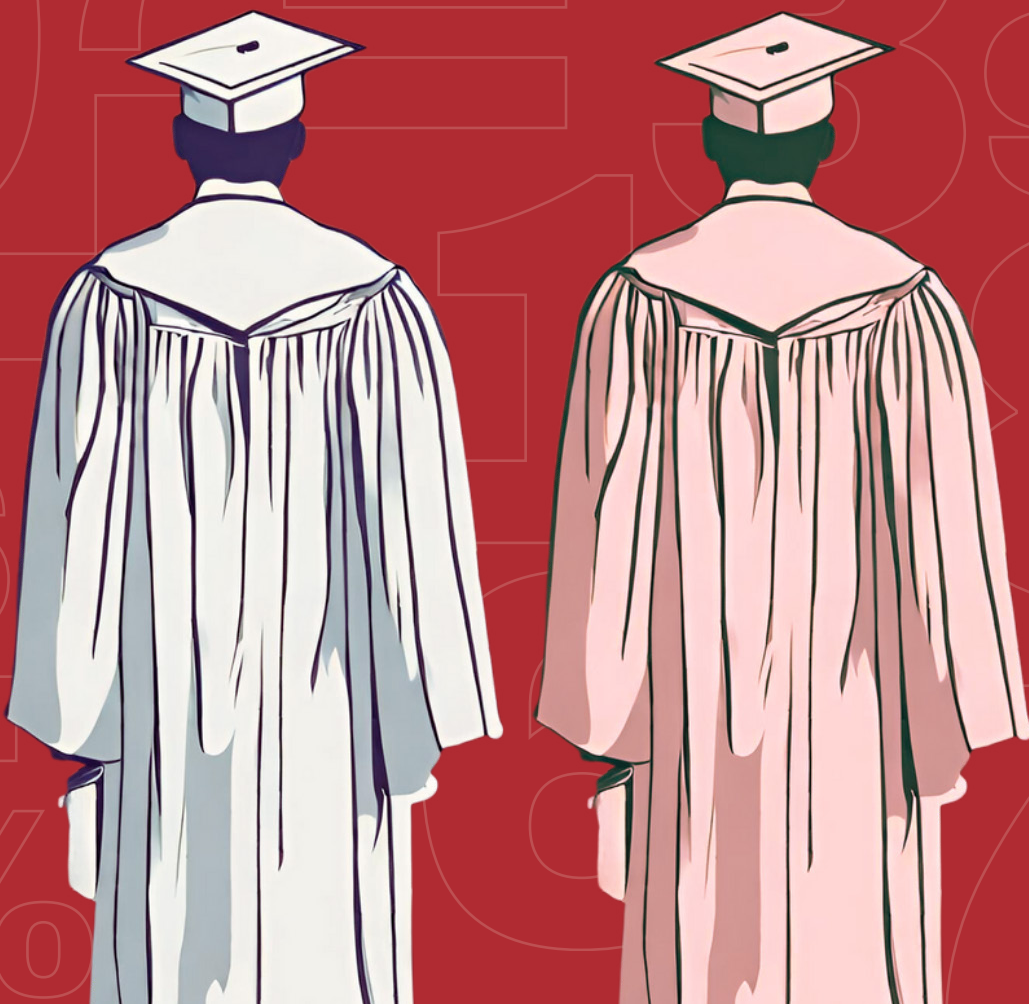


BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Comparing College-Going Outcomes of
Kalamazoo Public Schools to Those of Similar
Urban School Districts in Michigan



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key Takeaway	3
Key Points	3
Where Is College Enrollment Declining?	4
What Is a Better Comparison?	9
Who Is Attending College?	12
Who Is Enrolling in 4-Year Colleges?	16
Who Is Completing College Credentials?	20
Who Is Continuing in College?	24
Summary	26

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KEY TAKEAWAY

College enrollment has fallen in Kalamazoo in recent years, in line with broader trends in Michigan and the U.S. However, when we compare Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) to similar urban school districts, we find that KPS has consistently outperformed its peers. Every year for the past five years, KPS rates of college enrollment have been at least 10 percentage points higher than comparison districts. This advantage is probably partly due to the Kalamazoo Promise, which provides free college tuition to KPS graduates. However, disparities among student groups underscore the ongoing need for equitable college access support.

KEY POINTS

- KPS has a different demographic makeup than the state of Michigan. Therefore, to make meaningful comparisons, we contrast outcomes for KPS to those of similarly situated urban school districts in the state.
- While KPS graduates' college enrollment rate declined sharply between 2019 and 2022, the district's rate of college enrollment is nonetheless still higher than similar urban school districts in Michigan.
- KPS graduates are more likely to pursue 4-year college degrees compared to 2-year degrees or other post-secondary credentials.
- KPS graduates generally outperform similar urban districts in Michigan in earning various types of credentials within six years.
- Despite KPS generally outperforming other similar urban districts in Michigan, there are still disparities among student groups.

College enrollment is down.



Everywhere.



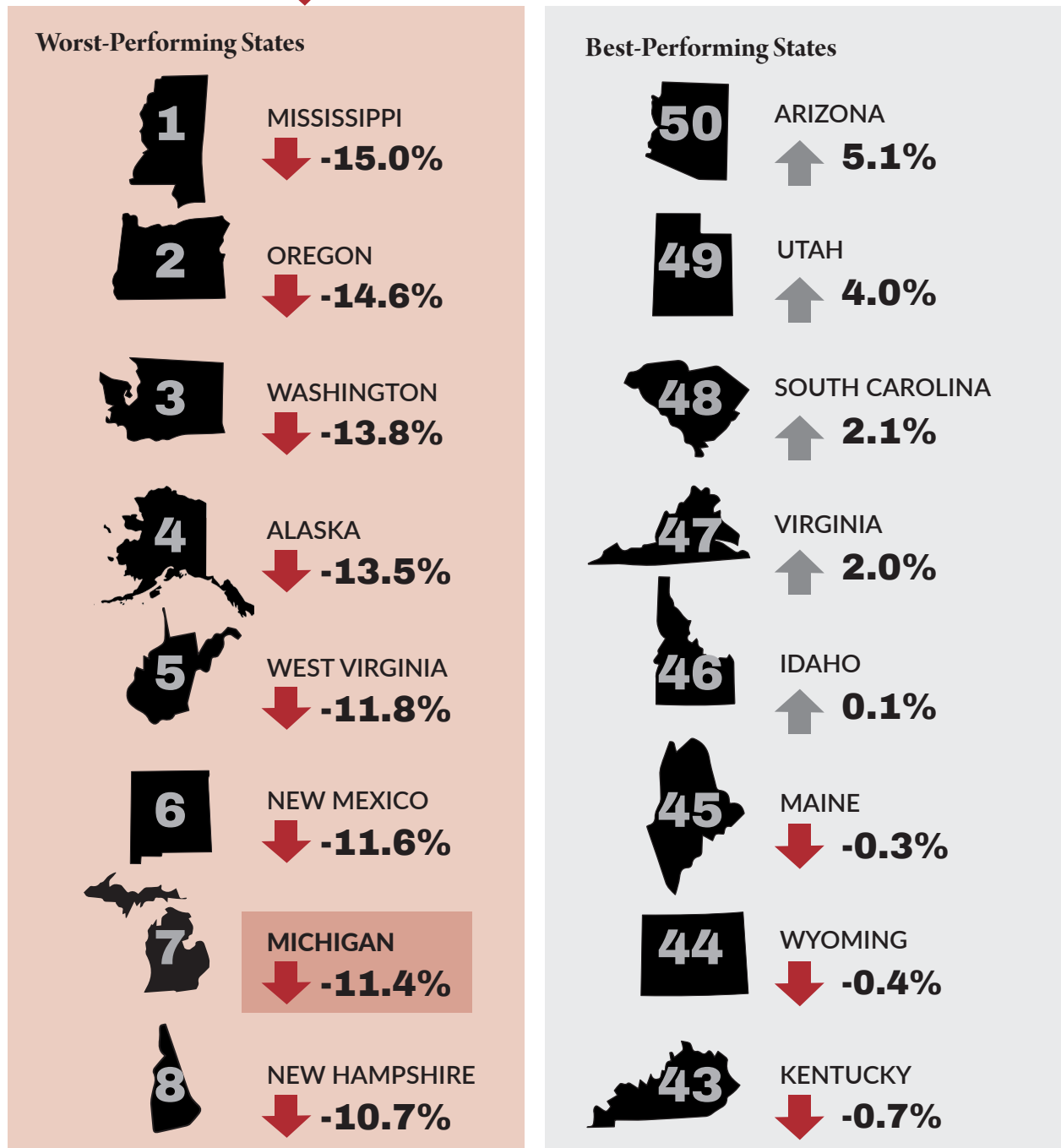
And Michigan has had one of the largest drops in college enrollment in the country.

WHERE IS COLLEGE ENROLLMENT DECLINING?

Michigan had the seventh-largest college enrollment decline among states between Fall 2019 and Fall 2022.

Percentage change in college enrollment (All College Types)

NATIONAL AVERAGE =  **-5.8%**

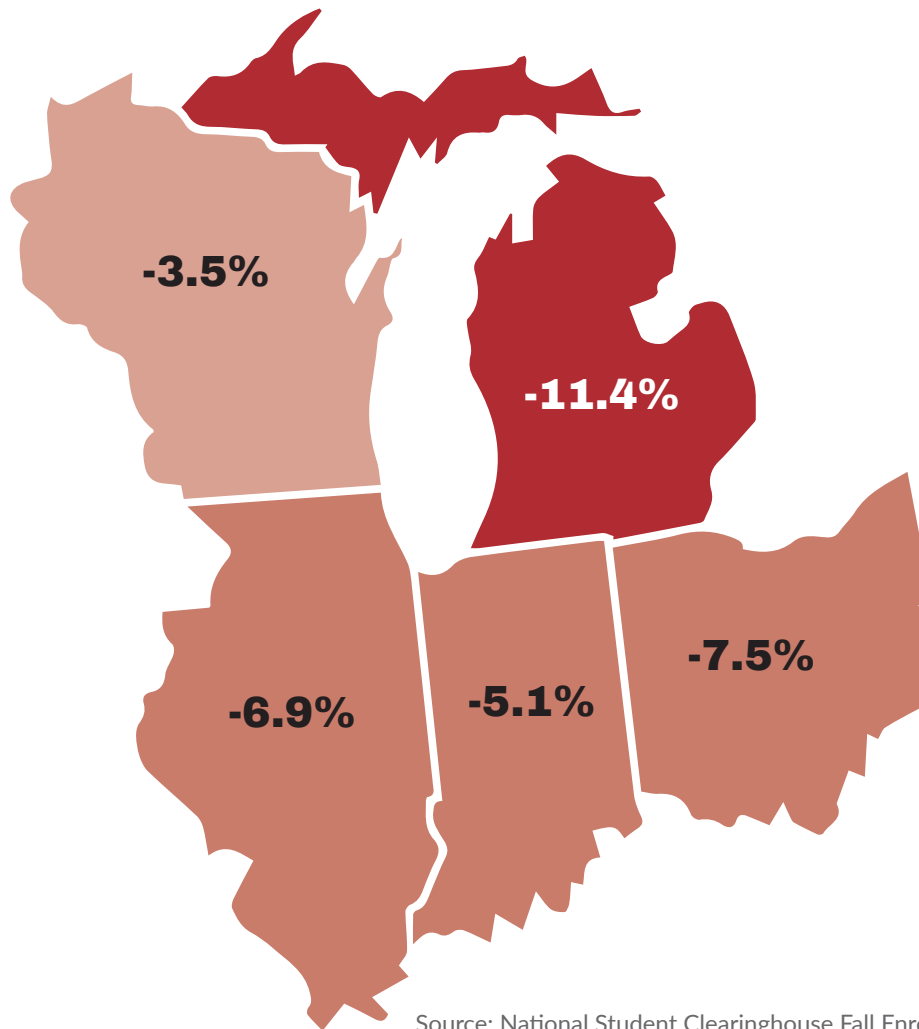


Source: National Student Clearinghouse Fall Enrollment Numbers

WHERE IS COLLEGE ENROLLMENT DECLINING?

Even compared to other Midwestern Great Lakes states, Michigan has seen a large drop in total enrollment.

Percentage change in college enrollment (All College Types)
Fall 2019 to Fall 2022



Source: National Student Clearinghouse Fall Enrollment Numbers

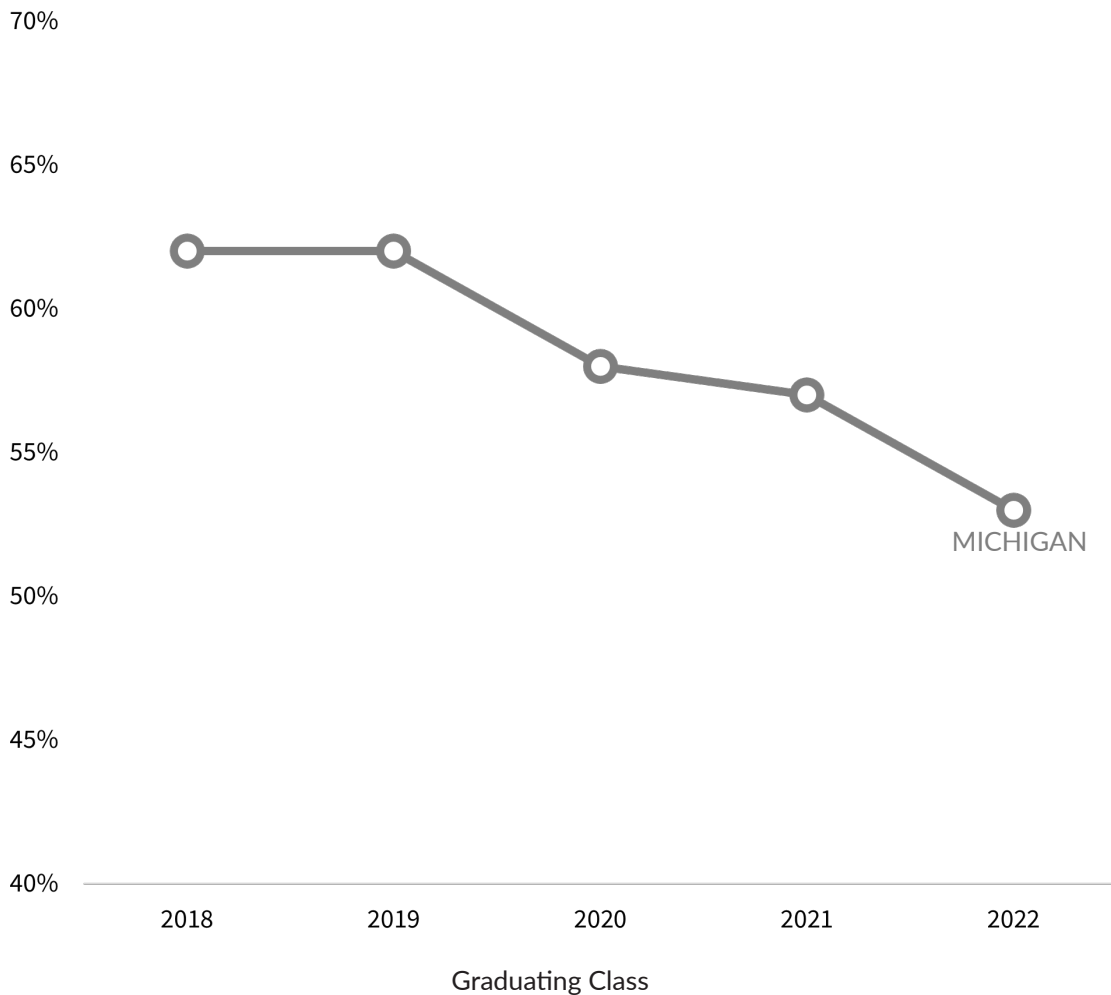


This decline in college enrollment is concerning. Not only has the state witnessed a substantial decrease in total college enrollment, it has also fared worse than its neighboring Great Lakes states. Several factors may be contributing to this drop, including economic conditions, shifts in demographic patterns, and changes in the perception of the value of higher education.

WHERE IS COLLEGE ENROLLMENT DECLINING?

Over the last five years, Michigan saw a 9-percentage-point decrease, from 62 percent to 53 percent, in the share of its public high school graduates who enrolled in a college or university six months after graduation.

College enrollment six months after high school graduation



Source: MI School Data

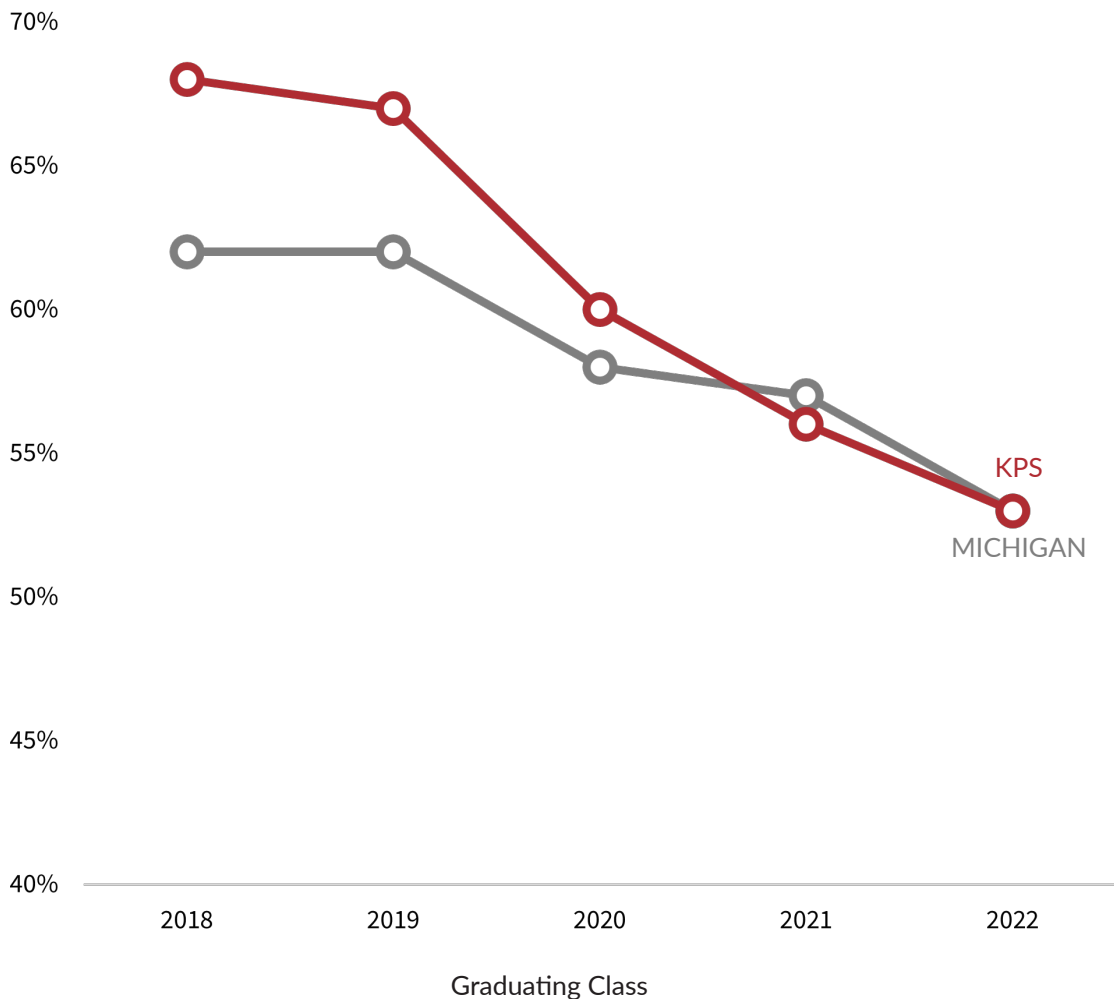


The primary reason for this decrease is that fewer high school graduates are choosing to enroll in college right away. This trend is almost certainly related to the strong labor market and rising wages for entry-level workers, which has encouraged some high school graduates who would have previously enrolled in college to instead seek work.

WHERE IS COLLEGE ENROLLMENT DECLINING?

During that same time period, **Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS)** saw an even larger decrease, 15 percentage points, from 68 percent to 53 percent, in the share of public high school graduates who enrolled in college right after high school.

College enrollment six months after high school graduation

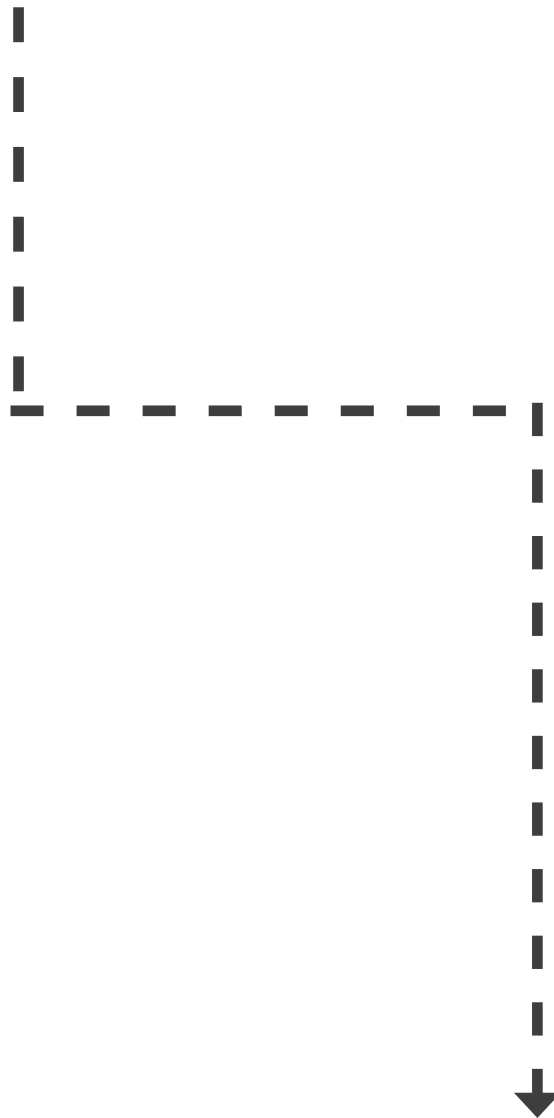


Source: MI School Data



Because college enrollment rates for the KPS class of 2018 were higher than that for the state as a whole, the larger decline in the district brought its college-going rate to about the same as the statewide average for the class of 2022.

Of course, there's always more happening behind the numbers than what you see on the surface, so let's dive in.



WHAT IS A BETTER COMPARISON?

It turns out that Michigan, as a whole, may not be the best comparison for KPS.



This is primarily because the demographic composition of KPS differs significantly from that of the state. In particular, KPS serves far more students with social, economic, and educational disadvantages than most other Michigan school districts. KPS is also primarily urban and faces different challenges than the state's many rural school districts. To get a better apples-to-apples comparison we thus turn to school districts that better match the demographic makeup of KPS.

Drawing upon previous research on the effects of the Kalamazoo Promise, we select a comparison group of 29 middle-sized Michigan urban school districts that likely face similar disadvantages as KPS.



Battle Creek Public Schools
Bay City School District
Beecher Community School District
Benton Harbor Area Schools
Dearborn City School District
Ferndale Public Schools
School District of the City of Flint
Garden City Public Schools
Grand Rapids Public Schools
School District of the City of Hazel Park
Highland Park City Schools
Jackson Public Schools
Lansing Public School District
Monroe Public Schools
Mount Clemens Community School District
Mt. Pleasant City School District
Muskegon Heights School District
Muskegon, Public Schools of the City of
Niles Community Schools
Pontiac City School District
Port Huron Area School District
Romulus Community Schools
School District of the City of Saginaw
Southfield Public School District
Waterford School District
Wayne-Westland Community School District
Westwood Community School District
Willow Run Community Schools
Ypsilanti Community Schools

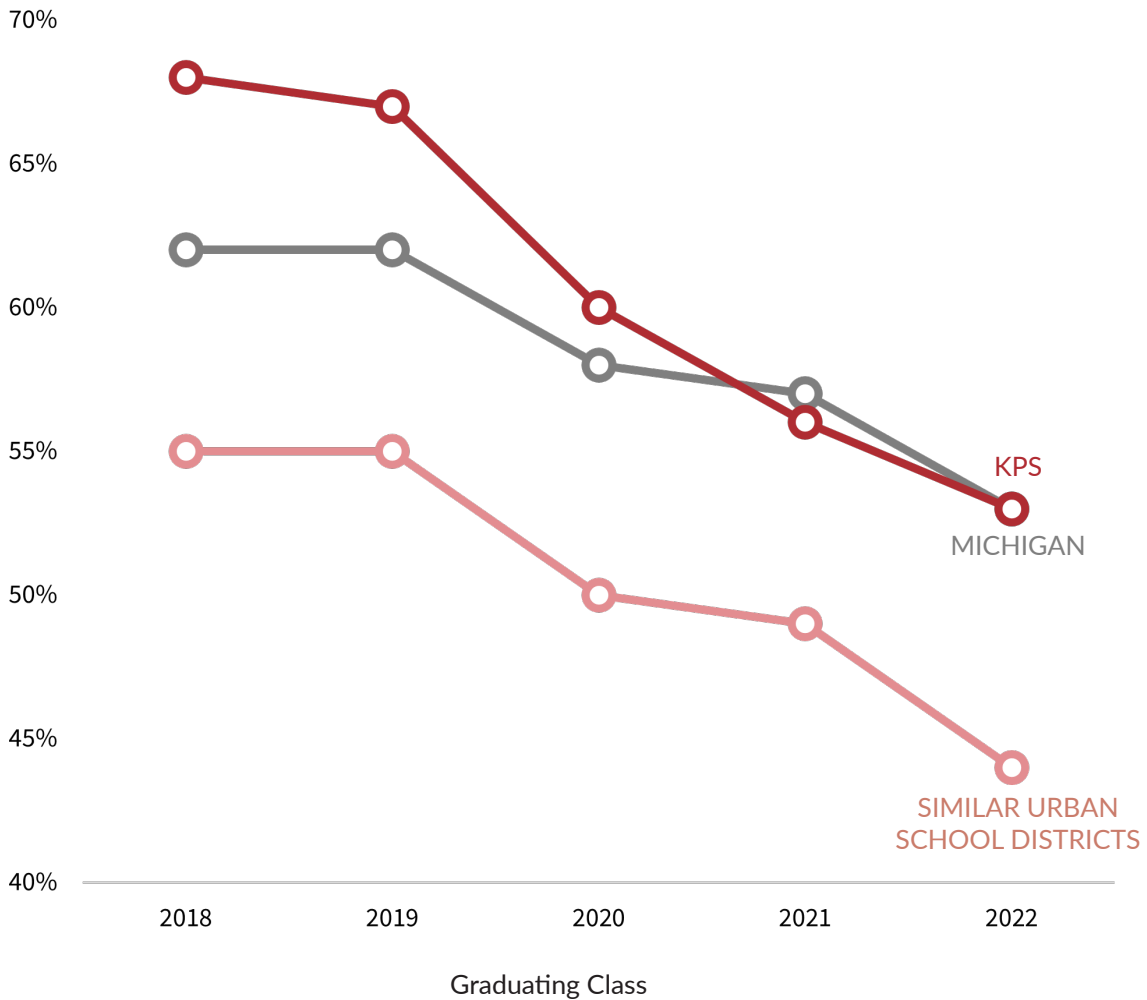


Looking at similar urban, peer districts enables us to make more meaningful comparisons of KPS outcomes. For simplicity, we create a composite district by averaging college-going outcomes from these comparison districts, giving more weight to the outcomes of larger districts.

WHAT IS A BETTER COMPARISON?

Over the past five years, college enrollment for **Similar Urban School Districts** has dropped by about 11 percentage points, from 55 percent to 44 percent.

College enrollment six months after high school graduation



Source: MI School Data



KPS experienced slightly greater declines between the class of 2018 and 2022 in the share of graduates enrolling in college than the composite comparison district. However, for the class of 2022, KPS graduates are more likely to enroll in college than similar urban school districts, 53 percent versus 44 percent.

This KPS advantage is likely due at least in part to the **Kalamazoo Promise**, which was found to boost college-going by about 10 percentage points. Interestingly, the greater decline for KPS may also be due, in part, to the Promise. This college scholarship can be used for up to 10 years after graduation, so some KPS graduates may be seeking to make money now with plans to return to school in the future.



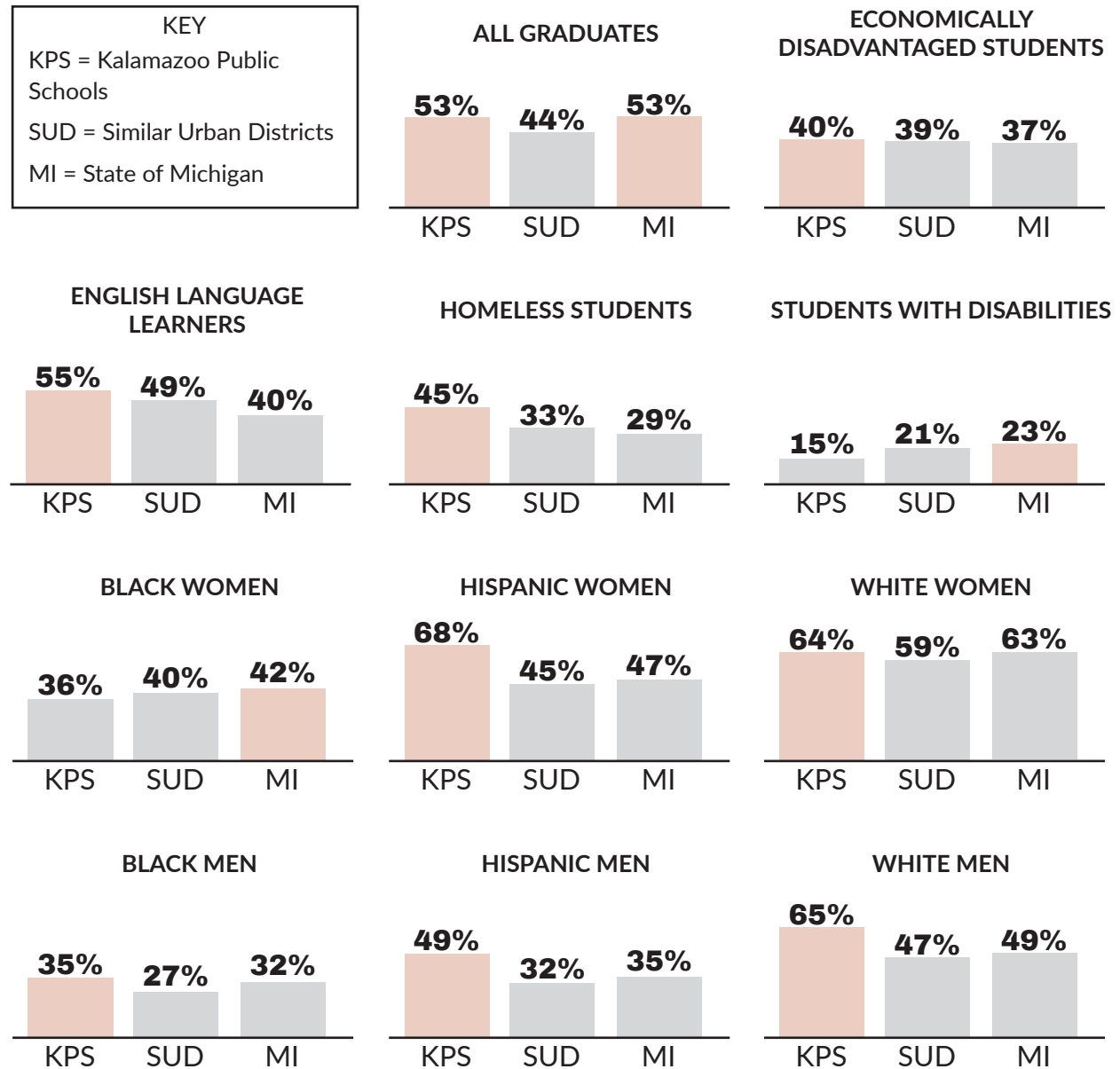
Other factors are likely present as well, and we can learn more by understanding which groups of students are more likely to still attend college.

WHO IS ATTENDING COLLEGE?

For most groups, the class of 2022 KPS graduates enrolled in college at higher rates than did graduates from similar urban districts or from the state as a whole.

College enrollment six months after high school graduation
All College Types (Class of 2022)

KEY
 KPS = Kalamazoo Public Schools
 SUD = Similar Urban Districts
 MI = State of Michigan



Source: MI School Data

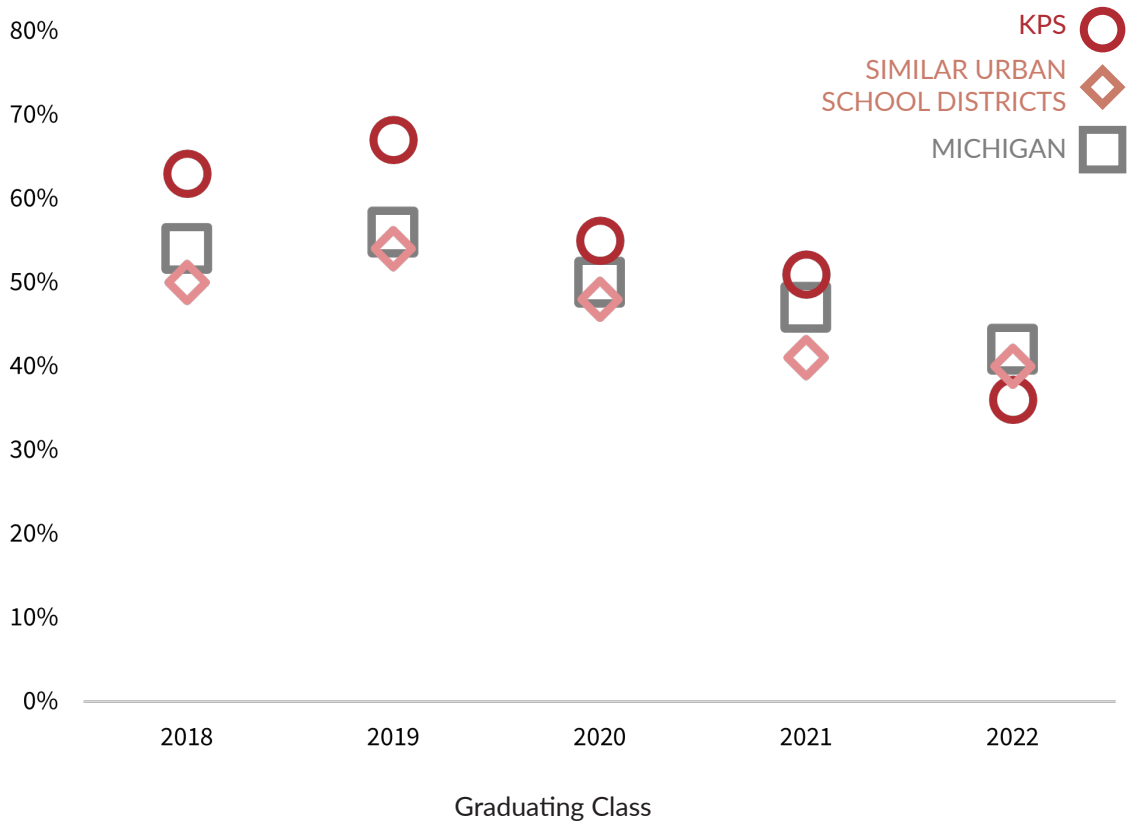
WHO IS ATTENDING COLLEGE?



One exception from the KPS graduating class of 2022 is Black women, whose college enrollment rate this past year dipped below that of comparison districts and the state average.

In past years, college-going rates of Black women graduating from KPS outpaced that of similar urban districts and Michigan as a whole. However, this has since reversed.

College enrollment for Black women six months after high school graduation
All College Types



Source: MI School Data

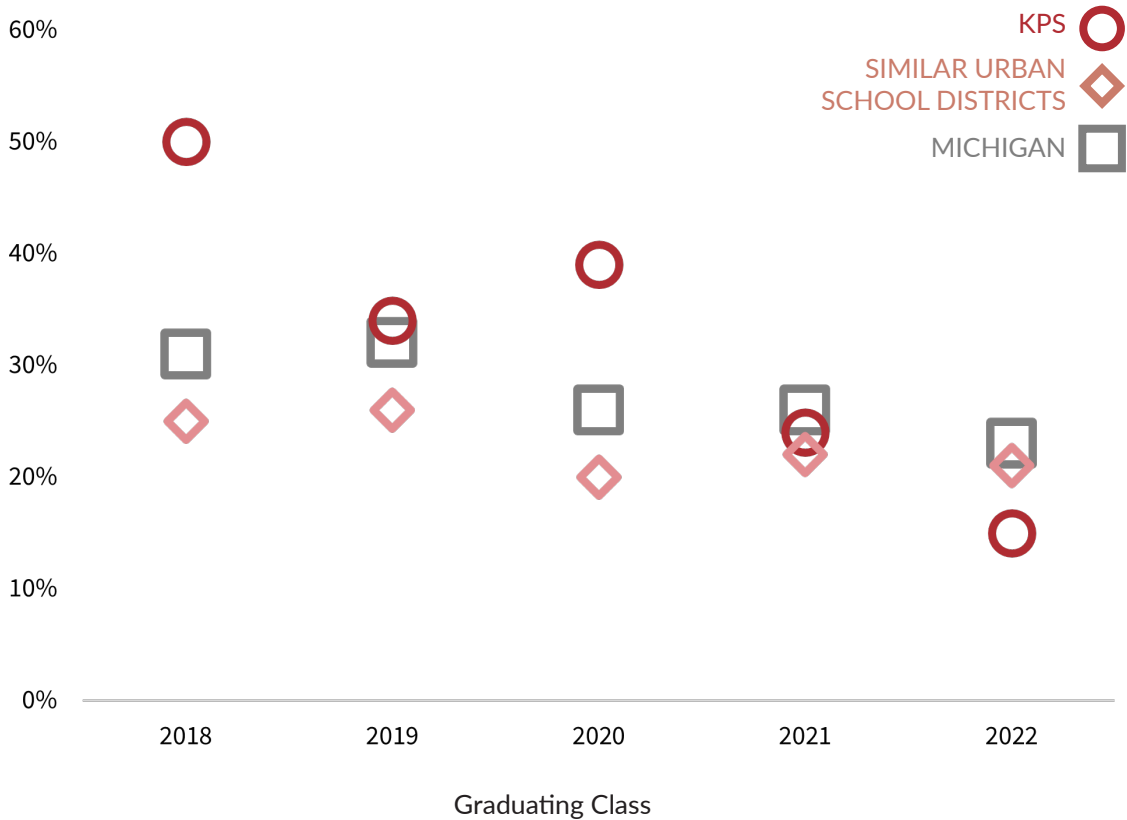
WHO IS ATTENDING COLLEGE?



Graduates with disabilities, a relatively small group with historically variable college enrollment rates, are another exception.

In recent years, the percentage of KPS graduates with disabilities enrolling in college has sharply declined, especially relative to the slowdowns in comparable urban districts.

College enrollment for students with disabilities six months after high school graduation
All College Types



Source: MI School Data



The magnitude of declines in college enrollment rates for KPS graduates with disabilities and KPS graduates who are Black women deserves further attention.

Another way to probe further is separating college enrollment trends between the 2-year and 4-year sectors.

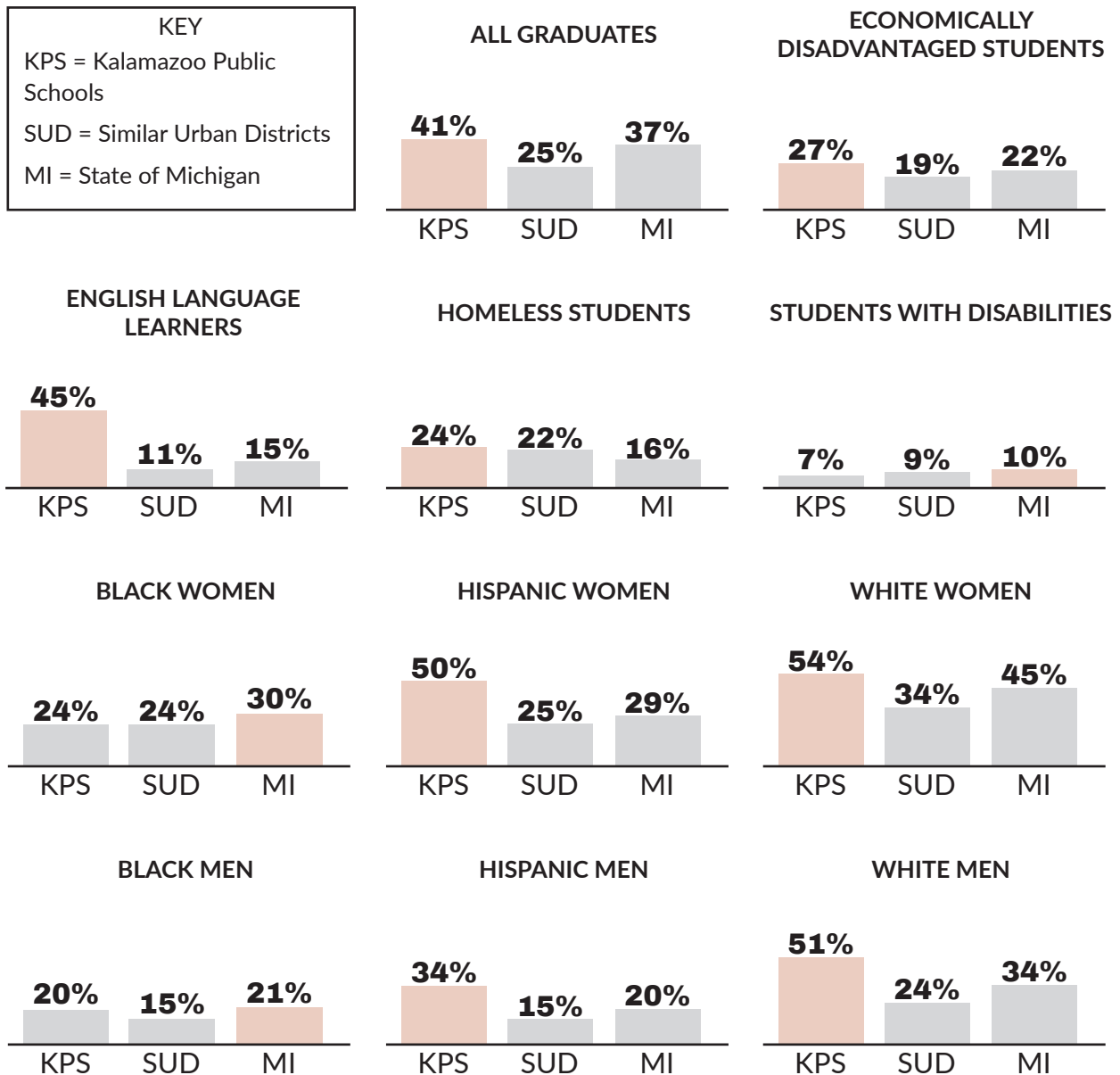


When enrolling in college, KPS graduates are more likely to pursue a 4-year college degree than a 2-year degree or other type of post-secondary credential. This may be an effect of the **Kalamazoo Promise**, which research has shown to have boosted the likelihood that a qualifying student will enroll in a 4-year college or university by 23 percent.

WHO IS ENROLLING IN 4-YEAR COLLEGES?

Compared to graduates from similar urban districts, KPS graduates from the class of 2022 are across the board more likely to have enrolled in 4-year colleges or universities. KPS also performs well compared to the state as a whole, with a few exceptions.

College enrollment six months after high school graduation
Enrollment in 4-Year Colleges and Universities (Class of 2022)



Source: MI School Data

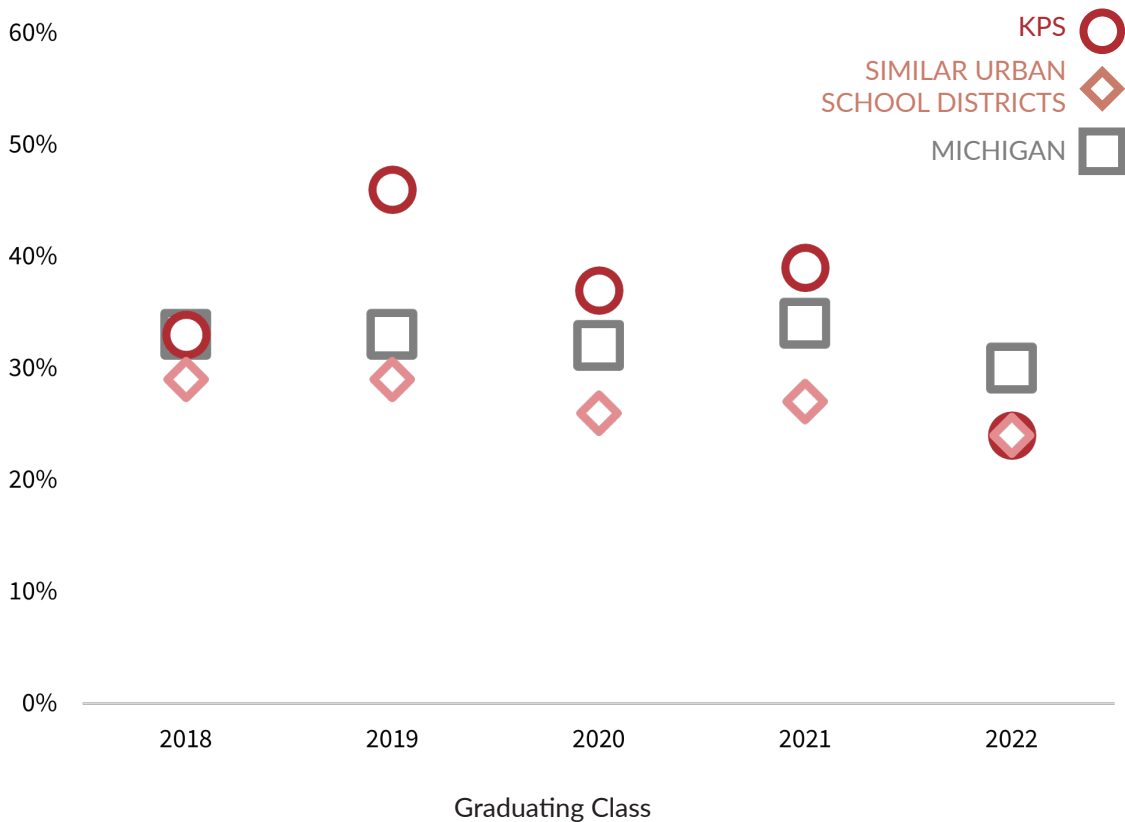
WHO IS ENROLLING IN 4-YEAR COLLEGES?



Most notably, Black men and Black women from the KPS graduating class of 2022 enrolled in 4-year colleges or universities at slightly lower rates than their peers statewide.

Historically, Black women graduating from KPS who enroll in college have chosen to enroll at 4-year colleges or universities at higher rates than those who graduate from similar urban districts or even statewide. However, this has varied by graduating class.

College enrollment for Black women six months after high school graduation
4-Year Colleges and Universities

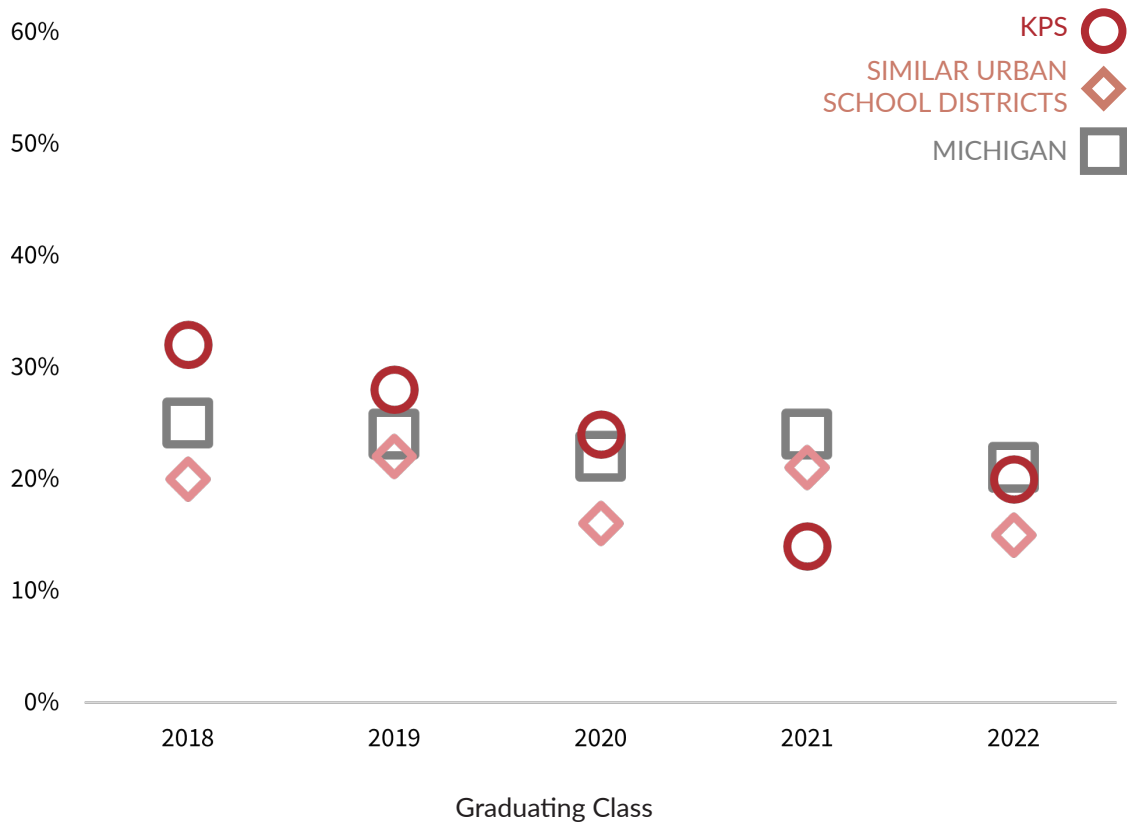


Source: MI School Data

WHO IS ENROLLING IN 4-YEAR COLLEGES?

Similarly, Black men graduating from KPS have historically outpaced the state average in the share of college enrollees at 4-year institutions, but this has changed recently.

College enrollment for Black men six months after high school graduation
4-Year Colleges and Universities



Source: MI School Data



These findings underline the importance of ongoing efforts to address and mitigate educational disparities, ensuring equitable access and opportunities for all students, regardless of their race or background.

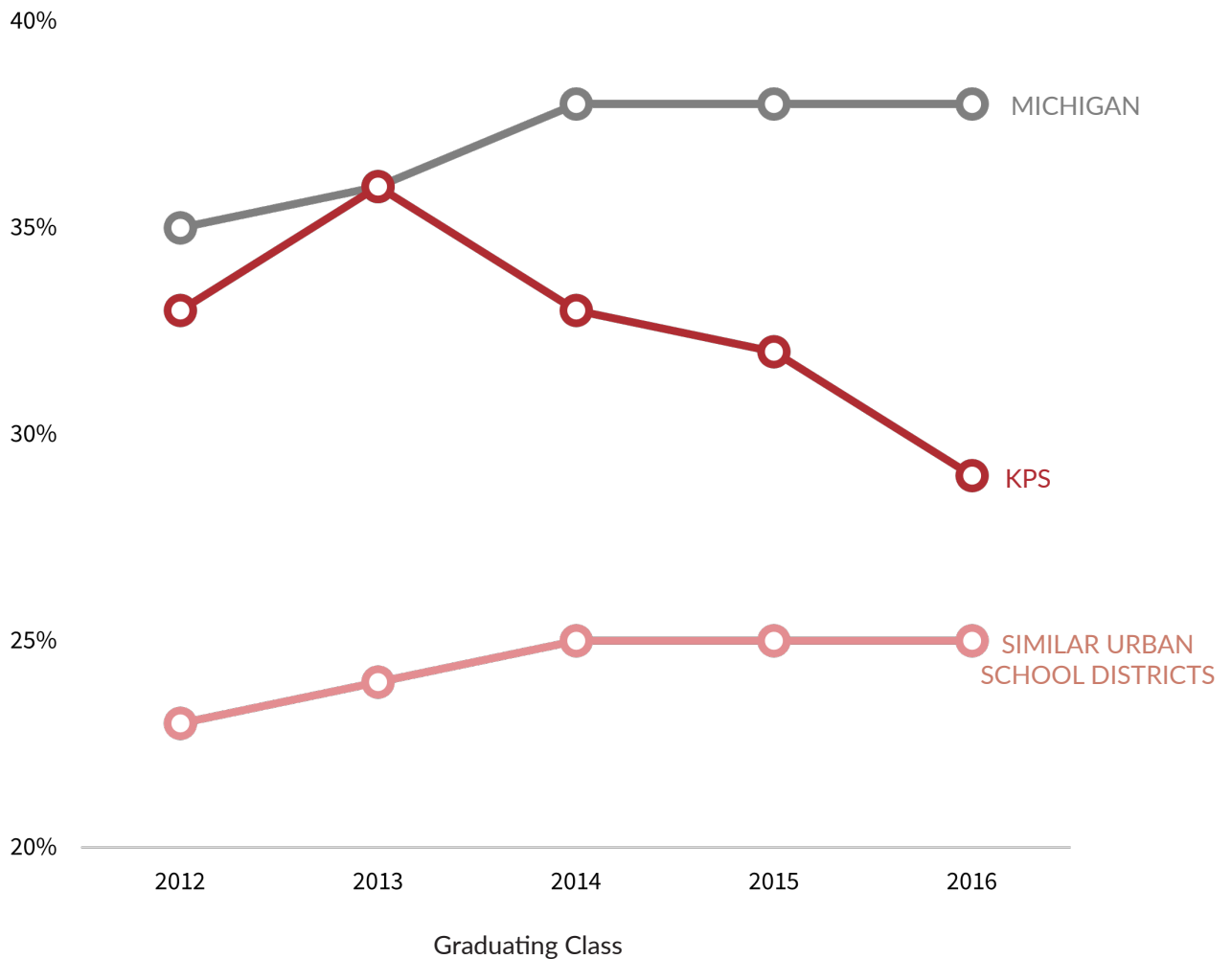
However, enrolling in college is not the same thing as completing college with a credential.



WHO IS COMPLETING COLLEGE CREDENTIALS?

KPS graduates also have been more likely to earn post-secondary credentials than graduates in similar urban school districts, but have recently become less likely to do so than the state as a whole.

Completion of a post-secondary credential six years after enrollment



Source: MI School Data

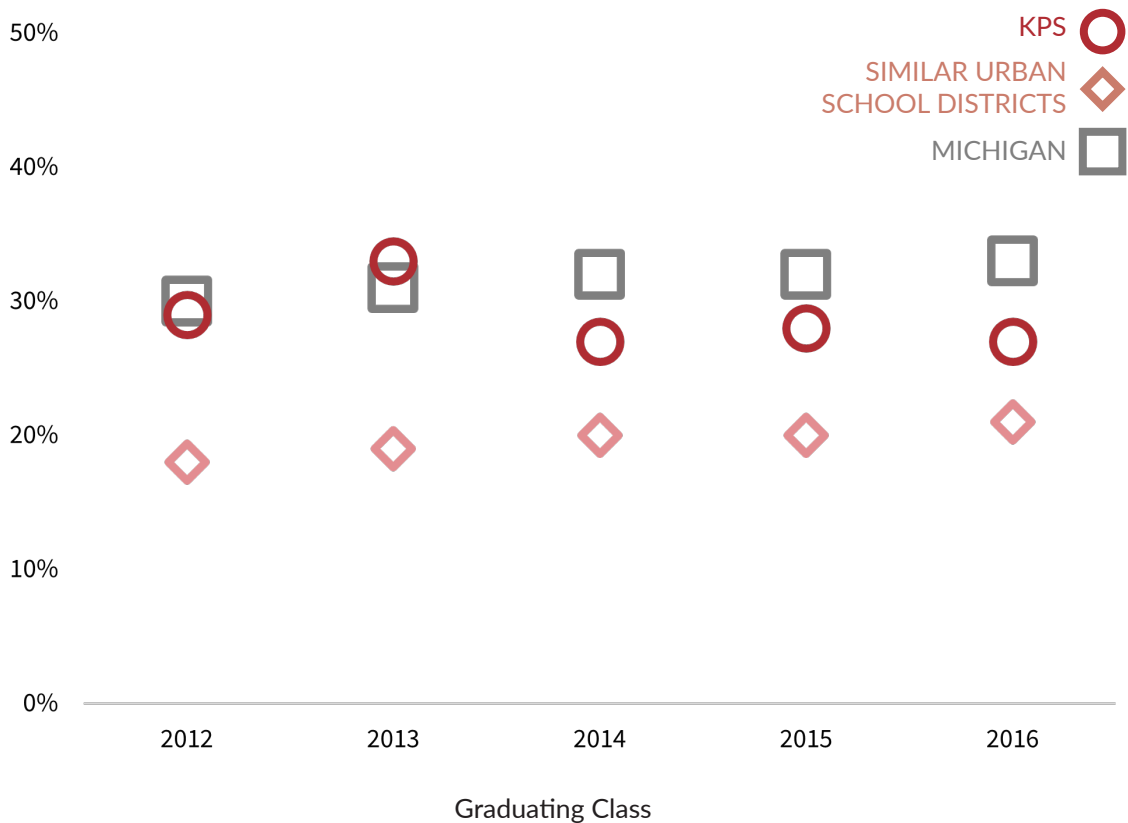


Compared to Michigan as a whole, with its different demographic and socioeconomic composition, KPS completion rates lag.

WHO IS COMPLETING COLLEGE CREDENTIALS?

Most notably, Kalamazoo Public Schools graduates were more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than graduates from similar urban school districts, but a smaller proportion of students finish their bachelor's degree in six years compared to the state of Michigan.

Completion of bachelor's degree six years after enrollment



Source: MI School Data

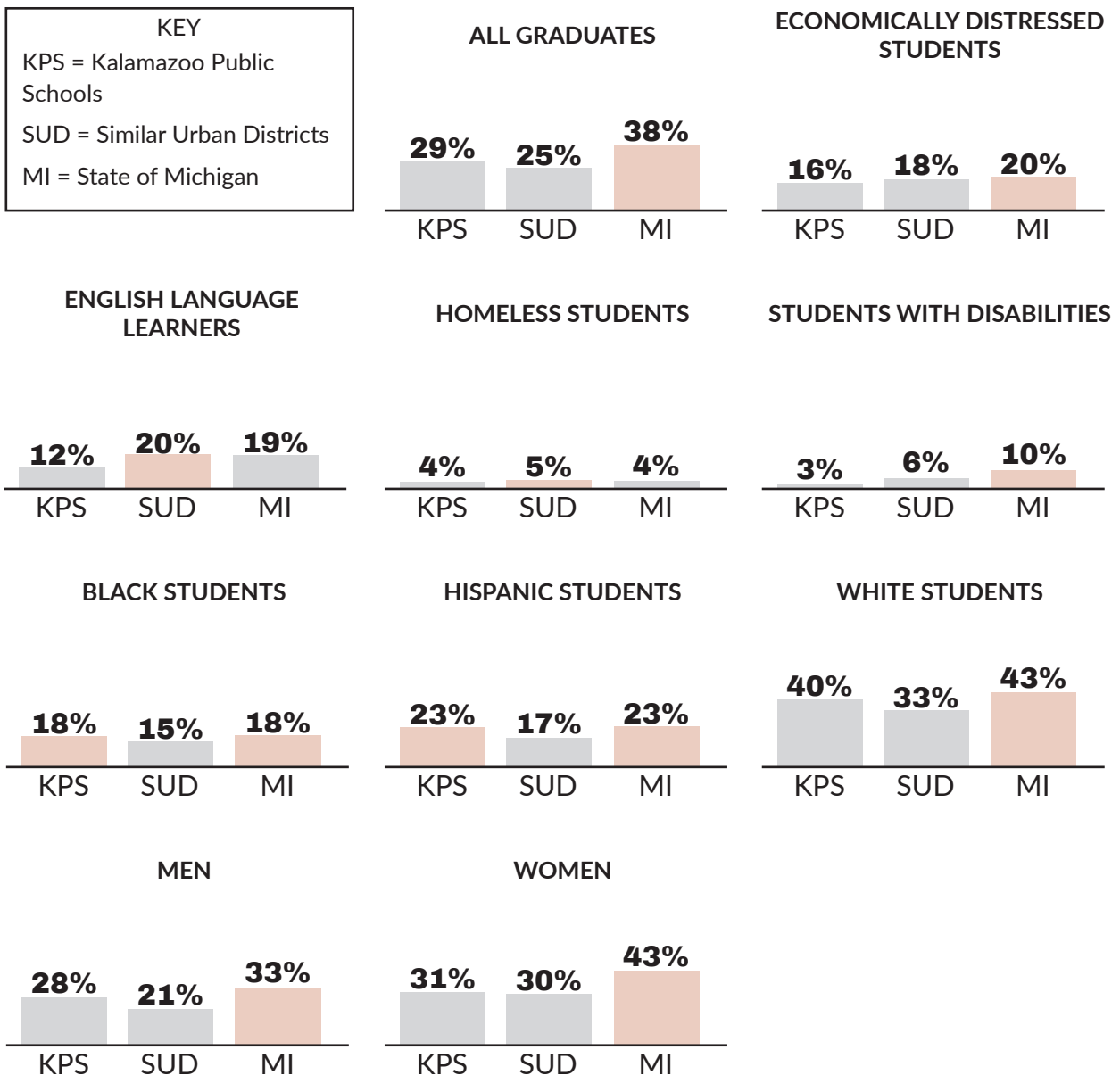


Many KPS graduate student groups from the class of 2016 (the most recent class with six-year completion data) were more likely to complete credentials within six years than graduates from similar urban school districts. The exceptions were for students with high need for supportive services, including students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, English-language learners, and economically distressed students.

WHO IS COMPLETING COLLEGE CREDENTIALS?

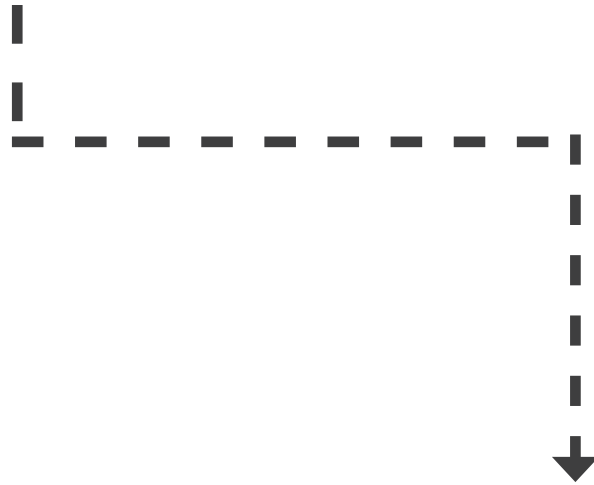
Compared to the state of Michigan, KPS college completion rates of *any credential* lagged overall—and particularly for women, English-language learners, and students with disabilities—but performed at roughly comparable rates for most other groups, stressing how important the different composition of graduates is when making comparisons.

Completion of a post-secondary credential six years after enrollment
Class of 2016



Source: MI School Data

However, students from KPS may be taking more time to finish their degrees, continuing their enrollment without permanently dropping out.

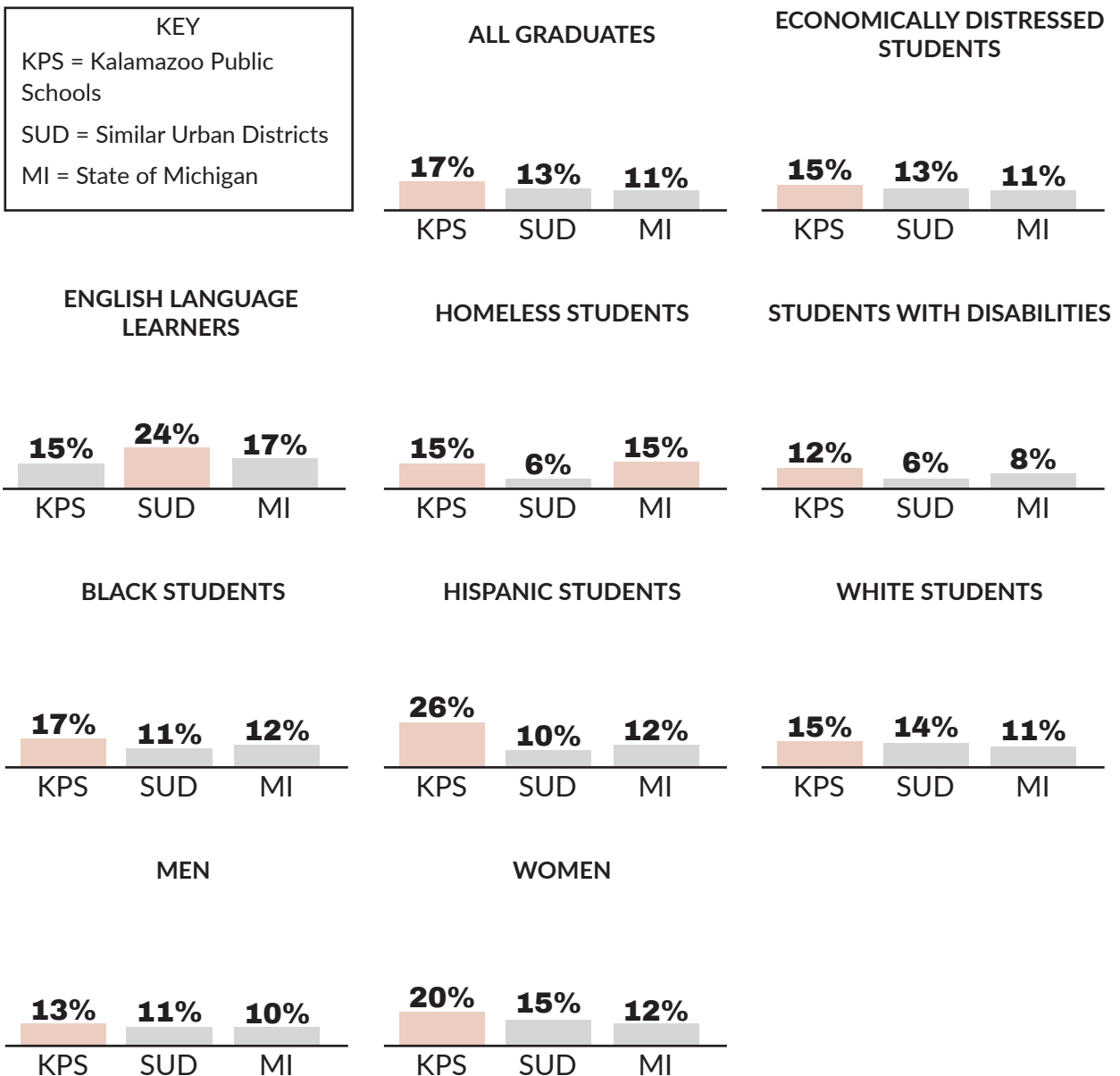


An additional feature that KPS graduates have is the 10-year window with which to use the Kalamazoo Promise. Indeed, the long eligibility window of the Promise has been linked to students who have unenrolled from college being more likely to return and finish their degree.

WHO IS CONTINUING IN COLLEGE?

Apart from English-language learners, all KPS student groups were more likely to still be enrolled in college beyond the six year mark compared to both similar urban districts and the state of Michigan, suggesting that their credential completion could still increase in the coming years.

Continuing on in college, continuing in college after certificate, continuing in college after credential, or continuing in college after 2-year degree, six years after enrollment
Class of 2016



Source: MI School Data

SUMMARY

The decline in college enrollment in Michigan represents a complex and multifaceted issue. Overall, Kalamazoo Public Schools have generally outperformed similar urban districts in college enrollment and completion rates, although the school district has rarely outperformed the state of Michigan on average. However, it is important to note that there are consequential disparities among student groups, underscoring the need for targeted support and interventions to ensure that all students, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equitable access to higher education.

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