

Finding Publicly Available High-Level Data for Higher Education

By Don Sutherland

Publicly-available data on higher education can be useful throughout a college or university. For example, such data can better inform strategic planning (providing insight into the context in which a college or university operates and allow schools to more effectively link programs/student learning goals with employment market developments), enhance the activities of Career Services offices (comparing industry employment trends with projections in the Occupational Outlook Handbook and better focus areas of employment opportunity for students), facilitate enrollment management planning, and help Admissions Offices discuss the value of higher education with prospective students.

This blog entry highlights some of the major sources of useful high-level data. By high-level data, I mean data that is generally national or international in nature. This list is not all-inclusive.

[American Community Survey Data on Educational Attainment](#) (U.S. Census Bureau):

Contains such information as field of degree and earnings, work-life earnings by field of degree and occupation for persons with Bachelor's degrees, Pathways after a Bachelor's degree, among other information.

[Current Population Survey Data on Educational Attainment](#) (U.S. Census Bureau): Contains detailed tables for educational attainment of the population 18 years and over by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin; tables for educational attainment of the population 25 years and over by gender; and, detailed years of school completed by persons 25 and over by sex, age groups, race, and Hispanic origin. The data is more recent than the American Community Survey data.

[Decennial Census Data on Educational Attainment](#) (U.S. Census Bureau): Contains historical census statistics on educational attainment in the U.S. from 1940 to 2000. More recent data can be found in the American Community Survey and Current Population Survey data.

[Employment Situation Reports](#) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics): Table A-4: Employment status of the civilian population 25 years and over by educational attainment; Table B-1: Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail

[Fast Facts](#) (National Center for Education Statistics): The section for post-secondary education and beyond contains tables related to degrees conferred by sex and race, enrollment, enrollment and employment experiences of college graduates, graduation rates, international comparisons of education outcomes, most popular majors, time-to-degree, among others.

[International Education Enrollment](#) (World Bank): One can view gross enrollment ratios, the net enrollment rate, adjusted net enrollment rate (primary), and children out of school for countries reporting such statistics.

Occupational Outlook Handbook (Bureau of Labor Statistics): Provides a wide range of data on occupations including work environment, required education, training, pay, the job outlook, and similar occupations.

OECD Education at a Glance (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development): Contains international data outputs of educational institutions (to what level adults have studied, how many students complete tertiary education, how educational attainment affects labor market participation, among others); financial and human resources invested in education; access to education, participation, and progression; and, the learning environment and organization of schools (classroom time, student-teacher ratios, how much time is spent teaching, among others). The .PDF is available only to subscribers of the OECD iLibrary, however, there is an option for non-subscribers to read the report or its tables.

Survey of Income and Program Participation Data on Educational Attainment (U.S. Census Bureau): Contains periodically published reports on the relationship between educational attainment and economic outcomes by field of training. Detailed tables include median monthly income and earnings by education, average monthly income/average earnings for Associate's, Bachelor's, and Advanced Degrees by field, occupation by educational attainment and field of degree, among others.