

Arts Data Profile: State-Level Estimates of Arts Participation Patterns: 2017-2018

Brief #3: Literary Reading – Top-Ranking States

According to findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), 44 percent of all U.S. adults (105.8 million people) read at least one work of literature (novels or short stories, poems, or plays) in 2017 (see table, below).

Percent of U.S. adults who read literature in 2017

	Percent	Number (in millions)
Novels or short stories	41.8%	99.6
Poetry	11.7%	27.9
Plays	3.7%	8.8
Any literary work	44.2%	105.8

2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

Residents of the following **seven states**, and the District of Columbia, **read literature at a significantly higher rate** than did the nation’s adults as a whole (see chart, below).¹

Percent of U.S. adults who read literature: 2017

States (and the District of Columbia) with shares significantly greater than the overall U.S. rate

U.S. [overall]	44.2%
Washington	62.5%
Alaska	61.2%
Oregon	60.6%
Connecticut	59.0%
District of Columbia	58.1%
Colorado	57.3%
Minnesota	56.0%
Virginia	54.0%

2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

With the exception of Minnesota, all these states also scored highly in the specific reading category of novels and short stories. For example, Colorado and Connecticut—both of which scored above the national rate for literary reading—were also high in the proportion of adults reading novels or short stories: 54-57 percent—well above the corresponding U.S. rate, which is 42 percent of adults.

Just under 12 percent of U.S. adults read poetry. But in **five states** (and Washington, D.C.) the rates of **poetry-reading** are much higher (see table, below).

Percent of U.S. adults who read poetry: 2017

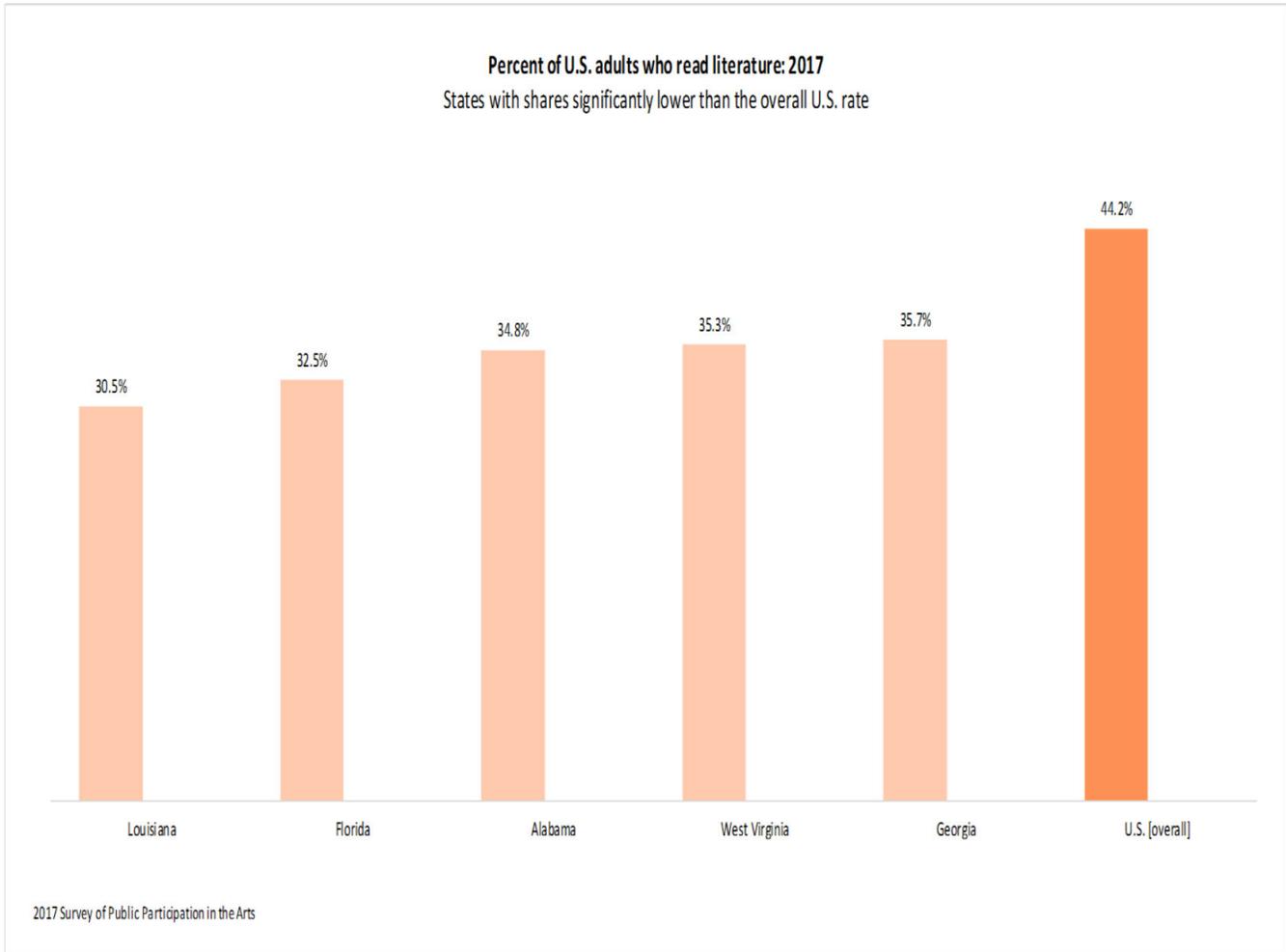
States (and the District of Columbia) with shares significantly greater than the overall U.S. rate

U.S. [overall]	11.7%
Vermont	21.2%
District of Columbia	20.5%
Washington	18.3%
Alaska	18.2%
Virginia	16.7%
New York	16.3%

2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

In addition, Alaska, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia exceeded the national rates of reading in the literary genres of novels and short stories *and* poetry.²

Alternatively, literary reading (the share of adults reading novels/short stories, poetry, or plays) was significantly lower in five states: Alabama; Florida; Georgia; Louisiana; and West Virginia. In these southern states, the overall literary reading rate ranged between 30 and 35 percent.



Endnotes

¹At 90 percent confidence, rates are not statistically different among these seven states (and the District of Columbia).

²The coefficient of variation for most state-level 2017 SPPA estimates of play-reading exceeded 30 percent, suggesting that state-level play-reading figures are unreliable. While included in the composite variable “literary reading,” play-reading is not discussed in this document.