

Lit



Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 1 ♦ Number 4

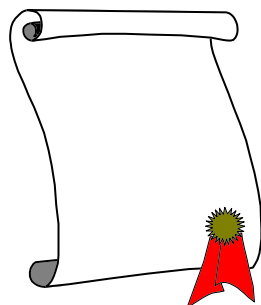
September 1, 1997

Gender Differences Among Colorado GED Graduates, 1995-96

In mid-1996, the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative surveyed 328 Coloradans who earned GED diplomas between October and December 1995. Of these graduates, 235 responded. (Response rate: 70 percent) The overall responses to this survey were reported in the second issue of LitScan (v. 1, n. 2, February 11, 1997). Further analysis of this data revealed some noteworthy differences between male and female GED graduates.

Highlights

- ◆ Male GED graduates four times as likely as women to receive promotions or raises.
- ◆ Women graduates three times as likely as men to become politically active, and twice as likely to vote.
- ◆ Women graduates twice as likely as men to be more confident about their children's lives, and three times as likely to start taking their children for medical checkups and inoculations.
- ◆ Women graduates twice as likely to have had dropout parents.
- ◆ Men graduates more likely to have taken GED tests for present jobs, women for educational admissions or a sought job.



Educational Aspirations

While female respondents were more likely than male respondents to be:

- ◆ enrolled in college courses for credit (36 v. 29 percent),
- ◆ in vocational or technical training (25 v. 15 percent), and
- ◆ taking non-credit courses (17 v. 13 percent),

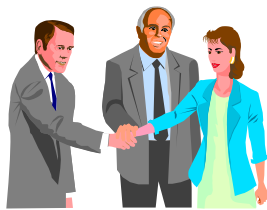
men were slightly more likely than women be receiving on the job training (36 v. 33 percent).

Despite this finding, however, women tended to have lower educational aspirations than men:

- ◆ Women were slightly more likely to be aiming for associate's degrees (39 v. 33 percent).
- ◆ And, equal percentages of male and female respondents indicated they were working toward bachelor's degrees (seven percent).
- ◆ But, men were more than twice as likely as women to indicate working toward a master's degree (seven v. three percent).
- ◆

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Employment Changes

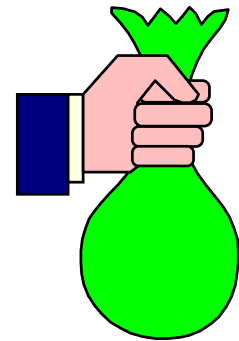
Survey respondents were asked to indicate how their employment status changed since passing the GED tests. In certain key respects, men report experiencing bigger payoffs than women.

- ◆ Men were four times more likely than women to report receiving promotions (16 v. 4 percent) and somewhat more likely to have changed jobs (20 v. 16 percent).
- ◆ One out of five survey respondents—male and female—reported getting a better job, and one out of 10 reported performing their current jobs better.
- ◆ Seven percent of female respondents reported getting off public assistance. (No male respondents reported this change; but, this may reflect the lesser likelihood of their having been on public assistance.)
- ◆ Only two male respondents reported entering the military.

Changes in Personal Finances

Survey respondents were asked to identify positive changes in their personal finances since passing the GED tests. Again, men were more likely to report job-related payoffs, while women reported more personal ones.

- ◆ Men were almost four times more likely than women to have received raises (20 v. 6 percent) and twice as likely to get better paying jobs (28 v. 14 percent).
- ◆ Women were four times more likely than men to become first-time homeowners (four v. one percent) and twice as likely to move to better homes (10 v. 5 percent).
- ◆ More than one out of six respondents—male and female—reported starting to save or invest.



Changes in Educational and Cultural Activities

Survey respondents were asked to identify any increases in their educational and cultural activities since passing the GED tests. More women than men reported:

- ◆ encouraging others to stay in school, prepare for the GED, or pursue other educational opportunities (79 v. 49 percent),
- ◆ spending more time keeping up with current events (45 v. 37 percent),
- ◆ discussing school matters with their children more frequently (29 v. 16 percent),
- ◆ getting a library card for themselves or their children (21 v. 13 percent),
- ◆ starting or doing a better job at helping their children with school work (26 v. 16 percent),
- ◆ acquiring a home computer (16 v. 13 percent),
- ◆ their children's attitudes toward school improving (19 v. 13 percent),
- ◆ beginning to communicate or communicating more with their children's teachers (18 v. 11 percent),
- ◆ their children's school work improving (13 v. nine percent), and
- ◆ getting involved or more involved in their children's school activities (12 v. seven percent),

Thirteen percent of all respondents—male and female—reported attending plays or concerts or visiting museums more frequently. Men were more likely than women to report only one activity: joining a commercial online information service, like America Online, CompuServe, or Prodigy (seven v. four percent).



Changes in Community Participation

Survey respondents were asked to report any increases in community participation since passing the GED tests. One out of 10 respondents--male and female--reported beginning to vote in political elections, but otherwise women indicated higher levels of political participation than men:

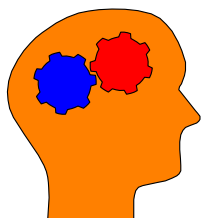
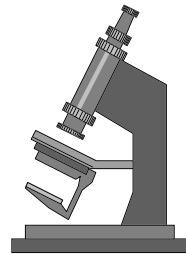
- ♦ Women were almost three times as likely as men to participate in a political caucus, campaign rally, or other political event (three v. one percent), and almost twice as likely to have registered to vote (24 v. 14 percent).
- ♦ Women were also almost twice as likely as men to begin to attend or increase attendance at local community events, such as festivals, fairs, benefits, and walks (21 v. 12 percent).
- ♦ Women were slightly more likely than men to start doing or increase volunteer work in the community (11 v. 7 percent).

Somewhat surprisingly, the only type of community participation in which men engaged in more than women was joining a community organization or hobby group (9 v. 6 percent).

Health Benefits

Survey respondents were asked to identify how their and their family's physical health has changed since passing the GED tests. The most dramatic difference between the sexes regards items concerning children's health.

- ♦ Women were more than four times as likely as men to report taking their children in for dental checkups on a more regular basis (18 vs. four percent) and more than three times as likely to report taking their children for medical checkups and inoculation on a more regular basis (32 v. nine percent).
- ♦ In addition, women were more likely to report doing more to prevent poor health (e.g., diet, exercise) (33 v. 26 percent), receiving medical checkups on a more regular basis (19 v. 14 percent), and missing fewer days of work due to illness (18 v. 10 percent).
- ♦ About one out of six respondents--male and female--reported receiving dental checkups themselves on a more regular basis.



Psychological Benefits

Survey respondents were asked to identify how they benefited psychologically from passing the GED tests.

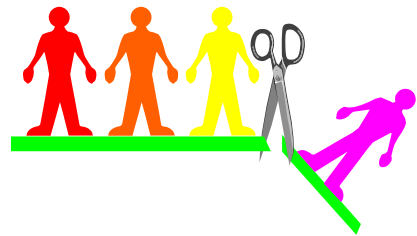
Women were more likely than men to report:

- ◆ feeling more confident about their children's future (38 v. 15 percent),
- ◆ doing better at solving problems in their lives (40 v. 33 percent), and
- ◆ being more satisfied with their jobs (26 v. 20 percent).

Respondents (male and female) were more or less equally likely to report:

- ◆ setting more realistic goals for their future (64 and 61 percent),
- ◆ being more satisfied with life in general (63 and 62 percent),
- ◆ being more open to change (46 and 42 percent),
- ◆ understanding themselves better (38 and 34 percent),
- ◆ communicating better with others verbally (36 and 34 percent),
- ◆ having more respect for others' opinions (31 percent),
- ◆ getting along better with family and friends (29 and 30 percent), communicating better with others in writing (28 and 26 percent), and
- ◆ getting along better with coworkers (16 and 15 percent).

Intergenerational Aspects of Dropping Out & Passing the GED Tests



Data about survey respondents indicate that there are intergenerational--as well as gender-related--aspects of dropping out and of later passing the GED tests:

- ◆ Women were twice as likely as men to have parents who had dropped out before completing high school (dropout fathers: 31 v. 15 percent, dropout mothers: 27 v. 14 percent).
- ◆ But, women were also three times as likely as men to have fathers who passed the GED tests (nine v. three percent) and twice as likely to have mothers who did so (14 v. 7 percent).

Reasons for Not Completing School

Survey respondents were also asked to identify why they did not complete school. There were several dramatic differences between men and women. Women were more likely than men to have left school due to family-related reasons:

- ◆ Many women became pregnant (26 percent).
- ◆ Women were overwhelmingly more likely than men to get married (14 v. 1 percent)
- ◆ Women were 50 percent more likely to become ill themselves or to become caregivers to ill family members (nine v. six percent).
- ◆ Women were one third more likely to report transportation problems (six v. four percent).
- ◆ Women were 25 percent more likely to leave school because their families "thought they should" (four v. three percent).

Men were more likely than women to have left school for reasons relating to their behavior:

- ◆ Men were three times as likely to experience difficulties understanding the language (three v. one percent).
- ◆ Men were a third more likely than women to have problems with teachers (21 v. 15 percent).

In addition to such behavioral problems, men were one quarter more likely than women to leave school to take a job (20 v. 16 percent).

Other reasons for leaving school were reported more or less equally by men and women. Both men and women reported:

- ◆ not being interested in school (43 and 39 percent),
- ◆ experiencing peer pressure (19 and 16 percent), and
- ◆ finding school too difficult (six and five percent).



Why They Took the GED Tests

Both male and female respondents identified personal enrichment as the reason they decided to prepare for and take the GED tests. Almost three out of four women and more than two out of three men reported this reason. But, there are marked gender differences among the other reasons reported that appear to be related to future orientation:

- ◆ Men were three times as likely to report taking the GED tests because it was a requirement of their present jobs (nine v. three percent).
- ◆ Women were almost twice as likely to report that it was required for educational admission, and more than twice as likely to report that it was required for a job they were seeking (21 v. 9 percent).

Conclusions

There are definite gender differences among GED graduates. Generally, these differences reflect the relative status and different traditional roles of women and men in society. Male graduates are more likely to see a financial payoff from passing the GED tests, while female graduates are more likely to experience social and psychological benefits that have intergenerational consequences. However, all GED graduates, regardless of gender, experience many of the same benefits from passing the tests.

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