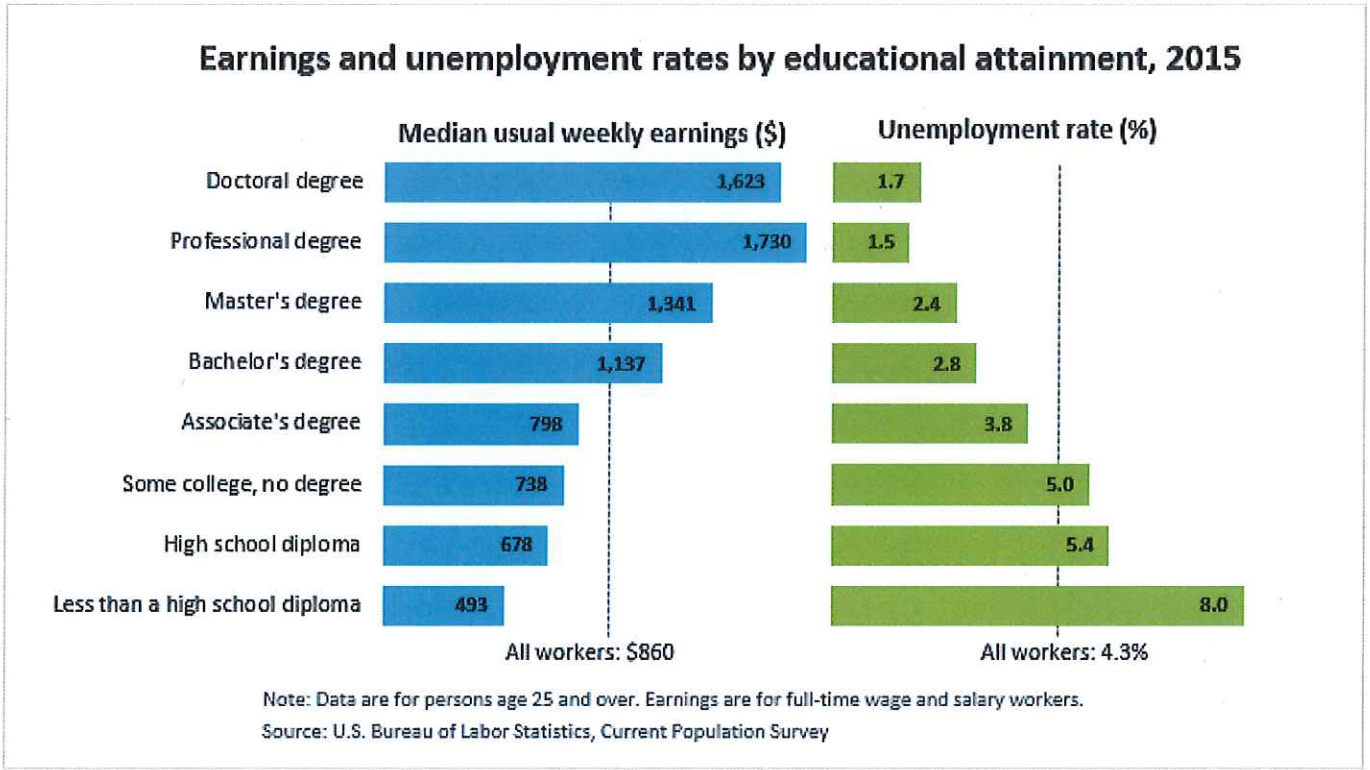
Data on display

Education matters

Dennis Vilorio | March 2016



Even if your career path seems hazy, the data are clear: More education leads to better prospects for earnings and employment.

According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), earnings increase and unemployment decreases as educational attainment rises. Grouping workers by education level, the chart shows that those with more education have higher earnings and lower rates of unemployment than those with less education.

For example, workers with a professional degree had the highest median weekly earnings ($1,730) and lowest unemployment rate (1.5 percent) in 2015 of all groups shown. That's more than triple the earnings ($493) and less than one-fifth the unemployment rate (8.0 percent) of workers with less than a high school diploma.

Education alone doesn't guarantee that you'll find a job or make a lot of money, however. Earnings and employment vary by occupation, and they are further affected by industry, geographic location, experience, and other factors. BLS data and resources, such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook, can help you learn more about the occupations that interest you.

These data are from the BLS Current Population Survey, a monthly survey of households that collects information about demographic and labor force characteristics.

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