

# Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009

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## Population Characteristics

P20-566

This report provides a portrait of educational attainment in the United States based on data collected in the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2005–2009 ACS 5-year estimates. It also uses data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS) collected in 2009 and earlier, as well as monthly data from the CPS. Prior to 2007, U.S. Census Bureau reports on educational attainment were based on data primarily from the CPS.<sup>1</sup> The ACS is now used as the main source of educational attainment data because it has a larger sample and provides more reliable statistics for small levels of geography.

The report also provides estimates of educational attainment in the United States, including comparisons by demographic characteristics such as age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin. Information about educational attainment among the native-born and foreign-born populations is included. This report also presents a geographic picture of educational attainment with estimates by region and state. Workers' median earnings by educational attainment are also addressed, including differences by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, as well as unemployment rates by educational attainment. Historical data are included to present some general trends over time.

<sup>1</sup> For information on the differences between the ACS and CPS estimates, see Comparison of ACS and ASEC Data on Educational Attainment: 2004, Washington, DC, U.S. Census Bureau, 2007, and accompanying tables and figures, available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <[www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/library/2007/2007\\_Scanniello\\_01.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/library/2007/2007_Scanniello_01.pdf)>.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2009, more than 4 out of 5 (85 percent) adults aged 25 and over reported having at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, while over 1 in 4 (28 percent) reported a bachelor's degree or higher. This reflects more than a three-fold increase in high school attainment and more than a five-fold increase in college attainment since the Census Bureau first collected educational attainment data in 1940.<sup>2</sup>
- A larger proportion of women than men had completed high school or more education.<sup>3</sup> A larger proportion of men had received at least a bachelor's degree. However, because women 25 years old and over outnumber men aged 25 and over, the number of women with bachelor's degrees is larger than the number of men with these degrees. Among people aged 25 to 34, the percentage of women with a bachelor's degree or higher was 35 percent compared with 27 percent of men.
- Differences in educational attainment by race and Hispanic origin existed. Attainment for non-Hispanic

<sup>2</sup> The decennial census has collected educational attainment data since 1940.

<sup>3</sup> "High school or more education" refers to completing a high school diploma, GED or alternative credential, or higher degree.

## Current Population Reports

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Whites and Asians was higher than attainment for Blacks and Hispanics.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as Asian may be defined as those who reported Asian and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Asian regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). This report shows data using the first approach (race alone). This report will refer to the White-alone population as White, the Black-alone population as Black, the Asian-alone population as Asian, and the White-alone-non-Hispanic population as non-Hispanic White. Use of the single-race population does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches. In this report, the term “non-Hispanic White” refers to people who are not Hispanic and who reported White and no other race. The Census Bureau uses non-Hispanic Whites as the comparison group for other race groups and Hispanics. Because Hispanics may be any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap with data for racial groups.

- Educational attainment varied by nativity. About 89 percent of the native-born population had completed at least high school, compared with 68 percent of the foreign-born population. More native-born than foreign-born adults reported completing at least a bachelor's degree (28 percent and 27 percent, respectively).
- Educational attainment of foreign-born Hispanics was lower than all other groups. The percentage of foreign-born Hispanics who had completed at least high school was 48 percent.
- The Midwest had the highest percentage of adults reporting that they completed high school or more education, and the Northeast had the highest

percentage with a bachelor's degree or more education.<sup>5</sup>

- Among all workers, those with a bachelor's degree on average earned about \$20,000 more per year than workers with a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Non-Hispanic Whites earned more than other race

<sup>5</sup> The Northeast region includes the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Midwest region includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The South region includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, a state equivalent. The West region includes the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

## TWO SOURCES OF DATA

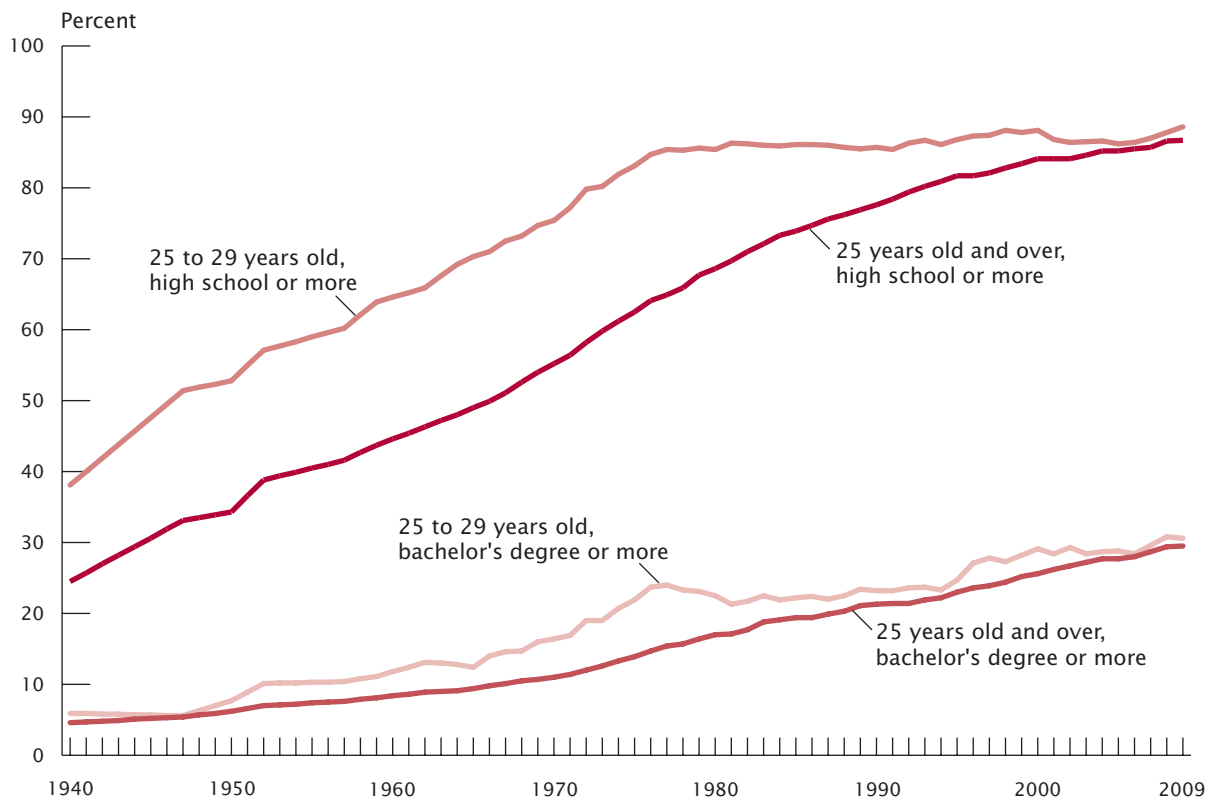
The information in this report is based on two separate data sources: the estimates of current educational attainment come from the 2009 and the 2005–2009 5-Year Estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS), while historical data about educational attainment is from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Unemployment data are from the monthly CPS.

The ACS, part of the Census Bureau's re-engineered 2010 Census, looks at a wide range of social, economic, and housing characteristics for the population. The ACS collects information from an annual sample of approximately 3 million housing unit addresses. The ACS is administered to the entire domestic population, including those living in group quarters. In this respect, data from the ACS are generally comparable with data from Census 2000 and earlier decennial censuses. In the ACS, educational attainment is classified by the highest degree or the highest level of schooling completed, with people currently enrolled in school requested to report the level of the previous grade attended or the highest degree received.

Another important source of educational attainment information is the ASEC to the CPS. The CPS is a monthly survey with a sample of approximately 72,000 housing units. ASEC data are collected from CPS respondents in February, March, and April of each year with an annual sample of approximately 100,000 households. Unlike the ACS, the universe is the civilian noninstitutionalized population, and therefore does not include people living in institutions or Armed Forces personnel (except those living with their families). While the sample size is not sufficient for describing small geographic areas, CPS data can provide estimates for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. CPS data also provide a time series of educational attainment information since 1947. Since 1992, data on educational attainment are derived from a single question that asks, “What is the highest grade of school . . . completed, or the highest degree . . . received?” Prior to 1992, respondents reported the highest grade they had attended, and whether or not they had completed that grade.

The ACS and the CPS differ in geographic scope, data collection methods, and population universe. For more information on these two sources of data, see the previous report, *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007*, Appendix A.

Figure 1.  
**Percentage of the Population 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed High School or College: Selected Years 1940–2009**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey and decennial censuses.

groups and more than Hispanics at the high school level, while earnings at the bachelor's and advanced degree level were highest for Asians. Black and Hispanic workers earned less at nearly all attainment levels.<sup>6</sup>

- Men earned more than women at each level of educational attainment.

<sup>6</sup> Among all workers, the median earnings for blacks with a high school diploma were not statistically different than the earnings for Asians with a high school diploma. Also, the median earnings for Hispanics with a GED were not statistically different than the earnings for non-Hispanic Whites with a GED.

## PORTRAIT OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

### Historical Trends in Education Using Data From CPS and the Decennial Census

This section uses data from the CPS and the decennial census. The CPS and the census are better sources of data to provide a historical picture of educational attainment because the census has collected educational attainment since 1940 and CPS since 1947. The Census Bureau has documented an increase in the educational attainment of the

population since the question was first asked in the 1940s.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1 plots educational attainment for the population aged 25 and over from 1940 to 2009 using data from the CPS for 1947 to 2009 and census for years prior to 1947. This percentage is shown for two levels of education: completing high school (regular high school diploma or GED) or higher, and completing a bachelor's degree or higher. In 1940, one-fourth of the population aged 25 and over had

<sup>7</sup> See Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007 (P20-560), available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <[www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p20-560.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p20-560.pdf)>.

completed high school. By 1967, over 50 percent of this population had reached this level. This percentage continued to increase to 75 percent by 1986 and reached 87 percent in 2009.<sup>8</sup>

The percentage of the population aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher also increased steadily from 1940 to 2009. In 1940, 5 percent of the population aged 25 and older held at least a bachelor's degree or higher. By 2009, this percentage had increased more than five-fold to 30 percent.<sup>9</sup>

In 1947, 51 percent of the population 25 to 29 years old had completed high school compared to 33 percent of the total population 25 years old and over. However, over time, the rates of educational attainment have converged. By 2009, the proportion of those who had completed high school was 89 percent for the 25 to 29 year old population and 87 percent for those aged 25 and over.

During the 20 years from 1975 to 1994, the proportion of 25- to 29-year-olds who had completed a bachelor's degree or higher stayed within the range of 21 to 24 percent. Since then, the rate for this age group has climbed to 31 percent. The rate of college completion for the population 25 years and over grew from 11 percent in 1970 to 30 percent in 2009.

### **A Current Picture of Educational Attainment Using ACS Data**

The following sections use data from the ACS. The ACS is used

<sup>8</sup> Estimates from ACS vary from CPS in this report due to factors such as differences in the population eligible for interview in each survey and other differences in survey methodology. See also the text box included in this report.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

instead of the CPS because ACS has a larger sample size and provides reliable estimates for population subgroups and smaller levels of geography. Estimates from ACS vary from CPS due to factors such as differences in the population, who is eligible for interview in each survey, and other differences in survey methodology.<sup>10</sup>

In 2009, 85 percent of the population aged 25 and over in the United States reported they had completed at least high school (receiving a regular high school diploma or the equivalent) (Table 1). More than 1 in 4 adults (28 percent) reported they had a bachelor's degree or more education. In 2000, 80 percent of the 25-and-older population completed high school or more and 24 percent reported a bachelor's degree or more education.<sup>11</sup>

The most common levels of educational attainment among the adult population were high school completion with a high school diploma (25 percent), followed by completion of a bachelor's degree (18 percent). Table 1 also shows that 4 percent of the population 25 years old and over completed high school by earning a GED or alternative credential. There was also a substantial percentage of the population who had completed schooling beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree. Twenty-one percent of the population 25 years old and over had completed

<sup>10</sup> For information on the differences between the ACS and CPS estimates, see Comparison of ACS and ASEC Data on Educational Attainment: 2004, Washington, DC, U.S. Census Bureau, 2007, and accompanying tables and figures, available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <[www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/library/2007/2007\\_Scanniello\\_01.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/library/2007/2007_Scanniello_01.pdf)>.

<sup>11</sup> For more information on educational attainment in 2000, see Educational Attainment: 2000 (C2KBR-24), available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <[www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-24.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-24.pdf)>.

some college. In addition, 8 percent of the population had completed an associate's degree.

### **Differences by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin**

*Age.* Educational attainment varies by several demographic characteristics, including age. The overall increase in educational attainment documented over the past 6 decades occurred as younger (and more educated) cohorts replaced older, less educated cohorts in the adult population. In 2009, the group aged 65 and older reported lower levels of high school and college attainment than all younger age groups. Among those aged 65 and over, 77 percent had completed high school or more education, and 20 percent reported a bachelor's degree or more education (Table 1).

*Sex.* Gender differences in education continue to exist. In 2009, a larger proportion of women than men had completed high school with a high school diploma, some college, associate's, and master's degrees. On the other hand, a higher proportion of men had completed high school with a GED, as well as bachelor's, professional, and doctorate degrees.

Although women 25 years and over were less likely than men to have bachelor's, professional, or doctorate degrees, they were still ahead of men by some measures. Because there were more women than men 25 years old and over, the number of women with a bachelor's degree or higher (28.7 million) was greater than the number of men with a bachelor's degree or higher (27.7 million).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Table B15002, Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over: 2009, available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>>.

In addition, among people aged 25 to 34, the percentage of women with a bachelor's degree or higher was 35 percent compared with 27 percent of men.<sup>13</sup>

*Race and Hispanic Origin.* Educational attainment also varied by race and Hispanic origin. Non-Hispanic Whites reported the highest percentage of adults with at least a high school education (90 percent). Asians reported the highest percentage of those with a bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctorate degrees. Blacks reported higher percentages at each level of those with high school diplomas and GED's of all race groups and Hispanics. Blacks were also more likely to have completed some college than any other group. However, Blacks were less likely to have completed bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctorate degrees than those who were White alone, non-Hispanic Whites, and Asians. Hispanics reported the lowest percentages overall of those with a high school diploma or equivalent and above—61 percent had completed high school or higher and 13 percent had completed at least a bachelor's degree.

### **Diverse Educational Experiences Among the Foreign-Born Population**

Educational attainment differed by nativity status. About 20 percentage points separated the native born (89 percent) and foreign born (68 percent) aged 25 and older who had completed high school or more. Foreign-born residents made up 35 percent of the population that had not completed high school. At the bachelor's and advanced degree attainment levels,

<sup>13</sup> See Subject Table S1501, Educational Attainment: 2009, available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>>.

there was about a one percentage point difference between the native born and the foreign born. A higher percentage of native-born than foreign-born adults reported completing at least a bachelor's degree (28 percent and 27 percent, respectively), while more foreign-born than native-born adults reported having a professional or doctorate degree. These differences suggest that, while a large proportion of the foreign-born population had lower levels of education, a sizeable segment also had high levels of education.

Since 2000, the percentage of the population aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree who are foreign born has increased. The foreign-born population made up 14 percent of the population aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree, up from 13 percent in 2000. The number of foreign-born residents with bachelor's or higher degrees has also increased by 49 percent since 2000.<sup>14</sup> For some race groups and Hispanics, there was little difference in educational attainment by nativity, but for others there were large differences (Table 1). For all groups except Blacks, a larger percentage of the native born than the foreign born had completed at least high school. The pattern differs for college attainment, with higher attainment among the foreign born for the non-Hispanic White and Black populations.

The lower educational attainment of foreign-born Hispanics affected the overall Hispanic education levels. In 2009, about 57 percent

<sup>14</sup> For information about nativity and educational attainment in 2000, see Table 2L-01 available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <[www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs/phc-t39/index.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs/phc-t39/index.html)>. Also see Table B06009, Place of Birth by Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009, available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>>.

of all Hispanics aged 25 and over in the United States were foreign born. Educational attainment of foreign-born Hispanics was lower than all other race, Hispanic origin, and nativity groups. The percentage of foreign-born Hispanics who completed at least high school was 48 percent. Although native-born Hispanics had higher educational attainment than foreign-born Hispanics, all other native-born race groups had higher educational attainment than native-born Hispanics.<sup>15</sup>

## **GEOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

### **Educational Attainment by County**

Educational attainment varied among states and counties. The 2005–2009 ACS 5-year dataset is used for Figure 2 and Figure 3 because these data can be used to show small geographies including counties. Figure 2 shows the geographic distribution of the population aged 25 and over whose educational attainment is high school completion (e.g., a high school diploma or a GED) or higher. The highest concentration of high school completion tended to be located in counties in the West and the Midwest. Of the ten counties with high school completion rates over 95 percent, three counties were located in Colorado (Hinsdale, Douglas, and Routt) and three were in Nebraska (Wheeler, Logan, and Grant). The other four counties were Los Alamos, New Mexico; Hamilton, Indiana; Washington, Minnesota; and Gallatin, Montana.

<sup>15</sup> About 16 percent of the native-born Hispanic and the native-born Black populations had completed a bachelor's degree, but the difference was not statistically different.

Table 1.

### Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, and Nativity Status: 2009

Characteristic	Total population	Total population		Age							
		Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	25 to 34 years		35 to 44 years		45 to 64 years		65 years and over	
				Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>201,952,383</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>
No schooling completed .....	2,592,831	1.3	—	0.7	—	0.9	—	1.2	—	2.5	—
Nursery school to 8th grade .....	10,048,130	5.0	—	3.6	0.1	4.1	0.1	4.0	—	9.4	0.1
9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma .....	17,144,287	8.5	—	8.8	0.1	7.7	0.1	7.2	0.1	11.6	0.1
Regular high school diploma .....	49,640,860	24.6	0.1	20.2	0.1	22.1	0.1	24.9	0.1	31.0	0.1
GED or alternative credential .....	7,910,811	3.9	—	4.4	0.1	4.0	0.1	3.9	—	3.4	—
Some college, less than 1 year .....	12,841,366	6.4	—	6.2	0.1	5.9	0.1	6.8	0.1	6.1	0.1
Some college, 1 or more years, no degree ...	30,246,118	15.0	—	17.2	0.1	15.7	0.1	15.1	0.1	11.7	0.1
Associate's degree .....	15,192,326	7.5	—	8.1	0.1	8.6	0.1	8.4	—	4.1	—
Bachelor's degree .....	35,494,367	17.6	0.1	22.0	0.1	19.8	0.1	17.2	0.1	11.4	0.1
Master's degree .....	14,579,118	7.2	—	6.5	0.1	7.9	0.1	8.0	—	5.8	0.1
Professional school degree .....	3,913,851	1.9	—	1.6	—	2.1	—	2.1	—	1.7	—
Doctorate degree .....	2,348,318	1.2	—	0.7	—	1.1	—	1.3	—	1.4	—
High school or more education <sup>2</sup> .....	172,167,135	85.3	0.1	87.0	0.1	87.2	0.1	87.7	0.1	76.5	0.1
Bachelor's degree or more .....	56,335,654	27.9	0.1	30.9	0.2	30.9	0.1	28.6	0.1	20.2	0.1
<b>Native Born</b>											
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>169,428,254</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>
No schooling completed .....	1,254,800	0.7	—	0.4	—	0.5	—	0.6	—	1.5	—
Nursery school to 8th grade .....	4,633,482	2.7	—	1.0	—	1.2	—	1.8	—	7.7	0.1
9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma .....	13,387,735	7.9	—	7.6	0.1	6.6	0.1	6.8	0.1	11.7	0.1
Regular high school diploma .....	43,130,828	25.5	0.1	20.1	0.1	22.8	0.1	25.9	0.1	32.4	0.1
GED or alternative credential .....	7,197,158	4.2	—	4.9	0.1	4.4	0.1	4.2	—	3.6	—
Some college, less than 1 year .....	11,810,629	7.0	—	6.9	0.1	6.7	0.1	7.4	0.1	6.5	0.1
Some college, 1 or more years, no degree ...	27,021,168	15.9	0.1	18.7	0.1	17.1	0.1	15.9	0.1	12.2	0.1
Associate's degree .....	13,376,589	7.9	—	8.7	0.1	9.3	0.1	8.7	0.1	4.1	—
Bachelor's degree .....	30,358,919	17.9	0.1	23.2	0.1	20.6	0.1	17.3	0.1	11.4	0.1
Master's degree .....	12,307,660	7.3	—	6.3	0.1	7.9	0.1	8.1	—	5.9	0.1
Professional school degree .....	3,215,887	1.9	—	1.6	—	2.0	—	2.1	—	1.7	—
Doctorate degree .....	1,733,399	1.0	—	0.6	—	0.9	—	1.2	—	1.3	—
High school or more education <sup>2</sup> .....	150,152,237	88.6	—	91.0	0.1	91.7	0.1	90.8	0.1	79.2	0.1
Bachelor's degree or more .....	47,615,865	28.1	0.1	31.7	0.2	31.4	0.2	28.7	0.1	20.3	0.1
<b>Foreign Born</b>											
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>32,524,129</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>
No schooling completed .....	1,338,031	4.1	0.1	1.8	0.1	2.7	0.1	4.5	0.1	9.6	0.2
Nursery school to 8th grade .....	5,414,648	16.6	0.2	14.4	0.3	15.3	0.3	16.9	0.2	22.2	0.4
9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma .....	3,756,552	11.6	0.1	13.9	0.3	12.3	0.2	9.7	0.1	10.7	0.3
Regular high school diploma .....	6,510,032	20.0	0.1	21.0	0.3	19.6	0.2	19.3	0.2	20.8	0.3
GED or alternative credential .....	713,653	2.2	—	2.0	0.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.1	2.1	0.1
Some college, less than 1 year .....	1,030,737	3.2	0.1	3.1	0.1	3.0	0.1	3.4	0.1	3.0	0.1
Some college, 1 or more years, no degree ...	3,224,950	9.9	0.1	10.9	0.2	10.2	0.2	9.9	0.1	7.8	0.2
Associate's degree .....	1,815,737	5.6	0.1	5.3	0.2	5.9	0.2	6.3	0.1	3.8	0.1
Bachelor's degree .....	5,135,448	15.8	0.1	17.1	0.2	16.6	0.2	16.3	0.2	11.1	0.2
Master's degree .....	2,271,458	7.0	0.1	7.6	0.2	7.9	0.2	6.9	0.1	4.5	0.2
Professional school degree .....	697,964	2.1	—	1.7	0.1	2.2	0.1	2.3	0.1	2.4	0.1
Doctorate degree .....	614,919	1.9	—	1.3	0.1	2.1	0.1	2.1	0.1	2.0	0.1
High school or more education <sup>2</sup> .....	22,014,898	67.7	0.2	69.9	0.4	69.7	0.3	68.9	0.2	57.5	0.4
Bachelor's degree or more .....	8,719,789	26.8	0.1	27.6	0.3	28.9	0.3	27.6	0.3	20.0	0.3

Table 1.

### Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, and Nativity Status: 2009—Con.

Sex				Race and Hispanic Origin										Characteristic
Male		Female		White alone		Non-Hispanic White alone		Black alone		Asian alone		Hispanic (of any race)		
Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Per- cent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	
<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.3	—	1.3	—	0.9	—	0.6	—	1.4	—	3.6	0.1	3.8	0.1	No schooling completed
5.2	—	4.8	—	4.2	—	2.4	—	4.1	0.1	5.0	0.1	19.7	0.2	Nursery school to 8th grade
9.0	0.1	8.0	—	7.4	—	6.6	—	13.1	0.1	6.0	0.1	15.6	0.2	9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma
24.1	0.1	25.0	0.1	25.0	0.1	25.3	0.1	27.2	0.2	14.8	0.2	22.4	0.2	Regular high school diploma
4.5	—	3.3	—	4.0	—	4.0	—	4.4	0.1	1.2	0.1	3.8	0.1	GED or alternative credential
6.0	—	6.7	—	6.7	—	7.0	—	6.0	0.1	2.9	0.1	4.5	0.1	Some college, less than 1 year
14.8	0.1	15.1	0.1	14.8	0.1	15.0	0.1	18.9	0.2	10.2	0.2	12.4	0.1	Some college, 1 or more years, no degree
6.7	—	8.3	—	7.8	—	8.0	—	7.3	0.1	6.6	0.1	5.3	0.1	Associate's degree
17.6	0.1	17.5	0.1	18.5	0.1	19.5	0.1	11.5	0.1	29.4	0.3	8.7	0.1	Bachelor's degree
6.8	—	7.6	—	7.6	—	8.1	—	4.7	0.1	13.0	0.2	2.7	0.1	Master's degree
2.4	—	1.5	—	2.1	—	2.2	—	0.8	—	3.9	0.1	0.9	—	Professional school degree
1.5	—	0.8	—	1.2	—	1.3	—	0.5	—	3.3	0.1	0.4	—	Doctorate degree
84.5	0.1	85.9	0.1	87.5	0.1	90.4	0.1	81.4	0.2	85.3	0.2	60.9	0.2	High school or more education <sup>2</sup>
28.4	0.1	27.4	0.1	29.3	0.1	31.1	0.1	17.6	0.2	49.7	0.3	12.6	0.1	Bachelor's degree or more
<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>Native Born</b>
<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>Total</b>
0.8	—	0.7	—	0.6	—	0.6	—	1.2	—	0.8	0.1	1.8	0.1	No schooling completed
2.8	—	2.6	—	2.5	—	2.2	—	3.8	0.1	1.4	0.1	7.0	0.1	Nursery school to 8th grade
8.3	0.1	7.5	—	6.9	—	6.6	—	13.6	0.1	2.9	0.3	13.6	0.2	9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma
25.0	0.1	25.9	0.1	25.4	0.1	25.5	0.1	27.7	0.2	13.1	0.5	23.8	0.2	Regular high school diploma
5.0	—	3.6	—	4.2	—	4.1	—	4.6	0.1	1.5	0.2	5.5	0.1	GED or alternative credential
6.6	—	7.3	—	7.1	—	7.1	—	6.3	0.1	4.0	0.3	6.8	0.1	Some college, less than 1 year
15.8	0.1	16.1	0.1	15.3	0.1	15.2	0.1	19.3	0.2	14.2	0.5	17.5	0.2	Some college, 1 or more years, no degree
7.1	—	8.6	0.1	8.0	—	8.0	—	7.0	0.1	8.0	0.4	7.5	0.1	Associate's degree
18.1	0.1	17.7	0.1	19.1	0.1	19.5	0.1	10.8	0.1	34.9	0.6	11.4	0.2	Bachelor's degree
6.7	—	7.8	—	7.8	—	8.0	—	4.5	0.1	11.0	0.4	3.7	0.1	Master's degree
2.5	—	1.4	—	2.1	—	2.1	—	0.7	—	6.3	0.3	0.9	—	Professional school degree
1.3	—	0.7	—	1.1	—	1.2	—	0.5	—	1.8	0.2	0.4	—	Doctorate degree
88.0	0.1	89.2	0.1	90.0	0.1	90.6	0.1	81.4	0.2	94.9	0.3	77.5	0.2	High school or more education <sup>2</sup>
28.6	0.1	27.7	0.1	30.1	0.1	30.7	0.1	16.5	0.2	54.0	0.7	16.4	0.2	Bachelor's degree or more
<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>Foreign Born</b>
<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(X)</b>	<b>Total</b>
3.8	0.1	4.4	0.1	3.6	0.1	2.1	0.1	2.8	0.2	4.1	0.1	5.3	0.1	No schooling completed
17.2	0.2	16.1	0.2	19.1	0.2	6.3	0.2	6.9	0.3	5.7	0.1	29.3	0.3	Nursery school to 8th grade
12.1	0.2	11.0	0.1	12.3	0.2	6.5	0.2	9.1	0.4	6.6	0.2	17.1	0.2	9th grade to 12th grade, no diploma
19.7	0.2	20.4	0.2	21.5	0.2	21.7	0.3	23.2	0.5	15.1	0.3	21.3	0.3	Regular high school diploma
2.2	0.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.1	2.2	0.1	3.5	0.2	1.2	0.1	2.5	0.1	GED or alternative credential
2.9	0.1	3.4	0.1	3.4	0.1	4.2	0.1	4.2	0.2	2.6	0.1	2.8	0.1	Some college, less than 1 year
9.8	0.1	10.1	0.1	9.7	0.1	11.5	0.2	15.2	0.4	9.4	0.2	8.5	0.2	Some college, 1 or more years, no degree
4.8	0.1	6.3	0.1	5.4	0.1	7.4	0.2	9.4	0.4	6.4	0.1	3.6	0.1	Associate's degree
15.0	0.2	16.6	0.1	13.0	0.2	20.6	0.3	16.6	0.5	28.4	0.3	6.6	0.1	Bachelor's degree
7.5	0.1	6.5	0.1	5.8	0.1	10.6	0.2	6.5	0.3	13.4	0.2	1.9	0.1	Master's degree
2.4	0.1	1.9	0.1	2.1	0.1	3.4	0.1	1.6	0.1	3.5	0.1	0.9	—	Professional school degree
2.5	0.1	1.3	—	1.8	0.1	3.6	0.1	1.0	0.1	3.6	0.1	0.4	—	Doctorate degree
66.8	0.2	68.6	0.2	65.0	0.3	85.2	0.2	81.3	0.4	83.5	0.2	48.3	0.3	High school or more education <sup>2</sup>
27.4	0.2	26.2	0.2	22.7	0.2	38.1	0.4	25.8	0.5	48.8	0.3	9.7	0.1	Bachelor's degree or more

— Represents or rounds to zero.

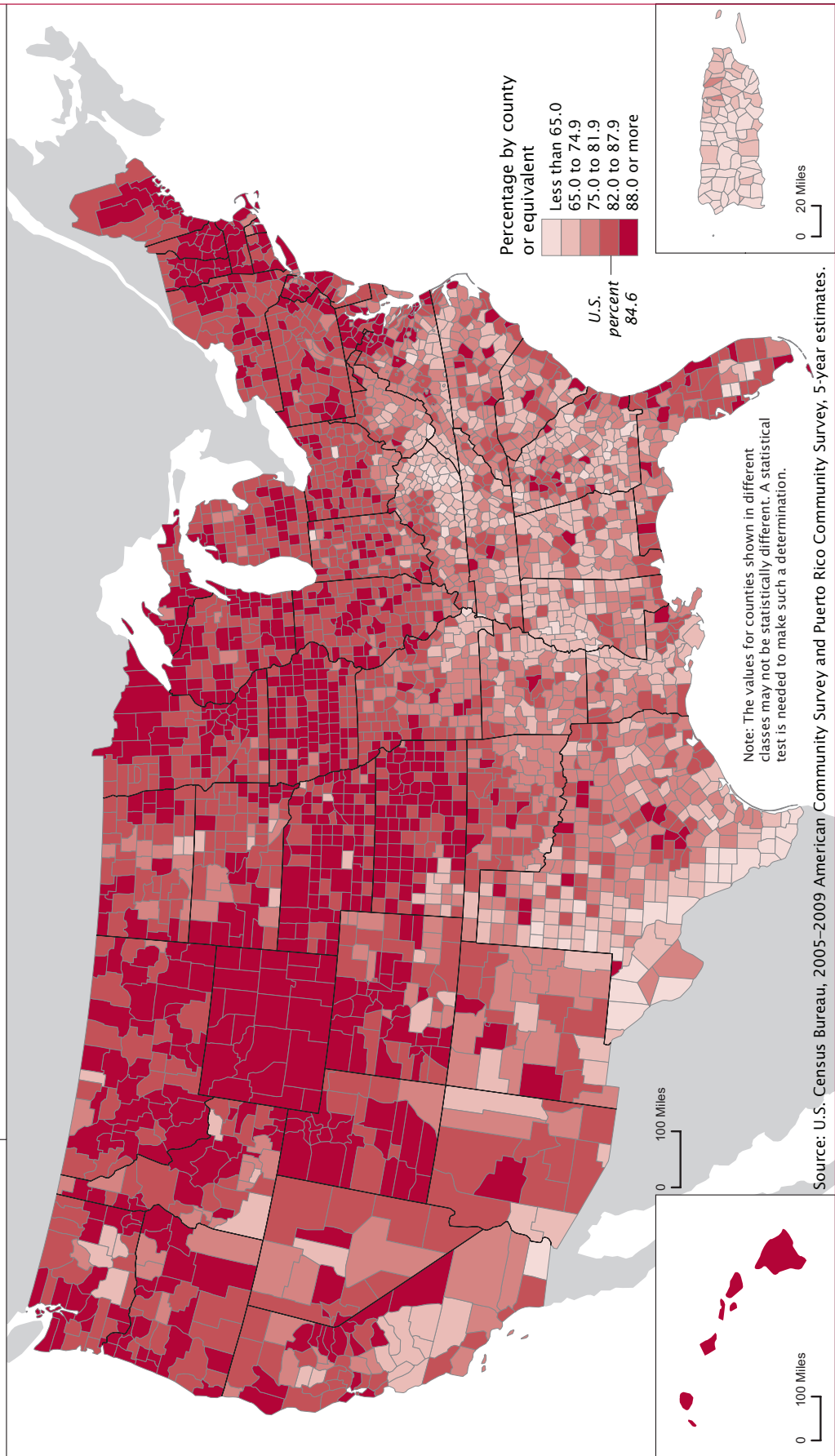
(X) Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> 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. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

<sup>2</sup> "High school or more education" refers to completing a high school diploma, GED or alternative credential, or higher degree.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

Figure 2.  
**Percentage of People 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed High School or More Education: 2005–2009**  
 (Includes GED recipients)





**Figure 3.  
Percentage of People 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed a Bachelor's Degree or More: 2005–2009**

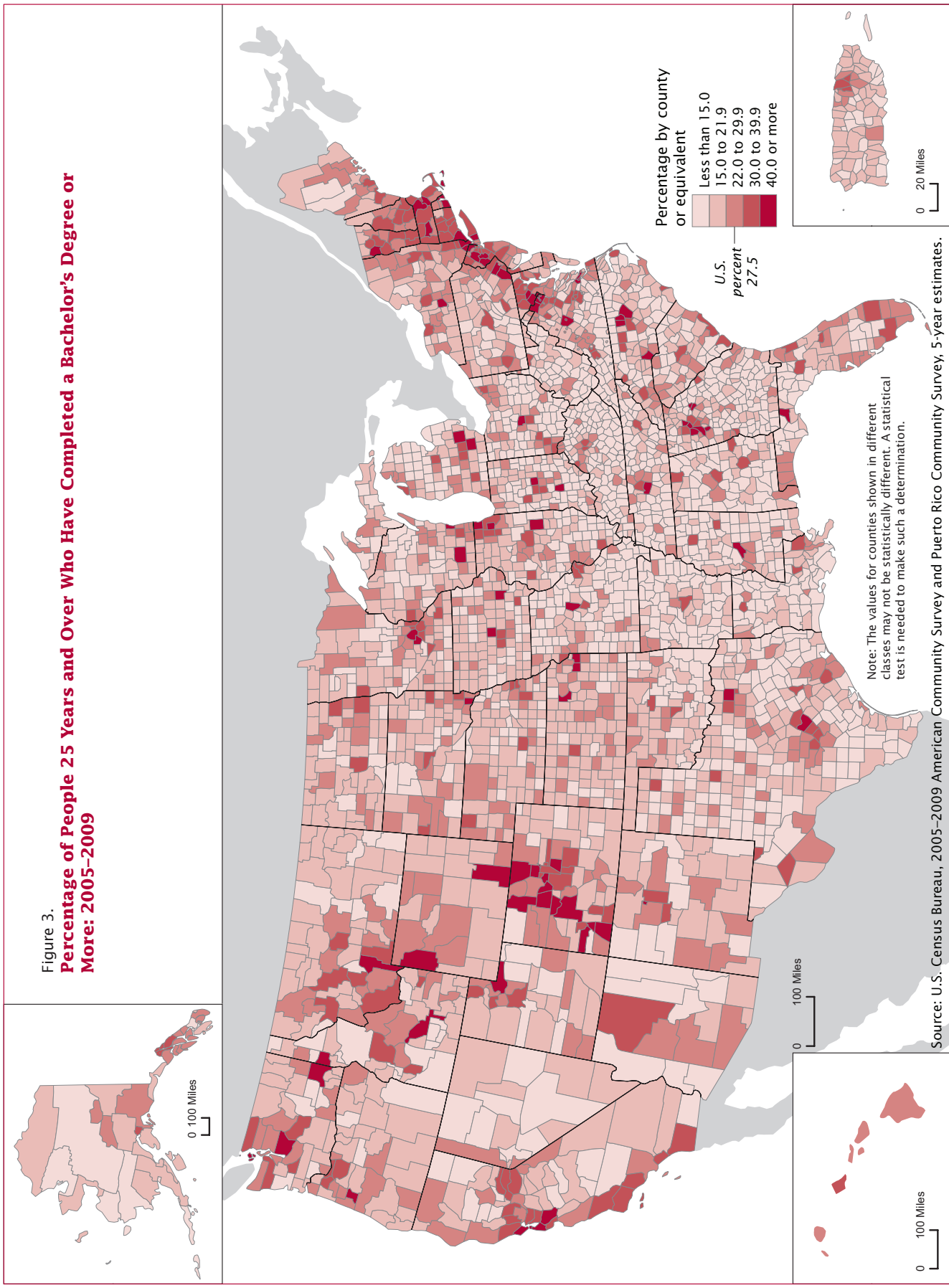


Figure 3 shows the percentage of the population aged 25 and over whose educational attainment is a bachelor's degree or higher. Metropolitan counties on the East and West Coast had high percentages of the college-educated population. Counties with high education formed a band in the Northeast from Albemarle County, Virginia, to Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Other counties that had high concentrations of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher included part of the San Francisco area, and King County, Washington, containing the city of Seattle.

There were only 17 counties where more than half of the population 25 years old and over held a bachelor's degree or higher. These included suburban counties in the Northeast and elsewhere, counties with large universities or research facilities, and resort counties in the western states.

### **Educational Attainment by Region and State**

Table 2 focuses on the proportion of the population aged 25 and over who were high school graduates (including GED) or more for regions and states. The percentage of the population with at least a high school diploma or GED was highest in the Midwest and lowest in the South. At the bachelor's degree level or higher, the largest percentage was in the Northeast and the smallest was in the South.

More than 90 percent of the population completed high school or more in the following states: Alaska, Iowa, Montana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Wyoming.<sup>16</sup> This contrasts to Mississippi and Texas, where

<sup>16</sup> The percentage of the population who were high school graduates or more in Utah was 90.4 percent. However, this estimate was also statistically different than 90 percent.

80 percent of the population had completed high school.

The highest concentration of college graduates was in the District of Columbia, where 49 percent of adults had a bachelor's degree or more education. In addition to the District of Columbia, more than 1 in 3 adults had at least a bachelor's degree in the following states: Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Virginia. In Arkansas, Mississippi, and West Virginia, 1 in 5 adults or fewer had a bachelor's degree or more education.

### **Nativity and Attainment by Region and State**

Table 2 also shows educational attainment data across regions and states by nativity status. Among the foreign born, educational attainment was highest in the Northeast and lowest in the West. The native-born population in every region was more likely than the foreign-born to have completed high school or more education. In the Northeastern and Western regions, the native-born population was more likely to have a bachelor's or higher education than the foreign-born population, while in the Midwest, the foreign born were more likely to have a bachelor's or higher degree. In the South, the native born were more likely than the foreign to hold a bachelor's or higher degree, but the difference was 0.3 percentage points.

High school attainment was higher for the native born in nearly all states.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, foreign-born residents were more likely to have less than a high school education. In Texas and Nevada, the foreign born made up half or more of the population aged 25 and over that

<sup>17</sup> High school attainment was significantly higher for the foreign born (87.3 percent) compared to the native born (82.7 percent) in West Virginia.

had not completed high school. In California, 70 percent of those with less than high school were foreign born.

College attainment was higher for the native born in fewer than half of the states. States with higher native-born than foreign-born college attainment were concentrated in the West, but this pattern was also evident in states that are traditional immigrant gateways (including Illinois, Florida, and New York).<sup>18</sup> In 19 of the 50 states, the proportion of foreign-born adults with at least a bachelor's degree was larger than the proportion of native-born adults who had completed college.

In some states, the foreign born made up a substantial share of the population with bachelor's or higher degrees. In California, the foreign-born population made up 30 percent of the population aged 25 and over with a bachelor's or higher degree. In New York, they made up 24 percent of this population.<sup>19</sup>

States with a large percentage of native-born people with a bachelor's or higher degree also tended to have a large percentage of foreign-born people with a bachelor's or higher degree, although the relationship was not very strong (Figure 4). The simple correlation between these percentages across states was 0.2 (where 1.0 represents perfect correlation and 0.0 represents no correlation at all).

<sup>18</sup> For information on immigrant gateways, see the Census 2000 Special Report Migration of Natives and the Foreign Born: 1995 to 2000 (CENSUR-11), available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <[www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-11.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-11.pdf)>.

<sup>19</sup> See Table B06009, Place of Birth by Educational Attainment in the United States: 2009, available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>>.

Table 2.

### Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over by Region and State by Nativity Status: 2009

Area	High school or more education <sup>2</sup>						Bachelor's degree or more					
	Total		Native born		Foreign born		Total		Native born		Foreign born	
	Percent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Percent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Percent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Percent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Percent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Percent	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)
<b>United States . . . . .</b>	<b>85.3</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>88.6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Region</b>												
Northeast . . . . .	87.0	0.1	89.8	0.1	74.9	0.3	32.1	0.1	32.3	0.2	31.1	0.4
Midwest . . . . .	88.1	0.1	89.6	0.1	70.9	0.5	26.5	0.1	26.1	0.1	30.7	0.4
South . . . . .	83.4	0.1	86.0	0.1	66.6	0.3	25.8	0.1	25.8	0.1	25.5	0.3
West . . . . .	84.1	0.1	91.3	0.1	63.3	0.3	29.3	0.1	31.0	0.1	24.2	0.2
<b>State</b>												
Alabama . . . . .	82.1	0.4	82.7	0.4	67.5	2.8	22.0	0.4	21.7	0.4	29.8	1.9
Alaska . . . . .	91.4	0.6	92.6	0.7	79.9	3.6	26.6	1.3	27.0	1.4	22.2	3.4
Arizona . . . . .	84.2	0.3	89.6	0.3	59.6	1.3	25.6	0.3	27.2	0.4	18.2	0.8
Arkansas . . . . .	82.4	0.5	84.0	0.5	51.6	3.3	18.9	0.5	19.0	0.5	15.8	2.3
California . . . . .	80.6	0.2	90.8	0.1	62.8	0.3	29.9	0.2	32.8	0.2	24.8	0.3
Colorado . . . . .	89.3	0.4	93.1	0.3	61.3	1.7	35.9	0.5	37.4	0.5	24.3	1.4
Connecticut . . . . .	88.6	0.4	90.7	0.3	77.4	1.5	35.6	0.5	36.4	0.5	31.4	1.4
Delaware . . . . .	87.4	0.8	88.8	0.6	74.9	3.9	28.7	1.0	27.6	1.1	38.7	3.2
District of Columbia . . . . .	87.1	1.0	88.9	0.9	76.7	3.5	48.5	1.2	48.5	1.3	48.1	3.4
Florida . . . . .	85.3	0.2	88.5	0.2	74.9	0.6	25.3	0.2	25.7	0.2	23.7	0.5
Georgia . . . . .	83.9	0.3	85.8	0.3	70.1	1.3	27.5	0.3	27.3	0.4	29.1	1.1
Hawaii . . . . .	90.4	0.5	93.3	0.5	80.6	1.4	29.6	0.8	30.8	0.9	25.5	1.6
Idaho . . . . .	88.4	0.5	91.2	0.5	55.3	3.2	23.9	0.6	24.6	0.7	15.7	2.2
Illinois . . . . .	86.4	0.2	90.1	0.2	69.4	0.8	30.6	0.2	31.1	0.2	28.0	0.5
Indiana . . . . .	86.6	0.3	87.6	0.3	68.4	1.9	22.5	0.3	22.2	0.4	28.7	1.6
Iowa . . . . .	90.5	0.3	91.7	0.3	64.4	2.6	25.1	0.5	25.0	0.5	27.1	2.4
Kansas . . . . .	89.7	0.4	91.9	0.3	62.5	2.4	29.5	0.5	30.0	0.5	23.0	1.9
Kentucky . . . . .	81.7	0.4	82.0	0.4	72.9	2.4	21.0	0.4	20.7	0.4	30.6	2.6
Louisiana . . . . .	82.2	0.4	82.6	0.4	72.9	2.8	21.4	0.4	21.2	0.4	26.2	2.6
Maine . . . . .	90.2	0.5	90.6	0.5	79.7	2.9	26.9	0.8	26.9	0.9	27.9	3.7
Maryland . . . . .	88.2	0.3	90.2	0.3	78.1	1.0	35.7	0.4	34.9	0.5	39.8	1.3
Massachusetts . . . . .	89.0	0.3	91.9	0.2	75.5	0.9	38.2	0.4	39.2	0.4	34.0	1.1
Michigan . . . . .	87.9	0.2	89.0	0.2	74.9	1.3	24.6	0.3	23.6	0.3	36.8	1.3
Minnesota . . . . .	91.5	0.2	93.2	0.2	71.6	1.6	31.5	0.4	31.4	0.4	32.4	1.7
Mississippi . . . . .	80.4	0.5	80.8	0.5	66.0	4.4	19.6	0.5	19.4	0.5	26.3	3.7
Missouri . . . . .	86.8	0.3	87.2	0.3	76.6	2.1	25.2	0.4	24.7	0.3	36.8	2.0
Montana . . . . .	90.8	0.5	91.2	0.5	77.8	4.9	27.4	1.0	27.2	1.0	33.7	6.0
Nebraska . . . . .	89.8	0.4	92.6	0.4	51.5	3.4	27.4	0.6	27.9	0.6	19.8	2.6
Nevada . . . . .	83.9	0.6	90.9	0.5	62.5	1.6	21.8	0.5	23.1	0.6	17.8	1.1
New Hampshire . . . . .	91.3	0.5	91.9	0.5	82.2	3.4	32.0	0.8	31.6	0.8	37.3	3.2
New Jersey . . . . .	87.4	0.2	90.5	0.2	78.5	0.7	34.5	0.4	34.1	0.4	35.6	0.7
New Mexico . . . . .	82.8	0.6	87.7	0.5	48.6	2.6	25.3	0.5	26.8	0.6	15.3	1.5
New York . . . . .	84.7	0.2	89.2	0.2	72.6	0.4	32.4	0.2	34.0	0.3	28.2	0.5
North Carolina . . . . .	84.3	0.3	86.2	0.2	64.5	1.3	26.5	0.3	26.5	0.3	26.6	1.1
North Dakota . . . . .	90.1	0.6	90.5	0.6	76.3	7.1	25.8	0.9	25.6	0.9	31.5	7.2
Ohio . . . . .	87.6	0.2	88.0	0.2	80.4	1.3	24.1	0.2	23.4	0.3	38.6	1.4
Oklahoma . . . . .	85.6	0.4	87.3	0.4	59.6	2.7	22.7	0.4	22.9	0.4	20.9	1.7
Oregon . . . . .	89.1	0.4	92.2	0.3	64.6	1.7	29.2	0.5	29.7	0.5	25.2	1.4
Pennsylvania . . . . .	87.9	0.2	88.6	0.2	78.3	0.9	26.4	0.2	25.7	0.2	35.8	1.2
Rhode Island . . . . .	84.7	0.8	88.5	0.7	64.7	3.0	30.5	1.0	32.7	1.1	18.6	2.1
South Carolina . . . . .	83.6	0.4	84.3	0.4	70.7	1.9	24.3	0.4	24.2	0.4	26.9	2.0
South Dakota . . . . .	89.9	0.6	90.5	0.6	70.4	5.3	25.1	1.0	25.1	1.0	24.4	5.3
Tennessee . . . . .	83.1	0.3	83.8	0.3	70.1	2.2	23.0	0.3	22.7	0.4	29.6	1.8
Texas . . . . .	79.9	0.2	87.1	0.2	53.2	0.6	25.5	0.2	27.2	0.2	19.4	0.3
Utah . . . . .	90.4	0.4	93.5	0.3	64.2	2.3	28.5	0.6	29.5	0.7	19.8	1.7
Vermont . . . . .	91.0	0.7	91.3	0.7	82.8	3.4	33.1	1.0	33.0	1.1	33.6	5.9
Virginia . . . . .	86.6	0.3	87.5	0.3	80.4	1.0	34.0	0.4	33.1	0.4	40.2	1.1
Washington . . . . .	89.7	0.3	92.7	0.3	72.6	1.0	31.0	0.4	31.0	0.4	31.3	1.0
West Virginia . . . . .	82.8	0.5	82.7	0.5	87.3	3.8	17.3	0.5	16.7	0.5	53.8	5.3
Wisconsin . . . . .	89.8	0.2	91.0	0.2	67.9	1.7	25.7	0.3	25.6	0.3	27.1	1.9
Wyoming . . . . .	91.8	0.7	92.8	0.6	68.0	7.9	23.8	1.1	24.1	1.1	14.8	5.2

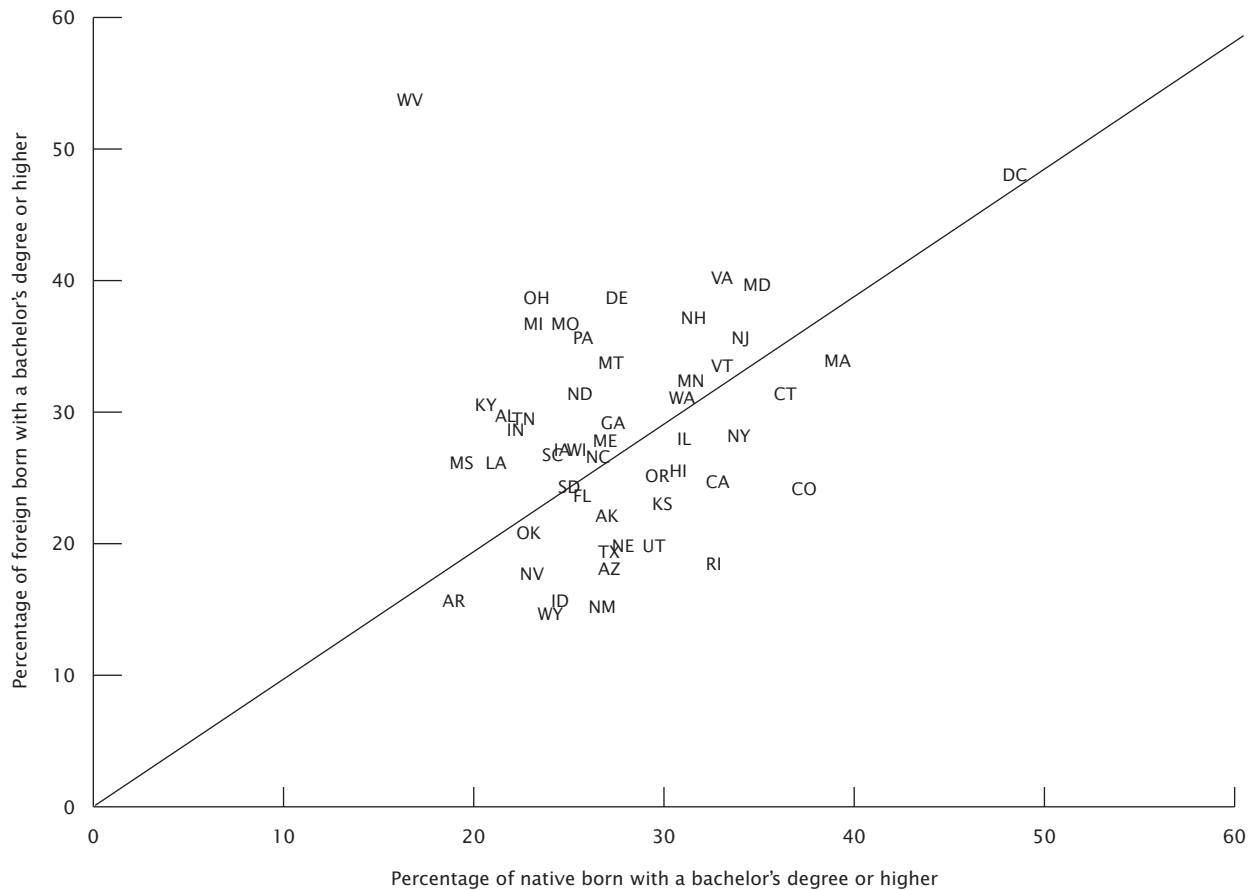
- Represents or rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> 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. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

<sup>2</sup> "High school or more education" refers to completing a high school diploma, GED or alternative credential, or higher degree.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

Figure 4.  
**Percentage of the Population 25 Years and Over with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by State and Nativity Status: 2009**  
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

## THE VALUE OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

One of the potential benefits of educational attainment is economic success, particularly through access to higher earnings.<sup>20</sup> Table 3 displays the median annual earnings in 2009 by educational attainment for workers aged 25

and over.<sup>21</sup> Among all workers, higher educational attainment was generally associated with higher earnings. The median earnings ranged from about \$18,000 for workers with less than a high school degree, to over \$60,000 for those with an advanced degree. Workers with a regular high school diploma earned about \$27,000, and those with a GED earned about

\$23,000. Those with a bachelor's degree earned about \$48,000. Median earnings for a worker with a bachelor's degree were 77 percent higher than median earnings for a worker with a regular high school diploma, and median earnings for an advanced degree were 31 percent higher than earnings for a bachelor's degree.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See the Current Population Report, The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings (P23-210), available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <[www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf)>.

<sup>21</sup> A worker is defined as a person who, during the preceding calendar year, did any work for pay or profit or worked without pay on a family-operated farm or business at any time during the year, on a part-time or full-time basis. A full-time, year-round worker is a person who worked full time (35 or more hours per week) and 50 or more weeks during the previous calendar year.

<sup>22</sup> These ratios were calculated by dividing the first median by the second median. For instance, median earnings for all workers were \$47,510 for a bachelor's degree and \$26,776 for a regular high school diploma. \$47,510 divided by \$26,776 equals 1.77. Therefore, median earnings for a worker with a bachelor's degree were 77 percent higher than median earnings for a worker with a high school degree alone.

Table 3.

### Median Earnings for Workers 25 Years and Over by Educational Attainment, Work Status, Age, Sex, and Race and Hispanic Origin: 2009

Characteristic	Total		Not a high school graduate		Regular high school diploma		GED or alternative credential		Some college or associate's degree		Bachelor's degree		Advanced degree	
	Earnings (dollars)	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Earnings (dollars)	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Earnings (dollars)	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Earnings (dollars)	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Earnings (dollars)	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Earnings (dollars)	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Earnings (dollars)	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)
<b>All workers</b> . . . . .	<b>33,071</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>18,432</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>26,776</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>22,534</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>31,906</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>47,510</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>62,313</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>Age</b>														
25 to 34 years . . . . .	28,645	76	16,284	167	23,127	156	18,836	280	27,171	125	39,886	152	49,393	223
35 to 44 years . . . . .	36,383	116	19,265	121	28,195	133	23,716	326	34,695	186	52,012	223	69,050	353
45 to 64 years . . . . .	37,297	87	20,207	155	29,392	93	25,617	251	36,376	115	52,135	163	70,455	258
65 years and over . . . . .	17,345	181	12,382	181	14,077	185	13,787	482	16,922	305	23,427	521	34,609	992
<b>Sex</b>														
Male . . . . .	39,186	71	21,629	137	32,000	121	26,906	304	39,125	98	57,714	163	78,582	250
Female . . . . .	27,836	52	13,943	88	21,307	92	18,232	184	26,937	87	39,263	111	52,150	175
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>														
White alone . . . . .	34,949	76	18,974	99	27,941	76	23,171	207	32,966	99	48,185	100	62,454	195
Non-Hispanic White alone . . . . .	36,813	77	20,040	156	28,644	79	23,205	206	33,458	99	48,585	102	62,897	238
Black alone . . . . .	28,101	113	16,019	263	23,582	175	18,684	392	28,679	153	41,329	368	55,950	1,027
Asian alone . . . . .	38,963	257	18,748	279	23,640	287	24,668	1,285	31,442	420	49,110	325	72,159	681
Hispanic (of any race) . . . . .	23,689	118	18,046	111	22,734	149	22,786	478	29,270	180	39,867	341	53,695	1,024
<b>Full-time, year-round workers</b> . . . . .	<b>42,242</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>24,520</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>33,213</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>30,915</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>39,867</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>56,472</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>74,248</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>Age</b>														
25 to 34 years . . . . .	36,352	115	22,050	214	28,687	140	27,898	337	33,238	158	45,997	253	56,285	465
35 to 44 years . . . . .	44,441	135	24,785	167	34,013	199	31,513	413	41,239	138	61,748	272	78,622	406
45 to 64 years . . . . .	46,747	124	26,243	180	35,950	154	32,934	330	44,041	132	63,261	265	82,097	336
65 years and over . . . . .	38,380	354	24,166	434	30,296	455	27,983	925	37,962	511	52,698	1,232	77,356	1,572
<b>Sex</b>														
Male . . . . .	48,156	73	27,465	161	38,379	110	35,492	326	46,456	155	64,919	234	89,431	323
Female . . . . .	37,183	82	20,037	123	28,157	81	25,767	239	34,418	109	48,220	118	61,532	199
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>														
White alone . . . . .	44,450	92	25,602	163	34,870	111	31,501	199	41,261	93	58,149	134	75,273	327
Non-Hispanic White alone . . . . .	46,808	102	29,203	175	36,036	124	31,779	220	41,855	98	58,779	138	75,982	349
Black alone . . . . .	35,178	190	23,334	282	28,956	192	27,303	644	34,761	235	47,155	556	61,791	730
Asian alone . . . . .	49,159	245	23,591	411	28,542	359	32,604	1,885	38,653	431	58,210	427	82,653	917
Hispanic (of any race) . . . . .	30,093	147	22,479	144	27,881	167	29,518	419	35,624	271	46,774	553	62,018	1,079

<sup>1</sup> 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. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009.

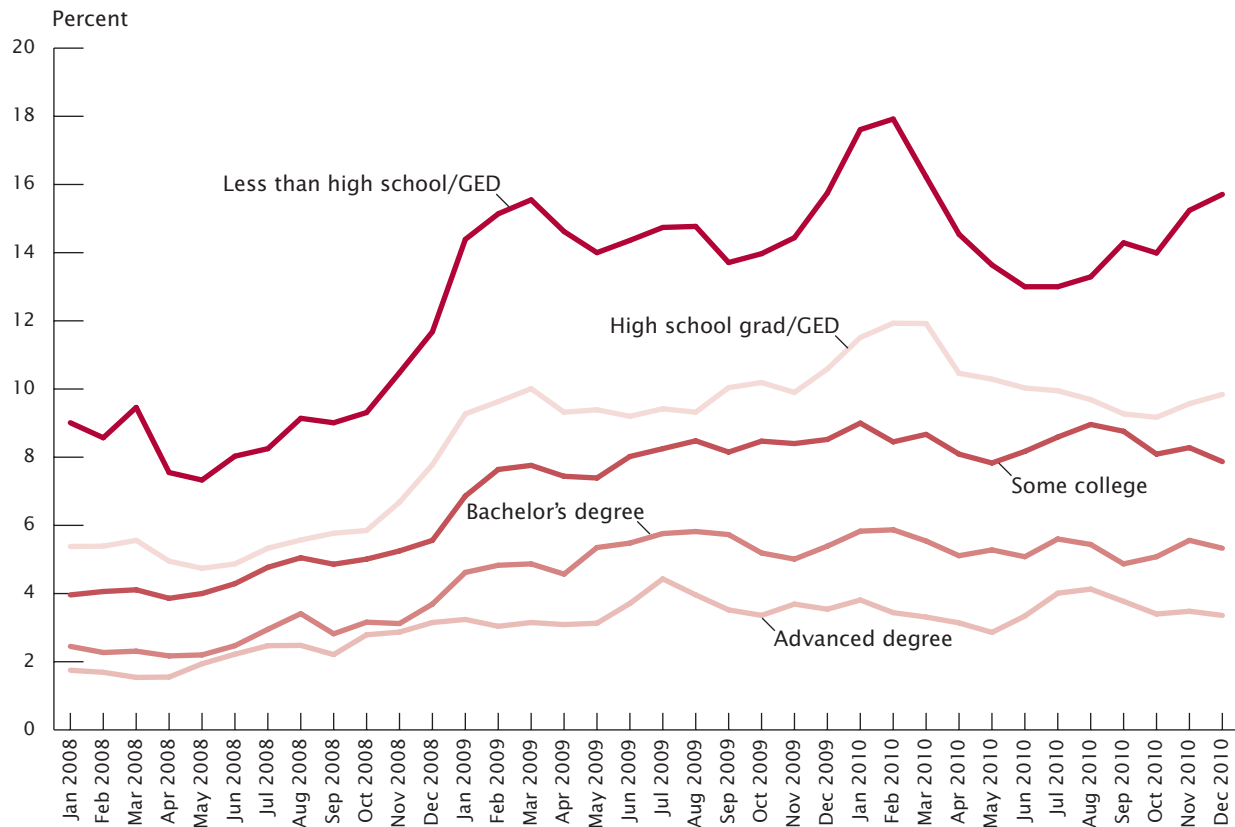
Differences in earnings by race and Hispanic origin were evident within each of the educational attainment categories, but the pattern was not always the same. Non-Hispanic White workers had the highest median earnings among those with a regular high school diploma. Among those with a bachelor's or advanced degree, Asian workers had the highest median earnings. Black workers had the lowest median earnings among those who did not complete high school, while

Hispanic workers had the lowest median earnings of those with a bachelor's or advanced degree.

Working full-time was associated with about \$6,000 higher earnings for those who had completed less than high school to \$12,000 more for those who held advanced degrees. Median earnings were about \$33,000 for those with a high school diploma who were full-time workers versus \$27,000 for all workers with a high school

diploma. The difference in median earnings between full-time workers and all workers was even greater for GED recipients. Full-time workers whose educational attainment was a GED earned \$31,000 compared to \$23,000 for all workers whose educational attainment was a GED. This meant that part of the reason for lower earnings

Figure 5.  
**Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment: 2008–2010**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2008, 2009, 2010.

among workers with a GED is that they were less likely to be working full-time.<sup>23</sup>

### Sex and Median Earnings by Education

Among all workers, women earned less than men (about \$28,000 and \$39,000, respectively). This was also true at each level of educational attainment (Table 3). Women with a high school diploma earned about \$21,000 a year. This was less than men without a high school diploma or GED, who earned about

\$22,000. At the high end of educational attainment, women with an advanced degree earned about \$52,000 a year, which was less than the \$58,000 that men with a bachelor's degree earned.

Working full-time, year-round was associated with higher earnings for both men and women, but there was still an \$11,000 gender difference in annual median earnings (about \$48,000 for men and \$37,000 for women). Women who worked full-time, year-round earned less than men in the all-worker population and earned less than full-time, year-round male workers at each educational attainment level.

The female-to-male earnings ratio in the total worker population was 0.71, while the ratio for full-time, year-round workers was 0.77. In other words, women earned 71 percent of what men earned overall, and earned 77 percent of what men earned when working full-time, year-round. At the bachelor's level and below, women who worked full-time earned 73 to 74 percent of what men earned at the same level of education. The earnings of women who worked full-time with advanced degrees were 69 percent of men's earnings.

<sup>23</sup> For more information, see David Boesel, Nabeel Alslam, and Thomas Smith, *Educational and Labor Market Performance of GED Recipients*, 1998, Washington, DC, National Library of Education.

## Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

While the Bureau of Labor Statistics is the official source of data about unemployment, this report provides a brief discussion of unemployment by educational attainment. Figure 5 shows monthly unemployment rates by educational attainment from January 2008 to December 2010 using CPS data.<sup>24</sup> People with the highest educational attainment were the least likely to be unemployed in any given month during this 3-year period.<sup>25</sup> In August 2010, the unemployment rate for people with less than a high school diploma or GED was 13.3 percent, while the unemployment rate for people with an advanced degree was 4.1 percent. The respective rates for these two groups in March 2008 were 9.5 percent and 1.5 percent. High school graduates were more likely to be unemployed than bachelor's degree holders within each month of this period.

Although the unemployment rate for people of all education levels increased over the 3-year period, the amount of change differed. In both January 2008 and September

<sup>24</sup> Although ACS does collect information on employment status, CPS is the primary source of information on labor force characteristics of the U.S. population. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces the official statistics about unemployment. For more information, see the monthly release of reports about unemployment by educational attainment in the link for the Employment Situation located on the BLS Web site at <[www.bls.gov/bls/newsrels.htm](http://www.bls.gov/bls/newsrels.htm)>. See also the release College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2010 High School Graduates available on the BLS Web site at <[www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.nr0.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.nr0.htm)> or Table A-4: Employment Status of the Civilian Population 25 Years and Over by Educational Attainment at <[www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t04.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t04.htm)>.

<sup>25</sup> In the 4 months of May, June, October, and November 2008, the unemployment rate for people with a bachelor's degree was not significantly different from the unemployment rate for people with an advanced degree.

2008, the unemployment rate for those who had completed less than high school was 9.0 percent. In the period spanning these months, the unemployment rate for people with advanced degrees was much less and remained under 3.2 percent. By January 2009, the unemployment rate for people with less than high school shifted then upward to 14.4 percent and eventually reached a peak of 17.9 percent in February 2010.<sup>26</sup> At the end of 2010, this unemployment rate had fallen slightly to 15.7 percent, but was still higher than the rate for people with greater educational attainment.<sup>27</sup> From January 2009 to December 2010, the unemployment remained below 5 percent for those with advanced degrees.

Relative to their unemployment levels in the first month of 2008, unemployment rates for people with less than a high school diploma or GED, and people with an advanced degree had shifted up by factors of 1.9 and 1.7 at the end of 2010, respectively. These factors are not significantly different from each other and suggest that both groups were affected in similar ways by economic conditions. However, if these changes are examined in terms of the likelihood of being unemployed in the same period of January 2008 and December 2010, the groups with the lower educational attainment were more heavily impacted. The unemployment rate grew 6.7 percent for those who had completed less than high school (from 9.0 to 15.7 percent)

<sup>26</sup> This February 2010 unemployment rate was not significantly different from the rate in January 2010 for people with less than a high school degree.

<sup>27</sup> This December 2010 unemployment rate was not significantly different from the rate in January 2009 for people with less than a high school degree.

but only 1.6 percent for those with advanced degrees (from 1.8 to 3.4).

## SOURCES OF THE DATA

Most estimates in this report are from the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2005–2009 ACS 5-Year estimates. Some estimates are based on data obtained by the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the decennial census. Unemployment data are from monthly Current Population Survey files.

The population represented (the population universe) in the 2009 ACS includes both the household and the group quarters populations (that is, the resident population). The group quarters population consists of the institutionalized population (such as people in correctional institutions or nursing homes) and the noninstitutionalized population (most of whom are in college dormitories).

The population represented (the population universe) in the ASEC to the CPS is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized people in Census 2000).

The population represented (the population universe) in the CPS is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The CPS is a monthly survey of households conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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## ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling error and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level. This means the 90 percent confidence interval for the difference between estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling error in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures in sample selection, the wording of questions, interviewing, coding, data processing, and data analysis.

The final ACS population estimates are adjusted in the weighting procedure for coverage error by controlling specific survey estimates to independent population controls by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to over- or under-coverage, but biases may still be present, for example, when people who were missed

differ from those interviewed in ways other than sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the “2009 ACS Accuracy of the Data” document located at [www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data\\_documentation/Accuracy/ACS\\_Accuracy\\_of\\_Data\\_2009.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2009.pdf) and the “Multiyear Accuracy of the Data” document for the 2005–2009 multiyear data located at [www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data\\_documentation/Accuracy/MultiyearACSAccuracyofData2009.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/MultiyearACSAccuracyofData2009.pdf).

The CPS weighting procedure uses ratio estimation whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, sex, race, and Hispanic

origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources. Further information on the source of the data and accuracy of the estimates for the 2008, 2009, and 2010 CPS, including standard errors and confidence intervals, can be found at [www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar08.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar08.pdf), [www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar09.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar09.pdf), and [www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar10.pdf), respectively or by contacting the Demographic Statistical Methods Division via e-mail at [dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov](mailto:dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov).

## MORE INFORMATION

Detailed tabulations, related information, and historic data are available on the Internet at the Educational Attainment page on the Census Bureau’s Web site at [www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/index.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/index.html).

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