



Education pays: More education leads to higher earnings, lower unemployment

Learn more, earn more—and avoid unemployment. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) consistently show that with increased education, median earnings rise and average rates of unemployment fall.

Above all, these data show the benefits of finishing high school. The chart shows that in 2009, high school dropouts earned about 40 percent less and had an unemployment rate almost double the average rate for all workers. In contrast, high school graduates had weekly earnings and an unemployment rate closer to those for all workers.

Completing an educational program demonstrates qualities—such as initiative, willingness to learn, and organizational ability—that employers value. In addition,

high-earning workers usually must be highly skilled, and these skills often are acquired through formal education.

Keep in mind that these data are averages. Wages and employment vary among occupations within each level of educational attainment, and other factors, such as geographic location, determine success in the job market. Furthermore, not everyone is interested in extended academic study. But pursuing the highest level of education consistent with your interests, abilities, and career goals is likely to pay off.

For more information about these data, write to the BLS Division of Labor Force Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE., Suite 4675, Washington, DC 20212; call (202) 691-6378; or visit online, www.bls.gov/CPS.

Unemployment rates and earnings for full-time wage and salary workers aged 25 and over, by educational attainment, 2009

