

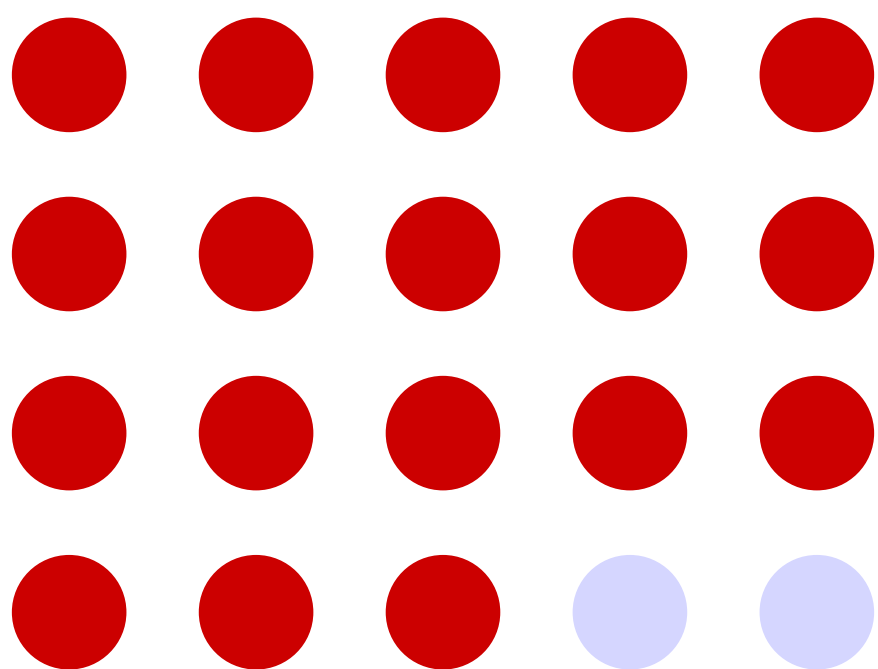


Closing the career readiness gap

Bain surveyed
more than

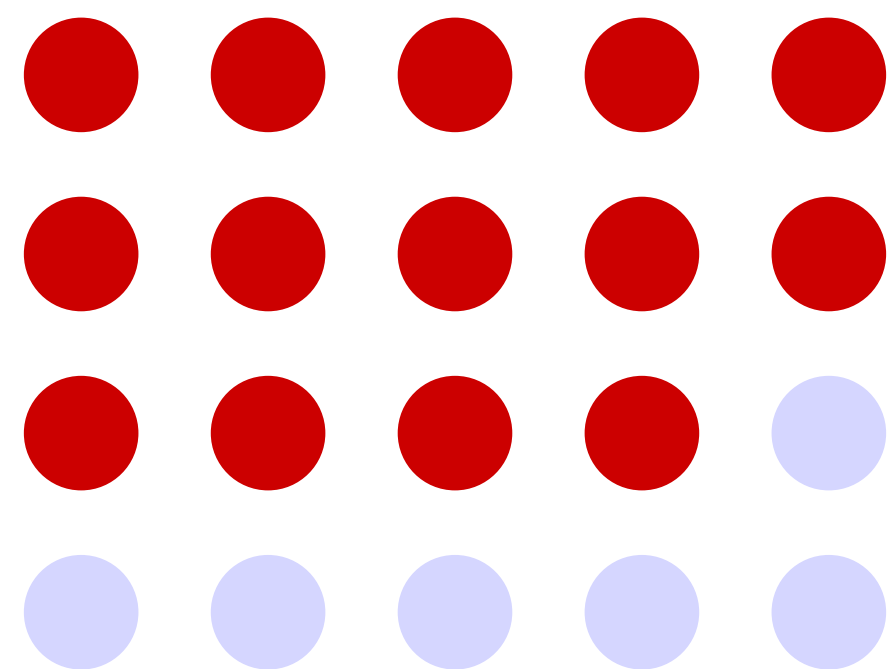
2.6K

high school graduates
aged 23 to 25



90%

of whom are
people of color



70%

of whom come
from low-income
backgrounds

The results are sobering

Fewer than

1/2

report earning a
living wage or
feeling financially
stable

4 in 10

are working in jobs
that do not require
the degree they
earned

~40%

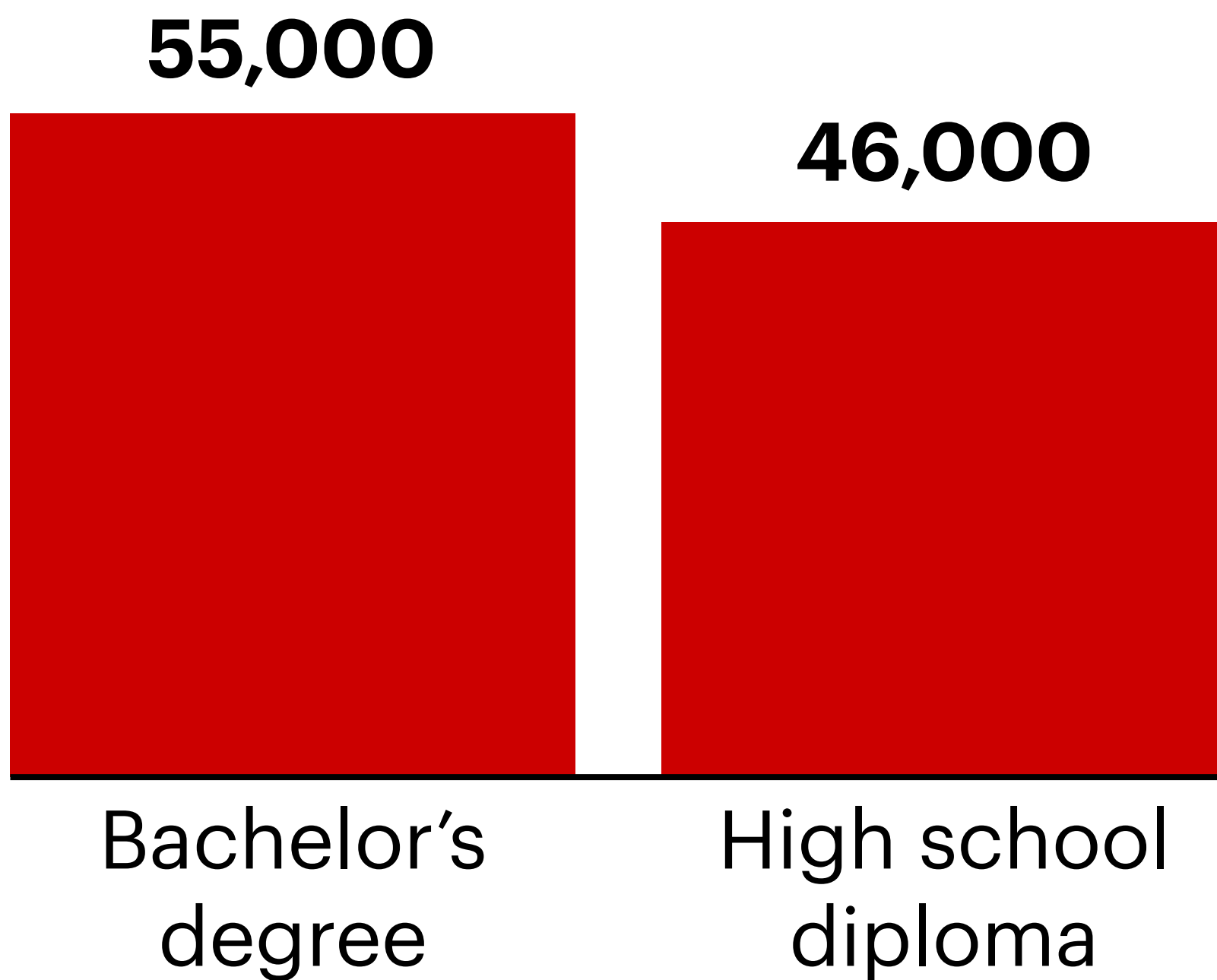
are in a job that pays
a living wage, offers
future advancement,
and is in a growing
field

Just over

1/2

felt their high school
meaningfully
exposed them
to available
career paths

Degrees help—but they don't guarantee success



Those with a bachelor's degree earn about

\$55K

a year, while those with a high school diploma earn

\$46K

Nearly
1/2
of bachelor's degree holders still earn less than a living wage

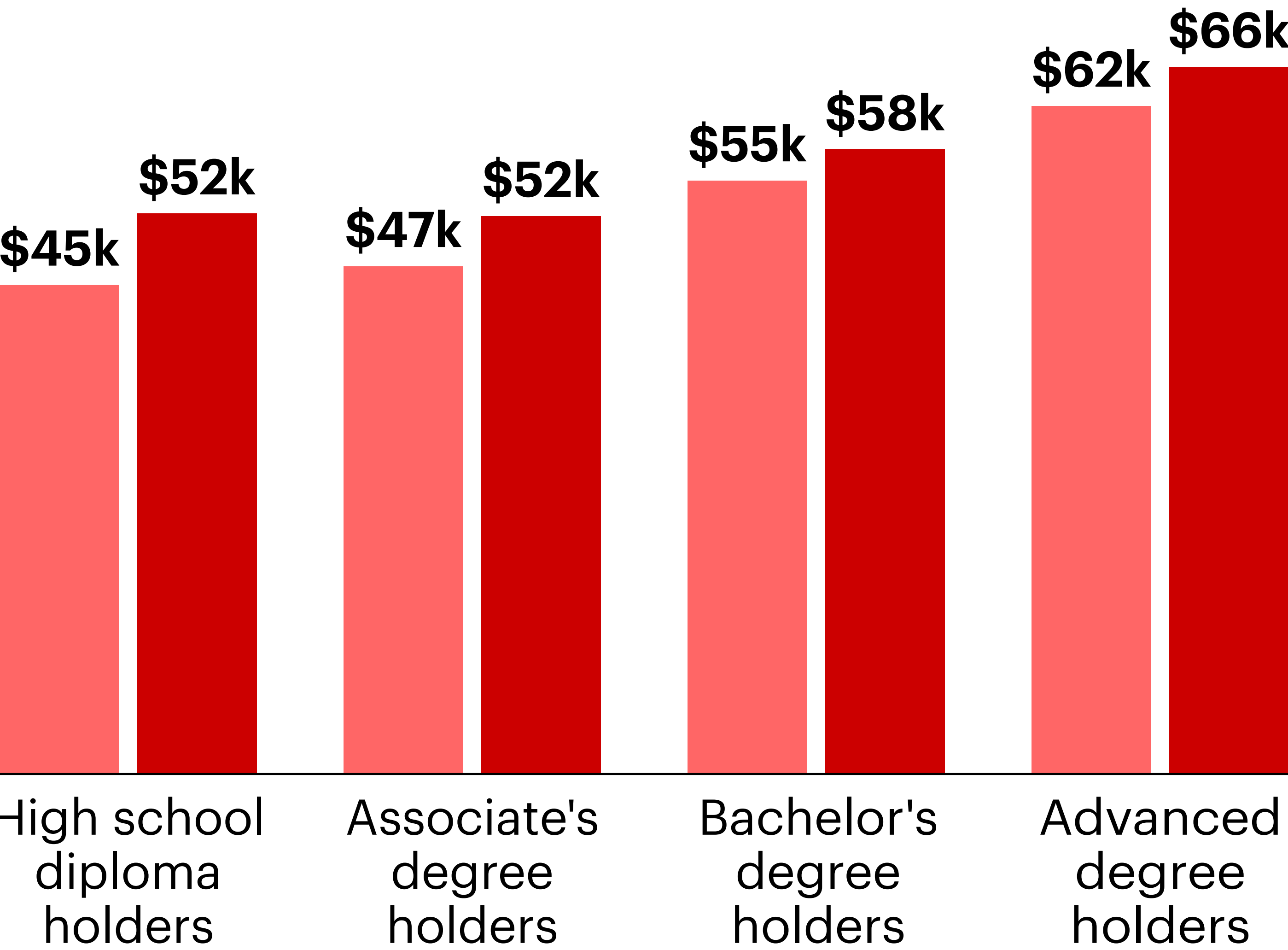
The average student debt of those in our sample was
\$13,000

More than
1 in 3
Americans who begin a bachelor's program do not complete their degree

Career-connected experiences could be a game changer

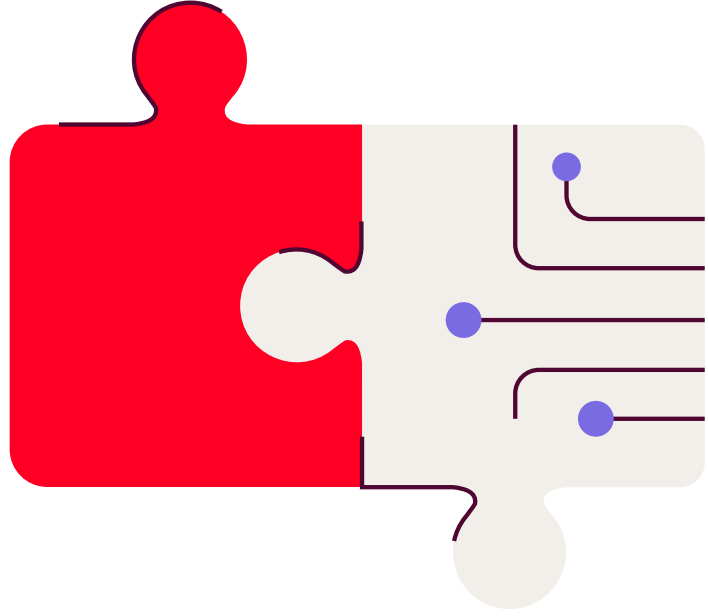
Average income (2024, pre-tax)

- No professional certificate
- Completed a professional certificate



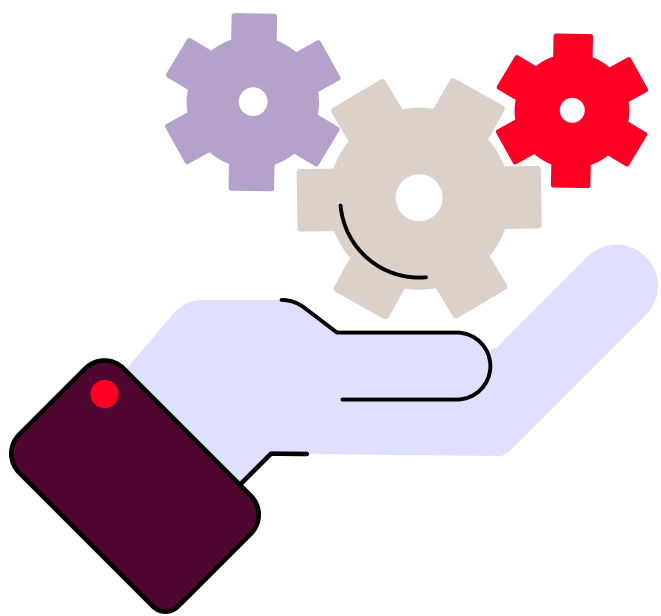
Notes: Based off highest degree earned by respondent; does not include the 12% of respondents currently enrolled in a bachelor's or associate's degree program
Source: Bain 2024 Alumni Early Career Outcomes Survey (n=2,619)

Here's how to get started



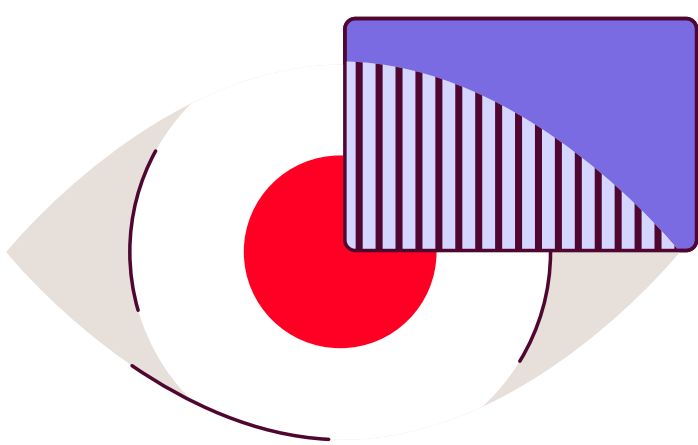
Government leaders:

1. Prioritize with data
2. Convene partners
3. Fund scale
4. Champion career-connected learning



Employers:

1. Map hiring needs
2. Partner with educators
3. Commit resources
4. Hire for skills



Educators:

1. Focus on good jobs
2. Build pathways
3. Provide market-informed advising
4. Set goals and measure outcomes