

Adult skills research

About the research

Ireland took part in the International survey of adult skills in 2023. The results were released on 10 December 2024. It is an international computer-based household survey of adults aged 16 to 65 years. It is designed as 10-yearly cycles. In Ireland 3,820 people did the survey.

21% of adults surveyed are at level 1 or below in **literacy**. This means around **700,000** people may find it difficult to read instructions and follow them.



25% of adults surveyed are at level 1 or below in **numeracy**. This means around **835,000** people may struggle with working out a percentage or discount.



28% of adults surveyed are at level 1 or below in **adaptive problem solving**. This means around **935,000** people may struggle with working out how to get from A to B in the fastest time.



Reference: Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (2024). Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

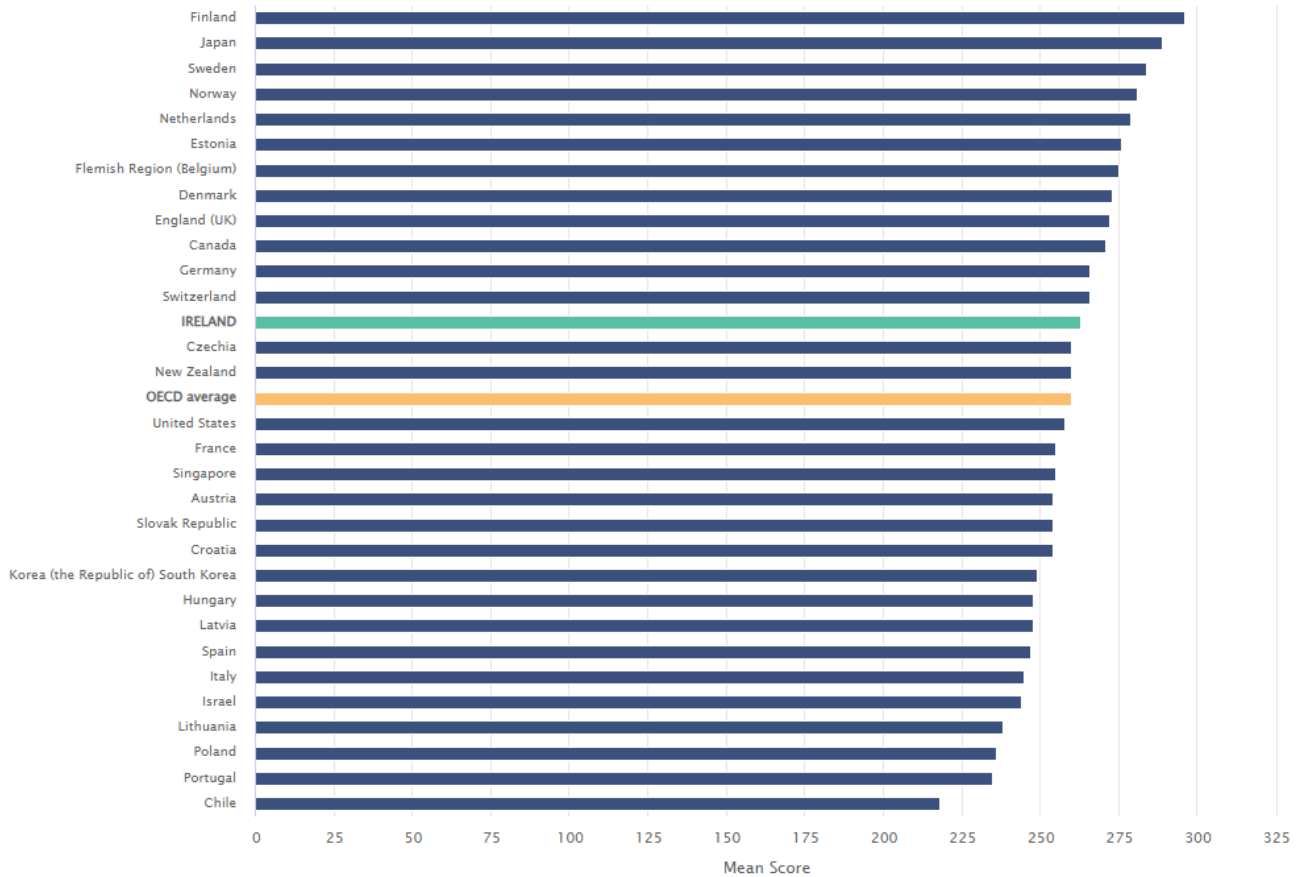


Where does Ireland compare on literacy



31 countries took part in the survey.

Literacy score of adults by country



Source: CSO Ireland
Highcharts.com

Literacy:
Ireland is 13th out
of 31 countries.

Numeracy:
Ireland is 18th out
of 31 countries.

**Adaptive problem
solving: Ireland is 17th
out of 31 countries.**



Read the OECD
report here at:
bit.ly/49Q7zSA



Comparing data from last survey in 2012



	PIAAC results in 2023	PIAAC results in 2012
	In literacy , 21% of adults surveyed are at level 1 or below. The OECD average is 26%.	18%
	In numeracy , 25% of adults surveyed are at level 1 or below. The OECD average is 25%.	25%
	In adaptive problem solving , 28% of adults surveyed are at level 1 or below. The OECD average is 29%.	This was not surveyed in 2012.

PIAAC results 2023

Of adults aged 16-65 years in Ireland

Literacy



Proficiency Levels:

- Level 5: 1%
- Level 4: 8%
- Level 3: 32%
- Level 2: 38%
- Level 1: 16%
- Below Level 1: 5%

Numeracy



Proficiency Levels:

- Level 5: 1%
- Level 4: 9%
- Level 3: 29%
- Level 2: 36%
- Level 1: 18%
- Below Level 1: 7%

Source: [CSO website](#)



Find out more about the Irish results at:



What can we learn from PIAAC 2023



1	Across all countries surveyed, nearly 20% of adults are considered low performers in all skill domains. These adults struggle with basic skills, such as reading simple texts or solving basic arithmetic and problems.
2	Literacy and numeracy skills are falling, especially among the least educated. Literacy has fallen more for men than women.
3	More education does not guarantee higher skills.
4	Adults with highly educated parents have better literacy skill levels than those with less educated parents.
5	Training systems may not match up to employers' demands for skills.
6	Skilled adults say they are healthier and happier. Adults with higher numeracy skills, for example, are more likely to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be employed,• earn a higher wage,• report better health and life satisfaction• more likely to feel they can understand and influence political affairs.

Source: [Insights and Interpretations report from OECD \(2024\)](#)



About PIACC

- The Central Statistics Office (CSO) carried out a nationally representative survey of adults aged 16 to 65 between September 2022 and June 2023.
- 3,820 people did the survey.
- People took the survey on a tablet in their homes.
- They did an assessment of three information-processing skills in:
 - literacy (reading and understanding written texts),
 - numeracy (understanding and using numerical information), and
 - adaptive problem solving.

