

# Standard documentation Meta information

(Definitions, comments, methods, quality)

on

## Key competencies of adults (PIAAC 2011/12)

This documentation is valid for the reference period:  
**2011/12**

Status: **14 March 2024**



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## Executive Summary

The "Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)" is a comprehensive international study to assess the skills of the adult population (16 to 65 years). The focus is on key competencies which are required for individuals to participate successfully in the economy and society of the 21st century. In the framework of PIAAC several survey waves are planned (cycle of 10 years). The PIAAC survey 2011/12 was the first wave and was conducted in 24 countries. Due to the results of this survey, valid data on the skills of adults in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in the context of new technologies are for the first time available for Austria which closed an important gap in the system of education statistics. The respective survey consisted of a comprehensive questionnaire which collected information on socio-demographic characteristics, education and training, participation on the labour market and application of skills on the workplace. This was followed by a test (on computer or on paper) which surveyed the following basic skills required in the information era:

- **Literacy:** This refers to the ability to understand and make use of information contained in various written texts, such as identifying the information from a list of rules in a kindergarten which indicates the time when children must arrive in the kindergarten at the latest. This skill is a basic requirement for the development of more challenging abilities.
- **Numeracy:** This refers to the ability to utilise, apply, interpret and communicate mathematical information and perceptions. This ability is extremely essential in an era in which individuals are confronted with an even larger quantity and variety of numerical and mathematical information in their every-day life.
- **Problem Solving in Technology Rich Environments:** This is about the ability to find information in a variety of electronic sources, to assess and make use of them, in order to solve specific problems, e.g. searching for a book in an online catalogue of a library or navigating through a complex website.
- **Reading Components:** This part of the test measures reading competencies such as recognition of words, understanding of words or the ability to capture the meaning of a sentence.

On an international level, PIAAC is planned and coordinated by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In Austria, Statistics Austria was authorised by the Federal Ministries of Education and Women's Affairs (BMBWF) and of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK) to coordinate the national project management for PIAAC. A steering committee as well as a project working group supported the continuous communication and coordination between the ministries and Statistics Austria. Additionally, an accompanying expert forum with national researchers was installed to serve the continuous exchange of information.

During the entire project Statistics Austria continuously had close contact with ministries and project partner on an international as well as on a national level. Basic aim of the PIAAC survey was the international comparability of results on the highest possible level. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct the data collection in all participating countries in a standardised way. To reach that aim comprehensive and detailed quality standards (mostly based on the experiences of the predecessor studies ALL and IALS) towards an input harmonisation were formulated whose adherence was compulsory for all participating countries and which was monitored by the PIAAC consortium.

In the course of the preparatory work of the PIAAC survey 2011/12 a field test was carried out during which approximately 1 500 individuals were surveyed. This field test, conducted in 2010, served for gaining data on the test questions (for instance on the quality of the translations and national appropriateness) and the background questionnaire. As a survey like PIAAC was conducted for the first time in Austria, the field test had the important function of a mock survey for the conduct of the main survey. The results of the field test were exclusively used for the development of the skills tests and quality assurance and not for publication.

The PIAAC survey 2011/12 (main survey) started in August 2011 and was finalised in Austria mid-April 2012. Based on a random sample drawn from the Central Population Register (ZMR) around 5 000 individuals participated. The Participation was voluntary.

Data provision to the international consortium was on 31 May 2012 as agreed in the contract. In October 2013 a first national report was published by Statistics Austria and results were presented to the public. One year later, in October 2014, another report with additional national and international results was published. This one was based on a co-operation between Statistics Austria and a team of national experts which mainly consisted of the members of the expert forum who have already been involved in the project for many years. This report was presented to the public in the framework of a research conference.

## Key competencies of adults (PIAAC 2011/12) – Main Key Points

<b>Subject matter</b>	Key Adult skills (literacy, numeracy, problem solving in the context of new technologies)
<b>Population</b>	Austrian resident population in private households (16 to 65 years); approximately 5.6 million people
<b>Type of statistics</b>	Primary sample survey among 5 000 individuals
<b>Data sources/Survey techniques</b>	Questionnaire (CAPI) and skills test (computer or paper)
<b>Reference period or due day</b>	2011/12 (field phase main survey: 1 August 2011 – 17 April 2012)
<b>Periodicity</b>	Every 10 years (planned)
<b>Survey participation (in case of a survey)</b>	Voluntary
<b>Main legal acts</b>	Contract with BMBF and BMASK
<b>Most detailed regional breakdown</b>	Austria
<b>Availability of results</b>	Final data: 8 October 2013
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compulsory quality standards in the framework of comprehensive guidelines (consisting of 184 standards, 365 guiding principles and 116 recommendations -&gt; strict “input harmonisation”</li> <li>• Monitoring the compliance with the quality standards by the PIAAC consortium</li> </ul>