

New Federal Data on Non-Degree Credentials

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GEMEnA

A collaborative effort of federal statistical agencies and policy offices to develop new survey items to measure the prevalence and key characteristics of non-degree credentials:

- Industry-recognized certifications
- Occupational licenses
- Educational certificates

GEMEnA Member Organizations

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Chair
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Census Bureau
- Council of Economic Advisors
- Department of Education Office of the Under Secretary
- National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NSF)
- OMB Office of Statistical and Science Policy

GEMEnA Values

- Rigorous developmental work is time consuming and expensive
- Documentation contributes to the field of survey methodology, may undergird future work, and informs survey sponsors about the validity and reliability of items they may wish to adopt or adapt
- A collaborative approach to development and deployment ensures value and use

5-Year Development Process

- Expert groups helped define the credentials
- Focus groups of potential respondents provided insight into relevant words/terms
- Cognitive interviews refined question wording and instructions
- Pilot studies tested survey items on a large number of respondents

Theoretical Definitions— Certifications and Licenses

- **Certification:** A credential awarded by a certification body based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job. The examination can be either written, oral, or performance-based. Certification is a time-limited credential that is renewed through a recertification process.
- **License:** A credential awarded by a licensing agency based on pre-determined criteria. The criteria may include some combination of degree attainment, certifications, certificates, assessment, apprenticeship programs, or work experience. Licenses are time-limited and must be renewed periodically.

Is it a Certification or a License?

- Respondents do not easily distinguish between certifications and licenses particularly when the certification is required for the license
- Based on development work, surveys ask respondent to indicate whether the credential was issued by a government or other kind of certifying body.

Operational Definition—Certification/License

Do you have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license? Do not include business licenses, such as a liquor license or vending license.

A professional certification or license shows you are qualified to perform a specific job and includes things like Licensed Realtor, Certified Medical Assistant, Certified Teacher, or an IT certification.

Theoretical Definition—Educational Certificate

A credential awarded by an educational institution based on completion of all requirements for a program of study, including coursework and test or other performance evaluations. Certificates are typically awarded for life (like a degree). Certificates of attendance or participation in a short-term training (e.g., 1 day) are not in the definitional scope for educational certificates.

Operational Definition—Educational Certificate

People sometimes earn certificates for completing an education or training program. A certificate is different from a certification or license. Do NOT include certifications/licenses here; include them in the previous section only. Have you ever earned any of the following types of certificates?

Let them tell us what they have

- a. A certificate for completing a training program from an employer, employment agency, union, software or equipment manufacturer, or other training provider.
- b. A certificate for completing a vocational program at a high school.
- c. A high school equivalency certificate, such as a GED®.

What we're really after:

- d. A certificate—not a degree—for completing courses at a community or technical college, or other school after high school. Do not include teaching certificates or college degrees.

First Results

- Census Bureau released the first official statistics in January 2014
- *Measuring Alternative Educational Credentials: 2012*

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/files/p70-138.pdf>

Table 1.

Percentage With Alternative Credentials by Regular Educational Attainment for the Population Aged 18 and Older: 2012

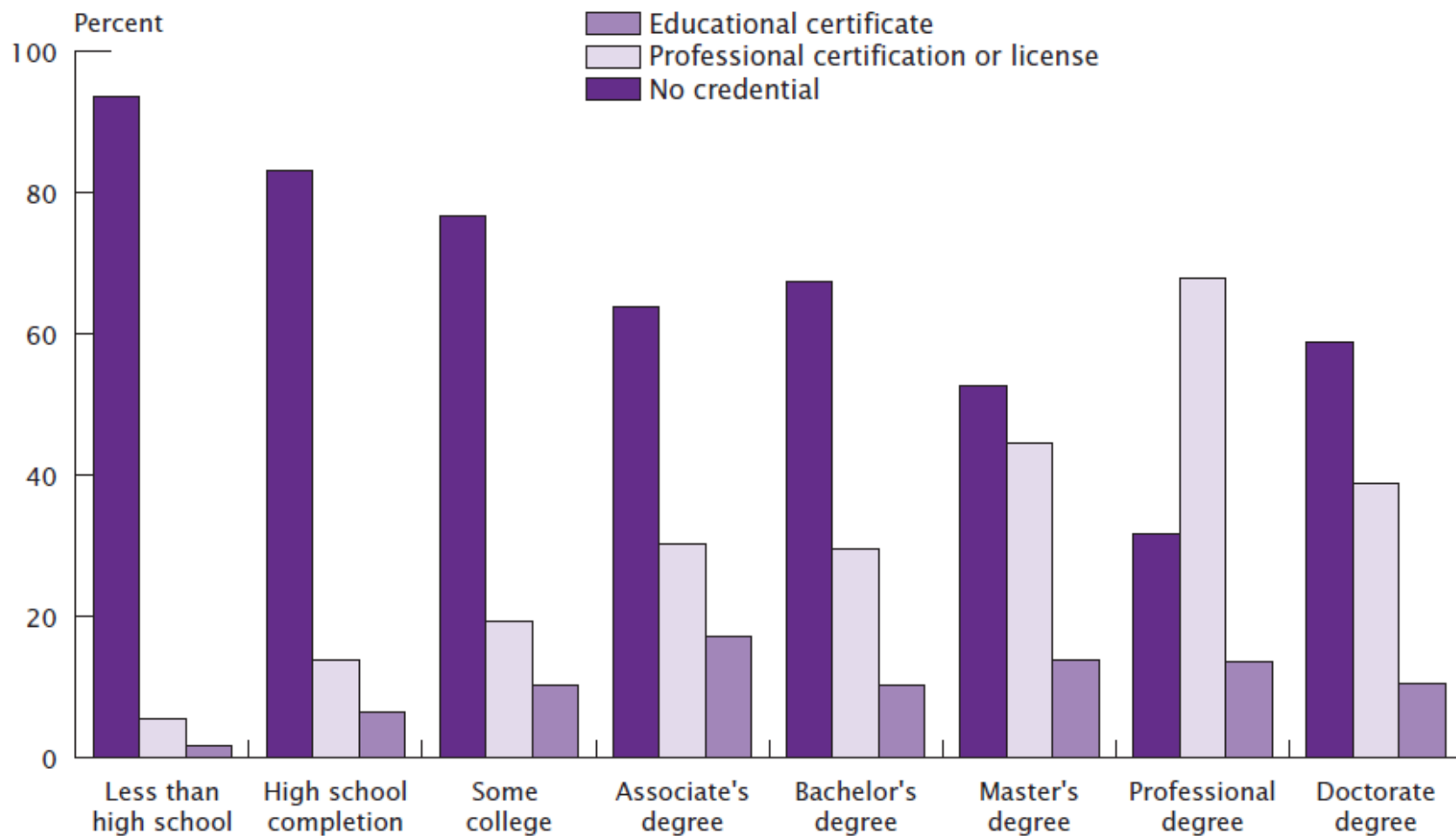
(Weighted, numbers in thousands)

Regular education level	No alternative credential		Professional certification, license		Educational certificate	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	161,557	75.2	46,326	21.6	19,113	8.9
Less than high school	22,240	93.6	1,315	5.5	411	1.7
High school completion	59,056	83.1	9,891	13.9	4,482	6.4
Some college	32,134	76.5	8,064	19.3	4,243	10.2
Associate's degree	11,457	63.8	5,409	30.2	3,059	17.1
Bachelor's degree	26,196	67.3	11,447	29.5	4,027	10.4
Master's degree	8,291	52.5	7,018	44.6	2,180	13.9
Professional degree	1,015	31.6	2,178	67.7	436	13.7
Doctorate degree	1,531	58.8	1,004	38.7	274	10.6

Note: Nonrespondents are not included in estimates of alternative credentials.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008 panel, wave 13.

Figure 1.
Alternative Credential Status by Regular Education Level: 2012

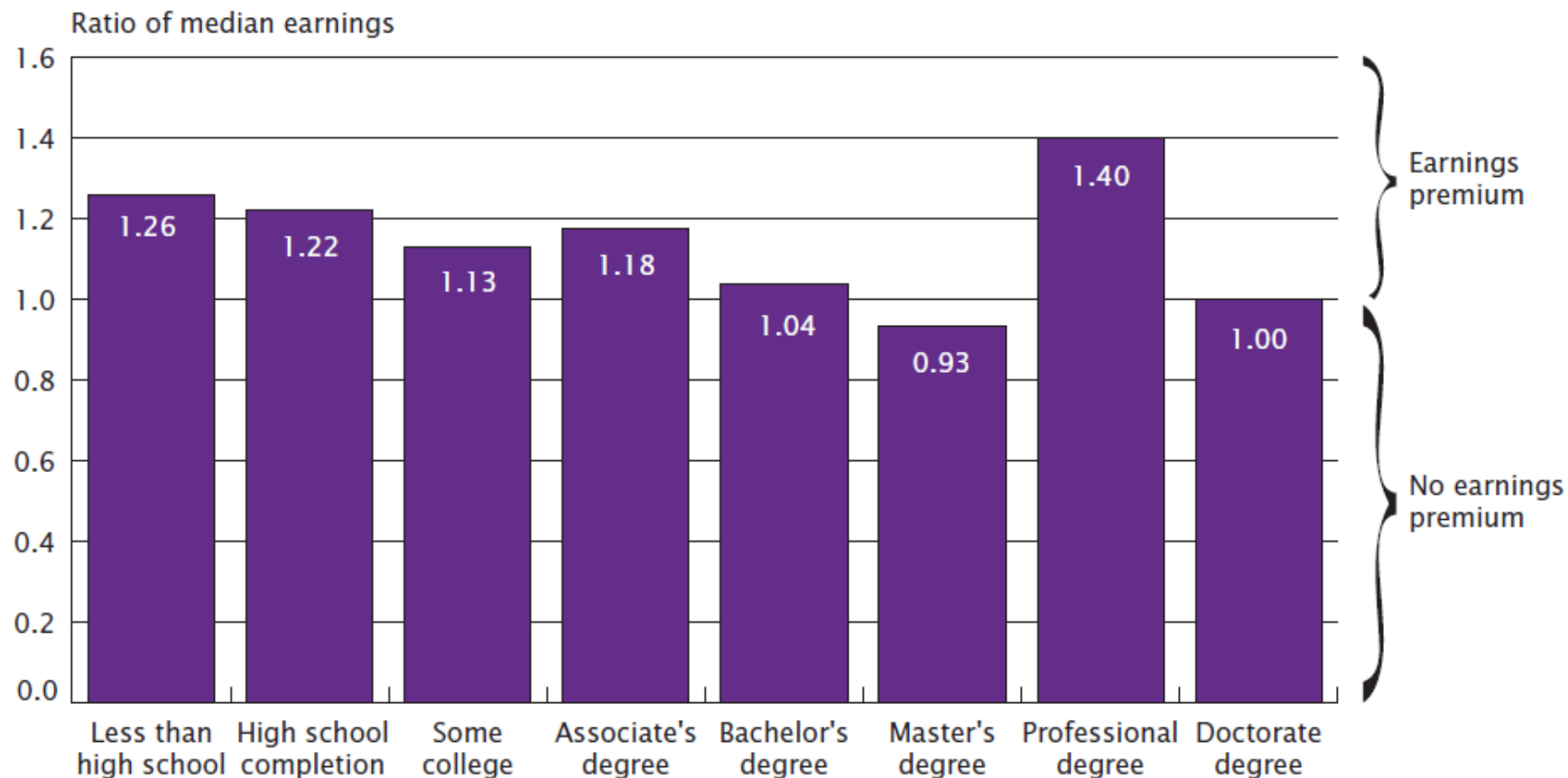


Note: Nonrespondents are not included in estimates of alternative credentials.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008, wave 13.

Figure 2.

Median Monthly Earnings for Professional Certification or License Relative to No Alternative Credential by Education Level: 2012



Note: Nonrespondents are not included in estimates of alternative credentials. Only people employed full-time for the 4 months before the survey with positive earnings are included in these analyses.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008 panel, wave 13.

Data Currently Available

- 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), Wave 13 topical module fielded in fall 2012
- 2002/2012 Education Longitudinal Survey 10 year follow up of 10th grade class of 2002 (12th grade class of 2004)

Data Available in the Near Future

- Redesigned SIIPP (Summer 2015)
- Baccalaureate and Beyond (Summer 2015)
- Current Population Survey (February 2016)
- National Survey of College Graduates (2016)
- Beginning Postsecondary Students (2016)
- Adult Training and Education Survey (2017)

Website: nces.ed.gov/surveys/gemena

- List of surveys with links to questionnaires and data (as they become available)
- Links to documentation on development process and published reports
- GEMEnA-developed working definitions of certifications, licenses, and certificates
- Link to LinkedIn group: GEMEnA Community

For More Information

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Measures of Enrollment and Attainment

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