Comparing literacy and numeracy scales in the Assessment Tool and Survey of Adult Skills

This information is intended to help educators and researchers using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool to understand the extent to which results for the Assessment Tool can be compared with the results from the Survey of Adult Skills.

Comparing the Scales

» The literacy and numeracy scales in the Survey and the Assessment Tool are moderately correlated. This suggests that the scales measure similar underlying concepts. However, there is a range of variation in scores of people who were assessed in both.

» The variation in scores means it is not possible to provide an exact mapping. However it is possible to map the range of scores that people are likely to have on the other instruments.

» People who scored at Step 1 for reading in the Assessment Tool are likely to score at Level 1 or below for literacy in the Survey. Those who scored at Step 4 or above are likely to score at Level 2 or higher. People who scored at Step 6 are likely to score at Level 3 or higher.

» People who scored at Step 1 or 2 for numeracy in the Assessment Tool are likely to only score at below level 1 for numeracy in the Survey. Those who scored at Step 5 or 6 are likely to score at level 2 or higher in the Survey.

» Based on these mappings, it is not possible to say that someone needs to achieve a specific step on the Assessment Tool in order to participate in employment, further study or everyday life.

Using the Mappings

» The mappings provide an approximate range over which the Assessment Tool steps and Survey levels can be compared. For example, learners who are assessed at Step 1 or 2 on the numeracy assessment are likely to share characteristics with people who were assessed at below Level 1 in the Survey of Adult Skills. Educators and researchers can then look at published results for the Survey to learn more about adults with this level of skill.

» The Survey of Adult Skills does not provide any benchmark for the level of skills that adults need to participate in work or society. The levels in the Survey describe the kinds of tasks people can do successfully. How well people at each skill level can participate will depend on the numeracy and literacy demands of their everyday life and work. Similarly, it is not possible, based on these mappings, to say that someone needs to achieve a specific step on the Assessment Tool in order to participate in employment, further study or everyday life.

The Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool

» The Assessment Tool measures the literacy and numeracy skills of individuals. It was developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research on behalf of the Tertiary Education Commission. It is widely used in lower-level tertiary education, schools and other settings. The Assessment Tool is designed to show what individuals need to learn to improve their skills. Assessments are conducted in a wide range of contexts, including homes, classrooms, assessment centres and prisons.

The Survey of Adult Skills

» The Survey of Adult Skills estimates the distribution of literacy and numeracy skills in the population. It is an international survey coordinated by the organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. It is conducted in New Zealand in 2014/2015, as a household survey, drawing on a nationally representative sample of 16 to 65-year-olds. The respondents were tested across literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments. The assessments were undertaken at home with an interviewer present, and included a background questionnaire.