

Supporters of Adult Low Performers in Literacy

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Content

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A short glimpse on recent quantitative research on adult literacy

European countries:

20 percent of adults in Europe lack the literacy skills they need to function fully in a modern society (EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy)

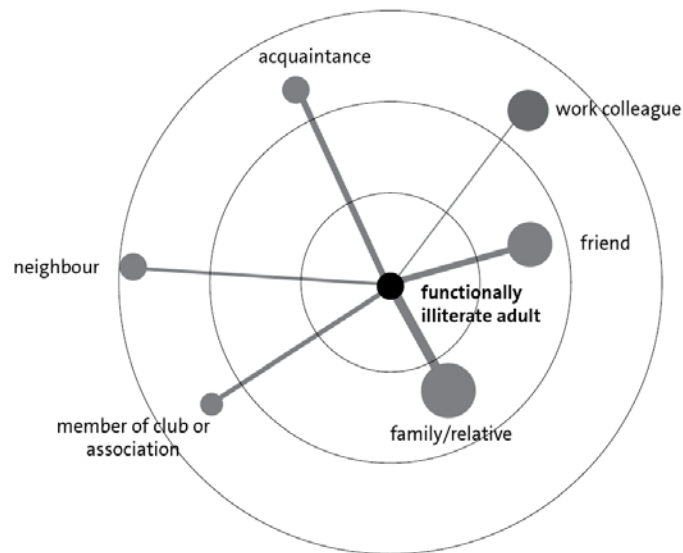
OECD countries:

different proportions of adults with low basic skills in OECD countries (PIAAC)

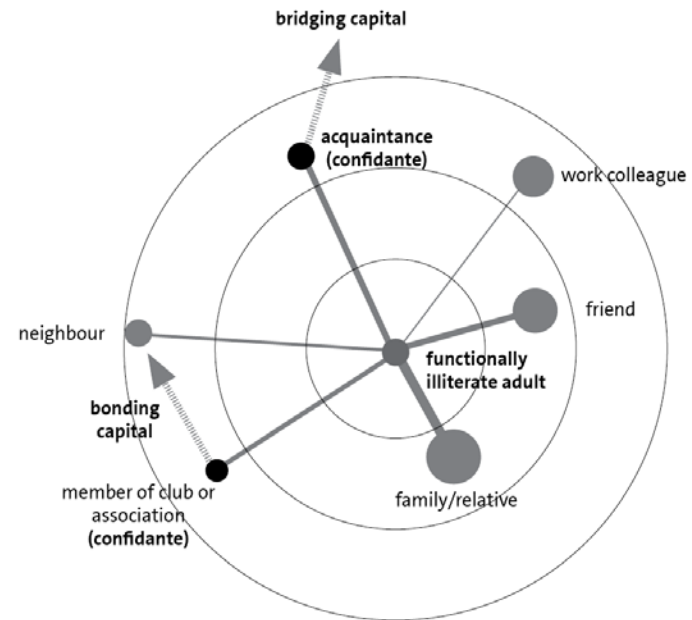
Germany:

7.5 million low literate adults (leo.)
20.000 participants each year

Shift in perspective



Research with a focus on functionally illiterate adults



Research on support networks with a focus on types of social capital of confidantes

Research questions

- **Proportion of knowledge and Fields of knowledge** (Do adults in Germany know other adults who have severe problems in reading and writing? Where does this knowledge occur)
- **Communication about the situation** (does knowledge lead to communication?)
- **Support** (Does knowledge lead to personal support in reading and writing?)
- **Interface to system of adult basic education** (Do supporters bridge the gap between low skilled readers/writers and ABE?)
- **Informal learning** (Are there informal settings of learning to be observed?)
- **Types of relationship** (Are there different types of supporting partnerships?)

Making of

Qualitative study

n=30 personal interviews

Field phase from February 2013 to October 2014

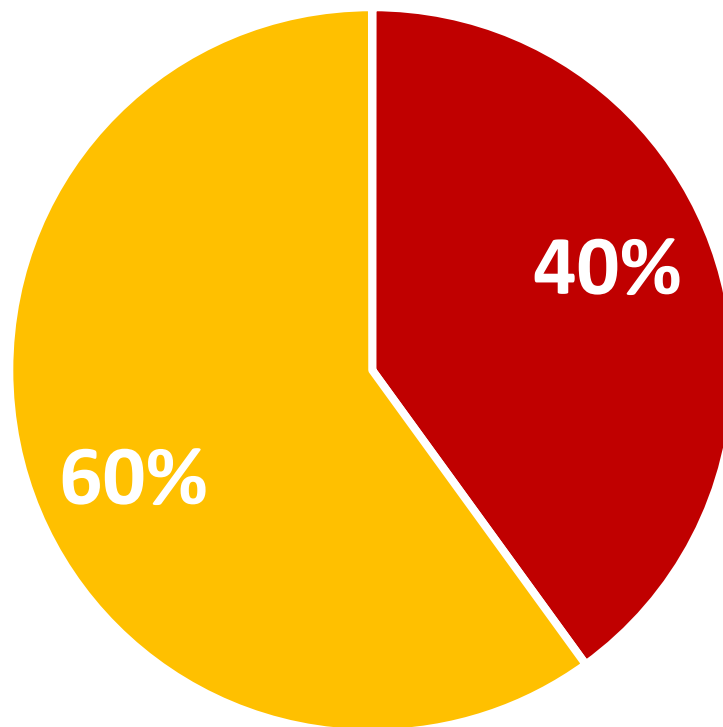
Quantitative study

n=1.511 interviews (telephone interviews CATI) in Hamburg

Development of the questionnaire highly inspired by qualitative interviews

Field phase: August and September 2014

Results: Proportion of knowledge

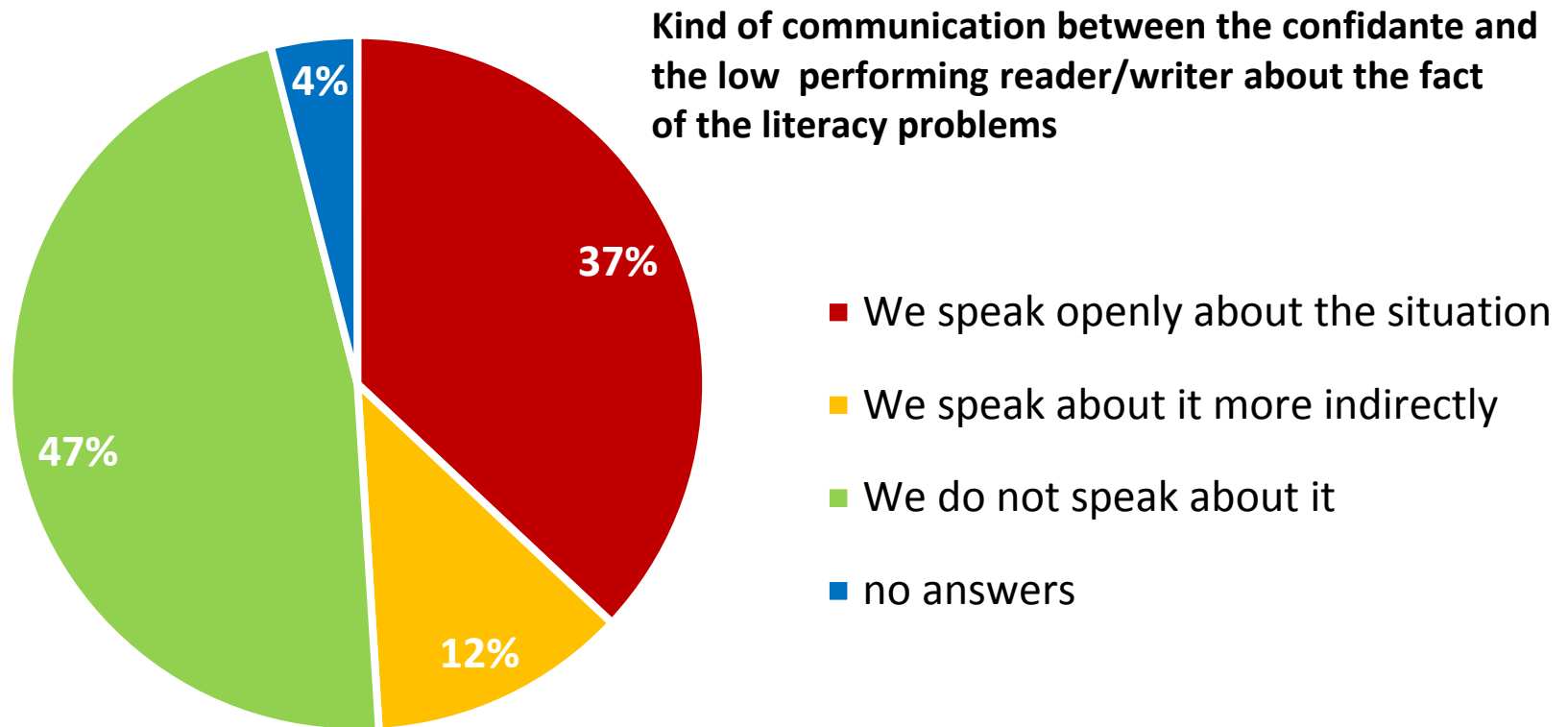


Proportion of adults in Hamburg who knows other adults with apparent difficulties in reading and/or writing in percent

- Confidants
- Non-Confidants

Source: Hamburg University, Umfeldstudie
n=1.511 adults in Hamburg

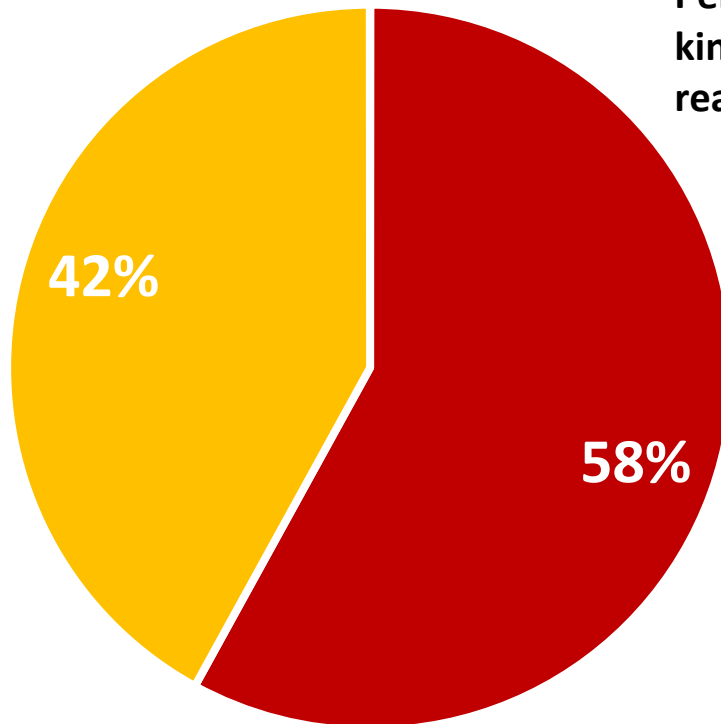
Results: Communication between the partners



Source: Hamburg University,
Umfeldstudie, n=562 adults in Hamburg

Results: Support

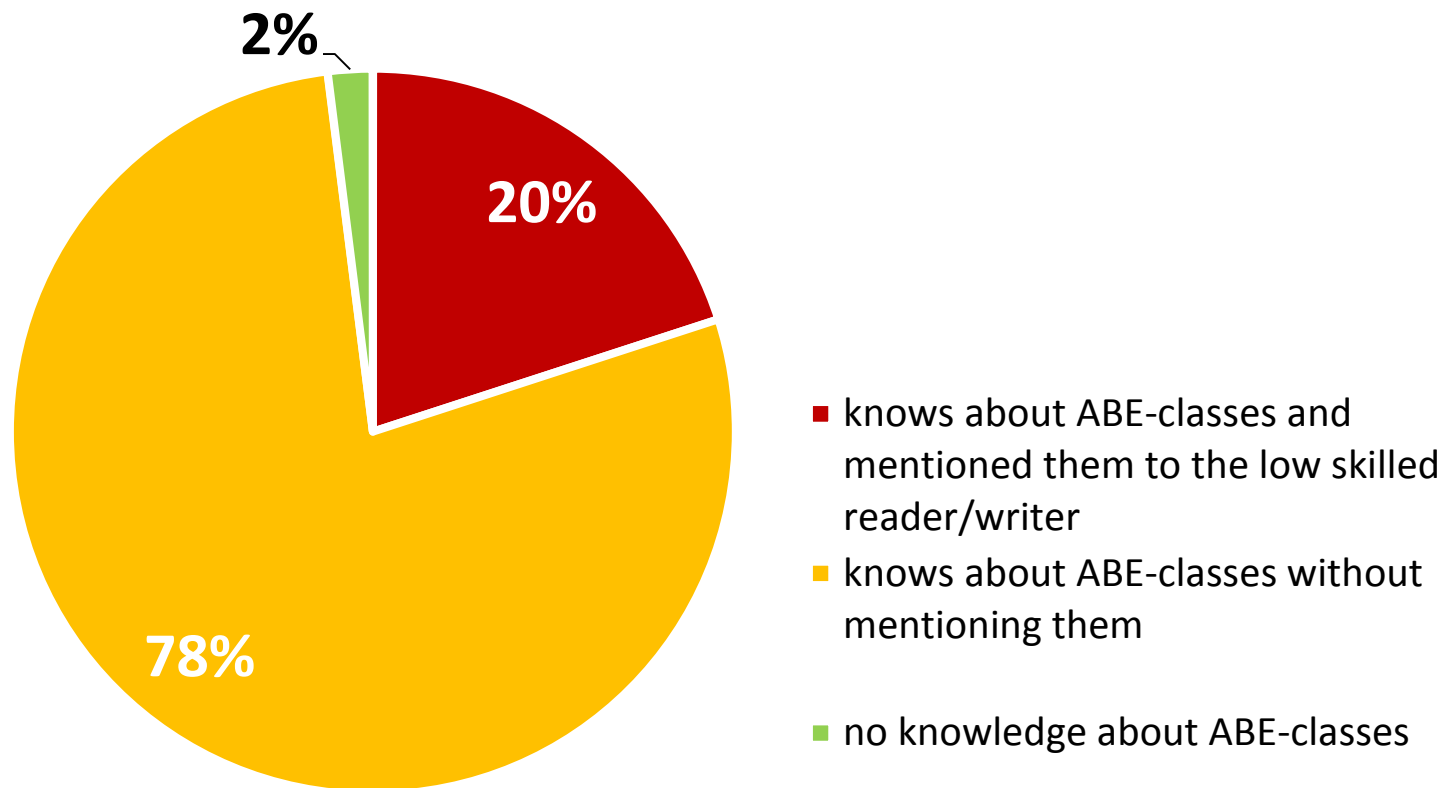
Percentage of confidantes who offer some kind of support for the low performing reader/writer



- providing support
- not providing support

Source: Hamburg University,
Umfeldstudie, n=562 adults in Hamburg

Results: Interface between individual and adult basic education



Source: Hamburg University,
Umfeldstudie, n=562 adults in Hamburg

Results: informal learning processes within the partnership

Example 1: Small music label

„Well, actually it was all misspelled, all higgledy-piggledy. You always had to double-check it. Sometimes it was really scary (...) but he was very engaged and if somebody said something or corrected him, this turned to be normal. (...) And I guess just by doing so every day, step by step it improved. One day I realized that and I told him: ‘You now for the first time are writing some text and we do not have to double-check it anymore’”

Example 2: Assistant in communication department

Similar structure of support by constantly correcting written texts.
Improvement of proficiency after several months.

Results: Types of confidantes of low performers in literacy

Type	Characteristics
Pragmatic confidanteship	Support through learning together, very positive image of person affected, “capable of learning”, no burden
Taboo	In particular family, emotional burden, substantial tasks are often taken on
Unsettled confidanteship	“How should I react to the situation?”, image of person affected is unclear, no support, no referral to further education
Caring confidanteship	A lot of tasks are taken on, image of person affected as “in need of help”, very emotionally involved
Accepting confidanteship	Image of person affected “they get by”, no burden, little support, “nothing more is required”
Resigned confidanteship	Affected person has multiple problems, attempts to refer them to further education have often failed, tasks taken on their behalf
Distanced confidanteship	No support, as not close enough to person affected, no burden

Source: Hamburg University, Umfeldstudie, n=30 interviews

Conclusions

1. High proportion of knowledge in society (40%):
Providers of ABE or information campaigns should address not only prospective learners themselves but also the society as a whole.
2. The common notion of functional illiteracy as a strong taboo should be revised.
3. Third: Non-formal learning is one way of improving literacy skills.
But it seems quite likely that in partnerships of support we can find a range of informal learning structures.

Thank you very much for your attention!

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Blog

<http://blogs.epb.uni-hamburg.de/umfeldstudie/>

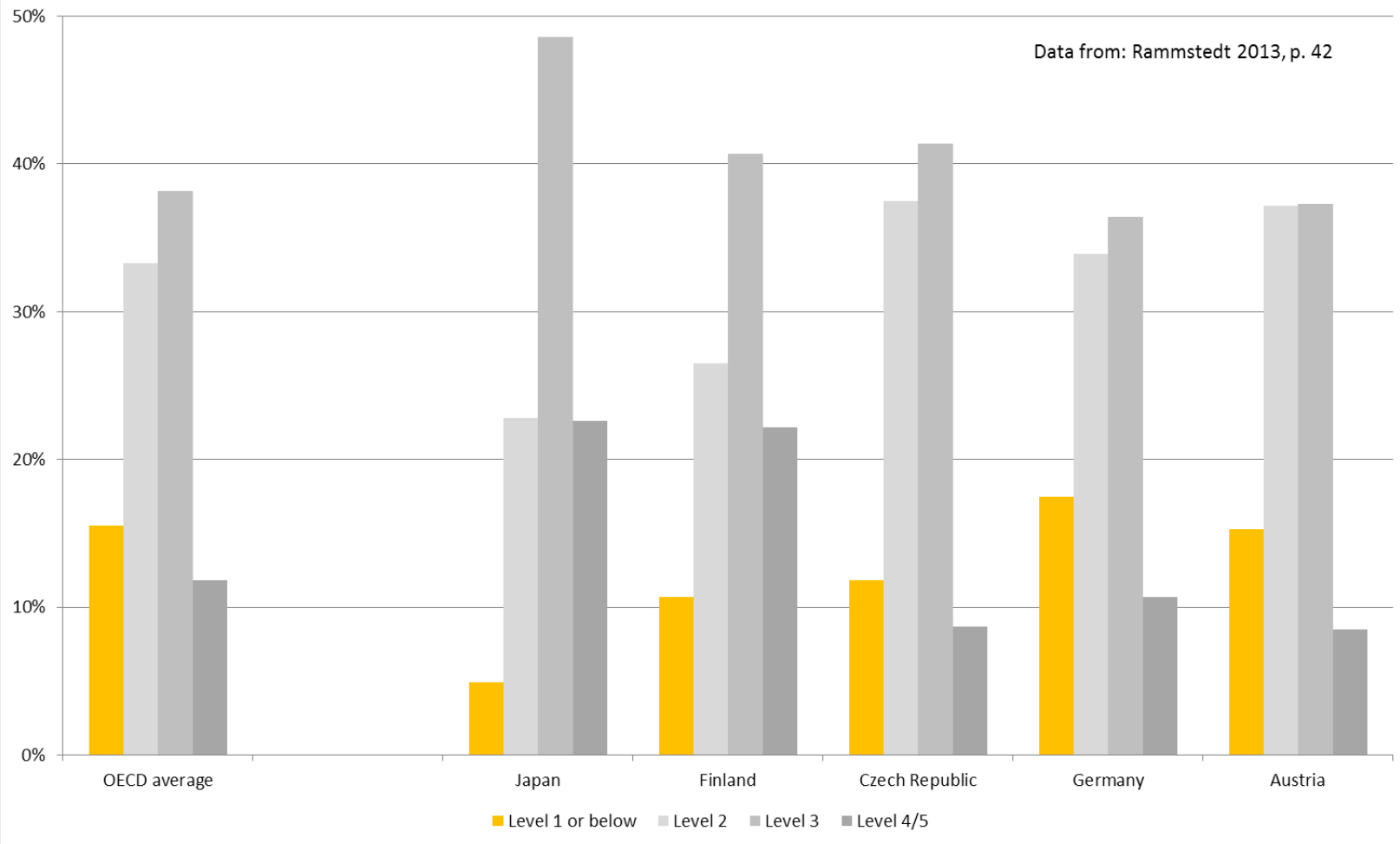
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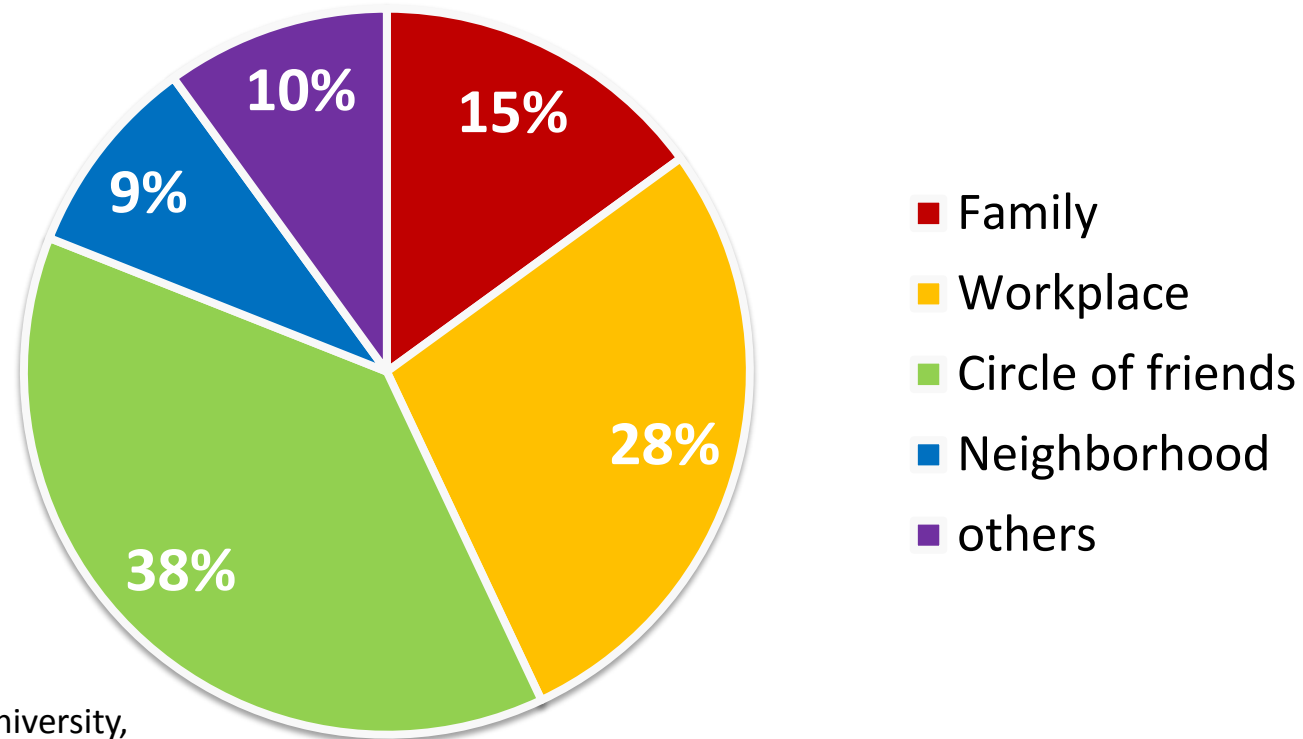
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PIAAC-Results - Proficiency Levels in Literacy (selected countries)



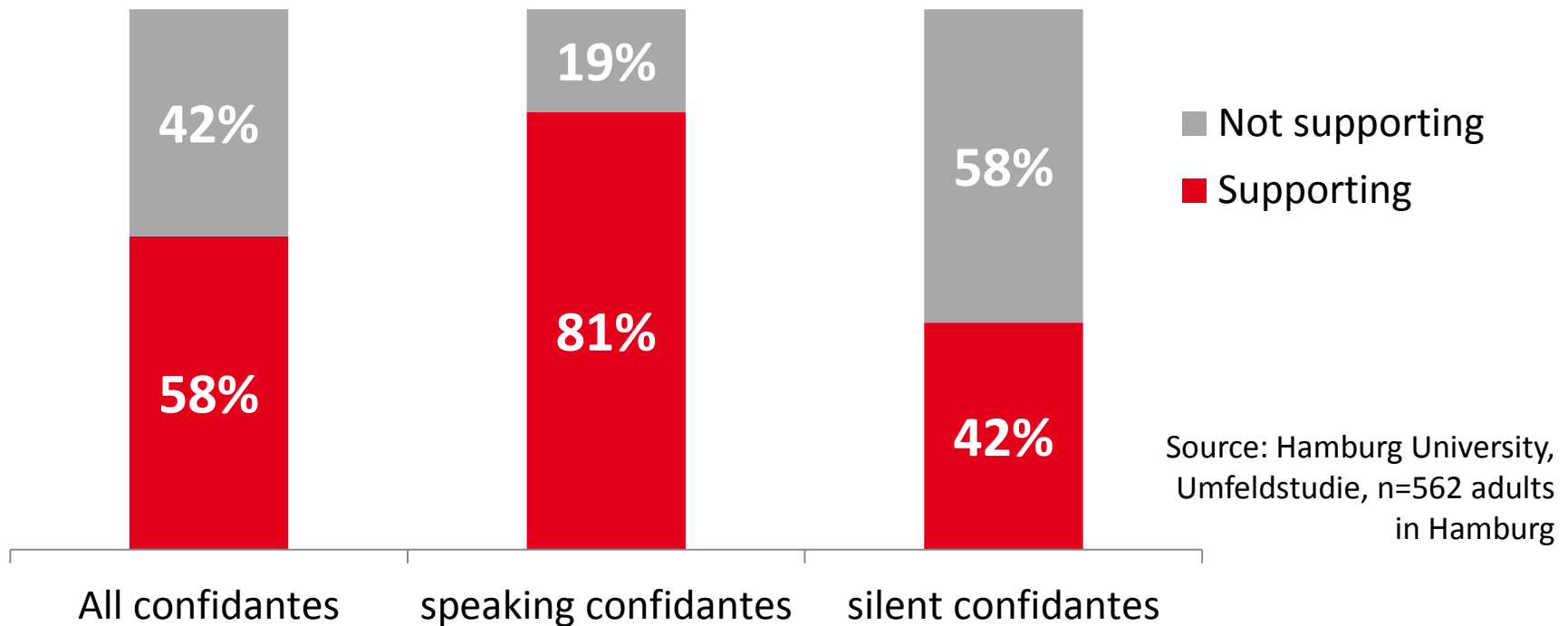
Results: Fields of knowledge



Source: Hamburg University,
Umfeldstudie, n=562 adults in Hamburg

Results: Support

Proportion of confidantes offering support (once or several times)



Research Results vs. Stereotypes

	PARTICIPANTS (AlphaPanel n=542)	LOW LITERATE ADULTS (leo. n= 8.436)
Without regular formal education at school	76%	20%
Living alone (without partner)	62%	32%
Unemployed	29%	17%
Risk for exclusion	high	???

AlphaPanel: Rosenblatt & Bilger 2011, Leo.: Grotlüschen & Riekmann 2012