

Painting a picture of literacy

**Literacy —
why it matters!**



20 Reasons Why Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills Programs Matter:

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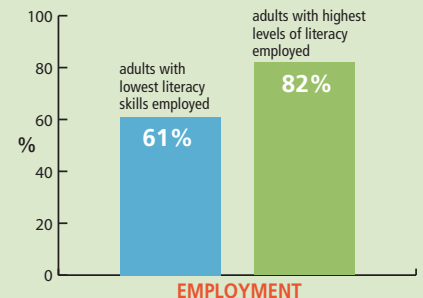
20 REASONS Why Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills Programs Matter:

1 Literacy: A CRITICAL ISSUE FOR ONTARIO

Literacy is an essential foundational skill in 21st century Ontario. However, in our province, 42% of adults do not have the literacy skills they need for home, work and life. In fact, 1.3 million people (16% of Ontarians) struggle with very serious literacy challenges and have trouble reading even the most basic text. Another 2.1 million people (26%) can read but not well enough to meet the demands of today's society.¹

2 Literacy and EMPLOYMENT

People with low literacy skills have much lower rates of employment. In Ontario, just 61% of adults with the lowest literacy levels are employed while 82% of people with the highest levels of literacy are in the workforce.²

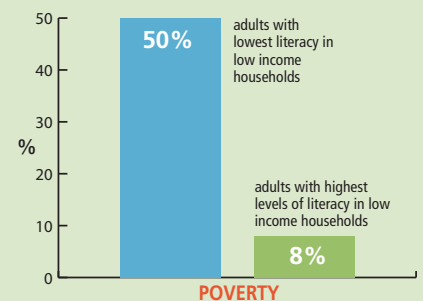


3 Literacy and UNEMPLOYMENT

People with low literacy skills are more likely to experience unemployment and they are about twice as likely to be unemployed for six months or more.³

4 Literacy and POVERTY

Close to 50% of adults with the lowest levels of literacy live in low income households, compared with only 8% of those with high levels of literacy.⁴

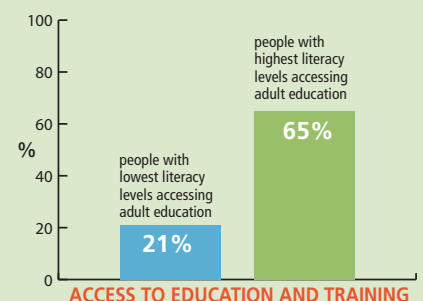


5 Literacy and INCOME

People with low literacy skills earn considerably less than those with high literacy skills and they are also more likely to receive social assistance from the government.⁵

6 Literacy and ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Just 21% of people with the lowest levels of literacy accessed some kind of adult education and training in the year preceding the survey, compared to 65% of people with the highest levels.⁶



7 Literacy and LIFELONG LEARNING

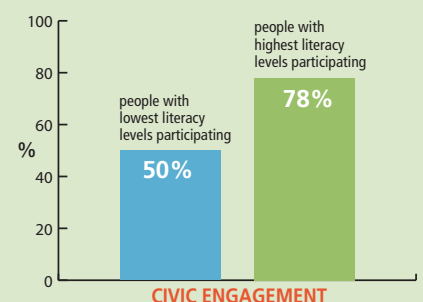
Lifelong learning is important for economic prosperity and personal growth. Raising the literacy levels of Canadians is one of the most important ways to encourage lifelong learning in our country.⁷

8 Literacy and HEALTH

Canadians with low literacy skills suffer poorer health than Canadians with high levels of literacy and a person's level of literacy is one of the key determinants of their overall health.⁸

9 Literacy and CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In Ontario, 50% of people with the lowest levels of literacy volunteer or participate in community groups, compared with 78% of people at the highest levels. As well, charitable giving increases with the level of education attained.⁹



10 Literacy and NEW CANADIANS

Immigrants make critical contributions to our society, culture, and economy. However, 60% of immigrants in our province have low levels of literacy in English or French.¹⁰

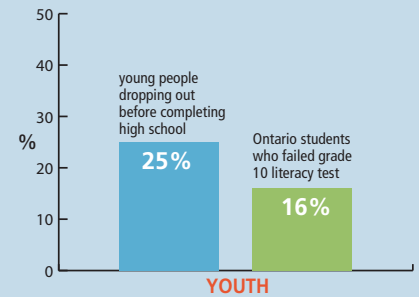


11 Literacy and FAMILIES

Parents play a vital role as their children's first teachers. The higher the level of a parent's education, the higher the likelihood the child will succeed in school.¹¹

12 Literacy and YOUTH

While the high school graduation rate in Ontario has increased from 68% to 75%, still, 25% of young people are dropping out before completing their high school education. In addition, 16% of Ontario students who wrote the grade 10 literacy test in the 2009-2010 school year failed.¹²

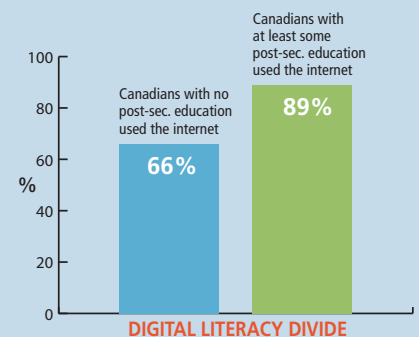


13 Literacy and SENIORS

In Ontario, more than 80% of seniors have low levels of literacy. This exposes them to increased health and safety risks which can result in higher health care costs and diminished quality of life. It can also reduce their ability to make informed choices about their health care, finances and other key decisions.¹³

14 Literacy and the DIGITAL DIVIDE

Canadians with lower literacy skills are significantly less likely to use computers. In 2009, 89% of Canadians with at least some post-secondary education used the Internet, compared to 66% of Canadians with no post-secondary education.¹⁴

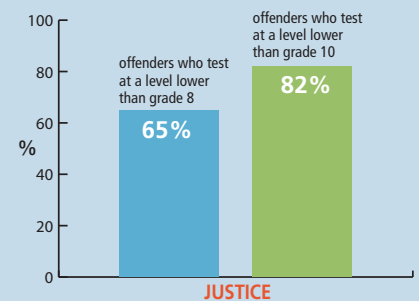


15 Literacy and JUSTICE

Upon arrival at correctional institutions, approximately 65% of offenders test at a level lower than Grade 8, and 82% test lower than Grade 10.¹⁵

16 Literacy and the ECONOMY

Increased literacy skills are strongly linked to economic growth and prosperity. A 1% increase in literacy skills would lead to an increase of \$18.5 billion per year in Canada's GDP. Further, literacy is a key component to Canada's economic recovery and to the future prosperity of our country. Government investment in adult literacy yields substantial economic returns.¹⁶



17 Literacy and the RECESSION

Lower skilled workers in Canada have been amongst the hardest hit by the economic recession. Training and employment services should be increasingly targeted at hard-to-place job-seekers such as lower skilled workers.¹⁷

18 Literacy and the LABOUR MARKET OF THE FUTURE

Jobs of the future will require increasingly higher skills levels. It is estimated that by 2031, Ontario will need 77% of its workforce to have post-secondary credentials.¹⁸

19 Literacy and SKILL SHORTAGES

Due to our aging population and progressively lower birth rates, Ontario will start to experience a severe skill shortage in the near future. Improving literacy rates and increasing the participation rates of people currently under-represented in Ontario's labour force, such as people with low levels of literacy, will be critical to our province's future economic health.¹⁹

20 Literacy and WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Low literacy skills can represent a risk to workplace health and safety; however many employers are not aware that there are any literacy skills issues amongst their workforce.²⁰



An Overview of Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills Programs

Literacy matters in Ontario! Literacy skills are needed every day — at work, at home, at school, and in the community. However, as per the statistics on the previous pages, 42% of Ontarians are in need of literacy upgrading and there are many negative impacts associated with low levels of literacy.

In response, the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), funds the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and Academic Upgrading (AU) program. The LBS/AU program serves adult learners who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to achieve their goals of further education and training, employment, or increased independence. The LBS/AU program is part of Employment Ontario. Currently, over 60,000 adult learners are receiving LBS/AU services in over 300 program sites all across this province.

The LBS program is delivered by three sectors: community-based agencies, school boards, and colleges. The Academic Upgrading program is delivered by colleges. The LBS program supports literacy upgrading for adult learners in four streams: English language, Francophone, Native, and Deaf. Each of these sectors and streams brings their unique strengths and together we effectively serve the diverse needs of adult literacy learners in Ontario.

Literacy instruction is provided through a variety of methods including classroom, small group, one-on-one or on the web. To be eligible for the LBS Program, participants should be over 18, out of school, have literacy skills below a Grade 12 level, and have facility in English or French.

You can learn more about the Literacy and Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading program by visiting this website: www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/literacy/ontliteracy/ont_lit.html or by visiting CLO's website at: www.nald.ca/clo/

Community Literacy of Ontario is pleased to help paint a picture of literacy: lifelong learning, health, poverty, employment, the economy, civic engagement, seniors, families ... these are issues the people of Ontario care deeply about and issues which also impact our province in profound ways.

"The literacy program has helped me to start my education again giving me the confidence to start over."

— Quote from an adult learner in a community-based LBS program

Sources

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