



TARGET CRIME WITH LITERACY

CHAPTER 1 - FACT SHEET 2

Who Are the People with Low Literacy in Canada?

About 58 out of 100 Canadian adults aged 16 to 65 have the basic reading skills they need for most everyday reading. The other 42 of the 100 working-age adults in Canada has lower literacy than is needed to cope with the increasing information demands of our society.

That means that about two in every five Canadian adults— 9 million people –can't read well enough to do everyday tasks. If we add in the people who are older than 65, that number goes up to 12 million Canadians.

The Statistics

More than 23,000 Canadians took part in an International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey in 2003. Based on the results of that survey, we can make some broad statements about who has low literacy skills in Canada:

- 2.6 million are immigrants
- 5.8 million are employed and over 800,000 are unemployed
- 2.4 million are not actively in the workforce
- 3.1 million have less than high school education
- 3.3 million finished high school
- 2.6 million have post-secondary education

Putting a Human Face on the Numbers

People who have low literacy are found throughout Canadian society – they live in all the provinces and territories, they belong to all the ethnic and religious groups, they are in all the income groups, and they have a whole range of levels of education.

Low literacy is more common in some specific groups than in Canadian society as a whole. These groups include

- seniors
- immigrants

- Aboriginal Canadians
- Francophones
- people entering the corrections system
- people who experienced one or more major roadblocks in their education when they were children or young adults, like being the victim of
 - neglect
 - abuse
 - poverty
 - poor nutrition
 - racial discrimination

More facts about low literacy in Canada

- Men are more likely to have low literacy skills than women.
- Some children had learning disabilities or social problems when they were in school, and never became good readers.
- Many people don't read regularly. They get their news from television and radio. They don't read for enjoyment either – they get their entertainment from the Internet, TV, movies, and concerts. Gradually, they lose their reading skills.
- Many senior citizens have only elementary school education, and their reading skills were never up to today's standard. Others have stopped reading and let their skills decline.
- Some immigrants may be literate in their first language are still learning English or French. Others are not literate in their first language, and find it difficult to learn how to read in a second language. Even those immigrants whose first language is English or French have lower literacy than those people born in Canada.

Low literacy in Canada is a personal, family, community, and societal problem. And low literacy is a law enforcement problem.

[Read Fact Sheet #3 >](#)

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