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STATUS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

New survey: Department of Labor has announced results of first of series of annual surveys of status of high school graduates. Report shows that 7 out of every 8 persons who graduated from high school in June, 1959, and entered job market were gainfully employed last October.

Drop-outs and unemployment: High school graduates did much better in job market than young people who dropped out of school before getting diplomas. Drop-outs had rate of unemployment double that of graduates. It was also found that involuntary part-time employment occurred much less frequently among employed 1959 high school graduates than among young school leavers. As many as 25 per cent of drop-outs at work were employed part-time for economic reasons, e.g., because they were unable to find full-time work. Only 6 per cent of graduates were in this category.

Drop-outs and kinds of jobs: Fifty per cent of recent high school graduates held clerical, office, and sales jobs, compared with only 6 per cent of drop-outs. On other hand, lower-paying service and laborer jobs engaged 44 per cent of drop-outs as against 18 per cent of graduates. Slightly more than 60 per cent of all girl graduates, but only 5 per cent of girl drop-outs, held clerical jobs. On other hand, only 15 per cent of graduates were in such service jobs as waitress and private household work, compared with 54 per cent of girl drop-outs. Much the same situation held for boys. There were 6 times as many graduates in clerical and sales jobs than among nongraduates, and 5 times as many boy graduates held skilled jobs as did school leavers.

College entrants: About 1 out of every 2 of 1.5 million high school graduates of June, 1959, were enrolled in college in October—54 per cent of men graduates and 39 per cent of girl graduates. Almost all of these students were going to college on full-time basis, although about 1 out of every 4 were also working. About 80 per cent of high school graduates who did not go on to college were in labor force in October. Among those not in labor force at all, about two-fifths were attending special schools such as training schools for nurses, secretarial or other vocational schools, and another one-fifth were married women.

LITERACY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

We're more educated: Educational level of people in USA has continued to advance, according to March, 1959, Current Population Survey conducted by Bureau of Census. Ability to read and write is now shared by nearly all persons 14 years old or over. Relatively small number of illiterates is concentrated mostly in older age groups. Illiteracy rate for civilian noninstitutional population 14 years old and over in 1959 was only 2.2 per cent. This is smallest percentage of illiterates ever recorded in this country and represents continuation of historic decline in inability to read and write.

Nonwhites do well: Decline in illiteracy has been more dramatic for nonwhites. From 1870 to 1950, percentage of population which was illiterate dropped steadily from 12 to 2 per cent for whites and from 80 to 8 per cent for nonwhites. Among persons 14 to 24 years old in 1959, illiteracy rate was only 0.5 per cent for whites and 1.2 per cent for nonwhites.

Other comparisons: As in past years, illiteracy rates were higher in 1959 for men than women, for older than younger persons, in South than in other parts of country, in farm than in nonfarm population, among unemployed and those not in labor force than employed, and among farm laborers and nonagricultural laborers than among workers in other occupational fields.

Educational attainment: Persistent upward trend in nation's educational attainment is being maintained. Median years of school completed by adult population, defined here as those 25 years old and over, was 11.0 years in 1959. This compares with 9.3 years in 1950 and 8.4 years in 1940. Average was 10.7 years for adult males and 11.2 years for adult females in 1959 survey.

High school graduation: About 43 per cent of adult population in 1959 had finished high school (including those who had attended college). This proportion was one-third greater than in years just following World War II and about double that of 1940. Considering only those 25 to 29 years of age, about 63 per cent are now high school graduates as compared with 38 per cent in 1940.

College graduation: College graduates still constitute relatively small percentage of adult population (8 per cent), but this proportion has been growing moderately. Among men 25 to 29 years old, proportion who had completed four years or more of college went up especially sharply in early 1950's and that proportion was maintained through 1959, at which time it was 15 per cent.