

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF VALIDATED HEALTH LITERACY ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS REGISTERED IN THE HEALTH LITERACY TOOL SHED

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Purpose

Health Literacy (HL) refers to people's ability to access, understand, and critically use health information. In this context, HL has increasingly been recognized as an important determinant of health. Assessing individuals' HL levels helps guide more effective health actions. As each age group presents specific needs and characteristics, it is essential to understand which populations the available instruments are intended for. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the distribution of validated HL instruments according to the target age group.

Methods

A documentary, descriptive, and quantitative analysis was conducted of HL instruments registered in the Health Literacy Tool Shed (HLTS) as of May 9, 2025, an international database that gathers information on validated HL assessment tools. All instruments with available data were included, and data were collected and classified according to the target population's age group: children (0 to 9 years); adolescents (10 to 17 years); adults (18 to 64 years); and older adults (65 years or older), and analyzed using absolute and relative frequencies.

Results

A total of 225 instruments were included, most of which were directed at adults (n=158; 63.2%), followed by older adults (n=52; 20.8%) and adolescents (n=36; 14.4%). Children showed minimal representation (n=4; 1.6%).

Implications for health literacy practice

The low availability of instruments for children and adolescents limits the early assessment of HL, which may hinder the planning of interventions during these critical stages of development, marked by the formation of habits and self-care skills. These findings highlight the need to develop and validate specific tools for this population, promoting more equitable actions and strengthening HL from an early age.

