



A STRONGER NATION

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

A policy brief from Lumina Foundation



Pennsylvania

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 Pennsylvania stood at 37.9 percent. In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate reached 40.8 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 Pennsylvania, 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 43.8 percent.

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

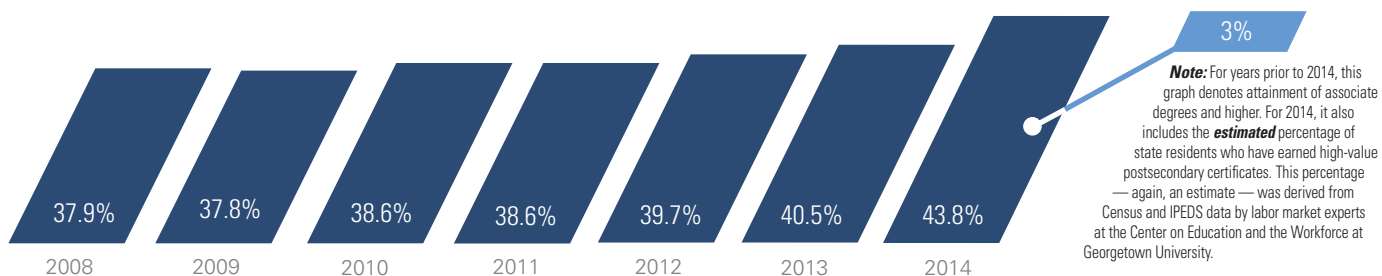
To date, 26 states have responded to the need to increase attainment by setting state attainment goals that meet Lumina's criteria for rigor and efficacy (i.e., the goal is quantifiable, challenging, long term, addresses gaps, and is in statute and/or a strategic plan). Our analysis shows that Pennsylvania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

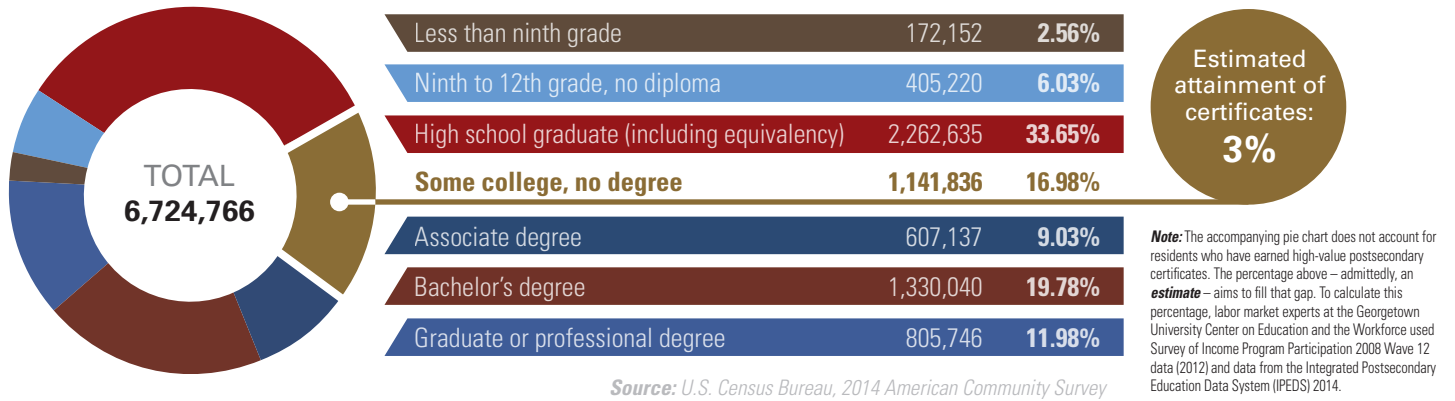
Lumina is working with state leaders from around the nation to expand postsecondary opportunity and success. More information on that work, including our full state policy agenda and additional data, is available on Lumina's Strategy Labs website (<http://strategylabs.luminafoundation.org/>).

Tracking the trend

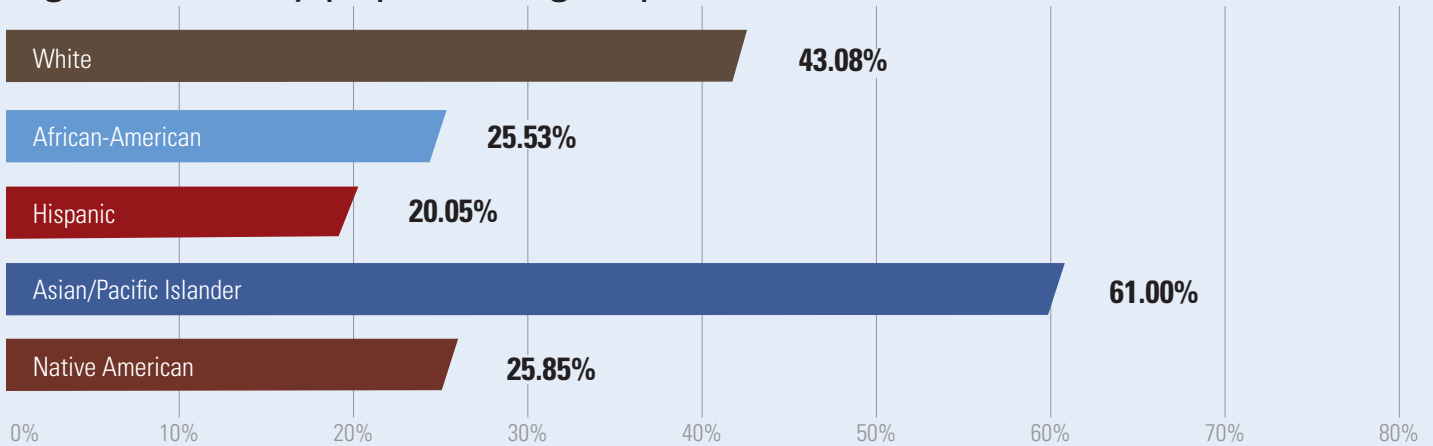
Percentage of the state's working-age population (25-64) with a quality postsecondary credential



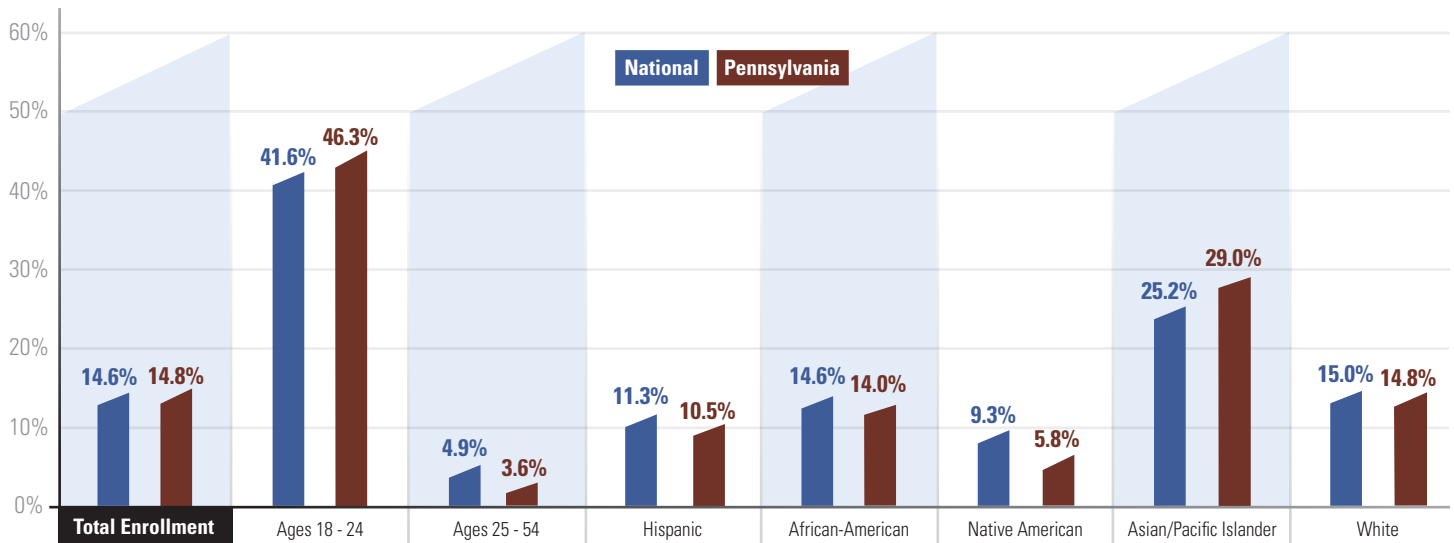
Levels of education for Pennsylvania residents, ages 25-64



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



College enrollment among Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania residents (ages 25-64) with at least an associate degree, by county

Adams	31.10	Carbon	29.08	Erie	37.06	Lawrence	32.79	Northumberland	25.84	Venango	28.68
Allegheny	52.13	Centre	52.05	Fayette	25.72	Lebanon	29.84	Perry	27.97	Warren	31.07
Armstrong	27.76	Chester	58.42	Forest	13.67	Lehigh	40.87	Philadelphia	32.31	Washington	41.72
Beaver	39.41	Clarion	31.46	Franklin	28.93	Luzerne	34.55	Pike	32.15	Wayne	28.61
Bedford	23.30	Clearfield	26.16	Fulton	20.88	Lycoming	33.53	Potter	25.41	Westmoreland	41.63
Berks	33.47	Clinton	29.27	Greene	26.63	McKean	26.98	Schuylkill	27.78	Wyoming	28.79
Blair	30.76	Columbia	32.89	Huntingdon	23.35	Mercer	33.06	Snyder	27.81	York	34.06
Bradford	27.84	Crawford	29.91	Indiana	35.60	Mifflin	21.32	Somerset	26.08		
Bucks	48.08	Cumberland	44.44	Jefferson	27.45	Monroe	34.20	Sullivan	26.45		
Butler	46.53	Dauphin	39.74	Juniata	21.88	Montgomery	57.54	Susquehanna	26.89		
Cambria	33.15	Delaware	46.41	Lackawanna	39.83	Montour	38.49	Tioga	31.13		
Cameron	25.99	Elk	30.28	Lancaster	33.55	Northampton	39.70	Union	29.91		

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.