

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION



THE OPPORTUNITY PICTURE

According to the 2014 Opportunity Index, 45 states and the District of Columbia increased the number of adults ages 25 or older who had earned at least an associate's degree.

Today, some form of training, degree or credential after high school is essential in order to secure a job that pays family-sustaining wages. Many good-paying “middle-skill jobs” require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree.

Americans with higher education degrees and credentials not only have increased access to jobs with higher salaries and greater autonomy, but also tend to be less affected by economic downturns. During the Great Recession, for example, college graduates faced a combined unemployment/underemployment rate of 10 percent. By contrast, those with only a high school education were unemployed or underemployed at twice that rate.¹

In 1973, just 28 percent of American jobs required an associate's degree or higher. By 2020, economists predict fully two-thirds of all jobs will require those credentials.²

Unless the United States rapidly increases the number of adults with postsecondary degrees, the country is on track to fall short by five million skilled workers.³ More than ever before, postsecondary training and education is the central path for Americans to secure economic security and prosperity. Community colleges and technical schools have a key role to play in building multiple pathways to the labor market, and ensuring the American workforce is prepared to compete in the 21st century economy.⁴

In an increasingly technical and information-driven economy, Americans without some form of post-secondary training are in less demand by employers. Education remains a critical path to the middle class, opening up economic and social benefits for both individuals and society as a whole.

INDICATOR QUICK FACTS

INDEX DIMENSION

- Education

MEASURE

- Associate Degree or Higher (percentage of adults ages 25 and over)

SOURCE

- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

OPPORTUNITY INDEX DATA

- West Virginia has the lowest percentage of adults aged 25 or older who have an associate's degree, **24.9%**, the same as the previous year.
- The District of Columbia, which had the fifth highest median household income, had the highest percentage of adults 25 and older with an associate's degree or higher, **56.2%**.
- The five states with the lowest percentage of population with an associate's degree or higher are located in the South.
- Falls Church City, Virginia has the highest percentage of adults with associate's degrees at **75.2%**, in addition to having the highest median household income at \$116,651.

37.1%

NATIONAL AVERAGE

¹ See e.g., <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/IB-Bean-Unemployment.pdf>

² See e.g., <http://cew.georgetown.edu/recovery2020>

³ Id.

⁴ See e.g., <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/higher-education/building-american-skills-through-community-colleges>