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Statistics Show Progress And Plenty Of Differences In Our World

By : **ANTONY BROCK**

This may be the Age of the Common Man but the Average Human Being still does not exist - even statistically. Despite all the census-taking, classifying, cross-indexing and computerizing we all undergo there are still variations between life in Moscow and Montevideo, Cairo and Canberra, Singapore and Stockholm.

Around the world, wide - and sometimes deplorable - differences exist as can be seen from the latest edition of Unesco's *Statistical Yearbook*, which gives an annual picture in figures of the world's education, cultural activities and scientific level.

Cinema-going is an example. Traditional film fans may be boycotting the box-office but the cinema is still doing good business in some parts of the world. On average, every Finn went to the cinema twice in the whole of 1975, Britons, citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgians and Austrians went a shade more often, but still not three times per head. The Bulgarians went just over 13 times, less than the people of Brunei (17 times), the citizens of the USSR (just under 18 times) and those of Singapore (just over 19 times a year). In Africa, the Yearbook figures show, cinemas are comparatively few and cinema-going in Rwanda does not even work out at one visit per head per year.

An important factor in the change in cinema-going habits must obviously be the increase in the television-watching habit. Two countries have passed the level of one TV set for every two inhabitants: the United States, which had 571 receivers per thousand of population in 1974 and the Principality of Monaco, which had 640 in 1975. The next nearest is Canada with 411, while a healthy score for most developed countries is around 300.

Book production climbing

When the last cathode ray tube burns out, people will probably still be arguing about whether television has anything to do with culture, but there is no doubt about the position of the book. In the field of book production the gap between developed and developing countries is striking. Despite a fairly steady climb since 1955 (when the developing countries produced just under 22 per cent of the world's books), they turned out under 32 per cent of the titles in 1975 when they had more than 64 per cent of the world's population; the industrialized countries, however, almost reversed this ratio by publishing more than 68 per cent for less than 36 per cent of the world's population. The world total of book titles produced in 1975 was 568,000, of which the developed nations published 388,200 and the developing nations 179,800.

The world's biggest book producers in 1975 were the United States with 85,287, the USSR with 78,697, the Federal Republic of Germany with 40,616, the UK with 35,526 and Japan with 34,590.

The figures seem to show that newspapers are surviving the threat of television. The USA still has the most newspaper titles in the world and in 1975 was running 1,812 off the presses every day, 61 more than 10 years earlier. Of the countries which support many daily papers, India was up over the ten years with 835 dailies compared with 525; so were the Soviet Union (691 against 639), Sweden with 135 against 119, the United Kingdom with 111 against 110. France is down to 98 against 121 in 1965, so is Switzerland, with 95 against 132, and Argentina, with 164 against 171.

Educational task to be done

To support big newspaper and book-producing industries, countries clearly need literate populations to form the home market and the Yearbook's statistics on education show how much remains to be achieved in this vital field.

The world total of enrolment at all three levels rose between 1960 and 1974 from 324,522,000 to 542,761,000. Whereas in the developed regions population growth is levelling out and they are approaching the point where their education systems can cover all who can benefit from them, the developing countries are still coping with booming populations and severely strained facilities.

The percentages for the three levels of education reflect this situation for, while in 1974 primary schoolchildren made up 57 per cent of all those undergoing education in Europe and only around 47 per cent in Northern America, in the Arab States the percentage was 73, in Asia, 70, in Africa, 84 and 79 in Latin America.

Statistical Yearbook 1976 is available from The Unesco Press, Place de Fontenoy, Paris 75700, at FF 22 a copy and from national distributors of Unesco publications.

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