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# STATE POLICIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS FOR ADULT LEARNERS

**National Summit on Adult Learning  
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Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)**

# The Adult Learner “Problem”

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## High School Educated Adults (25-64):

- **29.2 percent or 56,371,283** never went to college and;
- **19.4 percent or 42,548,055** individuals attended college but never graduated.

*Source: CAEL/NCHEMS Adult Learning in Focus Report*

# The Adult Learner “Problem”

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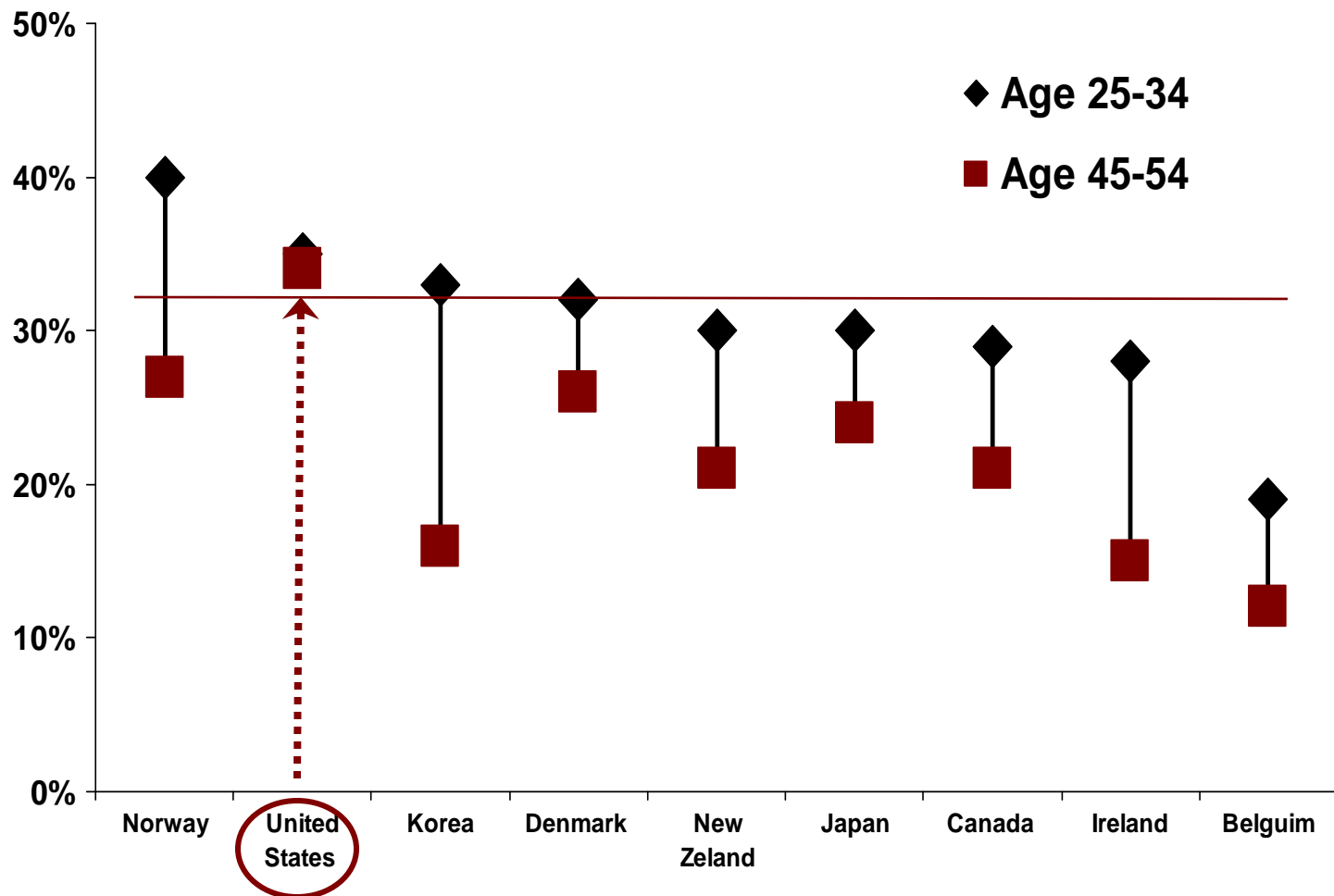
## Working Age Adults (25-64):

- National average of **37.2** percent of this age have an **associate’s degree** or higher
- **No state** has achieved **50%** of their working adults having an associate’s degree or higher

*Source: CAEL/NCHEMS Adult Learning in Focus Report*

# Educational Attainment

## Percent of Adults with Bachelor's or Higher Degrees United States & OECD Countries, 2006

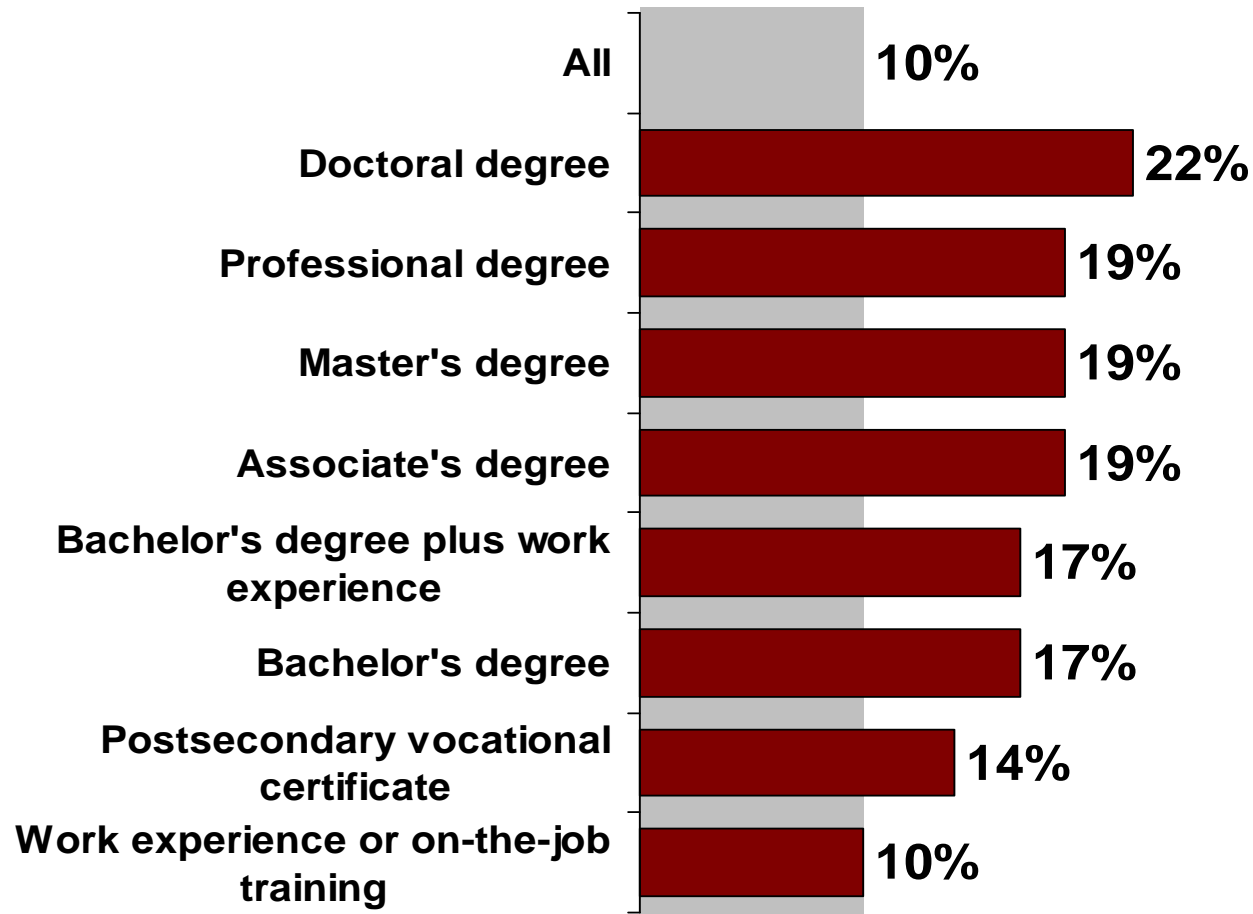


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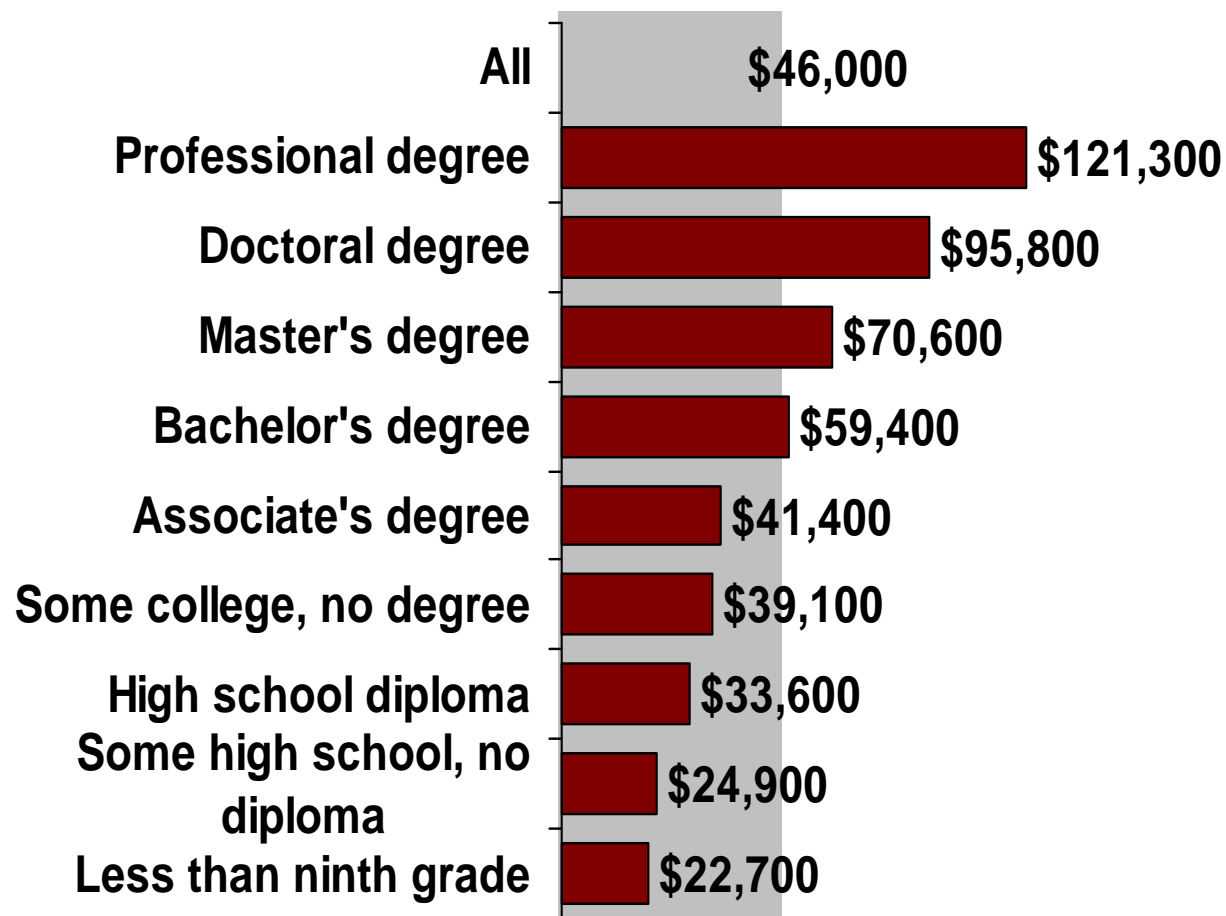
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# Projected Increases in Jobs

## United States, 2006 to 2016



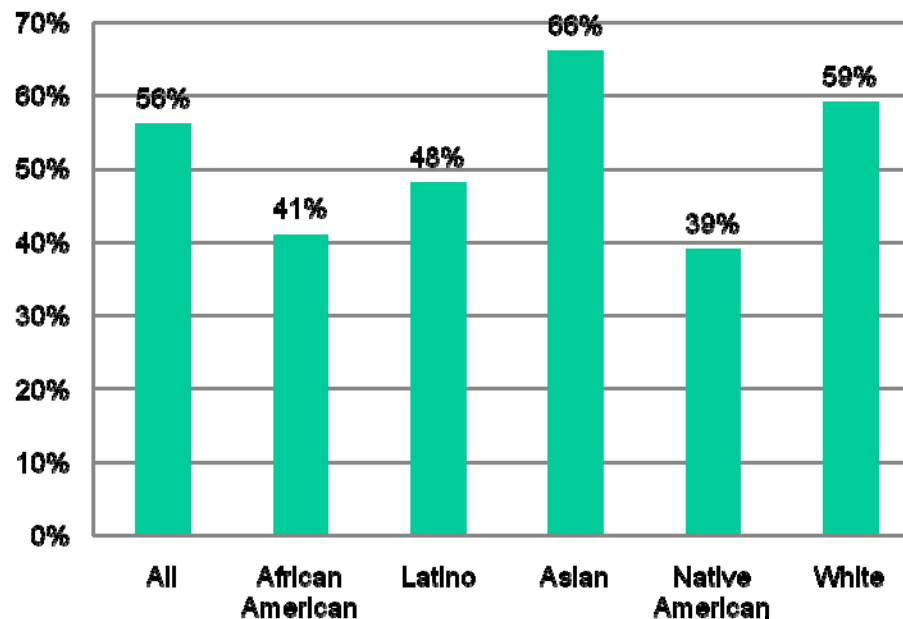
# Average Annual Earnings US 2007



# National Graduation Rate for Bachelor's Degree

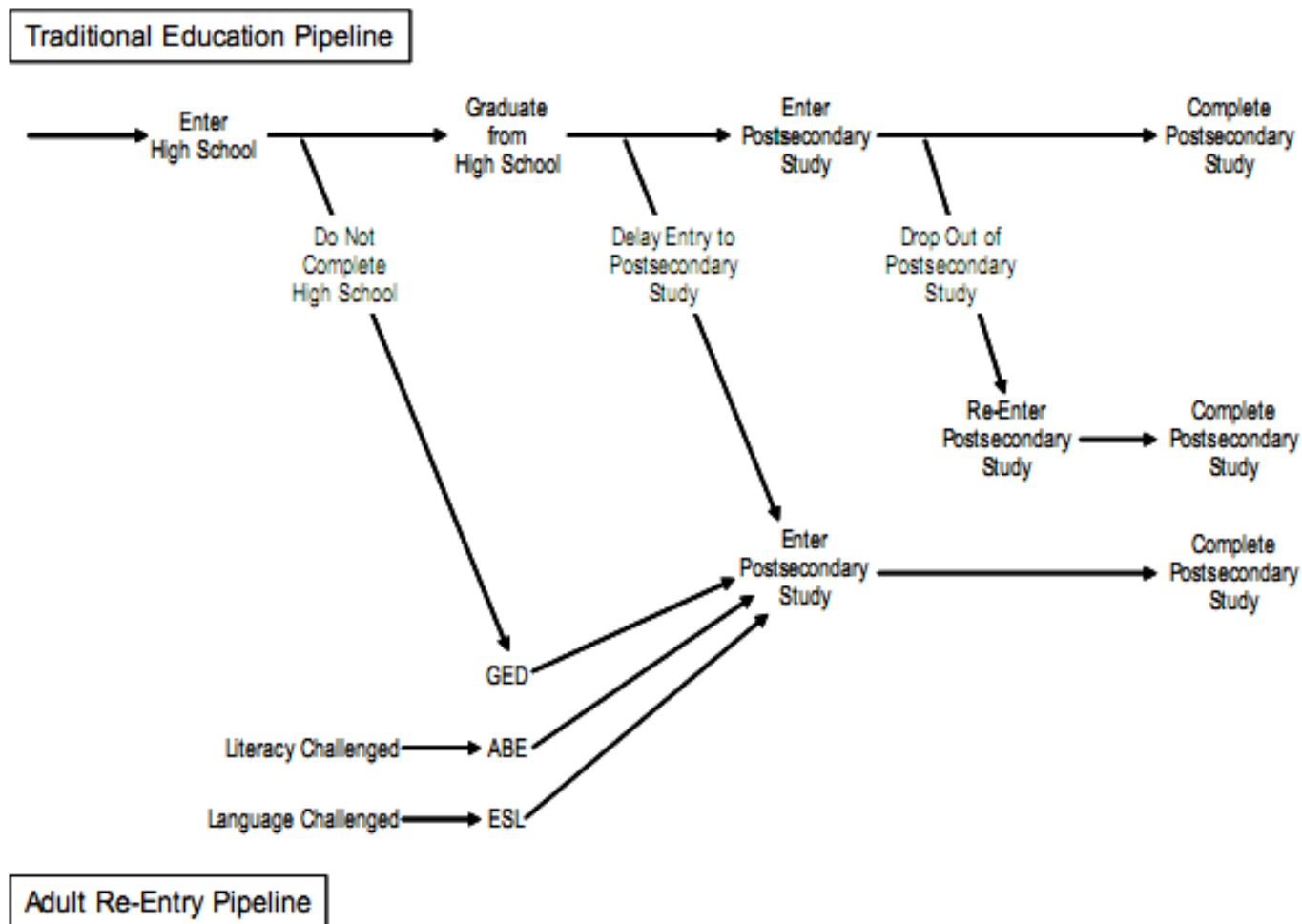
Only 56% of students who entered a four-year institution in 2000 graduated six years later

**U.S. Six-Year Graduation Rates at Four-Year Institutions, Entering Class of 2000**



Source: Education Trust, *College Results Online*.

# Higher Education “Pipelines”



## To Serve Adults Institutions Must Provide...

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- Flexible Programs that Meet Adult Needs
  - Time, Location, Length, Delivery Formats
- Pathways to Degrees that Give Some Hope of Completion
- Services Designed to Meet the Needs of Adult Learners (re-designed or new)
- More Adult-Friendly Policies
  - Credit Transfer/Acceptance
  - Prior Learning Assessment Opportunities
  - Financial Aid/Assistance for “non-traditional learners”

## What States Need to Do...

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- Establish adult learning as a major educational focus in the state;
- Expand learning opportunities and degree completion options;
- Develop statewide adult learning campaigns;
- Promote prior learning assessment strategies;
- Develop alliances and relationships with business and industry.

## State Policy “Levers” for Adults

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- Recognize the importance of this “market”
  - Its about economic development!
- Encourage/support initiatives by institutions to reach adult learners
- Provide incentives for participation
  - Institutions
  - Individuals
  - Employers
- Promote transfer credit systems that are student centric

## “Carrots and Sticks”

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- Incentive funding for institutions targeting and aiding adults to complete degrees
- Financial aid for part-time adult learners
- Tax incentives for employers supporting adult workers
  - Work day release time
  - Computer access
  - Child care
- Support for expanded on-line, weekend, accelerated and alternative delivery systems

## Questions You Might Ask...

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- What percentage of your workforce have attended college but don't have a degree?
- How many adults are within a year of completing a degree? (Probably many...)
- What institutions in your state have targeted adult learners?
- What existing policies are barriers to adults returning to college?
- What existing resources are available that institutions can use to address adult learners?

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**Thank You...**

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