

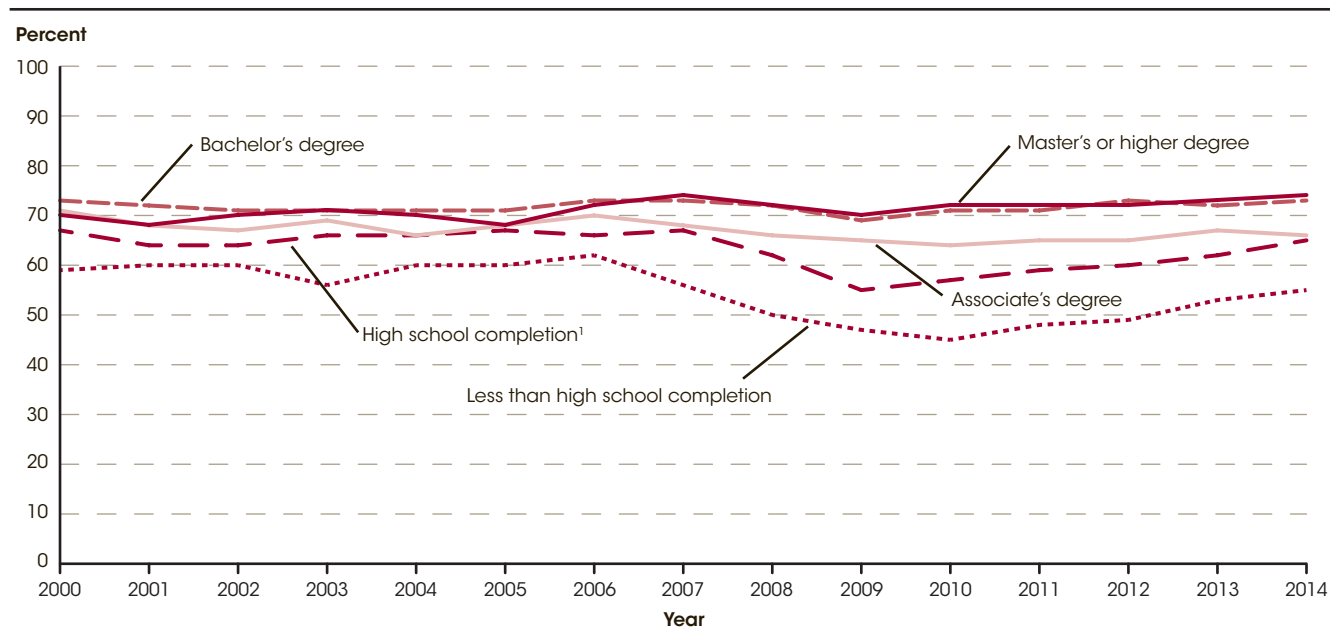
Annual Earnings of Young Adults

In 2014, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree (\$49,900) were 66 percent higher than the median earnings of young adult high school completers (\$30,000). The median earnings of young adult high school completers were 20 percent higher than the median earnings of those without a high school credential (\$25,000).

This indicator examines the annual earnings of young adults ages 25–34. Many people in this age group have recently completed their education and may be entering the workforce or transitioning from part-time to full-time work. In 2014, some 67 percent of young adults ages 25–34 who were in the labor force worked full time, year round (i.e., worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or

more weeks per year). The percentage of young adults working full time, year round was generally higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, 73 percent of young adults with a bachelor's degree worked full time, year round in 2014, compared with 65 percent of young adult high school completers (those with only a high school diploma or its equivalent).

Figure 1. Percentage of the labor force ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, by educational attainment: 2000–2014



¹ Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

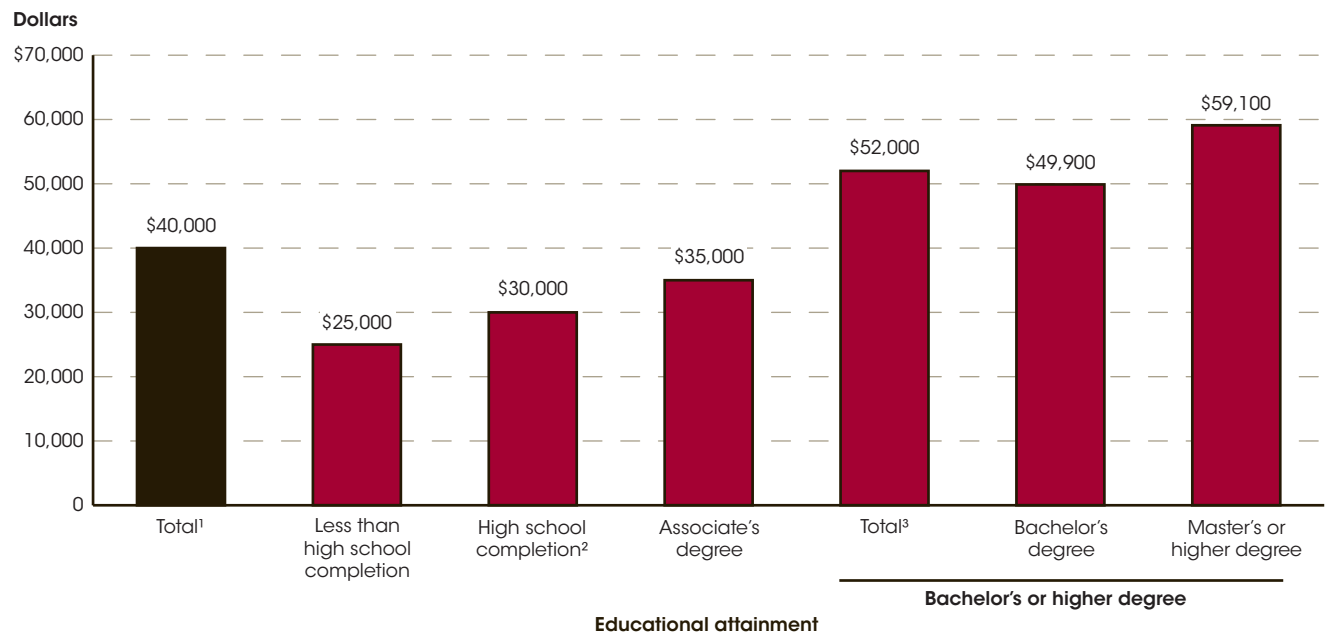
NOTE: Full-time, year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2001–2015; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 502.30.

Changes over time in the percentage of young adults in the labor force who worked full time, year round varied by level of educational attainment. From 2000 to 2014, the percentage of young adults without a high school credential (i.e., without a high school diploma or its equivalent) who worked full time, year round decreased from 59 to 55 percent. The corresponding percentage for young adults with an associate's degree decreased from 71 to 66 percent. In contrast, the percentage of young adults with a master's or higher degree who worked full time, year round increased from 70 to 74 percent

during the same period. However, from 2000 to 2014 the percentages of young adult high school completers and young adults with a bachelor's degree who worked full time, year round did not change measurably. Between 2013 and 2014, the percentages of young adults working full time, year round did not change measurably for most levels of educational attainment. The one exception was the percentage of young adult high school completers who worked full time, year round, which was higher in 2014 (65 percent) than in 2013 (62 percent).

Figure 2. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 2014



¹ Represents median annual earnings of all full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34.

² Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

³ Represents median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34 with a bachelor's or higher degree.

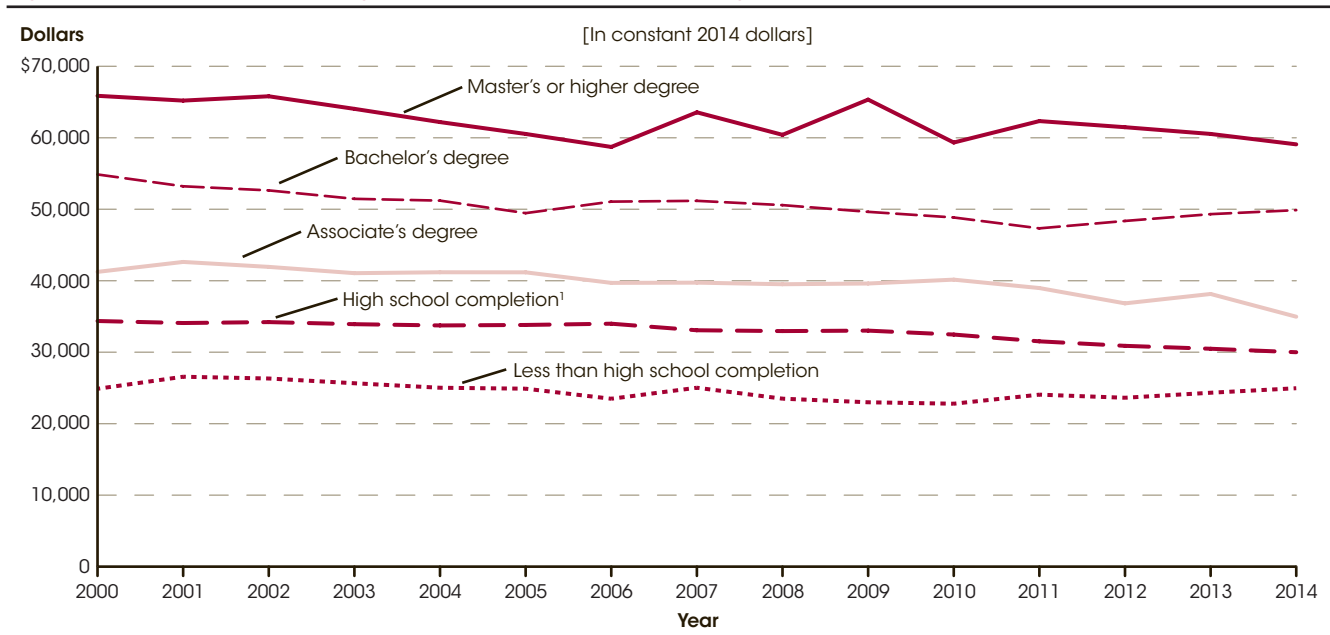
NOTE: Full-time, year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 502.30.

For young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time, year round, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings¹; this pattern was consistent from 2000 through 2014. For example, in 2014 the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree (\$49,900) were 66 percent higher than the median earnings of young adult high school completers (\$30,000). The median earnings of young adult high school completers were 20 percent higher

than the median earnings of those without a high school credential (\$25,000). In addition, median earnings of young adults with a master's or higher degree were \$59,100 in 2014, some 18 percent higher than the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree. This pattern of higher earnings associated with higher levels of educational attainment also held for both male and female young adults as well as for White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian young adults.

Figure 3. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25-34, by educational attainment: 2000-2014



¹ Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

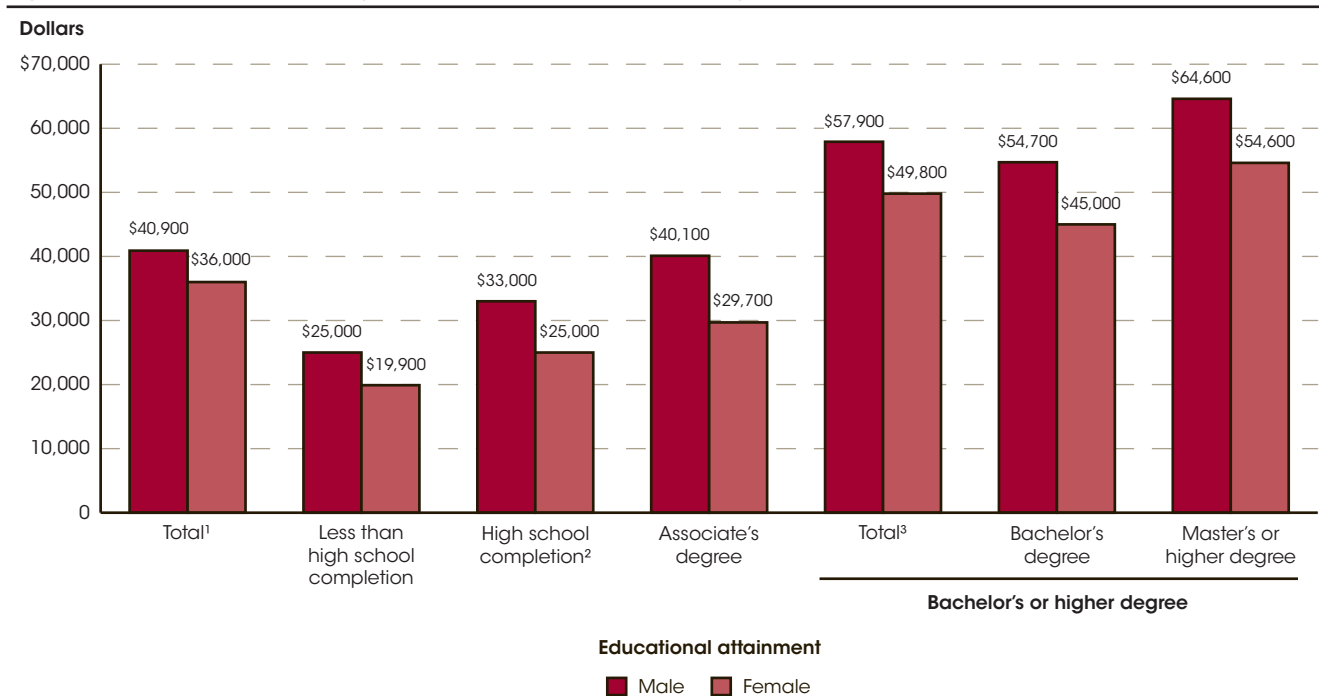
NOTE: Earnings are presented in constant 2014 dollars, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to eliminate inflationary factors and to allow for direct comparison across years. Full-time, year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2001-2015; and previously unpublished tabulations. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 502.30.

Median earnings (in constant 2014 dollars)² of young adults declined from 2000 to 2014 at most educational attainment levels, except for those who did not complete high school, for whom there was no measurable change in median earnings. During this period, the median earnings of young adult high school completers declined from \$34,400 to \$30,000 (a 13 percent decrease), and the median earnings of young adults with an associate's degree declined from \$41,200 to \$35,000 (a 15 percent decrease). In addition, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree declined from \$54,900 to \$49,900 (a 9 percent decrease), and the median earnings of young adults with a master's or higher degree declined from \$65,900 to \$59,100 (a 10 percent decrease). With the exception of high school completers, median annual earnings for young adults did not change measurably between 2013 and 2014; earnings declined for high school completers during this period.

Gaps in median earnings between young adults with varying levels of educational attainment exhibited different patterns between 2000 and 2014. The difference in median earnings between adult high school completers and those without a high school credential was smaller in 2014 than in 2000. In 2000, median earnings of young adult high school completers were \$9,500 higher than median earnings of those without a high school credential; in 2014, this difference in median earnings was \$5,000. Differences in median earnings between those with a bachelor's degree and high school completers and between those with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's or higher degree did not change measurably during the same period.

Figure 4. Median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment and sex: 2014



¹ Represents median annual earnings of all full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34.

² Includes equivalency credentials, such as the GED credential.

³ Represents median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34 with a bachelor's or higher degree.

NOTE: Full-time, year-round workers are those who worked 35 or more hours per week for 50 or more weeks per year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2015. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 502.30.

In 2014, median earnings of young adult males were higher than median earnings of young adult females at every level of educational attainment. For example, median earnings of young adult males with an associate's degree were \$40,100 in 2014, while median earnings of their female counterparts were \$29,700. The median earning of young adult males with a high school credential were \$33,000, compared with \$25,000 for their female counterparts. In the same year, median earnings for White young adults exceeded the corresponding median earnings for Black and Hispanic young adults at all attainment levels except the master's or higher degree level, where there was no measurable difference in median

earnings between White and Hispanic young adults. For instance, median earnings in 2014 for young adults with a bachelor's degree were \$49,900 for White young adults, \$44,800 for Black young adults, and \$44,200 for Hispanic young adults. Among those with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's or higher degree, Asian young adults had higher median earnings than their Black, Hispanic, and White peers. For example, median earnings in 2014 for young adults with at least a master's degree were \$73,100 for Asian young adults, \$57,900 for White young adults, \$57,100 for Hispanic young adults, and \$49,200 for Black young adults.

Endnotes:

¹ Differences in earnings may also reflect other factors, such as differences in occupation. See the [Employment Outcomes of Bachelor's Degree Recipients](#) indicator.

² Constant dollars based on the Consumer Price Index, prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2015*, table 502.30

Related indicators: Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

Glossary: Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, Constant dollars, Educational attainment (Current Population Survey), Employment status, High school completer, High school diploma, Master's degree, Median earnings, Racial/ethnic group