

The Economic Impact of Low Health Literacy in Arkansas

- Health literacy is how well a person can find, understand, and use health information needed for good health.
- 37% of adults in Arkansas have low health literacy (2003 NAALS)
- Even people who have gone to college or have higher income can have low health literacy
- Low health literacy is linked to
 - More hospitalizations
 - More urgent health care
 - Less use of shots and tests to find disease early
 - Taking meds wrong
 - Poorer total health
 - Higher death rates
- Low health literacy costs Arkansas \$1.3 to 3 billion each year in health care costs
- Arkansas counties with lower health literacy have higher healthcare cost per person (see map)
- The UAMS Center for Health Literacy suggests public policy actions focused on both:
 - Making health information simpler to understand and use and
 - Improving health literacy skills of Arkansans

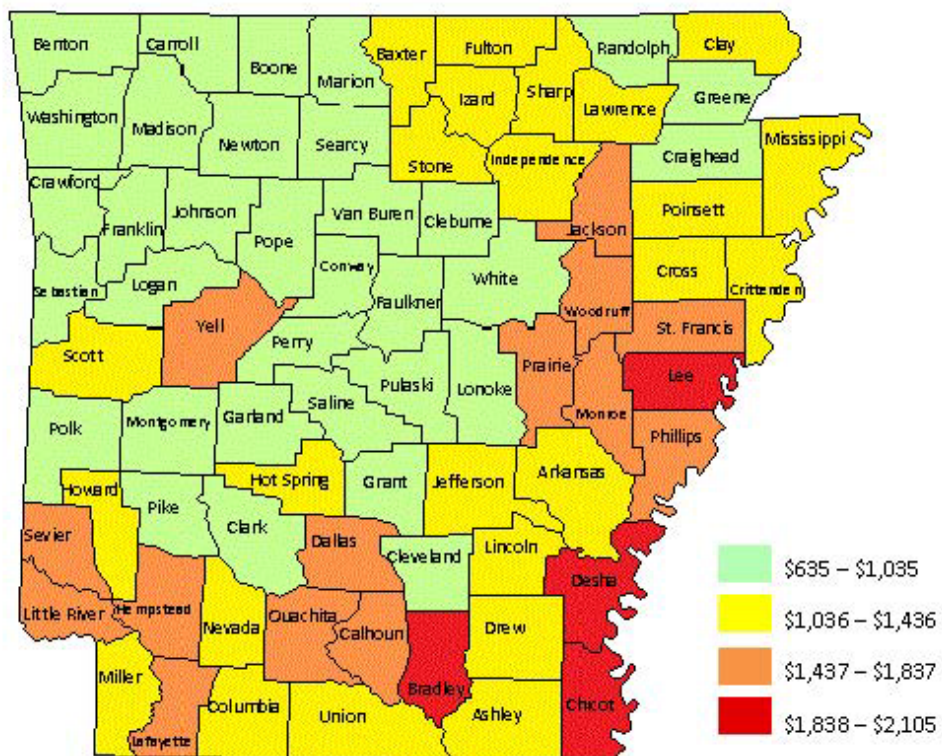


Figure 1. Per person Healthcare Costs (\$) Due to Low Health Literacy across Counties