

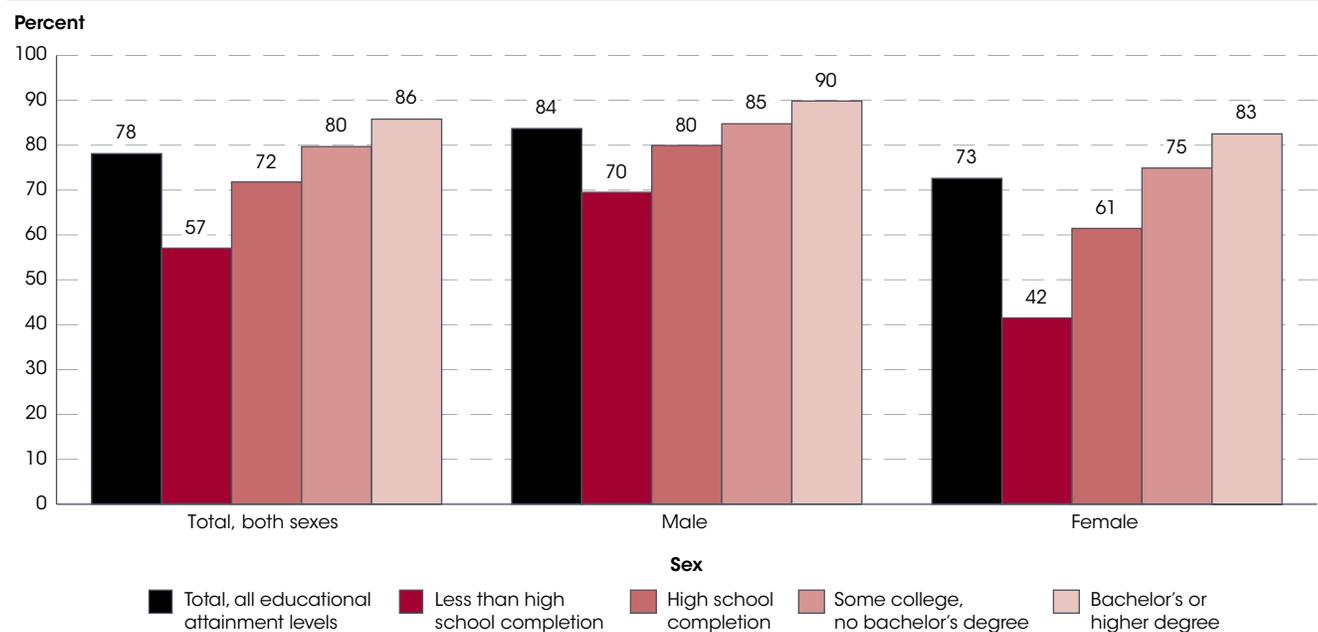
## Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

In 2017, the employment rate was higher for young adults with higher levels of educational attainment than for those with lower levels of educational attainment. For example, the employment rate was 86 percent for young adults with a bachelor’s or higher degree and 57 percent for those who had not completed high school.

Focusing on 25- to 34-year-olds (referred to here as “young adults”), 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.

Figure 1. Employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2017



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 employment rate, or employment to population ratio, is the number of persons in each group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian population in that group. “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 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 501.50, 501.60, and 501.70.

In 2017, 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 (86 percent). The employment rate for young adults with some college<sup>1</sup> (80 percent) was higher than the rate for those who had completed high school<sup>2</sup> (72 percent), which was, in turn, higher than the employment rate for those who had not completed high school (57 percent). The same pattern was observed among

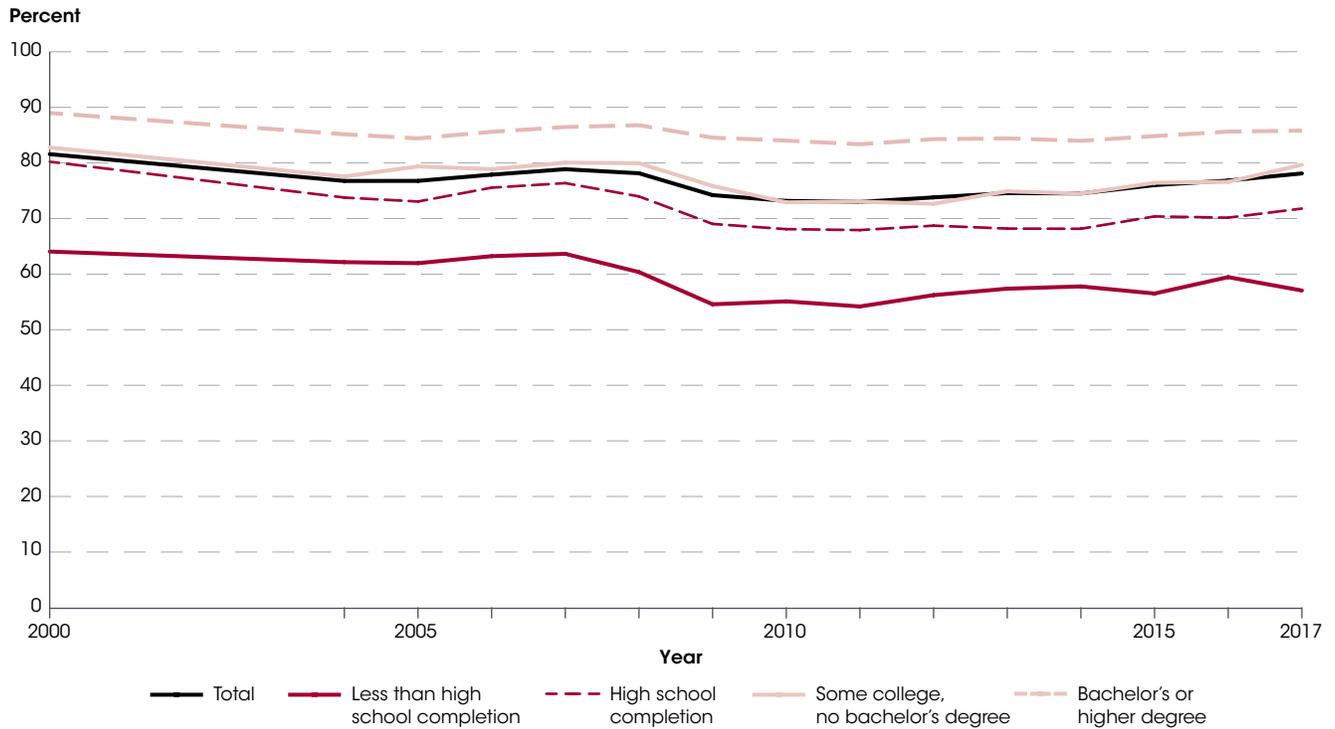
both young adult males and young adult females. For example, the employment rate for young adult females was highest for those with a bachelor’s or higher degree (83 percent) and lowest for those who had not completed high school (42 percent).

Employment rates were higher for young adult males than for young adult females in 2017, overall and at all levels of educational attainment. Specifically, the employment rate

for young adult males was higher than the rate for young adult females overall (84 vs. 73 percent) and among those with a bachelor's or higher degree (90 vs. 83 percent), those with some college (85 vs. 75 percent), those who had completed high school (80 vs. 61 percent), and those who had not completed high school (70 vs. 42 percent). The difference in employment rates between young adult males and females (also referred to in this indicator as

the gender gap) was generally narrower at higher levels of educational attainment. For instance, the gender gap was 7 percentage points for those with a bachelor's or higher degree. In comparison, the gender gap was 18 percentage points for those who had completed high school and 28 percentage points for those who had not completed high school.

**Figure 2. Employment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by educational attainment: Selected years, 2000 through 2017**

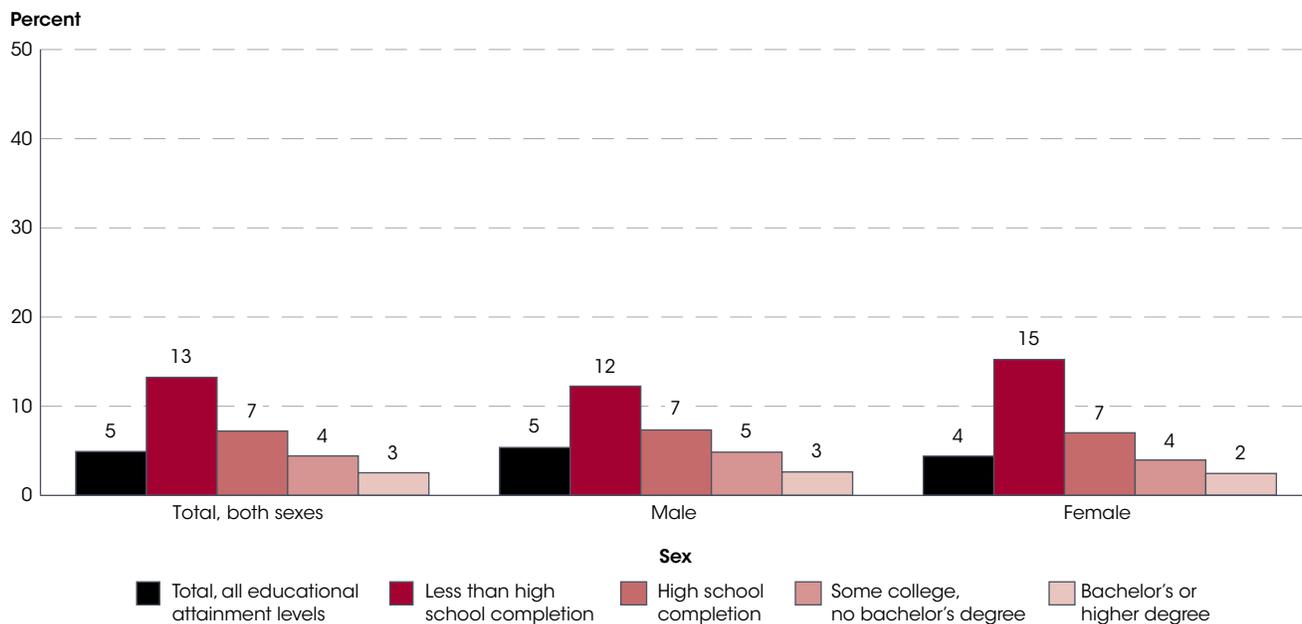


NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); this figure includes data only on the civilian population (excludes all military personnel). The employment rate, or employment to population ratio, is the number of persons in each group who are employed as a percentage of the civilian population in that group. "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, selected years, March 2000 through 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2017*, table 501.50.

From December 2007 through June 2009, the U.S. economy experienced a recession.<sup>3</sup> For young adults overall, the employment rate was lower in 2010 (73 percent), immediately after the recession, than in 2000 (82 percent), prior to the recession. The employment rate then increased from 2010 to 2017, to 78 percent, but this rate was still lower than the rate in 2000. During these years, the same patterns in employment rates were

observed for young adults with a bachelor's or higher degree, for those with some college, and for those who had completed high school. However, for young adults who had not completed high school, the employment rate in 2017 (57 percent) was not measurably different from the rate in 2010 but was lower than the rate in 2000 (64 percent).

Figure 3. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by sex and educational attainment: 2017



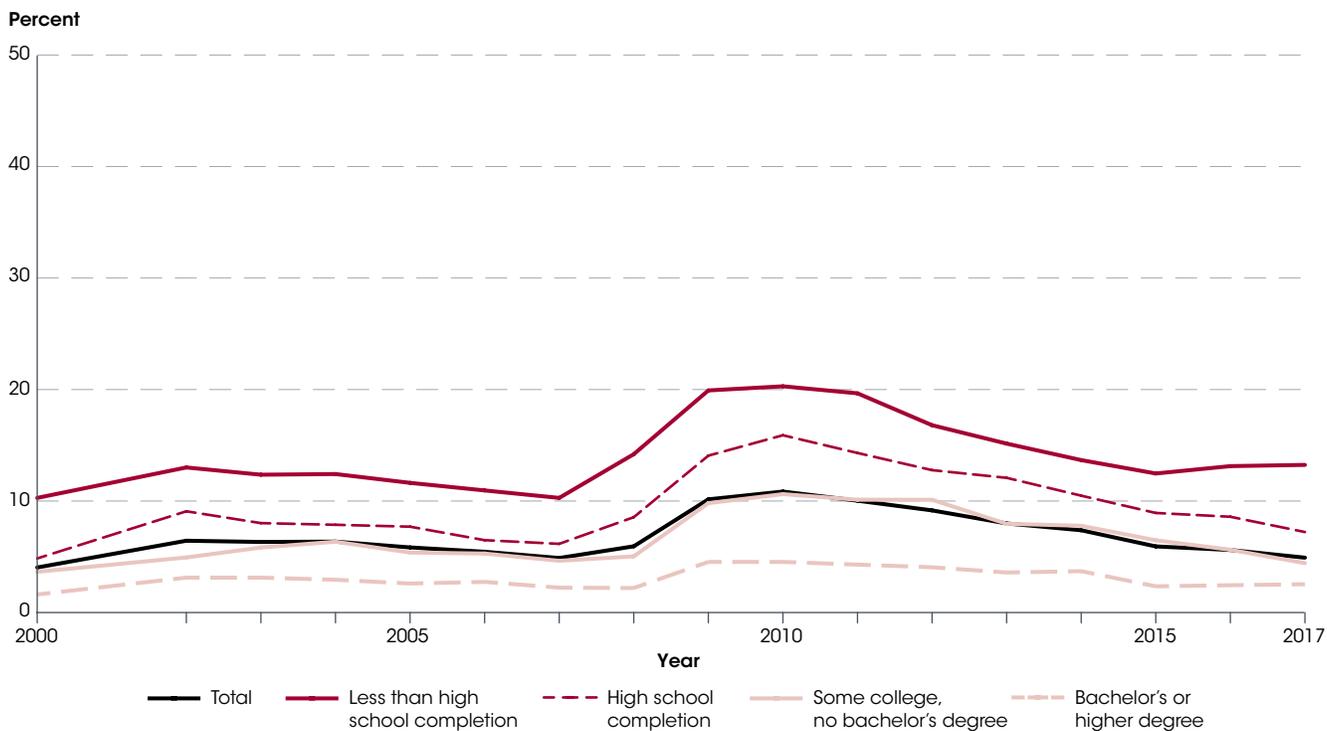
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); this figure includes data only on the civilian population (excludes all military personnel). The unemployment rate is the percentage of persons 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. "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 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90.

The unemployment rate in 2017 was lower for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, the unemployment rate was lowest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (3 percent). The unemployment rate was lower for young adults with some college (4 percent) than for those who had completed high school (7 percent), which was, in turn, lower than the rate for those who had not completed high school (13 percent). This pattern was observed for both young adult males and females. For example, the unemployment rate for young adult males

was lowest for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (3 percent) and highest for those who had not completed high school (12 percent).

In 2017, the unemployment rate for young adults overall was higher for males than for females (5 vs. 4 percent). However, there were no measurable differences between the unemployment rates of young adult males and females at any individual level of educational attainment.

**Figure 4. Unemployment rates of 25- to 34-year-olds, by educational attainment: Selected years, 2000 through 2017**



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. "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, selected years, March 2000 through 2017. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2013* and *2017*, table 501.80.

For young adults overall, the unemployment rate was higher in 2010 (11 percent), immediately after the recession, than in 2000 (4 percent), prior to the recession. The unemployment rate then decreased from 2010 to 2017, to 5 percent, but this rate was still higher than the rate in 2000. During these years, the same patterns in unemployment rates were observed for young adults

with a bachelor's or higher degree and for those who had completed high school. For young adults with some college and for those who had not completed high school, the unemployment rates in 2010 were also higher than in 2000, and the rates decreased from 2010 to 2017; however, the rates in 2017 were not measurably different from the rates in 2000.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> In this indicator, "some college" includes those with an associate's degree, and those who have attended college but have not obtained a bachelor's degree.  
<sup>2</sup> Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED.

<sup>3</sup> National Bureau of Economic Research. (2010). *U.S. Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions*. Retrieved January 23, 2018, from <http://www.nber.org/cycles.html>.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 501.50, 501.60, 501.70, 501.80, 501.85, and 501.90

**Related indicators and resources:** [Annual Earnings of Young Adults](#); [Disability Rates and Employment Status by Educational Attainment](#) [*The Condition of Education 2017 Spotlight*]; [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Recipients](#); [Post-College Employment Outcomes by Field of Study and Race/Ethnicity](#) [*The Condition of Education 2016 Spotlight*]; [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