

	Adult literacy rate						Youth literacy rate						Expected years of schooling	
	Male		% ages 15 and older		Female		Male		% ages 15-24		Female		Male 2002/03 ^a	Female 2002/03 ^a
	1990	2002	1990	2002	1990	2002	1990	2002	1990	2002	1990	2002		
Afghanistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Albania	87	99 ^b	67	98 ^b	97	99 ^b	92	99 ^b	11	12	..	..	..	..
Algeria	64	78	41	60	86	94	68	86	..	..	..	..	..	..
Angola	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Argentina	96	97	96	97	98	98	98	99	15	17	..	..	..	..
Armenia	99	100 ^b	96	99 ^b	100	100 ^b	99	100 ^b	11	11	..	..	..	..
Australia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	19	20	..	..	..	..
Austria	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	15	..	..	..	..
Azerbaijan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11	10	..	..	..	..
Bangladesh	44	50	24	31	51	58	33	41	8	9	..	..	..	..
Belarus	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	14	15	..	..	..	..
Belgium	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	18	20	..	..	..	..
Benin	38	55	15	26	57	73	25	38	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bolivia	87	93 ^b	70	81 ^b	96	99 ^b	89	96 ^b	..	..	..	..	..	..
Bosnia and Herzegovina	..	98	..	91	..	100	..	100	..	..	..	..	..	..
Botswana	66	76	70	82	79	85	87	93	11	11	..	..	..	..
Brazil	83	86 ^b	81	87 ^b	91	93 ^b	93	96 ^b	14	15	..	..	..	..
Bulgaria	98	99	96	98	100	100	99	100	12	13	..	..	..	..
Burkina Faso	25	..	8	..	36	..	14	..	4	3	..	..	..	..
Burundi	48	58	27	44	58	67	45	65	6	5	..	..	..	..
Cambodia	78	81	49	59	81	85	66	76	10	8	..	..	..	..
Cameroon	69	77 ^c	48	60 ^c	86	92	76	88	10	8	..	..	..	..
Canada	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	16	..	..	..	..
Central African Republic	47	65 ^c	21	33 ^c	66	70 ^c	39	47 ^c	..	..	..	..	..	..
Chad	37	55	19	38	58	76	38	64	..	..	..	..	..	..
Chile	94	96 ^b	94	96 ^b	98	99 ^b	98	99 ^b	14	13	..	..	..	..
China	87	95 ^b	69	87 ^b	97	99 ^b	93	99 ^b	..	..	..	..	..	..
Hong Kong, China	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	14	..	..	..	..
Colombia	89	92	88	92	94	97	96	98	11	11	..	..	..	..
Congo, Dem. Rep.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Congo, Rep.	77	89	58	77	95	98	90	97	..	..	..	..	..	..
Costa Rica	94	96	94	96	97	98	98	99	11	11	..	..	..	..
Côte d'Ivoire	51	..	26	..	65	70 ^c	40	52 ^c	..	..	..	..	..	..
Croatia	99	99 ^b	95	97 ^b	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	13	13	..	..	..	..
Cuba	95	97	95	97	99	100	99	100	13	13	..	..	..	..
Czech Republic	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	14	15	..	..	..	..
Denmark	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	17	..	..	..	..
Dominican Republic	80	84	79	84	87	91	88	92	12	14	..	..	..	..
Ecuador	90	92 ^b	85	90 ^b	96	96 ^b	95	96 ^b	..	..	..	..	..	..
Egypt, Arab Rep.	60	..	34	..	71	..	51	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
El Salvador	76	82	69	77	85	90	83	88	11	11	..	..	..	..
Eritrea	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6	4	..	..	..	..
Estonia	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	14	17	..	..	..	..
Ethiopia	37	49	20	34	52	63	34	52	6	4	..	..	..	..
Finland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	17	19	..	..	..	..
France	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	16	..	..	..	..
Gabon	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Gambia, The	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Georgia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11	11	..	..	..	..
Germany	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	16	..	..	..	..
Ghana	70	82	47	66	88	94	75	90	8	7	..	..	..	..
Greece	98	99	92	96	99	100	100	100	15	15	..	..	..	..
Guatemala	69	77	53	62	80	86	66	74	9	9	..	..	..	..
Guinea	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Guinea-Bissau	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Haiti	43	54	37	50	56	66	54	67	..	..	..	..	..	..

	Adult literacy rate					Youth literacy rate					Expected years of schooling	
	1990	% ages 15 and older		1990	2002	1990	% ages 15–24		1990	2002	Male 2002/03 ^a	Female 2002/03 ^a
		Male	Female				Male	Female				
Honduras	69	80 ^b	67	80 ^b	78	87 ^b	81	91 ^b	..	..
Hungary	99	99	99	99	100	100	100	100	15	16		
India	62	68	36	45	73	80	54	65	10	8		
Indonesia	87	92	73	83	97	99	93	98	11	11		
Iran, Islamic Rep.	72	84 ^c	54	70 ^c	92	96	81	92	12	11		
Iraq	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Ireland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	17
Israel	95	97	88	93	99	100	98	99	15	16		
Italy	98	99	97	98	100	100	100	100	15	16		
Jamaica	78	84	86	91	87	91	95	98	11	12		
Japan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	14
Jordan	90	96	72	86	98	99	95	100	13	13		
Kazakhstan	99	100	98	99	100	100	100	100	13	14		
Kenya	81	90	61	79	93	96	87	95	8	8		
Korea, Dem. Rep.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Korea, Rep.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	15
Kuwait	79	85	73	81	88	92	87	94	..	..
Kyrgyz Republic	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	12	13
Lao PDR	70	77	43	55	79	86	61	73	10	8		
Latvia	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	14	16		
Lebanon	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13	13
Lesotho	65	74 ^c	89	90 ^c	77	83	97	99	11	11		
Liberia	55	72	23	39	75	86	39	55	..	..
Libya	83	92	51	71	99	100	83	94	16	17		
Lithuania	100	100 ^b	99	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	15	16		
Macedonia, FYR	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	12	12
Madagascar	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Malawi	69	76	36	49	76	82	51	63	..	..
Malaysia	87	92 ^b	74	85 ^b	95	97 ^b	94	97 ^b	12	13		
Mali	28	27 ^b	10	12 ^b	38	32 ^b	17	17 ^b	..	..
Mauritania	46	51	24	31	56	57	36	42	7	7		
Mauritius	85	88 ^b	75	81 ^b	91	94 ^b	91	95 ^b	13	12		
Mexico	91	93 ^b	84	89 ^b	96	97 ^b	94	96 ^b	12	12		
Moldova	99	100	96	99	100	100	100	100	10	10		
Mongolia	98	98 ^b	97	98 ^b	99	97 ^b	99	98 ^b	10	12		
Morocco	53	63	25	38	68	77	42	61	11	9		
Mozambique	49	62	18	31	66	77	32	49	..	..
Myanmar	87	89	74	81	90	92	86	91	7	7		
Namibia	77	84	72	83	86	91	89	94	12	12		
Nepal	47	62	14	26	67	78	27	46	11	9		
Netherlands	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	16
New Zealand	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	17	19
Nicaragua	63	77 ^c	63	77 ^c	68	84 ^c	69	89 ^c	10	11		
Niger	18	25	5	9	25	34	9	15	3	2		
Nigeria	59	74	38	59	81	91	66	87	..	..
Norway	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	18
Oman	67	82	38	65	95	100	75	97	11	10		
Pakistan	49	..	20	..	63	..	31	..	6	5		
Panama	90	93	88	92	96	97	95	97	13	14		
Papua New Guinea	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Paraguay	92	93 ^c	88	90 ^c	96	96 ^c	95	96 ^c	12	12		
Peru	92	91 ^c	79	80 ^c	97	98 ^c	92	96 ^c	14	14		
Philippines	92	93 ^b	91	93 ^b	97	94 ^b	97	96 ^b	12	12		
Poland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	16
Portugal	91	95	84	91	99	100	100	100	16	17		
Puerto Rico	92	94	91	94	95	97	97	98	..	..



	Adult literacy rate				Youth literacy rate				Expected years of schooling		
	1990	% ages 15 and older		1990	1990	% ages 15–24		1990	1990	Male 2002/03 ^a	Female 2002/03 ^a
		Male	Female			Male	Female				
Romania	99	98 ^b	96	96 ^b	99	98 ^b	99	98 ^b	12	13	
Russian Federation	100	100	99	99	100	100	100	100	13	14	
Rwanda	63	75	44	63	78	86	67	84	9	8	
Saudi Arabia	76	84	50	69	91	95	79	92	10	9	
Senegal	38	49	19	30	50	61	30	44	..	..
Serbia and Montenegro	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13	13
Sierra Leone	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	6
Singapore	94	97 ^b	83	89 ^b	99	99 ^b	99	100 ^b	..	..
Slovak Republic	..	100 ^b	..	100 ^b	..	100 ^b	..	100 ^b	13	14	
Slovenia	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	15	17	
Somalia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
South Africa	82	87	80	85	89	92	88	92	13	13	
Spain	98	99	95	97	100	100	100	100	15	16	
Sri Lanka	93	95	85	90	96	97	94	97	..	..
Sudan	60	71	32	49	76	84	54	74	..	..
Swaziland	74	82	70	80	85	90	85	92	10	10	
Sweden	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	17	21
Switzerland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	15
Syrian Arab Republic	82	91	48	74	92	97	67	93	..	..
Tajikistan	99	100 ^b	97	99 ^b	100	100 ^b	100	100 ^b	12	10	
Tanzania	76	85	51	69	89	94	77	89	..	..
Thailand	95	95 ^b	89	91 ^b	99	98 ^b	98	98 ^b	13	12	
Togo	60	74	29	45	79	88	48	67	..	..
Trinidad and Tobago	98	99	96	98	100	100	100	100	12	12	
Tunisia	72	83	47	63	93	98	75	91	13	13	
Turkey	89	94 ^b	66	79 ^b	97	98 ^b	88	93 ^b	12	10	
Turkmenistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Uganda	69	79	43	59	80	86	60	74	12	11	
Ukraine	100	100	99	100	100	100	100	100	13	14	
United Arab Emirates	71	76	71	81	82	88	89	95	11	13	
United Kingdom	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	20	23
United States	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	15	16
Uruguay	96	97	97	98	98	99	99	99	13	15	
Uzbekistan	99	100	98	99	100	100	100	100	12	11	
Venezuela, RB	90	94	88	93	95	98	97	99	12	12	
Vietnam	94	..	87	..	94	..	94	..	11	10	
West Bank and Gaza	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Yemen, Rep.	55	69	13	29	74	84	25	51	..	..
Zambia	79	86	59	74	86	91	76	87	7	7	
Zimbabwe	87	94	75	86	97	99	91	96	10	9	
World	74 w	80 w	63 w	73 w	87 w	90 w	79 w	86 w	.. w	.. w	
Low income	60	68	38	48	73	79	55	66	10	8	
Middle income	85	89	75	87	96	97	92	97	..	..
Lower middle income	84	88	74	86	96	97	92	97	..	..
Upper middle income	88	90	86	90	96	97	95	97	13	13	
Low & middle income	73	79	62	73	87	89	78	85	..	..
East Asia & Pacific	88	90	72	86	97	98	93	98	..	..
Europe & Central Asia	98	98	94	96	99	99	98	99	12	12	
Latin America & Carib.	83	86	83	88	93	94	93	95	13	14	
Middle East & N. Africa	71	82	40	61	82	92	64	82	..	..
South Asia	64	73	34	44	70	77	50	62	10	8	
Sub-Saharan Africa	59	71	40	58	75	84	60	77	..	..
High income	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	17
Europe EMU	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	16

a. Data are provisional for OECD and World Education Indicators countries. b. National estimates based on census data. c. National estimates based on survey data.

About the data

Many governments collect and publish statistics that indicate how their education systems are working and developing—statistics on enrollment and on such efficiency indicators as repetition rates, pupil-teacher ratios, and cohort progression through school.

Basic student outcomes include achievements in reading and mathematics judged against established standards. In many countries national learning assessments are enabling ministries of education to monitor progress in these outcomes. Internationally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics has established literacy as an outcome indicator based on an internationally agreed definition.

The literacy rate is defined as the percentage of people who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday life. In practice, literacy is difficult to measure. To estimate literacy using such a definition requires census or survey measurements under controlled conditions. Many countries estimate the number of literate people from self-reported data. Some use educational attainment data as a proxy but apply different lengths of school attendance or level of completion. Because definition and methodologies of data collection differ across countries, data need to be used with caution.

The reported literacy data are compiled by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics based on national censuses and household survey data. The estimation methodology can be reviewed at www.uis.unesco.org. The national estimates are received

2.13a

In rural areas more children drop out of primary school, and girls are more vulnerable

Primary school dropout rate in Nepal (ages 6–11) in rural and urban areas, 2001 (%)



Source: Demographic and Health Surveys.

from countries and are based on national censuses or household surveys during 1995–2004.

Literacy statistics for most countries cover the population ages 15 and older, by five-year age groups, but some include younger ages or are confined to age ranges that tend to inflate literacy rates. As an alternative, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics has proposed the narrower age range of 15–24, which better captures the ability of participants in the formal education system. The youth literacy rate reported in the table measures the accumulated outcomes of primary education over the previous 10 years or so by indicating the proportion of people who have passed through the primary education system without acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills (or never entered the system). Reasons for this may include difficulties in attending school or dropping out before reaching grade 5 (see About the data for table 2.12) and thereby failing to achieve basic learning competencies.

Expected years of schooling is an estimate of the total years of schooling that a typical child at the age of school entry will receive, including years spent on repetition, given the current patterns of enrollment across cycles of education. It may also be interpreted as an indicator of the total education resources, measured in school years, that a child will acquire over his or her “lifetime” in school—or as an indicator of an education system’s overall level of development.

Because the calculation of this indicator assumes that the probability of a child’s being enrolled in school at any future age is equal to the current enrollment ratio for that age, it does not account for changes and trends in future enrollment ratios. The expected number of years and the expected number of grades completed are not necessarily consistent, because the first includes years spent in repetition. Comparability across countries and over time may be affected by differences in the length of the school year or changes in policies on automatic promotions and grade repetition.

Definitions

• Adult literacy rate is the percentage of people ages 15 and older who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday life. • Youth literacy rate is the literacy rate among people ages 15–24. • Expected years of schooling are the average number of years of formal schooling that children are expected to receive, including university education and years spent in repetition. They reflect the underlying age-specific enrollment ratios for primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

Data sources

The data on literacy are estimates calculated by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and projections by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The data on expected years of schooling are from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.