

# Pakistan's literacy rate on a downward spiral

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Kashif Abbasi | Published September 9, 2023





Schoolchildren participate in an awareness walk in Islamabad on Friday on the occasion of Wo



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**ISLAMABAD: At a time when the world is celebrating literacy day, Pakistan does not have much to boast about in the wake of unsatisfactory literacy figures.**

According to Education Secretary Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry, the actual literary figure stood at 59.3pc compared to 62.8pc reflected in the Economic Survey 2022-23.

Talking to Dawn, Mr Chaudhry said the rate mentioned in the Economic Survey was based on a projected figure in the absence of the latest census. However, he said following the latest national census, the actual literary rate was calculated at 59.3pc.

He went on to say that this figure was higher than the previous actual figure, therefore “one can't say that the country's literacy rate had declined”.

## *Secretary claims situation has improved in comparison to previous figures*

In fact it had seen some improvement, he added.

The federal secretary said the literary rate in all the provinces had gone up, with Punjab witnessing an increase from 66.1pc to 66.3pc; Sindh, 61.1pc to 61.8pc; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 52.4pc to 55.1pc while Balochistan saw an increase from 53.9pc to 54.5pc.

“So now our actual literary rate is 59.13 pc,” he added.

Official sources said besides giving it the least priority, education sector also received the lowest funding, which was one of the main reasons for a decline in literacy rate.

According to a teacher at a federal government school, “60pc is not a satisfactory figure as 40pc of our population still remains illiterate”.

It is relevant to note here that Pakistan is spending less than 2pc of its GDP on education.

The Economic Survey 2022-23 had pointed out that the cumulative education expenditure made by the federal and provincial governments in fiscal year 2022 was estimated at 1.7pc of the GDP.

“Expenditures on education-related activities during FY2022 witnessed an increase of 37.3pc, which reached Rs1,101.7 billion from Rs802.2 billion,” it had stated.

The survey had also said that there were 32pc out-of-school children, with more girls than boys deprived of education.

It said that in Balochistan, 47pc children were out of school, followed by Sindh which had 44pc, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 32pc and Punjab had 24pc out-of-school children.

Pakistan had the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, with over 23 million children not attending schools.

Besides, quality of education also remains one of the main concerns of students.

Various survey reports on quality of education have painted a gloomy picture, stating that a substantial number of fifth graders were neither able to read a sentence in English nor Urdu.

Similarly, quality of higher education in the country has also fallen below the mark. During the last couple of years, a numbers of PhD holders have staged protests in Islamabad, seeking jobs in government universities.

“There is a need to reset our priorities; we will have to pay special focus on our health and education sectors. There is a need to provide adequate funding and patronage to the education sector in the greater interest of the country,” said an official of the education ministry.

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