

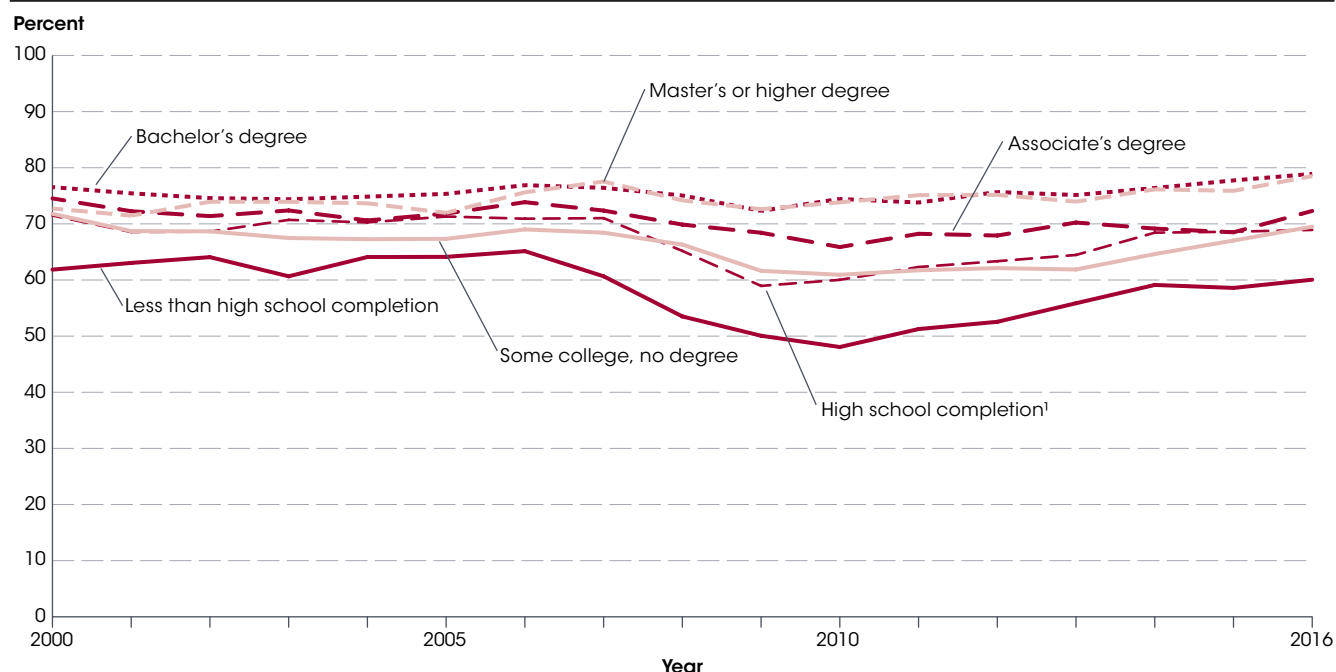
## Annual Earnings of Young Adults

*In 2016, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree (\$50,000) were 57 percent higher than those of young adult high school completers (\$31,800). The median earnings of young adult high school completers were 26 percent higher than those of young adults who did not complete high school (\$25,400).*

This indicator examines the annual earnings of young adults ages 25–34 employed full time, year round (i.e., worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year). Many people in this age group recently exited formal education and may be entering the workforce for the first time or transitioning from part-time to full-time work. In 2016, some 73 percent of young adults ages 25–34 who were in the labor force<sup>1</sup> 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, 79 percent of young adults with a bachelor's degree worked full time, year round in 2016, compared with 69 percent of young adult high school completers (those with only a high school diploma or an equivalency credential such as a GED certificate).

**Figure 1. Percentage of the labor force ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, by educational attainment: 2000–2016**



<sup>1</sup> 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. The *labor force* refers to the population who reported working or looking for work in the given year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2001–2017; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, 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. Among young adult high school completers who were in the labor force, a lower percentage worked full time, year round in 2016 (69 percent) than in 2000 (71 percent). In contrast, the corresponding percentage for those with a bachelor's

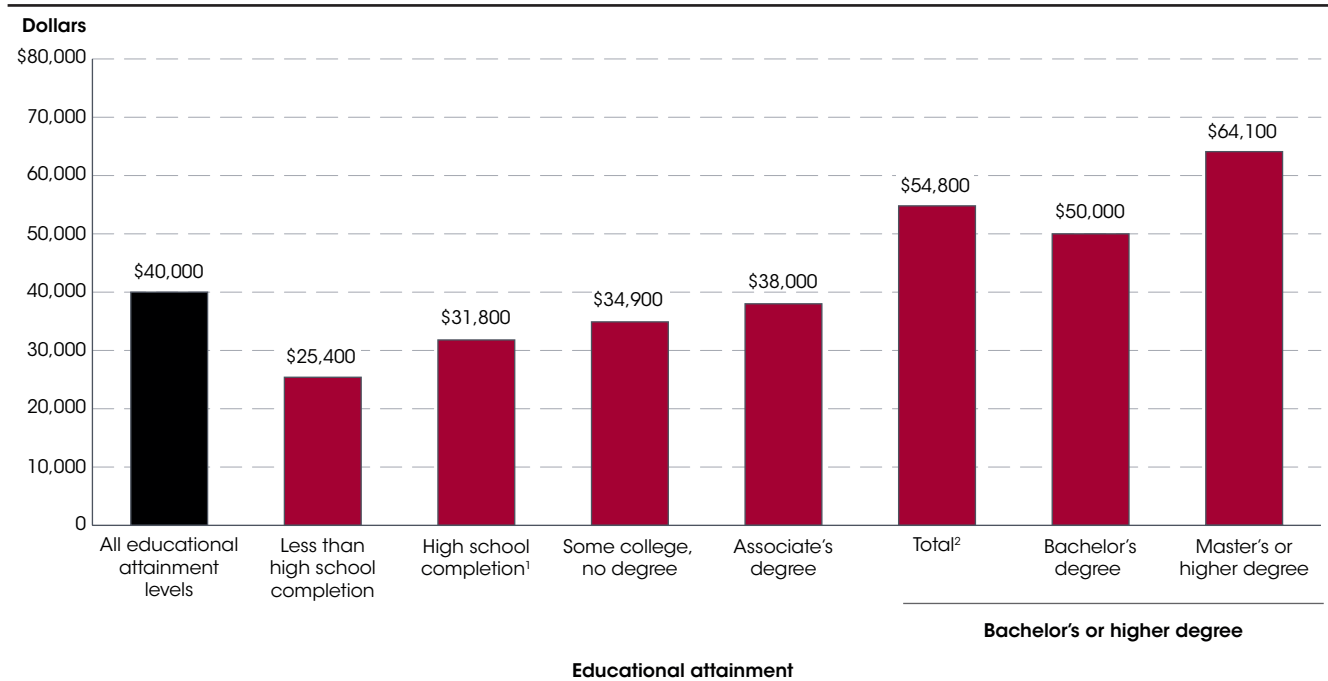
degree was higher in 2016 (79 percent) than in 2000 (77 percent). In addition, the percentage of young adult labor force participants who worked full time, year round increased among those with a master's or higher degree (from 73 percent in 2000 to 79 percent in 2016). At the following educational attainment levels, there was no measurable difference between 2000 and 2016 in the

percentage of young adult labor force participants who worked full time, year round: those without a high school diploma or an equivalent credential such as a GED, those with some college but no degree, and those with an associate’s degree (60 percent, 69 percent, and 72 percent, respectively, in 2016).

time, year round increased for every level of educational attainment. For example, during this period the percentage for young adult high school completers who worked full time, year round increased from 60 to 69 percent, and the corresponding percentage for young adults with a bachelor’s degree increased from 74 to 79 percent.

More recently, between 2010 and 2016, the percentages of young adult labor force participants working full

**Figure 2. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 2016**



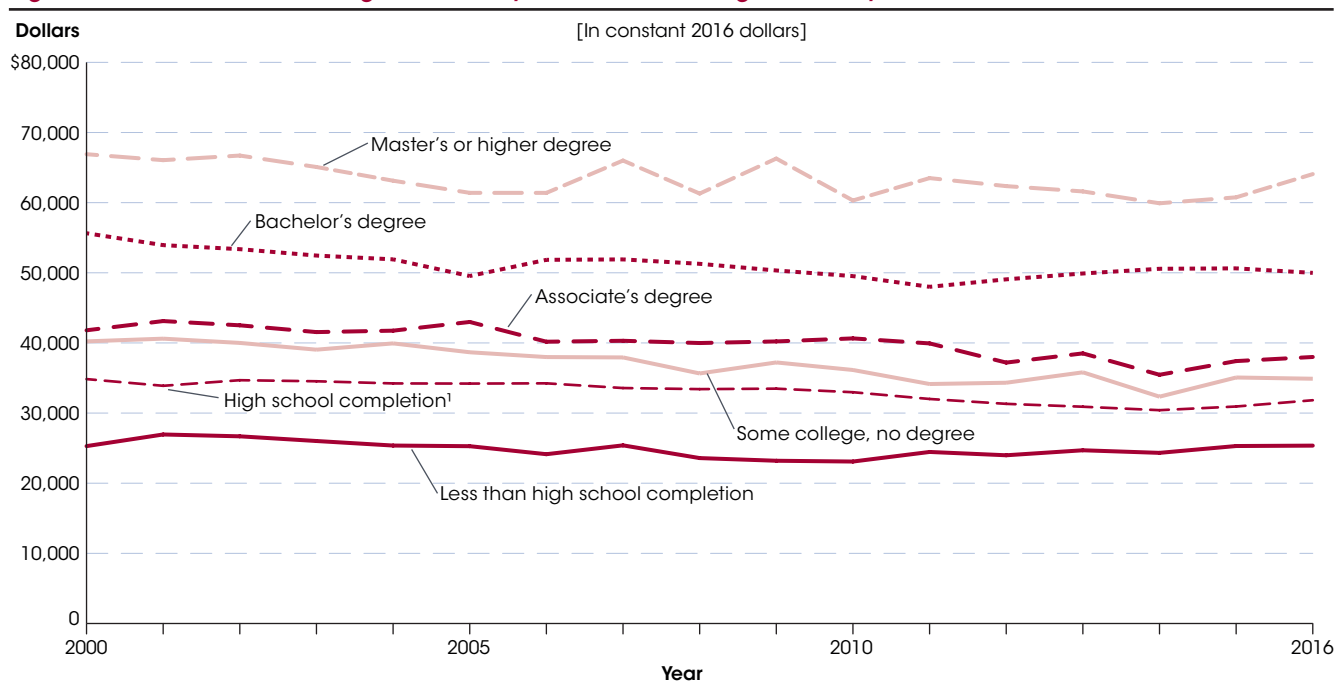
<sup>1</sup> Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

<sup>2</sup> 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,” 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 502.30.

For young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings; this pattern was consistent from 2000 through 2016. For example, in 2016 the median earnings of young adults with a master’s or higher degree were \$64,100, some 28 percent higher than those of young adults with a bachelor’s degree (\$50,000). In the same year, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor’s degree were 57 percent higher than those

of young adult high school completers (\$31,800). In addition, in 2016, the median earnings of young adult high school completers were 26 percent higher than those of young adults who did not complete high school (\$25,400). 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: 2000–2016**

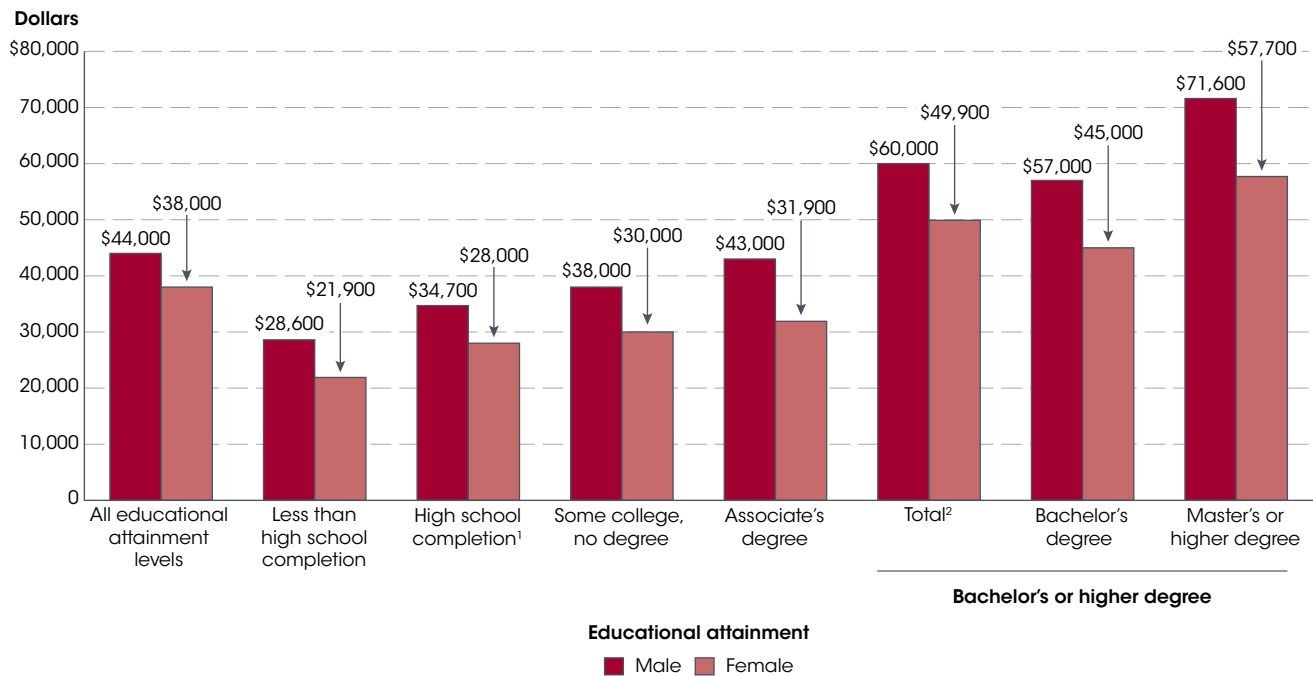
<sup>1</sup> Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

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 2016 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," 2001–2017; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 502.30.

The median earnings (in constant 2016 dollars)<sup>2</sup> of young adults who worked full time, year round declined from 2000 to 2016 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 \$34,800 to \$31,800 (a 9 percent decrease), and the median earnings of those with some college but no degree declined from \$40,200 to \$34,900 (a 13 percent decrease). In addition, the median earnings of young adults with an associate's degree declined from \$41,800 to \$38,000 (a 9 percent decrease), and the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree declined from \$55,600 to \$50,000 (a 10 percent decrease).

The difference in median earnings between young adult high school completers and those who did not complete high school narrowed between 2000 and 2016. In 2000, the median earnings of young adult high school completers were \$9,600 higher than the median earnings of those who did not complete high school; in 2016, this difference was \$6,500. In addition, the difference in median earnings between young adults with a bachelor's degree and high school completers was smaller in 2016 (\$18,200) than in 2000 (\$20,800). The difference in median earnings between young adults with a master's or higher degree and those with a bachelor's degree did not change measurably during this period.

**Figure 4. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment and sex: 2016**

<sup>1</sup> Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

<sup>2</sup> 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," 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 502.30.

In 2016, the 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, the median earnings of young adult males with an associate's degree were \$43,000 in 2016, while those of their female counterparts were \$31,900. The median earnings of young adult male high school completers were \$34,700, compared with \$28,000 for their female counterparts.

The median earnings of White young adults who worked full time, year round exceeded the corresponding median earnings of Black and Hispanic young adults at most attainment levels in 2016, except for those with a

master's or higher degree, where there were no measurable differences in median earnings between White (\$61,100), Black (\$59,700), and Hispanic (\$55,700) young adults. In addition, the median earnings of White young adults (\$50,000) with a bachelor's degree were not measurably different from those of their Black counterparts (\$45,800). 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 White, Black, and Hispanic peers. For example, the median earnings in 2016 for young adults with a bachelor's degree were \$59,700 for Asian young adults, \$50,000 for White young adults, \$45,800 for Black young adults, and \$44,700 for Hispanic young adults.

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The labor force consists of all civilians who are employed or seeking employment.

<sup>2</sup> 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 2017*, table 502.30

**Related indicators and resources:** [Employment and Earnings \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment](#); [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Recipients](#); [Post-College Employment Outcomes by Field of Study 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