

# **A modest landscape view of the Kiona-Benton City School District**

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Presentation to the Tri Cities STEM Career Connect Southeast  
June 18, 2025

# Goals of analysis

- To explore 3 sets of information underlying the STEM Foundation's work in the Kiona Benton school district
  - Socio-economic factors
  - Key performance indicators of the district
  - A look at opportunities in the Tri Cities metropolitan statistical area
- Likely resulting insights:
  - Challenges
  - Opportunities
  - Some surprises

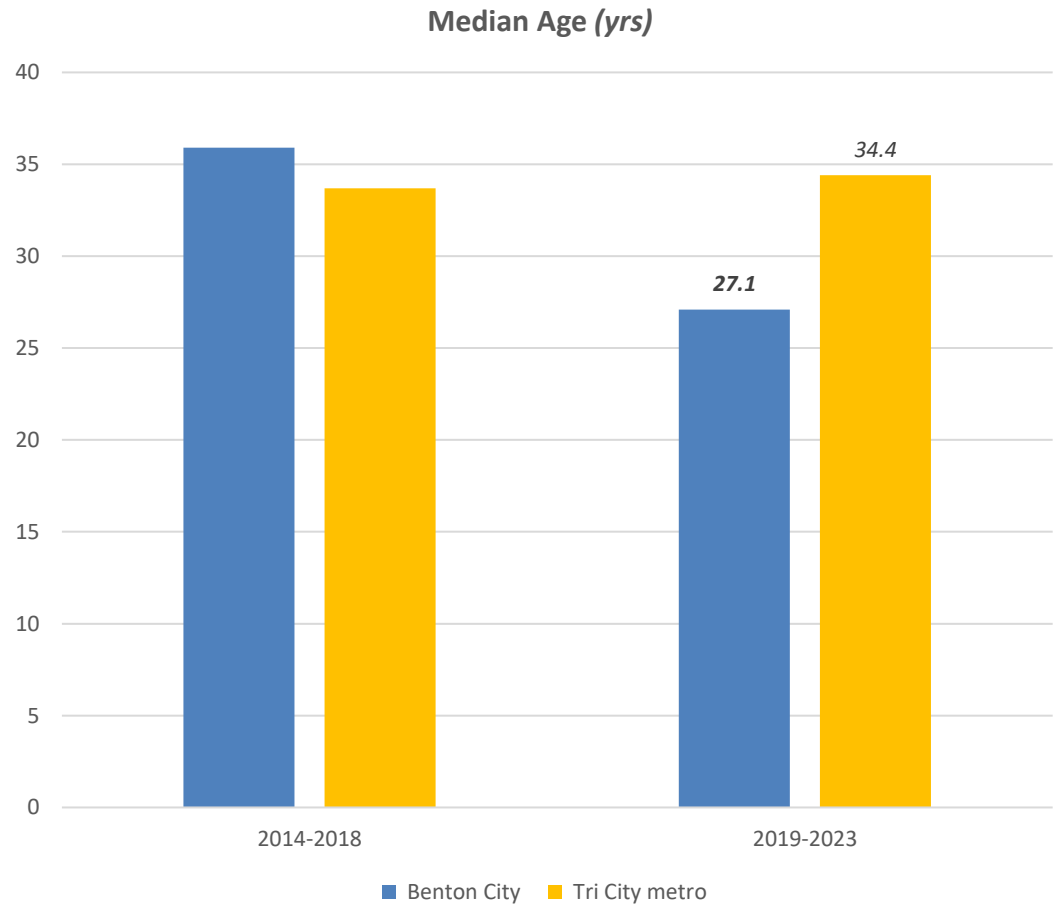
# Data

- U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates
- WA OSPI
- WA Employment Security Labor Market Information

## *Socio-economic landscape*

# Benton City's population is very young

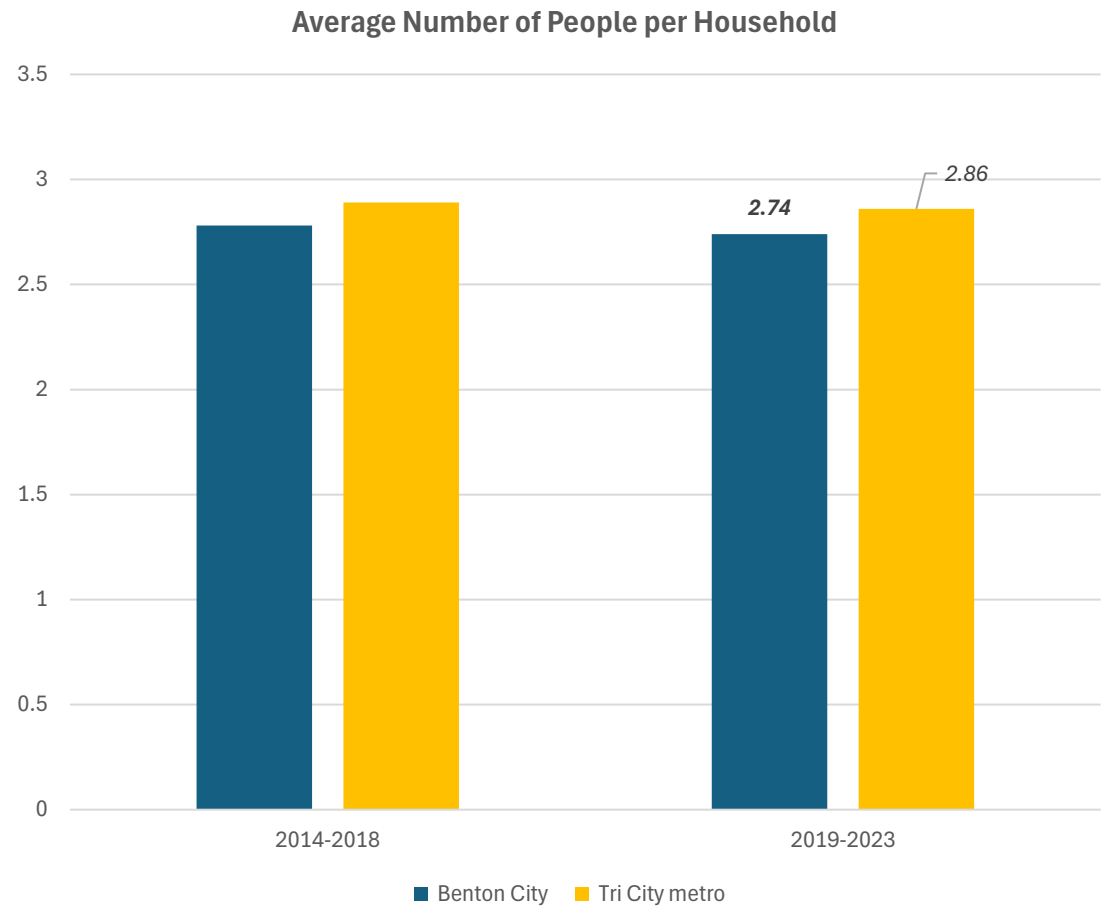
- Median = the value that divides a group of numbers into two equal halves
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population
- Benton City is 7 years "younger" than the two counties overall



## *Socio-economic landscape*

# Size of households (families) similar to Tri Cities

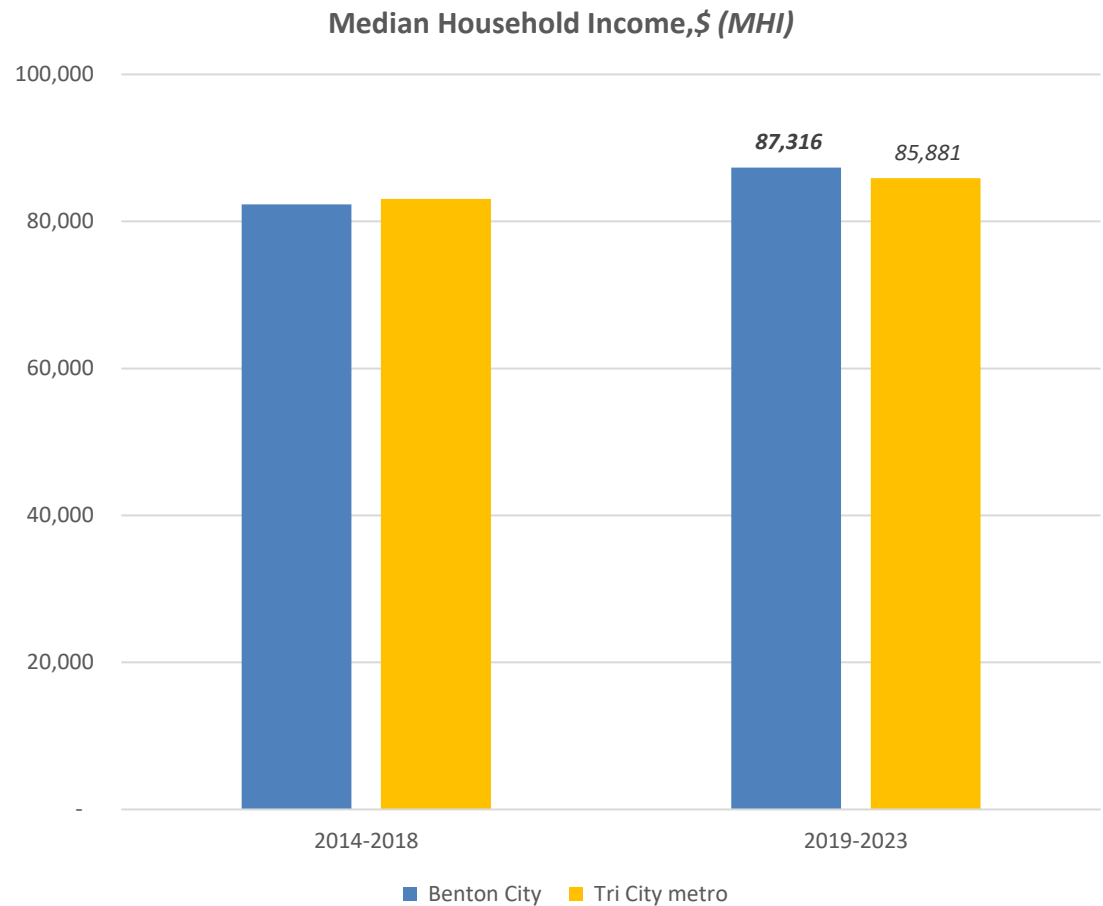
- Little change over the past decade in both locales
- Benton City is statistically same with Tri Cities
- Usually a reflection of family size
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population



## *Socio-economic landscape*

# **Benton City incomes are likely same as Tri Cities'**

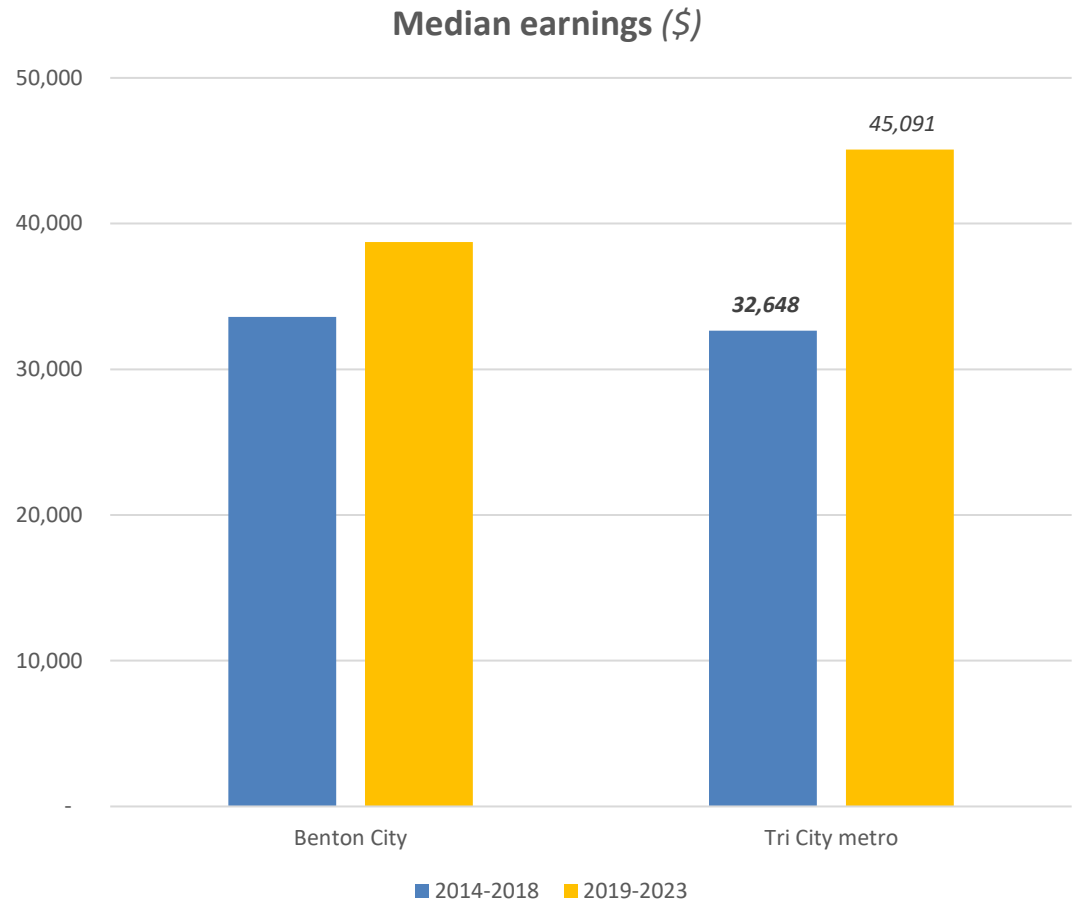
- Median gives a better sense of the "middle" in income distribution
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population
- Benton City's MHI is currently > that of the Tri Cities (but statistically the same)



## *Socio-economic landscape*

# **Benton City wage earnings, however, are lower**

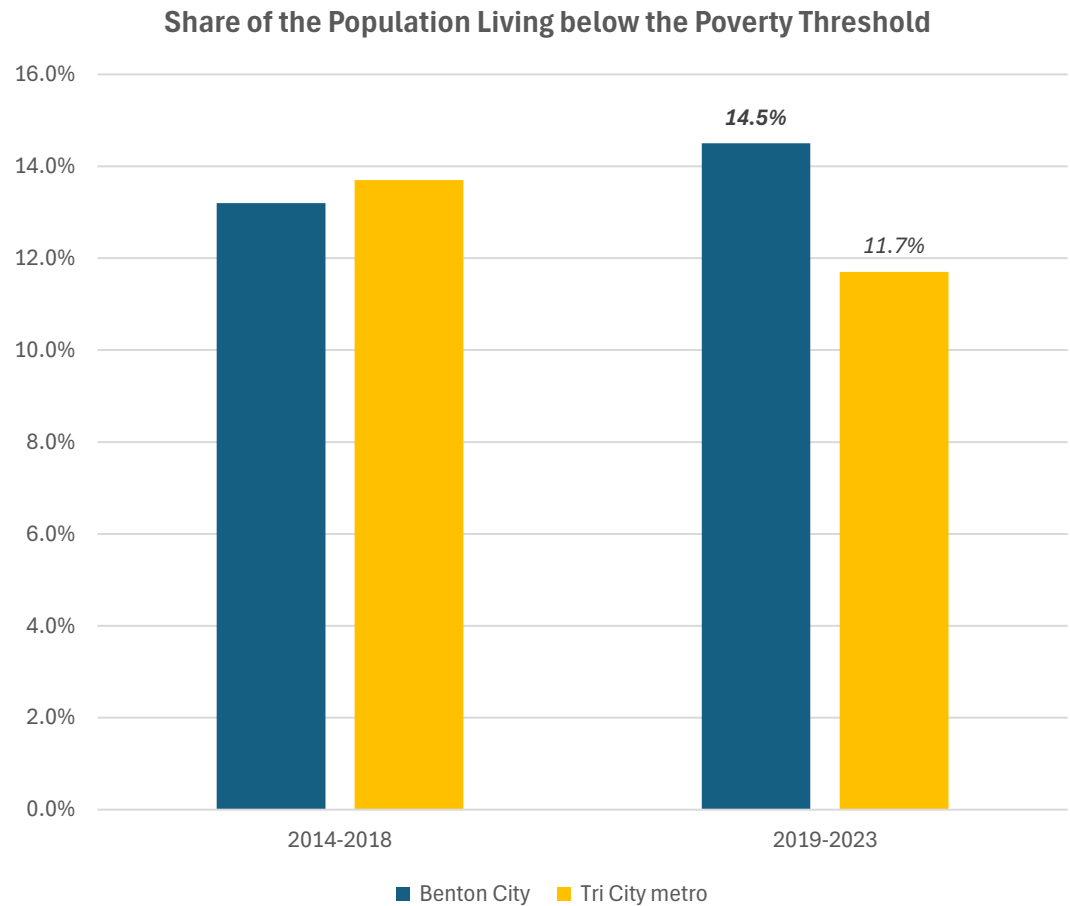
- Estimate is much lower earnings in Benton City than Tri Cities; however, statistically the same
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population



## *Socio-economic landscape*

# Poverty is higher in Benton City than in Tri Cities

- Poverty rate implies ~ 1 of every 7 residents of Benton City
- Estimate is higher here than in Tri Cities, but statistically the same
- Statistically, no change in the 2 halves of the decade

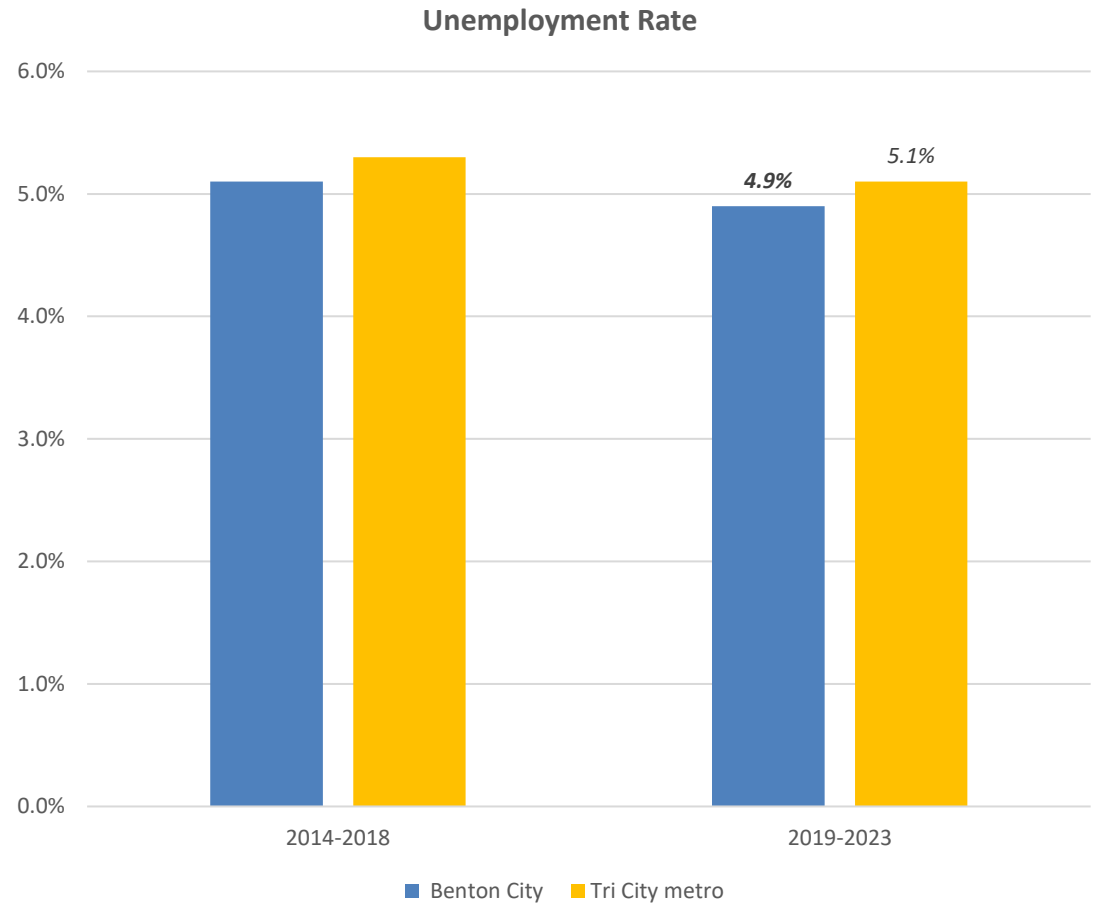




## *Socio-economic landscape*

# **Benton City's unemployment rate about the same as in Tri Cities**

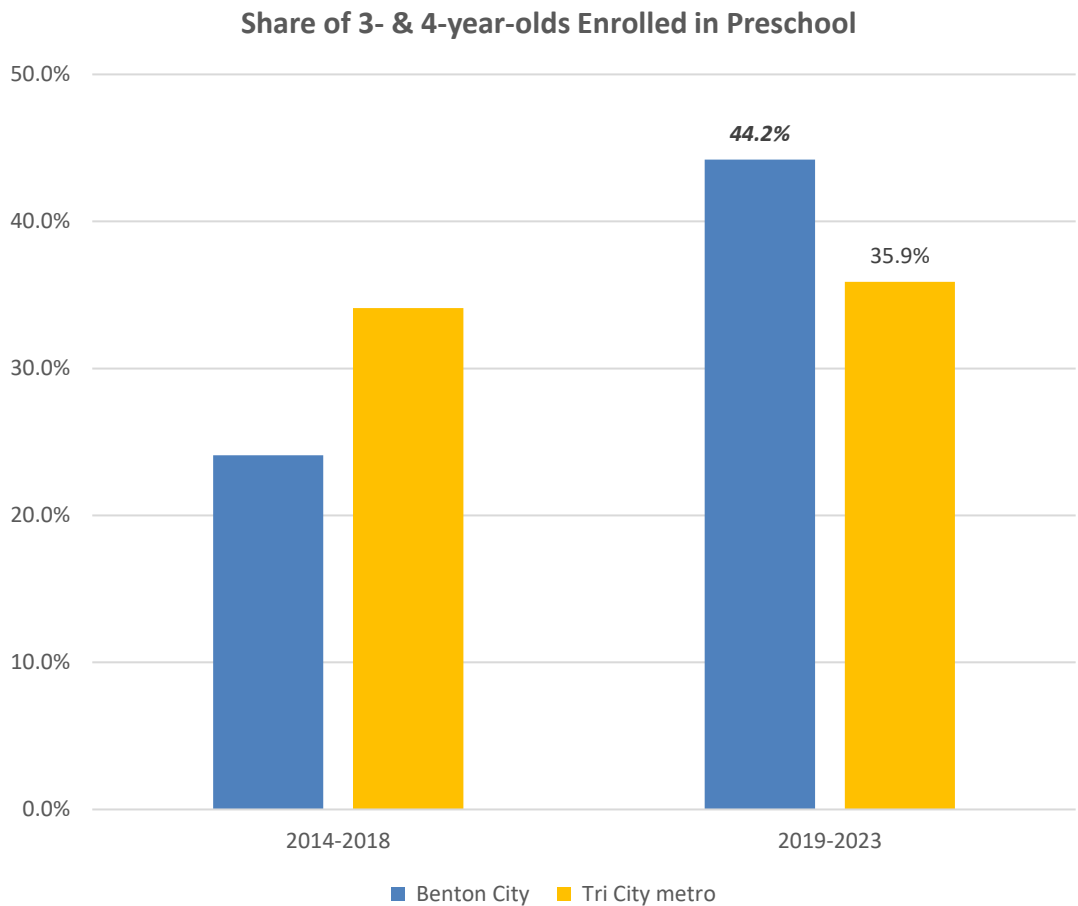
- Little change in both locales over the course of the decade
- Benton City rate not statistically different from Tri Cities'
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population



## *Socio-economic landscape*

# Pre-school enrollment here may be growing

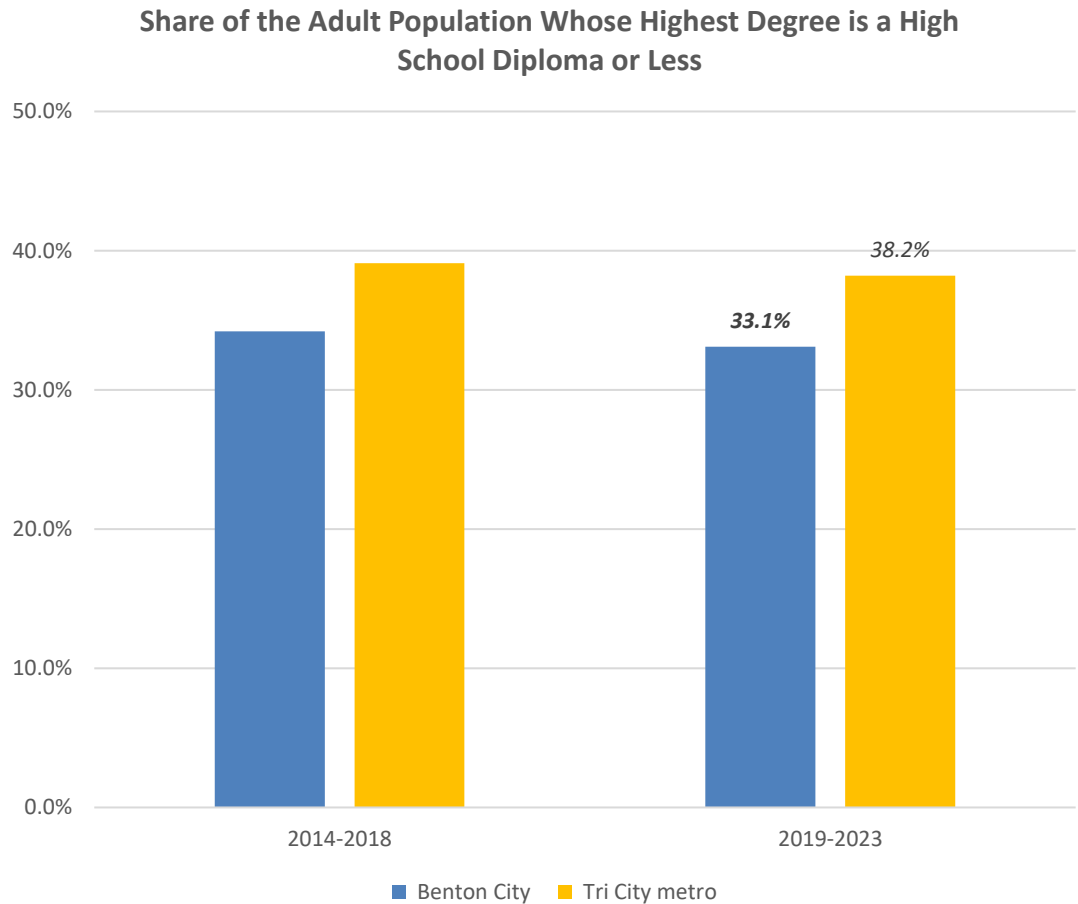
- A dramatic increase in preschool utilization in Benton City over the decade, but statistically no change
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population
- No statistical difference to the Tri Cities total



## *Socio-economic landscape*

# Share of the least-educated adults shows little growth & is lower than in Tri Cities

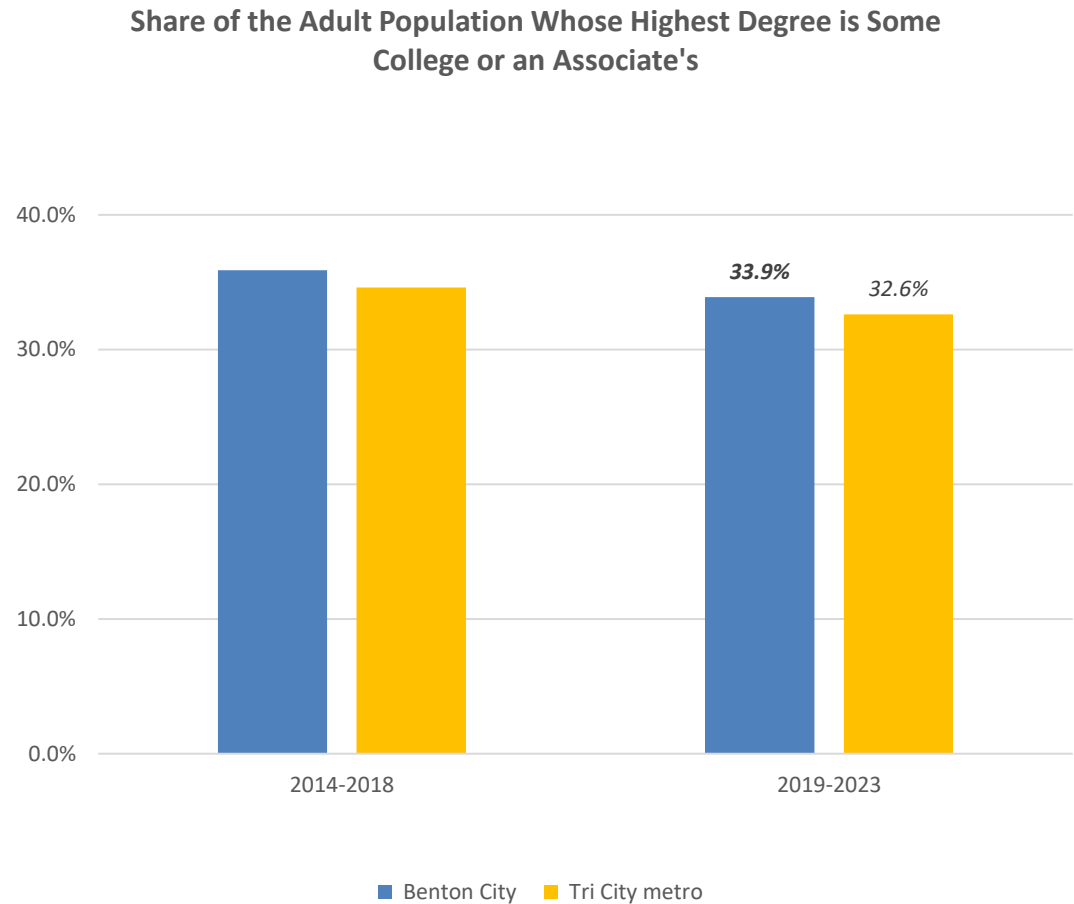
- Very little change in both locales over the decade
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population



## *Socio-economic landscape*

# Shares of adults with some college or an AA degree is about the same as in Tri Cities

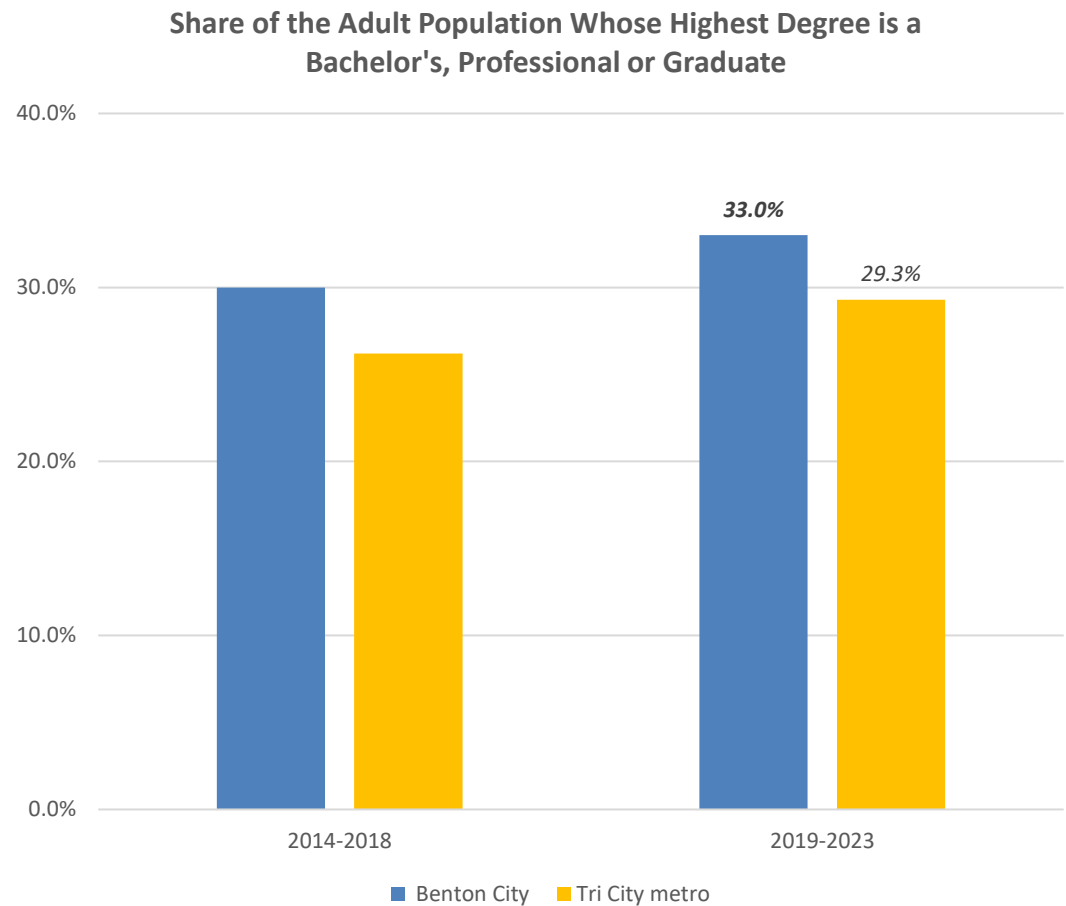
- Very little change in both locales over the past decade
- Statistically the same shares in Benton City & the Tri Cities
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population



## ***Socio-economic landscape***

# **Share of adults with a 4-year degree+ is about the same in Benton City & in Tri Cities**

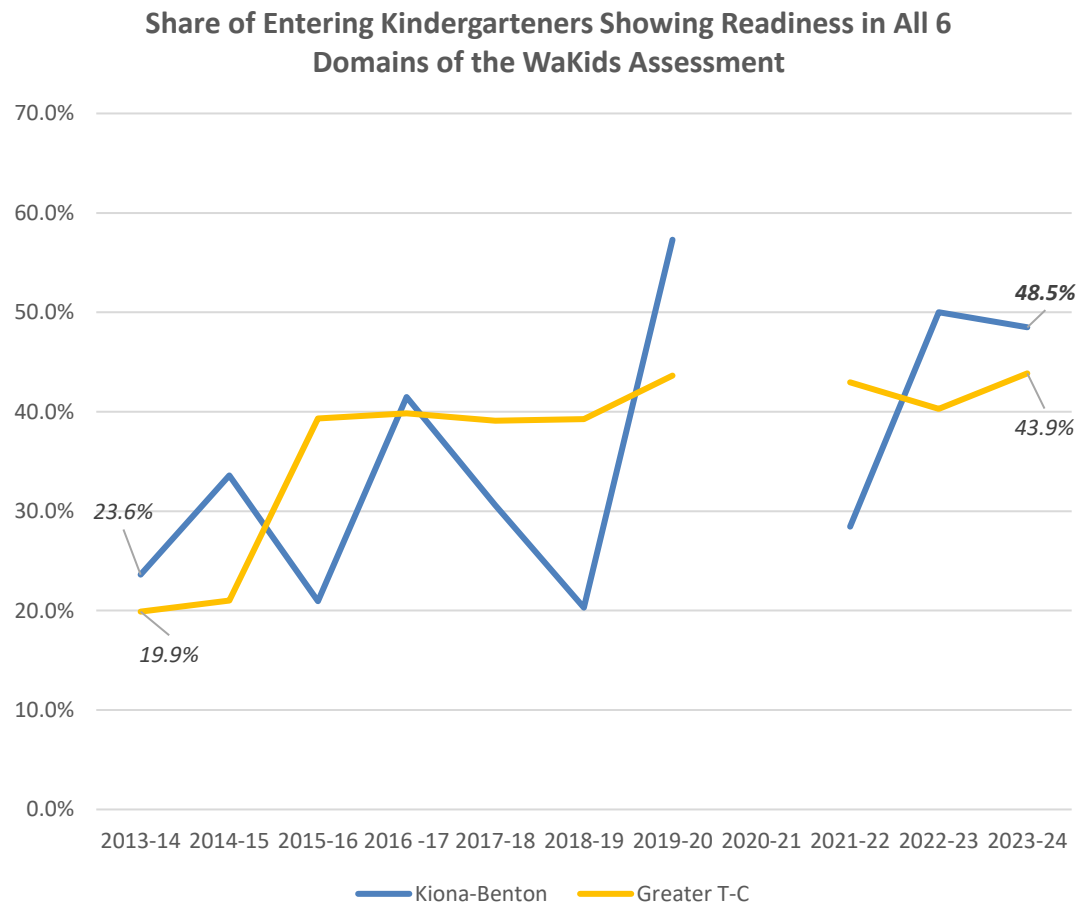
- Shares in both locales rose over the past decade, but not statistically
- Benton City's estimated share is now higher than in the Tri Cities, but not statistically
- Presented in 5-year, non-overlapping averages, due to small population



## *Selected K-12 metrics of KB school district*

# **WaKIDS scores show strong improvement**

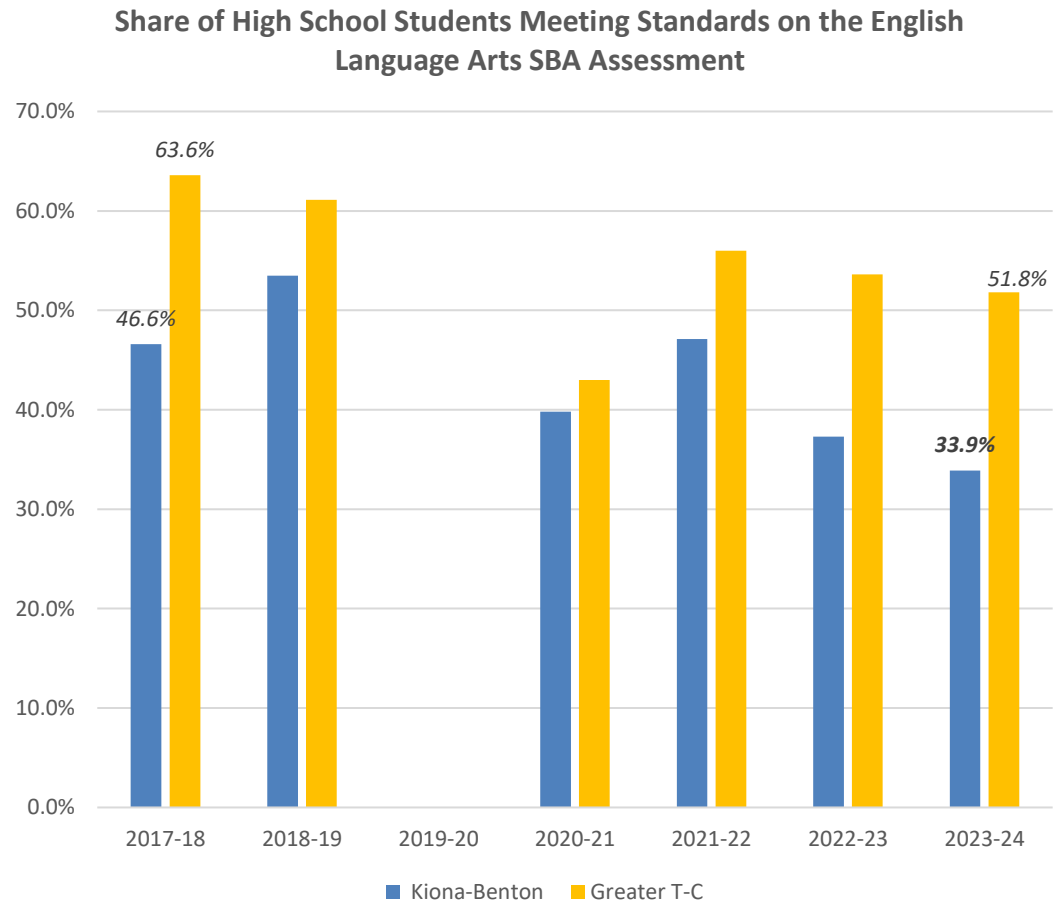
- 6 domains: social, emotional, language, math, physical, verbal
- Assessed every fall
- KB SD's share meeting standards in all 6 domains doubled over the decade!
- Share now > Benton & Franklin average



## ***Selected K-12 metrics of KB school district***

# **But share of older students meeting standard on the ELA has continually declined**

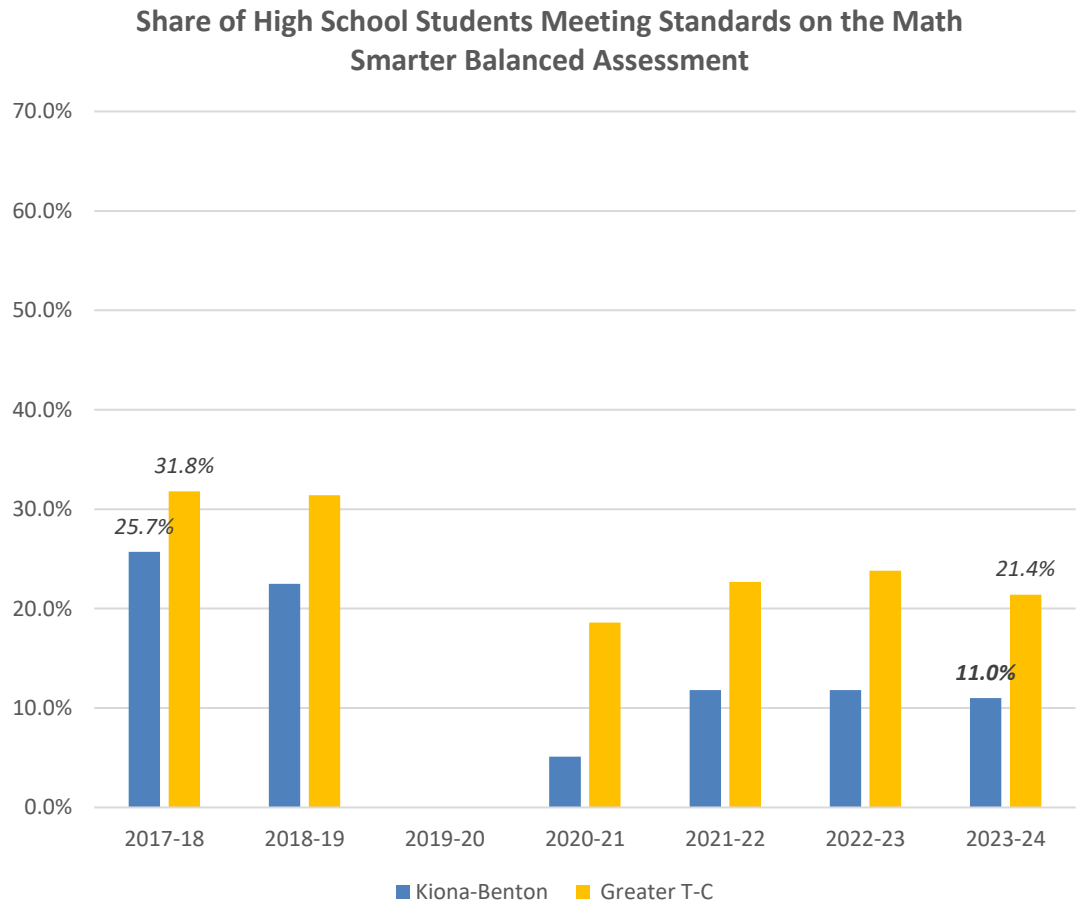
- KB SD's scores have typically been below the average share among all 2-county school districts
- Likely a pandemic effect
- No tests taken in 2020



## ***Selected K-12 metrics of KB school district***

# **And shares of older students meeting math standards is even lower**

- KB SD's share is now less than half of its value pre-pandemic
- Share is far below the (low) average share in the 2 counties
- Much lower shares than for the ELA

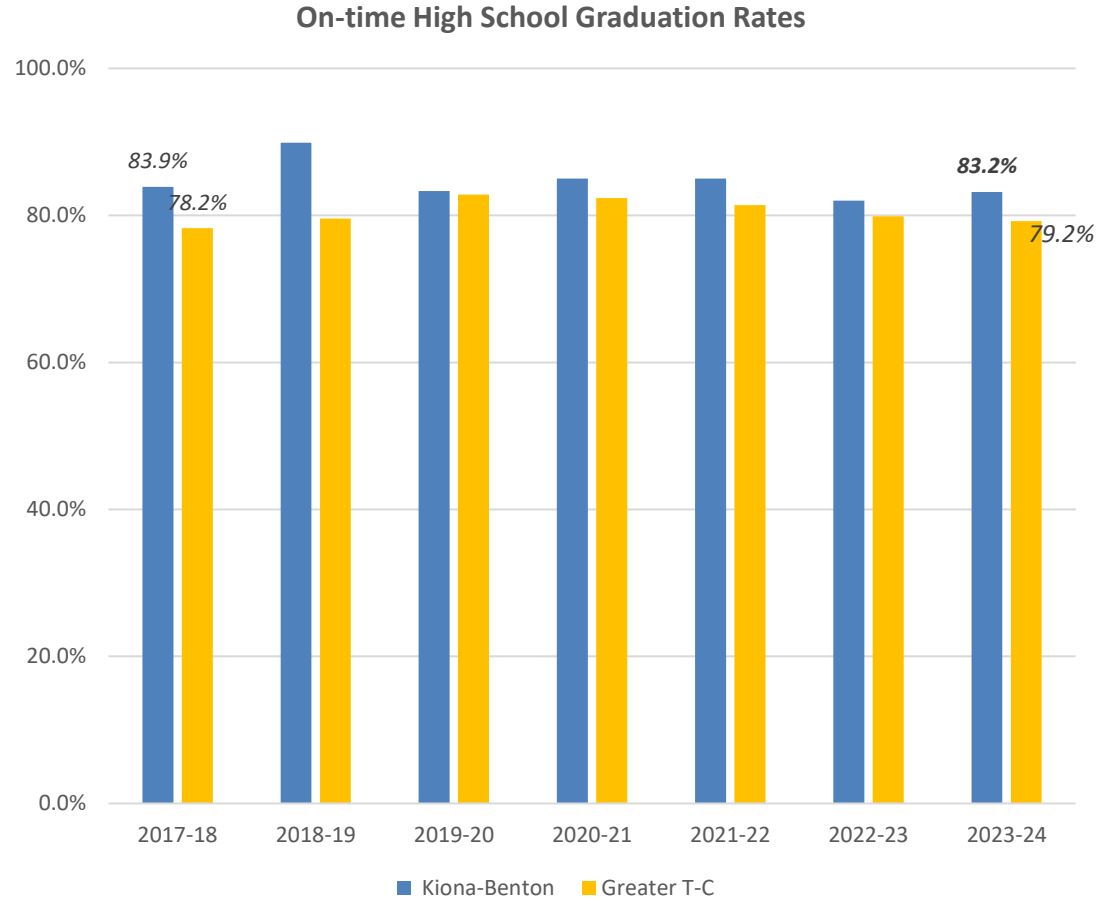




## *Selected K-12 metrics of KB school district*

# **Graduation rates have not changed much**

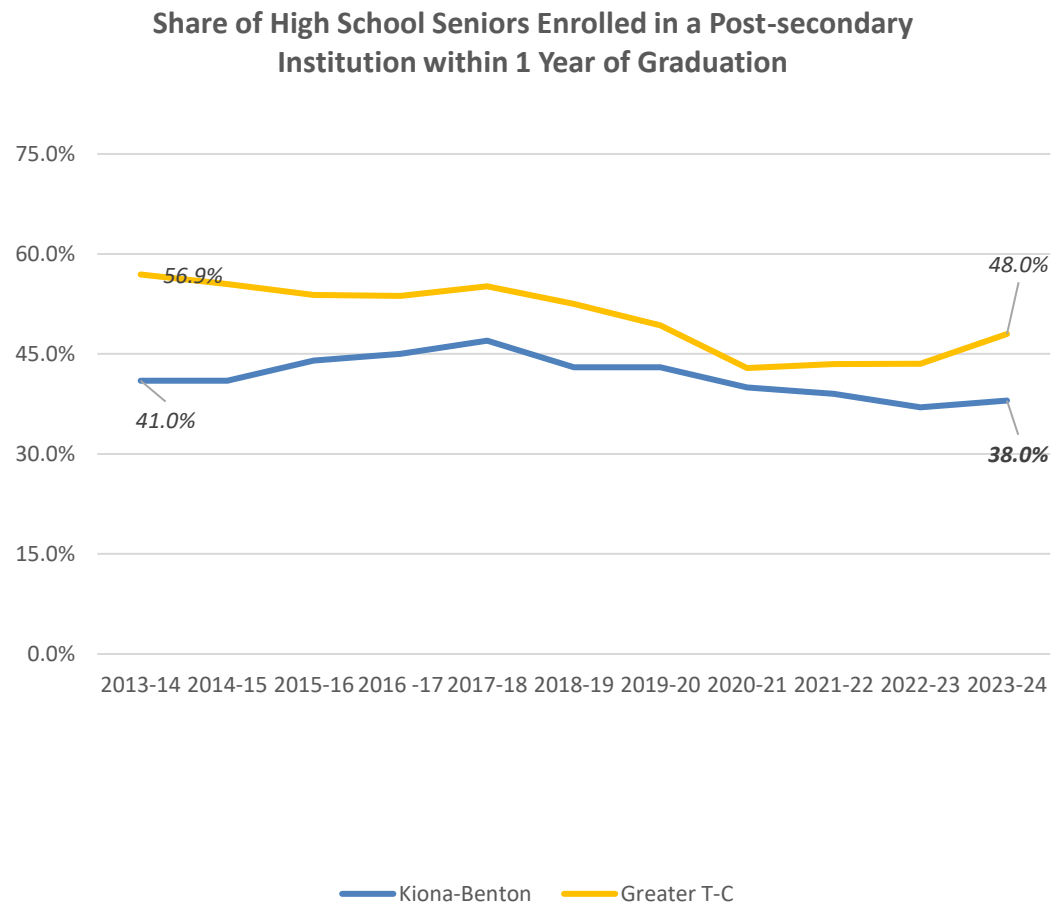
- "On-time" = 4-year graduation rate
- KB SD rates have been consistently higher than the 2-county average
- However, little difference between '24 and '18 classes



## *Selected K-12 metrics of KB school district*

# **Graduating seniors do not pursue higher ed, relative to all students in the two counties**

- Currently (class of '23), KB SD is 10 percentage points lower than average of districts in the 2 counties.
- This relative standing represents an improvement from 2013 but not from 2020.
- No post-pandemic rebound...yet.

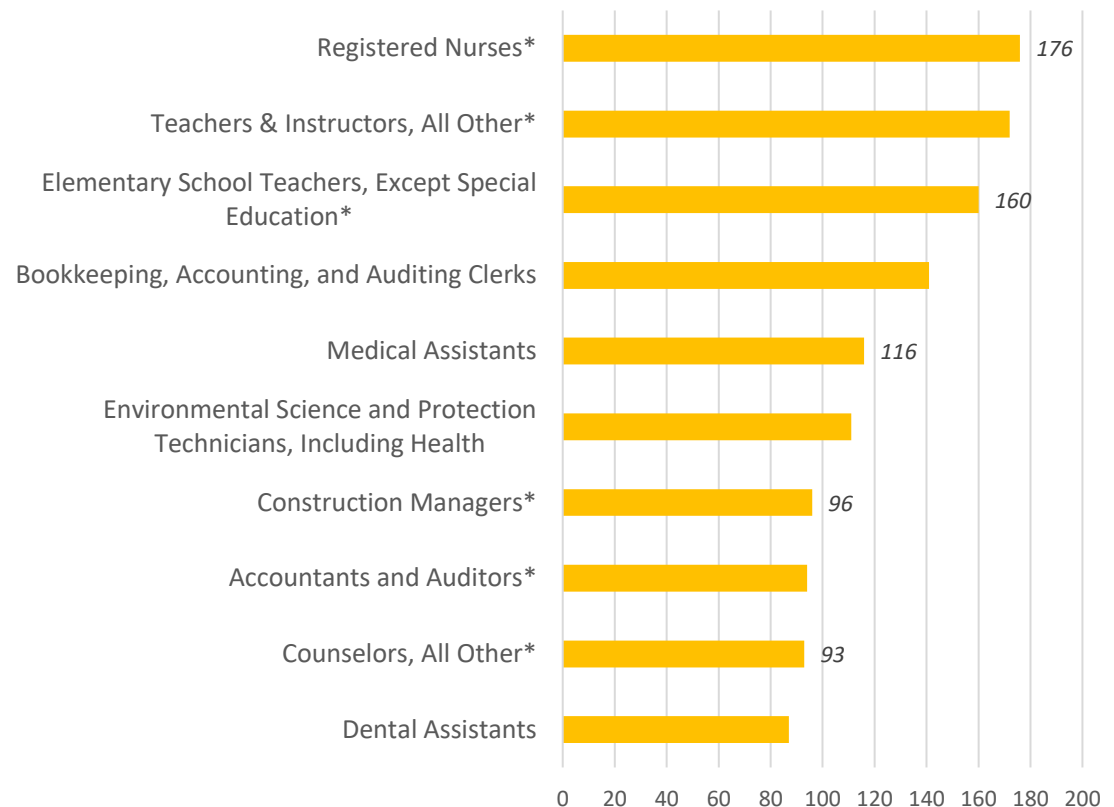


# *Future demand for occupations requiring post-secondary ed*

## **Overall leading occupations**

- A diversified set of occupations, although healthcare claims 4 of the 10
- Most of the forecasted top 10 require a bachelors degree or higher (indicated by an \*)

"Top 10" Annual Projected Openings, 2027-2032, Benton-Franklin MSA



# *Future demand for occupations requiring post-secondary ed*

## **Overall “near-leading” occupations**

- Also a highly diversified set of occupations
- Nearly all require a bachelors + degree (\*)
- Most of this talent will be “imported”

2nd "Top 10" Annual Projected Openings, 2027-2032, Benton-Franklin MSA

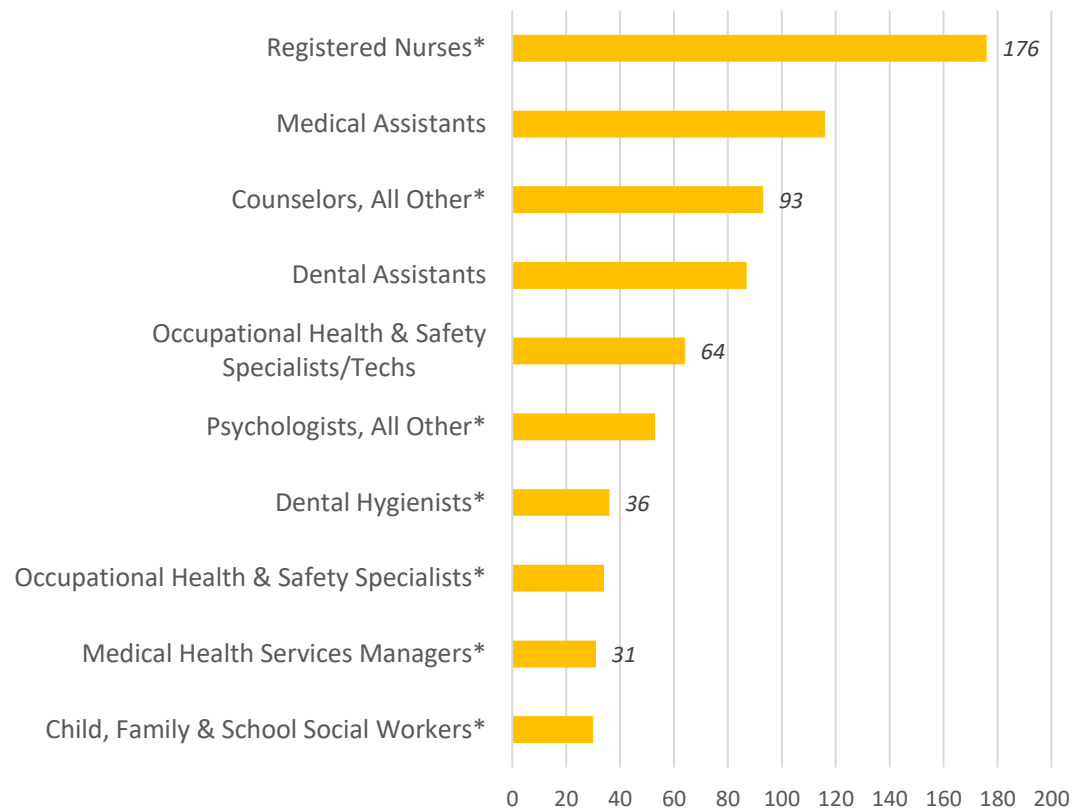


# *Future demand for occupations requiring post-secondary ed*

## **Healthcare sector leading occupations**

- Nurses dominate
- Behavioral health occupations also strong
- 2 from oral health
- Most require a bachelors +

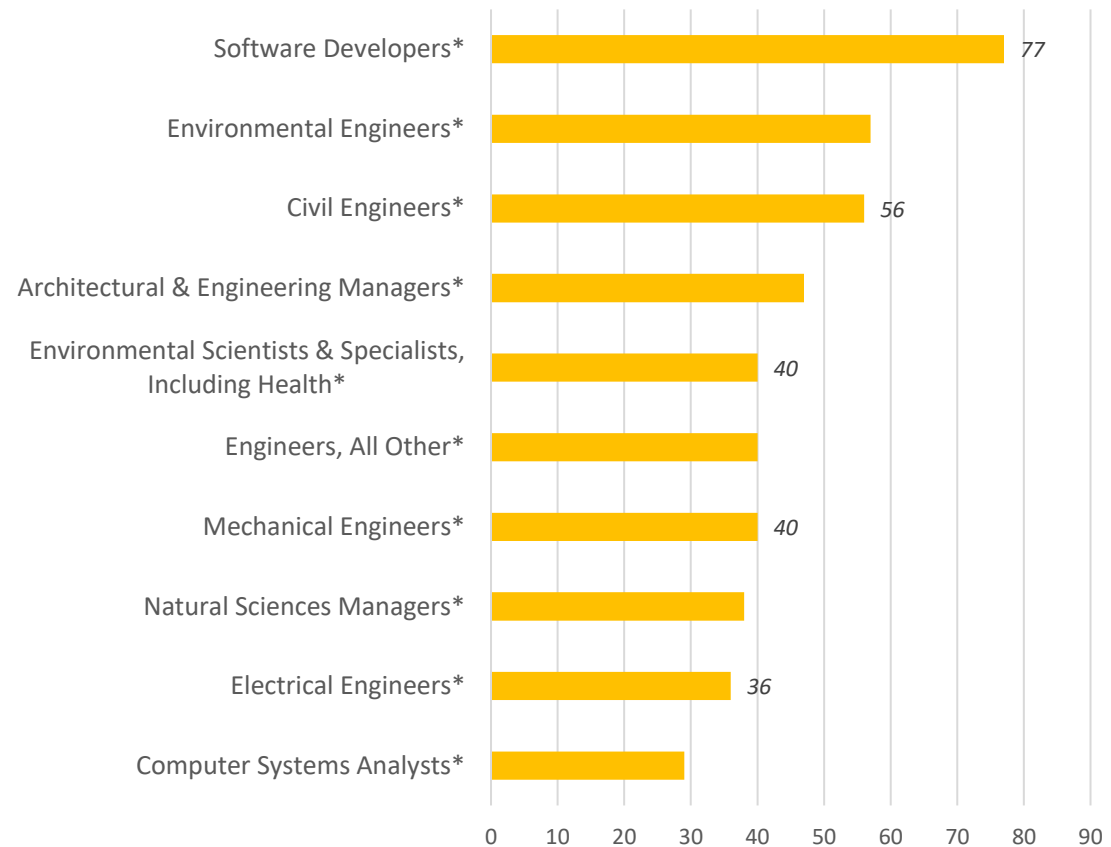
Healthcare's "Top 10" Annual Projected Openings, 2027-2032,  
Benton-Franklin MSA



# *Future demand for occupations requiring post-secondary ed* **STEM sector leading occupations**

STEM's "Top 10" Annual Projected Openings, 2027-2032

- Engineers dominate the list
- Most talent will need to be "imported"
- All occupations require a bachelors +



# *Future demand for occupations requiring post-secondary ed*

## **Leading business occupations**

- A diversified list
- Nearly all occupations require a bachelors + (\*)

**Business "Top 10" Annual Projected Openings, 2027-2032,  
Benton-Franklin MSA**



# Recap

- Statistically, very little difference among socio-economic factors for Benton City and for the Benton & Franklin Counties
  - Median age, the one exception
  - Difficult to ascertain “progress” over the past decade, due to very small sample size of Benton City
- Selected K-12 measures show a regression over past few years, with one exception
  - WaKIDS – a harbinger of future improvement?
- Forecasted job openings in the greater Tri Cities for occupations requiring some post-secondary education are strong and local supply will likely be inadequate under current enrollment rates



# Thank you!

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Jimena Ramos, B.A., (Data Analytics)

D. Patrick Jones, Ph.D.

Institute for Public Policy & Economic Analysis

[dpjones@ewu.edu](mailto:dpjones@ewu.edu)