

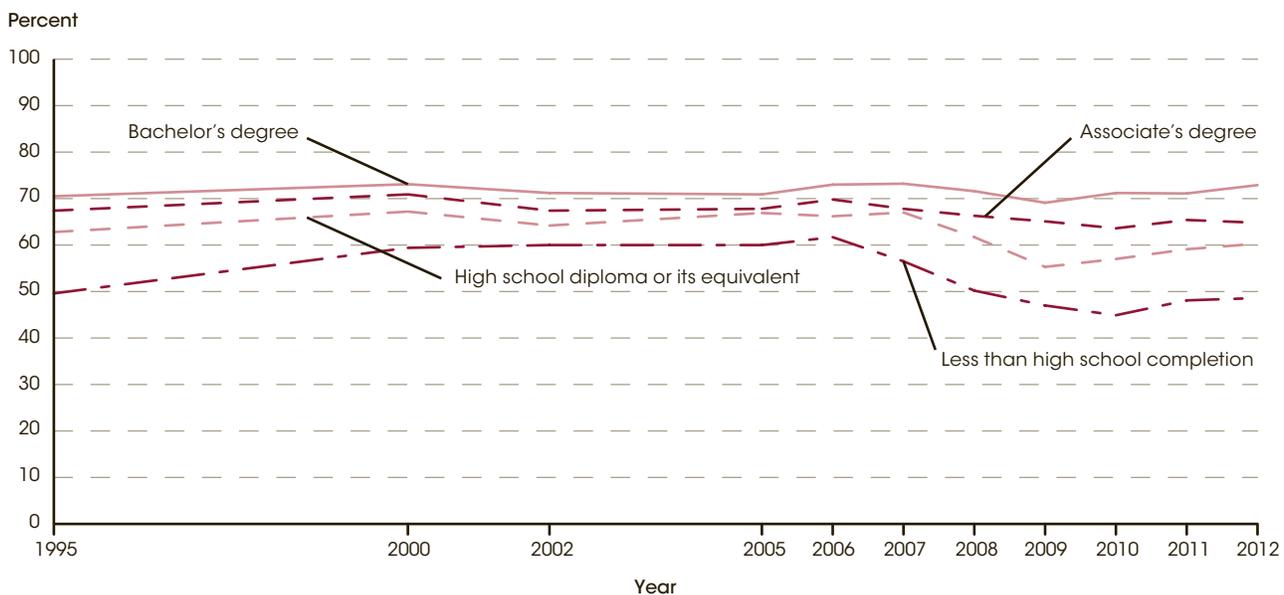
## Annual Earnings of Young Adults

*In 2012, young adults with a bachelor's degree earned more than twice as much as those without a high school credential (\$46,900 vs. \$22,900) and 57 percent more than young adult high school completers (\$46,900 vs. \$30,000).*

This indicator examines the annual earnings of young adults ages 25–34, many of whom have recently completed their education. In 2012, some 64 percent of young adults ages 25–34 who were in the labor force worked full time, year round (i.e., worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year). The percentage of young adults working full time, year

round was generally higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, 73 percent of young adults with a bachelor's degree worked full time, year round in 2012, compared with 60 percent of young adult high school completers (those with a high school diploma or its equivalent).

**Figure 1. Percentage of young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, by educational attainment: 1995–2012**

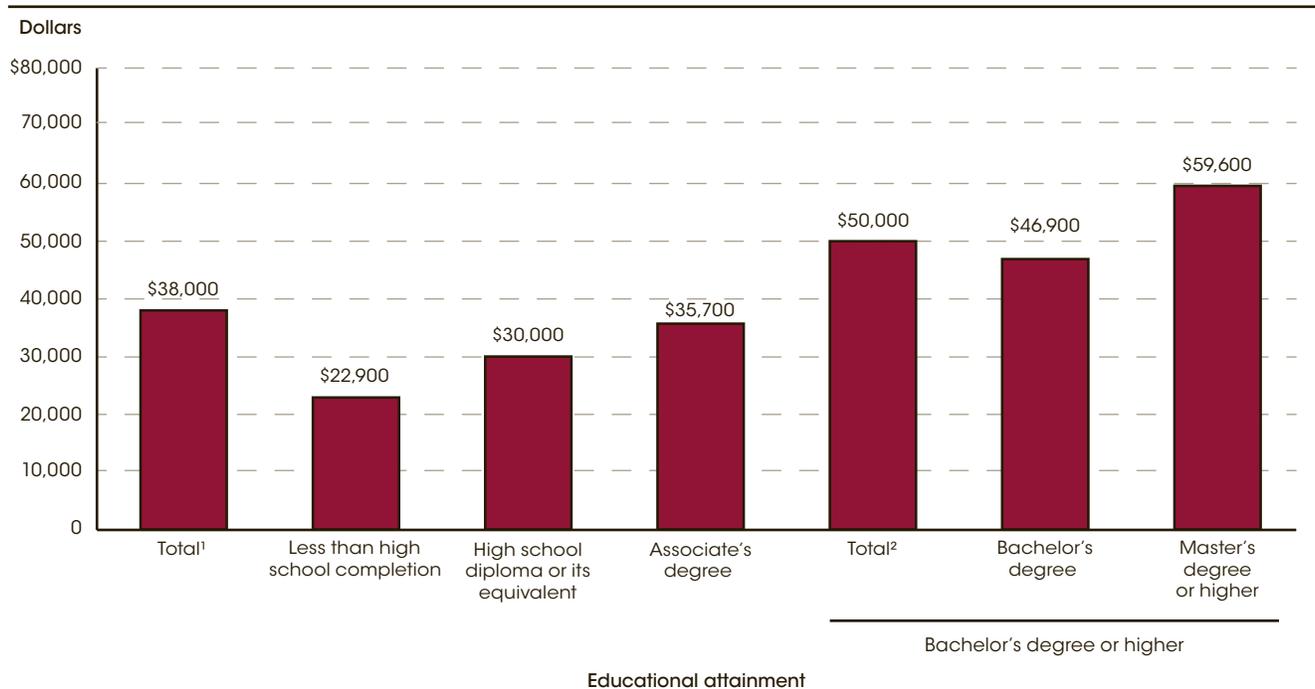


NOTE: Full-time year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 1996–2013. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 502.30.

Changes over time in the percentage of young adults who worked full time, year round varied by educational attainment. From 2002 to 2012, the percentage of young adults without a high school credential (i.e., without a high school diploma or its equivalent) who worked full time, year round dropped from 60 to 49 percent, and the corresponding percentage of those who had a high school credential was lower in 2012 than in 2002 (60 vs. 64 percent). However, the percentages of those with a bachelor's degree and of those with at least a master's degree who worked full time, year round did

not change measurably between 2002 and 2012. Over a longer period, the percentage of young adult high school completers who worked full time, year round was also lower in 2012 (60 percent) than in 1995 (63 percent), but the corresponding percentage of those with a bachelor's degree was higher in 2012 (73 percent) than in 1995 (71 percent). For those who did not complete high school and those with at least a master's degree, the percentage who worked full time, year round did not change measurably between 1995 and 2012.

**Figure 2. Median annual earnings of full-time year-round wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 2012**



<sup>1</sup>Total represents median annual earnings of all full-time year-round wage and salary workers ages 25–34.

<sup>2</sup>Total represents median annual earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher.

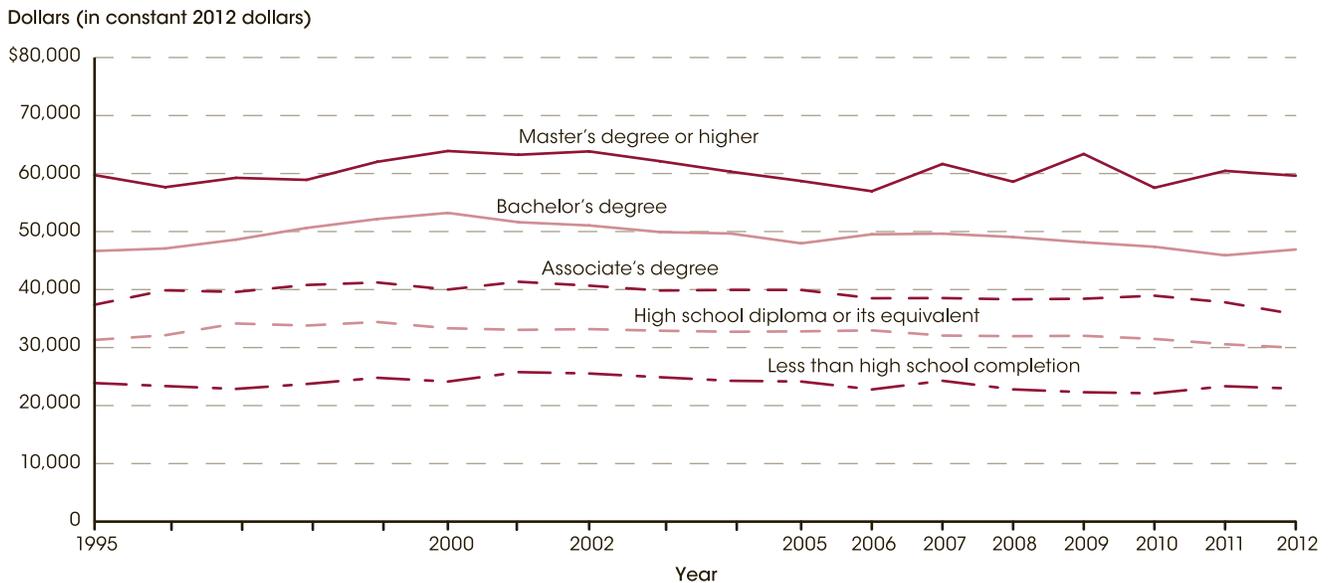
NOTE: Full-time year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2013. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 502.30.

For young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings; this pattern was consistent for 1995, 2000, 2002, and 2005 through 2012. For example, in 2012 the median of earnings for young adults with a bachelor's degree was \$46,900, while the median was \$22,900 for those without a high school credential and \$30,000 for those with a high school credential. In other words, young adults with a bachelor's degree earned more than twice as much as those without a high school

credential (105 percent more) and 57 percent more than young adult high school completers. Additionally, in 2012 the median of earnings for young adults with a master's degree or higher was \$59,600, some 27 percent more than the median for young adults with a bachelor's degree. For the above years between 1995 and 2012, this pattern of higher earnings associated with higher levels of educational attainment also held across sex and racial/ethnic subgroups (White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian).

**Figure 3. Median annual earnings of full-time year-round wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 1995–2012**

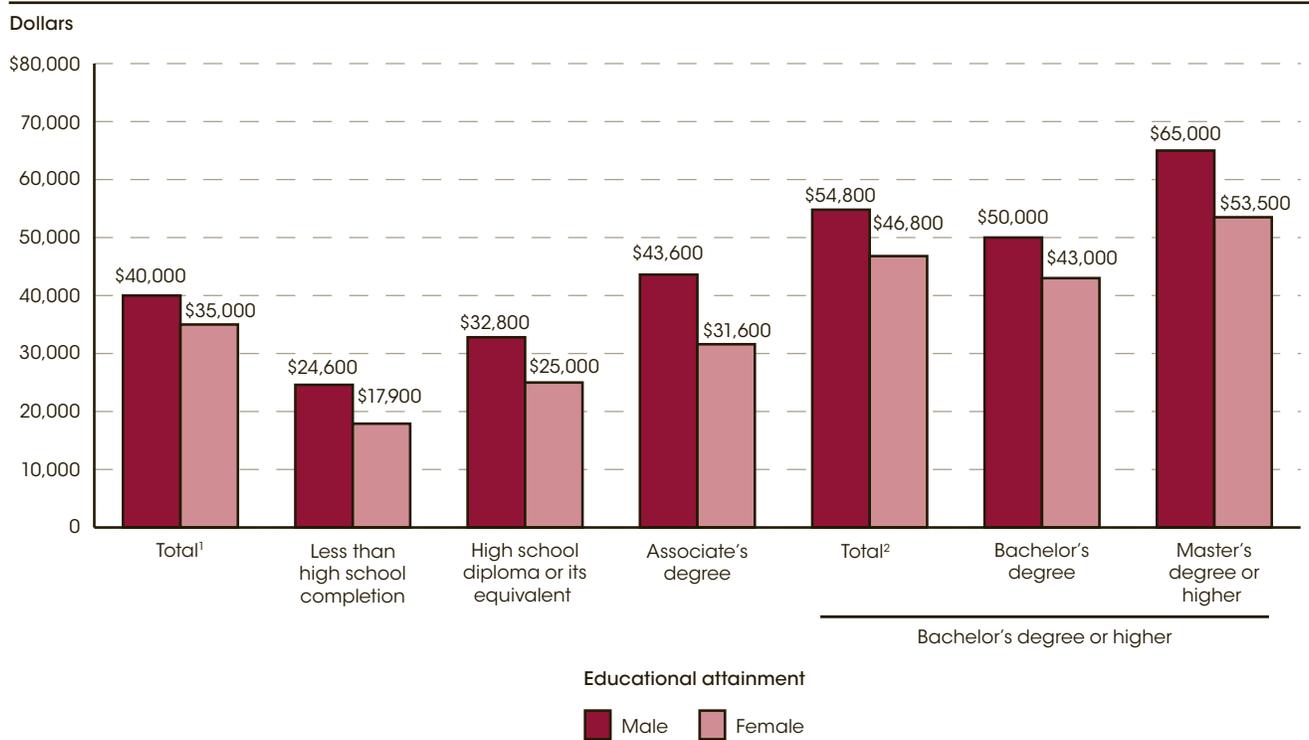


NOTE: Earnings are presented in constant dollars, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to eliminate inflationary factors and to allow for direct comparison across years. *Full-time year-round workers* are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," selected years, 1996–2013; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 502.30.

Median earnings (in constant 2012 dollars) for young adults with different levels of educational attainment generally declined over the period of 2002 to 2012. Between 2002 and 2012, the median earnings for young adults without a high school credential declined by 10 percent from \$25,500 to \$22,900, and the median earnings for young adult high school completers declined by 10 percent from \$33,200 to \$30,000. The median earnings for those with a bachelor's degree also decreased by 8 percent from \$51,000 to \$46,900. The median of earnings for those with at least a master's degree was lower in 2012 (\$59,600) than in 2002 (\$63,800). Over the longer period, the median of earnings of young adults with different levels of education in 2012 was not measurably different from that in 1995, with the exception that the median of earnings for high school completers was lower in 2012 (\$30,000) than in 1995 (\$31,300).

The difference in median earnings (in constant 2012 dollars) between those with varying levels of educational attainment exhibited different patterns of change over time. The difference in median earnings between those with a bachelor's degree or higher and those without a high school credential widened between 1995 and 2009, then narrowed between 2009 and 2012. In 1995, the median of earnings for young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher was \$25,800 greater than the median for those without a high school credential; in 2009, this earnings differential was \$31,000; but in 2012, it was \$27,000. There was no measurable difference between the 2012 and the 1995 median earnings differentials of those with at least a bachelor's degree over high school completers. Neither was there any measurable difference between the 2012 and 1995 median earnings differentials of those with a master's degree or higher over those with a bachelor's degree.

Figure 4. Median annual earnings of full-time year-round wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment and sex: 2012



<sup>1</sup> Total represents median annual earnings of all full-time year-round wage and salary workers ages 25–34.

<sup>2</sup> Total represents median annual earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher.

NOTE: Full-time year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2013. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 502.30.

In 2012, the median of earnings for young adult males was higher than the median for young adult females at every education level. For example, in 2012 young adult males with a bachelor's degree earned \$50,000, while their female counterparts earned \$42,900. In the same year, the median of earnings for White young adults generally exceeded the corresponding medians for Black and Hispanic young adults at each educational level, except

less than high school completion and master's degree or higher. Among those with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's degree or higher, Asian young adults had higher median earnings than their peers in other racial/ethnic groups. For example, the median of earnings in 2012 for young adults with at least a master's degree was \$69,700 for Asians, \$56,900 for Whites, \$54,700 for Blacks, and \$50,000 for Hispanics.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 502.30

**Glossary:** Bachelor's degree, Consumer Price Index (CPI), Constant dollars, Educational attainment, High school completer, Master's degree