

LITERACY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
ALTA NATIONAL LITERACY SURVEY 1994

Functionally illiterate: 21.3% (UWI) - 23% (ALTA) of the adult population (i.e. those over 15 years old) can read and write so little that it hinders their everyday activities. Since the two literacy surveys used different population samples and gave respondents different material to read and write, the fact that they show almost the same level of functional illiteracy (21.3%/23%) gives this statistic validity.

The UWI survey went on to examine the level of literacy beyond the basic level examined by ALTA. The findings reveal that an additional 32.7% of the population (250,000 people) can cope with some everyday reading and writing but not all, e.g. they cannot read and understand an average newspaper article and simple directions on a medicine label. This means that only 45.2%, or less than half, of the population can read and write well enough to handle a wide cross section of everyday tasks, including reading the newspapers and directions on medicine labels.

The accuracy of the ALTA and UWI findings was supported by the results of the 138-word dictation test given to 13,000 Special Reserve Police applicants in September 2003. These show failure rates varying from 50% (POS, West, North East and North divisions) to 85% (Southern division).

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of 9-10 year olds placed Trinidad and Tobago consistently below the international mean of 500, with a score of 436 in 2006, 471 in 2011 and 479 in 2016.

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Illiterate **8%** 62,000 adults could not read three of these five words: to at love bet sun

Functionally Illiterate **15%** 118,000 adults were able to answer only one of the 3 questions below.

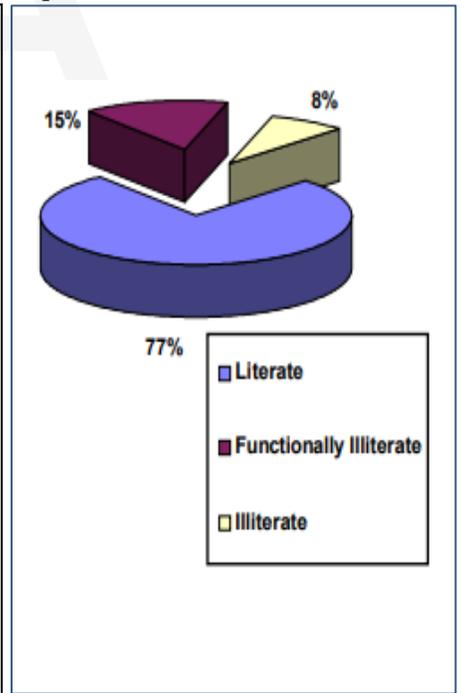
1. Mark an 'X' in the box beside the answer which best completes the statement.
To report a crime, you go to the _____

1. Post Office	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Bank	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Hospital	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. School	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Police	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Mark an 'X' in the box beside the name of the third month of the year.

1. June	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. April	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. May	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. March	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. July	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What is your main reason for living here?
Write your reason below in a full sentence.



UWI NATIONAL LITERACY SURVEY 1995

Literate Level 3 High	45.2% Can read and write well enough to handle a wide cross section of everyday tasks. The article in the box (item 4) was the highest level of reading in the UWI survey.
Literate Level 2 Intermediate	32.7% Can cope with some everyday reading and writing but not all, i.e. cannot read the boxed article.
Literate Level 1 Low	8.7% Can read and write, but so little that it hinders their everyday activities. (Equivalent to ALTA Functionally Illiterate)
Illiterate	12.6% Unable to read and write.

UWI SURVEY: Item 4

Please read the following news item and answer the question.

“BWIA International Airways announced yesterday that the airline had resumed its Miami services. In an earlier statement, BWIA said flights to Miami had been cancelled because of the possible dangers posed by Hurricane Erin.”

SUMMARY: Both surveys agree that 22-23%, or 1 out of 4 persons in Trinidad and Tobago are unable to cope with everyday reading and writing.

