



How To Guide:

What levels of educational attainment are found in your area?

Community college staff often must understand their area’s basic demographic characteristics, not only to understand their market for potential students but also to help strengthen arguments in grant and funding proposals. Educational attainment levels are one of the important demographic characteristics of relevance to community colleges. These data can be drawn from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an ongoing survey conducted by the US Census Bureau. Five years of data are collected to generate a sample size large enough to produce statistically significant results. One of the easiest methods of accessing these data is through the Census Bureau’s Quick Facts tool.

1. Go to the US Census Bureau’s State and County QuickFacts website:
 - a. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>

2. Use the map to select the state where your area is located. In this instance, we will look at Illinois. When you get to the QuickFacts page for Illinois you can select either Illinois-based counties or cities. For this example, use the dropdown menu to select Winnebago County—home to Rock Valley College. Once you have selected Winnebago County, click on the “Go” button.

3. Scroll about halfway down the page and you will see two variables:
 - a. *High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013*: 86.2 percent of Winnebago County’s population aged 25 and older had at least a high school degree; This was slightly less than the 87.3 percent figure for the State of Illinois.
 - b. *Bachelor’s degree or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013*: 21.2 percent of Winnebago County’s population aged 25 and older had at least a high school degree; This was ten percent less than the 31.4 percent figure for the State of Illinois.

4. If you want more information about Winnebago County, you can click on “Browse Data Sets for Winnebago County” at the top of the Table.
 - a. If you want more information on educational attainment, you can click on “Social Characteristics” under the American Community Survey.



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