OOChart

Finishing high school leads to better employment prospects

Recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) suggest that students who drop out of high school are more likely than high school graduates to be unemployed or to not participate in the labor force.

As the chart shows, 8 percent of individuals who hadn't graduated from high school were unemployed during the October when they were age 23. This compares with 5 percent of high school graduates who had never attended college and 3 percent of high school graduates who had attended college but had not earned a bachelor's degree. Among those who had earned a bachelor's degree, 3 percent were unemployed during the October when they were age 23.
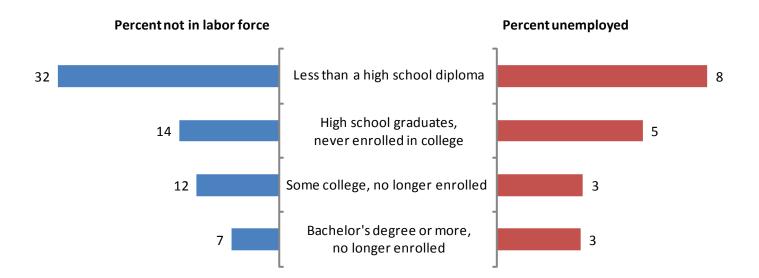
The relationship between education and labor force participation is even more pronounced. Thirty-two percent of high school dropouts were not in the labor force—that is, neither working nor looking for work—during the October when they were age 23. That's more than twice the proportion of high school graduates who were not in the labor force at age 23. And only 7 percent of college graduates were not participating in the labor force.

These data come from the BLS National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, which has surveyed the same group of respondents annually since 1997. Survey results are representative of all U.S. men and women born between the years 1980 and 1984 and living in the United States when the survey began. Respondents were age 23 in October during the years 2003 to 2008.

Recent data also show respondents' degree attainment, past employment experiences, and more. For details, visit online at **www.bls.gov/nls/nlsy97.htm**; write to the BLS National Longitudinal Survey Program, 2 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Suite 4945, Washington, DC 20212; call (202) 691-7410; or email *nls_info@bls.gov*.

Percent of young adults* unemployed or not in the labor force, by education, 2003–08

Percent not in labor force

32	Less than a high school diploma
14	High school graduates, never enrolled in college
12	Some college, no longer enrolled
7	Bachelor's degree or more, no longer enrolled

Percent unemployed

8	Less than a high school diploma
5	High school graduates, never enrolled in college
3	Some college, no longer enrolled
3	Bachelor's degree or more, no longer enrolled

*Respondents were not enrolled in school in the October of the year when they were 23 years of age.