

# Lit Scan

## Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

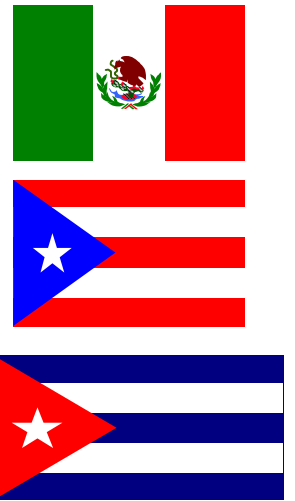
Volume 2 ♦ Number 8

October 23, 1998

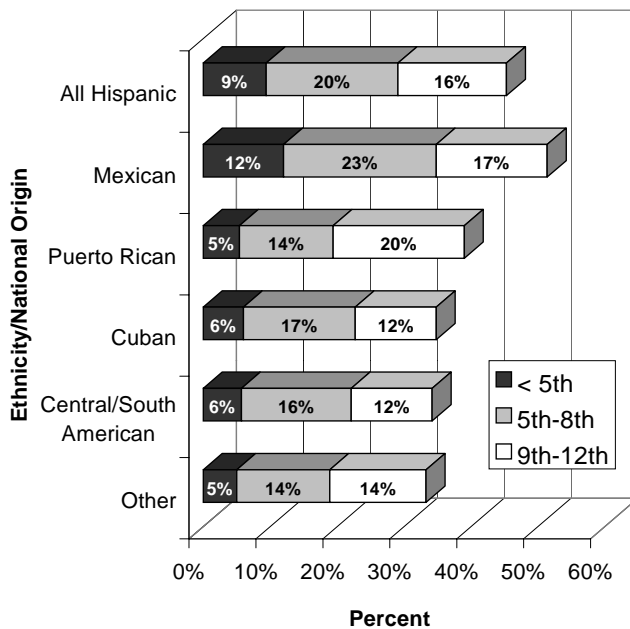
### The Variable Risk of Functional Illiteracy in U.S. Hispanic Communities, 1997

Because most ethnic group statistics employ the category "Hispanic," it is easy to overlook the fact that, beyond roots that include the Spanish language, members of different U.S. Hispanic communities vary dramatically in culture, experience, and educational attainment. The results of the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) demonstrated conclusively that low educational attainment is an

extremely strong predictor of functional illiteracy (**Adult Literacy in America**, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993).



**Low Educational Attainment by Grade Level for Hispanics by Ethnicity/National Origin, 1997**



#### Highlights

- Mexicans are the only U.S. Hispanic group of which more than half of adults are not high school or GED graduates.
- Mexican children are at double the risk of other groups of not even completing grade school.
- Mexican pre-teens are also at greatest risk of not completing middle school.
- Puerto Rican teens are at greatest risk of dropping out during high school years.

© 1998 – permission granted to reproduce for non-profit purposes

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](http://www.lrs.org/clri)

**LitScan v. 2 – n. 8 – The Variable Risk of Functional Illiteracy in Hispanic Communities, 1997 – October 23, 1998**

---

Recently released 1997 data on the educational attainment of Hispanic adults (i.e., age 25 and over) in the United States indicate some dramatic differences in the risk of functional illiteracy to members of sub-groups:

- Over half (52 percent) of Mexicans have not graduated from high school or passed the GED Tests. For most other Hispanic sub-groups, only about a third of adults did not receive high school or equivalent credentials.
- These losses begin alarmingly early. Mexican children are at least twice as likely as other young Hispanics to drop out of school before completing even the elementary grades.
- Mexican pre-teens (grades 5 through 8) are a third more likely than their Cuban, Puerto Rican, or Central/South American counterparts to drop out of school during the middle school years.
- Puerto Rican teens are slightly more likely than their Mexican peers to drop out during the high school years, but about half again as likely to drop out of high school as Cubans, Central/South Americans, and other Hispanics.

**SOURCE**

---

**Hispanic Population of the United States (Current Population Survey, March 1997: Detailed Tables)** Visit [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), word search "educational attainment," and go to result #3.)

**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](mailto: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](mailto:Bates_D@cde.state.co.us)