The Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) Study: An Introduction

The Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) study is an investigation of the distribution of certain skills (such as literacy, numeracy, and document interpretation) among the adult population. It is conducted at both international and national levels. This allows for comparison with other countries as well as providing information specific to New Zealand.

The ALL study follows a similar study – the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) – conducted in 1996 and is, in part, directly comparable to this earlier work. This comparison will provide a picture of some of the changes that may have occurred, both nationally, and internationally, over the previous decade.

This poster is intended as an introduction to the ALL study. It seeks to explain the nature of the ALL study, its application, and how the ALL results will be presented. It contains none of the ALL results itself.

We are planning to release the initial ALL results beginning with a sequence of brochures from mid 2007, and then with a larger report in late 2008.

FAQ’s

Why is it important to measure skills?

Strong evidence exists internationally that, for developed countries, full participation in society and the labour market is linked to the capacity to accumulate knowledge and to develop and maintain a broad range of skills.

What information will the ALL results provide?

ALL results will provide new information on the relationships between skill levels, the labour market, and education. They will throw new light on the role of skill in creating social equity and inequality in economic outcomes, particularly for groups functioning, on average, below the level of competence.

More specifically, the initial ALL results will focus on skills and:

- international comparisons
- educational and labour force status
- gender and ethnicity
- age

What does the ALL study measure?

The ALL study measures proficiency in four “domains”:

- “Prose Literacy” is concerned with continuous text – such as the type found in books and newspaper articles.
- “Document Literacy” deals with discontinuous text – such as graphs, charts, and tables.
- “Numeracy” addresses mathematical and numerical information.
- “Problem-Solving” involves analytical thinking, reasoning and logic.

Who will use the ALL results?

The ALL results will be presented in a form suitable for use by:

- government policy makers
- adult literacy providers
- the literacy research community
- the general public.

How is the ALL testing implemented?

The New Zealand implementation of the ALL study has a random, geographically-based sample design allowing for statistically useful analyses of Māori and Pasifika sub-populations. The achieved sample size will be about 6000 adults aged 16 – 65.

Each interview is administered, face-to-face, by an interviewer of the National Research Bureau Ltd (NRB) according to the strict guidelines laid down by Statistics Canada. NRB is interviewing throughout New Zealand over the period May 2006 – early 2007.

How are an individual’s skills measured by the ALL study?

To each individual, and for each of the domains mentioned above, Level 1 indicates extremely low proficiency, and Level 5, extremely high.

Who implements the ALL study?

The ALL study is a joint project of Statistics Canada, the US National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In New Zealand, the ALL survey is administered, under contract to the Ministry of Education, by the National Research Bureau Ltd. Again, this administration process is overseen by Statistics Canada.

Which countries are involved in the ALL study?

Australia, Bermuda, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United States of America, and the Mexican State of Nuevo Leon.

It is anticipated that the overall results including all of the participating countries will be released by Statistics Canada at the end of 2008.

How do the ALL and IALS studies compare?

The Prose Literacy and Document Literacy domains of the two studies are directly comparable. The “Quantitative Literacy” domain of the IALS study is partially comparable to the Numeracy domain of the ALL study. The Problem-Solving domain of the ALL study is a new domain.

For more information see: www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/research/all.html

How will the findings be presented?

The information in the ALL results will often be presented graphically.

Please be aware that the following graphs are NOT the findings of the ALL study.

They are merely representative of the way in which some of the ALL results will be presented.

Typical ALL findings Graph 1

Typical ALL findings Graph 2

Typical ALL findings Graph 3

This graph shows, for example, that 12% (respectively, 43%) of the 60 – 65 year-old Adult population of Country 1 achieved proficiency Levels 4 or 5 in Prose Literacy (respectively, Document Literacy).