



**ABORIGINAL
ADULT LITERACY
ASSESSMENT TOOL**



**DECOLONIZED
COMMUNITY ENGLISH
LITERACY PARTNERSHIP**

The Aboriginal Adult Literacy Assessment Tool

A Holistic Approach to Assessing English Literacy In Saskatchewan Aboriginal Communities

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IALS (INTERNATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY)
ITS MEANING AND IMPACT FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE
October 23-25, 2011
Banff, Alberta

What exactly is the Aboriginal Adult Literacy Assessment Tool, or AALAT?

- It was a two year funded project through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills
- It came about from the results of the 2003 IALSS

Why is AALAT necessary?

“Institutions produce and privilege certain kinds of knowing -- and how, in this process, they devalue or re-define the local and vernacular for their own purposes.”

(Hamilton, 2001, pp. 178)

- **The aim of the project was to create an English literacy assessment for Aboriginal communities**
- **The goal was to create an assessment that was reflective of the cultural perspectives of the Aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan and see if the results differ from IALSS**

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Where was it piloted?

- **Tool was piloted in six communities throughout the province of Saskatchewan**
- **The communities included Métis, Cree, and Denè and ranged from the northeast, central, southeast, and southwest parts of the province**

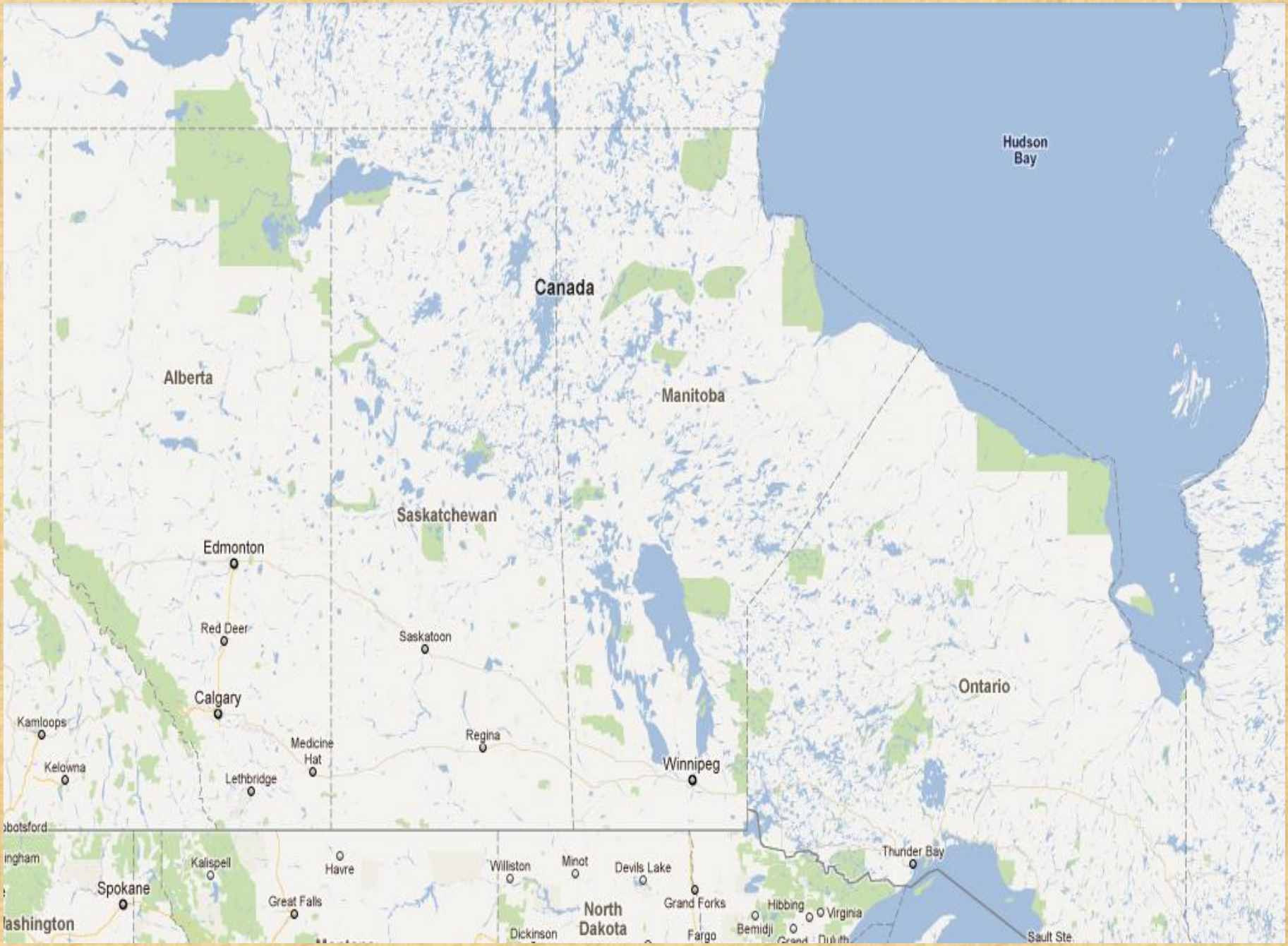
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Abbotsford

Ingham

Washington

Spokane

Kalispell

Great Falls

Havre

Williston

North Dakota

Dickinson

Minot

Devils Lake

Grand Forks

Fargo

Bemidji

Hibbing

Virginia

Grand

Duluth

Thunder Bay

Sault Ste

Limitations of IALSS for Aboriginal Literacy

- Devalued other literacies—ignores oracy
- Devalued Indigenous Peoples and cultures
- Based on dominant culture's values and contexts
- Testing methods not collaborative or community-based.
- Did not value knowledge of Elders or whole communities

Who was a part of AALAT?

Advisory Committee

- Sheelah McLean
- Elaine Ebenal
- Allan Quigley
- Ellen Paterson
- Fatima Pirbhai-Illich
- Donna Woloshyn

Research Teams

- Lisa Laliberte
- Carmen Gillies
- Rae Mitten
- Toni Lemaigre
- Ningwakwe George
- Cindy LaPlante
- Mary LeeElder
- Pavan K. Malreddy
- Linda Wason-Ellam
- Crystal Morin

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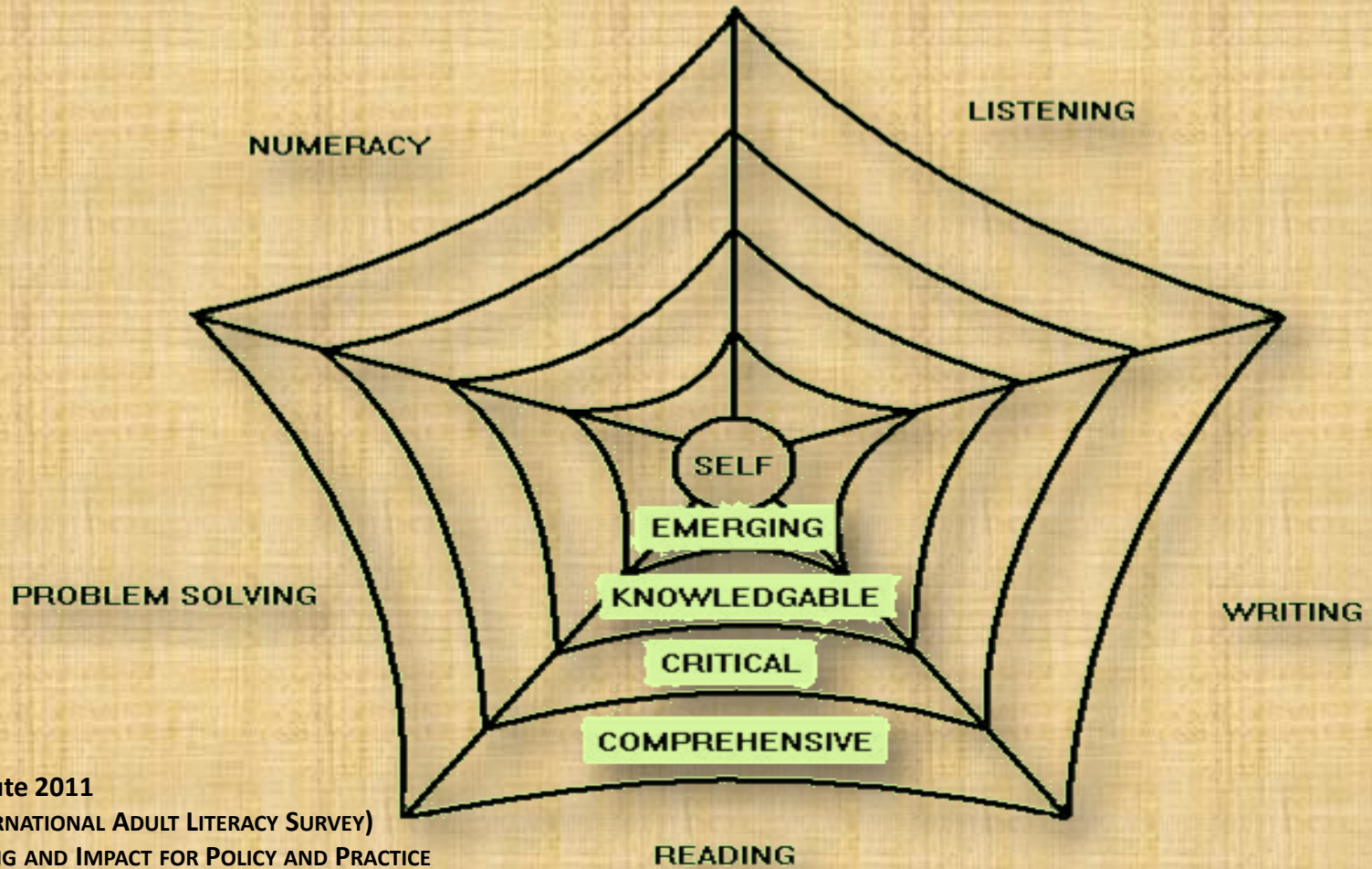
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What is Aboriginal Literacy?

“Traditionally Aboriginal literacy is unfolded through mutual, reciprocal relationships between one's social group and the natural world...involved all dimensions of one's being, while providing both personal development and technical skills through participation of community life.”

(Cajete, 1994).

Literacy Web



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AALAT Definition of Literacy

- **“Aboriginal literacy (First Nations and Métis) is a learner-centered approach to life-long learning that honours the inter-connectedness of all aspects of creation, for growth, personal empowerment, community development, and self-determination.**
- **Aboriginal literacy encompasses First languages, Elder involvement, culture, and community in a holistic development approach to unify mind, heart, body, and spirit.” (SALN)**

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What is Aboriginal Literacy?

**“The knowledge and ability of an individual to use literacy in changing environments in order to grow, communicate, and mobilize themselves within those environments.”
(AALAT Research Development Team, 2009)**

What does the tool look like?

- The AALAT is constructed into two parts:

A = Qualitative

&

B = Quantitative

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Part A

- **Is constructed to gather qualitative data for the community in the areas of education, workforce history, perceptions of literacy, technological literacy, and the impacts of social determinants or hindrances to literacy programming**

Part B

- **Is constructed to assess five literacy strands:**
 - 1. Oracy**
 - 2. Writing**
 - 3. Numeracy**
 - 4. Reading**
 - 5. Problem Solving**

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Oracy

- **Constructed a video with an Aboriginal community member**
- **Video focused on the life and history of the individual and their community**
- **Participants then answered questions which could be read or given orally about the narrative clip**
- **Importance of having a prompt that relates to individuals because of English dialects and mannerisms**

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Reading

- **Prompts include a story by an Elder, a cooking recipe, sentence and paragraph construction, graphs, and literary prompts (poems)**

Writing

- **Prompts included artistic drawings where participants answered in short sentences to paragraphs**
- **Artistic prompts were created by Aboriginal artists of Saskatchewan so people could relate to the prompt**



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Numeracy

Numeracy prompts were gathered from daily numeracy activities

- **Some of the prompts include an energy bill, thermometer, and gas gauge**
- **Numeracy word prompts locate the context and situation to different areas of the province**
- **The questions were developed with guidance from Aboriginal adult basic educators and Aboriginal community members**

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Problem Solving

- **Used a social problem facing some communities**
- **The questions focused on the participants working through the problem to find a solution that best fits the situation.**

How were the domains anchored in existing test criteria?

- **Focused on a strengths-based approach**
- **Four domains include:**
 - 1. Emerging**
 - 2. Knowledgeable**
 - 3. Critical**
 - 4. Comprehensive**

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- The domains were constructed using the Saskatchewan Adult Literacy Benchmarks, Adult Basic Education curricula, and IALSS criteria. Therefore Emerging is a compilation of IALSS Levels 1 and some of 2, as well as the Saskatchewan Benchmarks Level 1. Therefore each question can be validated using the criteria of IALSS as well as provincial standards

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So who were the participants

Aboriginal Females

- 212 respondents
- Mean age=33
- Average years of schooling = 10
- 133 read newspapers or letters daily

Aboriginal Males

- 192 respondents
- Mean age=31
- Average years of schooling=10
- 83 read newspapers or letters daily

N = 404

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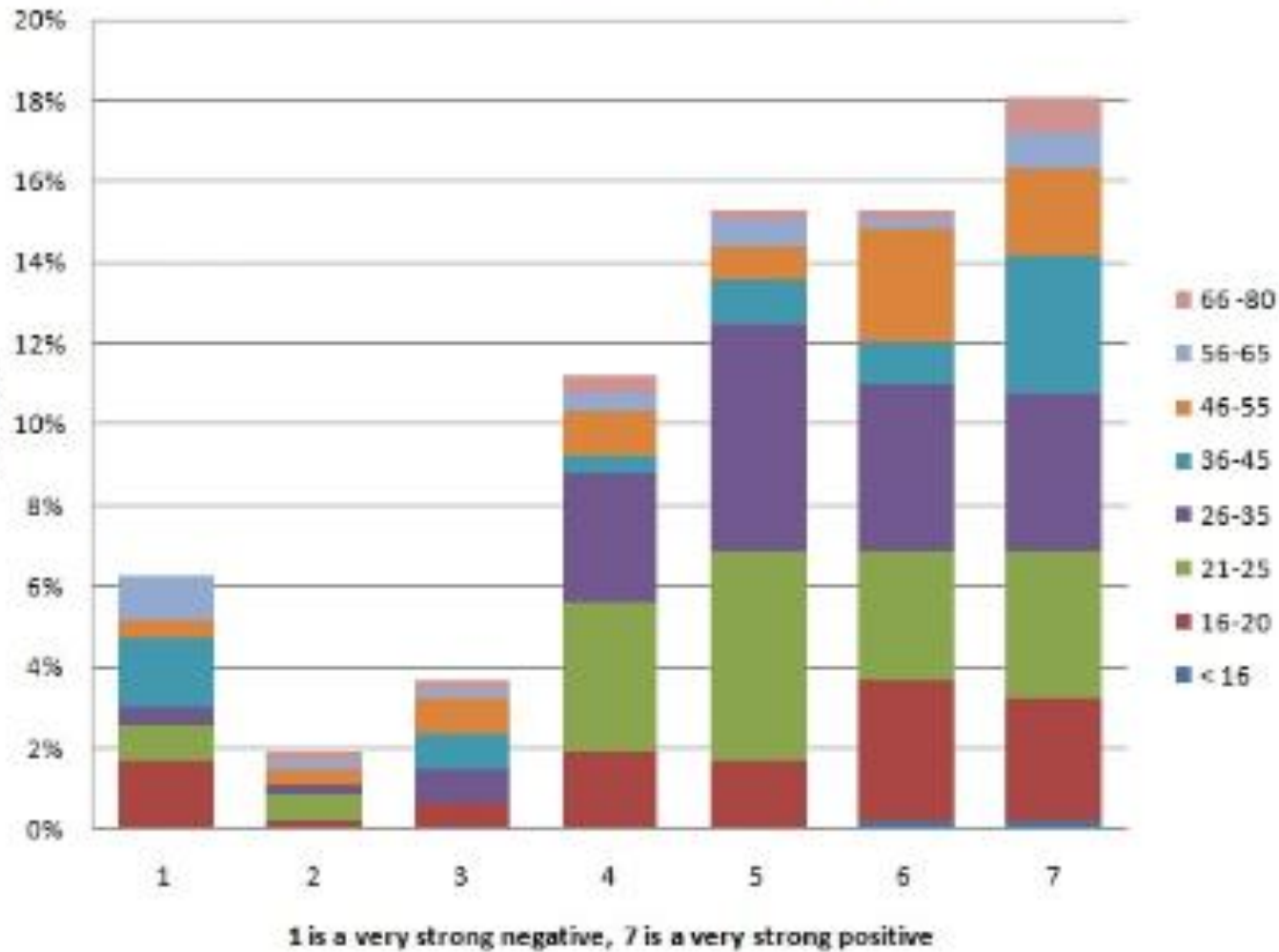
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Experience with education by Age



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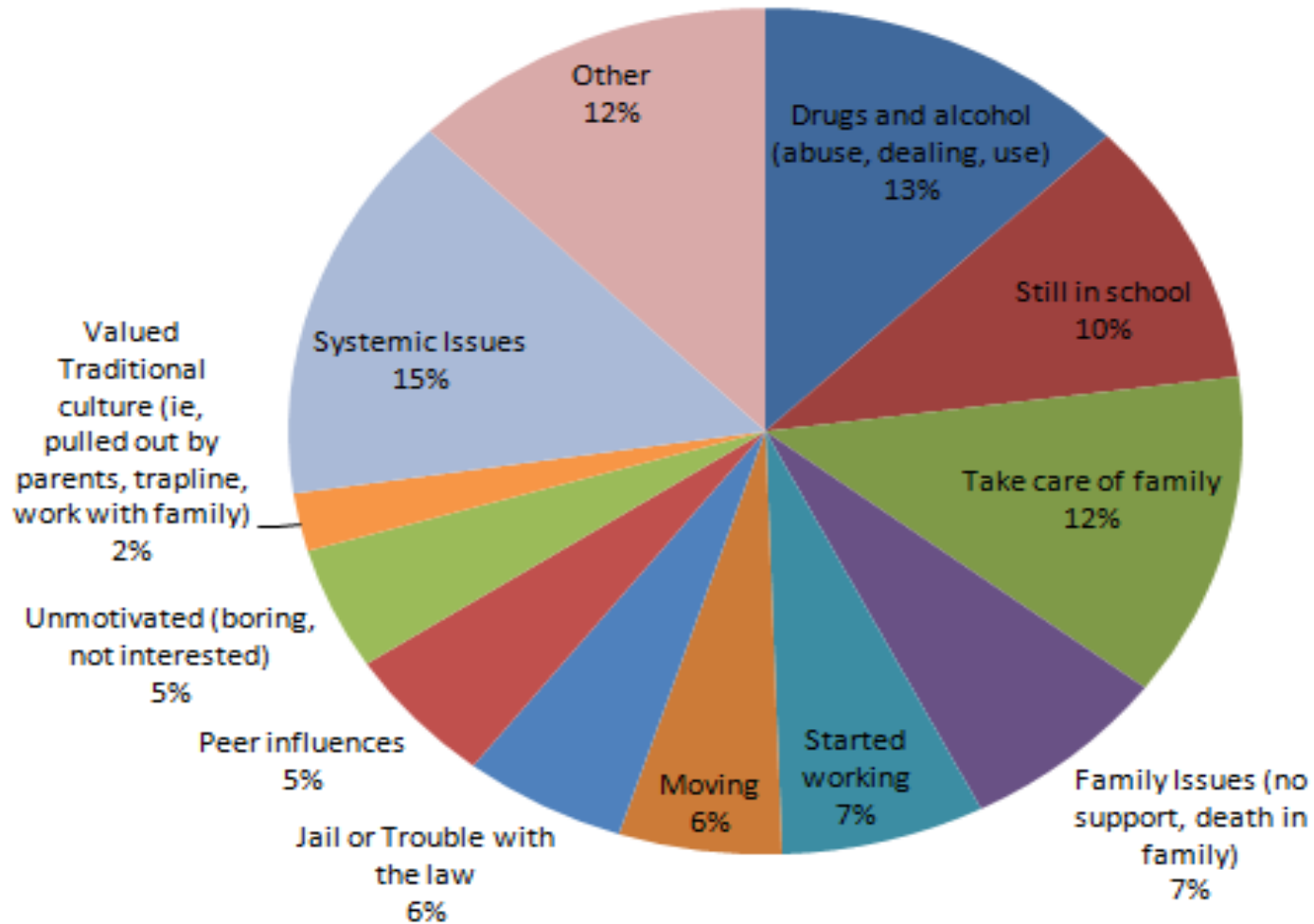
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What did we learn?

**Reading
& Oracy?**

**Numeracy &
Problem Solving?**

Reasons for not completing high school



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WHY DID YOU QUIT SCHOOL?

Examples of responses

- **“Failing one grade and not going back because I didn't want to be laughed at. Then I started getting into trouble with the law, then having a family of my own.”**
- **“Bullied & dropped out ‘cause of bullying”**
- **“Because I've hung out with the wrong group of people and had an addiction that made me not go to school but it was up to me. But know I'm in school cause I want to do good in life for me and my child.”**

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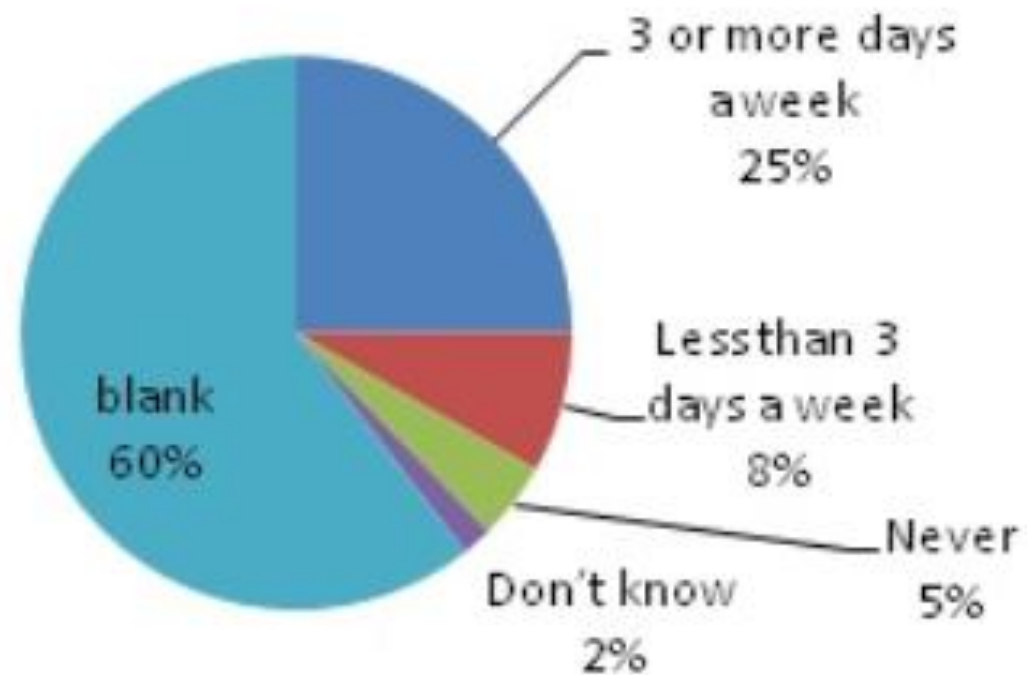
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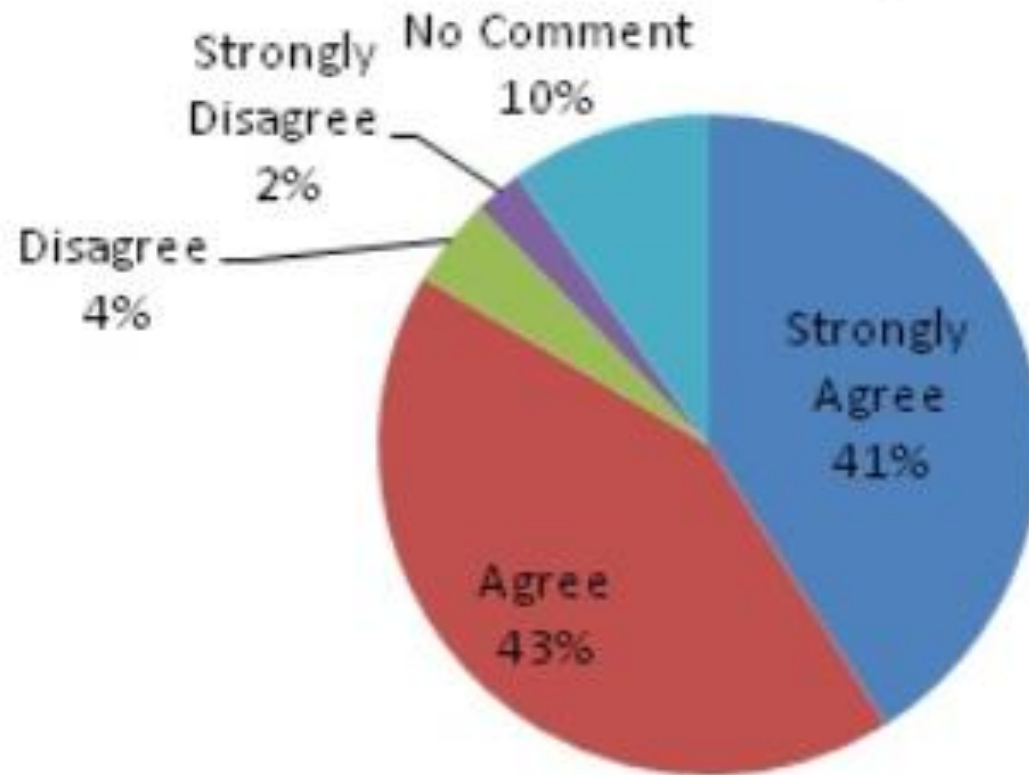
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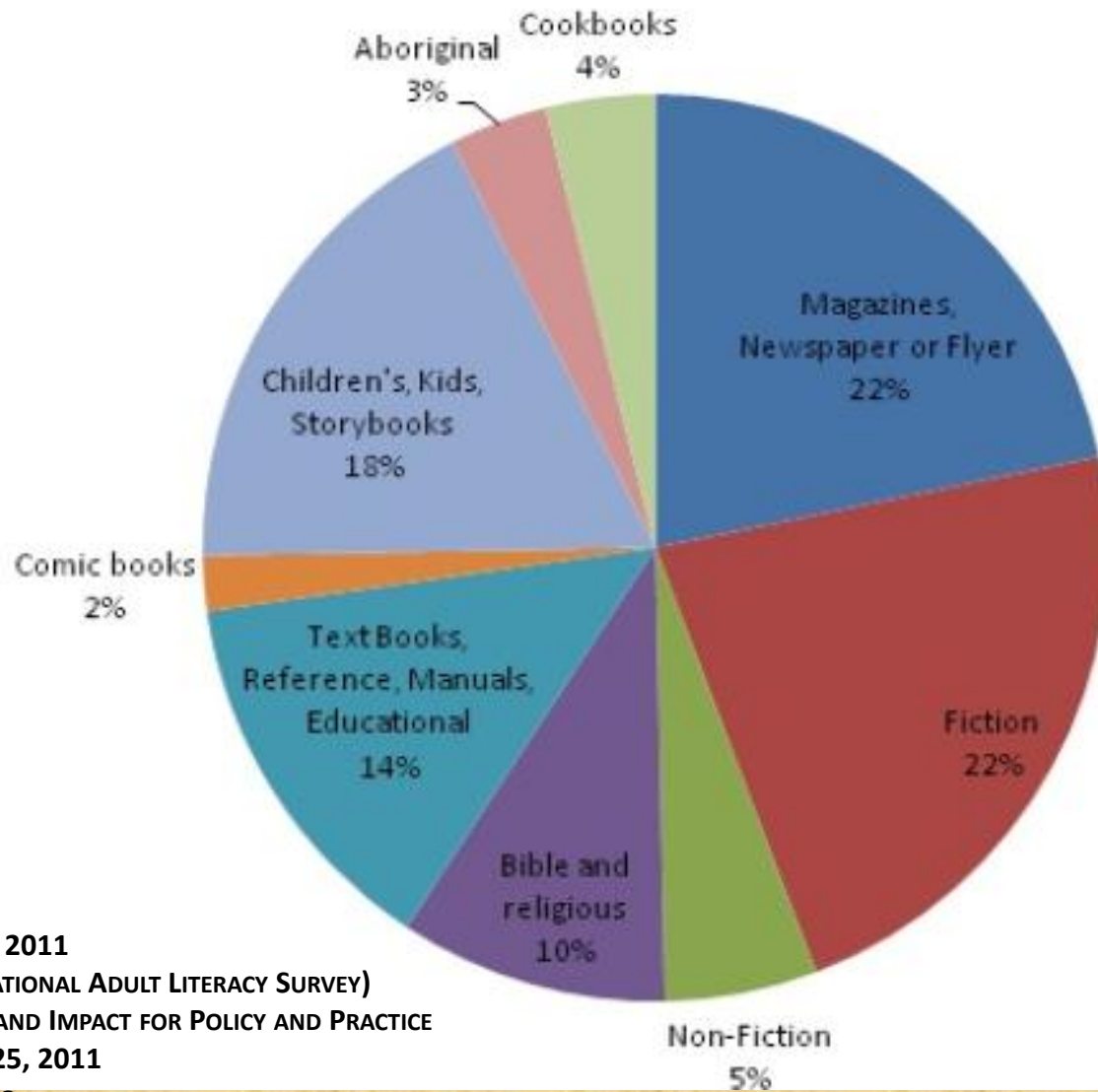
How often does anyone read or show picture books or tell stories to others in home



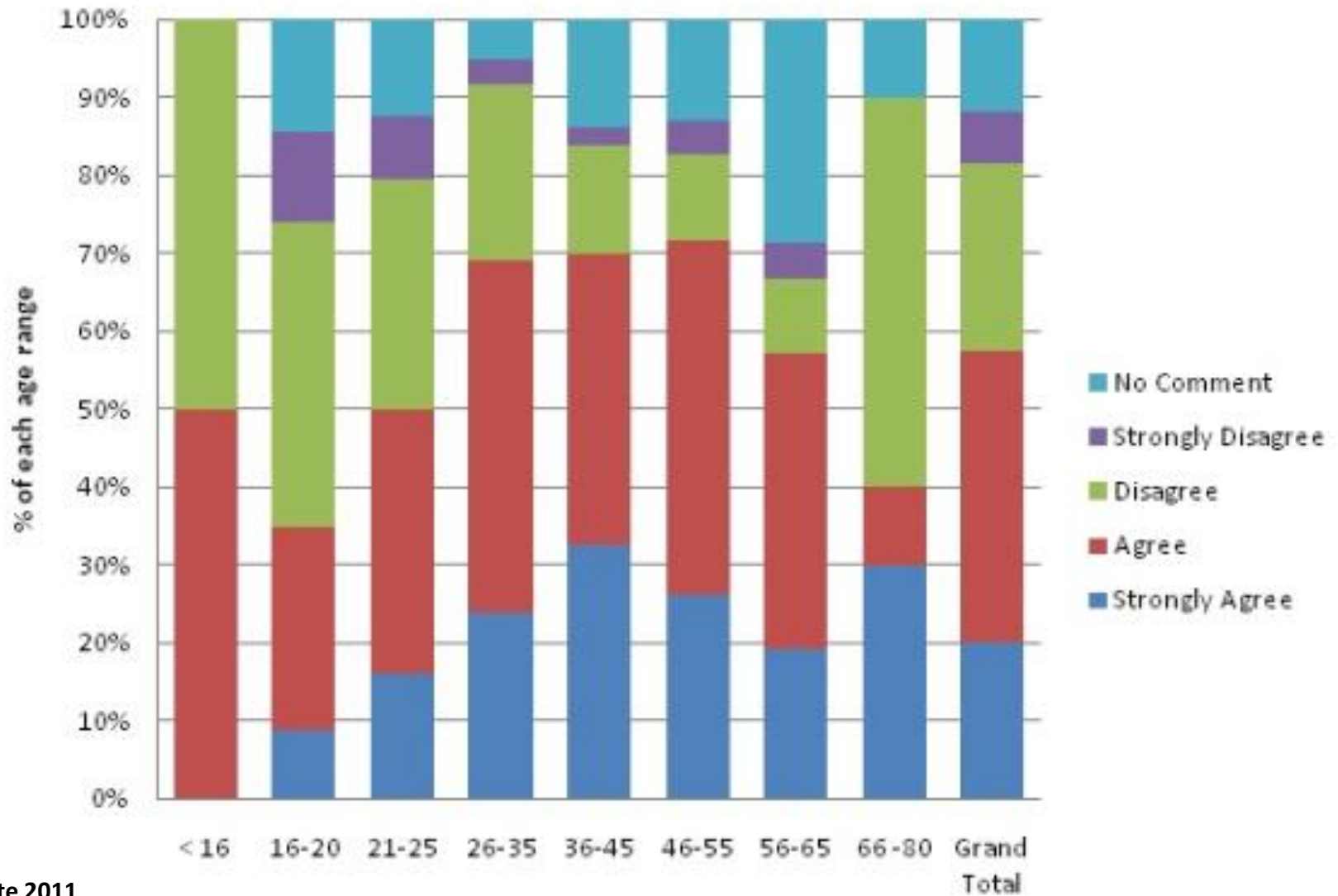
I enjoy listening to oral stories told by Elders and storytellers



Selected types of books in every home

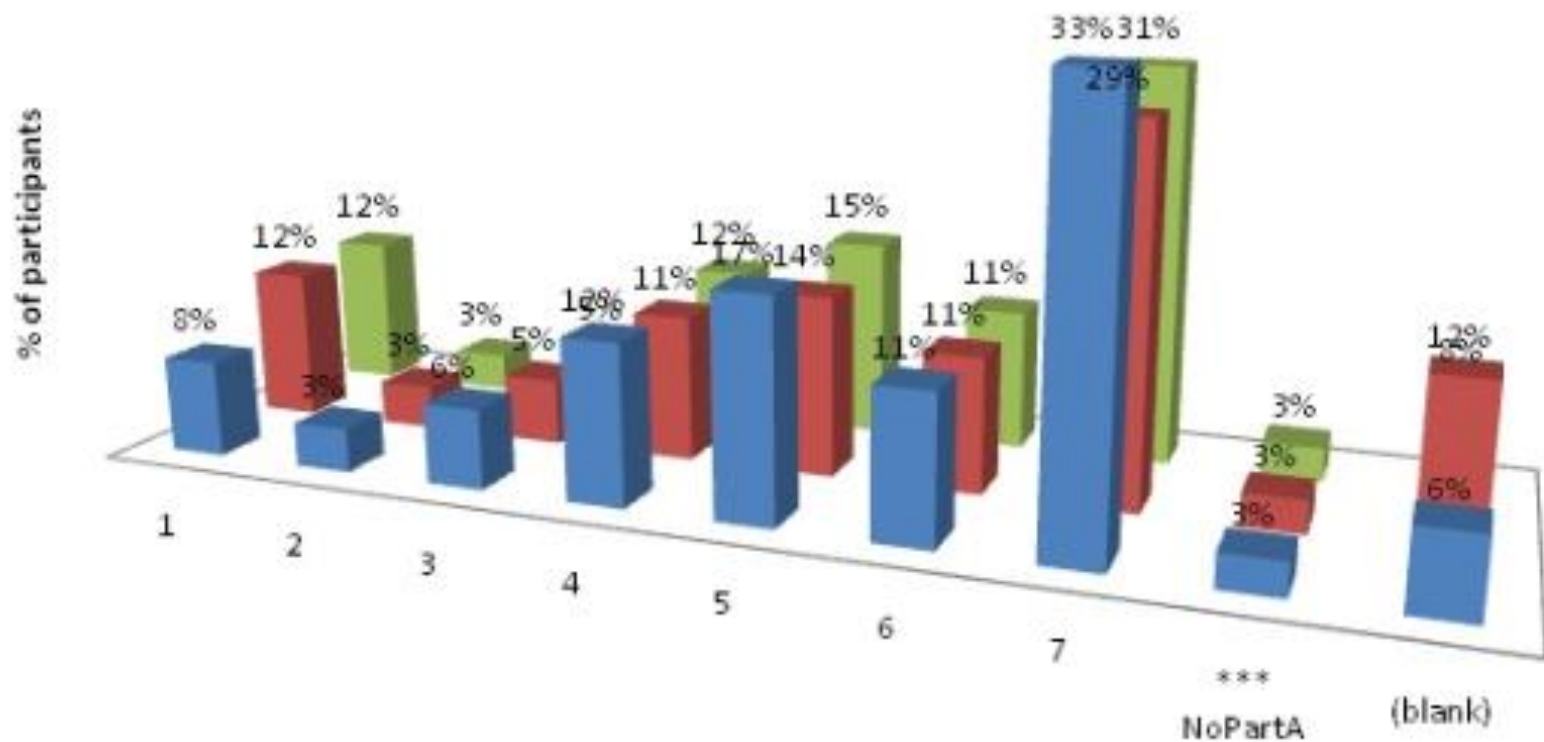


Reading is one of my favourite activities



Comfort with math...

■ ...at home ■ ...at work ■ ...in public



1 is a very strong no, 7 is a very strong yes

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS DESIGNED TOWARDS IMPROVING YOUR ENGLISH LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS?

1 = a very strong 'No' ← → 7 = a very strong 'Yes'

Answer	Female	% of Female	Male	% of Male	Other	No gender specified	Total	% of Total
1	22	10%	29	14%		2	53	11%
2	5	2%	5	2%			10	2%
3	9	4%	8	4%			17	4%
4	15	7%	14	7%		1	30	6%
5	23	10%	21	10%	2		46	10%
6	27	12%	30	15%		3	57	12%
7	115	50%	71	35%			189	41%
No Part A		0%		0%			12	3%
(blank)	14	6%	27	13%		6	51	11%
Grand Total	230		205		3	12	465	

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WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS...? EXAMPLE OF RESPONSES

- **“I will be strongly interested, as it would involve daily living in my position and with my children. Very important.”**
- **“For our people to get back the knowledge we lost in residential school, I personally would love to know and learn our Aboriginal literacy & numeracy skills.”**
- **“I would love to improve my literacy skills to help me reach my dream of being published some day.”**

AALAT Results



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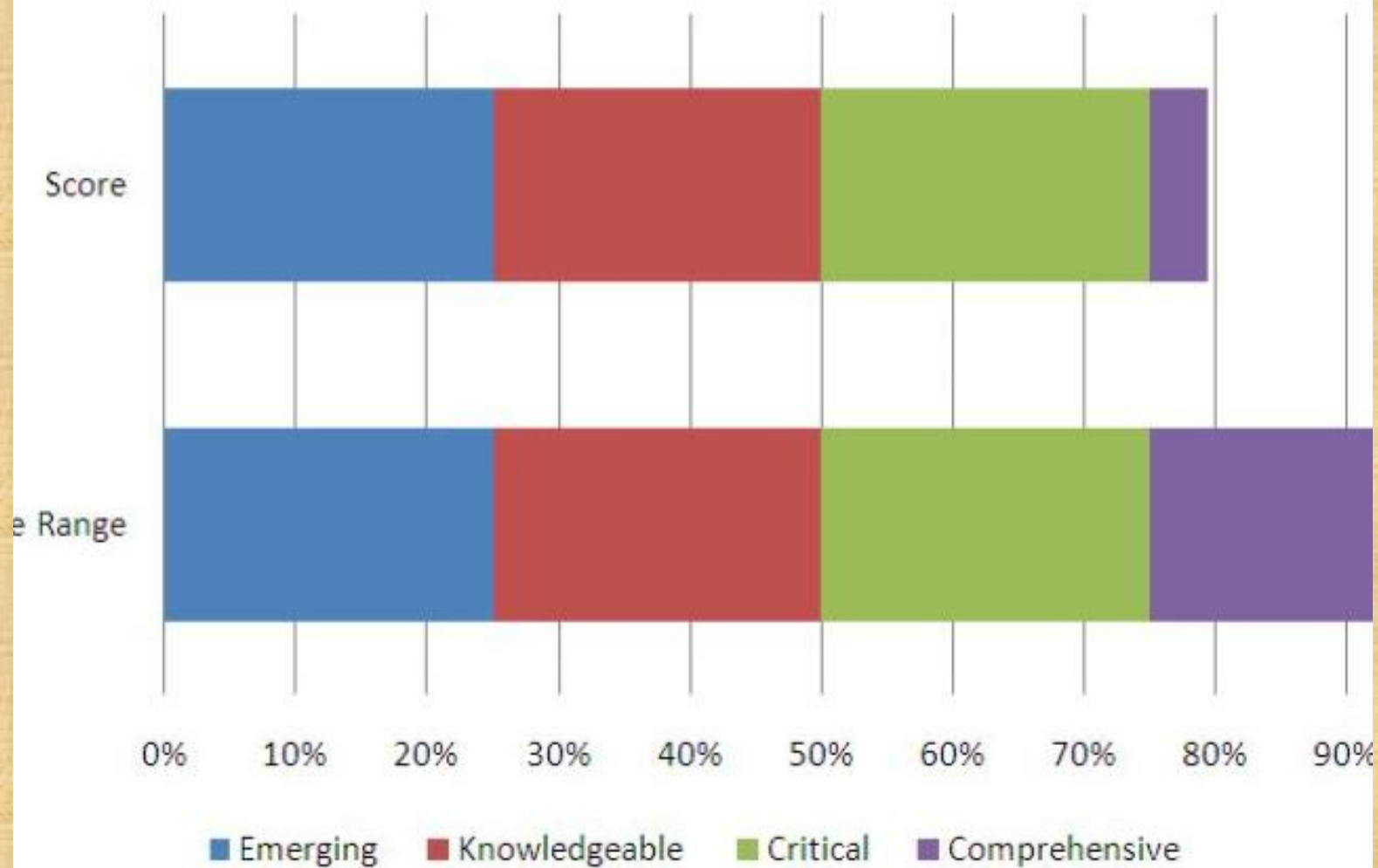
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Community Listening Score



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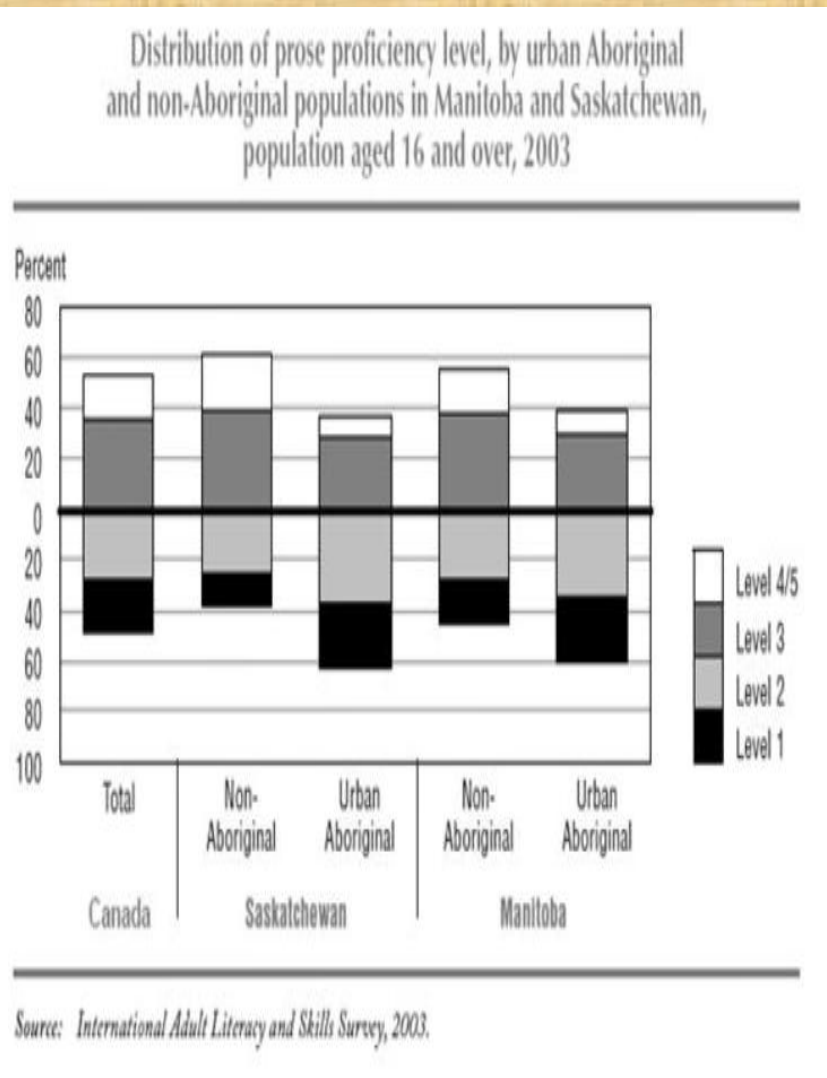
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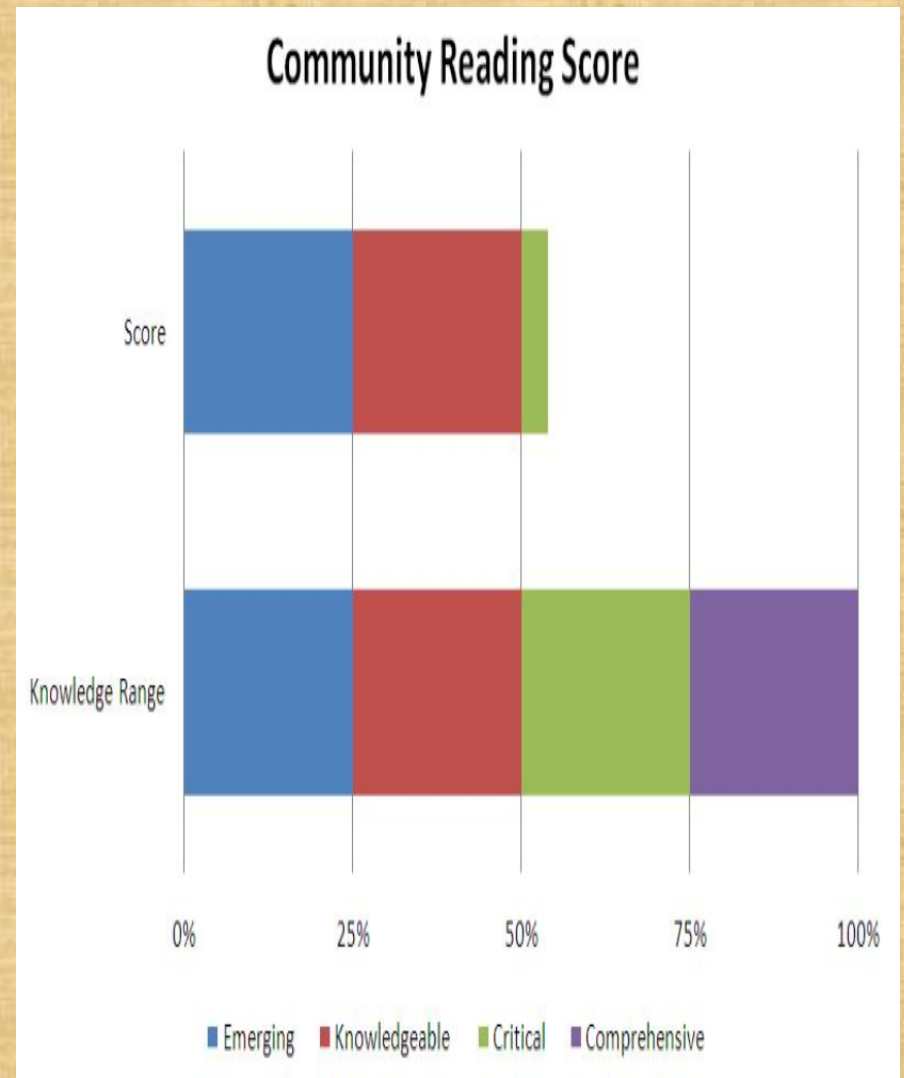
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IALSS Prose Results



AALAT Reading Results



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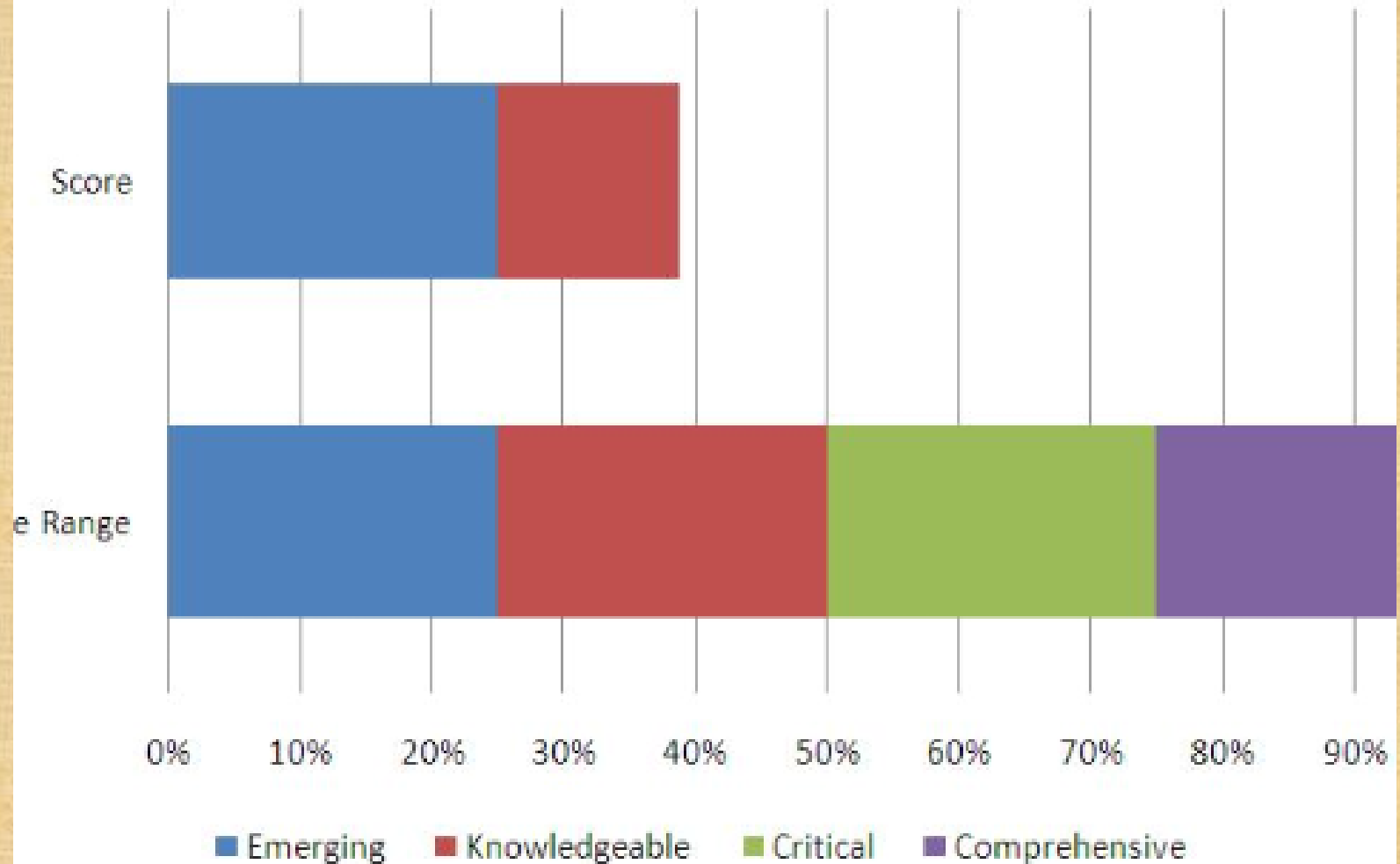
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Community Problem Solving Score



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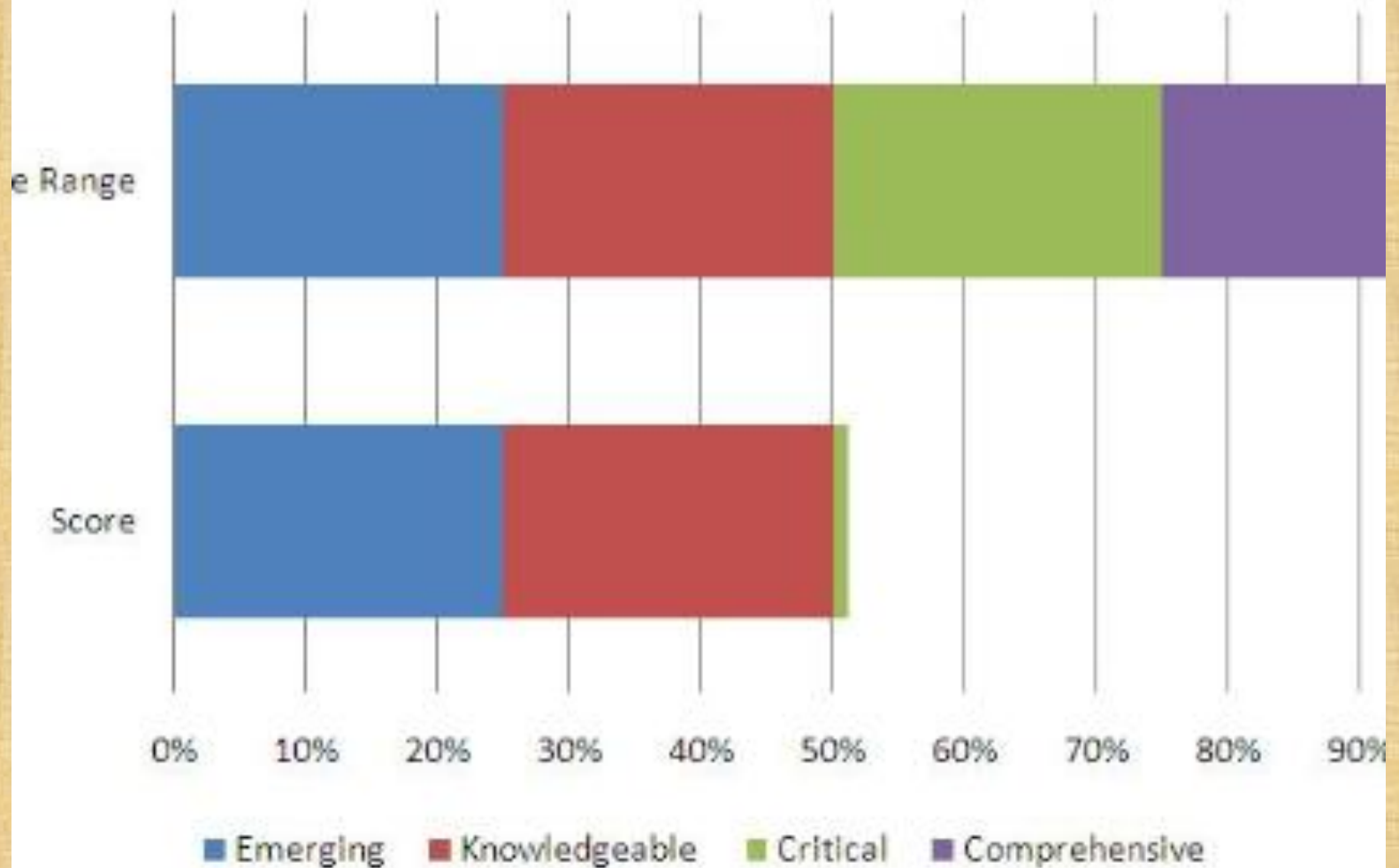
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Community Numeracy Score



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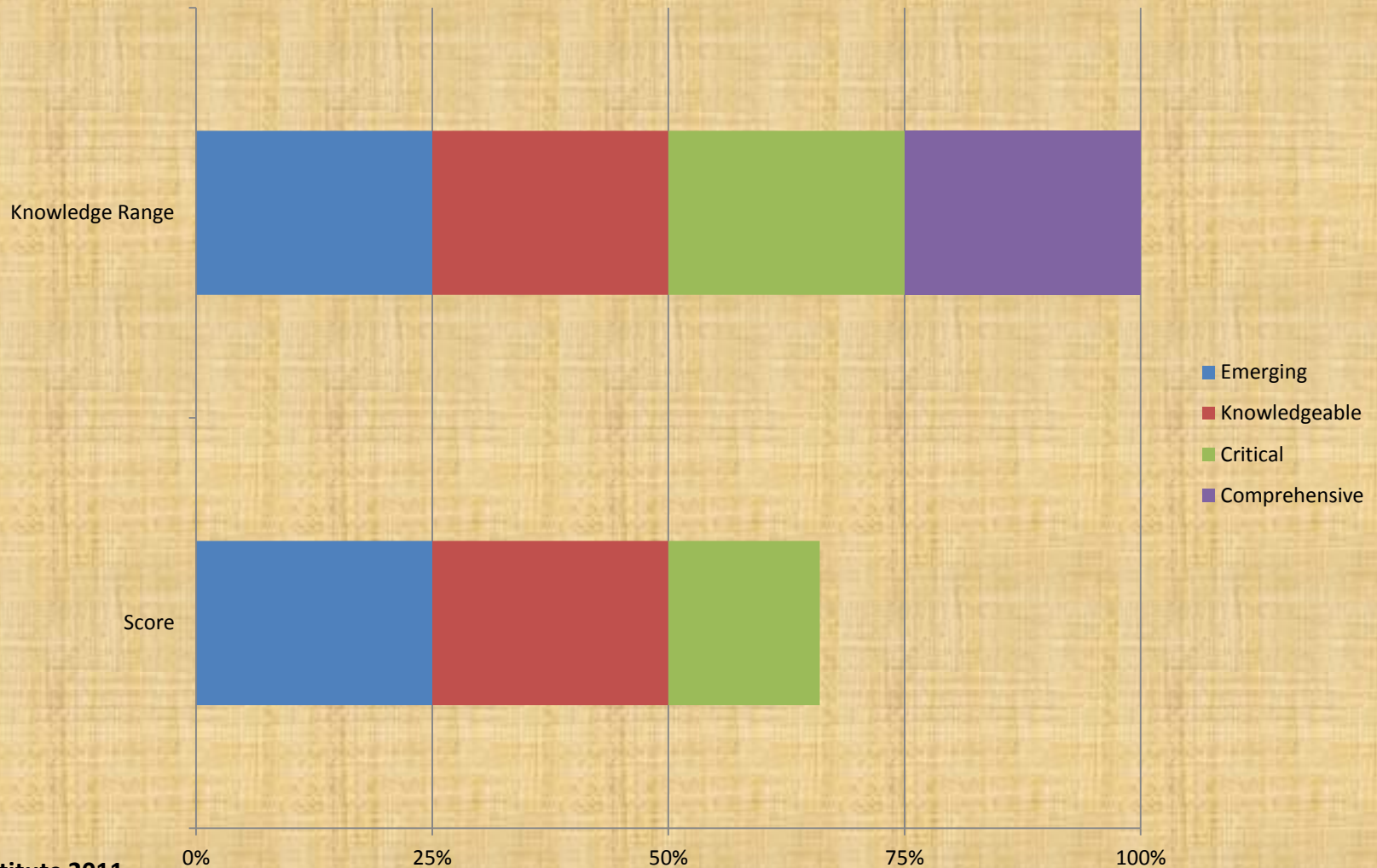
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Community Writing Score



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So now where do we
go from here?

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