

Annex C

What adults can do at different levels of numeracy proficiency

Proficiency at Level 5 (scores equal to or higher than 376 points): Adults at Level 5 on the numeracy scale can understand complex representations, and abstract and formal mathematical and statistical ideas, sometimes embedded in complex texts. They can integrate several types of mathematical information where considerable translation or interpretation is required; draw inferences; develop or work with mathematical arguments or models; and justify, evaluate and critically reflect upon solutions or choices. Only 1.1% of adults score at Level 5 on average across countries, in the U.S. 0.7% of adults score at this level.

Proficiency at Level 4 (from 326 points up to 376 points): At this level, adults understand a broad range of mathematical information that may be complex, abstract or embedded in unfamiliar contexts. They can perform tasks involving multiple steps and select appropriate problem-solving strategies and processes. They can analyze and engage in more complex reasoning about quantities and data, statistics and chance, spatial relationships, change, proportions and formulae. They can also understand arguments and communicate well-reasoned explanations for answers or choices. In the U.S. 7.8% of adults and on average across countries, 11.4% of adults score at Level 4.

Proficiency at Level 3 (from 276 points up to 326 points): Adults at Level 3 can successfully complete tasks that require an understanding of mathematical information that may be less explicit, embedded in contexts that are not always familiar, and represented in more complex ways. They can perform tasks requiring several steps and that may involve a choice of problem-solving strategies and relevant processes. They have a good sense of number and space; can recognize and work with mathematical relationships, patterns, and proportions expressed in verbal or numerical form; and can interpret and perform basic analyses of data and statistics in texts, tables and graphs. In the U.S. 25.9% of adults and on average across countries 34.4% of adults score at Level 3.

Proficiency at Level 2 (from 226 points up to 276 points): Adults at this level can successfully perform tasks that require identifying and acting upon mathematical information and ideas embedded in a range of common contexts where the mathematical content is fairly explicit or visual with relatively few distractors. The tasks may require applying two or more steps or processes involving, for example, calculations with whole numbers and common decimals, percents and fractions; simple measurement and spatial representations; estimation; or interpreting relatively simple data and statistics in texts, tables and graphs. In the U.S. 32.6% of adults and on average across countries, one in three adults (33.0%) scores at Level 2.

Proficiency at Level 1 (from 176 points up to 226 points): Adults at Level 1 can complete tasks involving basic mathematical processes in common, concrete contexts where the mathematical content is explicit with little text and minimal distractors. They can perform one-step or simple processes involving counting, sorting, basic arithmetic operations, understanding simple percents, and locating and identifying elements of simple or common graphical or spatial representations. In the U.S. 19.6% of adults and on average across countries, 14% of adults score at Level 1.

Proficiency below Level 1 (scores lower than 176 points): Adults at this level can only cope with very simple tasks set in concrete, familiar contexts where the mathematical content is explicit and that require only simple processes such as counting; sorting; performing basic arithmetic operations with whole numbers or money, or recognizing common spatial representations. Adults who score less than 176 points are considered to be below Level 1. In the U.S. 9.1% of adults and on average across countries, 5% of adults score below Level 1.



From:
Time for the U.S. to Reskill?
What the Survey of Adult Skills Says

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264204904-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2013), “What adults can do at different levels of numeracy proficiency”, in *Time for the U.S. to Reskill?: What the Survey of Adult Skills Says*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264204904-8-en>

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