

# Literacy and numeracy needs in Ireland today



The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills 2023** assesses literacy and numeracy skills of adults aged 16 to 65. Having literacy or numeracy needs means you would score at or below Level 1 (out of 5 levels) in this survey. This factsheet by the **National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)** compares Ireland's 2023 results with previous surveys and with other countries.

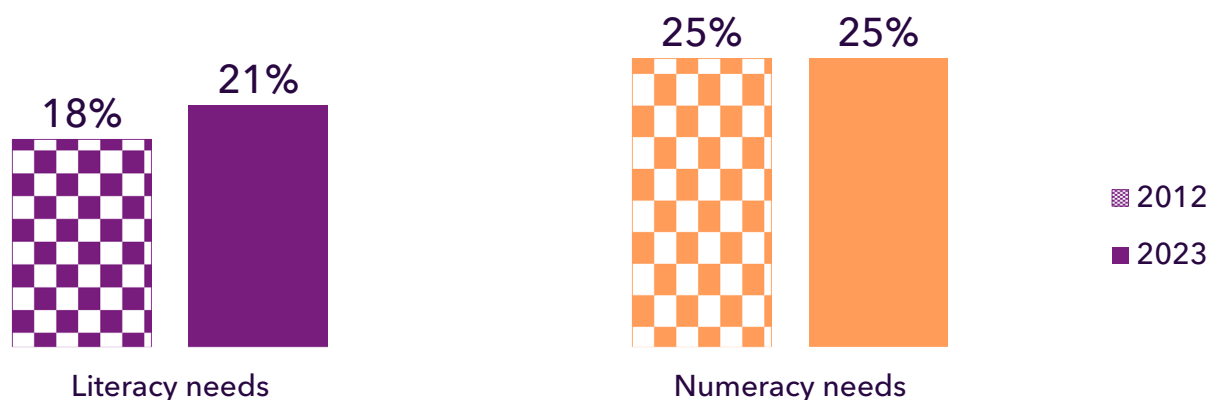
## Comparisons



Ireland's rate of literacy needs has risen\*, while our rate of numeracy needs is unchanged.

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills** takes place about every 10 years. The survey was run by the **Central Statistics Office (CSO)** in Ireland. The latest survey was in 2023. The previous survey took place in 2012. It found that about 1 in 6 adults in Ireland had literacy needs (18%). The 2023 survey found that about 1 in 5 adults in Ireland has literacy needs (21%). Both surveys found that 1 in 4 adults in Ireland has numeracy needs (25%).

### Literacy needs in 2012 and 2023



#### \*Important note

There's a reasonable chance that the rate of literacy needs among adults in Ireland has not really gone up between 2012 and 2023. In technical language, the change is not "statistically significant".

**However, Ireland now has more adults with literacy and with numeracy needs than before.**

The **numbers** of adults in Ireland who have literacy or numeracy needs have definitely both gone up since the 2012 survey. This is because Ireland now has a larger population.

Using population figures from the 2022 census, we can say that:

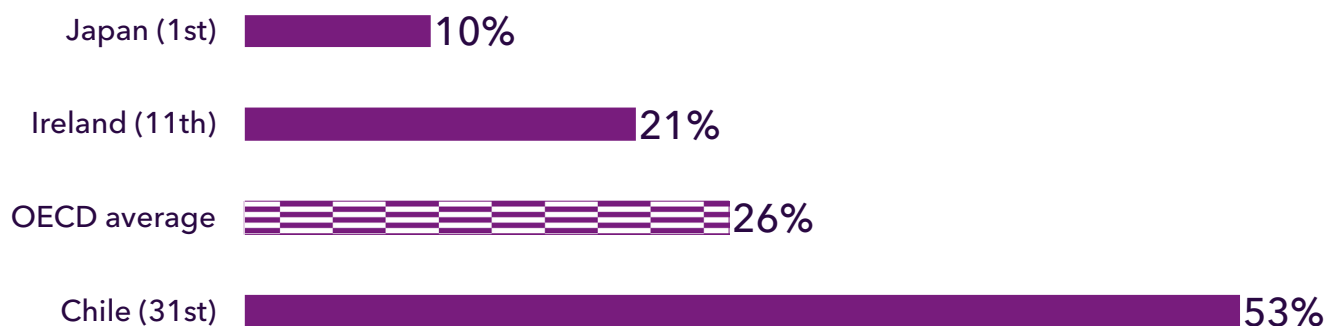
- about **700,000** people have literacy needs; and
- about **835,000** people have numeracy needs.



The rate of literacy needs in Ireland is lower than the OECD average.

The average rate of literacy needs across the OECD is 26% – just over 1 in 4 adults. This is higher than in Ireland (21%). This means that Ireland is doing better than the OECD average. A total of 31 countries took part in the 2023 survey. The lowest rate of literacy needs in any country was 10% in Japan. The highest rate of literacy needs in any country was 53% in Chile. Ireland is doing better than most other OECD countries. Ireland ranked 11th out of 31.

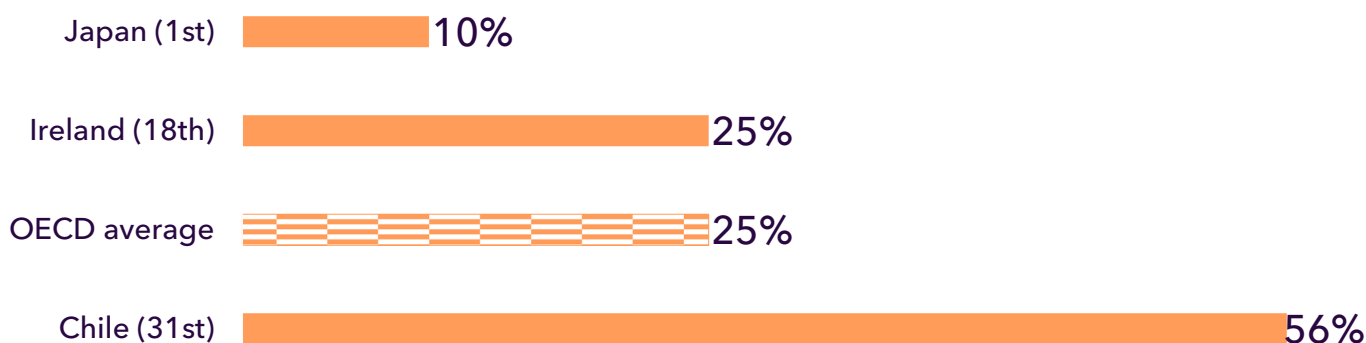
#### Literacy needs by country



The rate of numeracy needs in Ireland is the same as the OECD average.

The average rate of numeracy needs across the OECD is 25%. This is the same rate as Ireland. The lowest rate of numeracy needs in any country was 10% in Japan. The highest rate of numeracy needs in any country was 56% in Chile. Ireland ranked 18th out of 31 countries.

#### Numeracy needs by country



## Find out more

Visit [nala.ie/literacy-and-numeracy-in-ireland](https://nala.ie/literacy-and-numeracy-in-ireland) to learn more about the OECD Survey of Adult Skills 2023 or contact Aoife at [acrawford@nala.ie](mailto:acrawford@nala.ie) with any questions about this factsheet.