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Students who attend institutions of higher education obtain a wide range of personal, financial, and other lifelong benefits; likewise, taxpayers and society as a whole derive a multitude of direct and indirect benefits when citizens have access to postsecondary education. Accordingly, uneven rates of participation in higher education across different segments of US society should be a matter of urgent concern not only to the individuals directly affected, but also to public policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels.



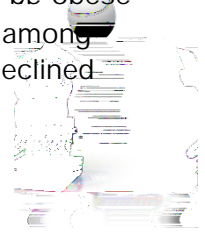
This report presents detailed evidence of the private and public benefits of

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¥ Both the percentage of people who donate their time to organizations and the number of hours people in volunteer activities are higher among individuals with higher levels of education.

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¥ Within each age group, college-educated adults are less likely than others to be obese. In addition, children living in households with more educated parents are less likely than other children to be obese.
¥ During the decade from 1998 to 2008, the smoking rate declined from 14% to 9% among adults with at least a bachelor's degree, while the rate for high school graduates declined from 29% to 27%.



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¥ Among parents whose highest degree was a bachelor's degree, 68% read to their children daily in 2007, compares to 57% of parents with an associate degree, 47% of parents with some college but no degree, high school graduates, and 26% of parents who did not complete high school.

Substantial evidence indicates that the associations described here are the result of increased educational attainment, not just individual characteristics.

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¥ The college enrollment rate of high school graduates from the lowest family income quartile increased from 51% in 1998 to 55% in 2008. The rate for middle income students declined from 63% to 61%, while 79% of the highest income high school graduates enrolled in college in 1998.