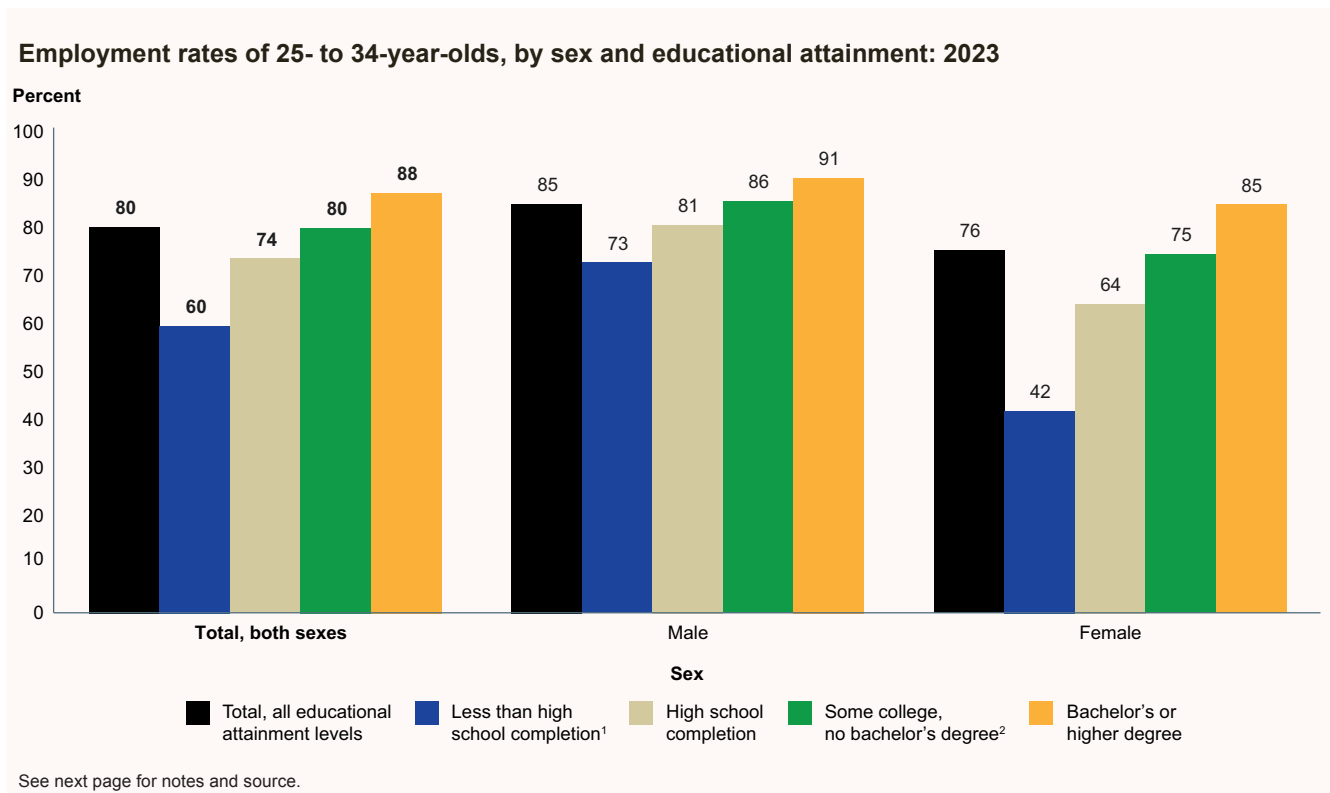


# Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

*In 2023, some 80 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds were employed, and 4 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds in the labor force were unemployed. Compared with 2019—the year before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States—the employment rate of 25- to 34-year-olds was higher in 2023, while the unemployment rate was not measurably different.*

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.<sup>1</sup> The *employment rate* (also known as the employment-to-population ratio) is the percentage of persons in the civilian noninstitutionalized population who are employed.<sup>2</sup> 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 roughly 1 year before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States, 2020 data represent the status of the labor market at the onset of the pandemic, and 2021 and 2022 data represent the status of the labor market roughly 1 year and 2 years into the pandemic, respectively. Employment and unemployment rates for 2023 represent the status of the labor market close to when the federal COVID-19 public health emergency declaration ended.<sup>3</sup> Reported levels of educational attainment for 25- to 34-year-olds in this indicator refer to a person’s highest degree earned or level of school completed.

**FIGURE 1.**



<sup>1</sup> "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.  
<sup>2</sup> "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree.  
 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. For 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/cpsmar23.pdf>. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2023. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables 501.50, 501.60, and 501.70.

### Employment Rates

In 2023, 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

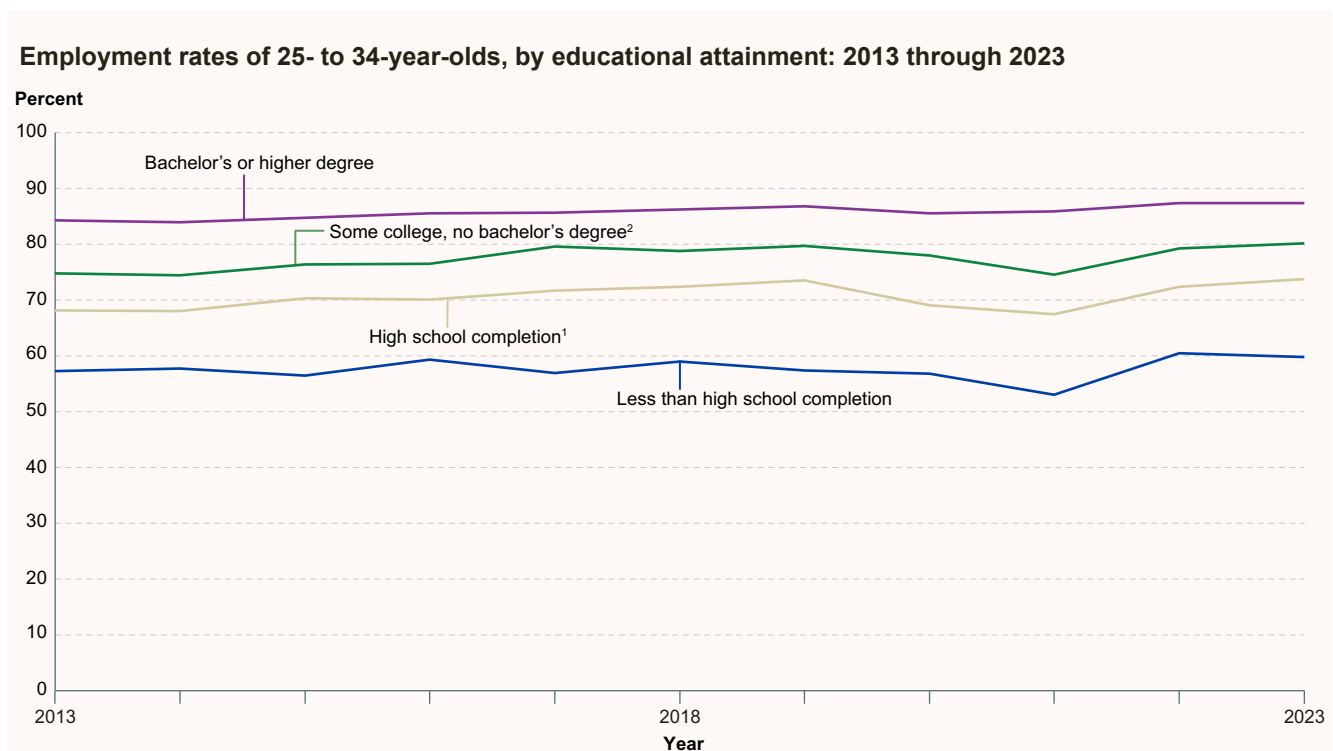
- highest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (88 percent); and
- lowest for those who had not completed high school (60 percent).

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 (42 percent).

The overall employment rate was higher for 25- to 34-year-old males (85 percent) than for their female peers (76 percent) in 2023. This difference in employment rates between males and females is called a gender gap. In 2023, 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 (6 percentage points); and
- largest for those who had not completed high school (31 percentage points).

FIGURE 2.

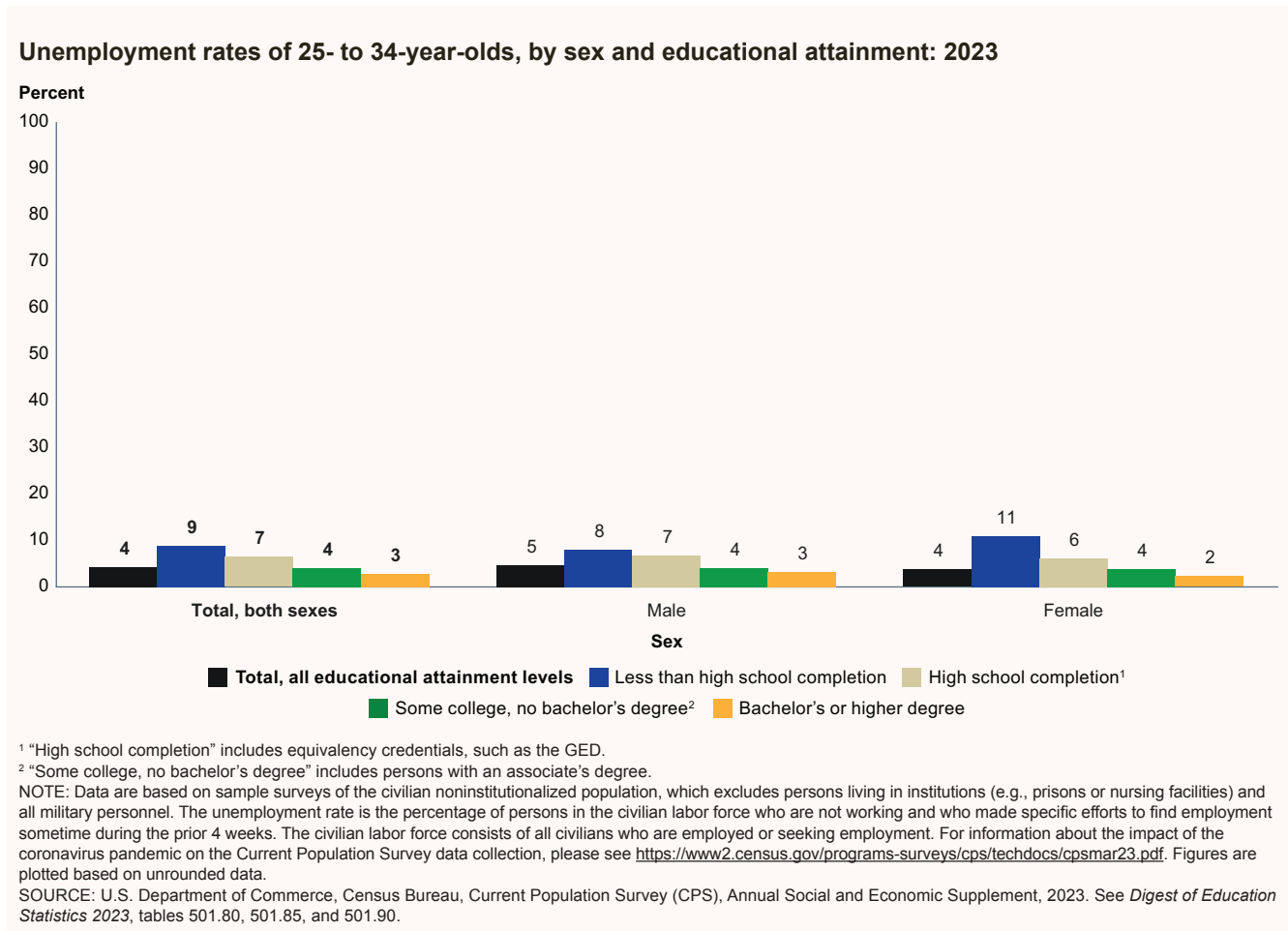


<sup>1</sup> "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.  
<sup>2</sup> "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree.  
 NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living 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. Caution should be used when comparing 2019, 2020, and 2021 estimates with those of other 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/cpsmar23.pdf>. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2013 through 2023. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023*, table 501.50.

From 2013 to 2019 (i.e., prior to the coronavirus pandemic), overall employment for 25- to 34-year-olds increased from 75 percent in 2013 to 79 percent in 2019. During the pandemic—from 2020 through 2023—overall employment for 25- to 34-year-olds was lowest in 2021 (76 percent).<sup>4</sup> At each level of educational attainment, the employment rates for 25- to 34-year-olds in 2023 were higher than the rates in 2021 and 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,<sup>5</sup> employment rates were 74 percent in 2019, then 68 percent in 2021, and 74 percent in 2023.

### Unemployment Rates

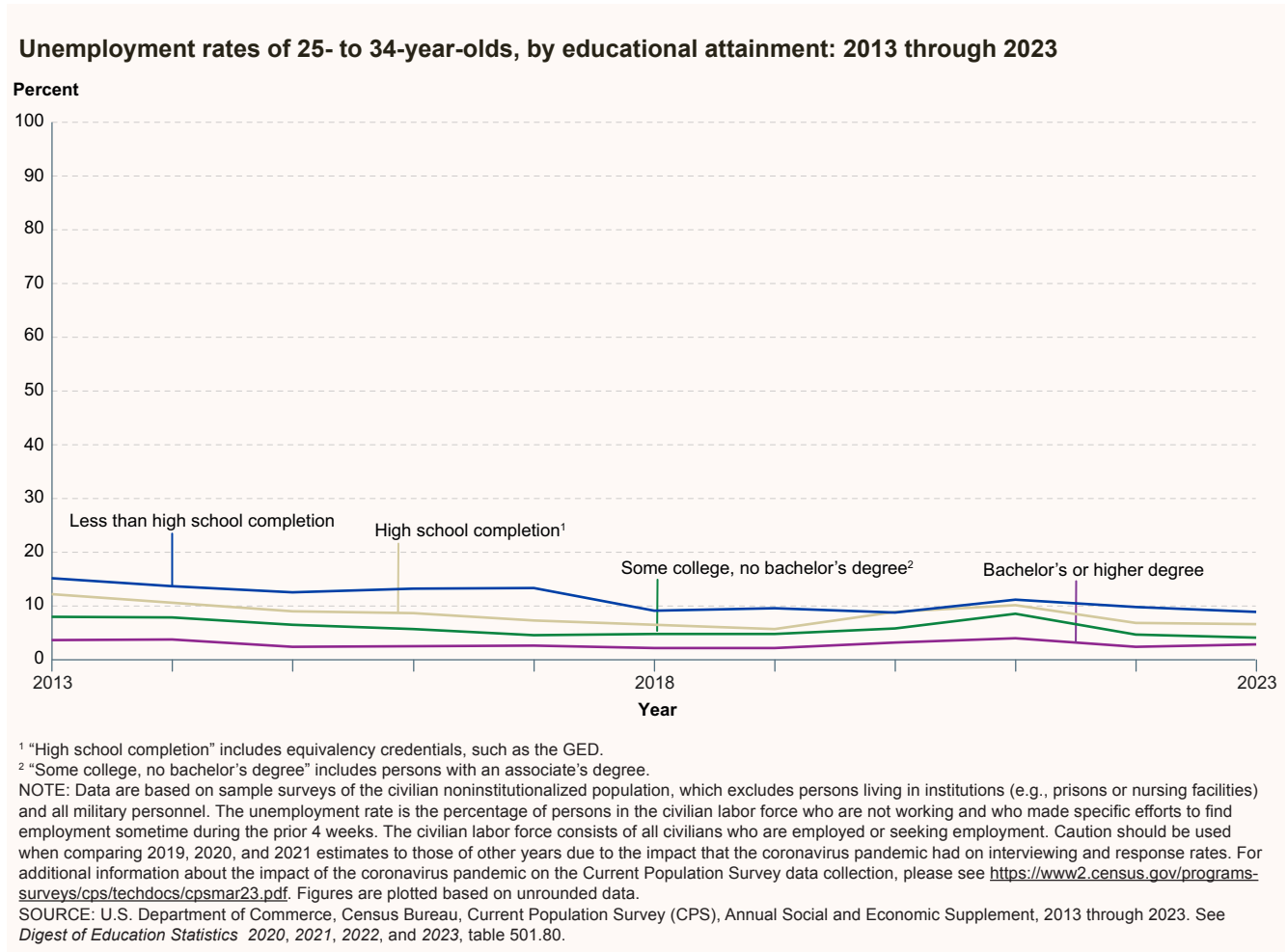
FIGURE 3.



In 2023, some 4 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds in the labor force were unemployed. For both males and females, the unemployment rates were generally higher at lower levels of educational attainment. For males, the unemployment rates for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (3 percent) and those with some college but no bachelor's degree<sup>6</sup> (4 percent) were lower than for those who had completed high school (7 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 (2 percent) had a lower unemployment rate than their peers with lower levels of educational attainment (ranging from 4 to 11 percent).

In 2023, among 25- to 34-year-olds, males had a higher overall unemployment rate than females (5 vs. 4 percent). However, there were no measurable gender gaps at any specific level of educational attainment in 2023.

**FIGURE 4.**



For 25- to 34-year-olds overall and at each level of educational attainment, the unemployment rate decreased between 2013 and the year before the pandemic (2019). During the pandemic—from 2020 through 2023—overall unemployment was highest in 2021 (7 percent).<sup>4</sup> The unemployment rate in 2023 was lower than the rate in 2021 at each level of educational attainment, except for those with less than high school completion, for whom the unemployment rate in 2023 was not measurably different from the rate in 2021. The 2023 unemployment rates at each level 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 level of educational attainment, unemployment rates were 6 percent in 2019, then 10 percent in 2021, and 7 percent in 2023.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the [Reader's Guide](#).

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> The federal COVID-19 public health emergency declaration ended on May 11, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Caution should be used when comparing 2019, 2020, and 2021 estimates with those of other 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/cpsmar23.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Refers to those whose highest level of education completed is a high school diploma or an equivalency credential such as a GED.

<sup>6</sup> Some college education includes those with no college degree as well as those with an associate's degree.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, tables [501.50](#), [501.60](#), [501.70](#), [501.80](#), [501.85](#), and [501.90](#); *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables [501.50](#), [501.80](#), [501.85](#), and [501.90](#); *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables [501.50](#), [501.80](#), [501.85](#), and [501.90](#); and *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables [501.50](#) and [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](#)