

Understanding Michigan's Reconnect Program Applicants

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This research result used data structured and maintained by the MERI-Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC). MEDC data is modified for analysis purposes using rules governed by MEDC and are not identical to those data collected and maintained by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and/or Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). Results, information and opinions solely represent the analysis, information and opinions of the author(s) and are not endorsed by, or reflect the views or positions of, grantors, MDE and CEPI, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, or any employee thereof.

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Overview

The Michigan Reconnect Program was launched in 2021, providing free community college tuition to Michiganders who are 25 or older and who have not already earned a college degree.¹ In this report, we summarize the characteristics of individuals who applied to Reconnect through April 2023. We compare Reconnect applicants to the broader pool of people eligible for the program, describe the prior educational history of the applicants, and compare applicants' intended field of study to the availability of high-demand, high-wage jobs in the State. Throughout we document and highlight patterns for applicants overall and by gender, race, and age.

Summary of Findings

1. The approximately 118,000 Reconnect applicants through April 2023 represent 7.2% of the Reconnect eligible population between the ages 25–49 and 3.3% of the entire statewide eligible population. Application rates among the eligible—the shares of the eligible population who applied to Reconnect—are highest among women, younger adults, Black adults, and those in the lower half of the state.
2. More than half of applicants had some prior enrollment, with the vast majority at a Michigan community college. Most applicants had not been engaged with the postsecondary system for quite some time. While 12.5% were currently enrolled when they applied, 40% had previously been enrolled more than a year before applying and 29% had not been enrolled for at least four years. Few had previously earned a certificate.
3. More than half of applicants had earned prior postsecondary credits at a Michigan public institution, and almost one-third had earned more than 24 credits, or the equivalent of a year of college. Though prior collegiate performance has no bearing on Reconnect eligibility, most previously enrolled applicants had a cumulative GPA that would put them in good standing (above 2.0). Together, these facts imply that an associate degree (or other credential) could be closer than many students (or policymakers) realize—if the prior credits transfer.
4. Most applicants are motivated by career pursuits of some form, though many applicants were unsure of their specific educational plans. Relatively few applicants expressed

¹ In 2024 the age requirement of the program was temporarily lowered to age 21 or older. These applicants are not included in our analysis.

interest in Business Management, STEM, and Transportation, though those jobs represent a large share of high-demand, high-wage jobs expected to be available in the state. Although applicants' interests may change during schooling, these initial preferences suggest opportunities for greater career and educational advising to better align students' educational plans with labor market opportunities.

I. Background on Reconnect

The Michigan Reconnect Program was launched in 2021, providing free in-district community college tuition to Michiganders age 25 or older who have not already earned a college degree. In 2024, the age requirement of the program was temporarily lowered to age 21 or older. Since the program was launched, more than 217,000 adult learners have applied for the Reconnect program, more than 51,000 have enrolled in college, and nearly 10,000 have earned a postsecondary award.² Along with the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, the Tuition Incentive Program, and several other smaller programs, Reconnect is a critical element of the state's goal to put an affordable postsecondary education within the reach of all Michiganders.

II. Who is Most Likely to Apply to Reconnect?

According to estimates from the American Community Survey, in 2021 there were approximately 3.5 million Michiganders that were likely eligible for Reconnect based on their age (25 or older) and educational attainment (high school graduate without an associate or bachelor's degree). The approximately 118,000 Reconnect applicants through April 2023 thus represent 3.3% of the entire statewide eligible population, including older Michiganders who may be retired. While we are unable to restrict our analysis precisely to the target group of eligible prime-age workers aged 25 to 54, we can examine those aged 24 to 49. Among this similar age group, 7.2% of eligible Michiganders—about 1 in 14—applied for Reconnect.

This application rate varies widely across demographic groups, as shown in **Table 1**:

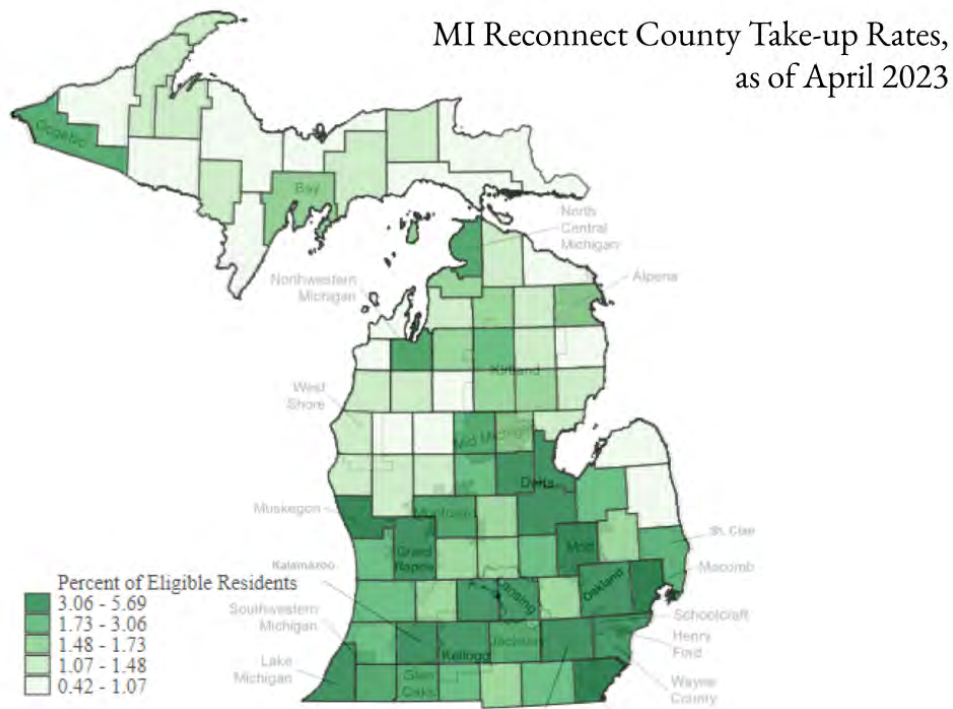
- **Age.** 10% of eligible 25–29 year olds applied vs. fewer than 1% of those age 50+. That said, even 4% of 40–49 year olds applied, which is high given the many barriers older students face when returning to school.
- **Gender.** Women's application rate (4.5%) was more than twice that of men (2.1%).

² These numbers are from the Reconnect Data Dashboard <https://www.michigan.gov/reconnect/about/reconnect-data-dashboard>, accessed June 20, 2025.

- **Race/ethnicity.** Application rates were highest among eligible Black adults (6.8%), who applied at a rate (relative to their eligible population) more than triple that of White adults (2.2%). Among eligible Hispanic adults, 4.0% applied.

Application rates among eligible adults varied notably across the state, with the highest rates in Metro Detroit and the Southcentral and Southwest parts of the state. Figure 1 reports application rates separately for each county, along with the location of each community college district. Application rates for Reconnect tend to be higher in counties that overlap with community college districts, as previously noted.³ The highest application rates were in Kalamazoo (5.7%), Ingham (5.4%), and Washtenaw (5.2%) Counties. Wayne County’s higher-than-average application rate (4.3%) is particularly impactful, given its large number of eligible adults.

Figure 1. MI Reconnect Application Rate by County, as of April 2023



Notes: The map shows the number of Reconnect applicants by county of residence divided by that county’s number of Reconnect eligible residents (individuals age 25+ with a high school diploma or equivalent but less than an associate degree), expressed as a percentage. The map also reports the location of Michigan’s community colleges and districts.

³ Huisman, Kyle and Kathleen Bolter. 2023. "Unequal Usage: Geographic Disparities and the Michigan Reconnect Program." Report prepared for the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. <https://research.upjohn.org/reports/291>

III. What Educational Background Do Reconnect Applicants Bring?

We matched more than 70% of Reconnect applicants (through April 2023) to Michigan administrative education records provided by CEPI, whether from K12, postsecondary, or both.⁴ These matched records permit us to characterize the postsecondary history of Reconnect applicants prior to and at the time of application. We assume that applicants not matched to Michigan education records had no postsecondary enrollment in the state prior to application.⁵

Table 2 reports the share of Reconnect applicants with postsecondary enrollment and credentials prior to or at the time of application to Reconnect. We provide overall estimates as well as breakdowns by sex, race/ethnicity, and age. Overall, 59% of applicants had enrolled prior to application, with the vast majority at a Michigan community college. A smaller, but still noticeable, share had previously enrolled in a Michigan public 4-year university (11%) or a private or out-of-state university (17%). About one in eight applicants were enrolled at the time of application (implying that just over one-fifth [$12.5 \div 59.1$] of applicants with prior enrollment were enrolled at the time of application).

Among applicants enrolled at the time of application, nearly all were attending a Michigan community college. Conversely, 87.2% of applicants were *not* already enrolled in a Reconnect-eligible institution at the time of application. Most applicants had not been engaged with postsecondary education for quite some time—40% of all applicants had previously enrolled more than one year before applying, and 29% for four or more years. Only 19% of applicants were enrolled within the year prior to application. The Reconnect program thus effectively targets potential students that have been disconnected from postsecondary education. Only 6% of applicants had earned a credential—primarily certificates—prior to applying.⁶

While male and female applicants had similar rates of prior enrollment, female applicants were slightly more likely to have had more recent engagement with postsecondary education. Racial

⁴ Note that we would not expect a match rate of 100% because some applicants will have attended private K12 schools in Michigan, recently moved to the state, or attended in Michigan before the available period of recordkeeping. This latter case particularly applies to older applicants in their 50s and 60s.

⁵ “Prior to application” includes any enrollment spells that began prior to the application date, including those that were still ongoing at the time of application. As the postsecondary data are complete only since 2011, postsecondary enrollment records prior to this year will be incomplete. Thus, enrollment occurring more than a decade before the application may not be captured, which may explain some—but not all—of the patterns by age.

⁶ The data indicate a very small share of applicants—1.3%—had been awarded an associate degree prior to applying, and an even smaller share, 0.4%, a bachelor’s or higher degree. We acknowledge that errors in the matching algorithm or data entry errors in the awards data could result in some applicants showing prior degree receipt. The Reconnect program has additional checks to ensure that students with an associate’s degree or higher, who are ineligible, do not receive Reconnect funds.

differences are larger, with two-thirds of Black applicants having had prior enrollment experience, compared with 54% of White applicants and 56% of Hispanic applicants. However, Black applicants' previous enrollment was more likely to be outside the MI public system (including for-profit and out-of-state colleges) and longer ago, which could create challenges for credit transfer. Unsurprisingly, younger applicants were more likely to have had postsecondary enrollment, and more recently, though this could partially reflect the lack of postsecondary records prior to 2011.

Table 3 shows the distribution of postsecondary credits earned by applicants, as well as their cumulative GPA (for Michigan publics) at institutions prior to application. Credits are most reliable for Michigan public colleges and universities, as these are directly available in the education records while they are imputed based on enrollment intensity for other institutions. We focus on the Michigan-public-specific measures in our discussion, but we report the combination of total credits (reported and imputed) in the top panel for completeness. Though prior collegiate performance has no bearing on Reconnect eligibility, prior credits earned and GPA do speak to how close applicants may be to earning a degree.

More than half of applicants have earned prior postsecondary credits at a Michigan public 2- or 4-year institution, and almost one-third have earned more than 24 credits, or the equivalent of one year of college. This suggests that—*if their credits will transfer*—many applicants may already be close to a credential. Many students lose credits when they transfer because schools may not award credit for courses that are slightly different, or they award only general credit that cannot be counted towards a degree. The result is that students must retake courses, and completion takes longer than it should. Fortunately, most of these credits have been earned at applicants' most recent institution and thus may be more likely to transfer. Finally, many students with previous enrollment achieved adequate grades—among the students whose GPA is observable, nearly two-thirds earned a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher, the benchmark for adequate yearly progress. Overall, more than one-quarter of all applicants had previously enrolled and earned at least a 2.0 at their most recent institution. (Because cumulative GPA is unavailable for private and out-of-state institutions, and missing for some others, these fractions are likely undercounts of the true share of applicants with at least a 2.0 GPA.)

Female applicants have earned slightly more credits, and with a higher GPA than male applicants, though the differences are not large. Black applicants tend to have accumulated slightly more credits (32.7% have at least 25 credits at Michigan public institutions) than White (29.3%) and Hispanic (28.0%) applicants, but less than Asian applicants (38.4%). However, Black applicants have earned fewer of their credits from their most recent institution, suggesting more cross-institution mobility, which could pose challenges for credit transfer. Black applicants are also more likely to be missing a GPA, which might reflect more enrollment at private

(including for-profit) or out-of-state institutions than non-Black applicants. Among applicants of different ages, the pattern of earned credits is similar to that for enrollment, though even older applicants have non-trivial credit accumulation.

IV. Opportunities to Better Align Educational Interests of Applicants with Labor Market Needs

Table 4 describes the interests and intentions of Reconnect applicants, as self-reported on the application form. More than 40% of people who applied for Reconnect did so for career advancement, either to find a better paying job or one that pays them to do what they do best or love doing. Two-thirds planned to work during school and many planned to enroll part-time.

The first two columns of Table 5 report applicants' intended field of study, again as self-reported on the application form. We should note that there are several reasons for why self-reported field may differ from the programs in which students actually enroll. Nonetheless, we view them as generally informative of the broad career interests of applications. Importantly, nearly one quarter of applicants were unsure what field they would like to study or did not report it on the application. Among those that did list a field, Health Sciences is the most common (22.1% of all applicants), followed by Arts, A/V Technology, & Communications (10.5%) and Government & Human Services (7%).

Given the strong career motivation among applicants, it is natural to ask how well these initial interests align with labor market needs. This is a difficult question to answer convincingly. Nonetheless, in the last two columns of Table 5 we compare the share of applicants interested in each field of study to the share of jobs in related fields that are “high-demand, high-wage” (HDHW). HDHW includes occupations that show a favorable mix of projected long-term job growth, projected annual job openings, and median wages. These are compiled by Prosperity Region by the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics in the [Regional Career Outlooks through 2030 reports](#). In line with Reconnect program goals, we focus on jobs requiring a certificate or associate degree.⁷ From this, we calculated the share of HDHW jobs linked to each field of study.⁸ Relatively few applicants expressed interest in Business Management, STEM, and

⁷ We provide details on how we linked occupations and field of study in the Appendix.

⁸ We also assembled HDWH job growth and Reconnect applicant field of study separately for each Michigan Prosperity Region. The correspondence between applicant field of study and the HDHW occupations is quite similar across Prosperity Regions.

Transportation, though those jobs represent a large share of HDHW jobs.⁹ This disparity could reflect the gender imbalance among applicants, among other explanations.

Of course, students change their intended fields of study, and the fields of interest expressed on the Reconnect application may not reflect the field(s) eventually chosen or in which credentials are earned. Although it is still too soon to comprehensively analyze the fields of study in which Reconnect applicants enrolled or earned degrees, it is illustrative to examine the distribution of fields from which Reconnectors have graduated to date. This information is found in the [Reconnect Dashboard](#) and is organized by the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code, which differs somewhat from the classification on the Reconnect application discussed above.¹⁰ The most common fields are Liberal Arts/General Studies and Health Professions, followed by Business Management and Computer and Information Sciences. Business, which accounts for a reasonable number of HDHW jobs (e.g., Sales Representatives and Insurance Sales Agents), is notably more represented among program graduates than in applicants' intentions. However, an associate degree in Liberal Arts/General Studies does not map directly into a profession, especially if students do not use it to successfully transfer to and graduate from a bachelor's degree program. Furthermore, program completion is strongly shaped by the specific programs offered by community colleges, when these programs and courses are offered, and whether they have a waiting list. Program completion patterns may reflect a lack of available program offerings with clear degree pathways that can be completed by part-time students. Future analysis should investigate how Reconnect applicants' intended field of study evolves through subsequent enrollment, including any enrollment beyond the associate degree that Reconnect funds.

This analysis suggests opportunities for greater career and educational advising to better align students' educational plans with labor market opportunities while also ensuring that programs that lead to these opportunities are available and accessible.

V. Conclusion and Implications

Outreach for Reconnect appears to have been successful—many potential applicants applied, especially younger workers looking to retool or pivot in their careers. Even a notable number of

⁹ Nearly one in six HDHW jobs are in "Architecture & Construction," but building trades positions are typically entered through a registered apprenticeship program rather than through a community college program. They are included here for completeness.

¹⁰ Alignment between the fields of study on the Reconnect application and the CIP reported by colleges—or at least a crosswalk—would be desirable to better understand demand-supply trends.

older workers and those that have been away from postsecondary system for many years applied. That said, opportunities for further, targeted outreach (especially to men) exist.

Given that most applicants had enrolled in Michigan community colleges prior to applying and had earned substantial credits with passing grades, it should be feasible for many of them to get across the finish line to completion. To do so, it will be important to provide the Reconnectors with the support they need to be successful. Applicants will need academic guidance to ensure they receive full credit for coursework already completed and support to ensure they are able to complete their academic courses. Colleges should also prioritize ways to maximize prior credit transfer. Just as importantly, students will need career advising that helps them find a program of study with a pathway to high-demand, high-wage jobs. Many students are interested in Reconnect but are unsure of their career goals or how to use Reconnect to get there. To provide such career advising, the state should consider expanding the role of Navigators and/or providing community colleges funding to bolster their own career service supports. Such guidance may entail encouraging more men to pursue postsecondary education through Reconnect but also encouraging women to consider “gender-non-traditional” fields such as STEM and manufacturing, for which HWHD jobs are available. Greater resources to help colleges provide additional career guidance, align program offerings with in-demand fields, and ease the transfer of prior earned credits all have potential to magnify the educational and economic impacts of Michigan Reconnect.

Table 1. Characteristics of Reconnect Applicants through April 2023 and of Michigan Population Presumed Reconnect-Eligible

	Reconnect Applications	Michigan Reconnect Eligible Population (ACS)	% Eligible Population	Share of Reconnect Applications	Share of Eligible Population
Total	118,189	3,532,571	3.3%		
Enrolled in college					
Enrolled	27,804	73,748	37.7%	23.5%	2.1%
Age					
25-29	33,764	339,312	10.0%	28.6%	9.6%
30-39	48,683	579,211	8.4%	41.2%	16.4%
40-49	22,949	548,607	4.2%	19.4%	15.5%
25 to 49	105,396	1,467,130	7.2%	89.2%	41.5%
50+	12,754	2,065,441	0.6%	10.8%	58.5%
N/A	39			0.0%	
Gender					
Male	36,633	1,779,011	2.1%	31.0%	50.4%
Female	78,978	1,753,560	4.5%	66.8%	49.6%
N/A	2,578			2.2%	
Race/Ethnicity					
Native American/Alaskan/Hawai	820	18,758	4.4%	0.7%	0.5%
Asian/(Pacific Islanders)	1,559	43,732	3.6%	1.3%	1.2%
Black	36,386	531,804	6.8%	30.8%	15.1%
White	61,596	2,770,345	2.2%	52.1%	78.4%
Hispanic	5,411	135,329	4.0%	4.6%	3.8%
Two or More	5,764	128,464	4.5%	4.9%	3.6%
Decline to answer / N/A	6,653			5.6%	
Prosperity Region					
Upper Peninsula	2,134	170,847	1.2%	1.8%	4.8%
Northwest	2,141	116,164	1.8%	1.8%	3.3%
Northeast	1,345	94,350	1.4%	1.1%	2.7%
West	13,680	520,235	2.6%	11.6%	14.7%
East Central	7,288	217,711	3.3%	6.2%	6.2%
East	10,126	357,152	2.8%	8.6%	10.1%
South Central	5,936	145,205	4.1%	5.0%	4.1%
Southwest	10,861	277,911	3.9%	9.2%	7.9%
Southeast	10,162	329,984	3.1%	8.6%	9.3%
Detroit Metro	50,133	1,302,377	3.8%	42.4%	36.9%
N/A	4,383			3.7%	0.0%

Note: The left data column shows characteristics of Michigan Reconnect applicants (through April 2023) based on the application form and individual-record merges of applicants with state administrative data on K12 and postsecondary records from CEPI (through the MEDC program). The right data column is based on 5-year ACS estimates for Michigan among the population age 25+ without a college degree and who resided in Michigan 12 months prior (this closely approximates Reconnect eligibility during the application window we use). Prosperity Region an applicant from is based on the ZIP code. Reconnect application data does not have a category for Pacific Islanders.

Table 2. Reconnect Applicants: Prior Postsecondary Enrollment and Award History by Gender, Race, and Age

	Gender			Race/ethnicity						Age			
	All	Male	Female	Native American	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	Multi	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Enrolled Prior to Application													
Any prior enrollment	59.1	59.0	59.0	58.7	61.6	66.4	54.5	55.8	63.9	73.3	63.3	43.8	33.8
MI community college	53.8	53.3	53.8	52.8	56.7	60.9	49.3	50.1	57.3	65.3	57.5	41.1	31.9
MI public university	11.4	12.2	11.0	10.5	13.9	13.7	10.3	8.0	12.0	16.4	13.0	5.4	3.1
Other 2-yr college	5.2	4.3	5.6	6.0	6.7	7.1	4.0	5.2	6.4	5.3	6.5	4.2	2.2
Other university	17.0	14.2	18.3	16.1	11.2	23.5	13.5	13.6	18.7	17.3	21.0	13.1	8.2
Enrolled At Time of Application													
Any enrollment	12.5	11.0	13.2	16.1	19.6	11.4	12.8	13.1	12.6	15.9	12.5	10.5	7.4
MI community college	11.8	10.4	12.4	15.0	18.3	10.5	12.2	12.3	11.8	14.9	11.8	9.9	7.0
MI public university	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.1
Other 2-yr college	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other university	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3
Time since last enrollment													
Enrolled when applied	12.5	11.0	13.2	16.1	19.6	11.4	12.8	13.1	12.6	15.9	12.5	10.5	7.4
≤6 months	4.1	3.4	4.4	3.5	6.3	4.4	3.7	4.3	4.5	6.0	3.7	3.0	2.0
6–12 months	2.5	2.2	2.7	2.1	2.7	3.1	2.1	2.7	2.9	3.8	2.4	1.8	1.3
1–2 years	3.9	3.5	4.1	4.0	3.7	5.0	3.2	3.8	4.7	5.9	3.8	2.4	2.0
2–3 years	3.4	3.3	3.5	2.8	3.8	4.3	2.9	3.4	3.9	5.4	3.2	2.0	1.6
3–4 years	3.5	3.5	3.4	2.8	3.4	4.2	3.0	3.4	4.1	5.7	3.2	1.9	1.4
4+ years	29.2	32.0	27.8	27.3	22.3	34.1	26.7	25.2	31.2	30.5	34.5	22.2	18.1
No prior/current enrollment	40.9	41.0	41.0	41.3	38.4	33.6	45.5	44.2	36.1	26.7	36.7	56.2	66.2
Earned award prior to application													
Any award	6.0	4.2	6.7	6.0	7.0	7.1	5.3	5.5	5.9	4.9	7.2	5.9	4.3
Certificate	4.1	2.9	4.7	4.3	4.6	4.6	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.5	4.8	4.2	3.1
Associate Degree	1.3	0.9	1.5	1.3	1.9	1.7	1.0	1.0	1.4	0.8	1.5	1.5	1.3
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3

Note: The data show, for the demographic group of applicants in each column, the likelihood of past and current forms of enrollment, based on whether matches were found in Michigan postsecondary records. These statistics do *not* rely on self-reporting in the application. Ever-enrolled college sectors are *not* mutually exclusive and so do not sum to the "any" category. "Other 2-yr college" and "Other university" include private MI colleges as well as out-of-state institutions. Enrollment prior to application is defined by having a postsecondary enrollment spell that began *before* the Reconnect application, and thus may include spells that ended after application. Time since last enrollment is measured by days elapsed since the end date of the most recent (pre-application) enrollment spell and the application date.

Table 3. Reconnect Applicants: Prior Postsecondary Credits and GPA by Gender, Race, and Age

	Gender			Race/ethnicity						Age			
	All	Male	Female	Native America	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	Multi	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Credits earned at any institution prior to application (imputed if not MI public)													
0 (includes no prior enrollment)	45.6	46.6	45.4	47.0	41.4	39.0	49.8	48.7	41.9	33.3	41.5	59.2	68.9
1-6	4.1	4.5	3.9	4.6	3.0	4.8	3.7	3.7	4.7	6.4	3.5	2.7	2.7
7-12	5.3	5.6	5.1	6.2	4.4	6.1	4.7	6.0	6.2	7.6	5.1	3.4	3.2
13-24	8.8	9.0	8.7	8.4	8.0	10.2	7.9	8.6	10.1	12.0	9.0	6.0	4.8
25-48	13.4	13.2	13.5	13.9	14.1	14.7	12.7	12.7	14.1	17.2	14.1	9.7	7.9
49+	22.8	21.1	23.4	19.9	29.1	25.2	21.3	20.3	22.9	23.5	26.8	19.1	12.6
Credits earned at MI public institutions prior to application													
0 (includes no prior MI public enrollment)	49.8	50.5	49.7	51.7	44.7	43.8	53.7	53.3	46.9	38.8	46.2	62.0	70.6
1-6	4.8	5.2	4.7	4.8	3.9	6.0	4.2	4.1	5.5	7.1	4.4	3.3	3.2
7-12	5.7	5.9	5.6	6.5	5.2	6.8	4.9	6.0	6.8	8.0	5.5	3.9	3.5
13-24	9.0	9.1	8.9	8.2	7.8	10.6	7.9	8.5	10.0	11.5	9.4	6.5	5.1
25-48	12.6	12.3	12.7	12.9	13.6	13.8	11.9	11.5	13.0	15.6	13.5	9.4	7.4
49+	18.1	17.1	18.5	16.0	24.8	19.0	17.4	16.5	17.8	19.0	21.1	14.9	10.1
Credits earned at last institution attended if MI public													
0 (includes no prior MI public enrollment)	57.8	56.9	58.4	58.9	49.0	56.8	59.0	57.8	55.7	46.2	56.4	68.1	74.7
1-6	6.1	6.3	6.0	6.2	5.0	8.1	5.0	5.0	6.7	8.4	6.0	4.3	3.8
7-12	6.5	6.7	6.4	5.6	6.5	7.5	5.9	6.6	7.4	9.0	6.5	4.5	3.7
13-24	8.9	9.2	8.7	8.7	8.9	9.6	8.4	9.2	9.7	11.8	9.0	6.4	5.0
25-48	10.4	10.5	10.4	12.7	14.3	9.6	10.7	10.3	10.6	13.2	10.9	7.9	6.1
49+	10.2	10.3	10.1	7.9	16.3	8.5	11.0	11.1	9.9	11.3	11.1	8.8	6.6
Cumulative GPA at the last institution prior to application													
N/A (applicants without prior IHE or GPA)	64.8	64.9	64.9	66.1	54.1	65.0	65.4	63.7	61.8	48.7	67.0	75.1	80.6
0 – 1.00	6.7	7.0	6.6	5.7	4.4	9.9	4.8	5.7	9.0	10.8	6.3	3.8	3.0
1.01 – 2.00	6.0	6.5	5.8	6.1	5.1	7.8	4.9	5.6	7.2	9.9	5.5	3.4	2.6
2.01 – 3.00	11.8	11.9	11.7	11.6	13.9	11.5	11.7	12.8	13.3	17.1	11.0	8.4	6.6
3.01 – 4.00	10.7	9.8	11.0	10.5	22.5	5.8	13.3	12.1	8.8	13.6	10.2	9.2	7.3

Note: The data show, for the demographic group of applicants in each column, the number of earned credits from matched administrative data. These statistics do *not* rely on self-reporting in the application. Credits for private and out-of-state institutions are imputed based on enrollment intensity, so those reported for MI public institutions are more accurate. Credits prior to application include those earned in enrollment spells that *end* before application date. Last institution is based on the enrollment spell that ended most recently prior to the application date. Cumulative GPA is unavailable for private or out-of-state institutions.

Table 4. Intentions and Motivations of Reconnect Applicants through April 2023

	Reconnect Applications	% Applications
Planned Enrollment Intensity		
Full-time	36,842	31.2%
Part-time	48,194	40.8%
Unsure	32,172	27.2%
N/A	981	0.8%
Planned Work Intensity		
Plan to work full-time	54,654	46.2%
Plan to work part-time	25,574	21.6%
Do not plan to work while enrolled	7,888	6.7%
Unsure	30,011	25.4%
N/A	62	
Main reason for applying to Reconnect		
Finding a better paying job	22,860	19.3%
Getting a job that pays me to do what I do best and I love doing	27,800	23.5%
Personal goal	47,276	40.0%
Required by my employer	384	0.3%
Other	19,807	16.8%
N/A	62	0.1%
Total	118,189	

Note: The data column shows characteristics of Michigan Reconnect applicants (through

Table 5. Intended Field of Study Compared to High-Demand High-Wage Jobs	Share	Applicant Example HDHW Occupations	HDHW Job Share
Health Sciences	22.1%	Licensed Practical Nurses, Radiologic Therapist Assistants	10.2%
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	10.5%	Musicians & Singers, Audio & Video Techs	0.3%
Government, Public Administration & Human Services	7.0%	Court, Municipal & License Clerks	1.5%
Business Management, Finance, Marketing	6.8%	Sales Representatives, Insurance Sales Agents	21.8%
Information Technology	5.8%	Computer User Support Specialists	3.2%
Education & Training	3.4%	None listed as HDHW	0.0%
Science, Technology, Engineering, Materials, Energy	3.2%	Industrial Machinery Mechanics, Diesel Engine Specialists	14.2%
Manufacturing	1.6%	Machinists, Tool and Die Makers	7.0%
Architecture & Construction	1.6%	*Electricians, Carpenters, Plumbers, Pipefitters, Steamfitters	15.9%
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	1.6%	Police, Sheriff's Patrol Officers	6.6%
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	0.7%	Farm Equipment Mechanics & Service Techs	0.1%
Hospitality & Tourism	0.3%	None listed as HDHW	0.0%
Other	10.9%		19.3%
Not sure, Not available	24.5%		0.0%

Note: The left data column shows characteristics of Michigan Reconnect applicants (through April 2023) based on the application form. Intended field of study was mapped to broad classification of instructional program (CIP) code, which were then mapped to occupation using a CIP-SOC crosswalk. The correspondance between CIP codes and the example occupations is reported in Appendix Table A2. The list of HDHW occupations are as of DATE. The HDHW job share reports the share of job openings in all HDHW jobs that fall into each category. * Building trades positions are typically entered through a registered apprenticeship program, rather than through a community college program, but are included here for completeness.

Appendix A. Data Sources and Methods

The research team analyzed Reconnect application information (through April 2023) received through an agreement with the State of Michigan’s Sixty by 30 office.¹¹ We used Reconnect application records merged with state administrative K–12 and postsecondary educational records structured and maintained by the MERI-Michigan Education Data Center (MEDC). MEDC data is modified for analysis purposes using rules governed by MEDC and are not identical to those data collected and maintained by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and/or Michigan’s Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). Results, information and opinions solely represent the analysis, information and opinions of the author(s) and are not endorsed by, or reflect the views or positions of, grantors, MDE and CEPI or any employee thereof. Applicant demographics come from the Reconnect Application form when available but were filled in with demographic information from MEDC if missing.

The research team received permission from Sixty by 30 office Michigan and CEPI to have Reconnect applicants securely matched to K–12 and postsecondary education records based on name and birth date. This match was performed by MEDC staff, not the research team. Table A1 reports the match rates and characteristics of Reconnect applicants that do and do not match with Michigan education records. Overall, 71.5% of applicants matched to either K–12 or postsecondary records. Match rates are much lower for older applicants because education records are sparse before the early 2000s.

We used the American Community Survey 2018–2022 five-year pooled estimates to identify the number and characteristics of Michiganders that are likely eligible for Reconnect based on their age (25 or older) and educational attainment (high school graduate or GED without an associate or higher postsecondary degree). We downloaded these data from [IPUMS](#) on June 11, 2024. We obtained county-level estimates of the Reconnect eligible population from the National Historical Geographic Information System ([NHGIS](#)) 5-year estimates (2018–2022).

The research team used intended field of study indicated in Reconnect application to approximate the supply of applicants by field. For each county, we aggregated the number of applicants indicating each field of study and calculated supply as the ratio of applicants in each field to the total number of applicants from that county. Applicants who did not specify a field of study were categorized as “pure surplus,” indicating no direct alignment with known demand.

¹¹ Reconnect was originally housed in the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), but responsibility for the program was transitioned to the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) by Executive Order in 2023.

We estimated demand in HDHW fields using regional projections of high-demand, high-wage occupations from the Michigan Career Outlook Through 2030, published by the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics. Occupations were matched to 2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and then linked to 2020 Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes using the SOC–CIP crosswalk from the National Center for Education Statistics. We aggregated projected job openings by HDHW occupation fields in each county and defined demand as the ratio of openings in each field to the total HDHW openings in that county. Appendix Table A2 presents the crosswalk of fields of study, HDHW fields and CIP codes we used in the analysis. The detailed mapping of each HDHW occupations and fields of study is presented in Appendix Table A3.

Table A1. Matching Reconnect Applicants to Michigan Education Records: by Self-reported Demographics

	Reconnect Applications	Not Matched to Michigan Education Records	Matched to Michigan Education Records	Share Matched
All applicants	118,189	33,709	84,480	71.5%
Age				
25–29	33,764	3,689	30,075	89.1%
30–39	48,683	10,541	38,142	78.3%
40–49	22,949	11,631	11,318	49.3%
50+	12,754	7,811	4,943	38.8%
N/A	39	37	2	5.1%
Gender				
Male	36,633	9,093	27,540	75.2%
Female	78,978	23,973	55,005	69.6%
N/A	2,578	643	1,935	75.1%
Race/Ethnicity				
Native American	820	251	569	69.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,559	436	1,123	72.0%
Black	36,386	8,309	28,077	77.2%
White	61,596	19,904	41,692	67.7%
Hispanic	5,411	1,560	3,851	71.2%
Two or More	5,764	1,314	4,450	77.2%
N/A	6,653	1,935	4,718	70.9%
Prosperity Region				
Upper Peninsula	2,134	758	1,376	64.5%
Northwest	2,141	674	1,467	68.5%
Northeast	1,345	448	897	66.7%
West	13,680	4,170	9,510	69.5%
East Central	7,288	2,079	5,209	71.5%
East	10,126	2,963	7,163	70.7%
South Central	5,936	1,702	4,234	71.3%
Southwest	10,861	2,982	7,879	72.5%
Southeast	10,162	2,969	7,193	70.8%
Detroit Metro	50,133	13,855	36,278	72.4%
N/A	4,383	1,109	3,274	74.7%

Note: The research team received permission from MI LEO and CEPI to have Reconnect applicants securely matched to K12 and postsecondary education records on the basis of name and birth date. This match was performed by MEDC staff, not the research team.

Technical Notes:

1. Column B is filled automatically with data in Table 1

Table A2. Mapping between Intended Field of Study and CIP Codes

Intended Field of Study	Example HDHW Occupations	Two-Digit CIP	Notes
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Farm Equipment Mechanics & Service Techs	01, 03	
Architecture & Construction	Electricians, Carpenters, Plumbers, Pipefitters, Steamfitters	04, 46	
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	Musicians & Singers, Audio & Video Techs	09, 10, 50	
Business Management, Finance, Marketing	Sales Representatives, Insurance Sales Agents	52	Excluding 52.09
Education & Training	None	13	
Government, Public Administration & Human Services	Court, Municipal & License Clerks	44	
Health Sciences	Licensed Practical Nurses, Radiologic Therapist Assistants	51	
Hospitality & Tourism	None	52.09	
Information Technology	Computer User Support Specialists	11	
Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security	Police, Sheriff's Patrol Officers	43, 22	
Manufacturing	Machinists, Tool and Die Makers	48	
Science, Technology, Engineering, Materials, Energy	Industrial Machinery Mechanics, Diesel Engine Specialists	14, 15, 26, 29, 40, 41, 47	

