

# Thinkfinity

## Quick Facts About Adults and Literacy

- The average reading level of adults is 8<sup>th</sup> grade. (University of Utah Health Sciences Center. (n.d.). *Literacy facts: Did you know*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Author.)
- 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 International Adult Literacy Survey indicate that only half of the U.S. adult population 16-65 years of age reached Level 3. (Sum, Andrew, Irwin Kirsch, and Robert Taggart. (2002). *The Twin Challenges of Mediocrity and Inequality: Literacy in the U.S. from an International Perspective*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.)
- In 2001, 88% of all 25-29 year olds had completed high school with a diploma or high school equivalency certificate. (U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *The condition of education 2002*. Washington, DC: Author.)
- The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) survey indicates that approximately 11 million adults are *Non-literate in English*; that is, their English proficiency is so limited, they could not take the assessment test. These adults are assumed to be immigrants whose first language is not English.
- The survey also estimated another 30 million adults have *Below Basic Literacy* skills; that is, they can speak some English and perform simple literacy tasks such as adding up a deposit slip or signing a form, but cannot perform more complex literacy tasks such as comparing event ticket prices or completing an order supply form consistently. These adults are most likely to live in poverty and have complicated health problems, and are not likely to participate fully in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- The report estimated that an additional 63 million adults have *Basic Literacy* skills; that is, they can perform incrementally more complex literacy tasks-like locating specific information in a television guide consistently, but do not have the skills required by an increasingly complex and technology-driven workplace.
- Taken altogether, the NAAL report indicated that up to 93 million adults in the U.S. would benefit from additional literacy instruction.
- Adults with a bachelor's degree are three times more likely than people with less than a high school diploma to report reading newspapers, magazines, or books regularly. (U.S. Department of Education. (2001). *The condition of education*. Washington, DC: Author.)

For more information go to: <http://www.proliteracy.org/advocacy/naal.asp>

This information was produced by ProLiteracy Worldwide for use on [www.thinkfinity.org](http://www.thinkfinity.org), a powerful educational platform supported by the Verizon Foundation. This information is in the public domain and may be reproduced for noncommercial purposes without permission.