European and International Booksellers Federation

International Bookselling Markets Report 2024

eibf

The voice of booksellers

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About EIBF

The European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) is a non-commercial umbrella organisation, representing national booksellers associations from all over the world. Through its member associations, EIBF speaks on behalf of more than 25.000 individual booksellers of all kinds, including independent bookshops, chains, and family businesses. We have a long history of representing booksellers and advocating for book-friendly policies to the benefit of readers and retailers.

EIBF works in Europe and around the world to further the interests of the bookselling industry. Our main aim is to ensure that the voices of booksellers are heard in every relevant debate by advocating for book-friendly policies and legislation that benefit both readers and retailers. Our main activity area also includes communication with and services to our members, and we are continuously increasing the exchange of best practices among our members.

Introduction

This report marks the fifth consecutive year that EIBF presents an overview of trends and tendencies across international bookselling markets. As representatives of booksellers across the globe, we see it as our responsibility to gather and share data to examine the state of the trade.

Beyond the indispensable quantitative data that is necessary to measure the economic vitality of booksellers around the world, we aim to propose a complete document, nuancing the quantitative with additional qualitative data. Therefore, the information employed originates from direct exchanges with our members, mostly national booksellers' associations, as well as third-party input, allowing us to compare, contrast and complete our analysis.[1] We take pride in offering a comprehensive snapshot of 20 diverse national bookselling markets across the globe.

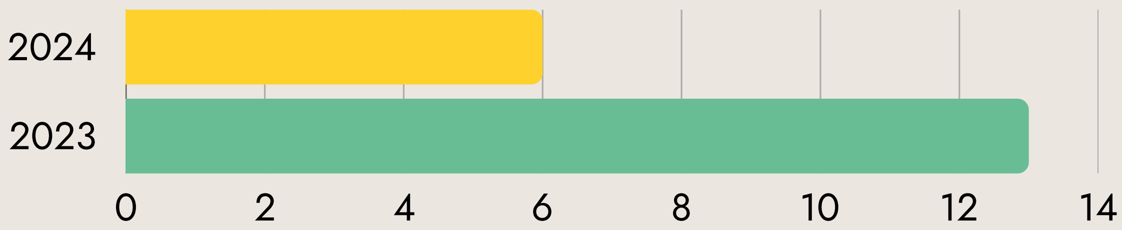
We closely observe European policy developments that impact the bookselling sector. The international bookselling markets report is a central tool that guides our strategy and exchanges with our partners across the year, while allowing us to develop a long-term vision of the developments in bookselling and bring a data-driven approach to our work.

In this report, we analyse the forces that impacted bookselling in 2024: from shifting consumer behaviour to the industry's resilience in the face of ongoing economic and political challenges.

[1] *The findings in this report are based on direct input from 12 EIBF members and associate members covering the United States of America, Sweden, France, Azerbaijan, Romania, Germany, Switzerland (German speaking part), Portugal, Latvia, The Netherlands, Australia and Norway. Additionally, it incorporates basic sales data from third-party sources -see bibliography- for Belgium (Wallonia), Belgium (Flanders), Brazil, Ireland, India, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Spain.*

The main tendencies in numbers

Looking at strictly book sales in 2024, we observe a slight decrease compared to 2023: only 6 out of 22 analysed markets have seen growing numbers. Our analysis reveals a strong divide across different regions. While European markets remain consistent, others, such as India, have increased rapidly in 2024. In the last year, the Indian market alone saw a 20% increase in sales compared to 2023.[1]



When looking at sales channels, it is interesting to note that the number of brick-and-mortar bookshops has stabilised or grown across a majority of the markets surveyed. Only in one case, in Norway, have we witnessed a small decline between 2023 and 2024. Overall, the market share of physical shops has held steady, while some cases merit closer observation in the upcoming year. This resilience suggests that, despite digital competition, physical bookshops continue to play a vital role in most markets.

A concerning trend is evident in the US, where brick-and-mortar bookshops are estimated to account for only 7 - 10% of the total market share. Meanwhile, online retailers, particularly Amazon, which is estimated to dominate 60 - 70% of the market, continue to expand their influence. This underscores the intense pressure traditional bookshops face when competing with digital giants.

However, significant regional variations persist, as in Portugal, where physical points of sale account for 60% of market share.

"ABA and others estimate that Amazon.com has 60 - 70% of print market in the U.S. It's estimated that indie booksellers in the U.S. have less than 10% of the overall paper book market."

- American Booksellers Assciation

Yet, the online book trade is not always dominated by a few major players. In Germany, for example, roughly half of online book sales are generated by online shops run by physical bookstores. This highlights the adaptability and resilience that booksellers have shown when facing ongoing digitalisation.

"It is important to note that half of online turnover is accounted for by the online shops of [brick-and-mortar] bookstores. This means that online business has also gained in importance for [physical] bookstores."

- Boersenverein des deutschen Buchhandels

Digitalisation is also leaving a clear mark on book formats. Digital book formats, such as e-books and audiobooks, are on the rise and have won in sales share in over 50% of the respondents' markets. In France, for example, the value of digital books sales increased from 126 million € in 2023 to 131 million € in 2024, illustrating the format's growing integration into the reading landscape. Similarly, in mature digital markets such as Sweden, where digital formats account for 32.7% of total market value, the sales value of digital books rose by 6.1%, while volume grew by 3.2%, indicating that digital books are being adopted as alternative and/or complement to paper books by the consumers.

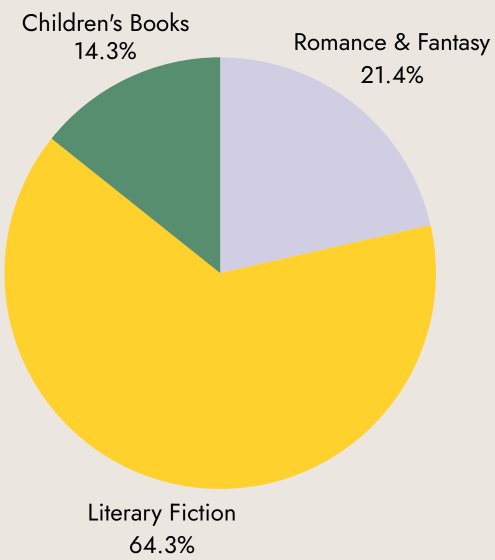
At the same time, significant regional differences persist: although sales of digital books are expanding in most markets, they only represent 1% of book sales in Romania for instance. Among digital formats, audiobooks continue to strengthen their position, with respondents noting that streaming is playing an increasingly important role in distribution.

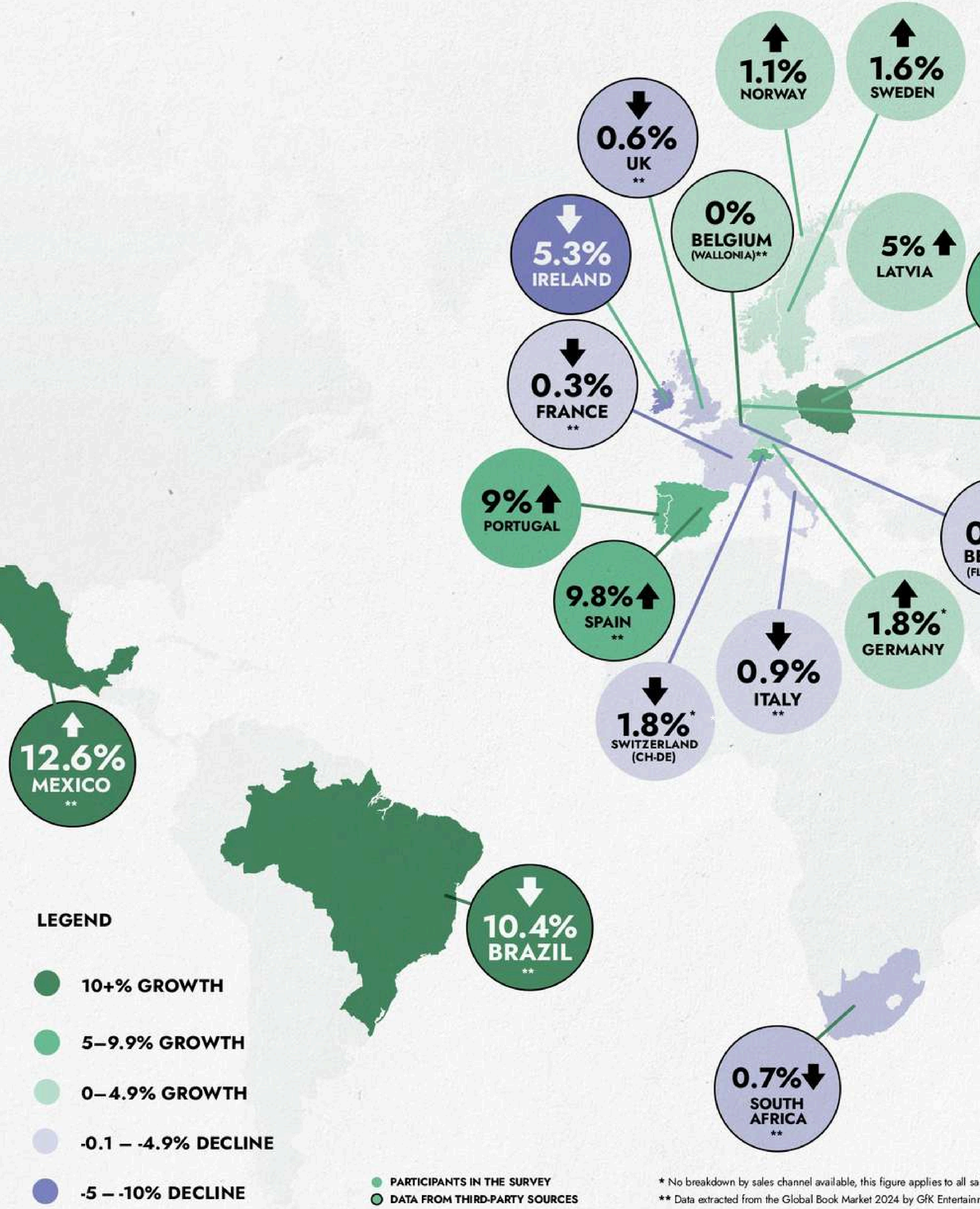
The most successful genres remained fiction and especially fantasy.

"Fiction is the largest product group and the most important for retail bookshops in Germany (more than a third of turnover), followed by children's and young adult books (about one-fifth)."

- Boersenverein des deutschen Buchhandels

Overview of the most prominent genres in 2024



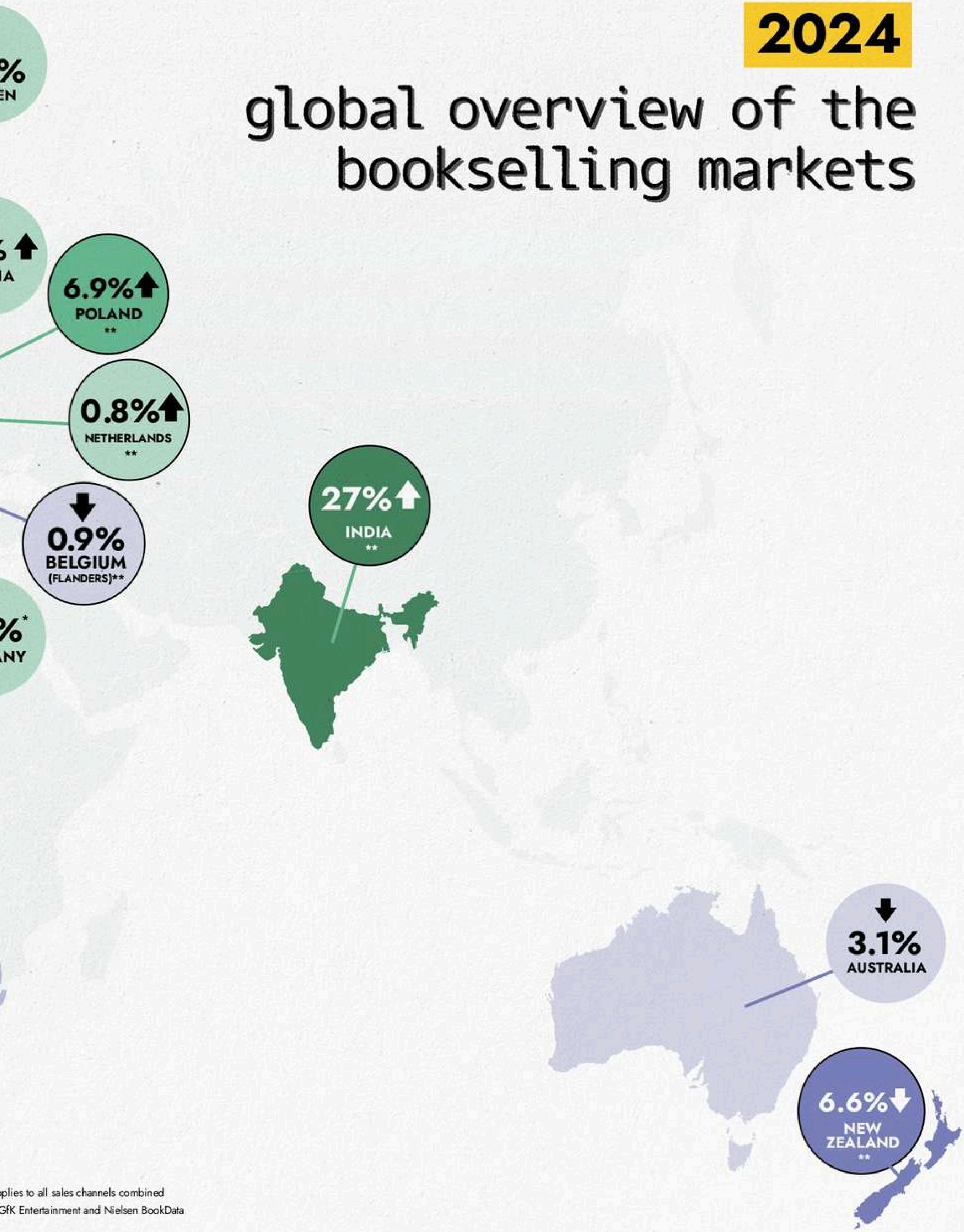


* No breakdown by sales channel available, this figure applies to all sa

** Data extracted from the Global Book Market 2024 by GfK Entertainm

2024

global overview of the bookselling markets



plies to all sales channels combined
GfK Entertainment and Nielsen BookData

* The Swiss book sales are based on the numbers provided by the German-speaking Swiss Publishers and Booksellers Association. The numbers for the whole country are likely different.

Effects of political & economic instability

"The market is in decline, and there are of course a number of reasons for this, the majority of which are cyclical: strong political and geopolitical uncertainty, the decline in reading, and a real problem of purchasing power."
- Association des librairies informatisées et utilisatrices des réseaux électroniques

Given the recent period marked by economic recession, rising political extremism, and the energy and cost-of-living global crises, it is essential to understand how these developments have affected bookselling in 2024 and how booksellers have adapted to continue managing their businesses.

The effects of these multiple hardships are twofold: they create economic distress on booksellers, while also threatening a central value to their work, which is the freedom to circulate diverse ideas through literature within their communities.

Economic impact

One significant feedback received by EIBF members is that margins are tightening. This troubling trend is driven, one the one hand, by cautious consumer behaviour and, on the other, by rapidly rising rent prices.

"Poor economic conditions, with inflation and cost pressures, are challenging for many consumers, which is dampening the market."
- Svenska Bokhandlareföreningens

Global geopolitical uncertainty and inflation have also affected the book market, reinforcing consumers' tendency to be more reticent to spend money. However, this trend should be interpreted with nuance, as developments differ across countries and each market responds in its own way to these challenges. Romania, for example, reported a positive economic outlook in 2024, with inflation declining and both public and private sector incomes seeing significant gains.

Unfortunately, the bigger picture reveals a sector under significant economic pressure with over 50% of respondents expressing concern regarding the economic situation booksellers are facing in their respective countries.

Political tensions and threats on freedom of expression

Shifting geopolitical dynamics are also affecting booksellers, whose mission is to circulate diverse ideas throughout society. As a result, they are increasingly becoming targets of political pressure, which can emanate from both civil society and from public institutions.

A prominent example of such political tension can be seen in the United States, where the American Booksellers Association (ABA) is continuously fighting legislative proposals aimed at limiting the circulation of and access to books. In 2024, the ABA joined a coalition to file a legal suit against the State of Arkansas to combat the Arkansas Act 372. This legislation threatened to expose booksellers and librarians to criminal penalties for distributing books, magazines, or films deemed inappropriate for minors. Crucially, however, the law failed to establish clear criteria for determining what constitutes 'inappropriate' material, making it a serious risk to booksellers, and the Act was ultimately judged unconstitutional. This case provides a concrete example of the threats that legislative measures can pose to freedom of expression and its sinister impact on booksellers and bookselling.

"We continue to see proposed legislation that targets booksellers and books, challenging the right to sell books and to read. We have a long list of stores that have been harassed/trolled/faced significant security concerns due to their free expression in the form of book curation, author events, or political positions or perceived political positions."

- American Booksellers Association

Attacks are also increasingly originating from civil society, including in Europe. An incident in Sweden that occurred in 2024 illustrates this trend: a bookshop was defaced with both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian graffiti after displaying books representing nuanced perspectives from both sides of the conflict. This is just one of many cases in which bookshops have been targeted precisely because they serve as spaces for the expression of diverse ideas.

This broader climate has been identified by booksellers' associations across Europe, which are now sharing experiences and beginning to develop strategies to prevent these incidents. These attacks can cause symbolic, material and economic harm, not to mention the psychological impact on the booksellers whose shops have been targeted by said militants.

Accordingly, safeguarding freedom of expression has emerged as a top priority among booksellers' associations in 2024 and going forward.

Reading rates are dropping

Declining reading rates have become an increasing concern to the bookselling community. Several Booksellers Associations report that addressing this issue is a top priority for 2024 and beyond, given its importance not only for economic sustainability for the trade but also for the cultural and social values that booksellers uphold.

At the same time, signs of renewed enthusiasm for reading have emerged in several countries, including Portugal, Germany, and Norway, as reported by EIBF members. Factors such as the rising popularity of reading and books across social media, screen fatigue, and supportive public initiatives have played a significant role in engaging more people with reading.

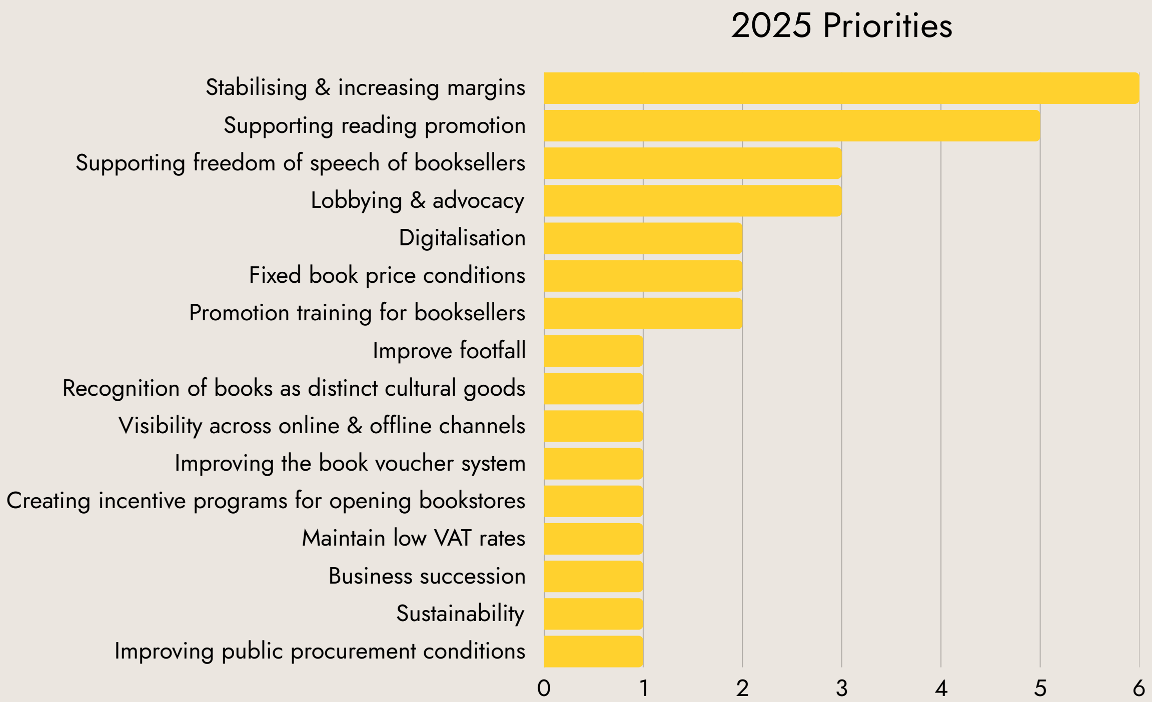
"In the post-pandemic period, we have witnessed a growing-organic enthusiasm for books in our country. The book market has grown by over 30% between 2021 and 2024, driven primarily by readers aged 34 and under, while older generations have maintained their reading habits.

Social media activity is vibrant, with an increasing number of reading groups and book clubs. Screen fatigue and the rising presence of digital clutter have also contributed to a renewed interest in alternative forms of leisure such as reading books. Book fairs are being held across the country, and the media is also helping to bring books into the spotlight, supporting publishers' and booksellers' communication plans."

- Associação Portuguesa de Editores e Livreiros

Top priorities for the upcoming year

As the industry navigates ongoing economic uncertainty, rapid technological evolution, and evolving consumer behaviour, booksellers are preparing to focus on strategic areas that support resilience and growth.



Conclusion

The 2024 international bookselling landscape reflects both challenge and resilience. While digitalisation and innovative consumer engagement are opening new opportunities, economic pressure and threats to freedom of expression continue to weigh heavily. Reading rates show mixed trends, highlighting the need for targeted promotion and support. Looking ahead, booksellers' priorities underscore a clear commitment to sustaining to cultural, social and economic value of bookselling in an increasingly complex global environment.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the EIBF members for their participation in this report and their continuous support:

Australia: The Australian Booksellers Association

France: Syndicat des Distributeurs de Loisirs Culturels (SDLC), Association des Librairies Informatisées et Utilisatrices des Réseaux Électroniques (ALIRE), Syndicat de la librairie française (SLF)

Germany: Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels

Azerbaidjan: Ali and Nino Bookstores

Latvia: Latvijas Grāmattirgotāju asociācija

Netherlands: Koninklijke Boekverkopersbond (KBb)

Norway: Den Norske Bokhandlerforening

Romania: Cărturești

Portugal: Associação Portuguesa de Editores e Livreiros

Sweden: Svenska Bokhandlareföreningens

Switzerland (CH DE): Schweizer Buchhandels- und Verlags-Verband (SBVV).

United States: American Booksellers Association

European and International Booksellers Federation - EIBF
Square Marie-Louise 69
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Contact: info@eibf.eu
Visit: www.eibf.eu
Tel: +32 (0)2 223 49 40

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