

Fact Sheet

Adult Literacy

- In 1998, the Workforce Investment Act defined literacy as “...an individual’s ability to read, write, speak in English, compute, and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society” (National Institute for Literacy).
source: <http://www.ala.org/work/literacybrochure.html>
- Approximately 44 million adults cannot read well enough to fill out an application, read a food label, or read a story to a child. These individuals lack the literacy skills needed to find and keep decent jobs, support their children’s education, and participate actively in civic life.
source: National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992
- A number of national and state organizations in the U.S., including the National Governor's Association, have identified Level 3 proficiency as a minimum standard for success in today's labor market. Findings from the IALS assessment indicate that only half of the U.S. adult population 16-65 years of age reached Level 3. (*Sum, 2002, p11, Table 5*)
source: National Institute for Literacy: http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/facts_overview.html
- The 2001 American Management Association Survey on Workplace Testing found the following:
 - 34.1 percent of applicants tested by respondent firms lacked the basic skills necessary to perform the jobs they sought in 2000.
 - 84.6 percent of the respondent firms did not hire skill-deficient applicants,
 - 3.5 percent hired skill deficient applicants and assigned them to obligatory remedial training,
 - 3 percent hired them and offered voluntary remedial training, and
 - 8.2 percent took other action.
(*American Management Association, p1*)source: National Institute for Literacy: http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/facts_overview.html
- The National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce found that productivity increases in the manufacturing sector for each of the following factors:
 - A 10% increase in the average education of all workers* is associated with an increase of 8.6% in productivity,
 - A 10% increase in hours worked results in an increase of 5.6% in productivity,
 - And a 10% increase in capital stock results in an increase of 3.4% productivity.
(*National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce, p2*)source: National Institute for Literacy: http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/facts_overview.html