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COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND WORK ACTIVITY OF 2004 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

In October 2004, 66.7 percent of high school graduates from the class of 2004 were enrolled in colleges or universities, according to data released today by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The college enrollment rate for recent high school graduates was almost 3 percentage points higher than a year earlier and approached the historical high for the series (67.0 percent in 1997).

Information on school enrollment and work activity is collected monthly in the Current Population Survey (CPS). Each October, a supplement to the basic CPS gathers more detailed information on full-time and part-time enrollment status, level of education, and enrollment status a year earlier. The CPS is a monthly nationwide survey of about 60,000 households that obtains information on employment, unemployment, earnings, demographics, and other characteristics of the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over. Additional information about the October supplement is included in the Technical Note.

Recent High School Graduates and Dropouts

Of the 2.8 million youth who graduated from high school between October 2003 and October 2004, 1.8 million (66.7 percent) were attending college in October 2004. (See table 1.) The enrollment rate of young women, 71.6 percent, continued to exceed that of young men, 61.4 percent. Asian high school graduates (76.0 percent) were more likely than white graduates (68.4 percent) to be enrolled in college. Black and Hispanic or Latino graduates were about equally likely to be college students in the fall—61.1 and 61.9 percent, respectively.

Among recent high school graduates enrolled in college, 93.2 percent were full-time students. Of these full-time students, 42.1 percent were employed or looking for work in October 2004. In contrast, 82.4 percent of part-time college students participated in the labor force.

Two-thirds of the 2004 high school graduates enrolled in college attended 4-year institutions. The labor force participation rate for these students was 36.5 percent, and their unemployment rate was 11.8 percent. In contrast, 61.1 percent of the recent high school graduates enrolled in 2-year institutions were in the labor force, and their unemployment rate was 15.0 percent. (See table 1.)

Recent high school graduates who were not enrolled in college in the fall of 2004 were more likely than enrolled graduates to participate in the labor force (77.5 versus 44.8 percent). The unemployment rate for those not enrolled in college was 20.0 percent in October 2004.

Between October 2003 and October 2004, about 500,000 young people dropped out of high school. The labor force participation rate for these dropouts (53.7 percent) was considerably lower than the

participation rate for recent high school graduates who had not enrolled in college (77.5 percent). Among recent high school dropouts, men were more likely than women to be participating in the labor force in October 2004 (59.9 versus 45.9 percent). The unemployment rate for high school dropouts was 39.9 percent in October 2004, nearly twice the unemployment rate of high school graduates who had not enrolled in college (20.0 percent).

Youth Enrolled in School

In October 2004, 20.2 million 16- to 24-year olds were either enrolled in high school (9.4 million) or college (10.8 million). Among high school students, 31.8 percent were engaged in some form of labor force activity in October. The labor force participation rate for high school students hovered around 40 percent throughout the 1990s but has fallen in recent years. Among college students who were enrolled full time, 53.7 percent participated in the labor force. In contrast, 87.0 percent of part-time college students participated in the labor force. (See table 2.)

Overall, the unemployment rate for high school students (16.5 percent) was higher than for college students (8.2 percent). Unemployment rates for black (33.3 percent) and Hispanic or Latino (24.4 percent) high school students continued to be higher than for whites (14.3 percent). Among college students, blacks and Asians had the highest unemployment rates (15.3 and 12.8 percent, respectively), while Hispanic or Latino and white college students had similar rates (7.6 and 7.1 percent, respectively).

Out-of-School Youth

Of the 16.3 million 16- to 24-year olds not enrolled in school in October 2004, 80.8 percent were in the labor force. Among youth not in school, men were more likely than women to be in the labor force. The difference was greatest among those with less than a high school diploma and diminished with more education. (See table 2.)

Unemployment rates for youth not in school were lower among those with higher education levels. The unemployment rates for youth who had college degrees were 5.0 percent for men and 5.6 percent for women. In contrast, youth not enrolled in school with less than a high school diploma had unemployment rates of 20.0 percent for men and 23.6 percent for women.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release were obtained from a supplement to the October 2004 Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of about 60,000 households which provides information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment for the nation. The survey is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data relate to the school enrollment status of persons 16 to 24 years of age in the civilian noninstitutional population in the calendar week that includes the 12th of the month. Data reflect revised population controls for the Current Population Survey introduced in January 2004.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the “true” population values they represent. The exact difference, or *sampling error*, varies depending on the particular sample selected, and this variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the “true” population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

The CPS data also are affected by *nonsampling error*. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

For a full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors, see the “Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error” section of *Employment and Earnings*.

Concepts

The principal concepts used in connection with the school enrollment series are described briefly below.

School enrollment. Respondents were asked whether they were currently enrolled in a regular school, including day or night school in any type of public, parochial, or other private school. Regular schooling is that which may advance a person toward a high school diploma or a college, university, or professional degree. Such schools include elementary schools, junior or senior high schools, and colleges and universities. Other schooling, including trade schools; on-the-job training; and courses that do not require physical presence in school, such as correspondence courses or other courses of independent study, is included only if the credits granted count toward promotion in regular school.

Full-time and part-time enrollment in college. College students are classified as attending full time if they were taking 12 hours of classes or more (or 9 hours of graduate classes) during an average school week and as part time if they were taking fewer hours.

High school graduation status. Persons who were not enrolled in school at the time of the survey were asked whether they had graduated from high school. Those who had graduated were asked when they completed their high school education. Persons who had not graduated, that is, school dropouts, were asked when they last attended a regular school. Those who were enrolled in college at the time of the survey also were asked when they graduated from high school.

Table 1. Labor force status of 2004 high school graduates and 2003-04 high school dropouts 16 to 24 years old by school enrollment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, October 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Civilian noninstitutional population	Civilian labor force						Not in labor force
		Total	Percent of population	Employed		Unemployed		
				Total	Percent of population	Number	Rate	
Total, 2004 high school graduates ¹	2,752	1,533	55.7	1,282	46.6	251	16.4	1,219
Men	1,327	764	57.6	645	48.6	119	15.6	562
Women	1,425	768	53.9	636	44.6	132	17.2	657
White	2,111	1,211	57.4	1,037	49.1	174	14.4	900
Black or African American	416	204	48.9	152	36.6	51	25.1	213
Asian	121	57	46.7	46	38.0	10	(²)	65
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	286	153	53.5	129	45.3	23	15.3	133
Enrolled in college	1,835	821	44.8	712	38.8	109	13.3	1,013
Enrolled in 2-year college	618	378	61.1	321	51.9	57	15.0	240
Enrolled in 4-year college	1,217	444	36.5	392	32.2	52	11.8	773
Full-time students	1,711	720	42.1	624	36.5	95	13.3	991
Part-time students	124	102	82.4	88	71.3	14	13.5	22
Men	815	347	42.6	293	35.9	54	15.6	468
Women	1,020	475	46.6	420	41.1	55	11.6	545
White	1,444	685	47.5	602	41.7	84	12.2	759
Black or African American	254	91	35.9	72	28.2	19	21.3	163
Asian	92	33	35.4	27	29.7	5	(²)	60
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	177	74	42.0	67	37.8	7	(²)	103
Not enrolled in college	918	711	77.5	569	62.1	142	20.0	206
Men	512	418	81.6	353	68.9	65	15.6	94
Women	406	294	72.4	217	53.5	77	26.2	112
White	667	526	78.8	435	65.2	91	17.3	141
Black or African American	162	112	69.4	81	49.8	32	28.2	49
Asian	29	24	(²)	19	(²)	5	(²)	5
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	109	79	72.1	63	57.3	16	20.4	31
Total, 2003-04 high school dropouts ³	496	267	53.7	160	32.3	106	39.9	229
Men	278	166	59.9	99	35.6	67	40.4	112
Women	218	100	45.9	61	28.1	39	38.9	118
White	370	196	53.0	140	37.7	56	28.8	174
Black or African American	91	50	54.4	11	12.3	39	(²)	42
Asian	2	2	(²)	2	(²)	—	—	—
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	154	87	56.8	61	39.3	27	30.7	67

¹ Data refer to persons who graduated from high school between October 2003 and October 2004.

² Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

³ Data refer to persons who dropped out of school between October 2003 and October 2004.

NOTE: Detail for the above race groups (white, black or African American,

and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race. Because of rounding, sums of individual items may not equal totals. Dash represents or rounds to zero. Data reflect revised population controls for the Current Population Survey introduced in January 2004.

Table 2. Labor force status of persons 16 to 24 years old by school enrollment, educational attainment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, October 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Civilian noninstitutional population	Civilian labor force						Not in labor force
		Total	Percent of population	Employed		Unemployed		
				Total	Percent of population	Number	Rate	
Total, 16 to 24 years	36,504	22,484	61.6	19,847	54.4	2,637	11.7	14,020
Enrolled in school	20,173	9,293	46.1	8,283	41.1	1,010	10.9	10,880
Enrolled in high school ¹	9,372	2,982	31.8	2,490	26.6	493	16.5	6,389
Men	4,913	1,545	31.5	1,258	25.6	287	18.6	3,367
Women	4,459	1,437	32.2	1,231	27.6	205	14.3	3,022
White	7,138	2,503	35.1	2,146	30.1	357	14.3	4,635
Black or African American	1,522	319	20.9	213	14.0	106	33.3	1,204
Asian	358	52	14.4	43	11.9	9	(²)	306
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	1,515	390	25.7	295	19.4	95	24.4	1,125
Enrolled in college	10,801	6,311	58.4	5,794	53.6	517	8.2	4,490
Enrolled in 2-year college	2,684	1,867	69.5	1,673	62.3	193	10.4	818
Enrolled in 4-year college	8,117	4,444	54.8	4,120	50.8	324	7.3	3,672
Full-time students	9,256	4,967	53.7	4,534	49.0	433	8.7	4,289
Part-time students	1,545	1,344	87.0	1,260	81.5	84	6.3	201
Men	4,934	2,751	55.8	2,503	50.7	248	9.0	2,183
Women	5,867	3,560	60.7	3,291	56.1	269	7.6	2,307
White	8,486	5,130	60.5	4,767	56.2	364	7.1	3,355
Black or African American	1,276	678	53.1	574	45.0	104	15.3	598
Asian	712	302	42.4	263	37.0	39	12.8	410
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	1,245	758	60.9	700	56.2	58	7.6	487
Not enrolled in school	16,331	13,191	80.8	11,564	70.8	1,627	12.3	3,140
16 to 19 years	3,210	2,322	72.4	1,858	57.9	464	20.0	887
20 to 24 years	13,121	10,868	82.8	9,705	74.0	1,163	10.7	2,253
Men	8,560	7,485	87.4	6,578	76.9	907	12.1	1,075
Less than a high school diploma	2,140	1,668	77.9	1,334	62.3	334	20.0	472
High school graduates, no college ³	3,978	3,540	89.0	3,110	78.2	429	12.1	438
Some college or associate degree	1,658	1,532	92.4	1,425	86.0	106	6.9	126
Bachelor's degree and higher	784	746	95.1	708	90.4	37	5.0	38
Women	7,771	5,706	73.4	4,986	64.2	720	12.6	2,066
Less than a high school diploma	1,626	867	53.3	662	40.7	205	23.6	759
High school graduates, no college ³	3,265	2,384	73.0	2,050	62.8	334	14.0	881
Some college or associate degree	1,799	1,478	82.2	1,352	75.2	126	8.5	321
Bachelor's degree and higher	1,081	976	90.3	921	85.2	55	5.6	105
White	12,842	10,486	81.7	9,441	73.5	1,045	10.0	2,356
Black or African American	2,466	1,924	78.0	1,484	60.2	440	22.9	542
Asian	425	333	78.4	296	69.7	37	11.1	92
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	3,541	2,737	77.3	2,429	68.6	308	11.2	804

¹ Includes a small number of persons enrolled in grades below high school.

² Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

³ Includes high school diploma or equivalent.

NOTE: Detail for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races.

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