

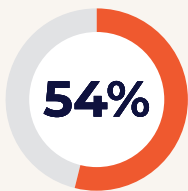


Literacy Behind Bars Changes Lives

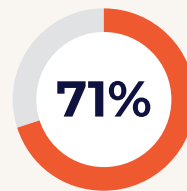
Struggling to read as an adult in the United States is more common than many realize, and even more prevalent among incarcerated individuals. There is hope. With the right intervention, literacy can be improved, opening doors to opportunity and helping reduce recidivism.



The Literacy Crisis



According to the U.S. Department of Education, **54% of U.S. adults 16-74 years old**—about 130 million people—**read below the equivalent of a sixth-grade level.**^{1,2}



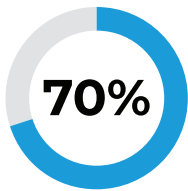
According to the 2024 Nation's Report Card (NAEP), **71% of the nation's 8th graders are reading at or below the proficient level**, with 30% reading at or below the basic level.³



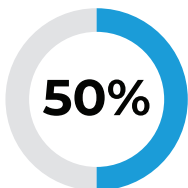
About 43 million Americans—nearly one in five adults—read below a third-grade level.^{1,2}



Literacy in Prison



According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, **70% of all incarcerated adults cannot read at a fourth-grade level**, “meaning they lack the reading skills to navigate many everyday tasks or hold down anything but lower (paying) jobs.”⁴



A study in Texas in 2000, estimated that **50% of the prison population has dyslexia.**⁵



Understanding the Why

The International Dyslexia Association reports **15-20% of the population (approximately 1 out of 5 persons) has a language-based learning disability.** Dyslexia is the most common cause of reading, writing and spelling difficulties. Dyslexia can be remediated with correct intervention.⁶



Education Changes Outcomes

Participation in any form of educational program leads to a **14.8% decrease in the likelihood of recidivism.**⁷

REACH →

More Information:

Reports on education programs in prisons across the US:

<https://www.mackinac.org/archives/2024/s2024-02.pdf>

<https://www.mackinac.org/s2023-01#introduction>

Report from the UK on promoting literacy in prison

<https://cdn.websitebuilder.service.justice.gov.uk/uploads/sites/19/2026/01/>

[Reading-for-rehabilitation-web-2026.pdf](#)

Sources:

1 <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/litproficiencylevel.asp>

2 (The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), also known as the Survey of Adult Skills, is a large-scale, international, household study conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In the United States, PIAAC is funded and led by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). PIAAC ranks literacy levels on a scale of 1 (least literate) to 5 (most literate). Level 3 – which roughly equates to a minimum 6th grade reading level – is considered the minimum level for proficiency in literacy.)

3 https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4_8/?grade=8

4 https://nces.ed.gov/naal/prison_lit.asp

5 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10876375>

6 <https://dyslexiaida.org>

7 <https://www.mackinac.org/s2023-01#introduction>



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