

Understanding Adult Skills Past and Future



What do we have? What do we need?

The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been collecting information about the education and skills of adults living in the U.S. since the mid-1990's. These survey data indicate that higher literacy skills are directly related to a person's ability to participate successfully in the workforce and enjoy higher levels of overall well-being throughout his or her life. To continue to be competitive in the world economy, the U.S. must have a knowledgeable and skilled workforce.

Surveys like ISAS help policymakers and educators make plans for present and future generations. These valuable data are collected by interviewing adults (about their background, work, and educational experiences) and asking them to complete a series of tasks that represent common everyday activities (such as reading a product label, filling out tax forms, buying something online, and planning a family trip).

[more ►](#)



International Survey of Adult Skills
United States Survey



Important Findings of Past Surveys

- Reading, writing, and computer skills are strongly linked with access to jobs and level of income. U.S. adults who demonstrate the highest levels of skills are much more likely to hold managerial positions and jobs that require expert-level knowledge and high-skill information-processing than adults with lower levels of skills.
- Individuals with high-skill levels are more likely to find satisfactory employment, as well as opportunities to enhance or broaden their skills during their working lives.
- In 2003, 35 percent of the U.S. adult population had literacy skills considered necessary for coping with the increasing demands of the emerging knowledge society and information-based economy.
- Adults need increasingly higher levels of skills for managing different aspects of their lives such as career planning, health care, and retirement.
- There is a larger literacy gap between the highest and lowest performing adults in the United States than in other developed countries.

Help Us Today

If you are asked to participate in the International Survey of Adult Skills, we hope you will agree to take part. This study will continue to provide the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, and educators across the country with the information they need to design programs that will help America and its population grow and prosper in the 21st century.

Thank you for supporting this important study.

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/isas/>
1-888-321-0338



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