

# The Condition of Education 2009

## Indicator 17

### *Annual Earnings of Young Adults*

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2009*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2009*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009081>) or contact ED PUBS at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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# Annual Earnings of Young Adults

*In 2007, young adults ages 25–34 with a bachelor’s degree earned 29 percent more than young adults whose highest educational attainment was an associate’s degree and 55 percent more than young adults whose highest educational attainment was a high school diploma or its equivalent.*

For young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time throughout a full year, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings. This pattern of higher earnings corresponding with higher levels of educational attainment was consistent for each year shown between 1995 and 2007 (see table A-17-1). For example, young adults with a bachelor’s degree consistently had higher median earnings than those with less education. This pattern held for male, female, White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian subgroups.

In 2007, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor’s degree were \$45,000, while the median earnings were \$35,000 for those with an associate’s degree, \$29,000 for those with a high school diploma or its equivalent, and \$23,000 for those who did not earn a high school diploma or equivalent degree. In other words, in 2007, young adults with a bachelor’s degree earned 29 percent more than young adults with an associate’s degree, 55 percent more than young adult high school completers, and 96 percent more than those who did not earn a high school diploma. In 2007, the median earnings of young adults with a master’s degree or higher were \$56,000, or 24 percent more than young adults with a bachelor’s degree.

Comparing the median earnings of those with at least a bachelor’s degree and those with each lower level of educational attainment, the earnings difference increased between 1980 and 2007, in constant 2007 dollars. However, over the more recent, shorter period between 2000 and 2007, there was generally no measurable change in the earnings difference between these groups. For example, in 1980, young adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher earned \$15,000 more than those who did not

earn a high school diploma or its equivalent. In 2000, this difference increased to \$24,000 and was \$25,000 in 2007. In 1980, young adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher earned \$10,000 more than high school completers. In 2000, this difference increased to \$18,000 and in 2007 it was \$19,000. However, between 2000 and 2007, there was a measurable increase in the earnings difference between those with a bachelor’s degree and those with a master’s degree or higher. In 2000, young adults with at least a master’s degree earned \$7,000 more than their peers with a bachelor’s degree. In 2007, this difference increased to \$11,000.

Earnings differences were also observed by sex and race/ethnicity. In 2007, at every educational level, young adult males had higher median earnings than young adult females. For example, in 2007, young adult males with a bachelor’s degree earned \$50,000 while their female counterparts earned \$40,000. In 2007, White young adults had higher median earnings than their Black and Hispanic counterparts at each educational level, with the exception of Hispanics with a master’s degree or higher, which was not measurably different. Asian young adults with a bachelor’s degree or master’s degree or higher had higher earnings than their White and Black counterparts in 2007. In 2007, the average median earnings of those with at least a master’s degree were \$65,000 for Asian young adults, \$58,000 for Hispanic young adults, \$55,000 for White young adults, and \$45,000 for Black young adults.



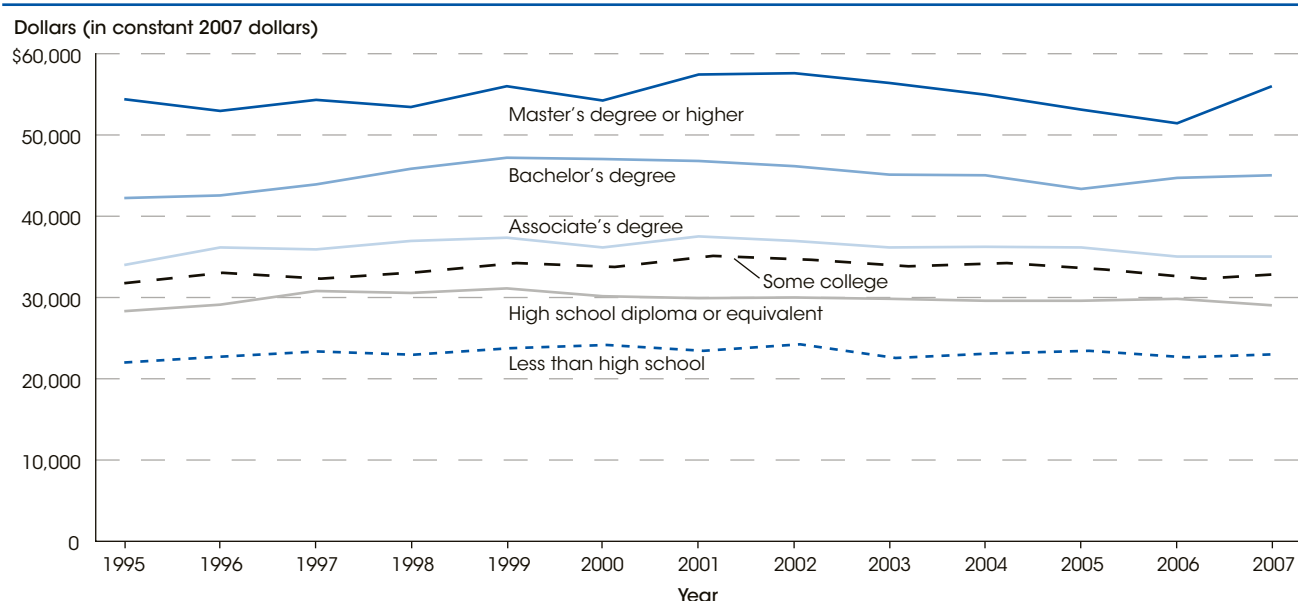
**For more information:** *Table A-17-1; Indicator 23*  
**Glossary:** *Constant dollars, Consumer Price Index, Educational attainment*

## Technical Notes

*High school completers* includes those who earned a high school diploma or equivalent (e.g., a General Educational Development [GED] certificate). Earnings are presented in 2007 constant dollars adjusted by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. For more information on the CPI, see *supplemental note 10*. *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; *full-time worker*

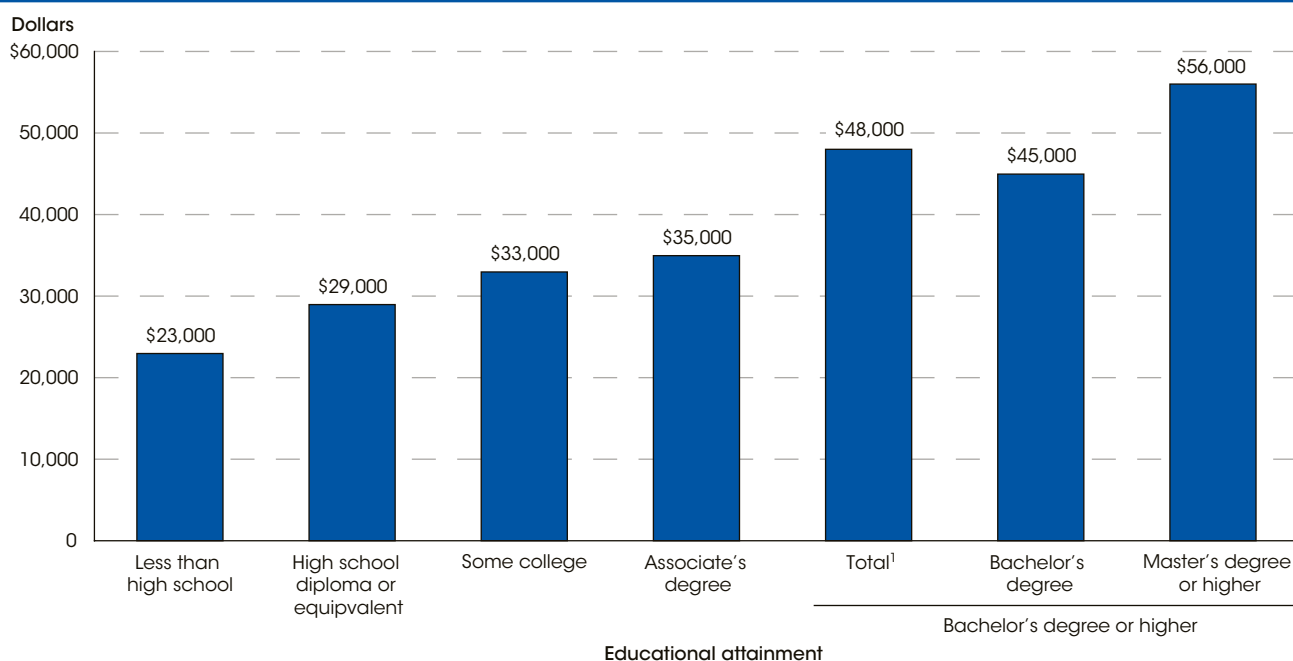
refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. For more information on changes to the CPS, see *supplemental note 2*. For more information on race/ethnicity, see *supplemental note 1*.

**Figure 17-1. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25-34, by educational attainment: 1995-2007**



NOTE: Earnings are presented in constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. For more information on the CPI, see *supplemental note 10*. *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; *full-time worker* refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see *supplemental note 2*.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 1996-2008.

**Figure 17-2. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25-34, by educational attainment: 2007**



<sup>1</sup> Total represents the median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.  
 NOTE: *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; *full-time worker* refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see *supplemental note 2*.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2008.

# Supplemental Table to Indicator 17

## Annual Earnings of Young Adults

**Table A-17-1. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2007**

[In constant 2007 dollars]

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity <sup>1</sup>	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>\$38,000</b>	<b>\$38,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$34,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>
Less than high school	30,000	27,000	25,000	22,000	24,000	23,000	23,000
High school diploma or equivalent	35,000	33,000	31,000	28,000	30,000	30,000	29,000
Some college <sup>3</sup>	38,000	39,000	36,000	32,000	34,000	33,000	33,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	34,000	36,000	36,000	35,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	45,000	48,000	46,000	45,000	48,000	47,000	48,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	42,000	47,000	43,000	45,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	54,000	54,000	53,000	56,000
<b>Sex and educational attainment</b>							
<b>Male</b>	<b>45,000</b>	<b>42,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>37,000</b>	<b>41,000</b>	<b>37,000</b>	<b>39,000</b>
Less than high school	33,000	29,000	27,000	26,000	25,000	26,000	25,000
High school diploma or equivalent	43,000	39,000	35,000	33,000	35,000	32,000	31,000
Some college <sup>3</sup>	45,000	44,000	40,000	35,000	40,000	37,000	37,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	35,000	45,000	41,000	40,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	50,000	53,000	50,000	51,000	55,000	53,000	52,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	48,000	54,000	48,000	50,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	60,000	64,000	58,000	62,000
<b>Female</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>33,000</b>	<b>32,000</b>	<b>33,000</b>
Less than high school	21,000	21,000	20,000	18,000	20,000	19,000	19,000
High school diploma or equivalent	28,000	27,000	25,000	24,000	25,000	25,000	24,000
Some college <sup>3</sup>	30,000	31,000	32,000	27,000	29,000	30,000	30,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	33,000	31,000	32,000	31,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	37,000	40,000	41,000	41,000	43,000	42,000	43,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	38,000	42,000	40,000	40,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	48,000	48,000	50,000	51,000
<b>Race/ethnicity<sup>1</sup> and educational attainment</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>39,000</b>	<b>39,000</b>	<b>38,000</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>39,000</b>	<b>37,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>
Less than high school	32,000	29,000	27,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	25,000
High school diploma or equivalent	36,000	35,000	32,000	30,000	33,000	32,000	30,000
Some college <sup>3</sup>	40,000	39,000	38,000	33,000	36,000	34,000	35,000
Associate's degree	‡	‡	‡	35,000	39,000	37,000	37,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	45,000	48,000	48,000	46,000	48,000	48,000	48,000
Bachelor's degree	‡	‡	‡	44,000	48,000	44,000	45,000
Master's degree or higher	‡	‡	‡	54,000	54,000	53,000	55,000
<b>Black</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>29,000</b>	<b>29,000</b>	<b>29,000</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>31,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>
Less than high school	22,000	19,000	20,000	19,000	23,000	22,000	20,000
High school diploma or equivalent	30,000	27,000	25,000	24,000	25,000	24,000	26,000
Some college <sup>3</sup>	33,000	29,000	31,000	30,000	31,000	31,000	30,000
Associate's degree	‡	‡	‡	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	38,000	39,000	40,000	37,000	42,000	41,000	40,000
Bachelor's degree	‡	‡	‡	35,000	40,000	38,000	39,000
Master's degree or higher	‡	‡	‡	46,000	52,000	47,000	45,000

See notes at end of table.

**Table A-17-1. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2007—Continued**

[In constant 2007 dollars]

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity <sup>1</sup>	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007
<b>Race/ethnicity<sup>1</sup> and educational attainment</b>							
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>\$34,000</b>	<b>\$31,000</b>	<b>\$29,000</b>	<b>\$27,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$29,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>
Less than high school	30,000	25,000	22,000	21,000	22,000	22,000	22,000
High school diploma or equivalent	30,000	29,000	27,000	26,000	28,000	25,000	26,000
Some college <sup>3</sup>	38,000	37,000	32,000	27,000	33,000	34,000	31,000
Associate's degree	‡	‡	‡	33,000	36,000	36,000	30,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	41,000	46,000	43,000	41,000	46,000	44,000	44,000
Bachelor's degree	‡	‡	‡	39,000	43,000	42,000	40,000
Master's degree or higher	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	54,000	58,000
<b>Asian</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$37,000<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>\$35,000<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>\$43,000<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>\$42,000</b>	<b>\$45,000</b>
Less than high school	—	—	‡ <sup>4</sup>	‡ <sup>4</sup>	‡ <sup>4</sup>	‡	‡
High school diploma or equivalent	—	—	26,000 <sup>4</sup>	27,000 <sup>4</sup>	30,000 <sup>4</sup>	29,000	28,000
Some college <sup>3</sup>	—	—	32,000 <sup>4</sup>	25,000 <sup>4</sup>	34,000 <sup>4</sup>	32,000	35,000
Associate's degree	—	—	‡ <sup>4</sup>	27,000 <sup>4</sup>	36,000 <sup>4</sup>	37,000	36,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	—	—	48,000 <sup>4</sup>	45,000 <sup>4</sup>	60,000 <sup>4</sup>	53,000	55,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	‡ <sup>4</sup>	42,000 <sup>4</sup>	59,000 <sup>4</sup>	53,000	50,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	‡ <sup>4</sup>	52,000 <sup>4</sup>	64,000 <sup>4</sup>	58,000	65,000
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>(<sup>4</sup>)</b>	<b>(<sup>4</sup>)</b>	<b>(<sup>4</sup>)</b>	<b>‡</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$32,000</b>	<b>\$27,000</b>	<b>\$29,000</b>	<b>\$32,000</b>	<b>\$31,000</b>
<b>More than one race</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$37,000</b>	<b>\$33,000</b>

— Not available.

‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

<sup>1</sup> Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Estimates for educational categories for Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and More than one race subgroups did not meet reporting standards. For more information on race/ethnicity, see *supplemental note 1*.

<sup>2</sup> Totals for 1980 and 1985 include other racial/ethnic groups not shown.

<sup>3</sup> Due to changes in categories across time, the category "some college" prior to 1992 is not comparable with "some college" from 1992 onward. Prior to 1992, "some college" may have included students who earned an associate's degree.

<sup>4</sup> From 1989 through 2002, data for Asians and Pacific Islanders were not reported separately; therefore, Pacific Islanders are included with Asians during this period.

NOTE: Earnings are presented in constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. For more information on the CPI, see *supplemental note 10*. Full-year worker refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; full-time worker refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. For more information on the CPS, see *supplemental note 2*. For more information on race/ethnicity, see *supplemental note 1*.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2008.

# Standard Error Table to Indicator 17

## Annual Earnings of Young Adults

**Table S-17-1. Standard errors for the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2007**

[In constant 2007 dollars]

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$200</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$200</b>	<b>\$100</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$100</b>
Less than high school	600	1,000	500	400	400	300	400
High school diploma or equivalent	400	300	300	300	200	300	400
Some college	400	400	500	600	400	200	700
Associate's degree	†	†	†	600	300	800	400
Bachelor's degree or higher	500	500	500	800	300	700	500
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	300	700	200	400
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,000	800	400	600
<b>Sex and educational attainment</b>							
<b>Male</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>300</b>
Less than high school	1,200	800	800	900	400	700	400
High school diploma or equivalent	400	500	300	500	500	200	200
Some college	600	800	500	500	700	400	400
Associate's degree	†	†	†	900	900	1,300	400
Bachelor's degree or higher	600	800	500	800	500	700	300
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	600	900	400	300
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,900	2,200	2,100	1,400
<b>Female</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>400</b>
Less than high school	900	800	900	800	700	700	1,000
High school diploma or equivalent	300	400	300	400	300	400	400
Some college	400	400	500	400	500	700	400
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,200	500	500	300
Bachelor's degree or higher	600	400	500	600	300	300	700
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	800	400	700	200
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,300	1,000	900	500
<b>Race/ethnicity and educational attainment</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>
Less than high school	1,100	800	600	1,100	500	800	700
High school diploma or equivalent	400	400	300	300	400	200	200
Some college	500	400	700	600	500	300	400
Associate's degree	†	†	†	700	400	500	600
Bachelor's degree or higher	600	400	400	800	300	500	800
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	400	500	300	300
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	900	900	500	600
<b>Black</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>300</b>
Less than high school	1,400	1,300	1,100	1,500	1,200	1,000	1,400
High school diploma or equivalent	700	700	500	800	400	800	400
Some college	1,300	900	1,000	1,200	600	1,300	500
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,200	800	1,100	900
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,500	1,200	900	1,300	1,500	1,300	600
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	1,200	1,800	900	1,000
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,700	2,900	2,500	2,100

See notes at end of table.

**Table S-17-1. Standard errors for the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2007—Continued**  
[In constant 2007 dollars]

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007
<b>Race/ethnicity and educational attainment</b>							
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>
Less than high school	2,600	2,100	2,100	900	800	400	400
High school diploma or equivalent	1,400	1,000	1,100	1,100	1,000	700	300
Some college	2,700	2,700	1,300	1,200	1,000	800	500
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,900	1,000	1,700	800
Bachelor's degree or higher	3,700	3,000	2,200	1,600	2,100	1,000	1,700
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	1,800	1,900	900	1,000
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	†	†	3,500	3,100
<b>Asian</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>1,200</b>
Less than high school	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
High school diploma or equivalent	†	†	2,200	2,000	1,500	1,400	2,000
Some college	†	†	1,800	2,400	2,600	1,400	1,500
Associate's degree	†	†	‡	1,700	2,300	4,500	2,200
Bachelor's degree or higher	†	†	2,300	1,900	900	700	2,400
Bachelor's degree	†	†	‡	900	1,900	2,100	1,500
Master's degree or higher	†	†	‡	4,900	2,600	4,000	1,800
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>3,100</b>
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>2,600</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>More than one race</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>2,300</b>

† Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2008.