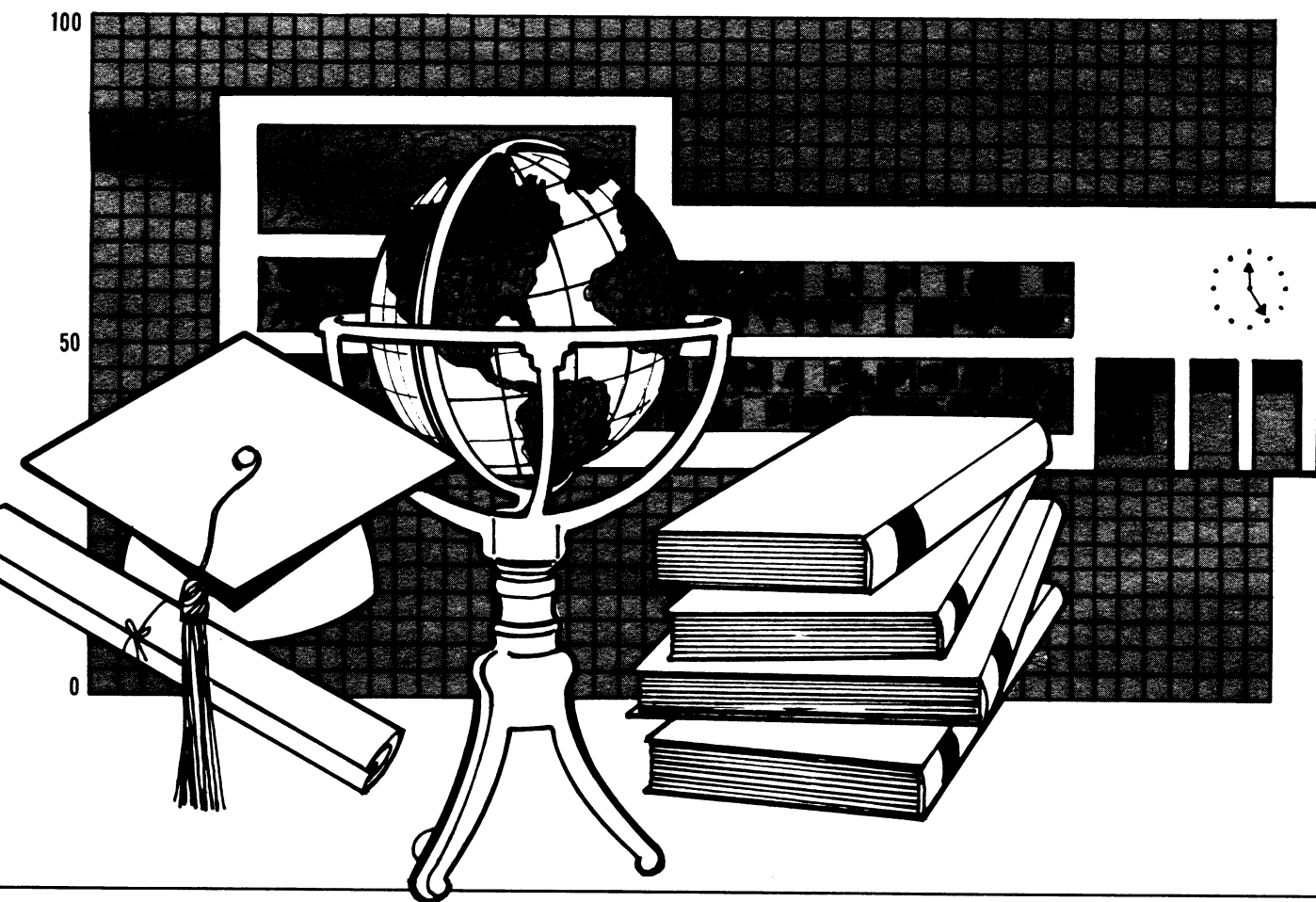


Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1979 and 1978



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United States:
March 1979 and 1978**



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SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.
 - B Base less than 75,000.
 - X Not applicable.
 - NA Not available.
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Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1979 and 1978

INTRODUCTION

This report contains data based on the results of the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Bureau of the Census in March 1979 and 1978. The detailed statistical tables present data on years of school completed by persons 14 years old and over by such characteristics as age, sex, race, Spanish origin, type of residence, region of residence, and occupation.

In March 1979, 68 percent of persons 25 years old and over were high school graduates, a significantly larger proportion than the 55 percent recorded in 1970. During the 1970's, the proportions of persons completing at least 1 year of college and graduating also rose. By 1979, 31 percent of adults had completed at least 1 year of college, and about 16 percent were college graduates, both proportions grew by nearly one-half during the decade. This increase was largely because of the higher attainment levels of the young adults

who had recently completed their education and the attrition of older persons who completed less years of school. In comparing persons 25 to 29 years old and persons 65 years old and over, large differences in attainment levels are apparent. Eighty-six percent of the younger group completed high school as compared with only 40 percent of the older group. Of persons 25 to 29, close to one-fourth completed 4 or more years of college—nearly three times the proportion of persons 65 and over who completed college.

Table A shows that the proportions of persons who completed at least 1 year of college and 4 or more years of college were greater for men than for women in 1979. This differential between men and women has not been narrowing, and in fact, among all persons 25 years old and over, the gap appears to have widened. In examining the level of educational achievement among young adults 25 to 29 years old, it appears that changes for men and women, although substantial at every level, were not very significant.

Table A. Percent of Persons 25 Years Old and Over Who Completed Selected Levels of Education, by Sex and Race: March 1979 and 1970

Age, race, and sex	Completed 4 years of high school or more			Completed 1 year of college or more			Completed 4 years of college or more		
	1979	1970	Change, 1970-79	1979	1970	Change, 1970-79	1979	1970	Change, 1970-79
25 YEARS AND OVER									
All races.....	67.7	55.2	12.5	31.1	21.2	9.9	16.4	11.0	5.4
Male.....	68.4	55.0	13.4	35.8	24.9	10.9	20.4	14.1	6.3
Female.....	67.1	55.4	11.7	26.9	18.0	8.9	12.9	8.2	4.7
White.....	69.7	57.4	12.3	32.2	22.3	9.9	17.2	11.6	5.6
Male.....	70.3	57.2	13.1	37.2	26.2	11.0	21.4	15.0	6.4
Female.....	69.2	57.6	11.6	27.6	18.6	9.0	13.3	8.6	4.7
Black.....	49.4	33.7	15.7	19.4	10.3	9.1	7.9	4.5	3.4
Male.....	49.2	32.4	16.8	19.7	10.2	9.5	8.3	4.6	3.7
Female.....	49.5	34.8	14.7	19.1	10.4	8.7	7.5	4.4	3.1
25 TO 29 YEARS									
All races.....	85.6	75.4	10.2	46.3	31.3	15.0	23.1	16.4	6.7
Male.....	86.3	76.6	9.7	49.8	36.2	13.6	25.8	20.0	5.8
Female.....	84.9	74.2	10.7	42.9	26.6	16.3	20.5	12.9	7.6
White.....	87.0	77.8	9.2	48.0	32.8	15.2	24.3	17.3	7.0
Male.....	87.7	79.2	8.5	51.7	38.3	13.4	27.1	21.3	5.8
Female.....	86.4	76.4	10.0	44.3	27.4	16.9	21.5	13.3	8.2
Black.....	74.8	56.2	18.6	31.4	17.1	14.3	12.4	7.3	5.1
Male.....	73.9	54.5	19.4	30.4	15.7	14.7	13.3	6.7	6.6
Female.....	75.4	57.9	17.5	32.2	18.8	13.4	11.7	8.0	3.7

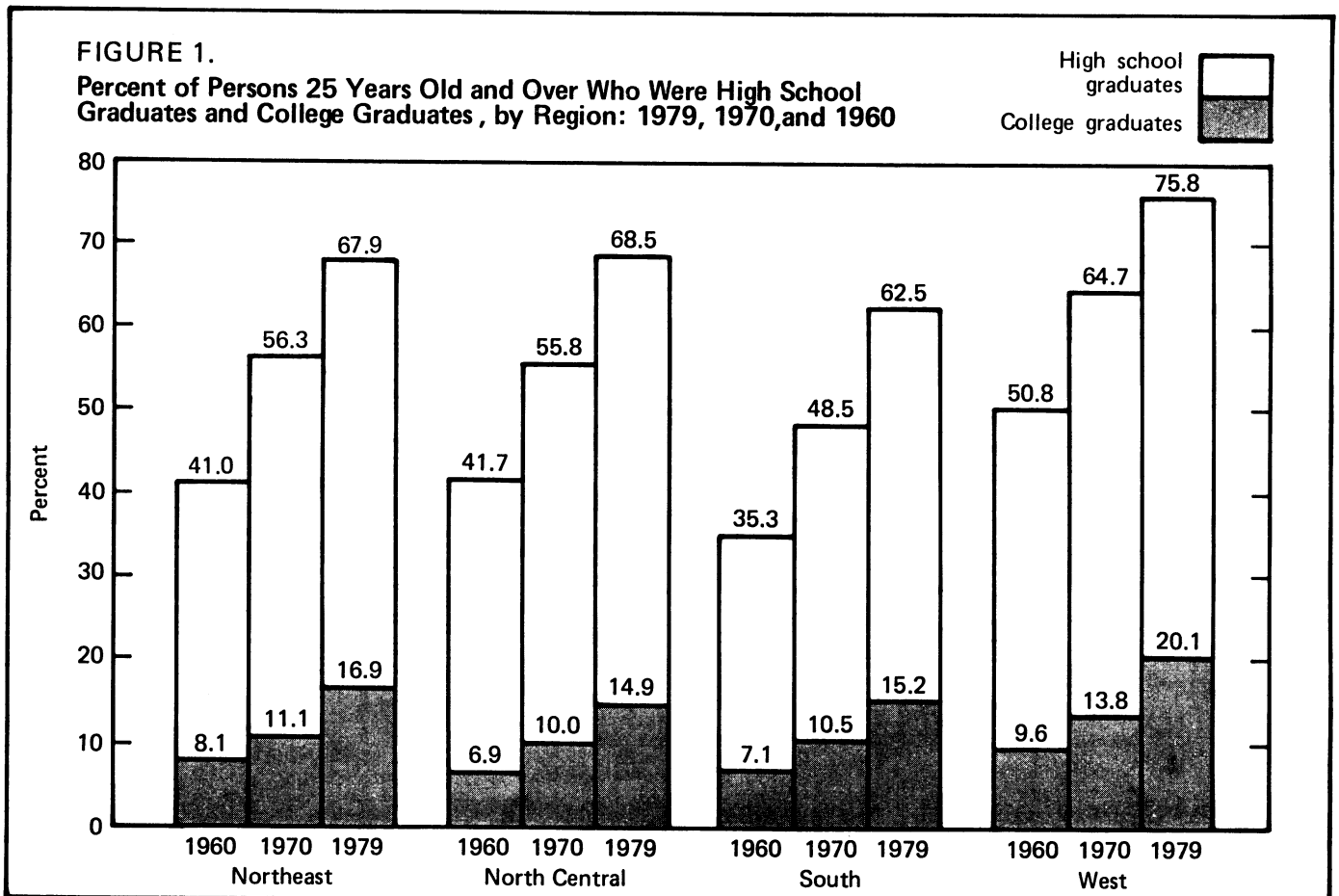
The proportion of persons who were high school graduates increased more for Blacks than for Whites, although White youths were still more likely than Black youths to be high school graduates as of 1979. The dramatic increase in graduation rates among young Blacks caused the rate for all Black persons 25 years old and over to rise from about one-third in 1970 to about one-half in 1979. The difference between high school graduation rates of young Blacks and Whites decreased dramatically; among persons 25 to 29 years old, the gap narrowed from 22 to 12 percentage points during the 1970's. In 1979, about 87 percent of Whites 25 to 29 years old and 75 percent of Blacks of the same age were high school graduates; in 1970, the comparable figures were 78 percent and 56 percent, respectively. In addition, the difference between young and old Black adults shows the advances in educational attainment in the last 40 years. Less than one-fifth of Black persons 65 years old and over were high school graduates in 1979, compared with three-fourths of persons 25 to 29 years old.

College graduation continued to be more common for Whites than Blacks. In March 1979, 17 percent of White adults 25 years old and over had completed 4 or more years of college, compared with 8 percent of Black adults. Among young adults 25 to 29 years old, 24 percent of Whites and 12 percent of Blacks had completed college. There have been significant gains in the proportions who completed at least 1 year of college and 4 or more years of college for both young Blacks and Whites, but the percentage points changes for both groups were not very different.

RESIDENCE AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Survey results show that among persons 25 years old and over, those residing in metropolitan areas were more likely to be either high school graduates or college graduates in 1979 than those living in nonmetropolitan areas. Of the total population 25 years old and over living in metropolitan areas, 71 percent had completed at least 4 years of high school and 18 percent had completed 4 or more years of college, whereas in nonmetropolitan areas, 62 percent had at least completed high school and 13 percent had completed 4 or more years of college. Table B indicates that in March 1979, persons 25 years old and over residing in metropolitan areas outside central cities (e.g., in the suburbs) were more likely to be high school or college graduates than persons residing in any other area; roughly 74 percent of the persons 25 years old and over were high school graduates and 20 percent were college graduates. In contrast, the nonmetropolitan farm population had 61 percent high school graduates and only 9 percent college graduates. These large differences reflect in part the older age structure of the adult farm population (table 6).

Table B shows that from 1970 to 1979, the proportion of high school graduates and the proportion of college graduates 25 years old and over increased in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The proportion of persons 25 years old and over who were high school graduates increased by about 15 percentage points in both metropolitan and



nonmetropolitan areas, resulting in a national average in 1979 of about 68 percent. The increase that occurred from 1970 to 1979 in the proportion who were college graduates was also similar for each residential area—about 5 percent of those in nonmetropolitan areas and 6 percent of those in metropolitan areas.

Attainment levels also differ by region (figure 1). In March 1979, persons 25 years old and over living in the South were less likely to be high school graduates than persons in the Northeast, North Central, and West Regions. Even though the South had proportionally fewer high school graduates compared with the other regions, the South did experience a greater increase from 1970 to 1979 than the national average (table C). The South differed less from the other regions in the proportion of adults who were college graduates than the proportion of adults who were high school graduates. The proportion of adults in the South who completed college was not significantly different from the proportion in the North Central Region, but was substantially below that in the Northeast and West.

The West consistently has had the largest proportion of adults who were either high school or college graduates. In 1979, 76 percent of adults in the West were high school graduates; in 1960, the figure was 51 percent. In both years,

the figure was at least 8 percentage points greater than that for the rest of the country. In 1979, about 20 percent of adults in the West had completed college, compared with 17 percent or less in the other regions.

OCCUPATION AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational level of the American worker has increased substantially throughout the years. More than three-fourths of all workers were high school graduates in 1979, compared with less than one-half in 1960. This higher educational level indicates that the school achievement of the population may be increasing more rapidly than the qualifications once regarded as necessary for some jobs. Certainly, employers now have the option to hire "better educated" workers for jobs that have traditionally been filled by persons with a relatively small amount of education.

During the period from 1960 to 1979, the proportion of employed persons 25 to 64 years old who had completed 4 years of high school or more increased by 33 percentage points for men and 29 points for women (table D). These educational advances may indicate that entrance require-

Table B. Percent of Persons 25 Years Old and Over Who Completed High School or College, by Metropolitan Residence: March 1979 and 1975, and April 1970

Metropolitan residence	Completed 4 years of high school or more				Completed 4 years of college or more			
	1979	1975	1970	Change, 1970-79	1979	1975	1970	Change, 1970-79
Total, 25 years old and over.	67.7	62.5	52.3	15.4	16.4	13.9	10.6	5.8
In metropolitan areas.....	70.7	66.2	55.3	15.4	18.3	15.7	12.0	6.3
In central cities.....	65.6	61.0	50.8	14.8	16.6	14.3	10.9	5.7
Outside central cities.....	74.4	70.2	59.2	15.2	19.5	16.9	13.0	6.5
In nonmetropolitan areas.....	61.6	54.7	45.9	15.7	12.5	9.9	7.7	4.8
Nonfarm.....	61.7	55.3	46.4	15.3	12.9	10.4	8.1	4.8
Farm.....	60.6	50.4	41.8	18.8	8.8	6.6	4.1	4.7

Note: Metropolitan areas are those identified in the 1970 Census of Population.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 295; and Census of Population: 1970, Vol. I, Characteristics of the Population.

Table C. Percent of Persons 25 Years Old and Over Who Completed High School or College, by Region and Age: March 1979, 1975, and 1970, and April 1960

Region	Completed 4 years of high school or more				Completed 4 years of college or more			
	1979	1975	1970	1960	1979	1975	1970	1960
Total, 25 years old and over.	67.7	62.5	55.2	41.1	16.4	13.9	11.0	7.7
Northeast.....	67.9	62.8	56.3	41.0	16.9	14.7	11.1	8.1
North Central.....	68.5	63.9	55.8	41.7	14.9	12.9	10.0	6.9
South.....	62.5	56.0	48.5	35.3	15.2	12.6	10.5	7.1
West.....	75.8	71.6	64.7	50.8	20.1	16.5	13.8	9.6

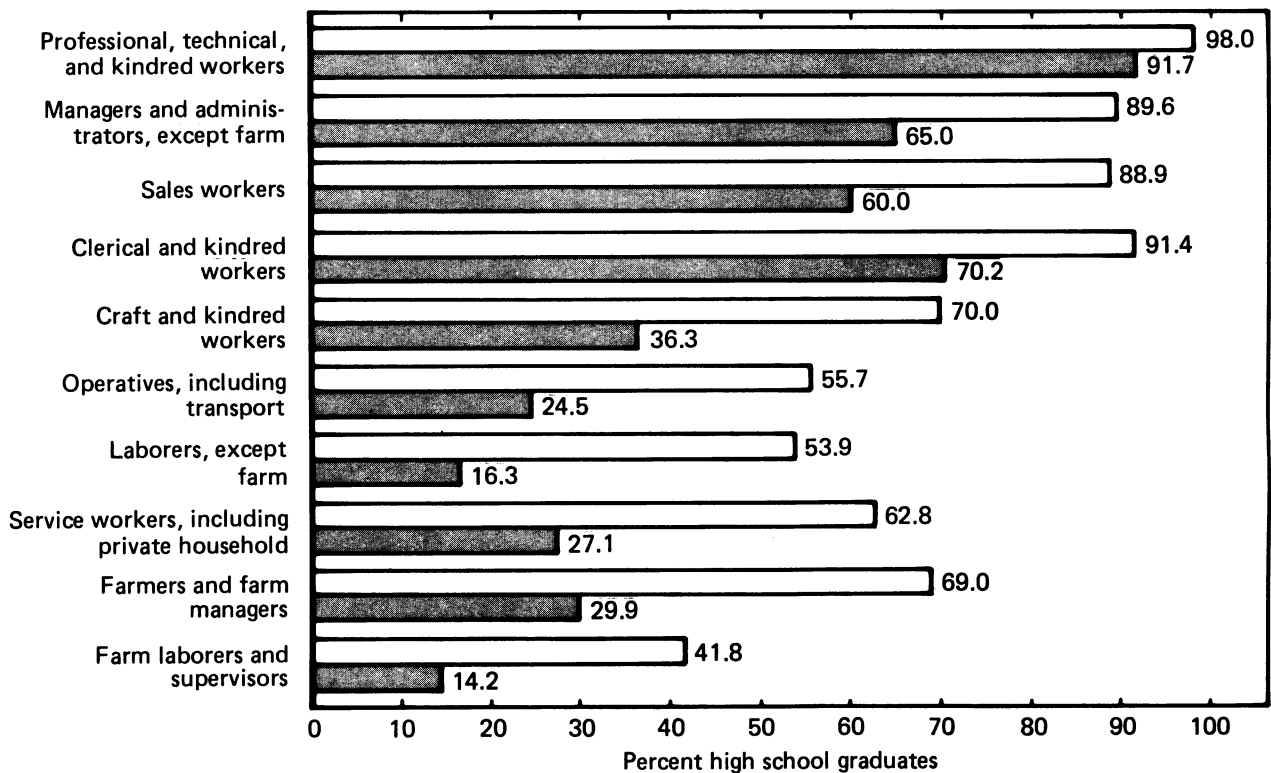
Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 295 and 207; and Census of Population: 1960, Vol. I, Characteristics of the Population.

ments for some jobs may be tightened by employers because: (1) a better trained labor force is available now that a much larger proportion of young adults are completing high school, and (2) there is increased technical complexity of those jobs. Young workers with high school diplomas were replacing retiring workers with fewer years of schooling. As table 5 indicates, a substantially larger proportion of workers 25 to 44 years old than of those 45 to 64 years old have completed at least 4 years of high school.

The educational level for persons in some occupational groups was greater than that for persons in others (figure 2).

percent) as older workers were replaced by younger workers with at least high school diplomas. Gains for persons employed as craft workers, operatives, and service workers were similar in both decades, as less well-educated workers continued to be replaced by young high school graduates. With more youths graduating from high school and a relative scarcity of white-collar jobs available, coupled with the fact that some blue-collar jobs pay more than white-collar jobs, an increased proportion of blue-collar workers were high school graduates. The proportion of male laborers who were high school graduates increased dramatically since 1960. In

FIGURE 2.
Percent of Employed Persons 25 to 64 Years Old Who Were High School Graduates, by Occupation: March 1979 and April 1960



The greatest increases in the proportion of men who were high school graduates occurred among those employed in the craft, operative, labor, service, and farm occupations. The large gains made by these groups reflect in part the fact that only a small proportion of these employees at the beginning of the period were high school graduates. Less than 40 percent of the men in these occupations in 1960 were high school graduates, compared with over 60 percent of clerical, sales, and management workers and 90 percent of professional workers. In some occupation groups, the changes in the proportion who were high school graduates were greater in the 1960's than in the 1970's; for other occupations, the reverse was true. Men and women employed in the professional, managerial, and clerical occupations achieved more advances during the 1960's than the 1970's. By 1970, nearly all employees in these white-collar occupation groups were high school graduates (approaching 100

1979, 53 percent of male laborers were high school graduates, compared with only 16 percent in 1960.

The percentage of employed persons 25 to 64 years old who completed 4 years of college or more also increased between 1960 and 1979 (table D). The most significant educational attainment increases since 1960 have been for persons in occupations in which a college background is seemingly most beneficial to their careers: the professional, managerial, and administrative fields for both sexes as well as the sales field for men. It is also noteworthy that some increase in the percentage of persons completing 4 years of college or more occurred in other occupational groups such as service workers (which includes police and firefighters), farmers, and craft workers.

In 1979, men who had not completed at least 1 year of college were most likely to be employed in the craft fields (table E). This was true for high school graduates as well as

Table D. Percent of Employed Persons 25 to 64 Years Old Who Have Completed 4 Years of High School or More and 4 Years of College or More, by Occupation and Sex: March 1979, 1975, and 1970, and April 1960

Occupation group and sex	4 years of high school or more				4 years of college or more			
	1979	1975	1970	1960	1979	1975	1970	1960
Male, total.....	77.4	72.2	62.9	44.6	24.3	21.1	16.0	11.0
Professional, tech. and kind. wkrs.....	98.1	97.6	96.5	91.3	71.1	68.7	63.8	58.9
Managers and administrators, exc. farm.....	89.4	88.1	80.0	65.5	36.5	31.7	22.7	17.5
Sales workers.....	92.7	89.4	84.0	66.8	33.6	28.7	20.5	15.0
Clerical and kindred workers.....	88.2	84.1	78.0	62.6	18.9	13.4	8.8	9.1
Craft and kindred workers.....	70.2	64.1	52.5	36.2	4.6	3.3	1.8	2.1
Operatives including transport.....	58.9	51.0	41.1	25.4	2.7	2.0	1.1	0.7
Laborers, except farm.....	53.2	40.7	29.8	16.1	2.5	2.3	0.8	0.6
Service workers, incl. private hhld.....	67.0	60.4	49.2	30.5	8.2	5.5	2.3	1.7
Farmers and farm managers.....	68.4	55.6	42.5	29.8	9.2	6.7	2.8	2.2
Farm laborers and supervisors.....	31.8	29.3	19.7	11.5	6.1	3.1	1.0	0.8
Female, total.....	80.6	75.5	67.0	51.2	18.0	15.8	11.5	8.8
Professional, tech. and kind. wkrs.....	97.9	97.5	96.5	92.4	63.6	62.8	58.4	50.6
Managers and administrators, exc. farm.....	90.0	83.5	78.8	62.0	24.4	19.0	9.4	7.8
Sales workers.....	83.5	78.0	67.4	48.6	11.7	8.2	3.2	2.2
Clerical and kindred workers.....	92.2	89.4	85.8	74.2	7.8	6.4	3.6	4.0
Craft and kindred workers.....	67.0	64.4	53.9	39.4	7.0	3.8	2.8	2.5
Operatives including transport.....	49.6	42.6	35.2	22.5	1.5	1.1	0.4	0.3
Laborers, except farm.....	58.5	52.2	36.5	23.7	3.7	3.1	-	0.8
Service workers, incl. private hhld.....	60.4	52.4	42.4	25.2	3.2	2.0	0.8	0.7
Farmers and farm managers.....	74.3	(B)	(B)	32.6	14.5	(B)	(B)	2.9
Farm laborers and supervisors.....	63.3	59.0	36.0	23.5	6.7	3.2	-	0.9

- Represents zero.

B Base less than 75,000.

Source: Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 295 and 207; and Census of Population: 1960, Vol. II, Subject Reports, Part 5B.

Table E. Occupation of Employed Persons 25 to 64 Years Old, by Years of School Completed and Sex: March 1979
(Numbers in thousands)

Occupation group and sex	Total	Less than 4 years of high school	High school: 4 years	College		
				1 to 3 years	4 years	5 years or more
Male, total.....	43,349	9,557	15,090	7,414	5,464	4,823
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Professional, technical and kindred workers....	17.8	1.5	5.4	16.5	38.5	67.7
Managers and administrators, except farm.....	16.7	7.8	14.2	21.3	28.7	20.9
Sales workers.....	5.9	1.9	5.2	9.3	11.7	4.1
Clerical and kindred workers.....	5.9	3.1	7.8	8.8	6.8	2.1
Craft and kindred workers.....	22.2	29.3	30.6	21.0	6.3	1.9
Operatives, except transport.....	10.5	18.6	13.5	7.1	1.6	0.5
Transport equipment operatives.....	6.0	11.5	7.1	4.0	1.1	0.4
Laborers, except farm.....	4.7	9.7	5.3	2.8	0.6	0.4
Private household workers.....	-	-	-	-	-	-
Service workers, except private household.....	7.0	10.1	8.0	7.1	3.2	1.4
Farmers and farm managers.....	2.3	3.3	3.0	1.7	1.3	0.4
Farm laborers and supervisors.....	1.0	3.1	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.1
Female, total.....	29,150	5,465	13,203	5,042	3,094	2,166
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Professional, technical and kindred workers....	18.7	2.0	6.3	20.7	56.9	78.8
Managers and administrators, except farm.....	7.2	3.7	6.9	9.4	9.7	9.8
Sales workers.....	6.0	5.1	6.9	6.8	5.1	2.2
Clerical and kindred workers.....	34.1	13.8	46.6	44.3	20.7	6.4
Craft and kindred workers.....	1.8	3.1	1.9	1.4	0.8	0.5
Operatives, except transport.....	11.3	30.6	10.5	2.9	1.4	0.2
Transport equipment operatives.....	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.1	0.1
Laborers, except farm.....	1.1	2.3	1.2	0.4	0.4	-
Private household workers.....	2.2	6.5	1.6	0.9	0.3	0.1
Service workers, except private household.....	15.8	30.3	16.3	11.8	4.1	1.4
Farmers and farm managers.....	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1
Farm laborers and supervisors.....	0.7	1.2	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.3

- Represents zero.

for those who were not high school graduates. Men who completed at least 1 year but less than 4 years of college were most likely to be employed as managers, administrators, or craft workers. The majority of those who had completed 4 years of college were in professional, technical, managerial, or administrative positions. The data suggest that occupational status is more closely related to amount of education for women. Fully one-third of all working women were in clerical jobs. For those who were not high school graduates, the majority were operatives or service workers, nearly one-half of the women who completed high school but not college were clerical workers, and the majority of all female college graduates were professional or technical workers.

The major occupation groups of White and Black persons 25 to 64 years old by years of school completed and sex are

shown in table F. Among persons who were not college graduates, White men and women were more likely to be employed in white-collar occupations than were Black men and women with similar levels of education. Black men who did not graduate from high school were about as likely as White men of a similar educational level to be employed in blue-collar and farm occupations; among those who graduated from high school but did not complete 4 years of college, a greater percentage of Black men were employed in blue-collar occupations than their White counterparts. For both Black and White men and women, at least 4 out of 5 college graduates were employed in white-collar jobs. Overall, Black workers were at least twice as likely to be in service occupations as White; this is most evident among those who completed 4 years of high school or less.

Table F. Summary Occupation Group for Employed Persons 25 to 64 Years Old, by Years of School Completed, Sex, and Race: March 1979

(Numbers in thousands)

Class of worker, sex, and race	Total	Less than 4 years of high school	High school: 4 years	College		
				1 to 3 years	4 years	5 years or more
WHITE						
Male, total.....	38,110	8,044	13,654	6,770	5,117	4,523
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White-collar workers.....	48.1	15.4	33.1	57.0	85.7	95.2
Blue-collar workers.....	42.4	69.7	55.7	34.1	9.3	3.1
Service workers.....	6.2	8.6	7.3	6.7	3.2	1.2
Farm workers.....	3.4	6.3	3.9	2.2	1.8	0.5
Female, total.....	25,235	4,416	11,778	4,370	2,761	1,910
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White-collar workers.....	69.0	28.0	69.2	82.7	92.8	97.0
Blue-collar workers.....	14.3	39.4	13.4	4.7	2.5	0.8
Service workers.....	15.7	30.8	16.4	11.8	4.2	1.7
Farm workers.....	1.1	1.8	1.1	0.8	0.4	0.5
BLACK						
Male, total.....	3,429	1,342	1,218	490	220	160
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White-collar workers.....	25.4	7.7	19.0	43.9	81.4	86.9
Blue-collar workers.....	57.2	68.2	64.9	44.5	13.2	5.0
Service workers.....	14.3	17.1	15.1	11.6	5.0	6.9
Farm workers.....	3.1	7.0	1.1	-	-	-
Female, total.....	3,330	1,110	1,233	557	227	173
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White-collar workers.....	45.3	12.9	46.3	72.5	91.6	98.8
Blue-collar workers.....	19.1	26.6	22.6	9.3	1.8	0.6
Service workers.....	35.2	59.9	30.7	18.3	7.0	-
Farm workers.....	0.5	0.7	0.5	-	-	-

Represents zero.

NOTE

In the past the Census Bureau has designated a head of household to serve as the central reference person for the collection and tabulation of data for each member of the household (or family). However, the trend toward recognition of equal status and roles for adult family members makes the term "head" less relevant in the analysis of household and family data. As a result, the Bureau is currently developing new techniques for the enumeration and presentation of data which will eliminate the concept "head." Although the data in this report are based on this concept, methodology for future Census Bureau reports will reflect a gradual movement away from this traditional practice.
