

Study: Young men and women without a high school diploma, 1990 to 2016

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In 2016, 340,000 young Canadians aged 25 to 34 had not completed high school. More than two-thirds of young Canadian men without a high school diploma were employed. For women in the same age group without a diploma, just over 40% had a job.

These results come from the new study "*Young men and women without a high school diploma*," which examines the characteristics and labour market outcomes of young Canadians who did not finish high school.

The type of experience obtained by young workers is often a determinant of future labour market outcomes. Therefore, it is important to examine the labour market outcomes of young Canadians without a high school diploma.

In addition, given the importance of skills in today's economy, knowing the labour market outcomes of young adults can help today's youth make informed decisions about their own education.

Men are more likely than women to be without a high school diploma

The proportion of young Canadians without a high school diploma was higher among men than women. In 2016, 8.5% of men aged 25 to 34 had not graduated from high school compared with 5.4% of women.

These proportions represent a significant decline since 1990, when 22% of young men and 19% of young women did not have a high school diploma.

Other population groups were also more likely to be without a high school diploma, among them Aboriginal people (that is, First Nations living off reserve, Métis, and Inuit).

In 2016, 20% of Aboriginal men and 16% of Aboriginal women aged 25 to 34 did not have a high school diploma.

Higher prevalence of disability among high school non-graduates

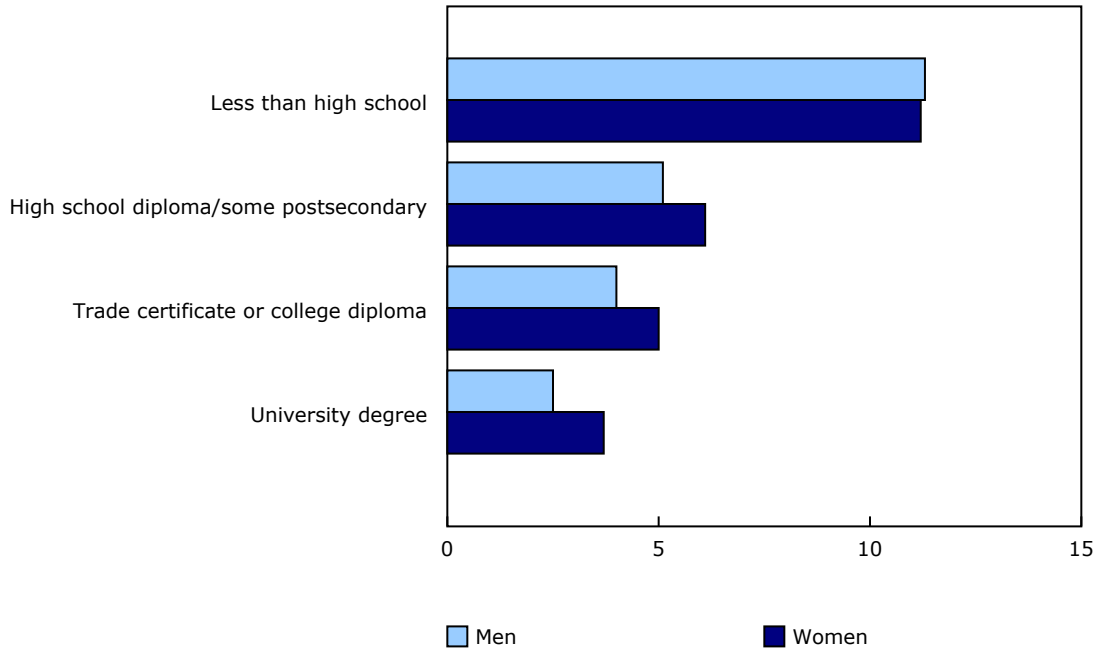
People without a high school diploma may sometimes face personal or family constraints when they want to complete high school or find employment.

For example, among young men and women aged 25 to 34 without a high school diploma, 11% reported that they had a disability. This compared with 5% among young men and 6% among young women who reported that their highest level of education was a high school diploma or some postsecondary education.

The most common type of disability reported by young Canadians without a high school diploma was a mental/psychological condition.



Chart 1
Proportion of individuals aged 25 to 34 with at least one type of chronic disability, by level of education, 2012



Source(s): Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

In addition, one in five young women without a high school diploma were lone parents, compared with 1 in 10 among those with no more than a high school diploma.

Young people without a high school diploma are also more likely to have children, and typically become parents at a younger age, particularly women.

Deterioration of labour market conditions for those without a high school diploma

Over the last 25 years, young Canadians without a high school education saw a deterioration of their labour market conditions.

From 1990 to 2016, the employment rate of young women without a high school diploma declined from 50% to 41%. Over the same period, the proportion of those who did not participate in the labour market increased from 40% to 51%.

Among those working, women without a high school education were less likely than men to work full time and full year, and more likely to work in lower wage occupations such as light-duty cleaners and cashiers.

Men without a high school education were significantly more likely to work than women in the same educational category, but their labour market conditions also deteriorated over the period.

From 1990 to 2016, the proportion of men who were employed declined from 75% to 67%, while the proportion of men not in the labour market increased from 12% to 22%.

Construction trade helpers and labourers, and transport truck drivers were the two most common occupations among young men without a high school diploma.

Women without a high school diploma get most of their income from government transfers

The lower labour market participation of women without a high school diploma translated into a higher dependency on government transfers (for example, Employment Insurance, social assistance, child benefits, workers compensation benefits or GST/HST credit).

From 2012 to 2014, government transfers represented more than 60% of the total individual income of young women without a high school diploma. This compared with 39% among young women with no more than a high school diploma.

Among young men in the same educational category, government transfers accounted for 31% of total individual income on average, compared with 16% among those with no more than a high school diploma.

Note to readers

This study uses data from three sources: the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) and the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). The LFS is a mandatory monthly survey that collects labour market information for all household members aged 15 and over, as well as demographic and family relationship information for all household members. Excluded from the survey's coverage are people living on reserves and other Aboriginal settlements in the provinces, full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and the institutionalized population. LFS data on individuals aged 25 to 34 from 1990 to 2016 were used to look at educational attainment, labour force status and other characteristics.

The CIS is a cross-sectional survey developed to assess the economic well-being of individuals and families in Canada. It is an annual supplement to the LFS; the first collection was undertaken in 2013 for the 2012 reference year. CIS data on individuals aged 25 to 34 from the 2012, 2013 and 2014 reference years were used to derive estimates of income and work intensity. Data for the three years were pooled together to increase the sample size.

The CSD is a survey of Canadian adults whose daily activities are limited because of a long-term condition or health-related problem. The 2012 CSD was based on a sample of people who reported an activity limitation on the 2011 National Household Survey. The CSD is based on a social model of disability rather than a medical model. The social model is based on the premise that disability is the result of the interaction between an individual's functional limitations and barriers in the environment, such as social and physical barriers, that make it harder to function on a daily basis. Data on individuals aged 25 to 34 from the 2012 CSD were used to derive estimates of disability prevalence.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3251](#), [3701](#) and [5200](#).

The article "[Young men and women without a high school diploma](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

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