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Jobs Gap Between College, High School Graduates Widens

By Josh Mitchell

College graduates claimed the bulk of last month's job gains, while high-school grads with no college lost jobs, highlighting a persistent divide in the recovery.



Bloomberg News

The net number of jobs held by Americans age 25 and older with at least a bachelor's degree rose by a seasonally adjusted 754,000 in November.

Jobs held by Americans with some college behind them but no bachelor's climbed by 113,000. And jobs held by adults at the lowest rung of educational achievement — workers with no high-school diploma — increased by 192,000.

Meantime, jobs held by Americans in the middle — high-school grads with no college — fell by 284,000 last month.

To be sure, the job gains by college graduates may have been exaggerated by the return of furloughed workers after the government shutdown estimated at somewhere over 350,000. Even taking that into account, the unemployment gap between college grads and high-school grads — a defining characteristic of the recovery — likely widened.

The unemployment rate for college grads fell by four-tenths in November to 3.4%, the lowest since November 2008, during the last recession. That's not far off from pre-recession levels, when the rate typically hovered between 2% and 3%. The latest drop reflected more college grads getting jobs, rather than departures from the labor force. Of course, though college grads are getting the lion's share of the jobs, it doesn't mean those are good jobs. Overall employment gains have come from lower wage jobs, with many graduates underemployed.

Meanwhile, the jobless rate for high-school grads with no college was 7.3% in November (above the national rate of 7%), unchanged from October. They're seeing progress — the unemployment rate for high-school grads was 8.1% a year ago — but it's been a frustrating slog.

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