

Lit Scan

Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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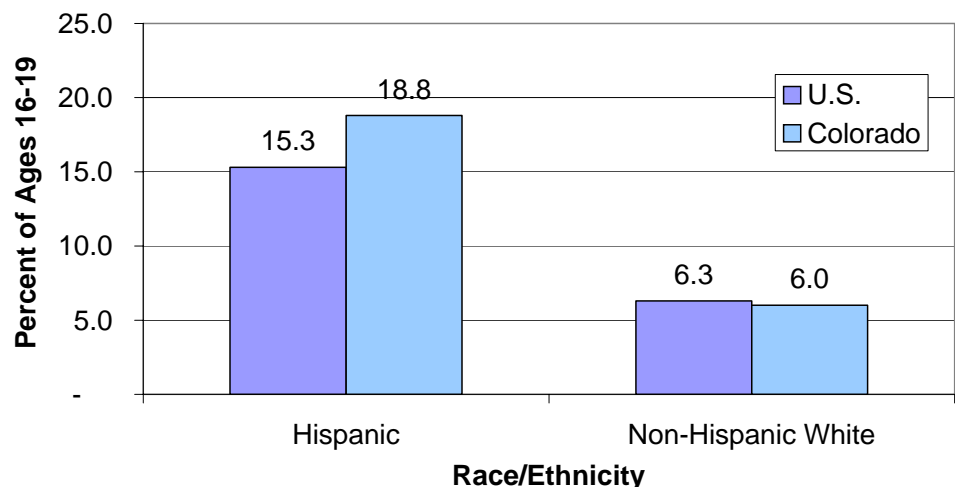
Rising Number of Colorado Teens Not in School & Not Working

The title of a recent Rocky Mountain News article claimed "Idleness rises for teens in Colorado," and cited the increased number of teenagers who are neither in school nor working—104,000 in 2000 and 149,000 in 2003. These figures were drawn from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count database, which provides online access to state-level data for a variety of indicators of well-being for the nation's children. The same source reports those numbers as percentages of all teenagers. The 2000 percentage was six percent, and the 2003 percentage was nine percent—a difference of only three percentage points, but a proportional increase of half (50%) during that interval.

Idle Teens

From the perspective of the general population, this trend is alarming enough; but, when it is examined for Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites, an even more alarming pattern is revealed. A Colorado teenager who is Hispanic is more than three times more likely to become "idle" (i.e., neither being in school nor being at work) than his or her non-Hispanic White counterpart. Only six percent of non-Hispanic White teenagers were idle in 2000, compared with almost 19 percent of Hispanic teens. (See Chart 1.)

Chart 1. Percent of Persons Ages 16-19 Who Are Idle (Not in School & Not Working) For Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites: U.S. & Colorado, 2000 Census

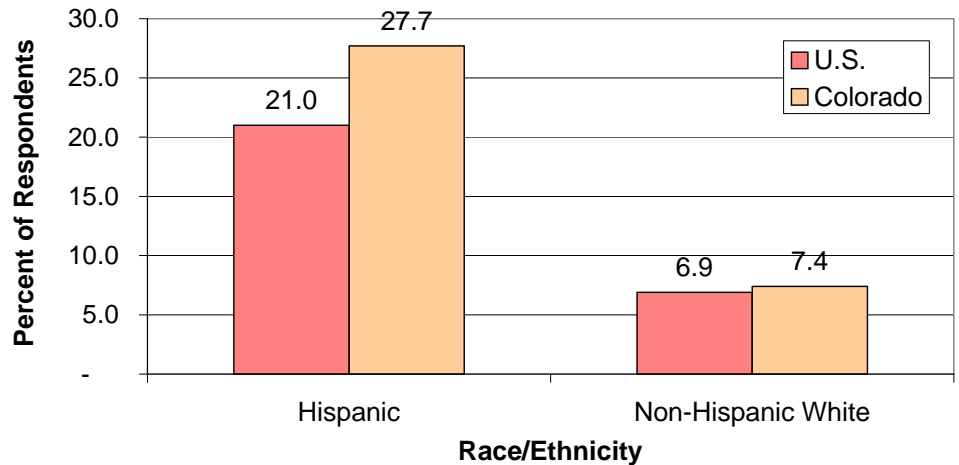


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High School Dropouts

Today, when “open campuses” are commonplace for high schools, one would like to hope that teenagers who are reported as not being in school would only be experiencing temporary absences. In fact, data on dropout rates suggests that most idle teens are probably classified as dropouts. In Colorado, a Hispanic teenager is almost four times more likely to be a high school dropout than his or her non-Hispanic White counterpart. Nationally, Hispanic teens are somewhat less likely—only three times more likely—to be dropouts than non-Hispanic White teens. (See Chart 2.)

Chart 2. Percent of Persons Ages 16-19 Who Are High School Dropouts For Hispanics and Non-Hispanic Whites: U.S. & Colorado, 2000 Census



The Future?

Another reason to be concerned about idle Hispanic teens in particular is that the Hispanic population, and especially the population of Hispanic teenagers, is projected to increase dramatically in the future. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s state population projections, the number of Hispanic Coloradans ages 16 to 19 will increase from 44,834 in 2000 to 55,803 by 2015 to 63,681 by 2025. That is an increase of almost 25 percent from 2000 to 2015, and an increase of more than 40 percent from 2000 to 2025. At those rates, even if the percentage of Hispanic teenagers who are neither in school nor working remains at 2000 levels—18.8 percent—the number of idle teens in Colorado, among Hispanics alone, could top 10,000 by 2015 and reach 12,000 by 2025.

SOURCES

- Tillie Fong, Survey: *Idleness rises for teens in Colorado: Number not working or attending school up 43% from 2000 to '03.* **Rocky Mountain News**, July 27, 3003.
- Kids Count Pocket Guide, Latino Children: State-Level Measures of Child Well-Being from the 2000 Census. Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003. Available at: http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/latino_pocketguide.pdf.
- State Population Projections, **Detailed State Projections by Single year of Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, 1995 to 2025**, U.S. Census Bureau. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/stproj.html>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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