

3.8 Million Kids Still Working in Brazil

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Child labor has declined in the Brazil by 1%, on the average, between 2002 and 2003. This is one of the findings contained in the National Household Sample Survey (Pnad) from the IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística—Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) released last week.

But the number remains large. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that there are approximately 3.8 million working children and adolescents between 5 and 16 years of age in Brazil.

Nevertheless, the profile of juvenile workers has changed. Data from the ILO and the IBGE reveal that children who look for work are older, between 10 and 17.

Moreover, they tend to live in the urban areas of the Southeast region. The study also shows that the majority is unable to find work, because few firms in Brazil persist in hiring minors.

The Northeast and South continue to employ children. However, most are engaged in family farming.

"Regions with small agricultural zones have less child labor," observes Walker Roberto Moura, head of the IBGE office in the Federal District.

Unicef data indicate that two of every ten working children do not attend school.

According to the Fund, the illiteracy rate among these children reaches 20.1%, as against 7.6% for children who don't work. Among adolescents, the educational consequences are also pronounced.

In the 15-17 age bracket, only a quarter of the young people who work manages to finish the eight years of basic instruction. Among those who don't work, this percentage is 44.2%.

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