

Current scientific literacy of Chinese citizens: findings from 2001 National Survey

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The 4th national survey of public understanding of science and scientific literacy was conducted by China Association for Science and Technology in 2001 after previous surveys in 1992, 1994 and 1996.

Great changes and developments have been found from the latest study compared with previous surveys. Scientific literacy of Chinese adult citizens (18-69) has jumped to 1.4 percent, an increase of 1.2 percent over the past five years since 1996. The survey also reflects that the gap between Chinese males and females and between urban and rural residents, as well as among different occupations, has remained quite large. Those with basic scientific literacy accounted for 1.7 percent of the male population while that for females is only 0.98 percent. And 3.1 percent of Chinese urban residents met the criteria, eight times the number of rural residents. The regional ratio ranged from 2.3 percent in more-developed eastern China to 0.65 percent in poorer western regions. Among different occupations, students possess the highest level of scientific literacy, with a rate of 11.42 percent, and agricultural workers, such as farmers and fishermen, and the unemployed ranked at the bottom of the list, with a ratio of only 0.04 percent. The investigation has also indicated that the mass media serve as a main channel for the public to get sci-tech information, and a key factor that influences them in acquiring the sci-tech attainment. The channels for the public to obtain sci-tech information are specified as follows: TV taking up 82.8 percent, newspaper occupying 52.2 percent, and conversation 20.2 percent and followed up by broadcasting of 10.9 percent and books 5.2 percent and last comes the Internet, accounting for 1.6 percent only.