

# WHY DOES EDUCATION IN PRISON MATTER?

Education and skills training in U.S. prisons are essential in preparing adults to successfully re-integrate into society and find jobs that provide sustainable incomes.

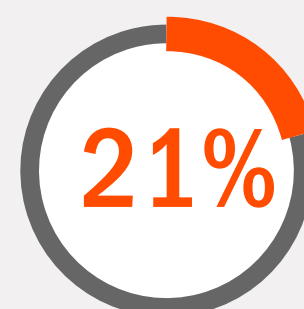
## Results from the 2014 PIAAC Prison Study<sup>1</sup>

1.5 million adults are incarcerated in U.S. federal and state prisons<sup>2</sup>

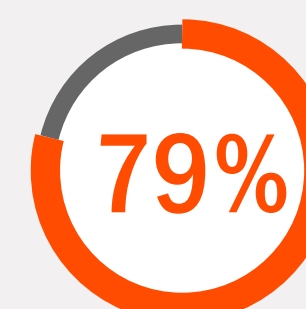
**94%** of incarcerated adults (ages 18–74)<sup>3</sup> had a high school degree or below, compared to 64 percent of adults in the general U.S. household population.

**73%** of adults in U.S. federal and state prisons had been incarcerated previously, indicating the challenges of transitioning and re-integrating into life outside prison.

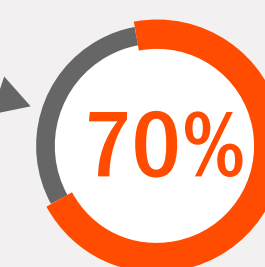
Among incarcerated adults, interest in education programs is high



are currently studying for a formal degree or credential

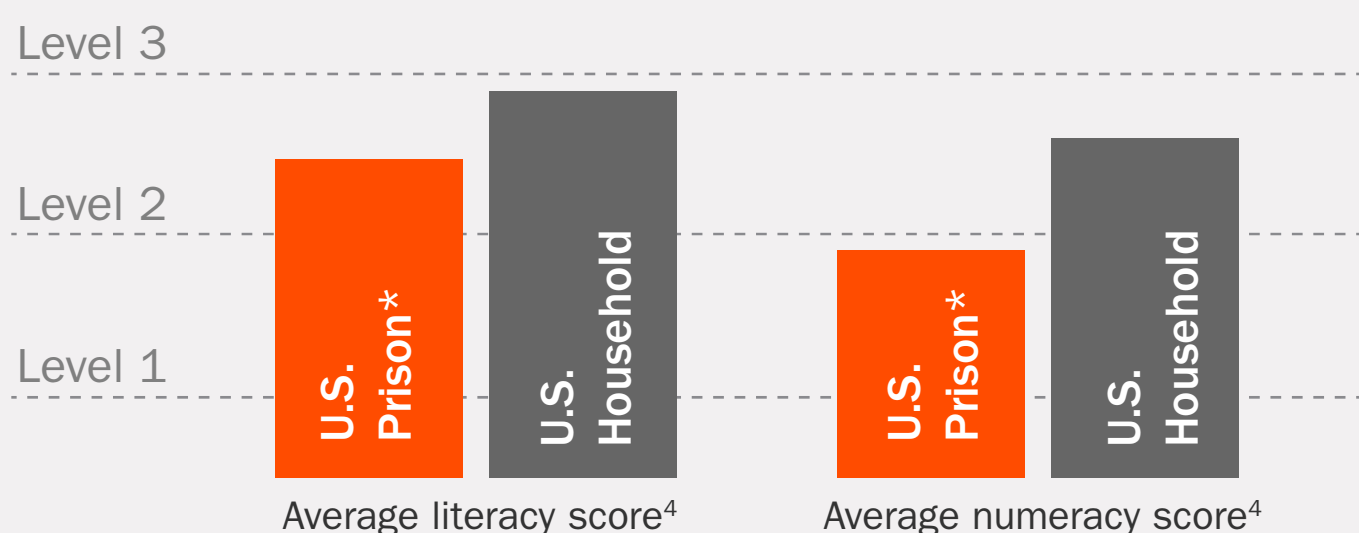


are not currently studying, but...



wanted to study for a formal degree or credential

Skills of incarcerated adults are significantly lower than those of the household population



\* Significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) from the comparison category, U.S. Household.

Top 3 reasons for wanting to enroll in an educational program<sup>5</sup>

**40%** Wanted to increase knowledge or skills in subject of interest

**39%** Wanted to increase possibilities of getting a job when released

**8%** Wanted to increase possibilities of getting a prison job assignment

After their release, incarcerated adults who participated in education programs in prison were<sup>6</sup>

**43%**  
Less likely  
to return to prison



**13%**  
More likely  
to obtain employment



<sup>1</sup> PIAAC stands for the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies.

<sup>2</sup> The White House Council of Economic Advisers estimates the total number of incarcerated adults, including those incarcerated in federal and state prisons as well as local jails, was 2.2 million in 2016. The PIAAC Prison Study (NCES 2016-040), conducted in 2014, selected the incarcerated adult sample from federal and state prisons as well as from private prisons that housed federal and state inmates.

<sup>3</sup> The age range for the PIAAC U.S. household population for comparison is 16–74.

<sup>4</sup> PIAAC is reported at five proficiency levels on a scale of 0 to 500 for literacy and numeracy: Below level 1 (0–175), Level 1 (176–225), Level 2 (226–275), Level 3 (276–325), and Level 4/5 (326–500), corresponding to types of skills that can be performed at each level. The proficiency levels for Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 are shown in the graph with lines representing their corresponding cut scores.

<sup>5</sup> Not all categories are shown. Respondents could select more than one category.

<sup>6</sup> Davis, L.M., Bozick, R., Steele, J.L., Saunders, J., and Miles, J.N.V. (2013). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR266.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html); also available in print.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), U.S. National Supplement: Prison Study 2014 and U.S. PIAAC 2012/2014; and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, PIAAC 2012.