

July 2020

STRONGER NATION OVERVIEW

- 1. The nation's educational attainment rate after high school is 51.3%.** Specifically, this means that 51.3 percent of working-age adults—those 25 to 64 years old—have earned a degree or other credential beyond a high school diploma that leads to further education and employment.
- 2. The nation's educational attainment rate** is the sum of two numbers: The degree-attainment rate (43.2 percentage points) and the rate of attainment for high-value, short-term credentials (8.1 percentage points).
- 3. Short-term credentials** include industry-recognized certifications (3.8 percentage points) and college certificates (4.3 percentage points).
- 4. Industry-recognized certifications have been added to Lumina's *A Stronger Nation* summary.** Certifications are industry-recognized credentials that are typically awarded based on assessments of knowledge and skill. Their addition to the overall attainment total recognizes their quality, the learning they represent, and their significant value in the labor market.
- 5. Certification programs are important means of meeting the nation's workforce needs.** Certifications are part of an expanding set of post-high school credentials that serve as on-ramps to opportunity. For many people, including working adults, certifications can be an excellent first step to better jobs and better lives.
- 6. States with the highest rates of adults 25 to 64 with certifications are:** Alaska (6.5 percent), Maine (6.1 percent), Wyoming (6 percent), Montana (5.7 percent), Indiana (5.6 percent), and West Virginia (5.3 percent).
- 7. States with the highest rates among adults 25 to 64 of short-term credential attainment (certifications and certificates combined) are:** Louisiana (15.2 percent), Arizona (15 percent), Kentucky (13.3 percent), New Mexico (12.3 percent), Oklahoma (11.4 percent), Washington (11.3 percent).
- 8. Nationally, educational attainment after high school is steadily increasing.** The proportion of working-age Americans with quality post-high school credentials has grown each year since Lumina began tracking progress in 2008. In 2008, degree attainment was 37.9 percent. Adding certifications to the mix this year for the first time puts the nation's overall attainment rate above 50 percent for adults 25 to 64 years old. College certificates were added to *A Stronger Nation* in 2016. Overall attainment increases are a result of growth and better measurement.

9. States' educational attainment rates after high school are increasing. With the addition of certifications, 31 states and the District of Columbia now have attainment rates for adults 25 to 64 above 50 percent, and all states are above 40 percent. In 2008, no state had a degree-attainment rate of 50% or greater, and 32 states had degree-attainment rates of under 40%.

- The states with the highest educational attainment rates for adults 25 to 64 are: (District of Columbia, 69.3 percent); Massachusetts, 61.1%; Colorado, 59.8 percent; Washington, 59.4 percent; and Minnesota, 58.6 percent.
- States with the lowest attainment rates are: Nevada, 41.3 percent; West Virginia, 42 percent; Arkansas, 43.6 percent; and Alabama, 44 percent.

10. Educational attainment among adults 25 to 64 is increasing across all races and ethnicities, but large disparities persist.

When we look at people with associate degrees and higher, attainment sits at 43.2 percent overall. However degree attainment is just 31.6 percent among Black adults, 24.6 percent among Native Americans, and 24.5 percent among Hispanics. Certification attainment is more evenly spread across races and ethnicities, but disparities are still quite noticeable, with attainment rates at 4.52 percent for

Native Americans, 3.71 percent for African Americans, 2.99 percent for Hispanics, and 4.27% for whites.

11. To reach a 60 percent educational attainment rate by 2025 and thus meet the nation's talent needs, the nation must ensure more adults can earn credentials after high school. At the current

attainment rate of 51.3 percent, almost 15 million more working-age adults must earn credentials of value by 2025 if the nation is to reach 60 percent. While the nation is clearly making progress, we should not lose sight of the fact that 48.7 percent of the U.S. population still lacks a quality credential beyond a high school diploma. (Sixteen percent who have some college experience, but left without a credential; 22 percent have a high school diploma or the equivalent, and 10 percent lack even that basic level of education.)

12. The national 60 percent goal can be reached by 2025. The attainment rate and the rate at which credentials are awarded are both accelerating. If the awarding of college degrees continues to increase at the same rate as in the past several years, we will reach 56 percent attainment by 2025. To reach 60 percent, we will need to refocus our efforts nationally. Specifically, we must help at least 7 million more of today's students—those whom higher learning has not served well, especially students of color and adults—enroll in and finish programs that lead to credentials of value.