

Educational Statistics In Guatemala

According to UNESCO, in Guatemala only 74.5% of the population age 15 and over is literate, the lowest literacy rate in Central America. There are many issues connected to this statistic.

Under Funded: Guatemala's spending on education is one of the lowest in the world (International Journal of Educational Development).

The current state of education in Guatemala is significantly under-funded. Many classrooms nationwide, especially in rural Guatemala, do not meet minimum standards for classroom space, teaching materials, classroom equipment and furniture, and water/sanitation (document published by the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Miami).

With more than half the population of Guatemalans living below the poverty line, it is hard for children going to school, to afford the rising cost of uniforms, books, supplies and transportation — none of which are supplied by the government. This is exacerbated by the fact that, for poorer students, time spent in school could be time better spent working to sustain the family. Poverty is thus the main deterrent to schooling for indigenous students—poverty and rural residence increases the likelihood of school incompleteness and non-enrollment.

The Indigenous Population: A Human Development document made by the Development Program of the United Nations in 2011 reports that students in Guatemala attend less years of schooling compared to other countries in the region. As stated above, 25.5% of the population are illiterate, with illiteracy rates up to more than 60% in the indigenous population. Indigenous people make up about 42% of the population in Guatemala and mostly reside in poor rural areas with little access to post-primary education. Indigenous students achieve lower than non-indigenous (ladino) students in schooling possibly due to greater poverty and lack of indigenous language involvement in public schooling.

Language: (Spanish is the official language of instruction as mandated by the Education Law in 1965). Monolingual Spanish instruction is used in linguistically diverse classrooms as there are about 20 Mayan languages in Guatemala. This trans-

lates to high rates of repetition of grades, for instance up to 30% in first grade. Compared to native Spanish speaking ladino students, Indigenous students often enter school without Spanish fluency and due to the language gap, achieve lower than other students.

Rural Communities: Parents in rural areas have less schooling and lower socioeconomic status; their children usually attend a poor education environment: schools with fewer educational materials and resources, inadequate school infrastructure, and low-quality educators, according to the International Journal of Educational Development. They also tend to perform worse on exams than students in other areas across Guatemala.

The recruitment and retaining of quality teachers pose a large problem in rural areas. Apart from the meagre pay, most teachers come from larger towns, where they have been able to receive higher education and, faced with a daily commute of a few hours to reach rural areas, many seek employment in larger towns first.

It is especially hard for children living in rural areas to attend primary school. Most drop out due to the lack of access and largely inadequate facilities.

Gender Biases: Gender inequality in education is common — male literacy and school enrollment exceeds female rates in all aspects. Out of the 2 million children who do not attend school in Guatemala, the majority are indigenous girls living in rural areas. Most families subscribe to patriarchal traditions that tie women to a domestic role and the majority would rather send a son than a daughter to school if they could afford it, says John Edwards in his publication called Education and Poverty in Guatemala.