

## Much Anticipated PIAAC Results Released. Boosting skills essential for tackling joblessness and improving well-being, says OECD

Posted on 10/08/2013

According to a new International report released this morning, low basic skills in literacy and numeracy are more common in the US than on average across participating countries. One in six adults in the US have low literacy skills and nearly one third have weak numeracy skills. Adults in the US fared less well with "problem-solving in technology-rich environments" than the cross-country average.



These findings are from the much anticipated **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Skills Outlook 2013 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) Report** released in Brussels today by OECD. The Survey of Adult Skills is an international survey conducted in the US and 24 participating countries. It measured the key cognitive and workplace skills needed for individuals to participate in society and for economies to prosper.

Martin Finsterbusch, a former adult education student and president of the National Coalition for Literacy and Executive Director of VALUEUSA, stated that, "This report underscores the importance of investing in adult education in the US. We must give adults in our nation the opportunity to improve their English literacy, numeracy, and technology skills. Research demonstrates that investment in adult education pays for America's Workers; for Global Competitiveness; for Bridging the Digital Divide; for Stronger Families and Future Generations; for Educational Attainment; for Safer and Healthier Communities; for an Informed Citizenry; and for Fully Integrated Communities!"

[According to the OECD](#) "Almost one in three adults in Italy (31.7%), Spain (30.6%) and the United States (28.7%) perform at or below the most basic level of numeracy, compared to around one in ten in Japan (8.2%), Finland (12.8%) and the Czech Republic (12.8%)."

The report reads in part, "The technological revolution that began in the last decades of the 20th century has affected nearly every aspect of life in the 21st: from how we 'talk' with our friends and loved ones, to how we shop, and how and where we work. Quicker and more efficient transportation and communication services have made it easier for people, goods, services and capital to move around the world, leading to the globalization of economies. These social and economic transformations have, in turn, changed the demand for skills as well. With manufacturing and certain low-skill tasks increasingly becoming automated, the need for routine cognitive and craft skills is declining, while the demand for information-processing and other high-level cognitive and interpersonal skills is growing."

Finsterbusch said, "Local adult education programs across the US report waiting lists. We must address the shortage of available resources to meet the instructional needs of these adults. In the meantime, the National Coalition for Literacy and the US Adult Education and Literacy field eagerly await the release of the US Country Report containing more specific analysis of the skills of adults in the US."

Key findings from the report have been outlined in a [media release from OECD](#). The findings include:

- **Progress across generations:** In England and the United States, the literacy and numeracy skills of young people entering the labor market are no better than those leaving for retirement. England ranks among the top three countries surveyed for literacy skills among the 55-65 year-olds. But the country is in the bottom three when it comes to such skills among 16-25 year-olds. American 55-65 year-olds perform around the average, but young Americans rank the lowest among their peers in the 24 countries surveyed.
- **Challenges for immigrants:** Immigrants performed worse than the native-born, especially those who did not learn the language of their new country as a child. But skills proficiency improves with length of stay in the host country, pointing to the important role of integration policies.
- **Adult Learning:** The highly skilled were on average three times more likely to take part in further training than the low skilled. The Survey suggests that Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have been most successful in boosting adult learning rates among the low-skilled. But countries with large shares of low-skilled adults, such as Canada, England and Northern Ireland, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the US, will need to do more to make adult learning more accessible, especially in the workplace.

Further information on the Skills Survey, including country notes, multilingual summaries, key data and data visualizations, is available at <http://skills.oecd.org/skillsoutlook.html>.

Source: [National Coalition for Literacy Press Release](#).