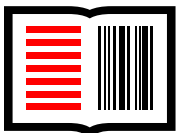
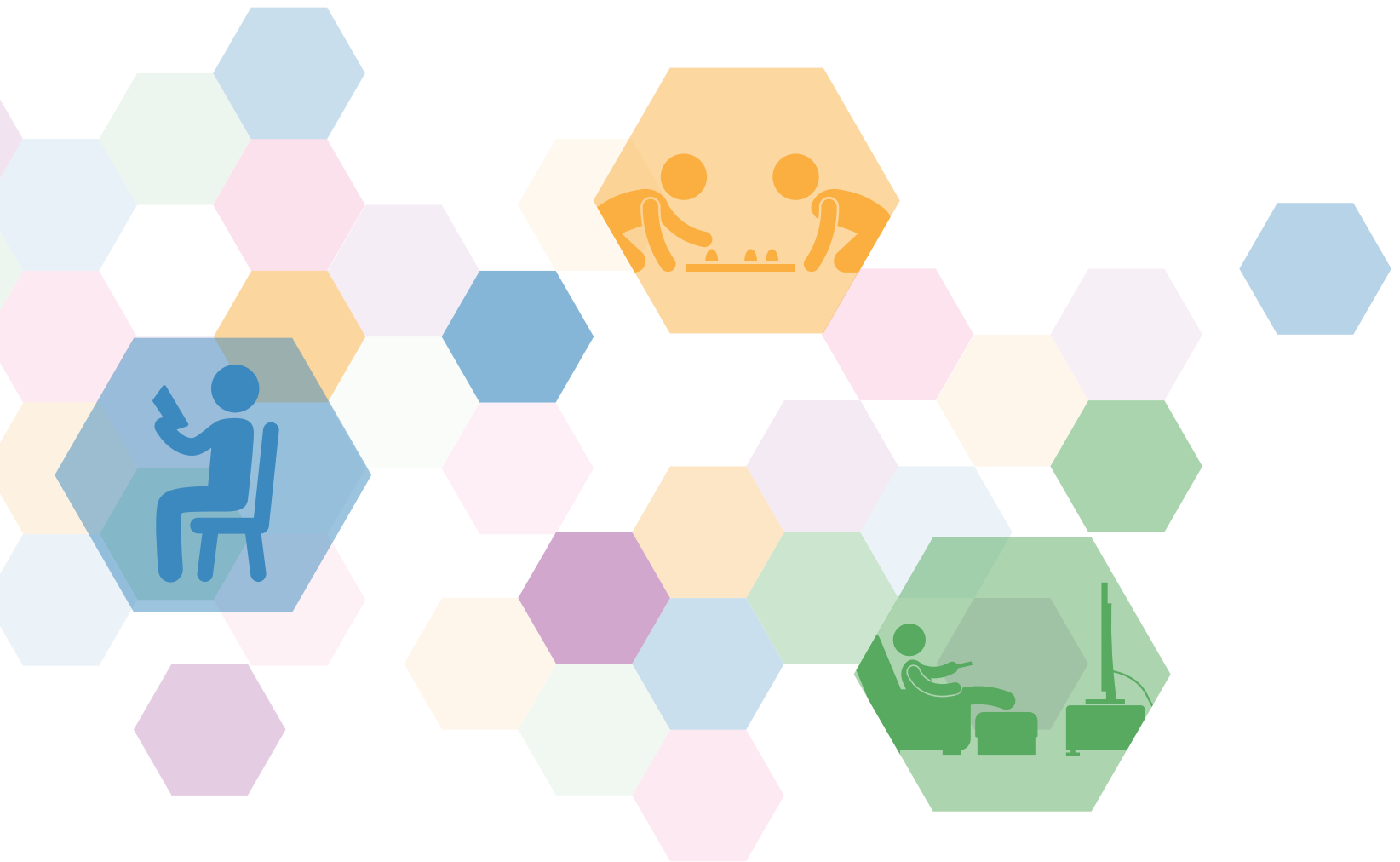


Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2022



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Introduction

Now in its tenth edition, the annual Canadian Leisure and Reading survey provides insight into the reading behaviours of Canadians in the previous year as well as over time when compared to previous surveys. This information can guide data-driven decisions in the Canadian book industry and beyond.

Methodology

This survey was fielded in January 2023 to 1,290 Canadians over the age of 18, linked in Appendix A. We surveyed Canadians until we had responses from 1,001 people who had read at least one book in 2022.

- *Readers* refers to the 1,001 respondents who had read or listened to a book or part of a book at least a few times a year in the past year.
- *Buying* refers to buying books from an online retailer (or retailing app for ebooks and audiobooks), a physical bookstore that primarily sells new books, a used bookstore or thrift store, a general retailer, or a subscription service.
- *Borrowing* refers to getting books for free from a public library, another person (gifting or lending), a free internet site, or an illegal file-sharing site.

Survey methodology:

- The survey was fielded online through an external provider, to their consumer panel of nearly two million Canadians. The survey was limited to those with internet access who were able and wanted to participate in our panel in exchange for non-monetary incentives as offered by our survey partner (e.g., loyalty reward “point” programs).
- Respondents were English-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older, located throughout Canada, and representative of the Canadian population based on age, gender, and geographical region. Selective sampling was based on demographic results from Statistics Canada.

- There is a margin of error of ± 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, meaning that statistics for this group could fluctuate about 3% in either direction if the survey was fielded to the entire Canadian population.
- The data is unweighted.
- In 2023, 289 people were screened out for not having read or listened to a book in 2022.

The study was prepared by BookNet Canada staff.

Highlights

- Smartphone use continues to increase for Canadian ebook readers and audiobook listeners in 2022.
- There is an increase in readership of comics and graphics novels in print and ebooks, across both Fiction and Non-Fiction titles in 2022.
- Attendance to book clubs and book related events increased in 2022, both in-person and online.
- Social media, and specifically BookTok, continues to be a growing driver of book awareness for readers.
- Across all formats, readers are buying less and borrowing more in 2022 compared with 2020. This trend is most pronounced for print books. In 2022, 52% of readers paid for their print books, compared to 61% in 2020.

Canadians and their free time

Do Canadians feel like they have enough time to spend on their leisure pursuits? Well, according to our survey respondents just over half felt like they had enough in 2022 (51%), 30% felt like they had more than enough free time, and 19% didn't feel they had enough. For our respondents, most had the perception that their leisure

time had stayed about the same from 2021 to 2022 (60%), though about equal segments said that it had increased (20%) or decreased (18%).

This seems to track with what our respondents to previous years' surveys have said. The answers have not changed drastically over the last three years, though there does seem to be a slight trend towards those who had "More than enough" shifting towards having "Enough" in 2022.

Perceptions of Canadians' leisure time, 2020-2022



So now that we know that the majority of Canadians either feel like they have enough or more than enough leisure time (81%), let's look a bit closer at what they were using that time for.

It turns out that the way Canadians were spending their leisure time in 2022 is much the same as they have been spending it over the past three years.

Leisure and recreational activities done by Canadians at least weekly in 2022:

1. Watching videos/TV/movies (90%)
2. Cooking (86%)
3. Listening to music (85%)
4. Browsing social media/web (84%)
5. Spending time with family (71%)
6. Shopping (68%)
7. Exercising/working out (63%)
8. Listening to radio shows (50%)
- 9. Reading or listening to books (49%)**
10. Playing video games (44%)

In the list above, almost every item is within a percentage or two of last year's answers. Cooking had the biggest change but even then it was only down 3% from 2021.

It's a similar story for the activities that Canadians do at least once a day. Most of these are within a percentage or two of last year's answers. Again, Cooking is down 4% from last year but listening to radio shows is up by 4%.

Leisure and recreational activities done by Canadians at least daily in 2022:

1. Watching videos/TV/movies (76%)
2. Browsing social media/web (75%)
3. Cooking (68%)
4. Listening to music (67%)

5. Spending time with family (48%)
6. Exercising/working out (36%)
7. Listening to radio shows (34%)
- 8. Reading or listening to books (31%)**
9. Playing video games (27%)
10. Listening to podcasts (17%)

Overall, 78% of Canadians chose to use at least some of their leisure time in the last year reading or listening to a book. Just under half did some reading or listening to a book at least once a week (49%) and just under a third did so daily (31%).

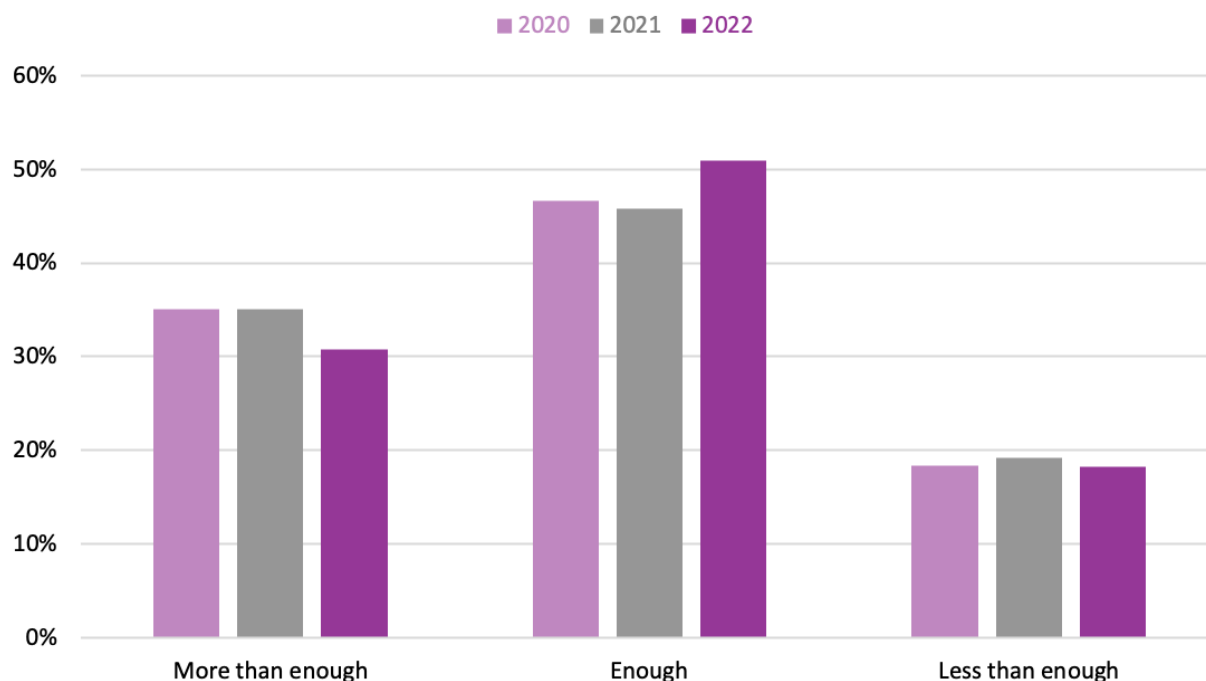
Readers and their leisure activities

How do readers compare to the average Canadian in terms of leisure time in 2022?

Let's start with perception. On the whole, readers had the same perceptions about their leisure time as did all Canadians. Readers felt like they had enough (51%) or more than enough (31%) leisure time in 2022.

And while readers didn't report a decrease in leisure time (only 18% said their leisure time decreased from 2021 to 2022) we can see from the graph below that fewer readers said they had more than enough, down from 35% in 2021 to 31% in 2022. The shift from those readers seems to have moved over to the "Enough" bucket, which rose from 46% in 2021 to 51% in 2022. These are both similar to the trend in reporting on leisure time by all Canadians as well.

Perceptions of readers' leisure time, 2020–2022



The activities that readers did at least once a week are very similar to those done by all Canadians, though reading books ranked higher than listening to radio shows for readers.

Leisure and recreational activities done by readers weekly in 2022:

1. Watching videos/TV/movies (92%)
2. Cooking (87%)
3. Listening to music (87%)
4. Browsing social media/web (86%)
5. Spending time with family (74%)
6. Shopping (70%)
7. Exercising/working out (69%)

8. Reading or listening to books (64%)

9. Listening to radio shows (54%)

10. Playing video games (47%)

The activities readers did at least once a day ranked in pretty much the same order as in 2021, but the percentage of readers who were listening to podcasts daily went up from 16% in 2021 to 21% in 2022. And, in 2022, browsing social media/web finally caught up with watching videos/TV/movies as the most popular daily activity after being hot on its heels since 2020.

Leisure and recreational activities done by readers at least once a day in 2022:

1. Watching videos/TV/movies (77%)

2. Browsing social media/web (77%)

3. Cooking (69%)

4. Listening to music (69%)

5. Spending time with family (49%)

6. Reading or listening to books (40%)

7. Exercising/working out (40%)

8. Listening to radio shows (36%)

9. Playing video games (29%)

10. Listening to podcasts (21%)

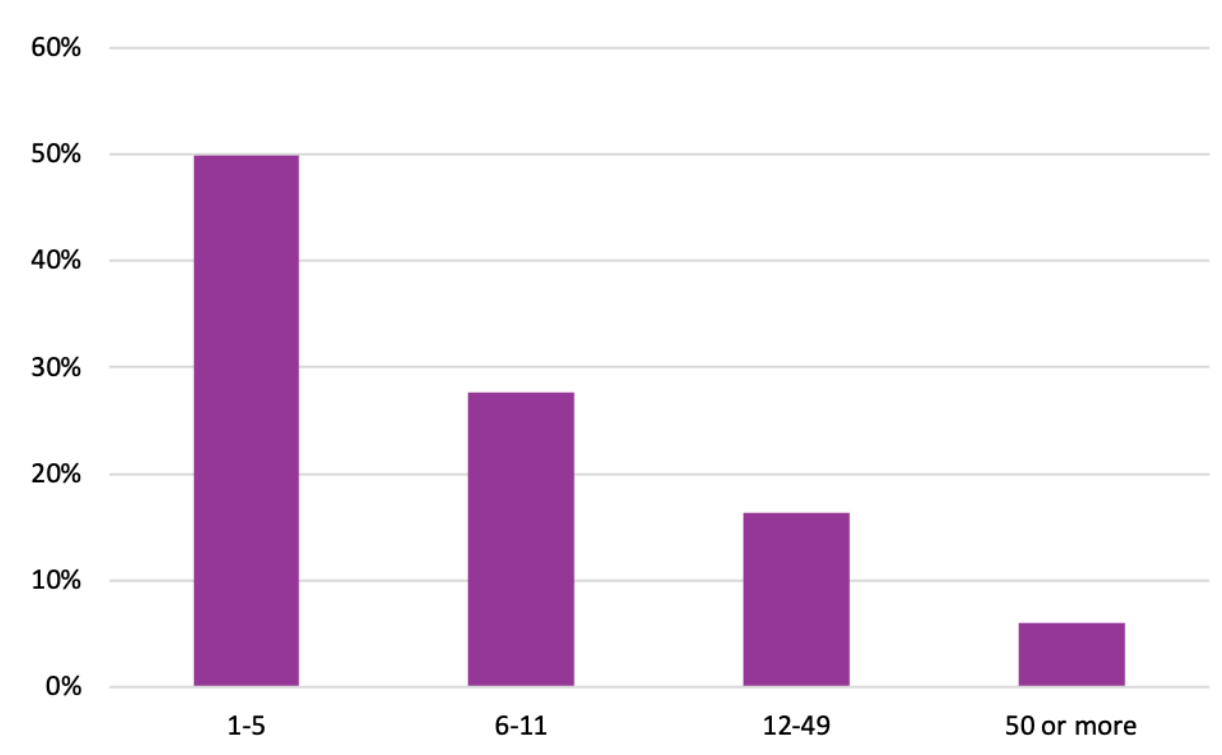
So what are readers doing on the web and/or social media site? Well, over half of them visited a general social media site daily in 2022 (57%).

For the first year, inspired by the [popularity of BookTok](#), we asked readers whether they had viewed a book-specific social media post, for example on BookTok, BookTube, Bookstagram, or similar. More readers had seen or searched out this type of content daily in 2022 than had visited a book-specific social networks (e.g., Shelfari, Goodreads, 49th Shelf, Wattpad, etc.) — 12% for viewing a book-specific social media post vs. 10% for visiting a book-specific social network.

Reading as a leisure activity

Half of the readers we surveyed read or listened to between 1 and 5 books in 2022 (50%). Over a quarter read or listened to 6-11 books (28%), 16% read or listened to between 12 and 49 books, and 6% of respondents were heavy readers and read or listened to 50 or more books last year.

Number of books read in 2022



Readers 65 and over were most likely to have read 12 or more books in 2022 than other demographics. Our youngest demographic, those aged 18 to 29 were most likely to have read 6 to 11 books in 2022.

Number of books read by age in 2022

| | 18-29 | 30-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ | All readers |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------------|
| 1-5 books | 45% | 54% | 54% | 53% | 44% | 50% |
| 6-11 books | 35% | 29% | 25% | 28% | 21% | 28% |
| 12-49 book | 16% | 13% | 15% | 14% | 25% | 16% |
| 50 books or more | 5% | 5% | 6% | 4% | 11% | 6% |

When it comes to how often they're reading, 40% read daily, 24% weekly, 15% once a month, and 21% less than once a month. And it might not be a surprise that in order to read the most books out of any age demographic, those readers aged 65 and over were the most likely to read daily (53%).

Like last year, almost all readers had read at least one print book in 2022 (94%), and just over two thirds had read an ebook in the last year (67%), up from 64% in 2021. Audiobook listening was also up over last year: in 2022, 51% of readers had listened to an audiobook compared with 45% of readers who had done so in 2021.

Reasons for reading

The main reasons readers read or listened to books in 2022 were:

- For enjoyment / entertainment (52%)

- To relax or for comfort (48%)
- To learn things or improve things (for school/study/work or personal) (30%)
- For brain health (improve memory, prevent diseases) (27%)
- To become immersed in another world or to escape reality (25%)

While we did not ask that question in our survey last year, we did ask it in 2020 and interestingly reading for enjoyment or entertainment dropped from 63% in 2020 to 52% in 2022; reading to relax or for comfort was at 57% in 2020 and was 48% in 2022; and reading as a form of escape or as immersion in another world declined from 32% in 2020 to 25% in 2022.

The reasons for reading that saw increases in 2022 compared with 2020 were those to do with learning, brain health, intellectual challenges or stimulation, spiritual enrichment, and inspiration or motivation.

It will be interesting to see if the trends towards reading for informational or enrichment purposes and away from escapism and pure enjoyment continue in the future.

Perhaps they'll meet somewhere in the middle. When we asked readers their sentiments about various statements about books, 61% chose "Yes" and 34% chose "Sometimes" for the statement "Books are for enjoyment, entertainment, or leisure." And for the statement "Books are for learning or education," 46% chose "Yes" and 46% percent chose "Sometimes." The split between "Yes" and "Sometimes" for books being for entertainment are virtually the same as in 2021. However in 2021, 41% of readers said "Yes" to books being for learning and 50% said "Sometimes."

Reader responses to book statements, 2022

| | Yes | Sometimes | No |
|---|-----|-----------|----|
| Books are for enjoyment, entertainment, or leisure. | 61% | 34% | 4% |
| Books are for learning or education. | 46% | 46% | 6% |

Reading activities

Audiobook listeners were much more likely to read while doing something else — for example, working, commuting/traveling, housekeeping, etc. (78%). Though ebook listeners also chose to listen to music, watch TV, etc. while reading at a fairly high rate as well (53%). Print book readers were the least likely at 48%.

Other than reading books, how do readers engage with them? What actions did they take while, or shortly after, reading in 2022? A majority of readers did at least one thing in the list below (69%).

- Read all or part of a book aloud to another person (a child, young adult, or adult) (46%)
- Searched for other books by that author (37%)
- Shared the experience, book, or photo of the book with others (23%)
- Added the book to a list of books you were currently reading or finished reading (19%)
- Went online to read about the author or follow them on social media (18%)
- Took an action as a direct result of the book (16%)
- Considered the book part of a reading challenge (11%)
- Read or listened to the book in another format (9%)

More readers seem to be participating in reading challenges (11% in 2022 vs. 7% in 2021) and tracking their book reading in 2022 (19%) than did in 2021 (16%).

Book clubs also rose in popularity in 2022 both for online and in-person meetings. The percentage of readers who attended an online book club meeting in 2022 was up to 28% from 22% in 2021 and those who participated in an in-person book club or reading group was 26% in 2022, up from 20% in 2021.

Book event attendance is also on the rise: 30% of readers attended an online author or book-related event in 2022 compared with 21% in 2021. In person events are similarly bouncing back: 28% of readers attended at least one in 2022, up from 20% in 2021.

Book discovery

Word of mouth fell quite a bit as a method of book discovery for readers in 2022. In 2021, 36% of readers found their books through friends or acquaintances, but in 2022, only 30% did so. It was still the most popular method of book discovery, however, and was followed by bookstores and public libraries tied at 26% — similar numbers to last year. Online book retailers and social media came in at 21% and 20% respectively.

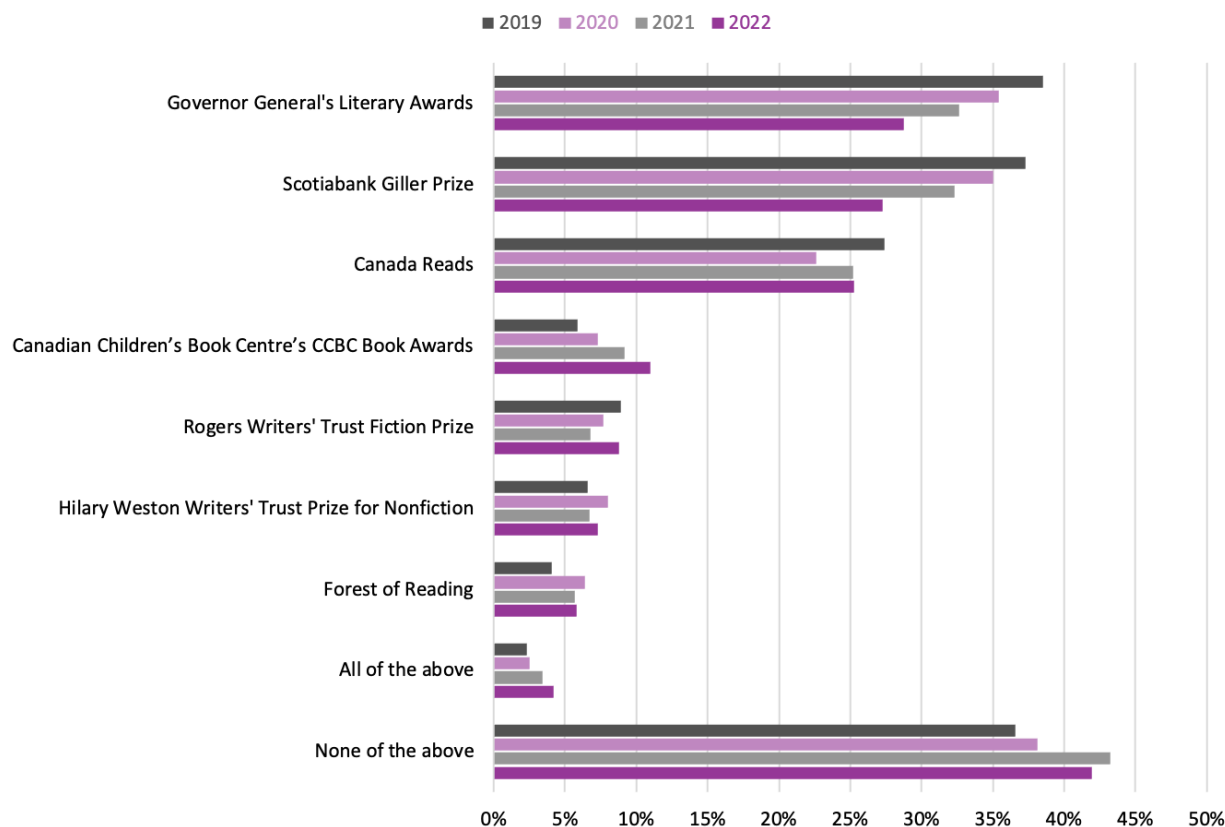
And though books that were literary award nominees or winners or on “Best of” lists was only a method of book discovery for 8% of readers in 2022, it was up from 6% in 2021. And, when we asked readers about their awareness of Canadian book awards, 58% were aware of at least one of the awards in the list we presented. This remains virtually unchanged from 2021.

Awareness of Canadian literary awards:

- Governor General's Literary Awards (29%)
- Scotiabank Giller Prize (27%)
- Canada Reads (25%)
- Canadian Children's Book Centre's CCBC Book Awards (11%)
- Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize (9%)
- Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction (7%)
- Forest of Reading (6%)
- All of the above (4%)

Interestingly, awareness of the two most popular Canadian book awards, the Governor General's Literary Awards and the Scotiabank Giller Prize have been trending down over the last four years. The Governor General's Literary Awards are down from a high of 39% in 2019 and the Scotiabank Giller Prize is down from 37% awareness in 2019. Awareness of the Canadian Children's Book Centre's CCBC Book Awards has been trending up over the same period of time from 6% in 2019 to 11% in 2022.

Awareness of Canadian book awards, 2019–2022



Choosing which books to read

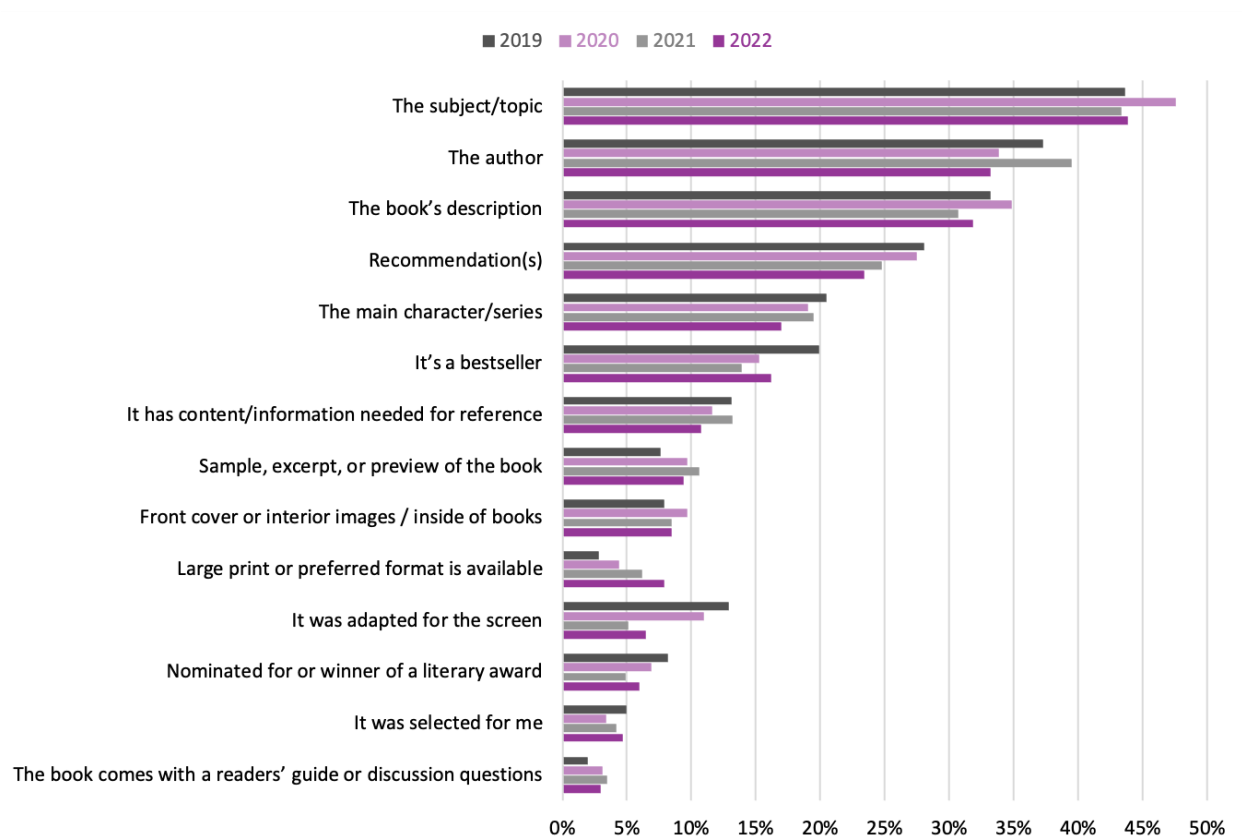
Once a reader has discovered a book, there's still that last step of choosing to read it. It turns out, the top five things that most influence readers to read a particular book are:

- the subject/topic (44%);
- the author (33%);
- the book's description (32%);
- recommendations (23%); and
- the main character/series (17%).

Above, we saw that word of mouth had decreased as a discovery method for books in 2022, and here we can see that recommendations are also trending downwards as a deciding factor in which book to actually devote time to reading from a high of 28% in 2019 to 23% in 2022.

While the availability of large print or a preferred format ranks fairly low when it comes to which book to read, it is steadily increasing over this time frame from 3% in 2019 to 8% in 2022.

Why readers chose to read a specific book, 2019–2022



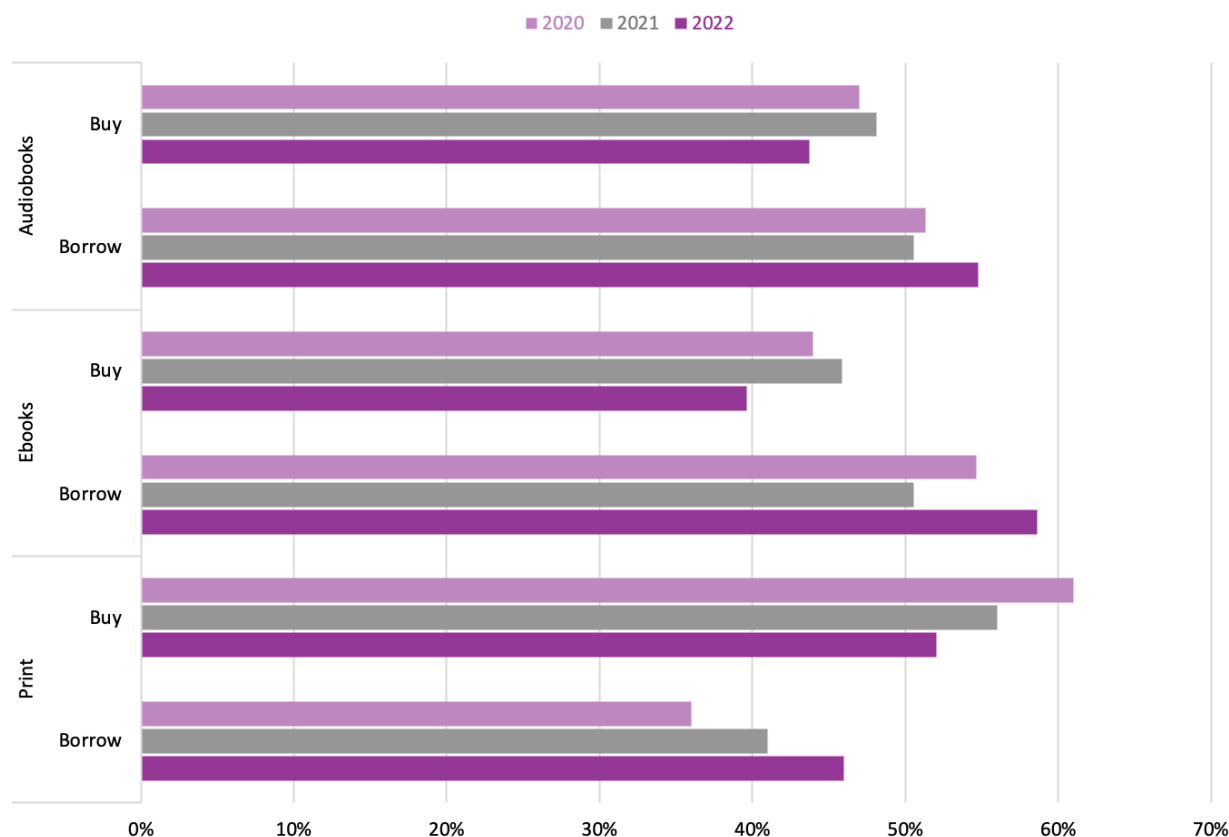
Acquisition by format

Across all formats, readers are buying less and borrowing more in 2022 compared with 2020. This trend is most pronounced for print books. In 2022, 52% of readers paid for their print books, compared to 61% in 2020.

In 2022, print book readers were still buying more than they borrowed (52% bought vs. 46% borrowed). Ebook and audiobook readers were getting their books for free more than they bought, however.

Audiobook listeners were mostly, but not exclusively, listening to digital audiobooks. In 2022, 29% only listened to digital audiobooks and 64% listened to a mix of physical and digital.

Borrowing and buying by format, 2020–2022



Borrowing or free sources of books by format

In 2022, 59% of ebook readers got their books for free from a free internet site (20%), from the public library (19%), as a gift (9%), or borrowed them from someone they knew (6%).

Over half of audiobook listeners also got their books for free (55%). The most popular ways they acquired their free books were from a free internet site (20%), the public library (17%), from a subscription service (13%), or as a gift (8%).

Print book readers were the ones who used the library the most as their free book acquisition source at 22%. They were almost equally likely to get their books from the other free sources we asked about: borrowing from someone they knew (9%), receiving as a gift (8%), and receiving for free (for example, from a Free Little Library, ARC, etc.) (7%).

This breakdown of free sources of books stayed mostly consistent between 2020 and 2022 with the exception of library use. Despite public library use being in the top one or two for ways readers acquire free books, its use has not bounced back from pre-pandemic levels. Public library use for audiobook listeners has decreased quite a bit since 2019, down from 30% to 17% in 2022. Just under a third of ebook readers got books from the library in 2019 (31%) compared with 19% in 2022. In 2019 28% of print book readers got their books from the library but in 2022 only 22% did.

If we compare this with data provided by OverDrive, the world's leading digital reading platform for libraries and schools, we find a different picture. Loans of all digital books have been steadily increasing 289% since 2013, with audiobooks up a significant 685%. Ebook checkouts also increased from 2013 to 2020, though they declined slightly to 2022, up 213% overall.

OverDrive digital library check outs, 2013-2022



Buying books by format

For print readers the most popular place to buy books was from a physical bookstore that primarily sells new books (16%) followed by an online retailer (14%), then a used bookstore (11%), from a general retailer or a retailer that is not primarily a bookstore (8%), and lastly from a subscription service (2%). These are all consistent with 2019 numbers.

For ebooks, most readers bought their books from an online retailer (21%) or from a subscription service (11%). Online retailer use has dropped from 34% in 2019 to 21% in 2022. However, general retailer patronage has gone from zero respondents in 2019 up to 7% in 2022, a fast growing channel.

Audiobook listeners bought their books much the same way as ebook buyers: from an online retailer (19%), from a subscription service (13%), or from a general retailer (6%). They also infrequently bought books from a physical bookstore reminding us

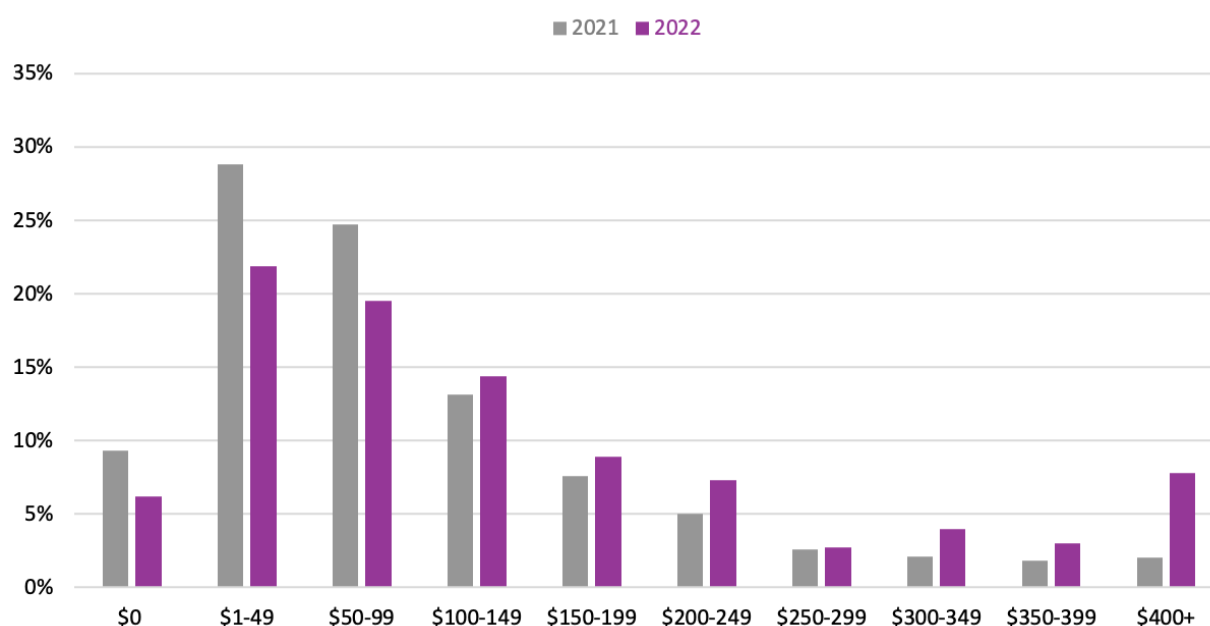
that not all audiobooks are digital (5%). There was not much change for any of these channels when compared to 2019 onwards, with the slight exception of online retailers. In 2020 and 2021 online retailers made up 24% of audiobook purchases, but the 19% in 2021 is a return to pre-pandemic levels when we compare to the 20% in 2019.

In terms of subscription services, both audiobook and ebook readers shared their login information with others: 36% of ebook readers and 44% of audiobook listeners did so at least sometimes.

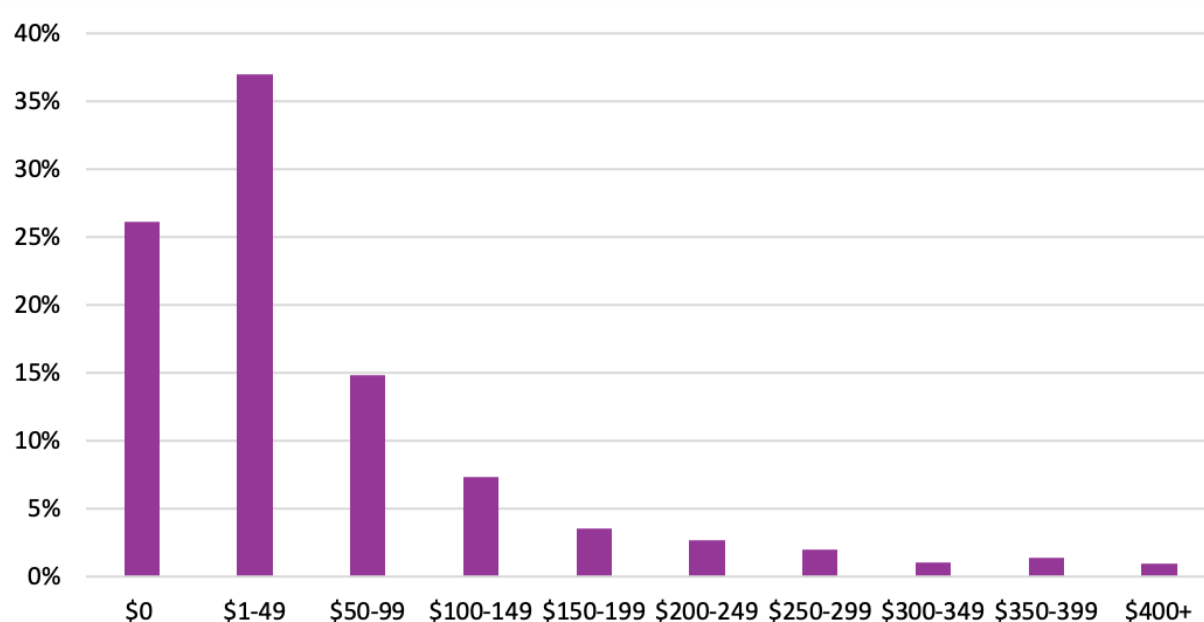
Money spent on books and perception of value

More readers have been spending more money on leisure time pursuits in 2022 than they did in 2021. The largest segments still remain those who spent \$1 to \$49 (22%) or \$50 to \$99 (19%) in a typical month in 2022, but the segments that spent \$100 or more in a typical month mostly all grew from 2021 to 2022. The biggest growth in 2022 when compared to 2021 were the readers who spent \$400 or more on their leisure activities in a typical month; from 2% in 2021 to 8% in 2022.

Amount spent by readers on leisure activities in a typical month, 2021–2022



As for how much readers spent on books in 2022, most spent between \$1 and \$49 (37%), 26% didn't spend any money on books, 15% spent between \$50 and \$99 in a typical month. This was the first year we asked this question, so we were unable to compare spending habits in previous years.

Amount spent on books by readers in a typical month, 2022

When we asked more general questions about book budgets, 40% of readers stated that they chose books within their budget in 2022. An equal 30% of readers either had no limit on what and how many books they bought or they did not pay for any books in 2022. Interestingly, more readers in 2022 stayed within their budget (40% in 2022 vs. 37% in 2021), but fewer got only free books in 2022 when compared with 2021 (30% in 2022 vs. 34% in 2021).

What does spending look like for readers if we break it down by book format? Print book buyers remain the most likely to spend the highest amounts for their books — 8% estimated their spending at \$300 or more in 2022 (same as in 2021). There was a big drop in ebook readers who get their books for free from 20% in 2021 to 10% in 2022. Audiobook readers are now the most likely to source their books for free, but again this is down from 16% in 2021 to 13% in 2022.

“Hardcover books are getting too expensive.”

“Price difference between Canada and US is too high.”

“We need more affordable prices on books.”

“I feel like ebooks are sometimes over priced in comparison to the physical copies and often opt out of buying ebooks because of this and buy the physical books instead.”

“I love reading but purchasing books is so expensive; that is why I borrow them.”

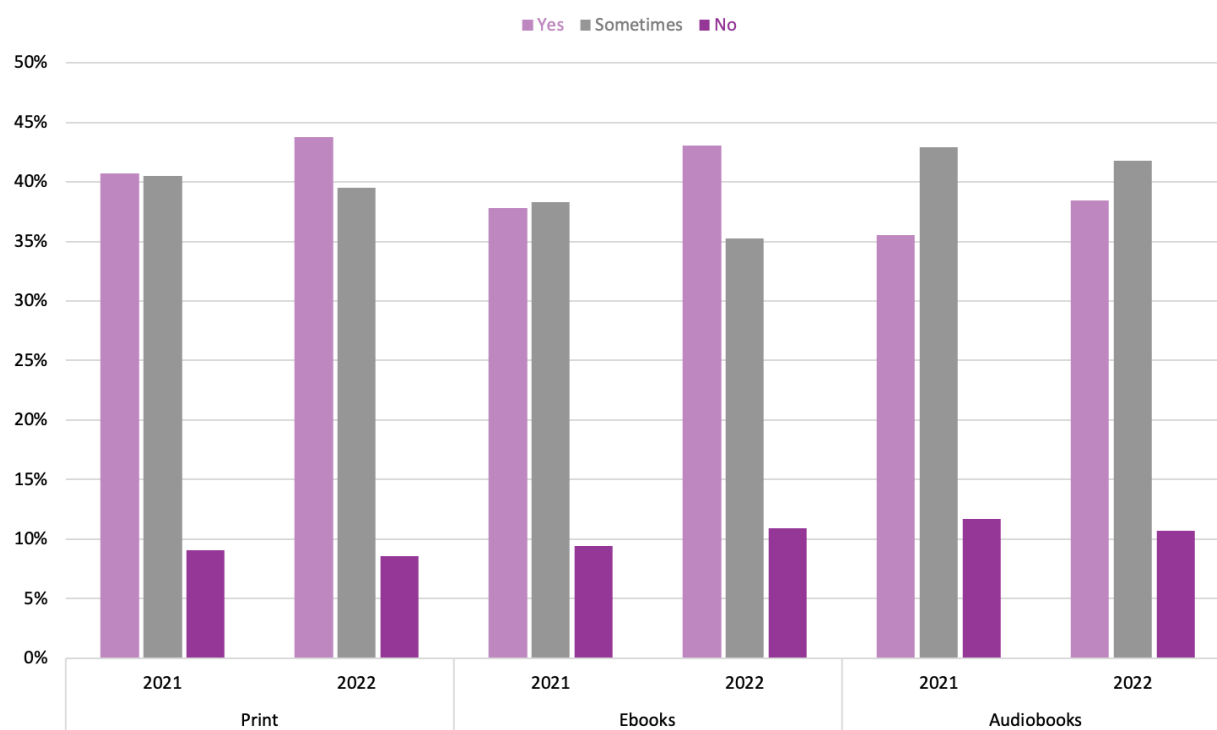
Amount spent on books by format, 2022

| | Print | Ebooks | Audiobooks |
|-----------|-------|--------|------------|
| \$0 | 4% | 10% | 13% |
| \$1-49 | 30% | 37% | 34% |
| \$50-99 | 21% | 22% | 22% |
| \$100-149 | 17% | 13% | 15% |
| \$150-199 | 9% | 9% | 8% |
| \$200-249 | 7% | 3% | 5% |
| \$250-299 | 4% | 2% | 1% |
| \$300+ | 8% | 4% | 3% |

Most readers across all formats felt they received good value for their books. Print readers the most: 83% of print readers answered “Yes” or “Sometimes” to the statement: “I get good value for print books at the price I pay.” Audiobook listeners and ebook readers were not far behind; 80% of audiobook listeners chose “Yes” or “Sometimes” and 78% of ebook readers did so.

All three format readers felt they got more value at the price they paid in 2022 when compared with 2021 sentiments.

Perceptions of value by format, 2021–2022



Format preferences and frequency

Readers know what they like. Only 9% of readers did not have a format preference in 2022. This is way down from 17% in 2021, but closer to the 11% in 2019 who did not have a format preference.

Readers continue to overwhelmingly favour print books (62%) though this number is the lowest it has been over the last four years. Of all print readers, 58% prefer paperbacks, and 55% prefer hardcovers.

Ebooks have stayed at a rock solid 16% for all four years, and audiobook preference continues to rise from 8% in 2019 to 12% in 2022.

“I just love reading. I hope the printed form never dies.”

“It is important to still have hard copies of books in this wild world of advancing technology.”

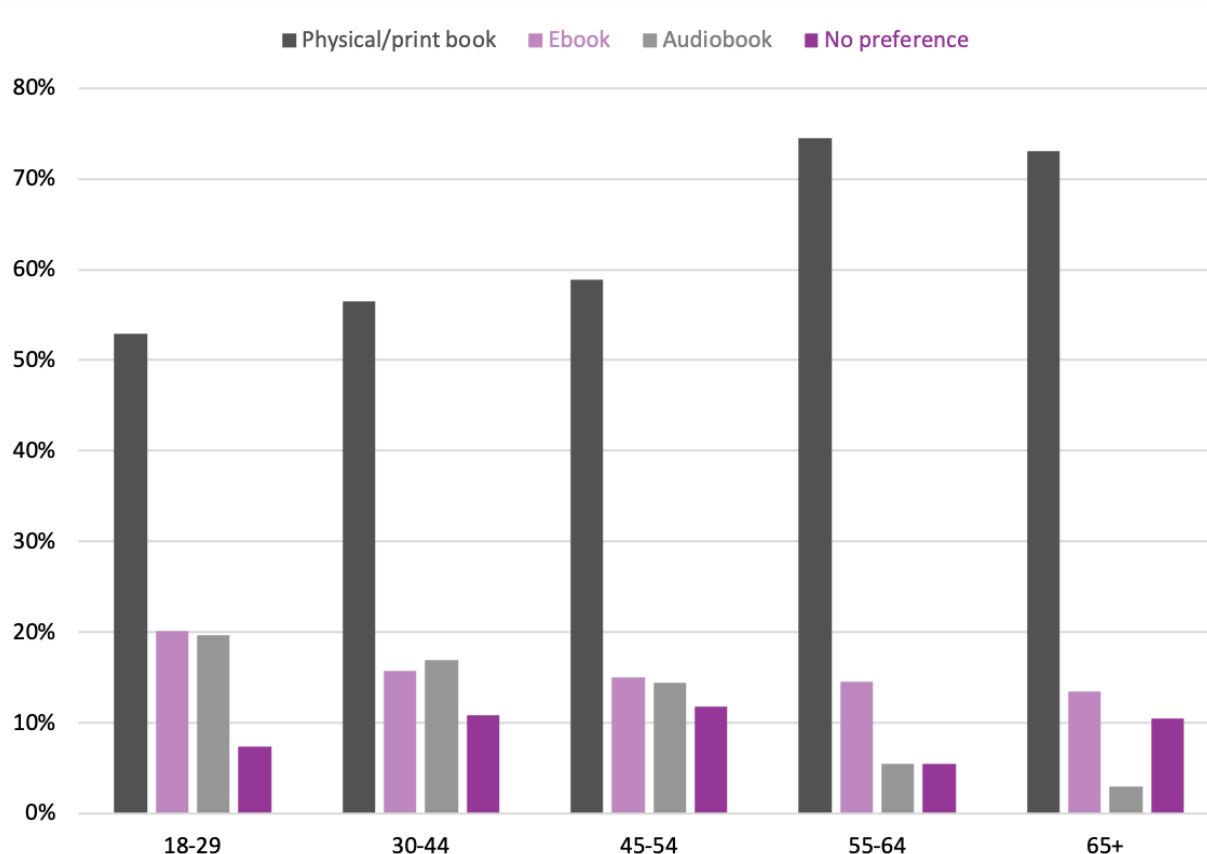
“That I am thankful that paper books continue to be published ... There is something very satisfying about holding a book in your hands.”

“Print books are still popular but expensive, but we still buy because we love the story. Push for ebooks ... They are easy to carry, especially on your phone.”

“Please maintain consistency that a book is always available in all formats. Audio, ebook, print.”

Format preferences broken down by age of readers shows us that the youngest demographic, those 18 to 29 years old were most likely to prefer ebooks (20%) and audiobooks (20%). Readers 55 to 64 were most likely to prefer print books (75%) and those 45 to 54 years old were most likely to say they did not have a format preference (12%).

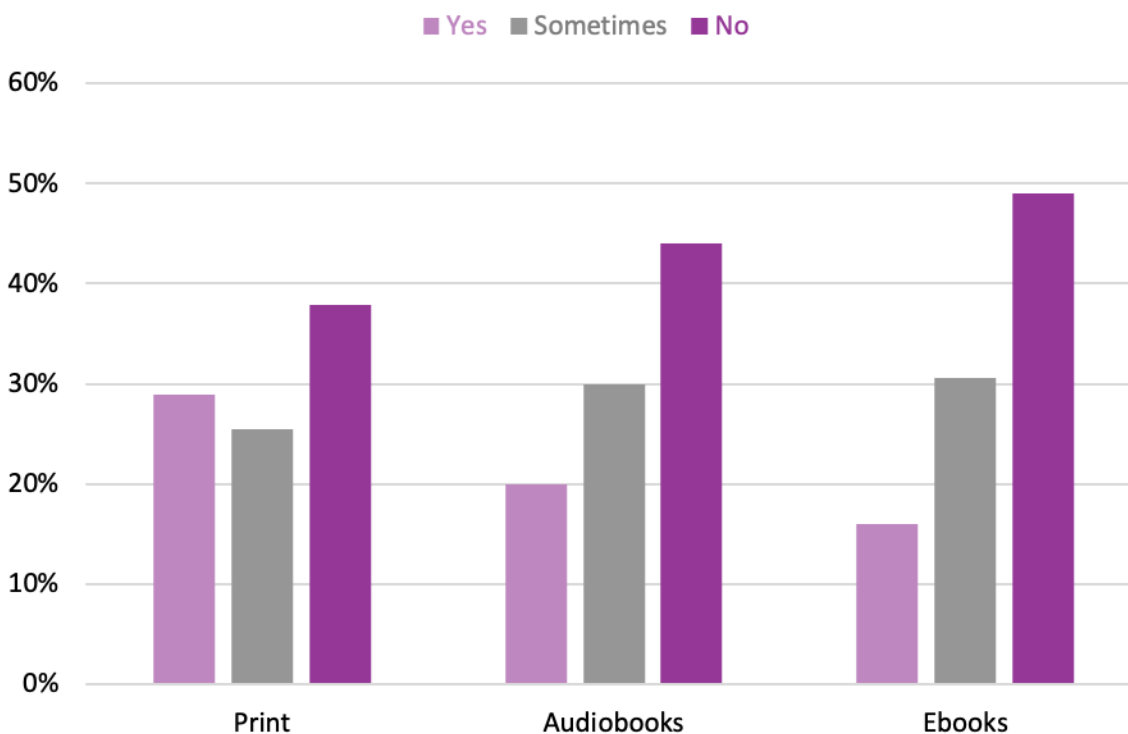
Format preference by age group, 2022



Only 25% of readers will always wait to read their preferred format. Most readers said they would read or listen to the format that is available or stocked either always or some of the time (67%).

Over half of all print readers said that if they could not find the print version of a book that they would not or usually not read it in another format (54%). Half of audiobook listeners (50%) and just under half of ebook readers said the same thing (47%).

Readers agreement with the statement “If I can’t find the ___ version of a book, I won’t read it in another format”, 2022



Reading time

Most readers told us that their reading time had stayed the same for print books (58%), ebooks (57%), and audiobooks (55%) from 2021 to 2022. Though 22% also said their reading time for print books increased.

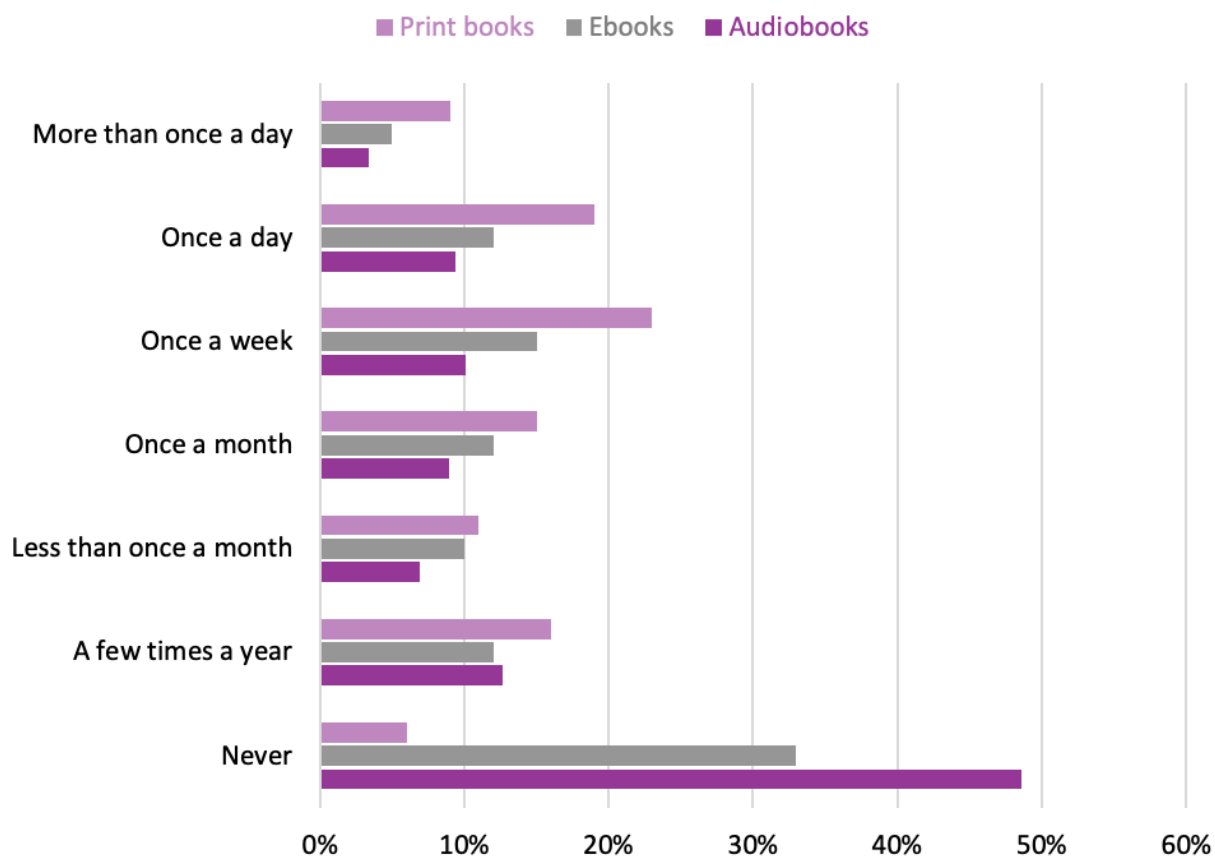
Perception of time spent reading by format, 2020–2021

| | Increased | Stayed the same | Decreased | Unsure |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| Print books | 22% | 58% | 17% | 3% |
| Ebooks | 17% | 57% | 18% | 9% |
| Audiobooks | 14% | 55% | 19% | 12% |

The percentage of readers who said that they had not listened to an audiobook at all last year decreased from 56% in 2021 to 49% in 2022, showing that they’re gaining in popularity. Those who listened to audiobooks once a day increased from 5% in 2021 to 9% in 2022.

Ebook and print book frequency has not changed much from 2021 to 2022, though the percentage of readers who had never read an ebook in the previous year decreased somewhat from 36% in 2021 to 33% in 2022.

Frequency of reading by format, 2022



Readers 65 and over were most likely to read print books at least daily, at 41%. They were also by far the most likely to never listen to audiobooks at 79% or ebooks at 56%. Readers in the 45 to 54 age group were most likely to read ebooks at least daily (29%) and audiobooks at least daily (25%).

Number of books read

Exactly half of all readers read between 1 and 5 books in 2022 (50%). Most print readers read between 1 and 5 books in 2022 (54%) but audiobook listeners were the most likely group to listen to 5 or fewer books, at 65%.

Number of books read by format and by all readers, 2022



Reading habits and preferences

Though readers reported the number of books they read in 2022 in the previous section, the number of books they started reading might be much higher: 80% of Canadian readers agreed that if they do not like the book they are reading, they will not finish it. And over half agreed that they often or sometimes only read or listen to the sections or parts of the book they are interested in (57%).

Half of print book readers also agreed (14%) or sometimes agreed (37%) that they skimmed or speed read their books. An even higher percentage of ebook readers also said they skimmed or speed read always or sometimes (58%).

Much of the preferences for print readers centered around environmental concerns with the physical book:

- I donate or give away a print book after I finish reading it (74%)
- I want books to be made from sustainably-sourced paper (70%)
- I want my books delivered in ecological-friendly packaging (64%)
- I want to know where books are printed or shipped from (49%)

Ebook readers mostly preferred ebooks with embedded audio or embedded video (52%). They either agreed (19%) or sometimes agreed (33%) with that statement. Though quite a large percentage of ebook readers also disagreed with that statement (38%).

Audiobook listeners were more likely to prefer audiobooks with sound effects and/or music (65%): 28% agreed with that statement and 41% sometimes agreed.

Other listening habits statements that Canadian audiobook listeners either agreed with or sometimes agreed with in 2022 were:

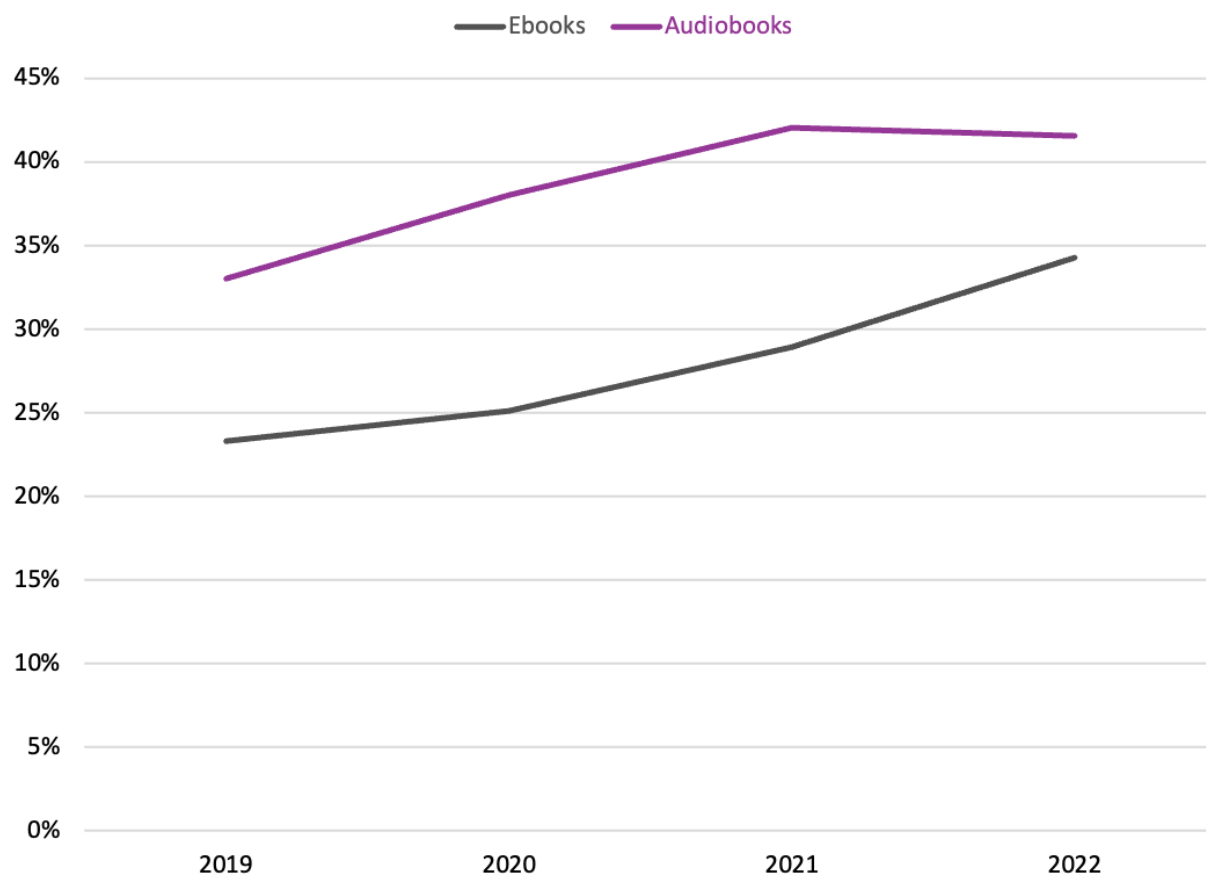
- I prefer listening to a human narrator over synthetic (AI) narration (82%)
- I have stopped listening to an audiobook because of the sound of the narrator's voice (64%)
- I search for specific narrators when looking for audiobooks to listen to (63%)
- I listen to an audiobook while following along in a physical/print book or ebook (54%)
- I specifically look for abridged (shortened) versions of audiobooks (52%)

Reading devices and apps

The story of 2022 is the rise of mobile for both ebook reading and audiobook listening. Over the past four years smartphones have been replacing other reading

devices for the two (largely) digital formats. The rise has been most pronounced for ebook reading going from 23% of devices used in 2019 to 34% in 2022.

Smartphone use for reading ebooks and listening to audiobooks, 2019–2022



Reading ebooks on smartphones (34%) has become even more popular than reading on tablets (32%). Same is true for listening to audiobooks on smartphones (42%) compared to listening on tablets (18%).

Devices used to read ebooks and listen to audiobooks

| | Ebook | Audiobook |
|--------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Smartphone | 34% | 42% |
| Tablet | 32% | 18% |
| Computer | 19% | 19% |
| Dedicated e-reader | 13% | 5% |
| Car stereo | - | 7% |
| Smart speaker | - | 5% |
| CD/tape player | - | 3% |
| Braille display/terminal | 1% | - |
| Other | 2% | 1% |

Same as last year, YouTube is the most popular platform for listening to audiobooks (31%) and Amazon Kindle is most popular for reading books (29%). Though YouTube is up slightly from last year (31% in 2022 vs. 29% in 2021) and Kindle is down quite a bit (29% in 2022 vs 35% in 2021).

Most popular apps to read ebooks and listen to audiobooks

| | Ebooks | Audiobooks |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------|
| YouTube | - | 31% |
| Amazon Kindle | 29% | 15% |
| Internet browser | 26% | 17% |
| Audible | - | 21% |
| Spotify | - | 21% |
| Google Books/Google Play | 19% | 19% |
| Apple Books/iTunes | 16% | 12% |
| Kobo | 15% | 6% |
| Adobe Reader or Digital Editions | 11% | - |
| OverDrive/Libby | 10% | 7% |
| Audiobooks.com | - | 10% |
| None of the above | 11% | 8% |

This was the first year we asked about Spotify; it tied with Audible as the second most popular audiobook listening app at 21% in 2022.

Accessibility features

While digital audiobooks and ebooks have many more features that provide accessibility support for readers than print books, we did find that 26% of print readers did use a magnifier when reading print books in 2022.

Ebooks

At 72% each, ebook readers are equally likely to turn on the night display or use the table of contents to navigate through the book — perhaps the 58% of ebook readers who said they skimmed or speed read in 2022 are using the table of contents to get to the passages of the book they're interested in. They also adjust screen magnification to make the text larger (71%) or use the bookmark button (69%).

Ebook features used by readers

| | Yes | Sometimes | No |
|---|-----|-----------|-----|
| I use the table of contents. | 30% | 42% | 25% |
| I turn on the night display when reading in dim/low lighting. | 37% | 36% | 24% |
| I adjust the screen magnification/zoom to be larger. | 27% | 44% | 27% |
| I use the Bookmark button. | 33% | 35% | 28% |
| I adjust font size or spacing to increase the text size or space out letters/lines. | 28% | 39% | 30% |
| I use the search function. | 28% | 37% | 31% |
| I use the reading mode on a tablet or smartphone. | 33% | 32% | 31% |
| I change text or background colours for a brighter contrast. | 25% | 37% | 35% |
| I change the text orientation from portrait to landscape. | 21% | 35% | 41% |
| I use reference page numbers or the percentage metric. | 25% | 29% | 39% |
| I make notes or highlight text. | 20% | 31% | 46% |
| I turn on the screen reader to use the text-to-speech feature or a Braille device. | 19% | 24% | 54% |
| I use voice control, eye tracking, or switches. | 13% | 24% | 59% |
| I don't know how to use most or all of these features. | 25% | 32% | 37% |

Same as last year, it’s a younger demographic than you might expect that are using the features in the list above the most. Though this year it was the 30 to 44 age group that consistently had the highest use of these features at least sometimes. In 2021, we found the 18 to 29 age group were the highest users.

Audiobooks

Listeners were most likely to replay parts of audiobooks to re-listen to them (76%), use speakers or handsfree features (74%), or listen to a sample of an audiobook before listening to the whole book (71%). These were very similar to 2021.

Audiobook features used by listeners

| | Yes | Sometimes | No |
|--|-----|-----------|-----|
| I replay parts of the audiobook to re-listen to. | 31% | 44% | 20% |
| I use the speaker, Bluetooth, or hands-free feature. | 38% | 36% | 22% |
| I listen to a sample of the audiobook before I listen to the full audio. | 33% | 39% | 25% |
| I use the Bookmark feature. | 31% | 37% | 29% |
| I reference the chapter or “minutes left” feature. | 29% | 33% | 33% |
| I use the table of contents or chapter list to read ahead. | 24% | 37% | 36% |
| I listen at an increased/faster or decreased/slower speed. | 24% | 34% | 38% |
| I set a timer to stop listening after a certain amount of time. | 21% | 25% | 51% |
| I don’t know how to use most or all of these features. | 26% | 32% | 36% |

Again, as for ebooks, the 30 to 44 age group were the demographic most likely to use audiobook features while listening to their books.

“Please make more books available in large print.”

“Like books that stay open, not always fighting with book to read it ... Make reading easier by making books more comfortable to use.”

“Need more accessibility and not so complicated.”

“Larger print please and easier listening.”

“Have easier options or access for people with visual impairments.”

Subjects and types of books

Readers of all formats read more children’s books in 2022 than they did in 2021. Print and ebook readers chose adult fiction books the majority of the time (73% for print readers and 67% for ebook readers). Audiobook listeners were most likely to read adult non-fiction books (61%).

Subject breakdown by format, 2021–2022

| | Print books | | Ebooks | | Audiobooks | |
|-------------------|-------------|------|--------|------|------------|------|
| | 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Adult fiction | 75% | 73% | 65% | 67% | 61% | 60% |
| Adult non-fiction | 68% | 66% | 60% | 58% | 65% | 61% |
| Children’s books | 12% | 16% | 7% | 10% | 9% | 13% |
| Young adult books | 19% | 18% | 14% | 16% | 15% | 14% |

When we drilled down into genres of fiction or non-fiction, we found that readers in 2022 were still captivated by Mysteries and Thrillers — it ranked number one in 2021 and 2022 for print readers (57% in 2021 vs. 53% in 2022) and ebook readers (48% in 2021 vs. 45% in 2022). For audiobook listeners it was also true that it was first in 2021 at 25% but it’s much higher in 2021 at 42%.

In fact, all fiction genres were up for audiobooks compared to 2021. As we can see in the table below, all fiction subjects had large dips from 2019 to 2020, stayed down in 2021, and then regained their 2019 levels or more in 2022.

Audiobook fiction subjects read, 2019-2022

| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Mysteries or Thrillers | 54% | 33% | 25% | 42% |
| Chick Lit | 7% | 2% | 3% | 7% |
| Historical Fiction | 29% | 9% | 10% | 27% |
| Fantasy | 28% | 12% | 10% | 36% |
| Science Fiction | 36% | 17% | 16% | 36% |
| Romance | 23% | 11% | 13% | 33% |
| Literary Fiction | 22% | 7% | 10% | 17% |
| Short Stories | 24% | 6% | 9% | 21% |
| Other fiction subjects | 2% | 0% | 0% | 2% |

Comics and graphic novels were also way up in 2022 compared with 2021 for print (15% in 2022 vs. 3% in 2021) and ebooks (16% in 2022 vs. 2% in 2021).

Fiction genres read by format

| | Print | Ebooks | Audiobooks |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|------------|
| Mysteries or Thrillers | 53% | 45% | 42% |
| Science Fiction | 31% | 28% | 36% |
| Historical Fiction | 29% | 27% | 27% |
| Romance | 28% | 28% | 33% |
| Fantasy | 28% | 30% | 36% |
| Literary Fiction | 23% | 20% | 17% |
| Short Stories | 17% | 22% | 21% |
| Comics or graphic novels | 15% | 16% | - |
| Chick Lit | 5% | 7% | 7% |
| Other fiction subjects | 3% | 4% | 2% |

The story is fairly similar for non-fiction subjects. History remained the top choice for ebook readers (37%) and audiobook listeners (38%) and it beat biographies and memoirs to take the top spot for print readers at 39%.

Comics and graphic novels also saw an increase from 2021 to 2022 for print (12% in 2022 vs. 7% in 2021) and ebook readers (10% in 2022 vs. 6% in 2021).

Again, all subjects were up for audiobook listeners compared with 2021, though not as dramatically as the fiction subjects.

Non-fiction subjects read by format

| | Print | Ebooks | Audiobooks |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|------------|
| History | 39% | 37% | 38% |
| Biographies or Memoirs | 38% | 30% | 30% |
| True Crime | 27% | 26% | 30% |
| Self-Help | 25% | 28% | 33% |
| Cookbooks | 24% | 22% | 20% |
| Health or Fitness | 20% | 19% | 25% |
| Personal Finance | 14% | 16% | 21% |
| Business | 13% | 18% | 16% |
| Comics or graphic novels | 12% | 10% | - |
| Other non-fiction subjects | 7% | 6% | 3% |

For more on the performance of specific subjects, you can find a [subject spotlight series](#) on the BookNet blog where we take a deep dive into the Canadian sales and library circulation of a different subject each month. Or watch our Tech Forum presentation, [Trendspotting: Book subjects on the move](#) in the Canadian market to learn more about the emerging trends in the types of books Canadians are buying.

To get a bit more broad about the types of books that Canadians were reading in 2022, we asked if they had read any of the following:

- Books that have been made into movies or TV shows (40%)
- Books with a sequel (duology, trilogy, series, etc.) (34%)
- Comics, manga, or graphic novels (20%)
- Books written in a language other than English (16%)
- Poetry, books in verse, or plays (14%)

These percentages, along with the 23% of readers who had not read any of the above types of books, were all similar to last year's numbers.

For the readers who had read a book in a language other than English, the top languages were French (37%), Mandarin (12%), and Spanish (10%).

Diversity and representation in books

An overwhelming majority of readers continue to agree that books should be representative of a variety of experiences (90%). Many also agreed that it is important that authors accurately represent their material through research, fact-checking, and/or hiring reviewers and sensitivity or beta readers (85%).

Reader opinions on diversity and representation in books

| | Yes | Sometimes | No |
|--|-----|-----------|-----|
| Books should be representative of a variety of experiences. | 59% | 31% | 4% |
| It is important that authors accurately represent their material through research, fact-checking, and/or hiring reviewers and sensitivity or beta readers. | 52% | 33% | 8% |
| A greater variety of authors should be published and stocked. | 45% | 31% | 6% |
| It is important that books about a group or culture should be written by people from that group or culture. | 35% | 36% | 18% |

Canadians reading books by or about Canadians has been trending down slightly from 2019 to 2022, but reading books by or about marginalized identities has either remained stable, as in the case of books by or about LGBTQIA+ people or disabled people, or has been trending up since 2019, as in the case of books by or about Black, Indigenous, or person/people of colour, people with immigrant status, and people who belong to religious minorities.

Representation in books, 2019–2022

| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Books by or about Canadians/locals | 30% | 27% | 28% | 24% |
| Books by or about Black, Indigenous, or person/people of colour | 7% | 8% | 19% | 14% |
| Books by or about LGBTQIA+ people | 10% | 10% | 8% | 8% |
| Books by or about people with immigrant status | 8% | 6% | 13% | 12% |
| Books by or about disabled people | 8% | 8% | 10% | 10% |
| Books by or about people who belong to religious minorities | 44% | 36% | 14% | 14% |

“Encourage and support Canadian authors and likewise encourage Canadians to read them.”

“Please publish more titles by first-time writers.”

“Promote more books from, by and for minorities and increase opportunities for marginalized writers!”

“There are lot of excellent manga series just waiting to be translated into English.”

“Have more variety of storytelling perspectives.”

About BookNet Canada

BookNet Canada is a non-profit organization that develops technology, standards, and education to serve the Canadian book industry. Founded in 2002 to address systemic challenges in the industry, BookNet Canada supports publishing companies, booksellers, wholesalers, distributors, sales agents, and libraries across the country.

BookNet Canada acknowledges that our operations are remote and our colleagues contribute their work from the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, and Mi'kmaq Peoples, the original nations of the lands we now call Beeton, Brampton, Guelph, Halifax, Toronto, and Vaughan. We endorse the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and support an ongoing shift from gatekeeping to spacemaking in the book industry.

The book industry has long been an industry of gatekeeping. Anyone who works at any stage of the book supply chain carries a responsibility to serve readers by publishing, promoting, and supplying works that represent the wide extent of human experiences and identities in all that complicated intersectionality. We, at BookNet, are committed to working with our partners in the industry as we move towards a framework that supports "spacemaking," which ensures that marginalized creators and professionals all have the opportunity to contribute, work, and lead.

BookNet Canada's services and research help companies promote and sell books, streamline workflows, and analyze and adapt to a rapidly changing market. BookNet Canada sets technology standards and educates organizations about how to apply them, performs market research, and tracks 85% of all Canadian English-language print trade book sales through BNC SalesData.

BookNet Canada has extensive research available on our [website](#), both free and for purchase.

- [Canadian Book Consumer Study 2022](#): New results from our quarterly survey of Canadians about their book buying, borrowing, and more in 2022.

- [Canadian Book Market 2022](#): A comprehensive guide to the Canadian market in 2022 with in-depth category data.
- [The State of Publishing in Canada 2021](#): A thorough overview of the Canadian English-language publishing landscape, with data from small, mid-sized, and large publishers.

To stay updated on current and future research, subscribe to our monthly [BNC Research newsletter](#). To stay up-to-date on all BookNet Canada news and information, [subscribe to our weekly eNews](#).

If you have any questions or comments about this or other studies, please contact the research team at research@booknetcanada.ca.

Industry-led and partially funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, BookNet Canada has become, as The Globe and Mail puts it, “the book industry’s supply-chain nerve centre.”

Learn more at booknetcanada.ca.

Appendix A: Demographics

The following tables compare the demographics of all Canadians and Canadian readers as collected by the Canadian Leisure and Reading survey in 2022.

Gender identity

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|-------------------|---------|---------------|
| Woman | 48% | 47% |
| Man | 51% | 53% |
| Non-binary | 0% | 0% |
| Prefer not to say | 0% | 0% |

Age

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|-------|---------|---------------|
| 18-29 | 22% | 20% |
| 30-44 | 23% | 21% |
| 45-54 | 19% | 19% |
| 55-64 | 16% | 19% |
| 65+ | 20% | 21% |

Region

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------------|
| Atlantic | 7% | 8% |
| Central | 59% | 58% |
| Prairies | 20% | 21% |
| West coast and Northern territories | 13% | 13% |

Location

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|--------------------------|---------|---------------|
| City or urban area | 49% | 49% |
| Suburban area | 33% | 31% |
| Small town or rural area | 18% | 20% |

Education

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|--------------------------|---------|---------------|
| College or university | 52% | 50% |
| Graduate or professional | 17% | 15% |
| High school or GED | 29% | 32% |
| Apprenticeship | 3% | 3% |
| Trade school | 7% | 7% |
| Prefer not to say | 2% | 3% |

Household income

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|---------------------|---------|---------------|
| Under \$15,000 | 6% | 6% |
| \$15,000-\$24,999 | 8% | 9% |
| \$25,000-\$34,999 | 9% | 9% |
| \$35,000-\$49,999 | 12% | 12% |
| \$50,000-\$74,999 | 19% | 19% |
| \$75,000-\$99,999 | 14% | 14% |
| \$100,000-\$149,999 | 18% | 17% |
| \$150,000 and over | 8% | 8% |
| Prefer not to say | 7% | 7% |

Caregiving

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|--|---------|---------------|
| Yes, a parent | 12% | 11% |
| Yes, a child/young adult | 26% | 24% |
| Yes, someone/a relationship not listed | 5% | 5% |
| Yes, a pet/animal | 29% | 28% |
| No | 42% | 45% |

Non-dominant identity

| | Readers | All Canadians |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------------|
| BIPOC | 7% | 7% |
| Disabled | 9% | 11% |
| LGBTQIA+ | 6% | 6% |
| Working class/low income earner | 21% | 21% |
| Immigrant | 14% | 13% |
| Religious minority | 10% | 9% |
| Prefer not to say | 4% | 4% |
| No | 45% | 46% |