

# Early Childhood Book Access and Child Outcomes (National vs. New Mexico vs. Albuquerque)

65% of low-income US families have no children's books at home.

One book for every 300 children in low-income neighborhoods.

70% of inmates in America's prisons cannot read above a fourth-grade level.

## School & Academic Readiness

Low income children without books in the house.

- Only 57% can read or pretend to read.
- Only 18–21% achieve reading proficiency by 3rd grade.
- 80% of Special Ed referrals are due to reading problems.

Children with books in the house.

- 77% can read or pretend to read by school entry.
- More likely to be reading at grade level by 3rd grade.
- Strong literacy reduces misdiagnosis of troubled children.

## Graduation & College Enrollment

Low income children without books in the house.

- Non-proficient 3rd grade readers have a 35% drop out rate.
- Low income students have significantly lower high school graduation rates.

Children with books in the house.

- Students who read well by 3rd grade are 4x more likely to graduate high school.
- Children from book rich homes are 19% more likely to complete college.

## Criminal Risk

Low income children without books in the house.

- 85% of juveniles in the court system are functionally low literate.
- 70% of US inmates read below a 4th grade level.
- Low-literacy dropouts are 5x more likely to be arrested, 63% more likely to be incarcerated.

Children with books in the house.

- Reading proficiency by 3rd grade strongly predicts reduced criminal activity.

Sources:

New Mexico Voices for Children - NM kids Count Data Book 2024.

U.S. Dept of Education, National Center for Education Statistics- Early literacy and reading proficiency data.

Illiteracy and High Incarceration Rates in New Mexico - research essay with state-specific context.