17.3% of adults in Massachusetts have low literacy. Massachusetts ranks 21 out of 50 in the U.S.

1 in 7 counties in Massachusetts have populations where 25% or more of the residents have below basic literacy.

How does low literacy affect equity and quality of life?

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

**Unemployment**
- 7.6% low literacy counties
- 5.9% other counties
- 5.4% state

**Median Income**
- $58,993
- $71,560
- $77,378

**Adults Without a High School Degree**
- 14.2%
- 7.6%
- 9.6%

**No Access to Healthcare**
- 3.7%
- 2.8%

**Residents Below the Poverty Line**
- 18.4%
- 10.9%
- 10.0%

**Demographics**

Households Where Limited English is Spoken

The percentage of households where no adult speaks English "very well."

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

- White: 16%
- Latinx/Hispanic: 42%
- Black/African American: 42%
- Asian: 11%

State Average: 24%
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
5.1%
138,155 adults living in Boston are unemployed.

Residents Below the Poverty Line
9.2%
341,021 residents are living below the poverty line in Boston.

Residents of Public Assistance
18.5%
179,254 residents receive public assistance in Boston.

Income by Race
- White: $94,647
- Latinx/Hispanic: $48,282
- Black: $50,573
- Asian: $92,890

Data for the Boston-Cambridge-Newton 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.