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## **COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND WORK ACTIVITY OF RECENT HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATES — 2020**

In October 2020, 62.7 percent of 2020 high school graduates ages 16 to 24 were enrolled in colleges or universities, down from 66.2 percent in the prior year, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Among 20- to 29-year-olds who received a bachelor's degree in 2020, 67.3 percent were employed, down from 76.0 percent in 2019. These changes reflect the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Information on school enrollment and employment status is collected monthly in the Current Population Survey (CPS), a nationwide survey of about 60,000 households that provides information on employment and unemployment. Each October, a supplement to the CPS gathers more detailed information about recent degree recipients and school enrollment. In addition to data on recent high school graduates ages 16 to 24, this news release presents information on recent degree recipients ages 20 to 29. For more information, see the Technical Note in this news release.

### **Following are some highlights from the October 2020 data:**

- Among recent high school graduates ages 16 to 24, college enrollment rates for men and women were 59.3 percent and 66.2 percent, respectively. (See table 1.)
- Among 16- to 24-year-olds, 47.5 percent of recent high school dropouts were working or looking for work, lower than the labor force participation rate of 67.2 percent for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college. (See table 1.)
- About 16.5 million persons ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school—43.9 percent of all persons in this age group. (See table 2.)
- Among 20- to 29-year-olds, 59.2 percent of recent associate degree recipients, 67.3 percent of recent bachelor's degree recipients, and 74.7 percent of recent advanced degree recipients were employed. (See table 3.)
- About one-fourth of recent bachelor's degree recipients ages 20 to 29 were enrolled in school. (See table 3.)

- Among 20- to 29-year-olds, unemployment rates for recent associate degree recipients, recent bachelor's degree recipients, and recent advanced degree recipients were 15.8 percent, 12.8 percent, and 12.6 percent, respectively. (See table 3.)

### **Recent High School Graduates and Dropouts (Ages 16 to 24)**

Of the 3.1 million youth ages 16 to 24 who graduated from high school between January and October 2020, 2.0 million (62.7 percent) were enrolled in college in October. The college enrollment rate of recent high school graduates in October 2020 was down from the rate of 66.2 percent in October 2019. (See table 1.)

Among 2020 high school graduates ages 16 to 24, the college enrollment rate for young women, at 66.2 percent in October 2020, continued to be higher than the rate for young men (59.3 percent). The college enrollment rate of Asians (83.2 percent) also continued to be higher than the rates for recent White (62.9 percent), Black (56.6 percent), and Hispanic (56.2 percent) graduates.

The labor force participation rate (the proportion of the population that is employed or looking for work) for recent high school graduates enrolled in college in October 2020 was 33.0 percent. The participation rates for male and female graduates enrolled in college were 27.7 percent and 37.9 percent, respectively.

Among recent high school graduates enrolled in college in October 2020, about 9 in 10 were full-time students. Recent graduates enrolled as full-time students were less than half as likely to be in the labor force (30.4 percent) as were their peers enrolled part time (67.5 percent).

About 2 in 3 recent high school graduates enrolled in college attended 4-year colleges. Of these students, 24.8 percent participated in the labor force in October 2020, lower than the 50.7 percent for recent graduates enrolled in 2-year colleges.

Recent high school graduates not enrolled in college in October 2020 were much more likely than enrolled graduates to be in the labor force (67.2 percent versus 33.0 percent). For both groups, labor force participation declined from the prior year. The unemployment rate for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college was 19.5 percent in October 2020, higher than the rate of 13.8 percent for recent graduates enrolled in college.

Between October 2019 and October 2020, 575,000 young persons dropped out of high school. While the labor force participation rate for recent dropouts, at 47.5 percent in October 2020, increased over the year, it remained much lower than the rate for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college (67.2 percent). The jobless rate for recent high school dropouts was 7.5 percent in October 2020, compared with 19.5 percent for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college.

### **All Youth Enrolled in High School or College (Ages 16 to 24)**

In October 2020, 21.0 million 16- to 24-year-olds, or 56.1 percent of youth, were enrolled in high school (9.2 million) or in college (11.8 million). The labor force participation rate for youth enrolled in school, at 36.0 percent in October 2020, decreased over the year. The unemployment rate (11.3 percent) for youth enrolled in school increased from the previous year. (See table 2.)

In October 2020, high school students continued to be less likely than college students to participate in the labor force (22.8 percent, compared with 46.3 percent). The participation rates for male and female high school students were 20.8 percent and 24.8 percent, respectively.

Among college students, those enrolled full time were much less likely to participate in the labor force in October 2020 than were part-time students (41.5 percent versus 82.0 percent). Students at 4-year colleges were also less likely to be in the labor force than were students at 2-year schools (43.6 percent and 55.6 percent, respectively). Female college students were more likely to participate in the labor force than their male counterparts (49.7 percent, compared with 42.2 percent). By race and ethnicity, the labor force participation rate was lower for Asian college students (33.2 percent) than for their Black (43.4 percent), White (49.0 percent), and Hispanic (53.7 percent) counterparts.

The unemployment rate for high school students, at 12.7 percent in October 2020, was little changed over the year. The rate for college students (10.8 percent) increased from the previous year.

### **All Youth Not Enrolled in School (Ages 16 to 24)**

In October 2020, 16.5 million persons ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school. The labor force participation rate of youth not enrolled in school decreased over the year to 79.2 percent. Among youth not enrolled in school in October 2020, young men continued to be more likely than young women to participate in the labor force (82.5 percent, compared with 75.4 percent). Labor force participation rates for not-enrolled men and women were highest for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (92.8 percent and 90.8 percent, respectively) and lowest for men and women with less than a high school diploma (66.8 percent and 47.0 percent, respectively). (See table 2.)

The unemployment rate for youth ages 16 to 24 not enrolled in school, at 11.3 percent in October 2020, increased from the previous year. Among not-enrolled youth who did not have a high school diploma, unemployment rates in October 2020 were 10.2 percent for young men and 11.2 percent for young women. The jobless rates of young men and young women with at least a bachelor's degree were 8.6 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively. Among youth not enrolled in school, the unemployment rate was higher for Blacks (20.1 percent) than for Hispanics (11.0 percent), Whites (9.7 percent), and Asians (8.7 percent).

### **Recent College Graduates (Ages 20 to 29)**

Between January and October 2020, 1.0 million 20- to 29-year-olds earned a bachelor's degree; of these, 692,000 (or 67.3 percent) were employed in October 2020, down from 76.0 percent in

October 2019. The unemployment rate for recent college graduates with a bachelor's degree increased to 12.8 percent in October 2020. (See table 3.)

In October 2020, 67.6 percent of male recent bachelor's degree recipients and 67.1 percent of female recent bachelor's degree recipients were employed. The jobless rates for recent male and female bachelor's degree recipients were 16.1 percent and 10.2 percent, respectively.

About one-quarter (or 273,000) of recent bachelor's degree recipients were enrolled in school in October 2020. These recent graduates who were enrolled in school were much less likely to be employed than those who were not enrolled (42.0 percent versus 76.4 percent).

Between January and October 2020, 306,000 persons ages 20 to 29 earned an advanced degree—that is, a master's, professional, or doctoral degree. In October 2020, 74.7 percent of those who recently earned an advanced degree were employed, compared with 82.3 percent in October 2019. The unemployment rate for recent advanced degree recipients was 12.6 percent in October 2020.

### **Recent Associate Degree Recipients (Ages 20 to 29)**

Of the 335,000 20- to 29-year-olds who completed an associate degree between January and October 2020, 59.2 percent were employed in October 2020, down from 71.3 percent in the previous year. The unemployment rate for recent associate degree recipients was 15.8 percent in October 2020. (See table 3.)

Recent associate degree recipients ages 20 to 29 were more likely to have completed an academic program than a vocational program (57.3 percent, compared with 42.7 percent). Associate degrees in academic programs are primarily in the arts and sciences and are often transferable to a bachelor's degree program, while associate degrees in vocational programs prepare graduates for a specific occupation.

In October 2020, 143,000 (or 42.7 percent) recent associate degree recipients were enrolled in school. Of these recent recipients who were enrolled in school, 49.3 percent were employed, compared with 66.5 percent for recent associate degree recipients who were not enrolled in school.

## Technical Note

The estimates in this release were obtained from a supplement to the October Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of about 60,000 eligible households that provides information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment for the nation. The CPS is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data in this release relate to the school enrollment status of persons in the civilian noninstitutional population in the calendar week that includes the 12th of October. Data about recent high school graduates and dropouts and the enrollment status of youth refer to persons 16 to 24 years of age. Data about recent associate degree recipients and college graduates refer to persons 20 to 29 years of age.

Updated population controls for the CPS are introduced annually with the release of January data. Additional information about population controls is available on the BLS website at [www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#pop](http://www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#pop).

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (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 component of this difference that occurs because samples differ by chance is known as *sampling error*, and its 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.

Additional information about the reliability of data from the CPS and estimating standard errors is available at [www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#reliability](http://www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#reliability).

### Concepts

*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.

*Recent high school graduates.* Persons age 16 to 24 who completed high school in the calendar year of the survey (January through October) are recent high school graduates.

*Recent high school dropouts.* Persons age 16 to 24 who were not enrolled in school at the time of the survey, attended school a year earlier, and did not have a high school diploma are recent dropouts.

*Recent college graduates.* Persons age 20 to 29 who completed a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree—that is, a master's, professional (such as law or medicine), or doctoral degree—in the calendar year of the survey (January through October) are recent college graduates.

*Recent associate degree recipients.* Persons age 20 to 29 who completed an associate degree (either an academic program or a vocational program) in the calendar year of the survey (January through October) are recent associate degree recipients. Associate degrees in academic programs are primarily in the arts and sciences and may be transferable to a bachelor's degree program, while associate degrees in vocational programs prepare graduates for a specific occupation.

**Table 1. Labor force status of 2020 high school graduates and 2019-2020 high school dropouts 16 to 24 years old by school enrollment, educational attainment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, October 2020**

[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	
<b>RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES</b>								
Total, 2020 high school graduates <sup>1</sup> .....	3,118	1,427	45.8	1,186	38.0	241	16.9	1,691
Men.....	1,581	703	44.5	580	36.7	123	17.5	878
Women.....	1,537	724	47.1	605	39.4	118	16.3	813
White.....	2,304	1,157	50.2	971	42.1	187	16.1	1,147
Black or African American.....	461	148	32.1	119	25.8	29	19.5	313
Asian.....	190	40	21.1	40	21.1	-	-	150
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	764	393	51.4	302	39.6	91	23.1	371
<b>Enrolled in college</b>								
Total, enrolled in college.....	1,955	645	33.0	556	28.4	89	13.8	1,310
Enrolled in 2-year college.....	621	315	50.7	263	42.3	52	16.6	306
Enrolled in 4-year college.....	1,335	331	24.8	294	22.0	37	11.2	1,004
Full-time students.....	1,819	553	30.4	476	26.2	78	14.0	1,266
Part-time students.....	136	92	67.5	80	58.9	12	12.6	44
Men.....	938	260	27.7	231	24.6	29	11.2	678
Women.....	1,017	386	37.9	326	32.0	60	15.6	632
White.....	1,450	540	37.2	471	32.4	70	12.9	910
Black or African American.....	261	49	18.8	42	16.2	7	-	212
Asian.....	158	27	16.9	27	16.9	-	-	132
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	429	181	42.2	149	34.8	32	17.5	248
<b>Not enrolled in college</b>								
Total, not enrolled in college.....	1,162	781	67.2	629	54.2	152	19.5	381
Men.....	643	444	69.0	349	54.3	94	21.2	200
Women.....	519	338	65.1	280	53.9	58	17.2	181
White.....	854	617	72.3	500	58.6	117	19.0	237
Black or African American.....	201	99	49.4	77	38.4	22	22.2	102
Asian.....	32	13	-	13	-	-	-	18
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	335	212	63.3	153	45.7	59	27.8	123
<b>RECENT HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS</b>								
Total, 2019-2020 high school dropouts <sup>2</sup> .....	575	273	47.5	253	43.9	20	7.5	302
Men.....	329	170	51.7	158	48.0	12	7.2	159
Women.....	246	103	41.9	95	38.5	8	8.0	143
White.....	415	206	49.6	192	46.2	14	6.8	209
Black or African American.....	60	17	-	11	-	6	-	43
Asian.....	31	24	-	24	-	-	-	7
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	178	78	44.1	70	39.3	8	10.8	100

<sup>1</sup> Data refer to persons who graduated from high school in January through October 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Data refer to persons who dropped out of school between October 2019 and October 2020.

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Dash indicates no data or data that do not meet publication criteria (values not shown where base is less than 75,000).

**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 2020**

[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.....	37,468	20,597	55.0	18,264	48.7	2,334	11.3	16,870
<b>Enrolled in school</b>								
Total, enrolled in school.....	21,012	7,564	36.0	6,710	31.9	855	11.3	13,448
Enrolled in high school <sup>1</sup> .....	9,214	2,097	22.8	1,832	19.9	266	12.7	7,116
Men.....	4,757	991	20.8	826	17.4	165	16.6	3,766
Women.....	4,456	1,106	24.8	1,005	22.6	101	9.1	3,350
White.....	6,704	1,657	24.7	1,481	22.1	176	10.6	5,047
Black or African American.....	1,416	275	19.4	212	14.9	64	23.1	1,141
Asian.....	440	51	11.6	47	10.7	4	-	389
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	2,190	355	16.2	310	14.2	45	12.6	1,835
Enrolled in college.....	11,798	5,467	46.3	4,878	41.3	589	10.8	6,331
Enrolled in 2-year college.....	2,703	1,503	55.6	1,324	49.0	178	11.9	1,200
Enrolled in 4-year college.....	9,095	3,964	43.6	3,554	39.1	410	10.4	5,131
Full-time students.....	10,395	4,316	41.5	3,865	37.2	451	10.4	6,079
Part-time students.....	1,403	1,151	82.0	1,013	72.2	138	12.0	252
Men.....	5,254	2,215	42.2	1,947	37.1	268	12.1	3,039
Women.....	6,544	3,252	49.7	2,931	44.8	321	9.9	3,292
White.....	8,495	4,165	49.0	3,790	44.6	375	9.0	4,330
Black or African American.....	1,589	689	43.4	579	36.5	110	16.0	899
Asian.....	1,185	393	33.2	332	28.0	61	15.6	792
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	2,492	1,337	53.7	1,192	47.8	145	10.9	1,155
<b>Not enrolled in school</b>								
Total, not enrolled in school.....	16,456	13,033	79.2	11,554	70.2	1,479	11.3	3,423
16 to 19 years.....	3,396	2,284	67.3	1,957	57.6	327	14.3	1,112
20 to 24 years.....	13,059	10,748	82.3	9,597	73.5	1,152	10.7	2,311
Men.....	8,796	7,256	82.5	6,367	72.4	889	12.3	1,540
Less than a high school diploma.....	1,165	778	66.8	699	59.9	80	10.2	387
High school graduates, no college <sup>2</sup> .....	4,414	3,597	81.5	3,100	70.2	498	13.8	817
Some college or associate degree.....	1,997	1,749	87.6	1,534	76.8	215	12.3	248
Bachelor's degree and higher <sup>3</sup> .....	1,219	1,131	92.8	1,034	84.8	97	8.6	88
Women.....	7,659	5,777	75.4	5,187	67.7	590	10.2	1,883
Less than a high school diploma.....	814	382	47.0	339	41.7	43	11.2	432
High school graduates, no college <sup>2</sup> .....	3,229	2,305	71.4	2,028	62.8	277	12.0	923
Some college or associate degree.....	2,038	1,656	81.3	1,499	73.6	157	9.5	382
Bachelor's degree and higher <sup>3</sup> .....	1,579	1,433	90.8	1,320	83.6	113	7.9	146
White.....	12,259	9,865	80.5	8,908	72.7	958	9.7	2,394
Black or African American.....	2,482	1,876	75.6	1,498	60.4	378	20.1	606
Asian.....	649	503	77.5	460	70.8	44	8.7	146
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	4,172	3,157	75.7	2,809	67.3	348	11.0	1,015

<sup>1</sup> Includes a small number of persons enrolled in grades below high school.

<sup>2</sup> Includes persons with a high school diploma or equivalent.

<sup>3</sup> Includes persons with bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees.

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Dash indicates no data or data that do not meet publication criteria (values not shown where base is less than 75,000).

**Table 3. Labor force status of 2020 associate degree recipients and college graduates 20 to 29 years old by selected characteristics, October 2020**

[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	
<b>RECENT ASSOCIATE DEGREE RECIPIENTS<sup>1</sup></b>								
Total, 20 to 29 years.....	335	236	70.3	198	59.2	37	15.8	100
Men.....	121	91	75.1	67	55.2	24	26.5	30
Women.....	215	145	67.6	132	61.4	13	9.1	69
20 to 24 years.....	235	169	71.8	139	59.3	29	17.4	66
25 to 29 years.....	101	67	66.8	59	59.0	8	-	33
Vocational program.....	143	114	79.6	102	71.0	12	10.8	29
Academic program.....	192	122	63.4	97	50.4	25	20.4	70
Enrolled in school.....	143	81	56.6	71	49.3	10	12.8	62
Not enrolled in school.....	192	155	80.5	128	66.5	27	17.3	37
<b>RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATES<sup>2</sup></b>								
Total, 20 to 29 years.....	1,334	1,055	79.1	920	69.0	135	12.8	279
Men.....	583	474	81.2	395	67.8	78	16.5	110
Women.....	751	582	77.5	525	69.9	57	9.7	169
20 to 24 years.....	865	667	77.1	593	68.5	75	11.2	198
25 to 29 years.....	468	388	82.7	328	69.9	60	15.5	81
Enrolled in school.....	318	154	48.4	146	45.8	8	5.4	164
Not enrolled in school.....	1,016	901	88.7	775	76.2	127	14.0	115
White.....	979	797	81.4	701	71.5	97	12.1	182
Black or African American.....	113	79	70.0	70	62.4	9	10.9	34
Asian.....	178	138	77.6	115	64.5	23	16.8	40
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.....	200	132	66.1	114	56.7	19	14.3	68
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>								
Total, 20 to 29 years.....	1,028	793	77.2	692	67.3	102	12.8	235
Men.....	441	355	80.5	298	67.6	57	16.1	86
Women.....	587	439	74.7	394	67.1	45	10.2	149
20 to 24 years.....	808	625	77.4	553	68.5	72	11.5	183
25 to 29 years.....	220	168	76.5	138	62.9	30	17.8	52
Enrolled in school.....	273	123	45.0	115	42.0	8	6.7	150
Not enrolled in school.....	755	670	88.8	577	76.4	93	13.9	84
<b>Advanced degree<sup>3</sup></b>								
Total, 20 to 29 years.....	306	262	85.5	229	74.7	33	12.6	44
Men.....	142	119	83.3	98	68.5	21	17.8	24
Women.....	163	143	87.4	131	80.1	12	8.4	21
20 to 24 years.....	58	42	-	39	-	3	-	15
25 to 29 years.....	248	219	88.2	189	76.1	30	13.7	29

<sup>1</sup> Data refer to persons who received an associate degree in January through October 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Data refer to persons who received a bachelor's or higher degree in January through October 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Data refer to persons who received a master's, professional, or doctoral degree in January through October 2020.

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Dash indicates no data or data that do not meet publication criteria (values not shown where base is less than 75,000).