



The Workforce Outlook

Data-Driven Insights for Education and Industry

West Michigan Talent Trends



Demographic Headwinds

Demographic headwinds are structural, not cyclical.



Credential Supply

Credential supply cannot meet credential-driven demand.



Shift to Generalization

Shift from specialization to generalization is accelerating across roles.



AI/Automation Pressures

AI/Automation pressures rising faster than adoption capacity.



Durable Human Skills

Durable human skills are now the shared currency of the labor market.



Succession Risk

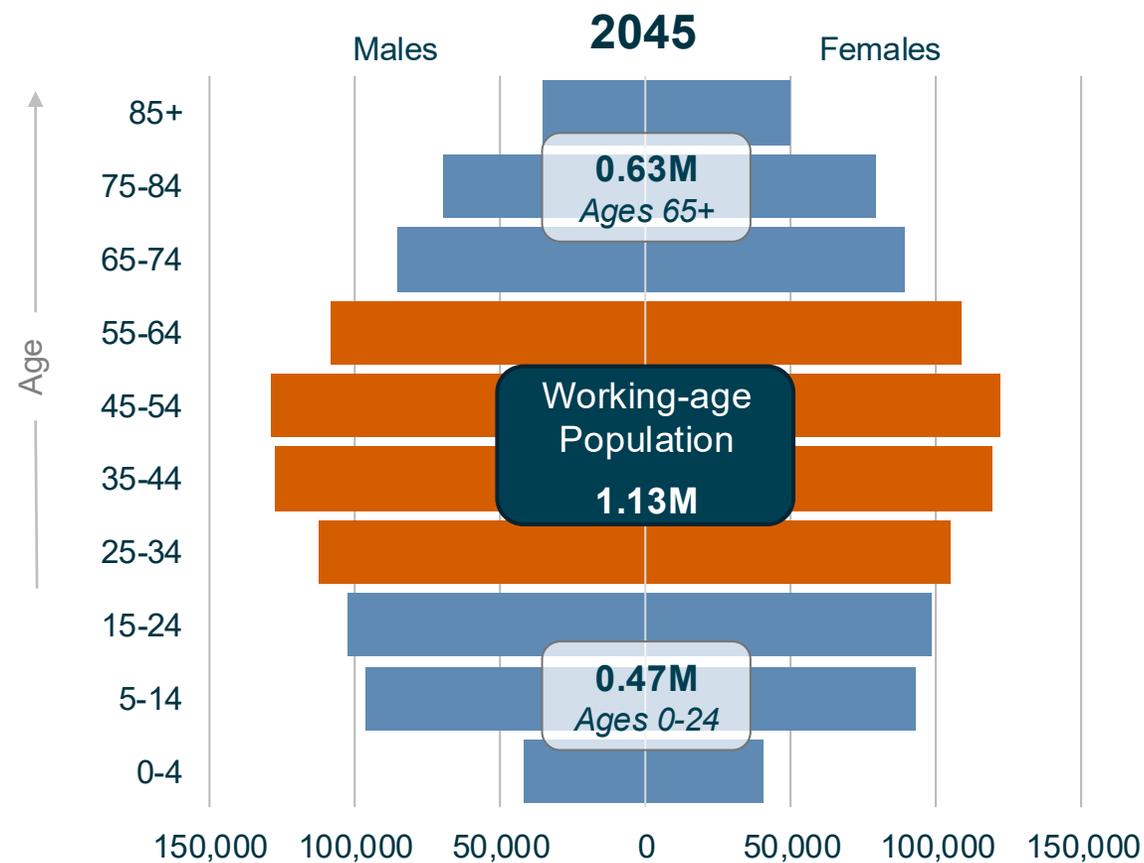
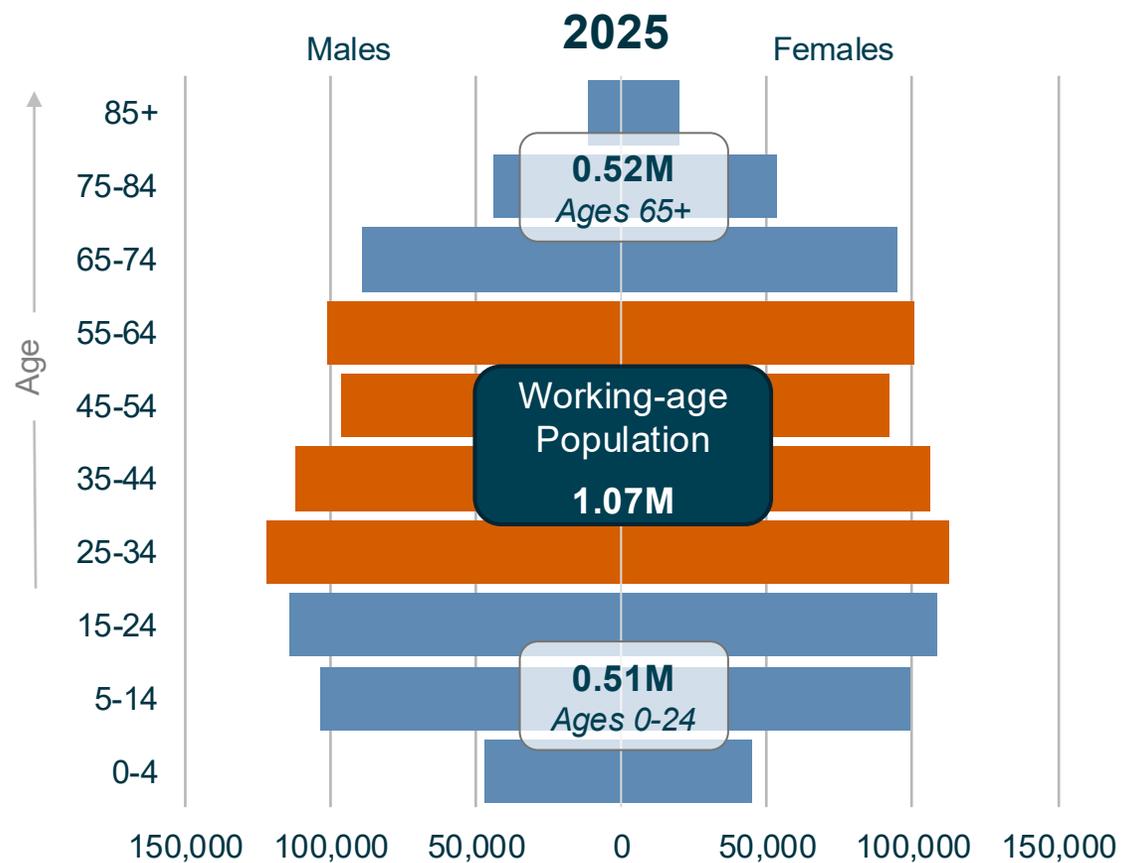
Succession risk is surging in managerial, technical & skilled roles.



Workforce Expectations

Workforce expectations are changing faster than employer adaptation.

Aging Population, Plateauing Workforce



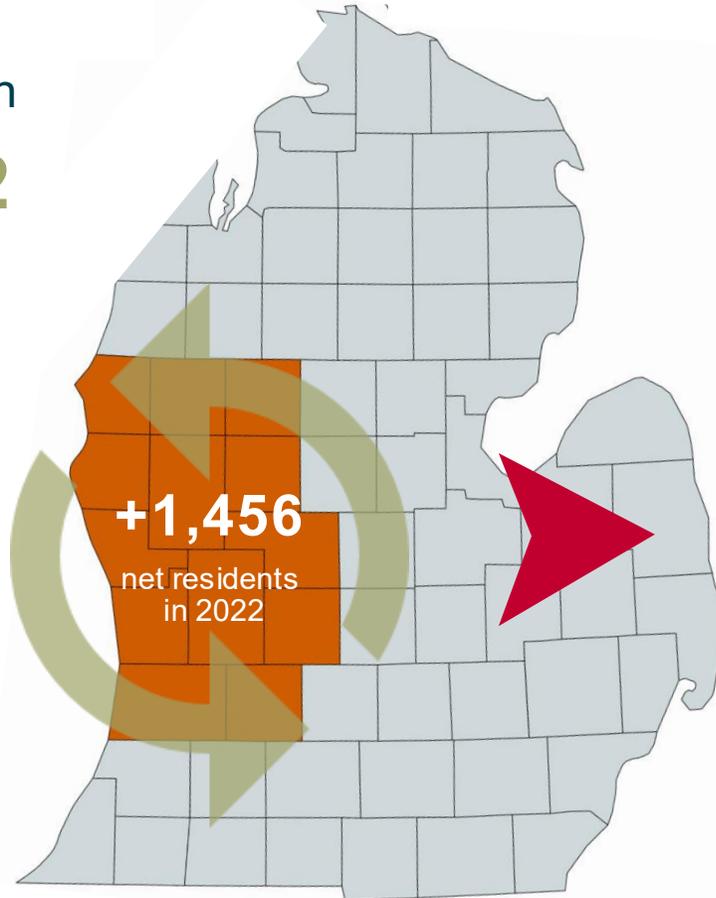
Migration is Not Solving the Talent Equation



2022 Population

1,637,792

+32,168
moved to West Michigan
in 2022

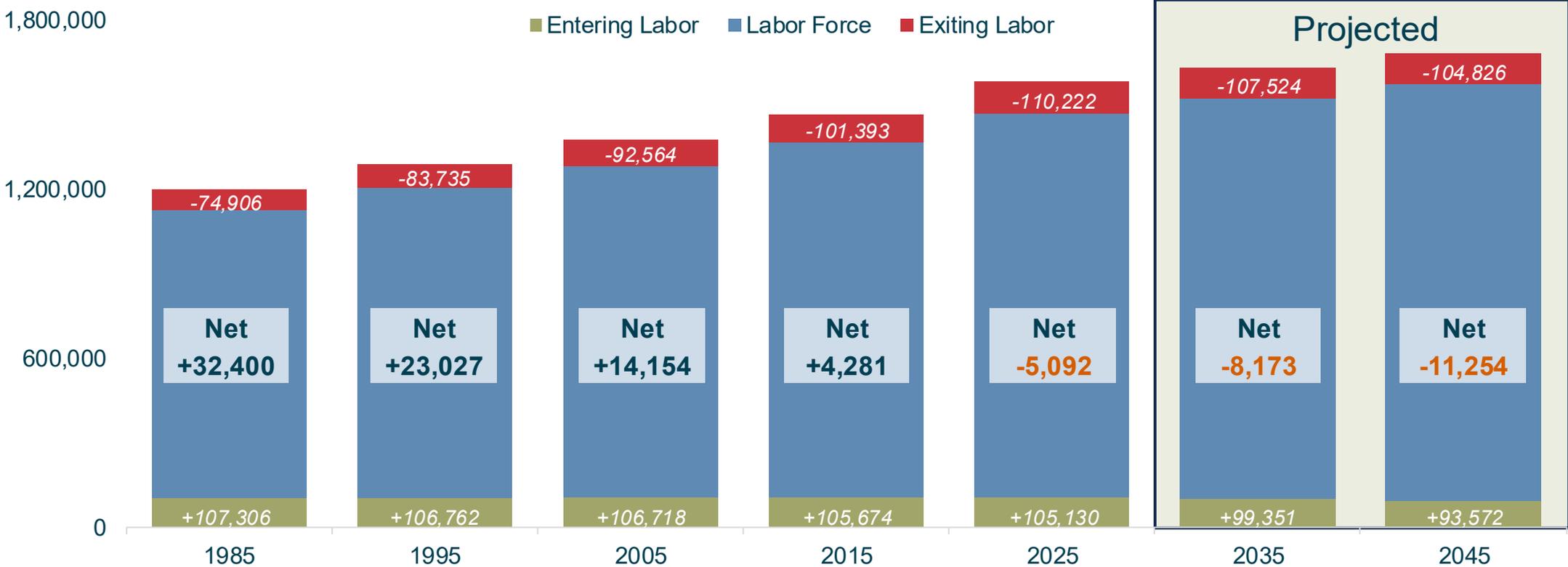


-30,710
moved away from
West Michigan in 2022



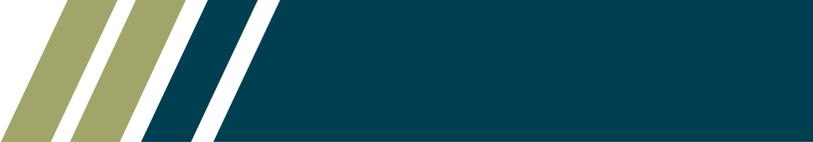
Labor Force Entrants Permanently Declining

Entering vs. Exiting Labor Force, West Michigan
(1985-2045)

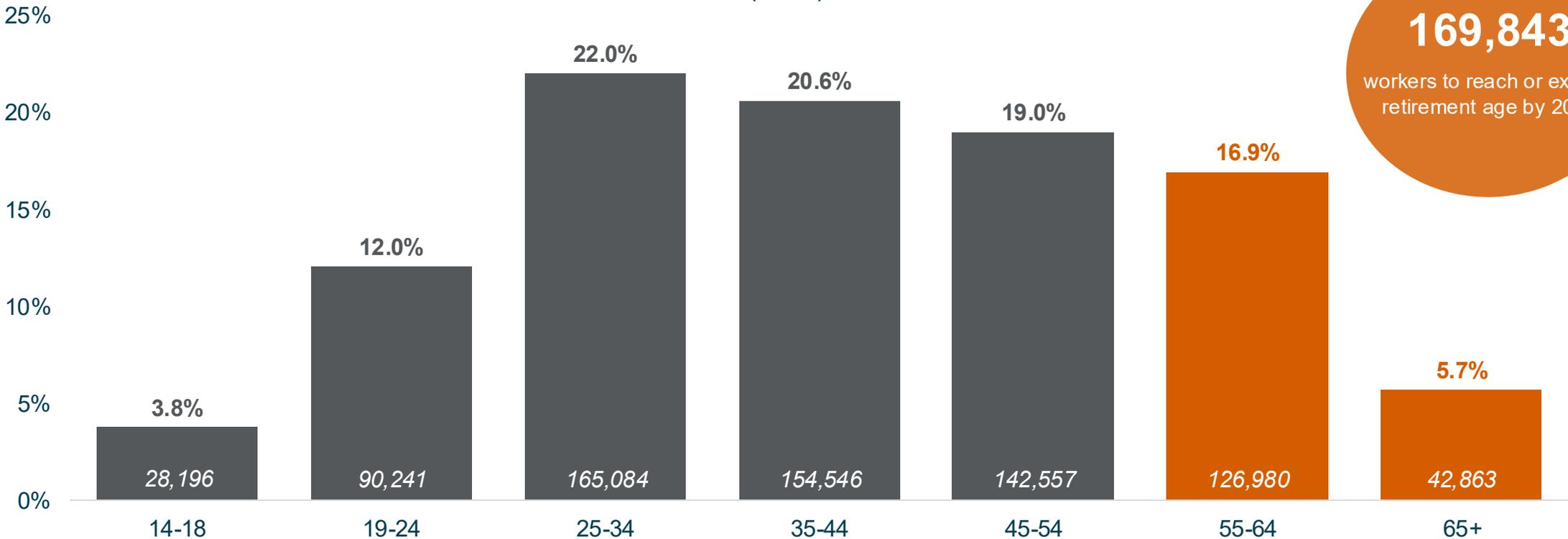


Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (1985-2025)

Over 1 in 5 Workers to Reach or Exceed Retirement Age by 2035



Age Distribution of West Michigan Workforce (2025)



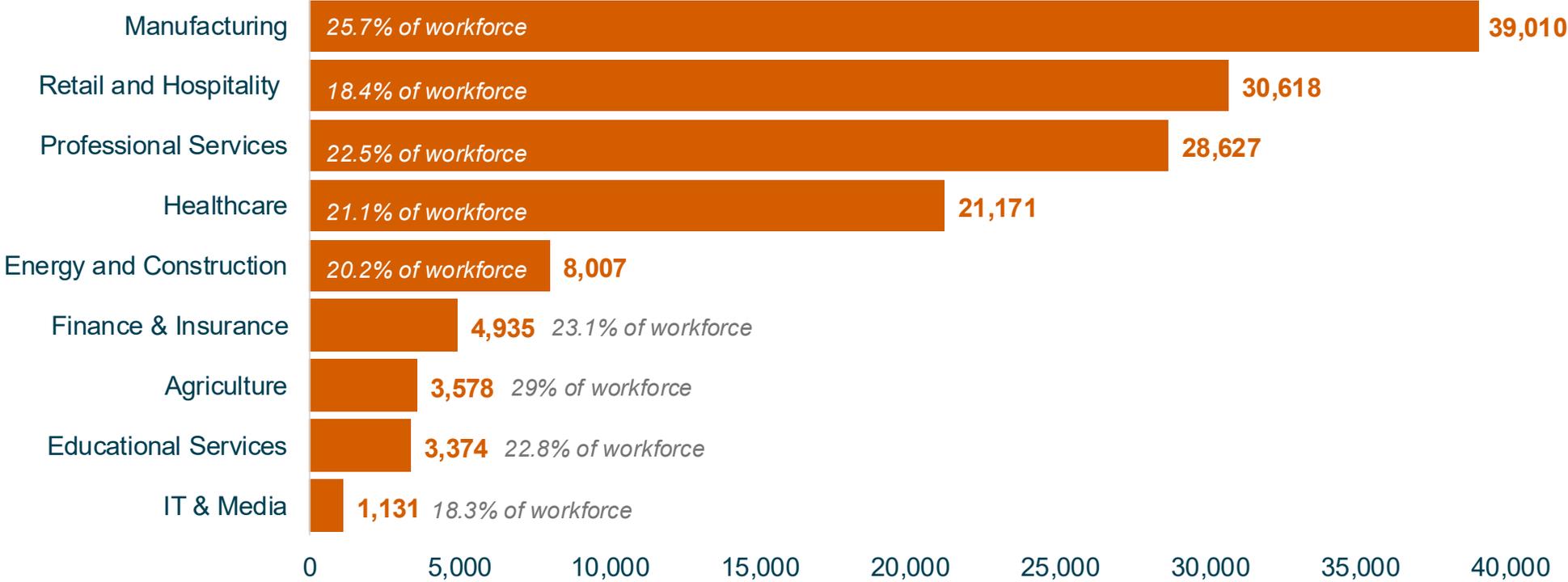
169,843
workers to reach or exceed retirement age by 2035



U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (2025); Lightcast, Occupation Table (2025)

Experience-Intensive Industries Face Greatest Succession Pressure

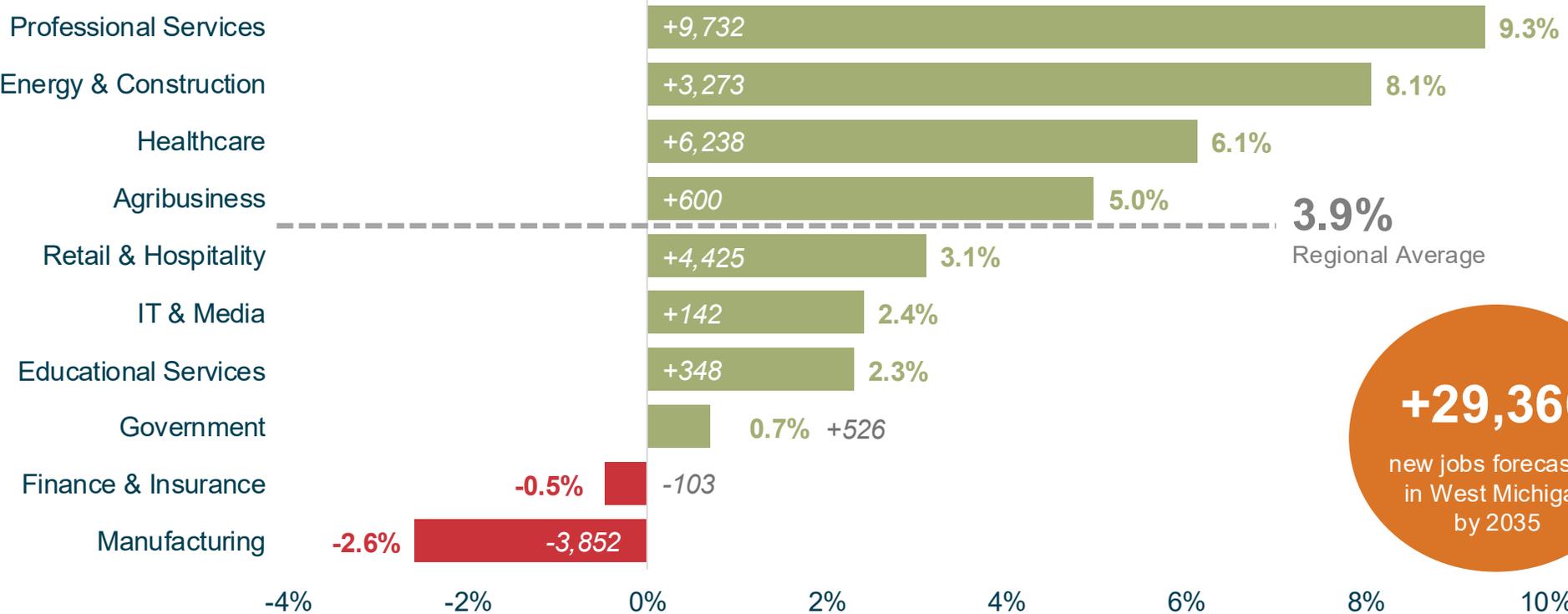
55+ Age Distribution for West Michigan Industries
(2025)



U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (2025); LightCast, Region Overview (2025)

Growth Led by Advisory, Infrastructure, and Care Industries

Projected Net Employment Change for West Michigan Industries (2025-2035)

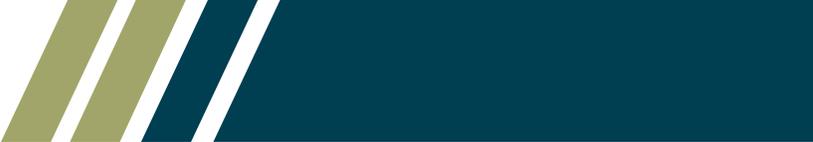


+29,366
new jobs forecasted in West Michigan by 2035

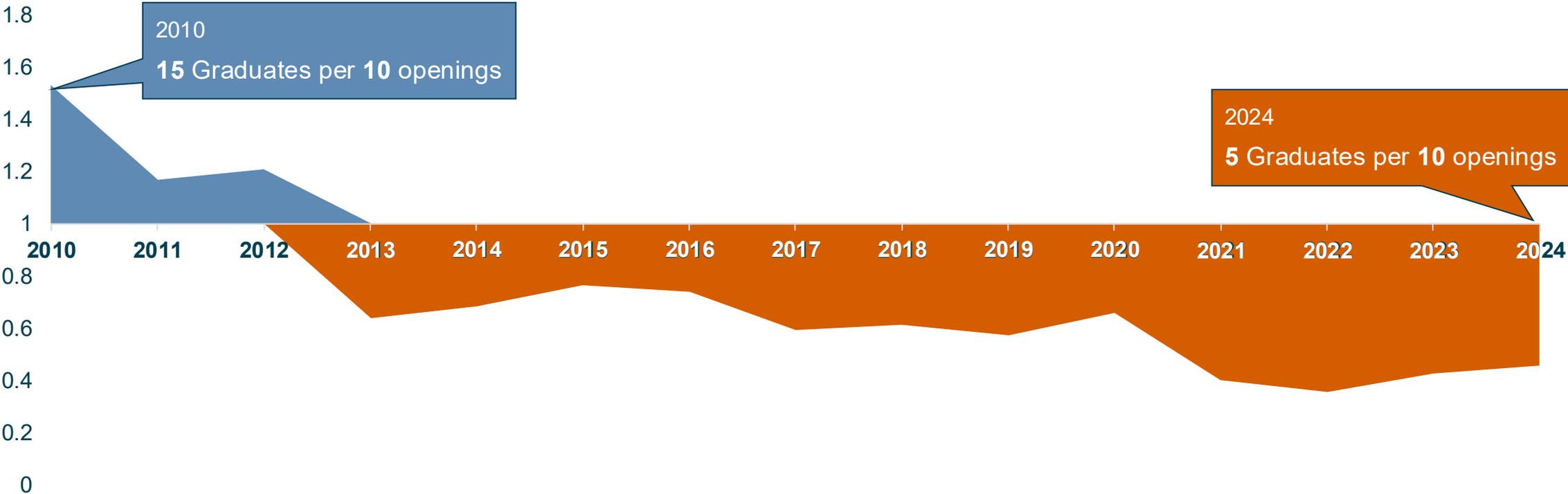


U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (2025); LightCast, Region Overview (2025-2035)

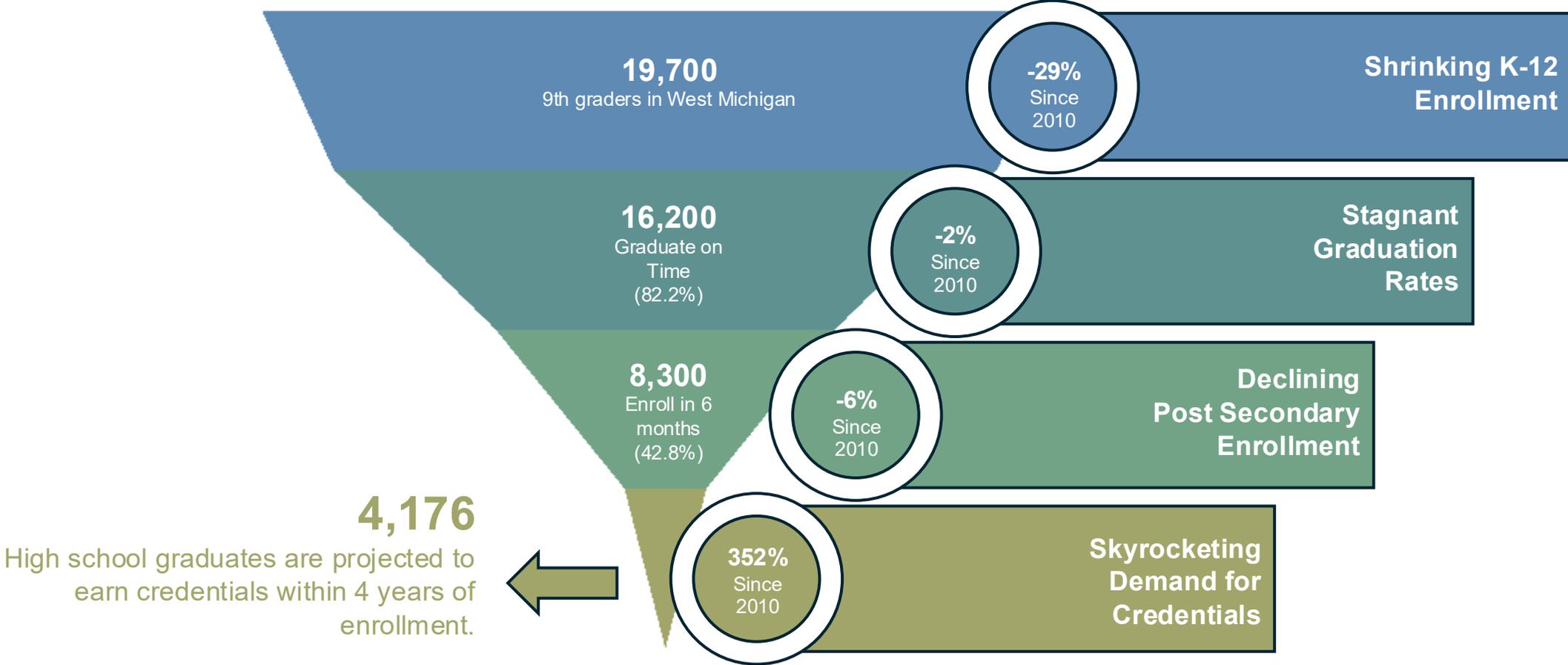
Growing Talent Gap Threatens Growth



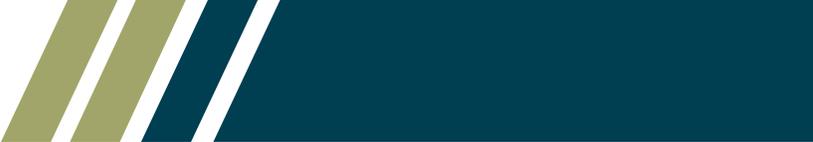
Ratio of Graduates per Job Opening Requiring a Credential, West Michigan (2010-2024)



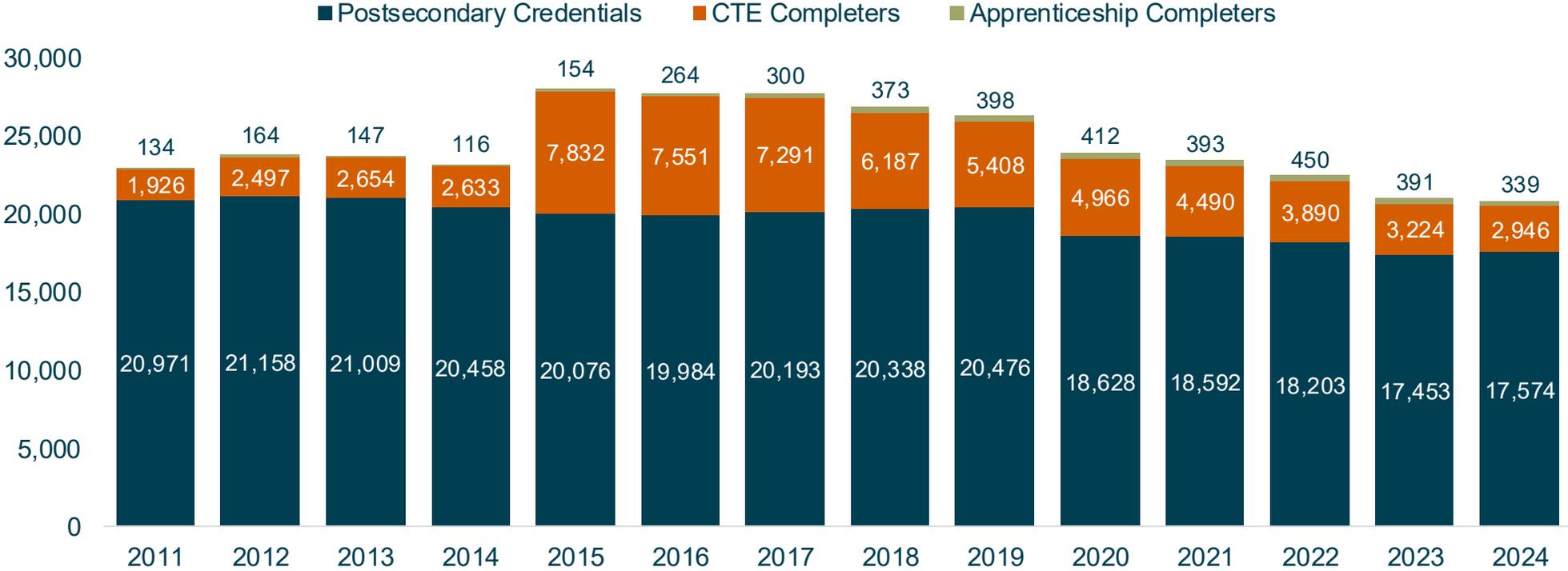
21% of 9th Graders Will Earn a Credential in 8 Years



Fewer Graduates Are Being Produced



Number of Graduates by Program Type, West Michigan (2011-2024)



+153.0%
increase in
Apprenticeship
completions since
2011

+53.0%
increase in **CTE**
completions since
2011

-16.2%
decrease in
postsecondary
credentials awarded
since 2011

Note: Apprenticeships and Certifications are not consistently reported, so actual participation may be higher than shown.

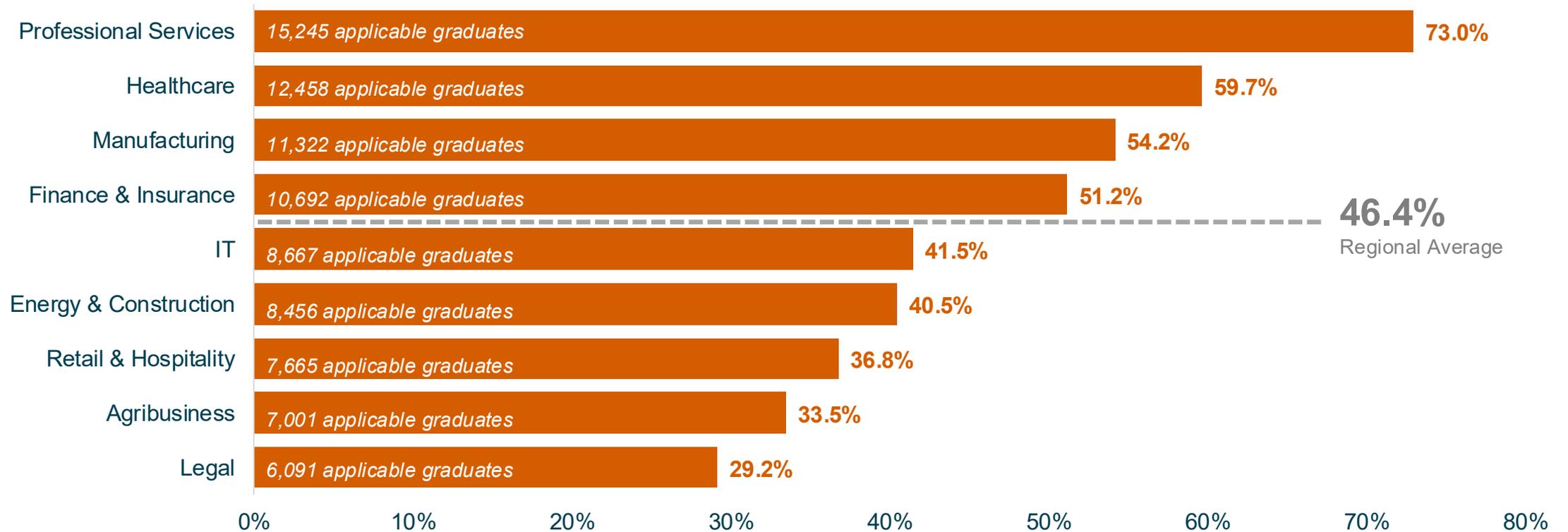
National Center For Educational Statistics, IPEDS (2011-2024); CTEIS



Critical Shortages Pair With Low Supply



Percentage of Demand Met by Graduate Supply Across West Michigan Industries (2024)



Where are the Gaps?



STEM

engineering, software development, data & analytics, cybersecurity, scientific research

1 graduate for every 2 job openings requiring a credential



-1% decline in graduates since 2010



+12% growth in demand since 2010



Skilled Trades & Applied Tech

installation, maintenance & repair, construction trades, manufacturing operations, technical support & automation

1 graduate for every 3 job openings requiring a credential



-3% decline in graduates since 2010



+15% growth in demand since 2010



Business

management, operations, finance, strategy & consulting, entrepreneurship

2 graduates for every 1 job opening requiring a credential



-6% decline in graduates since 2010



+53% growth in demand since 2010



Social Sciences & Humanities

research & analysis, policy & public service, communication & writing, media & content, education

1 graduate for every 3 job openings requiring a credential

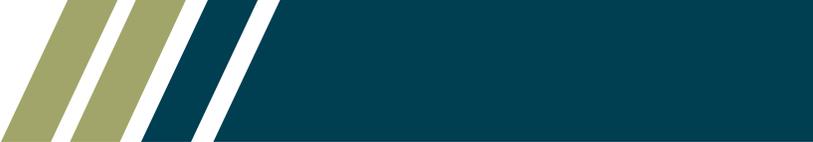


-7% decline in graduates since 2010

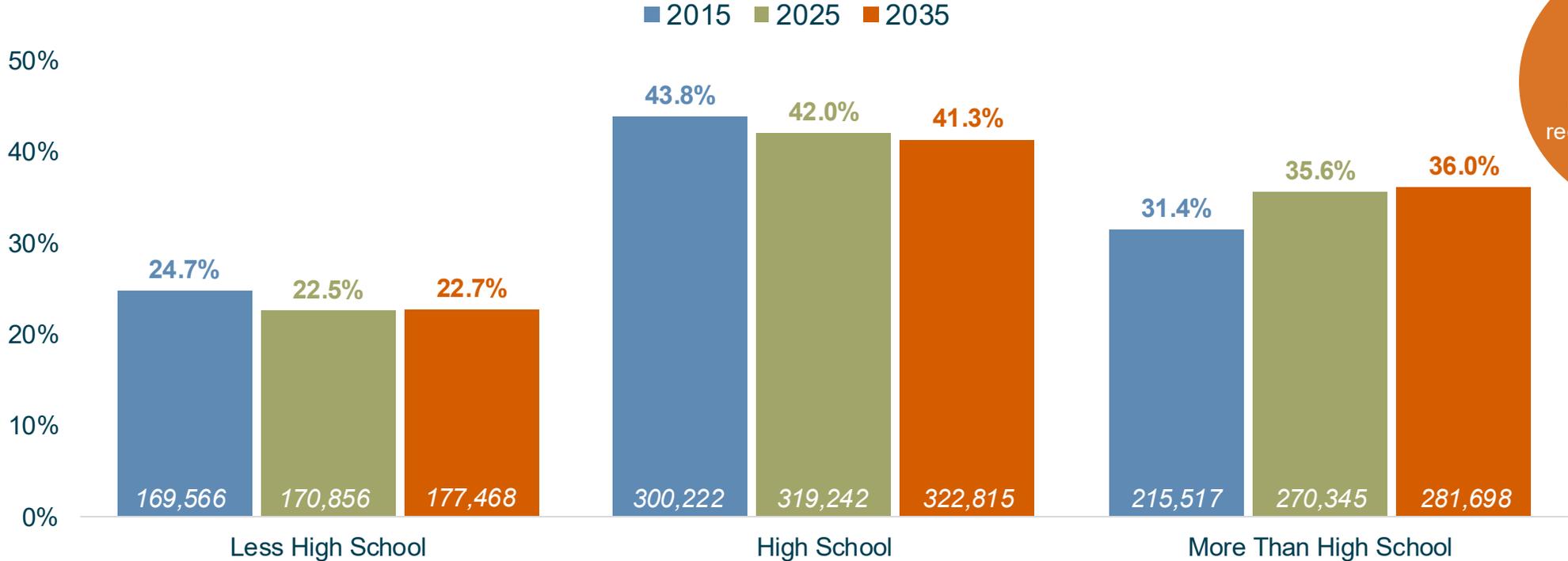


+12% growth in demand since 2010

Credential Shortages Expected to Worsen As Demand Grows



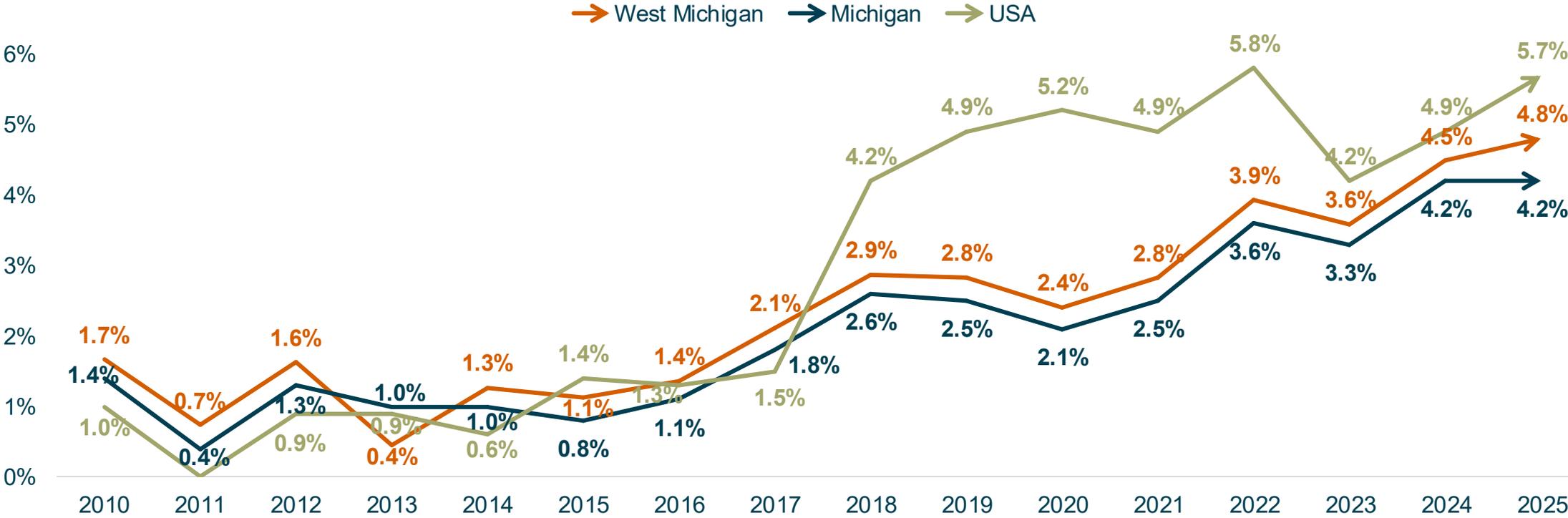
Current and Projected Employment by Educational Requirements, West Michigan (2015–2035)



More than
1 in 3
new jobs by 2035 will require education beyond high school

Demand for AI Skills Is Growing in STEM Jobs

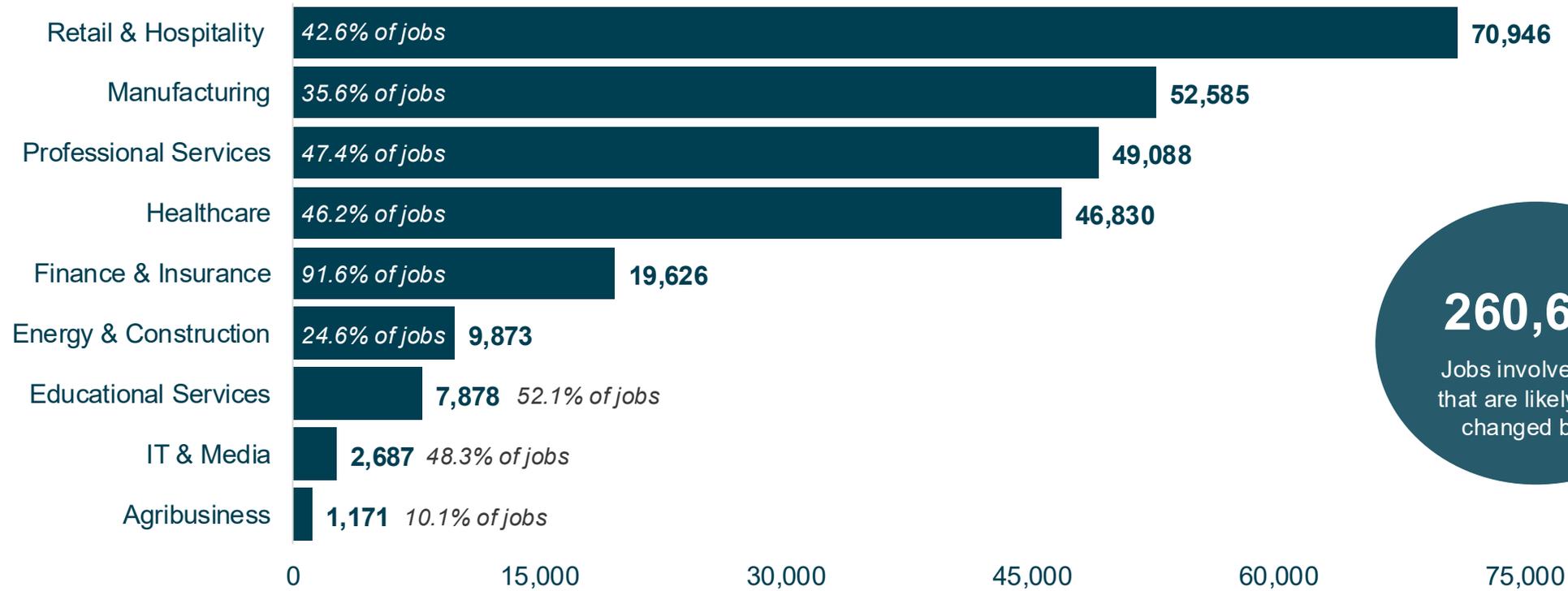
Share of STEM Job Postings Mentioning AI Skills, West Michigan (2010-2025)



AI Will Reshape Work Across Every Major Industry



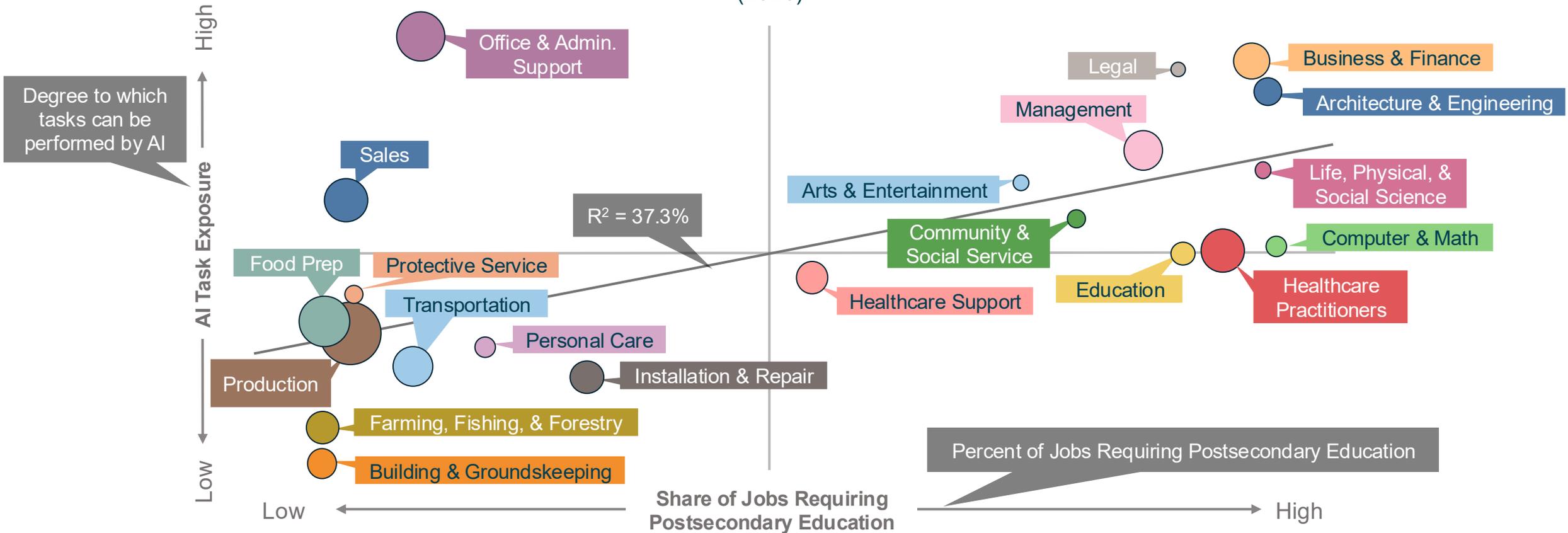
Volume of Jobs Impacted by AI for West Michigan's Industries (2025)



AI Exposure Is Highest in Knowledge-Intensive Occupations

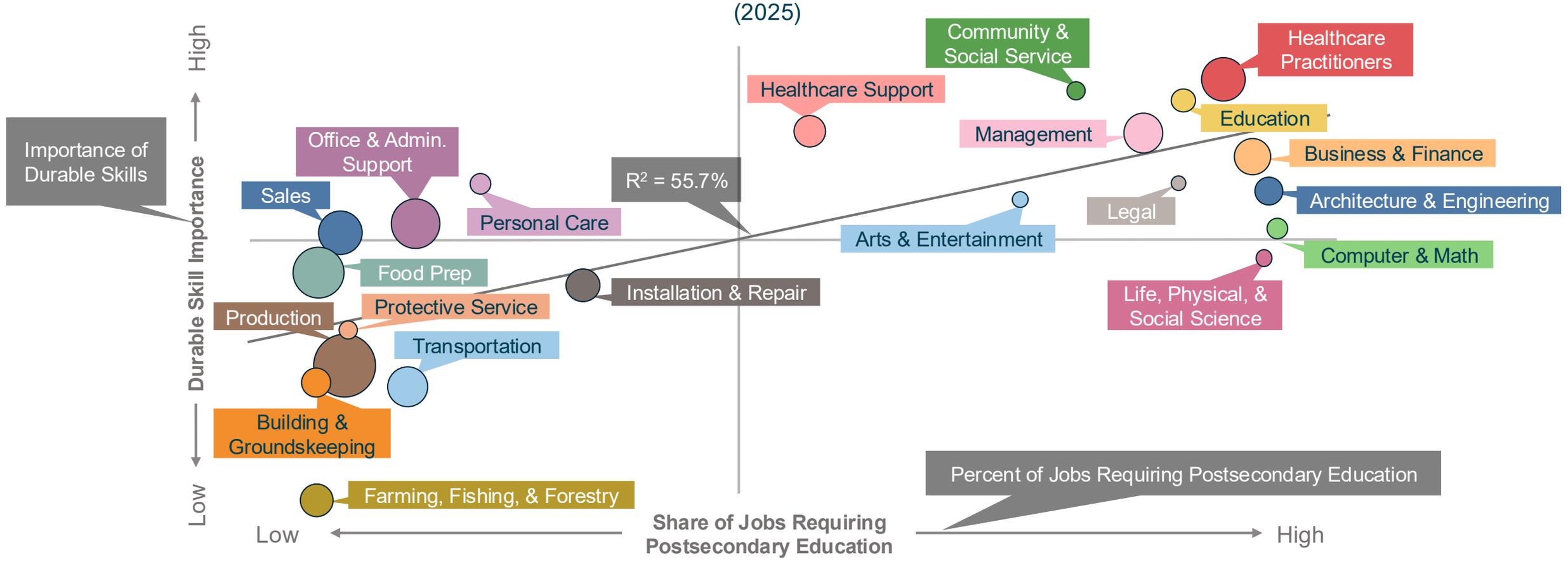
AI Task Exposure by Education Requirements for West Michigan Occupations

(2025)



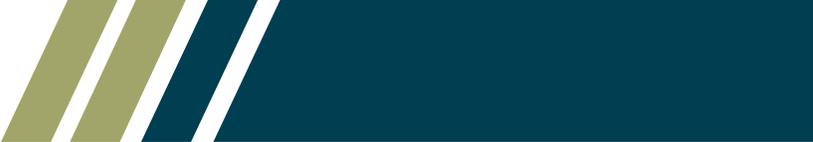
These Roles Also Place the Greatest Importance on Durable Skills

Durable Skill Importance by Education Requirements for West Michigan Occupations (2025)

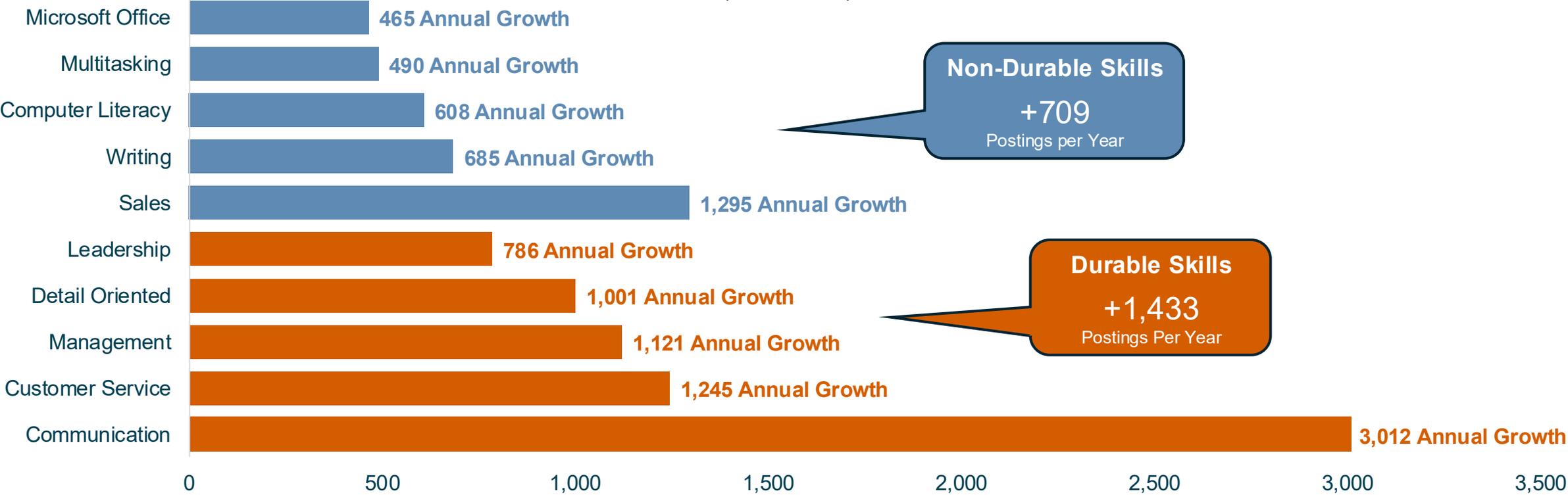


U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics
Durable Skill Importance derived from O*Net 'Work Styles' Importance Rating.

Durable Skills Growing 2X Faster Than Others

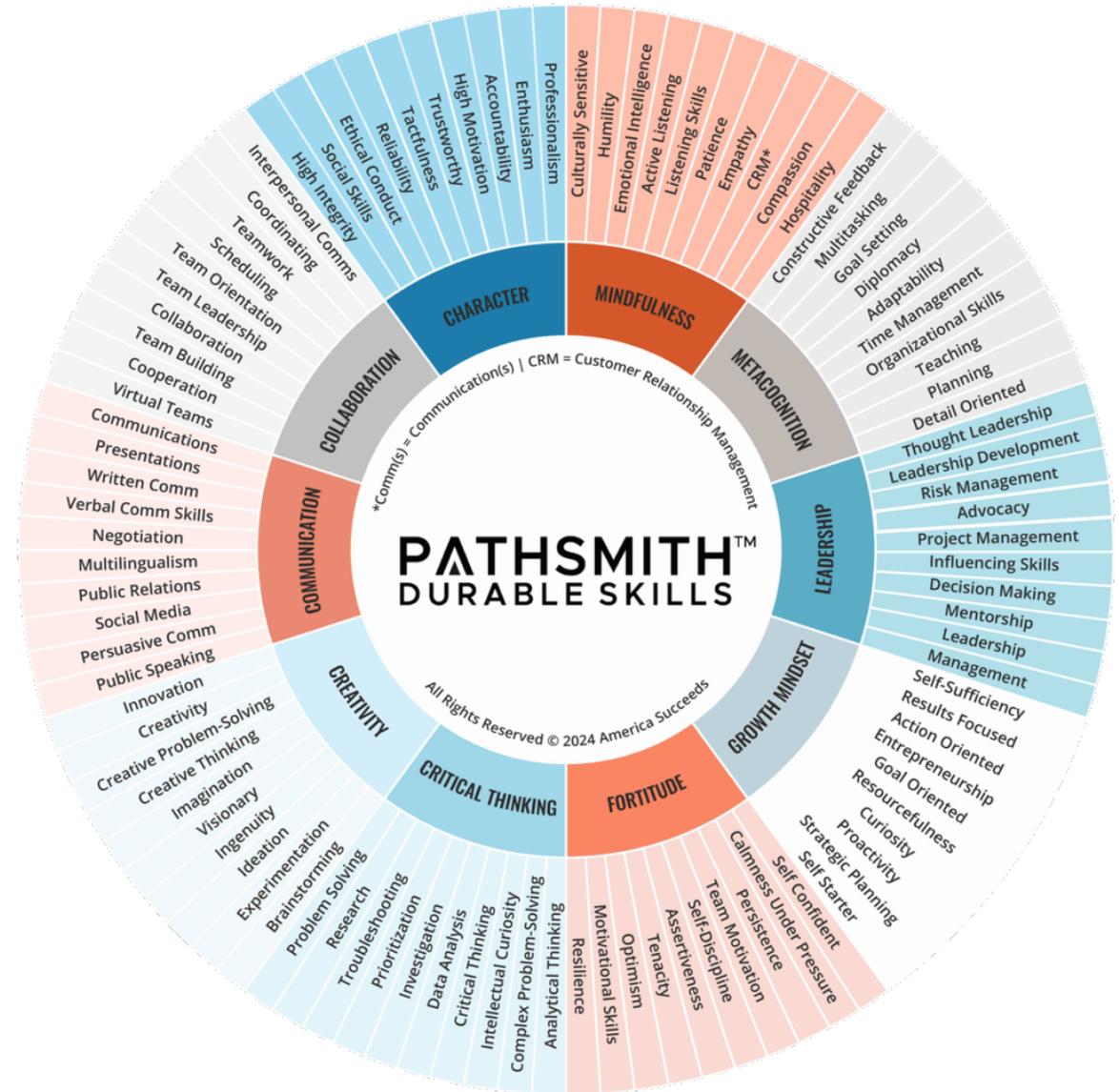


Top 5 Non-Durable vs. Durable Skills by Annual Job Posting Growth, West Michigan (2020-2025)



What Do We Mean by Durable Skills?

Communication. Collaboration.
Character. Mindfulness.
Leadership. Metacognition.
Growth Mindset. **Fortitude.**
Critical Thinking. Creativity.



West Michigan Talent Trends



Demographic Headwinds

Demographic headwinds are now structural, not cyclical.

Talent shortages will persist even in economic slowdowns.



Credential Supply

Credential supply cannot meet credential-driven demand.

Region must expand capacity, strengthen K-12 pathways & improve talent alignment.



Shift to Generalization

Shift from specialization to generalization is accelerating across roles.

Employers must prioritize development of broad skillsets, build internal mobility pathways & redesign roles to leverage more flexible, multi-disciplinary talent.



AI/Automation Pressures

AI/Automation pressures rising faster than adoption capacity.

Employers must proactively determine how AI will change job functions and role design, and align workforce development, reskilling, and productivity strategies to ensure AI enables — rather than displaces — their talent.



Durable Human Skills

Durable human skills are now the shared currency of the labor market.

Durable skills development should be integrated into K-12, postsecondary & employer-led training.



Succession Risk

Succession risk is surging in managerial, technical & skilled roles.

Targeted leadership development and knowledge transfer are urgent needs.



Workforce Expectations

Workforce expectations are changing faster than employer adaptation.

Employers must modernize job quality, strengthen management practices, and redesign advancement pathways to remain competitive in attracting and retaining talent.

Panel



Moderator
Steve Heethuis
Praeco Skills



Carrie Wilson
Freedom Construction



Nathan Barr
HealthBar



Casey Lowery
Applied Innovation



CAREER READINESS



CONFERENCE

Thank You