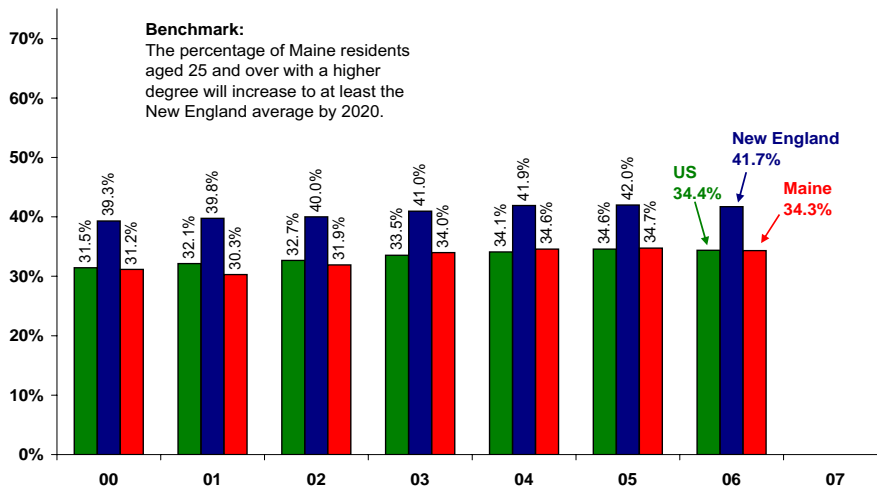


10. Higher Degree Attainment

Benchmark: The percentage of Maine residents aged 25 and over with a higher degree will increase to at least the New England average by 2020.

Higher Degree Attainment Among Residents Aged 25 and Over, New England and Maine 2000-2006



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

No Significant Change in Share of Higher Degree Holders in Maine

In 2006, just over one-third, or 34.3%, of people in Maine age 25 and over held an associate, bachelor or advanced degree. While this is in line with national numbers of 34.4%, it falls below the New England region where just over two-fifths, or 41.7%, of people hold a degree.

Of the higher degree holders in Maine in 2006, approximately one-quarter had an associate's degree, nearly half held bachelor's degrees, and another quarter held advanced degrees. This is a similar mix to New England except that New England had a slightly larger share of advanced degree holders – nearly a third of all higher degree holders had advanced degrees. The percentage of Mainers with higher degrees has increased over the last six years and has kept pace with national numbers. However, Maine has not made any significant progress toward the New England numbers and the benchmark.

Higher education is a critical factor in Maine's economic development. An educated workforce is central to Maine's competitiveness in an era of rapid knowledge advancement around the globe. An educated workforce is a critical consideration for businesses looking to locate and expand in Maine. An educated workforce has greater earning potential, particularly those with advanced degrees.

There are efforts underway to address this measure. The Maine Community College System has increased its enrollment and capacity and continues to work with industry to give more Mainers options for advancement. The University of Maine System is making investments in facilities and programs to attract more students within and outside the state. Programs like OpportunityMaine, passed by the Legislature in 2007, will offer financial incentives for people to complete a higher degree program at a Maine institution and then to stay and apply their skills in-state. These efforts will require sustained investment in order to realize the desired return.

The benchmark for this measure is set to the goal of the Maine Compact for Higher Education. The Compact's goal is to match New England's higher education attainment by 2020. For more information on Maine's Compact for Higher Education go to www.collegeforme.com.