



EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

2024 DATA

Student data, including attendance, assessment scores, graduation rates, enrollment and more, are essential for guiding instruction, shaping policies, and allocating resources. Colorado analyzes student academic performance using the statewide assessment CMAS. The assessment is administered annually to students in grades 3 through 8 for English Language Arts (ELA) and math, and in grades 5, 8, and 11 for science. Colorado uses the PSAT and SAT to measure academic achievement and growth in grades 9 through 11.

■ Student Performance Data

Academic achievement shows how well students have learned what they were supposed to for their grade and subject based on the standards and expectations set by the state. **Academic growth** measures a student's academic progress from year to year. In Colorado, growth is calculated by comparing a student's progress to other students who started at a similar level.

- **Families** use achievement and growth data to support learning at home, make informed decisions about schools and programs, and plan for future opportunities.
- **School and district leaders** analyze data to identify trends and address the needs of student populations through targeted support and professional development.
- **Policymakers** rely on aggregate data to shape effective policies, recognize outstanding performance, and allocate resources to schools that have the highest needs.

FIGURE 1: Percent of Students Grades 3-8 Proficient in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math

CMAS	2019 PRE-COVID	2023	2024
ELA	46%	43%	44%
MATH	35%	33%	34%

■ 2024 CMAS Academic Achievement Results

In reading and writing, 44% of students in grades 3 through 8 were meeting or exceeding expectations. That compared to 43% last year and 46% prior to the pandemic. In math, 34% of students met or exceeded expectations compared to 33% last year and 35% prior to the pandemic.

2024 CMAS Growth Results

Colorado’s growth calculations reveal that most students of color had growth scores below the state median of 50, with some of the lowest averages—46 or lower—seen among students with disabilities, migrant students, and Black students in reading and writing. In contrast, White students had an average growth score of 52 in both math and ELA. While growth scores in many areas have returned to pre-pandemic levels, students who are behind need high growth scores (greater than 50) to catch up.



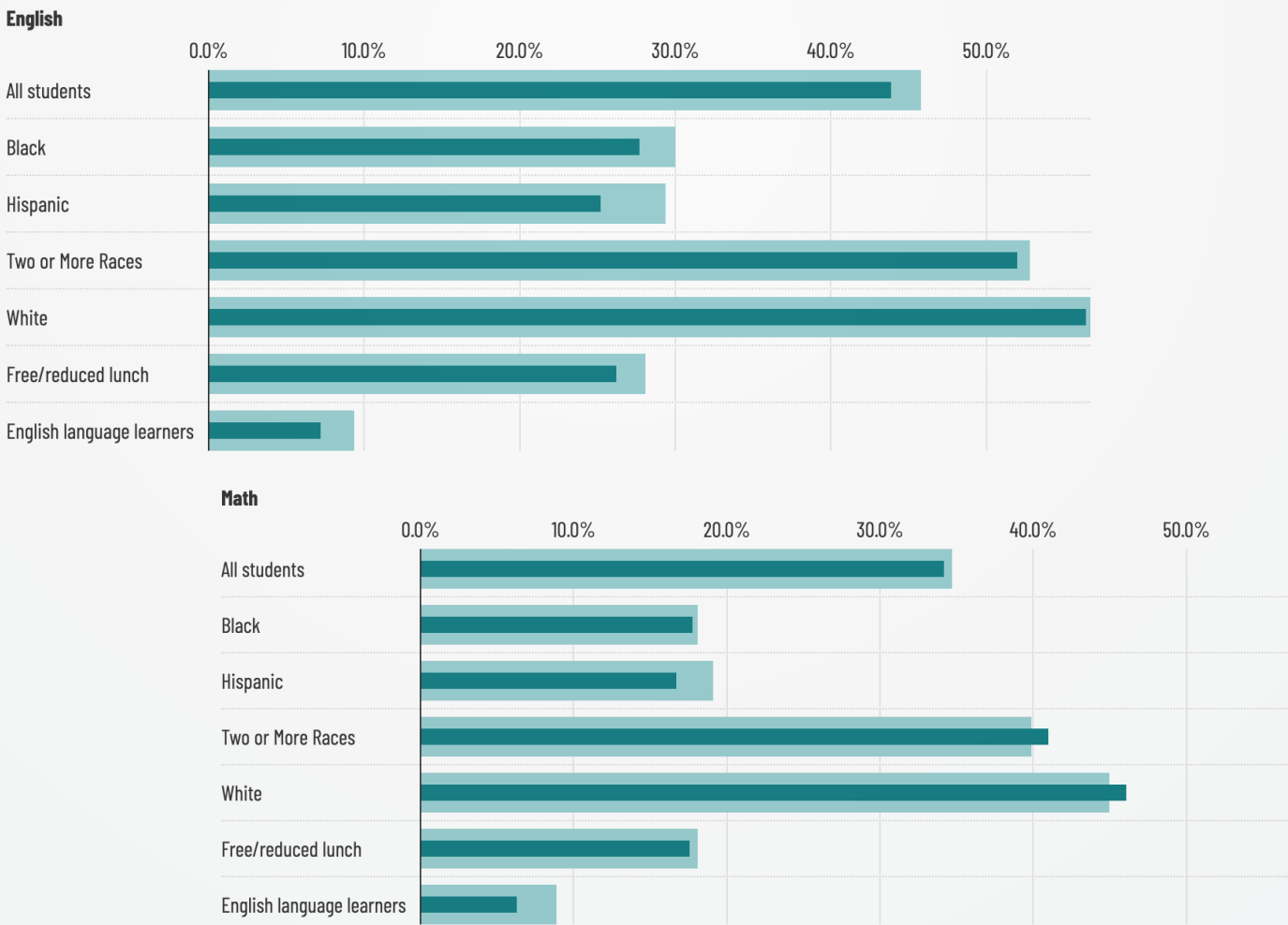
Achievement Gaps

Proficiency gaps based on racial and ethnic groups, disability, family income levels and English-speaking ability remain extremely large, as they have for the past several decades. These gaps range from 20 and 35 points between most races and ethnicities at all grade levels. (Figure 2)

- Only 6% of English Learners are proficient in ELA in 5th grade, compared to 53% of their peers, a gap of 46 points.
- 55% of white 4th graders are on grade level in reading and writing, while just 22% of Black and Hispanic students are.
- Only 12.7% of Hispanic students and 13.5% of Black students are on track in math in 6th grade, compared with 40% of white students and 50% of Asian students.

FIGURE 2: CMAS Performance, 3rd - 8th Graders by Student Group

Outer bars show the percentage of students who met or exceeded expectations in 2019. Inner bars show the 2024 rates.



Source: Chalkbeat, 2024. Chart: Thomas Wilburn. Data: Colorado Department of Education

2024 PSAT/SAT Results

9th and 10th graders scored at or above 2019 pre-pandemic levels on the PSAT and SAT, with 65-66% meeting college readiness standards in ELA, while 58% of 11th graders met those benchmarks.

In contrast, math scores remained 5 to 10 points below pre-pandemic levels. The drop in scores from 2023 to 2024 was in part due to changes to the test.

FIGURE 3: Percent of Students Meeting College Readiness Standards on the PSAT/SAT

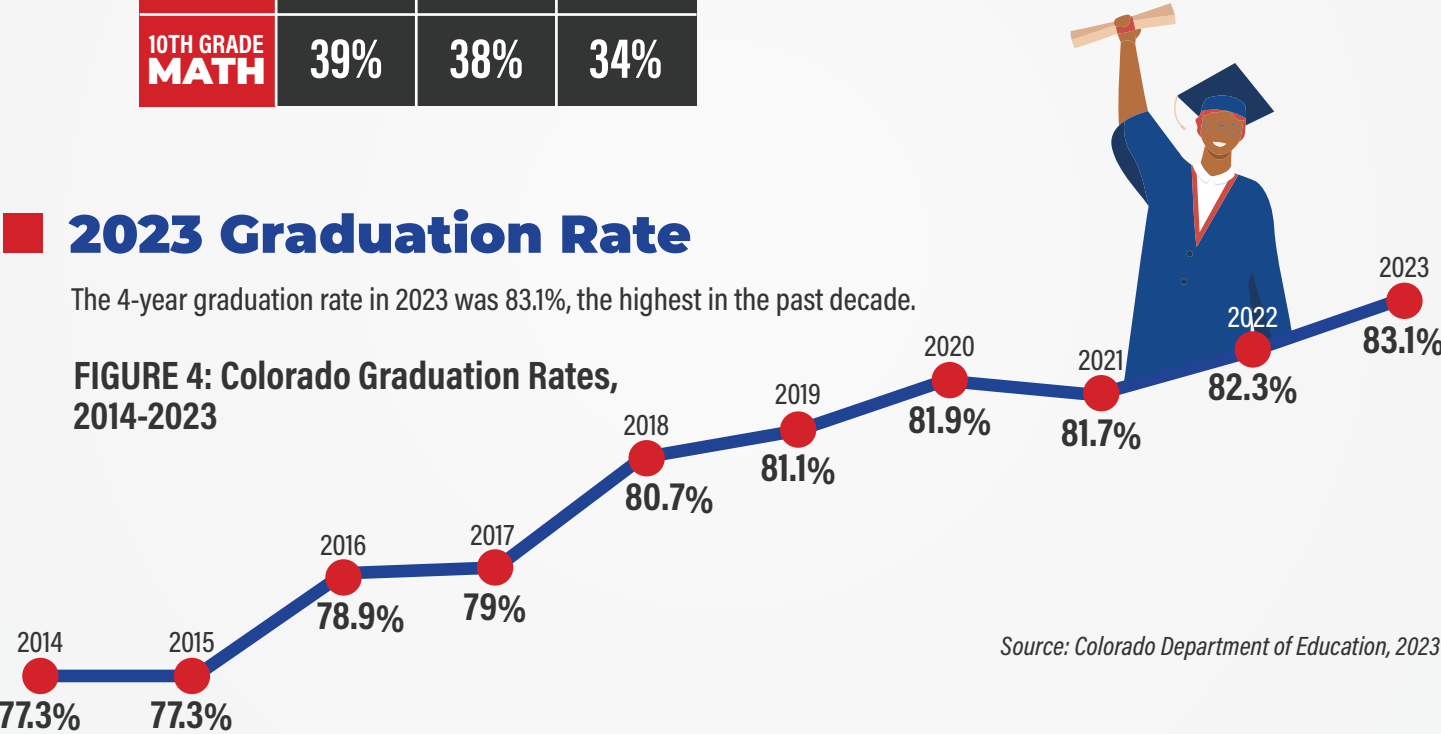
PSAT	2019 <small>PRE-COVID</small>	2023	2024
9TH GRADE ELA	66.5%	64%	65%
10TH GRADE ELA	65%	64.5%	66%
9TH GRADE MATH	50%	46.5%	39.5%
10TH GRADE MATH	39%	38%	34%

SAT	2019 <small>PRE-COVID</small>	2023	2024
11TH GRADE ELA	58.5%	59%	58%
11TH GRADE MATH	39%	35%	31%

2023 Graduation Rate

The 4-year graduation rate in 2023 was 83.1%, the highest in the past decade.

FIGURE 4: Colorado Graduation Rates, 2014-2023

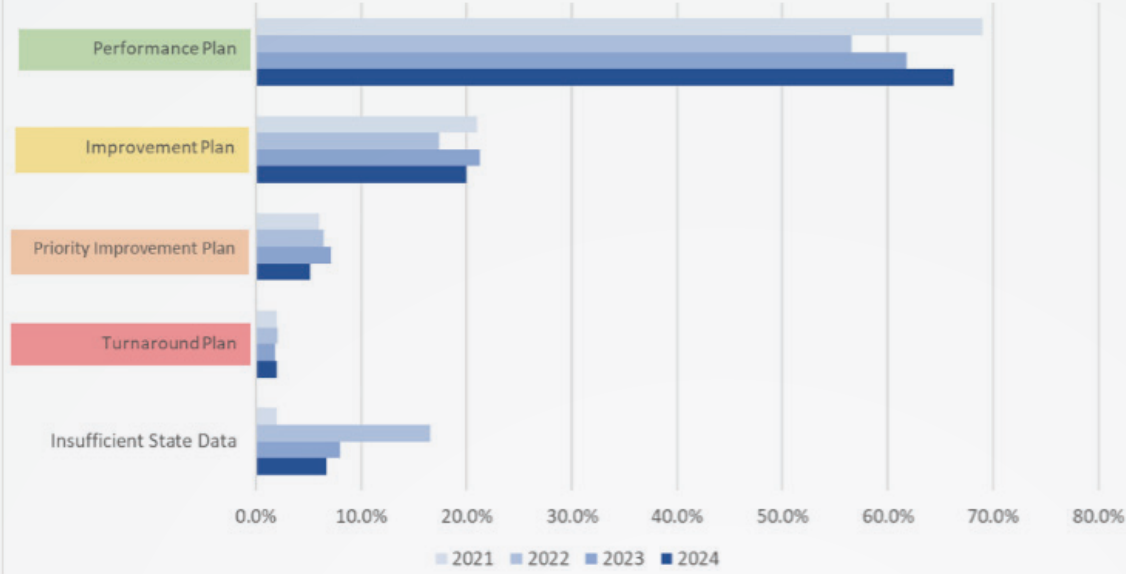


Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2023

School and District Ratings

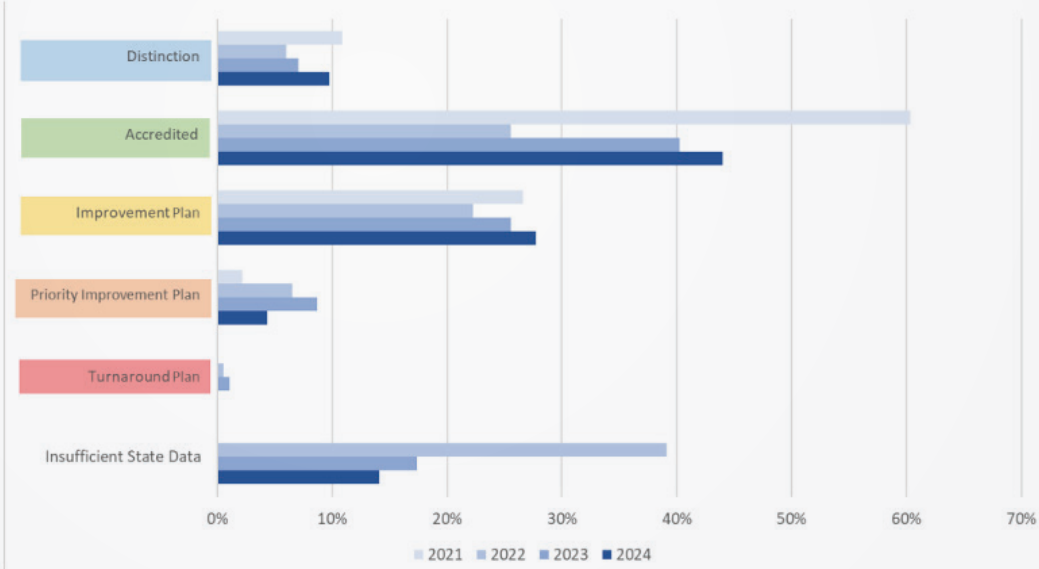
- **School Performance** (Figure 5): In 2024, 66% of schools earned the highest rating, a Performance Plan, 20% are on an Improvement Plan, 5% are on a Priority Improvement Plan, and 2% have the lowest rating and are on a Turnaround Plan.
- **District Performance** (Figure 6): In 2024, 10% of districts earned the highest rating, Accredited with Distinction, 44% are Accredited, 28% are Accredited with Improvement Plan, and 4% are Accredited with a Priority Improvement Plan. No districts are accredited with the lowest rating: Turnaround Plan.
- 26 districts (14%) and 122 schools (7%) had too few students tested to produce a state rating.

FIGURE 5: School-Level Results, 2021-2024



Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

FIGURE 6: District-Level Results, 2021-2024

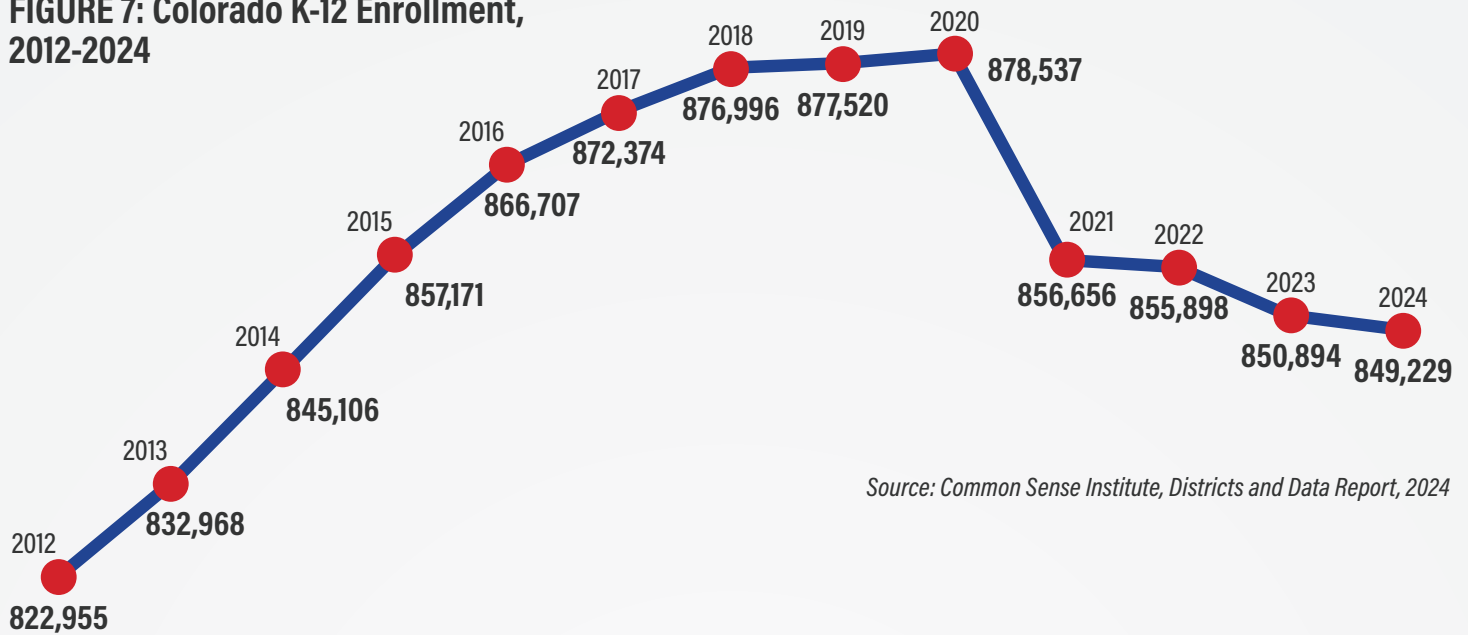


Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

School and District Statistics

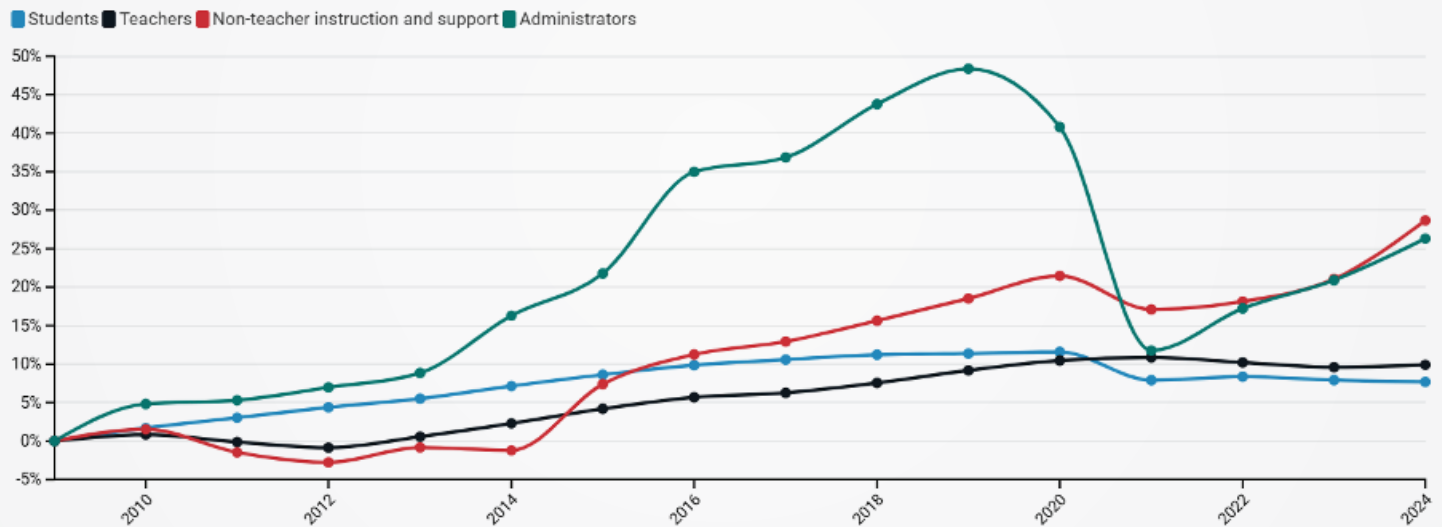
- Colorado public K-12 enrollment in 2023-24 was 849,229.
- Colorado's K-12 student enrollment has decreased for the past four years following the pandemic. Declining enrollment is likely due to both population changes and parent dissatisfaction with public schools. (Figure 7)
- Over the past 15 years, the number of administrators and non-teacher instruction and support staff have grown at a higher pace than the number of students and teachers. (Figure 8) These groups continue to grow even as the student population declines.

FIGURE 7: Colorado K-12 Enrollment, 2012-2024



Source: Common Sense Institute, Districts and Data Report, 2024

FIGURE 8: Public Education Staff and Student Growth, 2009-2024



Source: Common Sense Institute, Districts and Data Report, 2024

Enrollment by School Characteristics

- **Rural:** Out of 179 districts, 36 are rural (less than 6,500 students), and 110 are small rural (Less than 1,000 students). The 81% of districts classified as rural or small rural account for 15% of the state's student population. The remaining 85% of students are located in suburban or urban districts.
- **Charter Schools:** In the 2023-24 school year, 135,223 students were enrolled in charter schools, representing 15% of public school students.
- **Online:** 31,839 students (4%) attended online schools in 2023-24.
- **Homeschool:** According to Colorado Department of Education staff, 3 to 5% of Colorado's children are homeschooled and that population has continued to grow each year since the pandemic.

Demographic Data



SPECIAL EDUCATION: 113,992 Students

(13% of total enrollment)

ENGLISH LEARNERS: 114,509 Students

(13% of total enrollment)

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GIFTED AND TALENTED: 67,703 Students

(8% of total enrollment)

IMMIGRANT/MIGRANT: 17,202 Students

(2% of total enrollment)



FREE-REDUCED LUNCH (FRL) ELIGIBLE: 403,231 Students

(45% of total enrollment)

Current Challenges

- **Poor Academic Achievement:** While the 2023 graduation rate of 83% was the highest it has been in a decade, the low proficiency scores indicate that the majority of students are not graduating with a strong foundation in reading, writing, math and science.
 - Overall, the public education system is failing to serve over half of its students. The status quo does not work for far too many students, and innovation and choice should be embraced and scaled up.
- **Declining enrollment is a challenge** due to the fixed costs of education (facilities, staff, curriculum). Fewer students means fewer dollars.
 - New research shows smaller schools do not need to cost more per pupil. Such schools can use innovative staffing and community partnerships to remain open and achieve strong academic outcomes. This requires flexibility from one-size-fits-all staffing structures and budgeting.
- **Achievement gaps are significant.** Expanding opportunities for low-income students, English learners, and students of color to attend high quality schools is critical if Colorado wants to raise achievement for all students.

Bottom Line

Education data provide insight into how students, schools, and districts are performing, where problems need to be solved, and where successes can be replicated. Focusing on student outcomes and providing transparent data is critical so that parents can make school choice decisions, districts can target supports and interventions, and policymakers can allocate resources where most needed.