

# Labor Market Update and Workforce Needs

State Workforce Development Board  
Career Pathways and Youth Committees

Ben Crabb, Chief Economist  
Department of Workforce Services

March 12, 2026



# Overview

- 1 Labor Market Update
- 2 High-Demand Industries and Occupations
- 3 Current Skills Gaps
- 4 Education and Workforce Needs Alignment



# Labor Market update

- Utah continues to outperform national metrics
- Labor market cooling

# LABOR MARKETS

December 2025

State of Utah

1.2%

Job growth rate

3.6%

Unemployment rate

United States

0.3%

Job growth rate

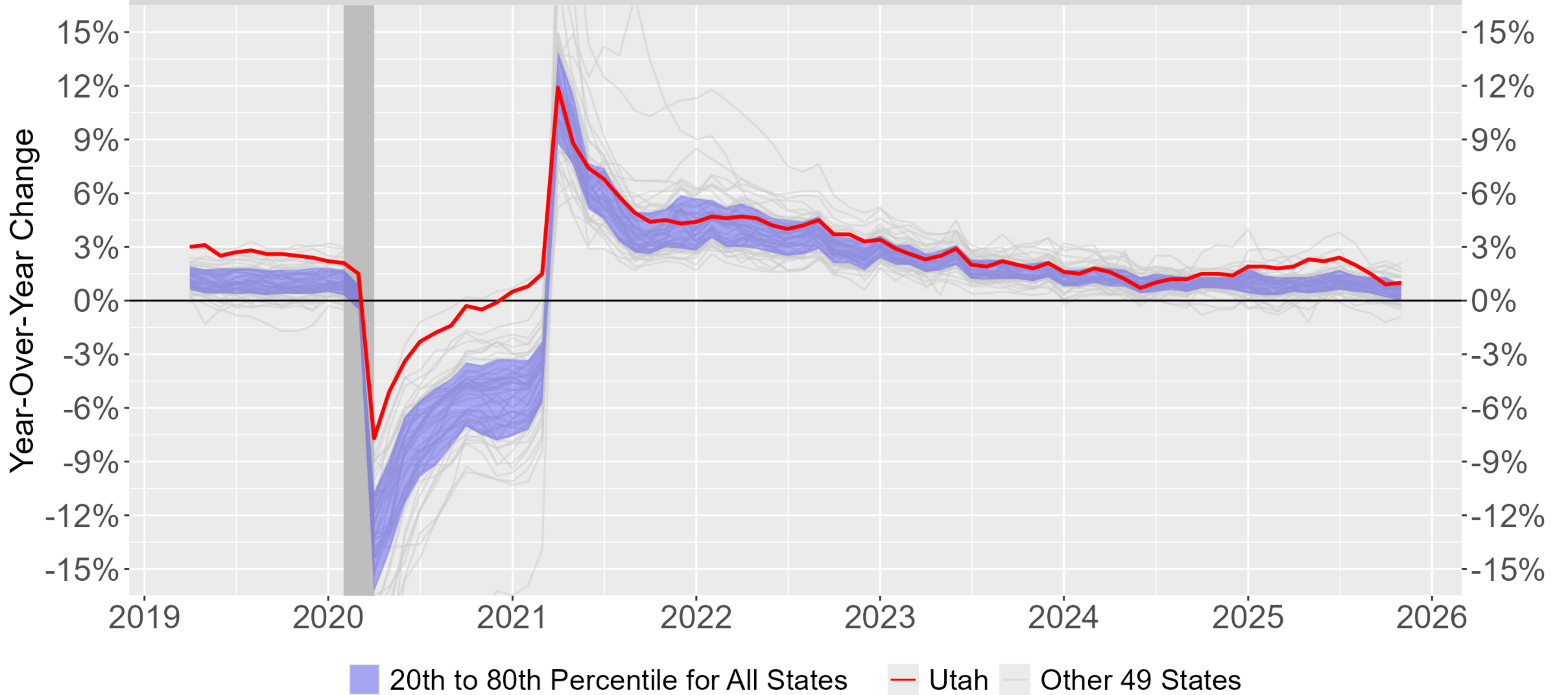
4.4%

Unemployment rate



# Job Growth, Utah & Other States

## Total Nonfarm



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Statistics (CES), not seasonally adjusted

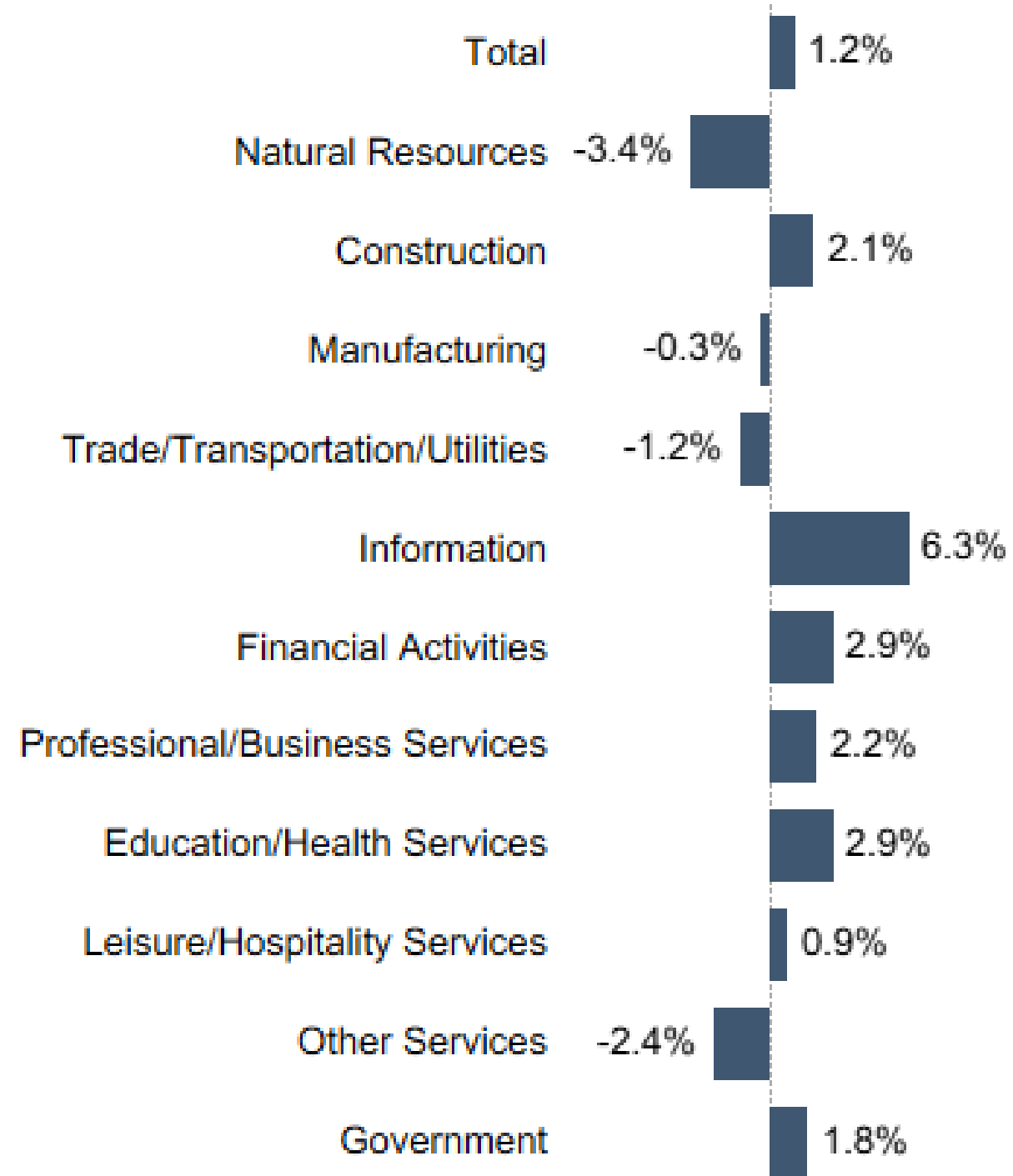
# STATE OF UTAH

## Industry Profiles

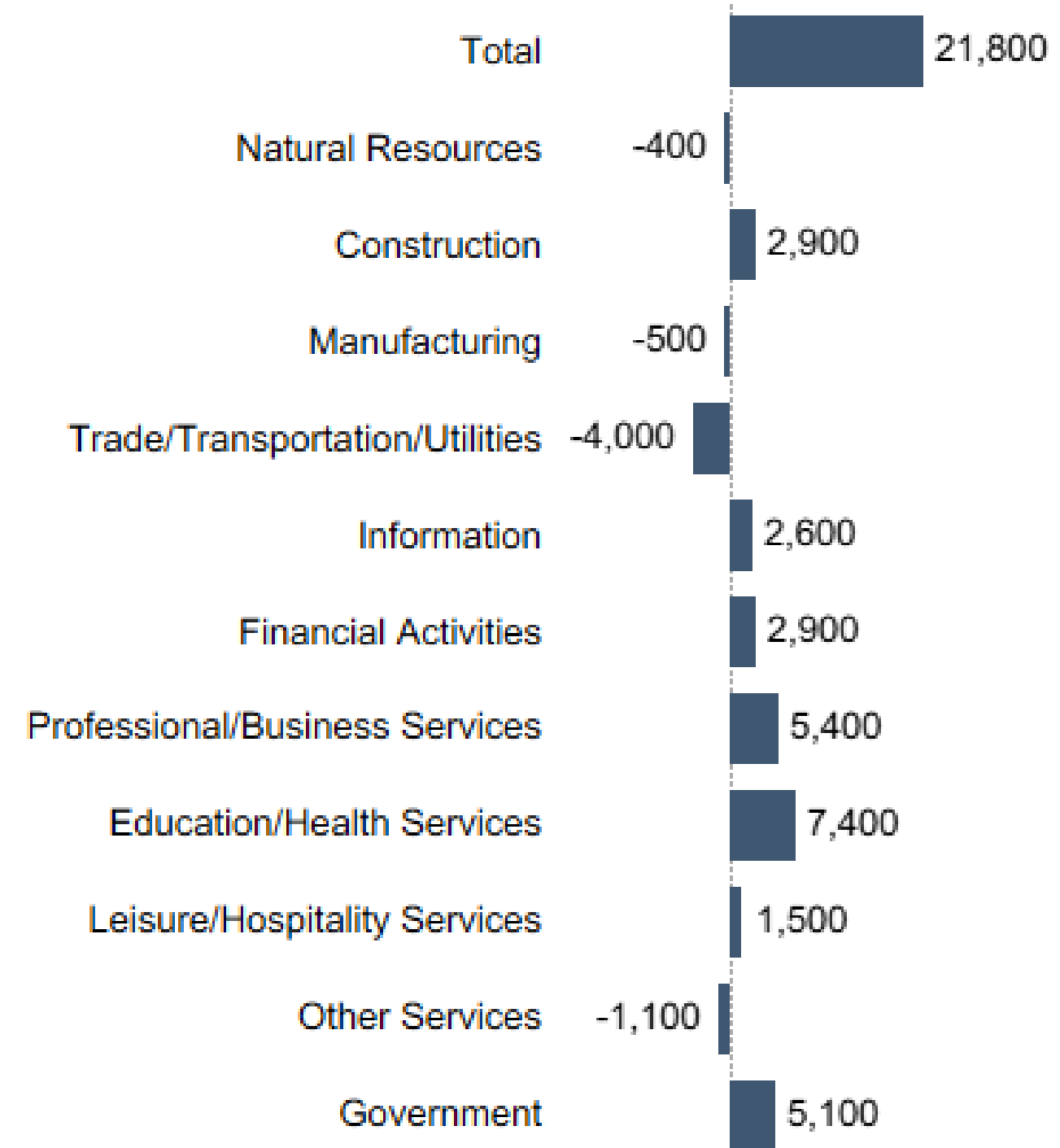
December 2024 - 2025



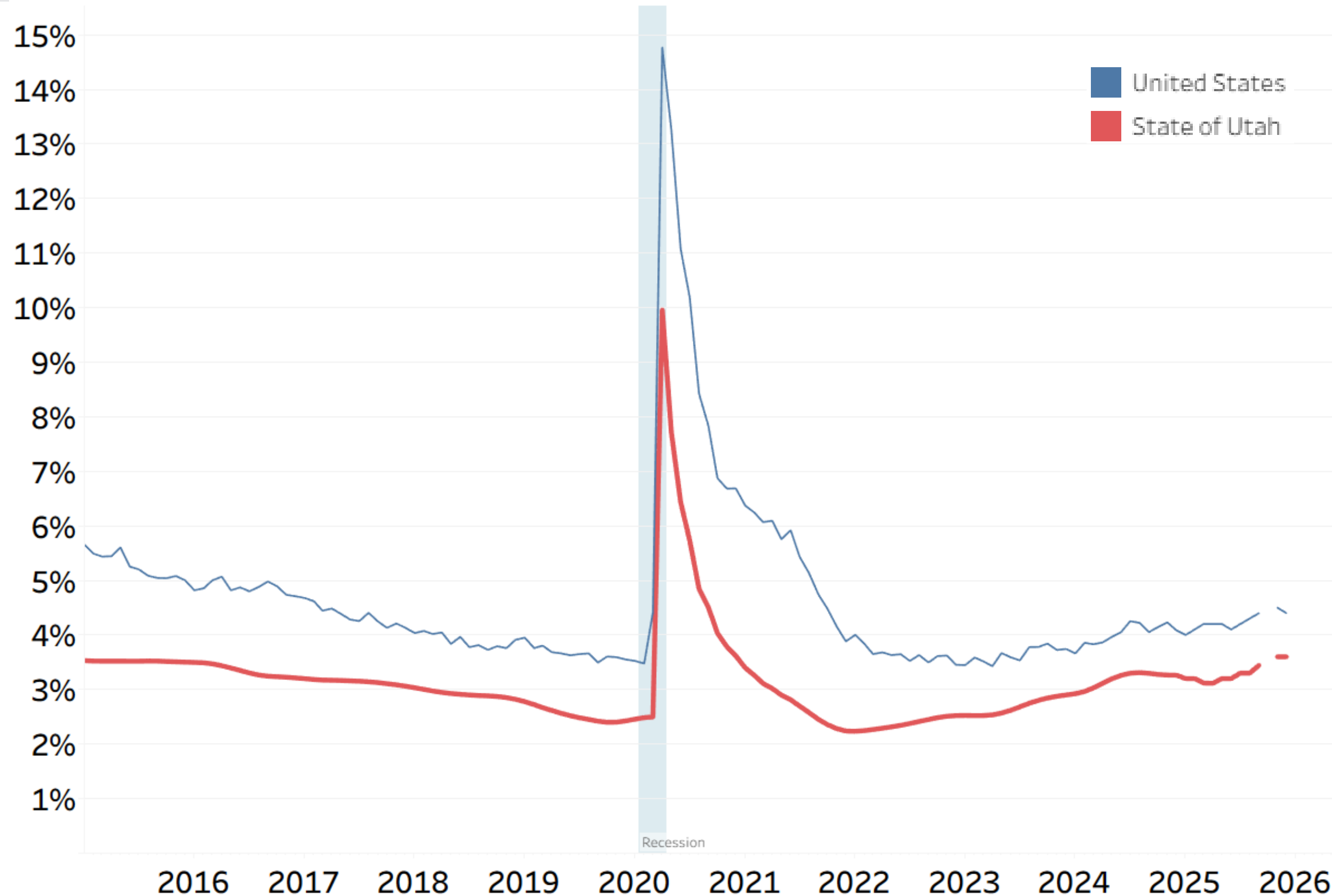
### Percentage Change



### Numeric Change



# UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

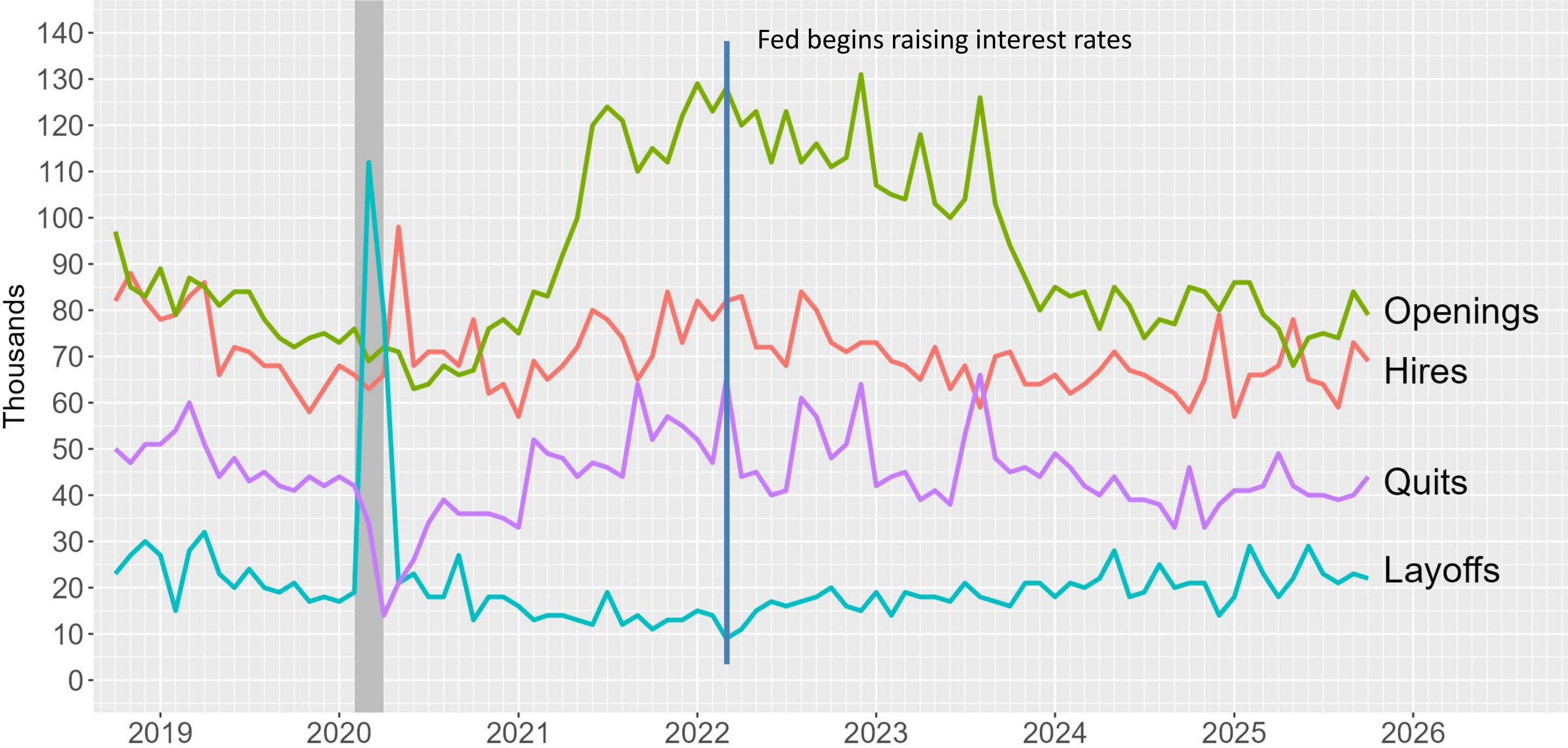


December 2025

United States 4.4%

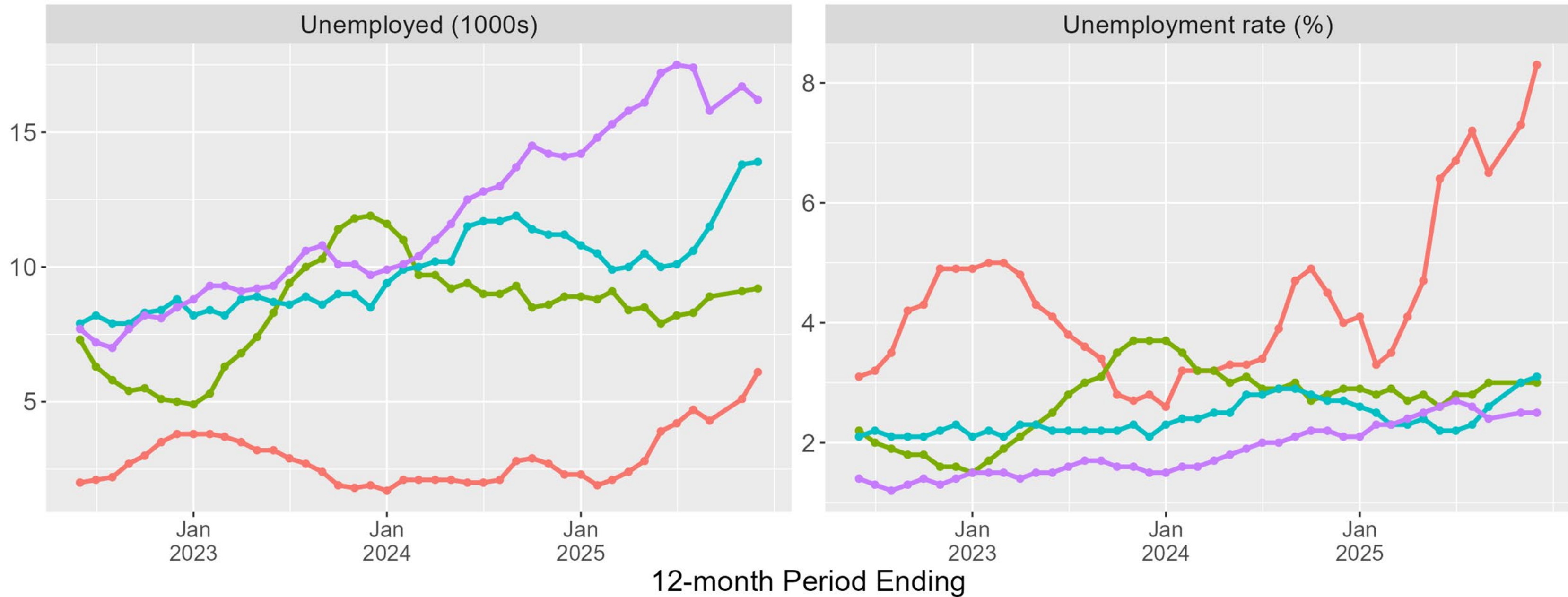
State of Utah 3.6%

# Labor Market Showing Some Cooling



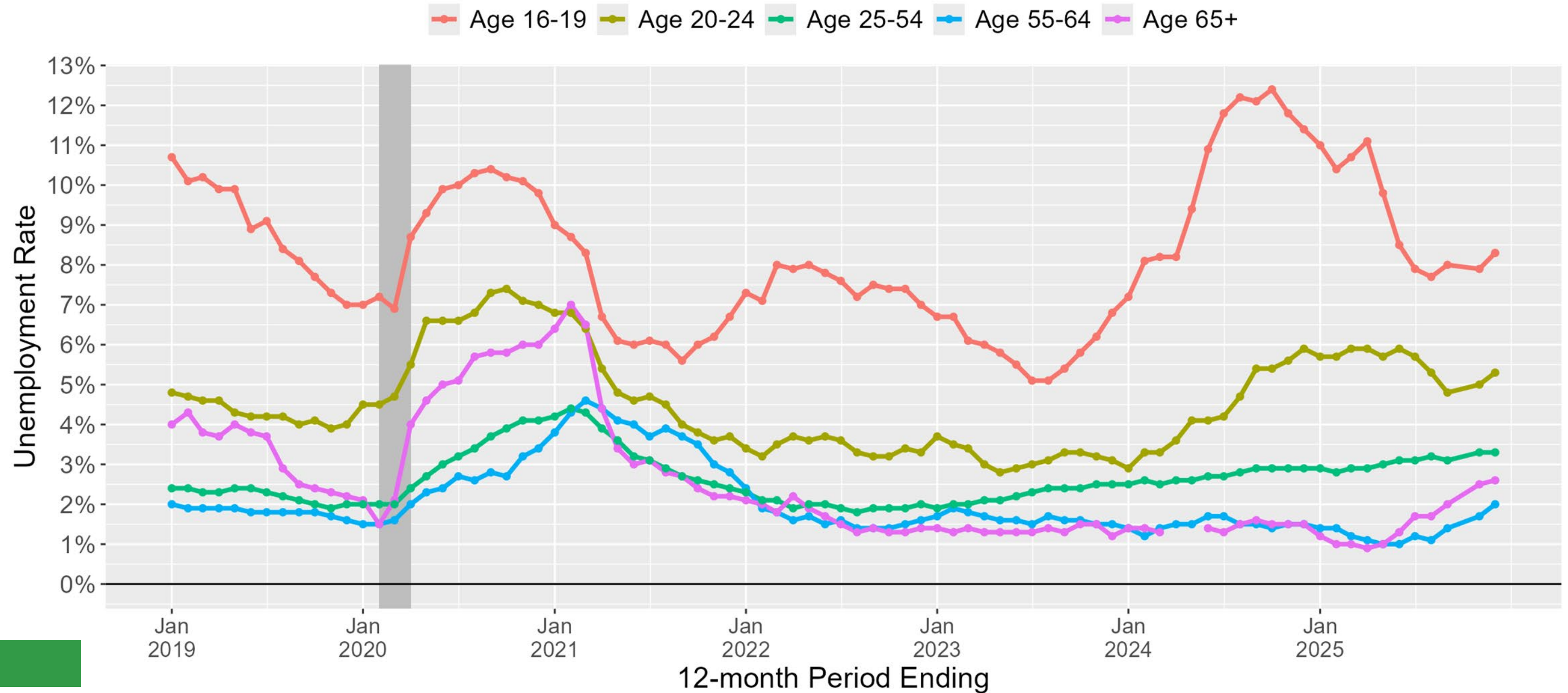
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment



- Less than a High school diploma
- High school graduates, no college
- Some college or associate degree
- Bachelor's degree and higher

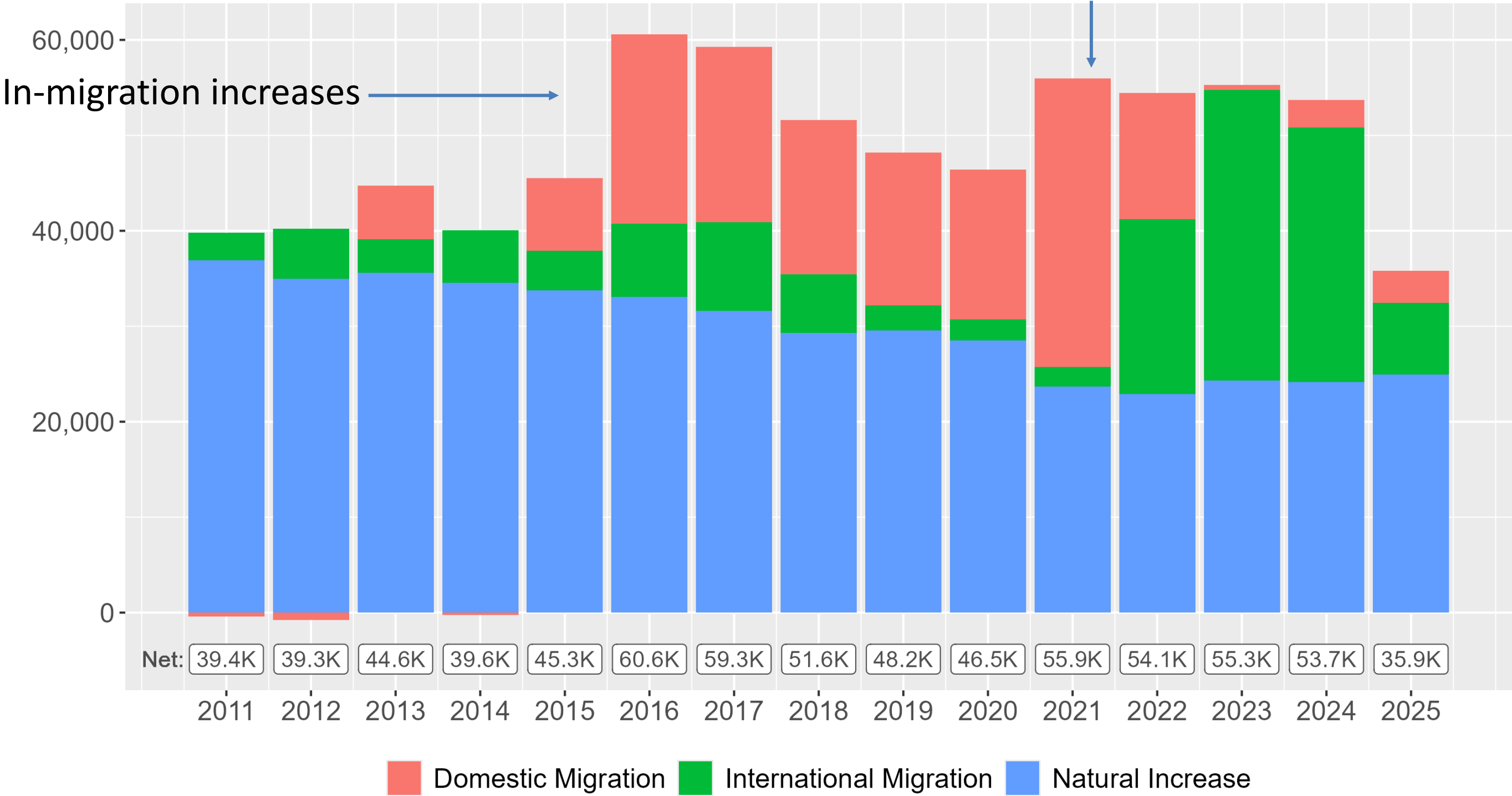
# Unemployment Rate By Age



# Utah Net Migration 2011-2025

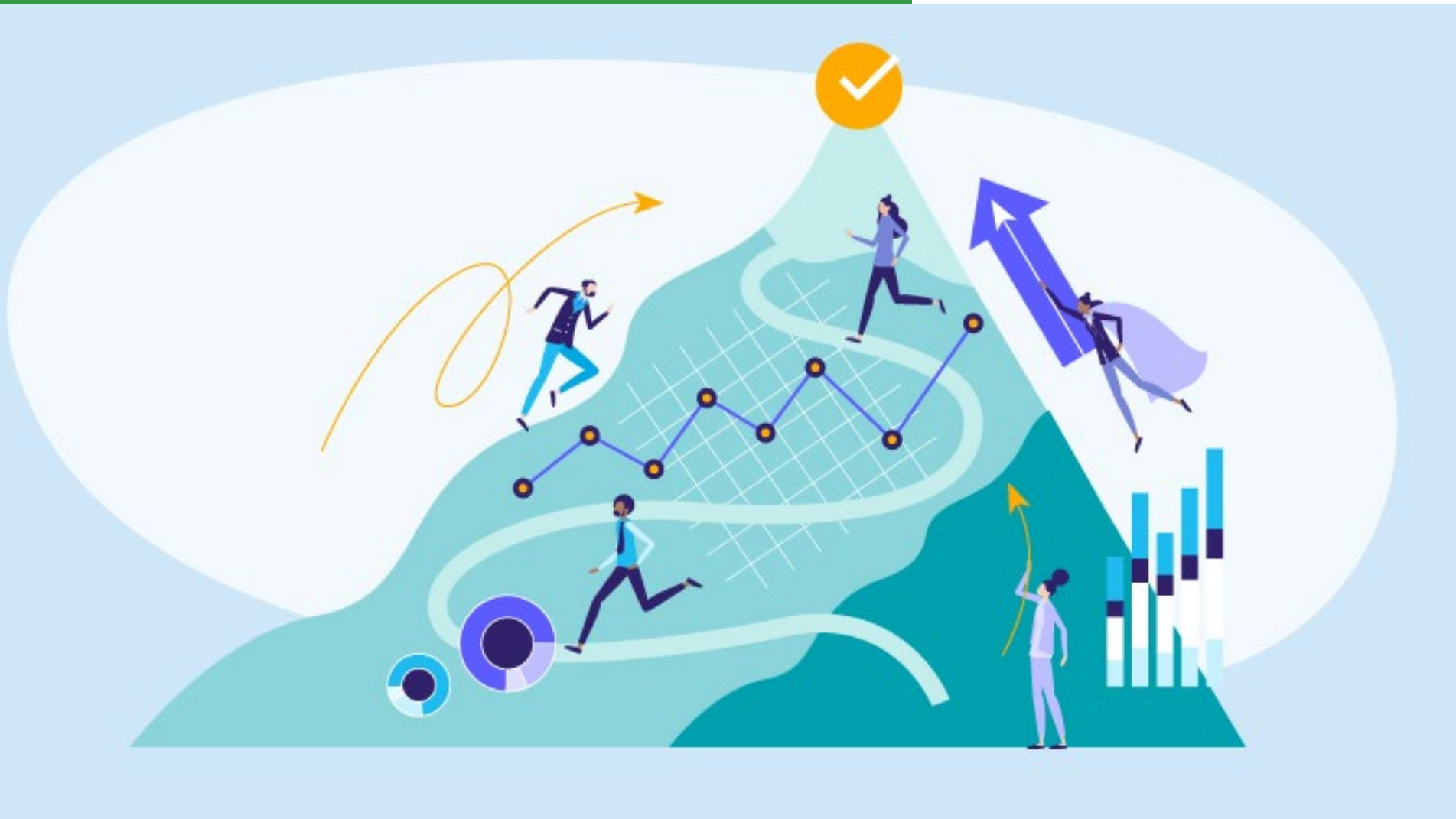
In-migration surpasses natural increase

In-migration increases pressure on housing market, decreases pressure on labor market.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute and Utah Population Committee



# High Demand Industries and Occupations

# UTAH SHORT TERM OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS

2025 - 2027

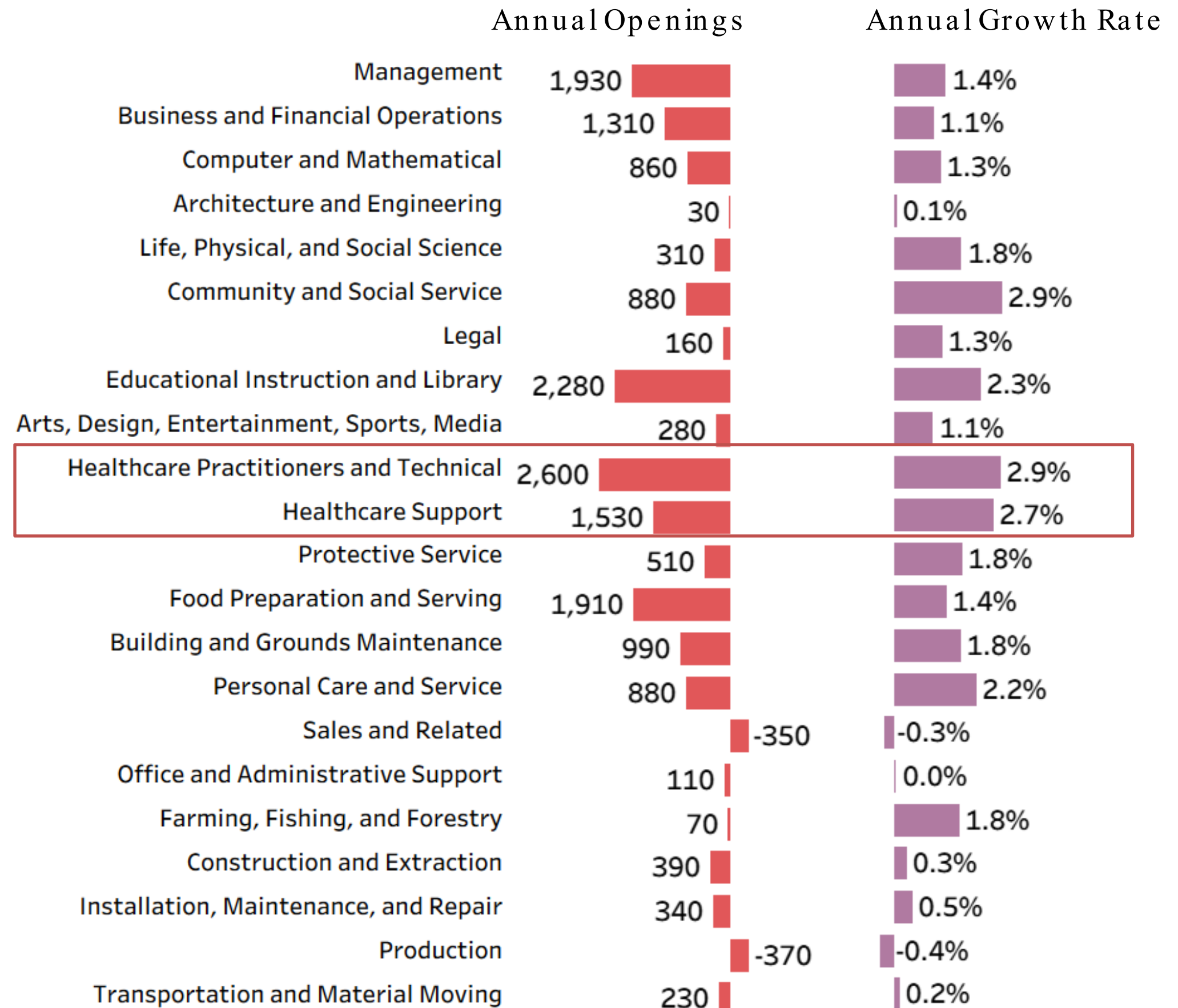
1.0%

Annual growth rate

204,080

Annual openings

Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services  
<https://jobs.utah.gov/wi/data/library/employment/shorttermoccproj.html>



# Occupations with labor shortages



## Criteria:

- More than 1,000 jobs in Utah
- High posting duration
- High advertised salary
- High posting volume relative to hires

## Healthcare Practitioners (Nurses & Specialized Techs)

Healthcare remains the most acute shortage area, driven by a combination of high "burn rate" (postings vs. hires) and an aging population.

• **Registered Nurses:** With **28,400+ jobs**, this is one of Utah's largest occupations. However, it has **14,850 unique postings** in the last year. The "Postings-to-Hires" ratio is extremely tight, and the advertised salary has climbed to a median of **\$88,400** as hospitals compete for a limited talent pool.

• **Medical & Health Services Managers:** This role has **8,920 jobs** but a median posting duration of **28 days** (significantly higher than the average). Employers are struggling to find candidates who have both clinical experience and business/management skills.

# Occupations with labor shortages



## Criteria:

- More than 1,000 jobs in Utah
- High posting duration
- High advertised salary
- High posting volume relative to hires

## Skilled Construction & Maintenance Trades

The "Silver Tsunami" (retiring workers) is hitting these trades hard, and the youth pipeline is not yet large enough to replace them.

•**HVAC Mechanics & Installers:** There are roughly **4,800 jobs** in Utah. Advertised salaries have surged to **\$58,240**, and the unique postings have increased by **9%** year-over-year. The median posting duration is **26 days**, indicating that these roles are staying open much longer than typical service jobs.

•**Electricians:** With over **9,000 jobs**, this is a massive sector. High concentration in "Silicon Slopes" data center construction and new housing has created a shortage characterized by aggressive recruiting and a median advertised salary of **\$64,800**.

# Occupations with labor shortages



## Criteria:

- More than 1,000 jobs in Utah
- High posting duration
- High advertised salary
- High posting volume relative to hires

## Specialized Management & Technical Operations

Roles that manage complex systems are difficult to fill.

• **Industrial Production Managers:** While there are only ~**1,450 jobs**, the demand has spiked by **12%** in the last year. These managers are needed to oversee automated "smart factories". Median advertised salary is high (**\$105,216**), but the posting duration is high at **30 days**.

• **Project Management Specialists:** With **12,150 jobs**, this is a major occupation. It has **6,240 unique postings**, meaning roughly half the workforce is being "recruited for" in a single year. This indicates high churn and a shortage of qualified, experienced project leads.



# Current Skills Gaps

3-1-2026

## Workforce Needs and Labor Market Trends in Utah [Special Report]

Lendel K. Narine  
*Utah State University, [lendel.narine@usu.edu](mailto:lendel.narine@usu.edu)*

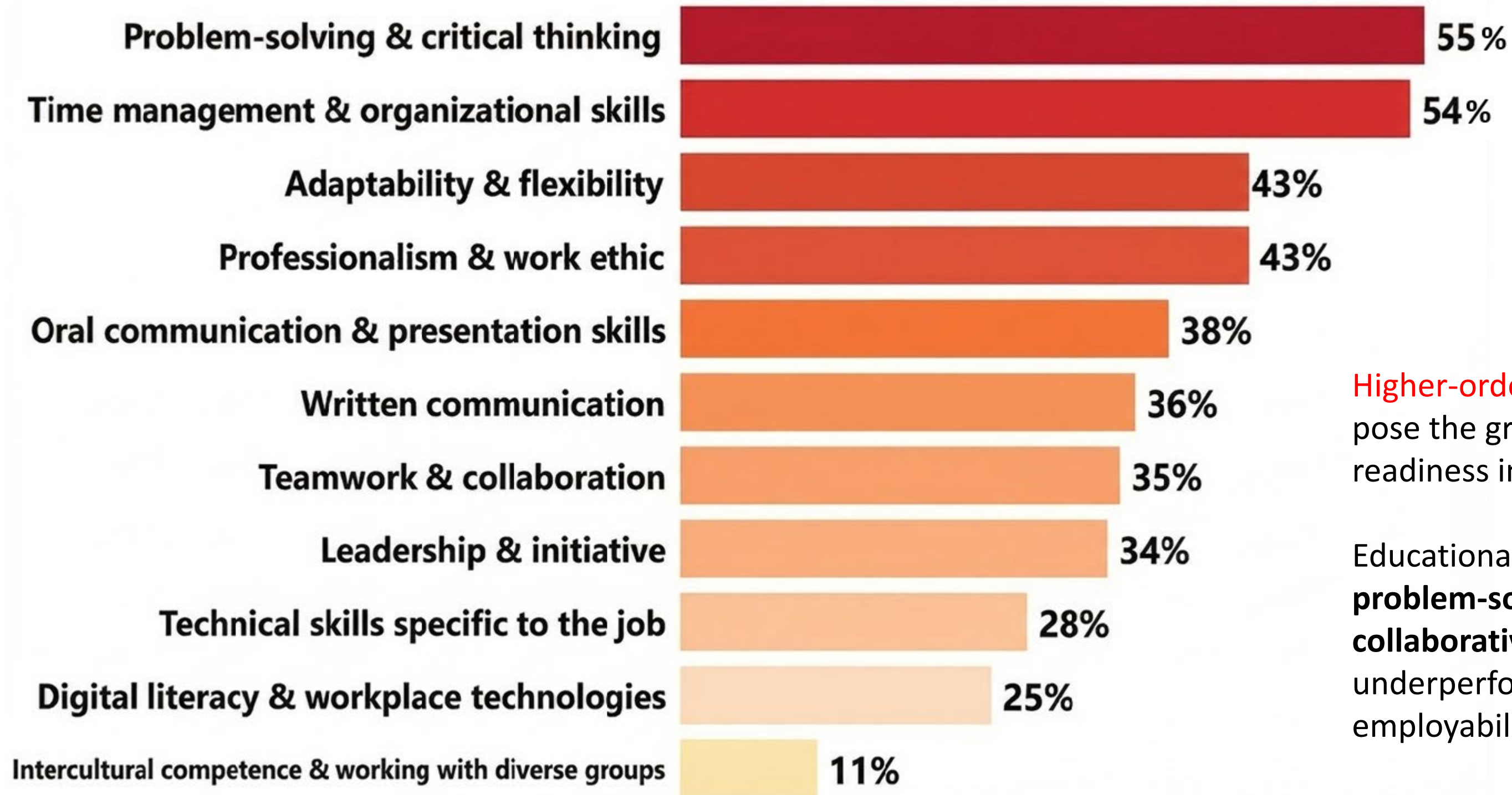
Paul Hill  
[paul.hill@usu.edu](mailto:paul.hill@usu.edu)

Andree' Walker Bravo  
*Utah State University, [andree.walker@usu.edu](mailto:andree.walker@usu.edu)*

*This study examined Utah employers' perceptions of workforce preparedness, hiring challenges, and emerging skill needs.*

*Data were collected from **226 employers across different industries** to identify priority competency gaps in the state's workforce.*

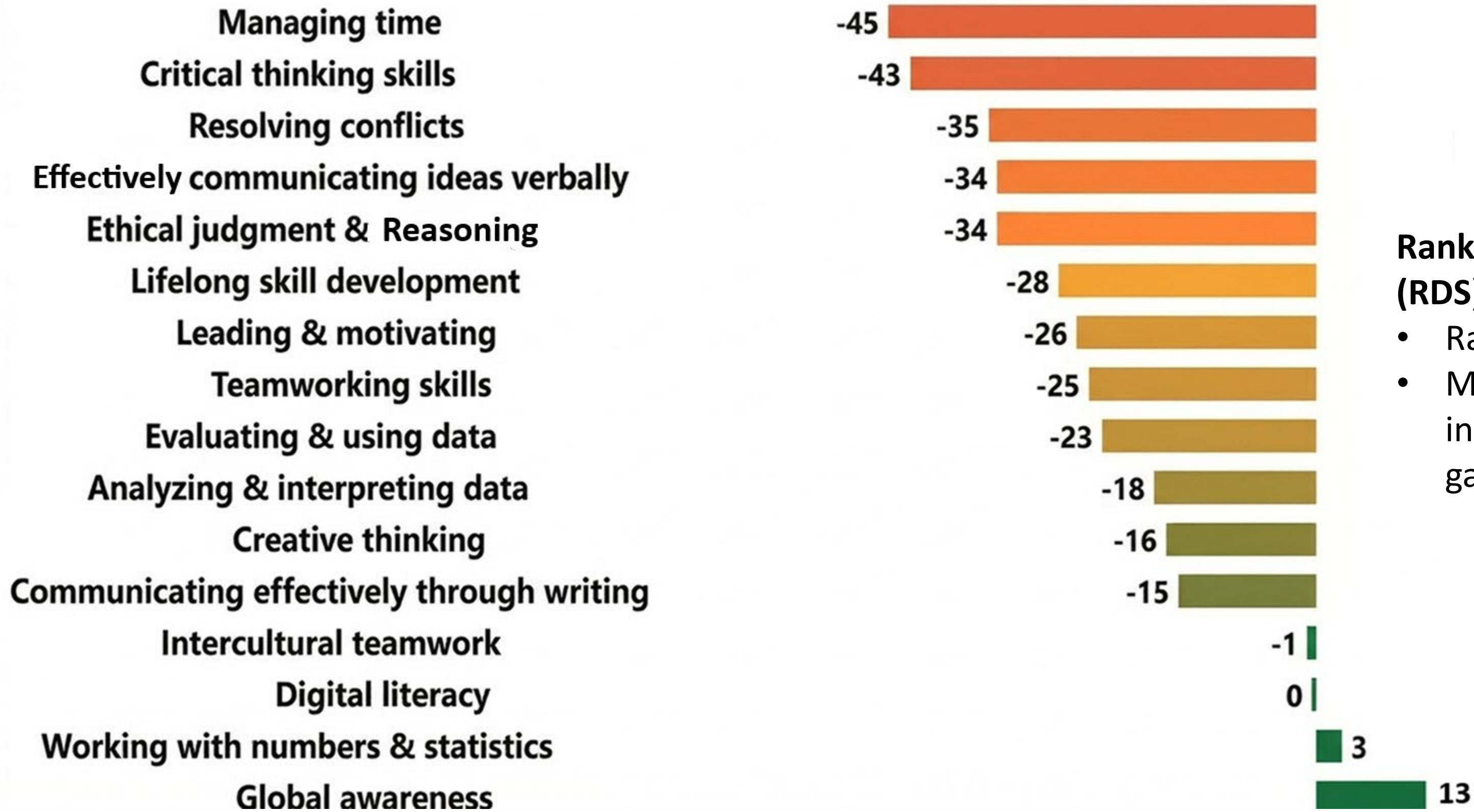
# Areas of Employees' Underperformance according to Employers



Higher-order cognitive and interpersonal skills pose the greatest challenge for workforce readiness in Utah.

Educational experiences such as **applied problem-solving, experiential learning, and collaborative projects**, may help reduce underperformance and enhance long-term employability across sectors

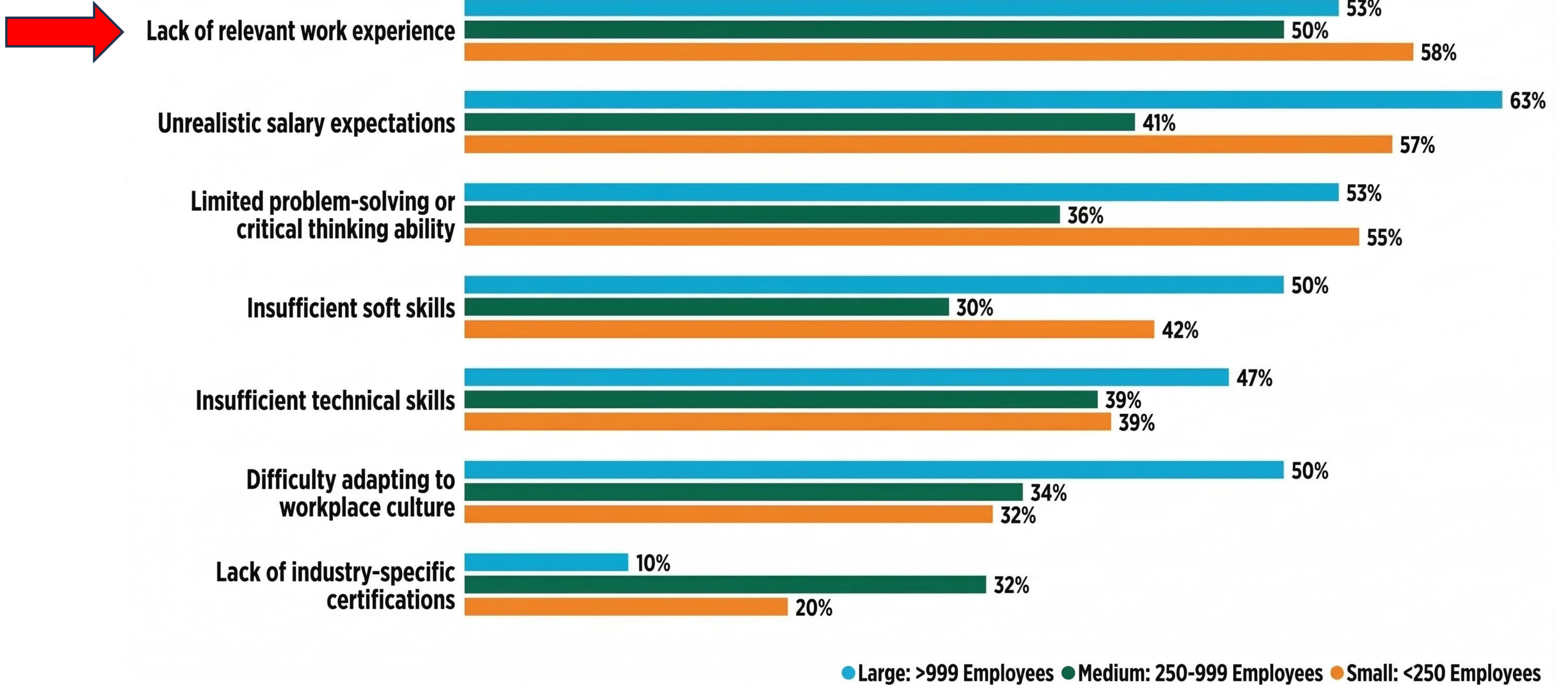
# Workforce Competency Gaps (RDS)



## Ranked Discrepancy Scores (RDS):

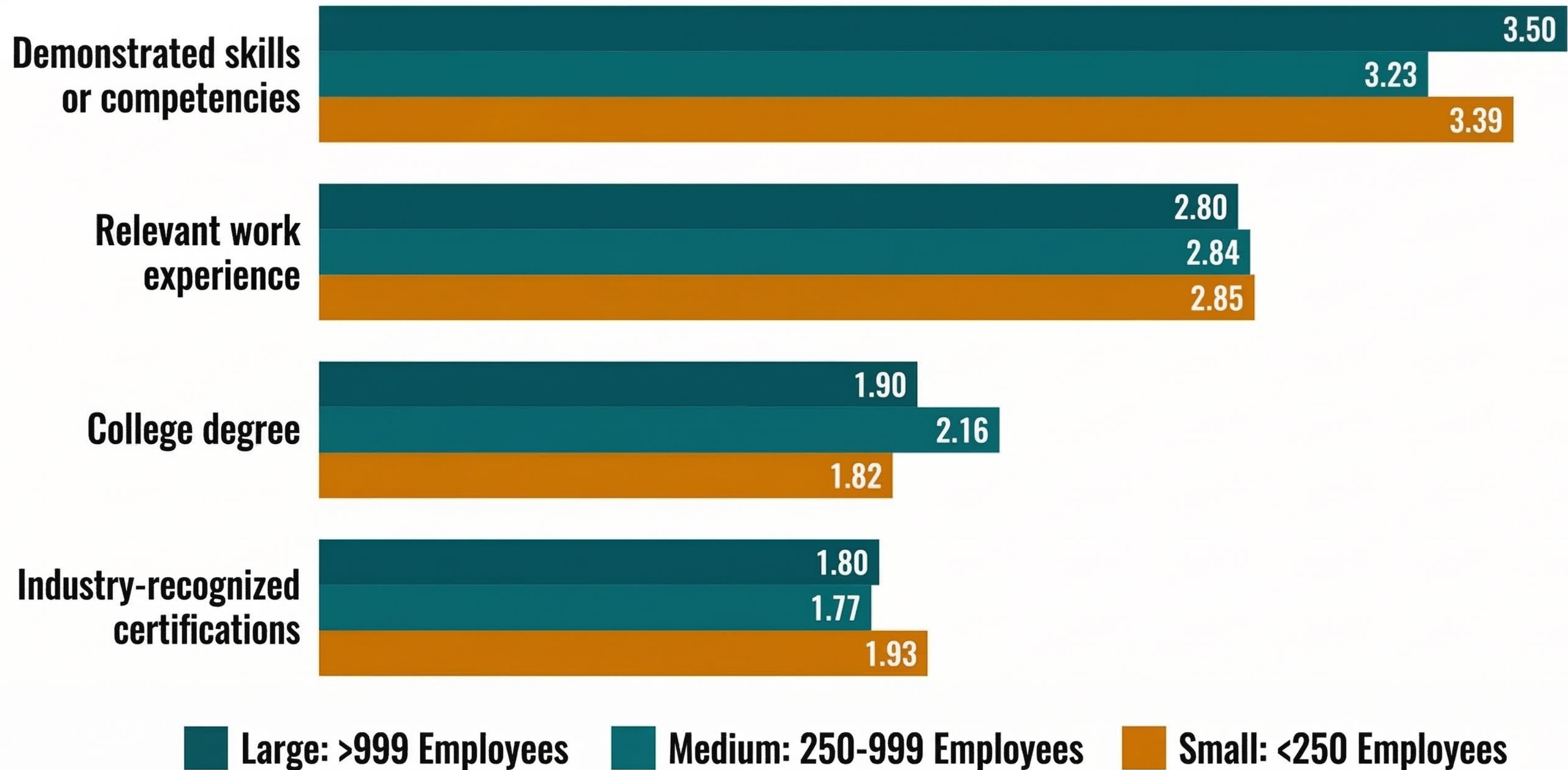
- Range from -100 to 100
- More negative values indicate greater skill gaps/areas of need

# HIRING CHALLENGES BY ORGANIZATION SIZE

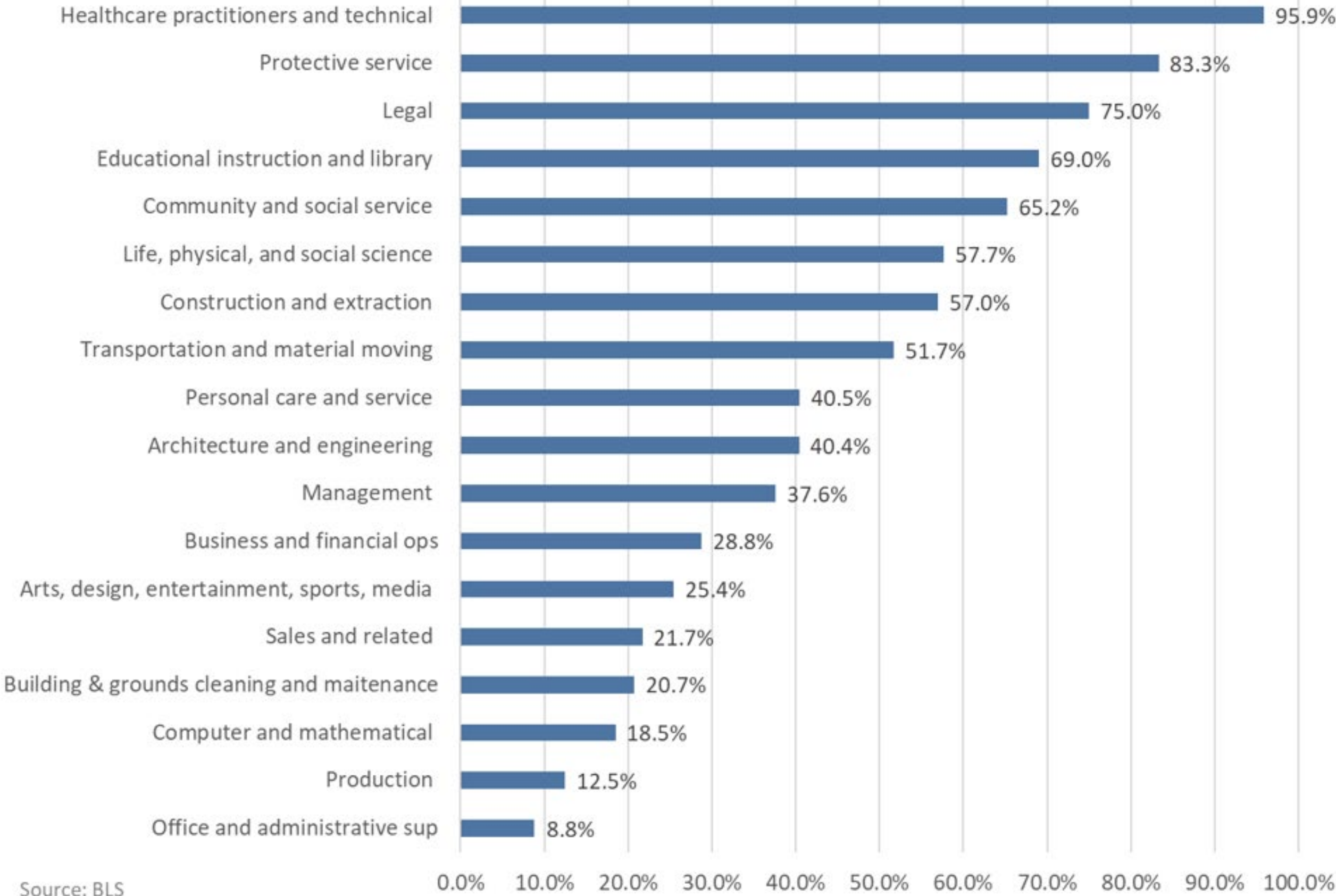


# Importance of Qualifications

Ranked by Utah employers: 1 (Not important) to 5 (Extremely important)

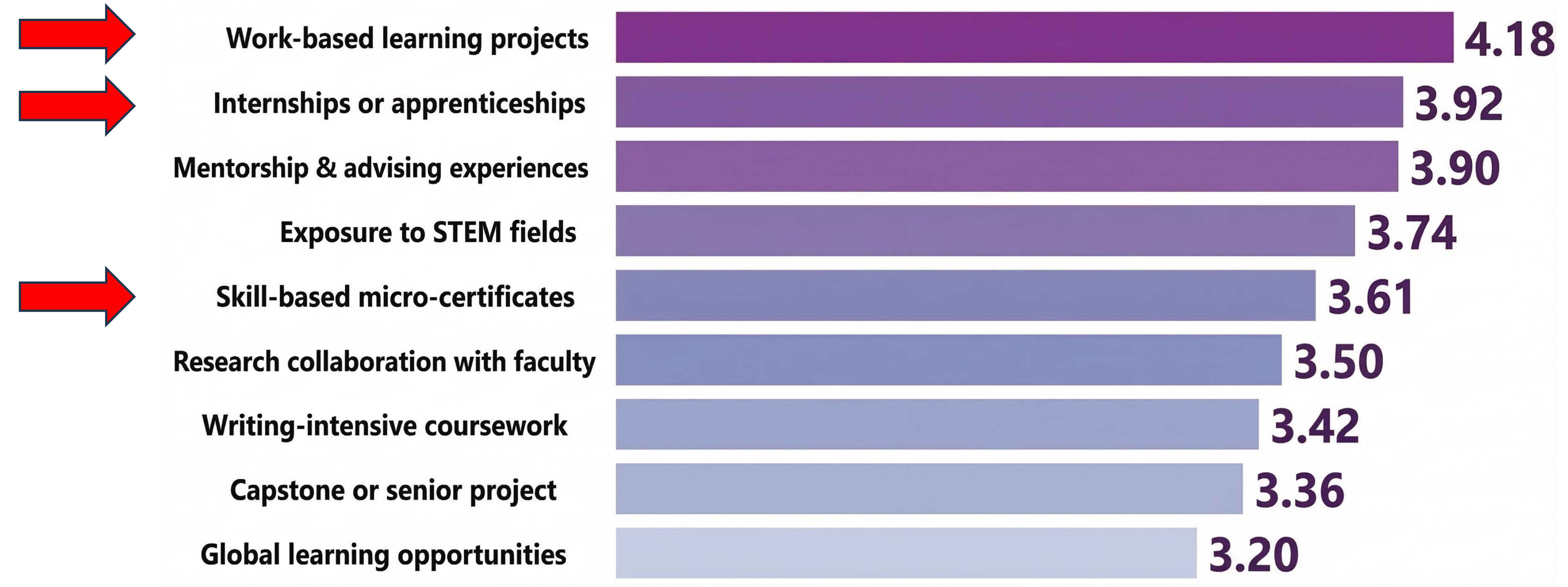


# 2024 OCCUPATIONAL CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS



# Value of Academic Experiences

Ranked by Utah employers: 1 (Not important) to 5 (Extremely important)





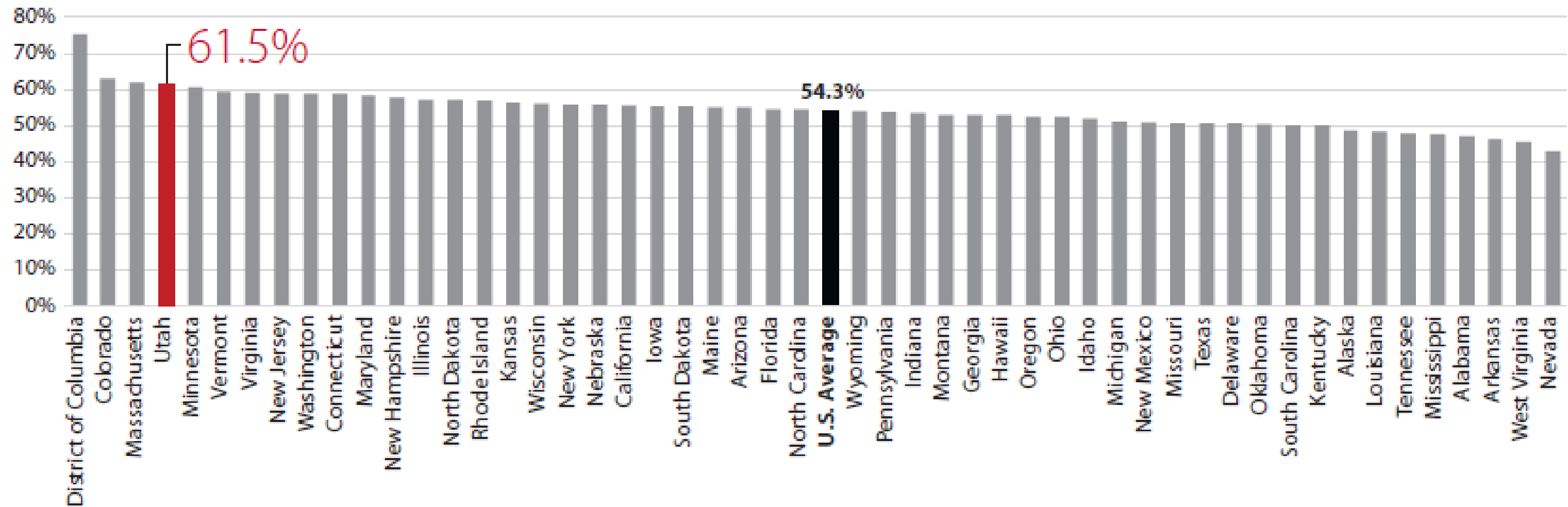
# Education and Workforce Needs Alignment

# % of Adults with Post Secondary Education

## A State - by - State Comparison

Figure 3: Percent of Adults with any Post-secondary Educational Attainment (ages 25-64), 2022

Utah is in the top 3 states for educational attainment.

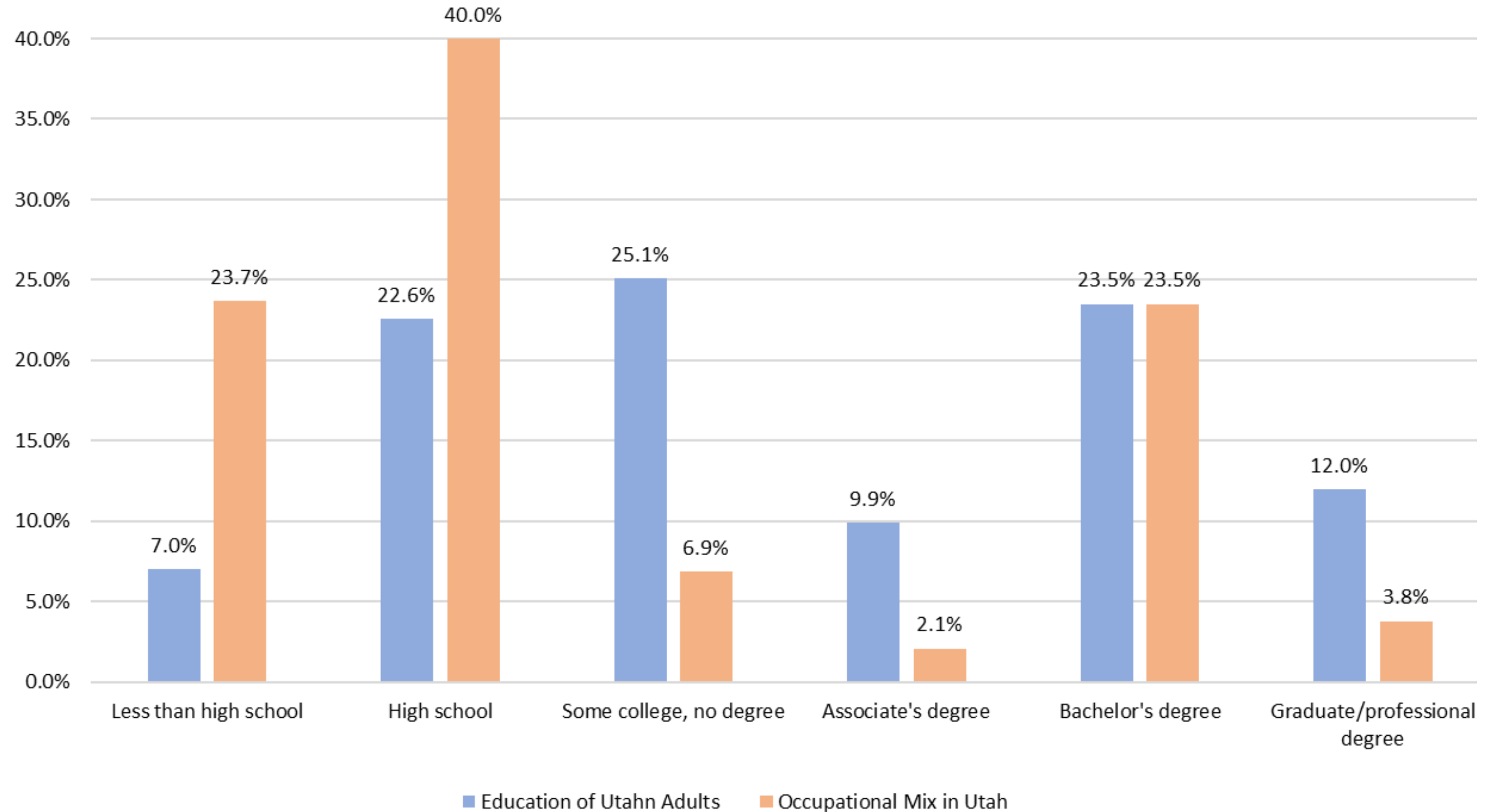


# Educational Mismatch

Education is outpacing Utah's labor force needs.

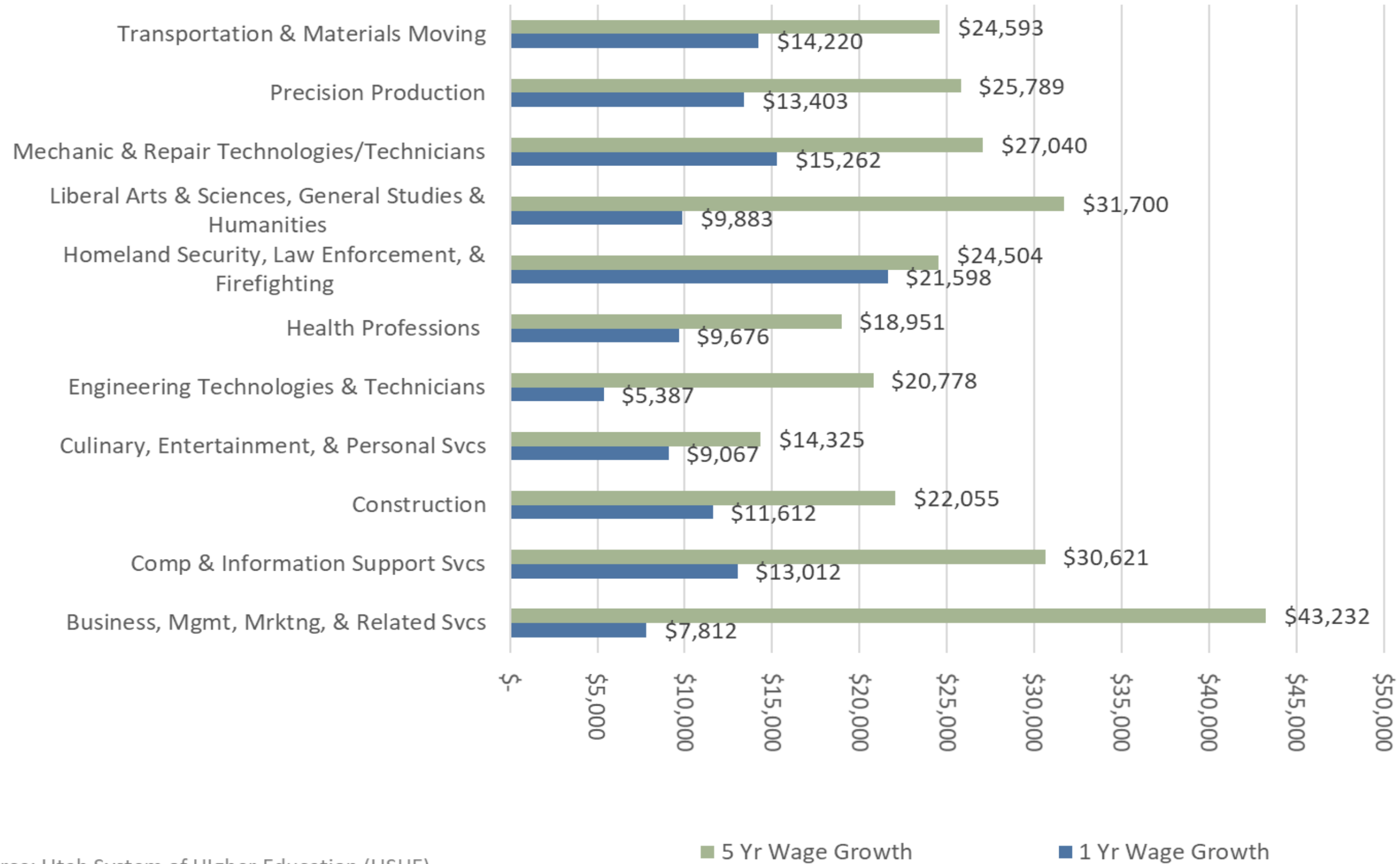
Utah's working population is over-educated for the job requirements of the market.

Current and predicted labor force shortages are largely in construction, healthcare, and other vocational work or specific degrees like programming, MD's, engineering.



# The Added Value of Certificate Completion

**Average Annual Wage Growth by Award Type Following Certificate Completion  
1 year and 5 years after Graduation**

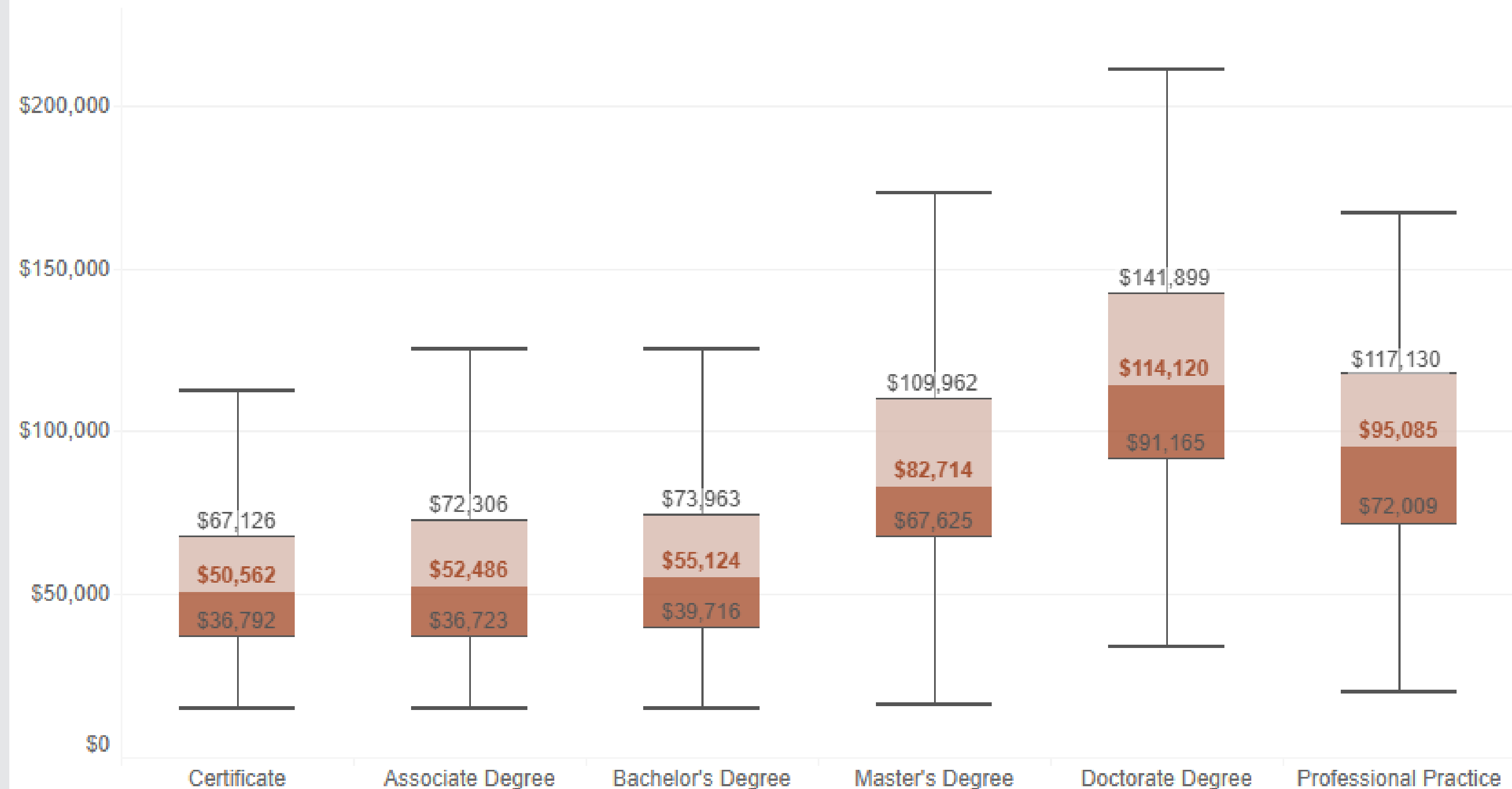


Source: Utah System of Higher Education (USHE)

## Salaries for 2023-24 Graduates, One Year After Graduation

Area of Study: All  
Institution: All

Values represent the 25th, 50th (median), and 75th percentiles within the groups.  
*Note: If no data appears, then the area of study is not at the given institution.*



# Higher Education Leads to Higher Wages

# Concurrent Enrollment and Degree Attainment

- 47% of Utah high school students completed at least one concurrent enrollment course with eight credits (or three courses) on average.
- Each concurrent enrollment course completed increased the likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree by 7%.
- Of the 15% of low-income students who earned a degree, two-thirds of them had taken concurrent enrollment in high school.

# Unemployment Rate Tied Directly to Educational Attainment

Education/certifications give people **value**.

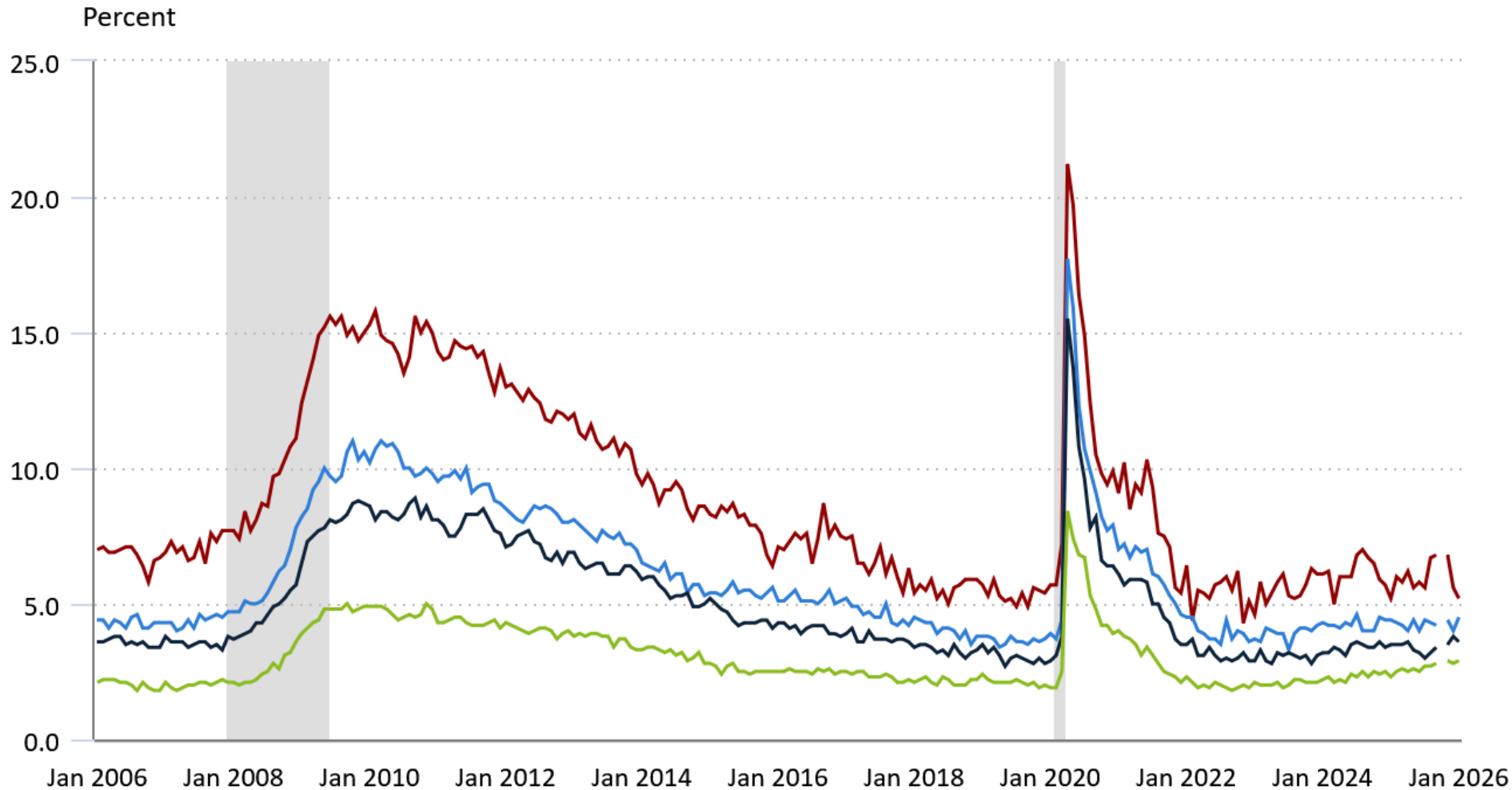
The basic question of employment is: **do I produce more monetary value for the company than I cost?**

We are all labor sellers; we sell our time to employers to produce goods and services.

**Unemployment rates for people 25 years and older by educational attainment, seasonally adjusted**

Click and drag within the chart to zoom in on time periods

— Less than a high school diploma    — High school graduates, no college    — Some college or associate degree  
— Bachelor's degree and higher



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.





**THANK**  
YOU

**Ben Crabb**

801.694 .5035

bcrabb@utah .gov

140 E 300 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

jobs .utah .gov