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COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND WORK ACTIVITY OF 2011 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

In October 2011, 68.3 percent of 2011 high school graduates were enrolled in colleges or universities, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Recent high school graduates not enrolled in college in October 2011 were more likely than enrolled graduates to be working or looking for work (68.7 percent compared with 38.8 percent).

Information on school enrollment and work activity 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 school enrollment, such as full- and part-time enrollment status. Additional information about the October supplement is included in the Technical Note.

Recent High School Graduates and Dropouts

Of the 3.1 million youth age 16 to 24 who graduated from high school between January and October 2011, about 2.1 million (68.3 percent) were enrolled in college in October 2011. The college enrollment rate of recent high school graduates was slightly lower than the record high set in October 2009 (70.1 percent). For 2011 graduates, the college enrollment rate was 72.3 percent for young women and 64.6 percent for young men. The college enrollment rate of Asian graduates (86.7 percent) was higher than for recent white (67.7 percent), black (67.5 percent), and Hispanic (66.6 percent) graduates. (See table 1.)

The labor force participation rate (the proportion of the population working or looking for work) for recent high school graduates enrolled in college was 38.8 percent. The participation rates for male and female graduates enrolled in college were 36.5 and 41.0 percent, respectively.

Among recent high school graduates enrolled in college in October 2011, 91.9 percent were full-time students. Recent graduates enrolled as full-time students were considerably less likely to be in the labor force (35.1 percent) than were their peers enrolled part time (79.7 percent).

About 6 in 10 recent high school graduates who were enrolled in college attended 4-year institutions. Of these students, about a third participated in the labor force, compared with about half of recent graduates enrolled in 2-year colleges.

Recent high school graduates not enrolled in college in the fall of 2011 were more likely than enrolled graduates to be in the labor force (68.7 percent compared with 38.8 percent). The unemployment rate for recent high school graduates not enrolled in school was 33.6 percent, compared with 21.1 percent for recent graduates enrolled in college.

Between October 2010 and October 2011, 369,000 young people dropped out of high school. The labor force participation rate for recent dropouts (55.5 percent) was lower than for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college (68.7 percent). The jobless rate for recent high school dropouts was 38.4 percent, compared with 33.6 percent for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college.

All Youth Enrolled in High School or College

In October 2011, 58.5 percent of the nation's 16- to 24-year-olds, or 22.4 million young people, either were enrolled in high school (9.6 million) or in college (12.8 million). The labor force participation rate (39.0 percent) of youth enrolled in school was essentially unchanged from October 2010 to October 2011. The unemployment rate for this group declined over the year from 16.8 percent to 14.2 percent. (See table 2.)

In October 2011, college students continued to be more likely to participate in the labor force than high school students (51.8 percent compared with 22.0 percent). About 85 percent of college students were enrolled full time. Those attending college full time had a much lower labor force participation rate than did part-time students. Asian college students were less likely to participate in the labor force than black, white, or Hispanic college students. Female college students were somewhat more likely to be in the labor force (53.5 percent) than their male counterparts (50.0 percent). Female high school students were also more likely to be in the labor force (24.7 percent) than were males (19.5 percent).

The unemployment rate for high school students, at 25.2 percent in October 2011, was more than twice the rate for college students (10.7 percent). Unemployment rates for black (38.8 percent) and Hispanic (36.1 percent) high school students continued to be higher than for white high school students (22.6 percent).

All Youth Not Enrolled in School

In October 2011, 15.9 million persons age 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school. The labor force participation rate of youth not enrolled in school in October 2011 was 79.6 percent, little changed from a year earlier. Among youth not enrolled in school in October 2011, men continued to be more likely than women to participate in the labor force—84.8 percent compared with 74.0 percent. Labor force participation rates for not-enrolled men and women were highest for those with at least a bachelor's degree and lowest for those with less than a high school diploma. (See table 2.)

The unemployment rate for youths age 16 to 24 not enrolled in school edged down from 18.7 percent in October 2010 to 17.5 percent in October 2011. Among youth not in school in October 2011, unemployment rates for those without a high school diploma were 19.7 percent for young men and 31.2 percent for young women. In contrast, the jobless rates for young men and women with at least a bachelor's degree were 9.5 percent and 8.0 percent, respectively. Black youth not enrolled in school had an unemployment rate of 28.5 percent in October 2011, higher than the rates for their white (15.3 percent), Asian (15.1 percent), and Hispanic (18.5 percent) counterparts.

Technical Note

The estimates in this release were obtained from a supplement to the October 2011 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 survey 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 16 to 24 years of age in the civilian noninstitutional population in the calendar week that includes the 12th of October. Updated population controls for the Current Population Survey are introduced annually with the release of January data. Additional information about population controls is available on the BLS Web site at 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 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 information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

A full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors is available at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#reliability.

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.

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

Recent high school dropouts. Persons 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.

Table 1. Labor force status of 2011 high school graduates and 2010-11 high school dropouts 16 to 24 years old by school enrollment, educational attainment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, October 2011

(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, 2011 high school graduates ¹	3,081	1,487	48.3	1,090	35.4	398	26.7	1,594
Men	1,607	808	50.3	551	34.3	258	31.9	799
Women	1,474	679	46.1	539	36.6	140	20.6	795
White	2,330	1,183	50.8	913	39.2	271	22.9	1,147
Black or African American	483	200	41.4	112	23.2	88	43.9	283
Asian	143	42	29.6	18	12.3	25	(²)	101
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	623	276	44.3	177	28.4	99	35.9	347
Enrolled in college	2,103	815	38.8	643	30.6	172	21.1	1,288
Enrolled in 2-year college	794	397	49.9	303	38.1	94	23.7	397
Enrolled in 4-year college	1,309	418	32.0	340	26.0	78	18.6	890
Full-time students	1,932	679	35.1	527	27.3	152	22.4	1,253
Part-time students	170	136	79.7	116	68.3	19	14.3	35
Men	1,038	378	36.5	273	26.3	106	27.9	659
Women	1,065	437	41.0	370	34.8	66	15.2	628
White	1,577	670	42.5	549	34.8	122	18.2	907
Black or African American	326	92	28.3	62	19.0	30	33.0	233
Asian	124	30	24.1	12	10.0	17	(²)	94
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	415	155	37.4	103	24.9	52	33.5	260
Not enrolled in college	979	672	68.7	447	45.6	226	33.6	306
Men	569	430	75.5	278	48.8	152	35.4	139
Women	409	242	59.2	169	41.2	74	30.4	167
White	753	513	68.2	364	48.4	149	29.0	239
Black or African American	158	108	68.4	50	32.0	57	53.3	50
Asian	19	13	(²)	5	(²)	7	(²)	7
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	208	121	58.0	74	35.4	47	39.0	88
Total, 2010-11 high school dropouts ³	369	205	55.5	126	34.2	79	38.4	164
Men	200	118	59.1	86	42.8	33	27.5	82
Women	169	87	51.3	41	24.1	46	53.1	82
White	266	133	49.8	87	32.8	45	34.2	134
Black or African American	74	49	(²)	32	(²)	17	(²)	25
Asian	10	10	(²)	5	(²)	5	(²)	-
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	96	48	49.6	28	29.0	20	(²)	49

¹ Data refer to persons who graduated from high school in January through October 2011.

² Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

³ Data refer to persons who dropped out of school between October 2010 and October 2011.

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. Because of rounding, sums of individual items may not equal totals. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Dash represents or rounds to zero.

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 2011

(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	38,276	21,386	55.9	17,932	46.8	3,454	16.2	16,890
Enrolled in school	22,403	8,744	39.0	7,501	33.5	1,243	14.2	13,659
Enrolled in high school ¹	9,618	2,116	22.0	1,582	16.5	534	25.2	7,502
Men	5,010	976	19.5	704	14.1	272	27.9	4,034
Women	4,608	1,140	24.7	878	19.1	262	23.0	3,468
White	7,232	1,764	24.4	1,365	18.9	399	22.6	5,468
Black or African American	1,598	263	16.5	161	10.1	102	38.8	1,334
Asian	372	37	10.0	28	7.6	9	(²)	335
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	1,981	300	15.1	192	9.7	108	36.1	1,681
Enrolled in college	12,785	6,628	51.8	5,919	46.3	709	10.7	6,158
Enrolled in 2-year college	3,685	2,252	61.1	1,941	52.7	311	13.8	1,433
Enrolled in 4-year college	9,101	4,375	48.1	3,977	43.7	398	9.1	4,725
Full-time students	10,908	5,043	46.2	4,508	41.3	534	10.6	5,866
Part-time students	1,877	1,585	84.4	1,410	75.1	174	11.0	292
Men	6,061	3,028	50.0	2,671	44.1	356	11.8	3,033
Women	6,725	3,600	53.5	3,247	48.3	353	9.8	3,125
White	9,970	5,435	54.5	4,911	49.3	524	9.6	4,536
Black or African American	1,670	736	44.1	619	37.1	117	15.9	934
Asian	772	261	33.8	223	28.9	38	14.5	511
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2,112	1,088	51.5	926	43.9	162	14.9	1,023
Not enrolled in school	15,873	12,642	79.6	10,431	65.7	2,212	17.5	3,231
16 to 19 years	2,855	1,930	67.6	1,384	48.5	546	28.3	925
20 to 24 years	13,018	10,713	82.3	9,047	69.5	1,666	15.5	2,305
Men	8,352	7,080	84.8	5,790	69.3	1,290	18.2	1,273
Less than a high school diploma	1,532	1,131	73.8	907	59.3	223	19.7	401
High school graduates, no college ³	3,990	3,348	83.9	2,574	64.5	774	23.1	642
Some college or associate degree	1,971	1,772	89.9	1,559	79.1	213	12.0	199
Bachelor's degree and higher ⁴	859	828	96.4	749	87.2	79	9.5	31
Women	7,521	5,563	74.0	4,641	61.7	922	16.6	1,958
Less than a high school diploma	1,222	697	57.0	480	39.3	217	31.2	525
High school graduates, no college ³	2,986	2,042	68.4	1,654	55.4	389	19.0	943
Some college or associate degree	2,073	1,682	81.1	1,457	70.3	225	13.4	392
Bachelor's degree and higher ⁴	1,240	1,142	92.1	1,051	84.7	92	8.0	98
White	12,265	9,935	81.0	8,414	68.6	1,521	15.3	2,330
Black or African American	2,467	1,838	74.5	1,315	53.3	523	28.5	630
Asian	467	353	75.7	300	64.2	53	15.1	114
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	3,600	2,834	78.7	2,309	64.1	525	18.5	766

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 persons with a high school diploma or equivalent.

⁴ 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. Because of rounding, sums of individual items may not equal totals. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.