

Study: Economic downturn and educational attainment, 2008 to 2011

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, June 21, 2012

During the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009, the decline in employment at the Canada level reflected mostly net employment losses among individuals with less than a high school diploma.

From 2008 to 2009, the number of individuals without a high school diploma who held a job decreased 10.2%. Among those with a high school diploma or some non-completed postsecondary education as their highest level of education, net employment fell 3.6%.

In contrast, people with postsecondary education experienced stable employment. This education level included trade certificates, college and CEGEP diplomas, university certificates below a bachelor's degree, and a bachelor's degree or higher.

By 2011, employment levels for individuals with less than a high school diploma were 14.5% lower than in 2008. The labour market outcomes of these individuals with the lowest levels of education have remained poor even in the economic recovery despite a continued decline in the population with less than a high school diploma.

The level of employment for people with a high school diploma but no further postsecondary credentials had also not recovered from the losses incurred during the economic downturn by 2011. The number of employed individuals within this education category was 1.8% lower than in 2008. In the meantime, the population with this level of education continued to grow, although at a moderate pace, to be 2.7% higher than in 2008.

Among people with a trade certificate, a college or CEGEP diploma, or a university certificate below a bachelor's degree, employment levels rose 5.1% between 2008 and 2011. As the population with these credentials increased faster, their employment rate fell from 73.1% to 71.4%.

By 2011, employment had risen the fastest (in percentage terms) for people who had a bachelor's degree or higher, up 8.8% from 2008. This growth in employment, however, was not strong enough to absorb the rapidly rising population who have these credentials. Between 2008 and 2011, the population with a bachelor's degree or higher increased 10.7%. As a result, the employment rate for this group fell from 75.0% to 73.7%.

Note to readers

This fact sheet examines the impact of the 2008 economic downturn on individuals with different levels of educational attainment to identify the groups most affected by the downturn, and those that benefited most from the recovery in employment. Data came from the Labour Force Survey.

This fact sheet is a product of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program, which is a long-running initiative of the Canadian Education Statistics Council, a partnership between Statistics Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

The fact sheet "Economic downturn and educational attainment," part of the *Education Indicators in Canada: Fact sheet* series (81-599-X2012009, free), is now available from the *Key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Statistics Canada's National Contact Centre (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 613-951-8116; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or the Media Hotline (613-951-4636; mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca).