

In Québec, 800 000 people aged 16 to 65 are at Level 1 literacy. They:

- are unable to fully comprehend written information at their disposal (newspapers, dosage information, flyers, etc.), and rely on others to understand these materials
- are unable to contribute fully to the economic, social and cultural growth of their community
- have difficulty improving their quality of life (diploma, jobs)
- are unable to help their children and those around them achieve their potential through reading

Some of them are unable to read. Others can, but they:

- decode words one at a time and have a difficult time grasping the meaning of sentences
- do not always make connections between the different elements of a text
- lose the sense of a text when the vocabulary becomes too complicated or technical
- have a hard time filling out even the simplest of forms
- have a hard time understanding written instructions
- are easily distracted by the outside world

"I always buy the same brand of powdered milk for my baby because my boyfriend taught me how much of it to use and I know how to prepare it."

"On a form, I can write my name and address but the rest of the questions are way too difficult."


1-800-361-9142

Reading, writing and counting:
that's part of life!

20-2049-01A

Éducation,
Loisir et Sport

Québec 

Québec 

4
Five,
four,
three,
two

Understanding
Level 1
Literacy
in Québec



In 2006,

the Institut de la statistique du Québec published a report on the results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS, 2003) for Québec, entitled *Développer nos compétences en littératie : un défi porteur d'avenir*. The report uses the term "literacy" (*littératie* in French) to refer to an individual's ability to understand and use various types of written information (instruction manuals, newspapers, forms, ballots, books, TV guides, maps, etc.) in their daily lives.

Adults are evaluated using five competency levels. Those at **Level 1** have serious difficulties in reading, writing and numeracy.

This pamphlet was created to educate you on the nature of these difficulties and their consequences, as well as to provide you with a few of the major statistics concerning these adults.

"I rely on the first letters of words and I guess the rest. The other day I got off at the wrong Metro station. I wanted to get to Honoré-Beaugrand station, but I ended up going all the way to Henri-Bourassa."

"I never go to parent-teacher meetings because I'm too afraid that someone will ask me to read something aloud in front of everyone."

Overview of 16- to 65-year-old Quebecers who have very poor literacy skills (Level 1)

Who are they?

All age groups

- 10%** are 16 to 25 years old
- 39%** are 26 to 46 years old
- 51%** are 46 to 65 years old

There are almost as many women as men

- 53%** are men
- 47%** are women

Another look at Québec as a whole

Among people aged 16 to 65:

- **16%** of them are at Level 1
- In urban centres, **15%** of them are at Level 1, as opposed to **19%** in rural areas
- **30%** of allophones, **14%** of francophones and **11%** of anglophones are at Level 1
- **31%** of immigrants and **14%** of people born in Canada are at Level 1

Among people who are 66 or older:

- **62%**, or approximately 500 000 people, are at Level 1
- They represent **40%** of all people aged 16 and older who are at Level 1

Most have no diploma

- 54%** do not have a secondary school diploma
- 28%** have a secondary school diploma
- 18%** have a post-secondary diploma (ACS, DCS, university degree, etc.)

Most are in the work force

- 54%** are employed
- 14%** are unemployed but looking for work
- 32%** are in different categories (inactive, students, retirees, etc.)

They live in urban centres and rural areas

- 79%** live in urban centres
- 21%** live in rural areas

They are mostly francophone or allophone

- 74%** are francophone
- 21%** are allophone
- 5%** are anglophone

Some are immigrants, while others were born in Canada

- 78%** were born in Canada
- 22%** are immigrants

Generally people at Level 1:

- read books, magazines and newspapers very infrequently
- rarely use the Internet
- rarely participate in any structured educational activities

Source: *Statistics Canada International Adult Literacy Skills Survey, (Canada): Public Use Microdata File*. Compilation: Institut de la statistique du Québec.

Consult the report entitled *Développer nos compétences en littératie: un défi porteur d'avenir. Rapport québécois de l'Enquête internationale sur l'alphabétisation et les compétences des adultes, 2003*, Québec, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 256 p. **on-line** (in French only) at: http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/sante/alphabetsation2003_pdf.htm.

At the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, several measures are being taken to promote literacy education, such as:

- support for and promotion of the Literacy Foundation's Info-Alpha line
- programs of study designed specifically for adults, to prepare them to face personal, professional and social challenges and to foster success in learning
- investments in non formal education for independent community-based literacy groups
- a record of learning reflecting the basic general education of people with little formal education
- illiteracy prevention programs promoting emergent literacy and educational success for parents of children 0 to 12 years old who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

