

## Children and young people's book ownership and access to books at home in 2022

Aimee Cole, Christina Clark and Irene Picton

Research has shown that book ownership and access to books at home can influence a variety of life outcomes, from educational attainment (Evans et al., 2010; Schubert and Becker, 2010) to income in adulthood (Brunello et al., 2015). In 2019, we found that compared with children and young people who said that they didn't have a book of their own at home, those who said that they did were not only more engaged with reading but also six times more likely to read above the level expected for their age (22% vs. 3.6%; National Literacy Trust, 2019).

Encouragingly, book ownership has increased over the last decade or so. While only 2 in 3 (66.8%) children and young people said they had a book of their own at home in 2010, this had increased to more than 9 in 10 (94.2%) by 2019 (NLT, 2019). However, far fewer children and young people from lower-income backgrounds report having a book of their own at home. In 2021, while just 1 in 20 (5.3%) children and young people who didn't receive free school meals (FSMs) said that they didn't have a book of their own, this increased to 1 in 11 (9.2%) children and young people who received FSMs (Clark et al., 2021).

### Key findings include:

- More than 9 in 10 (93.5%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 say that they have a book of their own at home, meaning 1 in 15 (6.5%) do not.
- While 1 in 17 (5.8%) of those who do not receive free school meals (FSMs) say they do not have a book, this increases to 1 in 10 (9.7%) children and young people who receive FSMs. This is a very slight increase compared with 2021, when 1 in 11 (9.2%) children and young people eligible for FSMs said that they didn't have a book of their own at home.
- Of those who said that they have books at home, 1 in 3 (32.1%) children and young people who receive FSMs had fewer than 10 books at home, compared with 1 in 5 (20.0%) of their peers who do not receive FSMs.

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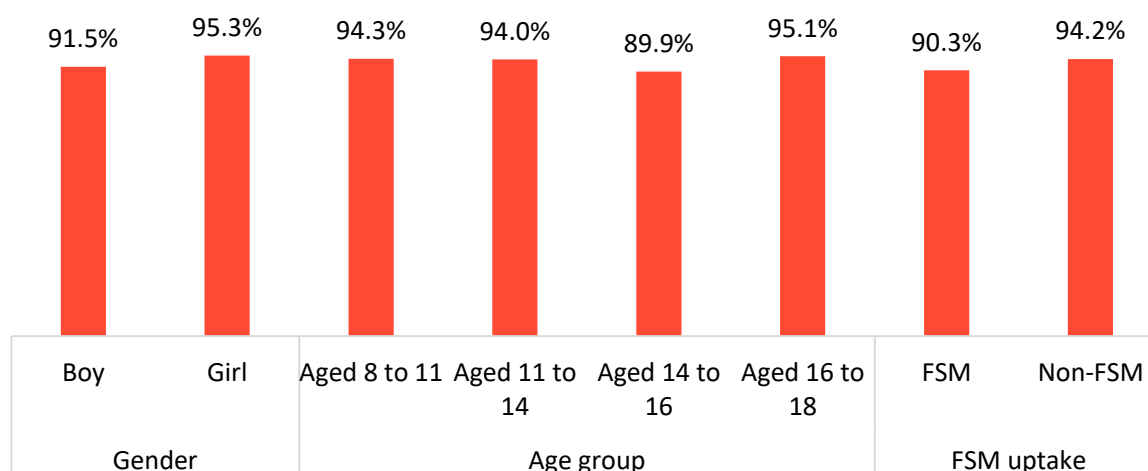
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- 1 in 4 (26.2%) young people aged 14 to 16 said they had fewer than 10 books at home, a higher percentage than for any other age group.
- Children and young people in Greater London (27.1%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (26.2%) were most likely to say they had fewer than 10 books at home, while those in the South East (18.8%) and South West (14.4%) were least likely to say this.
- Just 1 in 3 (32.6%) children and young people with fewer than 10 books at home say that they enjoy reading, compared with 3 in 5 (61.4%) of those with 50 or more books at home.
- Less than 1 in 6 (15.9%) of those children with fewer than 10 books at home said they read daily, compared with 1 in 2 (49.0%) children with 100 or more books.
- Conversely, while 6.2% of those with 100 or more books say they rarely or never read, this increases to 1 in 5 (19.5%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home.
- 3 in 4 (75.9%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home are confident in their reading ability, increasing to more than 9 in 10 (92.3%) of those with 100 or more books at home.
- Just 2 in 5 (39.7%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home said that they read to relax, compared with more than 7 in 10 (71.3%) of those with more than 100 books at home (a difference of more than 31 percentage points).

## Children and young people's book ownership in 2022

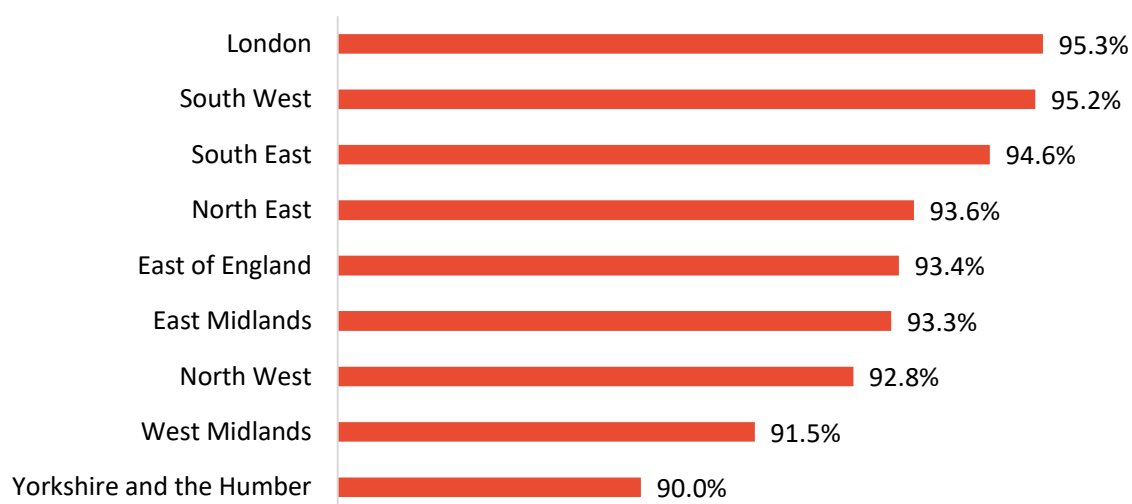
Book ownership for children and young people in the UK remained high in 2022, with 93.5% of 8- to 18-year-olds saying that they had a book of their own at home. However, this also means that 1 in 15 (6.5%) said that they don't own a book. This was even more pronounced for those who received free school meals, with nearly 1 in 10 (9.7%) of those saying that they didn't have a book of their own at home, compared with 5.8% of their better-off peers. This represents a slight increase from 2021, when 1 in 11 (9.2%) children and young people who received FSMs said they did not have a book of their own.

**Figure 1: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who said that they have a book of their own at home in 2022 by gender, age and FSM status<sup>1</sup>**



There were also some differences in book ownership by geographical location. As shown in Figure 2, children and young people who lived in London, the South East and the South West were most likely to say that they had a book of their own at home, while children and young people from the North West, the West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber were less likely to say that they had a book of their own. Overall, more children and young people in England (93.6%) said that they had a book of their own at home compared with their peers living in Wales (93.2%) or Scotland (85.7%).

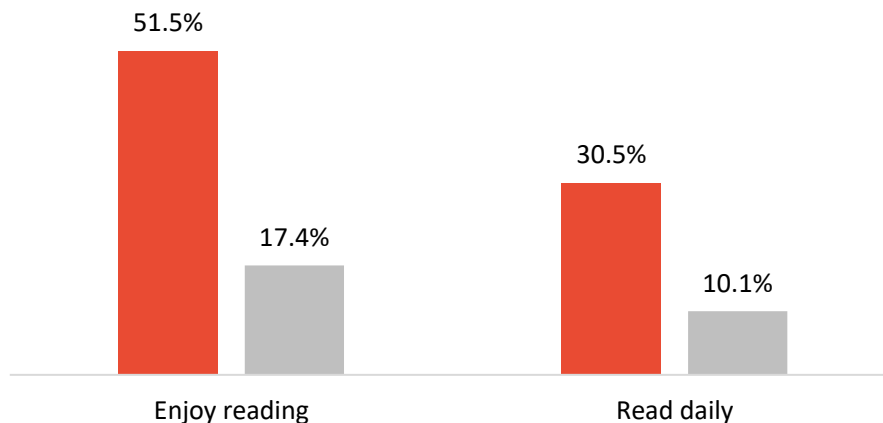
**Figure 2: Percentage of children and young people who said that they had a book of their own at home in 2022 by region in England.**



<sup>1</sup> Boys: 45.8% (n = 28,473), Girls: 48.3% (n = 30,024). 2.8% (n = 1,756) didn't want to specify their gender and 3.1% (n = 1,940) described themselves another way. Aged 8 to 11 = 15.1% (n = 9,369); Aged 11 to 14 = 64.8% (n = 40,325); Aged 14 to 16 = 15.9% (n = 9,913); Aged 16 to 18 = 4.2% (n = 2,586). FSM: 14.9% (n = 9,274); Non-FSM: 74.9% (n = 46,586); Didn't want to say: 1.4% (n = 851); Didn't know: 8.8% (n = 5,482). The demographic make-up of our 2022 sample is comparable to that of our 2021 sample.

In line with our previous research, there was an association between book ownership, reading enjoyment and reading frequency (see Figure 3). Nearly three times as many children and young people who said that they had a book of their own at home said that they enjoy reading (51.5%) and that they read daily (30.5%) compared with their peers who said that they didn't have a book of their own (17.4% and 10.1% respectively).

**Figure 3: Book ownership, reading enjoyment and reading frequency**



### Number of books at home

In addition to tracking whether children and young people had a book of their own at home, we decided in 2022 to see how many books children and young people told us that they had at home and how this relates to their reading engagement<sup>2</sup>.

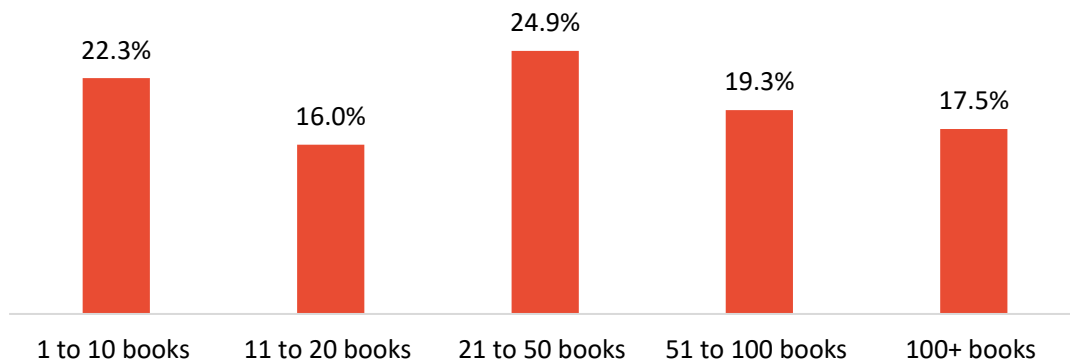
Children and young people aged 8 to 18 had, on average, 92 books at home<sup>3</sup>. We categorised the number of books into the following five groups: 1 to 10, 11 to 20, 21 to 50, 51 to 100, and 100+. Overall, there was a relatively even spread of responses across the five categories, with roughly 20% of children and young people in each (see Figure 4).

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<sup>2</sup> N = 44,690

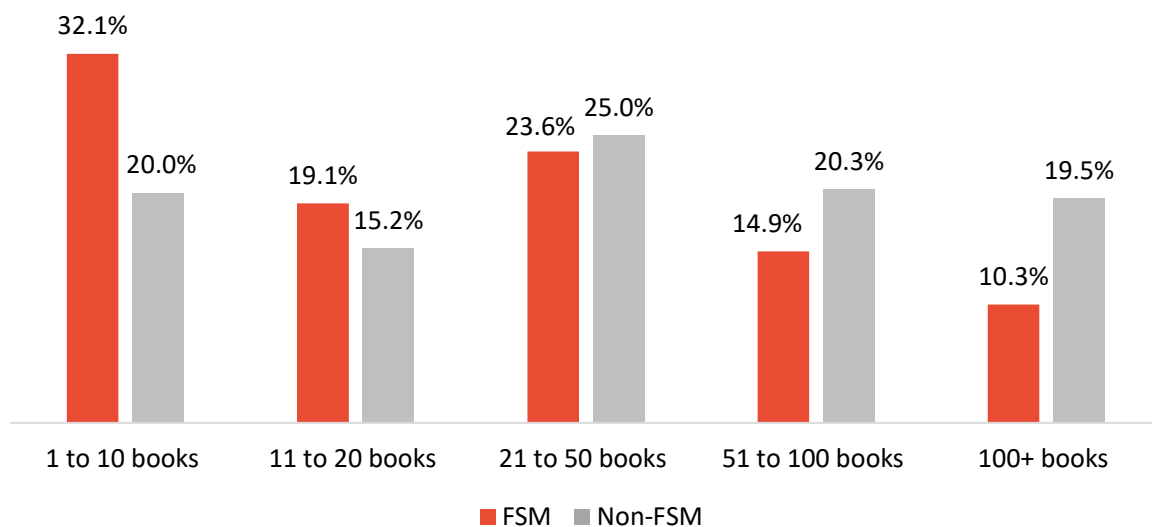
<sup>3</sup>(M = 91.98, SD = 173.818) (range = 1-1,000)

**Figure 4: 'How many books do you have at home?' for those aged 8 to 18**



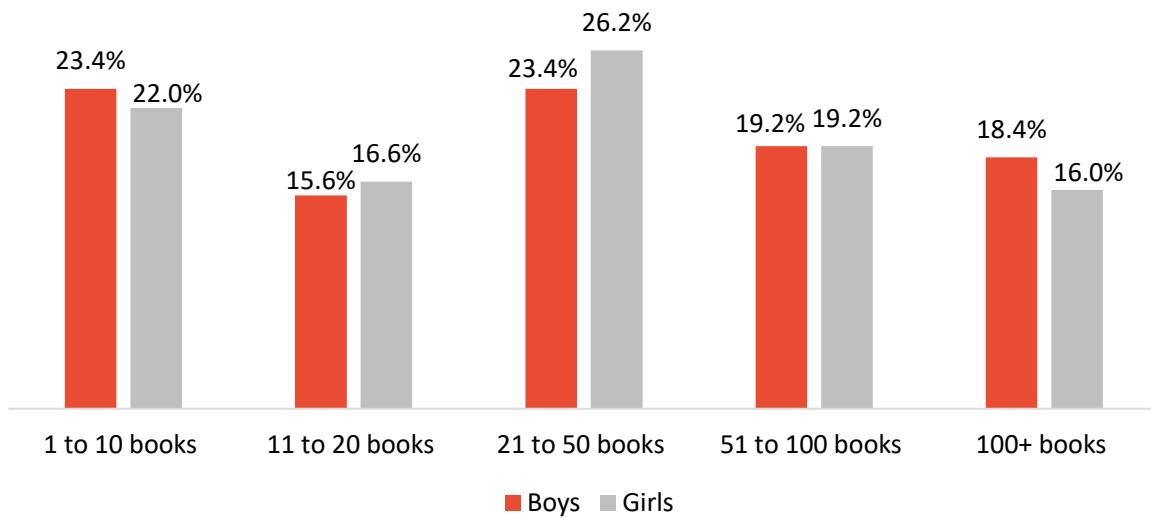
The percentage of children and young people with 10 or fewer books at home increases significantly when we consider those who receive free school meals (FSMs). 1 in 3 (32.1%) children and young people who receive FSMs said that they have fewer than 10 books at home compared with 1 in 5 (20.0%) of their non-FSM peers (see Figure 5). Conversely, compared with children and young people who receive FSMs, almost twice as many children and young people who do not say they have 100 or more books at home (10.3% vs 19.5%).

**Figure 5: 'How many books do you have at home?' by FSM status**



There were slight differences when looking at books in the home by gender. A similar percentage of boys and girls said that they had every category of number of books (see Figure 6). This is interesting given the differences seen by FSM uptake.

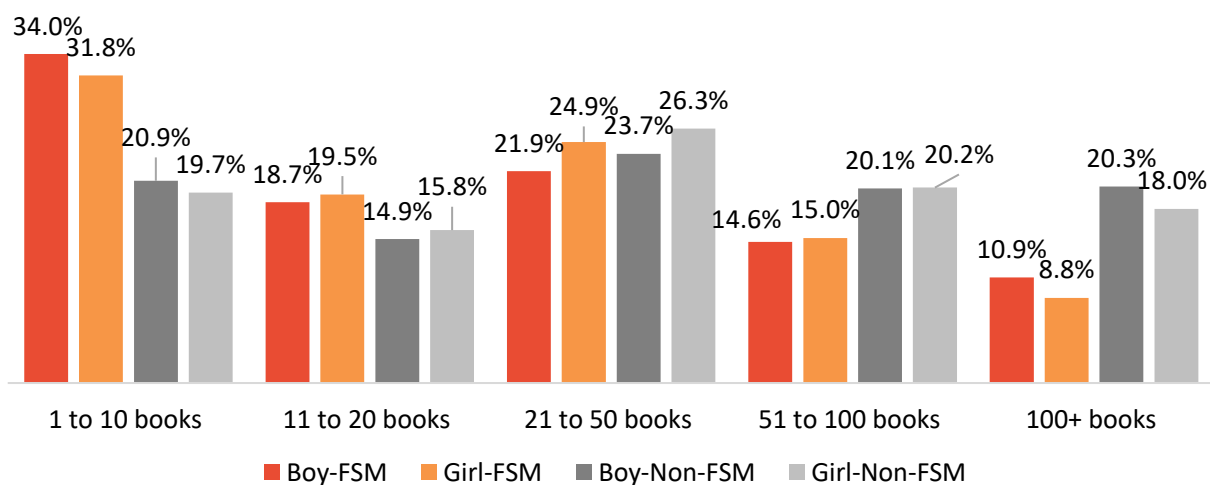
**Figure 6: 'How many books do you have at home?' by gender**



There were some differences when looking at the relationship between free-school-meal uptake and gender, and the number of books at home (see Figure 7). Indeed, while more than 1 in 3 (34.0%) boys who received FSMs said they had fewer than 10 books at home, only 1 in 5 (20.9%) boys who didn't receive FSMs said the same. Additionally, while 3 in 10 (31.8%) girls who received FSMs said that they had fewer than 10 books at home, 1 in 5 (19.7%) girls who didn't receive FSMs said the same.

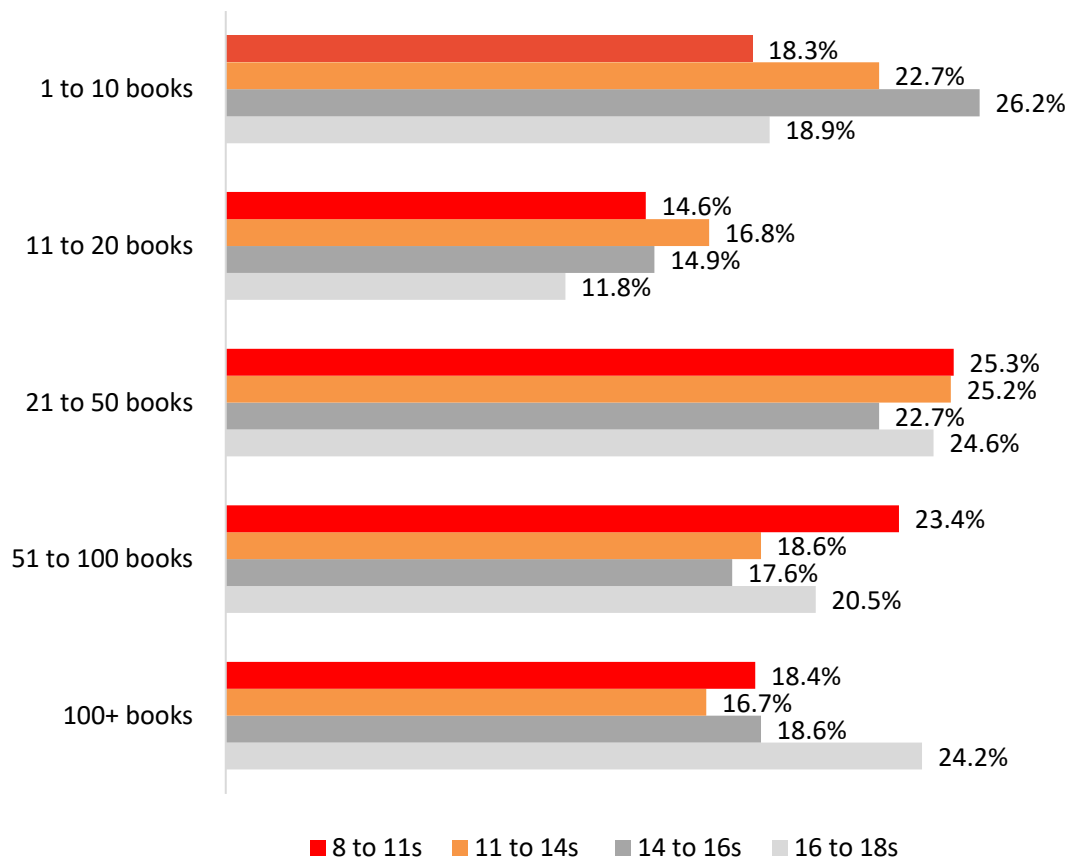
Conversely, 1 in 10 (10.9%) boys who received FSMs said that they had more than 100 books at home, compared with 1 in 5 (20.3%) boys who didn't receive FSMs. Additionally, less than 1 in 10 (8.8%) girls who received FSMs said they had more than 100 books at home, compared with almost 1 in 5 (18.0%) girls who didn't receive FSMs.

**Figure 7: 'How many books do you have at home?' by FSM status and gender**



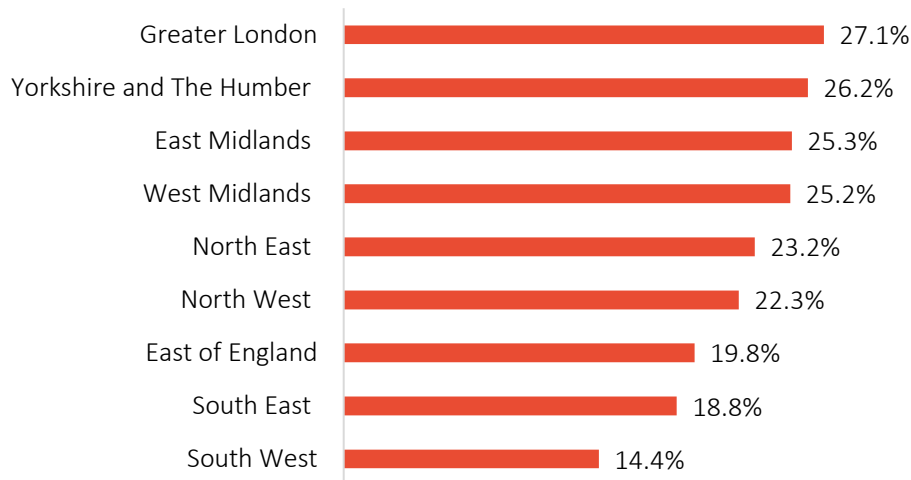
More distinctions emerged when looking at the number of books in the home by age group. A similar percentage of children across the different age groups said that they had from 11 to 20, and 21 to 50 books (see Figure 8). However, 1 in 4 (26.2%) of those aged 14 to 16 said that they had fewer than 10 books at home, a higher percentage than for any other age group in this bracket. By comparison, 1 in 4 (24.2%) of those aged 16 to 18 said that they had more than 100 books at home, more so than any other age group.

**Figure 8: 'How many books do you have at home?' by age group**



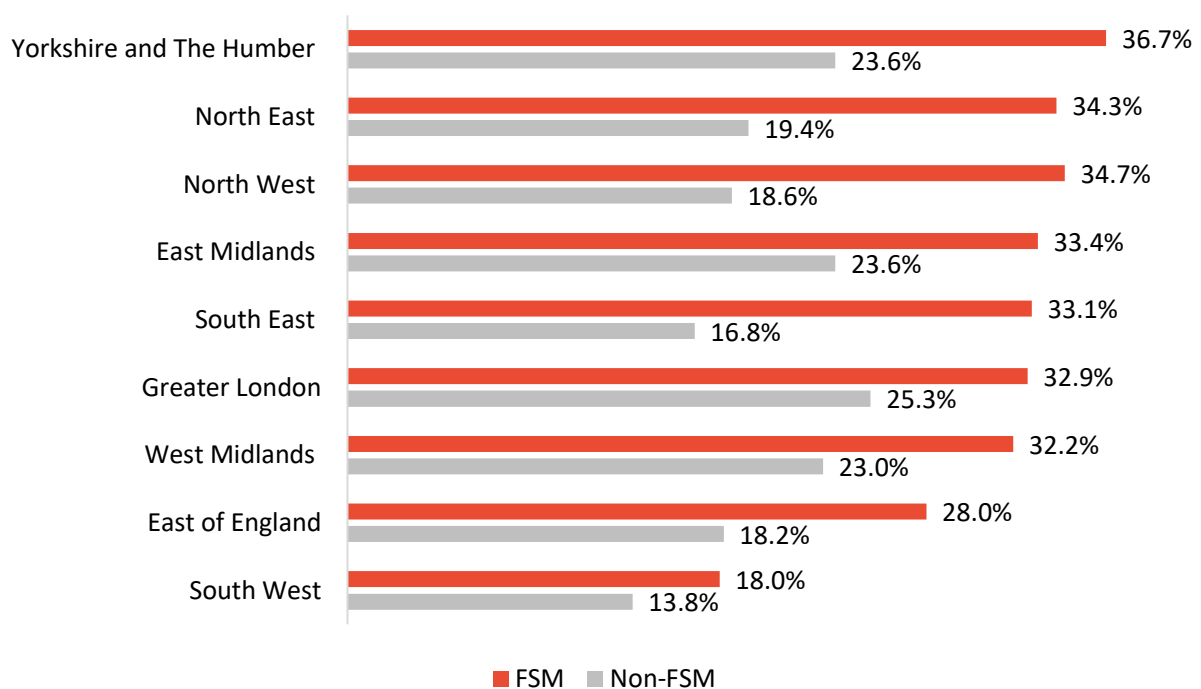
Looking by region (see Figure 9), we see that the percentage of those who had fewer than 10 books at home was highest in Greater London (27.1%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (26.2%), and lowest in the South East (18.8%) and South West (14.4%).

**Figure 9: Percentage of children who have fewer than 10 books at home, by region in England**



Looking at the difference between FSM and non-FSM children by region, we see large differences. As shown in Figure 10, children who received FSMs within each region in England were more likely to say that they had fewer than 10 books at home. The FSM gap for having fewer than 10 books at home was largest in the South East (16.3pp), North West (16.1pp) and North East (14.9pp), and smallest in the South West (4.2pp), Greater London (7.6pp) and the West Midlands (9.2pp).

**Figure 10: Percentage of children who have fewer than 10 books at home, by region and FSM in England**



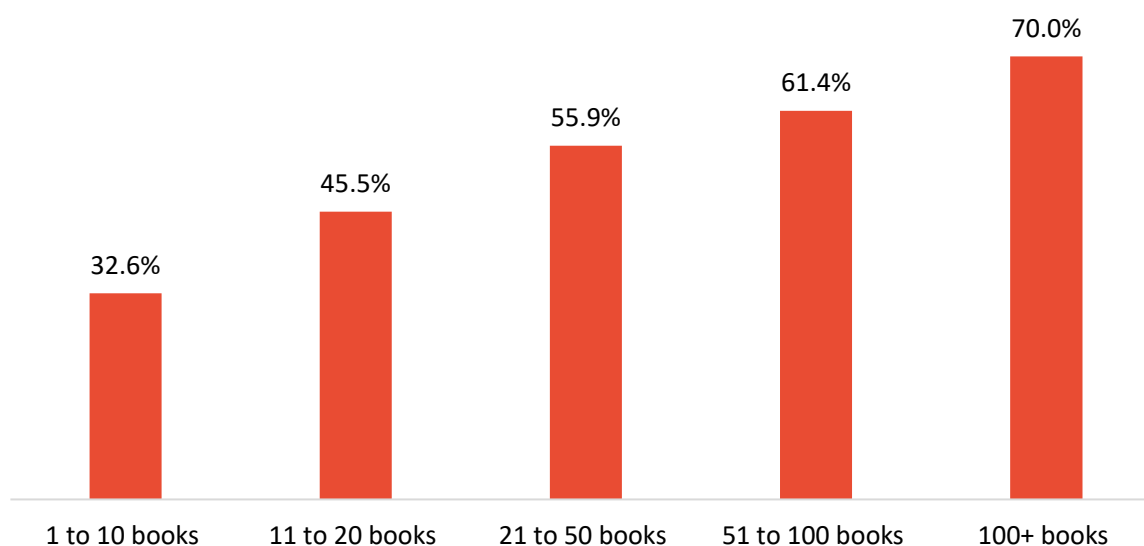


## Why does the number of books at home matter?

### Book ownership and reading enjoyment

As shown in Figure 11, there is a clear relationship between the number of books that children and young people say they have at home and their reading enjoyment<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, children and young people who say they have more than 50 books at home are around twice as likely to say they enjoy reading than those who have fewer than 10 books at home (e.g., 32.6% of those who have fewer than 10 books enjoy reading, compared with 61.4% of those who have 51-100 books).

**Figure 11: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 in 2022 who enjoy reading by estimated number of books at home**



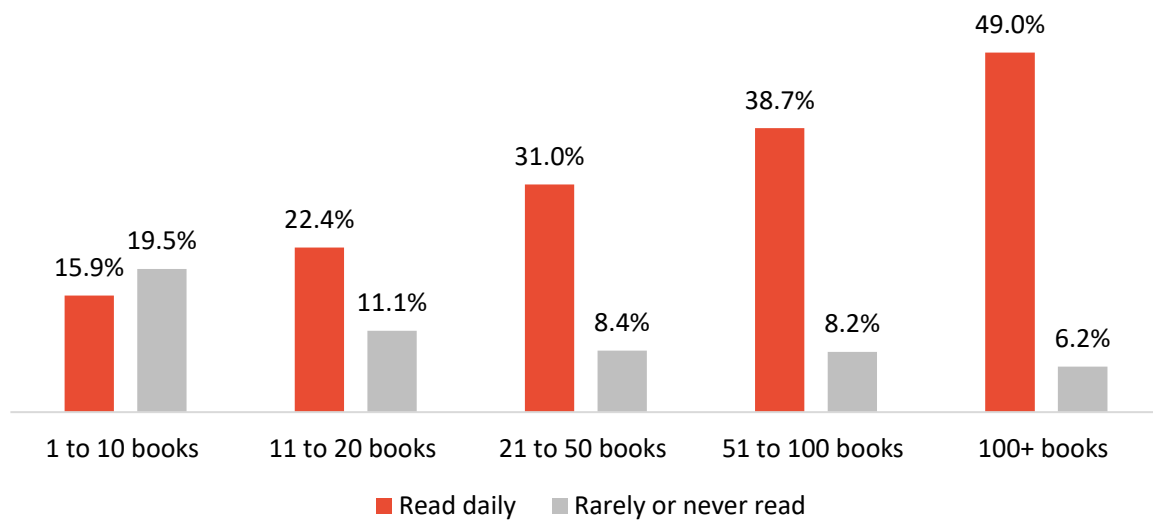
### Book ownership and reading frequency

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we also found a relationship between the number of books at home and reading frequency. Of children and young people who reported having fewer than 10 books at home, less than 1 in 6 (15.9%) said that they read daily, rising to 1 in 2 (49.0%) of those with 100 or more books. Indeed, as shown in Figure 12, daily reading increases with the number of books at home, while reading rarely or never decreases.

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<sup>4</sup> There was a statistically significant small positive correlation between the number of books at home and reading enjoyment  $r(n = 38,936) = .298, p < .000$

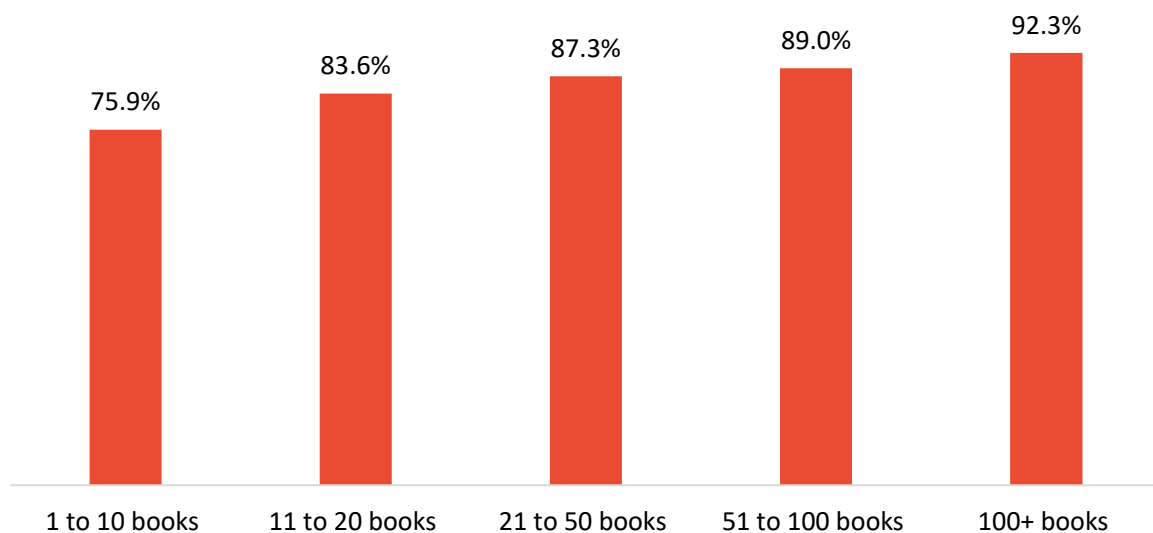
**Figure 12: Daily reading, by number of books at home**



### Book ownership and reading confidence

While, overall, confidence in reading ability is high regardless of the number of books at home, we do see a slight increase as the number of books at home increases (see Figure 13). Indeed, while 3 in 4 (75.9%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home are confident in their reading ability, this increases to more than 4 in 5 (83.6%) for those with 11 to 20 books, almost 9 in 10 (87.3%) for those with 21 to 50 and 51 to 100 books (89.0%), and more than 9 in 10 (92.3%) for those with 100 or more books at home.

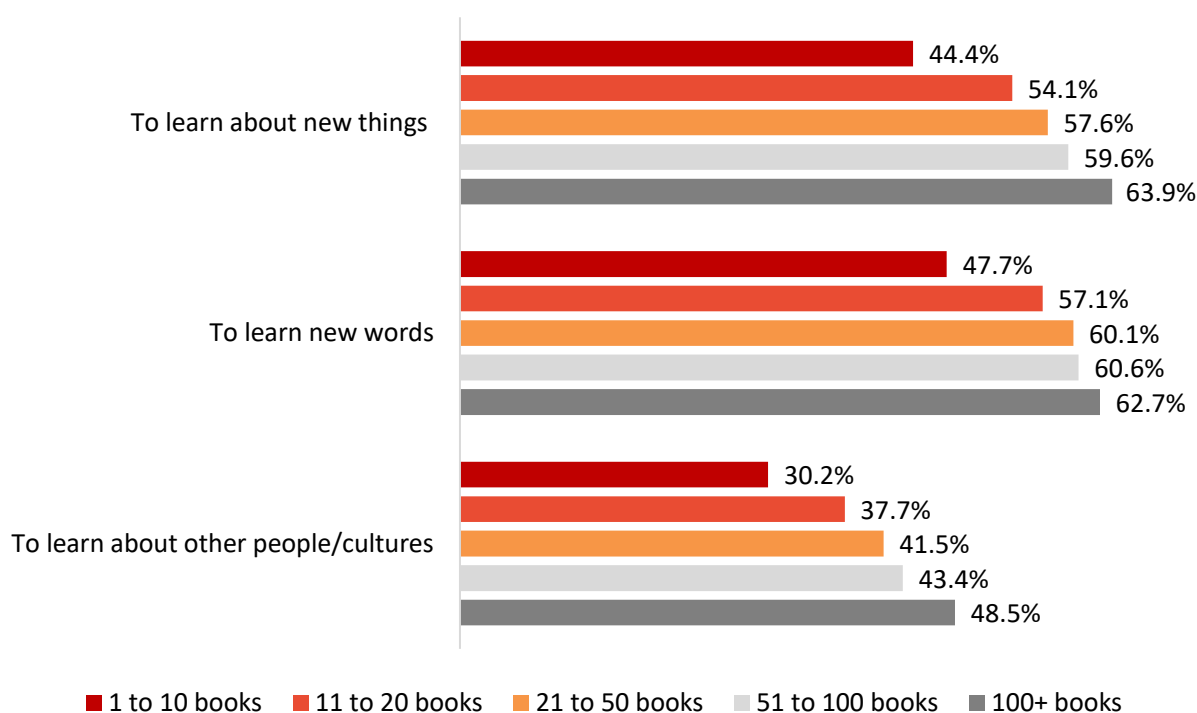
**Figure 13: Confidence in reading ability, by number of books at home**



## Book ownership and reading motivation

Some differences were also visible when looking at the number of books owned and reading motivation. For example, as shown in Figure 14, more children and young people with a higher number of books said that they read for educational purposes. Just over 2 in 5 (44.4%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home said they read to learn about new things, compared with just over 3 in 5 (63.9%) of those with more than 100 books. We see a similar pattern for reading to learn new words, with 47.7% of those with fewer than 10 books at home saying this is why they read, compared with 62.7% of those with more than 100 books at home. Finally, while fewer than 1 in 3 (30.2%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home said they read to learn about other people or cultures, half (48.5%) of those with more than 100 books at home said the same.

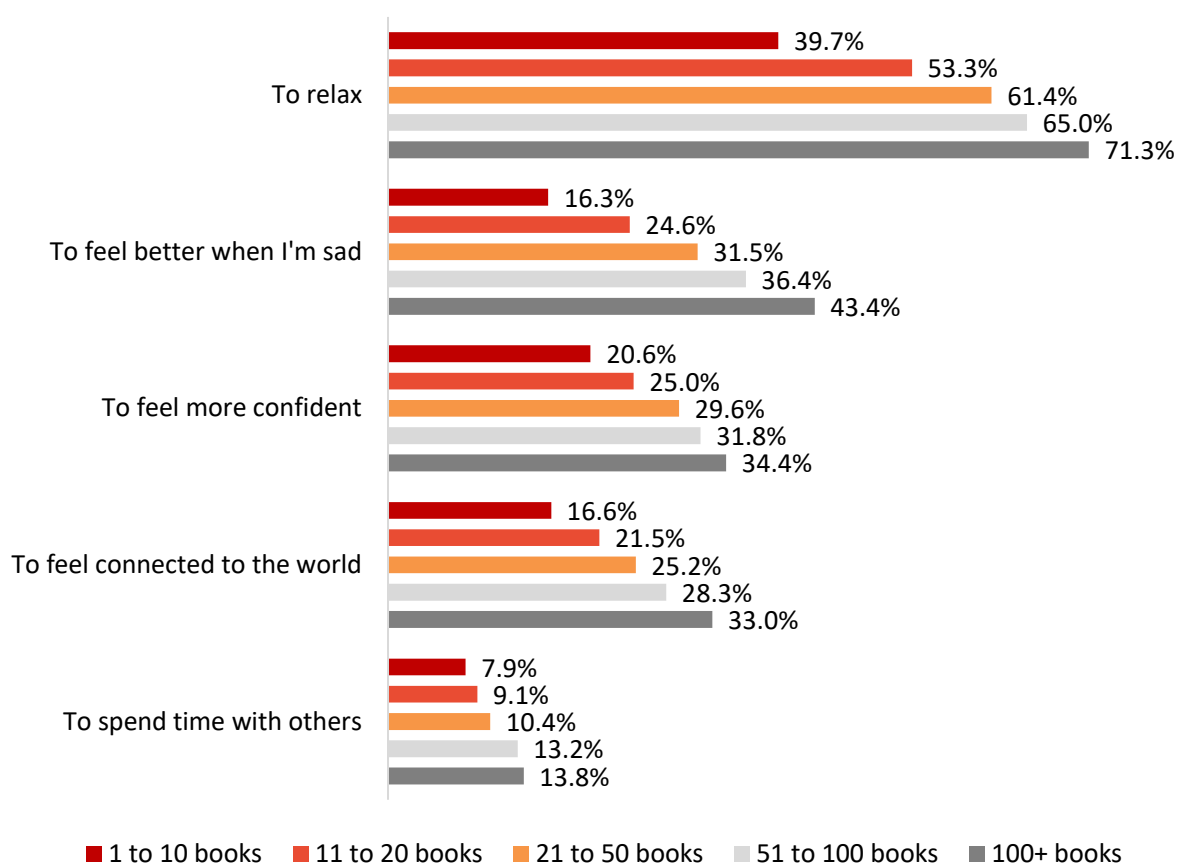
**Figure 14: Reading for educational purposes, by number of books at home**



As shown in Figure 15, a similar pattern is seen for reading for mental wellbeing, although the difference by number of books at home is greater than that for reading for educational purposes. The greatest difference relates to reading for relaxation. While 2 in 5 (39.7%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home said they read to relax, more than 7 in 10 (71.3%) of those with more than 100 books at home said the same, a difference of more than 31 percentage points. Almost 1 in 6 (16.3%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home said they read to feel better when they're sad, compared with more than 2 in 5 (43.4%) of those with more than 100 books at home. Similar patterns are seen for reading to feel more confident (20.6% vs 34.4%) and to feel connected to the world (16.6% vs 33.0%). Interestingly, children

and young people were similarly likely to say that they read to spend time with others, ranging from 7.9% for those with fewer than 10 books at home to 13.8% for those with more than 100 books at home.

**Figure 15: Reading for mental wellbeing, by number of books at home**

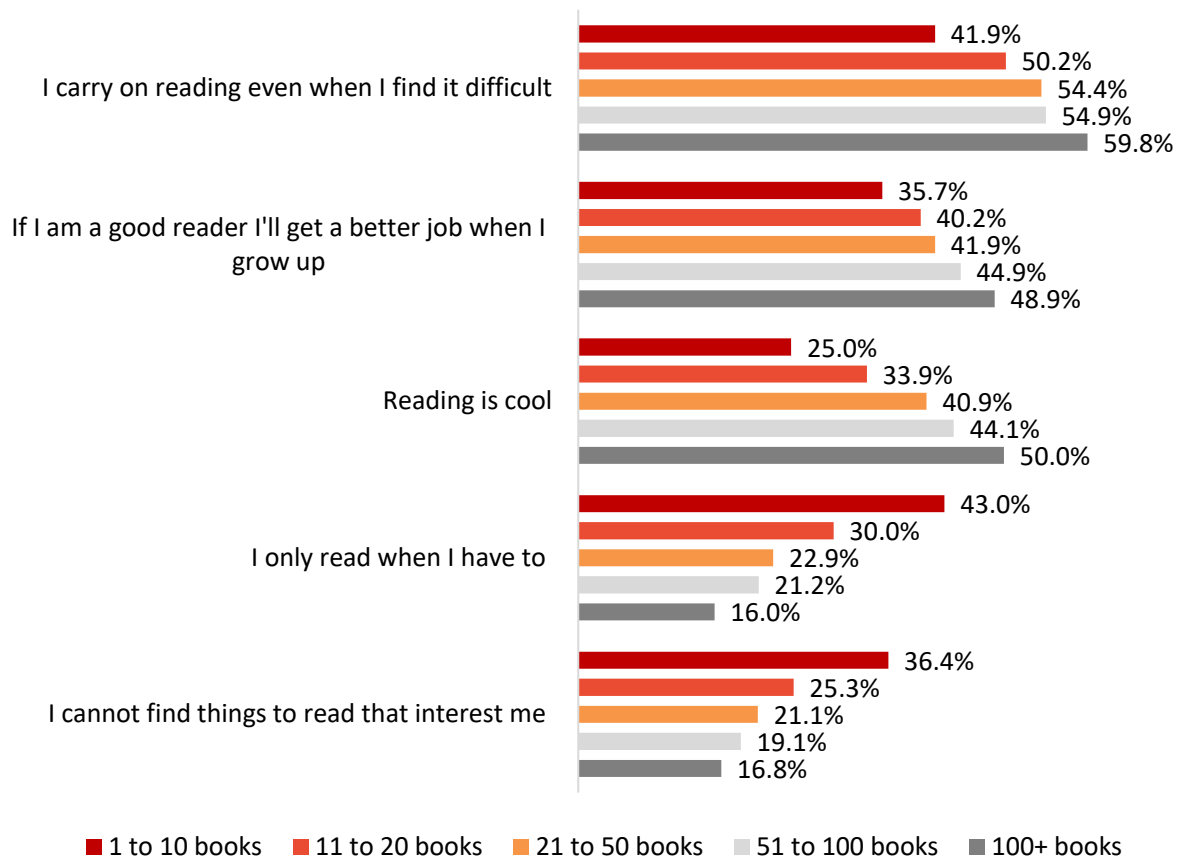


### Book ownership and reading attitudes

Children and young people with more books at home also showed more positive attitudes towards reading. For example, while 1 in 4 (25.0%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home agreed that reading is cool, half (50.0%) of those with more than 100 books at home said the same (see Figure 16). Additionally, while 2 in 5 (41.9%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home agreed that they carry on reading even when they find it difficult, 3 in 5 (59.8%) of those with more than 100 books at home said the same.

At the same time, fewer of those with more books at home showed negative reading attitudes. Indeed, while more than 2 in 5 (43.0%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home said they only read when they have to, only around 1 in 6 (16.0%) of those with more than 100 books at home said the same. Additionally, while more than 1 in 3 (36.4%) of those with fewer than 10 books at home said they cannot find things to read that interest them, only around 1 in 6 (16.8%) of those with more than 100 books at home said the same.

**Figure 16: Reading attitudes, by number of books at home**



## Summary and discussion

We have been asking children whether they have a book of their own at home for many years. Our previous research has shown that book ownership is related to better reading engagement and outcomes, while other studies have evidenced the benefits of book ownership on children’s educational attainment and their income as adults. In this report, we focused for the first time on how many books children and young people have at home and explored to what extent this was associated with their wider reading.

This new research found that, compared with children and young people who have fewer than 10 books, a higher percentage of those with more books say that they enjoy reading, read daily and are confident in their reading ability. More also said that they read for various educational and wellbeing purposes and showed more positive attitudes towards reading. These findings suggest that while having any books of your own at home is likely to have an impact on reading engagement, having more than 10 books is associated with a wide range of positive reading attitudes and behaviours. Notably, these impacts increased steadily in proportion to the number of books children reported having at home.

Indeed, children with 50 to 100 books at home were almost twice as likely to say they enjoyed reading compared with those who had fewer than 10 books at home (61.4% vs. 32.6%). Similarly, less than 1 in 6 (15.9%) of those children with fewer than 10 books at home said they read daily, compared with 1 in 2 (49.0%) children with 100 or more books. This is perhaps unsurprising, as having books readily available at home offers children opportunities for regular reading for pleasure that they otherwise would not have.

However, as in previous years, far fewer children and young people from lower-income backgrounds reported having books of their own at home. Almost 1 in 10 (9.7%) children who receive FSMs said they do not have a single book of their own at home, and 1 in 3 (32.1%) had fewer than 10 books, compared with 1 in 5 (20.0%) of their non-FSM peers. This is particularly worrying as research shows that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds experienced the greatest learning loss in reading over the pandemic, and national tests and assessments have further indicated a widening attainment gap between them and their more-advantaged peers. It is essential that increasing book ownership is included as part of efforts to support this group of children, allowing them the same opportunities as their peers to enjoy reading their own books at home.

Our sincere thanks to all of the schools that, despite really challenging times, participated in our survey this year. We couldn't do it without you!

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