



# 2023-2024 DEGREES & CREDENTIALS REPORT

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*Total degrees & credentials awarded by Kentucky  
public & private postsecondary institutions*



## OVERVIEW

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) annually produces a report examining degree and credential production in Kentucky in the previous academic year (July 1 through June 30) and over the last five years.

Using data from the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Data System (KPEDS), the report details the number and types of credentials earned at Kentucky's eight public universities, the sixteen campuses of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and the 18 institutions of the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU).



# WHY DOES DEGREE PRODUCTION MATTER?

To increase the competitiveness of the state's workforce, Kentucky needs 60% of adults to have a postsecondary degree or credential by the year 2030. Current attainment is 56.2%, just 3.8 points shy of the goal.

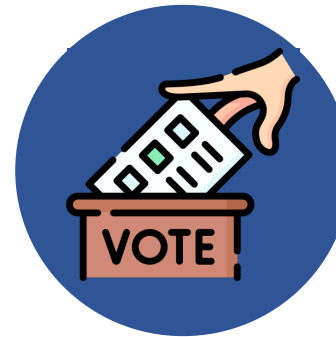
*Increased degree and credential production leads to:*



Higher earnings for graduates, increased tax revenues, lower poverty rates and less reliance on public assistance



Higher levels of employment and a more highly skilled workforce



A more educated citizenry with higher rates of voting, volunteerism and charitable giving

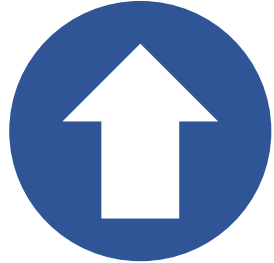


Healthier residents, less chronic disease and lower healthcare costs

*Source: The College Board, "Education Pays," 2023*



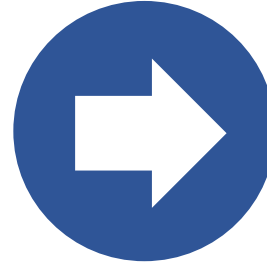
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## **TOTAL DEGREES & CREDENTIALS**

1-Yr. Change: **+6.4%**  
5-Yr. Change: **+16.8%**

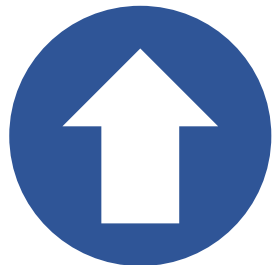
*Growth in total degrees and credentials is being driven by increases at the graduate and certificate levels.*



## **BACHELOR'S DEGREES**

1-Yr. Change: **+0.7%**  
5-Yr. Change: **-2.7%**

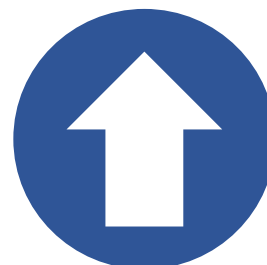
*Bachelor's degrees have remained essentially flat, rising at private institutions but falling at public institutions.*



## **URM DEGREES & CREDENTIALS (undergraduate only)**

1-Yr. Change: **+7.9%**  
5-Yr. Change: **+33.2%**

*Growth in undergraduate URM degrees and credentials is outpacing overall credential growth. Increases are consistent across all postsecondary sectors.*



## **LOW-INCOME DEGREES & CREDENTIALS (undergraduate only)**

1-Yr. Change: **4.1%**  
5-Yr. Change: **4.0%**

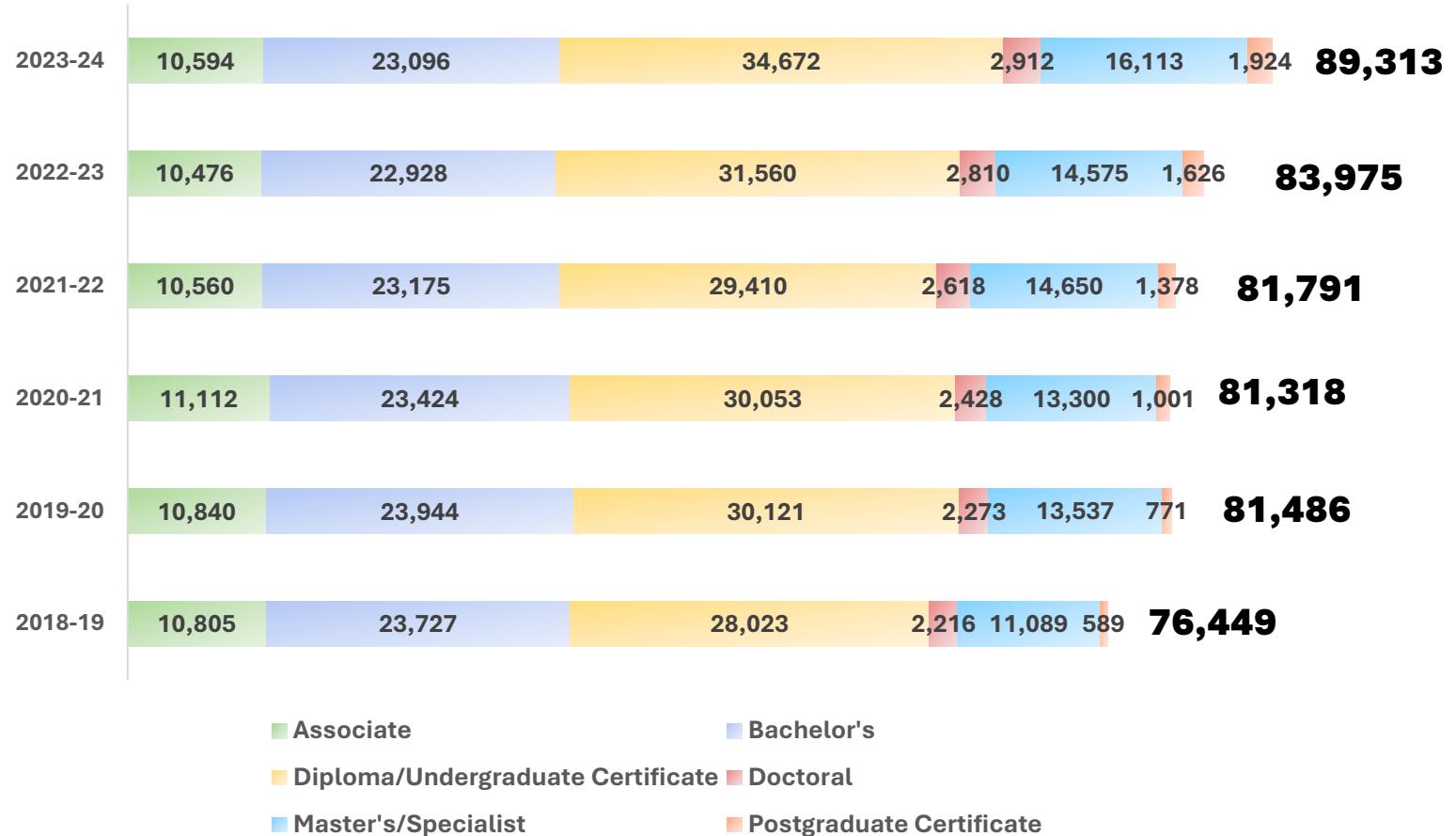
*While low-income degrees and credentials are up this year, over the last five years gains at KCTCS have offset decreases at public universities.*



# TOTAL DEGREES & CREDENTIALS

Public & AIKCU Institutions, All Levels

- Total degrees and credentials have increased **6.4%** over the previous year and **16.8%** since 2018-19.
- Gains have been driven by growth in certificates and graduate degrees. Master's, undergraduate certificates and doctoral degrees increased **10.6%**, **9.9%** and **3.6%**, respectively, over the previous year.
- Associate degrees are up **1.1%** from last year but have fallen **2.0%** over the last five years.

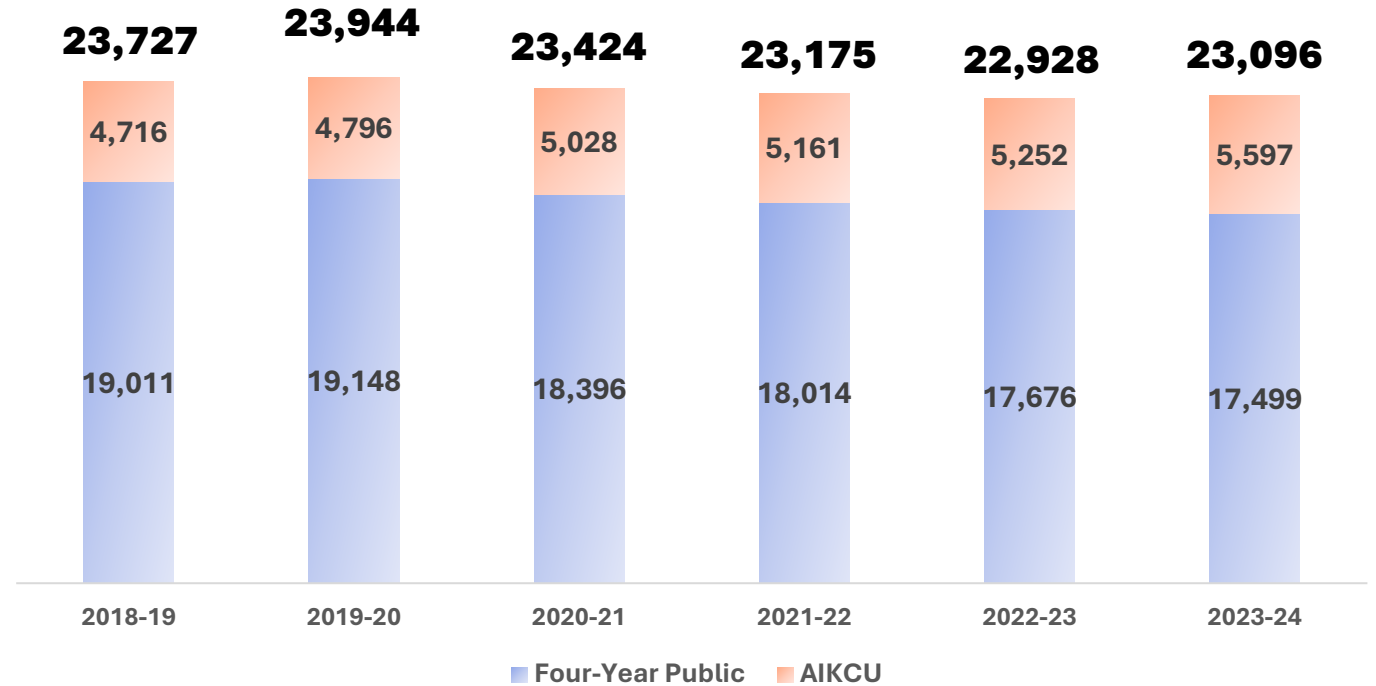




# BACHELOR'S DEGREES

Public & AIKCU Institutions

- Bachelor's degree production is essentially flat. Decreases at public universities have been offset by increases at AIKCU institutions.
- At public universities, baccalaureate degree production is down **1.0%** over last year and **8.0%** over the last five years.
- At AIKCU institutions, bachelor's degrees are up **6.6%** over last year and **18.7%** over the last five years.

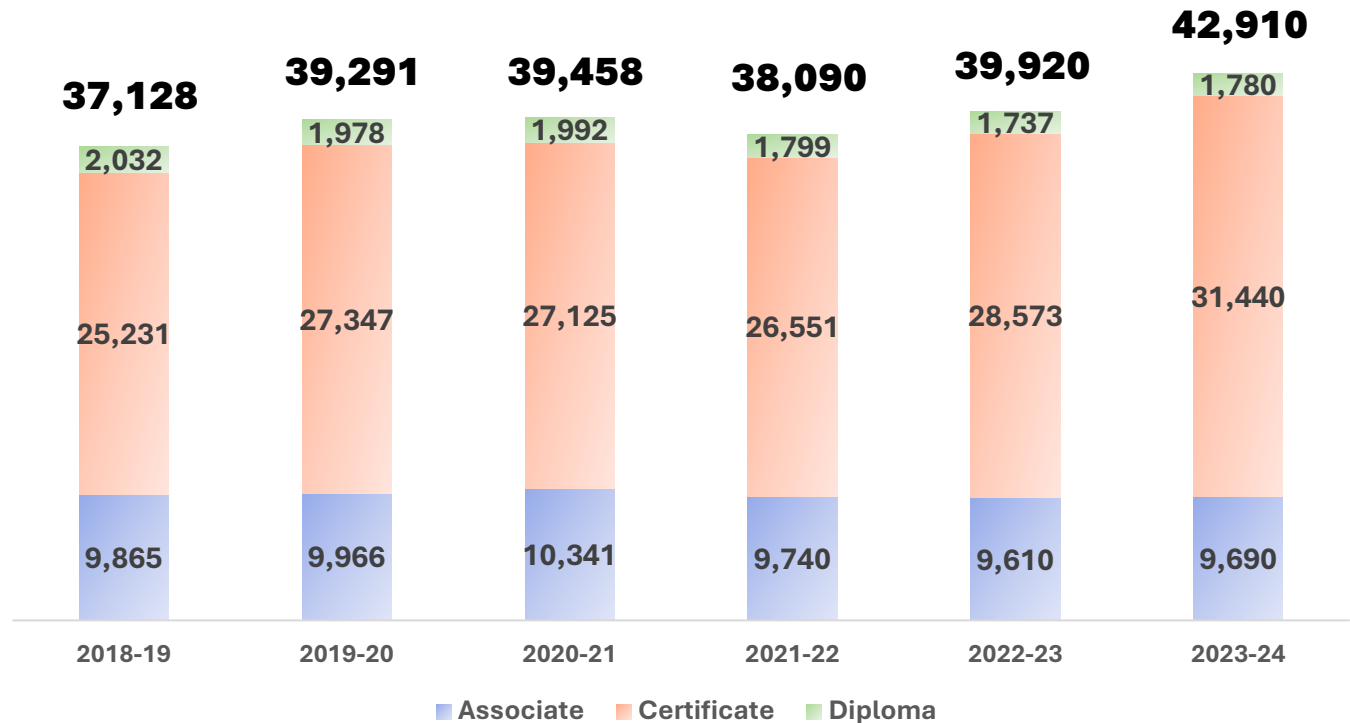




# KCTCS DEGREES & CREDENTIALS

All Levels

- Total KCTCS degrees and credentials have risen **7.5%** over the previous year and **15.6%** over the last five years.
- Certificates have shown the largest growth, increasing **10.0%** over the previous year and **24.6%** over the last five years.
- KCTCS associate degrees edged up **0.8%** from last year but have declined **1.8%** since 2018-19.

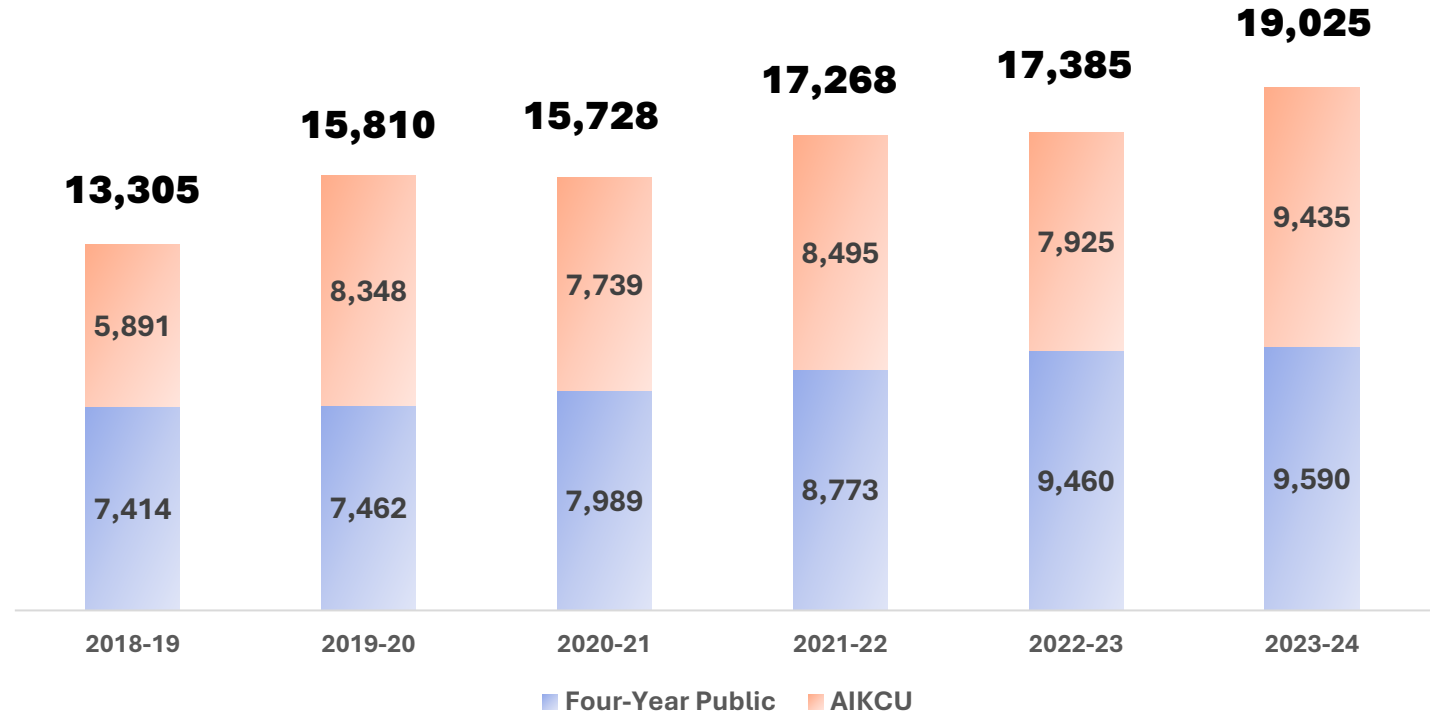




# GRADUATE DEGREES

*Public Universities and AIKCU Institutions*

- Graduate degrees are up **9.4%** from the previous year and **43.0%** over the last five years.
- Growth at AIKCU institutions has been particularly strong, increasing **19.1%** over the previous year and **60.2%** over the last five years.
- Over the same period, graduate degrees awarded by public universities increased more modestly, up **1.4%** (1-year change) and **29.3%** (5-year change).



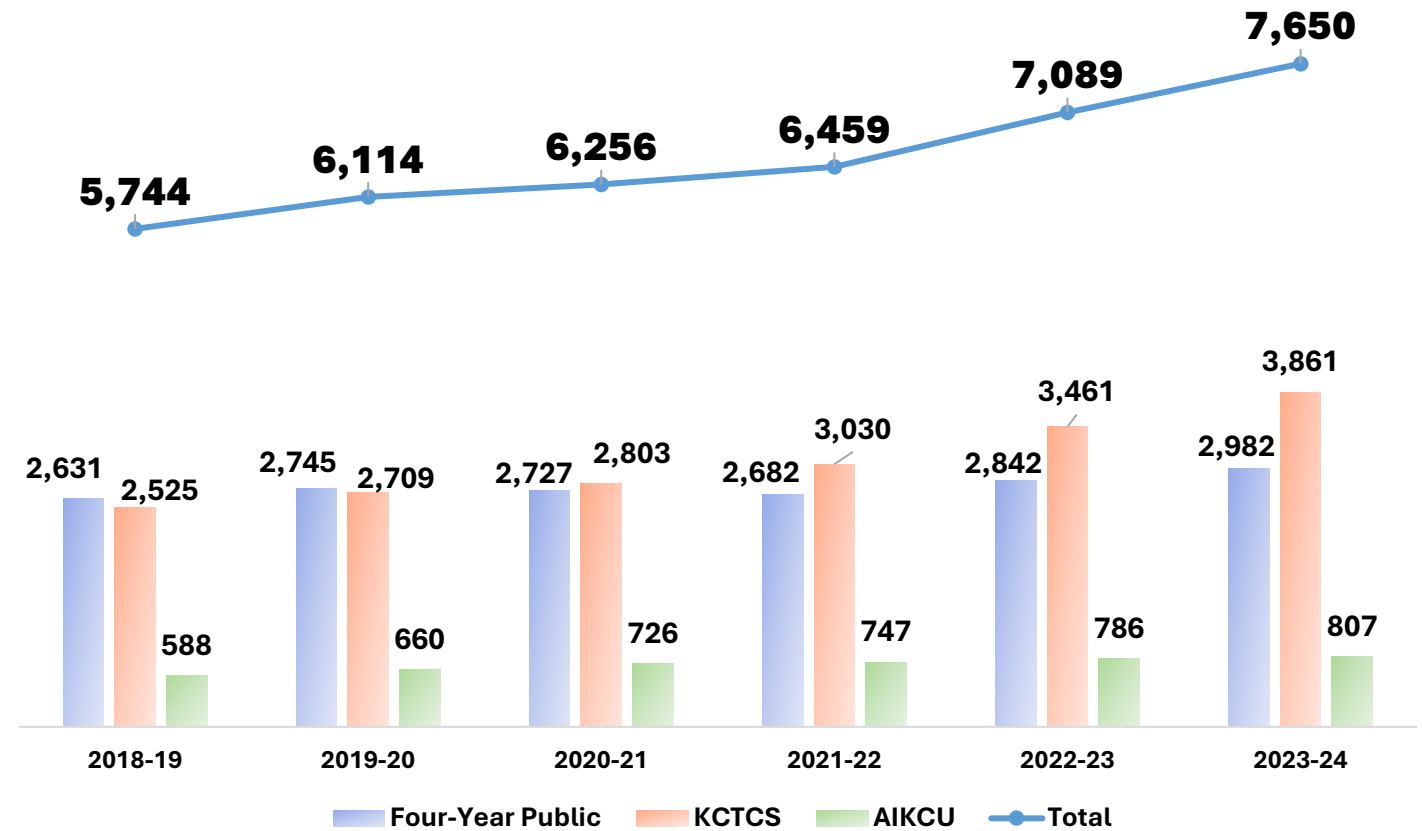




# URM DEGREES & CREDENTIALS

Public and AIKCU Institutions, Undergraduate Only

- Growth in undergraduate URM (underrepresented minority) degrees and credentials is outpacing overall credential growth, increasing **7.9%** over last year and **33.2%** over the last five years.
- KCTCS led the way in URM degree and credential growth, up **11.6%** from last year and **52.9%** over the last five years.
- URM degrees and credentials at public universities increased **4.9%** over the previous year and **13.3%** since 2018-19.



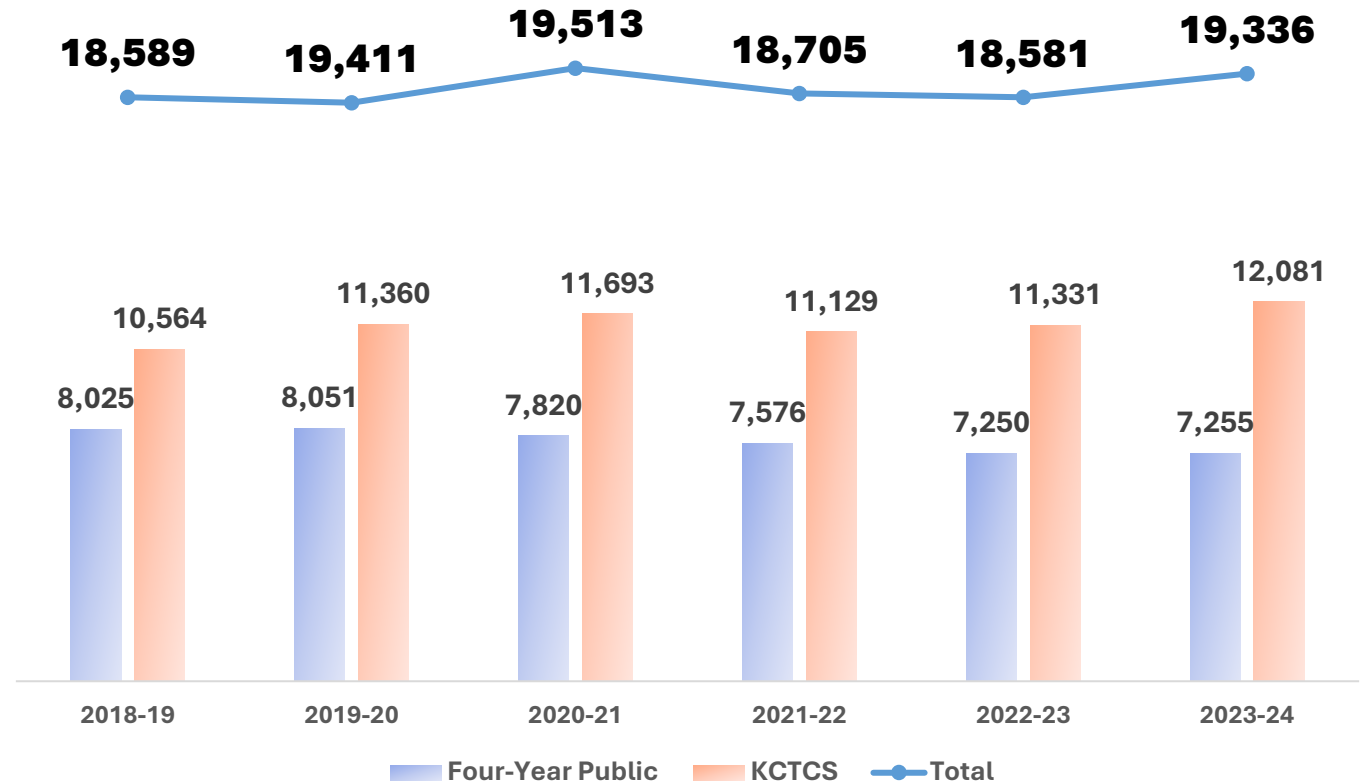
Counts are unduplicated at the sector level. See technical notes.



# LOW-INCOME DEGREES & CREDENTIALS

*Public Institutions, Undergraduate Only (AIKCU data not available)*

- Undergraduate degrees and credentials awarded to low-income students increased **4.1%** over the previous year and **4.0%** since 2018-19.
- At public universities, low-income degrees and credentials inched up **0.1%** from last year but have fallen **9.6%** over the last five years.
- Low-income degrees and credentials at KCTCS increased **6.6%** over last year and **14.4%** over the last five years.



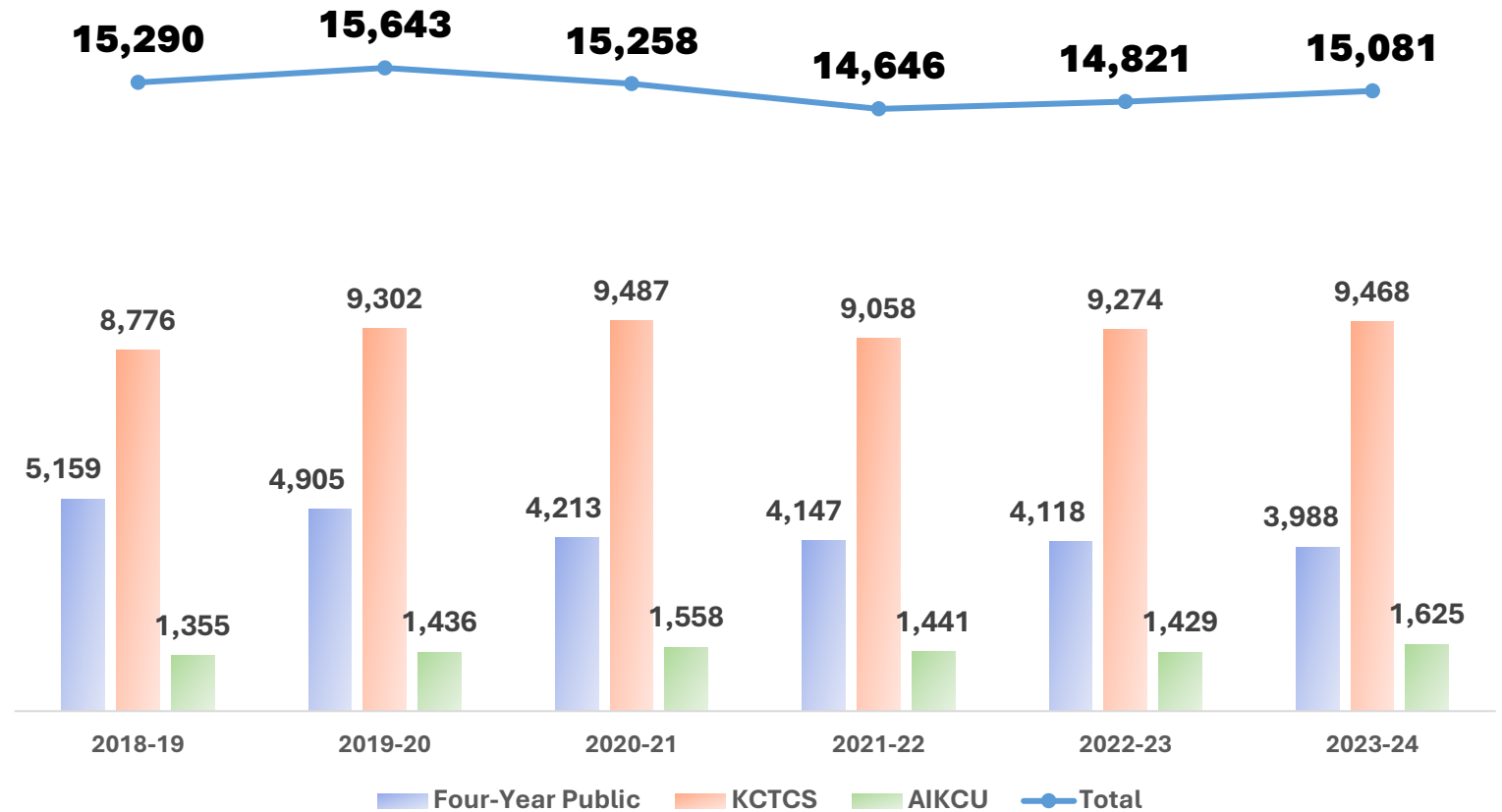
*Counts are unduplicated at the sector level. See technical notes.*



# ADULT DEGREES & CREDENTIALS

Public and AIKCU Institutions, Undergraduate Only

- Undergraduate degrees and credentials awarded to first-time adult students have been relatively flat over the last five years, although they increased **1.8%** over last year.
- KCTCS and AIKCU both saw annual and five-year increases in degrees and credentials awarded to adult undergraduates. KCTCS was up **2.1%** (1-year change) and **7.9%** (5-year change).
- Degrees and credentials awarded to adult undergraduates at public universities are down **3.2%** from last year and **22.7%** since 2018-19.



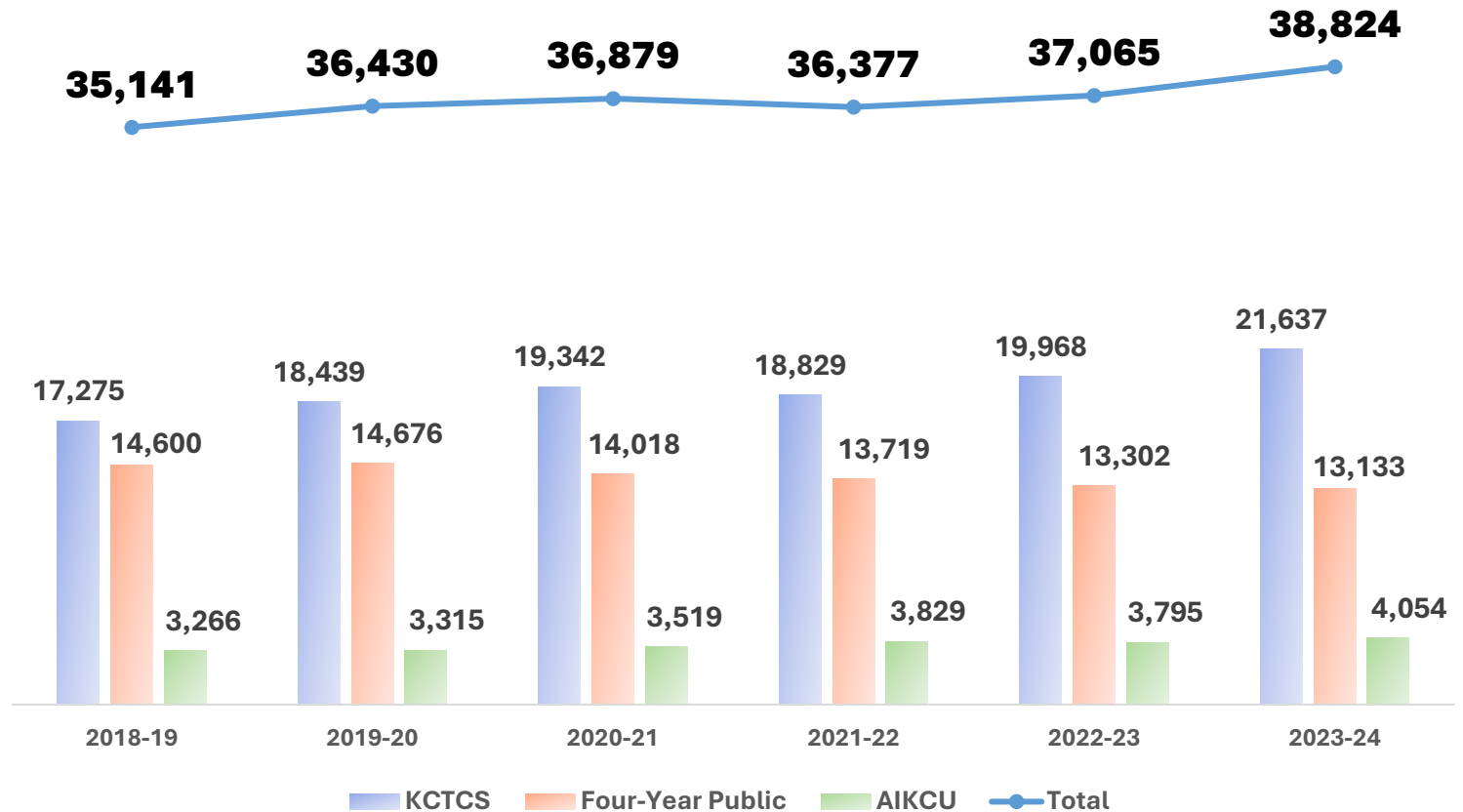
Counts are unduplicated at the sector level. See technical notes.



# IN-STATE DEGREES & CREDENTIALS

*Public and AIKCU Institutions, Undergraduate Only*

- Undergraduate degrees and credentials awarded to in-state students increased **4.7%** over the previous year and **10.5%** over the last five years.
- These increases were consistent across every sector except public universities, where degrees and credentials to in-state undergraduates fell **1.3%** from last year and **10.0%** since 2018-19.
- At KCTCS, degrees and credentials awarded to in-state undergraduates rose **8.4%** from the previous year and **25.3%** over the last five years.



*Counts are unduplicated at the sector level. See technical notes.*



# TECHNICAL NOTES

- **Total degrees and credentials** awarded include diplomas, undergraduate certificates, associate degrees, postgraduate certificates and bachelor's, master's, specialist and doctoral degrees awarded by public and AIKCU institutions. Counts include all credentials awarded during the academic year, even if a student earned multiple credentials or two bachelor's degrees, as is the case with some double majors (a duplicated count).
- **Bachelor's degrees** are awards that normally require at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the college or university undergraduate level. This includes all bachelor's degrees conferred in a five-year cooperative (work-study) program, as well as degrees in which the normal four years of work are completed in three years. Counts are duplicated, meaning that multiple credentials may have been awarded to a student during an academic year.
- **Total credentials** awarded by the sixteen **KCTCS campuses** include associate degrees, which normally require at least 60 credit hours or the equivalent at the undergraduate level; certificates, which are short-term credentials (from less than one year to up to four years) at the undergraduate level; and undergraduate diploma programs, courses of study often leading to professional credentials in vocational fields. Counts are duplicated, meaning that multiple credentials may have been awarded to a student during an academic year.
- **Total graduate and professional degrees** include master's, specialist and doctoral degrees awarded in an academic year. Multiple awards received by the same student in an academic year are all included. A master's degree is an award that requires the successful completion of an academic program of at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate or professional level. A specialist degree normally requires 60 semester hours of concentrated and approved graduate coursework beyond the bachelor's degree. It is generally offered in the field of education to acknowledge completion of advanced graduate study designed to help individuals meet licensure requirements or develop additional knowledge and skills beyond the master's degree, but not at the doctoral level. A doctoral degree requires advanced work beyond the master's level. CPE recognizes four classifications for doctoral degrees (doctor's degree, completed all coursework and dissertation; doctor's degree, completed all coursework but working on dissertation; doctor's degree, professional practice; and all other doctor's degrees that are not research/scholarship or professional practice degrees).



# TECHNICAL NOTES

- In this report, **underrepresented minority (URM)** refers to students whose race or ethnicity is Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races. Counts for URM students are unduplicated at the sector level (multiple credentials earned by the same student are not counted).
- In this report, a **low-income student** is one who has been a Pell recipient at any point during their enrollment. Federal Pell Grants are awarded only to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need and have not earned a bachelor's, graduate or professional degree. A Pell grant, unlike a loan, does not need to be repaid. Counts for low-income students are unduplicated at the sector level (multiple credentials earned by the same student are not counted).
- **Working-age adult students** are defined as students between the ages of 25 and 64. Counts for working-age adult students are unduplicated at the sector level (multiple credentials earned by the same student are not counted).
- Since AIKCU does not report degrees awarded to **in-state students**, CPE applied the state/country of origin filter to total degrees awarded to obtain this count. Counts for in-state students are unduplicated at the sector level (multiple credentials earned by the same student are not counted).



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