

Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

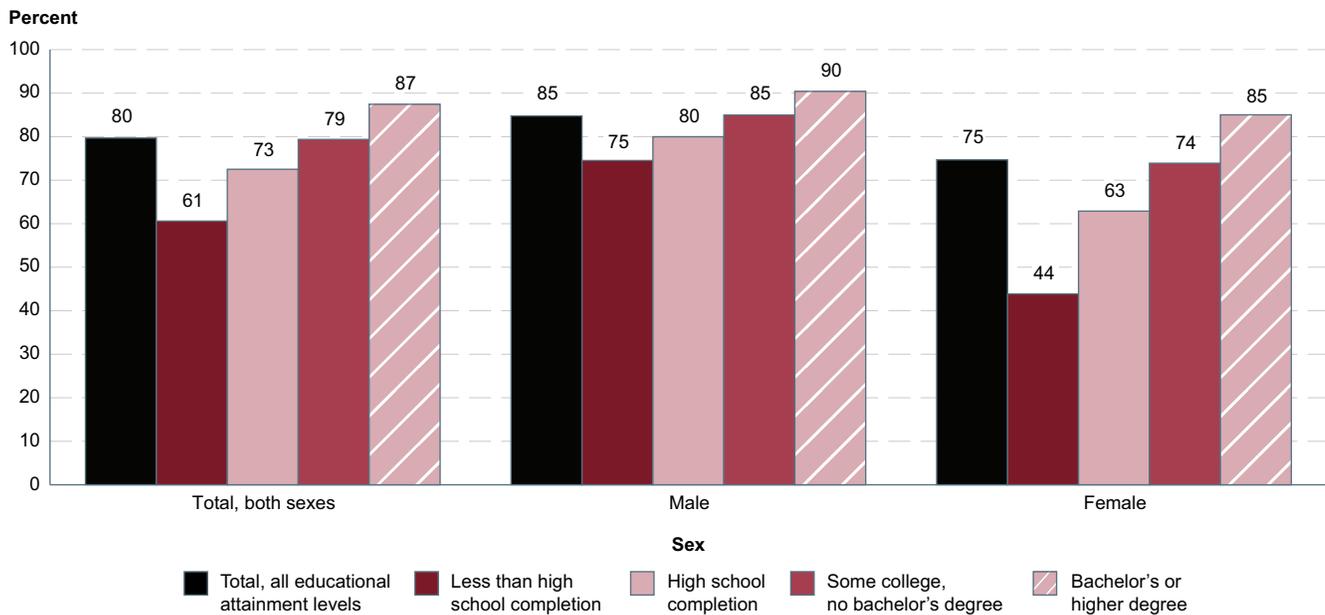
The employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds were higher in 2022 than in 2021 at all levels of educational attainment. Additionally, the unemployment rates were lower in 2022 than in 2021 at all levels of educational attainment at or above high school completion. However, neither the employment rates nor the unemployment rates in 2022 were measurably different from the rates in 2019, the year before the pandemic.

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 noninstitutionalized 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 each year of data is March, meaning that 2019 data represent the status of the labor market before the coronavirus pandemic, 2020 data represent the status of the labor market at the onset of the pandemic in the United States, and 2021 and 2022 data represent the status of the labor market roughly one year and two years into the pandemic, respectively.

Employment Rates

Figure 1. Employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2022



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, 2022. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables 501.50, 501.60, and 501.70.

Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

In 2022, some 80 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds were employed. The employment rate was higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, the overall employment rate was

- highest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (87 percent); and
- lowest for those who had not completed high school (61 percent).

The same pattern was observed for both sexes. For example, the employment rate for females was highest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (85 percent) and lowest for those who had not completed high school (44 percent).

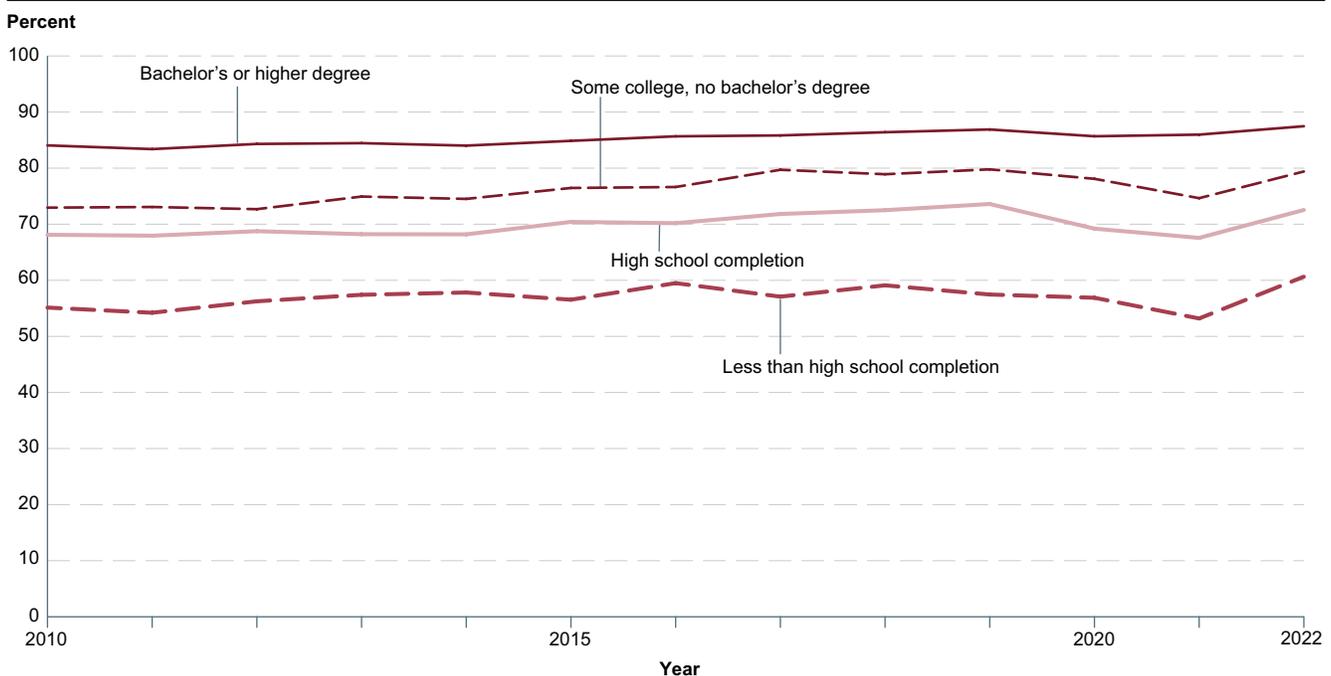
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Employment rates were higher for 25- to 34-year-old males (85 percent) than for their female peers (75 percent) in 2022. This difference in employment rates between males and females is called a gender gap. In 2022, the gender gap existed at each level of educational attainment but was smaller at higher levels of educational attainment.

For instance, the gender gap was

- smallest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (5 percentage points); and
- largest for those who had not completed high school (31 percentage points).

Figure 2. Employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by educational attainment: 2010 through 2022



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, 2021, and 2022 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/cpsmar22.pdf>.

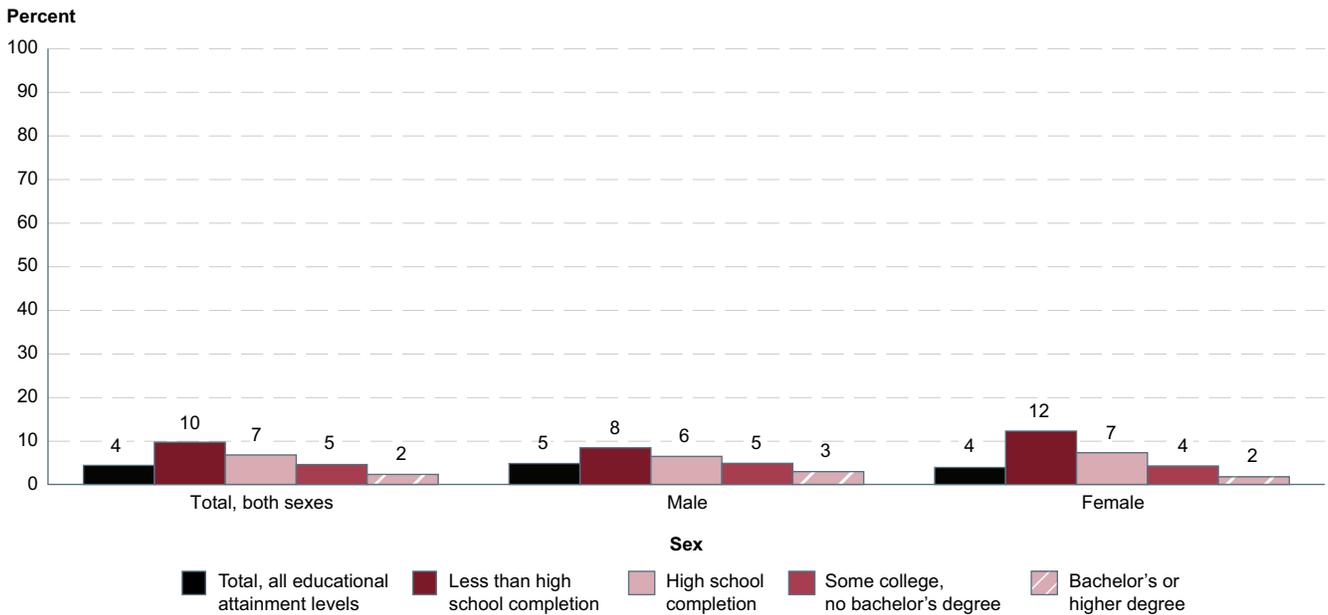
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010 through 2022. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022*, table 501.50.

Recent trends in employment rates have been shaped by the recovery from the 2008 recession² and the coronavirus pandemic. During the pandemic—from 2020 to 2022—overall employment for 25- to 34-year-olds was lowest in 2021 (76 percent).³ At all levels of educational attainment, the employment rate for 25- to 34-year-olds in 2022 was higher than the rate in 2021. With this rebound from 2021 to 2022, the 2022 employment rates for 25- to

34-year-olds at all levels of educational attainment were not measurably different from the rates in 2019, the year immediately before the pandemic. For example, among 25- to 34-year-olds whose highest level of educational attainment was high school completion,⁴ employment rates were 74 percent in 2019, then 68 percent in 2021, and then 73 percent in 2022.

Unemployment Rates

Figure 3. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2022



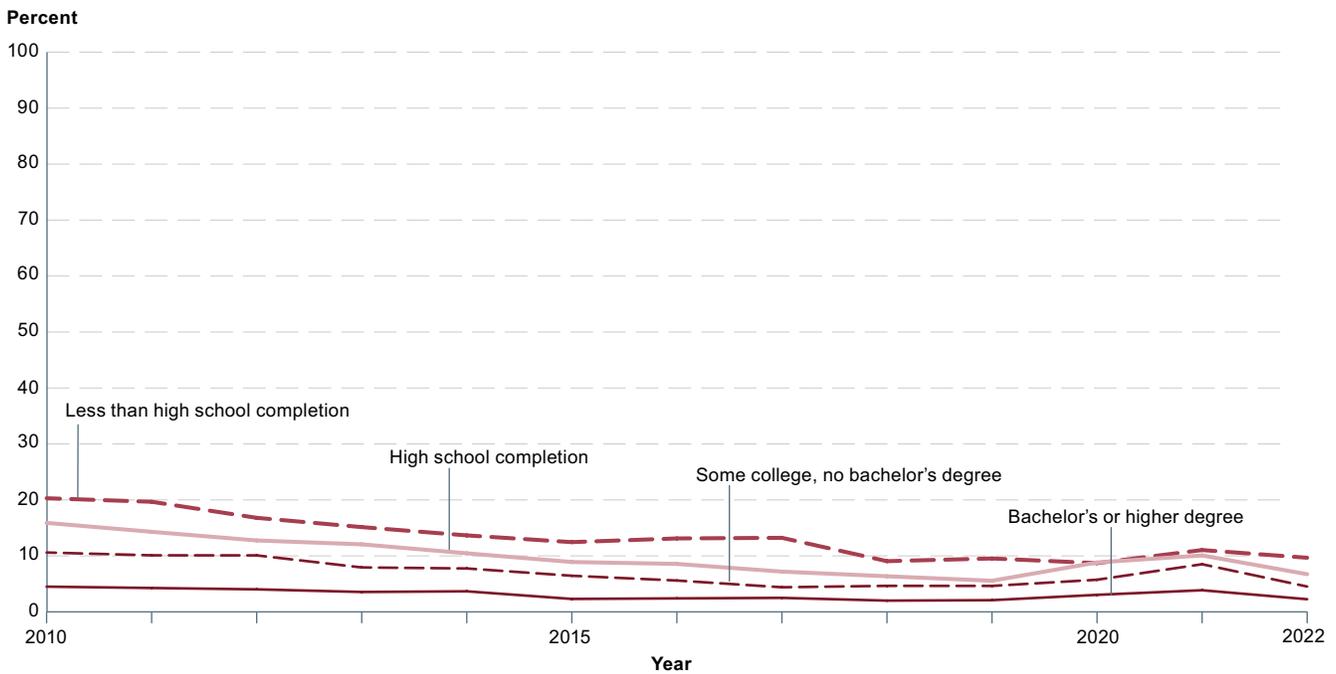
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and all military personnel. The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working and 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, 2022. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90.

In 2022, some 4 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds in the labor force were unemployed. For both males and females, the unemployment rate was lowest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree and was generally higher at lower levels of educational attainment. For males, the unemployment rate was lower for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (3 percent) than for those with some college⁵ (5 percent), those who had completed high school (6 percent), and those who had not completed high school (8 percent). The pattern was similar for females. Females with a bachelor's or higher degree had a lower

unemployment rate (2 percent) than their peers with lower levels of educational attainment (ranging from 4 to 12 percent).

In 2022, among 25- to 34-year-olds who had a bachelor's or higher degree, males had a higher unemployment rate than females (3 vs. 2 percent). This was the first time there was a gender gap in unemployment rates at this attainment level since 2015. There were no measurable gender gaps at lower levels of educational attainment in 2022.

Figure 4. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by educational attainment: 2010 through 2022



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, 2021, and 2022 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/cpsmar22.pdf>.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010 through 2022. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022*, table 501.80.

For 25- to 34-year-olds at each level of educational attainment, the unemployment rate decreased between 2010 and 2022. For example, the unemployment rate for those who had completed high school decreased from 16 percent in 2010 to 7 percent in 2022. Within that period, at all levels of educational attainment, the rate decreased between 2010 and 2019 (the year before the pandemic). During the pandemic—from 2020 to 2022—overall unemployment was highest in 2021 (7 percent). The unemployment rate in 2022 was lower than the rate in 2021 at all levels of educational attainment, except for

those with less than high school completion, for whom the unemployment rate in 2022 was not measurably different from the rate in 2021. With this general rebound from 2021 to 2022, the 2022 unemployment rates at all levels of educational attainment were not measurably different from the rates in 2019, the year immediately before the pandemic. For example, among 25- to 34-year-olds who had completed high school as their highest educational attainment, unemployment rates were 6 percent in 2019, then 10 percent in 2021, and then 7 percent in 2022.

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 all military personnel.

² National Bureau of Economic Research. (2021). *U.S. Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions*. Retrieved November 17, 2022, from <https://www.nber.org/research/data/us-business-cycle-expansions-and-contractions>.

³ Caution should be used when comparing 2020, 2021, and 2022 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/cpsmar22.pdf>.

⁴ Completed high school includes those who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

⁵ Some college education includes those with no college degree as well as those with an associate's degree.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables 501.50, 501.60, 501.70, 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90; *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 501.50, 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