

BOOKPALS READING HABITS SURVEY

1. The survey

1.1. Methodology

352 students from the six middle and secondary schools involved in the project participated in the survey on reading habits and reading motivation. Overall, 243 (69%) girls and 109 (31%) of boys took part. The age of the participating students ranged from 14 to 17 years, with the majority of pupils being 16 and 17-years old (44% and 37%, respectively).

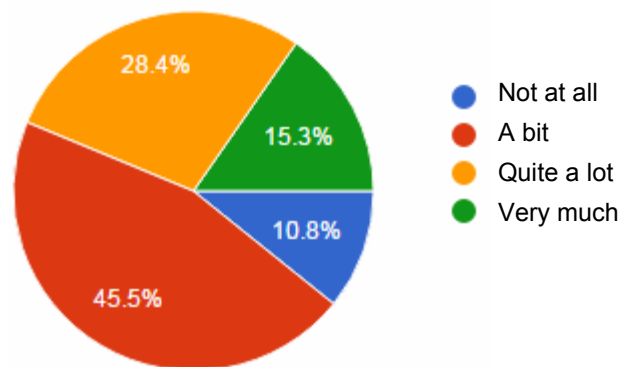
The students were given an 11-point questionnaire that, in addition to some background information, contained items on students' attitudes towards reading, their preferred reading materials, preferred types of fiction and non-fiction, preferred reading places, favourite reading incentives and activities.

1.2. Results

1.2.1. Reading enjoyment

Students were asked to rate how much they like reading on a scale of 1 ("Not at all") to 4 ("Very much"). Almost half of the students stated that they like reading "A bit" (see **Figure 1**). 15% of students indicating that they enjoy reading "Very much", while 28% of students enjoy reading "Quite a lot". 11% of students stated that they do not enjoy reading at all.

Figure 1



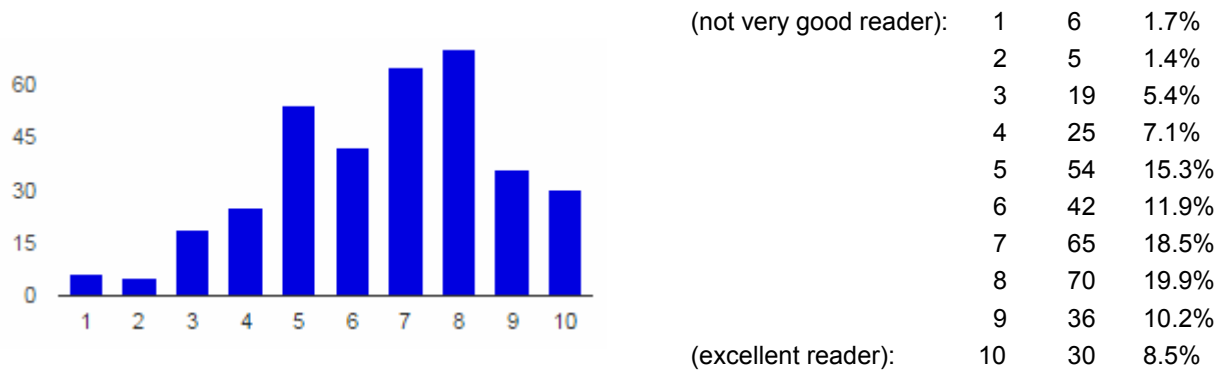
Reading enjoyment was also significantly and positively related to self-rated reading proficiency, indicating that students who enjoy reading rated themselves as more skilled readers than students who do not enjoy reading.

1.2.2. Reading proficiency

In addition to reading enjoyment, students were also asked to indicate how good a reader they thought they were on a 10-point scale (1 = not very good reader, 5 = average reader to 10 = excellent reader). The average self-rated reading proficiency was quite high (Mean = 6.63, SD = 2,11)¹. **Figure 2** indicates the percentages for the reading proficiency scale, and shows that most students rated themselves as being an average reader or above.

¹ The mean (M) is the average of a distribution of scores. The standard deviation (SD) indicates the extent to which scores deviate from the mean score.

Figure 2



1.2.3. Reading attitudes

In addition to reading enjoyment and reading proficiency, students were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with nine statements about their attitudes towards reading. **Figure 3** outlines the responses for each statement. Most students generally **agree that reading is important and fun**, and that they prefer reading by themselves. A substantial proportion of students disagreed with the statements that reading is boring and that they cannot find books that interest them. 37% of students don't like going to the library. Students tended to disagree that they only read at school and that reading is for girls.

Figure 3.1

Reading is more for girls than boys

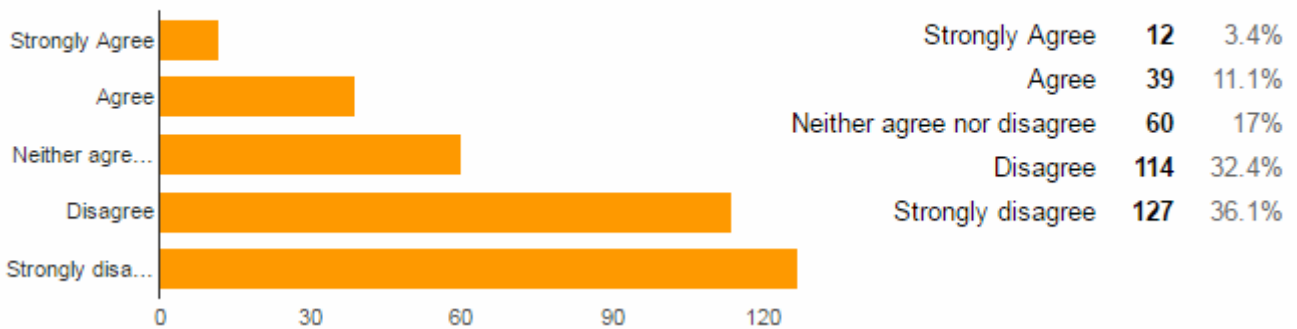


Figure 3.2

Reading is boring

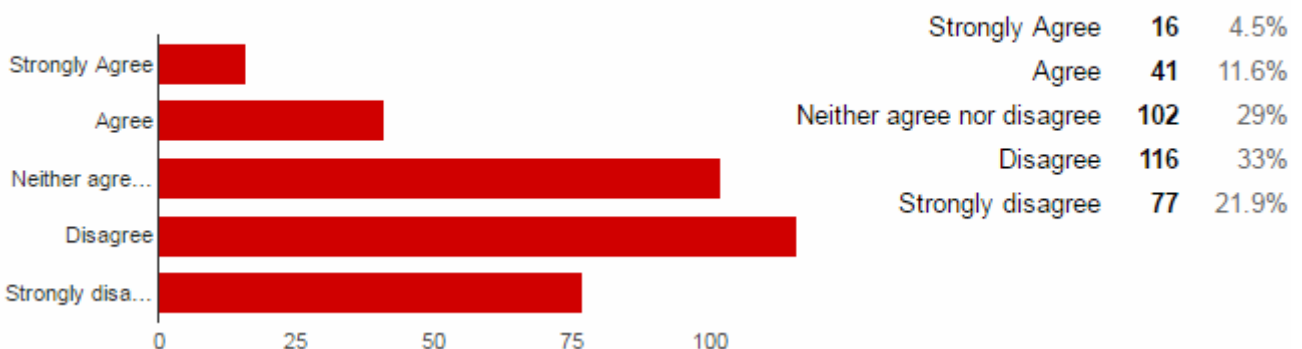


Figure 3.3

Reading is hard for me

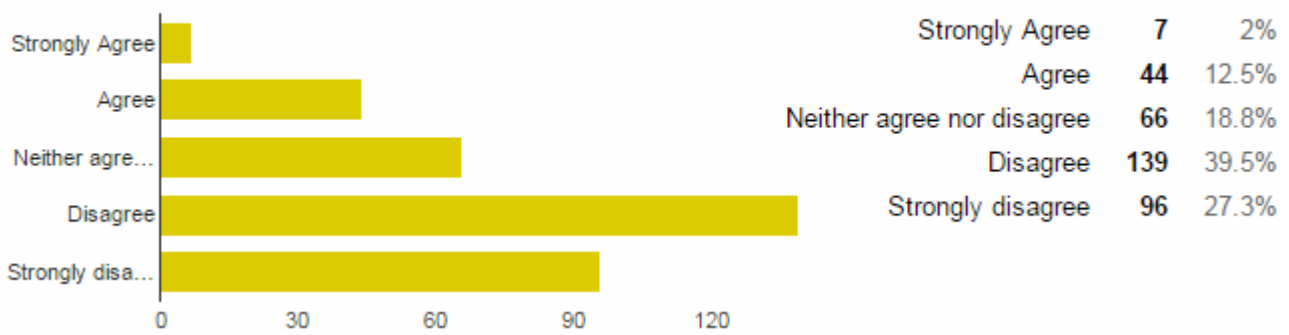


Figure 3.4

Reading is fun

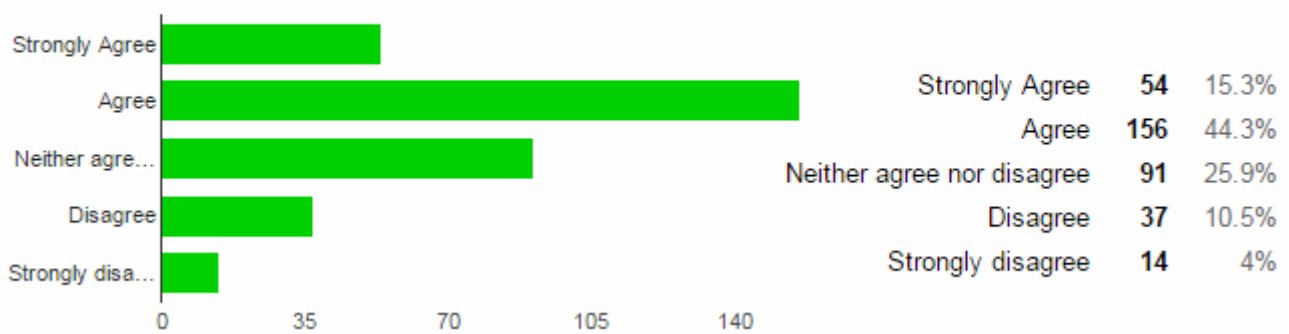


Figure 3.5

Reading is important

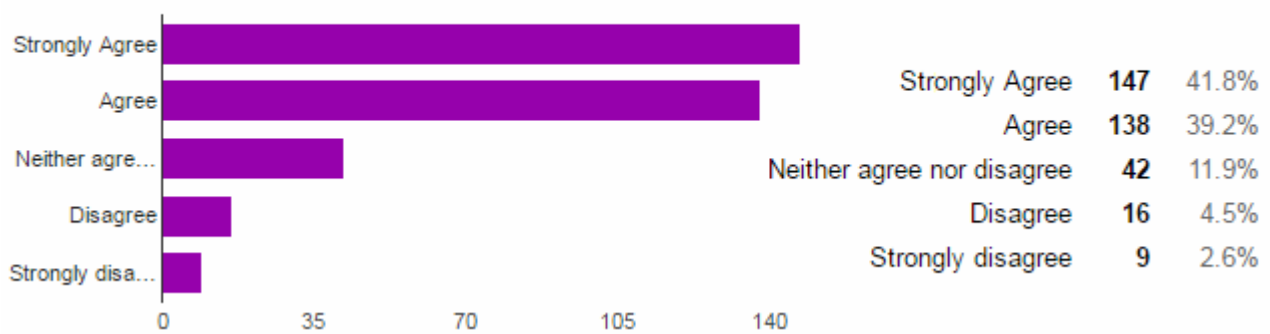


Figure 3.6

I can't find books that interest me

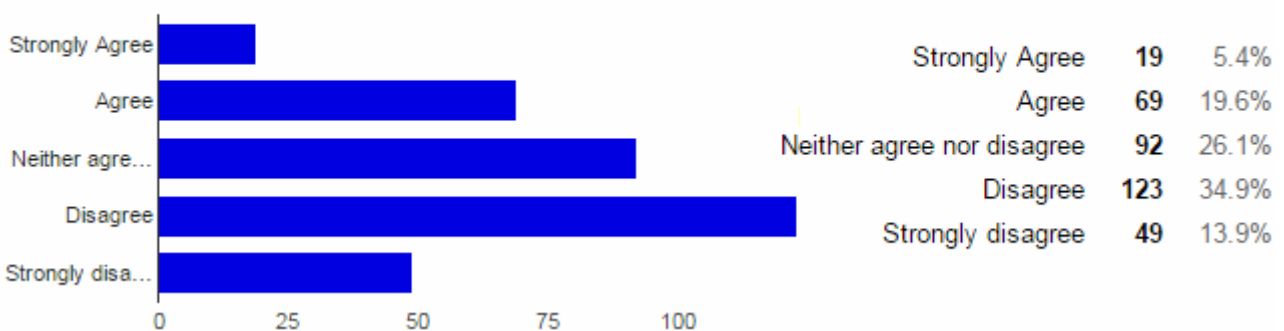


Figure 3.7

I only read at school

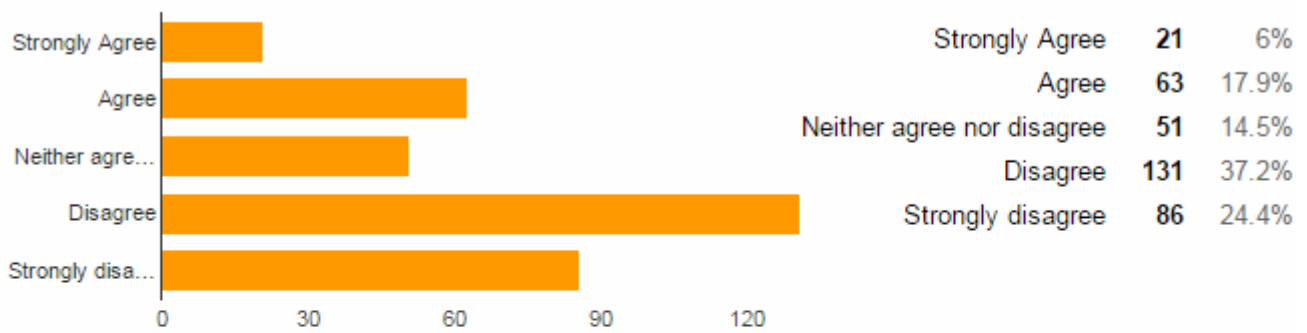


Figure 3.8

I like going to the library

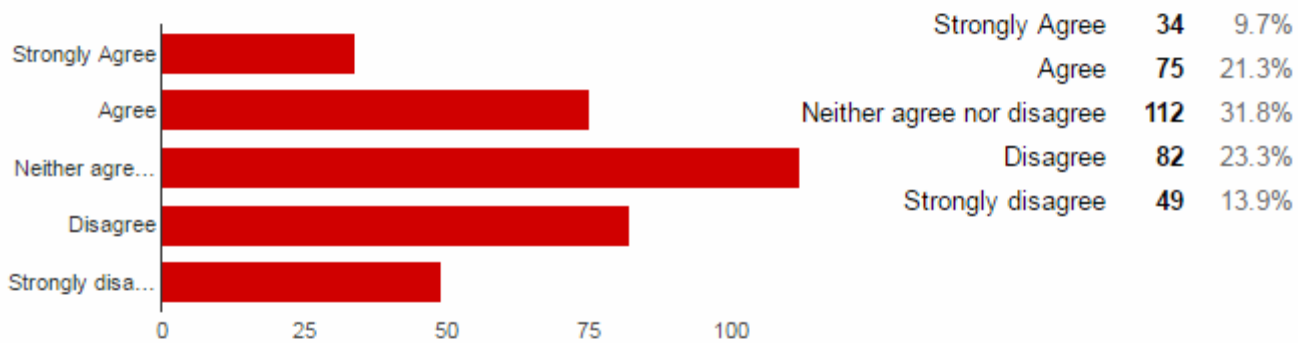
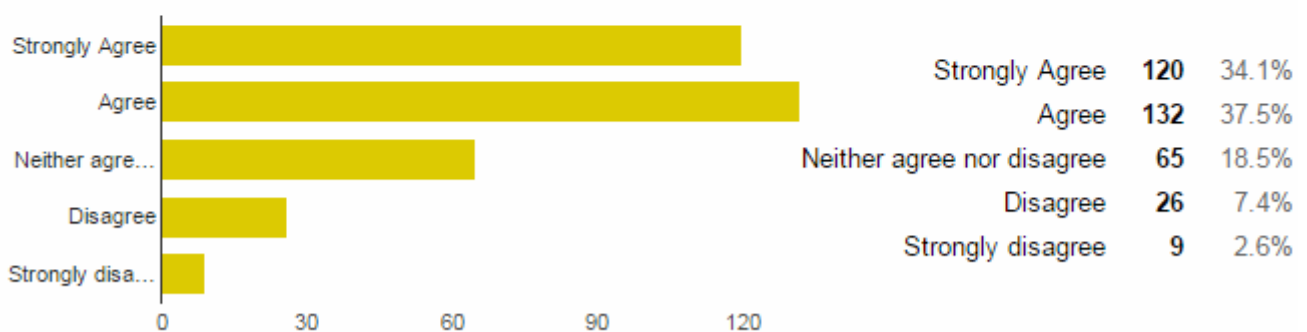


Figure 3.9

I prefer reading by myself



1.2.4. Preferred reading materials

The students were also asked to indicate what they liked reading. Of the 15 categories that were provided, students were most likely to read **text messages**, **websites**, and **song lyrics** and least likely to read graphic novels, and manuals/instructions (see **Table 1** for percentages).

Table 1

Websites	266	75.6%	Manuals/instructions	48	13.6%
Newspapers	117	33.2%	Text messages	274	77.8%
Magazines	207	58.8%	Emails	161	45.7%
Jokes	159	45.2%	Poetry	57	16.2%
Non-fiction books	79	22.4%	Plays	54	15.3%
Fiction books	128	36.4%	Song lyrics	235	66.8%
Graphic novels	37	10.5%	Poster/signs	126	35.8%
Comics	115	32.7%			

1.2.5. Reading fiction

Almost all students stated that they read fiction. However, what types of fiction do they read? Of the 12 categories provided, most students stated reading **romance**, **comedy**, and **adventure** (see **Table 2**). 6% of students reported not reading fiction at all.

Table 2

Adventure	179	50.9%	Crime/detective	148	42%
Horror/ghost	170	48.3%	Sports-related	74	21%
Romance/relationships	188	53.4%	Realistic teenage fiction	108	30.7%
Animal-related	42	11.9%	War/spy-related	60	17%
Science-fiction/fantasy	96	27.3%	Poetry	42	11.9%
Comedy	188	53.4%	I don't read fiction	22	6.3%

1.2.6. Reading non-fiction

What types of non-fiction do students read? The majority of pupils stated reading materials related to **music**, **fashion**, and **their hobbies** (see **Table 3**). The pupils were least likely to read manuals, how to... books, and science. However, 8% of pupils reported not reading nonfiction at all.

(Auto) biographies	68	19.3%	Music	196	55.7%
Encyclopaedias (fact books)	68	19.3%	Sports	109	31%
How to ... books	49	13.9%	History	92	26.1%
Fashion	163	46.3%	Computing/games	73	20.7%
Travel/maps	79	22.4%	My hobbies/interests	134	38.1%
Celebrities/gossip	116	33%	Manuals	27	7.7%
Cookbooks	62	17.6%	I don't read non-fiction	28	8%
Science	61	17.3%			

1.2.7. Reading places

The students were asked about their favourite reading places. Of the seven categories that were available most students stated that they like reading at **home**, followed by outside (see **Table 4**). Bookclubs, and libraries are the least favourite reading places.

Table 4

Home	335	95.2%	Town library	20	5.7%
School library	20	5.7%	Bookclub	9	2.6%
School lessons	58	16.5%	Outside	108	30.7%
Friend's house	41	11.6%			

1.2.8. Engaging others

When asked which activities would help them and others to read more, almost half the students stated that **talking about favourite reads**, and **helping younger pupils to read** would engage them and others in reading (see **Table 5**). Activities such as designing displays for the library, and helping choose stock for the library were chosen the least frequently. Overall, 16% of pupils indicated that none of these activities would help them and others to read more.

Table 5

Reading groups with friends	87	24.7%	Helping young children reading	128	36.4%
Talking about my favourite reads	166	47.2%	Designing displays for the library	31	8.8%
Reading games	86	24.4%	Reading for charity	75	21.3%
Helping choose stock for the library	45	12.8%	Designing websites/magazines	88	25%
Writing book reviews	66	18.8%	None of these	56	15.9%
			Other	8	2.3%

1.3. Discussion

Most students not only enjoy reading and believe they are proficient readers, they generally also hold positive attitudes towards reading. The majority states that reading is fun and an important activity.

Students indicated reading a wide variety of materials, with **text messages**, **websites**, and **song lyrics** being the most frequently cited types of reading material.

The most frequently stated non-fiction choices include **music**, **fashion** materials and materials related to their **hobbies**.

When asked what types of fiction they read, the majority of students states reading **romance**, **comedy**, and **adventure**.

The richness and diversity of young people's reading emphasises **the importance of choice** in reading materials to engage students. A **wide-ranging selection of materials** is particularly important in reading choices.

The survey results also highlight the diverse range of the students' reading interests and suggest that we should examine the materials we provide in order to guarantee that the students' interests and choice of reading materials are reflected in the reading opportunities in school.