

Children and young people's book ownership in 2025

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Studies have shown that growing up with books in the home is associated with various benefits for learning and literacy, from better reading performance ([Lindorff et al., 2023](#)) and higher academic achievement ([Evans et al., 2010](#)) to increased lifetime earnings ([Brunello et al., 2017](#)). These connections suggest that book ownership may be an important factor in improving social equity.

Along with tracking trends in levels of book ownership over time, our annual surveys of children and young people aged 5 to 18 consistently find links between book ownership and higher levels of reading enjoyment and frequency. Our findings offer evidence and insights for all those working to ensure that every child has the resources they need to develop essential literacy skills for a successful future.

Children and young people's book ownership in 2025

In 2025, we asked **114,970** children and young people aged 5 to 18 from 515 schools across the UK who took part in our Annual Literacy Survey whether or not they had a book of their own at home in 2025 (see **Appendix** for more information on methodology and sample).

Despite high levels of book ownership overall, a considerable percentage of children and young people said they didn't have a book of their own at home in 2025:

- 9 in 10 (89.7%) children and young people aged 5 to 18 said they had a book of their own at home, meaning 1 in 10 (10.3%) did not have their own book.
- Book ownership in 2025 was slightly higher among those aged 5 to 8 (92.2%) compared with those aged 8 to 18 (89.4%).

Book ownership trends have moved in different directions for different age groups:

- Book ownership in 2025 was at the highest level for those aged 5 to 8 since we first asked them this question in 2019 (when 81.4% said they had a book of their own).
- By contrast, book ownership for those aged 8 to 18 was at the lowest level in a decade (when 90.4% had a book in 2014).

In 2025, as in previous years, book ownership also varied by socioeconomic background, gender and geographical location:

- Far fewer children and young people receiving free school meals (FSMs) said they had a book of their own than their peers who did not receive FSMs (84.3% vs. 91.0%). This means that around 1 in 6 (15.7%) of those receiving FSMs did not have a book of their own, compared with 1 in 11 (9.0%) of their non-FSM peers.
 - The gap in book ownership by FSM status increased over the last year, from 4.4 percentage points to 6.7 percentage points, largely because more FSM pupils told us that they didn't have a book of their own at home.
 - By a small margin, the gap in book ownership by FSM status is the largest since 2014.

- More girls than boys aged 5 to 18 said that they had a book of their own at home (92.4% vs. 87.0%).
- Book ownership levels differed depending on where in the UK children and young people lived: around 9 in 10 children and young people in England (90.1%), Scotland (88.4%) and Northern Ireland (88.2%) said they had a book of their own at home. This decreased to 4 in 5 (82.2%) in Wales.
- There were also some differences in book ownership by English region: the highest percentages of book ownership were reported in London (93.5%) and the South West (91.6%), while the lowest were found in Yorkshire and the Humber (85.3%) and the North West (86.7%).

Having a book of their own was strongly associated with children and young people's enjoyment of reading, reading frequency and self-perception of reading ability:

- In 2025, nearly four times as many children and young people with a book of their own at home said they enjoyed reading compared with those without their own book (40.0% vs 11.3%).
- Similarly, nearly four times as many children and young people who had a book of their own at home also reported reading daily compared with those who did not (24.1% vs 6.8%).
- More children and young people who had a book of their own at home also considered themselves to be 'very good' or 'good' readers compared with their peers who didn't have their own books (79.2% vs. 53.1%).

These findings underscore the value of book ownership for reading engagement and emphasises the need to ensure that all children and young people, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, have access to reading resources they need to support their reading and improve their life outcomes.

Children and young people's book ownership in 2025

In 2025, 9 in 10 (89.7%) children and young people aged 5 to 18 said they had a book of their own at home, meaning 1 in 10 (10.3%) did not have a book of their own. Book ownership in 2025 was slightly higher among those aged 5 to 8 (%) compared with those aged 8 to 18 (89.4%).

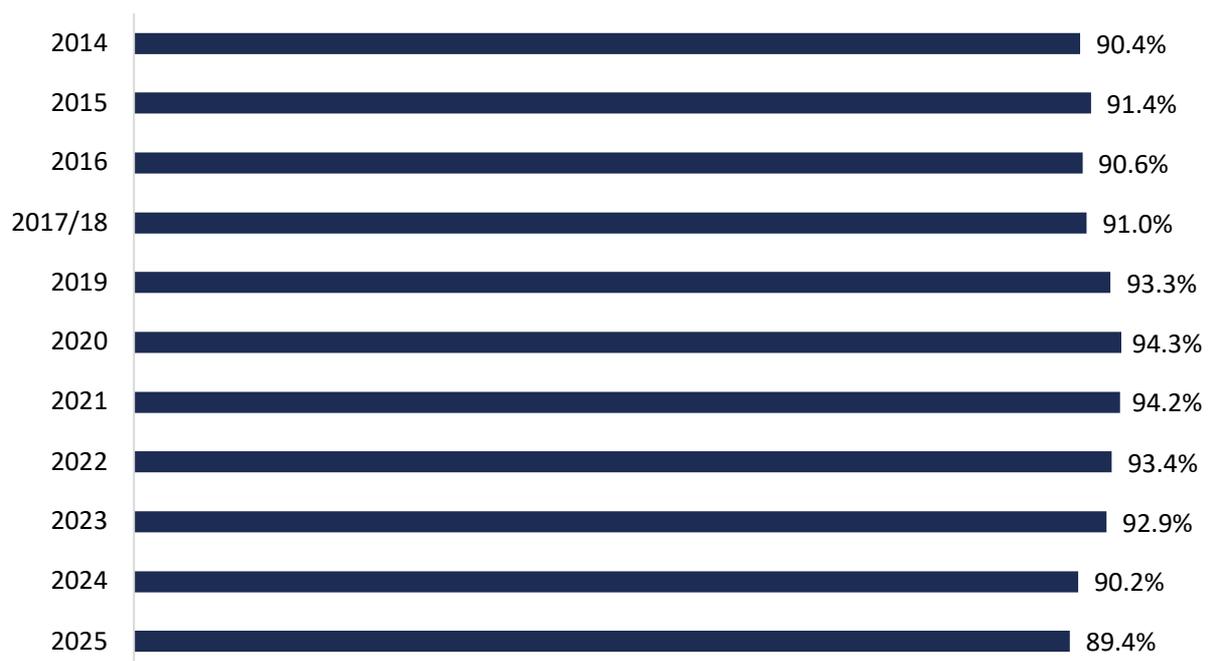
Book ownership trends have moved in different directions for different age groups. Figure 1 shows the percentage of book ownership in children aged 5 to 8 between 2019, when we first asked them about this, and 2025. It highlights that the highest percentage to date said in 2025 that they had a book of their own, with ownership rising steadily from 81.4% in 2019 to 92.2% in 2025, despite small dips in 2022 and 2023.

Figure 1: Book ownership in children and young people aged 5 to 8 between 2019 and 2025



Unfortunately, trends went in the opposite direction for children and young people aged 8 to 18, for whom our data allows us to track book ownership back to 2014. As shown in Figure 2, after incremental increases between 2014 and 2020, the percentage of this age group saying they had a book of their own at home has since decreased year on year, culminating in a new low in 2025.

Figure 2: Book ownership in children and young people aged 8 to 18 between 2014 and 2025



Levels of book ownership in 8- to 18-year-olds are now at their lowest since we started asking about this in 2014, and, as shown in Figure 3, 2025 is also the first year in which a higher percentage of those aged 5 to 8 reported having a book than those aged 8 to 18.

Figure 3: Comparing book ownership in children and young people aged 5 to 8 and 8 to 18 between 2019 and 2025



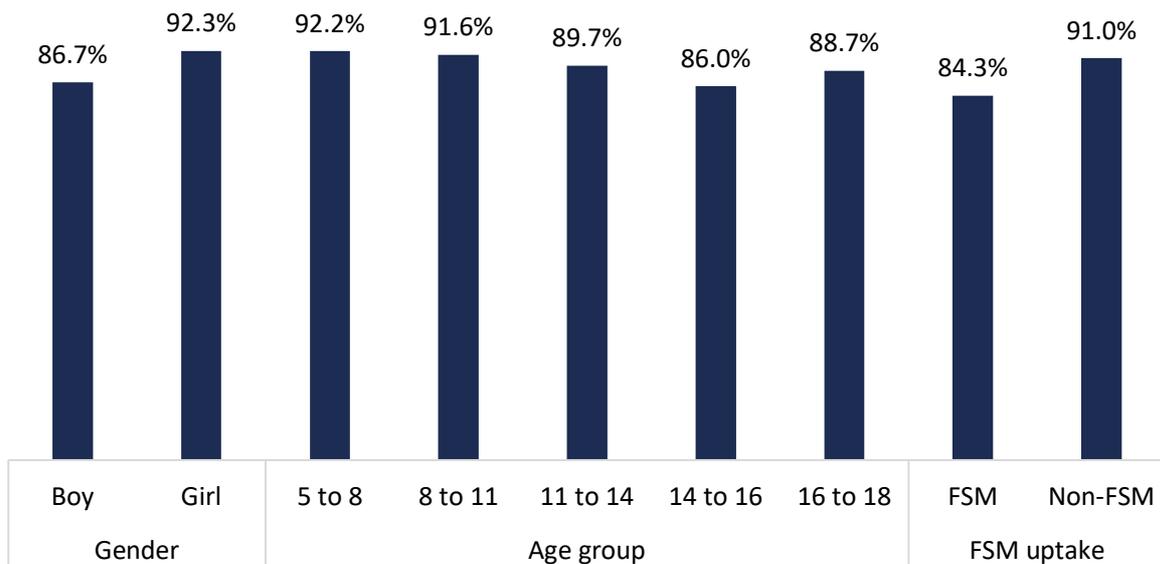
Who had a book of their own at home in 2025?

In 2025, book ownership among children and young people varied by gender, age and socioeconomic background (see Figure 4). More girls than boys told us that they had a book of their own at home in 2025. Looking at book ownership by age group, younger children had the highest rates, with more than 9 in 10 of children aged 5 to 8 and aged 8 to 11 saying that they had a book of their own at home. Slightly fewer of those aged 11 to 14 and those aged 14 to 16 reported owning a book. However, book ownership rates improved slightly in young people aged 16 to 18, with 88.7% of this group reporting having a book of their own.

The biggest gap in book ownership related to socioeconomic background. Only 84.3% of children and young people who received free school meals (FSMs) said they had a book at

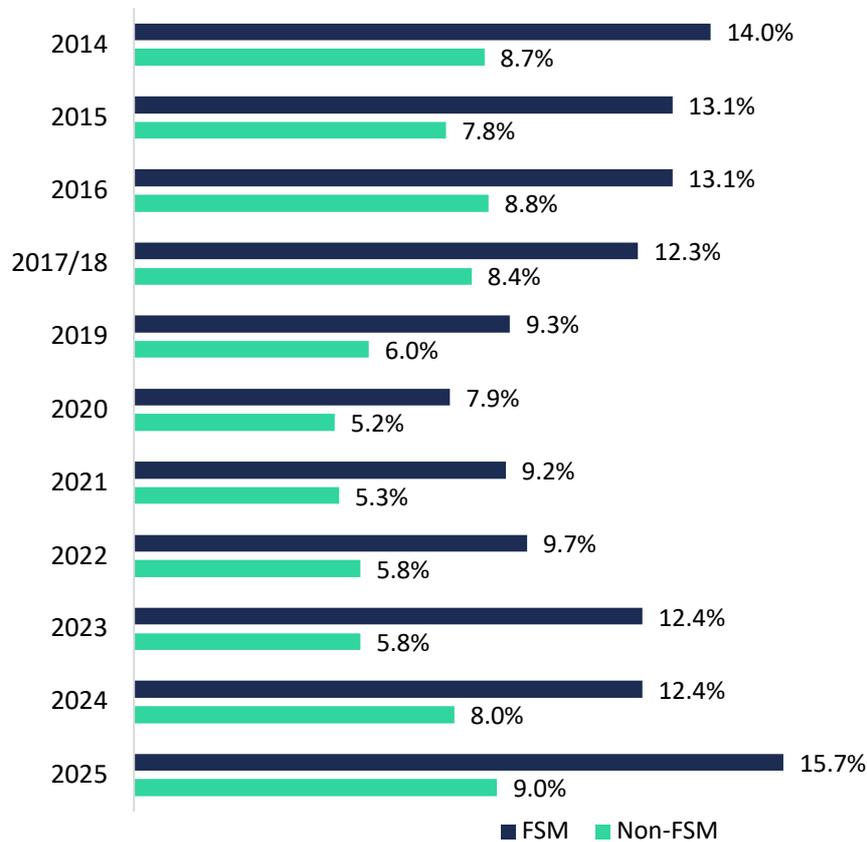
home, while the percentage for those who did not receive FSMs was 91.0%, a gap of 6.7 percentage points.

Figure 4: Percentage of children and young people aged 5 to 18 who said that they had a book of their own at home in 2025 by gender, age group and FSM uptake (8 to 18s only)



Looking at the data by FSM status in more depth (see Figure 5), 1 in 6 children and young people who received FSMs did not have a book at home in 2025, while the percentage for those who did not receive FSMs was markedly lower at 1 in 11. The gap between these two groups has increased over the last year, largely because more of those who received FSMs told us in 2025 that they didn't have a book of their own at home. This gap in book ownership by FSM status was (by a small margin) the largest since we started asking those aged 8 to 18 about book ownership in 2014.

Figure 5: Children and young people aged 8 to 18 who said that they did not have a book of their own at home by FSM status between 2014 and 2025



There were also differences in book ownership depending on where children and young people lived in the UK (see Figure 6). While around 9 in 10 children and young people in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland said they had a book of their own at home, this decreased to just over 4 in 5 in Wales.

Figure 6: Percentage of children and young people aged 5 to 18 who said that they had a book of their own at home in 2025 by UK nation



Book ownership among children and young people aged 5 to 18 also varied across regions in England (see Figure 7). The highest percentage of children and young people owning books at home was found in London, followed by the South West. The lowest percentage was reported in Yorkshire and the Humber, with the North West also reporting a relatively low figure. There was a gap of 8.2 percentage points between the regions with the highest and lowest rates of book ownership, highlighting an ongoing socioeconomic divide in book ownership between the north and the south of England, which we noted in our previous report¹.

Figure 7: Percentage of children and young people aged 5 to 18 who said that they had a book of their own at home in 2025 by region in England



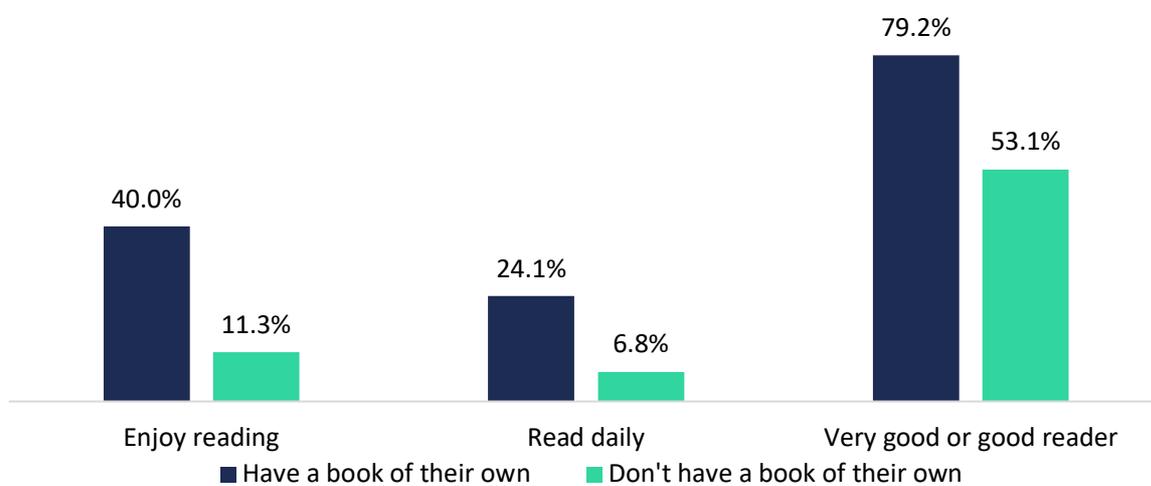
Book ownership and reading enjoyment, frequency and self-perceived reading ability

Our research has consistently shown a connection between book ownership, reading enjoyment, reading frequency and self-perceived reading skill. In 2025, nearly four times as many children and young people who had a book of their own at home told us that they enjoyed reading compared with those without a book (see Figure 8). Reading frequency

¹ Picton et al. (2024) *Children and young people's book ownership in 2024*, London: National Literacy Trust

also followed a similar pattern, with nearly four times as many of those who had a book of their own saying they read daily in their free time. There were also pronounced differences in self-reported reading ability between children and young people who did and did not have a book of their own at home. 4 in 5 book owners rated themselves as very good or good readers compared with 1 in 2 who did not own a book.

Figure 8: Book ownership, reading enjoyment, daily reading and self-perceived reading ability for those aged 5 to 18 in 2025



Summary and discussion

Research exploring the impact of book ownership on children and young people's literacy and life outcomes has highlighted the many benefits of having books at home. Our own research has consistently shown that more children who have a book of their own at home enjoy reading, read frequently, and perceive themselves to be good readers than their peers who do not have a book.

Unfortunately, despite these benefits, our surveys are finding that a decreasing number of children and young people aged 8 to 18 are reporting having a book of their own at home. Indeed, this year, we found that book ownership levels among those aged 8 to 18 are at their lowest level since we started asking about this in 2014.

However, this year, we also had more heartening news, as the percentage of those aged 5 to 8 who have a book of their own has reached its highest level since 2019. While the data we have do not allow further insight into what might be behind this increase, our findings indicated that a positive change in book ownership over time is possible. In future years this could, therefore, potentially extend to children in older age groups.

At the same time, inequalities in book ownership relating to age, gender, socioeconomic background and geographical location persist. Fewer boys, older age groups and children and young people who receive FSMs reported having a book of their own, as did children in Yorkshire and the Humber (regionally) and Wales (nationally). A widening gap in book ownership between children who receive FSMs and their peers who did not is of particular concern.

Given the evidence emphasising the importance of book ownership in supporting reading enjoyment and frequency, these findings highlight an ongoing need for targeted interventions to close access gaps, especially for children from lower-income backgrounds. In a year in which reading engagement is at an all-time low, ensuring access to diverse, high-quality and appealing reading materials may play a vital role in reversing trends of decreasing engagement.

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

About the National Literacy Trust

Our charity is dedicated to improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions.

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