



## ANALYTIC NOTE

# Time Use by Moldovan Parents for Taking Care of Their Children

The quality of human capital, which defines the competitiveness of each country, depends directly on the time parents allocate to the educational and cognitive development of their children, as well as on the way parents look after their children.

In this analytical note, we will try to provide answers to the following questions:

- Who spends more time taking care of children - mothers or fathers?
- Do parents in rural areas take care of their children as much as the parents in urban areas?
- How does the level of household income influence the time devoted to children care?

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 the context of this note, the notion of “taking care of children” (meaning parents taking care of their children up to 18 years of age) shall include: physical care and oversight<sup>1</sup>; doing homework with the child<sup>2</sup>; reading,

playing and speaking with the child; accompanying the child<sup>3</sup>; other activities related to child care or unspecified ones.

## Who spends more time taking care of children, mothers or fathers?

On average, 16.4% of the entire population participates in taking care of their own children, each of them allocating 2.1 hours per day for activities related to child care. Mothers offer significantly more time to their children than fathers: 2.4 hours compared do 1.3 hours and the rate of mothers’ participation in these activities is 21.4% and fathers’ rate - only 10.4%.

Mothers get much more involved than fathers in taking physical care of the child (allocating double time compared to fathers, specifically 1.7 hours compared 0.9 hours in case of men) and in interactive activities<sup>4</sup> (1.2 hours and 1 hour, respectively).

---

<sup>1</sup>“Physical care and oversight” activities include: feeding, dressing, bathing and preparing for sleep, etc. plus oversight inside and outside the home.

<sup>2</sup>The activity “doing homework with the child” includes: helping with the homework, providing explanations, etc.

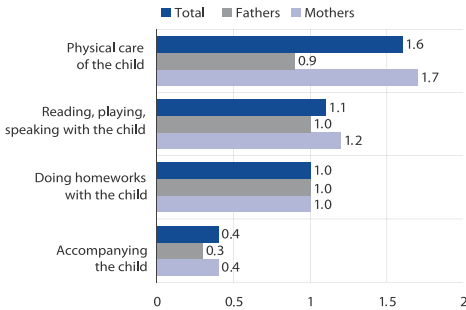
---

<sup>3</sup>“Accompanying the child” activity includes: accompanying the child to the doctor, plus waiting the child at the sports club, music school, etc. if another activity is not specified.

<sup>4</sup>Reading, playing speaking with the child.

With respect to helping children doing their homework and accompanying them to various activities<sup>5</sup>, mothers and fathers offer more or less the same amount of time (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Time allocated for childcare, by types of care and sex of caregivers, hours/day

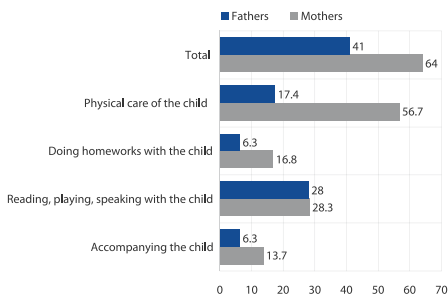


Source: NBS

There is an even larger difference between the number of fathers and mothers taking care of children. Daily, about 119 thousand fathers (41% of all fathers) perform such activities, while the number of mothers doing the same is 278 thousand (64% of all mothers).

The biggest difference relates to the provision of physical care to children by parents.

Figure 2. Rate of parents' participation for childcare, by types of care and sex of caregivers, %



Source: NBS

Although greater involvement of mothers in taking care of children is confirmed by data in all countries where Time Use Survey has been carried out, including the developed ones<sup>6</sup>, there are still countries where fathers get much more involved in taking care of the children. These are countries like Sweden, Norway, Finland<sup>7</sup>, where more efficient gender equality encourages males to participate in taking care of children.

### Do parents in rural areas take care of their children as much as the parents in urban areas do?

It seems that parents in villages dedicate less time to their children. Moreover, the share of parents in villages who take care of their children is much lower than in towns.

Daily, in rural areas, parents devote to their children 2.0 hours per day on the average, or by 0.3 hours (18 minutes) less than in urban areas. If we analyze this by types of care, then in villages parents give more time for physically caring the children and overseeing them, but less time for interactive activities like reading, playing and speaking with the child. As a result, children from villages benefit of less activities of educational and cognitive development compared to children in towns.

At the same time, a significant share of children in villages do not attend kindergartens: in 2012 the gross enrolment rate at kindergarten level of children between 3 and 6 years from rural areas accounted for only 71.4% compared to 100.5% in the urban areas<sup>8</sup>. Thus, we see that it's not just parents allocating less time to take care of their children, but also attendance at kindergartens and/or nurseries is much lower in villages. The causes include the fact that some children from nearby villages attend kindergartens in towns (which explains the extremely high gross enrolment rate at kindergartens in urban areas). At the same time, in some villages, where women employment level is lower (33.6% compared to 40.4%, annual average in 2012<sup>9</sup>), children attend the kindergarten to a lesser extent.

<sup>5</sup> Child's participation in sports, cultural, arts, celebration activities at kindergarten/school, etc.

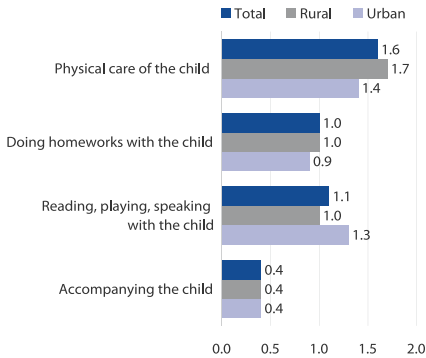
<sup>6</sup> HETUS database: <https://www.h2.scb.se/tus/tus/StatMeanMact2.html>

<sup>7</sup> EUROSTAT data, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> National Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

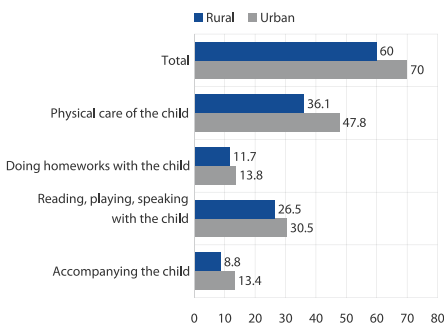
**Figure 3. Time allocated for childcare, by types of care and areas of residence of caregivers, hours/day**



Source: NBS

We can confidently state that parents in rural areas are busier with household chores, than the ones in urban areas, in order to be able to offer their children the necessary time. The research data confirm this: parents in villages spend daily on average 48% more time in household activities<sup>10</sup> than parents in urban areas.

**Figure 4. Rate of parents' participation in childcare, by types of care and residence areas, %**



Source: NBS

<sup>10</sup> Household maintenance, laundry, ironing, taking care of animals, construction/repairs, shopping/services.

As a result, only 60% of parents in villages participate daily in taking care of children, compared to 70% in case of parents in towns.

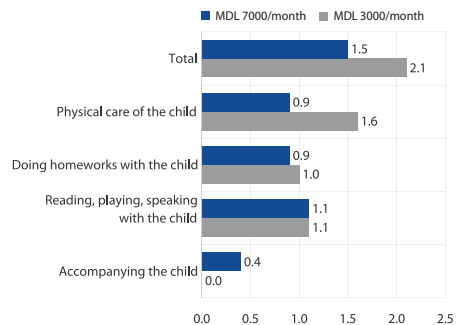
In rural areas, only 36% of parents take physical care of their children, while in urban areas 48% of parents do that. This difference could be explained by the lack of time (see above) or by the fact that in villages children have more practical skills and are less depending on parents taking care of them.

### How does the level of household income influence the time devoted to children care?

The time devoted to taking care of children in families with high income<sup>11</sup> is significantly lower than the time devoted by parents in low-income households<sup>12</sup>. Differences are also noticed in the involvement by types of care.

Thus, daily, parents in households with high income spend on average 1.5 hours per day to take care of the children, or by 0.6 hours less than the parents in low-income households. This is relevant for physical care and oversight of children.

**Figure 5. Time allocated for childcare, by types of care and income level of caregivers, hours/day**



Source: NBS

<sup>11</sup> Households whose total income exceeds MDL 7000/month.

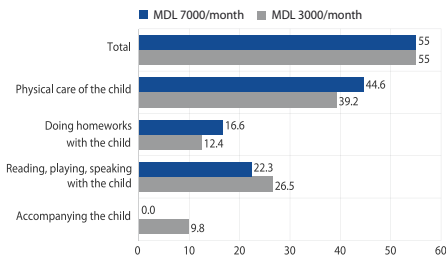
<sup>12</sup> Households whose total income does not exceed MDL 3000/month.

This situation could be explained by the fact that on average parents with high income have less children<sup>13</sup> and need less time to take care of them.

Though spending less time, the parents with higher income get involved to the same extent in taking care of children as the parents with low income do. Regardless of income, about 55% of parents take care daily of their children.

In taking physical care and helping with homework, parents with higher income get involved to a larger extent, though the correlation between the time granted to these types of care is diametrically opposite (see above). However parents with lower income get more involved in interactive activities and accompanying children, even though for these types of care they allocate about the same time as parents from higher income households do (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Rate of parents' participation in childcare, by types of care and income level<sup>14</sup>, %



Source: NBS

These differences are explained by the fact that most parents with smaller income live in rural area (77%) and most parents with high income live in urban area (67%)<sup>15</sup>. As it was previously noticed, household chores prevent parents in villages from getting more involved in childcare.

In case of fathers, income size proves to be a critical factor for involving in childcare activities. So, only 38% of the fathers with low income take care daily of their children, while about 60% of fathers with high income do that. Most likely, the need to work more makes fathers with lower income not to offer enough time to their children.

## Conclusions:

- In Moldova mothers have the main role in taking care of and educating children, which coincides with the situation in most countries where Time Use Surveys have been carried out;
- Parents from villages get less involved in taking care of children, mainly because they spend more time working in the household and because of the specific activities conducted by rural population. Moreover, they spend less time for activities of child education and cognitive development;
- Parents with higher income spend generally less time with their children than parents with lower income, one of the reasons being that they have fewer children;
- A smaller share of parents with low income get involved in taking care of children, because most of them live in villages and spend more time taking care of the household. In case of fathers, involvement is even lower.

## Recommendations:

- Policies focused on family, child protection, and women employment should ensure proper conditions for women to reach a balance between professional and family life. Only in such a way an optimal environment for child development can be ensured;
- The labor and social protection legislation shall provide equal chances for both parents to participate in children care. Consequently, it is necessary to organize public awareness campaigns related to the possibilities provided by the current legal

<sup>13</sup> According to NBS data, the disposable income (monthly average per person, MDL) in 2012 was MDL 1486.6 in households with 1 child; MDL 1198.2 in households with 2 children; and MDL 882.0 in households with 3 and more children.

<sup>14</sup> MDL 3000 and MDL 7000 thresholds were selected to emphasize the differences between people with higher income and with lower income. For narrower intervals (for instance MDL 3000 and MDL 5000).

<sup>15</sup> National Bureau of Statistics.

framework aimed at encouraging fathers get more involved in taking care of their children;

- Economic development of rural areas should be a priority concern for the authorities, in order to ensure sufficient income for parents, so that they would spend more time with their children;
- Taking into account that parents in villages spend less time for activities of child cognitive development and education, the local authorities should set up social centers for children or involve them in extracurricular activities after lessons and during holidays in schools;
- Given that less time is spent by parents in rural areas for taking care of their children parallel to the lower attendance of village kindergartens, it is necessary to ensure the development of alternative childcare services in rural areas. These could follow the community nurseries model, including the involvement of specialized NGOs and donor community in this process.



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: UN Women