

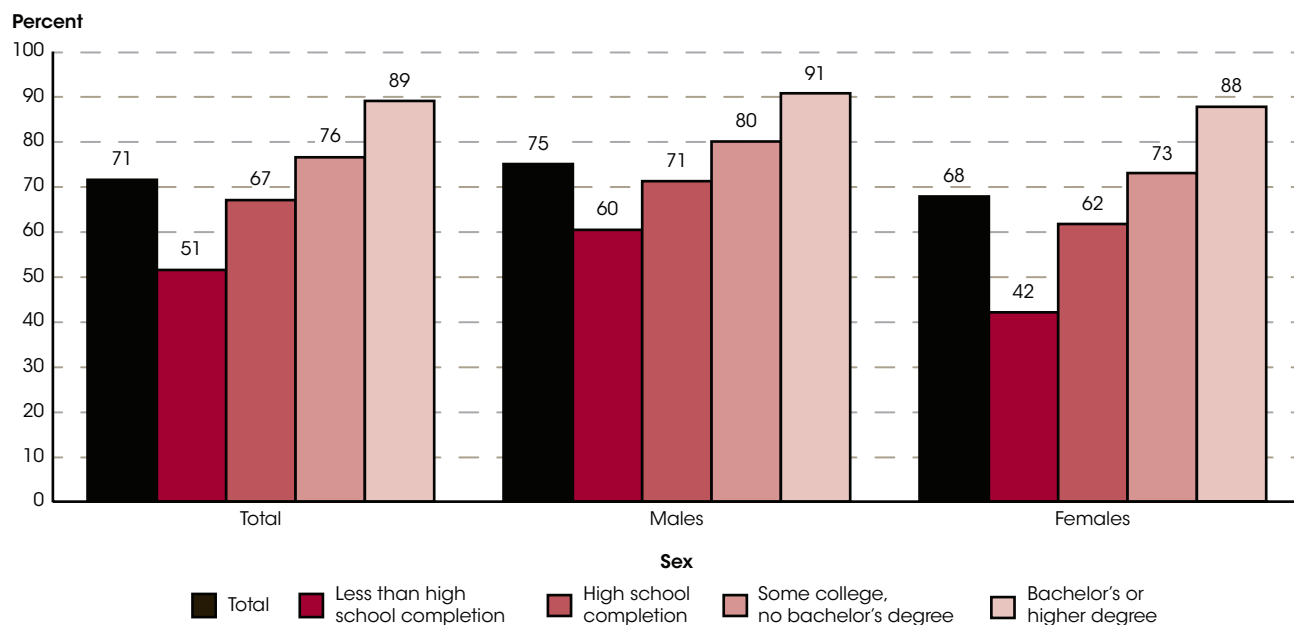
## Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

The employment rate was higher for people with higher levels of educational attainment than for those with lower levels of educational attainment. For example, among 20- to 24-year-olds in 2015, the employment rate was 89 percent for those with a bachelor's or higher degree and 51 percent for those who did not complete high school.

This indicator examines recent trends in two distinct yet related measures of labor market conditions—the employment rate (also known as the employment to population ratio) and the unemployment rate—by age group and educational attainment level. For each age group, the *employment rate* is the number of persons in that age group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian population in that age group. The *unemployment rate* is the percentage of persons in the civilian 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. Trends in the unemployment rate reflect net changes in the relative number of people who are looking for work, while the employment rate reflects whether the economy is generating jobs relative to population growth in a specific age group.

Figure 1. Employment to population ratios of 20- to 24-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2015



NOTE: For each group presented, the employment to population ratio, or employment rate, is the number of persons in that group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian population in that group. Data exclude persons enrolled in school. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the 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 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, unpublished annual average data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 501.50, 501.60, and 501.70.

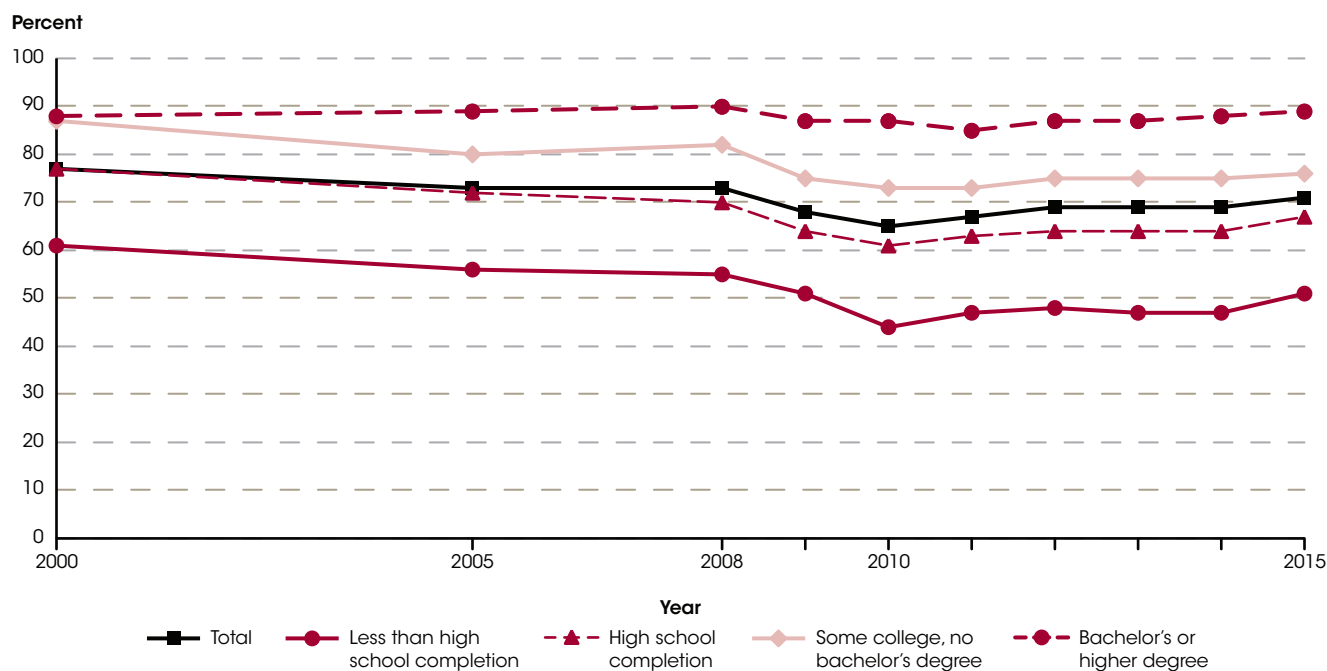
The employment rate was higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, in 2015, the employment rate for 20- to 24-year-olds (also referred to as "young adults" in this indicator) with a bachelor's degree or higher was higher than the rate for young adults with some college but no bachelor's degree (89 vs. 76 percent). The employment rate for young adults with

some college was higher than the rate for those who had completed high school (67 percent), which was, in turn, higher than the employment rate for those who had not finished high school (51 percent). This pattern of a positive relationship between employment rates and educational attainment was also seen for 25- to 64-year-olds (also referred to as "older adults" in this indicator).

Employment rates were generally higher for young adult males than females at each level of educational attainment in 2015. The overall employment rate for young adult males was higher than the rate for young adult females (75 vs. 68 percent). The employment rate was also higher for male than for female young adults who had some college (80 vs. 73 percent). Similarly, the employment rate for young adults who had completed high school

was higher for males than for females (71 vs. 62 percent), and the rate for young adults who had not completed high school was higher for males than for females (60 vs. 42 percent). However, there was no measurable difference between young adult males and females who had a bachelor's degree (91 and 88 percent, respectively). For older adults, employment rates were higher for males than for females at each level of educational attainment.

**Figure 2. Employment to population ratios of 20- to 24-year-olds, by educational attainment: Selected years, 2000 through 2015**

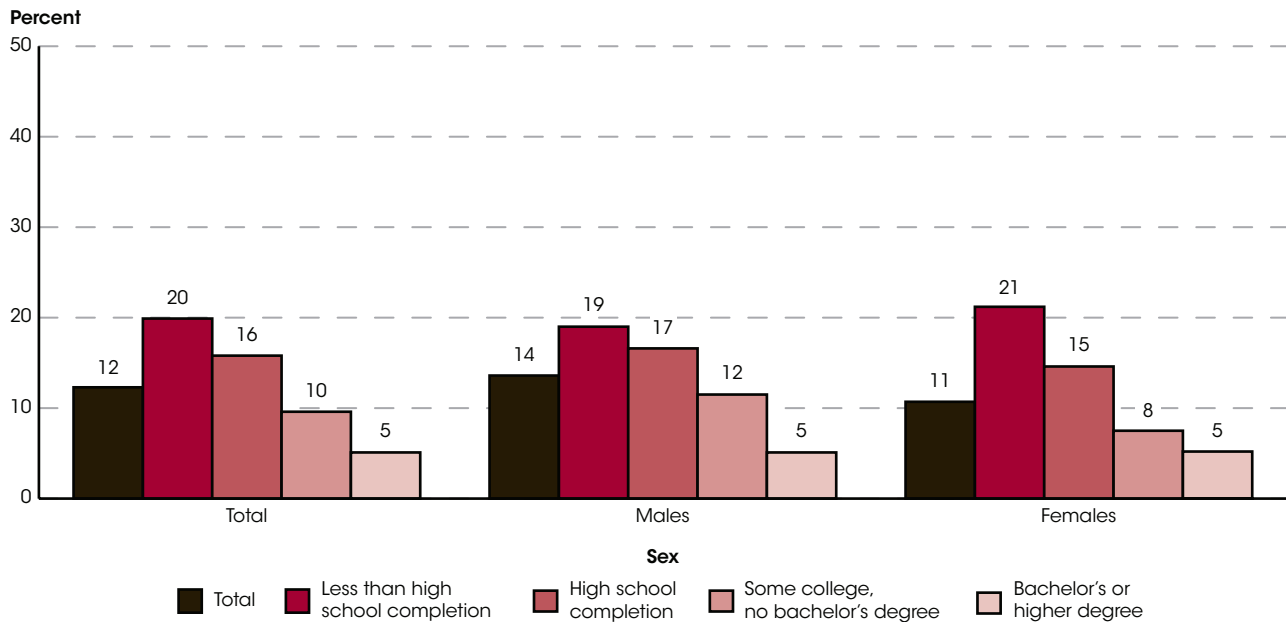


NOTE: For each group presented, the employment to population ratio, or employment rate, is the number of persons in that age group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian population in that age group. Data exclude persons enrolled in school. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the 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, 2000 through 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 501.50.

During the period from 2008 to 2010, the U.S. economy experienced a recession.<sup>1</sup> For young adults, the employment rate was lower in 2008, when the recession began, than it was in 2000 (73 vs. 77 percent). The employment rate was even lower in 2010 (65 percent), after the end of the recession, than it was in 2008. While the employment rate for young adults was higher in 2015 (71 percent) than in 2010, the 2015 rate was still lower

than the rates in 2008 and 2000. Similar patterns in the employment rate were found for young adults with some college and young adults who had completed high school, as well as for older adults. For young adults who had not completed high school, the employment rate was higher in 2015 (51 percent) than it had been in 2010 (44 percent), but was not measurably different than it had been in 2008 (55 percent).

Figure 3. Unemployment rates of 20- to 24-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2015



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 exclude persons enrolled in school. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

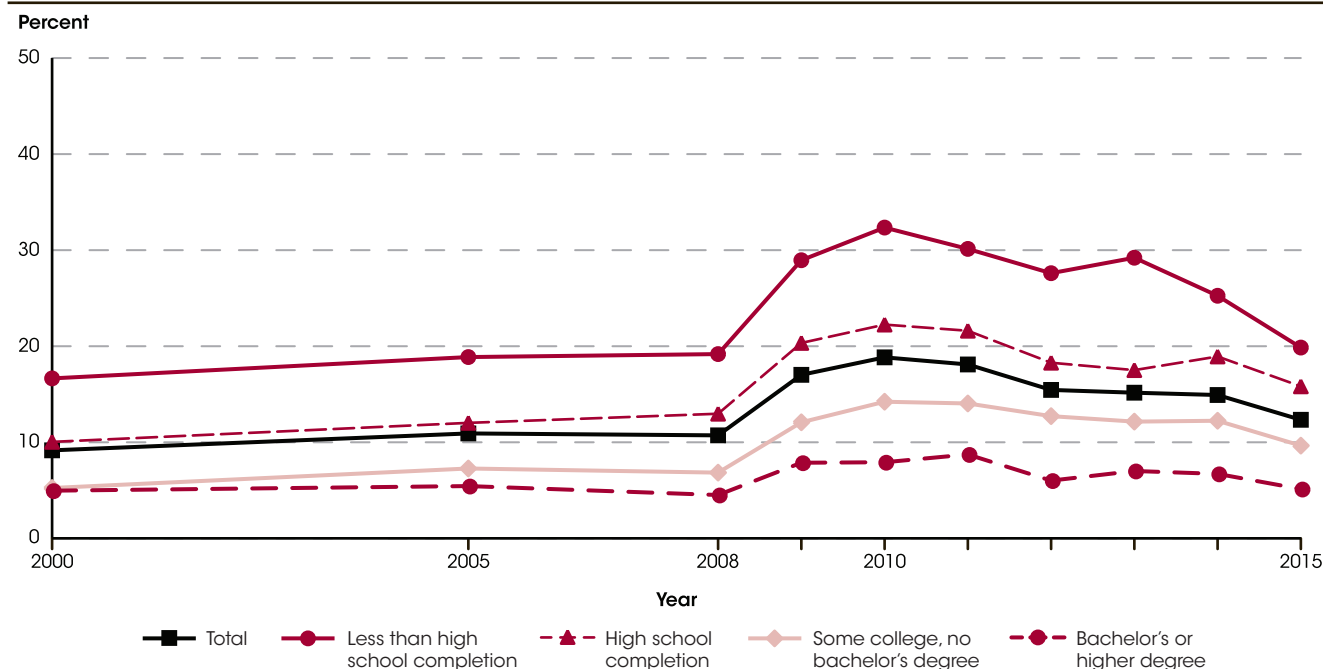
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, unpublished annual average data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90.

Generally, the unemployment rate was lower for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, in 2015, the unemployment rate for young adults with at least a bachelor's degree was lower than the rate for young adults with some college (5 vs. 10 percent), and the unemployment rate for young adults with some college was lower than the rate for those who had completed high school (16 percent). This pattern of unemployment rates being lower for those with higher levels of educational attainment was generally also seen for males and females. Specifically, for both males and females, unemployment rates were generally lowest for those who had at least

a bachelor's degree (5 percent in each case), and were lower for those who had some college (12 and 8 percent, respectively) than for those who had not attended college (15 to 21 percent).

In 2015, the overall unemployment rate for 20- to 24-year-olds was higher for males than for females (14 vs. 11 percent); the rate for 20- to 24-year-olds who had some college was also higher for males than for females (12 vs. 8 percent). However, there were no measurable differences between unemployment rates of male and female 20- to 24-year-olds at other levels of educational attainment.

Figure 4. Unemployment rates of 20- to 24-year-olds, by educational attainment: Selected years, 2000 through 2015



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 exclude persons enrolled in school. "Some college, no bachelor's degree" includes persons with an associate's degree. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the 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, 2000 through 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 501.80.

For young adults, the unemployment rate at the end of the recession in 2010 (19 percent) was higher than it was both at the beginning of the recession in 2008 and prior to the recession in 2000 (11 and 9 percent, respectively). In 2015, the unemployment rate for young adults (12 percent) was lower than it was in 2010, but higher than it was in both 2008 and 2000. Similar patterns were found for young adults with some college and young adults who had graduated from high school. For each of the four levels

of educational attainment, the unemployment rate for young adults was lower in 2015 than it was in 2010. Also, the unemployment rate for young adults who either had some college or had completed high school was higher in 2015 than in 2008. There were no measurable differences between the unemployment rates in 2015 and 2008 for young adults who had not completed high school and for young adults who had earned a bachelor's degree.

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The National Bureau of Economic Research determined that the recession began in December 2007 and continued through June 2009. See <http://www.nber.org/cycles.html>.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, tables 501.50, 501.60, 501.70, 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90

**Related indicators:** Annual Earnings of Young Adults, Trends in Employment Rates by Educational Attainment [*The Condition of Education 2013 Spotlight*]

**Glossary:** Bachelor's degree, College, Educational attainment (Current Population Survey), Employment status, High school completer