

How Much Education Do You Get?

by Cynthia Peters

Teacher's Note: One aspect of literacy is being able to read and interpret charts and graphs. In this lesson, the average years of schooling for males and females in selected countries is represented in two different graphics. Start by asking your students to simply look at the charts and identify what they see. Some might notice the layout and the shape and shading of the bars. Others might immediately react to the data. After they have had some time to absorb the information graphically, work with them on the math questions to help sharpen numeracy skills.

Chart 1: Average Years of Schooling for Males and Females in Selected Countries Compared to the U.S.

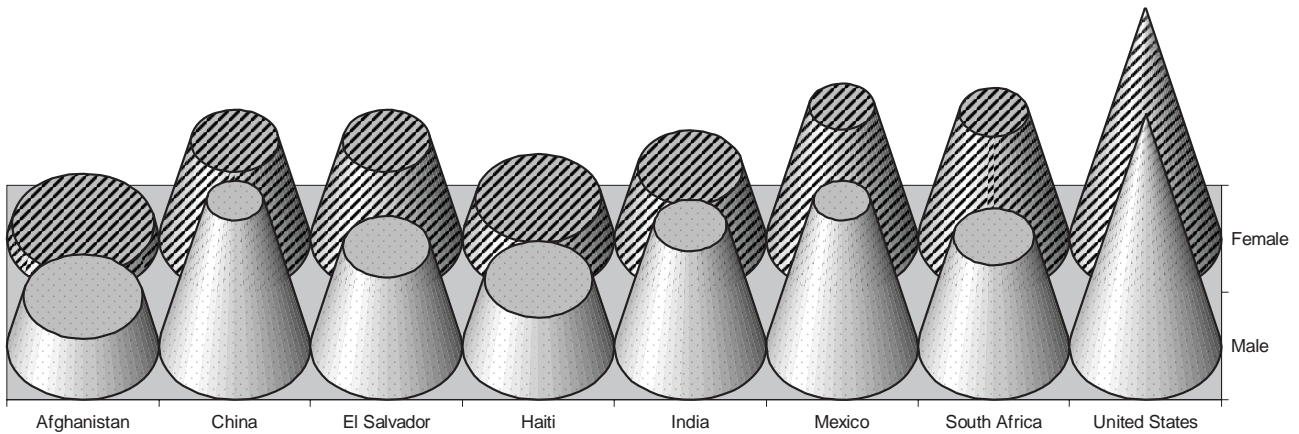
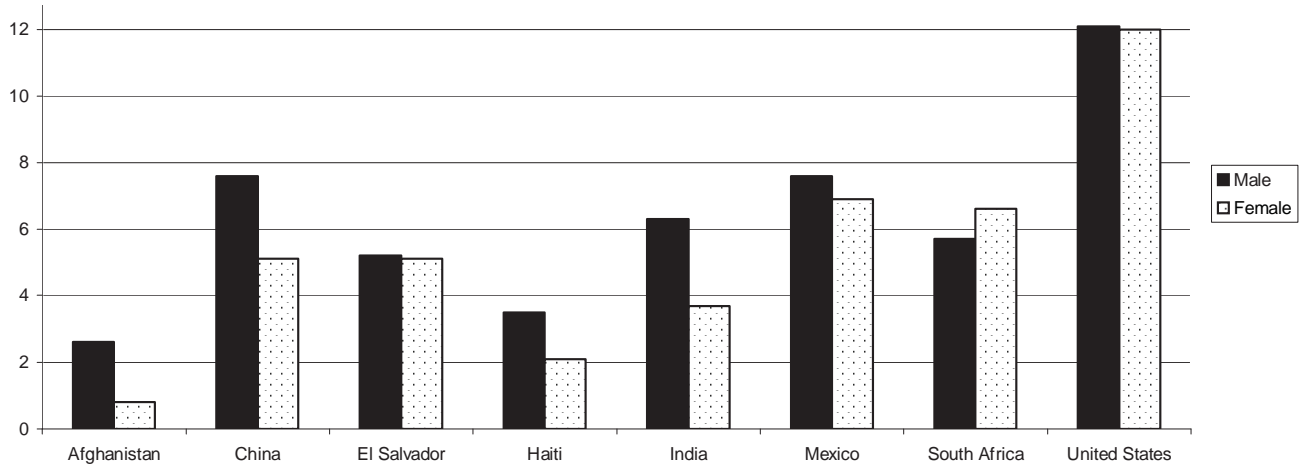


Chart 2: Average Years of Schooling for Males and Females in Selected Countries



Source: Table 2.13 (pp. 84-86) in the 2003 World Development Indicators, World Bank.

Student Worksheet: Average Years of Schooling

Look at Chart 1 and list three things you notice about it.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now look at Chart 2 and list three things you notice about it.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are three differences you notice in the two charts?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Look at Chart 2. The y axis is vertical and the x axis is horizontal. What information does the y axis give you?

What information does the x axis give you?

Where does this data come from?

Student Worksheet: Statistics and Averages

Statistics only tell part of the story and sometimes they do not even tell that well. What questions do these charts raise for you? What information is left out? What else would you like to know? Why do you think that in so many countries women get less education than men?

Questions to sharpen numeracy skills:

1. Which three countries show the least inequality between the sexes?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

2. Is there any country where females get on average more schooling than males?

Average years of schooling is found by adding all the years that males and females attended school and then dividing that number by the total number of males and the total number of females. Averages can mask certain facts. For example, averages tend to make us think that everyone's years of schooling are close to the average. But that might not be true. Averages often mask gross inequality.

Say you had a country with a very few well-educated people and a majority of people with very little education. Now, imagine another country where everyone had fairly equal access to a moderate level of education. The average years of schooling might look similar in both countries, but one country would have much more equal access to school. See below for how two very different countries (in terms of access to education) have similar averages. (Each country has 100 people.)

Country with Fairly Equal Access to Education:

30 people get 8 years of schooling = 240

40 people get 6 years of schooling = 240

30 people get 4 years of schooling = 120

TOTAL = 600 years

Average years of schooling per person = 6.0

Country with a Big Educational Divide:

10 people get 16 years of schooling = 160 years

20 people get 12 years of schooling = 240 years

70 people get 3 years of schooling = 210 years

TOTAL = 610 years

Average years of schooling per person = 6.1

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