Table of Contents

Introduction		13
Chapter 1	The importance of literacy in OECD societies	21
Chapter 2	Literacy performance on three scales: definitions and results	27
Chapter 3	The distribution of literacy	55
Chapter 4	The practice(s) of literacy	87
Chapter 5	International Adult Literacy Survey: insights and prospects	115
Appendix A	Participants in the International Adult Literacy Survey project	119
Appendix B	Tables: distribution of literacy	125
Appendix C	Tables: the practice(s) of literacy	159
List of ta	bles	
Table I.1	Survey coverage, language of test and sample yields of the International Adult Literacy Survey	15
Tables 2.1a-2.1c	Average probabilities of successful performance by individuals with selected proficiency scores on tasks in each literacy level of the prose, document and quantitative scales	51
Table 3.1a	Distribution of the population in each country, prose scale	57
Table 3.1b	Distribution of the population in each country, document scale	57
Table 3.1c	Distribution of the population in each country, quantitative scale	57
Table 3.2	Proportion of population at each literacy level who are unemployed, document scale	58
Table 3.3	Proportion of population at each literacy level whose income is within a particular quintile, document scale	61
Table 3.4	Proportion of Canadian population at each literacy level whose income is below a particular quintile, document scale	62
Table 3.5	Proportion of workers in each industry who are at a particular literacy level, document scale	66
Table 3.6	Proportion of population at each literacy level who participated in adult education in the last year, document scale	69
Table 3.7	Proportion of population who are immigrants and who are native born at each literacy level, document scale	71
Table 3.8	Proportion of population at each level of educational attainment who are at each literacy level, document scale	73
Table 3.9a	Comparison of the proportions in Canada and Germany at each level of educational attainment who are at each literacy level, prose scale	75
Table 3.9b	Comparison of the proportions in Canada and Germany at each level of educational attainment who are at each literacy level, document scale	75
Table 3.9c	Comparison of the proportions in Canada and Germany at each level of educational attainment who are at each literacy level, quantitative scale	7:
Table 3.10	Proportion of population who are at each literacy level for each level of parents' educational attainment, document scale	78
Table 3.11	Proportion of population in each age group who are at each literacy level, document scale	79

Literacy, Economy and Society

Table 3.12	Proportion of population in two age groups whose highest level of education is secondary graduation who are at each literacy level	80
Table 3.13a	Proportion of each sex who are at each level of literacy, prose scale	84
Table 3.13b	Proportion of each sex who are at each level of literacy, document scale	84
Table 3.13c	Proportion of each sex who are at each level of literacy, quantitative scale	84
Table 4.1	Proportion of population in each country who reported engaging in each of several workplace reading tasks at least once a week	89
Table 4.2	Proportion of workers in each occupational group who reported engaging in each of several workplace reading tasks at least once a week	91
Table 4.3	Proportion of population in each country who reported engaging in each of several workplace writing tasks at least once a week	94
Table 4.4	Proportion of workers in each occupational group who reported engaging in each of several workplace writing tasks at least once a week	96
Table 4.5	Proportion of population in each country who reported engaging in each of two workplace numeracy tasks at least once a week	97
Table 4.6	Proportion of workers in each occupational group who reported engaging in each of two workplace numeracy tasks at least once a week	98
List of fig	gures	
Figure 3.1	Estimated distribution of the population by literacy level, all scales	56
Figures 3.2a-3.2d	Literacy and employment, document scale	59
Figure 3.3	Percentage of the population within each country with low incomes by literacy level	60
Figure 3.4	Literacy levels for occupation, document scale	63
Figure 3.5a	Employment growth and literacy patterns, Germany	65
Figure 3.5b	Employment growth and literacy patterns, Canada	65
Figure 3.6	Estimated distribution by literacy level of the full-time employed and part-time employed populations	68
Figure 3.7	Literacy levels for those who received training, document scale	70
Figure 3.8	Distribution in each country of literacy level by educational attainment, document scale	74
Figure 3.9	Literacy by age, document scale	81
Figure 4.1a	Read directions or instructions for products as part of job, at least once a week, prose scale	89
Figure 4.1b	Read reports, articles, magazines, journals as part of job at least once a week, prose scale	92
Figure 4.2a	Read bills, invoices, spreadsheets as part of job at least once a week, quantitative scale	92
Figure 4.2b	Read diagrams or schematics as part of job, at least once a week, document scale	92
Figure 4.2c	Read manuals and reference books as part of job at least once a week, prose scale	92
Figure 4.2d	Read letters or memos as part of job at least once a week, prose scale	93
Figure 4.3a	Write reports or articles as part of job at least once a week, prose scale	94
Figure 4.3b	Write or fill in forms, bills or invoices as part of job at least once a week, document scale	94
Figure 4.4a	Write estimates or technical specifications as part of job at least once a week, document scale	95

Figure 4.4b	Write letters or memos as part of job at least once a week, prose scale	95
Figure 4.5a	Use mathematics to calculate costs, prices or budgets as part of job at least once a week, quantitative scale	97
Figure 4.5b	Use mathematics to measure things as part of job at least once a week, quantitative scale	97
Figure 4.6a	Employment growth and literacy patterns, Germany	99
Figure 4.6b	Employment growth and literacy patterns, Canada	100
Figure 4.7a	Self-rating of reading skills for main job, document scale	101
Figure 4.7b	Self-rating of writing skills for main job, prose scale	102
Figure 4.7c	Self-rating of mathematical skills for main job, quantitative scale	103
Figure 4.8a	Reading skills limiting job opportunities, document scale	104
Figure 4.8b	Writing skills limiting job opportunities, prose scale	104
Figure 4.8c	Mathematical skills limiting job opportunities, quantitative scale	104
Figure 4.9a	Percentage who read a newspaper or magazine everyday, document scale	106
Figure 4.9b	Percentage who read a book at least once a week, prose scale	106
Figure 4.9c	Percentage who write a letter at least once a week, prose scale	107
Figure 4.9d	Percentage who use a public library at least once a month, prose scale	107
Figure 4.10	Percentage watching more than two hours of television per day, prose scale	108
Figure 4.11	Percentage participating in community organizations at least once a month by literacy level, document scale	109
Figure 4.12a	Self-rating of reading skills for daily life, document scale	110
Figure 4.12b	Self-rating of writing skills for daily life, prose scale	111
Figure 4.12c	Self-rating of mathematical skills for daily life, quantitative scale	112
	Pr. D tables	
	lix B tables Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy	100
Append	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale	127
Append	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale	127 128
Append	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale	
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale	128
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale	128 129
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale	128 129 130
Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a Table B-2b	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, prose scale	128 129 130
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a Table B-2b Table B-2c	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy	128 129 130 130
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a Table B-2b Table B-2c Table B-3a	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level,	128 129 130 130 131 132
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a Table B-2b Table B-2c Table B-3a Table B-3b	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, document scale	128 129 130 131 132 133
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a Table B-2b Table B-2c Table B-3a Table B-3a Table B-3b	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each literacy level in each income quintile, prose scale Proportion of each literacy level in each income quintile, document scale	128 129 130 130 131 132 133
Append Table B-1a Table B-1b Table B-1c Table B-2a Table B-2b Table B-2c Table B-3a Table B-3c Table B-3c Table B-4a	Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each labour force category at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of those working full time and those working part time at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, prose scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, document scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each income group at each literacy level, quantitative scale Proportion of each literacy level in each income quintile, prose scale Proportion of each literacy level in each income quintile, prose scale	128 129 130 131 132 133 134

Literacy,	Economy and Society	
		Table B-5b
		Table B-5c
		Table B-6a
	Y	Table B-6b
	in the second of	Table B-6c
	and the second second	Table B-7a
		Table B-7b
		Table B-7c
		Table B-8a
Tak.	and the second second	Table B-8b
	ing the second of the second o	Table B-8c
4.40	er (Table B-9a
		Table B-9b
		Table B-9c
		Table B-10a
na n		Table B-10b
		Table B-10c
		Table B-11a
		Table B-11b
	the state of the s	TADIC D-IIC

Table B-5b	Proportion of each occupational group at each literacy level, document scale	139
Table B-5c	Proportion of each occupational group at each literacy level, quantitative scale	140
Table B-6a	Proportion of workers in each industry group at each literacy level, prose scale	141
Table B-6b	Proportion of workers in each industrial group at each literacy level, document scale	142
Table B-6c	Proportion of workers in each industry group at each literacy level, quantitative scale	143
Table B-7a	Proportion of those participating and not participating in adult education at each literacy level, prose scale	144
Table B-7b	Proportion of those participating and not participating in adult education at each literacy level, document scale	144
Table B-7c	Proportion of those participating and not participating in adult education at each literacy level, quantitative scale	145
Table B-8a	Proportion of each literacy level who participated in adult education, prose scale	145
Table B-8b	Proportion of each literacy level who participated in adult education, document scale	145
Table B-8c	Proportion of each literacy level who participated in adult education, quantitative scale	146
Table B-9a	Proportion at each ISCED level for each literacy level, prose	146
Table B-9b	scale Proportion at each ISCED level for each literacy level, document scale	147
Table B-9c	Proportion at each ISCED level for each literacy level, quantitative scale	148
Table B-10a	Proportion by parents' education for each ISCED level at each literacy level, prose scale	149
Table B-10b	Proportion by parents' education for each ISCED level at each literacy level, document scale	150
Table B-10c	Proportion by parents' education for each ISCED level at each literacy level, quantitative scale	151
Table B-11a	Proportion of those within each age group at each literacy level, prose scale	152
Table B-11b	Proportion of those within each age group at each literacy level, document scale	153
Table B-11c	Proportion of those within each age group at each literacy level, quantitative scale	154
Table B-12a	Proportion of those who are immigrants and of those who are native born at each literacy level, prose scale	155
Table B-12b	Proportion of those who are immigrants and of those who are native born at each literacy level, document scale	155
Table B-12c	Proportion of those who are immigrants and of those who are native born at each literacy level, quantitative scale	156
Table B-13a	Proportion of each sex at each literacy level, prose scale	156
Table B-13b	Proportion of each sex at each literacy level, document scale	157
Table B-13c	Proportion of each sex at each literacy level, quantitative scale	157

Appendix C tables

Table C-1a	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several reading activities at work at least once a week, prose scale	161
Table C-1b	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several reading activities at work at least once a week, document scale	162
Table C-1c	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several reading activities at work at least once a week, quantitative scale	163
Table C-2a	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several writing activities at work at least once a week, prose scale	164
Table C-2b	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several writing activities at work at least once a week, document scale	165
Table C-2c	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several writing activities at work at least once a week, quantitative scale	166
Table C-3a	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of two numeracy activities at work at least once a week, prose scale	167
Table C-3b	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of two numeracy activities at work at least once a week, document scale	168
Table C-3c	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of two numeracy activities at work at least once a week, quantitative scale	169
Table C-4a	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their reading skills for their main job, prose scale	170
Table C-4b	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their reading skills for their main job, document scale	171
Table C-4c	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their reading skills for their main job, quantitative scale	172
Table C-5a	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their writing skills for their main job, prose scale	173
Table C-5b	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their writing skills for their main job, document scale	174
Table C-5c	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their writing skills for their main job, quantitative scale	175
Table C-6a	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their numeracy skills for their main job, prose scale	176
Table C-6b	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their numeray skills for their main job, document scale	177
Table C-6c	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their numeracy skills for their main job, quantitative scale	178
Table C-7a	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their reading skills limited their job opportunities, prose scale	179
Table C-7b	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their reading skills limited their job opportunities, document scale	179
Table C-7c	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their reading skills limited their job opportunities, quantitative scale	179
Table C-8a	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their writing skills limited their job opportunities, prose scale	180

Literacy, Economy and Society

Table C-8b	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their writing skills limited their job opportunities, document scale	181
Table C-8c	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their writing skills limited their job opportunities, quantitative scale	181
Table C-9a	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their numeracy skills limited their job opportunities, prose scale	182
Table C-9b	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their numeracy skills limited their job opportunities, document scale	182
Table C-9c	Proportion of respondents in each literacy level who reported whether their numeracy skills limited their job opportunities, quantitative scale	183
Table C-10a	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several literacy activities in their daily lives, prose scale	184
Table C-10b	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several literacy activities in their daily lives, document scale	185
Table C-10c	Proportion of respondents within a level who reported engaging in each of several literacy activities in their daily lives, quantitative scale	186
Table C-11a	Proportion of each level who reported various frequencies for watching television each day, prose scale	187
Table C-11b	Proportion of each level who reported various frequencies for watching television each day, document scale	188
Table C-11c	Proportion of each level who reported various frequencies for watching television each day, quantitative scale	189
Table C-12	Proportion of each level who reported participating in community or volunteer activities at least once a month for each scale	190
Table C-13a	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their reading skills in their daily life, prose scale	191
Table C-13b	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their reading skills in their daily life, document scale	192
Table C-13c	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their reading skills in their daily life, quantitative scale	193
Table C-14a	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self- assessment of their writing skills in their daily life, prose scale	194
Table C-14b	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their writing skills in their daily life, document scale	195
Table C-14c	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their writing skills in their daily life, quantitative scale	196
Table C-15a	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their numeracy skills in their daily life, prose scale	197
Table C-15b Table C-15c	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their numeracy skills in their daily life, document scale	198
Table C-13C	Proportion of each level who gave a particular self-assessment of their numeracy skills in their daily life, quantitative scale	199