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Is A College Degree Worth The Cost?

High unemployment rates during the recent recession and the increasing cost of a four-year degree have raised questions about the value of a college degree.

A 2013 study by the Pew Research Foundation found that 88 percent of 25 to 32 year olds with at least a bachelor’s degree say that their degree has paid off or will be worth the cost in the future. An estimated 62 percent said it has already paid off. There are many ways that a college education can “pay off”. However, the bottom line for many is income. According to the Pew report, U.S. Census data reveals that the median annual income for full-time workers ages 25 to 32 years old with only a high school degree was $28,000 in 2013. What was the median annual income for 25 to 32 year olds with at least a bachelor’s degree in 2013?

   a) $33,000  
   b) $39,500  
   c) $45,500  
   d) $57,000

Answer: c) 25 to 32 year olds with at least a bachelor’s degree earned $45,500. That is $17,500 more annually than those with only a high school diploma and $15,500 more than 25 to 32 year olds with a two-year degree or who attended college, but didn’t earn a degree.

College grads also fared better at the unemployment line. Pew reports that the unemployment rate for college grads with at least a bachelor’s degree was 3.8 percent in 2013 compared to 12.2 percent for high school grads.


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