



# The State of College Access and Student Success in Florida

2026

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

**Welcome** to the 2026 State of College Access and Student Success Report, produced by the Florida College Access Network (FCAN). A companion piece to our [State of College Access Dashboard](#), the key metrics reported and analysis provided herein and online are intended to support the efforts of [Local College Access Networks](#) (LCANs), education advocates, philanthropists, and policymakers to identify opportunities to strengthen Florida’s talent pipeline, see progress over time, and prioritize resources to ensure each Floridian attains education beyond high school toward a rewarding career.

The data compiled for this report comes from public sources, and the metrics chosen were identified by FCAN staff in concert with feedback from network partners and subject-matter experts. By no means are the metrics selected an exhaustive list of indicators, but they represent a starting point of inquiry and fall into one of four categories:

**Context** indicators help set the stage for Florida’s talent needs. How is Florida growing in terms of residents and jobs, both objectively and in comparison to other states? How has the demographic composition of Florida’s population changed over time? These changes and trends can inform education and economic planning.

**Readiness** indicators describe key preparatory milestones in a student’s journey from high school to postsecondary education. Are students graduating high school on time? How are Florida students performing on critical standardized tests? And are enough Florida students applying for federal grants, work-study, and subsidized loans to pay for their education beyond high school?

**Access & Success** indicators measure the “to and through.” How many Florida students are enrolling in postsecondary education? How efficiently are Florida colleges and universities conferring degrees to their students?

**Outcome** indicators get to the big picture. How is Florida progressing towards its 2030 SAIL to 60 attainment goal of 60% of Floridians age 25-64 with either a degree or workforce credential of value? How do earnings increase with educational attainment? How is Florida’s economy performing on a per capita basis?

We encourage you to read this report to answer these questions, and welcome any that arise from your investigation.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Florida is a dynamic, fast-growing state, and in the post-pandemic period has been among the nation's top states for population and employment growth. To keep Florida in that leadership position, our economy will require an ample supply of trained residents. Research from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that 64% of Florida jobs in the year 2031 will require some sort of postsecondary training beyond high school. The Florida Chamber Foundation's analysis of occupational demand projections to 2031 reveals that nearly every one of the top 30 jobs – jobs with better than average pay and growth prospects – in each of the state's workforce development regions will require education beyond the high school diploma. As Florida's demographics tilt greyer, it is imperative that more young people receive the education, training, and skills required for Florida's continued economic competitiveness.

***...64% of Florida jobs in the year 2031 will require some sort of postsecondary training beyond high school.***

So how is Florida doing? The good news is that a larger share of students are graduating high school on time than ever before. What is less clear is their preparation for life beyond that 12th grade commencement stage. Florida's typical college entrance exam scores lag most states'. While drastic improvement has been made in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and a larger share of Florida students are exploring ways to pay for college, the state ranks 39th in FAFSA completion rate and ten percentage points below the national average.

In an environment where many question the need for education beyond high school – despite the occupational demand projections and documented earnings premiums coincident with higher levels of educational attainment – postsecondary enrollment rates have largely flatlined after a modest post-pandemic recovery, slipping from 54.2% to 53.9% for the class of 2024, even as the raw number of enrollees increased, driven by growth in Florida's graduating class.

***... it is imperative that more young people receive the education, training, and skills required for Florida's continued economic competitiveness.***

One year does not make a trend, but the rate decline warrants attention: Florida cannot reach its 60% attainment goal by graduating more students if a shrinking share of them enroll. The good news is that Florida's public colleges and universities possess a long track record of graduating students in a timely manner, ranking #1 nationally in 2-year and 4-year program graduation within 150% of time.

When added all together, Florida is making progress towards its SAIL to 60 goal. The latest data shows 54.8% of Florida's working age population with a degree or workforce credential of value, in a virtual dead heat with the national average. To meet this goal is to see greater prosperity for our state and its residents, to unlock [Florida's Future Billions](#) of social and fiscal benefits that Helios Education Foundation identified as outcomes from increased college enrollment and attainment, and to see Florida's gross domestic product per capita rise from 34th in the nation to a higher plane.

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## CONTEXT

Chances are, if you look around Florida you'll see signs of growth. Construction cranes reaching toward the sky and new roads connecting communities are part of the anecdotal evidence supporting Florida as a state on the rise. The hard data bears this out, too. Between 2020 and 2025, Florida had the second-largest increase in population, and the second-largest growth rate. 1.8 million additional people called Florida home when the first half of the decade came to an end, good for a 5-year growth rate of 8.7%. This rapid and significant growth was mirrored in terms of job growth – nearly 1.2 million more jobs in 2025 versus 2021 (the third-most nationally) reflecting a 13.3% growth rate (second-fastest) – during that time. The interplay of population and employment growth is symbiotic, to a large degree, as individuals move for economic opportunity and growing populations generate economic demand – especially among the service-producing sectors of the economy.

***Between 2020 and 2025, Florida had the second-largest increase in population, and the second-largest growth rate.***

Florida is growing as a state, and changing. Among age cohorts, Florida saw the largest growth in the 65 and older group, growing from 19.7% of the population in 2018 to 21.3% by 2024. This gain was largely at the expense of the 24 and younger cohort,



which shrank from 28.7% of the population in 2018 to 27.6% by 2024.

***Florida is growing as a state, and changing.***

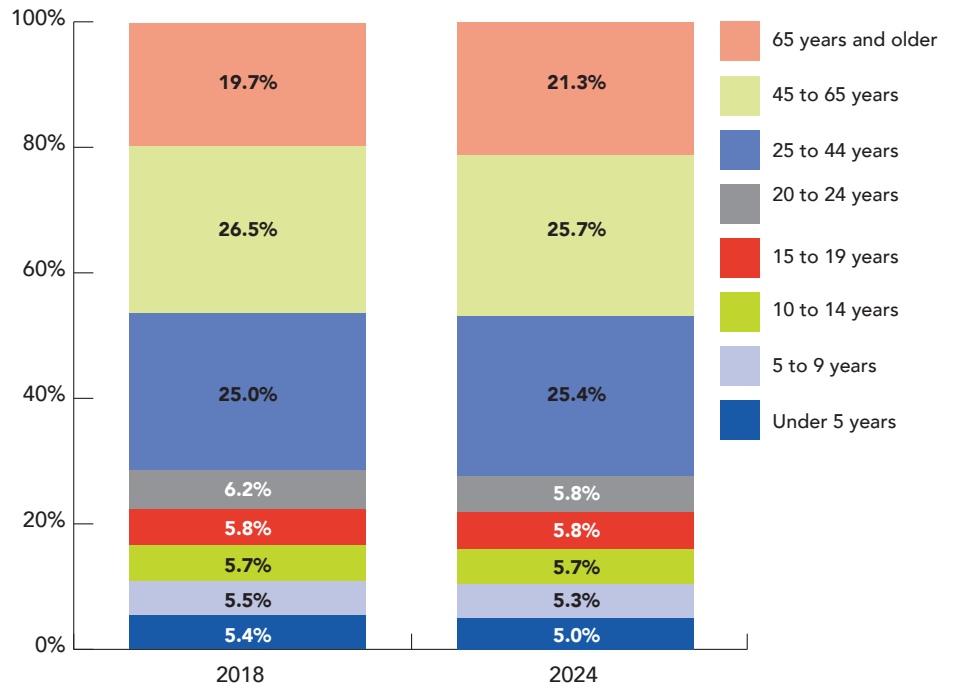
Along other demographic lines, non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, and Hispanic residents of any race accounted for 92.5% of the population in 2024, slightly less than the 94.9% share in 2018. Among these three groups, the Hispanic share of the population grew in that period, accompanied by corresponding reductions in the share of White and Black residents.

## FLORIDA AGE COHORT SHARES: 2018 VS 2024

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Contextualizing the talent pipeline and workforce demands, Florida's age cohorts reveal an aging state, the largest growers from 2018 to 2024 being the 65 and older cohort.

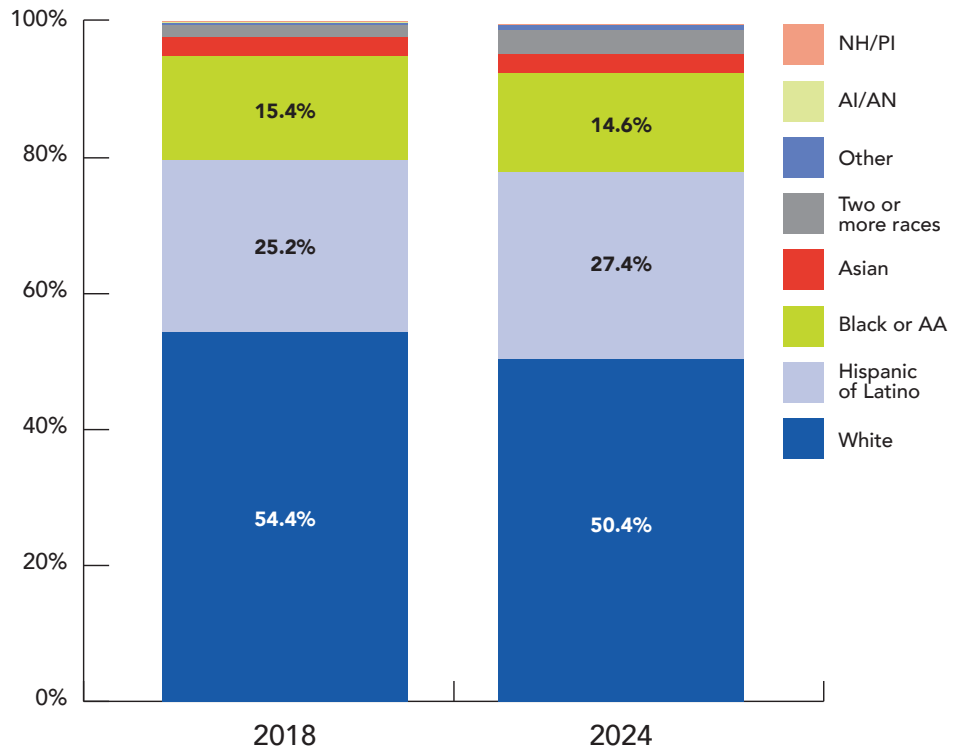
Florida's oldest age group gained a 1.6% share during the six-year period, now 21.3% of the state, while three of the five age cohorts below 25 lost a combined 1% share of the state's population. Floridians under 25 now account for 27.6% of the state. The largest fall of an individual cohort was the 45-64 age group, losing 0.8% of their share, now representing 25.7% of the population.



## FLORIDA RACE/ETHNICITY COHORT SHARES: 2018 VS 2024

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

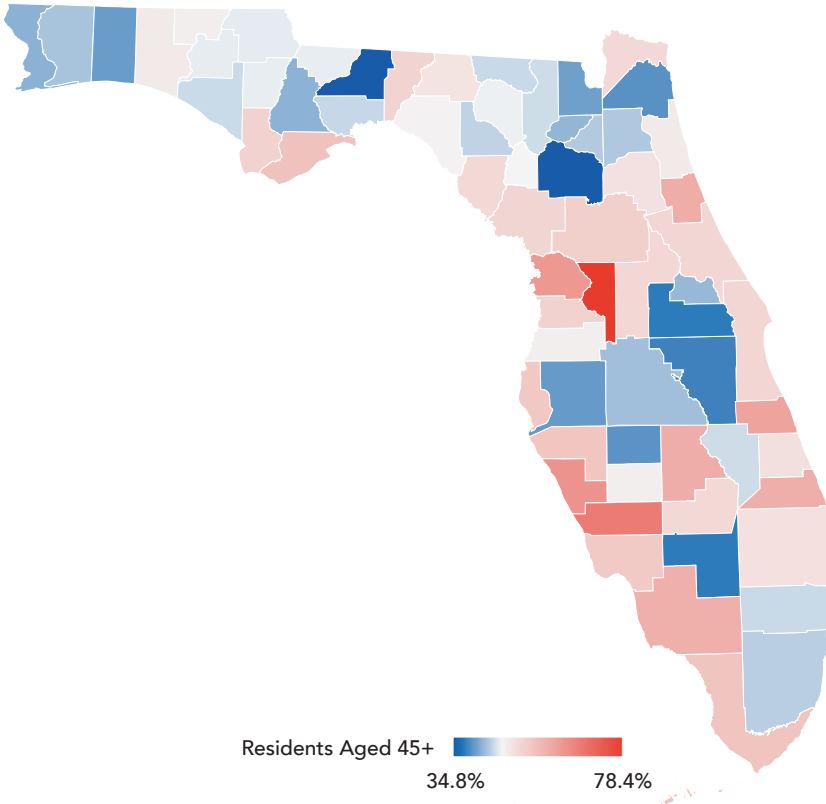
Florida race and ethnicity shares illustrate the diversity present in the third largest state in the country, with distinct regions possessing unique demographic trends. From 2018 to 2024 the largest demographic group, White non-Hispanic, saw a four percentage point decrease in population share from 54.4% to 50.4%. Non-Hispanic Black Floridians also decreased in share, falling to 14.6% (-0.8%).



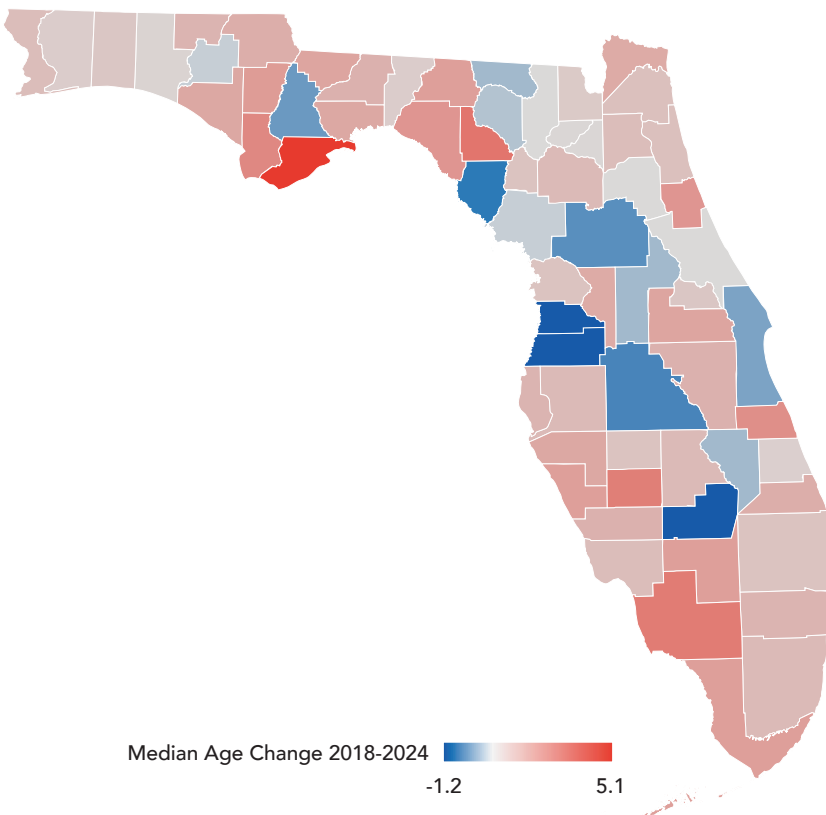
# DEEP DIVE: POPULATION BY AGE

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Share of Residents Age 45 And Over, 2024



## Change in Median Age, 2018-2024



Florida’s median age increased 0.7 years between 2018 and 2024, now the 5th oldest in the country, rising from 41.9 to 42.6. In 2024, 47.1% of Floridian residents were older than 45, up 0.8 percentage points from 2018. These changes reflect an aging state, a popular retirement destination experiencing significant population growth while reporting a declining birth rate.

Within the state, movement and migration soften this narrative. Thirty counties reported a lower median age than the state and 31 counties reported a lower share of residents older than 45. Florida’s counties’ median age ranges from 32 (Leon) to 68.5 (Sumter). The 2024 share of residents over 45 spans from 34.8% (Alachua, Leon) to 78.4% (Sumter). Leon (32), Alachua (32.3), and Hendry (35.8) are the three counties with the lowest median age in 2024; consider the presence of major state universities in Leon and Alachua to contextualize these values.

Cumulative change in median age from 2018 to 2024 reveals how Florida’s counties are aging compared to the state’s 0.7 years increase. 26 counties had a change in median age lower than the state, with 17 counties having a change less than or equal to zero. Pasco, Glades, and Hernando (-1.2), Dixie (-0.9), and Polk (-0.8) experienced the largest fall in median age.

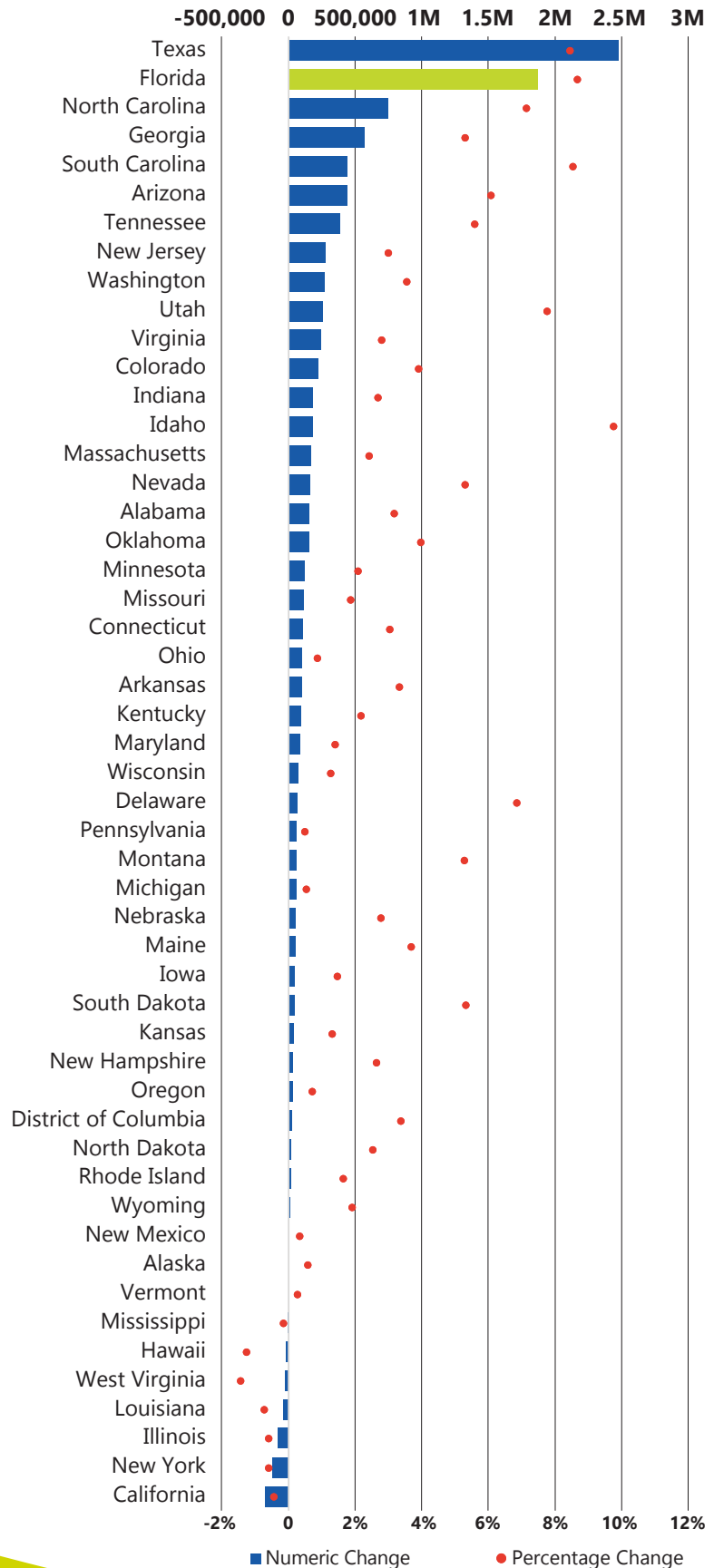
## POPULATION CHANGE, 2020-2025

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates

Florida registered the second-largest numeric growth in population, at 1,871,193, and the second-largest percentage growth in population, at 8.67%, in the period July 2020 to July 2025. These values trailed only Texas (+2.4 million) and Idaho (+9.76%), respectively. For context, Florida's population change of +1.8 million is larger than the 2025 population of twelve states and the District of Columbia.

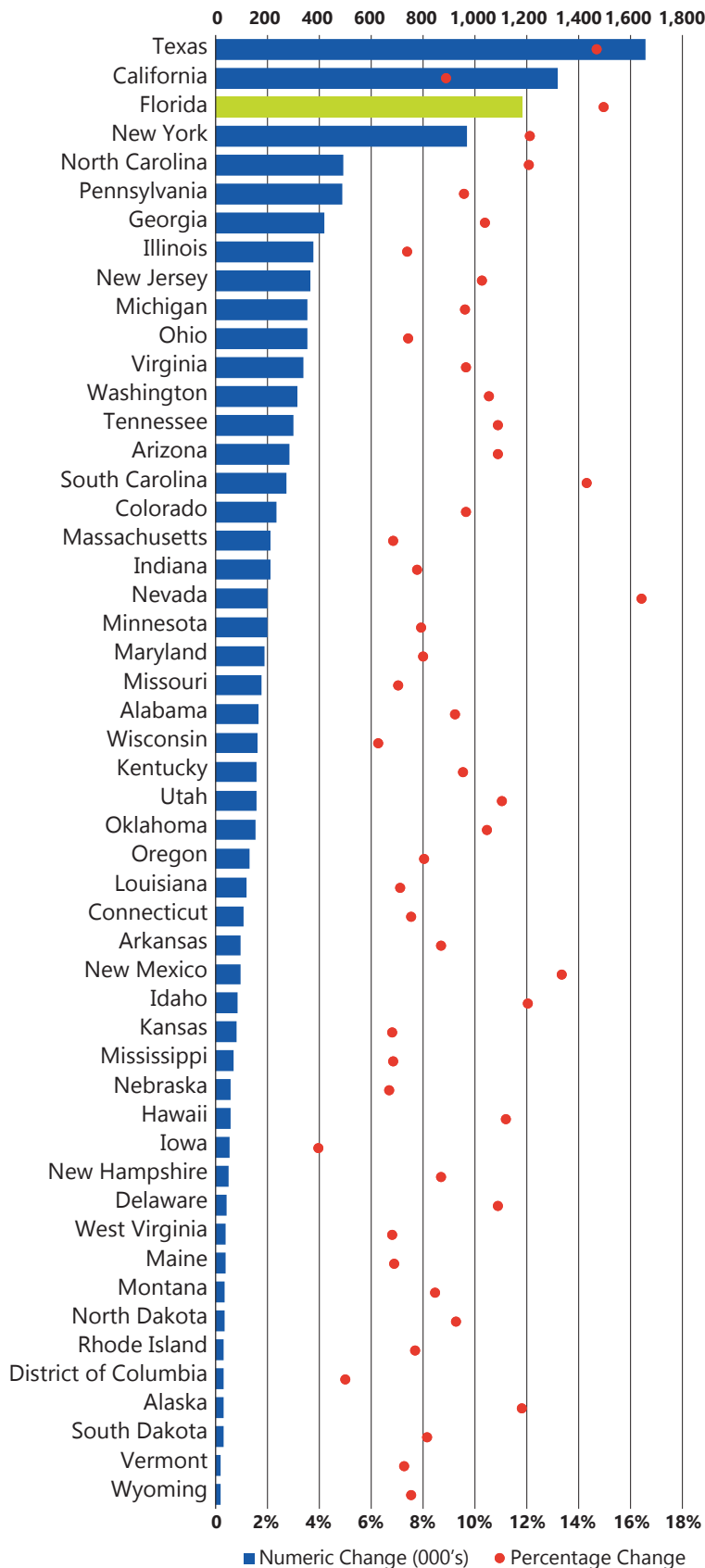
Seven states accounted for 67.8% of the nation's 10.2-million population growth in this period, six of them southern. Seven states registered negative population growth in the same period, with an aggregate loss of slightly more than 450,000 residents.

Population change is the combined effect of natural change (births minus deaths) and net migration (domestic and international), and drives demand for housing and labor, especially in services such as construction and healthcare.



# EMPLOYMENT CHANGE, 2021-2025

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Survey



Florida registered the third-largest numeric increase in employment, at nearly 1.2 million, and the second-largest percentage increase, 13.3%, in the period between June 2021 and June 2025. These values trailed only Texas and California (+1.66 million and +1.32 million) and Nevada (+14.6%). In Nevada's case, the percentage growth aligns with an employment gain of just over 200,000.

Seven states accounted for half of the nation's total employment growth of 13.1 million in this period.

Employment refers to the residence of the worker, not the location of the job. An individual working from home in the Tampa Bay area for a company in the San Francisco Bay area is counted in Florida's column.

The direction and magnitude of employment growth is a signal of overall economic health and, broadly, an indicator of workforce capability.

## READINESS

With every passing year, a greater and greater share of Florida’s public high school students are graduating on time. In the most recent year, 92.2% of Fall 2021 freshmen received a standard diploma alongside the class of 2025 (or earlier). A preponderance of those graduates satisfied all of the standard requirements for that diploma, as opposed to alternative criteria.

Yet, while Florida makes strides in high school graduation rates, standardized test scores present a more complicated picture. Florida 12th-graders scored, on average, 970 out of a possible 1600 on the SAT and, again on average, 19.6 out of a possible 36 on the ACT. The national benchmarks for these

tests were 1029 and 19.4, respectively. Florida is a SAT-heavy state, with 87% of the class of 2025 sitting for the exam. Among other SAT-heavy states (those with 66% or more of seniors taking the test), Florida ranks better than West Virginia and New Mexico, but somewhat behind other states like New Hampshire and New Jersey. A far smaller share, 39%, of Florida’s Class of 2025 took the ACT. Among select states where 25% to 75% of seniors sat for the ACT, Florida finished above South Carolina and Kansas, yet behind Iowa and Georgia.

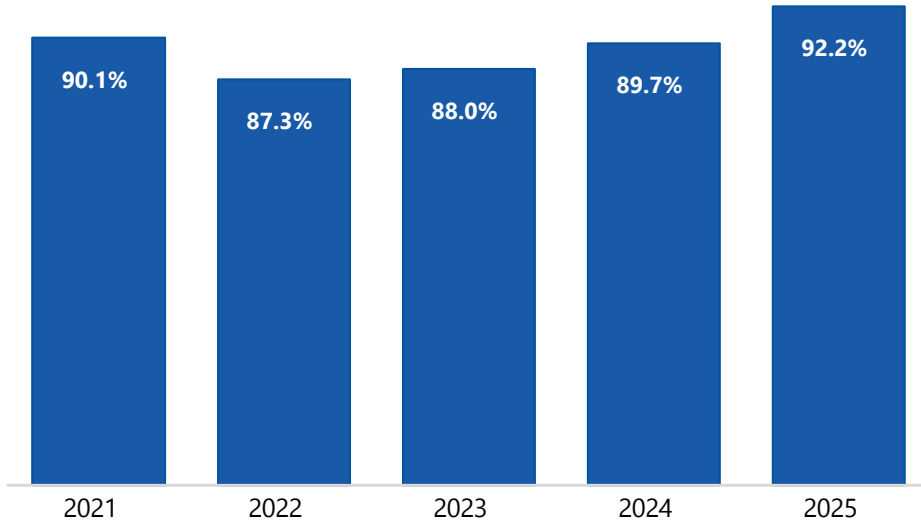
### ***Florida seniors continue to complete the FAFSA at lower rates than most states.***

Although progress has been made and the promise of the Better FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) has been largely realized, Florida seniors continue to complete the FAFSA at lower rates than most states. By the end of June 2025, more than a month after most high school graduation ceremonies, only 44.4% of the class of 2025 had completed a FAFSA, ranking Florida 39th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, trailing the national share of 54.0% by nearly 10 percentage points and southern states such as Tennessee, Texas, and Mississippi by even larger margins.



## FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE TREND

Source: Florida Dept. of Education

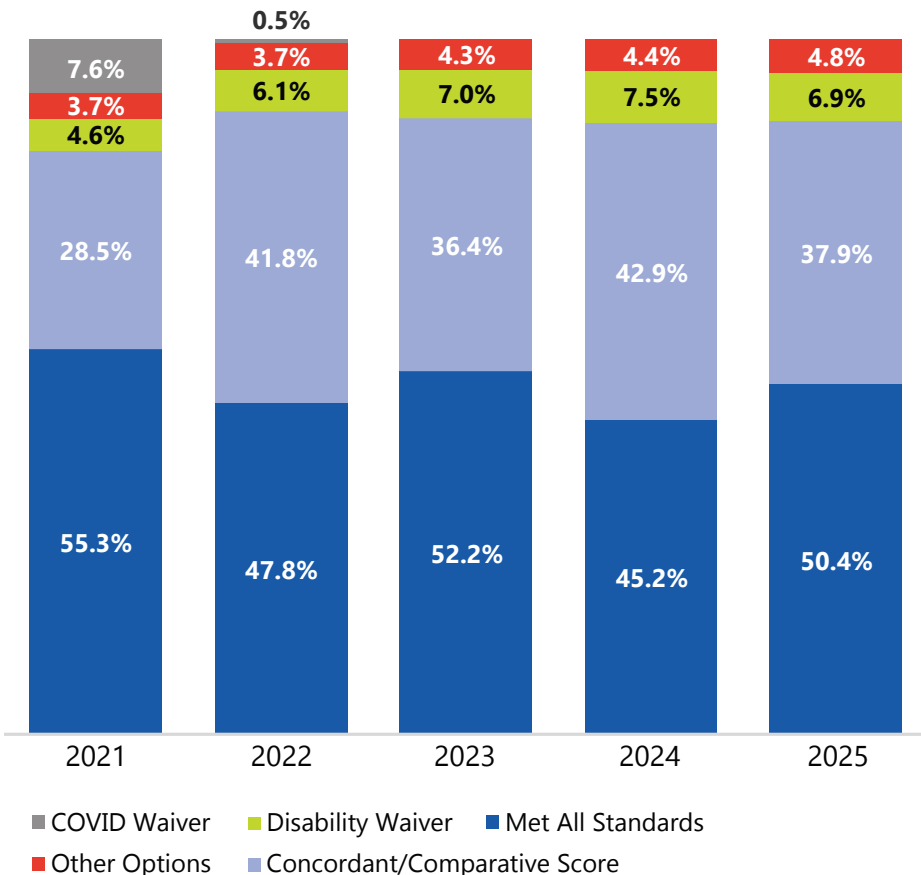


The class of 2025 graduation rate of 92.2% is Florida’s highest ever. Graduation rates are a key indicator of student success and maintaining high graduation rates strengthens postsecondary culture.

Florida’s high school graduation rate grew 2.5 percentage points in the last year, continuing a post-pandemic rise.

## FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES BY PATHWAY TREND

Source: Florida Dept. of Education

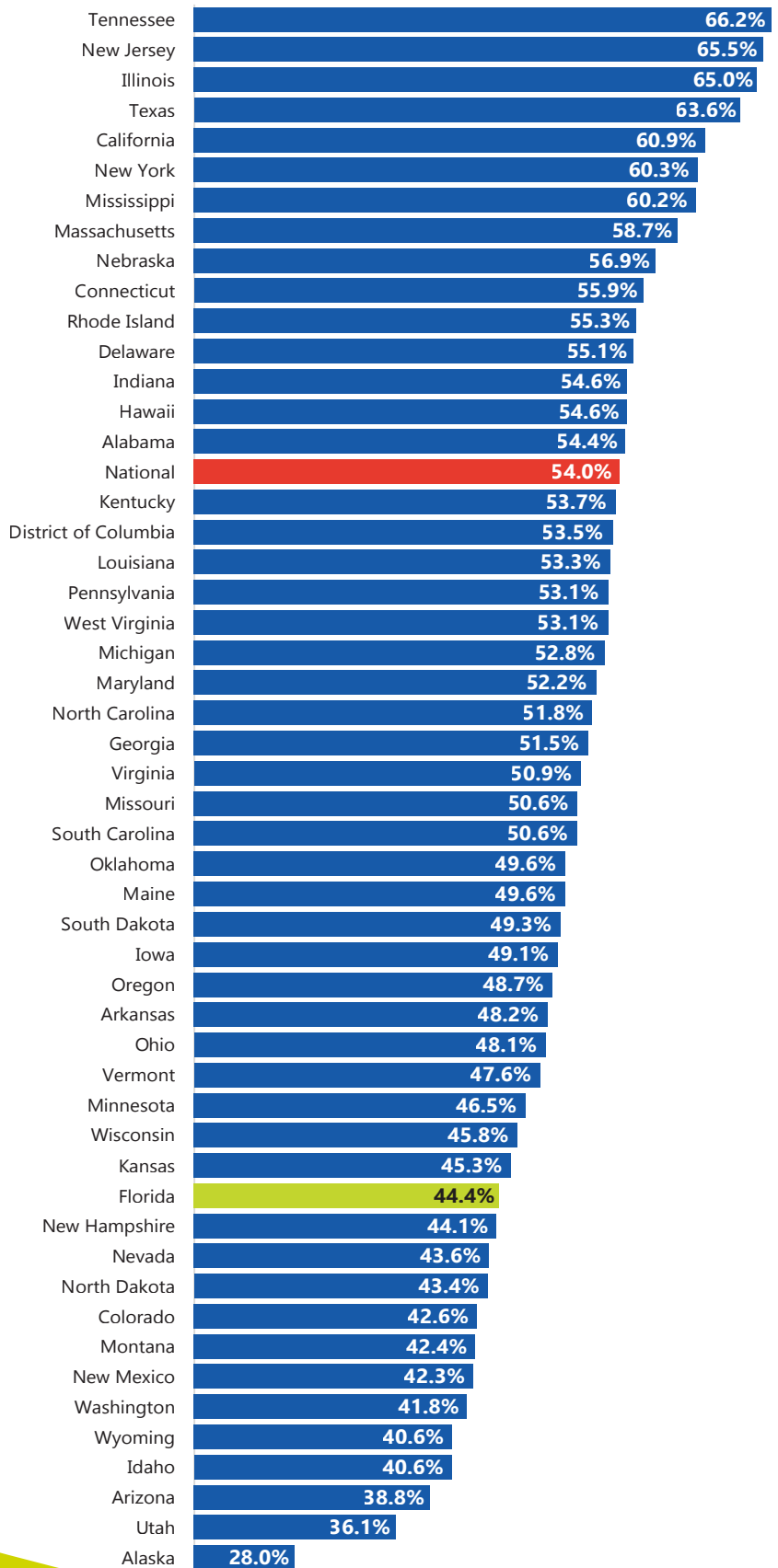


From 2021 to 2025, an average of 50.2% of graduating seniors met all standard requirements to graduate. The second largest share of graduates (an average of 37.5%) earned their diploma by achieving a concordant/ comparative score on an alternative language arts and/or mathematics assessment, while meeting all other requirements in terms of GPA and credits.

## FAFSA COMPLETION RATES BY STATE

Source: National College Attainment Network (NCAN), NCAN's FAFSA Tracker

Completing the FAFSA is strongly associated with postsecondary enrollment, which in turn is linked to a range of fiscal and social benefits. Students who enroll in college immediately after high school are significantly more likely to earn a credential, while delaying enrollment reduces the likelihood of completion. An estimated 44.4% of Florida's high school Class of 2025 – public and private schools – had completed a FAFSA by June 27, 2025, ranking 39th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This rate falls below the national completion rate of 54.0%, suggesting that many Florida students may be missing opportunities to access financial aid that could support their transition to postsecondary education.



## BEST PRACTICES: FAFSA COMPLETION INITIATIVES

Beginning in October 2024, the Florida College Access Network (FCAN), in partnership with the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation, supported innovative projects focused on increasing college enrollment rates among underrepresented students across the state. Across 17 schools from Leon to Miami-Dade, the graduating classes of 2025 and 2026, were supported and evaluated during this period. With over 5,000 students being directly impacted by the grant, beyond college enrollment, a key objective of the program was to increase grant recipient schools' FAFSA completion rates by 4 percentage points. Securing aid and understanding payment options is an essential task for students considering postsecondary education, and completing the FAFSA is highly correlated with postsecondary enrollment.

Participant schools deployed a variety of techniques, attempting to establish patterns of student engagement that would reach beyond the grant period and secure external funding to continue to support their work. FAFSA completion workshops, college and career readiness centers, summer exploration postsecondary education programs, and individualized peer coaching were all used to successfully target populations with opportunities to increase postsecondary enrollment and FAFSA completion.



The Citrus County Coalition for College and Careers (CCC) utilized individualized coaching to interact with over 400 students across three Citrus County High Schools (Lecanto, Crystal River, Citrus), with 5.5 average meetings per student during the 2025-2026 school year. Coaches included student peers, teachers, and community volunteers. Cohort students were able to schedule meetings during and outside of school hours, as well as virtual advising via phone-based communication; this flexibility allowed coaches to meet students where and when they're comfortable, without encroaching on their personal schedules. Students were aided not only in FAFSA completion, but college choice and selection, essay and resume drafting, and non-academic decisions like housing and travel concerns. A complete suite of college enrollment planning services ensured students were prepared for financing, academic rigors, and the lifestyle adjustments that can be a hurdle for students pursuing postsecondary education.

Beyond securing external funding and laying the foundation for a sustainable college readiness program, Citrus County CCC's efforts helped improve FAFSA completion rates in their district, emblematic of the entire grant cohort's performance within their respective districts and against the state average.

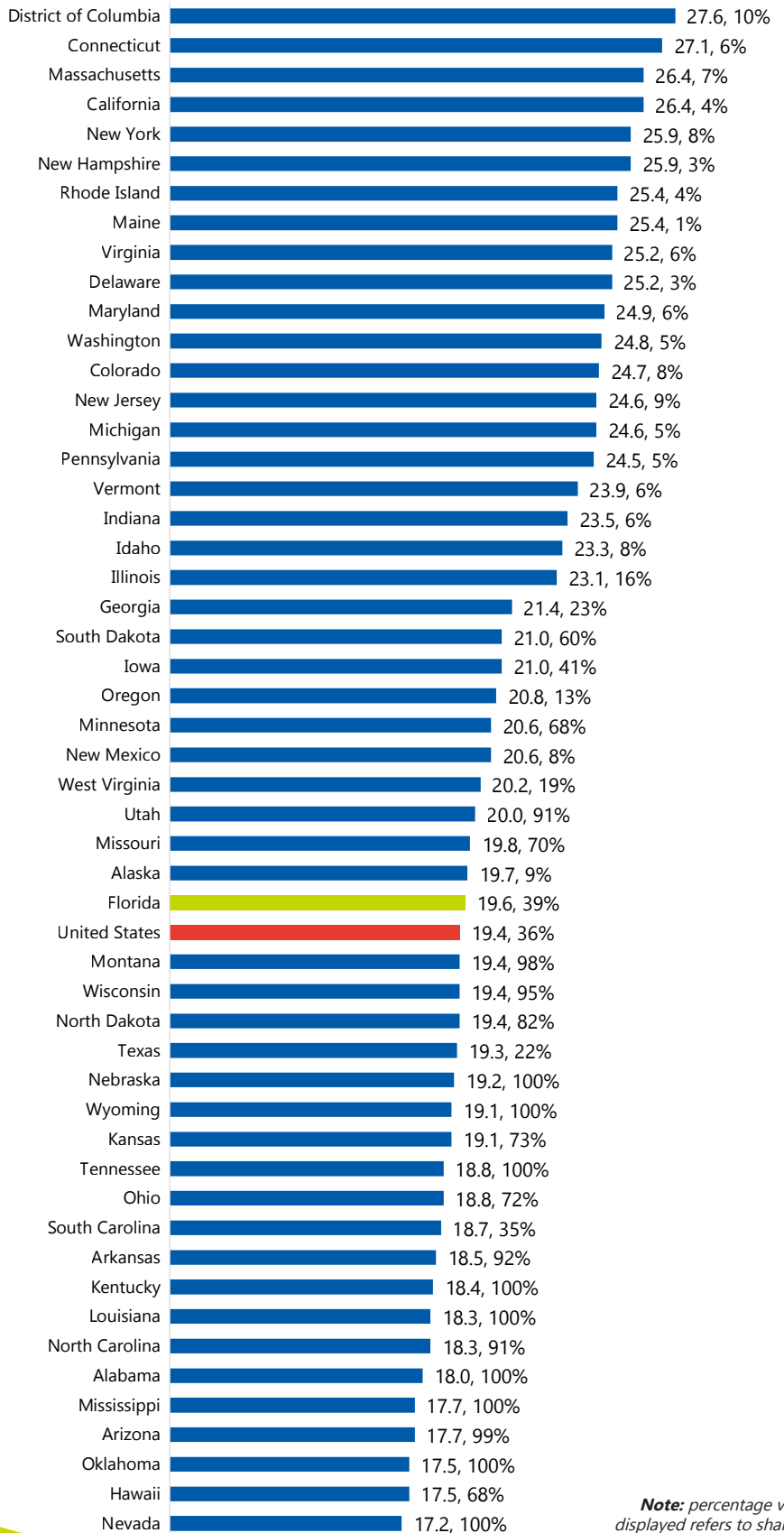


## ACT SCORES AND PARTICIPATION BY STATE

Source: American College Testing

Florida’s 2025 average composite ACT score is 19.6, above the national average of 19.4, with an estimated 39% of graduates taking the exam. Among states with similar participation rates, Florida scores between South Carolina (18.7, 35%) and Iowa (21.0, 41%) — a meaningful result given that Florida’s high school senior population is vastly larger than either state, meaning a greater number of students contributed to that average.

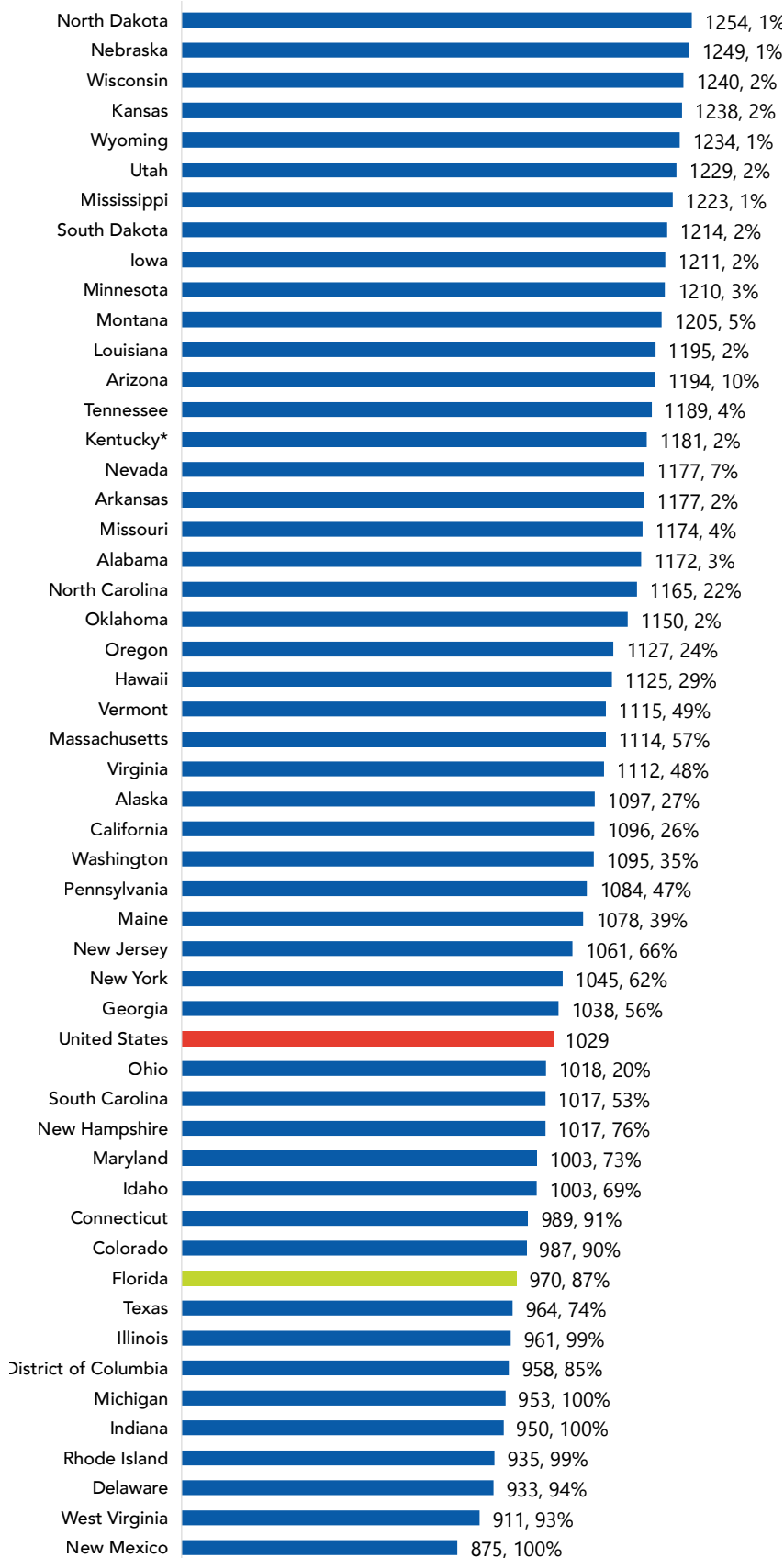
The ACT is one of two widely accepted standardized college entrance exams, accepted by all domestic universities for admissions and placement. Florida universities typically accept either the ACT or SAT, and students may also satisfy an unfulfilled assessment graduation requirement with a concordant or comparative score on either exam. Ranking 31st among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, participation rate is an important variable when comparing state scores; states where a smaller, more self-selected group sits for the exam tend to score higher.



*Note: percentage value displayed refers to share of seniors taking the assessment.*

## SAT SCORES AND PARTICIPATION BY STATE

Source: College Board



The SAT is one of the most widely accepted standardized college entrance exams in the United States, used as an aptitude test for college readiness and placement. Average SAT score is used to recruit and admit students to institutions of varying selectivity across the nation.

Florida universities typically request ACT or SAT scores from first-time in college applicants. The SUS requires a 1200 average SAT score for an institution's incoming fall freshman class as part of its Preeminent Research University criteria.

Florida's 2025 average SAT score is 970, with an estimated 87% of graduates testing. Falling below the national average of 1029, the state ranks 42nd among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Compared to areas with similar participation rates, Florida lies above the District of Columbia (45th, 958, 85%) and below both Colorado (41st, 987, 90%) and Connecticut (40th, 989, 91%) in score. Taken together with Florida's ACT performance, where a smaller and more self-selected group of test-takers scored above the national average, the SAT data reflect the influence of participation rates on state rankings, a caution against reading either score in isolation.

*Note: percentage value displayed refers to share of seniors taking the assessment.*

## ACCESS & SUCCESS

“To and Through” encapsulates the metrics included under access and success. The postsecondary enrollment rate, the share of public high school students that enroll in a public postsecondary or an Independent Colleges and Universities (ICUF) institution within one year of graduation, stands at 53.9%. This figure reflects a gradual increase over the past five years, but a small decline from the previous year. Postsecondary enrollment rates that fall below the state’s talent development goal of 60% must be augmented by other private institutions, students who left Florida for education returning to the state, or migration in order to meet the state’s workforce and labor market needs.

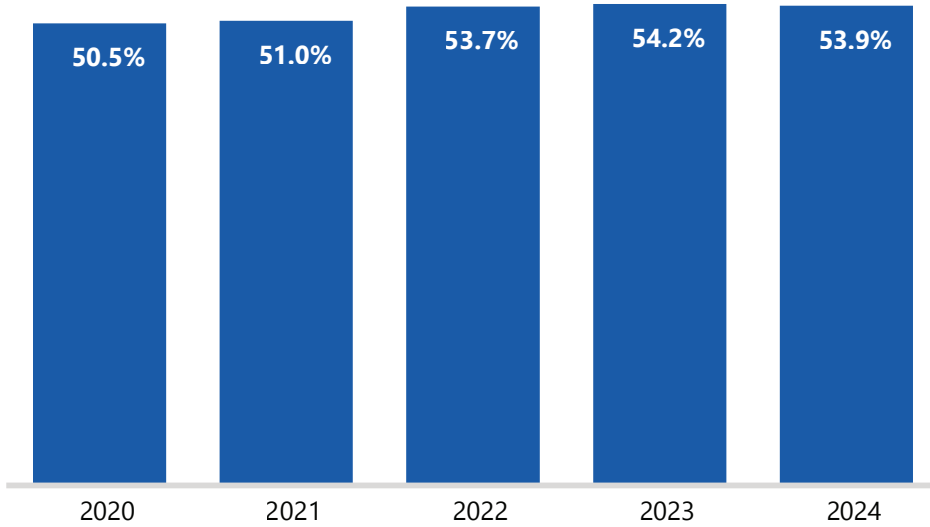
On the other hand, another way to keep the talent pipeline flowing is to retain out-of-state students who enroll in Florida universities and colleges. For SUS institutions, out of state enrollment accounts for roughly one out of every six first-time-in-college students, although individual institutions exhibit wider variation in enrollment patterns of in-state and out-of-state students. For Florida College System institutions, the share of out-of-state enrollment is much less, accounting for roughly one in twenty such students.

Florida is widely recognized for its higher education graduation rates. Along with low tuition and fees, these graduation rates are a primary reason *U.S. News & World Report* has named Florida the #1 state in Higher Education for a decade. Over the past five years, graduation rates within 150% of time (i.e. within six years for a four-year degree and within three years for a two-year degree) have increased from 76% to 79% among state universities and, more modestly, from 41.1% to 42.5% among Florida College System institutions. Each additional percentage point represents hundreds, if not thousands, of additional credentialed graduates.



## FLORIDA POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT TREND

Source: Florida Dept. of Education

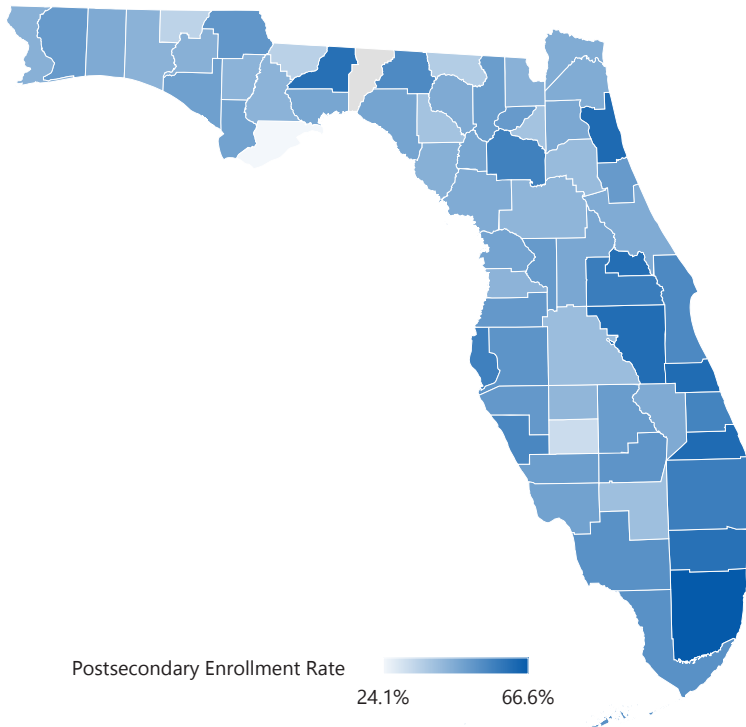


Postsecondary enrollment rate is the share of high school graduates enrolling in any Florida public postsecondary institution or certain private, not-for-profit Florida universities within one academic year of graduation.

While the class of 2024 had a lower enrollment rate than their direct predecessors with 53.9%, a greater number of students from the class of 2024 enrolled in Florida postsecondary than class of 2023.

## DEEP DIVE: POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

Source: Florida Dept. of Education

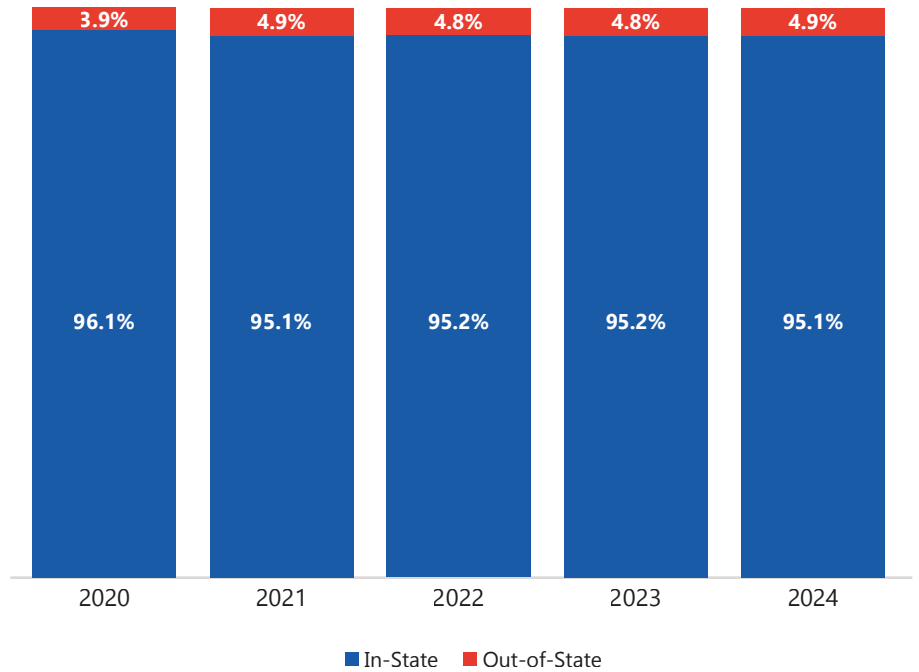


County-level postsecondary enrollment rates reveal the geographic dimension of Florida's access challenge. The range from 24.1% to 66.6% reflects wide variation in local conditions, for example, rural isolation, economic barriers, college-going culture, and the presence of an LCAN. Counties at the low end warrant targeted attention from state policymakers and local college access networks.

## FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM ENROLLMENT BY RESIDENCE TREND

Source: IPEDS

Florida College System institutions serve an overwhelmingly in-state population of first-time, degree or certificate-seeking undergraduates. Between 2020 and 2024, the share of in-state students remained above 95% while out-of-state (including out-of-state, foreign, and unknown residency) students accounted for less than 5% of undergraduate enrollment.

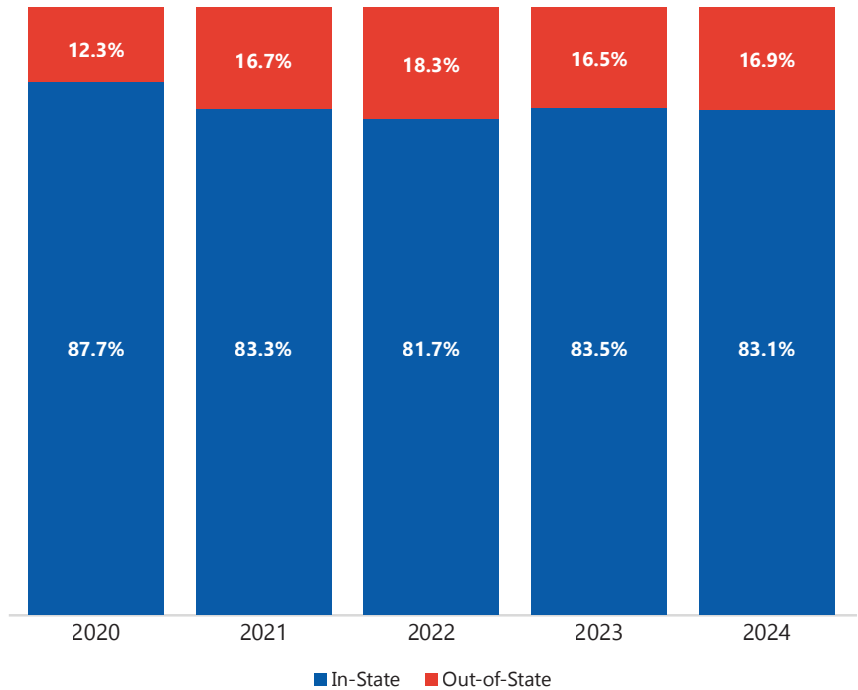


Residency is based on the student's self-reported permanent address at the time of application and does not necessarily reflect their attended high school or tuition status.

## STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ENROLLMENT BY RESIDENCE TREND

Source: IPEDS

Florida's State University System consistently enrolls a predominantly in-state cohort of first-time, degree or certificate-seeking undergraduates. From 2020 to 2024, the share of in-state students ranged from 81.7% to 87.7%. After peaking in 2020, the in-state share declined until 2022 before stabilizing around 83% in recent years. Out-of-state (including out-of-state, foreign, and unknown residency) students' share increased from 12.3% in 2020 to a peak of 18.3% in 2022, before leveling off to around 17% in subsequent years.



Residency is based on the student's self-reported permanent address at the time of application and does not necessarily reflect their attended high school or tuition status.

## BEST PRACTICES: LCAN ENROLLMENT INITIATIVES

Local College Access Networks (LCANs) play a central role in advancing Florida's statewide SAIL to 60 goal – an initiative to ensure that 60% of working-age adults hold a high-quality credential by 2030. Supported by Florida College Access Network (FCAN), these community-based partnerships bring together leaders from K-12 education, higher education, nonprofits, local government, business, and philanthropy to coordinate efforts that strengthen education attainment in the communities they serve.

Currently, 19 LCANs operate across Florida, collectively representing approximately 82% of the state's population. While all LCANs share a commitment to improving college and career readiness, access, and completion, each network is uniquely positioned to address the specific needs of its community.

LCANs across Florida are demonstrating how coordinated, community-driven strategies can increase postsecondary enrollment and strengthen the state's economy. Through the statewide initiative, The Post-High School College Enrollment Innovation Project, led by the Florida College Access Network and the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation, 12 LCANs have committed to increasing college enrollment rates by at least 4% among seniors at Title I high schools. Across regions, LCANs are implementing targeted strategies to meet these goals:



- In Central Florida, **Polk Vision** is targeting non-English-speaking households through financial aid workshops, scholarship sessions, college application guidance, and campus tours to build college-going culture among underrepresented families.



- On the East Coast, **Elevate Brevard** is combining mentorship and incentives to address persistently low college enrollment rates in the city of Cocoa's 32922 ZIP code, one of Brevard County's most economically challenged communities.



- In Southwest Florida, **PLANit Sarasota** is running a Summer Bridge Program to maintain student engagement through the critical transition into a student's first year of college.



- In South Florida, **Bridge 2 Life** is deploying a three-phase model – in-person assemblies, a virtual webinar, and a hands-on FAFSA completion workshop – across three high schools to address low completion rates and economic barriers to enrollment.

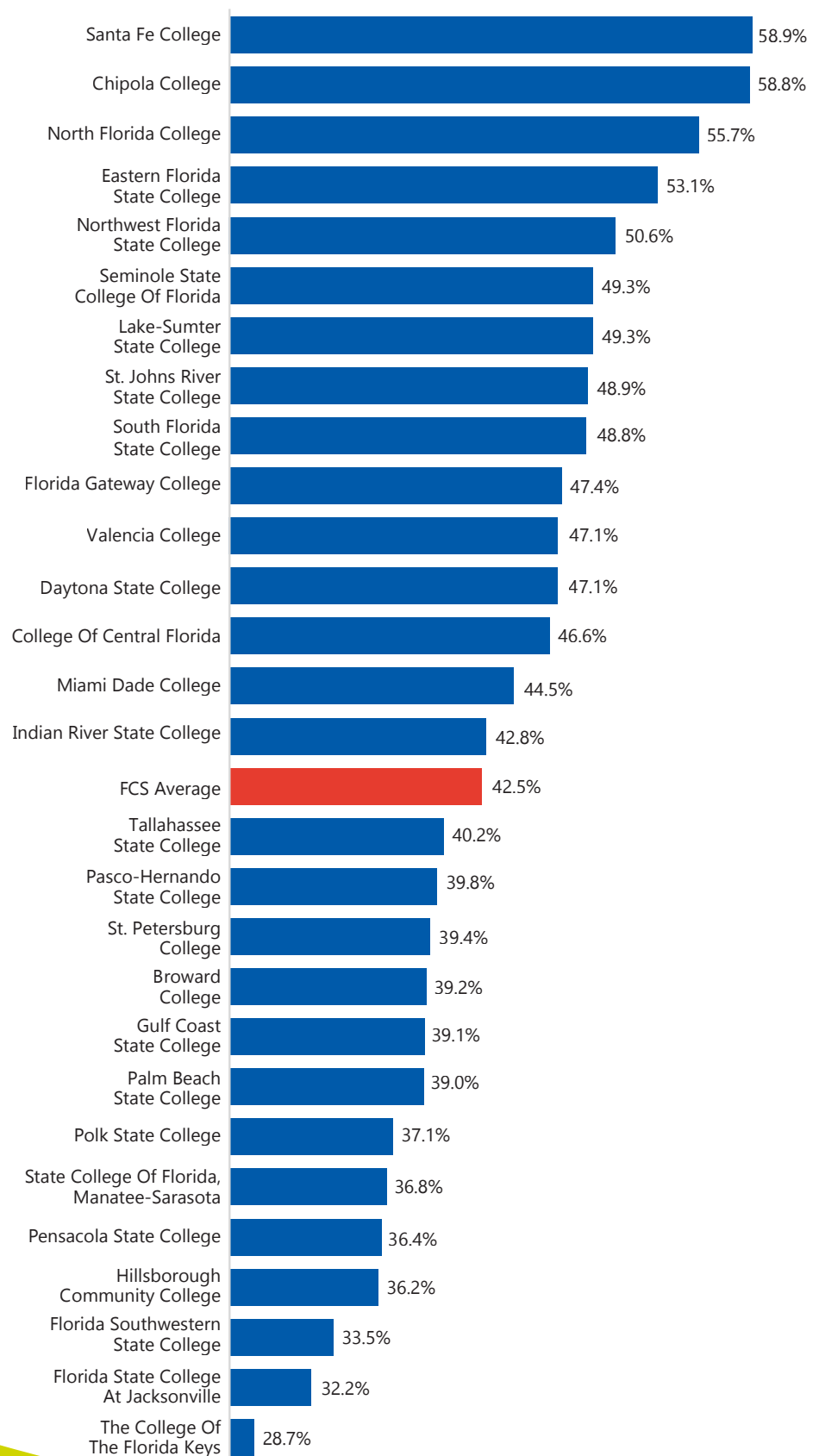
Together, these efforts demonstrate how locally driven, coordinated strategies can produce measurable gains in postsecondary enrollment – gains that, according to Helios Education Foundation's [Florida's Future Billions](#) analysis, carry significant long-term fiscal and social returns for Florida.

## FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM GRADUATION RATES BY INSTITUTION

Source: Florida Dept. of Education

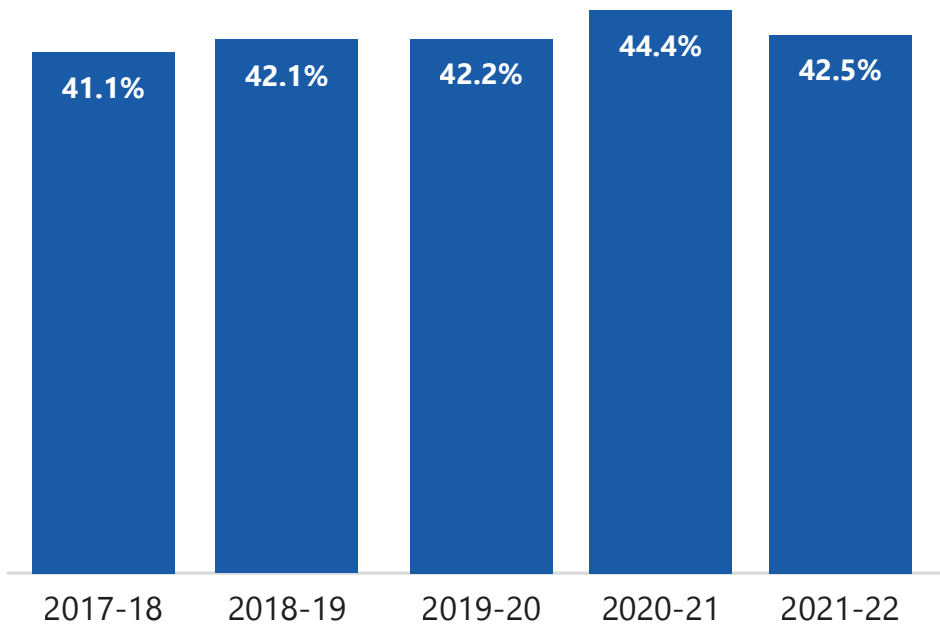
Florida College System 150% graduation rates, defined as the share of first-time in college students who complete a certificate or degree program within 150% of the expected time to completion (e.g., three years for a two-year program), demonstrate institutional efficiency and can aid prospective students in their postsecondary decision. Rates are based on the 2021-22 fall cohort, including full-and part-time students.

Across the system, rates vary from 28.7% to 58.9%, with a systemwide average of 42.5%. Several smaller institutions, such as Santa Fe College and Chipola College, report the highest completion rates, 58.9% and 58.8%, respectively. Larger institutions, including Miami-Dade College (44.5%) and Hillsborough Community College (36.2%), tend to fall at or below the system average of 42.5% — a pattern consistent with research showing that open-access colleges serving higher shares of part-time, working, and economically disadvantaged students face structural completion challenges independent of institutional performance.



## FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM GRADUATION RATE TREND

Source: Florida Dept. of Education



Graduation rates at 150% of normal time defined as students completing their program within one-and-a-half times the expected duration (e.g., a two-year degree completed in three years) have remained relatively steady across the Florida College System (FCS) for recent fall cohorts of full-time, first-time degree- or certificate-seeking students. Rates increased steadily from 41.1% to a peak of 44.4% before declining to 42.5% for the most recent cohort, a drop worth monitoring as pandemic-era supports and enrollment patterns normalize.

## DEEP DIVE: FCS TRANSFER PATHWAYS

Florida's Statewide Articulation Agreement guarantees that students who earn an AA degree (or, in some cases, an AS degree) from a Florida College System (FCS) institution can transfer to a State University System (SUS) institution with junior standing, reducing cost and time to degree completion.

Local College Access Networks (LCANs) play a critical role in strengthening transfer pathways and increasing degree attainment. **PLANit Sarasota** exemplifies this work through coordinated mentoring and student success coaching, expanding access to advising, career planning, and college readiness supports that help students persist and transfer.

**LEAP Tampa Bay** brings together cross-sector partners to advance attainment through college and career centers, personalized coaching for adult learners, and expanded financial aid access. The **FutureMakers Coalition** advances attainment across a five-county region in Southwest Florida by strengthening education-to-workforce pathways, supporting stop-out re-engagement, and coordinating cross-sector partners toward shared credential completion goals.

Together, building on Florida's "2+2" articulation policy, these LCANs demonstrate how community-driven partnerships expand opportunity and strengthen access, transfer, and completion across the state.

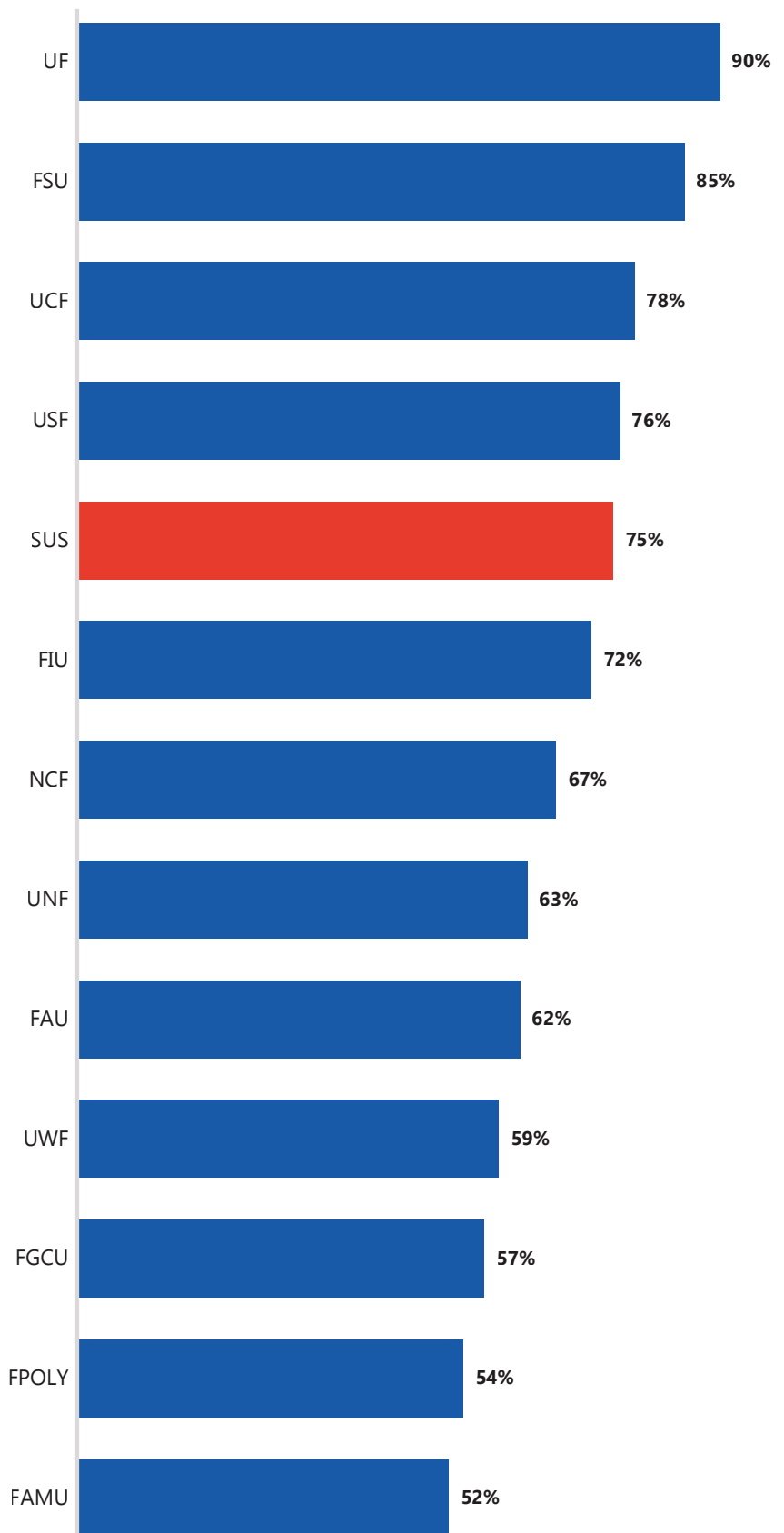
## STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM GRADUATION RATES BY INSTITUTION

Source: SUS Accountability Plan, 2025

This chart presents six-year graduation rates across institutions in the State University System (SUS) of Florida and reflects the percentage of first-time in college (FTIC) students (including both full- and part-time students) who earn a bachelor's degree within six years. At the system level, these rates account for students who transfer and graduate from the same SUS institution.

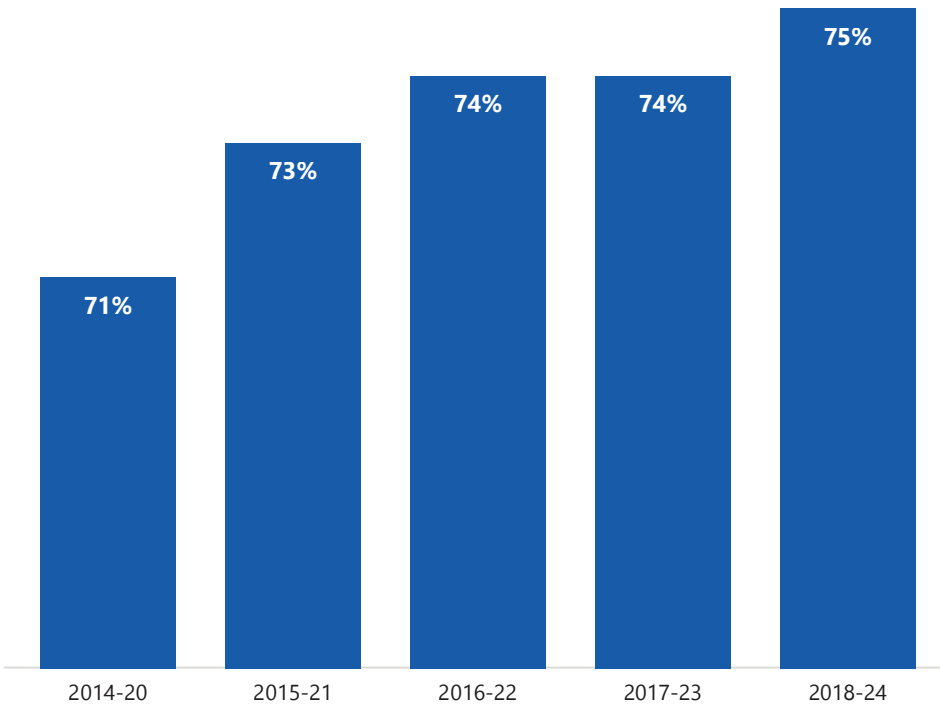
Graduation rates vary by institution, ranging from 52% to 90%, with a systemwide graduation rate of 75%. Several institutions, including the University of Florida (90%), Florida State University (85%), University of Central Florida (78%), and the University of South Florida (76%) exceed the system's average of 75%, while others fall below this benchmark.

The SUS has set a strategic plan goal of an 80% six-year graduation rate for the 2023-29 cohort of students graduating from the same institution.



## STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM GRADUATION RATE TREND

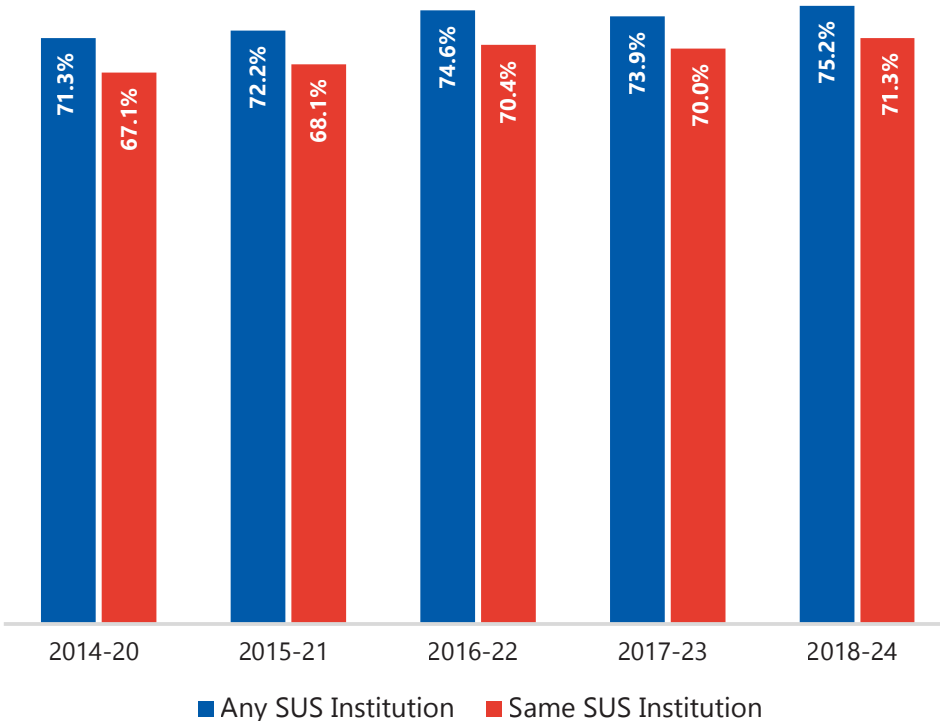
Source: SUS Accountability Plan, 2025



Six-year graduation rates across Florida’s State University System (SUS) have remained strong and steadily improved for recent cohorts of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students, including both full- and part-time enrollees. Rates increased from 71% for the 2014–20 cohort to 75% for the 2018–24 cohort, with incremental gains observed in nearly every year (73% for 2015–21 and 74% for both 2016–22 and 2017–23). The SUS 2030 Strategic Plan sets a goal for 80% of students to graduate from the same institution, placing recent cohorts just shy of this benchmark.

## DEEP DIVE: SUS PELL GRADUATION RATE TREND

Sources: SUS Accountability Plan, 2025 and IPEDS



The six-year graduation rate for first-time-in-college (FTIC) Pell recipients has steadily increased across recent cohorts. For the 2014-20 cohort, 71.3% graduated from *any* State University System (SUS) institution within six years, and 67.1% completed a bachelor’s at their starting SUS institution. Rates rose after a slight dip in 2016-22, reaching 75.2% (*any* SUS) and 71.3% (*same* institution) for the 2018-24 cohort.

## OUTCOMES

Florida continues to progress toward its SAIL to 60 goal – 60% of working age Floridians with a degree or high value credential by the year 2030. The most recent data, reflecting conditions as of 2024, shows Florida right at the United States' value of 54.8%. Florida ranks 25th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and 5th among the ten largest states. It also represents an increase of two percentage points since 2019, suggesting attainment will need to accelerate if the state is to meet its 2030 goal.

***...attainment will need to accelerate if the state is to meet its 2030 goal.***

And, despite anecdotal evidence that earnings are independent of educational attainment, in the aggregate that is simply not the case. Year after year, the positive correlation between increased

educational attainment and earnings is clearly displayed. Currently among Florida workers, the annual earnings premium for a bachelor's degree holder versus a high school graduate alone is 64%, a premium that is paid as a dividend year after year and over time can reach more than a million dollar differential in lifetime earnings.

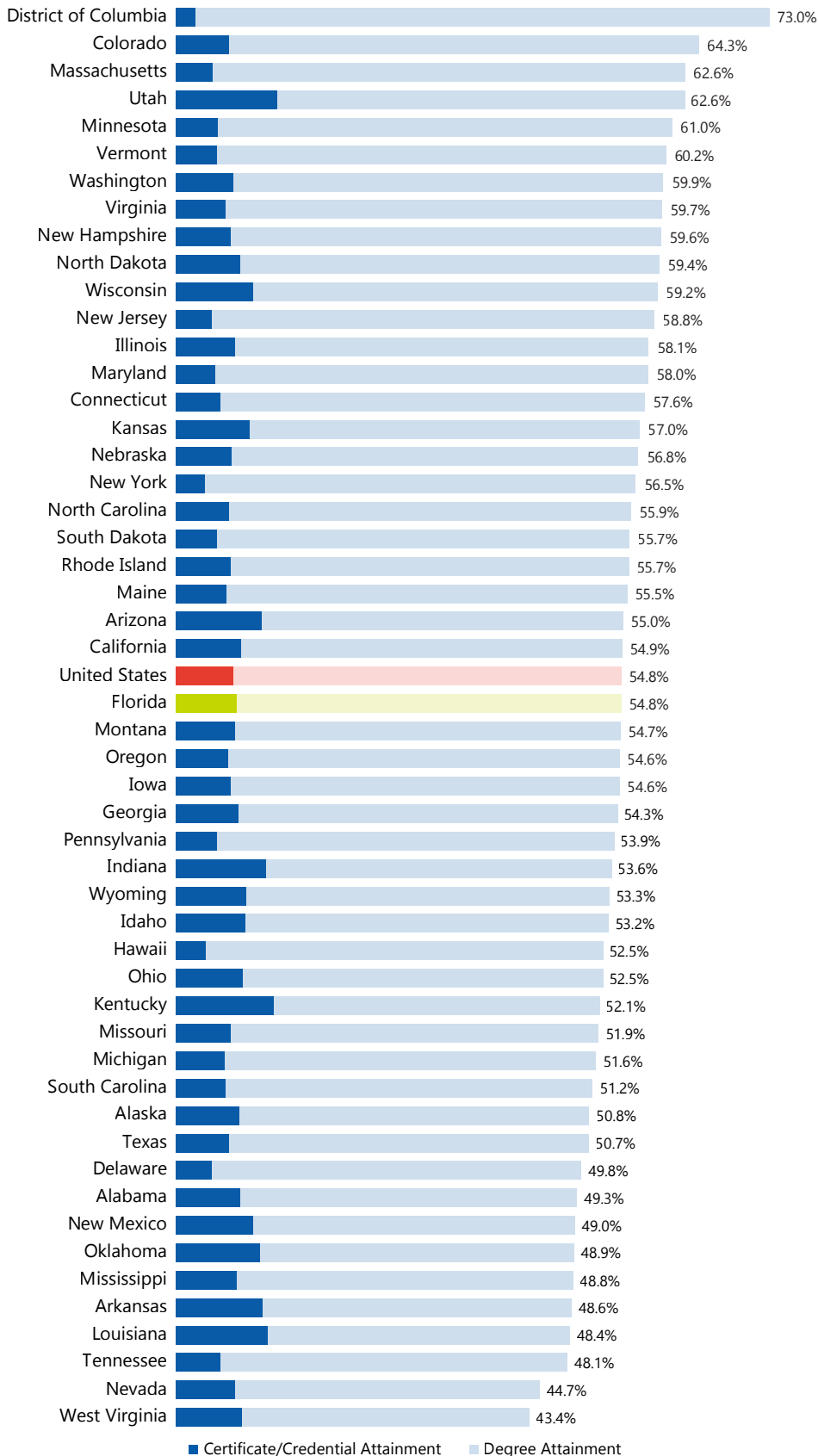
***Year after year, the positive correlation between increased educational attainment and earnings is clearly displayed.***

While Florida is growing, and ranking in the low single digits for population and job growth, the development of our economy as measured by gross domestic product per capita ranks low among the 50 states. Florida's GDP per capita of \$74,217 ranks 34th nationally, below the U.S. average of \$86,170, in part a function of an industry mix weighted toward tourism, hospitality, and services rather than the finance, technology, and energy sectors that drive higher per-capita output elsewhere. As more jobs require higher levels of education, now and increasingly in the future, talent development will be economic development.



# POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT

Source: Lumina Foundation



Lumina Foundation’s annual *Stronger Nation* release reports the nation’s postsecondary attainment, defined as the share of the population 25-64 holding a degree (associate’s and above) or a short-term workforce credential/certificate. States can gauge progress towards attainment goals in addition to reviewing trends to predict talent supply trends for the future of their economies.

Florida’s 2024 postsecondary attainment rate of 54.8% is ranked 25th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, equaling the national postsecondary attainment rate. It is the highest of our bordering neighbors, with Georgia and Alabama ranking 29th and 43rd, respectively. Among similarly-sized states, Florida lies above Texas (41st) and below California (24th) and New York (18th).

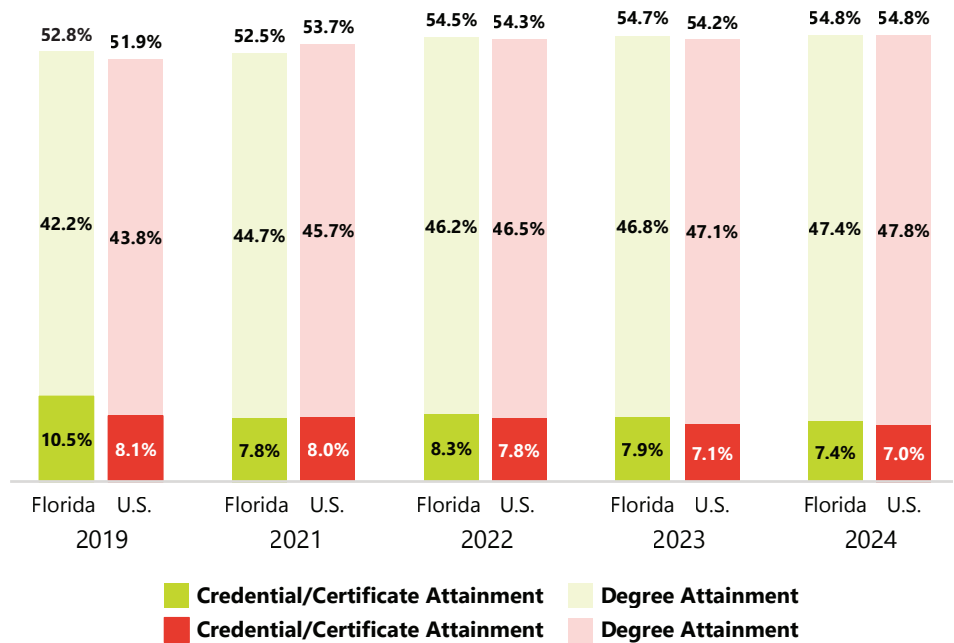
Georgetown’s Center on Education and the Workforce, a collaborator on *Stronger Nation*, reports that 72% of jobs nationwide (compared to Georgetown’s Florida-specific projection of 64%, reflecting the state’s heavier concentration of service-sector employment) will require some form of postsecondary education by 2031; continuing to pursue attainment goals ensures states are prepared to meet workforce and talent needs.

## FLORIDA AND U.S. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT TREND

Source: Lumina Foundation

Postsecondary attainment measures the share of working-age (25–64) adults with an associate’s degree or higher or a short-term workforce credential/certificate. Florida’s SAIL to 60 Goal aims for 60% attainment by 2030.

Florida’s 2024 attainment rate is 54.8%, up 0.1 percentage point from 2023 and a figure that, due to Lumina’s methodology change (see below) which reduced Florida’s credential attainment rate by 0.5 percentage points, represents a stronger underlying gain in degree attainment than the headline number suggests.



2020 data omitted due to quality concerns.

## DEEP DIVE: LUMINA ATTAINMENT METHODOLOGY

The Lumina Foundation’s *Stronger Nation* report leverages data from the U.S. Census Bureau, National Center for Education Statistics, and National Training, Education and Workforce Survey to produce educational attainment figures at national, state, county, and metro area scopes. Educational attainment captures the share of a region’s “working-age” population, defined by Lumina as residents aged 25-64, with a post-high school credential.

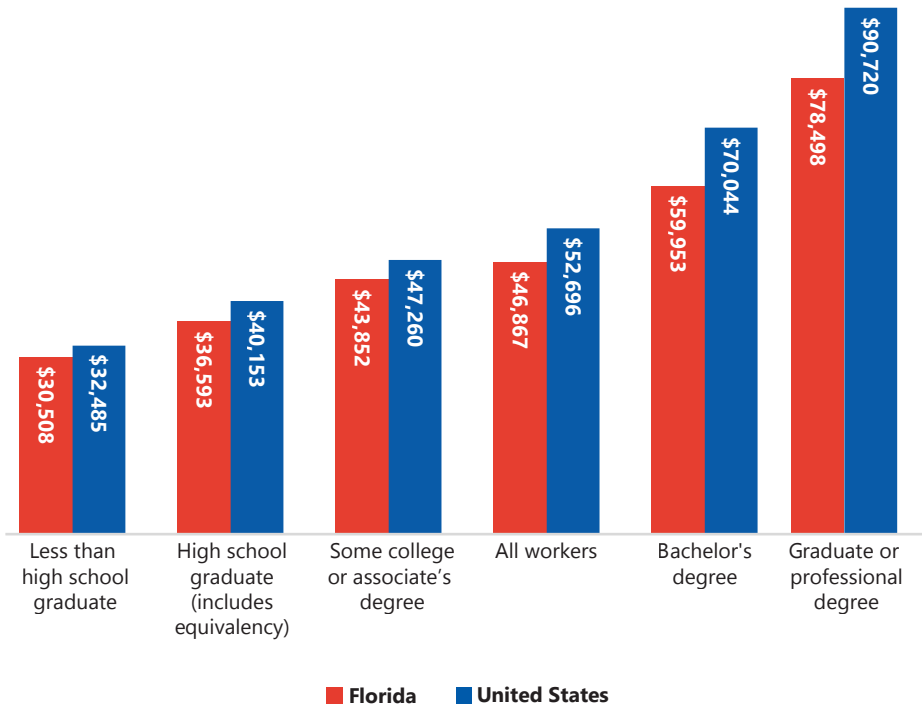
Post high school credentials fall into two categories: degrees or short-term credentials. Certificates and certifications are both considered to be short-term credentials. Certificates are earned at an education institution following the completion of a series of focused courses, while certifications are awarded by

third-party benchmarking organizations following an assessment of industry-wide standards. Certificates are usually awarded for life, while certifications may require upkeep. Both can contribute to labor market value in the pursuit of meaningful employment.

A significant change Lumina applied to their most recent calculation of the credential attainment rate, was to apply a Credentials of Value earnings threshold. Credentials that did not yield an annual salary or wage of at least 15% greater than the national median earnings of a high school graduate were omitted from attainment rate calculations. This change resulted in Florida falling 0.5% in credential attainment from 2023 to 2024 (7.9% to 7.4%).

## FLORIDA AND U.S. MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

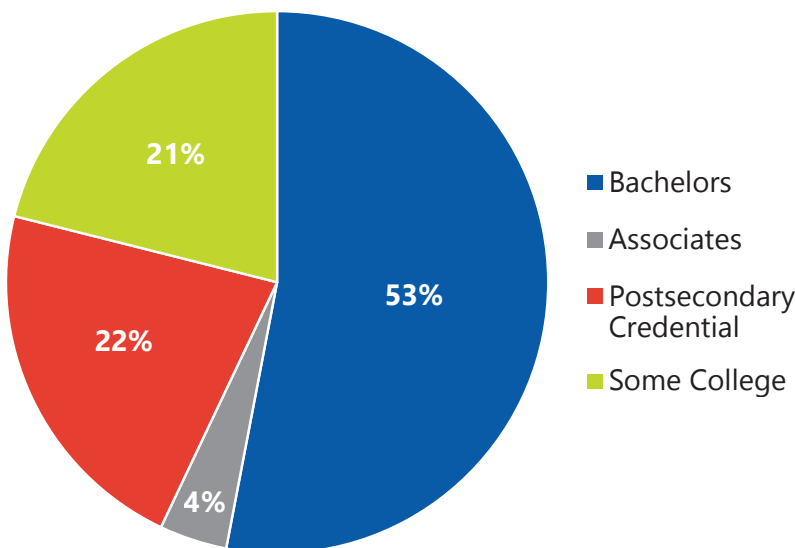
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



Earnings data for 2024 confirm that Florida workers earn less than U.S. averages at every level of educational attainment, yet the premium for additional education holds. Floridians with a bachelor's degree earn \$59,953, about 64% more than those with only a high school diploma, even as that figure falls short of the \$70,044 national median for bachelor's degree holders.

## DEEP DIVE: TOP JOBS BY EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Source: Florida Chamber Foundation, Top 30 High-Demand Careers, Statewide and Regional Projections



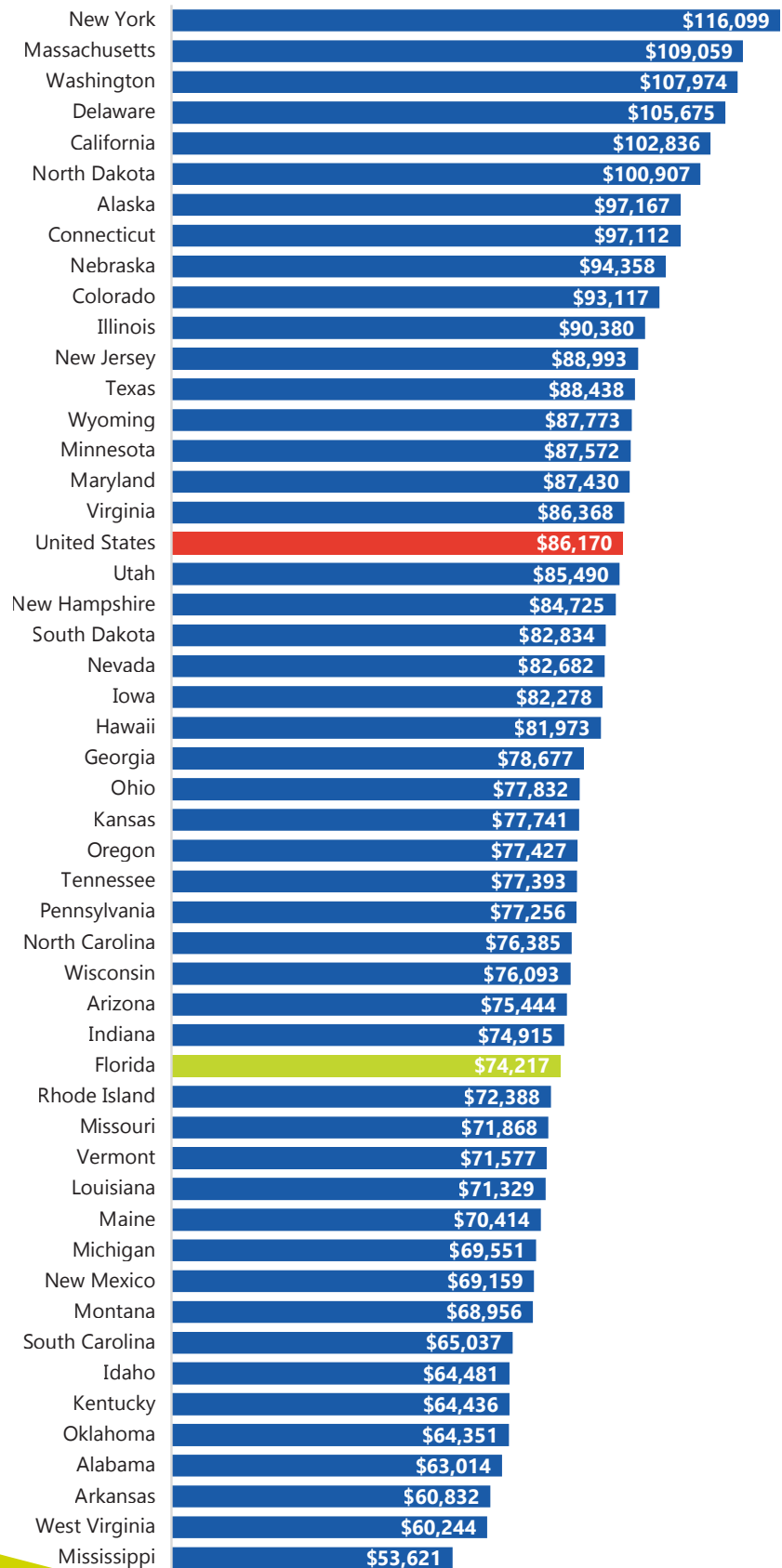
Projections from the Florida Chamber Foundation's Future of Work Initiative highlight substantial job growth across high-demand occupations through 2032. Among the top 30 high-demand careers statewide, approximately 865,000 (53%), will require a bachelor's degree, far exceeding demand for other education levels. In comparison, about 357,000 (22%) jobs will require a postsecondary credential, 344,000 (21%) will require some college, and roughly 66,000 (4%) will require an associate degree.

## GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT PER CAPITA BY STATE

Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis (GDP), U.S. Census Bureau (Population Estimates)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita measures the total economic output of a state divided by its population, offering an overview of economic productivity on a per-person basis.

GDP per capita varies widely across states, from over \$116,000 in New York to just over \$53,000 in Mississippi. Florida’s GDP per capita of \$74,217 falls below the national average of \$86,170, placing it in the lower half of states. This reflects, in part, the state’s industry mix where sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and service-based employment play a significant role compared to higher-output industries like finance, technology, and energy that drive higher per capita figures in other states. These differences highlight the stakes of Florida’s attainment gap. States with higher GDP per capita tend to have higher concentrations of knowledge-economy industries and more credentialed workforces. As the job projections on the preceding page show, more than half of Florida’s highest-demand careers will require a bachelor’s degree by 2032. Closing the attainment gap is the most direct path to moving Florida’s GDP ranking.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Citrus County Coalition for College & Careers**  
**Florida Chamber Foundation**  
**FutureMakers Coalition**  
**PLANit Sarasota**  
**upliftED**

**Bridge 2 Life**  
**Consortium of Florida Education Foundations**  
**Florida Philanthropic Network**  
**LEAP Tampa Bay**  
**Polk Vision**

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## ONLINE RESOURCE: FCAN STATE OF COLLEGE ACCESS DASHBOARD



### STATE OF COLLEGE ACCESS

The Florida College Access Network (FCAN) launched the State of College Access Key Metrics Dashboard in October 2025, a powerful resource that captures the state of college access, readiness, and success within the context of population and economic changes across Florida. Developed to support local college access networks, the interactive dashboard compiles relevant national-, state-, and county-level data into one convenient, user-friendly platform.

The State of College Access Key Metrics Dashboard brings together 15 key indicators, sourced from national and state organizations including the Lumina Foundation, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Community Survey, and the Florida Department of Education. Data metrics are organized into four categories - Context, Readiness, Access and Success, and Outcomes - to help regional users evaluate their community's progress toward Florida's SAIL to 60 goal, which aims to have at least 60% of working-age residents (25-64 years-old) hold a high-value credential or degree. Currently, Florida stands at 54.8%, according to the Lumina Foundation's most recent [Stronger Nation](#) report.

The dashboard is built using Tableau-based data visualizations, allowing users to interact with a range of timely and high-impact metrics such as:

- Educational attainment and earnings by education level
- Postsecondary enrollment and attainment
- Workforce credentials and GDP per capita
- High school graduation rates, FAFSA completion, and college-going trends
- Graduation and enrollment data for the Florida College System (FCS) and State University System (SUS)


Designed with accessibility and clarity in mind, the dashboard serves as a vital tool for community leaders, policymakers, school districts, and workforce planners. By aggregating and simplifying data across multiple dimensions, it helps answer key questions such as:

- How is my county performing compared to state and national trends?
- What gaps exist in readiness, postsecondary access, and attainment?
- Where can programs or policies be improved to support student success?




Learn more today by visiting the State of College Access Key Metrics dashboard.



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## About Florida College Access Network

Florida College Access Network (FCAN) leads the statewide collaborative movement to strengthen Florida by ensuring every Floridian attains education beyond high school towards a rewarding career. We envision a thriving Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility and a prosperous economy for all.

FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies, and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. For more information, visit [www.floridacollegeaccess.org](http://www.floridacollegeaccess.org).

***Online version of this report includes hyperlinked resources.***

*FCAN is a statewide independent organization hosted by the University of South Florida (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative of USF.*