



Children and Young People's Reading in Manchester in 2016

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National Literacy Trust

2016

Words for life

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Key findings

5,256 children and young people aged 8-18 from 60 schools in Manchester participated in this survey about their reading from April to June 2016. The key findings include,

- **66.4%** of children and young people in Manchester say that they enjoy reading
- **38.7%** of children and young people in Manchester read daily outside class
- Children and young people in Manchester spend **35.9 minutes a day on average reading a book**
- **Eight** books are read on average in a month by children and young people in Manchester
- **Popular materials read outside class** at least once a month include song lyrics, fiction and text messages
- **62.3%** say that reading is cool, but nearly **a third** (32.8%) say that they read only when they have to

However, compared with their peers nationally,

- **Fewer children and young people in Manchester enjoy reading** (66.4% vs. 69.9%)
- **Fewer children and young people in Manchester read daily outside class** (38.7% vs. 44.8%)
- Children and young people in Manchester on average **spend fewer minutes reading a book** in a typical day (35.9 minutes vs. 42.55 minutes). They also on average spend **fewer minutes reading something online** in a typical day (54.5 minutes vs. 101.01 minutes)
- **Fewer children and young people in Manchester think positively about reading** (for example, more children and young people in Manchester agree that they prefer watching TV to reading: 48.6% vs. 43.8% and that they only read when they have to: 32.8% vs. 29.5%)

There are also subgroups of children and young people whose reading engagement ought to be improved. For example,

- **Fewer boys than girls enjoy reading** (60.1% vs. 73.5%), **read daily outside class** (32.7% vs. 45.3%) **or think positively about reading** (for example, 38.8% of boys agree that they read only when they have to compared with 26.0% of girls)
- **Fewer young people aged 11-14 than aged 8-11 enjoy reading** (47.3% vs. 69.9%), **read daily outside class** (28.3% vs. 40.7%) **or think positively about reading** (for example, half as many agree that reading is cool: 36.6% vs. 67.4%. More also agree that they cannot find things to read that interest them: 42% vs. 26.8%). They also **spend fewer minutes reading a book in a typical day** (29.7 minutes vs. 36.89 minutes), and **read half as many books** a month as those aged 8-11 (4.32 vs. 8.78)
- **Fewer pupils who receive free school meals read daily outside class** (35.8% vs. 39.8%) and **think less positively about reading** (for example, more FSM pupils agree that they only read when they have to: 39.6% vs. 28.9%. FSM pupils are nearly twice as likely to agree that they would be embarrassed if their friends saw them reading: 21.5% vs. 12.8%)

Introduction

This report presents information on the enjoyment of reading, reading behaviours and reading attitudes of over 5,000 pupils from 60 schools in Manchester.

In 2016, Manchester City Council joined forces with the National Literacy Trust to create Read Manchester, a campaign to promote reading and boost literacy throughout the city. Read Manchester aims to raise awareness of the importance of reading and transform children's lives and the future of the city by galvanising a range of partners from the community, including: schools, businesses, libraries, public services and the media.

The National Literacy Trust conducted the survey in primary and secondary schools in Manchester in the spring of 2016 to establish how much children and young people within the city enjoy reading, how often they read, what they read and what they think about reading. This will not only highlight any areas in need of improvement but it is also hoped that if the survey is repeated after a year these baseline data will help us explore any changes that may have occurred as a result of Read Manchester activities.

Description of the sample

The data were collected from April to June 2016. Invitations to take part in the survey were sent to all schools within the Greater Manchester area (N = 169). 5,256 children and young people aged 8-18 from 60 schools participated in this survey.

There was near equal gender split in our sample (girls 49.9%, boys 50.1%). The sample contained mostly pupils aged 8-11 (83.4%), followed by pupils aged 11-14 (14.6%), pupils aged 14-16 (1.8%) and pupils aged 16+ (0.2%). 30.4% of children and young people said that they received free school meals, a percentage that is above the national average¹.

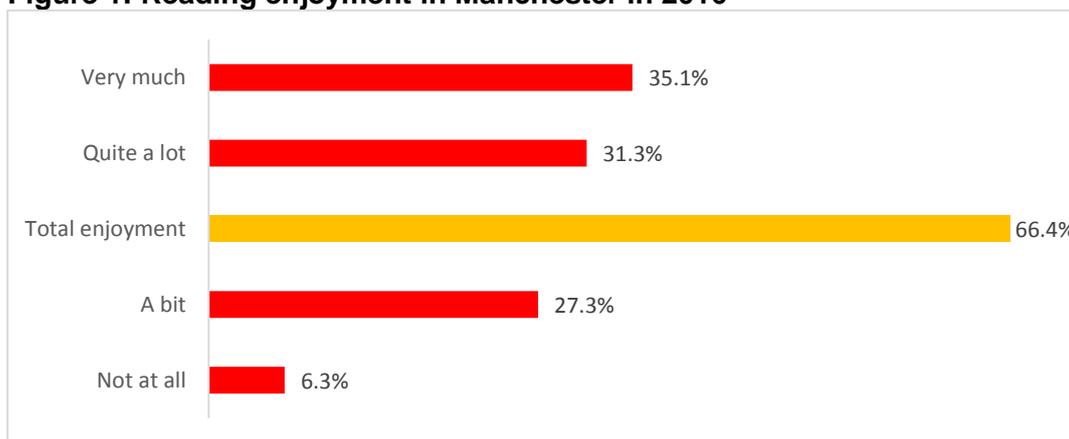
¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/433680/SFR16_2015_Main_Text.pdf

What is the level of reading engagement of children and young people in Manchester?

Based on data from 5,256 children and young people aged 8-18 who participated in this survey in spring 2016,

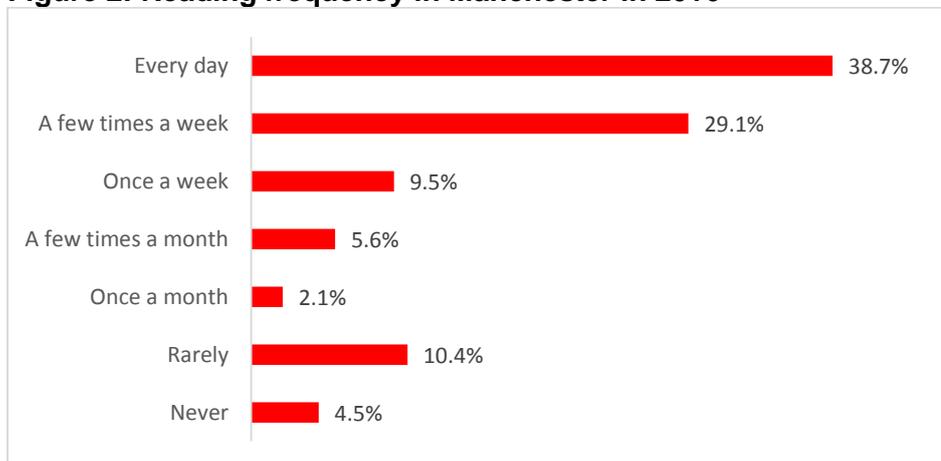
- **66.4%** of children and young people in Manchester say that they enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot (see Figure 1). However, over a quarter of children and young people only enjoy reading a bit.

Figure 1: Reading enjoyment in Manchester in 2016



- **38.7%** of children and young people in Manchester read daily outside class (see Figure 2). One in seven (14.9%) say that they rarely or never read outside class.

Figure 2: Reading frequency in Manchester in 2016



- Children and young people from our Manchester sample said that they read an average of **eight** books in a typical month².
- **73.8%** of children and young people in Manchester say that they have a favourite book or story. Figure 3 outlines some of the titles that were most frequently mentioned.

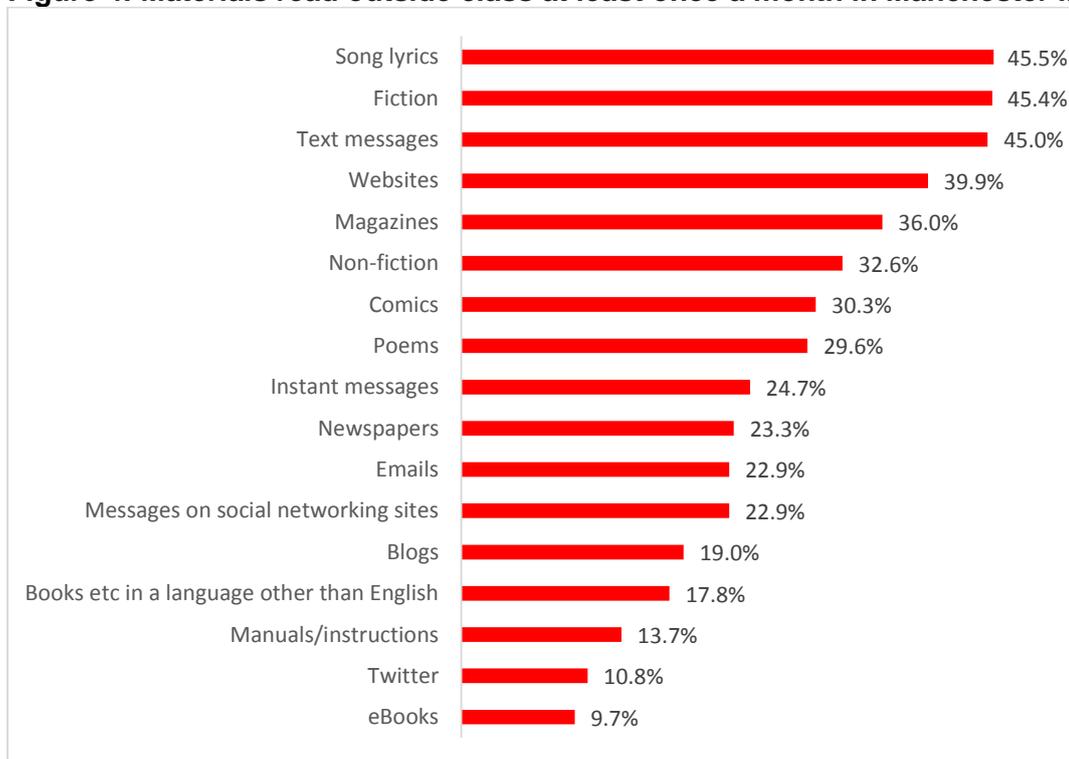
² SD = 7.457

Figure 3: Frequently mentioned books or stories by children and young people in Manchester in 2016



- Children and young people in Manchester on average spend **35.9 minutes** a day reading a book. They spend on average **54.5 minutes a day³** reading something online.
- **Song lyrics, fiction and text messages** are the materials most commonly read by children and young people in Manchester at least once a month outside class (see Figure 4).

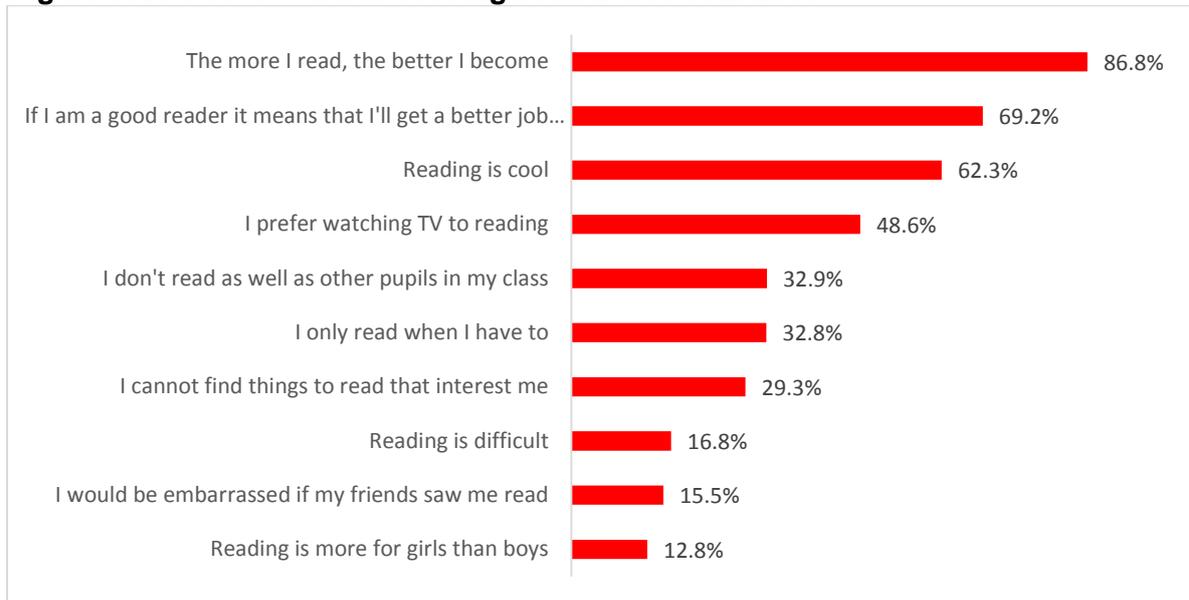
Figure 4: Materials read outside class at least once a month in Manchester in 2016



³ Book SD = 58.16; online SD = 106.43

- **62.3%** say that reading is cool. However, **32.8%** read only when they have to (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Attitudes towards reading in Manchester in 2016

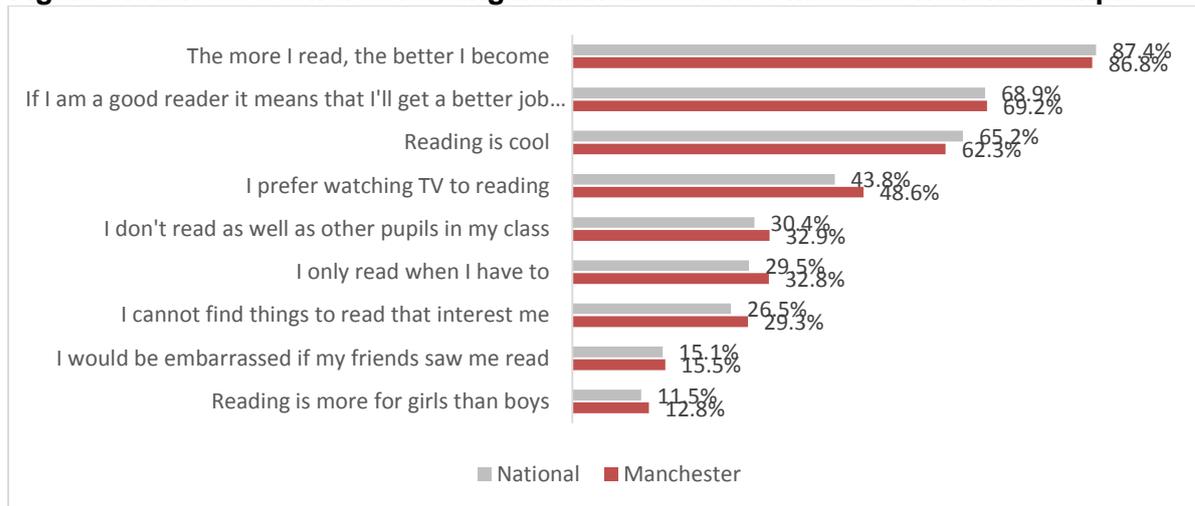


How does this compare with their peers nationally?

As the sample from Manchester contained more pupils aged 8-11 (83.4% vs. 21.9%), fewer pupils aged 11-14 (14.6% vs. 63.2%) and more pupils who receive free school meals (30.4% vs. 14.6%) compared with our national sample, a matched sample (N = 9,816) was created to allow for meaningful comparisons. Compared with their peers nationally,

- **Fewer children and young people in Manchester enjoy reading** (66.4% vs. 69.9%).
- **Fewer children and young people in Manchester read daily outside class** (38.7% vs. 44.8%).
- Children and young people in Manchester on average **spend fewer minutes reading a book** in a typical day (35.9 minutes vs. 42.55 minutes). They also on average spend **fewer minutes reading something online** in a typical day (54.5 minutes vs. 101.01 minutes).
- **Fewer children and young people in Manchester think positively about reading** (see Figure 6). For example, fewer children and young people in Manchester agree that reading is cool, while more agree that they read only when they have to and that they cannot find things to read that interest them.

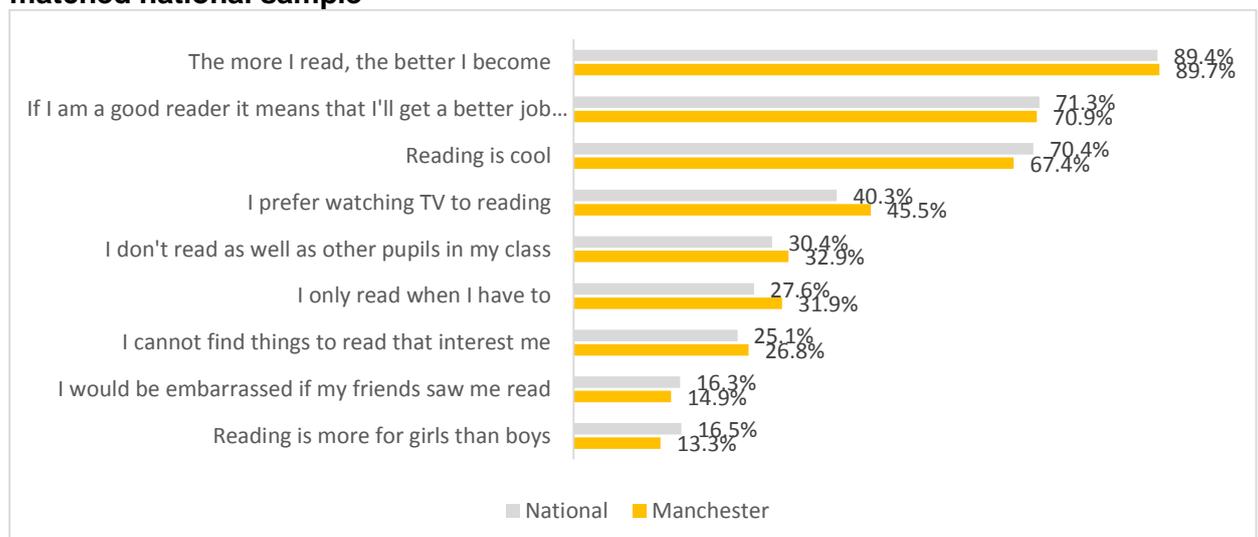
Figure 6: Attitudes towards reading in Manchester vs a matched national sample



As the Manchester sample contains mostly **children aged 8-11**, we thought it would be interesting to compare only those people with their peers nationally (N = 5,312, matched in terms of their gender and free school meal uptake). Compared with their peers nationally,

- **Slightly fewer children aged 8-11 in Manchester enjoy reading** (69.9% vs. 72.6%), but this difference was not statistically significant.
- **Fewer children in Manchester aged 8-11 read daily outside class** (40.7% vs. 45.5%).
- Children aged 8-11 in Manchester on average **spend fewer minutes reading a book** in a typical day (36.89 minutes vs. 40.86⁴).
- **Fewer children aged 8-11 in Manchester think positively about reading**⁵. The percentage agreement for each attitudinal statement is outlined in Figure 7, which shows that slightly more children in Manchester said that they only read when they have to and that they prefer watching TV to reading, while children nationally were slightly more likely to say that reading is cool.

Figure 7: Reading attitudes among children aged 8-11 in Manchester and a matched national sample



⁴ Manchester SD = 58.46; national SD = 66.99

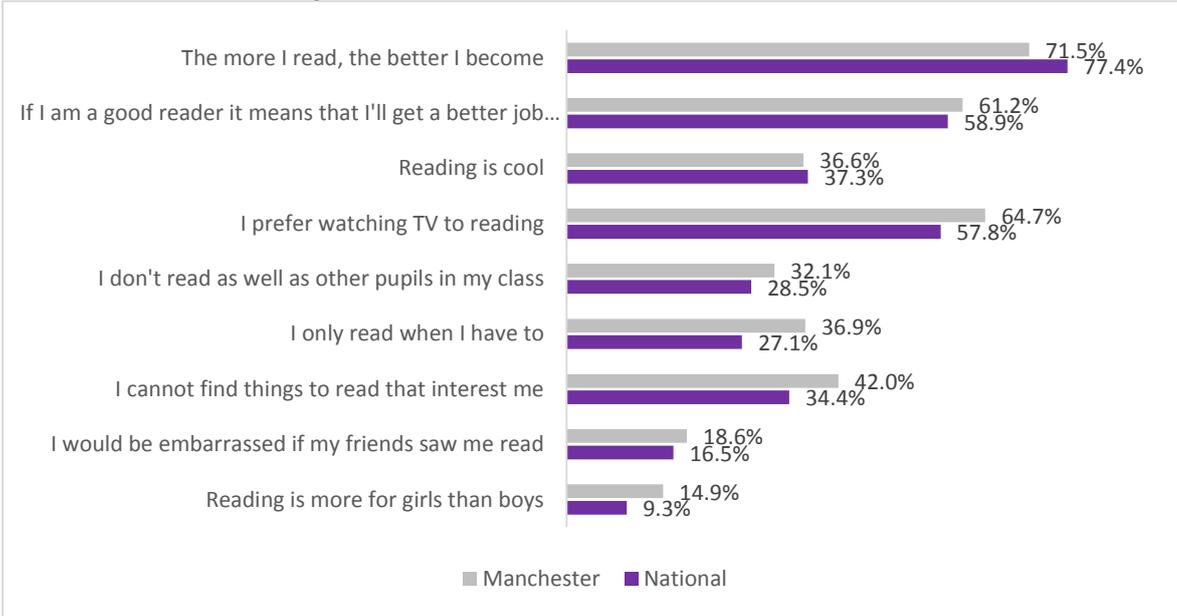
⁵ National: M = 2.356, SD = .759; Manchester: M = 2.401, SD = .861

Analyses of our annual literacy survey data from 2015 of differences between 11-14-year-olds in the northwest of England and their peers nationally showed that significantly fewer young people aged 11-14 in the northwest of England enjoy reading compared with their peers nationally (46% vs. 55%). They are also significantly less likely to read daily outside class (35% vs 43%) and less likely to think positively about reading.

The sample of young people aged 11-14 in Manchester was relatively small (N = 754; 14.6% of overall sample). Comparing these to a matched sample (N = 2,550, matched in terms of gender and free school meal uptake) corroborates the above findings and shows that compared with their peers nationally,

- **Fewer young people aged 11-14 in Manchester enjoy reading** (47.2% vs. 51.7%).
- **Fewer young people aged 11-14 in Manchester read daily** (28.3% vs. 42.0%).
- Young people aged 11-14 in Manchester **spend fewer minutes reading a book** in a typical day (29.70 minutes vs. 41.52⁶).
- **Fewer young people aged 11-14 in Manchester think positively about reading** (see Figure 8). For example, they are more likely to agree that they only read when they have to (36.9% vs. 27.1%) and that they cannot find things to read that interest them (42.0% vs. 34.4%).

Figure 8: Reading attitudes among young people aged 11-14 in Manchester and a matched national sample



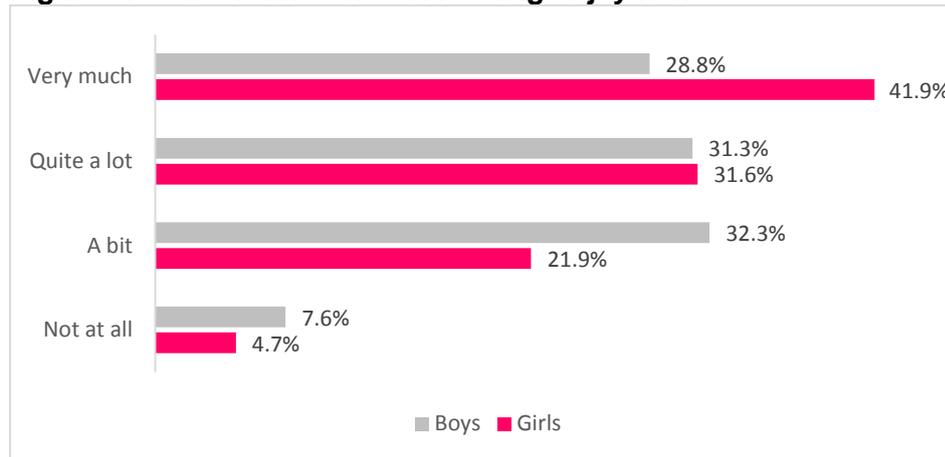
⁶ Manchester SD = 57.10; national SD = 74.711

What are the subgroups of children and young people who could be more engaged with reading?

... More needs to be done to engage boys in reading

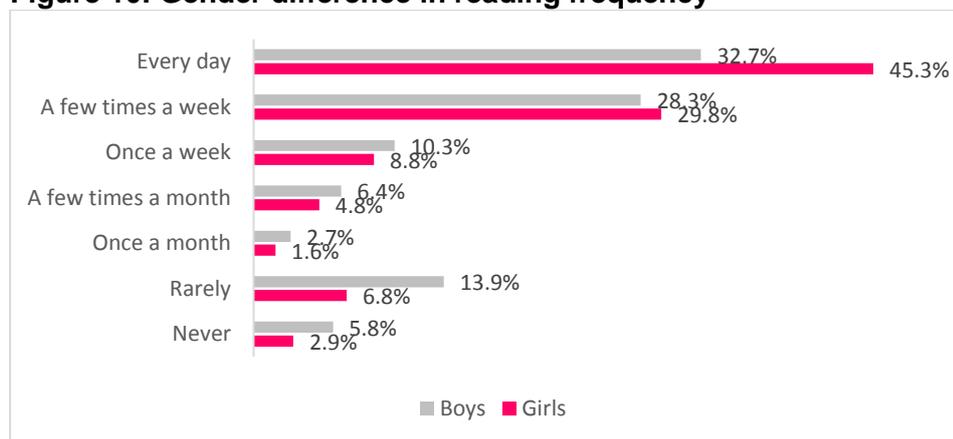
Boys are significantly less likely than girls to enjoy reading. Figure 9 illustrates the difference in reading enjoyment in percentages and shows that 41.9% of girls say that they enjoy reading very much compared with only 28.8% of boys. Conversely, while nearly a third of boys say that they only enjoy reading a bit, only a fifth of girls say the same.

Figure 9: Gender difference in reading enjoyment



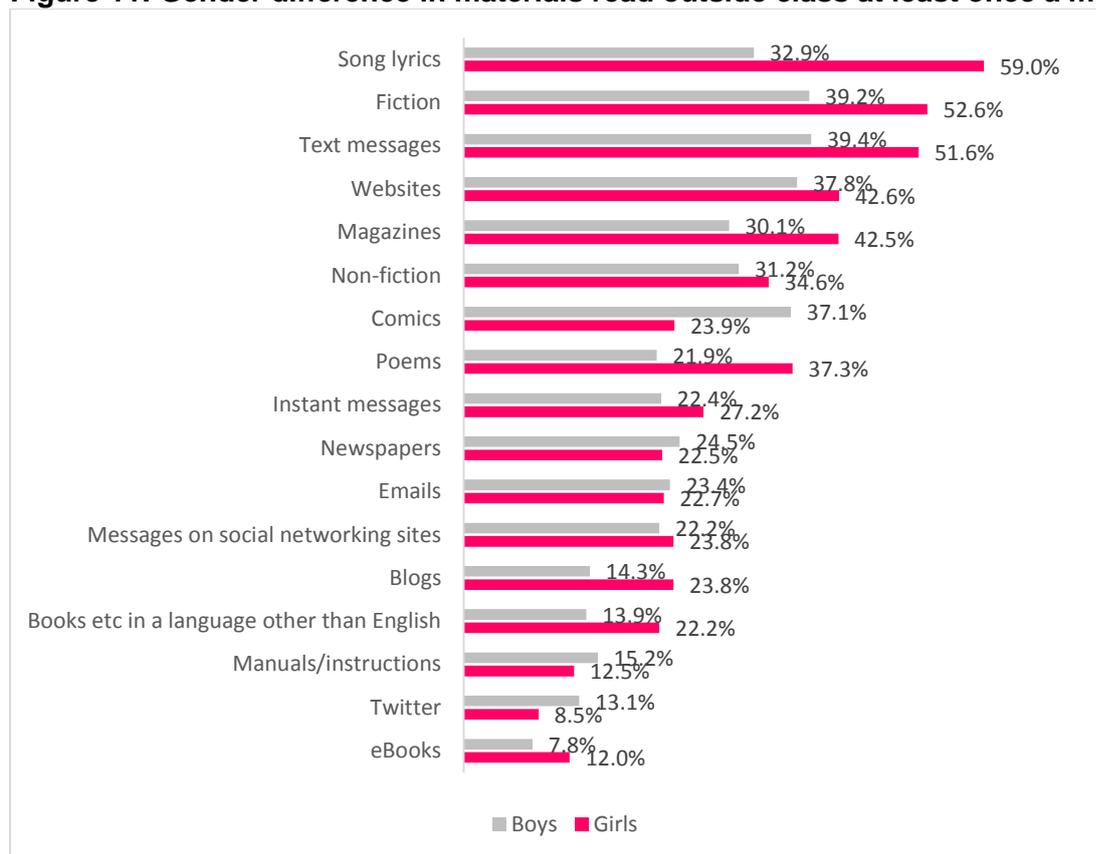
Significantly fewer boys read outside class. In terms of percentages, Figure 10 shows that only 32.7% of boys read daily outside class compared with 45.3% of girls. Conversely, a fifth (19.7%) of boys say that they rarely or never read compared with a tenth (9.7%) of girls.

Figure 10: Gender difference in reading frequency



Boys are less likely to read widely outside class. For example, more girls than boys read song lyrics, fiction, text messages, magazines, poems, blogs and materials in a language other than English outside class at least once a month (see Figure 11). However, significantly more boys than girls say that they read comics and Twitter outside class at least once a month.

Figure 11: Gender difference in materials read outside class at least once a month



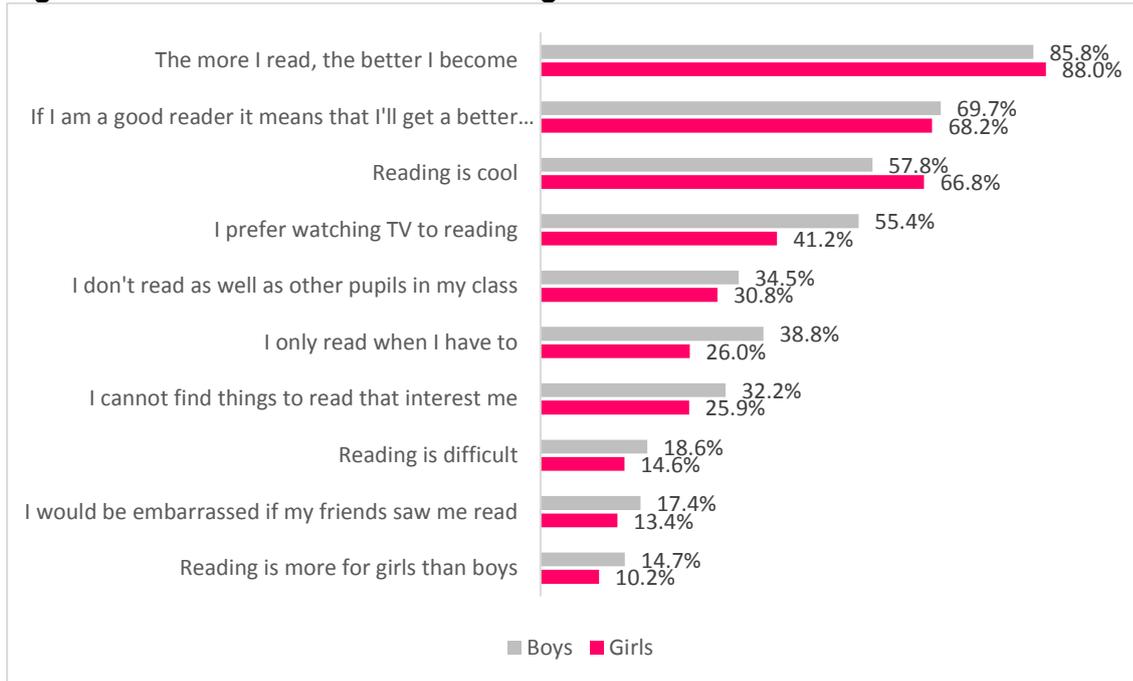
Boys read fewer books than girls in a typical month. Girls ($M = 8.73$, $SD = 7.628$) are significantly more likely to read more books in a typical month than boys ($M = 7.41$, $SD = 7.259$).

Boys also spend less time reading books in a typical day. While girls spend more minutes reading books in a typical day (girls: 39.47 minutes; boys: 32.95), there was no significant difference in how many minutes in a typical day they read something online (girls: 56.66 minutes; boys: 53.35 minutes).

Boys feel less enthusiastic about reading⁷. Figure 12 illustrates this difference in percentages and shows that fewer boys than girls agree that reading is cool, while more agree that they only read when they have to, that they prefer watching TV to reading and that they cannot find things to read that interest them.

⁷ Girls: $M = 2.283$, $SD = .713$; boys: $M = 2.495$, $SD = .763$; with lower means indicating more positive reading attitudes

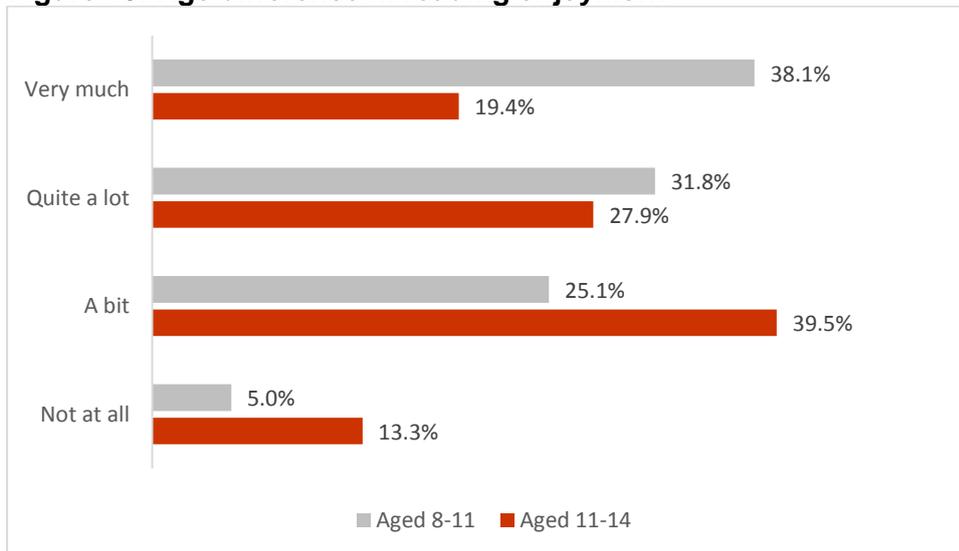
Figure 12: Gender difference in reading attitudes



... Pupils aged 11-14 could be more engaged with reading

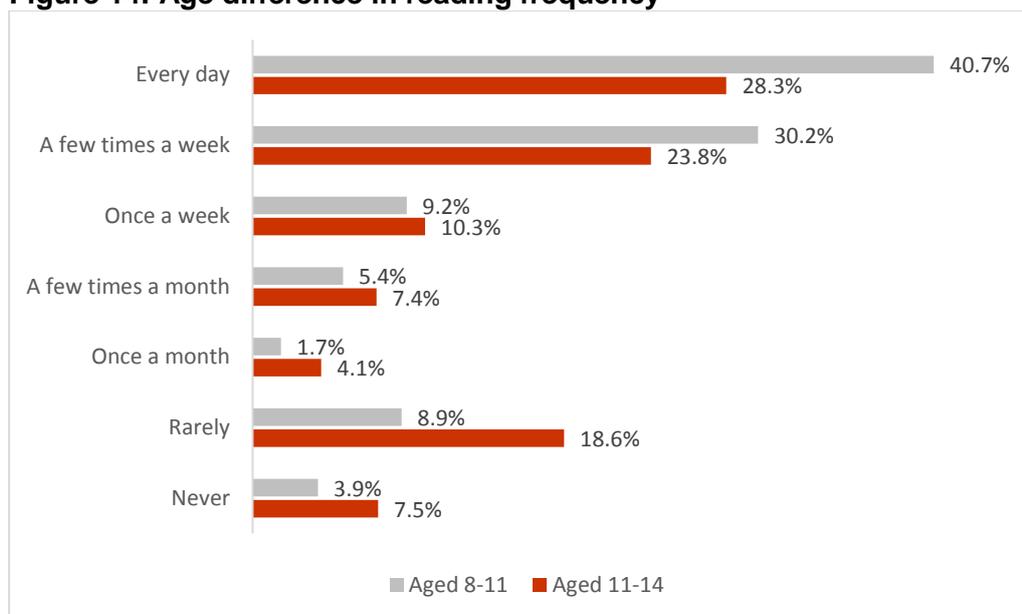
Fewer pupils aged 11-14 enjoy reading compared with pupils aged 8-11. More specifically, only 47.3% of 11-14-year-olds compared with 69.9% of 8-11-year-olds enjoy reading either very much or quite a lot (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Age difference in reading enjoyment



Significantly fewer pupils aged 11-14 read outside class. Figure 14 outlines daily reading rates in percentages and shows that only 28.3% of 11-14-year-olds read daily outside class compared with 40.7% of pupils aged 8-11. By contrast, over a quarter young people aged 11-14 say that they rarely or never read outside class.

Figure 14: Age difference in reading frequency



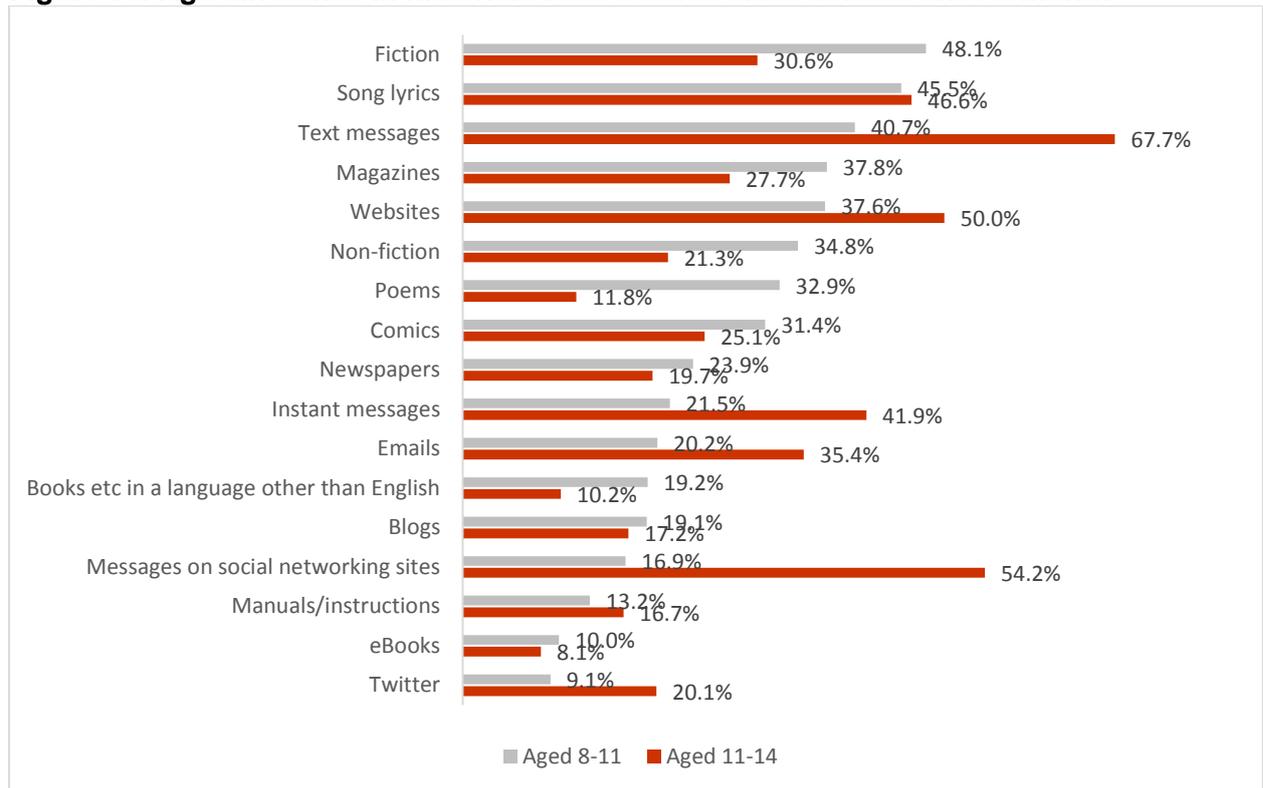
Young people aged 11-14 spend fewer minutes a day reading a book: Young people aged 11-14 spend an average of 29.70 minutes a day reading a book compared with children aged 8-11 who on average spend 36.89 minutes reading a book in a typical day. However, **young people aged 11-14 spend double the minutes reading something online** compared with their younger counterparts: 11-14-year-olds spend an average of 105.29 minutes a day reading something online compared with those aged 8-11 who spend an average of only 44.89 minutes a day reading online content.

Young people aged 11-14 read half as many books in a typical month compared with children aged 8-11. Children aged 8-11 say that they read an average of 8.78 books in a typical month compared with those aged 11-14 who read an average of 4.32 books over the same time period⁸.

Young people aged 11-14 are more likely to read technology-based materials at least once a month outside class compared with their younger counterparts (see Figure 15). By contrast, only 30.6% of young people aged 11-14 say that they read fiction compared with 48.1% of those aged 8-11. They are also three times less likely to say that they read poems at least once a month outside class (11.8% vs. 32.9%).

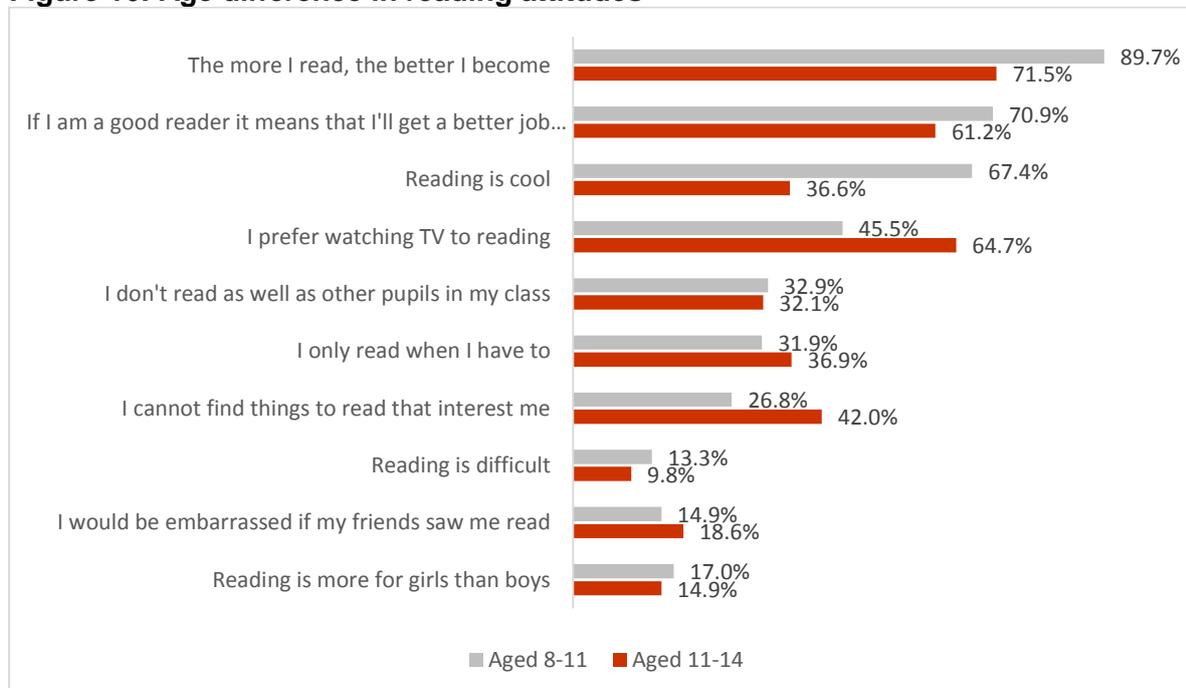
⁸ Aged 8-11 SD = 7.5; aged 11-14 SD = 6.06

Figure 15: Age difference in materials read outside class at least once a month



Fewer young people aged 11-14 think positively about reading. Figure 16 outlines the percentage agreement for each attitudinal statement and shows that half as many 11-14-year-olds than 8-11-year-olds agree that reading is cool. More young people aged 11-14 also agreed that they prefer watching TV to reading, that they only read when they have to and that they cannot find things to read that interest them.

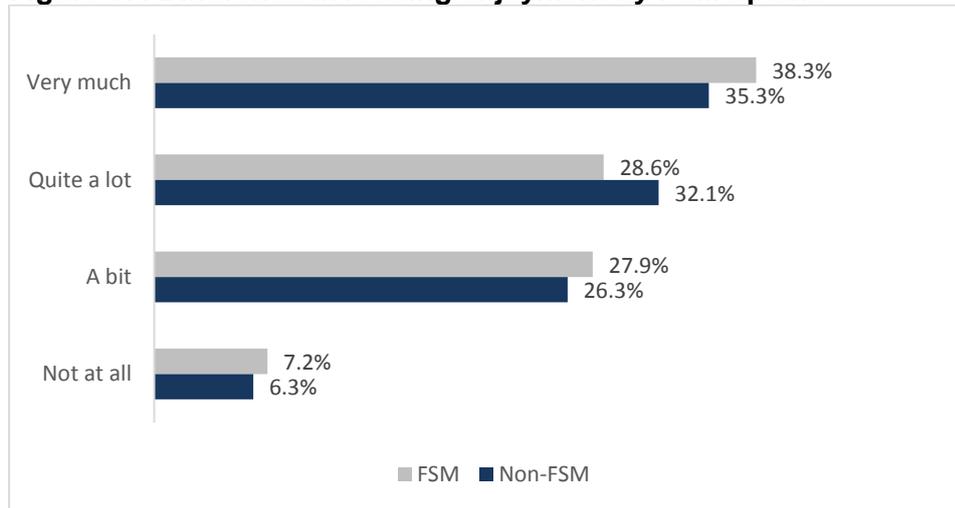
Figure 16: Age difference in reading attitudes



... Pupils who receive free school meals (a proxy measure of socioeconomic difference) could be more engaged with reading

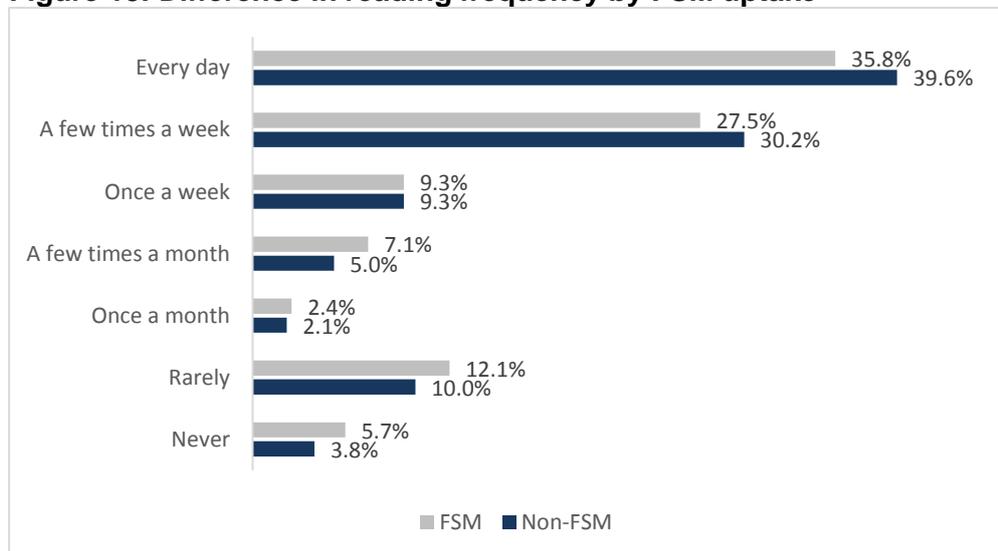
There is no difference between pupils who receive free school meals (FSMs) and those who do not in how much they enjoy reading. Although slightly more pupils who receive FSMs say that they enjoy reading “very much” compared with their peers who do not receive FSMs (see Figure 17), when the overall enjoyment score of enjoying reading either very much or quite a lot is considered, then these difference even out, with 66.9% of FSM pupils enjoying reading compared with 67.4% of non-FSM pupils.

Figure 17: Difference in reading enjoyment by FSM uptake



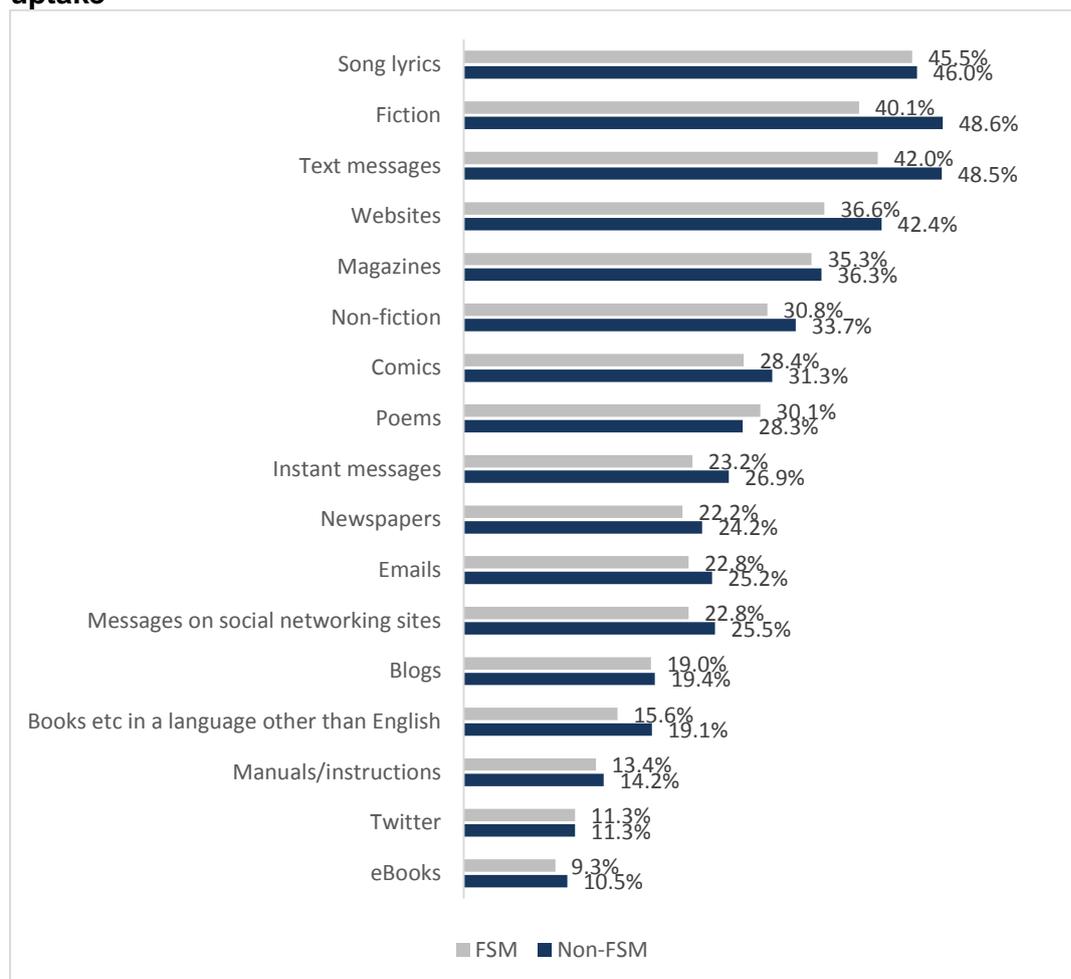
Fewer pupils who receive FSMs read regularly outside class. Figure 18 illustrates this difference and shows that more non-FSM than FSM pupils said that they read daily or a few times a week outside class.

Figure 18: Difference in reading frequency by FSM uptake



Fewer pupils who receive FSMs read widely outside class. When asked what types of materials they read at least once a month outside class (see Figure 19), a greater percentage of pupils who don't receive FSMs say that they read fiction, text messages, websites, non-fiction, instant messages, emails, messages on social networking sites, and materials in a language other than English.

Figure 19: Differences in materials read outside class at least once a month by FSM uptake

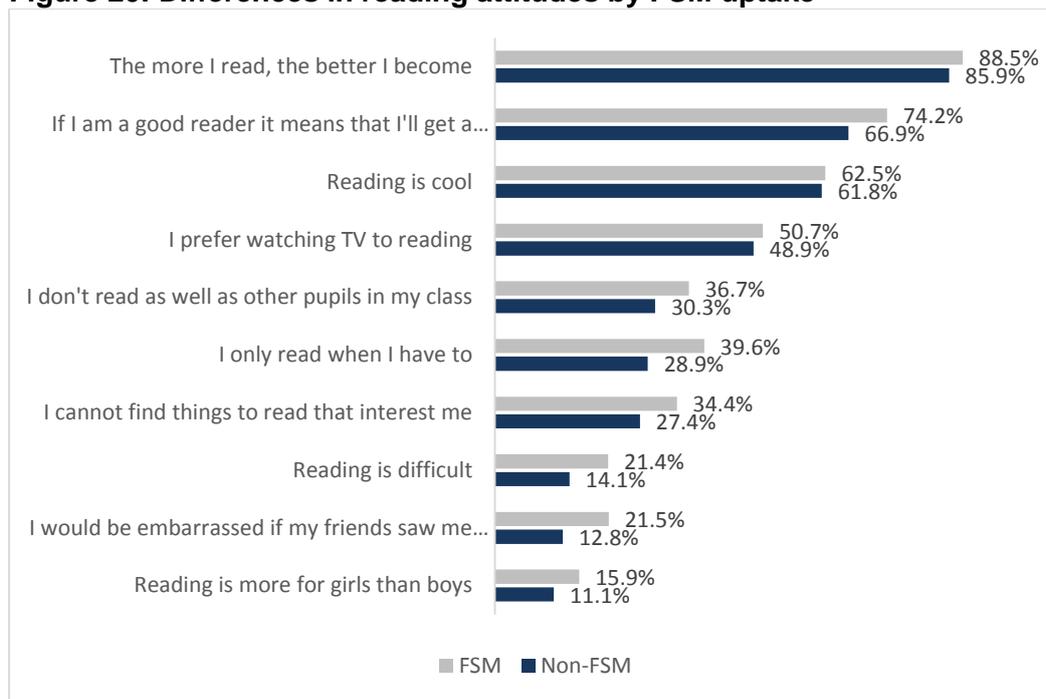


FSM and non-FSM pupils read roughly the same number of books in a typical month (FSM pupils: 7.74; non-FSM pupils: 8.01). **They also spent roughly the same number of minutes reading a book** (FSM pupils: 35.04 minutes; non-FSM: 37.47 minutes) or something online (FSM pupils: 54.63 minutes; non-FSM pupils: 58.44 minutes) in a typical day.

Fewer pupils who receive FSMs think positively about reading⁹. Figure 20 outlines the difference for each individual statement in percentages and shows that more FSM than non-FSM pupils agree that they don't read as well as other pupils in their class, that they only read when they have to and that reading is difficult. More FSM than non-FSM pupils also agree that they would be embarrassed if their friends saw them read.

⁹ Non-FSM pupils: M = 2.342, SD = .736; FSM pupils: M = 2.491, SD = .737; where lower means indicate more positive reading attitudes

Figure 20: Differences in reading attitudes by FSM uptake



Summary

In sum, fewer children and young people in Manchester say that they enjoy reading compared with their peers nationally (66.4% vs. 69.98%). A lower percentage also read daily outside class (38.7% vs. 44.8%) and, in a typical day, they spend fewer minutes reading both in print and on screen.

Reading engagement is a particular issue for boys and older children. While 73.5% of girls say that they enjoy reading, only 60.1% of boys say the same. Far fewer boys than girls read daily outside class (32.7% vs. 45.3%), and while 26.0% of girls say they read only when they have to, this increases to 38.8% of boys.

Similar gaps can be seen when comparing reading attitudes between younger and older children in Manchester. For example, 69.9% of 8-11-year-olds say that they enjoy reading, but this decreases to 47.3% of 11-14-year-olds. Interestingly, while 11-14-year-olds spend less time reading a book in a typical day than 8-11-year-olds, they spend more than double the minutes reading something online (105.29 minutes compared with 44.89 minutes). Indeed, older children are more likely to read technology-based materials than younger children.

Findings from the surveys also show some differences in reading behaviour and attitudes when comparing pupils who receive free school meals with those who don't. For example, children who receive free school meals are less likely to read daily outside class, more likely to say they only read when they have to and more likely to say they would be embarrassed if their friends saw them reading.

By raising awareness of the differences in reading attitudes and behaviours between children and young people in Manchester and nationally, and within the Manchester survey's respondents, we hope to highlight the groups of pupils with most to benefit from initiatives encouraging greater engagement with reading. A follow-up survey would allow children's reading to be explored further by comparing results before and after the Read Manchester campaign.