Ohio Attainment

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Ohio | Department of Higher Education

Introduction

Ohio faces an urgent and growing need for highly skilled, credentialed workers. Ohio's postsecondary attainment is not keeping pace with the needs of business and industry, leaving a significant gap between employer needs and worker knowledge and skills. This well-documented "talent gap" threatens our state's continued economic competitiveness and growth. The Ohio Bureau of Labor Market Information projects that between 2018 and 2028, 75% of job growth in Ohio will be in occupations requiring at least a postsecondary non-degree credential, and 58% of growth will be in occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or higher[1].

Ohio's ability to attract and retain jobs is the key to our state's economic future and hinges on the educational attainment levels of our citizenry. To win the stiff global competition for business investment and jobs, Ohio must be among the leaders in developing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and postsecondary credentials that meet the needs of employers. To fulfill our state's workforce demand, we must include all Ohioans – from new high school graduates to adults in transition – and address existing inequities in workforce readiness and opportunity gaps.

In response, Governor Mike DeWine, Lt. Governor Jon Husted, Chancellor Randy Gardner and former Superintendent Paolo DeMaria have made education and workforce development top priorities for the state and, together with the Ohio General Assembly, have made significant investments in support of the state's postsecondary attainment objectives. The FY2022-23 State Operating Budget included numerous examples of student centered financial and policy supports designed to elevate postsecondary attainment and Ohio's economic future, including continued investments in the Choose Ohio First program, funding for employers to upskill their employees through TechCred, and establishment of the Second Chance Grant pilot program.

Ohio House Bill 49, enacted by the 132nd General Assembly in 2017, directed the Chancellor – in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education – to prepare an annual report on postsecondary attainment in the state. The report is to be shared with the governor, the president and minority leader of the Ohio Senate, and the speaker and minority leader of the Ohio House of Representatives.

This document is the fourth of the required annual progress reports.

Attainment, as measured in this report, is defined as the percentage of working age adults (ages 25-64) who possess a postsecondary degree (associate, bachelor's or higher) or credential (certificate or industry-recognized certification). Therefore, many of Ohio's recently-implemented interventions designed to increase early degree and credential attainment (e.g.: College Credit Plus) will not be reflected in these data until such time as the degree or credential-earner turns 25-years-old.

Topline Takeaways

Steady progress continues

According to Lumina Foundation's *A Stronger Nation 2021* report[2], Ohio's overall rate of educational attainment has increased by 14.8 percentage points from 2009 to 2019. In 2009, 34.7 percent of Ohio adults had a postsecondary degree or other credential of value in the marketplace. By 2019, that number had increased to 49.5 percent. While a portion of this increase can be attributed to the inclusion of workforce-relevant certificates in the total of postsecondary credentials in 2014 and certifications in 2018, Ohio's degree attainment rate also has steadily improved, increasing by 6.1 percentage points, from 34.7 percent in 2009 to 40.8 percent in 2019.

STATE AVERAGE

49.5%

2019

Ohio's overall rate of educational attainment has increased by 14.8 percentage points since 2009.

2009

34.7%
35.8%
35.5%
36.5%
37.5%
*43.2%
43.6%
44.1%
44.6%
**49.2%

Since 2014, workforce-relevant certificates have been included in the total of postsecondary credentials.

**Since 2018, certifications have also been included in the total of postsecondary credentials.*

Lumina Foundation's *A Stronger Nation 2021* references degree attainment data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey[3] and certificate and certification attainment estimates from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce[4]. The Lumina Foundation defines adult working years as ages 25-64, and all attainment data reflects this definition. Degrees and credentials attained prior to age 25 are not reflected until the degree or credential holder is 25 years of age. F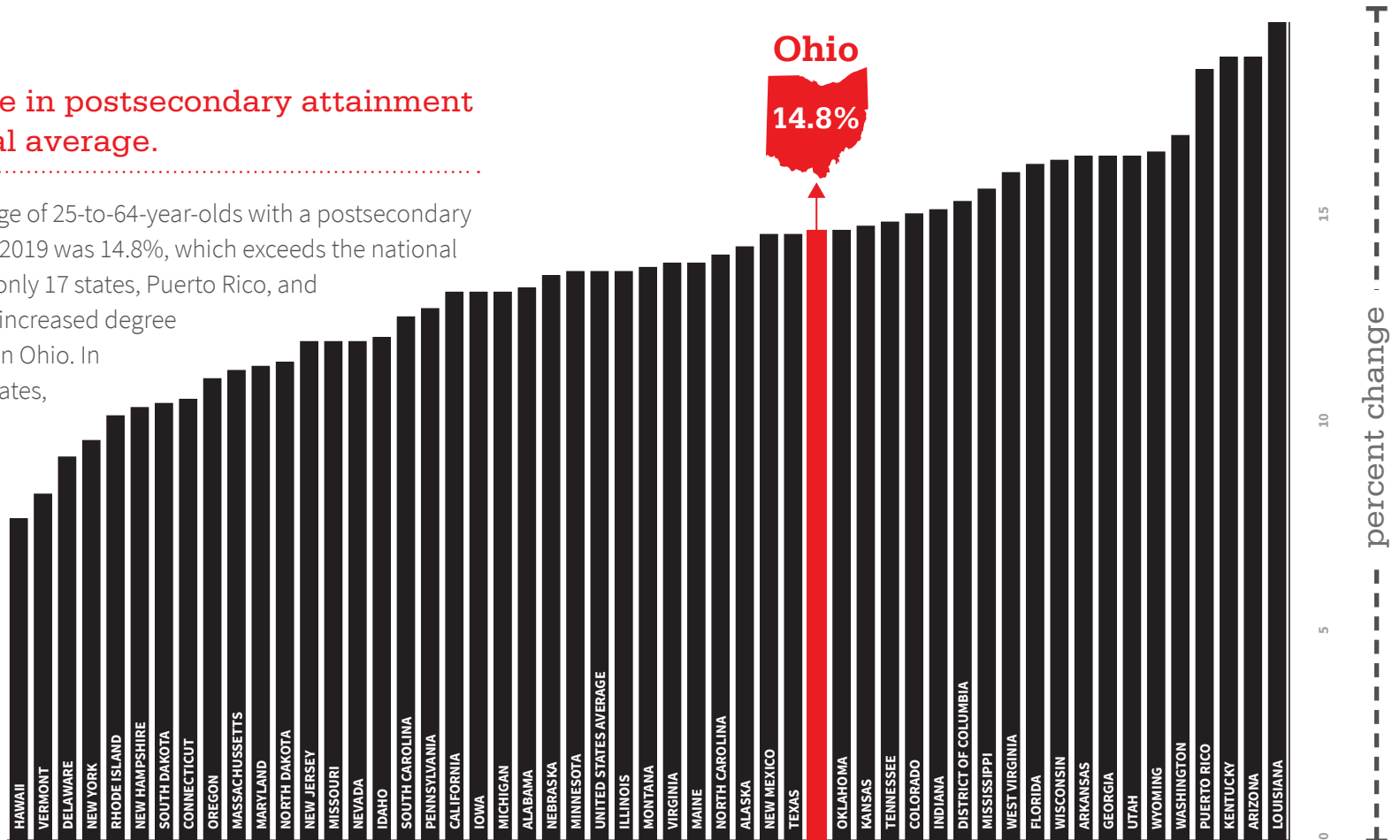or more on Lumina Foundation's methodology, please see **https://luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress&modal=methods**.

Ohio still lags the nation in postsecondary attainment.

National Average Attainment

51.9%

While Ohio is making steady progress, the state still lags when compared to the national average. Ohio's 2019 educational attainment rate of 49.5 percent is more than two percentage points lower than the national average of 51.9 percent. Today, 31 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia have higher attainment rates than Ohio.

## But…Ohio's increase in postsecondary attainment is above the national average.

Ohio's percentage point change of 25-to-64-year-olds with a postsecondary credential between 2009 and 2019 was 14.8%, which exceeds the national average of 13.8%[5]. Currently, only 17 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia have increased degree attainment at rates higher than Ohio. In comparison to neighboring states, Ohio lags Kentucky (19.0% change), West Virginia (16.2% change), and Indiana (15.3% change) but exceeds Michigan (13.3% change) and Pennsylvania (12.9% change).

Ohio

14.8%

percent change

HAWAII, VERMONT, DELAWARE, NEW YORK, RHODE ISLAND, NEW HAMPSHIRE, SOUTH DAKOTA, CONNECTICUT, OREGON, MASSACHUSSETTS, MARYLAND, NORTH DAKOTA, NEW JERSEY, MISSOURI, NEVADA, IDAHO, SOUTH CAROLINA, PENNSYLVANIA, CALIFORNIA, IOWA, MICHIGAN, ALABAMA, NEBRASKA, MINNESOTA, UNITED STATES AVERAGE, ILLINOIS, MONTANA, VIRGINIA, MAINE, NORTH CAROLINA, ALASKA, NEW MEXICO, TEXAS, OKLAHOMA, KANSAS, TENNESSEE, COLORADO, INDIANA, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, MISSISSIPPI, WEST VIRGINIA, FLORIDA, WISCONSIN, ARKANSAS, GEORGIA, UTAH, WYOMING, WASHINGTON, PUERTO RICO, KENTUCKY, ARIZONA, LOUISIANA
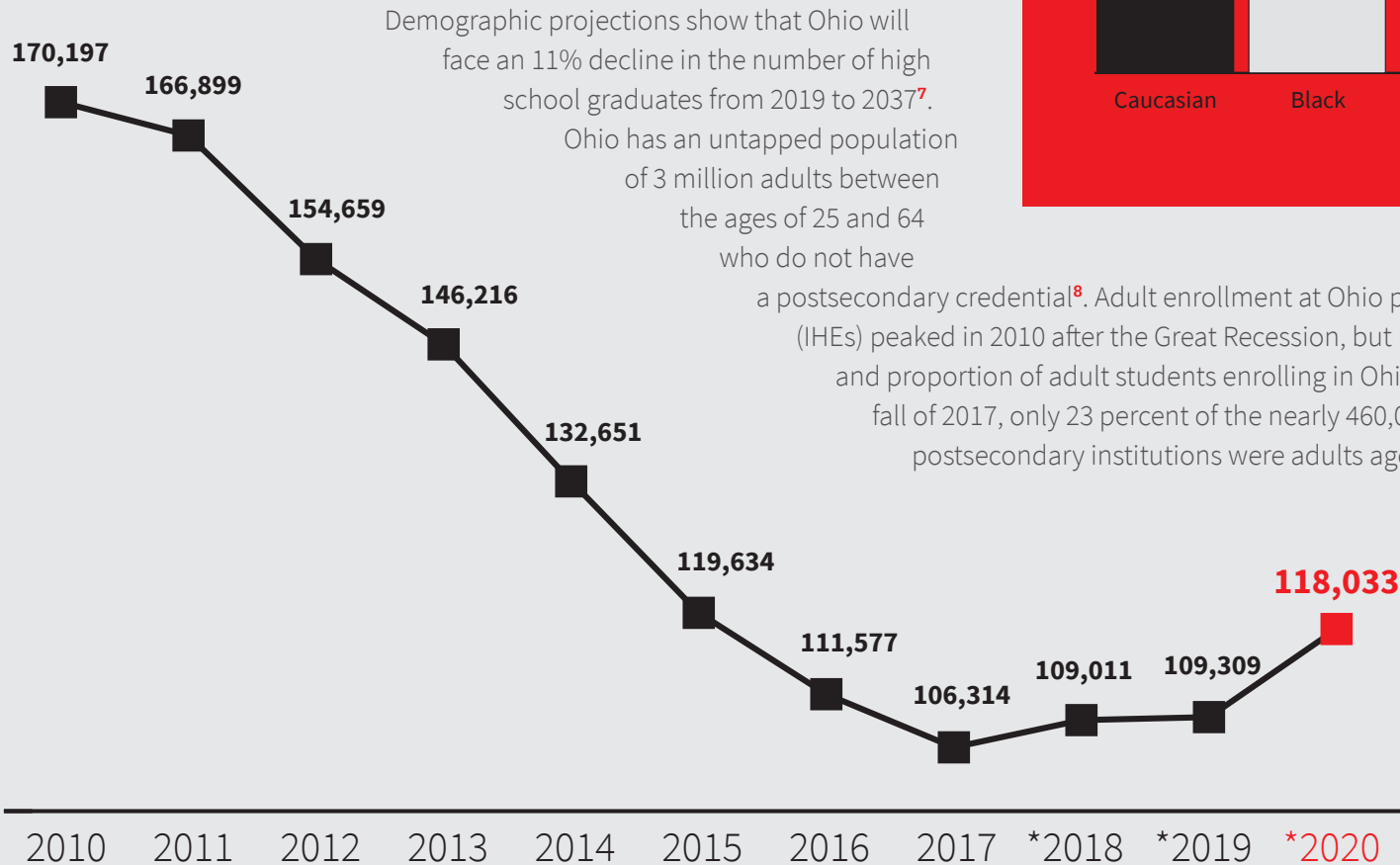
Significant racial and ethnic gaps exist.

Even though educational attainment is increasing among all demographic groups, data show persistent and troubling gaps linked to race and ethnicity[6].

Degree attainment percentage by racial/ethnic group

Caucasian	Black	Hispanic	Asian and Pacific Islander	Native American
42.0%	27.5%	27.0%	68.4%	32.0%
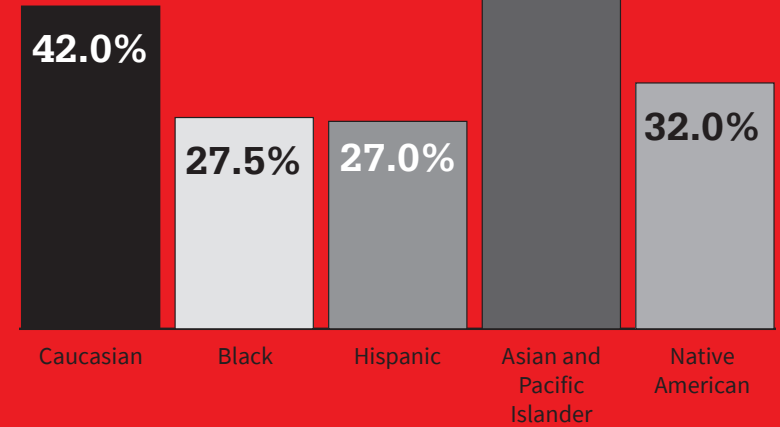
Adult enrollment continues declines since Great Recession

Demographic projections show that Ohio will face an 11% decline in the number of high school graduates from 2019 to 2037[7]. Ohio has an untapped population of 3 million adults between the ages of 25 and 64 who do not have a postsecondary credential[8]. Adult enrollment at Ohio public institutions of higher education (IHEs) peaked in 2010 after the Great Recession, but between 2010 and 2017 the number and proportion of adult students enrolling in Ohio's public IHEs steadily declined. In the fall of 2017, only 23 percent of the nearly 460,000 students enrolled in Ohio's public postsecondary institutions were adults aged 25 and older[9]. Adult enrollment at Ohio's public IHEs shows a modest increase beginning in 2018, but this is largely due to new partnership programs at Ohio IHEs that resulted in a significant increase in the enrollment of adult students from other states participating in fully online programs.

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	*2018	*2019	*2020
170,197	166,899	154,659	146,216	132,651	119,634	111,577	106,314	109,011	109,309	118,033

*Increases in adult learners enrolled in Ohio's Public Institutions of Higher Education since 2018 are largely due to the introduction of online program partnerships that enroll a significant number of out-of-state students.

Ohio's males are not keeping up with female attainment rates.

Men and women continue to earn degrees and credentials at different rates. From 2012 to 2020, men have earned 41.9% of all degrees from Ohio's public institutions of higher education and women have earned 58.1% of degrees[10].

Large geographic disparities continue to exist across the state[11].

Male and Female Attainment Rates

41.9%   58.1%
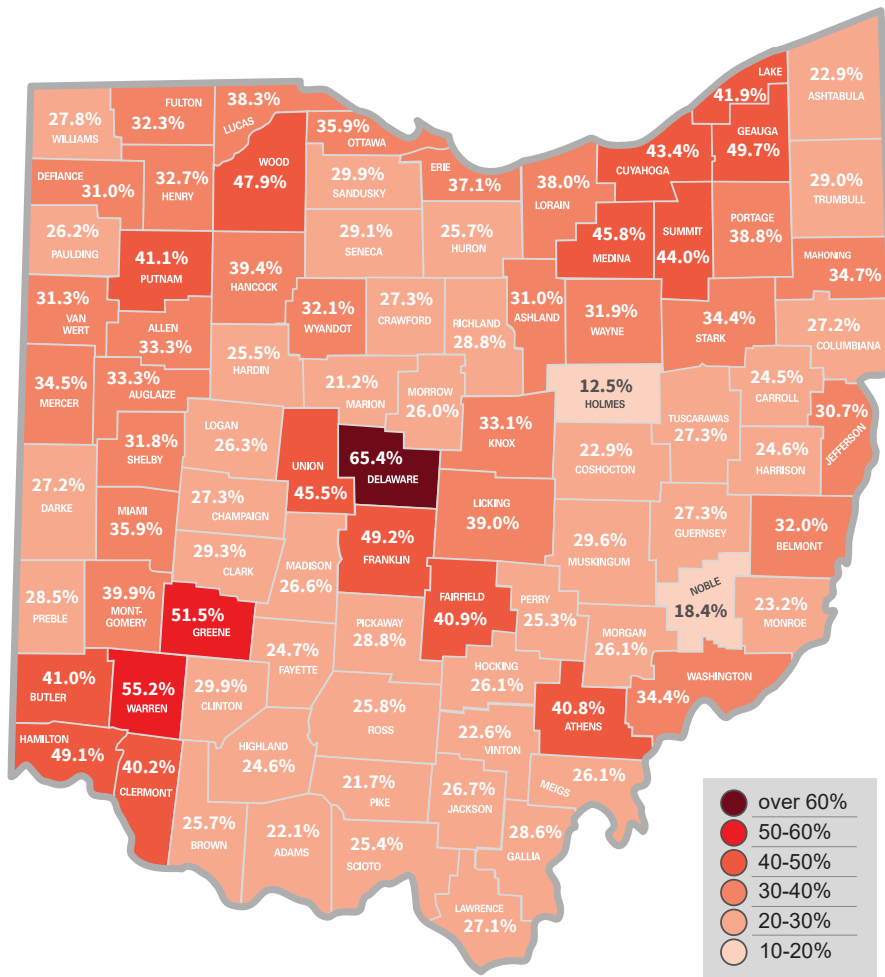
Chart data provided by Lumina Foundation

Degree attainment rates (i.e., percentage of people in Ohio ages 25 to 64 with at least an associate degree) range from 12.5 percent in Holmes County to 65.4 percent in Delaware County. *Note: The county data includes only postsecondary degrees, not certificates and certifications.*

Various, more modest differences in degree attainment rates also can be found in Ohio's highly populated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs):

Akron	42.9%
Cincinnati	45.0%
Cleveland/Elyria	43.1%
Columbus	47.0%
Dayton	41.8%
Toledo	39.6%

Degree attainment rates in Ohio's metropolitan areas range from 39.6 percent in Toledo to 47.0 percent in Columbus, but outside of these metro areas, 72 of Ohio's 88 counties have a degree attainment rate lower than 40 percent and almost half (43 of 88 counties) have a degree attainment rate of lower than 30 percent.

These variations in degree attainment across counties and metropolitan areas are likely shaped by a variety of cultural, economic, and political factors. Awareness of these variations and their underlying contributing factors can be utilized to shape attainment targets, strategies, and initiatives.

Tools for Moving Forward

Since the establishment of Ohio's attainment goal in 2017, several strategies have been enacted to increase the number of Ohioans earning a degree or credential. These strategies serve to move the needle on attainment in Ohio either directly or indirectly and may take several years to demonstrate results. Initiatives focused on students in elementary and secondary schools, for example, may lead to increases in the number of students attending an institution of higher education and earning a postsecondary degree or credential, but the effects of such programming will not be seen for years after its initiation.

STRATEGY 1

Accelerate credential attainment by providing pathways to a credential for students in secondary education.

One of the most important strategies the State of Ohio can pursue to increase postsecondary education and credential attainment in the long term is to foster an excellent, tightly aligned, and high-functioning education system that begins in pre-kindergarten and continues through high school to postsecondary education. To this end, key state agencies are purposefully collaborating to accelerate progress toward credential attainment. One tactic that can significantly accelerate the attainment of a postsecondary degree or credential is to provide pathways to earning college credit while still in high school. In Ohio, multiple such pathways have been established including **College Credit Plus (CCP)**[12], the **Advanced Placement (AP)**[13] program, **Early College High Schools**[14], the **International Baccalaureate (IB)**[15] program, **Career-Technical Credit Transfer (CT²)**[16] and the **High School Industry-Recognized Credential Program**[17].

STRATEGY 2

Strengthen pathways and remove barriers for adult learners to return to school and earn credentials.

Ohio cannot achieve its attainment goals and economic priorities by focusing solely on new high school graduates. Ohio is projected to see its high school population decline by nearly 8% by 2028[18]. Engaging with the nearly 3 million Ohio adults who do not possess a postsecondary degree or credential is essential[19].

Nearly 750,000 Ohioans over the age of 25 are without a high school diploma[20], a requirement to pursue a degree or credential. Ohio provides multiple pathways for adults to receive high school credentials and be on the path to postsecondary attainment, including the **Adult Diploma Program**[21], the **22+ Adult High School Diploma Program**[22], and **Aspire**[23].

Ohio recognizes that adult learners gain skills, knowledge, and experience in a variety of settings throughout their lives. Formal education, military training, and on-the-job training and experience can all impart college-level learning that should be considered as part of an adult's education and leveraged to improve degree or credential attainment. The Western Interstate Commission

College Credit Plus (CCP)

CCP helps high school students save money and get a head start on earning college credit. Students earn college and high school credits at the same time by taking college courses from community colleges or universities. CCP provides a wide variety of rigorous academic options to college-ready students. These courses are available at no cost to public and private school students; families do not pay for tuition, books, or fees (courses provided by private colleges or universities may have limited costs).

Many CCP students truly jumpstart their degree attainment by earning more than college credit – they actually earn a certificate or degree while pursuing their high school diploma. Since its inception in academic year 2015-2016, CCP has directly resulted in the attainment of 7,851 degrees and credentials*.

| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
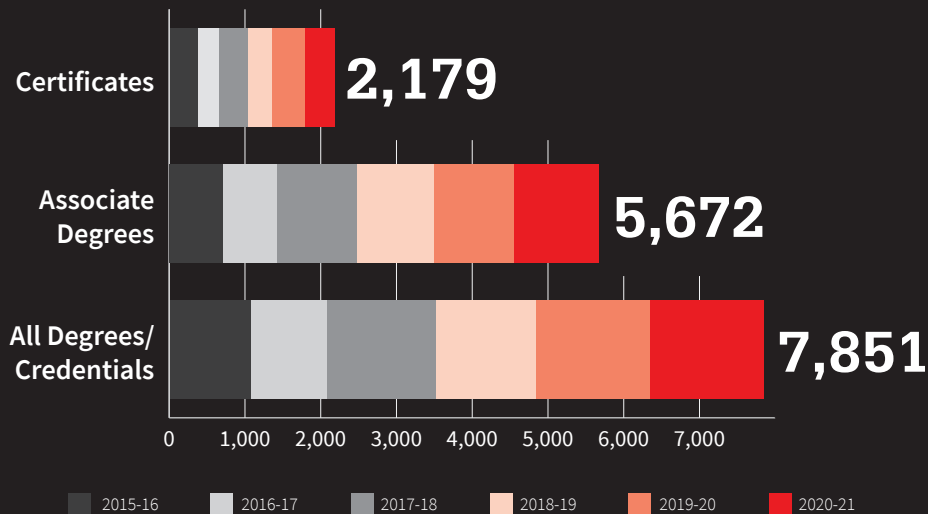
These data include students who had begun earning college credit under the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program (the precursor to CCP), Early College High Schools, and/or local dual enrolment activities.

for Higher Education (WICHE) found higher degree completion rates for adult learners who earned credit for prior learning compared to those who did not[24]. Ohio programs focused on providing college credit when it is due include **Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**[25], **Military Transfer Assurance Guides (MTAGs)**[26], **Industry Transfer Assurance Guides (ITAGs)**[27], and the **College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)**[28].

A total of 1.3 million Ohioans have some college credit but no degree (SCND)[29]. Of this group, the National Student Clearinghouse estimates that 9% or nearly 120,000 are likely to re-enroll in higher education **and** complete a degree program given appropriate supports. This group includes SCND adults who:

- have earned at least 60 college credits
- are under the age of 40
- were in their 20s when they last attended college
- attended more than one institution of higher education in the past
- stopped out of an Ohio institution of higher education less than five years ago

Part of Ohio's participation in the **National Governors Association's Educate 4 Opportunity**[30] program is focused on engaging the SCND adult population. The Re-Engaging Adults in PostSecondary (REAPS) working group was established to develop policy recommendations designed to improve access, success, and degree or credential attainment for adult learners. These recommendations are based on themes and research established through previous initiatives including **Finish for Your Future**[31], **Complete to Compete**[32] and **Strong Start to Finish**[33]. Policy recommendations are anticipated in January 2022.

Finances are a frequent barrier to adults returning to higher education. Ohio has launched innovative financial assistance programs for SCND adults including the **Second Chance Grant Pilot Program**[34] and **College Comeback**[35].
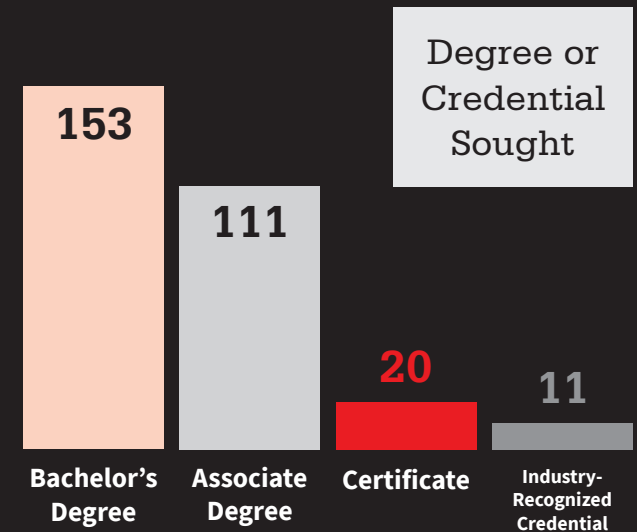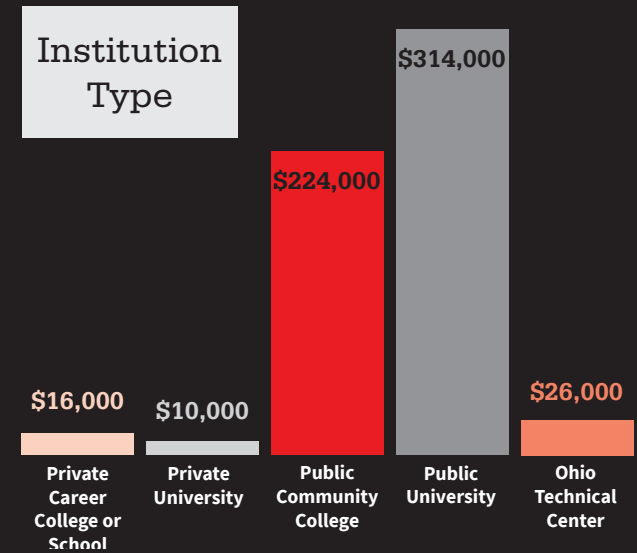
College Comeback & Second Chance Grant

One significant barrier that former college students with some credit but no degree (SCND) face is that they may hold past-due debts owed to their previously attended institution of higher education. This debt is often seen as an insurmountable barrier to earning a degree or credential. On May 12, 2021, ODHE issued formal guidance that clarified Ohio's laws and regulations regarding debt forgiveness in exchange for a prior student's re-enrollment at a public college or university. These debt forgiveness programs (collectively referred to as College Comeback) generally involve a written agreement with the student detailing financial responsibilities, academic entry requirements and progress requirements in exchange for cancellation of past-due debt when the agreed upon requirements are met. To date, at least seven Ohio public colleges and universities have developed College Comeback programs that allow for the cancellation of past-due debts, and several more are looking to add such programs in the coming year. The maximum amount of debt forgiven varies by institution but ranges between $1,000 at several community colleges and $5,000 at both Cleveland State University and Shawnee State University.

College Comeback has also made possible an innovative pilot program designed to provide a sustainable solution to the problem of stranded credits – college credit that is inaccessible to a student because they have an unpaid balance at the IHE where the student earned the credit, and the transcript is held as collateral. In December, 2021, eight public universities and community colleges in Northeast Ohio (Cleveland State University, Cuyahoga Community College, Kent State University, Lakeland Community College, Lorain County Community College, Stark State College, The University of Akron and Youngstown State University) partnered with Ithaka S+R to design and pilot a first-in-the-nation, inter-institutional agreement allowing for the settlement of institutional debt and release of transcripts for students with stranded credits returning to any of the institutions in the pilot program. This regional compact has the potential to impact as many as 60,000 Ohioans with stranded credits residing in Northeast Ohio[36].

The Second Chance Grant pilot program, a financial assistance program targeted at Ohioans who had previously attended a college or university but stopped out, was launched in October 2021. The program provides $3 million dollars to Ohioans returning to higher education in the form of $2,000 grants. In the first 75 days of the program, 295 grants totaling $590,000 have been reserved for students returning to 31 different institutions of higher education.

Institution Type

Private Career College or School	Private University	Public Community College	Public University	Ohio Technical Center
$16,000	$10,000	$224,000	$314,000	$26,000

Degree or Credential Sought

Bachelor's Degree	Associate Degree	Certificate	Industry-Recognized Credential
153	111	20	11

Continue Ohio's investment in college access, affordability, and workforce alignment, with special attention given to programs that support economically disadvantaged students, adult learners, and students of color.

In order to facilitate degree and credential attainment, the State of Ohio must continue to support programs, initiatives, and processes that demonstrate improved student access, success and completion. The FY 2022-2023 Ohio State Operating Budget included major investments by the Governor and the General Assembly in support of Ohio's postsecondary attainment objectives.

State Share of Instruction (SSI)[37] is the state funding allocated to Ohio's public colleges and universities. Ohio's SSI funding is a 100% performance funding model that incentivizes student success by basing funding on course completion, degree completion, and progress metrics, as well as some medical, doctoral, and research set-asides. SSI increased from $2.04 billion to $2.05 billion in FY2022 and $2.07 billion in FY2023.

Ohio supports low-income students by providing resources and grants to help defray the cost of higher education. One important step for students to take is completion of the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**[38]; multiple state agencies are collaborating to increase FAFSA completion by students before they graduate from high school as part of the **3 To Get Ready/4 To Go**[39] campaign. Students who complete the FAFSA not only apply for need-based federal aid, but also state aid in the form of the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG). OCOG funding increased 5.0% to $106.7 million in FY22 and an additional 5.4% to $112.5 million in FY23. Economically disadvantaged students are also served through

the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' Community College Acceleration Program (CCAP), which received an additional $5 million in funding in the new biennium. Eligible students can use this program for educational expenses including childcare and transportation. The **Short Term Certificate Grant Program**[40], a need-based financial aid program for students enrolled in a program that can be completed in less than one year and awards a certificate or industry-recognized credential in an in-demand job, was funded at $3.5 million per year for the next biennium.

Ohio provides additional financial aid designed to incentivize degree and credential attainment in high-demand fields helping to drive Ohio's 21st century economy. The **Choose Ohio First (COF)**[41] Scholarship Program, Ohio's scholarship program for students pursuing a certificate or degree in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) or STEM education, received a 75% increase to $25 million dollars in FY22 and another 12% incre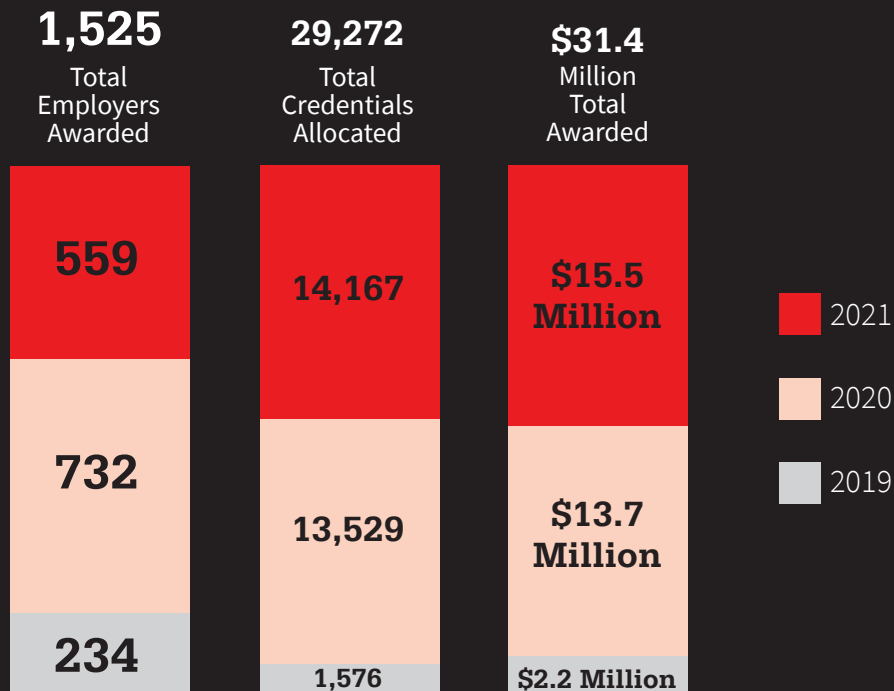ase to $28 million for FY23. Other programs focusing on aligning student credentials with industry needs include the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program, which provided elementary and secondary schools with $34 million over the next biennium for education of students seeking industry-recognized credentials, and **TechCred**[42], which gives businesses the chance to upskill current or future employees for better jobs in technology-focused fields.

> The performance-based funding model for higher education is working as intended. Between 2013 and 2020, the number of degrees and certificates awarded by Ohio's public colleges and universities increased by 19 percent.

TechCred

TechCred incentivizes businesses to provide training to current workers or future employees, resulting in workers earning technology-focused short-term credentials. TechCred was provided more than $58 million in state funding in FY2022-2023. Since its inception in October of 2019, TechCred has been effective at assisting Ohioans seeking to gain an industry-recognized credential. Credentials that are eligible under TechCred are short-term, industry-recognized, and technology-focused. TechCred reimburses up to $2,000 of the cost of training upon completion of a credential, up to $30,000 per employer, during each application period. To date, over 29,000 such credentials have been funded through TechCred.

1,525
Total Employers Awarded

29,272
Total Credentials Allocated

$31.4
Million Total Awarded

	Total Employers Awarded	Total Credentials Allocated	Million Total Awarded
2021	559	14,167	$15.5 Million
2020	732	13,529	$13.7 Million
2019	234	1,576	$2.2 Million

Help all students succeed in not only going to college, but also completing college.

Over the past couple of decades, higher education institutions and systems have begun to recognize and emphasize the importance of ensuring that students not only can access higher education, but also can succeed within college, earning a degree or credential. This shift has led to changes such as performance-based funding models and the expansion of admission offices into enrollment management offices. In Ohio, several large-scale initiatives have had the express objective of ensuring that students in higher education are able to successfully navigate and graduate from their institution of higher education. Current examples of these initiatives include the **Scaling Up Community College Efforts for Student Success (SUCCESS)**[43] program, The **Ohio Mathematics Initiative**[44], and **Ohio Strong Start to Finish (OhioSSF)**[45].

SUCCESS is a research-based partnership between MDRC, ODHE, and two Ohio community colleges. Informed by data-supported student success initiatives including the City University of New York's (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) initiative[46] (which has been successfully replicated in Ohio at three community colleges), this comprehensive approach to student support builds capacity and informs Ohio about the best ways to provide advising and other wraparound supports to ensure increased degree completion.
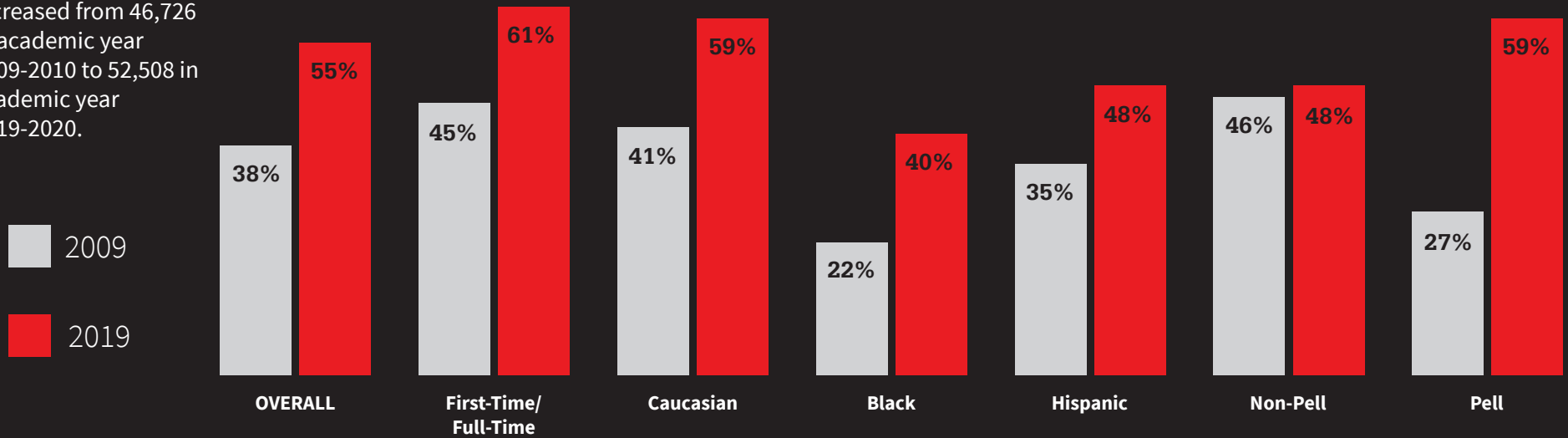
The Ohio Mathematics Initiative is a collaborative effort of mathematics faculty members from Ohio's public colleges and universities and high schools to rethink mathematics courses, curricula, and the relationship of mathematics to other disciplines. In partnership with ODHE and ODE, the community has worked to develop and promote multiple entry-level courses and pathways aligned with academic disciplines; co-requisite remediation as an alternative to lengthy developmental sequences; high school transition courses designed to help students transition from high school into college-level mathematics remediation free; and the discussion of Algebra 2 Equivalent Pathways in high school.

Ohio Strong Start to Finish (OhioSSF)

Completion of a gateway course in mathematics and English during the first year of college is a consistent early indicator of student success and degree completion. OhioSSF is a collaboration between ODHE, the Inter-University Council of Ohio, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, and the public colleges and universities in Ohio designed specifically to significantly increase the number of students completing gateway mathematics and English courses within their first academic year through the adoption of developmental education reform, increased academic support, and holistic student services.

For students entering in fall 2019, 55% of all students and 61% of first-time, full-time students completed both English and mathematics gateway courses in the first academic year. Students of color saw the greatest percent increase in completion of gateway courses from the 2009 baseline year. Black student completion increased from 22% to 40% (an 82% gain) and Hispanic student completion rose from 35% to 48% (a 37% gain). However, the achievement gap persists, with white students completing the gateway courses at 18% and 13% higher rates than Black and Hispanic students, respectively. In addition, the total number of students completing both mathematics and English courses increased from 46,726 in academic year 2009-2010 to 52,508 in academic year 2019-2020.

Year One Gateway English and Math Completion Rates

Legend: 2009, 2019

	OVERALL	First-Time/Full-Time	Caucasian	Black	Hispanic	Non-Pell	Pell
2009	38%	45%	41%	22%	35%	46%	27%
2019	55%	61%	59%	40%	48%	48%	59%

An additional significant gain achieved through the Strong Start to Finish program was the scaling of developmental education reform. The adoption of co-requisite remediation reduced the number of students enrolled in stand-alone developmental education courses, thus accelerating their path to degree completion.

Developmental Education Enrollments			
	2016	2020	Percent Decrease
English	21,636	12,108	44.0%
Mathematics	59,066	29,261	50.4%
Total	**80,702**	**41,369**	**48.7%**

Looking Ahead

To summarize, Ohio has made progress — the number of working age adults with a postsecondary degree, certificate, or other credential of value in the workplace has slowly increased over the past 10 years for all major racial and ethnic groups. However, at our current rate of degree and certificate production, we will not meet employer needs, and disturbing gaps in postsecondary attainment will persist for underrepresented minorities.

If Ohio hopes to meet its workforce needs, urgent efforts are needed to significantly accelerate degree and credential attainment as we move into the future. Areas of focus should include:

- Communicating the necessity and value of postsecondary credentials to the prosperity of individuals, communities, and our state.
- Working creatively and collaboratively to keep the cost of postsecondary education affordable.
- Engaging adult learners, many of whom have earned some postsecondary credits but have not completed a certificate or degree, with particular attention to developing resources that would help adults choose pathways that best fit their interests and goals.
- Increasing postsecondary opportunities for populations traditionally underrepresented in higher education, including racial minorities, adult learners, low-income students, and rural students.
- Employing evidence-based practices known to enhance student success, particularly those that have been shown to reduce equity gaps.

For more information:

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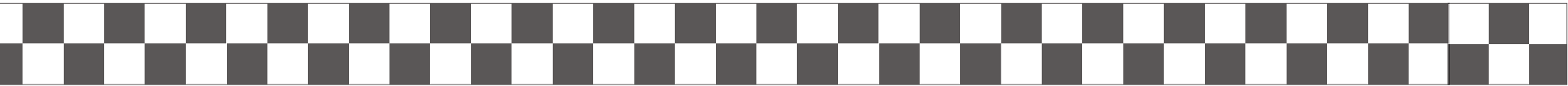Ohio Department of Higher Education
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Endnotes

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2 **https://luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/2021/#/progress**

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10 **https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/certificates-and-degrees-awarded---trends**

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14 **https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Career-and-College-Planning/College-Prep-and-Early-College-Programs-for-High-S**

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29 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2019). Some College, No Degree: A 2019 Snapshot for the Nation and 50 States. **https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SCND_Report_2019.pdf**

30 **https://www.nga.org/educateforopportunity/**

31 **https://www.ohiohighered.org/FFYF**

32 **https://completetocompeteohio.org/**

33 **https://www.ohiohighered.org/SSTF**

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