

2016 NATIONAL READING HABITS STUDY ON ADULTS

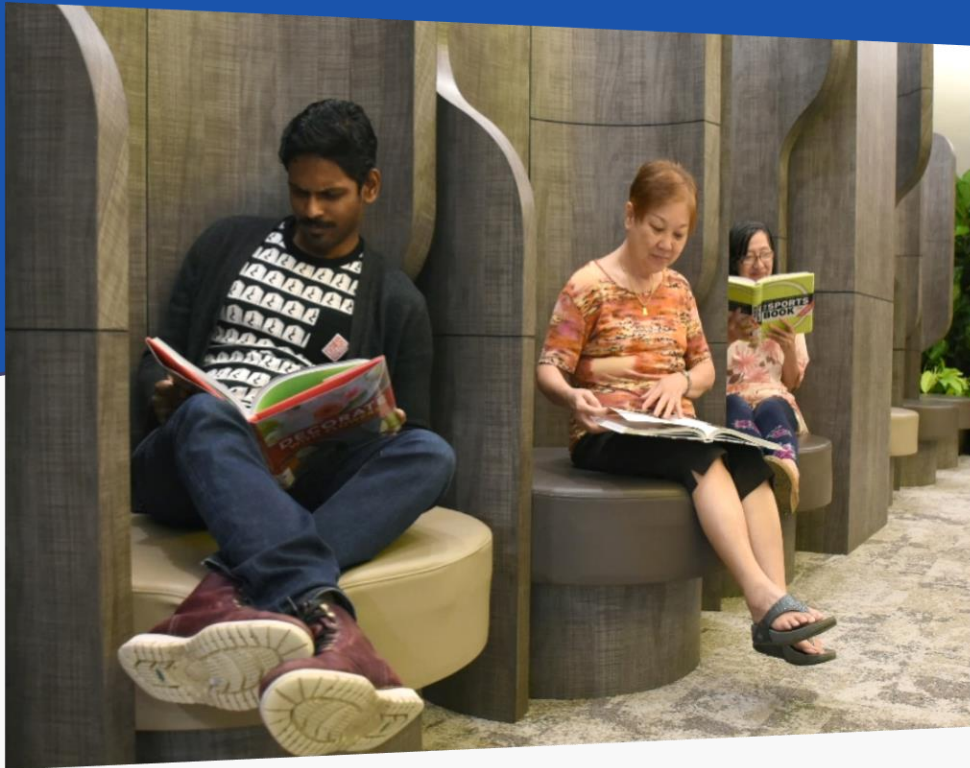


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STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY



This section covers the objectives and methodology of the study, definitions of key terms, and the profile of the survey respondents.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

In conjunction with the launch of the National Reading Movement (NRM) in 2016, the National Library Board commissioned the inaugural **National Reading Habits Study on Adults**.

The study aims to ascertain the state of reading for leisure among Singapore residents, so as to align NRM initiatives with the needs of Singapore residents.

Specifically, the study seeks to find out:

Reading habits

- Are people reading?
- What type of materials do people read?
- Are people reading in their Mother Tongue language?

Reading preferences

- What do people like to read?

About books

- Are people still reading books?
- Where do people get their books from?

Reading motivations and barriers

DEFINITION OF READING

Reading is defined as having read any of the following types of materials.



Books include e-books, audio books as well as physical books. This covers both non-fiction and fiction books, excluding textbooks.



News refers to printed newspapers as well as online news



Online Articles refer to articles, blogs or essays posted on social media (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Twitter) or websites

Magazines include both physical and digital magazines

Reports, e.g. annual company reports or trade reports

This study excludes reading related to communications such as emails and WhatsApp messages.

METHODOLOGY

The **Study** was carried out in two phases - door-to-door surveys, followed by Focus Group Discussions.



Door-to-door surveys

- ✓ **3,515 surveys** were conducted **nation-wide via door-to-door interviews** by trained interviewers, which gave a margin of error of **±1.55%** at 95% confidence level.
- ✓ **Singapore residents** (i.e. Singapore citizens and Singapore Permanent Residents) **aged 20 years and above** were randomly chosen for the survey. Sample quotas by age, gender, ethnicity, housing type and residence status were applied to ensure that the sample collected is representative of the Singapore Resident population.
- ✓ The surveys were conducted at **different times** of the day, on **both weekdays and weekends**, to capture all demographic profiles.
- ✓ Each survey lasted on average about **45 minutes**.
- ✓ Surveys were conducted from **4 May to 5 August 2016**.

METHODOLOGY



Focus Group Discussions

- ✓ Focus Group Discussions were conducted by **experienced moderators** to understand reasons underlying reading behavior.
- ✓ A total of **18 Focus Groups** with **163 participants aged 20 years and above** were conducted from **22 August to 19 September 2016**.
- ✓ Participants were from **all life stages**, and covered **all ethnicities**.
- ✓ Discussions were conducted in the **Mother Tongue language** of the participants when necessary (such as among seniors).

Life Stage	FGDs conducted
Young adults (aged 20-39 years old) without children	3
Mature adults (aged 40-59 years old) without children	3
Parents with children aged 0-6 years old	3
Parents with children aged 7-12 years old	3
Parents with children above 12 years old	3
Seniors 60 years old and above	3

***Insights obtained from Focus Group Discussions are titled “A deeper look” in the rest of the report**

PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The survey sample is representative of the Singapore resident population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, residency status and dwelling type.

Residency Status	n	% of Total
Singapore Citizen	3178	90%
Singapore Permanent Residents	337	10%
Total	3515	100%

Gender	n	% of Total
Male	1680	48%
Female	1835	52%
Total	3515	100%

Ethnicity	n	% of Total
Chinese	2713	77%
Malay	391	11%
Indian	306	9%
Others	105	3%
Total	3515	100%

Age	n	% of Total
20-29 years old	746	21%
30-39 years old	624	18%
40-49 years old	711	20%
50-59 years old	665	19%
60 years old and above	769	22%
Total	3515	100%

Dwelling Type	n	% of Total
1 or 2-room HDB flat	152	4%
3-room HDB flat	604	17%
4-room HDB flat	1213	35%
5-room/ Executive HDB flat	881	25%
Executive Condominium/HUDC	51	2%
Condominium/ Apartment / Private Flat	331	9%
Private Landed Property	283	8%
Total	3515	100%

PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Marital Status	n	% of Total
Single	1046	30%
Married with children	2096	60%
Married without children	224	6%
Widowed/Separated/Divorced	129	4%
Refused	20	0%
Total	3515	100%

Highest Attained Education Level	n	% of Total
Primary School or below	461	13%
Secondary School	948	27%
Technical / Vocational Training	170	5%
A-levels	277	8%
Diploma / International Baccalaureate	698	20%
University	770	22%
Post-Graduate or higher	191	5%
Total	3515	100%

Occupation	n	% of Total
Legislators, Senior Officials, Managers	136	4%
Professionals	578	16%
Associate Professionals and Technicians	292	8%
Clerical Support Workers	196	6%
Service and Sales Workers	390	11%
Agricultural and Fishery Workers	3	0%
Craftsmen and Related Trades Workers	13	0%
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	39	1%
Cleaners, Labourers and Related Worker	117	3%
Self-employed	294	8%
Retired	442	13%
Full-time National Serviceman	52	2%
Full-time Homemaker	433	12%
Unemployed currently	101	3%
Students	319	9%
Others, please specify:	54	2%
Refused	56	2%
Total	3515	100%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This section gives a summary of the key findings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1)

METHODOLOGY



Door-to-door
interviews

SAMPLE SIZE

3,515

Singapore residents
aged 20 years and
above



Respondent profile
representative of
population

- age
- gender
- ethnicity
- residency status
- housing type



ARE PEOPLE READING?

This includes reading books, magazines, newspapers/ news (print or digital), as well as online articles **in the past 12 months**.

93%

read at least once
in the past 12
months



80% more
than once
a week

13% once a week or
less often

7% did not read in the
past 12 months

WHAT ARE PEOPLE READING?

Adults read the following more than once a week...

68%

News (print or digital)



41%

Articles on social media/
websites



19%

Books, including
e-books



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (2)

WHAT DO PEOPLE LIKE TO READ?

Of the 93% who read...

98%

Non-fiction



57%

Fiction



Top non-fiction topics read

51% About Singapore



47% Health and Fitness



41% Politics and Current Affairs



40% Travel



37% Cooking



ARE PEOPLE READING IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE?

Of the 93% who read...

66%

can read in English and their Mother Tongue



Out of this...

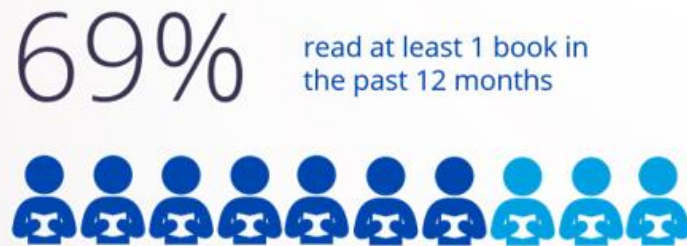
62%

read in their Mother Tongue more than once a week



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (3)


ARE PEOPLE STILL READING BOOKS ?



95% read physical books



41% read e-books



56% borrow from libraries



53% purchase from bookstores



TO READ OR NOT TO READ?

Motivations

I find reading enjoyable and relaxing



Barriers

I tend to spend more time on other activities



I prefer watching TV/ DVDs/ online videos

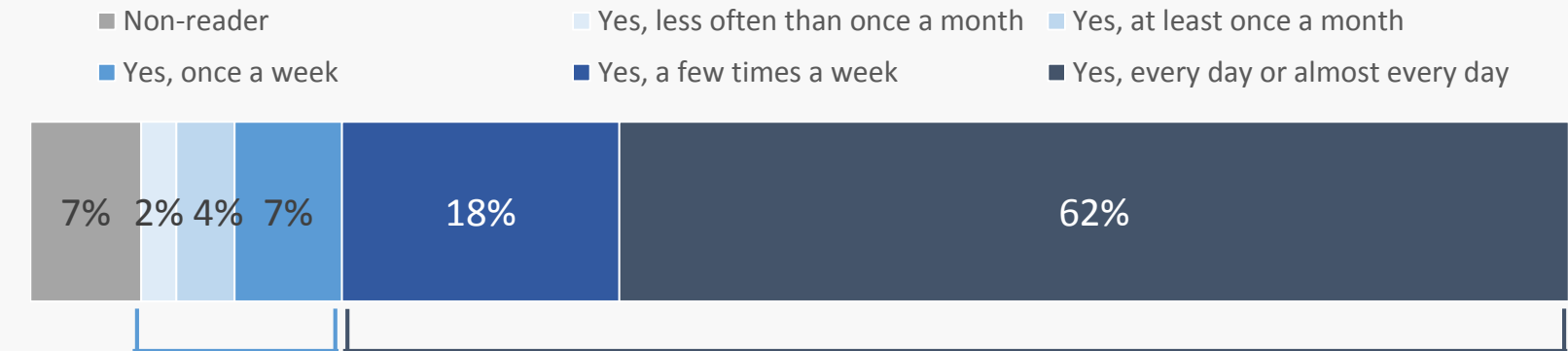
READING HABITS



This section looks into Singapore residents' reading frequency, types of materials read, reading in Mother Tongue languages and sharing of reads.

ARE PEOPLE READING?

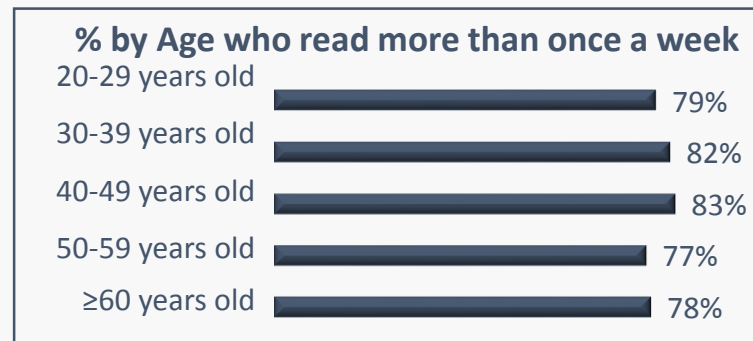
- *93% of Singapore residents read at least once in the past 12 months. This includes reading books (physical, e-books, or audio books), magazines (physical or digital), newspapers or online news, as well as articles posted on social media or websites.
- 80% read more than once a week, regardless of age group.
- Among Singapore residents, 79% spent at least 30 minutes reading daily, regardless of weekday or weekend.



7% Non-reader:
Did not read in the past 12 months

13% Once a week or less often

80% More than once a week



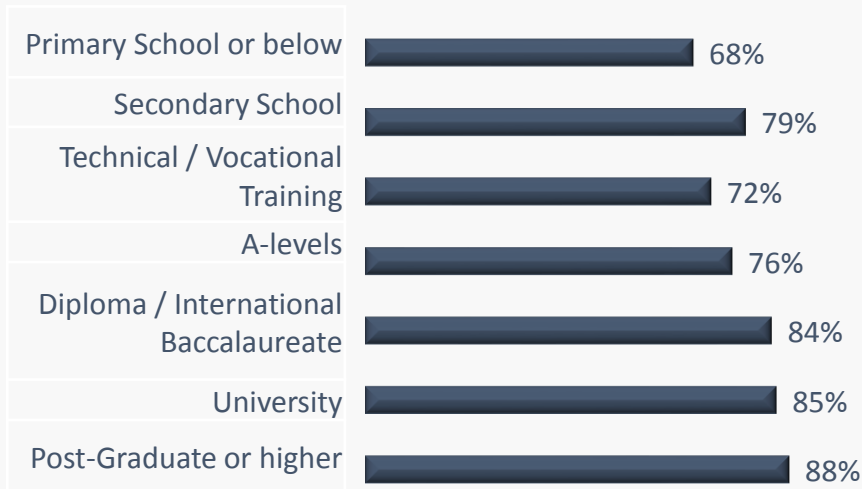
***This group will be known as “readers” (n=3,262) in the rest of this report**

Base: All respondents (n=3,515)

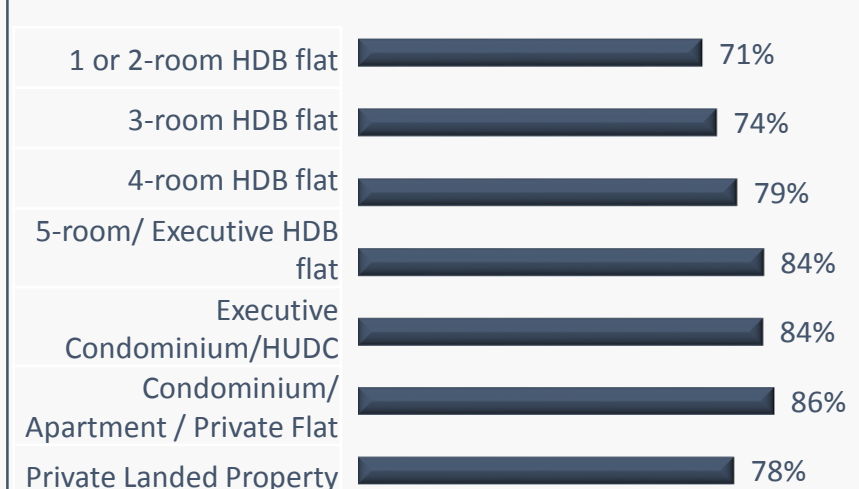
ARE PEOPLE READING?

- 85% of university degree holders read more than once a week, while only 68% of those with primary school or below education do so.
- Nearly 80% or more of Singapore residents across all dwelling types read more than once a week, except for those in 1-to-3 room HDB flats.
- There is no significant difference between gender and ethnicity in reading frequency.

**Read more than once a week
by Highest Attained Educational Level**

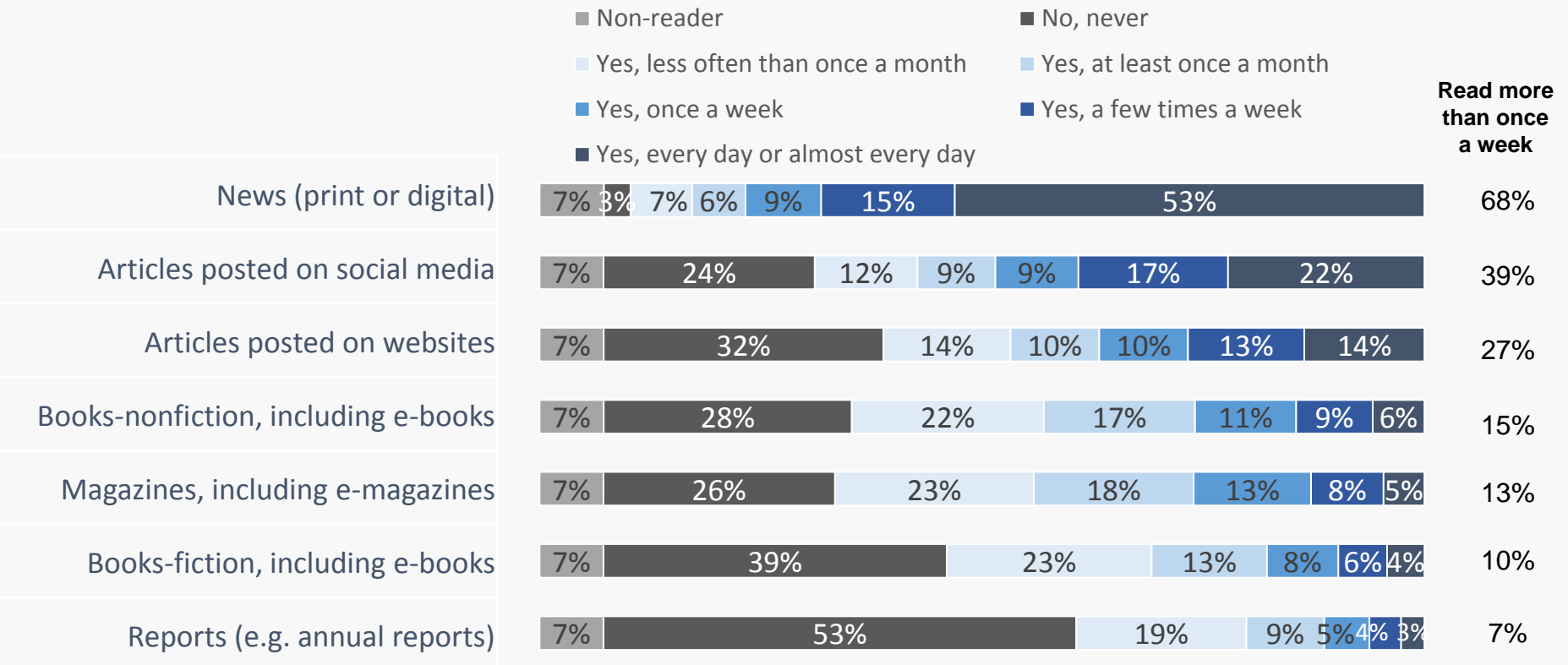


**Read more than once a week
by Dwelling Type**



WHAT TYPE OF MATERIALS DO PEOPLE READ?

- 68% of Singapore residents read **news** more than once a week, while 41% read **online articles** posted on either social media (39%) or websites (27%) more than once a week.
- In contrast, 19% read **books** more than once a week. 15% read non-fiction books, while 10% read fiction books.

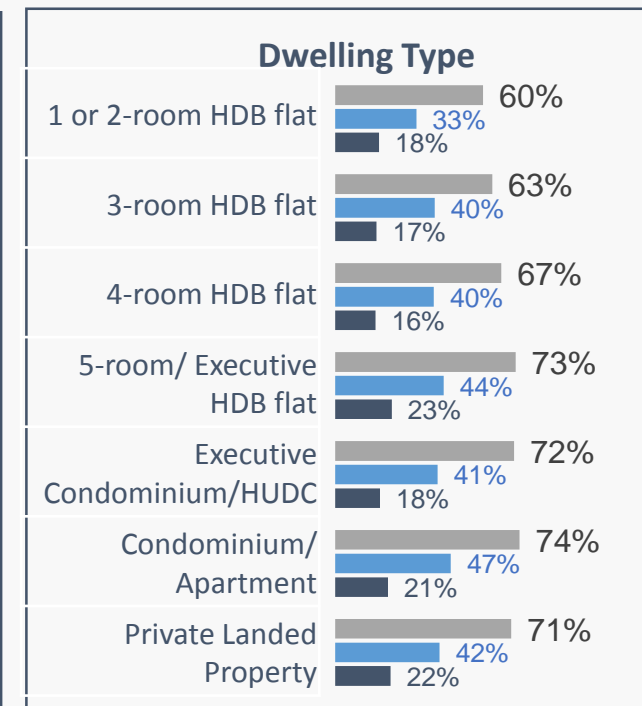
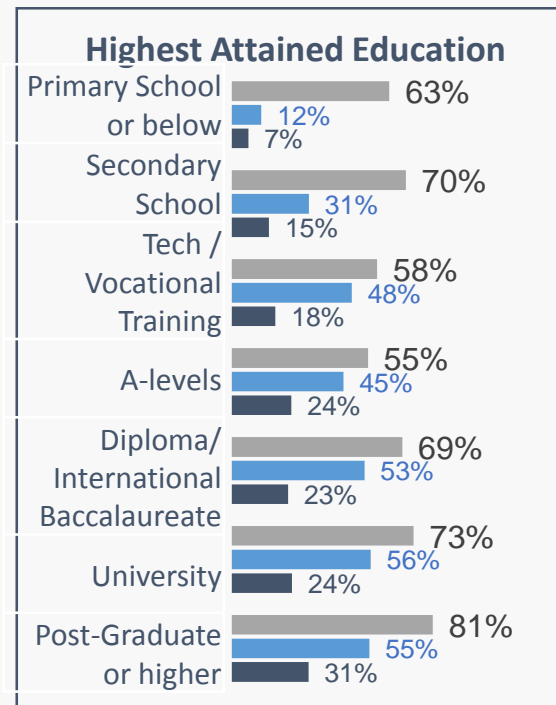
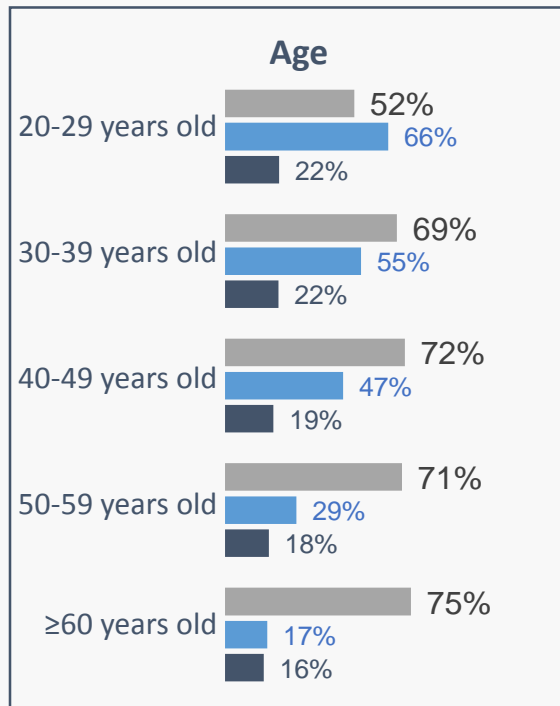


WHAT TYPE OF MATERIALS DO PEOPLE READ?

- News is the most common material that is read more than once a week, except for the 20 to 29 year olds where a larger proportion read online articles rather than news.
- A greater proportion of university degree holders read news, online articles and books more than once a week than those with lower educational levels.

Type of material read more than once a week

■ News ■ Online articles ■ Books



A DEEPER LOOK INTO TYPES OF MATERIALS READ



Newspaper
or News
Online

A Must-Read for All

- **Keep up** with what is happening - it affects my work
- **Social currency** - not knowing the latest makes me look out of touch (“suaku”) and affects my social standing
“Not appear like an idiot in front of all the people. ...” – Male, 46 years old
- If I don’t read news, I cannot **contribute to water-cooler talk**



Articles posted
on social media
or websites

Part of my lifestyle

- Internet is available all the time – receive **alerts** about posts
- **Links me** to friends, like-minded people and interest groups
- Content is **directly relevant** to me (e.g. they like the Facebook page of topics that they are interested in)



Books –
includes
e-books

I outgrew books

- **Irrelevant** - all the latest, most current information is online
- I used to when I was studying, but now I am **too tired after work**. I cannot **focus** anymore.
- I would **rather wait for the movie**. I lose interest in the book.

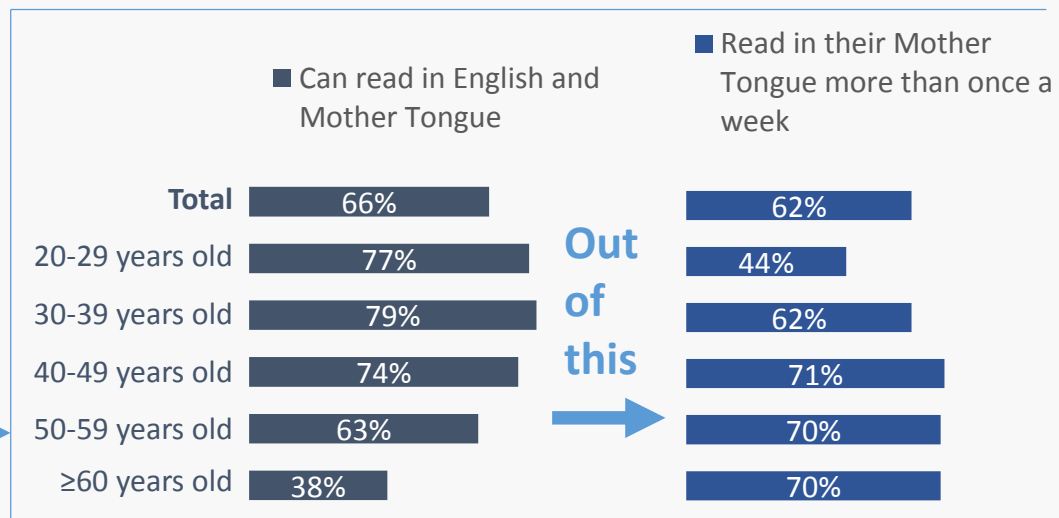
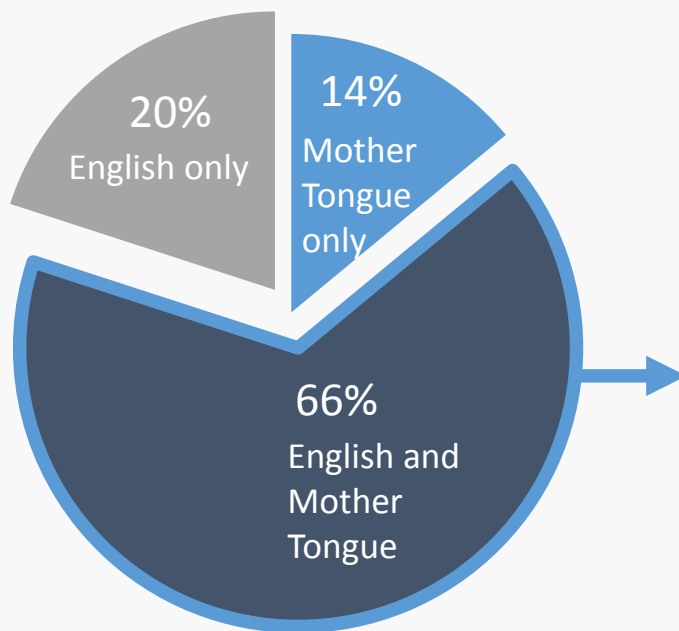
But for the minority who do read books...IT’S ME TIME

- Habit since young to read books
- It helps me to relax
- It’s interesting and brings me into another world

ARE PEOPLE READING IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE?

- Of the readers, 66% are able to read in both English and their Mother Tongue. Among them, 62% read in their Mother Tongue more than once a week.
- There is a lower proportion of bilingual 20 to 29 year olds, compared to other age groups, who read in their Mother Tongue more than once a week.
- Compared to bilingual Malay readers, lower proportion of bilingual Chinese readers and bilingual Tamil readers read more than once a week.

Language that they are able to read in



Read in their Mother Tongue more than once a week

62% of bilingual Chinese readers

73% of bilingual Malay readers

57% of bilingual Tamil readers

A DEEPER LOOK INTO READING IN MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGES

Barriers to overcome:

- **Lack of language proficiency** - perceived as difficult and time-consuming.
- **No value in reading in their Mother Tongue** – English is the official working language

Despite that, people do read because of the below Motivations

Only available in Mother Tongue

“(Chinese news are) more entertaining, more social, more close to your lifestyle.”- Female, 45 years old, Chinese.”

For school or work

“It’s to brush up my Chinese also because I have Chinese speaking clients. – Male, 27 years old, Chinese

Share news with family members who don’t understand English

“I read news only, in my mother tongue...just see what is interesting so update my father, mother.” – Female, 29 years old, Malay

Help children with Mother Tongue

“I feel I need to brush up my Chinese so I can help them.” – Female, 35 years old, Chinese

Convey meaning better

“Certain words in English just cannot describe the emotions...’Sun Zi Bing Fa’, you read in English... Different meaning!” – Male, 66 years old, Chinese

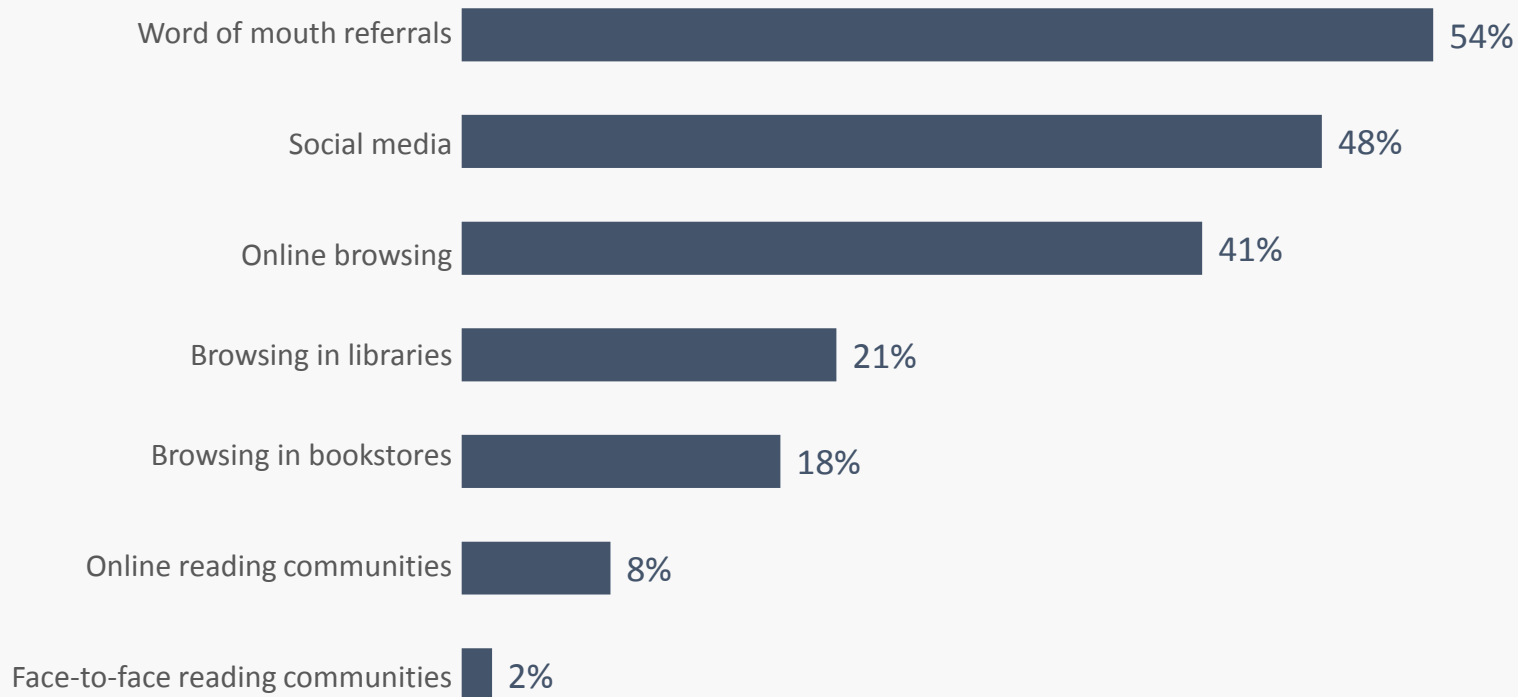
Appreciation of Mother Tongue

“Maybe the words and the content (of Malay novels) la. We can really understand more of it. Because we are Malay, we can relate.” – Female, 36 years old, Malay

HOW DO PEOPLE DISCOVER NEW READS?

- Among the readers, the top ways of discovering new reads are through word of mouth referrals (54%), social media (48%), and online browsing (41%).

How they discover new materials to read

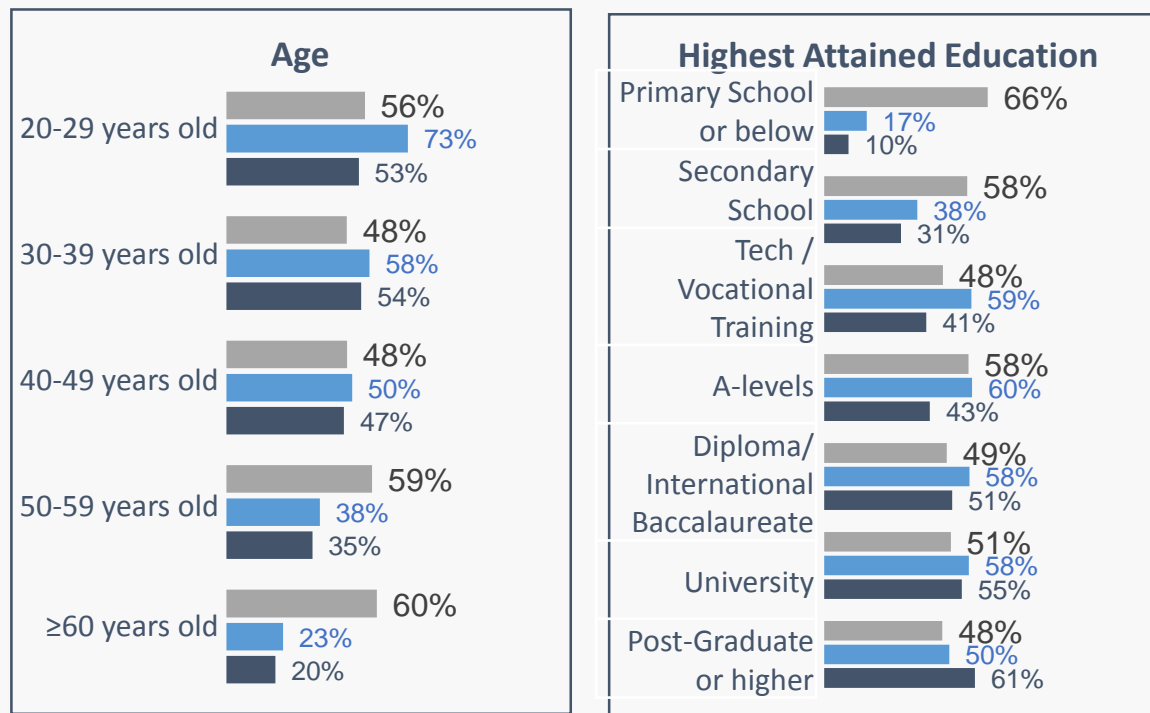


HOW DO PEOPLE DISCOVER NEW READS?

- Among the 20 to 29 years-old readers, 73% discover new reads through social media.
- While most readers with primary school education or below rely on mainly word of mouth referrals to discover new reads, a higher proportion of readers with diploma or higher education qualifications browse online to do so.

How they discover new materials to read

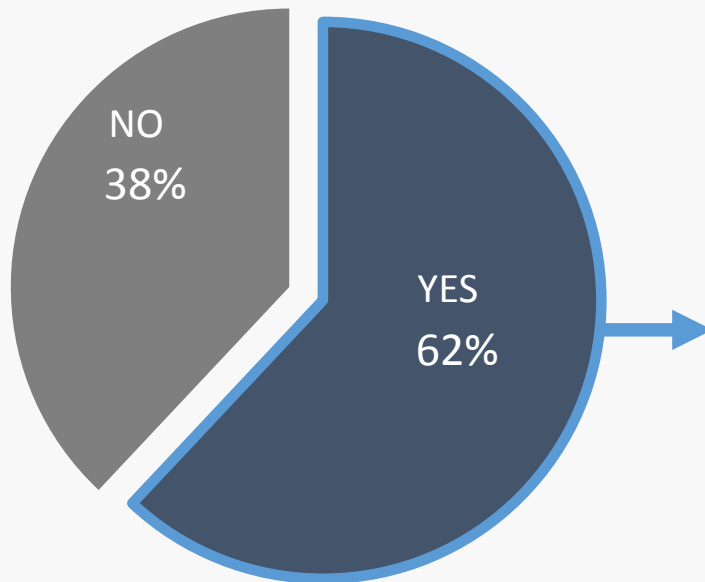
■ Word of mouth referrals ■ Social media ■ Online browsing



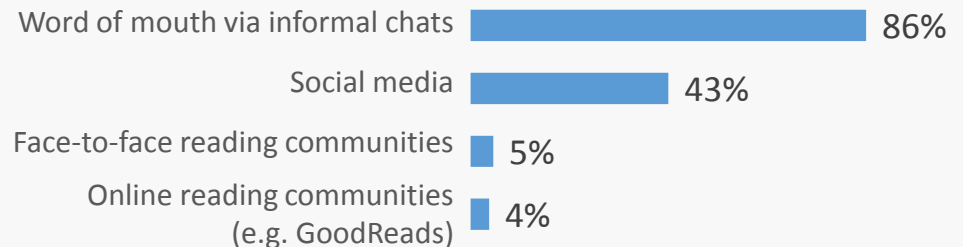
SHARE OPINIONS ON WHAT THEY READ

- 62% of readers share their opinions on what they are reading with others.
- Among these readers who share their opinions, 86% do so via informal chats and 43% via social media.
- While majority across all age groups share their opinions via informal chats, a larger proportion of the younger age groups do so social media.

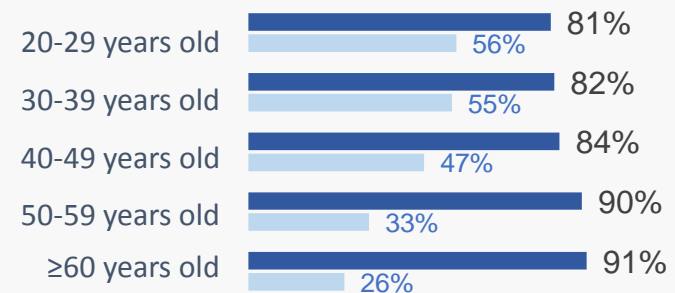
Share opinions/ recommendations on reading materials



How do they share their opinions



Word of mouth via informal chats Social media



A DEEPER LOOK INTO READING CLUBS

Would YOU join reading clubs?



Low Awareness – few know what reading clubs are

Low Interest – no need to join one, as:

- reading is a very **personal** activity (awkward to discuss with strangers)
- not keen to commit **time** to the club
- may result in a more **stressful** reading experience
- topics may not conform to **personal interest**
- worried about the **convenience** of the meeting place

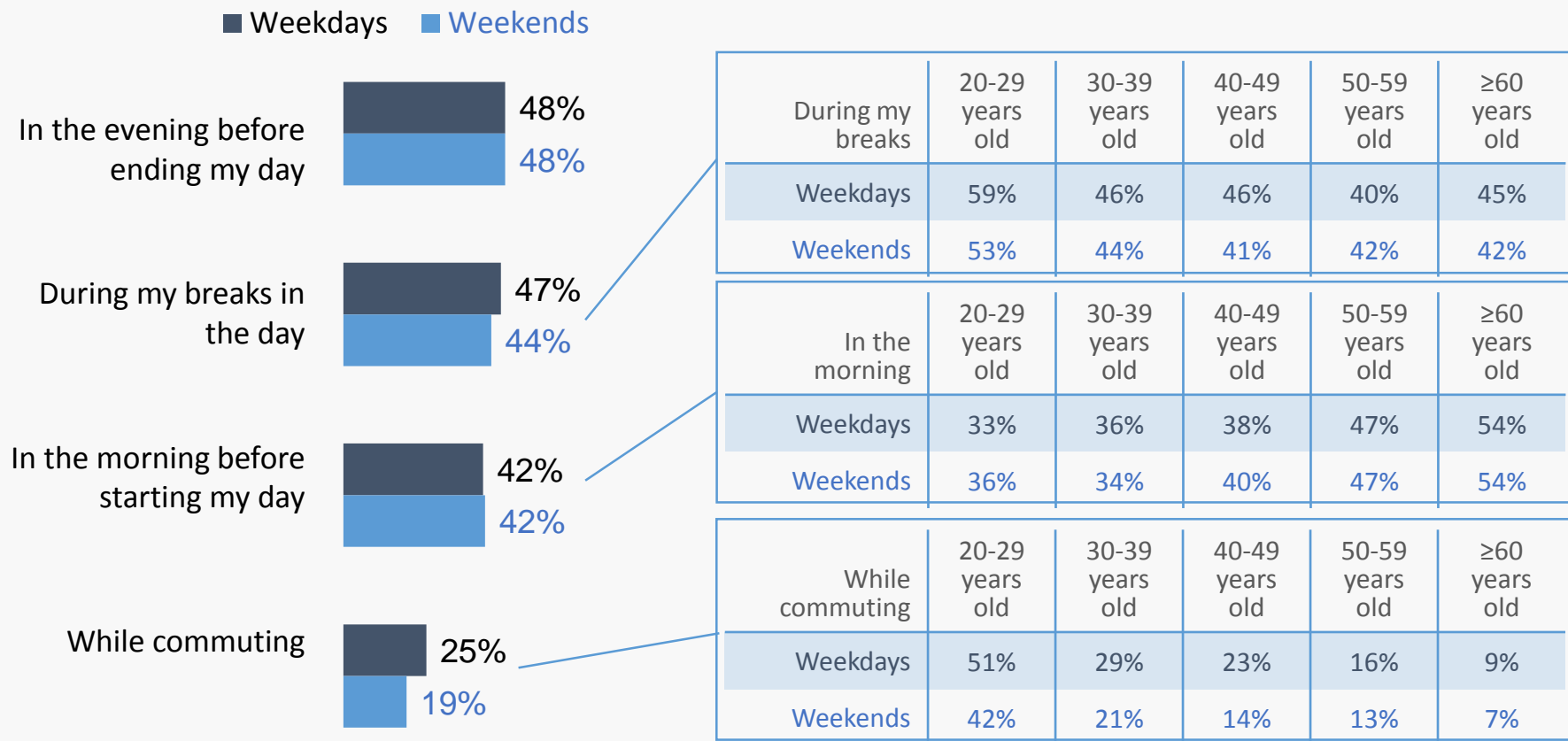
May consider if....

Provides social interaction - meet **like-minded individuals** who read **similar genres** to me (e.g. manga) or books from my favorite authors.

Online reading clubs - eliminate concerns of fixed time commitment, inconvenient locations and meeting strangers.

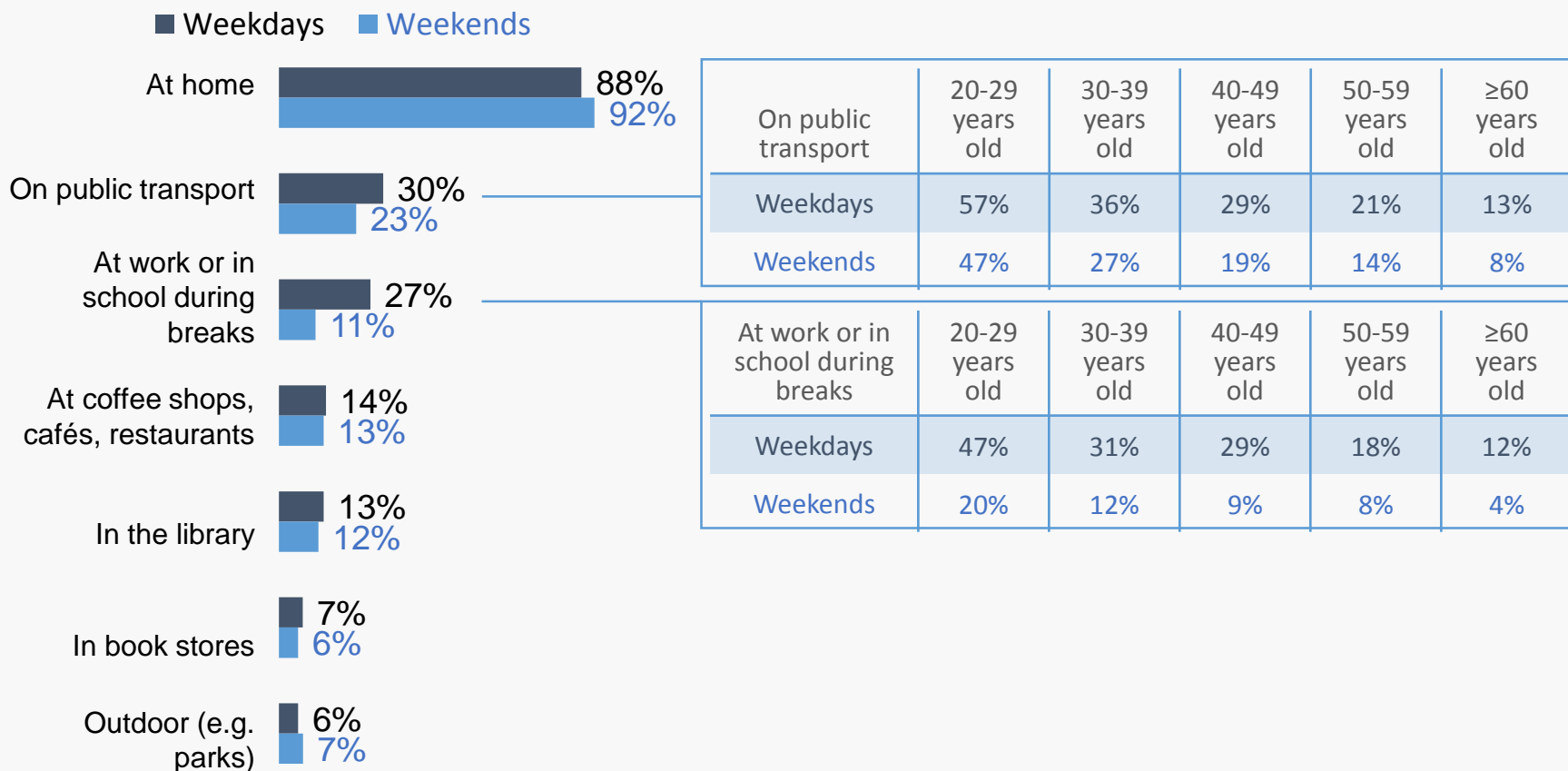
WHEN DO PEOPLE READ?

- A higher proportion of 20 to 29 year-old readers read during breaks in the day and while commuting, compared to the older age groups.
- About 50% of seniors read as part of their morning routine.



WHERE DO PEOPLE READ?

- Most readers prefer to read at home.
- 20 to 39 year-old readers also read at work or in school during breaks, and on public transport.



A DEEPER LOOK INTO WHERE PEOPLE READ



At home

- Most read in the **comfort of home** – when they have free time, at the start of the day, or before bedtime.

“Usually before the market starts (in the morning), you read what's happening with the past 10 hours you missed out. Evening time, it's usually when I have my own hobby, so I have my own articles to read after my own interest.” – Male, 49 years old



On public transport

- **Working adults** frequently cited reading while commuting. However, amount and frequency read **depended heavily on the contents that were pushed to them**. They may click on news/articles if the **headlines or topics** caught their attention or if the articles had many likes and share.

“On the way to work, that one definitely I will scroll la.” – Female, 29 years old



At work or in school during breaks

- Many were **unable or unwilling to set aside reading time**. Instead, reading happened randomly whenever they had free time.

“If I am one of the early bird in the morning, I will read in office and during lunch time.” – Female, 39 years old

READING PREFERENCES

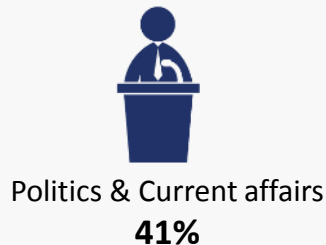
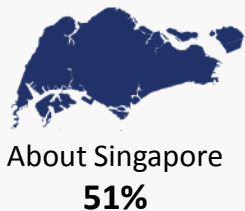


This section describes the top genres read for fiction and non-fiction for the various demographic groups

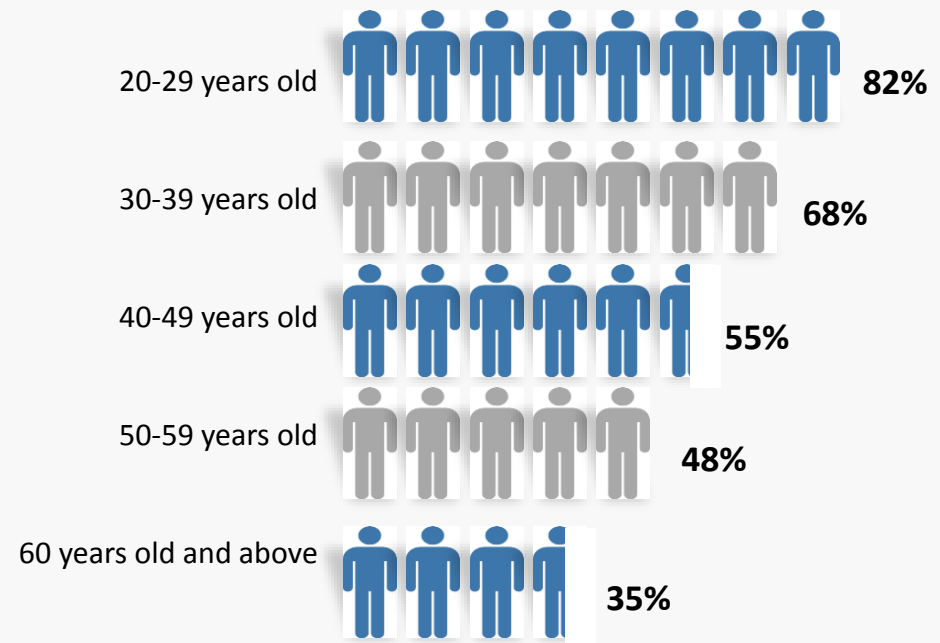
WHAT DO PEOPLE LIKE TO READ?

- 98% of readers read non-fiction topics, to serve practical purposes. There are clear differences in topics read across gender and highest attained education level.
- Only 57% of readers read fiction, with higher proportions in the younger age groups doing so.

Top 5 non-fiction topics read

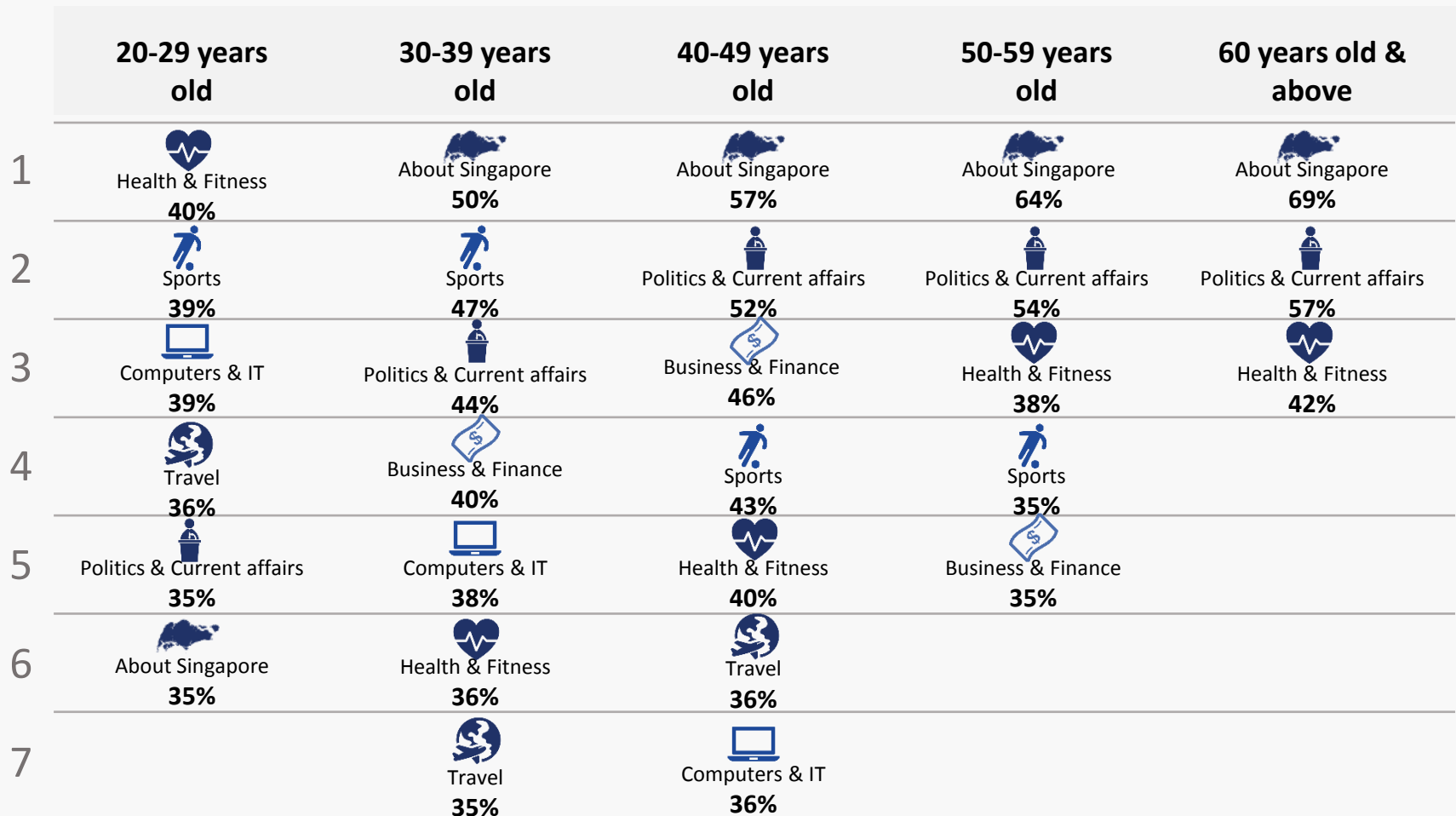


Read fiction



WHAT NON-FICTION TOPICS DO MALES READ?

- 20 to 29 year-old males read about health and fitness as well as sports, while older males prefer information about Singapore, and politics and current affairs.

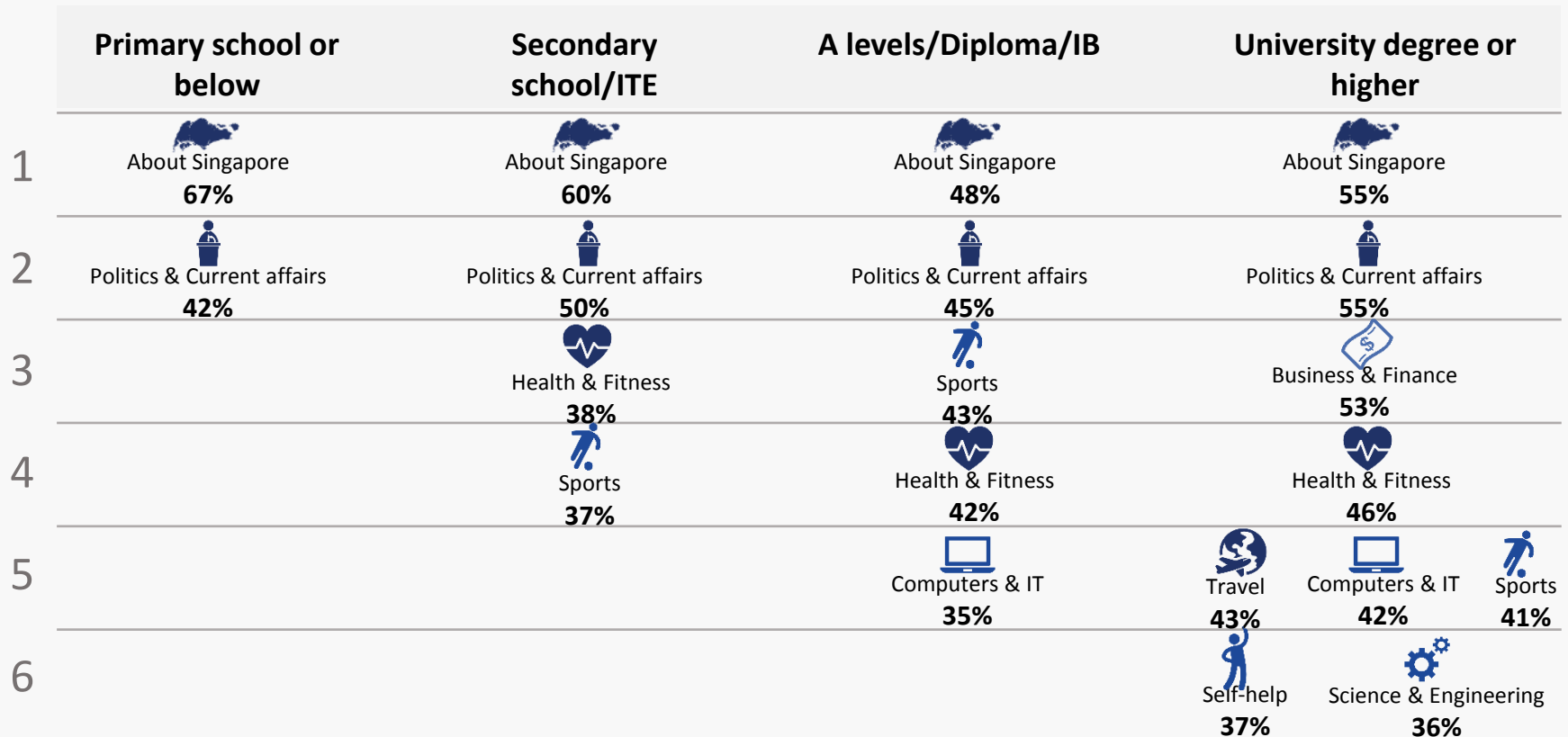


*Note: Topics shown are read by at least 35% of base

Base of male readers: 20-29 yo (n=303); 30-39 yo (n=285); 40-49 yo (n=271); 50-59 yo (n=267); 60 yo and above (n=425)

WHAT NON-FICTION TOPICS DO MALES READ?

- In addition to information about Singapore and politics and current affairs, males with university degrees or higher education qualifications read about business and finance, as compared to males with secondary school education or below.

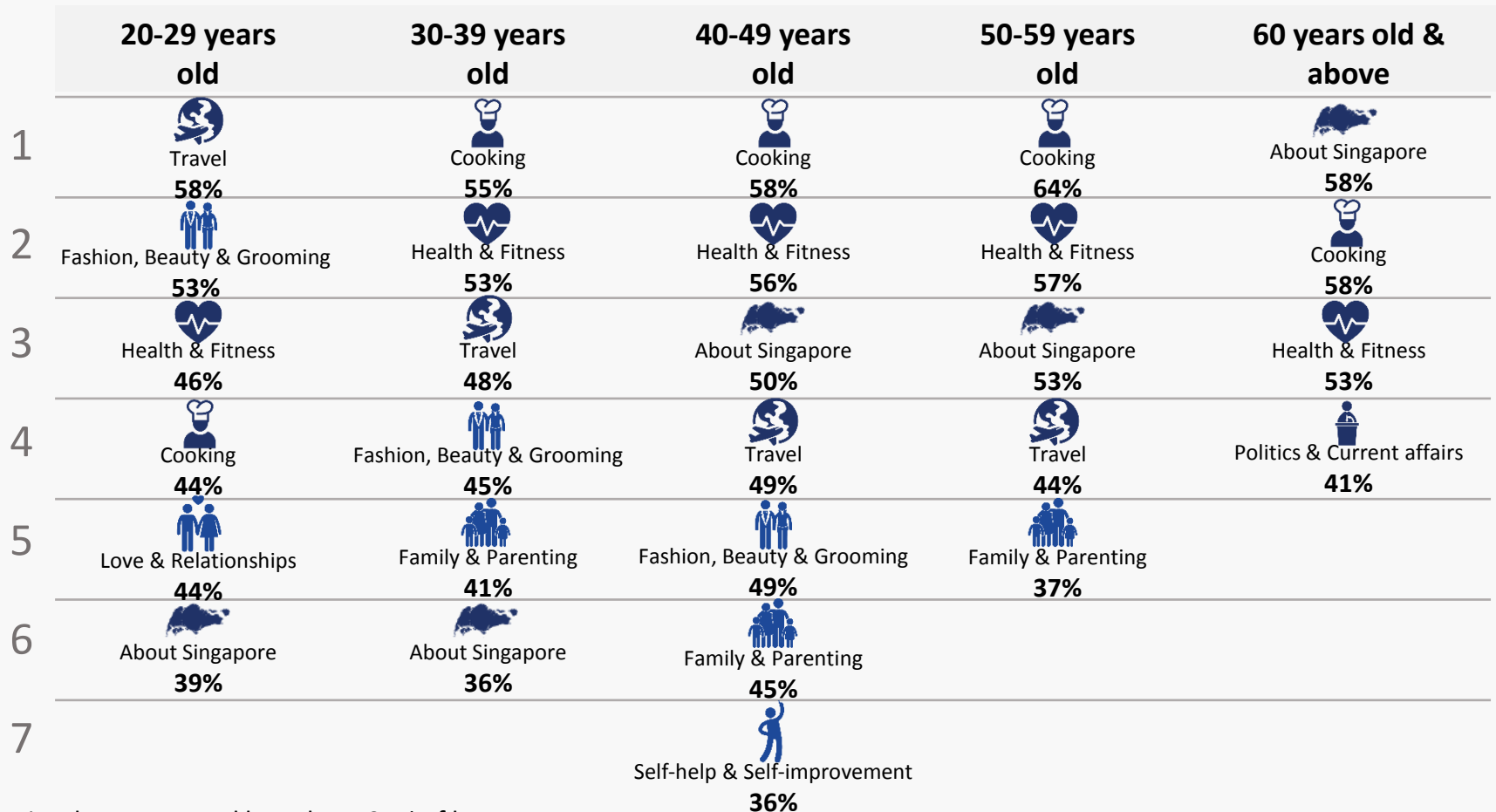


*Note: Topics shown are read by at least 35% of base

Base of male readers: Primary school or below (n=193); Sec/ITE (n=439); A levels/dip/IB (n=427); university degree or higher (n=491)

WHAT NON-FICTION TOPICS DO FEMALES READ?

- 20 to 29 year-old females read about lifestyle topics such as travel and fashion, beauty and grooming, while older females lean towards cooking, health-related and Singapore-related information.

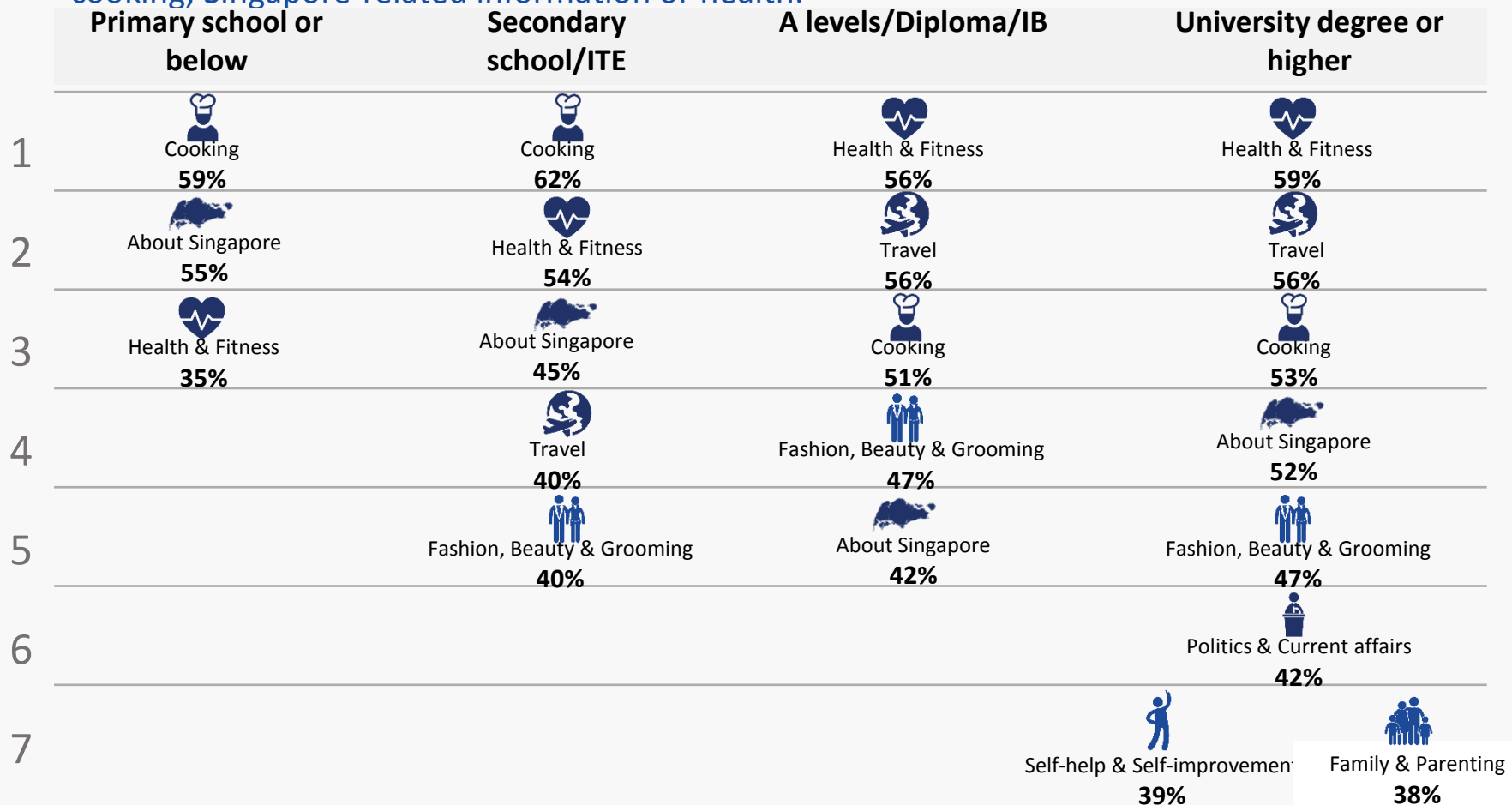


*Note: Topics shown are read by at least 35% of base

Base of female readers: 20-29 yo (n=288); 30-39 yo (n=370); 40-49 yo (n=415); 50-59 yo (n=366); 60 yo and above (n=273)

WHAT NON-FICTION TOPICS DO FEMALES READ?

- Females with university degrees or higher education qualifications read a wider range of non-fiction topics, while females with primary school education or below read mainly about cooking, Singapore-related information or health.



















*Note: Topics shown are read by at least 35% of base

Base of female readers: Primary school or below (n=187); Sec/ITE (n=594); A levels/dip/IB (n=475); university degree or higher (n=455)

WHAT FICTION GENRES DO MALES READ?

- The fiction genres that are of common interest to males are mysteries and thrillers, humorous stories and jokes, and science fiction. In addition to these genres, younger males read graphic novels and comics.



















	20-29 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	60 years old & above
1	 Mysteries & Thrillers 35%	 Mysteries & Thrillers 31%	 Science fiction 22%	 Mysteries & Thrillers 24%	
2	 Humorous stories & jokes 32%	 Science fiction 28%	 Mysteries & Thrillers 20%	 Science fiction 20%	
3	 Graphic novels, comics & manga 31%	 Humorous stories & jokes 25%	 Humorous stories & jokes 20%	 Humorous stories & jokes 20%	
4	 Science fiction 29%	 Graphic novels, comics & manga 22%			
5	 Fantasy 24%				
6	 Horror 20%				

*Note: Topics shown are read by at least 20% of base

Base of male readers: 20-29 yo (n=303); 30-39 yo (n=285); 40-49 yo (n=271); 50-59 yo (n=267); 60 yo and above (n=425)

WHAT FICTION GENRES DO FEMALES READ?

- Females of all ages read mysteries and thrillers, as well as humorous stories and jokes. Females aged 20 to 29 years old also read romance and love stories.

	20-29 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	60 years old & above
1	 Mysteries & Thrillers 47%	 Romance & love stories 28%	 Humorous stories & jokes 27%	 Mysteries & Thrillers 22%	 Humorous stories & jokes 21%
2	 Romance & love stories 47%	 Mysteries & Thrillers 28%	 Mysteries & Thrillers 26%	 Humorous stories & jokes 22%	 Mysteries & Thrillers 20%
3	 Humorous stories & jokes 37%	 Humorous stories & jokes 25%	 Romance & love stories 24%		
4	 Fairytale, folklore, mythologies 33%				
5	 Fantasy 28%				
6	 Horror 24%				
7	 Science fiction 24%				
8	 Graphic novels, comics & manga 20%				

*Note: Topics shown are read by at least 35% of base

Base of female readers: 20-29 yo (n=288); 30-39 yo (n=370); 40-49 yo (n=415); 50-59 yo (n=366); 60 yo and above (n=273)

A DEEPER LOOK INTO NON-FICTION PREFERENCE



Non-Fiction

Inclined towards news on hot topics or areas of interest:

- materials that are most **readily available** (e.g. online or newspapers) - “pushed” to them or in their line of sight
- information received from **sources of interest** they have subscribed to

Read non-fiction more frequently:

- most people valued the **new knowledge** they acquire
- materials “pushed” to them via **social media posts or subscription to interest groups** (e.g. football/financial topics read by males)
- seek **facts based on needs** such as a change in life stage (e.g. seniors reading on dementia, mothers reading about child-rearing), and for travel (i.e. to plan for next holiday)
- **learn more** about **hot topics** that may affect them e.g. Zika virus



Fiction

Few read fiction:

- **does not value-add to their lives** - not willing to invest time to read
- **requires more commitment** - have to complete the entire book to fully enjoy the story

But...Younger adults still read fiction:

- **continued reading for entertainment** – e.g. following favorite authors/ series
- **follow-up to movies** – to fill in plot details not covered in movies

ABOUT BOOKS

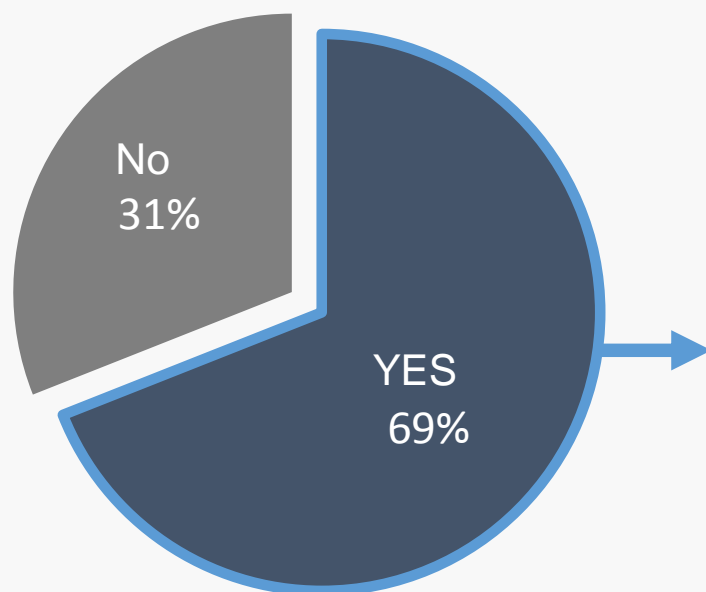


This section looks at the average number of books read by Singapore residents in the past 12 months and the book formats covered, as well as the different sources of books.

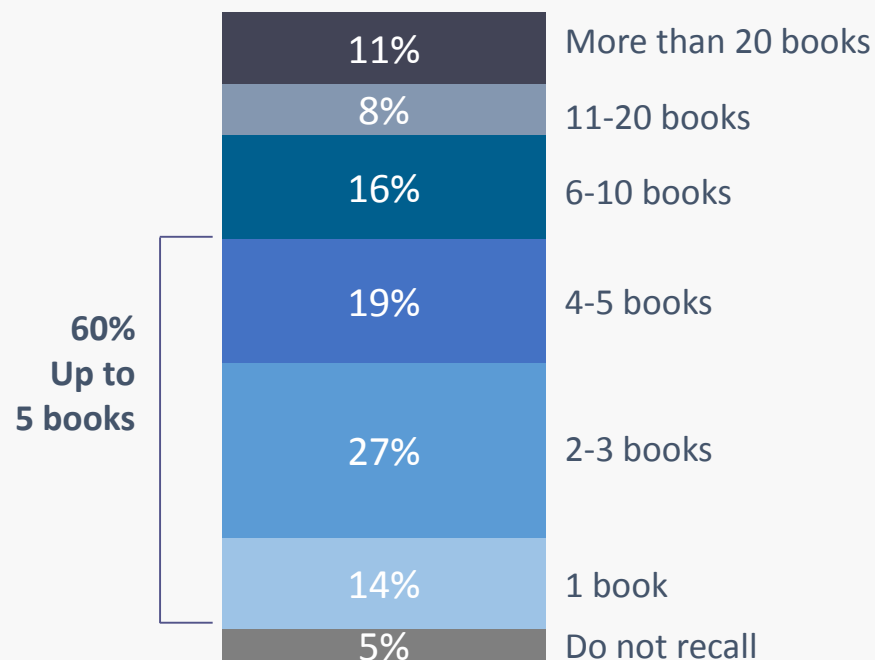
ARE PEOPLE STILL READING BOOKS?

- Among Singapore residents, 69% have read books in the past 12 months.
- 60% of those who read books have read up to 5 books.

Read books in the past 12 months



Number of books read in past 12 months



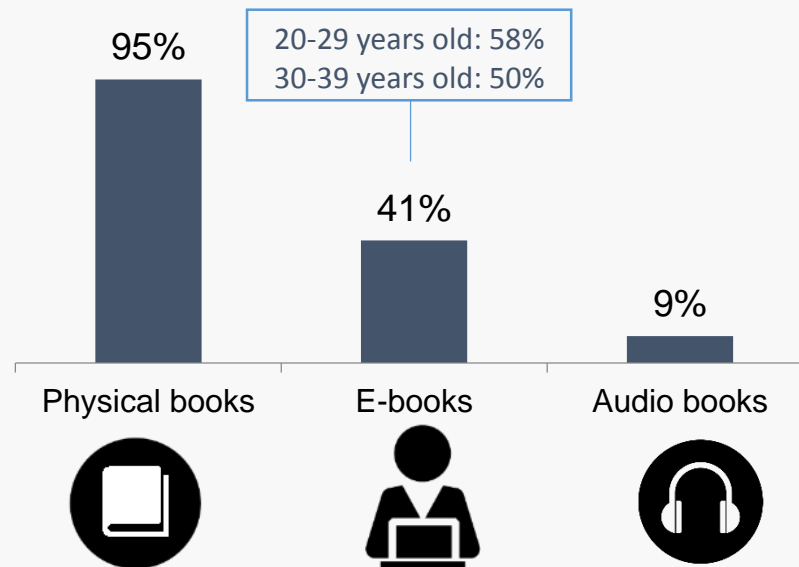
*Those who read at least 1 book will be known as "book readers" (n=2,306) in the rest of this report

Base: All respondents (n=3,515)

WHAT BOOK FORMAT DO PEOPLE READ?

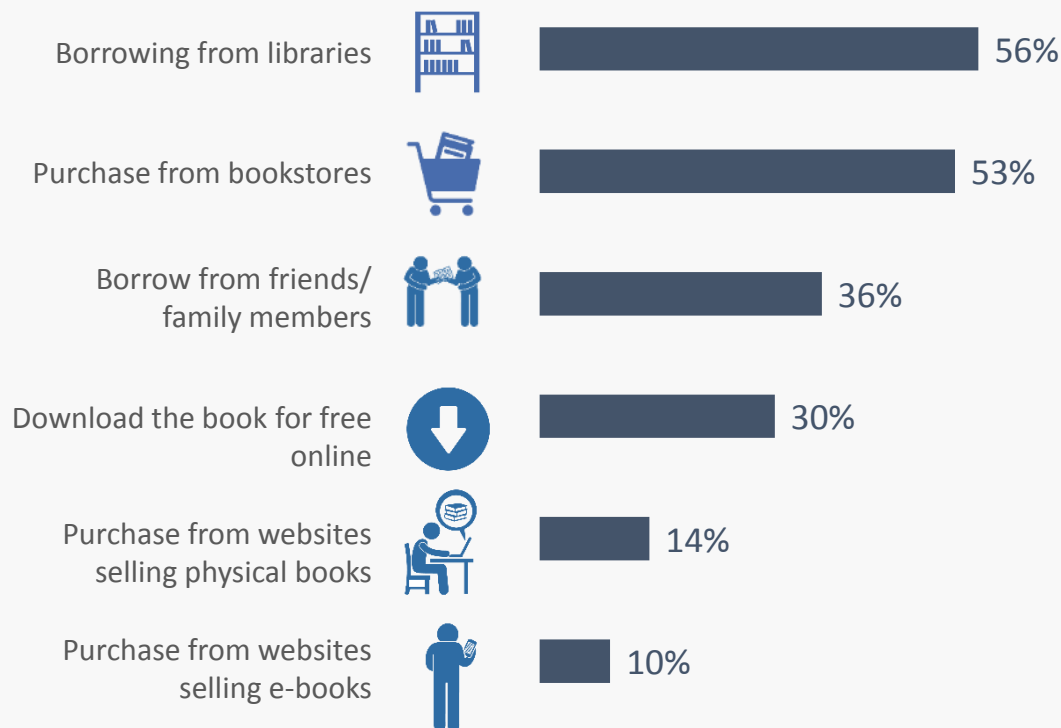
- Among the book readers, 95% read physical books and 41% read e-books.
- There is a larger proportion of 20 to 29 year-old book readers who have read e-books (58%).

Format of books read in past 12 months



WHERE DO PEOPLE GET THEIR BOOKS FROM?

- Among the book readers, 56% borrow their books from libraries, while 53% buy their books from bookstores.

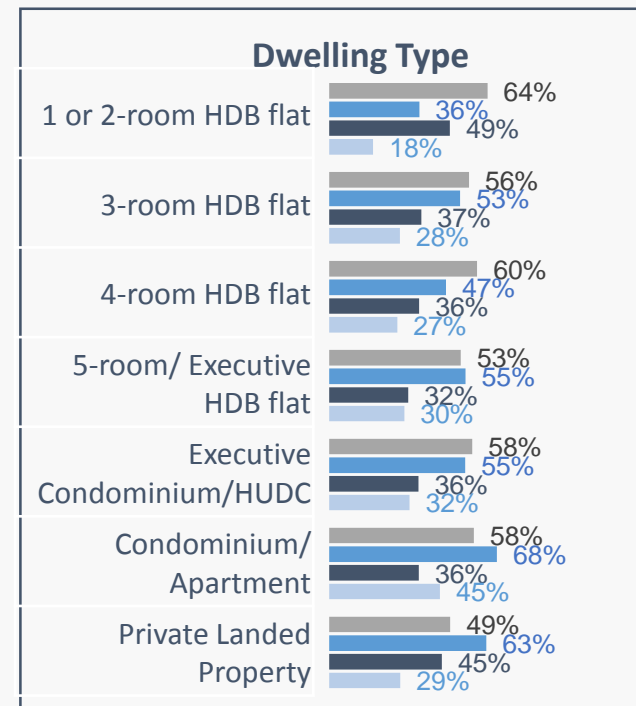
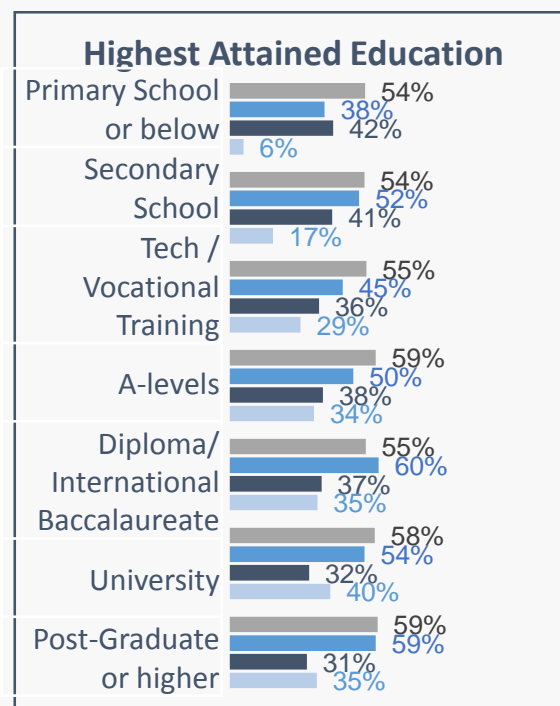
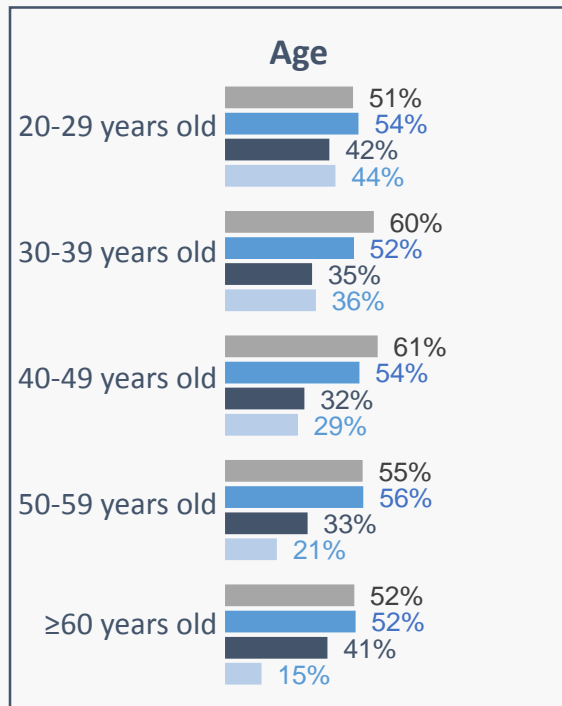


WHERE DO PEOPLE GET THEIR BOOKS FROM?

- Higher proportions of the younger book readers have downloaded free books online.
- Of book readers with a diploma or higher education qualifications, larger proportions purchase books from book stores than those with vocational certificates or primary school education or below.

Source of books

■ Borrow from libraries ■ Purchase from bookstores ■ Borrow from friends or family ■ Download free online



A DEEPER LOOK INTO SOURCES OF BOOKS

Why borrow from a library?



- **Convenient** to borrow since they are at the library with their children
- **Short-term** need for the book e.g. look up info for holiday, for entertainment
- **Wide variety** of books for **free**
- **Try out** new genres – unsure if they will like the book enough to buy it

Why buy from bookstores?



- Need to have it **immediately available**
- Read books at **own pace**
- **Decreasing cost** of books
- Keep for **personal collection** e.g. re-read favourite authors in future or keep non-fiction book for **future reference**

Why download free online?

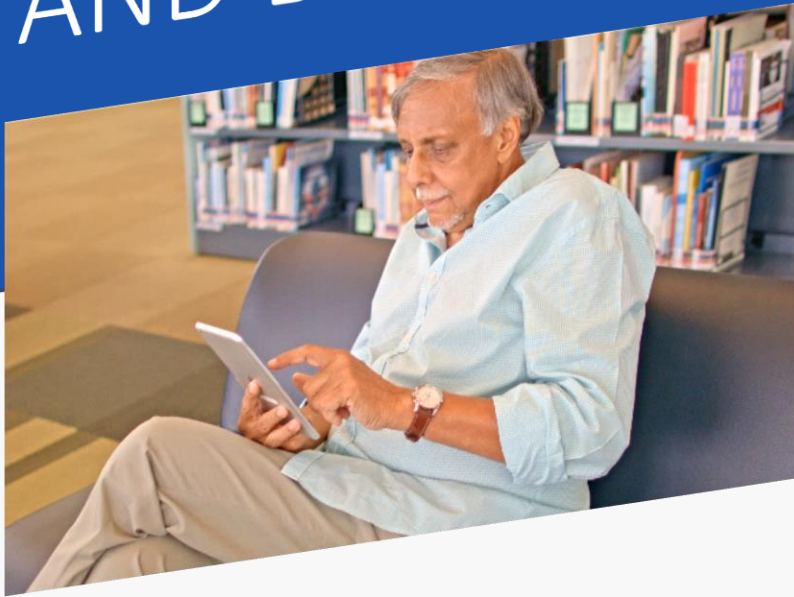


- **Easy to download and store** without constraints of physical space
- Seamless process to **look at online reviews** before downloading the book

However, people cannot sustain prolonged reading on digital devices

- **Strain to the eyes** – glare, small screen
- **Interrupted** by messages, alerts etc.
- **More engaged** with ‘authentic’ look, feel and smell of the physical book

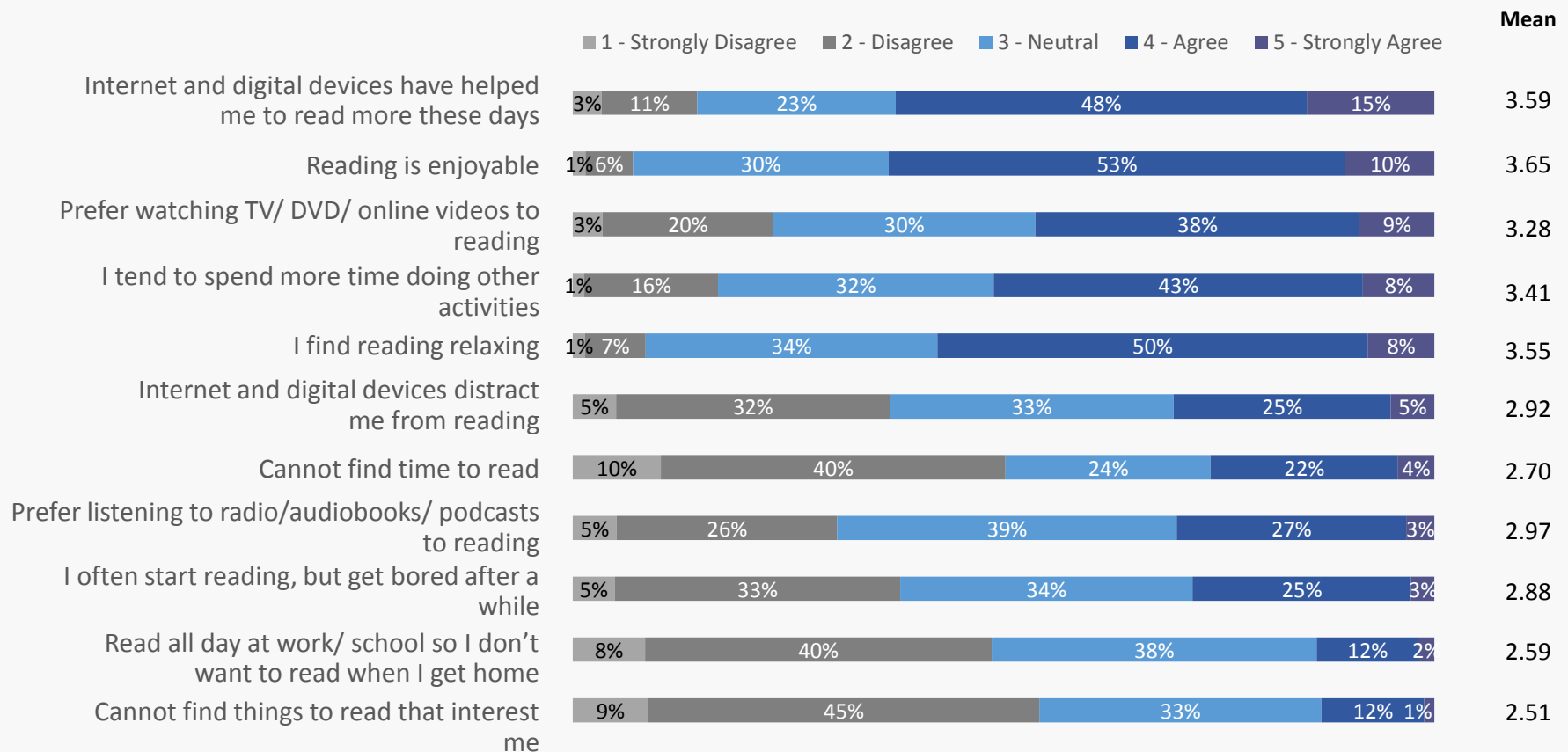
MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS



This section looks into the reasons for reading in general and the factors that inhibit reading

TO READ OR NOT TO READ?

- The top motivations to read across all age groups are that internet and digital devices have helped them to read more, and that reading is enjoyable and relaxing.
- The main barriers to reading are that people prefer to watch TV/ DVDs/ online videos to reading and that they tend to spend more time doing other activities.



THANK YOU

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