



Jobs Recovery Deepens Economic and Political Divide between College Haves and Have-Nots

For the first time, four-year college graduates make up a larger share of the workforce than workers with a high school diploma or less

(Washington, D.C., June 30, 2016) Out of the 11.6 million jobs created in the post-recession economy, 11.5 million went to workers with at least some college education, according to newly-published research from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown Center). Of these jobs, 8.4 million went to workers with a bachelor's degree or higher. *America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots* reveals that employment of workers with a high school diploma or less only grew by 80,000 jobs in the recovery.

“The modern economy continues to leave Americans without a college education behind,” said Anthony P. Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center and lead author of the report. “For decades, we’ve witnessed this growing split that parallels the divide in the current electorate.”

Jobs are back, but they are not the same jobs that were lost. The Great Recession decimated blue-collar and clerical jobs, whereas the recovery added primarily managerial and professional jobs. The recession and recovery have hastened a long-term change in the composition of the American workforce. In 2016, for the first time, workers with a bachelor's degree or higher are a larger proportion of the workforce (36 percent) than those with a high school diploma or less (34 percent). Workers with more than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree, who are typically employed in middle-skill occupations, comprise the remaining 30 percent of the workforce.

Occupational and industry shifts have been major drivers of change in the labor market. Production industries, such as manufacturing, construction and natural resources, shifted from employing nearly half of the workforce in 1947 to only 19 percent in 2016. On the other hand, industries that employ managerial and professional workers such as healthcare, business, financial, education and government services accounted for 28 percent of the workforce in 1947 and have grown to encompass 46 percent of the workforce today.

The largest occupational group in the American economy, routine office and administrative support jobs, lost 1.4 million jobs during the recession and recovery, primarily because of automation and the rise in digital information storage. These occupations were a primary source of jobs for workers with a high school diploma or less, in many cases, so the decline of these jobs has hit less-educated workers particularly hard.

Other key report findings include the following.

- In the recovery, graduate degree holders gained 3.8 million jobs, bachelor's degree holders gained 4.6 million jobs, and Associate's degree holders (and those with some college education) gained over 3 million jobs, compared to workers with a high school diploma or less, who added only 80,000 jobs.
- About 5.8 million high-skill jobs in the recovery are going to workers with a B.A. or higher, whereas low-skill jobs are the only area of growth for workers with a high school diploma or less.
- Workers with at least some postsecondary education now make up 65 percent of the total employment. B.A. holders now earn 57 percent of all wages.
- Among industries, consulting and business services added the largest number of jobs in the recovery (2.5 million), while manufacturing added the second most (1.7 million). Manufacturing, however, still has 1 million fewer jobs than it did before the recession began. Construction added 834,000 jobs during recovery, but is still 1.6 million jobs short of its pre-recession employment — the largest gap among all industries.



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- Management added the largest number of jobs of any occupation since the recession began (1.6 million), while healthcare professional and technical occupations added the second most jobs (1.5 million).

“While it’s reassuring to see the economy back on track, we can’t ignore this tale of two countries with vastly different economic realities for those with and without a college education,” said Tamara Jayasundera, senior economist at the Georgetown Center and co-author of the report. “Fewer pathways to the middle class for those with less education will continue to reshape the labor market and American culture as we know it.”

Access the full report, *America’s Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots* at cew.georgetown.edu/dividedrecovery.

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