



A STRONGER NATION

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

A policy brief from Lumina Foundation



Nebraska

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 Nebraska stood at 40.5 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 47 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 Nebraska, 3 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 47 percent.

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

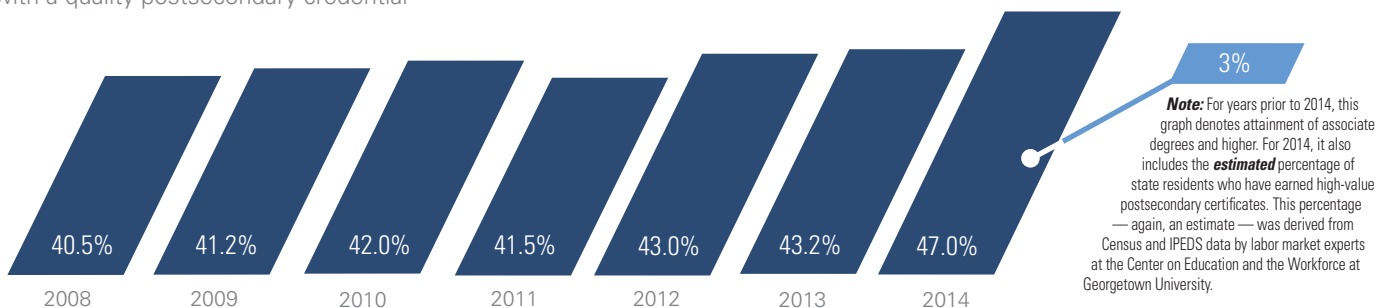
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). Our analysis shows that Nebraska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

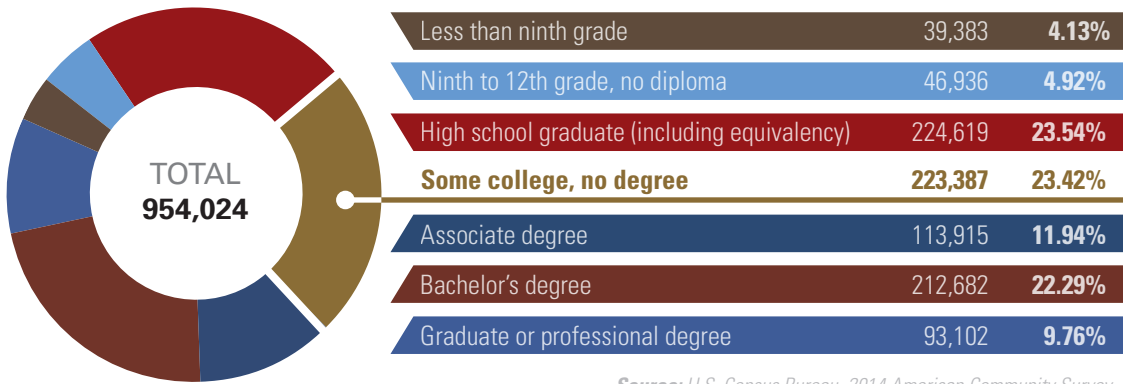
Lumina is working with state leaders from around the nation to expand postsecondary opportunity and success. More information on that work, including our full state policy agenda and additional data, is available on Lumina's Strategy Labs website (<http://strategylabs.luminafoundation.org/>).

Tracking the trend

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



Levels of education for Nebraska residents, ages 25-64

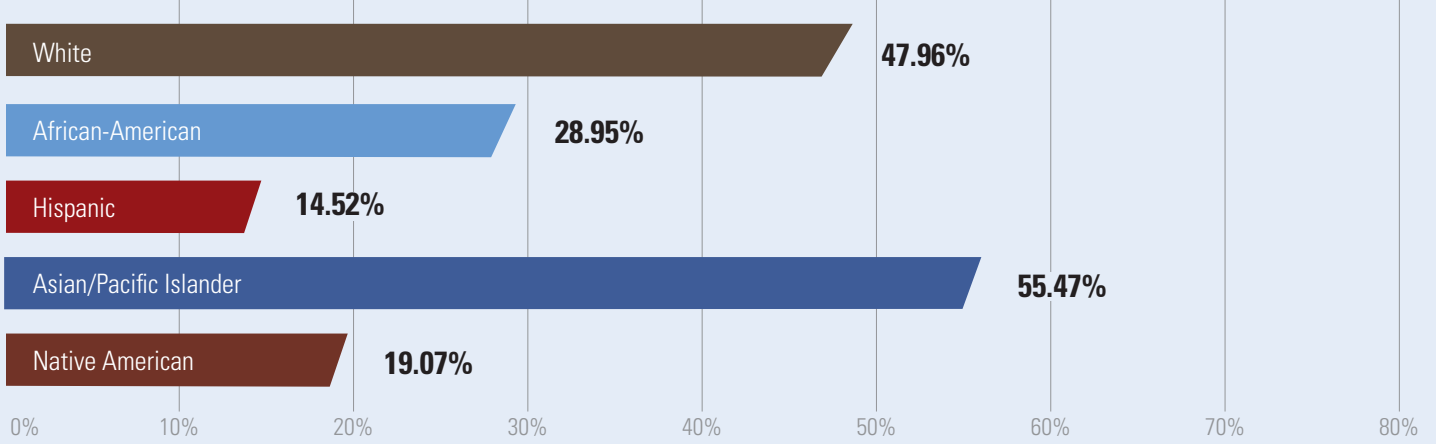


Estimated attainment of certificates: **3%**

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.

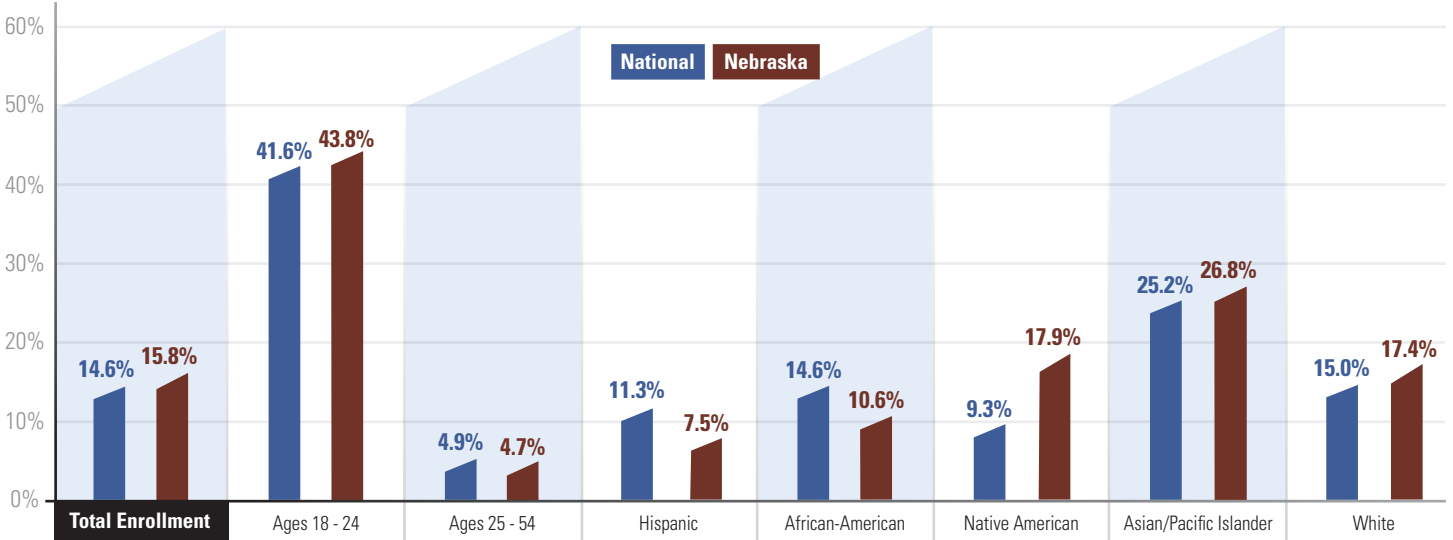
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey

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

Adams	37.06	Cheyenne	38.59	Furnas	39.20	Johnson	25.71	Nuckolls	36.18	Sheridan	38.71
Antelope	37.89	Clay	36.51	Gage	37.56	Kearney	40.38	Otoe	38.95	Sherman	29.43
Arthur	51.11	Colfax	24.20	Garden	35.92	Keith	41.49	Pawnee	30.39	Sioux	38.57
Banner	31.18	Cuming	37.88	Garfield	24.06	Keya Paha	28.22	Perkins	33.33	Stanton	39.81
Blaine	34.19	Custer	36.77	Gosper	32.82	Kimball	25.97	Phelps	39.40	Thayer	37.24
Boone	34.06	Dakota	19.36	Grant	39.40	Knox	37.00	Pierce	40.60	Thomas	38.80
Box Butte	30.96	Dawes	50.56	Greeley	32.32	Lancaster	50.48	Platte	36.74	Thurston	29.72
Boyd	33.37	Dawson	25.71	Hall	30.11	Lincoln	33.98	Polk	38.46	Valley	34.81
Brown	34.77	Deuel	31.14	Hamilton	40.50	Logan	40.23	Red Willow	40.13	Washington	45.03
Buffalo	46.02	Dixon	30.55	Harlan	32.00	Loup	31.58	Richardson	33.96	Wayne	51.66
Burt	39.28	Dodge	31.25	Hayes	34.85	McPherson	43.83	Rock	35.44	Webster	35.41
Butler	31.06	Douglas	46.70	Hitchcock	36.91	Madison	41.28	Saline	28.86	Wheeler	32.34
Cass	39.70	Dundy	36.17	Holt	41.65	Merrick	30.74	Sarpy	49.49	York	39.91
Cedar	37.87	Fillmore	41.19	Hooker	43.55	Morrill	33.22	Saunders	43.02		
Chase	38.14	Franklin	32.75	Howard	30.27	Nance	28.79	Scotts Bluff	35.49		
Cherry	37.31	Frontier	38.00	Jefferson	29.52	Nemaha	42.19	Seward	46.95		

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.