

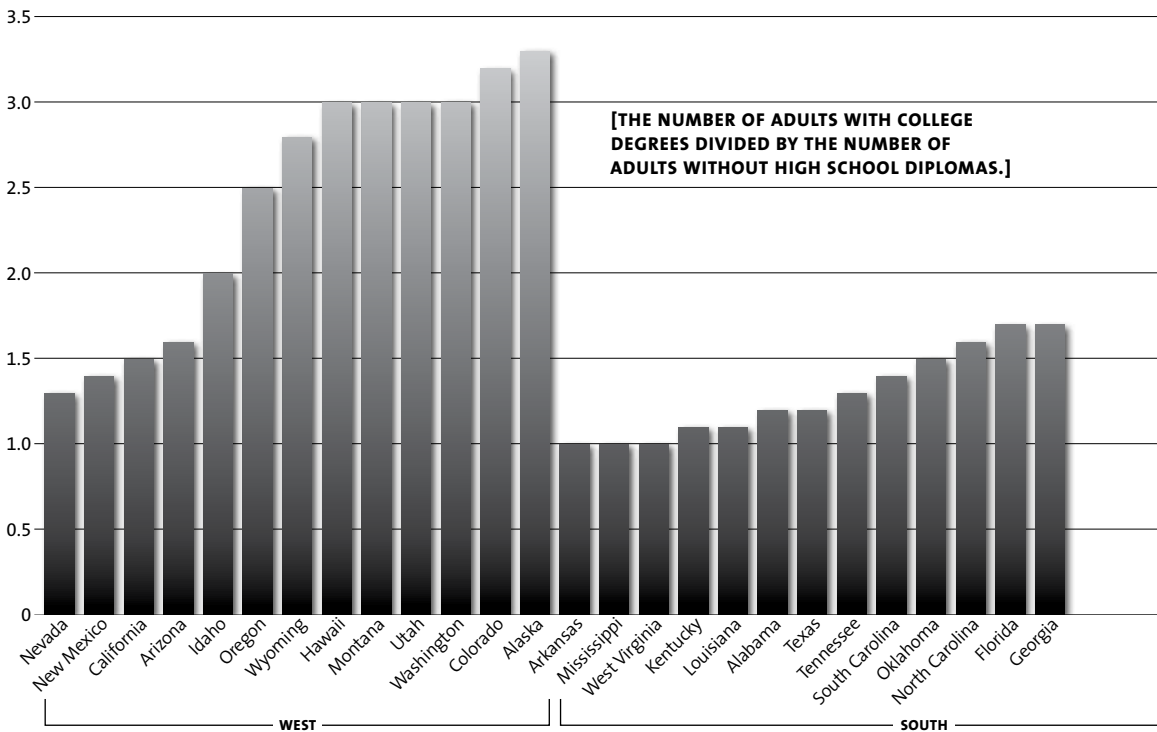
BY WILLIAM H. FREY

**Guess what?** As a nation, we are getting smarter – more educated, anyway. Almost three in 10 Americans now have college degrees, compared with just two in 10 in 1990, and one in 10 in 1970. What’s more, the proportion of Americans failing to finish high school has declined markedly.

That said, the rise in adults with sheepskins has not softened sharp regional differences in educational attainment. Ten cities offering high-end jobs and amenities – among them, San Jose, San Francisco, Boston, Ra-

leigh and Washington, DC – are home to disproportionate numbers of the well-educated. Meanwhile, metros with long-established immigrant communities (think Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas) and some new ones (e.g.,

**BRAINS TO BRAWN RATIOS FOR U.S. STATES, 2008**



Las Vegas) attract and keep the less educated.

At one end of the scale, Minneapolis-St. Paul can boast of 5.2 college grads for every high school dropout. At the other, Riverside, Calif. trails with fewer than one grad per dropout.

Slice and dice educational attainment by state, and a similar pattern emerges. Twelve states, concentrated in New England and the upper West, have brain-to-brawn ratios at or over 3.0; 13 states, mostly in the old South, Appalachia and along the Mexican border, have ratios below 1.5. Such extremes may be understandable: places full of the highly educated tend to attract more of the same. But it may not be good news in a country already divided by troubling gaps in income and culture.

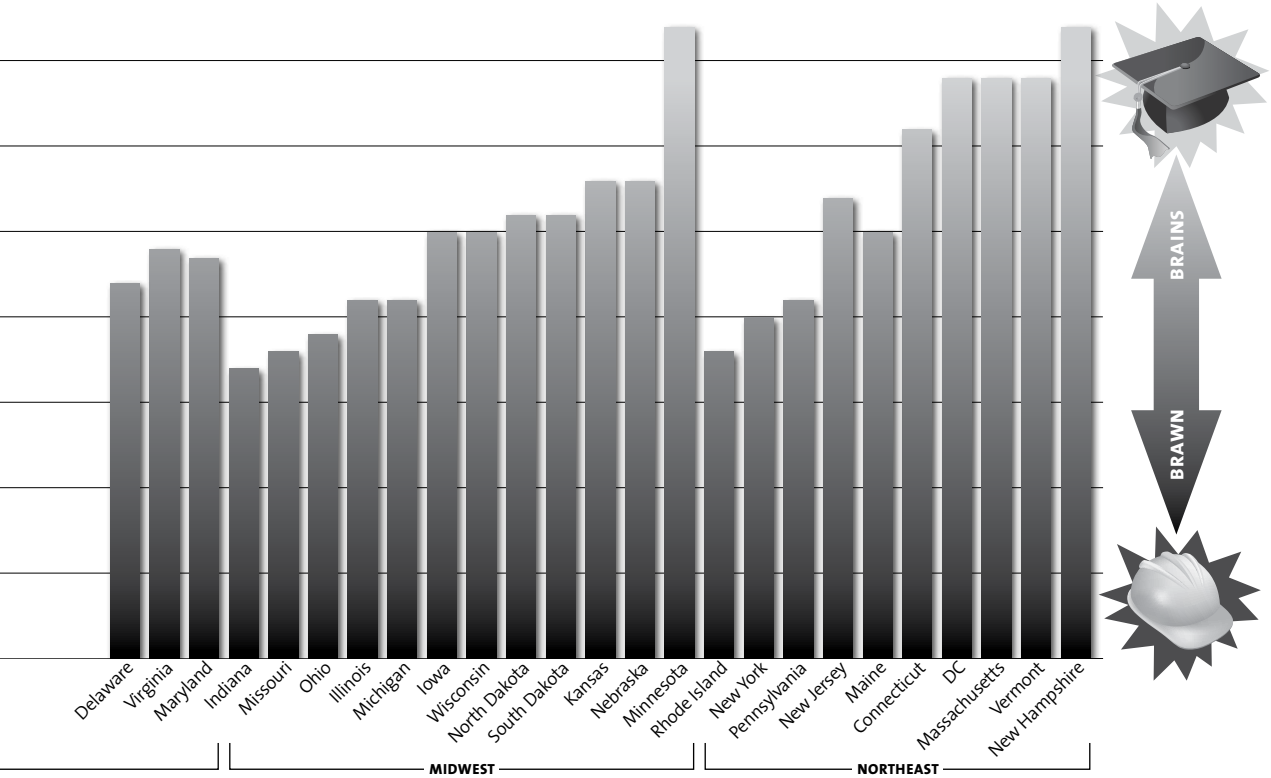
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**METROS WITH MOST COLLEGE GRADS, 2008**

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Washington, DC | 46.8% |
| San Jose       | 43.5  |
| San Francisco  | 43.4  |
| Boston         | 41.9  |
| Raleigh        | 41.5  |
| Austin         | 38.2  |
| Minn.-St.Paul  | 37.6  |
| Denver         | 37.5  |
| Seattle        | 36.4  |
| New York       | 35.2  |

**METROS WITH MOST HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS, 2008**

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| Los Angeles | 23.2% |
| Riverside   | 22.0  |
| Houston     | 19.9  |
| Dallas      | 18.8  |
| San Antonio | 18.3  |
| Providence  | 17.7  |
| Miami       | 17.3  |
| Las Vegas   | 16.8  |
| New Orleans | 16.4  |
| Phoenix     | 16.3  |



SOURCE: Author's analysis of American Community Survey (2008, 2006-8), and U.S. Census.