

BRIEF 1: HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION OUTCOMES

On-time high school completion drives stronger, more durable employment outcomes.

About This Series

To build a clear picture of the opportunities and supports driving economic mobility, the Office of Education Through Employment Pathways (ETEP) is releasing public-facing dashboards and briefs on education and employment outcomes for DC residents who work in the District, attended DC public schools, and participated in District-funded programs. These outcomes reflect residents whose education records could be matched to employment records – meaning the data does not yet include some residents, such as those working for the federal government or outside the District. This series will help District residents, program providers, policymakers, agency leaders, and educators better understand the impact of education and workforce programs on residents' employment outcomes.

About This Brief

This analysis examines **postsecondary employment outcomes for DC public high school alumni** whose highest level of education is high school, based on whether they completed high school in four years or less ("on-time completers"), completed high school in more than four years ("extended-time completers"), or did not complete high school ("non-completers").

Key Finding 1

The **wage gap** between **on-time completers** and **non-completers** emerges immediately after expected graduation and widens substantially over time.

One year after expected high school graduation, on-time completers earn a median annual wage of **\$18,912**, compared to **\$16,138** for non-completers.

By six years after expected graduation, that gap widens to nearly **\$10,000**: on-time completers earn **\$29,678** annually, compared to **\$38,922** for non-completers.

The gap is even larger among students classified as economically disadvantaged: six years after graduation, on-time completers in this group earn nearly twice as much annually as economically disadvantaged non-completers (**\$39,288 vs. \$22,644**)

Key Finding 2

Even among those who eventually earn a diploma, **timing matters** – and both non-completers and those who took longer than four years to earn a diploma remain concentrated in the District's lowest-wage industries.

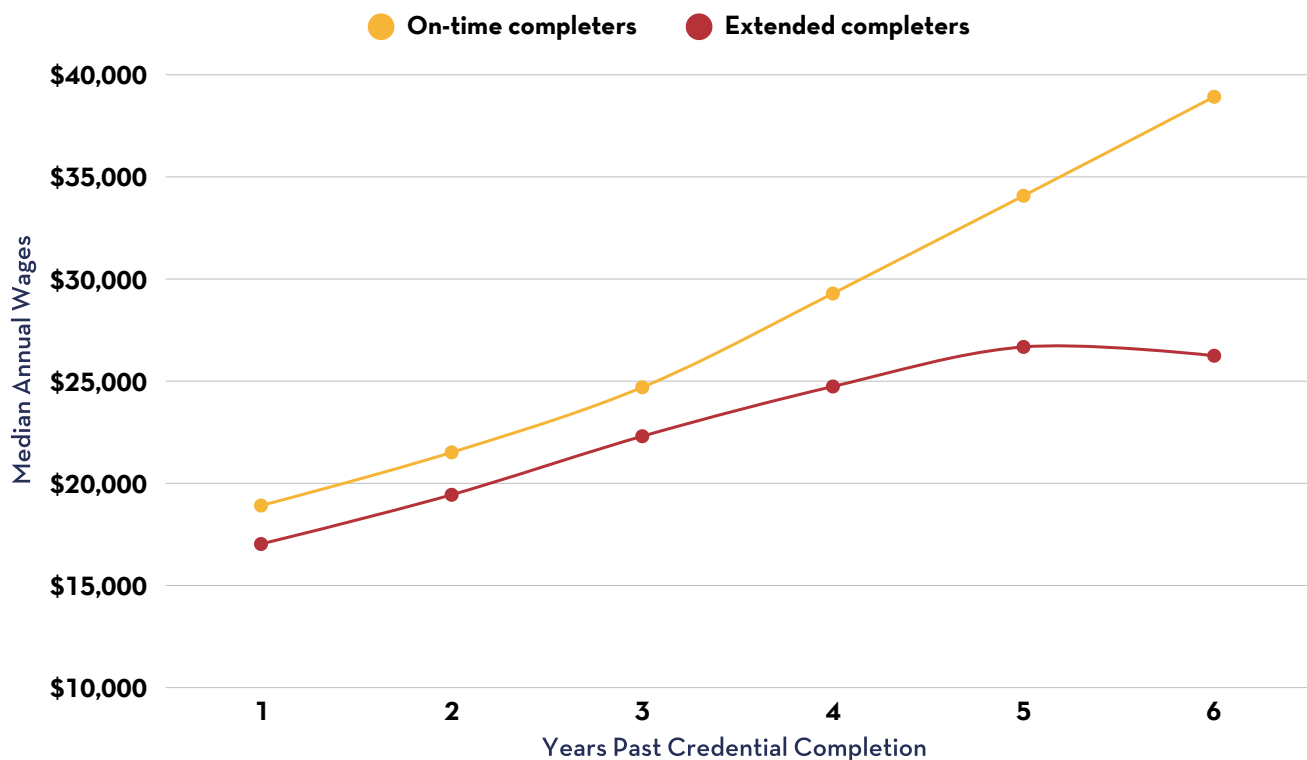
A delayed diploma comes at a cost: six years after expected graduation, on-time completers earn nearly **50% more** annually than extended-time completers who took more than four years to graduate (**\$38,922 vs. \$26,246**).

See this trend in the graph below.

Six years after expected graduation, non-completers and extended-time completers are concentrated in low-wage industries (median annual wages ranging from **\$22,634–\$34,926**; about three in four **75%** work in Administrative & Support, Waste Management & Remediation Services, Accommodation & Food Services, or Retail Trade. Conversely, only **57%** of on-time completers work in those low-wage industries.

Completing high school still pays off within these same industries: on-time completers out-earn non-completers by roughly **\$3,000–\$5,000** annually – the gap is largest in Accommodation & Food Services (~\$5,000) and smallest in Administrative & Support, Waste Management, & Remediation Services (**-\$3,000**).

Median Annual Wages in Years Past Expected HS Graduation



Additional Context



“Economically disadvantaged” is defined as students who qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), have been identified as homeless during the academic year and/or who under the care of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA or “foster care”).



Industry definitions:

- Health Care & Social Assistance: Provision of health care and social assistance for individuals.
 - Examples: Hospitals, doctors' offices, nursing homes, child care services
- Public Administration: Government establishments engaged in administering, overseeing, and managing public programs. Note that ETEP's data set does not include federal employees.
 - Examples specific to DC: DC Housing Authority, DC Government Personnel Office.
- Educational Services: Instruction and training in a wide variety of subjects, provided by specialized establishments.
 - Examples: Schools, colleges, universities, training centers

Explore the Dashboard

Use the interactive dashboards to explore these findings.

Key Finding 1:

Median Annual Wages by High School Completion Status

[LINK](#)

Key Finding 2:

Median Annual Wages by
High School Completion
Status

[LINK](#)

Employed Individuals by
Education Level 6 Years After
High School Graduation

[LINK](#)

Industries of Employment for
Students Served by DC Public
& Public Charter High Schools
6 Years After Expected High
School Graduation

[LINK](#)