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COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND WORK ACTIVITY OF 2003 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Almost sixty-four percent of high school graduates from the class of 2003 were enrolled in colleges or universities in the fall, according to data released today by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The college enrollment rate of recent high school graduates was little changed over the year and remains near historically high rates.

Information on school enrollment and the work activity of high school graduates comes from an October supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). 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 2.7 million youth who graduated from high school in 2003, 1.7 million (63.9 percent) were attending college in October. Young women continued to be more likely than young men to enter colleges or universities after high school—66.5 percent versus 61.2 percent. The enrollment rate for Asian high school graduates (84.1 percent) was much higher than for white graduates (65.0 percent). Black and Hispanic graduates were about equally likely to be college students in the fall—58.3 and 58.6 percent, respectively. (See table 1.)

Among recent high school graduates enrolled in college, 9 out of 10 were full-time students, of whom 40.0 percent were in the labor force. In contrast, 62.3 percent of part-time college students participated in the labor force.

Two-thirds of the 2003 high school graduates enrolled in college attended 4-year institutions. The labor force participation rate for these students was 33.5 percent, and their unemployment rate was 16.0 percent. In contrast, 57.8 percent of the recent graduates enrolled in 2-year institutions were in the labor force, and their unemployment rate was 6.2 percent.

The labor force participation rate was 78.3 percent among high school graduates who did not enroll in college in the fall of 2003. The unemployment rate for this group was 26.2 percent in October 2003, up from 16.9 percent a year earlier.

Between October 2002 and October 2003, about 460,000 young people dropped out of high school. The labor force participation rate for dropouts (59.3 percent) was considerably lower than the participation rate for recent high school graduates who had not enrolled in college. Among recent high school dropouts,

men were more likely than women to be participating in the labor force (65.6 versus 52.1 percent). The unemployment rate for high school dropouts was 30.8 percent in October 2003.

Youth Enrolled in School

In October 2003, a total of 20.1 million 16- to 24-year olds were either enrolled in high school (9.6 million) or college (10.5 million). Among high school students, 31.4 percent were engaged in some labor force activity in October. The labor force participation rate for high school students hovered around 40 percent throughout the 1990s, but has drifted down in recent years. Among college students who were enrolled full time, about half participated in the labor force. In contrast, 83.7 percent of part-time college students participated in the labor force. (See table 2.)

Overall, the unemployment rate for high school students (16.1 percent) was higher than for college students (6.4 percent). Unemployment rates for black (33.2 percent) and Hispanic (22.7 percent) high school students continued to be higher than for whites (13.0 percent). Likewise, among college students, blacks had the highest unemployment rate (12.8 percent), while Hispanics and Asians had similar rates (6.8 and 6.6 percent, respectively). The unemployment rate for white college students was 5.7 percent.

Out-of-School Youth

Of the 15.9 million 16- to 24-year olds not enrolled in school in October 2003, 81.3 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 rate for youth who had college degrees was 7.2 percent for men and 6.2 percent for women. In contrast, youth not enrolled in school with less than a high school diploma had the highest unemployment rates—18.3 percent for men and 24.8 percent for women.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release were obtained from a supplement to the October 2003 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 2003.

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 infor-

mation, 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 towards 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 2003 high school graduates and 2002-03 high school dropouts 16 to 24 years old by school enrollment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, October 2003

(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, 2003 high school graduates	2,677	1,470	54.9	1,190	44.4	280	19.1	1,208
Men	1,306	748	57.3	591	45.2	157	21.0	558
Women	1,372	722	52.6	599	43.7	123	17.1	650
White	2,106	1,181	56.1	1,020	48.4	161	13.6	925
Black or African American	333	163	49.1	80	24.1	83	50.9	170
Asian	126	50	39.3	39	30.9	11	(¹)	77
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	314	162	51.6	135	42.9	27	16.9	152
Enrolled in college	1,711	713	41.7	631	36.9	82	11.5	998
Enrolled in 2-year college	574	332	57.8	311	54.2	21	6.2	243
Enrolled in 4-year college	1,137	381	33.5	320	28.1	61	16.0	756
Full-time students	1,580	631	40.0	559	35.4	72	11.4	949
Part-time students	131	81	62.3	72	54.9	10	11.9	49
Men	799	339	42.5	294	36.8	45	13.4	459
Women	913	374	41.0	338	37.0	36	9.7	539
White	1,368	586	42.8	525	38.4	60	10.3	782
Black or African American	194	55	28.3	42	21.7	13	(¹)	139
Asian	106	45	42.6	38	35.8	7	(¹)	61
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	184	67	36.4	60	32.5	7	10.9	117
Not enrolled in college	966	757	78.3	558	57.8	198	26.2	209
Men	507	409	80.6	297	58.6	111	27.3	98
Women	459	348	75.8	261	56.9	87	25.0	111
White	738	595	80.6	494	66.9	101	16.9	143
Black or African American	139	108	78.1	38	27.5	70	64.8	30
Asian	20	5	(¹)	1	(¹)	3	(¹)	16
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	130	95	73.1	75	57.7	20	21.1	35
Total, 2002-03 high school dropouts ²	457	271	59.3	187	41.0	84	30.8	186
Men	242	159	65.6	106	43.9	53	33.2	83
Women	215	112	52.1	81	37.8	31	27.6	103
White	336	215	63.9	157	46.6	58	27.1	121
Black or African American	88	42	47.8	24	26.8	19	(¹)	46
Asian	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	11
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	124	68	54.5	51	40.7	17	(¹)	57

¹ Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

² Data refer to persons who dropped out of school between October 2002 and October 2003.

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 2003.

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 2003

(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	36,017	21,858	60.7	19,304	53.6	2,555	11.7	14,159
Enrolled in school	20,114	8,932	44.4	8,069	40.1	863	9.7	11,182
Enrolled in high school ¹	9,610	3,019	31.4	2,531	26.3	487	16.1	6,592
Men	5,031	1,562	31.0	1,310	26.0	252	16.1	3,469
Women	4,579	1,457	31.8	1,221	26.7	235	16.2	3,122
White	7,333	2,510	34.2	2,185	29.8	326	13.0	4,823
Black or African American	1,582	351	22.2	234	14.8	116	33.2	1,232
Asian	339	55	16.1	39	11.4	16	(²)	284
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	1,538	340	22.1	263	17.1	77	22.7	1,198
Enrolled in college	10,503	5,914	56.3	5,538	52.7	376	6.4	4,590
Enrolled in 2-year college	2,817	1,876	66.6	1,743	61.9	133	7.1	941
Enrolled in 4-year college	7,686	4,038	52.5	3,795	49.4	243	6.0	3,649
Full-time students	8,809	4,496	51.0	4,198	47.7	298	6.6	4,313
Part-time students	1,695	1,418	83.7	1,339	79.0	79	5.5	277
Men	4,751	2,649	55.8	2,467	51.9	182	6.9	2,102
Women	5,752	3,265	56.8	3,071	53.4	194	5.9	2,487
White	8,239	4,798	58.2	4,527	54.9	271	5.7	3,441
Black or African American	1,253	600	47.9	524	41.8	77	12.8	653
Asian	709	310	43.8	290	40.9	21	6.6	399
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	1,124	651	57.9	607	54.0	44	6.8	473
Not enrolled in school	15,903	12,926	81.3	11,235	70.6	1,691	13.1	2,977
16 to 19 years	3,112	2,264	72.7	1,761	56.6	503	22.2	849
20 to 24 years	12,791	10,663	83.4	9,474	74.1	1,189	11.1	2,129
Men	8,317	7,266	87.4	6,313	75.9	953	13.1	1,051
Less than a high school diploma	2,045	1,620	79.2	1,324	64.7	296	18.3	425
High school graduates, no college ³	3,852	3,396	88.2	2,938	76.3	458	13.5	456
Some college or associate degree	1,638	1,520	92.8	1,374	83.9	146	9.6	118
Bachelor's degree and higher	782	730	93.3	677	86.6	53	7.2	52
Women	7,587	5,660	74.6	4,922	64.9	738	13.0	1,926
Less than a high school diploma	1,506	765	50.8	575	38.2	190	24.8	742
High school graduates, no college ³	3,281	2,435	74.2	2,074	63.2	361	14.8	846
Some college or associate degree	1,753	1,503	85.8	1,375	78.5	128	8.5	249
Bachelor's degree and higher	1,046	957	91.5	898	85.8	59	6.2	89
White	12,570	10,449	83.1	9,350	74.4	1,100	10.5	2,120
Black or African American	2,345	1,742	74.3	1,288	54.9	454	26.1	603
Asian	400	311	77.6	255	63.8	55	17.8	90
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	3,440	2,648	77.0	2,323	67.5	325	12.3	792

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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