Skilled for Life?
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY OF ADULT SKILLS

Equipping adults for the 21st Century
Joining Forces for Action on Skills and Competences
9 Dec 2013

Ji Eun Chung
Policy Analyst
Directorate for Education and Skills
Survey of Adult Skills in brief

166 thousand adults...
Representing 724 million 16-65 year-olds in 24* countries/economies

Took an internationally agreed assessment...
in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments.

The assessment was administered either in computer-based or paper-based versions.
Survey of Adult Skills in brief

Sample sizes ranged from a minimum of approximately 4,500 to a maximum of nearly 27,300.

The survey collected background information of adults for about 40 minutes.

Respondents with very low literacy skills were directed to a test of basic “reading component” skills.

The survey also collects a range of generic skills such as collaborating with others and organising one’s time, required of individuals in their work.
Survey of Adult Skills
Skills assessed

“Key information-processing skills”

**Literacy**

The ability to...
Understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts.

In order to..
Achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.

Literacy encompasses a range of skills from...
The decoding of written words and sentences
The comprehension, interpretation and evaluation of complex texts.

**Numeracy**

The ability to...
Access, use, interpret and communicate mathematical information and ideas

In order to..
Engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adults.
Numeracy involves
Managing a situation or solving a problem in a real context, by responding to mathematical content/information/ideas represented in multiple ways.

**Problem Solving in Technology Rich Environments**

The ability to...
Use digital technology communication tools and networks to acquire and evaluate information, communicate with others and perform practical tasks.

The assessment focuses on the abilities to...
Solve problems for personal, work and civic purposes by setting up appropriate goals and plans, and accessing and making use of information through computers and computer networks.
Likelihood of positive social and economic outcomes among highly literate adults

(scoring at Level 4/5 compared with those scoring at Level 1 or below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being Employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>High wages</td>
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<tr>
<td>High levels of trust</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in volunteer activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High levels of political efficacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good to excellent health</td>
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</tbody>
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Average | England (UK)
Adults with low skills (Level 1 or below) in Europe

- **Literacy**: 57 million adults
- **Numeracy**: 68 million adults
Skills of adults

Literacy

Japan
Finland
Netherlands
Australia
Sweden
Norway
Estonia
Flanders (Belgium)
Russian Federation³
Czech Republic
Slovak Republic
Canada
Average
England (UK)
Korea
England/N. Ireland (UK)
Denmark
Germany
United States
Austria
Northern Ireland (UK)
Poland
Ireland
France
Spain
Italy

7 points are roughly equal to one year of education
Skills of adults

Literacy

Japan
Finland
Netherlands
Australia
Sweden
Norway
Estonia
Flanders (Belgium)
Russian Federation
Czech Republic
Slovak Republic
Canada
Average
England (UK)
Korea
England/N. Ireland (UK)
Denmark
Germany
United States
Austria
Northern Ireland (UK)
Poland
Ireland
France
Spain
Italy

Score

Mean and .95 confidence interval for mean

5th
25th
75th
95th
Differences in literacy proficiency between 5\textsuperscript{th} and 95\textsuperscript{th} percentile

7 points are roughly equal to one year of education
Literacy proficiency: score differences by educational attainment

Score point difference

Difference between tertiary and below upper secondary
Literacy proficiency: score differences by educational attainment

Score point difference

Difference between tertiary and upper secondary

Countries: Cyprus, Italy, Estonia, Korea, Slovak Republic, Spain, Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Japan, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Germany, Czech Republic, Flanders (Belgium), France, United States, Poland.
Mean literacy proficiency and distribution of literacy scores, by educational attainment

- **Japan**
  - Tertiary
  - Upper secondary
  - Lower than upper secondary
  - Level 1 and below
  - Level 2

- **Italy**
  - Tertiary
  - Upper secondary
  - Lower than upper secondary
Literacy proficiency among young adults, by orientation of education

**Vocational orientation**
- Average score for vocational orientation

**General orientation**
- Average score for general orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Vocational Orientation</th>
<th>General Orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<td>Austria</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>Korea</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Score distribution with 25th and 75th percentiles, and mean and .95 confidence interval for mean.
Differences in literacy proficiency between VET and general programmes

Score-point difference

Japan, Korea, Slovak Republic, Norway, Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany
Proficiency in problem solving in technology-rich environments among adults

- No computer experience/Failed ICT core
  - Average: 17%
  - Poland: 26%
  - Italy: 27%
Problem solving proficiency
by educational attainment

Below upper secondary

Netherlands
Sweden
Norway
Czech Republic
Finland
Flanders (Belgium)
Australia
Denmark
England (UK)
England/N. Ireland (UK)
Germany
Average
United States
Austria
Japan
Northern Ireland (UK)
Slovak Republic
Canada
Ireland
Korea
Poland
Estonia

Level 2
Level 3
Relationship between problem solving in technology-rich environments and literacy

- **Below Level 1**
- **Opted out of the computer-based assessment**
- **Level 2**
- **No computer experience**
- **Failed ICT core**
- **Level 1**
- **Level 3**

**Denmark**
Literacy skills and age

Level 2
Likelihood of participating in adult education and training, by level of literacy proficiency

Odds Ratio

Reference group: Below Level 1
Numeracy practice at work and numeracy proficiency

Score

Denmark  | Japan  | England/N. Ireland (UK) | Average

Lowest practice  | 225  | 250  | 275  | 280

Highest practice  | 300  | 305  | 310  | 315

Numeracy at work

OECD
ICT use outside work and literacy proficiency

Score

- Japan
- United States
- England/N. Ireland (UK)
- Average

No practice | Lowest practice | Highest practice

ICT practice outside work

Score range: 200 to 325

Japan's score is consistently higher compared to the other countries, especially in the highest practice category.
Reading outside work and literacy proficiency

Score

- Japan
- United States
- England/N. Ireland (UK)
- Average

Reading outside work

Lowest practice

Highest practice

200
225
250
275
300
325
The use of information-processing skills at work, by establishment size

**Reading at work**

**Writing at work**

**Numeracy at work**

**ICT at work**

**Problem solving**

Index of use

Most frequent use = 4

Least frequent use = 0

- 1-10 employees
- 11-50 employees
- 51-250 employees
- 251-1000 employees
- 1000+ employees

OECD
Reasons preventing from the participation in adult education and training

- I did not have the prerequisites: 25%
- I did not have time because of child care or family responsibilities: 14%
- Education or training was too expensive/I could not afford it: 13%
- Something unexpected came up that prevented me from taking education or training: 12%
- Lack of employer’s support: 9%
- I was too busy at work: 8%
- The course or programme was offered at an inconvenient time or place: 7%

Levels:
- Level 1 or below: 6%
- Level 4/5: 18%
Participation in courses conducted through open or distance education during the last 12 months

%
Literacy skills in younger and older generations

- **Korea**: Average 24-year-olds, Average 55-65 year-olds
- **Finland**: Average 24-year-olds, Average 55-65 year-olds
- **US**: Average 24-year-olds, Average 55-65 year-olds
- **Norway**: Average 24-year-olds, Average 55-65 year-olds
- **Germany**: Average 24-year-olds, Average 55-65 year-olds
- **France**: Average 24-year-olds, Average 55-65 year-olds
- **Spain**: Average 24-year-olds, Average 55-65 year-olds
- **UK**: Average 16-65 year-olds
- **Average 16-24 year-olds**
- **Average 55-65 year-olds**
Literacy proficiency by immigration background

Score

Native-born

Ireland
Slovak Republic
Czech Republic
Australia
Spain
Estonia
Canada
Italy
Austria
Austria
Germany
United States
Flanders (Belgium)
France
Denmark
Korea
Norway
Netherlands
Finland
Sweden
Japan
Poland
Literacy proficiency by immigration background

- Native-born
- Foreign-born - < 5 years
Data products

PIAAC micro-data files
• OECD file (complete micro-data file)
• PUF (some countries have suppressed or coarsened data)

Background Questionnaire
Codebook
SAS and STATA tools
IEA Data Analyser
Technical Report
Find Out More About PIAAC at:

www.oecd.org/site/piaac

All national and international publications

The complete micro-level database

Thank you