

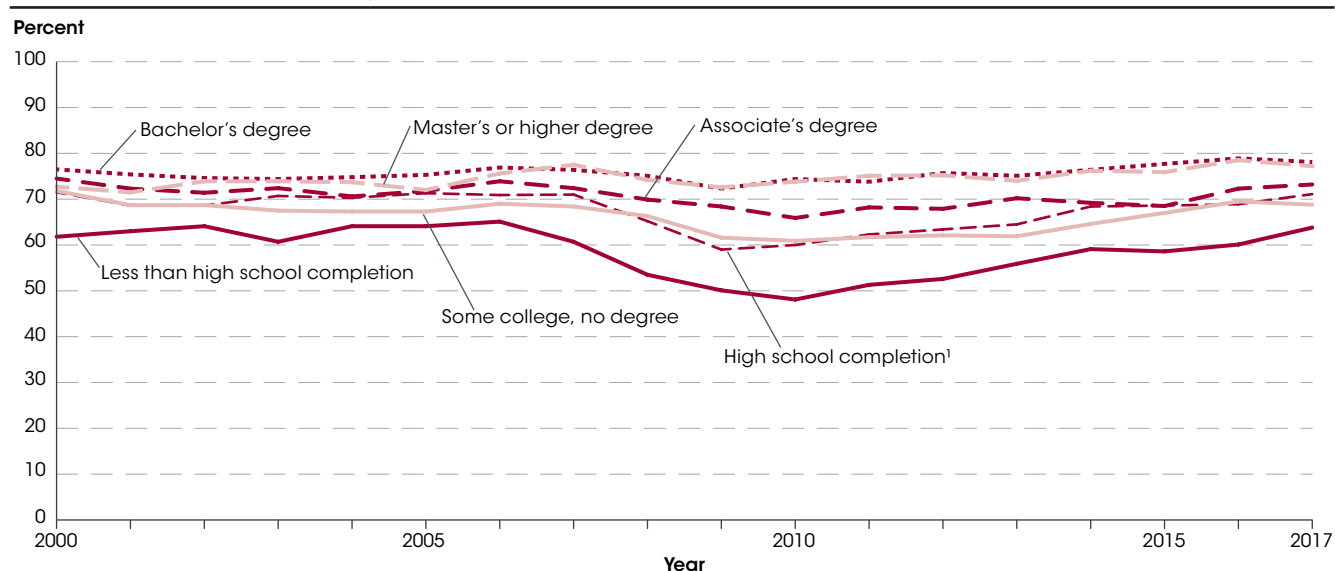
## Annual Earnings of Young Adults

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 2017. For example, in 2017 the median earnings of young adults with a master’s or higher degree (\$65,000) were 26 percent higher than those of young adults with a bachelor’s degree (\$51,800), and the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor’s degree were 62 percent higher than those of young adult high school completers (\$32,000).

This indicator examines the annual earnings of young adults ages 25–34 who worked 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 2017, 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 who worked 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 2017, compared with 71 percent of young adult high school completers (those with only a high school diploma or an equivalency credential such as a GED).

**Figure 1. Percentage of young adults ages 25–34 in the labor force who worked full time, year round, by educational attainment: 2000 through 2017**



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

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Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), “Annual Social and Economic Supplement,” 2001–2018; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 502.30.

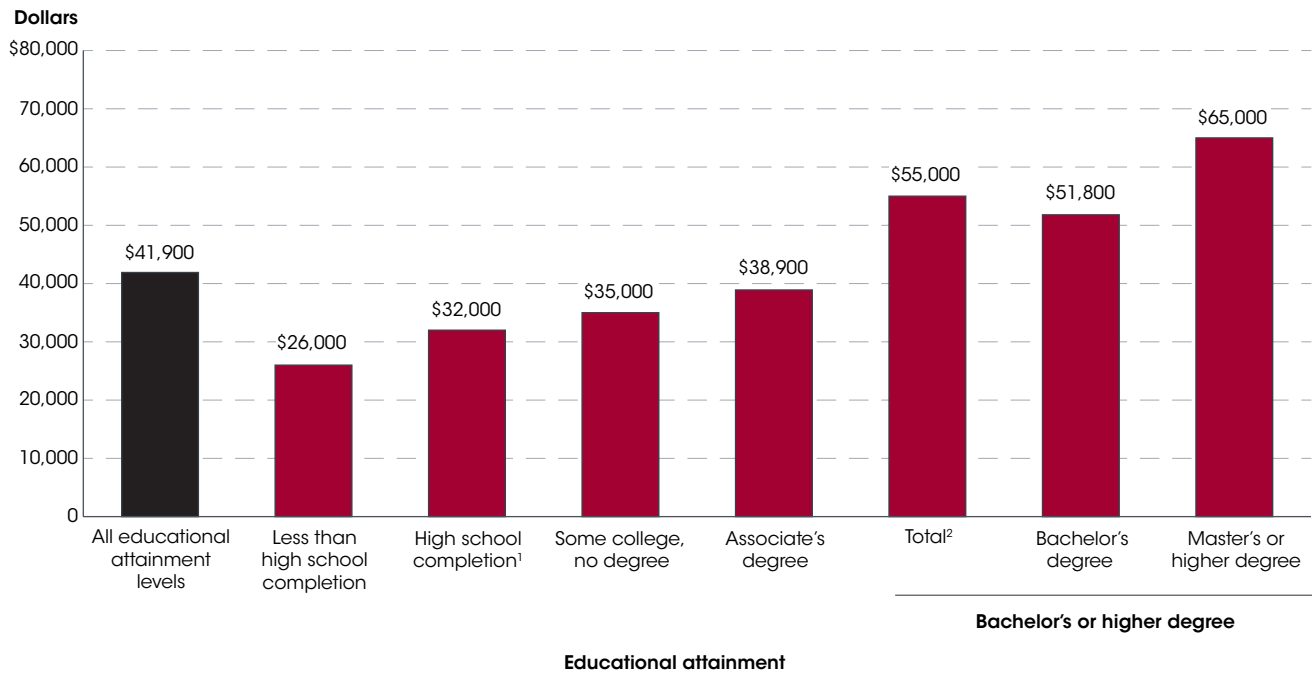
Changes over time in the percentage of young adults ages 25–34 in the labor force who worked full time, year round varied by level of educational attainment. Among young adults with some college but no degree who were in the labor force, a lower percentage worked full time, year round in 2017 (69 percent) than in 2000 (72 percent). In contrast, the corresponding percentage for those with a master’s or higher degree was higher in 2017 (77 percent) than in 2000 (73 percent). At the

following educational attainment levels, there was no measurable difference between 2000 and 2017 in the percentage of young adult labor force participants who worked full time, year round: those who did not complete high school (64 percent in 2017), those who completed high school (71 percent in 2017), those with an associate’s degree (73 percent in 2017), and those with a bachelor’s degree (78 percent in 2017).

Between 2010 and 2017, the percentages of young adults in the labor force who worked full time, year round increased for every level of educational attainment. For example, during this period, the percentage of young adult

high school completers who worked full time, year round increased from 60 to 71 percent, and the corresponding percentage of young adults with a bachelor's degree increased from 74 to 78 percent.

**Figure 2. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 2017**



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

<sup>2</sup> Represents median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34 with a bachelor's or higher degree.

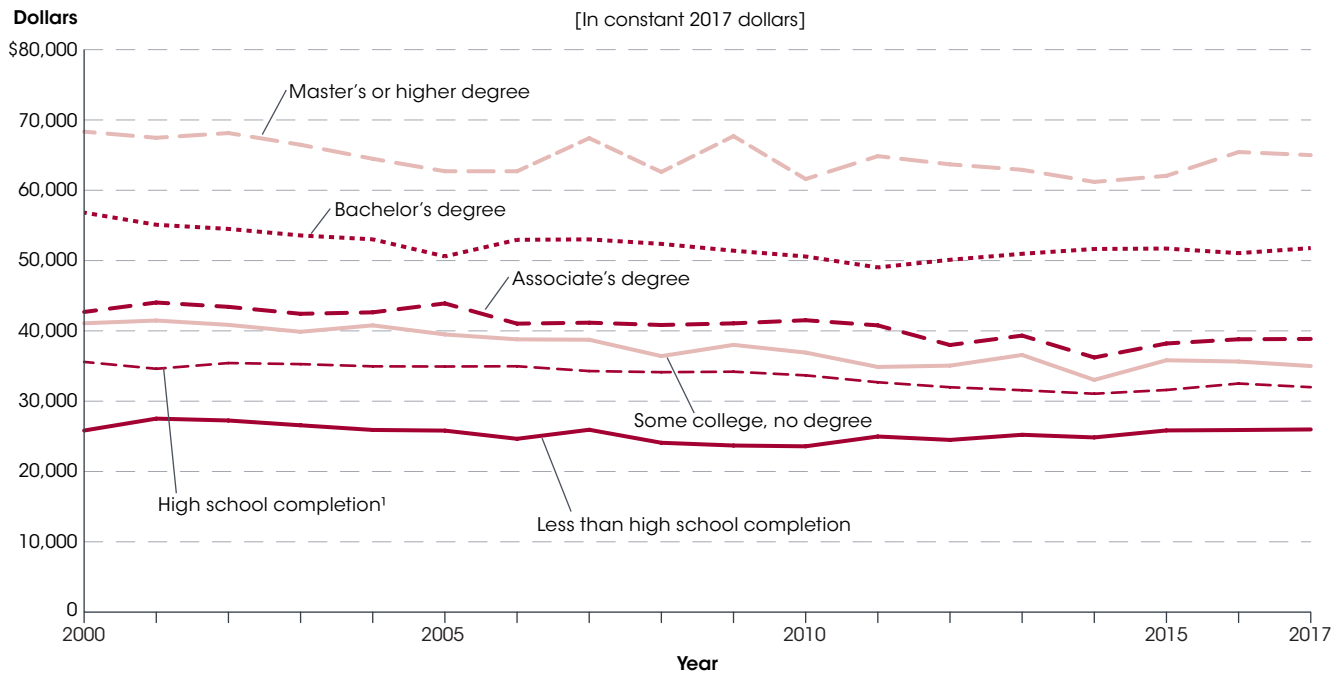
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and military barracks. *Full-time, year-round* workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2018. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, 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 2017. For example, in 2017 the median earnings of young adults with a master's or higher degree were \$65,000, some 26 percent higher than those of young adults with a bachelor's degree (\$51,800). In the same year, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree were 62 percent higher than those of

young adult high school completers (\$32,000), and the median earnings of young adult high school completers were 23 percent higher than those of young adults who did not complete high school (\$26,000). 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 through 2017

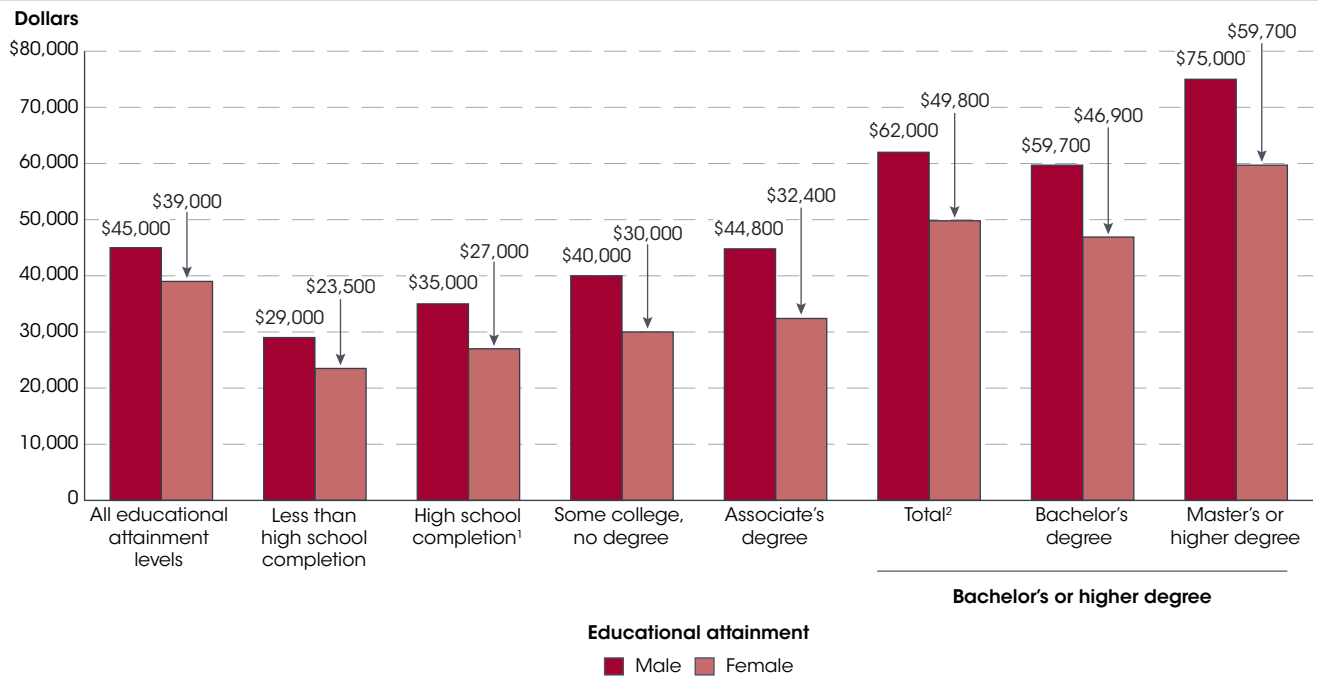


<sup>1</sup> Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.  
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities) and military barracks. Full-time, year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year. Earnings are presented in constant 2017 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," 2001-2018; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 502.30.

The median earnings (in constant 2017 dollars)<sup>2</sup> of young adults who worked full time, year round declined from 2000 to 2017 at all educational attainment levels, except for those who did not complete high school and those with a master's or higher degree: neither of these groups had a measurable change in median earnings between these two years. During this period, the median earnings of young adult high school completers declined from \$35,600 to \$32,000 (a 10 percent decrease), and the median earnings of those with some college but no degree declined from \$41,100 to \$35,000 (a 15 percent decrease). Similarly, the median earnings of young adults with an associate's degree declined from \$42,700 to \$38,900 (a 9 percent decrease), and the median earnings of young

adults with a bachelor's degree declined from \$56,800 to \$51,800 (a 9 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 2017. In 2000, the median earnings of young adult high school completers were \$9,800 higher than the median earnings of those who did not complete high school; in 2017, this difference was \$6,000. Differences between median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree and those who completed high school and between those with a master's or higher degree and those with a bachelor's degree did not change measurably during this same period.

**Figure 4. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment and sex: 2017**

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

<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," 2018. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 502.30.

In 2017, 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, ranging from 23 percent higher for those who did not complete high school to 38 percent higher for those with an associate's degree. For example, the median earnings of young adult males with a master's or higher degree (\$75,000) were 26 percent higher than those of their female counterparts (\$59,700), and the median earnings of young adult males with an associate's degree (\$44,800) were 38 percent higher than those of their female counterparts (\$32,400). The median earnings of young adult male high school completers (\$35,000) were 30 percent higher than those of their female counterparts (\$27,000).

The median earnings of White young adults who worked full time, year round exceeded the corresponding median earnings of Black young adults and Hispanic young adults at all attainment levels in 2017, except for those

with a master's or higher degree, where there were no measurable differences in median earnings between White young adults and Hispanic young adults. For instance, the median earnings in 2017 for young adults with a bachelor's degree were \$53,800 for White young adults, compared with \$45,700 for Hispanic young adults and \$41,700 for Black 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 White, Black, and Hispanic peers. For example, the median earnings in 2017 for young adults with a master's or higher degree were \$78,400 for Asian young adults, \$64,900 for White young adults, \$56,500 for Hispanic young adults, and \$54,800 for Black young adults. For young adults with an associate's or lower degree (i.e., an associate's degree, some college, high school completion, and less than high school completion), the median earnings for Asian young adults were not measurably different from those of their White, Black, and Hispanic peers.

**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.

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**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 502.30

**Related indicators and resources:** [Earnings and Employment \[Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups\]](#); [Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment](#); [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Holders \[web-only\]](#); [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); Employment status; High school completer; High school diploma; Master's degree; Median earnings; Racial/ethnic group