1947

The educational status of Louisiana's farm population

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THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF LOUISIANA'S FARM POPULATION

By

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

MAR 27 1961

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

AND

AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS

W. G. Taggart, Director
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THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF
LOUISIANA'S FARM POPULATION

T. LYNN SMITH AND LOUISE KEMP

I. SUMMARY

1. Whether gauged by the average number of years of schooling, the proportion of persons with no formal education, or the percentages of the population completing high school, the educational status of Louisiana's population is very low in comparison with that of people in the remainder of the nation.

2. The state's poor educational showing is not merely, or even mainly, due to the high percentage of Negroes in its population, although this factor does reduce the averages. If the comparisons are based on data for the white population alone, Louisiana still ranks at the bottom of the list.

3. The state's poor educational showing is due mostly to the inadequate schooling that has been afforded our white rural population. The educational status of the white inhabitants of Louisiana's towns and cities compares favorably with that of their fellow urbanites elsewhere in the nation. But among the white farm populations of the various states, that of Louisiana ranks at the bottom. This category of our population has received an average of only 6.3 years of schooling, almost a year less than the corresponding figure (7.1 years) for Alabama, our closest rival for the cellar position, and 2.7 years below the national average for the white rural-farm population.

4. Louisiana's farm population not only ranks at the bottom of the nation's educational scale, but our farm people are more disadvantaged educationally, in comparison with the inhabitants of towns and cities, than is the case in any other state. In other words, in comparison with the amount of schooling provided our urban people the degree to which the training of our rural-farm population has been neglected is unequalled anywhere else in the United States.

5. The people living in the northwestern part of Louisiana have by far the highest average amount of schooling and those living in the French-speaking sections of south Louisiana have the lowest.

6. For several decades Louisiana has been about keeping pace with the nation in increasing the amount of education given to white urbanites, and has now reached a point where the amount of training given to young white persons in rural-nonfarm areas comes fairly close
to the amount afforded comparable groups in the country as a whole. The educational status of white Louisiana farmers more nearly approximates the national average than was the case several decades ago, but the state will have to accelerate its pace considerably in raising rural educational standards before farm people in the state will reach the levels attained by farmers elsewhere. The state is gaining little headway on the nation in educating its Negroes.

7. Within the state the position occupied by the youthful farmers compares even more unfavorably with that occupied by young people in other groups than is the case among their elders.

II. INTRODUCTION

Purposes and Objectives

This is a study of the educational status of the population of Louisiana. In it we analyze the amount of formal schooling received by the people of the state, compare these attainments with those of the populations in other parts of the Union, examine the variations from group to group and place to place within Louisiana, and study the nature and direction of the changes and trends that are underway. We are particularly interested in the educational standing of the farm people, especially in how the amount of schooling received by them compares with that given to other groups and classes in the population. We want to know if this spread or differential is greater or less than that prevailing in other states and regions. We also desire to identify the factors that are related to the amount of schooling received by farmers and others and to understand the ways in which they operate. It is not merely that we are curious about these and related matters. On the contrary, we believe that such knowledge is necessary in order that measures to correct shortcomings and provide more equal educational opportunities for all may be directed in the most intelligent manner possible. It is earnestly hoped that the data and relationships set forth in this study will contribute to the provision of more equitable and adequate educational opportunities for the state's oncoming citizenry.

The rural sociologist or population analyst need offer no apology for an interest in the educational status of the population. Modern society takes for granted the ability to read well, write legibly, and to make and check rather involved calculations. This is true of persons in all walks of life, not merely those living in towns and cities. If in the small, isolated, and self-sufficient little neighborhoods and communities of half a century ago, many a farmer could get along fairly well with little or no formal schooling, the same certainly cannot be said for his grandson on the farm today. Even in our most rural areas the successful management of a farm requires a considerable amount of schooling on
the part of the farm operator. Furthermore, we now know that the rural schools of the nation train fully as many of the future inhabitants of our cities as do the schools of those cities themselves.

For the reasons just enumerated, the educational status of the population has become an important index of its quality. It is a direct reflection of the amount of effort which parents, the members of the community as a whole, and the state are putting forth to insure the well-being of the oncoming generations. Nowadays when the state and the nation do so much to and for the many classes that make up the great society, it is highly important to know the extent to which education—a primary determinant of the quality of the population—is being afforded to the various residential, racial, and cultural groups.

**Data and Procedure**

The results of the 1940 Census offer the best opportunity we have had for taking stock of the educational attainments of the population. Prior to 1940 only data on illiteracy were gathered. Long ago in the United States the percentages of those who were unable to read and write were reduced so much that the proportion illiterate came to be a very unsatisfactory measure of educational attainments of the people of any given area, race or occupation. Fortunately, in 1940 the regular population schedule contained questions about the number of years of schooling received. The published reports of the census, together with special tabulations that we have had made, make possible a fairly thoroughgoing analysis of the educational achievement of Louisiana's population.

The question on the census schedule referred to the highest, or last full, grade the person had completed in the school system. The possible range is from no grades at all, represented by zero, through five years or more of college, represented by the number 17. We have restricted our study to the educational attainment of adults, or those persons who may be assumed to have completed their training. Most of the data refer to persons 25 years of age and over; but the discussion of the educational status of the population divided into five-year age groups also includes the group aged 20-25 years.

To be most readily understood, these data must be compressed into indexes of one kind or another. Apriori it would seem that one of the best yardsticks of the educational status of a group would be the median number of school years completed. This is the number that divides the group into two equal parts, one half having completed more years and one half having completed less years than the median. Wherever possible we have used this figure as one measure of attainment. "Average" as we use it in this study refers to median years of schooling. From the pub-
lished tabulations of the Bureau of the Census it was possible to obtain the medians, or average amounts of schooling attained, for the adult populations of the state and nation for both whites and nonwhites properly subdivided into the urban, the rural-nonfarm, and the rural-farm categories.

We supplemented this information by calculating the proportions of persons who have attained specific educational levels (completed no years of school, completed seven grades, completed high school, etc.). On the basis of these indexes, it was possible to make fairly satisfactory comparisons of the status of Louisiana's population with that of the rest of the country.

The analysis of variations within the state was more difficult. Although it is widely recognized that the disparity between the educational attainments of whites and Negroes in the southern states is wide, the data published by the Bureau of the Census are not subdivided by race for any divisions smaller than the states. As a result, these data often reflect little more than the varying proportions of Negroes in the populations of the counties or other divisions. We were anxious to avoid having our studies turn out to be nothing more than crude and expensive ways of demonstrating that the proportion of Negroes in the population varied widely from one part of the state to another. It was necessary, therefore, to procure special tabulations from the Census Bureau, more detailed data which would permit analysis of the educational status of each racial group, before we could proceed with the study of variations throughout Louisiana. The special tabulations made it possible for us to calculate for each of the parishes the proportions of persons who attained specific educational levels, properly subdivided according to race and residence, but it was still not feasible to secure the medians. This was not as serious a defect as we at first thought, because in the course of the study the median proved to be of less use in detecting important variations than some of the other indexes such as the percentage completing high school.

Determination of trends was complicated by the fact that the censuses prior to 1940 secured data solely about the ability of the population to read and write. As indicated above, it was a long step forward when the 1940 Census schedule included queries about the number of years of schooling received. Certainly one should not bemoan the fact that the old tabulations on illiteracy have given way to the new data which are so much more detailed and informing. In the next few decades, it will be possible to determine accurately the rates at which the state and nation are improving their educational standards. For the present, how-

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ever, we were able to approximate the trends only by comparing the
level reached by older age groups in the population, or those persons
who completed their training 40 or 50 years ago, with that reached by
young adults, or those aged 20 to 24, or 25 to 29 years in 1940. The
medians of the number of school years completed by Louisiana’s popu-
lation subdivided into five-year age groups are available in the census
publications for nonwhites; these were also calculated for whites in
each of the principal residential groups in the state and used as the
bases for determining the direction and speed of the changes.

One shortcoming in the use of this type of data is that they measure
quantity, but not quality, of training. Such factors as length of the
school year, the type of instruction offered, the qualifications of teachers
and the availability of financial resources to carry out the school pro-
gram are all factors that affect educational achievement. It is important
to recognize this fact, especially since these are likely to be most inade-
quate where the smallest amount of schooling is reported by the popu-
lation (among Negroes, in rural areas, etc.).

III. LOUISIANA’S POSITION IN THE NATION

One who seeks to determine the relative standing of Louisiana’s
population with respect to educational status must first divide the data
by race and residence. Otherwise, any comparisons are sure to be mis-
leading. As has been the case in so many other studies of the contem-
porary social scene, after endless statistical manipulations one may suc-
cceed merely in demonstrating that the state contains a large proportion
of rural folk and a very high percentage of Negroes! These facts are
already well known and may be shown in more direct ways. Therefore,
in the preparation of our basic tabulations the first consideration was
to get the data properly classified according to residence and race.

From among the infinite possibilities in the way of tabulations and
graphic representations, and from the hundreds of tabulations and
charts actually prepared for purposes of study and analysis, we have se-
lected for presentation in this section only three tables and four maps.
These tables and maps contain the basic data from which Louisiana’s
standing educationally among her sister states may be determined. Table
I supplies the data necessary for comparing the median years of school
completed by the various residential and racial groups in the state and
the nation; Table II provides the facts on which comparisons of propor-
tions with no formal schooling at all may be based; and Table III gives
the information about the proportions of the respective residential and
racial groups who have received a high school education or better. With

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IV (Louisiana and United States Summary). Washington: Government Printing Of-
fice, 1943.
The data for individual states mapped as in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4, one may easily and consistently determine the residential, racial, and regional variations in educational status. They deserve careful study, and such study will immediately reveal several outstanding distinctions relative to Louisiana's educational status.

In the first place, our citizens must frankly face the fact that the educational status of our population is low, among the lowest in the nation. This lamentable finding stands out irrespective of whether we use median years of schooling, percentage of the population with no schooling, or proportion of persons who have completed high school as the index on which the comparisons are based. Taking, for example, the first of
these, we are forced to confess that our people have received, on the average, fewer years of schooling than those of any other state in the Union. We can also determine the factors responsible for our poor showing. Louisiana does not rank low on the nation's educational scale because the white inhabitants of our towns and cities have not had as much formal education as that enjoyed by urban residents in the neighboring states and in the other regions. In fact, the data indicate that there are no great regional differences among the native white urban populations. White people who live in the cities in one section of the country have had about as much schooling as their fellows in any other section. Thus, although our native white population ranks 37th among the 48 states, it still is a well-educated group. The average number of grades completed by those of 25 years of age and over is 9.1, only one half of a year below the national average for the corresponding group. There are few places in the world where the population has received anywhere near this amount of schooling. Those interested in regional aspects will want to know (see Figure 1) that urban whites in Louisiana are about on a par with those of New York and above the standing of the comparable group in New Jersey, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Maryland, arranged in descending order. However, Louisiana does not compare favorably with its neighbor, Mississippi, where the 11.7 grades average for the urban native white population topped the nation, nor with Utah, Cali-

![Figure 1](image-url)
fornia, Nevada, South Carolina, Florida, North Dakota, and Washington, all of them with an average of 11 years or more.

Nor is Louisiana's low position due in any large measure to the relative standing of its native white rural-nonfarm population. It is true that among persons 25 years of age and over in this category, Louisiana's position is only 44th. Our state ranks below all others except Tennessee, Kentucky, New Mexico, and West Virginia. But the average in Louisiana is 8.1 grades completed, while the national average is only one half of a year more and those of the three leaders, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Utah, only 10.5, 10.4, and 10.1, respectively.

Louisiana's unenviable position educationally among the states is largely due to the very poor showing made by the native white population of her farms. Among persons 25 years of age and over in this category, the average number of years of schooling completed is only 6.3. This is the 48th position among the states, and the average is almost a full year below 7.1 recorded in Alabama, the second lowest state. It is

![Figure 2](image-url)

**Figure 2.**—Variations in the Amount of Formal Schooling Received by the Negro Population of the United States Aged 25 Years and Over, By Residence, 1940. (Starting at 12:00 o'clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)

2.7 years lower than the national average for the category, and more than three years below the averages of the two leaders, Massachusetts and Utah, which are 9.8 and 9.4, respectively.

These conclusions would not be altered in any fundamental way if they were based on the proportions of persons who had never completed
the first grade, although on this score the showing of the urban population is not as good as it is when median years of school completed are considered. The 3.2 per cent of our urban native white population, 25 years of age and over, who had not completed the first grade, compares most unfavorably with the 0.8 per cent in the nation, and is higher than that of any other state except New Mexico. Even New Mexico, with its large Spanish-American population included in the native white category, does not keep Louisiana's native white rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations from occupying the most unfavorable position among the states. The 10.1 per cent of our white rural-nonfarm population with no schooling looks bad alongside the national average of 1.7 per cent; and the 14.6 per cent of Louisiana's white farm population who have had no schooling makes an even poorer showing with the nation's 2.5 per cent. As late as 1940, on the eve of the Atomic Age, one out of

![Figure 3](image.png)

**Figure 3.**—Variations in the Proportions of the White Population of the United States Aged 25 Years and Over Who Had Completed No School Years, By Residence, 1940. (Starting at 12:00 o'clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)

seven of Louisiana's white farmers and their wives had never completed the first grade of school.

The very low educational status of the Negroes is another important factor in our poor educational standing. This fact is strongly emphasized by the graphical devices employed in this study. The urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm Negroes of Louisiana, along with those living in
other southern states, make a very poor showing, not only in comparison with the native white populations of comparable residential categories, but also in comparison with the urban Negroes of the northern states. (See Figure 2.) The median of 5.2 grades completed by Louisiana's urban Negroes stands third from the bottom among the 48 states, below all of the others except Georgia and South Carolina. It is 1.4 grades below the national average of 6.8.

The position of Louisiana's rural-nonfarm Negroes is even worse. The median for this group is only 3.5 years, the very lowest in the nation, 0.3 of a year below that of the next state, South Carolina, and a full year and one half below the national average for the class.

Rural-farm Negroes are not sufficiently numerous outside the South to justify ranking the states, but in any case Louisiana would not make a showing of which to be proud. In this state the rural-farm Negroes averaged only 2.8 grades, almost a full year below the next lowest ones, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama, and 1.3 years below the national (almost exclusively the southern) average.

As in the case of the native whites, to make the comparisons on the basis of the proportions of persons who have never completed the first grade gives results fully as unfavorable for the state. In all residential categories the percentage of Louisiana's Negroes who have no schooling

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**Figure 4.**—Variations in the Proportions of the White Population of the United States Aged 25 Years and Over Who Had Completed High School, By Residence, 1940. (Starting at 12:00 o'clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)
is about double that for the nation as a whole. In the urban category, the percentage among Louisiana’s Negroes is the highest in the nation. Among the rural categories, the percentage of Louisiana’s Negroes is much higher than in any of the other southern states, the only ones with sufficiently large Negro populations to permit significant comparisons to be made.

Louisiana’s farm population not only ranks at the bottom of the nation’s educational scale, but the spread between the amount of schooling they have been privileged to receive and that afforded their fellows in the towns and cities is the widest in the nation. In fact, this discrepancy between the amount of education acquired by the inhabitants of Louisiana’s towns and cities and those who live on her farms is one of the most significant findings of this study. This is a matter that should be of concern to every person who cares about the well-being of the state, for there is no comparable differential in any of the other states of the nation. As may be seen from Figure 1, in Ohio, New York, and New Jersey the people living on farms have been given about the same amount of formal training as have those who live in urban centers. Throughout the entire Midwest the educational attainments of the farm population approach those of people living in cities. In the West and in Massachusetts there is a slight differential only because even the high level attained by the farmers is surpassed in the urban centers. But in the South the unfavorable situation of the farm population stands out. The relatively high educational status of its urban population accompanied by a low educational status of the rural-farm population is the outstanding characteristic of the region. This deplorable situation is most acute of all in Louisiana. It strikes the eye all the more because the urban level as well as the rural-farm are so much below those of the other southern states.

That the inequality of educational opportunities is greater in Louisiana than in most other states in the Union also exhibits itself in other forms than this rural-urban differential that has just been mentioned. Careful study will show that our rating is better if the proportions of persons receiving a high school education or more are used as the index, than it is if either the median years of schooling or the per cent receiving no schooling at all is employed. (See Table III.) This situation is one that would occur if a selected portion of the population were benefiting from comparatively good educational opportunities, while larger numbers were finding it difficult or impossible to continue their schooling. In other words, evidence suggests that the Louisiana family in poor circumstances finds it more difficult to keep its children in school until their secondary education has been completed than is the case elsewhere.

The data and analysis presented in the preceding paragraphs leave no doubt that the educational status of our population, in comparison
with that of the other states in the Union, is nothing of which to be proud. Nor can we better our case by asserting that we have high proportions of rural people and of Negroes, whose educational status pulls the state average down. Even when racial and residential differences are properly accounted for by comparing Louisiana's urban whites with the same category elsewhere, rural-farm whites with rural-farm whites, urban Negroes with urban Negroes, rural-farm Negroes with rural-farm Negroes, etc., the state's poor showing persists. Our people of all residential and racial groups have been receiving relatively little formal schooling. Furthermore, our state is in a class of its own from the standpoint of the great differential in the amount of schooling received by the urban population and by the rural. Nowhere else in the nation does the farmer compare so unfavorably with the townsman and the city dweller as in Louisiana.

IV. VARIATIONS WITHIN THE STATE

The educational status of the population varies tremendously from one part of Louisiana to another. To a considerable extent these are merely reflections of the facts previously indicated, namely, that urban people have been privileged to receive more schooling than those who live in rural districts, and that white people have been afforded better educational opportunities than Negroes. But among members of each of the races who fall in any one of the three residential categories the differences in educational status vary widely from one section of the state to another. For the white farmer as well as the Negro agriculturist, the accident of birth in one part of the state has exerted a great influence upon the amount of schooling he was privileged to obtain; and the same has held for those born in the towns and cities. This indicates that not only race and residence but other factors as well are related to the educational status of the population. To a determination of the precise nature of the variations and an identification of the factors which are responsible for them, this section is devoted. Since residence and race are known to be such powerful determinants, they must be taken into account from the very beginning.

In order to get a bird's-eye picture of how educational status among urban and rural people, of each race, varies throughout Louisiana, Figures 5 to 10 were prepared. Two of these, one for the white population and the other for the Negro, utilize the proportions having completed seven or more years of schooling as a basis for comparing the educational status of the people of one parish with that of their fellows in other parts of the state. Another pair is based upon the percentage of the population with no schooling at all, and the third uses the proportion of high school graduates as the yardstick for making the comparisons. Because the data are subdivided by race as well as residence, and because all three indexes are employed, a study of these six maps
reveals the principal variations in the educational status of the population of Louisiana.\(^8\)

**Residential Differentials**

We have already indicated that the nation-wide tendency for more education to be provided urban people than is given to the inhabitants of rural territory also prevails in Louisiana. In fact, we have demonstrated that the disadvantage of the farm population is at its maximum in this state. Now it merely remains to be shown that this condition pre-

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\(^8\) For detailed data by parishes, see Louise Kemp and Homer L. Hitt, "Educational Data for Parishes of Louisiana," Mimeographed Series 1, Department of Rural Sociology, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Baton Rouge, August, 1947. These tables were prepared because published reports of the United States Bureau of the Census do not give parish data for the races separately.
vails throughout all portions of the state. Observation of Figures 5 to 10 indicates that the unfavorable educational position of the rural-farm population prevails in all parts of Louisiana. Consider the data for the white population.

In the state as a whole in 1940 three-fourths (73.1 per cent) of all adult urban whites had completed at least seven grades of school. Among rural-nonfarm population the corresponding percentage was 58.4, but in the rural-farm population it was only 41.9. Although the educational status of urban people, villagers and suburbanites, and farmers varies greatly from one part of the state to another, there is one uniformity that is state-wide. This is the unfavorable position of the farmers compared with the others. In every one of the 40 parishes containing urban populations except East Feliciana, the farmers are the lowest of the three groups in educational attainments. In the other 23

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**Figure 6.—Variations in the Proportions of the Negro Population of Louisiana Aged 25 Years and Over Who Had Completed Seven Grades of Schooling, By Residence, 1940.** (Starting at 12:00 o'clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)
parishes (Orleans is all urban), the farm population ranks below the rural-nonfarm.

Similar are the results if the comparisons are based on data showing the percentages of the population with no schooling at all, or on the proportions graduating from high school. In the deltas as in the hills; in the sugar bowl, the rice area, the cotton sections, and the areas where truck and dairy farming prevail; in French Louisiana and in the Anglo-Saxon portions of the state; in north central Louisiana, where the educational status of the population is comparatively high, and in south central Louisiana, where it is very low; in all parts of our exceedingly heterogeneous state, the differences are the same—the people who live on the farms have received far less schooling than those who live in the villages, towns, and cities.

Figure 7.—Variations in the Proportions of the White Population of Louisiana Aged 25 Years and Over Who Had Completed No School Years, By Residence, 1940. (Starting at 12:00 o’clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)
Similar is the showing of the rural Negro in comparison with his urban fellow. On each of the indexes, amid all the varied situations found within the borders of Louisiana the country people of a given parish have received less formal schooling than the residents of the towns or cities in the same parish.

Racial Differentials

Few comments are necessary about the racial differences in the educational status of the population of Louisiana. The facts evidenced by comparing Figure 5 with Figure 6, Figure 7 with Figure 8, and Figure 9 with Figure 10, show that the difference is considerable and clear-cut. Whatever index is employed, in rural districts as in towns and cities, and in all sections of Louisiana, the educational status of the Negro population is vastly inferior to that of its white fellows.

**Figure 8.** Variations in the Proportions of the Negro Population of Louisiana Aged 25 Years and Over Who Had Completed No School Years, By Residence, 1940. (Starting at 12:00 o'clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)
Other Differentials

Even after rural-urban and racial differentials are properly accounted for, some other significant variations remain. The most important of these are the comparatively high educational status which prevails in north central and northwestern Louisiana, and the extremely low educational attainments of the population in the French-speaking sections of south Louisiana. Roughly, the French cultural area of Louisiana is included in the triangle formed by a straight line running from the southwestern tip of the state to the point where the east-west boundary of Louisiana and Mississippi ends at the Mississippi River, another straight line extending from that point through New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico, and by taking the Louisiana coast as a base. To one familiar with the distribution of races and cultures in Louisiana the associations revealed by Figures 5 to 10 are clear-cut and unmistakable.

Figure 9.—Variations in the Proportions of the White Population of Louisiana Aged 25 Years and Over Who Had Completed High School, By Residence, 1940. (Starting at 12:00 o'clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)
There is a definite association between the population of French language and French culture and low educational status. Moreover, the educational standing of the population is lowest in those particular parts of the French section in which the Acadian influence has been the greatest. More than any other factor this contributes to Louisiana’s poor national standing, just as the Spanish-speaking population of New Mexico is responsible for that state’s low ranking educationally.

Figure 10.—Variations in the Proportions of the Negro Population of Louisiana Aged 25 Years and Over Who Had Completed High School, By Residence, 1940. (Starting at 12:00 o’clock on the circles and reading clockwise, the segments represent the urban, rural-nonfarm and rural-farm populations, respectively.)

V. PROGRESS

There is little doubt that the educational status of the population is improving. But, since prior to 1940 we have no information on years of schooling completed, we can measure this improvement only by comparing the levels attained by young persons, or those who have com-
pleted their training fairly recently, with the levels reached by persons who finished their schooling five or six decades ago. Figures 11 and 12 were prepared to show the trends in educational progress in the state and in the country as a whole.

It is apparent from these figures that young people, in cities, villages and suburban areas, and on farms, have the advantage over their parents and grandparents as far as average amount of schooling is concerned. The increased achievement is particularly noticeable among persons aged 40 years and less, or those who received their training since the public school system was organized.

**Louisiana and the Nation**

Figure 11 enables us to compare the educational progress made in Louisiana with that made by the nation as a whole. It shows that during the last half century the rate of improvement among white people of the state has been more rapid than that made in the country, with the result that the gaps between the educational levels reached by Louisianans and people who live in the rest of the country are being closed. Negroes of the state, however, seem to be making little headway in approaching the national average for their race.

As far as white city residents are concerned, the gap has been closed for some time. Even among persons aged 65 years and over the residents of the state did not fall far short of those in the nation, and for some time now Louisiana has been about keeping pace with the country as a whole in educating her urban population. The state has likewise reached a point where the training given to young village and suburban dwellers compares at least not too unfavorably with that of the comparable group in the nation as a whole. Some progress is being made toward giving the state's white farmers the necessary training that will enable them to hold their own with farmers elsewhere. This is indicated by the fact that the average educational attainment of Louisiana farmers aged 65-70 years failed by 3.3 years to meet the national average for these ages, whereas among persons aged 20-25 years the difference between state and national averages amounted to 1.4 years. However, the goal is still far from attained. The differential between Louisiana farmers and those of the nation is especially important because it is found even in the youngest age groups. The educational level of persons aged 20-25 years in 1940 will influence the general educational picture in the state for a long time to come, and it is only as these persons are replaced by succeeding generations that are better trained can the state hope to reach the average educational attainment of the farmers in the nation.
Figure 11.—Relationship of Age to the Average Years of Schooling Attained, By Residence and Race, Louisiana and the United States, 1940.
Progress within the State

The extent to which the amount of formal schooling has increased among the different groups which make up Louisiana's citizenry is shown in Figure 12. Urban residents aged 20-25 years in 1940, both white and colored, averaged more than four years of training above the amount

![Graph showing median school years completed by age, race, and residence in Louisiana, 1940.](image)

**Figure 12.** Relationship of Age to the Average Years of Schooling Attained, By Race and Residence, Louisiana, 1940.
reported by urbanites aged 65-70 years at that time. The median years of schooling reported by rural-nonfarm persons aged 20-25 years likewise exceeded by more than four years the amount reported by persons aged 65-70 years who were living in rural-nonfarm areas. The improvement of the educational standing of young farm people in comparison with that of their elders is not as marked. Here the differences amount to only 3.4 years for whites and 3.7 years for Negroes.

The educational level of Louisiana farmers, both white and colored, was lower than that of other groups in the state half a century ago; at the present time the gap between the amount of training reported by farmers and persons living elsewhere, instead of being lessened, is actually wider than ever. The white farmer of the state aged 65-70 years in 1940 had received, on the average, 3.3 years of schooling less than had the urban resident in the same age group; farm people aged 20-25 years had received, on the average, 4.2 years less than their contemporaries in the cities of the state. This is just as true of the Negro farmer, whose standing comes no closer to that of the Negroes in the towns and cities than that of his parents did.

The implications of these facts are clear. If Louisiana is to better her rank educationally, she must look first of all to her rural schools. The gap must be closed between the educational opportunities offered to citizens of the state who live in the country and those who live in towns and cities. The big task confronting Louisiana, and the Southern Region, is to increase the amount of schooling secured by rural people.