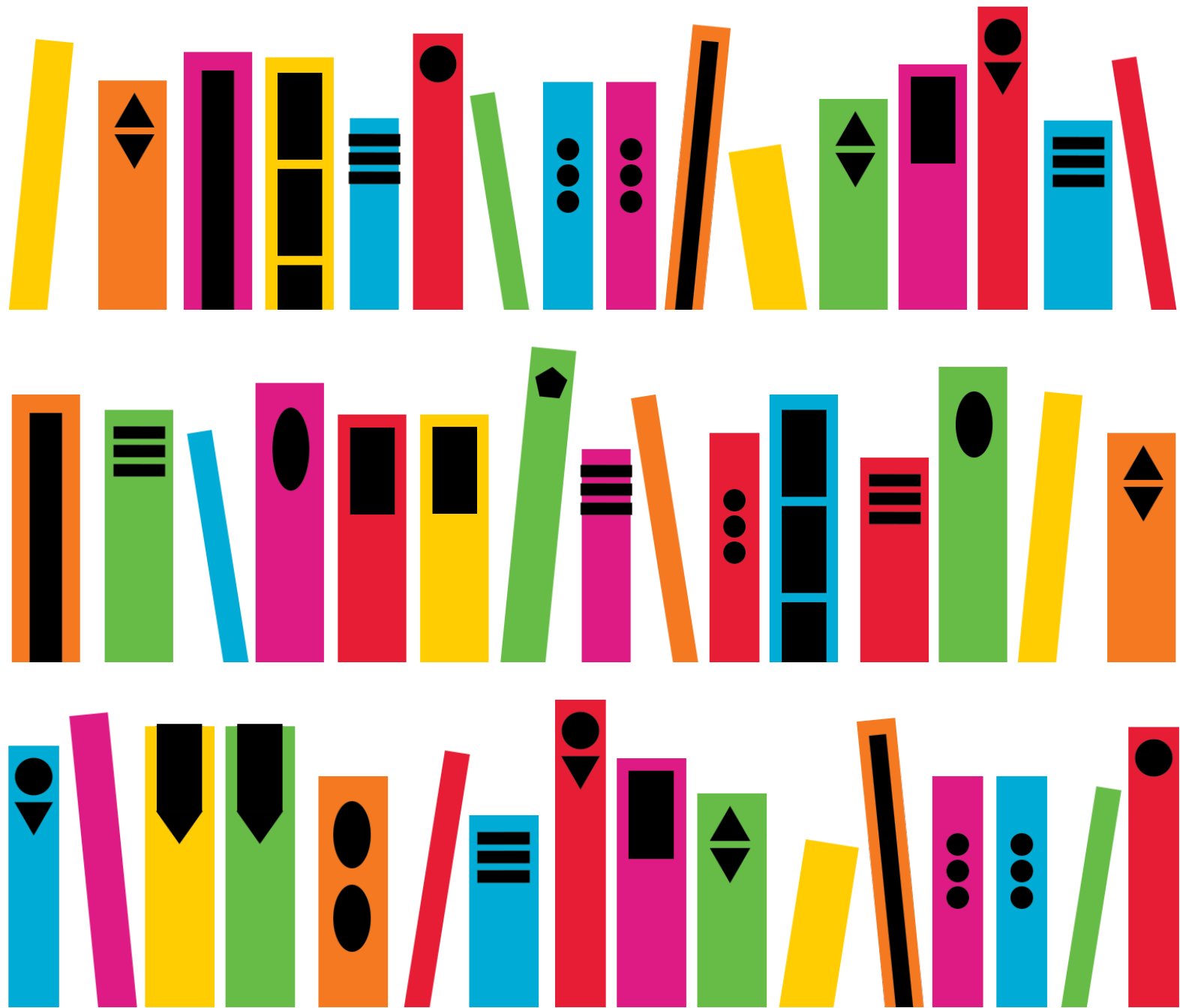




# Reading in Scotland: My life as a reader



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## Executive summary

**'I've read whilst ill, I've read whilst in labour, whilst feeding a newborn and over an incubator in NICU. I read in the hours after my father died as a distraction. I've read on boats, planes, trains and in cars. T.S. Eliot may have written about a life measured out in coffee spoons but mine could be measured out in books.'**

During the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, Scottish Book Trust set out to discover what impact the lockdown was having on readers in Scotland. We recruited a panel of people living in Scotland to complete regular surveys about their experiences of reading between March and August 2020. As part of this study we investigated the role reading has played at different stages of the panel's lives – their many lives as readers.

### Reading identity

The vast majority of the panel saw themselves as readers and had a strong sense of the impact that this had had on their lives.

- 98% agreed that they would describe themselves as 'a reader'.
- 98% agreed that reading is an important part of who they are.
- 95% agreed that things they have read over their life had had an impact on who they are.
- 90% agreed that their lives had been changed in some way by something they had read.

'It's how I define myself. I think of myself as a Reader, and my collection of books are a physical manifestation of who I am!'

'I cannot imagine living a life without books.'

'I think it's essential. There's something so wonderful about being delighted by a story, and being lost in a book that you can't wait to get back to is one of the best things there is.'

## Reading as a child

Most of the panel's love of reading had developed in childhood, often bolstered by their local public library.

- 93% read a lot for enjoyment as a child.
- 88% read a lot for enjoyment in their teens.
- 92% used the public library as a child.

'I would read anywhere and everywhere. I could spend whole Saturdays lost in the world of a book. It was my refuge and my escape and my hobby!'

'I read everything the children's library could supply and then harassed the staff until they let me join the senior library before I was the correct age. I loved my local library and visited weekly, if not more often. It's their fault all my spare money goes on books!!'

'That another world existed and was possible for a child like me. Eternally grateful, and now I get to share this with my son.'

## The lifelong benefits of reading

The panel described a range of benefits of being a lifelong reader, including support of their health and wellbeing, empathy, social lives and lifelong learning.

In the past few years:

- 97% read to relax, 90% for comfort and 85% to escape
- 97% read for entertainment and 99% told us it makes them happy
- 92% read to learn in general and 90% to learn about different places or people
- 70% read for social reasons

'During lockdown, I have had the time to read a lot more and I am really grateful for that. Those moments of escape are not only crucial to my mental health but remind me that there is light at the end of the tunnel.'

'I love it when a book – fiction or non fiction – changes the way you look at the world. I feel that I have grown as a human being.'

'People think that reading is a solitary and lonely affair but they are so wrong.'

- 88% agreed that reading for enjoyment has helped them in their professional life.

'My professional interests have been guided and strengthened by my reading and there are definitely characters I have loved who have stayed with me and whose values or attitudes have impacted me.'

## Conclusion

Over the course of this study we got to know our panel a little better with each weekly survey. These fascinating insights made us want to know more about their reading lives and the impact being a reader has had on them. We were amazed and delighted by the quality and depth of their responses to our survey focusing on this theme and believe they give a real sense of the hugely important and positive effects reading can have on a person's life.

## Introduction

In March 2020 we recruited a panel of readers living in Scotland to explore if, and how, the lockdown was impacting Scotland's reading. Each week from April to June a group of between 114–213 people completed surveys on their experience of reading that week. They were contacted again in mid-August for a follow-up survey. Participation in the panel was voluntary and the response rate varied from week to week.

Over the weeks we built up a picture of Scotland's reading habits under lockdown and investigated whether reading had an impact on our panel's life and wellbeing. In November 2020 we published the [\*Reading in Scotland: reading over lockdown report\*](#), detailing our findings.

Each week in addition to set questions relating to the panel's reading habits and experiences we dove deeper into a different theme to maintain variety for the panellists and gain further insights. In week seven (the penultimate weekly survey and anti-penultimate survey of the study) we focused on the role reading has played at different stages of their lives.

We received 121 returns to this survey and are publishing this second report from the *Reading in Scotland* study to share the panel's fascinating insights on what it means to be 'a reader'.

You can find more information about the panel and methodology in the [\*Reading in Scotland: reading over lockdown report\*](#).

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the *Reading in Scotland* study. The panel were incredibly generous with their time, energy and insights over the course of the project.

## Reading identity

'Reading to me is like breathing utterly essential.'



98% of our panel agreed (93% strongly) that they would describe themselves as 'a reader'. It might not be surprising that a group of people who signed up voluntarily to participate in a reading study are voracious readers, and it would be interesting to compare their perspectives to those who don't read as much. However, it was notable that panellists' self-definition as readers reflected the importance of books to their sense of self. 98% of the panel agreed (88% strongly) that reading is an important part of who they are. 95% agreed that things they have read over their life had had an impact on who they are and 90% agreed that their lives had been changed in some way by something they had read.

'It's how I define myself. I think of myself as a Reader, and my collection of books are a physical manifestation of who I am!'

'I cannot imagine living a life without books.'

'I think it's essential. There's something so wonderful about being delighted by a story, and being lost in a book that you can't wait to get back to is one of the best things there is.'

## Changes to reading identity over time

Many panellists described themselves as lifelong readers who discovered their love of books at an early age:

'Reading has always been one of the most important things in my life, right from when I was a toddler. I simply cannot imagine life without it.'

'I learned to read when I was 4, and after that my mum would sometimes forbid me to read because I would hide under my desk at night and read with a small torch.'

'The highlight of each Saturday was being taken to the local bookshop to spend my pocket money.'

A few told us that they experienced difficulties reading when they were younger and became a reader later in life:

'I was not a big reader as a child, I had issues with comprehension of the books (only realised this in later life) however discovered a love of reading in my late 20s.'

The teens were difficult reading years for some on the panel with a few mentioning peer pressure or image worries impacting their reading:

'Adored reading as a child but when I was a teenager I stopped as it wasn't "cool" (peer pressure). Once I started working in a library (21), I picked up books again and have never looked back! I regret the time I didn't read as I imagine it would have helped hugely in difficult times. Teens/Young Adults are definitely a group that need more attention in terms of encouraging to read.'

'I loved reading but felt embarrassed to be seen reading as I thought it was a geeky thing to do. Now I am a proud bookworm!'

The panel described a changing relationship with reading at different stages of their adult lives. The role of reading fluctuated depending on time, commitments and priorities:

'I was a voracious reader when I was younger but there were fewer distractions. I still really love reading but do get distracted by other activities such as surfing the net, social media, Netflix etc.'



'I love reading for pleasure and wish I could spend more time doing it but I feel guilty if I'm neglecting other things.'

'Now retired I can fulfil many of my personal reading ambitions but I am still most likely just to reach out and read the next available item; book, article, newspaper etc. When I worked I drowned in technical, medical, and professional literature. I enjoyed it too and still read some of that to keep me up to date but it's so nice to not have to read it.'

'My reading patterns have changed as I've got older (I've had my big 40 under lockdown). I never read much non fiction when I was younger but enjoy it more now. I stopped reading fiction for a while after I lost my Mum because I couldn't cope with the emotions in a lot of stories – most stories involve loss of some kind so fiction stopped being an escape at that time. As I've got older I find myself looking at a wider variety of genres but I still go back to old favourites time and time again.'

The two adult life experiences that were consistently cited as hindering the panellists' time and energy to read were having young children or studying at university:

'The number of hours I spend reading has decreased massively since having children. As a child, teenager and adult I've always been a big reader; it's how I relax, and I used to really look forward to getting home from school/work and back to my current book. I have less time and energy now, and less awareness of what books are out there that I could enjoy. Lockdown has actually been a good opportunity for me to focus my efforts on reading; and it IS an effort to get it done now, whereas before it was just an integral part of my existence. I still find reading very relaxing, but I'm mostly too tired/busy to find time for a relaxation portion of the day. I'm either awake and busy, or asleep. But I've carved out two reading windows in the day and I'm sticking to them as best I can without passing out.'

'The only time in my life when I didn't read much for pleasure was when I was at University, as I had to do so much reading for my course, that reading for pleasure didn't feel like the best of breaks from that, and when I did read then I would choose deliberately easy books, fast paced crime fiction or "chick lit".'

Although many of our panel members were voracious readers, their responses indicated that their reading behaviours hadn't necessarily stayed the same throughout their lives. Many came to reading at an early age, but their reading patterns and preferences changed at different stages of their lives. This emphasises the variety of different reading lives we can live, and the ways reading can serve us differently during different periods.

## Reading as a child

**'That another world existed and was possible for a child like me. Eternally grateful, and now I get to share this with my son.'**

We focused the majority of our questions around the panel's experience of reading as children in order to investigate how they developed as readers at an early age. However, it should be noted that a number of panellists found their love for books later in their lives:

'I wasn't really a reader until my late 20's/30 ... I've grown to love reading, need reading. It was after I studied my degree that I became a great reader. I'm rarely without a book now.'

The panel is diverse in background and age and these two factors were relevant to their comments on reading as a child. Some respondents have vivid memories their first trips to public libraries in the 1950s, others were teenagers for whom memories of their childhood reading are very recent:

'Reading was considered an essential part of my routine when I was a child, it held the same role in my night-time routine as brushing my teeth. Now, as a teenager I find I stick to that less strictly but I still try to honour it and notice when I haven't done it.'

'Life was different in the 50s and 60s. At home we had plenty of reference books; encyclopaedias, dictionaries, atlases etc. but it was encouraged that fiction books were borrowed from the library and not bought. Books were too expensive to purchase regularly. So the local library became my second home.'

### The role of family

78% of the panel remembered being encouraged to read for enjoyment by their family as a child. Those who remembered being encouraged to read as a child noted that this gave them access to books (whether at home or in the library), positive reinforcement and reading role models. A few saw reading as an inheritance passed down through their family:

'I was obsessed! My mum in particular really encouraged a connection with books and the library.'

'My Dad and grandparents were a big influence on my reading, I was always surrounded by books of various genres.'

'I grew up in a family where everyone read and we would discuss books together.'

'My parents are both avid readers and I'm glad this is something they passed on to me.'

Encouragement and support at home was particularly important for those who struggled with literacy initially:

'I was slow to learn to read but my mum spent a lot of extra time helping me and then I read anything I could get my hands on.'

Some responses did not mention outside encouragement at all and described reading on their own initiative as a child:

'Nobody had to encourage me to read books, it was the opposite – I would read anywhere and everywhere. I could spend whole Saturdays lost in the world of a book. It was my refuge and my escape and my hobby!'

'It used to make my family laugh that I was always reading, even sitting reading the cereal box at breakfast time.'

Others described a lack of encouragement to read or their commitment to read in the face of discouragement or even adversity:

'Reading set me apart as a child because no-one else read. Due to the dearth of reading materials in my home, I reread the few books we had over and over again. I now never reread a book and that makes me feel sad.'

'Although there weren't many books in my house growing up and my parents kept telling me to get my nose out of a book, I've been really fortunate in having book lovers guide me on my reading journey – The Famous Five by a friend of my parents, Nancy Drew by my primary school headteacher, Toni Morrison by a university flat mate, Thomas Hardy by a landlady, Ron Rash by a colleague – and I

thank each and every one of them for sharing their passion with me and introducing me to such a broad range of stories.'

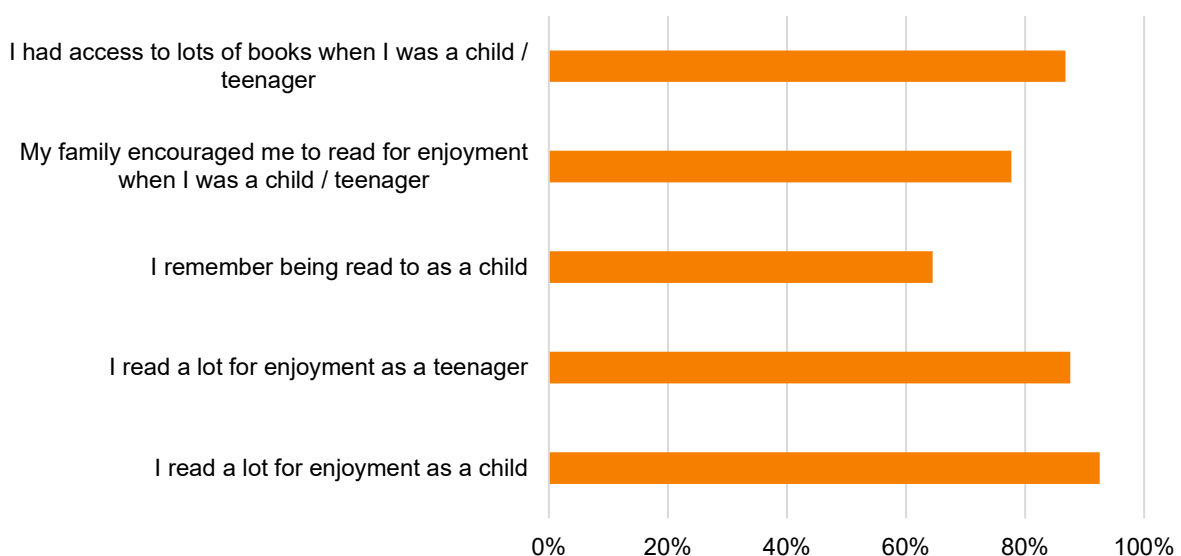
'I was lucky to grow up in a house full of books, and I read as many of them as I could. My mother used to chase me outside as a child as she didn't approve of me and my siblings sitting about "doing nothing" during the day (and that included reading!). But we could read as much as we liked in the evenings. I remember being read to every night at bedtime as a child and did the same with my son, until he was in first year of secondary school (though he told me not to tell anyone...).'

Many panellists advocated encouraging children to read from an early age and a number were consciously passing their love of reading on to the next generation through their work as teachers or their actions as parents or family members:

'I became an English teacher in order to give back to others the gift of reading. Even if my pupils do not enjoy the books we study in class, I am fortunate to help them choose books for their wider enjoyment.'

'I have no children but always try to encourage other family members and friends to read. It saddens me when people sometimes tell me they have no interest in reading, as they are missing out on so much. I am now 65 and sometimes think that when I die one of my few regrets will be about the books I never managed to read. '

### Reading as a child



## The role of schools

93% of the panel read a lot for enjoyment as a child and this dipped slightly to 88% reading a lot for enjoyment in their teens. However, only 65% generally enjoyed the texts read in school and 64% felt encouraged to read for enjoyment by their teachers.

When school appeared in the responses, some reported enjoying their set texts, having their reading horizons expanded or being inspired by learning professionals:

'In the absence of other distractions (such as the internet), reading played a massive part in my childhood and teenage years. I was given a huge list of 'classics' to read by my teacher before A Level English which really expanded my world. It saddens me a bit that my daughter isn't pushed in a similar way to expand her reading. I very rarely bought books as a child/teenager, so most of my reading was through the public library.'

'I grew up on a scheme in Falkirk with no books at home. My mum enrolled me in the library as soon as I was eligible. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the old library on Hope Street which enabled me to just browse the shelves for anything that attracted me/had been suggested by excellent teachers at Falkirk High School to whom I owe an equal debt of gratitude.'

The panel was slightly more likely to report negative experiences of reading at school. Themes that cropped up in these responses included frustration with the focus on exams and the texts studied:

'In upper secondary, reading became associated with exams and work rather than enjoyment.'

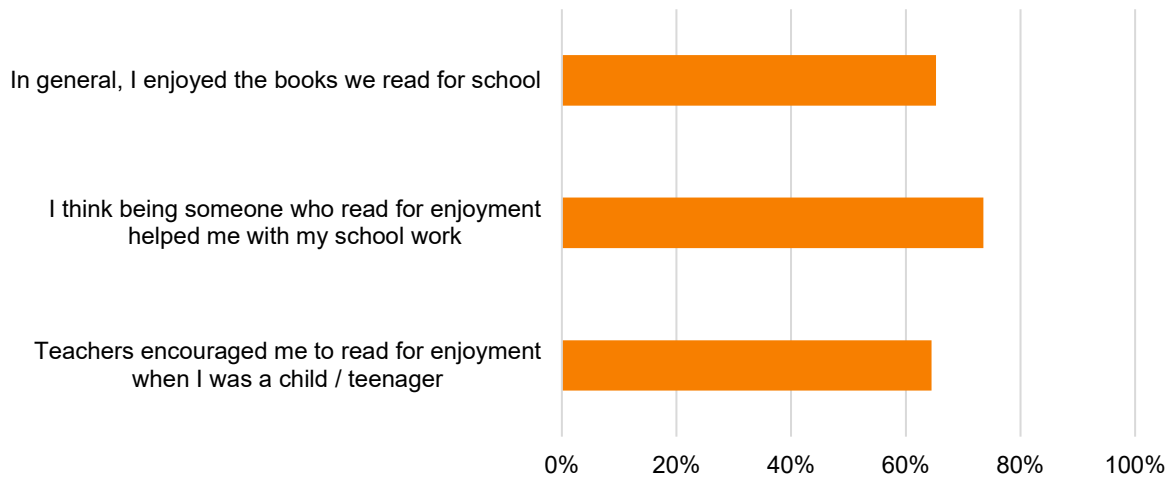
'Reading has always been a massive source of enjoyment for me, but I always found set texts at school very off-putting.'

'I struggled for a while as a teenager as teachers wanted me to read more 'challenging' books and read other genres. I didn't mind trying them, but being forced to read entire books took my love out of reading for a while.'

'We didn't have a television because my dad thought it rotted your brain so I read a lot. I didn't enjoy the books at school too much because they quickly got too easy.'

By the time I started secondary school, I was reading the same books as my mum and found the books at school too easy/childish. I loved the poetry we covered though.'

### Reading and education



### The role of libraries

92% of the panel reported that they used the public library as a child. The panel not only commented on how they felt supported by libraries as children but also how they considered public libraries to be essential to their growth as readers. A number of people on the panel noted that they would not have had access to books without their local library and expressed concerns over children today and in the future not having the same opportunities:

'The library I used as a child and young person every week has closed due to cuts. I couldn't have gone to uni without it.'

'I grew up in poverty so the local library was essential for me. I worry for children today with so many libraries closing.'

'Reading can transport us to places and ideas that we wouldn't dream of ourselves. It is ESSENTIAL that a free well-stocked library is readily available for everyone.'

The role libraries played in the panel's reading lives varied but was overwhelmingly positive. Panellists were more likely to remember public than school libraries and mentioned visiting as part of a routine, visiting with family and age barriers for borrowing:

'I read everything the children's library could supply and then harassed the staff until they let me join the senior library before I was the correct age. I loved my local library and visited weekly, if not more often. It's their fault all my spare money goes on books!!'

'As a teenager I visited my local library 3–4 times a week for books and internet access, it was an absolute lifeline for me.'

Panellists who grew up in poverty and/or without books in their homes were especially enthusiastic about libraries. Restricted (or no) library access severely impacted their access to quality books:

'We never had much money when I was wee, so I didn't own many books compared to others, but my parents took me to just about every library in our local authority to keep me in books – when we visited friends and family in nearby towns I would take my library card and run off to the local library! I was quite shy as a child and reading was my solace but also a way to experience all kinds of worlds, as mine was quite small I suppose. I'm more outgoing as an adult but still find a wonderful comfort in books and get to the library as often as I can. Passing on that love of reading to my children is really important to me.'

'We were poor. Each child got a book for each birthday and Christmas. These were passed about to the others. The mining village library I lived in only had adult fiction and that was most Westerns and Romance novels!'

'We didn't have a library so I reread a lot of things and luckily had cousins in the USA who sent books, but also read things from parents' bookshelves – not always suitable!'



## The lifelong benefits of reading

'I love it when a book – fiction or non fiction – changes the way you look at the world. I feel that I have grown as a human being.'

Please tell us if you read for any of the following reasons	During lockdown	During the past few years	At school	Never
To relax	97%	97%	75%	0%
To learn	78%	92%	85%	1%
For comfort	85%	90%	66%	3%
For social reasons	43%	70%	25%	22%
To escape	90%	85%	76%	4%
For entertainment	94%	97%	84%	0%
It makes me happy	97%	99%	89%	0%
To learn more about different places or people	70%	90%	72%	3%

Throughout the survey, responses indicated a range of benefits associated with being a reader. We have grouped these findings under the themes of social, health and wellbeing, empathy and lifelong learning, though much of the evidence provided by the panel intersects with multiple themes.

### Social

As the panel looked back on the role of reading throughout their lives they noted a range of social benefits. They recounted how reading helped them find a romantic partner, bond with colleagues, make friends and connect with existing friends:

'I am lucky that my career as a teacher and librarian has meant I can use reading and the love of reading in my job. I love that I may have inspired some kids to think of reading as something that is for them. People think that reading is a solitary and lonely affair but they are so wrong. I do not what I would be like as a person if I did not read.'

'Passion for reading helped me connect with my partner when we first met, and is a hobby that makes our conversations more interesting. He is the one who told me about this survey in the first place and is a part of this panel, too!'

'The majority of my friends aren't massive readers but I have found some to enjoy reading socially with. I am part of a couple very informal reading groups and I often exchange thoughts and recommendations about books with a couple of friends whose reading tastes are very similar to mine. I find these relationships very rewarding and reading has definitely strengthened our friendship.'

However, it should be noted that those who did not experience reading as social did not see this as negative:

'I read for all the reasons except social. My reading is a wonderfully solitary occupation.'

Possibly influenced by the focus of the study on lockdown, panellists mentioned that reading helped reduce isolation when social contact was not an option or not desired:

'Although reading is an individual act, for me it has helped to reduce social isolation, both through the more formal mechanism of belonging to several book groups and discussing particular books, but also in the more informal way of recommending, swapping, and discussing books with friends and colleagues.'

The potential for reading to reduce isolation also came up in responses about childhood reading in the context of bullying or loneliness:

'I used to read all the time to escape and because I was an only child I used it as company too.'

'I was the child who carried three books around with me everywhere I went, as I couldn't decide which one to read. As a teenager, I was bullied a lot at school, and so my relationship with books strengthened – they became my best friends. That has not changed until the present day.'

## Health and wellbeing

92% of the panel agreed (65% strongly) that reading has been important to them in times of stress or anxiety. Reading to support health and wellbeing emerged as an important theme throughout the study in terms of the panel's experiences of reading under lockdown.

A significant minority described reading to escape as a child when they were stuck in difficult home situations:

'As a child it showed me that my future wasn't as dark as I feared.'

'I had a high ACEs score. Books were literally my escape!'

'Reading was essential escapism from a difficult home life.'

A number described using reading as a leisure activity as an adult to promote their wellbeing through relaxation and distraction:

'I also like to get away from my desk and read at lunchtime – entering into a fictional world feels like a proper break.'

'Reading is sometimes a form of mindfulness for me. I like to get absorbed in a book though it rarely happens just now.'

Others cited reading as key to tackling stress, difficult life experiences, insomnia and mental health issues:

'Listening to audio books during sleepless nights when severely depressed, quite literally saved my life, and were what got me through the night and safely into the next morning, in particular Stephen Fry reading the Harry Potter books.'

'For the past few years I have kept a 'book diary' that details all the books I read in a given year. You can see years where I was having a difficult or stressful time in my personal life as the number of books I read increased. It wasn't something I was aware of at the time but I've realised that reading has become a significant part of my coping mechanism.'

'Reading has been a permanent part of my life (it even inspired my first degree) but during lockdown, I have had the time to read a lot more and I am really grateful for that. Those moments of escape are not only crucial to my mental health but remind me that there is light at the end of the tunnel.'

Throughout the study we received reports from panellists that they were sometimes not able to read during periods of anxiety or depression and that this can be distressing, particularly if reading was one of their methods of coping:

'Although reading has been important in times of stress or anxiety, I lost the ability to read for pleasure when suffering from stress and anxiety badly, and particularly when the stress induced depression. It can be much harder to focus on a story line in such circumstances.'

'I get really bad tempered if I don't have the space to read every day. The idea of being without a book on hand fills me with anxiety.'

Some used reading to inform, educate and support themselves or others through a range of health issues:

'I have read a lot of books regarding quitting alcohol and they have had a huge impact on my life and how I view alcohol.'

'After being diagnosed with MS in 2013, I did a lot of researching in books on how best to manage and live with this condition. Without reading I would not be as well as I am. I often recommend certain books to others with MS in the hope that they do the same.'

'In my job I help adults in recovery from alcohol and drugs. I promote reading & writing to help in their journey. I also promote reading with my colleagues.'

'I've read whilst ill, I've read whilst in labour, whilst feeding a newborn and over an incubator in NICU. I read in the hours after my father died as a distraction. I've read on boats, planes, trains and in cars. T.S. Eliot may have written about a life measured out in coffee spoons but mine could be measured out in books.'

## Empathy

The panel reported that they had read to learn about different people and places throughout their lives. This was cited as a motivation for reading during lockdown (70%), over the past few years (90%) and at school (72%). This desire to learn about and understand difference was expressed as a desire to develop emotional skills and increase empathy by some panellists:

'I think reading fiction is a great way to build empathy and experience things from other people's points of view, and well written fiction can do this in a much more

powerful way than reading something factual. E.g I recently read "Girl Woman Other", I am not a black women, I will never personally experience some of the things described, but after reading the book I feel I have more understanding and empathy around how others experience the world.'

'I believe reading allows us to step into the lives of others and understand their feelings and actions better. I think reading a lot about others has had an impact on how I see others. I believe it develops empathy.'

'Although I had wonderful kind friends when I was growing up they were not very similar to me in tastes or the things they thought about. So I enjoyed reading as a way to fulfil some of these holes. I love the worlds in books as a new perspective and place and find 'going' to these places, real or imagined, very rewarding. I love to think about things and I feel reading is a way to do that. I have definitely read both fiction and non-fiction that has changed my life because it changed my perspective. I hope it has made me a more compassionate and imaginative person.'

Others explained their motivation to learn about new people and places as an expanding of their horizons and a broadening of their perspective:

'Although I read for enjoyment, I believe a side effect has been that an increased knowledge and understanding about the world and people and different viewpoints, which helps me to see problems in my life with perspective and not get too wrapped up in them, giving me more background information to make life decisions, giving me critical skills to try to see things in an objective way instead of being emotive, eg politics and media.'

'Reading fiction has taught me an incredible number of things, from moon phases to Scottish history, to new foods and drinks, to understanding other people better.'

'I love reading books by authors from different countries or who have experiences/job roles that I will never have. I find it helps to gain perspective into areas of life I know little about which is always a thing.'

## Lifelong learning

The majority indicated that they have read to learn throughout their lives whether in lockdown (78%), over the past few years (92%) and at school (85%). Some described learning skills and developing ambitions through their reading:

'I think every time we read, even if we don't realise, we are learning but often it isn't necessarily learning 'things' but rather skills – empathy, analysis etc.'

'Reading as a child absolutely shaped my ambitions for the future. And still does.'

Some of the panel noted that reading fuelled their curiosity and knowledge outside of formal education. Reading represented a form of lifelong learning and sometimes an accessible alternative to formal education:

'Growing up in poverty, I only learned about education and university from books. I have always been the only reader in my family and I am the only one who went on to higher education and moved away from the area we grew up in.'

'Each book I read makes me want to add at least two or three others to my list – more works by that author, an alternate history, some of the authors recommended reading or other similar books. The more I read the more I want to know, and the more I see there is to know, and the more I see connections in every aspect.'

88% of the panel agreed (70% strongly) that reading for enjoyment has helped them in their professional life. A number described their enjoyment of reading as directly influencing their careers or plans for professional development:

'There are some books I've read that have really stood out or sparked an interest in me – eg. As a child I read a lot of animal related books and am now in the veterinary profession.'

'I read English at university and my ability to discuss literary themes I think helped me get at least 1 job (civil service). Reading was what inspired to me to travel as well. I've been to Mexico and Cuba because of books.'

'I wrote to the photojournalist Tim Page after reading his autobiography 'Page after Page', and subsequently became a Trustee of a charity and since 2002 have helped run photojournalism workshops in Vietnam.'

## Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of our panel were avid readers, and described themselves as such. We were however somewhat surprised by the strength of feeling expressed around the role reading has played in their lives, with 98% saying that reading is an important part of who they are, 95% that things they have read over their life had had an impact on who they are and 90% that their lives had been changed in some way by something they had read.

'Books have always been vital to me.'

Panellists detailed changes in the role reading has played in their lives. Most were readers from childhood, whether they were encouraged to be or not, with some noting that they lost the habit as teenagers due to concerns around how others saw them.

'My father read a lot, and I just followed suit.'

Libraries played a huge role in our panellists' childhoods, with 92% using their local public library as a child. We received many comments across the study on the significance of libraries.

'Libraries are important. Without my parents taking me to my local library as a child, I wouldn't have had the wider reading experience that I had.'

Some described how, as adults, their reasons for reading had sometimes changed and, for a number of panellists, other activities and priorities had lessened the time they had for reading. In particular, work, study and becoming a parent reduced time and energy available for reading.

'In adulthood reading to learn has been more important to me, but I still find this rewarding, entertaining and relaxing at the same time.'

'I've always loved reading the only time I've really fell away from it was having children. I read to them but didn't read a lot of adult books.'

Throughout the study, and in this survey in particular, the panel offered wonderful insights into the benefits they feel reading has offered them across health and wellbeing, empathy, social connection and lifelong learning.

'Reading also helps when I feel anxious as it provides a distraction and gives me something to concentrate on.'

'I use audiobooks when I suffer from insomnia, or panic attacks to help calm me.'

'Reading took me out of my surroundings and into places I never knew existed. It fed, and continues to feed, my imagination and my world-view.'

'Reading has been a joy and something that I can share and discuss with others.'

'My professional interests have been guided and strengthened by my reading and there are definitely characters I have loved who have stayed with me and whose values or attitudes have impacted me.'

We hope this summary provides readers with an insight into the many reading lives and journeys of readers in Scotland and inspires others to consider the benefits that reading can have throughout their lives.