



Australian Government



Fact Sheet

A changing story: trends in reading among Australians

October 2013

This fact sheet is based on evaluation research of the Get Reading! campaign. The research was conducted with readers¹ each year from 2008 to 2012.

Key findings

How much are we reading?

- What we are reading and how we read has changed in the past few years, but the amount we are reading has stayed the same.
- Most people surveyed read at least once a week.
- Readers using portable reading devices spend more time reading than other readers.

What are we reading?

- In 2012, over half of the people surveyed read a fiction book and 37 percent read a non-fiction book.
- Plays and histories have increased in popularity since 2010.

How do we access reading material?

- More readers borrow from libraries and use digital technology for reading in 2012 than in 2010. There are fewer readers visiting bookstores, even though two thirds of readers say they enjoy it.

How do we feel about reading?

- Reading is a unique experience for Australian readers. Over 8 readers in every 10 agreed that reading offers them something that TV and computers do not.

How much are Australians reading?

Most readers are reading at least once a week (58 percent) and a further one third read at least once every six months. Readers with portable devices spend more time reading than others, 9 hours compared to 5 hours per week.

The amount of time spent reading has remained relatively steady. Around half of readers said they read the same amount in 2012 as in the previous year (54 percent). The remaining half were evenly split between reading more than last year and reading less.

The main reason readers give for changing the amount of time they spend reading is because they have more (or less) time to read.

What is Australia reading?

- 52% of readers read a fiction book for pleasure in the past month.
- 37% of readers read a non-fiction book for pleasure in the past month.
- 27% of readers read a book to a child in the past month.

¹ People who have read a book for pleasure in the last three years

The table below shows the types of material readers are reading.

Table 1: Materials read in an average month in 2012	
	% of readers
A novel	57
An essay or a journal article	47
A short story	39
A history	27
A biography or autobiography	24
A poem	23
A graphic novel	23
A play	12

The type of materials read by Australians has been steady with a few exceptions:

- Plays are now more popular as reading material (from 7 percent in 2010)
- More people are reading histories than in 2010 (23 percent).

Overall, 42 percent of readers could identify at least one Australian author whose books they enjoy or would like to read in 2012. Readers nominated over 50 authors, the most commonly named authors were:

- Bryce Courtney 9%
- Tim Winton 5%
- Matthew Reilly 4%
- Colleen McCullough 2%
- John Marsden 2%
- Di Morrissey 2%

Readers found it easier to name at least one international author whose books they enjoy reading or would like to read (65 percent), naming 280 different authors in total in 2012.

The most commonly named international authors were:

- J.K. Rowling 7%
- Stephen King 6%
- James Patterson 3%
- Jodi Picoult 3%
- Dan Brown 3%

How are Australians accessing reading materials?

More readers borrow from a libraries and use digital reading technology in 2012 compared to 2010.

Traditional Channels

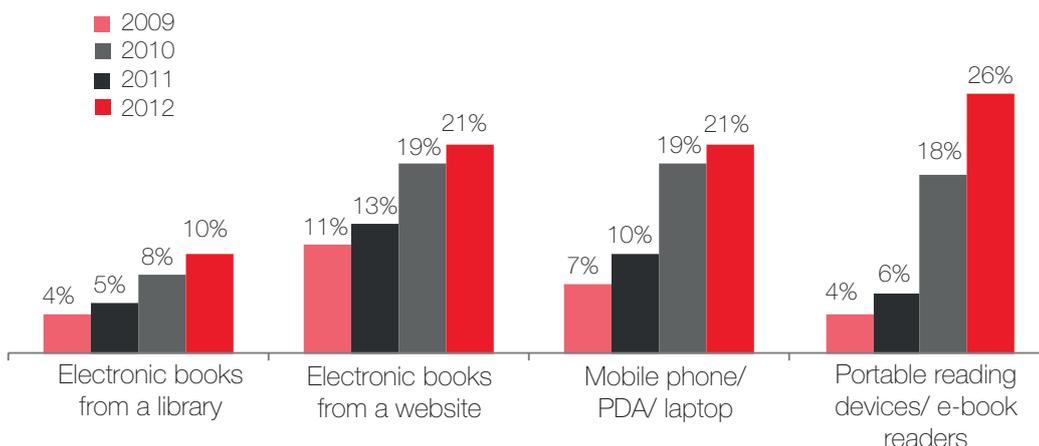
More readers borrowed from a library at least once a month in 2012 (29 percent) than 2010 (25 percent). Fewer readers visited a bookstore at least once a month in 2012 (36 percent) than in 2010 (41 percent).

Digital Technology

In 2012, two thirds of readers read online (including articles on websites, blogs and forums) at least once a week.

The chart below shows the use of digital technology for reading.

Chart 1: Technology used for reading books



Key Findings

- The use of digital technology for reading has increased significantly since 2009
- One quarter of Australian readers now use portable reading devices.
- Steadily more readers have been downloading electronic and audio books from the digital branch of a library since 2009.

How do we feel about reading?

The chart below shows attitudes about reading. The attitudes to these statements have remained stable from 2010 to 2012.

- Over 8 in 10 readers think that reading offers something unique and develops knowledge.
- Around half of readers think books are too expensive, but only one third think books are expensive when compared against other leisure activities.
- Two thirds of readers enjoy browsing in bookstores, with only one third of readers purchasing books more often from online stores than from bookstores.

Chart 2: Attitudes to reading 2012

