

January 21, 2026

# ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOL TO CAREER STUDY



ILLINOIS WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION  
RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

**UCHICAGO** Consortium  
on School Research

Presented to the Illinois  
Board of Higher Education

IL HIGH SCHOOL TO CAREER STUDY

# AGENCY PARTNERS



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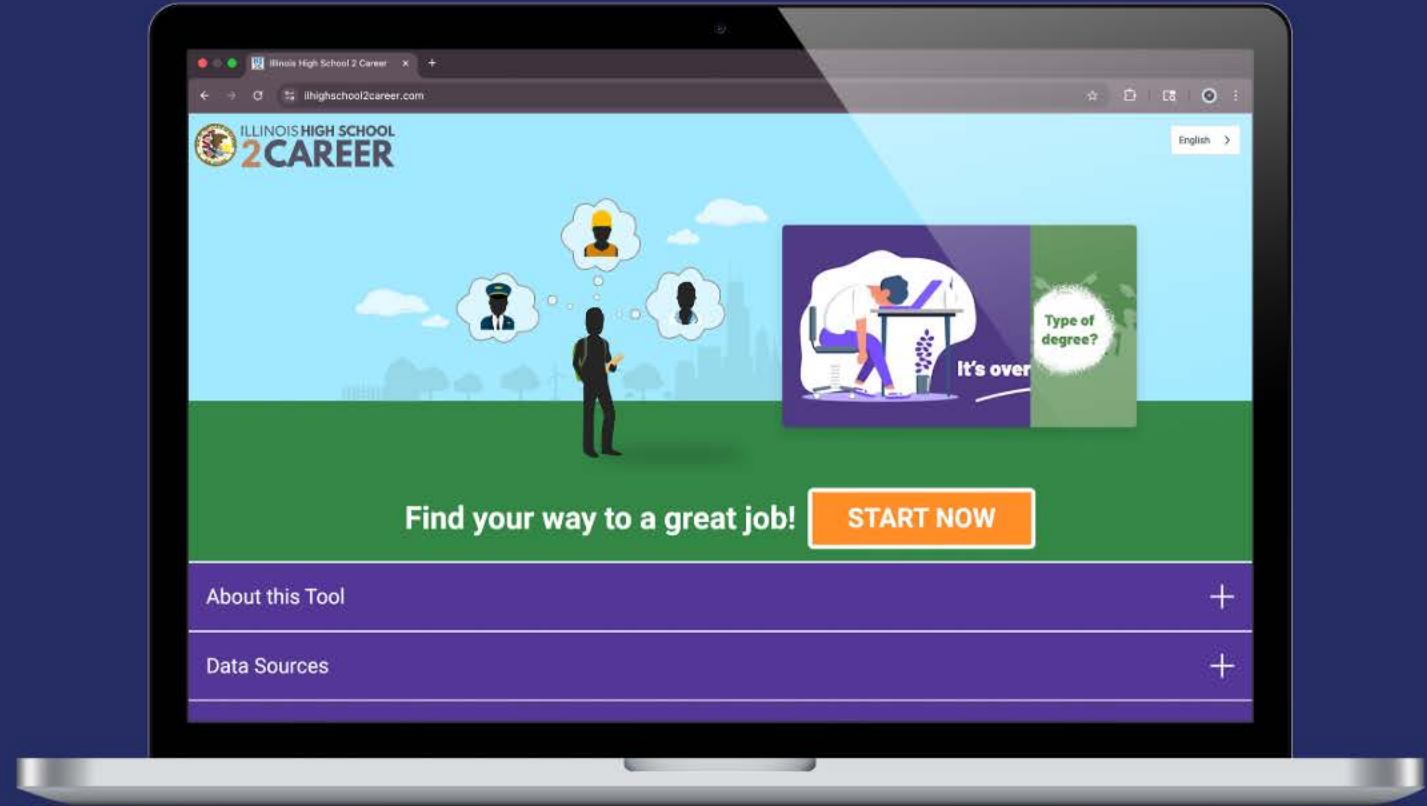


Photo Mockup Designed by D3images / Freepik

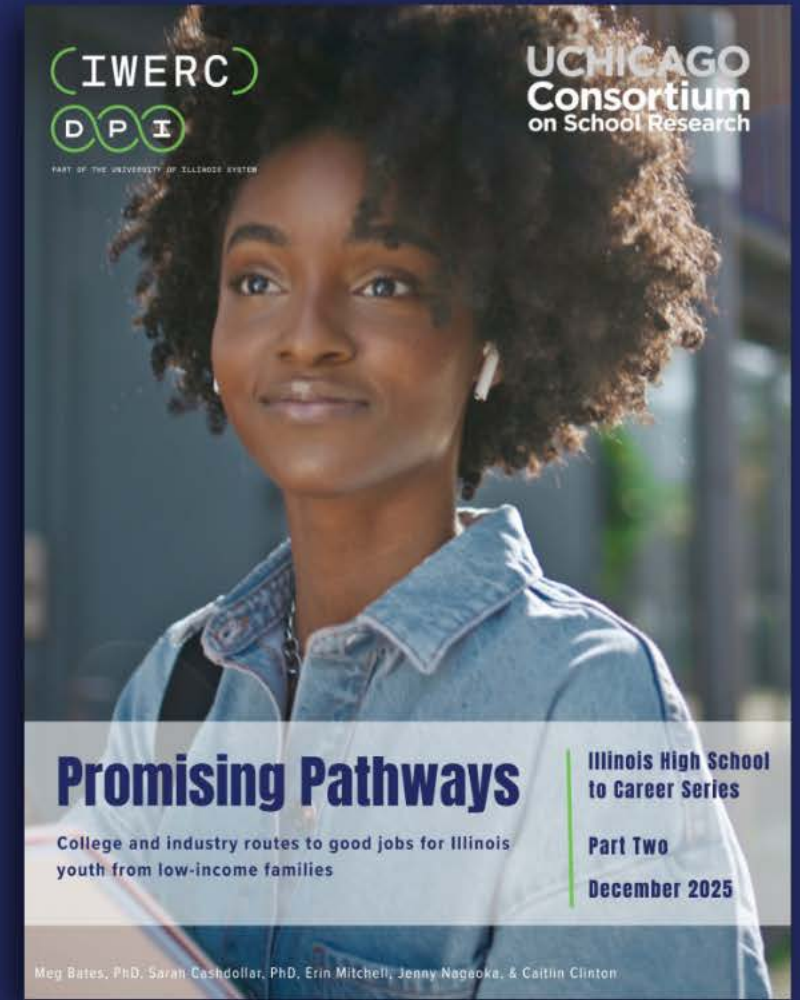


<https://www.ilhighschool2career.com/>



## IL HIGH SCHOOL TO CAREER STUDY

# REPORTS



# IL HIGH SCHOOL TO CAREER STUDY

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

*Among students from low-income households:*

### Bachelor's+ pathways (Bachelor's, Master's, professional degrees)

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- Earning a BA+ was the **surest route** to upward mobility
- Disparities in access to good jobs were **not eliminated, but were reduced**
- The most common degree outcome was "**some college, no degree**"

### Sub-baccalaureate pathways (High school only, some college, certificate, associate)

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- Several programs of study and industries provided **access to good jobs**, most commonly for men
- On average, sub-BA pathways led to **lower earnings** and greater racial/ethnic and gender **disparities** in access to good jobs

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# ILLINOIS HS2C DATASET

## Sample

- IL senior classes of 2008-2012

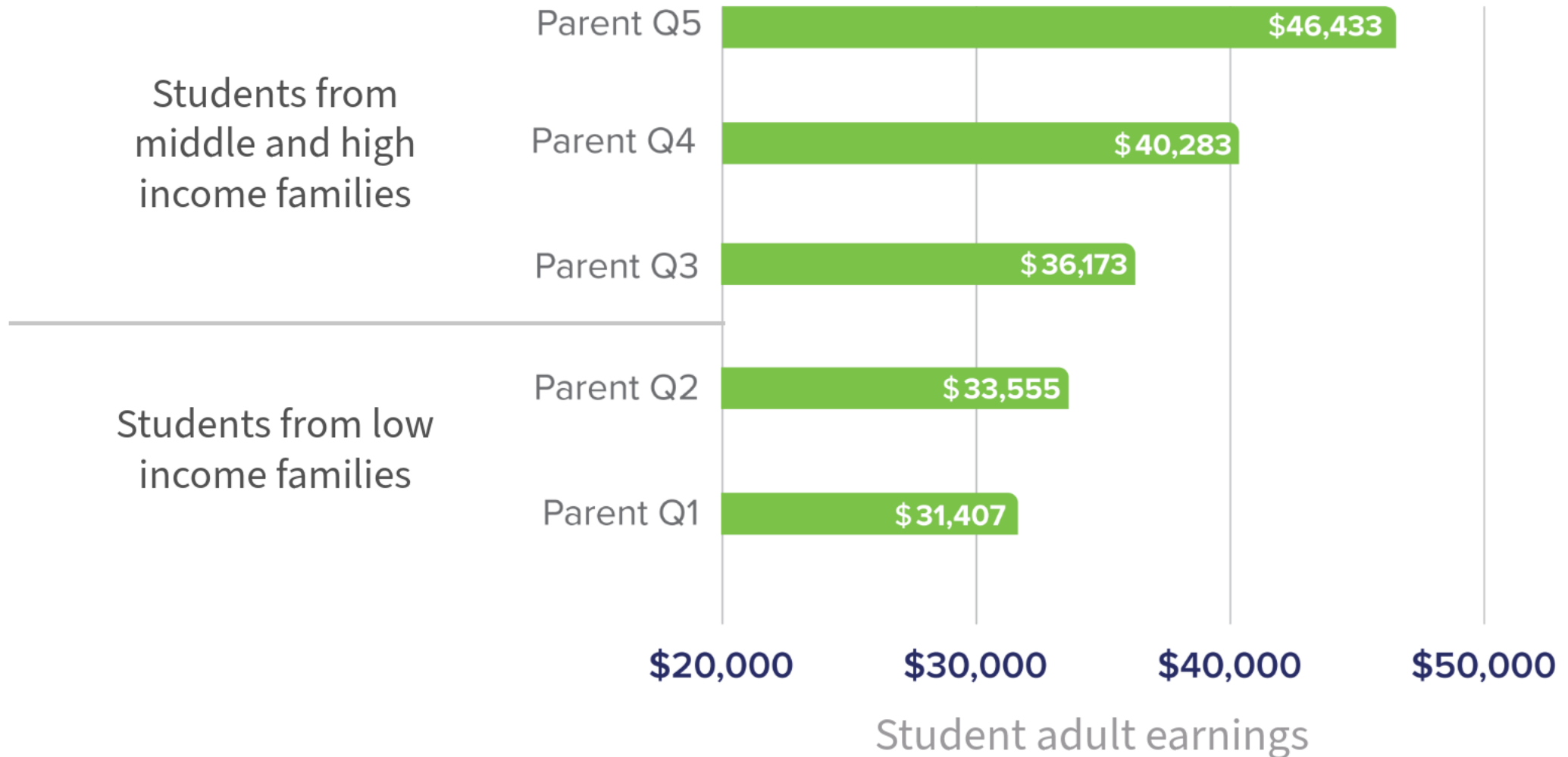
## Inclusion Criteria

- Complete the FAFSA
- Work in IL in a stable job 3 years after college

## Who is missing?

- Most (3/4) students with only a high school education
- Students who worked outside of IL

# The problem: Students from low-income families earned less as adults



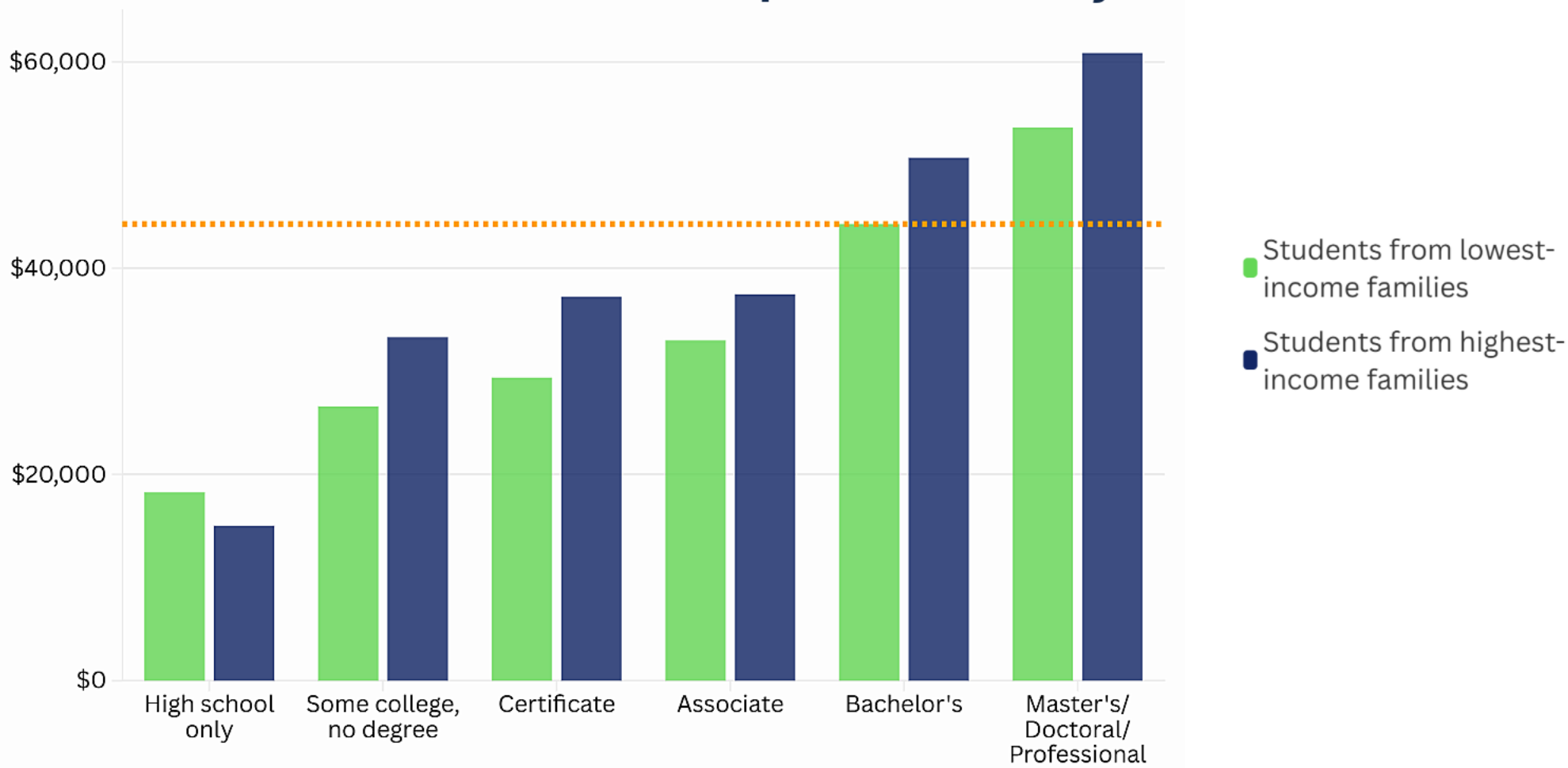
# BACHELOR'S+ PATHWAYS

Bachelor's, Master's, and Professional  
Degrees



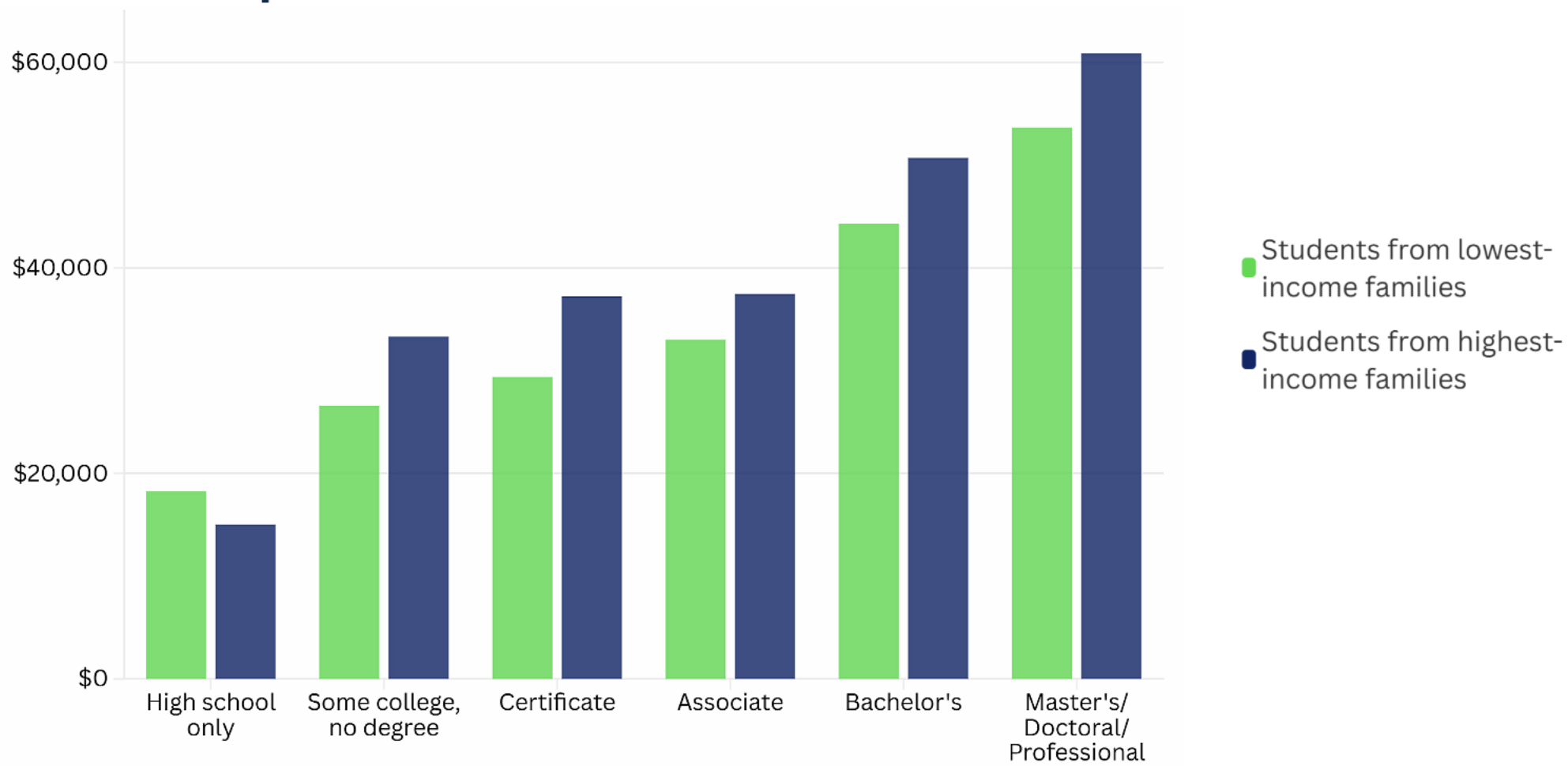
# Pathways

Earning a BA+ was the surest route to upward mobility



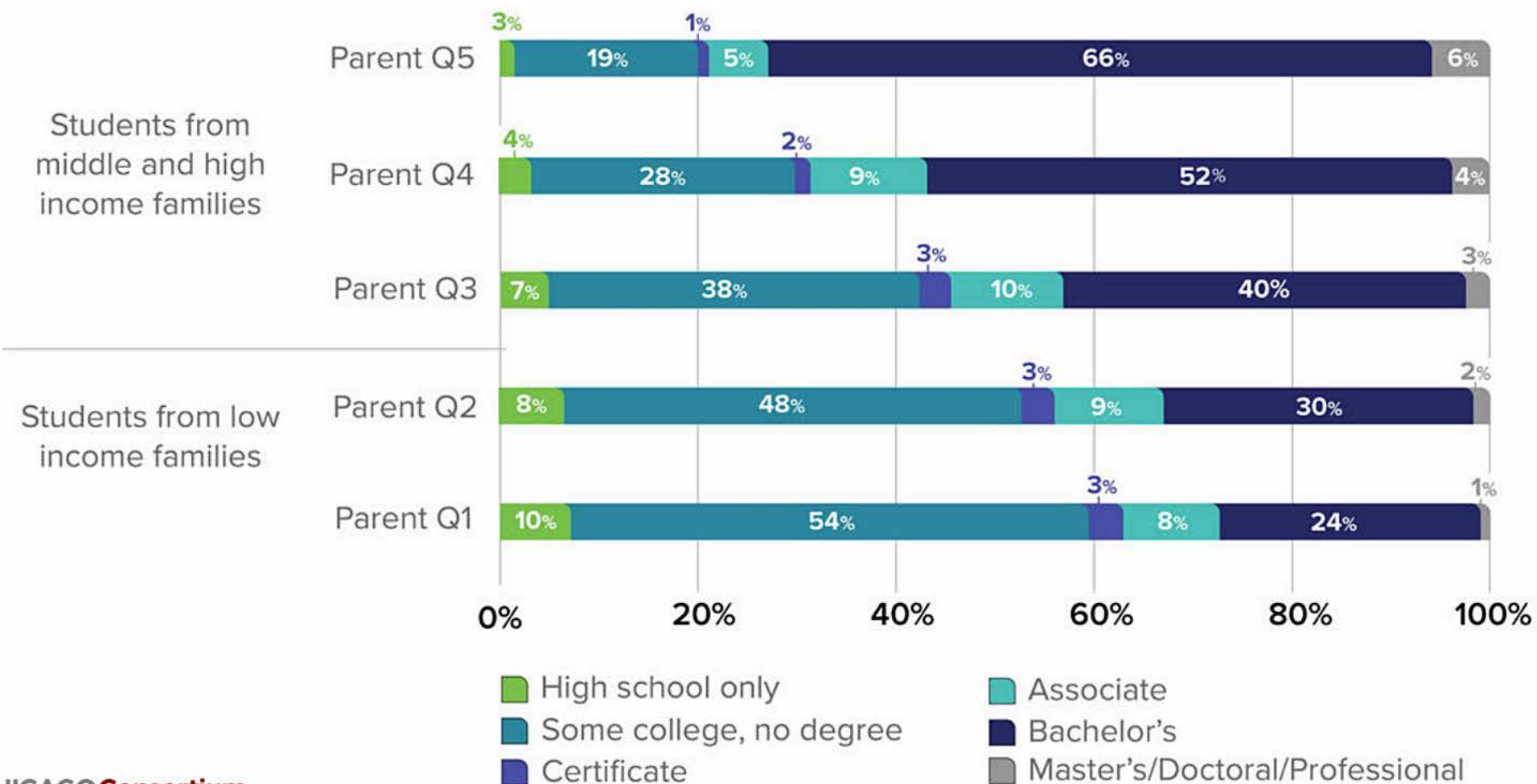
# Pathways

## Socioeconomic disparities were not eliminated



# Pathways

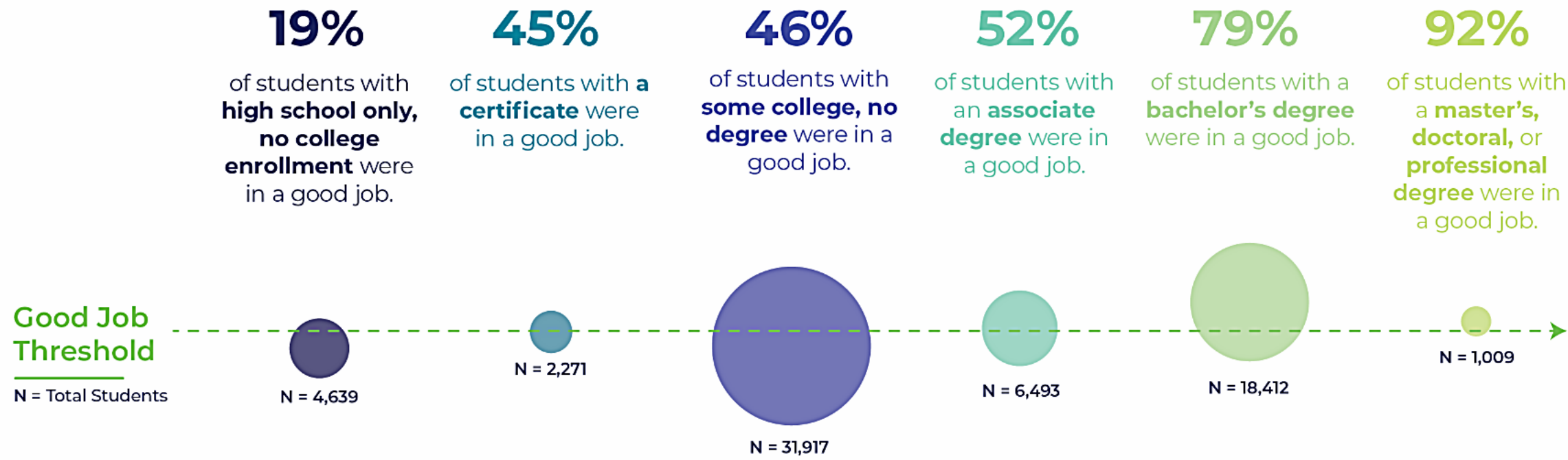
The most common degree outcome was "some college, no degree"



# GOOD JOB

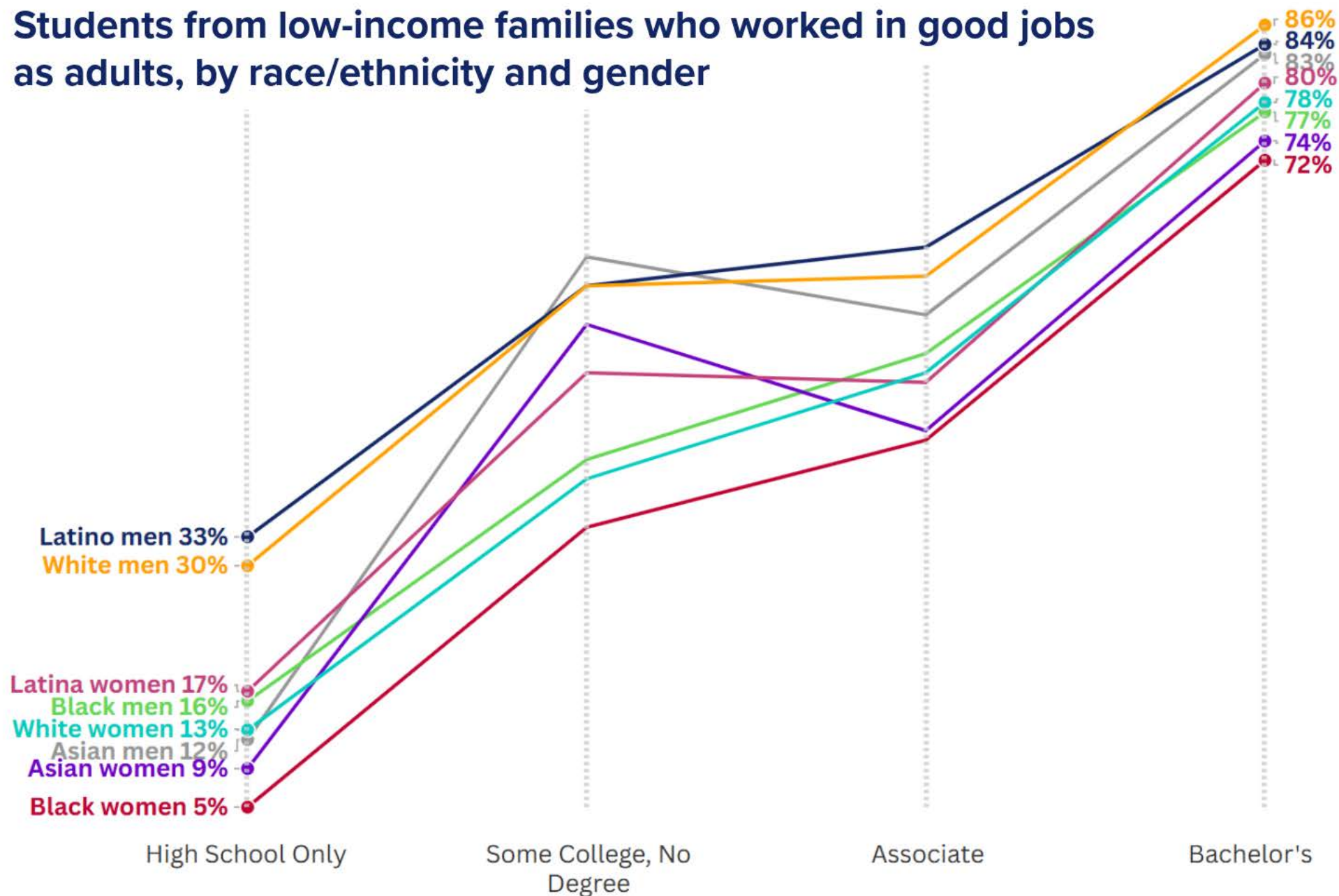
A job in which a person's earnings are in the top three quintiles (i.e., top 60%) relative to their peers in the same high school cohort

# Among students from low-income families...





## Students from low-income families who worked in good jobs as adults, by race/ethnicity and gender



# SUB-BACCALAUREATE PATHWAYS

High school only, some college,  
certificate, associate

# Pathways

Several programs of study and industries provided access to good jobs

52%

of students with  
an **associate  
degree** were in  
a good job.



N = 6,493

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## PROMISING PROGRAMS OF STUDY (ASSOCIATE DEGREE)

- Agricultural/animal/plant/veterinary science and related fields
- Engineering/engineering-related technologies/technicians
- Health professions and related programs
- Mechanic and repair technologies/technicians

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## PROMISING INDUSTRIES (ASSOCIATE DEGREE)

- Construction
- Management of companies and enterprises
- Manufacturing
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- Public administration
- Wholesale trade



# Pathways

Several programs of study and industries provided access to good jobs, most commonly for men

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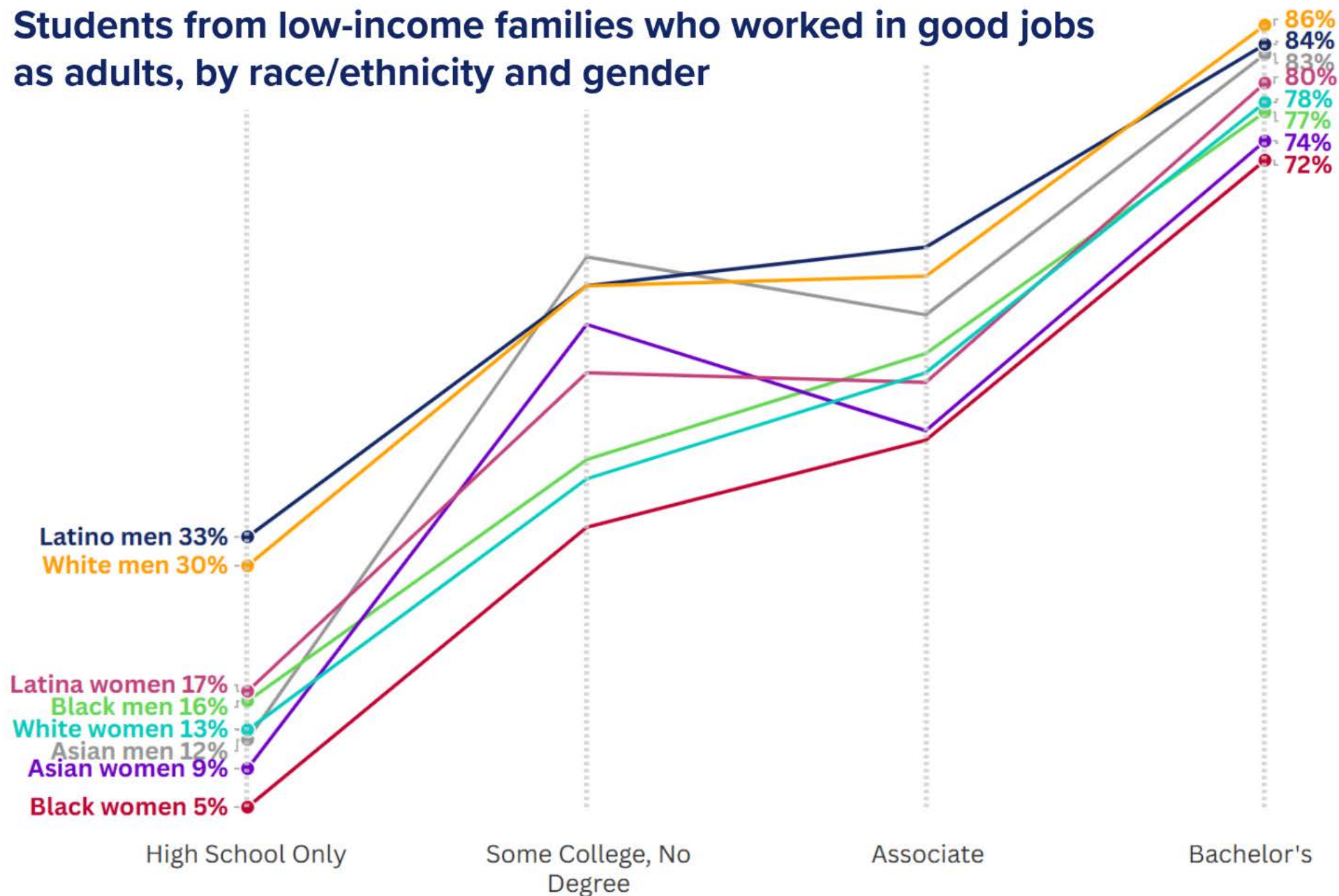
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Program of study	Overall	Men					Women				
		Asian	Black	Latino	White	All men	Asian	Black	Latina	White	All women
Agricultural/animal/plant/veterinary science	76%				92%	92%				61%	60%
Engineering/engineering-related technologies	84%				88%	85%					
Health professions and related programs	78%				90%	92%		59%	76%	79%	77%
Mechanic and repair technologies	75%				81%	76%					

## Students from low-income families who worked in good jobs as adults, by race/ethnicity and gender



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# READ THE REPORTS



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- Pritzker Traubert Foundation

## UChicago Consortium on School Research

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