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 predetermined 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*
Table 1.
Percentage With Alternative Credentials by Regular Educational Attainment for the Population Aged 18 and Older: 2012
(Weighted, numbers in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regular education level</th>
<th>No alternative credential</th>
<th>Professional certification, license</th>
<th>Educational certificate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161,557</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>46,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>22,240</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>1,315</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school completion</td>
<td>59,056</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>9,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>32,134</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>8,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>11,457</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>5,409</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>26,196</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>11,447</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>8,291</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>7,018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>2,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>1,531</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Nonrespondents are not included in estimates of alternative credentials.
Figure 1. Alternative Credential Status by Regular Education Level: 2012

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