

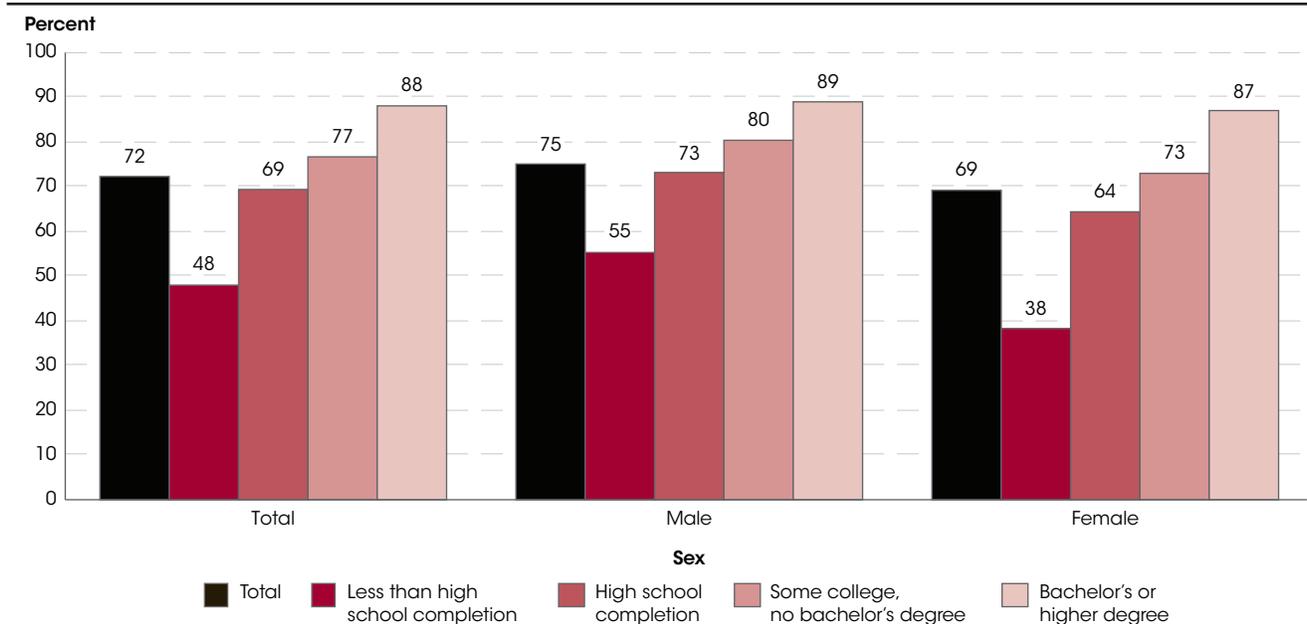
Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

In 2016, 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, the employment rate was 88 percent for those with a bachelor's or higher degree and 48 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 and the unemployment rate. The *employment rate* (also known as the employment to population ratio) is the number of persons in a given group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian population in that 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. Both the employment and unemployment rates exclude 20- to 24-year-olds (also referred to as “young adults” in this indicator) who are enrolled in school. 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 rates of 20- to 24-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2016



NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); this figure includes data only on the civilian population (excludes all military personnel). For each group presented, the employment rate, or employment to population ratio, 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.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, March 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 501.50, 501.60, and 501.70.

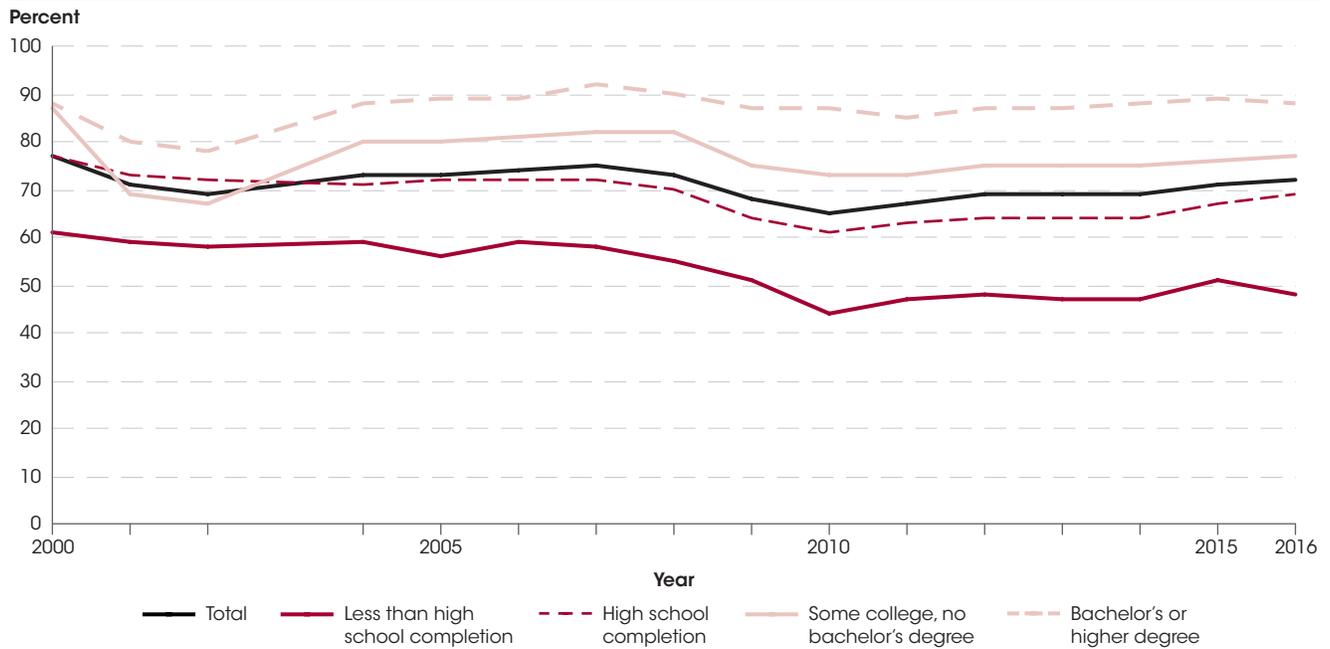
In 2016, the employment rate was higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, the employment rate was highest for young adults with a bachelor’s or higher degree (88 percent). The employment rate for young adults with some college¹ (77 percent) was higher than the rate for those who had completed high

school² (69 percent), which was, in turn, higher than the employment rate for those who had not finished high school (48 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).

Among young adults, employment rates were higher for males than for females at most levels of educational attainment in 2016. The employment rate for young adult males was higher than the rate for young adult females both overall (75 vs. 69 percent) and among those with some college (80 vs. 73 percent), those who had completed high school (73 vs. 64 percent), and those who had not

completed high school (55 vs. 38 percent). However, there was no measurable difference between the employment rates of young adult males and females with a bachelor's or higher degree. For older adults, employment rates were higher for males than for females at each level of educational attainment.

Figure 2. Employment rates of 20- to 24-year-olds, by educational attainment: Selected years, 2000 through 2016

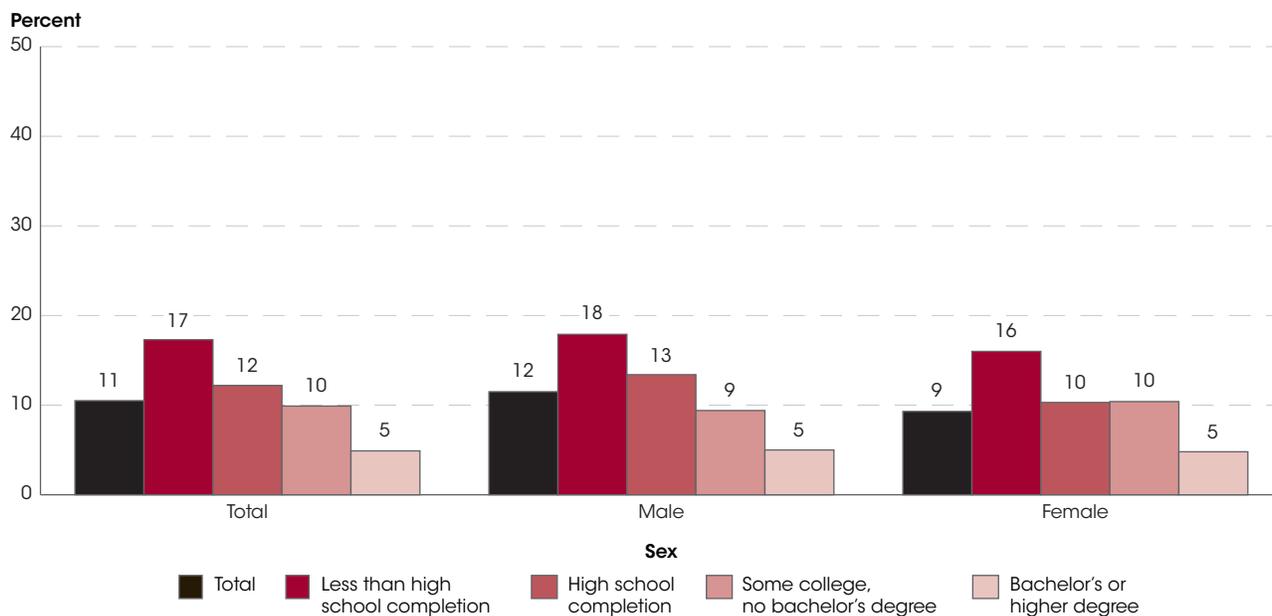


NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); this figure includes data only on the civilian population (excludes all military personnel). For each group presented, the employment rate, or employment to population ratio, 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 for all data years except 2001 and 2002. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, March 2000 through 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2002 and 2003*, table 378; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2013, 2014, and 2016*, table 501.50.

From December 2007 through June 2009, the U.S. economy experienced a recession.³ For young adults, the employment rate was lower in 2008, near the beginning of the recession, than it was in 2000, prior to the recession (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 2016 (72 percent) than in 2010 (65 percent), the 2016 rate was lower than the rate in 2000 (77 percent) and not measurably different from the rate in 2008 (73 percent). During these years, patterns in the employment rate for young adults varied by educational

attainment. For young adults who had not completed high school, the employment rate in 2016 (48 percent) was lower than in 2000 (61 percent) and 2008 (55 percent), but not measurably different from the rate in 2010. For young adults with a bachelor's or higher degree, the employment rate in 2016 (88 percent) was not measurably different from the rates in 2000, 2008, and 2010. For older adults, the overall employment rate in 2016 (74 percent) was lower than in 2000 (78 percent) and 2008 (76 percent), but higher than in 2010 (72 percent). This pattern was also found among older adults who had a bachelor's or higher degree and those with some college.

Figure 3. Unemployment rates of 20- to 24-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2016



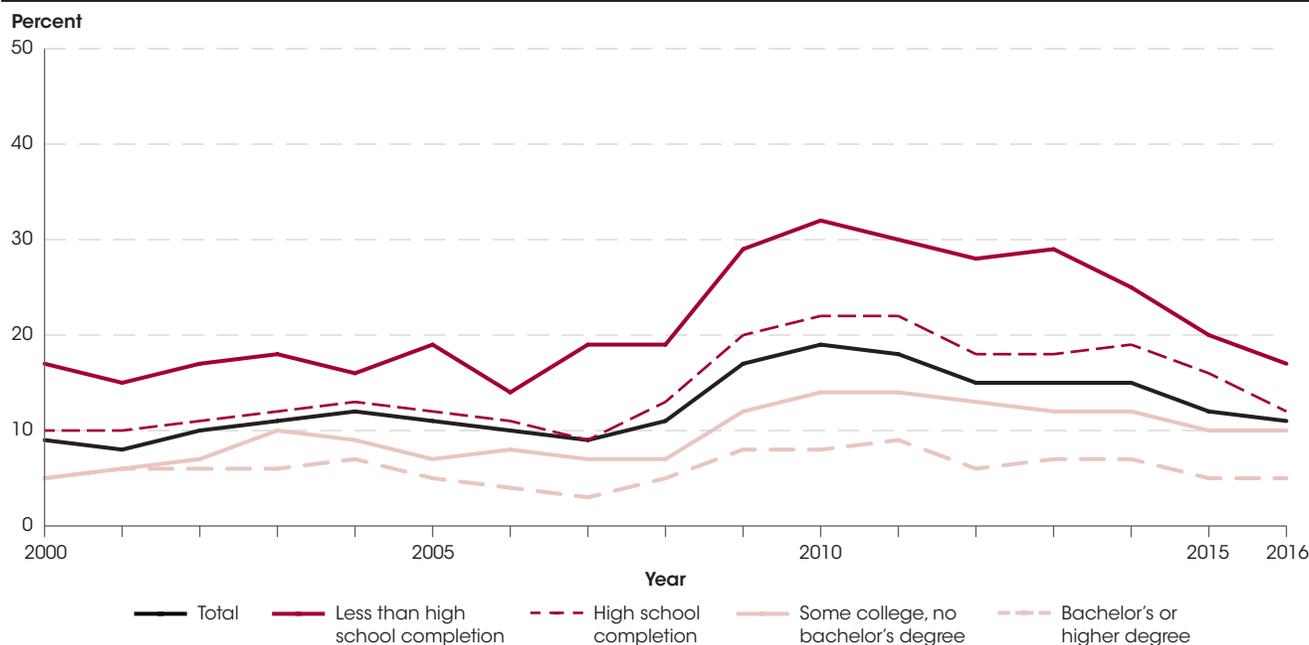
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); this figure includes data only on the civilian population (excludes all military personnel). The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons 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.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, March 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90.

Generally, unemployment rates in 2016 were lower for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, the unemployment rate for young adults with a bachelor's or higher degree (5 percent) was lower than the rates for young adults with some college (10 percent), those who had completed high school (12 percent), and those who had not completed high school (17 percent). However, the unemployment rate for young adults with some college was not measurably different from the rate for those who had completed high school. For both young adult males and young adult females, unemployment rates were lowest for those who had a bachelor's or higher degree (5 percent for both). For young adult males the rate was also lower for those who had some college (9 percent) than for those who had completed high school (13 percent) and those who had not completed high school (18 percent). For young adult females, there was

no significant difference between the unemployment rates for those who had some college, those who had completed high school, and those who had not completed high school. The same pattern of lower unemployment rates for individuals with higher levels of education was also observed for older adult males and older adult females.

In 2016, the overall unemployment rate for young adults was higher for males than for females (12 vs. 9 percent). However, there were no measurable differences between the unemployment rates of male and female young adults at any individual level of educational attainment. For older adults, there were no measurable differences between the unemployment rates of males and females, neither overall nor at any individual level of educational attainment.

Figure 4. Unemployment rates of 20- to 24-year-olds, by educational attainment: 2000 through 2016



NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); this figure includes data only on the civilian population (excludes all military personnel). 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 for all data years except 2001 and 2002. "High school completion" includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, March 2000 through 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2003*, table 380; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2013, 2014, and 2016*, table 501.80.

Both overall and for each of the four levels of educational attainment, the unemployment rates for both young adults and older adults were lower in 2016 than they were in 2010. For young adults, the post-recession unemployment rate in 2010 (19 percent) was higher than it was both at the beginning of the recession in 2008 (11 percent) and prior to the recession in 2000 (9 percent).

In 2016, while the unemployment rate for young adults (11 percent) was lower than it was in 2010 (19 percent), it was not measurably different from the rates in 2008 and 2000. Similar patterns were found for young adults with a bachelor's or higher degree, those who had completed high school, and those who had not completed high school.

Endnotes:

¹ In this indicator, "some college" includes those who have attended college, but did not obtain a bachelor's degree. This includes those who have completed an associate's degree for all years except 2001 and 2002. In 2001 and 2002, "some college, no degree" and "associate's degree" data were collected separately.

² Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.
³ See <http://www.nber.org/cycles.html>.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 501.50, 501.60, 501.70, 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90

Related indicators and resources: Annual Earnings of Young Adults, Employment of STEM College Graduates, Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Recipients, Trends in Employment Rates by Educational Attainment [*The Condition of Education 2013 Spotlight*], Post-Bachelor's Employment Outcomes by Sex and Race/Ethnicity [*The Condition of Education 2016 Spotlight*], Disability Rates and Employment Status by Educational Attainment [*The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight*]

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