

Press release

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Latest figures show reading is holding steady after years of decline, as boys read for longer and more children read for pleasure

Boys are showing more interest in reading for longer periods of time, more children are reading books for pleasure, and printed books are making a slight recovery, reveals a new report into children's reading habits, according to the latest 2018 CHILDWISE Monitor Report.

5 to 16-year-olds spend an average of 0.6 hours a day reading which has remained unchanged over the last four years

However, the new data shows that while girls remain more likely than boys to read for longer, boys are showing more interest this year.

This year also sees an overall increase in the number of children reading books for pleasure, rather than just for schoolwork.

Meanwhile, several years of decline in reading the printed word are halted this year as printed books make a slight recovery.

Around half of girls (51%) read for half an hour or more a day, compared to fewer than half of boys (48%). However, this is an increase for boys from 44% a year ago.

"The peak reading age is 9-10," says Simon Leggett, research director at CHILDWISE. "With children this age reading for around three quarters of an hour a day on average."

"Time spent reading increases up to this age, but falls back among older children, with one in three teenage children saying that they never read for pleasure.¹

But, overall more children are now reading books for pleasure, outside schoolwork. Almost four in five children age 5-16 ever read books in their own time. This is up from three in four last year and close to a high of four in five in 2013.

The 2018 CHILDWISE Monitor is a comprehensive annual report looking at 5 to 16-year-olds media consumption, purchasing and social habits as well as key behaviour. More than 2000 children in schools across the United Kingdom completed in-depth online surveys for the report.

The report also asked 7-16 year olds to specify which devices they used for reading books, reflecting the change in reading habits since technological devices have become more widespread. This question has been asked across several years allowing tracking over time.

¹ 34% of 13-16s

Three in five children age 7-16 read a paper book in the last week – 62% up from 59% a year ago. Two in five children have used an electronic device to read on in the last week, the same proportion as last year. One in four use a mobile phone to read with, up from one in five last year. Girls are more likely to read on a mobile phone than boys.

The proportion using an e-book reader has recovered after a drop to 7% using them last year – 10% now use them, boys and girls alike with little variation by age.

“The use of electronic devices to read shows little sign of change,” says Simon Leggett. “The proportion of children with their own e-book reader is unchanged this year (one in five). However, unlike most other devices ownership has failed to ever really take hold among children.”

The proportion of children buying books for themselves has fallen back this year after a peak a year ago. Fewer than one in five children now buy books for themselves with their own money.

Findings of the report also include...

- Children age 5-16 spend just over two and a half hours a day watching programmes, video and short clips (2.6 hours, 2.5 hours last year).
- Most children now use devices other than a traditional television set to watch video content.
- YouTube remains the top way of watching on-demand content.
- Children age 9-16 spend an average of 2.7 hours online a day. This has dropped over the last three years and is down from 2.9 hours last year. However, this fall could be a consequence of children being less able to determine which of their routine activities are carried out online or offline.
- Children are taking to virtual reality with 25% having mobile VR equipment at home, 11% with Playstation VR, 10% have Oculus Rift and 6% have HTC Vive
- Binge watching content is a growing habit.

CHILDWISE is an independent market research agency specialising in children and young people. CHILDWISE has a programme of published independent research and also conducts research for government agencies, charities, broadcasters, publishers and brands www.childwise.co.uk

The Monitor Report 2018 covers... children and their media; TV viewing; music; reading ; cinema; children’s equipment; money; purchasing; sports & activities; health & wellbeing and social awareness.

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