Worldwide, 3.6 billion adults are literate; 82% of the adult population are able to read and write simple statements. Here adults include people aged 15 years and over.

The percentage of literate adults is lower than that of literate youth in every region of the world. The biggest differences are 17% in Northern Africa, 13% in Central Africa, and 11% in Southeastern Africa. The smallest difference between youth and adult literacy rates is 1% in Japan.

The largest populations of literate adults live in China, India and the United States. India has a literacy rate of 61%, the other two territories have rates of 91%.

Territory size shows the proportion of all people over 15 years old who are literate, that live there.

“I am somehow less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein’s brain than in the near certainty that people of equal talent have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops.”

Stephen Jay Gould, 1980