More than 1 in 5 adults in Europe (aged 25-64) struggle with basic literacy and numeracy skills and the use of digital tools in everyday life. In 2017, about the same amount of adult Europeans (61 million or 22%) only obtained a lower secondary education level at most. Without basic skills and with a low level of qualifications, adults are at a higher risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Low skills levels negatively impact on economic productivity and long-term growth.

Profile of low-qualified adults in the EU

**Age**

There are more low-qualified adults among older than younger people.

- **17%** From 25 to 34 years
- **22%** From 35 to 44 years
- **29%** From 45 to 54 years
- **32%** From 55 to 64 years

On average, **women** in the EU have higher qualifications than **men**, but there are significant differences between Member States.

Low-qualified people are often over-represented in **rural areas**.
1 in 3 of low-qualified adults are inactive and 1 in 2 are in employment

Higher participation in cultural activities
- 52.3% of low-qualified adults take part in cultural activities compared to 81.8% of high-qualified adults.

Increased participation in education and training
- Only 4.3% of low-qualified adults take part in education and training, compared to 18.6% of high-qualified adults.

Better health and wellbeing
- Compared to high-qualified adults (6.7%), twice as many low-qualified adults (12.7%) perceive their health as bad or very bad.

Better chances on the labour market
- In the EU, only 64.4% of low-qualified adults are active on the labour market compared to 89.1% of high-qualified adults.

Lower risk of poverty
- 34.2% of low-qualified adults are at risk of poverty compared to 10.9% of high-qualified adults.
- More than 60% of children of low-qualified people are at risk of poverty, compared to around 9% of children of high-qualified parents.

Higher income
- The annual EU average net income of low-qualified adults is €14,513 compared to €25,552 of high-qualified adults.

Impact of education and skills on life chances

Sources:
EU Labour Force Survey 2017 (25-64 years olds)
EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions 2017
The OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

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