

Trade School Market Insights

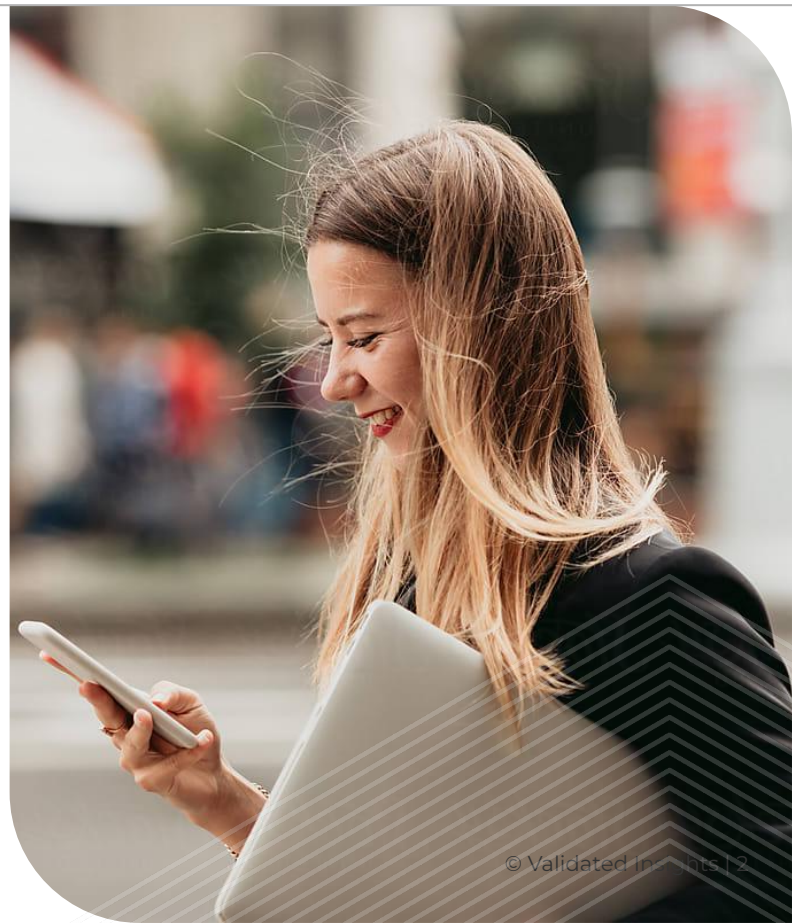
A quarterly update on the trade school market in the United States.

About Trade School Market Insights

VI's market research team publishes quarterly reports on the higher education market, with this one focusing on trade/technical schools and vocational education. They analyze reliable data sources to provide valuable insights and recommendations. This report uses proprietary categorizations to give an in-depth look at the growing trade school market.

This report primarily covers a first-of-its-kind analysis of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) IPEDS data, in which we go beyond the standard NCES and Carnegie classifications to identify Trade Schools specifically. These efforts clarify the enrollment picture at Trade Schools and find that these institutions are outperforming universities.

In addition to this enrollment data, industry sources and survey data show that the market for Trade School is growing in terms of revenues, and that more and more potential students (both teens and adults) indicate a preference for enrolling in Trade Schools.





Enrollment Trends

- As of 2023 there were 1.5 million students enrolled in Trade Schools across the United States. Furthermore, the U.S. Census Bureau shows that an additional ~2.5 million students are enrolled in technical/vocational education that are not enrolled at colleges or universities (including Trade Schools).
- The pandemic dramatically changed enrollment growth in trade schools. Total Trade School enrollment grew 4.9% from 2020 to 2023 (1.6% CAGR). This represents a significant acceleration as total Trade School enrollment declined at -0.8% CAGR pre-pandemic (2017 to 2020).
- Growth isn't evenly distributed among Trade Schools. In particular, Culinary Arts Schools (9.4% CAGR) and Healthcare Trade Schools (3.9% CAGR) have seen significant enrollment growth while Maintenance and Repair Schools have seen a decline (-3.3% CAGR).

October 2024



Demand Trends

- Search interest for Trade Schools has grown at a 10.3% CAGR since 2017 (while enrollment grew at a 0.8% CAGR through 2023).
- The percentage of both teens and adults interested in enrolling in trade school almost doubled during the pandemic.



Competitive Landscape

- The 15 largest private Trade Schools enroll 18.6% of all Trade School enrollments. In 2023 these market leaders enrolled an average of about 19,000 students.
- The 15 largest public Trade Schools enroll 14.9% of all Trade School enrollments. In 2023 these market leaders enroll an average of about 15,000 students.



Enrollment Trends

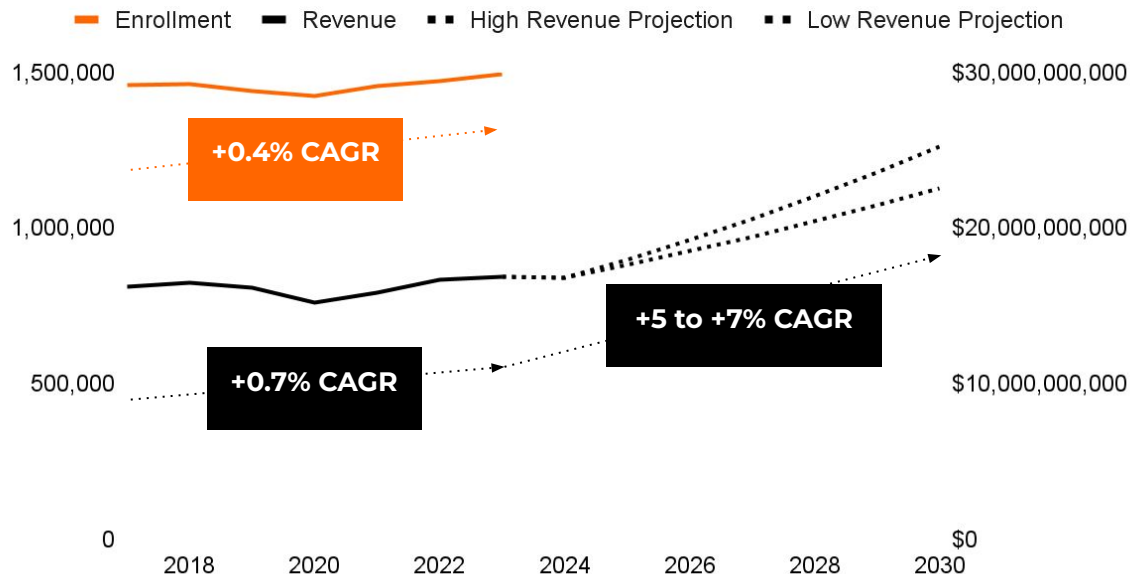


Enrollment Trends

Trade School revenue grew at a 0.4% CAGR from 2017 to 2023

From 2017 to 2023 total Trade School revenue grew at a 0.4% CAGR. During that time revenues of Trade Schools grew faster at a 0.7% CAGR.

Total Trade School Enrollment and Market Revenue by Year (2017 to 2023 with Revenue Projections to 2030)



While the Trade School market is projected to grow at a 5-7% CAGR, the broader higher education market is projected to grow at a 2-4% CAGR.

Key Takeaways

- Trade School enrollment and aggregate market revenue tends to (unsurprisingly) track together. Changes in enrollment, however, result in more significant changes in revenue.
- In 2018 it was projected by Statista that total Trade School revenues would grow at a 2.0% CAGR through 2023, meaning that growth has not met expectations in recent years.¹

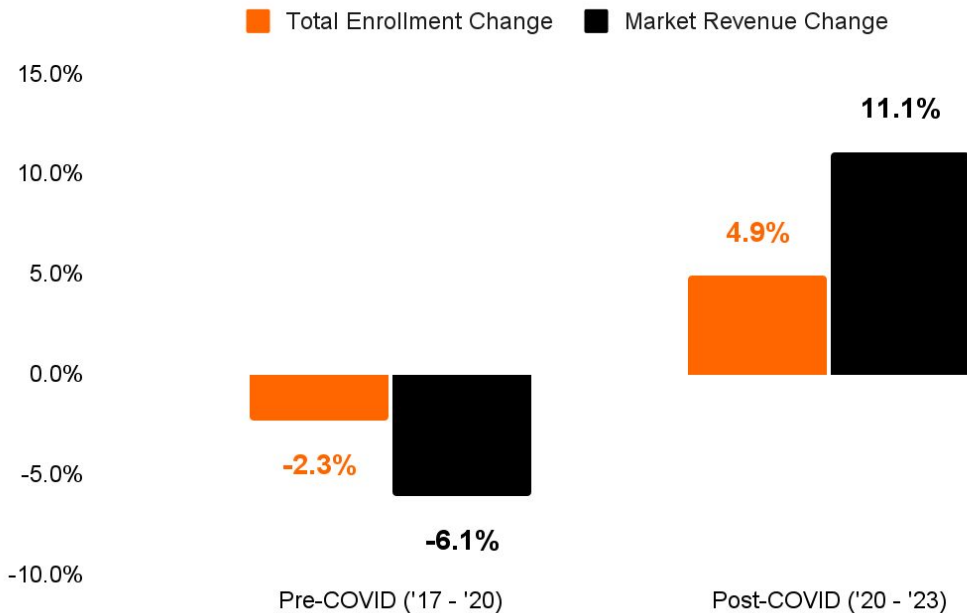


Enrollment Trends

Trade School revenue grew 11.1% from 2020 to 2023

From 2017 to 2020, total Trade School revenues declined 6.1% while enrollments declined 2.3%. Since 2020, revenues have grown 11.1% and enrollment 4.9%.

Change in Trade School Enrollment and Revenue (2017 to 2023)



While Trade School enrollment grew 4.9% from 2020 to 2023, university enrollment declined 0.6% (Fall 2020 to Fall 2023).

Key Takeaways

- Pre-COVID, Trade Schools saw enrollments decline 2.3% (from 2017 to 2020). Revenues brought in by Trade Schools declined more significantly than enrollments, declining 6.1% during that same time.
- Post-COVID, total Trade School enrollment grew 4.9% while total revenues brought in by these schools grew 11.1%.

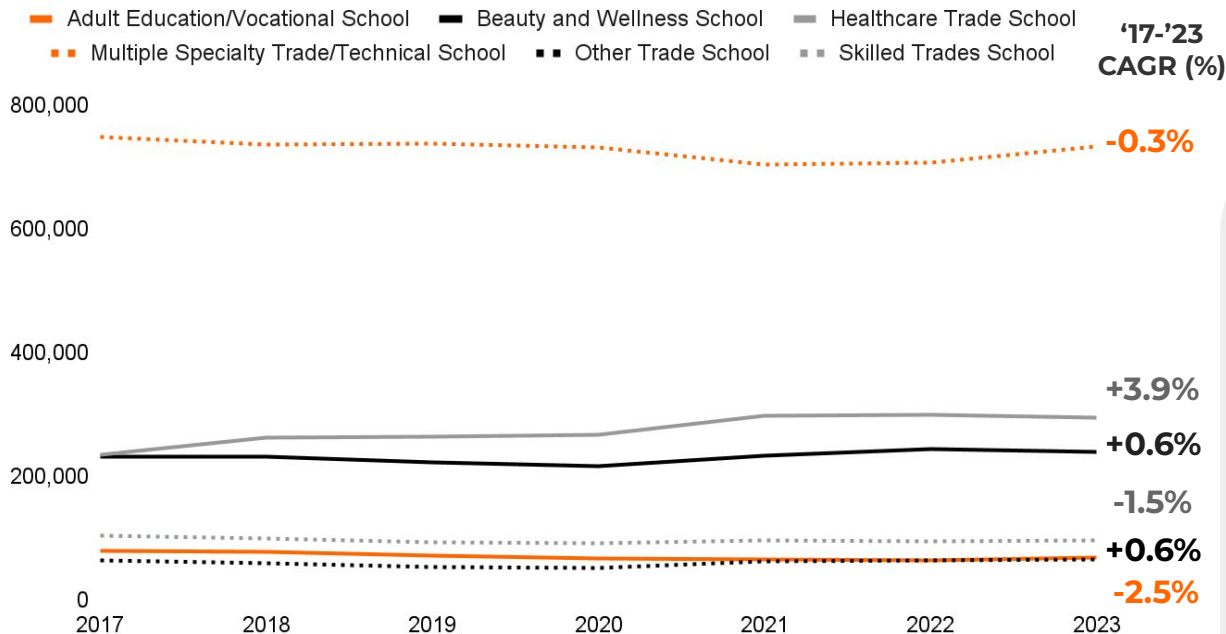


Enrollment Trends

Healthcare Trade Schools are leading in enrollment growth

From 2017 to 2023, 12-month unduplicated headcount at Healthcare Trade Schools grew at a 3.9% CAGR.

Trade School Enrollment by Type (2017 to 2023)



Key Takeaways

- All Trade School categories combined saw enrollment grow at a 0.3% CAGR from 2017 to 2023. Growth was not evenly distributed, however, as Healthcare Trade Schools, Beauty and Wellness Schools, and Other Trade Schools experienced growth while Multiple Specialty Schools, Skilled Trade Schools, and Adult/Vocational Schools all experienced declines.



Enrollment Trends

Culinary Schools are the fastest growing sub-type of Trade School

While Healthcare schools are the fastest growing type of Trade Schools, Culinary Arts schools lead growth of sub-types of Trade Schools.

School Sub-Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	CAGR
Adult Ed./Vocation	78,525	77,156	70,645	67,341	65,053	64,250	67,623	-2.5%
Automotive	5,442	4,912	4,747	4,656	5,045	5,167	5,341	-0.3%
Cosmetology	212,171	212,015	203,703	198,269	213,588	224,831	223,726	+0.9%
Culinary Arts	13,155	11,565	12,686	15,456	20,537	22,859	22,523	+9.4%
Healthcare	234,712	261,820	263,023	266,856	297,325	299,209	294,539	+3.9%
Maint. And Repair	71,724	65,474	58,140	56,625	59,376	59,295	58,740	-3.3%
Multiple Specialty	747,417	735,800	737,950	731,175	703,277	707,173	733,155	-0.3%
Welding	6,545	7,189	7,700	8,063	8,358	7,559	8,932	+5.3%

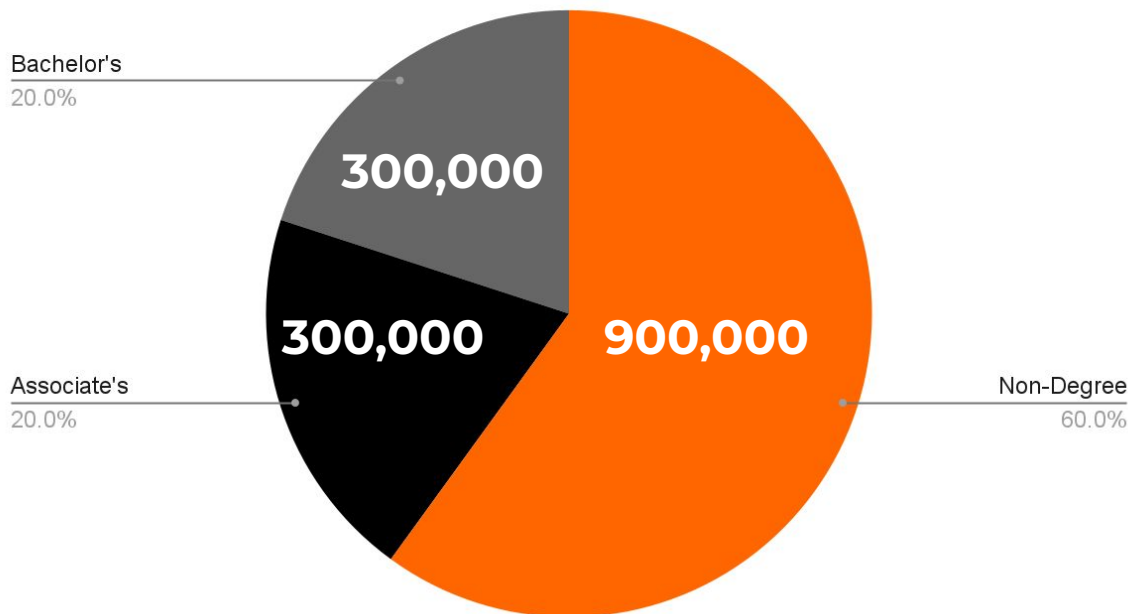


Enrollment Trends

Trade School enrollments are mostly non-degree

About 60% of Trade School enrollments are in non-degree programs with another 20% being in associate's degrees and the remaining 20% in bachelor's.

Percent of Trade School Enrollment by Program Level



Key Takeaways

- 60% of Trade School enrollments are in non-degree programs, however 67% of programs offered by Trade Schools are non-degree programs.²
- 8% of programs offered by Trade Schools are bachelor's degrees, however 20% of enrollments in Trade Schools are at the bachelor's level.²



Demand Trends



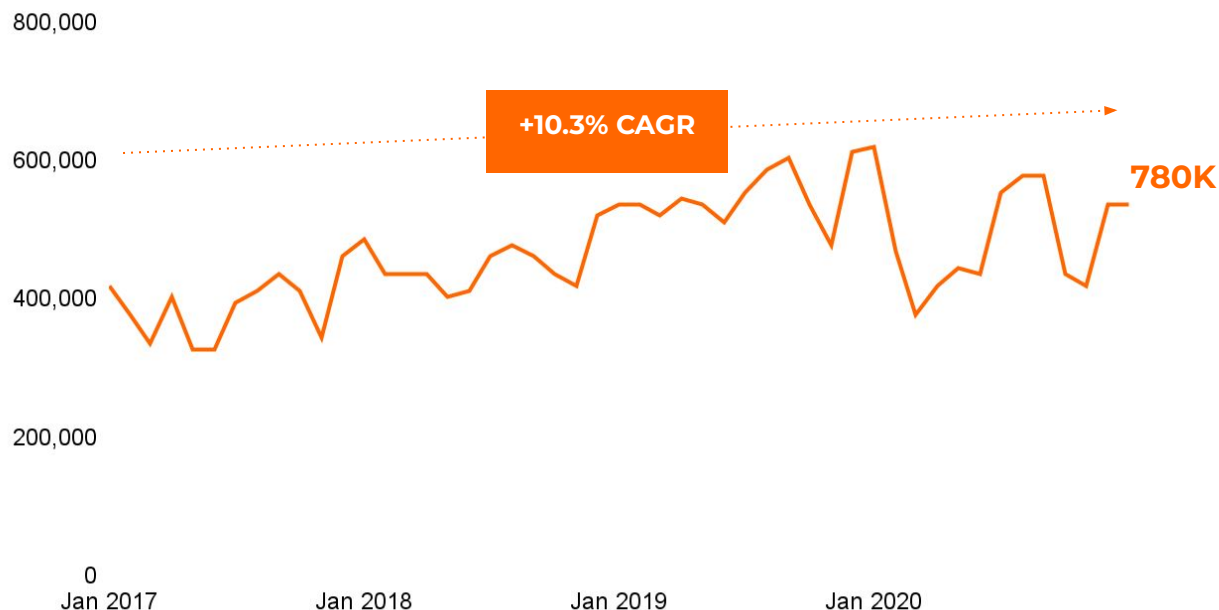


Demand Trends

Search traffic for Trade Schools grew at a 10.3% CAGR from 2017 to 2024

From 2017 to 2023, Trade School enrollment grew at a 0.4% CAGR. During that same time, search traffic for Trade Schools grew at an 8.0% CAGR.

Monthly Search Traffic for Trade Schools (2017 to 2024)



Key Takeaways

- Search traffic for Trade Schools is growing faster than enrollment at Trade Schools, with enrollments growing at a 0.4% CAGR and search traffic growing at an 8.0% CAGR from 2017 to 2023.
- Thus far in 2024, search traffic for Trade Schools is up 27.1%. IBISWorld, on the other hand, expects that Trade School revenues to decline 0.4% year-over-year in 2024.

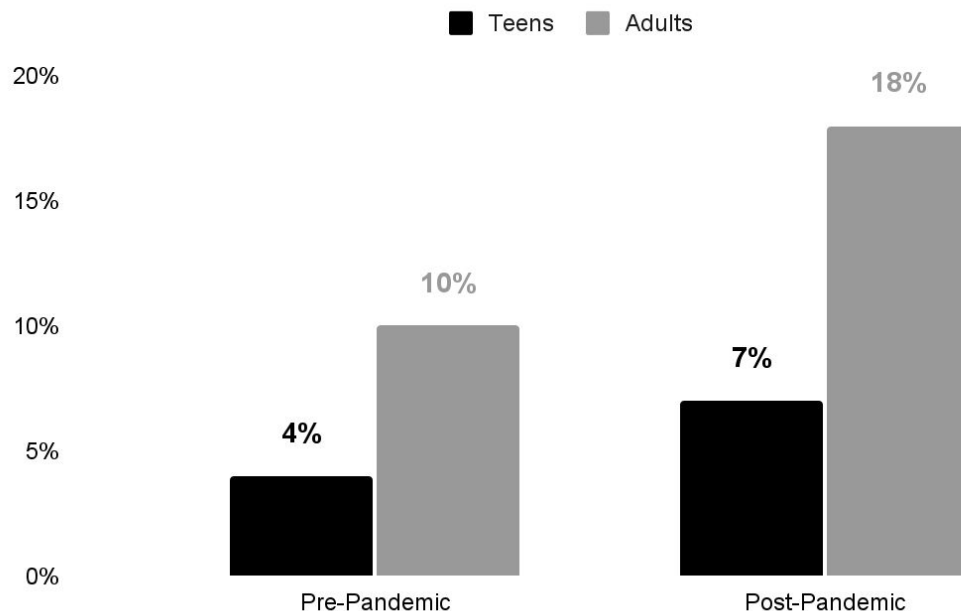


Demand Trends

Interest in enrolling in Trade Schools is growing

Pre-pandemic to post-pandemic, interest in attending Trade School nearly doubled among both teens and adults.

Interest in Enrolling in Trade School by Age Group



Key Takeaways

- Pre-pandemic, only 4% of teens indicated interest in enrolling in Trade Schools. After the pandemic, that had grown to 7%.³
- Pre-pandemic, only 10% of adults indicated interest in enrolling in Trade Schools. After the pandemic, that had grown to 18%.⁴



Competitive Landscape

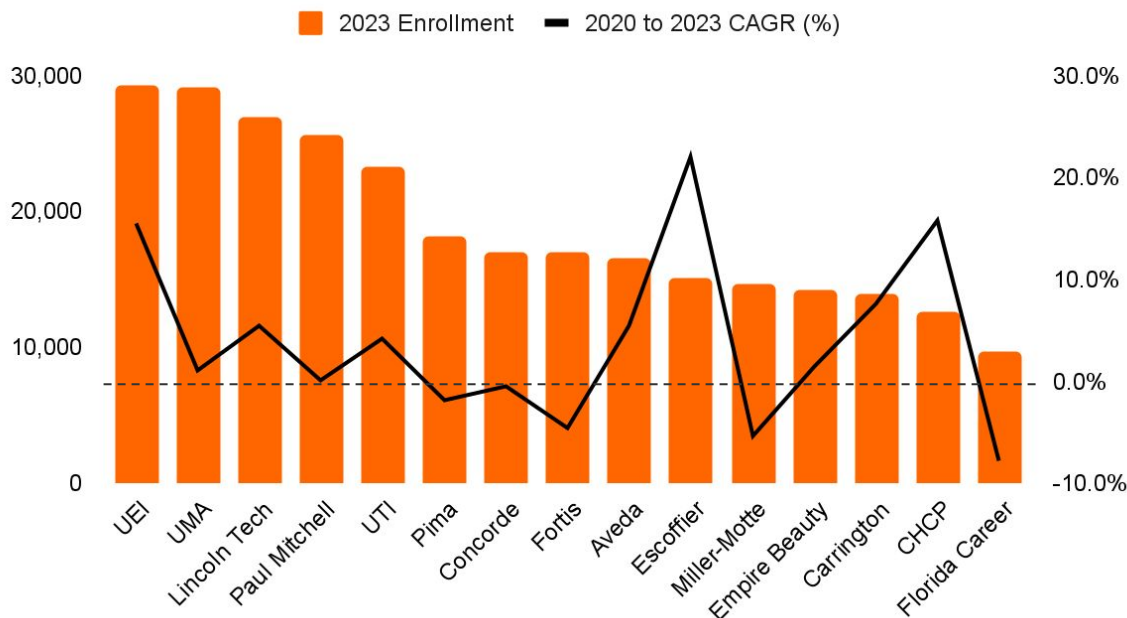


Competitive Landscape

The largest private Trade Schools enroll about 19,000 students on average

The 15 largest *private* Trade Schools collectively enroll 281,570 students, or 18.6% of all Trade School enrollments.

Top 15 Largest Private Trade Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- The 15 largest private Trade Schools collectively enrolled 18.6% of all Trade School students in 2023 and had an average enrollment of just under 19,000 students.
- These market leaders are outperforming the market as well. From 2020 to 2023, all Trade School enrollments grew at a 1.6% CAGR. During the time, the average compound annual growth rate of the 15 largest private Trade Schools was 3.9% (unweighted).

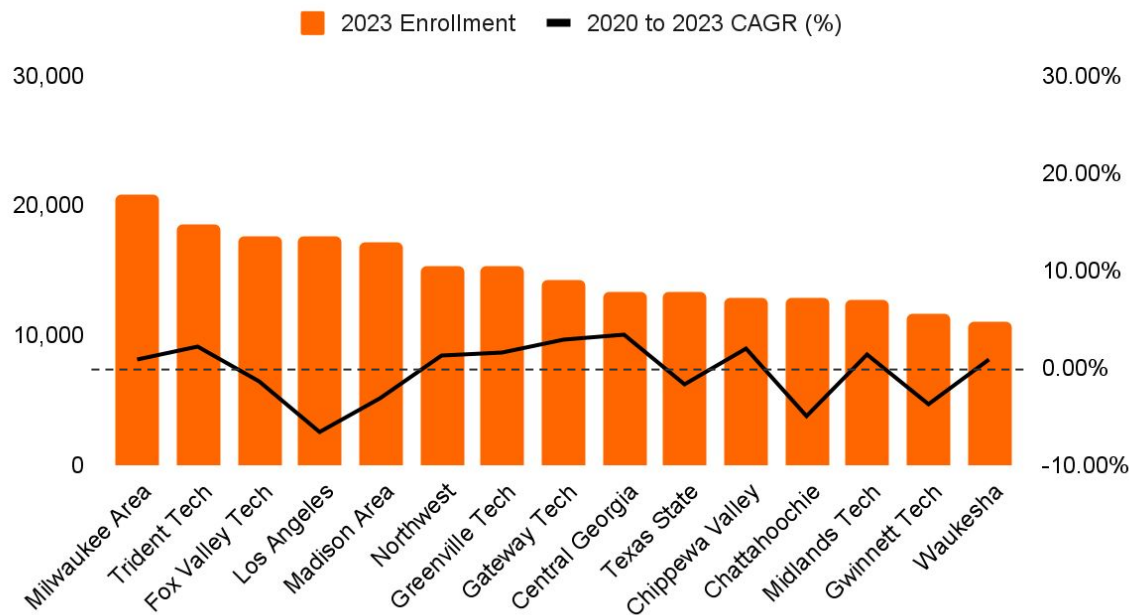


Competitive Landscape

The largest public Trade Schools enroll about 15,000 students on average

The 15 largest *private* Trade Schools collectively enroll 281,570 students, or 14.9% of all Trade School enrollments.

Top 15 Largest Public Trade Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- The 15 largest private Trade Schools collectively enrolled 14.9% of all Trade School students in 2023 and had an average enrollment of just under 15,000 students.
- These market leaders are underperforming the market. From 2020 to 2023, all Trade School enrollments grew at a 1.6% CAGR. During the time, the average compound annual growth rate of the 15 largest public Trade Schools was -0.3% (unweighted).



Market Profiles - Adult Education/Vocational Schools

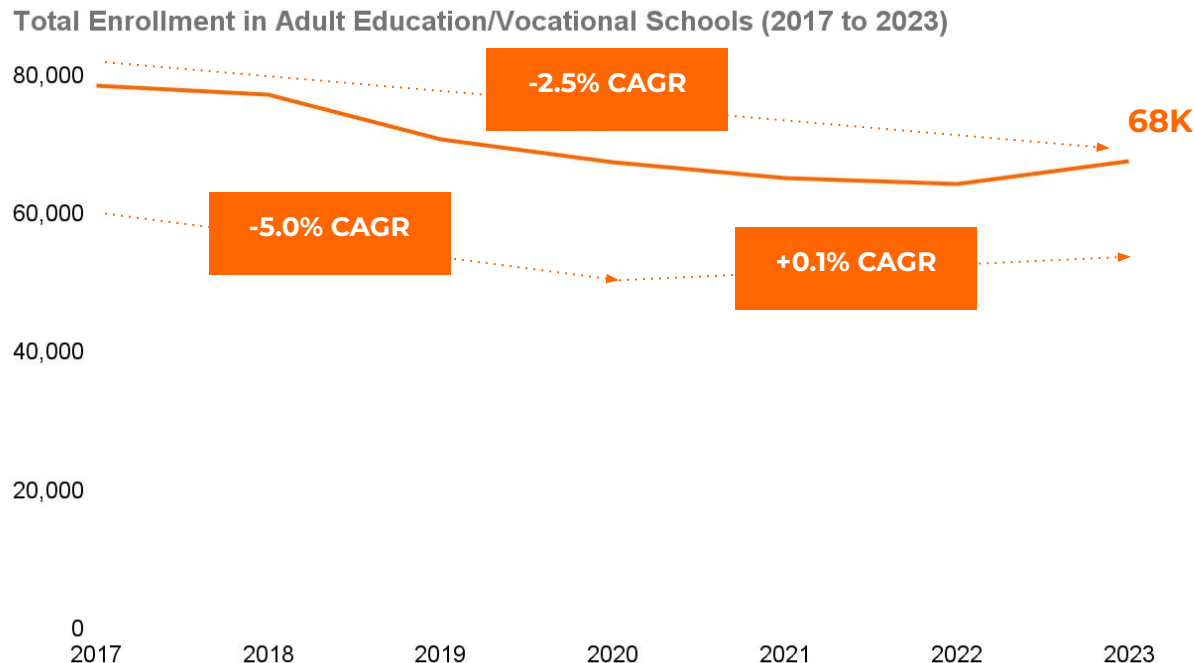




Adult Ed./Voc. Schools

Enrollment in Adult Ed./Voc. Schools has declined but is starting to rebound

While the trend improved throughout the pandemic, since 2017, enrollment in Adult Education/Vocational Schools is declining at a -2.5% CAGR.



Key Takeaways

- From 2017 to 2020 (pre-pandemic), enrollment in Adult Education/Vocational Schools was declining at a -5.0% CAGR.
- Post-pandemic (2020 to 2023), enrollment in these schools has rebounded, growing at a 0.1% CAGR. Even with this growth, the long term trend is negative.

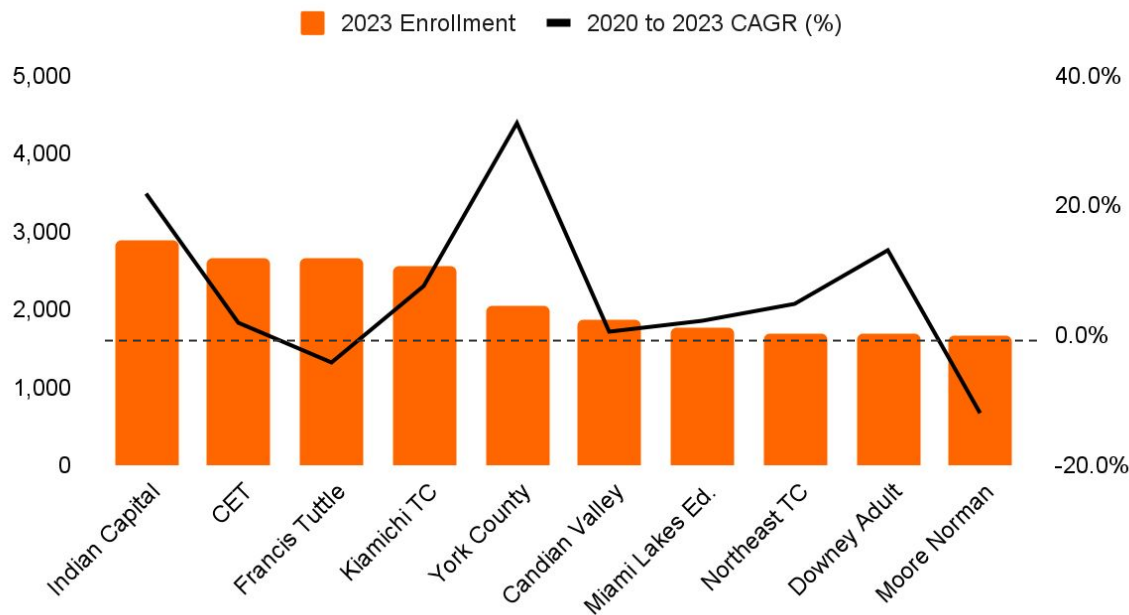


Adult Ed./Voc. Schools

The 10 largest Adult Ed./Voc. Schools enroll 2,100 students on average

Adult Education/Vocational Schools tend to be small and localized with an average enrollment of only 2,100 among market leaders.

Top 10 Largest Adult Education/Vocational Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- Leading Adult Education/Vocational Schools have an average enrollment of only about 2,100 students.
- The top 10 largest Adult Education/Vocational Schools enroll 31.5% of all students enrolled in this type of institution.



Market Profiles - Beauty and Wellness Schools

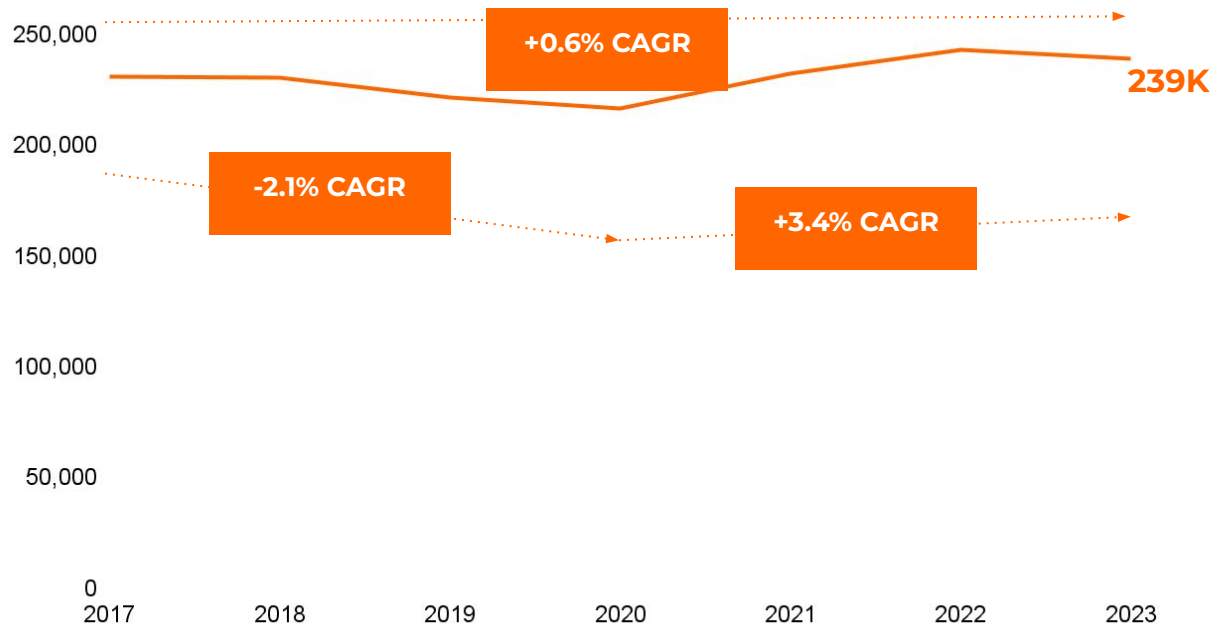


Beauty and Wellness Schools

Beauty and Enrollment Schools are growing strongly post-pandemic

From 2020 to 2023, enrollment in Beauty and Wellness Schools has grown at a 3.4% CAGR to a total of 239,022 in 2023.

Total Enrollment in Beauty and Wellness Schools (2017 to 2023)



Key Takeaways

- Pre-pandemic, enrollment in Beauty and Wellness Schools declined at a -2.1% CAGR.
- Post-pandemic (2020 to 2023), enrollment in these schools has rebounded strongly, growing at a 3.4% CAGR.
- As of 2023 there were 239,022 students enrolled in Beauty and Wellness Schools.

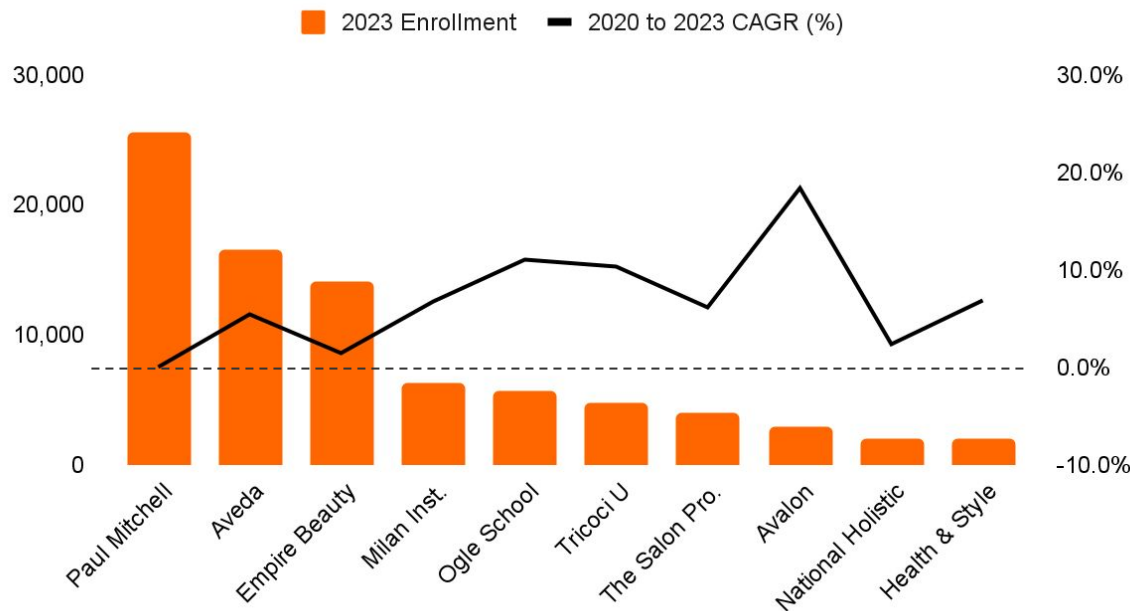


Beauty and Wellness Schools

The largest Beauty and Wellness Schools enroll 8,300 students on avg.

The 10 largest Beauty and Wellness Schools enroll 83,069 students, or 34.8% of all Beauty and Wellness School enrollments.

Top 10 Largest Beauty and Wellness Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- The 10 largest Beauty and Wellness Schools enroll 34.8% of all Beauty and Wellness School enrollments.
- Leading Beauty and Wellness Schools have an average enrollment of about 8,300 students per institution.

Cosmetology Schools enroll more than 200k students and are growing

While Cosmetology Schools are large and growing, Massage Schools have more modest enrollment totals and are declining at a -3.1% CAGR.

School Sub-Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	CAGR
Cosmetology	212,171	212,015	203,703	198,269	213,588	224,831	223,726	+0.9%
Massage	18,473	18,600	17,848	18,021	18,792	18,013	15,296	-3.1%



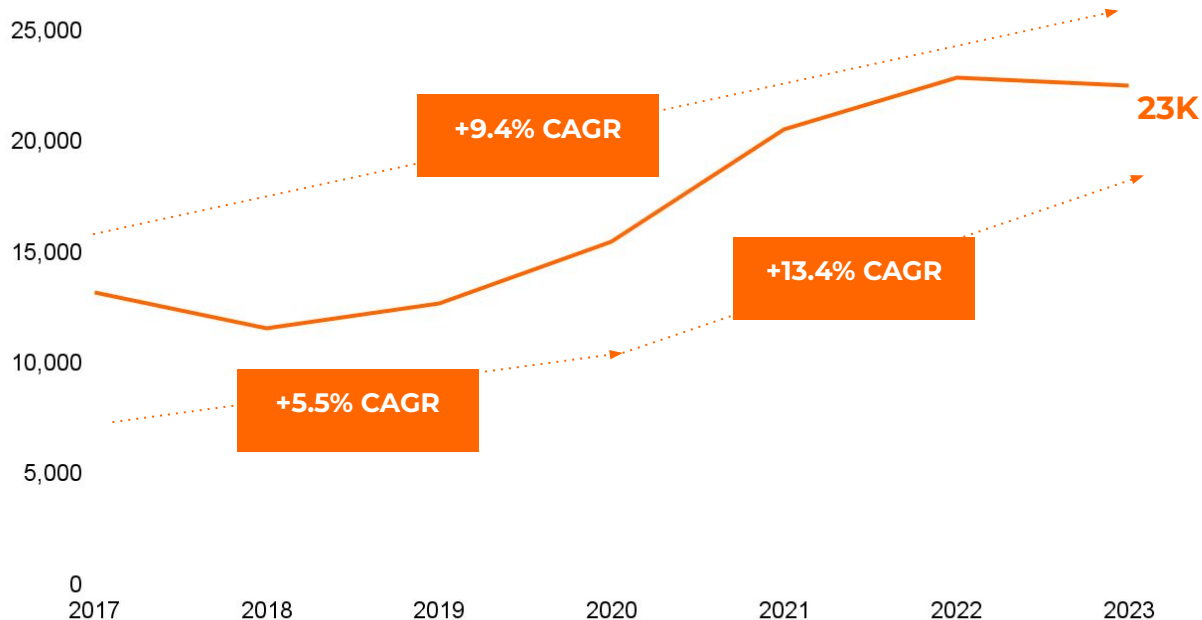
Market Profiles - Culinary Arts Schools



Culinary Arts School enrollment is growing and accelerating

From 2017 to 2020, enrollment in Culinary Arts Schools grew at a 5.5% CAGR. Post-pandemic, the compound annual growth rate accelerated to 13.4%.

Total Enrollment in Culinary Arts Schools (2017 to 2023)



Key Takeaways

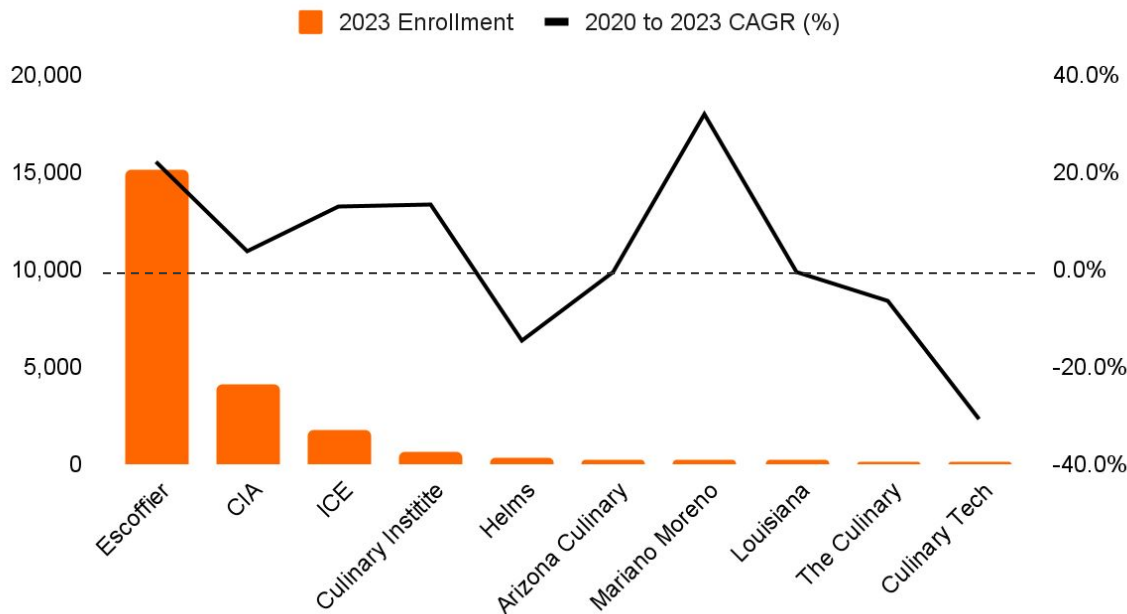
- From 2017 to 2023, total enrollment in Culinary Arts Schools grew at a 9.4% CAGR. The compound annual growth rate is accelerating, as it was 5.5% pre-pandemic and 13.4% post-pandemic.



The largest Culinary Arts Schools enroll 2,200 students on average

The 10 largest Culinary Arts Schools enroll 22,394 students, or 99.4% of all Culinary Arts School enrollments.

Top 10 Largest Culinary Arts Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- The 10 largest Culinary Arts Schools enroll 99.4% of all students enrolled in Culinary Arts Schools, indicating a high degree of market concentration.
- The leading Culinary Arts Schools enroll an average of about 2,200 students per institution.



Market Profiles - Healthcare Trades Schools

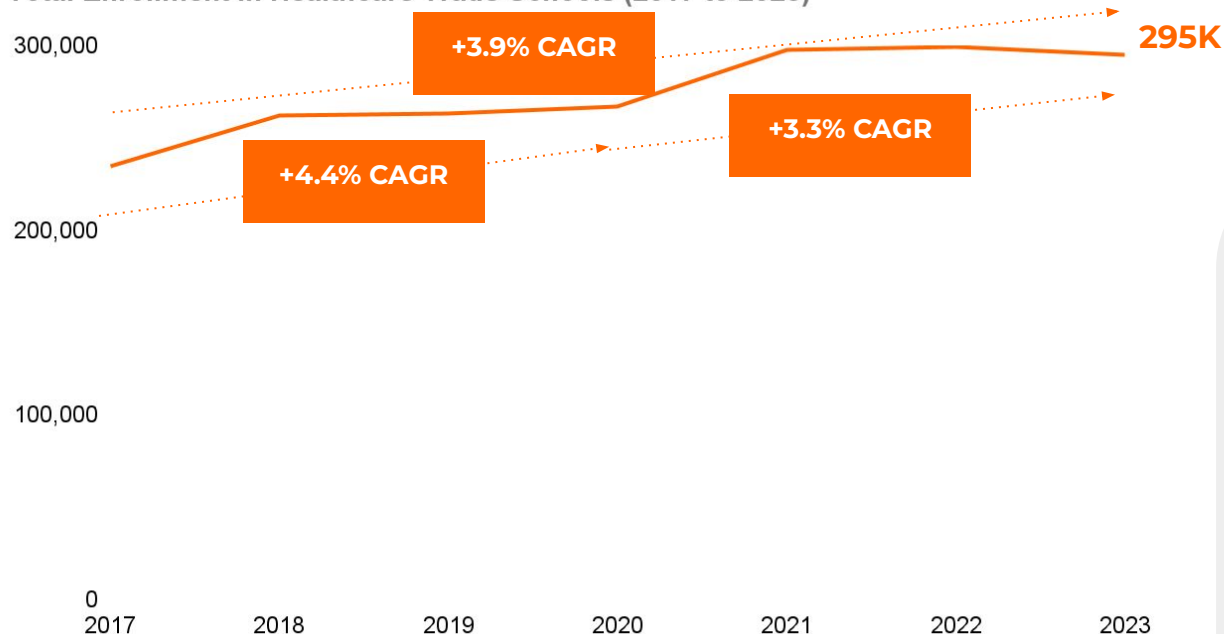


Healthcare Trade Schools

Healthcare Trade School enrollment is growing but has decelerated

From 2017 to 2020, Healthcare Trade School enrollment grew at a 4.4% CAGR. From 2020 to 2023, enrollment at these schools grew at a 3.3% CAGR.

Total Enrollment in Healthcare Trade Schools (2017 to 2023)



Key Takeaways

- Healthcare Trade Schools are growing at a healthy 3.9% CAGR since 2017, although growth did decelerate during and after the pandemic.

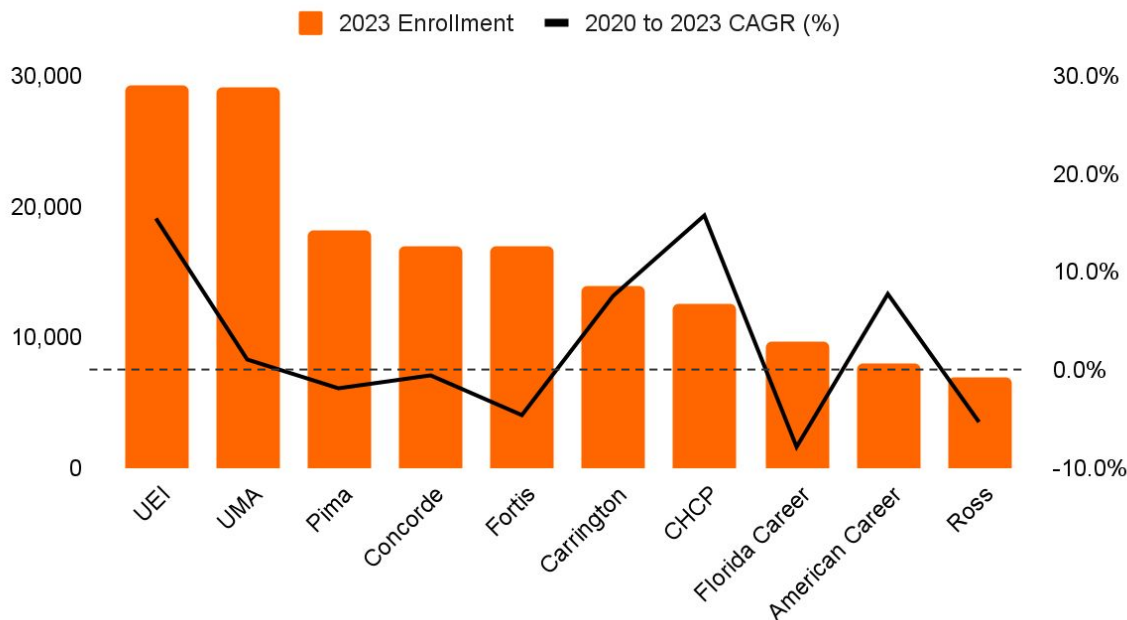


Healthcare Trade Schools

The 10 largest Healthcare Trade Schools enroll 16,100 students on average

The 10 largest Healthcare Trade Schools enroll 160,716 students, or 54.6% of all enrollments in Healthcare Trade Schools.

Top 10 Largest Healthcare Trade Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- The 10 largest Healthcare Trade Schools enroll 54.6% of all students enrolled in Healthcare Trade Schools.
- Among these market leaders there is an average of about 16,100 students enrolled per institution.



Market Profiles - Multiple Specialty Trade/ Technical Schools



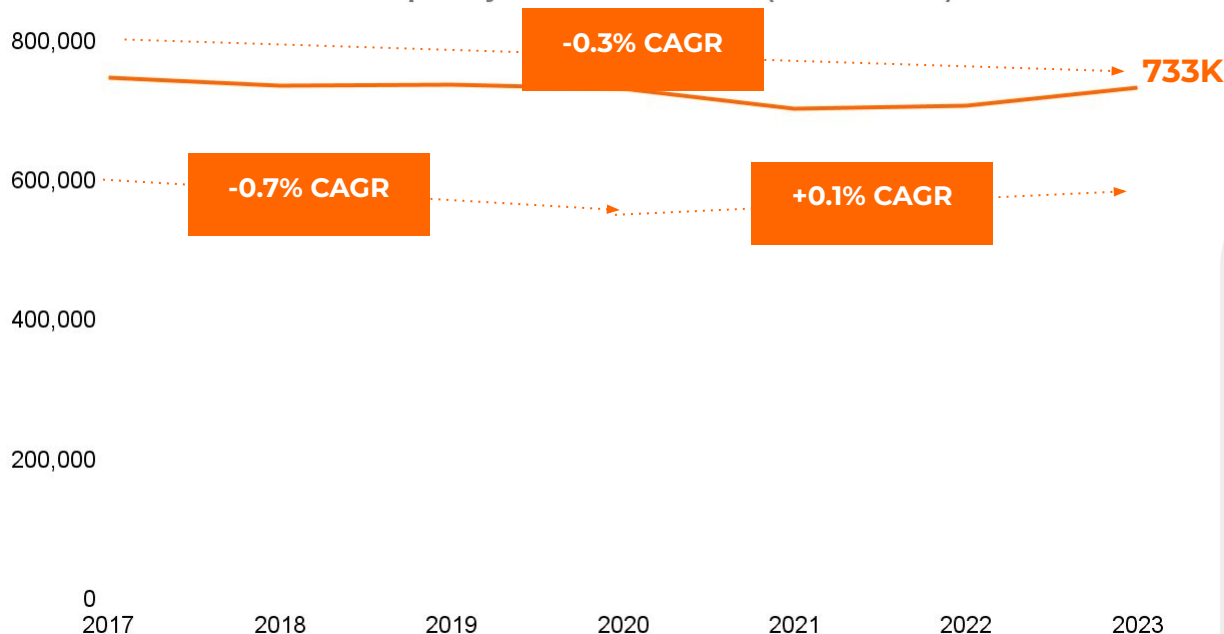


Multidisc. Tech. Schools

Enrollment in Multidisciplinary Tech Schools is growing post-pandemic

After declining at a -0.7% CAGR from 2017 to 2020, enrollment in Multidisciplinary Technical Schools is growing at a modest 0.1% post-pandemic (2020 to 2023).

Total Enrollment in Multidisciplinary Technical Schools (2017 to 2023)



Key Takeaways

- Multidisciplinary Technical Schools enrolled just over 733,000 students in 2023, making it the largest classification of Trade School.
- Enrollment in these schools declined slightly, at a -0.7% CAGR from 2017 to 2020, but post-pandemic, enrollment is now growing at a modest 0.1% CAGR.

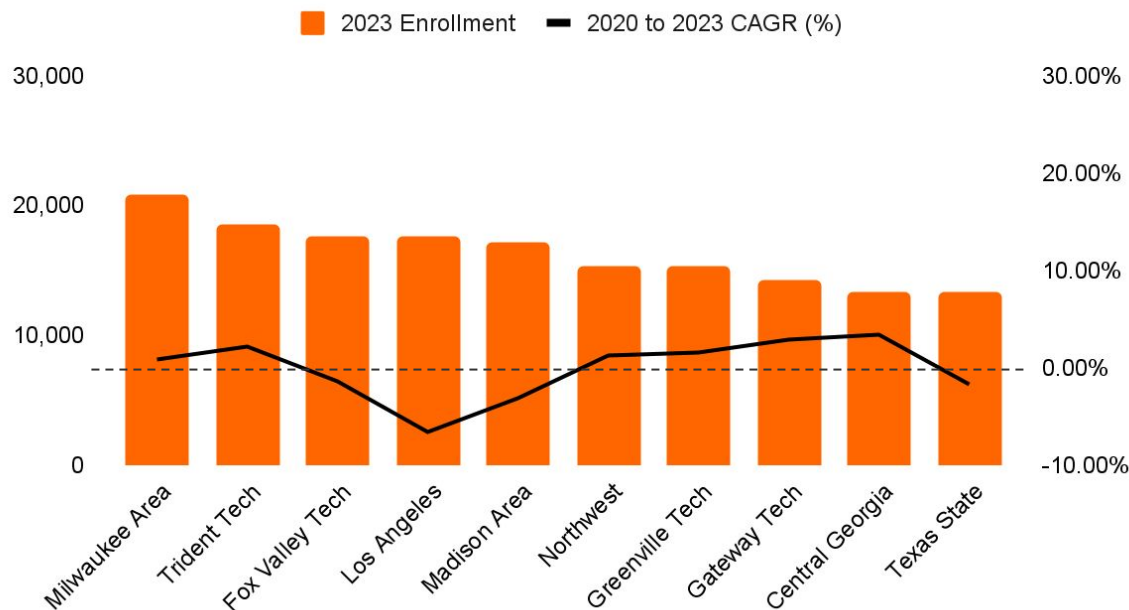


Multidisc. Tech. Schools

The 10 largest Multidisciplinary Technical Schools enroll 16,200 students on average

The 10 largest Multidisciplinary Technical Schools enroll 162,304 students collectively, or 22.1% of all enrollments in this type of Trade School.

Top 10 Largest Multidisciplinary Technical Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- The Multidisciplinary Technical School market is the most fragmented Trade School market, with only 22.1% of enrollments being enrolled by the top 10 largest providers.



Market Profiles - Skilled Trades Schools

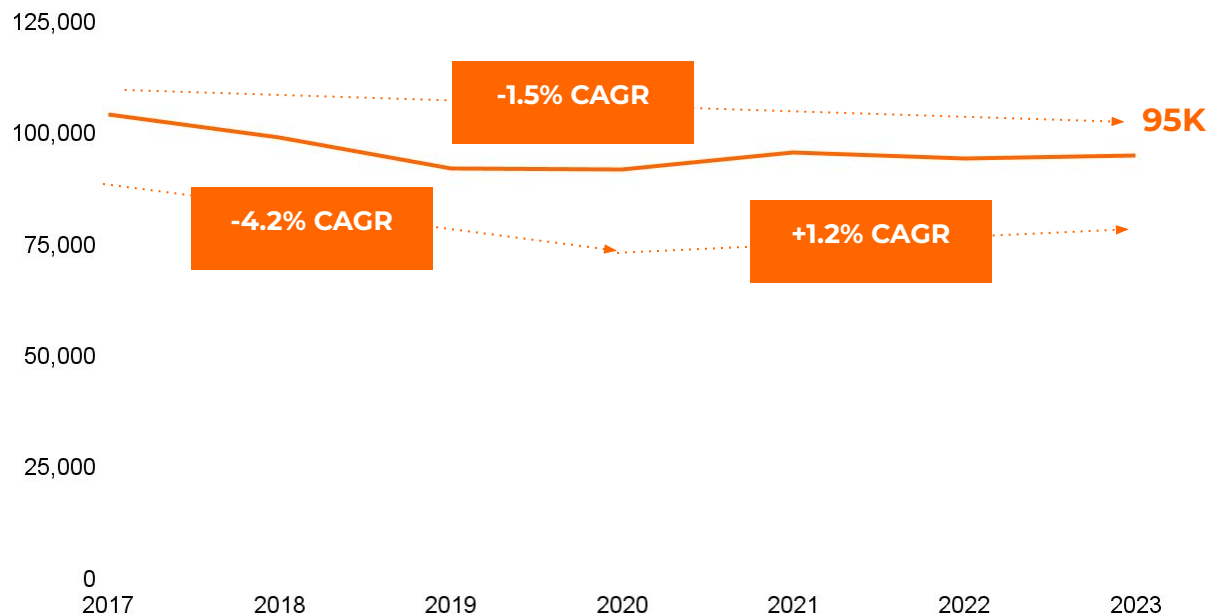


Skilled Trades Schools

Enrollment in Skilled Trades Schools is growing post-pandemic

After declining at a -4.2% CAGR pre-pandemic, enrollment in Skilled Trades Schools is growing at a 1.2% CAGR from 2020 to 2023.

Total Enrollment in Skilled Trades Schools (2017 to 2023)



Key Takeaways

- From 2017 to 2020 (pre-pandemic), enrollment in Skilled Trades Schools was declining at a -4.2% CAGR.
- Post-pandemic (2020 to 2023), enrollment in these schools has rebounded, growing at a 1.2% CAGR. Even with this growth, the long term trend is negative.

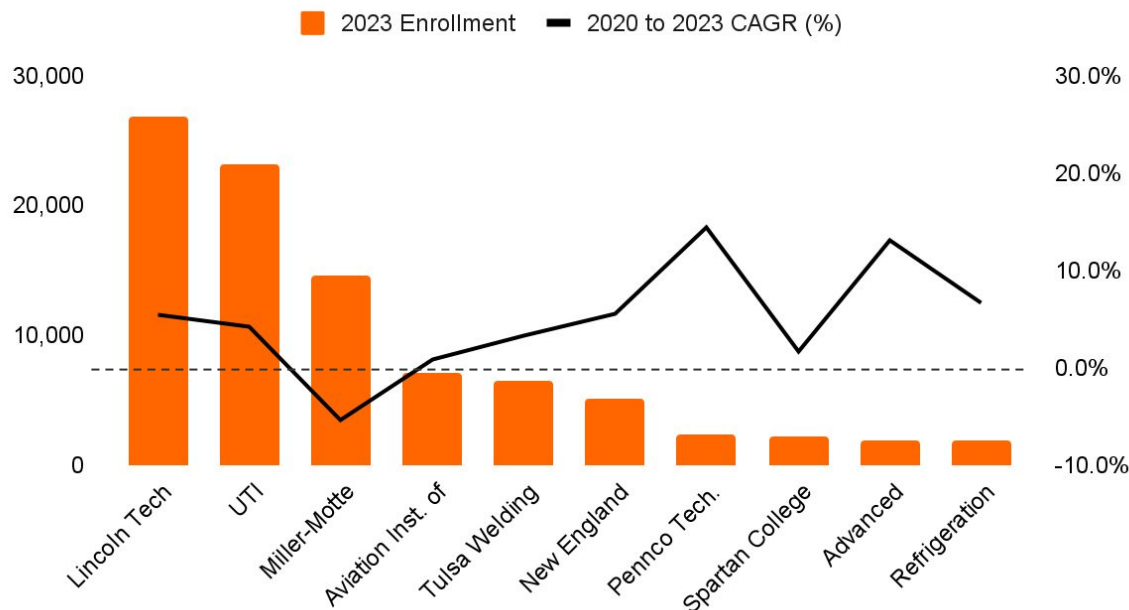


Skilled Trades Schools

The 10 largest Skilled Trades Schools enroll 9,100 students on average

The Skilled Trades School market is concentrated, as the 10 largest providers enroll 96.6% of students enrolled in these schools.

Top 10 Largest Skilled Trades Schools and Recent Growth Rate



Key Takeaways

- Leading Skilled Trades Schools enroll an average of 9,100 students per institution.
- The top 10 largest Skilled Trades Schools enroll 96.6% of all students enrolled in this type of institution, making this a highly concentrated market.



Skilled Trades Schools

Maint. and Repair Schools are the largest Skilled Trades School sub-type

While Maint. and Repair Schools are the largest Skilled Trades School sub-type, the fastest growing sub-type is Welding Schools.

School Sub-Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	CAGR
Automotive	5,442	4,912	4,747	4,656	5,045	5,167	5,341	-0.3%
Aviation	14,005	14,991	15,137	15,025	15,116	13,132	13,467	-0.7%
Driving	6,669	6,747	6,639	7,451	7,729	9,084	8,608	+4.3%
Maint. And Repair	71,724	65,474	58,140	56,625	59,376	59,295	58,740	-3.3%
Welding	6,545	7,189	7,700	8,063	8,358	7,559	8,932	+5.3%

[1] “Industry revenue of “technical and trade schools“ in the U.S. 2012-2024” Statista. December 21, 2023.

<https://www.statista.com/forecasts/311192/technical-and-trade-schools-revenue-in-the-us>

[2] “School and Student Characteristics and Student Achievement Outcomes”. Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC). 2024. <https://www.accsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Institutional-Characteristics-2022.pdf>

[3] “Teens Have Changed Their Higher Ed Plans — Survey Shows They May Never Go Back”. Morning Consult with EdChoice via the 74 Million. 2021.

<https://www.the74million.org/article/teens-have-changed-their-higher-ed-plans-survey-shows-they-may-never-go-back/>

[4] “Public Viewpoint: COVID-19 Work and Education Survey”. Strada Education Foundation. 2020.

<https://www.stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-5.pdf>



Key

Classification of Trade Schools Key

School Sub-Types	School Type	Notes	Examples
Adult Education/Vocational School	Adult Education/Vocational School	Typically a public institution affiliated with a local K-12 school system that provides basic skills training	Northeast Technology Center, Hacienda La Puente Adult Education
Automotive Trade School	Skilled Trades School	A school that prepares students for employment in automotive repair or manufacturing	NASCAR Technical Institute
Aviation Trade School	Skilled Trades School	A school that prepares students for employment in aviation repair or manufacturing	Aviation Institute of Maintenance

Note: Other Trade School types and sub-types not referenced in this report include Arts Trade Schools, Driving Schools, IT and Computer Schools, Massage Schools, Mortuary Schools, Veterinary Trade Schools, and Other Trade Schools



Key

Classification of Trade Schools Key

School Sub-Types	School Type	Notes	Examples
Cosmetology School	Beauty and Wellness School	A school that prepares students for employment in Cosmetology like Salons	Empire Beauty School, Paul Mitchell School
Culinary Arts School	Other Trade School	A school that prepares students for employment as a Chef	Escoffier, Culinary Institute of America
Healthcare Trade School	Healthcare Trade School	A school that prepares students for entry-level employment in Healthcare and Medical fields, mostly below the baccalaureate level	Ultimate Medical Academy, the College of Healthcare Professions, Pima Medical Institute

Note: Other Trade School types and sub-types not referenced in this report include Arts Trade Schools, Driving Schools, IT and Computer Schools, Massage Schools, Mortuary Schools, Veterinary Trade Schools, and Other Trade Schools



Key

Classification of Trade Schools Key

School Sub-Types	School Type	Notes	Examples
Maintenance and Repair School	Skilled Trades School	A school that prepares students for employment in Maintenance and Repair fields like HVAC and Plumbing	Miller-Motte, Universal Technical Institute
Multiple Specialty Trade/Technical School	Multiple Specialty Trade/Technical School	A trade or technical school that offers a number of sub-baccalaureate programs in a range of fields	Milwaukee Area Technical School
Welding School	Skilled Trades School	A school that prepares students for entry-level employment as a Welder	Tulsa Welding School

Note: Other Trade School types and sub-types not referenced in this report include Arts Trade Schools, Driving Schools, IT and Computer Schools, Massage Schools, Mortuary Schools, Veterinary Trade Schools, and Other Trade Schools