

## Illiteracy Rate in Some Brazilian States Runs from 20 to 30%

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A 2004 survey found that Brazil's illiteracy rate was 11.4%; that is, 11.4% of the population 15 years of age or older declared that they could not read or write.

For the sake of comparison, illiteracy rates in some other Latin American nations are: Mexico (9.7%), Chile (4.3%), Argentina (2.8%) and Cuba (0.2%). In China, the illiteracy rate is 9.1%.

The illiteracy problem was most serious in remote rural areas where the rate rises in some cases to over 25%. In urban areas the rate is 8.7%.

Brazil continues to have enormous regional differences, even in the illiteracy rate. It was highest in the Northeast, reaching 19.4% in the state of Sergipe and 29.5% in Alagoas.

The lowest illiteracy rates (below 5%) were in the Distrito Federal (4.2%) and the states of Santa Catarina (4.8%) and Rio de Janeiro (4.8%).

Despite the progress that has occurred in education in recent years, according to data released at the end of last year, illiteracy persisted among 10.5% of the Brazilian population aged 10 or more in 2004. This index was 10.6% in 2003.

The survey also showed that 2.9% of children and adolescents between the ages of 7 and 14 did not attend school in 2004. In regional terms, the lowest indices of children who did not attend school were in the Southeast (1.9%) and the South (2.2%).

The highest indices were in the North (5.1%) and the Northeast (3.9%). In the Center-West, the index stood at 2.8%.

The majority of students aged 5 and over were enrolled in public schools (80.9%). At university level, public institutions accounted for 26.1% of the student population. That is, three out of every four university students attended private institutions.

At the high school level, public schools concentrated 85% of the student population, and in fundamental education, 89%. At the pre-school level the public school system handled 75.7% of the total number of children enrolled in 2004.

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