

→ **Fast Facts**

→ **Education and the American future**

A new report from The College Board recommends that at least 55 percent of young Americans earn a community college degree or higher by the year 2025 in order to maintain global competitiveness and leadership in education. Among the ten steps recommended to achieve this goal are to provide universally available preschool education; to keep college affordable; to clarify and simplify the admissions process; and to provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of adult education programs. High school graduation rates have fallen from about 77 percent in 1971 to 67 percent today. In recent years, American college completion rates have dropped from number two in the world for younger workers (age 25–34) to number eleven.

Commission On Access, Admissions And Success In Higher Education (2008), "Coming to Our Senses: Education and the American Future," The College Board, New York, New York. professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/coming-to-our-senses-college-board-2008.pdf. Retrieved Dec. 10, 2008.

→ **Adult online learning**

"About 70 percent of adult learners taking classes online do not finish their courses," according to a study by Shawna L. Strickland, a clinical assistant professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The report says that while more introverted or shy personality types, or individuals with schedule conflicts, can thrive in online-learning programs, difficulties with operating the required technology or heavy workloads can stand in the way of course completion. The author drew from academic journals and studies on distance learning for the report, which examined adult learners ages 20 to 40.

Mary C. Breden, Adult Online Learning, Education Week, March 5, 2008, Vol. 27, Issue 26. Original Report, "Understanding Successful Characteristics of Adult Learners." www.aarc.org/resources/rcea/rcea07.pdf. Retrieved Feb. 6, 2009.

→ **Citation rankings by country**

Thomson Reuters has presented its list of "Top 20" countries for scientific papers published from January 1998 through August 31, 2008. Countries are ranked by three separate measures: total citations, number of papers, and citations per paper. The United States is ranked first in total citations at 42.3 million, followed by Germany at 8.8 million citations. Ranked by total papers published in Thomson Reuters-indexed journals, the top countries are the United States, Japan, Germany, and England. Switzerland claims the top spot in citations per paper at 14.85. It is followed by the United States, Denmark, Netherlands, Scotland, and Sweden.

Top 20 Countries in ALL FIELDS, 1998-August 31, 2008, ScienceWatch.com, New York, New York. sciencewatch.com/drcou/2008/08decALL. Retrieved Feb. 2, 2009.

→ **Alternative Search Engines**

Adrian Janes has written an article extolling the virtues of Web search alternatives to the "Big Four" (Google, Yahoo, Ask, and Live). They are useful, he says, because "it can be more efficient to search with something that may have a smaller, but more focused, index. Some have features that give them an advantage over bigger engines. It's important to encourage, through usage and feedback, the smaller companies so as to prevent monopolies emerging." He provides links and mini-reviews for Zuula, Hakia, Agent 55, Mednar, Clusty, and others.

Adrian Janes, "Engineering Results: Some Alternative Search Engines," Free Pint Ltd., February 2009, Middlesex, United Kingdom. web.fumsi.com/go/article/find/3616. Retrieved Feb. 9, 2009.

Gary Pattillo is reference librarian at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, e-mail: pattillo@email.unc.edu