

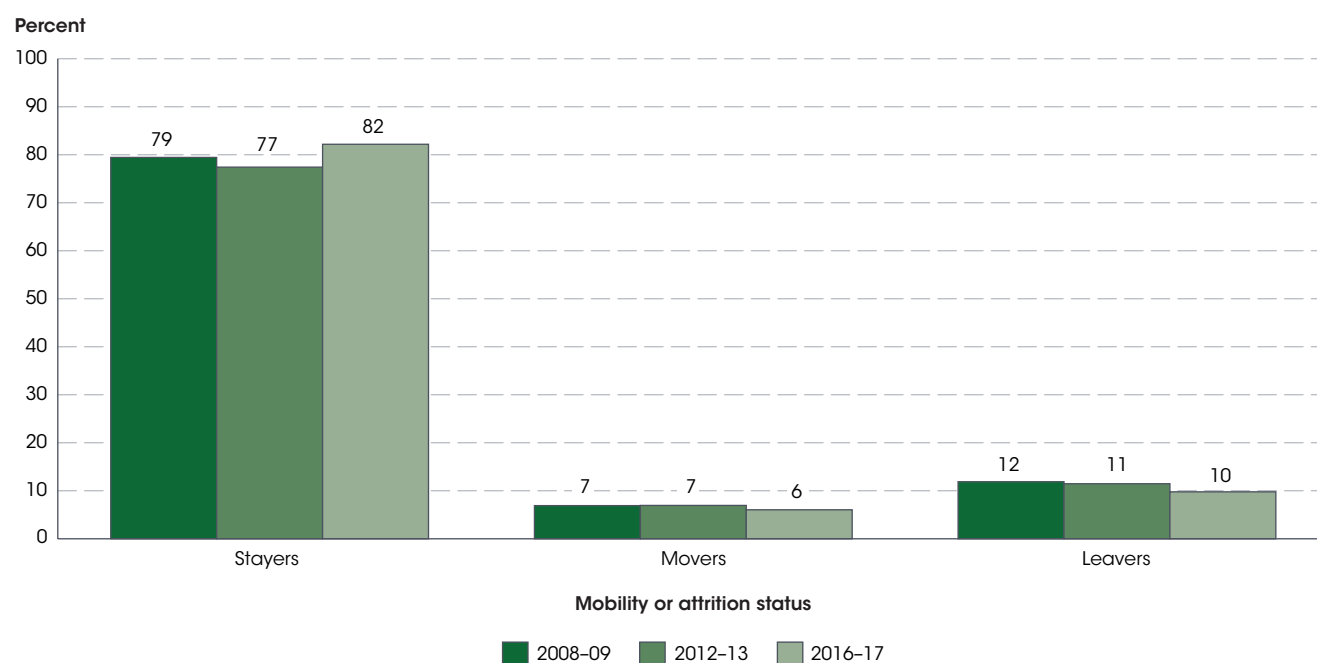
Principal Turnover: Stayers, Movers, and Leavers

Among public school principals who stopped working as a principal in 2016–17, some 32 percent had retired; 32 percent were working in kindergarten through grade 12 education, but not in a school; 27 percent were working in a kindergarten through grade 12 school, but not as a principal; and 8 percent were working at a job outside of kindergarten through grade 12 education.

In the United States, which includes the 50 states and District of Columbia, more than four-fifths (82 percent) of public school principals in 2015–16 stayed in the same position at the same school in 2016–17, while 6 percent moved to a position as principal at another

school and 10 percent stopped working as a principal. These three groups are referred to as “stayers,” “movers,” and “leavers,” respectively, in this indicator.¹ Mobility or attrition status refers to a principal’s status as a stayer, mover, or leaver.

Figure 1. Percentage of public school principals, by mobility or attrition status: 2008–09, 2012–13, and 2016–17



NOTE: Of those who were public school principals, stayers were public school principals who stayed in the same position at the same school in the following year; movers were public school principals who moved to work as a principal at a different school in the following year; and leavers were public school principals who stopped working as a principal in the following year. Principals who were no longer at the same school but whose occupational status was unknown are not shown. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail does not sum to totals because some data are not shown.

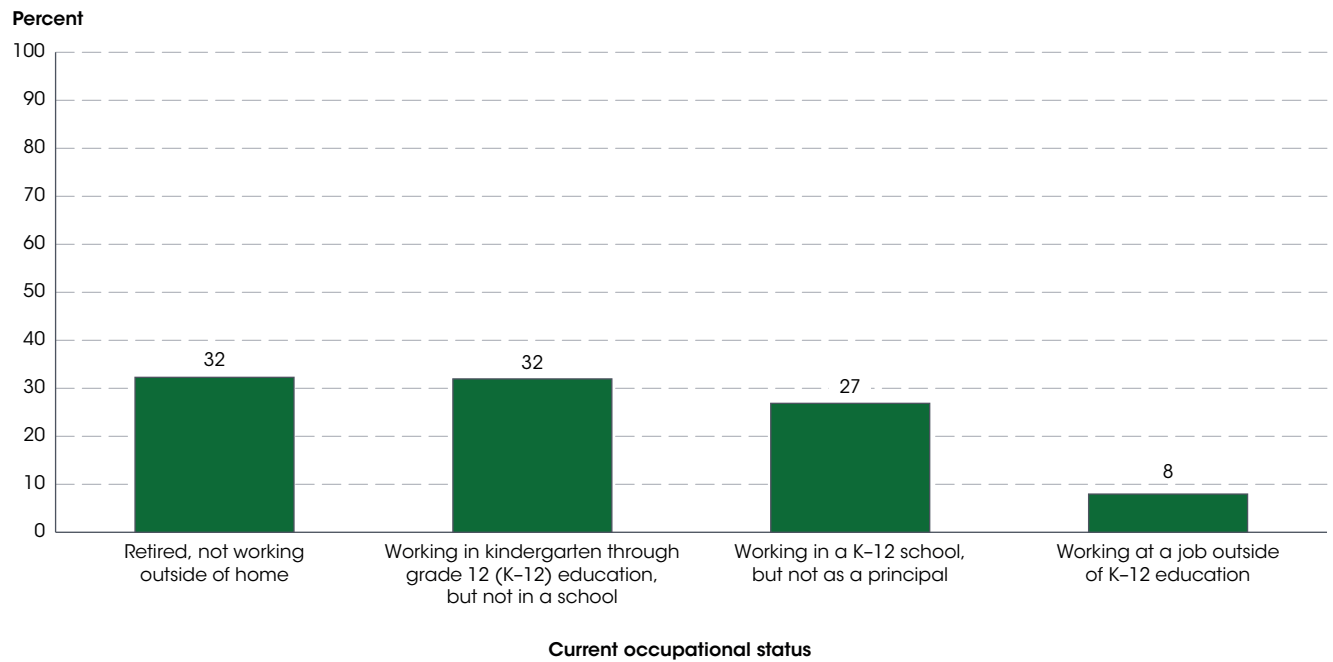
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), “Public School Principal Data File,” 2007–08 and 2011–12; SASS Principal Follow-up Survey (PFS), “Public School Principal Status Data File,” 2008–09 and 2012–13; National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Principal Data File,” 2015–16; and NTPS Principal Follow-up Survey (PFS), “Public School Principal Status Data File,” 2016–17. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 212.20.

The percentage of public school principals who stayed in the same position at the same school from 2015–16 to 2016–17 (“stayers”) (82 percent) was higher than the percentages from 2007–08 to 2008–09 (79 percent) and from 2011–12 to 2012–13 (77 percent). The percentage of public school principals who stopped working as a principal in 2016–17 (“leavers”) (10 percent) was lower than the percentages in prior periods (12 percent in 2008–09 and 11 percent in 2012–13). The percentage of public school principals who moved to work as a

principal at a different school (“movers”) did not change measurably during the periods of 2007–08 to 2008–09, 2011–12 to 2012–13, and 2015–16 to 2016–17.

Among the 6 percent of public school principals who were movers in 2016–17, the majority (59 percent) moved from one public school to another public school in the same school district, while smaller percentages moved to a different public school district (36 percent) or to a private school (2 percent).²

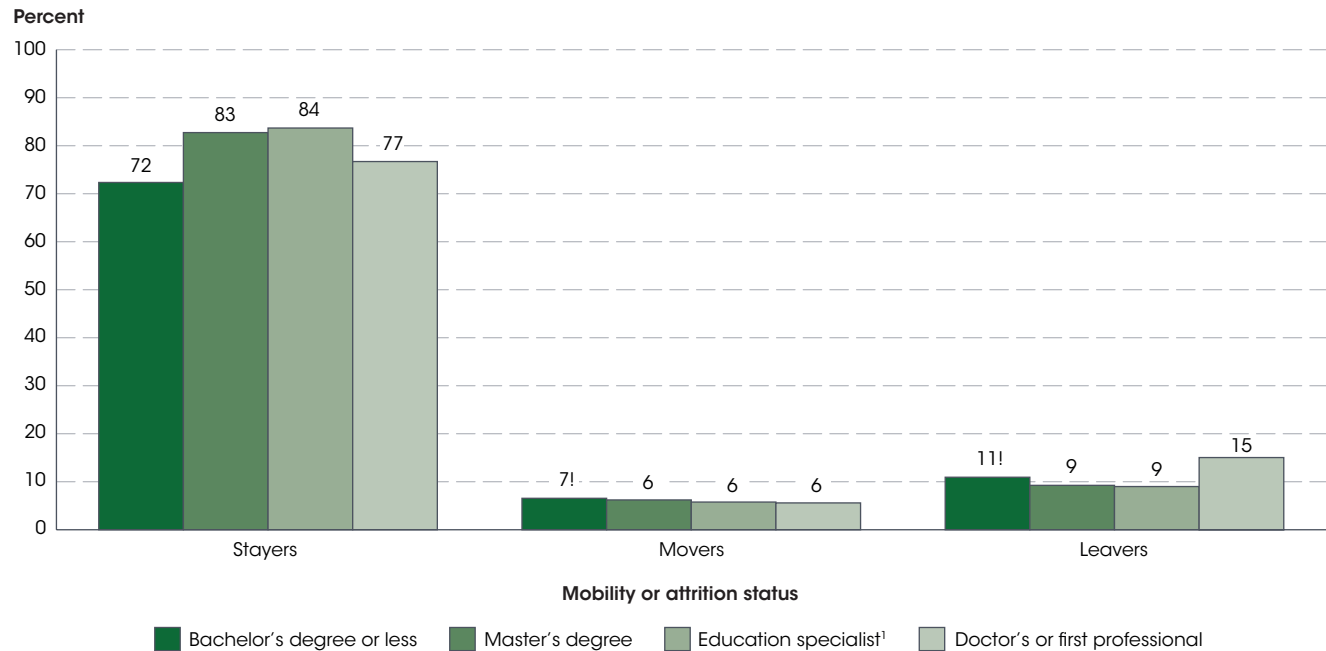
Figure 2. Percentage distribution of public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17, by current occupational status: 2016–17



NOTE: Of those who were public school principals in 2015–16, leavers were public school principals who stopped working as a principal in 2016–17. Detail does not sum to totals because category of “deceased” is not shown. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Principal Data File,” 2015–16; and NTPS Principal Follow-up Survey (PFS), “Public School Principal Status Data File,” 2016–17. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 212.30.

Among the 10 percent of public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17, some 32 percent had retired; 32 percent were working in kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) education, but not in a school (including 19 percent working in a district or administrative office as a superintendent, assistant superintendent, or other

higher level administrator); 27 percent were working in a K–12 school, but not as a principal (including 17 percent working in a different public school, but not as principal); and 8 percent were working at a job outside of K–12 education.³

Figure 3. Percentage of public school principals who were stayers, movers, and leavers, by highest degree earned: 2016–17

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

¹ Education specialist degrees or certificates are generally awarded for 1 year's work beyond the master's level. Includes certificate of advanced graduate studies.

NOTE: Of those who were public school principals in 2015–16, stayers were public school principals who stayed in the same position at the same school from 2015–16 to 2016–17; movers were public school principals who moved to work as a principal at a different school; and leavers were public school principals who stopped working as a principal in 2016–17. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. Detail does not sum to totals because some data are not shown.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Principal Data File," 2015–16; and NTPS Principal Follow-up Survey (PFS), "Public School Principal Status Data File," 2016–17. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 212.20.

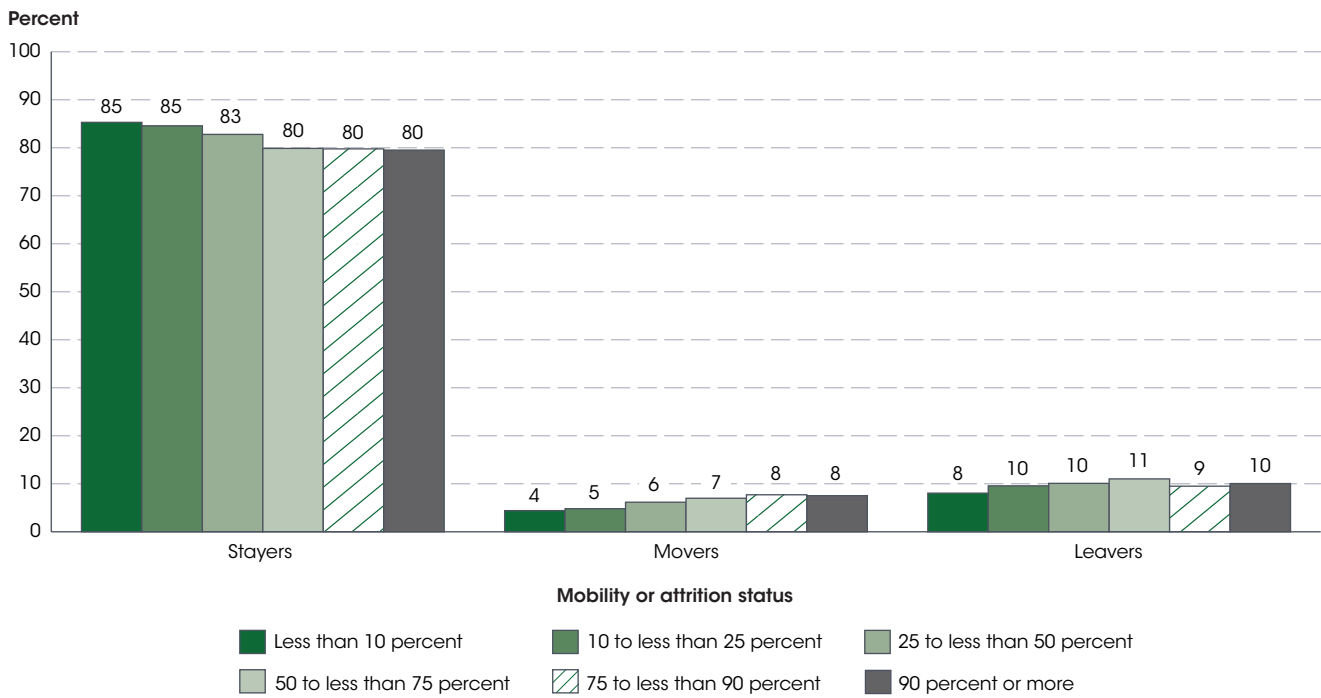
The percentages of public school principals who were stayers and leavers varied by highest degree earned. Specifically, the percentage of public school principals who were stayers in 2016–17 was lower for those whose highest degree was a doctor's or first professional degree (77 percent) than for those whose highest degree was a master's degree (83 percent) or an educational specialist degree or certificate (84 percent). In contrast, the percentage of public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17 was greater for those whose highest degree was a doctor's or first professional degree (15 percent) than those for whose highest degree was a master's degree or an educational specialist degree or certificate (9 percent each). However, there was no measurable difference in the percentages of public school principals who were movers in 2016–17 by highest degree earned.

The percentages of public school principals who were stayers and leavers also varied by years of experience as a principal. Specifically, the percentage of public school principals who were stayers in 2016–17 was lower for

those with 10 or more years of experience as a principal at any school (78 percent) than for those with fewer years of experience as a principal (ranging from 83 percent to 85 percent). The opposite pattern was observed for principals who were leavers—the percentage of public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17 was higher for those with 10 or more years of experience as a principal at any school (15 percent) than for those with fewer years of experience as a principal (ranging from 8 to 9 percent). However, there was no measurable difference in the percentages of public school principals who were movers in 2016–17 by years of experience as a principal.

From 2015–16 to 2016–17, no measurable differences in mobility or attrition status⁴ were observed by public school principal's sex or race/ethnicity. For example, the percentages of public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17 ranged from 9 percent to 10 percent for public school principals who were White, Black, and Hispanic.

Figure 4. Percentage of public school principals who were stayers, movers, and leavers, by percent minority enrollment: 2016–17

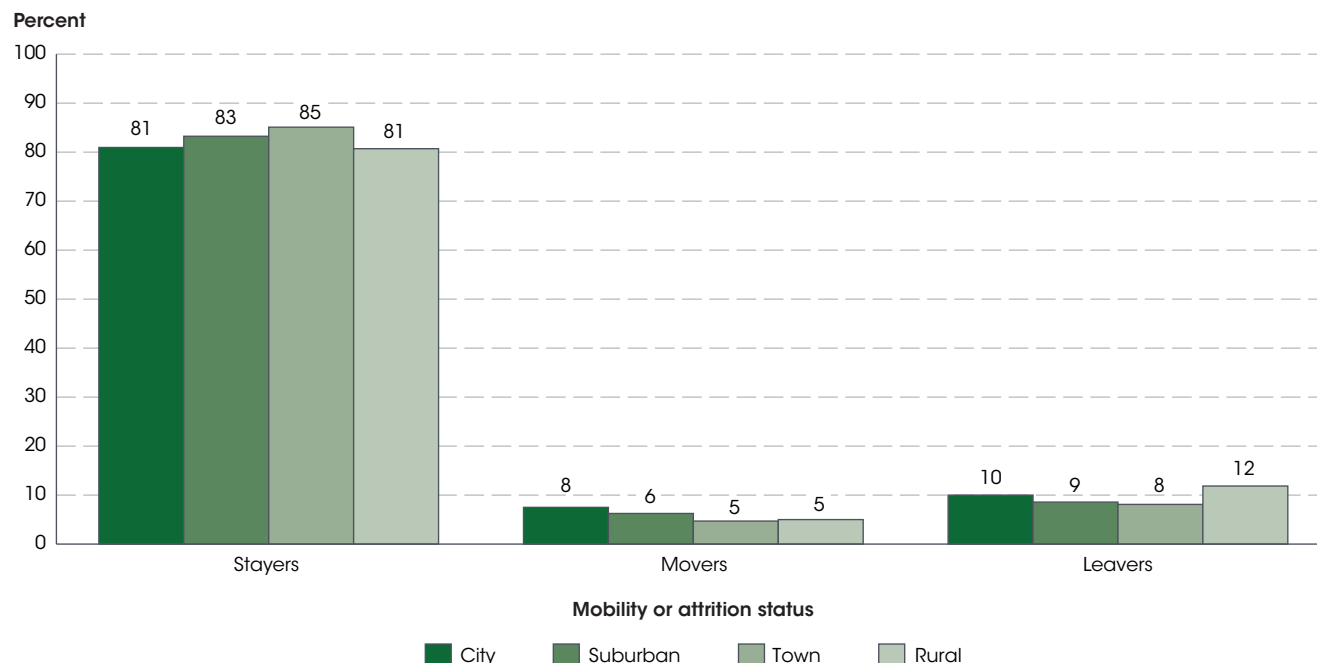


NOTE: Of those who were public school principals in 2015–16, stayers were public school principals who stayed in the same position at the same school from 2015–16 to 2016–17; movers were public school principals who moved to work as a principal at a different school; and leavers were public school principals who stopped working as a principal in 2016–17. The percent minority enrollment is the combined percentage of students in the school who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or of Two or more races. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Principal Data File,” 2015–16; and NTPS Principal Follow-up Survey (PFS), “Public School Principal Status Data File,” 2016–17. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 212.20.

Differences were also observed in the mobility or attrition status of public school principals by school enrollment characteristics. From 2015–16 to 2016–17, the percentage of public school principals who were stayers was higher for principals in schools with a low concentration of minority students (i.e., schools with less than 10 percent minority enrollment) (85 percent) than for principals in schools with a high concentration of minority students (i.e., schools with 90 percent or more minority enrollment) (80 percent). In contrast, the percentage of public school principals who were movers was higher for principals in schools with a high concentration of minority students (8 percent) than for principals in schools with a low concentration of minority students (4 percent). However, the percentage of public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17 was not measurably different by concentration of minority students.

Similarly, from 2015–16 to 2016–17, the percentage of public school principals who were stayers was higher for principals in low-poverty schools (i.e., schools in which 25.0 percent or less of students were approved for free or reduced-price lunch) (86 percent) than principals in high-poverty schools (i.e., schools in which more than 75.0 percent of students were approved for free or reduced-price lunch) (79 percent). In contrast, the percentage of public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17 was greater for principals in high-poverty schools (11 percent) than for principals in low-poverty schools (7 percent). The percentages of public school principals who were movers in 2016–17 were not measurably different between high-poverty and low-poverty schools.

Figure 5. Percentage of public school principals who were stayers, movers, and leavers, by school locale: 2016–17

NOTE: Of those who were public school principals in 2015–16, stayers were public school principals who stayed in the same position at the same school from 2015–16 to 2016–17; movers were public school principals who moved to work as a principal at a different school; and leavers were public school principals who stopped working as a principal in 2016–17. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Principal Data File,” 2015–16; and NTPS Principal Follow-up Survey (PFS), “Public School Principal Status Data File,” 2016–17. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 212.20.

In addition, the mobility or attrition status of public school principals also varied by school locale and school level. For example, during the period of 2015–16 to 2016–17, the percentage of public school principals who were stayers was higher for principals in town schools (85 percent) than for principals in city and rural schools (81 percent each). The percentage of public school principals who were movers was higher for principals in city schools (8 percent) than for principals in town and rural schools (5 percent each); and the percentage of public school principals who were leavers was higher for public school principals in rural schools (12 percent) than in suburban schools (9 percent) and town schools (8 percent).

During the period of 2015–16 to 2016–17, the percentage of public school principals who were stayers was higher for principals in secondary schools (85 percent) than for principals in elementary (82 percent) and combined schools (78 percent). In addition, the percentage of public school principals who were movers was higher for principals in elementary schools (7 percent) than for principals in secondary and combined schools (4 percent each). The percentage of public school principals who were leavers was higher for principals in combined schools (15 percent) than for principals in elementary and secondary schools (9 percent each).

Endnotes:

¹ Not discussed as stayers, movers, and leavers are an additional 2 percent of public school principals who were no longer at the same school but their current occupational status was unknown.
² Among public school principals who were movers in 2016–17, some 3 percent of public school principals moved to a public school in an unknown district or to a school with unknown control.

³ Among public school principals who were leavers in 2016–17, some 1 percent of public school principals had died.
⁴ Mobility or attrition status refers to a principal’s status as a stayer, mover, or leaver.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 212.20 and 212.30

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Public School Principals](#); [Characteristics of Public School Teachers](#); [Characteristics of Public School Teachers Who Completed Alternative Route to Certification Programs](#) [*The Condition of Education 2018 Spotlight*]; [Teacher Turnover: Stayers, Movers, and Leavers](#)

Glossary: Bachelor’s degree; College; Educational attainment (Current Population Survey); Gap; High school completer; Racial/ethnic group