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## ESTIMATES OF ILLITERACY, BY STATES: 1950

Estimates of the number of illiterate persons in each State in 1950, recently prepared by the Bureau of the Census, show that the percentage of persons 14 years old and over who were illiterate at that time was below 3 percent in about two-thirds of the States and below 10 percent in all of the States. Comparison of these estimates with figures for earlier census years shows that illiteracy rates in every State dropped sharply during the first half of the twentieth century.

Data on illiteracy, here defined as the inability to read and write either in English or in any other language, were last collected for States in the 1930 Census. Since that time, although sample survey data on illiteracy have been compiled for the country as a whole, separate figures for States had not been available. The estimates on page 2 for 1950 refer to the population 14 years old and over, whereas the census figures for 1900 to 1930 refer to the population 15 years and over.

Some highlights of the statistics are the following:

1. In 1900, illiteracy rates by States ranged from a low of 2.6 percent to a high of 39.6 percent. By 1950, the lowest rate for a State was 0.9 percent and the highest was 9.8 percent. The rates for most States probably have continued to decline between 1950 and 1959; statistics for the United States as a whole, collected in the Current Population Survey, show that the national illiteracy rate dropped from 3.2 percent to 2.2 percent during that period.

2. As of 1950, illiteracy rates were highest in the South, particularly in Louisiana, South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama, and in New Mexico and Arizona in the West. However, all of these States have experienced substantial declines in illiteracy during the first half of the twentieth century. Rates were generally lowest in the North Central and Pacific areas. Relatively low illiteracy rates in 1950 were found in Iowa, Nebraska, Oregon, Kansas, Idaho, Washington, Utah, Minnesota, and South Dakota.

Statistics collected in the Current Population Survey show that about three-fourths of the population with

no schooling and somewhat more than one-half of those with only one year of school are illiterate, and progressively smaller proportions of persons with three, four, and five years of school report that they cannot read and write. All persons with six or more years of school completed are assumed to be literate. Since educational attainment tends to be low among older persons, rural residents, and nonwhites, the presence of a large proportion of these persons in the population of a State tends to be associated with a lower level of education of the population and, hence, a higher proportion of illiterates.

The estimates of illiteracy by States for 1950 were prepared as follows: (a) illiteracy rates for the United States by age, sex, and grade completed were estimated for April 1950 by averaging the rates obtained in the October 1947 and October 1952 surveys; (b) these illiteracy rates (by age, sex, and grade completed) were applied to corresponding population groups for States shown in the 1950 Census of Population, Volume II; (c) the results of these computations gave the estimated number of illiterates; (d) this number was divided by the population 14 years old and over to obtain an estimated illiteracy rate.

The estimates of illiteracy for 1950 are subject to error arising from a number of sources. The estimates for the Nation as a whole and for the States individually are subject to biases due to errors of response and reporting. In addition, the illiteracy rates for 1950 are subject to sampling variability.

Survey data on illiteracy in the United States as a whole for 1947 were published in Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 20, and for 1952 in Series P-20, No. 45. The former report also contains national estimates of illiteracy for 1940, and the latter report shows estimates for 1950. Data for earlier census years are shown in the census reports for those years. Figures on illiteracy, by social and economic characteristics, for 1959 will be issued in a forthcoming Series P-20 report.

ILLITERACY OF THE POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES, BY DIVISIONS AND STATES: 1900 TO 1930  
AND ESTIMATES FOR 1950

(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. See text for basis of estimating illiteracy by States for 1950)

Division and State	Number illiterate, 1950	Percent illiterate				
		1950	1930	1920	1910	1900
United States.....	3,623,000	3.2	4.8	6.5	8.2	11.2
<b>NEW ENGLAND:</b>	195,000	2.7	4.1	5.4	5.8	6.6
Maine.....	14,000	2.0	3.0	3.6	4.5	5.5
New Hampshire.....	8,000	2.0	3.0	4.9	5.1	6.7
Vermont.....	5,000	1.7	2.4	3.3	4.2	6.4
Massachusetts.....	102,000	2.8	4.0	5.3	5.7	6.5
Rhode Island.....	19,000	3.1	5.5	7.2	8.5	9.2
Connecticut.....	48,000	3.1	5.1	6.9	6.6	6.5
<b>MIDDLE ATLANTIC:</b>	731,000	3.1	3.9	5.5	6.3	6.4
New York.....	407,000	3.5	4.1	5.6	6.1	6.1
New Jersey.....	108,000	2.9	4.3	5.8	6.2	6.5
Pennsylvania.....	216,000	2.7	3.5	5.2	6.6	6.9
<b>EAST NORTH CENTRAL:</b>	445,000	2.0	2.4	3.2	3.8	4.9
Ohio.....	111,000	1.9	2.5	3.2	3.6	4.5
Indiana.....	50,000	1.7	1.8	2.5	3.4	5.2
Illinois.....	151,000	2.3	2.7	3.8	4.2	4.8
Michigan.....	91,000	2.0	2.2	3.4	3.7	4.8
Wisconsin.....	43,000	1.7	2.1	2.8	3.6	5.4
<b>WEST NORTH CENTRAL:</b>	161,000	1.5	1.6	2.2	3.2	4.6
Minnesota.....	33,000	1.5	1.4	2.1	3.4	4.6
Iowa.....	17,000	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.9	2.7
Missouri.....	63,000	2.1	2.5	3.4	4.7	7.0
North Dakota.....	10,000	2.3	1.7	2.5	3.4	6.1
South Dakota.....	7,000	1.5	1.4	1.9	3.2	5.8
Nebraska.....	12,000	1.2	1.3	1.5	2.2	2.6
Kansas.....	18,000	1.3	1.4	1.8	2.5	3.3
<b>SOUTH ATLANTIC:</b>	744,000	4.9	9.2	12.8	17.1	25.1
Delaware.....	6,000	2.7	4.4	6.6	9.0	13.2
Maryland.....	47,000	2.7	4.2	6.1	7.8	12.1
District of Columbia.....	12,000	1.8	1.7	3.0	5.4	9.4
Virginia.....	118,000	4.9	9.7	12.2	16.2	24.3
West Virginia.....	49,000	3.5	5.5	7.2	9.2	12.6
North Carolina.....	155,000	5.5	11.5	15.0	20.2	30.1
South Carolina.....	111,000	7.9	16.7	20.9	27.6	37.4
Georgia.....	165,000	6.9	10.4	16.7	22.1	32.1
Florida.....	81,000	3.9	7.7	10.2	14.4	23.4
<b>EAST SOUTH CENTRAL:</b>	438,000	5.5	10.7	13.9	18.6	26.3
Kentucky.....	90,000	4.3	7.3	9.4	13.1	18.1
Tennessee.....	111,000	4.7	8.0	11.3	14.7	21.9
Alabama.....	132,000	6.2	14.0	17.8	24.2	35.1
Mississippi.....	106,000	7.1	14.8	18.8	24.4	34.1
<b>WEST SOUTH CENTRAL:</b>	591,000	5.7	7.9	10.8	13.9	21.4
Arkansas.....	67,000	5.0	7.6	10.2	13.4	21.3
Louisiana.....	183,000	9.8	15.1	23.4	29.9	39.6
Oklahoma.....	41,000	2.5	3.1	4.1	6.2	11.7
Texas.....	299,000	5.4	7.3	8.9	10.6	15.6
<b>MOUNTAIN:</b>	107,000	3.1	4.6	5.6	7.3	10.3
Montana.....	8,000	1.8	1.9	2.5	5.1	6.6
Idaho.....	5,000	1.3	1.2	1.7	2.5	5.1
Wyoming.....	4,000	1.7	1.8	2.3	3.6	4.4
Colorado.....	20,000	2.0	3.1	3.6	4.1	4.5
New Mexico.....	30,000	6.6	14.9	17.4	21.7	35.7
Arizona.....	32,000	6.2	11.0	15.9	21.6	30.0
Utah.....	6,000	1.4	1.4	2.2	2.8	3.6
Nevada.....	3,000	2.2	4.8	6.4	6.9	13.8
<b>PACIFIC:</b>	210,000	1.9	2.3	2.9	2.8	4.6
Washington.....	23,000	1.3	1.1	1.9	2.2	3.4
Oregon.....	13,000	1.2	1.1	1.6	2.1	3.7
California.....	174,000	2.2	2.8	3.6	4.0	5.3