

A Mere One-Quarter of Brazilians Are Fully Literate

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Friday, 09 September 2005

Only 26% of the Brazilian population in the 15-64 age bracket is fully literate. 70% of this group is 34 years old or under, and, among these younger literates, 53% are women, and 47% are men.

These data were announced Thursday, September 8, International Literacy Day, in the southeastern Brazilian city of São Paulo.

The data are part of the fifth national survey based on the National Indicator of Functional Literacy (Inaf), a joint effort by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Paulo Montenegro Institute and Educational Action.

The study covered two thousand people, who were questioned about topics related to family, education, and reading and writing habits.

According to the director of the Paulo Montenegro Institute, Fábio Montenegro, the results of the 2005 survey did not differ much from those of previous years.

He emphasizes that, at present, 68% of the people in Brazil are functional illiterates, that is, they have a difficult time interpreting texts and lack writing skills.

7% are total illiterates, 30% are at the rudimentary level (they can read, but without understanding what they read, and write, but without being able to express themselves), 38% are at basic level two (they are able to read, understand, and express themselves better than those at the rudimentary level, but still inadequately), and 26% are at level three, which corresponds to those who have reading and writing mastery.

Montenegro points out that, prior to the inception of the survey five years ago, the country lacked an indicator of functional literacy. All that existed were indicators of total illiteracy. For this reason, the partners decided to create a homemade methodology to evaluate Brazilian literacy levels.

"After five years of mapping, we observe that the patient still has a fever, and the fever does not seem to have abated."

Therefore, according to Montenegro, the two institutions organized the First Encounter of Reading, Writing and Mathematics for Literacy Instruction (Lema), which took place Thursday, September 8, in São Paulo, to gather successful initiatives from all over the country. The goal is to undertake joint actions that will accelerate the battle against illiteracy.

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