

# Young adults more likely to attend college

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American young adults are more racially and ethnically diverse, more likely to graduate from high school, and attend college, and less likely to smoke than previous generations, according to a report by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. However, the young adults have more student debt than generations past, earn less than their counterparts in the year 2000, and more than 1 in 5 are obese, the report says.

The findings are among those reported in a statistical collection by the forum titled, America's Young Adults: Special Issue, 2014. Young adults are identified as between the ages of 18-24.

The report includes data from nationally representative, federally sponsored surveys, summarized under five key themes: education, economic circumstances, family formation, civic, social, and personal behavior, and health and safety.

"This report is a rich snapshot of the health, education, and well-being of America's [young adults](#)," said Evelyn Kappeler, director of the Office of Adolescent Health. "Overall, we cheer the gains being made in education, but also note the need to address health concerns such as the smoking, obesity, and depression levels among this population."

According to the report, more young adults are graduating from [high school](#) and earning college degrees today than in 2000. In addition, the report found that among Hispanics in this age group, college enrollment during this time increased from 21.7 percent to 37.5 percent, the largest

increase among all racial and ethnic groups.

Among other findings:

- Approximately 522,000 young adults were serving on active duty in the armed forces in 2012.
- The overall [college enrollment](#) rate for 18- to 24-year-olds increased from 26 percent in 1980 to 41 percent in 2012. Continuing a trend since the early 1990s, females are enrolling in college in greater percentages than males. In 2012, 44.5 percent of females were enrolled in college versus 37.6 for males.
- The mean cumulative debt per fourth-year student for the 2011-2012 school year was \$25,400, up from \$14,700 for 1989–1990 school year, after adjusting for inflation.
- The labor force participation rate for young adults was 65 percent in 2012, compared with the peak rate of 75 percent in 1986 and 74 percent in 2000.
- >58 percent of young men and 51 percent of young women lived with their parents in 2013.
- Birth rates for young women have reached historic lows in the United States. The birth rate for women ages 18–19 was 51.4 per 1,000 in 2012, down from 94.0 per 1,000 in 1991. The rate for women ages 20–24 fell from 116.5 per 1,000 in 1990 to 83.1 per 1,000 in 2012.
- Like the rest of the population, young adults are less likely to vote in congressional election years than [presidential election](#) years. In the 2012 presidential election year, 38 percent of young adults voted, compared with 20 percent in the 2010 congressional election year.
- In 2012, 20 percent of young men and 15 percent of young women smoked cigarettes, a decline for both groups. However, young White adults are still more than twice as likely to smoke as Hispanic and Blacks this age.

- Between 1988–1994 and 1999–2002, there was an increase in obesity among young adults, but between 1999–2002 and 2007–2010, there was no significant change in obesity. Between 2007–2010, [young women](#) (27 percent) were more likely to be obese than [young men](#) (19 percent).

Provided by National Institutes of Health

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