

National Participation in Adult Education, 2004-05

Formal & Informal Activities of, Employer Support for, & Use of Distance Learning by Adult Basic Education (ABE) & English as a Second Language (ESL) Students

During 2004 and 2005, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveyed a nationally representative sample of adults. Forty-four percent of adults reported participating in some kind of formal adult education (excluding full-time college attendance) during that period.

Seven percent of the survey respondents reported being students in basic skills and/or GED test preparation classes, while two percent reported being students in ESL classes. (See Chart 1.)

Chart 1. Percentage of Adults Without a High School Diploma by Type of Adult Education Participation, 2004-05

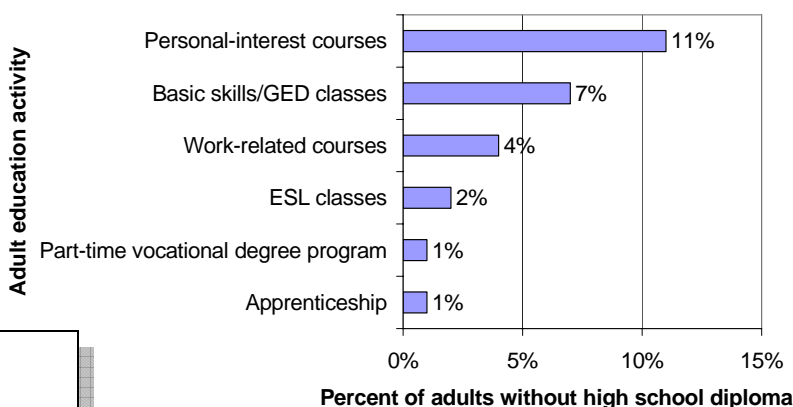
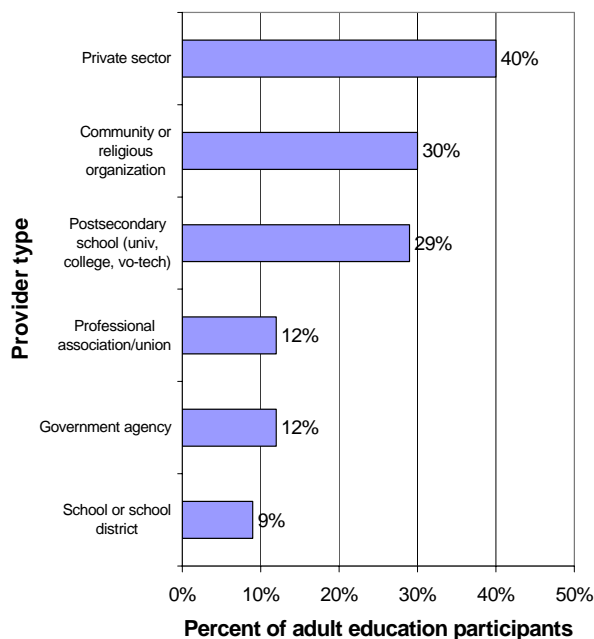


Chart 2. Percentage of Adults in Adult Education Activities by Provider Type, 2004-05

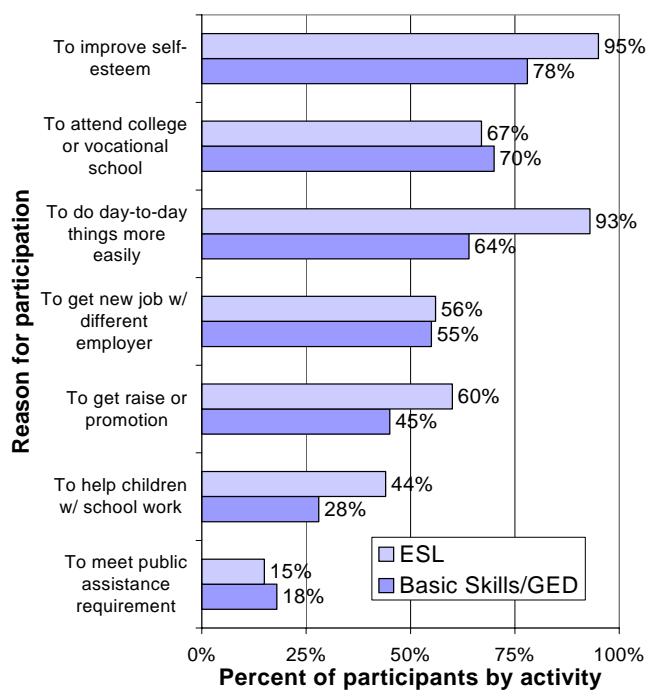


Adult education opportunities are offered by a wide variety of public and private sector providers. Two out of five participating adults (40%) are served by private sector businesses, companies, or hospitals. Community and religious organizations serve three out of ten adult education participants (30%). A similar proportion (29%) is served by postsecondary institutions (i.e., universities, colleges, vocational-technical schools). Professional associations or unions and government agencies serve 12 percent each, and schools or school districts serve nine percent. (See Chart 2.)

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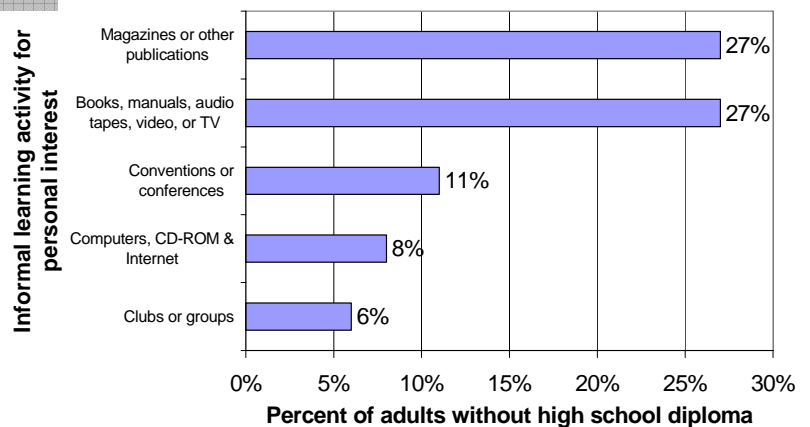
Chart 3. Reasons for Participation in Adult Education Activities for Basic Skills/GED & ESL Participants, 2004-05



When students in basic skills, GED test preparation, and ESL classes were asked why they participate in such activities, their most frequent reason was to improve their self-esteem (78% basic skills/GED, 95% ESL). Ninety-three percent of ESL students indicated that their classes made it easier for them to do things on a day-to-day basis. That reason was also given by 64 percent of basic skills/GED students. Seventy percent of basic skills/GED students took classes to qualify to attend college or vocational schools. (See Chart 3.)

When adults without a high school diploma were asked how they pursue informal learning activities, over a quarter (27%) indicated that they read magazines and other publications, and the same percentage reported using books, manuals, audio tapes, video formats, and television as sources of information. (See Chart 4.)

Chart 4. Percentage of Adults Without a High School Diploma by Type of Informal Learning Activities for Personal Interest, 2004-05



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Adults who had not graduated from high school were also asked about the types of support for participation in adult education activities they receive from their employers. Approximately two-thirds reported taking classes during work hours (66%) and receiving financial support (64%). Three out of five said they were paid while taking courses, and three out of ten (30%) attended classes at their workplaces. (See Chart 5.)

Chart 5. Percentage of Adults Without a High School Diploma by Type of Employer Support for Adult Education, 2004-05

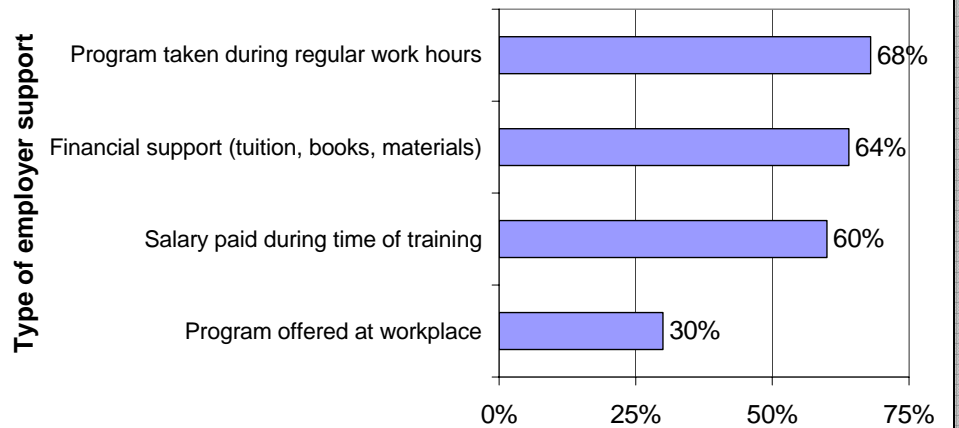
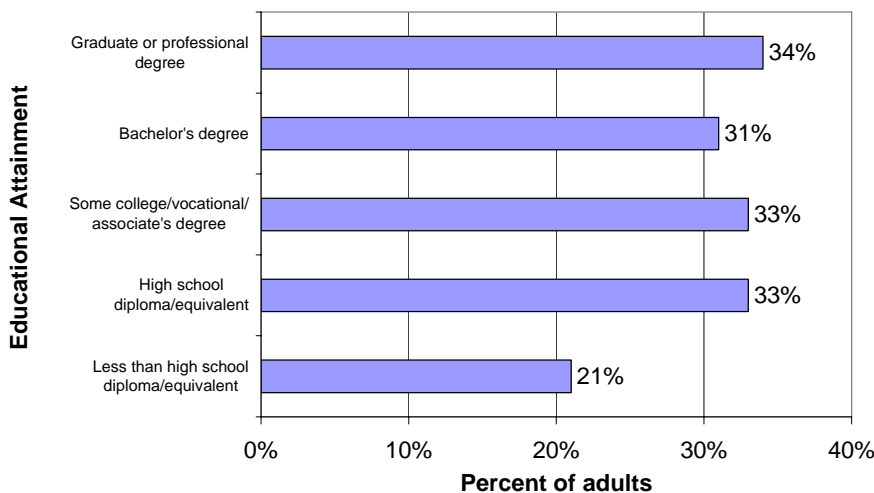


Chart 6. Use of Distance Education Reported by Adults by Educational Attainment, 2004-05



Finally, adults responding to the survey were asked if they had ever made use of any means of distance education (encompassing everything from courses offered at remote locations to courses offered entirely online). For all educational attainment groups from high school graduation up, approximately one-third of respondents said yes, compared to only 21 percent of adults without a high school diploma. (See Chart 6.)

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While adult education encompasses a wide variety of activities, among the most important of these are basic skills instruction, GED test preparation, and ESL classes. These types of adult education not only enable adult students to learn how to live in our society, but provide them with the foundation necessary to pursuing advancement, whether through education, in the workplace, or both. Adults who have not graduated from high school use a variety of resources in learning about personal interests, but few of them are yet taking advantage of distance education opportunities. It is a hopeful sign, however, that many employers are recognizing that it is in their interests as much as the interests of their workers for them to support adult education opportunities.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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