

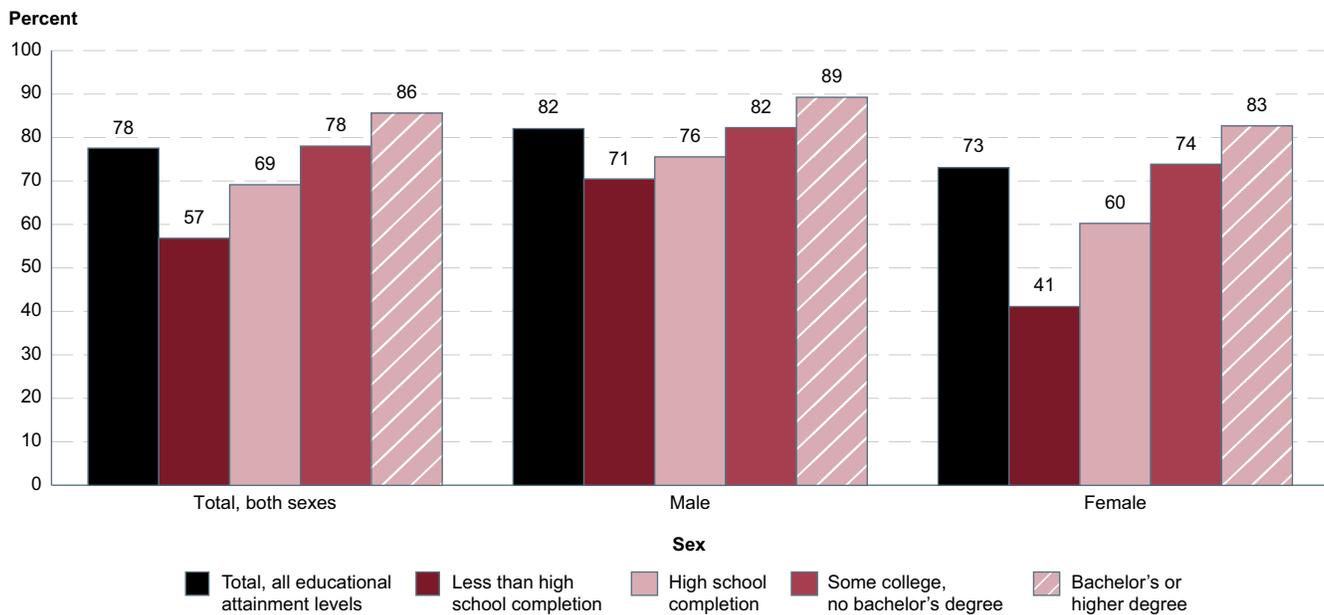
Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

In March 2020, the employment rate for female 25- to 34-year-olds with a bachelor's or higher degree was higher than for similar individuals who had not completed high school (83 percent vs. 41 percent). These data reference the period of early pandemic-related labor market impacts, just prior to the first major U.S. business and school closures.

This indicator focuses on 25- to 34-year-olds and examines recent trends in two distinct yet related measures of labor market conditions: the employment rate and the unemployment rate. The employment rate (also known as the employment to population ratio) is the percentage of persons in the civilian noninstitutionalized population who are employed.¹ The *unemployment rate* is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force (i.e., all civilians who are employed or seeking employment) who are not working and who made specific efforts to

find employment sometime during the prior 4 weeks. It is important to note that the reference period for the data for this indicator is the week of March 8-14, 2020, which preceded many of the coronavirus-related business closures and other public health efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus. As a result, the data only represent the initial labor market response to the effects of the coronavirus and efforts to contain it rather than the full extent of the pandemic's impact on the labor market.²

Figure 1. Employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2020



NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and all military personnel. The employment rate, or employment to population ratio, is the number of persons in each group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian noninstitutionalized population in that group. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED. Caution should be used when comparing 2020 estimates to those of prior years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates. For additional information about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Current Population Survey data collection, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar20.pdf>. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 501.50, 501.60, and 501.70.

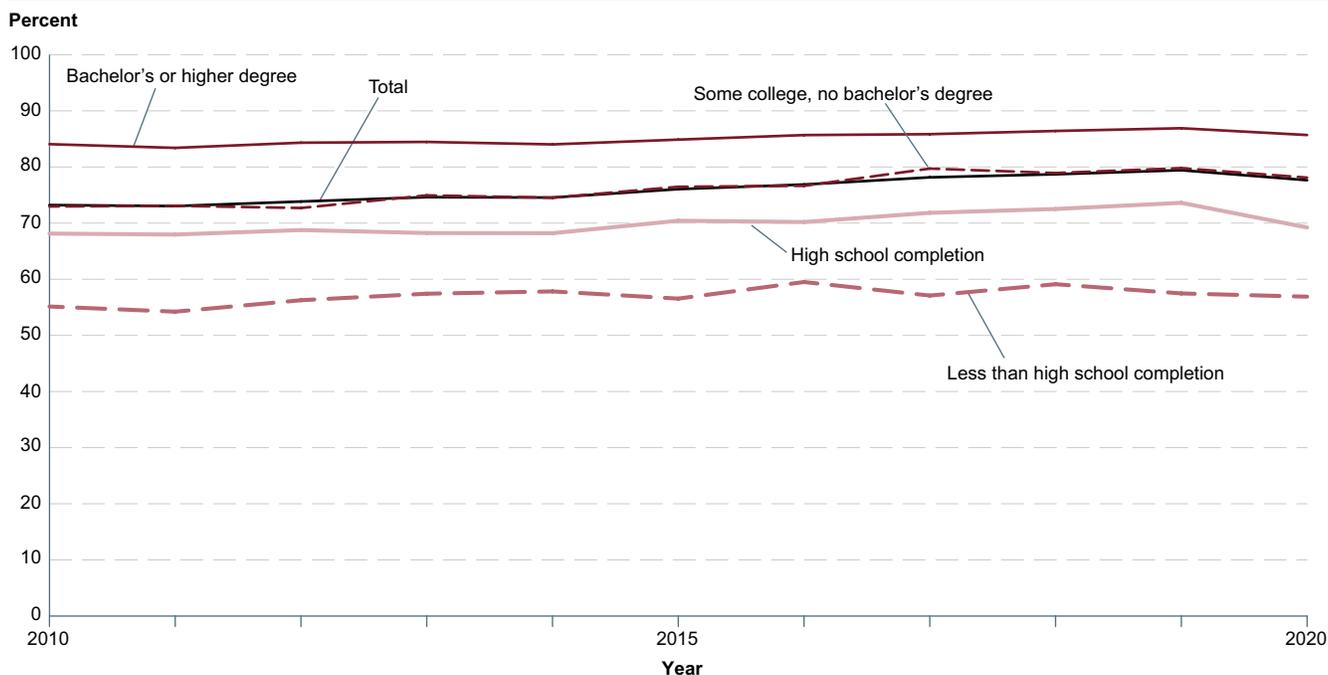
In March 2020, the employment rate was higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, the employment rate was highest for 25- to 34-year-olds with a bachelor's or higher degree (86 percent). The employment rate for those with some college³ (78 percent) was higher than the rate for those who had completed high school⁴ (69 percent), which was

higher than the employment rate for those who had not completed high school (57 percent). The same pattern was observed among both sexes. For example, the employment rate for females was highest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (83 percent) and lowest for those who had not completed high school (41 percent).

Employment rates were higher for 25- to 34-year-old males than for their female peers in March 2020, overall and at each level of educational attainment. The difference in employment rates between males and females (also referred to in this indicator as the gender gap) was narrower at higher levels of educational attainment.

For instance, the gender gap was 7 percentage points for those with a bachelor's or higher degree, while the gender gap was 15 percentage points for those who had completed high school and 29 percentage points for those who had not completed high school.

Figure 2. Employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by educational attainment: 2010 through 2020

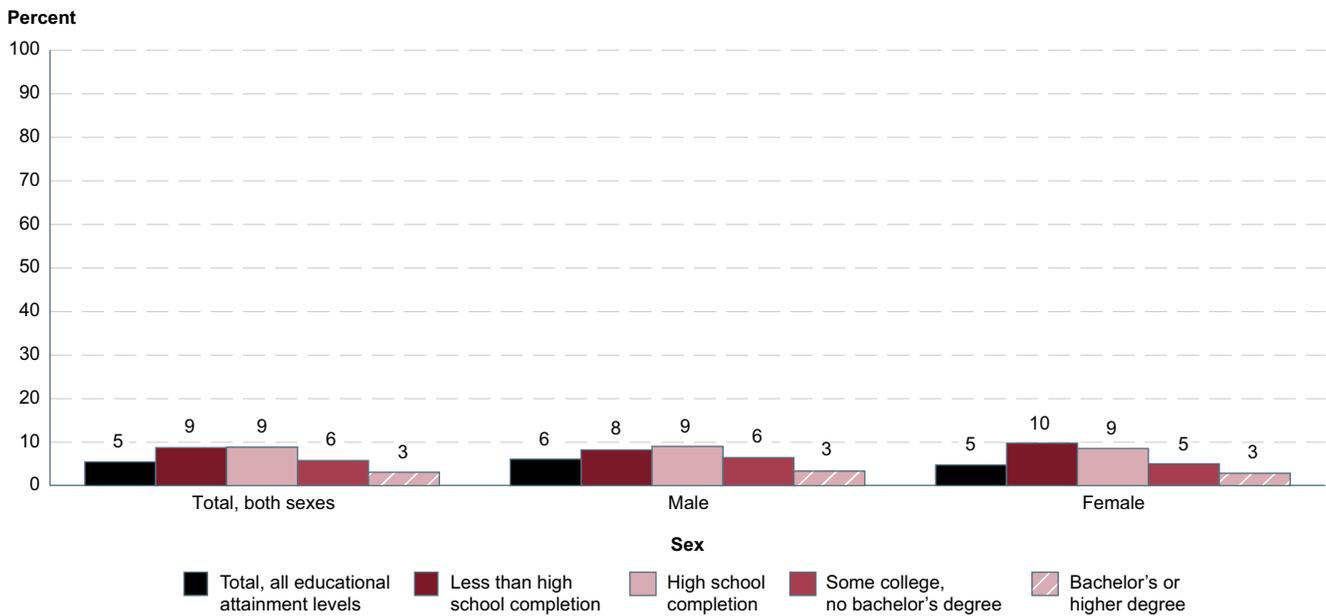


NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and all military personnel. The employment rate, or employment to population ratio, is the number of persons in each group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian noninstitutionalized population in that group. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED. Caution should be used when comparing 2020 estimates to those of prior years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates. For additional information about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Current Population Survey data collection, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar20.pdf>. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010 through 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2018, 2019, and 2020*, table 501.50.

From December 2007 through June 2009, the U.S. economy experienced a recession.⁵ For 25- to 34-year-olds overall, the employment rate was higher in March 2020 (78 percent) than in 2010 (73 percent), shortly after the recession. The employment rates in 2020 were also higher than the employment rates in 2010 for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (86 percent vs. 84 percent) and those with some college (78 percent vs. 73 percent). In contrast, for those who had completed high school and those who had not, the employment rates in 2020 (69 percent and 57 percent, respectively) were not measurably different from the rates for these groups in 2010, shortly after the recession.

Importantly, for 25- to 34-year-olds who had completed high school, the employment rate was lower in March 2020 than it had been in 2019 (74 percent).⁶ This represented a departure from a trend of increasing employment between 2010 and 2019, similar to the pattern observed over this period for their peers with some college and those with a bachelor's or higher degree. For those who had not completed high school, however, there was no consistent trend in employment rates between 2010 and 2019, and there was no measurable difference between 2019 and 2020.

Figure 3. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2020



NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and all military personnel. The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working and who made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the prior 4 weeks. The civilian labor force consists of all civilians who are employed or seeking employment. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED. Caution should be used when comparing 2020 estimates to those of prior years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates. For additional information about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Current Population Survey data collection, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar20.pdf>. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

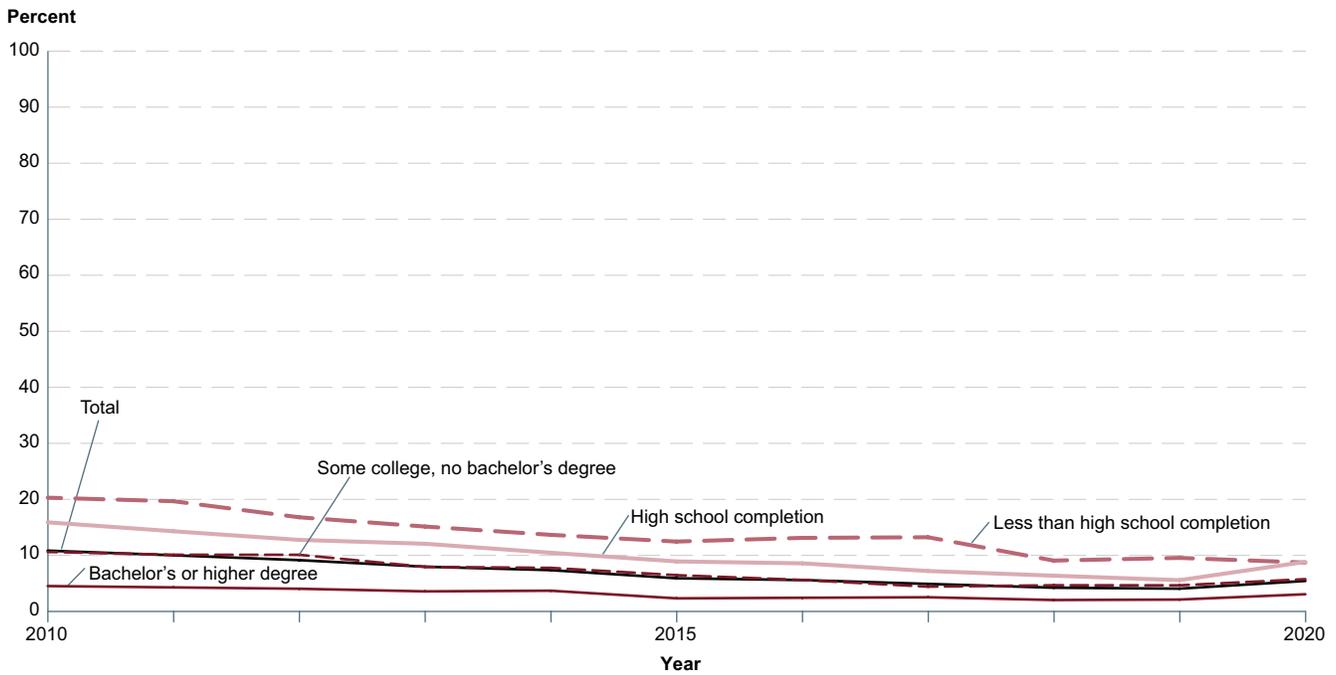
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90.

Generally, the unemployment rate in March 2020 was lower for 25- to 34-year-olds with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, the unemployment rate was lowest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (3 percent) compared with all other levels of educational attainment. The unemployment rate was also lower for individuals with some college (6 percent) than for those who had and who had not completed high school (both 9 percent). However, there was no measurable difference in unemployment rates between those who completed high school and those who had

not. A similar pattern was observed by sex, except that there was also no measurable difference between unemployment rates for males with some college and those who had not completed high school.

The overall unemployment rate for male 25- to 34-year-olds in March 2020 (6 percent) was higher than the rate for females (5 percent). However, there were no measurable differences in unemployment rates by sex, when comparing those at each level of educational attainment.

Figure 4. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by educational attainment: 2010 through 2020



NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and all military personnel. The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working and who made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the prior 4 weeks. The civilian labor force consists of all civilians who are employed or seeking employment. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED. Caution should be used when comparing 2020 estimates to those of prior years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates. For additional information about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Current Population Survey data collection, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar20.pdf>. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010 through 2020. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020*, table 501.80.

For 25- to 34-year-olds overall, the unemployment rate decreased from 11 percent in 2010 to 5 percent in March 2020. During these years, a decline in the unemployment rates was observed at each level of educational attainment. However, despite a general downward trend in unemployment over this period, the overall unemployment rate for 25- to 34-year-olds in 2020 was

higher than the rate in 2019 (5 percent vs. 4 percent). The unemployment rates in 2020 were higher than the rates in 2019 for all levels of educational attainment except the rate for those who had not completed high school, where there was no measurable difference in the unemployment rates for these years.⁷

Endnotes:

¹ Data in this indicator are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and excludes all military personnel.

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). *Frequently Asked Questions: The Impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on The Employment Situation for March 2020*. Retrieved November 6, 2020, from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/employment-situation-covid19-faq-march-2020.pdf>.

³ In this indicator, “some college” includes those who attended any college, including those who obtained an associate’s degree, but did not obtain a bachelor’s degree.

⁴ Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.

⁵ National Bureau of Economic Research. (2020). *U.S. Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions*. Retrieved November 9, 2020, from <https://www.nber.org/research/data/us-business-cycle-expansions-and-contractions>.

⁶ While significant differences are observed between 2019 and 2020, unless otherwise noted in the text, both years follow a similar trend when compared with prior years: in both cases,

the employment rates in the most recent year are higher than the rates in 2010. In addition, caution should be used when comparing 2020 estimates with those of prior years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates. For additional information about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Current Population Survey data collection, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar20.pdf>.

⁷ While significant differences are observed between 2019 and 2020, unless otherwise noted in the text, both years follow a similar trend when compared with prior years: in both cases, the unemployment rates in the most recent year are lower than the rates in 2010. In addition, caution should be used when comparing 2020 estimates with those of prior years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates. For additional information about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Current Population Survey data collection, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar20.pdf>.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 501.50, 501.60, 501.70, 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90; *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2018, and 2019*, table 501.50; *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2016, and 2019*, table 501.80

Related indicators and resources: [Annual Earnings](#); [Disability Rates and Employment Status by Educational Attainment](#) [*The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight*]; [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor’s Degree Holders](#) [*web-only*]; [Post-Bachelor’s Employment Outcomes by Sex and Race/Ethnicity](#) [*The Condition of Education 2016 Spotlight*]; [Trends in Employment Rates by Educational Attainment](#) [*The Condition of Education 2013 Spotlight*]; [Unemployment](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]

Glossary: Bachelor’s degree; College; Educational attainment (Current Population Survey); Employment status; Gap; High school completer