

# **Supporting Adults Improve their Numeracy**

**- Current challenges in policy and practice**

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# Outline



## Policy



## Challenges



## Solutions



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# Policy background

- **Learning for Life, White Paper on Adult Learning (2000)** - Top priority to adult literacy / numeracy ref only to children / NI
- **Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002)** - Basic Skills including mathematical / numeracy for everyday life
- **Tomorrow's Skills Towards a National Skills Strategy (2007)** - Generic skills including basic skills such as numeracy
- **Review of ALCES Funded Adult Literacy Provision (2013)** - limited numeracy provision (5%)
- **OECD IALS / PIAAC** as well as EU, external policy drivers
- **NALA** – national policy driver

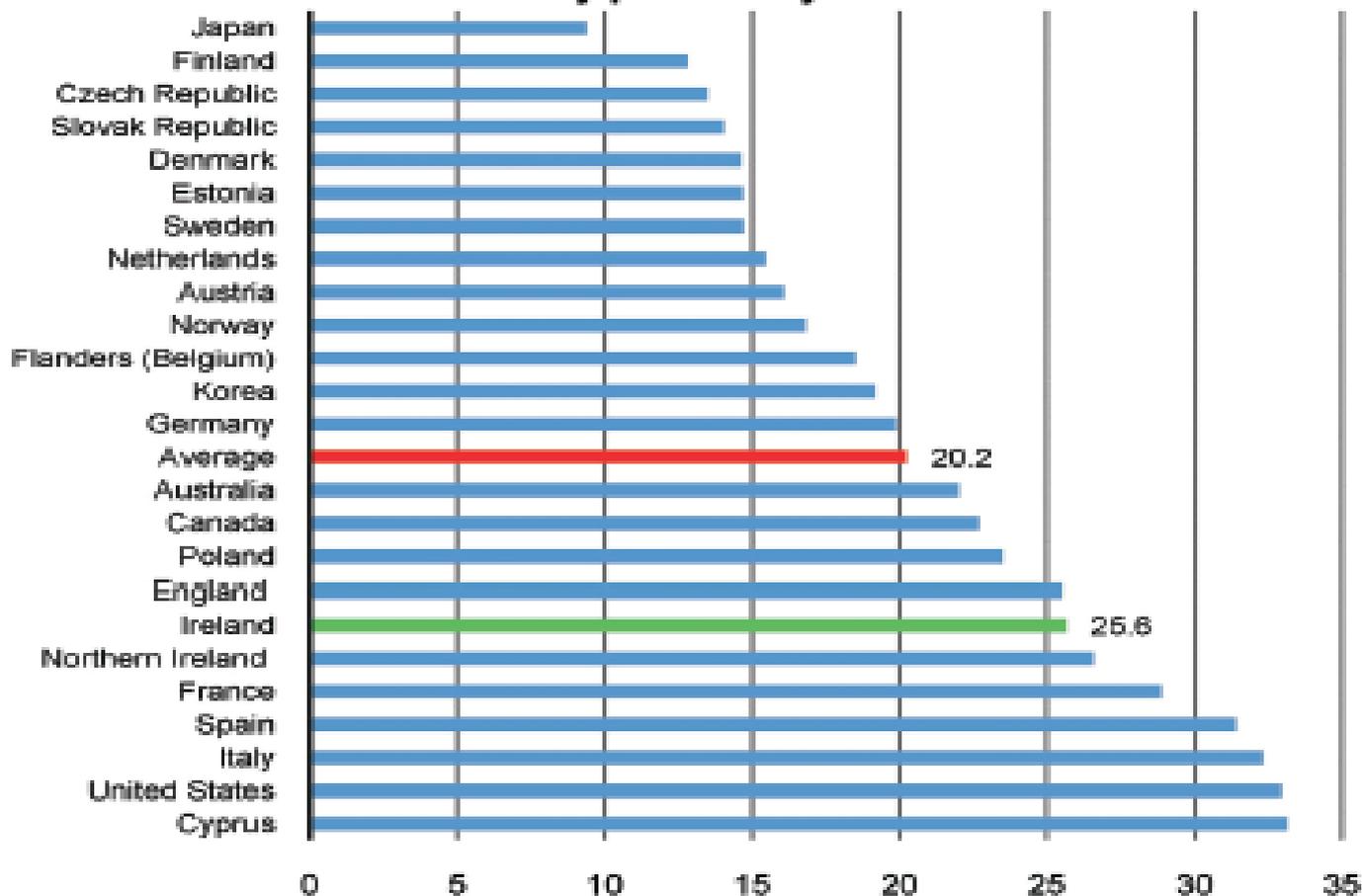


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# Results for numeracy

**Figure A.5**  
**Percentage of adults (16-65) at or below Level 1 of numeracy proficiency**



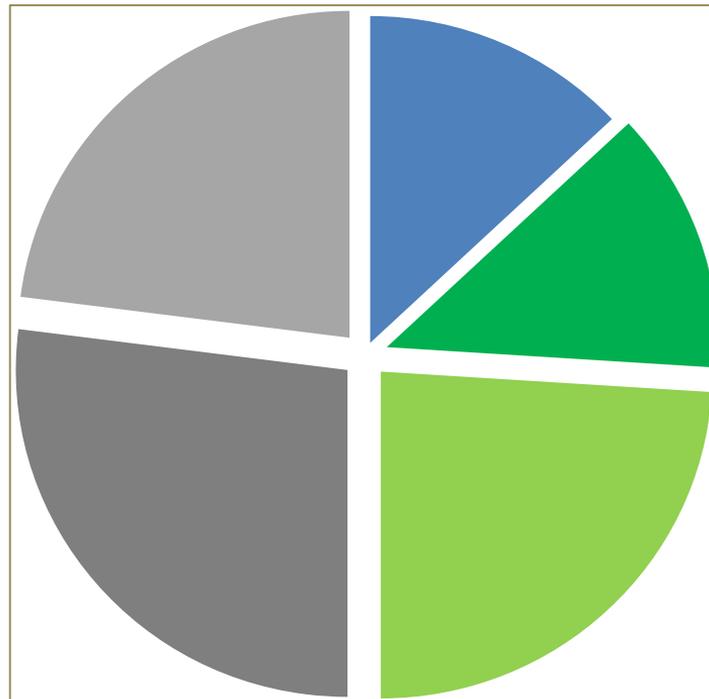
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# Who are they?



The 750,000 People At or Below Level 1 Numeracy (2013) by their Educational Attainment



- Tertiary
- Post-sec, non-tertiary
- Upper sec.
- Lower sec.
- Primary or less

# Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 - 19

- Enshrined a Literacy and Numeracy strategy as part of the FET Strategy in the Further Education and Training Act, 2013 (why)
- National Adult Literacy & Numeracy Strategy (Active Inclusion) - 'Prioritise numeracy more strongly and increase the amount of numeracy provision offered as integrated and standalone options' (p100) (what)
- Challenges: 'Capacity to embed literacy and numeracy in the relevant FET provision will need to be expanded' (p33).
- There is no 'how'



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# National Skills Strategy (2015)

- The National Skills Strategy 2025 target is to upskill 256,000 people from PIAAC level 1 or below in numeracy, by 2025 (reduce the % of Adults Scoring at Level 1 or below to from 25.6% to 17%)
- 2 of 6 objectives - Lifelong learning and Active Inclusion
- Stronger performance at school level – PISA, TIMMS (17<sup>th</sup> out of 50), but DEIS schools remain below national average
- Relationship between school age performance and adult performance
- ‘Ensuring that people in the labour force with lower levels of formal education have the skills that enable them to gain and maintain employment will continue to be a challenge in the coming years’ (p45)



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# Challenges

- The educational architecture currently in place is insufficient to cater for the number of adults who need second chance education and to meet targets (system capacity)
- Participation rates in lifelong learning generally, and adult literacy and numeracy programmes specifically, remain relatively static
- Silo working within and between the education & training system
- Macro Level Policy Formulation to Micro Level Policy Realisation
- Budget – 30m since pre-crash



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# Solutions

1. Provide a **meaningful guaranteed universal system of second chance education & motivate people to participate**
  2. Integrate numeracy support and development into all publicly funded education and training
  3. Guarantee learners **intensive and more flexible learning, (family, workplace) options to aid persistence and remove any barriers to progression**
  4. Ensure the **systematic delivery of high quality programmes** which are supported by well trained practitioners
  5. Ensure people understand the importance of using acquired skills through usage
- All of the above captured in a National Numeracy Demonstration Project?



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# Conclusion

Policy = Numeracy is a critical skill that we develop and need to maintain throughout our lives

Practice = Achievement in school

Very limited second chance = failure

More sharing within education & training sector = Opportunity



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# Further information

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Family: [www.helpmykidlearn.ie](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie)



<http://facebook.com/nalairland>



<http://twitter.com/nalairland>



<http://www.youtube.com/user/nationaladulterac>



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The public acknowledge that doing maths forms an integral part of day-to-day life, spanning work & home life, shopping and budgeting. Fewer than one in ten adults say they 'never' do maths.

Despite the need for numeracy skills in everyday life, just over 6 in 10 adults say they like doing maths, leaving a significant third of adults who don't enjoy doing maths.

One in five of those who don't like maths claim to 'never' do maths, perhaps suggesting a cycle of avoidance based on lack of competence and/or confidence.

Six in ten adults correctly answer at least four of the six primary school maths questions asked of the general public in this study.

Education level emerges as the strongest factor determining correct responses among the public. This research shows that those who leave formal education at primary level are most likely to struggle with numeracy, and those completing third level education are most at ease.

Social grade also determines numerical ability, as ABC1 are much more likely than C2DE's to get the answers right. Farmers score somewhere in between both groups.

Men perform better than women overall, but age does not appear to be a strong factor determining numerical ability.

Questions that involve very day-to-day practical calculations that may be encountered in the supermarket – e.g. number of coke bottles in tray, best value calculation for product packs – are more likely to be correctly answered than less common scenarios such as area calculation and adding VAT to a price.

Overall this research highlights that two distinct sub-groups of the population – those who left school at primary level and C2DE's – have lower levels of numeracy skills overall and may require specific help and encouragement to allow them to function effectively when faced with everyday numerical challenges.



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