

**What's in it for me?
Views of adult
learners on engaging
in literacy and
numeracy tuition in
Ireland**

**Tina Byrne NALA
ELINET Conference
23rd July 2018**



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

What is NALA?

- Independent membership organisation that is committed to making sure adults with literacy and numeracy can fully take part in society, and access learning opportunities to meet their needs
- Support the implementation of policy
- Improve quality of teaching, learning and information provision
- Build awareness of literacy and numeracy



NALA's Research Work

Conduct research to help improve teaching and learning and to investigate why literacy matters to Irish society

Research projects include:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Blended Learning
- Family Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Financial Literacy
- Evaluation of NALA's Distance Learning Service



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Purpose of session

- Brief overview of adult literacy in Ireland
- Present findings from a research project that explored with adult literacy learners the benefits of engaging in literacy and numeracy tuition in Ireland



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Literacy is ...



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A beginner reader is not a beginner thinker.

Adult Skills Survey 2013

	Below Level 1	At Level 1	At Level 2	At Level 3	At Level 4	At Level 5
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Literacy	4.3	13.2	37.7	36.2	8.1	#
Numeracy	7.1	18.2	38.2	29.0	7.0	0.6
PSTRE	18.7	43.8	32.9	4.7		



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Adult Skills Survey 2013



18% of Irish adults are at or below level 1 of literacy – 521,550 people



25% of Irish adults are at or below level 1 of numeracy – 754,000 people

This survey reports that people with the lowest skill levels also:

- have low educational attainment,
- earn less income,
- are more likely to be unemployed, and
- have poorer health.



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Participation in ALS 2016

- In 2016 the total number of learners in the adult literacy service was 64,215.
- Programmes typically two to four hours per week during academic year.
- ALS staffed by paid and volunteer tutors.
- Adult literacy budget €3m



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Participation in ALS 2016

Programme	Beneficiaries	NFQ L1	NFQ L2	NFQ L3	NFQ L4	NFQ L5	Unaccredited
Adult literacy	40,186	1,630	8,012	11,672	1,121	0	17,751
ESOL	15,584	3,122	2,407	2,256	558	94	7,147
ITABE	3,327	175	1,509	958	0	0	685
Skills for work	2,958	51	399	1,070	11	0	1,427
Voluntary literacy tuition	2,160	66	104	0	0	0	1,990
Total	64,215	5,044	12,431	15,956	1,690	94	29,000



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What's in it for me?

- Mixed method research study
- Seeks to add to knowledge base on the benefits of taking part in lifelong learning
- Capture the views and experiences that adult learners hold about

returning to education
their educational needs
their expectations



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We explored with them:

- The perceived benefits of engaging in adult literacy and numeracy tuition
- Their views on the benefit re-engagement has had on different areas of their lives, including personal development, family, health and well being



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Methodology

- Used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques
- Anonymous online survey – with DLS learners
- Focus group – with members of student committee
- Individual interviews with learners in programmes delivered by homeless agency



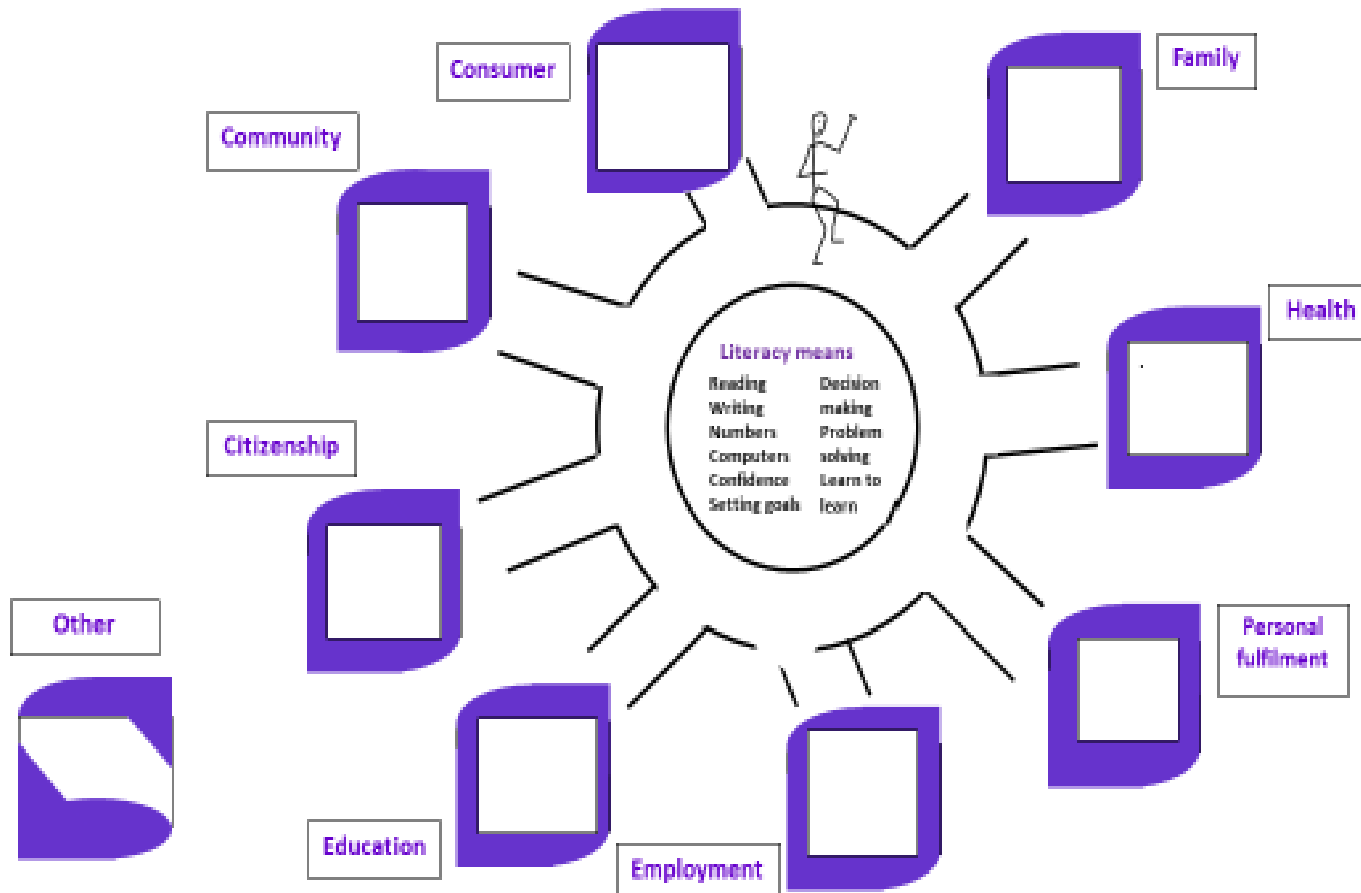
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Visual aid

Realising potential

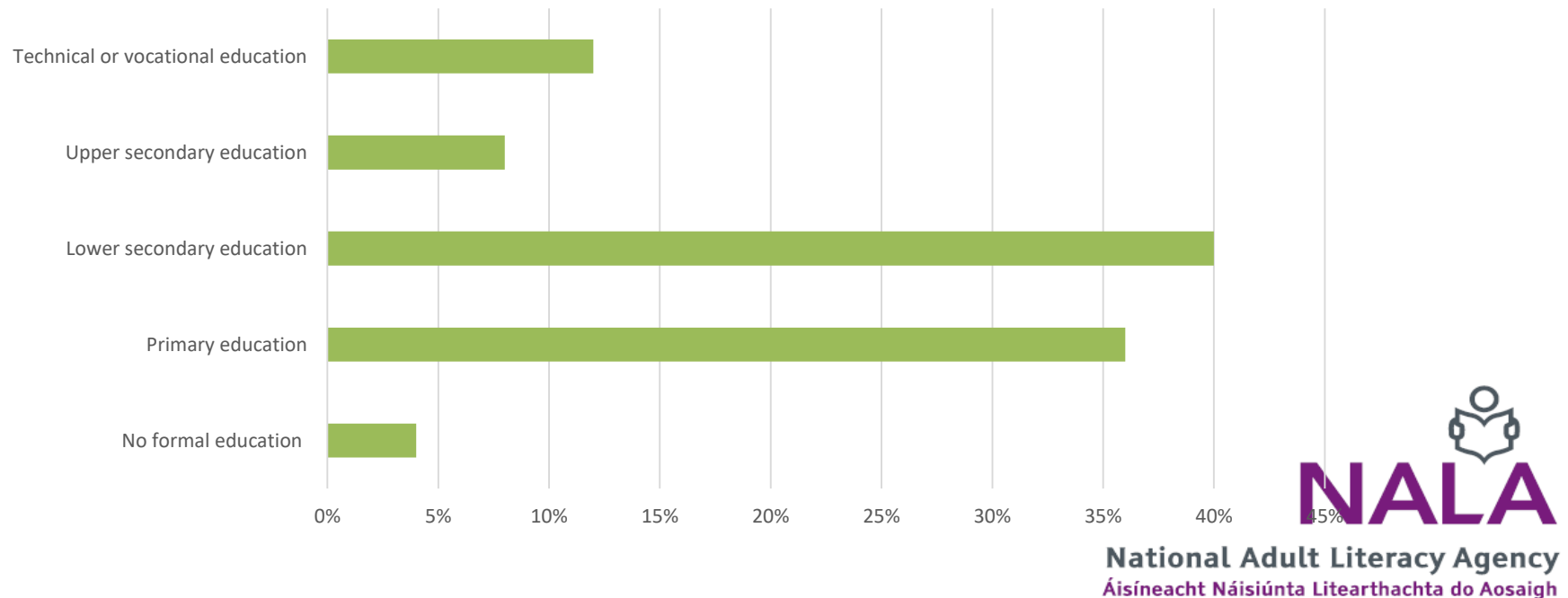
Literacy and numeracy: essential lifelong learning throughout life events



Research participants

- Total of 32 learners took part in the research
- 14 women and 18 men
- Ranged in age from 24 – 65 years

Highest level of education to date



Main findings

The learners chose the following areas as having had the most benefit on their lives

- First choice – personal fulfilment
- Second choice – education
- Third choice – family



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Personal fulfilment

- **More fulfilling social life** – more willing to get involved in social and community activities – passing it on
- **Health and well being** - if you're more confident in yourself, you feel better and you're health improves
- **Money issues** – increase in financial literacy and numeracy, being in control of their money situation, more confident carrying out everyday financial transactions
- **Emotional impact** – sense of empowerment, magnitude of learning journey overwhelming, speaking at public forums – sharing story



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Overall education

- **Reasons for returning to education** – improve technical skills but also to help improve self confidence and self esteem
- **Achieving accreditation** for the first time
- **Complete the education** they felt they missed out on
- **Instilled in them** sense of optimism and confidence in their ability to succeed



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Family

- **Help** children and grandchildren with their homework
- **Improvement** in home – school relationship attending more parent teacher meetings
- **Positive impact** on other family members



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Conclusion

- Demonstrable benefits
- Main benefit was an increase in self confidence
- Report better and more fulfilling social life
- More involved in social activities and community life
- Increase in health and well being and health literacy



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- Reasons for returning to education varied from it's my time to want to complete education
- Enabled them to understand that one of the main barriers was past negative experiences within the education system
- Accreditation – getting the piece of paper and also learning for learning sake
- Benefits felt keenly in the home environment – can build literacy strengths of all family members



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Further research

- Recommend the development of thematic papers based on the findings
- Inform future research and NALA's campaign and awareness work
- Also based on 3 overarching themes in GRALE
 - ❖ Social and community
 - ❖ Health
 - ❖ Employment



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Further information

**Sandford Lodge
Sandford Close
Ranelagh
Dublin 6**

Tel: (01) 412 7900

Email: tbyrne@nala.ie

Website: www.nala.ie

Plain English: www.simplyput.ie

Family: www.helpmykidlearn.ie



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