

What is Life Literacy?

Life literacy signals the importance of lifelong and life-wide literacy and learning. It's the literacy skills you need to live your life fully and the new skills you need to acquire throughout your life. Workplace, family and community are important areas in your life where developing your essential skills can result in a more productive and more successful life experience.

Having adequate literacy skills means being able to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts. It also means being able to participate in society, achieve your goals, and develop your knowledge and potential.

Research shows that adults who have inadequate literacy skills are more likely to have poorer overall health, lower salaries, and lower levels of participation in their community.



Adult Literacy in Canada

- 48% of adult Canadians have literacy skills that fall below a high school level, which negatively affects their ability to function at work and in their personal lives
 - ▶ 17% function at the lowest level, where they may, for example, be unable to read the dosage instructions on a medicine bottle (OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, 2013)
- Canada has a higher percentage of its population at the highest and lowest levels of literacy ability
 - ▶ 14% of Canadians (compared to the OECD average of 12%) have advanced reading skills, meaning that they can perform tasks that involve combining information from several long texts and reaching a conclusion.
 - ▶ 17% of Canadians (more than the OECD average of 15%) score at or below the lowest level, meaning that they are able to use short texts to find one piece of information (*Skills in Canada: First Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – Statistics Canada, 2013*)
- Over half (54.7%) of adult Canadians score in the two lowest skill levels in numeracy, up from 49.8% in 2003
 - ▶ People with lower literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed than those who scored higher (*Skills in Canada: First Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – Statistics Canada, 2013* Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – Statistics Canada, 2013)
- Canada ranked 11th out of the 23 OECD countries evaluated by the PIAAC (*The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies*) on the percentage of adults with suitable literacy skills
 - ▶ The assessment found that the percentage of adults with suitable literacy skills (48%) has increased notably over the past 10 years (*OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, 2013*)
- Literacy had the most notable effect when measured against other factors that affect differences in pay, followed by education (Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey – OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000) of adults with suitable literacy skills