

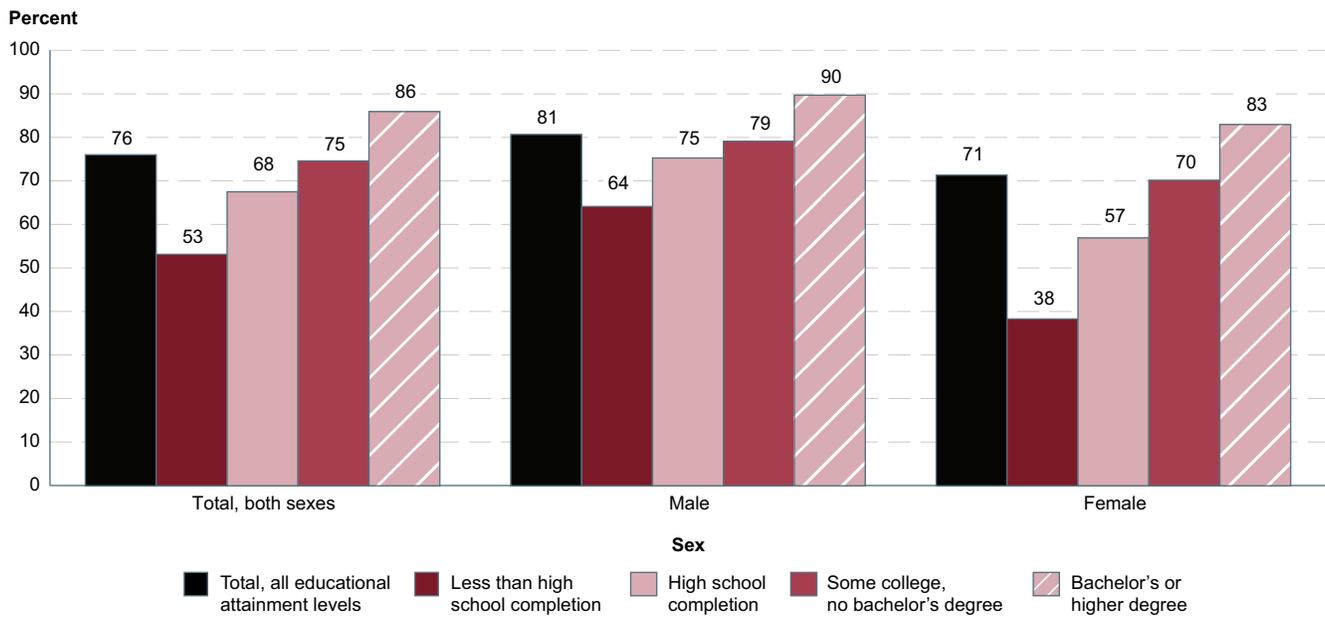
Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

The employment rate of 25- to 34-year-olds increased from 73 percent in 2010 to 79 percent in 2019 and then decreased to 76 percent in 2021. The unemployment rate decreased from 11 percent in 2010 to 4 percent in 2019 and then increased to 7 percent in 2021.

This indicator examines recent trends in two distinct yet related measures of labor market conditions for 25- to 34-year-olds: 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 most recent year of data for this indicator is March 2021. The data therefore represent the status of the labor market roughly one year into the coronavirus pandemic.

Figure 1. Employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2021



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. 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, 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 501.50, 501.60, and 501.70.

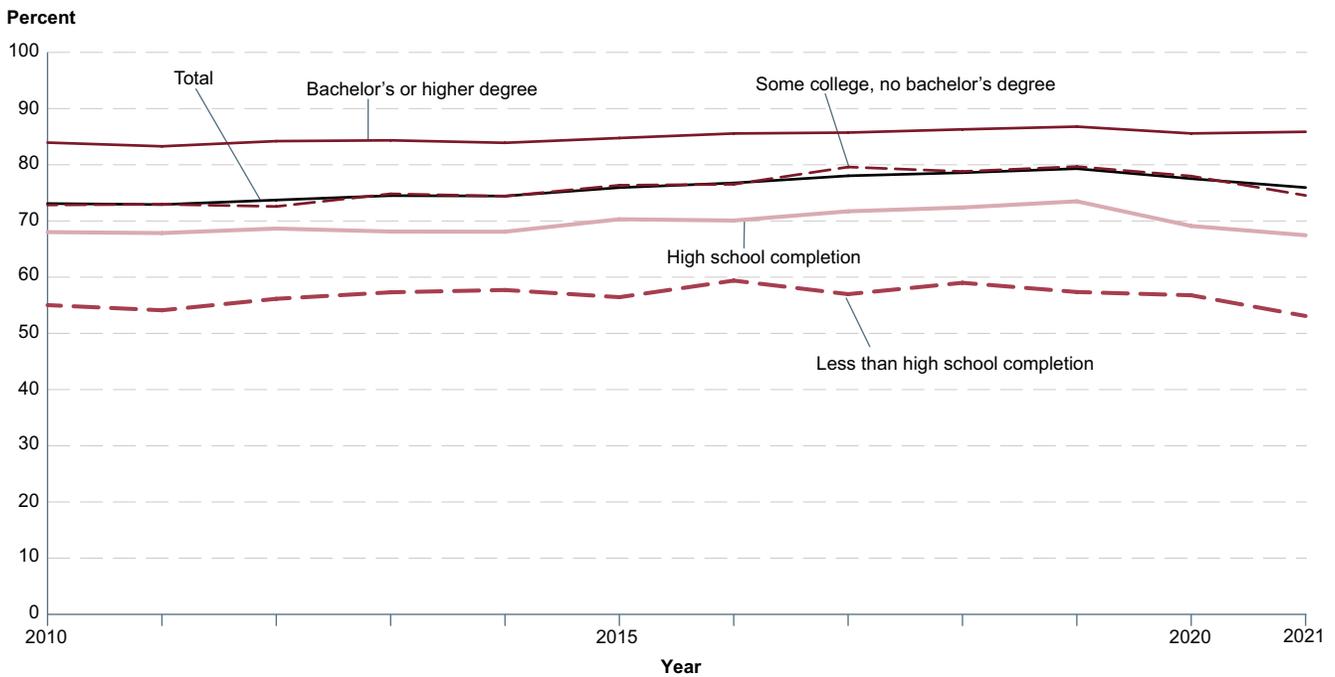
In 2021, the employment rate was higher for 25- to 34-year-olds at higher levels of educational attainment. For example, the employment rate was highest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (86 percent). The employment rate for those with some college² (75 percent) was higher than the rate for those who had completed high school³ (68 percent), which was higher than the rate

for those who had not completed high school (53 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 (38 percent).

Employment rates were higher for 25- to 34-year-old males than for their female peers in 2021. This pattern occurred overall and at each level of educational attainment. The gender gap is defined as the difference in employment rates between males and females. In 2021, the gender

gap was generally smaller at higher levels of educational attainment. For instance, the gender gap was 7 percentage points for those with a bachelor's or higher degree, but 26 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 2021

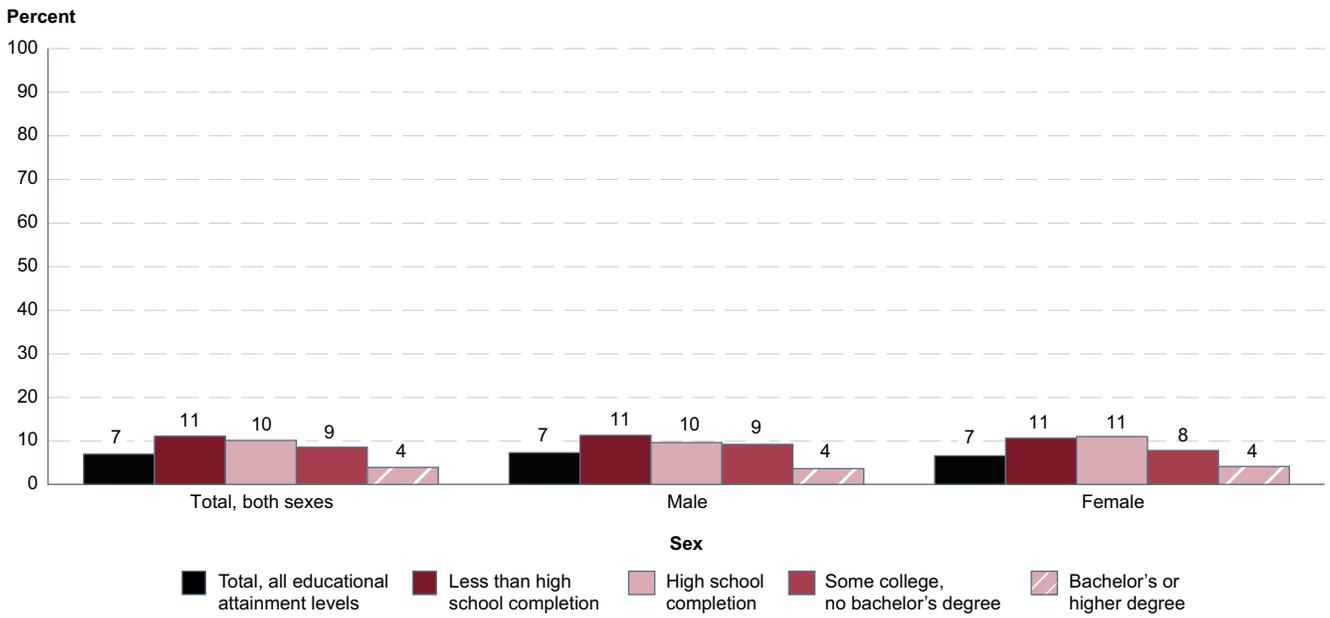


NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and all military personnel. The employment rate, or employment to population ratio, is the number of persons in each group who are 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 and 2021 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/cpsmar21.pdf>. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010 through 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021*, table 501.50.

Recent trends in employment rates have been shaped by the recovery from the 2008 recession⁴ and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Overall, the employment rate for 25- to 34-year-olds increased from 2010 to 2021. First, this rate increased from 73 percent in 2010 to 79 percent in 2019. It then dropped to 76 percent in 2021 but remained higher than in 2010.⁵ This pattern differed by educational attainment. Compared with 2010, employment rates were higher in 2021 only for those with a bachelor's or higher degree. For this group, the employment rate generally increased over the period (from 84 percent in 2010 to 86 percent in 2021), although there was no measurable difference between 2019 and 2021. For those with lower

levels of educational attainment, the employment rate in 2021 was not measurably different from the employment rate in 2010. Employment rates first increased between 2010 and 2019 for those with some college (from 73 to 80 percent) and for those who had completed high school (from 68 to 74 percent). However, these gains were reversed during the coronavirus pandemic. For these two groups, employment rates were lower in 2021 (75 percent and 68 percent, respectively) than in 2019. For those who had not completed high school, employment rates in 2021 and 2019 were not different from those in 2010 or from each other.

Figure 3. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2021

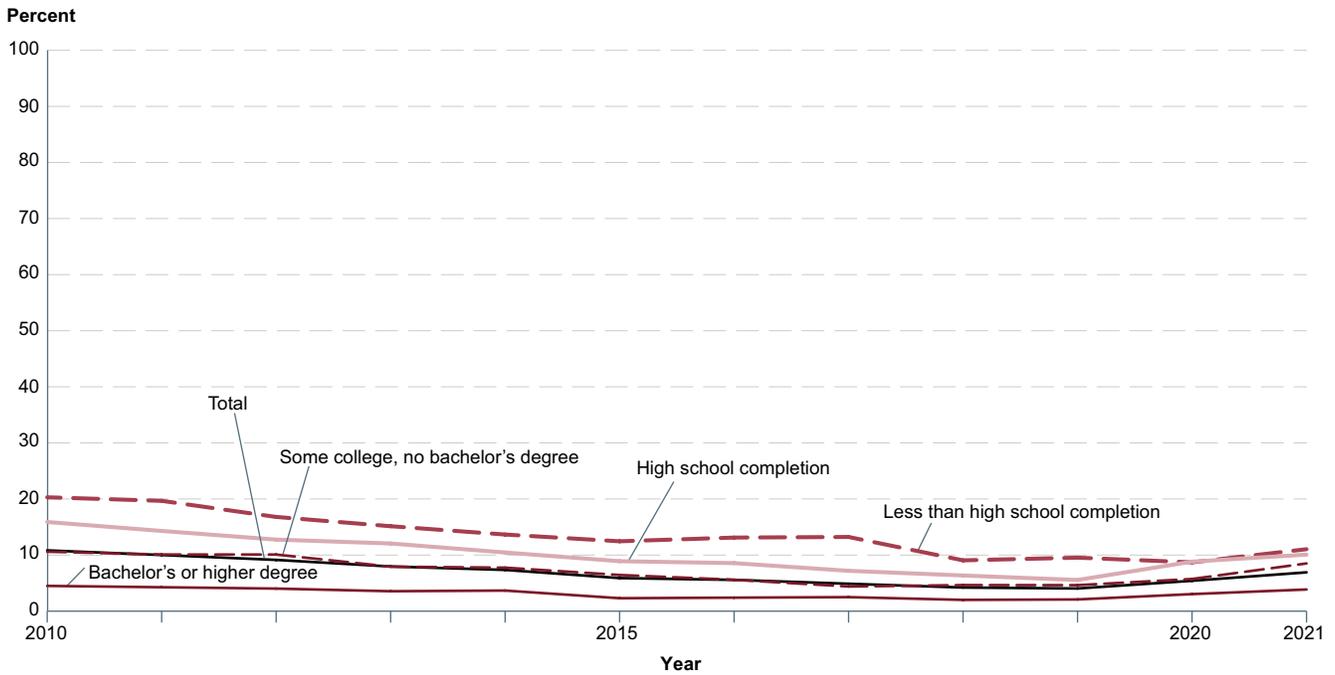


NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and all military personnel. The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working and 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. 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, 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90.

In 2021, the overall *unemployment* rate was lower for 25- to 34-year-olds with a bachelor's or higher degree (4 percent) than for those at all other educational attainment levels. The unemployment rate was also lower for those with some college (9 percent) than for those who had completed high school (10 percent), but neither of these rates were measurably different from the rate for those who had not completed high school (11 percent). A similar

pattern was observed for both males and females.⁶ For example, for males, the unemployment rate was lower for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (4 percent) as compared with those who had not completed high school (11 percent). Additionally, there was no measurable difference in unemployment rates between females and males. This was true both overall and by educational attainment level.

Figure 4. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by educational attainment: 2010 through 2021



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 and 2021 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/cpsmar21.pdf>. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010 through 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2021*, table 501.80.

For 25- to 34-year-olds, the unemployment rate was lower in 2021 than in 2010. During this period, the overall unemployment rate decreased from 11 percent in 2010 to 4 percent in 2019. Then, the unemployment rate increased to 7 percent in 2021. At each level of educational attainment, a decline in the unemployment rate was observed between 2010 and 2019. However, between 2019 and 2021, changes in unemployment rates varied by educational attainment. Unemployment rates were higher in 2021 than in 2019 for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (4 vs. 2 percent), those with some college (9 vs. 5 percent), and those who had completed high school (10 vs. 6 percent). Additionally, over this period,

changes in unemployment rates were larger for those with some college (4 percentage points) and for those who had completed high school (5 percentage points) than for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (2 percentage points). For those who had not completed high school, however, unemployment rates were not measurably different between these two years. As a result of the varying degrees of changes between 2019 and 2021 for each level of educational attainment, unemployment rates for those with some college and those who had completed high school in 2021 were no longer measurably different from the rate for those who had not completed high school in 2021.

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 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.

³ Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.

⁴ National Bureau of Economic Research. (2020). *U.S. Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions*. Retrieved December 1, 2021, from <https://www.nber.org/research/data/us-business-cycle-expansions-and-contractions>.

⁵ Caution should be used when comparing 2020 and 2021 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/cpsmar21.pdf>.

⁶ The only exception was that for male 25- to 34-year-olds, the unemployment rate was also not measurably different between those with some college and those who had completed high school.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 501.50, 501.60, 501.70, 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90; *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2018, 2019, and 2020*, table 501.50; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2016, 2019, and 2020*, table 501.80

Related indicators and resources: [Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment](#); [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: Associate’s degree; Bachelor’s degree; College; Educational attainment (Current Population Survey); Employment status; Gap; High school completer