Detroit Regional Chamber Foundation

TALENT ED

STATE OF EDUCATION AND TALENT



2026



Following the 2026 Mackinac Policy Conference, the Chamber leads the conversation about What's the Fix? to Michigan's declining educational outcomes.



Open Door helps students navigate challenges such as housing instability and childcare needs to stay in school and graduate.

Our House Is on Fire: We Need to Unite Around Education

Michigan's future prosperity depends on becoming a better-educated state.

Nothing makes this case stronger than Michigan's fall in per capita income rankings. We've plummeted from 18th to 40th in per capita income rankings since 2000, the steepest decline of any state over that time period. And it's far from the only economic or education metric where Michigan has fallen to the bottom nationally — a precipitous decline prompting the Detroit Regional Chamber's "House Is on Fire" campaign.

Michigan's decline reflects a changing relationship between education and prosperity.

In 2000, a state or region could achieve high incomes without equally high levels of educational attainment. Since the dawn of the millennium, that model has become less viable as high wages have become increasingly tied to postsecondary attainment. With a few exceptions, increasing postsecondary attainment is now central to individual and regional prosperity. Michigan and the Detroit Region lag on that measure.

Michigan has made real progress in expanding affordable higher-education options over the last few years. State financial aid programs include: Michigan Reconnect, the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, and Michigan Community College Guarantee. This year's state budget added a $40-million appropriation to help fund dual enrollment programs in high schools serving low-income students.

This is significant because dual enrollment is a proven strategy for encouraging postsecondary enrollment among low-income and first-generation students. Encouragingly, these investments were made with bipartisan support, a rarity in these political times.

Unfortunately, the good news ends there.

An aging population and a long-term decline in Michigan's high school graduates complicate the impact of these investments. Michigan is making incremental progress toward its goal of 60% educational attainment by 2030, but that progress lags competing states and regions.

Chamber polling shows that most residents believe Michigan's economic and educational performance is about average, even though the state has fallen to the bottom on many key measures. That gap between perception and performance makes it harder to build the urgency Michigan needs.

This has dire consequences for employers; as there are fewer people to

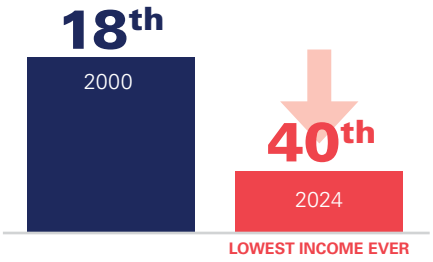
Since 2000, No State Has Fallen as Far or as Fast as Michigan

MICHIGAN... OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE!

POPULATION GROWTH
(2000-2025)

49th
in the Country

PER CAPITA INCOME





Detroit Reconnect is making higher education a reality for adults in the Region.

enroll in college, there will be fewer people at the end of the talent pipeline to fill high-tech, knowledge economy jobs.

As a region that doesn't attract many migrants from other places, our only path forward is to do a better job educating the people who are already here — particularly those groups Michigan has historically not done a great job educating.

Michigan must increase educational attainment with a far greater sense of urgency and a stronger long-term commitment. In a politically competitive state, that commitment must endure through polarization, shifts in power, and each election cycle — not be reset by them.

A commitment to education will help shape Michigan's future prosperity — and the Detroit Region and state we leave to our children and grandchildren.



Gregor Handel

Greg Handel
Chief Education and Talent Officer,
Detroit Regional Chamber

Key Takeaways

1. **For every 100 ninth graders across the Detroit Region, only 33 earn a postsecondary degree within six years of high school graduation.**

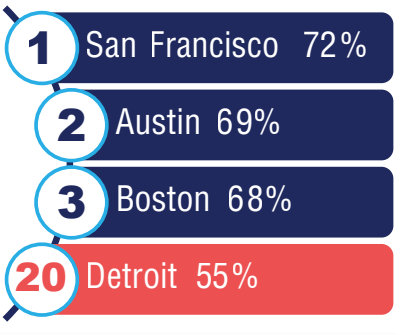
2. **Fewer high school graduates are enrolling in college, leading to fewer college graduates.**

3. **Educational attainment is critical to regional prosperity and reversing Michigan's fall to the bottom nationally on key economic metrics.**

4. **Policies and strategies to boost attainment need to be insulated from politics and require continued attention, support, and expansion.**

Educational Attainment Rate

Associate or Higher (Including Short-Term Credentials)
Ages 25-64, 2025





Education Metrics Rank Near the Bottom Nationally

The Detroit Regional Chamber's "Michigan, Our House Is on Fire" campaign draws attention to Michigan's declining competitiveness. Education is at the center of that challenge. Michigan continues to rank near the bottom of states on several critical education indicators.

houseonfiremi.com

44th **Fourth Grade Reading Proficiency**
16th in 1998 **> 44th** in 2024

34th **Fourth Grade Math Proficiency**
10th in 2000 **> 34th** in 2024

39th **Chronic Absenteeism**

49th **School Counselor Access**
Student-to-School Counselor Ratio

44th **High School Graduation Rate**

26th **College Enrollment Rate**

37th **Postsecondary Attainment**
Population with a postsecondary credential

Source: American School Counselor Association, FutureEd, Michigan Education Data Center, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), National Center for Education Statistics, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), Lumina Foundation.

Two-Thirds of Students Don't Earn a Post-High School Credential as the Region's Talent Pipeline Shrinks at Every Stage

Students in the Detroit Region are stopping out or lengthening their path to achieving a credential, limiting their ability to pursue high-skilled careers and answer employers' talent demands. From high school graduation to postsecondary completion, students leave the education pipeline at every stage – only 33 of every 100 ninth graders earn a degree or credential within six years of high school graduation.



100
ninth graders in 2015.

84 of 100
graduated high school in 2019.

56 of 100
enrolled in college within 12 months of high school graduation.

33 of 100
earned a degree or credential within six years.

FOR EVERY 100 NINTH GRADE STUDENTS:

33
earned a degree or credential within six years of post-high school enrollment.

7
still enrolled after six years with no degree or certificate.

60
did not earn a degree, with 44 never enrolling and 16 no longer enrolled.

> **"Declining enrollment in higher education and leaks in our talent pipeline where students fall short of earning post-high school credentials is a recipe for disaster."**

GREG HANDEL
CHIEF EDUCATION AND TALENT OFFICER,
DETROIT REGIONAL CHAMBER

Source: Michigan Education Data Center
Note: Please see disclaimer on the back cover of the report.

College Enrollment Is Declining and a Growing Share of Students Are Not Enrolling at All

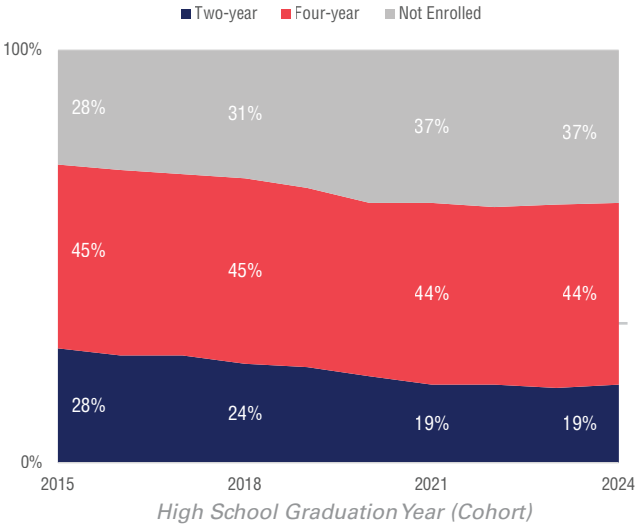
Postsecondary enrollment continues to decline across both the Detroit Region and the City of Detroit, driven by two factors: smaller high school graduating classes and a declining share of graduates pursuing college. While four-year enrollment has remained relatively stable, two-year institutions have experienced the steepest losses.

Over the past decade, the share of graduates who do not enroll in college within one year of high school graduation increased from 28% to 37% in the Detroit Region and from 41% to 54% in the City of Detroit. Combined with shrinking graduating cohorts, these trends have reduced the flow of students into higher education, resulting in more than 5,500 fewer regional students enrolling in 2024 than in 2015, a decline of 16%.

POST-HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

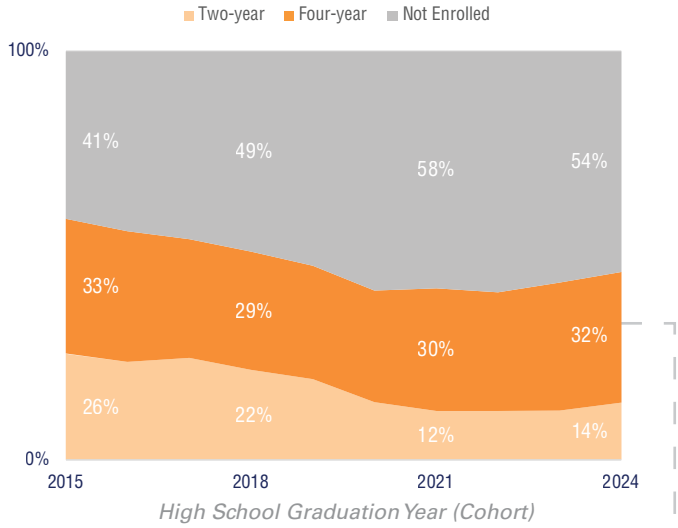
Percentage of Students Enrolled Within 12 Months of High School Graduation

DETROIT REGION



Regional enrollment rates have dropped 10 percentage points over the last decade, from 73% in 2015 to 63% in 2024.

CITY OF DETROIT



While enrollment for graduates from Detroit has ticked upward over the last two years, total enrollment still lags behind historical and regional rates.

About the Student Pipeline Data

In partnership with the Youth Policy Lab at University of Michigan, this analysis follows a cohort of students for six years after their initial enrollment in college. In the example below, the cohort of ninth graders includes those who enrolled in college in 2019. Their six-year outcomes such as graduation rates are measured in 2024.

Following a cohort for six years gives a fuller picture of long-term student success. The students reside in the Detroit Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and attend public district (92%) and charter (8%) schools. In the city of Detroit, students attend Detroit Public Schools Community District (45%), charter (32%), and out-of-district (22%) schools.

Source: Michigan Education Data Center. Note: Please see disclaimer on the back cover of the report.

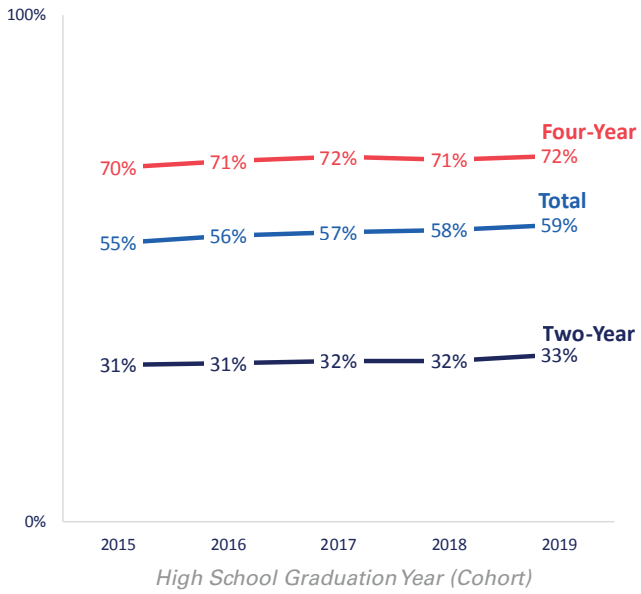
Despite Improving Graduation Rates, the Total Number of College Graduates Is Declining

The Detroit Region's six-year college graduation rate increased from 55% for the 2015 cohort to 59% for the 2019 cohort. However, because fewer high school graduates are enrolling in college, these gains in student success are not translating into more degree holders. As enrollment declines, the Detroit Region is projected to produce under 18,000 college graduates annually despite improving completion outcomes.

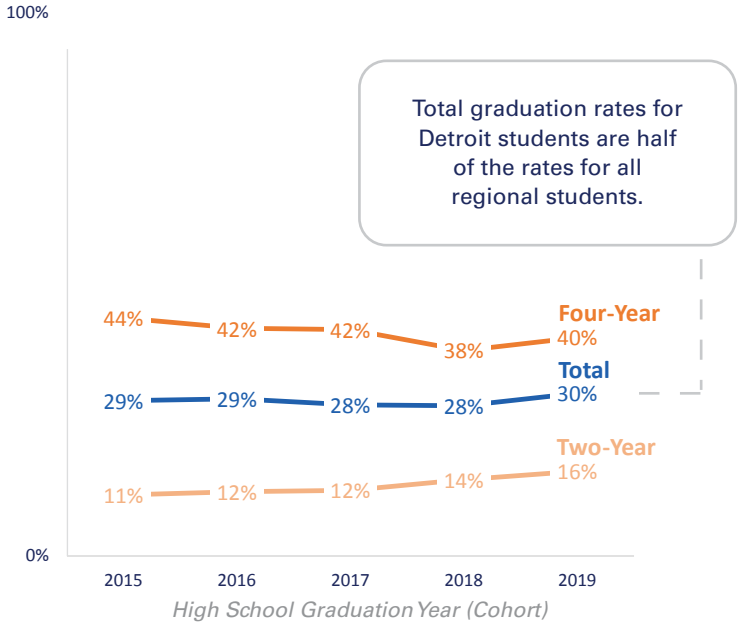
POST-HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

Six Years From Initial Enrollment

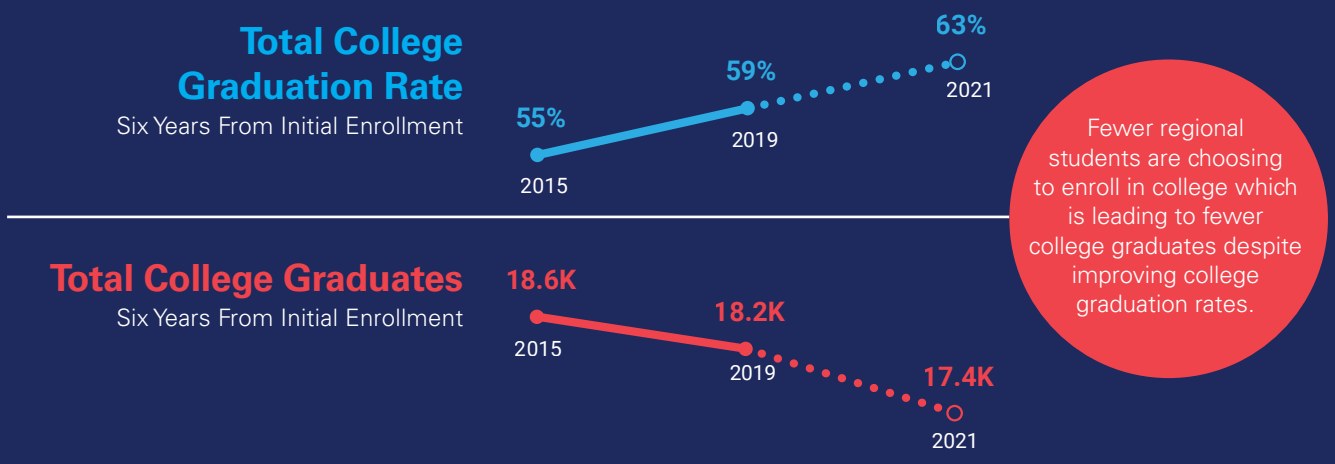
DETROIT REGION



CITY OF DETROIT



The Detroit Region Is Projected to Produce Over 1,000 Fewer College Graduates Annually Due to Declining College Enrollment



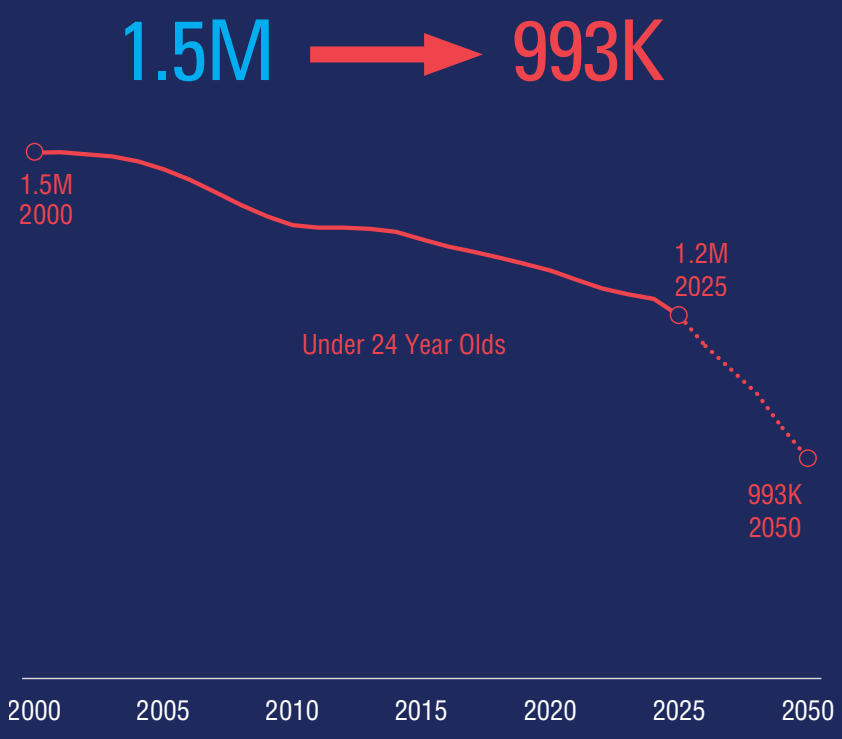
Source: Michigan Education Data Center Note: Please see disclaimer on the back cover of the report.

Demographic Shifts Are Putting Pressure on the Detroit Region's Talent Pipeline

A shrinking youth population is reducing the number of students moving through the Detroit Region's talent pipeline. With fewer young people entering K-12 schools, future high school graduating classes will shrink, creating enrollment pressures across Michigan and the Detroit Region. This is particularly significant because traditional-age students account for approximately 75% of undergraduate enrollment in Michigan, including 86% at four-year institutions and 65% at community colleges. A smaller pipeline of students will make it more difficult to sustain enrollment growth, increase educational attainment, and meet future workforce demands, placing additional pressure on the long-term economic competitiveness of the state and Region.

The Region's Population Under 24 Years Old Is Projected to Decline by More Than 20% by 2050

Detroit MSA, Ages 0-24



The Region's Youth Population Is Shrinking

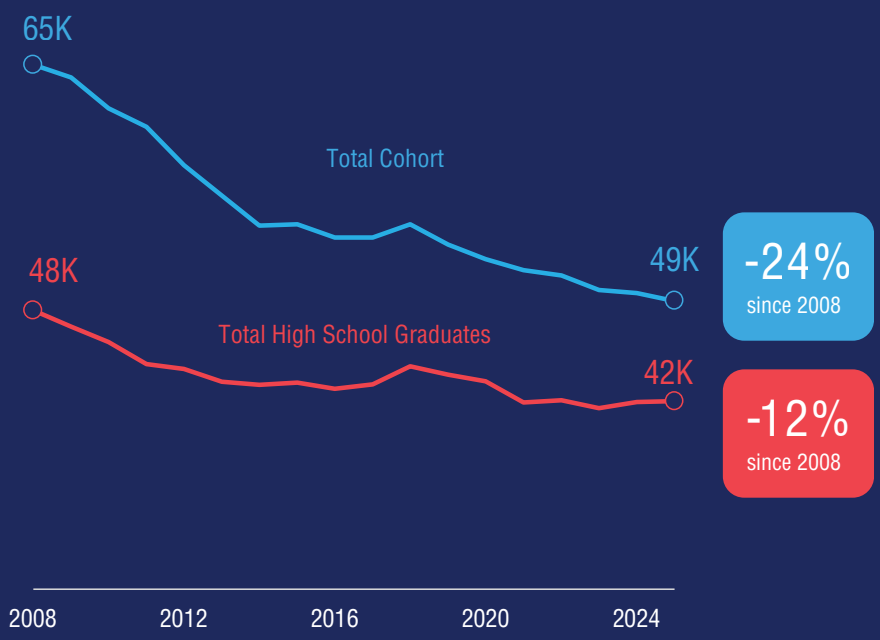
The Region's future workforce begins with young people moving through its education system. Yet the population age 24 and younger has been declining for decades and is projected to continue shrinking through 2050.

The Region's 24 and under population is projected to fall more than 20% between 2025 and 2050, representing a loss of more than 255,900 young residents, according to the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics projections.

Source: Michigan Center for Data and Analytics, U.S. Census Population Estimates Program

Detroit Region's High School Cohorts Have Declined by Nearly a Quarter Since 2008

All Students, Detroit MSA



Fewer Students Are Moving Through the Education Pipeline, Putting Future Attainment at Risk

This demographic shift is already affecting the Detroit Region's education pipeline. Although the Region's high school graduation rate increased from 75% in 2008 to 86% in 2025, there are fewer students moving through the system. The Region produced approximately 6,000 fewer high school graduates in 2025 than in 2008 as the size of the graduating cohort declined by 24%.

8,600

fewer high school graduates in the Region annually by 2050 if high school graduates decline at the same rate as the youth population.



A shrinking youth population is reducing the number of students moving through the Detroit Region's talent pipeline.

Source: Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics

Measuring Progress

Sixty by 30

Higher educational attainment correlates with increased income, lower unemployment, higher participation in the labor force and greater economic activity. While meaningful progress was made between 2015 and 2024, the Region remains below its target goal.

GOAL

Increase postsecondary educational attainment to 60% and cut the racial equity gap in half by 2030.

Progress to 60% by 2030 Goal

Attainment for adults 25-64 years old, associate degree or higher (including short-term credentials), Detroit MSA





After the Chamber set a 60% by 2030 postsecondary attainment goal for the Detroit Region, Gov. Whitmer did the same for Michigan.

Chamber Driving Commitment to 2030 Goal

In 2015, the Detroit Regional Chamber set the goals of achieving 60% educational attainment and cutting the racial equity gap in half by 2030. It has also built the state's largest business-led education and talent portfolio to achieve those goals, with several programs, such as Detroit Reconnect and the Detroit Promise, serving as precursors to similar statewide programs.

Under the leadership of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan adopted the same 60% postsecondary educational attainment goal statewide. Michigan also made the first two years of postsecondary education or skilled training tuition-free through Michigan Reconnect, the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, and Futures for Frontliners.

These policies are groundbreaking and critical to educating our citizens for the careers of tomorrow and should be continued, and built upon by the next governor and legislature.

Source: Lumina Foundation, U.S. Census Bureau. Note: Short-term credentials are for the State of Michigan, as regional data is not available.

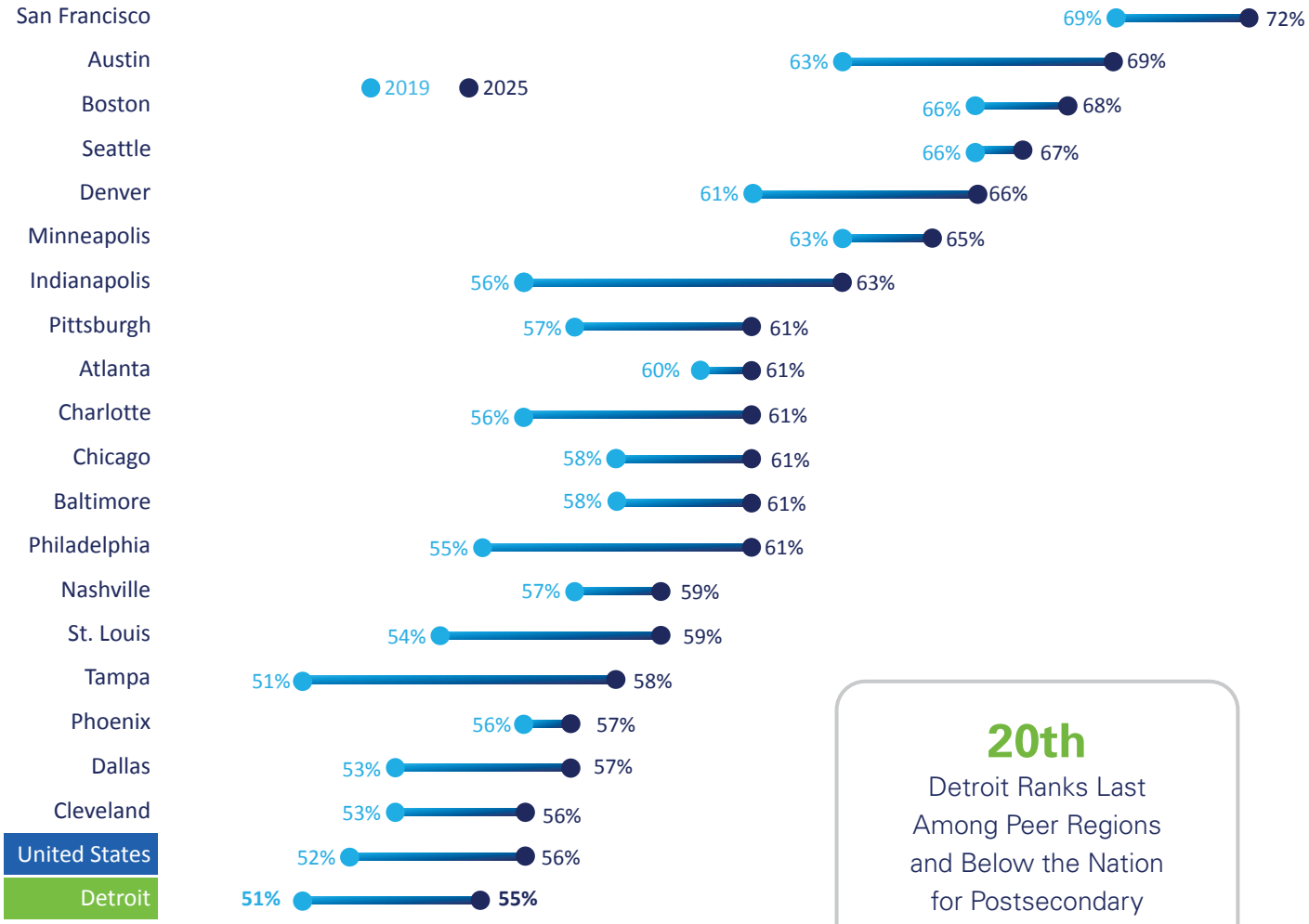
While Regional Attainment Is Increasing, Its Growth Lags Peers

The Detroit Region's educational attainment rate increased from 51% in 2019 to 55% in 2025, reflecting meaningful progress over this period.

However, Detroit remains below the national average (56%) and ranks last among its peer regions such as San Francisco, Austin, Boston, and Seattle, where more than two-thirds of adults hold a postsecondary credential.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY PEER REGION

Associate degree or higher (including short-term credential), population 25-64 years old



20th

Detroit Ranks Last Among Peer Regions and Below the Nation for Postsecondary Educational Attainment in 2025

Source: Lumina Foundation, U.S. Census Bureau
Note: Short-term credentials are for the state level, as metro level data is not available.

The Path to Reaching the Sixty by 30 Goal

The Region has made significant progress toward meeting its goal of 60% educational attainment by 2030. But to continue growing to meet workforce needs, the Region will need to expand to create opportunities for adult learners, address attainment disparities among racial and ethnic groups in the Region, and undergo an overdue culture shift that prioritizes completing two years of education or training after high school.

1 Two Years, Tuition-Free — Guaranteed

Michigan has made great strides over the last five years to provide affordable postsecondary education options and is the only Great Lakes state offering two years of tuition-free education. The resulting modest impact on enrollment has not been enough to meet the state's talent needs. As Chamber voter surveys and focus groups have shown, most residents are unaware of affordable options.

As a result, the Chamber took the lead in helping create Level Up Michigan, a nongovernmental, nonpartisan initiative to boost postsecondary and skill attainment. It is based on the "K-12 + 2" notion that in today's high-tech, knowledge economy virtually everyone needs at least two years of additional education beyond high school.

Level Up Michigan is currently leading a statewide campaign to improve Michiganians' awareness that Michigan offers two-year of free college and job skill training through the Community College Guarantee.

LEVEL UP MICHIGAN!

Only 32%

of Michiganians Know About the Community College Guarantee

2 Increase Adult Postsecondary Attainment

There are nearly 500,000 adults in the Region who have completed at least some college courses but have yet to earn a degree. Re-engaging these adults in a significant way is essential to increasing educational attainment, but current adult completions have been trending downward in recent years.

469,300

Working-age adults in the Region accrued some college credits but stopped before earning a credential or degree as of 2025.

Down 29%

Since 2019, adult degree completions at Detroit Region colleges and universities have declined by 29%, compared with a 16% decline among students 18-24.

116,000

Individuals are needed with a short-term credential or degree to meet the goal of 60% by 2030 in the Detroit Region.

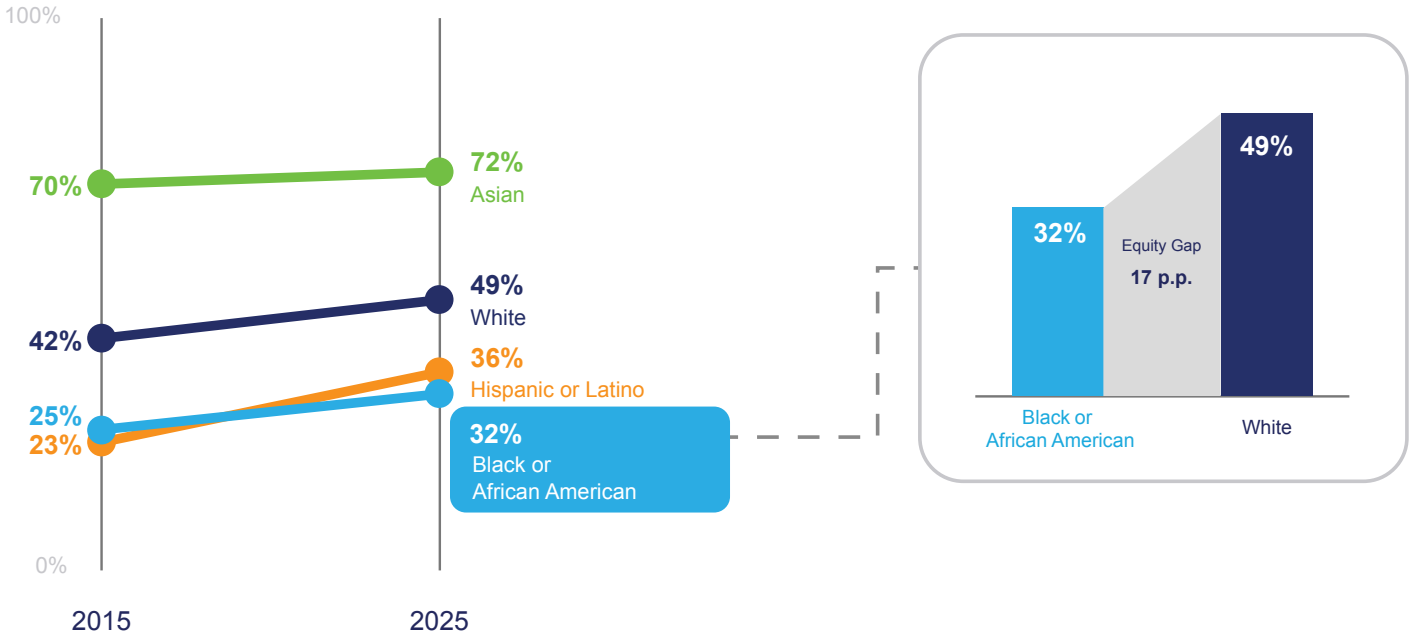
Source: Michigan Center for Data Analysis, U.S. Census Bureau, Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information

3 Close Equity Gaps in Postsecondary Attainment

While educational attainment has increased for all racial and ethnic groups, Black or African American reflects the lowest attainment share among major groups in the Region. Despite gains, the gap in attainment is 17 percentage points between white and Black adults, and 40 percentage points between Asian and Black adults.

REGIONAL ATTAINMENT BY RACE

Associate degree or higher (excluding short-term credentials), 25 and older

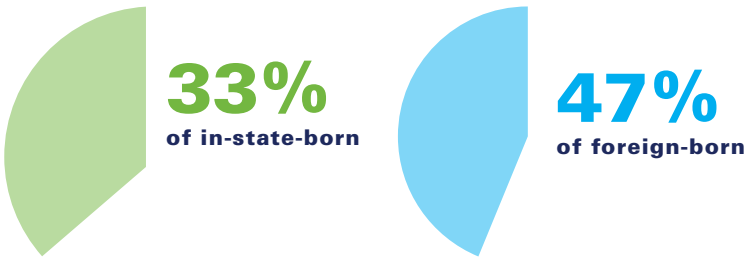


4 Attract and Retain Immigrant Talent

The Region's immigrant population is much more likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher (47%) than adults born in Michigan (33%). Immigrants continue to help the Region reach its 60% by 2030 educational attainment goal.

RESIDENTS WITH A BACHELOR'S OR HIGHER

Detroit MSA, 2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Why It Matters: Talent Drives Prosperity

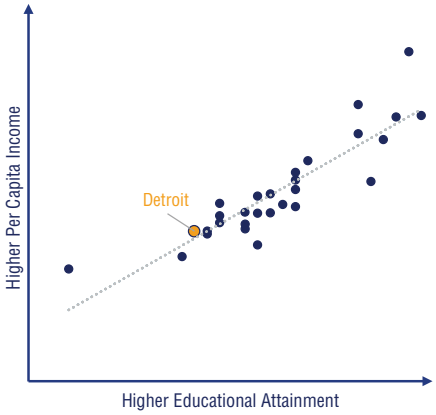
Education Creates Economic Advantage

The nation's most educated metropolitan areas consistently outperform the Detroit Region on income, workforce participation, and economic output. While many factors influence regional prosperity, the gap between Detroit and leading talent regions illustrates the economic opportunity associated with higher levels of educational attainment.

REGIONS WITH **MORE EDUCATED RESIDENTS** CONSISTENTLY ACHIEVE:

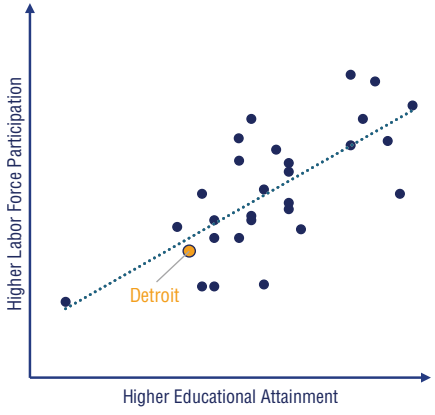
Higher Incomes

Workers earn more in regions with stronger attainment.



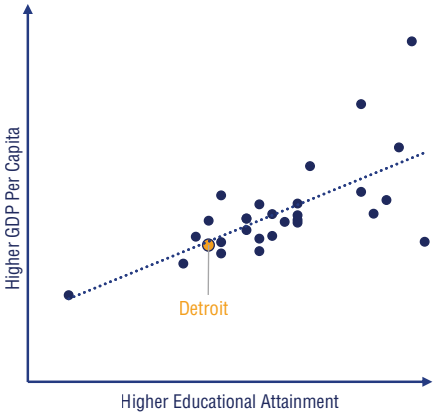
Stronger Workforce Participation

Regions with higher attainment engage a larger share of residents in the workforce.



Greater Economic Output

Regions with more education generate significantly more economic value per resident.



Compared to the Detroit Region, regions with the highest levels of educational attainment are associated with:

Nearly $20,000 higher per capita income

7 percentage points higher labor force participation rate

Up to $33,000 more economic output per resident annually

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
Note: Regions shown include the 25 largest U.S. metros by population and the Chamber's peer regions.

Education Remains a Worthwhile Investment

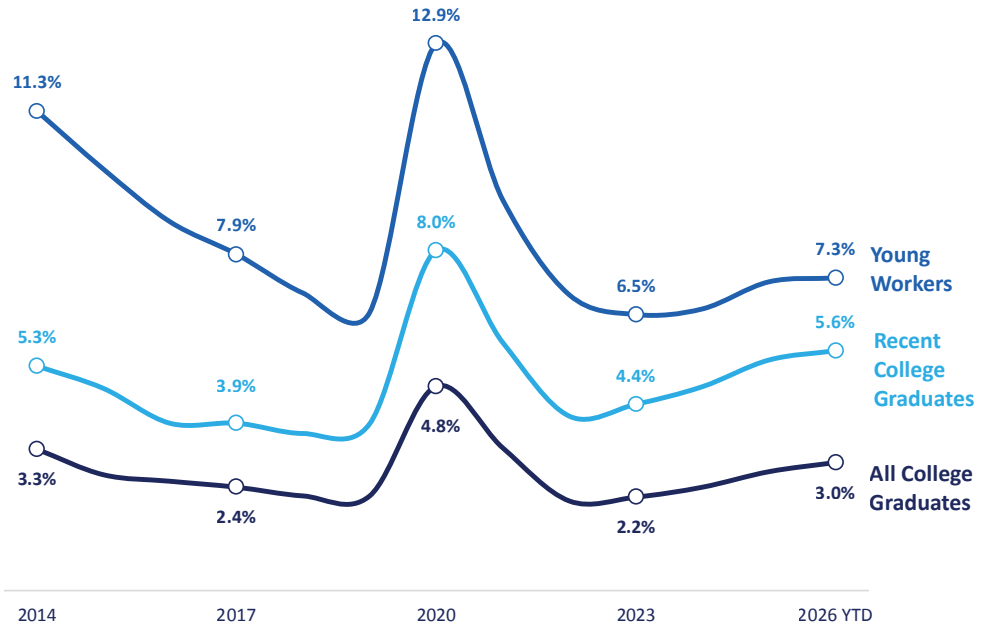
Despite labor market challenges facing some recent graduates, adults with higher levels of educational attainment continue to experience lower unemployment, access to higher-paying jobs, and greater wealth accumulation over time.

Recent College Graduates Maintain an Employment Advantage Over Their Peers Without a Bachelor's Degree

Unemployment among recent graduates aged 22 to 27 years old (5.6%) remains below that of similarly aged workers without a bachelor's degree (7.3%), while workers aged 22 and older with bachelor's degree or higher (3.0%) maintain the lowest unemployment rates overall.

UNEMPLOYMENT FOR RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATES VS. OTHER GROUPS

United States, Annual Average



7.3%
Young Workers
(Ages 22-27;
No Bachelor's Degree)

5.6%
Recent College Graduates
(Ages 22-27)

4.2%
All Workers

3.0%
All College Graduates
(Ages 22-65 with Bachelor's Degree)

Public Perception of Importance and Affordability of College Is Dropping

GALLUP®

70%
of Americans **in 2013**
said a college education
is very important

31%
of Americans **in 2024**
said a college education
is very important

Detroit Regional Chamber · Glengariff Group Inc
MICHIGAN VOTER POLL

Only 17%

***of Michigan voters** say postsecondary education is available at an affordable price.*

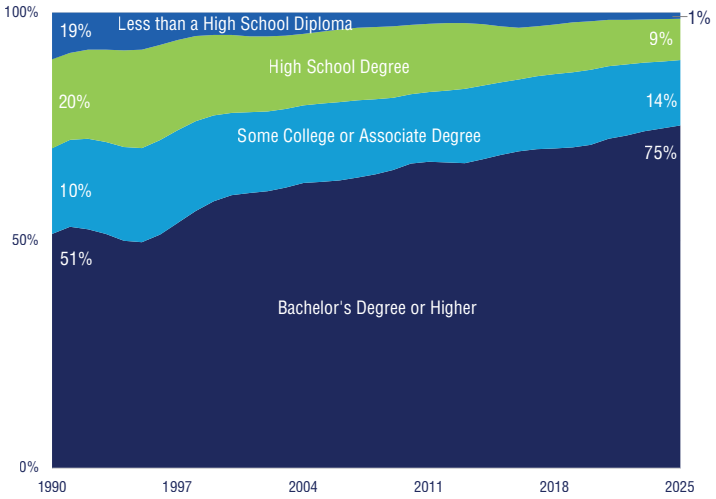
Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York. GALLUP Poll October 2026, Detroit Regional Chamber Michigan Voter Poll, Spring 2025.

Benefits of Education Compound Over Time

Households headed by adults with a bachelor's degree or higher have accumulated substantially greater wealth over time than households with lower levels of educational attainment. The wealth gap has widened steadily over the last four decades.

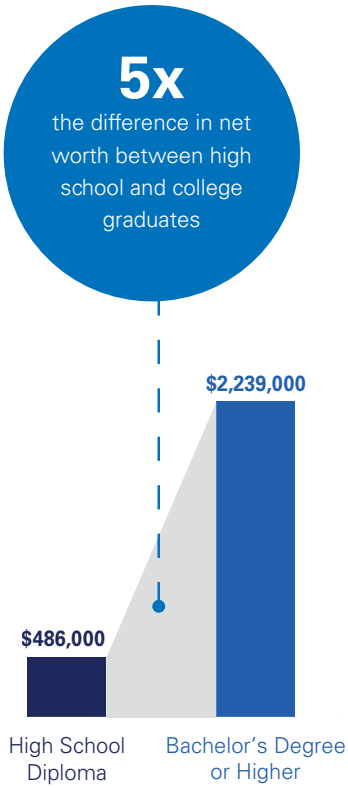
DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD WEALTH IN THE U.S.

Percent of Total



AVERAGE NET WORTH BY EDUCATION LEVEL

United States, 2025



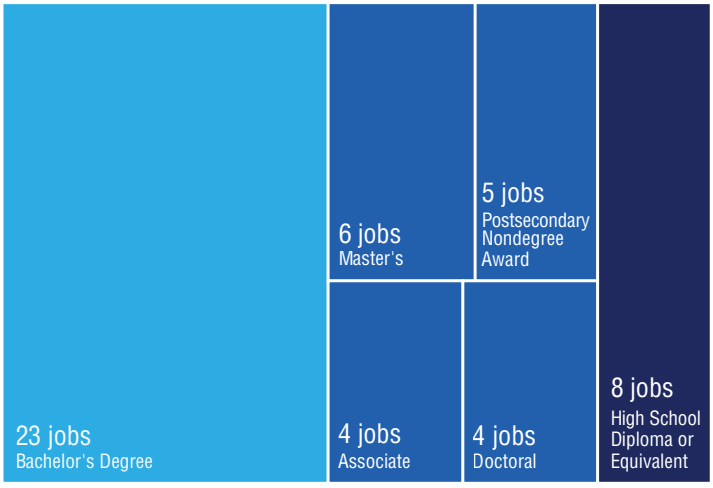
High Wage, High Demand Jobs Require More Than a High School Diploma

Michigan's economy offers valuable opportunities through both degree and non-degree pathways, but nearly all of these opportunities require some form of postsecondary preparation. Whether entering a skilled trade or earning a bachelor's degree, most high-wage careers require postsecondary education or training.

84%

of Michigan's in-demand and high-wage jobs require some form of **credential beyond high school.**

2026 MICHIGAN HOT 50 JOBS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVEL



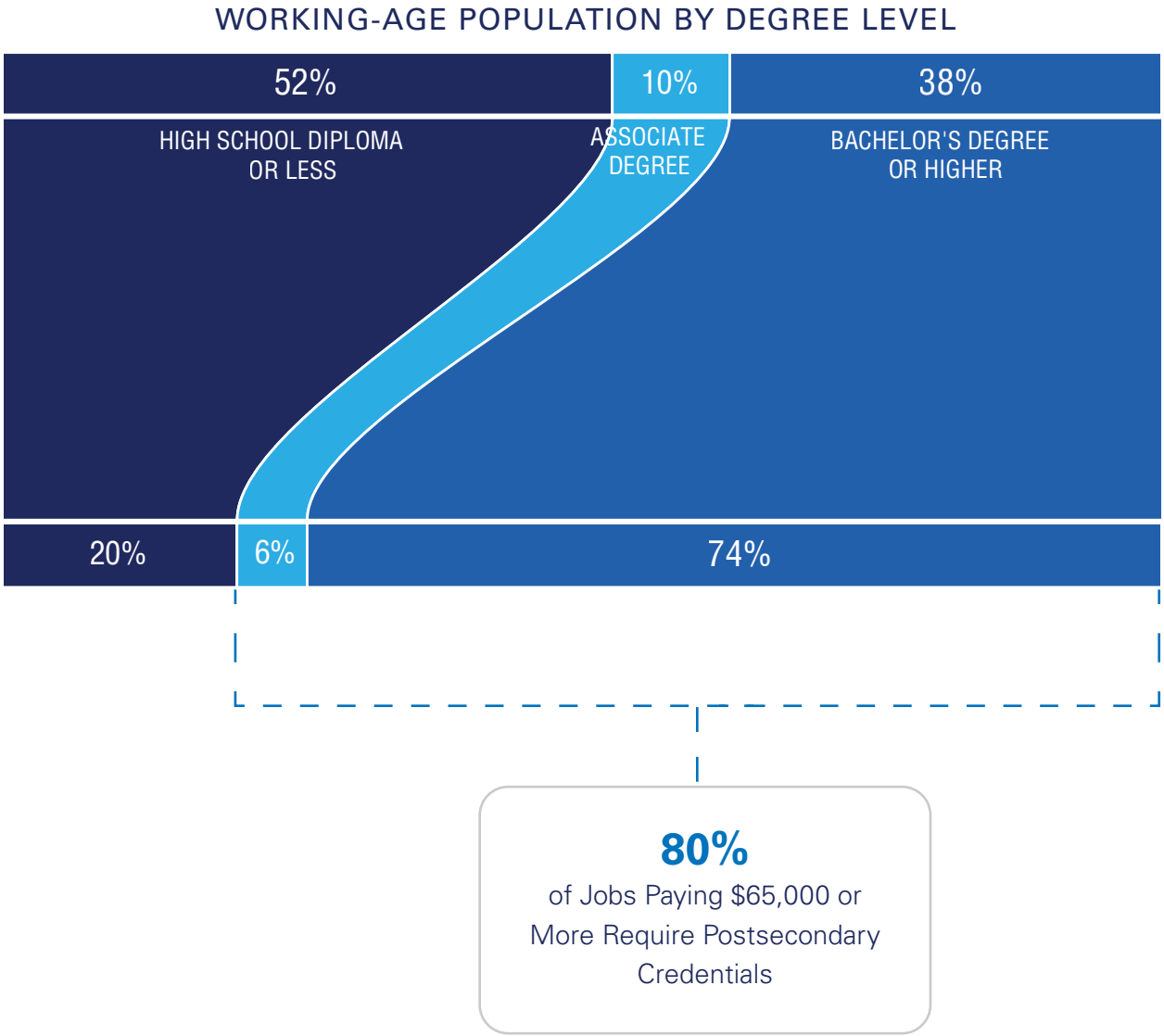
Source: Michigan Future, Inc. analysis of Federal Reserve System data. Michigan Center for Data Analytics.
Note: Net worth equals the value of all assets less all liabilities.

Higher-Paying Jobs Are Concentrated at Levels Beyond High School

Most higher-paying jobs require education beyond high school as 80% of jobs paying at least $65,000 require postsecondary education, with nearly three-quarters (74%) concentrated in occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or higher. Workers with a high school diploma or less have fewer opportunities to access these higher-paying jobs.

Distribution of Jobs Paying $65,000 or More by Education Level

Detroit MSA



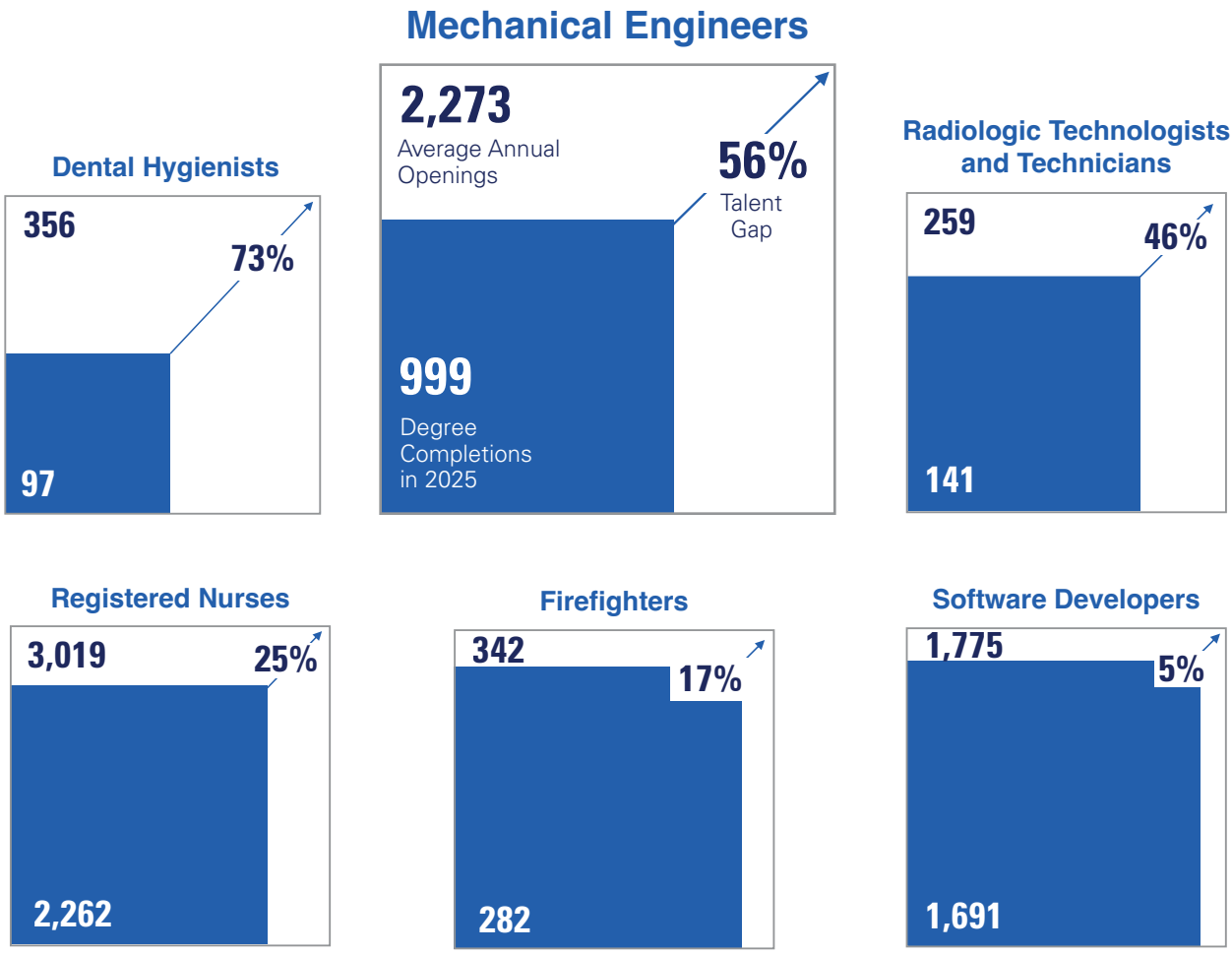
Source: Detroit Regional Chamber analysis of Michigan Center for Data and Analytics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) data. Note: Working age population is 25-64 years old.

Critical Talent Shortages Persist in Key Occupations

Job postings have slowed significantly from their 2022 peak, declining 42% by 2025. Yet employers continue to report difficulty filling positions in critical occupations. There are gaps between annual job openings and available talent, suggesting the Region is not producing enough credentialed workers to meet employer demand in several high-demand fields and occupations.

GAPS BETWEEN DEGREE COMPLETION AND ANNUAL JOB OPENINGS

Detroit Region, All Institutions, All Degree Levels, 2025



Source: Lightcast. Note: Average job postings from 2024 to 2025. Degree completions represent regional programs of study associated with each occupation using Lightcast's standard CIP-to-SOC crosswalk.

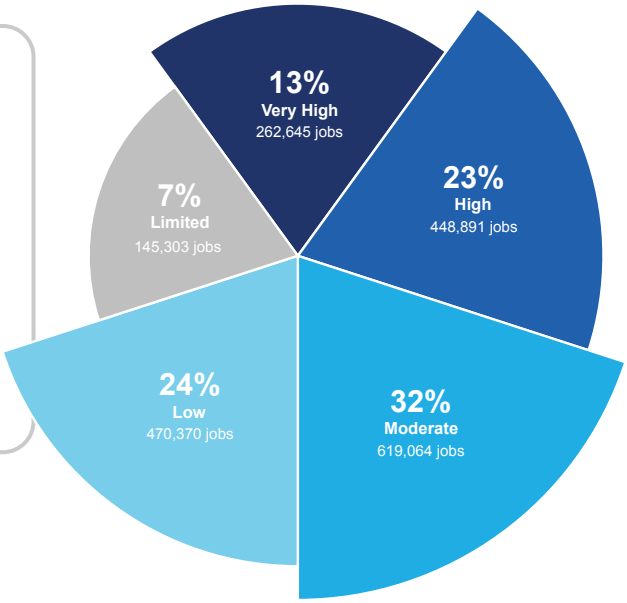
AI Integration Driving Need for Related Skills

As AI becomes integrated into more occupations, the value of education, skills, and adaptability continues to rise. The growing exposure of jobs to AI and increasing demand for AI-related skills reinforce the need for the Detroit Region to produce, attract, and retain more skilled talent to compete in an innovation-driven economy.

AI EXPOSURE ACROSS THE DETROIT REGION WORKFORCE

Detroit MSA, 2026 Jobs

Nearly 70% of jobs in the Detroit Region have **moderate to very high AI exposure,** representing nearly 1.3 million jobs across the region.



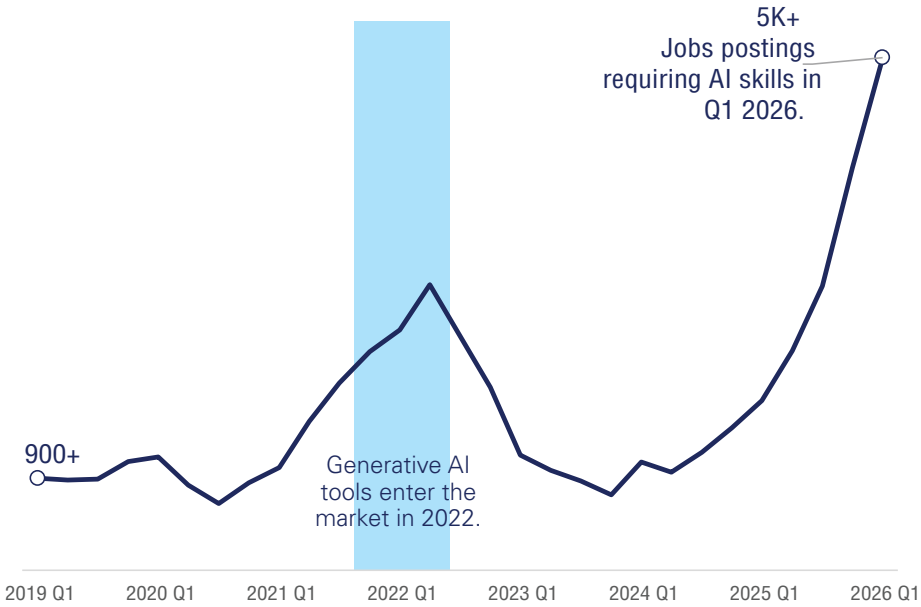
2026 Employment Share

Very High Exposure 262,645 jobs	13%
High Exposure 448,891 jobs	23%
Moderate Exposure 619,064 jobs	32%
Low Exposure 470,370 jobs	24%
Limited Exposure 145,303 jobs	7%

Note: AI exposure reflects an occupation's relative exposure to AI compared with all other occupations, based on projections of how AI may augment or automate the tasks and activities performed in that occupation. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

GROWTH IN JOBS POSTINGS REQUIRING AI SKILLS

Detroit MSA, All Job Postings



Employer demand for AI skills has accelerated rapidly, with **AI-related job postings growing by 456% since 2019** in the Detroit Region.

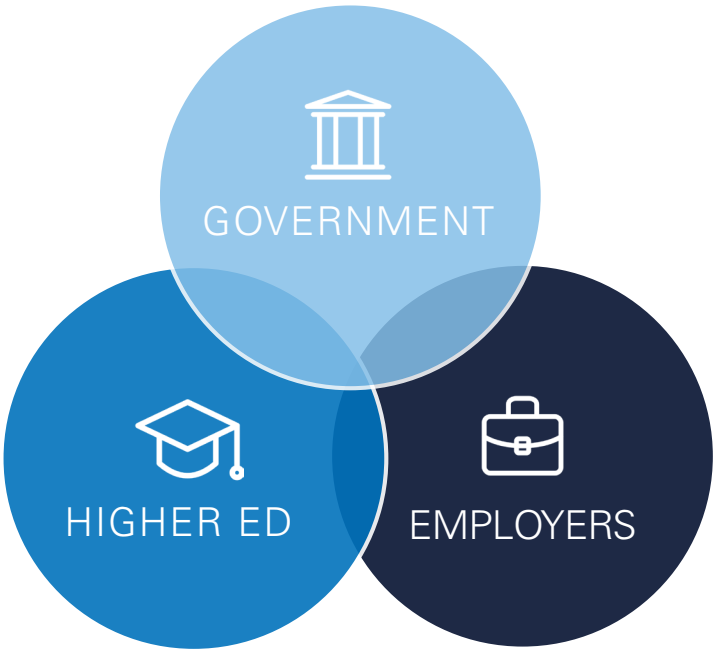
Source: Education Strategy Group, Lightcast

[WHAT'S THE FIX?]

There's No Silver Bullet, but Plenty of Options to Reverse Education Declines

There are no quick fixes or silver bullets to immediately overcome Michigan's educational challenges. However, states that once ranked near the bottom in education, such as Mississippi, have reversed specific outcomes and now sit atop national rankings.

Michigan can do the same, but it requires a shared statewide strategy that is sustainable and properly funded over the long term.



What's Working in Government, Higher Education, and Among Employers

Helping adult learners return to college to earn a postsecondary credential through Michigan Reconnect.

Tuition-free paths to higher education via programs such as the Michigan Achievement and Detroit Promise Scholarships.

Investments in both ends of the talent pipeline from early education, like Great Start Readiness Program, to postsecondary via expanded dual enrollment.

Removing barriers to graduation from debt forgiveness programs to basic needs loans, like Open Door, that help students re-enroll and/or stay in school.

Industry-specific employer-based interventions that target high-need sectors such as healthcare and provide career exposure and pathways to higher wages.

WHAT'S THE FIX: GOVERNMENT

Policy Solutions Expanding Postsecondary Access and Success

MICHIGAN RECONNECT

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Through increased state income taxes from higher wages, the state is estimated to recover its investment in a Reconnector after seven years.

Michigan Reconnect Graduates See Strong Wage Gains and Improved Employment Outcomes

Michigan Reconnect is a state scholarship program that pays for adults to earn an associate degree or skilled certificate at any community college. Through its tuition-free pathway, nearly **20,000** Michigan adults have earned a degree or certificate.

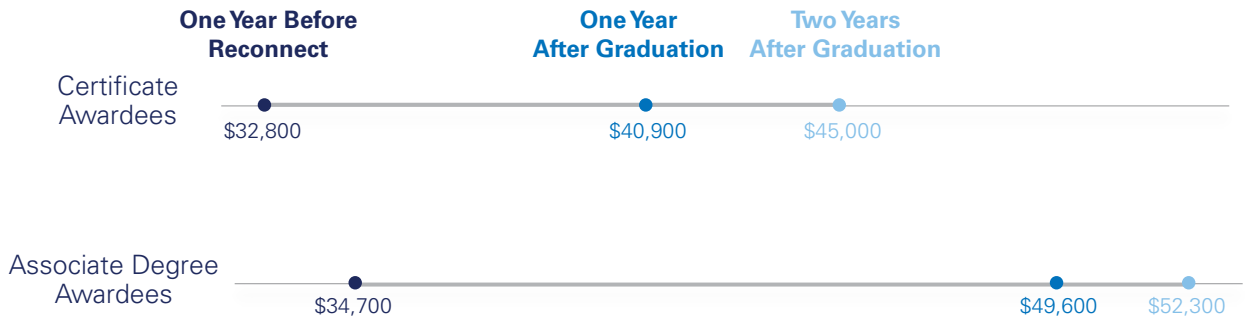
Reconnect graduates are finding greater employment outcomes immediately after graduation.

12%
increase in employment rate

$13,400
increase in income vs. previous wages

$16,500
higher wages than peers with a high school diploma

MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGES FOR RECONNECT GRADUATES



Source: Michigan Center for Data and Analytics

WHAT'S THE FIX: GOVERNMENT

Widely Accessible Scholarships Are Easing the Financial Burden of Attending College

MI Student Aid
Accessible • Affordable • Attainable

Since 2023, the Michigan Achievement Scholarship has expanded access to higher education for recent graduates by providing tuition-free community college and substantial financial aid for four-year colleges.

By the Numbers

$381M Awarded

89,000+ Recipients

$4,276 Average Award

73% Utilization Rate

DETROIT PROMISE

Locally, tax revenue in Detroit is funding the Detroit Promise Scholarship, a tuition-free pathway serving 9,000+ Detroit high school graduates since 2013 to attend 31 colleges and universities statewide. Year over year, Promise scholars graduate at higher rates than their City of Detroit peers.

POST-HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

Six-year Completion Rates, 2019 Cohort

Four-Year Enrollees

60% Detroit Promise

40% City of Detroit

Two-Year Enrollees

19% Detroit Promise

16% City of Detroit

Sources: Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP), Detroit Promise

WHAT'S THE FIX: GOVERNMENT

Dual Enrollment Students Are More Likely to Enroll in and Graduate From College

STATEWIDE DUAL ENROLLMENT PARTICIPATION

2023-24 vs. 2024-25

Percent of schools offering dual enrollment

68.7% → **73.5%**

Percent of students participating in dual enrollment

7.6% → **9.2%**

81%

of dual enrollment students from the Class of 2025 enrolled in college vs. **55%** of non-dual enrollment students.

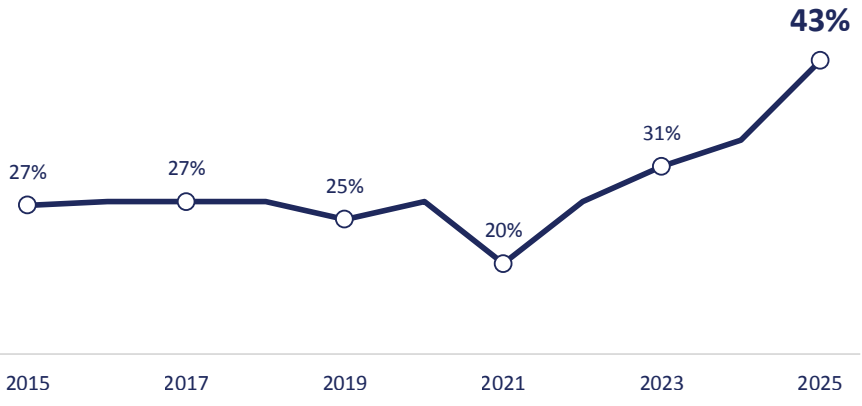
32%

of dual enrollment students from the Class of 2021 graduated from college in four years vs. **17%** of non-dual enrollment students.

More Families Are Accessing Critical Pre-K Education Through Expanded Access to the Great Start Readiness Program

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is Michigan's state-funded, free pre-kindergarten program for four-year-old children. In 2024, Michigan expanded access to GSRP by eliminating income caps. Regionally, the percentage of kindergartners who participated in GSRP has increased by 16 points over the last four years.

DETROIT REGION KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN GSRP



Sources: Michigan Department of Education Center for Educational Performance and Information

WHAT'S THE FIX: HIGHER ED

Institutional Solutions Supporting Student Success

Scholarship Programs Are Making College More Affordable

Incoming students can access tuition-free scholarships and other substantial financial aid opportunities.

TUITION GUARANTEES

Oakland University's Golden Guarantee and the University of Michigan-Dearborn's Go Blue Guarantee, along with other financial aid, provided full tuition for over half of Fall 2025 first-time freshmen at these universities.

THE BURNING ISSUE

57%

of parents cited cost and financial strain as their biggest concern about their child pursuing a four-year degree.

Removing Barriers Helps More Students Reach Graduation

For returning and current students, institutions like Henry Ford College (HFC) and Wayne State University (WSU) have created programs to reduce barriers to persistence and graduation.

BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT

OpenDoor is an initiative designed to help current students overcome basic-needs barriers to staying in school and graduating. It is now active at WSU and HFC in partnership with United Way for Southeastern Michigan and Detroit Drives Degrees.

THE BURNING ISSUE

79%

of students stopping out or considering stopping out identified basic needs insecurity (food, housing, etc.) as a factor.

DEBT FORGIVENESS

WSU's Warrior Way Back program offers debt forgiveness of up to $4,000. The university has returned over 600 students since 2018.

THE BURNING ISSUE

6.6M

students owe colleges and universities an estimated $15B in unpaid institutional balances nationally.

Sources: Detroit Regional Chamber and Glengariff Group, Ithaka S+R, The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University

WHAT'S THE FIX: HIGHER ED

Building Early Pathways Through Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment for high school students continues to expand, with many regional community colleges significantly increasing participation over the last four years.

GROWTH IN DUAL ENROLLMENT

Participation in dual enrollment at Macomb Community College has increased 141% since 2022. Dual enrollment students now constitute 13% of all MCC students.

THE BURNING ISSUE

26 p.p. lower

College enrollment is 26 percentage points lower for high school graduates who did not participate in dual enrollment.

Supporting Transfer Students

Transferring to four-year institutions is becoming less daunting as community colleges provide critical interventions at key student milestones.

LEAN4WARD

To ease transfer students' challenges, Henry Ford College created Lean4ward, which connects current students with advisors at partner four-year universities to support the two-year/four-year transition.

THE BURNING ISSUE

Nearly 80%

of community college students aspire to earn a bachelor's degree, yet only about one-third transfer to a four-year institution.

Re-Engaging Adult Learners

Recognizing the barriers that adults face to enroll in college, community colleges are meeting adults where they are to provide the necessary services and supports to transition to postsecondary.

MOMENTUM ADULT SUCCESS PROGRAM

Monroe County Community College is embedding services directly in underserved neighborhoods, offering individualized success plans, technology access, transportation, and childcare.

THE BURNING ISSUE

Only 25%

of adults without a degree say all or most Americans can access quality, affordable education after high school.

Sources: Michigan Department of Education Center for Educational Performance and Information, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Gallup-Lumina Foundation

WHAT'S THE FIX: EMPLOYERS

Employer Solutions to Develop Talent and Address Workforce Needs

Expanding Apprenticeships

THE BURNING ISSUE

23,200

active registered apprentices statewide in 2025, ranking fourth nationally. Construction and manufacturing account for 83% of all Michigan apprenticeships.

THE BURNING ISSUE

83%

of Michigan apprenticeships are in construction and manufacturing.

SOLUTION IN ACTION

Participation in apprenticeships is at an all-time high. While most are concentrated in traditional industries like construction and manufacturing, industries like healthcare, IT, and professional services are expanding apprenticeship programs. Companies like Accenture and Aptiv are working toward a goal of creating 500 new professional apprenticeships in the Region.

accenture · APTIV ·

Retaining Global Talent Studying at Michigan Colleges and Universities

THE BURNING ISSUE

65,000

Regionally, nearly 65,000 jobs were filled by international students working on the Optional Practical Training (OPT) between 2013-2022.

THE BURNING ISSUE

91%

of OPT jobs were in STEM fields, including 56% in engineering.

SOLUTIONS IN ACTION

Michigan already educates world-class talent. Programs such as the Global Talent Retention Initiative are helping employers access and retain international student talent. Through employer education, career pathways, and workforce partnerships, these efforts connect Michigan companies with highly skilled graduates already studying in the state.

Michigan Global Talent Initiative

Sources: Michigan Center for Data and Analytics, Global Detroit

WHAT'S THE FIX: EMPLOYERS

Investment in Identifying and Developing Healthcare Talent

THE BURNING ISSUE

23,000

Across Michigan, hospitals are reporting 23,000 open positions.

SOLUTIONS IN ACTION

The Detroit Regional Chamber's **Regional Healthcare Talent Collaborative**, co-chaired by **Henry Ford Health and the Chamber**, brings together employers, educators, workforce organizations, and community partners to strengthen Southeast Michigan's healthcare talent pipeline and address critical workforce shortages.

As part of the collaborative, companies like Bank of America and Citizens are investing in healthcare workforce initiatives that expose hundreds of students to healthcare careers and support custom training programs.

Additionally, Henry Ford Health, Michigan Humane, Corewell Health, and Trinity Health are a few employers volunteering with the Chamber's Pathways in Practice initiative that provides healthcare career exposure through classroom visits and networking events.

Corewell Health™ HENRY FORD HEALTH Trinity Health

Developing Career Building Strategies, Including Professional Networks

THE BURNING ISSUE

53%

of alumni wish they had access to career coaching while completing their degree — the most commonly cited unmet need.

SOLUTIONS IN ACTION

Companies and organizations like BAMF Health, Comerica, Song United, and Walker Miller Energy Services, have spoken to over 300 education and business leaders through events like Connect 360 and the Industry Insights series.

BAMF Health ComericA Bank SONG UNITED walker-miller Energy Services

Sources: Michigan Health and Hospital Association, Gallup-Lumina Foundation

Detroit Regional Chamber Foundation

TALENT ED

detroitchamber.com/soet

Data Disclaimer: This analysis utilizes data obtained through a confidential data application process submitted to the Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC) and Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI). Youth Policy Lab at the University of Michigan requested data access and completed the analysis included in this report. The data are structured and maintained by the MEDC and MERI. MEDC data is modified for analysis purposes using rules governed by MEDC and are not identical to those data collected and maintained by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and/or Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). Results, information, and opinions solely represent the analysis, information, and opinions of the author(s) and are not endorsed by, or reflect the views or positions of, grantors, MDE, CEPI, or any employee thereof.

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