



ANALYTIC NOTE

How Fond are Moldovans of Reading?

The development of human capital, in term of personal and professional development of citizens, is related mainly to the persons' level of information and acquired skills. In this analytical note, we intend to analyze what influences citizens' interest in various forms of reading. In particular, we will analyze:

- How much time Moldovans allocate for reading compared to citizens of other countries?
- What are the differences between men and women regarding the reading time and what means of reading they use?
- How the time intended for reading in villages differs from the time allocated in towns?
- What are the differences between younger people and the elderly regarding the attitude towards reading?

In order to find answers to these questions, we will use the results of the Time Use Survey, carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2012.

How much time Moldovans allocate for reading compared to the citizens of other countries?

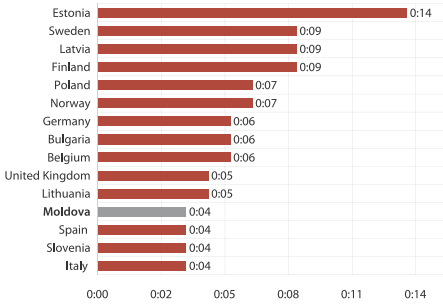
Moldovans allocate an average of 17 minutes a day for different forms of reading¹, which is less compared to other EU countries, where on the average about 25 minutes² are allocated for this activity. In Moldova, the most popular form of reading is informing themselves via the computer (for which an average of 10 minutes a day are allocated), while twice less time is allocated to read printed books (on the average 4 minutes a day).

Compared to other European countries, generally Moldovans dedicate relatively little time to reading books. Thus, the 4 minutes allocated for book reading in Moldova are less than the time allocated for this form of reading in Poland (7 minutes), Latvia (9 minutes) and Estonia (14 minutes) (Figure 1).

¹Including: reading books, publications, periodicals, information via computer.

²Countries as: Belgium (26 min), Germany (38 min), Estonia (38 min), Latvia (29 min), *Statistics in focus – Population and social conditions* 4/2006, Eurostat.

Figure 1. Time dedicated to the reading of books in European countries, minutes a day



Source: NBS and the HETUS database, (link for HETUS <http://www.tus.scb.se/>).

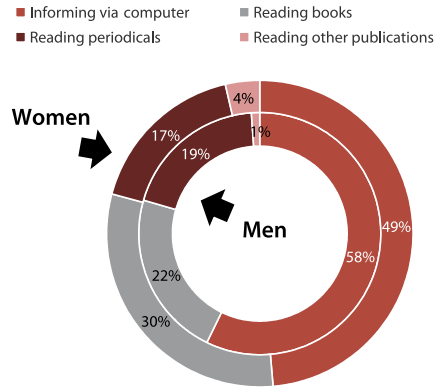
How much time Moldovan women and men spend reading?

In Moldova, the time dedicated to reading does not essentially differ between women (15 minutes) and men (16 minutes). The same insignificant difference between men and women regarding the time spent for reading is noticed in European countries, where the distribution of time varies from country to country, but on the average is by 1 to 5 minutes longer for men³. A different situation is noticed in USA, where the difference is about 11 minutes in favor of women (36 minutes a day among women and 25 minutes a day among men)⁴.

In Moldova, certain gender differences are found regarding the forms of reading. Thus, men inform themselves more than women via the computer (57% versus 49% of the total time for reading) and periodicals (20% versus 17% of the total time for reading).

Women, however, dedicate more time than men to read books (30% versus 22% of the total time for reading), and other publications⁵ (1% versus 4% of the total time for reading) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Distribution of the total time for reading, by sex and forms of reading, % of the total time for reading



Source: NBS

How much time is allocated for reading in villages and towns?

The urban population allocates almost twice as much time for reading compared to the rural population: 23 minutes versus 12 minutes, on the average per day.

The gaps can be seen in the main forms of reading. Thus, while the urban population spends an average of 13 minutes a day to inform themselves via computer, the rural population allocates only 7.6 minutes a day. The possible causes of these differences is related to the poor internet penetration in the rural area, the financial constraints for purchasing computers by the rural population, but also their computer literacy level, as well as the type of professional activity/occupation of the rural population compared to the urban population.

However, not only the limited financial possibilities and infrastructure constraints determine the rural

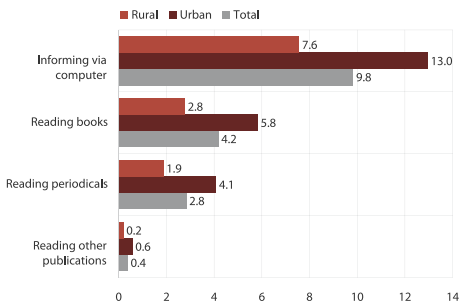
³ Ibid.

⁴ American Time Use Survey – 2012 results, Bureau of Labour Statistics, June 2013.

⁵ Brochures, advertising materials, etc.

population to read less. The time spent by them reading books or other periodical editions that do not involve significant financial costs, is over two times less than the time spent by the urban population (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Time spent reading by types of reading and area of respondents' residence, minutes a day



Source: NBS

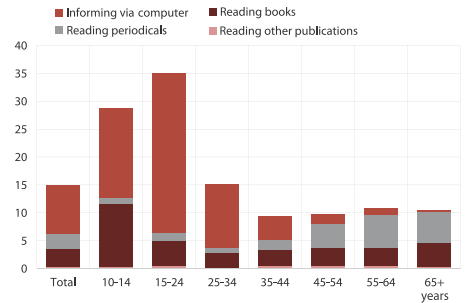
We cannot state either that the rural population read less because most of the time is allocated to household activities. Thus, the Time Use Survey, conducted by NBS reveals that the rural population has sufficient time, but which is allocated more for the activities related to social life and entertainment in comparison to urban areas and, especially, Chisinau municipality⁶. Therefore, another cause of low propensity towards reading of the rural population could be related to the lack of habit of reading systematically and a poor culture for reading in these localities.

What is the propensity towards reading of different age groups?

Another factor that explains the lower amount of time allocated for reading in rural areas is related to the higher rate of aging in villages. Thus, the smaller share of young population in villages, who due to the education at school or university allocate more

time for reading, explains the lower amount of total time allocated for reading in villages compared to towns. Figure 4 shows clearly the differences between people aged up to 24 years and the rest of the population, which refers specifically to the time spent reading on the computer and books.

Figure 4. Time dedicated to the main forms of reading, by age groups, minutes a day



Source: NBS

The more advanced the age, the much less time is dedicated to reading via the computer. Thus, from the age of 35 years, the time allocated for reading periodicals and books gradually increases. This can be explained by the relatively recent introduction and widespread use of information technologies, the younger generations having a wider volume of knowledge and skills of using those compared to older generations.

Conclusions

- Moldovans spend less time reading compared with the population of other countries and the preferred form of reading is via computer;
- There are no significant differences between men and women in terms of time intended for reading. However, women prefer more to read books and other publications, while men inform themselves more via computer and periodical publications;

⁶ 3.5 hours per day allocated for activities related to social life and entertainment by the rural population, compared to 3.0 hours per day in urban areas and 2.8 hours per day in Chisinau municipality.

- The rural population allocate less time to reading, compared to urban population. This is due to the infrastructure and financial constraints that limit the access of rural population to the Internet, including the difference of the level of knowledge of computer use, as well as several labors related to the economic activity/occupation in rural areas and taking care of a rural household. At the same time, the reading culture is less spread in villages than in cities;
- In general, there is a noticeable segregation of the forms of reading between the younger and older generations. Thus, while people up to 34 years mainly read via the computer and allocate relatively little time to read books, the persons older than 35 years prefer reading books and periodical publications.

Recommendations:

- The reading culture needs to be promoted intensively, especially in the rural area. In this regard, it is necessary to modernize the public libraries, both their book stock and material basis. At the same time, public authorities, in partnership with private bookstores could organize more frequently book fairs, in various localities of the country, where people could buy books and other publications at affordable prices;
- If reading of books should be promoted more intensively among young people, then among the elder population it is appropriate to facilitate the access to Internet and computer - as an operative means of information. For this purpose, the schools that have computer rooms could organize, possibly with the financial and logistical support of the local authorities, computer and Internet trainings for elder persons, where the benefits and opportunities of IT could be explained;
- Education is in a constant flow of change. The global evolution becomes more alert, it gets increasingly marked by the need of knowing fast, complete and correctly the surrounding reality, in order the decision making is made firmly, timely and competent. This leads to increasing amounts of information that needs to be analyzed, the necessity to store and process it, hence the need to use the computer in the everyday life, but especially in the professional work. The rapid globalization brings with it the need to adapt and progress in the use of IT. The countries with a high level of IT use have a much higher level of development compared to other countries.



This material has been developed on the basis of the Time Use Survey, conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and of the Swedish Government within the framework of the UN joint project "Strengthening the National Statistical System." The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the institutions of the United Nations, Swedish Government or National Bureau of Statistics.

Developed by: Independent Think-Tank Expert-Grup

Design: Ion Axenti

Picture: UNDP