20.4% of adults in Illinois have low literacy
Illinois ranks 31 out of 50 in the U.S.

2 in 9 counties in Illinois have populations where 20% or more of the residents have below basic literacy

How does low literacy affect equity and quality of life?

In counties where at least 20% of the population have below basic literacy, we see that many health, economic, and educational outcomes fall short.

Unemployment
- 7.5% low literacy counties
- 6.2% other counties
- 6.6% state

Median Income
- $49,301
- $53,803
- $63,575

Adults Without a High School Degree
- 15.3%
- 10.0%
- 11.1%

No Access to Healthcare
- 7.3%
- 6.0%
- 7.3%

Residents Below the Poverty Line
- 15.8%
- 13.3%
- 11.6%

The percent of 4th graders with below basic reading by race

White: 25%
Latinx/Hispanic: 45%
Black/African American: 54%
Asian: 18%
State Average: 36%

Demographics

Households Where Limited English is Spoken

The percentage of households where no adult speaks English "very well."
4th Grade Reading Levels
While literacy can be high or low in a given metro area, when we look at 4th grade testing, we can see that the performance in English/Language Arts is not consistent across race and gender.

Unemployment
6.7%
339,651 adults living in Chicago are unemployed.

Residents Below the Poverty Line
10.9%
783,435 residents are living below the poverty line in Chicago.

Receives Public Assistance
25.8%
571,389 residents receive public assistance in Chicago.

Median Household Income
$68,715

Racial Distribution
White 53.1%
Latinx/Hispanic 21.9%
Black 16.4%
Asian 6.5%

Data for the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin Metro Area

Below basic literacy is defined as scoring level 1 or below on the PIAAC International Adult Literacy Survey. 4th grade reading scores come from the NAEP reading assessment. 4th grade ELA test performance data comes from edopportunity.org. Self-Reported health comes from the Community Health Status Indicators. All other data comes from the American Community Survey. PIAAC data is not available by city. Visit map.barbarabush.org for county-level PIAAC data.