

What is Math Literacy?

Math literacy (also referred to as numeracy) is the ability to understand and apply math concepts in real-life situations. It is more than just calculating numbers and adding and subtracting; it involves reasoning, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Math literacy empowers individuals to make informed decisions in daily life. Examples of how we might use numeracy in everyday life includes creating and managing a budget, measuring ingredients while cooking a recipe, and understanding distances to calculate travel time.



Math Literacy in Canada

- Over half (55%) of adult Canadians score in the three lowest skill levels in numeracy, up from 49.8% in 2003. (*Skills in Canada: First Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – Statistics Canada, 2013*)
- 55% of Canadians have unsuitable numeracy skills, which means that they may struggle with understanding written instructions that rely on charts, numbers and conditional statements (if-then statements). (*Adults With Inadequate Numeracy Skills – Conference Board of Canada, 2010*)
- Across the full age spectrum, men have measurably higher average numeracy skills than women, and this difference becomes more pronounced in older age groups. For example, in the 16-to-24 cohort, average numeracy scores are 273 for men and 264 for women, a nine-point difference. In the 55-to-65 age group, however, the difference is more than twice as large, with an average score of 261 for men and 242 for women. (*Skills in Canada: First Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – Statistics Canada, 2013*)
- Canada is below the OECD average in numeracy. Canada's average score of 265 places it below the OECD average of 269, alongside countries such as Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In Canada, all 13 provinces and territories scored either at or below the OECD average. (*Skills in Canada: First Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) – Statistics Canada, 2013*)