

## Are persons with a limited health literacy less satisfied with the German health care system?

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### Background:

Health literacy (HL) is the ability to find, understand, appraise and apply health information with the aim of using this information to make decisions affecting the own health. Previous studies showed limited HL in around 50% of the German population. The assessment of the German health care system from the perspective of persons with limited HL is subject of this study.

### Methods:

In 2018, a survey was conducted among 20,000 persons with private health insurance in Germany. Survey items were based on the intermediate and final goals of the WHO Health Systems Framework. Questions comprised, for example, satisfaction with the health care system, responsiveness (e.g. perceived discrimination), access (e.g. off-hour care), and safety (e.g. medical errors). HL was assessed with the HLS-EU-Q16 questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square test were used to analyze the data and group differences.

### Results:

Overall, 3,601 participants (18.0%) completed the survey (58.6 years  $\pm$  14.6; 64.6% male). Limited HL was seen with 44.6% (8.5% inadequate & 36.1% problematic), whereas 55.4% did not report limited HL (43.4% sufficient & 12.0% excellent). Very satisfied with the German health care system were 6.5% of the persons with limited HL (vs. 14.3%). Perceived discrimination within the last 12 months was reported by 11.0% of the persons with limited HL (vs. 5.1%). To get medical care on weekends, holidays or evenings outside hospitals was rated as “very hard” by 34.6% of the persons with limited HL (vs. 23.6%). The feeling that they experienced medical errors was reported by 18.7% with limited HL (vs. 11.5%) and 5.9% were unsure (vs. 2.2%). All results were statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### Conclusions:

Persons with limited HL were less satisfied with the overall German health care system in comparison to persons with not limited HL and reported more often perceived discrimination. Strengthening HL could help to improve satisfaction with the health care system.

### Key messages:

- Limited HL among persons with private health insurance in Germany was found in 44.6% of the survey’s participants.
- Persons with limited HL indicated to be less satisfied with the German health care system and perceived more often discrimination in their health care.