

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.

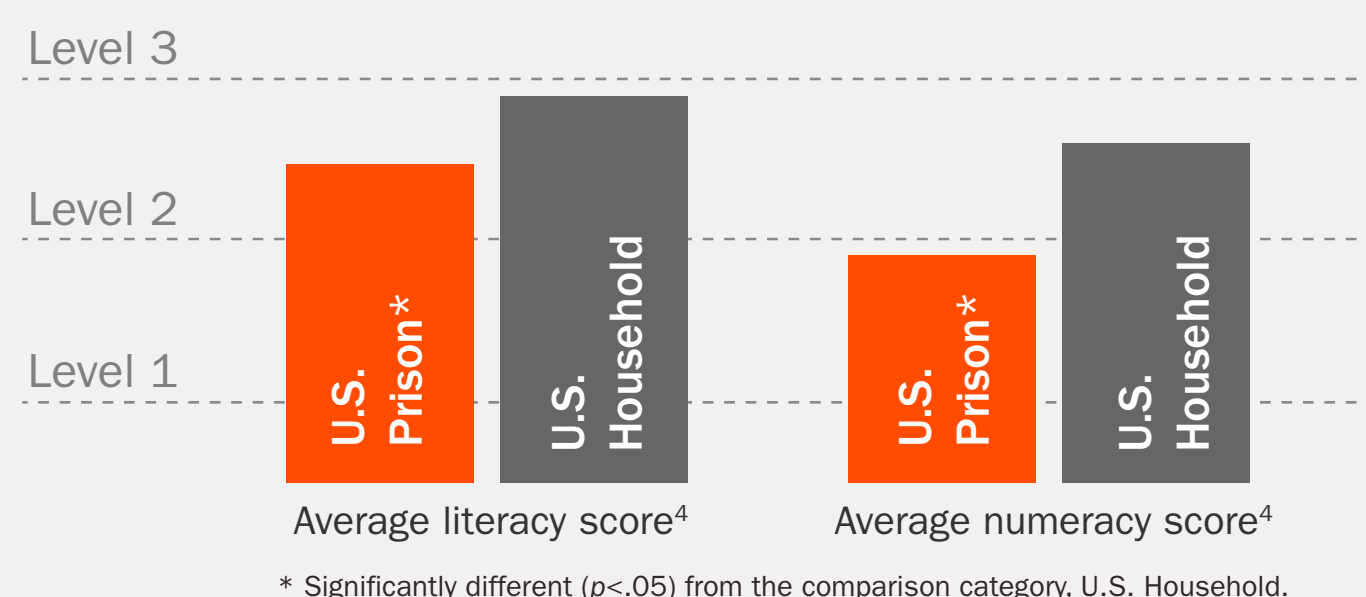
Results from the 2014 PIAAC Prison Study¹

1.5 million adults are incarcerated in U.S. federal and state prisons²

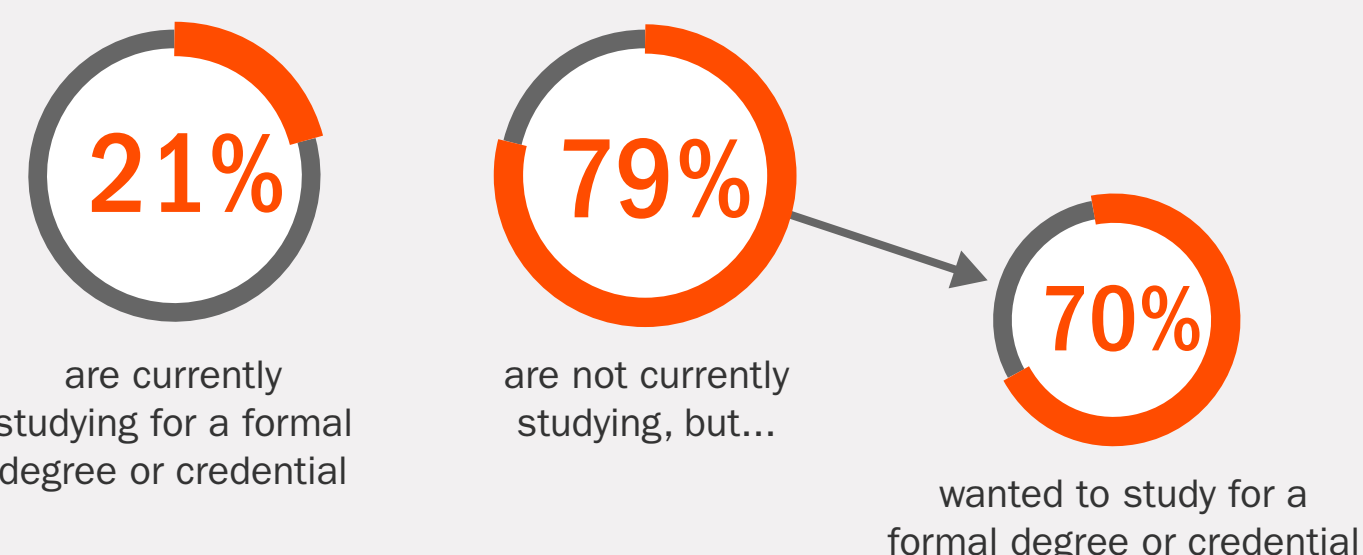
94% of incarcerated adults (ages 18–74)³ had a high school degree or below, compared to 64 percent of adults in the general U.S. household population.

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.

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



Among incarcerated adults, interest in education programs is high



Top 3 reasons for wanting to enroll in an educational program⁵

- 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 were⁶

43% Less likely to return to prison



13% More likely to obtain employment



¹ PIAAC stands for the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies.

² 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.

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

⁴ 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.

⁵ Not all categories are shown. Respondents could select more than one category.

⁶ 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; 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.