

Developing New Survey Items on Non-Degree Credentials: Lessons from a Federal Collaboration

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(**GEMEnA**)

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Background

- The need for better data on education, training, and non-degree credentials for work became apparent during the recession
- An interagency group had attempted to address this early in the 2000s, but the time wasn't ripe
- Non-degree credentials with labor market value include industry-recognized certifications, occupational licenses, and educational certificates
- GEMEnA commissioned in fall 2009

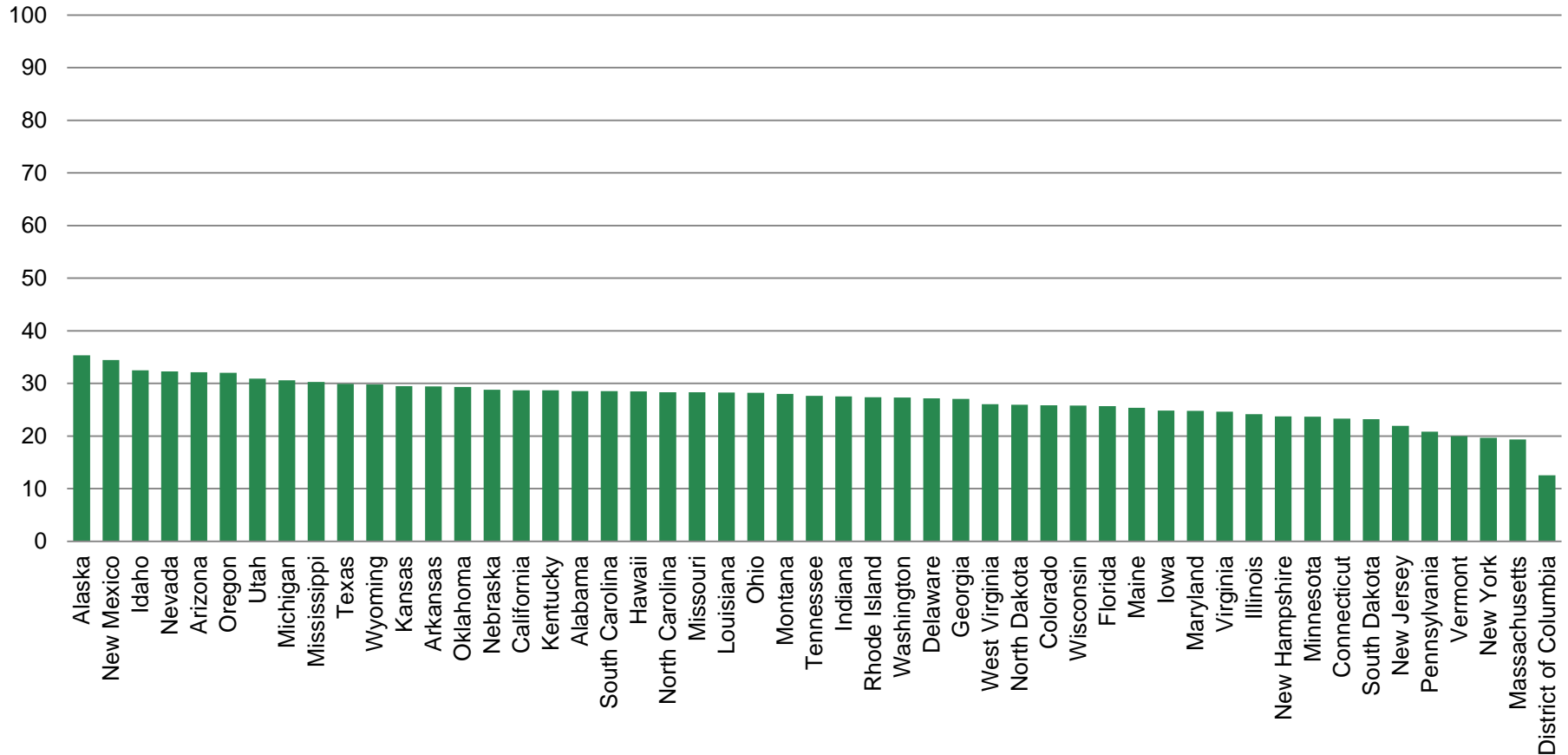
GEMEnA Member Organizations

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Chair
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Census Bureau
- Council of Economic Advisors
- Department of Education Office of the Under Secretary
- National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NSF)
- OMB Office of Statistical and Science Policy

Plus a distinguished and actively involved Expert Panel and the support of partners and stakeholders.

Percent of 25 to 34 year olds with at least a high school diploma who report “some college”, by state

(Source: ACS)



Objectives

- Develop a parsimonious set of survey items to measure prevalence and key characteristics of non-degree credentials
 - Incorporate items into federal surveys of households and individuals
- Develop sets of items to measure:
 - Completion of work experience programs
 - Training pipeline for non-degree credentialsIncorporate items into NCES in-depth survey on credentials

GEMEnA Values

- Rigorous developmental work is time consuming and expensive
- Documentation (nces.ed.gov/surveys/gemena):
 - contributes to the field of survey methodology
 - may undergird future work
 - informs survey sponsors about the validity and reliability of items they may wish to adopt or adapt
- A collaborative approach to development and deployment ensures value and use

Development Process

- Experts helped define the constructs
- Focus groups of potential respondents provided insight into relevant words/terms
- Cognitive interviews helped refine question wording and instructions
- Pilot studies tested items on large numbers of respondents

Pilot Studies

- The Adult Training and Education Study (ATES) of 2010 (~3,700)
 - Seeded sample
- The National Adult Training and Education Study (NATES) response rate pilot in 2013 (~10,000)
 - Nonresponse Bias Study
- The National Household Education Study Feasibility Study (NHES-FS) in 2014 (~44,000)
 - Seeded sample

Defining the Constructs

- **Certification:** A credential awarded by a certification body based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job. The examination can be either written, oral, or performance-based. Certification is a **time-limited credential** that is **renewed** through a recertification process.
- **License:** A credential awarded by a government agency that constitutes legal authority to do a specific job. Licenses are based on some combination of degree or certificate attainment, certifications, assessments, or work experience; are **time-limited**; and must be **renewed** periodically.

ATES* Item—Certification/License

6. Do you have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license? Do not include business licenses, such as a liquor license or vending license.

A professional certification or license shows you are qualified to perform a specific job and includes things like Licensed Realtor, Certified Medical Assistant, Certified Teacher, or an IT certification.

No

**GO TO question 30**

Yes



CPS Items on Certifications/Licenses

- Do you/Does [name] have a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license? Do not include business licenses, such as a liquor license or vending license.
Help text: A professional certification or license shows you are qualified to perform a specific job. Examples include a realtor license, a teacher's license, or an IT certification. Only include certifications or licenses obtained by an individual.
- Were any of your/his/her certifications or licenses issued by the federal, state, or local government?
- Earlier you told me you/[name] had a currently active professional certification or a state or industry license. Is your/his/her certification or license required for your/his/her job?

More Data on Certifications—Available Now

- 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), Wave 13 topical module fielded in fall 2012
- 2002/2012 Education Longitudinal Survey 10 year follow up of 10th grade class of 2002
- 2008/12 Baccalaureate and Beyond 4 year follow up of 2008 bachelor degree recipients
- 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students 2 year follow up of 2012 first time students

More Data on Certifications— Available in the Future (availability)

- Re-engineered SIPP (December 2016)
- National Survey of College Graduates (early 2017)
- Adult Training and Education Survey (Fall 2017)—
part of the National Household Education Survey
- High School Longitudinal Study 2nd Follow Up
(early 2018)

How Prevalent are these Credentials?

- Approximately 18% (17.8%) of adults held a currently active certification or license in 2015
- Most credential holders reported having a license
 - 87.8% of certification or license holders
 - 15.6% of all adults

Who is Certified and/or Licensed?

- Most prevalent among the employed
 - 25.5% of employed
 - 12.7% of unemployed
 - 6.1% of those not in the labor force
- Most prevalent among employed *women*
 - 28.1% of employed women vs. 23.2% of employed men
- Most prevalent among employed women and men with *advanced degrees* (51.9%)
 - 58.2% of employed women vs. 45.6% of employed men with advanced degrees

In which Occupations are these Credentials Most Prevalent?

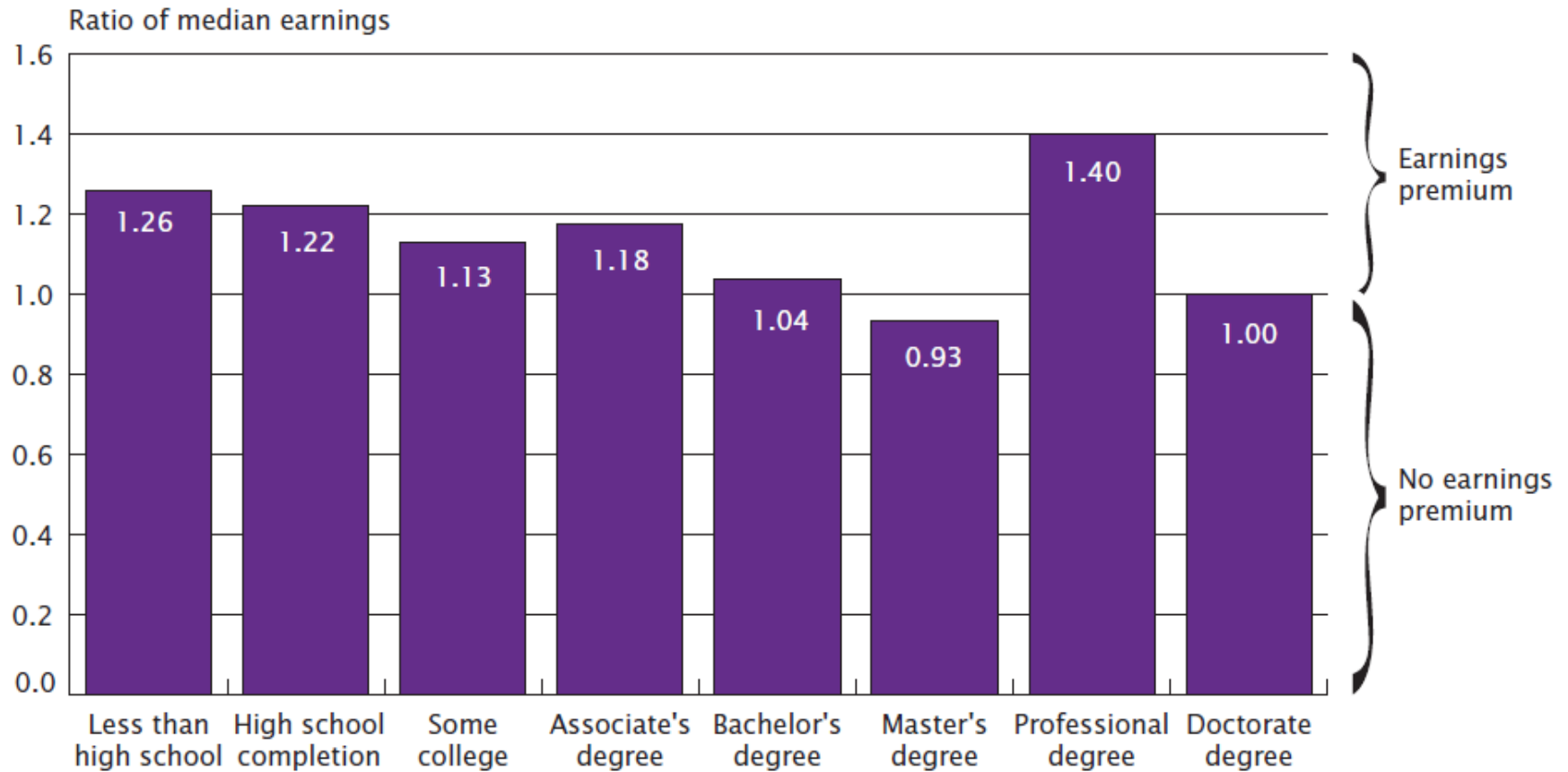
- Certifications and licenses were most prevalent in...
 - Healthcare practice and tech 76.9%
 - Law 68.1%
 - Education, training, library 55.5%
 - Healthcare support 51.8%

Are Credentials Associated with Wages?

- Median weekly earnings of full-time workers were 34% higher with a credential
 - \$1,004 for certification or license holders vs. \$747 for others
- This pattern holds for all demographics except men with an advanced degree

Figure 2.

Median Monthly Earnings for Professional Certification or License Relative to No Alternative Credential by Education Level: 2012



Note: Nonrespondents are not included in estimates of alternative credentials. Only people employed full-time for the 4 months before the survey with positive earnings are included in these analyses.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2008 panel, wave 13.

Lessons Learned about Leading a Federal Collaboration

- Spend time defining your goal(s)
- Have naïve enthusiasm; but don't be naïve
- Figure out your sphere of influence
- Keep an eye on the big picture and take advantage of opportunities
- Develop networks of support and keep them in the loop

Website: nces.ed.gov/surveys/gemena

- List of surveys with links to questionnaires and data
- Documentation on development process and published reports
- GEMEnA-developed working definitions of certifications, licenses, and certificates

For More Information

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Measures of Enrollment and Attainment

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