

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN THE CENTRAL PUGET SOUND REGION

Central Puget Sound is markedly more literate and degreed than most other metropolitan regions in the U.S., but a comparatively high percentage of local kids are not graduating from high school within four years, and the region isn't producing enough bachelor's degrees to meet employer demand.

Seattle was recently named the most literate city in the U.S., rising above Minneapolis, Washington D.C., Atlanta, and San Francisco.¹ More than 35 percent of people who live in the central Puget Sound region hold a bachelor's degree. The region has the third highest percentage of bachelor's degrees per capita in the nation.

While central Puget Sound ranks high in the number of people who have college degrees, the region ranks relatively low among the states in granting bachelor's degrees, especially in science and engineering. Many of the region's high tech employers are importing highly educated employees from outside the region and the U.S. For example, the state's colleges supply only 52 percent of projected demand for computer programmers.

Washington ranks 39th among the 50 states in the percentage of students graduating from high school. Just 66 percent of students graduated statewide in 2001, according to a nationwide survey by the Manhattan Institute. The Washington State Office of Public Instruction uses a different method for estimating graduation rates and shows a higher graduation rate — 72 percent — for the same survey year. Estimating graduation rates is imprecise given that the whereabouts of some students are unknown — they may have moved to another district, dropped out, graduated early, or taken extra time to graduate.

For information on this Trend or to learn more about the Prosperity Partnership's efforts to develop a higher education reform proposal, contact Angela Kerwin at 206-587-5061, akerwin@psrc.org.

TABLE 1. High School Graduation Rate by State, 2001

Rank	State	Total
1	North Dakota	89%
2	Utah	87%
3	Iowa	85%
4	South Dakota	85%
5	West Virginia	84%
11	Minnesota	80%
34	Arizona	69%
35	Colorado	68%
36	California	67%
39	Washington	66%

TABLE 2. High School Graduation Rate by Race, 2001

Total	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
66%	48%	77%	48%	53%	69%

Tables 1 & 2 Source: U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey Data" 2001; Manhattan Institute of Policy Research, Education Working Paper, No. 3 September 2003

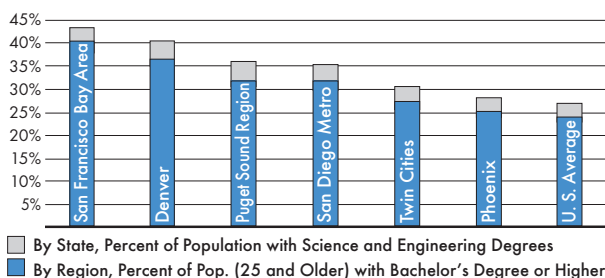
Greene, Ph.D., Jay P. and Greg Forster, Ph.D. "Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States"

http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_03.htm#09

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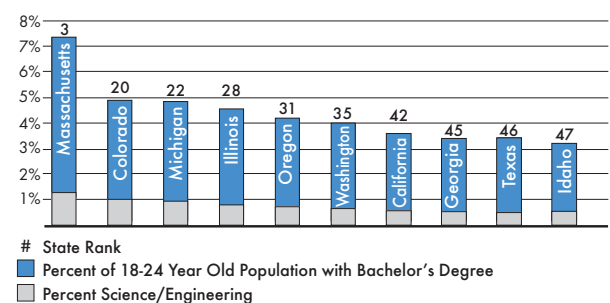
¹ America's Most Literate Cities, <http://www.ccsu.edu/amlc/>

FIGURE 1. Percent of Population Holding Bachelor's Degrees, 2003



Source: ECG, Global Insight

FIGURE 2. Bachelor's Degrees Granted as Percent of 18-24 Year Old Population, 2001



Source: Technology Alliance, U.S. Dept. of Commerce