

DATA POINT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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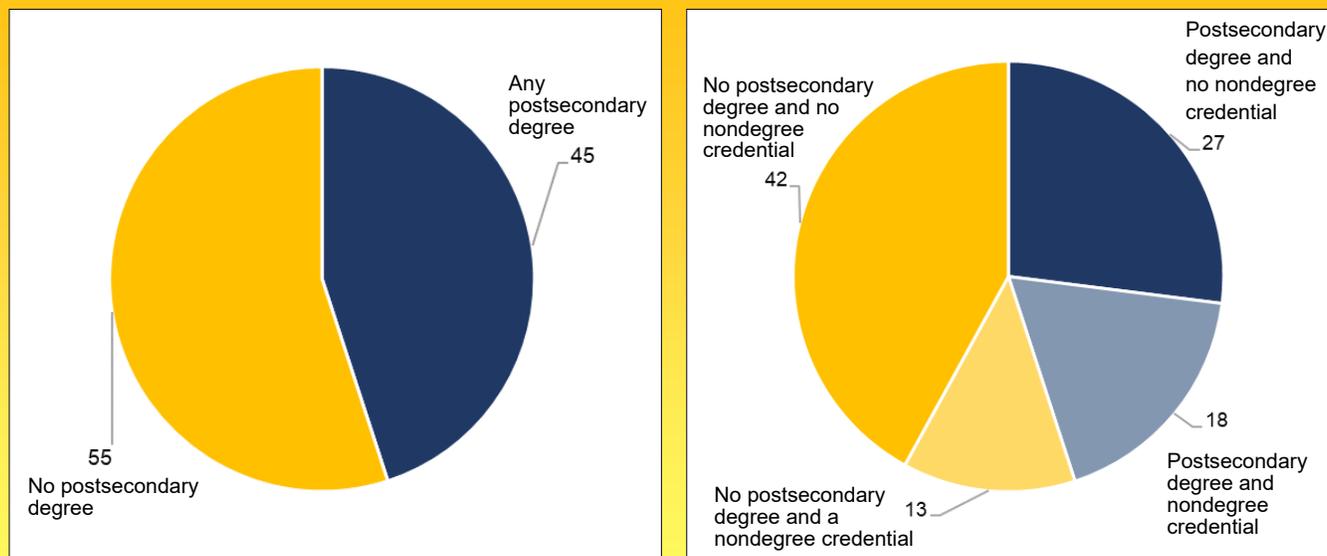
Degree and Nondegree Credentials Held by Labor Force Participants

This Data Point uses data from the Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), administered as part of the 2016 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES:2016). ATES:2016 collected information from a nationally representative sample of over 47,000 adults ages 16 to 65 who were not enrolled in high school. ATES focuses on nondegree credentials and training, including certifications, licenses, postsecondary certificates, and work experience programs.

A common approach to describing the credentials required for occupations is to cite whether workers hold an educational degree beyond a high school diploma—that is, whether they hold a postsecondary degree.¹ Using a postsecondary degree as a measure of occupational credentialing, 45 percent of labor force participants (adults who are working or looking for work) had this type of credential in 2016 (figure 1). Data from the new ATES:2016 allow for a more expansive analysis of credentials; in addition to measuring degrees, the ATES

identifies adults who have *nondegree* credentials—that is, subbaccalaureate educational certificates (hereafter, “certificates”) and the two work credentials of certifications and licenses (e.g., Cisco Certified Network Associate [CCNA], cosmetology license, medical license).² When these types of credentials are considered in addition to postsecondary degrees, 58 percent of labor force participants had a credential beyond high school completion in 2016.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of adults in the labor force who have different degree and nondegree credentials: 2016



NOTE: As defined in the survey, *adults* are ages 16 to 65 and not enrolled in high school. A *nondegree credential* is a certification, license, or postsecondary certificate. A *postsecondary certificate* is defined in the survey as a certificate obtained from a community or technical college or other school after high school, and that included at least 40 hours of instruction and did not require being enrolled in or having completed a bachelor's or higher degree program. Adults can have more than one credential. Standard errors for estimates can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/A8.asp>. Detail may not sum to total because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES) of the National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016.

To learn more about the data collection used in this report, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/nhes>. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018057>.

As figure 1 shows, 13 percent of labor force participants did not have a postsecondary degree but did have a nondegree credential. An additional 18 percent of labor force participants had both a degree and a nondegree credential, for a total of 31 percent of all labor force participants holding a nondegree credential.

For the 13 percent of labor force participants who do not have a degree, the nondegree credential is their only work credential.

What types of credentials do these nondegreed labor force participants hold?

Among the 13 percent of nondegreed labor force participants, the most common credential, held by about half of these adults (56 percent), was a license (figure 2). The next most common credential was a postsecondary certificate (43 percent). The least common nondegree credential held by these adults was a certification (21 percent).³

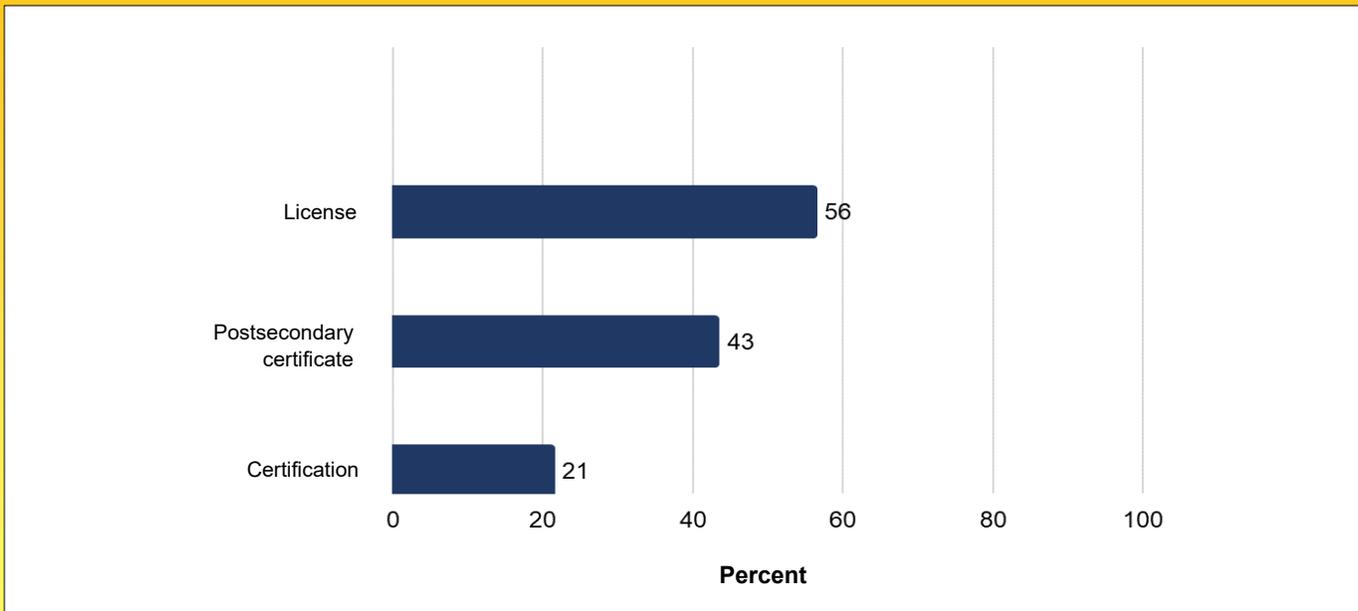
Endnotes

¹ For example, O*NET OnLine (<https://www.onetonline.org/>) allows users to research the educational attainment of people working in a given occupation.

² Certifications and licenses document that the credential holder has the skills and knowledge needed to perform a specific job. As defined in the ATES, licenses are issued by government agencies, while certifications are issued by credentialing bodies, often a professional or trade association.

³ Note that adults may hold any combination of these credentials.

FIGURE 2. Percentage of adults in the labor force without a postsecondary degree and with a nondegree credential who have a license, certification, or postsecondary certificate: 2016



NOTE: As defined in the survey, *adults* are ages 16 to 65 and not enrolled in high school. A *nondegree credential* is a certification, license, or postsecondary certificate. A *postsecondary certificate* is defined in the survey as a certificate obtained from a community or technical college or other school after high school, and that included at least 40 hours of instruction and did not require being enrolled in or having completed a bachelor's or higher degree program. Details do not sum to 100 because adults can have more than one credential. Standard errors for estimates can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/A9.asp>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES) of the National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016.

This National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Stephanie Cronen and Emily Isenberg of the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All stated differences

are statistically significant at the .05 level. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.