

# 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

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[www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)



# Course Outline

- Introductions
- Goals
- Definitions
- The 2003 NAAL
- The 2003 Health Literacy Report
- Resources
- Final Thoughts



# What are Your Goals Today?

- You will Understand Key Findings of the 2003 NAAL Survey
- You will Understand Key Findings of the NAAL Health Literacy Report
- You will have Resources for Further Study



# What is the 2003 NAAL?



- The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) is the first examination of the literacy skills of America's adults since the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS)
- Nationally representative household survey of more than 17,000 adults, including adults in prison, providing estimates of:
  - English literacy skills of adults  $\geq 16$  years of age
  - Changes in literacy levels between 1992 and 2003



# 2003 NAAL Definition of Literacy

Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve goals, and to develop knowledge and potential



# NAAL Dimensions of Literacy

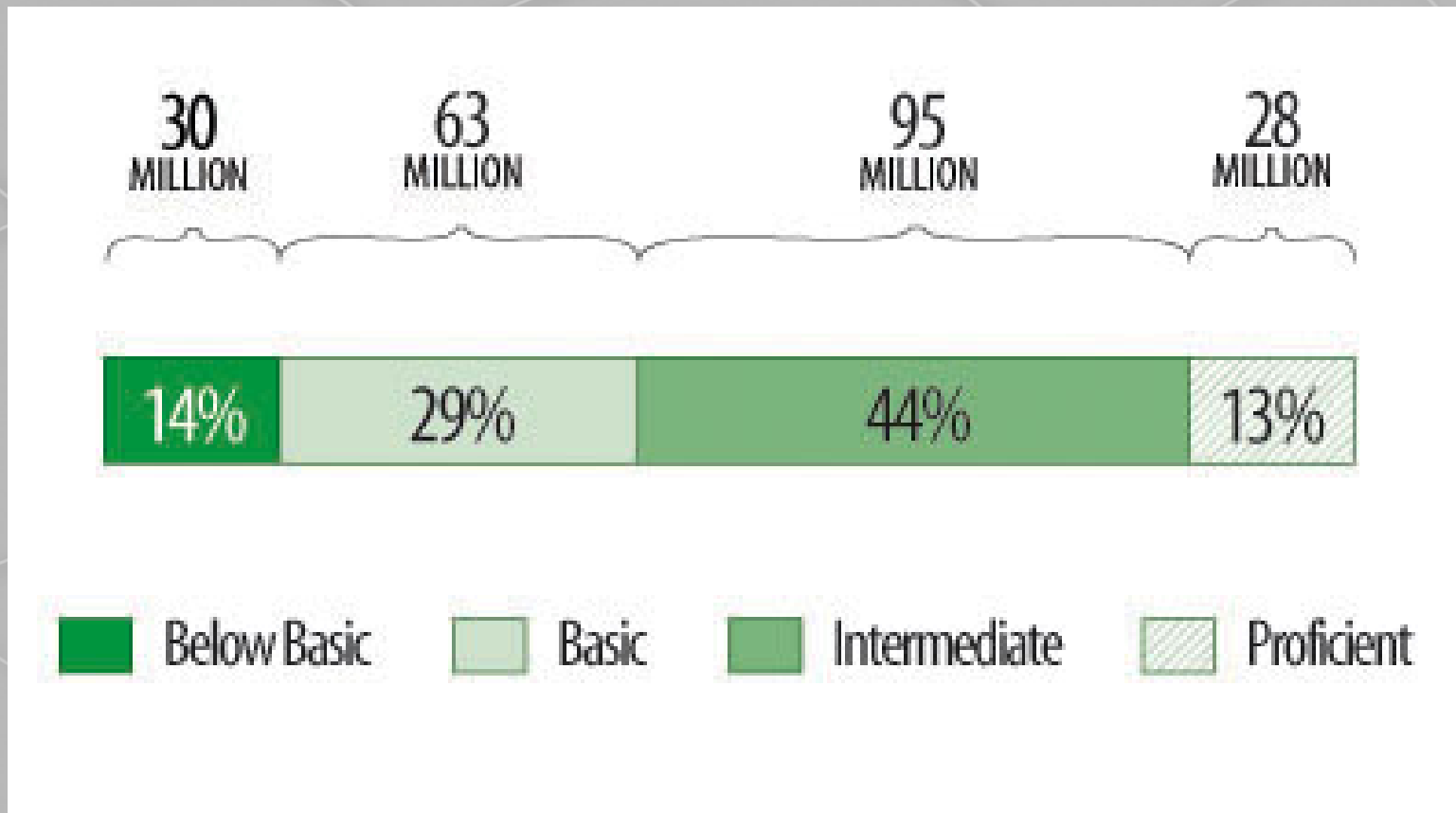
- Prose
- Document
- Quantitative



# 2003 NAAL Key Findings

- 11 million adults are *Non-literate in English*
- 30 million adults have *Below Basic Literacy* skills
- 63 million adults have *Basic Literacy* skills

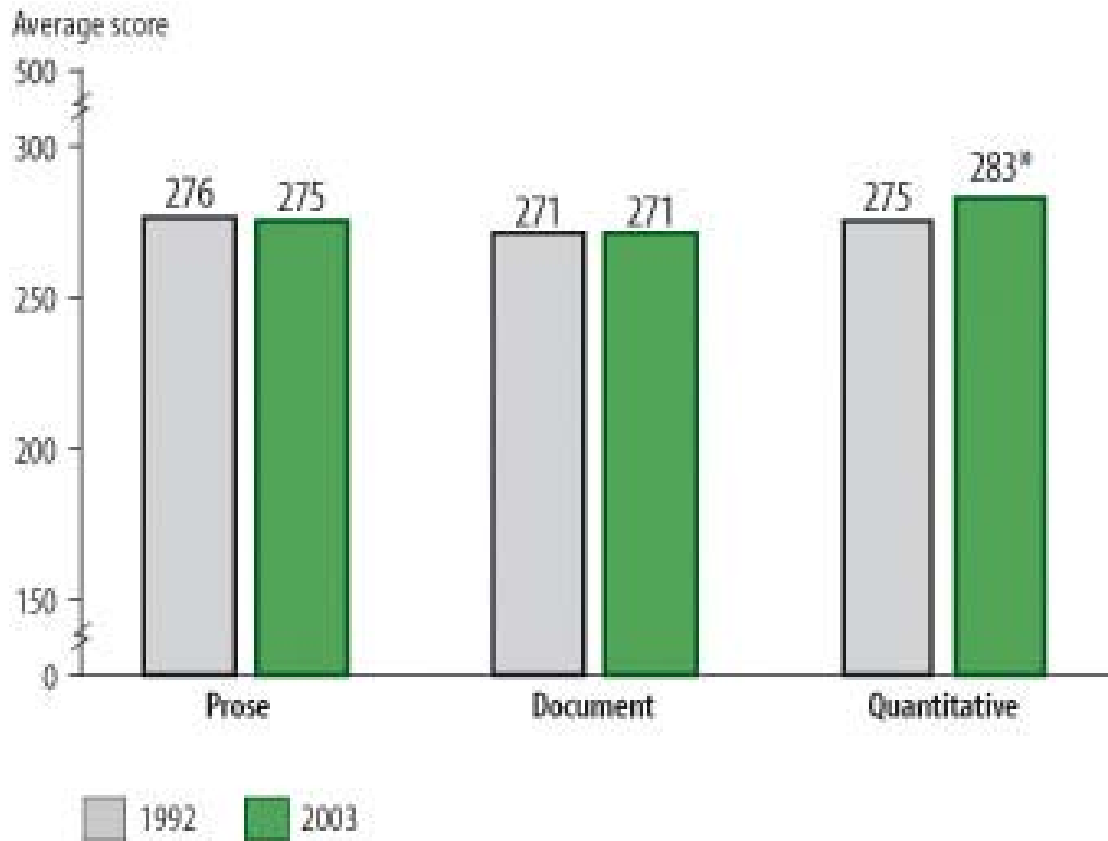




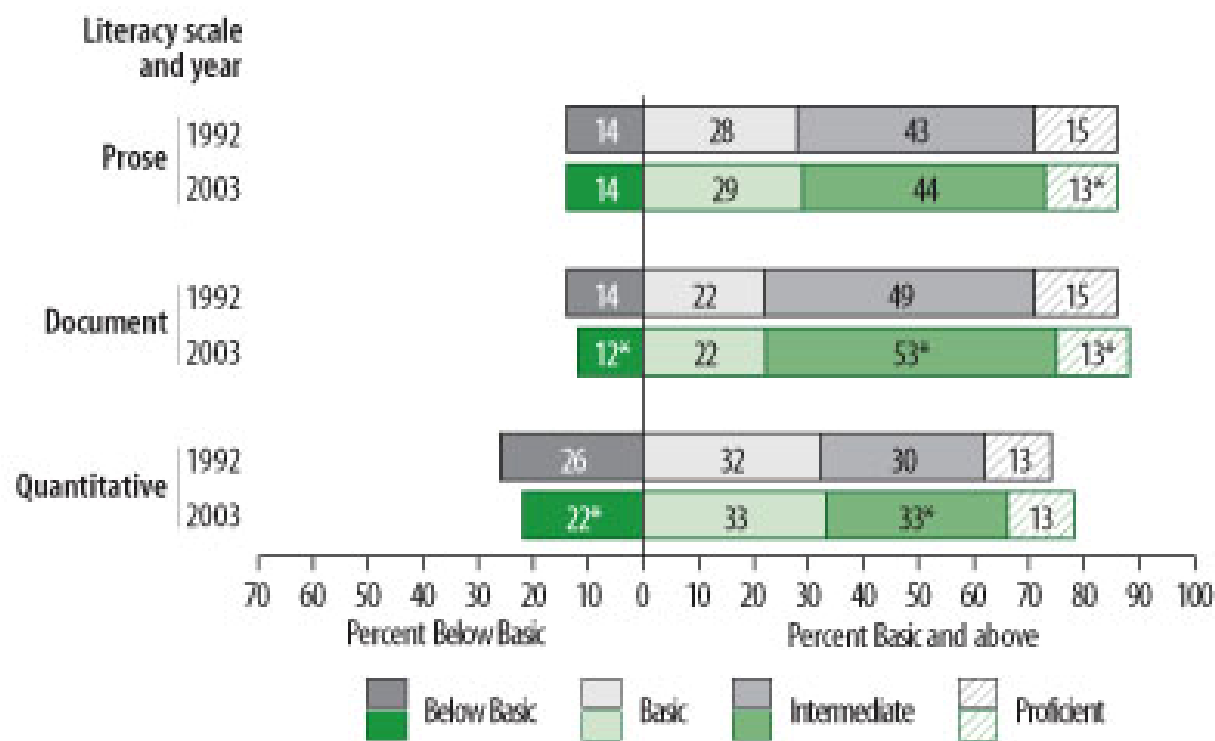
# Graph of Prose Literacy Skills



# Comparison 1992 and 2003 Data



# Literacy Scale and Year



# NAAL Report on Health Literacy

- Released September 6, 2006
- Nationally representative household survey of more than 17,000 adults, including adults in prison
- Dimensions of prose, document, and quantitative skills
- Materials: clinical, prevention, and navigation of the health system



# Definition of Health Literacy

The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health literacy information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions



# Distribution of Health Literacy Skills



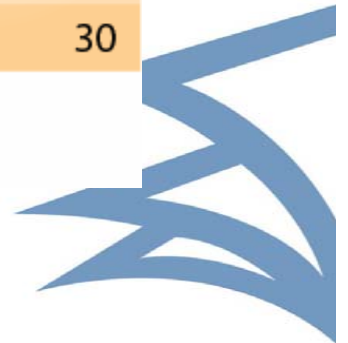
# Characteristics of Population with Low Health Literacy Skills

Characteristic	Percent in <i>Below Basic</i> population	Percent in total population
Did not graduate from high school	51	15
Did not speak English before starting school	39	13
Adults reporting poor health	10	4
Hispanic adults	35	12
Age 65+	31	15
No medical insurance	36	18
Did not obtain health information over the Internet <sup>1</sup>	80	43
Black adults	19	12
One or more disabilities <sup>2</sup>	48	30

<sup>1</sup>The "Did not obtain health information over the Internet" category does not include prison inmates because they do not have access to the Internet.

<sup>2</sup>Disabilities include vision, hearing, learning disability, and other health problems.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL).



# Health Literacy Skills of Older Americans

- Adults aged 65+ had the lowest average health literacy scores
- More Americans aged 65+ had *Below Basic* or *Basic Skills* than any other age group (29 + 30%)
- Adults with Medicare and Medicaid or no health insurance had the lowest average health literacy scores

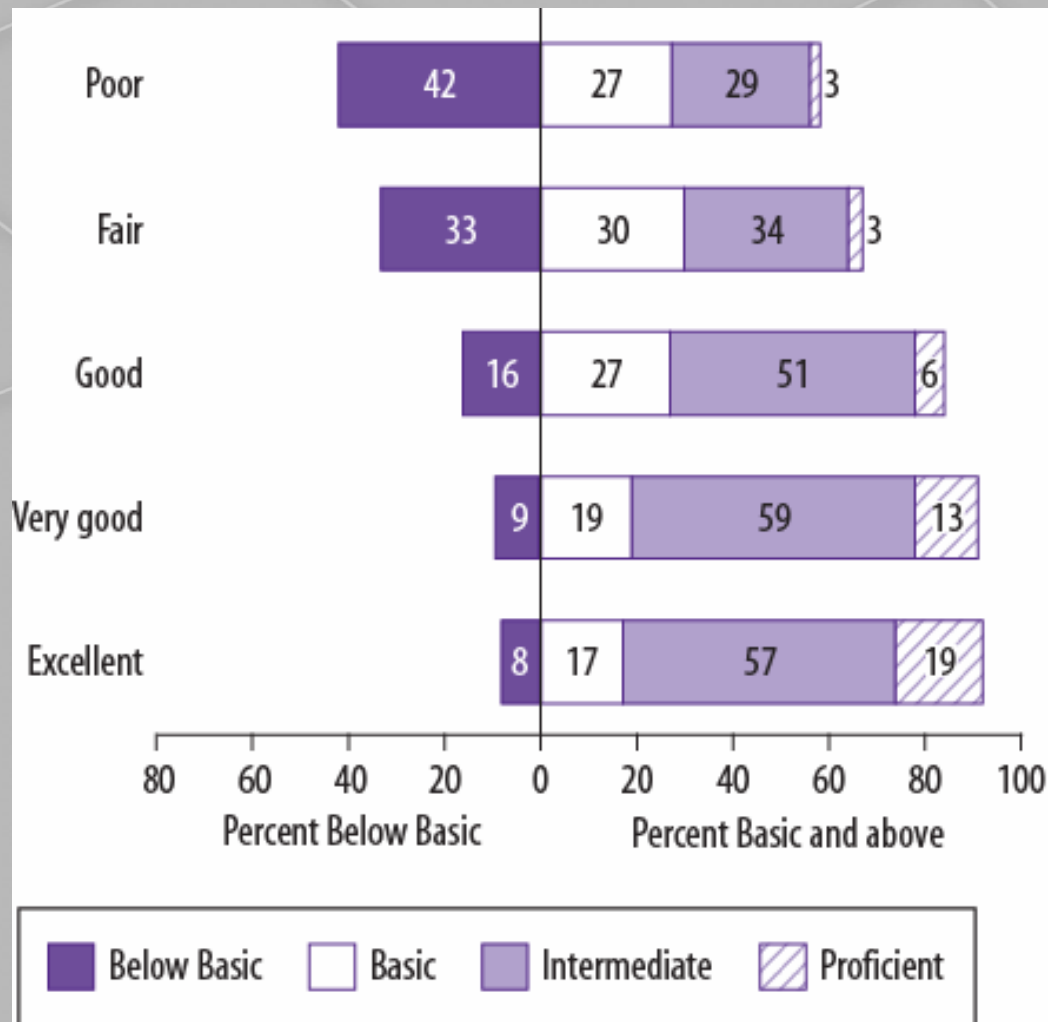


# Health Literacy by Gender

- More men (16%) than women (12%) had *Below Basic* or *Basic* Literacy Skills
- Less men (51%) than women (55%) had *Intermediate* literacy skills
- Men had lower average health literacy scores (242) than women (248)



# Health Condition Self-Assessment



# Key Findings

- A higher percent of adults with *Below Basic* or *Basic* literacy skills cited radio and television as their primary source of health information
- Adults living in poverty had lower average health literacy scores than other adults



# Why Does Health Literacy Matter?

- Poor Health Outcomes
  - ◆ Increased Hospitalization
  - ◆ Less Frequent Screening
  - ◆ High Rates of Disease and Mortality
  - ◆ Increased Use of Emergency Rooms for Routine Care



# Resources

- [www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)
- [www.nces.ed.gov/naal](http://www.nces.ed.gov/naal)
- [www.national-coalition-literacy.org/naal](http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/naal)
- [www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/health](http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/health)



*Health Literacy is of concern to everyone involved in health promotion and protection, disease prevention and early screening, health care maintenance, and policy making.*

Committee on Health Literacy of the Institute of  
Medicine, 2004

[www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)

