

ADULT SKILLS ASSESSMENT IN HUNGARY: INSIGHTS FROM THE OECD PIAAC SURVEY (2017–18 AND 2022–23)

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The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has measured the reading, numeracy and problem-solving skills of adults aged 16–65 on two occasions. The first Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey was conducted in 2017–18, and the second in 2022–23 (N = 4564), with 31 countries participating. Our research questions: How well did Hungarian adults perform? How have adult skills developed over the past decade? Are there significant differences between gender performance? In this presentation, we compare data on the best-performing and worst-performing countries using statistical methods. The PIAAC survey revealed that on average one in five adults performs poorly in reading and numeracy skills. Hungarian adults aged 16–65 performed at the OECD average in all three areas measured: literacy 248 points, numeracy 254 points, and adaptive problem solving 241 points. In the area of literacy, 32% of Hungarian adults achieved level 1 or below. This means that they are unable to understand longer, more complex sentences. 6% of adults achieved level 5, which represents an excellent level, compared to the OECD average of 12%. Examining the three areas together, 22% of Hungarian adults achieved the two lowest levels of these proficiency scales, compared to the OECD average of 18%. The 30-point lower performance of adults aged 55–65 can be explained by the effects of aging and changes in the quality and quantity of education and training. The trend shows a deterioration, with the proportion of adults performing poorly in literacy and numeracy skills increasing. In the participating OECD countries, women showed an average of 3 points higher literacy, while men had a 10-point advantage in numeracy and a 2-point advantage in adaptive problem solving. In Hungary, there was a significant (6-point) difference in favor of women in literacy; a significant 5-point difference in favor of men in numeracy. In Hungary, differences in skill levels also affect employment data. According to the OECD study, a one-standard deviation increase in numeracy skills among employed adults is associated with 10% higher wages, which is a statistically significant difference. A one-standard deviation increase in educational attainment in Hungary is an even more significant difference, associated with 22% higher wages. The results are similarly worrying as the PISA study conducted among 15-year-olds. The conclusions that can be drawn from the new results can help draw attention to the shortcomings and problems of the education system. The new findings could help identify the most vulnerable groups of the population and develop ways to provide them with practical assistance.