

School Enrollment and Work Status: 2011

American Community Survey Briefs

By Jessica Davis

Issued October 2012

ACSB/11-14

INTRODUCTION

This brief presents data on school enrollment and student work status for the nation based on the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS). It takes a look at the proportion of students who worked and how much they worked over the previous year. Work status questions in the ACS are asked of persons aged 16 and over, so in addition to college students, high school students are included in this analysis.

College students have a history of working, independent of the type of institution they attend, their age or family responsibilities, or even their family income.¹ College professors and administrators generally recommend that students work 10 to 15 hours per week on campus.² While 10 to 15 hours per week is considered optimal for college students, many of them work longer hours and not necessarily on campus.

This report is one in a series to promote results from the 2011 ACS. The ACS provides detailed estimates of demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics for congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. A description of the ACS is provided in the text box.

¹ See American Council on Education issued brief, *Working Their Way Through College*, May 2006, at <www.acenet.edu/AM/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm?ContentFileID=1618>.

² See Perna, Laura W., "Understanding the Working College Student," *Academe*, July–August 2010, at <www.aaup.org/AAUP/CMS_Templates/AcademeTemplates/AcademeArticle.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID=%7B234AF8C0-AF36-4705-8129-E86F7383FDBA%7D&NRORIGINURL=%2FAAUP%2Fpubsres%2Facademe%2F2010%2FJA%2Ffeat%2Fpern.html&NRCACHEHINT=NoModifyGuest>.

ENROLLMENT AND WORK STATUS

In this analysis, full-time, year-round workers include those who usually worked 35 hours or more per week for 50 to 52 weeks in the past 12 months.

Most high school students are dependents, living at home, and do not need employment to pay for school or other living expenses.

In 2011, there were 11.1 million students aged 16 and over in high school and the majority of them did not work (71 percent). Another 28 percent of high school students aged 16 and over worked less than full-time, year-round, while 1 percent of them were full-time, year-round workers (Appendix Table 1-A). Of the high school students who worked less than full-time, year-round, only a minority worked more than 20 hours per week. In fact, of the 3.1 million who worked less than full-time, year-round, half (1.5 million) worked 13 weeks or less and 70 percent of them worked less than 20 hours per week (Figure 1).

In 2011, of the 19.7 million students aged 16 and over enrolled in undergraduate college, 72 percent worked (20 percent full-time, year-round workers and 52 percent less than that). Of college students who worked less than full-time, year-round, more than half of them worked more than 26 weeks, and of those, half of them worked over 20 hours.

The percentage of college undergraduate students who worked full-time, year-round in 2011 varied by state (Figure 2). Some states with higher percentages of college students working full-time, year-round were in the West and Mid-Atlantic. States with the lowest percentage of college students working full-time, year-round were in the Northeast and West. Alaska had the highest

percentage of college students working full-time, year-round (37 percent) and Massachusetts had the lowest percentage of college students working full-time, year-round (14 percent).

In 2011, there were 4.1 million graduate students and 82 percent of them worked (Appendix Table 1-A). Almost half of graduate students were full-time, year-round workers. Of graduate students who worked less than full-time, year-round, 68 percent of them worked more than 26 weeks per year and over half of those worked over 20 hours.

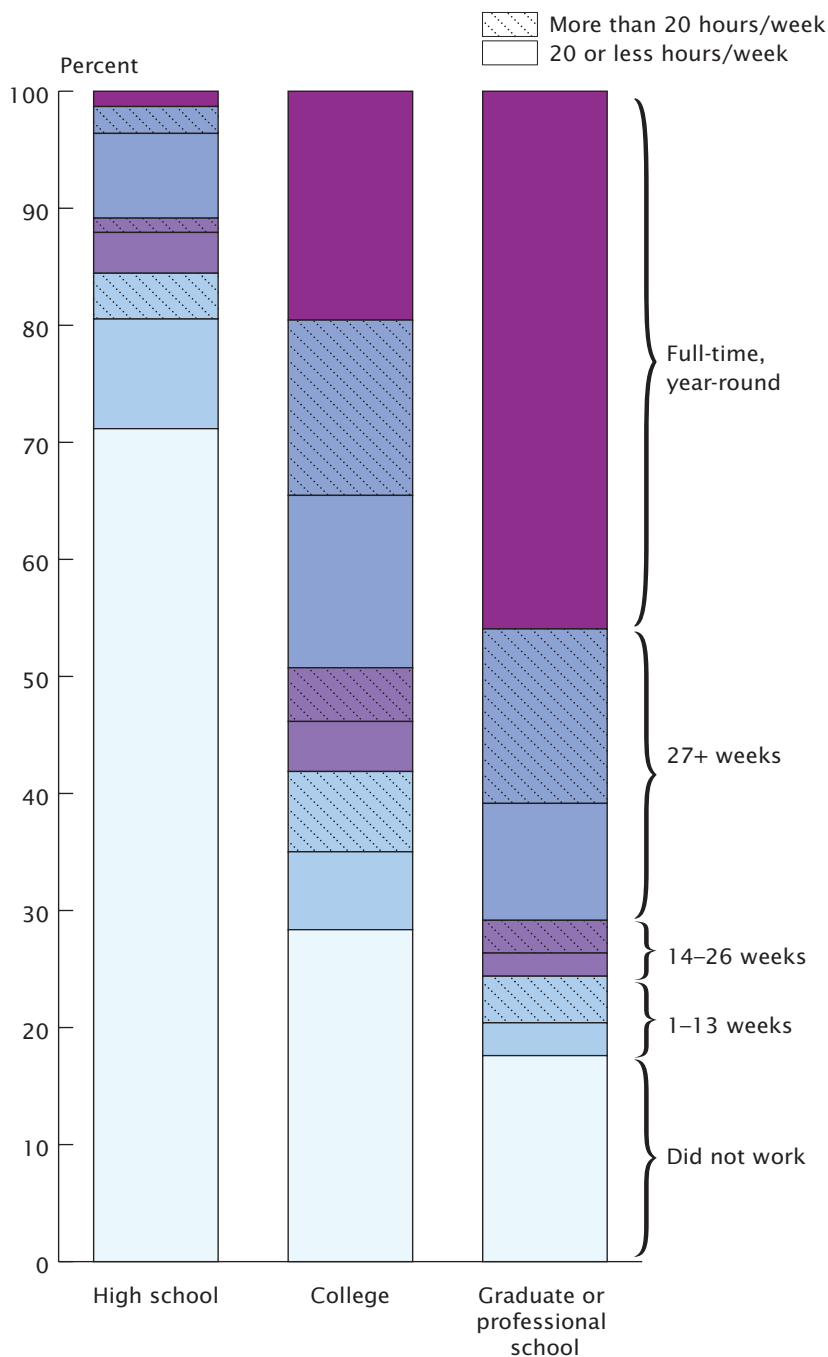
What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3.3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit www.census.gov/acs/www.

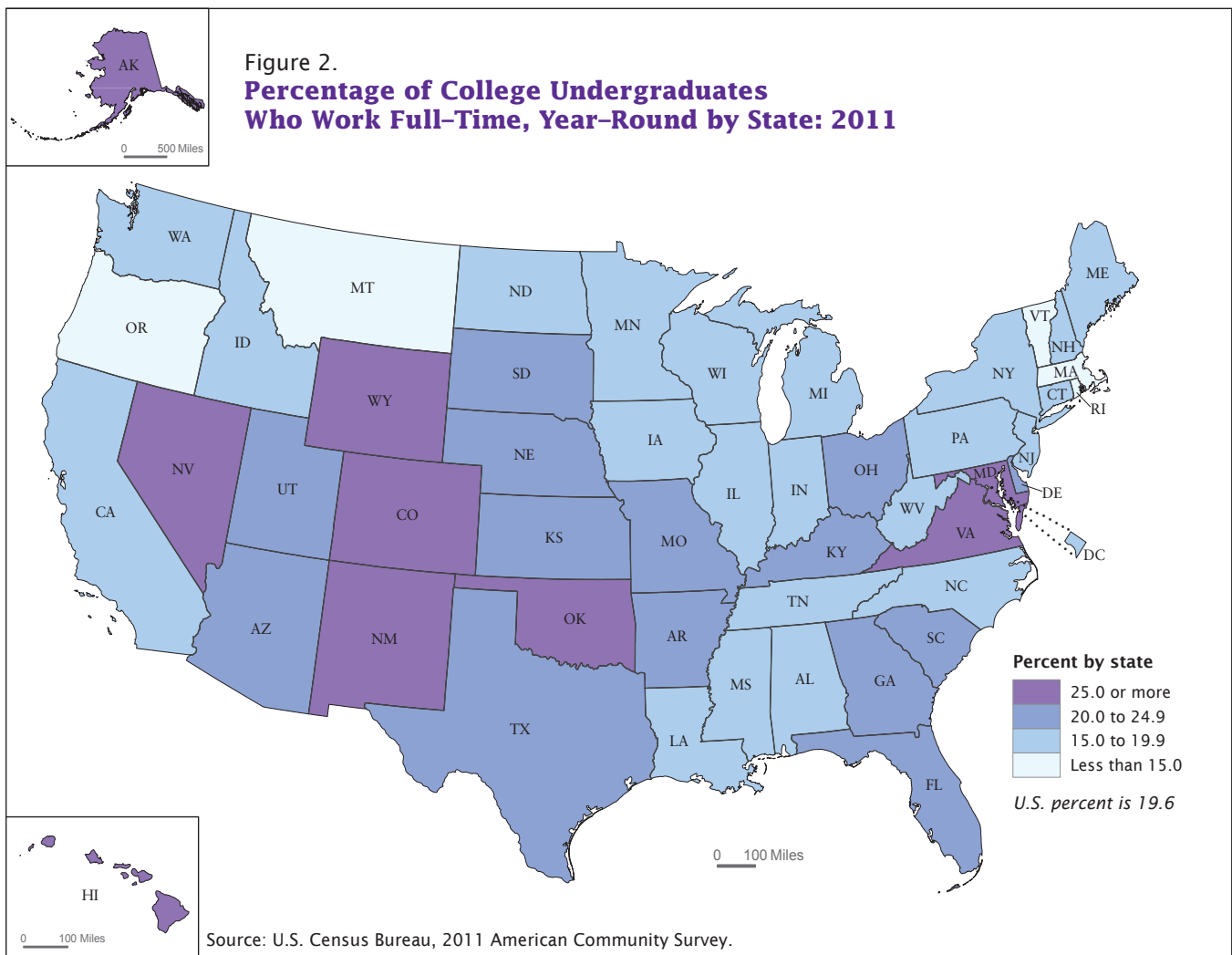
Figure 1.

Hours and Weeks Worked for Students Enrolled in High School, College, and Graduate School: 2011

(For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.



SOURCE AND ACCURACY

The data presented in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2011. The estimates based on this sample approximate the actual values and represent the entire household and group quarters population. Sampling error is the difference between an estimate based on a sample and the corresponding value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a

census). Measures of the sampling errors are provided in the form of margins of error for all estimates included in this report. All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and comparisons are significant at the 90 percent level unless otherwise noted. In addition to sampling error, nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the operations used to collect and process survey data such as editing,

reviewing, or keying data from questionnaires. For more information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the 2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data document located at www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf.

Appendix Table 1-A.

Hours and Weeks Worked for Students Enrolled in High School, College, and Graduate School: 2011

(Population 16 years and over enrolled in public or private school. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Population	High school		College		Graduate or professional school	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	11,149,446		19,730,695		4,127,319	
Did not work	7,934,795	71.2	5,595,655	28.4	726,475	17.6
Worked less than full-time, year-round . . .	3,068,911	27.5	10,276,460	52.1	1,504,510	36.5
13 weeks or less	1,480,619	13.3	2,667,249	13.5	280,087	6.8
1 to 10 hours	508,828	34.4	541,600	20.3	50,080	17.9
11 to 20 hours	535,855	36.2	771,693	28.9	65,634	23.4
Over 20 hours	435,936	29.4	1,353,956	50.8	164,373	58.7
14 to 26 weeks	525,155	4.7	1,748,397	8.9	197,127	4.8
1 to 10 hours	141,453	26.9	251,304	14.4	23,819	12.1
11 to 20 hours	247,264	47.1	592,286	33.9	57,765	29.3
Over 20 hours	136,438	26.0	904,807	51.8	115,543	58.6
27 to 49 weeks	1,063,137	9.5	5,860,814	29.7	1,027,296	24.9
1 to 10 hours	272,489	25.6	640,277	10.9	82,377	8.0
11 to 20 hours	534,501	50.3	2,265,686	38.7	329,928	32.1
Over 20 hours	256,147	24.1	2,954,851	50.4	614,991	59.9
Worked full-time, year-round	145,740	1.3	3,858,580	19.6	1,896,334	45.9

Source: 2011 American Community Survey.

Appendix Table 1-B.

Hours and Weeks Worked for Students Enrolled in High School, College, and Graduate School: 2011

(Margin of error values for Appendix Table A-1a. Population 16 years and over enrolled in public or private school. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Population	High school		College		Graduate or professional school	
	Number	Margin of error ¹	Number	Margin of error ¹	Number	Margin of error ¹
Total	11,149,446		19,730,695		4,127,319	
Did not work	40,456	0.233	46,500	0.195	18,665	0.389
Worked less than full-time, year-round . . .	27,653	0.243	48,560	0.200	24,650	0.475
13 weeks or less	19,823	0.177	26,976	0.123	8,571	0.195
1 to 10 hours	11,531	0.593	11,266	0.378	3,584	1.166
11 to 20 hours	11,716	0.641	14,168	0.516	4,314	1.413
Over 20 hours	10,338	0.592	22,709	0.566	7,299	1.760
14 to 26 weeks	12,594	0.112	18,962	0.100	8,044	0.188
1 to 10 hours	5,287	0.915	7,738	0.432	2,201	1.068
11 to 20 hours	9,025	1.120	12,409	0.641	4,239	1.749
Over 20 hours	6,358	1.036	15,779	0.617	6,082	1.818
27 to 49 weeks	18,324	0.163	44,074	0.210	19,871	0.418
1 to 10 hours	8,419	0.722	11,195	0.187	4,805	0.464
11 to 20 hours	11,617	0.715	34,497	0.478	12,008	0.857
Over 20 hours	10,018	0.774	32,495	0.427	14,584	0.986
Worked full-time, year-round	7,097	0.062	38,480	0.153	24,962	0.510

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. This number when added to or subtracted from the estimate forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Source: 2011 American Community Survey.