

## LEVEL ONE PIAAC 2023 France

### Adults with low literacy skills in France

In France, the percentage of adults who are at low levels of French literacy (PIAAC Level 1 or below) has increased to 28 percent in 2023 (22% in 2012). About two in five adults with low literacy skills (40%) are 55-65-year-olds, an increase from 35 percent in 2012. Older adults (ages 55-65) are the largest age group in the analysis. With gender parity in 2012, the proportion of males among adults with low skills in 2023 is higher than that of females. The change in the proportion of males is not statistically significant (51% in 2012 and 53% in 2023).

The proportion of adults with low literacy skills who were not born in France remained stable at 28 percent. The proportion of those whose parents were also not born in France has increased from 24 percent in 2012 to 27 percent in 2023. Remaining stable from 2012, 18 percent of adults with low literacy skills had a native language other than French.

Among adults with low skills, the proportion of those with less than secondary level qualifications decreased to 41 percent, the proportion of those with secondary qualifications increased to 49 percent, and the proportion of those with more than secondary level qualifications increased to 11 percent. The change in proportions of those whose parents achieved certain educational qualifications follows a similar pattern between the two time points.

Among adults with low skills, while the proportion of employed adults remained stable (57% in 2023), there was a decrease in the proportion of unemployed adults (8% in 2012 and 5% in 2023). Among currently or recently employed adults with low literacy skills, a lower proportion was employed in elementary occupations (24% in 2012 and 18% in 2023), and a larger proportion was working in semi-skilled white-collar occupations (22% in 2012 and 29% in 2023).

The proportion of low-skilled adults participating in non-formal education remain at similar level (20% in 2023). However, these results should be interpreted with caution because the formulation of the question in 2012 may have led to overreporting in non-formal education for that time point. The proportion of adults with low skills acquiring formal degrees remained stable (7% in 2023).

The share of adults with low literacy skills reporting excellent or good health has decreased from 68 percent in 2012 to 64 percent in 2023.

As a result of a change in the formulation of the questions between 2012 and 2023, measuring changes in percentages in social trust and political efficacy between the two time points is not recommended. In 2023, less than one in five adults with low literacy (18%) say that most people could be trusted (social trust). Those with higher levels of literacy (Level 2 or above) have higher levels of social trust (30%) and political efficacy (15%). Twelve percent (12%) of adults with low literacy skills and 15 percent of adults with high literacy skills report having a say in what the government does.

Suggested Citation: Grotlüschen, Anke; Essert (Mamedova), Saida; Dutz, Gregor; Buddeberg, Klaus; Skowranek, Kristin. (2025). LEVEL ONE PIAAC 2023 France: Adults with low literacy skills in France. Country Story. In *LEO PIAAC 2023 – Level One im deutschsprachigen Raum*. Brochure. Available online: <https://leo.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/> and <https://www.fdr.uni-hamburg.de/record/17831>.

FRA Table A-4. Percentage distribution of adults in **France** ages 16 to 65 overall and with proficiency level 1 or below (adults with low skills) and level 2 or above (adults with middle or high skills), by demographic and personal characteristics: 2012 and 2023

Characteristic	Total, all adults				Level 1 or below				Level 2 or above			
	2012		2023		2012		2023		2012		2023	
<b>All adults</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>†</b>	<b>21,7</b>	<b>(0,52)</b>	<b>27,5</b>	<b>(0,57)</b>	<b>78,3</b>	<b>(0,52)</b>	<b>72,5</b>	<b>(0,57)</b>
Age												
16-24	17,3	(0,13)	17,6	(0,14)	10,3	(0,82)	10,6	(0,82)	19,2	(0,27)	20,3	(0,35)
25-34	19,0	(0,18)	18,0	(0,25)	11,4	(0,91)	9,6	(0,84)	21,1	(0,31)	21,2	(0,41)
35-44	20,8	(0,19)	20,6	(0,25)	18,2	(0,89)	15,3	(1,00)	21,5	(0,32)	22,7	(0,43)
45-54	21,0	(0,20)	20,9	(0,24)	24,9	(0,99)	24,5	(0,96)	19,9	(0,31)	19,6	(0,41)
55-65	21,9	(0,14)	22,8	(0,14)	35,1	(1,07)	39,9	(1,01)	18,2	(0,34)	16,3	(0,36)
Gender												
Male	48,8	(0,19)	49,3	(0,13)	50,5	(1,14)	52,9	(1,13)	48,4	(0,40)	48,0	(0,47)
Female	51,2	(0,19)	50,7	(0,13)	49,5	(1,14)	47,1	(1,13)	51,6	(0,40)	52,0	(0,47)
Language: French												
Non-native	9,3	(0,27)	8,6	(0,23)	19,6	(1,11)	18,2	(0,99)	6,4	(0,31)	5,2	(0,36)
Native	90,7	(0,27)	91,4	(0,23)	80,4	(1,11)	81,8	(0,99)	93,6	(0,31)	94,8	(0,36)
Nativity status												
Born in France	87,3	(0,03)	86,3	(0,06)	74,3	(1,04)	71,8	(0,89)	90,9	(0,29)	91,9	(0,34)
Born outside of France	12,7	(0,03)	13,7	(0,06)	25,7	(1,04)	28,2	(0,89)	9,1	(0,29)	8,1	(0,34)
Immigrant status												
Foreign-born of foreign-born parents	10,9	(0,14)	12,1	(0,18)	23,6	(1,03)	26,6	(0,99)	7,4	(0,29)	6,7	(0,36)
Foreign-born of mixed heritage	1,0	(0,10)	0,8	(0,12)	1,7	(0,34)	0,9	! (0,28)	0,7	(0,11)	0,7	(0,14)
Foreign-born of native-born parents	0,8	(0,11)	0,8	(0,10)	!!	!!	0,8	! (0,28)	1,0	(0,13)	0,7	(0,13)
Native-born of foreign-born parents	5,7	(0,26)	7,2	(0,29)	6,1	(0,61)	7,5	(0,78)	5,5	(0,32)	7,1	(0,39)
Native-born of mixed heritage	7,3	(0,31)	8,7	(0,32)	5,6	(0,63)	6,2	(0,61)	7,7	(0,39)	9,7	(0,42)
Native-born of native-born parents	74,4	(0,36)	70,4	(0,46)	62,7	(1,10)	58,0	(1,22)	77,6	(0,49)	75,1	(0,64)
Educational attainment												
Less than secondary	27,8	(0,41)	19,3	(0,27)	55,2	(1,28)	40,5	(1,02)	20,2	(0,47)	11,3	(0,40)
Secondary degree	45,3	(0,41)	42,4	(0,27)	38,7	(1,39)	48,8	(1,05)	47,1	(0,52)	40,0	(0,40)

Above secondary degree	26,9	(0,04)	38,3	(0,04)	6,0	(0,68)	10,7	(0,77)	32,6	(0,27)	48,7	(0,35)
Parental highest educational attainment												
Less than secondary	45,4	(0,58)	31,9	(0,55)	70,6	(1,39)	57,2	(1,61)	39,0	(0,65)	23,4	(0,64)
Secondary degree	35,3	(0,55)	36,5	(0,66)	24,2	(1,44)	30,2	(1,47)	38,1	(0,60)	38,6	(0,77)
Above secondary degree	19,3	(0,42)	31,6	(0,63)	5,3	(0,74)	12,6	(1,05)	22,9	(0,55)	38,0	(0,80)
Employment Status												
Employed	63,9	(0,04)	69,0	(0,31)	54,8	(1,42)	56,6	(1,22)	66,4	(0,40)	73,7	(0,50)
Unemployed	6,5	(0,02)	4,5	(0,20)	7,9	(0,73)	4,8	(0,57)	6,2	(0,21)	4,3	(0,27)
Out of the labor force	29,6	(0,04)	26,4	(0,32)	37,3	(1,29)	38,5	(1,11)	27,4	(0,36)	21,9	(0,50)
Occupation												
Skilled occupations	38,7	(0,49)	47,2	(0,55)	17,3	(1,26)	20,5	(1,18)	44,2	(0,66)	56,2	(0,68)
Semi-skilled white-collar occupations	26,2	(0,50)	26,0	(0,58)	22,3	(1,38)	28,8	(1,45)	27,2	(0,65)	25,1	(0,65)
Semi-skilled blue-collar occupations	23,3	(0,52)	18,2	(0,44)	36,3	(1,34)	32,6	(1,37)	20,0	(0,58)	13,4	(0,53)
Elementary occupations	11,8	(0,40)	8,5	(0,35)	24,2	(1,18)	18,1	(1,12)	8,6	(0,41)	5,3	(0,38)
Job satisfaction												
Satisfied	79,3	(0,59)	82,8	(0,56)	78,6	(1,38)	81,3	(1,50)	79,5	(0,61)	83,2	(0,63)
Not Satisfied	20,7	(0,59)	17,2	(0,56)	21,4	(1,38)	18,7	(1,50)	20,5	(0,61)	16,8	(0,63)
Life satisfaction												
Satisfied	--	--	79,3	(0,52)	--	--	69,9	(1,30)	--	--	82,8	(0,60)
Not Satisfied	--	--	20,7	(0,52)	--	--	30,1	(1,30)	--	--	17,2	(0,60)
Health												
Excellent to good	81,3	(0,42)	76,8	(0,51)	67,6	(1,53)	63,8	(1,17)	85,1	(0,49)	81,8	(0,57)
Fair or poor	18,7	(0,42)	23,2	(0,51)	32,4	(1,53)	36,2	(1,17)	14,9	(0,49)	18,2	(0,57)
Most people could be trusted												
Agree	x	x	26,6	(0,56)	x	x	17,7	(1,06)	x	x	29,9	(0,69)
Disagree	x	x	73,4	(0,56)	x	x	82,3	(1,06)	x	x	70,1	(0,69)
People like me have a say in the government												
Agree	x	x	13,9	(0,40)	x	x	11,7	(1,01)	x	x	14,6	(0,50)
Disagree	x	x	86,1	(0,40)	x	x	88,3	(1,01)	x	x	85,4	(0,50)
Formal education in the last 12 months												
Not participated	83,7	(0,29)	84,0	(0,27)	92,4	(0,82)	92,7	(0,71)	81,2	(0,38)	80,7	(0,38)

Participated	16,3	(0,29)	16,0	(0,27)	7,6	(0,82)	7,3	(0,71)	18,8	(0,38)	19,3	(0,38)
Non-formal education in the last 12 months												
Not participated	68,0	(0,61)	64,9	(0,71)	81,6	(1,18)	80,1	(1,08)	64,1	(0,66)	59,0	(0,92)
Participated	32,0	(0,61)	35,1	(0,71)	18,4	(1,18)	19,9	(1,08)	35,9	(0,66)	41,0	(0,92)
Formal or Non-formal education in the last 12 months												
Not participated	56,8	(0,57)	54,8	(0,61)	75,6	(1,25)	74,7	(1,16)	51,5	(0,62)	47,2	(0,79)
Participated	43,2	(0,57)	45,2	(0,61)	24,4	(1,25)	25,3	(1,16)	48,5	(0,62)	52,8	(0,79)

† Not applicable.

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

!! Not reportable. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is 50 percent or above.

-- Data not collected

x Data not comparable

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Educational attainment is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011, grouped into below upper secondary (ISCED 1, 2 and 3 short), upper secondary (ISCED 3 and 4) and tertiary (ISCED 5, 6, 7 and 8). Occupation skill-level is based on an OECD measure that classifies occupations into four broad skill-levels: (1) skilled occupations (e.g. legislators, senior officials and managers, professionals, technicians and associate professionals); (2) semi-skilled white-collar occupations (e.g. clerks, service workers, and shop and market sales workers); (3) semi-skilled blue-collar occupations (e.g. skilled agricultural and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers); and (4) elementary occupations (e.g. cleaners, kitchen assistants) (OECD 2013). Social Trust was asked in a question: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please answer using this card, where 0 means 'you can't be too careful' and 10 mean 'Most people can be trusted'. The estimation here divides the scale into 0-5 as Disagree and 6-10 as Agree. Political efficacy was asked in a question: How much would you say the political system in #CountryName allows people like you to have a say in what the government does? Please answer using this card, where 0 means 'not at all' and 10 means 'completely'. The estimation here divides the scale into 0-5 as Disagree and 6-10 as Agree. The way non-formal education participation was asked in 2012 may have facilitated over-reporting, therefore caution is requested when interpreting the trend results. SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), 2012 and 2023.