

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Geography of Functional Illiteracy Among Colorado Hispanics

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, one in five adults (those age 25 or over) did not graduate from high school. For Hispanic adults, that ratio is half. Of the over 5.6 million Hispanic adults who did not graduate from high school, three out of five did not even begin it. On the basis of numerous studies that have directly tested the literacy skills of such populations, these conditions are known to identify the functionally illiterate.

Conditions in Colorado are only slightly better. One out of six Colorado adults and more than two out of five Hispanic adults in the state did not graduate from high school. Of the almost 91,000 Hispanic dropouts in the Colorado, half did not even begin high school.

Conditions in the state's five metropolitan areas vary dramatically. (See Table 1.) Two figures stand out in this table:

- ◆ The incidence of functional illiteracy among Hispanics is highest in metropolitan Denver. Over 46,000 Hispanic Coloradans living in the metropolitan Denver counties cannot read, write, or do simple math well enough to achieve their potential socially or economically.
- ◆ The proportion of functional illiteracy among the state's Hispanic population is highest in the Greeley area: 59 percent—twice the rate in the Colorado Springs area and half again the rate for the Fort Collins-Loveland and Pueblo areas.

**Table 1 ♦ Hispanic Coloradans Who Did Not Complete High School
by Metropolitan Area, 1990**

Metropolitan Area	Less than 9 th grade		9 th -12 th grade, no diploma		Total (less than high school graduate)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Colorado Springs	1,848	11%	3,024	18%	4,872	29%
Denver (metro counties)	18,994	16%	27,067	23%	46,061	40%
Fort Collins-Loveland	1,151	20%	934	17%	2,085	37%
Greeley	4,693	37%	2,824	22%	7,517	59%
Pueblo	4,846	20%	4,404	18%	9,250	38%

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Attached is an additional table reporting the same data—numbers and percentages of Hispanics who did not begin or complete high school—for Colorado counties (Table 2).

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