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## FP-12-04 School Enrollment and Completion

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# School Enrollment and Completion

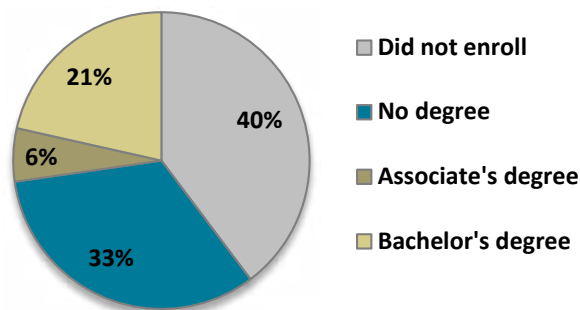
Krista K. Payne

Educational attainment affects young adults' current and future ability to achieve gainful employment and live independently from their parents, as well as their timing of parenthood, cohabitation, and marriage. In 2009, adults aged 25-34 with a Bachelor's degree earned more than double those without a high school diploma/GED, 50% more than those with a high school diploma/GED, and 25% more than those with an Associate's degree (The Condition of Education, NCES 2011-033). This Profile presents analyses of longitudinal data from the National Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) capturing the collective college experiences—including whether they enroll, type of program (two-year or four-year), if they have received a degree, and if so which degree—of young adults up to their 25th birthdays.

## College Experiences of Young Adults

- A majority of young adults (59%) enroll in a two- or four-year college program prior to age 25.
  - Among those who enroll prior to age 25, 85% do so within a year of their 18th birthdays.
  - The majority of young adults who enroll in a two- or four-year degree college program have not completed any degree by their 25th birthdays (54%).

Figure 1. College Experiences of Young Adults (by age 25)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, Rounds 1-13: 1997-2009 weighted. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

## Two- and Four-year College Programs

- Nearly a third of young adults enroll in a *two-year* program.
  - One-third of those young adults who enroll complete a degree of some kind before their 25th birthdays.
    - » About one-fifth (18%) who enroll complete an Associate's degree.
    - » Twelve percent use this experience as a stepping stone to earning at least a Bachelor's degree.
- Forty-four percent of young adults enroll in a *four-year* program.
  - A majority (56%) of young adults who enroll in a four-year program complete a degree of some kind.
    - » Half (49%) who enroll earn a Bachelor's degree by age 25.
    - » Seven percent earn an Associate's degree.

Figure 2. Percent of Young Adults (by age 25) Who Enroll in a Two-year Program by Degree Earned

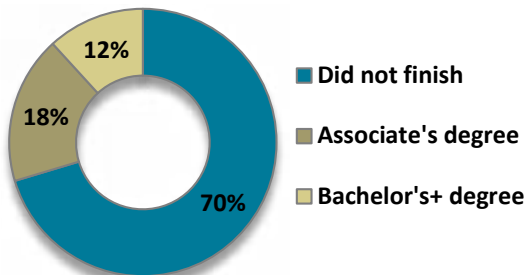
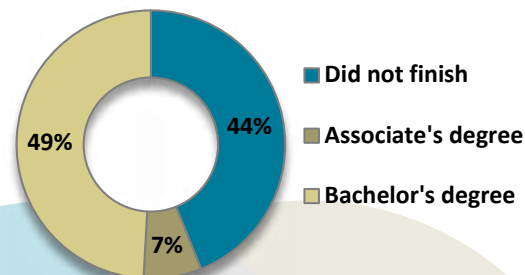


Figure 3. Percent of Young Adults (by age 25) Who Enroll in a Four-year Program by Degree Earned



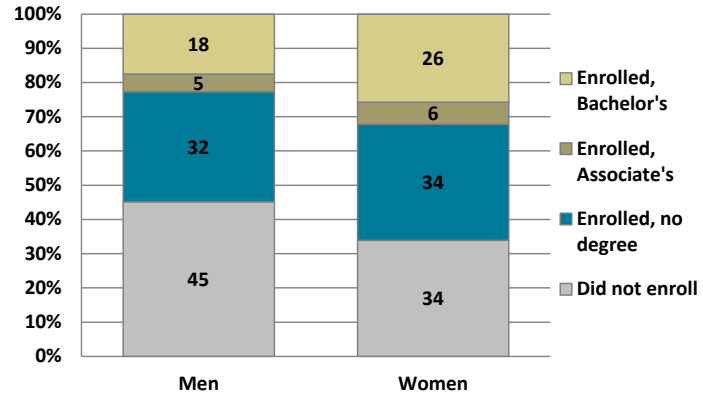
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, Rounds 1-13: 1997-2009 weighted. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

## College Experiences and Socioeconomic/Demographic Characteristics

### Gender

- Women are more likely to enroll in a two- or four-year college program in young adulthood than men (66% and 55%, respectively).
  - Similar proportions of men and women enroll but do not ultimately receive a degree. About a third of men (32%) and women (34%) enroll but do not complete a degree by age 25.
    - » Twenty-six percent of women—compared to 18% of men—receive at least a Bachelor's degree by age 25.

Figure 4. College Experiences of Young Adults (by age 25) by Gender

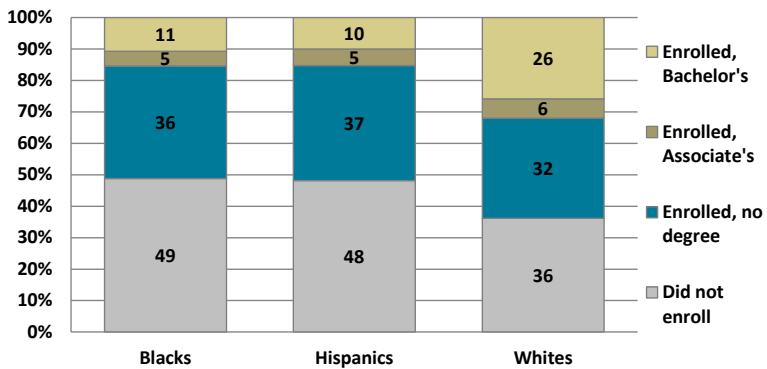


Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, Rounds 1-13: 1997-2009 weighted. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

### Race and Ethnicity

- Two-thirds of Whites enroll in a two- or four-year college program in young adulthood, compared to about half of Blacks and Hispanics (51% and 52%, respectively).
  - Over a quarter of Whites receive a Bachelor's degree by age 25, compared to about one-tenth of Blacks (11%) and Hispanics (10%).
- Around a third of Blacks (36%), Hispanics (37%), and Whites (32%) enroll but do not complete a degree by age 25.

Figure 5. College Experiences of Young Adults (by age 25) by Race and Ethnicity

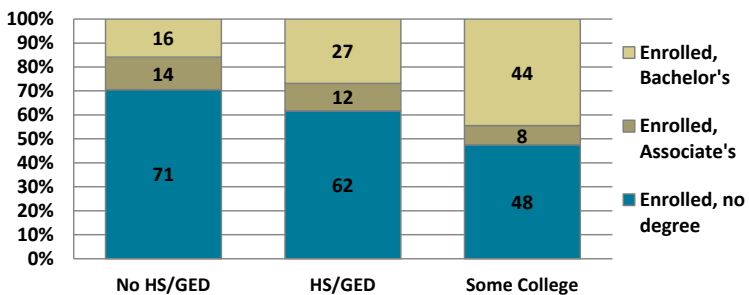


Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, Rounds 1-13: 1997-2009 weighted. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

### Mother's Educational Attainment

- A large majority (88%) of young adults whose mothers have at least some college enroll in college in early adulthood. Half (54%) of young adults with mothers who have a high school diploma/GED also enroll in college in early adulthood—compared to one-third (34%) of young adults with mother's who do not have any degree/diploma.
  - Young adult college students whose mothers do not have a high school diploma/GED are the least likely to earn any degree by the age of 25 (29%). In contrast, 52% of young adults with a college graduate mother also graduate from college.

Figure 6. College Completion of Young Adults (by age 25) by Mother's Educational Attainment



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, Rounds 1-13: 1997-2009 weighted. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, NCFMR analyses of valid cases.

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Sources:

Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). *The Condition of Education 2011* (NCES 2011-033). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.