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ESTIMATES OF ILLITERACY, BY STATES: 1960

(Estimates of illiteracy by States, as of 1950, were previously shown in Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 6)

The percentage of the population 14 years old and over that was illiterate in 1960 was below the national rate of 2.4 percent in 32 States and the District of Columbia, according to estimates prepared by the Bureau of the Census. The estimated illiteracy rate by States was as low as 0.7 percent (in Iowa) and as high as 6.3 percent (in Louisiana).

Illiteracy rates were generally highest in the South. In addition to Louisiana, southern States which had rates of 4.0 or higher included South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, and North Carolina. Other States with such high rates were Hawaii and New Mexico. Illiteracy rates were generally lowest in parts of the West North Central, Mountain, and Pacific Divisions. In addition to Iowa, States where the percent illiterate was below 1.0 percent included South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Washington, and Oregon.

During the 60-year period from 1900 to 1960, when the illiteracy rate for the United States declined from 11.3 to 2.4 percent, the rates also dropped substantially in all States. Sharpest declines were observed for those States for which rates were highest at the beginning of the century. Reductions in illiteracy have been more gradual in recent decades as the level of illiteracy approaches an irreducible minimum in some States. Undoubtedly, illiteracy rates will not reach zero since a small proportion of the population is physically or mentally incapable of learning to read and write.

As used here, illiteracy is defined as the inability to read and write a simple message either in English or in any other language. Illiteracy, in this sense, should be clearly distinguished from "functional illiteracy," a term used by the Army in World War II to refer to persons who were incapable of understanding the kinds of written instructions that are needed for carrying out basic military functions or tasks. Since that time, the term "functional illiterate" has been commonly used to denote a person who has completed fewer than five years of

school. In 1960, there were about 3 million illiterates but about 8 million "functional illiterates."

Data on illiteracy for States were last collected in the 1930 Census. National data on illiteracy have been collected in sample surveys taken in 1947, 1952, and 1959; but these surveys did not provide figures for States. Estimates of illiteracy for States as of 1950 were published in Series P-23, No. 6, and are included in this report. In the table on page 2, the estimates for 1950 and 1960 are for the population 14 years old and over, whereas the census figure for 1900 to 1930, which are shown in the same table, are for the population 15 years old and over. The census figures and the estimates for 1950 and 1960 refer to the total population in the age group specified, whereas the survey figures for 1947, 1952, and 1959 refer to the civilian noninstitutional population.

The estimates of illiteracy by States for 1960 were prepared as follows: (a) illiteracy rates for the United States by age, sex, and grade completed were obtained from the March 1959 Current Population Survey; (b) these specific illiteracy rates were applied to corresponding population groups for States, shown in the 1960 Census of Population, Volume I, Part D; (c) the results of these computations were summed to give the estimated number of illiterates; (d) this number was divided by the population 14 years old and over to obtain an estimated illiteracy rate. A similar procedure, using averaged data from the 1947 and 1952 surveys and the 1950 Census of Population, was employed in making estimates for 1950.

These estimates of illiteracy are subject to errors arising from a number of sources. The data upon which the estimates are based are subject to errors of response and reporting, as well as sampling variability. Moreover, slightly different figures might be produced if another estimating procedure were used.

Figures on illiteracy, by social and economic characteristics, for 1959 were published in Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 99, "Literacy and Educational Attainment: March 1959."

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ILLITERACY OF THE POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES, BY STATES, 1900 TO 1930, AND ESTIMATES FOR 1950 AND 1960
 (Data refer to the population 15 years old and over in 1900 to 1930, and to the population 14 years old and over in 1950 and 1960. See text for method of estimating illiteracy by States for 1950 and 1960)

Division and State	Number illiterate, 1960	Percent illiterate					
		1960	1950	1930	1920	1910	1900
United States ¹	3,055,000	2.4	3.3	4.8	6.5	8.3	11.3
NEW ENGLAND:							
Maine.....	9,000	1.3	2.0	3.0	3.6	4.5	5.5
New Hampshire.....	6,000	1.4	2.0	3.0	4.9	5.1	6.7
Vermont.....	3,000	1.1	1.7	2.4	3.3	4.2	6.4
Massachusetts.....	83,000	2.2	2.8	4.0	5.3	5.7	6.5
Rhode Island.....	15,000	2.4	3.1	5.5	7.2	8.5	9.2
Connecticut.....	41,000	2.2	3.1	5.1	6.9	6.6	6.5
MIDDLE ATLANTIC:							
New York.....	355,000	2.9	3.5	4.1	5.6	6.1	6.1
New Jersey.....	99,000	2.2	2.9	4.3	5.8	6.2	6.5
Pennsylvania.....	166,000	2.0	2.7	3.5	5.2	6.6	6.9
EAST NORTH CENTRAL:							
Ohio.....	99,000	1.5	1.9	2.5	3.2	3.6	4.5
Indiana.....	40,000	1.2	1.7	1.8	2.5	3.4	5.2
Illinois.....	128,000	1.8	2.3	2.7	3.8	4.2	4.8
Michigan.....	84,000	1.6	2.0	2.2	3.4	3.7	4.8
Wisconsin.....	35,000	1.2	1.7	2.1	2.8	3.6	5.4
WEST NORTH CENTRAL:							
Minnesota.....	23,000	1.0	1.5	1.4	2.1	3.4	4.6
Iowa.....	14,000	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.9	2.7
Missouri.....	52,000	1.7	2.1	2.5	3.4	4.7	7.0
North Dakota.....	6,000	1.4	2.3	1.7	2.5	3.4	6.1
South Dakota.....	4,000	0.9	1.5	1.4	1.9	3.2	5.8
Nebraska.....	9,000	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.5	2.2	2.6
Kansas.....	14,000	0.9	1.3	1.4	1.8	2.5	3.3
SOUTH ATLANTIC:							
Delaware.....	6,000	1.9	2.7	4.4	6.6	9.0	13.2
Maryland.....	41,000	1.9	2.7	4.2	6.1	7.8	12.1
District of Columbia.....	11,000	1.9	1.8	1.7	3.0	5.4	9.4
Virginia.....	94,000	3.4	4.9	9.7	12.2	16.2	24.3
West Virginia.....	35,000	2.7	3.5	5.5	7.2	9.2	12.6
North Carolina.....	125,000	4.0	5.5	11.5	15.0	20.2	30.1
South Carolina.....	87,000	5.5	7.9	16.7	20.9	27.6	37.4
Georgia.....	120,000	4.5	6.9	10.4	16.7	22.1	32.1
Florida.....	92,000	2.6	3.9	7.7	10.2	14.4	23.4
EAST SOUTH CENTRAL:							
Kentucky.....	70,000	3.3	4.3	7.3	9.4	13.1	18.1
Tennessee.....	88,000	3.5	4.7	8.0	11.3	14.7	21.9
Alabama.....	93,000	4.2	6.2	14.0	17.8	24.2	35.1
Mississippi.....	71,000	4.9	7.1	14.8	18.8	24.4	34.1
WEST SOUTH CENTRAL:							
Arkansas.....	45,000	3.6	5.0	7.6	10.2	13.4	21.3
Louisiana.....	137,000	6.3	9.8	15.1	23.4	29.9	39.6
Oklahoma.....	32,000	1.9	2.5	3.1	4.1	6.2	11.7
Texas.....	272,000	4.1	5.4	7.3	8.9	10.6	15.6
MOUNTAIN:							
Montana.....	5,000	1.0	1.8	1.9	2.5	5.1	6.6
Idaho.....	4,000	0.8	1.3	1.2	1.7	2.5	5.1
Wyoming.....	2,000	0.9	1.7	1.8	2.3	3.6	4.4
Colorado.....	15,000	1.3	2.0	3.1	3.6	4.1	4.5
New Mexico.....	24,000	4.0	6.6	14.9	17.4	21.7	35.7
Arizona.....	33,000	3.8	6.2	11.0	15.9	21.6	30.0
Utah.....	5,000	0.9	1.4	1.4	2.2	2.8	3.6
Nevada.....	2,000	1.1	2.2	4.8	6.4	6.9	13.8
PACIFIC:							
Washington.....	18,000	0.9	1.3	1.1	1.9	2.2	3.4
Oregon.....	10,000	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.6	2.1	3.7
California.....	203,000	1.8	2.2	2.8	3.6	4.0	5.3
Alaska.....	5,000	3.0	6.3	20.5	24.6	26.5	40.6
Hawaii.....	21,000	5.0	8.4	17.5	21.2	29.2	35.2

¹ Includes Alaska and Hawaii for all dates.