

Lit



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Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Illiteracy in Colorado Down Almost One-Third Since 1990 ...But State Ranks Fifth Among Western States in Improvement



In September 1993, the National Center for Education Statistics published **Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey**. That report provided the first direct evidence of a relationship long suspected by adult educators: low educational attainment—specifically failure to graduate from high school is an extremely strong predictor of functional illiteracy.

Consequently, data from the 1990 Census and the recently released 1996 Current Population Survey (CPS) may be used to observe the dramatic progress being made in the battle against illiteracy in the Western states (see table).

Findings:

- Educational attainment data from the 1990 Census indicated that one of every six adult Coloradans was functionally illiterate—compared with one-quarter of adults nationwide.
- CPS data indicates that, by 1996, only one out of ten

Low Educational Attainment of Persons Age 25 and Older, for Western States, April 1, 1990; March 1996; and Percent Change

State	Percent not high school/GED graduates			Percent Change
	1990	1996*	Margin for error (+/-)*	
United States	24.8%	18.3%	N/A	-26.2%
Wyoming	17.0%	9.8%	1.9%	-42.4%
Utah	14.9%	9.3%	2.4%	-37.6%
Nevada	21.2%	14.6%	1.7%	-31.1%
Idaho	20.3%	14.1%	1.7%	-30.5%
Colorado	15.6%	10.9%	1.7%	-30.1%
Montana	19.0%	14.4%	1.8%	-24.2%
Arizona	21.3%	16.5%	2.0%	-22.5%
New Mexico	24.9%	22.9%	2.2%	-8.0%

SOURCES: U.S. Census, 1990; Current Population Survey (CPS), 1996.

*Because figures for 1996 are CPS estimates, the actual figure for each state may be as high or as low as the estimate plus or minus the margin for error.

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adult Coloradans was functionally illiterate—compared with one out of five adults nationwide.

- The comparison of these two sets of data on Colorado yields the good news that the state's illiteracy rate has been reduced by almost one-third over the six year interval.
- While that is a dramatic improvement—especially compared to the national figures—the Colorado adult education community cannot afford to rest on its laurels: four other Western states—Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and Idaho—experienced even larger gains.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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