



MIDWESTERN
HIGHER EDUCATION
— **COMPACT** —

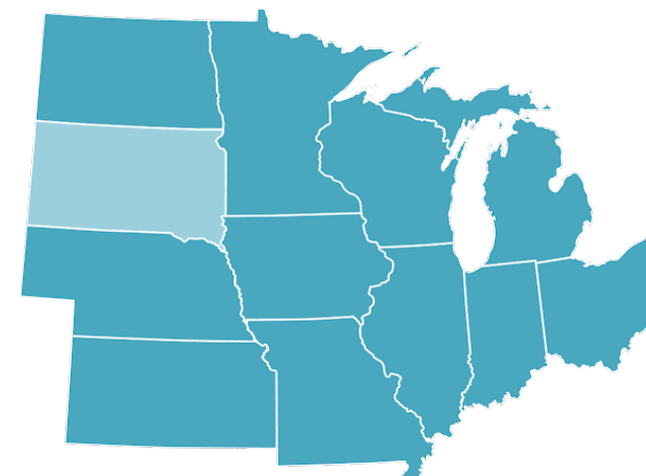
CSG Annual Business Meeting:
MHEC ROI in Midwest

September 2, 2026
Susan Heegaard, President



What is a Compact?

- **A contract that allows states to work together, rooted in the U.S. Constitution:** In MHEC's case, the compact strengthens postsecondary education in the states in the U.S. Midwest Census Region (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, and WI) through interstate cooperation and resource sharing.
- **Statute establishing MHEC:** Makes the Commission an instrumentality of state government in each of the member states, which enables MHEC to, in limited circumstances set forth in the statute, act on behalf of and for the benefit of the states.
- Not a licensure compact; no bonding authority.



The Midwestern Higher Education Compact brings together leaders from 11 Midwestern states to strengthen postsecondary education and promote regional economic vitality.



MHEC leverages the knowledge and expertise of postsecondary leaders to generate collaborative solutions to challenges in higher education.



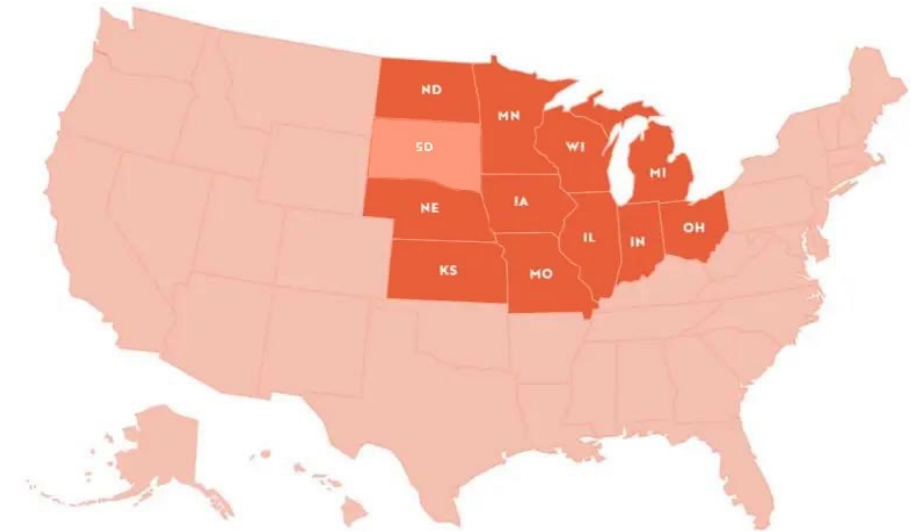
MHEC's contracts and programs save colleges, universities, and students in its member states valuable time and millions of dollars annually.



MHEC research and policy initiatives support workforce readiness and improve the quality, accessibility, and affordability of postsecondary education.

More about MHEC

- **Legislatively created** in 1991 through Council of State Governments, Midwestern Legislative Conference
- **Compact language and bylaws:** provide statutory authority and management and operations of the commission
- **Governed by 55 commissioners**
- **One vote** for each state
- **MHEC officers:** chair, vice chair, treasurer, past chair
- **MHEC annual state commitment:** \$115,000, lowest of four regional higher education compacts



How MHEC Benefits Midwest States

MHEC delivered Midwest states \$144.8 million as return on their investment in 2024-25.

Midwestern-State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (M-SARA) for distance education savings	\$112.3M
Contracts and technology savings	\$31.6M
Master Property Program dividends	\$748,000
Capacity building support (state grants, convenings, scholarships, travel grants)	\$220,000
TOTAL	\$144.8M

MHEC Contracts

Contracts

- MHEC competitively sources vendors and negotiates agreements for benefit of its member states and their entities, thereby eliminating the need for individual RFPs and vendor negotiations
- MHEC offers contracts for technology (hardware, software, data and networking, and services) and for student health insurance
- Contracts are open to all public and private not-for-profit higher education institutions within MHEC's member states and generally open to all member states of MHEC's sister compacts
- **Cooperative contracts saved member states \$31.6M and hundreds of hours last year**

MHEC Programs

Programs

- Respond to stakeholder challenges that require persistent interstate cooperation to help save money, improve efficiency, and better serve region
- Current programs: distance education reciprocity agreements (M-SARA); Midwest Student Exchange Program (reduced tuition for students)
- Forthcoming program: captive insurance
- **Midwest region savings in 2024-2025:**
 - **\$112.3M through M-SARA**
 - **\$748,000 through Master Property Program dividends**

MHEC Research & Initiatives

Research

- MHEC supports member states with reliable data and applied research to inform policies, strengthen practices, and improve student outcomes
- Research reports and interactive dashboards cover finance and affordability; college readiness and student success; educational trends and system performance; and college-career pathways, credentials, and workforce outcomes

Initiatives

- MHEC convenes regional leaders to develop solutions, offer policy revisions, or navigate complicated changes on topics of importance in postsecondary education

Strategic Impact & Innovation Grants

\$3 million in grants provided to MHEC member states

Each MHEC member state is eligible to apply for a \$250,000 Strategic Impact and Innovation Grant to pursue high-impact activities that:

- Align with MHEC's [strategic priorities](#)
- Are responsive to state needs in such areas as affordability, credential attainment, student success, and workforce alignment

State Workforce Alignment

- **Illinois:** Supporting multi-partner State Attainment Working Group with comprehensive economic and labor market analysis to help project Illinois' workforce needs in 2040 and to inform state's new postsecondary attainment goal
announced 5/7/2026
- **Wisconsin:** Creating a Wisconsin College and Career Attainment Network that will support alignment of statewide postsecondary education and workforce development efforts
announced 11/20/2025

Pathways through Education and Workforce

- **Michigan:** Bolstering state's efforts to ensure seamless pathways from work experience to bachelor's degree completion in applied programs, through both credit for prior learning and stackable credential pathways
announced 4/6/2026
- **North Dakota:** Providing all 11 North Dakota University System institutions with access to a career readiness and workforce alignment technology platform that will bridge K-12 and postsecondary career exploration efforts
announced 12/8/2025

Education to Workforce Systems Improvement

- **Nebraska:** Designing statewide Credential Registry and connected Talent Marketplace to make learning achievements transparent, comparable, and directly aligned to employer needs
announced 6/23/2026
- **Kansas:** Strengthening statewide data systems to meet the evolving needs of students, institutions, and the workforce through suite of targeted software solutions that will modernize internal operations and enhance service delivery
announced 5/1/2026
- **Missouri:** Modernizing three critical systems that connect Missouri's learners, institutions, and state operations
announced 7/28/2026

Enabling Access and Student Success

- **South Dakota:** Embedding dedicated case management positions at two locations where students are pursuing careers in high-demand health professions through a partnership between South Dakota State University and Black Hills State University
[announced 3/16/2026](#)

Midwest Postsecondary Education Value and Opportunities

Partnering with Gallup to leverage existing national data collection from Lumina-Gallup State of Higher Education Study

Partnership focused on helping states gain Midwest and state-specific perspectives on:

1. Value and return on investment in postsecondary education
2. Motivation and enrollment decisions in credentials
3. Opportunities for Midwest states to help grow the pipeline of students for credentials and workforce

MHEC State Visits

MHEC leadership visits every member state annually during legislative sessions (January–May)

Visits typically include meetings with:

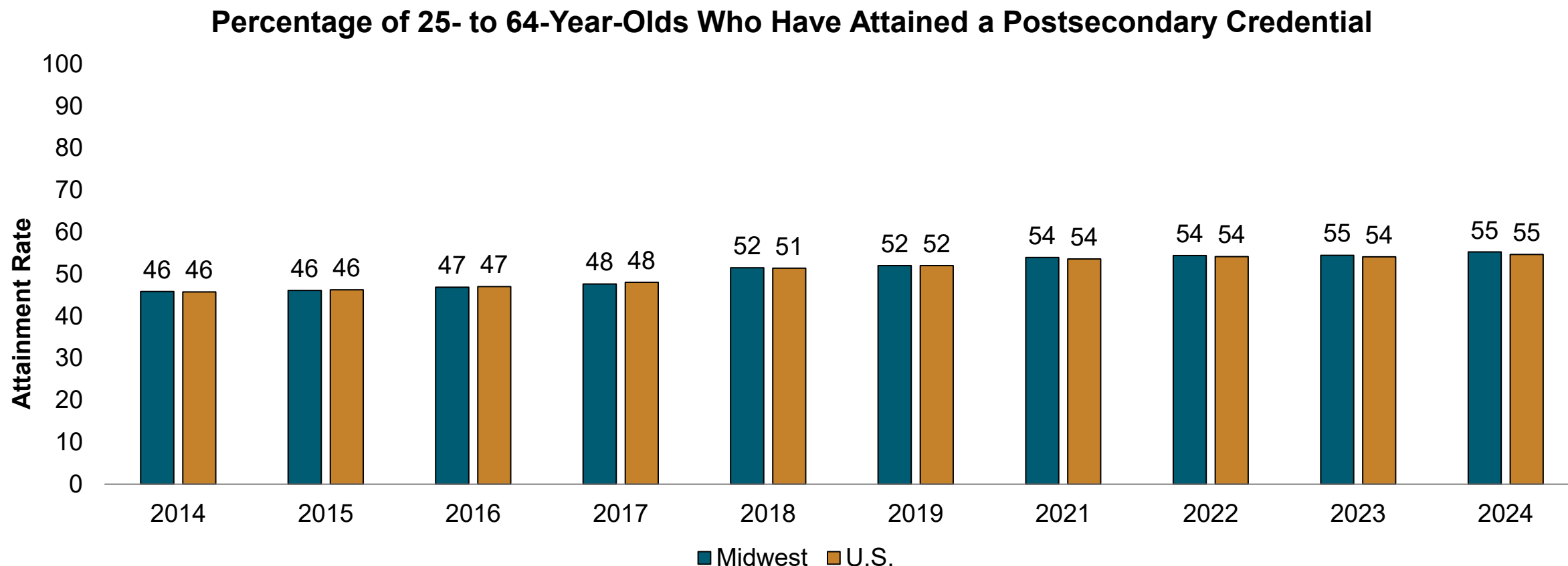
- Legislative and gubernatorial leadership and staff
- Higher education leadership (campus visits where applicable)
- SHEEO leadership and staff
- Dinner with commissioners and invited guests

Goals for visits:

- Share an annual update on MHEC's work
- Bring together leaders to discuss emerging higher education issues
- Learn about state priorities and opportunities for MHEC engagement and future work

Key Indicators for Higher Education in Midwest

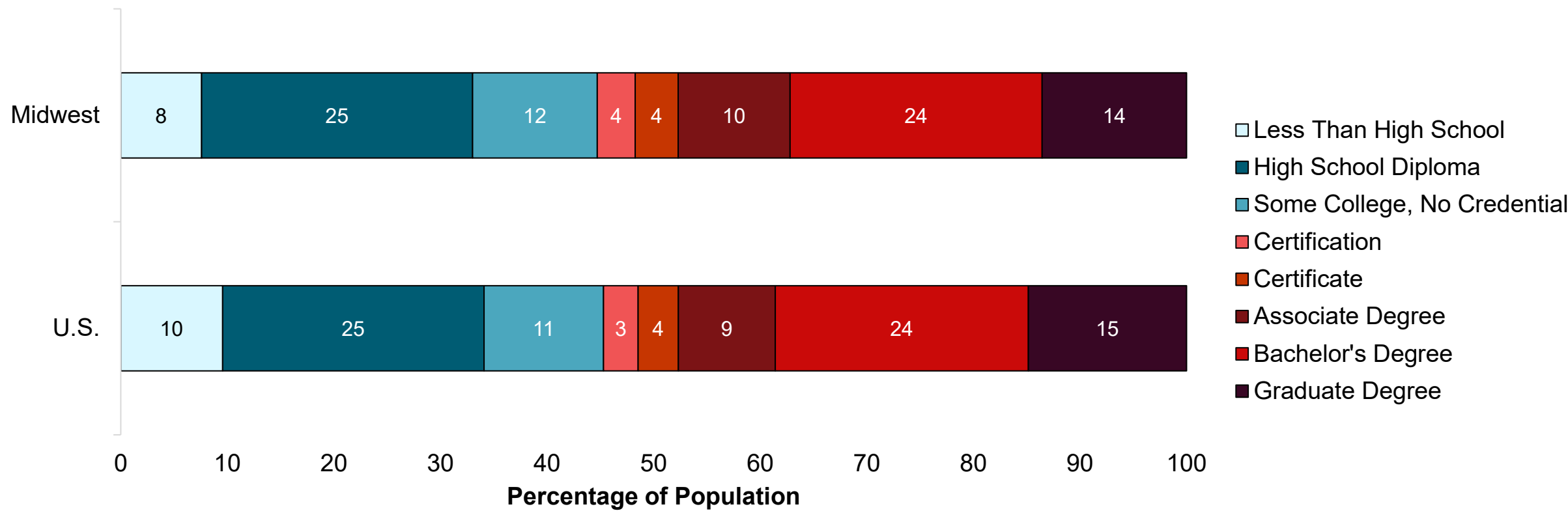
ATTAINMENT: Over the past decade, the Midwest's postsecondary attainment rate has increased and is currently the same as the national attainment rate.



Source: Lumina Foundation. (2026). *A Stronger Nation*. Note. Estimates include U.S. residents of any citizenship or immigration status. The attainment estimates include postsecondary certificates. Since 2018, the attainment estimate includes industry-recognized certifications. 2020 estimates are not available due to sampling problems that occurred during the 2020 administration of the American Community Survey. Lumina's methodology for short-term non-degree credentials includes only certificates and certifications that meet its value threshold of earning at least 15% above the national median annual wages of a high school graduate. The reported share of adults whose highest credential is a certificate or certification may thus be underestimated. Registered apprenticeship completion certificates outside of a postsecondary institution are not captured in Lumina's attainment measure. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

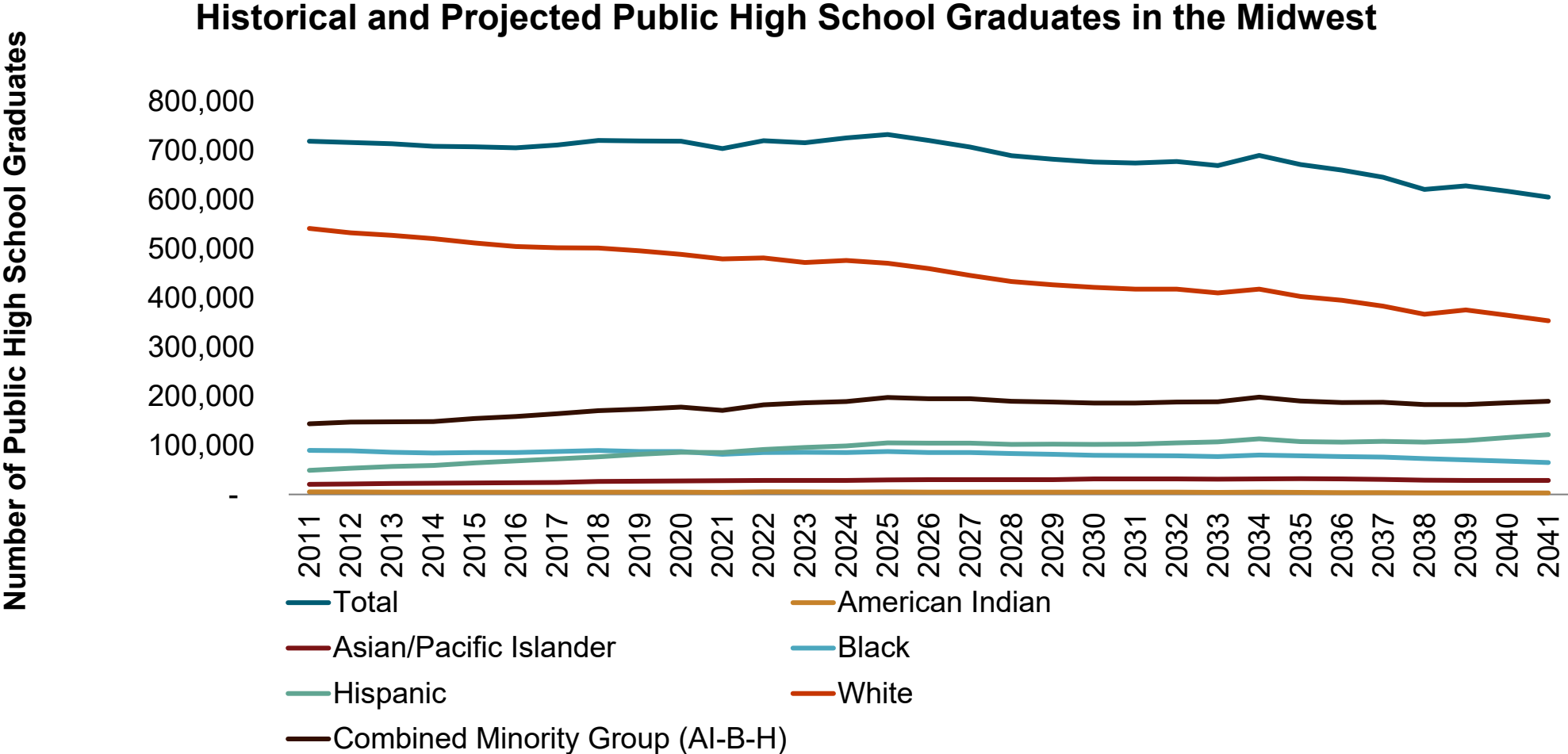
ATTAINMENT: Midwest and U.S. residents have attained various types of postsecondary credentials, ranging from industry certifications and college certificates to bachelor's and graduate degrees; 45% of Midwest and U.S. residents do not have a credential beyond high school.

Educational Attainment Distribution of Residents Ages 25-64, 2024



Source. Lumina Foundation. (2026). *A Stronger Nation*. Note. Estimates include U.S. residents of any citizenship or immigration status. Lumina's methodology for short-term non-degree credentials includes only certificates and certifications that meet its value threshold of earning at least 15% above the national median annual wages of a high school graduate. The reported share of adults whose highest credential is a certificate or certification may thus be underestimated. Registered apprenticeship completion certificates outside of a postsecondary institution are not captured in Lumina's attainment measure. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

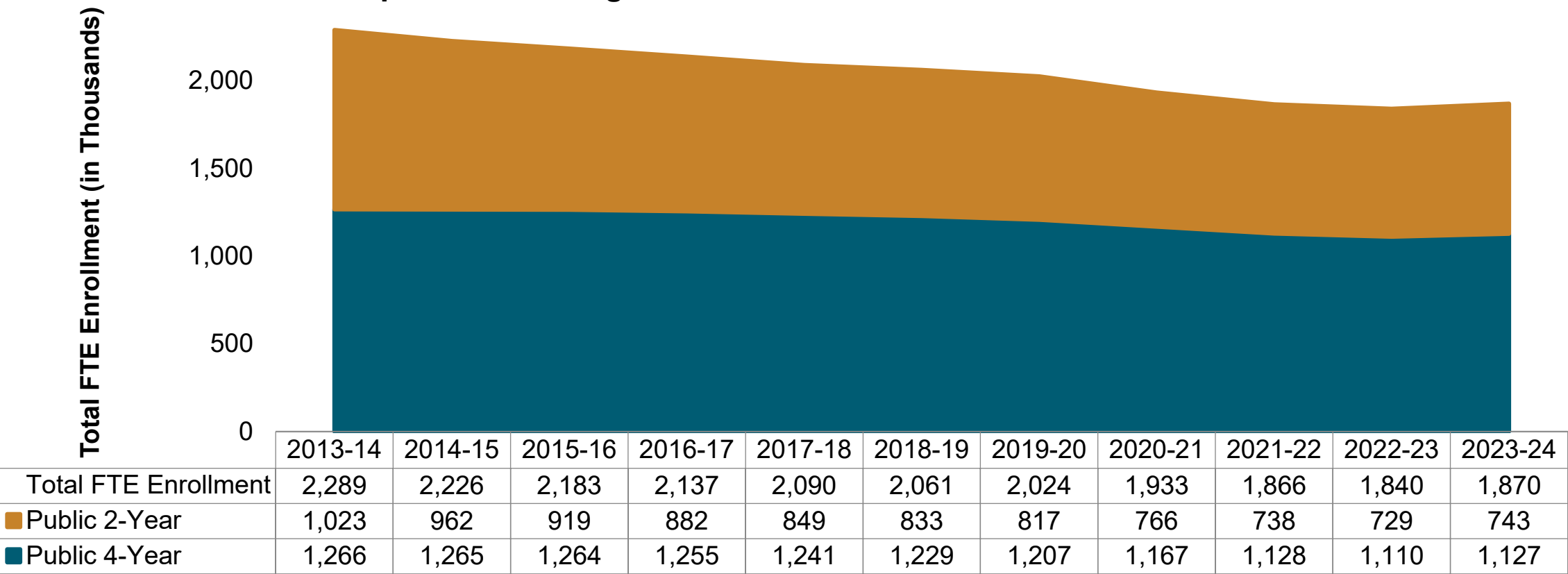
ENROLLMENT POOL: The number of high school graduates in the Midwest is projected to decline over the next decade, driven by a substantial decrease among White graduates. The number of American Indian, Black, and Hispanic graduates is expected to remain relatively stable or increase modestly.



Source: WICHE. (2024). *Knocking at the College Door*. The combined minority group (AI-B-H) comprises American Indians, Blacks, and Hispanics. Estimates include public high school graduates of any citizenship or immigration status. The estimates exclude home-schooled students. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

ENROLLMENT: Undergraduate enrollment has declined at public two- and four-year institutions in the Midwest over the past decade but started to increase in 2023-24.

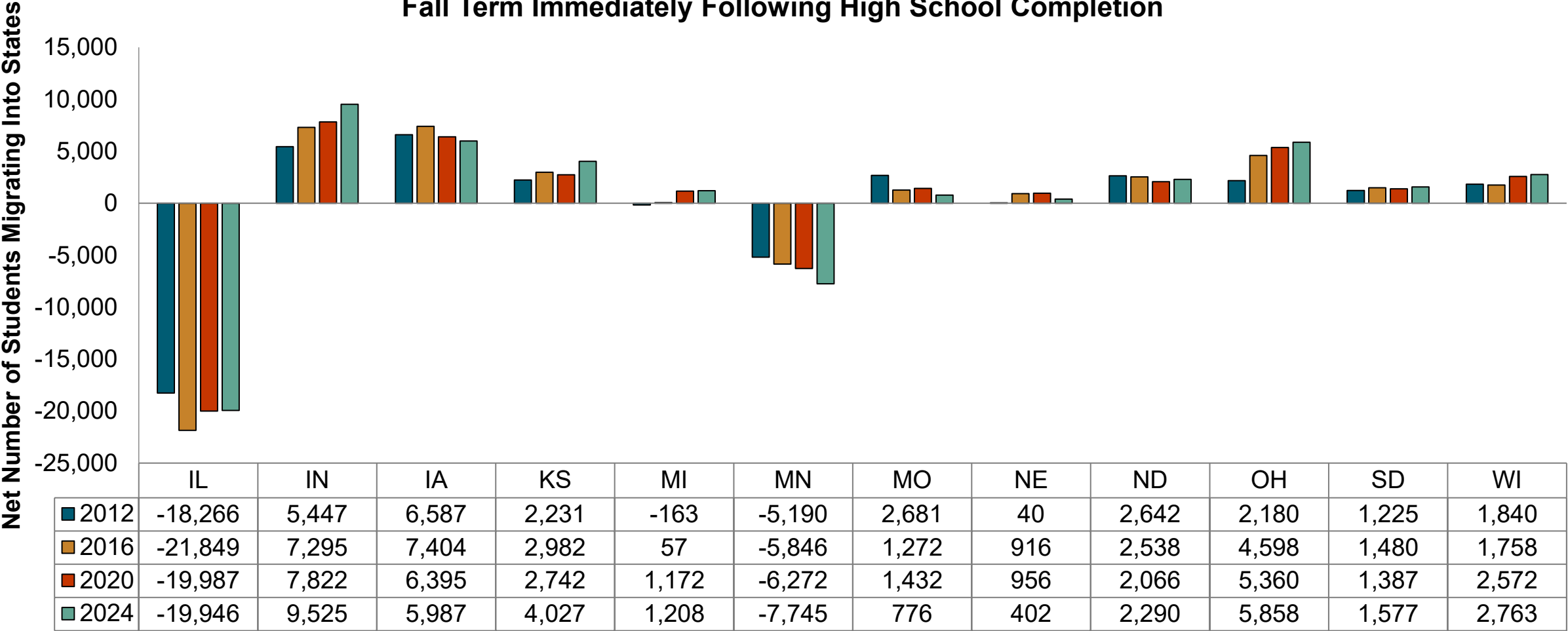
Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment at Midwest Public Institutions



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Reported 12-month enrollment*. FTE enrollment is a calculated measure of the equivalent number of full-time students represented by an institution’s instructional activity over a 12-month period. It is derived from the reported credit or clock hours attempted and the institution’s academic calendar system. Enrollment counts include all students enrolled for credit, regardless of living arrangement (on-/off-campus), instructional modality (in-person and online), enrollment type (including dual enrollment and non-degree-seeking students), and residency status (in-state, out-of-state, international, undocumented, and DACA). Carnegie Classification was used to classify institutions. Institutions with mixed categories were classified according to their distribution of associate and bachelor’s degrees awarded. Tribal colleges and universities are excluded. Categorizations may change over time. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

MIGRATION: In 10 Midwest states, more students migrate into the state than the number that migrate out. Net in-migration increased in eight states between 2020 and 2024.

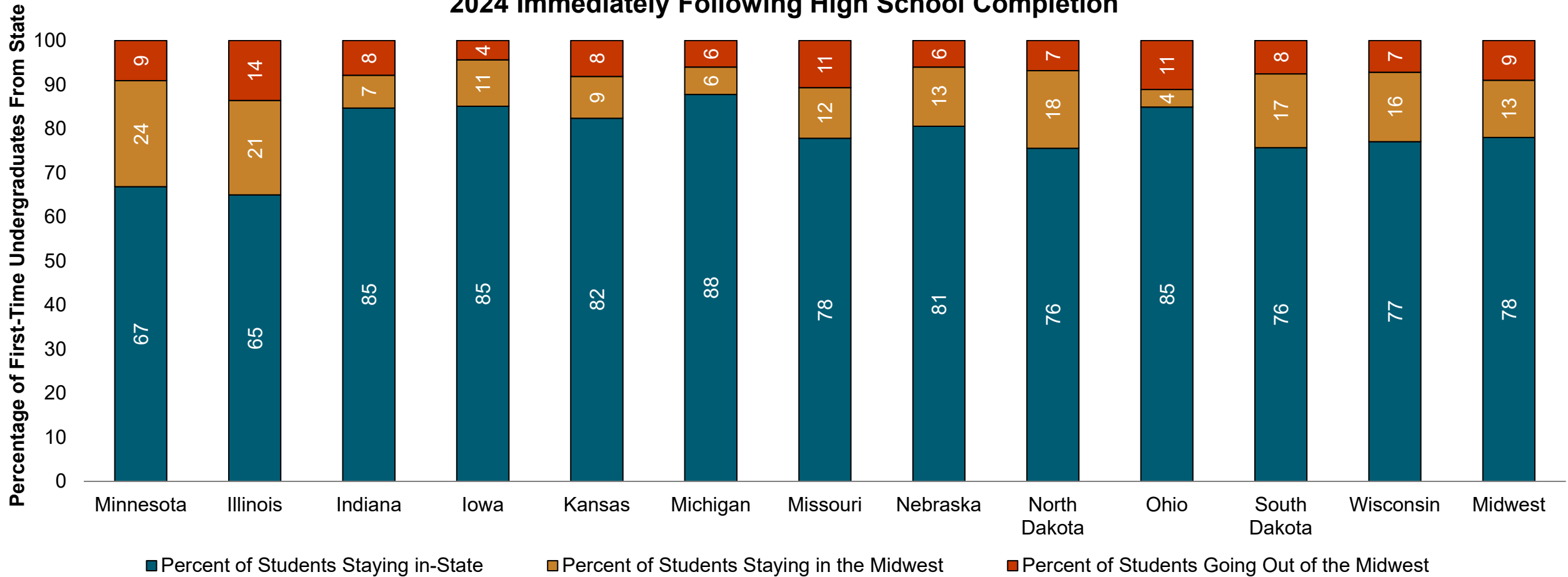
Net In-Migration of High School Graduates Who Enrolled in a Postsecondary Institution in the Fall Term Immediately Following High School Completion



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Fall enrollment*. Estimates include enrollment at any Title IV-participating postsecondary institution. Students with unknown residence and those entering from outlying territories and foreign countries are excluded. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

ENROLLMENT LOCATION: Of first-time college students in Midwest states in 2024, 78% enrolled in state, 13% enrolled elsewhere in the Midwest, and 9% percent enrolled outside the Midwest.

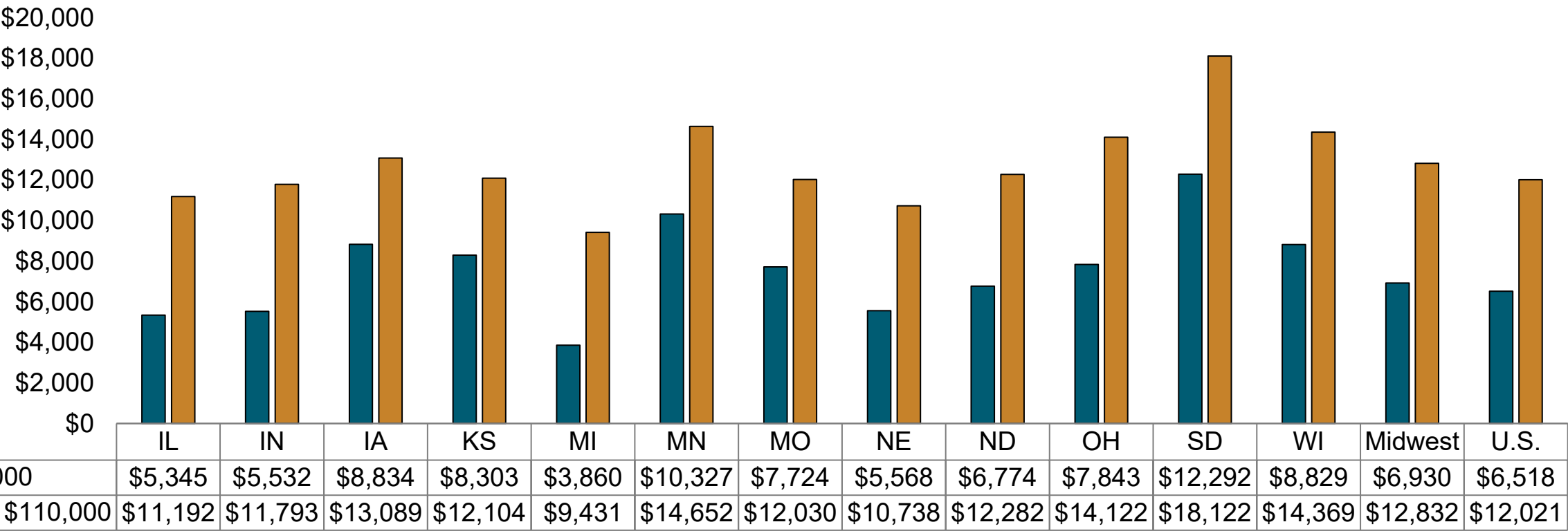
Regional Migration of High School Graduates Who Enrolled in a Postsecondary Institution In Fall 2024 Immediately Following High School Completion



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Fall enrollment*. Estimates include enrollment at any Title IV-participating postsecondary institution. Students with unknown residence and those entering from outlying territories and foreign countries are excluded. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

COLLEGE PRICE: The average net prices – the total cost of attendance (including room and board) minus grant aid from all sources – for both low- and median-income students at public two-year institutions are below the Midwest averages in five states and below the national averages in four states.

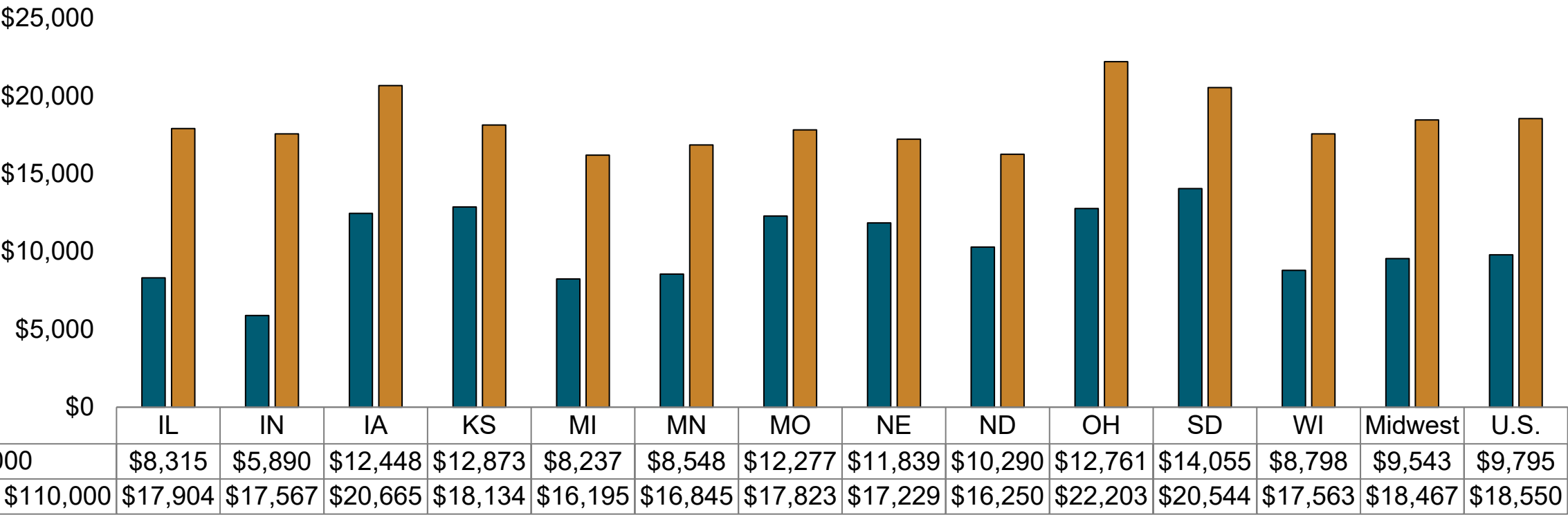
Net Price of Full-Time Enrollment at Public Two Institutions by Family Income Level



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Net price*. U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *American Community Survey one-year estimates, Table B19125: Median family income in the past 12 months by presence of own children under 18 years*. Note. Net price is standardized to first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students who received Title IV aid for comparative analysis and should not be interpreted as the typical price paid by all students, particularly in the two-year sector, where part-time students constitute a large share of enrollment. Total cost of attendance includes in-state or in-district published tuition and required fees, books, supplies, food, on-/off-campus housing, and other expenses. The \$75,001–\$110,000 income band includes the median family income for every Midwestern state except Minnesota, where the median family income is \$120,971. Since living costs vary geographically, families in the same income band may differ in their effective ability to pay. Estimates are weighted by income group of first-time/full-time students. Carnegie Classification was used to classify institutions. Institutions with mixed categories were classified according to their distribution of associate and bachelor's degrees awarded. Tribal colleges and universities are excluded. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

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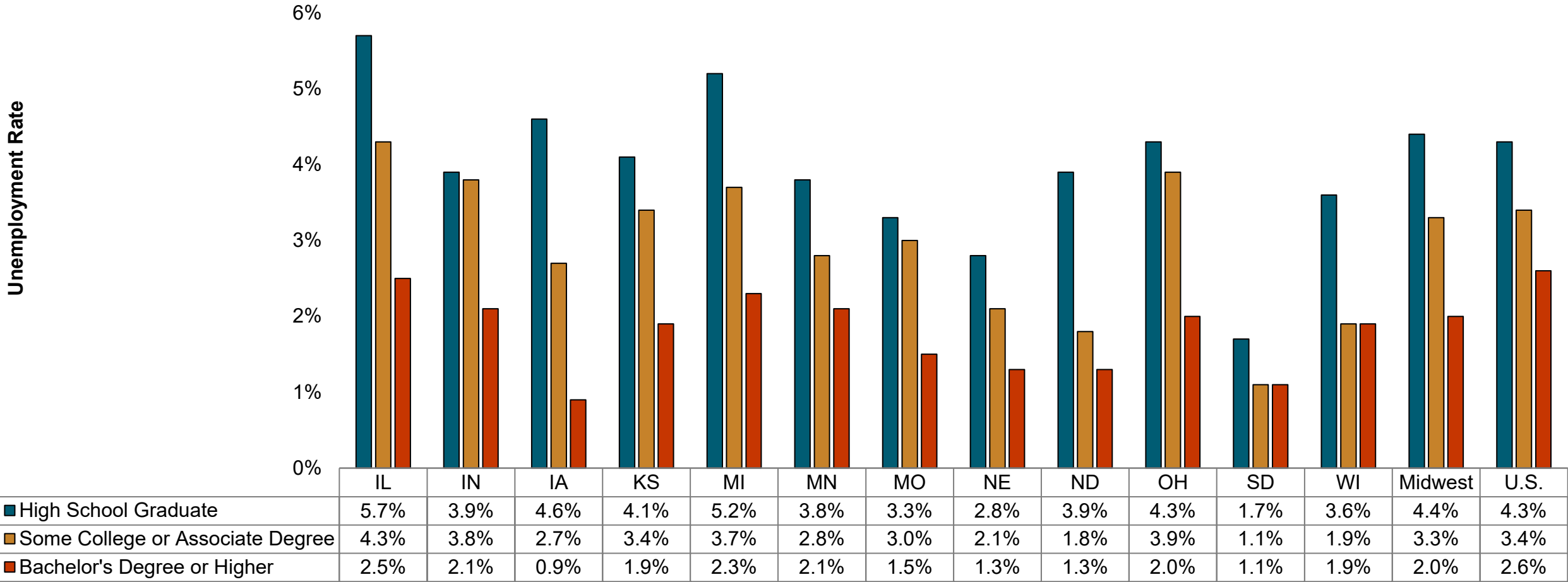
Net Price of Full-Time Enrollment at Public Four-Year Institutions by Family Income Level



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Net price*. U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *American Community Survey one-year estimates, Table B19125: Median family income in the past 12 months by presence of own children under 18 years*. Note. Net price is standardized to first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students who received Title IV aid for comparative analysis and should not be interpreted as the typical price paid by all students, particularly in the two-year sector, where part-time students constitute a large share of enrollment. Total cost of attendance includes in-state or in-district published tuition and required fees, books, supplies, food, on-/off-campus housing, and other expenses. The \$75,001–\$110,000 income band includes the median family income for every Midwestern state except Minnesota, where the median family income is \$120,971. Since living costs vary geographically, families in the same income band may differ in their effective ability to pay. Estimates are weighted by income group of first-time/full-time students. Carnegie Classification was used to classify institutions. Institutions with mixed categories were classified according to their distribution of associate and bachelor’s degrees awarded. Tribal colleges and universities are excluded. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

Unemployment: Unemployment rates in the Midwest were consistently lower among adults with at least some postsecondary education in 2024.

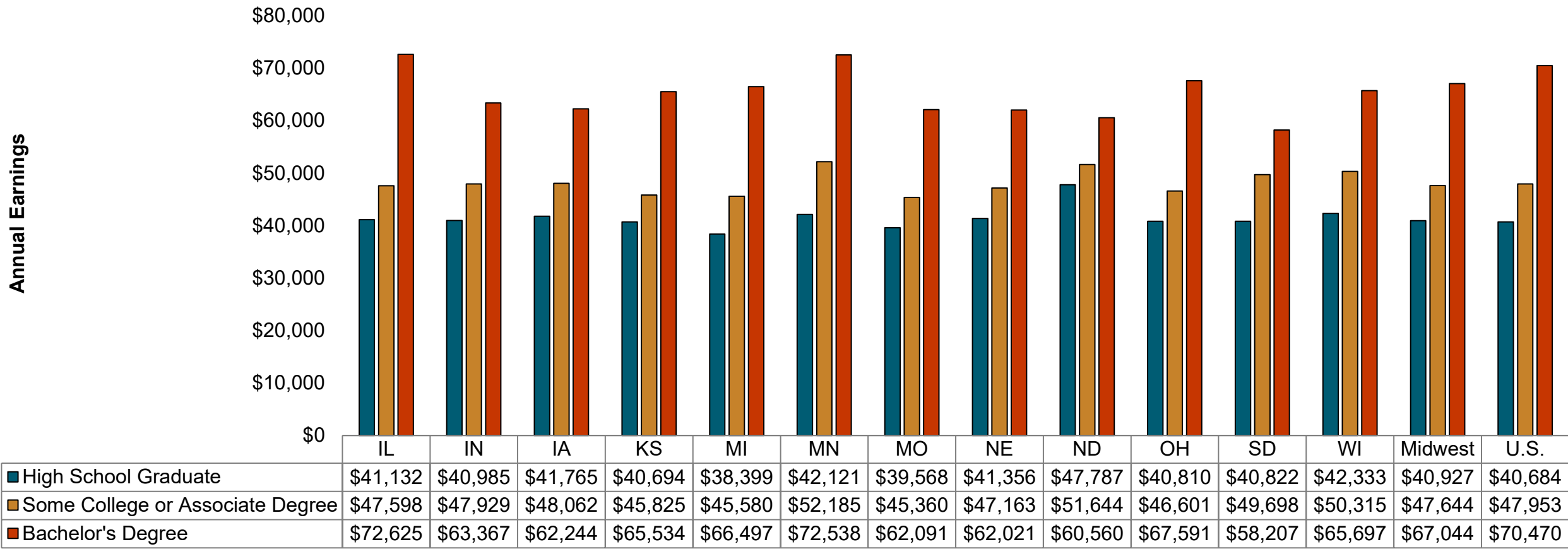
Average Annual Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, 2024



Source. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025). *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 25 years and older, by educational attainment*. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

Earnings: The median earnings of adults who completed some college credit or an undergraduate credential were consistently higher than the median earnings of high school graduates across all Midwestern states in 2024.

Median Earnings by Educational Attainment, 2024



Source. U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *American Community Survey one-year estimates: Median earnings in the past 12 months by sex by educational attainment for the population 25 years and over*. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

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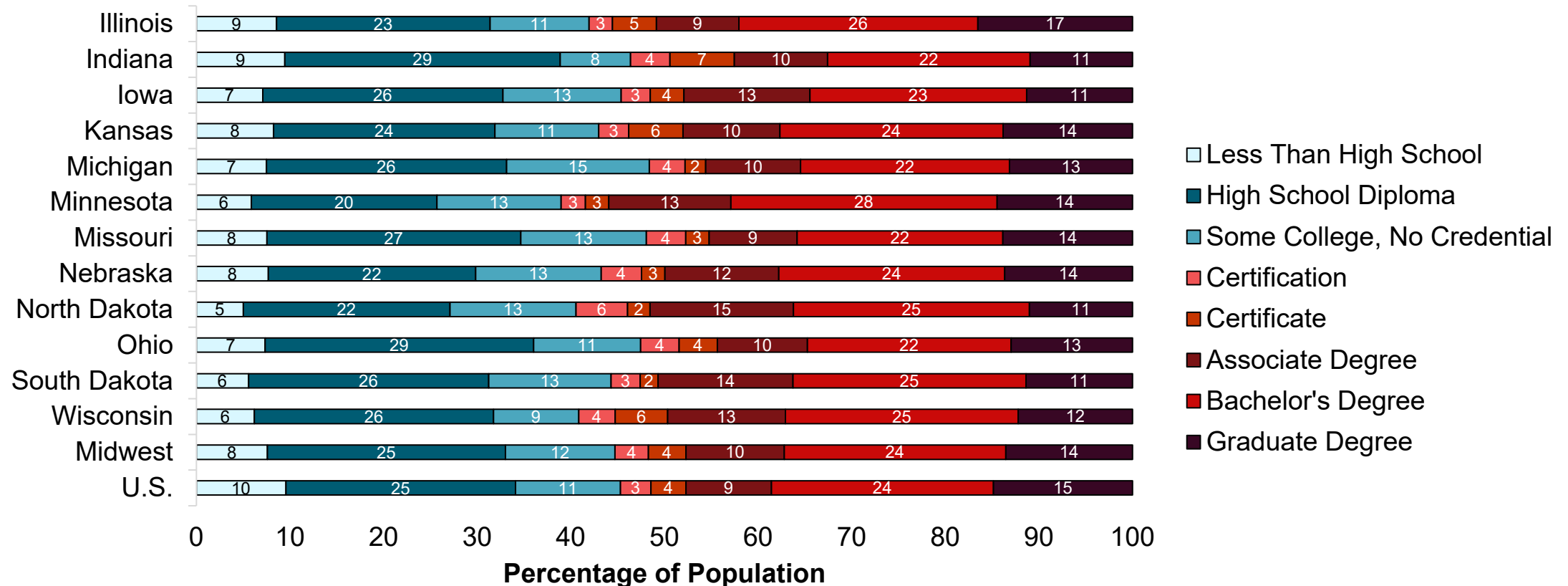
MHEC Resources

- **MHEC website:** <https://mhec.org/>
- **Each state has a member page** (with multiple downloadable documents):
<https://mhec.org/about/member-states/>
- **Interactive dashboard:** <https://mhec.org/mhec-interactive-dashboard/>
- **MHEC contracts:** <https://mhec.org/what-we-do/contracts/>
- **MHEC news:** <https://mhec.org/news/>
- **About MHEC:** (statutory language, bylaws, ROI, strategic plan, annual report)
<https://mhec.org/about/>
- **MHEC committees:** <https://mhec.org/about/committees/>
- **MHEC commissioners:** <https://mhec.org/about/commissioners/>

State-Specific Key Indicators

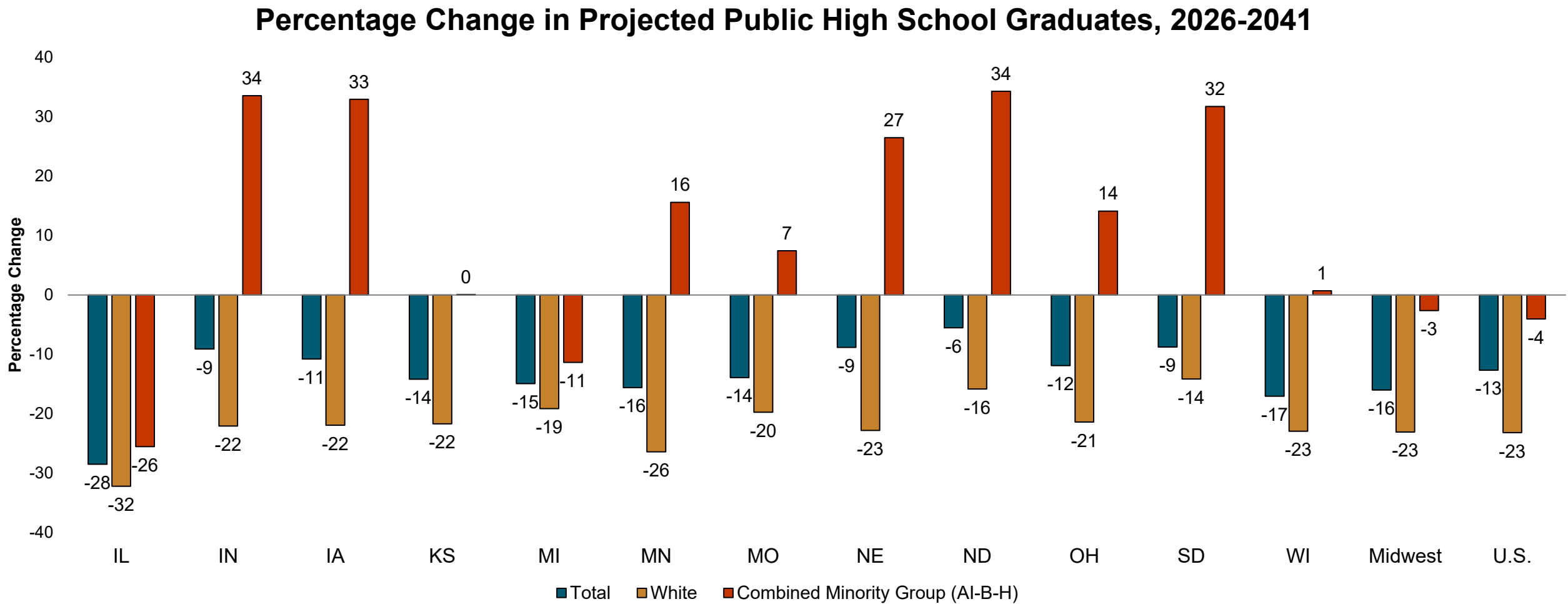
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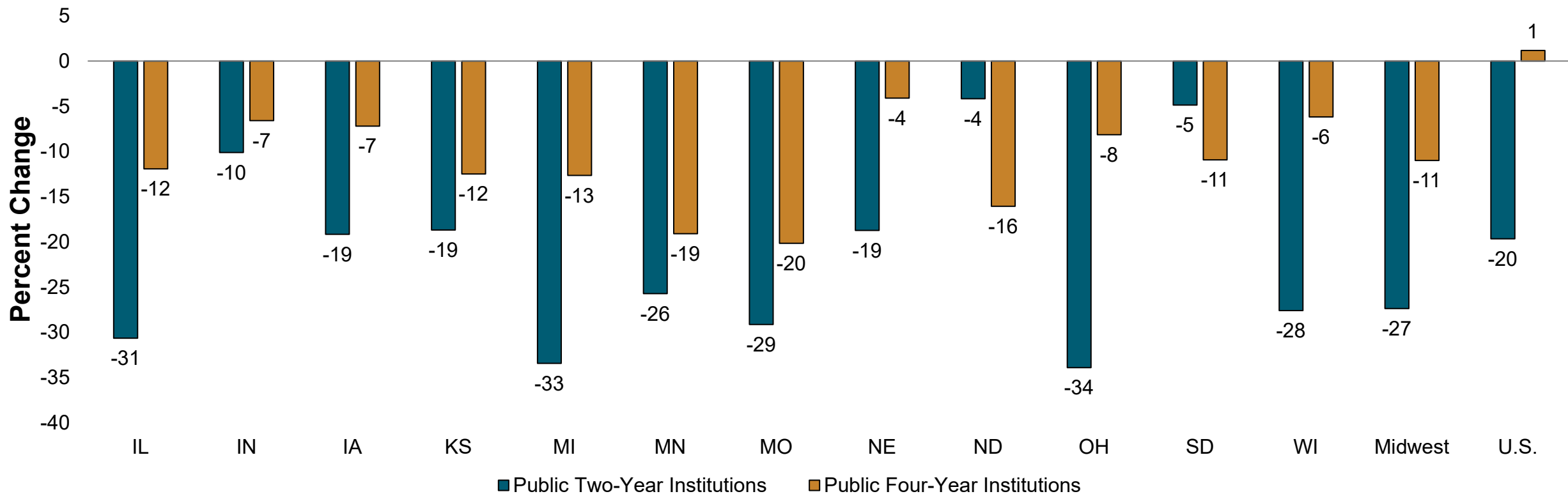
ENROLLMENT POOL: The number of high school graduates in most minority groups is projected to increase or remain stable across most Midwest states, compared to a projected decline in the number of White high school graduates in all Midwest states.



Source. WICHE. (2024). *Knocking at the College Door*. The combined minority group (AI-B-H) comprises American Indians, Blacks, and Hispanics. Estimates include public high school graduates of any citizenship or immigration status. The estimates exclude home-schooled students. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

ENROLLMENT: Undergraduate enrollment declined at public two-year institutions in all Midwest states (following the national trend) and declined at public four-year institutions in all Midwest states (in contrast to the national trend) over the past decade.

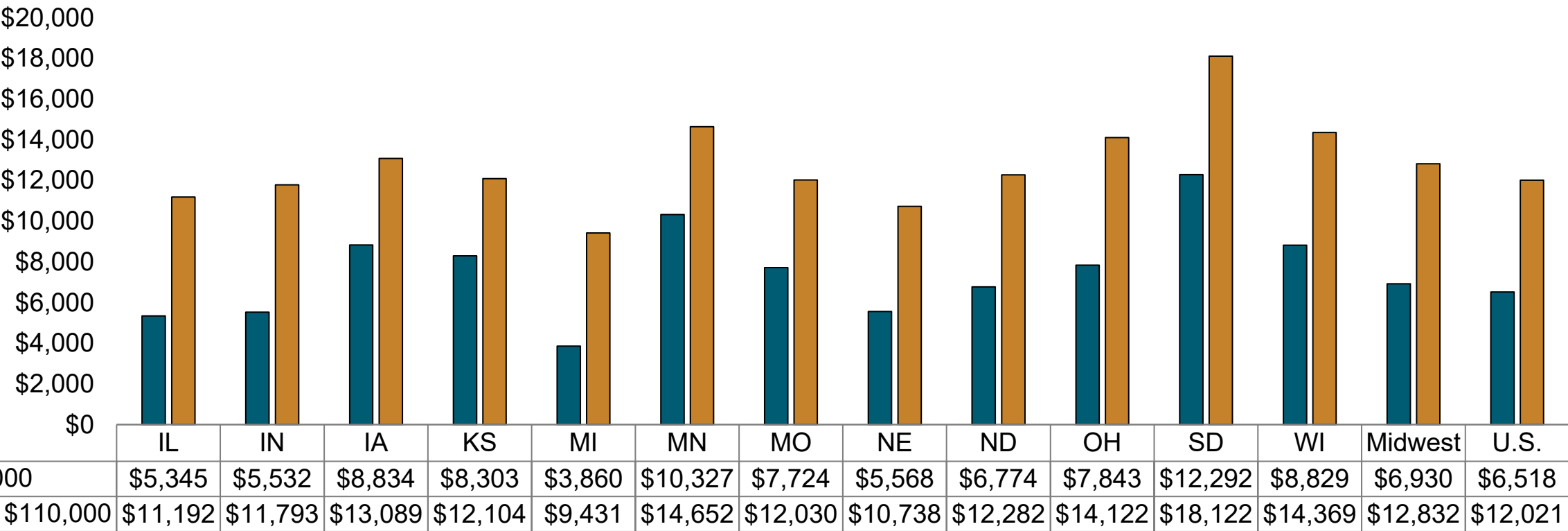
Ten-Year Percent Change in FTE Enrollment at Public Postsecondary Institutions, 2014-2024



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Reported 12-month enrollment*. FTE enrollment is a calculated measure of the equivalent number of full-time students represented by an institution’s instructional activity over a 12-month period. It is derived from the reported credit or clock hours attempted and the institution’s academic calendar system. Enrollment counts include all students enrolled for credit, regardless of living arrangement (on/off-campus), instructional modality (in-person and online), enrollment type (including dual enrollment and non-degree-seeking students), and residency status (in-state, out-of-state, international, undocumented, and DACA). Carnegie Classification was used to classify institutions. Institutions with mixed categories were classified according to their distribution of associate and bachelor’s degrees awarded. Tribal colleges and universities are excluded. Categorizations may change over time. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

COLLEGE PRICE: The average net prices – the total cost of attendance (including room and board) minus grant aid from all sources – for both low- and median-income students at public two-year institutions are below the Midwest averages in five states and below the national averages in four states.

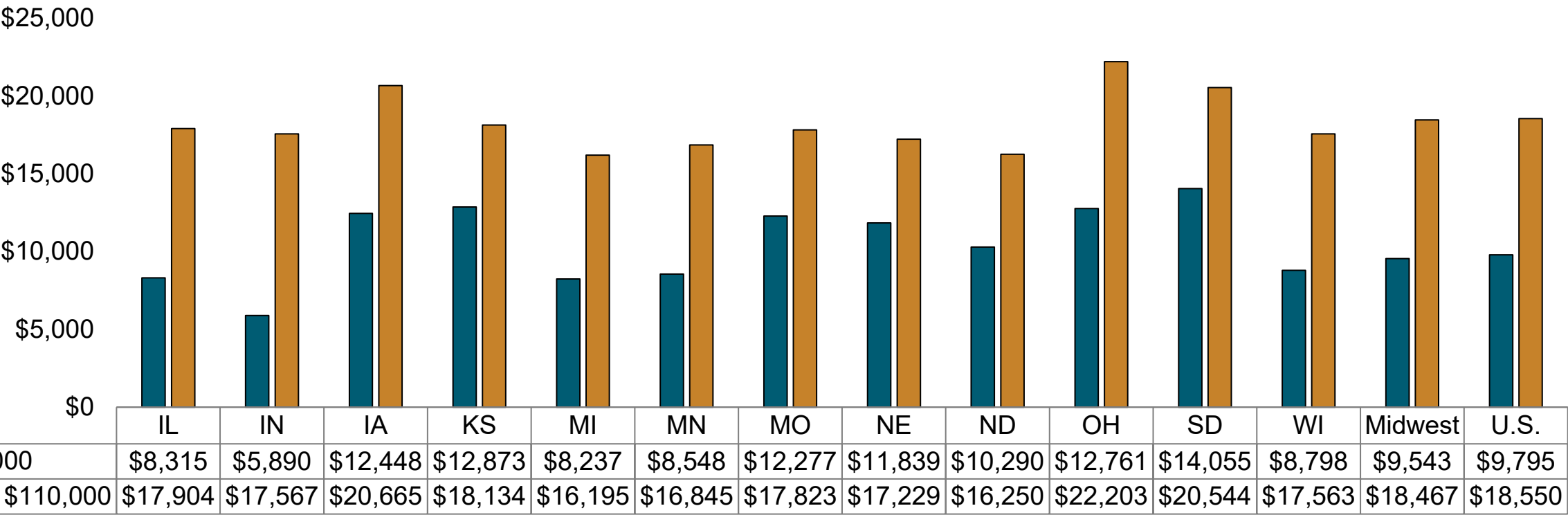
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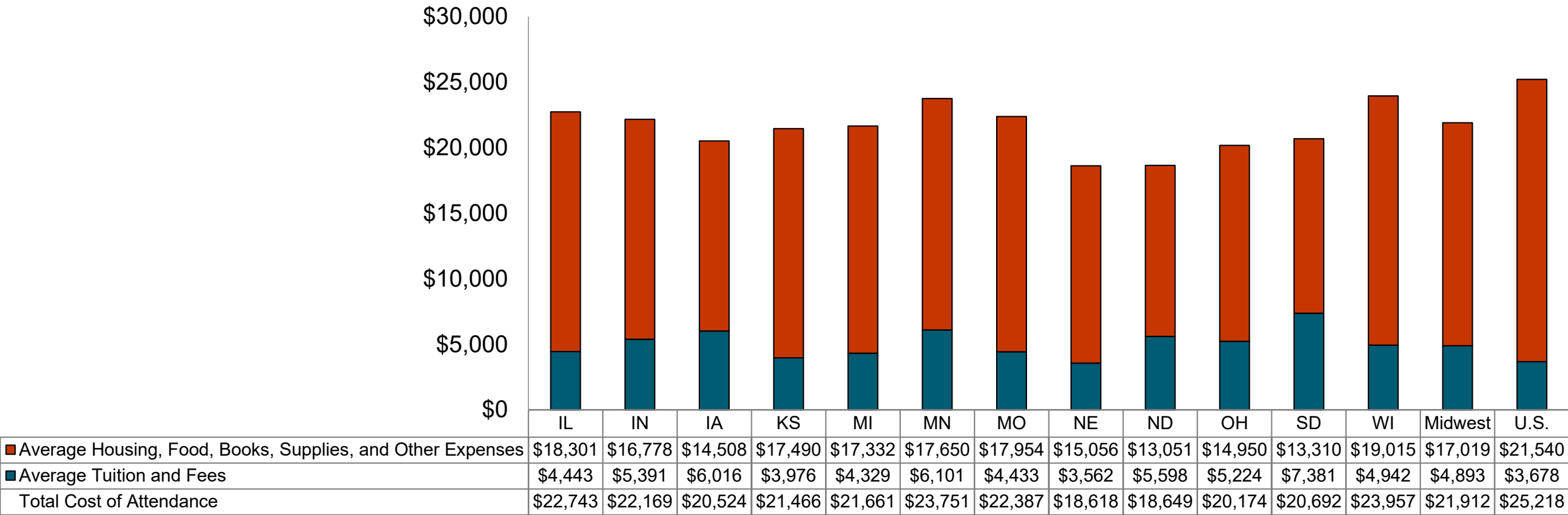
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COST OF ATTENDANCE: The average total cost of attendance – published tuition and required fees, books, supplies, food, housing, and other expenses – at public two-year colleges is lower than the Midwest average in 7 states and lower than the national average in all 12 states.

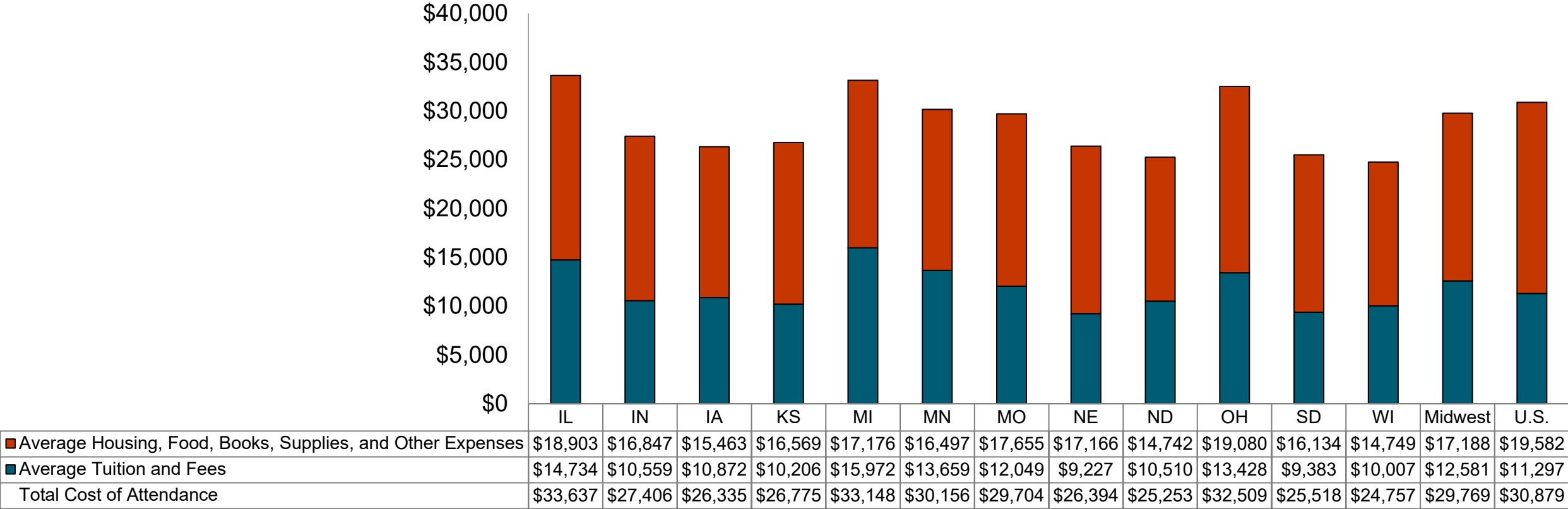
Total Cost of Attendance at Public Two-Year Institutions, 2024-25



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Institutional characteristics. 12-month enrollment*. Note. Cost of attendance is for full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates paying the in-district tuition rate. For institutions without on-campus housing, housing and food is estimated as the cost of living off-campus for students not living at home with their parents. Estimates are weighted by FTE enrollment.

COST OF ATTENDANCE: The average total cost of attendance – published tuition and required fees, books, supplies, food, housing, and other expenses – at public four-year institutions is lower than the Midwest average in eight states and lower than the national average in nine states.

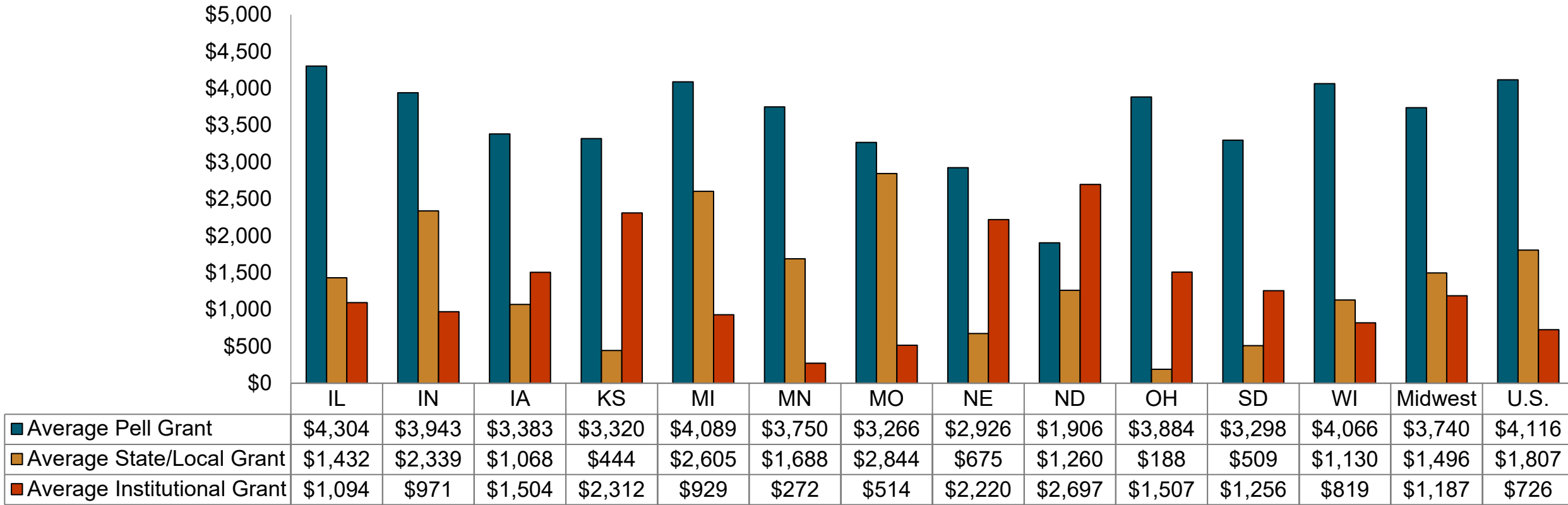
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Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Institutional characteristics. 12-month enrollment*. Note. Cost of attendance is for full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates paying the in-state tuition rate. For institutions without on-campus housing, housing and food is estimated as the cost of living off-campus for students not living at home with their parents. Estimates are weighted by FTE enrollment.

Grant Aid: The average state grant aid (based on financial need or merit) at public two-year colleges was higher than the Midwest average in four states and higher than the national average in three states.

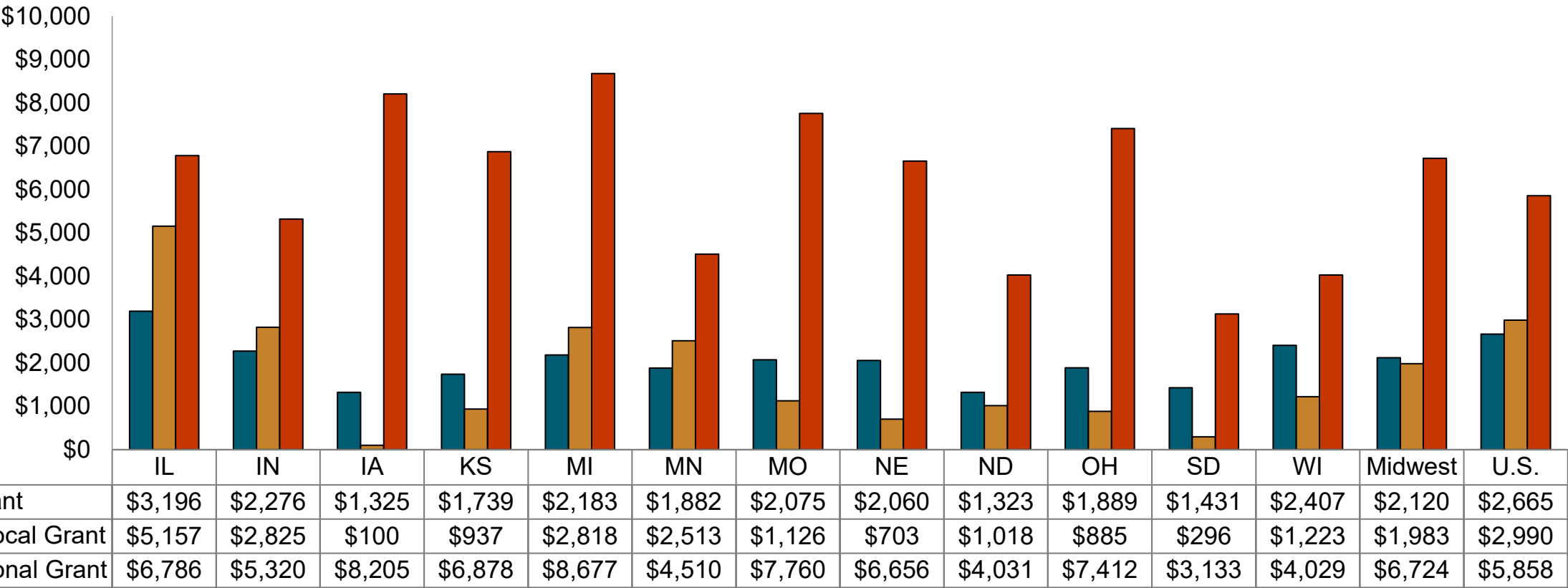
Average Grant Aid for First-Time, Full-Time, Degree/Certificate-Seeking Students at Public Two-Year Institutions, 2023-24



Source. NCES IPEDS. (2024). *Financial aid*. Estimates are weighted by full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students who were awarded any grant aid. Grant aid includes need-based and merit-based aid. About 92% of state grant aid in the Midwest is allocated based on financial need.

Grant Aid: The average state grant aid (based on financial need or merit) at public four-year institutions was higher than the Midwest average in four states and higher than the national average in one state.

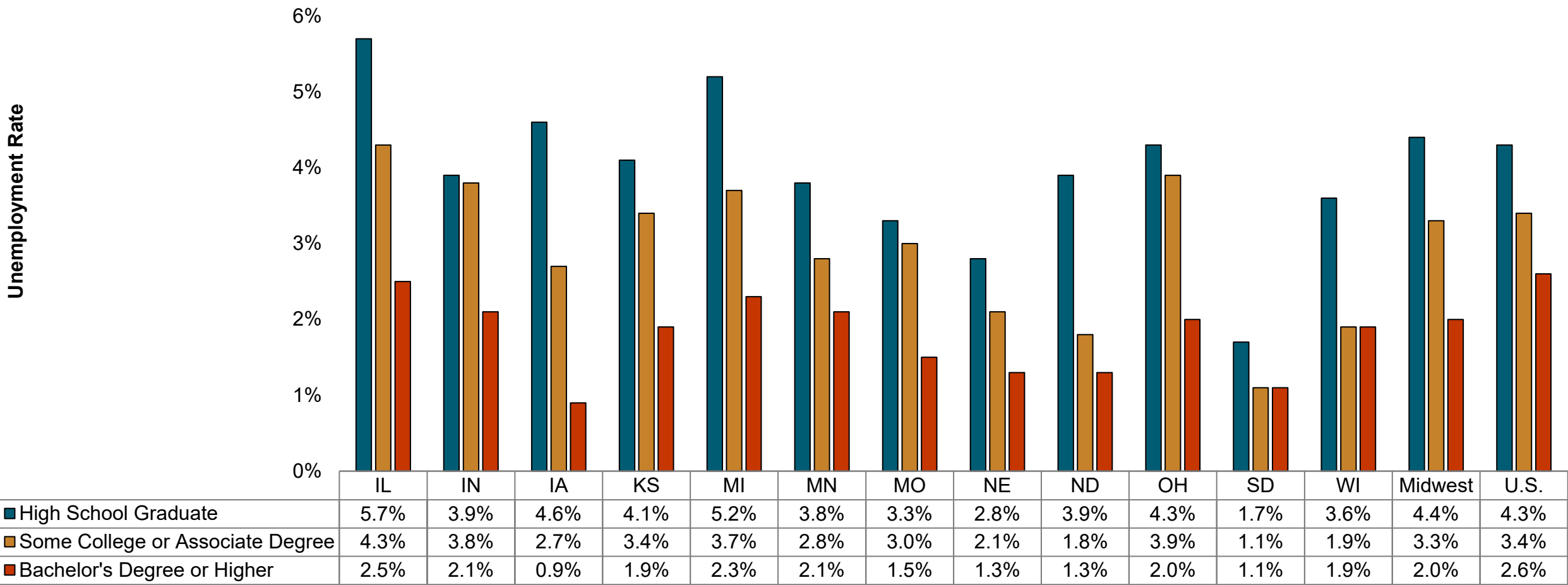
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Unemployment: Unemployment rates in the Midwest were consistently lower among adults with at least some postsecondary education in 2024.

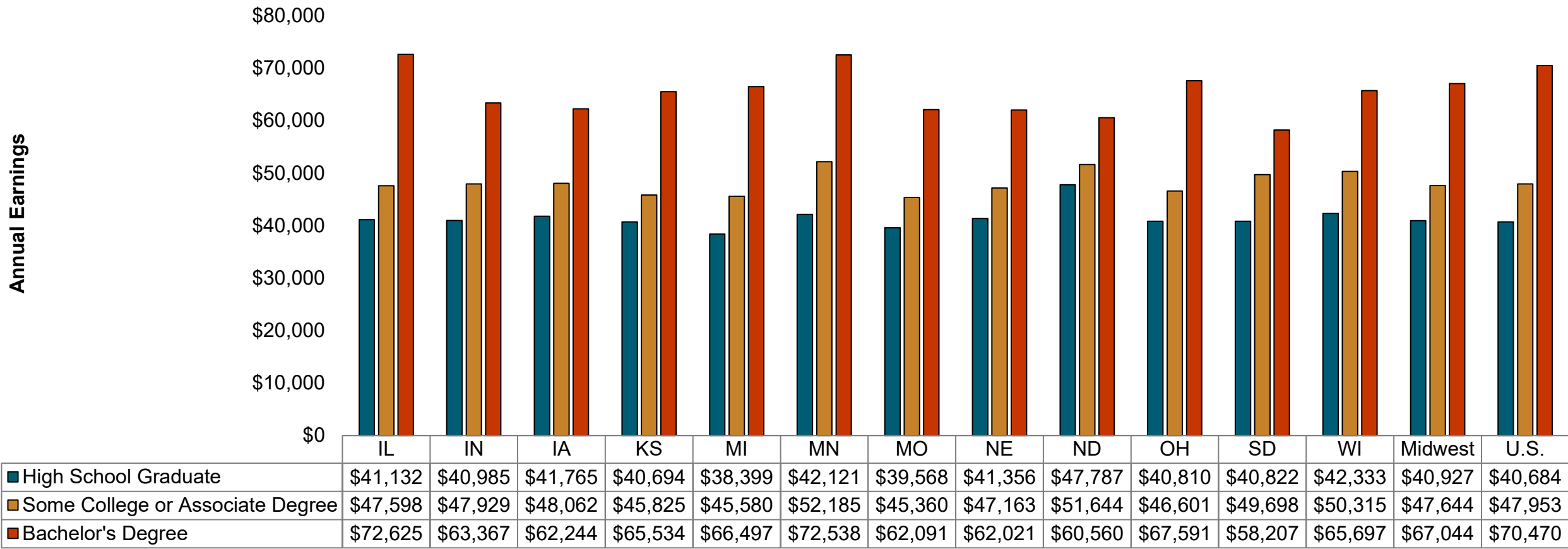
Average Annual Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, 2024



Source. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025). *Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 25 years and older, by educational attainment*. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).

Earnings: The median earnings of adults who completed some college credit or an undergraduate credential were consistently higher than the median earnings of high school graduates across all Midwestern states in 2024.

Median Earnings by Educational Attainment, 2024



Source. U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). *American Community Survey one-year estimates: Median earnings in the past 12 months by sex by educational attainment for the population 25 years and over*. Explore more on the [MHEC Interactive Dashboard](#).