



Foreword

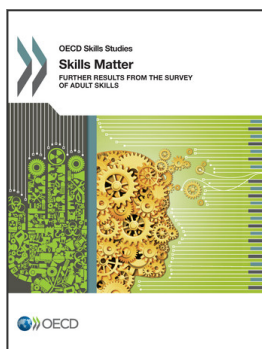
In a world in which millions of people are unemployed while many employers complain that they cannot find qualified workers something is obviously out of balance. One of those issues is the match between the supply of and demand for skills. Governments need a clearer picture, not only of how labour markets are changing, but of how well-equipped their citizens are to participate in, and benefit from, increasingly knowledge-based economies. The Survey of Adult Skills, a product of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), is providing that picture. It captures information about adults' proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills, and whether and how those skills are used on the job and throughout life.

Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills expands on the data and analysis examined in the *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills* by including data from nine additional countries that conducted the survey in 2014-15. The results show that poor skills severely limit people's access to better-paying and more rewarding jobs. The distribution of skills also has significant implications for how the benefits of economic growth are shared within societies. Put simply, where large shares of adults have poor skills, it becomes difficult to introduce productivity-enhancing technologies and new ways of working, which in turn stalls improvements in living standards. Importantly, the results show that skills affect more than earnings and employment. In all countries, adults with lower skills are far more likely than those with better literacy skills to report poor health, to perceive themselves as objects rather than actors in political processes, and to have less trust in others.

The report also finds that acquiring relevant skills is certainly key, but may not be enough to integrate successfully in the labour market. Skills must be used productively, not only to keep them from atrophying, but also to reap some of the intangible benefits of skills proficiency that contribute to adults' general well-being. For example, this report shows that the intensity with which workers use their information-processing skills in their jobs is related to the likelihood of being satisfied at work.

Going forward, the OECD is working with governments to develop national skills strategies that ensure that their citizens are equipped with the right skills for 21st-century economies and use those skills productively. We know that skills matter for both workers and employers; now it's time to get the balance right.

Angel Gurría
OECD Secretary-General



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