



Assessed Skills and Skill Use of Adults with Learning Disabilities in PIAAC



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Why this study?

- Adults with learning disabilities (LD) face challenges in education and employment and frequently live with other disabilities and health conditions. The study's objective was to investigate numeracy/digital literacy skills and skill use for U.S. adults with LD.

What are the research questions?

- How do assessed skills in numeracy/digital literacy differ for adults with LD, compared with the general population, and what is the role of coexisting health and disabling conditions (e.g., vision and auditory difficulties as well as permanent disability)?
- How does skill use *at work* in numeracy/digital literacy differ for *employed* adults with LD, compared with the general employed population?
- How does skill use *at home* in numeracy/digital literacy differ for adults with LD who are *outside the workforce*, compared with the general population outside the workforce? How does skill use *at home* in numeracy/digital literacy differ for *employed* adults with LD compared with the general employed population?
- Controlling for selected demographic and background characteristics, what is the relationship of assessed numeracy skills with numeracy skills use, and of assessed skills in digital literacy with digital literacy skill use, at work or at home for adults with LD?
- How does numeracy/digital literacy skill use at work or at home of adults with LD differ among discrete groups based on covariates and assessed numeracy and digital skill levels?

What are the key findings?

- Adults with LD have lower mean numeracy and digital literacy scores than adults in the general population.
- Adults with LD have twice the incidence of fair/poor health, vision difficulties, and hearing difficulties as adults without LD.
- Those with health concerns and other disabling conditions tend to score substantially lower than adults with LD who are employed and have no health issues.
- Employed adults, whether with LD or in the general population, have similar levels of numeracy skill use. Employed adults with LD have slightly lower average use of digital literacy. Adults with LD outside the labor force report using numeracy and digital literacy skills at home slightly less often than employed adults with LD do.
- Use of skills at home adds to variance explained in both numeracy and digital literacy skills; use of digital literacy skills at work does so for digital literacy skills; findings suggest that using numeracy skills and digital literacy skills matter in gaining – or keeping – the skills themselves.
- Adults with LD indicate a desire for learning, yet their rates of uncompleted education are high.

What are the policy implications?

- Adult and postsecondary education policies that support adults with LD to engage in more numeracy and digital literacy activities can simultaneously encourage not only the association with skill growth but also with lifelong learning.
- Policymakers need to enact policies that can support adults with LD in finding and accessing resources, such as grants and loans for tuition, to attend and complete education or training that so many want. Policies also need to ensure that adequate resources are available to support adults in meeting health and disability needs.