

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

Volume 6 - Number 8

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The Geography of Adult Low Literacy Skills in Colorado

Table 1.
Colorado Counties With Most Adults Who Did Not Graduate High School, 2000

County	Number of adults not high school graduates
Denver	79,034
Adams	47,240
Arapahoe	29,574
Jefferson	28,747
El Paso	28,029
Weld	21,633
Pueblo	17,199
Boulder	13,404
Larimer	12,013
Mesa	11,453

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 363,039 adult Coloradans (age 25 and over) who never graduated from high school or earned a GED diploma. Of those, over a third—134,348—failed to complete the ninth grade.

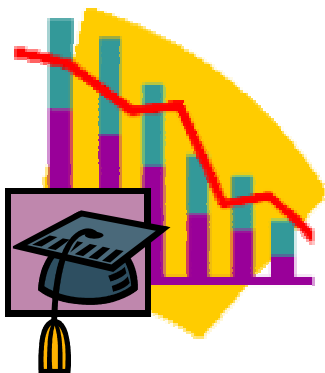
Research indicates that those who dropout during high school—and even more, those who dropout before reaching high school—are at an extremely high risk of having low literacy skills. This means that one out of every seven or eight adult Coloradans—those who did not complete high school—likely cannot read and understand a library book, a newspaper story, a bus schedule ... or their child's or grandchild's school textbook. One out of every twenty—those who did not complete ninth grade—almost certainly cannot perform these basic literacy tasks.

Table 2.
Colorado Counties With Highest Percentages of Adults Who Did Not Graduate High School, 2000

County	Percent of adults not high school graduates
Costilla	31.8
Saguache	30.0
Morgan	28.6
Prowers	28.0
Conejos	27.9
Otero	24.3
Dolores	24.0
Las Animas	23.1
Kit Carson	23.0
Bent	22.8

Table 1 identifies the 10 Colorado counties with the most adults who did not graduate from high school. Unsurprisingly, Denver, the state's capital city, tops this list with over 79,000 such individuals.

In some corners of the state, however, what is notable is the percentage of adults without high school diplomas. In Costilla and Saguache counties, Table 2 reports, almost a third of adults did not finish high school. In Conejos, Otero, Dolores, Las Animas, Kit Carson, and Bent counties, in 2000, about a quarter of adults did not have diplomas.



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Table 3.
Colorado Counties With
Most Adults Who Did Not
Complete 9th Grade, 2000

County	Number of adults less than 9 th grade
Denver	34,253
Adams	17,141
Weld	10,459
Arapahoe	9,666
El Paso	7,417
Jefferson	7,355
Pueblo	6,561
Boulder	5,582
Larimer	3,647
Mesa	3,492

children, their own low literacy skills need to be addressed. Otherwise, low educational attainment can become a generational phenomenon.

Table 3 identifies the 10 Colorado counties with the most adults who did not complete ninth grade. Once again, Denver tops this list with over 34,000 such individuals. The majority of the remaining counties in that list are along the I-25 corridor where the majority of the state's population resides.

According to Table 4, Saguache and Conejos counties lead the list of 10 counties with the highest percentages of adults who had not completed ninth grade.

These statistics indicate that Colorado still has a substantial adult population with low literacy skills. As the majority of these individuals are parents, grandparents, or other caregivers to school-age

Table 4.
Colorado Counties With
Highest Percentages of
Adults Who Did Not Enter
9th Grade, 2000

County	Percent of adults less than 9 th grade
Saguache	17.2
Conejos	15.5
Morgan	15.4
Costilla	15.2
Prowers	14.9
Rio Grande	11.7
Otero	11.6
Kit Carson	11.0
Sedgwick	10.8
Las Animas	10.7

STATISTICAL NOTE

Statistics on low literacy levels in the adult population are generated only once per decade by the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS). The latest NALS study is being conducted this year, 2002; but its results will not be available until 2003 or 2004. For spreadsheet containing educational attainment data for Colorado, its counties, and its incorporated and Census-designated places, go to the source listed below.

SOURCE

Colorado Demography Section, Division of Local Government, Colorado Department of Local Affairs. Geographic Comparison (Tables) by Subject Matter. Available at:
<http://www.dlg.oem2.state.co.us/demog/Census/SFGeoComparisons.htm>

CONTACT INFORMATION

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