



A STRONGER NATION

In Mississippi, postsecondary learning builds the talent that helps us rise



A policy brief from Lumina Foundation



Mississippi

The need to increase postsecondary attainment — the number of Americans who hold degrees and other high-quality credentials — has never been clearer. State leaders are responding to the growing global demand for talent by setting goals and enacting policies to increase attainment. Like Lumina Foundation, states have come to understand the scope of the effort required. Much is left to be done, but real progress is being made through the efforts of those who are committed to assuring that millions more Americans benefit from postsecondary education.

Lumina began reporting the attainment rate (associate degree and higher) in 2008. That year, the rate in Mississippi stood at 29.3 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 31.4 percent.

However, the degree attainment rate doesn't tell the whole story. Lumina has always said that other postsecondary credentials — including certificates and certifications — should count toward national and state goals for attainment, with one important caveat. To count, non-degree credentials should be of high quality, which we define as having clear and transparent learning outcomes leading to further education and employment.

This year, for the first time, we have nationally representative data on the number of Americans who hold high-quality postsecondary certificates; we now feel confident we can count these credentials toward attainment goals. In states, we are able to use estimates from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce on the number of residents who hold high-quality certificates as their highest earned credential. In Mississippi, 5 percent of residents between the ages of 25 and 64 hold a high-quality certificate. This brings the state's overall postsecondary attainment rate to 36.4 percent.

As the data in this report make clear, increasing overall attainment is not the only challenge Mississippi faces. There are also significant gaps in attainment that must be closed. While current systems work very well for many students, more postsecondary credentials must be earned by Americans who, by definition, are *post-traditional* learners. Compared with current students, they will be older; more will be African-American, Hispanic and Native American; and they will have lower incomes. Most will be first-generation students. The data in this report show the extent of the attainment gaps in Mississippi by race and ethnicity.

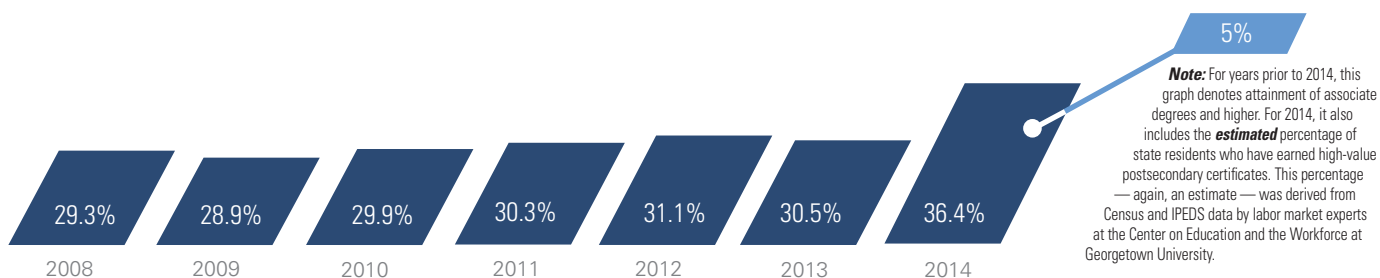
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). Our analysis shows that Mississippi has not set a goal that meets Lumina's criteria; we urge state leaders to do so.

There is much more that states can do to increase attainment. It begins with assuring that all prospective students, including working adults, have access to affordable programs that lead to quality credentials. State policies such as outcomes-based funding can encourage colleges and universities to direct resources to approaches that increase student success. States can also help assure that students get full recognition for *all* of their learning — whether it was obtained in an institution, in the military or on the job — and can apply it to further education and credentials.

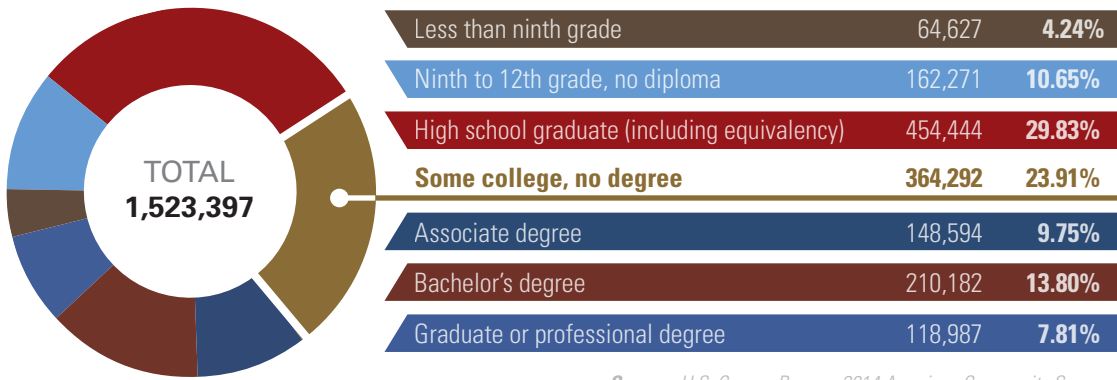
Lumina is working with state leaders from around the nation to expand postsecondary opportunity and success. More information on that work, including our full state policy agenda and additional data, is available on Lumina's Strategy Labs website (<http://strategylabs.luminafoundation.org/>).

Tracking the trend

Percentage of the state's working-age population (25-64) with a quality postsecondary credential



Levels of education for Mississippi residents, ages 25-64

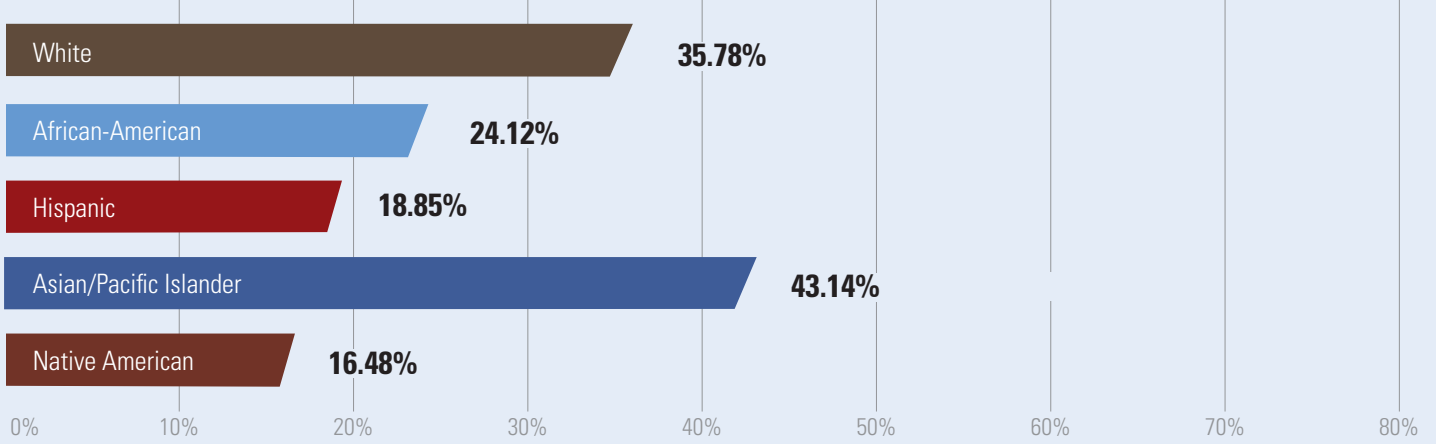


Estimated attainment of certificates: **5%**

Note: The accompanying pie chart does not account for residents who have earned high-value postsecondary certificates. The percentage above – admittedly, an **estimate** – aims to fill that gap. To calculate this percentage, labor market experts at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce used Survey of Income Program Participation 2008 Wave 12 data (2012) and data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2014.

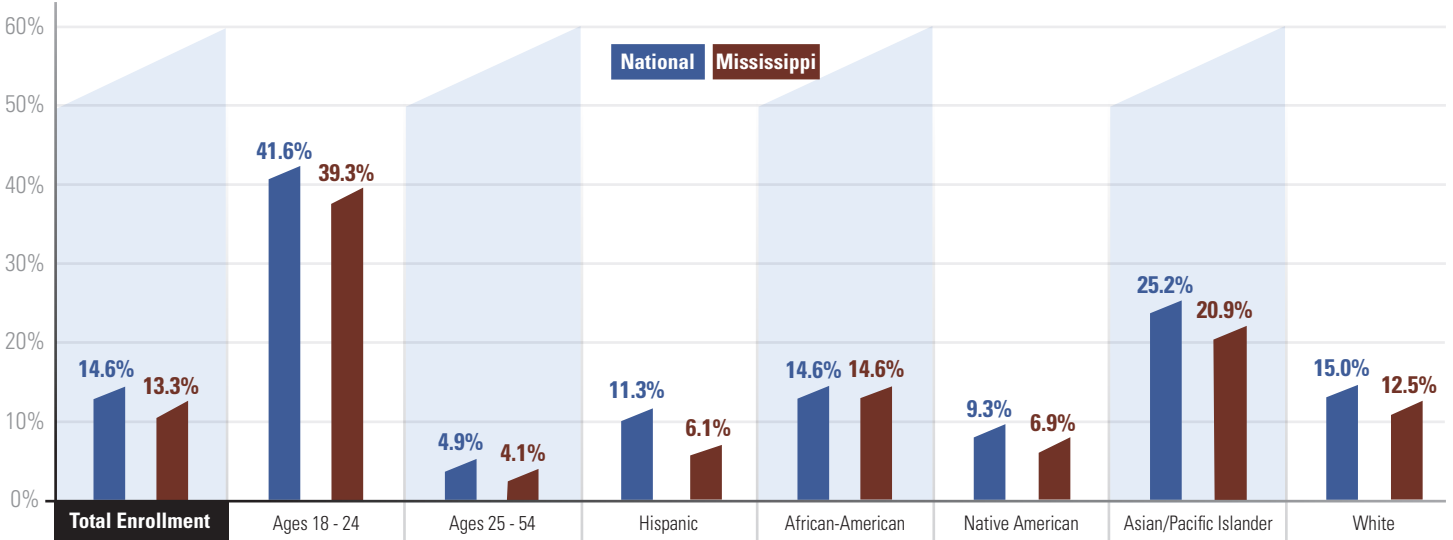
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey

Degree-attainment rates among Mississippi residents (ages 25-64), by population group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, 2013, and 2014 American Community Survey One-Year PUMS Files

College enrollment among Mississippi residents, ages 18-54



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey One-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Note: These percentages reflect the enrollment of non-degree-holding students, ages 18-54, at public and private, two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions

Percentage of Mississippi residents (ages 25-64) with at least an associate degree, by county

Adams	26.30	Copiah	26.61	Itawamba	26.02	Lincoln	30.62	Pike	26.15	Tishomingo	22.84
Alcorn	28.05	Covington	22.38	Jackson	32.94	Lowndes	32.51	Pontotoc	23.36	Tunica	28.88
Amite	19.10	DeSoto	34.33	Jasper	23.01	Madison	55.94	Prentiss	24.15	Union	23.82
Attala	24.65	Forrest	35.45	Jefferson	30.50	Marion	22.80	Quitman	23.16	Walthall	22.70
Benton	16.28	Franklin	21.83	Jefferson Davis	22.23	Marshall	16.39	Rankin	41.56	Warren	36.32
Bolivar	28.82	George	21.11	Jones	28.22	Monroe	25.42	Scott	19.18	Washington	25.88
Calhoun	18.50	Greene	16.03	Kemper	19.94	Montgomery	22.90	Sharkey	28.36	Wayne	17.17
Carroll	20.97	Grenada	24.67	Lafayette	46.33	Neshoba	26.77	Simpson	22.83	Webster	28.83
Chickasaw	15.78	Hancock	30.61	Lamar	46.09	Newton	30.46	Smith	22.48	Wilkinson	20.55
Choctaw	24.40	Harrison	30.92	Lauderdale	31.01	Noxubee	20.96	Stone	23.05	Winston	28.71
Claiborne	27.11	Hinds	36.34	Lawrence	22.64	Oktibbeha	51.98	Sunflower	19.79	Yalobusha	20.84
Clarke	21.94	Holmes	17.81	Leake	21.61	Panola	25.50	Tallahatchie	19.43	Yazoo	18.67
Clay	27.44	Humphreys	16.80	Lee	32.69	Pearl River	26.28	Tate	28.91		
Coahoma	29.25	Issaquena	12.64	Leflore	25.35	Perry	20.40	Tippah	19.36		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-14 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an equitable, accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025.