

# New Federal Data on Non-Degree Credentials

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**M**easures of **E**nrollment and **A**ttainment  
(**GEMEnA**)

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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

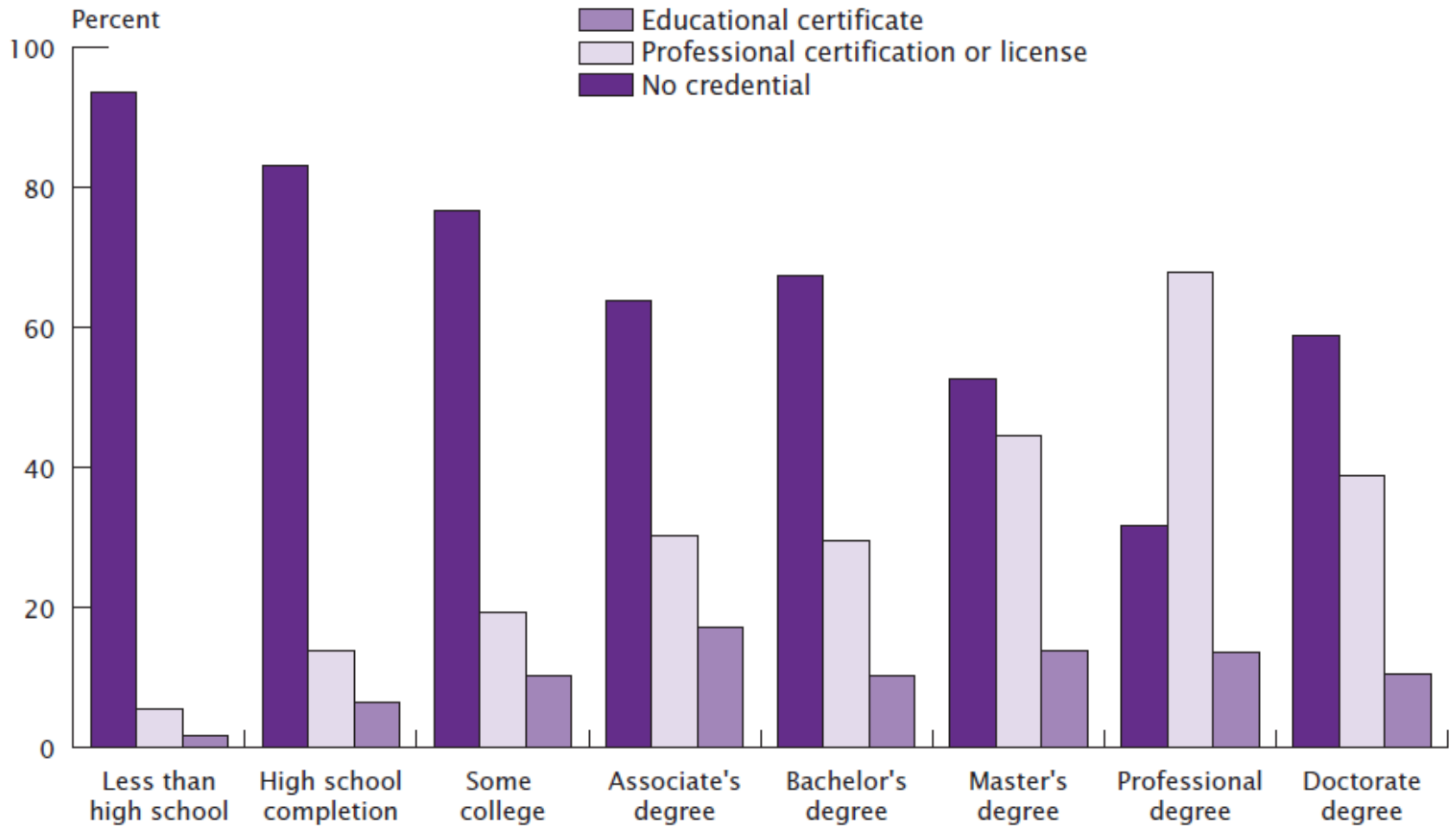
(Weighted, numbers in thousands)

Regular education level	No alternative credential		Professional certification, license		Educational certificate	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>161,557</b>	<b>75.2</b>	<b>46,326</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>19,113</b>	<b>8.9</b>
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.

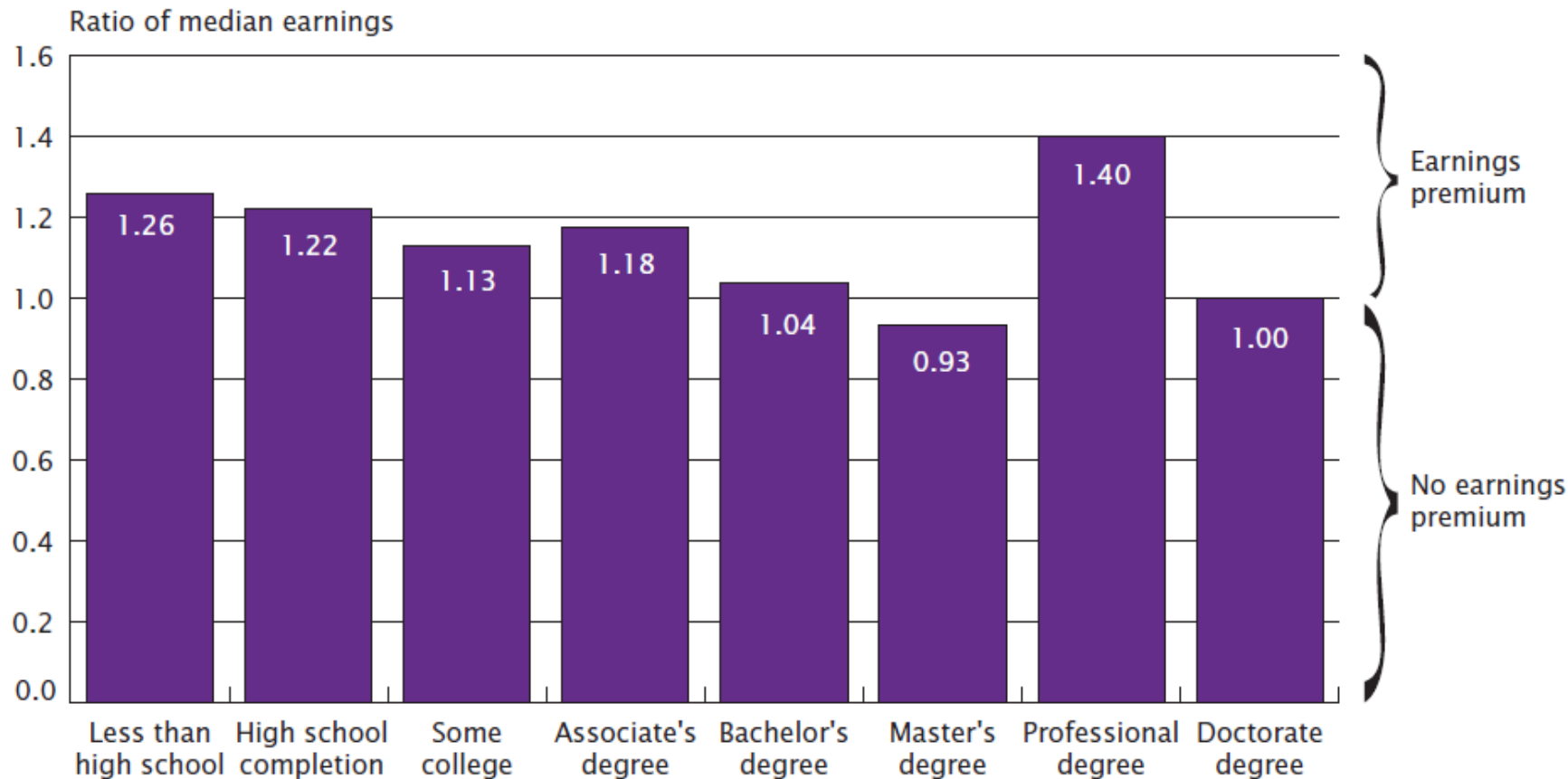
Figure 1.  
**Alternative Credential Status by Regular Education Level: 2012**



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 10<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2002 (12<sup>th</sup> 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](https://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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