

As a Boston Globe subscriber, you enjoy exclusive benefits, including events, offers, and contests. Check out the latest now.

TEXT SIZE | MANAGE ACCOUNT | LOG OUT

The Boston Globe

NEWS ▶	METRO ▶
LOTTERY ▶	OBITUARIES ▶
GLOBE NORTH ▶	GLOBE SOUTH ▶
GLOBE WEST ▶	DATA DESK ▶
MAGAZINE ▶	INSIDERS ▶
TODAY'S PAPER ▶	

Report sees fewer educated workers

Employers in state may struggle to fill openings

By **Matt Rocheleau**

| GLOBE CORRESPONDENT | OCTOBER 20, 2014



7 COMMENTS

The number of working-age adults in Massachusetts with at least a bachelor's degree will top out in 2020 before declining over the next decade, according to new projections that raise concerns about labor shortages in a state that thrives on knowledge-based industries.

A report scheduled to be released Monday by [MassINC](#), an independent Boston think tank, and the [University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute](#) forecasts that between 2020 and 2030 the number of adults ages 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree or higher will drop by about 46,000 statewide, or by about 3 percent, after rising a projected 61 percent between 1990 and 2020.

The report attributes the predicted shift to two key reasons: As the baby boom generation retires, it will be replaced by younger generations that are simply smaller in numbers; and after two decades of rapid growth, the rate of increase in educational

attainment of state residents is slowing and will eventually start to decline.

For the first time since the US Census Bureau began reporting educational attainment in 1940, Massachusetts will end a decade with fewer prime working-age college-educated residents than it had at the start of the decade, said the study, which received financial backing from the Barr Foundation.

“Massachusetts has had the luxury of having exceptional growth for decade after decade but it’s not going to come as easy for us as it has in the past,” said Benjamin Forman, research director at MassINC. “When you look at these data it’s clear we’re entering a new era. We haven’t confronted this kind of challenge before, and it’s an issue we have to pay close attention to.”

Certain parts of the state will see more significant changes than others.

The report predicts that between 2010 and 2030, the number of working-age adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher will fall by 41 percent on Cape Cod; 27 percent in the Pioneer Valley; and 9 percent in the Berkshires.

Meanwhile, the rest of the state will see gains of 1 percent in the southeast region; 5 percent in the northeast region; 9 percent in Central Massachusetts; and 10 percent in both the Metrowest region and in Greater Boston.



Some experts believe that a slowdown in the growth of college-educated workers would be a positive shift, citing research that says there already are not enough quality jobs to meet the large supply of degree-holding workers.

However, others contend the dearth of quality jobs is mostly a product of the recent economic recession. As conditions improve, employers will struggle to find well-educated workers to fill openings, some experts say.

Linda Noonan, executive director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, said her organization surveyed nearly 400 employers this fall and more than two-thirds of them said they are having trouble finding people with the right skills to fill open positions.

“Clearly Massachusetts needs and is going to continue to need workers with postsecondary degrees,” she said. “When we see educational attainment is dropping, that’s a cause for concern.”

Massachusetts has the nation’s largest percentage of residents 25 and older who hold a bachelor's degree or higher and, according to the report, the state saw a dramatic spike in that population between 1990 and 2010.

Migration to the state was a key reason for the growth, accounting for more than half of the increase during that span.

But the report's authors said they do not believe that migration will necessarily continue. Individual tastes, rising costs of living, and immigration policies could affect the flow of people moving to Massachusetts.

And, while educational attainment rose overall in the state during the past two decades, growth in bachelor's degree attainment has lagged for African-American and Latino residents, the report found.

Forman said greater efforts should be made to eliminate those racial and ethnic disparities and to increase educational attainment for all.

"If we addressed those issues, it would go a long way to providing the human talent that employers are going to need that we built our economy around today," he said.

State Higher Education Commissioner Richard Freeland said his office plans to unveil a report with similar findings later this month and will outline recommendations — including investing more in public higher education — that the state should follow to increase educational attainment.

"We live and breathe by our supply of college-educated workers." Freeland said. "Closing achievement gaps and raising graduation rates will go a long way toward solving this issue."

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)



SHOW 7 COMMENTS

As a Boston Globe subscriber, you enjoy exclusive benefits, including events, offers, and contests. Check out the latest now.

| [MANAGE ACCOUNT](#) | [LOG OUT](#)

The Boston Globe ▼

NEWS ▶	METRO
ARTS ▶	BUSINESS ▶

SPORTS

OPINION

Trending Articles

MOST VIEWED

MOST COMMENTED

MOST SHARED

1 Thomas M. Menino, Boston's longest serving mayor...

2 Brittany Maynard's dilemma: choosing the right ti...

3 High school scoreboard

4 Charlie Baker acknowledges he flubbed fisherman's...

5 Vote all you want. The secret government won't cha...

6 Why do people earn what they earn?

Learn more

7 Legal Sea Foods to close Prudential Center restaura...

SUBSCRIBE BOSTON GLOBE INSIDERS

8 That letter to the future in golden lion time capsule...

MY ACCOUNT

LOGOUT

9 Yes on Question 3: Pull the plug on flawed casino law

MY SAVED LIST

MANAGE HOME DELIVERY

10 Baker says he may have gotten some details of fishe...

MANAGE OFFLINE

MORE

ARCHIVES

PRIVACY POLICY

TERMS OF SERVICE

TERMS OF PURCHASE

YOUR AD CHOICES

DIGITAL JOBS AT BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA

VIEW ALL JOBS AT BGM

