



## Study: "How young people find and buy books today" 2024

As part of a comprehensive study, the avj - Arbeitsgemeinschaft von Jugendbuchverlagen (avj) (German Association of Young Adult Book Publishers) and the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (German Publishers and Booksellers Association) commissioned Consumer Panel Services GfK to find out more about the market for books for children and teens, books for young & new adults and the young people's target group as a whole. The main objective of the study was to understand how young people discover books, which selection criteria are relevant and how they buy books.

In addition to recording key market figures, young readers aged 10 to 29 and parents aged 30 and over with children interested in books were interviewed.

### Summary of the Study

#### **Development of the children and teen book genre in 2023 compared to 2019**

- Spending on books for children and teens increased by 7.4 per cent to €672 million between 2019 and 2023.
- In the same period, the number of books sold for children and teens fell from €66.6 million to €58.3 million (minus 12.6 per cent).
- The average price paid for books in this genre rose by 22.8 per cent (from €9.40 to €11.53 per book).
- The number of buyers of books for children and teens fell by 1.5 per cent from 11.7 to 11.5 million.
- The number of copies purchased per buyer fell from 5.7 to 5.1, but expenditure per buyer rose from €53.50 to €58.29.

#### **Book purchases by up to 19-year-olds across all genres**

- If we look not only at purchases in the genre of books for children and teens, but also at spending by young people and for young people (self-purchases and books bought as gifts) across all genres, we see a much more significant increase in spending: Spending for this target group of up to 19-year-olds rose by around 32 per cent between 2019 and 2023 (from €601 million to €793 million).
- Particular growth drivers are readers aged 13 to 15 (spending up 65 per cent) and 16 to 19 (up 77 per cent).
- Only around 60 per cent of spending by and for young people up to the age of 19 is attributable to books specifically aimed at children and teens. Other genres, especially fiction, are already gaining in importance among readers aged 10 and over. This trend has increased significantly since 2019. Among 13 to 15-year-olds, fiction already accounts for 46 per cent of spending and only 42 per cent for books specifically for children and teens. Among 16 to 19-year-olds, 60 per cent of spending goes on fiction, 11 per cent on non-fiction and only 19 per cent on books specifically for children and teens.

## Survey on the book-buying and book-use behaviour of 10 to 29-year-old readers as well as parents aged 30 and over with children in the household interested in books

- **Reading socialisation:** The parental home and school have the greatest influence on independent book reading among young people. However, there are signs of a shift: Whereas the ritual of being read to by parents or grandparents helped to inspire 77 per cent of today's 20 to 29-year-old readers to read, the figure is only 67 per cent for today's 10 to 15-year-old readers. At the same time, reading at school is becoming increasingly important for igniting enthusiasm for books. Among today's 10 to 15-year-olds, school was a trigger for 70 per cent; among today's 20 to 29-year-olds, this was only the case for 60 per cent.
- **Format preferences:** Printed books are by far the most popular format across all age groups, regardless of whether they are reading themselves or being read to. 97 per cent of 10 to 19-year-olds and 96 per cent of 20 to 29-year-olds read printed books, and 97 per cent of parents also rely on the paper format for books for their children. E-books and audio books are also used, but with clearer differences between the age groups. Audio books for children are particularly popular among parents.
- **Purchase occasions and purposes:** Even among young readers aged 10 to 15, 56 per cent of them buy books for children, teenagers and young adults themselves. Parents aged 30 and over are naturally mostly gift buyers in this category, but 28 per cent also buy these genres to read themselves. In addition to purely personal use, compulsory literature purchases for school are also a common reason for 10 to 15-year-olds and 16 to 19-year-olds to buy books (36 and 47 per cent respectively). On the other hand, 27 per cent of parents reward their children with books for a specific (school) achievement and among young buyers aged 10 to 15, 14 per cent even reward themselves with book purchases for achievements.
- **Aspects of book selection:** Regardless of the age group, the most important criteria for deciding on a book are that it has an exciting story (between 90 and 98 per cent in the target groups surveyed) and that the title and cover/book jacket are appealing (between 78 and 85 per cent). When choosing a book, knowledge transfer is more important to parents (86 per cent) than to children (52 per cent), teenagers (61 per cent) and young adults (60 per cent).
- **Reading in the book's original language:** 14 per cent of 10 to 15-year-old readers read books in their original version very frequently or frequently, while the proportion is even twice as high among 16 to 19-year-olds at 30 per cent. The main reasons for this in this age group (and also overall) are to improve language skills (82 per cent) and that jokes, puns or something else gets lost in translation (73 per cent). 41 per cent of 16 to 19-year-olds cite the fact that the book is only or was previously only available in the original version as a reason. Among 20 to 29-year-olds, around a fifth (18 per cent) also regularly read the original version and 14 per cent of parents (very) often read aloud to their children in the original (foreign) language of the book.
- **Touch points:** Bookstores play the biggest role in drawing attention to new books across all age groups (between 52 and 62 per cent), followed only slightly behind by libraries and recommendations from adults or peers. Among 16 to 19-year-olds, book recommendations on the internet (44 per cent) are the second most important touch point with new books after the bookstore (56 per cent in this age group), followed by cover / book jacket (40 per cent) and social media (38 per cent). Among 10 to 15-year-old readers, 33 per cent discover new books on social networks.

- **Social media as a source of inspiration:** The most important channels for books among 10 to 15-year-old readers are TikTok / BookTok (49 per cent) and YouTube (50 per cent). Instagram is number one among 16 to 19-year-olds and 20 to 29-year-olds (53 and 55 per cent respectively). Short summaries of books are most important for young people when using social media in the context of books. In-depth reviews or direct purchase options in the network are less crucial.
- **Books as a source of information:** How do young people find out about topics relating to entertainment, lifestyle, hobbies, their own lives and the environment? Online search engines and social media, but also personal conversations, top the list of the most important sources of information in most areas. However, books are also highly relevant in a number of subject areas. Depending on the topic and age group, a third to a quarter of 10 to 29-year-olds read books on topics such as politics, the environment, history and other countries and cultures. A fifth of 10 to 15-year-olds also use books to find out about love, sexuality and personal development, and all young age groups like to turn to books for advice on topics such as cooking, baking and creative subjects.

## Key Findings

- **Books are highly regarded by young people.** The book has to compete with numerous other media and digital content in particular has taken the lead among young people. However, books are still important for young people, particularly when it comes to guides, self-help and topics such as politics, the environment and history.
- **Young readers today come into contact with books later than they used to.** The parental home and school still have a great influence on young people's independent reading. However, today the parental home is less likely to lay the foundation for an interest in books than in the past. On the other hand, school is more important today as an impetus for reading.
- **The boundaries between genres are becoming increasingly blurred.** Some children and teens no longer read classic books aimed at children and teens, but rather a lot of general fiction. What's more, adults are also reading books aimed at young people.
- **The bookstore is still a central place** for children and young adults to come into contact with new books; libraries are also important touch points as well as personal recommendations.
- **Social media is an important source of inspiration for young readers.** Short summaries are particularly appreciated here. The classic print format is still the preferred method of purchase.
- **Reading in the original language of the book plays a major role,** with the focus on improving language skills. The feeling that jokes or puns are lost in translation, for example, comes a close second.

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