

International Adult Literacy Facts

ProLiteracy's work to improve adult literacy rates worldwide directly aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goal on education to ensure all youth and a substantial number of adults—both men and women—achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030.¹

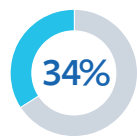


The Global State of Literacy

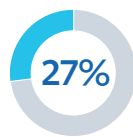
Despite the steady rise in literacy rates over the past 50 years, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) data shows that in 2020, 763 million adults worldwide still don't have basic literacy skills.

While more adults are literate today, it is largely because more went to school when they were young—**not because they were given a second chance to learn as adults.**³

Low Literacy Rates by Region⁴



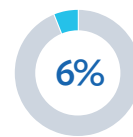
Sub-Saharan Africa



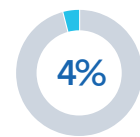
Southern Asia



Northern Africa and Western Asia



Latin America and the Caribbean



East and Southeast Asia

The Cost of Low Literacy

Economic

\$1 Trillion

Low literacy costs the global economy more than **\$1 trillion** each year.⁵

30%-42% less earnings

Adults with low literacy earn **30%-42% less** than their literate peers.⁶

Social

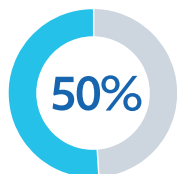
50% more likely

In developing countries, a child born to a mother who can read is **50% more likely to survive** past age 5.⁷

If all adults completed secondary school, the global poverty rate would be more than halved.⁸

Women's Literacy

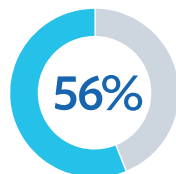
2/3 of adults with low literacy skills are women.²



More than half of all disadvantaged rural women in developing countries lack basic literacy skills.¹¹



Of the 99 million illiterate youth, **56% are girls.**¹²



The Digital Divide



No Internet Access

53% of people in developing countries do not have access to the internet compared to 13% in the rest of the world.

Globally, only **40%** of primary, **50%** of intermediate, and **65%** of high school-level schools have internet access.

Almost 9% of the global population—and more than **70%** of people in rural sub-Saharan Africa—**lack access to electricity.**¹⁰

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References

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