

Literacy in Everyday Life

Comprehensive results from the
2003 National Assessment of
Adult Literacy

Presenters

Sherrie Claiborne
President
National Coalition for
Literacy

Marsha L. Tait
Senior Vice President
ProLiteracy
Worldwide



Today's Agenda

- Brief review of 2003 NAAL findings
- Highlights from the comprehensive report
- How to use the results for
 - Program Planning
 - Promotion
 - Funding
 - Advocacy
- Q & A

2003 NAAL Overview

- Assessed English literacy skills of 19,200 adults
- Three literacy levels measured:
 - Prose: read/understand continuous text
 - Document: charts, maps, forms
 - Quantitative: use numbers in printed material

2003 NAAL Findings

- Nonliterate in English—5% (11 million)
- Below basic—14% (30 million)
- Basic—29% (63 million)
- Intermediate—44%
- Proficient—13%

The Comprehensive Report

- Introduction
- Demographic Characteristics
 - Population, gender, race/ethnicity, language background, age, learning disabilities, household income
- Education
 - Highest level of attainment, level by race/ethnicity, age at school completion, other types of adult education

Chapters Include

- Employment, earnings, job training
 - Employment status, occupation, weekly wage, job skills/training, public assistance
- Family
 - Parent-child interactions, educational resources at home, school involvement
- Community/Civic Involvement
 - Voting, information sources, volunteering, online communities

The Comprehensive Report

Shows relationships between literacy and

- Demographics
- Education
- Employment, earnings, job training
- Family
- Community/Civic involvement

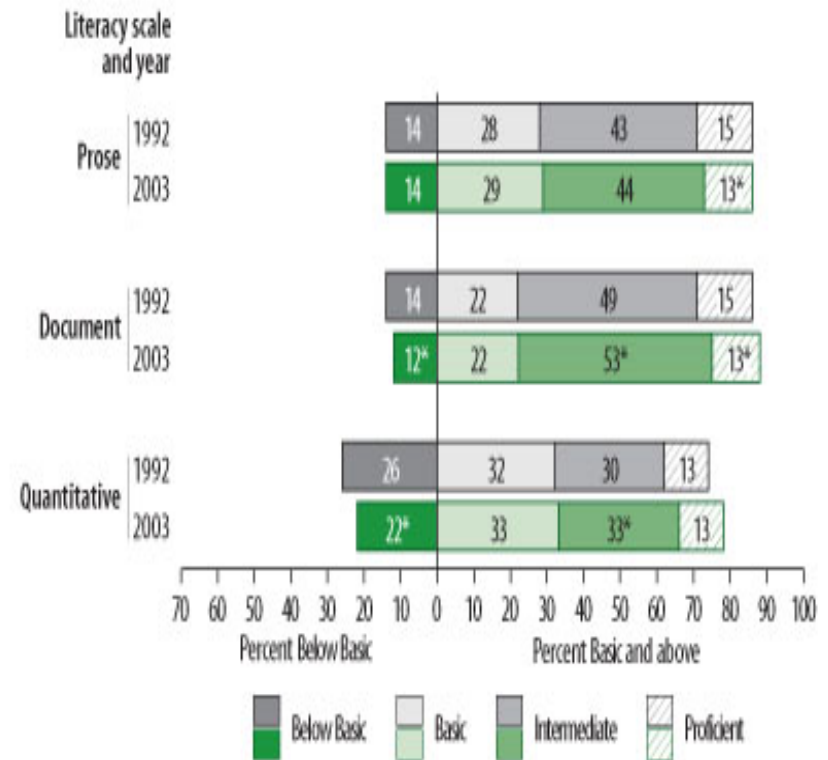
The Comprehensive Report

Use the information for:

- Program/service planning
- Promotion
- Fund-raising
- Advocacy

1992 - 2003

- No change in prose, document literacy skills
- Slight improvement in quantitative skills



Why so little change?

- Population snapshot, not longitudinal study
- Adult population more diverse
- ABE and literacy funding remained level or declined slightly
- New Immigrants are younger and have less formal education

Our Message

- Additional funds would create access to instruction for more individuals
- The need for adult literacy programs is still significant

Good News, Bad News

Quantitative

- Overall drop in percentage of adults with below basic quantitative literacy skills
- 22% of adults – 48 million people – have below basic quantitative skills
- Nearly twice as many as below basic document literacy skills

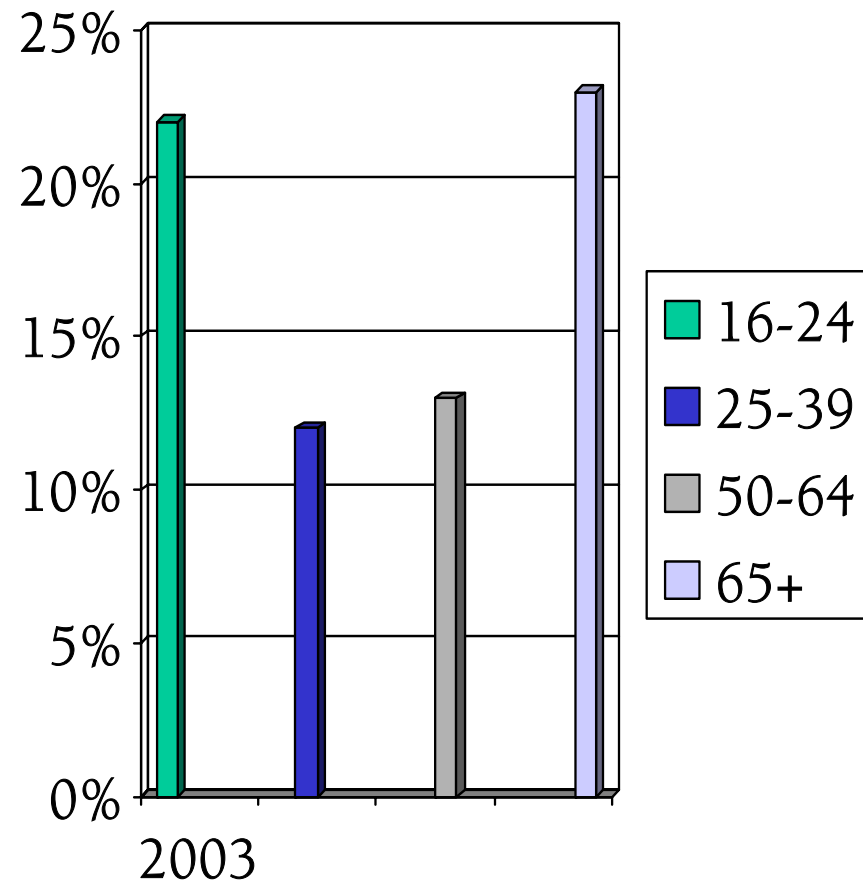
Quantitative Skills Matter

- Quantitative literacy is very important to workplace success
- Higher relationship to income returns
- Critical in GED preparation

Literacy and Age

Youngest and oldest adults have lower literacy than other age groups

Below Basic Literacy



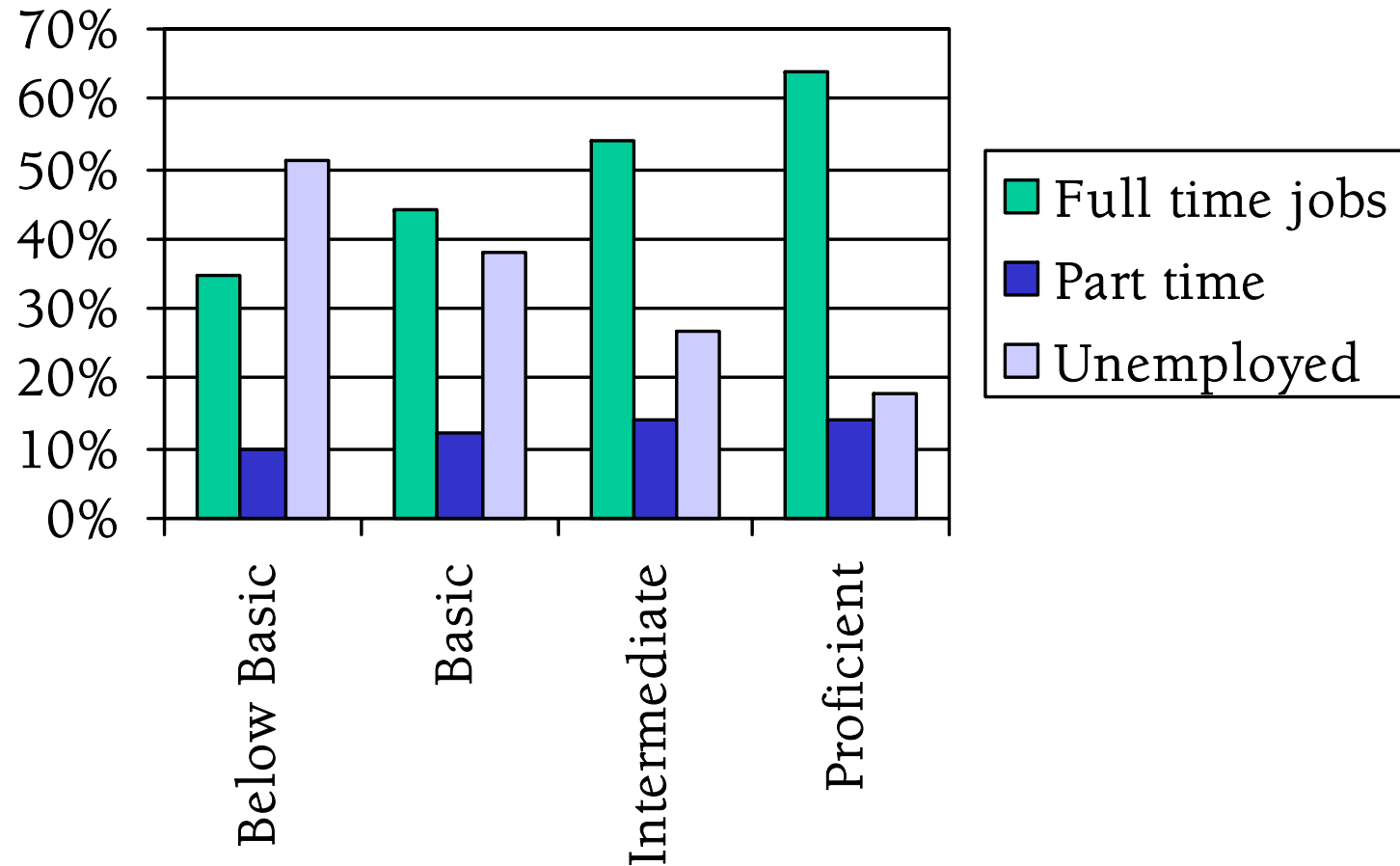
Young People in Below Basic

- Skills of people entering workforce haven't changed; but the workplace has changed!
- 80% of workforce in 2027 is working now
- 2/3 of all new jobs in next 10 years will require a college degree or technical training

What does this mean for us?

- The pipeline is continually refilled with youth who will become adults with limited literacy skills
- Youth in adult basic education and literacy programs present unique learning challenges
- K-12 reform is not enough!

Literacy and Employment



Employment Challenges

- Adults with Below Basic skills report being hindered by:
 - Reading skills
 - Math skills
 - Computer skills

Literacy and Wages

- Less than \$300/week:
 - Below Basic: 18 %
 - Proficient: 3% - 6%
- More than \$1950:
 - Below Basic: 2% - 3%
 - Proficient: 12% - 14%

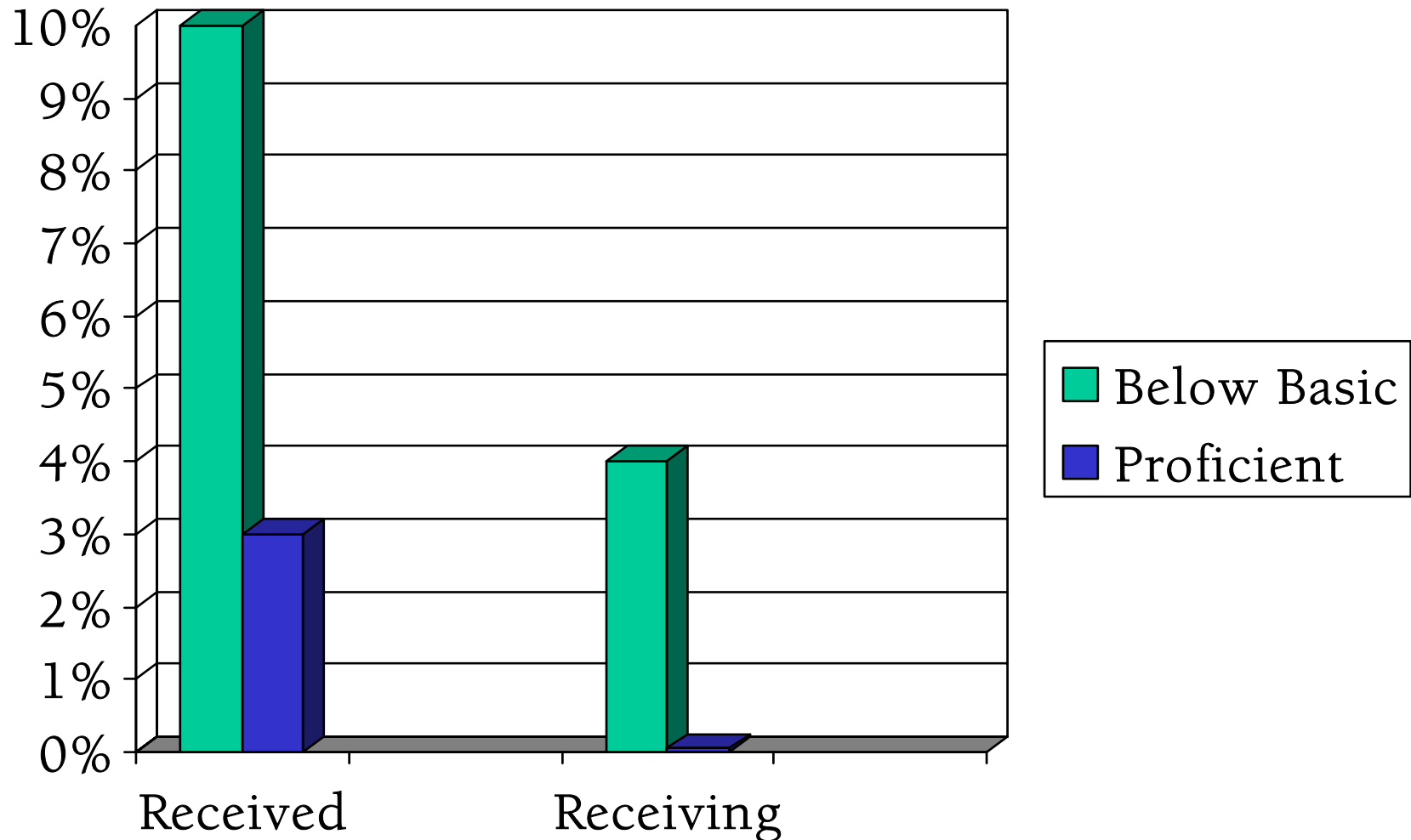
“Demand Side” Workplace Literacy Programs

- Instructors must have workplace experience
- Broad focus on all basic skills
- Use workplace context for language and situation

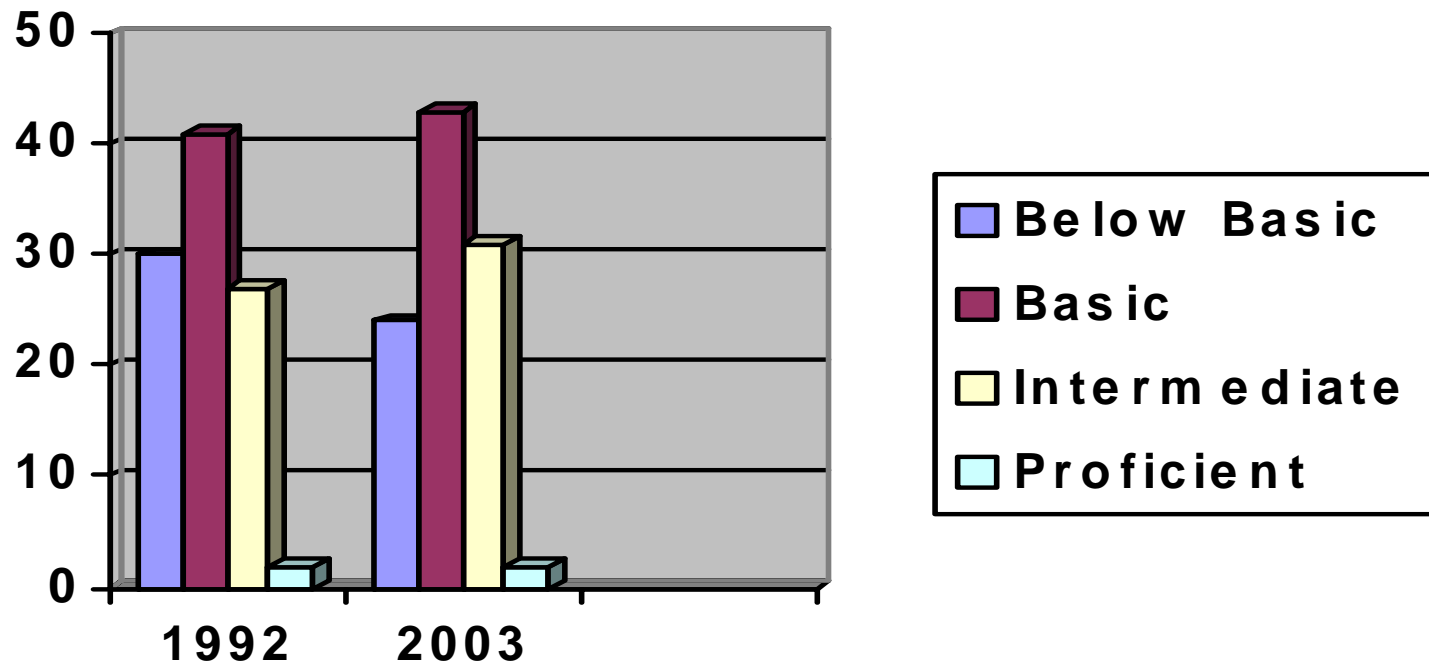
Brian Bosworth, FutureWorks

Bosworth@futureworks-web.com

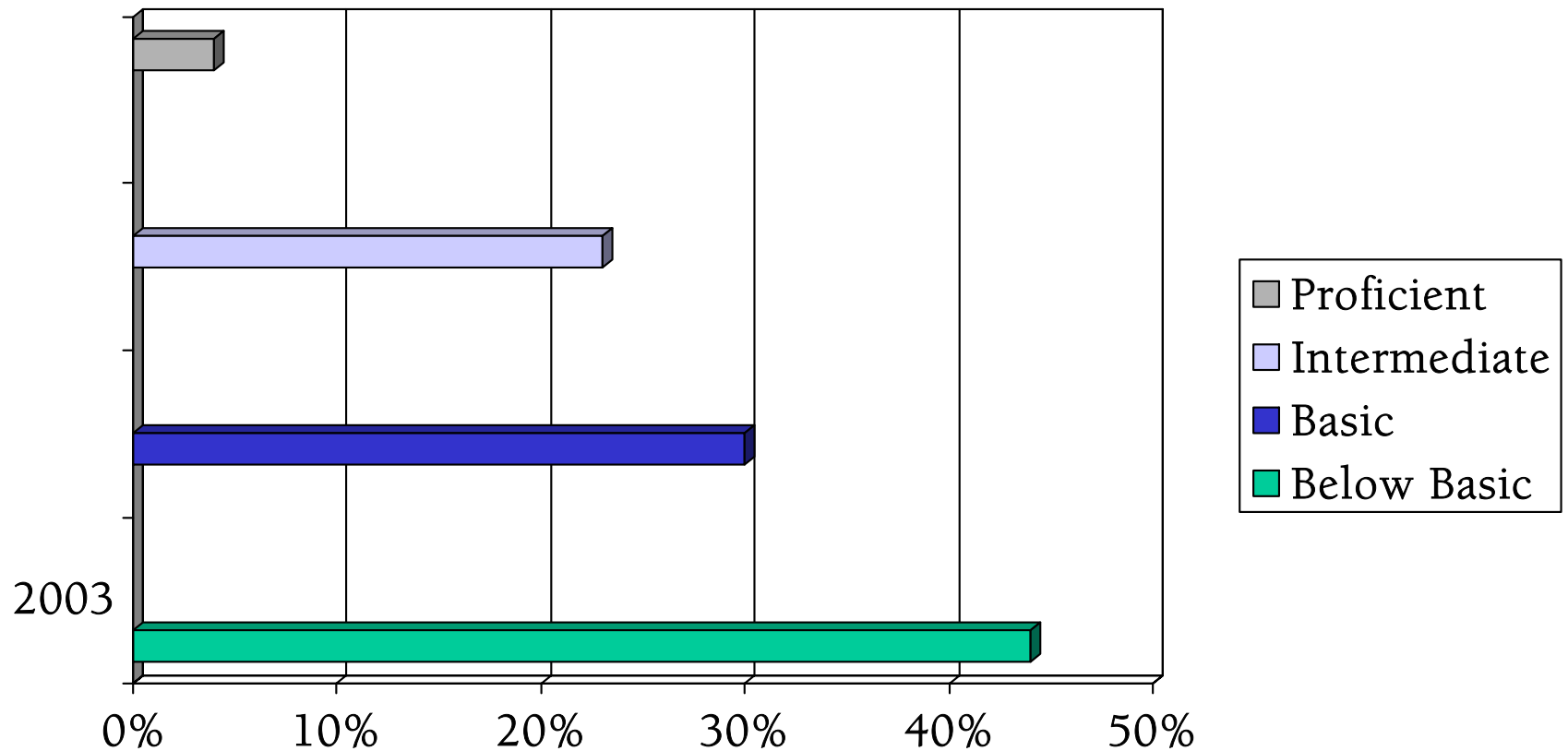
Women, Literacy, and Public Assistance



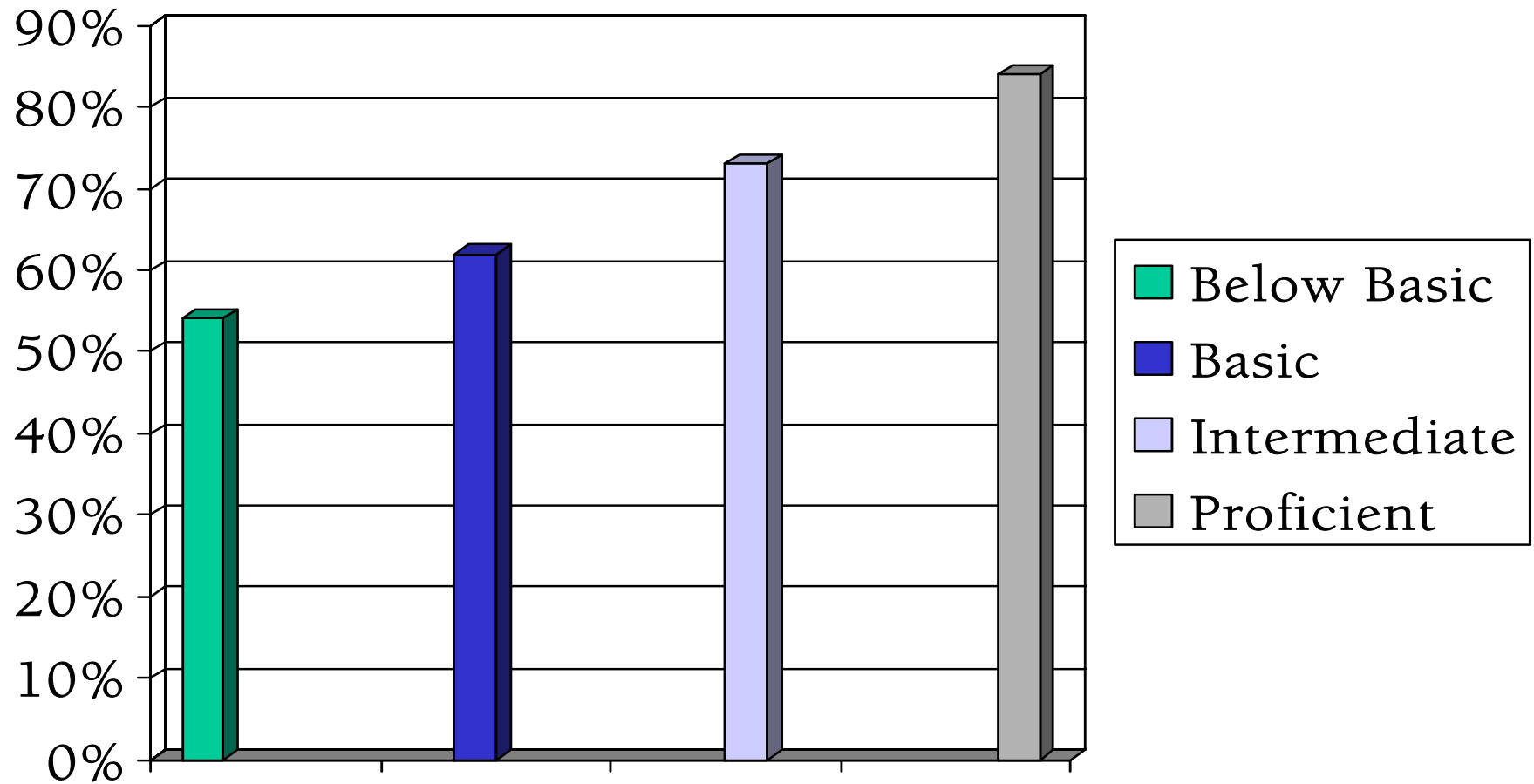
Percentage of Black Adults in Prose Literacy Levels



Percentage of Hispanic Adults in Each Prose Literacy level



Voting in Presidential Election



Using the Information

- Program Planning and Forming Partners
 - What services do students need?
 - What does your community need?
- Demand for ESL services
 - Instructional approaches
 - Employability issues

Key Findings

- Number of adults with below basic literacy skills remained constant
 - More diverse population
 - Immigrants younger and less educated
- Increasing ESL demand
- Adults w/ GED performed as well as adults w/ High School diploma

Key Findings

- Young people ages 16 - 24 represent one-quarter of adults with below basic skills
- Seniors age 65+ make up 23% of adults in the lowest prose literacy level

Key Findings

- 22% - 48 million adults – have below basic quantitative skills
 - Required for workplace success
- Adults with below basic skills more likely to:
 - Be unemployed
 - Work in low-wage service jobs when employed

Key Findings

- Adults with below basic skills are less likely to vote
- Women with intermediate or advanced skills are less likely to need public assistance

What does this mean for you?

- What services do your students/potential students need?
- What does your community need?
- Partnerships
- Advocacy

Resources

www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007480

www.national-coalition-literacy.org/

www.proliteracy.org

Contact Information

Sherrie Claiborne

Claibornes@ten-nash.ten.k12.tn.us

Marsha L. Tait

mtait@proliteracy.org

Thank you!