

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 on WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE 2025

Report reveals new insights into addressing the reading for pleasure crisis as charity warns children's reading enjoyment levels have reached lowest in 20 years

New National Literacy Trust research published today [**Wednesday 11th June 2025**], reveals that the reading for pleasure crisis in the UK persists with both children and young people's reading enjoyment and daily reading frequency having fallen to their lowest levels since the charity began tracking them twenty years ago [1].

However, despite a deeply concerning picture, new insights from the charity's largest ever survey of 114,970 children and young people from across the UK into the reading motivations of 8- to 18-year-olds offer a window into what might re-engage those with the lowest levels of reading enjoyment.

Just one in three (32.7%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 said they enjoyed reading "very much" or "quite a lot" in 2025 – a slight drop from the previous year, but part of a much longer decline. Compared to 2005, this marks a 36% drop in reading enjoyment [2].

Sadly, the picture for the South West mirrors this national trend with just one in three (32.3%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 saying they enjoy reading in their free time.

Key points from this year's research:

- This year's reading for pleasure decline has been especially steep among primary-aged children and boys, with boys aged 11 to 16 seeing the sharpest drop; children eligible for free school meals (FSMs) also report lower levels of enjoyment (31.0%) than their peers (33.0%) [3].
- For reading frequency, just 18.7% of 8- to 18-year-olds said they read something daily in their free time in 2025 – half the number reading daily 20 years ago. Even among younger children aged 5 to 8, daily reading rates dropped by 3.4 percentage points in the past year to 44.5%.
- Girls continue to read daily at higher rates than boys, with the gender gap widening to 6.2 percentage points – the largest seen since 2023. More children not receiving FSMs read daily (19.4%) than those who receive FSMs (15.8%).
- While more girls read for wellbeing and emotional support, more boys leaned toward reading to connect with causes or the wider world. Reading to build knowledge and skills was equally strong across genders.

- Children and young people who report low levels of reading enjoyment, though less engaged, still recognise reading's educational value – nearly half said it helps them learn new words or new things. However, reading for wellbeing or to connect with causes are far less common for this group, suggesting these are weaker drivers of engagement.

These findings shed light on both the challenges and possible routes out of crisis in Cornwall, where the National Literacy Trust has been working to improve literacy levels since 2022. With local teams on the ground, the charity works in partnership with community organisations, nurseries, schools, and local businesses to encourage reading for pleasure from the very start of children's lives.

The charity focuses on supporting children aged 0-5 by delivering family-facing events in the community, advice and guidance for parents as well as training and resources for professionals working in the early years.

To support children and young people with the lowest levels of reading enjoyment, the report findings suggest a need to align reading with their personal interests and media habits:

- **Two in five** said they were more motivated to read when the material related to a favourite film or TV series (38.1%), or that matched their interests or hobbies (37.1%).
- **Three in ten** (30.9%) were drawn in by an interesting book cover or title.
- **One in four** (26.6%) valued having the freedom to choose what they read.
- **One in five** (22.0%) were inspired by reading recommendations from friends, family, or teachers [4].

Even among those who say they don't enjoy reading, many still choose to read song lyrics, news articles, fiction, comics and fan fiction in their free time, highlighting how we might re-engage this group with reading [5].

In 2025, half (49.3%) of children and young people still read fiction or short stories in print each month, with two in five (40.1%) reading non-fiction books. Comics and graphic novels (29.2%) and magazines (21.3%) also remain popular choices in this format. Digital formats dominated in other categories, with song lyrics (60.7%) and news articles (28.2%) mostly read on screens [6].

Jonathan Douglas, Chief Executive of the National Literacy Trust, said: *"This year's data is once again stark. We are witnessing the lowest levels of reading enjoyment and daily*

reading in a generation – a critical challenge for literacy, wellbeing, and life chances. Children’s futures are being put at risk and joining forces across sectors to address the reading for pleasure crisis is essential.”

“But our research also offers hope. Young people are still motivated to read when it connects to their interests, when they have choice, and when it feels relevant to their lives. We must meet young readers where they are – emotionally, culturally and digitally – if we are to reignite a love of reading across the UK.”

There is a known link between reading for pleasure and reading skills, wellbeing, empathy, confidence, and aptitude for learning; with children and young people who enjoy reading in their free time being twice as likely to have above average reading skills (34.2% vs 15.7%) [7].

There is also a link between reading for pleasure and benefits to the UK economy. Previous research found that, if all school-aged children in the UK read for pleasure every day, the number getting five good GCSEs by the age of 16 could increase by 1.1 million within 30 years, boosting their average lifetime earning potential by £57,500 and adding £4.6 billion to the UK’s GDP each year [8].

The National Literacy Trust therefore calls for a multi-sector approach to solve the reading for pleasure crisis and address the long-term educational, social and economic effects of low levels of reading enjoyment. Charities, libraries, businesses, schools, communities, and government must join forces to grow a generation of readers.

The charity continues its commitment, over three years, to directly support and empower 1.5 million more children and young people from disadvantaged communities to read for pleasure. This includes ensuring every primary school has a dedicated library or reading space by 2028 through its Libraries for Primaries campaign and supporting young families with children aged 0–5 through its Early Words Matter campaign, which champions the crucial role of stories, songs and shared book experiences in building early language and emotional bonds that form the bedrock of future reading enjoyment and success.

In response to England’s ongoing Curriculum and Assessment Review, the charity has also called for a culture of reading for pleasure to be embedded into all levels of the education system.

The National Literacy Trust has also curated a range of free resources to help families, teachers and businesses encourage children's reading: literacytrust.org.uk/reading-for-pleasure

The National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey is supported by Twinkl.

-ENDS-

Media contact

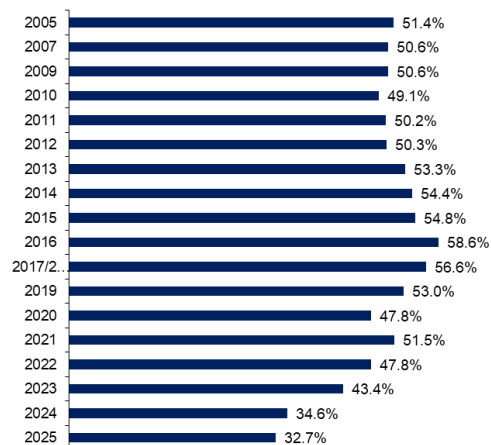
For further information or to request a spokesperson interview, please contact:

- **Holly McSweeney**, Campaigns Officer, National Literacy Trust,
holly.mcsweeney@literacytrust.org.uk / 07900 312259
- **Press office:** media@literacytrust.org.uk / 07902 401 927

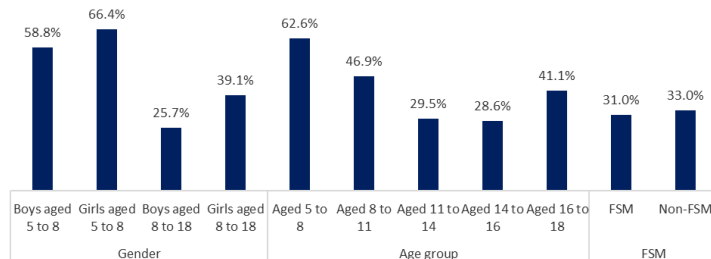
Notes to editors

[1] National Literacy Trust (2025) Children and young people's reading in 2025

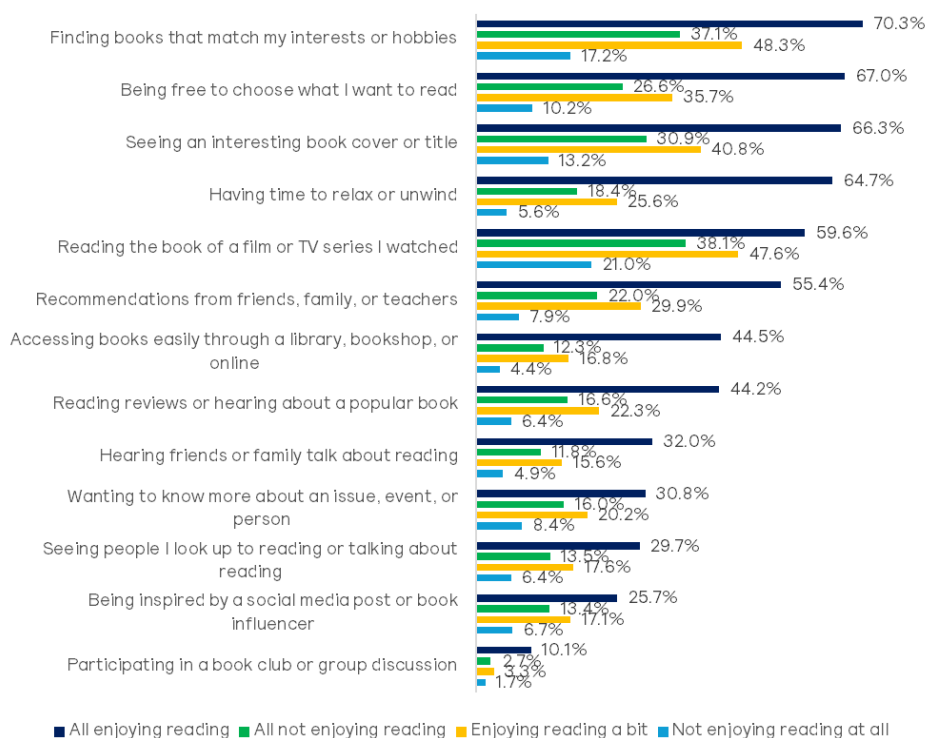
[2] **Figure 1:** Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who told us that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot between 2005 and 2025



[3] **Figure 2:** Percentage of children and young people who enjoyed reading in their free time in 2025 by gender, age group and free-school-meal uptake (8 to 18s only)



[4] **Figure 3:** What would motivate children and young people aged 8 to 18 to engage with reading in 2025 by whether or not they enjoy reading

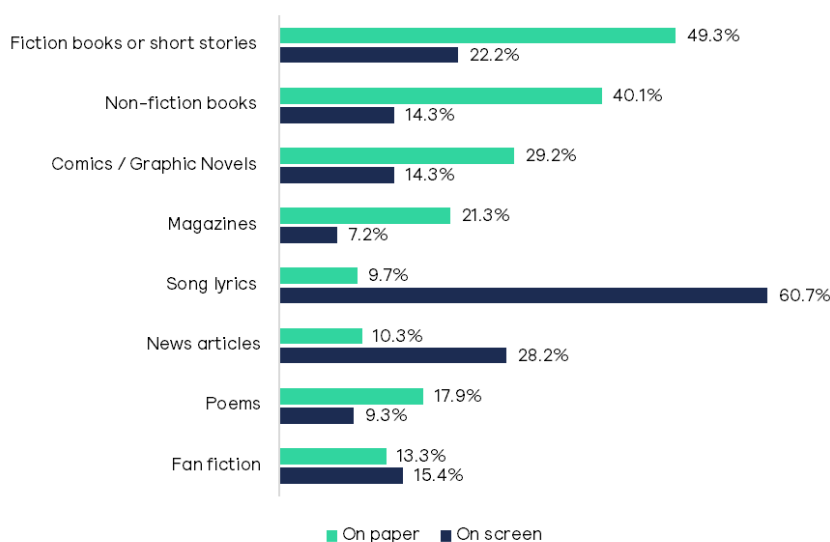


[5] **Table 1:** Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading various formats (on paper or screen) in their free time in 2025 by whether or not they enjoy reading

	On screen		On paper	
	Enjoys reading	Doesn't enjoy reading	Enjoys reading	Doesn't enjoy reading
Fiction books or short stories	29.5%	18.7%	73.7%	37.5%
Non-fiction books	19.5%	11.7%	57.4%	31.7%
Comics / graphic novels	18.9%	12.0%	42.0%	23.0%
Magazines	8.3%	6.7%	29.5%	17.4%

Song lyrics	60.6%	60.7%	13.4%	7.9%
News articles	33.4%	25.7%	15.1%	8.0%
Poems	13.5%	7.2%	26.4%	13.7%
Fan fiction	22.5%	12.0%	19.8%	10.1%

[6] **Figure 4:** Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading various formats (on paper or screen) at least once a month in their free time in 2025



[7] National Literacy Trust (2024) Children and young people's reading in 2024

[8] WPI Strategy, National Literacy Trust and British Land (2021) The power of reading for pleasure

About the National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed. Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills give you the tools to get the most out of life, and the power to shape your future. For over 30 years the National Literacy Trust has continued to support schools, families and communities on a local and national level to help people change their stories.

literacytrust.org.uk

About Twinkl

Founded in 2010 with a mission to 'help those who teach', Twinkl has grown into a global leader in education, trusted by over 6 million educators across 190 countries. Supporting both educators and families worldwide, Twinkl brings learning to life with expert-created, curriculum-aligned resources.

Twinkl's literacy offering includes a fully decodable reading scheme, engaging storybooks and the DfE-validated Twinkl Phonics programme – all designed to ignite a lifelong love of reading and build essential literacy skills.

With over 1.5 million resources, including fully-resourced curriculum schemes, inclusion support and unit assessments alongside a growing suite of digital apps and AI tools, Twinkl empowers educators and learners from early years to secondary school across classrooms, homes and every setting in between.