

the condition of education 2008



INDICATOR 20

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2008*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2008*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008031>) or contact ED PUBS at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

Suggested Citation:

Planty, M., Hussar, W., Snyder, T., Provasnik, S., Kena, G., Dinkes, R., KewalRamani, A., and Kemp, J. (2008). *The Condition of Education 2008* (NCES 2008-031). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.



Economic Outcomes

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

In 2006, young adults ages 25–34 with a bachelor’s degree earned 28 percent more than young adults with an associate’s degree and 50 percent more than young adult high school completers.

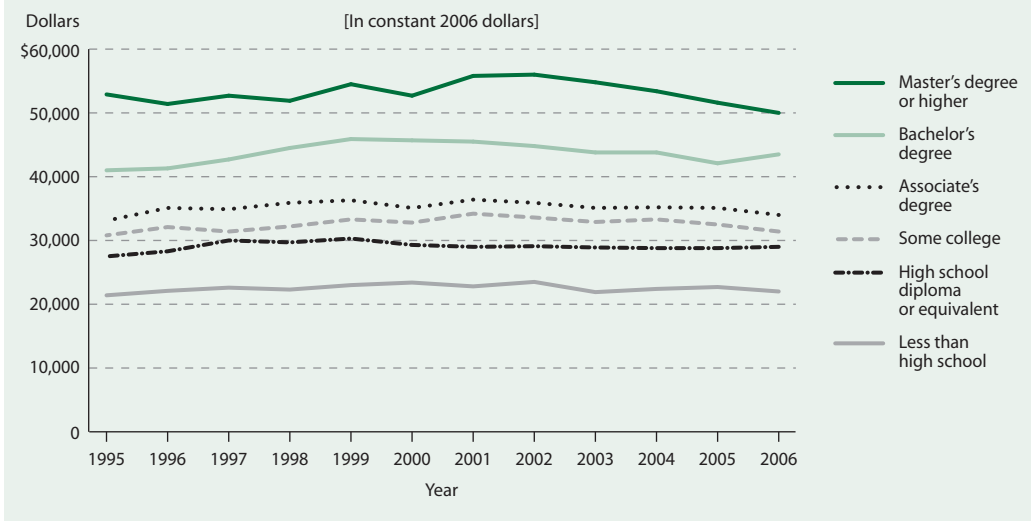
Measured in constant 2006 dollars, median earnings for young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time throughout a full year increased as education level increased for each year shown between 1995 and 2006 (see supplemental tables 20-1 and 20-2). For example, young adults with a bachelor’s degree as their highest degree consistently had higher median earnings than those with less education. This pattern held for male, female, White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian subgroups.

In 2006, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor’s degree were \$43,500, while the median earnings were \$34,000 for those with an associate’s degree, \$29,000 for high school completers,¹ and \$22,000 for those who did not earn a high school diploma. In other words, in 2006, young adults with a bachelor’s degree earned 28 percent more than young adults with an associate’s degree, 50 percent more than young adult high school completers, and 98 percent more than those who did not earn a high school diploma (see supplemental table 20-1). In 2006, the median earnings of young adults with a master’s degree or higher were \$50,000, or 15 percent more than young adults with a bachelor’s degree.

The earnings difference between those with at least a bachelor’s degree and those with less education increased between the longer period of 1980 and 2006. However, between 2000 and 2006, there was generally no measurable change in the earnings difference between these groups. For example, in 1980, young adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher earned \$14,600 more than those who did not earn a high school diploma or its equivalent. In 2000, this difference increased to \$23,400 and was \$23,000 in 2006.

In 2006, Asian young adults with a master’s degree or higher had higher earnings than their White, Black, and Hispanic counterparts (see supplemental table 20-2). Unlike in earlier years, there were no measurable differences in earnings among White, Black, and Hispanic young adults with a master’s degree or higher in 2006. In 2006, the average median earnings of Asian young adults with a master’s degree or higher were \$60,000, while the average median earnings for their White, Black, and Hispanic peers were between \$48,000 and \$50,000.

ANNUAL EARNINGS: Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 1995–2006



¹ Includes those who earned a high school diploma or its equivalent (e.g., a General Educational Development [GED] certificate).

NOTE: Educational levels represent highest degree obtained. Earnings are presented in 2006 constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. See supplemental note 11 for further discussion. Full-year worker refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; full-time worker refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. See supplemental note 2 for further discussion on both of these changes.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1996–2007.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Supplemental Notes 1, 2, 11
Supplemental Tables 20-1,
20-2



Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table 20-1. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2006

[In constant 2006 dollars]							
Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity ¹	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
Total	\$36,700	\$37,400	\$34,700	\$33,100	\$35,100	\$34,900	\$35,000
Educational attainment							
Less than high school	29,400	26,200	24,100	21,400	23,400	22,700	22,000
High school diploma or equivalent	34,200	31,900	29,700	27,500	29,300	28,800	29,000
Some college ²	36,700	37,500	34,700	30,800	32,800	32,500	31,400
Associate's degree	—	—	—	33,100	35,100	35,100	34,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	44,000	46,800	45,200	43,700	46,800	45,400	45,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	41,000	45,700	42,100	43,500
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	52,900	52,700	51,600	50,000
Sex and educational attainment							
Male	43,700	41,200	38,600	36,400	39,800	36,100	37,000
Less than high school	32,500	28,100	26,500	25,100	23,800	25,500	24,000
High school diploma or equivalent	41,400	37,500	33,900	31,800	33,900	31,000	30,000
Some college ²	44,000	43,100	38,600	34,400	38,500	36,100	35,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	34,400	43,300	40,300	38,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	48,900	51,400	49,000	49,300	53,900	51,600	50,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	46,300	52,700	46,500	50,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	58,600	62,000	56,800	58,000
Female	29,400	30,000	30,500	29,100	31,600	31,000	31,800
Less than high school	20,400	20,600	19,300	17,500	19,500	18,600	19,500
High school diploma or equivalent	26,900	26,200	24,700	23,300	24,600	24,800	24,000
Some college ²	29,400	30,000	30,900	26,500	28,100	28,900	28,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	31,800	30,400	31,000	30,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	36,300	39,100	40,100	39,700	41,600	41,300	41,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	37,000	41,000	39,200	40,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	46,300	46,800	48,500	48,000

See notes at end of table.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table 20-1. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2006—Continued

[In constant 2006 dollars]							
Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity ¹	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
Race/ethnicity¹ and sex							
White	\$38,200	\$37,500	\$37,000	\$34,400	\$37,900	\$36,100	\$37,400
Male	44,000	43,100	40,100	39,600	41,000	40,300	40,000
Female	29,400	31,900	30,900	30,400	33,900	33,000	34,000
Black	29,400	28,100	27,800	27,800	29,700	29,800	30,000
Male	34,000	31,900	29,300	30,400	33,900	29,900	30,000
Female	26,900	26,200	26,200	25,900	26,900	29,300	27,500
Hispanic	33,000	30,400	27,800	26,500	29,300	27,900	28,000
Male	36,700	33,700	30,100	27,500	30,400	28,900	29,000
Female	26,900	28,100	24,700	24,800	26,200	26,800	27,000
Asian	—	—	36,300³	34,400³	42,100³	41,300	45,000
Male	—	—	37,400 ³	37,000 ³	48,000 ³	46,500	50,000
Female	—	—	33,400 ³	33,100 ³	41,000 ³	41,300	40,000
Pacific Islander	—	—	(³)	(³)	‡ ³	‡	30,000
American Indian/Alaska Native	—	—	30,900	26,500	28,100	31,000	27,000
More than one race	—	—	—	—	—	36,100	35,000
Male	—	—	—	—	—	38,200	35,000
Female	—	—	—	—	—	32,200	35,000
Other	36,700	37,100	‡	—	—	—	—
Male	42,800	41,200	‡	—	—	—	—
Female	30,600	32,000	‡	—	—	—	—

— Not available.

‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

¹ Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Estimates by sex for Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and More than one race subgroups did not meet reporting standards.

² Due to changes in categories across time, the category “some college” prior to 1992 is not comparable with “some college” from 1992 onwards. Prior to 1992, some college may include students who earned an associate’s degree.

³ From 1989 through 2002, data for Asians and Pacific Islanders were not reported separately; therefore, Pacific Islanders are included with Asians during this period.

NOTE: Earnings are presented in constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. See *supplemental note 11* for further discussion. *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; *full-time worker* refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. See *supplemental note 2* for further discussion on both of these changes.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2007.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table 20-2. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by race/ethnicity and educational attainment: Selected years, 1980–2006

[In constant 2006 dollars]							
Race/ethnicity ¹ and educational attainment	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
White	\$38,200	\$37,500	\$37,000	\$34,400	\$37,900	\$36,100	\$37,400
Less than high school	30,800	28,100	26,200	23,800	23,400	23,700	25,000
High school diploma or equivalent	35,100	33,700	30,900	29,100	32,200	31,000	30,000
Some college ²	38,800	37,500	36,700	31,800	35,100	33,000	33,300
Associate's degree	—	—	—	34,400	37,500	36,100	35,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	44,000	46,900	46,300	45,000	46,800	46,500	45,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	42,300	46,800	42,300	45,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	52,900	52,700	51,600	50,000
Black	29,400	28,100	27,800	27,800	29,700	29,800	30,000
Less than high school	21,800	18,700	19,600	18,600	22,200	21,500	18,000
High school diploma or equivalent	29,400	26,200	24,500	23,800	24,600	23,700	25,000
Some college ²	31,800	28,100	30,100	29,100	30,400	30,100	28,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	29,100	29,300	28,900	29,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	36,700	37,500	38,600	36,400	41,000	40,300	40,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	34,400	38,600	37,200	37,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	45,000	50,300	45,400	50,000
Hispanic	33,000	30,400	27,800	26,500	29,300	27,900	28,000
Less than high school	29,300	24,400	21,700	20,600	21,300	21,500	20,800
High school diploma or equivalent	29,400	28,100	26,200	25,100	26,900	24,800	26,000
Some college ²	36,700	35,600	30,900	26,500	31,600	33,000	30,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	31,800	35,100	35,100	32,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	40,000	45,000	41,700	39,700	44,500	42,300	42,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	38,100	42,100	41,300	40,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	‡	‡	52,300	48,000
Asian	—	—	36,300³	34,400³	42,100³	41,300	45,000
Less than high school	—	—	‡ ³	‡ ³	‡ ³	‡	‡
High school diploma or equivalent	—	—	25,500 ³	26,500 ³	29,300 ³	27,900	28,000
Some college ²	—	—	30,900 ³	24,600 ³	32,800 ³	31,000	32,000
Associate's degree	—	—	—	26,500 ³	35,100 ³	36,100	36,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	—	—	46,300 ³	43,700 ³	58,500 ³	51,600	55,000
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	40,300 ³	57,400 ³	51,600	50,000
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	50,300 ³	62,000 ³	56,800	60,000
Pacific Islander	—	—	(³)	(³)	‡ ³	‡	30,000
American Indian/Alaska Native	—	—	30,900	26,500	28,100	31,000	27,000
More than one race	—	—	—	—	—	36,100	35,000

See notes at end of table.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table 20-2. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by race/ethnicity and educational attainment: Selected years, 1980–2006—Continued

Race/ethnicity ¹ and educational attainment	[In constant 2006 dollars]						
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
Other	\$36,700	\$37,100	‡	—	—	—	—
Less than high school	‡	‡	‡	—	—	—	—
High school diploma or equivalent	29,400	30,000	‡	—	—	—	—
Some college ²	36,700	34,100	‡	—	—	—	—
Associate's degree	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bachelor's degree or higher	44,000	41,200	‡	—	—	—	—
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

— Not available.

‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

¹ Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Estimates for educational categories for Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and More than one race subgroups did not meet reporting standards.

² Due to changes in categories across time, the category "some college" prior to 1992 is not comparable with "some college" from 1992 onwards. Prior to 1992, some college may include students who earned an associate's degree.

³ From 1989 through 2002, data for Asians and Pacific Islanders were not reported separately; therefore, Pacific Islanders are included with Asians during this period.

NOTE: Earnings are presented in constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. See *supplemental note 11* for further discussion. *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; *full-time worker* refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. See *supplemental note 2* for further discussion on both of these changes.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2007.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table S20-1. Standard errors for the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2006

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity	[In constant 2006 dollars]						
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
Total	\$210	\$240	\$250	\$180	\$120	\$320	\$140
Educational attainment							
Less than high school	630	940	510	410	360	290	270
High school diploma or equivalent	380	280	320	260	210	330	400
Some college	400	430	470	570	430	200	210
Associate's degree	†	†	†	540	310	760	840
Bachelor's degree or higher	520	510	520	740	270	640	240
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	330	640	220	770
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	960	770	390	470
Sex and educational attainment							
Male	330	270	250	360	470	180	190
Less than high school	1,130	790	750	910	360	700	660
High school diploma or equivalent	380	440	340	520	520	240	200
Some college	620	740	500	470	710	350	370
Associate's degree	†	†	†	880	880	1,220	1,270
Bachelor's degree or higher	570	740	500	760	520	650	290
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	610	870	430	650
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,880	2,110	2,050	1,730
Female	190	250	290	240	200	150	160
Less than high school	850	820	890	810	660	720	650
High school diploma or equivalent	270	410	300	390	310	400	420
Some college	340	430	460	380	440	680	570
Associate's degree	540	430	480	1,180	470	490	430
Bachelor's degree or higher	540	430	480	560	300	250	220
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	800	340	660	270
Master's degree or higher	220	220	330	1,260	1,000	890	1,150

See notes at end of table.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table S20-1. Standard errors for the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2006—Continued

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity	[In constant 2006 dollars]						
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
Race/ethnicity and sex							
White	\$220	\$220	\$330	\$210	\$270	\$150	\$280
Male	350	490	270	390	200	510	190
Female	210	280	300	420	370	190	520
Black	460	510	730	470	330	580	410
Male	980	670	1,070	880	790	810	330
Female	590	820	830	780	680	730	570
Hispanic	1,310	720	800	520	410	490	750
Male	1,690	1,660	1,000	680	580	830	720
Female	1,280	1,140	1,020	1,260	760	570	490
Asian	†	†	1,530	1,210	580	640	1,120
Male	†	†	2,010	2,140	3,520	3,200	790
Female	†	†	1,880	2,000	1,310	1,880	1,170
Pacific Islander	†	†	†	†	†	†	2,400
American Indian/Alaska Native	†	†	4,030	2,510	1,340	1,090	2,320
More than one race	†	†	†	†	†	1,570	1,550
Male	†	†	†	†	†	2,080	2,980
Female	†	†	†	†	†	1,710	2,170
Other	1,600	1,440	†	†	†	†	†
Male	2,310	2,230	†	†	†	†	†
Female	2,070	1,710	†	†	†	†	†

† Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2007.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table S20-2. Standard errors for the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by race/ethnicity and educational attainment: Selected years, 1980–2006

Race/ethnicity and educational attainment	[In constant 2006 dollars]						
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
White	\$220	\$220	\$330	\$210	\$270	\$150	\$280
Less than high school	1,090	810	600	1,090	440	830	850
High school diploma or equivalent	420	430	300	330	390	230	210
Some college	440	410	660	600	490	260	740
Associate's degree	†	†	†	670	360	530	580
Bachelor's degree or higher	550	410	440	790	290	490	260
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	410	460	260	510
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	920	850	460	560
Black	460	510	730	470	330	580	410
Less than high school	1,370	1,270	1,050	1,430	1,200	960	1,150
High school diploma or equivalent	680	700	490	760	380	790	570
Some college	1,270	880	950	1,120	610	1,250	950
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,200	790	1,070	1,510
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,420	1,210	890	1,240	1,440	1,280	830
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	1,130	1,750	890	1,190
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,650	2,780	2,440	3,100
Hispanic	1,310	720	800	520	410	490	750
Less than high school	2,550	2,020	2,000	920	740	440	380
High school diploma or equivalent	1,330	1,010	1,080	1,030	980	720	360
Some college	2,600	2,630	1,250	1,180	990	790	610
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,890	990	1,610	1,290
Bachelor's degree or higher	3,580	2,880	2,160	1,530	2,050	950	1,080
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	1,770	1,880	920	800
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	†	†	3,440	2,100
Asian	†	†	1,530	1,210	580	640	1,120
Less than high school	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
High school diploma or equivalent	†	†	2,160	1,920	1,420	1,350	1,460
Some college	†	†	1,770	2,300	2,520	1,350	2,300
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,620	2,210	4,370	2,630
Bachelor's degree or higher	†	†	2,260	1,870	860	680	2,510
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	840	1,800	2,090	790
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	4,810	2,560	3,880	850
Pacific Islander	†	†	†	†	†	†	2,400
American Indian/Alaska Native	†	†	4,030	2,510	1,340	1,090	2,320
More than one race	†	†	†	†	†	1,570	1,550

See notes at end of table.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table S20-2. Standard errors for the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by race/ethnicity and educational attainment: Selected years, 1980–2006—Continued

[In constant 2006 dollars]							
Race/ethnicity and educational attainment	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
Other	\$1,600	\$1,440	†	†	†	†	†
Less than high school	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
High school diploma or equivalent	2,270	3,230	†	†	†	†	†
Some college	2,110	1,810	†	†	†	†	†
Associate's degree	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Bachelor's degree or higher	2,750	2,090	†	†	†	†	†
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	†	†	†	†

† Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2007.