What is education?

Educational attainment is the highest grade of school an individual attends and completes. Educational proficiency measures a student’s mastery of skills and understanding. High school dropout rates are defined here as the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who dropped out of school in the past year (event dropout rate) or the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not enrolled and have not yet completed high school (status dropout rate).

How many New Mexico residents are affected?

In 2008–2009:

- 4.9% of New Mexico public school students in grades 9-12 dropped out of school (event dropout rate) in the preceding year.

As of 2009:

- 17.2% of adults in New Mexico (age 25 and older)—approximately 222,000 persons—had not completed high school, and 43.6% had not attended one or more years of college.
- 7.6% of adults in New Mexico (age 25 and older) had less than a 9th grade education.
- More than one-third of New Mexico 8th graders scored below basic on reading proficiency (34.5%).
- 40.6% of New Mexico 8th graders scored below basic on mathematics proficiency.

As of 2009, nearly half (47.9%) of 4th graders in public schools in New Mexico scored below basic on reading proficiency and 28.2% scored below basic on mathematics proficiency.
In 2008–2009, the event dropout rate among American Indians was nearly twice the rate of whites (7.1% vs. 3.8%, respectively).

**What are the trends?**
Between 1992 and 2009, the percentage of New Mexico 4th and 8th grade students who scored below basic in mathematics proficiency assessments decreased by 22.0 and 11.8 percentage points, respectively.

**Who is affected?**
**Males:** In 2009, average reading proficiency scores in New Mexico were consistently higher for female students than for male students in the 4th grade (213 vs. 203).

**Seniors:** As of 2009 in New Mexico, almost one out of four (24.3%) older adults (age 65 and older) had not completed high school.

**Minorities:** In 2006-2008, the percentage of persons age 25 and older who completed high school was 93.0% among whites, 70.4% among Hispanics, and 73.5% among American Indians/Alaska Natives.

**The Poor:** In 2009, average reading proficiency scores in New Mexico were lower among 4th graders eligible for the National School Lunch Program than among students who were ineligible (199 vs. 225).

**WHY DOES IT MATTER?**
Poor education limits future prospects for employment, earnings, housing, and health. It is a growing problem in an era based on a knowledge economy. An inadequate education can perpetuate a cycle of distress for families across multiple generations.

**SOURCES AND METHODS**