



DOLLAR GENERAL LITERACY FOUNDATION

State of American Literacy

Research Report



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About the Dollar General Literacy Foundation

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is proud to support initiatives that help others improve their lives through literacy and education. Since 1993, the Foundation has awarded more than \$203 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than 14.8 million individuals take their first steps toward literacy, a general education diploma, or English proficiency. Each year, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation provides financial support to schools, nonprofit organizations, and libraries within a 15-mile radius of Dollar General stores and distribution centers. To learn more about the Dollar General Literacy Foundation or apply for a literacy grant, visit www.dgliteracy.org.

Introduction

Education is a great equalizer, and the ability to read proficiently is foundational to learning for both adults and youth. The disruption in education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted access to quality instruction, remediation, and intervention, heightening the barriers that already existed for some youth and adults to advance their literacy skills. As we look for opportunities to address post-pandemic educational challenges, we must redouble our efforts to support teachers, students, schools, and nonprofit organizations in creating an equitable path to educational success.

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation has been investing in literacy and education programs that uplift, empower, and serve others for nearly three decades. We are proud of our efforts, but there is much work left to do. Teachers, education leaders, and students need us now more than ever, and we are committed to standing alongside these communities as we all navigate the new normal.

Recently, we commissioned research to gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities that exist in the field of literacy to help us develop funding priorities designed to narrow the gap between what adult and youth literacy learners need and the resources that are currently available. We spoke to those most affected—students, parents, teachers, and adult learners—as well as experts who are working to solve our country’s literacy challenges.

The results of our study are outlined in the pages that follow. Notably, our work reveals that youth and adult literacy levels are widely viewed as an important issue and priority, yet public awareness of the scope and scale of the need and access to educational instruction for adults is limited. Even with a general awareness of challenges created by the inability to read proficiently, many Americans do not fully understand the lasting impact of literacy and education on opportunity, income, health, and equality.

As we continue to navigate this critical time in education, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation’s commitment to supporting literacy and education remains strong and unwavering. Through these research findings, and in collaboration and partnership with other institutions and organizations who share common goals, we hope to elevate the conversation and drive systemic change in education and literacy across the nation. We look forward to joining forces, armed with insights and actionable recommendations, to make an impact on literacy, individuals, families, and communities.



Denine Torr
Executive Director
Dollar General Literacy Foundation

Special Thanks

We’d like to thank some of our key partners in this effort: the **Barbara Bush Foundation, The National Center for Families Learning, and Reading Is Fundamental.** We appreciate their continued support and thought leadership.





Methodology

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation commissioned global insights consultancy **PSB Insights** (PSB) to conduct research on youth (K-12) and adult literacy from September through December 2021. PSB fielded surveys and conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews across a range of audiences, including teenage students, parents of K-12 students, K-12 teachers, principals of K-12 schools, and youth and adult literacy experts. Surveys covered several areas related to youth and adult literacy, including awareness of literacy rates and impact on individuals' future success, the impact of COVID-19 on literacy, barriers to improving literacy rates, and potential solutions.

For more information on research audiences, sample sizes, and survey methodology, please see the Appendix.

Executive Summary

Despite incredible efforts by education, nonprofit, and community stakeholders, literacy rates in the U.S. have stagnated over the past several years, and in some cases dropped. While research continues in this area, we are already seeing significant impacts, particularly on youth literacy, due to new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of literacy remain the same. Literacy provides critical opportunities for employment, economic advancement, and improved health outcomes. The good news is that many Americans seem to be aware of the benefits of literacy and that our nation's literacy rates are a significant issue, particularly for youth. In fact, the vast majority of those we surveyed (80%) said they believe that low youth literacy is a problem in the country.

With the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic threatening to deepen the literacy gap, how can we use this unique moment in history to harness the power of literacy and education as a key driver of the recovery?

Here's a summary of what we discovered.

The Challenge

- » Strong literacy skills are widely recognized as critical tools to a successful life. All audiences surveyed noted low youth literacy in the U.S. is a significant problem, hindering opportunities for future success.
- » Respondents also identified adult literacy as a challenge, though many were surprised by the magnitude of the issue.
- » Adults who need to strengthen their literacy skills or complete their high school equivalency often have experienced educational trauma in the form of a wide spectrum of negative experiences in an educational setting in their past. They may also have multiple barriers to overcome, including lack of access to programs, childcare, transportation, or simply not knowing where to receive assistance.
- » Experts interviewed for this report draw a link between adult and youth literacy and point to the need to address adult literacy to break the cycle across generations.



The COVID-19 Pandemic

- » According to educators and literacy experts, the pandemic had a significant impact on students' and adults' reading and writing skills development. The shift to remote learning stretched the abilities of those providing literacy help and challenged those seeking assistance.
- » However, a silver lining from the COVID-19 pandemic may be greater sophistication among many groups in using technology, and advancements in remote teaching and learning.

Impact Areas

Opportunities For Strategic Development

Based on our research findings we have identified the following four impact areas. These impact areas are not exhaustive of all work that needs to be done to address low literacy in the U.S., but they provide an overview of how we can leverage the disruption of the last two years to develop more effective solutions to help improve literacy in our nation.

1 Provide increased professional development for K-12 and adult literacy teachers and instructors.

Literacy experts cite one-on-one instruction as the most effective method of literacy education for adults and youth. However, due to budgetary and staffing constraints, most schools can't deliver this highly resource-intensive form of teaching, and many nonprofit organizations and libraries face similar challenges. Additionally, because funding for additional staffing can be difficult to navigate and sustain, it is critical that we provide professional development to help equip and empower educators with the tools, resources, and latest advances in learning support to enable even greater efficiency at literacy instruction, especially in a classroom setting where students have varying levels of proficiency.

2 Meet adult learners where they are by providing flexible programs that offer a variety of instructional delivery models.

Adult learners need free, convenient learning solutions, whether online or in-person. In addition to investing in one-on-one or small group instruction at times and locations that are accessible for adult learners' schedules, investments are needed in innovative technologies, blended learning programs, and initiatives to help students learn with confidence at their own pace.



3 Leverage advancements in remote learning from the pandemic to super-charge investment in technology solutions and training that help adult teachers and learners.

Initiatives in this area could include supporting adult teachers and learners in navigating blended learning models and integrating technology-based solutions into traditional classroom instruction or independent studies.

4 Engage volunteers in tutoring efforts at schools and nonprofits to help drive change.

In addition to technology solutions, using highly trained volunteers to support adults and youth can be effective in advancing educational progress.

The State of Literacy

Adult Literacy Rates Stagnate

More than 40 million adults in the U.S. score at or below the lowest levels of literacy. According to the National Center for Education Statistics' definition, this means they lack the "ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." This silent crisis is often overlooked both by media and during policy discussions. In addition, despite efforts from countless educators, community leaders, and nonprofit organizations, literacy rates in our country have stagnated and, in some areas, worsened.

To understand and measure the scope of the issue, in 2017 the U.S. participated in the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) assessment, a cyclical, large-scale study of adult cognitive skills. PIAAC literacy scores range from "below one" to "five." In the 2017 testing period, 19% of Americans ages 16 to 65, or roughly 43 million Americans, scored at or below Level 1, while 33% of Americans ages 16 to 65, or about 57.5 million Americans, scored at Level 2.¹ There were no substantive changes in these rates from the main PIAAC assessment in 2012 and the PIAAC National Supplement in 2014.

A Majority of High School Graduates Are Not Proficient Readers

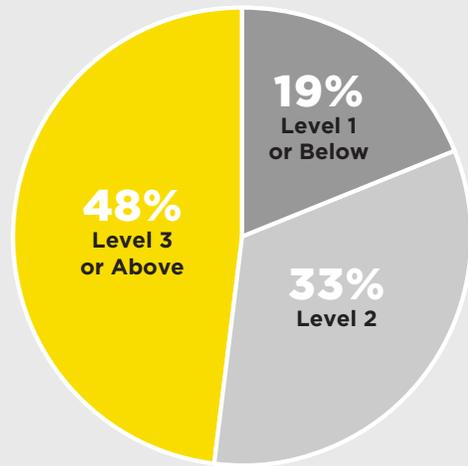
During our research, we asked survey respondents to estimate the percentage of graduating seniors who are unable to read proficiently. Their answer: 57%. Unfortunately, even that large percentage underestimates the magnitude of the problem.

In 2020 The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an organization that measures academic performance from a representative sampling of students from across the country, issued The Nation's Report Card, which found that only 37% of 12th graders leave high school at or above a proficient reading level, i.e., 63% of 12th graders are not proficient.²

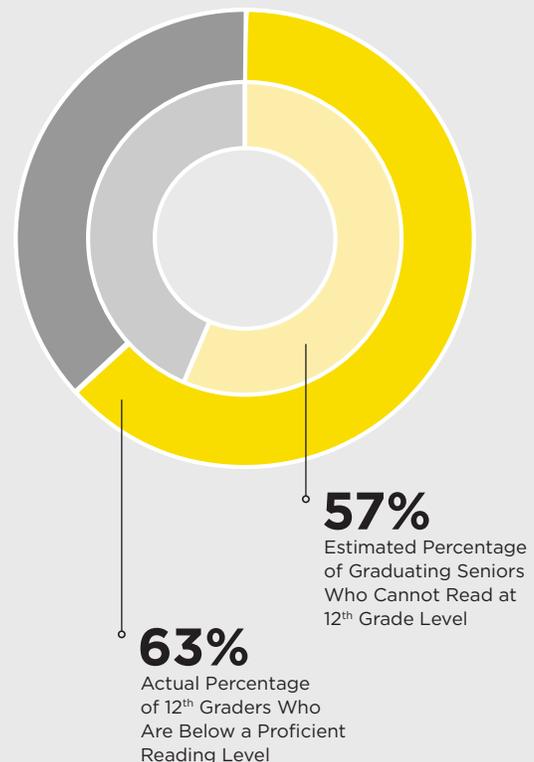
¹ Highlights of the 2017 U.S. PIAAC Results Web Report (NCES 2020-777). (2017). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current_results.asp

² NAEP Report Card: 2019 NAEP Reading Assessment, Highlighted Results at Grade 12 for The Nation. (2020). Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2019/g12/>

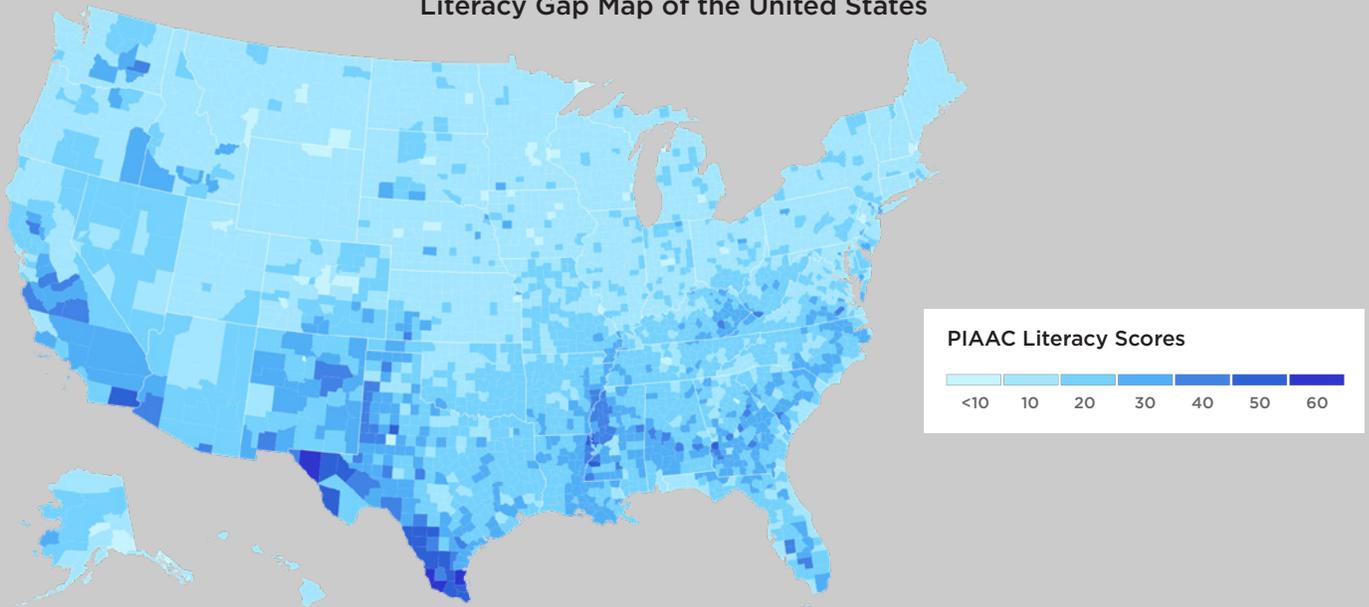
Literacy Levels



Actual Reading Level of Graduating Seniors Compared to Public Perception



Literacy Gap Map of the United States



Note: The Literacy Gap Map shows the percentage of individuals with below basic literacy skills in each county. Below basic literacy is defined as scoring at Level 1 or below on the PIAAC International Adult Literacy Survey. The Dollar General Literacy Foundation funded the Barbara Bush Foundation’s Literacy Gap Map Project.

Adult Literacy Rates Along Demographic Lines

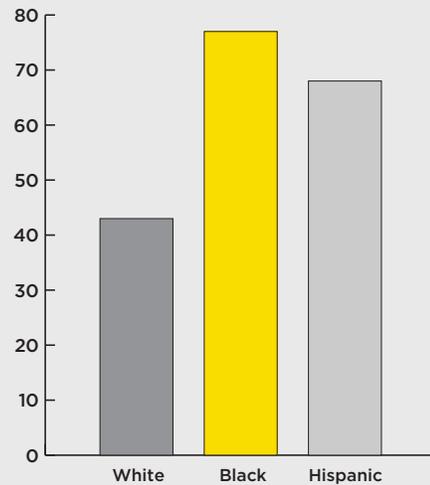
Low Literacy Mirrors Existing Racial Inequities

Adult low literacy certainly is not limited to any particular ethnic or racial group. However, several populations within the U.S. are more likely to experience low literacy among adults—for example: 43% of White Americans scored Level 2 or lower on the 2017 PIAAC Literacy test, compared to 77% of Black Americans, and 68% of Hispanic Americans.

Geographies with the Lowest Literacy Rates

While low literacy among adults can be found in every state across the country, it is often concentrated in lower-income areas among native and non-native English-speaking populations in specific areas in the South, the Rio Grande Valley, Southern California, and parts of Florida.³

Adults Scoring at Literacy Level 2 or Below



Note: The literacy proficiency scale is defined in terms of six levels for the PIAAC Literacy Test, ranging from “below one” to “five.”

³ Literacy Gap Map. (2020). Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. <https://map.barbarabush.org/map/>



The True Costs of Low Literacy

Income, Health, and Literacy

The negative impacts of low literacy continue throughout life. Low literacy is linked to lower annual income and worse health outcomes for adults.

After controlling for other factors that affect income (such as age, gender, and race), people with sub-proficient PIAAC Literacy scores (Levels 0–2) have lower mean annual incomes than those with scores Level 3 and higher. On average, the mean annual income gap between those at Levels 2 and 3 is \$13,193 while the average annual income gap between Levels 1 and 3 is \$23,979.⁴

Lower literacy rates also are linked to greater negative health outcomes (as self-reported): Adults with PIAAC scores of Level 2 or lower are five times more likely to report being in poor health.⁵

⁴ Rothwell, J. (2020). Assessing the Economic Gains of Eradicating Illiteracy Nationally and Regionally in the United States. Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy and Gallup. https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BBFoundation_GainsFromEradicatingIlliteracy_9_8.pdf

⁵ Literacy Gap Map: Percent of Adults in Poor Health. (2020). Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. <https://map.barbarabush.org/well-being/#health>

Reduced Annual Income Correlated to Illiteracy



The Cycle of Literacy

In the past 27 years, reading levels among youth have only marginally increased, and from 2017 to 2019, they began a slight decline.

Using a scale of 0 to 500 to establish achievement levels of Basic, Proficient, and Advanced:

- » 4th grade scores decreased from 222 (2017) to 220 (2019)
- » 8th grade scores decreased from 267 (2017) to 263 (2019)
- » 12th grade scores decreased from 287 (2017) to 285 (2019)⁶

Just as limited literacy proficiency can be linked to lower adult incomes and greater negative health outcomes, limited literacy can also reinforce those same patterns from one generation to another.

Studies show a child's literacy is correlated to parental literacy, with parental literacy being one of the strongest indicators of the child's likelihood of educational (and later, vocational) success. In fact, a mother's reading ability has been shown to be the greatest determining factor in a child's future academic achievement, even ahead of other factors such as neighborhood and family income.⁷ Improving adult literacy and parental support in a child's learning journey are key factors in reversing the decline in youth literacy levels.

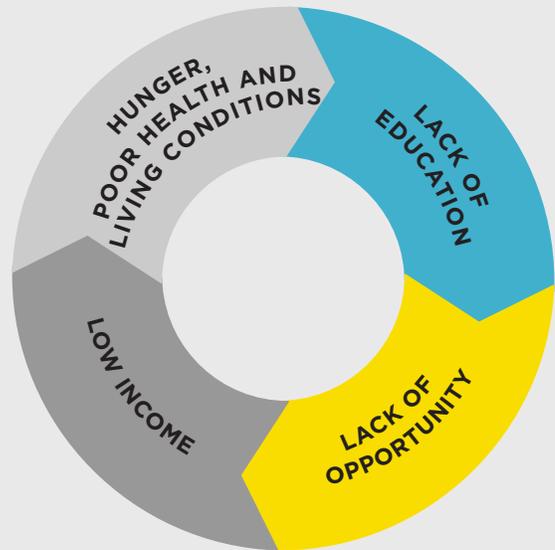
“A lot of the times we see parental engagement programs that are about how parents can support their children, which is great. But parents can't do that if they're not literate themselves.”

ADULT LITERACY EXPERT

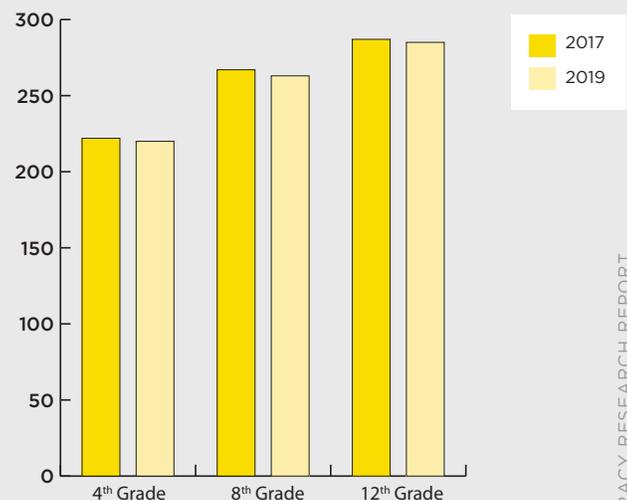
6 NAEP Report Card: Reading, Explore Results for the 2019 NAEP Reading Assessment. (2020). Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/?grade=4>

7 Sastry, N. & Pebley A. R. (2010). Family and Neighborhood Sources of Socioeconomic Inequality in Children's Achievement. *Demography*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3000065/>

The Cycle of Low Literacy



NAEP Reading Assessment Scores, 2017-2019



Note: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment in reading comprehension is given every two years to students at grades 4 and 8, and approximately every four years at grade 12. The NAEP reading scale ranges from 0 to 500.

The COVID-19 Pandemic's Toll on Youth Literacy

While researchers are just beginning to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational outcomes, including literacy, those surveyed say the pandemic has taken a toll on literacy learning. When asked whether students are having more difficulty reading since the pandemic, 73% of teachers say “yes,” as do 66% of principals. However, only 20% of parents feel this is true—highlighting a sizeable disconnect between what is being experienced in the (sometimes virtual) classroom and what parents understand to be true.

Parents acknowledged the challenges of virtual instruction when it comes to reading and the ability of teachers to provide the type of hands-on support and encouragement that can keep a child engaged and continuing to improve their literacy skills.

Overall, a majority of teachers feel that the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a somewhat negative (48%) to very negative (18%) effect on literacy and reading.

As in other areas of life, marginalized populations have borne a disproportionate share of the negative impact of the pandemic when it comes to education and literacy.⁸ Factors impacting marginalized groups include trouble adjusting to virtual or hybrid instruction due to lack of technology resources and inconsistent access to live instruction.⁹

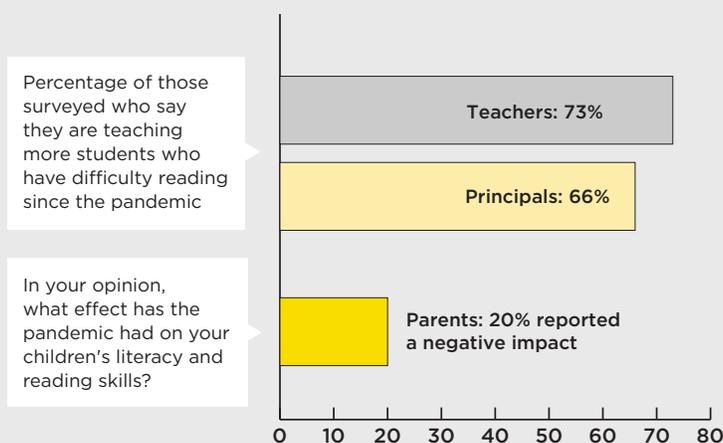


“

Pre-pandemic a lot of my students were coming in with fifth and sixth grade [reading] levels. Post-pandemic, it's more like first and second grade reading levels, and I teach ninth grade.”

—HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

Student Literacy Impacted by COVID-19 Pandemic

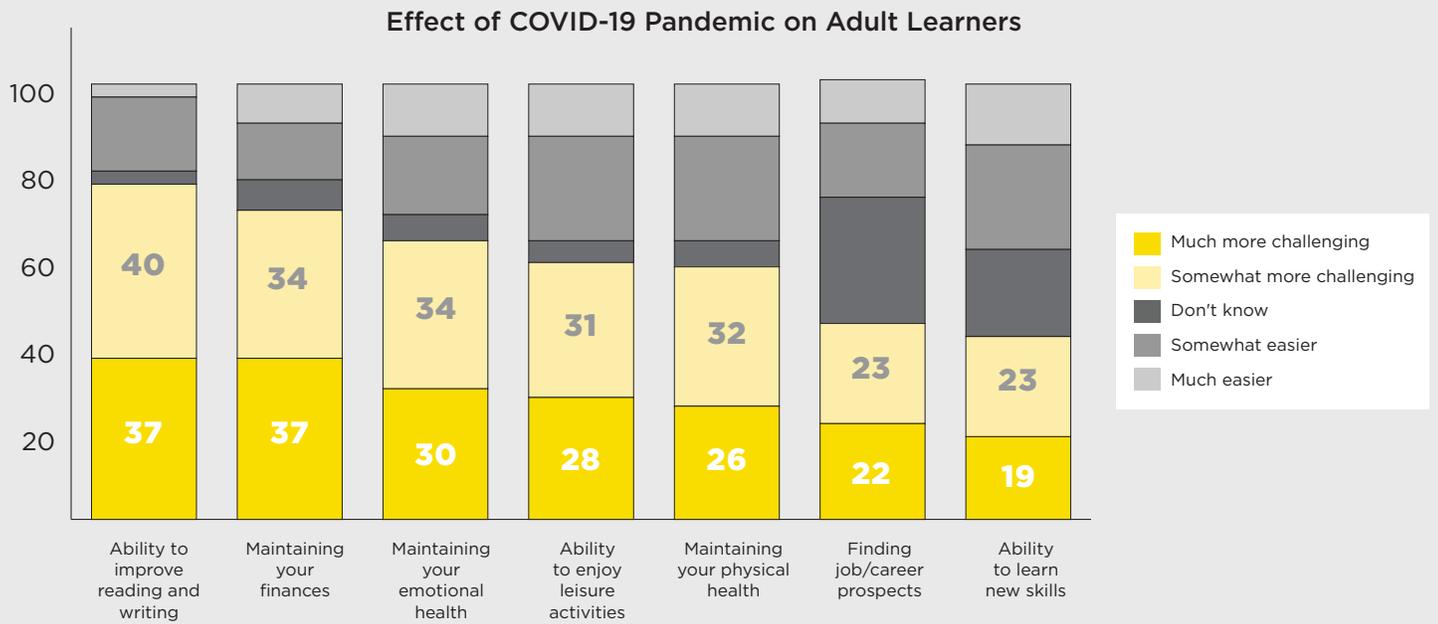


66%

of teachers surveyed said the pandemic has had a negative impact on literacy and reading skills

⁸ Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students. (2021). U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>

⁹ Dorn, E., Bryan, H., Sarakatsannis, J. & Viruleg, E. (2020). COVID-19 and Learning Loss—Disparities Grow and Students Need Help. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help>



Adult Literacy Learning Tops the List of Areas Affected by COVID-19 Pandemic

As with youth struggling with online education during the COVID-19 pandemic, literacy experts observed that adults encountered a technology barrier. Even in households with a mobile device and internet connection, many parents prioritize children's education and learning over their own. But with many schools in the U.S. returning to in-person instruction, we are hopeful that adults in need of literacy services will be able to re-prioritize their own education.

In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic many adults lost their jobs and had to prioritize basic needs—such as food and shelter—rather than education. From February 2020 to February 2021, employment among low-wage workers, who, as noted above, are more likely to struggle with literacy issues, fell by 11.7%, from 28.1 million to 24.8 million. This compares with a loss of 5.4% among middle-wage workers and roughly unchanged employment levels among high-wage workers.¹⁰

Finally, experts told us that one-on-one instruction, which is one of the most effective strategies for improving literacy, became much more difficult in a virtual environment.

Given these realities, it's not surprising that “ability to improve reading and writing” topped the list of issues impacted by the pandemic, underscoring the need for greater national attention and urgency toward addressing the issue.

“During the pandemic, there were adult students that were ... worried about just food and shelter and basic needs. So they didn't have time for education, so they quit coming to classes because they were dealing with other life issues.”

ADULT LITERACY EXPERT

¹⁰ Bennett, J. & Kochhar, R. (2021). U.S. Labor Market Inches Back from the COVID-19 Shock, but Recovery Is Far from Complete. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/14/u-s-labor-market-inches-back-from-the-covid-19-shock-but-recovery-is-far-from-complete/>

A Pandemic Silver Lining

The COVID-19 pandemic set back many education and literacy efforts. Yet it also produced changes in education that could be leveraged to help improve literacy going forward. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers have become more adept at new methods of teaching online, and educators have adopted new tools designed for online learning. These tools and lessons can be utilized to provide more individualized, private, and effective learning plans that better fit into the busy schedules of parents and their children while also providing an additional resource for teachers' in-class use.

Amid this silver lining, we must also recognize the need to address digital literacy alongside deployment of increasingly technology-driven instructional solutions. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that around 16% of adults lack digital literacy, meaning they do not possess basic computer skills.¹¹ A holistic approach to seizing the opportunities afforded by the COVID-19 pandemic will have to include support to improve basic digital literacy skills.

“COVID was like a shock, not just to society and the economy but also to the adult education field, too, and the rest of education. Significant innovation has taken place to be able to maintain the provision of services under these circumstances, even during lockdown time. I think if we're smart, we should ask ourselves, 'How can we integrate these learnings post-pandemic and make them part of our standard practices? But also, how can we further accelerate innovation and scale?'"

ADULT LITERACY EXPERT

“

It does now seem that school systems are committed to making sure that students have access to technology... there's a commitment now to keep our kids connected digitally in ways that you didn't before because we just didn't think financially that it was feasible. Now, we know that it's feasible.”

—YOUTH LITERACY EXPERT



¹¹ Mamedova, S. & Pawlowski, E. (2018). A Description of U.S. Adults Who Are Not Digitally Literate. U.S., Statistics in Brief (NCES 2018-161). Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018161.pdf>

Searching for Solutions

Supporting Adult Learners

As noted previously, adult literacy plays a critical role in an individual’s success, correlating positively to higher levels of income and better health.

However, many adult literacy experts say adult literacy is currently not part of the national discussion, despite the fact that it affects more than 40 million adults in the country. They describe the state of adult literacy as a significant societal issue that is largely hidden from public awareness.

For adult learners, experts we spoke with emphasized the importance of providing free, flexible options and having support from a local nonprofit or center offering literacy services. Of those adult learners surveyed, “programs with flexible hours” topped the list of desired resources.

As the adult literacy field continues to create ways to meet learners needs, experts believe remote and blended learning models that were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to grow and improve. These new models not only provide an additional tool for teachers to extend independent learning, but also provide learners with resources that enable them to have a more flexible schedule when engaging with instructional programming.

CONNECTING ADULTS WITH LITERACY RESOURCES

National Literacy Directory

The National Literacy Directory is a comprehensive directory of organizations and schools that offer literacy services in communities throughout the U.S. The directory can be used to find local referrals for literacy and educational services, including early childhood, family literacy, high school equivalency, adult basic education, English language learning and citizenship classes. The National Literacy Directory telephone hotline provides literacy referrals 24 hours a day, seven days a week in English and Spanish. Learn more at www.nationalliteracydirectory.org or by phone at 1-877-389-6874.

The National Literacy Directory is provided and maintained by a partnership of the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, the National Center for Families Learning, and ProLiteracy.

Resources Adult Learners Said Would Help Them Improve Literacy Skills

Showing % of Adult Literacy Learners



Normalizing the Conversation

Several experts we interviewed also cited social stigma, embarrassment, and shame as factors inhibiting progress in adult literacy. “Embarrassment or discomfort starting a program” ranked highest among barriers to adults improving literacy skills according to adult learners we surveyed. Flexible options such as online learning could provide a more private option for these learners to begin or continue their literacy journey.



CONNECTING ADULTS WITH LITERACY RESOURCES

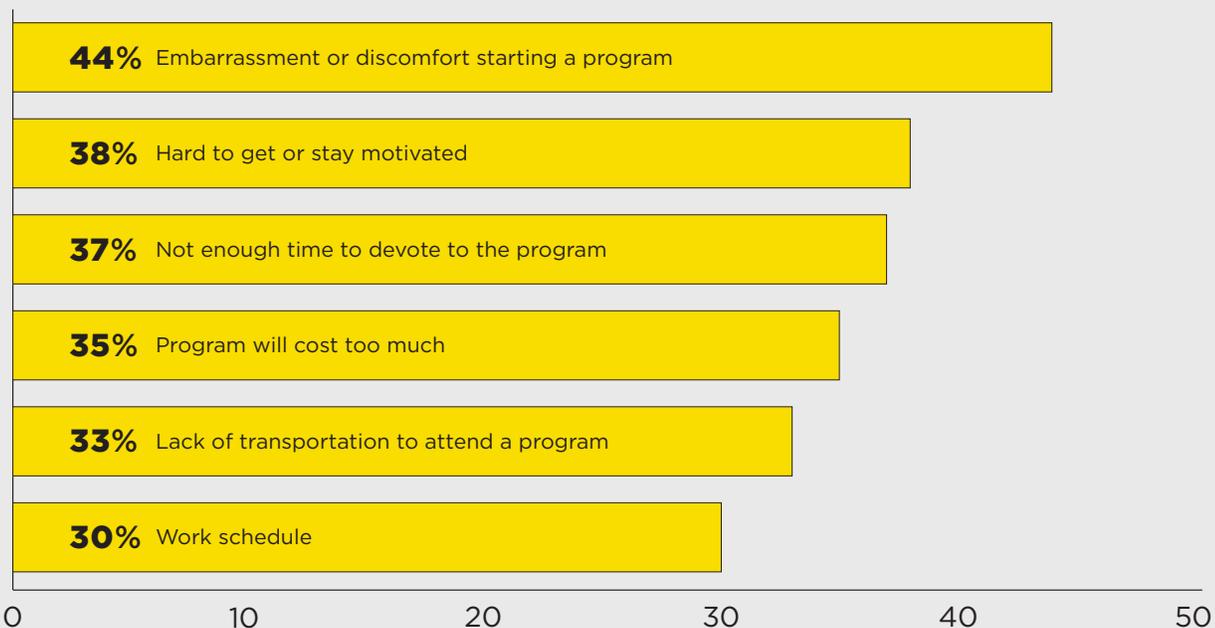
FinishYourDiploma.org

FinishYourDiploma.org provides adults with the information needed to find and connect with free adult education centers near them and get started on their journey to earning a high school equivalency diploma.

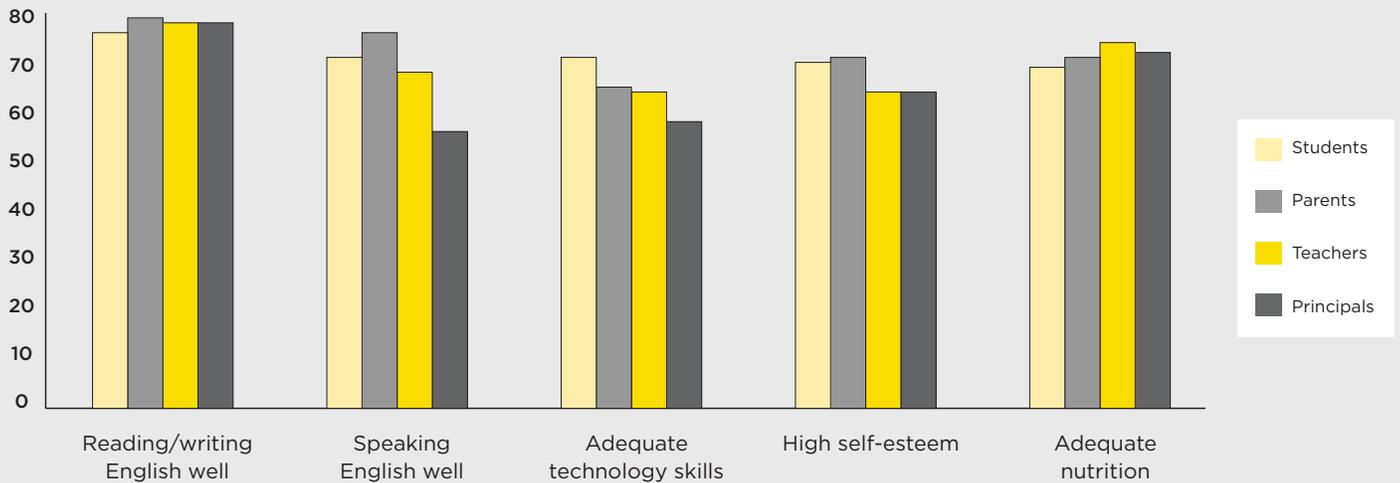
The Finish Your Diploma campaign is a longstanding collaboration between the Dollar General Literacy Foundation and the Ad Council to raise awareness, inspire, and provide resources for people to take the first steps in completing their high school equivalencies. Since the original campaign launched in 2010, it has connected more than 1.8 million Americans with the information needed to sign up for free adult education classes at <https://finishyourdiploma.org/>.

Barriers to Improving Adult Literacy Skills

Showing % of Adult Literacy Learners



Important Factors for a Child's Success in Life
Showing % Very Important



Supporting Youth Learners

Literacy is seen by all audiences we surveyed—parents, principals, students, and teachers—as a top factor for a child's success in life. As noted in the chart above, literacy ranked higher than speaking English well, possessing technology and math skills, and high self-esteem among other factors essential to a child's success.

Learning disruptions driven by the COVID-19 pandemic are creating measurable, negative impacts on student performance in reading and literacy. A recent report from the NWEA's Center for School and Student Progress¹² found that students in grades 3–8 were underachieving in reading by an average of three to six percentile points by the end of the 2020–2021 school year.

As the pandemic stretches past two years, it's likely that disruption to learning due to school closures and further adjustments to hybrid models will continue.

Educators and experts interviewed noted that resolving staffing issues would help to improve youth literacy. Furthermore, due to a lack of reading specialists, they note that students who may benefit from additional reading support often don't receive it.



“

One of our biggest challenges is not enough staff to support students who are struggling with age-appropriate literacy curriculum. So either the students who are on pace are not receiving adequate support or the students who are behind are not being provided additional support.”

—K-12 EDUCATOR

¹² Kuhfeld, M., Lewis, K., McEachin, A. & Ruzek, E. (2021).

Learning During COVID-19: Reading and Math Achievement in the 2020–21 School Year. NWEA Center for School and Student Progress.

<https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2021/07/Learning-during-COVID-19-Reading-and-math-achievement-in-the-2020-2021-school-year.research-brief-1.pdf>

Of the teachers we surveyed, only 49% of K-8 teachers and 42% of high school teachers report they have access to reading specialists.

While increasing staff to address literacy issues is a top solution suggested across all groups we surveyed, experts told us that enhanced efforts to bring in more trained volunteers from the community—in compliance with current health standards—can help fill that gap.

Furthermore, some experts say there should be increased resources devoted to professional development for literacy instruction.

This is an area with substantial opportunity for improvement, as approximately one-third of all teachers surveyed reported they do not have adequate professional development resources to enhance and strengthen their own abilities to deliver reading instruction.

“

His math did suffer, but I also feel like there was a lot missing in the literacy space because [there was] not a lot of writing... And I think that if he had more of that one-on-one instruction in reading and in literacy, he would have done a little bit better in that space.”

—PARENT

“I think the school system is very short on resources in terms of human capital, so I think if the philanthropic sector could help recruit adults to layer in as additional support for students and work one-on-one with students, that could have a huge impact.”

—YOUTH LITERACY EXPERT



About one in three teachers does not have adequate professional development resources to support delivery of reading instruction.





Next Steps

When we commissioned this research, we sought to identify the best path (or paths) forward to improve literacy rates in the U.S. We listened to K-12 teachers and adult literacy instructors as they shared that their greatest challenge was simply not having enough hours in the day. While we cannot create time, we can help teachers be equipped and informed in ways that help them continue their efforts to strengthen the quality of educational instruction and aid in student success, specifically focusing on literacy instructional methods, remediation, intervention, and blended learning models.

The following outlines some of the strategic investments we, at the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, can and will make to help students and educators.

Our Commitment

- 1 Invest in professional development to help instructors in K-12 schools, community-based organizations, and libraries more efficiently address literacy issues in classroom and small-group literacy instruction.
- 2 Meet adult learners where they are, delivering high-quality literacy instruction that is available at times that are convenient within their busy lives. This may include in-person and/or online instruction and technology-enabled solutions.

- 3 Provide access to high-quality reading instruction through grants, particularly in rural communities that may lack access to technology and other services.
- 4 Invest in efforts to recruit, train, and place volunteer tutors within literacy programs in K-12 and adult literacy programs. We will ensure that investments are mindful of current health and safety concerns.

Literacy plays a critical role in society. The Dollar General Literacy Foundation believes it is not only an urgent need but also a fundamental human right. We also believe that one's age and ZIP code should not determine or limit access.

As we work to advance efforts that drive quality educational instruction and inspire innovation, we recognize that it will take multiple stakeholders working together to create significant, systemic, and sustainable change. We look forward to working with our current and future national partners to create a pathway forward and welcome conversations with other corporations and foundations that are working to address educational access and inspire innovation.

Full Methodology

Research conducted by global insights consultancy PSB Insights and commissioned by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation consisted of the following:

Youth literacy research, which began with an online quantitative survey fielded September 14–20, 2021, among the following audiences:

Audience	N-Size	Margin of Error
Students (Aged 13–18)	300	+/-5.66%
Parents (of K-12 Students)	401	+/-4.89%
Teachers (K-12)	200	+/-6.93%
Principals (K-12)	50	+/-13.86%

(Additional research conducted in December 2021 included 150 interviews among K-12 teachers to understand their definitions of resources and availability.)

In addition, research consisted of four focus groups conducted September 21–22, 2021, among the following:

Date	Markets	Audience
September 21	U.S. Nationwide	Parents of K-12 Students
		K-8 Teachers
September 22		Parents of K-12 Students
		High School Teachers

Finally, youth literacy studies included 13 in-depth phone interviews with youth literacy experts September 3–29, 2021.

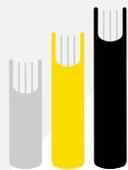
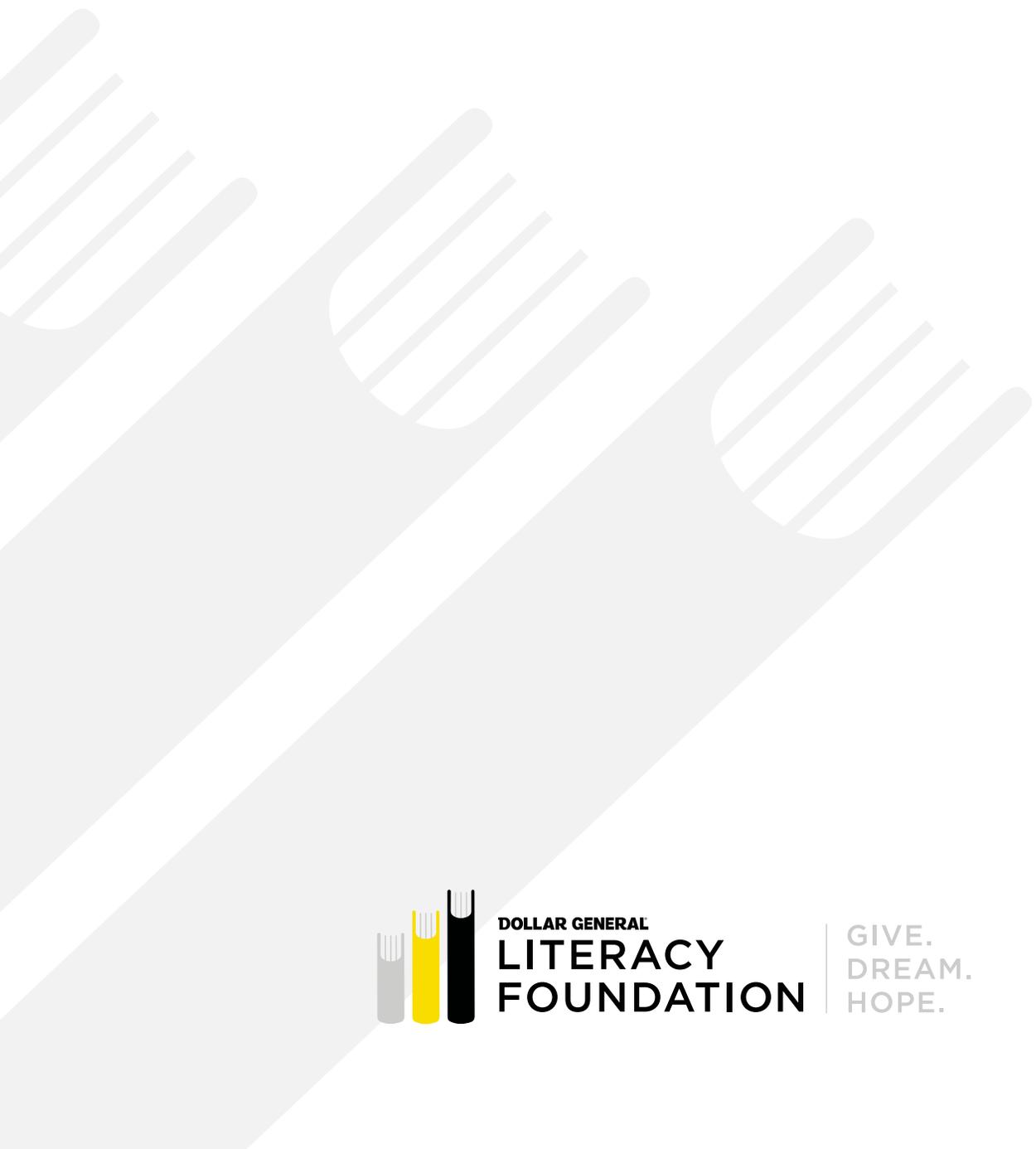
Adult literacy research, which consisted of phone surveys conducted October 7–22, 2021, among:

Audience	N-Size	Margin of Error
Adult Literacy Learners	300	+/-5.66%

In addition, adult literacy research included nine in-depth phone interviews with adult literacy experts August 30–September 21, 2021.

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