

Literacy in Halton

The importance of literacy cannot be overstated. To be literate means that you have the skills to understand what you read, communicate with others and engage fully and confidently in life's activities and opportunities – at work, at home and in the community¹.

As a community, how literate are we in Halton? Findings of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) indicate that in Halton, approximately one in five, or 20%, of the adult population is at the lowest level of literacy,² Literacy Level 1, for prose, document and quantitative literacy domains. Level 1 is the lowest level and Level 5 is the highest. About half of Halton residents are at Levels 1 and 2, meaning they do not have the minimal skills and ability to cope with everyday demands.

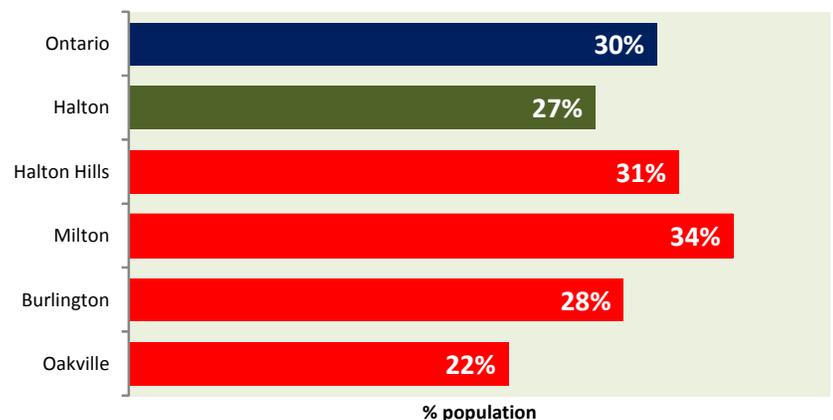


Prose Literacy	the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information such as editorials, news stories, poetry and fiction
Document Literacy	the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and graphics
Quantitative Literacy	the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a chequebook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement

Strong literacy skills are closely linked to the probability of having a good job, decent earnings, and access to training opportunities. Individuals with weak literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed or, if employed, to be in jobs that pay little or that offer poor hours or working conditions.³

Although school attendance does not necessarily equate to literacy levels, it can provide some measure of literacy of a community. At the regional level, the proportion of population (15–24 years) not attending school is lower than the provincial average (30%) in 2006. Of the four municipalities, Milton and Halton Hills have the highest proportion of population not attending school. The proportion is higher than the provincial average. Oakville has the lowest proportion at 22%.

Proportion of population (15-24 yrs) not attending school, Halton Region, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

¹ ABC Life Literacy Canada

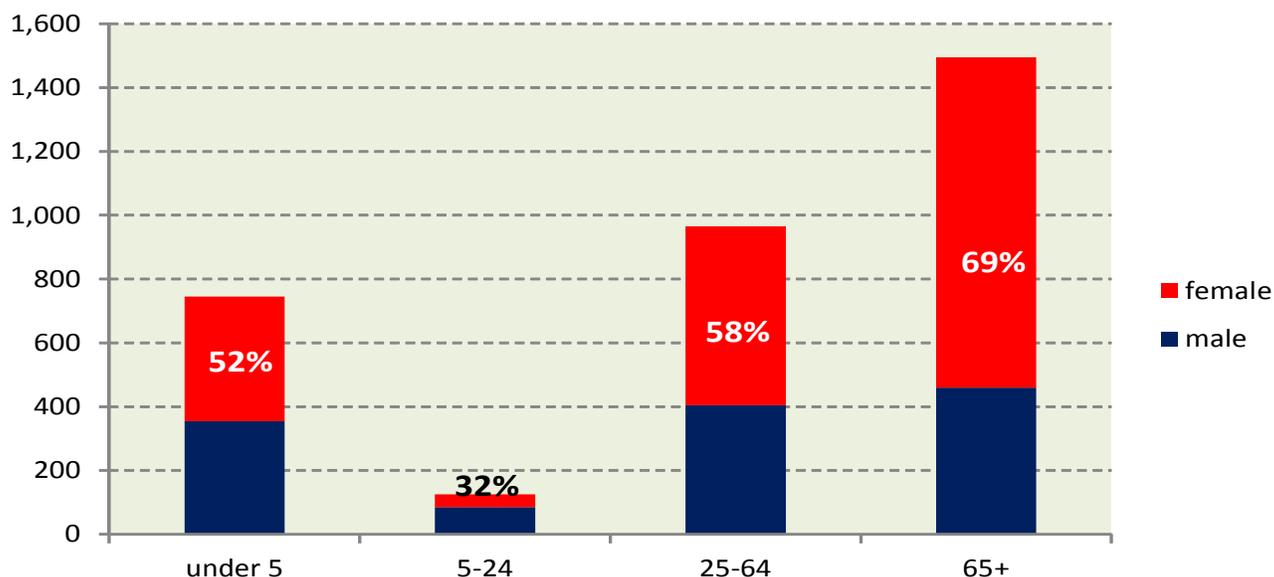
² Community Development Halton, *A Profile of Literacy Skills and Needs in Halton*, January, 2002

³ ABC Life Literacy Canada

Another obstacle to literacy is the language barrier. With the main source of immigrants to Canada shifting from Europe to non-European countries, the number of immigrants with a mother tongue¹ other than English or French is growing. In 2006, over 8% of the population with a mother tongue that was a non-official language did not have knowledge of either English nor French. That translates into over 500,000 Canadians who were not able to conduct a conversation in either official language.

In Halton, the population with no knowledge of English or French has increased by 67% between 1996 and 2006, more than double the growth rate of the general population. The Town of Milton experienced the greatest increase (over five times) reflecting the influx of immigrants during the period. About 45% of the population with no knowledge of either English or French is seniors. Over two thirds of them are female.

Population with no knowledge of English or French by age groups and by sex, Halton Region, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

¹ first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual



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