

Book production and reading in Italy

Year 2016

Book production in Italy

In 2016 over 86% of the approximately 1,500 active publishers published no more than 50 titles per year; more than half (54.8%) were "small" publishers, producing at most 10 works per year, and 31.6% were "medium" publishers, producing from 11 to 50 works per year (Table 1). On the contrary, the "big" publishers, i.e. those with a book production of more than 50 works per year, although representing only 13.6% of the publishing operators, covered more than three quarters (76.1%) of production as regards the titles and almost 86% with reference to the number of printed copies.

The Italian publishing sector was strongly polarized also from a geographical point of view: over 50% of active publishers was based in Northern Italy. The cities with the largest number of publishers were Milano and Roma. The city of Milano alone hosted more than a quarter of the "big" publishers.

TABLE 1. ACTIVE PUBLISHERS, PUBLISHED WORKS AND PRINTED COPIES BY TYPE OF PUBLISHER. Year 2016 (a)

TYPE OF PUBLISHER	Active publishers		Published works		Printed copies		Average number of published works per publisher	Average number of printed copies per publisher
	N.	%	N.	%	(in thousand)	%		
Small publishers	825	54.8	3,380	5.5	3,536	2.7	4.1	4,286
Medium publishers	476	31.6	11,272	18.4	14,809	11.5	23.7	31,111
Big publishers	204	13.6	46,536	76.1	110,481	85.8	228.1	541,574
Total	1,505	100.0	61,188	100.0	128,825	100.0	40.7	85,599

(a) Values refer to "active" publishers, i.e. those who have published at least one book during the year; those who have published up until 10 works were defined as "small"; "medium" from 11 to 50 works; "big" over 50 works.

In 2016, the approximately 1,500 active publishers published 61,188 titles and printed almost 129 million of copies; on average, just over 2,000 copies were printed for each published title.

In 2016 the publishing sector showed a slight increase in publishing production: compared to the previous year, the number of titles increased by 3.7%; however, the trend of reducing the number of printed copies persisted in 2016 as well (-7.1%).

In 2016, 35.8% of the books published in Italy (about 22,000 titles) were also offered to the public in the e-book format. E-books were mainly available for adventure books and mystery books (for which e-books reach 82.7% of printed works). The digital version was available for more than half the school books (53.3%).

As regards the distribution tools, determining factor in the publishing sector, publishers consider the role of independent libraries to be strategic in intercepting the audience of actual and potential readers.

In 2016 almost a quarter of respondents (23.3%) were part of an association of publishers. The main reason for joining a publishers association was the possibility of being informed and updated on the regulatory and commercial news of the sector.

For almost 40% of publishers the main factors that determined the modest propensity to reading in our country were the low cultural level of the Italian population (39.7% of responses) and the lack of effective educational policies for reading education (37.7%).

To encourage the development of the publishing sector, about 40% of active operators first of all identified the need to increase readership initiatives and campaigns aimed to improve reading education.

Reading in Italy

In 2016 40.5% of people aged 6 and over (23 million est.) have read at least one book in the 12 months preceding the interview, for purposes other than school or work. The figure was decreasing as compared to 2015, after the decline started in 2011. 10.1% of the Italian households did not own any books, 63.2% owned 100 books at most.

Women showed a higher familiarity with books: 47.1% of them were estimated to be book readers, vs 33.5% of men. Book readers' share was over 50% among those aged 11 to 19; the percentage showed a decrease in later age groups; the age group that reads the most was the one composed by those aged 11-14.

School is not enough. Family is a key factor: 66.9% of youngsters aged 6 to 18 with both parents reading books were book readers too, vs. only 30.8% of those whose parents did not read books.

Book reading was still less frequent in Southern Italy, where fewer than one out of three (27.5%) has read at least one book. In the North-East area, readers were 48.7%.

In metropolitan centers the estimated percentage of book readers was 48.6%, vs. 35.6% in areas with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants.

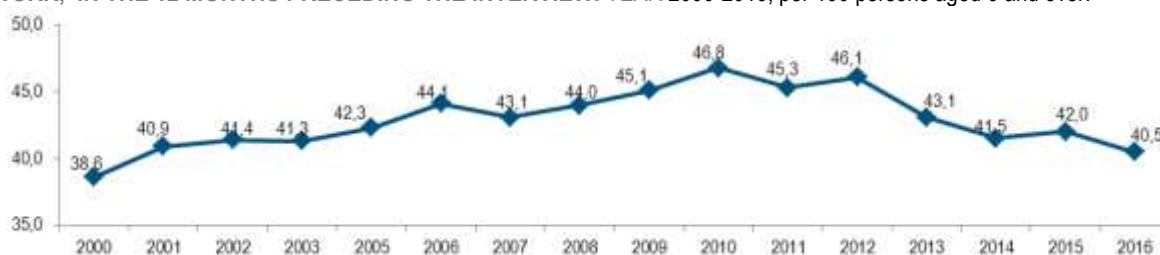
"Strong" readers, i.e. people who read on average at least one book per month, were 14.1% of the readers (13.7% in 2015). Data confirm that nearly one reader out of two (45.1%) was a "weak" one, having read no more than three books in one year.

Book reading and cultural participation go hand in hand: among book readers, shares of those who practiced other cultural activities were higher than those of non-readers.

Reading also varies according to the evaluation of the available economic resources of the family. The economic condition of "non-readers" families was relatively worse than the one related to readers: in 2016, 54.5% of "non-readers" considered the resources available to their family as "scarce or insufficient" compared to 42.5% of the "readers".

In 2016, about 4.2 million people read e-books (7.3% of the population aged 6 and over). If you add also those who have downloaded books online, the figure rises to 6.3 million or 11.1% of the population of 6 years and over, up compared to 8.2% in 2015.

PERSONS AGED 6 AND OVER WHO HAVE READ AT LEAST ONE BOOK FOR PURPOSES OTHER THAN SCHOOL OR WORK, IN THE 12 MONTHS PRECEDING THE INTERVIEW. YEAR 2000-2016, per 100 persons aged 6 and over.



For more details please refer to the Italian version

Contact persons:

Francesca Brait (brait@istat.it)

phone +39 06 4673.7504

Elisabetta Del Bufalo (delbufal@istat.it)

phone +39 06 4673.7584

Istat – National Institute of Statistics

Via Cesare Balbo, 16 – Rome 00184 Italy