

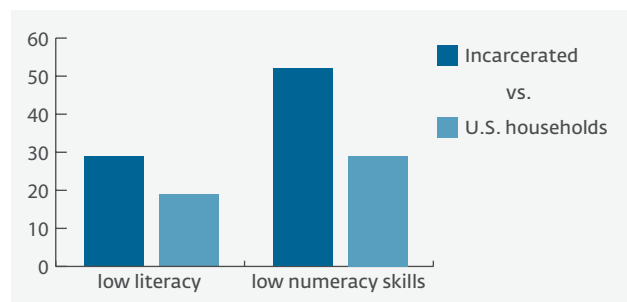
# Incarceration

Today, more than 2 million adults in the United States are incarcerated in local jails and federal and state prisons.<sup>17</sup>



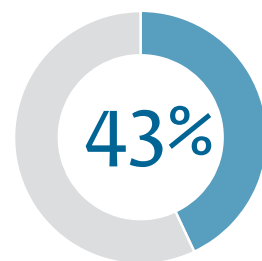
2 Million

29 percent of incarcerated adults have low literacy skills and another 52 percent have low numeracy skills, compared to 19 percent and 29 percent, respectively, of U.S. households.<sup>18</sup>

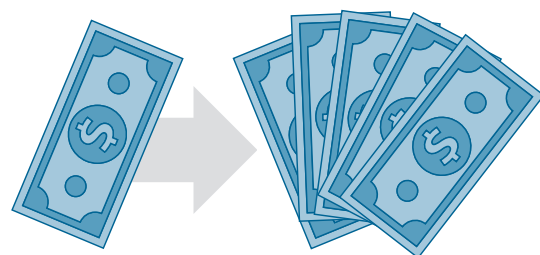


## Education Programs Make a Difference

Incarcerated individuals who participated in correctional education, which included remedial, vocational, and postsecondary programs, were **43 percent less likely to return to prison** within three years than individuals who didn't participate in any correctional education.<sup>19</sup>



RAND estimated that for every dollar invested in correctional education programs, five dollars are saved on three-year re-incarceration costs.<sup>19</sup>



# Health Care

## 106-238 Billion

Adults with limited health literacy are hospitalized and use emergency services at significantly higher rates than those with higher

skills. Reversing this trend is estimated to save between \$106 and \$238 billion each year in health care costs in the U.S.<sup>20</sup>

## The Emergency Room

Patients with low health literacy also tend to use the emergency department more often and are more likely to return to the emergency department after 2 weeks.<sup>21</sup>



## How You Can Help

### Volunteer

Volunteers are vital to the success of students and literacy programs. Be referred to a literacy program near you by filling out a form at

[proliteracy.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer](http://proliteracy.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer)

### Donate

With a monetary donation, you can empower adults worldwide to improve their literacy skills and achieve their goals. Donate today at

[proliteracy.org/Donate](http://proliteracy.org/Donate)

### Interested in learning more?

You can always call our hotline at **1-800-528-2224** or email us at [info@proliteracy.org](mailto:info@proliteracy.org) to learn how you can join us in supporting adult learners.

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# Adult Literacy and Basic Education The Facts



More than 43 million adults in the United States cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third-grade level.<sup>1</sup>



**ProLiteracy**

## Our Mission

Changing lives and communities through the power of adult literacy.

## Our Vision

To be the leading resource and champion for adult education and literacy worldwide.

## Defining the Problem

**Literacy** is the ability to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written text to participate in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

### The three segments of the adult literacy education field:

- 1. Adult Basic Education (ABE)**  
education provided for adults at the elementary level of literacy (grades 0-8), with an emphasis on communicative, computational, and social skills.
- 2. Adult Secondary Education (ASE)**  
education for adult students who have not completed high school and/or are seeking a high school equivalency credential, and have literacy skills that are at approximately a grade 9 level or higher.
- 3. English Language Learning (ELL)**  
instruction for adults who lack proficiency in English and who seek to improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in English. ELL is also known as ESL (English as a second language) or ESOL (English for speakers of other languages).<sup>2</sup>

## The Need

### High School Dropout Rates

Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of all people age 25 and older who had not completed high school decreased by more than one-third, dropping from 16 percent to 10 percent.<sup>3</sup>



Despite this good news, that still left 23 million American adults in 2017 without a high school credential.<sup>4</sup>

### Obstacles to Education

**2X** People with diagnosed learning disabilities are twice as likely to have low skills.<sup>5</sup>

### Budget Cuts

Adult education programs in the United States must increase capacity, at a time when federal funding of these programs has been cut 3 percent since 2009 and 18 percent since 2001.<sup>6</sup>



## Employment & Civic Engagement

Workers age 25 and over who have less education than a high school diploma had the highest unemployment rate (5.4 percent) and lowest median weekly earnings (\$592) in 2019 among those at all education levels.<sup>7</sup>



The 2020 recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic saw adults with less than a high school diploma suffer the highest unemployment rate compared to all other education levels.<sup>8</sup>

Investing in education is also good for state budgets in the long run, since workers with higher incomes contribute more through taxes over the course of their lifetimes.<sup>9</sup>



Raising adult skills could increase civic engagement in communities. Higher-skilled adults volunteer more and have more confidence in their ability to affect government actions than lower-skilled adults.<sup>10</sup>

## Immigration

The U.S. has—by far—the world's largest immigrant population, holding about one-in-five of the world's immigrants.<sup>11</sup>



One-in-Five

**53%**  
Proficient

Among immigrants ages 5 and older in 2018, only half (53 percent) were proficient English speakers.<sup>12</sup>

Pew Research estimates that between 2015 and 2065, immigrants and their descendants are projected to increase the U.S. population by 103 million people.<sup>13</sup>

## The Cycle of Family Literacy

Children from immigrant families now account for one in every four young children in the United States.<sup>14</sup>



Parents need English and basic levels of functional literacy to meaningfully engage with their children's early education.<sup>14</sup>

When programs are known to provide appropriate language support and resources, parents in the community are eager to enroll in order to access not only high-quality, relevant care for their children, but also parent-focused opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

A mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income.<sup>15</sup>



**10X**  
more likely

Children of less-educated parents are much more likely to become low-skilled adults. U.S. adults with low levels of education who have parents with low levels of education are 10 times more likely to have low skills than are those who have higher-educated parents.<sup>16</sup>