

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL AND WORKFORCE OUTCOMES REPORT

2025

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. 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.

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.

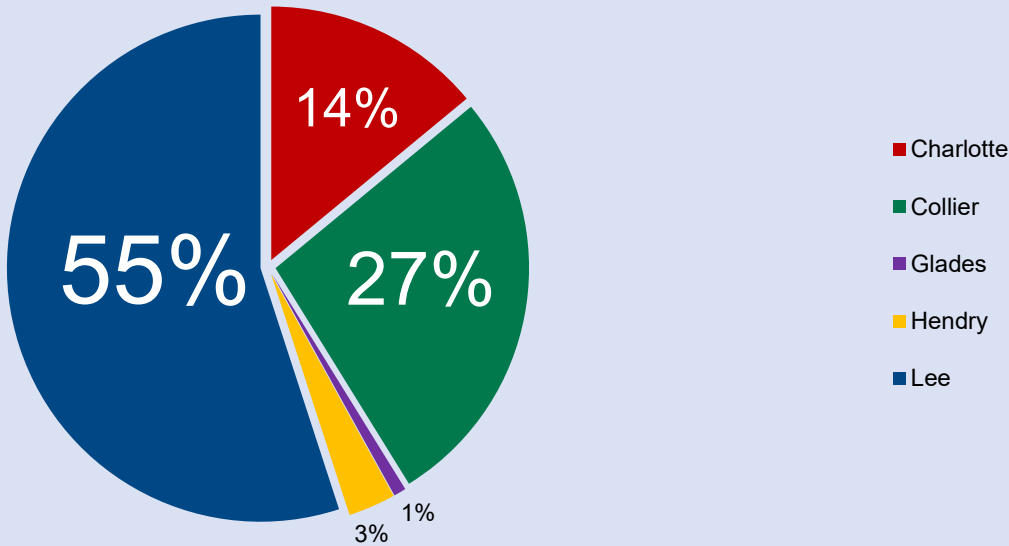
The result of this collaboration is the Educational and Workforce Outcomes Report. Now in its fifth year, this report provides regional stakeholders with the latest educational and workforce outcomes for Southwest Florida (defined as the five-county region encompassing Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry 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 16.1 percent between 2013 and 2023. The skilled workforce in the region increased to 45.6 percent in 2023 compared to 44.3 percent in 2022. 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 increased in the 2024 academic year to 87.5 percent compared to the 2023 academic year (86.8 percent) but were still below the high of 89.9 percent in 2020 academic year. Postsecondary fall enrollment numbers were down in Fall 2023 compared to Fall 2022 (down 0.6 percent), while state enrollment remained unchanged and increased 2.6 percent in the nation. However, technical college enrollments increased 5.6 percent in the same period, following the increasing trend of the state and nation. FAFSA completion rates trended upwards to 39.8 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.

Workforce indicators showed that the regional labor market remained steady. In June 2025, the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 4.1 percent, a slight increase of 0.6 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 but has seen gains in industries such as construction. In 2024 the region's largest industries are retail trade (77,550 jobs), construction (69,124), health care and social assistance (68,825 jobs). Average annual wages continue to grow, increasing 3.4 percent from 2023 to 2024, however this is lower than the growth observed in Florida (4.3 percent) and the United States (4.5 percent). Wage growth has been supported by expansion in higher-wage industries, such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Professional and Technical Services and Manufacturing.

Chart 1-1: Population
2024



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 entire state. Southwest Florida’s population increased to 1,503,300 in 2024, up 3.1 percent from the previous year, and up 24.1 percent from 2014. 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 is included in Appendix B.

Table 1-1: Area Population

Area	2014	2024	Percent Change	Share of Region Population
Charlotte	165,551	210,645	27.2%	14.0%
Collier	334,816	408,381	22.0%	27.2%
Glades	12,336	11,845	-4.0%	0.8%
Hendry	37,712	45,413	20.4%	3.0%
Lee	660,699	827,016	25.2%	55.0%
Southwest Florida	1,211,114	1,503,300	24.1%	--
Florida	19,507,369	22,907,149	17.4%	--

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 2023, a share lower than Florida (51.2 percent). On the other hand, 31.3 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 (370,491 residents, 46.7 percent of the total county population), followed by Collier County (169,657 residents, 43.8 percent of total county population), Charlotte County (83,511 residents, 42.8 percent of total county population), Hendry County (20,669 residents, 50.7 percent of total county population), and Glades County (6,318 residents, 51.3 percent of total county population).

Table 1-2: Population by Age

Area	2013	2020	2021	2022	2023
Charlotte County					
<i>Working age population</i>	72,607	79,563	80,051	81,114	83,511
<i>Percent of total population</i>	45.0%	42.8%	43.3%	42.7%	42.8%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	56,908	74,548	73,664	76,614	78,873
<i>Percent of total population</i>	35.3%	40.1%	39.9%	40.3%	40.4%
Collier County					
<i>Working age population</i>	152,784	167,591	165,587	166,968	169,657
<i>Percent of total population</i>	46.6%	44.2%	44.4%	43.9%	43.8%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	89,939	122,024	119,479	124,784	130,092
<i>Percent of total population</i>	27.4%	32.2%	32.0%	32.8%	33.6%
Glades County					
<i>Working age population</i>	6,580	6,706	6,372	6,303	6,318
<i>Percent of total population</i>	50.3%	48.7%	52.3%	51.8%	51.3%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	2,947	3,885	3,315	3,266	3,273
<i>Percent of total population</i>	22.5%	28.2%	27.2%	26.8%	26.6%
Hendry County					
<i>Working age population</i>	18,873	21,039	19,768	20,262	20,669
<i>Percent of total population</i>	49.2%	50.7%	50.1%	50.8%	50.7%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	4,588	5,601	5,303	5,340	5,540
<i>Percent of total population</i>	12.0%	13.5%	13.4%	13.4%	13.6%
Lee County					
<i>Working age population</i>	309,542	355,324	354,516	360,033	370,491
<i>Percent of total population</i>	48.8%	47.0%	47.1%	46.6%	46.7%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	154,036	215,942	213,650	223,302	229,480
<i>Percent of total population</i>	24.3%	28.5%	28.4%	28.9%	28.9%
Southwest Florida					
<i>Working age population</i>	560,386	630,223	626,294	634,680	650,646
<i>Percent of total population</i>	47.7%	45.8%	46.0%	45.5%	45.5%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	308,418	422,000	415,411	433,306	447,258
<i>Percent of total population</i>	26.3%	30.6%	30.5%	31.1%	31.3%
Florida					
<i>Working age population</i>	9,917,578	10,907,414	11,002,325	11,059,200	11,219,566
<i>Percent of total population</i>	51.9%	51.4%	51.6%	51.1%	51.2%
<i>Retirement age population</i>	3,399,925	4,347,912	4,346,965	4,520,647	4,630,733
<i>Percent of total population</i>	17.8%	20.5%	20.4%	20.9%	21.1%

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.¹ Approximately 45.6 percent of the total working age population in Southwest Florida was considered skilled labor in 2023.² 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 50.7 percent of total working age population. Lee County had the next highest rate (45.5 percent), followed by Charlotte County (42.2 percent). Hendry County and Glades County had rates of 25.4 and 24.2 percent, respectively.

All five Southwest Florida counties had a lower percentage of skilled workforce than Florida in 2023 (51.2 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	2020	2021	2022	2023
Charlotte County	38.0%	38.4%	40.9%	41.2%	42.2%
Collier County	41.7%	46.9%	48.8%	49.0%	50.7%
Glades County	24.7%	19.4%	20.5%	22.6%	24.2%
Hendry County	21.2%	25.2%	24.0%	24.1%	25.4%
Lee County	39.3%	42.3%	43.5%	44.4%	45.5%
Southwest Florida	39.0%	42.2%	43.7%	44.3%	45.6%
Florida	44.4%	48.7%	49.7%	50.4%	51.2%

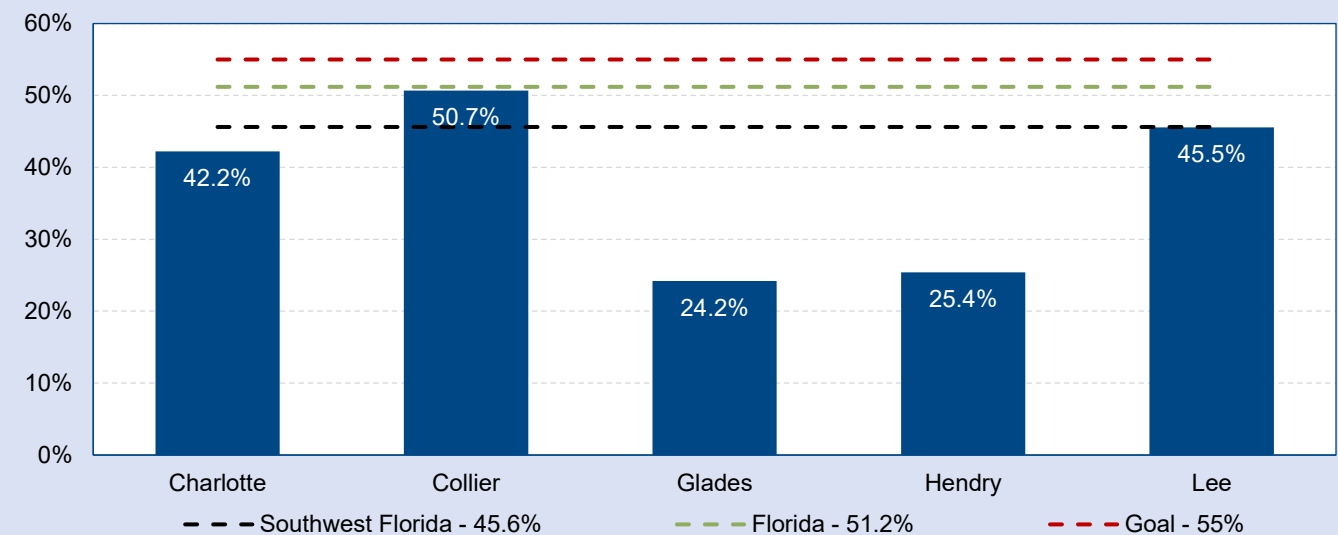
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, IPUMS

¹ See the Methodology for more information on how skilled workforce is calculated.

² 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

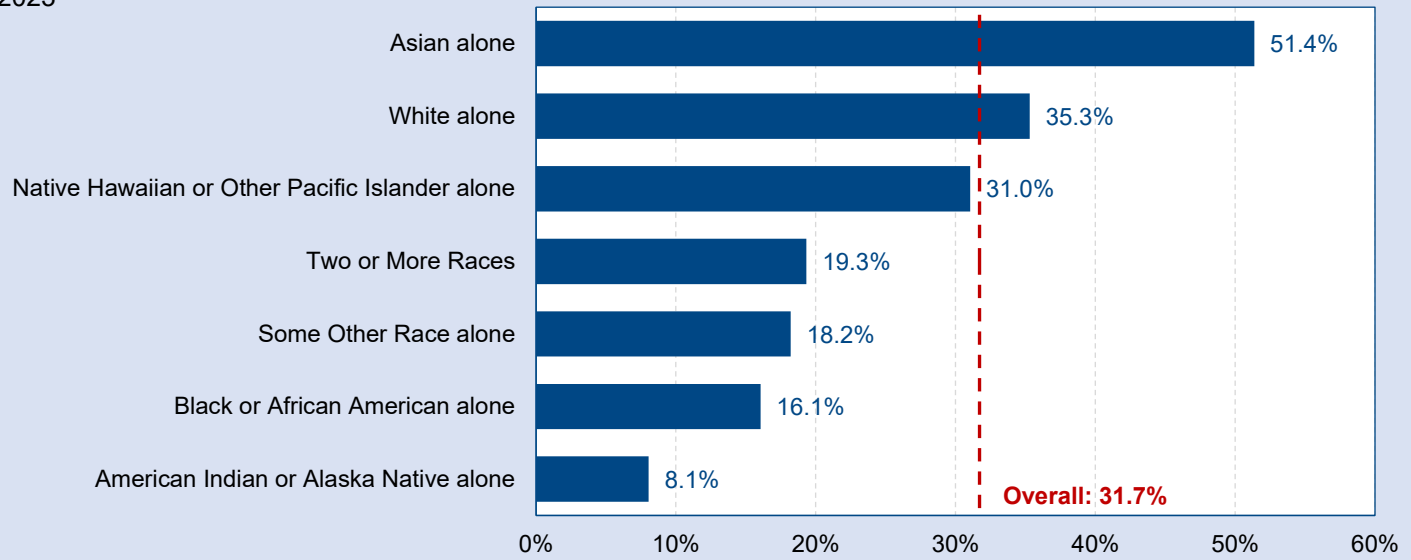
Southwest Florida
2023



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

Chart 1-4: Educational Attainment by Race

Percent of Southwest Florida population 25 and over with at least a Bachelor's degree
2023



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.³ In 2023, 35.3 percent of Southwest Florida residents who identified as White had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 16.1 percent for residents who identified as Black or African American. Residents who identified as Asian reported the greatest percentage of bachelor's degree attainment at 51.4 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.

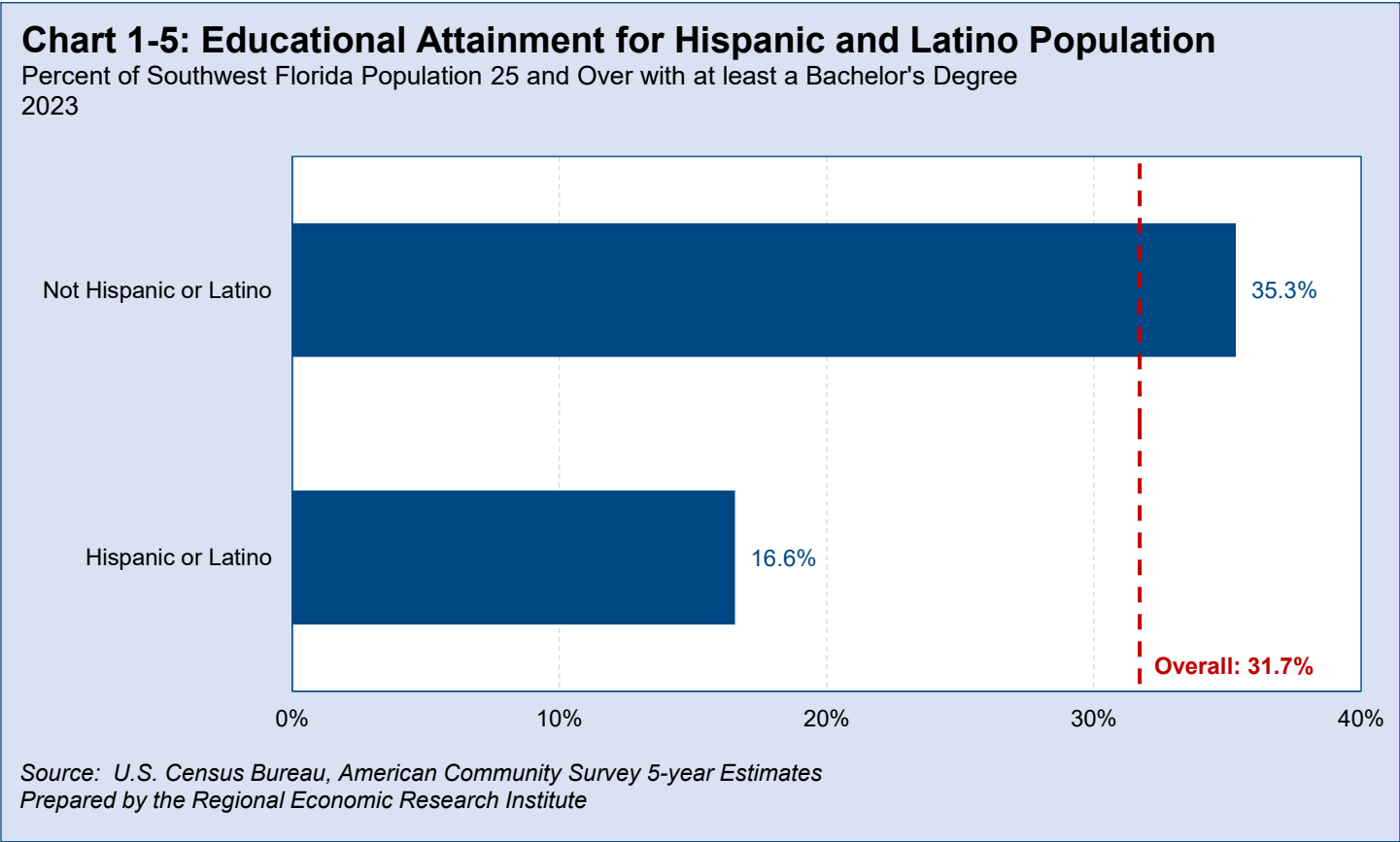
Table 1-4: Educational Attainment by Race

Southwest Florida
2023

Race	Bachelor's degree or higher	Total population 25 and over	Percent with Bachelor's degree or higher
White alone	295,261	836,368	35.3%
Black or African American alone	10,733	66,836	16.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	487	6,045	8.1%
Asian alone	8,955	17,435	51.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander alone	149	480	31.0%
Some Other Race alone	6,497	35,678	18.2%
Two or More Races	26,121	135,062	19.3%
Overall	348,203	1,097,904	31.7%

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

³ 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.



Educational Attainment for Hispanic and Latino Population

Like the data in Chart 1-4, Educational Attainment by Race, 16.6 percent of Southwest Florida residents who identified as Hispanic or Latino reported at least a bachelor's degree in 2023, compared to 35.3 percent for residents who identified as Not Hispanic or Latino.



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Educational Outcomes



FutureMakers Coalition



Aspiration and Preparation




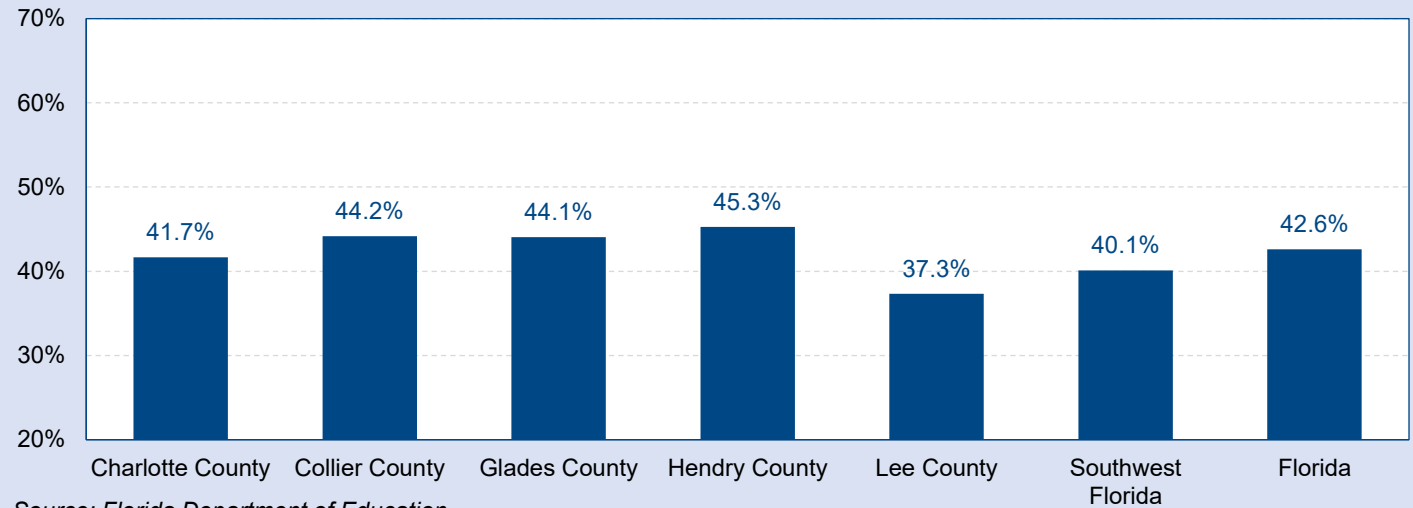
Indicator		Measure		Trending
	Kindergarten Readiness	SWFL	40.1%	↓
	Percent Pre-K students considered ready for kindergarten	Florida	42.6%	↓
	Third Grade Reading	SWFL	52.0%	--
	Percent third grade students with satisfactory reading scores	Florida	57.0%	↑
	High School Graduation Rates	SWFL	87.5%	↑
	High school graduation rate	Florida	89.7%	↑

Chart 2-1: Kindergarten Readiness

Percent scoring 690+ on FAST Star Early Literacy assessment, Fall 2024

*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.⁴ 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 2024, 40.1 percent of total kindergarten students in Southwest Florida were considered ready for kindergarten, an 8-percentage point decrease from the previous year. This percentage was below the state of Florida, measured at 42.6 percent. Hendry County had the highest percentage in Fall 2024, with a kindergarten readiness rate of 45.3 percent. Collier County was next highest at 44.2 percent, followed by Glades County (44.1 percent), Charlotte County (41.7 percent), and Lee County (37.3 percent).

⁴ 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

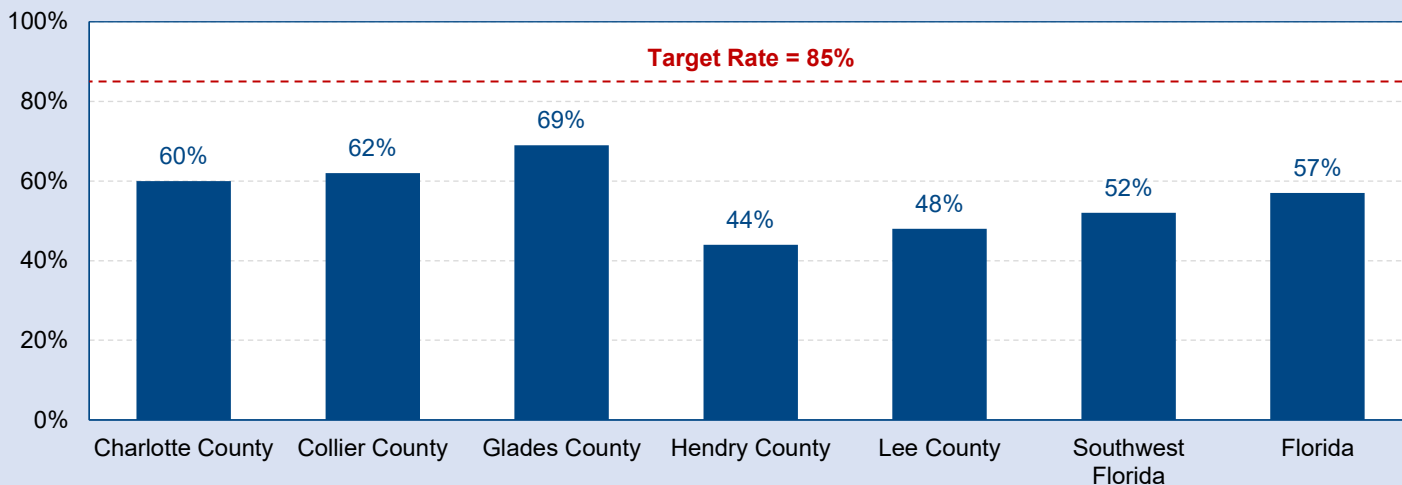
Area	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024
Charlotte County			
Number "ready for kindergarten"	597	581	428
Number of test takers	1,070	1,020	1,027
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	55.8%	57.0%	41.7%
Collier County			
Number "ready for kindergarten"	1,536	1,338	1,355
Number of test takers	3,085	3,074	3,069
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	49.8%	43.5%	44.2%
Glades County			
Number "ready for kindergarten"	67	79	63
Number of test takers	134	142	143
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	50.0%	55.6%	44.1%
Hendry County			
Number "ready for kindergarten"	226	227	343
Number of test takers	476	508	758
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	47.5%	44.7%	45.3%
Lee County			
Number "ready for kindergarten"	2,958	3,107	2,504
Number of test takers	6,422	6,333	6,709
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	46.1%	49.1%	37.3%
Southwest Florida			
Number "ready for kindergarten"	5,384	5,332	4,693
Number of test takers	11,187	11,077	11,706
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	48.1%	48.1%	40.1%
Florida			
Number "ready for kindergarten"	92,755	95,494	78,287
Number of test takers	188,511	186,417	183,719
Percent "ready for kindergarten"	49.2%	51.2%	42.6%

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
2024-25 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 proficiency⁵ (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 2024-25 academic year. Southwest Florida's third grade reading proficiency remains well below the 85 percent target rate and is below the state (57 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 69 percent during the 2024-25 academic year. Collier County had the next highest reading proficiency (62 percent), followed by Charlotte County (60 percent), Lee County (48 percent), and Hendry County (44 percent).

⁵ 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

Area	2023AY	2024AY	2025AY
Charlotte County			
Number of Students	1,231	1,239	1,259
Percent in Level 3 or Above	56%	57%	60%
Collier County			
Number of Students	3,527	3,615	3,639
Percent in Level 3 or Above	56%	60%	62%
Glades County			
Number of Students	181	158	160
Percent in Level 3 or Above	58%	63%	69%
Hendry County			
Number of Students	529	517	1,069
Percent in Level 3 or Above	39%	49%	44%
Lee County			
Number of Students	8,089	7,644	8,215
Percent in Level 3 or Above	42%	48%	48%
Southwest Florida			
Number of Students	13,557	13,173	14,342
Percent in Level 3 or Above	48%	52%	52%
Florida			
Number of Students	221,504	216,473	219,787
Percent in Level 3 or Above	51%	55%	57%

Source: Florida Department of Education

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

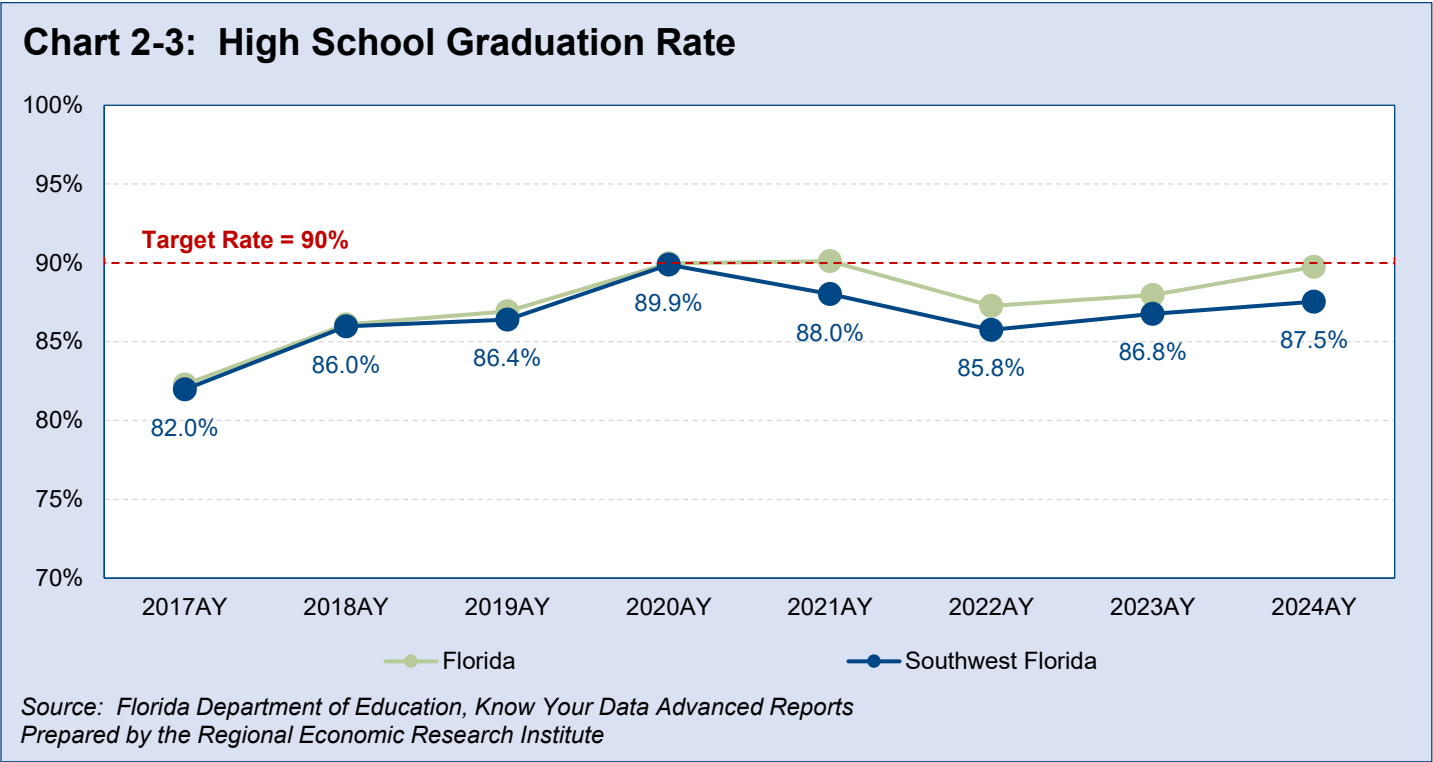
FutureMakers in Action

Family Literacy and STEAM Education

Two grants were secured during FY 25 directly benefiting Aspiration & Preparation's reading indicators. Room to Read donated 750 sets of STEAM Career books and 935 sets of Climate Change books to FutureMakers Coalition to distribute to education partners who run in-school, after school, and community reading programs. The donation of new books was accompanied by a \$16,725 grant that was shared with the IMAG History & Science Center and Southwest Florida Library Network to integrate the books into their STEAM programming and provide children with free take-home STEAM kits.

In June 2025, Suncoast Credit Union Foundation granted \$10,000 toward an effort to expand the Family Literacy Project to Glades and Hendry Counties in partnership with the Southwest Florida Library Network and FGCU. The project will further their STEAM education initiatives, encourage parent/child reading and engagement opportunities, and initiate a book share program with Lee County Adult Education and Career Education which started the Family Literacy Project model with FGCU at Tice Elementary.

Both efforts represent the start of new pilot projects while supporting the sustainability of successful parent/child education models.



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 87.5 percent during the 2023-24 academic year, up 0.7 percentage points from the prior academic year. The high school graduation rate for Southwest Florida was below the state, measured at 89.7 percent during the 2023-24 academic year.

Collier County (91.3 percent) was the only county to exceed the 90 percent target graduation rate during the 2023-24 academic year. Glades County had the next highest graduation rate (87.8 percent), followed by Charlotte County (87.0 percent), Lee County (85.8 percent), and Hendry County (85.5 percent).



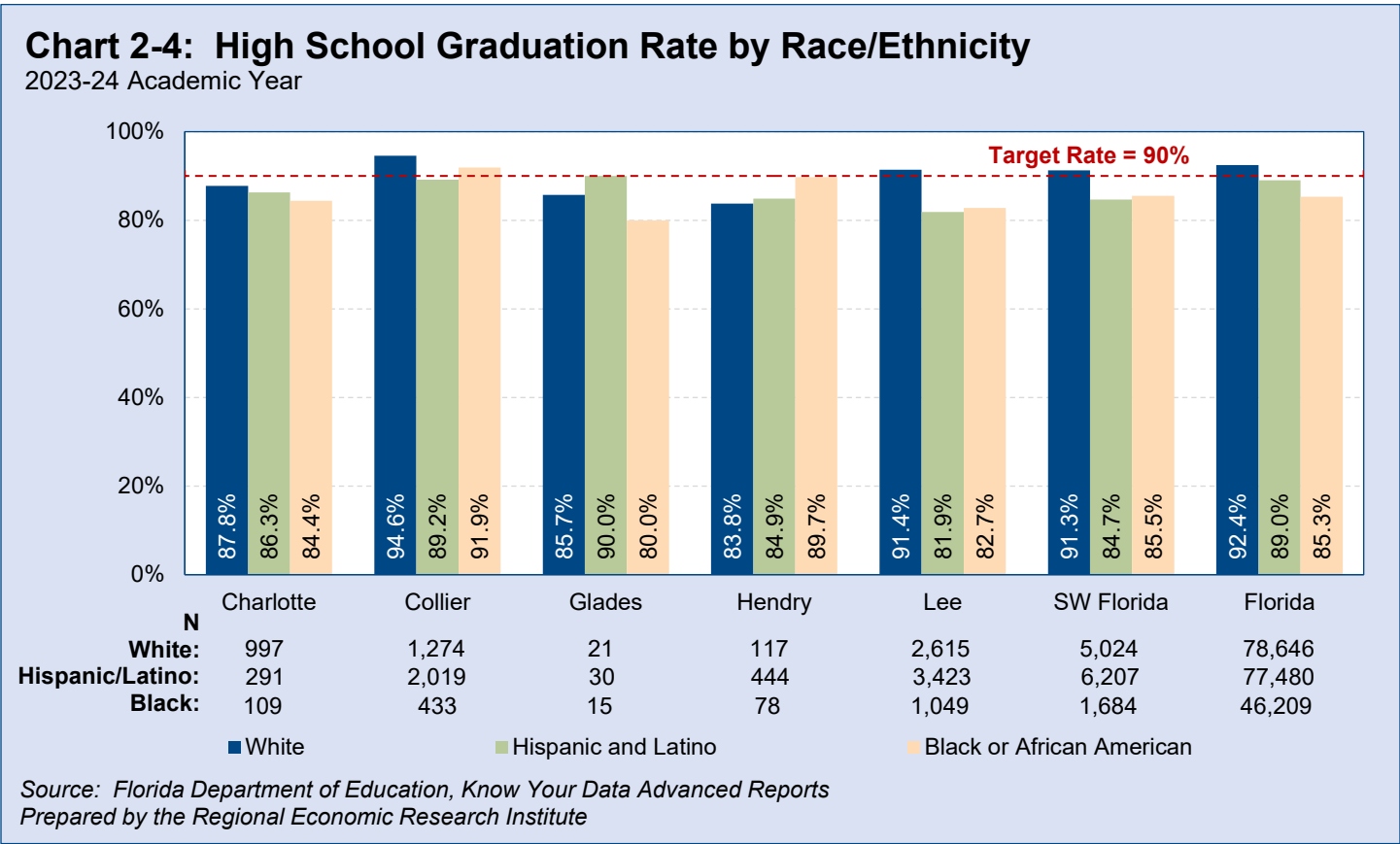
While high school graduation rates in Southwest Florida improved during the 2023-24 academic year, they remain below the high of 89.9 percent in 2020. Charlotte, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties all saw year-to-year improvements in the high school graduation rate, while Collier County had a decline.

Table 2-3: High School Graduation Rate

Area	2017AY	2018AY	2019AY	2020AY	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY	2024AY
Charlotte County								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	1,111	1,273	1,188	1,272	1,248	1,206	1,186	1,307
<i>Cohort students</i>	1,371	1,453	1,375	1,407	1,373	1,372	1,381	1,502
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	81.0%	87.6%	86.4%	90.4%	90.9%	87.9%	85.9%	87.0%
Collier County								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	2,995	3,101	3,312	3,501	3,461	3,287	3,359	3,534
<i>Cohort students</i>	3,394	3,376	3,605	3,796	3,735	3,592	3,673	3,869
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	88.2%	91.9%	91.9%	92.2%	92.7%	91.5%	91.5%	91.3%
Glades County								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	44	57	74	69	51	58	43	65
<i>Cohort students</i>	54	61	81	77	65	65	50	74
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	81.5%	93.4%	91.4%	89.6%	78.5%	89.2%	86.0%	87.8%
Hendry County								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	423	428	510	519	519	506	488	554
<i>Cohort students</i>	501	511	609	574	588	605	605	648
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	84.4%	83.8%	83.7%	90.4%	88.3%	83.6%	80.7%	85.5%
Lee County								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	5,084	5,588	5,778	6,123	6,083	5,661	6,077	6,385
<i>Cohort students</i>	6,461	6,749	6,902	6,922	7,147	6,864	7,144	7,438
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	78.7%	82.8%	83.7%	88.5%	85.1%	82.5%	85.1%	85.8%
Southwest Florida								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	9,657	10,447	10,862	11,484	11,362	10,718	11,153	12,206
<i>Cohort students</i>	11,781	12,150	12,572	12,776	12,908	12,498	12,853	14,018
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	82.0%	86.0%	86.4%	89.9%	88.0%	85.8%	86.8%	87.1%
Florida								
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	168,042	180,411	184,509	188,088	185,758	180,228	183,416	194,968
<i>Cohort students</i>	204,212	209,520	212,240	209,041	206,150	206,484	208,490	217,248
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	82.3%	86.1%	86.9%	90.0%	90.1%	87.3%	88.0%	89.7%


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 Rate by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 2-4 and Table 2-4 show high school graduation rates by race and ethnicity for the 2023-24 academic year. Southwest Florida students who identified as White had a high school graduation rate of 91.3 percent during the 2023-24 academic year, slightly above the target rate of 90 percent. Meanwhile, students who identified as Black or African American had a high school graduation rate of 84.7 percent, while students who identified as Hispanic and Latino had a high school graduation rate of 85.5 percent, both below the 90 percent target rate. For Florida, White students had a graduation rate (92.4 percent) slightly above the 90 percent target, while the graduation rates for Hispanic and Latino students (89.0 percent) and Black or African American students (85.3 percent) were lower than the 90 percent target rate.



It is important to note that Hispanic and Latino and Black or African American students made up more than half (61.1 percent) of the Southwest Florida student population during the 2023-24 academic year. 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

2023-24 Academic Year

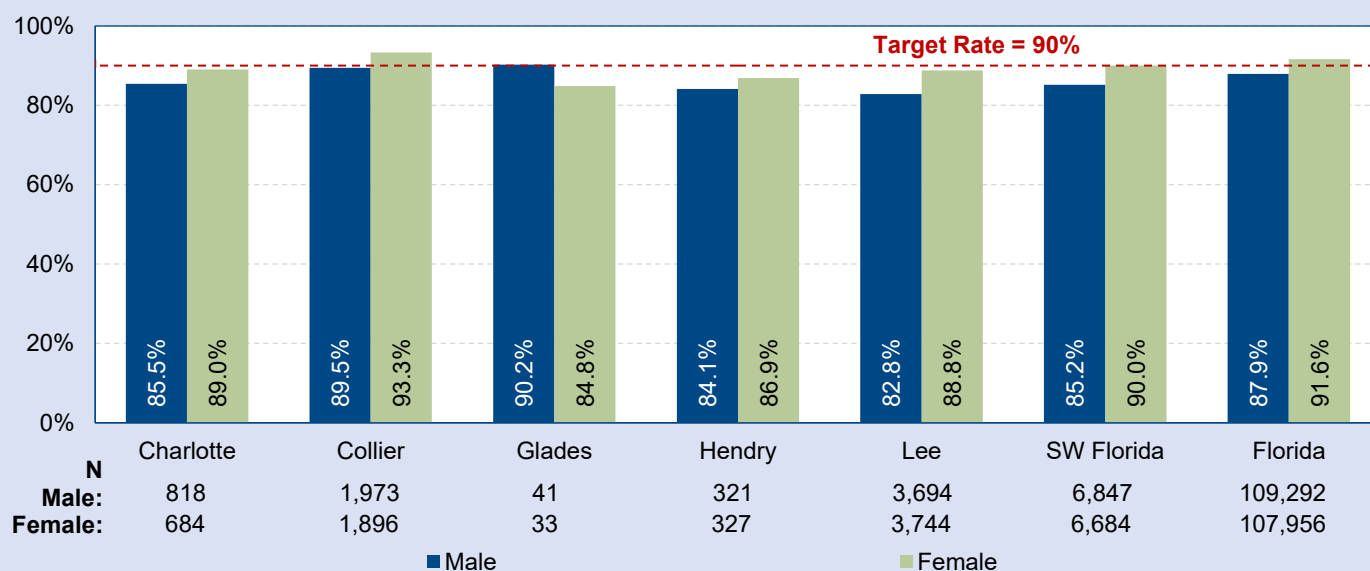
Area	White	Hispanic and Latino	Black or African American
Charlotte County			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	875	251	92
<i>Cohort students</i>	997	291	109
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	87.8%	86.3%	84.4%
Collier County			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	1,205	1,800	398
<i>Cohort students</i>	1,274	2,019	433
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	94.6%	89.2%	91.9%
Glades County			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	18	27	12
<i>Cohort students</i>	21	30	15
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	85.7%	90.0%	80.0%
Hendry County			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	98	377	70
<i>Cohort students</i>	117	444	78
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	83.8%	84.9%	89.7%
Lee County			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	2,391	2,802	868
<i>Cohort students</i>	2,615	3,423	1,049
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	91.4%	81.9%	82.7%
Southwest Florida			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	4,587	5,257	1,440
<i>Cohort students</i>	5,024	6,207	1,684
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	91.3%	84.7%	85.5%
Florida			
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	72,700	68,994	39,411
<i>Cohort students</i>	78,646	77,480	46,209
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	92.4%	89.0%	85.3%

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

2023-24 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 show high school graduation rate by gender for the 2023-24 academic year. Females in Southwest Florida had a high school graduation rate of 90.0 percent during the 2023-24 academic year, at the target rate of 90 percent. Meanwhile, male students had a high school graduation rate of 85.2 percent. Rates for both females and males were below the state of Florida, measured at 91.6 percent and 87.9 percent, respectively.

Females had a higher graduation rate than males in most of the Southwest Florida counties, Glades County being the exception. Collier County females had the highest graduation rate (measured at 93.3 percent) followed by Charlotte County (89.0 percent), Lee County (88.8 percent), Hendry County (86.9 percent) and Glades County (84.8 percent).

Table 2-5: High School Graduation Rate by Gender

2023-24 Academic Year

Area	Male	Female
Charlotte County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	699	609
<i>Cohort students</i>	818	684
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	85.5%	89.0%
Collier County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	1,765	1,769
<i>Cohort students</i>	1,973	1,896
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	89.5%	93.3%
Glades County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	37	28
<i>Cohort students</i>	41	33
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	90.2%	84.8%
Hendry County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	270	284
<i>Cohort students</i>	321	327
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	84.1%	86.9%
Lee County		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	3,060	3,325
<i>Cohort students</i>	3,694	3,744
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	82.8%	88.8%
Southwest Florida		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	5,831	6,015
<i>Cohort students</i>	6,847	6,684
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	85.2%	90.0%
Florida		
<i>Cohort graduates</i>	96,057	98,911
<i>Cohort students</i>	109,292	107,956
<i>Percent cohort graduates</i>	87.9%	91.6%

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

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



FutureMakers Coalition



Access and Entry




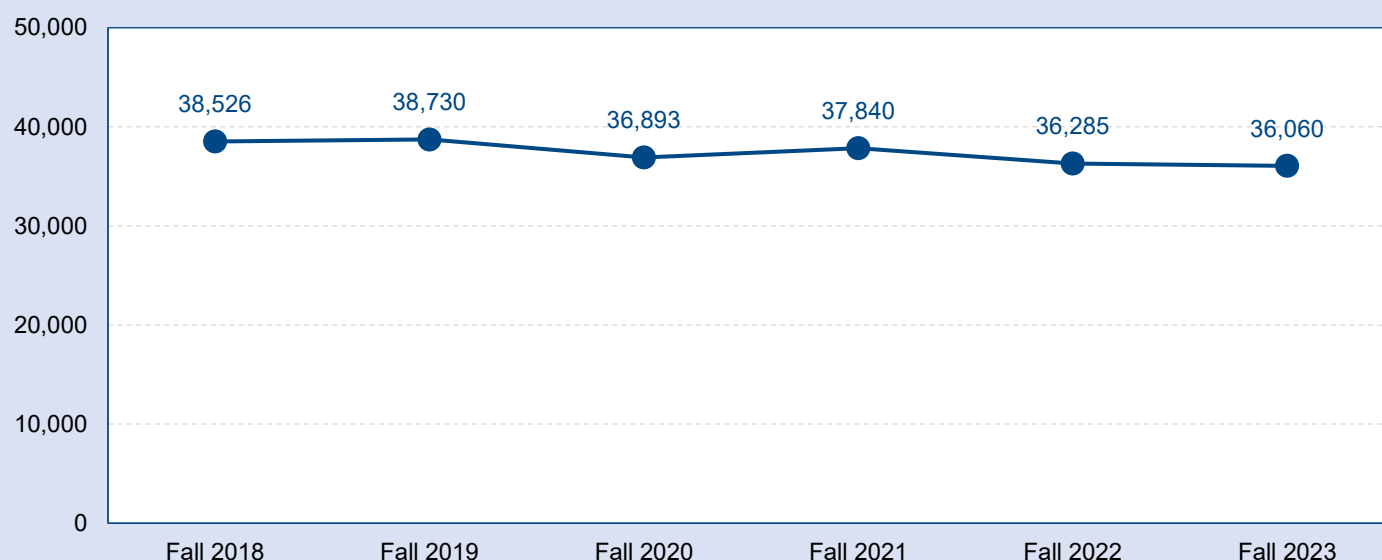
Indicator		Measure		Trending
	Fall Enrollment Postsecondary fall enrollment	SWFL	36,060	↓
		Florida	1,052,571	↑
	Technical Education Technical college fall enrollment	SWFL	4,193	↑
		Florida	81,688	↑
	FAFSA Completion FAFSA completion rate	SWFL	39.8%	↑
		Florida	43.5%	↑

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.⁶ Southwest Florida had a total postsecondary fall enrollment of 36,060 students in Fall 2023, down 0.6 percent from the previous fall. Fall enrollment growth for the region fell below both the state (virtually unchanged from Fall 2022) and the nation (2.6 percent increase).

Table 2-6: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment

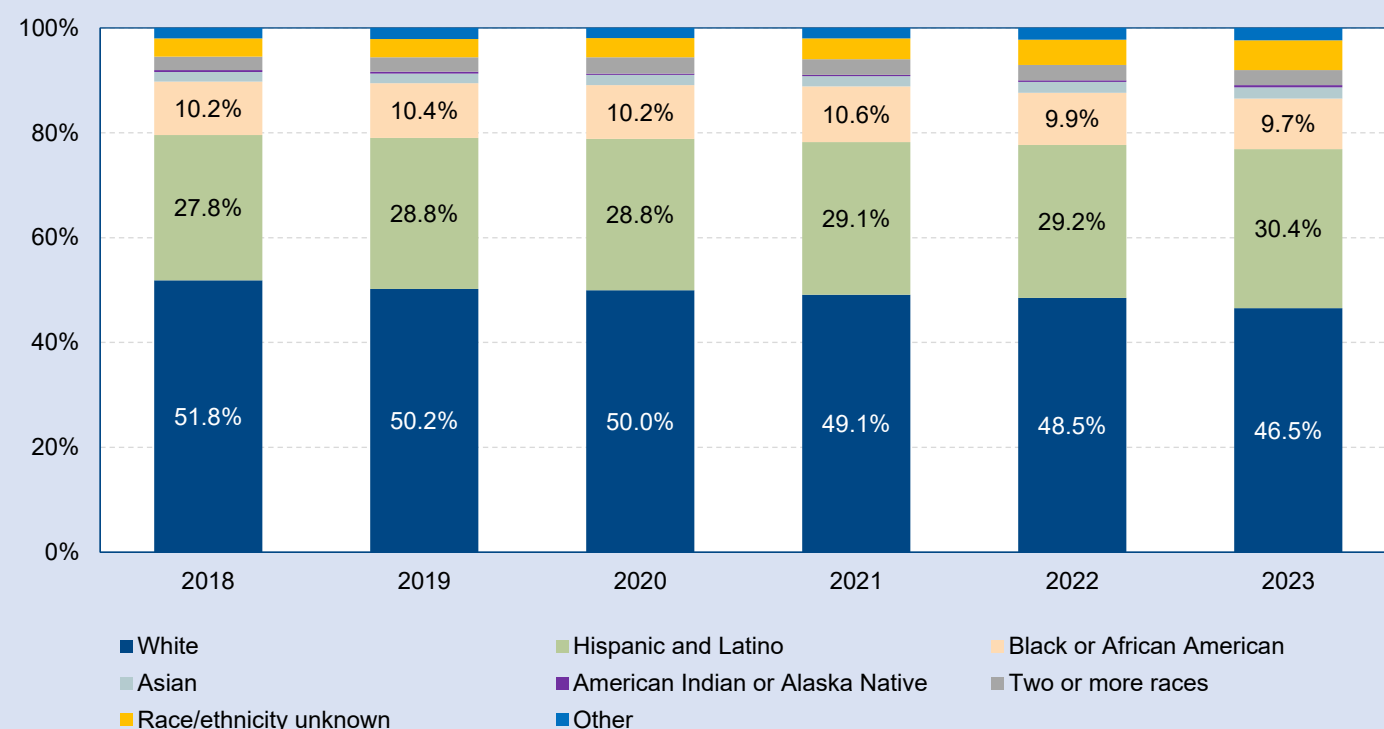
Area	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Southwest Florida						
Fall enrollment	38,526	38,730	36,893	37,840	36,285	36,060
Percent change	--	0.5%	-4.7%	2.6%	-4.1%	-0.6%
Florida						
Fall enrollment	1,116,833	1,108,594	1,073,607	1,051,656	1,052,474	1,052,571
Percent change	--	-0.7%	-3.2%	-2.0%	0.1%	0.0%
United States						
Fall enrollment	20,058,711	20,043,436	19,455,993	19,121,819	19,027,303	19,523,473
Percent change	--	-0.1%	-2.9%	-1.7%	-0.5%	2.6%

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

⁶ 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

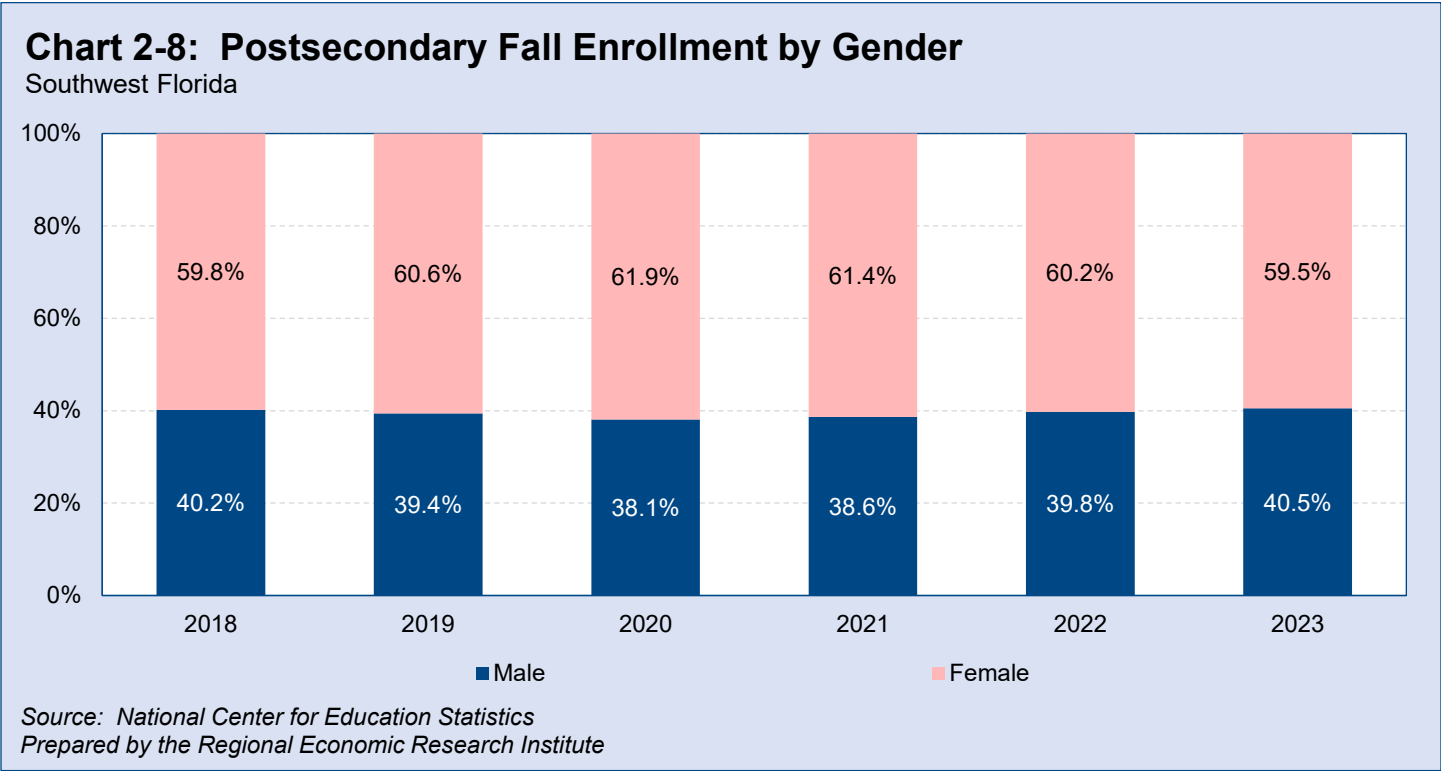
Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

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 51.8 percent in Fall 2018 to 46.5 percent in Fall 2023, as the proportions of students identifying as Black or African American 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 27.8 percent in Fall 2018 to 30.4 percent in Fall 2023. 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 or African American, hovering around 10 percent between Fall 2018 to Fall 2023.

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

Southwest Florida						
Race/Ethnicity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
White						
<i>Number of students</i>	19,974	19,460	18,446	18,591	17,597	16,782
<i>Percent of total</i>	51.8%	50.2%	50.0%	49.1%	48.5%	46.5%
Hispanic and Latino						
<i>Number of students</i>	10,692	11,150	10,641	11,009	10,601	10,945
<i>Percent of total</i>	27.8%	28.8%	28.8%	29.1%	29.2%	30.4%
Black or African American						
<i>Number of students</i>	3,921	4,040	3,775	4,014	3,605	3,480
<i>Percent of total</i>	10.2%	10.4%	10.2%	10.6%	9.9%	9.7%
Asian						
<i>Number of students</i>	701	718	732	738	742	775
<i>Percent of total</i>	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.1%
American Indian or Alaska Native						
<i>Number of students</i>	141	135	97	106	105	145
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander						
<i>Number of students</i>	49	64	73	69	58	40
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Two or more races						
<i>Number of students</i>	987	1,059	1,128	1,116	1,078	1,030
<i>Percent of total</i>	2.6%	2.7%	3.1%	2.9%	3.0%	2.9%
Race/ethnicity unknown						
<i>Number of students</i>	1,341	1,338	1,361	1,502	1,739	2,060
<i>Percent of total</i>	3.5%	3.5%	3.7%	4.0%	4.8%	5.7%
Nonresident alien						
<i>Number of students</i>	720	766	640	695	760	803
<i>Percent of total</i>	1.9%	2.0%	1.7%	1.8%	2.1%	2.2%
Total Fall Enrollment	38,526	38,730	36,893	37,840	36,285	36,060

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



Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Gender

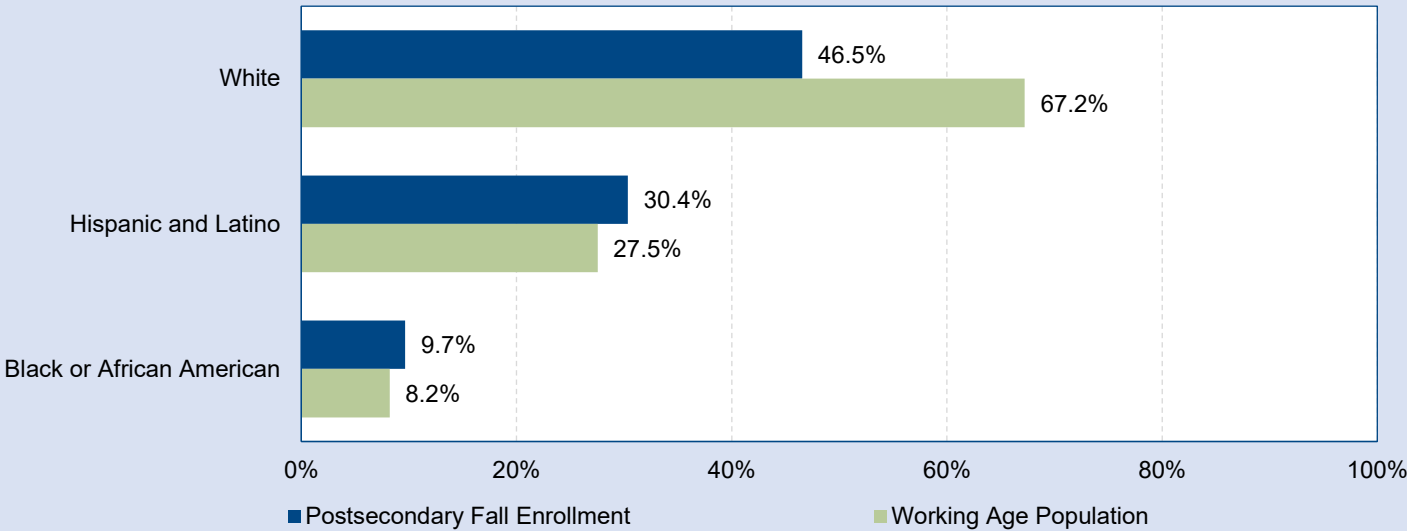
Chart 2-8 and Table 2-8 show postsecondary fall enrollment by gender for Southwest Florida. The region had 21,445 female students enrolled into a postsecondary institute during Fall 2023, representing 59.5 percent of total fall enrollment. The region also had 14,605 male students enrolled in Fall 2023, accounting for 40.5 percent of total fall enrollment during that year.

Table 2-8: Postsecondary Fall Enrollment by Gender						
Southwest Florida						
Gender	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Male						
Number of students	15,482	15,271	14,068	14,616	14,425	14,605
Percent of total	40.2%	39.4%	38.1%	38.6%	39.8%	40.5%
Female						
Number of students	23,044	23,459	22,825	23,224	21,860	21,455
Percent of total	59.8%	60.6%	61.9%	61.4%	60.2%	59.5%
Total Fall Enrollment	38,526	38,730	36,893	37,840	36,285	36,060

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

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

Southwest Florida
2023



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

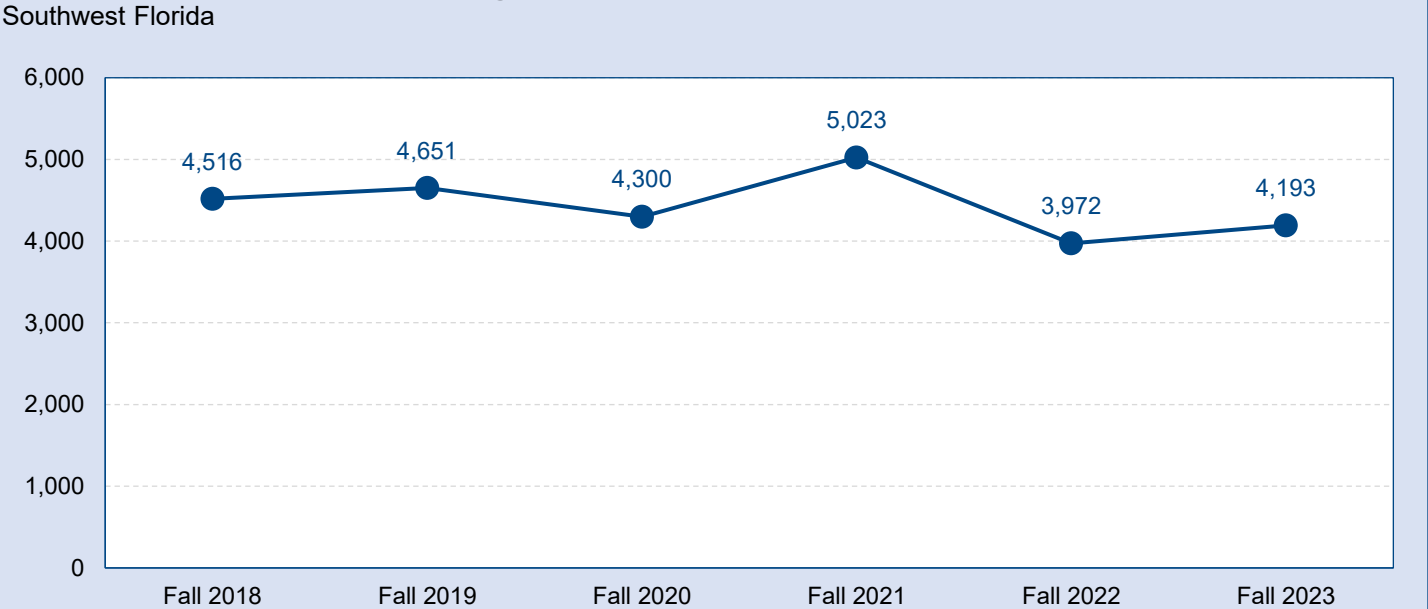
Postsecondary Fall Enrollment vs. Working Age Population by Race/Ethnicity

Chart 2-9 and Table 2-9 compare postsecondary enrollment and working-age population distributions by race and ethnicity in 2023. While working-age residents who identified as White represent 67.2 percent of the population in Southwest Florida, they accounted for slightly less than half of fall enrollment in 2023. Hispanic and Latino students represented 30.4 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 2023, slightly below 9.7 percent fall enrollment during that year.

Table 2-9: Postsecondary Enrollment vs. Working Age Population		
2023		
Race/Ethnicity	Postsecondary Fall Enrollment	Working Age Population
White	46.5%	67.2%
Hispanic and Latino	30.4%	27.5%
Black or African American	9.7%	8.2%

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

Chart 2-10: Technical College Fall Enrollment



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.⁷ Technical colleges identified in the region had 4,193 students enrolled in Fall 2023. Enrollment rose compared to Fall 2022, up 5.6 percent.

Table 2-10: Technical College Fall Enrollment

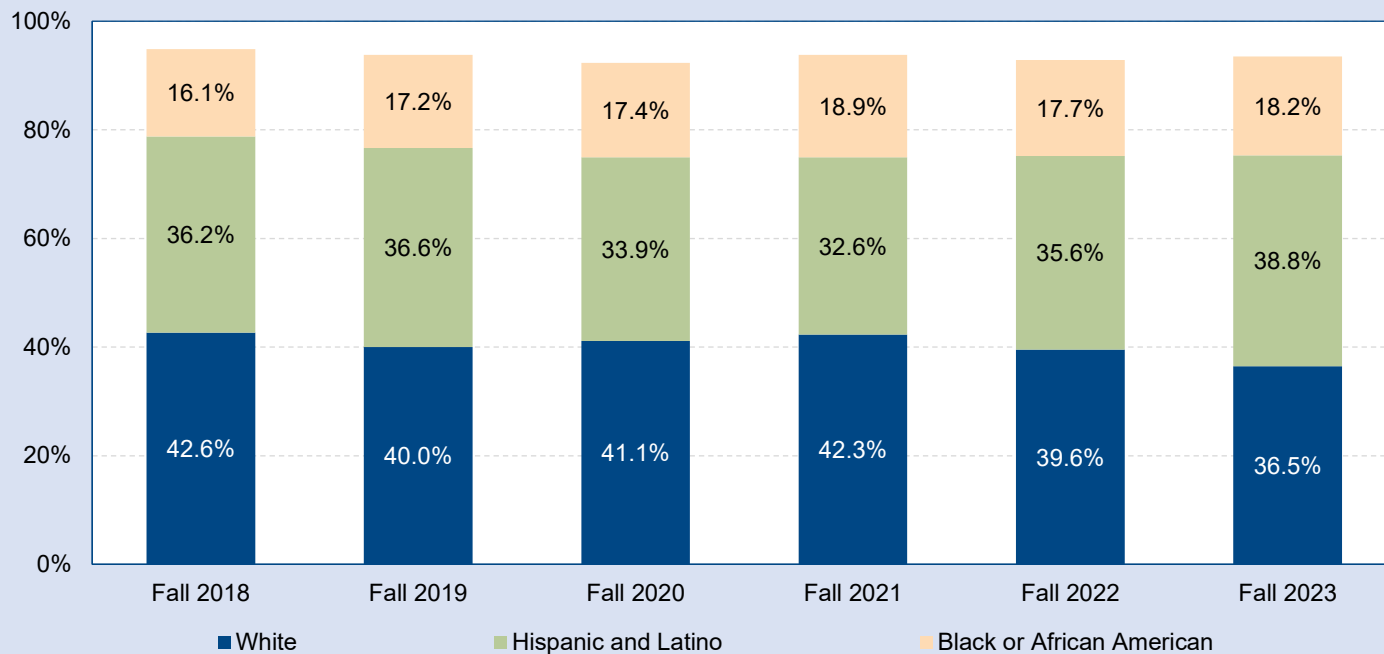
Area	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Southwest Florida						
Fall enrollment	4,516	4,651	4,300	5,023	3,972	4,193
Percent change	--	3.0%	-7.5%	16.8%	-20.9%	5.6%
Florida						
Fall enrollment	110,482	100,954	96,915	93,887	75,231	81,688
Percent change	--	-8.6%	-4.0%	-3.1%	-19.9%	8.6%
United States						
Fall enrollment	6,117,400	5,961,378	5,297,091	5,060,918	5,029,937	5,104,807
Percent change	--	-2.6%	-11.1%	-4.5%	-0.6%	1.5%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

⁷ 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 42.6 percent in Fall 2018 to 36.5 percent in Fall 2023. Moreover, technical college fall enrollment among Hispanic and Latino students increased from 36.2 percent in Fall 2018 to 38.8 percent in Fall 2023. For students identifying as Black, technical college fall enrollment increased from 16.1 percent in Fall 2018 to 18.2 percent in Fall 2023.

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

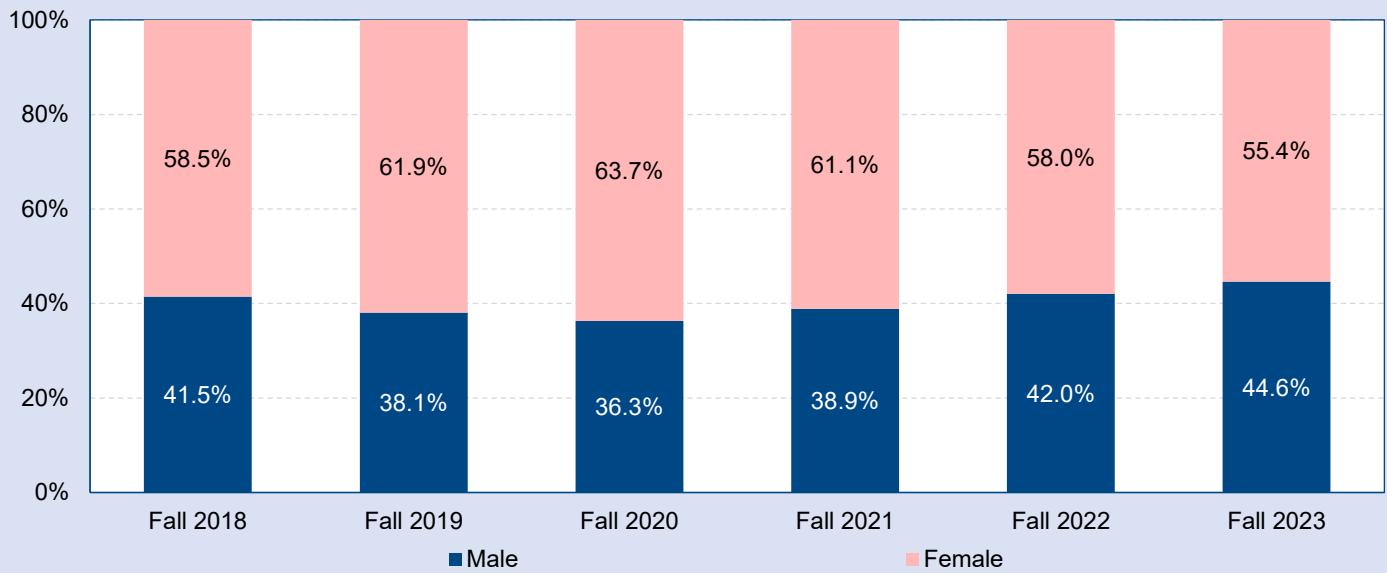
Southwest Florida

Race/Ethnicity	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
White						
<i>Number of students</i>	1,926	1,860	1,768	2,125	1,571	1,530
<i>Percent of total</i>	42.6%	40.0%	41.1%	42.3%	39.6%	36.5%
Hispanic and Latino						
<i>Number of students</i>	1,633	1,704	1,456	1,639	1,415	1,627
<i>Percent of total</i>	36.2%	36.6%	33.9%	32.6%	35.6%	38.8%
Black or African American						
<i>Number of students</i>	726	798	747	949	703	764
<i>Percent of total</i>	16.1%	17.2%	17.4%	18.9%	17.7%	18.2%
Asian						
<i>Number of students</i>	47	36	59	60	41	55
<i>Percent of total</i>	1.0%	0.8%	1.4%	1.2%	1.0%	1.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native						
<i>Number of students</i>	14	15	11	18	9	50
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	1.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander						
<i>Number of students</i>	6	6	24	12	17	11
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.1%	0.1%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%
Two or more races						
<i>Number of students</i>	123	192	202	171	155	115
<i>Percent of total</i>	2.7%	4.1%	4.7%	3.4%	3.9%	2.7%
Race/ethnicity unknown						
<i>Number of students</i>	31	28	25	45	44	21
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.9%	1.1%	0.5%
Nonresident alien						
<i>Number of students</i>	10	12	8	4	17	20
<i>Percent of total</i>	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.5%
Total Fall Enrollment	4,516	4,651	4,300	5,023	3,972	4,193

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

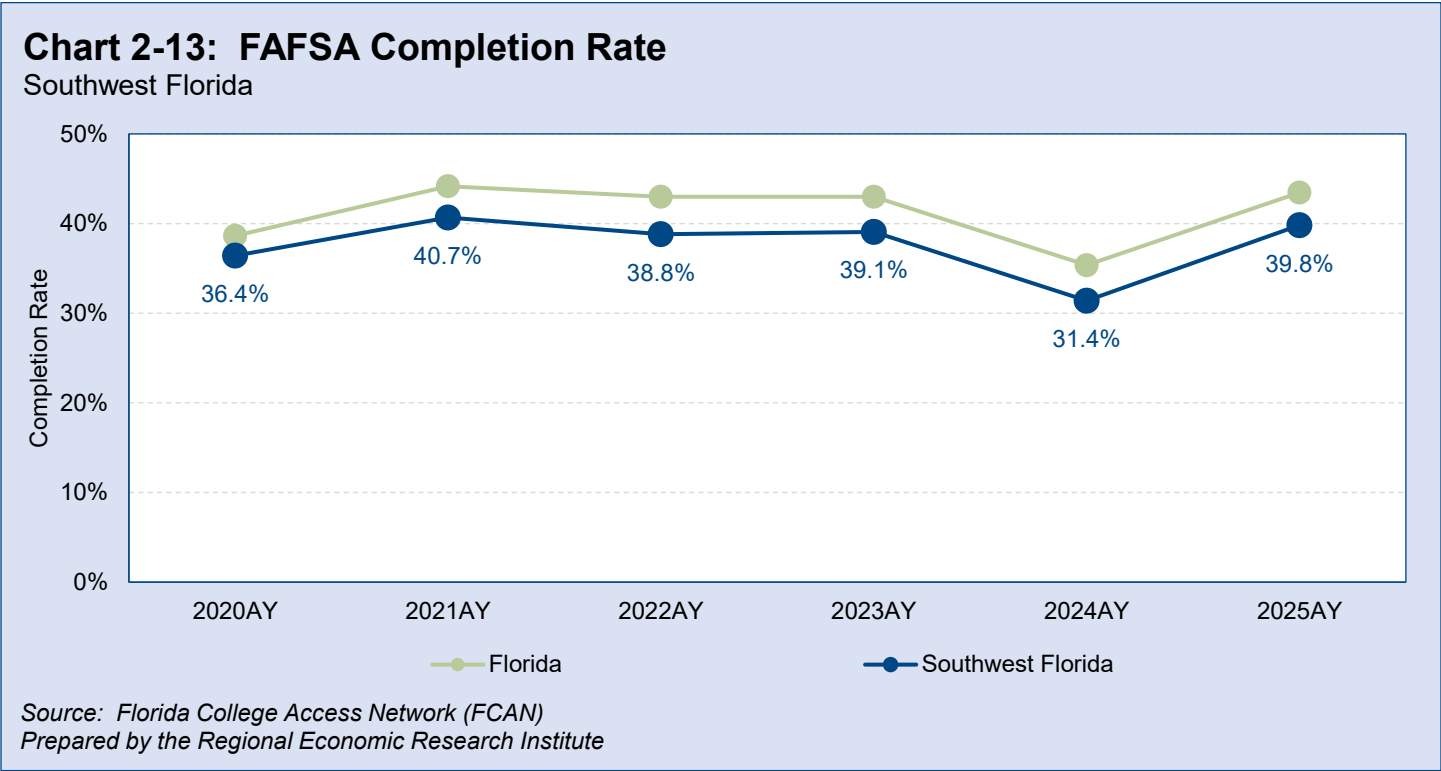
Chart 2-12 and Table 2-12 show technical college fall enrollment by gender for Southwest Florida. The region had 2,321 female students enrolled into a technical college during Fall 2023, representing 55.4 percent of total fall enrollment. This share has fallen for three consecutive years. The region also had 1,872 male students enrolled in Fall 2023, accounting for 44.6 percent of total fall enrollment during that year.

Table 2-12: Technical College Fall Enrollment by Gender

Southwest Florida

Gender	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Male						
Number of students	1,873	1,770	1,561	1,953	1,669	1,872
Percent of total	41.5%	38.1%	36.3%	38.9%	42.0%	44.6%
Female						
Number of students	2,643	2,881	2,739	3,070	2,303	2,321
Percent of total	58.5%	61.9%	63.7%	61.1%	58.0%	55.4%
Total Fall Enrollment	4,516	4,651	4,300	5,023	3,972	4,193

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



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, 2025, the region had 5,609 students complete a FAFSA application, for a FAFSA completion rate of 39.8 percent. The FAFSA completion rate has increased by 8.4 percentage points from the 2023-24 academic year and remains below the state FAFSA completion rate of 43.5 percent in 2024-25.

Of the five Southwest Florida counties, only Collier County (44.6 percent) had a higher FAFSA completion rate than the state. Glades County had a completion rate of 43.2 percent, followed by Charlotte County at 39.3 percent, Hendry County at 38.6 percent, and Lee County with a 38.0 percent completion rate.

Table 2-13: FAFSA Completion Rate

Area	2020AY	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY	2024AY	2025AY
Charlotte County						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	1,335	1,205	1,308	1,301	1,454	1,419
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	426	533	526	493	440	557
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	31.9%	44.2%	40.2%	37.9%	30.3%	39.3%
Collier County						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	3,482	3,413	3,336	3,205	3,458	3,482
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	1,484	1,579	1,473	1,489	1,260	1,553
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	42.6%	46.3%	44.2%	46.5%	36.4%	44.6%
Glades County						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	63	51	53	59	68	81
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	33	21	25	29	24	35
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	52.4%	41.2%	47.2%	49.2%	35.3%	43.2%
Hendry County						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	519	556	559	571	590	591
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	145	182	191	215	168	228
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	27.9%	32.7%	34.2%	37.7%	28.5%	38.6%
Lee County						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	7,295	7,213	7,494	7,945	8,120	8,519
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	2,537	2,744	2,736	2,883	2,406	3,236
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	34.8%	38.0%	36.5%	36.3%	29.6%	38.0%
Southwest Florida						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	12,694	12,438	12,750	13,081	13,690	14,092
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	4,625	5,059	4,951	5,109	4,298	5,609
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	36.4%	40.7%	38.8%	39.1%	31.4%	39.8%
Florida						
<i>Total 12th Grade Population</i>	199,139	196,883	204,189	205,886	213,828	217,714
<i>FAFSA Completions Through June</i>	76,969	86,942	87,791	88,518	75,625	94,634
<i>FAFSA Completion Rate</i>	38.7%	44.2%	43.0%	43.0%	35.4%	43.5%

Source: Florida College Access Network (FCAN)

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

FutureMakers in Action

FAFSA Completion Efforts

Prior to the 2024 summer, FutureMakers Coalition was awarded a \$28,000 ECMC FAFSA Student Support Strategy grant to increase student FAFSA completions over the summer. Between May and September 273 individuals benefited from 24 FAFSA supported events offered by Collaboratory and its partners throughout Hendry, Glades, Charlotte, Lee, and Collier counties.

Additionally, new volunteers were recruited to learn how to guide students and parents through the FAFSA process and translated materials were expanded to include Spanish and Haitian Creole.







With the support of the ECMC grant, the FutureMakers Coalition FAFSA First Team was able to offer 113 FAFSA completion events for Southwest Florida high school seniors during the 2024/2025 school year.



FutureMakers Coalition



Persistence and Completion

Indicator		Measure	Trending
	Retention Percent of full-time cohort from previous fall still enrolled	SWFL	81.2% ↑
		Florida	78.8% ↓
	On-time Completion Percent completing within 150 percent of normal time at two- and four-year institutes	SWFL	52.8% ↓
		Florida	57.1% ↑
	Business Partnerships* Percent employers working with postsecondary institutions	SWFL	N/A N/A
	Returning Adults* Percent employers offering education opportunities	SWFL	N/A N/A
	Living Wage Hourly wage to support one adult and two children	SWFL	\$45.94 ↑
		Florida	\$45.96 ↑
	Local Jobs** Percent of Southwest Florida graduates still working in Southwest Florida	SWFL	29.6% N/A

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

** Due to a change in Lightcast's methodology, readers should exercise caution when comparing these results to previous reports.

FutureMakers in Action

Persistence and Completion Team Update

Over the past year, the teams have made significant progress advancing the goals of the EDA Good Jobs Challenge, particularly in participant recruitment and job placement. Collectively, the initiative has already recruited more than 5,300 participants—over double the original grant goal—and secured more than 1,200 good job placements, representing 68% of the target. Each sector has contributed meaningfully to this momentum: healthcare has recruited nearly 3,000 individuals with 527 job placements, manufacturing has brought in close to 1,000 with 264 placements, logistics has recruited more than 900 with 362 placements, and PK–12 education has engaged nearly 470 participants with 59 job placements.

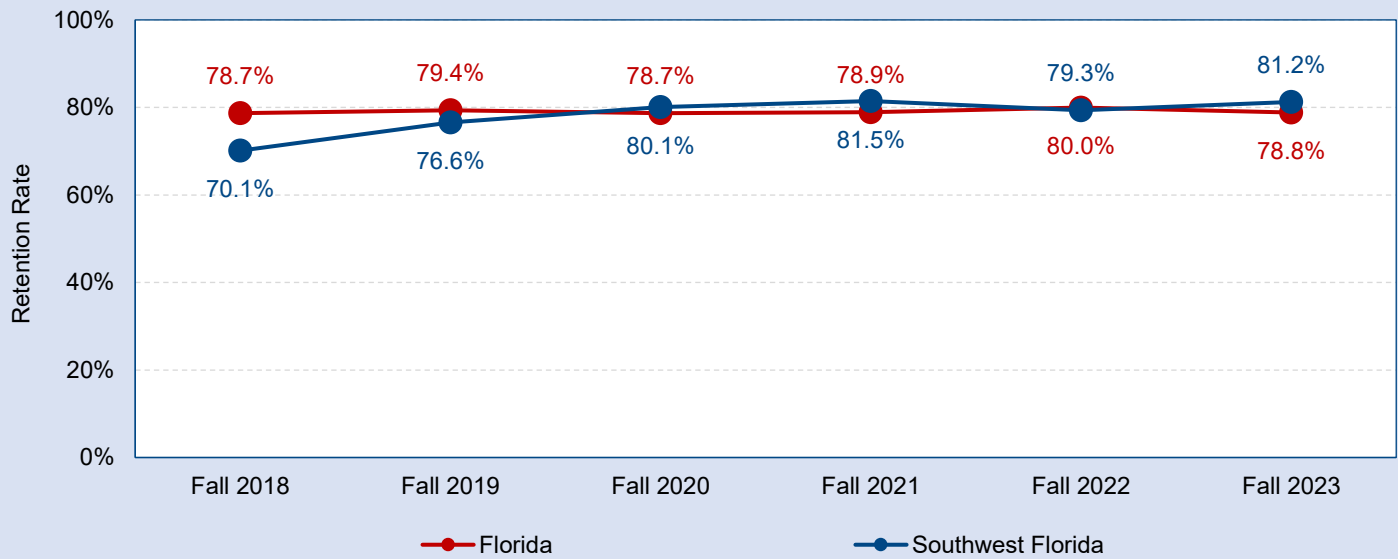
Within the healthcare sector, teams have been working on several focused projects to address workforce challenges. A nurse mentorship program is underway to increase the longevity of nurses at both the entry and late-career stages, particularly in long-term care facilities. Complementing this effort is an employee retention project at FGCU that ensures healthcare workers are better prepared before entering the field. Other initiatives include raising awareness of healthcare career opportunities among high school seniors and strengthening business partnerships to expand living-wage job opportunities.

In manufacturing, the regional awareness team has focused on boosting visibility of career opportunities and improving system alignment across partners. Training partners are working on strategies to increase consistent employer engagement earlier in the training pipeline, ensuring that students are more connected to living-wage job opportunities throughout their education.

These projects are supported by backbone coordination from Collaboratory and the Persistence & Completion Regional Action Team, which ensures alignment, accountability, and shared learning across the collaborative.

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 4,557 full-time, first-year students enrolled during Fall 2022, 3,702 remained enrolled in Fall 2023, giving the region a first-year retention rate of 81.2 percent. The first-year retention rate for the region increased from the prior year and was higher than both the national average (77.5 percent) and the state average (78.8 percent).

Table 2-14: First Year Retention Rate

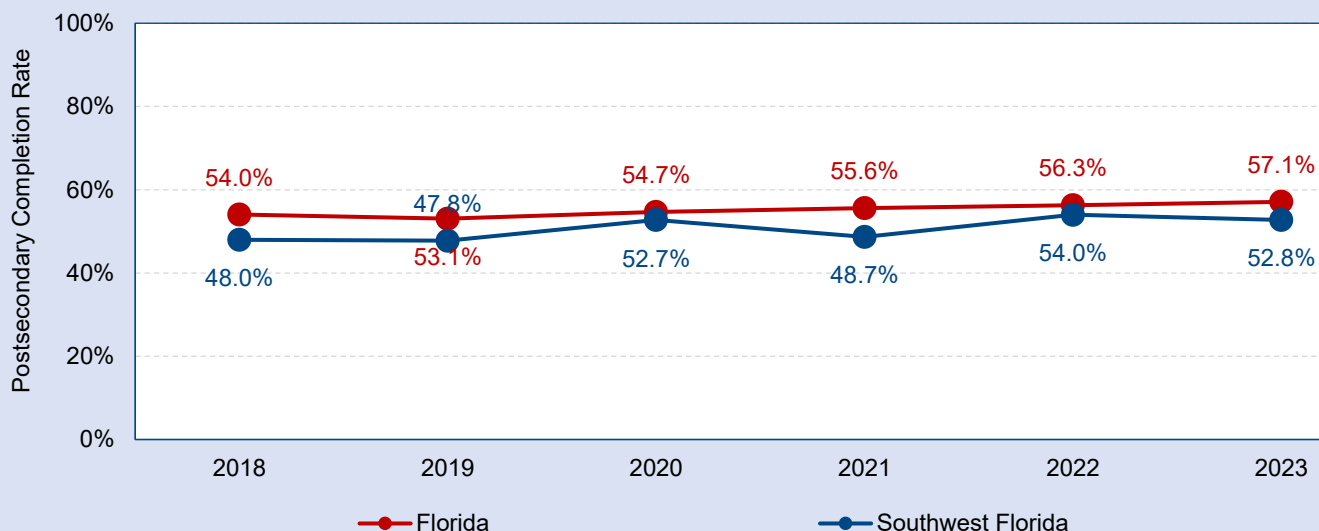
Area	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Southwest Florida						
Full-time cohort from previous fall	4,067	4,587	4,277	3,959	4,727	4,557
Students still enrolled in fall	2,852	3,512	3,425	3,225	3,750	3,702
First-year retention rate	70.1%	76.6%	80.1%	81.5%	79.3%	81.2%
Florida						
Full-time cohort from previous fall	87,272	89,880	91,318	85,150	87,253	90,928
Students still enrolled in fall	68,688	71,335	71,855	67,175	69,778	71,693
First-year retention rate	78.7%	79.4%	78.7%	78.9%	80.0%	78.8%
United States						
Full-time cohort from previous fall	2,269,264	2,274,908	2,258,289	2,066,075	2,105,638	2,148,596
Students still enrolled in fall	1,712,996	1,730,114	1,709,758	1,560,472	1,613,342	1,665,409
First-year retention rate	75.5%	76.1%	75.7%	75.5%	76.6%	77.5%

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 show 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 year⁸. Two- and four-year institutes in the region had an on-time completion rate of 52.8 percent in 2023, down 1.2 percentage points from 2022. The completion rate remains below both the state (57.1 percent) and the nation (55.6 percent).

Table 2-15: Postsecondary Completion Rates

Two-year and four-year institutes

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Southwest Florida						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	2,849	2,973	3,218	2,575	2,897	2,913
Adjusted cohort size	5,939	6,223	6,104	5,288	5,364	5,520
Cohort completion rate	48.0%	47.8%	52.7%	48.7%	54.0%	52.8%
Florida						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	90,810	76,778	76,441	77,504	75,985	82,046
Adjusted cohort size	168,120	144,698	139,849	139,400	135,019	143,715
Cohort completion rate	54.0%	53.1%	54.7%	55.6%	56.3%	57.1%
United States						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	1,252,907	1,267,573	1,290,648	1,311,655	1,315,869	1,323,523
Adjusted cohort size	2,448,946	2,424,896	2,427,776	2,429,557	2,439,128	2,379,198
Cohort completion rate	51.2%	52.3%	53.2%	54.0%	53.9%	55.6%

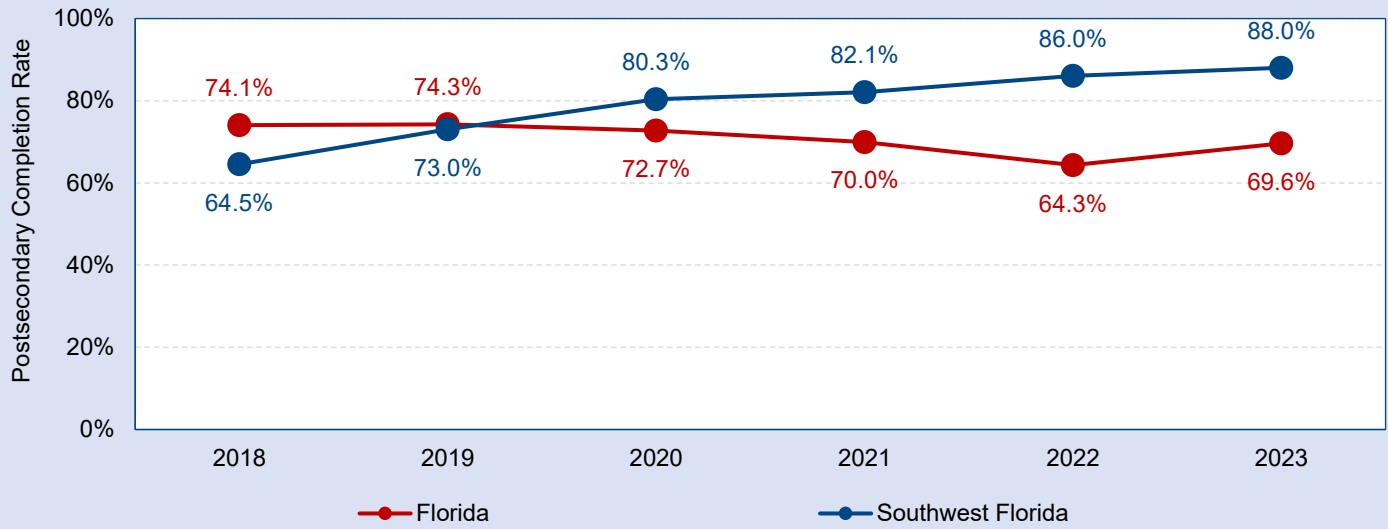
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

⁸ 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 show the completion rates for students seeking a degree or certificate and enrolled in less-than two-year institutes in Southwest Florida. Less than two-year institutes in the region had an on-time completion rate of 88.0 percent in 2023, up 2.0 percentage points from 2022. The completion rate remains above both the state (69.6 percent) and the nation (68.4 percent).

Table 2-16: Postsecondary Completion Rates

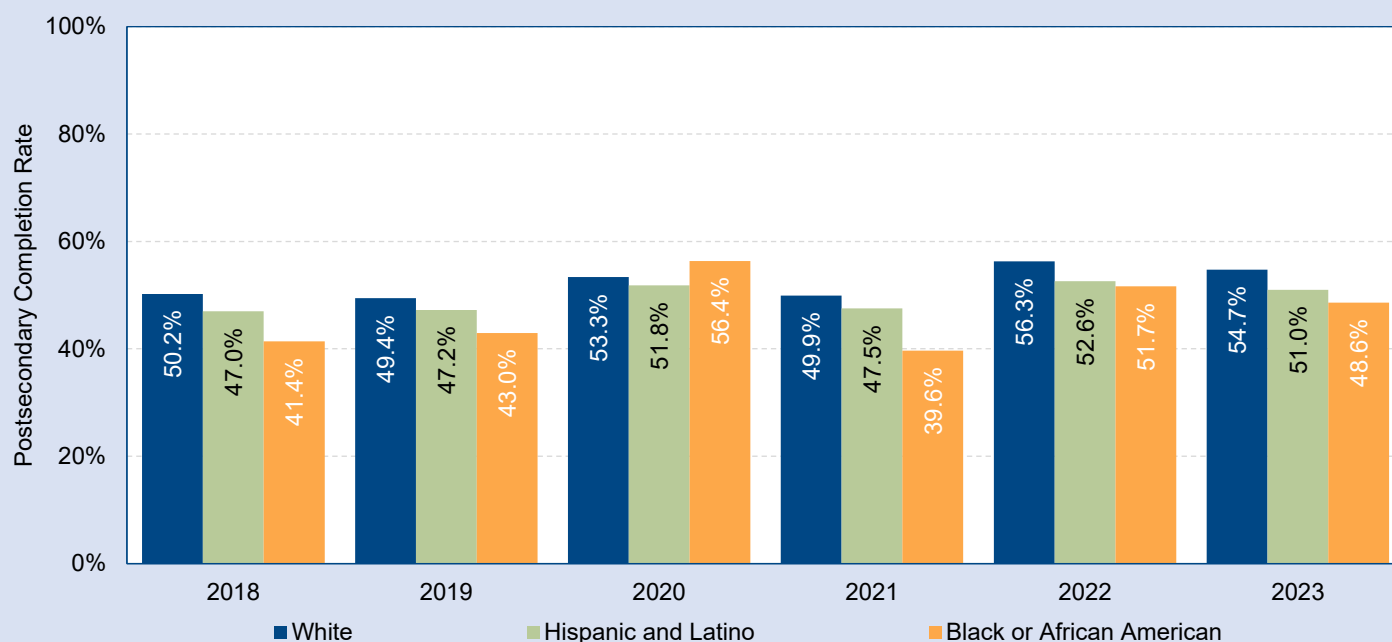
Less than two-year institutes

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Southwest Florida						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	304	620	560	951	844	1,015
Adjusted cohort size	471	849	697	1,159	981	1,153
Cohort completion rate	64.5%	73.0%	80.3%	82.1%	86.0%	88.0%
Florida						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	11,303	9,688	9,964	10,042	10,132	10,834
Adjusted cohort size	15,258	13,046	13,697	14,352	15,746	15,556
Cohort completion rate	74.1%	74.3%	72.7%	70.0%	64.3%	69.6%
United States						
Cohort completers in 150 percent of normal time	102,670	98,322	96,173	95,339	85,829	91,384
Adjusted cohort size	149,094	143,351	138,939	139,226	131,795	133,671
Cohort completion rate	68.9%	68.6%	69.2%	68.5%	65.1%	68.4%

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 2-17⁹ and Table 2-17 show completion rates for students seeking a degree or certificate and enrolled in two- and four-year institutes¹⁰ by race and ethnicity for the region. Southwest Florida had a cohort completion rate of 52.8 percent in 2023. Students who identified as White had a slightly higher completion rate, measured at 54.7 percent during 2023. Students identifying as Hispanic and Latino had a lower completion rate (51.0 percent), along with students identifying as Black (48.6 percent).



Data illustrating on-time, postsecondary completion rates by race and ethnicity for Southwest Florida are also provided in this report. Between 2018 and 2023, on-time postsecondary completion rates follow similar patterns across the races and ethnicities, with Black and Hispanic/Latino students having lower completion rates than White students.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Information for less than two-year institutes is not available by race and ethnicity.

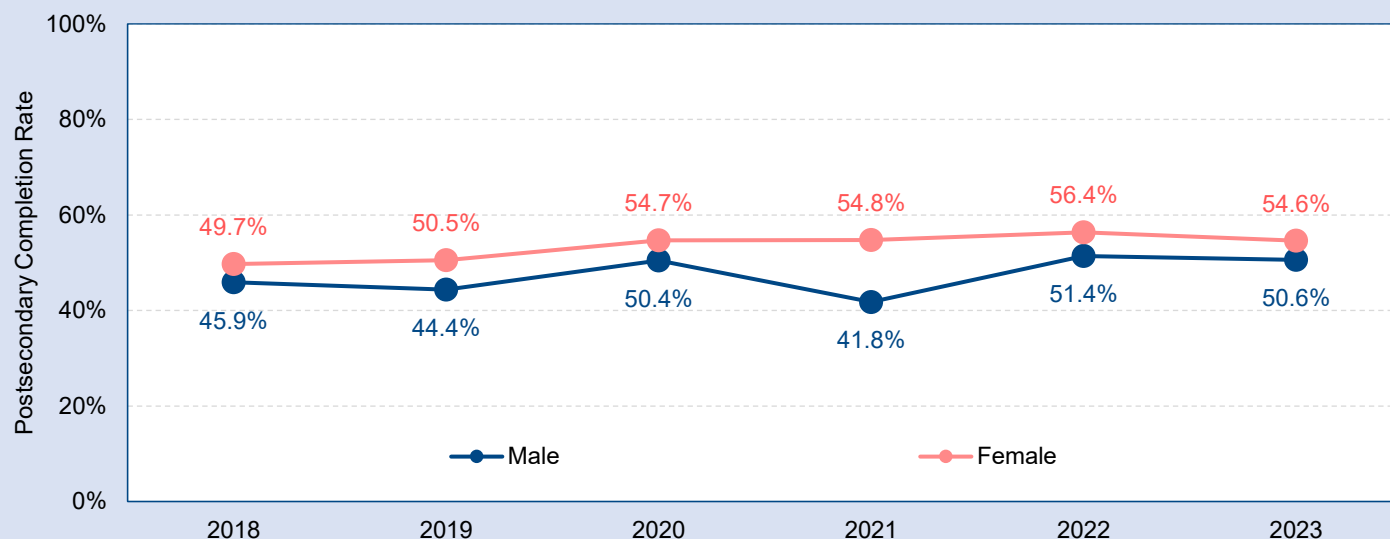
Table 2-17: Postsecondary Completion Rates by Race/EthnicityTwo-year and four-year institutes
Southwest Florida

Race/Ethnicity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
White						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	1,752	1,719	1,818	1,543	1,701	1,606
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	3,489	3,477	3,408	3,092	3,023	2,935
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	50.2%	49.4%	53.3%	49.9%	56.3%	54.7%
Hispanic and Latino						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	688	752	836	629	751	789
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	1,464	1,592	1,614	1,323	1,428	1,548
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	47.0%	47.2%	51.8%	47.5%	52.6%	51.0%
Black or African American						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	246	321	363	178	250	265
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	594	747	644	449	484	545
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	41.4%	43.0%	56.4%	39.6%	51.7%	48.6%
Asian						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	39	39	41	45	39	53
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	81	88	73	78	78	101
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	48.1%	44.3%	56.2%	57.7%	50.0%	52.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	10	6	4	7	9	7
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	24	17	12	14	19	13
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	41.7%	35.3%	33.3%	50.0%	47.4%	53.8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	7	4	3	5	5	6
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	10	10	6	8	10	10
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	70.0%	40.0%	50.0%	62.5%	50.0%	60.0%
Two or more races						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	47	50	60	69	53	91
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	117	121	157	130	127	174
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	40.2%	41.3%	38.2%	53.1%	41.7%	52.3%
Race/ethnicity unknown						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	42	48	53	58	60	53
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	115	107	118	124	139	118
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	36.5%	44.9%	44.9%	46.8%	43.2%	44.9%
Nonresident alien						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	18	34	40	41	29	43
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	45	64	72	70	56	76
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	40.0%	53.1%	55.6%	58.6%	51.8%	56.6%
Total						
<i>Number of cohort completers</i>	2,849	2,973	3,218	2,575	2,897	2,913
<i>Adjusted cohort size</i>	5,939	6,223	6,104	5,288	5,364	5,520
<i>Cohort completion rate</i>	48.0%	47.8%	52.7%	48.7%	54.0%	52.8%

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 show completion rates for students seeking a degree or certificate and enrolled in two- and four-year institutes¹¹ by gender for the region. Southwest Florida had a cohort completion rate of 52.8 percent in 2023. Females had a higher completion rate, measured at 54.6 percent during 2023, while male students had a lower completion rate (50.6 percent).

Table 2-18: Postsecondary Completion Rates by Gender

Two-year and four-year institutes
Southwest Florida

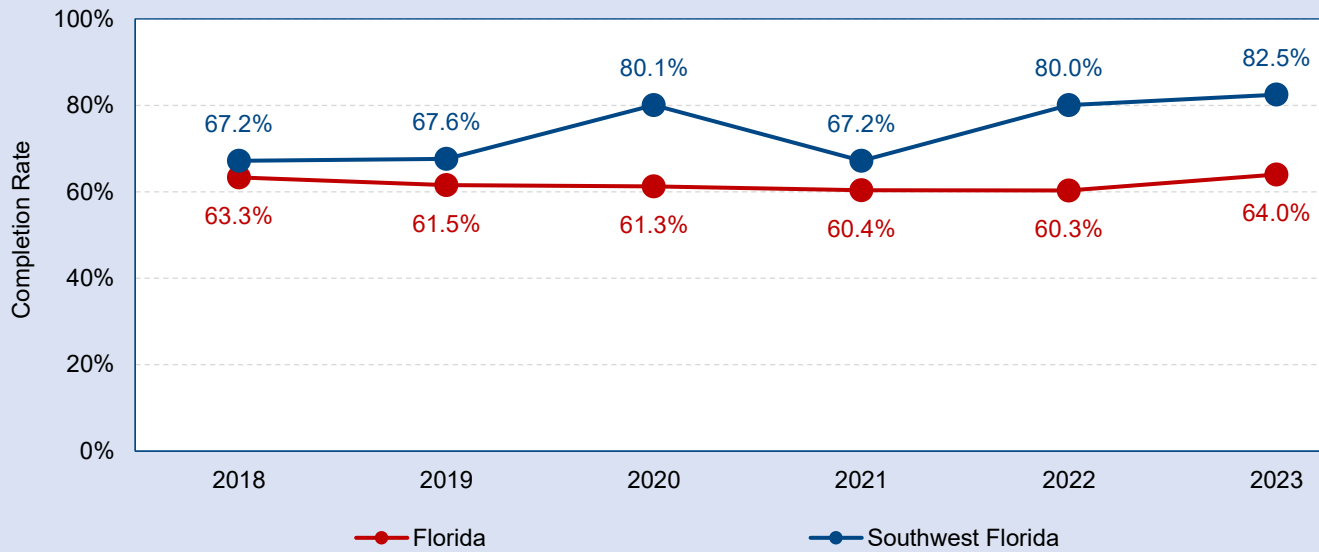
Gender	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Male						
Number of cohort completers	1,245	1,235	1,429	1,032	1,307	1,280
Adjusted cohort size	2,713	2,783	2,833	2,470	2,543	2,531
Cohort completion rate	45.9%	44.4%	50.4%	41.8%	51.4%	50.6%
Female						
Number of cohort completers	1,604	1,738	1,789	1,543	1,590	1,633
Adjusted cohort size	3,226	3,440	3,271	2,818	2,821	2,989
Cohort completion rate	49.7%	50.5%	54.7%	54.8%	56.4%	54.6%
Total						
Number of cohort completers	2,849	2,973	3,218	2,575	2,897	2,913
Adjusted cohort size	5,939	6,223	6,104	5,288	5,364	5,520
Cohort completion rate	48.0%	47.8%	52.7%	48.7%	54.0%	52.8%

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

¹¹ 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

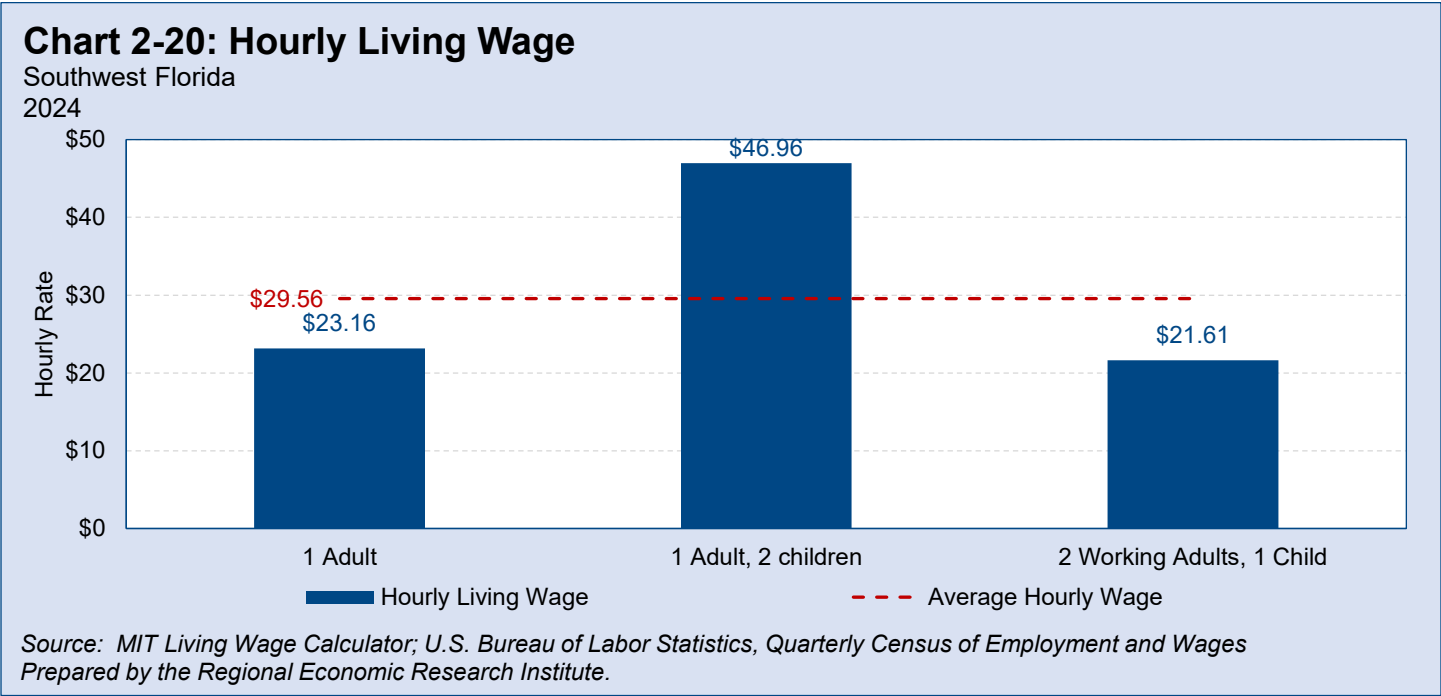
Chart 2-19 and Table 2-19 show completion rates for students enrolled at technical colleges in Southwest Florida.¹² The region had 1,637 cohort completers in 2023, resulting in an 82.5 percent cohort completion rate. The completion rate improved from 2022 and was higher than both the state (64.0 percent) and the nation (44.7 percent).

Table 2-19: Technical College Completion Rates

Area	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Southwest Florida						
Number of cohort completers	1,226	1,527	1,493	1,227	1,446	1,637
Adjusted cohort size	1,825	2,259	1,865	1,826	1,807	1,985
Cohort completion rate	67.2%	67.6%	80.1%	67.2%	80.0%	82.5%
Florida						
Number of cohort completers	44,345	28,261	27,298	27,270	24,115	27,098
Adjusted cohort size	70,044	45,923	44,568	45,163	39,986	42,337
Cohort completion rate	63.3%	61.5%	61.3%	60.4%	60.3%	64.0%
United States						
Number of cohort completers	360,071	346,417	343,912	343,343	327,373	320,174
Adjusted cohort size	894,935	855,544	830,512	822,982	813,197	716,325
Cohort completion rate	40.2%	40.5%	41.4%	41.7%	40.3%	44.7%

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

¹² See the Methodology for more information on how technical colleges in Southwest Florida were identified.



Living Wage

Chart 2-20 shows 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 2024 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 2024 population distribution. The table also provides average hourly wages earned in each area and are obtained from FloridaCommerce.

The living wage for a single adult in Southwest Florida is \$23.16 per hour in 2024, slightly below the state average of \$23.41 per hour. Furthermore, an adult supporting two children must earn \$46.96 per hour in Southwest Florida (compared to \$47.53 in Florida). Two working adults with one child have a living wage of \$21.61 per hour (versus \$21.81 for the state). While the average hourly wage in Southwest Florida (\$29.56) 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

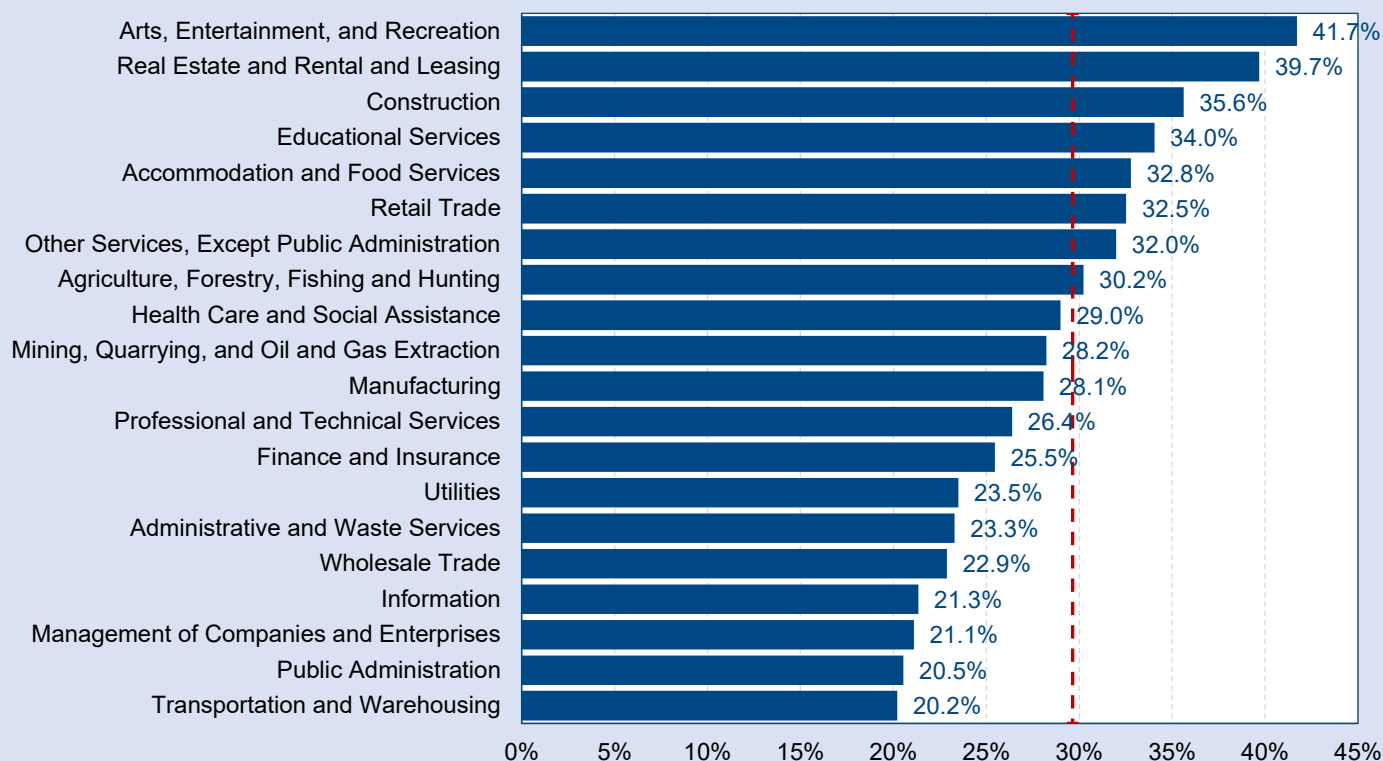
2024

Area	1 Adult	1 Adult, 2 children	2 Working Adults, 1 Child	Average Hourly Wage
Charlotte	\$20.85	\$43.76	\$19.97	\$25.41
Collier	\$23.66	\$50.56	\$22.89	\$32.48
Glades	\$19.86	\$38.85	\$18.66	\$27.58
Hendry	\$19.36	\$40.17	\$18.71	\$26.64
Lee	\$23.76	\$46.49	\$21.60	\$28.68
Southwest Florida	\$23.16	\$46.96	\$21.61	\$29.56
Florida	\$23.41	\$47.53	\$21.81	\$33.31

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: 29.6%

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. Estimates are based on an analysis of reported information from online employment profiles such as LinkedIn and Indeed.¹³ The data used for this report was obtained on August 11th, 2025.¹⁴

Of the 148,620 SWFL graduates found online, 44,063 of them were employed in Southwest Florida, giving the region a graduation retention rate of 29.6 percent. The arts, entertainment, and recreation industry had the highest retention rate in the region, with 41.7 percent of graduates employed in the industry working in Southwest Florida. Real estate and rental and leasing was close behind, with a graduation retention rate of 39.7 percent, followed by the construction industry (35.6 percent). Furthermore, the educational services industry and the accommodation and food services industry had 34.0 and 32.8 percent of graduates working in the region, respectively.

¹³ One limitation to this analysis is that it says nothing about whether the graduate is working in a capacity that utilizes their postsecondary credential.

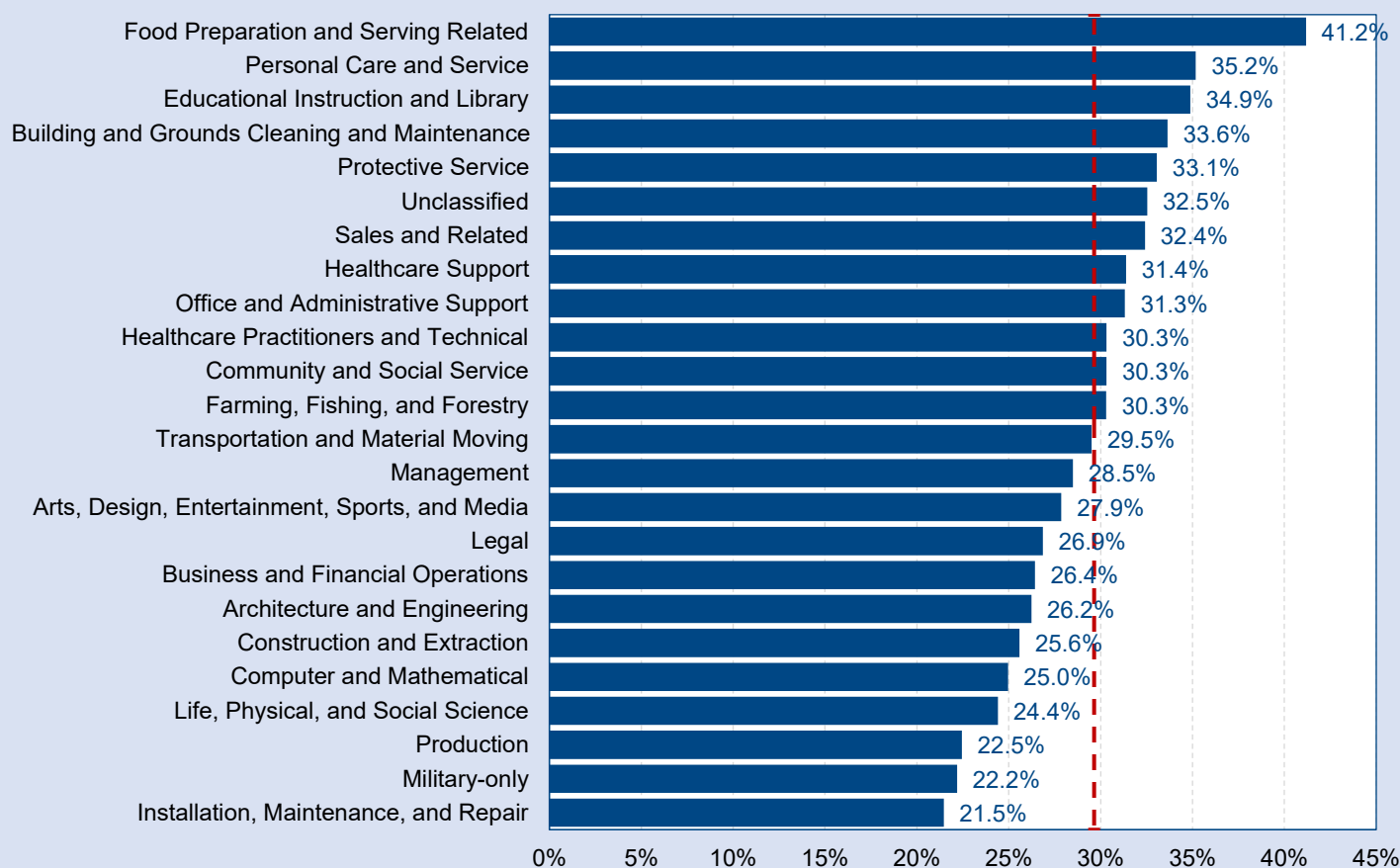
¹⁴ In July 2025, [Lightcast announced the acquisition of Rhetorik](#), a UK-based business that provides B2B data intelligence. One outcome from this acquisition was improved visibility of online profiles analyzed by Lightcast. As a result, readers should exercise caution when comparing results from this report to prior reports.

Table 2-21: Graduation Retention Rates by Industry

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

Industry	Graduated in SWFL	Graduated and employed in SWFL	Retention Rate
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2,371	989	41.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	4,092	1,624	39.7%
Construction	4,088	1,456	35.6%
Educational Services	11,778	4,010	34.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	5,281	1,731	32.8%
Retail Trade	9,007	2,930	32.5%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	3,730	1,193	32.0%
Unknown	49,958	15,150	30.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	311	94	30.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	13,863	4,019	29.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	255	72	28.2%
Manufacturing	7,071	1,985	28.1%
Professional and Technical Services	12,119	3,198	26.4%
Finance and Insurance	6,697	1,705	25.5%
Utilities	566	133	23.5%
Administrative and Waste Services	3,864	900	23.3%
Wholesale Trade	2,801	641	22.9%
Information	3,293	703	21.3%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	251	53	21.1%
Public Administration	5,121	1,052	20.5%
Transportation and Warehousing	2,103	425	20.2%
Total, all industries	148,620	44,063	29.6%

Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast, obtained on August 11, 2025

Chart 2-22: Graduation Retention Rates by OccupationPercent of graduates from SWFL post-secondary institutes that work in SWFL **Total, all occupations: 29.6%**

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. Estimates 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 August 11th, 2025.

The occupation with the highest graduate retention rate in Southwest Florida was the food preparation and serving related group, with 41.2 percent of all graduates in this field staying in the area. This was followed by personal care and service (35.2 percent), educational instruction and library (34.9 percent), building and grounds cleaning and maintenance (33.6 percent) and protective service (33.1 percent). The average retention rate for all industries in Southwest Florida was 29.6 percent.

Table 2-22: Graduation Retention Rates by Occupation

Graduates from SWFL post-secondary institutes that work in SWFL

Occupation	Graduated in SWFL	Graduated and employed in SWFL	Retention Rate
Food Preparation and Serving Related	4,881	2,010	41.2%
Personal Care and Service	2,291	806	35.2%
Educational Instruction and Library	6,418	2,239	34.9%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	428	144	33.6%
Protective Service	1,334	441	33.1%
Unclassified	6,741	2,193	32.5%
Sales and Related	14,813	4,801	32.4%
Healthcare Support	2,731	857	31.4%
Office and Administrative Support	15,402	4,824	31.3%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	8,923	2,706	30.3%
Community and Social Service	3,229	979	30.3%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	99	30	30.3%
Transportation and Material Moving	2,104	621	29.5%
Management	33,350	9,504	28.5%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	7,462	2,079	27.9%
Legal	3,448	926	26.9%
Business and Financial Operations	18,136	4,793	26.4%
Architecture and Engineering	2,390	627	26.2%
Construction and Extraction	805	206	25.6%
Computer and Mathematical	8,261	2,062	25.0%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,479	361	24.4%
Production	1,376	309	22.5%
Military-only	604	134	22.2%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	1,915	411	21.5%
Total, all industries	148,620	44,063	29.6%

Source: RERI analysis of data obtained from Lightcast, obtained on August 11, 2025



FutureMakers Coalition



Resilience and Diversification

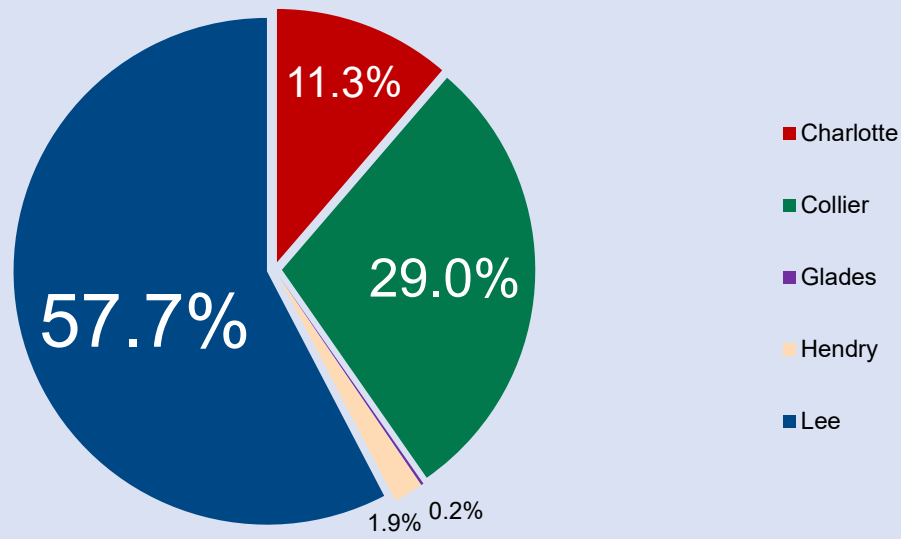
Indicator		Measure	Trending
	Start-Up Businesses* Number of start-up businesses up to two-years old	SWFL 15,207	↑
	Start-Up Employees* Number of employees at start-up businesses up to two-years old	SWFL 104,086	↑

* Updated information was not available at the time of publication. Information in this table represents data from last year.

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

Note: Updated information was not available at the time of publication. Information in this section represents data from last year.

As of July 2024, there were 15,207 start-up businesses in Southwest Florida.¹⁵ 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.

¹⁵ 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

Note: Updated information was not available at the time of publication. Information in this section represents data from last year.

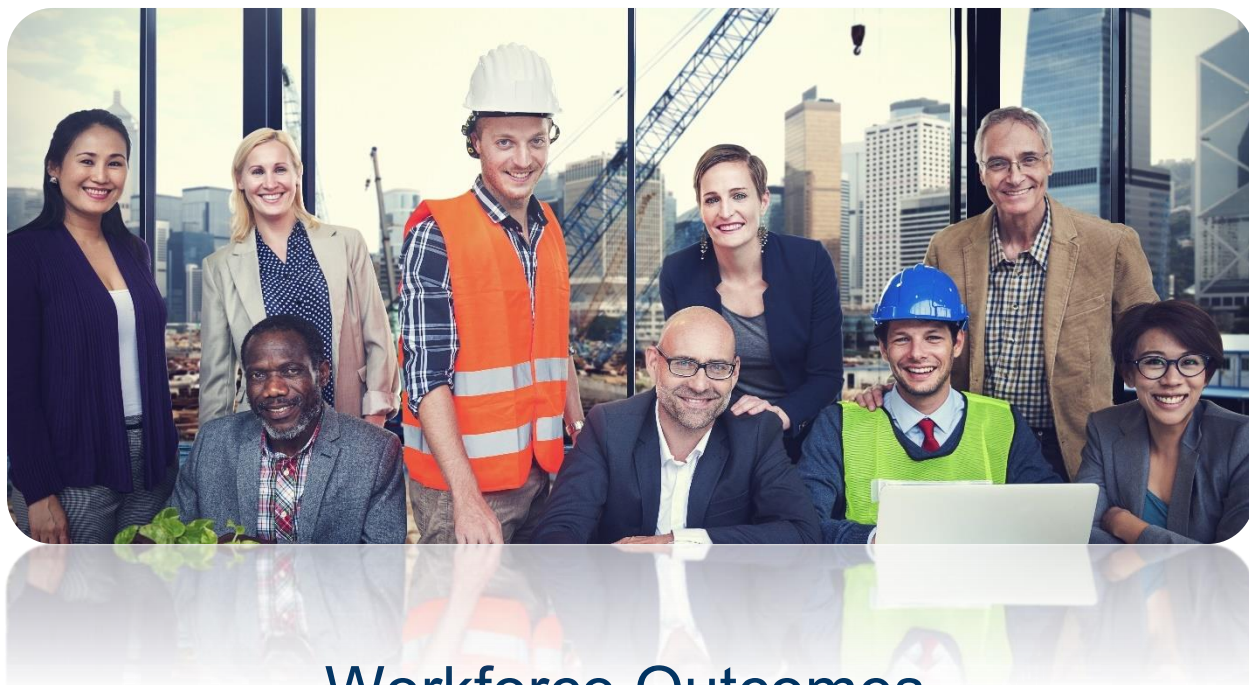
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services was the industry with the greatest number of start-up establishments (1,864 as of July 2024). This was followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (1,782 establishments), Construction (1,652 establishments), Other Services (1,634 establishments) and 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
Total, All Industries	15,207	104,086

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

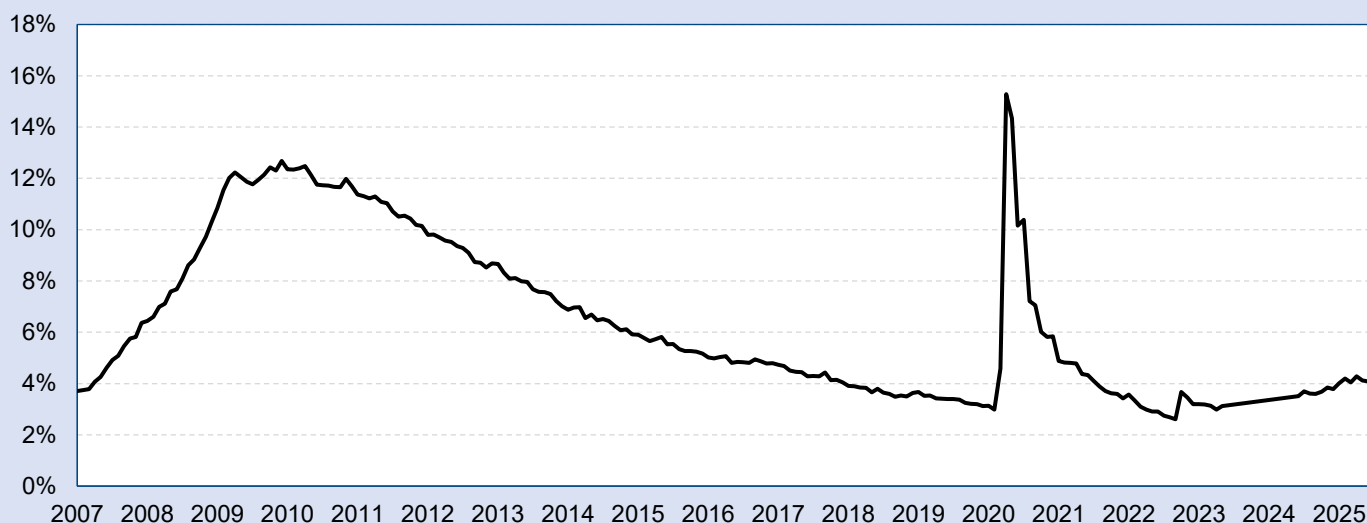


Workforce Outcomes



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

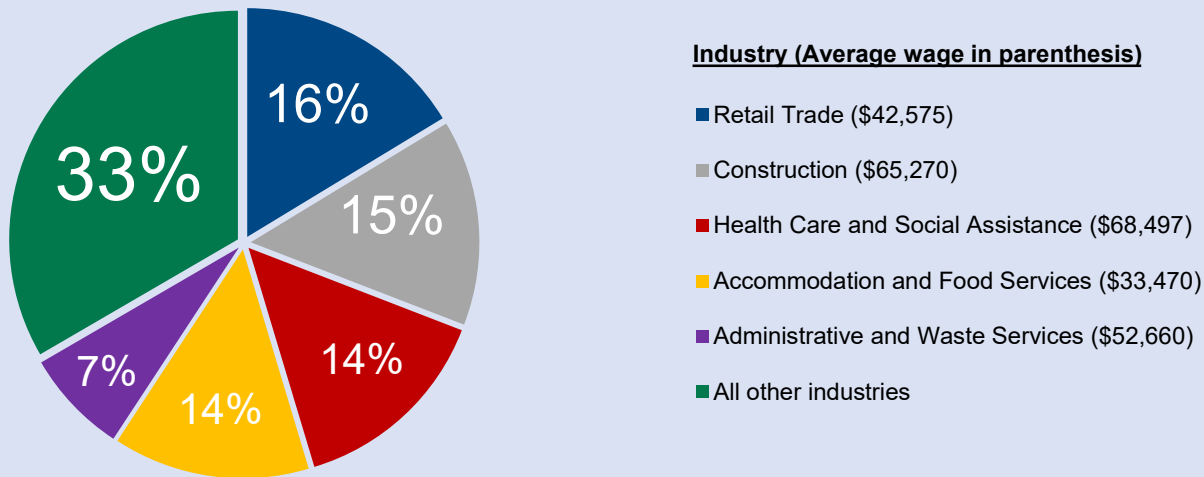
Unemployment Rate

Chart 3-1 shows the seasonally unemployment rate for Southwest Florida since January 2007.¹⁶ The unemployment rate for the region in June 2025 was 4.1 percent, up 0.6 percentage points from the June 2024 measure but unchanged from the May 2025 measure.

¹⁶ All seasonal adjustments performed by the Regional Economic Research Institute.

Chart 3-2: Employment by Industry

Southwest Florida
2024



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).¹⁷ Retail trade was the largest industry in Southwest Florida in 2024, with an average monthly employment of 77,550, representing 16.3 percent of all employment in the region.

The second largest industry employer was construction, with 69,124 employees (14.5 percent of regional employment). The third largest industry was health care and social assistance at 68,825 employees, representing 14.5 percent of the region's employment. Close behind was accommodation and food services with 66,032 employees (13.9 percent of the region's employment). The fifth largest industry was administrative and waste services, employing 35,053 workers (7.4 percent of the region's workforce). Southwest Florida's top five industries accounted for 66.6 percent of employment in the region, while all other industries employed 33.4 percent of the population in 2024.

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.

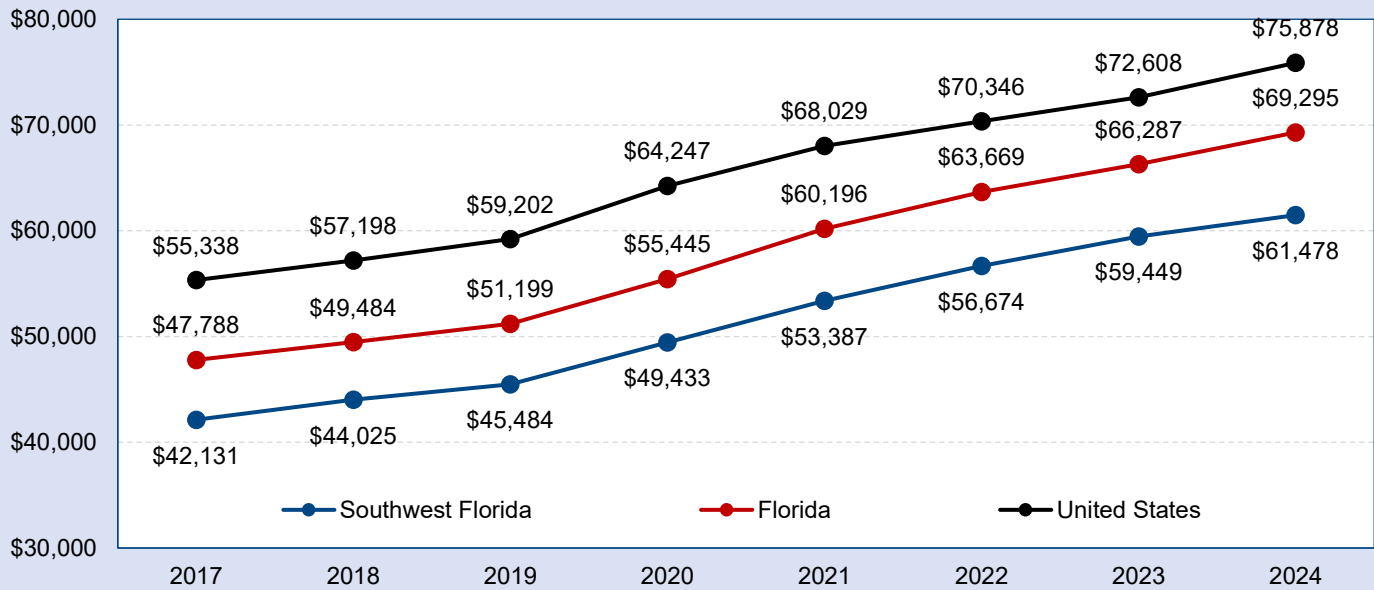
¹⁷ QCEW data is based on employees covered by the Florida unemployment insurance, so it does not include workers who are self-employed. All figures represent employment from the private sector only.

Table 3-1: Employment by IndustrySouthwest Florida
2024

Industry	Average Monthly Employment	Percent of Total Employment
Retail Trade	77,550	16.3%
Construction	69,124	14.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	68,825	14.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	66,032	13.9%
Administrative and Waste Services	35,053	7.4%
Professional and Technical Services	29,387	6.2%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	19,510	4.1%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	18,143	3.8%
Manufacturing	15,425	3.2%
Wholesale Trade	14,893	3.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13,590	2.9%
Finance and Insurance	13,134	2.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	10,756	2.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	6,891	1.5%
Educational Services	6,163	1.3%
Information	4,878	1.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,141	0.7%
Utilities	1,373	0.3%
Unclassified	801	0.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	547	0.1%
Total, All Industries	475,203	100.0%

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.¹⁸ The average annual wage in Southwest Florida was \$61,478 in 2024, an increase of 3.4 percent since 2023. Although Southwest Florida's average annual wage has grown considerably since 2020 (up 24.4 percent), it continues to trail behind both the state average (\$69,295 in 2024) and national average (\$75,878).

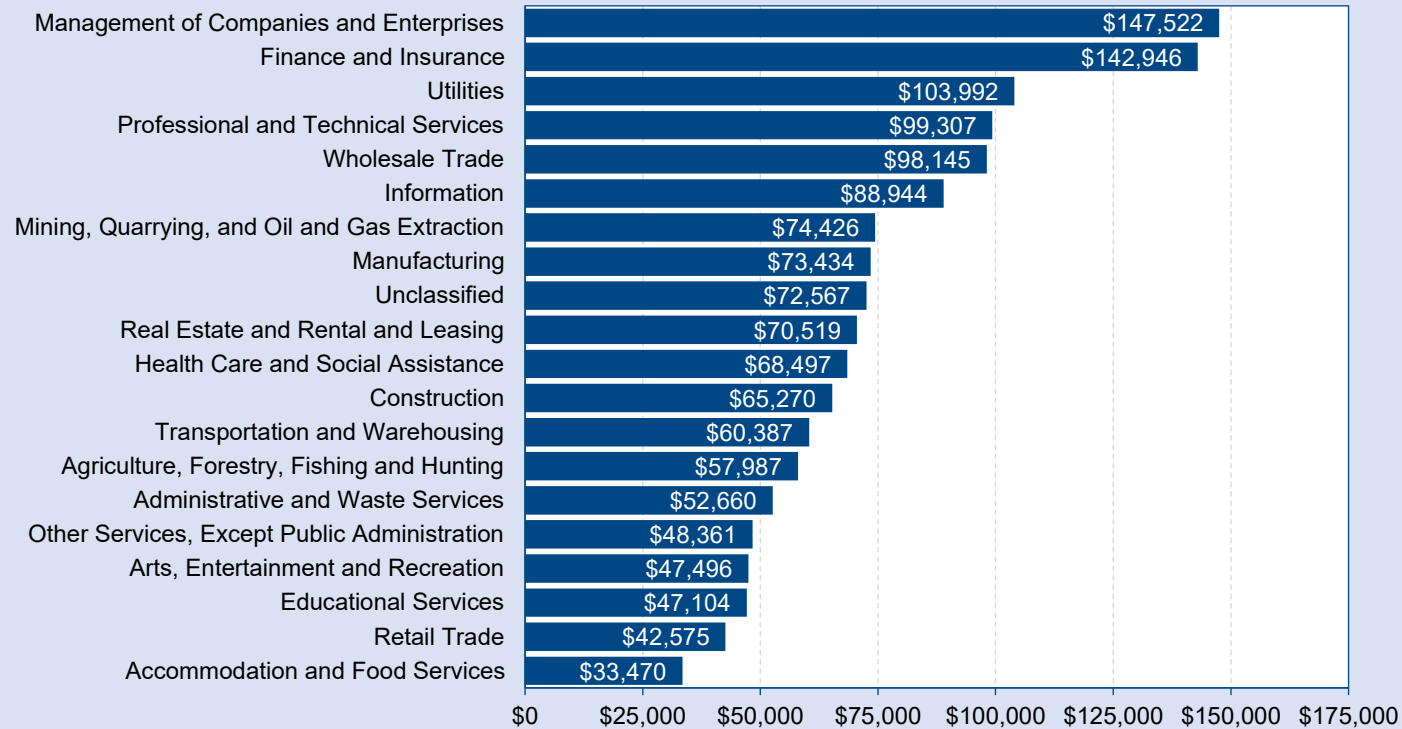
Collier County had the highest average annual wage in Southwest Florida in 2024, measured at \$67,563. Lee County had the second highest average annual wage in the region (\$59,645 in 2024), followed by Glades County (\$57,364), Hendry County (\$55,420) and Charlotte County (\$52,853). Complete results by county can be found in Table 3-2.

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

Table 3-2: Average Annual Wages

Area	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Charlotte County								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$36,422	\$37,712	\$39,205	\$42,126	\$47,189	\$48,264	\$51,287	\$52,853
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	3.5%	4.0%	7.5%	12.0%	2.3%	6.3%	3.1%
Collier County								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$45,652	\$48,020	\$49,537	\$54,326	\$59,868	\$62,660	\$64,716	\$67,563
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	5.2%	3.2%	9.7%	10.2%	4.7%	3.3%	4.4%
Glades County								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$41,770	\$42,625	\$44,652	\$47,339	\$47,649	\$52,457	\$56,241	\$57,364
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	2.0%	4.8%	6.0%	0.7%	10.1%	7.2%	2.0%
Hendry County								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$35,858	\$40,354	\$39,098	\$41,990	\$44,495	\$48,890	\$51,990	\$55,420
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	12.5%	-3.1%	7.4%	6.0%	9.9%	6.3%	6.6%
Lee County								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$41,390	\$42,957	\$44,480	\$48,209	\$51,077	\$54,994	\$58,100	\$59,645
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	3.8%	3.5%	8.4%	5.9%	7.7%	5.6%	2.7%
Southwest Florida								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$42,131	\$44,025	\$45,484	\$49,433	\$53,387	\$56,674	\$59,449	\$61,478
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	4.5%	3.3%	8.7%	8.0%	6.2%	4.9%	3.4%
Florida								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$47,788	\$49,484	\$51,199	\$55,445	\$60,196	\$63,669	\$66,287	\$69,295
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	3.5%	3.5%	8.3%	8.6%	5.8%	4.1%	4.5%
United States								
<i>Average annual wage</i>	\$55,338	\$57,198	\$59,202	\$64,247	\$68,029	\$70,346	\$72,608	\$75,878
<i>Percent change</i>	N/A	3.4%	3.5%	8.5%	5.9%	3.4%	3.2%	4.5%

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

Chart 3-4: Average Annual Wages by IndustrySouthwest Florida
2024

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

Average Annual Wages by Industry

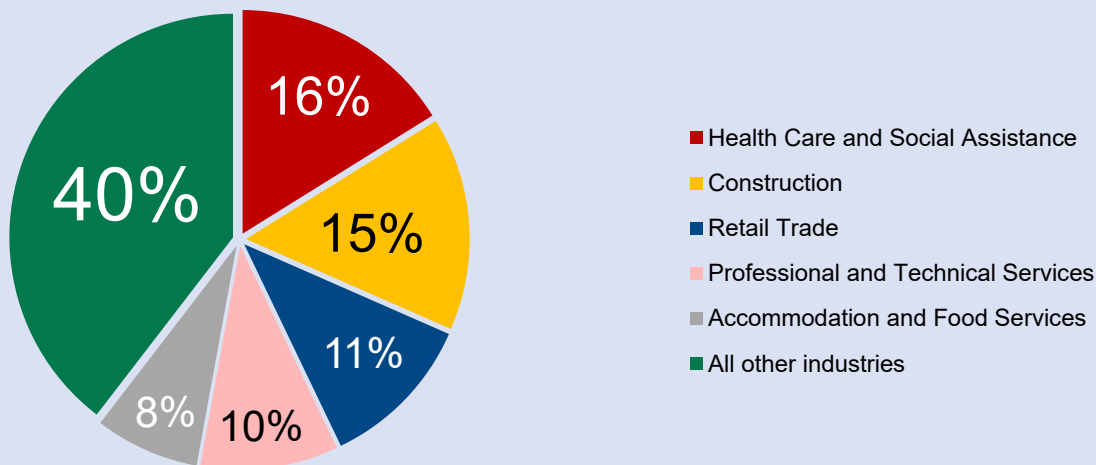
Southwest Florida had an average annual wage of \$61,478 in 2024. The management of companies and enterprises industry had the largest average annual wage in Southwest Florida, measured at \$147,522 (as shown in Chart 3-4 and Table 3-3).

The finance and insurance industry had the second highest average annual wage in 2024 (\$142,946), followed by the utilities industry (\$103,992), professional and technical services (\$99,307), and wholesale trade (\$98,145). Information had the sixth highest average annual wage in 2024 (\$88,944), followed by mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (\$74,426), manufacturing (\$73,434), unclassified (\$72,567), and real estate and rental and leasing (\$70,519) to round out the top 10. None of the industries in the top five highest employment in Southwest Florida were ranked in the top 10 in average annual wages in 2024.

Table 3-3: Average Annual Wages by IndustrySouthwest Florida
2024

Industry	Average Annual Wage
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$147,522
Finance and Insurance	\$142,946
Utilities	\$103,992
Professional and Technical Services	\$99,307
Wholesale Trade	\$98,145
Information	\$88,944
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$74,426
Manufacturing	\$73,434
Unclassified	\$72,567
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$70,519
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$68,497
Construction	\$65,270
Transportation and Warehousing	\$60,387
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$57,987
Administrative and Waste Services	\$52,660
Other Services, Except Public Administration	\$48,361
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	\$47,496
Educational Services	\$47,104
Retail Trade	\$42,575
Accommodation and Food Services	\$33,470
Total, All Industries	\$61,478

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

Chart 3-5: Total Wages by IndustrySouthwest Florida
2024

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

Total Wages by Industry

The largest contribution to total wage income is health care and social assistance—with annual wage expenditures exceeding \$4.7 billion—representing 16.1 percent of total wage expenditures in Southwest Florida. Construction was close behind in terms of total wage expenditure, with 15.4 percent of the region's total annual wage and expenditures of \$4.5 billion. The third largest industry measured by total wage expenditures was retail trade, with 11.3 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 \$2.9 billion or 10.0 percent of the region's total wage expenditures. Finally, accommodation and food services was fifth in terms of total wage expenditures, with \$2.2 billion or 7.6 percent of the region's total wage expenditures. The total wage expenditures by industry are shown in Chart 3-5 and Table 3-4.

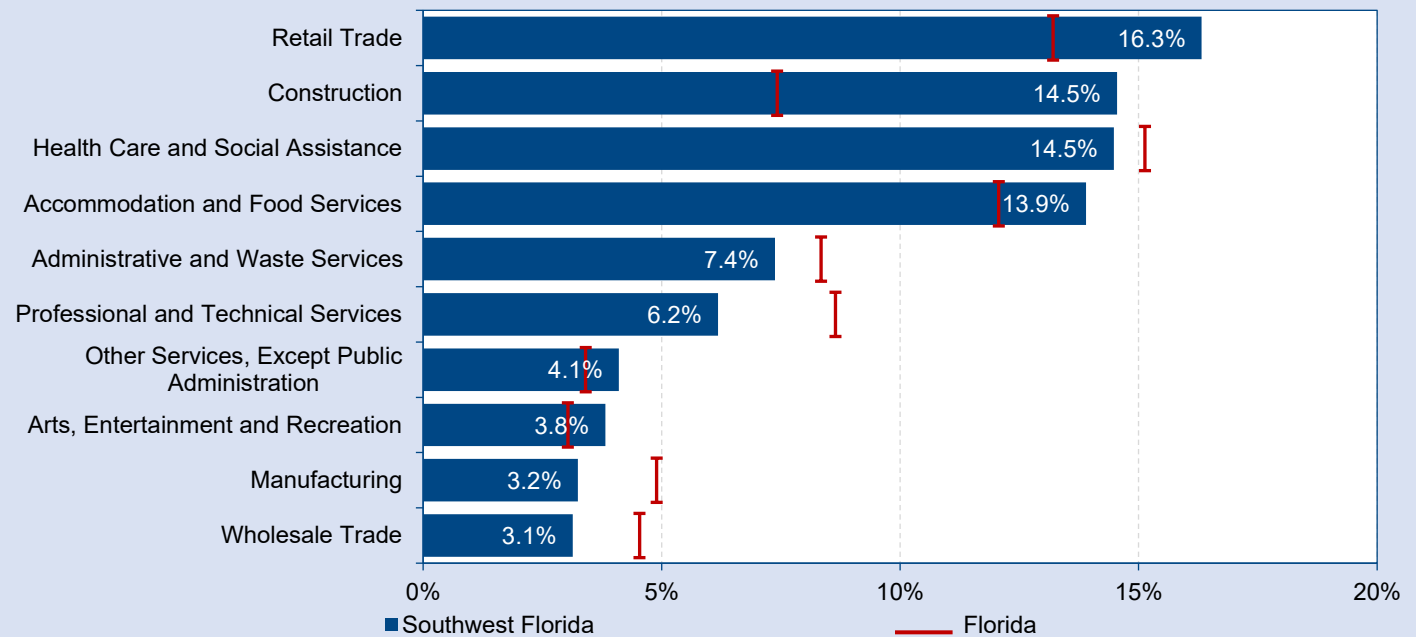
Table 3-4: Total Wages by IndustrySouthwest Florida
2024

Industry	Total Wages	Percent of Total Wages
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$4,714,279,555	16.1%
Construction	\$4,511,693,075	15.4%
Retail Trade	\$3,301,689,537	11.3%
Professional and Technical Services	\$2,918,325,831	10.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$2,210,092,014	7.6%
Finance and Insurance	\$1,877,446,523	6.4%
Administrative and Waste Services	\$1,845,895,056	6.3%
Wholesale Trade	\$1,461,669,613	5.0%
Manufacturing	\$1,132,712,592	3.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$958,358,491	3.3%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	\$943,531,938	3.2%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	\$861,720,523	2.9%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$649,522,132	2.2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$463,365,051	1.6%
Information	\$433,867,819	1.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$399,590,896	1.4%
Educational Services	\$290,299,569	1.0%
Utilities	\$142,781,446	0.5%
Unclassified	\$58,125,895	0.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$40,711,255	0.1%
Total All Industries	\$29,214,757,220	100.0%

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

Chart 3-6: Employment Share by Industry

Southwest Florida vs. Florida
2024



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from FloridaCommerce.
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 (7.1 percentage points greater than the state of Florida), retail trade (3.1 percentage points), accommodation and food services (1.8 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), professional and technical services (2.5 percentage points below Florida), transportation and warehousing (2.4 percentage points), manufacturing (1.7 percentage points), and wholesale trade (1.4 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 IndustrySouthwest Florida vs. State of Florida
2024

Industry	Florida	Southwest Florida	Difference
Construction	7.4%	14.5%	7.1%
Retail Trade	13.2%	16.3%	3.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	12.1%	13.9%	1.8%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3.0%	3.8%	0.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.7%	1.5%	0.7%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	3.4%	4.1%	0.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2.5%	2.9%	0.3%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Utilities	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Unclassified	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	15.1%	14.5%	-0.7%
Information	1.8%	1.0%	-0.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.6%	0.7%	-0.9%
Administrative and Waste Services	8.3%	7.4%	-1.0%
Educational Services	2.3%	1.3%	-1.0%
Wholesale Trade	4.5%	3.1%	-1.4%
Manufacturing	4.9%	3.2%	-1.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	4.6%	2.3%	-2.4%
Finance and Insurance	5.2%	2.8%	-2.5%
Professional and Technical Services	8.6%	6.2%	-2.5%

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

Chart 3-7: Industry Employment Growth

Southwest Florida
2020 to 2024



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

Fastest and Slowest Growth Industries

Most industries in Southwest Florida grew between 2020 and 2024, as shown Chart 3-7 and Table 3-6. The industries with the most growth from 2020 to 2024 included construction (15,075 employees, 27.9 percent increase), accommodation and food services (11,174 employees, 20.4 percent increase), health care and social assistance (10,691 employees, 18.4 percent increase), retail trade (6,734 employees, 9.5 percent increase), and professional and technical services (6,540 employees, 28.6 percent increase). Over the same period, the only industry experiencing negative growth was agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (1,528 employee decline, 18.1 percent decrease).

Table 3-6: Industry Employment Growth

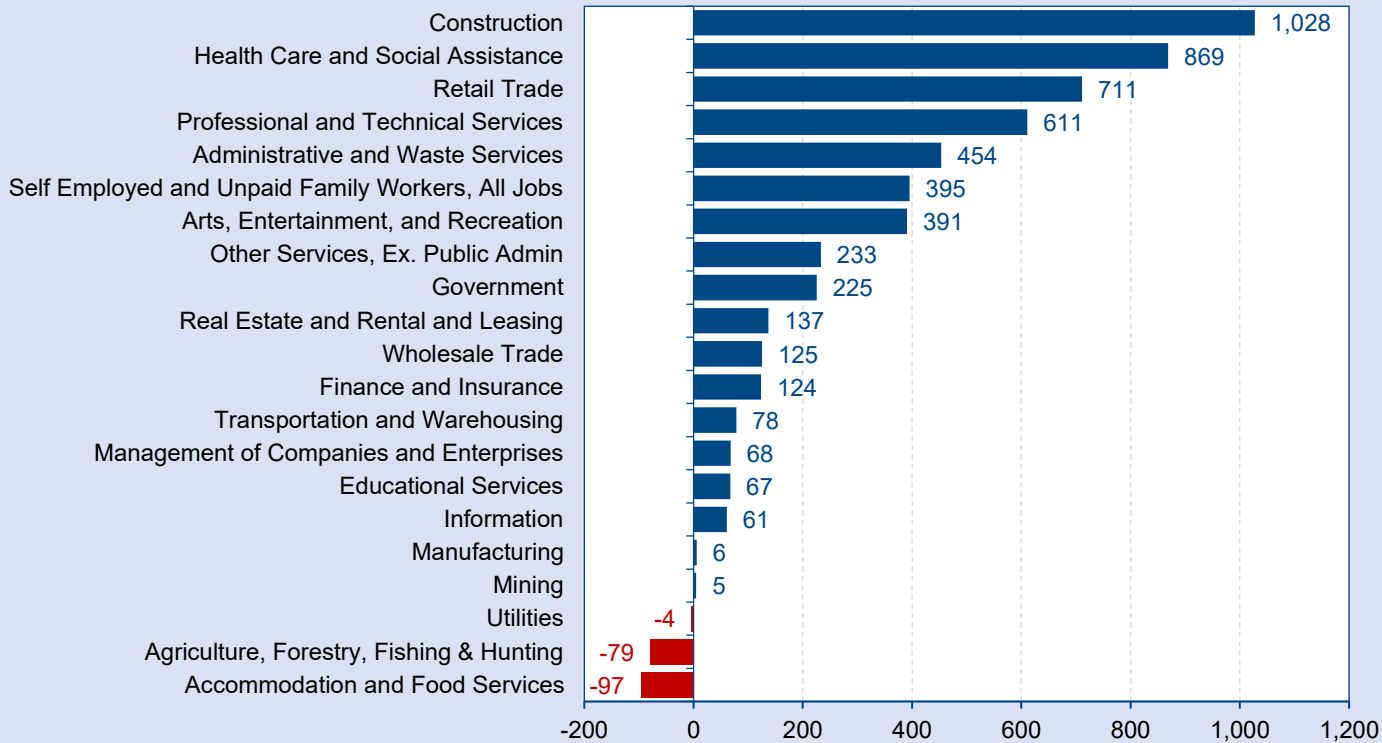
Southwest Florida

Industry	2020	2024	Growth	Percent
Construction	54,049	69,124	15,075	27.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	54,858	66,032	11,174	20.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	58,134	68,825	10,691	18.4%
Retail Trade	70,816	77,550	6,734	9.5%
Professional and Technical Services	22,847	29,387	6,540	28.6%
Administrative and Waste Services	29,179	35,053	5,874	20.1%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	16,419	19,510	3,091	18.8%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	15,092	18,143	3,051	20.2%
Manufacturing	12,449	15,425	2,976	23.9%
Wholesale Trade	12,145	14,893	2,748	22.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	8,253	10,756	2,503	30.3%
Educational Services	4,540	6,163	1,623	35.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12,000	13,590	1,590	13.3%
Finance and Insurance	11,616	13,134	1,518	13.1%
Information	4,127	4,878	751	18.2%
Unclassified	269	801	532	197.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,790	3,141	351	12.6%
Utilities	1,164	1,373	209	18.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	388	547	159	41.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8,419	6,891	-1,528	-18.1%
Total, All Industries	399,548	475,203	75,655	18.9%

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

Chart 3-8: Projected Industry Employment Growth

Southwest Florida
2024 to 2032



Source: FloridaCommerce, 2024 to 2032 Employment Projections
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

Projected Industry Employment Growth

Each year, FloridaCommerce provides an employment forecast by industry, which is shown in Chart 3-8 and Table 3-7.¹⁹ The construction industry is projected to be the fastest-growing industry in Southwest Florida, adding an average of 1,028 employees each year from 2024 to 2032. Health care and social assistance is projected to gain the second largest number of employees, adding 869 per year. This is followed by retail trade at 711 employees per year, professional and technical services at 611 employees per year, and administrative and waste services at 454 employees per year.

¹⁹ Unlike QCEW data, projections from FloridaCommerce include employment from both the private sector and public sector.

Table 3-7: Projected Industry Employment Growth

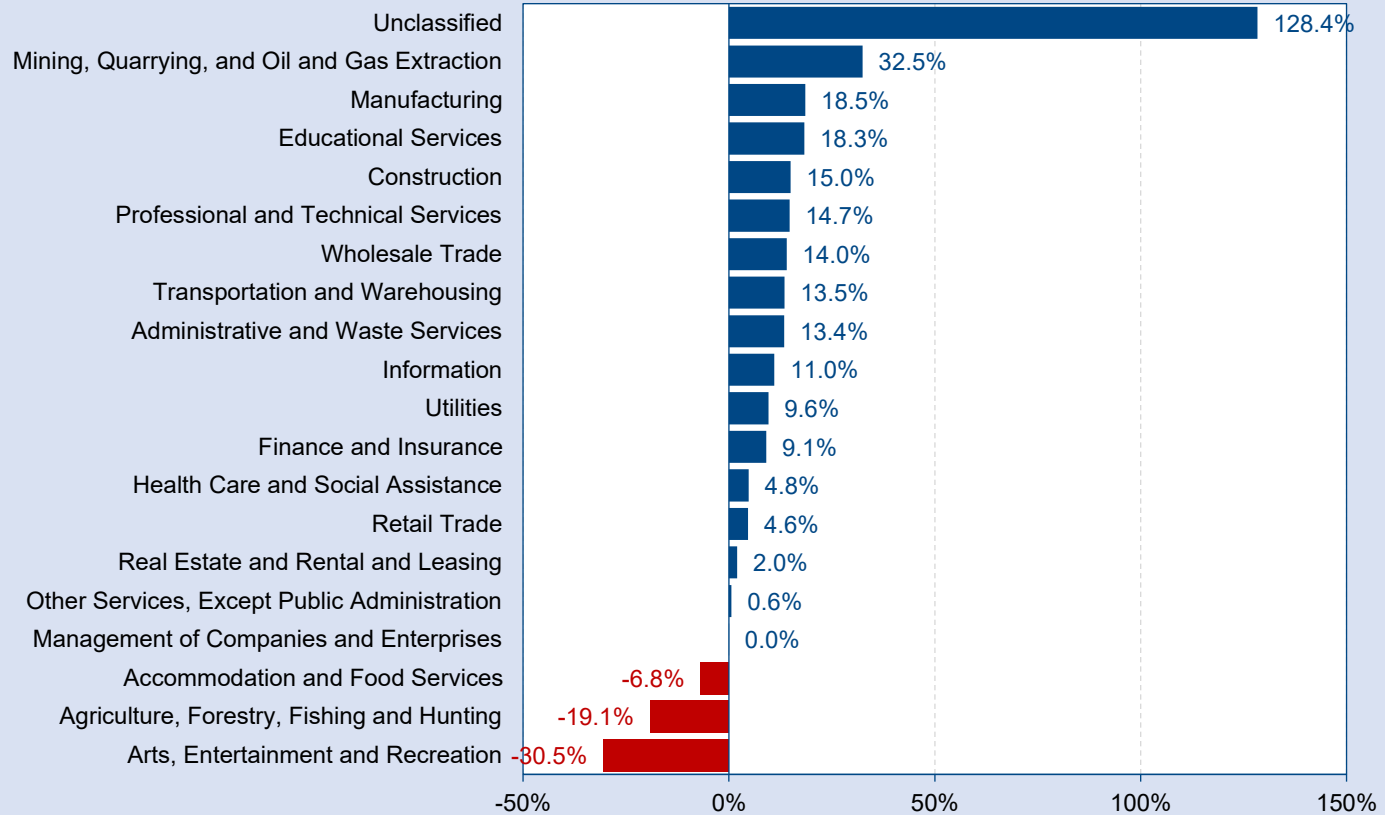
Southwest Florida

Industry	2024	2032	Average Annual Growth	Average Annual Percentage Growth
Construction	74,293	82,513	1,028	1.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	69,656	76,606	869	1.2%
Retail Trade	85,932	91,620	711	0.8%
Professional and Technical Services	36,232	41,119	611	1.7%
Administrative and Waste Services	42,221	45,849	454	1.1%
Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	50,877	54,039	395	0.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	19,531	22,658	391	2.0%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	24,972	26,837	233	0.9%
Government	77,367	79,170	225	0.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	15,879	16,974	137	0.9%
Wholesale Trade	17,648	18,650	125	0.7%
Finance and Insurance	15,945	16,933	124	0.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	12,886	13,512	78	0.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,077	4,619	68	1.7%
Educational Services	7,319	7,856	67	0.9%
Information	6,229	6,715	61	1.0%
Manufacturing	16,413	16,459	6	0.0%
Mining	583	622	5	0.8%
Utilities	1,511	1,479	-4	-0.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	6,315	5,681	-79	-1.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	81,190	80,415	-97	-0.1%
Total, All Industries	667,076	710,326	5,406	0.8%

Source: FloridaCommerce, 2024 to 2032 Employment Projections

Chart 3-9: Competition Effect

Southwest Florida
2020 to 2024



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from FloridaCommerce.
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).²⁰

- **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.

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

Leading the charge was the unclassified industry (128.4 percent increase from 2020 to 2024), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (32.5 percent increase), manufacturing (18.5 percent increase), educational services (18.3 percent increase), and construction (15.0 percent increase). Industries with negative competition effects included arts, entertainment and recreation (30.5 percent decline from 2020 to 2024), agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (19.1 percent decline) and accommodation and food services (6.8 percent decrease). Complete results can be found in Table 3-8.

Table 3-8: Shift-Share Analysis

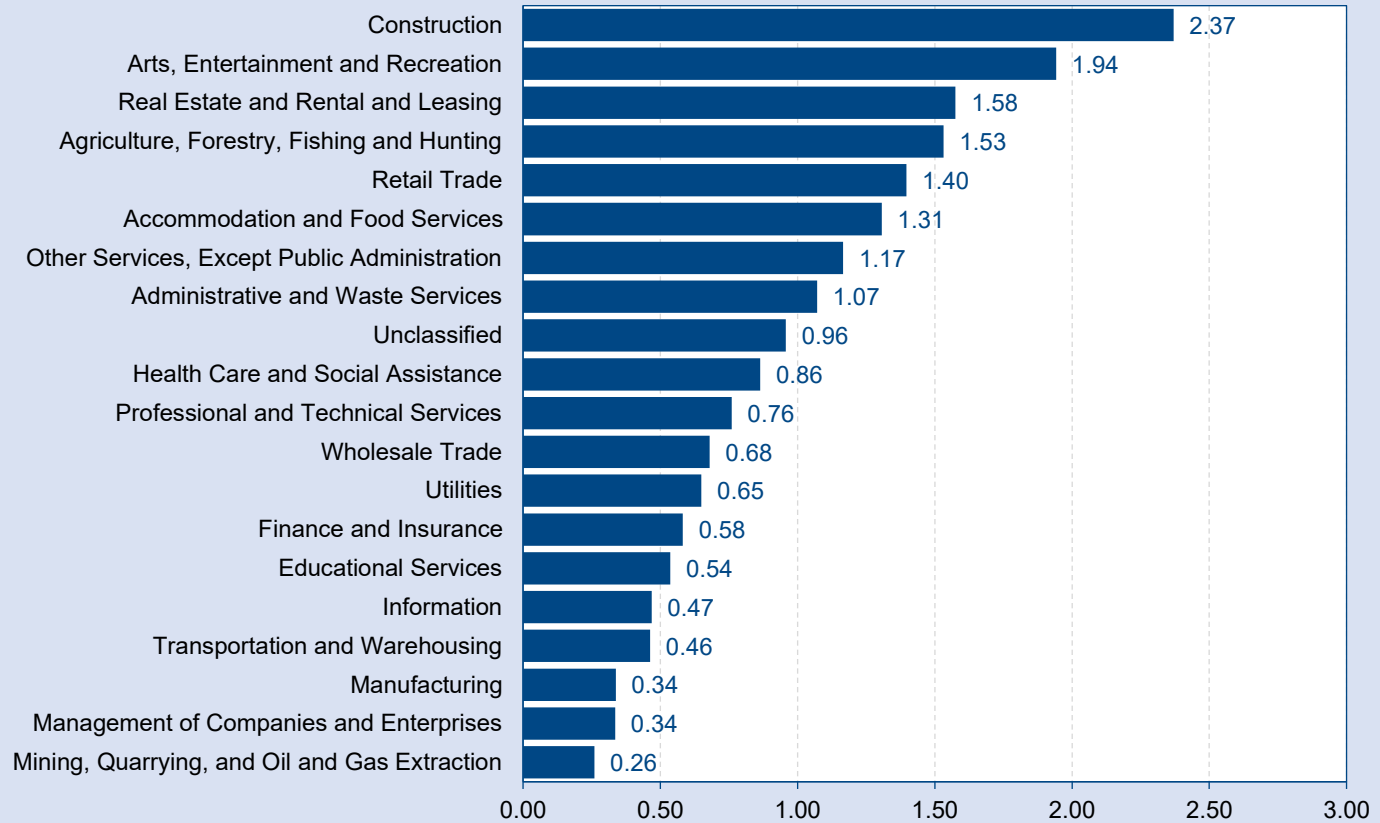
Southwest Florida

Industry	2020	2024	Percent Change	National Share	Industry Mix	Competition Effect
Unclassified	269	801	197.8%	12.3%	57.1%	128.4%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	388	547	41.0%	12.3%	-3.8%	32.5%
Manufacturing	12,449	15,425	23.9%	12.3%	-6.9%	18.5%
Educational Services	4,540	6,163	35.7%	12.3%	5.1%	18.3%
Construction	54,049	69,124	27.9%	12.3%	0.6%	15.0%
Professional and Technical Services	22,847	29,387	28.6%	12.3%	1.6%	14.7%
Wholesale Trade	12,145	14,893	22.6%	12.3%	-3.7%	14.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	8,253	10,756	30.3%	12.3%	4.5%	13.5%
Administrative and Waste Services	29,179	35,053	20.1%	12.3%	-5.6%	13.4%
Information	4,127	4,878	18.2%	12.3%	-5.1%	11.0%
Utilities	1,164	1,373	18.0%	12.3%	-4.0%	9.6%
Finance and Insurance	11,616	13,134	13.1%	12.3%	-8.3%	9.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	58,134	68,825	18.4%	12.3%	1.3%	4.8%
Retail Trade	70,816	77,550	9.5%	12.3%	-7.4%	4.6%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12,000	13,590	13.3%	12.3%	-1.0%	2.0%
Other Services, Except Public Administration	16,419	19,510	18.8%	12.3%	5.9%	0.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,790	3,141	12.6%	12.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	54,858	66,032	20.4%	12.3%	14.9%	-6.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	8,419	6,891	-18.1%	12.3%	-11.3%	-19.1%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	15,092	18,143	20.2%	12.3%	38.4%	-30.5%
Total, All Industries	399,548	475,203	18.9%	12.3%	0.0%	6.6%

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

Chart 3-10: Location Quotient

Southwest Florida Relative to United States
2024



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Collected from FloridaCommerce.
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.²¹

- 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 2024, relative to the United States. The construction industry had the highest location quotient (measured at 2.37), indicating that this industry was about 2.37 times more concentrated in Southwest Florida than the nation. The arts, entertainment and recreation industry had the second highest location quotient (1.94), followed by real estate and rental and leasing (1.58), agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (1.53), and retail trade (1.40). The industries with the lowest location quotient included mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (0.26), management of companies and enterprises (0.34), manufacturing (0.34), transportation and warehousing (0.46) and information (0.47). Complete results of location quotients relative to both Florida and the United States can be found in Table 3-9.

²¹ See the methodology for more information on how the location quotient is calculated.

Table 3-9: Location Quotient

2024

Industry	SWFL Employment	Florida		United States	
		Employment	LQ	Employment	LQ
Construction	69,124	647,872	1.96	8,131,161	2.37
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	18,143	264,877	1.26	2,604,369	1.94
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13,590	221,290	1.13	2,404,576	1.58
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	6,891	61,324	2.06	1,253,527	1.53
Retail Trade	77,550	1,152,987	1.24	15,476,375	1.40
Accommodation and Food Services	66,032	1,053,587	1.15	14,086,347	1.31
Other Services, Except Public Administration	19,510	297,552	1.20	4,662,885	1.17
Administrative and Waste Services	35,053	728,295	0.88	9,122,213	1.07
Unclassified	801	18,358	0.80	233,194	0.96
Health Care and Social Assistance	68,825	1,321,177	0.96	22,209,110	0.86
Professional and Technical Services	29,387	754,638	0.72	10,775,211	0.76
Wholesale Trade	14,893	395,947	0.69	6,104,372	0.68
Utilities	1,373	26,194	0.96	589,039	0.65
Finance and Insurance	13,134	455,417	0.53	6,288,178	0.58
Educational Services	6,163	200,275	0.57	3,202,817	0.54
Information	4,878	156,740	0.57	2,903,805	0.47
Transportation and Warehousing	10,756	405,268	0.49	6,479,503	0.46
Manufacturing	15,425	427,420	0.66	12,730,845	0.34
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,141	136,488	0.42	2,609,539	0.34
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	547	4,242	2.37	586,276	0.26

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

FGCU Seasonality Index

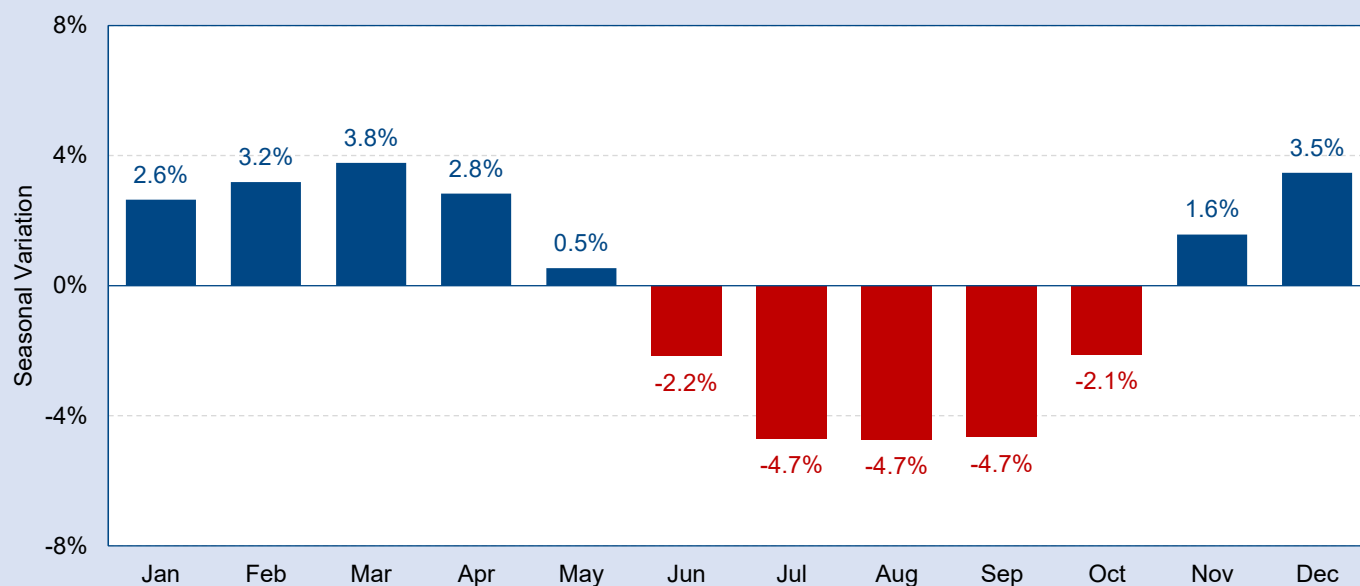
Southwest Florida is often characterized as experiencing seasonal fluctuations in employment levels throughout the year. However, these fluctuations vary across industries; some face severe month-to-month changes, while others exhibit little to no fluctuation. In this section, we analyze how Southwest 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 2024, determined by the FGCU Seasonality Index. This index calculates the Mean Seasonal Variation (MSV) in employment for each region.²² The MSV indicates the average seasonal employment variation each month, with higher values showing greater seasonality. In 2024, the Southwest Florida region experienced the highest seasonal fluctuation, with an index of 2.2 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		
2024		
Rank	Workforce Region	MSV
1	Southwest Florida	2.2%
2	Okaloosa Walton	1.8%
3	Gulf Coast	1.5%
4	Heartland	1.2%
5	Palm Beach County	1.0%
6	Suncoast	1.0%
7	Capital Region	0.9%
8	Research Coast	0.8%
9	Pasco Hernando	0.6%
10	Polk	0.6%
11	North Central Florida	0.6%
12	North Florida	0.6%
13	Escarosa	0.6%
14	South Florida	0.6%
15	Hillsborough Pinellas	0.6%
16	Citrus Levy Marion	0.5%
17	Broward	0.5%
18	Northeast Florida	0.5%
19	Central Florida	0.4%
20	Brevard Flagler Volusia	0.4%
21	Chipola	0.4%

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

²² 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

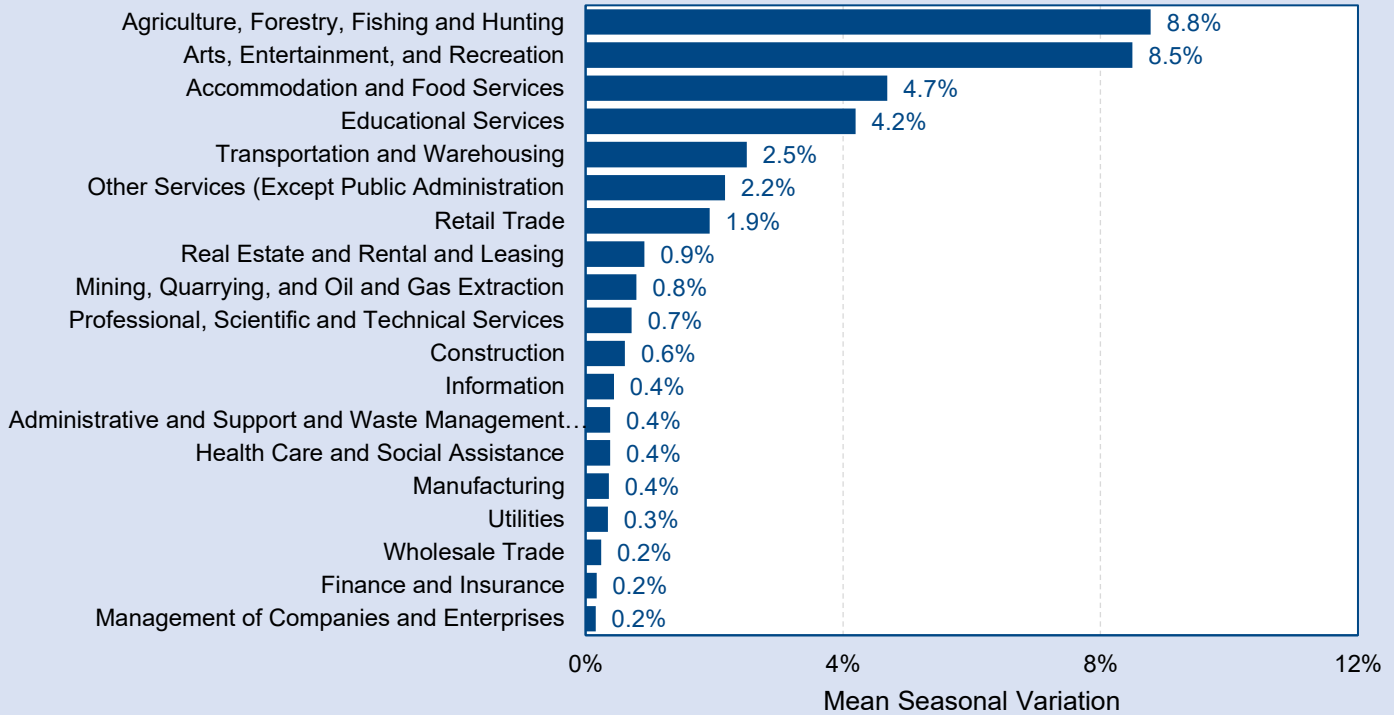
Source: Source: RERI Analysis of QCEW data obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Prepared by the Regional Economic Research Institute

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 2024. 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

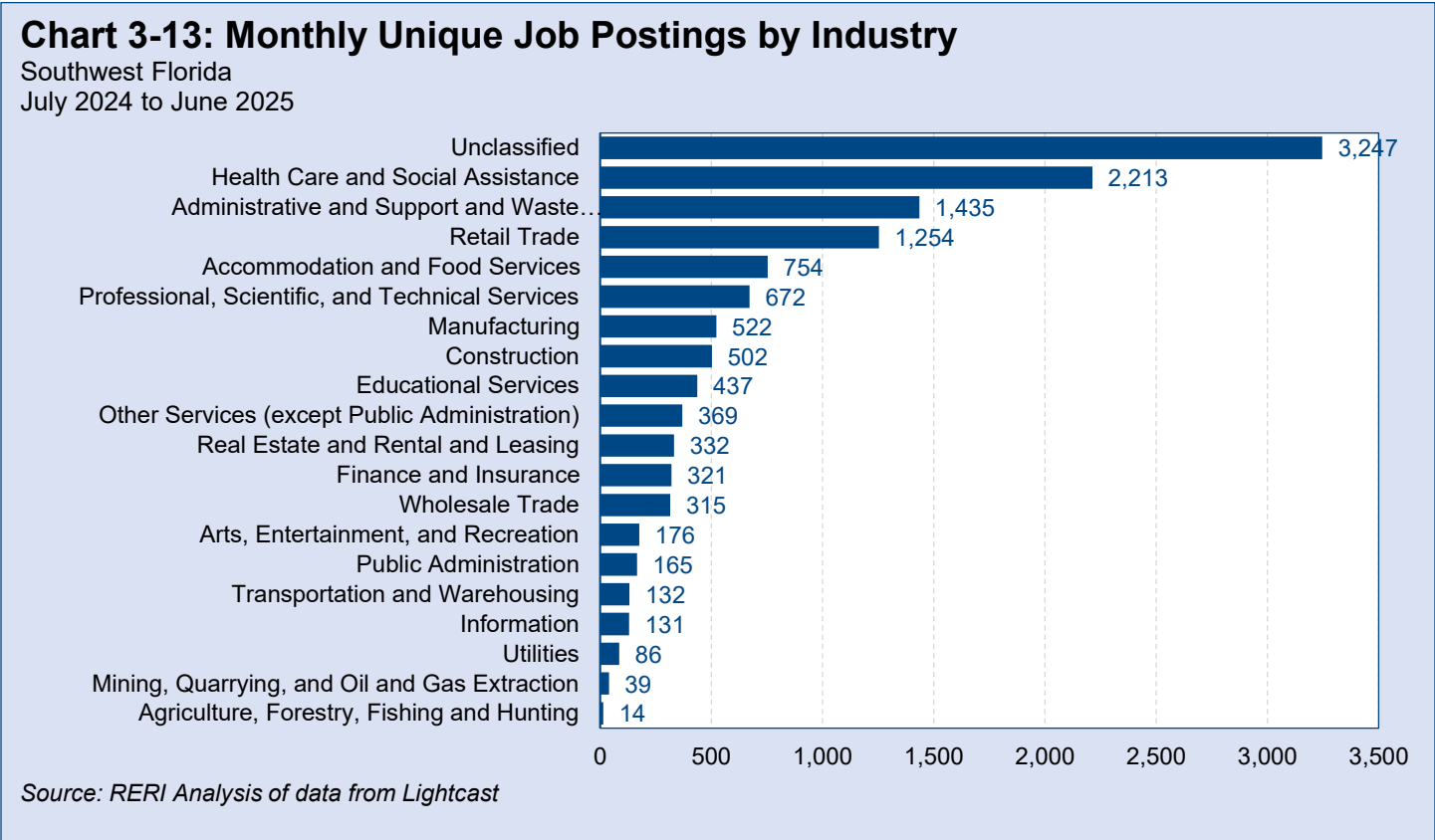
Southwest Florida
2024



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 2024 (8.8 percent), followed by arts, entertainment, and recreation (8.5 percent), accommodation and food services (4.7 percent), educational services (4.2 percent), and transportation and warehousing (2.5 percent).



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 2024 to June 2025.²³ The unclassified industry had the greatest number of unique job postings over the 12-month period, with an average of 3,247 unique job postings per month. This was followed by health care and social assistance (2,213 unique job postings per month), administrative and support and waste management and remediation services (1,453 postings), retail trade (1,254 postings) and accommodation and food services (754 postings).

²³ See the glossary for more information on unique job postings.

Table 3-11: Monthly Unique Job Postings by Industry

Southwest Florida

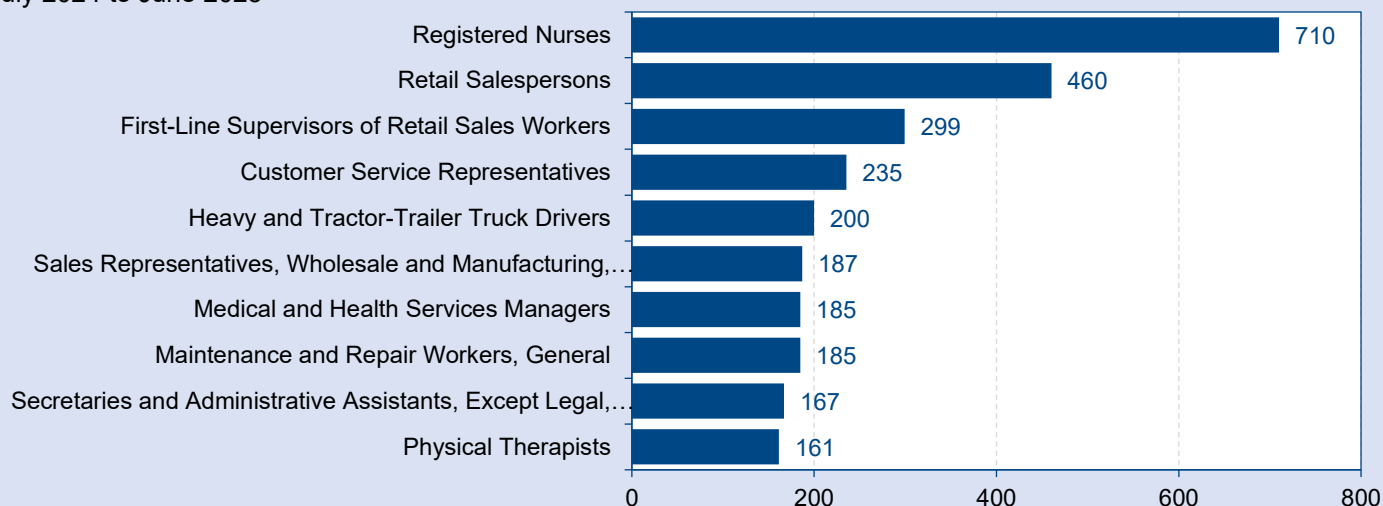
July 2024 to June 2025

Rank	Industry	Average Unique Postings
1	Unclassified	3,247
2	Health Care and Social Assistance	2,213
3	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,435
4	Retail Trade	1,254
5	Accommodation and Food Services	754
6	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	672
7	Manufacturing	522
8	Construction	502
9	Educational Services	437
10	Other Services (except Public Administration)	369
11	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	332
12	Finance and Insurance	321
13	Wholesale Trade	315
14	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	176
15	Public Administration	165
16	Transportation and Warehousing	132
17	Information	131
18	Utilities	86
19	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	39
21	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	14

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

Chart 3-14: Unique Job Postings by Occupation

Southwest Florida
July 2024 to June 2025



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 2024 to June 2025. Registered nurses had the most job openings between July 2024 and June 2025, with an average of 710 openings per month. Retail salespersons was the next highest occupation (460 job postings), followed by first-line supervisors of retail sales workers (299 postings), customer service representatives (235 postings), and heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers (200 postings). Four of the top 10 occupations required a high school diploma, two required some college (but no degree), one occupation required postsecondary education, two occupations required a bachelor's degree, and one occupation required a master's degree or higher.

Table 3-12: Unique Job Postings by Occupation

Southwest Florida
July 2024 to June 2025

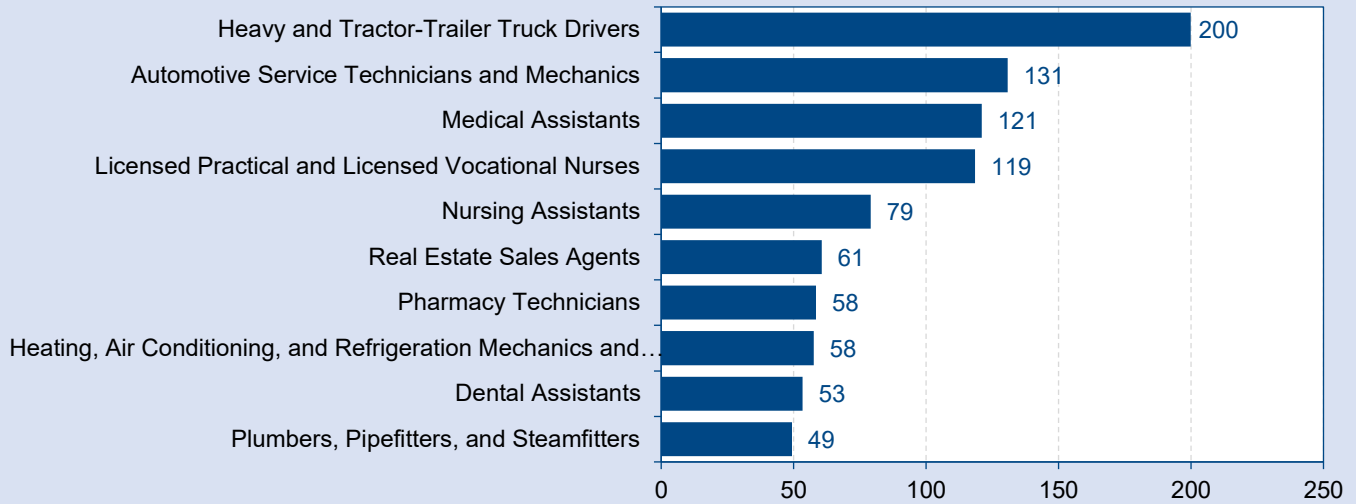
Occupation	Average Unique Postings	Minimum Education
Registered Nurses	710	Bachelors
Retail Salespersons	460	HS/GED
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	299	Some College, No Degree
Customer Service Representatives	235	HS/GED
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	200	PSAV
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	187	Some College, No Degree
Medical and Health Services Managers	185	Bachelors
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	185	HS/GED
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	167	HS/GED
Physical Therapists	161	Master's or Higher

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

Chart 3-15: Adult Vocational Unique Job Postings

Southwest Florida

July 2024 to June 2025



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 2024 to June 2025 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 200 postings per month, followed by automotive service technicians and mechanics (131 postings), medical assistants (121 openings), licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (119 postings), and nursing assistants (79 postings).

Table 3-13: Adult Vocational Unique Job Postings

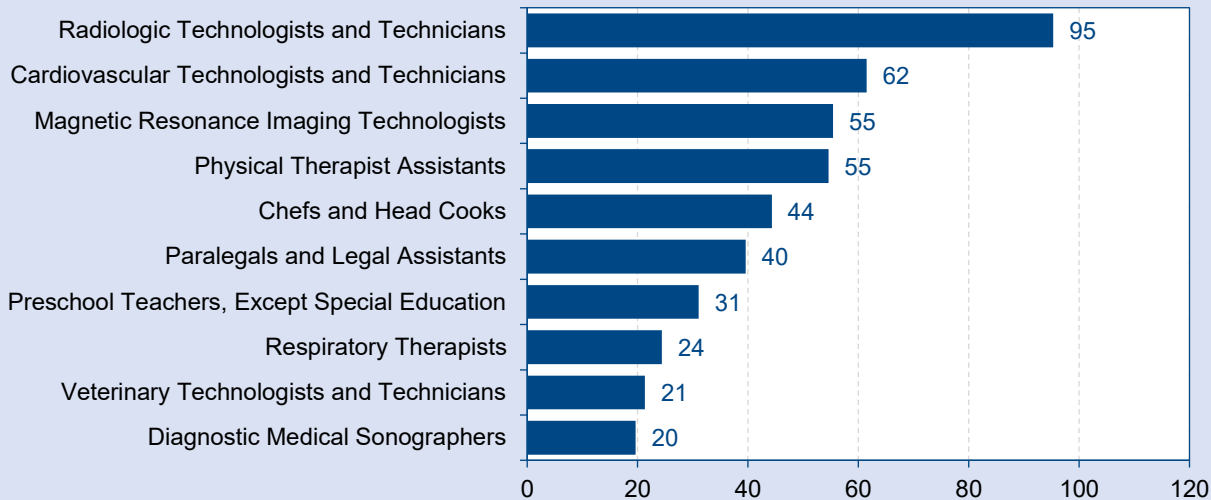
Southwest Florida

Occupation	Average Unique Postings
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	200
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	131
Medical Assistants	121
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	119
Nursing Assistants	79
Real Estate Sales Agents	61
Pharmacy Technicians	58
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	58
Dental Assistants	53
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	49

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

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

Southwest Florida
July 2024 to June 2025



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

Associate's Degree Job Openings

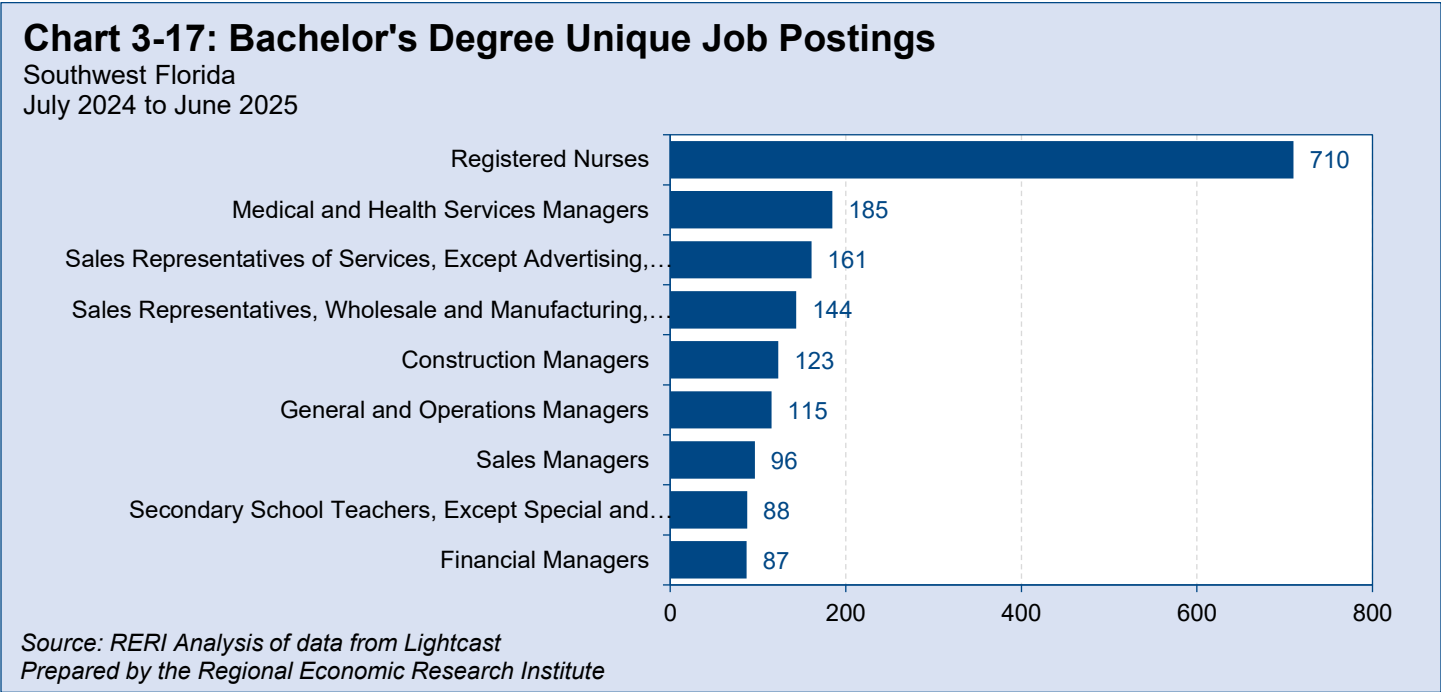
Chart 3-16 and Table 3-14 show the top 10 occupations with the most unique job postings in Southwest Florida from July 2024 to June 2025 for occupations requiring at least an associate's degree. Radiologic technologists and technicians had 95 unique job postings, followed by cardiovascular technologists and technicians (62 postings), magnetic resonance imaging technologists (55 postings), physical therapist assistants (55 postings), and chefs and head cooks (44 postings).

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

Southwest Florida

Occupation	Average Unique Postings
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	95
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	62
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	55
Physical Therapist Assistants	55
Chefs and Head Cooks	44
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	40
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	31
Respiratory Therapists	24
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	21
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	20

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast



Bachelor’s Degree Job Openings

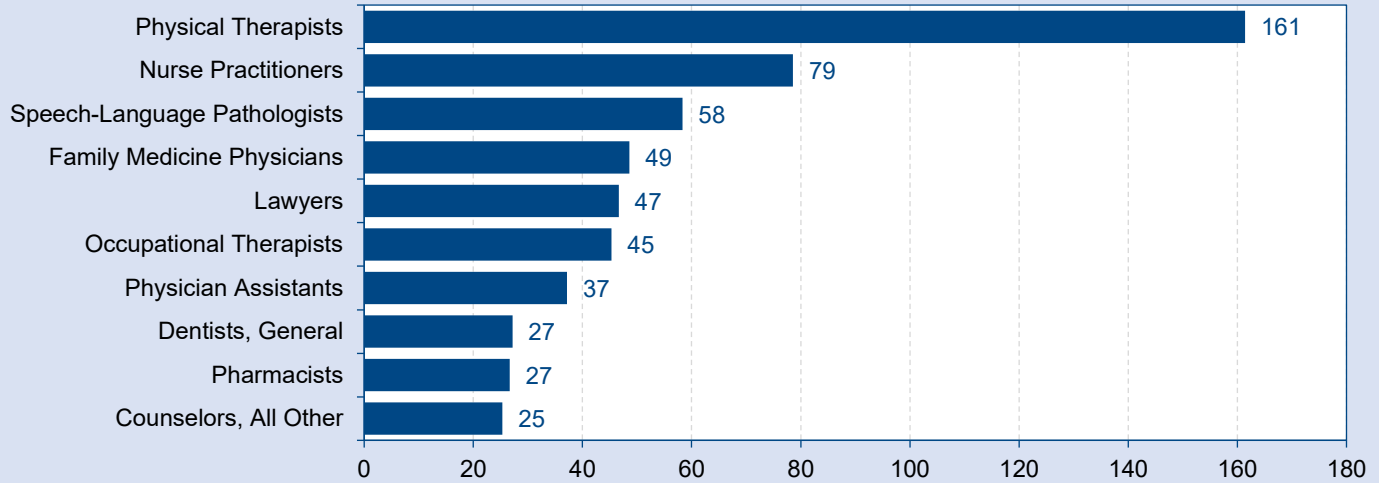
Chart 3-17 and Table 3-15 show the top 10 occupations with the most unique job postings in Southwest Florida from July 2024 to June 2025 for occupations requiring at least a bachelor's degree. Registered nurses had the most job postings with 710 unique postings per month, followed by medical and health services managers (185 postings), sales representatives of services, except advertising, insurance, financial services, and travel (161 postings), sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products (144 postings), and construction managers (123 postings).

Table 3-15: Bachelor's Degree Unique Job Postings	
Southwest Florida	
Occupation	Average Unique Postings
Registered Nurses	710
Medical and Health Services Managers	185
Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	161
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	144
Construction Managers	123
General and Operations Managers	115
Sales Managers	96
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	88
Financial Managers	87
Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers	78

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

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

Southwest Florida
July 2024 to June 2025



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 2024 to June 2025 for occupations requiring a master's degree or higher. Physical therapists had the most job postings with 161, followed by nurse practitioners (79 postings), speech-language pathologists (58 postings), family medicine physicians (49 postings) and lawyers (47 postings).

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

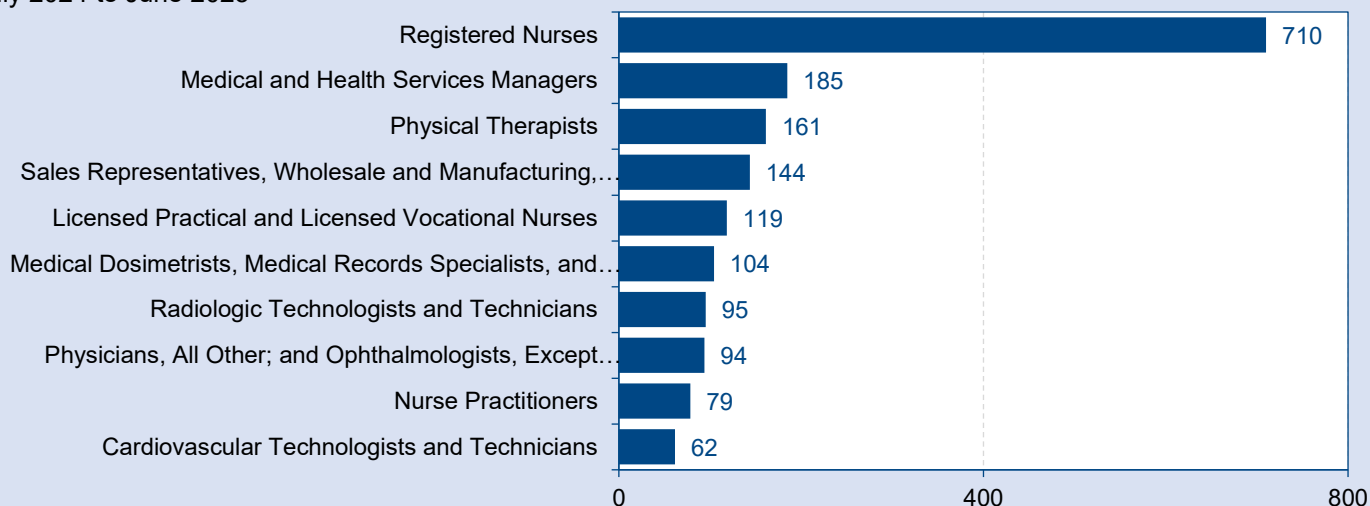
Southwest Florida

Occupation	Average Unique Postings
Physical Therapists	161
Nurse Practitioners	79
Speech-Language Pathologists	58
Family Medicine Physicians	49
Lawyers	47
Occupational Therapists	45
Physician Assistants	37
Dentists, General	27
Pharmacists	27
Counselors, All Other	25

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

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

Southwest Florida
July 2024 to June 2025



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 2024 to June 2025. Registered nurses had the most unique job postings, with an average of 710 postings per month. Medical and health services managers had the next greatest job openings (185 postings), followed by physical therapists (161 postings), sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products (144 postings), licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (119 postings). Two of the top 10 STEM occupations required postsecondary adult vocational education, two 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	710	Bachelors
Medical and Health Services Managers	185	Bachelors
Physical Therapists	161	Master's or Higher
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	144	Bachelors
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	119	PSAV
Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	104	PSAV
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	95	Associates
Physicians, All Other; and Ophthalmologists, Except Pediatric	94	Master's or Higher
Nurse Practitioners	79	Master's or Higher
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	62	Associates

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 2024 median hourly wage and educational requirements. The top 10 employment growth occupations include general and operations managers (1,259 new positions by 2032), construction laborers (1,251 new positions), restaurant cooks (1,244 new positions), stockers and order fillers (1,151 new positions), home health and personal care aides (953 new positions), registered nurses (864 new positions), hand laborers and freight, stock, and material movers (850 new positions), first-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers (839 new positions), heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers (788 new positions), and carpenters (781 new positions).

The top 10 growth occupations primarily reflect expected increases in tourism, food preparation, construction, and health care. Two of the top growth occupations require less than a high school degree, three require a high school degree or GED, two require adult vocational training, one requires some college but no degree, and two require a bachelor's degree. Median wages varied from \$16.12 per hour to \$44.25 per hour.

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

2024 to 2032

Occupation	2024	2032	Growth	Percent Growth	2024 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
General and Operations Managers	13,306	14,566	1,259	9.5%	\$44.25	Bachelors
Construction Laborers	7,499	8,751	1,251	16.7%	\$19.62	Less HS/GED
Cooks, Restaurant	9,421	10,665	1,244	13.2%	\$18.07	HS/GED
Stockers and Order Fillers	9,503	10,654	1,151	12.1%	\$17.55	HS/GED
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	7,026	7,979	953	13.6%	\$16.12	HS/GED
Registered Nurses	11,071	11,935	864	7.8%	\$41.13	Bachelors
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	7,058	7,908	850	12.0%	\$18.02	Less HS/GED
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	6,744	7,583	839	12.4%	\$34.70	Some College, No Degree
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,396	6,184	788	14.6%	\$23.41	PSAV
Carpenters	5,305	6,086	781	14.7%	\$23.03	PSAV

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 2024 and 2032, as well as the median hourly wage for 2024.

Postsecondary Adult Vocational

The top 10 projected long-run growth occupations requiring a minimum of postsecondary adult vocational training include: heavy and tractor-trailer drivers (788 new positions), carpenters (781 new positions between 2024 and 2032), medical assistants (467 new positions), heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers (420 new positions), electricians (418 new positions), plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters (348 new positions), automotive service technicians and mechanics (270 new positions), insurance sales agents (219 new positions), hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists (209 new positions), and dental assistants (186 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

2024 to 2032

Ranking	Occupation	2024	2032	Growth	Percent Growth	2024 Median Hourly Wage
1	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,396	6,184	788	14.6%	\$23.41
2	Carpenters	5,305	6,086	781	14.7%	\$23.03
3	Medical Assistants	4,039	4,505	467	11.6%	\$21.27
4	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	3,138	3,559	420	13.4%	\$24.89
5	Electricians	3,365	3,783	418	12.4%	\$24.97
6	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	2,921	3,269	348	11.9%	\$24.31
7	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	3,128	3,398	270	8.6%	\$23.70
8	Insurance Sales Agents	2,475	2,693	219	8.8%	\$27.17
9	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	2,075	2,283	209	10.1%	\$15.10
10	Dental Assistants	1,484	1,671	186	12.6%	\$22.60
11	Nursing Assistants	4,911	5,083	171	3.5%	\$18.73
12	Computer User Support Specialists	1,792	1,946	154	8.6%	\$26.89
13	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	602	738	136	22.6%	\$28.42
14	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	924	1,053	129	13.9%	\$24.19
15	Pharmacy Technicians	2,061	2,182	121	5.9%	\$19.17
16	Psychiatric Technicians	690	795	105	15.2%	\$20.59
17	Massage Therapists	533	634	101	19.0%	\$25.30
18	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,081	2,181	100	4.8%	\$29.14
19	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	654	741	86	13.2%	\$30.75
20	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	791	876	85	10.8%	\$22.20

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 (126 new positions from 2024 to 2032), physical therapist assistants (119 new positions), dental hygienists (111 new positions), radiologic technologists and technicians (87 new positions), police and sheriff's patrol officers (86 new positions), respiratory therapists (73 new positions), chefs and head cooks (67 new positions), veterinary technologists and technicians (64 new positions), preschool teachers, except special education (61 new positions), and diagnostic medical sonographers (60 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
2024 to 2032

Ranking	Occupation	2024	2032	Growth	Percent Growth	2024 Median Hourly Wage
1	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	1,581	1,707	126	8.0%	\$28.40
2	Physical Therapist Assistants	520	639	119	22.9%	\$34.50
3	Dental Hygienists	845	956	111	13.2%	\$43.30
4	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	913	1,000	87	9.5%	\$34.88
5	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	2,443	2,529	86	3.5%	\$34.33
6	Respiratory Therapists	501	574	73	14.6%	\$39.43
7	Chefs and Head Cooks	1,231	1,298	67	5.4%	\$32.34
8	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	562	626	64	11.4%	\$19.64
9	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	1,762	1,823	61	3.4%	\$16.43
10	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	378	438	60	16.0%	\$40.48
11	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	432	483	51	11.8%	\$30.28
12	Architectural and Civil Drafters	462	510	48	10.4%	\$29.61
13	Medical Equipment Repairers	182	224	42	23.4%	\$24.45
14	Occupational Therapy Assistants	178	218	40	22.7%	\$35.36
15	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	454	492	39	8.5%	\$20.17
16	Web and Digital Interface Designers	132	170	38	28.9%	\$32.11
17	Web Developers	154	187	33	21.5%	\$39.42
18	Computer Network Support Specialists	219	249	30	13.7%	\$35.73
19	Audio and Video Technicians	209	238	30	14.2%	\$22.53
20	Surveying and Mapping Technicians	237	263	26	10.9%	\$23.71

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 (1,259 new positions from 2024 to 2032), registered nurses (864 new positions), software developers (632 new positions), sales representatives of services, except advertising, insurance, financial services, and travel (495 new positions), medical and health services managers (495 new positions), project management specialists (431 new positions), construction managers (399 new positions), market research analysts and marketing specialists (383 new positions), accountants and auditors (377 new positions), and financial managers (320 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
2024 to 2032

Ranking	Occupation	2024	2032	Growth	Percent Growth	2024 Median Hourly Wage
1	General and Operations Managers	13,306	14,566	1,259	9.5%	\$44.25
2	Registered Nurses	11,071	11,935	864	7.8%	\$41.13
3	Software Developers	1,892	2,524	632	33.4%	\$61.16
4	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	5,806	6,301	495	8.5%	\$27.94
5	Medical and Health Services Managers	2,009	2,504	495	24.6%	\$53.01
6	Project Management Specialists	3,353	3,784	431	12.8%	\$42.55
7	Construction Managers	2,565	2,964	399	15.5%	\$46.75
8	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	2,187	2,570	383	17.5%	\$31.23
9	Accountants and Auditors	3,892	4,269	377	9.7%	\$36.98
10	Financial Managers	2,007	2,327	320	15.9%	\$72.25
11	Management Analysts	2,161	2,471	310	14.3%	\$39.99
12	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	1,046	1,353	307	29.4%	\$27.83
13	Human Resources Specialists	2,374	2,607	234	9.8%	\$30.50
14	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	2,161	2,379	219	10.1%	\$33.70
15	Computer and Information Systems Managers	924	1,123	200	21.6%	\$70.47
16	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	1,454	1,611	156	10.7%	\$26.07
17	Managers, All Other	1,968	2,111	143	7.2%	\$46.80
18	Sales Managers	1,701	1,842	141	8.3%	\$53.27
19	Logisticians	594	728	134	22.6%	\$33.91
20	Computer Systems Analysts	860	993	133	15.4%	\$46.51

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 (431 new positions between 2024 and 2032), lawyers (259 new positions), physician assistants (186 new positions), physical therapists (158 new positions), postsecondary teachers (110 new positions), speech-language pathologists (109 new positions), physicians, all other (80 new positions), occupational therapists (76 new positions), pharmacists (62 new positions), general dentists (54 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

2024 to 2032

Ranking	Occupation	2024	2032	Growth	Percent Growth	2024 Median Hourly Wage
1	Nurse Practitioners	1,204	1,635	431	35.8%	\$66.46
2	Lawyers	2,179	2,438	259	11.9%	\$61.07
3	Physician Assistants	899	1,085	186	20.7%	\$62.06
4	Physical Therapists	1,018	1,176	158	15.5%	\$47.82
5	Postsecondary Teachers	1,714	1,825	110	6.4%	\$33.38
6	Speech-Language Pathologists	451	560	109	24.1%	\$46.42
7	Physicians, All Other	1,270	1,350	80	6.3%	\$169.30
8	Occupational Therapists	520	596	76	14.5%	\$49.71
9	Pharmacists	942	1,004	62	6.6%	\$69.16
10	Dentists, General	444	498	54	12.2%	\$81.28
11	Healthcare Social Workers	426	476	51	11.9%	\$33.56
12	Clergy	657	707	49	7.5%	\$29.17
13	Marriage and Family Therapists	152	194	42	28.0%	\$28.10
14	Veterinarians	314	351	37	11.7%	\$62.82
15	Chiropractors	306	342	36	11.9%	\$30.61
16	Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	163	198	35	21.8%	\$52.26
17	Family Medicine Physicians	408	437	29	7.2%	\$106.06
18	Nurse Anesthetists	460	489	29	6.2%	\$95.26
19	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	764	791	27	3.6%	\$33.68
20	Education Administrators, All Other	346	372	26	7.4%	\$33.23

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 2024 median hourly wage and educational requirements. The top 10 STEM occupations by employment growth include registered nurses (885 new positions between 2024 and 2032), software developers (548 new positions), nurse practitioners (429 new positions), medical and health services managers (387 new positions), licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (329 new positions), veterinary technologists and technicians (182 new positions), physical therapists (181 new positions), computer user support specialists (178 new positions), respiratory therapist (166 new positions), dental hygienists (159 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 \$22.92 per hour to \$48.19 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

2024 to 2032

Occupation	2024	2032	Growth	Percent Growth	2024 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Registered Nurses	9,951	10,836	885	8.9%	\$36.30	Associates
Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	2,620	3,168	548	20.9%	N/R	Bachelors
Nurse Practitioners	868	1,297	429	49.4%	\$48.19	Master's or Higher
Medical and Health Services Managers	1,423	1,810	387	27.2%	\$46.45	Bachelors
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,416	2,745	329	13.6%	\$22.92	PSAV
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	869	1,051	182	20.9%	N/R	Associates
Physical Therapists	1,343	1,524	181	13.5%	\$46.21	Master's or Higher
Computer User Support Specialists	1,664	1,842	178	10.7%	\$23.05	PSAV
Respiratory Therapists	809	975	166	20.5%	N/R	Associates
Dental Hygienists	831	990	159	19.1%	\$37.29	Associates

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

Note: Numbers not reported denoted by N/R.

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 2024 and 2032.

Table A-1: Top 25 Long-Term Employment Growth Occupations
2024 to 2032

Occupation	2024	2032	Change	Percent Change	2024 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
General and Operations Managers	13,306	14,566	1,259	9.5%	\$44.25	Bachelors
Construction Laborers	7,499	8,751	1,251	16.7%	\$19.62	Less HS/GED
Cooks, Restaurant	9,421	10,665	1,244	13.2%	\$18.07	HS/GED
Stockers and Order Fillers	9,503	10,654	1,151	12.1%	\$17.55	HS/GED
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	7,026	7,979	953	13.6%	\$16.12	HS/GED
Registered Nurses	11,071	11,935	864	7.8%	\$41.13	Bachelors
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	7,058	7,908	850	12.0%	\$18.02	Less HS/GED
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	6,744	7,583	839	12.4%	\$34.70	Some College, No Degree
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	5,396	6,184	788	14.6%	\$23.41	PSAV
Carpenters	5,305	6,086	781	14.7%	\$23.03	PSAV
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	7,664	8,397	734	9.6%	\$16.65	HS/GED
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	10,216	10,853	636	6.2%	\$17.67	Less HS/GED
Software Developers	1,892	2,524	632	33.4%	\$61.16	Bachelors
Roofers	3,215	3,844	629	19.6%	\$21.84	Less HS/GED
Retail Salespersons	21,578	22,176	598	2.8%	\$15.30	HS/GED
Light Truck Drivers	3,904	4,481	577	14.8%	\$19.36	HS/GED
Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel	5,806	6,301	495	8.5%	\$27.94	Bachelors
Medical and Health Services Managers	2,009	2,504	495	24.6%	\$53.01	Bachelors
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	2,832	3,315	483	17.1%	\$22.32	Less HS/GED
Fast Food and Counter Workers	13,317	13,797	480	3.6%	\$13.72	Less HS/GED
Medical Assistants	4,039	4,505	467	11.6%	\$21.27	PSAV
Nurse Practitioners	1,204	1,635	431	35.8%	\$66.46	Master's or Higher
Project Management Specialists	3,353	3,784	431	12.8%	\$42.55	Bachelors
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	3,138	3,559	420	13.4%	\$24.89	PSAV
Electricians	3,365	3,783	418	12.4%	\$24.97	PSAV

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

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

2024 to 2032

Occupation	2024	2032	Change	Percent Change	2024 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Construction Managers	2,565	2,964	399	15.5%	\$46.75	Bachelors
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	2,187	2,570	383	17.5%	\$31.23	Bachelors
Accountants and Auditors	3,892	4,269	377	9.7%	\$36.98	Bachelors
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	2,921	3,269	348	11.9%	\$24.31	PSAV
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	4,145	4,479	334	8.1%	\$29.16	Some College, No Degree
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	2,278	2,610	332	14.6%	\$23.50	HS/GED
Financial Managers	2,007	2,327	320	15.9%	\$72.25	Bachelors
Management Analysts	2,161	2,471	310	14.3%	\$39.99	Bachelors
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	1,046	1,353	307	29.4%	\$27.83	Bachelors
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	3,434	3,732	298	8.7%	\$19.45	Some College, No Degree
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	6,740	7,030	290	4.3%	\$22.10	HS/GED
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	3,128	3,398	270	8.6%	\$23.70	PSAV
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	5,333	5,596	263	4.9%	\$21.22	HS/GED
Lawyers	2,179	2,438	259	11.9%	\$61.07	Master's or Higher
Human Resources Specialists	2,374	2,607	234	9.8%	\$30.50	Bachelors
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	2,161	2,379	219	10.1%	\$33.70	Bachelors
Insurance Sales Agents	2,475	2,693	219	8.8%	\$27.17	PSAV
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	2,075	2,283	209	10.1%	\$15.10	PSAV
Drywall and Ceiling Tile Installers	873	1,074	200	22.9%	\$18.92	Less HS/GED
Computer and Information Systems Managers	924	1,123	200	21.6%	\$70.47	Bachelors
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	4,944	5,137	193	3.9%	\$23.04	Some College, No Degree
First-Line Supervisors of Transportation and Material Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisors	1,684	1,873	189	11.2%	\$28.42	Some College, No Degree
Dental Assistants	1,484	1,671	186	12.6%	\$22.60	PSAV
Physician Assistants	899	1,085	186	20.7%	\$62.06	Master's or Higher
Animal Caretakers	994	1,177	183	18.4%	\$14.74	HS/GED

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 2024 and 2032.

Table A-3: Top 25 Long-Term Employment Growth STEM Occupations
2024 to 2032

Occupation	2024	2032	Change	Percent Change	2024 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Registered Nurses	11,071	11,935	864	7.8%	\$41.13	Bachelors
Software Developers	1,892	2,524	632	33.4%	\$61.16	Bachelors
Medical and Health Services Managers	2,009	2,504	495	24.6%	\$53.01	Bachelors
Nurse Practitioners	1,204	1,635	431	35.8%	\$66.46	Master's or Higher
Computer and Information Systems Managers	924	1,123	200	21.6%	\$70.47	Bachelors
Physician Assistants	899	1,085	186	20.7%	\$62.06	Master's or Higher
Physical Therapists	1,018	1,176	158	15.5%	\$47.82	Master's or Higher
Computer User Support Specialists	1,792	1,946	154	8.6%	\$26.89	PSAV
Computer Systems Analysts	860	993	133	15.4%	\$46.51	Bachelors
Pharmacy Technicians	2,061	2,182	121	5.9%	\$19.17	PSAV
Industrial Engineers	388	501	113	29.2%	\$45.87	Bachelors
Dental Hygienists	845	956	111	13.2%	\$43.30	Associates
Data Scientists	245	355	110	44.9%	\$48.73	Bachelors
Speech-Language Pathologists	451	560	109	24.1%	\$46.42	Master's or Higher
Information Security Analysts	385	493	108	28.1%	\$51.01	Bachelors
Psychiatric Technicians	690	795	105	15.2%	\$20.59	PSAV
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	819	923	103	12.6%	\$47.12	Bachelors
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	2,081	2,181	100	4.8%	\$29.14	PSAV
Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	336	426	90	26.9%	\$40.00	Bachelors
Computer Occupations, All Other	448	537	89	19.9%	\$45.20	Bachelors
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	913	1,000	87	9.5%	\$34.88	Associates
Physicians, All Other	1,270	1,350	80	6.3%	\$169.30	Master's or Higher
Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	252	328	76	30.4%	\$50.67	Bachelors
Occupational Therapists	520	596	76	14.5%	\$49.71	Master's or Higher
Respiratory Therapists	501	574	73	14.6%	\$39.43	Associates

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

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

2024 to 2032

Occupation	2024	2032	Change	Percent Change	2024 Median Hourly Wage	Minimum Education
Medical Records Specialists	683	749	66	9.6%	\$21.91	PSAV
Emergency Medical Technicians	722	787	66	9.1%	\$20.36	PSAV
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	562	626	64	11.4%	\$19.64	Associates
Pharmacists	942	1,004	62	6.6%	\$69.16	Master's or Higher
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	378	438	60	16.0%	\$40.48	Associates
Mechanical Engineers	246	305	59	24.0%	\$41.29	Bachelors
Operations Research Analysts	261	319	58	22.3%	\$34.10	Bachelors
Dentists, General	444	498	54	12.2%	\$81.28	Master's or Higher
Civil Engineers	915	968	53	5.8%	\$45.94	Bachelors
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	667	719	52	7.8%	\$43.35	Bachelors
Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other	695	744	50	7.1%	\$19.35	PSAV
Architectural and Civil Drafters	462	510	48	10.4%	\$29.61	Associates
Paramedics	551	596	46	8.3%	\$30.90	PSAV
Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	312	355	44	14.1%	\$45.68	Bachelors
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	463	505	42	9.0%	\$24.31	PSAV
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	454	492	39	8.5%	\$20.17	Associates
Web and Digital Interface Designers	132	170	38	28.9%	\$32.11	Associates
Surgical Technologists	427	465	38	8.8%	\$30.61	PSAV
Veterinarians	314	351	37	11.7%	\$62.82	Master's or Higher
Architectural and Engineering Managers	228	265	37	16.1%	\$84.00	Bachelors
Chiropractors	306	342	36	11.9%	\$30.61	Master's or Higher
Surveyors	291	327	36	12.5%	\$29.89	Bachelors
Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	163	198	35	21.8%	\$52.26	Master's or Higher
Web Developers	154	187	33	21.5%	\$39.42	Associates
Computer Network Support Specialists	219	249	30	13.7%	\$35.73	Associates

Source: RERI Analysis of data from Lightcast

Appendix B: Additional Demographic Data

Population Growth

Southwest Florida had 1.5 million residents in 2024, up 3.1 percent from 2023. Four of the five counties saw population increase from 2023 to 2024, with Hendry County having the highest growth rate (11.0 percent) followed by Lee and Charlotte County (3.2 percent each), and Collier County (2.2 percent). Glades County's population declined from 2023 to 2024, dropping 5.9 percent to 11,845.

Table B-1: Population Growth

Area	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Charlotte County					
Population	186,847	190,570	196,742	204,126	210,645
Percent change	--	2.0%	3.2%	3.8%	3.2%
Collier County					
Population	375,752	382,680	390,912	399,480	408,381
Percent change	--	1.8%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
Glades County					
Population	12,126	12,130	12,273	12,591	11,845
Percent change	--	0.0%	1.2%	2.6%	-5.9%
Hendry County					
Population	39,619	40,540	40,633	40,895	45,413
Percent change	--	2.3%	0.2%	0.6%	11.0%
Lee County					
Population	760,822	782,579	802,178	800,989	827,016
Percent change	--	2.9%	2.5%	-0.1%	3.2%
Southwest Florida					
Population	1,375,166	1,408,499	1,442,738	1,458,081	1,503,300
Percent change	--	2.4%	2.4%	1.1%	3.1%
Florida					
Population	21,555,986	21,898,945	22,276,132	22,634,867	22,907,149
Percent change	--	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%	1.2%

Source: Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research

Population Projections

Southwest Florida is projected to gain approximately 212 thousand residents over the next decade, 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

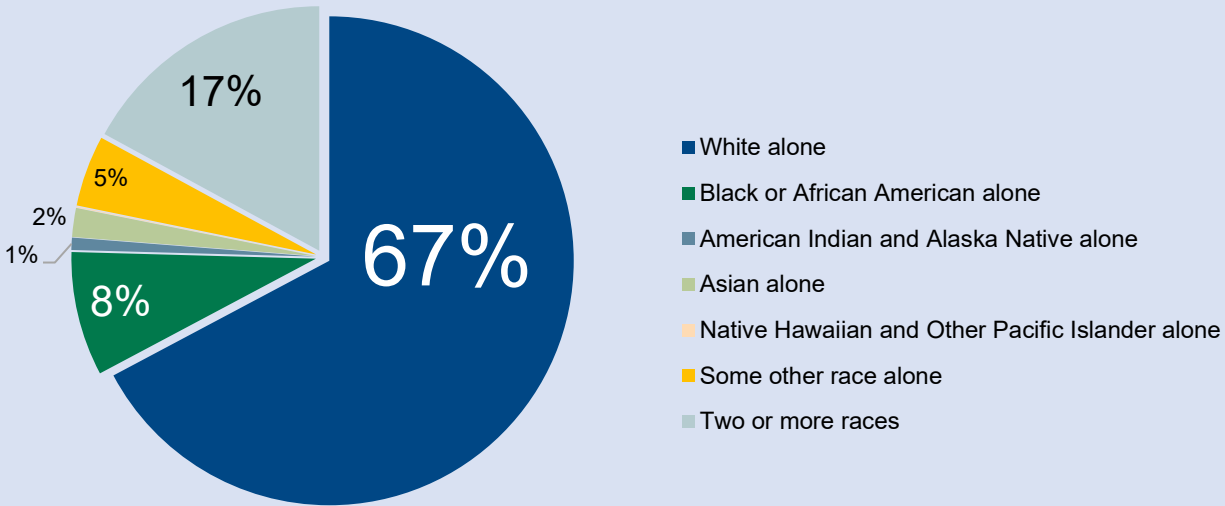
Area	2023	2024	2025*	2030*	2035*
Charlotte County					
Population	204,126	210,645	211,348	226,889	240,013
Percent change	--	3.2%	0.3%	7.4%	5.8%
Collier County					
Population	399,480	408,381	413,299	443,006	466,039
Percent change	--	2.2%	1.2%	7.2%	5.2%
Glades County					
Population	12,591	11,845	12,689	12,887	13,047
Percent change	--	-5.9%	7.1%	1.6%	1.2%
Hendry County					
Population	40,895	45,413	41,454	42,591	43,442
Percent change	--	11.0%	-8.7%	2.7%	2.0%
Lee County					
Population	800,989	827,016	835,889	908,482	964,371
Percent change	--	3.2%	1.1%	8.7%	6.2%
Southwest Florida					
Population	1,458,081	1,503,300	1,514,679	1,633,855	1,726,912
Percent change	--	3.1%	0.8%	7.9%	5.7%
Florida					
Population	22,634,867	22,907,149	23,292,200	24,698,545	25,814,954
Percent change	--	1.2%	1.7%	6.0%	4.5%

Source: Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research

Note: * indicates population projections.

Chart B-1: Working-Age Population by Race

Southwest Florida
2023



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 2023, 67.2 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 (17.1 percent), followed by the Black or African American alone population (8.2 percent) and the some other race alone category (4.7 percent).

Table B-3: Working Age Population by Race

Southwest Florida
2023

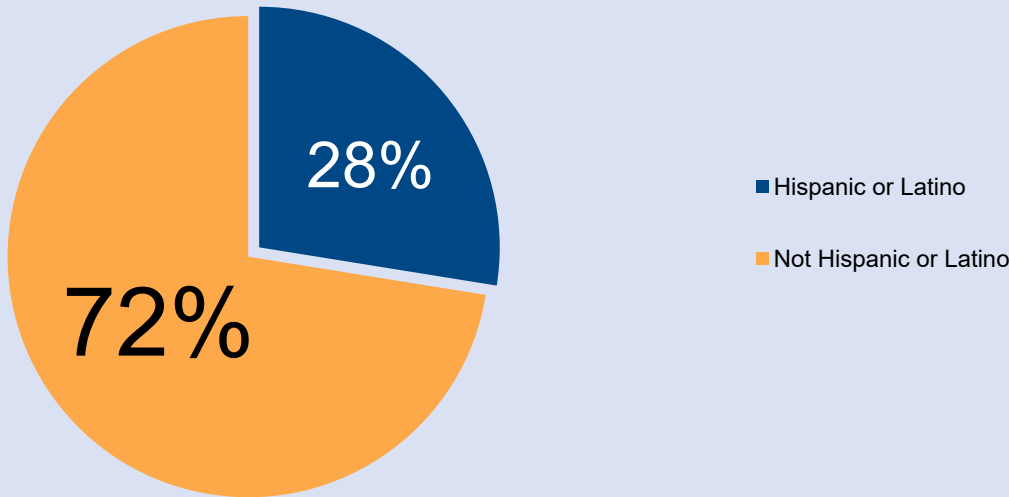
Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent of Total
White alone	437,429	67.2%
Black or African American alone	53,382	8.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	5,268	0.8%
Asian alone	12,441	1.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	413	0.1%
Some other race alone	30,592	4.7%
Two or more races	111,121	17.1%
Total	650,646	100.0%

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 Population for Hispanic and Latino Population

Southwest Florida
2023



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 2023, while the remaining 27.5 percent identified as Hispanic or Latino.

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

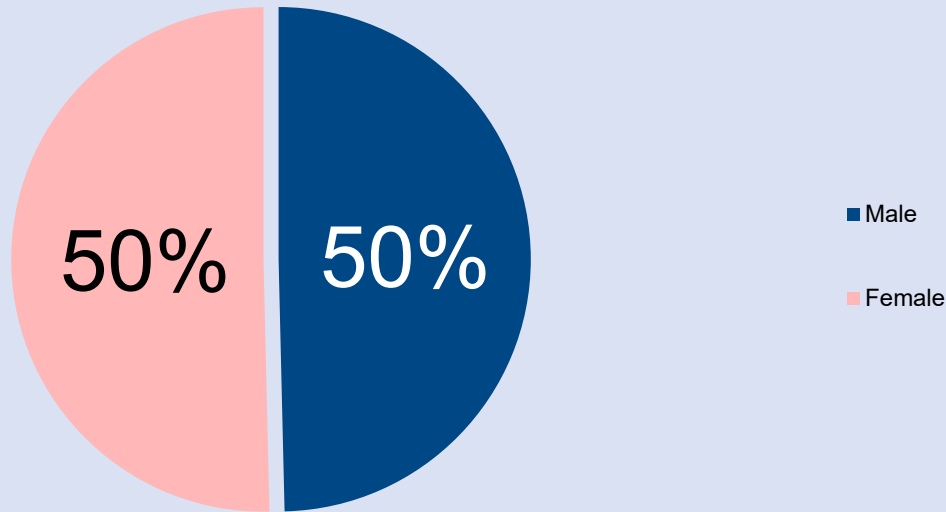
Southwest Florida
2023

Hispanic/Latino	Count	Percent of Total
Hispanic or Latino	179,192	27.5%
Not Hispanic or Latino	471,454	72.5%
Total	650,646	100.0%

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
2023



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

In 2023, the female population represented 50.4 percent of the total working-age population in Southwest Florida, up 0.3 percentage points from 2022. This percentage has slowly declined since 2016, falling 0.8 percentage points over the eight-year period.

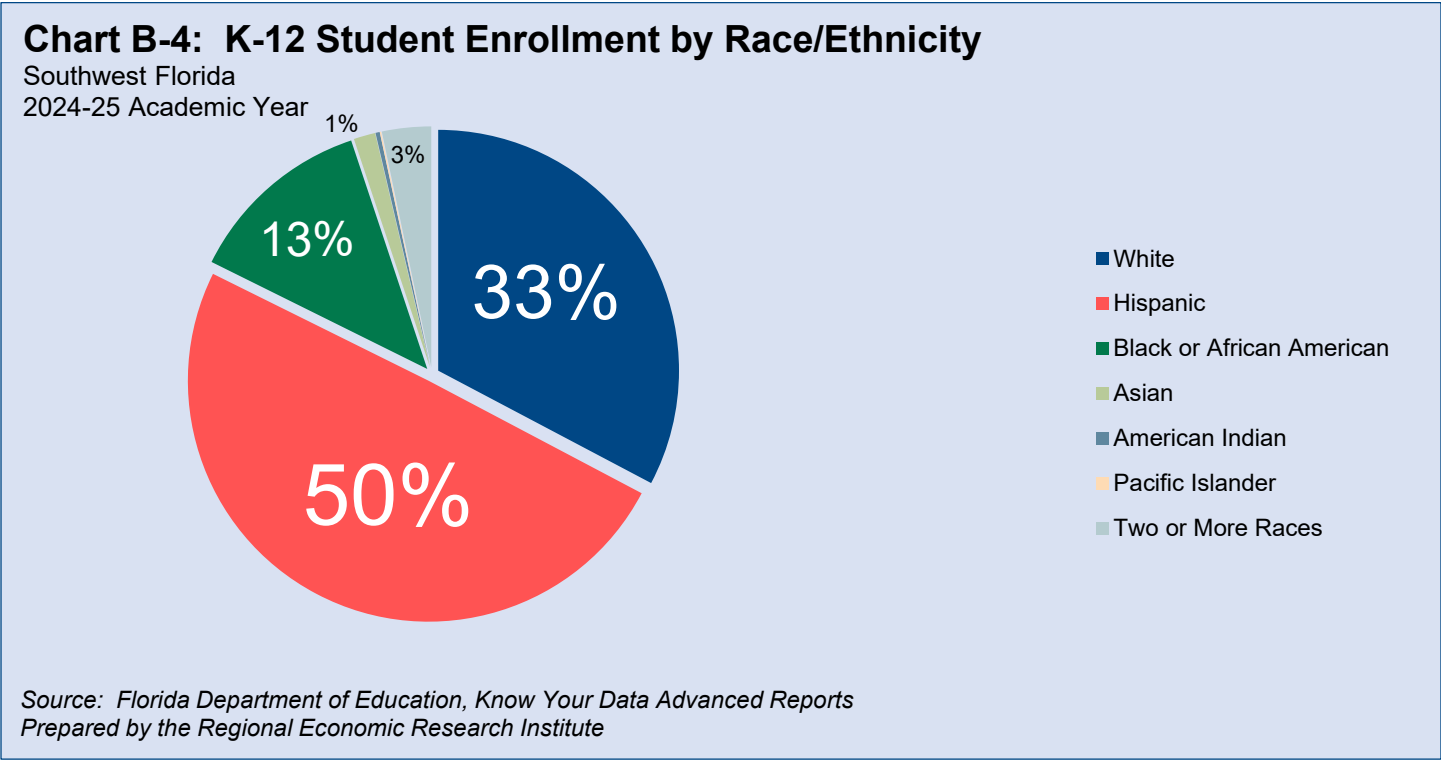
Table B-5: Working Age Population by Gender

Southwest Florida

Gender	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Male								
Count	284,470	290,112	295,821	302,387	308,873	309,485	316,411	322,855
Percent of total	48.8%	48.8%	48.9%	49.0%	49.0%	49.4%	49.9%	49.6%
Female								
Count	298,362	304,240	309,194	314,812	321,350	316,809	318,269	327,791
Percent of total	51.2%	51.2%	51.1%	51.0%	51.0%	50.6%	50.1%	50.4%
Total	582,832	594,352	605,015	617,199	630,223	626,294	634,680	650,646

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.



K-12 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

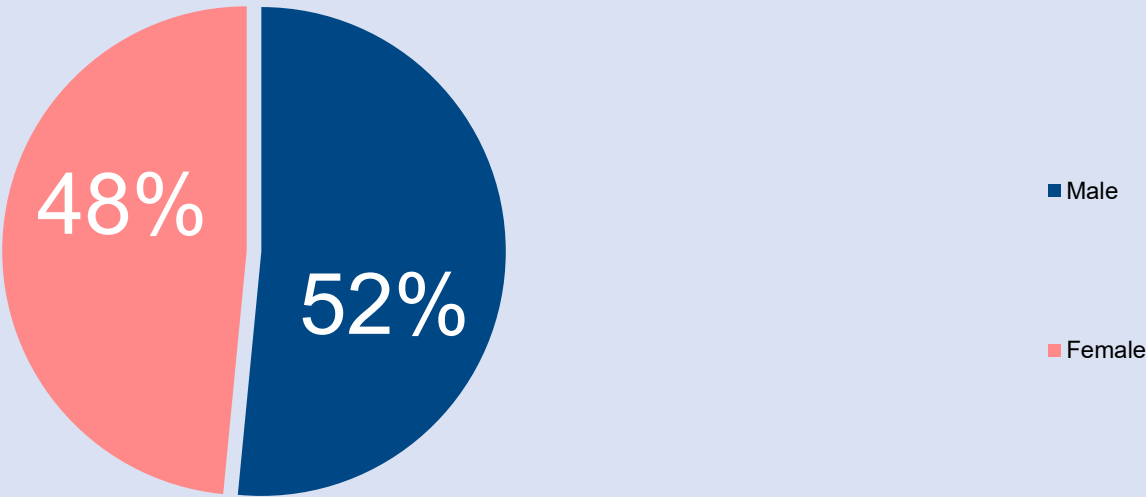
The Hispanic population in the K-12 schools represented approximately 49.6 percent of the total student population in 2025AY, up 4.7 percentage points from the 2021AY. On the other hand, the white population dipped 4.7 percentage points over the same period.

Table B-6: K-12 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity					
Southwest Florida					
Race/Ethnicity	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY	2024AY	2025AY
White					
Number of students	61,877	63,168	62,848	60,404	58,010
Percent of total	37.4%	37.1%	36.2%	34.6%	32.7%
Hispanic					
Number of students	74,241	77,139	80,460	83,710	87,903
Percent of total	44.9%	45.3%	46.4%	48.0%	49.6%
Black or African American					
Number of students	21,064	21,348	21,443	21,531	22,250
Percent of total	12.7%	12.5%	12.4%	12.3%	12.6%
Asian					
Number of students	2,546	2,624	2,674	2,626	2,579
Percent of total	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
American Indian					
Number of students	554	513	492	472	502
Percent of total	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Pacific Islander					
Number of students	140	161	168	167	156
Percent of total	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races					
Number of students	5,008	5,250	5,467	5,618	5,836
Percent of total	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%	3.2%	3.3%
Total K-12 Enrollment	165,430	170,203	173,552	174,528	177,236

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

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

Southwest Florida
2024-25 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 2021AY and 2025AY. 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	2021AY	2022AY	2023AY	2024AY	2025AY
Male					
Number of students	85,483	87,857	89,449	90,029	91,338
Percent of total	51.7%	51.6%	51.5%	51.6%	51.5%
Female					
Number of students	79,947	82,346	84,103	84,449	85,898
Percent of total	48.3%	48.4%	48.5%	48.4%	48.5%
Total K-12 Enrollment	165,430	170,203	173,552	174,478	177,236

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 counties²⁴. For the 2023-24 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	Premiere International College
Aveda Institute-Fort Myers	Cozmo Beauty School	Jersey College – Naples
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)

²⁴ 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.

- The Training Domain (2015 to 2022)
- Jersey College – Naples (2022 to 2023)

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).

Technical Colleges

Southwest Florida technical colleges are also identified through IPEDS. The following institutes were classified as technical colleges in the region for the 2023-24 academic year:

Charlotte Technical College	Cape Coral Technical College	Paul Mitchell the School-Fort Myers
Lorenzo Walker Technical College	Cozmo Beauty School	Lee Professional Institute
Fort Myers Technical College	Immokalee Technical College	Premiere International College
Aveda Institute-Fort Myers	The Salon Professional Academy-Ft. Myers	
Southern Technical College	Florida 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.²⁵

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.²⁶ 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”.

²⁵ 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*.

²⁶ 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.