

Topic - Literacy rates (and other education metrics) in USA

Focus(es):

- **Adult literacy**, among various education metrics in the United States from a socioeconomic/demographic perspective. Are there any relationships to statistics like crime rate, incarceration, wealth inequality, cost of living, political bias (historical voting stats?), etc? What are the trends like in general for the population at large in the USA? What are some predictors or identifiers of literacy in adults? (state-level govt funding? Population density? Family status like married/divorced etc.?) We could try to identify the potential systematic causes that relate.

Supplementary/related reading for adult population:

1. <https://www.literacymidsouth.org/news/the-relationship-between-incarceration-and-low-literacy> Links between incarceration and literacy
 2. <https://usafacts.org/articles/which-states-have-the-highest-and-lowest-adult-literacy-rates/> Literacy by geo in USA
 3. <https://map.barbarabush.org/> Literacy gap map
 4. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019179/index.asp> Exposition on demographic data for literacy on govt data
- **Student literacy** (or standardized test scores? That's an ugly can of worms though). This topic, while intimately related to the above, is borne more of a social phenomenon that I have a personal preference towards. Currently, there are a growing number of teachers writing their manifestos on how the current generation of students (mostly from grades 4-12, gen alpha to the younger side of gen z) is the least academically inclined generation of students yet. Emotionally charged anecdotes claim that it is not a surprise when a high school student cannot formulate the structure of a short and simple essay, or that a student in middle school to even highschool cannot perform common arithmetic or simple algebra. I would like to explore how valid these claims are - whether they are just another older generation complaining about the youth as we have seen so commonly, or if it is statistically supported and generation-specific as some teachers describe it to be. Furthermore, if so, what changed? What could be some explanations for the changes we see? Some claim covid, mental health issues, parenting, administration, technology such as social media and chatgpt, or potentially even environmental reasons such as pollution/microplastics/lead as

some potential primary causes. Finally, what are the implications/extrapolations we should consider given the (undetermined!) results? This one will probably be more challenging than the other focus, as it's a developing situation and the data might be more scattered, but it's also something that has a real impact on society both in long term and short term that hasn't been fully explored yet, due to the recent nature of the subject. It could be something really interesting and meaningful to look at. (potential segue - what about stunted emotional/social development? Is there a relation?)

Supplementary/related reading focusing on youth generation*:

1. <https://learn4life.org/teens-are-entering-high-school-reading-at-a-third-grade-level/> Literacy of high schoolers
2. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/what-can-schools-do-when-older-students-cant-read/2023/03> same as above
3. <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/education/students-cant-read-education/> same as above
4. <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2020/01/functional-illiteracy/> yeah
5. https://www.reddit.com/r/Teachers/comments/15s8axi/kids_dont_know_how_to_read/ Online forum Reddit thread in teachers community
6. https://www.reddit.com/r/Teachers/comments/r2c6sc/american_students_are_really_entering_high_school/ Online forum Reddit thread in teachers community
7. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/prospective-college-students-increasingly-say-they-feel-unprepared-for-higher-education> News article, regarding high schoolers looking towards higher ed.
8. <https://thewichitan.com/74121/op-ed/opinion-are-students-getting-dumber/> Blog/Independent post on students
9. <https://medium.com/@ibrahimandcompany/will-ai-make-future-students-dumber-9d6ad1282c45> On the topic of AI/Technology for students

10. <https://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/spoiled-stupid>
Social/environmental factors
11. <https://dailycaller.com/2022/11/06/america-dumber-experts-lockdowns-only-cause-student-declines/> Covid claims towards “dumber students”
12. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/12/cell-phones-student-test-scores-dropping/676889/> more technology related claims

NOTE: These links above contain tabloid-style or potentially opinionated/biased new articles, as well as subjective discussion threads, mostly as a presentation/discussion point regarding the active development of the topic at hand. There are a few sources of varying credibility, but there is definitely sensationalist journalism and vague “doomerism” attached to many/all of these links.

Relevant Data Sources/Scientific References

Regarding Both Focus Groups

Datasets/Datatools

Pct of Adults Ages 25 and Older Who Have Completed a Bachelor's Degree or Higher:

- <https://www.prb.org/usdata/indicator/bachelors-degree/table>

National Assessment of Educational Progress reports:

- <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/scores/?grade=4>
**table/resources at bottom of page*
- <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2022/>
- https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/data_tools.aspx General data tools

US Dept of Education:

- <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/landing.ihtml?src=pn>
- <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/> *Direct link from above*

Data.gov:

- <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/public-school-characteristics-current-8d621> Public School Characteristics (Updated 11/4/2023)
- <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/school-neighborhood-poverty-estimates-current-c7e05> School Neighborhood Poverty Estimates (Updated 11/4/2023)
- <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/college-scorecard-c25e9> College scorecards (11/4/2023)
- <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/school-data-8e1c5> eligibility and compliance reports, think FAFSA (Updated 8/3/2023)
- <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/teacher-shortage-areas-2021-22-b184f> teacher shortages
- <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset?organization=ed-gov> Additional datasets available.

National Center for Education Statistics:

- <https://nces.ed.gov/datatools/> general
- <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019179/index.asp> adult literacy

Cal adult education pipeline:

- <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies:

- <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/data/>

Various other credible (for now) non-govt affiliated sources:

- <https://www.statista.com/markets/411/topic/962/education-science/#statistic2>
- <https://www.crossrivertherapy.com/research/literacy-statistics>
- <https://datausa.io/profile/cip/adult-continuing-education>

Academic/Scientific Papers Related

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5105607/>
- https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/lrt/supporting_files/2020_LTT_Press_Release.docx
- <https://www.shsu.edu/academics/education/journal-of-multidisciplinary-graduate-research/documents/2016/WhittenJournalFinal.pdf>