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Under the Loupe: Young People in Villages Key Findings



Socio-demographic characteristics of the rural population

- Compared to other European countries, Serbia belongs to a group of those with relatively high participation of young people who live in villages.
- The share of the young people from rural areas in the overall young population has not changed, especially in recent years.
- Rural population shows a slightly higher gender imbalance in favour of male population, compared to the general population of young people.
- Emigration of female population from rural areas is more pronounced than that of the male population.

Socio-economic status of young people in villages and towns

- Disposable income of households in villages is significantly lower compared to that in urban areas.
- The risk from poverty among young people in Serbian countryside is significantly pronounced compared to the average in Europe, and with three other countries Serbia belongs to a group where such risk is pronounced in almost one third of the young population in villages. In the countryside, the multiple material deprivation rate is also more pronounced.
- Young people in villages are at higher risk of living in households with lower work intensity.
- In addition, young people in villages more often live with their parents than their counterparts in urban areas.

Health and risky behaviour

- When it comes to risky forms of behaviour, young people from villages are no different compared to those from cities, except for using contraceptives, where the former lag behind.
- There is no difference in prevalence of consumption of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana when it comes to young people from different types of settlements.
- Most common problems that the young people from villages have when it comes to medical care, are the waiting lists and the cost of services, in particular those relating to dental treatment.
- Crime, violence and vandalism are more present in urban areas. Proximity to the nature, clean air and more sincere relationships are reasons why young people stay in villages.

Education

- Educational aspirations of young people in villages are slightly lower compared to the aspirations of their peers in cities. Educational aspirations in villages have a gender component since considerably more young women than young men want to gain a university diploma.



- Despite lower aspirations, young people in villages are also less convinced that they will succeed in achieving the desired educational level compared to the young people from cities.
- Giving up education is more present in rural than in urban areas. Every tenth young person in villages „gave up education early“, i.e. stayed on the level of primary education, or did not complete secondary school, and is not in the education process now.
- Most young people from villages think that the education system has not prepared them well for the labour market, and the perception among the young from the cities is almost identical.
- The perception of chances for getting a job varies depending on the place of living, and therefore young people from villages think that finding a job is hard, while this is the case with one third of young people from the cities.

Work and employment

- Young people in villages have slightly higher rates of activity and lower rates of inactivity compared to the young from urban centres and other urban areas.
- Young men from villages have significantly higher rates of activity, while the girls have significantly higher rates of inactivity; the difference in rates is about 20 percentage points.
- In last five years, pronounced is an increase in employment among the young, and also the growth of employment among the village youth.
- Researches indicate that the growth of employment is the result of flexibilisation and deregulation of the labour market, so the increased rates can be explained by bigger participation of temporary and uncontracted jobs, while at the same time the share of permanent jobs drops.
- The rising trend of employment is seen in both young men and young women, so the new conditions on the labour market did not contribute to either decrease or increase of the gender asymmetry which reflects in a difference of about 18-20 percentage points.
- With the decline in the size of a settlement comes the increase of share of young people who belong to the NEET category. Particularly vulnerable category of young people in villages are young women from 25 to 29. Marital and family responsibilities in less educated parts of the female village population most often lead to withdrawal from the labour market.
- The young who live in the villages have fewer opportunities to combine work and education, which decreases their chances to support themselves during the education process (to a lesser extent they depend exclusively on their family of origin).
- The employed young in villages, by number of hours, are more engaged per week than those in the cities, indicating also a higher degree of workload. Part-time work is not very present; 2-5 young individuals work approximately full time (40 hrs. a week), while more than a half of the young people from villages work more than 40 hrs. per week.
- Half of the young in cities, and three fourths of those in villages, claim that the job they do is not in the profession for which they were educated. Two out of five young individuals, both in villages and cities, do jobs that are below their educational qualifications.
- Two thirds of the young in villages prefer to work in the public sector, as well as almost half of the young in cities.

- Young people from both villages and cities think that knowing the right people who are well positioned in the society (in economy, politics), is the most important factor in getting a job.

Participation

- The young in villages have very little interest in political topics; two thirds of them are completely uninterested, and they are less interested compared to the young in cities.
- Politics and any engagement repel the young in villages because they identify them with clientelism, corruption and unpredictability, and for that reason they do not want to be a part of this field.
- The potential for uniting the young and the social engagement is primarily through professional associations and initiatives that can help them in their work. The business sphere could be a field through which it would be possible to join and organise young people for other social questions as well.
- Among the young in both cities and villages (about two thirds) there is a significant agreement about the fact that the interests of the young have not been adequately represented on the national level.
- About 70% of the young in cities and 61% of those in villages perceive that the politicians do not care about the interests of the young, and such attitude is on average more pronounced in the urban areas.
- The young in villages talk about politics with their families or friends and acquaintances a little less often compared to the young in cities.
- Unconventional types of political engagement are not developed, and are present among the young in villages to a somewhat lesser extent. During their life, only 13% of the young in villages worked or volunteered in an organisation, 14% signed a petition, 7% once participated in demonstrations, and almost the same percentage of them (9%) avoided shopping and was politically active online.
- About half of the young is not happy with the state of the democracy in our country. Slightly more than a third of the young from both villages and cities think that Serbia should become a member of the European Union. However, the perception of the EU is mostly positive since the young think that all aspects of life within the EU are on higher level than in Serbia.

Free time

- Different levels of material security and amount of free time depending on the type of settlement pronounces certain difference in these activities. The young from villages go out with their friends less often, and spend less time in bars, cafes and clubs, they are less engaged in sport activities, travel abroad less often, they go shopping less often, do less creative work and spend less time in youth centres.
- The young in villages spend more time with their families, and spend more time doing religion-related activities like praying. On average, the young from villages are less happy with the amount of free time they have.
- More free time, greater material security, as well as provision of more qualitative content in rural areas that may contribute to personal growth, as well as engagement for the benefit



of the community, are the key factors for improving the quality of activities which the young in villages do in their free time.

Use of digital technologies

- Both in cities and villages, 98% of the young have access to the internet on various devices (PC, tablet, telephone) and places, either every day or almost every day.
- The young from villages more often do not have internet connection in their households.
- The young from villages on average spend one hour less on the internet every day, compared to their peers in cities. The internet is most often used for entertainment.
- The young in villages more rarely use internet at school, for learning or at work, for sending and receiving emails, for reading news and/or for browsing for information on the internet, but also for grading and recommending certain products and services compared to the young in urban areas.
- The young in cities, more or less, have better mastery of all digital skills than the young in villages.
- The most prominent differences occur in the young who know how to code i.e. create, change and adapt software solutions.
- In villages, the young between 20 and 24 have more developed digital skills.
- There is a need for a special portal where the young from villages could exchange information and experiences. The main recommendation would be that such portal should have a practical orientation and preserve the evaluative neutrality. The respondents are willing to share their experiences and participate in the work of such portal.

