RURAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the United States, rural, urban, and suburban students enroll in and complete higher education at very different rates, with rural students most often attending and graduating at much lower rates. In 2015, 29% of 18-24 year olds from rural areas enrolled in a postsecondary education program compared to 48% from urban areas. That same year, only 19% of rural adults had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 33% of their urban peers. Access and affordability contribute to these numbers, but the news is not all bad. The proportion of rural adults with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 5% in 1960 to 20% in 2017.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Among all those 25 and older in rural areas in 2015, 18% of rural men and 20% of rural women aged 25 and older had earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 32% of urban men and 33% of urban women.
- Among those 25 and older in rural areas in 2015, whites were more likely to have earned a bachelor's degree or high school diploma:
  - 20% of whites, 10% of blacks, 10% of American Indians/Alaska Natives, and 9% of Latinos in rural areas held a bachelor's degree or higher.
  - 36% of whites, 39% of blacks, 37% of American Indians/Alaska Natives, and 30% of Latinos in rural areas had a high school diploma or equivalent.

ENROLLMENT & COMPLETION

- According to the National Student Clearinghouse, 62% of rural high school graduates in the class of 2018 enrolled immediately in college compared to 62% of urban high school graduates and 67% of suburban high school graduates from that year.
- 41% of rural high school graduates in the class of 2012 completed a college degree within six years of graduation compared to 36% of urban high school graduates and 47% of suburban high school graduates.

EARNINGS OUTCOME BASED ON EDUCATION

- In 2017, median earnings for rural working adults were eclipsed by median earnings for urban working adults at every level of educational attainment.
  - Working adults in rural areas with graduate degrees earned a median of $54,513 compared to $72,348 for those in urban areas.
  - Bachelor's degree holders in rural areas earned $42,269 compared to $54,597 for those in urban areas.
  - Adults with only a high school diploma or equivalency earned $29,240 in rural areas compared to $30,829 for those in urban areas.
  - Adults with less than a high school diploma had median earnings of $22,248 in rural areas compared to $23,158 for those in urban areas.
RESOURCES


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