



**Do citizens have the skills needed to understand the statistical information we produce?
Findings from international surveys and their implications**

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The ability of citizens to understand statistical information and quantitative evidence in the civic sphere is essential for social progress and for effective functioning in modern economies. This talk argues that the existence of the knowledge bases and competencies, as well as attitudes and supporting dispositions that underlie such an ability, cannot be taken for granted. There is a gap between current levels of numeracy (mathematical literacy) skills in the adult population and among school graduates compared to the demands of tasks that adults face in specific life contexts where they may need to understand or react to statistical information about financial, medical, or societal issues.

To illustrate gaps and development goals, the paper presents selected findings from recent international comparative surveys, i.e., OECD's Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies and (PIAAC; i.e., OECD's survey of adult skills), OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and from the European Commission's Eurobarometer system of multi-year public opinion surveys. The paper points to a resulting need to broaden the scope, content, and implementation of statistics education activities, and enhance dissemination frameworks and "public education" collaborations by statistics producers, in order to address current diversity in adult numeracy and statistical literacy levels.

Keywords: Statistics education, adult numeracy, functional literacy, dissemination of official statistics.