

Adults in U.S. not as smart as those in other countries

By Richard Perez-Pena, New York Times

American adults lag well behind their counterparts in most other developed countries in the mathematical and technical skills needed for a modern workplace, according to a study released Tuesday.

The study, perhaps the most detailed of its kind, shows that the well-documented pattern of several other countries surging past the United States in students' test scores and young people's college graduation rates corresponds to a skills gap, extending far beyond school. In the United States, young adults in particular fare poorly compared with their international competitors of the same ages – not just in math and technology, but also in literacy.

More surprisingly, even middle-aged Americans – who, on paper, are among the best-educated people of their generation anywhere in the world – are barely better than middle of the pack in skills.

Arne Duncan, the education secretary, released a statement saying that the findings “show our education system hasn't done enough to help Americans compete – or position our country to lead – in a global economy that demands increasingly higher skills.”

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