

Literacy Facts

According to researchers Hart and Risley findings in the U.S., professional families children hear an average of 2,153 words per hour, in working class families 1,251 words per hour, and in welfare families only 616 words per hour. The relationship of illiteracy and poverty is undeniable. The International Reading Association culled the following literacy facts from lists assembled by ProLiteracy Worldwide, Alliance for Excellent Education, and AmericaScores.

From ProLiteracy Worldwide:

Globally

- The per capita income in countries with a literacy rate less than 55% averages about \$600.
- Teaching mothers to read can lead to a decrease in infant mortality of up to 50%.
- 98% of all non-literates live in developing countries.
- 52% of all non-literates live in India and China.
- Africa as a continent has a literacy rate of less than 60%.
- In all developing countries, the percentage of children aged 6-11 not attending school is 15%. In the least developed countries, it is 45%.

In the U.S.

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, workers 18 and over with a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$51,206 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn \$27,915; those without a high school diploma average \$18,734
- American business currently spends more than \$60 billion each year on employee training, much of that for remedial reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Annual health care costs in the U.S. are four times higher for individuals with low literacy skills than they are for individuals with high level literacy skills.
- Women in the U.S. who have little formal education are more likely than educated women to be in abusive relationships.
- One-half of all adults in U.S. federal and state correctional institutions cannot read or write at all; 85% of juvenile offenders have reading problems.

(From ProLiteracy Worldwide: Facts about Literacy, www.proliteracy.org)

From Alliance for Excellent Education:

- More than eight million students in grades 4-12 read below grade level. Most are able to sound out words—the challenge isn't to teach them to *decode* text but, rather, to help them *comprehend* what they read.
- Only 31% of America's 8th-grade students—and roughly the same percentage of 12th graders—meet the National Assessment of Educational Progress standard of reading "proficiency" for their grade level.
- Among low-income 8th graders, just 15% read at a proficient level.

- A mere 3% of all 8th graders read at an advanced level.
- On average, African-American and Hispanic 12th-grade students read at the same level as white 8th-grade students.
- The 25 fastest-growing professions have far greater than average literacy demands, while the fastest-declining professions have lower than average literacy demands.
- Roughly 23% of high school graduates are not ready to succeed in an introductory-level college writing course.
- About 40% of high school graduates lack the literacy skills employers seek.
- Employment projections indicate that jobs requiring only a high school degree will grow by just 9% by the year 2008 while those requiring a bachelor's degree will grow by 25% and those requiring an associate's degree will grow by 31%.
- Male and female students with low academic achievement are twice as likely to become parents by their senior year of high school compared to students with high academic achievement.
- For juveniles involved in quality reading instruction programs while in prison, recidivism was reduced by 20 % or more.
- High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetimes.

(From Alliance for Excellent Education: <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/FactSheets.html>)

From America SCORES:

- In 1996, 25 to 34 year olds who had dropped out of high school were more than three times as likely to receive public assistance as high school graduates who did not go on to college (12% versus 4%).
- Children in families below poverty are less likely than higher-income children to have a diet rated "good." For children ages 2 to 5, 19% of those in poverty had a good diet in 1994-96, compared with 28% of those living above the poverty line.
- Activities such as reading and singing songs vary by maternal education, family type, welfare receipt, and race/ethnicity. Children whose mothers have lower levels of education, single mothers, families reporting receipt of welfare services, and black parents are less likely to be read to every day than those with mothers with higher levels of education, two-parent families, families without welfare support and white, Hispanic, and Asian parents (respectively).
- Children who watch four or more hours of TV per day spend less time on school work, have poorer reading skills, play less with friends, and have fewer hobbies than children who watch less TV.

(From America SCORES Literacy Facts and Figures: www.americascors.org)

Compiled by **International Reading Association**, a community of reading professionals with over 85,000 members and institutional subscribers in more than 100 countries including 82,000 members in the United States. Through IRA councils and national affiliates, IRA's network extends to an estimated 350,000 reading professionals. IRA is committed to promoting higher achievement levels in literacy, reading, and communication by continually advancing the quality of instruction and research worldwide. www.reading.org