

# SOUTHWEST FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL AND WORKFORCE OUTCOMES REPORT

2024

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**FutureMakers**  
**Coalition**





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# About the Authors

## FutureMakers Coalition

FutureMakers is a collective impact initiative working along the cradle-to-career pathway to create a skilled and sustainable workforce pipeline. The pathway begins with early childhood learning and ends with post-high school credential attainment and career connections. The coalition focuses on systems change to connect untapped workforce with the education and training to fill in-demand jobs by removing attainment barriers and creating a culture of career exploration and aspiration from an early age.

FutureMakers Coalition aims to transform Southwest Florida's workforce by increasing the proportion of working-age adults with college degrees, workforce certificates, industry certifications and other high-quality credentials to 55 percent by 2025.



# FutureMakers Coalition

## Workforce Now

Workforce Now was an original regional research initiative resulting from a collaboration between the three regional universities (Florida SouthWestern State College, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Hodges University) to identify current and future talent requirements for the five counties of Southwest Florida. Founded in October 2012, the initiative was created as an outcome of discussions following the Education Summits produced by The News-Press Group. It was envisioned as a systematic, strategic multi-year focus on understanding and meeting critical workforce needs.

The initiative involved discussions with major employers and industries within the region to better understand their critical employment gaps and help identify skill sets needed for those positions. The plan was to provide a continuous stream of labor force information to employers and educational institutions and to look for ways to create dialogue and new partnerships between businesses and educational institutions. The quality of the regional workforce is a primary competitive factor in the region's ability to grow and prosper in a global marketplace. Workforce Now was discontinued after the 2023 report.



# Executive Summary

FutureMakers Coalition aims to transform Southwest Florida's workforce by increasing the proportion of skilled working age adults with college degrees, workforce certificates, industry certifications and other high-quality credentials to 55 percent by 2025. Previously, Workforce Now, a regional research initiative established in 2013 by Florida SouthWestern State College, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Hodges University, focused on identifying the current and future talent needs of the five counties in Southwest Florida. Because both groups shared a common interest in aligning educational attainment with regional workforce needs, a collaboration between the two initiatives made sense and was mutually beneficial.

The result of this collaboration is the Educational and Workforce Outcomes Report. Now in its fifth year, this report provides regional stakeholders with the latest educational and workforce outcomes for Southwest Florida (defined as the five-county region encompassing Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties). It is one of a series created by FutureMakers Coalition with a view towards identifying opportunities and fostering outcomes to achieve the goal of 55 percent skilled working age adults in support of a diversified and resilient economy, and an improved quality of life for Southwest Florida.

Demographics show that Southwest Florida's population is growing and at a faster rate than Florida, with primary growth occurring in the coastal counties of Southwest Florida. The working age population in the Southwest Florida region increased approximately 13.3 percent between 2013 and 2022. Similarly, the skilled workforce in the region increased approximately 28.6 percent in the same timeframe. Progress toward the 55 percent goal is not uniform among the five Southwest Florida counties. This observation suggests that FutureMakers Coalition and its network partners must not only maintain, but expand, their efforts to identify opportunities and to foster outcomes to achieve the goal of 55 percent in skilled working age adults in support of a diversified and resilient economy.

Educational outcomes showed mixed results in the region. High school graduation rates in Southwest Florida rebounded in 2023 academic year to 86.8 percent but were still below the high of 89.9 percent in 2020 academic year. However, both postsecondary and technical college fall enrollment numbers were down in Fall 2022 compared to Fall 2021 (down 4.2 and 21.2 percent), a trend shared at the state and national level. FAFSA completion rates also trended downwards, declining to 30.1 percent in the 2024 academic year. Several factors contributed to this ongoing trend, including the fact that FAFSA changed its application process causing confusion, questions, and delays. Past trends across the races and ethnicities also remained the same. In general, Southwest Florida's residents who identify as Black or Hispanic and Latino achieved worse educational outcomes, possibly suggesting that 1.) the long-standing systemic barriers still exist for the populations with lower attainment; and 2.) further efforts are needed to support our priority populations – adults with some college, but no degree; adults with no education post-high school, and traditional-age students who are at risk of not pursuing and completing education beyond high school. Businesses and education institutions must design and implement policies and procedures that support equitable outcomes for all and maximize opportunities for the untapped Southwest Florida workforce – the nearly 60 percent working age adults who do not currently hold a high-quality credential beyond high school.

Workforce indicators showed that the regional labor market remains strong. In June 2024, the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 3.2 percent, a slight increase of 0.2 percentage points from the same month last year, yet still below the 5 percent threshold often associated with "full employment". The region is historically a service-based economy, with industries such as retail trade (77,209 jobs), health care and social assistance (63,589 jobs) and accommodation and food services (62,123 jobs) accounting for three of the four largest industries. Nominal wages continue to grow, increasing 4.8 percent from 2022 to 2023 and outpacing growth observed in Florida (4.0 percent) and the United States (3.2 percent). Nominal wage growth has been supported by expansion in higher-wage industries, such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Professional and Technical Services and Manufacturing.

It is important to note that much of the information in this report was developed with the most recent available data from publicly available federal and state databases, which may take into account a lag time from the writing of this report. Furthermore, the most recent available data in this year's report – primarily from 2022 – include the timeframe immediately post the COVID-19 pandemic during which the region's school systems and broader economy were still recovering. In addition, the data from 2022 and 2023 may have been impacted by the effects of Hurricane Ian (on September 28, 2022) and the region's ongoing recovery efforts. Therefore, the data to assess changes in educational outcomes (either an improvement or decline) should be carefully considered relative to these two major, disruptive events.

# Introduction

FutureMakers Coalition aims to transform Southwest Florida's workforce by increasing the proportion of working age adults with college degrees, workforce certificates, industry certifications and other high-quality credentials to 55 percent by 2025.

FutureMakers work along the cradle-to-career pathway to create a skilled and sustainable talent pipeline. The pathway begins with early childhood learning and ends with post-high school credential attainment and career connections. The coalition focuses on systems change to connect untapped workforce with the education and training needed to fill in-demand jobs by removing attainment barriers and creating a culture of career exploration and aspiration from an early age.

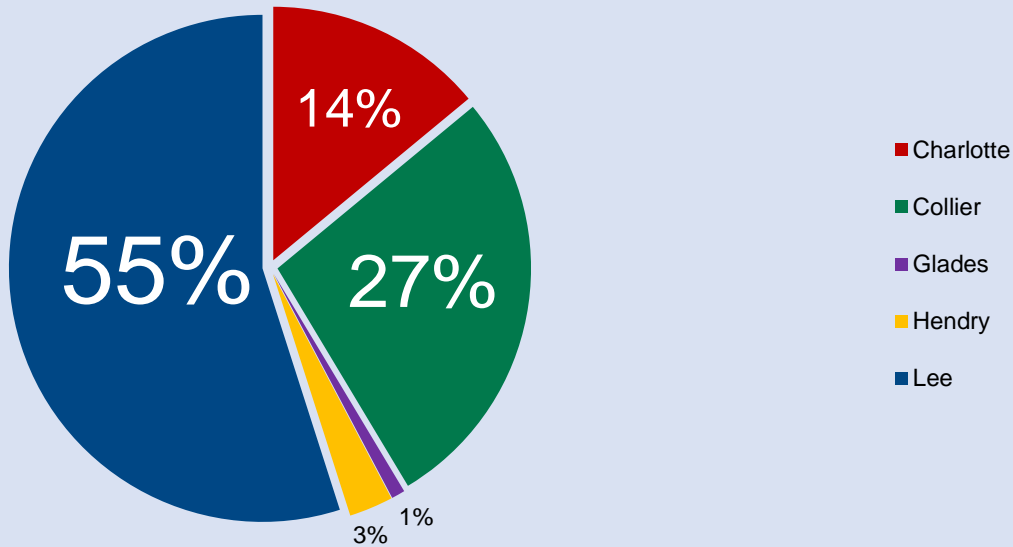
The coalition has grown to 150 partner organizations and over 260 active FutureMakers representing business, education, government, nonprofits, philanthropy, residents, and students across Glades, Hendry, Collier, Lee, and Charlotte counties. The coalition understands that employers must draw from the region's talent pool. Working regionally enhances the coalition's ability to attract state and national funding and expertise. It also helps us share and coordinate best practices to maximize the knowledge and resources we already have.

This report is one of a series created by FutureMakers Coalition with a view towards identifying opportunities and fostering outcomes to achieve the goal of 55 percent skilled working age adults in support of a diversified and resilient economy and improved quality of life for Southwest Florida. For the purpose of this report, a skilled working age adult has a college degree, workforce certificate, industry certification, or other high-quality credential beyond high school. The report consolidates a summary of demographic information and educational outcomes, as well as the Workforce Now analyses, for the Southwest Florida region.

In 2020, Southwest Florida was designated a Talent Hub by the Lumina Foundation in partnership with The Kresge Foundation and joined 25 other Talent Hubs across the USA. These communities meet rigorous standards for creating environments that cultivate, attract, and retain talent, particularly among today's students, many of whom are adults, Black, Hispanic, or Native American, students from low-income households, or the first in their families to go to college.

In 2023, Florida Gulf Coast University and FutureMakers were awarded a \$23 million grant from the United States Department of Commerce to formalize and grow sector strategies by offer training to the untapped workforce. The four target industries for the Equitable Jobs Pipeline project are health care, manufacturing, PK-12 public education, and logistics. More than 1,700 local job seekers from underserved populations who face barriers to education, employment, and career advancement will be able to benefit from this program.

**Chart 1-1: Population**  
2023



Source: Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Demographics

### Population

Table 1-1 shows the population of each county in the Southwest Florida region, as well as the state of Florida. Southwest Florida’s population increased to 1,458,081 in 2023, up 1.1 percent from the previous year, and up 22.1 percent from 2013. The region’s population growth has exceeded the state growth since 2010. Ninety-six percent of the region’s population lives in coastal Lee, Collier, and Charlotte Counties. Additional population data are included in Appendix B.

**Table 1-1: Area Population**

Area	2013	2023	Percent Change	Share of Region Population
Charlotte	164,112	204,126	24.4%	14.0%
Collier	331,380	399,480	20.6%	27.4%
Glades	12,336	12,591	2.1%	0.9%
Hendry	37,681	40,895	8.5%	2.8%
Lee	648,719	800,989	23.5%	54.9%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>	<b>1,194,228</b>	<b>1,458,081</b>	<b>22.1%</b>	--
<b>Florida</b>	<b>19,259,543</b>	<b>22,634,867</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	--

Source: Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research



## Population by Age

Table 1-2 presents a breakdown of the Southwest Florida population into two age groups: residents between the ages of 25 and 64 (working-age population) and those aged 65 and over (retirement age population). Southwest Florida's working age population accounted for 45.5 percent of the total regional population in 2022, a share lower than Florida (51.1 percent). On the other hand, 31.1 percent of the Southwest Florida population was at retirement age, 10.2 percentage points above the state.

Lee County had the most working-age residents (360,033 residents, 46.6 percent of the total county population), followed by Collier County (166,968 residents, 43.9 percent of total county population), Charlotte County (81,114 residents, 42.7 percent of total county population), Hendry County (20,262 residents, 50.8 percent of total county population), and Glades County (6,303 residents, 51.8 percent of total county population).

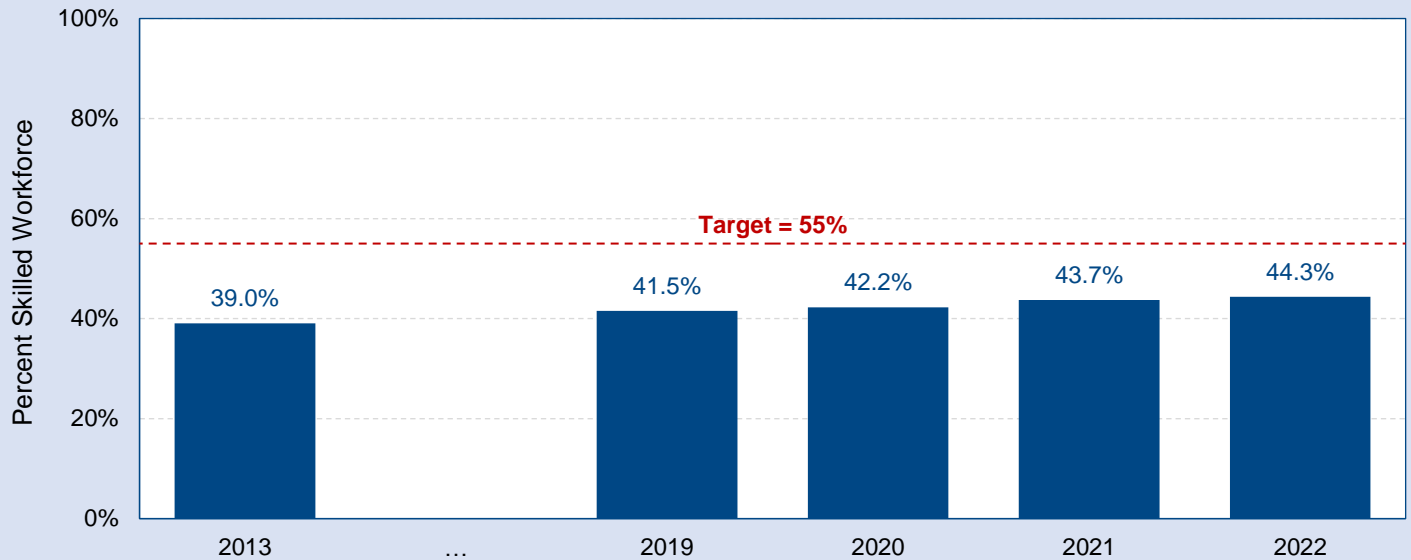
### Table 1-2: Population by Age

Area	2013	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Charlotte County</b>					
<i>Working age population</i>	72,607	77,699	79,563	80,051	81,114
<i>Percent of total population</i>	45.0%	42.9%	42.8%	43.3%	42.7%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	56,908	71,735	74,548	73,664	76,614
<i>Percent of total population</i>	35.3%	39.6%	40.1%	39.9%	40.3%
<b>Collier County</b>					
<i>Working age population</i>	152,784	164,923	167,591	165,587	166,968
<i>Percent of total population</i>	46.6%	44.4%	44.2%	44.4%	43.9%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	89,939	117,197	122,024	119,479	124,784
<i>Percent of total population</i>	27.4%	31.6%	32.2%	32.0%	32.8%
<b>Glades County</b>					
<i>Working age population</i>	6,580	6,574	6,706	6,372	6,303
<i>Percent of total population</i>	50.3%	48.6%	48.7%	52.3%	51.8%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	2,947	3,638	3,885	3,315	3,266
<i>Percent of total population</i>	22.5%	26.9%	28.2%	27.2%	26.8%
<b>Hendry County</b>					
<i>Working age population</i>	18,873	20,326	21,039	19,768	20,262
<i>Percent of total population</i>	49.2%	49.9%	50.7%	50.1%	50.8%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	4,588	5,345	5,601	5,303	5,340
<i>Percent of total population</i>	12.0%	13.1%	13.5%	13.4%	13.4%
<b>Lee County</b>					
<i>Working age population</i>	309,542	347,677	355,324	354,516	360,033
<i>Percent of total population</i>	48.8%	47.1%	47.0%	47.1%	46.6%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	154,036	207,169	215,942	213,650	223,302
<i>Percent of total population</i>	24.3%	28.1%	28.5%	28.4%	28.9%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>					
<i>Working age population</i>	<b>560,386</b>	<b>617,199</b>	<b>630,223</b>	<b>626,294</b>	<b>634,680</b>
<i>Percent of total population</i>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>45.9%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>46.0%</b>	<b>45.5%</b>
<i>Retirement age population</i>	<b>308,418</b>	<b>405,084</b>	<b>422,000</b>	<b>415,411</b>	<b>433,306</b>
<i>Percent of total population</i>	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>30.6%</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>31.1%</b>
<b>Florida</b>					
<i>Working age population</i>	<b>9,917,578</b>	<b>10,760,317</b>	<b>10,907,414</b>	<b>11,002,325</b>	<b>11,059,200</b>
<i>Percent of total population</i>	<b>51.9%</b>	<b>51.5%</b>	<b>51.4%</b>	<b>51.6%</b>	<b>51.1%</b>
<i>Retirement age population</i>	<b>3,399,925</b>	<b>4,205,428</b>	<b>4,347,912</b>	<b>4,346,965</b>	<b>4,520,647</b>
<i>Percent of total population</i>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>20.9%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table B01001: Sex by Age

### Chart 1-2: Skilled Workforce

Southwest Florida



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, IPUMS  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Skilled Workforce

Chart 1-2 and Table 1-3 depict the skilled workforce for Southwest Florida.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 44.3 percent of the total working age population in Southwest Florida was considered skilled labor in 2022.<sup>2</sup> The skilled workforce in Southwest Florida has grown since 2013, when only 39.0 percent of the total working age population was skilled. Collier County had the largest skilled workforce rate in the region, measured at 49.0 percent of total working age population. Lee County had the next highest rate (44.4 percent), followed by Charlotte County (41.2 percent). Hendry County and Glades County had rates of 24.1 and 22.6 percent, respectively.

All five Southwest Florida counties had a lower percentage of skilled workforce than the state of Florida (50.4 percent). The region and each individual county, as well as the state of Florida, also remain below the 55 percent goal set (see Chart 1-3).

**Table 1-3: Skilled Workforce**

Area	2013	2019	2020	2021	2022
Charlotte County	38.0%	37.1%	38.4%	40.9%	41.2%
Collier County	41.7%	45.6%	46.9%	48.8%	49.0%
Glades County	24.7%	20.0%	19.4%	20.5%	22.6%
Hendry County	21.2%	21.6%	25.2%	24.0%	24.1%
Lee County	39.3%	42.2%	42.3%	43.5%	44.4%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>	<b>39.0%</b>	<b>41.5%</b>	<b>42.2%</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>44.3%</b>
<b>Florida</b>	<b>44.4%</b>	<b>48.0%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>50.4%</b>

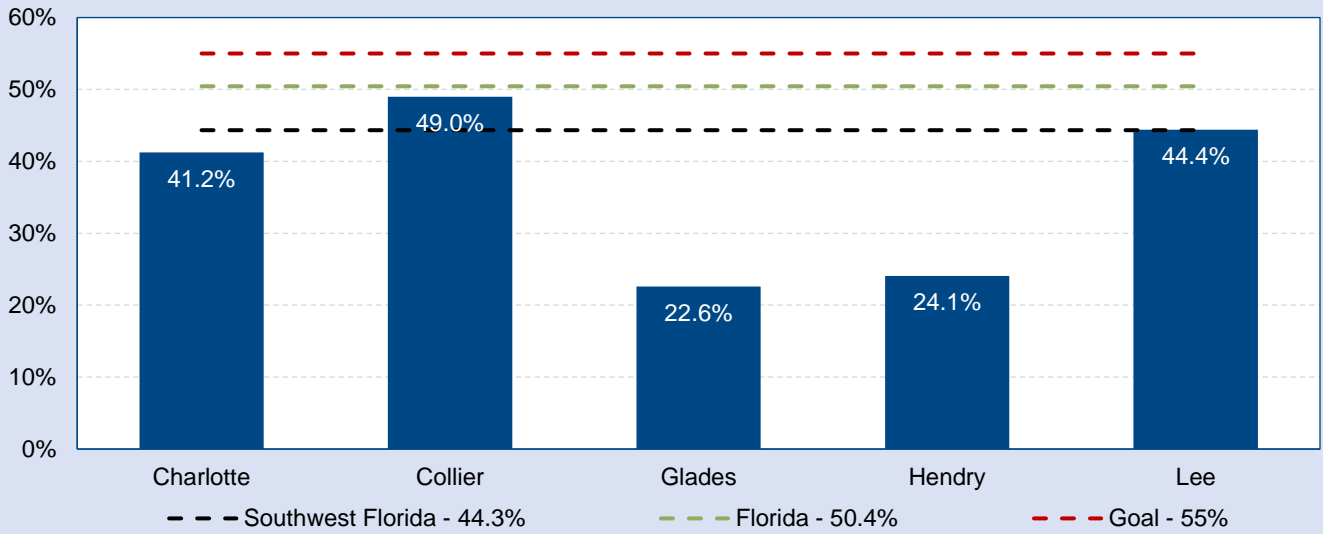
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, IPUMS

<sup>1</sup> See the Methodology for more information on how skilled workforce is calculated.

<sup>2</sup> Delays in census processing due to Covid-19 may have impacted estimates produced in the 2020 and 2021 ACS. The reader should exercise caution when comparing results to past years. See [Population Controls for the 2021 ACS](#) for more information.

### Chart 1-3: Skilled Workforce by County

Southwest Florida  
2022



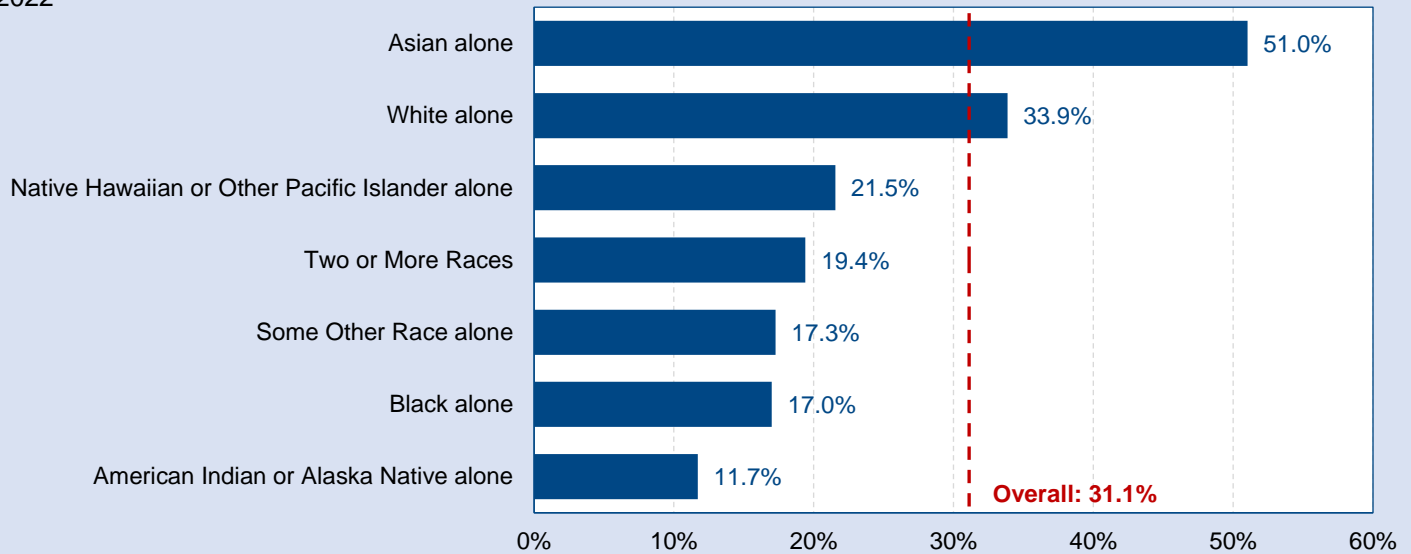
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, IPUMS  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute



This observation suggests that FutureMakers Coalition and its network partners must not only maintain, but expand, their efforts to identify opportunities and to foster outcomes to achieve the goal of 55 percent skilled workforce goal in support of a diversified and resilient economy.

### Chart 1-4: Educational Attainment by Race

Percent of Southwest Florida population 25 and over with at least a Bachelor's degree  
2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Educational Attainment by Race

Chart 1-4 and Table 1-4 show the percent of the total population at least 25 years old that have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, broken down by race.<sup>3</sup> In 2022, 33.9 percent of Southwest Florida residents who identified as White had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 17.0 percent for residents who identified as Black. Residents who identified as Asian reported the greatest percentage of having at least a bachelor's degree at 51.0 percent.

It is important to point out this chart illustrates residents aged 25 years and older and does not solely represent the attainment of the skilled workforce (residents between the ages of 25 and 64 years old). Furthermore, it does not include those with high-quality credentials obtained in programs that require less than a bachelor's degree program.

### Table 1-4: Educational Attainment by Race

Southwest Florida  
2022

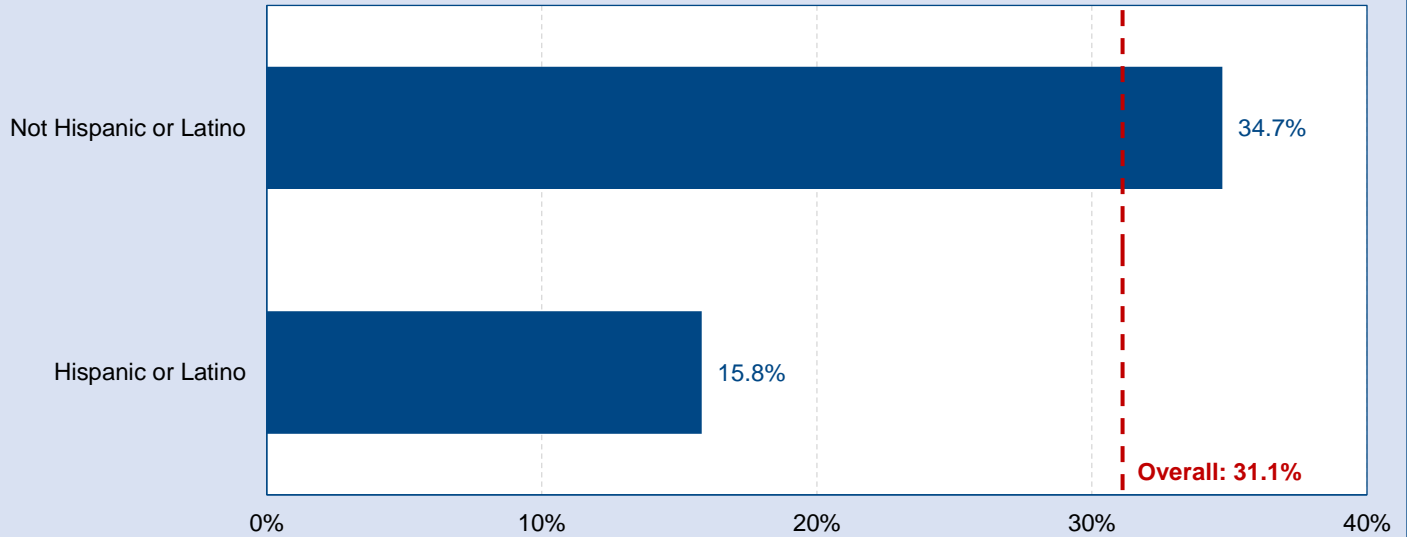
Race	Bachelor's degree or higher	Total population 25 and over	Percent with Bachelor's degree or higher
White alone	286,610	846,652	33.9%
Black alone	11,020	64,810	17.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	413	3,529	11.7%
Asian alone	8,445	16,550	51.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone	120	557	21.5%
Some Other Race alone	5,555	32,153	17.3%
Two or More Races	20,130	103,735	19.4%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>332,293</b>	<b>1,067,986</b>	<b>31.1%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates

<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey has two separate questions for race and ethnicity; for example, the respondent could have reported both Black as race and Hispanic or Latino as ethnicity. Therefore, the Hispanic and Latino data are presented separately in Chart 1-5 since that is how the U.S. Census Bureau collects the information.

### Chart 1-5: Educational Attainment for Hispanic and Latino Population

Percent of Southwest Florida Population 25 and Over with at least a Bachelor's Degree  
2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Educational Attainment for Hispanic and Latino Population

Like the data in Chart 1-4, Educational Attainment by Race, 15.8 percent of Southwest Florida residents who identified as Hispanic or Latino reported at least a bachelor's degree in 2022, compared to 34.7 percent for residents who identified as Not Hispanic or Latino.



The data in Charts 1-4 and 1-5 suggest that the discrepancies in attaining at least a Bachelor's degree among the races and ethnicities represented by Southwest Florida's non-White residents may be the result of long-standing barriers that still exist for the populations with lower attainment.



# FutureMakers Coalition



Educational Outcomes



# FutureMakers Coalition



## Aspiration and Preparation

	Indicator		Measure	Trending
	<b>Kindergarten Readiness*</b> Percent Pre-K students considered ready for kindergarten	SWFL	48.1%	--
		Florida	51.2%	↑
	<b>Third Grade Reading*</b> Percent third grade students with satisfactory reading scores	SWFL	52.0%	↑
		Florida	55.0%	↑
	<b>High School Graduation Rates</b> High school graduation rate	SWFL	86.8%	↑
		Florida	88.0%	↑

*\*The assessment used to measure these indicators changed for the 2022-23 academic year to the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), making comparisons to prior years difficult. See the accompanying sections for FAST data for these outcomes.*

## Overview

Kindergarten readiness, the percent of pre-K students considered ready for kindergarten, was 48.1 percent in Fall 2023, 3.1 percentage points below the state. The third grade reading proficiency rate in Southwest Florida was 52 percent in the 2023-24 academic year, 3 percentage points below Florida. The Southwest Florida high school graduation rate improved to 86.8 percent during the 2022-23 academic year but remained 1.2 percentage points beneath the state.

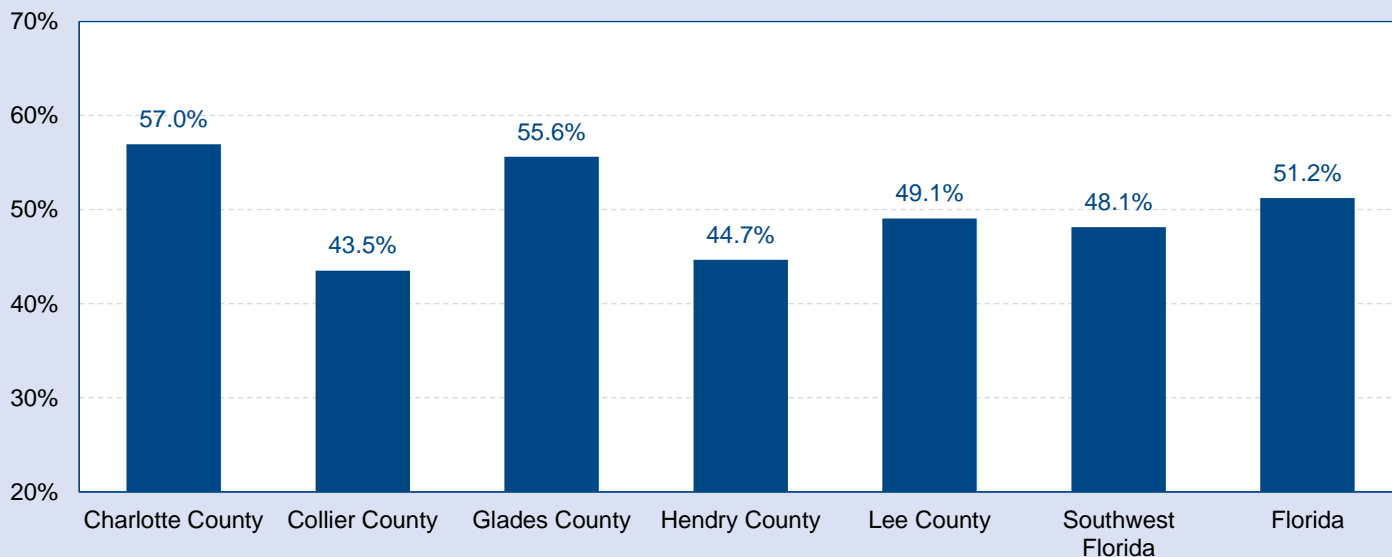


Florida adopted a statewide Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System known as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) in the 2022-23 academic year. The FAST Star Early Literacy assessment now serves as the kindergarten readiness screener. As a result, the reader should exercise caution when drawing comparisons between results from Fall 2022 and results from prior years. See the accompanying sections for FAST data.



### Chart 2-1: Kindergarten Readiness

Percent scoring 690+ on FAST Star Early Literacy assessment, Fall 2023



Source: Florida Department of Education

Note: Hendry County results do not include information from Digital Academy of Florida.

Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Kindergarten Readiness

Chart 2-1 and Table 2-1 show kindergarten readiness for Southwest Florida, along with each of the five counties.<sup>4</sup> Kindergarten readiness is measured through the FAST Star Early Literacy assessment, a screener exam administered to kindergarten students during the first 30 days of the school year. Students that score a 690 or higher are considered “ready for kindergarten”.

In Fall 2023, 48.1 percent of total kindergarten students in Southwest Florida were considered ready for kindergarten, virtually unchanged from the previous year. This percentage was below the state of Florida, measured at 51.2 percent. Charlotte County had the highest percentage in Fall 2023, with a kindergarten readiness rate of 57.0 percent. Glades County was next highest at 55.6 percent, followed by Lee County (49.1 percent), Hendry County (44.7 percent), and Collier County (43.5 percent).



Collier County dipped 6.3 percentage points from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023. There is no data available by demographics, but data at a school level for Collier County was evaluated. There was no individual school that saw a significant decline causing this, but instead was just general across the board for majority of schools (30 of 37 schools with data available saw percentage point declines from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Florida adopted a statewide Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System known as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) in the 2022-23 academic year. The FAST Star Early Literacy assessment now serves as the kindergarten readiness screener. As a result, the reader should exercise caution when comparing data in this report to data before Fall 2022.

**Table 2-1: Kindergarten Readiness**

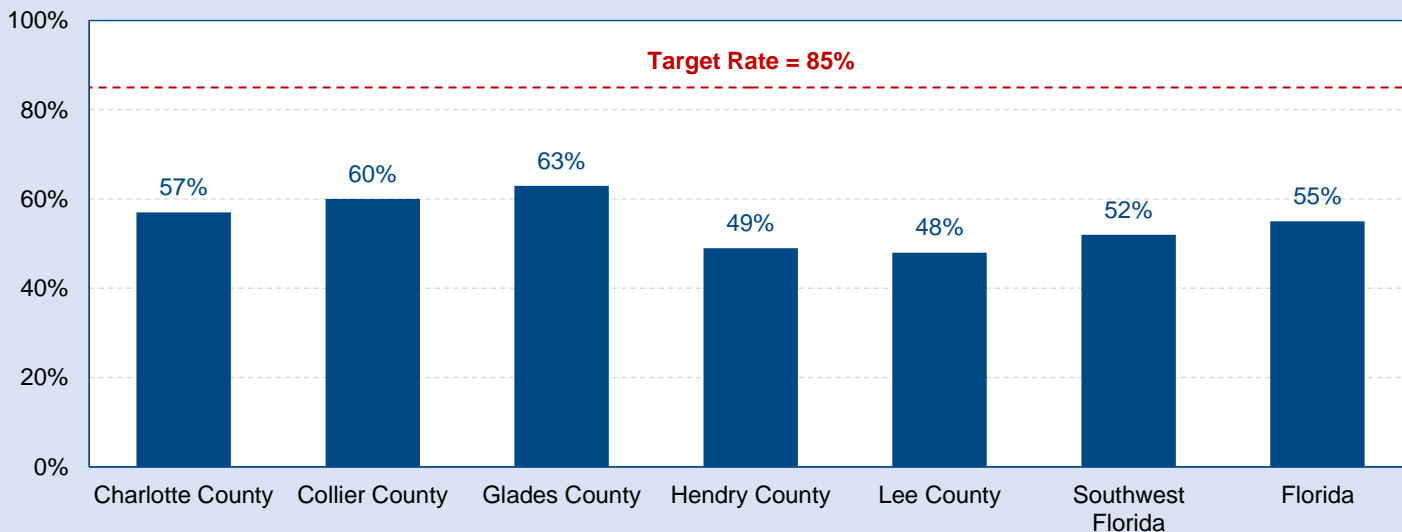
<b>Area</b>	<b>Fall 2022</b>	<b>Fall 2023</b>
Charlotte County		
Number "ready for kindergarten"	597	581
Number of test takers	1,070	1,020
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	55.8%	57.0%
Collier County		
Number "ready for kindergarten"	1,536	1,338
Number of test takers	3,085	3,074
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	49.8%	43.5%
Glades County		
Number "ready for kindergarten"	67	79
Number of test takers	134	142
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	50.0%	55.6%
Hendry County		
Number "ready for kindergarten"	226	227
Number of test takers	476	508
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	47.5%	44.7%
Lee County		
Number "ready for kindergarten"	2,958	3,107
Number of test takers	6,422	6,333
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	46.1%	49.1%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>		
<b>Number "ready for kindergarten"</b>	<b>5,384</b>	<b>5,332</b>
<b>Number of test takers</b>	<b>11,187</b>	<b>11,077</b>
<b>Percent "ready for kindergarten"</b>	<b>48.1%</b>	<b>48.1%</b>
<b>Florida</b>		
<b>Number "ready for kindergarten"</b>	<b>92,755</b>	<b>95,494</b>
<b>Number of test takers</b>	<b>188,511</b>	<b>186,417</b>
<b>Percent "ready for kindergarten"</b>	<b>49.2%</b>	<b>51.2%</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education

Note: Hendry County data does not include information from Digital Academy of Florida.

### Chart 2-2: Third Grade Reading Proficiency

Percent scoring 3 or above  
2023-24 Academic Year



Source: Florida Department of Education

Note: Hendry County results do not include information from Digital Academy of Florida.

Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Third Grade Reading Proficiency

Chart 2-2 and Table 2-2 show the third grade reading proficiency<sup>5</sup> (students scoring at least a 3 on the FAST PM3 exam) for Southwest Florida, along with each of the five counties. Southwest Florida had a third grade reading proficiency rate of 52 percent during the 2023-24 academic year. Southwest Florida’s third grade reading proficiency remains well below the 85 percent target rate and is below the state (55 percent).

None of the five Southwest Florida counties achieved the 85 percent target rate. Glades County had the highest rate of third grade reading proficiency at 63 percent during the 2023-24 academic year. Collier county had the next highest reading proficiency (60 percent), followed by Charlotte County (57 percent), Hendry County (49 percent), and Lee County (48 percent).

<sup>5</sup> Florida adopted a statewide Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System known as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) in the 2022-23 academic year. Results are based on provisional achievement level cuts that are linked to each assessment’s respective 2021-2022 reporting scale, as required by s. [1008.34\(7\)\(d\)](#), Florida Statutes. Therefore, comparisons should not be made between the 2023 data and previous years’ data.

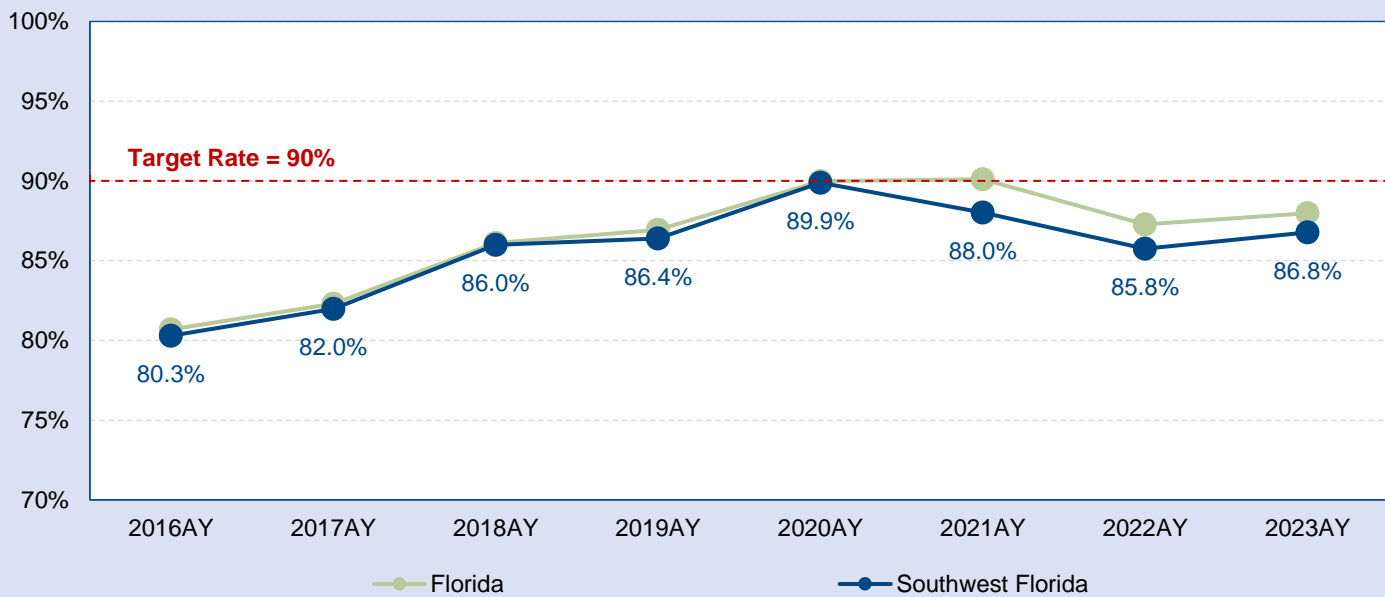
**Table 2-2: Third Grade Reading Proficiency**

<b>Area</b>	<b>2023AY</b>	<b>2024AY</b>
Charlotte County		
Number of Students	1,231	1,239
Percent in Level 3 or Above	56%	57%
Collier County		
Number of Students	3,527	3,615
Percent in Level 3 or Above	56%	60%
Glades County		
Number of Students	181	158
Percent in Level 3 or Above	58%	63%
Hendry County		
Number of Students	529	517
Percent in Level 3 or Above	39%	49%
Lee County		
Number of Students	8,089	7,644
Percent in Level 3 or Above	42%	48%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>		
<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>13,557</b>	<b>13,173</b>
<b>Percent in Level 3 or Above</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Florida</b>		
<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>221,504</b>	<b>216,473</b>
<b>Percent in Level 3 or Above</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>55%</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education

Note: Hendry County information does not include information from Digital Academy of Florida.

**Chart 2-3: High School Graduation Rate**



Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## High School Graduation Rate

Chart 2-3 and Table 2-3 show the high school graduation rates for Southwest Florida, along with each of the five counties. Southwest Florida had a high school graduation rate of 86.8 percent during the 2022-23 academic year, up 1.0 percentage point from the prior academic year. The high school graduation rate for Southwest Florida was below the state, measured at 88.0 percent during the 2022-23 academic year.

Collier County (91.5 percent) was the only county to exceed the 90 percent target graduation rate during the 2022-23 academic year. Glades County had the next highest graduation rate (86.0 percent), followed by Charlotte County (85.9 percent), Lee County (85.1 percent), and Hendry County (80.7 percent).

**Table 2-3: High School Graduation Rate**

Area	2016AY	2017AY	2018AY	2019AY	2020AY	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY
<b>Charlotte County</b>								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	1,091	1,111	1,273	1,188	1,272	1,248	1,206	1,186
<i>Cohort students</i>	1,410	1,371	1,453	1,375	1,407	1,373	1,372	1,381
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	77.4%	81.0%	87.6%	86.4%	90.4%	90.9%	87.9%	85.9%
<b>Collier County</b>								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	2,794	2,995	3,101	3,312	3,501	3,461	3,287	3,359
<i>Cohort students</i>	3,223	3,394	3,376	3,605	3,796	3,735	3,592	3,673
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	86.7%	88.2%	91.9%	91.9%	92.2%	92.7%	91.5%	91.5%
<b>Glades County</b>								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	47	44	57	74	69	51	58	43
<i>Cohort students</i>	60	54	61	81	77	65	65	50
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	78.3%	81.5%	93.4%	91.4%	89.6%	78.5%	89.2%	86.0%
<b>Hendry County</b>								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	385	423	428	510	519	519	506	488
<i>Cohort students</i>	493	501	511	609	574	588	605	605
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	78.1%	84.4%	83.8%	83.7%	90.4%	88.3%	83.6%	80.7%
<b>Lee County</b>								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	4,794	5,084	5,588	5,778	6,123	6,083	5,661	6,077
<i>Cohort students</i>	6,161	6,461	6,749	6,902	6,922	7,147	6,864	7,144
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	77.8%	78.7%	82.8%	83.7%	88.5%	85.1%	82.5%	85.1%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	9,111	9,657	10,447	10,862	11,484	11,362	10,718	11,153
<i>Cohort students</i>	11,347	11,781	12,150	12,572	12,776	12,908	12,498	12,853
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	80.3%	82.0%	86.0%	86.4%	89.9%	88.0%	85.8%	86.8%
<b>Florida</b>								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	159,672	168,042	180,411	184,509	188,088	185,758	180,228	183,416
<i>Cohort students</i>	197,886	204,212	209,520	212,240	209,041	206,150	206,484	208,490
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	80.7%	82.3%	86.1%	86.9%	90.0%	90.1%	87.3%	88.0%

Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports

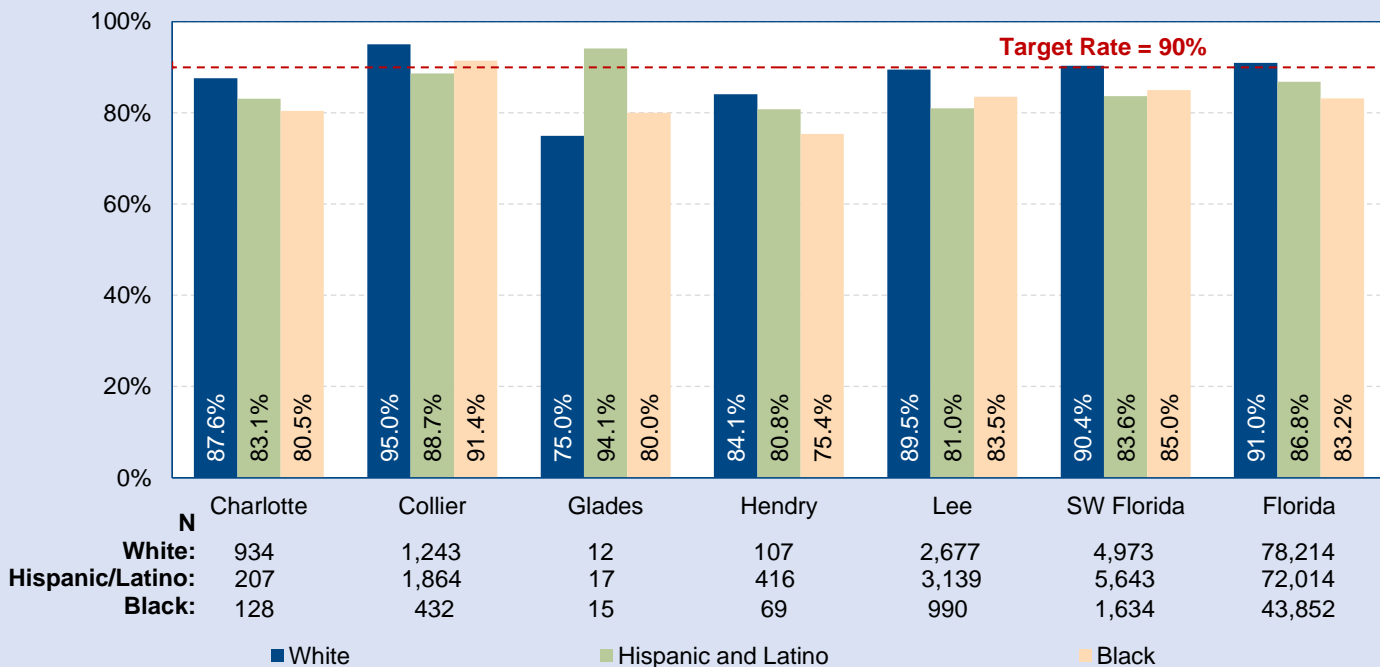
Note: Hendry County data does not include any information from Digital Academy of Florida.



High school graduation rates in Southwest Florida rebounded in 2023AY to 86.8% but are still below the high of 89.9 percent in 2020. This improvement was led by Lee County (82.5% to 85.1%), the largest school district, while Collier County remained the same at 91.5 percent. Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry Counties continued to see a decrease in Graduation Rates in 2023AY.

**Chart 2-4: High School Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity**

2022-23 Academic Year



Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## High School Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 2-4 and Table 2-4 shows high school graduation rates by race and ethnicity for the 2022-23 academic year. Southwest Florida students who identified as White had a high school graduation rate of 90.4 percent during the 2022-23 academic year, slightly above the target rate of 90 percent. Meanwhile students who identified as Black had a high school graduation rate of 85.0 percent, while students who identified as Hispanic and Latino had a high school graduation rate of 83.2 percent, both below the 90 percent target rate. For Florida, White students had a graduation rate (91.0 percent) slightly above the 90 percent target, while the graduation rates for Hispanic and Latino students (86.8 percent) and Black students (83.2 percent) were lower than the 90 percent target rate.



It is important to note that Hispanic and Latino and Black students make up more than half (58.7 percent) of the Southwest Florida student population. Improving high school graduation rates among students in these two demographic groups may support FutureMakers' 55 percent goal.

**Table 2-4: High School Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity**

2022-23 Academic Year

<b>Area</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Hispanic and Latino</b>	<b>Black</b>
<b>Charlotte County</b>			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	818	172	103
<i>Cohort students</i>	934	207	128
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	87.6%	83.1%	80.5%
<b>Collier County</b>			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	1,181	1,653	395
<i>Cohort students</i>	1,243	1,864	432
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	95.0%	88.7%	91.4%
<b>Glades County</b>			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	9	16	12
<i>Cohort students</i>	12	17	15
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	75.0%	94.1%	80.0%
<b>Hendry County</b>			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	90	336	52
<i>Cohort students</i>	107	416	69
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	84.1%	80.8%	75.4%
<b>Lee County</b>			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	2,396	2,543	827
<i>Cohort students</i>	2,677	3,139	990
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	89.5%	81.0%	83.5%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	<b>4,494</b>	<b>4,720</b>	<b>1,389</b>
<i>Cohort students</i>	<b>4,973</b>	<b>5,643</b>	<b>1,634</b>
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	<b>90.4%</b>	<b>83.6%</b>	<b>85.0%</b>
<b>Florida</b>			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	<b>71,151</b>	<b>62,514</b>	<b>36,479</b>
<i>Cohort students</i>	<b>78,214</b>	<b>72,014</b>	<b>43,852</b>
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	<b>91.0%</b>	<b>86.8%</b>	<b>83.2%</b>

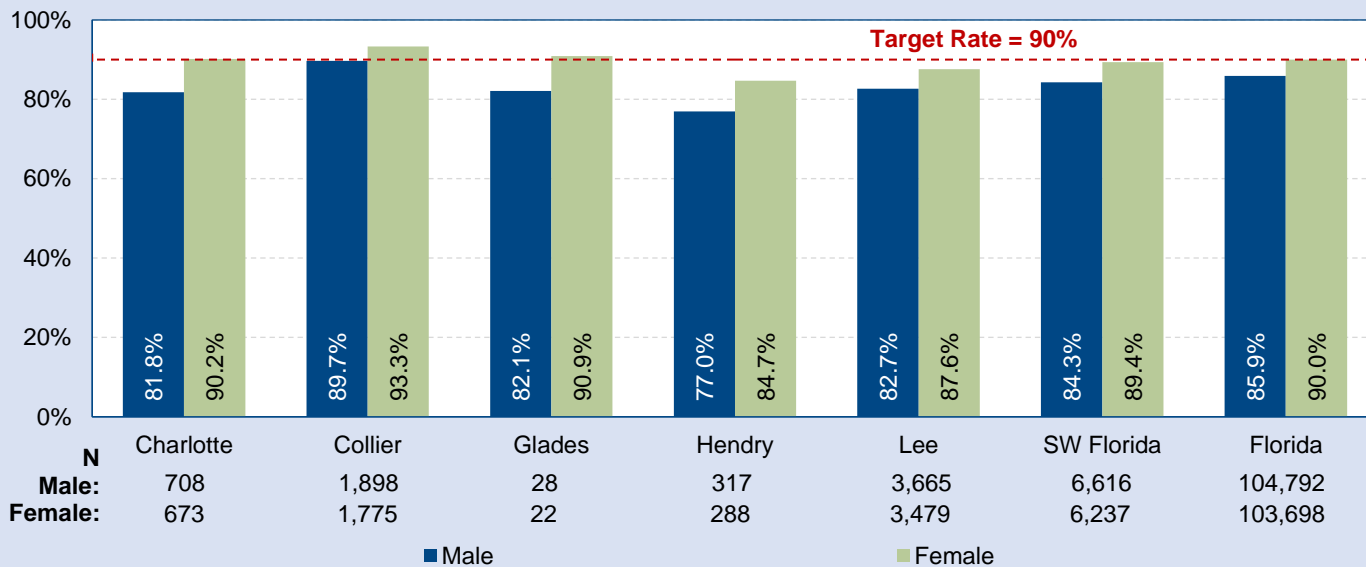
Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports

Note: N/A denotes that data was not available. Hendry County data does not include any information from Digital Academy of Florida.



### Chart 2-5: High School Graduation Rate by Gender

2022-23 Academic Year



Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## High School Graduation Rate by Gender

Chart 2-5 and Table 2-5 shows high school graduation rate by gender for the 2022-23 academic year. Females in Southwest Florida had a high school graduation rate of 89.4 percent during the 2022-23 academic year, below the target rate of 90 percent. Meanwhile, male students had a high school graduation rate of 84.3 percent. Rates for both females and males were below the state of Florida, measured at 90.0 percent and 85.9 percent, respectively.

Females had a higher graduation rate than males in all five Southwest Florida counties as well. Collier County females had the highest graduation rate (measured at 93.3 percent) followed by Glades County (90.9 percent), Charlotte County (90.2 percent), Lee County (87.6 percent) and Hendry County (84.7 percent).



Male students continue to underachieve in high school graduation rate compared to female students. It would be interesting to further break down the gender data by race and ethnicity to ascertain whether a specific demographic of male students is driving this trend.

**Table 2-5: High School Graduation Rate by Gender**

2022-23 Academic Year

<b>Area</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Charlotte County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	579	607
<i>Cohort students</i>	708	673
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	81.8%	90.2%
Collier County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	1,703	1,656
<i>Cohort students</i>	1,898	1,775
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	89.7%	93.3%
Glades County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	23	20
<i>Cohort students</i>	28	22
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	82.1%	90.9%
Hendry County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	244	244
<i>Cohort students</i>	317	288
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	77.0%	84.7%
Lee County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	3,030	3,047
<i>Cohort students</i>	3,665	3,479
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	82.7%	87.6%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	<b>5,579</b>	<b>5,574</b>
<i>Cohort students</i>	<b>6,616</b>	<b>6,237</b>
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>89.4%</b>
<b>Florida</b>		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	<b>90,046</b>	<b>93,370</b>
<i>Cohort students</i>	<b>104,792</b>	<b>103,698</b>
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	<b>85.9%</b>	<b>90.0%</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports




Note: N/A denotes that data was not available. Hendry County data does not include any information from Digital Academy of Florida.



# FutureMakers Coalition



## Access and Entry

Indicator	Measure	Trending	
 <b>Fall Enrollment</b> Postsecondary fall enrollment	SWFL	36,269	↓
	Florida	1,051,976	↑
 <b>Technical Education</b> Technical college fall enrollment	SWFL	3,956	↓
	Florida	75,164	↓
 <b>FAFSA Completion</b> FAFSA completion rate	SWFL	30.1%	↓
	Florida	36.0%	↓

## Overview

Southwest Florida saw a dip in postsecondary fall enrollment from Fall 2021 to Fall 2022, declining 4.2 percent to 36,269. Postsecondary fall enrollment for Florida was 1,051,976 in Fall 2022, an infinitesimal improvement over the previous fall. When looking at only technical colleges, fall enrollment in Southwest Florida declined in Fall 2022, falling to 3,956 (21.2 percent decrease). FAFSA completion rates in Southwest Florida continued their downward trend in the 2023-24 academic year, falling to 30.1 percent.



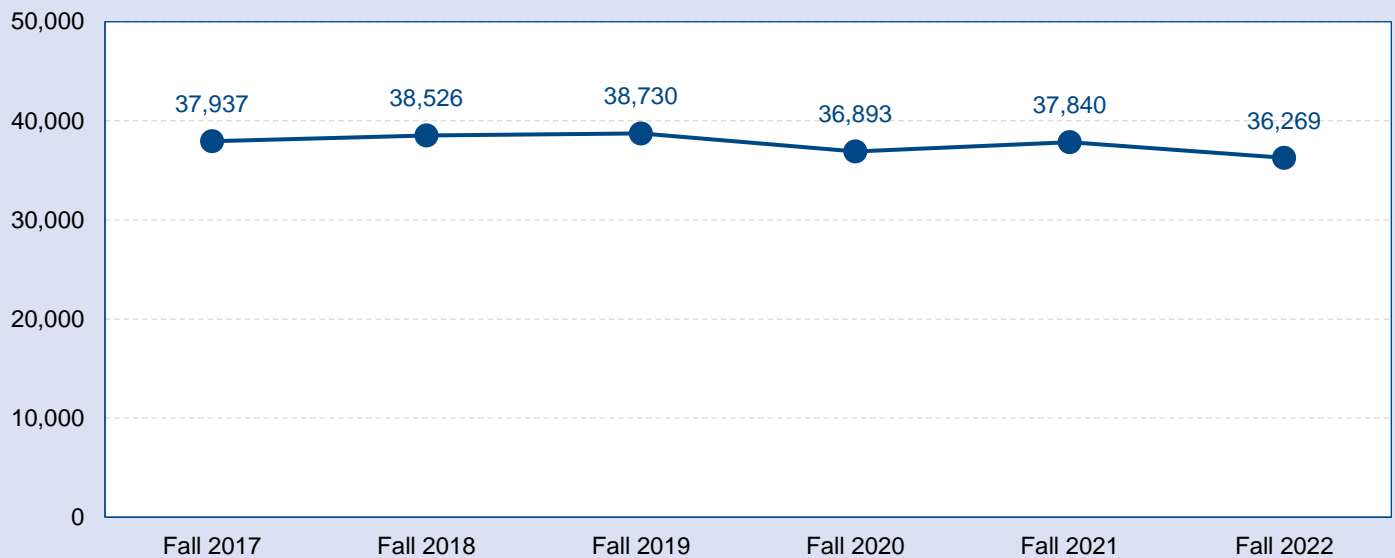
As noted, FAFSA completion continued its downward trend in 2023AY. The trends in Southwest Florida reflect a national trend of decreasing college enrollment as students are perhaps questioning the value of a post-secondary degree and foregoing college (and the related expenses) for the shorter-term gains in wages even among workers without a college degree. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education changed the FAFSA form, causing confusion, questions, and delays, which also likely contributed to the decreased completion rate from the prior year.



Data on postsecondary fall enrollment and technical college fall enrollment by race and ethnicity for Southwest Florida are also provided in this report. Between 2013 and 2023 in general, the region's Black and Hispanic and Latino populations represent a growing proportion of students enrolling in postsecondary training and degree programs, while the number of students identifying as White decreased. As the region's population changes, postsecondary education institutions will need to co-create policies and practices that ensure all students are achieving key education outcomes in order to achieve FutureMakers Coalition's 55 percent goal of skilled working age adults with college degrees, workforce certificates, industry certifications, and other high-quality credentials.

## Chart 2-6: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment

Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Postsecondary Fall Enrollment

Chart 2-6 and Table 2-6 depict postsecondary fall enrollment data that was obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics website.<sup>6</sup> Southwest Florida had a total postsecondary fall enrollment of 36,269 students in Fall 2022, down 4.2 percent from the previous fall. Fall enrollment growth for the region fell below both the state (virtually unchanged from Fall 2021) and the nation (0.5 percent decrease).

### Table 2-6: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment

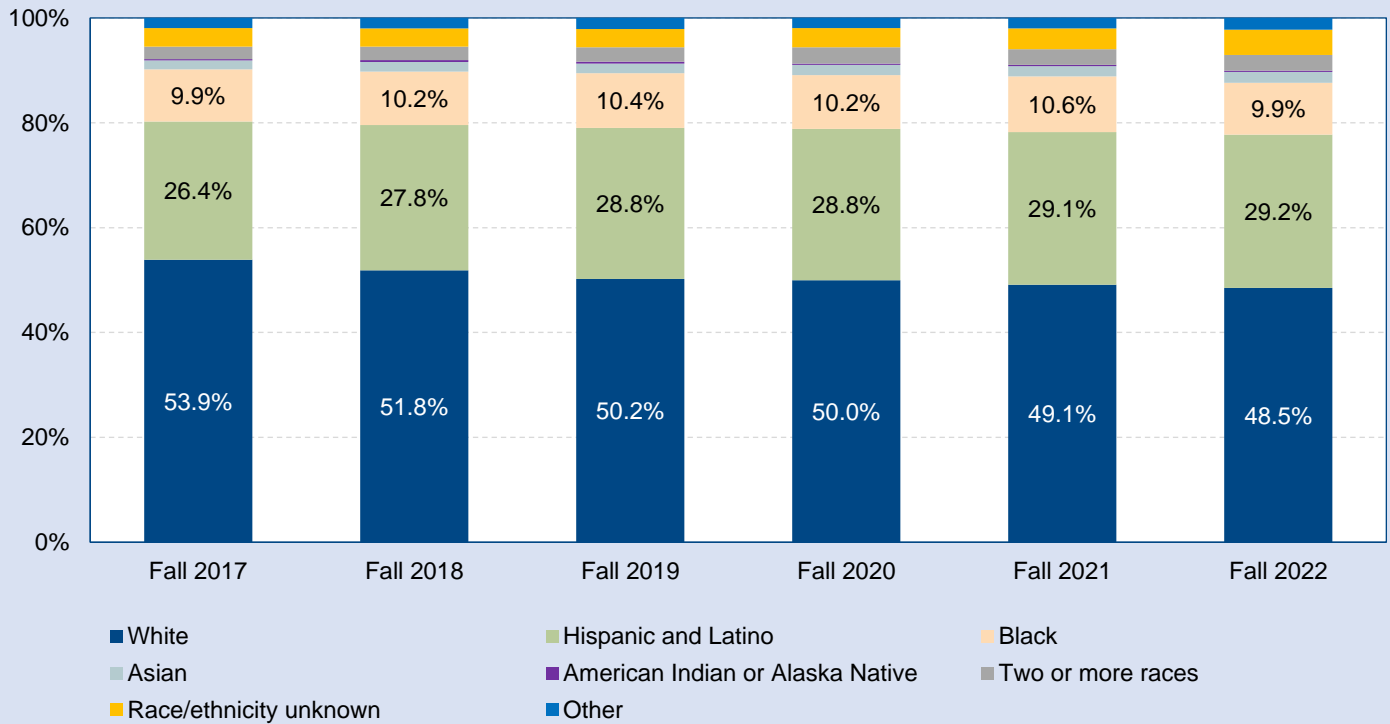
Area	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Southwest Florida						
Fall enrollment	37,937	38,526	38,730	36,893	37,840	36,269
Percent change	--	1.6%	0.5%	-4.7%	2.6%	-4.2%
Florida						
Fall enrollment	1,125,301	1,116,833	1,108,594	1,073,607	1,051,656	1,051,976
Percent change	--	-0.8%	-0.7%	-3.2%	-2.0%	0.0%
United States						
Fall enrollment	20,185,233	20,058,711	20,043,436	19,455,993	19,121,819	19,023,667
Percent change	--	-0.6%	-0.1%	-2.9%	-1.7%	-0.5%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

<sup>6</sup> See the Methodology for more information on how postsecondary institutes in Southwest Florida were identified.

## Chart 2-7: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 2-7 and Table 2-7 display postsecondary fall enrollment by race and ethnicity for Southwest Florida. The proportion of students making up postsecondary fall enrollment who identify as White has steadily declined from 53.9 percent in Fall 2017 to 48.5 percent in Fall 2022, as the proportions of students identifying as Black or Hispanic and Latino enrolling in postsecondary education have increased during this same period. Of note, postsecondary fall enrollment among Hispanic and Latino students increased from 26.4 percent in Fall 2017 to 29.2 percent in Fall 2022. Smaller increases in postsecondary fall enrollment were seen among students who identified as two or more races and race/ethnicity unknown. Postsecondary fall enrollment has remained fairly constant for the region's students identifying as Black, hovering around 10 percent between Fall 2017 to Fall 2022.



As the region's population grows and our demographics change, postsecondary education institutions will need to adapt to accommodate the increased demand and rewrite policies and procedures that may be unintentionally creating barriers for some groups of students to achieve the 55 percent goal of skilled working age adults with college degrees, workforce certificates, industry certifications, and other high-quality credentials.

**Table 2-7: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

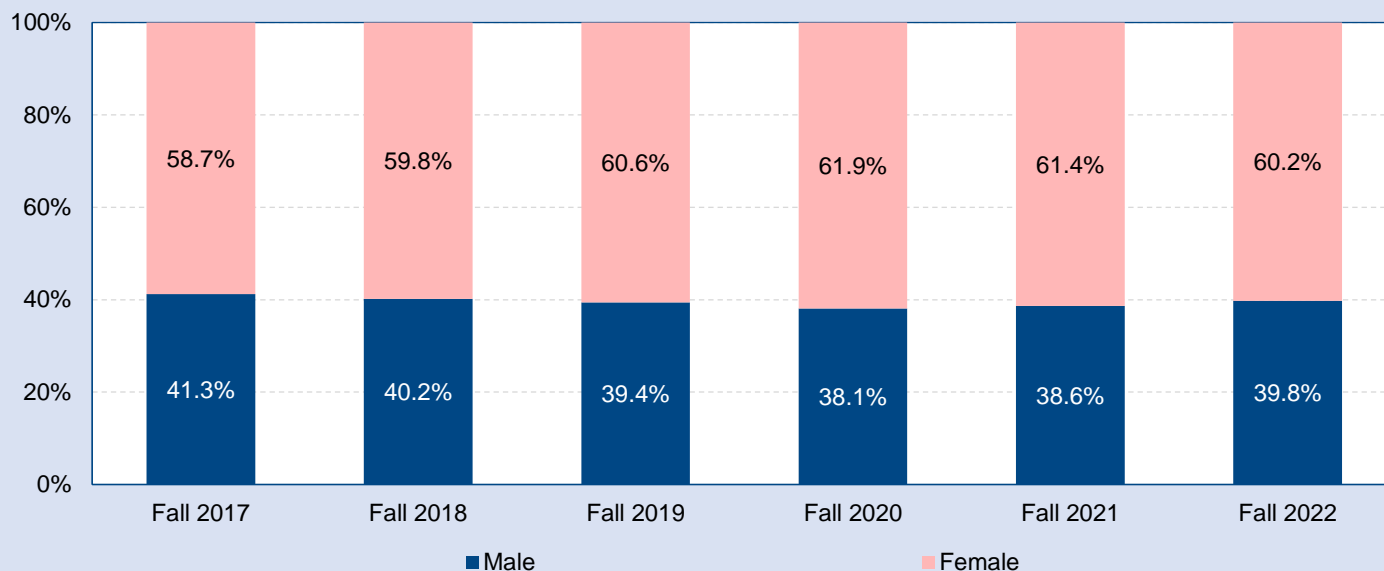
Southwest Florida

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Fall 2017</b>	<b>Fall 2018</b>	<b>Fall 2019</b>	<b>Fall 2020</b>	<b>Fall 2021</b>	<b>Fall 2022</b>
White						
<i>Number of students</i>	20,438	19,974	19,460	18,446	18,591	17,598
<i>Percent of total</i>	53.9%	51.8%	50.2%	50.0%	49.1%	48.5%
Hispanic and Latino						
<i>Number of students</i>	10,015	10,692	11,150	10,641	11,009	10,598
<i>Percent of total</i>	26.4%	27.8%	28.8%	28.8%	29.1%	29.2%
Black or African American						
<i>Number of students</i>	3,760	3,921	4,040	3,775	4,014	3,597
<i>Percent of total</i>	9.9%	10.2%	10.4%	10.2%	10.6%	9.9%
Asian						
<i>Number of students</i>	645	701	718	732	738	736
<i>Percent of total</i>	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native						
<i>Number of students</i>	107	141	135	97	106	105
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander						
<i>Number of students</i>	62	49	64	73	69	58
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Two or more races						
<i>Number of students</i>	887	987	1,059	1,128	1,116	1,078
<i>Percent of total</i>	2.3%	2.6%	2.7%	3.1%	2.9%	3.0%
Race/ethnicity unknown						
<i>Number of students</i>	1,349	1,341	1,338	1,361	1,502	1,739
<i>Percent of total</i>	3.6%	3.5%	3.5%	3.7%	4.0%	4.8%
Nonresident alien						
<i>Number of students</i>	674	720	766	640	695	760
<i>Percent of total</i>	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	1.7%	1.8%	2.1%
<b>Total Fall Enrollment</b>	<b>37,937</b>	<b>38,526</b>	<b>38,730</b>	<b>36,893</b>	<b>37,840</b>	<b>36,269</b>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

## Chart 2-8: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Gender

Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Gender

Chart 2-8 and Table 2-8 show postsecondary fall enrollment by gender for Southwest Florida. The region had 21,847 female students enrolled into a postsecondary institute during Fall 2022, representing 60.2 percent of total fall enrollment. The region also had 14,422 male students enrolled in Fall 2022, accounting for 39.8 percent of total fall enrollment during that year. The percent of male students enrolled in a postsecondary institution has declined 7.9 percentage points since Fall 2017.

### Table 2-8: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Gender

Southwest Florida

Gender	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Male						
Number of students	15,651	15,482	15,271	14,068	14,616	14,422
Percent of total	41.3%	40.2%	39.4%	38.1%	38.6%	39.8%
Female						
Number of students	22,286	23,044	23,459	22,825	23,224	21,847
Percent of total	58.7%	59.8%	60.6%	61.9%	61.4%	60.2%
<b>Total Fall Enrollment</b>	<b>37,937</b>	<b>38,526</b>	<b>38,730</b>	<b>36,893</b>	<b>37,840</b>	<b>36,269</b>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

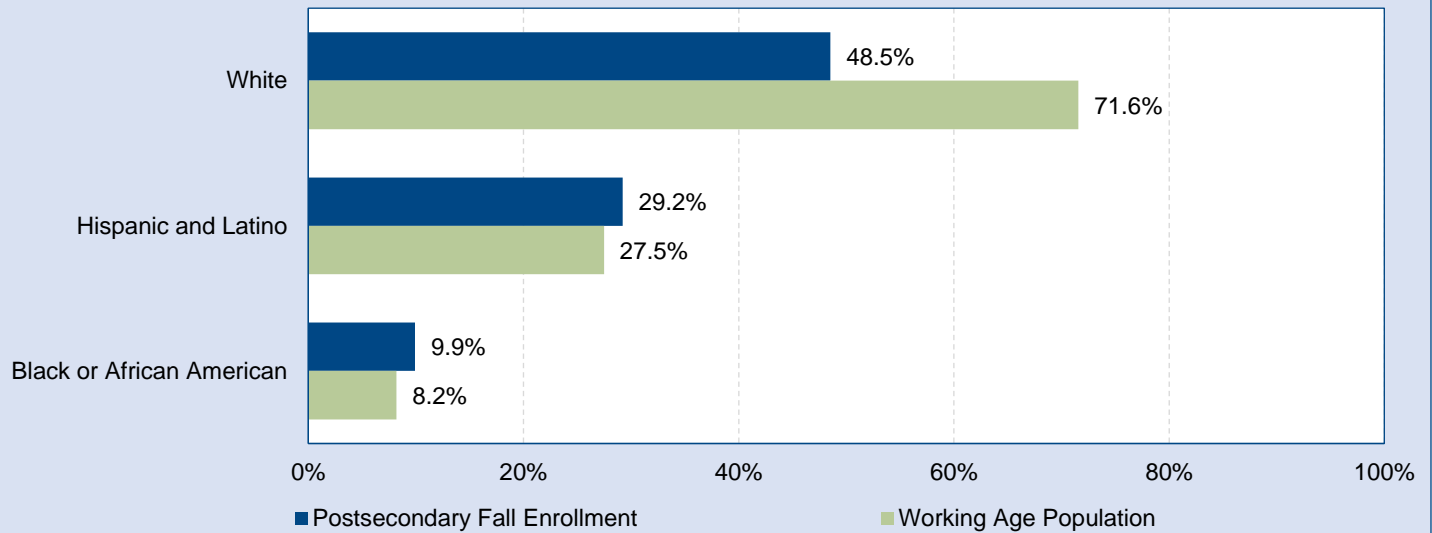


Perhaps as predicted by the trends over time in high school graduation rate by gender data, postsecondary fall enrollment for male students has lagged behind fall enrollment for female students during this time period.



## Chart 2-9: Postsecondary Enrollment vs. Working Age Population

Southwest Florida  
2022



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Postsecondary Fall Enrollment vs. Working Age Population by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 2-9 and Table 2-9 compare postsecondary enrollment and working-age population distributions by race and ethnicity in 2022. While working-age residents who identified as White encompassed 71.6 percent of the population in Southwest Florida, they accounted for slightly less than half of fall enrollment in 2022. Hispanic and Latino students represented 29.2 percent of total postsecondary fall enrollment, compared to 27.5 percent of the working age population. The region had a Black or African American working age population of 8.2 percent in 2022, slightly below 9.9 percent fall enrollment during that year.

### Table 2-9: Postsecondary Enrollment vs. Working Age Population

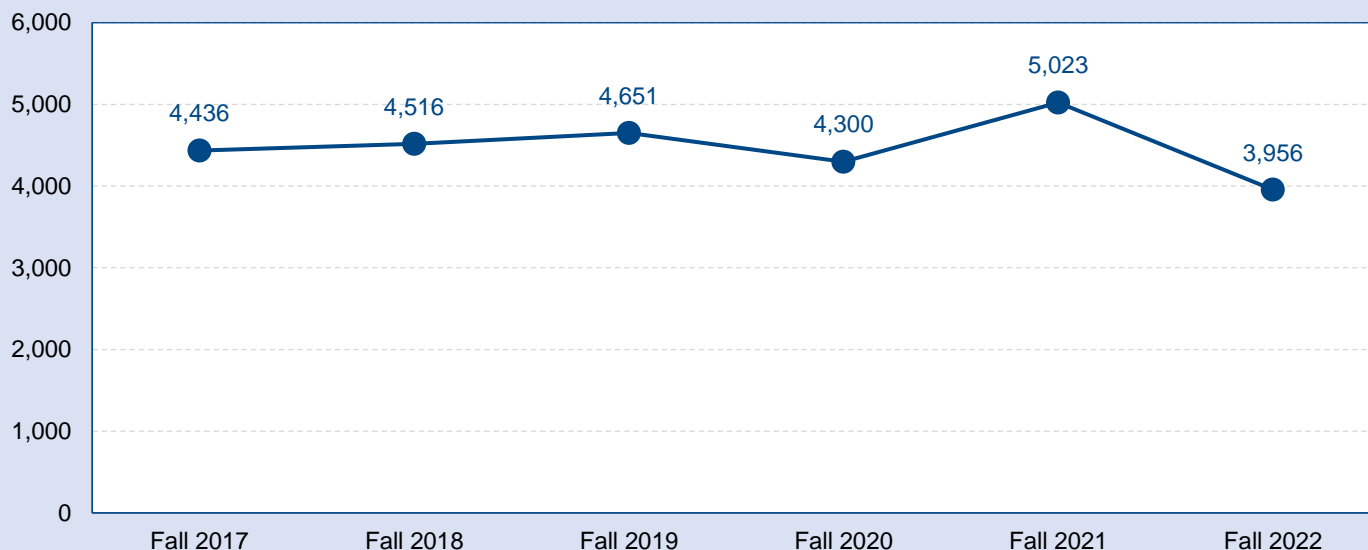
2022

Race/Ethnicity	Postsecondary Fall Enrollment	Working Age Population
White	48.5%	71.6%
Hispanic and Latino	29.2%	27.5%
Black or African American	9.9%	8.2%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Chart 2-10: Technical College Fall Enrollment

Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Technical College Fall Enrollment

Chart 2-10 and Table 2-10 show fall enrollment data from technical colleges in Southwest Florida.<sup>7</sup> Technical colleges identified in the region had 3,956 students enrolled in Fall 2022. Enrollment fell compared to Fall 2021, down 21.2 percent.

### Table 2-10: Technical College Fall Enrollment

Area	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Southwest Florida						
Fall enrollment	4,436	4,516	4,651	4,300	5,023	3,956
Percent change	--	1.8%	3.0%	-7.5%	16.8%	-21.2%
Florida						
Fall enrollment	120,153	110,482	100,954	96,915	93,887	75,164
Percent change	--	-8.0%	-8.6%	-4.0%	-3.1%	-19.9%
United States						
Fall enrollment	6,325,726	6,117,400	5,961,378	5,297,091	5,060,918	5,029,262
Percent change	--	-3.3%	-2.6%	-11.1%	-4.5%	-0.6%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

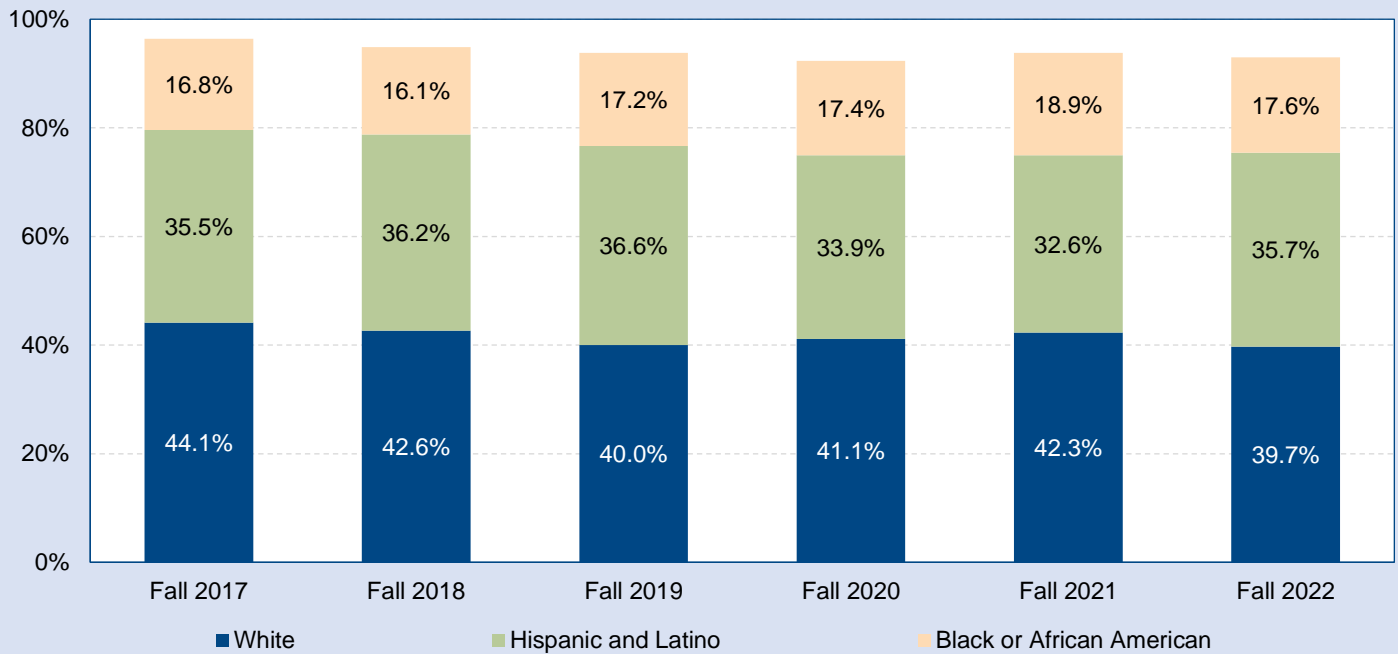


A significant portion of this decline can be attributed to a fall in enrollment from Southern Technical College, which slipped from 1,294 in 2021 to 578 in 2022 (a 55.3 percent decline). Several other institutions also saw noteworthy declines, including Fort Myers Technical College (-20.2 percent), Florida Academy (-16.6 percent), The Salon Professional Academy (-18.2 percent), and Lorenzo Walker Technical College (-8.8 percent).

<sup>7</sup> See the Methodology for more information on how technical colleges in Southwest Florida were identified.

## Chart 2-11: Technical College Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Technical College Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 2-11 and Table 2-11 display technical college fall enrollment by race and ethnicity for Southwest Florida. Like the trends seen in the total postsecondary fall enrollment statistics, the proportion of students making up fall technical college enrollment who identify as White has steadily declined from 44.1 percent in Fall 2017 to 39.7 percent in Fall 2022. Moreover, technical college fall enrollment among Hispanic and Latino students was largely unchanged from Fall 2017 to Fall 2022 but increased 3.1 percentage points from Fall 2021. For students identifying as Black, technical college fall enrollment increased from 16.8 percent in Fall 2017 to 17.6 percent in Fall 2022. Technical college fall enrollment has remained consistent for the region's students among the other races/ethnicities tracked by the National Center for Education Statistics.



As noted before, the region's population growth will require technical colleges to adapt to accommodate the increased demand and rewrite policies and procedures that may be unintentionally creating barriers for some students in order to achieve the 55 percent goal of skilled working age adults with college degrees, workforce certificates, industry certifications, and other high-quality credentials.

**Table 2-11: Technical College Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

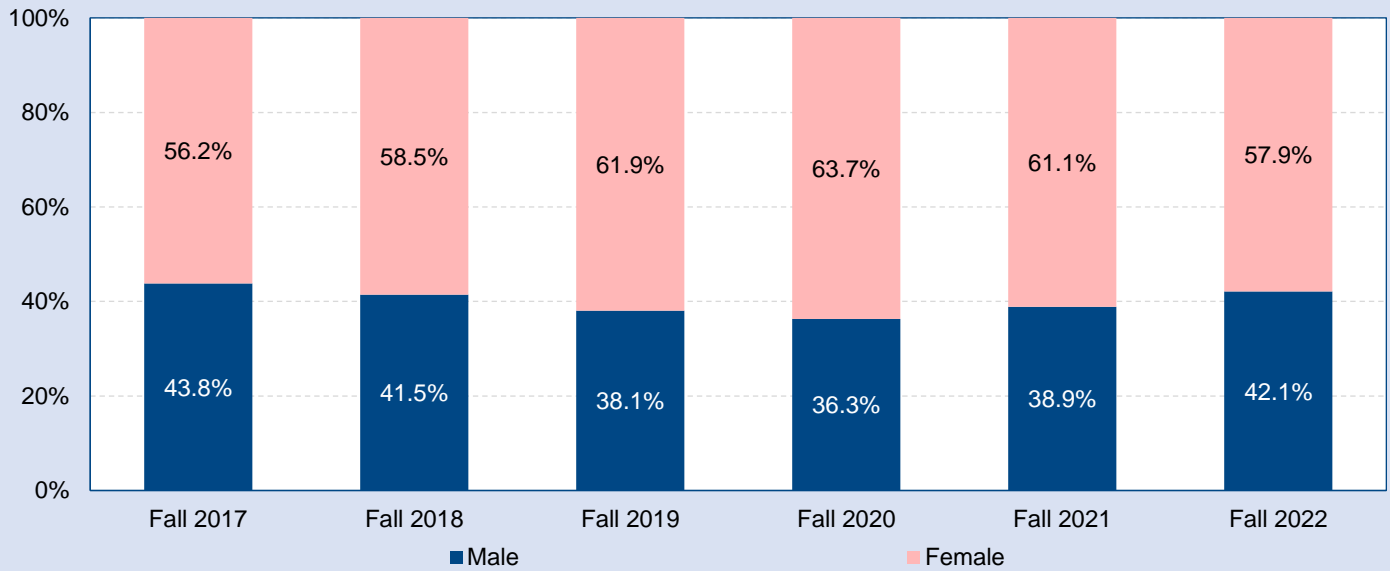
Southwest Florida

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Fall 2017</b>	<b>Fall 2018</b>	<b>Fall 2019</b>	<b>Fall 2020</b>	<b>Fall 2021</b>	<b>Fall 2022</b>
White						
<i>Number of students</i>	1,957	1,926	1,860	1,768	2,125	1,572
<i>Percent of total</i>	44.1%	42.6%	40.0%	41.1%	42.3%	39.7%
Hispanic and Latino						
<i>Number of students</i>	1,575	1,633	1,704	1,456	1,639	1,412
<i>Percent of total</i>	35.5%	36.2%	36.6%	33.9%	32.6%	35.7%
Black or African American						
<i>Number of students</i>	745	726	798	747	949	695
<i>Percent of total</i>	16.8%	16.1%	17.2%	17.4%	18.9%	17.6%
Asian						
<i>Number of students</i>	39	47	36	59	60	35
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.9%	1.0%	0.8%	1.4%	1.2%	0.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native						
<i>Number of students</i>	13	14	15	11	18	9
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander						
<i>Number of students</i>	8	6	6	24	12	17
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%
Two or more races						
<i>Number of students</i>	75	123	192	202	171	155
<i>Percent of total</i>	1.7%	2.7%	4.1%	4.7%	3.4%	3.9%
Race/ethnicity unknown						
<i>Number of students</i>	23	31	28	25	45	44
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.9%	1.1%
Nonresident alien						
<i>Number of students</i>	1	10	12	8	4	17
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%
<b>Total Fall Enrollment</b>	<b>4,436</b>	<b>4,516</b>	<b>4,651</b>	<b>4,300</b>	<b>5,023</b>	<b>3,956</b>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

## Chart 2-12: Technical College Fall Enrollment by Gender

Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Technical College Fall Enrollment by Gender

Chart 2-12 and Table 2-12 shows technical college fall enrollment by gender for Southwest Florida. The region had 2,290 female students enrolled into a technical college during Fall 2022, representing 57.9 percent of total fall enrollment. This share has fallen for two consecutive years. The region also had 1,666 male students enrolled in Fall 2022, accounting for 42.1 percent of total fall enrollment during that year.

### Table 2-12: Technical College Fall Enrollment by Gender

Southwest Florida

Gender	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Male						
Number of students	1,945	1,873	1,770	1,561	1,953	1,666
Percent of total	43.8%	41.5%	38.1%	36.3%	38.9%	42.1%
Female						
Number of students	2,491	2,643	2,881	2,739	3,070	2,290
Percent of total	56.2%	58.5%	61.9%	63.7%	61.1%	57.9%
<b>Total Fall Enrollment</b>	<b>4,436</b>	<b>4,516</b>	<b>4,651</b>	<b>4,300</b>	<b>5,023</b>	<b>3,956</b>

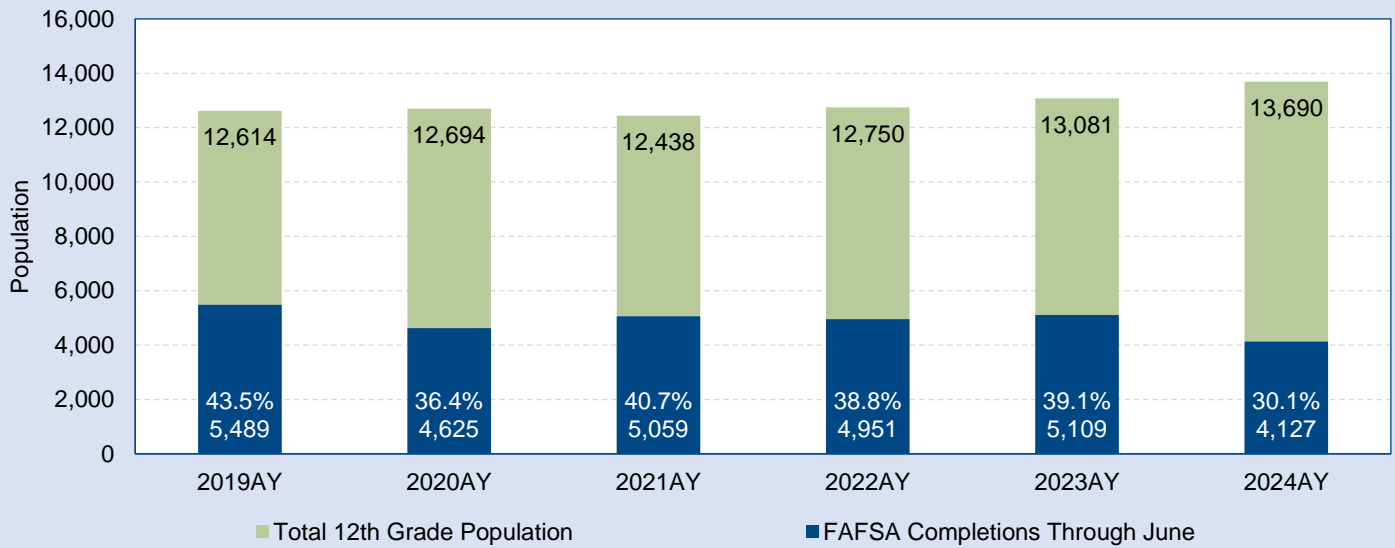
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System



Technical college fall enrollment for male students reversed a downward trend in 2021, increasing to 38.2 percent from 36.3 percent in 2020, but still lags behind enrollment for female students. To reach our 55 percent goal, the reasons for this gender disparity should be explored further.

## Chart 2-13: FAFSA Completion Rate

Southwest Florida



Source: Florida College Access Network (FCAN)  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## FAFSA Completion Rate

Chart 2-13 and Table 2-13 show the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates for Southwest Florida and each of the five counties. Through June 30th, 2024, the region had 4,127 students complete a FAFSA application, for a FAFSA completion rate of 30.1 percent. The FAFSA completion rate has decreased by 9.0 percentage points from the 2022-23 academic year and remains below the state FAFSA completion rate of 36.0 percent in 2023-24.

Of the five Southwest Florida counties, only Glades County (36.8 percent) and Collier County (36.6 percent) had a higher FAFSA completion rate than the state. Charlotte County had a completion rate of 30.2 percent, followed by Hendry County at 28.8 percent and Lee County with a 27.5 percent completion rate.



As noted, FAFSA completion continued its downward trend in 2024AY. The trends in Southwest Florida reflect a national trend of decreasing college enrollment as students are perhaps questioning the value of a post-secondary degree and foregoing college (and the related expenses) for the shorter-term gains in wages even among workers without a college degree. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education changed the FAFSA form, causing confusion, questions, and delays, which also likely contributed to the decreased completion rate from the prior year.

## Table 2-13: FAFSA Completion Rate

Area	2019AY	2020AY	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY	2024AY
<b>Charlotte County</b>						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	1,354	1,335	1,205	1,308	1,301	1,454
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	510	426	533	526	493	439
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	37.7%	31.9%	44.2%	40.2%	37.9%	30.2%
<b>Collier County</b>						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	3,290	3,482	3,413	3,336	3,205	3,458
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	1,679	1,484	1,579	1,473	1,489	1,264
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	51.0%	42.6%	46.3%	44.2%	46.5%	36.6%
<b>Glades County</b>						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	74	63	51	53	59	68
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	32	33	21	25	29	25
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	43.2%	52.4%	41.2%	47.2%	49.2%	36.8%
<b>Hendry County</b>						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	534	519	556	559	571	590
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	197	145	182	191	215	170
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	36.9%	27.9%	32.7%	34.2%	37.7%	28.8%
<b>Lee County</b>						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	7,362	7,295	7,213	7,494	7,945	8,120
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	3,071	2,537	2,744	2,736	2,883	2,229
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	41.7%	34.8%	38.0%	36.5%	36.3%	27.5%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	12,614	12,694	12,438	12,750	13,081	13,690
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	5,489	4,625	5,059	4,951	5,109	4,127
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	43.5%	36.4%	40.7%	38.8%	39.1%	30.1%
<b>Florida</b>						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	203,306	199,139	196,883	204,189	205,886	213,828
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	92,944	76,969	86,942	87,791	88,518	76,911
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	45.7%	38.7%	44.2%	43.0%	43.0%	36.0%

Source: Florida College Access Network (FCAN)

Note: Hendry County information does not include information from Digital Academy of Florida



# FutureMakers Coalition



## Persistence and Completion

	Indicator		Measure	Trending
	<b>Retention</b> Percent of full-time cohort from previous fall still enrolled	SWFL	79.3%	↓
		Florida	79.7%	↑
	<b>On-time Completion</b> Percent completing within 150 percent of normal time at two- and four-year institutes	SWFL	54.0%	↑
		Florida	56.3%	↑
	<b>Business Partnerships</b> Percent employers working with postsecondary institutions	SWFL	N/A*	N/A
	<b>Returning Adults</b> Percent employers offering education opportunities	SWFL	N/A*	N/A
	<b>Living Wage</b> Hourly wage to support one adult and two children	SWFL	\$45.94	↑
		Florida	\$45.96	↑
	<b>Local Jobs</b> Percent of Southwest Florida graduates still working in Southwest Florida	SWFL	44.8%	↑

\* Updated information for these metrics will be provided in the Workforce Employer Survey Report.



## Overview

First year retention rates in the Southwest Florida region slipped from 81.5 percent in 2021 to 79.3 percent in 2021. However, on-time completion rates among students attending two- and four-year institutes in the region rose, increasing from 48.7 percent in 2021 to 54.0 percent in 2022. Hourly living wages and the average hourly wage for an adult with two children also increased in the Southwest Florida region to \$45.94 in 2023 compared to \$41.87 in 2022.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the percentage of Southwest Florida graduates still working at local jobs in Southwest Florida improved to 44.8 percent in 2024 compared to 43.7 percent in 2023.

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<sup>8</sup> Living wage is defined as the local wage rate that allows residents to meet minimum standards of living. For more information on the living wage methodology, see the [MIT webpage](#).

# FutureMakers in Action

## *Return to the Nest*

The **Return to the Nest initiative** was designed to help former FGCU students, who stopped-out for more than three consecutive semesters and did not earn a degree, re-enroll with fewer barriers and complete their Bachelor's Degree. Returning students are provided Navigator support through the office of Innovative Education and Partnerships to ensure streamlined readmission, academic persistence and personalized guidance to navigate barriers. The Return to the Nest initiative has proven to be beneficial for both stop-out students and current students alike. At least eight student friendly policies have been updated/implemented; nearly \$208,000 has been awarded (Phase 1 & 2) to support students in their first semester back, to help students graduate without debt, and to fund credit for prior learning opportunities; and 363 credentials (Associate and Bachelor's) have been earned.

**44.5%**

nearly 11,000

FGCU STOP OUTS  
SINCE 2008  
LIVE IN 5-COUNTY  
REGION

**814**

STUDENTS RETURNED  
AND ENROLLED  
SINCE 2019

**309**

BACHELOR'S  
DEGREES AWARDED  
SINCE 2019

*85 did not require enrollment!*

**252**

RETURNING STUDENTS  
CURRENTLY ENROLLED  
FOR SUMMER 2024 &  
FALL 2024

**\$134,126**

FUNDS DISTRIBUTED SINCE JULY 1, 2022

GRAND TOTAL (PHASE 1 & 2): \$207,683

**FGCU** | Innovative Education  
& Partnerships

**Return to the Nest**

The impact of the Return to the Nest initiative is the implementation of student friendly policies and practices including:

- Academic amnesty
- Admission regulations
- Transfer credit
- Petition for prior year catalog
- Non-traditional admissions and support
- Pre-collections outreach
- Graduation application
- Credit for prior learning
- Withdrawal policy
- Automatic grade forgiveness
- FGCU ChatBot and AI Interventions

# FutureMakers in Action

## *Charlotte County Action Team*

The FutureMakers Coalition Charlotte Action Team is a new endeavor aimed at reshaping the workforce landscape of Charlotte County and the broader Southwest Florida region. Key objectives of the Charlotte County FutureMakers Coalition Action Team:

- **Developing Skills and Workforce:** Creating a pathway from early childhood education to career, ensuring a continuous supply of skilled professionals.
- **Systems Change for Workforce Development:** Connecting potential employees with the necessary education and training to fill in-demand jobs, while overcoming barriers to career attainment.
- **Collaboratively creating a culture of career exploration and aspiration at an early age.**
- **Upskill Existing Employees:** Enhancing the skills of your current workforce to meet evolving industry demands.
- **Enhancing recruitment and Retention:** Streamlining hiring processes and improving employee retention strategies.
- **Cultivating Essential Skills:** Fostering attributes like teamwork and collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence within the workforce.

Thirty-six people representing a variety of businesses and industries attended the first meeting on March 8th at the Charlotte County Public Schools District office. Tessa LeSage introduced the goals of FutureMakers and shared success stories of other counties. A second meeting on 19 April was dedicated to sharing the data for the Aspiration and Preparation, Access and Entry, Persistence and Completion, and Resilience and Diversification teams. After evaluation of data for Charlotte County, guiding questions were developed and the teams started to discuss projects that will support the initial efforts to improve data in Charlotte County.

On April 30th, Charlotte County arranged a tour for the Collaboratory's SWFL FutureMakers Team. During this tour, Economic Development shared the future of Charlotte County, followed by a tour of the new Airport Airframe and Powerplant program. In addition, the group visited FSW, Charlotte Technical College, Tradesman Place, and the Family Services Center in Port Charlotte to learn about new educational initiatives, as well as all the various programs offered to the citizens of Charlotte County. Additional meetings were held on May 28th and June 11th to discuss and plan future projects.

Moving forward, Charlotte County remains committed to following through with the initiatives discussed to assure that we are a major part of the transformation of Southwest Florida's workforce by increasing the proportion of working-age adults with college degrees, workforce certificates, industry certifications and other high-quality credentials to 55 percent.

# FutureMakers in Action

## *Immokalee Project - Dr. Arthur Boyer Foundation Adult Education*

In early Fall 2023, Dr. Negroni and Dr Kahar, FGCU, invited the partners who had participated in the Immokalee HealthCare Project to meet with Jon Romine, Collaboratory, and Betsy Haesemeyer, Healthy Start, to introduce Collaboratory's Coalitions and the Immigration Network. At this meeting, English proficiency was identified as the key to success for the immigrant community. As a result, the Collaboratory will help build an adult English proficiency program. Dr. Arthur Boyer Foundation, Pastor Jean C. Paul, FutureMakers, and the Immigration Network, with multiple community partners, began the Immokalee Project's Adult English Proficiency program in October 2023. The Immokalee Project bridges the language gaps and ensures a strong community connection through English proficiency for adults. The Haitian Adult Learners who complete the program can seek better employment opportunities, enter higher education, or become successful entrepreneurs.

The Dr. Arthur Boyer Foundation Adult Education began with five partners, primarily local pastors. By the end of the first session in May 2024, the network expanded to over 15 partners, including FGCU, CareerSource, Collaboratory, Healthy Start, Immokalee Museum, Collier County Commission Bill McDaniel, and the Sheriff's Department. We are proud to announce that we have secured funding from Collaboratory, which has enabled us to purchase computers and headsets.

By May 2024, the program had the following successes:

- Of the two hundred students enrolled, forty had completed HHA certification.
- Thirty were eligible to take the Florida CNA certification exam.
- Twenty enrollees have found better jobs.
- Over one hundred participated in the Immokalee Job Fair.

In addition, six town halls were conducted with local guest speakers in real estate, government, law, and business, providing our students valuable insights into the broader Immokalee community.

After thoroughly evaluating the first classes with input from staff, students, and potential employers, enhancements were made to the program. The team is looking forward to an exciting year (July – November)!



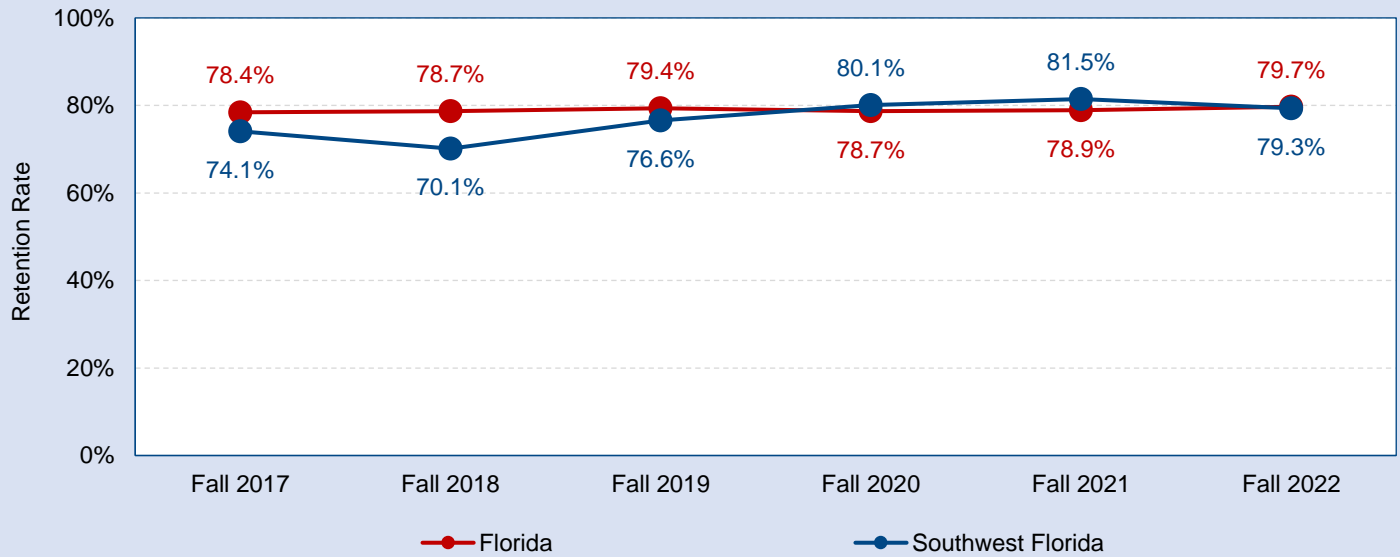
**Figure 1.** Students take a pre-placement exam.



**Figure 2.** Students prepare for conversation practice.

### Chart 2-14: First Year Retention Rate

Percent of full-time cohort from previous fall still enrolled



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## First-Year Retention Rate

Chart 2-14 and Table 2-14 show the first-year retention rate for all full-time, first-time students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in Southwest Florida. Of the 4,727 full-time, first-year students enrolled during Fall 2021, 3,750 remained enrolled in Fall 2022, giving the region a first-year retention rate of 79.3 percent. The first-year retention rate for the region fell from the prior year but was higher than the national average (measured at 76.5 percent).

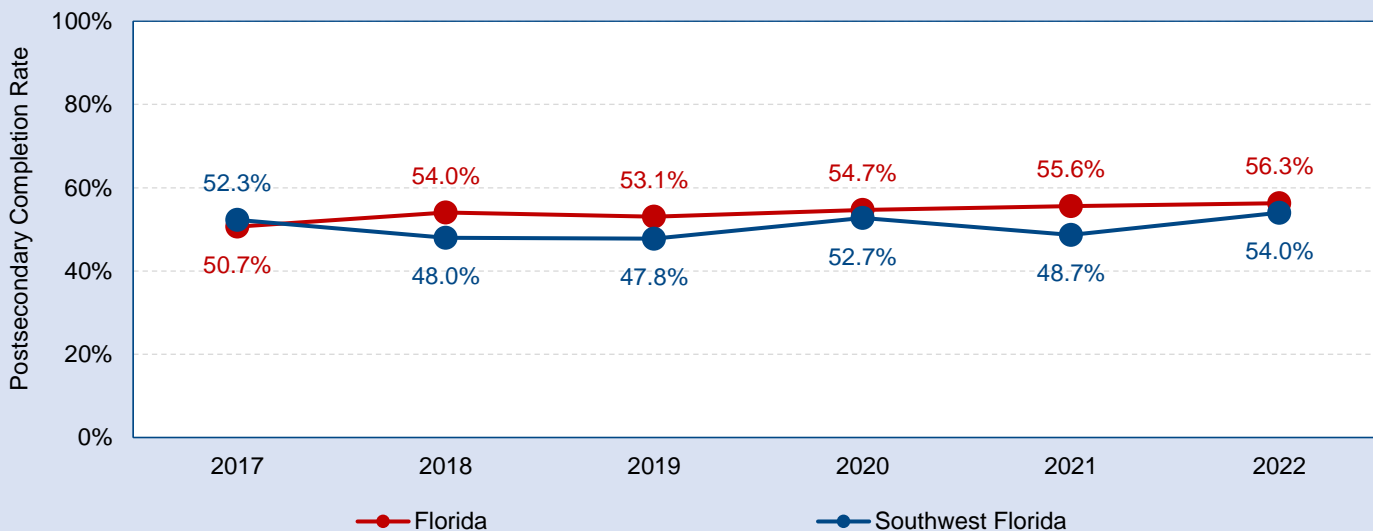
### Table 2-14: First Year Retention Rate

Area	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
<b>Southwest Florida</b>						
Full-time cohort from previous fall	3,979	4,067	4,587	4,277	3,959	4,727
Students still enrolled in fall	2,948	2,852	3,512	3,425	3,225	3,750
First-year retention rate	74.1%	70.1%	76.6%	80.1%	81.5%	79.3%
<b>Florida</b>						
Full-time cohort from previous fall	85,406	87,272	89,880	91,318	85,150	87,776
Students still enrolled in fall	66,987	68,688	71,335	71,855	67,175	69,956
First-year retention rate	78.4%	78.7%	79.4%	78.7%	78.9%	79.7%
<b>United States</b>						
Full-time cohort from previous fall	2,274,697	2,269,264	2,274,908	2,258,289	2,066,075	2,110,234
Students still enrolled in fall	1,714,471	1,712,996	1,730,114	1,709,758	1,560,472	1,614,915
First-year retention rate	75.4%	75.5%	76.1%	75.7%	75.5%	76.5%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

### Chart 2-15: Postsecondary Completion Rates

Two- and four-year institutes  
Percent completing within 150 percent of normal time



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Postsecondary Completion Rates

Chart 2-15 and Table 2-15 shows the completion rates for students seeking a degree or certificate and enrolled in two- and four-year institutes in Southwest Florida. The cohort completion rate is calculated using the number of cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time as of August 31st of the reported year<sup>9</sup>. Two- and four-year institutes in the region had an on-time completion rate of 54.0 percent in 2022, up 5.3 percentage points from 2021. The completion rate remains below the state (55.7 percent) and on par with the nation (54.0 percent).

### Table 2-15: Postsecondary Completion Rates

Two-year and four-year institutes

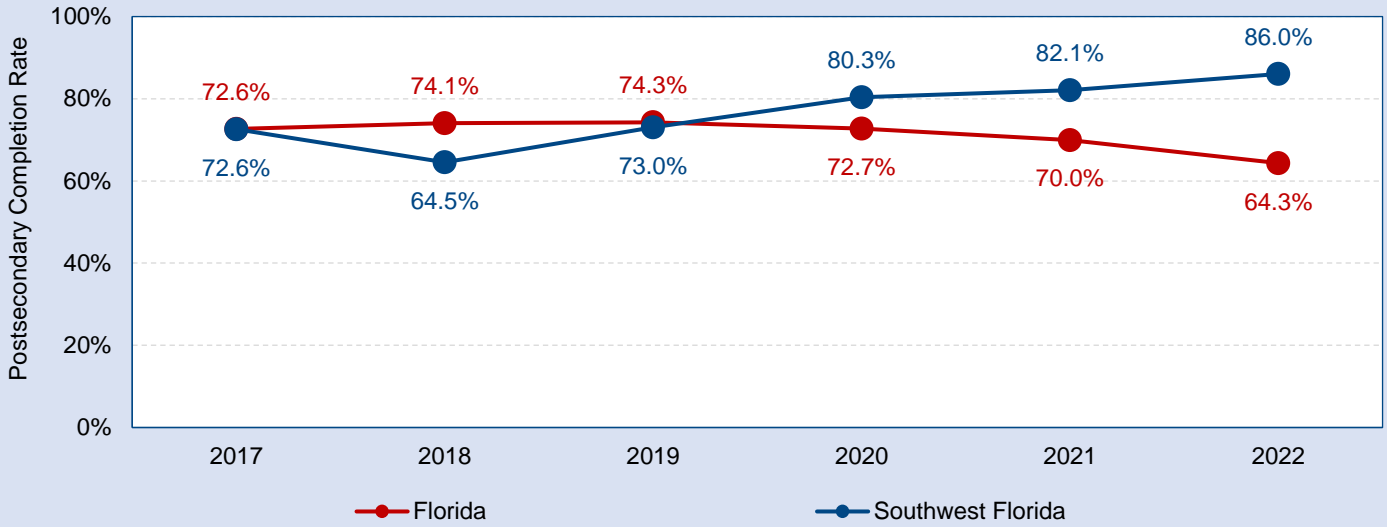
Area	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Southwest Florida</b>						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	3,125	2,849	2,973	3,218	2,575	2,897
Adjusted cohort size	5,978	5,939	6,223	6,104	5,288	5,364
Cohort completion rate	52.3%	48.0%	47.8%	52.7%	48.7%	54.0%
<b>Florida</b>						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	89,184	90,810	76,778	76,441	77,504	75,898
Adjusted cohort size	176,048	168,120	144,698	139,849	139,400	134,848
Cohort completion rate	50.7%	54.0%	53.1%	54.7%	55.6%	56.3%
<b>United States</b>						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	1,252,240	1,252,907	1,267,573	1,290,648	1,311,655	1,316,796
Adjusted cohort size	2,565,153	2,448,946	2,424,896	2,427,776	2,429,557	2,440,161
Cohort completion rate	48.8%	51.2%	52.3%	53.2%	54.0%	54.0%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

<sup>9</sup> See the Glossary for more information on how to interpret the completion rate.

### Chart 2-16: Postsecondary Completion Rates

Less than two year institutes  
Percent completing within 150 percent of normal time



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

Chart 2-16 and Table 2-16 shows the completion rates for students seeking a degree or certificate and enrolled less-than two-year institutes in Southwest Florida. Less than two-year institutes in the region had an on-time completion rate of 86.0 percent in 2022, up 3.9 percentage points from 2021. The completion rate remains above both the state (64.3 percent) and the nation (65.1 percent).

### Table 2-16: Postsecondary Completion Rates

Less than two-year institutes

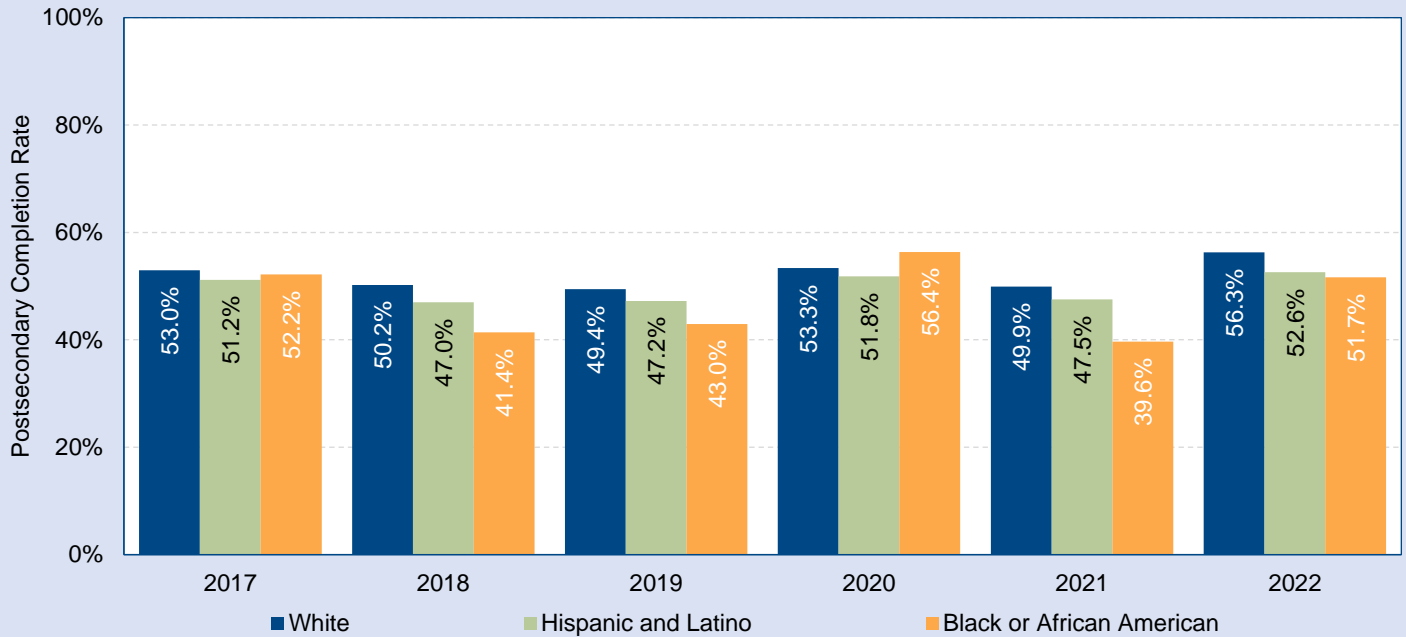
Area	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Southwest Florida</b>						
<i>Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time</i>	405	304	620	560	951	844
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	558	471	849	697	1,159	981
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	72.6%	64.5%	73.0%	80.3%	82.1%	86.0%
<b>Florida</b>						
<i>Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time</i>	10,518	11,303	9,688	9,964	10,042	10,137
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	14,481	15,258	13,046	13,697	14,352	15,753
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	72.6%	74.1%	74.3%	72.7%	70.0%	64.3%
<b>United States</b>						
<i>Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time</i>	103,944	102,670	98,322	96,173	95,339	85,565
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	149,864	149,094	143,351	138,939	139,226	131,405
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	69.4%	68.9%	68.6%	69.2%	68.5%	65.1%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System



### Chart 2-17: Postsecondary Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Two- and four-year institutes  
Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Postsecondary Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 2-17<sup>10</sup> and Table 2-17 show completion rates for students seeking a degree or certificate and enrolled in two- and four-year institutes<sup>11</sup> by race and ethnicity for the region. Southwest Florida had a cohort completion rate of 54.0 percent in 2022. Students who identified as White had a slightly higher completion rate, measured at 56.3 percent during 2022. Students identifying as Hispanic and Latino had a lower completion rate (52.6 percent), along with students identifying as Black (51.7 percent).



Data illustrating on-time, postsecondary completion rates by race and ethnicity for Southwest Florida are also provided in this report. Between 2017 and 2022, on-time postsecondary complete rates follow similar patterns across the races and ethnicities, with Black and Hispanic/Latino students having lower completion rates than White students.

<sup>10</sup> Data for the other races/ethnicities tracked by the National Center for Education Statistics do not appear in Chart 2-18 due to the small and highly variable sample sizes, making visual interpretations more difficult. These data are presented in Table 2-18.

<sup>11</sup> Information for less than two-year institutes is not available by race and ethnicity.



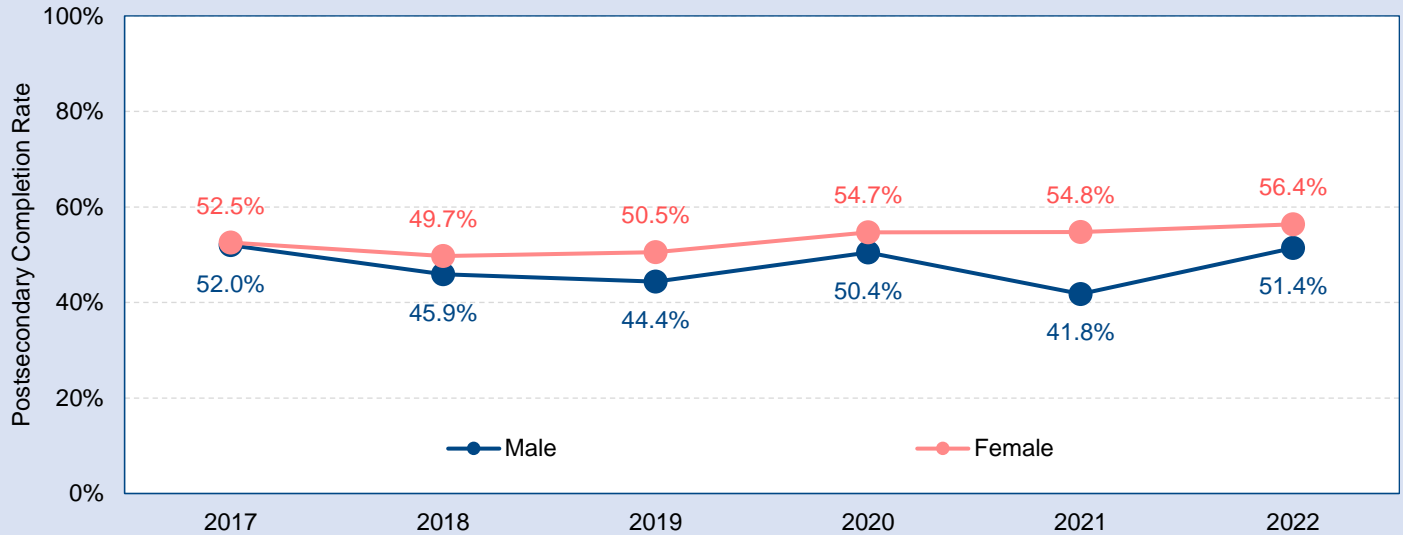
**Table 2-17: Postsecondary Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity**Two-year and four-year institutes  
Southwest Florida

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
White						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	1,896	1,752	1,719	1,818	1,543	1,701
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	3,580	3,489	3,477	3,408	3,092	3,023
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	53.0%	50.2%	49.4%	53.3%	49.9%	56.3%
Hispanic and Latino						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	732	688	752	836	629	751
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	1,430	1,464	1,592	1,614	1,323	1,428
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	51.2%	47.0%	47.2%	51.8%	47.5%	52.6%
Black or African American						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	313	246	321	363	178	250
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	600	594	747	644	449	484
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	52.2%	41.4%	43.0%	56.4%	39.6%	51.7%
Asian						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	44	39	39	41	45	39
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	88	81	88	73	78	78
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	50.0%	48.1%	44.3%	56.2%	57.7%	50.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	7	10	6	4	7	9
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	12	24	17	12	14	19
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	58.3%	41.7%	35.3%	33.3%	50.0%	47.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	3	7	4	3	5	5
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	8	10	10	6	8	10
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	37.5%	70.0%	40.0%	50.0%	62.5%	50.0%
Two or more races						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	60	47	50	60	69	53
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	118	117	121	157	130	127
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	50.8%	40.2%	41.3%	38.2%	53.1%	41.7%
Race/ethnicity unknown						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	43	42	48	53	58	60
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	95	115	107	118	124	139
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	45.3%	36.5%	44.9%	44.9%	46.8%	43.2%
Nonresident alien						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	27	18	34	40	41	29
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	47	45	64	72	70	56
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	57.4%	40.0%	53.1%	55.6%	58.6%	51.8%
<b>Total</b>						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	<b>3,125</b>	<b>2,849</b>	<b>2,973</b>	<b>3,218</b>	<b>2,575</b>	<b>2,897</b>
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	<b>5,978</b>	<b>5,939</b>	<b>6,223</b>	<b>6,104</b>	<b>5,288</b>	<b>5,364</b>
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	<b>52.3%</b>	<b>48.0%</b>	<b>47.8%</b>	<b>52.7%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>54.0%</b>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

### Chart 2-18: Postsecondary Completion Rates by Gender

Two-year and four-year institutes  
Southwest Florida



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Postsecondary Completion Rates by Gender

Chart 2-18 and Table 2-18 shows completion rates for students seeking a degree or certificate and enrolled in two- and four-year institutes<sup>12</sup> by gender for the region. Southwest Florida had a cohort completion rate of 54.0 percent in 2022. Females had a higher completion rate, measured at 56.4 percent during 2022, while male students had a lower completion rate (51.4 percent).

### Table 2-18: Postsecondary Completion Rates by Gender

Two-year and four-year institutes  
Southwest Florida

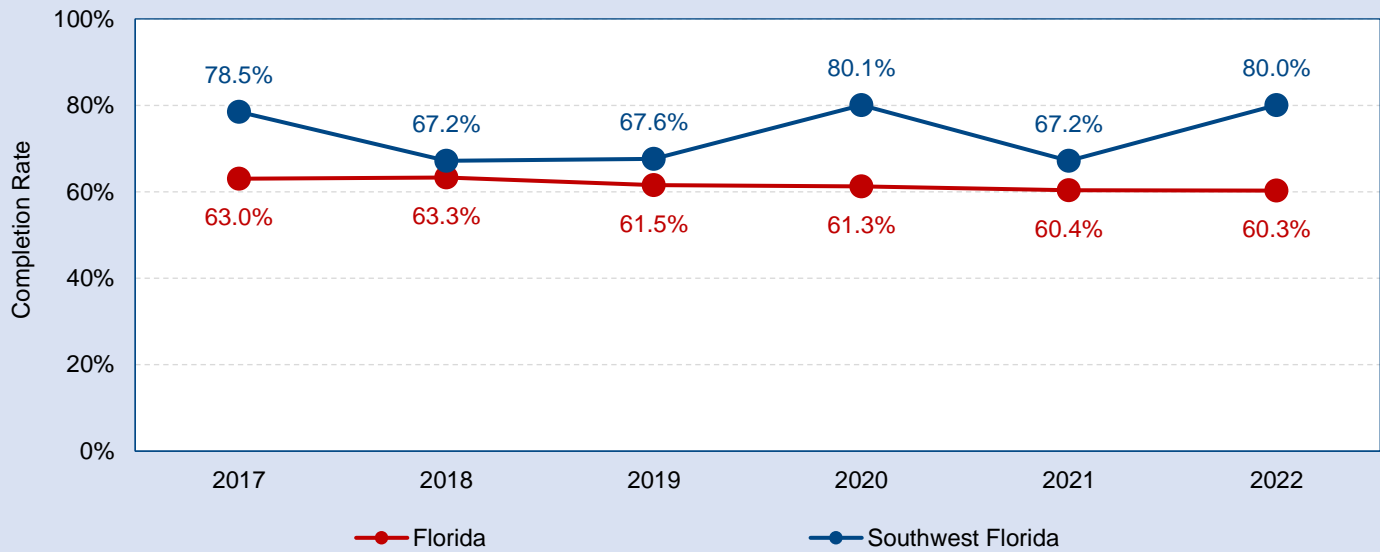
Gender	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Male</b>						
Number of cohort completers	1,380	1,245	1,235	1,429	1,032	1,307
Adjusted cohort size	2,655	2,713	2,783	2,833	2,470	2,543
Cohort completion rate	52.0%	45.9%	44.4%	50.4%	41.8%	51.4%
<b>Female</b>						
Number of cohort completers	1,745	1,604	1,738	1,789	1,543	1,590
Adjusted cohort size	3,323	3,226	3,440	3,271	2,818	2,821
Cohort completion rate	52.5%	49.7%	50.5%	54.7%	54.8%	56.4%
<b>Total</b>						
Number of cohort completers	3,125	2,849	2,973	3,218	2,575	2,897
Adjusted cohort size	5,978	5,939	6,223	6,104	5,288	5,364
Cohort completion rate	52.3%	48.0%	47.8%	52.7%	48.7%	54.0%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

<sup>12</sup> Information for less than two year institutes is not available by gender.

### Chart 2-19: Technical College Completion Rates

Percent completing within 150 percent of normal time



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Technical College Completion Rates

Chart 2-19 and Table 2-19 shows completion rates for students enrolled at technical colleges in Southwest Florida.<sup>13</sup> The region had 1,446 cohort completers in 2022, resulting in an 80.0 percent cohort completion rate. The completion rate improved from 2020 and was higher than both the state (60.3 percent) and the nation (40.3 percent).

### Table 2-19: Technical College Completion Rates

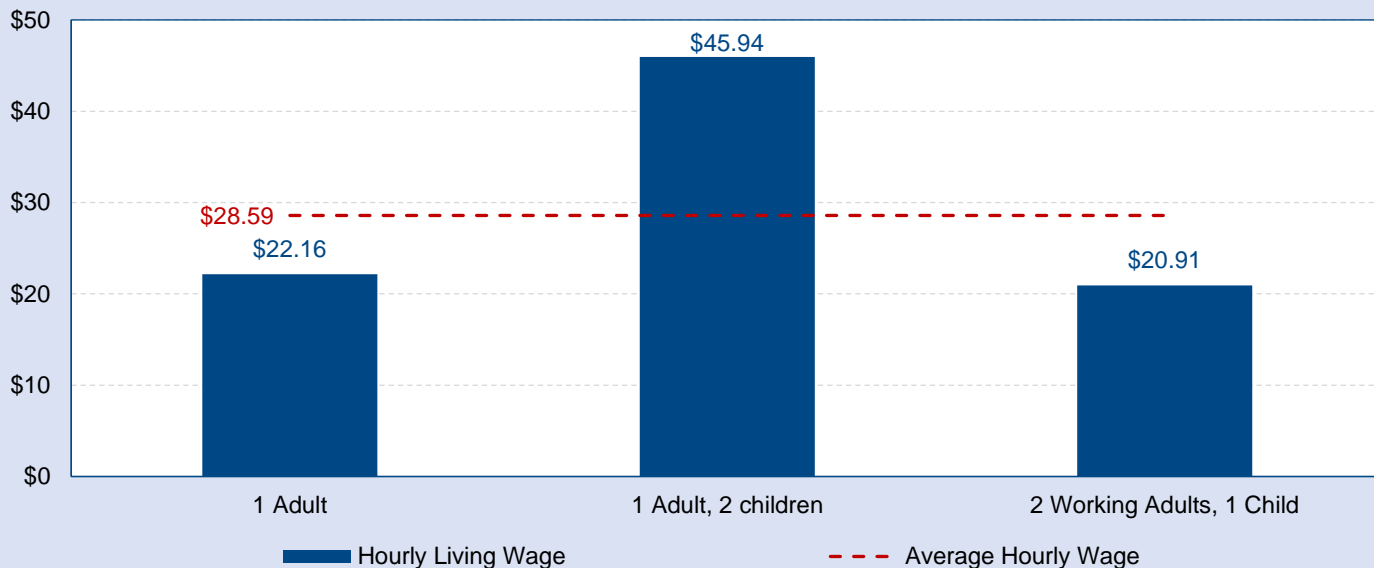
Area	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Southwest Florida</b>						
Number of cohort completers	1,600	1,226	1,527	1,493	1,227	1,446
Adjusted cohort size	2,039	1,825	2,259	1,865	1,826	1,807
Cohort completion rate	78.5%	67.2%	67.6%	80.1%	67.2%	80.0%
<b>Florida</b>						
Number of cohort completers	40,096	44,345	28,261	27,298	27,270	24,108
Adjusted cohort size	63,615	70,044	45,923	44,568	45,163	39,993
Cohort completion rate	63.0%	63.3%	61.5%	61.3%	60.4%	60.3%
<b>United States</b>						
Number of cohort completers	370,689	360,071	346,417	343,912	343,343	327,744
Adjusted cohort size	939,949	894,935	855,544	830,512	822,982	813,748
Cohort completion rate	39.4%	40.2%	40.5%	41.4%	41.7%	40.3%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

<sup>13</sup> See the Methodology for more information on how technical colleges in Southwest Florida were identified.

**Chart 2-20: Hourly Living Wage**

Southwest Florida



Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute.

## Living Wage

Chart 2-20 show living wage estimates for Southwest Florida. Living wages are obtained from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) living wage calculator and are updated annually by the MIT research team. Living wage is defined by MIT as the wage needed to cover basic family expenses (basic needs budget) plus all relevant taxes. Values reported by MIT are in December 2023 dollars.

Living wages shown in Table 2-20 sample the hourly rate full-time working adults in a household must earn to pay regional average food, clothing, medical care, childcare and other expenses, and county average housing and transportation costs. In reality, these costs vary depending on county. Southwest Florida living wages are estimated for household combinations of 1-2 working adults and 0-3 children by computing the average of each of the five counties, weighted by the 2023 population distribution. The table also provides average hourly wages earned in each area and are obtained from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

The living wage for a single adult in Southwest Florida is \$22.16 per hour in 2023, slightly below the state average of \$22.43 per hour. Furthermore, an adult supporting two children must earn \$45.94 per hour in Southwest Florida (compared to \$45.36 in Florida). Two working adults with one child have a living wage of \$20.91 per hour (versus \$20.81 for the state). While the average hourly wage in Southwest Florida (\$28.59) exceeded living wages for a single adult and two adults with a child, it remains below the living wage threshold for a single adult supporting two children.

**Table 2-20: Living Wage**

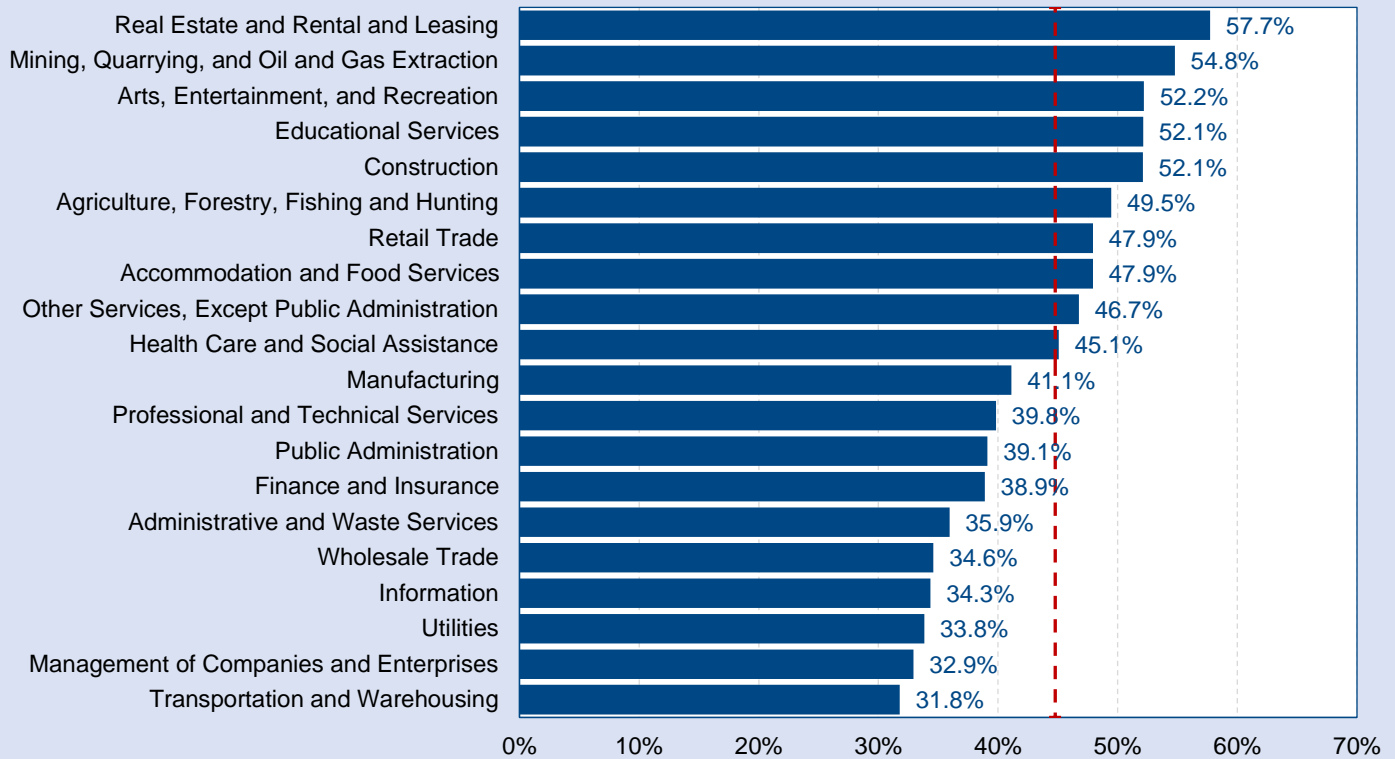
2023

Area	1 Adult	1 Adult, 2 children	2 Working Adults, 1 Child	Average Hourly Wage
Charlotte	\$20.12	\$42.61	\$19.26	\$24.66
Collier	\$23.13	\$49.11	\$22.17	\$31.11
Glades	\$19.20	\$39.69	\$18.02	\$27.03
Hendry	\$18.57	\$39.90	\$18.32	\$25.01
Lee	\$22.43	\$45.61	\$20.88	\$27.94
<b>Southwest Florida</b>	<b>\$22.16</b>	<b>\$45.94</b>	<b>\$20.91</b>	<b>\$28.59</b>
<b>Florida</b>	<b>\$22.43</b>	<b>\$45.36</b>	<b>\$20.81</b>	<b>\$31.87</b>

Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

### Chart 2-21: Graduation Retention Rates by Industry

Percent of graduates from SWFL post-secondary institutes that work in SWFL **Total, all industries: 44.8%**



Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Graduation Retention Rates by Industry

The data team used data from Lightcast to estimate graduation retention rates by industry in Southwest Florida. These rates represent the share of graduates from a postsecondary institution in Southwest Florida that also remained in the region to work. Estimations are based on an analysis of reported information from online employment profiles such as LinkedIn and Indeed.<sup>14</sup> The data used for this report was obtained on July 12th, 2024.

Of the 84,753 SWFL graduates found online, 37,943 of them were employed in Southwest Florida, giving the region a graduation retention rate of 44.8 percent. The real estate and rental and leasing industry has done the best job at keeping Southwest Florida graduates employed locally, with 57.7 percent of graduates employed in the industry working in the region. Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction was close behind the real estate industry, with a graduation retention rate of 54.8 percent, followed by the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry (52.2 percent). Furthermore, the educational services industry and the construction industry each had 52.1 percent of graduates working in the region.

<sup>14</sup> One limitation to this analysis is that it says nothing about whether the graduate is working in a capacity that utilizes their postsecondary credential.

**Table 2-21: Graduation Retention Rates by Industry**

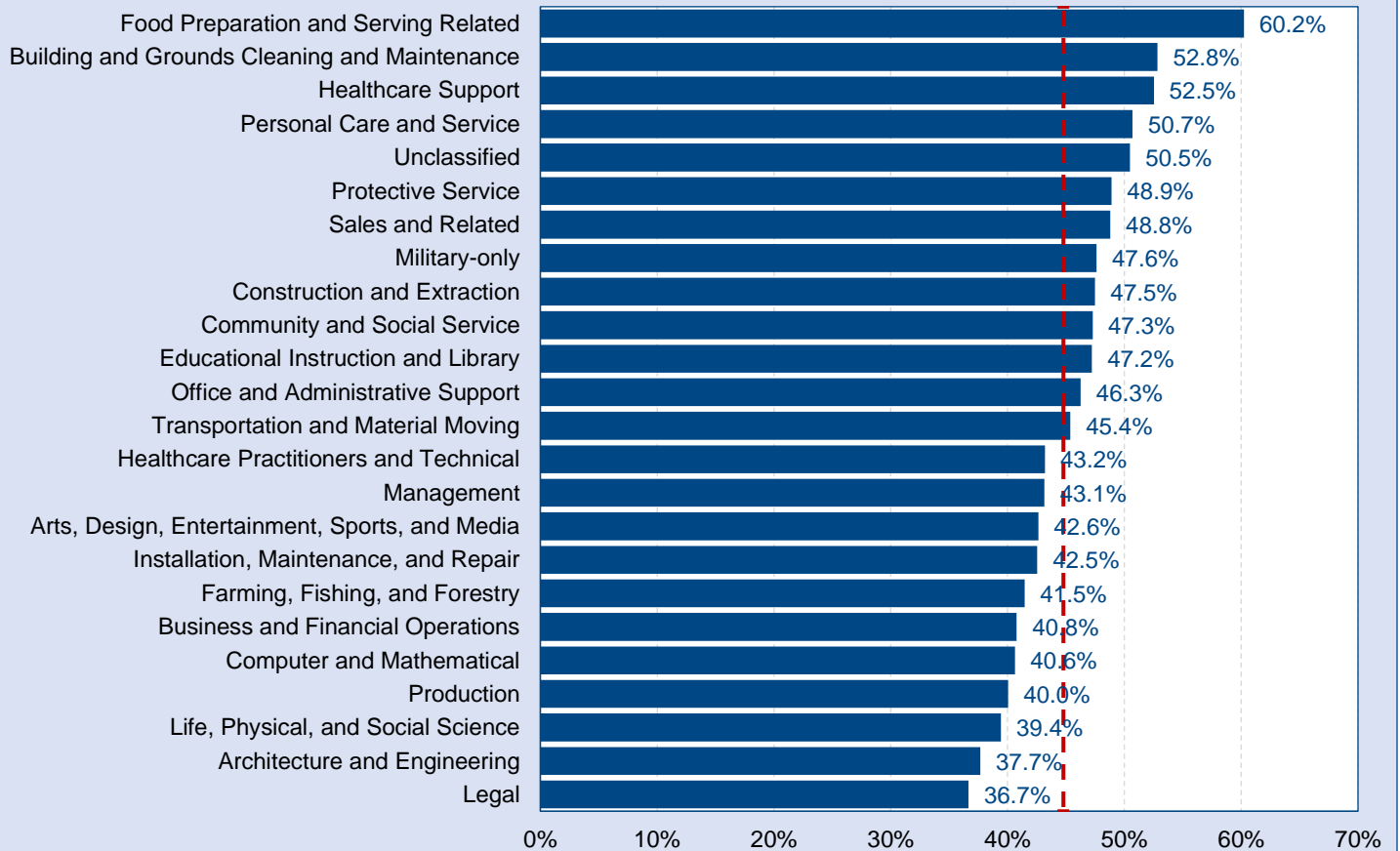
Graduates from SWFL post-secondary institutes that work in SWFL since 2000

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Graduated in SWFL</b>	<b>Graduated and employed in SWFL</b>	<b>Retention Rate</b>
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,645	1,527	<b>57.7%</b>
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	115	63	<b>54.8%</b>
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,364	712	<b>52.2%</b>
Educational Services	7,124	3,714	<b>52.1%</b>
Construction	2,437	1,270	<b>52.1%</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	182	90	<b>49.5%</b>
Retail Trade	4,974	2,384	<b>47.9%</b>
Accommodation and Food Services	2,819	1,351	<b>47.9%</b>
Other Services, Except Public Administration	2,075	970	<b>46.7%</b>
Unknown	27,655	12,558	<b>45.4%</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	7,956	3,587	<b>45.1%</b>
Manufacturing	4,354	1,790	<b>41.1%</b>
Professional and Technical Services	7,370	2,935	<b>39.8%</b>
Public Administration	2,199	860	<b>39.1%</b>
Finance and Insurance	4,012	1,561	<b>38.9%</b>
Administrative and Waste Services	2,145	771	<b>35.9%</b>
Wholesale Trade	1,740	602	<b>34.6%</b>
Information	1,913	657	<b>34.3%</b>
Utilities	337	114	<b>33.8%</b>
Management of Companies and Enterprises	170	56	<b>32.9%</b>
Transportation and Warehousing	1,167	371	<b>31.8%</b>
<b>Total, all industries</b>	<b>84,753</b>	<b>37,943</b>	<b>44.8%</b>

Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast, obtained on July 12, 2024

### Chart 2-22: Graduation Retention Rates by Occupation

Percent of graduates from SWFL post-secondary institutes that work in SWFL **Total, all occupations: 44.8%**



Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Graduation Retention Rates by Occupation

The data team used data from Lightcast to estimate graduation retention rates by occupation in Southwest Florida. These rates represent the share of graduates from a postsecondary institution in Southwest Florida that also remained in the region to work. Estimations are based on an analysis of reported information from online employment profiles such as LinkedIn and Indeed. The data used for this report was obtained on July 12th, 2024.

The occupation with the highest graduate retention rate in Southwest Florida was the food preparation and serving related group, with 60.2 percent of all graduates in this field staying in the area. This was followed by building and grounds cleaning and maintenance (52.8 percent), healthcare support (52.5 percent), personal care and service (50.7 percent) and the unclassified industry (50.5 percent). The average retention rate for all industries in Southwest Florida was 44.8 percent.



**Table 2-22: Graduation Retention Rates by Occupation**

Graduates from SWFL post-secondary institutes that work in SWFL

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Graduated in SWFL</b>	<b>Graduated and employed in SWFL</b>	<b>Retention Rate</b>
Food Preparation and Serving Related	2,019	1,216	<b>60.2%</b>
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	229	121	<b>52.8%</b>
Healthcare Support	1,367	718	<b>52.5%</b>
Personal Care and Service	1,294	656	<b>50.7%</b>
Unclassified	4,928	2,487	<b>50.5%</b>
Protective Service	1,133	554	<b>48.9%</b>
Sales and Related	6,718	3,278	<b>48.8%</b>
Military-only	84	40	<b>47.6%</b>
Construction and Extraction	457	217	<b>47.5%</b>
Community and Social Service	2,538	1,200	<b>47.3%</b>
Educational Instruction and Library	4,301	2,031	<b>47.2%</b>
Office and Administrative Support	8,258	3,820	<b>46.3%</b>
Transportation and Material Moving	1,320	599	<b>45.4%</b>
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	5,823	2,515	<b>43.2%</b>
Management	21,692	9,359	<b>43.1%</b>
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	3,392	1,446	<b>42.6%</b>
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	811	345	<b>42.5%</b>
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	41	17	<b>41.5%</b>
Business and Financial Operations	7,769	3,168	<b>40.8%</b>
Computer and Mathematical	4,901	1,991	<b>40.6%</b>
Production	1,104	442	<b>40.0%</b>
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,111	438	<b>39.4%</b>
Architecture and Engineering	1,529	576	<b>37.7%</b>
Legal	1,934	709	<b>36.7%</b>
<b>Total, all industries</b>	<b>84,753</b>	<b>37,943</b>	<b>44.8%</b>




Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast, obtained on July 12, 2024



# FutureMakers Coalition



## Resilience and Diversification\*

Indicator	Measure	Trending
 <b>Start-Up Businesses</b> Number of start-up businesses up to two-years old	SWFL 15,207	↑
 <b>Start-Up Employees</b> Number of employees at start-up businesses up to two-years old	SWFL 104,086	↑
 <b>Longevity</b> Proportion of ongoing businesses and employees after 3 to 5 years	Businesses TBD Employees TBD	

\* These data are a preliminary attempt to describe the current Southwest Florida entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Data & Reporting Team is continuing to explore the available data sources to determine the best methods to estimate the Resilience and Diversification Team outcomes.

## Background

The new Resilience & Diversification Regional Action Team is focused on ensuring our region's workforce and economy are resilient by cultivating a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem. Toward that end, entrepreneurial education is an indispensable cornerstone in the development of a thriving economy, especially in regions like Southwest Florida where small businesses and startups play an instrumental role. These enterprises not only create a dynamic economic atmosphere but also fortify the economic resilience of the area. By cultivating an educational environment that emphasizes entrepreneurial skills and mindset from K-12 onwards, we can set the foundation for a more robust and adaptive future for Southwest Florida. There are several compelling reasons to embed entrepreneurial education deeply within the region's educational infrastructure:

- **Economic Diversification:** Southwest Florida's economic vitality is intrinsically linked to the diversity of its industries. With a stronger emphasis on entrepreneurial education, students are equipped to explore and enter a broader array of sectors, thus diversifying and strengthening the region's economic base.
- **Cultivating a Growth Mindset:** Entrepreneurial education fosters a growth mindset in students. They are encouraged to see failures as learning opportunities, to be persistent, and to approach problems with innovative solutions. This mindset is invaluable not just for starting businesses but in myriad aspects of life.
- **Stimulating Local Economy:** By nurturing homegrown entrepreneurs, we ensure a continuous influx of local businesses that cater to the unique needs and characteristics of the Southwest Florida region. This not only boosts the local economy but also creates job opportunities and retains talent within the region.
- **Skill Development:** Entrepreneurial education equips students with a versatile set of skills – from critical thinking and problem-solving to financial literacy and leadership. These skills are transferable and beneficial even for those who do not pursue entrepreneurship, making them more adaptable in the evolving job market.
- **Building Community Networks:** When entrepreneurial mindsets are nurtured from a young age, it leads to the establishment of a supportive community of innovators, mentors, and investors. This ecosystem is essential for budding entrepreneurs to thrive and for the continuous exchange of ideas.
- **Empowering the Youth:** Empowerment comes from the knowledge that one has the tools and abilities to shape their future. By giving students the tools to create, innovate, and drive change, we're fostering a generation that believes in its potential to make a difference.
- **Future-proofing the Economy:** The future landscape of business and work is unpredictable. By fostering entrepreneurial skills, we are ensuring that the next generation is not just equipped to find jobs but to create them, adapting to whatever the future holds.

These reasons provide a firm foundation upon which the Resilience and Diversification Action Team can work toward the following goals.

- To enhance entrepreneurship Education in K-12 schools in all five counties in Southwest Florida.
- To increase the number of entrepreneurship programs offered and students studying entrepreneurship in all major universities and the five technical colleges in Southwest Florida.
- To increase the number of entrepreneurship programs offered to adults outside of universities and colleges.
- To develop the Southwest Florida Startup Community.
- To improve the Southwest Florida entrepreneurial ecosystem.

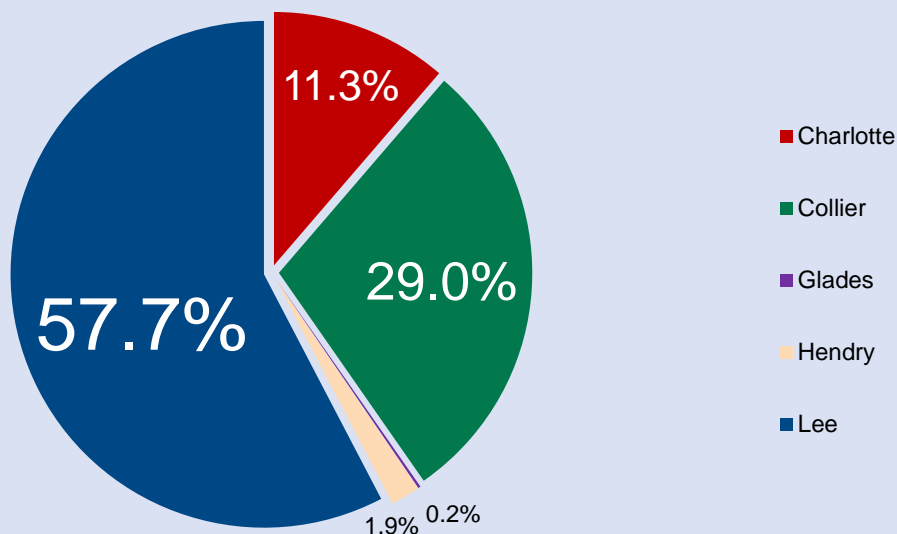
To measure the team's progress over time, two key outcomes were identified. These metrics will be reported on a routine basis in the annual Educational and Workforce Outcomes Report.

- The number of new businesses started in the region – and by county.
- The number of employees at startups and the business longevity – by industry, by type of startup.

Enhancing entrepreneurial education in K-12 and beyond is more than just an educational upgrade; it's a strategic investment in Southwest Florida's future. By embedding these skills and values early on, we are ensuring that the future viability, vibrancy, and resilience of the Southwest Florida economy is in competent and innovative hands.

### Chart 2-23: Southwest Florida Start-Ups

Proportion of businesses up to two-years old, by county (N = 15,207)  
As of July 2024



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast, obtained July 2024  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Start-Up Businesses

As of July 2024, there were 15,207 start-up businesses in Southwest Florida.<sup>15</sup> A little more than half (57.7 percent) of the start-up businesses were in Lee County. Glades County accounted for only 0.2 percent of start-up businesses (Chart 2-23).



The Lightcast data as currently sorted is not able to differentiate between “entrepreneurial start-ups” and a new store opened in the 5-county region by a large national chain (for example). The new chain store would be considered a “start-up” in the current Lightcast definition, even though that national chain may have been around for decades as a corporation.

<sup>15</sup> An establishment is considered a start-up business if they are listed as being in business “for up to two years” and have been in business since 2022. See the Methodology for more information on how start-up business was defined.

## Start-Up Businesses by Industry

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services was the industry with the greatest number of start-up establishments (1,864 as of July 2024). This was followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (1,782 establishments), Construction (1,652 establishments), Other Services (1,634 establishments) and Administrative, Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (1,605 establishments). The top five industries with the greatest number of start-up businesses accounted for approximately 56 percent of all regional start-up businesses (Table 2-23). The number of employees among these same five industries accounted for approximately half of all employees in start-up business employees in Southwest Florida.

These data are a preliminary attempt to describe the current Southwest Florida entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Data & Reporting Team is continuing to explore the available data sources to determine the best methods to estimate the Resilience and Diversification Team outcomes.

**Table 2-23: Top Industries for Start-Up Business**

Industry	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,864	9,602
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,782	24,908
Construction	1,652	6,264
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,634	4,721
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,605	6,718
Retail Trade	1,561	8,430
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,101	5,786
Finance and Insurance	907	5,628
Accommodation and Food Services	763	11,523
Manufacturing	658	6,998
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	478	3,163
Transportation and Warehousing	371	2,771
Wholesale Trade	338	1,803
Information	235	1,854
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	101	324
Management of Companies and Enterprises	73	2,008
Utilities	31	1,311
Educational Services	30	131
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	23	143
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>15,207</b>	<b>104,086</b>

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast, obtained July 2024

In addition to the analysis of Lightcast data by the RERI, the data team collected the following data from local sources:

### **Collier County Public Schools**

- 48 Schools Participated in Entrepreneurship this past school year INCubatoredu Curriculum plus ESB Industry Certification (Entrepreneurship & Small Business) is offered
  - ✓ 9 High Schools
  - ✓ 8 Middle Schools
  - ✓ 31 Elementary Schools
- High School 500 students impacted
- Middle School 1,500 7th graders
- Elementary 3,300 5th grade students impacted

### **Collier County Schools: Dual Enrollment with FGCU**

- Aubrey Rogers
- Barron Collier
- Gulf Coast High School
- Immokalee High School

### **Collier County CEO Launch**

- Collier County will be launching the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of the CEO Program 20 students have gone through the application process. It will consist of Private, Public, and Home-Schooled students. Moorings Park has become the home base for the students since the course is geared to being outside of the school and embedded in businesses for the entire year. Each week students will visit a C-Suite for either a presentation, tour, or mentorship. A Trade Show, Pitch Competition, and Fundraising will be part of this program with the opportunity to expand into additional cohorts next year by region.

### **Hendry County**

- Labelle High School Entrepreneurship Program 200 students using Essentials of Entrepreneurship textbook moving forward with year 2 this year imbedding the lean startup team collaboration with pitch competition Plus Industry Certification
- Clewiston High School visited FGCU School of Entrepreneurship for a workshop and pitch presentation looking at starting a program at their high school

### **Lee County**

- Oasis High School started an afterschool program with 18 students. They created a product within the school and started a school store providing t-shirts for the clubs within Oasis High School
- Pitched at the FGCU High School Challenge for the 1<sup>st</sup> time this year
- The school will be offering a course in entrepreneurship this coming fall.
- Estero High School is participating in a summer camp at FGCU for the 2nd year in a row with hopes of opening a program in the school plus looking at dual enrollment
- Babcock Ranch is pursuing additional entrepreneurship opportunities for their students as well. The school is looking at dual enrollment opportunities

### **Charlotte County**

- The district is also imbedding entrepreneurship this fall following the same track as Hendry County with Essentials of Entrepreneurship plus the industry certification ESB Entrepreneurship and Small Business Exam great credential for the students to boost their resume

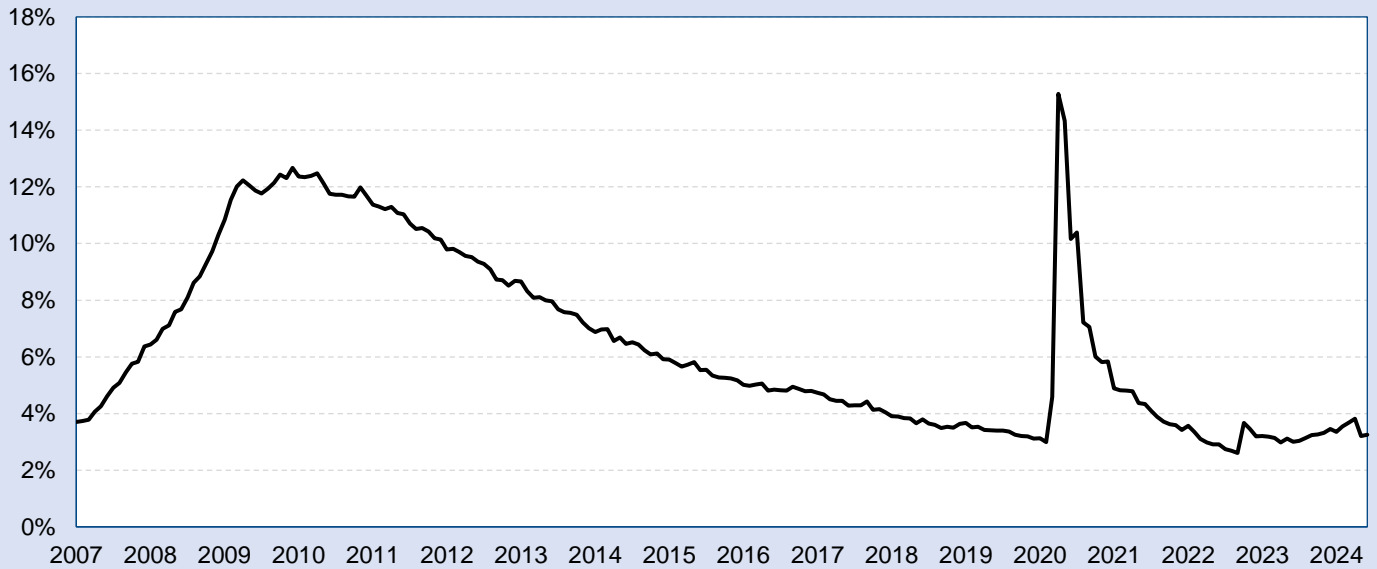


## Workforce Outcomes



### Chart 3-1: Unemployment Rate

Southwest Florida



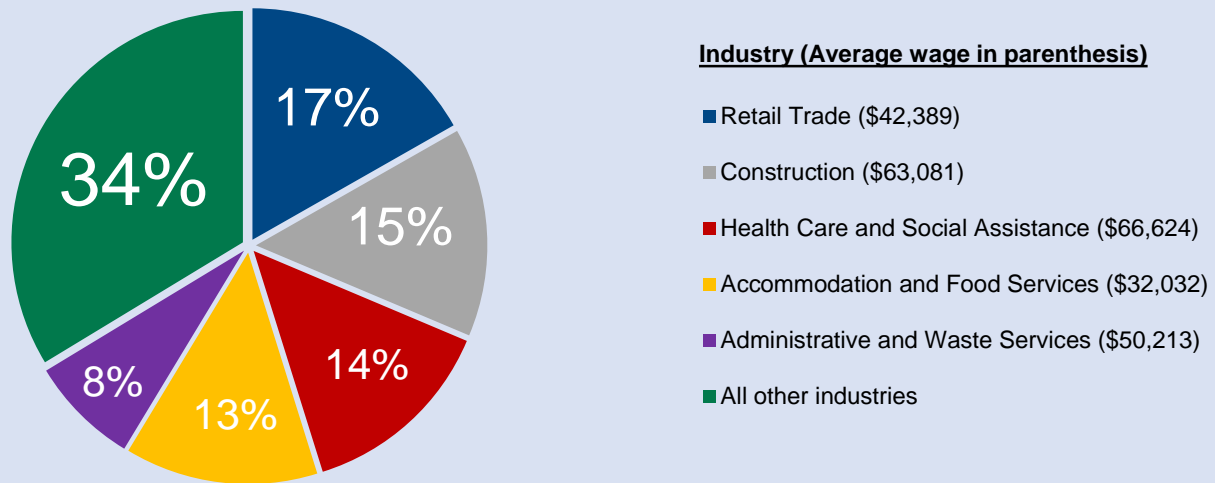
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Seasonally adjusted by the RERI.  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Unemployment Rate

Chart 3-1 shows the seasonally unemployment rate for Southwest Florida since January 2007.<sup>16</sup> The unemployment rate for the region in June 2024 was 3.2 percent, up 0.2 percentage points from the June 2023 measure but unchanged from the May 2024 measure.

<sup>16</sup> All seasonal adjustments performed by the Regional Economic Research Institute.



**Chart 3-2: Employment by Industry**Southwest Florida  
2023

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Employment by Industry

Chart 3-2 and Table 3-1 show an employment breakdown by industry and is provided by the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW).<sup>17</sup> Retail trade was the largest industry in Southwest Florida in 2023, with an average monthly employment of 77,209, representing 16.8 percent of all employment in the region.

The second largest industry employer was construction, with 67,191 employees (14.6 percent of regional employment). The third largest industry was health care and social assistance at 63,589, representing 13.8 percent of the region's employment. Close behind was accommodation and food services with 62,123 employees (13.5 percent of the region's employment). The fifth largest industry was administrative and waste services, employing 35,305 workers (7.7 percent of the region's workforce). Southwest Florida's top five industries accounted for 66.4 percent of employment in the region, while all other industries employed 33.6 percent of the population in 2023.

Southwest Florida has a comparative advantage in weather (sunshine and mild winter temperatures), beaches, and recreational activities. These quality-of-life characteristics are drivers that support the key industries in Southwest Florida, such as retail trade, health care, accommodation and food services, construction, and support services. Population growth has been a strong driver of wealth for the region, creating the need for housing, recreation, and services.

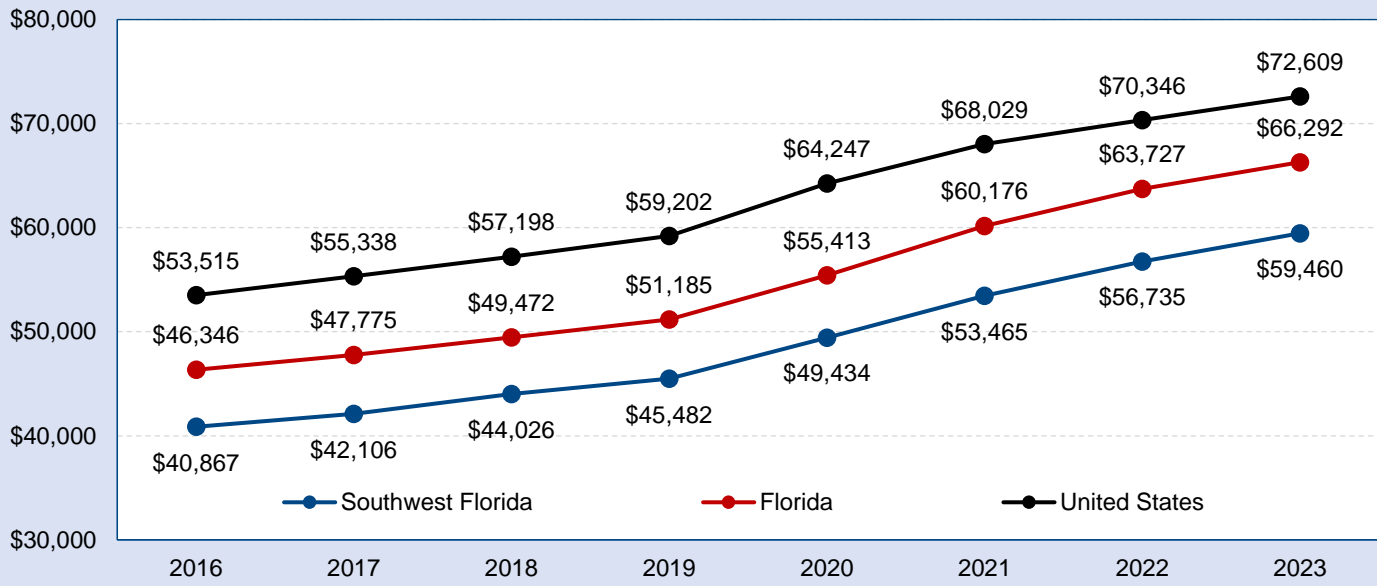
<sup>17</sup> QCEW data is based on employees covered by the Florida unemployment insurance, so it does not include workers who are self-employed. All figures represent employment from the private sector only.

**Table 3-1: Employment by Industry**Southwest Florida  
2023

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Average Monthly Employment</b>	<b>Percent of Total Employment</b>
Retail Trade	77,209	16.8%
Construction	67,191	14.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	63,589	13.8%
Accommodation and Food Services	62,123	13.5%
Administrative and Waste Services	35,305	7.7%
Professional and Technical Services	28,796	6.3%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	18,778	4.1%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	17,425	3.8%
Manufacturing	15,021	3.3%
Wholesale Trade	14,081	3.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13,751	3.0%
Finance and Insurance	12,968	2.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	10,547	2.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	6,646	1.4%
Educational Services	5,881	1.3%
Information	4,729	1.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,159	0.7%
Unclassified	1,454	0.3%
Utilities	1,270	0.3%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	542	0.1%
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>460,465</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

**Chart 3-3: Average Annual Wages**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Average Annual Wages

Chart 3-3 shows how average annual wages have changed over time.<sup>18</sup> The average annual wage in Southwest Florida was \$59,460 in 2023, an increase of 4.8 percent since 2022. Although Southwest Florida’s average annual wage has grown considerably since 2020 (up 20.3 percent), it continues to trail behind both the state average (\$66,292 in 2023) and national average (\$72,609).

Collier County had the highest average annual wage in Southwest Florida in 2023, measured at \$64,717. Lee County had the second highest average annual wage in the region (\$58,119 in 2023), followed by Glades County (\$56,228), Hendry County (\$52,013) and Charlotte County (\$51,292). Complete results by county can be found in Table 3-2.

<sup>18</sup> All figures represent average annual wages from the private sector only. Values are not adjusted for inflation.

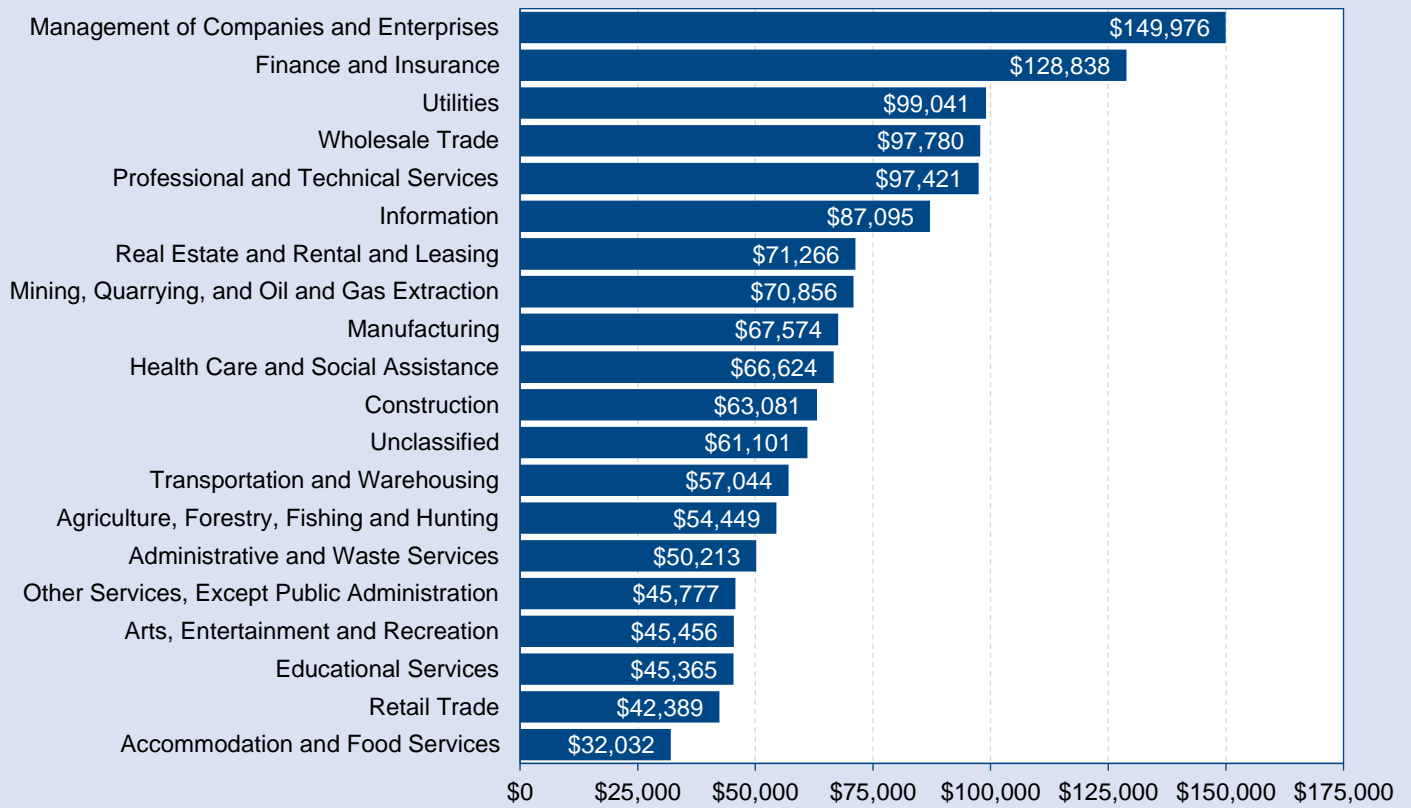
**Table 3-2: Average Annual Wages**

<b>Area</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Charlotte County</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$35,061	\$36,423	\$37,715	\$39,205	\$42,125	\$47,193	\$48,283	\$51,292
<i>Percent change</i>	2.2%	3.9%	3.5%	4.0%	7.4%	12.0%	2.3%	6.2%
<b>Collier County</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$44,610	\$45,565	\$48,021	\$49,533	\$54,324	\$59,858	\$62,734	\$64,717
<i>Percent change</i>	0.7%	2.1%	5.4%	3.1%	9.7%	10.2%	4.8%	3.2%
<b>Glades County</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$40,680	\$41,756	\$42,642	\$44,645	\$47,356	\$47,220	\$52,465	\$56,228
<i>Percent change</i>	3.9%	2.6%	2.1%	4.7%	6.1%	-0.3%	11.1%	7.2%
<b>Hendry County</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$36,141	\$35,858	\$40,342	\$39,098	\$41,991	\$44,549	\$48,900	\$52,013
<i>Percent change</i>	-1.3%	-0.8%	12.5%	-3.1%	7.4%	6.1%	9.8%	6.4%
<b>Lee County</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$39,933	\$41,391	\$42,959	\$44,480	\$48,210	\$51,232	\$55,051	\$58,119
<i>Percent change</i>	2.4%	3.7%	3.8%	3.5%	8.4%	6.3%	7.5%	5.6%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$40,867	\$42,106	\$44,026	\$45,482	\$49,434	\$53,465	\$56,735	\$59,460
<i>Percent change</i>	1.7%	3.0%	4.6%	3.3%	8.7%	8.2%	6.1%	4.8%
<b>Florida</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$46,346	\$47,775	\$49,472	\$51,185	\$55,413	\$60,176	\$63,727	\$66,292
<i>Percent change</i>	1.7%	3.1%	3.6%	3.5%	8.3%	8.6%	5.9%	4.0%
<b>United States</b>								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$53,515	\$55,338	\$57,198	\$59,202	\$64,247	\$68,029	\$70,346	\$72,609
<i>Percent change</i>	1.2%	3.4%	3.4%	3.5%	8.5%	5.9%	3.4%	3.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

### Chart 3-4: Average Annual Wages by Industry

Southwest Florida  
2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Average Annual Wages by Industry

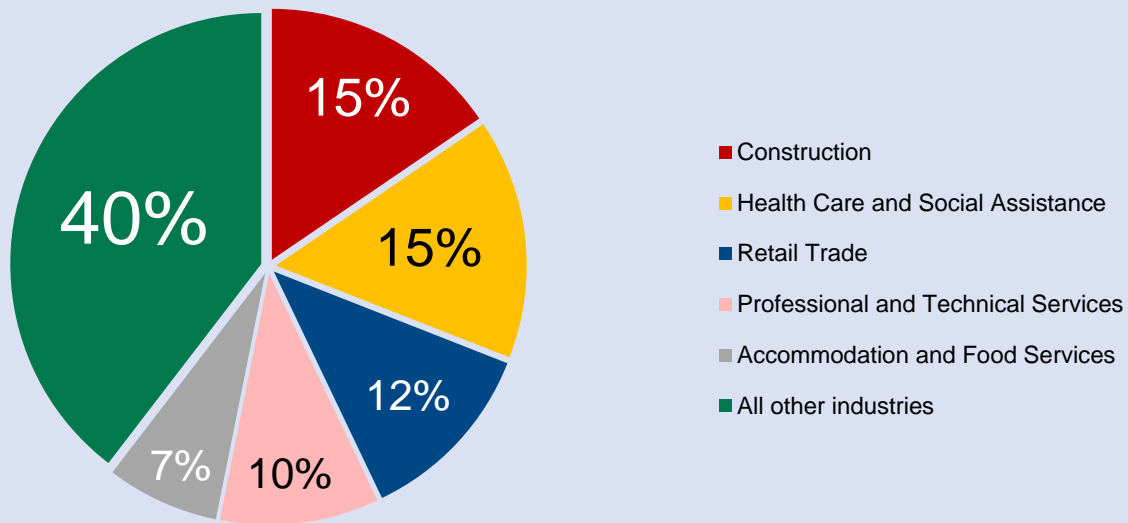
Southwest Florida had an average annual wage of \$59,460 in 2023. The management of companies and enterprises industry had the largest average annual wage in Southwest Florida, measured at \$149,976 (as shown in Chart 3-4 and Table 3-3).

The finance and insurance industry had the second highest average annual wage in 2023 (\$128,838), followed by the utilities industry (\$99,041), wholesale trade industry (\$97,780), and professional and technical services (\$97,421). Information had the sixth highest average annual wage in 2023 (\$87,095), followed by real estate and rental and leasing (\$71,266), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (\$70,856), manufacturing (\$67,574), and health care and social assistance (\$66,624) to round out the top 10. Only one industry (health care and social assistance) in the top five highest employment in Southwest Florida was ranked in the top 10 in average annual wages in 2023.

**Table 3-3: Average Annual Wages by Industry**Southwest Florida  
2023

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Average Annual Wage</b>
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$149,976
Finance and Insurance	\$128,838
Utilities	\$99,041
Wholesale Trade	\$97,780
Professional and Technical Services	\$97,421
Information	\$87,095
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$71,266
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$70,856
Manufacturing	\$67,574
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$66,624
Construction	\$63,081
Unclassified	\$61,101
Transportation and Warehousing	\$57,044
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$54,449
Administrative and Waste Services	\$50,213
Other Services, Except Public Administration	\$45,777
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	\$45,456
Educational Services	\$45,365
Retail Trade	\$42,389
Accommodation and Food Services	\$32,032
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>\$59,460</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

**Chart 3-5: Total Wages by Industry**Southwest Florida  
2023

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Total Wages by Industry

The largest contribution to total wage income is construction—with annual wage expenditures exceeding \$4.2 billion—representing 15.5 percent of total wage expenditures in Southwest Florida. Health care and social assistance was close behind in terms of total wage expenditure, also with 15.5 percent of the region's total annual wage and expenditures of \$4.2 billion. The third largest industry measured by total wage expenditures was retail trade, with 12.0 percent of the total regional wage expenditures at \$3.3 billion. Professional and technical services was the fourth largest industry as measured by total wages at \$2.8 billion or 10.2 percent of the region's total wage expenditures. Finally, accommodation and food services was fifth in terms of total wage expenditures, just shy of \$2.0 billion or 7.3 percent of the region's total wage expenditures. The total wage expenditures by industry are shown in Chart 3-5 and Table 3-4.

**Table 3-4: Total Wages by Industry**Southwest Florida  
2023

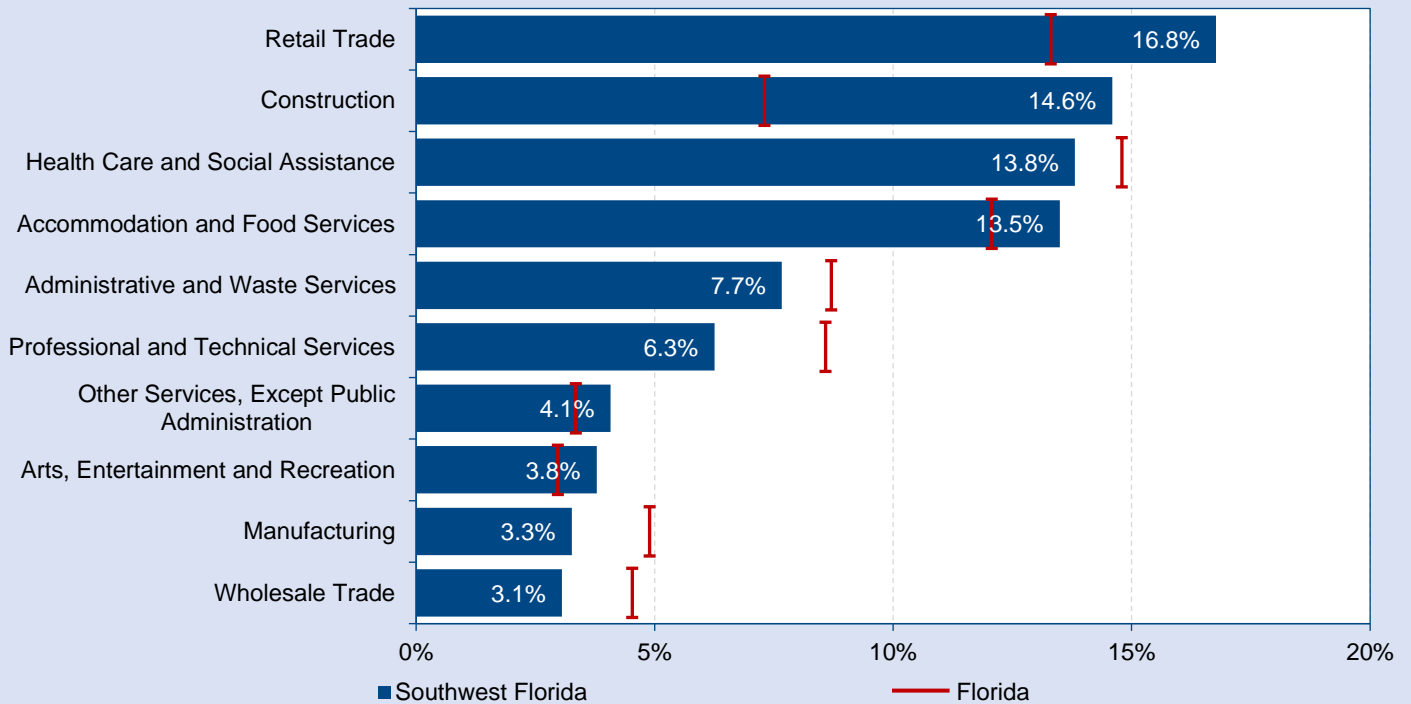
<b>Industry</b>	<b>Total Wages</b>	<b>Percent of Total Wages</b>
Construction	\$4,238,482,606	15.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$4,236,551,935	15.5%
Retail Trade	\$3,272,794,567	12.0%
Professional and Technical Services	\$2,805,372,483	10.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$1,989,908,880	7.3%
Administrative and Waste Services	\$1,772,765,228	6.5%
Finance and Insurance	\$1,670,783,525	6.1%
Wholesale Trade	\$1,376,873,380	5.0%
Manufacturing	\$1,015,011,606	3.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$979,967,337	3.6%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	\$859,614,963	3.1%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	\$792,059,435	2.9%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$601,644,886	2.2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$473,812,773	1.7%
Information	\$411,828,489	1.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$361,865,689	1.3%
Educational Services	\$266,802,114	1.0%
Utilities	\$125,740,912	0.5%
Unclassified	\$88,840,282	0.3%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$38,386,491	0.1%
<b>Total All Industries</b>	<b>\$27,379,107,581</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Bureau of Labor Statistics



### Chart 3-6: Employment Share by Industry

Southwest Florida vs. Florida  
2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Southwest Florida vs. State of Florida Employment

Southwest Florida’s comparative advantage as a preferred location for tourism and retirement certainly helps to explain why the region differs from the state. The largest positive differentials between Southwest Florida and the state include construction (7.3 percentage points greater than the state of Florida), retail trade (3.5 percentage points), accommodation and food services (1.4 percentage points), arts, entertainment, and recreation (0.8 percentage points), and other services, except public administration (0.7 percentage points).

The largest negative differentials between the region and the state include finance and insurance (2.5 percentage points below Florida), transportation and warehousing (2.4 percentage points), professional and technical services (2.3 percentage points), manufacturing (1.6 percentage points), and wholesale trade (1.5 percentage points). Three of the top five industries with the largest negative differentials were also in the top five highest paying industries in Southwest Florida. Complete results can be found in Chart 3-6 and Table 3-5.

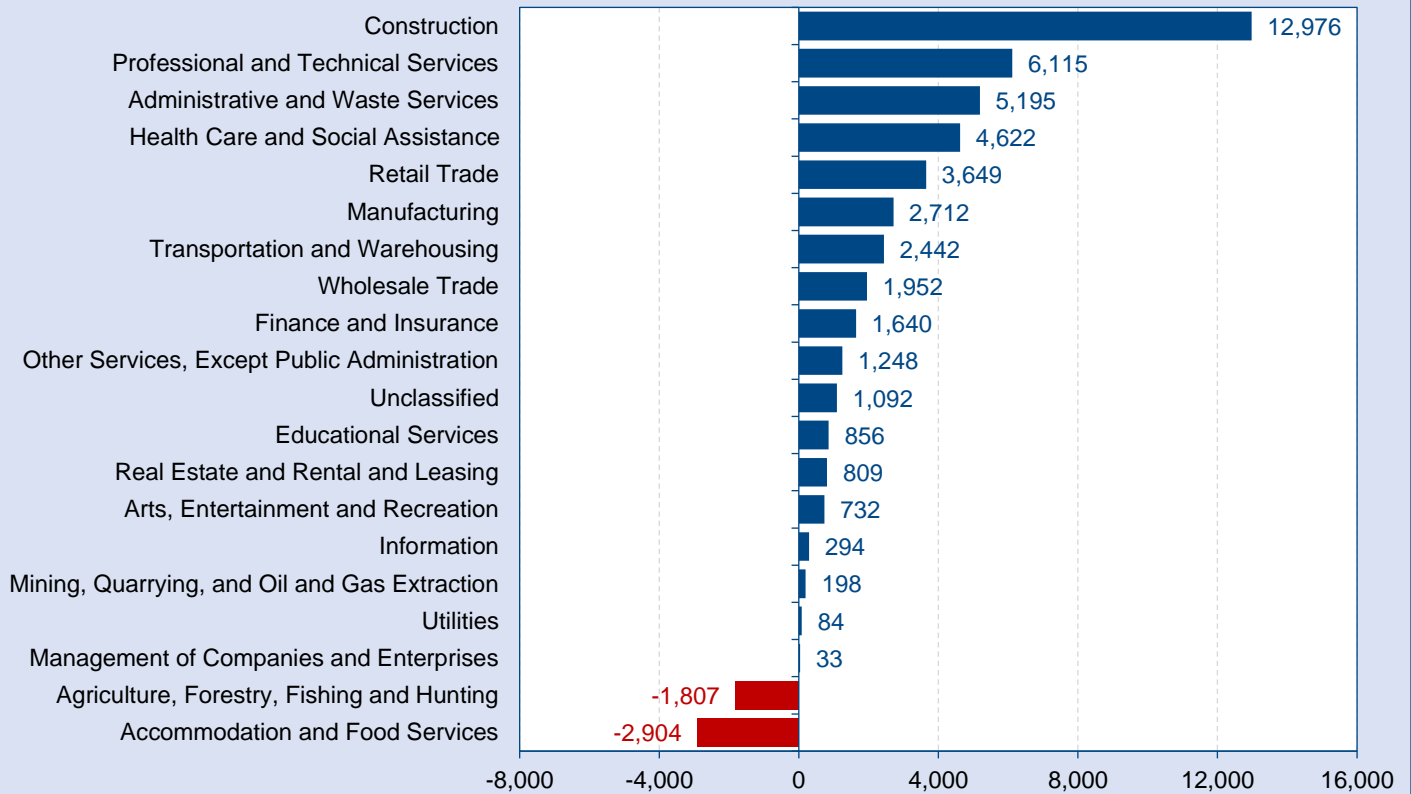
**Table 3-5: Employment Share by Industry**Southwest Florida vs. State of Florida  
2023

Industry	Florida	Southwest Florida	Difference
Construction	7.3%	14.6%	7.3%
Retail Trade	13.3%	16.8%	3.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	12.1%	13.5%	1.4%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3.0%	3.8%	0.8%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	3.3%	4.1%	0.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.7%	1.4%	0.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2.5%	3.0%	0.5%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Unclassified	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Utilities	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Information	1.8%	1.0%	-0.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.6%	0.7%	-0.9%
Educational Services	2.2%	1.3%	-1.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	14.8%	13.8%	-1.0%
Administrative and Waste Services	8.7%	7.7%	-1.0%
Wholesale Trade	4.5%	3.1%	-1.5%
Manufacturing	4.9%	3.3%	-1.6%
Professional and Technical Services	8.6%	6.3%	-2.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	4.6%	2.3%	-2.4%
Finance and Insurance	5.3%	2.8%	-2.5%

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Bureau of Labor Statistics

### Chart 3-7: Industry Employment Growth

Southwest Florida  
2019 to 2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Fastest and Slowest Growth Industries

Most industries in Southwest Florida grew between 2019 to 2023, as shown Chart 3-7. The industries with the most growth between 2019 to 2023 included construction (12,976 employees, 23.9 percent increase), professional and technical services (6,115 employees, 27.0 percent increase), administrative and waste services (5,195 employees, 17.3 percent increase), health care and social assistance (4,622 employees, 7.8 percent increase), and retail trade (3,649 employees, 5.0 percent increase). Over the same period, the industries experiencing negative growth included accommodation and food services (2,904 employee decline, 4.5 percent decrease), and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (1,807 employee decline, 21.4 percent decrease). Complete results can be found in Chart 3-7 and table 3-6.

**Table 3-6: Industry Employment Growth**

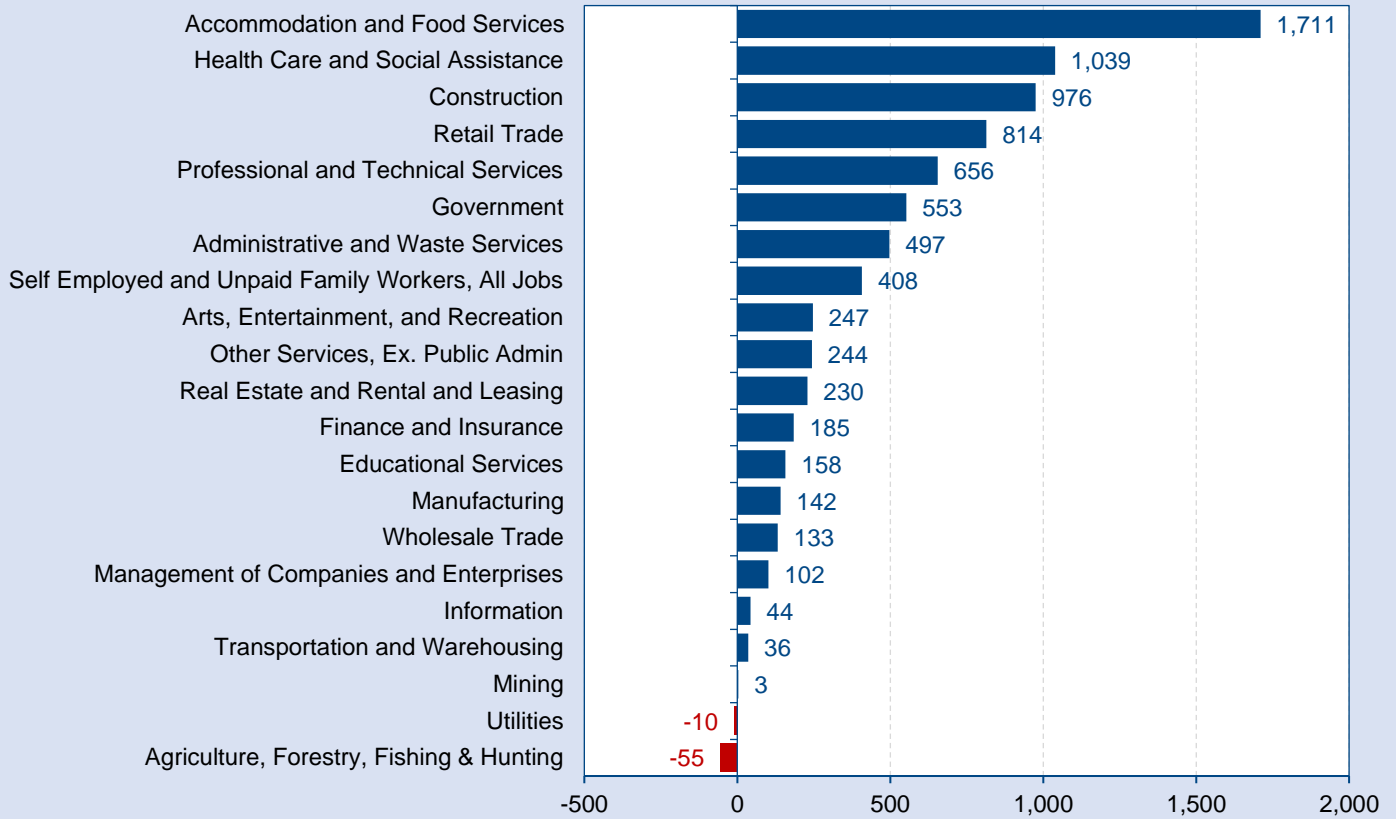
Southwest Florida

Industry	2019	2023	Growth	Percent
Construction	54,215	67,191	12,976	23.9%
Professional and Technical Services	22,681	28,796	6,115	27.0%
Administrative and Waste Services	30,110	35,305	5,195	17.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	58,967	63,589	4,622	7.8%
Retail Trade	73,560	77,209	3,649	5.0%
Manufacturing	12,309	15,021	2,712	22.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	8,105	10,547	2,442	30.1%
Wholesale Trade	12,129	14,081	1,952	16.1%
Finance and Insurance	11,328	12,968	1,640	14.5%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	17,530	18,778	1,248	7.1%
Unclassified	362	1,454	1,092	301.7%
Educational Services	5,025	5,881	856	17.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12,942	13,751	809	6.3%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	16,693	17,425	732	4.4%
Information	4,435	4,729	294	6.6%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	344	542	198	57.5%
Utilities	1,186	1,270	84	7.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,126	3,159	33	1.1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8,453	6,646	-1,807	-21.4%
Accommodation and Food Services	65,027	62,123	-2,904	-4.5%
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>418,526</b>	<b>460,465</b>	<b>41,939</b>	<b>10.0%</b>

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Bureau of Labor Statistics

### Chart 3-8: Projected Industry Employment Growth

Southwest Florida  
2023 to 2031



Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, 2023 to 2031 Employment Projections  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Projected Industry Employment Growth

Each year, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity provides an employment forecast by industry, which is shown in Chart 3-8 and Table 3-7.<sup>19</sup> The accommodation and food services industry is projected to be the fastest-growing industry in Southwest Florida, adding an average of 1,711 employees each year from 2023 to 2031. Health care and social assistance is projected to gain the second largest number of employees, adding 1,039 per year. This is followed by construction at 976 employees per year, retail trade at 814 employees per year, and professional and technical services at 656 employees per year.

<sup>19</sup> Unlike QCEW data, projections from the FDEO include employment from both the private sector and public sector.

**Table 3-7: Projected Industry Employment Growth**

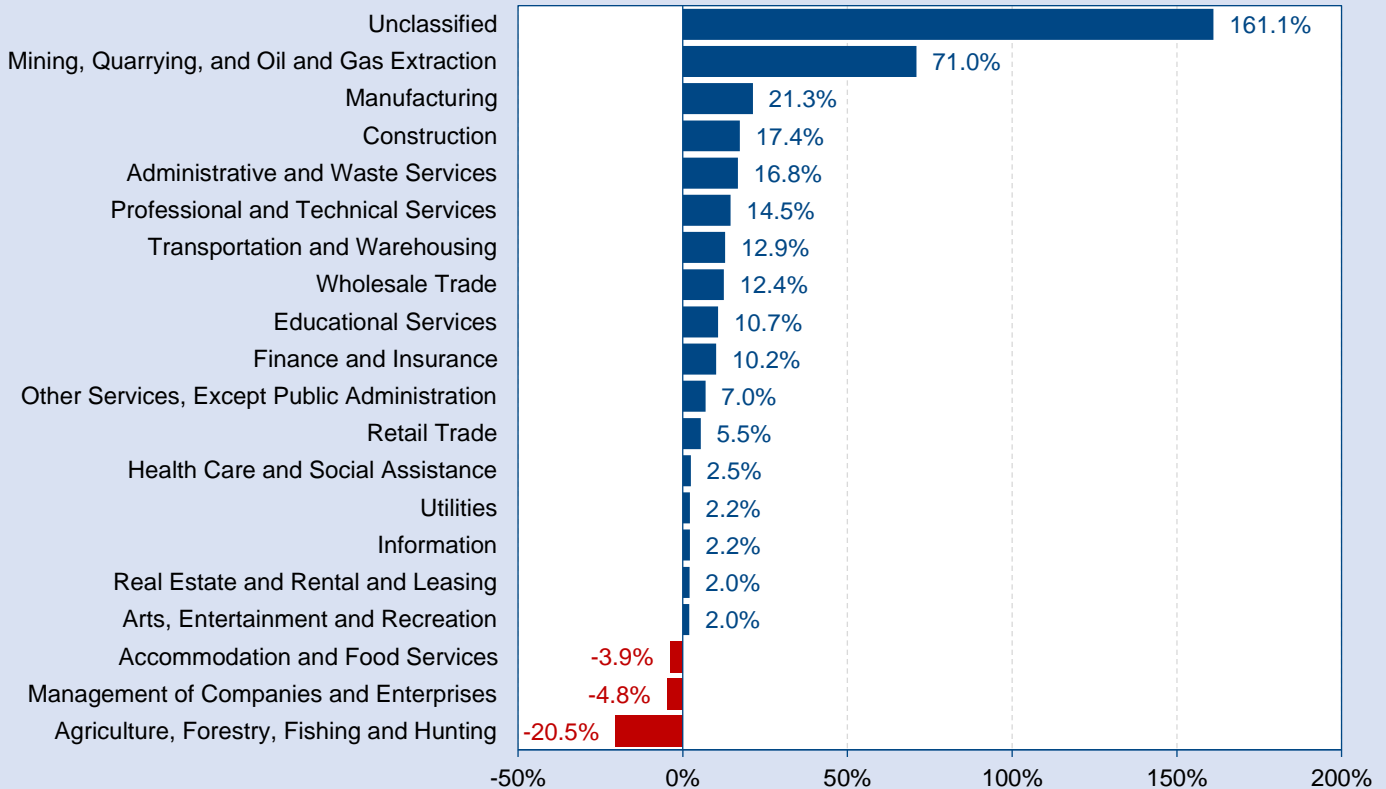
Southwest Florida

Industry	2023	2031	Average Annual Growth	Average Annual Percentage Growth
Accommodation and Food Services	63,317	77,005	1,711	2.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	63,753	72,065	1,039	1.6%
Construction	66,003	73,809	976	1.5%
Retail Trade	78,287	84,800	814	1.0%
Professional and Technical Services	32,711	37,957	656	2.0%
Government	68,519	72,939	553	0.8%
Administrative and Waste Services	39,252	43,228	497	1.3%
Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	47,423	50,683	408	0.9%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	17,785	19,760	247	1.4%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	21,653	23,603	244	1.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	14,466	16,303	230	1.6%
Finance and Insurance	14,474	15,952	185	1.3%
Educational Services	6,162	7,424	158	2.6%
Manufacturing	14,969	16,103	142	0.9%
Wholesale Trade	15,851	16,912	133	0.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,283	4,099	102	3.1%
Information	5,278	5,626	44	0.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	10,545	10,831	36	0.3%
Mining	460	486	3	0.7%
Utilities	1,211	1,131	-10	-0.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	7,122	6,681	-55	-0.8%
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>592,524</b>	<b>657,397</b>	<b>8,109</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, 2023 to 2031 Employment Projections

### Chart 3-9: Competition Effect

Southwest Florida  
2019 to 2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Shift-Share Analysis

A shift-share analysis decomposes regional growth into different components: external factors (interest rates, nation’s growth, etc) and internal factors (infrastructure, human capital, etc). This method focuses on the region’s production structure and compares the observed growth to a theoretical growth (if the region grew similarly to the reference unit, such as the nation). The difference in the observed and theoretical growth shows us how dynamic the region is and can be differentiated between a structural component (industrial composition) and differential component (comparative advantages).<sup>20</sup>

- **National Growth Effect:** portion attributed to national growth. Equals the theoretical change – if the region grew at the same rate as the nation.
- **Industry Mix Effect (proportion effect):** portion attributed to performance of specific industry. Derives from the presence in the region of sectors with more marked dynamics at national level due to increasing demand in those sectors.
- **Competition Effect (differential shift):** portion attributed to regional influences. Derives from the regional economy’s capacity to develop each of its sectors at greater average rates than those achieved by the corresponding national sectors.

Chart 3-9 presents the results of the shift-share analysis for Southwest Florida by competition effect. Most industries in Southwest Florida had a positive competition effect, indicating industries that were outpacing national and industry trends. Leading the charge was the unclassified industry (161.1 percent increase from 2019 to 2023), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (71.0 percent increase), manufacturing (21.3 percent increase), construction (17.4 percent increase), and administrative and waste services (16.8 percent increase). Industries with negative competition effects included agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (20.5 percent decline from 2019 to 2023), management of companies and enterprises (4.8 percent decline) and accommodation and food services (3.9 percent decrease). Complete results can be found in Table 3-8.

<sup>20</sup> See the methodology for more information on how the shift-share analysis is calculated.

**Table 3-8: Shift-Share Analysis**

Southwest Florida

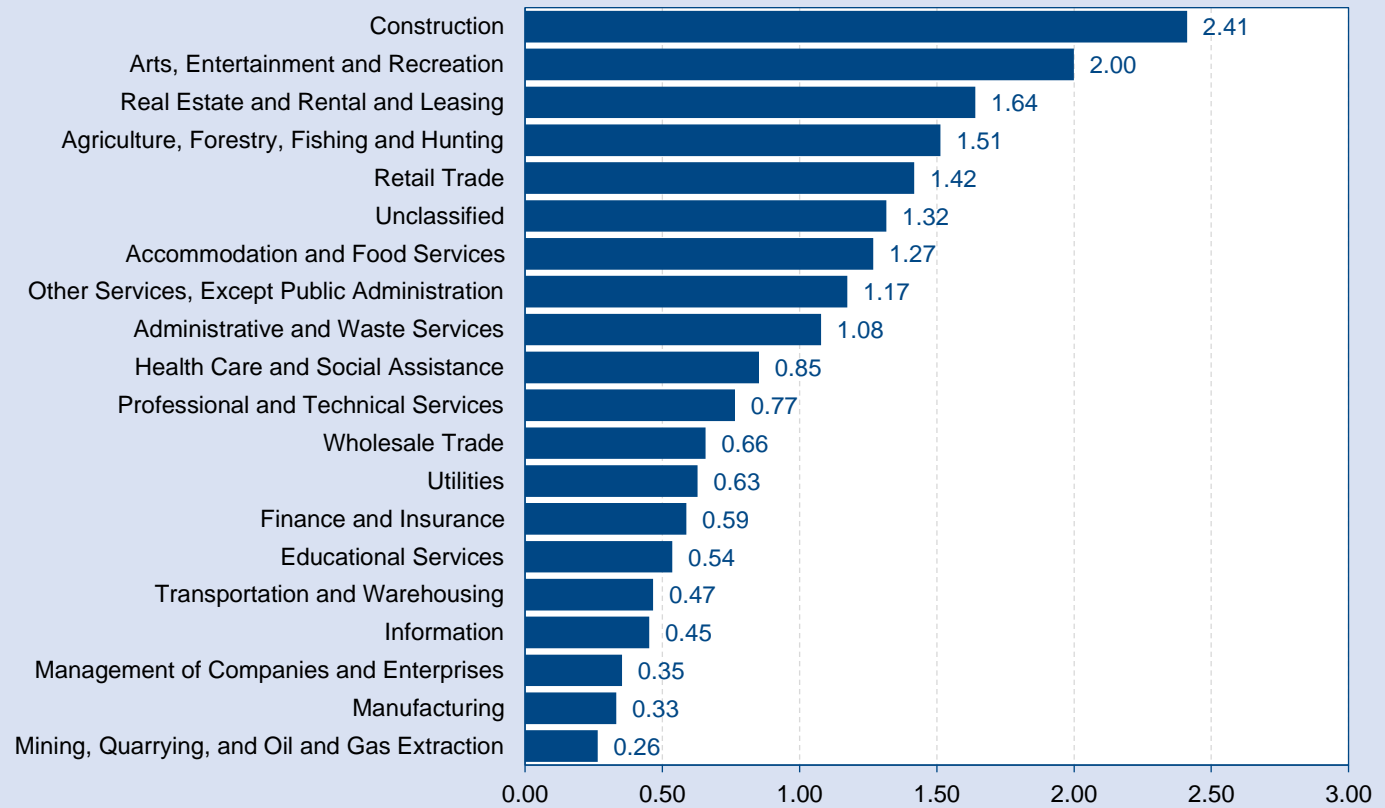
Industry	2019	2023	Percent Change	National Share	Industry Mix	Competition Effect
Unclassified	362	1,454	301.7%	3.9%	136.7%	161.1%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	344	542	57.5%	3.9%	-17.4%	71.0%
Manufacturing	12,309	15,021	22.0%	3.9%	-3.2%	21.3%
Construction	54,215	67,191	23.9%	3.9%	2.7%	17.4%
Administrative and Waste Services	30,110	35,305	17.3%	3.9%	-3.4%	16.8%
Professional and Technical Services	22,681	28,796	27.0%	3.9%	8.6%	14.5%
Transportation and Warehousing	8,105	10,547	30.1%	3.9%	13.4%	12.9%
Wholesale Trade	12,129	14,081	16.1%	3.9%	-0.2%	12.4%
Educational Services	5,025	5,881	17.0%	3.9%	2.4%	10.7%
Finance and Insurance	11,328	12,968	14.5%	3.9%	0.4%	10.2%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	17,530	18,778	7.1%	3.9%	-3.7%	7.0%
Retail Trade	73,560	77,209	5.0%	3.9%	-4.4%	5.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	58,967	63,589	7.8%	3.9%	1.5%	2.5%
Utilities	1,186	1,270	7.0%	3.9%	1.0%	2.2%
Information	4,435	4,729	6.6%	3.9%	0.6%	2.2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12,942	13,751	6.3%	3.9%	0.3%	2.0%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	16,693	17,425	4.4%	3.9%	-1.5%	2.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	65,027	62,123	-4.5%	3.9%	-4.4%	-3.9%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,126	3,159	1.1%	3.9%	2.0%	-4.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8,453	6,646	-21.4%	3.9%	-4.8%	-20.5%
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>418,526</b>	<b>460,465</b>	<b>10.0%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages



### Chart 3-10: Location Quotient

Southwest Florida Relative to United States  
2023



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Location Quotient

Location quotients (LQ) are a statistical measure used to measure the importance of an industry within a geographical area compared to a larger reference area (such as the nation). Quotients in this section are calculated using employment in Southwest Florida and comparing them to both the state of Florida and United States as a whole.<sup>21</sup>

- A LQ > 1 indicates that the region is specialized in the industry compared to the national average. Because of the higher concentration of employment, these industries often export goods and services outside of the region.
- A LQ < 1 indicates that the region is not specialized in the industry compared to the national average. Because their relative importance is lower, this can highlight a weakness within a regional economy.

Chart 3-10 depicts the location quotients for Southwest Florida in 2023, relative to the United States. The construction industry had the highest location quotient (measured at 2.41), indicating that this industry was about 2.4 times more concentrated in Southwest Florida than the nation. The arts, entertainment and recreation industry had the second highest location quotient (2.00), followed by real estate and rental and leasing (1.64), agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (1.51), and retail trade (1.42). The industries with the lowest location quotient included mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (0.26), manufacturing (0.33), management of companies and enterprises (0.35), information (0.45) and transportation and warehousing (0.47). Complete results of location quotients relative to both Florida and the United States can be found in Table 3-9.

<sup>21</sup> See the methodology for more information on how the location quotient is calculated.

**Table 3-9: Location Quotient**

2023

Industry	SWFL Employment	Florida		United States	
		Employment	Loc. Quotient	Employment	Loc. Quotient
Construction	67,191	627,797	2.00	7,941,364	<b>2.41</b>
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	17,425	255,437	1.27	2,484,357	<b>2.00</b>
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13,751	217,537	1.18	2,388,665	<b>1.64</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	6,646	62,617	1.98	1,251,522	<b>1.51</b>
Retail Trade	77,209	1,143,832	1.26	15,525,880	<b>1.42</b>
Unclassified	1,454	27,239	1.00	314,774	<b>1.32</b>
Accommodation and Food Services	62,123	1,037,519	1.12	13,955,389	<b>1.27</b>
Other Services, Except Public Administration	18,778	287,848	1.22	4,560,949	<b>1.17</b>
Administrative and Waste Services	35,305	748,138	0.88	9,329,814	<b>1.08</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	63,589	1,271,888	0.93	21,263,545	<b>0.85</b>
Professional and Technical Services	28,796	737,882	0.73	10,726,898	<b>0.77</b>
Wholesale Trade	14,081	389,448	0.68	6,099,085	<b>0.66</b>
Utilities	1,270	25,640	0.92	575,386	<b>0.63</b>
Finance and Insurance	12,968	455,015	0.53	6,286,955	<b>0.59</b>
Educational Services	5,881	192,633	0.57	3,122,317	<b>0.54</b>
Transportation and Warehousing	10,547	399,262	0.49	6,439,264	<b>0.47</b>
Information	4,729	158,547	0.56	2,975,637	<b>0.45</b>
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,159	134,344	0.44	2,548,692	<b>0.35</b>
Manufacturing	15,021	420,860	0.67	12,866,643	<b>0.33</b>
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	542	4,131	2.45	583,861	<b>0.26</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

## FGCU Seasonality Index

Southwest Florida is often characterized as experiencing seasonal fluctuations in employment levels throughout the year. However, these fluctuations vary across industries; some face severe month-to-month changes, while others exhibit little to no fluctuation. In this section, we analyze how Southwest Florida compares to other workforce regions in the state regarding these seasonal variations.

Table 3-10 ranks the workforce regions from most seasonal to least seasonal in 2023, determined by the FGCU Seasonality Index. This index calculates the Mean Seasonal Variation (MSV) in employment for each region.<sup>22</sup> The MSV indicates the average seasonal employment variation each month, with higher values showing greater seasonality. In 2023, the Okaloosa Walton region experienced the highest seasonal fluctuation, with an index of 1.6 percent. Southwest Florida ranked third among the 24 workforce regions, also with an index of 1.6 percent. This percentage reflects the average monthly difference in employment between the seasoned and unseasoned data for Southwest Florida.

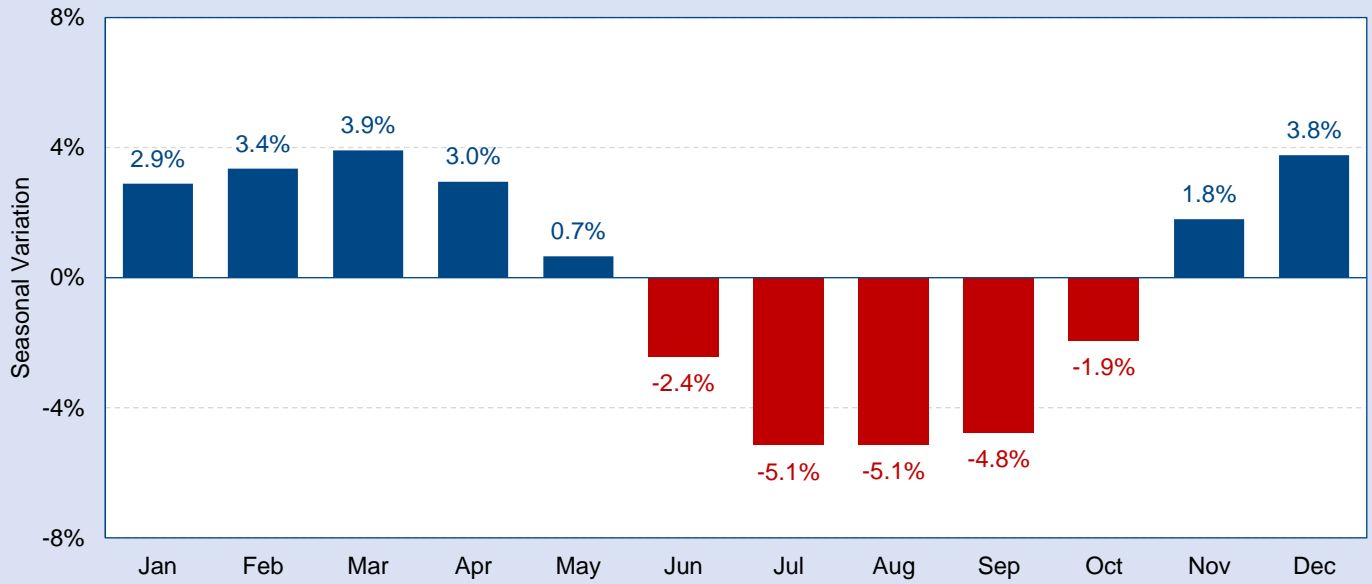
**Table 3-10: FGCU Seasonality Index**

2023		
Rank	Workforce Region	MSV
1	Okaloosa Walton	1.6%
2	Heartland	1.6%
<b>3</b>	<b>Southwest Florida</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
4	Gulf Coast	1.5%
5	Palm Beach County	0.9%
6	Capital Region	0.9%
7	Suncoast	0.8%
8	Research Coast	0.7%
9	North Central Florida	0.7%
10	North Florida	0.6%
11	Polk	0.6%
12	South Florida	0.5%
13	Escarosa	0.5%
14	Broward	0.5%
15	Northeast Florida	0.5%
16	Citrus Levy Marion	0.4%
17	Pasco Hernando	0.4%
18	Pinellas	0.4%
19	Tampa Bay	0.4%
20	Central Florida	0.4%
21	Florida Crown	0.4%
22	Chipola	0.4%
23	Flagler Volusia	0.4%
24	Brevard	0.2%

Source: RERI Analysis of QCEW data obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>22</sup> See Issue Brief 2022-05 on the RERI website for more information on how the index was calculated.

**Chart 3-11: SWFL Seasonal Variation by Month**



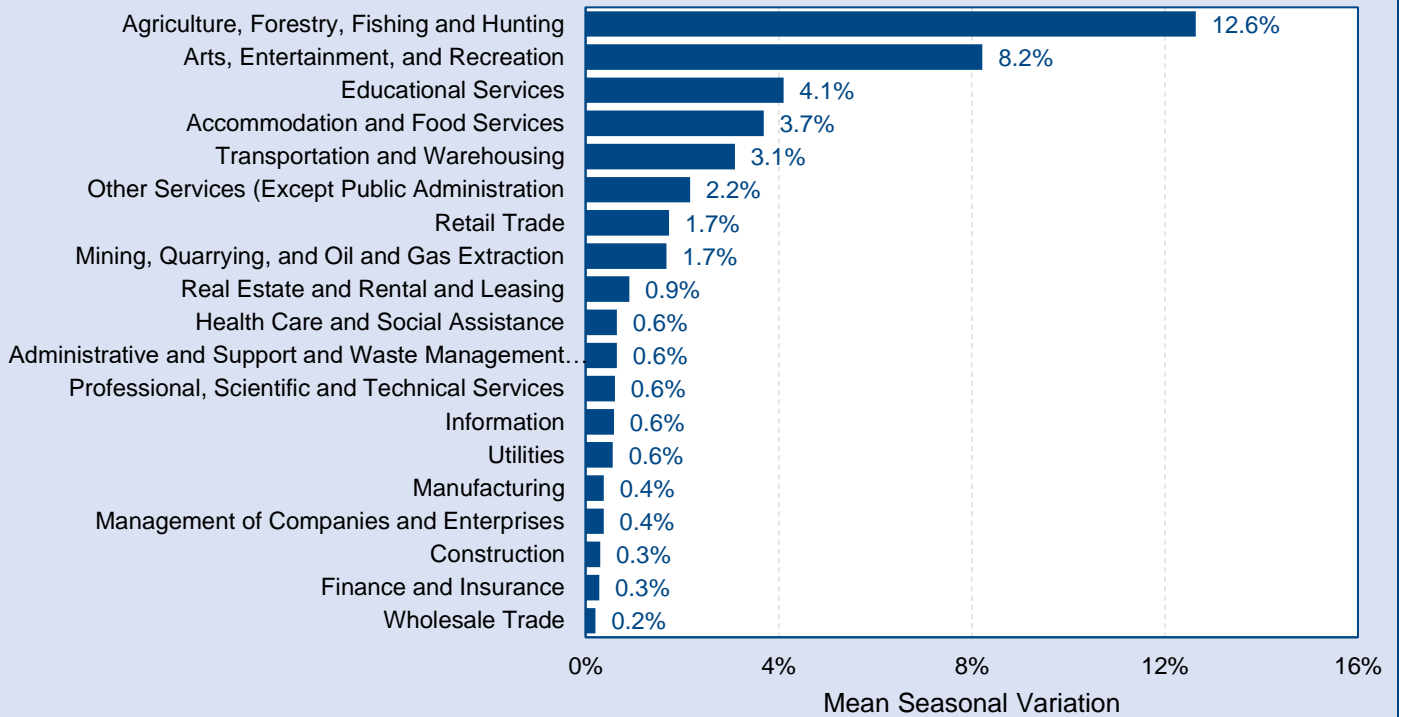
Source: Source: RERI Analysis of QCEW data obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Seasonality by Month

Chart 3-11 shows the average percent differences between the observed value and the seasonal values, by month, in Southwest Florida from 1990 to 2023. November through April tend to be the months considered “in season” for the region, and employment data backs this up. On the other hand, June through October tend to be the off-season months for the region, when firms shutdown and temporarily cut back on employment as demand for goods and services decline.

### Chart 3-12: FGCU Seasonality Index by Industry

Southwest Florida  
2023



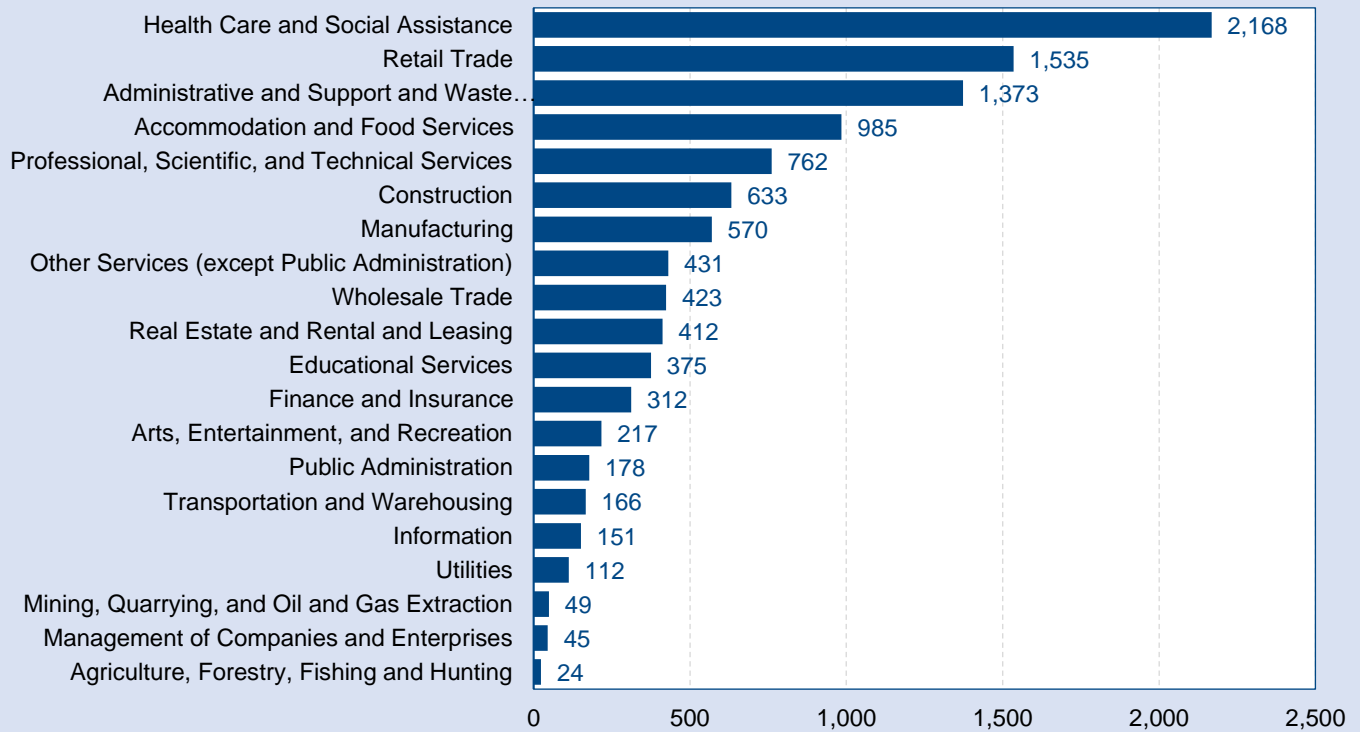
Source: RERI Analysis of QCEW data obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Seasonality by Industry

Chart 3-12 shows the industries that exhibited the highest seasonality in Southwest Florida. The agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry had the highest seasonality in 2023 (12.6 percent), followed by arts, entertainment, and recreation (8.2 percent), educational services (4.1 percent), accommodation and food services (3.7 percent), and transportation and warehousing (3.1 percent).

### Chart 3-13: Monthly Unique Job Postings by Industry

Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Unique Job Postings by Industry

Chart 3-13 and Table 3-11 depict the average number of unique job postings per month, by industry, in Southwest Florida from July 2023 to June 2024.<sup>23</sup> Health care and social assistance had the greatest number of unique job postings over the 12-month period, with an average of 2,168 unique job postings per month. This was followed by retail trade (1,535 unique job postings per month), administrative and support and waste management and remediation services (1,373 postings), accommodation and food services (985 postings) and professional, scientific, and technical services (762 postings).

<sup>23</sup> See the glossary for more information on unique job postings.

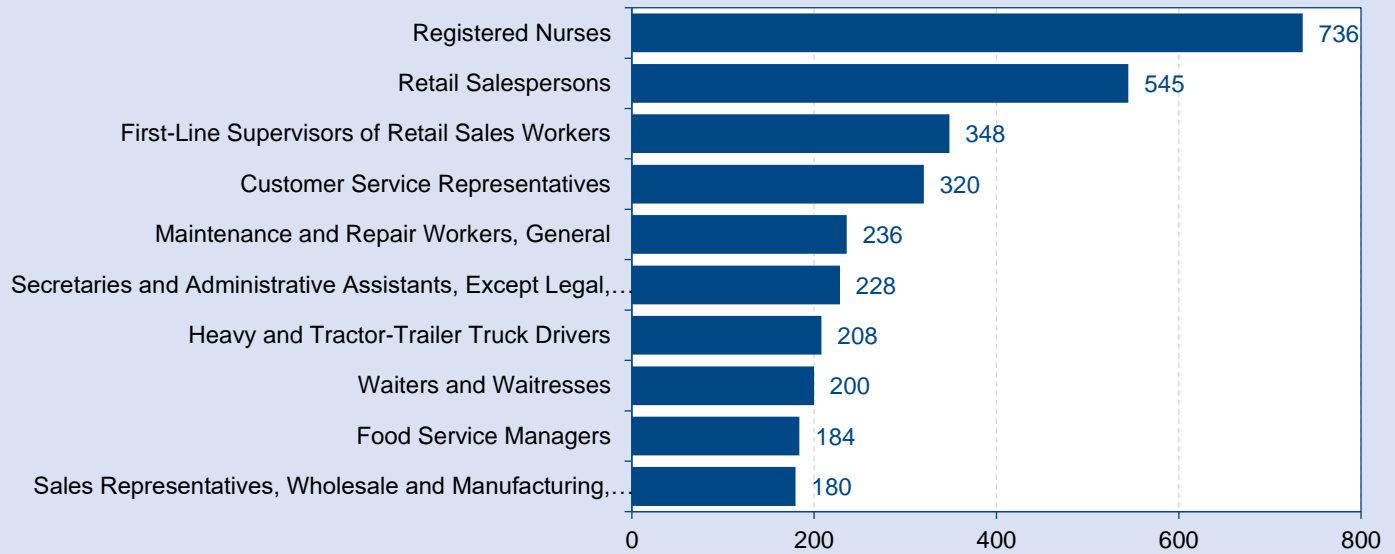
**Table 3-11: Monthly Unique Job Postings by Industry**Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024

Rank	Industry	Average Unique Postings
1	Health Care and Social Assistance	2,168
2	Retail Trade	1,535
3	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,373
4	Accommodation and Food Services	985
5	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	762
6	Construction	633
7	Manufacturing	570
8	Other Services (except Public Administration)	431
9	Wholesale Trade	423
10	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	412
11	Educational Services	375
12	Finance and Insurance	312
13	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	217
14	Public Administration	178
15	Transportation and Warehousing	166
16	Information	151
17	Utilities	112
18	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	49
19	Management of Companies and Enterprises	45
20	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	24

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

### Chart 3-14: Unique Job Postings by Occupation

Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Unique Job Postings by Occupation

Chart 3-14 and Table 3-12 show the 10 occupations with the most unique job postings, by occupation, in Southwest Florida from July 2023 to June 2024. Registered nurses had the most job openings between July 2023 and June 2024, with an average of 736 openings per month. Retail salespersons was the next highest occupation (545 job postings), followed by first-line supervisors of retail sales workers (348 postings), customer service representatives (320 postings), and maintenance and repair workers, general (236 postings). One of the top 10 occupations required less than a high school diploma, four required a high school diploma or equivalent, three required some college (but no degree), one occupation required postsecondary education, and one occupation required a bachelor’s degree.

### Table 3-12: Unique Job Postings by Occupation

Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024

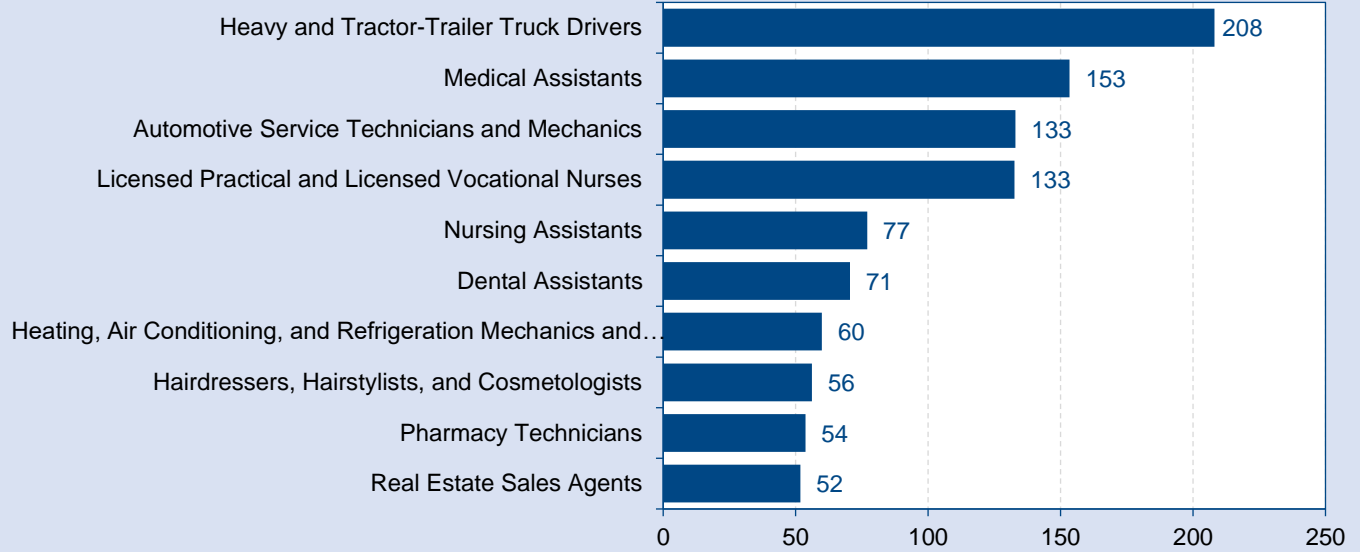
Occupation	Average Unique Postings	Minimum Education
Registered Nurses	736	Bachelors
Retail Salespersons	545	HS/GED
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	348	Some College, No Degree
Customer Service Representatives	320	HS/GED
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	236	HS/GED
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	228	HS/GED
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	208	PSAV
Waiters and Waitresses	200	Less HS/GED
Food Service Managers	184	Some College, No Degree
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	180	Some College, No Degree

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast



### Chart 3-15: Adult Vocational Unique Job Postings

Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Unique Job Postings by Educational Attainment

The study identified which occupations have the most job openings, broken down by the minimal educational requirement including:

- ✓ Postsecondary adult vocational
- ✓ Associate's degree
- ✓ Bachelor's degree
- ✓ Master's degree or higher

### Postsecondary Adult Vocational Job Openings

Chart 3-15 and Table 3-13 show the top 10 occupations with the most unique job postings in Southwest Florida from July 2023 to June 2024 for occupations requiring at least postsecondary adult vocational training. Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers had the most unique job postings with an average of 208 postings per month, followed by medical assistants (153 openings), automotive service technicians and mechanics (133 postings), licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (133 postings), and nursing assistants (77 postings).

**Table 3-13: Adult Vocational Unique Job Postings**

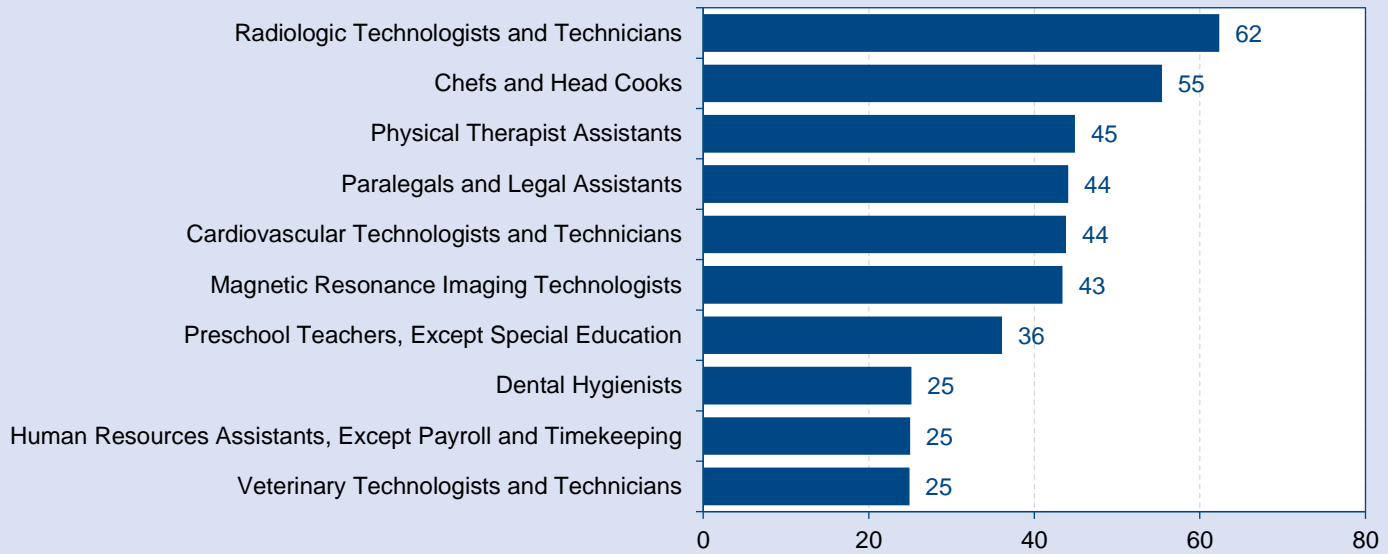
Southwest Florida

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Average Unique Postings</b>
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	208
Medical Assistants	153
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	133
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	133
Nursing Assistants	77
Dental Assistants	71
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	60
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	56
Pharmacy Technicians	54
Real Estate Sales Agents	52

*Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast*

### Chart 3-16: Associate's Degree Unique Job Postings

Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

### Associate's Degree Job Openings

Chart 3-16 and Table 3-14 show the top 10 occupations with the most unique job postings in Southwest Florida from July 2023 to June 2024 for occupations requiring at least an associate's degree. Radiologic technologists and technicians had 62 unique job postings, followed by chefs and head cooks (55 postings), physical therapist assistants (45 postings), paralegals and legal assistants (44 postings), and cardiovascular technologists and technicians (44 postings).

**Table 3-14: Associate's Degree Unique Job Postings**

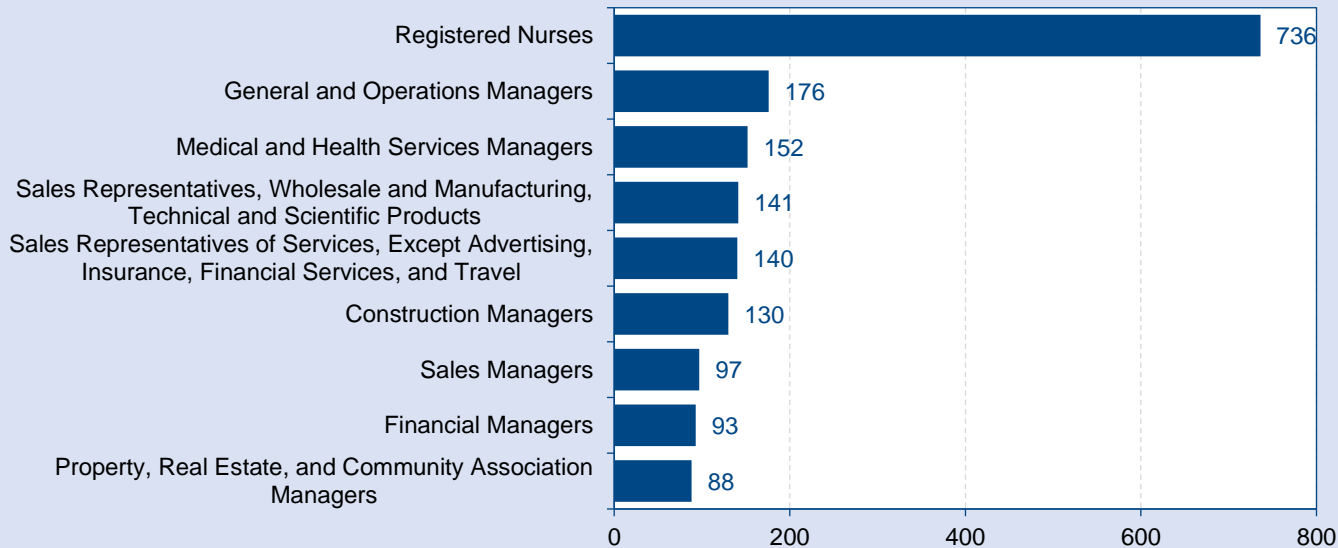
Southwest Florida

Occupation	Average Unique Postings
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	62
Chefs and Head Cooks	55
Physical Therapist Assistants	45
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	44
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	44
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	43
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	36
Dental Hygienists	25
Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll and Timekeeping	25
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	25

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

### Chart 3-17: Bachelor's Degree Unique Job Postings

Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

### Bachelor's Degree Job Openings

Chart 3-17 and Table 3-15 show the top 10 occupations with the most unique job postings in Southwest Florida from July 2023 to June 2024 for occupations requiring at least a bachelor's degree. Registered nurses had the most job postings with 736, followed by general and operations managers (176 postings), medical and health services managers (152 postings), sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products (141 postings), and sales representatives of services, except advertising, insurance, financial services, and travel (140 postings).

**Table 3-15: Bachelor's Degree Unique Job Postings**

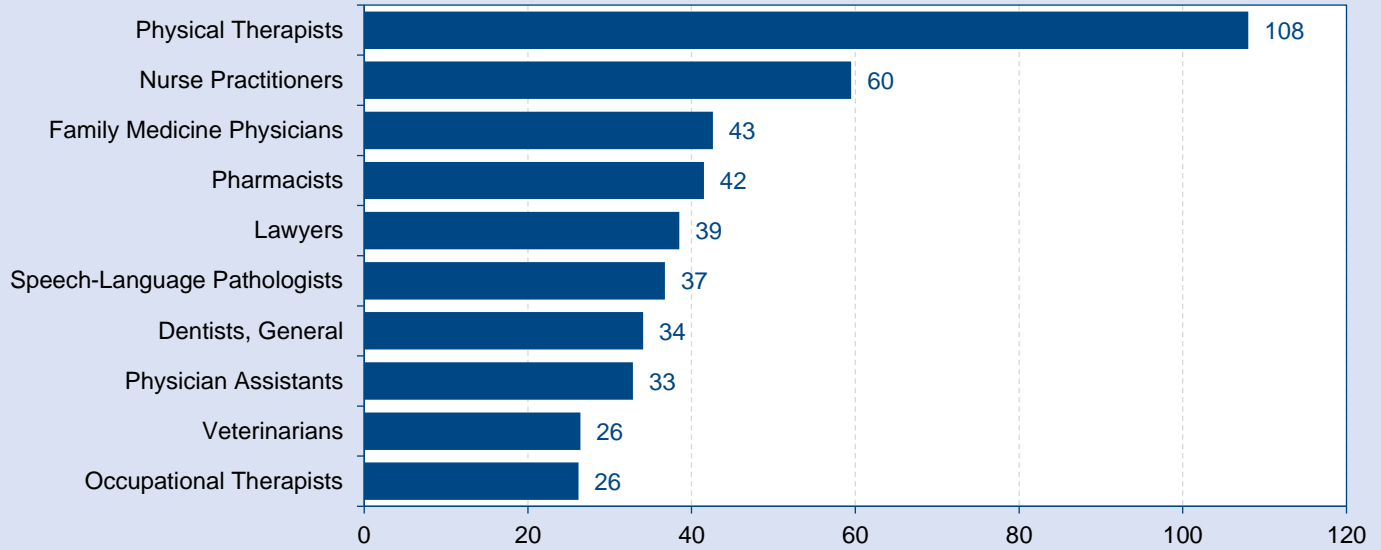
Southwest Florida

Occupation	Average Unique Postings
Registered Nurses	736
General and Operations Managers	176
Medical and Health Services Managers	152
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	141
Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	140
Construction Managers	130
Sales Managers	97
Financial Managers	93
Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	88
Accountants and Auditors	64

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

### Chart 3-18: Master's Degree or Higher Unique Job Postings

Southwest Florida  
July 2023 to June 2024



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

### Master’s Degree or Higher Job Openings

Chart 3-18 and Table 3-16 show the top 10 occupations with the most unique job postings in Southwest Florida from July 2023 to June 2024 for occupations requiring a master's degree or higher. Physical therapists had the most job postings with 108, followed by nurse practitioners (60 postings), family medicine physicians (43 postings), pharmacists (42 postings) and lawyers (39 postings).

**Table 3-16: Master's Degree or Higher Unique Job Postings**

Southwest Florida

Occupation	Average Unique Postings
Physical Therapists	108
Nurse Practitioners	60
Family Medicine Physicians	43
Pharmacists	42
Lawyers	39
Speech-Language Pathologists	37
Dentists, General	34
Physician Assistants	33
Veterinarians	26
Occupational Therapists	26

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

### Chart 3-19: Short-term Job Openings for STEM Occupations

Southwest Florida  
July 2022 to June 2023



Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Short-term Job Openings for STEM Occupations

Chart 3-19 and Table 3-17 show the 10 STEM occupations with the most unique job postings in Southwest Florida from July 2023 to June 2024. Registered nurses had the most unique job postings, with an average of 736 postings per month. Medical and health services managers had the next greatest job openings (152 postings), followed by sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products (141 postings), licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (133 postings), and physical therapists (108 postings). Three of the top 10 STEM occupations required postsecondary adult vocational education, one required an associate’s degree, three required a bachelor’s degree and three required at least a master’s degree.

**Table 3-17: Unique Job Postings for STEM Occupations**

Southwest Florida

Occupation	Average Unique Postings	Minimum Education
Registered Nurses	736	Bachelors
Medical and Health Services Managers	152	Bachelors
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	141	Bachelors
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	133	PSAV
Physical Therapists	108	Master's or Higher
Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	97	PSAV
Physicians, All Other; and Ophthalmologists, Except Pediatric	65	Master's or Higher
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	62	Associates
Nurse Practitioners	60	Master's or Higher
Pharmacy Technicians	54	PSAV

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

## Long-term Employment Growth by Occupation

The forecast in Table 3-18 provides additional information about projected occupational demands for the Southwest Florida region. Information is presented for the top 10 growing occupations along with the 2023 median hourly wage and educational requirements. The top 10 employment growth occupations include stockers and order fillers (1,402 new positions by 2031), general and operations managers (1,299 new positions), construction laborers (1,271 new positions), home health and personal care aides (1,054 new positions), roofers (955 new positions), hand laborers and freight, stock, and material movers (918 new positions), restaurant cooks (915 new positions), registered nurses (913 new positions), carpenters (912 new positions), and first-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers (893 new positions).

The top 10 growth occupations primarily reflect expected increases in tourism, food preparation, construction, and health care. Three of the top growth occupations require less than a high school degree, three require a high school degree or GED, one requires adult vocational training, one requires some college but no degree, and two require a bachelor's degree. Median wages varied from \$15.40 per hour to \$44.84 per hour and were highly correlated with the required minimum education.

A complete list of the top 50 long-term annual employment growth occupations in Southwest Florida can be found in Appendix A.

**Table 3-18: Long-Term Employment Growth Occupations**

2023 to 2031

Occupation	2023	2031	Growth	Percent Growth	2023 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Stockers and Order Fillers	10,103	11,505	1,402	13.9%	\$17.20	HS/GED
General and Operations Managers	11,210	12,509	1,299	11.6%	\$44.84	Bachelors
Construction Laborers	6,754	8,025	1,271	18.8%	\$18.69	Less HS/GED
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	6,239	7,292	1,054	16.9%	\$15.40	HS/GED
Roofers	3,661	4,616	955	26.1%	\$22.54	Less HS/GED
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	6,163	7,081	918	14.9%	\$17.39	Less HS/GED
Cooks, Restaurant	8,463	9,378	915	10.8%	\$17.18	HS/GED
Registered Nurses	10,722	11,635	913	8.5%	\$39.65	Bachelors
Carpenters	5,992	6,904	912	15.2%	\$22.76	PSAV
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	6,250	7,142	893	14.3%	\$31.99	Some College, No Degree

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

## Long-term Employment Growth by Educational Attainment

The study looked at long-run occupational growth by identifying the fastest-growing occupations by the minimal educational requirement including:

- ✓ Post-secondary adult vocational
- ✓ Associate’s degree
- ✓ Bachelor’s degree
- ✓ Master’s degree or higher

The tables in this section present information employment growth between 2023 and 2031, as well as the median hourly wage for 2023.

### Postsecondary Adult Vocational

The top 10 projected long-run growth occupations requiring a minimum of postsecondary adult vocational training include: carpenters (912 new positions between 2023 and 2031), heavy and tractor-trailer drivers (801 new positions), medical assistants (519 new positions), heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers (399 new positions), electricians (341 new positions), plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters (334 new positions), automotive service technicians and mechanics (288 new positions), insurance sales agents (249 new positions), hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists (230 new positions), and dental assistants (185 new positions). The top 20 growth occupations for adult vocational, along with the median wage can be found in Table 3-19.

**Table 3-19: Adult Vocational Long-term Growth Occupations**  
2023 to 2031

Ranking	Occupation	2023	2031	Growth	Percent Growth	2023 Median Hourly Wage
1	Carpenters	5,992	6,904	912	15.2%	\$22.76
2	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4,643	5,444	801	17.3%	\$23.02
3	Medical Assistants	3,805	4,324	519	13.6%	\$19.10
4	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	3,092	3,490	399	12.9%	\$24.23
5	Electricians	2,938	3,279	341	11.6%	\$23.83
6	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	3,068	3,402	334	10.9%	\$23.83
7	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	3,140	3,428	288	9.2%	\$22.27
8	Insurance Sales Agents	2,290	2,539	249	10.9%	\$26.84
9	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	2,020	2,250	230	11.4%	\$17.29
10	Dental Assistants	1,331	1,516	185	13.9%	\$22.73
11	Computer User Support Specialists	1,529	1,705	176	11.5%	\$25.98
12	Nursing Assistants	4,996	5,159	163	3.3%	\$18.07
13	Real Estate Sales Agents	2,770	2,932	162	5.8%	\$30.63
14	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	597	745	148	24.7%	\$26.36
15	Pharmacy Technicians	1,800	1,943	143	7.9%	\$18.71
16	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	848	984	136	16.0%	\$23.69
17	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,246	2,377	131	5.8%	\$27.64
18	Massage Therapists	603	707	104	17.2%	\$24.27
19	Psychiatric Technicians	540	639	99	18.4%	\$20.08
20	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	592	687	95	16.0%	\$27.25

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast



## Associate’s Degree

The top 10 projected long-run growth occupations requiring an associate’s degree include: paralegals and legal assistants (143 new positions from 2023 to 2031), physical therapist assistants (132 new positions), dental hygienists (122 new positions), police and sheriff’s patrol officers (113 new positions), preschool teachers, except special education (98 new positions), radiologic technologists and technicians (93 new positions), veterinary technologists and technicians (80 new positions), respiratory therapists (67 new positions), diagnostic medical sonographers (62 new positions) and architectural and civil drafters (58 new positions). The top 20 growth occupations requiring an associate’s degree, along with the median wage can be found in Table 3-20.

**Table 3-20: Associate's Degree Long-term Growth Occupations**  
2023 to 2031

Ranking	Occupation	2023	2031	Growth	Percent Growth	2023 Median Hourly Wage
1	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	1,393	1,536	143	10.3%	\$28.62
2	Physical Therapist Assistants	452	584	132	29.3%	\$34.04
3	Dental Hygienists	865	987	122	14.1%	\$41.39
4	Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers	1,957	2,070	113	5.8%	\$31.02
5	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	1,534	1,633	98	6.4%	\$15.62
6	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	944	1,038	93	9.9%	\$32.16
7	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	637	717	80	12.5%	\$18.86
8	Respiratory Therapists	500	567	67	13.5%	\$38.04
9	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	350	412	62	17.6%	\$38.75
10	Architectural and Civil Drafters	454	512	58	12.9%	\$28.36
11	Web Developers	326	383	56	17.3%	\$39.42
12	Web and Digital Interface Designers	208	261	53	25.4%	\$33.23
13	Occupational Therapy Assistants	199	251	52	26.4%	\$34.12
14	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	424	474	51	11.9%	\$26.80
15	Medical Equipment Repairers	169	209	40	23.8%	\$23.89
16	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	492	533	40	8.1%	\$17.65
17	Computer Network Support Specialists	278	315	37	13.3%	\$34.92
18	Chefs and Head Cooks	1,072	1,100	28	2.6%	\$28.96
19	Surveying and Mapping Technicians	296	324	28	9.3%	\$22.86
20	First-Line Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	513	537	24	4.6%	\$51.46

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

## Bachelor's Degree

The top 10 projected long-run growth occupations requiring a bachelor's degree include: general and operations managers (1,299 new positions from 2023 to 2031), registered nurses (913 new positions), software developers (731 new positions), sales representatives of services, except advertising, insurance, financial services, and travel (501 new positions), medical and health services managers (483 new positions), project management specialists (446 new positions), accountants and auditors (428 new positions), market research analysts and marketing specialists (413 new positions), construction managers (411 new positions), and financial managers (315 new positions). The top 20 growth occupations requiring a bachelor's degree, along with the median wage can be found in Table 3-21.

**Table 3-21: Bachelor's Degree Long-term Growth Occupations**  
2023 to 2031

Ranking	Occupation	2023	2031	Growth	Percent Growth	2023 Median Hourly Wage
1	General and Operations Managers	11,210	12,509	<b>1,299</b>	11.6%	\$44.84
2	Registered Nurses	10,722	11,635	<b>913</b>	8.5%	\$39.65
3	Software Developers	2,122	2,854	<b>731</b>	34.4%	\$53.80
4	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	5,654	6,155	<b>501</b>	8.9%	\$27.39
5	Medical and Health Services Managers	1,866	2,348	<b>483</b>	25.9%	\$49.64
6	Project Management Specialists	3,234	3,680	<b>446</b>	13.8%	\$41.83
7	Accountants and Auditors	4,262	4,690	<b>428</b>	10.0%	\$35.38
8	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	2,293	2,706	<b>413</b>	18.0%	\$29.87
9	Construction Managers	2,236	2,647	<b>411</b>	18.4%	\$49.09
10	Financial Managers	1,768	2,083	<b>315</b>	17.8%	\$65.70
11	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	885	1,196	<b>311</b>	35.1%	\$26.39
12	Management Analysts	1,803	2,112	<b>309</b>	17.1%	\$38.55
13	Human Resources Specialists	2,341	2,616	<b>275</b>	11.8%	\$28.91
14	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	2,264	2,514	<b>250</b>	11.0%	\$31.14
15	Computer and Information Systems Managers	775	979	<b>204</b>	26.3%	\$66.33
16	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	1,215	1,376	<b>161</b>	13.2%	\$32.73
17	Cost Estimators	1,207	1,357	<b>150</b>	12.4%	\$30.66
18	Sales Managers	1,297	1,447	<b>149</b>	11.5%	\$55.48
19	Computer Systems Analysts	912	1,060	<b>147</b>	16.2%	\$45.31
20	Personal Financial Advisors	892	1,022	<b>131</b>	14.7%	\$42.14

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

## Master’s Degree or Higher

The top 10 projected long-run growth occupations requiring at least a master’s degree include: nurse practitioners (542 new positions between 2023 and 2031), lawyers (315 new positions), physical therapists (207 new positions), physician assistants (129 new positions), speech-language pathologists (119 new positions), occupational therapists (90 new positions), postsecondary teachers (89 new positions), physicians, all other (83 new positions), pharmacists (71 new positions), and healthcare and social workers (62 new positions). The top 20 growth occupations requiring at least a master’s degree, along with the median wage can be found in Table 3-22.

**Table 3-22: Master's Degree and Higher Long-term Growth Occupations**

2023 to 2031

Ranking	Occupation	2023	2031	Growth	Percent Growth	2023 Median Hourly Wage
1	Nurse Practitioners	1,478	2,020	542	36.7%	\$61.53
2	Lawyers	2,313	2,628	315	13.6%	\$56.10
3	Physical Therapists	1,114	1,321	207	18.6%	\$46.68
4	Physician Assistants	481	610	129	26.8%	\$61.04
5	Speech-Language Pathologists	420	539	119	28.2%	\$47.98
6	Occupational Therapists	484	574	90	18.6%	\$47.08
7	Postsecondary Teachers	1,560	1,650	89	5.7%	\$32.43
8	Physicians, All Other	1,118	1,201	83	7.4%	\$161.58
9	Pharmacists	1,143	1,215	71	6.2%	\$66.48
10	Healthcare Social Workers	487	549	62	12.8%	\$30.43
11	Dentists, General	379	437	58	15.4%	\$87.96
12	Clergy	650	700	49	7.6%	\$27.11
13	Veterinarians	296	342	45	15.3%	\$61.18
14	Marriage and Family Therapists	151	196	44	29.4%	\$19.89
15	Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	357	400	43	12.1%	\$43.63
16	Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	120	163	42	35.4%	\$47.13
17	Family Medicine Physicians	618	657	39	6.3%	\$88.82
18	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	783	820	37	4.8%	\$32.21
19	Instructional Coordinators	496	530	34	6.9%	\$40.10
20	Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary	793	823	29	3.7%	\$51.38

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

## Long-term Employment Growth for STEM Occupations

The forecast in Table 3-23 provides information about projected occupational demands for STEM occupations in the Southwest Florida region. Information is presented for the top 10 growing occupations along with the 2023 median hourly wage and educational requirements. The top 10 STEM occupations by employment growth include registered nurses (913 new positions between 2023 and 2031), software developers (731 new positions), nurse practitioners (542 new positions), medical and health services managers (483 new positions), physical therapists (207 new positions), computer information systems managers (204 new positions), computer user support specialists (176 new positions), computer systems analysts (147 new positions), pharmacy technicians (143 new positions), and licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (131 new positions).

The top 10 STEM occupations were primarily focused on the healthcare practitioners and technical occupation group. Three of the top STEM occupations required adult vocational training, five required a bachelor's degree and two required at least a master's degree. Median wages varied from \$18.71 per hour to \$66.33 per hour.

A complete list of the top 50 long-term annual employment growth STEM occupations in Southwest Florida can be found in Appendix A.

### Table 3-23: Long-Term Employment Growth for STEM Occupations

2023 to 2031

Occupation	2023	2031	Growth	Percent Growth	2023 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Registered Nurses	10,722	11,635	913	8.5%	\$39.65	Bachelors
Software Developers	2,122	2,854	731	34.4%	\$53.80	Bachelors
Nurse Practitioners	1,478	2,020	542	36.7%	\$61.53	Master's or Higher
Medical and Health Services Managers	1,866	2,348	483	25.9%	\$49.64	Bachelors
Physical Therapists	1,114	1,321	207	18.6%	\$46.68	Master's or Higher
Computer and Information Systems Managers	775	979	204	26.3%	\$66.33	Bachelors
Computer User Support Specialists	1,529	1,705	176	11.5%	\$25.98	PSAV
Computer Systems Analysts	912	1,060	147	16.2%	\$45.31	Bachelors
Pharmacy Technicians	1,800	1,943	143	7.9%	\$18.71	PSAV
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,246	2,377	131	5.8%	\$27.64	PSAV

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

# Appendix A: Additional Employment Projections

## Long-Term Employment Growth by Occupation

Below is a list of the top 50 long-term employment growth occupations identified between 2023 and 2031.

### Table A-1: Top 25 Long-Term Employment Growth Occupations

2023 to 2031

Occupation	2023	2031	Change	Percent Change	2023 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Stockers and Order Fillers	10,103	11,505	1,402	13.9%	\$17.20	HS/GED
General and Operations Managers	11,210	12,509	1,299	11.6%	\$44.84	Bachelors
Construction Laborers	6,754	8,025	1,271	18.8%	\$18.69	Less HS/GED
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	6,239	7,292	1,054	16.9%	\$15.40	HS/GED
Roofers	3,661	4,616	955	26.1%	\$22.54	Less HS/GED
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	6,163	7,081	918	14.9%	\$17.39	Less HS/GED
Cooks, Restaurant	8,463	9,378	915	10.8%	\$17.18	HS/GED
Registered Nurses	10,722	11,635	913	8.5%	\$39.65	Bachelors
Carpenters	5,992	6,904	912	15.2%	\$22.76	PSAV
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	6,250	7,142	893	14.3%	\$31.99	Some College, No Degree
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	7,227	8,071	844	11.7%	\$14.87	HS/GED
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4,643	5,444	801	17.3%	\$23.02	PSAV
Retail Salespersons	20,132	20,886	754	3.7%	\$15.22	HS/GED
Software Developers	2,122	2,854	731	34.4%	\$53.80	Bachelors
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	10,112	10,824	712	7.0%	\$17.24	Less HS/GED
Fast Food and Counter Workers	13,270	13,976	706	5.3%	\$13.46	Less HS/GED
Light Truck Drivers	3,840	4,424	585	15.2%	\$18.52	HS/GED
Nurse Practitioners	1,478	2,020	542	36.7%	\$61.53	Master's or Higher
Medical Assistants	3,805	4,324	519	13.6%	\$19.10	PSAV
Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	5,654	6,155	501	8.9%	\$27.39	Bachelors
Medical and Health Services Managers	1,866	2,348	483	25.9%	\$49.64	Bachelors
Project Management Specialists	3,234	3,680	446	13.8%	\$41.83	Bachelors
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	2,798	3,240	442	15.8%	\$19.36	Less HS/GED
Accountants and Auditors	4,262	4,690	428	10.0%	\$35.38	Bachelors
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	2,293	2,706	413	18.0%	\$29.87	Bachelors

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

**Table A-2: Ranked 26-50 Long-Term Employment Growth Occupations**

2023 to 2031

Occupation	2023	2031	Change	Percent Change	2023 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Construction Managers	2,236	2,647	411	18.4%	\$49.09	Bachelors
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	3,092	3,490	399	12.9%	\$24.23	PSAV
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	3,895	4,242	347	8.9%	\$18.41	Some College, No Degree
Electricians	2,938	3,279	341	11.6%	\$23.83	PSAV
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	2,121	2,459	339	16.0%	\$22.71	HS/GED
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	3,068	3,402	334	10.9%	\$23.83	PSAV
Lawyers	2,313	2,628	315	13.6%	\$56.10	Master's or Higher
Financial Managers	1,768	2,083	315	17.8%	\$65.70	Bachelors
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	885	1,196	311	35.1%	\$26.39	Bachelors
Management Analysts	1,803	2,112	309	17.1%	\$38.55	Bachelors
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	3,961	4,263	302	7.6%	\$28.87	Some College, No Degree
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	3,140	3,428	288	9.2%	\$22.27	PSAV
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	6,497	6,773	276	4.2%	\$20.29	HS/GED
Human Resources Specialists	2,341	2,616	275	11.8%	\$28.91	Bachelors
Drywall and Ceiling Tile Installers	1,005	1,261	256	25.4%	\$19.57	Less HS/GED
Customer Service Representatives	11,233	11,485	252	2.2%	\$18.48	HS/GED
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	2,264	2,514	250	11.0%	\$31.14	Bachelors
Insurance Sales Agents	2,290	2,539	249	10.9%	\$26.84	PSAV
Office Clerks, General	11,266	11,507	241	2.1%	\$19.64	HS/GED
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	5,175	5,413	238	4.6%	\$19.23	HS/GED
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	4,770	5,004	234	4.9%	\$23.24	Some College, No Degree
Counter and Rental Clerks	2,061	2,294	233	11.3%	\$16.92	Less HS/GED
Receptionists and Information Clerks	4,528	4,760	232	5.1%	\$16.97	HS/GED
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	2,020	2,250	230	11.4%	\$17.29	PSAV
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	1,633	1,844	211	12.9%	\$27.27	Some College, No Degree

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

## Long-Term Employment Growth by STEM Occupations

Below is a list of the top 50 long-term employment growth STEM occupations identified between 2023 and 2031.

**Table A-3: Top 25 Long-Term Employment Growth STEM Occupations**  
2023 to 2031

Occupation	2023	2031	Change	Percent Change	2023 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Registered Nurses	10,722	11,635	913	8.5%	\$39.65	Bachelors
Software Developers	2,122	2,854	731	34.4%	\$53.80	Bachelors
Nurse Practitioners	1,478	2,020	542	36.7%	\$61.53	Master's or Higher
Medical and Health Services Managers	1,866	2,348	483	25.9%	\$49.64	Bachelors
Physical Therapists	1,114	1,321	207	18.6%	\$46.68	Master's or Higher
Computer and Information Systems Managers	775	979	204	26.3%	\$66.33	Bachelors
Computer User Support Specialists	1,529	1,705	176	11.5%	\$25.98	PSAV
Computer Systems Analysts	912	1,060	147	16.2%	\$45.31	Bachelors
Pharmacy Technicians	1,800	1,943	143	7.9%	\$18.71	PSAV
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,246	2,377	131	5.8%	\$27.64	PSAV
Physician Assistants	481	610	129	26.8%	\$61.04	Master's or Higher
Dental Hygienists	865	987	122	14.1%	\$41.39	Associates
Industrial Engineers	433	555	121	28.0%	\$47.58	Bachelors
Speech-Language Pathologists	420	539	119	28.2%	\$47.98	Master's or Higher
Data Scientists	242	347	105	43.5%	\$42.85	Bachelors
Computer Occupations, All Other	558	661	103	18.5%	\$38.62	Bachelors
Psychiatric Technicians	540	639	99	18.4%	\$20.08	PSAV
Information Security Analysts	310	406	96	30.8%	\$38.34	Bachelors
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	646	740	94	14.6%	\$40.40	Bachelors
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	944	1,038	93	9.9%	\$32.16	Associates
Occupational Therapists	484	574	90	18.6%	\$47.08	Master's or Higher
Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	308	394	86	27.8%	\$40.43	Bachelors
Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	309	392	83	26.9%	\$40.88	Bachelors
Physicians, All Other	1,118	1,201	83	7.4%	\$161.58	Master's or Higher
Civil Engineers	752	833	81	10.7%	\$44.72	Bachelors

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

## Table A-4: Ranked 26-50 Long-Term Employment Growth STEM Occupations

2023 to 2031

Occupation	2023	2031	Change	Percent Change	2023 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	637	717	80	12.5%	\$18.86	Associates
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	637	715	79	12.3%	\$22.17	PSAV
Medical Records Specialists	691	766	75	10.9%	\$21.83	PSAV
Pharmacists	1,143	1,215	71	6.2%	\$66.48	Master's or Higher
Respiratory Therapists	500	567	67	13.5%	\$38.04	Associates
Mechanical Engineers	224	287	63	28.1%	\$40.23	Bachelors
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	350	412	62	17.6%	\$38.75	Associates
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	711	771	60	8.5%	\$40.33	Bachelors
Operations Research Analysts	282	342	59	21.0%	\$33.59	Bachelors
Emergency Medical Technicians	646	706	59	9.2%	\$19.81	PSAV
Dentists, General	379	437	58	15.4%	\$87.96	Master's or Higher
Architectural and Civil Drafters	454	512	58	12.9%	\$28.36	Associates
Web Developers	326	383	56	17.3%	\$39.42	Associates
Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	566	622	56	9.9%	\$19.03	PSAV
Web and Digital Interface Designers	208	261	53	25.4%	\$33.23	Associates
Paramedics	563	610	47	8.3%	\$32.29	PSAV
Veterinarians	296	342	45	15.3%	\$61.18	Master's or Higher
Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	357	400	43	12.1%	\$43.63	Master's or Higher
Architectural and Engineering Managers	215	258	43	19.8%	\$69.68	Bachelors
Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	120	163	42	35.4%	\$47.13	Master's or Higher
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	492	533	40	8.1%	\$17.65	Associates
Family Medicine Physicians	618	657	39	6.3%	\$88.82	Master's or Higher
Computer Network Support Specialists	278	315	37	13.3%	\$34.92	Associates
Surgical Technologists	435	471	36	8.3%	\$29.21	PSAV
Opticians, Dispensing	387	421	33	8.6%	\$27.03	PSAV

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast



# Appendix B: Additional Demographic Data

## Population Growth

Southwest Florida had 1.5 million residents in 2023, up 1.1 percent from 2022. Four of the five counties saw population increase from 2022 to 2023, with Charlotte County having the highest growth rate (3.8 percent) followed by Glades County (2.6 percent), Collier County (2.2 percent) and Hendry County (0.6 percent). Lee County's population slightly declined from 2022 to 2023, slipping 0.1 percent to 801 thousand.

**Table B-1: Population Growth**

Area	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Charlotte County					
Population	181,708	186,847	190,570	196,742	204,126
Percent change	--	2.8%	2.0%	3.2%	3.8%
Collier County					
Population	367,578	375,752	382,680	390,912	399,480
Percent change	--	2.2%	1.8%	2.2%	2.2%
Glades County					
Population	11,960	12,126	12,130	12,273	12,591
Percent change	--	1.4%	0.0%	1.2%	2.6%
Hendry County					
Population	39,122	39,619	40,540	40,633	40,895
Percent change	--	1.3%	2.3%	0.2%	0.6%
Lee County					
Population	743,871	760,822	782,579	802,178	800,989
Percent change	--	2.3%	2.9%	2.5%	-0.1%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>					
Population	<b>1,344,239</b>	<b>1,375,166</b>	<b>1,408,499</b>	<b>1,442,738</b>	<b>1,458,081</b>
Percent change	--	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>
<b>Florida</b>					
Population	<b>21,208,589</b>	<b>21,555,986</b>	<b>21,898,945</b>	<b>22,276,132</b>	<b>22,634,867</b>
Percent change	--	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>

Source: Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research

## Population Projections

Southwest Florida is projected to gain approximately 269 thousand residents over the next 12 years, with an estimated population of 1.7 million by the year 2035. The growth rate for Southwest Florida is expected to outpace the Florida population growth rate over the same period.

### Table B-2: Population Projections

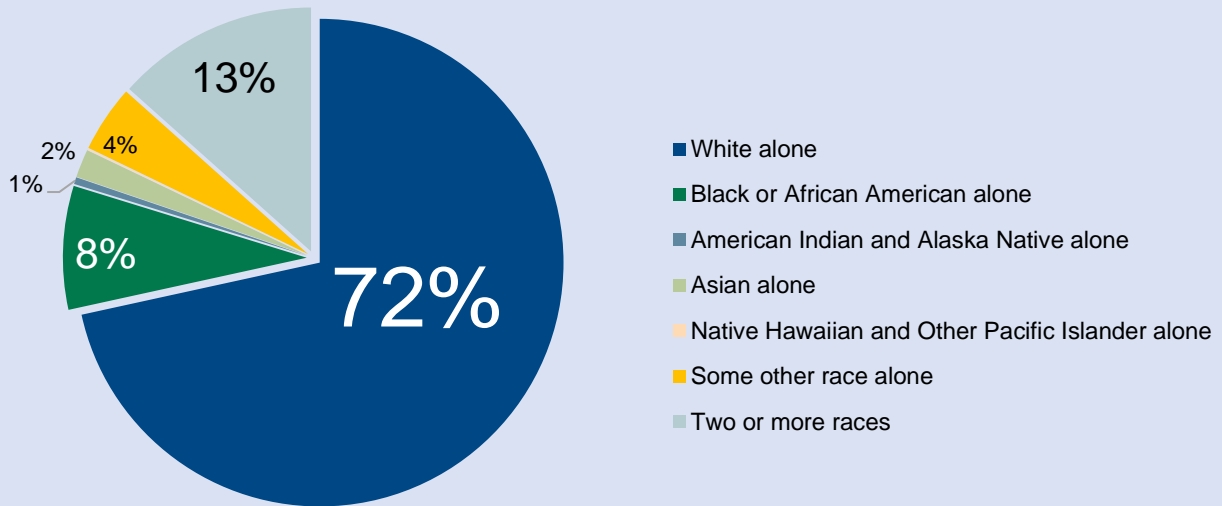
Area	2022	2023	2025*	2030*	2035*
Charlotte County					
<i>Population</i>	196,742	204,126	211,348	226,889	240,013
<i>Percent change</i>	--	3.8%	3.5%	7.4%	5.8%
Collier County					
<i>Population</i>	390,912	399,480	413,299	443,006	466,039
<i>Percent change</i>	--	2.2%	3.5%	7.2%	5.2%
Glades County					
<i>Population</i>	12,273	12,591	12,689	12,887	13,047
<i>Percent change</i>	--	2.6%	0.8%	1.6%	1.2%
Hendry County					
<i>Population</i>	40,633	40,895	41,454	42,591	43,442
<i>Percent change</i>	--	0.6%	1.4%	2.7%	2.0%
Lee County					
<i>Population</i>	802,178	800,989	835,889	908,482	964,371
<i>Percent change</i>	--	-0.1%	4.4%	8.7%	6.2%
<b>Southwest Florida</b>					
<i>Population</i>	<b>1,442,738</b>	<b>1,458,081</b>	<b>1,514,679</b>	<b>1,633,855</b>	<b>1,726,912</b>
<i>Percent change</i>	--	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Florida</b>					
<i>Population</i>	<b>22,276,132</b>	<b>22,634,867</b>	<b>23,292,200</b>	<b>24,698,545</b>	<b>25,814,954</b>
<i>Percent change</i>	--	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>

Source: Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research

Note: \* indicates population projections.

### Chart B-1: Working-Age Population by Race

Southwest Florida  
2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates  
 Note: "Working-age population" defined as population between the ages of 25 and 64.  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Working Age Population by Race

In 2022, 71.6 percent of the working-age population was White alone, the highest proportion in Southwest Florida. The population consisting of two or more races had the next highest share of working-age adults (13.4 percent), followed by the Black or African American alone population (8.2 percent) and the some other race alone category (4.4 percent).

### Table B-3: Working Age Population by Race

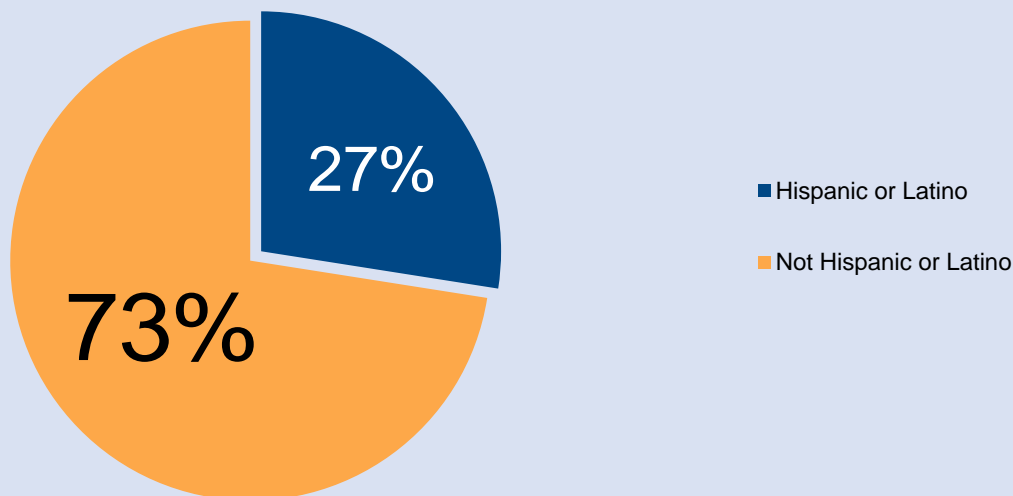
Southwest Florida  
2022

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent of Total
White alone	454,246	71.6%
Black or African American alone	51,977	8.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,902	0.5%
Asian alone	11,892	1.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	476	0.1%
Some other race alone	28,173	4.4%
Two or more races	85,014	13.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>634,680</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates  
 Note: "Working-age population" defined as population between the ages of 25 and 64.

### Chart B-2 Working-Age Hispanic and Latino Population

Southwest Florida  
2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates  
 Note: "Working-age population" defined as population between the ages of 25 and 64.  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Working Age Hispanic and Latino Population

The non-Hispanic and Latino population represented 72.5 percent of the total working-age population in Southwest Florida in 2022, while the remaining 27.5 percent identified as Hispanic or Latino.

**Table B-4: Working Age Hispanic and Latino Population**

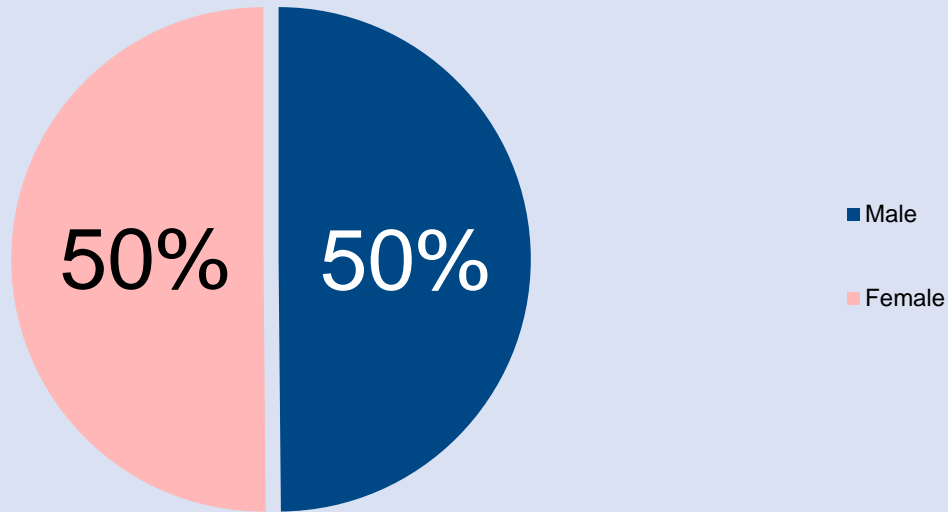
Southwest Florida  
2022

Hispanic/Latino	Count	Percent of Total
Hispanic or Latino	174,453	27.5%
Not Hispanic or Latino	460,227	72.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>634,680</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates  
 Note: "Working-age population" defined as population between the ages of 25 and 64.

### Chart B-3: Working Age Population by Gender

Southwest Florida  
2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates  
 Note: "Working-age population" defined as population between the ages of 25 and 64.  
 Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## Working-Age Population by Gender

The female population represented 50.1 percent of the total working-age population in Southwest Florida, down 0.5 percentage points from 2021. This percentage has slowly declined since 2015, falling 1.1 percentage points over the eight-year period.

**Table B-5: Working Age Population by Gender**

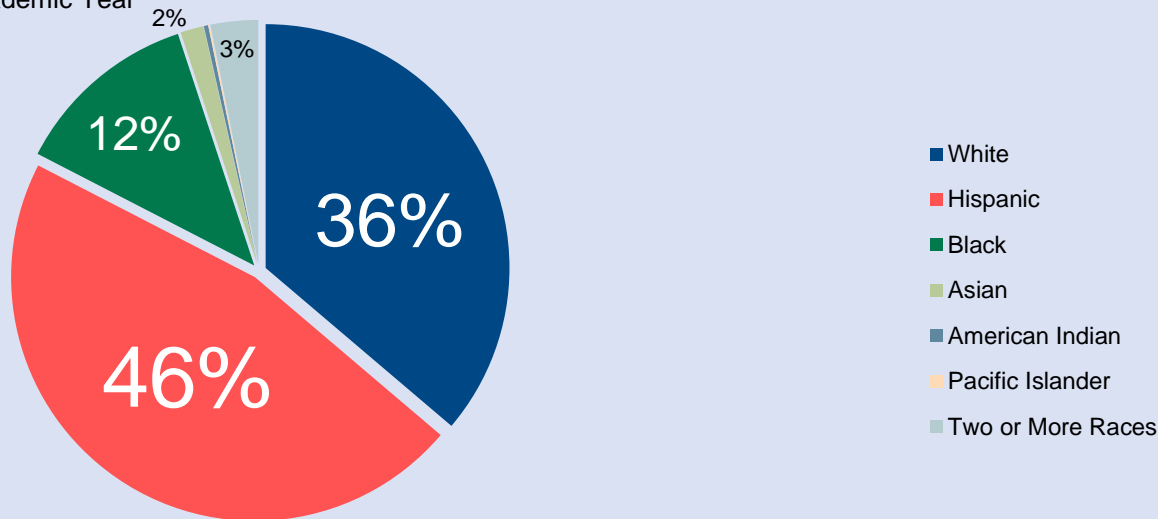
Southwest Florida

Gender	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Male								
Count	280,391	284,470	290,112	295,821	302,387	308,873	309,485	316,411
Percent of total	48.8%	48.8%	48.8%	48.9%	49.0%	49.0%	49.4%	49.9%
Female								
Count	293,964	298,362	304,240	309,194	314,812	321,350	316,809	318,269
Percent of total	51.2%	51.2%	51.2%	51.1%	51.0%	51.0%	50.6%	50.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>574,355</b>	<b>582,832</b>	<b>594,352</b>	<b>605,015</b>	<b>617,199</b>	<b>630,223</b>	<b>626,294</b>	<b>634,680</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates  
 Note: "Working-age population" defined as population between the ages of 25 and 64.

### Chart B-4: K-12 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Southwest Florida  
2022-23 Academic Year



Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## K-12 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

The Hispanic population in the K-12 schools represented approximately 46.4 percent of the total student population in 2023AY, up 3.0 percentage points from the 2019AY. On the other hand, the white population dipped 2.7 percentage points over the same period.

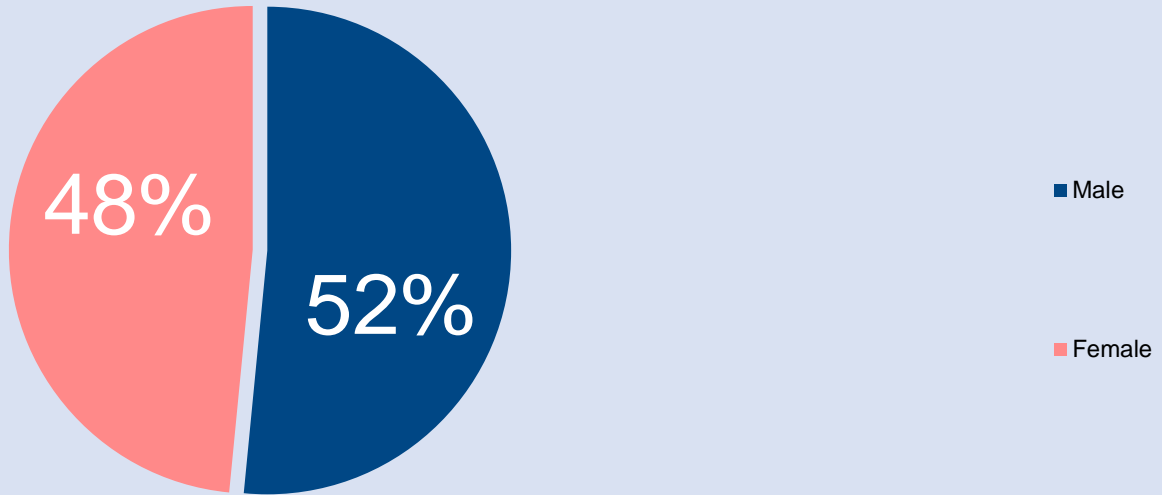
### Table B-6: K-12 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Southwest Florida					
Race/Ethnicity	2019AY	2020AY	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY
<b>White</b>					
Number of students	64,856	63,897	61,877	63,168	62,848
Percent of total	38.9%	37.9%	37.4%	37.1%	36.2%
<b>Hispanic</b>					
Number of students	72,378	74,705	74,241	77,139	80,460
Percent of total	43.4%	44.3%	44.9%	45.3%	46.4%
<b>Black</b>					
Number of students	21,533	21,640	21,064	21,348	21,443
Percent of total	12.9%	12.8%	12.7%	12.5%	12.4%
<b>Asian</b>					
Number of students	2,631	2,572	2,546	2,624	2,674
Percent of total	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
<b>American Indian</b>					
Number of students	673	615	554	513	492
Percent of total	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>					
Number of students	155	144	140	161	168
Percent of total	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Two or More Races</b>					
Number of students	4,659	4,924	5,008	5,250	5,467
Percent of total	2.8%	2.9%	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%
<b>Total K-12 Enrollment</b>	<b>166,885</b>	<b>168,497</b>	<b>165,430</b>	<b>170,203</b>	<b>173,552</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports

### Chart B-5: K-12 Student Enrollment by Gender

Southwest Florida  
2022-23 Academic Year



Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports  
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

## K-12 Student Enrollment by Gender

Both genders have remained relatively consistent between the 2019AY and 2023AY. During this latest academic year, approximately 51.5 percent of all students were male, while 48.5 percent of students were female.

**Table B-7: K-12 Student Enrollment by Gender**

Southwest Florida					
Gender	2019AY	2020AY	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY
Male					
Number of students	86,196	87,274	85,483	87,857	89,449
Percent of total	51.6%	51.8%	51.7%	51.6%	51.5%
Female					
Number of students	80,689	81,223	79,947	82,346	84,103
Percent of total	48.4%	48.2%	48.3%	48.4%	48.5%
<b>Total K-12 Enrollment</b>	<b>166,885</b>	<b>168,497</b>	<b>165,430</b>	<b>170,203</b>	<b>173,552</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, Know Your Data Advanced Reports

# Methodology

## Skilled Workforce

Skilled workforce is measured in two parts: the first part is obtaining the percent of the working population with at least an associate's degree. This information is gathered directly from the American Community Survey 5-year estimates. The second part requires identifying the portion of the working population that does not hold an associate's degree, but instead hold some form of high-quality credential. The data team used a study from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce to help define a high-quality credential holder. The study states that high school graduates receive a 20 percent wage premium from possessing a certificate. Therefore, we define a high-quality credential holder as an individual with "some college" education experience and is making at least 20 percent higher than the median income of a high school graduate in their county. This data is not readily available in any of the American Community Survey tables and must be estimated through public use microdata.

The public use microdata used to calculate this is obtained from the IPUMS website, which gathers American Community Survey public use microdata and makes it readily available for the public. One drawback to public use microdata is that it is only provided for areas that contain at least 100,000 people, so IPUMS data for Glades and Hendry County are not available for direct calculation of high-quality credentials. To work around this drawback, the research team calculates the percent of "some college" population identified to hold a high-quality credential in Charlotte, Collier, and Lee County, and use this percentage to extrapolate the number of high-quality credential holders by multiplying it by the "some college" population in Glades and Hendry County.

## Postsecondary Institutes

Southwest Florida postsecondary institutions were identified through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs.

Postsecondary institutions in Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee County were selected if the institutes' primary campus was in one of the five counties<sup>24</sup>. For the 2020-21 academic year, nineteen postsecondary institutes were identified:

Charlotte Technical College	Cape Coral Technical College	Florida Academy
Lorenzo Walker Technical College	Florida Gulf Coast University	Paul Mitchell the School-Ft Myers
Florida SouthWestern State College	Ave Maria School of Law	Lee Professional Institute
Fort Myers Technical College	Ave Maria University	The Training Domain
Sunstate Academy	Cozmo Beauty School	Premiere International College
Southern Technical College	Immokalee Technical College	
Hodges University	The Salon Professional Academy-Ft Myers	

In addition, historical data from 2014-15 to 2018-19 academic years may contain information for postsecondary institutes that were either no longer operating or data was no longer available in the 2019-20 academic year. These institutes include:

- Wolford College (2015 to 2017)
- ITT Technical Institute-Fort Myers (2015 to 2017)
- Heritage Institute-Ft Myers (2015 to 2016)
- Regency Beauty Institute-Fort Myers (2015 to 2016)
- Med-Life Institute-Naples (2016 to 2017)

Postsecondary institutions in Florida were chosen based on the physical state the institutes' primary campus was located in. Finally, postsecondary institutes in the United States were chosen if their institutes' primary campus was located somewhere in the 50 states (excluding U.S. territories).

<sup>24</sup> Because of this, some institutes with a primary campus outside of Southwest Florida (such as Keiser University which has a campus located in Fort Myers) cannot be included in the regional analysis.



## Technical Colleges

Southwest Florida technical colleges are also identified through IPEDS. The following institutes were classified as technical colleges in the region for the 2020-21 academic year:

Charlotte Technical College	Immokalee Technical College	Lee Professional Institute
Lorenzo Walker Technical College	The Salon Professional Academy-Ft Myers	Florida Academy
Fort Myers Technical College	Paul Mitchell the School-Ft Myers	Premiere International College
Southern Technical College	The Training Domain	Cape Coral Technical College
Cozmo Beauty School	Sunstate Academy	

Because IPEDS does not contain a variable for indicating if a postsecondary institute is a technical college, the research team estimates technical college enrollment and completion rates for the state and the nation using variables available through IPEDS. For this study, a technical college is defined as a less-than-4-year Title IV postsecondary institute.<sup>25</sup>

## Startup Businesses

Startup businesses were compiled using data from DatabaseUSA, provided through Lightcast. DatabaseUSA gathers business data from over 6,000 different sources and adds roughly 300,000 new businesses to their listings each quarter.<sup>26</sup> Data mainly comes from directory and event-driven sources, such as:

- New business filings
- Utility connections
- Press releases
- Corporate websites
- Annual reports
- User-generated feedback
- U.S. and Canadian Yellow Page directories

Using DatabaseUSA, the data team obtained 77,517 establishment-level records containing all establishments in Southwest Florida (comprising Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee County). This data represents the most recent information available on Lightcast (version 2024.3) as of July 30th, 2024.

Lightcast notes that due to the nature of the database, some records may show business locations and employee counts that may be inaccurate. We make the following assumptions to help alleviate some of these issues:

- All records that report either zero employees or zero sales volume were removed. This helps remove instances of multiple records for the same establishment, especially in the health care field.
- An establishment is considered a startup business if they are listed as being in business “for up to two years” and have been in business since 2022. Both of these conditions are necessary since records in DatabaseUSA are not always updated on a frequent basis. For instance, if an establishment opened in 2017 and its record was last updated in 2019, that establishment would be labeled as being in business “for up to two years”.

<sup>25</sup> This definition is borrowed from a 2008 study from the National Center for Education Statistics, titled *Postsecondary Career/Technical Education: Changes in the Number of Offering Institutions and Awarded Credentials from 1997 to 2006*.

<sup>26</sup> For more information on DatabaseUSA, see the [Lightcast Knowledge Base](#).

## Shift-Share Analysis

A shift-share analysis was performed using data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). The analysis decomposes changes in employment levels within a region into one of three components: *national growth (N)*, *industry mix (P)*, and *competition effect (D)*. Between two periods (0 and 1), employment growth can be modelled as:

$$e_{ij}^1 = e_{ij}^0 * (1 + g_{ij})$$

$$e_{ij}^1 - e_{ij}^0 = [e_{ij}^0 * G] + [e_{ij}^0 * (G_i - G)] + [e_{ij}^0 * (g_{ij} - G_i)]$$

Where  $e_{ij}$  represents employment in industry  $i$  in region  $j$ ,  $G$  is the employment growth rate for the nation,  $G_i$  is the employment growth rate for industry  $i$  in the nation, and  $g_{ij}$  is the employment growth rate of industry  $i$  in region  $j$ . We can define each of the three components as:

$$N = e_{ij}^0 * G$$

$$P = e_{ij}^0 * (G_i - G)$$

$$D = e_{ij}^0 * (g_{ij} - G_i)$$

Substituting  $N$ ,  $P$  and  $D$  into the model yields:

$$e_{ij}^1 - e_{ij}^0 = N + P + D$$

## Location Quotients

Location quotients were calculated using data from the QCEW. The analysis calculates the relative importance of an industry within a region compared to a reference region. Location quotients are modelled as:

$$LQ_{ij} = \frac{e_{ij}/e_j}{e_i/e}$$

Where  $e_{ij}$  is the employment level of industry  $i$  in region  $j$ ,  $e_j$  is total employment in region  $j$ ,  $e_i$  is the employment level of industry  $i$  in the reference region, and  $e$  is total employment in the reference region. For this analysis, two reference regions are used: the state of Florida and the United States.

## FGCU Seasonality Index

The FGCU Seasonality Index is calculated based on the Mean Seasonal Variation (MSV). The MSV represents the average absolute difference between an unseasoned variable and seasoned variable over a length of time. In formal terms, the MSV is defined as follows:

$$MSV = \left( \sum_{t=1}^T \left| \frac{U_t - S_t}{S_t} \right| \right) / T$$

Where  $U_t$  is the unseasoned variable in time  $t$ ,  $S_t$  is the seasoned variable in time  $t$ , and  $T$  is the length of the period. For this study, the primary variable used is monthly private employment from the QCEW, making  $T = 12$ .

# Glossary

**Academic Year (AY):** The period that represents a year of activity for a school district or postsecondary institution. The definition of what period varies:

*Public school districts:* The academic year varies from district to district, but typically starts in the beginning of August and ends in late July when including the summer months.

*Postsecondary institutions:* 12-month period extending from July 1st of the preceding year to June 30th of the reported year. For example, "2020AY" would represent the 12-month period starting on July 1st, 2019 and ending June 30th, 2020.

**Adjusted cohort:** A specific group of students established for tracking purposes, adjusted for allowable exclusions and transfers. Students may be excluded from the cohort for one of the following reasons: (1) death or total and permanent disability; (2) service in the armed forces (including those called to active duty); (3) service with a foreign aid service of the federal government, such as the Peace Corps; or (4) service on official church missions.

**Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, completers in 150 percent of normal time are "Students who completed their program within 150% of the normal (or expected) time for completion." See "normal time to completion" definition below for more information.

**Cohort graduates:** The number of students within a cohort that graduate with a standard diploma within four years of their first full year of enrollment in ninth grade in Florida.

**Cohort students:** A group of students enrolled in the public school system established for the purposes of calculating graduation and dropout rates. This group of students is initially created by determining the number of first-time ninth graders enrolling within a school district. Adjustments are made to this cohort over time to account for (1) incoming transfer students based on their grade level and year of entry; (2) remove deceased students; and (3) remove students who withdrew to attend school in another state, private school, or a home-education program.

**Employment:** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a person is considered employed "if they did any work at all for pay or profit during the survey reference week. This includes all part-time and temporary work, as well as regular full-time, year-round employment. Individuals also are counted as employed if they have a job at which they did not work during the survey week, whether they were paid or not, because they were on vacation, ill, experiencing childcare problems, on maternity or paternity leave, taking care of some other family or personal obligation, involved in a labor dispute or prevented from working by bad weather.

**FAFSA completer:** According to the U.S. Department of Education, there is a distinction between a FAFSA submission and a FAFSA completion. A FAFSA submission is an application that has been submitted, but not necessarily processed. This is because a lot of submissions are missing key pieces of information and rejected by the Central Processing System. A FAFSA completion are the number of applications that have not been rejected. Therefore, completions represent a subset of submissions. In this report, a FAFSA completer is a person who has submitted a FAFSA application without any errors.

**Fall enrollment:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, fall enrollment represents "the number of students enrolled in the fall at postsecondary institutions. Students reported are those enrolled in courses creditable toward a degree or other recognized postsecondary credential; students enrolled in courses that are part of a vocational or occupational program, including those enrolled in off-campus or extension centers; and high school students taking regular college courses for credit."

**First-time student:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, a first-time student is "A student who has no prior postsecondary experience attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level." This means that the student is first-time in terms of postsecondary education (or the student is not known to have attended another postsecondary institution). There are two exceptions: (1) students who attended any institution for the first time the summer prior to entering your institution in the fall term are to be counted as "first-time", as are (2) students who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school).

**Four-year institute:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, a four-year institute is "A postsecondary institution that offers programs of at least 4 years duration or one that offers programs at or above the baccalaureate level. Includes schools that offer postbaccalaureate certificates only or those that offer graduate programs only. Also includes free-standing medical, law or other first-professional schools."

**Full-time student:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, a full-time undergraduate student is "A student enrolled for 12 or more semester credits, or 12 or more quarter credits, or 24 or more clock hours a week each term."

**Graduation retention rate:** In this report, we define the graduation retention rate as the share of total graduates from a local postsecondary institution that remained in the region to work.

**Kindergarten readiness:** Determined through the FAST Star Early Literacy assessment, a screener exam administered to kindergarten students during the first 30 days of the school year. Students that score a 690 or higher are considered "ready for kindergarten".

**Labor force:** The total of employed and unemployed persons.

**Less than 2-year institute:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, a less than two-year institute is “A postsecondary institution that offers programs of less than 2-years duration below the baccalaureate level. Includes occupational and vocational schools with programs that do not exceed 1800 clock hours.”

**Living wage:** Defined by MIT as the wage needed to cover basic family expenses (basic needs budget) plus all relevant taxes.

**Normal time to completion:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, the normal time to completion is “The amount of time necessary for a student to complete all requirements for a degree or certificate according to the institution's catalog. This is typically 4 years (8 semesters or trimesters, or 12 quarters, excluding summer terms) for a bachelor's degree in a standard term-based institution; 2 years (4 semesters or trimesters, or 6 quarters, excluding summer terms) for an associate's degree in a standard term-based institution; and the various scheduled times for certificate programs.”

**Postsecondary institute:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, a postsecondary institute is “an institution which has as its sole purpose or one of its primary missions, the provision of postsecondary education”.

**Postsecondary retention rate:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, the retention rate is “a measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions, this is the percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall. For all other institutions this is the percentage of first-time degree/certificate-seeking students from the previous fall who either re-enrolled or successfully completed their program by the current fall.”

**Retirement age population:** The total population that is 65 years of age and over.

**Skilled workforce:** The total working age population that holds a college degree, workforce certificate, industry certification, or other high-quality credential beyond high school.

**Southwest Florida:** The five-county region comprising Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties.

**Technical college:** In this report, we define a technical college as a less-than-4-year Title IV postsecondary institute. Technical colleges are a subset of all postsecondary institutes.

**Third grade reading proficiency:** Determined through the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) English Language Arts (ELA) tests, a third grade student is considered proficient at reading if they score at least a three on the FSA ELA test.

**Two-year institute:** According to the IPEDS Glossary, a two-year institute is “A postsecondary institution that offers programs of at least 2 but less than 4 years duration. Includes occupational and vocational schools with programs of at least 1800 hours and academic institutions with programs of less than 4 years. Does not include bachelor's degree-granting institutions where the baccalaureate program can be completed in 3 years.”

**Unemployment:** All civilians 16 years old and over are classified as unemployed if they (1) were neither ‘at work’ nor ‘with a job but not at work’ during the reference week, and (2) were actively looking for work during the last 4 weeks, and (3) were available to start a job. Also included as unemployed are civilians who did not work at all during the reference week, were waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off and were available for work except for temporary illness.

**Unemployment rate:** The share of the total labor force that is unemployed.

**Unique job postings:** Obtained from Lightcast, unique job postings refer to the number of deduplicated job vacancy advertisements scraped from over 45,000 websites. Deduplication is the process of identifying duplicate job postings and only counting one of the duplicates.

**Wages:** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, wages include total compensation paid during the calendar quarter, regardless of when the services were performed. Under most state laws or regulations, wages include bonuses, stock options, severance pay, the cash value of meals and lodging, tips and other gratuities. In some states, wages also include employer contributions to certain deferred compensation plans, such as 401(k) plans.

**Working age population:** The total population that is between the ages of 25 and 64.