

# Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B:16/20)

A First Look at the 2020 Employment and Education  
Experiences of 2015-16 College Graduates—Summary

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# Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B:16/20): A First Look at the 2020 Employment and Education Experiences of 2015–16 College Graduates

First Look–Summary

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# Introduction

This report looks at the education and work outcomes of a national sample of bachelor's degree recipients 4 years after they earned their degrees. The findings are based on data from the 2016/20 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:16/20). B&B:16/20, which took place in 2020, is the second follow-up in a national study of students who completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree during the 2015–16 academic year.<sup>1</sup> The first follow-up took place in 2017 and asked respondents about their bachelor's degree programs and any education and work they had in the first year after earning their degrees.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic, which started a few months before B&B:16/20 began data collection in June 2020, likely impacted the data presented in this report.

Data from B&B can generally be used to address questions about bachelor's degree earners' education, work, family, and household experiences and outcomes. B&B provides data on how bachelor's degree earners used financial aid programs to pay for education, their student loan debt, and how they repay their student loans. B&B data also capture graduates' pursuit of more education and training and employment after they earned their bachelor's degree. In addition, B&B focuses on kindergarten through 12th-grade classroom teachers, asking questions about their experiences and career paths. Starting with the B&B:16 cohort, the focus on teachers includes prekindergarten (preK) teachers.

This First Look reports on a few of the topics that the B&B:16/20 study covers. The report provides information on bachelor's degree earners' student loan debt and repayment, employment and enrollment, financial well-being, and teaching 4 years after they earned their bachelor's degree. This report shows some of the many ways that B&B:16/20 data can be used. Readers should not infer causality from the data in this report. Although many of the factors discussed (“variables”) are related to each other, the relations between them have not been explored. The variables in this report are just a few of the several hundred that will be available in the B&B:16/20 data.

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<sup>1</sup> The criteria for B&B eligibility include the date when a student *completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree program*. In this report, the date of *earning* a bachelor's degree also refers to the date on which the student completed all degree requirements, which may differ from the date of graduation.

<sup>2</sup> For each wave of data collection, the data collection continued into early the following year.

Although this report does not directly address the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on graduates' experiences and outcomes, the B&B:16/20 data presented in this report were collected during the early stage of the pandemic. New items were added to the survey to collect information about the early experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic for 2015–16 bachelor's degree earners' education, work, and household and financial well-being 4 years after graduation. Details about these experiences can be found in the forthcoming *Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B:16/20): A First Look at the 2020 Experiences of 2015–16 College Graduates During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (NCES 2022-251) at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022251>.

For readers interested in appendixes with estimate and standard error tables, definitions of terms used in the findings and tables, and additional information about the study from which the findings are drawn, please see the full report at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022241>.

# Selected Findings

## ***Demographic, enrollment, and employment characteristics (table A-1)***

- Four years after earning their 2015–16 bachelor’s degrees, 74 percent of graduates worked full time, and 7 percent worked part time. Fourteen percent of graduates were out of the labor force, and 4 percent were unemployed.<sup>3</sup>

## ***Postbaccalaureate employment and enrollment (table A-2)***

- The rate at which 2015–16 graduates were enrolled for more education 4 years after earning a bachelor’s degrees was 21 percent among those whose parents had a graduate or professional degree. Enrollment rates ranged from 15 percent to 16 percent among those whose parents had lower levels of education.<sup>4</sup>

## ***Federal student loan debt and repayment (table A-3)***

- Four years after earning their bachelor’s degrees in 2015–16, Black graduates who took out federal student loans owed an average of 105 percent of the original amount borrowed. American Indian or Alaska Native borrowers owed an average of 87 percent, and both Hispanic or Latino borrowers and borrowers of Two or more races owed an average of 84 percent. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander borrowers owed 82 percent, White borrowers owed 73 percent, and Asian borrowers owed 63 percent of the original amount borrowed.

## ***Most recent job hours and pay (table A-4)***

- Among 2015–16 graduates who were working for pay 4 years after earning bachelor’s degrees, 93 percent of those who were veterans worked full time, and those who worked full time earned an average income of \$68,700 yearly. Eighty-five percent of those serving in active duty, Reserves, or National Guard worked full time, and those who worked full time earned \$67,200 on average. Eighty-eight percent of graduates with no military service worked full time, and those who worked full time earned \$59,300 on average.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Out of the labor force* and *unemployed* are defined in appendix C. The period 4 years after respondents earned a bachelor’s degree included the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic for approximately half of the B&B:16/20 sample. For a more detailed look at employment status and other employment-related information in the context of COVID-19, see Thomsen et al. (2022).

<sup>4</sup> Reported enrollment rates include 2015–16 graduates who were “Both enrolled and employed” and those who were “Enrolled only.”

<sup>5</sup> Military service could have preceded postsecondary education enrollment, so there may be an age difference among respondents of different military statuses.

***Characteristics of most recent job (table A-5)***

- Seventy-four percent of 2015–16 bachelor’s degree earners who were working for pay 4 years after earning bachelor’s degrees and who had ever enrolled in a postbaccalaureate degree or certificate program thought of their job 4 years after bachelor’s degree completion as part of a career. Sixty-eight percent of those who had not enrolled in a postbaccalaureate degree or certificate program thought of their job as part of a career.

***Financial well-being (table A-6)***

- Four years after earning bachelor’s degrees in 2015–16, thirty-one percent of graduates owned a home and 74 percent reported having a retirement account. Thirty-four percent reported negative net worth.<sup>6</sup> Eleven percent did not meet essential expenses such as mortgage or rent payments, utility bills, or important medical care for reasons other than the COVID-19 pandemic at some point in the past 12 months preceding the survey.

***Prekindergarten through 12th-grade teaching (table A-7)***

- Among 2015–16 graduates who majored in education, 10 percent had never taught in a regular classroom as of 4 years after they earned their bachelor’s degree. Forty-four percent were new regular classroom teachers since 2017, and 33 percent were continuing regular classroom teachers, meaning they were working as regular classroom teachers both in 2017 and 4 years after graduation. Twelve percent had left regular classroom teaching as of 4 years of earning their degrees.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Respondents are considered to have negative net worth if they would still be in debt after selling all their major possessions, turning all their investments and other assets into cash, and paying off as many debts as they could.

<sup>7</sup> Regular classroom teaching statuses are defined in appendix C.