

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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The Changing Face of Functional Illiteracy in the West:

Educational Attainment by Region, Race/Ethnicity, and Age, 1996

Highlights

- Hispanics in Western states more than twice as likely as Whites and Blacks to be functionally illiterate.
- Rates of illiteracy are converging for younger Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics in Western states.

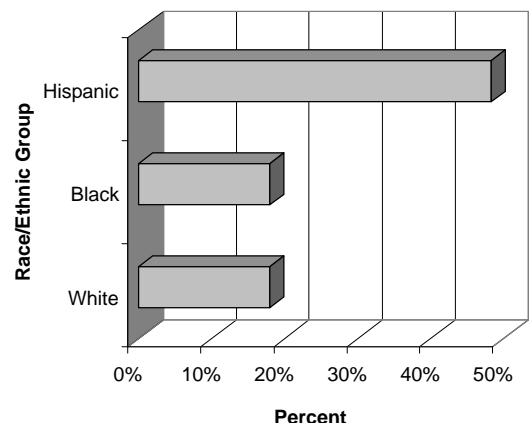
Recently, the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey yielded March 1996 data on educational attainment by region, race/ethnicity and age. Because failure to graduate from high school or pass the GED Tests is an extremely strong predictor of functional illiteracy, educational attainment data make it possible to assess the literacy status of the general population.

In 1996, Hispanics in

Western states were more than twice as likely as Whites and Blacks to be functionally illiterate.

- In the Rocky Mountain and Pacific coast states, fewer than one in five Whites and Blacks 18 years old and over (18 percent) failed to graduate from high school or pass the GED Tests.
- More than two out of five Hispanic adults in those states (48 percent) had not received a high school or GED diploma.

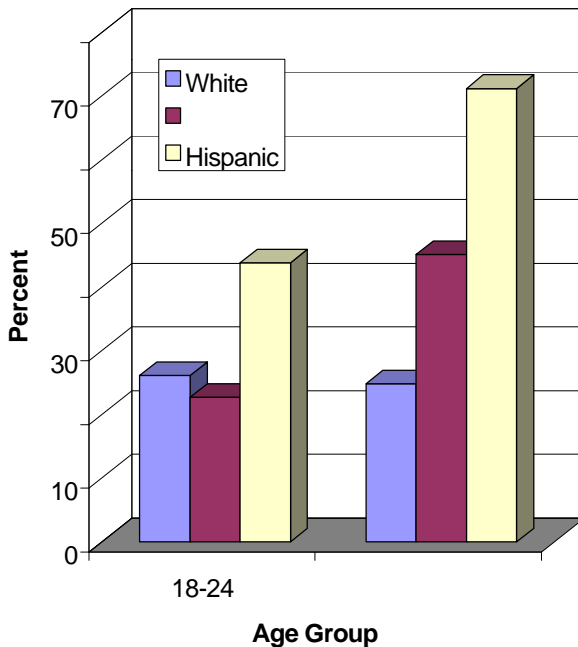
Percent Not High School Graduates for Persons Age 18 and Over for Selected Racial/Ethnic Groups Western States, 1996



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Office of Adult Education ♦ Colorado Department of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue ♦ Denver, Colorado 80203-1799
(303) 866-6609 ♦ fax (303) 830-0793 ♦ web site www.lrs.org/clri

Percent Not High School Graduates for Selected Racial/Ethnic Groups Western States, 1996



As of 1996, rates of functional illiteracy were converging for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics 18 years old and over in Western states.

- Among Western adults 65 years old and over, Blacks were almost twice as likely as Whites never to have completed high school or passed the GED Tests, and Hispanics were almost three times as likely as Whites not to have graduated.
- Among Westerners between the ages of 18 and 24, these gaps were reduced significantly. In that age group, Blacks were actually somewhat more likely to have completed high school than Whites; but, Hispanics were still almost twice as likely as Whites and Blacks never to have received a high school diploma.
- While the trend across these two age groups is improvement for Hispanics, the trends for Whites and Blacks are curious. In the 18-24 age group, the Black and White rates of failure to complete high school almost converged at 25 percent. Younger Blacks are much more likely to have completed high school than their elders, but younger whites are slightly less likely to have done so.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about this study or other projects of the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative, contact: Keith Curry Lance, Library Research Service, 201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 309, Denver, CO 80203-1799, (303) 866-6737, fax (303) 866-6940, e-mail klance@csn.net

For more information about adult education programs in Colorado, contact: Dian Bates, Office of Adult Education, Colorado Dept. of Education, 201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 100, Denver, CO 80203-1799, (303) 866-6611 or 866-6609 - fax (303) 866-6947, e-mail Bates_D@cde.state.co.us