



# NRS Fast Facts

## Characteristics of English Literacy Participants in Adult Education: 2000-2005

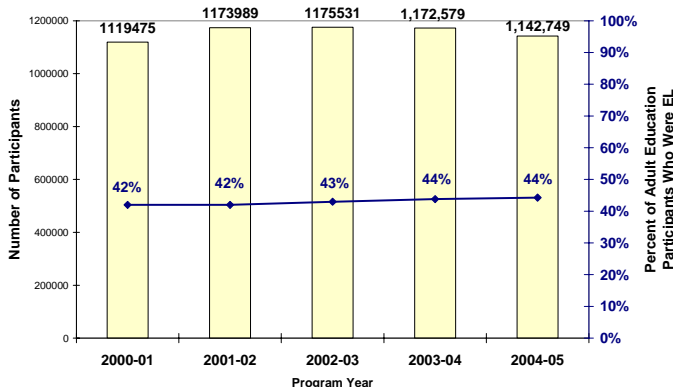
### Background

Increasing adult literacy is a primary goal of the U.S. Department of Education's (USED) adult education program. English Literacy (EL) participants are placed in six different levels, according to their English proficiency and literacy level, from Beginning Literacy through Advanced English Literacy. Participants at the Beginning Literacy level are the most difficult to serve due to their low English proficiency and overall level of literacy. This FastFacts presents the national picture and state highlights of the changing demographics of EL participants from program year (PY) 2000-01 through 2004-05.

### NRS Data

The overall number of participants in English literacy over the past five years peaked in PY 2002-03. Comparing the PY 2000-01 to the 2004-05 year, the number of students increased 2%. The percentage of EL students out of all adult education participants rose slightly, up to 44 percent in PY 2004-05.

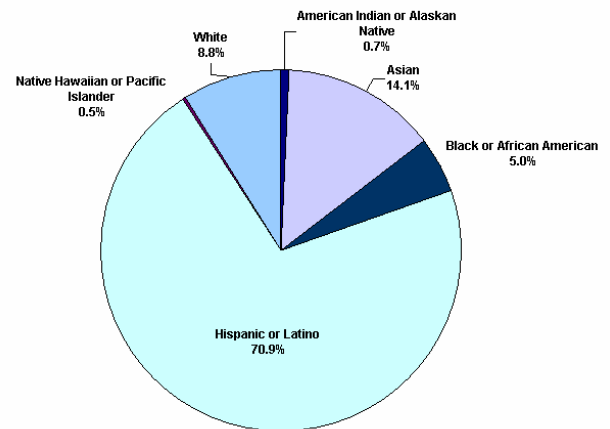
**Total Number and Percent of English Literacy Participants in Adult Education Programs 2000-2003**



Hispanic or Latino students accounted for the largest percentage of participants in EL classes, making up more than 70 percent of the population (see pie chart). In contrast, Adult Basic Education and Adult

Secondary Education, Whites comprise the largest group at 40 and 46 percent, respectively. Within EL, Asian students made up the second largest group accounting for about 14 percent, while Whites make up about 9 percent of the students.

**Race/Ethnicity of English Literacy Adult Education Participants PY 2004-05**

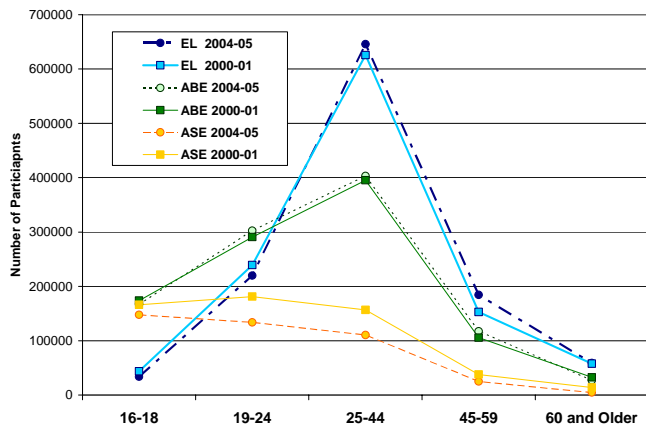


In PY 2002-03, females accounted for the majority (58%) of students with 682,379 participants, and males made up 42% with 493,152 students. The enrollment of males and females differed most for Hispanic or Latino and Asian students, almost 80,000 and 65,000 more women were participants respectively.

In PY 2004-05, the majority (57 percent) of the EL participants fell into the 25-44 year old age range. The line graph below shows how the numbers of students peak in the middle age group and drop off at similar levels for younger and older age groups. This pattern was similar to the enrollment pattern by age group during the 2000-01 year.

Across the five program years and compared to the other Adult Education program areas, EL has a greater number of students in all of the higher age groups: the 25-44, 45-59, and 60 and older age groups. For the 16-18 age group, EL has the fewest number of participants (see line graph).

**Adult Education Participation by Program Type and Age  
PY 2000-01 and 2004-05**



### State Highlights: 2004-2005

In PY 2004-05, the states with the largest **number** of participants in English Literacy courses were not surprisingly some of the states with the largest overall populations. California had by far the largest number of EL participants with over 400,000 students, accounting for roughly 38 percent of the entire population taking EL courses. The five states with the largest number of EL participants in 2004-2005 were:

- **California:** 429,024
- **Florida:** 114,310
- **New York:** 86,111
- **Illinois:** 72,311
- **Texas:** 64,726

Although the above states contributed the most in number, a more informative statistic may be the states with the highest percentage of EL participants relative to their Adult Education participant population. Overall, EL students constituted 44 percent of participants in federally-sponsored adult education programs. The states with the highest percentage of EL participants in PY 2004-05 were:

- **Nevada:** 82% (8,163)
- **California:** 72% (429,024)
- **Colorado:** 63% (9,427)
- **New Jersey:** 62% (25,265)
- **Illinois:** 61% (72,311)

At the other end of the spectrum, the states with the lowest percentage of EL participants were:

- **West Virginia:** 3% (287)
- **Mississippi:** 3% (781)
- **Montana:** 6% (199)
- **Louisiana:** 7% (1,917)
- **Alabama:** 8% (1,626)

Since PY 2000-01, many states have also seen significant changes in the percentage of their adult education program serving EL students. For example, Nevada went from 49 percent of adult education students in EL in PY 2000-01 to 82 percent in PY 2004-05, a gain of 33 percentage points. However, due to overall program size reductions, this actually translated to a loss of about 3,000 students in EL. Colorado, Maine, and Hawaii each saw larger than 10 percentage point gains in the percentage of total program participants being served in EL.

California, on the other hand, was serving 62,020 more EL students in PY 2004-05 than five years before, but due to increases in their overall adult education program, when compared with overall enrollment, the proportion of EL students actually decreased by 5 percent.

### Data Limitations

While the data presented here offer a glimpse of trends of the beginning literacy population, it is also important to consider the limitations of comparing data across states. There is a dramatic range and variety of demographic characteristics between the states that are continually shifting, and those changes are continually affecting the make-up of adult education programs.

In addition, the 2000-01 data reflect the first year of NRS data collection. Improvements to the data collection process alone may account for increases or decreases in the data. For example, reducing duplicate counts may lower the reported number of participants, when in fact the actual number of participants did not change.

### Resources

- To learn more about the adult education and literacy programs of the USED, go to the Department's Division of Adult Education and Literacy at: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html>
- To learn more about the National Reporting System, see the Web site at: [www.nrsweb.org](http://www.nrsweb.org).

### Copies

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