



THE WIDE-RANGING IMPACTS OF WISCONSIN'S LITERACY CRISIS

Poor literacy outcomes in Wisconsin negatively impact individuals, communities, and the economy in the short and long term. It hinders school success, job readiness, health outcomes, and economic productivity.

Education

In 2024, just 31% of Wisconsin fourth graders achieved proficiency on the national assessment, despite evidence that 95% of students can learn to read. Students with low literacy are four times more likely to drop out of high school.



Workforce

One-third of employers say workers lack basic literacy skills, and 40% report widespread low literacy, prompting many to invest in remedial reading training.



WHAT EFFECTS DO WE SEE?

Health

Low literacy greatly increases the risk of low health literacy, leading to medical costs that are up to four times higher each year.



Crime

Incarcerated adults are screened for learning disabilities, like dyslexia. Nearly three quarters read at or below a fourth-grade level. Prison literacy programs reduce reincarceration.



Sources: Wisconsin Literacy, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, National Library of Medicine, The Educational Justice Institute, ProLiteracy, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Wisconsin Watch