

Brazil's Disarmament Campaign Saves Close to 6,000 Lives

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Without the disarmament campaign and statute, over 5,563 people would have been fatal victims of firearms last year. This figure represents a 15.4% reduction in this type of death in comparison with 2003.

Between 1999 and 2003, Brazil registered an average annual growth rate of 7.2% in this type of death. Had this trend been maintained, there should have been 41,682 deaths in 2004, but only 36,119 actually occurred, that is, 5,563 fewer than expected. This was the first decline in this statistic in Brazil in 13 years.

According to the The National Index of Firearm Deaths, announced on September 2, the Disarmament Statute had a significant impact in reducing violence. In the first half of 2004, when the Statute took effect, there was a 12.5% decline in firearm deaths.

The study also shows that, after the inauguration of the firearm collection campaign, the results were even better, attaining the level of 18% in deaths avoided in the second half of the year.

The disarmament campaign has already gathered over 443 firearms around the country, more than twice what the government anticipated. The initial expectation was for 80 thousand weapons to be turned in. This was later revised to 200 thousand.

In some states, such as São Paulo, Mato Grosso, Sergipe, and Paraíba, the decline in the number of deaths surpassed 30%. Altogether, 20 states and the Federal District registered lower indices than were projected.

The study shows that Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, and Espírito Santo have the highest indices of firearm deaths, with rates around 40 deaths per 100 thousand inhabitants. Of the 36,119 deaths registered in 2004, 38.3% occurred in the capitals, where 23.8% of the Brazilian population lives.

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