Data Matters: Certificate Popularity Is on the Rise

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Learn more about the fastest-growing postsecondary credential in the United States. Certificates have surged in popularity in the past 20 years — in fact, they’re the fastest-growing postsecondary credential in the United States, according to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

In some instances, data show certificates may even be a better investment than a college degree. Check out our infographic for more stats.

CERTIFICATE CRAZE

Certificates of postsecondary awards has increased 16% from 1980 to 2012.

On average, workers with certificates earn 20% more money than those with only high school diplomas.

Blue-collar and tech careers hold the highest value for men.

Business and office-management careers hold the highest value for women.

MOST POPULAR CERTIFICATE FIELDS

- HEALTH CARE 15%
- BUSINESS AND OFFICE MANAGEMENT 11%
- COSMETOLOGY 7%

HOW MANY CERTIFICATE HOLDERS ATTENDED COLLEGE?

- Some college – 26%
- Associate degree – 19%
- Bachelor’s degree or higher – 15%

STATES THAT PRODUCE THE MOST CERTIFICATES

- LOUISIANA 67%
- ARIZONA 50%
- GEORGIA 50%
- KENTUCKY 50%
- FLORIDA 45%

*Awards per 10,000 population

Sources: “Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees,” by Anthony P. Carnevale, Stephen J. Rose and Andrew R. Hanson; and unpublished data from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: U.S. Census

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