

CONNECTING THE DOTS

HEALTH EQUITY AND HEALTH LITERACY

Improving health literacy is a national priority. Research has shown that health literacy is a more important predictor of health than race, socioeconomic status or educational attainment.¹



Check your organization's progress on implementing CLAS Standards

Understanding Health Literacy

Addressing health literacy through successful interventions and strategies can build a bridge to achieving health equity. Telligen's investment in improving health literacy is an investment in improving health equity.

Personal Health Literacy

Personal health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Organizational Health Literacy

Organizational health literacy is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.²

Health Literacy Challenges

Limited health literacy is a silent epidemic that is not easily visible. Even people with strong literacy skills can face health literacy challenges. Patients with low health literacy are more likely to have poorer health outcomes and higher healthcare costs as depicted below³:

Individuals with low health literacy...

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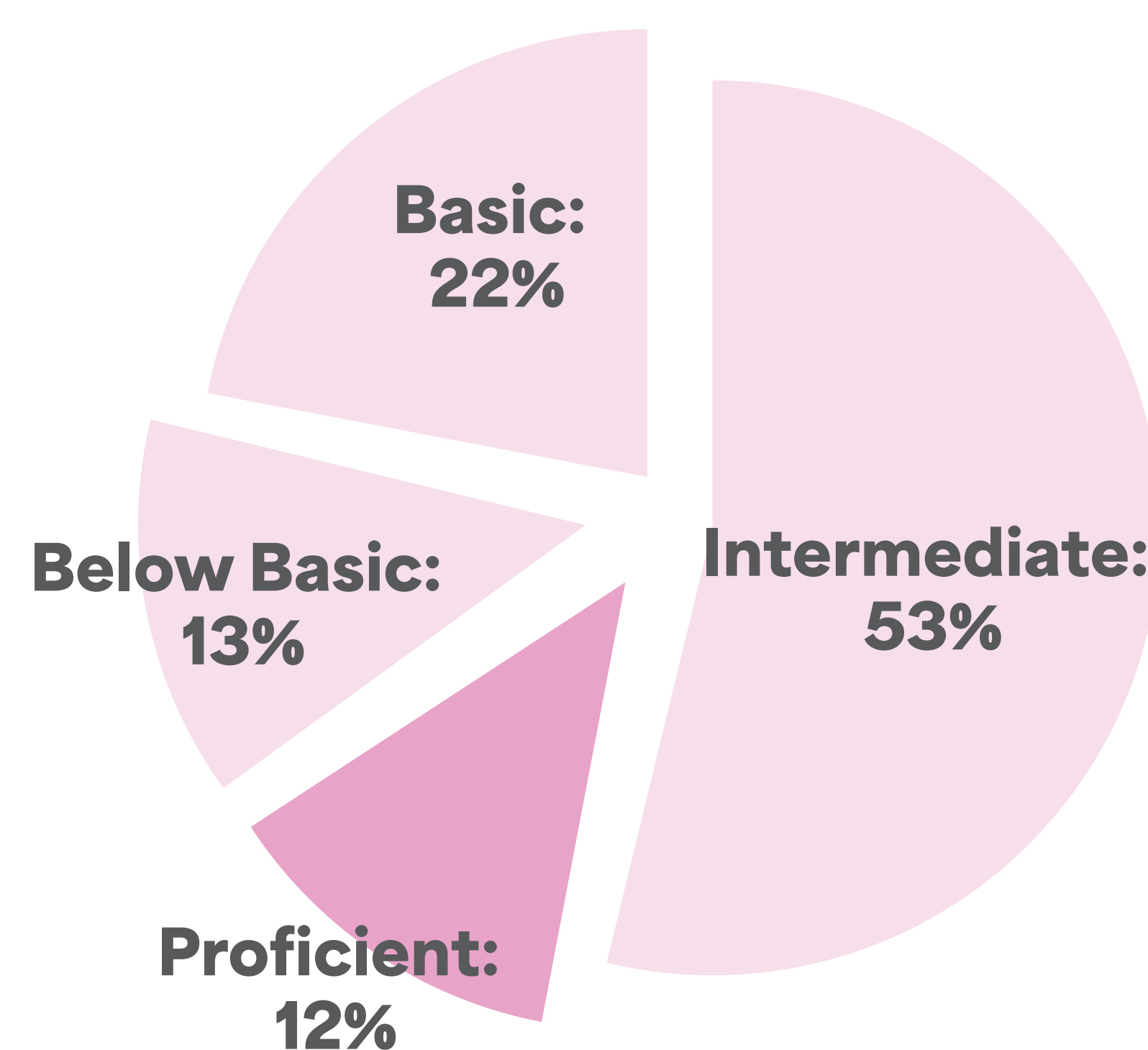
Are more likely to visit an emergency room
- 

Have more hospital stays
- 

Are less likely to follow treatment plans
- 

Have higher mortality rates

Examining the Data



77 million adults have “basic” or “below basic” health literacy skills - **88% are below “proficient”**⁴

- ✓ Proficient: Can perform complex and challenging literacy activities
- ✓ Intermediate: Can perform moderately challenging literacy activities
- ✓ Basic: Can perform simple everyday literacy activities
- ✓ Below Basic: Can perform no more than the most simple and concrete literacy activities

Strategy for Change

Quality improvement is not linear, but rather iterative and mutually reinforcing. Telligen supports communities and organizations through enhanced technical assistance and coaching to build a shared understanding and commitment to address health literacy and other social drivers, assess and prioritize action, implement evidence-based interventions, measure progress, and report and sustain change.

Effects of Change

Advancing health equity requires addressing health literacy and other health disparities. Efforts to improve health outcomes must be woven into the fabric of organizations and communities and aligned with quality improvement to affect sustainable change.



¹ Parker, R.M., et al., Committee on Health Literacy for the Council on Scientific Affairs. (1999). Health literacy: Report of the Council on Scientific Affairs. JAMA, 281, 552-7.

² <https://www.nlm.gov/guides/intro-health-literacy>

³ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-literacy-healthy-people-2030>

⁴ <https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/new-tool-tackles-low-health-literacy>