

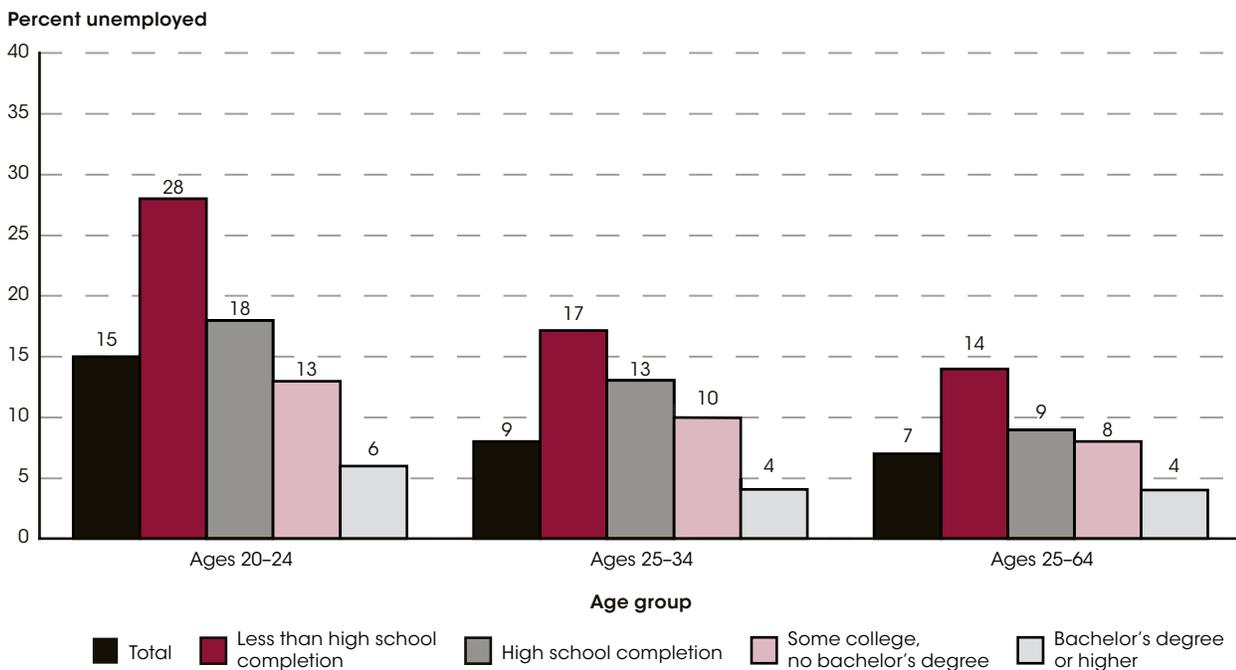
## Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

*In 2012, the unemployment rate for those with at least a bachelor's degree was lower than the rates for those with lower levels of educational attainment. During the most recent economic recession (December 2007 through June 2009), the unemployment rate increased less for those who had at least a bachelor's degree than for those who had less than a bachelor's degree.*

In 2012, some 15.5 percent of young adults ages 20–24 were unemployed, as were 9.2 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds. The unemployment rates for both of these younger age cohorts were higher than the unemployment rate for 25- to 64-year-olds (7.4 percent), which included the subset of 25- to 34-year-olds. This pattern was consistent across several levels of educational attainment in 2012, such as the attainment levels of high school completion and of some college education. Educational attainment

in this indicator refers to the highest level of education achieved (i.e., less than high school completion, high school completion, some college education, or a bachelor's degree or higher). In this indicator, the unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working *and who made specific efforts to find employment* during the prior 4 weeks. The civilian labor force refers to the civilian population who are employed or seeking employment.

**Figure 1. Unemployment rates, by age group and educational attainment: 2012**



NOTE: 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. Data for 20- to 24-year-olds exclude persons enrolled in school. High school completion includes equivalency credentials, such as the General Educational Development (GED) credential.

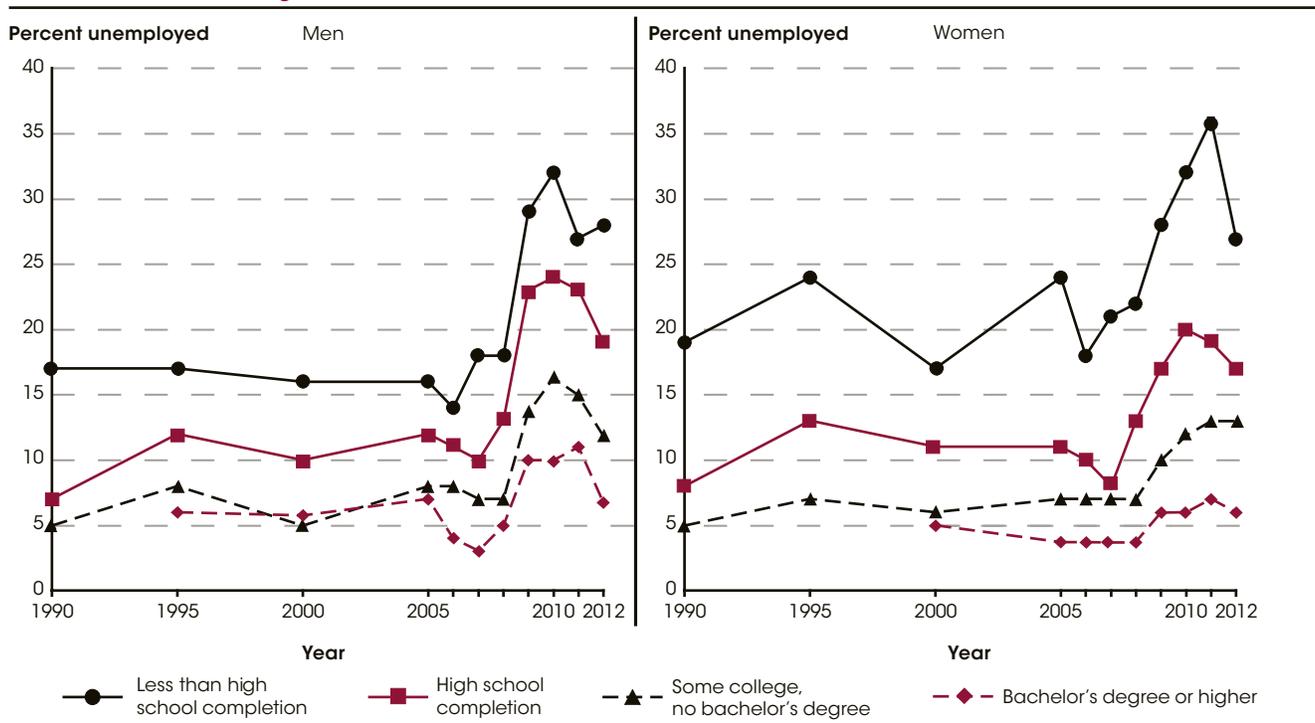
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, unpublished annual average data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), 2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 434.

For more information, see the Reader's Guide and the Guide to Sources.

Between 1990 and 2012, the unemployment rate for individuals without a bachelor's degree was generally higher than the rate for their peers with at least a bachelor's degree. This pattern was consistent for young adults (ages 20–24), 25- to 34-year-olds, and 25- to 64-year-olds. In 2012, for example, the unemployment rate for young adults (ages 20–24) was 27.6 percent for those who did not complete high school, 18.3 percent for those whose highest level of education was high school completion, and 12.7 percent for those with some college education, compared with an unemployment rate of 6.0 percent for those with at least a bachelor's degree. For 25- to 34-year-olds, the unemployment rates for those with some college education (10.1 percent), high school completers (12.8 percent), and those who did not complete high school (16.8 percent) were also higher than the unemployment rate for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (4.1 percent). This pattern of higher unemployment rates corresponding with lower levels of educational attainment also generally held across males and females for each age group from 1990 to 2012.

In 2012, for young adults ages 20–24, the unemployment rates of males and females were not measurably different at each level of educational attainment examined, although the overall unemployment rate was higher for males (16.6 percent) than for females (14.1 percent). For 25- to 64-year-olds, the unemployment rate overall as well as that for high school completers was higher for males (8.0 and 10.1 percent, respectively) than for females (6.8 and 8.1 percent, respectively). For individuals ages 25–34, the overall male unemployment rate and the rate for males with some college education (10.0 and 11.1 percent, respectively) were higher than the corresponding female unemployment rates (8.2 and 9.1 percent, respectively). However, the unemployment rate for males who did not complete high school (14.3 percent) was lower than that for their female counterparts (22.0 percent). For individuals ages 25–34 whose educational attainment was high school completion and for those with at least a bachelor's degree, the employment rates for males and females were not measurably different.

**Figure 2. Unemployment rates of persons 20 to 24 years old, by sex and educational attainment: Selected years, 1990 through 2012**



NOTE: 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. Data for 20- to 24-year-olds exclude persons enrolled in school. High school completion includes equivalency credentials, such as the General Educational Development (GED) credential. The unemployment rates for males and females with a bachelor's degree or higher in 1990 as well as for females with a bachelor's degree or higher in 1995 were suppressed because reporting standards were not met.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, unpublished annual average data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), selected years, 1990 through 2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 435 and 436.

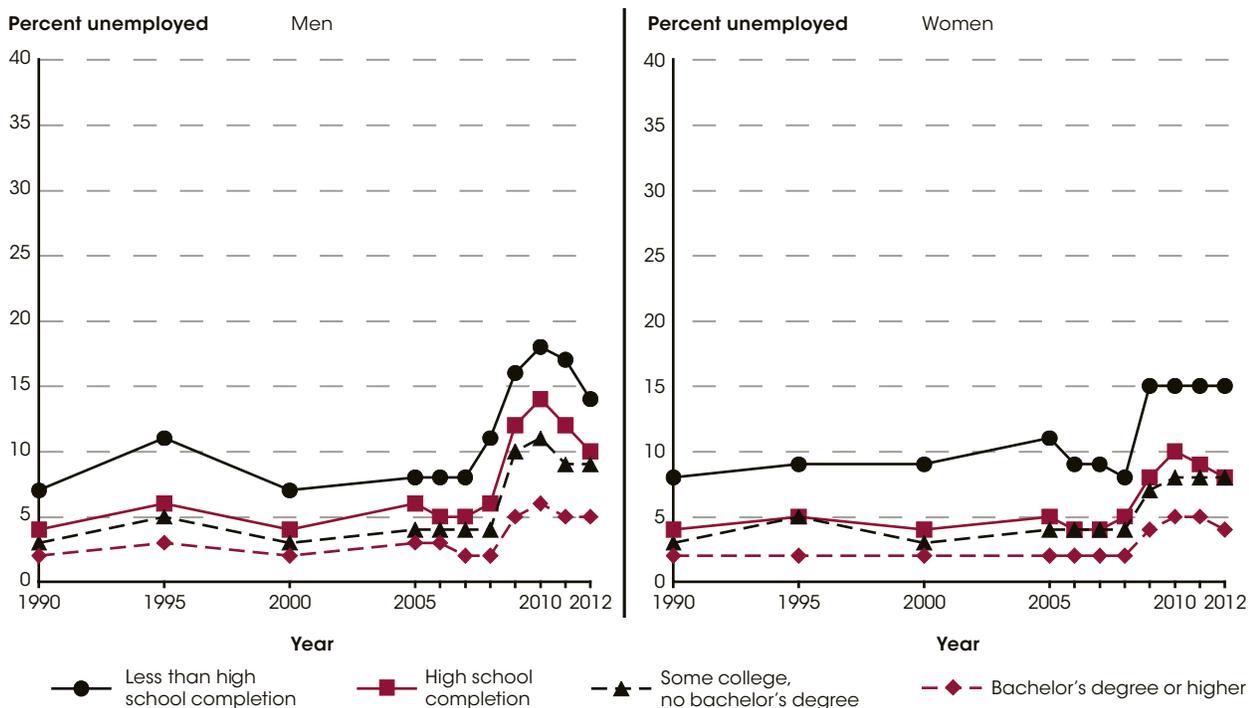
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During the recent economic recession and recovery from 2008 to 2012, the magnitude of change in unemployment rates varied by educational attainment. In general, compared with high school completers and those who did not complete high school, individuals with at least a bachelor's degree were affected to a lesser extent by the recession in terms of unemployment. For young adults ages 20–24, the unemployment rates for males and females generally increased from 2008 to 2010 at each level of educational attainment. From 2008 to 2010, the 14.3-percentage-point increase (from 18.2 to 32.4 percent) in the unemployment rate for males who did not complete high school and the 10.5-percentage-point increase (from 13.3 to 23.7 percent) for male high school completers were higher than the 5.1-percentage-point increase (from 4.7 to 9.8 percent) for males with at least a bachelor's degree. For female young adults, the unemployment rate for those who had at least a bachelor's degree did not change measurably between 2008 and 2010. Although the unemployment rate for female young adults increased from 2008 to 2010 for those with some college education (from 6.5 to 12.1 percent), for those who were high school completers (from 12.5 to 19.9 percent), and for those who did not complete high school (from 21.6 to 32.2 percent), these unemployment rate increases across educational

attainment levels were not measurably different from each other.

As the economy was recovering from 2010 to 2012, unemployment rates for young adults ages 20–24 did not change measurably within any of the educational attainment levels for females or males, with the exceptions of males with some college education and male high school completers. The unemployment rates for both males with some college education and male high school completers were lower in 2012 (12.0 and 19.0 percent, respectively) than in 2010 (16.4 and 23.7 percent, respectively). Compared with 2008, when the recession started, the unemployment rates for both male and female young adult high school completers as well as both males and females with some college education remained higher in 2012. The unemployment rate for male young adults who did not complete high school also remained higher in 2012: some 27.8 percent were unemployed in 2012, compared with 18.2 percent in 2008. However, for male and female young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher, the 2012 unemployment rate was not measurably different from the rate in 2008. In addition, the 2012 unemployment rate for female young adults who did not complete high school was not measurably different from the 2008 rate.

**Figure 3. Unemployment rates of persons 25 to 64 years old, by sex and educational attainment: Selected years, 1990 through 2012**



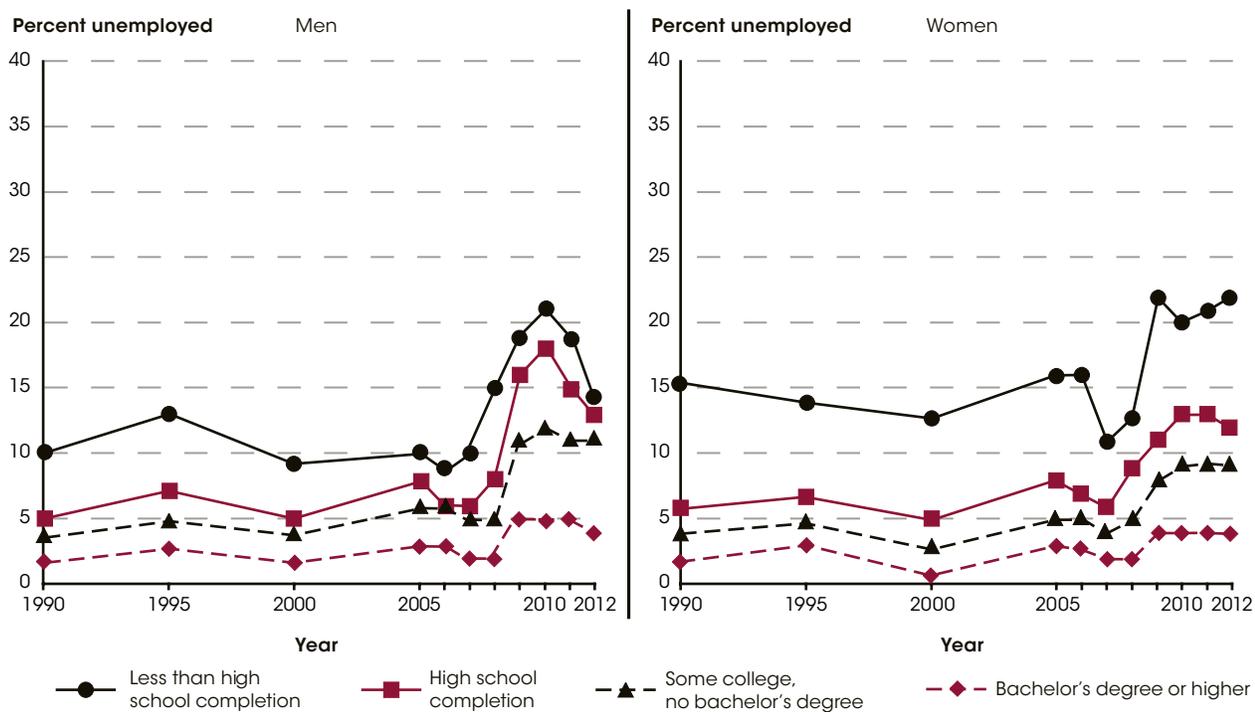
NOTE: The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons in the civilian labor force who are not working and who made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the prior 4 weeks. The civilian labor force consists of all civilians who are employed or seeking employment. High school completion includes equivalency credentials, such as the General Educational Development (GED) credential.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, unpublished annual average data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), selected years, 1990 through 2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 435 and 436.

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As was the case for male young adults ages 20–24, unemployment rates for both male and female 25- to 64-year-olds also increased from 2008 to 2010 at each level of educational attainment. The increase in the unemployment rate from 2008 to 2010 was higher for both males and females who did not complete high school, who did complete high school, and who had some college education than for both males and females who had at least a bachelor’s degree. From 2008 to 2010, for 25- to 64-year-olds, the unemployment rate increased 6.9 percentage points (from 10.9 to 17.8 percent) for males who did not complete high school, 7.5 percentage points (from 6.3 to 13.8 percent) for male high school completers, and 6.0 percentage points (from 4.2 to 10.2 percent) for males with some college education, whereas it increased 3.1 percentage points (from 2.0 to 5.1 percent) for males with at least a bachelor’s degree. During the same period, the unemployment rate increases were 6.5 percentage points (from 8.5 to 15.0 percent) for females who did not complete high school, 4.8 percentage

points (from 5.1 to 9.8 percent) for female high school completers, and 3.3 percentage points (from 4.2 to 7.5 percent) for females with some college education, compared with an increase of 2.2 percentage points (from 2.1 to 4.3 percent) for females with at least a bachelor’s degree. From 2010 to 2012, unemployment rates for 25- to 64-year-old males decreased at each level of educational attainment: the decreases were 0.8 percentage points (from 5.1 to 4.3 percent) for males with at least a bachelor’s degree, 2.0 percentage points (from 10.2 to 8.2 percent) for males with some college education, 3.8 percentage points (from 13.8 to 10.1 percent) for male high school completers, and 4.2 percentage points (from 17.8 to 13.6 percent) for males who did not complete high school. The unemployment rate for female high school completers also decreased from 2010 to 2012 (from 9.8 to 8.1 percent). Nevertheless, for both male and female 25- to 64-year-olds at each level of educational attainment unemployment rates in 2012 remained higher than they had been in 2008.

**Figure 4. Unemployment rates of persons 25 to 34 years old, by sex and educational attainment: Selected years, 1990 through 2012**



NOTE: 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. High school completion includes equivalency credentials, such as the General Educational Development (GED) credential.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, unpublished annual average data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), selected years, 1990 through 2012. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 435 and 436.

For 25- to 34-year-olds, the change in unemployment rates from 2008 to 2010 followed a pattern similar to that of the change in unemployment rates for 25- to 64-year-olds. For example, from 2008 to 2010 the unemployment rate increases were 9.3 percentage points (from 8.5 to 17.8 percent) for male high school completers and 6.8 percentage points (from 5.0 to 11.8 percent) for males with some college education, compared with a 2.7-percentage-point increase (from 2.1 to 4.8 percent) for males with at least a bachelor's degree. For females, from 2008 to 2010 the unemployment rates increased 4.3 percentage points (from 5.1 to 9.3 percent) for those with some college education and 6.7 percentage

points (from 12.8 to 19.5 percent) for those who did not complete high school, compared with a 2.0-percentage-point increase (from 2.3 to 4.3 percent) for those with at least a bachelor's degree. Between 2010 and 2012, the unemployment rate did not change measurably for females ages 25–34 overall or at any level of educational attainment. The unemployment rate for males, however, was lower in 2012 than in 2010 for those who did not complete high school (14.3 vs. 20.7 percent) and for high school completers (13.5 vs. 17.8 percent). For both male and female 25- to 34-year-olds, the unemployment rate remained higher in 2012 than in 2008, except in the case of males who did not complete high school.

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**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 434, 435, 436

**Glossary:** Bachelor's degree, Educational attainment, High school completer