

Graduate gap

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

BY ONE MEASURE, Massachusetts is easily the most educated state in the United States. Among our residents over 25 years old, 37.9 percent had at least a bachelor's degree in 2007, according to US Census data—putting us in front of second-place Maryland (35.2 percent) and far ahead of the nation as a whole (27.5 percent). If our education ceiling is impressive, however, our floor is not so hot. The Bay State is tied for 17th place in high school graduation rates, with 88.4 percent of our over-25 residents holding diplomas—better than the national average of 84.5 percent, but well below first-place Wyoming's 91.2 percent.

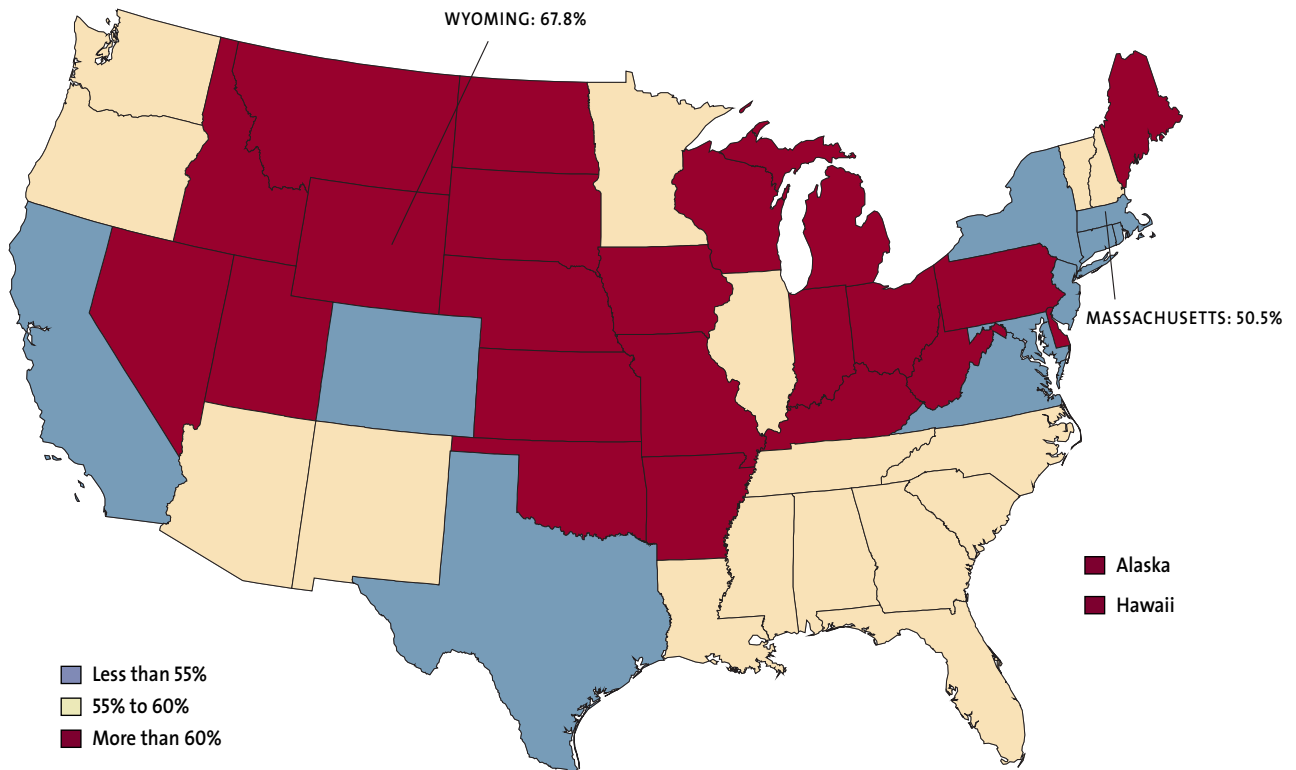
The combined result of these two statistics is that Massachusetts is dead last in the percentage of its population that has completed high school but not received a college degree, as shown on the map below. We're in the same company as several other urban states, mostly with above-average college graduate rates and so-so high school

completion rates. (The major exception is Texas, which has a so-so college graduate population and a well-below-average high school graduate population.)

Compared with 1990, the college-degree share of the Bay State population jumped by 8.1 points (up from 29.8 percent), one of the biggest increases in the US. At the same time, our high school graduate share rose by a more modest 4.7 points. (Nationally, it was up 9.0 points.) Our failure, as yet, to hit the 90 percent mark, is attributable to several cities with lagging graduation rates. In Lawrence, 37 percent of the adult population had not completed high school; the comparable figures were 36 percent in New Bedford and 34 percent in Pittsfield.

The states with the highest proportions of high school (but not college) graduates were mostly in the Farm Belt and Midwest. Intriguingly, they included eight of the 10 states with the lowest unemployment rates as of this August. **CW**

SHARE OF ADULT POPULATION WITH HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS BUT NOT COLLEGE DEGREES



Source: US Census Bureau

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