

## Adults with low literacy skills in Austria

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17.1% of Austrian adults (16 to 65 years) have low literacy skills (literacy level 1, below 1 and literacy-related nonrespondents). This corresponds to around one million persons. Across all participating OECD countries, 16.9% of adults show only low literacy skills. Thus, Austria's result is about average in international comparison.

Most of these people are able to read sentences and brief texts, but have problems to understand longer text passages. However, 4.3% of Austrian adults belong to the group of persons with very low literacy skills (literacy level below 1 and literacy-related nonrespondent) – this means that about 240 000 persons have considerable difficulties to understand texts and sentences, because they either cannot read or are not able to understand German. The average across all participating OECD countries is 4.5%.

The extent of a person's formal education is highly relevant for low literacy skills. A logistic regression shows that especially persons with compulsory education only have an up to seven times higher risk to be affected by low literacy skills than persons with an academic degree. Another relevant influence is the social origin of a person, measured in PIAAC with an indicator for the parent's cultural capital (books in the household at age 16). The fewer books were present, the higher was the person's risk to be affected by low literacy skills. Another relevant variable in relation to literacy skills is a person's mother tongue and country of birth, especially because literacy skills in PIAAC were measured in the official language of the participating country (German in Austria). No significant gender differences in relation to low literacy skills were observed, nor had the place of residence of the person (city or rural) any significant influence.

The definition of literacy in PIAAC is based on the assumption that a certain degree of literacy is necessary in order to participate in society and in the workplace, i.e. low literacy skills can go hand in hand with disadvantages in these fields. As the analysis for Austria shows, a relatively high proportion of people with low literacy skills are integrated into the labour market, but those with higher literacy skills are better integrated and also have higher earnings. In addition, there is a significant relationship between literacy and the subjective assessment of health.

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