

# Study: Literacy and numeracy among off-reserve First Nations people and Métis, 2012

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Non-Aboriginal adults aged 25 to 54 with lower literacy skills were 12 percentage points more likely to be employed in 2012 than off-reserve First Nations adults with higher literacy skills.

Once they had a job, however, off-reserve First Nations adults with higher skills were as likely as their non-Aboriginal counterparts to work as professionals or as managers.

The results are included in the new study, "[Literacy and numeracy among off-reserve First Nations people and Métis: Do higher skill levels improve labour market outcomes?](#)"

The study is based on data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. The survey assessed individuals' level of proficiency in skills related to literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments.

The study examined the literacy and numeracy of off-reserve First Nations and Métis adults and focused on the factors and labour market outcomes associated with higher skill levels. (For definitions of higher and lower skills, see note to readers.)

## Off-reserve First Nations and Métis adults have lower skill levels than their non-Aboriginal counterparts

In 2012, just over one-third (35%) of off-reserve First Nations adults and 50% of Métis had higher literacy scores, compared with 57% of the non-Aboriginal population (excluding immigrants).

For all groups, individuals with higher levels of education also had higher literacy skill levels.

Off-reserve First Nations adults, however, had lower literacy skill levels than non-Aboriginal adults in every category of educational attainment, even within the university-educated population.

For example, the proportion of adults who had at least a bachelor's degree and who scored a level 3 or higher in literacy was 69% among off-reserve First Nations adults. This compared with 85% among non-Aboriginal adults and 82% among Métis adults.

## Relationship between skills and employment

Overall, non-Aboriginal adults aged 25 to 54 (87%) had a greater employment rate than Métis adults (79%) and off-reserve First Nations adults (62%).

To better understand the differences in employment rates among groups, it is important to account for differences in factors that can be related to employment, such as education and skills.

Even after accounting for these factors, however, a significant gap in employment rates remained between off-reserve First Nations adults and non-Aboriginal adults.

Specifically, non-Aboriginal adults with higher literacy skills had a 91% probability of being employed. This compared with 75% among off-reserve First Nations adults who also had higher literacy skills (taking other factors into account). Among Métis adults who had similar skills, the rate was 87%.



Non-Aboriginal adults with lower literacy skills had an 87% probability of being employed. In other words, they were 12 percentage points more likely to be employed than off-reserve First Nations adults with higher skills, even after accounting for other factors related to employment.

When they were employed, however, off-reserve First Nations workers with higher literacy skills were as likely to be employed in a managerial or professional occupation as their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

### Note to readers

*In this study, data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) are used to examine the skill proficiency level of off-reserve First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal adults in literacy and numeracy.*

*For the purposes of this study, a person with a literacy score of level 3 or higher (out of 5 levels) is considered to have a **higher level of literacy**. People with a higher level of literacy typically achieve better socioeconomic outcomes than their counterparts who score at lower levels.*

*A person with a literacy score of level 2 or below is considered to have a **lower level of literacy**. People with a lower level of literacy are less likely to be able to integrate information from multiple sources and may be only able to undertake tasks of limited complexity, such as locating single pieces of information in short sections of text.*

*PIAAC collected data in every province and territory. In addition, oversamples of Aboriginal people were drawn in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia (only for those living off reserve in large urban population centres), Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Inuit respondents are excluded from the analysis because of their smaller sample size. It is also important to note that the non-Aboriginal population excludes immigrants as they tend to score lower in numeracy and literacy tests conducted in English or French.*

*In the first part of the study, the literacy and numeracy levels are examined for off-reserve First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal adults aged 25 to 65. In the second part, the relationship between skills and the probability of employment is examined among core working age adults (aged 25 to 54). The results presented in this Daily release are based on literacy scores. Similar results for numeracy scores are available in the study.*

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [4406](#).

The article, "[Literacy and numeracy among off-reserve First Nations people and Métis: Do higher skill levels improve labour market outcomes?](#)," is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)), from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website, under *Publications*.

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