



ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE IN AMERICA TODAY

Access to Knowledge is one of the three areas measured by the American Human Development Index, along with health and standard of living. *The Measure of America 2010-2011* explores access to knowledge of various groups—by state, congressional district, metro area, racial/ethnic groups, and for men and women—and reveals alarming gaps that threaten the long-term well-being of America.

Access to knowledge is calculated as a combination of school enrollment data of children ages 3-24 and the highest educational degree attained of adults 25 and older.

WHY DOES EDUCATION MATTER?

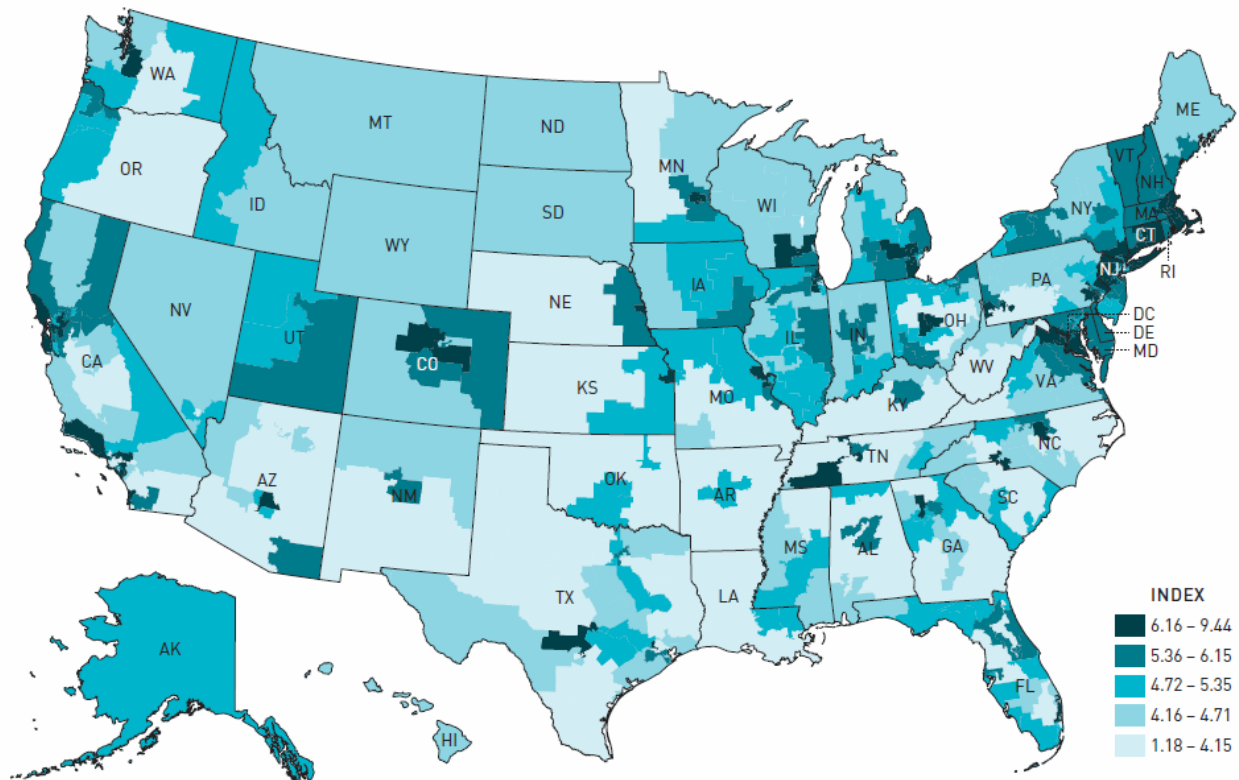
It is widely accepted that more education leads to better jobs and bigger paychecks. But more education also correlates to better, happier, and longer lives for individuals and pays big dividends for all of us in the form of increased civic engagement, greater neighborhood safety, more tolerance, and a more competitive economy. Globalization and technological change have made it extraordinarily difficult for poorly educated Americans to achieve economic self-sufficiency, self-respect, and resilience in the face of adversity.

STRIKING FINDINGS IN EDUCATION FROM *THE MEASURE OF AMERICA 2010-2011*:

- In the top five states on the Education Index, Washington, DC, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, and New Jersey, more than one in three adults has a bachelor's degree. In the bottom-ranking states, Alabama, Nevada, Louisiana, West Virginia, and Arkansas, about one in five adults does.
- Women score higher on the Education Index than men—but men earn \$11,000 more.
- **African Americans** in the U.S. have school enrollment rates (88.6 percent) that are above the national average (87.3 percent) and equal to the rate of **whites**. **Yet they lag in degree attainment:** 80.7 percent of **African Americans** have a high school diploma, compared with 90.1 percent of **whites**.
- **California** and **Texas** alone educate more than half of the nation's Latino children.
- In **California's** Thirtieth Congressional District (Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Malibu), more than one in four residents have graduate or professional degrees. A few miles west in downtown Los Angeles, California's Thirty-fourth District, only three in one hundred residents have graduate or professional degrees.
- In **Texas'** District 29 (Houston area), only 54 percent of adults over 25 have completed high school, whereas in **Colorado's** District 6 (southern suburbs of Denver), 97 percent of adults hold at least a high school diploma.

- In **New Jersey**, nearly 70 percent of 3 and 4 year olds are enrolled in preschool; in **Nevada**, fewer than 30 percent are.
- More than a quarter of high school freshmen today do not graduate in four years.
- Spending matters. The top five states in the American Human Development Index on education spent an average of over \$14,500 per K-12 pupil. The bottom five spent under \$9,000 per pupil.

Access to Knowledge by Congressional District



POLICY LEVERS FOR CHANGE

Many experts concur that the following are powerful and cost-effective actions for improving access to knowledge and educational outcomes.

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:** Quality preschool has been shown to be the single most cost effective educational intervention.
- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Amidst tremendous progress in educational attainment over the last 30 years, on-time high school graduation rates have not budged. The warning signs are largely known; the dropout crisis must be addressed.

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- **IMMIGRANT CHILDREN:** Addressing the astonishing disparities in education funding and quality will support immigrant children, especially Latino children, who disproportionately attend large, struggling schools with fewer resources and substantially lower teacher salaries.
- **TEACHERS:** Teacher quality is the most decisive classroom factor in student achievement. It is critical to attract and retain skilled professionals in schools that serve low-income children, while ensuring teacher training and salaries commensurate with the job's importance.
- **COLLEGE COSTS:** College costs increased by 30 percent from 2000 to 2008. It is time to reconsider the financial structure of our higher education to close the widening gap between need and aid and to rein in runaway costs.