
Do Teenagers Read?

Reading habits of
students between the
ages of 14 and 19

Project Report

Submitted by:
Kristof Fehér and
Kristof Géczi

Temesvári Pelbárt Ferences Gimnázium
Esztergom

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Teacher: Barbara Ávár

Abstract

The present study deals with the reading habits of secondary school students of Hungary. We were trying to disprove or justify the common stereotype that teenagers do not read. We applied different methods such as surveys, interviews, and read articles on the topic. We collected the data in excel files and access files. We found that students read novels, magazines and web pages. According to our research, girls read much more than boys do and their main motivation is their need for entertainment.

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Introduction

The current study deals with teenagers' reading habits. We tried to include such important and interesting questions such as: What kind of literature is read by Hungarian students? How true are the common stereotypes of uneducated teenagers? Is reading indeed decreasing among the young?

One of our purposes was to confirm or disprove some common misconceptions or stereotypes [with the help of our own research and interviews with students from abroad]. One of our other purposes was to compare Hungarian students' reading habits with students from other countries throughout Europe and the World.

It is said that nowadays, the young do not read, and we – as young men who read – are displeased with this assumption, therefore with results of this research, we are trying to justify our hypothesis, of course without bias.

We all read at some point or another, whether it is the newspaper, or even signs; we can see that reading is an important segment of our lives, even if someone does not like it. It is a cliché to say that reading has a positive impact on our thinking and our personality, but we rarely say why. The benefits of books are undeniable: for children, reading – for fun of course – improves not only imagination and literacy but also mathematical abilities. Reading can help avoid depression and Alzheimer's disease, but can also lead to better sleep. Of course, it is not the same, what kind of book we read. For example: high-brow literature is much more effective than mainstream novels. According to the research of psychologist David Kidd, reading classic literature affects our skill to comprehend others' thoughts and feelings, but mainstream fiction do not have such an affect.

Methods and Procedure

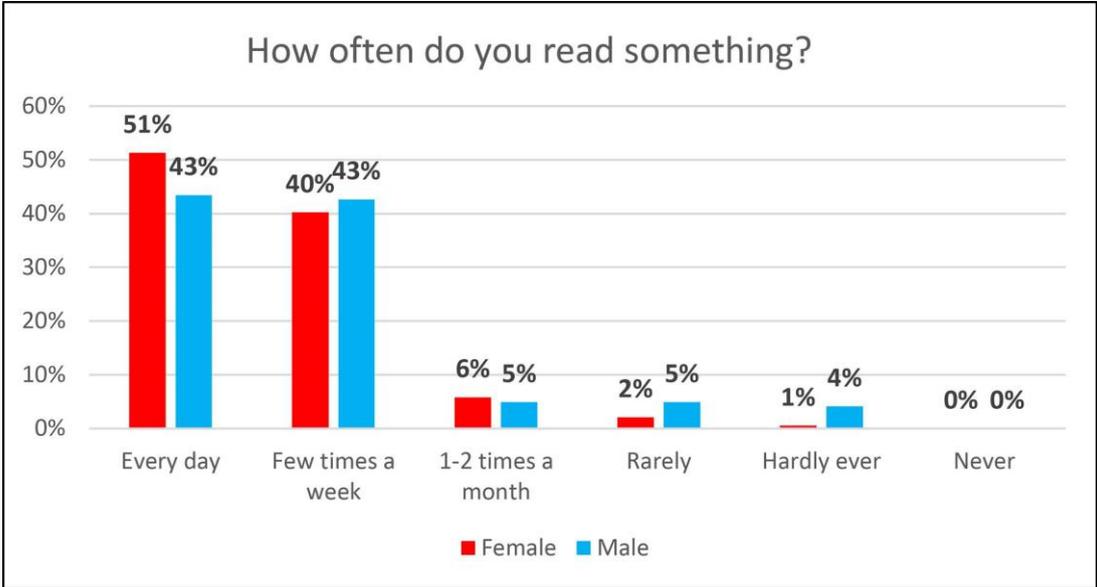
First we wrote a questionnaire, aimed at Hungarian teens and shared it through Facebook. Since we had not received enough answers, we decided to ask teachers from our county's secondary schools to ask their students who speak English fill in our questionnaires. We printed 300 copies and received 261 pieces from various schools. We asked the students about

the books they were reading at the time, the time they spend reading, and the types of texts they prefer to read frequently. However, our target group was not /especially broad, but our results led to a well-balanced view of the rate of sexes and age groups. Accordingly, our research among the Hungarian secondary school students - who speak English - was significant.

Another important source were the interviews, of which six were recorded, and which were made predominantly with our schoolmates who were, fluent speakers in English. We questioned them about their personal reading habits, their views on reading, and the most popular books in the countries they had lived in.

Data and results

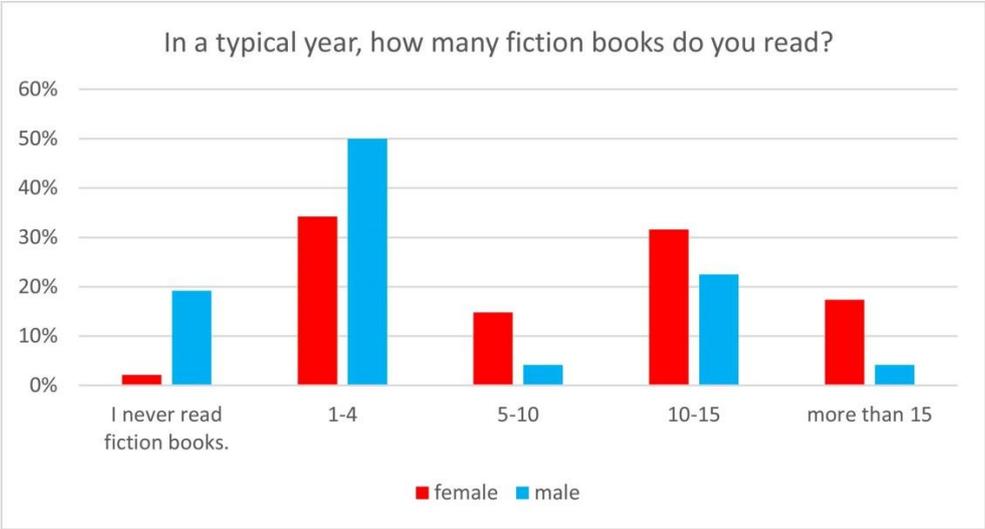
The results of the survey in some aspects are unexpected and contradictory, but it is calming to see that by all means almost half of the respondents read every day and more than 90% of read at least once a week.



1. Diagram

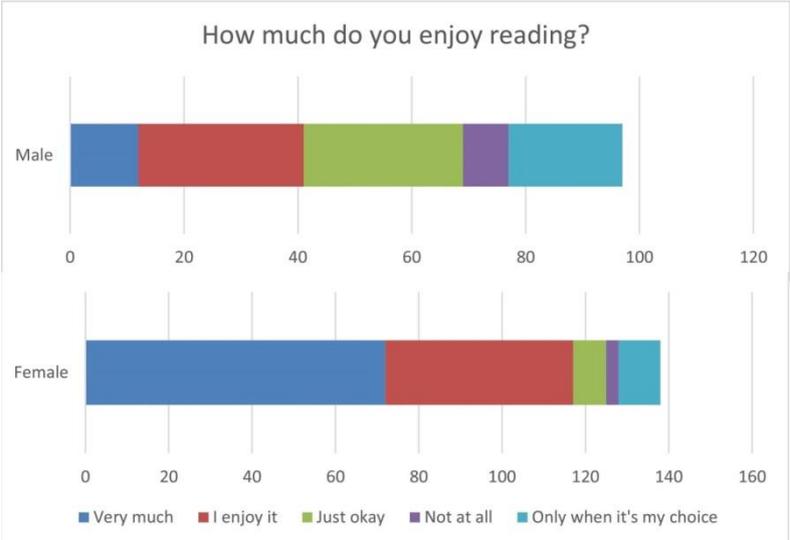
In regards of sexes, the data is more interesting because the proportion of girls overweigh their male counterparts. According to our survey, in a typical year, 17% of women read more than 15 books, while with men this rate is much lower. The majority of females read at least five books in a year, but the percentage of males reading more than five books a year is only

44% compared to the females' 64%. A fifth of the male respondents answered that they do not read any fiction books, but the proportion of females who said that they never read is only 2%. Nevertheless: most people read 1 to 4 books a year, half of men and 34% of women fell into this category.



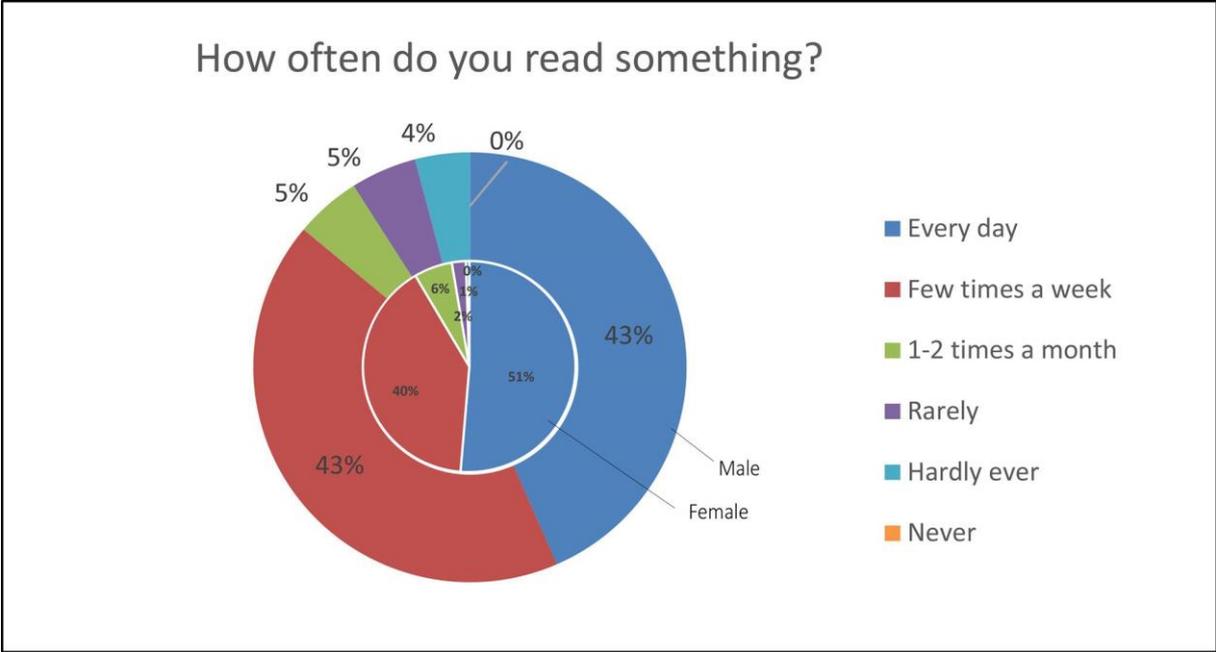
2. Diagram

The view of the rate of sexes is another disappointing data: we asked the people whether how much they enjoy reading. Their answers are remarkably unequal regarding the gender of the responder. Half of the girls said that they enjoy reading very much, but 85% of them at least enjoy it, whereas, in the case of boys the proportion was only 12% and 42%!



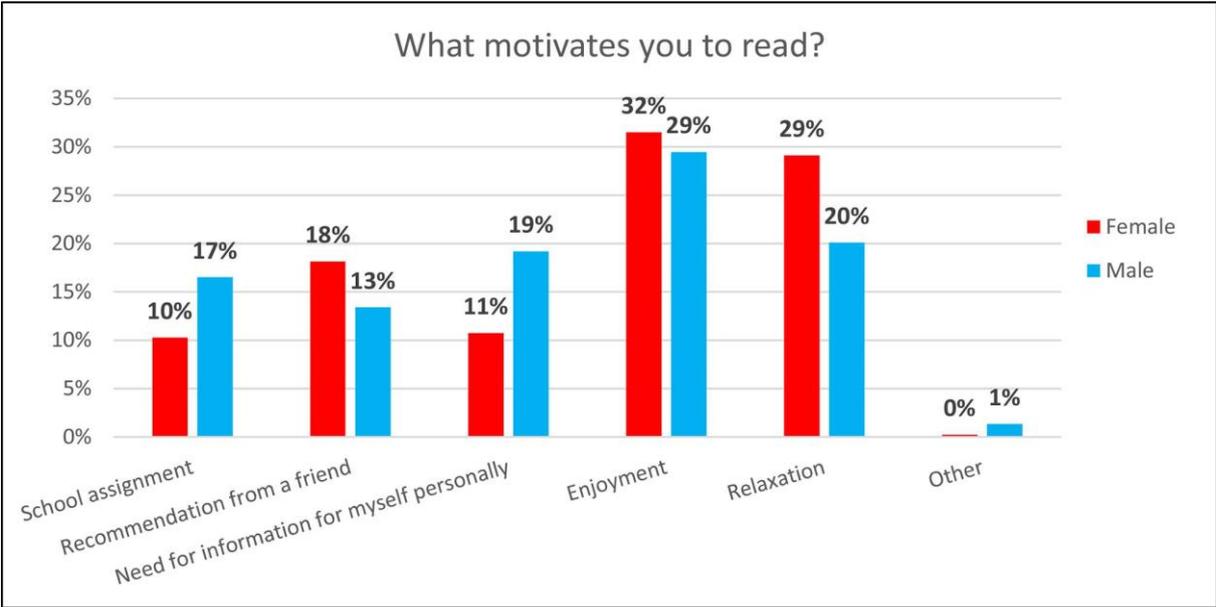
3. Diagram

A more calming piece of data is that not only books, but every text (press, Internet) the majority of the pupils read every day, and the female-male ratio was much more equal than at the previous question. A vast majority read at least something a few times a week



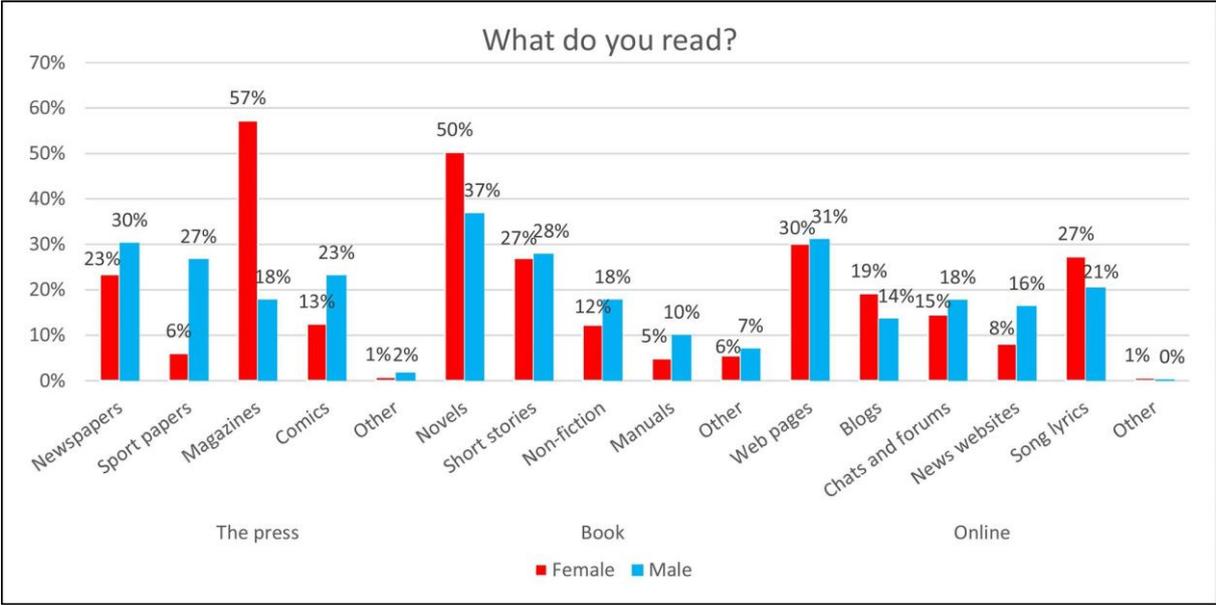
3. Diagram

Some difference occurs in the motivations for reading, women prefer to read their friends' recommendations and for relaxation, but men rather read to educate themselves or because of school assignments. Thankfully, principal enjoyment and relaxation seem to be a reason for both cases.



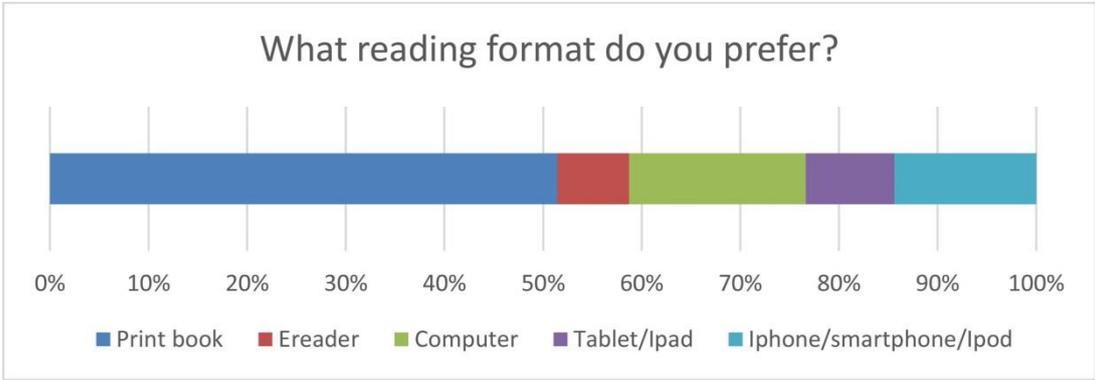
4. Diagram

In reading, there is a natural difference between the interests of boys and girls. The rate of women reading magazines is very high, while reading sport papers is almost exclusive to men. In case of books, of course, the novel is the most popular and the most frequently appearing genre, with short stories amounting to 77% of the female census and 65% of the male. Non-fiction and manuals are primarily specific for men. In case of online substance, women and men prefer web pages and song lyrics equally; however chats, forums, blogs and news websites are also popular.



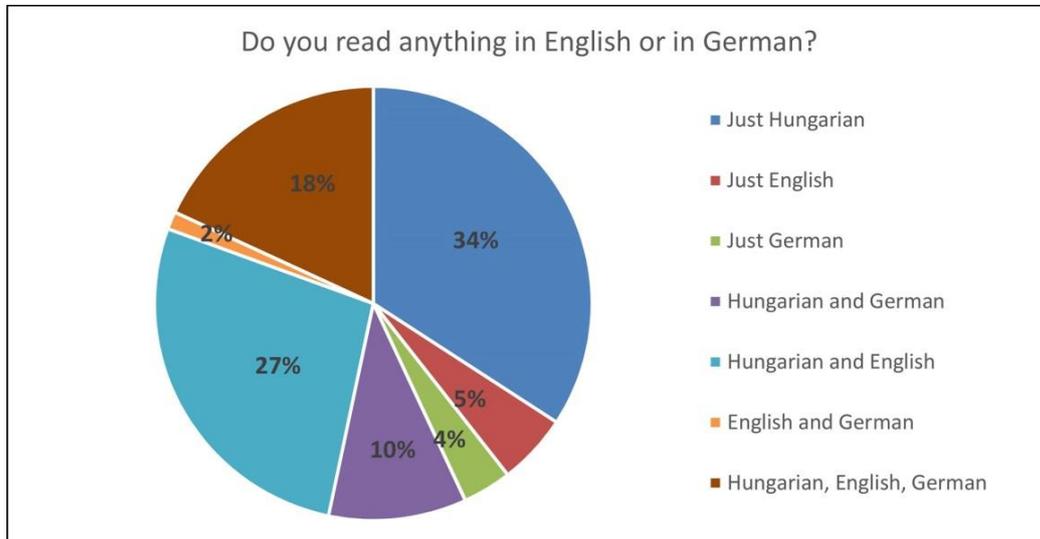
5. Diagram

The percentage of reading formats was not as much of a surprise as the previous questions; by far the most popular was the paper book. However, from another point of view we can see that the use of digital devices is just as common as printed books. Surprisingly the e-book was comparatively uncommon; perhaps it is not yet as popular in Hungary as it is in western countries.



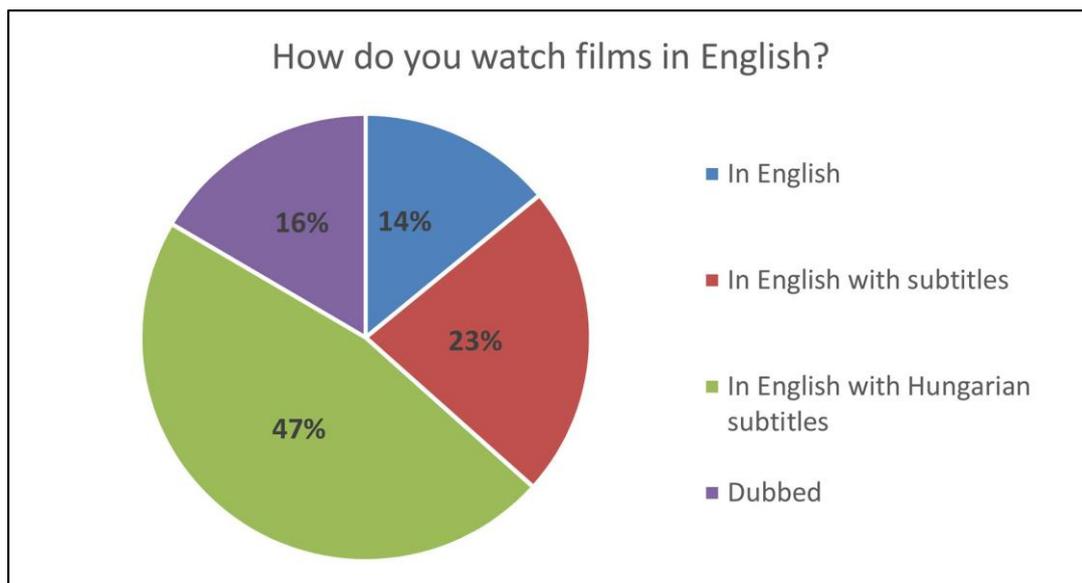
6. Diagram

The survey also indicates positive data about languages, which the students read in: only 34% of our students answered that they read only Hungarian. More than half of them said, that they read in English, and a third of them read in German, this means that 18% of the students read in three languages.



7. Diagram

In regards of the secondary school students' language knowledge, films indicate similarly positive rates: only the 16% of the respondents watch foreign films dubbed Hungarian. Out of 100 teenagers, 84 watch films in English with subtitles, 14 of which watch them without any subtitles.



8. Diagram

Discussion of results

According to our research, we can confidently say that the popular assumption regarding the reading habits of teenagers, namely that the young do not read, is obviously untrue. However, we have to admit, that girls read much more than boys do. Boys at that age, in many cases, prefer playing computer games or doing sports. It is also true, that regrettably the rate of teenagers who prefer mainstream, in lieu of classical literature is rising. Regardless, one must not presume that today's young are inferior in reading whereas the culture of reading is ascending continuously. Unfortunately, it is undeniable that books are not as popular as they were before the age of the Internet, but the numbers indicate that the situation is not as bad as people think it is. This allegation was disproved by our surveys, which indicates: there is not a secondary school student who does not read. However, on the other hand, it depends on what they read. Accordingly, we have to enunciate that many of the responding students prefer reading mainstream literature opposed to classic literature, but we guess that similarly this tendency can be observed in every country.

Conclusion

After analysing the results, we can confirm our previous claims that teenagers do read nowadays as well, whereas boys are overweighed by girls. Although novels are popular, webpages and magazines are also preferred by many students as well. A lot of students decide to read a book after watching the film adaptation.

One of the great experiences was that we found it difficult to get people to fill in our survey on the Internet and social network users were not especially helpful. If we were to redo this project, we would start collecting the data with the paper-based questionnaires instead of digital forms. Another experience was that the respondents in many cases misinterpreted the questions, although we thought them to be completely straightforward (for example they believed that 'fiction book' means science fiction or fantasy.) Nevertheless, the answers were mostly clear and evaluable.

Acknowledgements

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