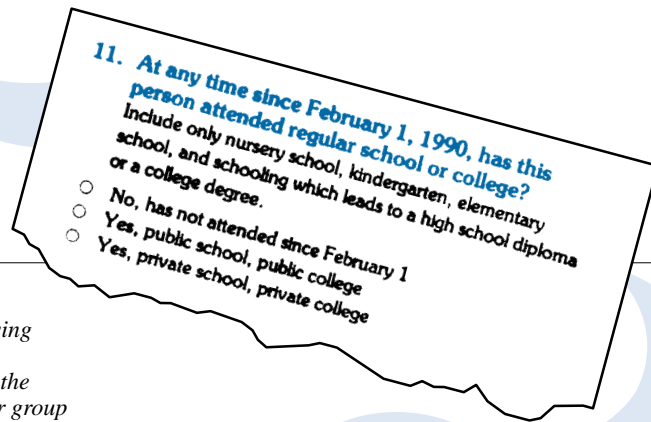


We asked... You told us

Education

The Census Bureau conducts a census of population and housing every 10 years. This bulletin is one of a series that shows the questions asked in the 1990 census and the answers that you, the American people, gave. Each bulletin focuses on a question or group of questions appearing on the 1990 census questionnaires.



School Enrollment

In question 11 on the 1990 census forms, we asked people if they had attended a regular school or college at any time between February 1, 1990, and the census date, April 1, 1990. We defined a regular school as a nursery school, kindergarten, elementary school, and schooling that leads to a high school diploma or college degree.

From what you told us, we learned that:

- In 1990, 65 million persons, or one-fourth of the Nation's population 3 years and over, reported they were enrolled in school.

Recent Enrollment Trends

- About 43 million persons were enrolled in elementary and high school (1st to 12th grade) in 1990, and nearly 18 million were enrolled in college.
- In 1990, there were about 5 million fewer children enrolled in elementary and high school than in 1970, the peak year of elementary school enrollment (see top chart). Changes in the number enrolled, particularly at compulsory school attendance ages, primarily reflected fluctuations in the number of births in preceding years.
- For example, the entrance of children of the large post-World War II "Baby Boom" into elementary schools—starting in the 1950's—and their replacement in the 1970's by children born during the "Baby Bust"—a period of declining births—had a much greater effect on changing enrollment levels than other factors such as dropout rates or immigration.
- Remarkably, reported college enrollment has increased elevenfold since 1940, from 1.5 million to 17.9 million (see bottom chart).

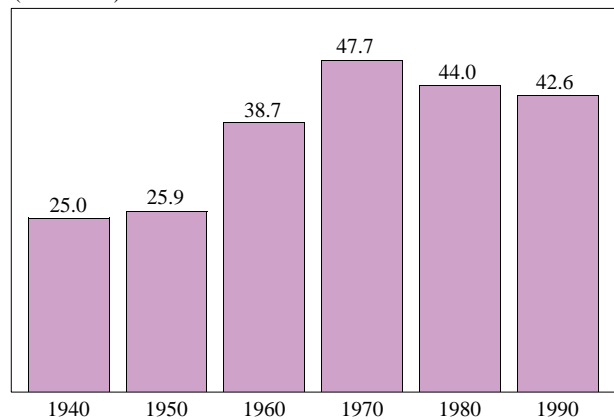
Private School Enrollment Declined

- Nationally, nearly 1 in 10 elementary and high school students were enrolled in private school in 1990. States varied in their private school enrollment from 3 percent in Utah and Wyoming to 16 percent in Delaware, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia.
- In 1960, the proportion of elementary and high school students attending private school stood a little higher, at 14 percent.

Enrollment Reflected Population Shifts—Baby Boom and Baby Bust

Elementary and High School Enrollment of Persons 3 Years and Over: 1940 to 1990

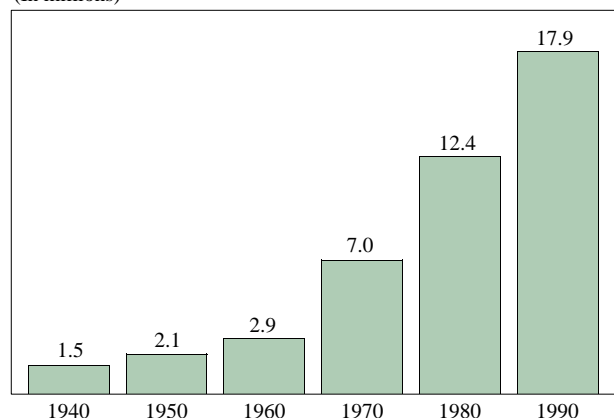
(In millions)



College Enrollment Has Skyrocketed Since 1940

College Enrollment: 1940 to 1990

(In millions)



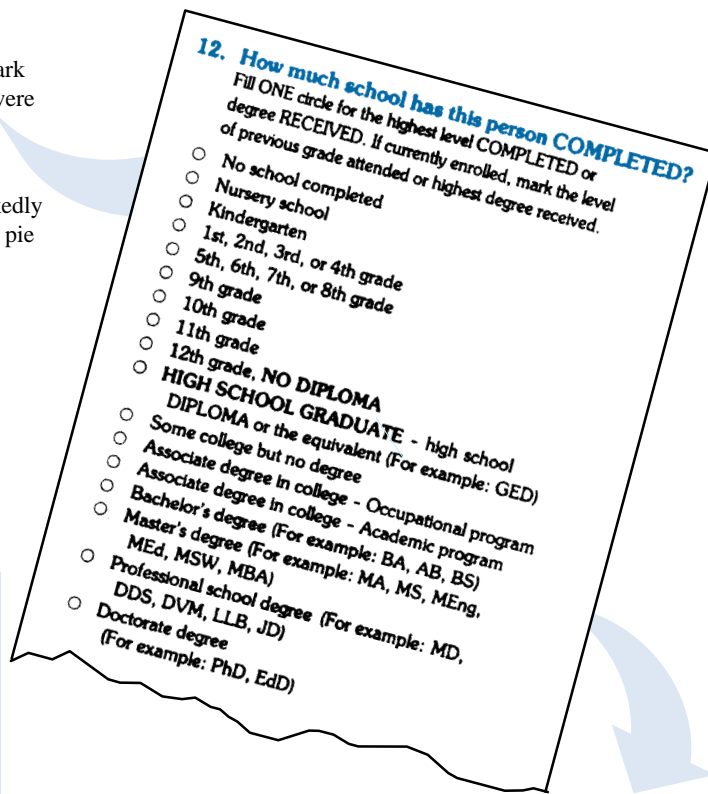
Census Trivia: According to the 1990 census, which metropolitan areas had the highest proportion of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher? Which ones had the lowest? (Answer on page 4.)

Educational Attainment

In question 12 on the 1990 census forms, we asked people to mark how much schooling they had completed. Grades and degrees were listed ranging from “No school completed” to “Doctorate degree.”

You told us that American adults 25 years and over differed markedly in 1990 in the amount of education they had attained. From the pie chart, we can see that:

- 25 percent of adults were not high school graduates
- 30 percent had graduated from high school but had not attended college
- 25 percent had attended college but had not earned a bachelor’s degree
- 20 percent had earned at least a bachelor’s degree



Highest Level of School or Degree for Persons 25 Years and Over: 1990
(In millions)

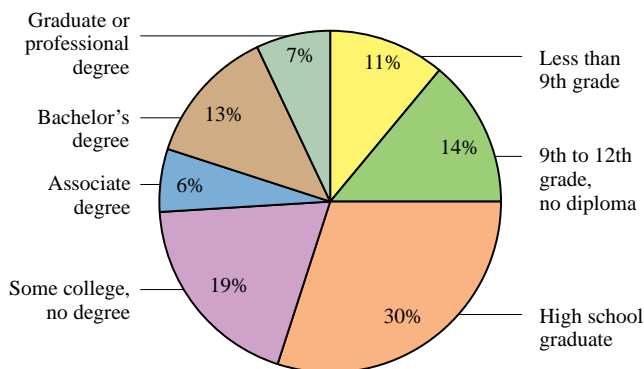
Less than 9th grade	16.5	Bachelor’s degree	20.8
9th to 12th grade no diploma	22.8	Master’s degree	7.5
High school graduate	47.6	Professional school degree	2.8
Some college, no degree	29.8	Doctorate	1.2
Associate degree	9.8		

Rising Educational Attainment

- Increases in educational attainment in the last half-century have been dramatic. Between 1940 and 1990, the percentage of American adults who were high school graduates tripled from 25 to 75 percent, and the percentage who were college graduates quadrupled from 5 to 20 percent (see bar chart).
- Progress in educational attainment also was reflected in the growing numbers of high school and college graduates in the country. Between 1940 and 1990, the number of high school graduates jumped from 18.0 to 119.5 million. Likewise, the number of college graduates, which stood at 3.4 million in 1940, soared to 32.3 million in 1990.
- These profound increases in attainment allowed workers to adapt to the radical shifts occurring in the American economy during this period. As jobs became more technical and highly skilled, people sought higher levels of education.
- Younger workers are much better educated than the older population they replaced. In 1990, persons 25 to 34 years old boasted 84 percent high school graduates and 23 percent bachelor’s degrees, compared with 45 percent high school graduates and 10 percent bachelor’s degrees for persons 75 years and over.
- Fifty years earlier, in the 1940 census, only 36 percent of persons 25 to 34 years old were high school graduates, and 6 percent had bachelor’s degrees.
- Among young adults 25 to 34 years old in 1990, nearly the same proportion of women and men had bachelor’s degrees—23 percent. Among all adults, however, 18 percent of women and 23 percent of men had bachelor’s degrees.

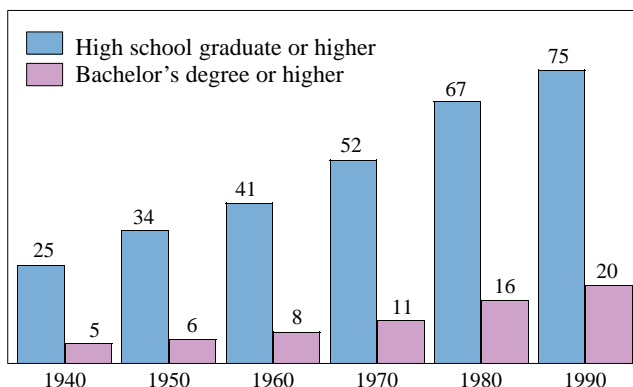
How Much Schooling?

Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years and Over: 1990



Great Strides Made in High School and College Completion Rates

Percent of Persons 25 Years and Over: 1940 to 1990



Report Card Across America— Geographic Variations in ...

... High School Graduates

- In 1990, the proportion of adults 25 years and over who were high school graduates was highest in the West and lowest in the South.
- Alaska had the highest percentage of high school graduates (87 percent), followed closely by Utah (85 percent), and Colorado and Washington (84 percent each)—see top map.
- In contrast, the lowest percentages of high school graduates were found in Mississippi (64 percent), Kentucky (65 percent), and West Virginia and Arkansas (66 percent each). Thirteen of the 15 States with fewer than three-fourths of the adults completing high school were in the South.

... Bachelor's Degrees

- One-third of the adults in the District of Columbia had a bachelor's degree or higher, the largest proportion in the Nation. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Colorado each had 27 percent (see bottom map).
- The proportions of adults with bachelor's degrees were lower in some Southern States, especially in West Virginia (12 percent), Arkansas (13 percent), and Kentucky (14 percent), and in the industrial Midwest.

... Advanced Degrees

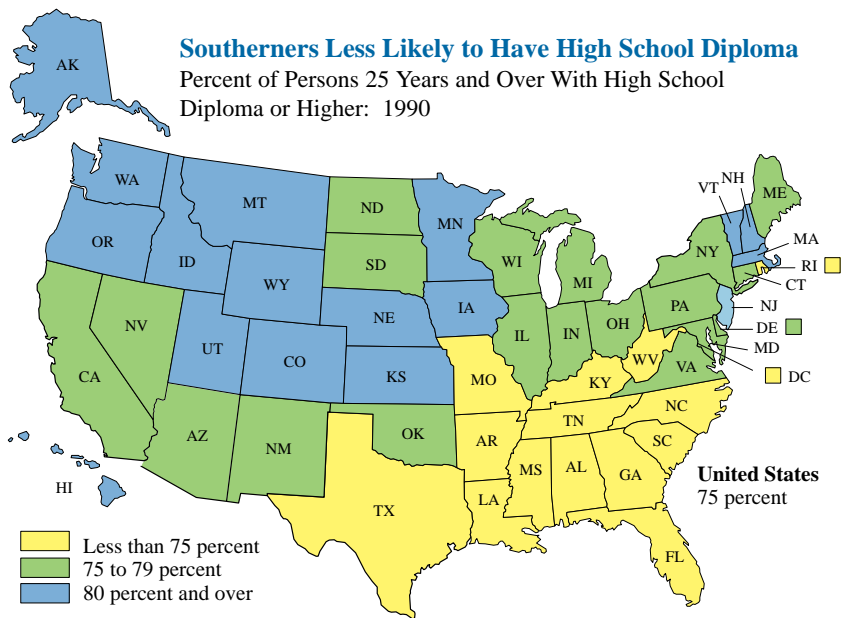
- In 1990, 7 percent of adults held advanced degrees—master's, professional, or doctorate's. (Professional school degrees include medical, dentistry, veterinary, theology, and law degrees.) Slightly more than one-third of all persons with a bachelor's degree had acquired an advanced degree as well.
- The District of Columbia had the highest proportion of adults holding an advanced degree (17 percent), representing over half of the college graduates there. Next were Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maryland, each with 11 percent. At the other extreme, only 5 percent of adults in Arkansas and North Dakota held advanced degrees.
- In 1990, 1.7 percent of adults held professional school degrees. The District of Columbia also ranked first in the proportion of adults who had professional school degrees (5 percent); Maryland ranked second (3 percent).

One Reason Why Areas Differed in Schooling

- The geographic variations in educational level, particularly those for bachelor's degrees and higher, largely reflected the

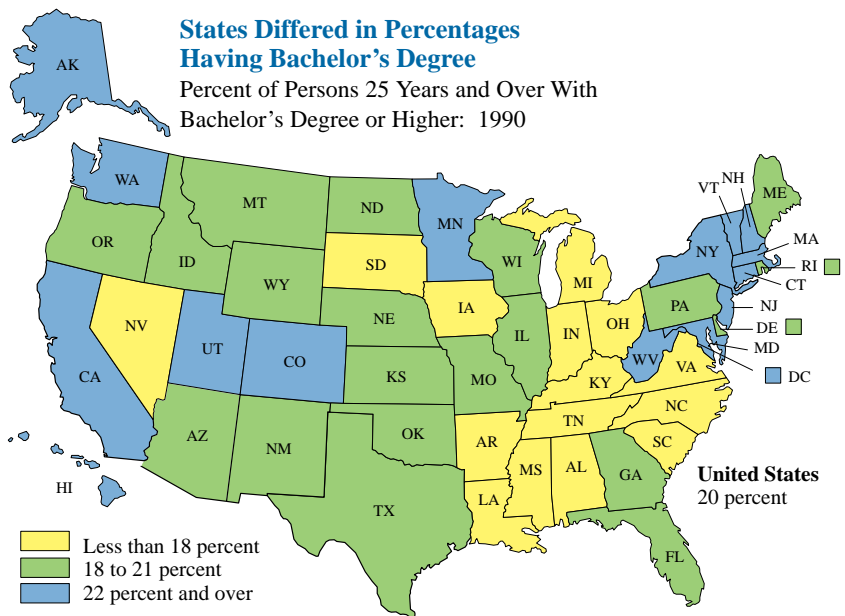
Southerners Less Likely to Have High School Diploma

Percent of Persons 25 Years and Over With High School Diploma or Higher: 1990



States Differed in Percentages Having Bachelor's Degree

Percent of Persons 25 Years and Over With Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 1990



types of industries or economic base in the area. Since States have greater economic diversity than cities, differences in the levels of bachelor's degrees were much more extreme among cities than among States.

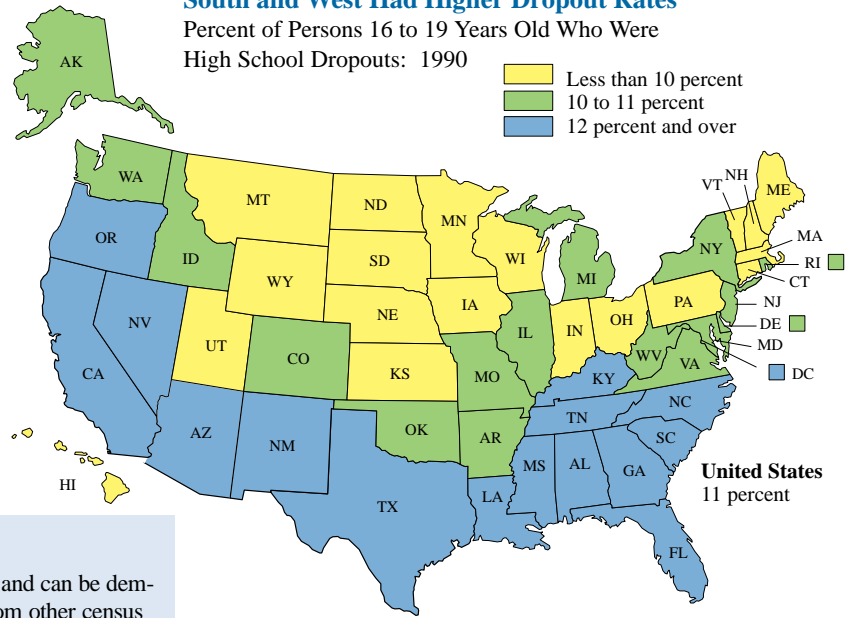
- Small cities with large universities had some of the highest proportions of adults with at least a bachelor's degree in 1990. Some notable examples were the college towns of East Lansing, MI (71 percent bachelor's degrees); Palo Alto, CA (65 percent); and College Station, TX (59 percent).
- Low proportions with bachelor's degrees were often associated with older industrial cities, such as Camden, NJ (6 percent) and Cleveland, OH (8 percent). Also reporting low proportions with bachelor's degrees were cities with high proportions of recent immigrants and non-English language speakers, such as East Los Angeles, CA (3 percent).

What About High School Dropouts?

- In 1990, about 11 percent of the Nation's 16- to 19-year-olds were high school dropouts; that is, they were not enrolled in school, and they were not high school graduates. In both 1980 and 1970, 13 percent of this age group were dropouts.
- The percentage of high school dropouts was higher in the South and Southwest and lower in New England and the western portion of the Midwest. For States, the proportions ranged from 5 percent in North Dakota to 15 percent in Nevada (see map).

South and West Had Higher Dropout Rates

Percent of Persons 16 to 19 Years Old Who Were High School Dropouts: 1990



You Earn When You Learn

The importance of education is widely accepted and can be demonstrated by linking education data with data from other census questions, such as income. The chart below clearly shows that earnings rise with increased educational attainment. The average 1989 earnings of workers with only a high school diploma were just 59 percent of the earnings for workers whose highest schooling was a bachelor's degree. Even workers with some college but no degree earned only 70 percent of their college-educated counterparts.

Mean Earnings in 1989 by Education for Year-Round Full-Time Civilian Workers 18 Years and Over: 1990

Professional school degree	\$82,995	
Doctorate degree	\$58,519	
Master's degree	\$48,142	
Bachelor's degree	\$40,149	
Associate degree	\$28,521	
Some college, no degree	\$27,920	
High school graduate	\$23,549	All year-round full-time civilian workers 18+
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	\$20,898	
Less than 9th grade	\$19,068	

Note: the **mean** is obtained by dividing the total earnings of year-round full-time civilian workers 18 years and over for a given education level by the total number of persons in that category.

Who Uses This Information?

A few examples:

- Federal Government to allocate funding to States for numerous education programs such as vocational and adult education
- State and local governments and school administrators to assess the quality of their school systems and to identify populations such as high school dropouts with special educational needs
- Marketers to identify populations potentially interested in their products and services
- Business enterprises interested in finding sites having a labor force with certain education characteristics

Want to Know More?

Consult the series of 1990 census reports, CP-2, *Social and Economic Characteristics*, at a large public or university library. Also for sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). Call:

- Customer Services at the Census Bureau, **301-763-4100**, for ordering information about the GPO reports listed above or for copies of CQC bulletins
- Rosalind Bruno, **301-763-1154**, for more information about this bulletin or on education data
- Karen Mills, **301-763-7200**, for general information on CQC bulletins

Note: Data on school enrollment and educational attainment are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. Information collected from other 1990 census questions is included in this bulletin, as follows:

- Gender: question 3—see CQC-3, *Gender*
- Age: question 5—see CQC-5, *Age*
- Year-round full-time workers: question 31—see CQC-23, *Work Experience in 1989*
- Earnings: question 32—see CQC-24, *Income*

Trivia Answer: The Iowa City, IA, and Stamford, CT, metropolitan areas, with 44 percent of the adult population possessing a bachelor's degree, were highest of all metropolitan areas¹ in 1990. The lowest proportion was found in Steubenville-Weirton, OH-WV; Houma-Thibodaux, LA.; and Danville, VA, metropolitan areas, each with 10 percent.

¹ Generally, a **metropolitan area** consists of a sizable central city (or cities) and the surrounding suburbs, with a total population of at least 100,000. Metropolitan areas are defined in terms of counties (cities and towns in New England).



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