

Lit Scan

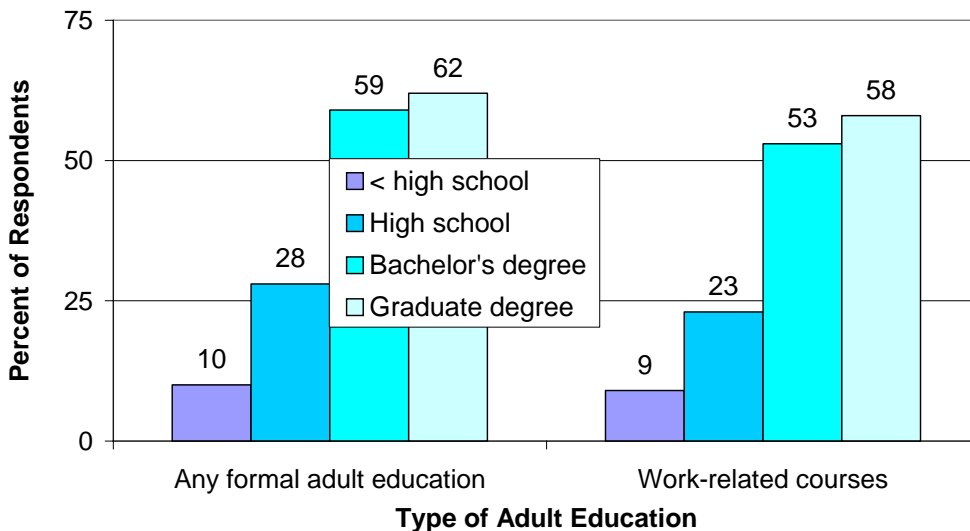
Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Work-Related Education: Participation in, Outcomes for, & Obstacles Facing Adults with a High School Education or Less

Chart 1. Participation in Work-Related Education by Educational Attainment, 2002-03

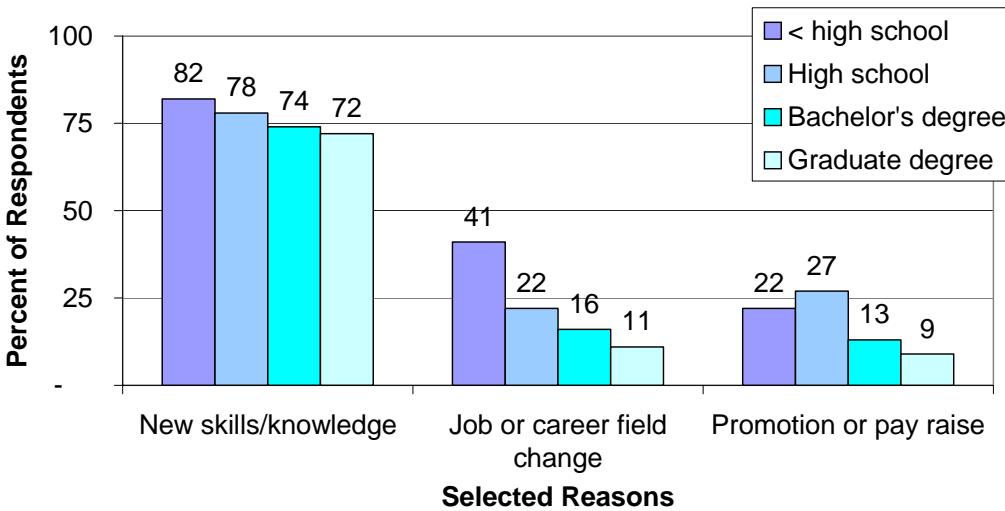


During 2002-03, 40 percent of adults responding to the National Household Education Survey reported participating in any formal adult education during the past year. Educational attainment, however, was a powerful predictor of whether or not an individual participated in adult education: 59 percent of those with a bachelor's degree, but only 10 percent of those with less than a high school diploma. That those who achieved higher levels of educational

attainment would be more likely to report participation in any formal adult education—which includes higher education—is no surprise. But, the story is not that simple. In fact, for work-related courses in particular, the participation rates were remarkably similar: 53 percent and 9 percent, respectively. (See Chart 1.)



Chart 2. Adults' Selected Reasons for Participating in Work-Related Courses, 2002-03



Reasons for Participating in Workplace Education

Adults with a high school diploma or less—and especially those without a diploma—are more likely than their better-educated colleagues to participate in workplace education for three reasons:

- To acquire new skills or knowledge,
- To change jobs or career fields, and
- To seek a promotion or pay raise.



(easing the move from unemployment to employment) and an improved ability to advance in a career.

Outcomes of Workplace Education for Adults with Low Educational Attainment

The actual benefits of participating in work-related courses reported by adults with a high school diploma or less indicate that these expectations are met frequently. Other positive outcomes experienced by many include increased employability

Chart 3. Selected Outcomes of Adult Participation in Work-Related Education for Those With High School Diploma or Less, 2002-03

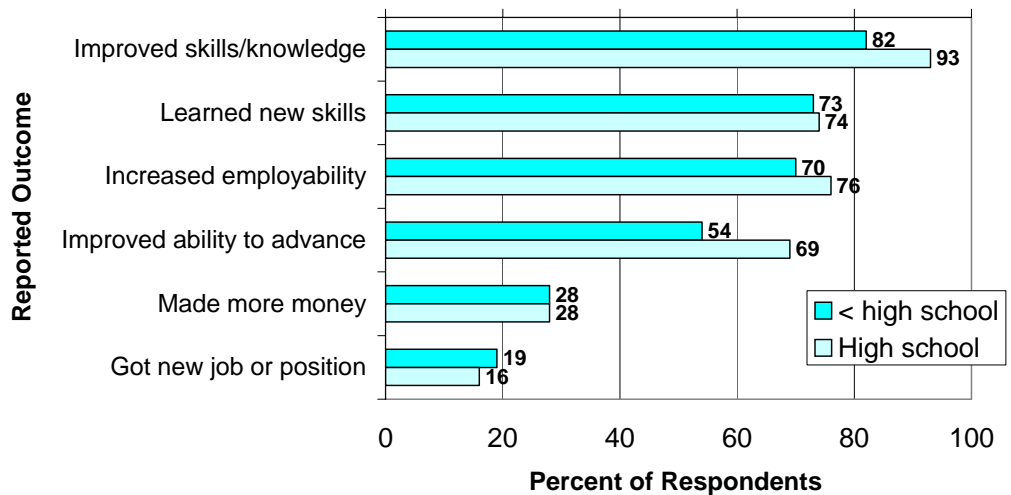
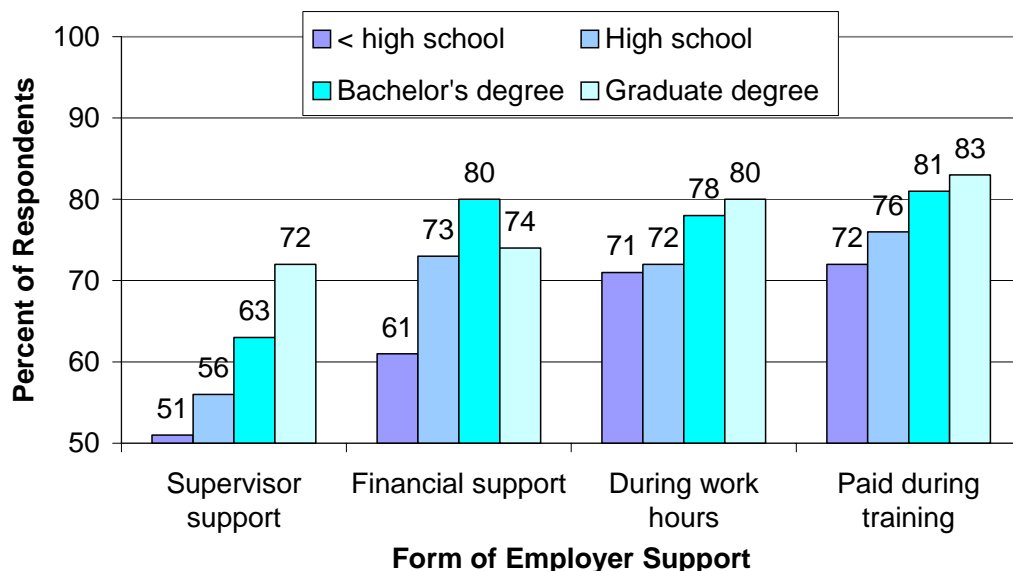


Chart 4. Selected Forms of Employer Support of Work-Related Education, 2002-03



Aids and Obstacles to Accessing Workplace Education for Adults with Low Educational Attainment

Considering the potential benefits of participating in workplace education for adults with a high school diploma or less, one would anticipate that most employers would encourage it. In fact, however, those with lower educational attainment receive less support from their employers for participating in work-related courses.

Barely half (51 percent) of those without a high school diploma report having supportive supervisors, and only two out of five (61 percent) can receive financial support (e.g., tuition, books) from their employers. While seven out of ten in this group can take courses during work hours and are paid while doing so, those with higher educational attainment are more likely to have these benefits.

Workplace education could make a demonstrable difference in the lives of many adults who did not complete high school or pursue higher education. Their motivations for participating in courses related to work, and the actual benefits they receive from doing so, suggest that it is a very worthwhile investment. It is curious, therefore, that those who have the most to gain from workplace education are least likely to have access to it.



SOURCE

- **National Household Education Surveys Program of 2003: Tabular Summary of Adult Education for Work-Related Reasons: 2002-03, E.D. TAB.** Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. NCES 2005-044. Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005044.pdf>.

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