

**Discovering a Good Read:
Exploring Book Discovery
and Reading for Pleasure
Among Australian Teens**





Teen Reading in the Digital Era



The *Discovering a Good Read Survey* is a nationally representative survey of 13,217 Australian adolescents (ages 11-18) conducted between March 2022 and June 2023.

This project is funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Project Scheme (project number: LP180100258) in partnership with Copyright Agency Ltd, Australian Publishers Association Ltd, School Library Association of Victoria, Australian Library and Information Association Ltd and BookPeople. The project was led by Deakin University.

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Acknowledgements: The authors thank Donald Matheson for his assistance with the analysis of popular books, and Susan La Marca for her pivotal role in recruiting schools. Special thanks to the schools that took part, making this project possible.

How to cite this document: L. Rutherford, A. Singleton, B. Reddan, K. Johanson (2024) *Discovering a Good Read: Exploring Book Discovery and Reading for Pleasure Among Australian Teens*. Geelong: Deakin University.

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ISBN: 978-0-6486374-0-0 (PDF) 978-0-6486374-1-7 (Print)

Report design by VisionaryCreative.com.au

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Executive Summary

The **Discovering a 'Good Read': Pathways to Reading for Australian Teens** project (DAGR), funded by the Australian Research Council and industry partners, presents an extensive exploration of Australian adolescents' reading habits. This research delves into the intersection of digital and cultural influences on teen reading. It combines interviews with educational and book industry professionals, focus groups, and a nationally representative survey of 13,217 Australian secondary school students (Years 7-12). **This report presents findings from the survey component of the project.**

KEY FINDINGS

Leisure Reading Habits: In this report, the term 'teen reading' refers to the voluntary reading habits of young people, focusing specifically on books they choose to read for pleasure, rather than books assigned for school. This includes fiction, non-fiction and graphic novels. When referring to other forms of reading like newspapers, blog posts, Wattpad, or magazines, we distinctly identify them as separate from book reading. (Note: 'Books' can be in any format, including printed or eBooks.)

The survey reveals that, for Australian teens, reading ranks below social media and video viewing in their leisure activity preferences. **Notably, 29% of secondary school students do not engage in reading during their free time.**

Reading Frequency: Among secondary-school students, 15% read daily, while 10% read four to six times a week. About 16% read two to three times a week, and 12% once a week. However, a concerning 17% engage in reading less than once a week. The rest – about a third – don't read at all.

Teen Reader Categories: Utilising Latent Class Analysis (LCA), the study identifies diverse reader types among teens: 12% are 'Fiction Fanatics', 10% are 'Regular Bookworms', 9% are 'Rushed Fans', 16% are 'Casual Dabblers', 10% are 'Holiday Browsers', 10% are 'Sparse Readers', and the largest group, 33%, are 'Book Abstainers'.

Influencing Factors: The survey highlights how factors like parental reading habits, peer influence, gender, and age play a more significant role in influencing teens' reading types than geographic or school sector factors.

Book Discovery Methods: The primary method for discovering books is through previously liked authors (61%), with recommendations from friends (57%) and reading books from favourite movies, TV shows, or games (55%) also popular.

Fiction vs. Non-Fiction Readers: There's a notable difference in book discovery ease between fiction and non-fiction readers. Sixty-three per cent of teen fiction readers find it easy to discover new fiction books, compared to 53% of non-fiction readers.

Popular Fiction Genres: The top fiction genres among teens are fantasy, mystery and crime, and dystopian.

This comprehensive survey offers valuable insights into the reading patterns of Australian teens, highlighting the urgent need for engaging strategies to foster a reading culture in the digital age.

Foreword

We all know the benefits of reading – it makes us happier, healthier, and more empathetic, amongst other great benefits. Reading stories about our country, our heritage and our people helps us to better understand ourselves. It helps us to make sense of our place, our history, and our future.

As we start 2024 it is timely to think of how we can encourage young Australians to read and to read more Australian stories. Australia has a rich literary history, from Miles Franklin to Tim Winton to Melissa Lucashenko and schools and librarians play a crucial role in fostering and nurturing a love of reading in students. However, today's young people are faced with a multitude of challenges and diversions to impede their discovery of a good book.

This timely project offers insights into teen reading habits, aiding teachers, librarians, publishers, and booksellers. It helps in selecting suitable books for teens and provides data on their reading preferences and patterns. The study explores reading frequency, methods, social media's impact, and discovery processes.

The Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund is proud to support and partner with universities on research that contributes to our understanding and work with teachers and teacher librarians in publishing relevant resources for teens on Reading Australia. This collaboration also extends more broadly through the Copyright Agency's work with our members in schools, libraries and publishing.

Josephine Johnston
CEO
Copyright Agency

Background

The DAGR project is the result of more than ten years collaboration with book industry and library professionals who have a stake in young people's reading engagement. Studies consistently show that participation in sustained reading for pleasure is associated with better school achievement, post-school vocational outcomes, and general levels of emotional wellbeing. Reading as a social practice is also central to the generational renewal of literary culture and Australian literature.

The researchers commenced with a pilot study in 2016, the **Teen Reading in the Digital Era: Platforms, Access and Diversity** project, funded by grants from Deakin University and the Cultural Fund of the Copyright Agency. It was focused on Australian teenagers' practices using traditional print and digital platforms for long-form recreational reading and it surveyed and interviewed students from secondary

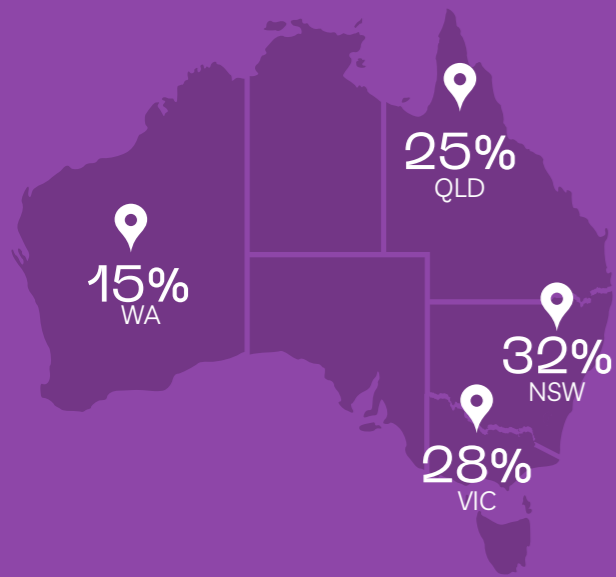
schools in Western Australia and Victoria. A major finding was that the major reason given by teens for not reading more was the difficulty of finding a good book.

Book discovery and strategies that work to enhance teens' ability to 'find a good read' became the focus of the current research. The DAGR study was designed to map the multiple influences that shape young people's reading preferences and discovery including the digital ecology of reading and the work of traditional mediators, such as educators, librarians, publishers and booksellers, as well as new digital influencers.

About the DAGR Survey

13,217

participants



GENDER GROUPS:

48%

Female

46%

Male

3%

Non-binary, trans, or intersex

3%

Identified as 'other'

AGE GROUPS: (weighted)

37%

11-13 year-olds

26%

14-15-year-olds

35%

16-18-year-olds

LOCATIONS:

81%

from metropolitan areas

14%

from inner regional areas

5%

from outer regional and remote areas

5%

had Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background

81%

of the sample were born in Australia

SCHOOL SECTOR: (weighted)

16%

Catholic

34%

Independent

50%

Ggovernment

DAGR Survey Design

The DAGR survey employs a purposive quota sample design to represent Australian secondary school students. Cooperation from schools, teachers and teacher-librarians nationwide has enabled the survey.

- The DAGR survey was designed by the chief investigators and research fellow in consultation with our industry partners.
- We designed a purposive quota sample to reflect the demographic spread of Australian secondary students across WA, NSW, VIC, and QLD, encompassing capital city and regional populations and school types (independent, Catholic, and government). We used Australian Bureau of Statistics data to design our sample frame.
- We invited expressions of interest from schools in WA, NSW, VIC and QLD. We also selected schools fitting our sample criteria and reached out to them, asking for student participation. Once we had the necessary consents from schools, parents, and students, we provided a survey link for completion on personal devices.
- Data were collected via the Qualtrics online platform between March 2022 and June 2023. (Access to schools in some states was delayed by complications arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.)
- A total of **13,217** students participated in the survey, with **12,093** completing it entirely. Even among those who did not finish, valuable data were obtained as many answered crucial questions. The sample size of 13,217 (including partial responses) is exceptionally large for a survey, enabling very detailed analysis.
- Some biases arose during data collection. To

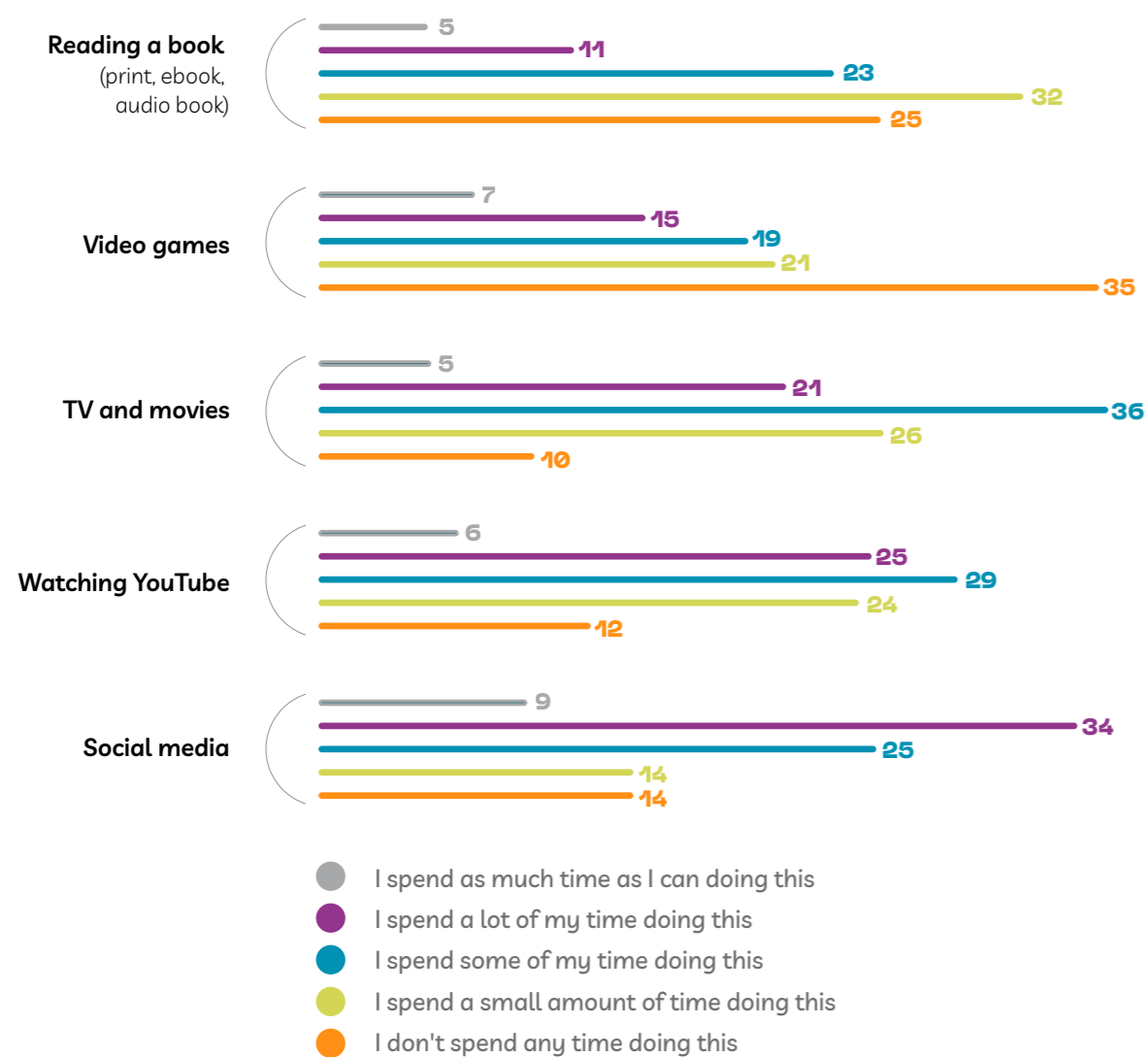
adjust for this, we applied a two-step weighting to the data: first, to accurately represent the age distribution of adolescents aged 11-18 from WA, NSW, VIC and QLD, and second, to ensure the correct proportion of students attending independent, Catholic and government secondary schools in those states. Our reference for this was the 2021 Australian census. Importantly, we did not weight for gender since it was already accurately represented in the sample.

- Due to time and cost constraints, we were unable to survey students in the ACT, NT, Tasmania and SA. However, our data show minimal state-based differences, with age and gender emerging as more significant factors. We endeavoured to include schools with a diverse range of ICSEA scores to ensure a comprehensive representation. **We are confident that the survey sample is representative of secondary school-aged readers in Australia.**
- The survey is augmented by book industry interviews, focus groups, and interviews with teen readers and teacher librarians across various states, along with an analysis of the digital ecology of reading. These elements informed the survey design though they are not the focus of this report. Note: In this report, pseudonyms replace real names in all direct quotes to ensure privacy.

Teen Leisure: Reading and Other Recreation Patterns

Teens lead busy lives with numerous leisure options. We surveyed their time spent on passive recreational activities, like social media, gaming, watching TV, movies, YouTube, and reading books **on a typical weekday during the school term**. Figure 1 displays the responses.

Figure 1: Australian Secondary School Students: Reading and Recreation Patterns (% of population)



Source: *Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3*

We find that teenagers in Australia spend their leisure time across various activities as follows:



Social Media

Almost half of teenagers engage extensively with social media, making it the preferred passive leisure activity for teens.



Video Games

Among teenagers, a third do not play video games at all, while a majority play video games a bit to a moderate amount.



YouTube

Engagement with YouTube varies, with most teens dedicating some or a lot of their leisure time to the platform.



Reading for Pleasure

Reading has a lower level of engagement, with the majority investing little to no time in this activity.



TV and Movies








The trend for TV and movies shows moderate engagement, with a small majority of teenagers allocating some or a lot of time to these forms of entertainment.

Reading ranks low in the hierarchy of leisure activities for Australian teenagers, with a significant number not engaging in it at all. In contrast, screen-based activities, particularly social media and video viewing, are distinctly more popular.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media ranks as the top passive leisure pursuit for teens. Our survey investigated the specific platforms they favour. This is shown in Table 1. Participants could nominate as many platforms as they liked.

Table 1: Social Media Users: Preferred Platforms
(% of those who use social media)

Platform	Percentage of social media users who use platform
 Instagram	81%
 Snapchat	80%
 TikTok	76%
 Facebook	28%
 Twitter	22%
 Reddit	20%
 Tumblr	5%

Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

Instagram leads as the top social media platform used by Australian secondary students, closely followed by Snapchat, with TikTok also highly popular. Facebook, Twitter and Reddit have a moderate user base, whereas Tumblr is the least utilised.



'I feel like the TikTok algorithm really like knows what to recommend to me' (Scarlett)



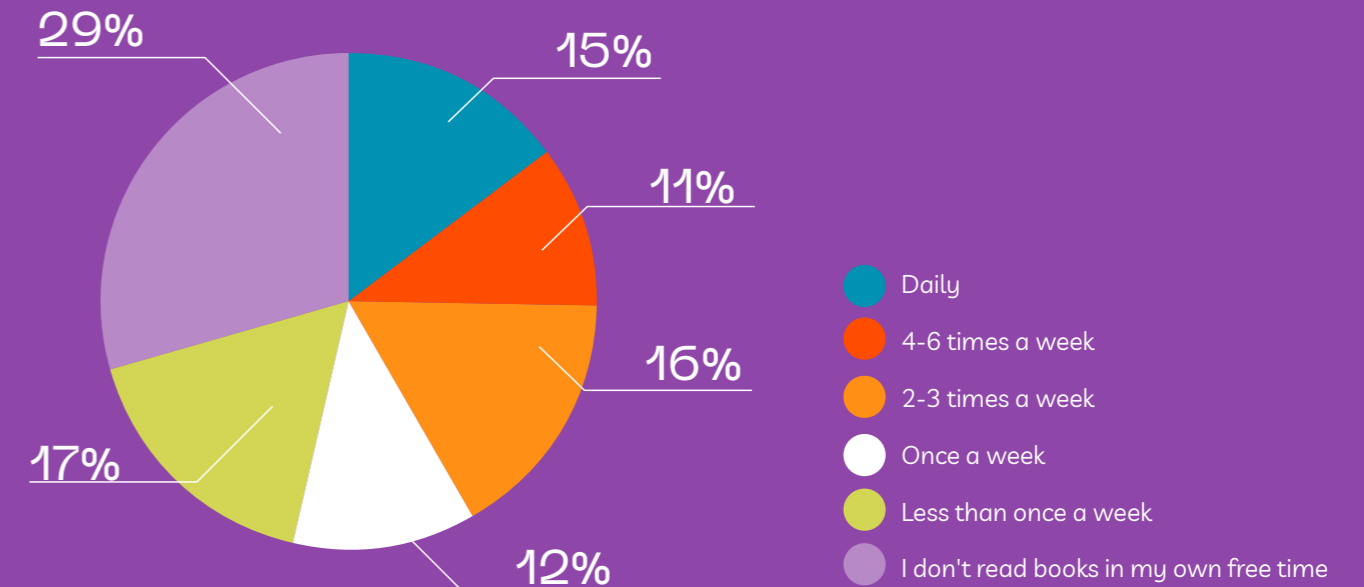
'I'm a bit of a fan of the absurd and weird things so it's a bit too niche for BookTok' (Mayra)

Reading for Pleasure: Habits of Australian Secondary School Students

This section delves into the reading practices of young people, focusing on books they read by choice in their leisure time, not for school. We specified in the survey that 'books' include fiction, non-fiction, and graphic novels. We also differentiated these from other forms of reading such as blog posts, newspapers, Wattpad, and magazines, ensuring clarity for students about the type of reading in question. (Books could be in any format: printed or eBooks, or a combination of both.)

Figure 2 illustrates the **frequency** with which teens read for pleasure during the school term, complementing the earlier data on their overall time spent reading for pleasure.

Figure 2: Australian Secondary School Students: Reading Frequency in a Typical Week (% of population)



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

15% of secondary schoolers read daily

11% read four to six times a week

16% read two to three times a week

12% read once a week

17% read less than once a week

'I noticed a thing, my brother and I... grew up both reading a lot, and then he reached a point where he's totally stopped reading now, and it's strange, and I sort of stopped reading for a little bit and then I got back into it, but he hasn't. Like we try to encourage him to, but he's totally gone off it' (Melissa).

And other kinds of reading? Over a third of Australian secondary students don't engage with articles, blog posts, magazines, comics, or newspapers in their free time, while most read these materials weekly or less, with only 10% reading these daily.

Audiobooks are not popular either, with only 13% of Australian secondary students listening to audiobooks in their free time.

Other things to know about **secondary schoolers who read books** (we're calling them 'teen readers' for this report):

45% of teen readers read more in the holidays

21% of teen readers read less in the holidays

22% of teen readers maintain the same reading frequency

11% of teen readers don't read during holidays at all

Compared to when they were in Grade 6, 34% of teen readers read more, 43% read less, and 23% have not changed their reading frequency.

Among teens who read both books **and** other materials like comics and newspapers, the majority show a preference for books.

During school holidays, 45% of Australian teen readers read more than during the school term, 21% read less, 22% read about the same, and 11% don't pick up a book while on their break.

Among teen readers, 58% primarily prefer fiction, 9% opt for non-fiction, and 29% enjoy both genres equally.

Most teen readers prefer to read printed books: 73% read mainly printed books, 18% read printed books and eBooks equally, and 10% prefer to use an eBook reader.

29% do not read books in their free time



Teen readers who read eBooks

27% of teen readers read eBooks.

46% use an app on their phone (e.g. Kindle app), 22% use an Amazon Kindle, 3% use a Kobo reader, and 29% use other methods of reading eBooks.

Other methods include school library ebook resources such as Wheelers and SORA, library apps including Libby and BorrowBox, online reading platforms including Wattpad, Webtoon, and Archive of Our Own (AO3), as well as Apple Books, Google Books and pdf readers.

59% source eBooks for free, 26% borrow eBooks from a library, 24% have eBooks purchased for them by a parent or guardian, 18% buy eBooks themselves, 10% use other methods to obtain eBooks (multiple answers were possible for this question).

Types of Teen Readers

In this section, we report on a deeper level of statistical analysis that has enabled the identification of hidden subgroups based on reading habits and preferences.

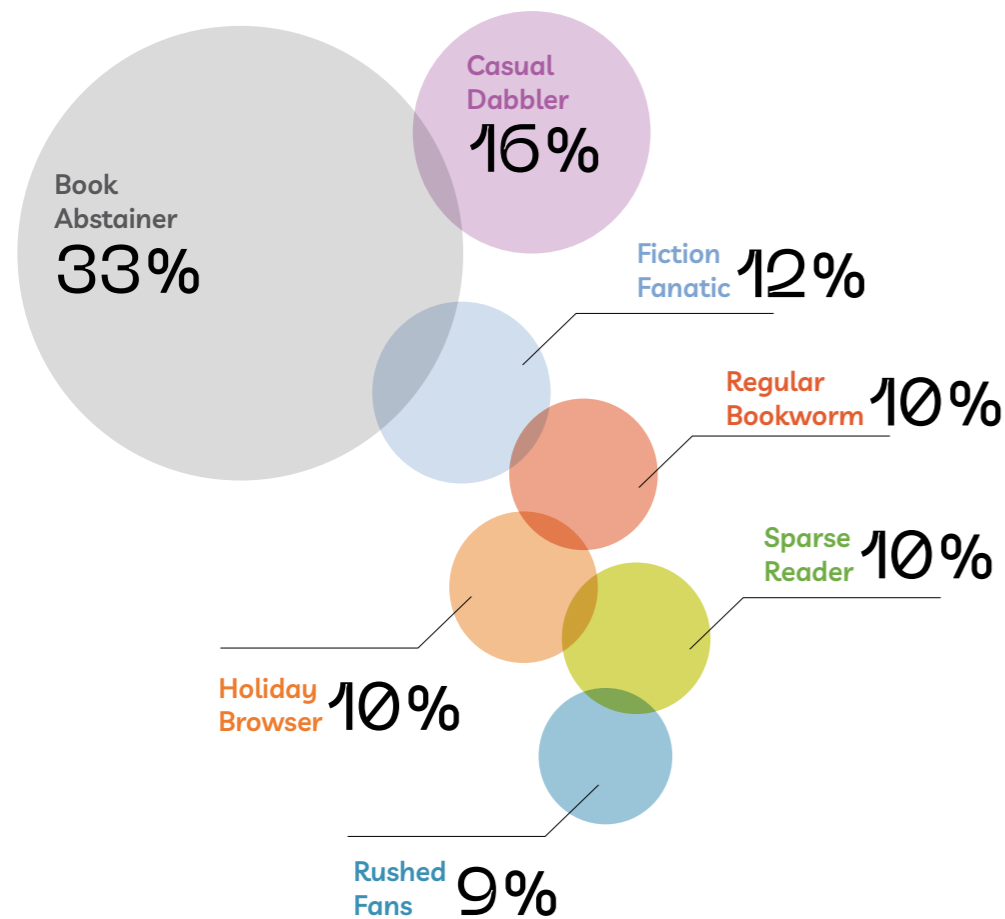
We conducted a Latent Class Analysis (LCA) to explore patterns related to reading habits, including the frequency and time spent reading books for pleasure, as well as **feelings about reading books for pleasure**. We also examined their preferences for reading **articles, blog posts, Wikipedia, magazines, comics, newspapers, fiction versus non-fiction**, and

reading habits during school holidays. Our analysis considers all these elements.

We identified **seven** distinct reader clusters (or non-readers). Individuals are assigned to the cluster they have the highest probability of belonging to. These clusters represent people with more similarities within their group than with others.

The proportions and names of these clusters are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Australian Secondary School Students: Reading Types (% of population)



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

Key Characteristics of Reading Types

Book Abstainer:

- Doesn't read books at all.
- Neutral to negative feelings about reading.
- Rarely reads articles or blogs.

Holiday Browser:

- Reads infrequently, more so during holidays.
- Neutral to positive feelings about reading.
- Reads articles about once a week.
- Leans towards fiction.

Casual Dabbler:

- Reads 1-3 times a week, mostly fiction or equally both fiction and non-fiction.
- Neutral to slightly positive feelings about reading.
- Varied frequency in reading articles, some avoid.
- Reads less or the same during holidays.

Sparse Reader:

- Rarely reads, mostly fiction.
- Neutral to negative feelings about reading.
- Reads articles about once a week.

Fiction Fanatic:

- Reads books daily, mostly fiction.
- Almost always positive about reading.
- Diverse habits for articles and blogs.
- Reads more during holidays.

Rushed Fans:

- Reads 2-6 times a week, predominantly fiction.
- Positive feelings towards reading.
- Mixed habits for articles.
- Reads more during holidays.

Regular Bookworm:

- Reads books multiple times a week, leaning towards fiction.
- Positive about reading.
- Varied habits for articles, with a third avoiding them.
- Mixed holiday reading habits.

'It's the engagement of the book that, "Oh my gosh, what's going to happen next" type of thing. It's really engaging and those fictional books and those natural world books really engage me as a reader. That's what keeps me reading (Lewis, Fiction Fanatic).



Social Determinants of Reading Habits Among Teenagers

Which social and cultural factors affect the reading habits of teenagers? Factors like parental reading habits, peers, gender, and age seem to play a more pronounced role in determining reading types than geographic factors or school sector. We conducted a series of correlation analyses to examine the influence of these factors on teenage reading habits. We found the following:

Location and school sector: Neither the school sector nor the regional/metro location shows a strong correlation or significant influence on teen reading types.

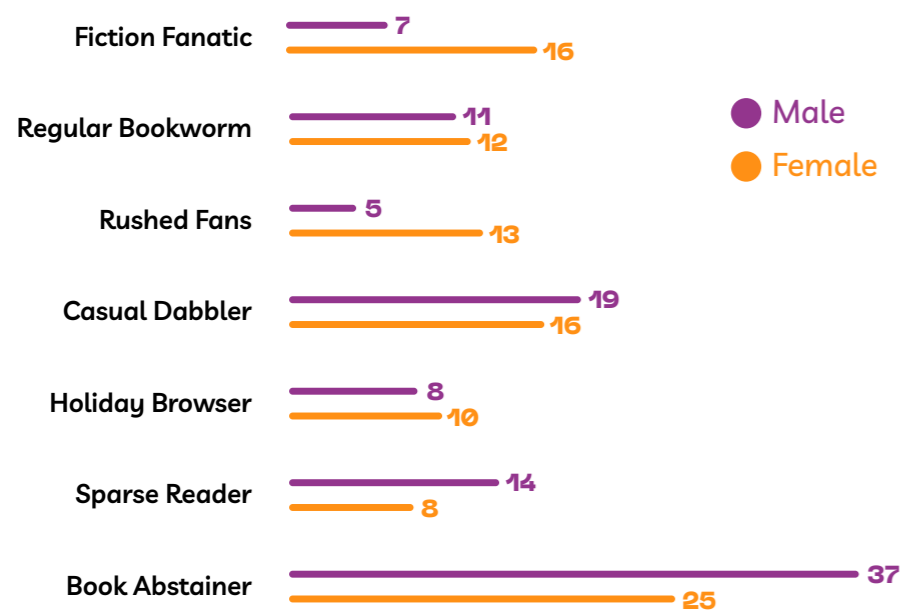
Gender: Gender appears to play a role in reading habits, with females generally engaging more with reading than males. This is shown in Figure 4.

Approximately 3% of the sample identified as non-binary, transgender, or intersex. While these figures are insufficient for statistically robust comparisons with other gender groups, we can still observe patterns within this cohort of teenagers. Overall, the gender diverse group shows a distinct distribution, with a particular inclination towards Fiction Fanatic and Rushed Fans categories, and a lower tendency to be Sparse Readers or Book Abstainers.

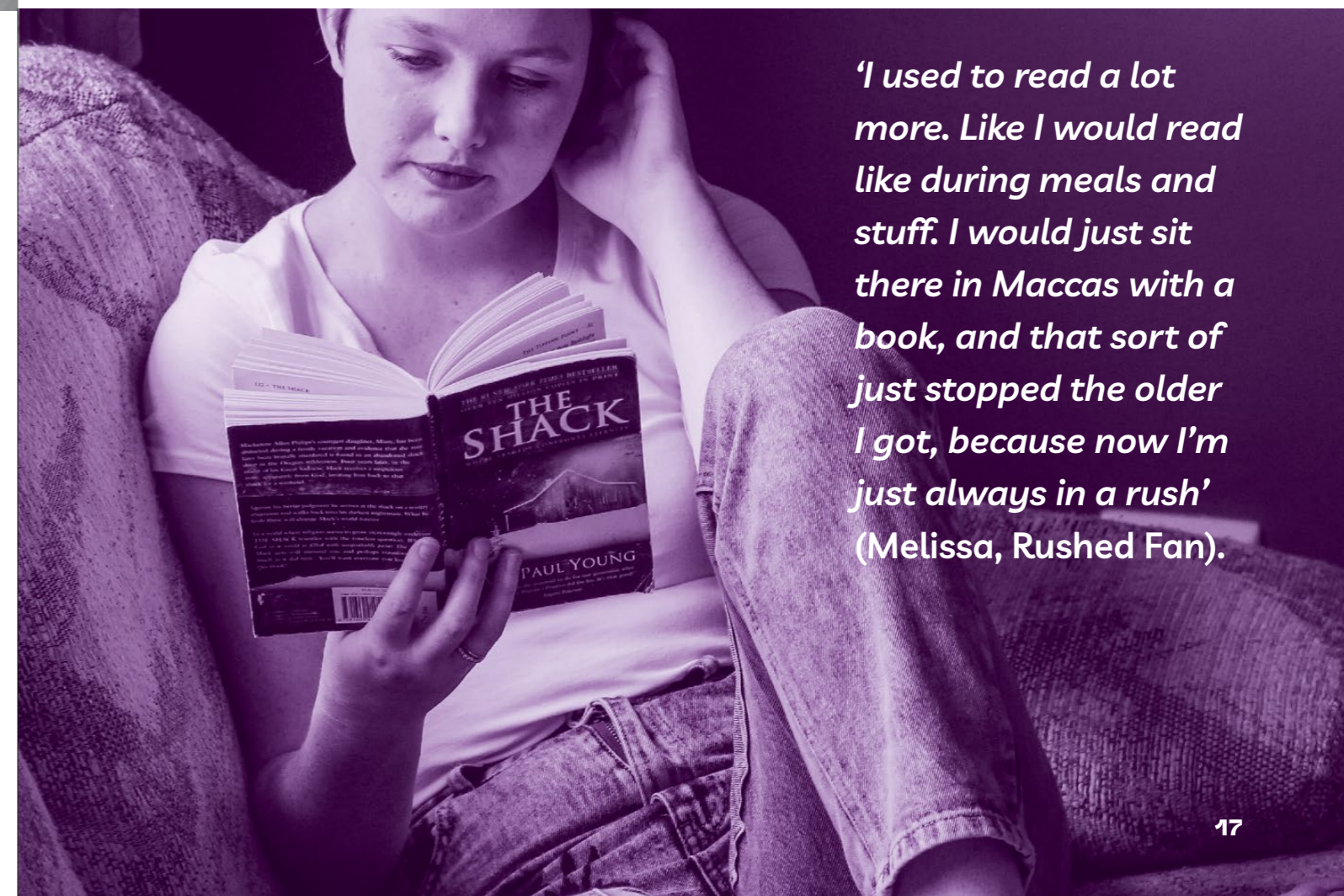
Parents: Teens we identified as Fiction Fanatics, Regular Bookworms or Rushed Fans consistently had a higher percentage of parents (both mothers and fathers) who were regular or weekly readers compared to some of the lesser reading categories. Overall, while teens in every category have parents who read, teens who read less often also think their parents read less.

'Me and my mum both like to read books, and then talk about what we're reading. ... We read completely difference genres, but still manage to understand what the other person is talking about' (Minh).

Figure 4: Australian Secondary School Students: Reading Types by Gender (% of Type)

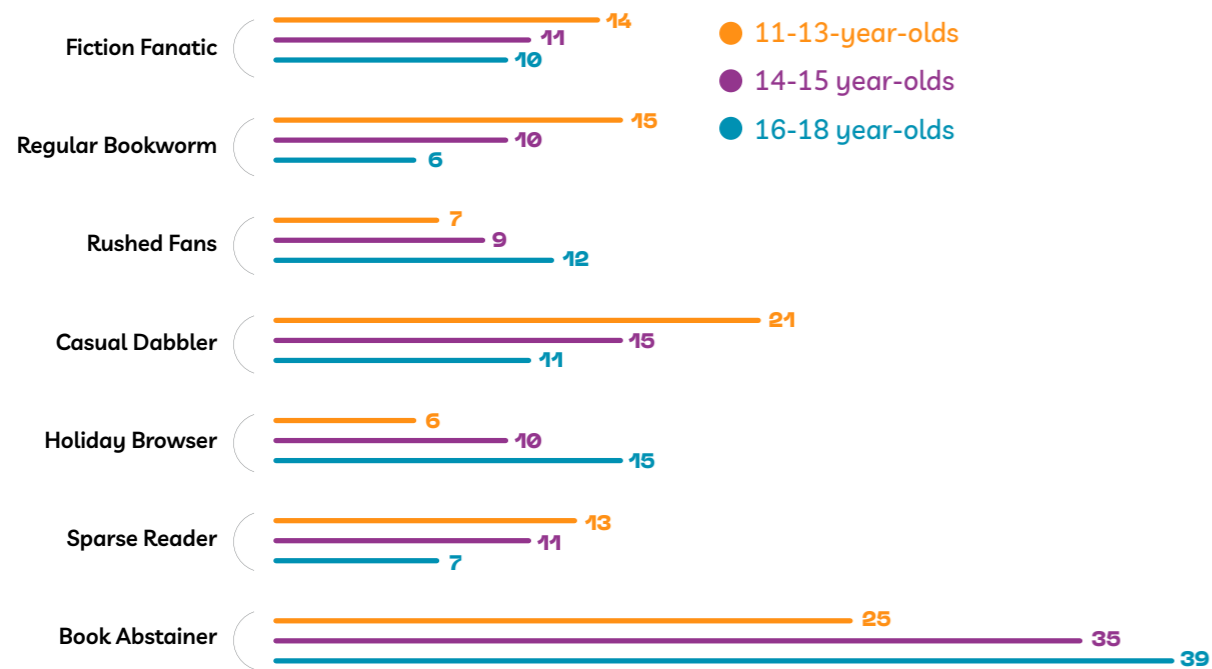


Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3



'I used to read a lot more. Like I would read like during meals and stuff. I would just sit there in Maccas with a book, and that sort of just stopped the older I got, because now I'm just always in a rush' (Melissa, Rushed Fan).

Figure 5: Australian Secondary School Students: Reading Types by Age Group (% of Type)



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

Age: Overall, the age effect indicates that younger teens (11-13) tend to be more consistent readers. Mid-teens begin to diverge, with fewer being consistent readers. Older teens (16-18) seem to have more polarised reading habits, with many either becoming intensive readers in short bursts (Rushed Fans and Holiday Browsers) or moving away from reading altogether. This is shown in Figure 5.

'I used to, through all my primary school, I'd read for hours on end. Then I kind of hit high school and then from Year 7 on, my reading kind of stopped. Because when you get homework and everything, you don't really have time to read' (Elliott).

Leisure Time Activities: As previously mentioned, reading is less popular as a passive activity compared to watching TV, YouTube, or movies, and this preference influences the teen reading types. Book Abstainers are the most active on social media, with a significant portion heavily engaged, while Fiction Fanatics and Regular Bookworms tend to spend less time on these platforms. Higher reading engagement correlates with reduced social media usage across the identified reading types.

'I have a few different social media platforms. So, I use Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube. YouTube is generally used to – more science videos, I generally use YouTube for that. TikTok and Facebook – Facebook I can use to contact some family that I don't get to chat to very much and generally, I do a little scroll on TikTok and Facebook probably after school every day, just to catch up on recent events and Snapchat I just use to chat with my friends.' (Jesse).

Peer Reading: The majority of Regular Bookworms, Rushed Fans, Casual Dabblers, and Holiday Browsers believe their friends' reading habits are like their own or somewhat less. Fiction Fanatics typically see their friends as reading considerably less, whereas Book Abstainers are most likely to report that their friends' reading habits closely match their own lack of engagement with books.

'I usually talk about books with my friends, and I usually get other ideas from them on what other books are good to read' (Ava)

Teens who Don't Read Books for Pleasure

The previous section showed how social factors influence young people's reading habits. Book Abstainers often use social media more, are usually male, older, and have friends with similar (non) reading habits. We also asked non-readers why they don't read and have listed their responses in Table 2.

The reasons Book Abstainers give for not reading, with the possibility of giving multiple responses, include a preference for other activities (78%), a general dislike of reading (67%), and the sentiment that reading isn't enjoyable (56%). Many find it difficult to locate appealing books (44%), while others have various unspecified reasons (22%). Some associate reading with schoolwork and avoid it at home (21%), feel they lack reading proficiency (21%), choose to read alternative materials (12%), or feel underrepresented in literature (5%).

Table 2: Non-reading Australian Secondary School Students: Reasons for not Reading Books for Pleasure (% of Book Abstainers)

I prefer doing other things in my free time	78%
I don't like reading	67%
Reading is not fun	56%
It is hard to find anything good to read	44%
Something else (Tell us!)	22%
I read at school so I don't want to read at home	21%
I am not very good at reading	21%
I read other kinds of stuff	12%
There are not many books about people like me	5%

Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3



How Teen Readers Find and Choose Books They Want to Read

In 2016, our pilot study of the ecology of teen reading in Australia found that the top barrier to teens reading more was the difficulty of choosing a good book. In the DAGR survey, we explored this further by asking teen readers to tell us how they typically find books to read, where they get books, and how easy or difficult it is for them to discover their next read.

HOW DO TEEN READERS DISCOVER BOOKS?

Reading other books by an author I like (61%) is the most popular method for finding a book to read, closely followed by recommendations from friends (57%) and reading the book of a movie, TV show or game I liked (55%). Figure 6 shows the popularity of common book discovery methods. Participants could select as many methods as applicable.

'So, my favourite place is to come to the school library, and the person that mostly gives me my books to read is [teacher librarian]. She's like, oh, have a go at this book because I think you might like it. So, I read it, and go like, yeah, this is great' (Stella).

WHERE DO TEEN READERS GET BOOKS?

Sixty-six per cent of teen readers receive books as presents either sometimes or often. Bookstores (new books) (63%), teens' own homes (including parents' and siblings' books) (63%), and school libraries (50%) are other important sources of books for teen readers. More than two-thirds of teen readers get books from public libraries, find books second hand, or borrow books from friends rarely or not at all. This is shown in Figure 7.

'I already have a pretty big collection of books and they generally keep me entertained, so I don't generally buy a lot of books' (Jesse).

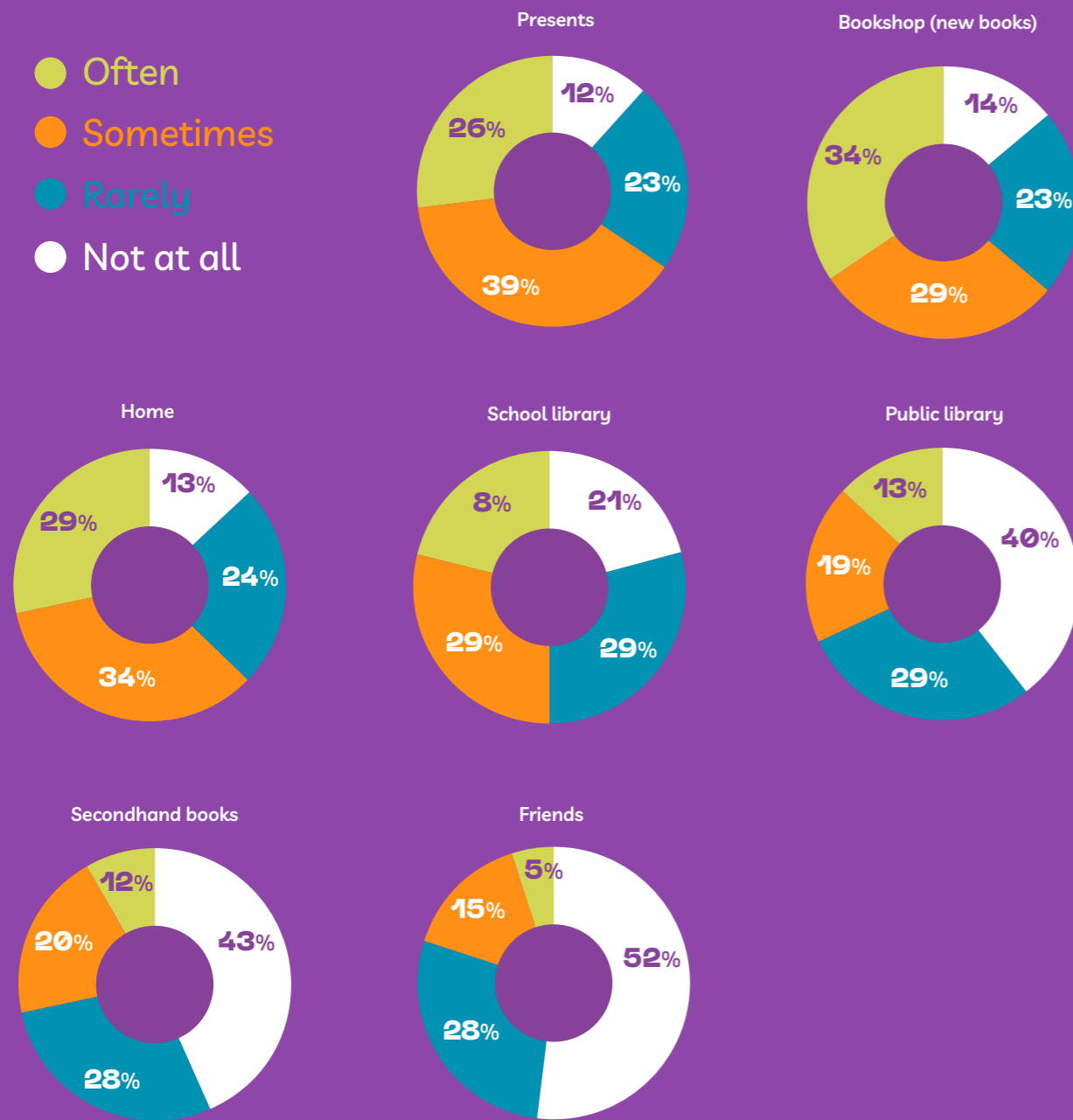


Figure 6: Teen Readers: How Teen Readers Discover Books (% Of Teen Readers)



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

Figure 7: Teen Readers: Where teen readers obtain books (% of teen readers)



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

'I usually go into book shops whenever I'm like anywhere near one, and I will go just to look. Usually I won't buy anything, and if a book looks good, I will find it in a library, but I generally don't go to libraries to look for books' (Melissa).

WHAT INFLUENCES HOW TEEN READERS DISCOVER AND OBTAIN BOOKS?

In general, teen readers' preferred book discovery strategies and the sources they use to obtain books are influenced by their Reading Type, age, and gender.

Discovery strategies not influenced by Reading Type, gender, or age

Use of two discovery strategies does not vary according to Reading Type, gender, or age:

- reading the book of a movie, TV show or game I liked
- visiting a street library

'Heartstopper ... was on Netflix ... so you got recommendations and lots of things. It's popular. I've been to watch that series four times, then I read the books' (Isaac).

READING TYPE

Readers who read more regularly, especially Fiction Fanatics, use a larger range of discovery strategies than readers who read less frequently. Fiction Fanatics also obtain books from all the sources identified in Figure 7 more frequently than other Reader Types. By contrast, Sparse Readers, Casual Dabblers, and Holiday Browsers use a narrower range of strategies to find books to read. Sparse Readers obtain books less often from all sources than other Reading Types.

Social reading practices

Rushed Fans frequently get book recommendations from their friends. They are also more likely to use social media to discover books than other Reading Types.

'If I want to read something but I don't really know what to read, I'll just scroll through TikTok and have a look or I'll go on like Goodreads and see what other authors are on, like what other books they've written and see if anything catches my eye' (Chloe).



AGE

Older teen readers aged 16-18 have different book discovery and book sourcing preferences to younger teen readers aged 11-13. The preferences of teen readers aged 14-15 broadly correspond to the patterns in Figures 6 and 7.

Older teen readers

Teen readers aged 16-18 are more likely to discover books via:

- recommendations from friends
- visiting bookstores (physical or online)
- social media (recommendations from influencers and browsing book social media)

They are more likely to purchase new and used books than younger readers. They are less likely to use library resources to discover or borrow books.

Younger teen readers

Teen readers aged 11-13 are more likely to use library resources to discover and borrow books. They are less likely to use social media to discover books.

GENDER

Gender also has an impact on how teen readers find and obtain books.

Female and gender diverse teen readers are more likely to:

- borrow books from and get book recommendations from their friends
- discover books by reading an author they like
- visit physical bookstores and purchase new and used books
- use social media to discover books

Male teen readers

Are more likely to discover books from recommendations from their family.

'[When I was younger] I would sometimes just sit in [the library] and just go through book by book by book and just read because I felt like reading but I don't think I was really worried about what I was reading at the time. Like now I'm very picky' (Mary)

How Difficult Is It For Teen Readers To Find Their Next Read?

Overall, fiction readers find it easier to discover books than non-fiction readers. Sixty-three per cent of teen readers who read fiction find it 'extremely easy' or 'somewhat easy' to discover fiction books to read compared to 53% of teens who read non-fiction.

Gender

Female and gender diverse teen readers find it easier to discover fiction books than male teen readers. This trend is reversed for non-fiction readers, with male non-fiction teen readers finding it easier to discover non-fiction books than female and gender diverse non-fiction readers.

Reading Type

Fiction Fanatics, Regular Bookworms and Rushed Fans find it easier to discover fiction books to read than Casual Dabblers, Holiday Browsers and Sparse Readers. Regular Bookworms, Casual Dabblers and Sparse Readers find it easier to discover non-fiction books.

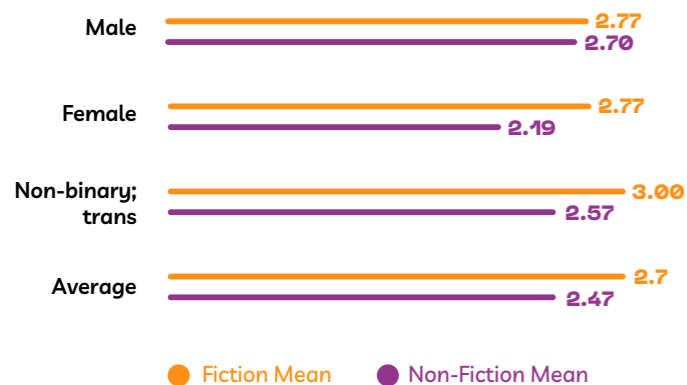
Age does not have a significant impact on whether teen readers find it easy or difficult to find their next fiction or non-fiction read.



Genres and Titles Popular with Teen Readers

While the reading tastes of individual teen readers vary, there are broad trends in terms of the genres and titles most popular with teen readers. Teen readers who read fiction were asked to rank fiction genres, and those who read non-fiction did the same for non-fiction genres, using a five-star rating system. Overall, fiction genres were ranked higher than non-fiction genres. While variations in rankings emerge across ages and types of readers, the most notable differences appear to be between genders. This is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Teen Readers: Preference for Fiction or Non-fiction by Gender (mean score for each gender)



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

Male and female readers showed similar levels of interest in fiction, but females rated non-fiction considerably lower. Non-binary or gender diverse readers expressed a higher preference for both fiction and non-fiction compared to the average. Overall, these differences highlight gender as a significant factor in genre preferences.

FICTION GENRES

The top three most popular fiction genres are fantasy, mystery and crime, and dystopian. Table 3 lists each fiction genre ranked along with the average rating out of five stars.

Table 3: Fiction genre rankings (mean of fiction reader rankings)

Genre	Average ranking (1-5 stars)
Fantasy	3.57 ★★★★★
Mystery and crime	3.49 ★★★★★
Dystopian	3.41 ★★★★★
Humour	3.06 ★★★★★
Romance	2.87 ★★★★★
Graphic novels	2.73 ★★★★★
Science Fiction	2.68 ★★★★★
Contemporary Fiction	2.63 ★★★★★
Classics	2.62 ★★★★★
Horror	2.35 ★★★★★
Paranormal	2.24 ★★★★★

Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

'When I read a book, I read it to connect with the characters and to go in a whole different world, so you kind of leave your reality for a little bit and you jump into someone else's, and you feel everything that they do, and you just get lost in it' (Aisha).

NON-FICTION GENRES

The top three most popular non-fiction genres are history, biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs, and technology and science. Table 4 lists each non-fiction genre ranked along with the average rating out of five stars.

Table 4: Non-fiction genre rankings (mean of non-fiction reader rankings)

Genre	Average ranking (1-5 stars)
History	3 ★★★★★
Biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs	2.8 ★★★★★
Technology and science	2.62 ★★★★★
Video games, information and lore	2.47 ★★★★★
Self-help and life-hacks	2.39 ★★★★★
Philosophy	2.29 ★★★★★
Guides and how-to manuals	2.26 ★★★★★
Politics and current affairs	2.07 ★★★★★

Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

'I read what I'm interested in, so I'm interested in [Auschwitz] I read about crime, I read about history and then there's some random things that pop in' (Elliott).

BOOKS POPULAR WITH TEEN READERS

All teen readers were asked to tell us which book they enjoyed reading most in the past year. Series feature prominently in the responses to this question and we have included all responses nominating a book from a series under the series title rather than listing multiple titles from the same series. A range of fiction genres are represented including fantasy, mystery and crime, dystopian, romance, humour, science fiction, and graphic novels including manga. Titles popular on BookTok as well as well young adult and middle grade fiction are nominated as favourites by many teen readers, with literary classics and books written by Australian authors selected less frequently. A small number of non-fiction titles are nominated, notably biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs of well-known figures including sports stars and political actors, and self-help titles.

Table 5: Top 10 most popular books

- 1 Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling
- 2 The Hunger Games series by Suzanne Collins
- 3 One of us is Lying series by Karen M. McManus
- 4 It Ends With Us by Colleen Hoover
- 5 Diary of a Wimpy Kid series by Jeff Kinney
- 6 Percy Jackson & the Olympians series by Rick Riordan
- 7 The Maze Runner series by James Dashner
- 8 Heartstopper series by Alice Oseman
- 9 A Good Girl's Guide to Murder series by Holly Jackson
- 10 Wings of Fire series by Tui T. Sutherland

Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

Public Library Use

Public libraries provide important access to books and other important educational resources and may significantly influence teen reading habits. Nearly **half the students surveyed (47%)** used resources from public libraries in the past year. Table 6 shows the main uses of public libraries for these students.

Table 6: Teen Public Library Users: Reasons for Using Public Library (% who visit for that reason)

Purpose for use	% using library for this purpose
To study for school	58%
To borrow books to read for recreation (this can include eBooks and audiobooks)	48%
To borrow books or other material for my school assignments	38%
To hang out with friends	35%
To use the internet	20%
To read magazines, comics, newspapers or listen to music	16%
To do a class, like art and craft	11%
To participate in a library activity, like a reading group	10%

The table indicates that **among Australian secondary students who use public libraries**, 58% do so for study, 48% to borrow books for recreational reading, 38% for school assignments, 35% to hang out with friends, 20% for internet access, and smaller percentages for reading other kinds of reading material, attending classes or participating in library groups.

How often do teens borrow books for leisure reading from public libraries? In the past 12 months: 40% all teen readers never used public libraries to get books to read for pleasure, 29% did so rarely, 19% sometimes and 13% often.



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

School Library Use

Almost all the students we surveyed told us their school had a school library. School libraries are used for various purposes. We found that 15% of Australian secondary students visit their school library **for study** every week, 12% do so most weeks, 40% a few times per term, and 34% never visit to study.

We found that about a third of students have a **reading session** in their school library fortnightly or more often, 28% a few times per term, while 44% never have them. Age makes a big difference here.

Schools tend to arrange library sessions primarily for younger students, with our qualitative data showing years 7 and 8 most commonly receiving regular library sessions. Some schools extend this to year 9 students as well. Participation drops significantly among senior students, likely because they are doing a broader range of subjects without requirements for compulsory library sessions.

School librarians can help with book discovery. We asked teen readers how often they'd sought recommendations from their librarian in the past year. This is shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Teen Readers: Requesting Book Recommendations from School Librarians in the past year (% of teen readers)



Source: Discovering a Good Read Survey (DAGR) 2022/3

Figure 9 shows that in the past 12 months, 60% of teen readers have not asked their school librarian for a book recommendation for leisure reading. A smaller proportion, 23%, have asked 1-2 times, 9% have asked 3-6 times and only 4% have asked 7 or more times.

'I'm currently reading If This Gets Out, and [my teacher librarian] recommended it to me because its loosely linked to some of my favourite singers' (Amelia).

'I read like 20 books this year. My favourite books would probably be one in the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series such as Big Shot because it was just released. I have read the whole ... series 10 times each book and it is getting kind of boring, so I decided to try something new by going to the school library where I found this book related to what we were doing in history ... The book showed me lots of stuff that I had already learned in history as well as much more information ... Due to this I realised the true power of books and how they can help me with my grades' (Zayd).

We asked students who had sought book suggestions from their librarians to rate the helpfulness of these recommendations for leisure reading. After standardising their responses to a 1-10 scale, librarians earned a high average score of 7.74.

The top three reasons students don't ask their school librarians for book recommendations are:

- They can't be bothered.
- They already have enough books to read.
- They don't borrow books from the school library.

Fiction Fanatics and Regular Bookworms are more likely to seek recommendations than the other reading categories. Additionally, our data show that younger students (11-13-year-olds) are more likely than older students to ask their school librarian for book suggestions. This pattern is likely due in part to older teens having less presence in the school library, and the fact they are less avid readers generally. There are no major gender differences when it comes to asking for a recommendation.

Conclusions

Acknowledging the diverse reading habits and preferences among Australian teens, our report highlights a landscape where digital activities often overshadow traditional reading.

A key challenge is helping teens find books that captivate their interests and motivate them to read. Enhancements in library services and further use of digital recommendation tools are potential solutions. Importantly, the study's focus was not on reading ability but on understanding reading habits and preferences, which are essential for designing effective reading promotion strategies.

To foster a strong reading culture among teens, it's essential to align initiatives with their digital habits and busy schedules, finding new ways to make reading an accessible and appealing part of their daily lives.

