

Literacy Statistics – U.S.

Center for Disabilities and Development

(formerly University Hospital School)

Developing abilities for more than 50 years.

Why do we need to worry about reading comprehension?

Because functional literacy levels in the US are lower than we often assume:



1992
The National Adult Literacy Survey
National Center for Education Statistics
Nearly 50% of the Americans surveyed cannot read well enough to find a single piece of information in a short publication, nor can they make low level inferences based on what they read.

75% of adult Americans with chronic health conditions scored in the lowest two literacy levels assessed.

1994
Pediatrics
The average reading level of American parents of young children is 7th or 8th grade, but 80% of pediatric materials for parents are written at the 10th grade level or above.

1995
Emory University/UCLA study, reported in JAMA
12-95
41.6% of American patients could not comprehend directions for taking medication on an empty stomach.

26% were unable to understand information regarding when their next appointment was scheduled.

50.5% could not understand a standard informed consent form.

1996 *Drug Newsletter*, "Physical Assessment: The Pharmacist and the Self-medicating Patient" About 20% of the US population is functionally illiterate; for some subsets of our population, that rises to 40%.

1999 Education levels in the US About one in every four Americans (25%) is a high school dropout.

About half (45%) have gone to college for some period of time, but fewer than one in six (15%) have a college degree.

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www.medicine.uiowa.edu/uhs/comprehend3.cfm