
Title	Reading habits of Singapore teenagers 2021
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Reading Habits of Singapore Teenagers 2021

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An Institute of



DEV02/20 LCE Designing School Libraries of the Future Study

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FRONT MATTER

Reading Habits of Singapore Teenagers 2021

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We are not able to name the schools for research confidentiality purposes but would like to thank the schools, and their teachers and students, for their participation in the study.

PROJECT WEBSITE

<https://www.readingbydesignsg.org>

OTHER REPORTS

1. [Report on the Reading Habits of Teenagers 2017](#)
2. [School Library Perspectives Report 2018](#)
3. [Envisioning the School Library of the Future: A 21st Century Framework](#)
4. [Design Patterns for School Libraries: A Preliminary Report of the Building a Reading Culture Study 2019](#)
5. [Report on the Reading Habits of Singapore Bilingual Children 2021](#)

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, a baseline study of the reading habits of adolescent students from six Singapore secondary schools was conducted. We found that 70.5% of our students still enjoyed reading though the numbers decreased as the students grew older. Students still preferred to read in print then, although more students read online as they got older. The 2017 study showed unequal access to home resources for students from different income groups and we argued that the school library could be a more central place to ensure equitable access to books and reading resources.

Since then, there have been significant changes in the world and education.

The most obvious is the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in Full-Home Based Learning (HBL) during Circuit Breaker between May to June 2020. Schools scrambled to move to full online learning during Circuit Breaker and many school libraries restricted access for students due to safe management measures after Circuit Breaker. Subsequently, regular HBL was implemented as part and parcel of schooling, and it was announced that a personal learning device would be issued to all secondary school students in 2021.

There have also been developments in reading technologies, including access for all Singaporeans to free e-books via the National Library Board (NLB) app. Although many students increasingly turned to devices for learning and leisure, it was not certain how many of these students used their devices for reading rather than other purposes such as for social media, communication, and gaming. Little was and still is known about how teenagers utilised devices for reading, if at all, and which devices, software and subscriptions would support student reading.

Finally, unlike the 2017 survey cohort, this batch of students had increased exposure to technology use as a result of HBL. While individual smartphone ownership is high, there was little information about how teenagers were utilising their smartphones for reading. Do smartphones increase access to reading resources via e-books and online materials or do they distract from reading with the many other pleasures offered in the handheld device? Under what circumstances would students use their smartphones or other devices for reading?

This study re-examines the reading habits and practices of teenagers in 2021, considering these changes. While some questions remain the same as those in the 2017 survey, we have added new questions about the teens' use of technology for reading and changes in reading habits during Full HBL.

DEFINITION OF READING

Reading is defined in this study as the meaningful decoding and comprehension of text in both print and digital formats. Reading in print refers to paper-based material while reading in digital formats refers to online material accessed on electronic devices. We focus on student's independent reading, or their out-of-school self-chosen reading of continuous linear fiction or nonfiction texts in this study.

METHODS

The survey on students reading habits and practices was administered to 6690 secondary school students from six government schools between February to April 2021. 5,732 or 85.7% of the participants completed the survey. This was followed by focus group discussions with 67 students from two schools' Express, Normal Academic and Normal Technical streams to further refine our understanding of adolescents' reading habits and practices.

This publication reports on the survey findings. Student voices are drawn from the focus group discussions as illustrations, and all names used are pseudonyms. In this publication, teenagers, teens, adolescents and students are used interchangeably.

OUR CONVICTION

It is our conviction that all students should have access to reading resources, both in print and digitally. An equitable system would ensure that teens from different walks of life would not be disqualified by their home backgrounds from discovering a love of books and knowledge. We hope that the research findings will provide policymakers and educators with the evidence to make informed decisions to support adolescent reading and learning.

KEY FINDINGS

1 THE STATE OF TEENAGE READING HABITS

Singapore students generally find reading in English relatively easy. 64.1% reported that they enjoyed reading, though their enjoyment declines as they get older. Enjoyment is a key motivation for teens to read and they are more likely to read when they can find books and topics they are interested in.

2 THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON READING

Teen smartphone ownership is high and their two most preferred reading devices are smartphones and print. Those who enjoy reading are more likely to read more in print and digitally, compared to teens who do not enjoy reading. Teens who enjoy reading are likely to use their smartphones and other devices for more longform reading.

3 TEEN ACCESS TO READING RESOURCES

Teens who are on the financial assistance scheme (FAS) are likely to have fewer books at home, receive less home reading support and enjoy reading less. During Full Home-Based Learning in 2020, teens mostly relied on their home resources for their reading materials. Teens with fewer books at home had less opportunities to sustain and enjoy reading.

4 PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARY SUPPORT FOR READING

Public and school libraries serve different functions to support student reading. Public libraries provide access to a wide variety of books across different subject areas and through varied print and digital platforms. School libraries are closer to students and their collections and programmes can be curated to be more targeted for their school profile.

SECTION 1

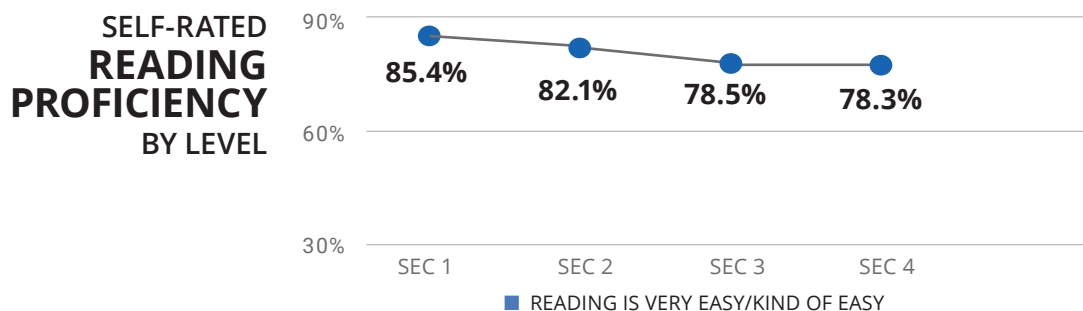
THE STATE OF TEENAGE READING HABITS

Singapore teens generally find reading in English relatively easy. 64.1% reported that they enjoyed reading, though their enjoyment declines as they get older. Enjoyment is a key motivation for teens to read and they are more likely to read when they can find books and topics they are interested in.



TEEN SELF-RATED ENGLISH READING PROFICIENCY

Singapore teens generally feel that reading in English is relatively manageable with 81.2% stating that reading in English is “very easy” or “kind of easy” for them. This parallels the PISA findings where Singapore 15-year-olds score highly relative to other OECD countries. As students get older, they find themselves adjusting to the higher standards of the secondary curriculum and encountering more difficult reading materials, which is why they may find reading more difficult than before.

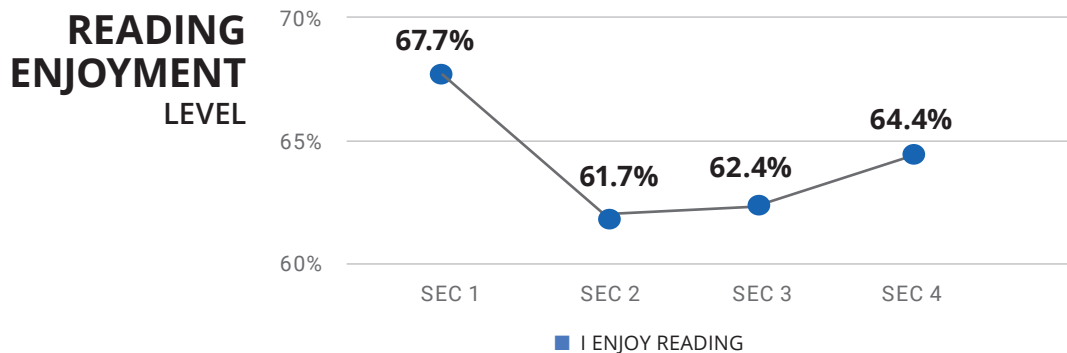


PISA FINDINGS 2018ⁱ

Findings from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is a triennial survey of 15-year-old students around the world, found that at least 89% of Singapore students acquired at least a Level 2 proficiency in reading, significantly more than the OECD average of 77%. By this test, students are able to identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit, though sometimes complex criteria, and can reflect on the purpose and form of texts when explicitly directed to do so. 26% of Singapore students attained Level 5 or 6 (OECD average 9%). Of the top performers in Singapore, 43% were socio-economically advantaged students and 10% were disadvantaged students. These students can comprehend lengthy texts, deal with concepts that are abstract or counterintuitive, and establish distinctions between fact and opinion, based on implicit cues pertaining to the content or source of the information.

TEEN READING ENJOYMENT

64.1% of the teenagers surveyed reported that they enjoyed reading, with a large dip from Secondary 1 to Secondary 2. Reasons for the overall dip are multiple: it may be related to lack of access to books during COVID-19 Circuit Breaker, distractions from devices or increased workload and activities in secondary school.



WHAT TEENS SAY

I remember I used to love reading books when I was younger. I have loads of storybooks. As I got older, I have a lot of schoolwork and I just stopped reading.

CHERYL, SEC 3

Honestly, I think last time in Primary School, I didn't have a phone, so I read because I want to kill time and stuff. Now, I mostly use my phone to do that.

KHAIRUL, SEC 3

I think primary school was the time where I like read the most. Cause I return back home much earlier, so I have more free time. And there's lesser school subjects and homework too.

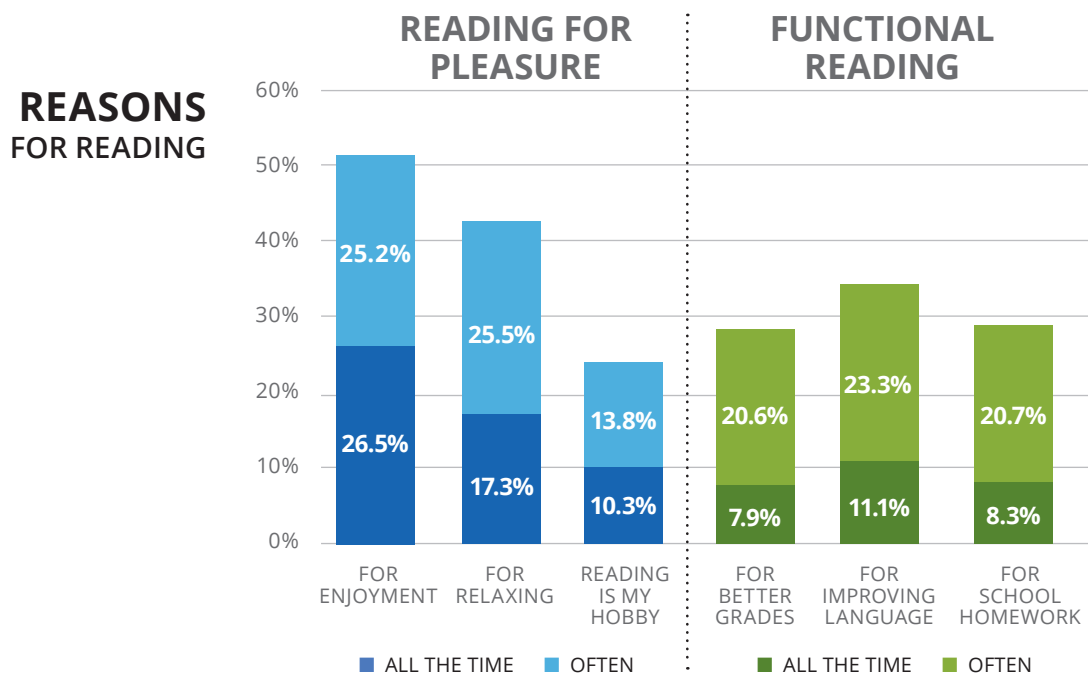
EMILY, SEC 3

During FHBL, as I progress reading, I found out that my eyes got more strained, more dry, and every time I blink there was like a burning sensation in my eyes. So I would usually take a break from reading or doing my homework on HBL.

ZHI XIN, SEC 2

TEEN REASONS FOR READING

Overall, teenagers are more likely to be motivated to read for enjoyment, with students across all levels ranking enjoyment as their top reason for reading. This is followed by reading for relaxation and to improve their language. Teens also read to learn new things, to find information about their interests and when they have nothing else to do.

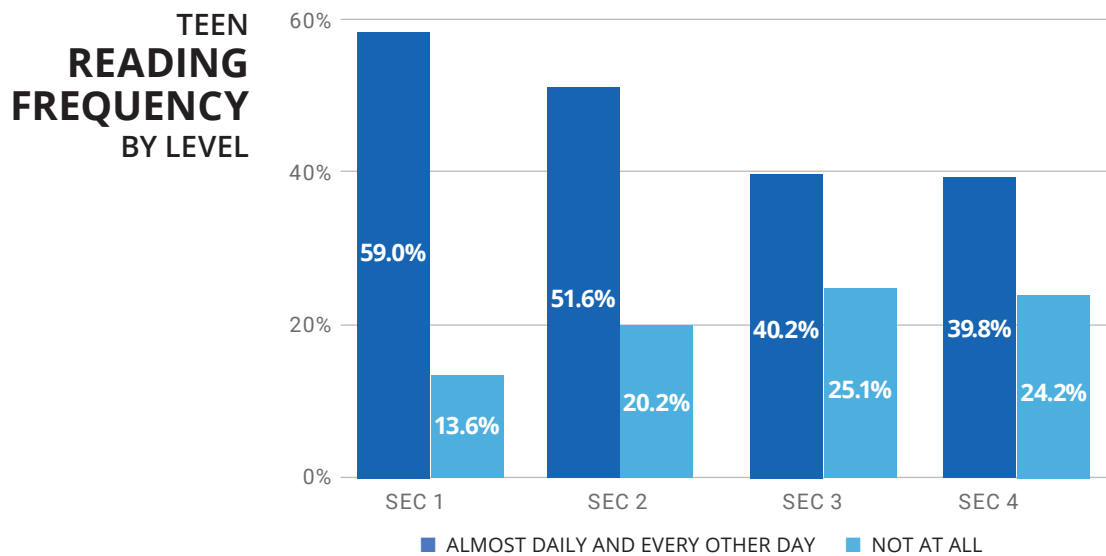


DIFFERENT WAYS OF READINGⁱⁱ

Teens have different motivations for reading different kinds of texts, though the motivations are often mixed. Teens read for leisure or recreationally, as a way to relax but they also read to learn or for information. In school, they learn to read complex texts critically or what may be termed deepⁱⁱⁱ or literary reading. All these ways of reading, whether in print or digitally, are different ways of reading that are required to navigate the media in the world around. Students need to learn a flexible literacy^{iv} where they are able to utilise their reading skills for different purposes and on different mediums, whether for leisure, learning or civic participation.

TEEN READING FREQUENCY

The reading habits of teenagers evolve as they get older. Teenagers read less on a daily basis and more students report not reading at all as they get older. 59.0% of Secondary 1 students report reading daily or every other day. By contrast, only 39.8% of Secondary 4 students report reading daily or almost every day.



WHAT TEENS SAY

In primary school, it was very fun where they got some mums or some students to come and help teach us to read. They get a book and then they will tell you to read. If you cannot read, then they will tell you the word and explain everything.

SHUPING, SEC 2

I prefer shorter books because now we don't really have time with our timetable, our CCA, everything. So I don't read books that are too long to read, I might consider reading shorter books and very interesting ones because it's not very time-consuming.

MAX, SEC 3

I don't read a lot of books cause like not much time in school. I usually read books in the morning during school hours and sometimes when I have free time during the holiday.

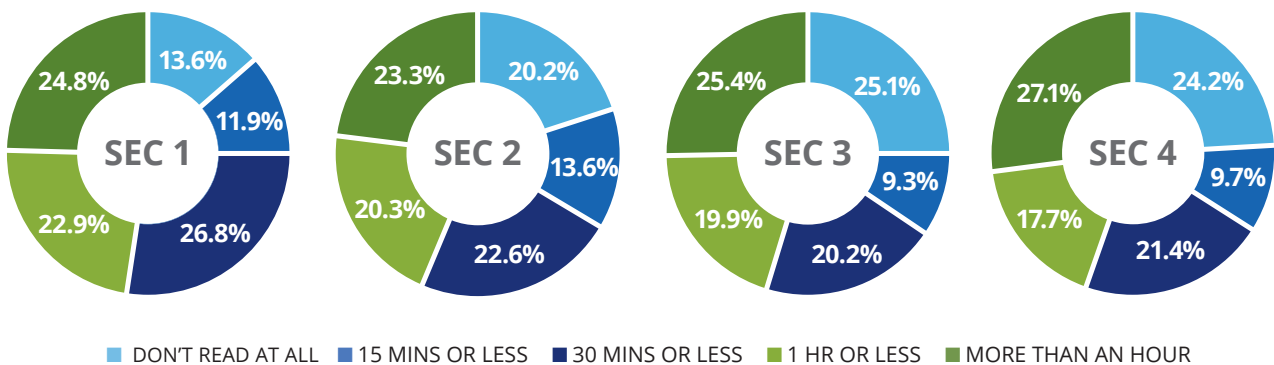
ZAC, SEC 3

TEEN READING DURATION

35.7% of the Secondary 4 students can sustain reading for an hour or longer, up from 28.7% in Secondary 1, suggesting increased reading stamina for a group of students.

On the other hand, 24.2% of Secondary 4 students do not read at all, compared to 13.6% of Secondary 1 students, suggesting there is one group that disengages from reading as they get older.

READING DURATION ACROSS GRADE LEVELS (%)



WHAT TEENS SAY

Compared to primary school, my speed of reading is slightly faster. I can finish about 5 to 7 pages in an hour.

MAJID, SEC 3

Once I start reading a book and I really like it, I sit for hours reading it. But then, I don't really commit to it.

JARED, SEC 3

When I was in primary school, I used to read this particular series a lot - 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid'. I used to love it and I used to read it everyday. But since secondary school, teachers have different expectations on what you read. And that just pushed me towards reading different kinds of books... I read more books that take maturity to understand.

SWATHI, SEC 2



THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL READING TIME

In primary school, I really actually hated reading. I never really do it. But I think as I grow up, I actually explore different and more varieties of genres and books. So I get more interested.

TIM, SEC 2

In Sec 1 and Sec 2, I've been reading quite a lot, but then as I came into Sec 3, the only time I've been able to read is in the morning before the school starts lessons. So, we have a special reading time for that.

KEITH, SEC 3

There is nothing much to improve about the school reading programme. Because the school sometimes they tell students to borrow from the library. They remind students, and sometimes they hold events in libraries. They always have new recommendations for students, and they make it very easy for you to just go over and get your own books that you're interested in.

CINDY, SEC 2

I read a book from my literature lessons last year. It's *Shooting Kabul*. So I put myself to read it for, maybe an hour and I found it interesting so I just kept going.

ALICE, SEC 2

As the quotes from the students show, the school plays an important role in motivating student reading. A “reading school” integrates regular independent reading, creates spaces for teachers and students to have conversations about books and has a lively school library with relevant and attractive books. In such schools, the principal and teachers set the example for reading by sharing about their own reading with their students^v.

TEEN READING PREFERENCES

Except for romances, which are preferred by girls, there are no significant differences in reading preferences between the genders. While non-fiction is less preferred than fiction, most students preferred non-fiction related to sports, science, history, travel, and hobbies.

	TOP 5 FICTION GENRES	TOP 5 NON-FICTION GENRES
1	MYSTERY, CRIME & DETECTIVE	HISTORY
2	ADVENTURE	SCIENCE
3	SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY	HOBBIES
4	HUMOUR	SPORTS
5	ROMANCE & RELATIONSHIPS	TRAVEL



WHAT TEENS SAY

The Merchant of Venice is quite special to me, because I wouldn't really read plays or Shakespeare or poetry out of my own will. It's a good genre after I've read it. Shooting Kabul was a good book too. It was about Afghanistan, which was war-torn and I found it very educational, because if not, I wouldn't have known so much about what's happening in Afghanistan.

ZHANG WEI, SEC 2

I do enjoy reading. There's a lot of school work, a lot of exam papers so there's not much time to read but whenever I do read, I like reading Marvel comics. I also read a lot of biographies. Because it's pretty cool to learn about other people's lives and some biographies are actually pretty adventurous, which motivates me.

AATISH, SEC 3

Actually, I don't really like to read books to be honest. I find that reading is not my type of tea. But does manga count as reading? I like to read manga recently because I'm more of an anime type of person. I like to read a lot of manga basically.

MARCUS, SEC 2

As I got older, I switched from Narnia, fantasy books to more romance or more realistic books and also fanfiction.

CASSIE, SEC 2

One series I have finished, almost completed, is the Harry Potter series. It is one of my first fiction books and I really like the series. So, I just keep re-reading some parts. Even though I've read it before, I really enjoy reading it.

KAVIN, SEC 3

TOP TITLES READ

The survey asked the students to list down books they had read in the last six months at the time of the survey.

Teens love series books and often re-read familiar books for leisure. They also enjoy comics and books with teen protagonists. A large percentage of the students report reading their school literature text, suggesting that school can provide some direction for reading materials.

Although students do read around their favourite series books or authors, they are also game to try different books that interest them. Examining the books read across schools shows students' varied reading tastes. Stocking the library with a wide variety of diverse literature gives students choice and diversity, encouraging them to read often and stretch their reading diet.

STUDENTS' READING VARIETY

From the survey and focus group data, we found that students get their books in a variety of ways – through book recommendations, online sites, watching popular movies or shows, or browsing in libraries or bookstores. The concept of “environmental press” suggests that having books close at hand in a physical setting encourages students to engage with these materials and read more^{vi}. Ensuring that students have access to a wide variety of books that are of interest to them and can inspire them can encourage increased teen reading engagement^{vi}.

TOP 20 TITLES READ

TITLE	AUTHOR	GENRE	FORMAT	COUNTRY
1. Harry Potter*	J K Rowling	Fantasy	Fiction	UK
2. Wonder#	R J Palacio	Realistic	Fiction	US
3. Percy Jackson and the Heroes of Olympus*	Rick Riordan	Adventure	Fiction	US
4. Run Hide Seek*	Gabby Tye	Adventure	Fiction	SG
5. Diary of a Wimpy Kid*	Jeff Kinney	Humour	Junior Fiction	US
6. Keeper of the Lost Cities*	Shannon Messenger	Fantasy	Junior Fiction	US
7. The Hunger Games*	Suzanne Collins	Dystopian	YA Fiction	US
8. The Maze Runner*	James Dashner	Dystopian	YA Fiction	US
9. One of Us is Lying*	Karen M McManus	Mystery	YA Fiction	US
10. The Land of Stories*	Chris Colfer	Adventure	Junior Fiction	US
11. The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas#	John Boyne	Historical	Fiction	UK
12. The Trials of Apollo*	Rick Riordan	Adventure	Fiction	US
13. Geronimo Stilton*	Elisabetta Dami	Adventure	Junior Fiction	Italy
14. Demon Slayer*	Koyoharu Gotouge	Fantasy	Manga	Japan
15. Charlotte's Web	E B White	Fantasy	Junior Fiction	US
16. Divergent*	Veronica Roth	Dystopian	YA Fiction	US
17. Attack on Titan*	Hajime Isayama	Fantasy	Manga	Japan
18. Haroun and the Sea of Stories#	Salman Rushdie	Magic Realism	Fiction	UK
19. Shooting Kabul#	N H Senzai	Realistic	Junior Fiction	US/ Afghanistan
20. True Singapore Ghost Stories*	Russell Lee	Horror	Fiction	SG

*SERIES FORMAT

LITERATURE TEXT AT ONE OR SOME SCHOOLS

SECTION 2

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON READING

—

Teen smartphone ownership is high and their two most preferred reading devices are smartphones and print*. Those who enjoy reading are more likely to read more in print and digitally, compared to students who do not enjoy reading. Teens who enjoy reading are likely to use their smartphones and other devices for more longform reading.



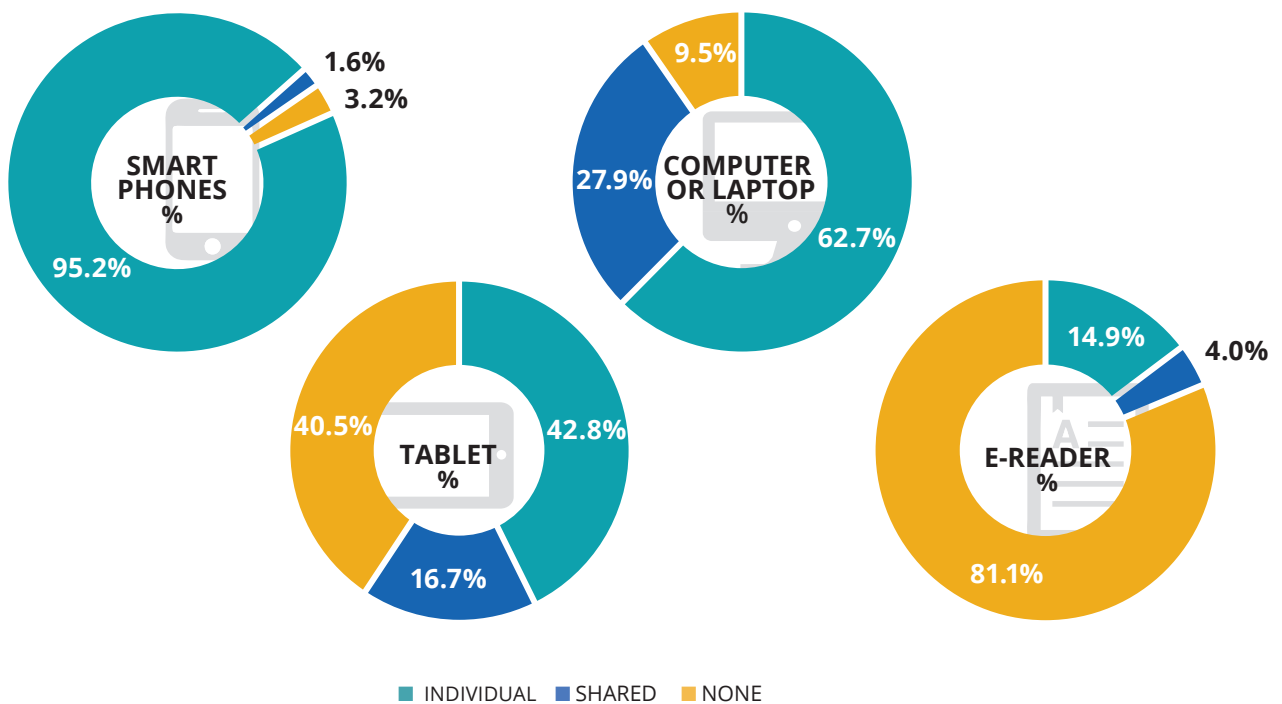
*For the purposes of this study, we consider print as a “device” to compare with other devices such as smartphones and e-readers.

TEEN DEVICE OWNERSHIP

Singapore teens report that they are well connected with almost 100% having internet connection and 95% having a phone plan with internet access, prior to the issuance of the Personal Learning Device to all secondary school students.

95% of the students reported individual smartphone ownership. However, it's important to note that teens may have different kinds of plans and bandwidth and that there is a small percentage without smartphones.

Nine in 10 students reported having shared computer or laptop ownership and five in 10 students reported having individual or shared tablet ownership. Fewer students have e-readers.



THE ECOLOGY OF READING

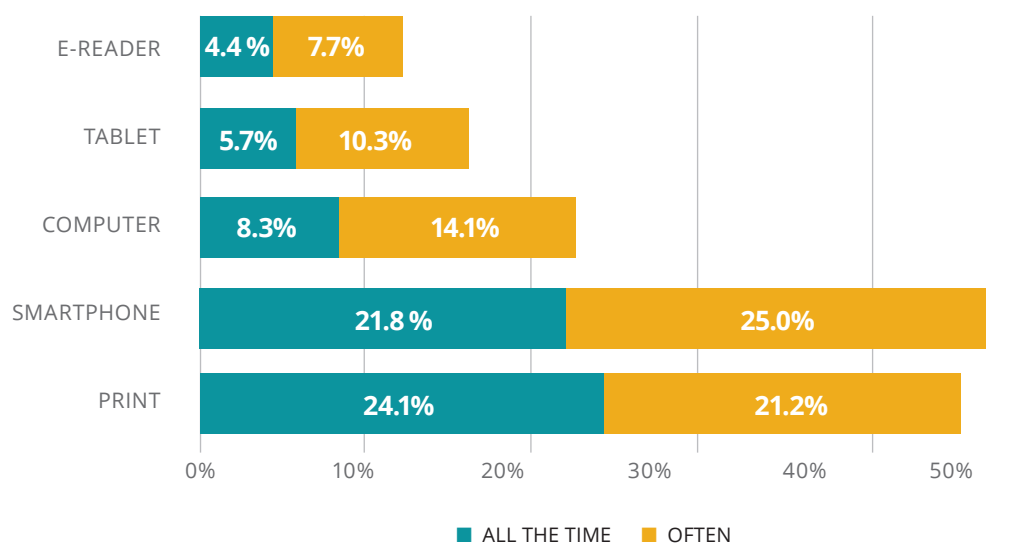
Although e-readers are useful single devices for reading, students may not be able to purchase e-readers or the accompanying subscriptions. Smartphones are useful for quick searches, news reading and reading on the go, but tablets such as iPads provide a reading experience that more resembles the actual experience of reading with a hardcopy book since they can be easily held^{viii}.

When considering how to support teen reading, it is important to evaluate how easy it is for them to get the content they are interested in reading as well as the comfort of the reading experience. When the factors of having a good book and a convenient platform align, teens will be more motivated to read. Thus, supporting teen print and digital reading includes (1) helping them to find the right books and (2) teaching them to use the technology or how to find the books, whether in the library or online platform.

TEEN DEVICE OWNERSHIP

Teenagers prefer to read using smartphones and printed texts. The preferences differ by school and student profile.

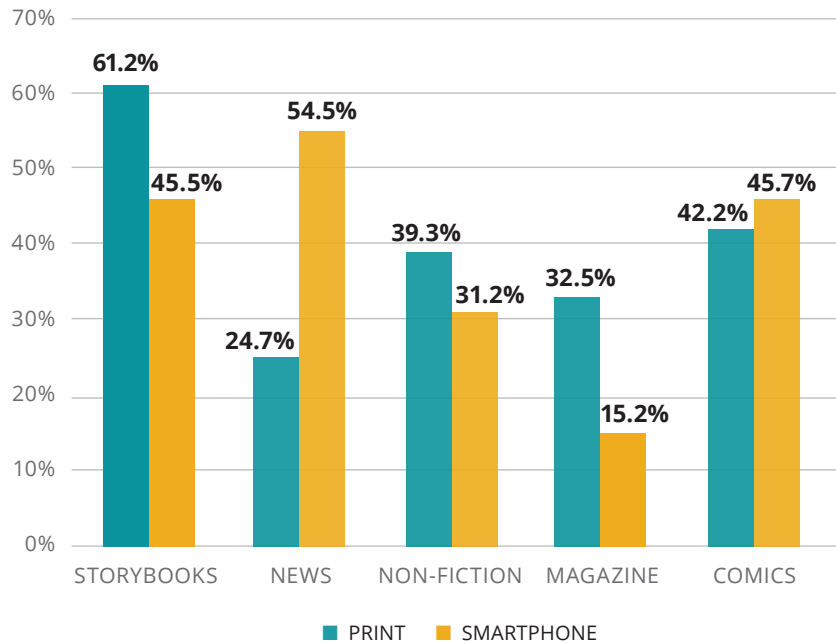
PREFERRED READING DEVICE



TEEN CHOICE OF DEVICES FOR DIFFERENT READING MATERIALS

Print was most used for reading storybooks, non-fiction, and magazines whereas smartphones was most used for reading news and comics. Adolescents thus use smartphones and print for different kinds of reading. Understanding the different reasons for their choice of device(s) for different formats and reading materials may help educators to discover ways to support adolescents' leisure reading using various devices, including print.

DEVICES USED FOR READING DIFFERENT MATERIALS





**WHAT
TEENS SAY
ABOUT
READING IN
PRINT AND
DIGITALLY**

I prefer to read on my phone because I have my phone with me all the time.

JAN, SEC 3

I don't like reading digitally. I tried. I wanted to read this specific book very badly but I couldn't find it anywhere, so I tried reading online. It was very confusing.

SAB, SEC 2

I actually do prefer reading the physical copy but sometimes I don't want to buy books. I just feel it is easy to go to the library app so it's quite convenient now to be on a phone.

BHAVIN, SEC 3

I don't really like reading full books online. I prefer print. But for anime, manga, I would use online apps to read instead. I use my phone to read on the bus on the way to school.

ZAC, SEC 3

I usually just Google the ebook, and I download the PDF. I feel that e-books are more convenient because you can read them anywhere.

NICK, SEC 2

I use my phone to read manga and I use my iPad to read novels because usually the text is too small for me to see from my phone.

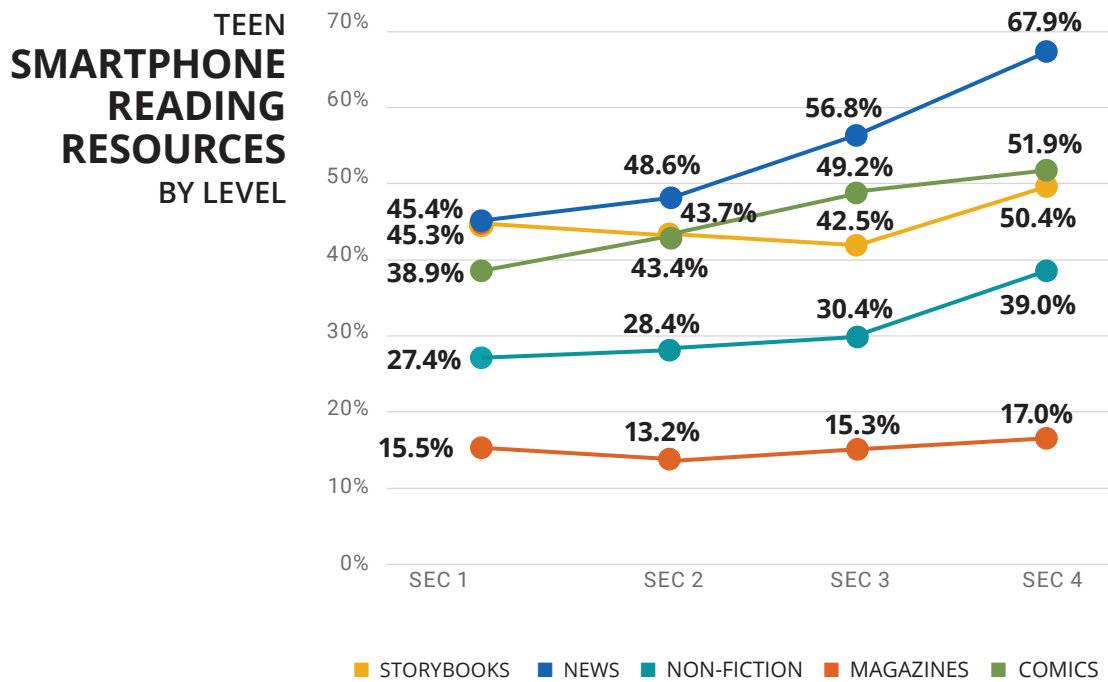
AVA, SEC 2

Generally I'll read in like printed form, but for news I usually go online to read. Because it's more convenient. I don't like the feel of newspaper.

KAREN, SEC 3

WHAT TEENS READ ON THEIR SMARTPHONES BY LEVEL

Teens utilise their smartphone more as they get older, likely because they become more familiar with using technology to support their reading needs. Adolescents generally prefer to get their news from online sources rather than print copies^{ix} and news reading increases the most across the years. However, more than 30% of the students report that they do not read the news.





WHAT TEENS SAY ABOUT NEWS READING

Normally I see the news also. Like current things that happen in Singapore. Just browse through.

MARK, SEC 2

I find my news from online platforms, like Mothership or Straits Times Online; which is easier to me because the newspapers are quite large.

XIANG, SEC 3

I read on the Channel News Asia app. Mostly when I read the news, I am just reading the headline, not really reading the whole article. So I know what's happening but if there's something interesting or serious or that maybe we'd like to know a bit more about what it was, I'll read it.

KAI, SEC 3

Sometimes I use my phone to read the news. Google News compiles the different articles and I have the app on my phone. So usually I use it to read.

YEN YEN, SEC 2

I read the news in two kinds of ways. My family subscribes to the news, and it comes every morning. Sometimes, on my phone, I'll read some political, military news that is common or catching my interest.

ISAAC, SEC 2

I have C.N.A, Channel News Asia but I don't usually use that one. I use Google news. Google news is actually very convenient, it picks up like the best news for me... There's one more - South China Morning Post. Their news is actually very good. They will make it very interesting and they will make it into a very simplified version so easy for us to read as students and is also gives us a lot of information.

CHAKRESH, SEC 2

**TEENS' DIGITAL
LITERACY:
"I DON'T CHECK.
I JUST BELIEVE
EVERYTHING I SEE."**

Given the amount of time teens spend online, the school curriculum should devote time to supporting students' digital literacy. Digital literacy includes a whole range of skills which include the ability to query search engines, navigate hyperlinks and dynamic images, as well as evaluate online sources of information^x.

Students interviewed during the focus groups showed a range of skills, with many stating that they learnt how to look for information by themselves and some stating that they do not check the information they find online. Schools should integrate digital literacy as a core skill to be learnt across different subject areas.

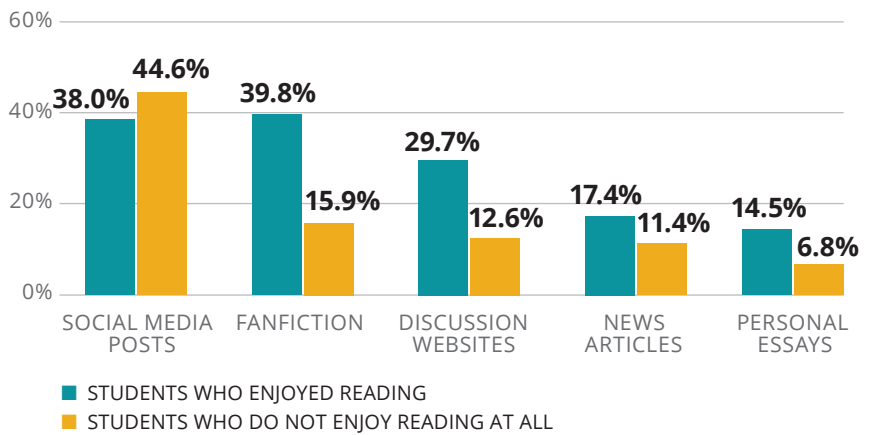
To find out more about news reading, listen to the How We Read podcast, True or Not? – How to Spot Fake News



SMARTPHONE READING HABITS OF STUDENTS WHO ENJOY AND DO NOT ENJOY READING

Longform texts have been defined to include newspaper articles, book chapters or journal articles and novels^{xi}, basically texts that require some form of sustained reading. Students who enjoy reading read more longform texts on their smartphones, compared to those who do not enjoy reading.

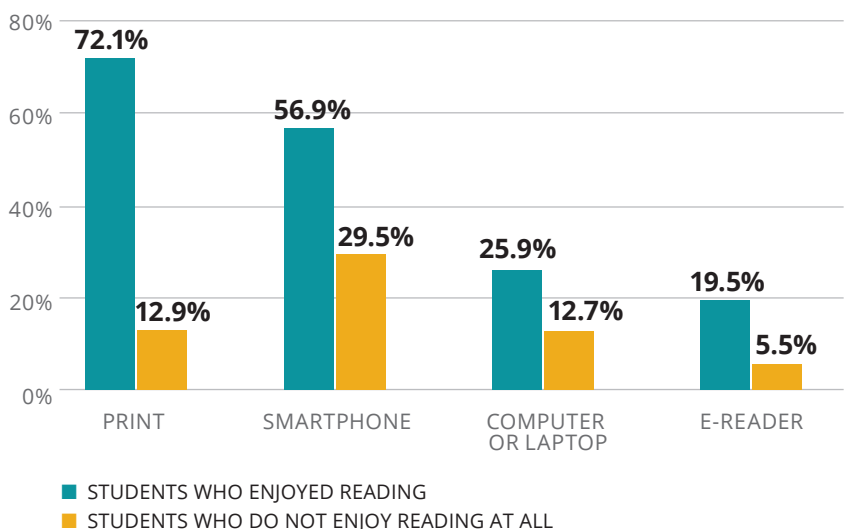
I READ _____ ON THE
SMARTPHONE
OFTEN OR ALL THE TIME



DEVICE READING HABITS OF STUDENTS WHO ENJOY AND DO NOT ENJOY READING

Adolescents who enjoy reading prefer using print the most and are more likely to use technology to extend their reading diet and sources. They read significantly more in print, using their smartphones, laptops/computers and e-readers.

I READ _____
USING





WHAT TEENS WHO ENJOY READING SAY

The reason why I read is because I have like nothing better to do and since I was a child since I didn't have like easy access to the internet, I just like read a lot. It's become a habit.

SIVA, SEC 3

Usually I would like, go online and search for books and sometimes also, I would look at TikTok. Like TikTok has a recommendation section for books.

GAYA, SEC 2

I always like reading...But now that I use my phone quite a lot, I don't read as often but I still tried to relax so I read fanfiction or just like self-help books. I don't go the public library except to check out books. I use the Libby app all the time.

AZLINA, SEC 3

I enjoy reading. I like to read webtoons and storybooks. My favourite storybook is the Run Hide Seek series. My favourite webtoon is True Beauty.

BELINDA, SEC 3

TEENS WHO ENJOY READING VS TEENS WHO DO NOT ENJOY READING

The findings confirm findings from earlier studies in Australia^{xii} and Singapore^{xiii} that teens who enjoy reading and do not enjoy reading use technology differently. While teens who enjoy reading may independently use their devices and go online to search for more reading materials, teens who do not enjoy reading may need some encouragement to go online to look for reading materials. Teens who enjoy reading are also likely to have developed the search skills necessary for finding reading material online. This suggests that schools need to put aside time for students who do not enjoy reading to help them find good reads, both in print and digitally, to motivate their independent reading.

DEVICE CONFLICT WITH READING

Correlation results of the relationships between teens' reading habits and their frequency of leisure activities revealed that increased device usage for e-gaming, browsing social media and watching videos online was negatively correlated to their reading enjoyment, frequency and duration. While students can extend their reading through their devices, they may also be easily distracted by other leisure and social possibilities offered by technology.

CORRELATION BETWEEN TEENS READING HABITS AND THEIR FREQUENCY OF DEVICE-RELATED LEISURE ACTIVITIES

	ENJOYING E-GAMES	BROWSING SOCIAL MEDIA APPS	WATCHING VIDEO ONLINE
READING ENJOYMENT	-.09***	-.12***	-.08***
READING FREQUENCY	-.08***	-.15**	-.12***
READING DURATION	-.05**	-.06**	-.04**

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

WHAT TEENS SAY ABOUT THEIR DEVICES AND READING

I mostly use my phone for Whatsapp, YouTube and listening to music and sometimes for Pinterest. I use Samsung Music but if I'm watching YouTube it'll mostly be like for watching other things, like music videos.

HASHINI, SEC 2

Usually when I read, like every like two minutes, a notification will pop out and I will just reply and I forget that I was reading a book and then I will do something else.

JANICE, SEC 3

If we need to read the book, then I'm just forced to read the book. But if I had the choice to, I wouldn't. I'd rather watch than read.

FAIZ, SEC 2

REACHING TEENS THROUGH THEIR SMARTPHONES

Smartphones and other mobile technologies can support reading by providing more resources in the form of access to books, fanfiction or comics. It can also distract students from reading as there are other attractive options such as playing games, watching videos and browsing social media apps to while away their time.

Consider using social media to reach out to students by pushing books and reading programmes to them^{xiv} and introducing them to alternative online reading resource such as webtoons and interactive stories^{xv}. Teach students anti-distraction strategies such as muting notifications when using their devices for reading^{xvi}.



SECTION 3

TEEN ACCESS TO READING RESOURCES

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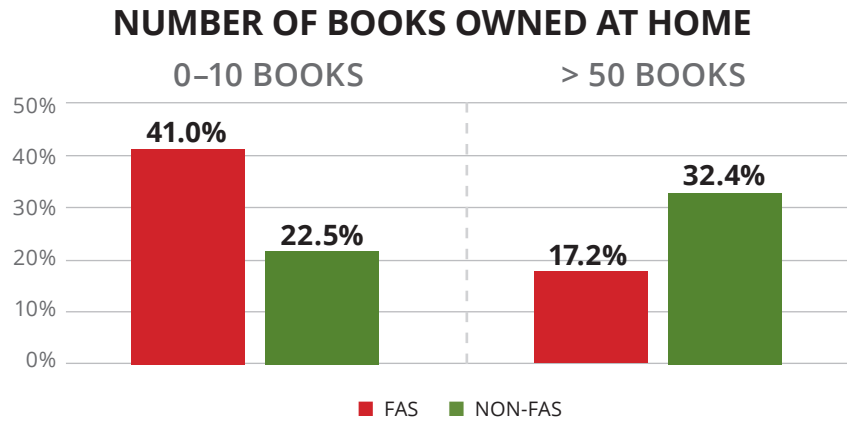
Students who are on the financial assistance scheme (FAS)* are likely to have fewer books at home, receive less home reading support and enjoy reading less. During Full Home-Based Learning in 2020, students mostly relied on their home resources for their reading materials. Students with fewer books at home had less opportunities to sustain and enjoy reading.



*Students who are Singapore citizens, attend government or government-aided schools and whose families have a monthly gross income of \$2,750 or less, or a monthly per capita income of \$690 or less qualify for financial assistance. FAS students receive waiver of school fees, free textbooks and school attire, transport subsidy and meal subsidies (<https://www.moe.gov.sg/financial-matters/financial-assistance>).

FAS AND NON-FAS STUDENTS' NUMBER OF BOOKS OWNED

FAS students reported having fewer books at home compared to non-FAS students. Four in 10 FAS students reported that they had 10 books or fewer at home. In contrast, three out of 10 non-FAS students report that they have 50 or more books at home.



FAS AND NON-FAS STUDENTS' READING ENJOYMENT

Fewer FAS students reported that they enjoyed reading. This may be partly attributed to fewer home resources or support for some and lower proficiency levels for others.



PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO READ

We asked the students to recall if their parents encouraged them to read. Overall, only about a quarter of students report that their parents encouraged them to read. Of these, non-FAS were more likely to report that they were encouraged to read sometimes or a lot compared to FAS parents.

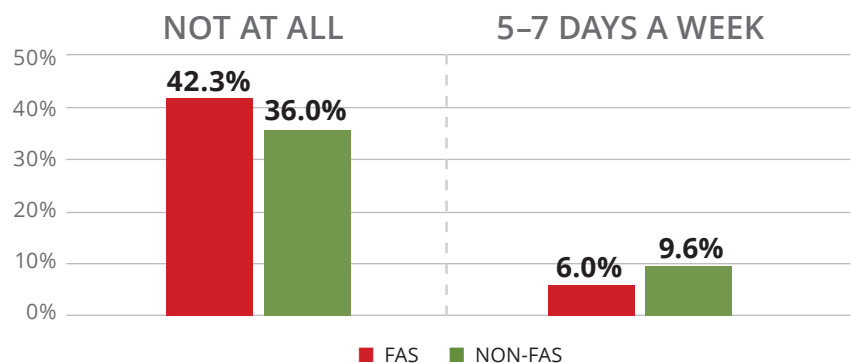
	FAS	NON-FAS
YES, A LOT (%)	22.4%	25.6%
YES, SOMETIMES (%)	51.5%	54.4%
NO, NOT AT ALL (%)	26.0%	20.0%

EARLY SHARED BOOK READING

Research has shown that shared book reading from an early age contributes to a child's reading development^{xvii}. More than one-third of the students reported that they did not experience early shared book reading. Parental knowledge, work commitments, time availability and language proficiencies are some factors that may contribute to infrequent or lack of early shared book reading at home.

More non-FAS students recalled regular shared book reading of between 5 to 7 days a week.

BEFORE YOU STARTED PRIMARY SCHOOL, HOW OFTEN DID YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS/GUARDIAN READ ENGLISH BOOKS TO YOU?





WHAT NON-FAS TEENS SAY ABOUT HOME READING PRACTICES^{XVIII}

I don't really specifically remember the process of how I learned to read but I think my mom because she was like showing me all the books – children books, cardboard books, books about letters, colouring books - So I think it's really my mom who taught me to read. And I think my dad also because he taught me also how to go on Libby. My dad is a pretty heavy reader. He always borrows books from the library when we go. He borrows magazines, sports books, workout books. My mom does borrow a lot of books but she's very busy with work all the time. Most of the time, she doesn't get to finish much of the book, but she does like to borrow and find new and different books.

IZZ, SEC 3

One of the series books I liked back in primary school was called Sherlock Sam. There were 11 or 13 books in the series. My mom bought the first one and I really enjoyed it. So she bought me the whole series of it.

FARHANN, SEC 3

I attended reading classes till I was Primary 6, since K2 I think. My mom reads Chinese books online. My dad doesn't read any books anymore cause he's too busy studying for his exams for his course. I usually order books I want to read online from Book Depository; because they're quite trusted and the deals are great on the website. My sister reads Percy Jackson fiction. She reads science experiment books. She reads theory books. She reads almost every type of book I can think of except mangas, cause we can't get a hold of that just yet.

ZHANG WEI, SEC 2

When I was younger, my parents will either bring me to the library and borrow some those simple books where the story is not much but then it helps us improve English. They brought collections from authors like Shakespeare. I had a whole collection of it. And sometimes we have this time together to read it together and just understand the story. They guided me through the reading.

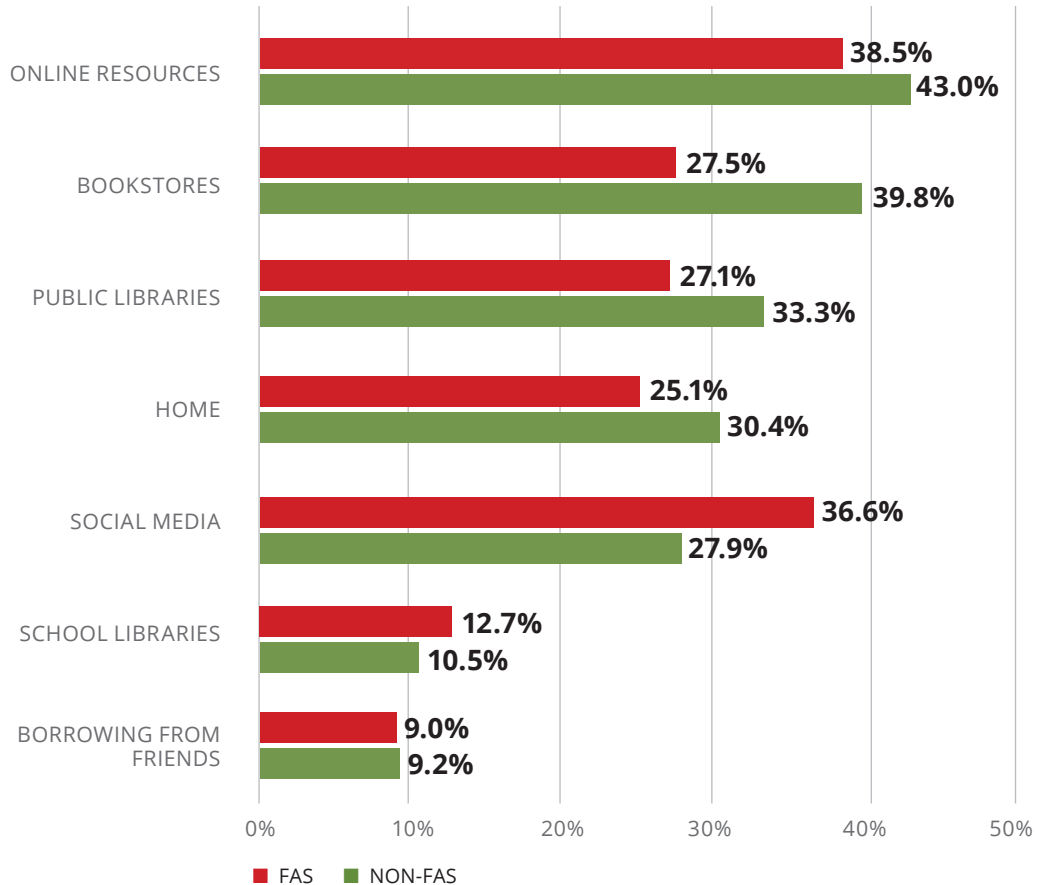
NATALIE, SEC 2

WHERE TEENS GET THEIR READING RESOURCES

Teens get their print and digital reading resources from different places.

Non-FAS students are more likely to get reading materials from online resources, bookstores, public libraries and homes. FAS students are more likely than non-FAS students to get reading materials from social media and school libraries. This may have to do with cost and ease of access. Since FAS students have fewer resources at home, they are less likely to get resources from home. School libraries, being located in school, are more convenient for students to access daily.

I GET MY READING MATERIALS FROM (ALL THE TIME/OFTEN)

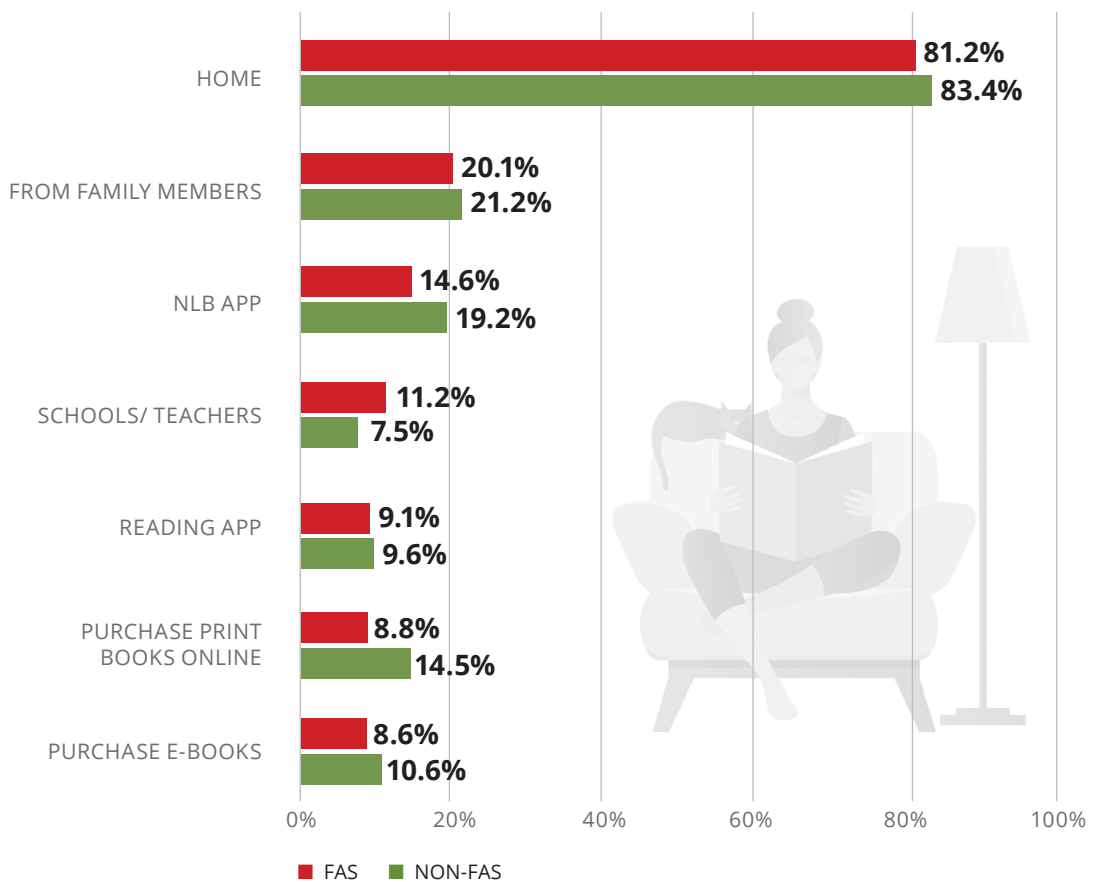


SOURCES OF READING MATERIALS DURING FULL HOME-BASED LEARNING

Most teens obtain their reading material from home during HBL. FAS students is more likely to rely on schools and teachers than non-FAS students.

The number of individual and shared books at home are thus very important to support reading when students are stuck at home. When teens have fewer books at home, they have fewer opportunities to enjoy the pleasure of re-reading^{xix} or trying new books. This is why school support for reading materials is vital.

WHERE DID YOU FIND YOUR READING MATERIALS DURING FHBL?

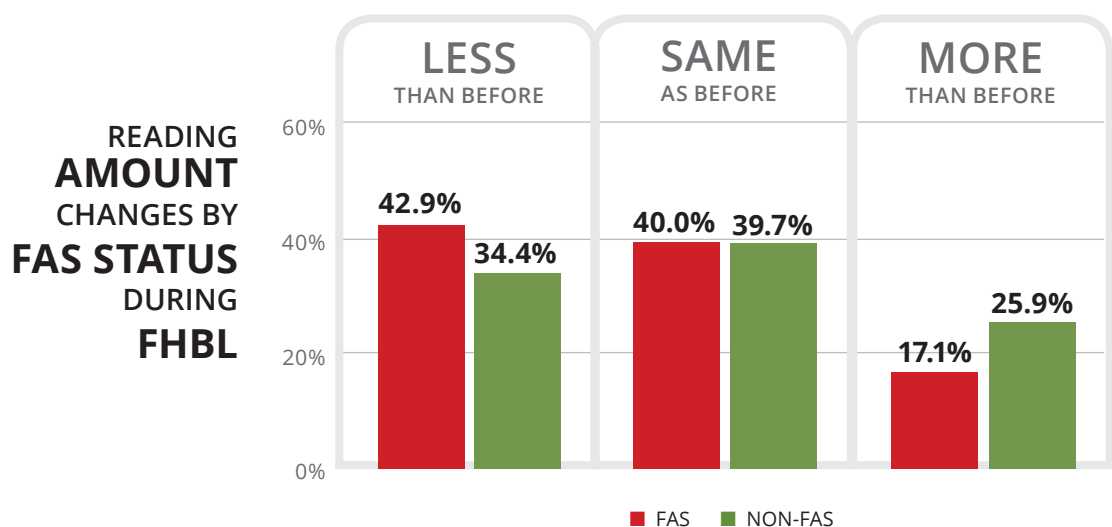


READING CHANGES DURING FULL HOME-BASED LEARNING

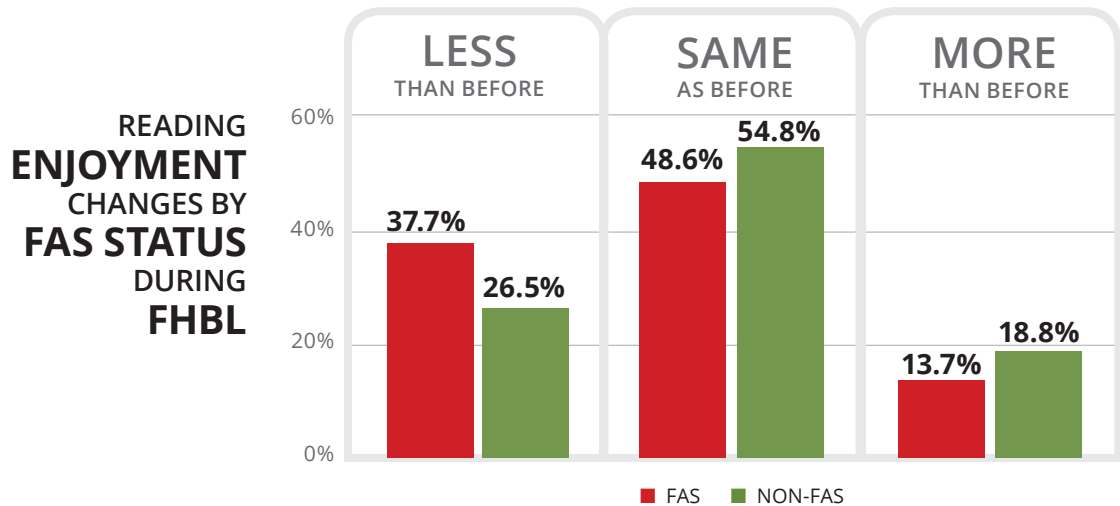
We asked students about changes in their reading amount and enjoyment before and during Full Home-Based Learning during Circuit Breaker 2020 to help us understand their reading habits when not attending physical school.

Some students reported reading more during Full Home-Based Learning but more students reported that their reading amount and enjoyment dropped during that period when they were away from school. This could be due to lack of books and time set aside for reading. Students often read in school during Sustained Silent Reading time or library periods. When school is out and reading is not integrated into the blended curriculum, students may be less motivated to read.

FAS students were more likely to report reading less than before during Full Home-Based Learning.

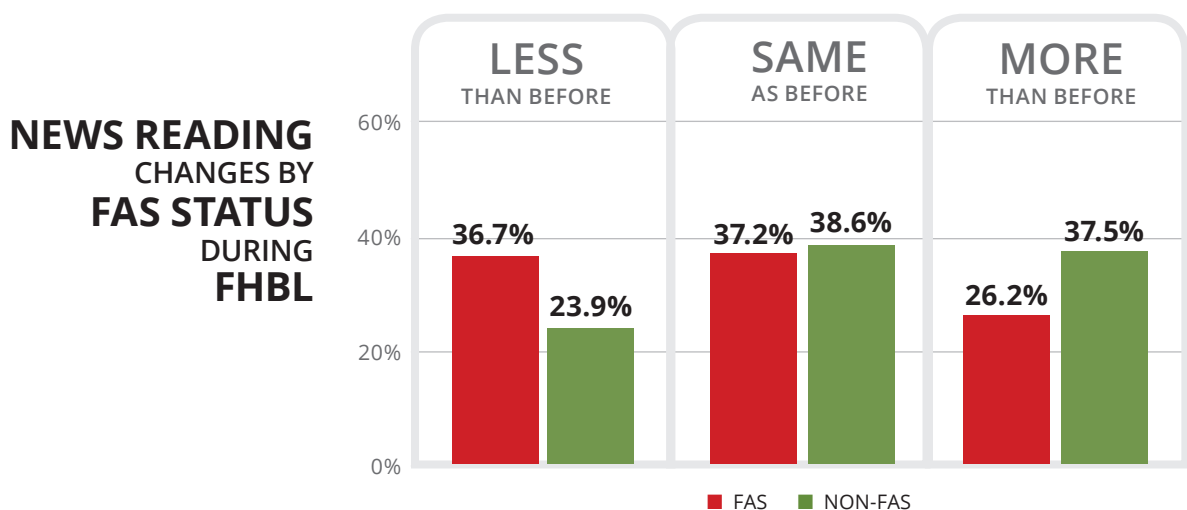


FAS students were also more likely to report a drop in their reading enjoyment during Full Home-Based Learning.



NEWS READING HABITS DURING FULL HOME-BASED LEARNING

More FAS students also reported reading less news than before during Full Home-Based Learning.



STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENT READING DURING HOME-BASED LEARNING

Since FAS students rely more on school resources for reading, it is important to ensure that they have sufficient reading resources during home-based learning to support their engaged reading. Middle-class parents are able to afford book purchases, accompany their children on library visits, allow constant device charging and reliable WIFI access for download of books and reading resources when students are at home. These parents may also be more familiar with locating books from different sources and helping their students to navigate various online platforms.

However, for FAS students, these seemingly mundane practices might be insurmountable obstacles due to economic and knowledge constraints. Providing students with print books or getting them to download books on their devices before home-based learning is one way to support their engaged reading during Home-Based Learning. Continuing to organise reading activities and programmes can also keep them motivated to read. To design an equitable way of ensuring access to reading resources, policymakers and educators need to consider distribution and access from the point of view of a student who has limited access^{xx} when it comes to designing school spaces and technology provisions.

SECTION 4

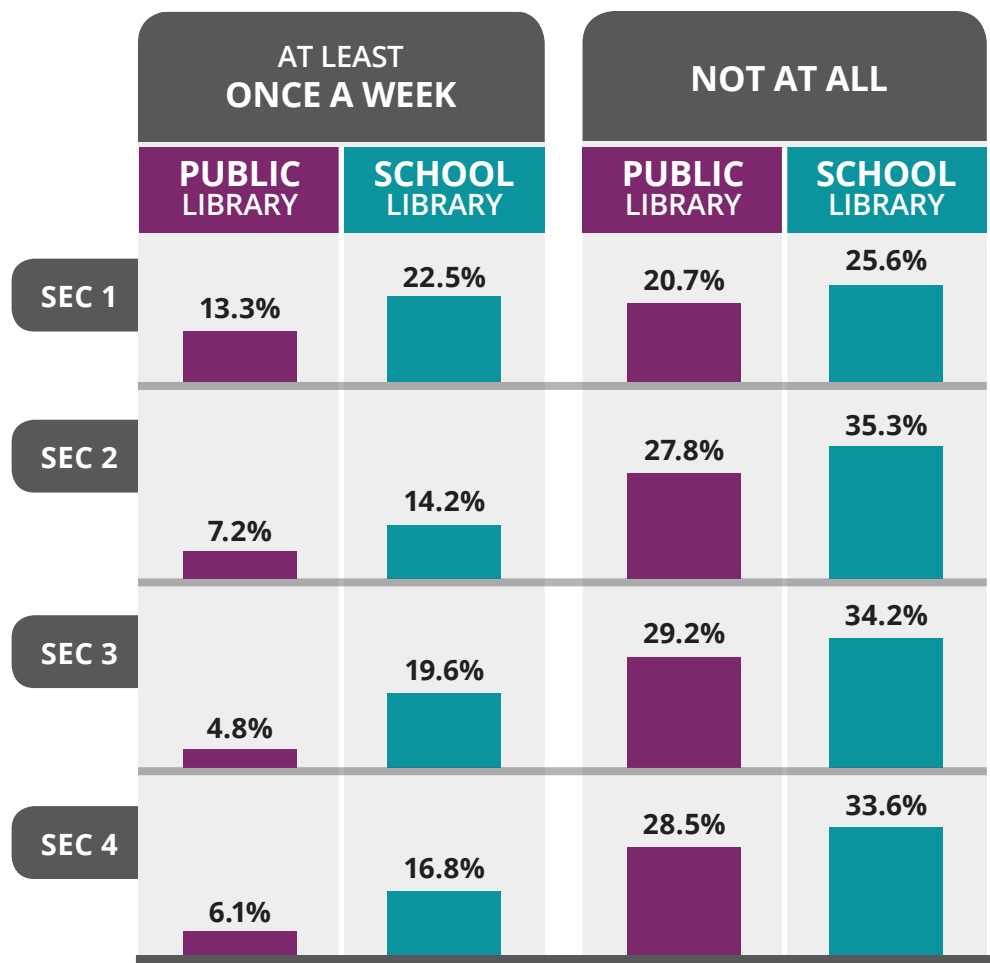
PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARY SUPPORT FOR READING

Public and school libraries serve different functions to support student reading. Public libraries provide access to a wide variety of books across different subject areas and through varied print and digital platforms. School libraries are closer to students and their collections and programmes can be curated to be more targeted for their school profile.



FREQUENCY OF PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARY VISITS

Across all levels and schools, the study found that students visit the school library more regularly on a weekly basis compared to the public library. At the same time, there are more students who do not visit the school library at all, compared to the public library. This suggests that the school library has untapped potential as a place to encourage student reading but that more needs to be done to encourage students to use the resource. Providing a better learning environment, improving the book collection and curating interesting programmes are some ways to increase reading through the school library^{xxi}.





WHAT TEENS SAY ABOUT LIBRARIES

I prefer the public library because they actually have a lot books that seem a bit more mature, like for crime fiction. Because in the school library, the crime fiction books that they have is not very high level, it's more suitable for young teens. But I like the ones that are for adults and they don't have that in the school library.

HASHINI, SEC 2

Last year I used to go to the school library everyday cause I don't really have Mother Tongue in school. I was just looking through books cause I was so bored and then I found a book I liked. I read the blurb. It was actually really interesting.

SWATHI, SEC 2

I don't really go to our school library to borrow books, so I don't really know what type of books they have. Once, our English teacher brought the entire class to the library. I passed through the aisles of books and saw some books. But most of the books that I saw were not my type.

JAZ, SEC 2

My primary school library was bigger but they only renew the books every couple of years. I like our secondary school library because they always bring in new books and I love the recommendations.

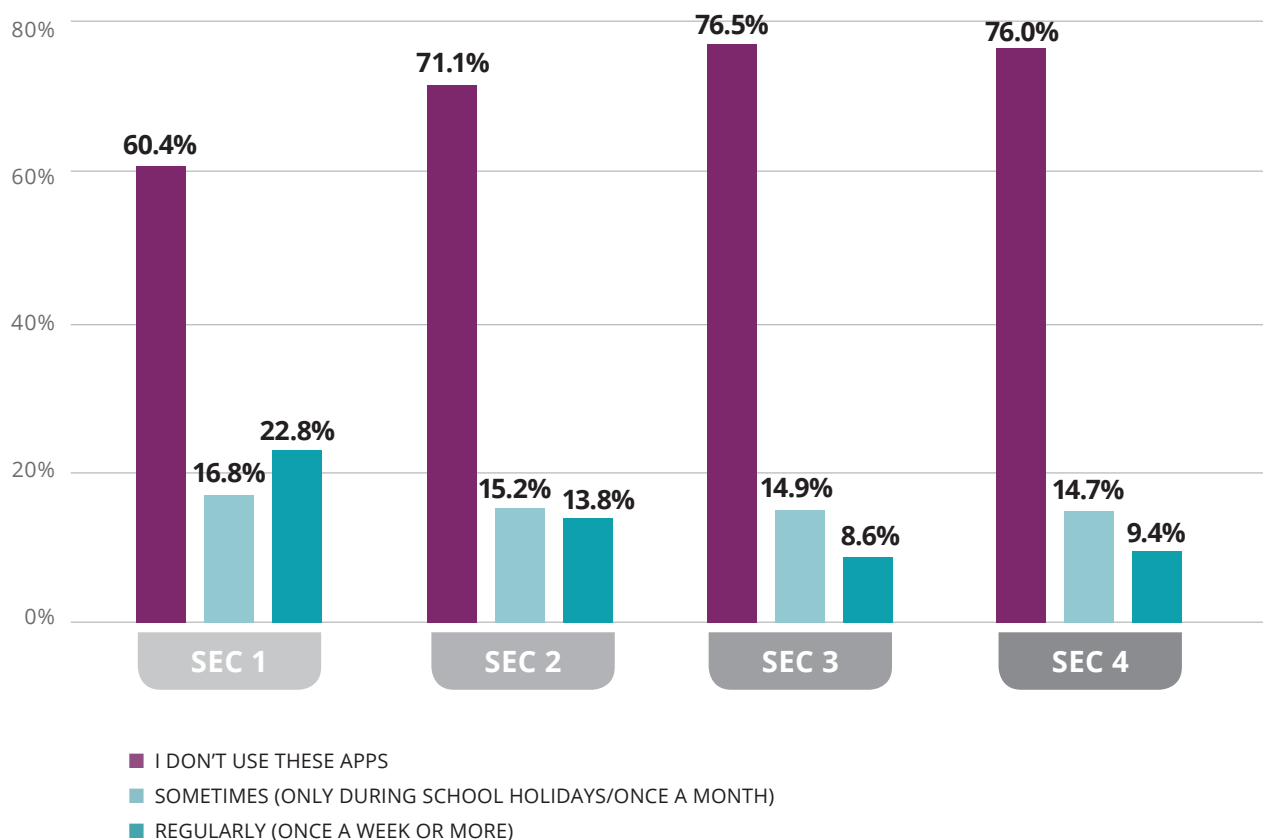
JASON, SEC 2

USE OF NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD (NLB) APPS

NLB provides a wealth of e-reading resources for students through the NLB app, Libby and Overdrive (NLB apps). We asked students if they used these apps and how often they used it. 70.9% of the students do not use the NLB apps and 13.85% use it at least once a week.

Secondary 1 students seem more accustomed to using the NLB apps for reading.

I READ USING THE FOLLOWING NLB APPS (NLB APP, LIBBY, OVERDRIVE) (%)





**WHAT
TEENS SAY
ABOUT
NLB APPS**

There was once where I physically went to the library to borrow a book. And they recommended me to just download audio books. They taught me how to download it and use it.

TIM, SEC 2

I found out about the app from school, and I just forgot about it. And then recently, my friend like shared on her Instagram story. She shared that she read a book on an app. So I asked her "Oh, what is it?" She said, "Oh, Libby, you know, the NLB thing." So that's how I found out. I don't usually borrow from the library now because I just use the Libby app all the time.

ALINA, SEC 2

Usually when I go to Popular, it's to get stationery such as pens, correction tape, the usual. But sometimes when I go there with my family, I just go to the adventure, the teenage section and put all the books there in my list of books and then I just go to the library app and search it up, like the books that I want to read instead of buying.

DAN, SEC 2

I did hear about the app but I didn't download the app, I didn't use the app. I didn't have time for the app.

DAVID, SEC 2

There's a library app?

HUMIRA, SEC 2

SOCIALISING TEENS INTO E-READING

Strategies for encouraging print and e-reading are similar. Students need to be socialised into the use of e-resources for reading. They need help with finding books and dedicated time for reading and talking about books, whether in print or online. We can support teen reading by dedicating funds to print books which are easier to find and share and teaching them how to use technology to extend their reading possibilities.

In one case study government school which has had the 1-1 laptop for some time and where students were actively encouraged to use the apps, the survey showed that students in that school used the apps more than other government schools in the study. This tells us that schools can remind students about the NLB app and put aside time for students to practise using the apps to get them to be familiar with the apps and use it more often.

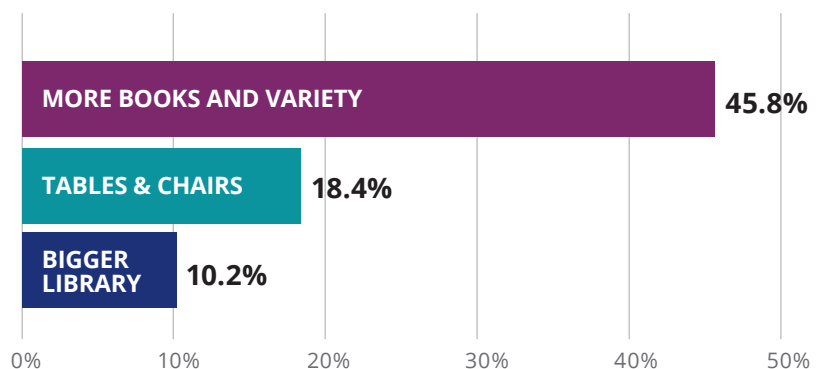
Download the
NLB mobile app at
<https://go.gov.sg/nlb-mobile>



STUDENTS' TOP REQUESTS FOR THEIR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

We asked students an open-ended question about what they would like improved about their school library and coded their responses. Overwhelmingly, students want more books and better books. They also request for more tables and chairs to support studying and collaboration as well as a bigger library. Allocating money to purchase more books can support both FAS and non-FAS students' reading.

WHAT STUDENTS WANT IMPROVED FOR THEIR SCHOOL LIBRARIES



WHAT TEENS SAY

The quality of the books, as some of them are already falling apart but no one has tried to fix the books.

MURHANI, SEC 2

Books to be more up to date. There are some series that I have interest in, yet they didn't have all the books which I find upsetting.

LE XIN, SEC 2

I think that there should be more books based on up-to-date in real life issues (eg. racial right, gender equality, real-life problems).

VANI, SEC 1

More up-to-date books and more variety, such as manga or storybooks.

HAIREE, SEC 2

It could have more up-to-date books that are relevant to subjects.

WEI YANG, SEC 3

Add more books! And please, if possible, put books that have awards and nominations on a separate shelf so students can easily search for them. Or maybe put stickers or a defining characteristic on the book for students to easily find them. Thank u.

MOHIT, SEC 4

PUTTING MONEY IN OUR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

To bridge the reading gap between students of different proficiencies, socioeconomic backgrounds and interests, educational policies and practices need to address three fundamental issues.

First, content matters the most. Teens will read more if they are matched with the right content and have access to reading materials that they are interested in^{xxii}. School libraries need to stock a sufficiently wide and varied book collection suitable for leisure reading, subject-matter learning and independent research.

Secondly, teacher training should include book knowledge so they can personalise students' reading support^{xxiii}. While teachers are experts in their subject-area, they are not necessarily trained to know which books would interest adolescent readers^{xxiv}.

Finally, schools need qualified teachers-librarians who can support teachers in their daily work of encouraging reading. To support the work of busy teachers, teacher-librarians can curate books to support teen reading, design digital information literacy lessons and programmes to improve students' future-ready reading and enthuse students about their independent reading and learning.

² Qualified teacher-librarians possess a Bachelors or Masters in Library and Information Science and are able to independently work with teachers to plan curriculum, lessons and programming to support teaching and learning. According to the International Federation of Library Association School Library Guidelines, school librarians should be able to develop and manage effective library services which include "resource, library, and information management and teaching"and support students' reading and development of information-handling skills, "regardless of form, format or medium" (p. 61).

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An Institute of



Reading habits of Singapore Teenagers 2021

Loh Chin Ee
Sun Baoqi

DEV02/20 LCE Designing School Libraries of the Future Study