

Bullet Points: What It's Worth: Field of Training and Economic Status in 2009

- In 2009, the median earnings of men who completed a degree or certificate beyond the high school level were 28 percent higher than that of comparable women.
- Men with a bachelor's degree had median earnings 36 percent higher than those of women with a bachelor's degree. Among those who earned a diploma or certificate from a vocational or technical school, the earnings advantage for men was 40 percent.
- The field of study made a difference in how well men did compared to women. At the associate's degree level, the earnings of men who majored in the natural sciences were not statistically different from women with the same major. Among men and women with an associate's degree in liberal arts, the male earnings advantage was 51 percent.
- No field of study at any degree level was associated with higher earnings for women than for men.
- Less than half of all people with a degree or certificate beyond high school were working in an occupation directly related to the field which they studied.
- Sixty percent or more of people worked in a related occupation if they had a degree in business — whether they earned it at the level of vocational certificate, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or advanced degree.
- People who worked in occupations related to their field of study usually earned more than those who worked in other occupations. The median monthly earnings of adults with associate's degrees in engineering and computer science were \$4,800 for those working in a related occupation and \$3,600 for those working in an unrelated occupation.
- Only 35 percent of bachelor's degree recipients went on to earn advanced degrees. People who majored in pre-professional fields were most likely to earn an advanced degree.
- The business field expanded at all education levels from 1984 to 2009. In 1984, 19.2 percent of bachelor's degrees held by adults were in business, while in 2009, 24.8 percent were in this field.
- Earnings depend on both degree level and field of study. Adults with bachelor's degrees in education earned less than those with associate's degrees in computer science and engineering and vocational certificates in engineering. The mean monthly earnings were \$3,800 for bachelor's degrees in education, \$4,900 for associate's degrees in computers, \$4,800 for associate's degrees in engineering, and \$4,300 for vocational certificates in engineering.

- Among adults with a high school certification, those with a regular high school diploma were much more likely to go to college than those with a GED. While 73 percent of those who completed a regular high school diploma went on to complete at least some postsecondary education, less than half (43 percent) of GED recipients pursued postsecondary schooling.