



The Centre for Literacy
Le centre d'alphabétisation

IALS and PIAAC: Understanding the Canadian experience

CBS, Jerusalem, Israel, January 14, 2014

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Pre-test: Where is Canada? Why should you care?

1. Canada is the largest country in the world by territory.

True

False

2. What is the population of Canada?

a) 15 million b) 35 million c) 75 million

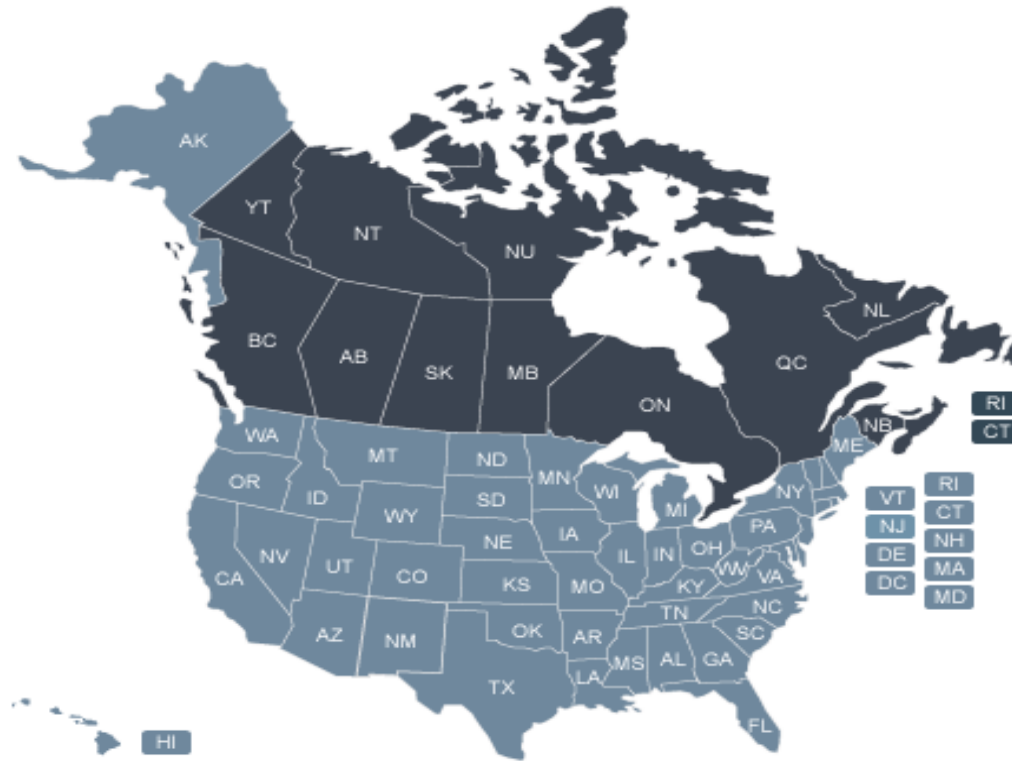
3. Canada is running the largest PIAAC sample in the world.

True

False



Canadian facts



Canada: 3,854,085 sq mi
second largest in world

Nunuvut (NU): 777,000 mi²
Population: 31, 906

US: 3,717,813 sq mi
Israel: 8,000 sq mi

CAN Population: 35 million

PIAAC CAN sample: 27,000



Canadian contexts*

- Size: Geography & Population
- Minority language and bilingualism
- Aboriginal peoples (First nations, Inuit, Metis)
- Immigration
- Jurisdictional structure
 - 10 provinces, 3 territories
 - Education exclusive provincial power
 - Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC)

* See slides 19 and 20 for further references
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PIAAC partnership

- A joint education and labour initiative, PIAAC under the leadership of CMEC and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). (now Employment and Social Development Canada ESDC)
- PIAAC is a cross-sector initiative that involves the following partners:
 - Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (now ESDC)
 - Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
 - Citizenship and Immigration Canada
 - Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
 - Public Health Agency of Canada
- Statistics Canada is National Project Manager responsible for PIAAC data collection.

Source: CMEC

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Impacts of IALS(S)[ALL] in Canada

- Concept of literacy – shift in policy discourse
 - from a dichotomous condition to a continuum and context-related
- Uses in other social policy areas – health literacy (See slides 21 and 22)
- Alignment with Essential Skills Framework

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/les/>



Impacts

- Common language
- Comparable adult literacy data across provinces not previously available
- Provincial discussion papers and policies in adult literacy - reference IALSS data
 - e.g. Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba
- Benchmarking – against IALSS levels
 - e.g. Saskatchewan



Impacts

- **Benchmarking – a pan-Canadian example**

Relating Canadian Language Benchmarks to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework (Version 1)

Designed for English as a Second Language (ESL) practitioners who want to incorporate meaningful workplace content and Essential Skills resources into adult second language classrooms and curricula.

For each skill, a chart provides a quick overview of the general relationship between the two scales (Global Descriptors)

NOTE: This is not a straight-forward alignment, but rather an intersection that reflects the complex and multi-dimensional relationship between two very different underlying scales.

http://www.language.ca/index.cfm?Voir=sections&Id=17367&M=4038&Repertoire_No=2137991327

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Impacts

- Program objectives and results aligned to IALS levels, e.g. varies across provinces
- Curriculum aligned to IALS levels
e.g. Ontario
- Tools developed and commercialized– assessment and others e.g. TOWES

[See *IALS and Essential Skills in Canadian Literacy Policy and Practice: A descriptive overview*]

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/learningevents/si-2013-learning-ials-preparing-piaac>



Challenges of IALSS use

- Messages promoted by literacy organizations
e.g. “illiteracy” and levels of literacy (1 & 2)
The levels were added to get alarming stats. Populations at Level 1 and Level 2 are markedly different
- “Level 3” marketed broadly as level required to function in modern society
- Minority population concerns
e.g. aboriginal and francophone
- Media messages
e.g. sensationalism, uncritical promotion

[See Canada Story <http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/node/1597>]
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Challenges

- Focus on level 3 and economic links
 - funding priorities focused on Level 3. Difficult to get support for projects that could move people to “3”
 - concerns about addressing those at levels 1 and 2. Those with greatest skills needs left behind
- Narrow range of research – heavily economic



PIAAC in Canada: OECD view

See Skilled for Life? Key Findings from the Survey of Adult Skills, Presentation by William Thorn, OECD, by video-link to Fall Institute, October 27, 2013

Compares Canada's PIAAC results to other countries

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/node/1955#cda1>



Skills in Canada - Results from PIAAC

Patrick Bussière, Skills Development Research, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)

- highlights of PIAAC in Canada, particularly newer elements (PS-TRE)
- hypotheses to explain the more surprising results

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/node/1955> Presentation

<http://vimeo.com/81721675> video



Measuring Skills Mismatch with PIAAC

Bruno Rainville, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)

- What Background Questionnaire, including Skills Used at Work, adds to our understanding of links between skills, employment, and well-being
- Can it help us better understand the phenomenon of “skills mismatch” ?

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/node/1955> Presentation

<http://vimeo.com/82435308> video



PIAAC and sub-populations

Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Statistics Canada

- Uses hypothetical research questions related to the skills and well-being of minority language groups, aboriginals and immigrants, and why no single data set should be used alone to explain outcomes or to propose solutions.
- Discusses how PIAAC data might be used in conjunction with other information to inform policy and practice.

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/node/1955>

<http://vimeo.com/81738141#at=0>

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PIAAC promise in Canada

- Educating key stakeholders about the theory and methods behind PIAAC
- Understanding uses and misuses of population-level assessments
- Collaborating to develop credible and usable messages in specific contexts - partnerships
- Opening up cross-disciplinary avenues for research with PIAAC data



PIAAC promise in Canada

- More caution in interpreting results and putting out messages—especially re minority language, aboriginal and immigrant populations
- Less media attention than in past
- Interest in exploring links between PIAAC and school-based assessments (PISA, et al)



For more information

Web resources

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/news/understanding-international-findings-literacy-and-skills-ials-piaac>

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/learningevents/fall-institute-2013>

N.B. Summer Institute June 25-27, 2014 Montreal
Exploring PIAAC Data: Enriching research,
supporting practice



Further references on Canada

Shohet, Linda. Adult learning and literacy in Canada. *In Review of Adult Learning and Literacy*, Volume 2 (2001). National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) Chapter 6.

<http://www.ncsall.net/index.html?id=558.html>

Chapter contains more detail on Canada's jurisdictional structure, demographics, bilingualism and minority language populations, aboriginal populations and immigrants as of 2000.

Also history of adult literacy in Canada and impacts of the first International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).



Further references on Canada

Shohet, Linda. Family literacy in Canada. *Handbook of Family Literacy, 2nd ed.* Edited by B.H. Wasik. Taylor and Francis (NY and Oxford), 2012. pp. 307-324.

In print only, descriptions can be googled

Chapter includes more up-to-date background on Canadian context and traces policy developments at federal and provincial levels regarding family literacy with focus 2000 to 2011. Includes a graphic from CMEC comparing the 13 education systems in Canada. Handbook has history of family literacy with chapters on several countries for comparison.



Applications of survey data –health literacy

Data for HL since 2003 mainly drawn from IALSS (ALL) in Canada and NALS in US – 193 health-related questions

Jump-started response from health sectors

- National conferences

- In US - IOM 2004 Report *A Prescription to End Confusion*

- In Canada - 2007, Expert Panel and paper *Vision for a Health-literate Canada*



Applications of survey data –health literacy

Centre for Literacy Institute 2008, Calgary Charter

http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/health_literacy/calgary_charter

Accredited health literacy course for doctors through

Canadian Medical Association [WWW.MDCME.CA](http://www.mdcme.ca)

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/news/accredited-hl-online-course>

- Health literacy overview

http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/health_literacy



Information

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