

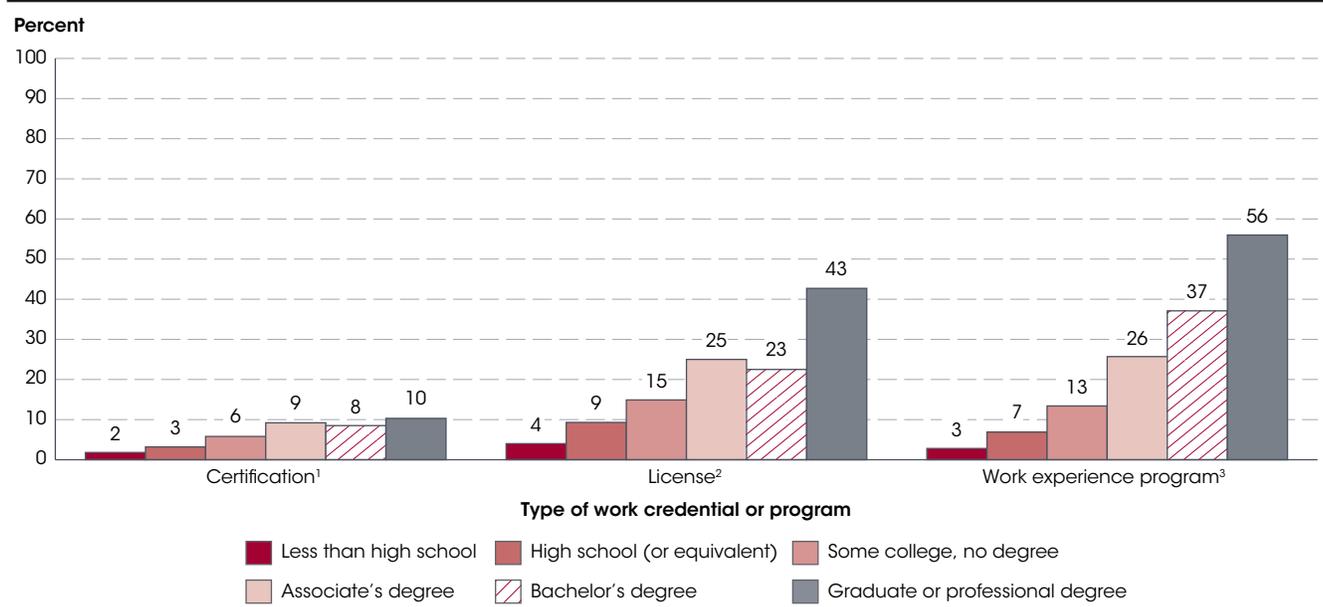
Nondegree Work Credentials and Work Experience Programs

In addition to earning educational credentials, preparation for the workforce can include the earning of “nondegree” work credentials, such as certifications and licenses, as well as the completion of work experience programs, such as internships and apprenticeships. In 2016, some 6 percent of 16- to 65-year-olds reported having a currently active certification, 18 percent reported having a currently active license, and 21 percent reported having completed a work experience program. The percentages of adults with a certification, with a license, and who had completed a work experience program were higher for college graduates than for non-college graduates.

This indicator presents 2016 data on U.S. adults’ preparation for the workforce, focusing on nondegree work credentials and work experience programs. Nondegree work credentials include occupational certifications and licenses.¹ A *certification* is an occupational credential awarded by a certification body—such as a professional association or certifying board—based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job. A *license* is an occupational credential

awarded by a government agency that constitutes legal authority to do a specific job. *Work experience programs* include internships, co-ops, practicums, clerkships, externships, residencies, clinical experiences, apprenticeships, and similar programs. In 2016, some 6 percent of noninstitutionalized 16- to 65-year-olds who were not enrolled in high school (referred to as adults in this indicator) reported having a certification, 18 percent reported having a license, and 21 percent reported having completed a work experience program.

Figure 1. Percentage of 16- to 65-year-olds who have work credentials or have completed a work experience program, by highest level of education: 2016



¹ A certification is an occupational credential awarded by a certification body—such as a professional association or certifying board—based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job; examples include Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification and medical technician certification.

² A license is an occupational credential awarded by a government agency that constitutes legal authority to do a specific job; examples include a medical license and an electrician's license.

³ A work experience program is defined in the survey as an internship, co-op, practicum, clerkship, externship, residency, clinical experience, apprenticeship, or similar program.

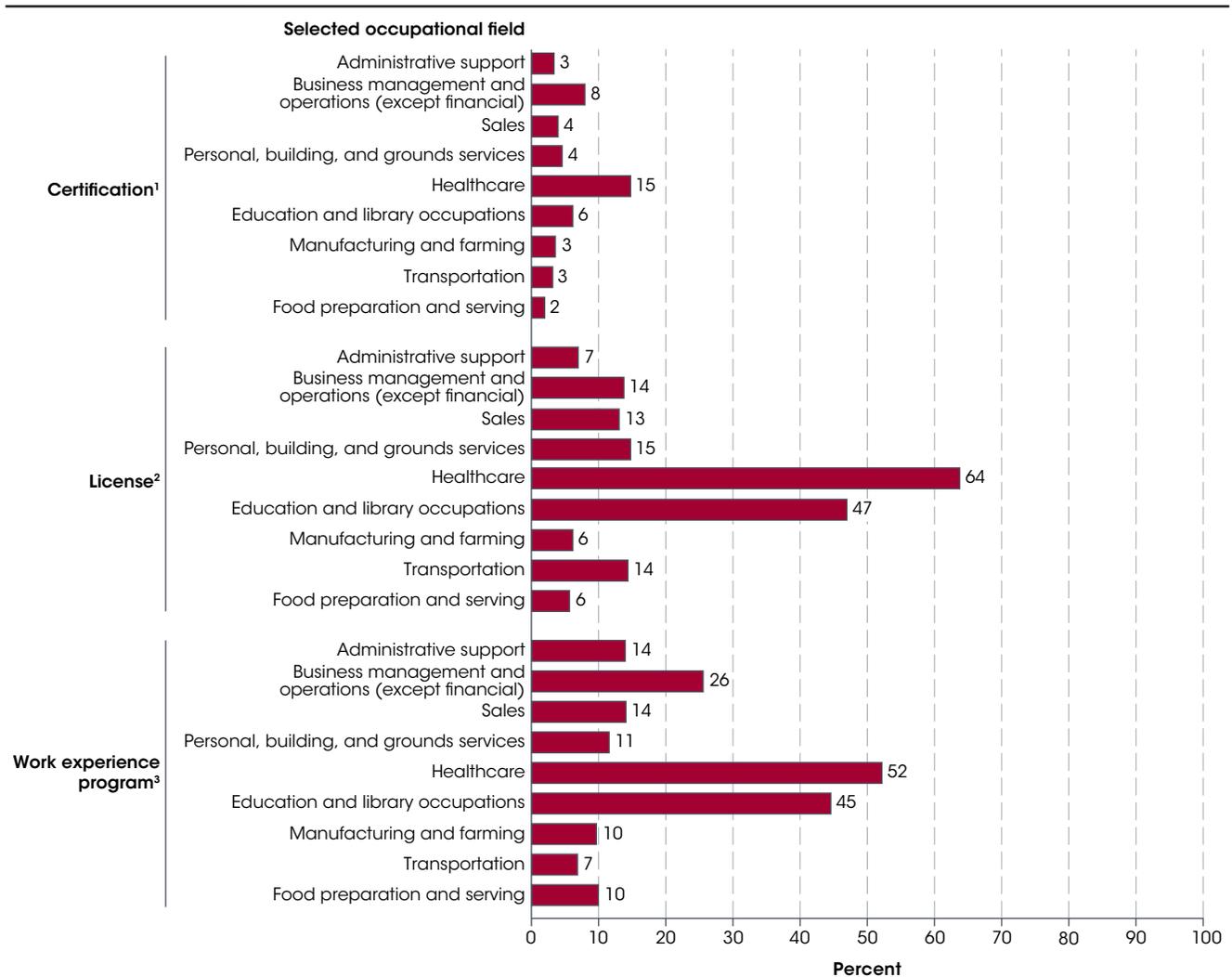
NOTE: Survey respondents were noninstitutionalized 16- to 65-year-olds who were not enrolled in high school at the time of sampling (although they could be enrolled in college). "Work credentials" include only certifications and licenses. They do not include postsecondary degrees and certificates. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ATES-NHES:2016). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 507.50a.

In 2016, the percentages of 16- to 65-year-olds with certifications, with licenses, and who had completed work experience programs were higher for those with a college degree (referred to as college graduates) than for those without a college degree (referred to as non-college graduates). Some 43 percent of adults with a graduate or professional degree, 23 percent with a bachelor's degree, and 25 percent with an associate's degree reported having a license, compared with 15 percent of those with some college but no degree, 9 percent of those who completed high school (or equivalency), and 4 percent of those who had not completed high school. Similarly, the percentage of adults who reported having a certification was higher for those with a graduate or professional

degree (10 percent), a bachelor's degree (8 percent), and an associate's degree (9 percent) than for those with some college but no degree (6 percent), high school completion (or equivalency) (3 percent), and less than high school completion (2 percent). In addition, the percentage of adults who reported that they had completed a work experience program was highest for those with a graduate or professional degree (56 percent), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (37 percent), an associate's degree (26 percent), some college but no degree (13 percent), and high school completion (or equivalency) (7 percent), and was lowest for those with less than high school completion (3 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage of 16- to 65-year-olds who have work credentials or have completed a work experience program, by selected occupational field: 2016



¹ A certification is an occupational credential awarded by a certification body—such as a professional association or certifying board—based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job; examples include Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification and medical technician certification.

² A license is an occupational credential awarded by a government agency that constitutes legal authority to do a specific job; examples include a medical license and an electrician’s license.

³ A work experience program is defined in the survey as an internship, co-op, practicum, clerkship, externship, residency, clinical experience, apprenticeship, or similar program.

NOTE: Survey respondents were noninstitutionalized 16- to 65-year-olds who were not enrolled in high school at the time of sampling (although they could be enrolled in college). “Work credentials” include only occupational certifications and licenses. They do not include postsecondary degrees and certificates. The nine largest occupational fields are those in which 10 million or more 16- to 65-year-olds were employed. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ATES-NHES:2016). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 507.50a.

Among the nine largest occupational fields in 2016, (i.e., those in which 10 million or more 16- to 65-year-olds were employed),² healthcare was the field in which the largest percentages of adults reported having nondegree work credentials and having completed work experience programs. Of adults employed in healthcare, 15 percent reported having a certification, 64 percent having a license, and 52 percent having completed a work experience program. Across these large occupational fields, the percentage of adults with certifications ranged from 2 percent for those employed in food preparation and serving to 15 percent for those employed in healthcare.

In the two fields of business management and operations (8 percent) and healthcare (15 percent), the percentage of adults reporting having certifications was higher than the overall average of 6 percent. Among the remaining smaller occupational fields, the percentage of adults with certifications was above average in installation and repair (14 percent), for financial specialists (13 percent), in computer occupations (13 percent), and for scientists, engineers, and architects (10 percent).

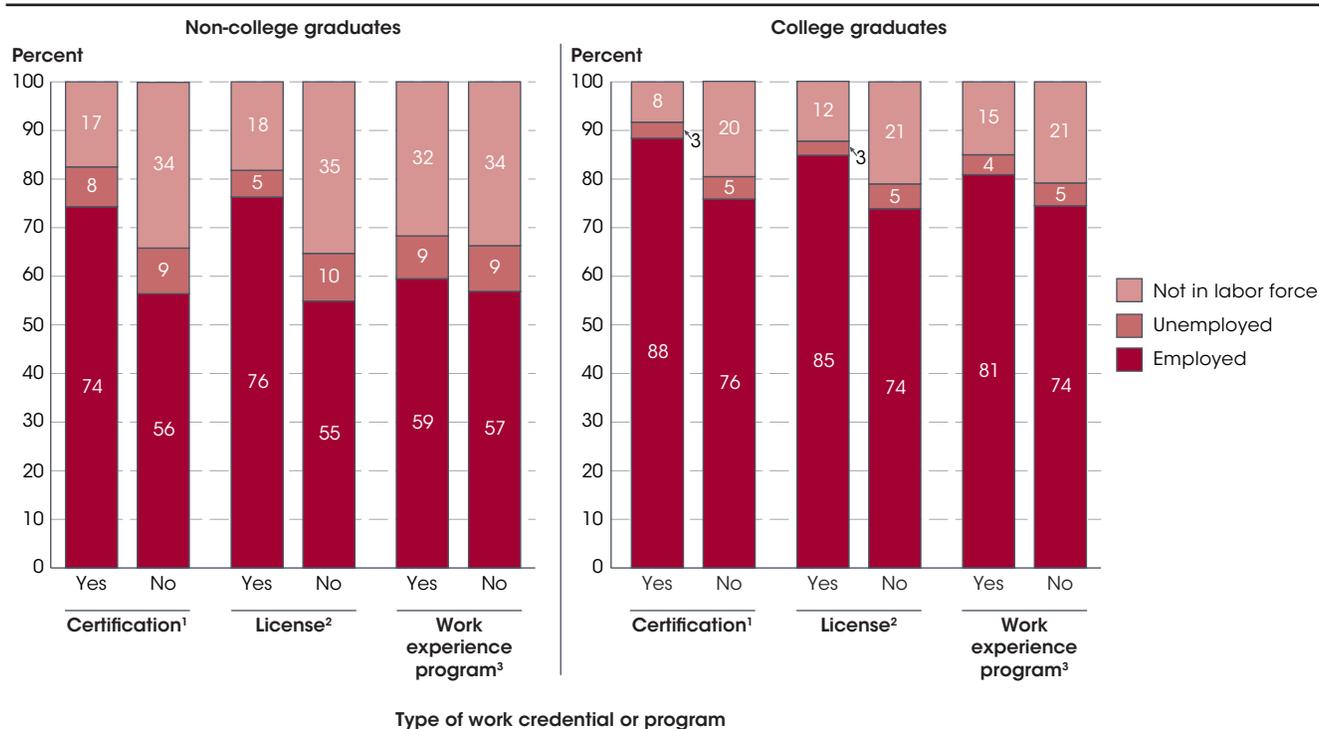
Similar patterns were observed for licenses. Across the largest occupational fields, the percentage of 16- to

65-year-olds with licenses ranged from 6 percent for those employed in food preparation and serving to 64 percent for those employed in healthcare in 2016. In the two fields of education and library occupations (47 percent) and healthcare (64 percent), the percentage of adults reporting having licenses was higher than the overall average of 18 percent. Among the remaining smaller occupational fields, the percentage of adults with licenses was above average in community, social service, and legal occupations (39 percent) and protective services (37 percent).

Across the largest occupational fields in 2016, the percentage of 16- to 65-year-olds completing work

experience programs ranged from 7 percent for those employed in transportation to 52 percent for those employed in healthcare. In addition to healthcare, the percentage of adults completing work experience programs was above the average of 21 percent in education and library occupations (45 percent) and business management and operations (26 percent). Among the remaining smaller occupational fields, the percentage of adults completing work experience programs was above average in community, social service, and legal occupations (54 percent); for scientists, engineers, and architects (42 percent); in arts, design, entertainment, and media occupations (39 percent); in computer occupations (31 percent); and for financial specialists (28 percent).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of 16- to 65-year-olds' labor force and employment status, by college degree attainment status, work credential status, and completion of work experience program: 2016



¹ A certification is an occupational credential awarded by a certification body—such as a professional association or certifying board—based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job; examples include Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification and medical technician certification.
² A license is an occupational credential awarded by a government agency that constitutes legal authority to do a specific job; examples include a medical license and an electrician's license.
³ A work experience program is defined in the survey as an internship, co-op, practicum, clerkship, externship, residency, clinical experience, apprenticeship, or similar program.
 NOTE: Survey respondents were noninstitutionalized 16- to 65-year-olds who were not enrolled in high school at the time of sampling (although they could be enrolled in college). "Work credentials" include only occupational certifications and licenses. They do not include postsecondary degrees and certificates. The denominators for all percentages shown are the civilian 16- to 65-year-olds in the relevant group, including those not in the labor force. The unemployment percentages presented here are not comparable to unemployment rates produced by Bureau of Labor Statistics, which exclude individuals not in the labor force. Detail may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ATES-NHES:2016). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 507.50c.

Other analyses in *The Condition of Education* show that non-college graduates have lower employment rates and earnings than their peers with higher levels of educational attainment (see indicators [Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment](#), and [Annual Earnings of Young Adults](#)). This indicator expands on those analyses by comparing workforce outcomes

between adults with and without nondegree credentials and between adults who have completed work experience programs and those who have not.

In 2016, the employment rate was higher for 16- to 65-year-olds who had certifications or licenses than for those who did not, regardless of college degree attainment.

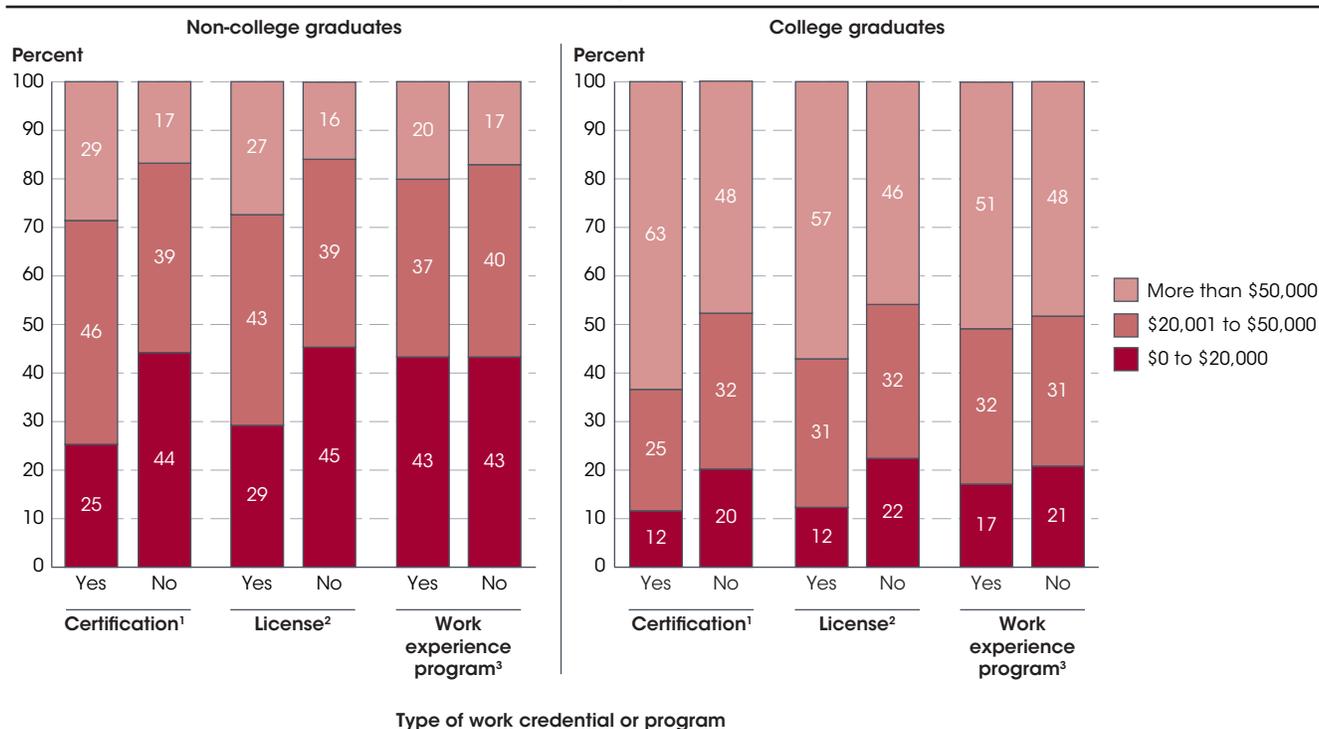
This indicator examines the percentages of adults who were employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force. The population not in the labor force consists of persons who are neither employed nor seeking employment.³ For example, among non-college graduates, 74 percent of those who had a certification were employed, compared with 56 percent of those who did not have a certification. Similarly, the employment rate for non-college graduates was higher for those who had a license than for those who did not have a license (76 vs. 55 percent). However, for non-college graduates, there was no measurable difference between the employment rates for those who had completed a work experience program and for those who had not. For college graduates, the employment rate was higher for those who had completed a work experience program than for those who had not (81 vs. 74 percent).

For comparison purposes, this analysis also examines the percentage of adults who are “not in the labor force,” a category that includes individuals who are not employed and are not looking for work. In 2016, the percentage

of adults in this category was lower for adults who had certifications or licenses in comparison with those who did not. This pattern was observed among college graduates as well as among non-college graduates. For example, among non-college graduates, the “not in labor force” percentage was 17 percent for those who had a certification and 18 percent for those who had a license, compared with 34 percent for those who did not have a certification and 35 percent for those who did not have a license.

Different patterns were observed when comparing the “not in labor force” percentages between those who had completed a work experience program and those who had not. Among non-college graduates, the “not in labor force” percentages were not measurably different for work experience program completers (32 percent) and those who had not completed such programs (34 percent). In contrast, among college graduates, the “not in labor force” percentage was lower for work experience program completers (15 percent) than for those who had not completed such programs (21 percent).

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of 16- to 65-year-olds' earnings, by college degree attainment status, work credential status, and completion of work experience program: 2016



¹ A certification is an occupational credential awarded by a certification body—such as a professional association or certifying board—based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job; examples include Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification and medical technician certification.
² A license is an occupational credential awarded by a government agency that constitutes legal authority to do a specific job; examples include a medical license and an electrician's license.
³ A work experience program is defined in the survey as an internship, co-op, practicum, clerkship, externship, residency, clinical experience, apprenticeship, or similar program.
 NOTE: Survey respondents were noninstitutionalized 16- to 65-year-olds who were not enrolled in high school at the time of sampling (although they could be enrolled in college). "Work credentials" include only occupational certifications and licenses. They do not include postsecondary degrees and certificates. Detail may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (ATES-NHES:2016). See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 507.50c.

In 2016, the percentage of 16- to 65-year-olds earning more than \$50,000 was higher for those who had a nondegree work credential than for those who did not have a nondegree work credential. These differences were observed for both college graduates and non-college graduates. For example, among non-college graduates, 29 percent of those with a certification earned more than \$50,000 over the past 12 months, compared with

17 percent of those without a certification. The percentage of non-college graduates earning more than \$50,000 was higher for those with a license than for those without a license (27 vs. 16 percent). Similarly, among non-college graduates, the percentage earning more than \$50,000 was higher for those who had completed a work experience program than for those who had not (20 vs. 17 percent).

Endnotes:

¹ “Work credentials” refer to certifications or licenses that document adults’ skill attainment. They do not include postsecondary degrees and certificates. Examples of certifications include Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification and medical technician certification. Examples of licenses include a medical license and an electrician’s license. Detailed definitions for each type of nondegree credential are available at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/gemena/definitions.asp>.

² Large occupational fields are defined as those in which 10 million or more 16- to 65-year-olds were employed. In

2016, the large occupational fields consisted of administrative support; business management and operations (except financial); sales; personal, building, and grounds services; healthcare; education and library occupations; manufacturing and farming; transportation; and food preparation and serving.

³ The unemployment percentage presented here is not comparable to unemployment rates produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which exclude individuals not in the labor force.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, tables 507.50a, 507.50b, and 507.50c

Related indicators and resources: [Educational Attainment of Young Adults](#); [Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment](#); *Degree and Nondegree Credentials Held by Labor Force Participants*

Glossary: Associate’s degree, Bachelor’s degree, College, Educational attainment, Employment status