2025 STATE OF THE ST. LOUIS WORKFORCE

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ST. LOUIS

Gen Z at Work: Understanding Gen Z's Impact on the Modern Workplace

D'Andre Braddix, Ed.D.

BORN
1928-1945
The Silent
Generation

BORN
1965-1980
Generation X

BORN
1997-2012
Generation Z

BORN
1946-1964
Baby
Boomers

BORN
1981-1996
Millennials

BORN
**EARLY-2010S-
MID-2020S**
Generation
Alpha
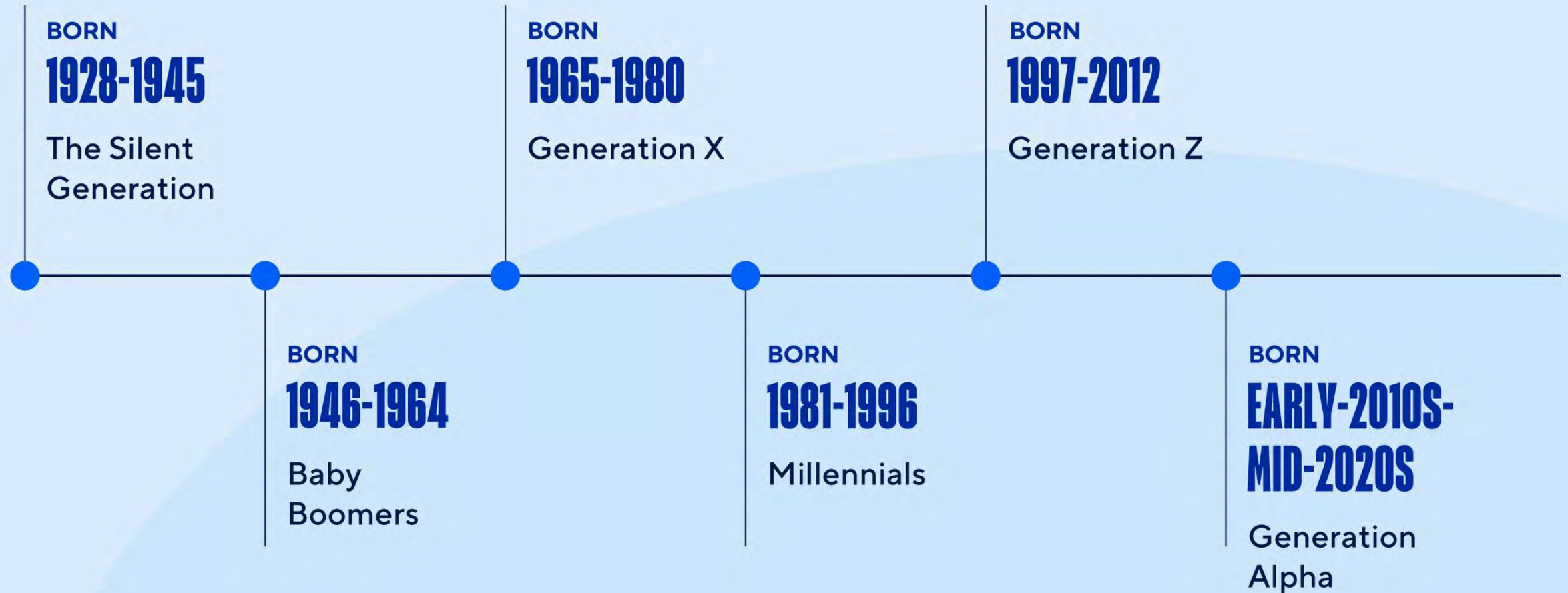
Gen Z will be 30% of workforce by 2030; filling about 50 million jobs across the country

- Bureau of Labor Statistics

GEN Z WORKFORCE

Forbes

The 'Gen Z Stare' Is Real—Here's Why Employers Should Care

Experts say the 'Gen Z stare' is more than a blank look—it reflects generational disconnects and signals a shift in workplace communication...

HRD America

US managers feel like 'babysitters' to Gen Z staff – report

Managers in the United States feel like they're "babysitting" Gen Z employees amid their lack of foundational workplace skills, according to...

Washington Examiner

Making sense of Gen Z's workplace nihilism

One in 4 full-time Generation Z employees regret attending college, according to a recent survey in the United States.

Newsweek

Some Gen Z Workers Are Quitting Jobs Over 'Sunday Scaries'

"Quitting over the Sunday scaries isn't retreat - it's acknowledgement," Driscoll told Newsweek. "And it's a red flag for employers. It reflects...

Carolina Journal

The work habits of Gen Z: A wake-up call for employers and educators

This trend — combined with phenomena like "quiet quitting," "lazy girl jobs," and "bare minimum Mondays" — points to a deeper issue: a rejection...

New York Post

Gen-Z has unbelievable job requirements — including nap rooms and ping pong: survey

Nearly one in six Americans under the age of 28 won't even consider taking a job unless there's a designated snooze space at the office, a mind-boggling new...

Age range in 2025:
13-28 years old

Digital natives with strong tech fluency

- **2007: iPhone Launch**
- **2010s: Social Media Boom**

Shaped by economic uncertainty, global activism, and the COVID-19 pandemic

- **2008: Financial Crisis**
- **2020: COVID-19 Pandemic**
- **2020s: Social Activism Rise**
- **Ongoing: Tech & AI Evolution**

GEN Z

Generation Z (Gen Z)

[ˌje-nə-ˈrā-shən ˈzē]

The generation of people born from 1997 to 2012.

Gen Z and Higher Education: Key Findings

- A majority of Generation Z (83%) in the U.S. say that a college education today is "very important" or "fairly important."

  - Gallup and Walton Family Foundation-State of American Youth Survey

- Yet only 62% of high school graduates head to college.

  - National Center for Education Statistics

- Due to financial burden, alternative paths are gaining popularity, such as vocational qualifications, apprenticeships, or trades that offer more skills-based learning.

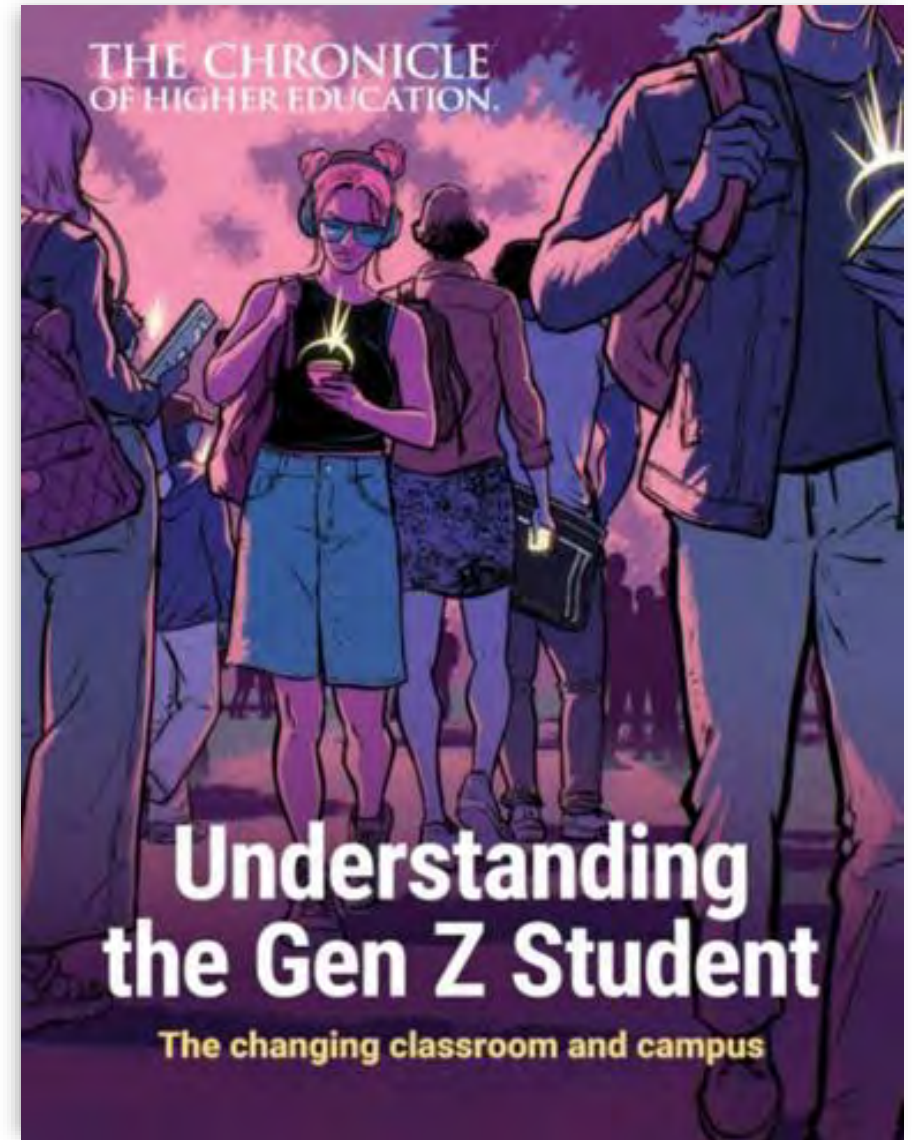 - Deloitte: 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey

Faculty Experiences with Gen Z

Challenges
- Little reading occurs outside of the classroom
- Struggle with resiliency
- Want to know the "why" behind learning something
- Desire for education they can apply

Positives
- Stronger emotional acuity
- Greater authenticity
- More willing to question authority

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Understanding the Gen Z Student
The changing classroom and campus

Supporting Gen Z in Higher Education

- Guided Pathways
  - structured programs that offer clear steps for course selection, goals, and support to help students graduate efficiently

- Real World Learning
  - connecting classroom instruction to practical, hands-on experiences that prepare students for careers and life beyond school

- NACE's Career-Readiness Competencies
  - providing experiences to promote essential skills, such as communication, leadership, and critical thinking, that equip students for success in the workforce

Gen Z and the Workplace: Key Findings

- Gen Z are focused on learning and development
- There is a rising sense of financial insecurity among Gen Zs
- Gen Zs want purpose-driven work
- Supporting the mental well-being of workers should start with addressing the root cause of workplace stress

    - Deloitte: 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey

Learning and Development

- Only 6% say their primary goal is to reach a leadership position

- 7 in 10 are regularly developing skills to advance their careers

- They believe managers' key role is to provide support, motivation, mentorship and ensure work/life balance

"I've had managers who were solely focused on task completion without fostering any growth or innovation... my current leaders want us to try new things, take risks, and pursue learning opportunities, even if it means spending time away from our regular job duties. This supportive environment has been a game-changer for my professional development."

Gen Z, Male

Financial Security

- 52% of Gen Z are living paycheck to paycheck

- 37% of Gen Z struggle to pay their monthly living expenses

- 41% worry about their ability to retire comfortably

- About 1/3 of financially secure Gen Z cite the cost of living as a top concern

Financial security compared to 2024

Percentage of those who do not feel financially secure

2025 Gen Zs	48%
2024 Gen Zs	30%
2025 millennials	46%
2024 millennials	32%
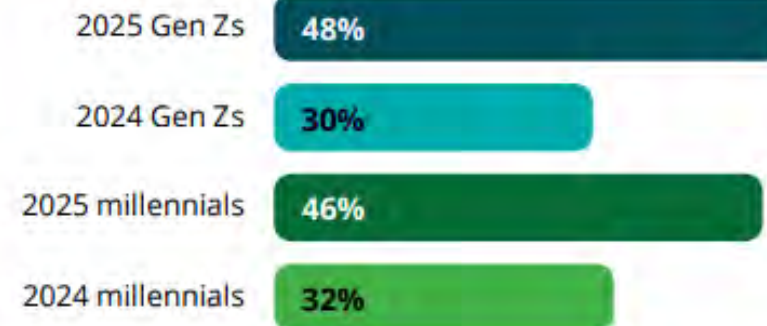
Q. Thinking about your finances, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I feel financially secure

Purpose

- 41% of Gen Z say their primary job is central to their identity

- 89% of Gen Z consider a sense of purpose to be "very" or "somewhat important" for their job satisfaction and well-being

- 45% of Gen Z have left a role because they felt it lacked purpose

- 40% have rejected an assignment or a potential employer due to personal beliefs

To me purpose at work means aligning my work with something meaningful beyond just a paycheck. It is about a job that makes a positive contribution to society and it is about feeling a personal sense of fulfillment and satisfaction knowing that my work has a tangible impact"

Gen Z, Male

Mental Well-being

- 61% of Gen Z who feel satisfied with work recognition report good mental well-being

- 61% of Gen Z who are satisfied with their career growth opportunities report good mental well-being

- 48% of Gen Z cite long hours and lack of recognition contribute "a lot" to their stress and anxiety

- 42% of Gen Z believe managers are responsible for fostering a positive and inclusive work culture, but only 22% believe it is happening

"I feel like the managers leading the team are very important to mental health because they help control your workload. If they're giving you very tight deadlines, not being realistic, or not willing to work with you, that does impact mental health. You are more anxious about getting your stuff done on time so that the team doesn't fall down because you're late on your work."

Supporting Gen Z at Work: Trifecta
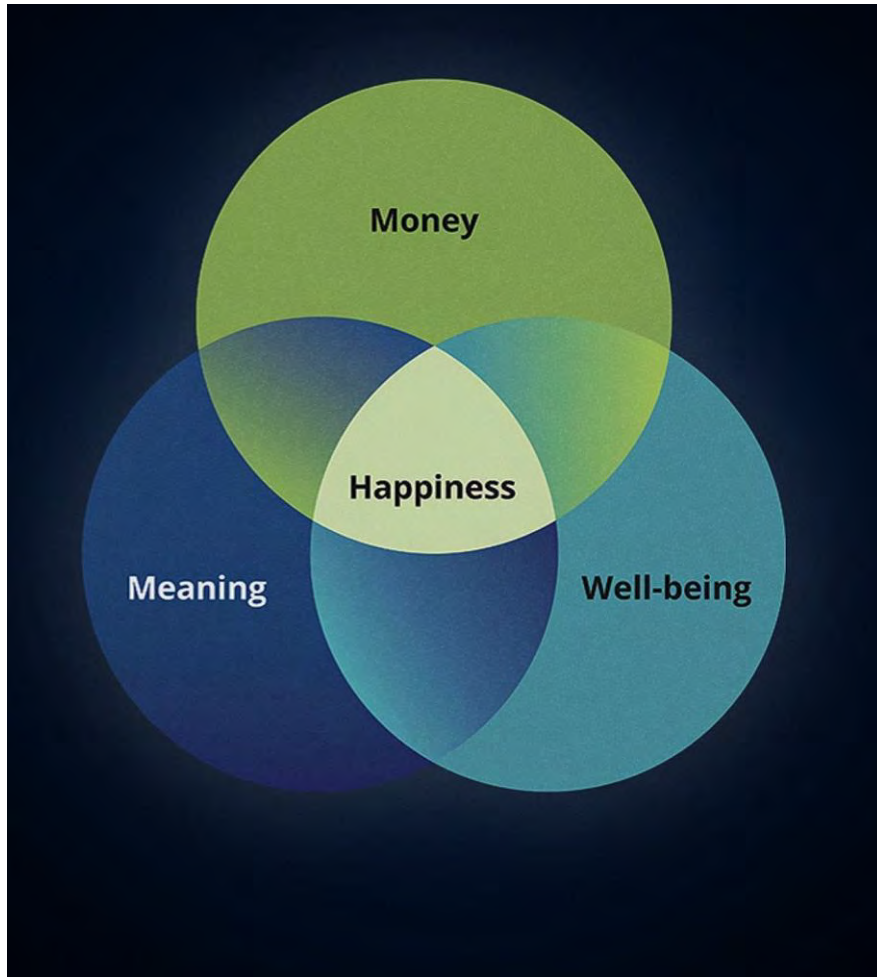
- Create in-house learning programs and allot time to learn; 1:1 mentorship programs; learning platforms or subscriptions

- Market competitive salaries and benefits; financial literacy; support commuting costs

- Clearly define and communicate purpose; create value for employees

- Support work-life balance; identify stress drivers; focus on employee recognition
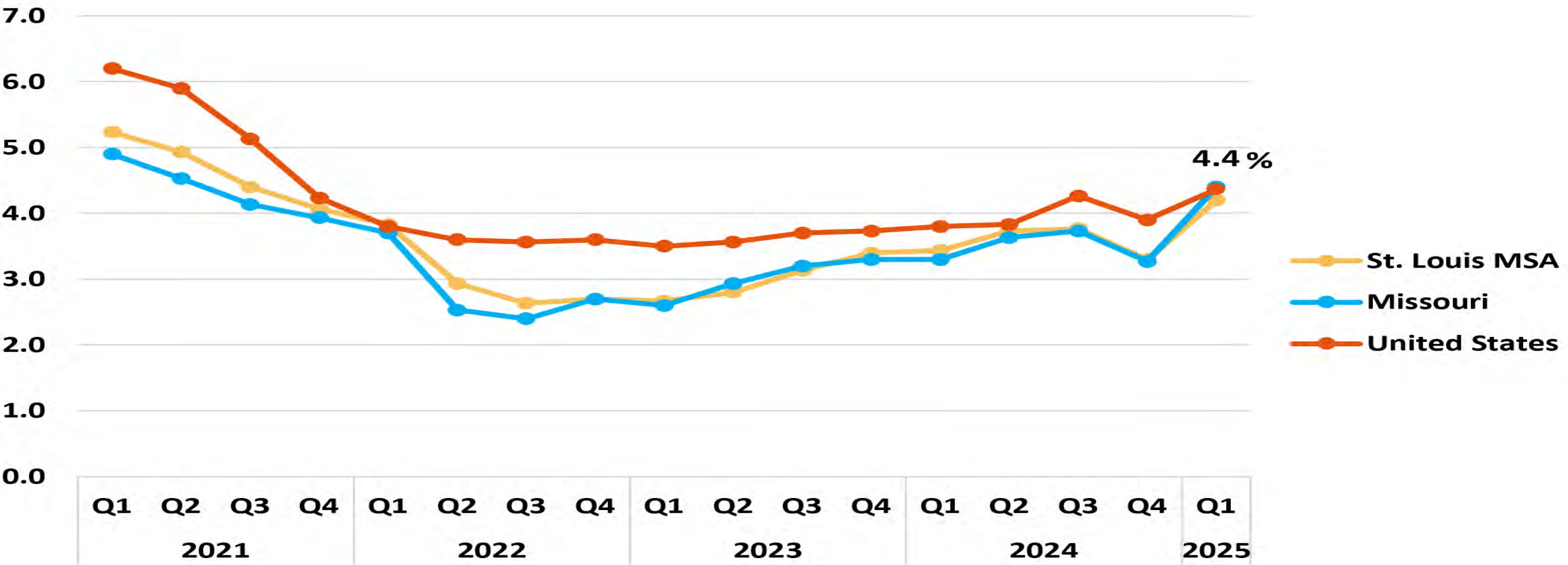
"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write,
but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

~Alvin Toffler

- **St. Louis Economy**

- **Employer Survey**

- **Spotlight on Startups and Job Creation**

- **Spotlight on Transportation**

St. Louis Economy

Not-Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate by Quarter

4.4 %

Legend:
- St. Louis MSA
- Missouri
- United States

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
2021				2022				2023				2024				2025

Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment of the Population

Legend: St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.

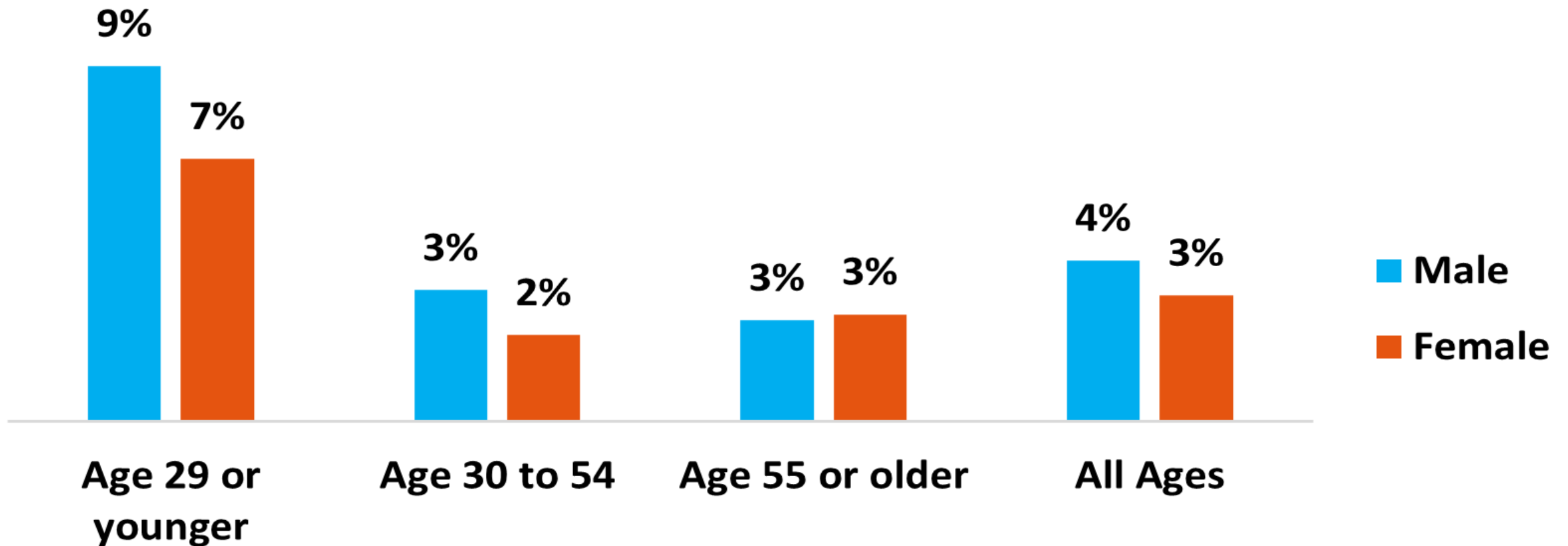| Category	St. Louis	Missouri	U.S.
No High School diploma	6%	8%	10%
High school graduate (or equivalent)	25%	30%	26%
Some college, no degree	20%	21%	19%
Associate degree	10%	9%	9%
Bachelor's degree	23%	20%	22%
Graduate or professional degree	16%	13%	14%
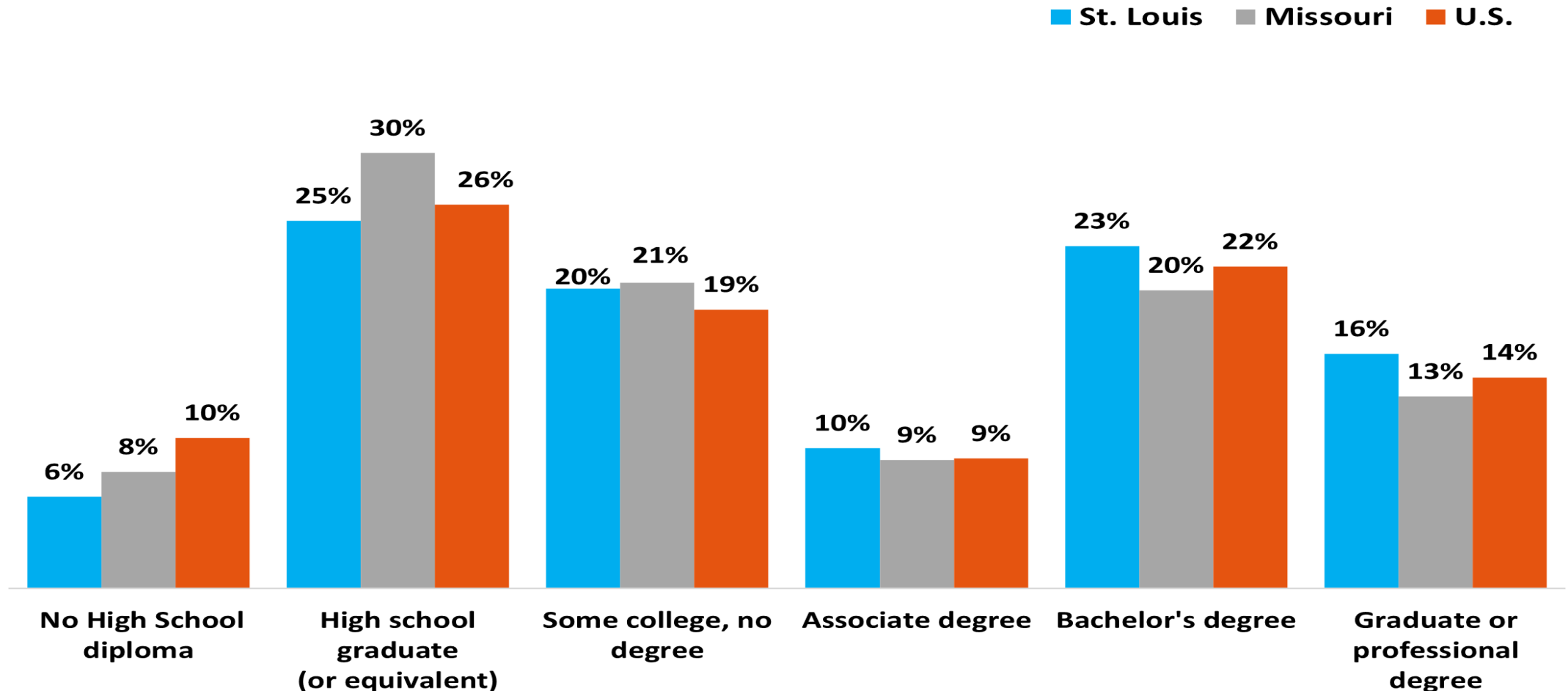
Education Pays

Education affects both earning and unemployment

Biggest salary jump with 4-year degree

Education post-HS provides stability

	Unemployment Rates	Educational Attainment	Median Earnings
Missouri	5.9%	Less than high school graduate	$31,777
	3.5%	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	$37,420
	2.9%	Some college or associate's degree	$43,300
	1.5%	Bachelor's degree or higher	$66,921
St. Louis MSA	7.4%	Less than high school graduate	$30,562
	4.7%	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	$40,042
	2.9%	Some college or associate's degree	$46,767
	1.4%	Bachelor's degree or higher	$73,694

Top 10 St. Louis MSA Industry Clusters

Industry Cluster	2024	2014
Health Care & Social Assistance	229,984	197,466
Wholesale & Retail Trade	207,764	210,630
Leisure & Hospitality	157,733	151,841
Manufacturing	119,665	110,405
Educational Services	110,052	105,411
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	90,581	77,354
Administrative & Support Services	89,607	90,306
Construction	77,782	61,841
Finance & Insurance	73,515	67,531
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	67,069	55,044

Employer Survey

Live interview survey of 600 St. Louis MSA employers

Each interview takes about 20 minutes

Graphics Key/Legend

2025	CURRENT YEAR

2024	LAST YEAR

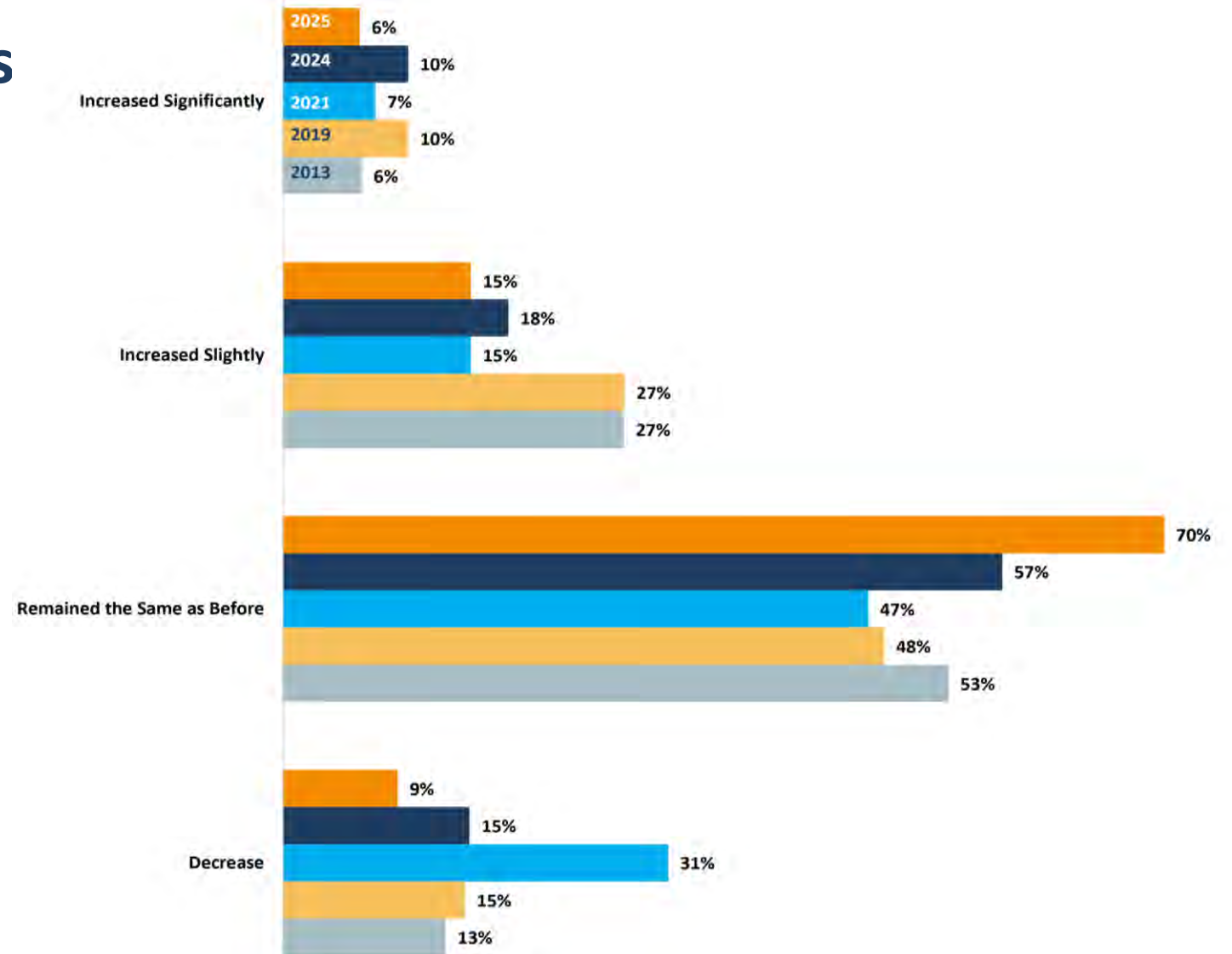| 2021	PANDEMIC YEAR

2019	PRE-PANDEMIC YEAR

2013	POST-RECESSION YEAR

Change in Employment Levels over the Last 12 Months

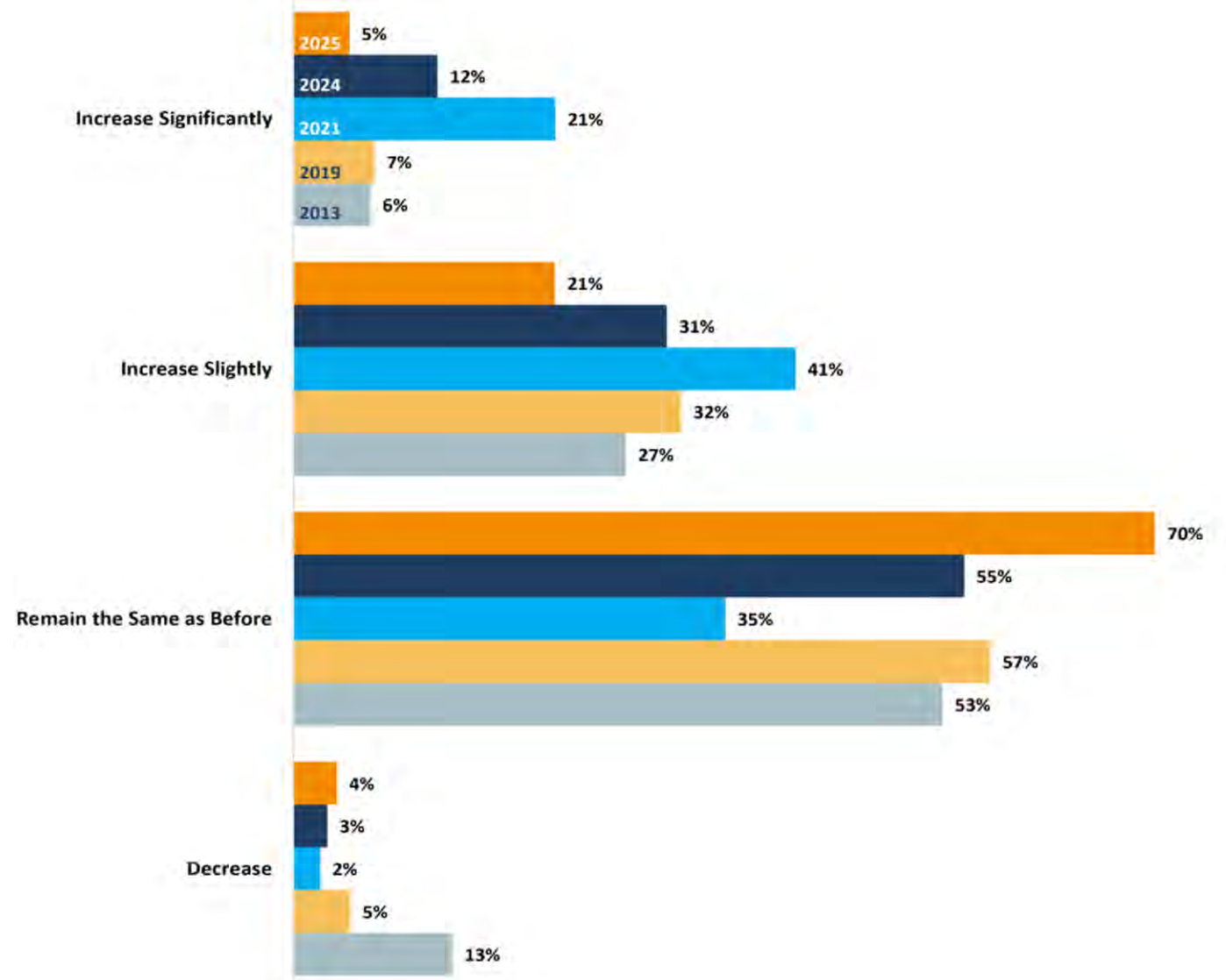**21% of companies hired employees in the last 12 months, down from last year.**

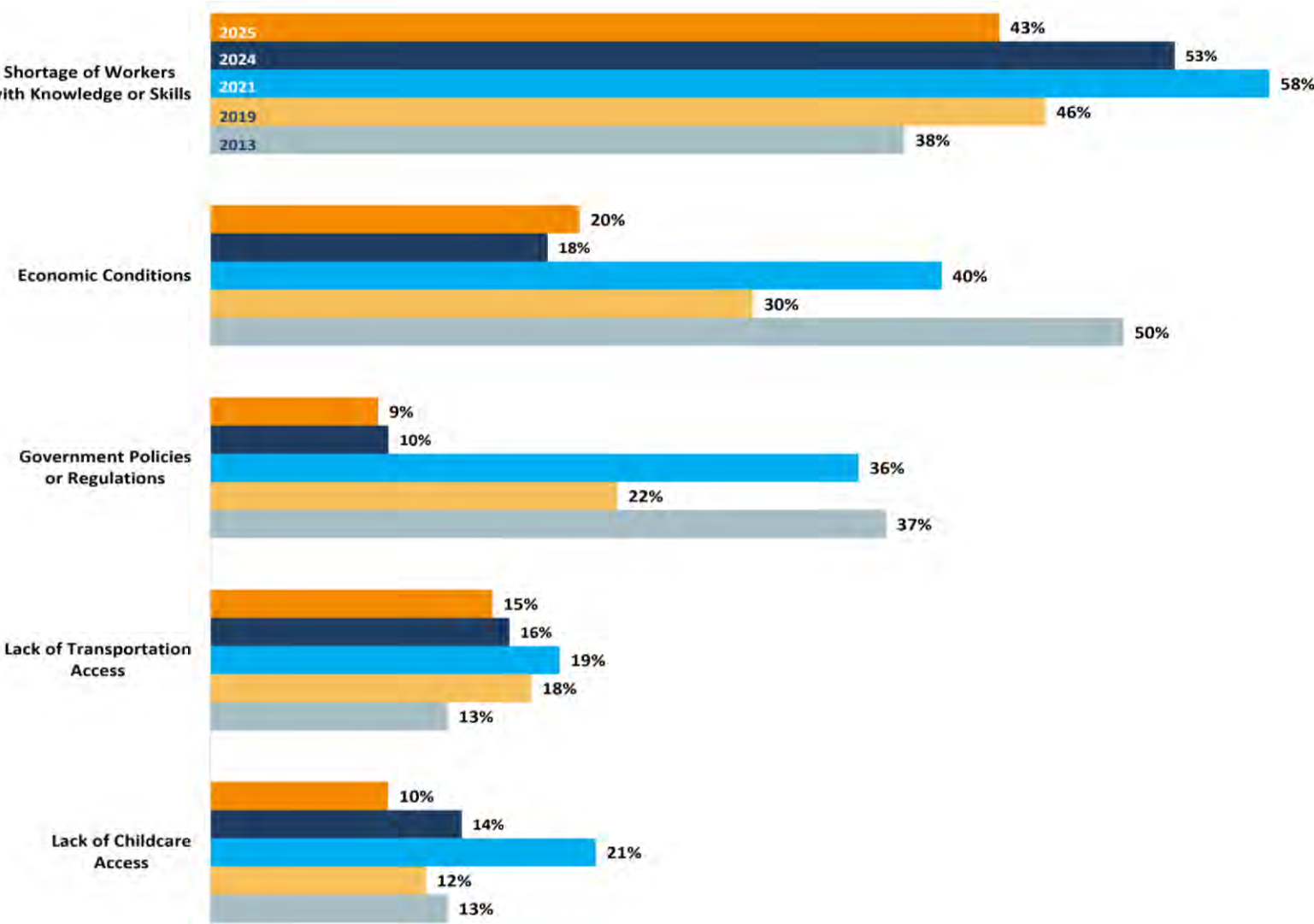**9% cut employees, down from last year**

Increased Significantly
- 2025: 6%
- 2024: 10%
- 2021: 7%
- 2019: 10%
- 2013: 6%

Increased Slightly
- 2025: 15%
- 2024: 18%
- 2021: 15%
- 2019: 27%
- 2013: 27%

Remained the Same as Before
- 2025: 70%
- 2024: 57%
- 2021: 47%
- 2019: 48%
- 2013: 53%

Decrease
- 2025: 9%
- 2024: 15%
- 2021: 31%
- 2019: 15%
- 2013: 13%

Barriers to Growth

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Shortage of Workers with Knowledge or Skills
- 2025: 43%
- 2024: 53%
- 2021: 58%
- 2019: 46%
- 2013: 38%

Economic Conditions
- 2025: 20%
- 2024: 18%
- 2021: 40%
- 2019: 30%
- 2013: 50%

Government Policies or Regulations
- 2025: 9%
- 2024: 10%
- 2021: 36%
- 2019: 22%
- 2013: 37%

Lack of Transportation Access
- 2025: 15%
- 2024: 16%
- 2021: 19%
- 2019: 18%
- 2013: 13%

Lack of Childcare Access
- 2025: 10%
- 2024: 14%
- 2021: 21%
- 2019: 12%
- 2013: 13%

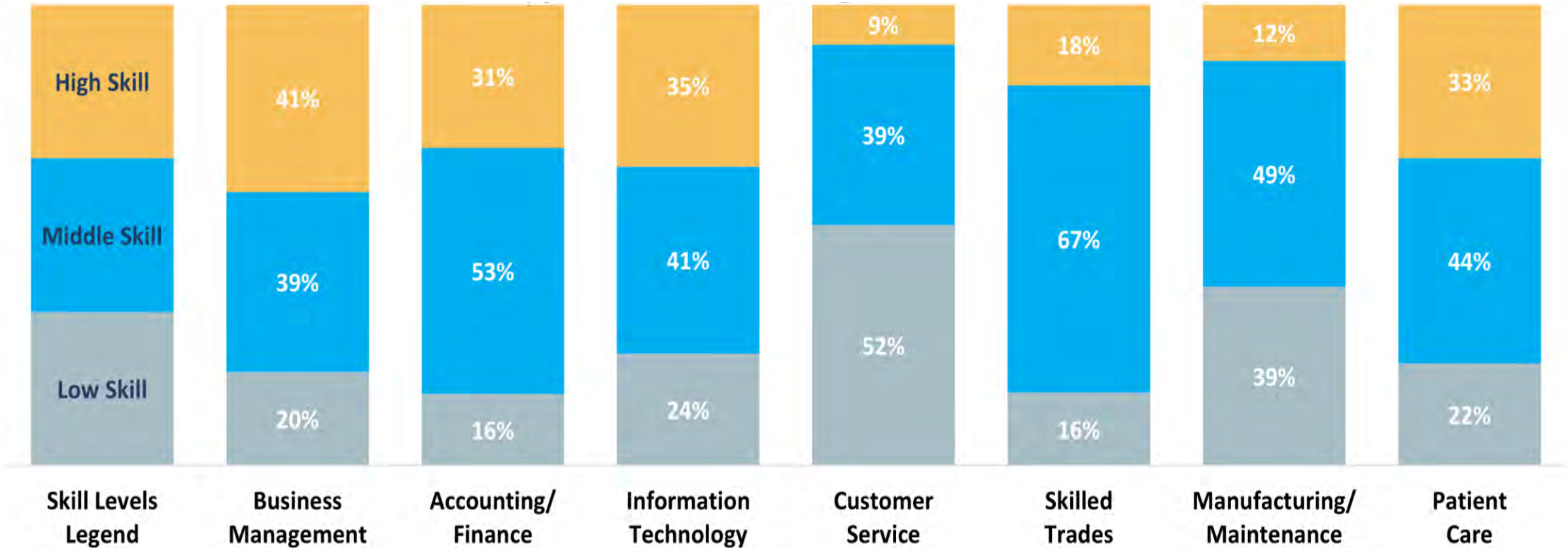**Shortage of workers with knowledge or skills still # 1**

High-skill

requiring a four-year degree or higher

Middle-skill

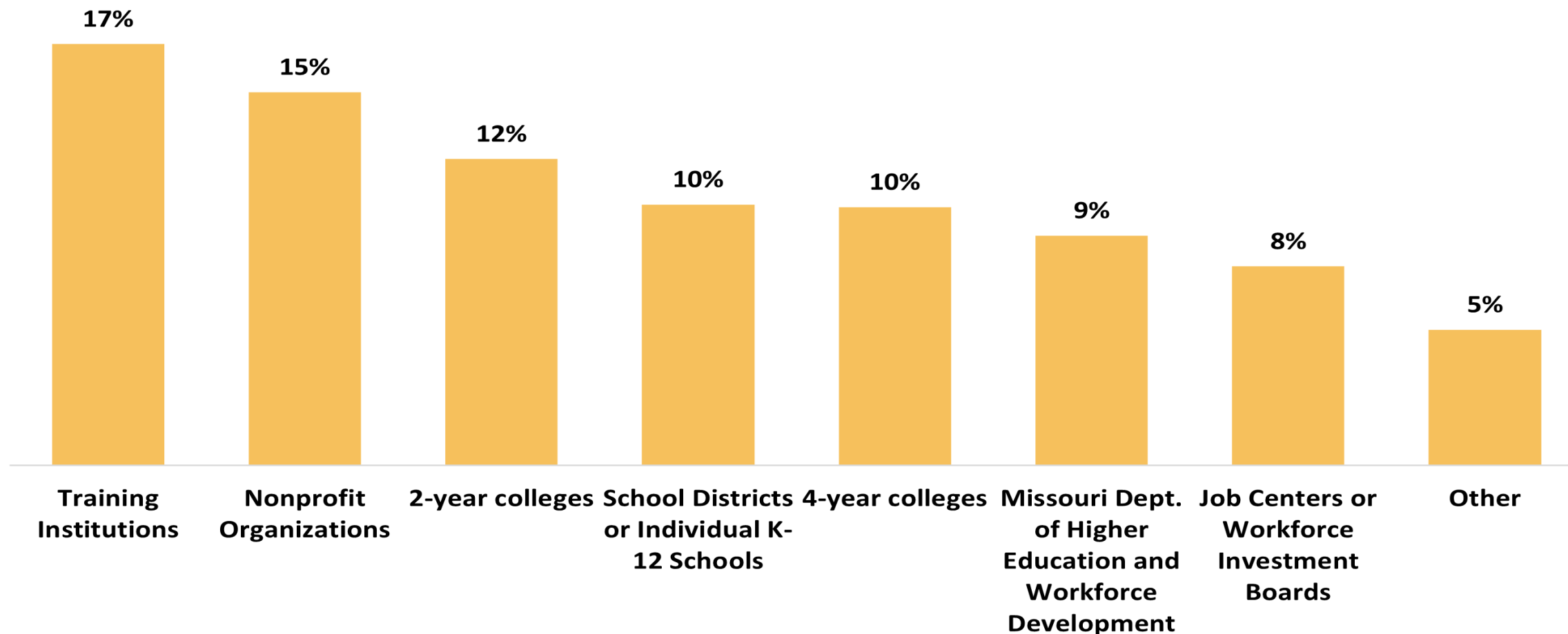**requiring a training or education beyond a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree**

Low-skill

requiring a high school diploma or less

Skill Shortages by Business Functional Areas

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WORKFORCE

Skill Levels Needed to Meet Skill Shortages

	High Skill	Middle Skill	Low Skill
Skill Levels Legend			
Business Management	41%	39%	20%
Accounting/Finance	31%	53%	16%
Information Technology	35%	41%	24%
Customer Service	9%	39%	52%
Skilled Trades	18%	67%	16%
Manufacturing/Maintenance	12%	49%	39%
Patient Care	33%	44%	22%

Employers Remote Work Policy
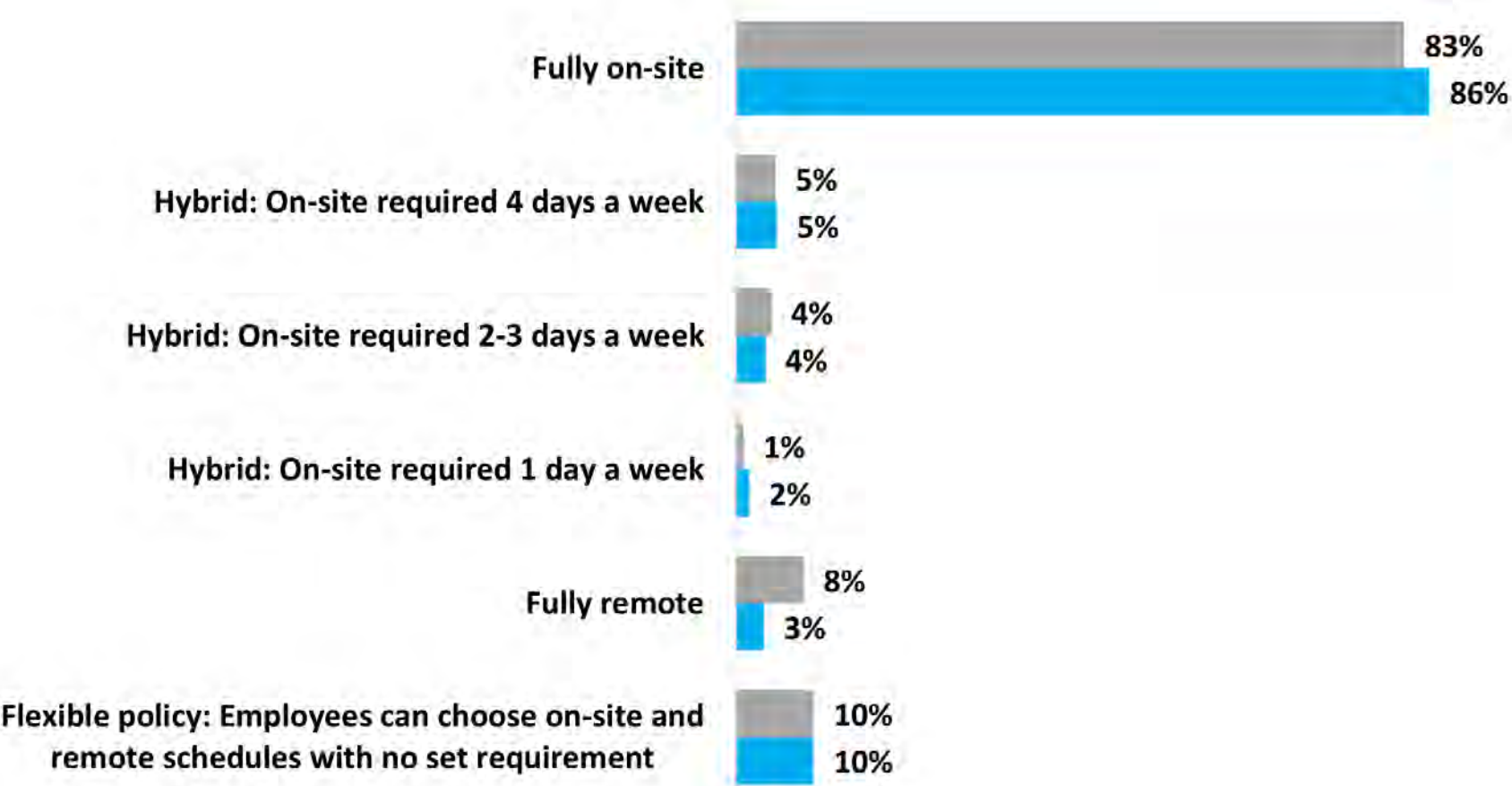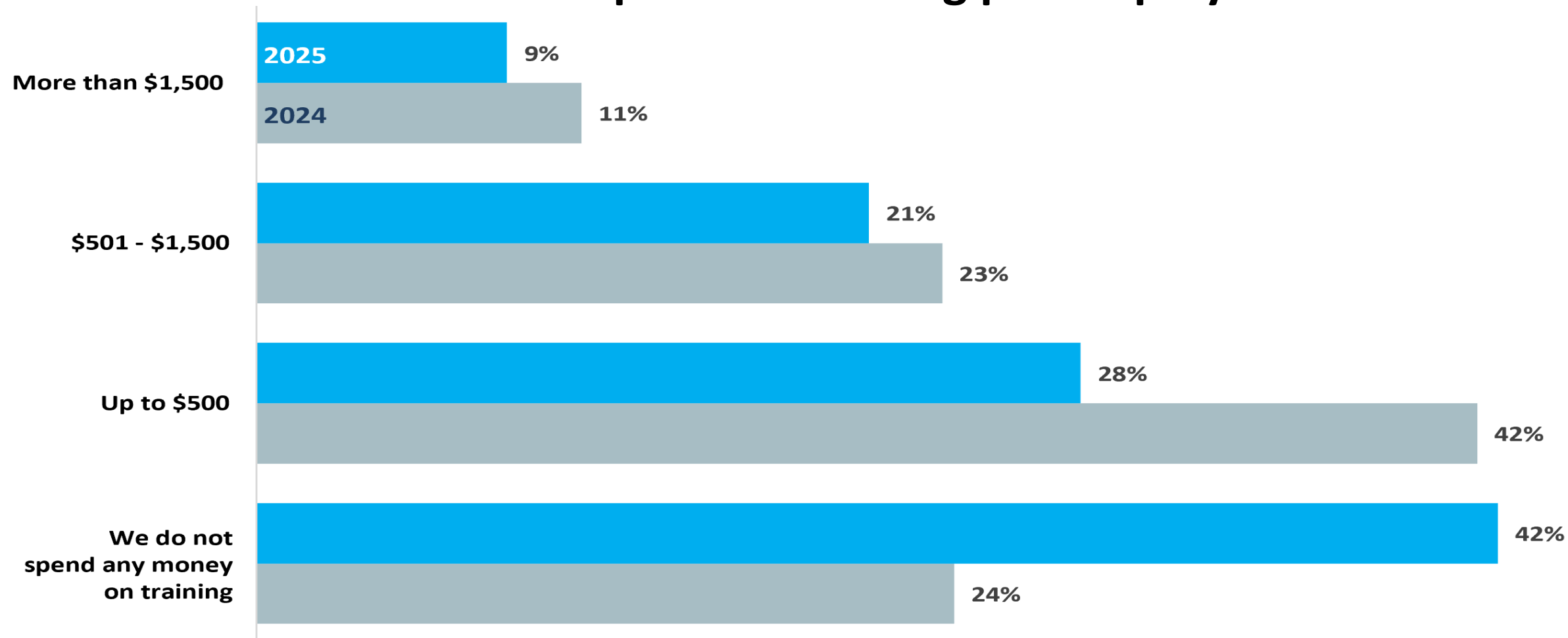
Policy	Gray	Blue
Fully on-site	83%	86%
Hybrid: On-site required 4 days a week	5%	5%
Hybrid: On-site required 2-3 days a week	4%	4%
Hybrid: On-site required 1 day a week	1%	2%
Fully remote	8%	3%
Flexible policy: Employees can choose on-site and remote schedules with no set requirement	10%	10%

AI Adoption and Application
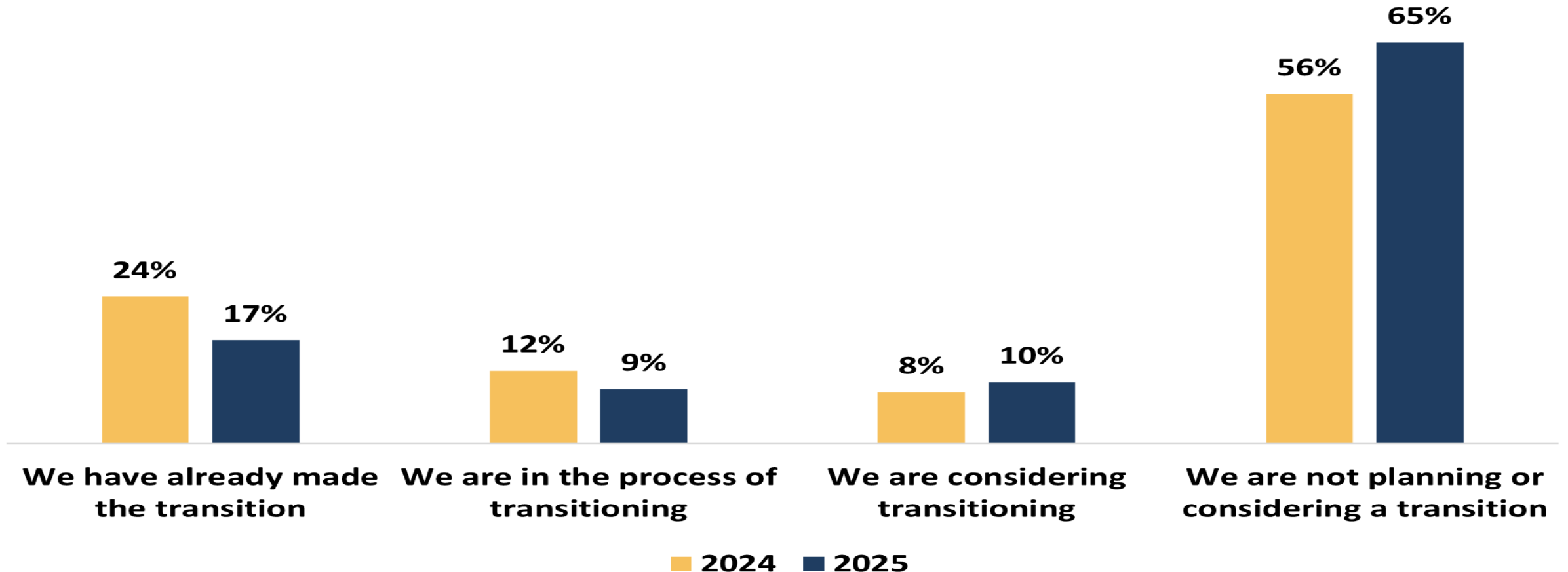
Areas of Company Using Artificial Intelligence(AI)

Area	Percentage
Customer Service	42%
Business Management	33%
Information Technology	24%
Maintenance	16%
Manufacturing/Production	13%
Skilled Trades	10%
Accounting/Finance	10%
Transportation	5%
Patient Care	3%
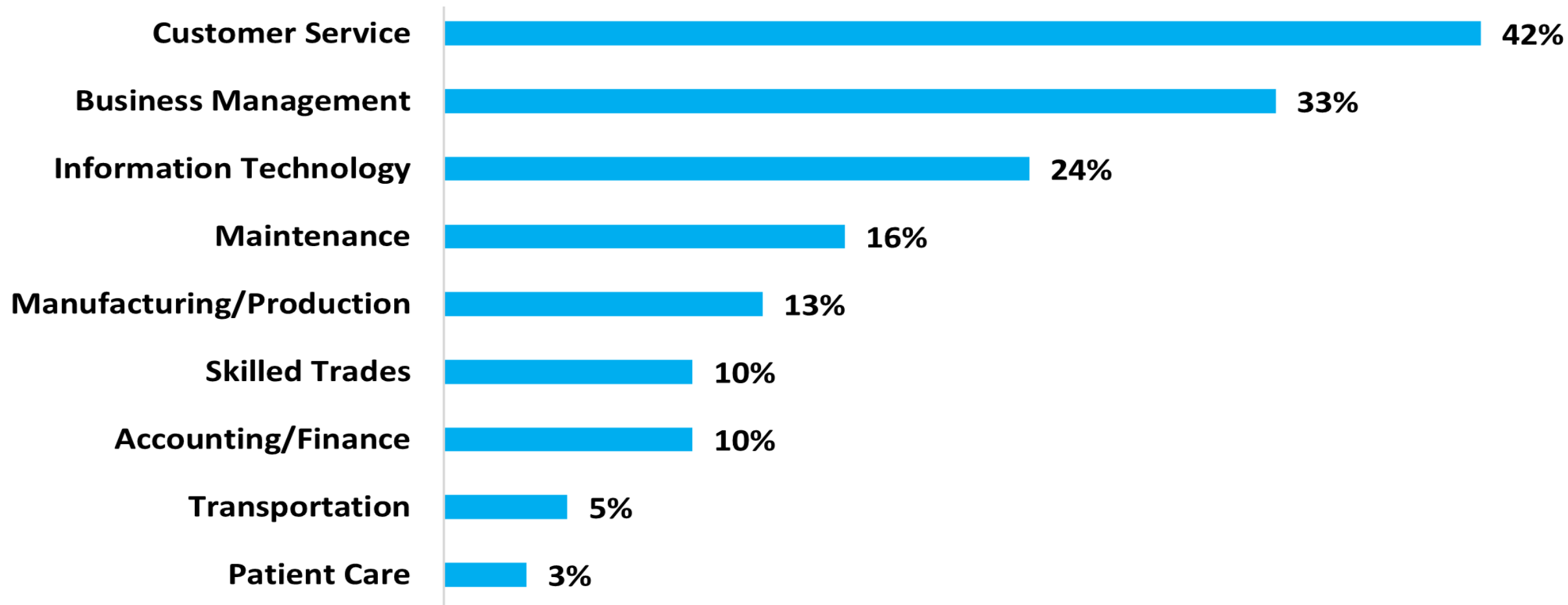
Spotlight on Startups and Job Creation

Spotlight on Startups

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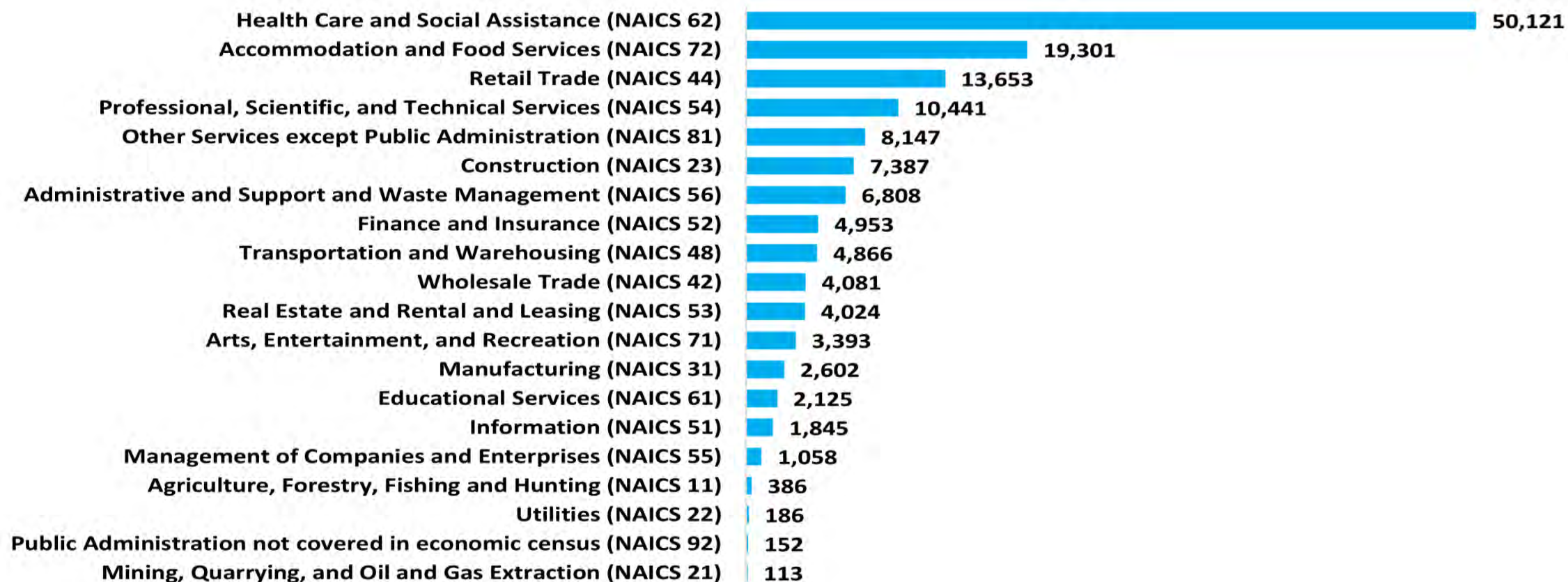
St. Louis region added 15,612 new jobs by startups in 2024

+34%

Spotlight on Startups

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St. Louis Region First-time Startups and Jobs Created by Year
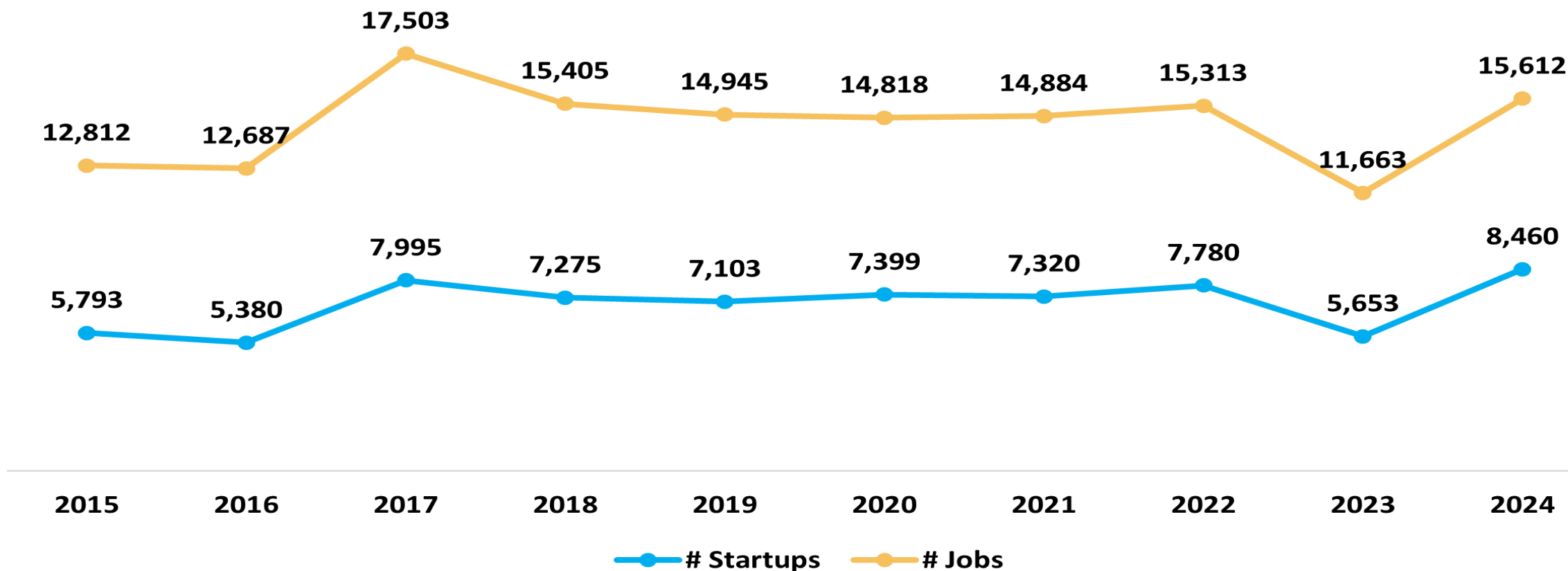
St. Louis Region Jobs Created by Startups (2015-2024)

Industry	Jobs
Health Care and Social Assistance (NAICS 62)	50,121
Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72)	19,301
Retail Trade (NAICS 44)	13,653
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (NAICS 54)	10,441
Other Services except Public Administration (NAICS 81)	8,147
Construction (NAICS 23)	7,387
Administrative and Support and Waste Management (NAICS 56)	6,808
Finance and Insurance (NAICS 52)	4,953
Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48)	4,866
Wholesale Trade (NAICS 42)	4,081
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (NAICS 53)	4,024
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (NAICS 71)	3,393
Manufacturing (NAICS 31)	2,602
Educational Services (NAICS 61)	2,125
Information (NAICS 51)	1,845
Management of Companies and Enterprises (NAICS 55)	1,058
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (NAICS 11)	386
Utilities (NAICS 22)	186
Public Administration not covered in economic census (NAICS 92)	152
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (NAICS 21)	113

Spotlight on Transportation and Warehousing

St. Louis regional transportation and warehousing jobs increased by 24% since 2014.