

## 2019 CENSUS DATA ON SHELBY COUNTY RESIDENTS' EDUCATION LEVELS

The U.S. Census Bureau released new data in September on [income](#), [poverty](#), education, and [health insurance coverage](#) in 2019. These metrics paint a picture of the social and economic circumstances across America in the final year of a historically long period of economic growth. For years to come, they will serve as a baseline to measure many of the coronavirus recession's short- and long-term effects.

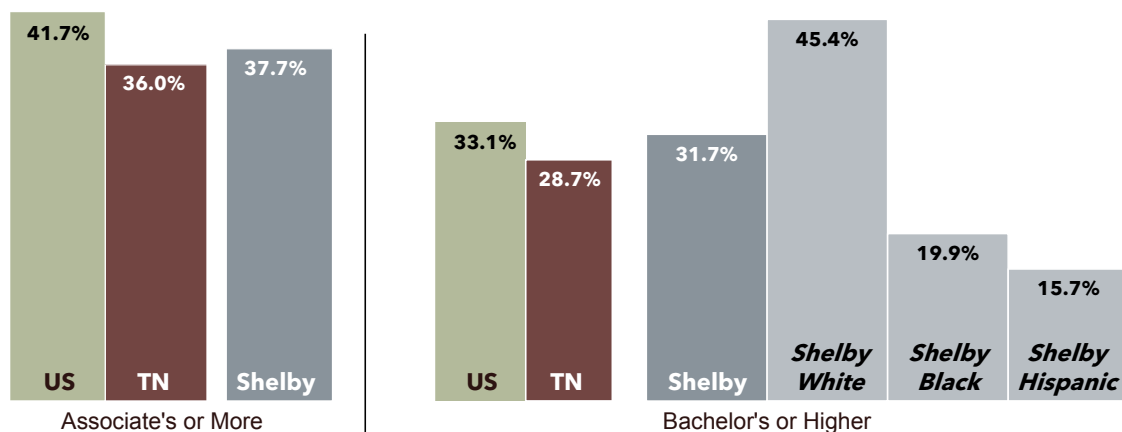
Here's what stands out from the estimates of Shelby County, Tennessee, residents' education levels in 2019.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- An estimated 37.7% of Shelby residents age 25+ had at least an associate's degree last year, and 31.7% had a bachelor's or more - both higher than statewide but unchanged from recent years.
- There are significant and growing gaps in post-secondary education rates between black and white Shelby County residents.
- Over the last decade, median earnings fell or remained unchanged for Shelby County residents at every level of education.

### Figure 1. Most Shelby County Residents Did Not Have a Post-Secondary Degree in 2019

Highest Level of Education Attained by Shelby County Residents Ages 25+ (2019)



Some Hispanic individuals also appear in the categories for black and white residents.

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

### Education Levels in Shelby County

The share of Shelby County residents with post-secondary degrees held steady into 2019, though it remains higher than the state rate and lower than the national rate. An estimated 37.7% of Shelby County residents 25 and older had at least an associate's degree last year, and 31.7% had a

bachelor's degree or higher (**Figure 1**). Both metrics have plateaued in recent years (**Figure 2**). (1) Meanwhile, state policymakers have also sought to increase the number of Tennesseans with technical degrees and certifications. However, the American Community Survey does not collect information on those credentials.

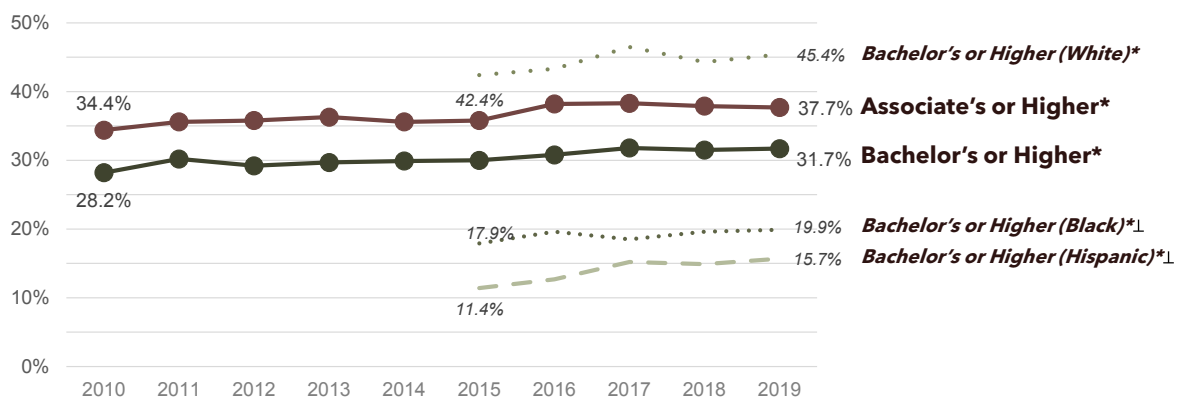
## Demographic and Geographic Variation

**There are significant and growing gaps in post-secondary education rates between black and white Shelby County residents (Figure 2).** (1) In 2018, 45% of white Shelby County residents had a bachelor's or higher compared to 20% of black residents. The difference between those two rates (26 percentage points) was not only higher than in 2015 (25 points) but also more than three times higher than the statewide difference (eight points).

**Meanwhile, differences in post-secondary education rates between Hispanic and non-Hispanic residents may have narrowed, but significant gaps remain (Figure 2)** (1). From 2015 to 2019, the share of Shelby County residents with at least a bachelor's degree grew the most among Hispanics (up 4.3 percentage points), although the increase was within the estimates' margins of error. Despite this possible progress, 16% of Hispanic residents had a bachelor's or higher, compared to 20% of black residents and 45% of white residents.

## Figure 2. Educational Attainment Rose Slightly in Shelby County Over the Last Decade but Racial Gaps Widened

Highest Level of Education Attained by Shelby County Residents Ages 25+ (2010-2019)



Some Hispanic individuals also appear in the categories for black and white residents. \*Due to the margins of error, the difference in 2018 and 2019 estimates is not statistically significant for these groups. <sup>1</sup> Due to the margins of error, the difference in 2015 and 2019 estimates is not statistically significant for these groups. Source: 2010-2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

## Education and Earnings in Shelby County

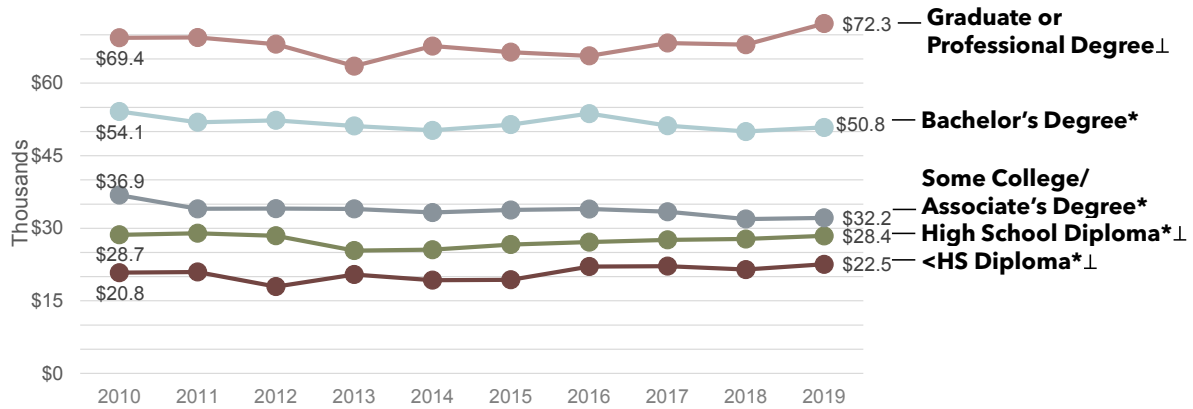
**Higher levels of education continue to be associated with higher earnings in Shelby (Figure 5).**

(1) In 2019, for example, Tennesseans with just a bachelor's degree had median earnings of about \$51,000. In other words, half of the people in that group made more and half earned less. For comparison, those median earnings were about 58% higher than for Tennesseans with only some college or an associate's degree – about \$32,000.

**Over the last decade, median earnings fell or remained unchanged for Shelby County residents at every level of education (Figure 5).** (1) (2) After adjusting for inflation, decreases occurred for earnings of those with some college or an associate's degree and those with a bachelor's degree, which were 13% and 6% lower - respectively - in 2019 than in 2010. Median earnings for residents at all other levels of education were not statistically different in 2019 compared to 2010.

### Figure 5. At Every Level of Education, Shelby County Residents Earned the Same or Less than a Decade Prior

Median Earnings for Shelby County Residents by Highest Level of Education Completed (in 2019 dollars)



Inflation-adjusted median earnings are shown in 2019 dollars using the CPI-U-RS. (2) \*Due to the margins of error, the difference in 2018 and 2019 estimates is not statistically significant for these groups. <sup>⊥</sup> Due to the margins of error, the difference in 2010 and 2019 estimates is not statistically significant for these groups.

Source: 2010-2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

See **Table A1** in the Appendix for complete 2010-2019 Shelby County data.

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## References

1. **U.S. Census Bureau.** 2010-2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. [Online] September 17, 2020. Accessed from <http://data.census.gov>.
2. **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.** Consumer Price Index: R-CPI-U-RS. [Online] [Cited: September 14, 2020.] Accessed from <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/research-series/r-cpi-u-rs-home.htm>.

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\* Due to the margins of error, the difference in some 2018 and 2019 estimates is not statistically significant. The Census Bureau's American Community Survey generates estimates based on a sample of the total population. The margin of error measures the likely range of the true value if every person were surveyed. When the error margins for two values overlap, the difference may simply be due to sampling or estimation issues. To learn more about the importance of samples, [read our tips for interpreting statistics](#).

**Table A1. 2010-2019 Census Data on Shelby County Residents' Education Levels**

American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (2010-2019)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% of Individuals Ages 25+ with an Associate's or Higher	34.4%	35.6%	35.8%	36.3%	35.6%	35.8%	38.2%	38.3%	37.9%	37.7%
% of Individuals Ages 25+ with a Bachelor's or Higher	28.2%	30.2%	29.2%	29.7%	29.9%	30.0%	30.8%	31.8%	31.5%	31.7%
- among white residents	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	42.4%	43.3%	46.5%	44.3%	45.4%
-among black residents	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17.9%	19.6%	18.5%	19.6%	19.9%
-among Hispanic residents	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11.4%	12.7%	15.2%	14.9%	15.7%
Inflation-Adjusted Median Earnings by Highest Level of Education Completed:										
-did not complete high school	\$20,818	\$20,974	\$17,956	\$20,436	\$19,267	\$19,347	\$22,099	\$22,181	\$21,471	\$22,547
-high school diploma or equivalent	\$28,659	\$28,971	\$28,448	\$25,391	\$25,570	\$26,631	\$27,149	\$27,610	\$27,791	\$28,434
-some college and/or associate's degree	\$36,860	\$34,031	\$34,074	\$33,997	\$33,264	\$33,780	\$33,996	\$33,416	\$31,917	\$32,152
-bachelor's degree	\$54,148	\$51,925	\$52,319	\$51,153	\$50,256	\$51,445	\$53,714	\$51,209	\$50,003	\$50,847
- graduate or professional degree	\$69,397	\$69,448	\$68,062	\$63,540	\$67,686	\$66,399	\$65,651	\$68,299	\$67,966	\$72,327

Inflation-adjusted median earnings are shown in 2019 dollars using the CPI-U-RS. (2) \* Indicates a statistically significant change from 2018. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2018 and 2019 estimates is not statistically significant.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)