

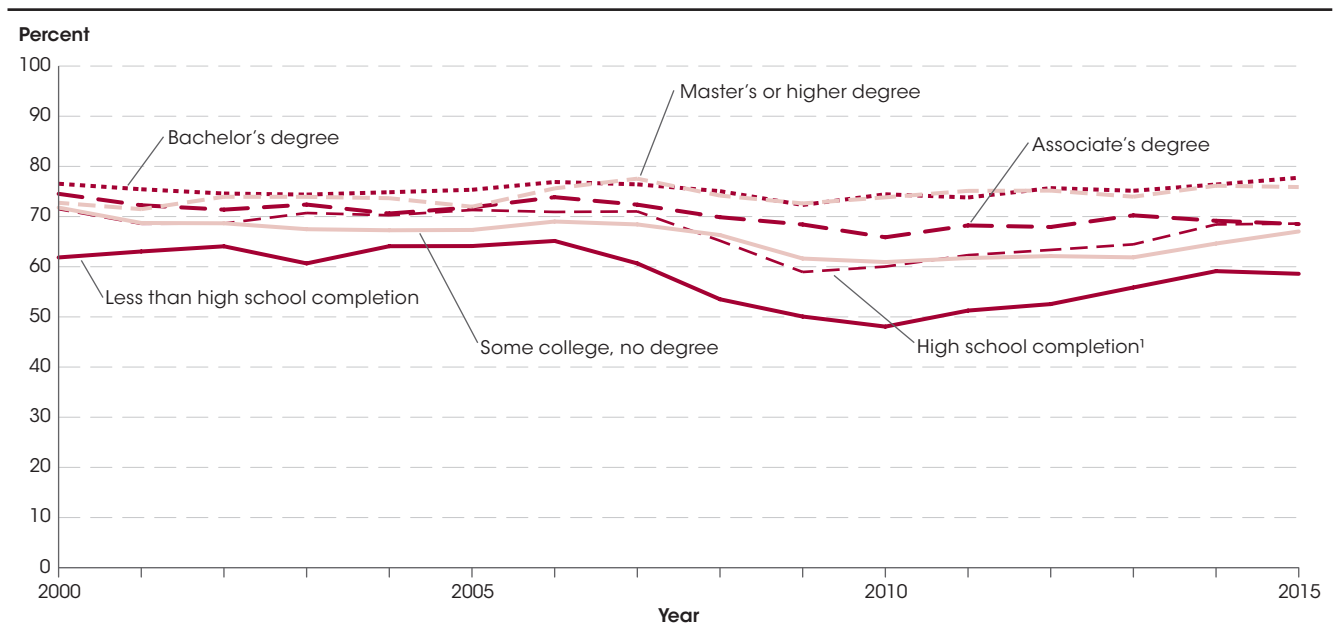
Annual Earnings of Young Adults

In 2015, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree (\$50,000) were 64 percent higher than those of young adult high school completers (\$30,500). The median earnings of young adult high school completers were 22 percent higher than those of young adults who did not complete high school (\$25,000).

This indicator examines the annual earnings of young adults ages 25–34 who had full-time, year-round employment (i.e., worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year). Many people in this age group have recently completed their education and may be entering the workforce or transitioning from part-time to full-time work. In 2015, some 71 percent of young adults ages 25–34 who were in the labor force worked full time,

year round. The percentage of young adults in the labor force working full time, year round was generally higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, 78 percent of young adults with a bachelor's degree worked full time, year round in 2015, compared with 69 percent of young adult high school completers (those with only a high school diploma or its equivalent).

Figure 1. Percentage of the labor force ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, by educational attainment: 2000–2015



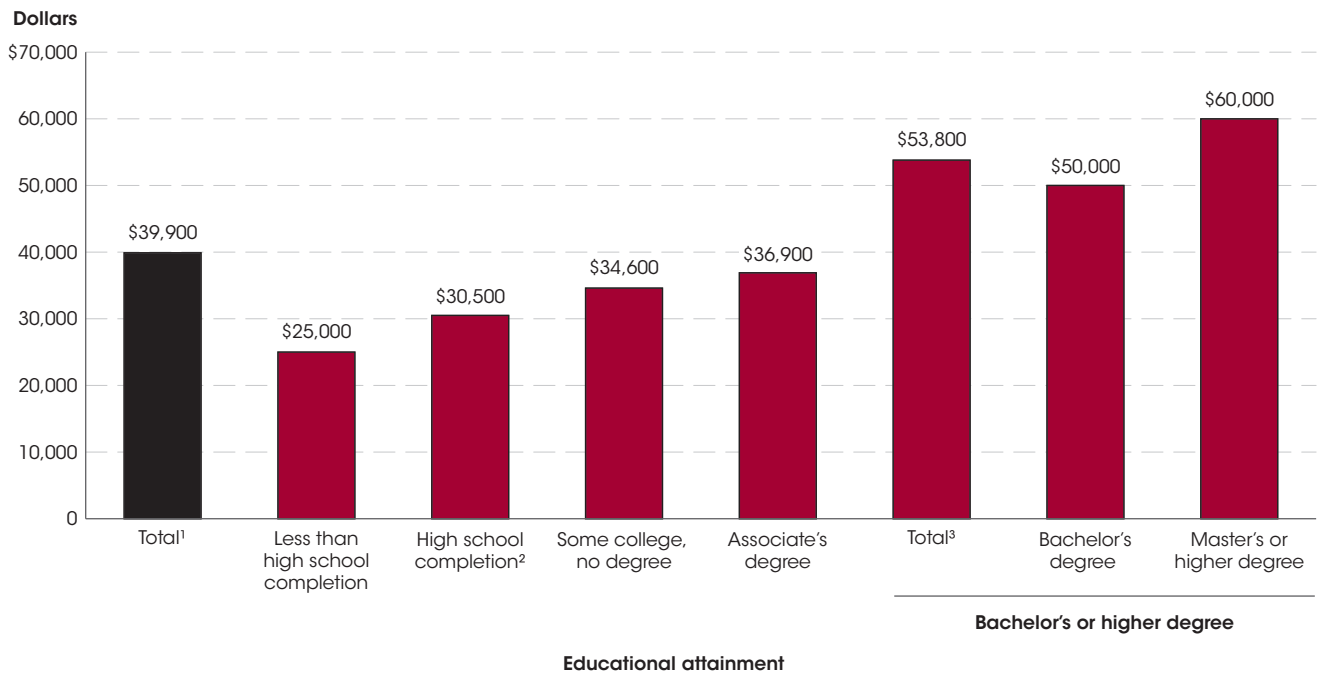
¹ Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and military barracks. 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Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2001–2016; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 502.30.

Changes over time in the percentage of young adults in the labor force who worked full time, year round varied by level of educational attainment. From 2000 to 2015, the percentage of young adult high school completers who worked full time, year round decreased from 71 to 69 percent. The corresponding percentage for young adults with an associate's degree decreased from 75 to 69 percent. In contrast, the percentage of young adults with a master's or higher degree who worked full time, year round increased from 73 to 76 percent during the

same period. However, in 2015 the percentages of young adults who did not complete high school (i.e., without a high school diploma or its equivalent) (59 percent) and those with a bachelor's degree (78 percent) who worked full time, year round were not measurably different from the corresponding percentages in 2000. Between 2014 and 2015, the percentages of young adults working full time, year round did not change measurably for any individual level of educational attainment.

Figure 2. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 2015

¹ Represents median annual earnings of all full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34.

² Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

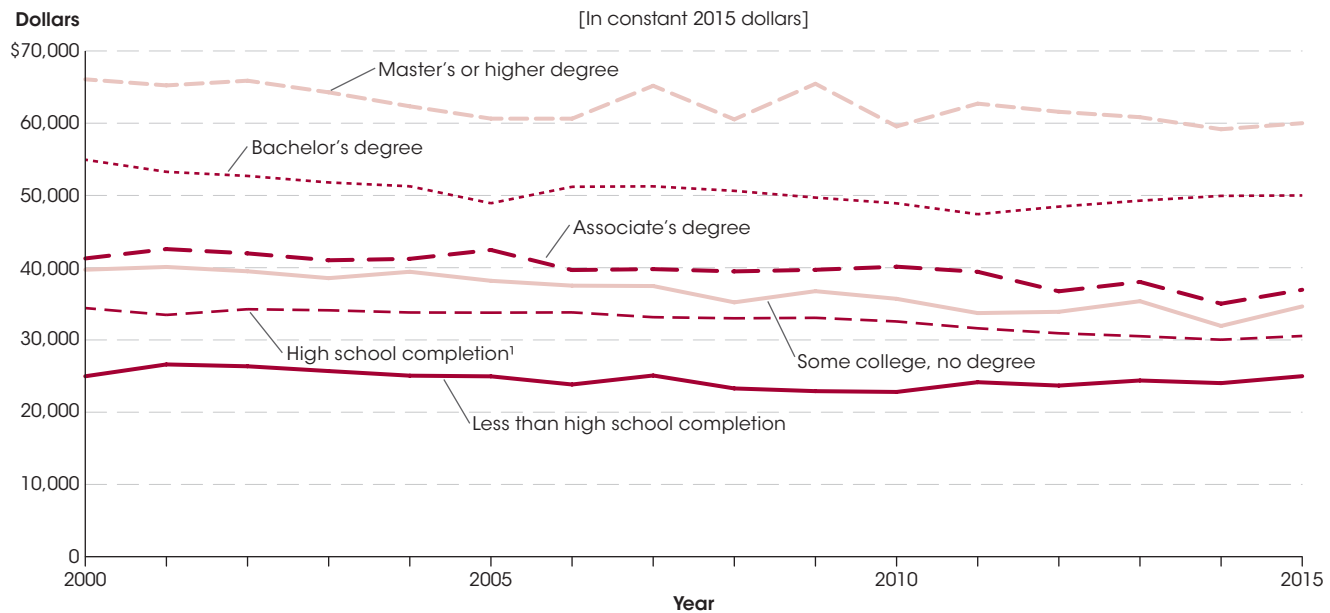
³ Represents median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34 with a bachelor's or higher degree.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and military barracks. *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," 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 502.30.

For young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings;¹ this pattern was consistent from 2000 through 2015. For example, in 2015 the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree (\$50,000) were 64 percent higher than those of young adult high school completers (\$30,500). The median earnings of young adult high school completers were 22 percent higher than those of young adults who did

not complete high school (\$25,000). In addition, median earnings of young adults with a master's or higher degree were \$60,000 in 2015, some 20 percent higher than those of young adults with a bachelor's degree. This pattern of higher earnings associated with higher levels of educational attainment also held for both male and female young adults as well as for White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian young adults.

Figure 3. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34, by educational attainment: 2000-2015

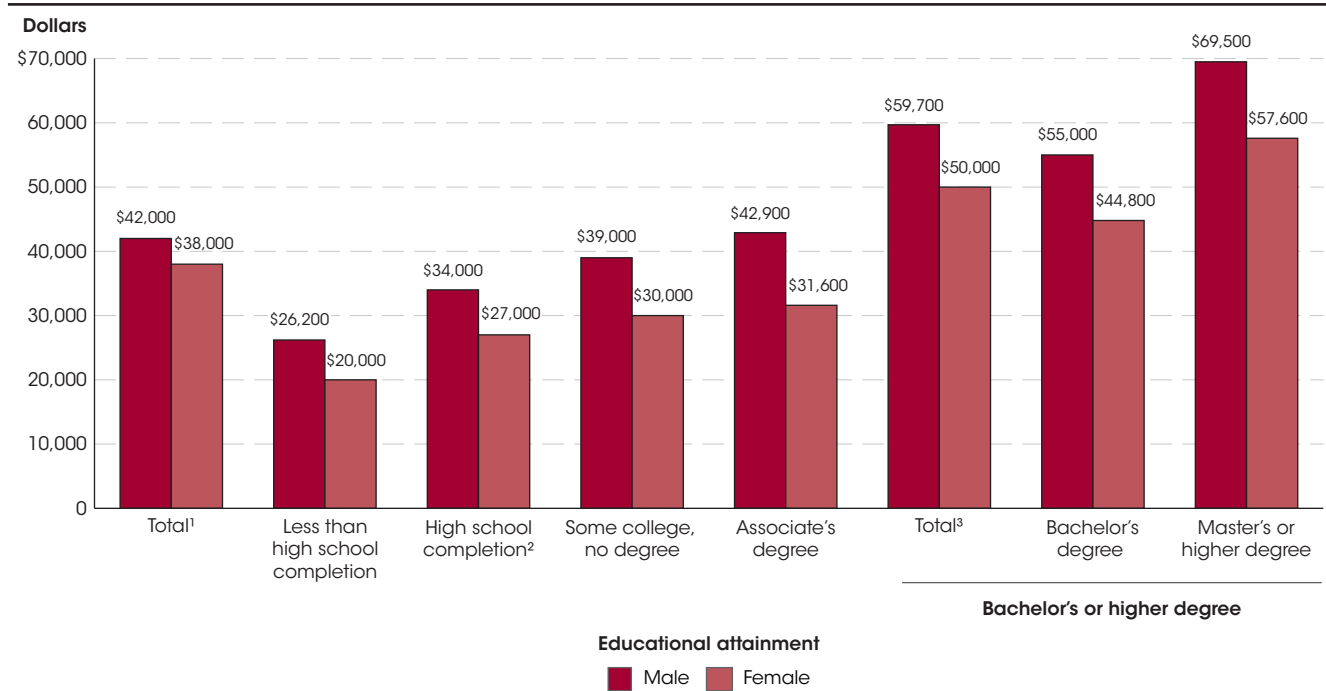
¹ Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and military barracks. *Full-time, year-round* workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year. Earnings are presented in constant 2015 dollars, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to eliminate inflationary factors and to allow for direct comparison across years. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS). "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2001-2016; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 502.30.

Median earnings (in constant 2015 dollars)² of young adults who worked full time, year round declined from 2000 to 2015 at most educational attainment levels, except for those who did not complete high school and those with a master's or higher degree, both of whom saw no measurable change in median earnings between these two years. During this period, the median earnings of young adult high school completers declined from \$34,400 to \$30,500 (an 11 percent decrease), and the median earnings of those with some college education declined from \$39,700 to \$34,600 (a 13 percent decrease). In addition, the median earnings of young adults with an associate's degree declined from \$41,300 to \$36,900 (a 10 percent decrease), and the median earnings of young

adults with a bachelor's degree declined from \$54,900 to \$50,000 (a 9 percent decrease).

The difference in median earnings between young adult high school completers and those who did not complete high school was smaller in 2015 than in 2000. In 2000, median earnings of young adult high school completers were \$9,400 higher than median earnings of those who did not complete high school; in 2015, this difference was \$5,600. Differences between median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree and high school completers and between those with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's or higher degree did not change measurably during the same period.

Figure 4. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34, by educational attainment and sex: 2015

¹ Represents median annual earnings of all full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34.

² Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

³ Represents median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34 with a bachelor's or higher degree.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and military barracks. *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," 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 502.30.

In 2015, median earnings of young adult males who worked full time, year round were higher than the corresponding median earnings of young adult females at every level of educational attainment. For example, median earnings of young adult males with an associate's degree were \$42,900 in 2015, while those of their female counterparts were \$31,600. The median earnings of young adult males with a high school credential were \$34,000, compared with \$27,000 for their female counterparts.

In the same year, median earnings of White young adults who worked full time, year round exceeded the corresponding median earnings of Black young adults at all attainment levels, except for those with less than high school completion and master's or higher degrees, where there were no measurable differences in median earnings between White and Black young adults. For instance, median earnings in 2015 for young adults

with a bachelor's degree were \$50,000 for White young adults, compared with \$42,800 for Black young adults. In addition, median earnings of White young adults were higher than those of their Hispanic peers among individuals who did not complete high school (\$29,800 and \$24,000, respectively) and high school completers (\$34,600 and \$29,700, respectively). At other attainment levels, there was no measurable difference between the median earnings of White and Hispanic young adults. Among those with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's or higher degree, Asian young adults had higher median earnings than their Black, Hispanic, and White peers. For example, median earnings in 2015 for young adults with at least a master's degree were \$74,800 for Asian young adults, \$60,000 for White young adults, \$54,300 for Hispanic young adults, and \$54,200 for Black young adults.

Endnotes:

¹ Differences in earnings may also reflect other factors, such as differences in occupation. Please see the [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Recipients](#) indicator.

² Constant dollars based on the Consumer Price Index, prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 502.30

Related indicators and resources: Employment Rates and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, Employment of STEM College Graduates, Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Recipients, Post-Bachelor's Employment Outcomes by Sex and Race/Ethnicity [*The Condition of Education 2016 Spotlight*]

Glossary: Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Constant dollars, Consumer Price Index (CPI), Educational attainment (Current Population Survey), High school completer, High school diploma, Master's degree, Median earnings, Racial/ethnic group