



# A STRONGER NATION

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

A policy brief from Lumina Foundation





# Montana

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 Montana stood at 37.7 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 39.6 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 Montana, 2 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 41.6 percent.

As the data in this report make clear, increasing overall attainment is not the only challenge Montana 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 Montana by race and ethnicity.

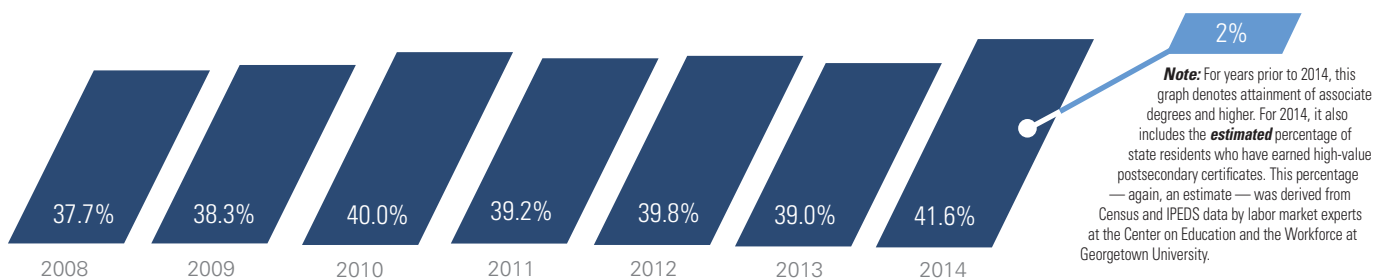
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). Montana is one of those 26 states.

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.

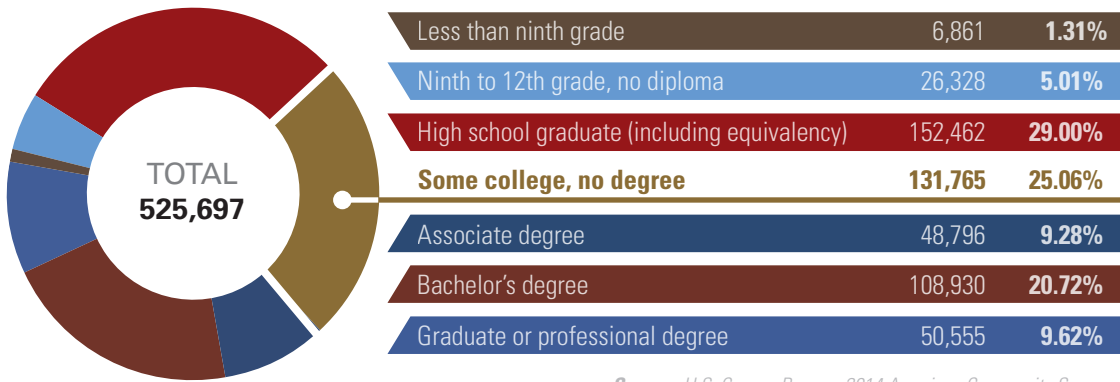
Lumina is working with state leaders from around the nation to expand postsecondary opportunity and success. More information on that work, including our full state policy agenda and additional data, is available on Lumina's Strategy Labs website (<http://strategylabs.luminafoundation.org/>).

## Tracking the trend

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



## Levels of education for Montana residents, ages 25-64

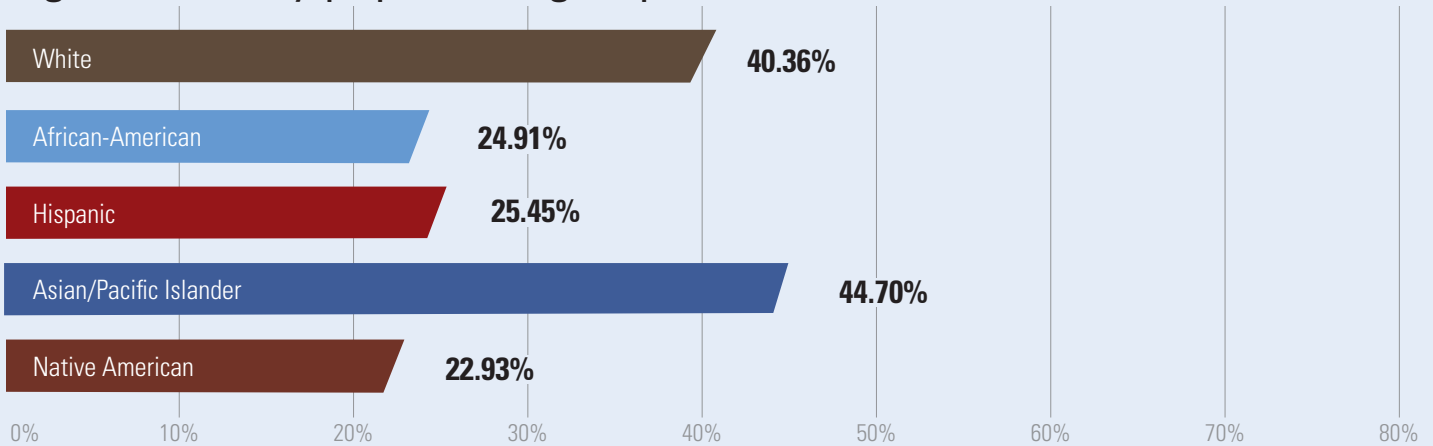


Estimated attainment of certificates: **2%**

**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.

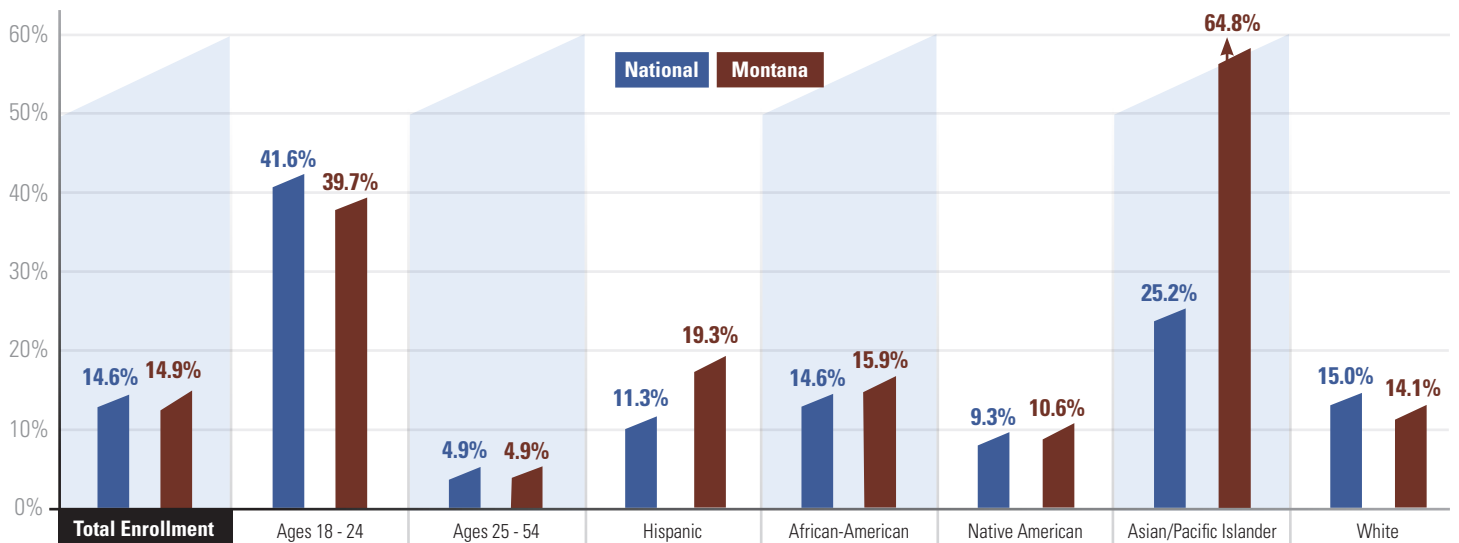
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey

## Degree-attainment rates among Montana 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 Montana 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 Montana residents (ages 25-64) with at least an associate degree, by county

Beaverhead	38.95	Dawson	39.17	Hill	40.21	Mineral	20.22	Ravalli	32.40	Toole	19.49
Big Horn	27.18	Deer Lodge	31.20	Jefferson	44.62	Missoula	50.11	Richland	29.57	Treasure	22.19
Blaine	26.37	Fallon	34.24	Judith Basin	43.91	Musselshell	21.64	Roosevelt	23.15	Valley	31.64
Broadwater	32.58	Fergus	40.38	Lake	33.35	Park	42.23	Rosebud	35.27	Wheatland	23.36
Carbon	37.78	Flathead	36.39	Lewis and Clark	48.54	Petroleum	39.10	Sanders	23.28	Wibaux	35.21
Carter	27.24	Gallatin	54.00	Liberty	35.99	Phillips	34.21	Sheridan	35.17	Yellowstone	38.01
Cascade	38.07	Garfield	26.01	Lincoln	32.00	Pondera	35.27	Silver Bow	34.75		
Chouteau	36.60	Glacier	29.14	McCone	27.47	Powder River	35.93	Stillwater	31.49		
Custer	37.91	Golden Valley	32.05	Madison	37.87	Powell	27.85	Sweet Grass	39.74		
Daniels	43.57	Granite	39.12	Meagher	27.69	Prairie	33.28	Teton	35.31		

*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.