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# Children and young people's reading in 2025

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National Literacy Trust

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When we published our report on children and young people’s reading last year, we warned of a situation requiring urgent attention. We were not alone in raising the alarm. The Reading Agency’s 2024<sup>1</sup> report into adult reading habits painted an equally troubling picture, revealing that only half of UK adults now read regularly for pleasure and that those aged 16 to 34 are the least likely to do so. Similar issues have been reported in the US, with studies finding marked declines in daily reading over the last 20 years<sup>2</sup>.

The findings must also be seen in a global context. The latest *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)* revealed worrying trends in reading enjoyment among 10-year-olds, with both England and Northern Ireland falling below the international average. In these nations, around 1 in 4 children (24% in England and 25% in Northern Ireland) reported that they did not enjoy reading compared with just 1 in 5 (18%) globally<sup>3</sup>.

Together, these findings point to a broad and urgent challenge: a steady erosion of reading enjoyment across generations, with implications for literacy, wellbeing, and personal development that cannot be ignored.

## Children and young people’s reading in 2025

We asked **114,970** children and young people aged 5 to 18 from 515 schools across the UK who took part in our Annual Literacy Survey how they felt about reading in 2025 (see Appendix A for more information on methodology and sample). This report shows that the picture remains just as concerning one year on.

### Reading enjoyment in free time

In 2025, reading enjoyment is at its lowest point in two decades. Over the last year, the decline has been most acute among primary-aged children and boys, particularly teenage boys:

- Just 1 in 3 (32.7%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 reported enjoying reading “very much” or “quite a lot” in 2025.
- Enjoyment levels dropped slightly (by 1.9 percentage points) from the previous year. However, the long-term fall remains stark, with levels 18.7

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<sup>1</sup> <https://readingagency.org.uk/adult-reading-research-report-2024/>

<sup>2</sup> Bone et al., (2025). *The decline in reading for pleasure in the US: Analyses of 20 years of the American Time Use Survey*. [https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/pfmxz\\_v1](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/pfmxz_v1)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pirls-2021-reading-literacy-performance-in-england>

percentage points lower than in 2005 or, in other words, a 36% drop in the number of children and young people who say they enjoy reading in their free time.

- 3 in 5 (62.6%) children aged 5 to 8 reported enjoying reading in 2025, down 2.1 percentage points from 2024. Overall, levels for those aged 5 to 8 have remained more stable over the past six years – ‘only’ reducing by 18% between 2019 and 2025.
- Enjoying reading in free time in 2025 was associated with gender and age: more girls than boys (39.1% vs. 25.7%) and more children aged 5 to 8 (62.7%) and 8 to 11 (46.9%) enjoyed reading than those aged 11 to 14 (29.5%), 14 to 16 (28.6%) and 16 to 18 (41.1%). Slightly more children and young people who didn’t receive free school meals (FSMs) told us they enjoyed reading compared with their peers who received FSMs (33.0% vs. 31.0%).
- Enjoyment levels dropped for all children and young people regardless of their background in 2025. However, the drop was particularly pronounced for those in primary school, decreasing by 5 percentage points between 2024 and 2025.
- Between 2024 and 2025, boys’ enjoyment of reading declined across most age groups, particularly those aged 11 to 16, while girls’ enjoyment remained relatively stable or slightly improved.
- There were geographical differences in reading enjoyment. More children and young people in England told us that they enjoyed reading compared with their peers in the other UK nations. Within England, more children and young people in London and the North East enjoyed reading in their free time than their counterparts in other regions.

### Daily reading in free time

Daily reading habits among children and young people have continued to decline, reaching their lowest levels since tracking began. The most recent figures show that just 1 in 5 children and young people aged 8 to 18 read daily, marking a sustained downward trend. Over the last year, the drop in daily reading was most pronounced in boys, older age groups, and pupils receiving free school meals.

- In 2025, just 1 in 5 (18.7%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 said they read something daily in their free time.
- After a steep drop between 2023 and 2024, rates fell again in 2025 by a further 1.8 percentage points. This marks the lowest level of daily reading recorded to date and is nearly 20 percentage points lower than 2005.

- Again, a similar pattern is seen among younger children aged 5 to 8. In 2025, 44.5% of children aged 5 to 8 said they read something daily in their free time, more than twice the rate reported by older age groups.
- More girls than boys said that they read something daily in their free time in 2024, regardless of whether they were aged 5 to 8 (48.3% vs 41.0%) or 8 to 18 (21.6% vs 15.4%). Levels of daily reading decreased with age. For example, over twice as many children aged 5 to 8 said that they read something in their free time daily compared with those aged 11 to 14 (44.5% vs 17.1%). More children and young people who didn't receive FSMs told us that they read daily in their free time compared with their peers who received FSMs (19.4% vs. 15.8%).
- Between 2024 and 2025, daily reading rates dropped more steeply among boys than girls, widening the gender gap to 6.2 percentage points, the largest since 2023. Reading rates dropped across all age groups, with the most pronounced decline this year seen in 8- to 11-year-olds. Pupils eligible for FSMs also saw a notable drop in daily reading, while rates among non-FSM pupils remained more stable, widening the FSM gap to 3.6 percentage points – the largest since 2021.
- Between 2024 and 2025, boys' daily reading levels declined across most age groups, particularly for those aged 11 to 16, while girls' daily reading remained more stable.
- More children and young people in England (19.1%) said that they read daily in their free time compared with their peers in Scotland (16.8%) and Northern Ireland (16.9%). Wales had the lowest daily reading rate (12.5%). There were also regional variations across England, with more children and young people in London telling us that they read daily in their free time, followed by children and young people in the North East and East of England.

### Reading motivation (aged 8 to 18)

An important way to address the decline in reading enjoyment and frequency is to shed light on what drives or deters reading among children and young people, particularly for those who tell us that they don't enjoy it.

While enjoyment and frequency are declining, many children and young people still find value in reading, particularly for learning. Motivations fall into three broad categories: curious (learning-focused), mindful (wellbeing-focused), and social (connection-focused). Curious motivations remain the strongest across all enjoyment levels, especially among those less enthusiastic about reading.

- **Curious readers** read to build knowledge and skills. Half read to learn new words (51.8%) or new things (51.6%), while others read to improve focus (42.1%), understand different views (34.4%), develop critical thinking (30.1%), or learn about other cultures (28.3%).
- **Mindful readers** read for wellbeing, creativity and escapism. Many said reading helped them relax (57.2%), feel inspired (46.3%), escape (43.3%), or feel happy (39.1%). A quarter said it boosted their confidence (24.8%) or helped with problems (23.2%).
- **Social readers** read to connect with causes they cared about (23.2%), the wider world (19.1%) or other people (9.0%).
- Reading motivations differed by age, gender and background. Girls were more likely to be mindful readers, while boys leaned slightly more towards social reading. Curious reading was equally common across genders. Younger children were more engaged overall, with mindful reading declining with age and social reading increasing slightly in adolescence. Differences by socioeconomic background were minimal.

Looking at reading motivation from the perspective of children and young people with the lowest levels of reading enjoyment may offer insights into how we might re-engage this group with reading.

- Many of this group appear to value reading for its benefits in relation to learning. For example, almost half of those who say they only enjoy reading a bit and around 3 in 10 who don't enjoy reading at all believe reading helps them learn new words (28.9%) or new things (29.2%). Fewer of this group, however, read to improve their focus or their critical thinking.
- Far fewer children and young people with the lowest levels of reading enjoyment are motivated by 'mindful' motivations, such as relaxation and happiness, with only around 1 in 7 (15%) reading for these reasons. Social reading motivations were least endorsed across all enjoyment levels, but particularly in those with the lowest levels, indicating these are the weakest drivers of reading engagement for this group.

### What might encourage disengaged readers?

For children and young people who report low enjoyment, specific motivators stand out, particularly connections to other media and personal interests. Practical design features like engaging covers and freedom of choice also matter, while social initiatives like book groups had limited impact.

- 2 in 5 (38.1%) said they were motivated to read by reading material related to a film or TV series they'd enjoyed, or that matched their interests or

hobbies (37.1%). This suggests linking reading text more explicitly to other media, particularly visual media, and emphasising how reading can help you to explore personal interests could support greater reading engagement in this group.

- Other drivers included seeing an interesting book cover or title (30.9%), being free to choose what they wanted to read (26.6%) and receiving reading recommendations from friends, family or teachers (22.0%). These findings again suggest compelling cover art and titles may catch the attention of this group, along with agency and personalised reading recommendations from those who know them best.
- Few children and young people felt that easy access to books (e.g. through a library or bookshop), hearing friends or family talk about reading in general or taking part in book groups or discussions had an impact of their reading. These motivations appear to be more relevant to already engaged readers.

### What children and young people are reading in their free time

Despite declining enjoyment, many children and young people continue to engage with reading in various forms. Print remains the dominant format, especially for fiction and non-fiction, while digital content plays a key role, particularly for music lyrics and news. Even among those who say they don't enjoy reading, many still choose to read regularly, often turning to formats that align with their interests or cultural experiences.

- Half (49.3%) of those aged 8 to 18 said they read fiction books or short stories on paper in their free time, while 2 in 5 (40.1%) read non-fiction in print. 3 in 10 (29.2%) reported reading comics or graphic novels on paper, and 1 in 5 (21.3%) read printed magazines.
- Some types of content were clearly preferred on screen: 3 in 5 (60.7%) said they read song lyrics digitally, and more than 1 in 4 (28.2%) read news articles on screen.
- More children and young people who enjoyed reading engaged with a wide variety of formats on paper and on screen, especially fiction, non-fiction, comics and poems, with a clear preference for reading in print.
- However, it's important to recognise that even among those who say they don't enjoy reading, many still choose to read in their free time, particularly song lyrics, news articles, fiction, comics and fan fiction, highlighting that certain formats remain meaningful and relevant even for those who are less enthusiastic overall.

These insights are powerful: they suggest that re-engagement is possible,

especially if we personalise reading opportunities around interests, allow autonomy in choice, and forge better links between reading and other media that the children and young people already recognise as part of their cultural life. By engaging with young readers in their own environments, and in ways that resonate on intellectual and emotional levels, we can start to rebuild a culture of reading that values both enjoyment and attainment.

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## Reading in 2025

This report focuses on the reading children and young people do in their free time (a report on children and young people's reading at school will be published separately later in the year).

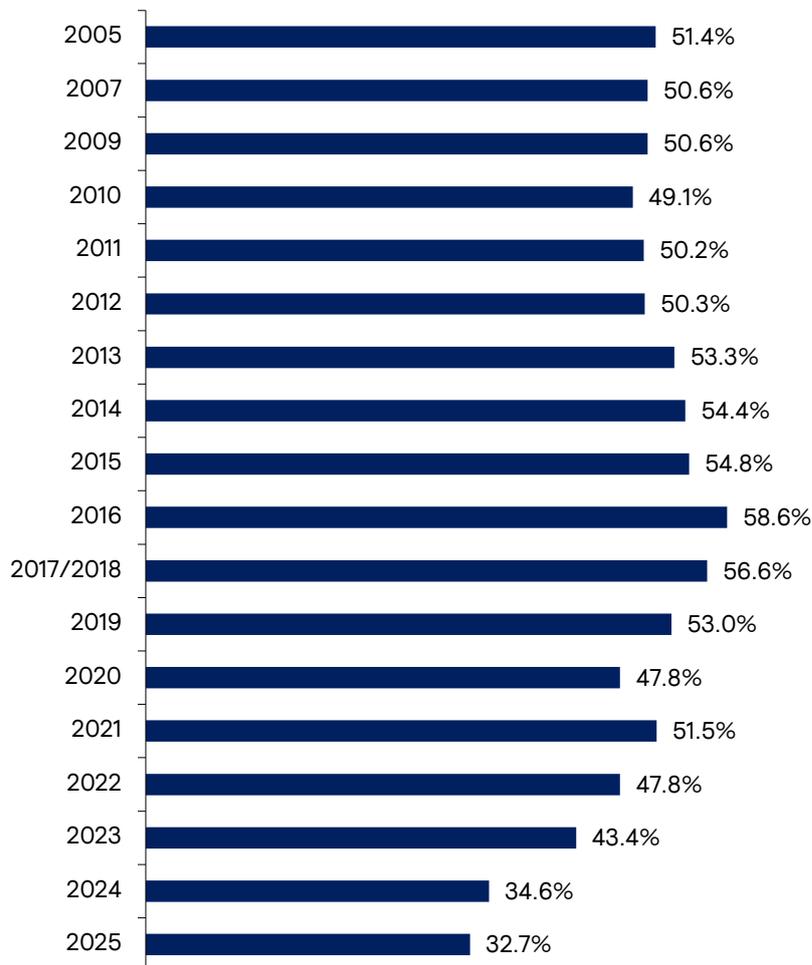
Before they answered questions on reading, they were reminded that “by reading, we mean books, magazines, newspapers, comics or anything else you might read in print or on a screen (e.g. on your phone, tablet or computer)”.

### Reading enjoyment in free time

We have been tracking the reading enjoyment levels of children and young people aged 8 to 18 since 2005. 1 in 3 (32.7%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 told us in 2025 that they enjoyed reading either very much or quite a lot in their free time. This means that after the dramatic drop in levels in the previous year (see Figure 1 for an over-time comparison), levels of enjoyment have remained relatively stable – only reducing by 1.9 percentage points over the past year.

However, the broader trend is more concerning. From the mid-2000s to early 2010s, reading enjoyment in free time remained fairly stable. Starting around 2012, there was a noticeable rise in reading enjoyment, peaking in 2016. But this momentum quickly reversed and since 2017, levels have steadily declined, with a sharper drop after 2019. By 2025, the enjoyment level is at its lowest in the 20-year span, pointing to a notable shift away from reading as a preferred leisure activity. Indeed, since 2005, enjoyment of reading in free time has fallen by 18.7 percentage points. Or put another way, 36% fewer children and young people now say they enjoy reading in their free time compared with 2005.

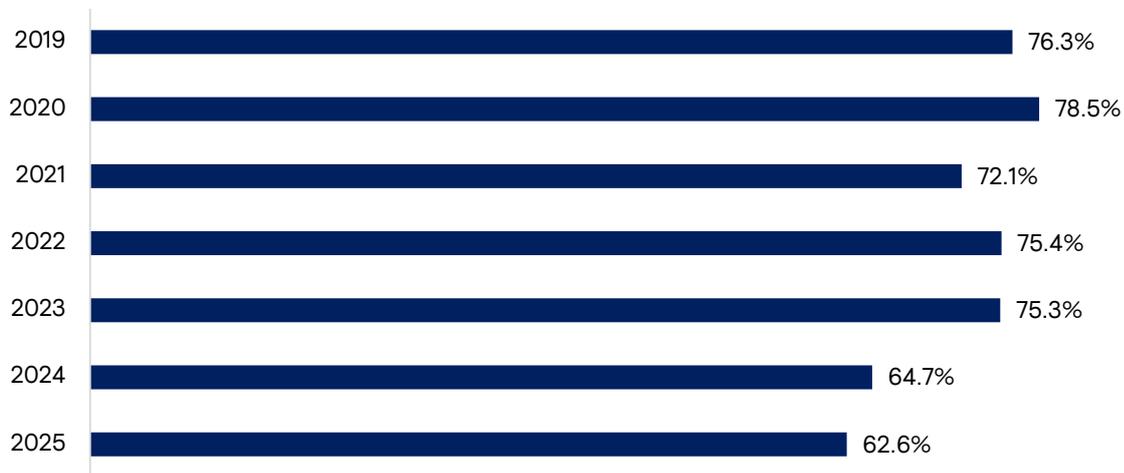
**Figure 1: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who told us that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot between 2005 and 2025**



This also means that 2 in 3 children and young people aged 8 to 18 told us that they did not enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot. Indeed, over 2 in 5 (43.2%) told us that they only enjoyed reading a bit and 1 in 4 (24.1%) didn't enjoy reading at all.

We have also tracked the reading enjoyment of children aged 5 to 8 over the last six years. As shown in Figure 2, enjoyment of reading remained relatively stable in this age group between 2019 and 2023, aside from a dip in 2021. However, mirroring the decline seen in older age groups, enjoyment has dropped since 2023. In 2025, just 3 in 5 (62.6%) children aged 5 to 8 said they enjoyed reading in their free time.

**Figure 2: Percentage of children aged 5 to 8 who told us that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot between 2019 and 2025**



### Who enjoyed reading in 2025?

Who were the children and young people who told us in 2025 that they enjoyed reading either very much or quite a lot? And, therefore, who are the children and young people who didn't enjoy reading?

As shown in Figure 3, more girls than boys reported enjoying reading in their free time in 2025, regardless of whether they were aged 5 to 8 or 8 to 18. The data also indicate that reading enjoyment declines with age: while 3 in 5 children aged 5 to 8 enjoyed reading, this dropped to 1 in 2 among those aged 8 to 11, and further to just 3 in 10 among those aged 11 to 14 and 14 to 16. However, enjoyment rebounded slightly among those aged 16 and above, with 2 in 5 telling us that they enjoyed reading.

The difference in reading enjoyment based on socioeconomic background – measured by eligibility for free school meals (FSM) – was minimal. Slightly more children and young people who did not receive FSMs reported enjoying reading compared with those who told us they did receive FSMs.

**Figure 3: 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)**

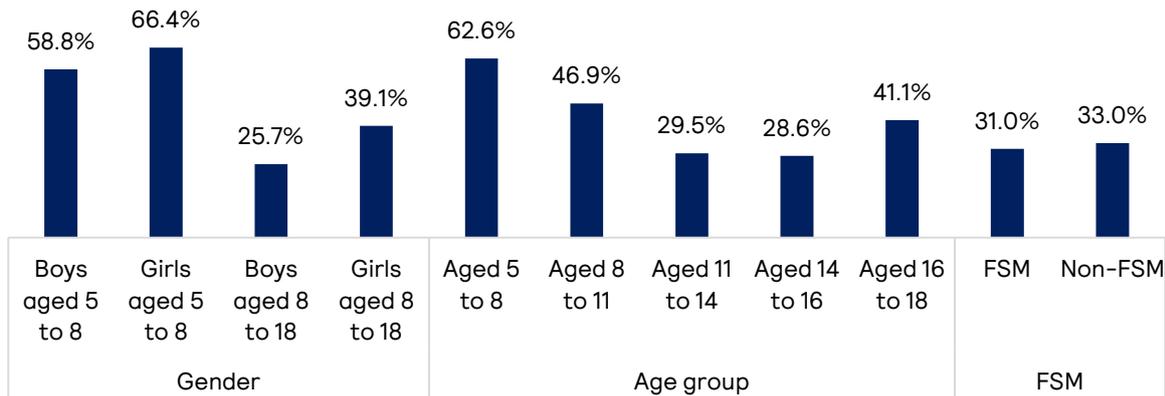
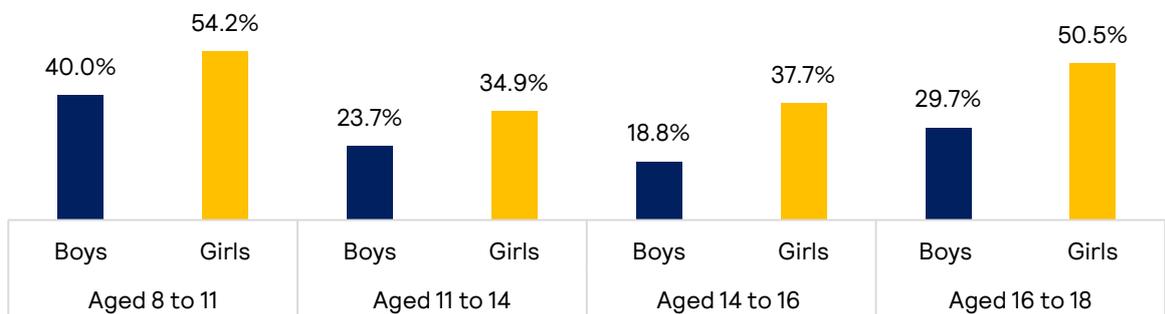


Figure 4 shows the percentage of children and young people across different age groups who reported enjoying reading in their free time broken down by gender. Across all age groups, more girls than boys consistently reported enjoying reading in their free time, with the gap widening notably during the teenage years.

**Figure 4: Percentage of children and young people enjoying reading in their free time in 2025 by gender and age group**



### Reading enjoyment over time by gender, age group and FSM uptake

In 2025, more girls than boys aged 8 to 18 said they enjoyed reading in their free time (see Table 1). The gender gap, which had narrowed from 10.7 percentage points in 2005 to 4.8 in 2023, nearly tripled to 12.3 percentage points in 2024. This

gap widened further in 2025 to a 13.4-percentage-point difference, largely due to a sharper drop in boys' reading enjoyment.

Reading enjoyment declined across all age groups in 2025. In 2024, the drop was steepest among those aged 11 to 14 (down 9.7 percentage points) and 14 to 16 (down 11.1 percentage points), reaching the lowest levels in 19 years. In contrast, the drop among 8- to 11-year-olds was smaller (4.3 percentage points). This trend reversed in 2025, with a much larger decline in reading enjoyment levels for those aged 8 to 11 (down 5 percentage points), while levels for their older counterparts stabilised.

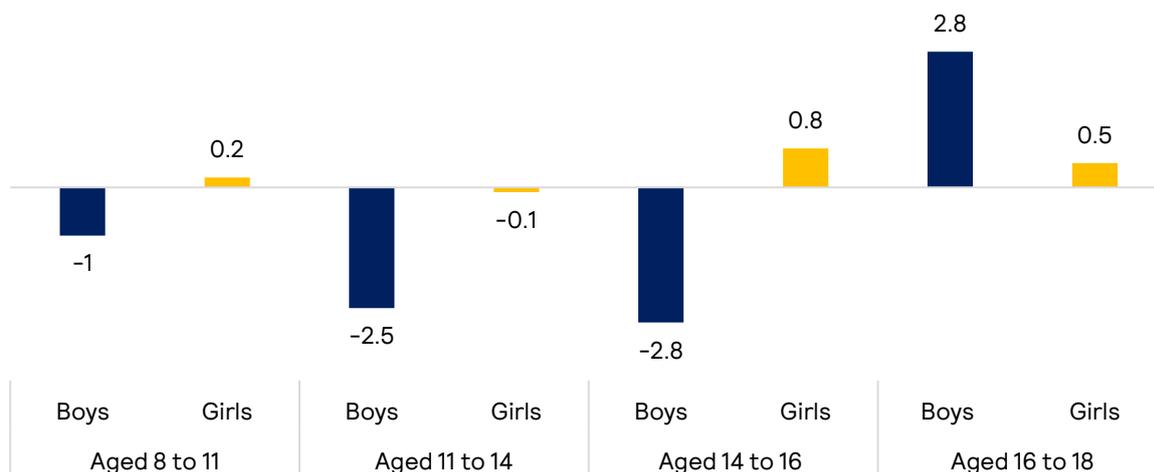
Enjoyment also fell for both pupils receiving FSMs and those who did not. In 2024, the decline was larger for non-FSM students (9.2 vs. 5.6 percentage points). As a result, reading enjoyment levels for both groups were nearly equal and the closest they had been since 2016. However, the drop was slightly more pronounced among those receiving FSMs in 2025, causing the gap between the two groups to widen again.

**Table 1: Reading enjoyment levels for children and young people aged 8 to 18 between 2005 and 2025 by gender, age group and FSM uptake**

	Boys	Girls	8-11	11-14	14-16	16-18	FSM	Non-FSM
<b>2005</b>	46.1%	56.8%	67.5%	44.3%	32.0%	44.4%	46.5%	50.2%
<b>2010</b>	42.3%	55.4%	68.1%	45.8%	32.5%	45.5%	44.1%	49.7%
<b>2011</b>	43.7%	56.7%	73.0%	47.2%	34.4%	46.3%	45.3%	50.8%
<b>2012</b>	43.9%	56.8%	64.0%	45.5%	36.3%	44.8%	47.7%	50.7%
<b>2013</b>	47.1%	59.8%	65.8%	49.5%	36.7%	40.1%	49.6%	53.9%
<b>2014</b>	47.2%	61.6%	65.6%	50.3%	43.4%	55.3%	50.4%	54.9%
<b>2015</b>	47.8%	61.2%	72.6%	51.7%	40.2%	53.6%	53.4%	55.1%
<b>2016</b>	52.4%	64.9%	77.6%	55.2%	43.8%	56.0%	58.3%	58.3%
<b>2017/18</b>	51.1%	62.6%	77.0%	53.2%	44.3%	54.4%	53.8%	56.3%
<b>2019</b>	46.5%	60.3%	71.9%	49.5%	40.2%	56.5%	51.4%	52.6%
<b>2020</b>	46.6%	48.9%	66.6%	46.2%	42.3%	56.0%	45.9%	48.0%
<b>2021</b>	45.6%	55.9%	62.4%	50.7%	48.1%	58.9%	47.5%	52.1%
<b>2022</b>	42.4%	51.5%	59.8%	45.6%	45.3%	57.5%	43.8%	42.8%
<b>2023</b>	40.5%	45.3%	56.2%	40.4%	40.8%	56.2%	39.5%	43.8%
<b>2024</b>	28.2%	40.5%	51.9%	30.7%	29.7%	40.0%	33.9%	34.8%
<b>2025</b>	25.7%	39.1%	46.9%	29.5%	28.6%	41.4%	31.0%	33.0%

Figure 5 shows the difference in reading enjoyment between 2024 and 2025 in percentage points between boys and girls across different age groups. Between 2024 and 2025, boys' enjoyment of reading declined across most age groups, particularly between the ages of 11 to 16, while girls' enjoyment remained relatively stable or slightly improved. Notably, boys aged 16 to 18 showed a significant rebound in reading enjoyment, in contrast to more modest gains among girls. This means that the gender gap widened in early to mid-adolescence but began to narrow again in late teens.

**Figure 5: Differences in percentage points in children and young people aged 8 to 18 enjoying reading in their free time between 2024 and 2025 by gender and age group**



Looking specifically at those aged 5 to 8 in 2025, more girls than boys said they enjoyed reading in their free time (see Table 2), reflecting the same gender pattern observed among older age groups. This trend has been consistent since we began tracking reading enjoyment in this age group.

Notably, while the gender gap has fluctuated since 2019, it has more than halved, dropping from 15.5 percentage points in 2019 to 7.6 points in 2025, largely due to a steeper decline in reading enjoyment rates among girls (17.5 percentage points) than boys (9.6 percentage points) over that time.

**Table 2: Reading enjoyment levels for children aged 5 to 8 from 2019 to 2025 by gender**

	Overall	Boys	Girls	Gender gap (percentage points)
2019	76.3%	68.4%	83.9%	15.5
2020	78.5%	73.6%	83.3%	9.7
2021	72.1%	65.8%	78.1%	12.3
2022	75.4%	70.4%	81.0%	10.6
2023	75.3%	70.8%	80.2%	9.4
2024	64.7%	59.7%	69.6%	9.9
2025	62.6%	58.8%	66.4%	7.6

### Reading enjoyment in free time by geographical location

There were differences in reading enjoyment across the four nations. As shown in Table 3, more children and young people in England said that they enjoyed reading compared with their peers in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Children and young people in Wales had the lowest reading enjoyment rate.

Within England, regional variations were also notable. More children and young people in London told us that they enjoyed reading in their free time, followed by children and young people in the North East. Yorkshire and the Humber recorded the lowest reading enjoyment rate in England in 2025.

**Table 3: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 enjoying reading in their free time in 2025 by geographical region**

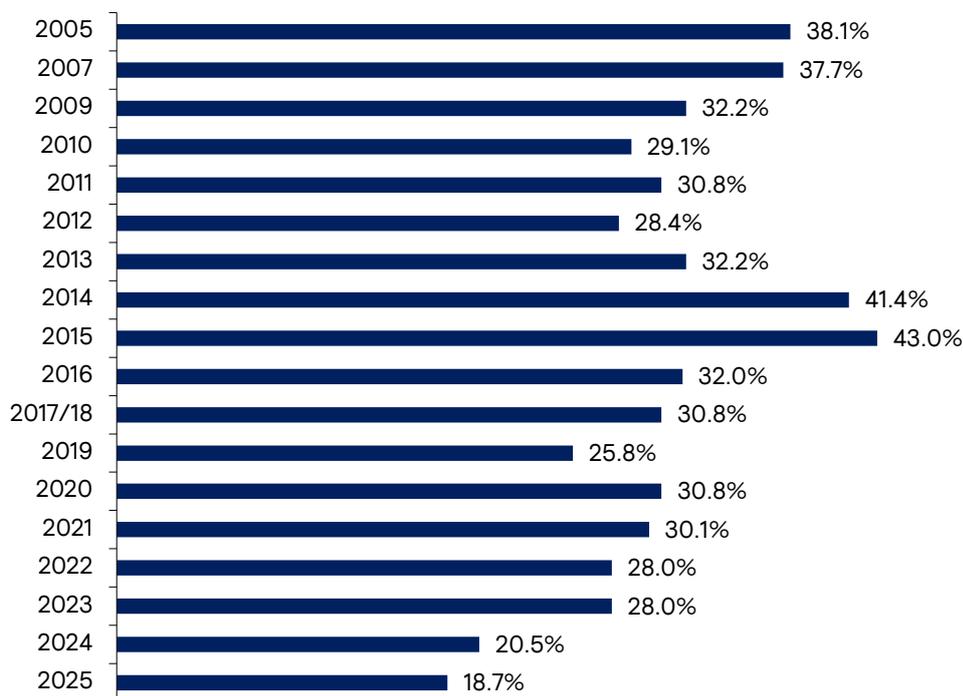
<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>33.2%</b>
North East	37.8%
North West	31.8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	28.6%
East Midlands	32.4%
West Midlands	34.8%
East of England	33.1%
London	39.5%
South East	31.0%
South West	32.3%
<b>WALES</b>	<b>25.5%</b>
<b>SCOTLAND</b>	<b>30.3%</b>
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>	<b>28.9%</b>

## Daily reading in free time

In 2025, just 1 in 5 (18.7%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 said they read something daily in their free time.

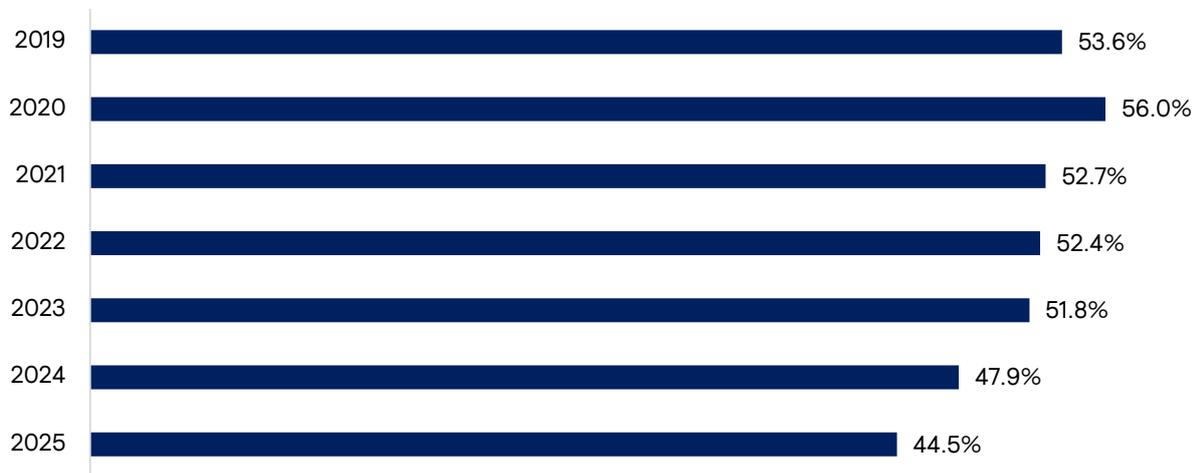
As shown in Figure 6, daily reading rates have fluctuated over the past 19 years, but the trend since 2023 has been sharply downward. After a steep drop between 2023 and 2024, rates fell again in 2025 by a further 1.8 percentage points. This marks the lowest level of daily reading recorded to date – nearly 20 percentage points lower than 2005. Or, put another way, the number of children and young people who read daily in their free time has dropped by 51% over the past 20 years.

**Figure 6: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who read daily in their free time from 2005 to 2025**



Looking at just those aged 5 to 8, in 2025, 44.5% said they read something daily in their free time, which was more than twice the rate reported by older age groups (see Figure 7). However, daily reading among this younger group has also declined, with a year-on-year drop since 2023. Rates fell by 3.4 percentage points in the past year, continuing the downward trend seen across all age groups.

**Figure 7: Percentage of children aged 5 to 8 who read daily in their free time from 2019 to 2025**



### The link between reading enjoyment in free time and reading frequency in free time

For those aged 8 to 18, there was a strong positive relationship between enjoying reading in free time and reading frequency in free time ( $r = .710$ ), indicating that those who enjoyed reading read more frequently in their free time. The relationship was weaker, though still positive, for those aged 5 to 8 ( $r = .449$ ).

As shown in Table 4, nearly 1 in 2 children and young people aged 8 to 18 who enjoyed reading in their free time also said that they read daily in their free time compared with 1 in 20 of those who didn't enjoy reading. Nonetheless, 1 in 3 (34.4%) of those who told us that they didn't enjoy reading in their free time read at least once a week and, overall, 3 in 5 (61.1%) read at least once a month in their free time.

**Table 4: Reading enjoyment in free time by reading frequency in free time in 2025 for children and young people aged 8 to 18**

	Daily	A couple of times a week	Once a week	A couple of times a month	Once a month	Rarely or never
Enjoyed reading	47.0%	36.2%	9.3%	4.4%	1.4%	1.8%
Didn't enjoy reading	5.0%	15.3%	14.1%	14.1%	12.7%	38.9%

## Daily reading in free time by gender, age group and free-school-meal uptake

In 2025, more girls than boys reported reading something daily in their free time across both the 5 to 8 and 8 to 18 age groups (see Figure 8). As with reading enjoyment, daily reading declined with age: over twice as many 5- to 8-year-olds read daily compared with those aged 11 to 16.

Slightly fewer children and young people receiving FSMs read daily in their free time compared with their non-FSM peers, continuing a small but persistent gap in reading frequency linked to socioeconomic background.

**Figure 8: Percentage of children and young people aged 5 to 18 who said they read daily in 2025 by gender, age group and free-school-meal uptake (8 to 18s only)**

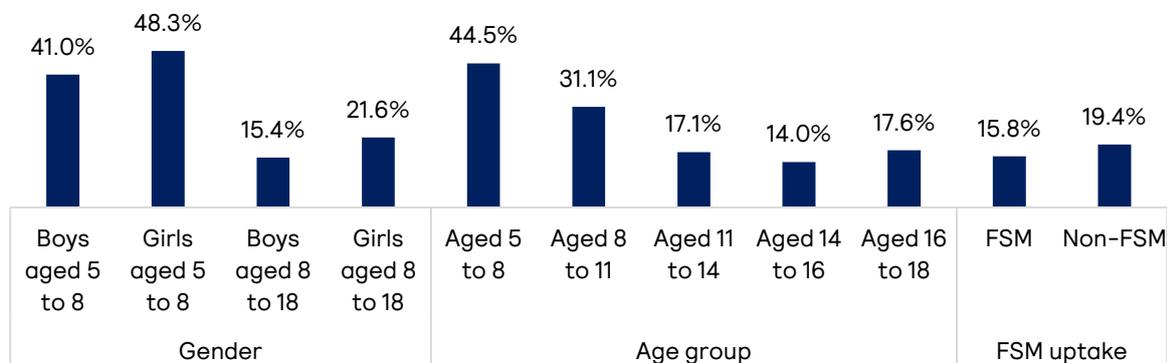
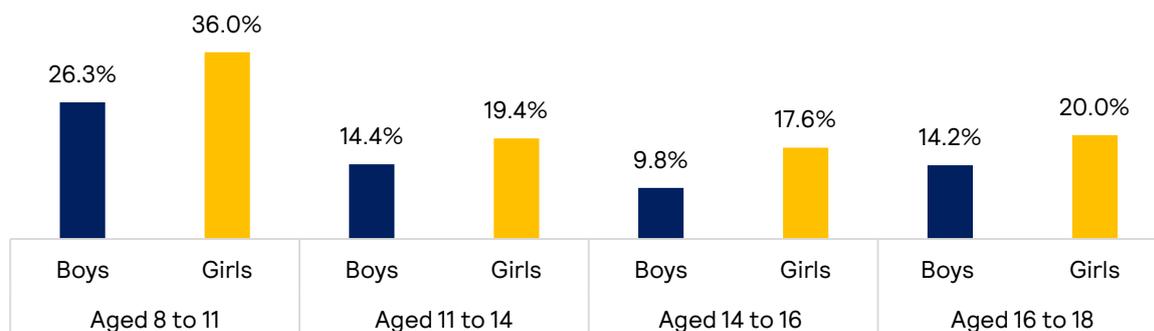


Figure 9 Looks at the interplay between gender and age group. It shows that daily reading levels decrease with age for both boys and girls, but more girls consistently read daily in their free time compared with boys across all age groups.

**Figure 9: Daily reading of children and young people aged 8 to 18 in 2025 by gender and age group**



### Daily reading levels by gender, age group and FSM uptake over time

In 2025, daily reading rates among 8- to 18-year-olds continued their long-term decline (see Table 5). Just 15.4% of boys and 21.6% of girls said they read something daily in their free time. The gender gap, which had narrowed to 1.5 percentage points in 2023, widened again in 2024 (5.7 percentage points) and has increased further in 2025 to 6.2 percentage points, primarily due to a steeper decline in boys' reading.

Daily reading rates declined across all age groups. In 2024, the steepest falls were seen in those aged 14 to 16 (down 10.9 percentage points) and those aged 11 to 14 (down 8.0 percentage points). In 2025, these older groups saw further (though smaller) drops, but the biggest drop was among those aged 8 to 11, where daily reading fell from 32.8% to 31.1%, a decrease of 1.7 percentage points.

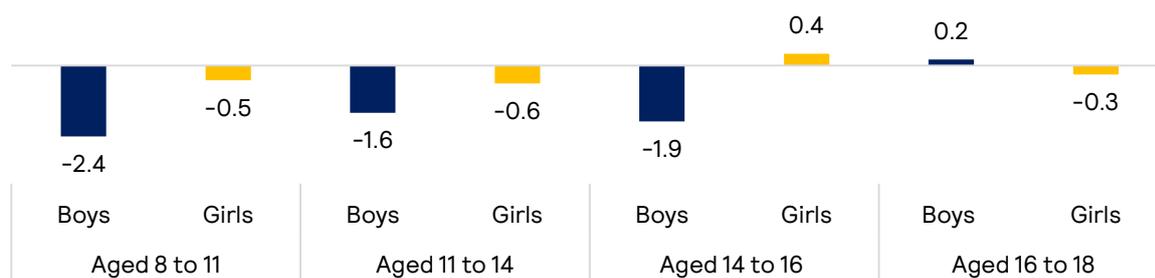
Among pupils eligible for FSMs, daily reading dropped slightly from 19.3% in 2024 to 15.8% in 2025. In contrast, non-FSM pupils remained relatively stable, only decreasing slightly from 20.6% to 19.4%. As a result, the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils, which had nearly closed in 2024 (just 1.3 percentage points), has widened again in 2025 to 3.6 percentage points, the largest disparity since 2021.

**Table 5: Daily reading levels for children and young people aged 8 to 18 between 2005 and 2025 by gender, age group and FSM uptake**

	Boys	Girls	8-11	11-14	14-16	16-18	FSM	Non-FSM
2005	35.0%	42.0%	40.5%	44.3%	32.0%	28.6%	31.0%	39.0%
2010	24.1%	33.8%	40.9%	26.7%	21.7%	28.9%	22.9%	30.2%
2011	26.3%	35.3%	42.9%	29.0%	22.9%	25.9%	28.6%	31.2%
2012	24.4%	32.5%	37.7%	24.8%	20.7%	27.9%	24.9%	29.0%
2013	28.2%	36.6%	40.7%	28.4%	24.6%	32.7%	28.7%	32.8%
2014	35.8%	46.5%	45.9%	38.5%	38.2%	47.6%	36.5%	42.1%
2015	36.0%	49.5%	45.5%	42.0%	42.4%	50.7%	38.2%	44.0%
2016	27.5%	36.5%	46.3%	28.9%	22.6%	30.7%	28.8%	32.0%
2017/18	26.7%	34.8%	46.7%	28.0%	21.9%	27.4%	28.6%	31.1%
2019	21.8%	29.9%	41.3%	23.2%	16.3%	19.2%	25.5%	25.4%
2020	28.6%	32.9%	39.8%	29.0%	26.6%	34.3%	27.9%	31.3%
2021	28.0%	35.3%	42.9%	29.5%	26.5%	31.5%	25.4%	31.1%
2022	26.5%	34.4%	39.1%	26.0%	27.1%	31.6%	24.7%	28.9%
2023	24.9%	30.4%	36.9%	26.1%	25.7%	34.0%	24.1%	28.8%
2024	17.5%	23.2%	32.8%	18.1%	14.8%	18.9%	19.3%	20.6%
2025	15.4%	21.6%	31.1%	17.1%	14.0%	17.6%	15.8%	19.4%

Figure 10 shows the difference in daily reading levels by gender and age group between 2024 and 2025 in percentage points. Between 2024 and 2025, daily reading levels declined for most age groups, with boys experiencing larger decreases than girls. The biggest drops occurred among boys aged 11 to 16, while girls' levels remained more stable overall. Notably, girls aged 14 to 16 saw a slight increase, as did boys aged 16 to 18, suggesting a modest rebound in older teens.

**Figure 10: Differences in percentage points in children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading daily in their free time between 2024 and 2025 by gender and age group**



Looking just at those aged 5 to 8 (see Table 6), in 2025 a higher percentage of girls aged 5 to 8 reported reading daily compared with boys, mirroring the gender pattern seen in the older age groups. As with reading enjoyment, this trend has been consistent since we began tracking daily reading in this age group. Interestingly, while the gender gap in daily reading increased last year, it has narrowed again in 2025, nearly halving from 14 percentage points in 2019 to 7.3 percentage points this year.

**Table 6: Daily reading levels for children aged 5 to 8 between 2019 and 2025 by gender**

	Overall	Boys	Girls	Gender gap (percentage points)
2019	53.6%	46.5%	60.5%	14.0
2020	56.0%	51.1%	61.2%	10.1
2021	52.7%	49.5%	56.1%	6.6
2022	52.4%	48.2%	56.9%	8.7
2023	51.8%	48.0%	55.2%	7.2
2024	47.9%	43.0%	52.7%	9.7
2025	44.5%	41.0%	48.3%	7.3

## Daily reading in free time by geographical location

There were differences in daily reading across the four nations. As shown in Table 7, more children and young people in England said that they read daily in their free time compared with their peers in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Children and young people in Wales had by far the lowest daily reading rate.

There were also regional variations across England. More children and young people in London told us that they read daily in their free time, followed by children and young people in the North East and East of England. Yorkshire and the Humber recorded the lowest daily reading rate in England in 2025.

**Table 7: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading daily in their free time in 2025 by geographical region**

<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>19.1%</b>
North East	21.5%
North West	18.5%
Yorkshire and the Humber	15.7%
East Midlands	17.3%
West Midlands	17.6%
East of England	20.0%
London	23.5%
South East	18.3%
South West	19.4%
<b>WALES</b>	<b>12.5%</b>
<b>SCOTLAND</b>	<b>16.8%</b>
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>	<b>16.9%</b>

## What motivates children and young people aged 8 to 18 who read at least once a month?

In addition to reading enjoyment and daily reading habits, we also wanted to explore what encourages children and young people to read in their free time. We presented them with 15 different motivations grouped into three categories: the curious reader, the mindful reader and the social reader.

Figure 11 outlines these distinct reader profiles, each with unique motivations. Curious readers are primarily driven by a desire to learn, with over half citing reading as a means to discover new words and acquire knowledge. They also value reading for its ability to enhance focus, promote critical thinking and broaden cultural understanding.

In contrast, mindful readers turn to reading for emotional and mental wellbeing. Their top motivation is relaxation, which ranks the highest across all profiles, followed by using reading as a source of creativity and escape. Reading also contributes to their happiness, confidence and ability to cope with challenges.

Meanwhile, social readers represent the smallest group. However, 1 in 4 are motivated by reading's role in helping them learn about causes they care about, and 1 in 5 do so to feel connected to the world, suggesting that reading holds

value for this more outward-looking group. At the same time, fewer than 1 in 10 report that reading helps them spend time with others, indicating that personal and introspective reasons far outweigh social factors when it comes to why most children and young people read. Overall, the findings suggest that reading is more commonly valued for its internal and personal benefits than for external or social engagement.

**Figure 11: Children and young people’s (aged 8 to 18) motivations for reading in 2025**

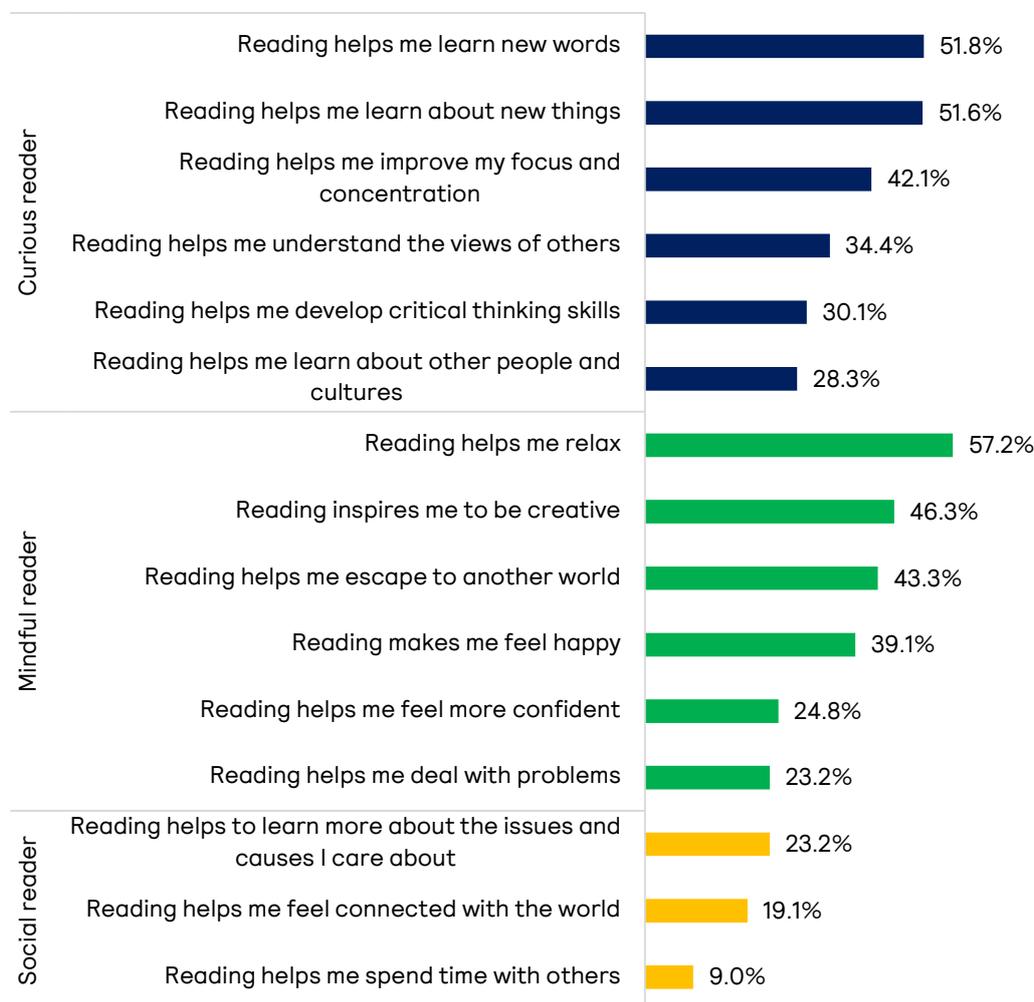


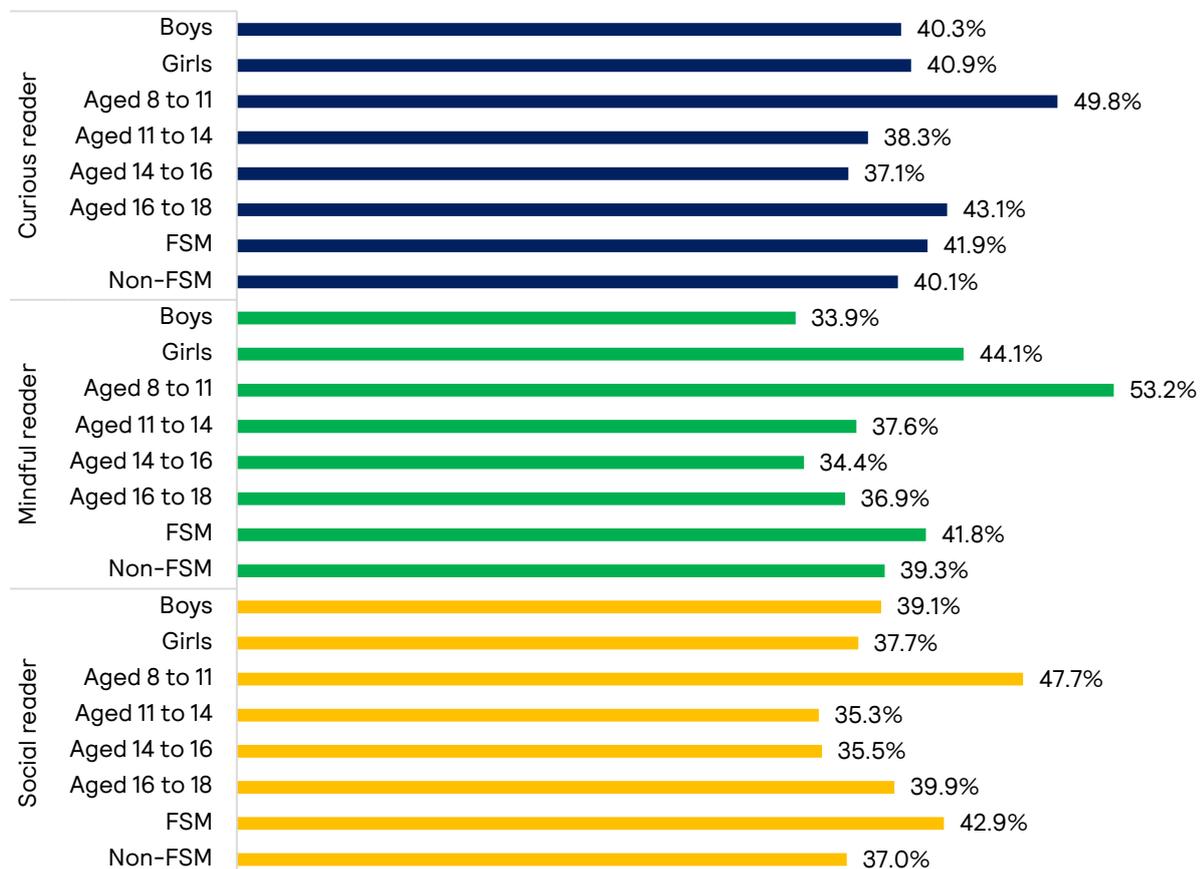
Figure 12 suggests that reading motivations are dynamic and shaped by age, gender and background. Girls are more likely than boys to identify as mindful readers, indicating a stronger emotional connection to reading. Curious reading, associated with learning and discovery, is nearly equal between boys and girls, suggesting a shared drive for knowledge. Interestingly, marginally more boys

than girls identify as social readers, indicating a slightly higher inclination among boys to read for awareness and connection to issues or causes.

Children aged 8 to 11 consistently show the highest engagement across all three reader profiles, suggesting that younger children are more broadly connected to reading for both personal development and enjoyment. As age increases, interest in mindful reading (relaxation, escape, emotional benefit) drops most sharply, particularly in the 14 to 16 age group. Meanwhile, social reading sees a more stable pattern, with a slight resurgence among those aged 16 to 18, perhaps reflecting growing awareness of social issues in late adolescence.

There were only modest differences in reading profiles by FSM uptake. Children and young people receiving FSMs reported slightly higher levels of engagement across all reading profiles compared with their non-FSM peers, with the largest gap seen in the social reader profile. While these gaps are small, they suggest that reading remains an important activity across all economic backgrounds, with motivations relatively consistent regardless of financial circumstance.

**Figure 12: Being a curious, mindful or social reader in 2025 by gender, age group and FSM uptake**



While we know that there is a relationship between enjoying reading and reading frequency, with those who enjoy reading choosing to read more frequently (see Table 4 earlier), we also know that a fair number of those who only enjoy reading a bit ( $n = 37,271$ ) or not at all ( $n = 6,173$ ) still read in their free time at least once a month. We therefore wanted to know why they engaged with reading. Figure 13 shows the reading motivation profiles and their individual component by whether or not children and young people enjoyed reading, with a closer look at those who told us that they only enjoyed reading a bit or not at all.

More children and young people who enjoyed reading reported a wide range of reading benefits – including cognitive, emotional and social – compared with those who didn't enjoy reading, with the strongest links seen in feeling relaxed, happy, inspired and able to escape to another world.

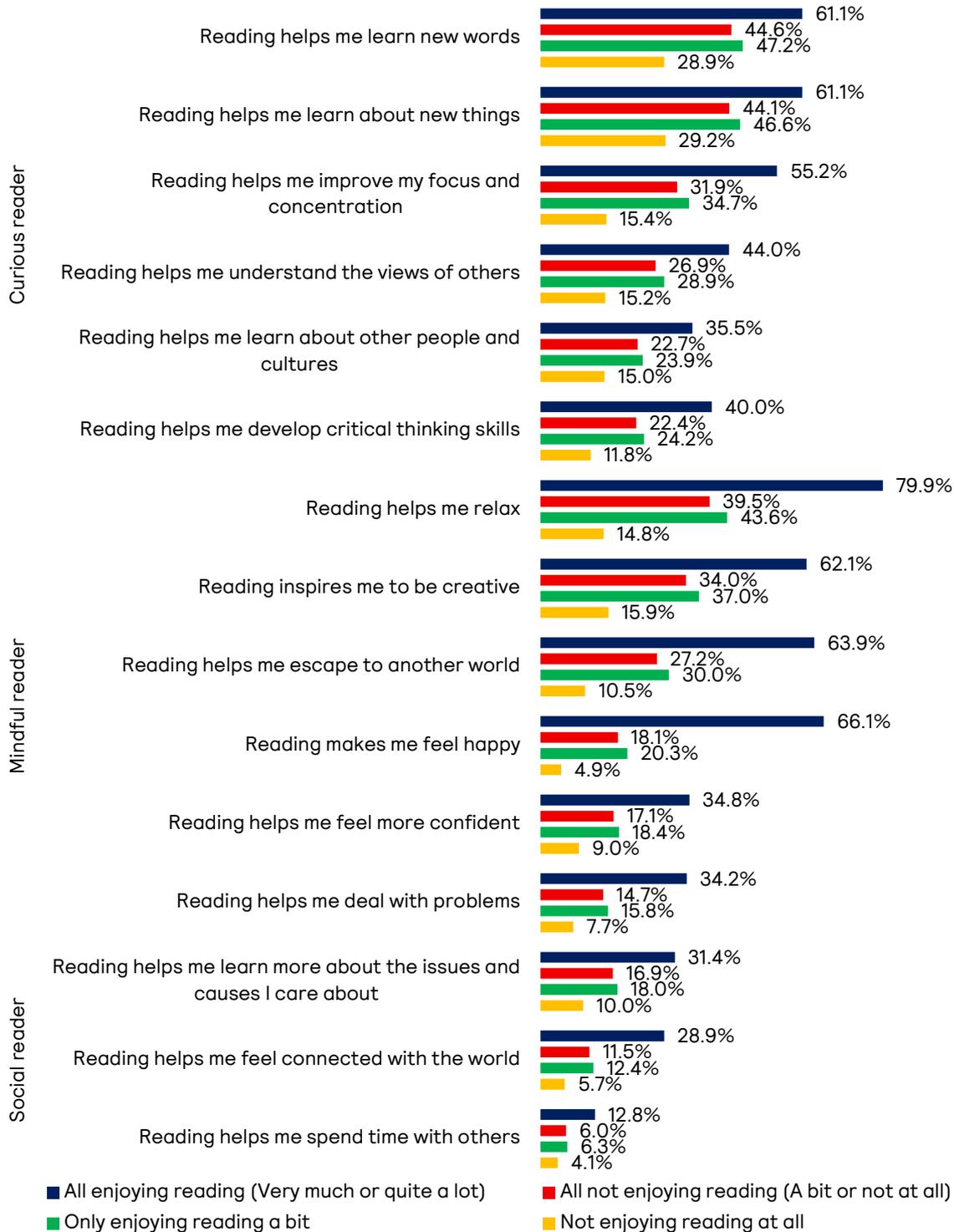
However, among children and young people who reported that they didn't enjoy reading, whether a bit or not at all, there is still evidence that many recognise its potential benefits. Curious reader motivations were the most popular, even among those who didn't enjoy reading. Indeed, nearly half of those who only enjoyed reading a bit still said that reading helped them learn new words and new things, while even among those who didn't enjoy reading at all, nearly 3 in 10 saw these as benefits. More cognitively demanding benefits like improving focus and attention (15.4%), understanding others' views (15.2%), or developing critical thinking (11.8%) dropped off more sharply among those not enjoying reading at all, suggesting perhaps that these deeper impacts are harder to appreciate without intrinsic enjoyment.

Mindful reader motivations, such as reading for relaxation, creativity or emotional wellbeing, were somewhat less prominent overall. Still, over 4 in 10 of those who enjoyed reading a bit said that reading helped them relax or inspired creativity. But among those who didn't enjoy reading at all, these motivations fell significantly: just 14.8% said reading helped them relax, and fewer than 5% said it made them feel happy. Social reader motivations were the least endorsed across the board, especially by those who didn't enjoy reading at all. Only 1 in 10 of this group said reading helped them learn about causes they care about, and even fewer felt it helped them feel connected with the world or spend time with others. Even among those who enjoyed reading a bit, these motivations remained relatively low, indicating that social reasons to read are not strong drivers, particularly for disengaged readers.

Overall, the findings suggest that while disengaged readers, especially those who don't enjoy reading at all, tend to disconnect from many of reading's perceived benefits, some recognition of its value remains. Learning-based

motivations persist most strongly, while emotional and social benefits are less commonly recognised.

**Figure 13: Reader profiles of children and young people aged 8 to 18 in 2025 by whether or not they enjoy reading**



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## What would make children and young people who don't enjoy reading want to read?

Given how many children and young people told us that they don't enjoy reading, and given how many don't engage daily in reading, we also wanted to find out what, if anything, would make them want to read.

Children and young people aged 8 to 18 were provided with a list of 13 possible suggestions and they could tick as many as they liked. Figure 14 shows these possible routes into reading by enjoyment of reading, with a particular focus on those who told us that they only enjoyed reading a bit or not at all (n = 71,100).

Overall, children and young people who enjoyed reading were more responsive to a wide range of motivators compared with those who didn't enjoy reading, particularly when reading is linked to personal choice, interest and visual appeal (see Figure 14). Key drivers include having books that reflect their hobbies or interests, the freedom to choose what they read, and eye-catching covers or titles, highlighting the importance of relevance and autonomy in fostering reading engagement.

Among those who only enjoyed reading a bit or not at all, the most common motivators were books linked to films or TV series and content aligned with their interests, with around a third of these children and young people saying such factors might encourage them to read. Visual appeal, such as book covers and titles, and the ability to choose what to read, also had a moderate impact. Less influential were social and environmental factors like recommendations, hearing others talk about reading, or access to books. Participation in book clubs was the least motivating factor, suggesting that personalised and interest-based strategies are more effective in encouraging reading engagement than group or social influences.

Notably, those who reported enjoying reading a bit were consistently more motivated by every listed factor than those who said they didn't enjoy it at all. For example, nearly half of the group that enjoyed reading a bit were influenced by books linked to screen content or personal interests, compared with just 1 in 5 of those who didn't enjoy reading at all. This pattern indicates that even a small spark of enjoyment makes young readers more open to engagement, especially when reading is made relevant and familiar.

**Figure 14: What would motivate children and young people aged 8 to 18 to engage with reading in 2025 by whether or not they enjoy reading**

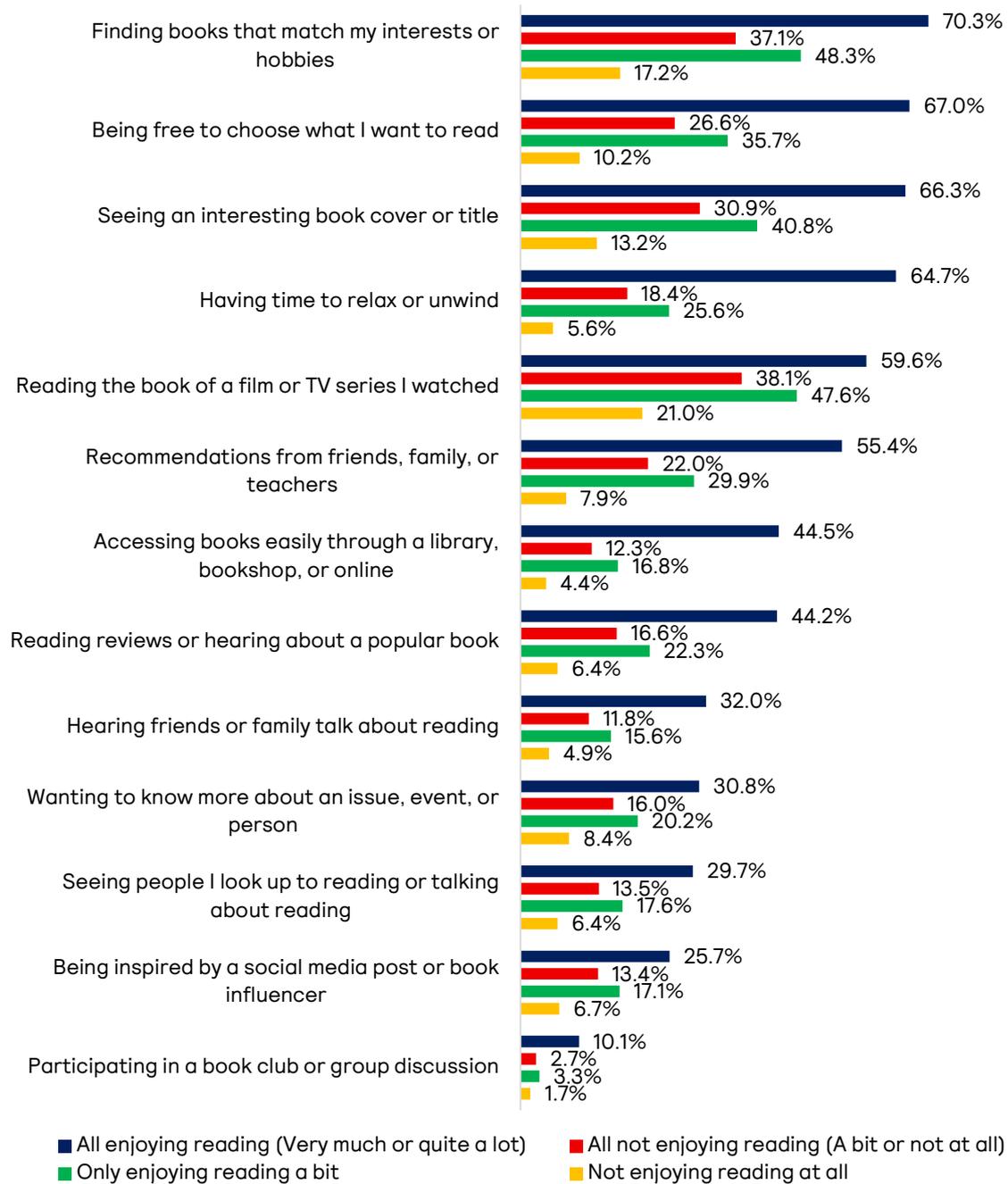


Table 8 explores the different routes into reading among children and young people who reported not enjoying reading by demographics. It shows that girls consistently reported being influenced by all motivators to a greater extent than boys. The biggest differences appeared in responses to book-related social media content, striking covers or titles, and personal recommendations. Girls

also showed stronger engagement with books linked to films or TV series, and with conversations about reading.

Children aged 8 to 11 showed the highest levels of interest across most routes, especially when it came to visual appeal, personal interests, and connections to film or television. Engagement with these motivators tended to decline with age, with those aged 14 to 16 showing the lowest levels of interest. However, 16- to 18-year-olds stood out for their stronger response to issue-based reading and social media influence.

FSM-related differences were minor. One notable exception was interest-based reading, which resonated more strongly with those not receiving FSMs.

**Table 8: Routes into reading for those who don't enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot in 2025 by gender, age group and FSM uptake**

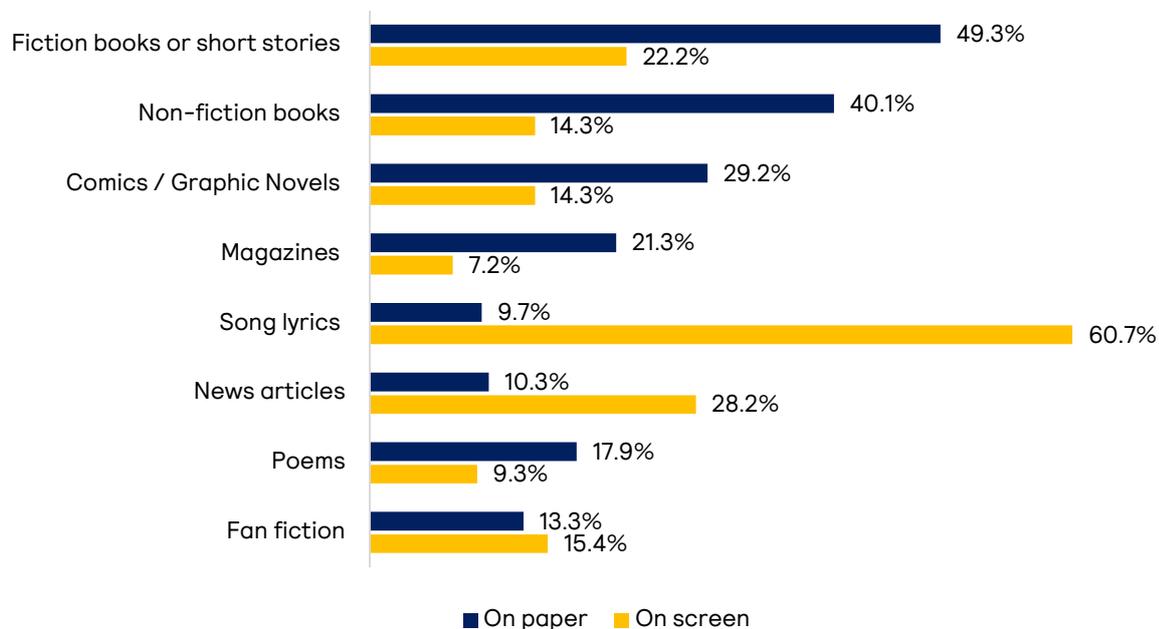
	Boys	Girls	8-11	11-14	14-16	16-18	FSM	Non-FSM
Seeing people I look up to reading	11.2%	16.6%	22.0%	12.6%	11.1%	14.5%	14.1%	13.3%
Reading the book of a film	32.6%	45.4%	45.8%	39.0%	30.5%	32.1%	36.6%	38.5%
Hearing friends/family talk about reading	9.4%	14.8%	20.4%	10.7%	9.6%	13.2%	12.4%	11.5%
Recommendations	17.7%	27.7%	32.6%	20.9%	17.6%	26.0%	20.0%	22.6%
Finding books that match my interests	34.0%	41.4%	46.9%	37.1%	29.8%	38.1%	33.7%	38.2%
Wanting to know more about an issue	15.0%	17.3%	18.7%	14.7%	15.7%	26.1%	14.7%	16.4%
Seeing an interesting cover or title	26.3%	37.0%	45.6%	31.0%	22.1%	25.0%	29.4%	31.2%
Reading reviews	11.6%	23.0%	27.9%	15.7%	12.4%	16.8%	16.4%	16.5%
Being free to choose	23.3%	30.6%	40.9%	26.3%	18.9%	21.4%	25.9%	26.6%
Easy access to books	10.6%	14.3%	22.7%	11.7%	7.9%	10.8%	13.3%	12.0%
Participating in a book club	2.7%	2.6%	7.3%	2.2%	1.8%	2.2%	4.0%	2.2%
Being inspired by social media/influencer	8.4%	19.7%	14.3%	13.1%	12.9%	15.8%	12.8%	13.6%
Having time to relax	15.7%	22.0%	27.5%	17.7%	14.5%	19.9%	17.6%	18.6%

## What do children and young people read?

After looking at why children and young people read in their free time, as well as the routes into reading for those who don't already enjoy reading, we also wanted to know what they were choosing to read in their free time at least once a month. This gave us a better sense of the content and formats that keep them interested.

Paper remained the most popular format for reading among children and young people in 2025 (see Figure 15). Half of those aged 8 to 18 said they read fiction books or short stories on paper in their free time, while 2 in 5 read non-fiction in print. Around 3 in 10 reported reading comics or graphic novels on paper, and 1 in 5 read printed magazines. That said, some types of content were clearly preferred on screen: 3 in 5 said they read song lyrics digitally, and more than 1 in 4 read news articles on screen.

**Figure 15: 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**



We also wanted to know what formats those who enjoyed reading and those who didn't read at least once a month. More children and young people who enjoyed reading engaged with a wide variety of formats – both on paper and on screen – especially fiction, non-fiction, comics and poems, with a clear preference for

reading in print (see Table 9). Notably, while nearly twice as many of those who enjoyed reading as those who didn't said they read fiction on paper, the gap narrows significantly when it comes to reading fiction on screen, and a similar pattern can be seen for non-fiction, comics and magazines.

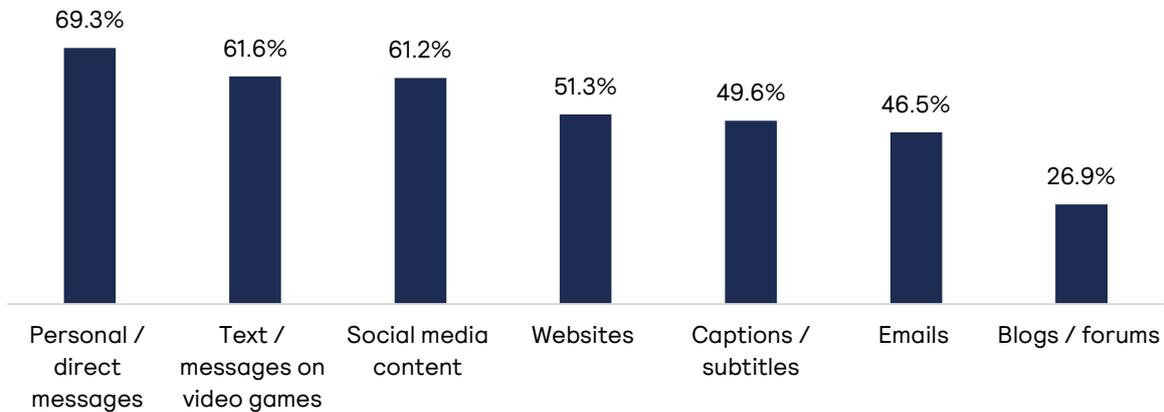
It's also important to recognise that even among those who said they didn't enjoy reading, many still chose to read in their free time, particularly song lyrics, news articles, fiction, comics and fan fiction, highlighting that reading can remain meaningful and relevant even for those who are less enthusiastic overall.

**Table 9: 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
<b>Fiction books or short stories</b>	29.5%	18.7%	73.7%	37.5%
<b>Non-fiction books</b>	19.5%	11.7%	57.4%	31.7%
<b>Comics / graphic novels</b>	18.9%	12.0%	42.0%	23.0%
<b>Magazines</b>	8.3%	6.7%	29.5%	17.4%
<b>Song lyrics</b>	60.6%	60.7%	13.4%	7.9%
<b>News articles</b>	33.4%	25.7%	15.1%	8.0%
<b>Poems</b>	13.5%	7.2%	26.4%	13.7%
<b>Fan fiction</b>	22.5%	12.0%	19.8%	10.1%

We also asked children and young people aged 8 to 18 whether they read any formats that were only available on screen. As shown in Figure 16, personal or direct messages were the most commonly read digital content, followed closely by in-game text, social media posts, websites and captions, highlighting the wide range of digital formats that form part of their everyday reading.

**Figure 16: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading various exclusively on-screen formats in their free time in 2025**



### Reading formats by gender, age group and free-school-meal uptake

In 2025, girls reported reading a wider range of formats than boys, especially fiction, poems, magazines and song lyrics, most often on a screen but also in print (see Table 10). More girls than boys also read fan fiction on a screen at least once a month. More boys, meanwhile, told us that they read comics and graphic novels at least once a month in their free time, particularly in print, although boys and girls showed similar levels of engagement with news articles and non-fiction books across both formats. While gender differences were evident in the types of content and formats preferred, it's encouraging to see that both boys and girls are engaging with reading in ways that reflect their individual interests and media habits.

**Table 10: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading various formats (on paper or screen) in their free time in 2025 by gender**

	On screen		On paper	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>Fiction books or short stories</b>	18.6%	25.6%	43.4%	55.4%
<b>Non-fiction books</b>	14.0%	14.4%	39.4%	41.0%
<b>Comics / graphic novels</b>	15.6%	12.1%	32.0%	25.7%
<b>Magazines</b>	6.6%	7.7%	19.0%	23.8%
<b>Song lyrics</b>	49.7%	71.8%	7.4%	11.7%
<b>News articles</b>	28.6%	28.0%	10.7%	9.6%
<b>Poems</b>	6.2%	12.0%	13.2%	22.4%
<b>Fan fiction</b>	12.1%	17.6%	13.5%	13.0%

Reading preferences among 8- to 18-year-olds also varied noticeably by age, with key differences emerging in format and content (see Table 11). More of those aged 8 to 11 read fiction, non-fiction, comics and poems, showing a strong preference for physical books. As children grow older, on-screen reading becomes more dominant, especially for song lyrics and news articles, which increase notably with age. More of those aged 16 to 18 read on screen overall, particularly news, song lyrics and fiction.

Print reading declined steadily through the middle years (11 to 16), especially for comics and non-fiction, but saw a slight rebound among 16- to 18-year-olds for fiction and non-fiction books. Fan fiction showed relatively steady on-screen engagement across all age groups, but printed fan fiction dropped sharply with age. These trends suggest that as children and young people grow, they gravitate toward more digital formats and diverse media-linked content, while traditional print reading remains strongest in the younger years.

**Table 11: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading various formats (on paper or screen) in their free time in 2025 by age group**

	On screen				On paper			
	8-11	11-14	14-16	16-18	8-11	11-14	14-16	16-18
<b>Fiction books or short stories</b>	20.9%	21.5%	23.5%	29.4%	56.4%	49.8%	40.5%	47.9%
<b>Non-fiction books</b>	16.5%	13.3%	13.8%	20.2%	50.7%	39.7%	31.0%	41.1%
<b>Comics / graphic novels</b>	14.4%	13.4%	15.4%	20.8%	41.3%	30.5%	17.8%	14.3%
<b>Magazines</b>	7.4%	6.5%	8.4%	10.9%	26.8%	22.0%	15.9%	15.0%
<b>Song lyrics</b>	49.8%	61.1%	65.9%	69.7%	16.1%	9.4%	6.6%	4.9%
<b>News articles</b>	14.1%	25.5%	39.0%	63.3%	12.4%	9.9%	8.9%	12.1%
<b>Poems</b>	13.4%	8.3%	8.5%	12.1%	29.5%	15.5%	17.6%	14.8%
<b>Fan fiction</b>	14.7%	15.3%	16.0%	16.8%	24.9%	13.3%	5.7%	3.7%

There were also some clear differences in reading preferences between children and young people who received FSMs and those who didn't (see Table 12). More of those not receiving FSMs read printed fiction and non-fiction, with the biggest gap seen in print fiction. However, many formats showed similar levels of engagement across both groups, such as comics and graphic novels, magazines, fan fiction and song lyrics, particularly on screen. These formats may offer important shared entry points into reading, while differences in format preference highlight the importance of accessibility and choice in supporting reading engagement for all children and young people.

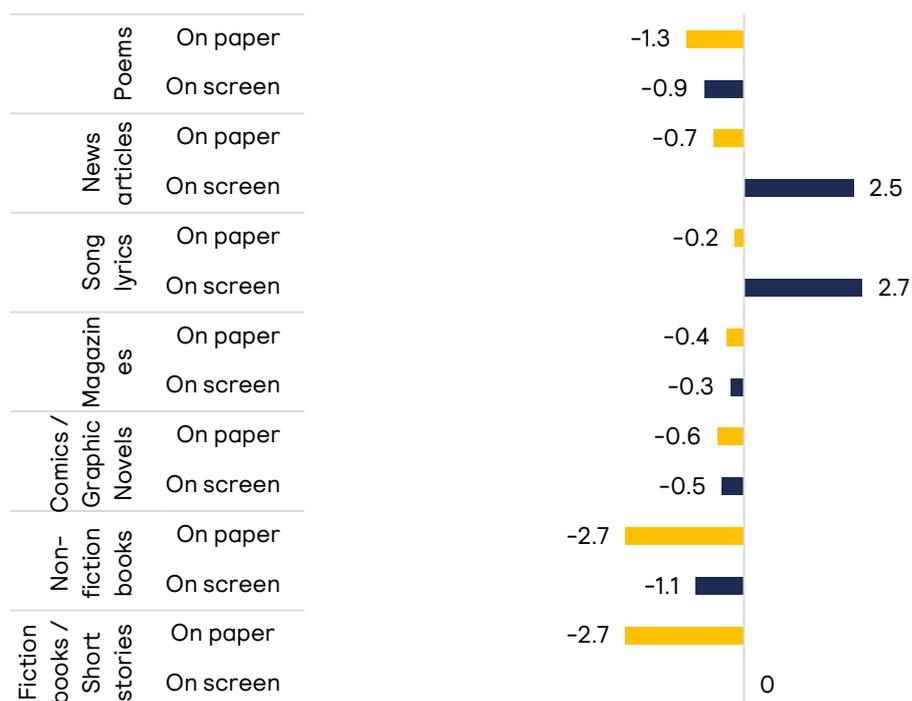
**Table 12: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading various formats (on paper or screen) in their free time in 2025 by FSM uptake**

	On screen		On paper	
	FSM	Non-FSM	FSM	Non-FSM
<b>Fiction books or short stories</b>	24.3%	21.7%	42.6%	51.4%
<b>Non-fiction books</b>	15.9%	13.7%	36.6%	41.0%
<b>Comics / graphic novels</b>	17.0%	13.4%	28.9%	28.8%
<b>Magazines</b>	7.5%	7.1%	18.2%	22.0%
<b>Song lyrics</b>	60.2%	61.5%	10.3%	9.3%
<b>News articles</b>	23.6%	30.4%	9.8%	10.4%
<b>Poems</b>	12.4%	8.3%	21.0%	16.6%
<b>Fan fiction</b>	17.4%	14.8%	14.7%	12.5%

### Reading formats over time

Comparing reading habits with last year, slightly fewer children and young people aged 8 to 18 read any of the materials on screen or paper (see Figure 17). The exceptions to this were song lyrics (up by 2.7 percentage points on screen) and news articles (up by 2.5 percentage points on screen).

**Figure 17: Percentage-point difference in children and young people aged 8 to 18 reading various formats (on paper or screen) in their free time between 2024 and 2025**



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## Summing up

The findings from our 2025 Annual Literacy Survey paint a stark but nuanced picture of children and young people's relationship with reading. While the rate of decline in reading enjoyment and daily reading has slowed compared with the sharp drops seen in previous years, the overall trend remains deeply concerning. At just 32.7%, the percentage of 8- to 18-year-olds who say they enjoy reading very much or quite a lot has reached its lowest point in two decades. Daily reading has also hit a historic low, with only 18.7% reading every day in their free time.

This continued decline, especially among primary-aged children and boys, raises urgent questions about how reading is being experienced – and taught – during their formative years. It is particularly worrying that enjoyment is dropping most rapidly among younger children, as early positive reading experiences are known to set the foundation for lifelong literacy habits. The widening gender and socioeconomic gaps further suggest that current strategies may be failing to reach the children who could benefit most.

Yet, the data also provide grounds for cautious optimism. Notably, many children and young people, especially those with lower levels of reading enjoyment, still engage with reading materials that resonate with their interests. This includes digital formats like song lyrics, news articles, and fan fiction, as well as books connected to film and TV franchises. These behaviours hint at a more dynamic and multifaceted relationship with reading than traditional metrics of reading books alone may capture.

Understanding children and young people's motivations is key to reversing this downward trend. The typology of readers – curious, mindful and social – offers a useful lens through which to understand the diversity of motivations. The 'curious' motivation, centred around learning and vocabulary growth, is the most widely endorsed, even among those who claim not to enjoy reading. This suggests a crucial entry point: educational framing may serve as a more effective hook than emotional or social appeals, particularly for disengaged readers.

That said, the role of pleasure, autonomy and relevance cannot be overstated. Across the board, children and young people respond to content that reflects their hobbies, connects them with popular media, or simply *looks interesting*. The finding that visually engaging covers and the freedom to choose are key

motivators underscores the importance of personal agency and aesthetic appeal. This aligns with broader evidence showing that intrinsic motivation, especially when supported by autonomy and relevance, is a powerful driver of sustained engagement.

The fact that social incentives like book clubs or peer discussion are among the least effective motivators for disengaged readers challenges some long-held assumptions about how to build a culture of reading. While these strategies may benefit avid readers, they may do little for those on the margins of literacy engagement. Interventions, then, must be carefully tailored, not only to different reading levels and interests but also to different motivational profiles.

Finally, the preference for print, especially among those who enjoy reading, reminds us that access to physical books remains essential, even as digital formats continue to play an important role. At the same time, digital reading should not be dismissed, as this format is a key factor for many children and young people, from the most engaged readers to those with the lowest levels of enjoyment. Indeed, in the latter group, the gap between them and their peers in reading fiction, non-fiction and other materials on paper narrows considerably in relation to reading digitally. In addition, more children who receive free school meals report reading such materials on screen than those who do not receive FSMs, emphasising the need to offer an inclusive range of reading opportunities.

In sum, the report highlights both the scale of the challenge and a potential roadmap forward. Rebuilding a culture of reading will require a more personalised, flexible approach, one that acknowledges the different ways young people experience reading and meets them where they are. This means combining high-quality engaging content with greater choice and relevance, bridging the gap between formal literacy and the real-world media children and young people already value. Most importantly, it means placing enjoyment at the heart of reading, not as a luxury but as a necessity for lasting literacy engagement.

We will revisit many of the points covered here in a forthcoming report that explores 60,000 comments from children and young people about why or why not they read in their free time.

## Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to all the schools that took part in our survey this year – we couldn't do it without you!

Thank you also to Twinkl for supporting this report.

### About the National Literacy Trust

Our charity is dedicated to improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions.

Literacy is a vital element of action against poverty and our work changes life stories.

Visit [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) to find out more, donate or sign up for a free email newsletter. You can also find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

### About Twinkl

Founded in 2010 with a mission to 'help those who teach', Twinkl supports educators and families worldwide with expert-created, curriculum-aligned resources that build essential literacy skills and ignite a lifelong love of reading. With over 1.5 million resources – including the DfE-validated Twinkl Phonics programme, a fully decodable reading scheme and engaging storybooks – Twinkl empowers educators and learners from early years to secondary school across classrooms, homes and every setting in between.

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## Appendix

### About the Annual Literacy Survey

The Annual Literacy Survey, run annually since 2010, includes questions about reading, writing and listening as well as about children and young people's home learning environment and access to resources at home. Questions about young people's use of AI to support their literacy have been included since 2023, and questions about speaking were added to the survey in 2024.

We made three surveys available in 2025: one for children aged 5 to 8 (Year 1 to Year 4, or Primary 2 to Primary 5 for Scotland), one for children and young people aged 8 to 16 (Year 4 to Year 11, or Primary 5 to Secondary 5 for Scotland) and one for those aged over 16. The surveys contain similar questions but the one for the younger age group is shorter and more pictorial, while the one for those aged over 16 had questions more relevant for that age group. The 2025 survey contained 19 questions for those aged 5 to 8, 39 questions for those aged 8 to 16, and 35 questions for those aged 16 and over.

Taking place from January to the middle of March every year, schools are recruited from autumn onwards through our networks, newsletters and social media followers, as well as through partner organisations like World Book Day and Renaissance. Participating schools receive a school-specific report as a thank you, which means that they can compare their responses to those received nationally once we've published the national reports.

**114,970** children and young people aged 5 to 18 from 515 schools took part in our Annual Literacy Survey in 2025. 9,730 answered a shorter survey for those aged 5 to 8, while 105,583 answered longer surveys intended for those aged 8 to 18.

### Sample description

The make-up of our 2025 sample was largely comparable with that of 2024 and previous samples. Of those aged 8 to 18, 50,907 (48.2%) were boys; 50,748 (48.1%) were girls; 2,360 (2.2%) would rather not say; 1,475 (1.4%) described themselves another way; and 93 (0.1%) described themselves as non-binary. 15,509 (14.7%) were aged 8 to 11; 67,624 (64.0%) were aged 11 to 14; 15,913 (15.1%) were aged 14 to 16; and 6,537 (6.2%) were aged 16 to 18.

18,493 (17.5%) told us they received FSMs; 76,336 (72.3%) told us they didn't receive FSMs; 8,873 (8.4%) didn't know; and 1,881 (1.8%) didn't want to say. 90,749 (86.0%)

attended schools in England; 1,939 (1.8%) attended schools in Wales; 7,739 (7.3%) attended schools in Scotland; and 5,156 (4.9%) attended schools in Northern Ireland. Of the children and young people attending schools in England, 3,328 (3.7%) came from the North East; 9,708 (10.7%) from the North West; 5,295 (5.8%) from Yorkshire and the Humber; 8,630 (9.5%) from the East Midlands; 11,191 (12.3%) from the West Midlands; 14,292 (15.7%) from the East of England; 10,403 (11.5%) from London; 19,397 (21.4%) from the South East; and 8,505 (9.4%) from the South West.

Of those aged 5 to 8, 4,239 (45.2%) were boys; 4,428 (47.2%) were girls; 174 (1.9%) would rather not say; and 62 (0.7%) described themselves another way (485 didn't answer the gender question). 7,047 (75.1%) attended schools in England; 187 (2.0%) attended schools in Wales; 1,644 (17.5%) attended schools in Scotland; and 510 (5.4%) attended schools in Northern Ireland. Of the children attending schools in England, 929 (13.2%) came from the North East; 961 (13.6%) from the North West; 747 (10.6%) from Yorkshire and the Humber; 821 (11.7%) from the East Midlands; 725 (10.3%) from the West Midlands; 1,122 (15.9%) from the East of England; 513 (7.3%) from London; 544 (7.7%) from the South East; and 685 (9.7%) from the South West.