20 15 NATIONAL LITERARY READING AND WRITING SURVEY

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HIGHLIGHTS

1 HIGHLIGHTS

The purpose of this survey was to establish an understanding of the reading, book-buying and writing habits of Singaporeans.

4 in 10 Singaporeans are literary readers

44% of the respondents read at least one literary book in the past 12 months, with women (47%) slightly more likely to read than men (41%). More than half of professionals (henceforth, PMETs) (57%) and students (58%) read a literary book in the past 12 months. The majority of readers prefer to read printed books and books in English. 60% of the readers[1] read for leisure. 1 in 4 readers read literary books by Singaporean writers. Around 2 in 5 readers who did not read literary books by Singaporean writers cited lack of awareness as one of the key reasons for not doing so.

56% of respondents indicated that they had not read any literary book in the past 12 months. In particular, seniors and people with no/little education were more likely to not have read during this time. Among non-readers[2], lack of time and lack of interest were the most commonly cited reasons for not reading.

4 in 10 Singaporeans buy literary books

4 in 10 respondents generally buy their own literary books, with about 3 in 10 having bought at least 1 book over the last 12 months. 3 in 10 respondents would solely rely on loans from libraries and other people, as well as gifts, to obtain their literary books. About one in five respondents did not buy or borrow any literary books at all.

Book buyers prefer physical book stores

Around 3 in 4 book buyers[3] buy their books from a brick-and-mortar bookstore. Book buyers were mostly motivated to buy books for their own leisure reading, and students were more likely to buy books if the books had good reviews.

1 in 10 Singaporeans do creative writing

12% of the respondents said they engaged in creative writing, and were motivated to do so for self-expression and relaxation. The older the respondent, the less likely they were to write creatively. The top two reasons why the majority (88%) of Singaporeans did not engage in writing creatively were lack of interest and lack of time.

Singaporeans are aware of reading events even though they may not attend

The top three most known literary events were the Singapore Writers Festival (16%), Read! Singapore (13%), and the SG Author series (9%). However, while there was awareness of these literary events, participation tended to be low due to lack of interest and lack of time. Word-of-mouth, newspapers and the internet/websites were the most commonly cited sources of information for literary events.

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[1] Read at least one literary book in the past 12 months.
[2] Had not read at least one literary book in the past 12 months.
[3] Bought a literary book in the past 12 months.

8 in 10 Singaporeans believe that reading allowed them to learn new things

At least 60% of respondents agreed they could gain a range of benefits from reading. 8 out of 10 respondents felt that reading has allowed them to learn new things, and 7 out of 10 said reading has improved their lives. Respondents with tertiary-level education and above as well as PMETs were more likely to agree strongly with the benefits of reading. The lack of time to read was the most common barrier to reading for respondents. Slightly more than half of respondents thought that books would eventually be replaced by computers and the internet in the next 20 years.

INTRODUCTION

2   INTRODUCTION

2.1   Background & Research Objectives

The National Arts Council (NAC) aims to nurture the arts in Singapore, and to make it an integral part of the lives of all Singaporeans. We celebrate excellence in the arts and work to make it accessible to all.

To establish an understanding of the trends in the reading and buying of literary books as well as creative writing amongst Singaporeans, NAC commissioned the inaugural National Literary Reading and Writing Survey in 2015. The survey aims to identify and track trends in literary reading and creative writing habits over time. Specifically, NAC is interested in understanding:

    i.   Reading habits among Singaporeans
- Socio-demographic profile of literary readers
- Mode of consumption
- Language of reading
- Reasons for reading
- Consumption of Singapore literature

   ii.   Book buying habits

  iii.   Creative writing habits
- Socio-demographic profile of creative writers
- Language of writing
- Reasons for writing

  iv.   Awareness of and participation in reading or writing events

   v.   Attitudes towards reading

2.2   Definitions

Literary books include fiction, poetry, drama, children's and young adult literature, graphic novels, creative non-fiction, critical writing and anthologies.

Fiction refers to literature, in the form of prose, which describes imaginary events and people, though it may be based on a true story or situation. This includes novels, novellas and short stories.

Creative non-fiction refers to writing that uses literary devices to create a narrative text about real events, people or ideas. This includes biography, food writing, literary journalism, memoirs, and personal essays.

2.3   Methodology

The survey was administered island-wide via face-to-face, street-intercept interviews conducted by trained interviewers. A total of 1,015 interviews were conducted from 11 March to 22 March 2015. To ensure that residents from all districts of Singapore were represented, quotas were applied to the five districts as defined by the Community Development Councils (CDCs), as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Breakdown of Sample Responses by Region		
Region	**Sample Size**	**Percentage**
Central	205	20%
West	203	20%
North	201	20%
North-East	206	20%
East	200	20%
Total	1015	100%

Respondents were selected randomly without bias, using a random-seed selection process: in areas where there was a congregation of crowds or flow of traffic, interviewers approached every n^{th} person, as defined by a random seed, who walked past them. Only Singaporeans or Permanent Residents aged 15 years old or above were surveyed.

Charts in this report may be marked with red boxes, i.e. [   ]. This indicates significant increase/decrease across the groups at a 95% confidence level.

Many of the questions are multiple response questions. As such, total percentage in the charts may be more than 100%.

2.4   Socio-Demographics

The survey sample was representative of the national population in terms of age, gender and race. In terms of education and occupation, close to 50% of respondents had polytechnic diploma certification or above, and 35% of them were PMETs. In terms of monthly household income, around 1 in 4 of the respondents had a monthly household income below $2,000.

Figure 2.1 Socio-Demographic Profiles – Age, Gender, Race and Marital Status
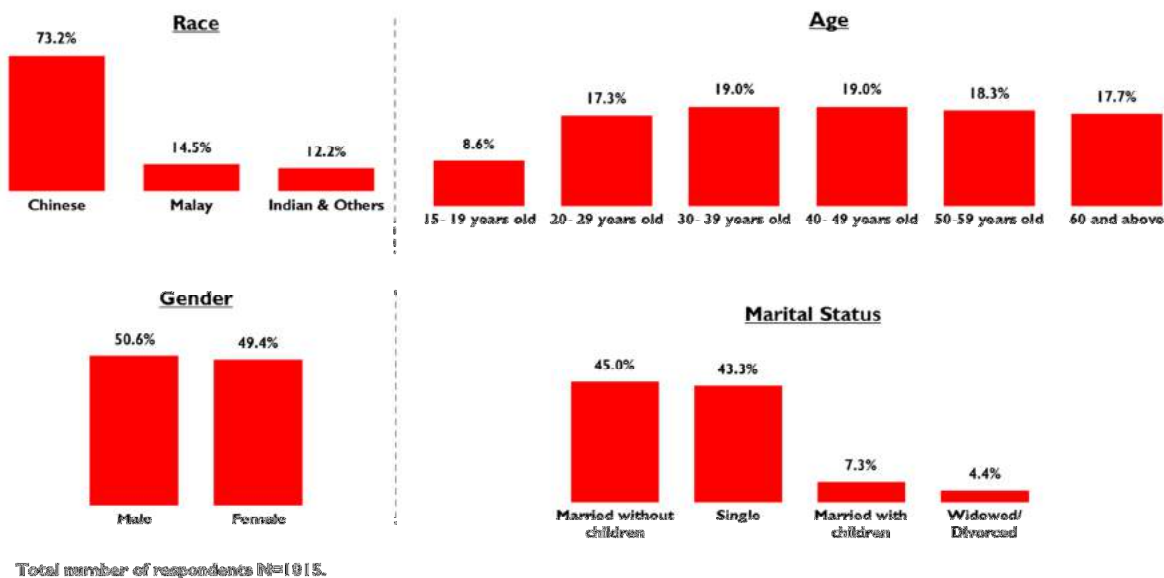
Figure 2.2 Socio-Demographic Profiles – Education and Occupation
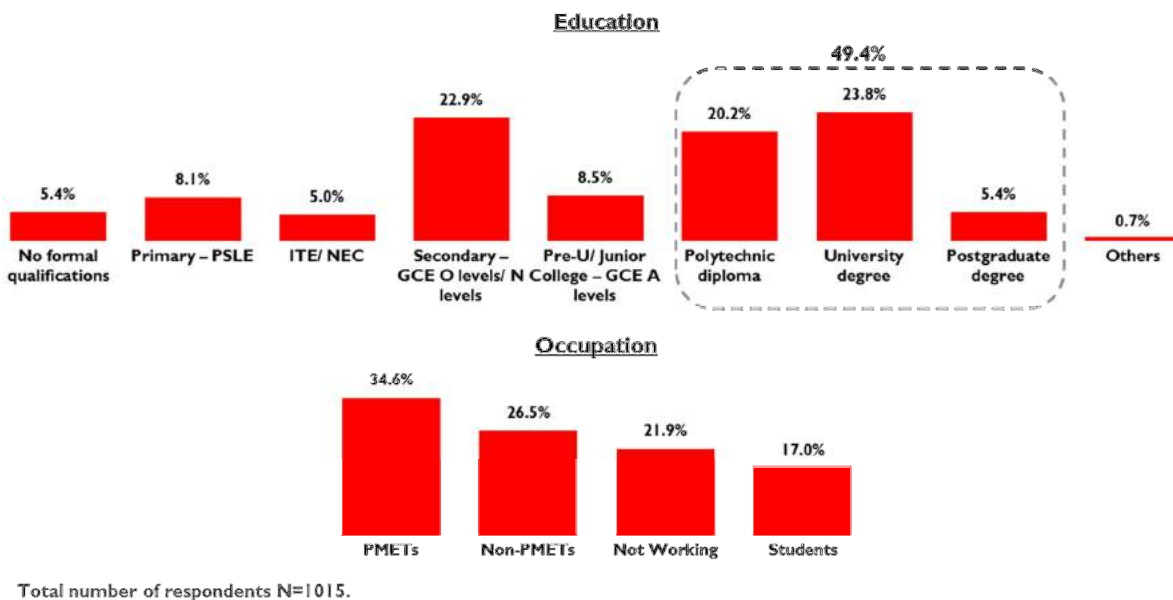
Figure 2.3 Socio-Demographic Profiles – Region Lived In and Monthly Household Income

Region Lived In

- East: 24.9%
- North-east: 23.7%
- West: 21.7%
- North: 17.8%
- Central: 11.9%

Monthly Household Income

- Below $2,000: 24.5%
- $2,000 - $2,999: 14.7%
- $3,000 - $3,999: 13.1%
- $4,000 - $4,999: 10.9%
- $5,000 - $5,999: 9.8%
- $6,000 - $6,999: 7.5%
- $7,000 - $7,999: 3.3%
- $8,000 - $8,999: 2.5%
- $9,000 - $9,999: 1.5%
- $10,000 and above: 12.2%
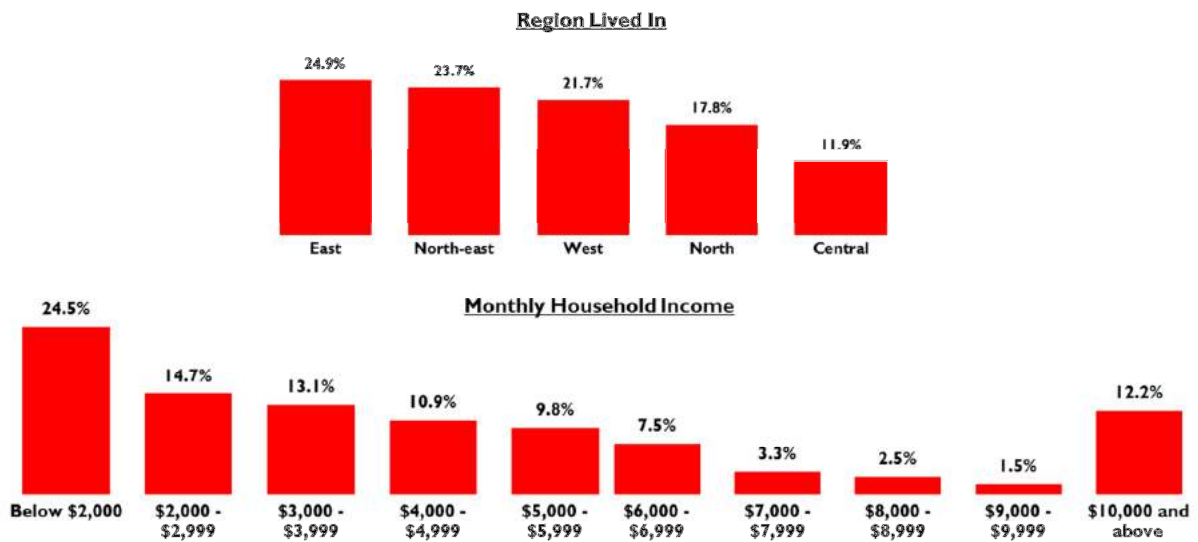
Total number of respondents N=1015.

READING HABITS

3 READING HABITS

3.1 Read at Least One Book

44% of the respondents read at least one book in the past 12 months. The proportion of respondents aged 60 and above were the least likely to have read a book in the past 12 months. This was also true of respondents with no/primary education. The gender profile of readers is similar to the overall Singaporean population.

Figure 3.1 Readers – Overall, by Gender, Age
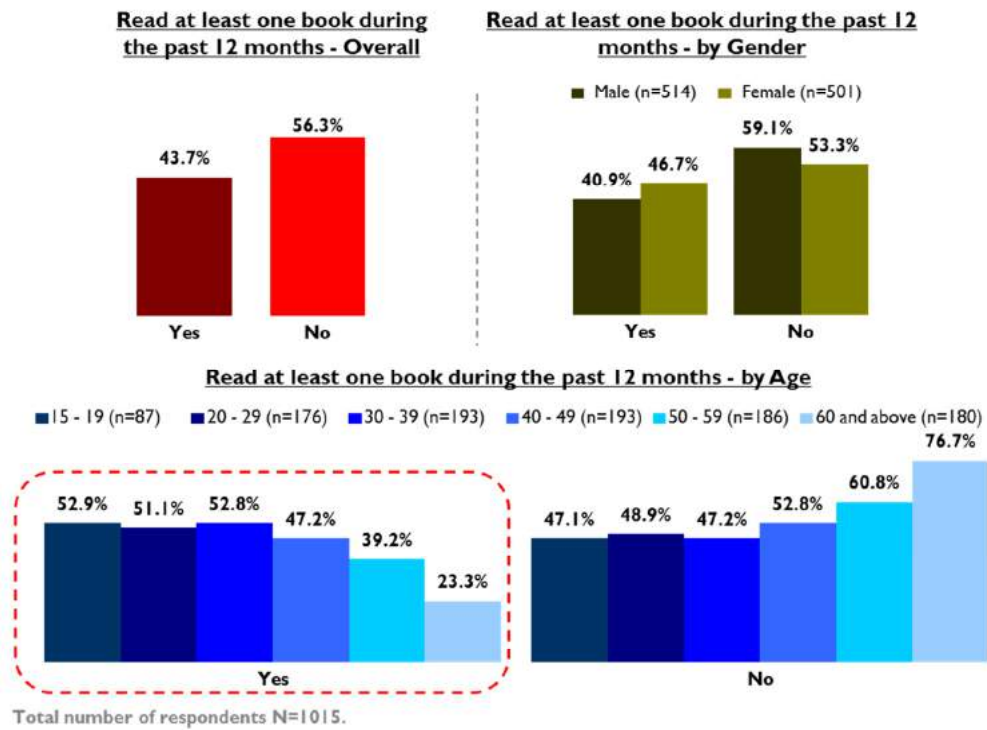
57% of PMETs and 58% of students read in the past 12 months.

Figure 3.2 Readers – by Education, Occupation

Read at least one book during the past 12 months - by Education Level

■ None / Primary (n=124) ■ "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=259) ■ Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=266) ■ Degree & Above (n=270)

Read at least one book during the past 12 months - by Occupation

■ PMETs (n=326) ■ Non-PMETs (n=249) ■ Students (n=160) ■ Not Working (n=206)
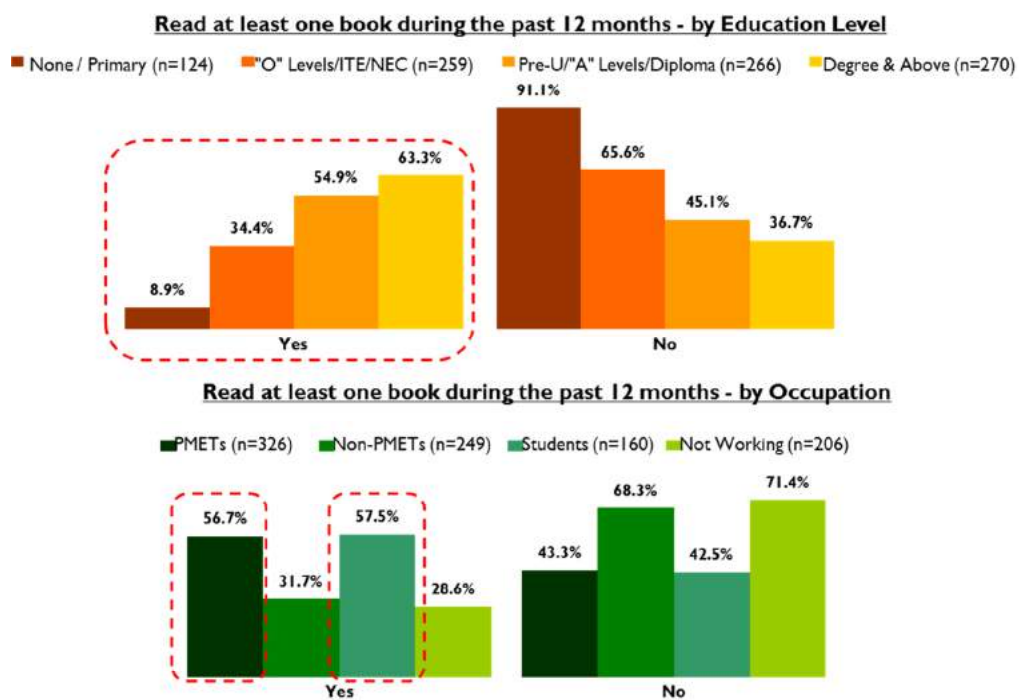
Total number of respondents N=1015.

3.2   Read Books to Others

Reading need not be solitary. Parents may read to young children, and caregivers may read to the elderly. Close to one-third of readers had read a book to others. Women are twice as likely to read to others as men.

Figure 3.3 Read Books to Others – Overall

Total number of respondents N=444.
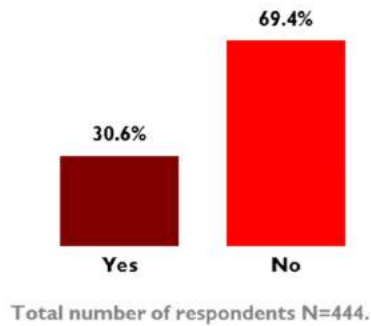
Figure 3.4 Read Books to Others – by Gender

Total number of respondents N=444.
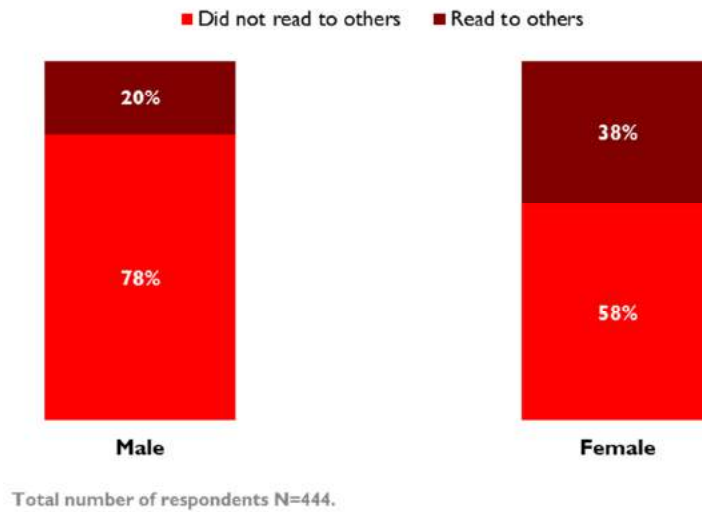
3.3   Book Genres

Readers reported reading a wide variety of literary genres (fiction, creative non-fiction, children's books, travel writing, poetry and graphic novels) during the past 12 months. The most popular genre is fiction (including short stories and novels) (63%), followed by creative non-fiction (52%).

Figure 3.5 Book Genres – Overall
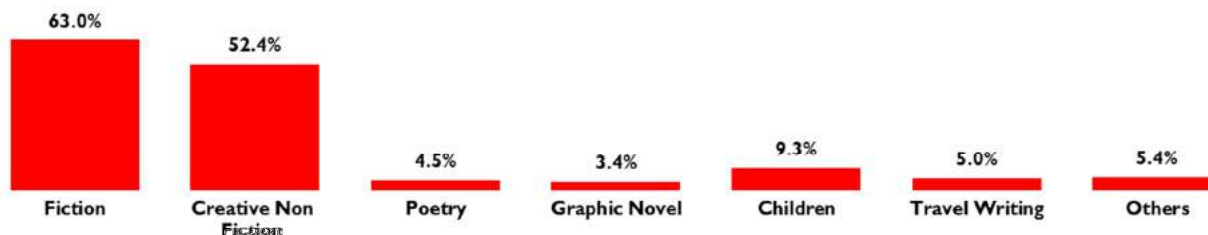
Total number of respondents N=444.

There was a clear contrast in preferences between men and women. Fiction readers were mainly women, while creative non-fiction readers were mainly men. There was also a higher proportion of women who read children's books; many of these respondents who had indicated that they read to others were in the 30-49 age group. They were thus likely to be mothers who read to their children.

Figure 3.6 Top 5 Book Genres – by Gender, Age
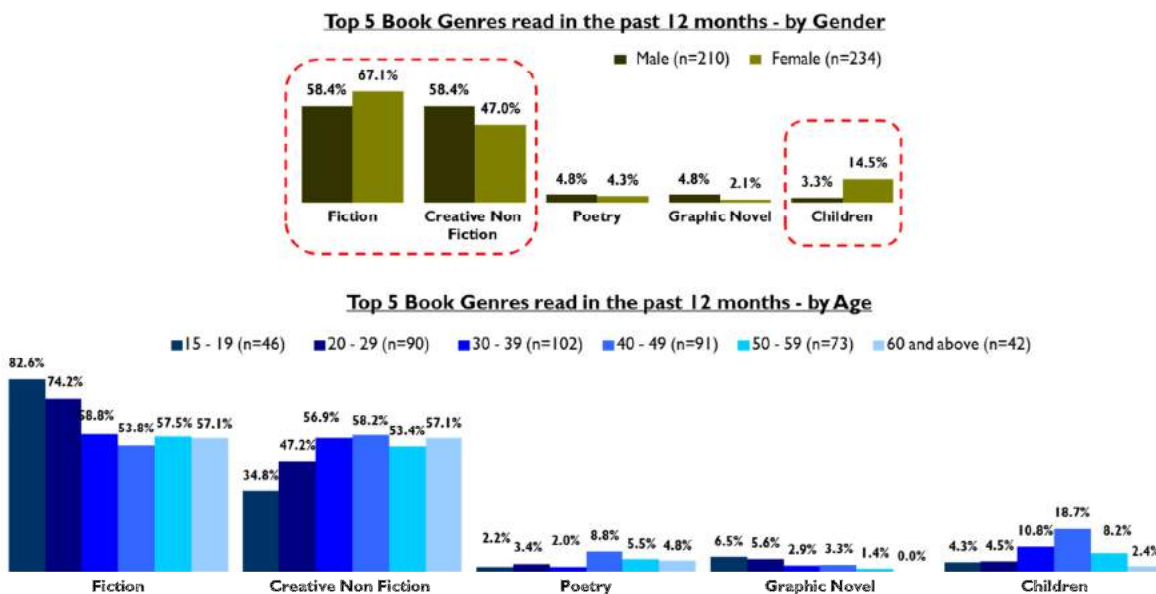
Total number of respondents N=444.

Readers with higher educational qualifications (university degree and above) were less likely to read fiction but were more likely to read creative non-fiction compared to readers with "O" Levels/ITE to "A" Levels/Diploma education. Students were more likely to read fiction.

Figure 3.7 Top 5 Book Genres – by Education, Occupation

Top 5 Book Genres read in the past 12 months - by Education

Top 5 Book Genres read in the past 12 months - by Occupation
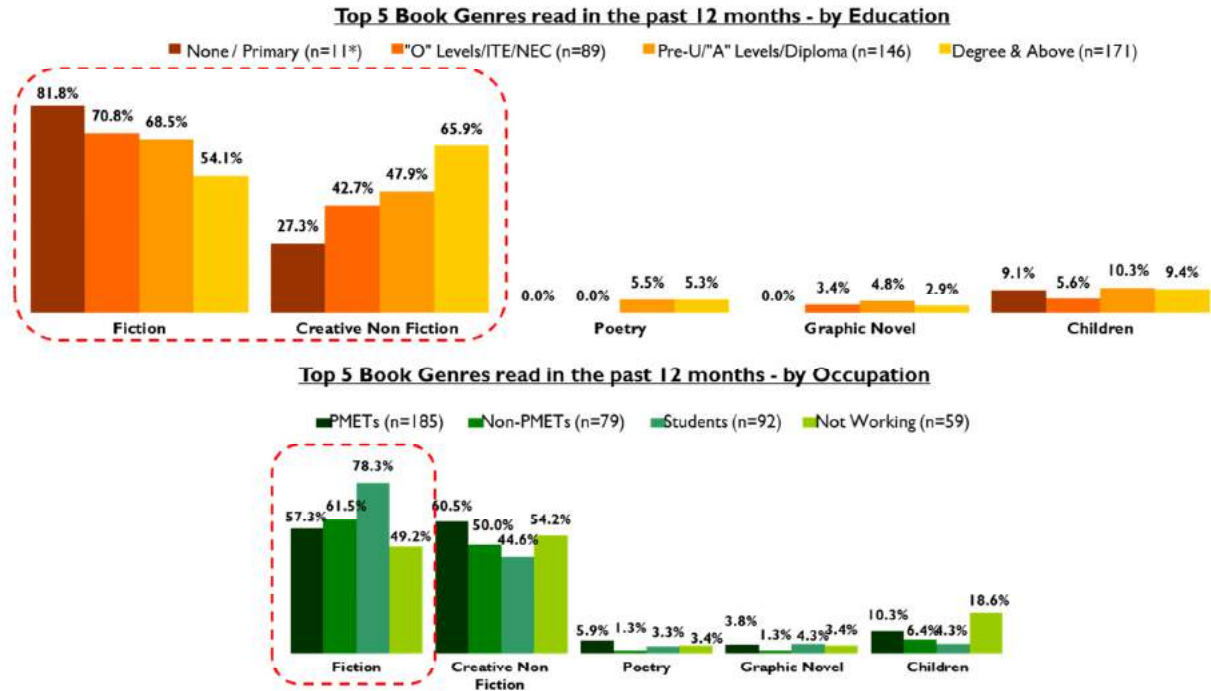
Total number of respondents N=444.

3.4 Book Forms

The pervasiveness of the internet and use of mobile devices was once thought to herald the death of print in the 21st century. However, in Singapore, print books were the dominant book form. Only 13% of readers said they only read electronic books or e-books. There were no significant differences in the book forms read across gender, age groups, education levels, or occupations.

Figure 3.8 Book Forms – Overall, by Gender, Age

Book Forms - Overall

Print Book — 74.4% | 12.2% | E-book — 13.4%

Book Forms - by Gender

■ Male (n=210) ■ Female (n=234)

Print Book: 84.8% / 87.9%
E-book: 26.7% / 24.6%

Book Forms - by Age

■15 - 19 (n=46) ■20 - 29 (n=90) ■30 - 39 (n=102) ■40 - 49 (n=91) ■50 - 59 (n=73) ■60 and above (n=42)

Print Book: 95.7%, 85.6%, 78.4%, 85.6%, 90.4%, 92.7%

E-book: 19.6%, 28.9%, 39.2%, 18.9%, 21.9%, 12.2%

Total number of respondents N=444.
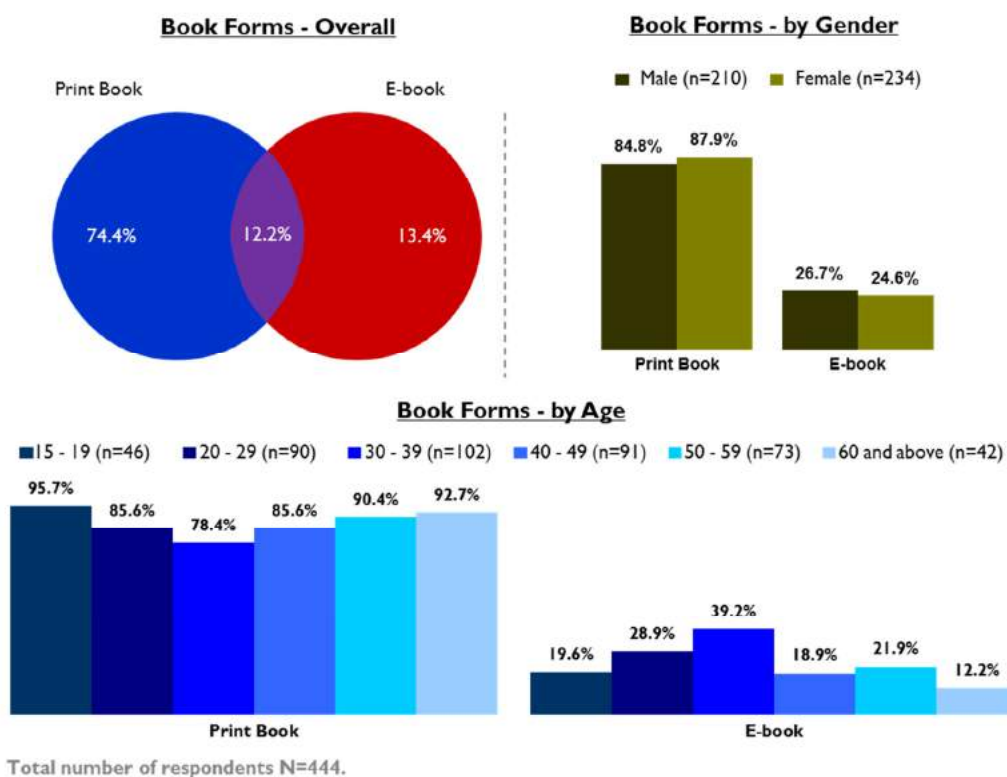
Figure 3.9 Book Forms – by Education, Occupation

Book Forms - by Education
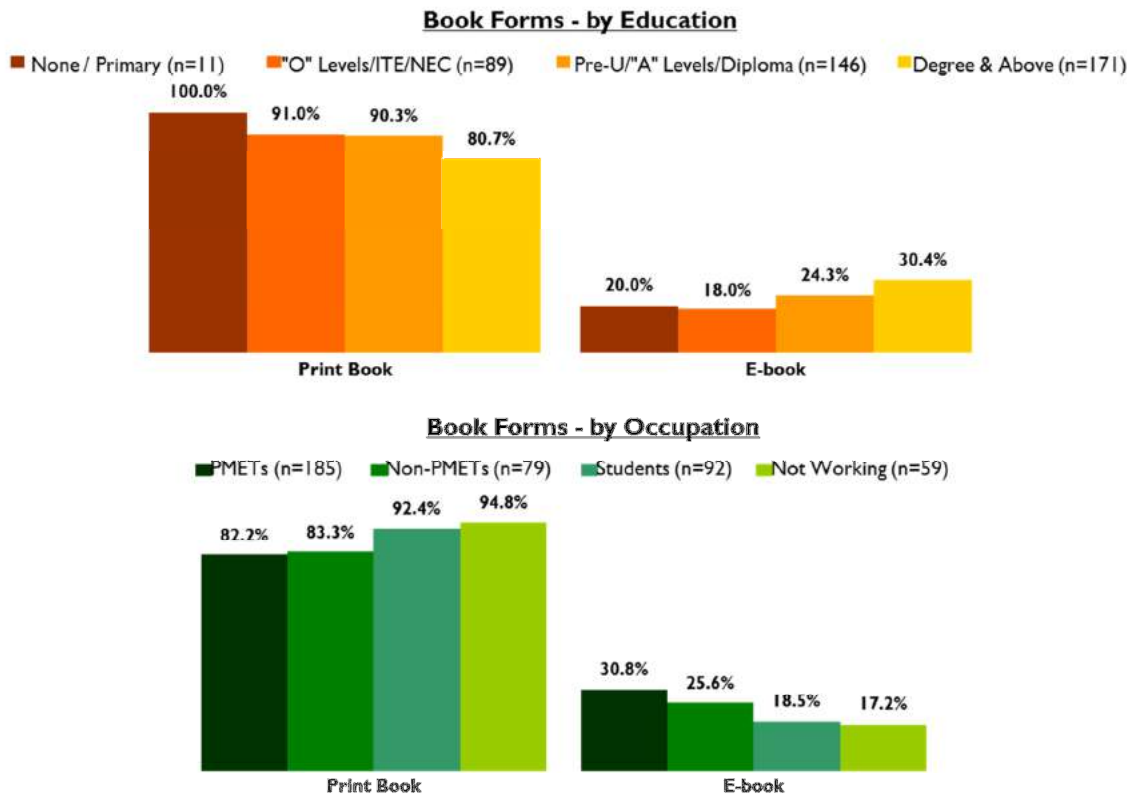
Total number of respondents N=444.

3.5 Language of Reading

With English as first language in Singapore, it is unsurprising that this was the language of reading for almost all readers (92%). On average, only about a quarter of ethnic Chinese, Malay or Tamil respondents read in their mother tongue language.

Figure 3.10 Language of Reading – Overall

Languages read in	
% of Chinese who read in Chinese language	25.8% (n=323)
% of Malays who read in Malay language	27.8% (n=65)
% of Indians who read in Tamil language	16.7% (n=36)
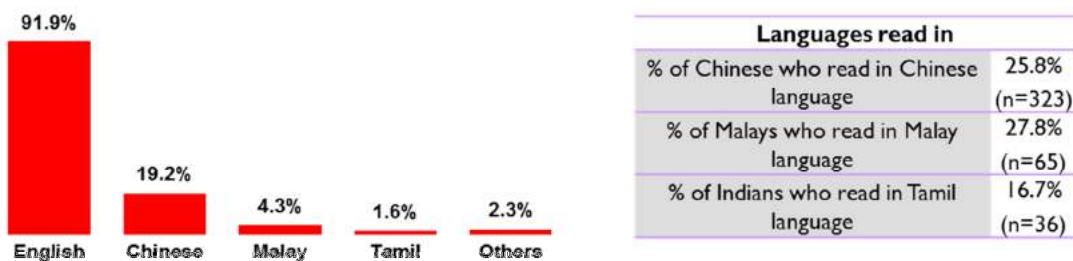
Total number of respondents N=444.

3.6   Motivations for Reading

Reading for leisure was the main motivation for readers (59% cited this). Other cited reasons were reading for information/knowledge (23%) and for personal development (20%).

Figure 3.11 Motivations for Reading – Overall
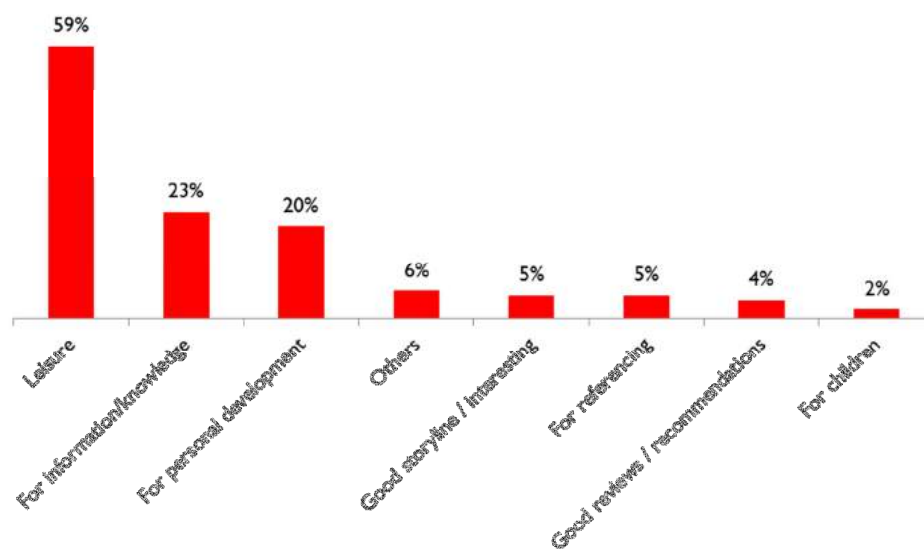
Total number of respondents N=444.

Men were more likely than women to read for personal development. There were no significant differences in the motivations to read across age groups, education levels or occupations.

Figure 3.12 Top 3 Motivations for Reading – by Gender, Age

Top 3 Motivations for Reading - by Gender

■ Male (n=210) ■ Female (n=234)

Leisure: 55.2%, 63.2%
For information/knowledge: 25.7%, 19.7%
For personal development: 24.8%, 15.4%

Top 3 Motivations for Reading - by Age

■ 15 - 19 (n=46) ■ 20 - 29 (n=90) ■ 30 - 39 (n=102) ■ 40 - 49 (n=91) ■ 50 - 59 (n=73) ■ 60 and above (n=42)

Leisure: 63.0%, 55.6%, 57.8%, 62.6%, 54.8%, 69.0%
For information/knowledge: 23.9%, 18.9%, 17.6%, 18.7%, 32.9%, 31.0%
For personal development: 10.9%, 23.3%, 23.5%, 19.8%, 21.9%, 9.5%

Total number of respondents N=444.

Figure 3.13 Top 3 Motivations for Reading – by Education, Occupation

Top 3 Motivations for Reading - by Education

■ None / Primary (n=11*) ■ "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=89) ■ Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=146) ■ Degree & Above (n=171)

Leisure: 90.9%, 64.0%, 58.2%, 56.7%
For information/knowledge: 18.2%, 27.0%, 20.5%, 19.9%
For personal development: 18.2%, 11.2%, 20.5%, 24.6%

Top 3 Motivations for Reading - by Occupation

■ PMETs (n=185) ■ Non-PMETs (n=79) ■ Students (n=92) ■ Not Working (n=59)

Leisure: 55.7%, 64.6%, 54.3%, 66.1%
For information/knowledge: 23.8%, 22.8%, 22.8%, 18.6%
For personal development: 22.2%, 16.5%, 13.0%, 28.8%

Total number of respondents N=444.

3.7 Reasons for Not Reading Books

56% of the respondents had not read a literary book in the past 12 months. In particular, the majority of those aged 60 and above (77%) and those with no education (92%) were non-readers. The main reasons for not reading books during the past 12 months were lack of time (49%) and lack of interest (49%).

Figure 3.14 Reasons for Not Reading Books – Overall
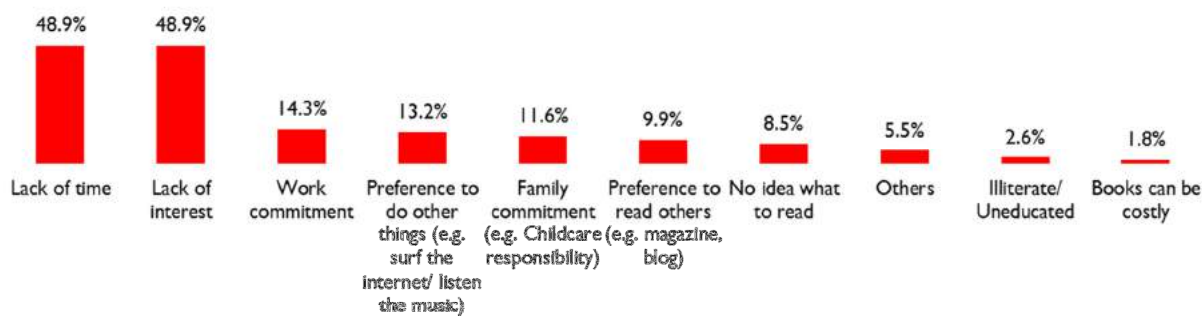
Total number of respondents N=571.

Women were more likely than men to cite lack of time as a reason for not reading. As expected, respondents aged 60 and above were significantly less likely to cite lack of time. Non-PMETs were more likely to cite work commitments compared to PMETs.

Figure 3.15 Reasons for Not Reading Books – by Gender, Age
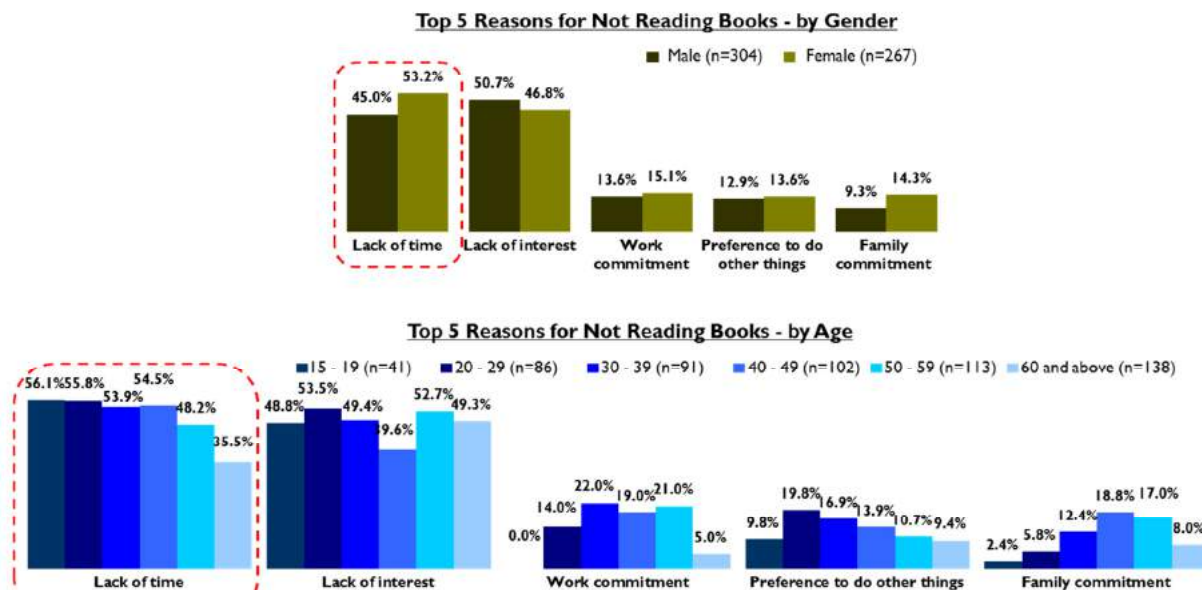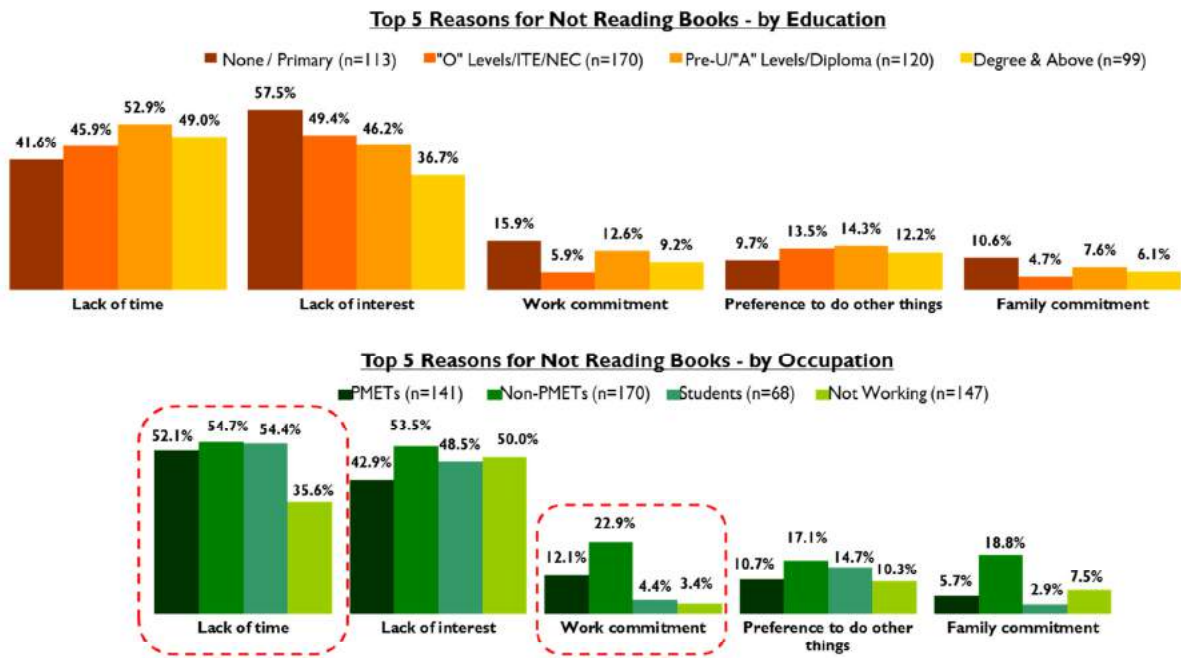

Total number of respondents N=571.

Figure 3.16 Reasons for Not Reading Books – by Education, Occupation

Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Books - by Education

■ None / Primary (n=113)　■ "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=170)　■ Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=120)　■ Degree & Above (n=99)

	Lack of time	Lack of interest	Work commitment	Preference to do other things	Family commitment
None / Primary	41.6%	57.5%	15.9%	9.7%	10.6%
"O" Levels/ITE/NEC	45.9%	49.4%	5.9%	13.5%	4.7%
Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma	52.9%	46.2%	12.6%	14.3%	7.6%
Degree & Above	49.0%	36.7%	9.2%	12.2%	6.1%

Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Books - by Occupation

■PMETs (n=141)　■Non-PMETs (n=170)　■Students (n=68)　■Not Working (n=147)

|	Lack of time	Lack of interest	Work commitment	Preference to do other things	Family commitment
PMETs	52.1%	42.9%	12.1%	10.7%	5.7%
Non-PMETs	54.7%	53.5%	22.9%	17.1%	18.8%
Students	54.4%	48.5%	4.4%	14.7%	2.9%
Not Working	35.6%	50.0%	3.4%	10.3%	7.5%

Total number of respondents N=571.

3.8　Singapore Literary Works

Slightly more than a quarter of readers indicated that they had read books by Singaporean writers. The most recognised Singaporean writer was Catherine Lim, followed by Russell Lee and Low Kay Hwa.

Figure 3.17 Read books by Singaporean Writers – Overall

Read books by Singaporean writers - Overall

Yes	No
26.5%	73.5%

Top 3 Singaporean Writers - Overall

Catherine Lim	Russell Lee	Low Kay Hwa
33.3%	17.1%	10.3%
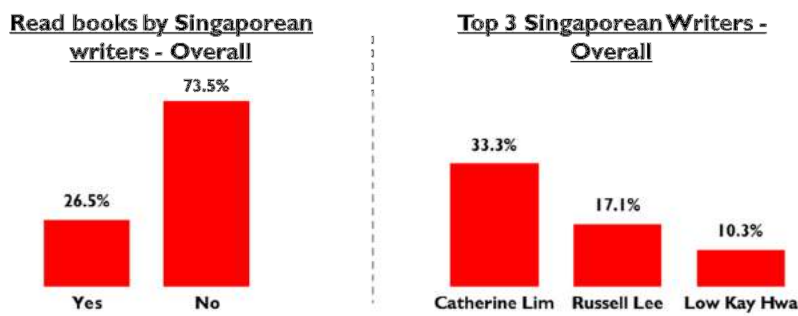
Total number of respondents N=444.

Women were more likely than men to read books by Singapore writers. There were no significant differences in the reading of literary works by Singaporean writers across age groups, education levels or occupations.

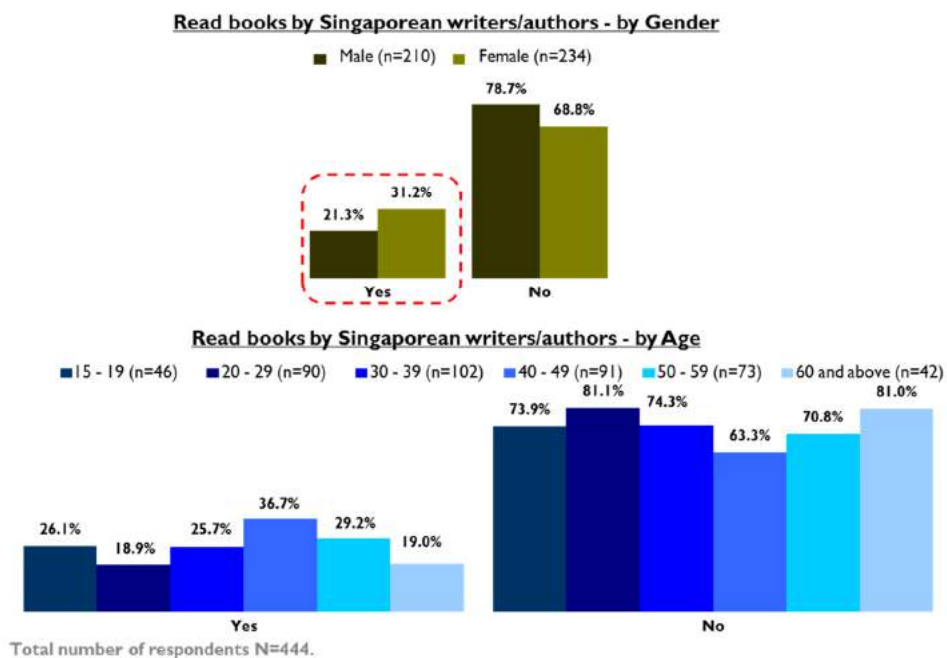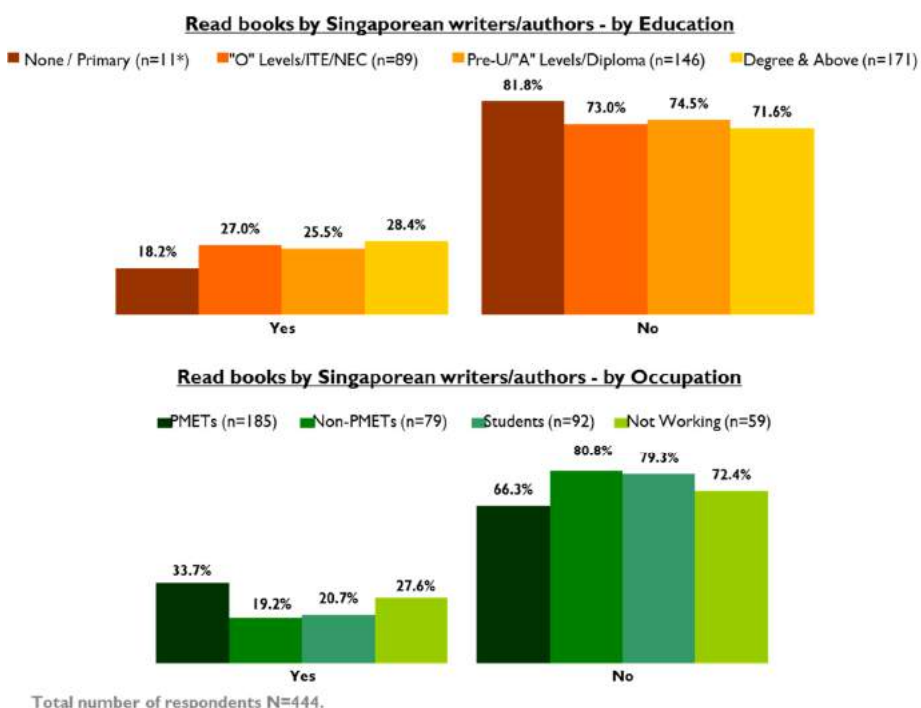**Figure 3.18** Read books by Singaporean writers – by Gender, Age

Figure 3.19 Read books by Singaporean writers – by Education, Occupation

The top three reasons for reading Singapore Literature[4] were: interest in Singapore Literature (29%), relatability of Singapore Literature (23%), and interest to explore and learn (21%). However, there was generally a distinct lack of contact with Singapore Literature: close to 50% of respondents who did not read Singapore Literature claimed lack of awareness and 26% stated a lack of interest.

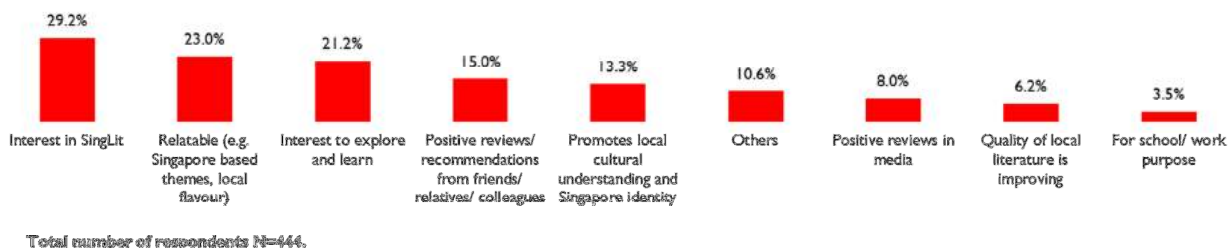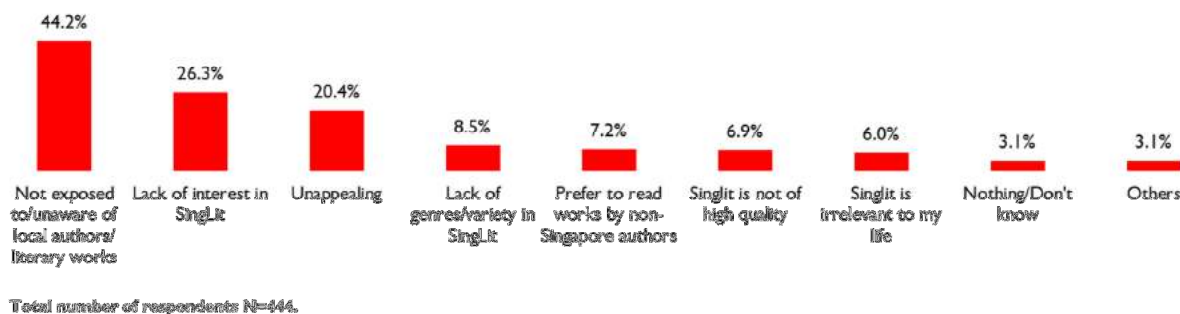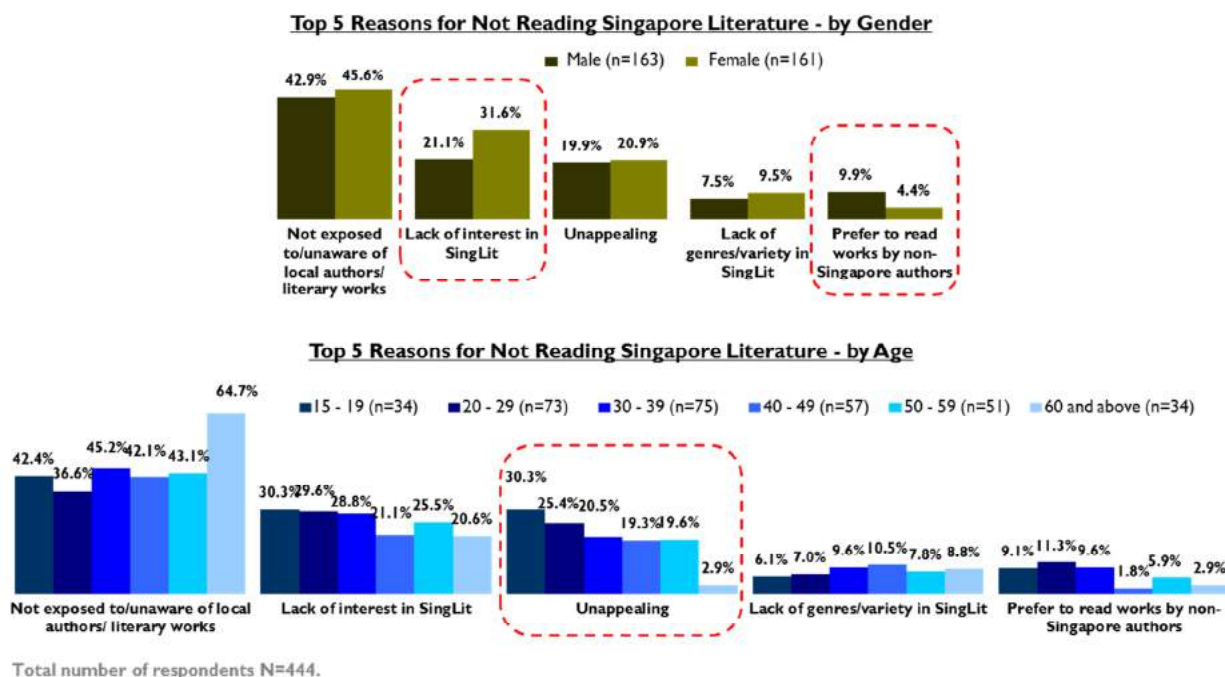**Figure 3.20** Reasons for Reading Singapore Literature – Overall (n=117)

Total number of respondents N=444.

Figure 3.21 Reasons for Not Reading Singapore Literature – Overall (n=324)

Total number of respondents N=444.

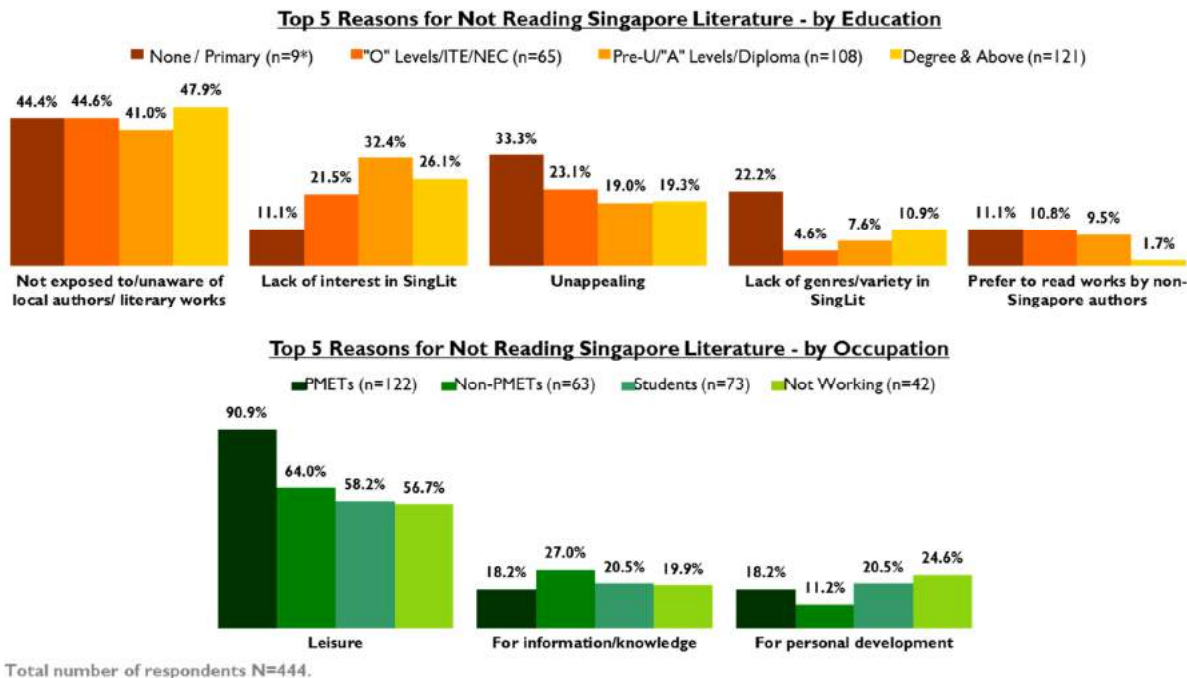
[4] Literary works by Singaporeans

When asked why they did not read Singapore Literature, significantly more women cited lack of interest while more men indicated a preference for non-Singapore authors. Those aged 60 and above were less likely to find Singapore Literature unappealing.

Figure 3.22 Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Singapore Literature – by Gender, Age

Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Singapore Literature - by Gender

Male (n=163) Female (n=161)

	Not exposed to/unaware of local authors/ literary works	Lack of interest in SingLit	Unappealing	Lack of genres/variety in SingLit	Prefer to read works by non-Singapore authors
Male	42.9%	21.1%	19.9%	7.5%	9.9%
Female	45.6%	31.6%	20.9%	9.5%	4.4%

Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Singapore Literature - by Age

15 - 19 (n=34) 20 - 29 (n=73) 30 - 39 (n=75) 40 - 49 (n=57) 50 - 59 (n=51) 60 and above (n=34)

	Not exposed to/unaware of local authors/ literary works	Lack of interest in SingLit	Unappealing	Lack of genres/variety in SingLit	Prefer to read works by non-Singapore authors
15 - 19	42.4%	30.3%	30.3%	6.1%	9.1%
20 - 29	36.6%	29.6%	25.4%	7.0%	11.3%
30 - 39	45.2%	28.8%	20.5%	9.6%	9.6%
40 - 49	42.1%	21.1%	19.3%	10.5%	1.8%
50 - 59	43.1%	25.5%	19.6%	7.8%	5.9%
60 and above	64.7%	20.6%	2.9%	8.8%	2.9%

Total number of respondents N=444.

29

There were no significant differences in the reasons for not reading Singapore Literature across education levels and occupations.
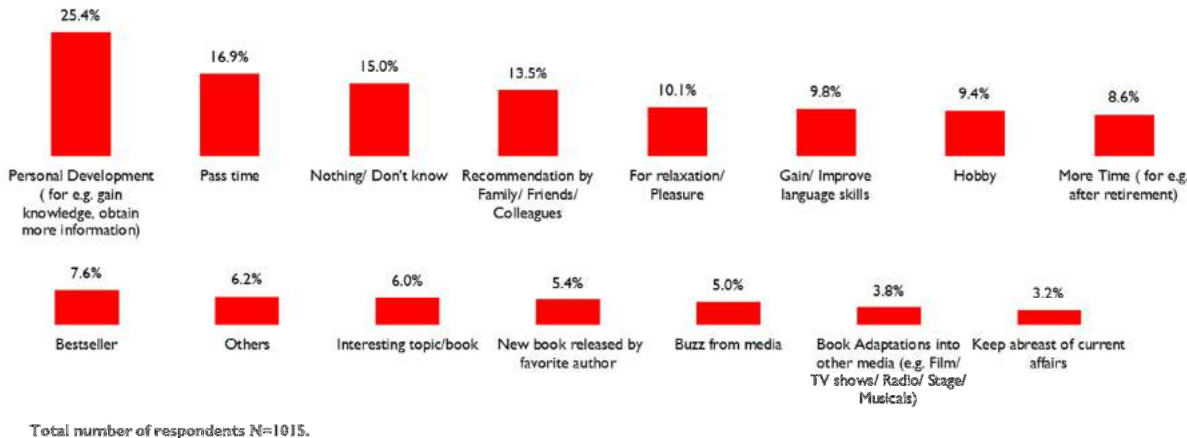
Figure 3.23 Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Singapore Literature – by Education, Occupation

Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Singapore Literature - by Education

■ None / Primary (n=9*)   ■ "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=65)   ■ Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=108)   ■ Degree & Above (n=121)

	Not exposed to/unaware of local authors/ literary works	Lack of interest in SingLit	Unappealing	Lack of genres/variety in SingLit	Prefer to read works by non-Singapore authors
None / Primary	44.4%	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	11.1%
"O" Levels/ITE/NEC	44.6%	21.5%	23.1%	4.6%	10.8%
Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma	41.0%	32.4%	19.0%	7.6%	9.5%
Degree & Above	47.9%	26.1%	19.3%	10.9%	1.7%

Top 5 Reasons for Not Reading Singapore Literature - by Occupation

■ PMETs (n=122)   ■ Non-PMETs (n=63)   ■ Students (n=73)   ■ Not Working (n=42)

	Leisure	For information/knowledge	For personal development
PMETs	90.9%	18.2%	18.2%
Non-PMETs	64.0%	27.0%	11.2%
Students	58.2%	20.5%	20.5%
Not Working	56.7%	19.9%	24.6%

Total number of respondents N=444.
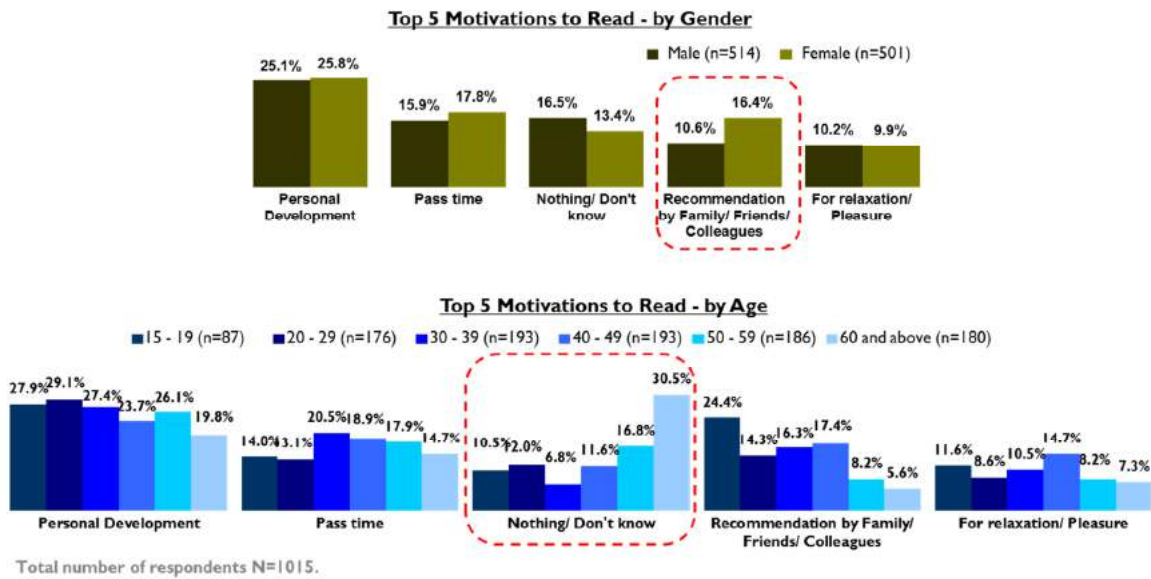
3.9   Motivations to Read in the Future

The top three factors that would motivate respondents (both readers and non-readers) to read in the future were personal development (25%), leisure (passing the time) (17%) and recommendations by family, friends or colleagues (14%). However, as many as 15% of respondents had no idea what would motivate them to read in the future.

Figure 3.24 Motivations to Read – Overall

Motivation	%
Personal Development (for e.g. gain knowledge, obtain more information)	25.4%
Pass time	16.9%
Nothing/ Don't know	15.0%
Recommendation by Family/ Friends/ Colleagues	13.5%
For relaxation/ Pleasure	10.1%
Gain/ Improve language skills	9.8%
Hobby	9.4%
More Time (for e.g. after retirement)	8.6%
Bestseller	7.6%
Others	6.2%
Interesting topic/book	6.0%
New book released by favorite author	5.4%
Buzz from media	5.0%
Book Adaptations into other media (e.g. Film/ TV shows/ Radio/ Stage/ Musicals)	3.8%
Keep abreast of current affairs	3.2%

Total number of respondents N=1015.

In particular, women were more likely to be motivated to read if the books were recommended by their family, friends or colleagues. Older respondents (aged 60 and above), and respondents with no/primary education tend to claim they have no idea what would motivate them to read in the future.

**Figure 3.25** Top 5 Motivations to Read – by Gender, Age

Students were more likely to be motivated by recommendations.

Figure 3.26 Top 5 Motivations to Read – by Education, Occupation
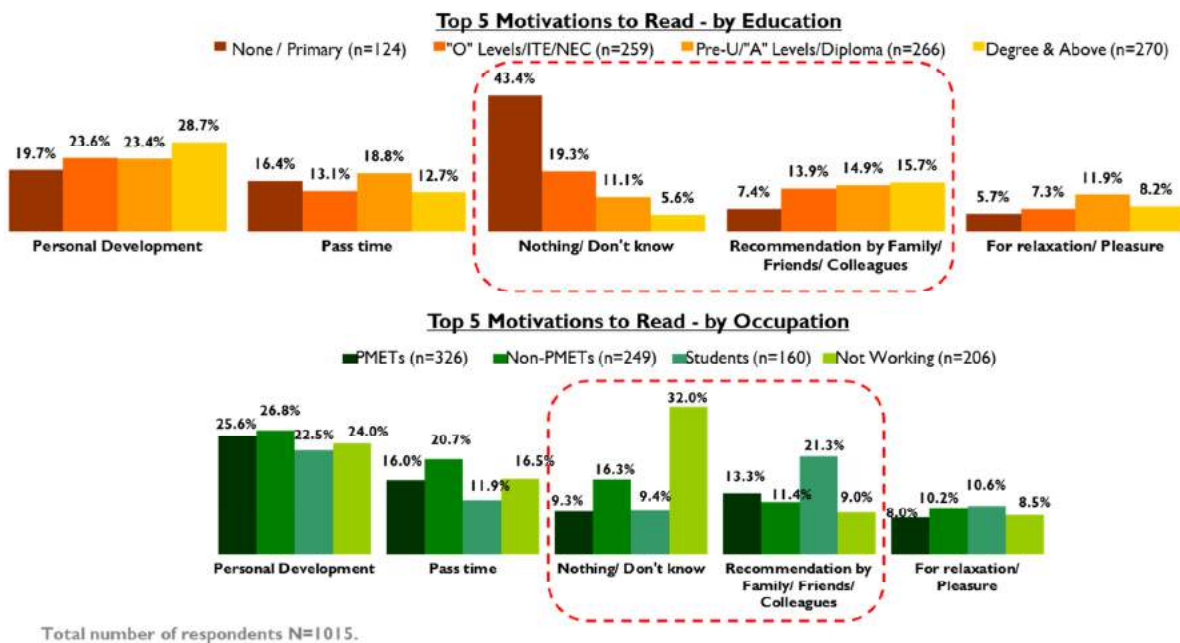
There were differences when motivations to read in the future were analysed by current reading habits. Readers were more likely to be motivated to read for personal development (30%) and by recommendations (20%). Getting non-readers to read in the future can be done by appealing to their desire for personal development (22%) and leisure (20%). However, 24% of these non-readers (or about 13% of the population) had no idea what would get them started on the reading habit.

Figure 3.27 Top 5 Motivations to Read – by Reader vs Non-Reader
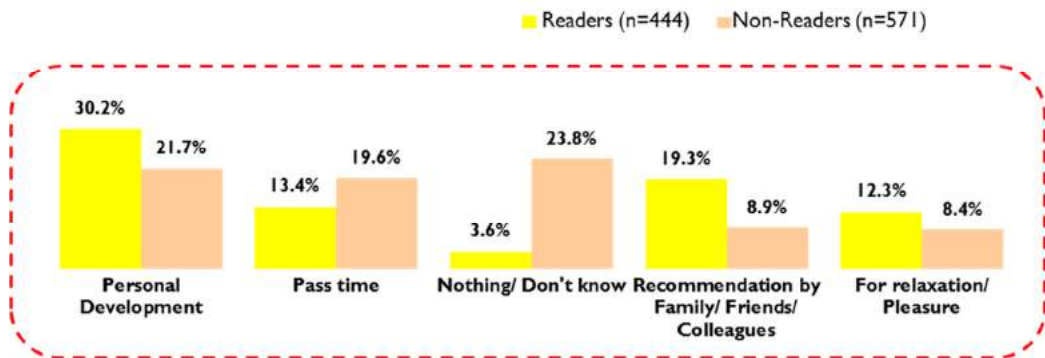
3.10 Perception of Singapore Literature

Respondents were asked if the reasons that would motivate them to read more in the future would also motivate them to read more Singapore Literature. More than 85% agreed it would be the same motivations of personal development, leisure and recommendations by others. However, 15% stated that their motivation to read more literary books in future would not apply to Singapore Literature. More than half of this latter group felt that they were not at all interested in Singapore Literature, and thus would not be motivated to read it.

Asked about their perception of Singapore Literature, lack of exposure to Singapore Literature and lack of publicity / popularity were the most frequently expressed feelings about Singapore Literature.

**Figure 3.28** Are these the same Motivations to Read Singapore Literature – Overall
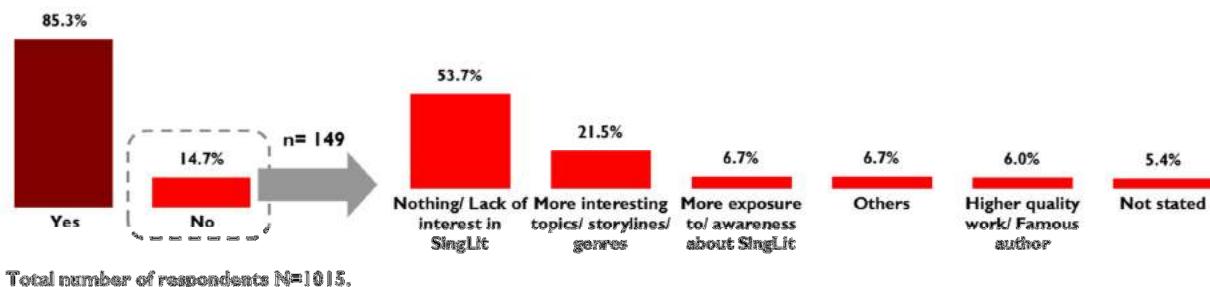
Figure 3.29 Perception of Singapore Literature – Overall
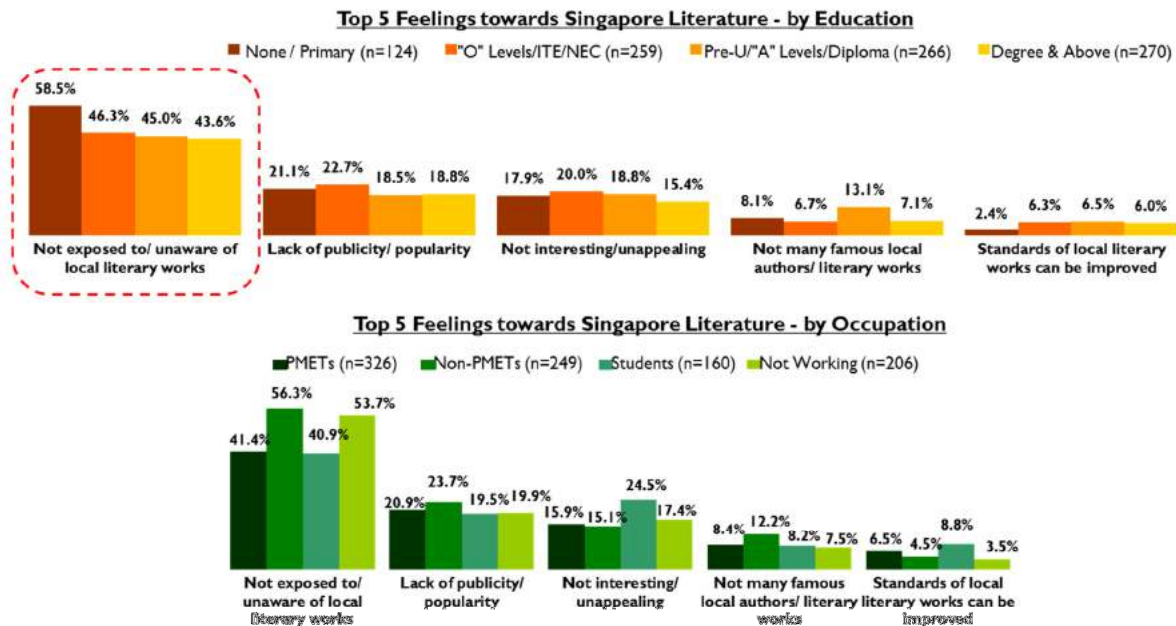

Total number of respondents N=1015.
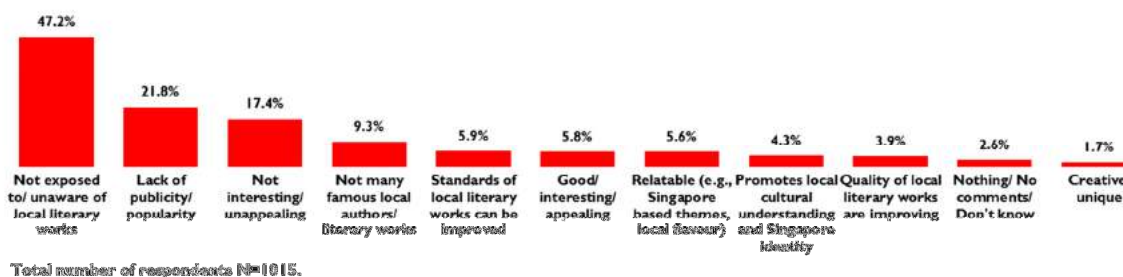
There were no significant differences in people's perception of Singapore Literature across gender and age groups.

Figure 3.30 Top 5 Feelings towards Singapore Literature – by Gender, Age

Total number of respondents N=1015.
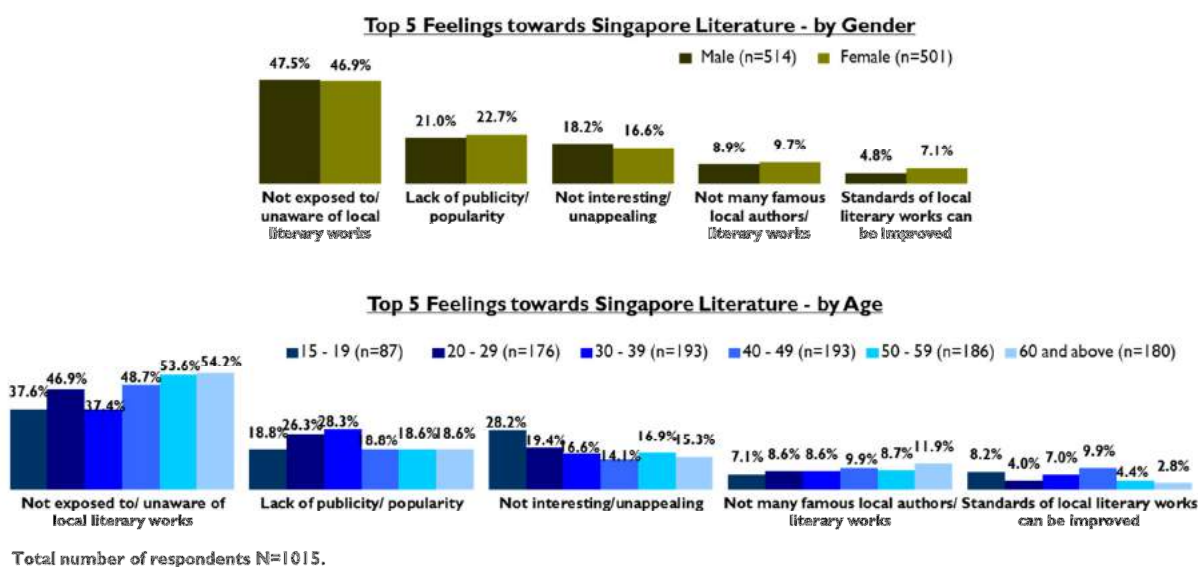
Respondents with no/primary education were more likely to be unaware of literary works by Singaporean writers.

Figure 3.31 Top 5 Feelings towards Singapore Literature – by Education, Occupation

Non-readers were more likely to express a lack of exposure to and awareness of Singapore Literature than readers. Significantly more readers than non-readers felt that Singapore did not have many famous local authors/literary works and that the standards of Singapore Literature could be improved.

Figure 3.32 Top 5 Feelings towards Singapore Literature – by Readers vs Non-Readers
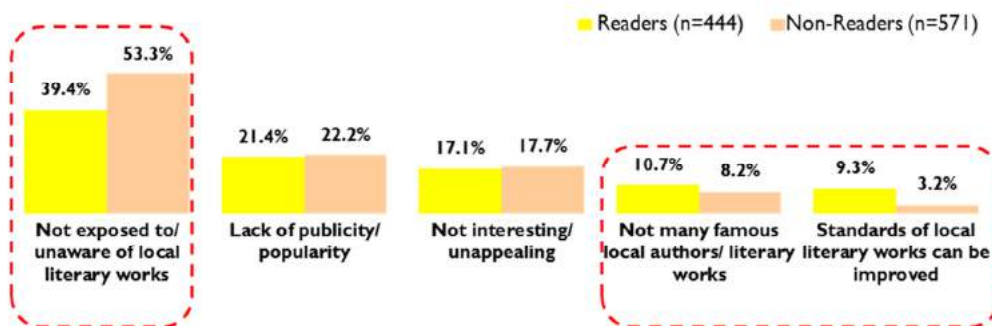
BUYING HABITS

4 BUYING HABITS

4.1   Literary Book Buying Behaviour

44% of respondents stated that they generally bought their literary books. However, the main channel for respondents to obtain their literary books was loans from the library or other people, or gifts, with one third of respondents citing this as their only source of books.

Significantly more women got their books through loans and gifts. 22% had no contact at all with books, with a significantly higher proportion of these being men. The likelihood of a respondent never having bought or borrowed or given any books increases significantly with age.

Figure 4.1 Literary Book Buying – Overall, by Gender, Age
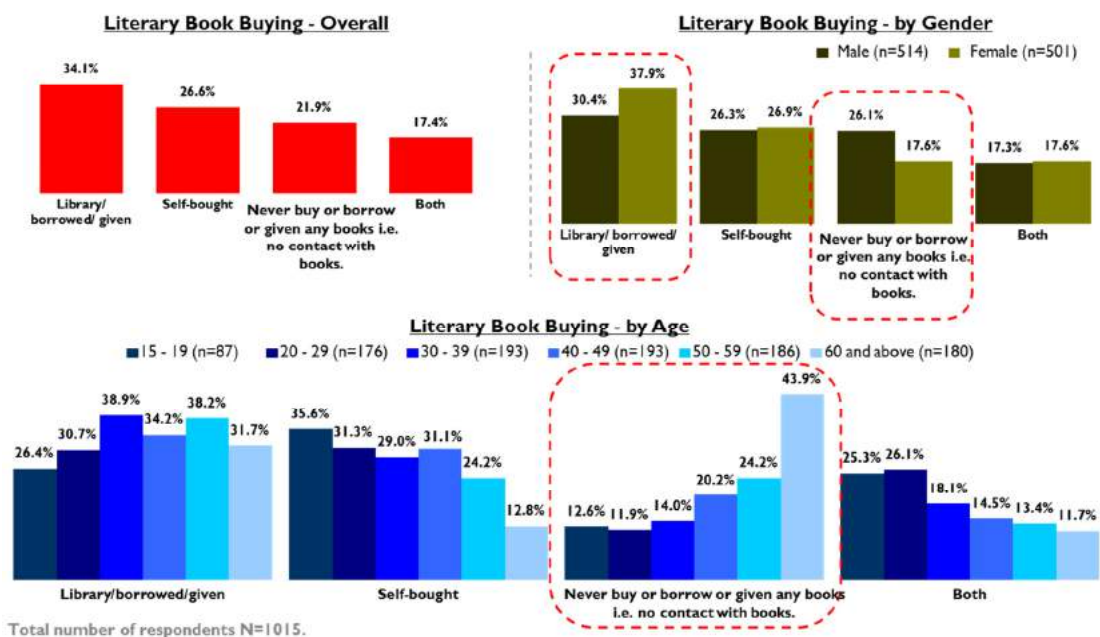
Literary book-buying rates increase with education levels. Non-PMETs were more likely to get their books through loans and/or gifts, and non-working respondents were the most likely to have had no contact with books altogether.

Figure 4.2 Literary Book Buying – by Education, Occupation
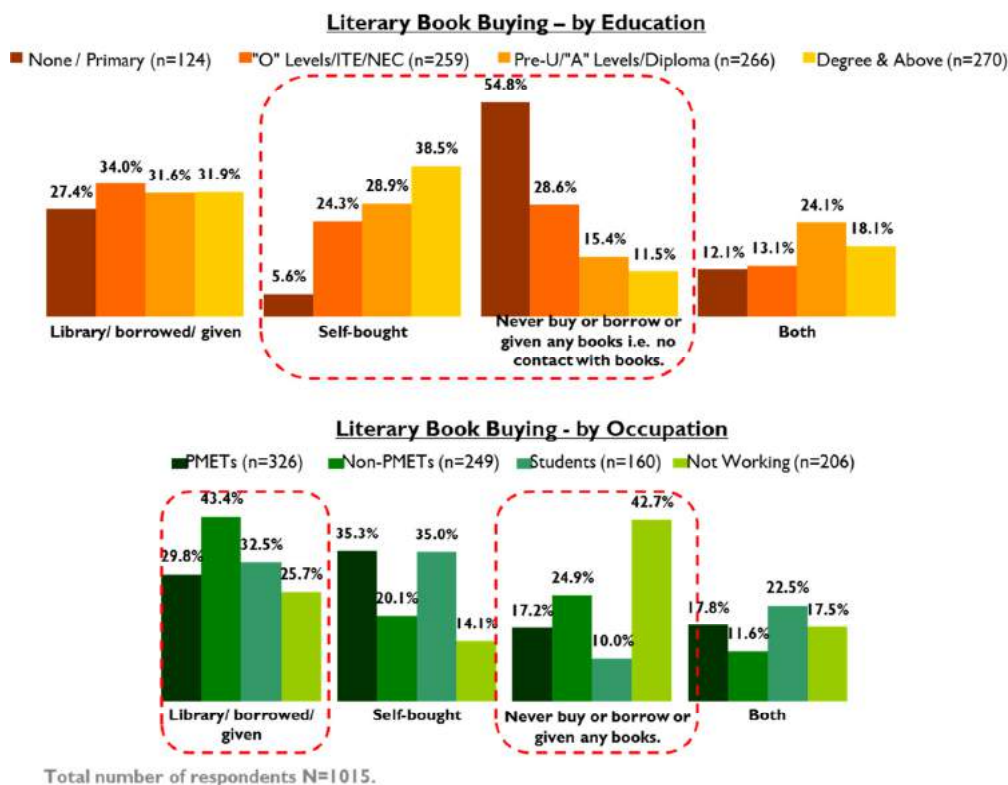
As expected, more than 60% of readers bought their own literary books. Interestingly, 30% of non-readers bought literary books.

Figure 4.3 Literary Book Buying – by Readers vs Non-Readers
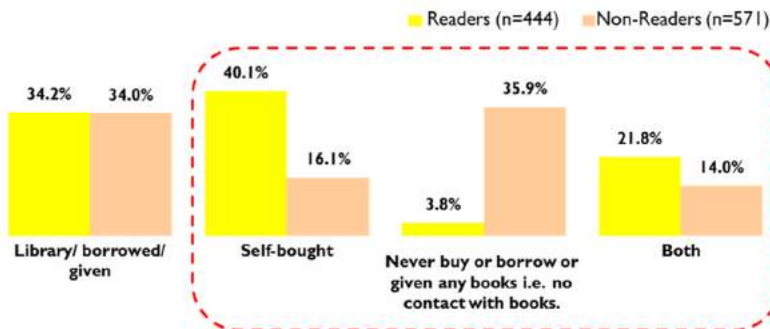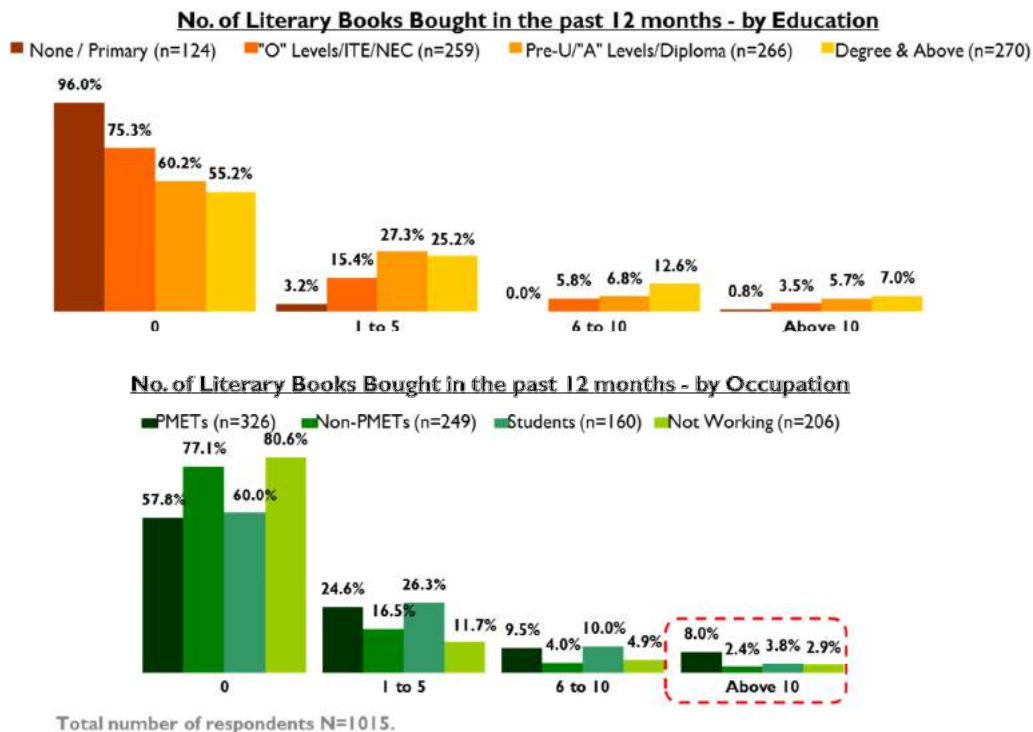
4.2   Number of Books Bought

Close to a third of respondents bought at least one literary book during the past 12 months. A small percentage (14%) of those who said they usually obtained literary books through loans or gifts bought a literary book in the past 12 months. There was no significant difference in the number of books bought across gender and age groups.

Figure 4.4 No. of Literary Books Bought – Overall, by Gender, Age
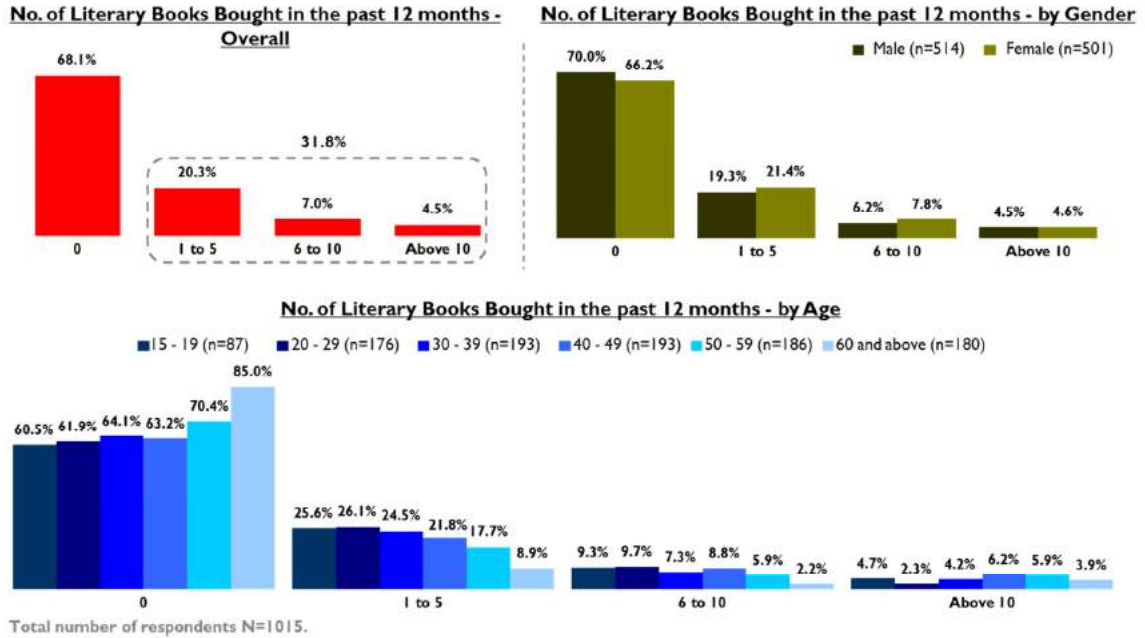
The average number of books bought was 3. In particular, PMETs were more likely to have bought more than 10 literary books in the past 12 months.

Figure 4.5 No. of Literary Books Bought – Education, Occupation

No. of Literary Books Bought in the past 12 months - by Education

■ None / Primary (n=124)   ■ "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=259)   ■ Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=266)   ■ Degree & Above (n=270)

No. of Literary Books Bought in the past 12 months - by Occupation

■ PMETs (n=326)   ■ Non-PMETs (n=249)   ■ Students (n=160)   ■ Not Working (n=206)

Total number of respondents N=1015.

As expected, significantly more readers than non-readers bought literary books in the past 12 months. The average number of books bought by readers was 7.
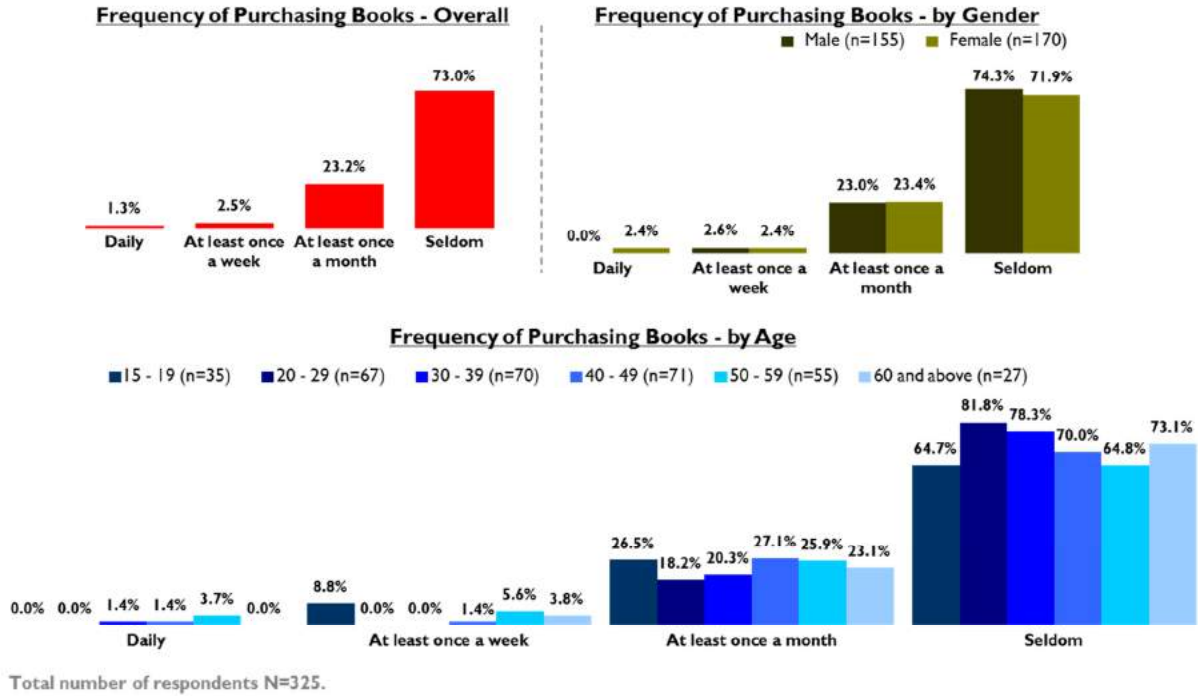
Figure 4.6 No. of Literary Books Bought – by Readers vs Non-Readers

■ Readers (n=444)   ■ Non-Readers (n=571)
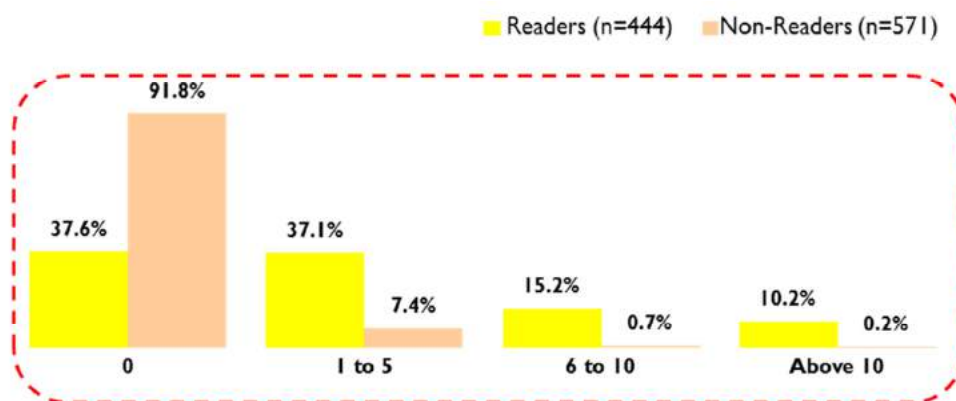
4.3   Frequency of Buying Books

Close to 75% of respondents said they seldom bought literary books. There were no significant differences in the frequency of buying literary books across gender and age groups.

Figure 4.7 Frequency of Purchasing Books – Overall, by Gender, Age

Total number of respondents N=325.

Compared to other occupations, more non-PMETs stated they seldom bought literary books.

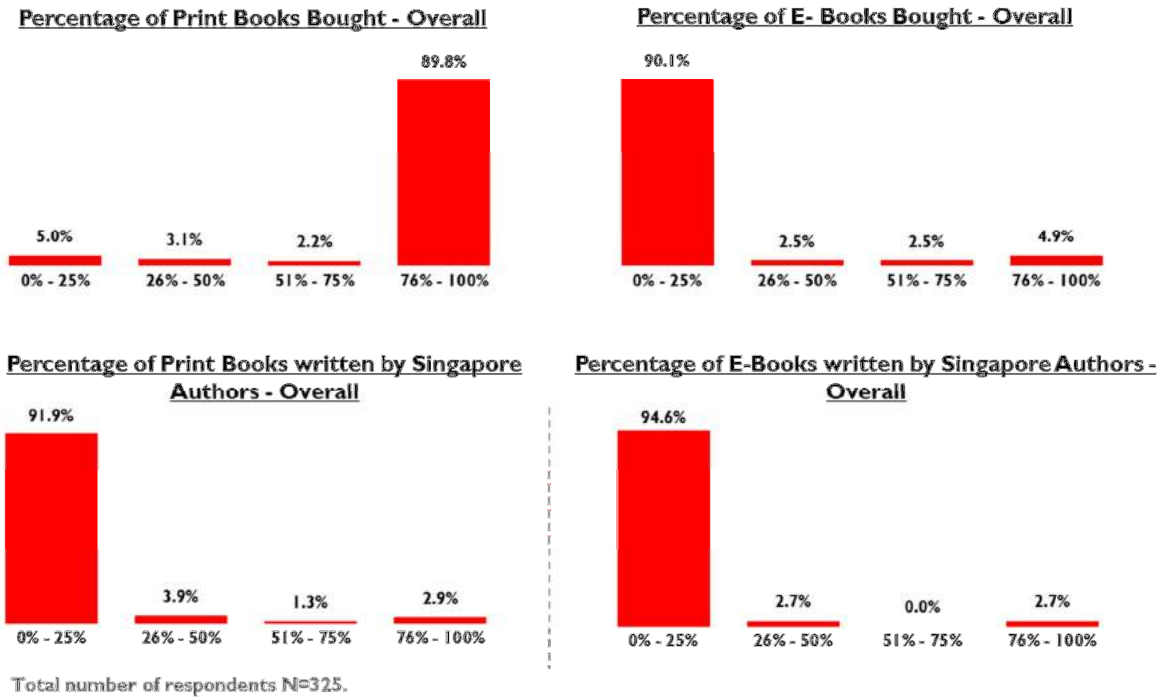**Figure 4.8** Frequency of Purchasing Books – by Education, Occupation
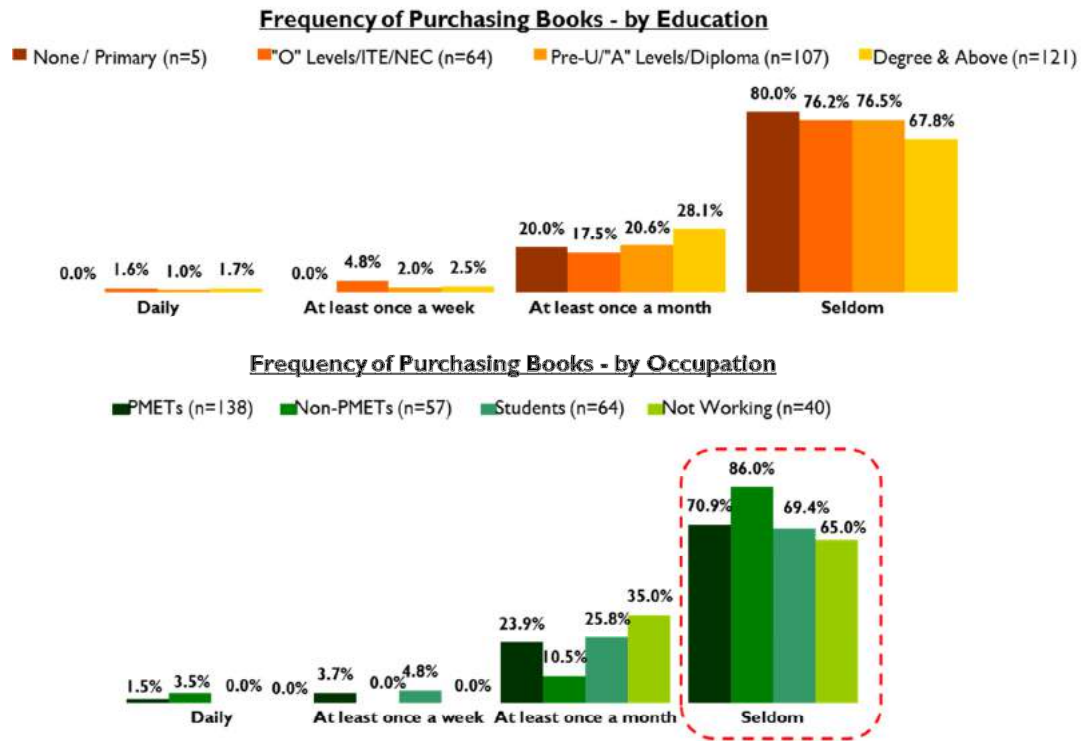
4.4 Types of Books Bought

Preferences of readers for print over electronic form were mirrored in buying behaviour. Print books constituted more than three-quarters of literary book purchases for 90% of people who had bought a book in the past 12 months. However, most of the books bought in the past 12 months (both print and electronic forms) were by foreign authors. For nearly all the respondents, the most recent literary book they bought was written by an international author.

Figure 4.9 Book Types Bought

Percentage of Print Books Bought - Overall

0% - 25%	26% - 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%
5.0%	3.1%	2.2%	89.8%

Percentage of E- Books Bought - Overall

0% - 25%	26% - 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%
90.1%	2.5%	2.5%	4.9%

Percentage of Print Books written by Singapore Authors - Overall

0% - 25%	26% - 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%
91.9%	3.9%	1.3%	2.9%

Percentage of E-Books written by Singapore Authors - Overall

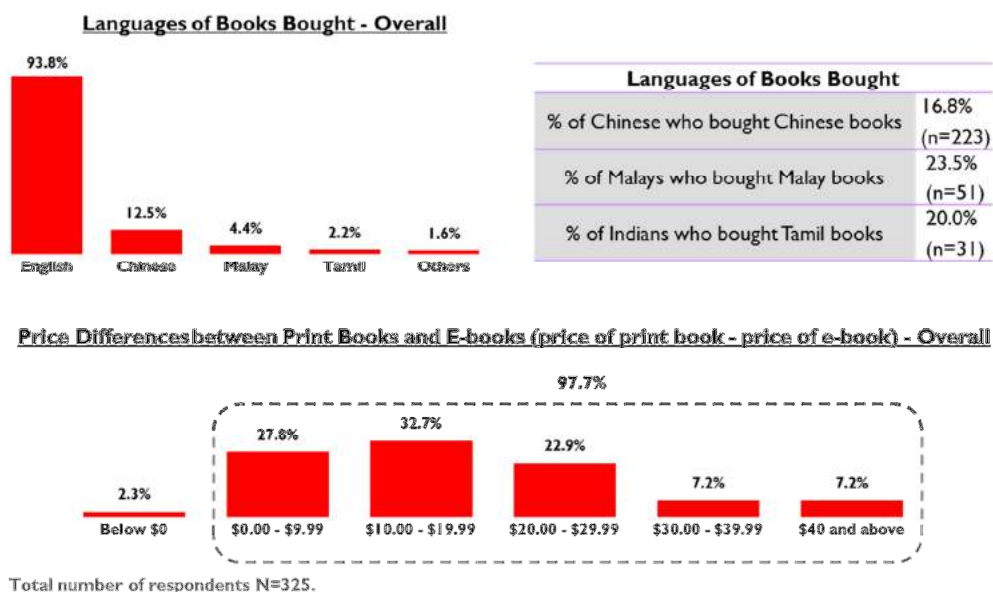| 0% - 25%	26% - 50%	51% - 75%	76% - 100%
94.6%	2.7%	0.0%	2.7%

Total number of respondents N=325.

4.5   Language and Price Paid

94% of literary book buyers bought books in English. On average, about 2 out of 10 book buyers bought books in their respective vernacular languages.

Almost all the book buyers agreed they would pay more for print books. One third of them also indicated that they were willing to pay a premium of $10 to $19.99 for a print book over an e-book.
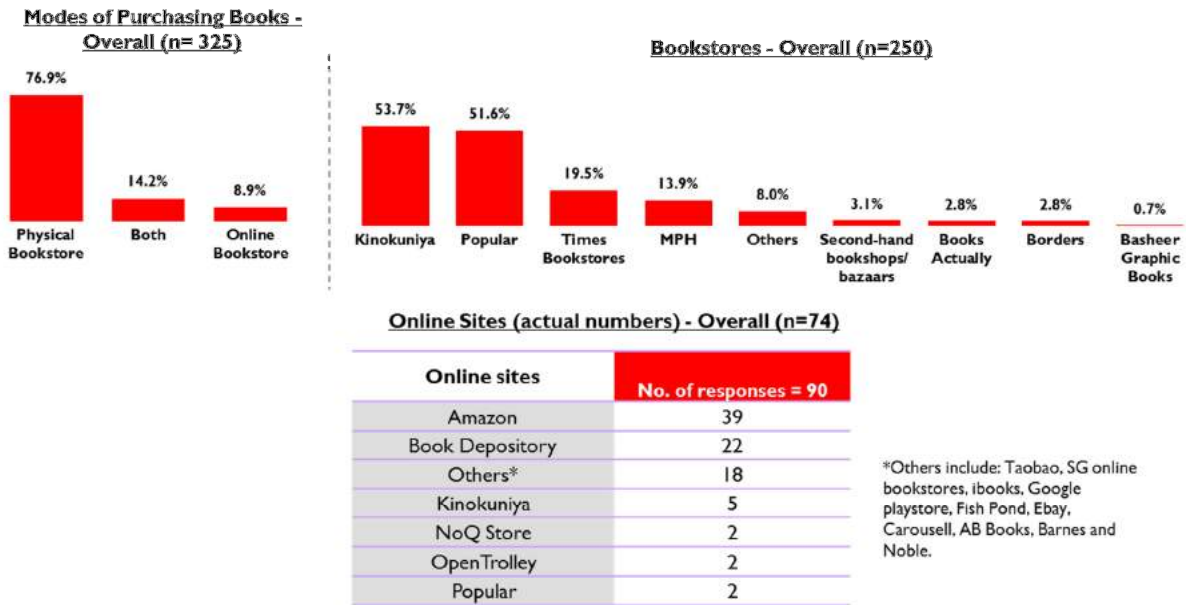
Figure 4.10 Languages of Books Bought and Price Differences

Languages of Books Bought - Overall

93.8% English
12.5% Chinese
4.4% Malay
2.2% Tamil
1.6% Others

Languages of Books Bought	
% of Chinese who bought Chinese books	16.8% (n=223)
% of Malays who bought Malay books	23.5% (n=51)
% of Indians who bought Tamil books	20.0% (n=31)

Price Differences between Print Books and E-books (price of print book - price of e-book) - Overall

97.7%

2.3% Below $0
27.8% $0.00 - $9.99
32.7% $10.00 - $19.99
22.9% $20.00 - $29.99
7.2% $30.00 - $39.99
7.2% $40 and above

Total number of respondents N=325.

4.6   Channels for Buying

Despite the increasing popularity of online shopping, Singaporeans appeared to favour physical bookstores – 8 out of 10 book buyers would head to physical bookstores only. Kinokuniya (54%) and Popular (52%) were the most patronised physical bookstores, while Amazon.com was the most popular online site for buying books.
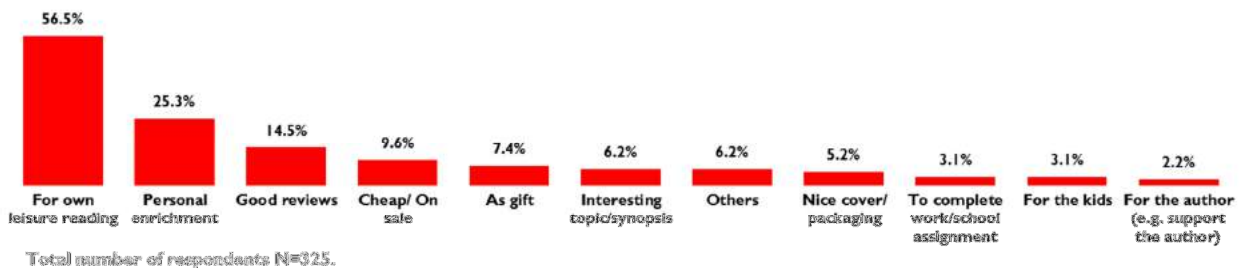
Figure 4.11 Modes of Purchasing Books

Modes of Purchasing Books - Overall (n= 325)

- Physical Bookstore: 76.9%
- Both: 14.2%
- Online Bookstore: 8.9%

Bookstores - Overall (n=250)

- Kinokuniya: 53.7%
- Popular: 51.6%
- Times Bookstores: 19.5%
- MPH: 13.9%
- Others: 8.0%
- Second-hand bookshops/ bazaars: 3.1%
- Books Actually: 2.8%
- Borders: 2.8%
- Basheer Graphic Books: 0.7%

Online Sites (actual numbers) - Overall (n=74)

Online sites	No. of responses = 90
Amazon	39
Book Depository	22
Others*	18
Kinokuniya	5
NoQ Store	2
OpenTrolley	2
Popular	2

*Others include: Taobao, SG online bookstores, ibooks, Google playstore, Fish Pond, Ebay, Carousell, AB Books, Barnes and Noble.

Total number of respondents N=325.

4.7   Motivations for Buying Books

When book buyers were asked what motivated their purchases, the top three factors were: leisure reading (57%), personal enrichment (25%), and good reviews (15%).

Figure 4.12 Motivations to Buy a Book – Overall

- For own leisure reading: 56.5%
- Personal enrichment: 25.3%
- Good reviews: 14.5%
- Cheap/ On sale: 9.6%
- As gift: 7.4%
- Interesting topic/synopsis: 6.2%
- Others: 6.2%
- Nice cover/ packaging: 5.2%
- To complete work/school assignment: 3.1%
- For the kids: 3.1%
- For the author (e.g. support the author): 2.2%

Total number of respondents N=325.

Women were more likely to buy a book if it was cheap or on sale. There were no significant differences in the motivating factors for buying books across age groups and education levels. Students were more likely to be influenced by good reviews to buy books.

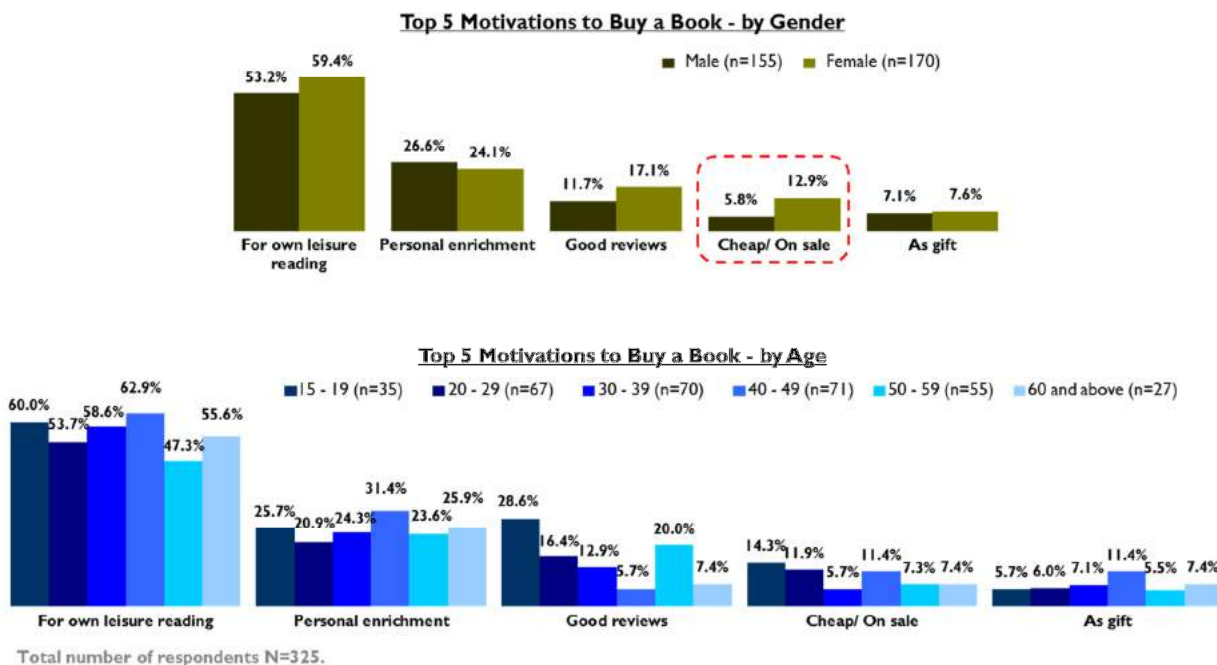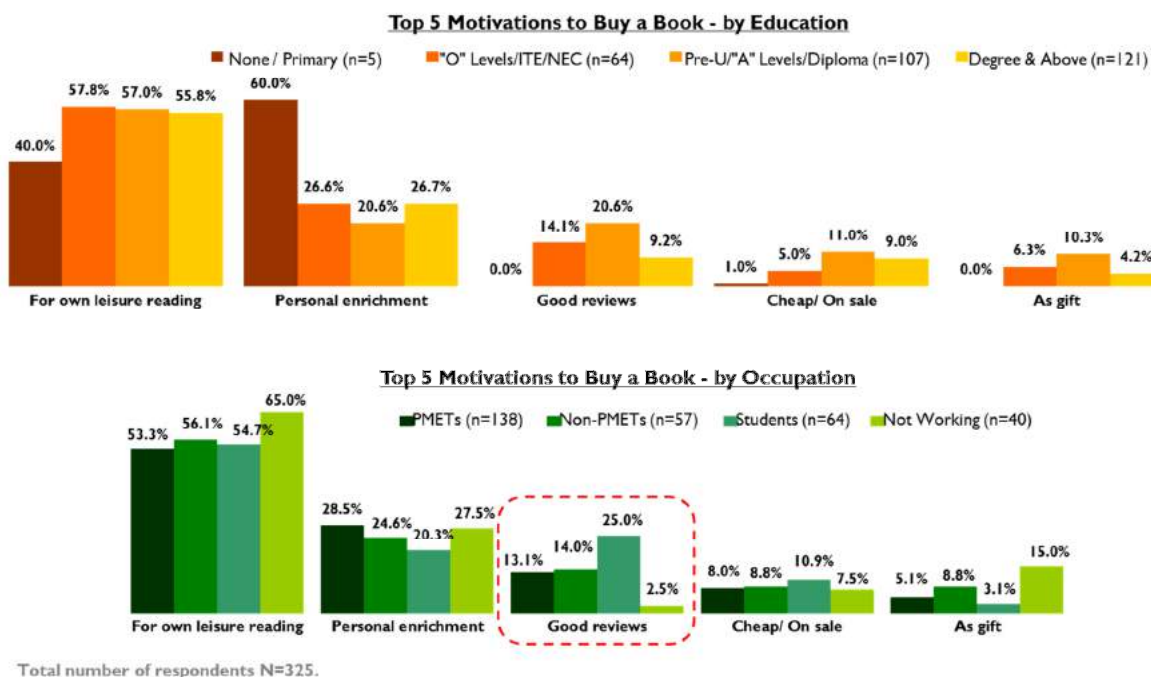**Figure 4.13** Top 5 Motivations to Buy a Book – by Gender, Age

Figure 4.14 Motivations to Buy a Book – by Education, Occupation

As expected, readers were largely motivated to buy books for their own leisure reading, while a significantly higher proportion of non-readers would buy books if the books had good reviews or were gifts.

Figure 4.15 Top 5 Motivations to Buy a Book – by Readers vs Non-Readers
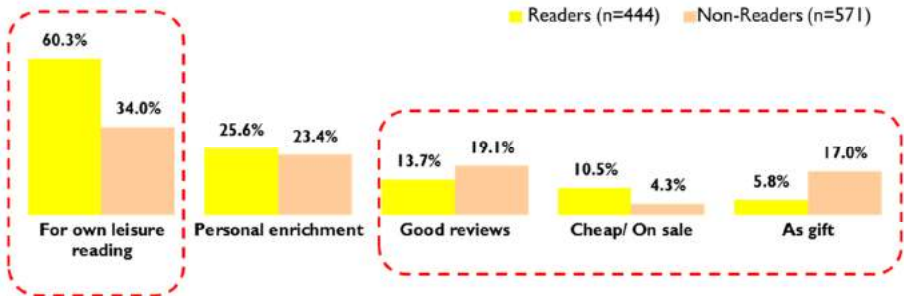
WRITING HABITS

5   WRITING HABITS

5.1   Creative Writing

1 out of 10 respondents indicated that they participated in some form of creative writing. The older the respondent, the less likely that he or she wrote creatively.

Figure 5.1 Wrote Creatively – Overall, by Gender, Age
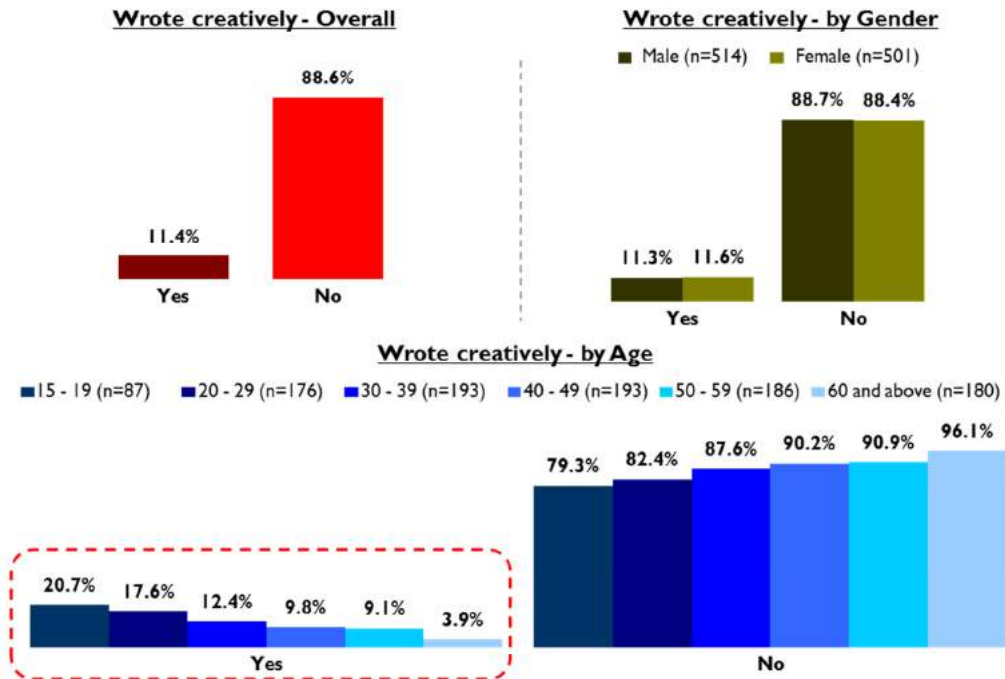
Total number of respondents N=1015.

There was a significantly lower proportion of respondents with no/primary education who wrote creatively.

Figure 5.2 Wrote Creatively – by Education, Occupation

Wrote creatively - by Education

- None / Primary (n=124)
- "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=259)
- Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=266)
- Degree & Above (n=270)

Yes: 1.6%, 15.4%, 10.9%, 13.0%
No: 98.4%, 84.6%, 89.1%, 87.0%

Wrote creatively - by Occupation

- PMETs (n=326)
- Non-PMETs (n=249)
- Students (n=160)
- Not Working (n=206)

Yes: 14.7%, 6.8%, 18.8%, 7.3%
No: 85.3%, 93.2%, 81.3%, 92.7%

Total number of respondents N=1015.
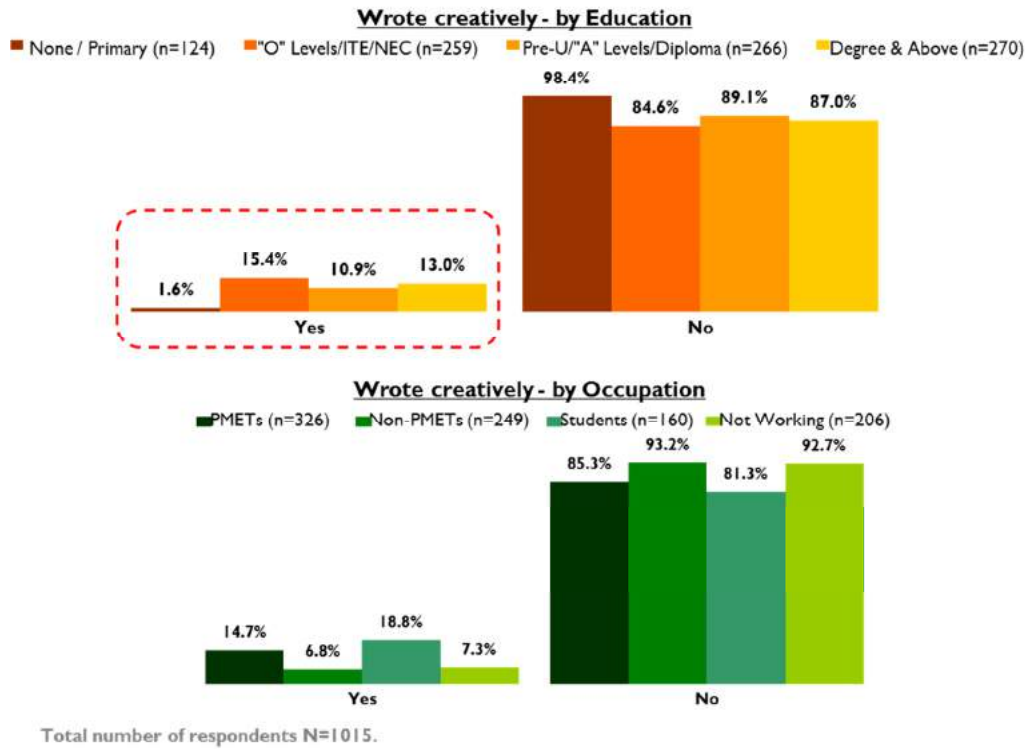
Readers were three times as likely as non-readers to write creatively.

Figure 5.3 Wrote Creatively – by Readers vs Non-Readers

- Readers (n=444)
- Non-Readers (n=571)

Yes: 18.0%, 6.3%
No: 82.0%, 93.7%
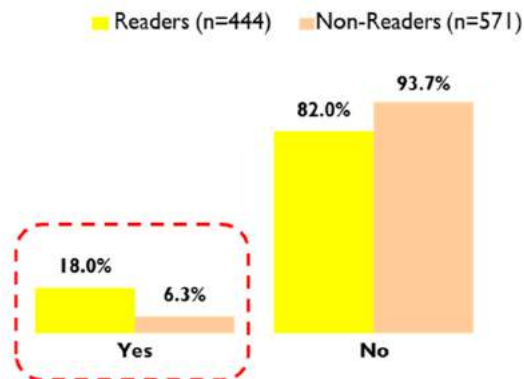
5.2   Frequency, Genres and Language of Writing

Of the respondents who wrote creatively, almost half of them did so infrequently. The most commonly-written genres were non-fiction (34%), followed by literature (25%) and fiction (21%). English was the main language used.

Figure 5.5 Frequency of Writing and Genres
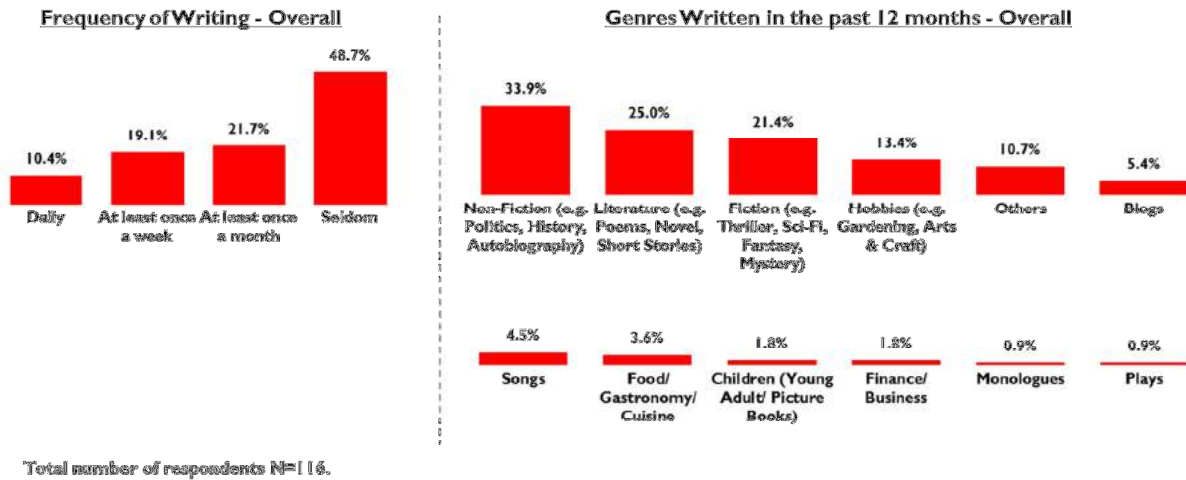
5.3   Motivations for Writing Creatively

The top three reasons for writing creatively were: for self-expression (47%), for relaxation/pleasure (35%) and for a hobby (29%).

Figure 5.6 Reasons for Writing Creatively – Overall and Language
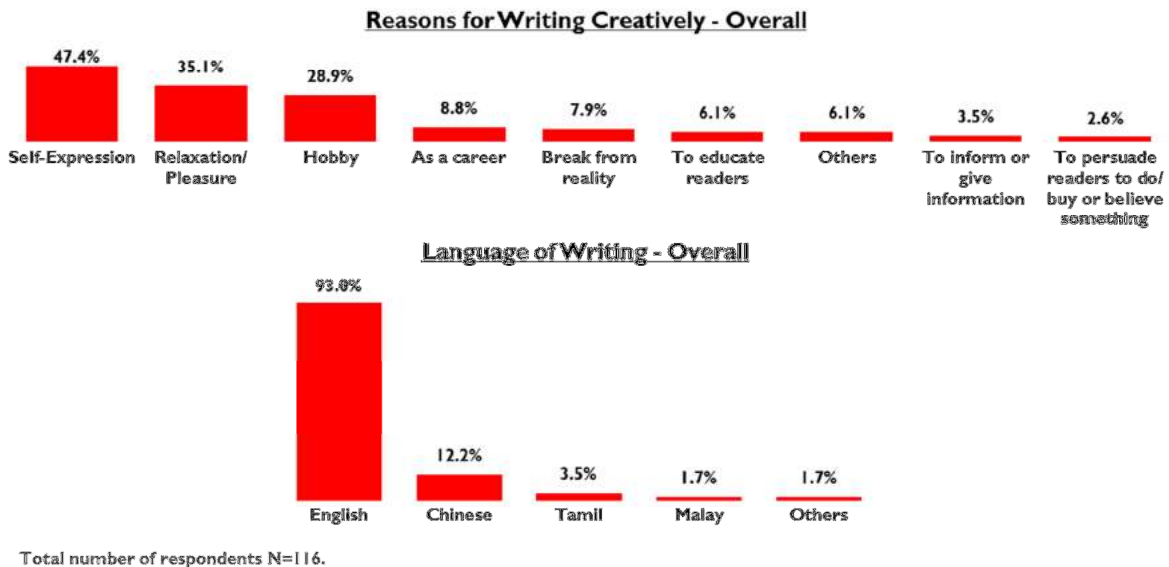
When asked why they did not write creatively, many respondents cited lack of interest (49%), lack of time (41%) and lack of ideas (19%).

Figure 5.7 Reasons for Not Writing Creatively – Overall
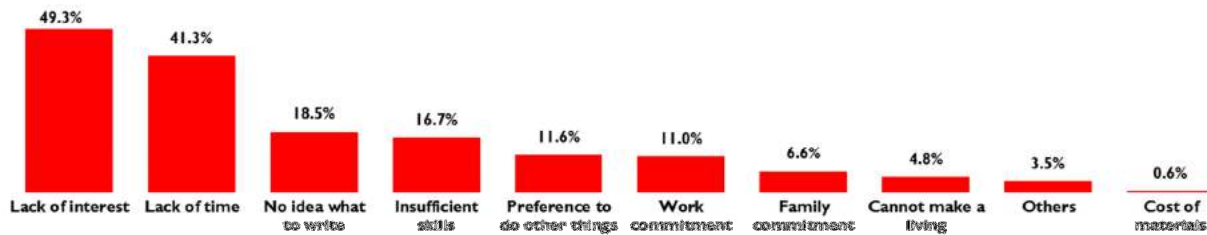
Total number of respondents N=899.

Men were more likely to be uninterested in creative writing, while women were more likely to cite a lack of time and a preference to do other things. There were no significant differences in the reasons for not writing creatively across age groups and education levels. In contrast to other occupations, students were less likely to be deterred from writing creatively by a lack of writing skills.

Figure 5.8 Top 5 Reasons for Not Writing Creatively – by Gender, Age

Total number of respondents N=899.
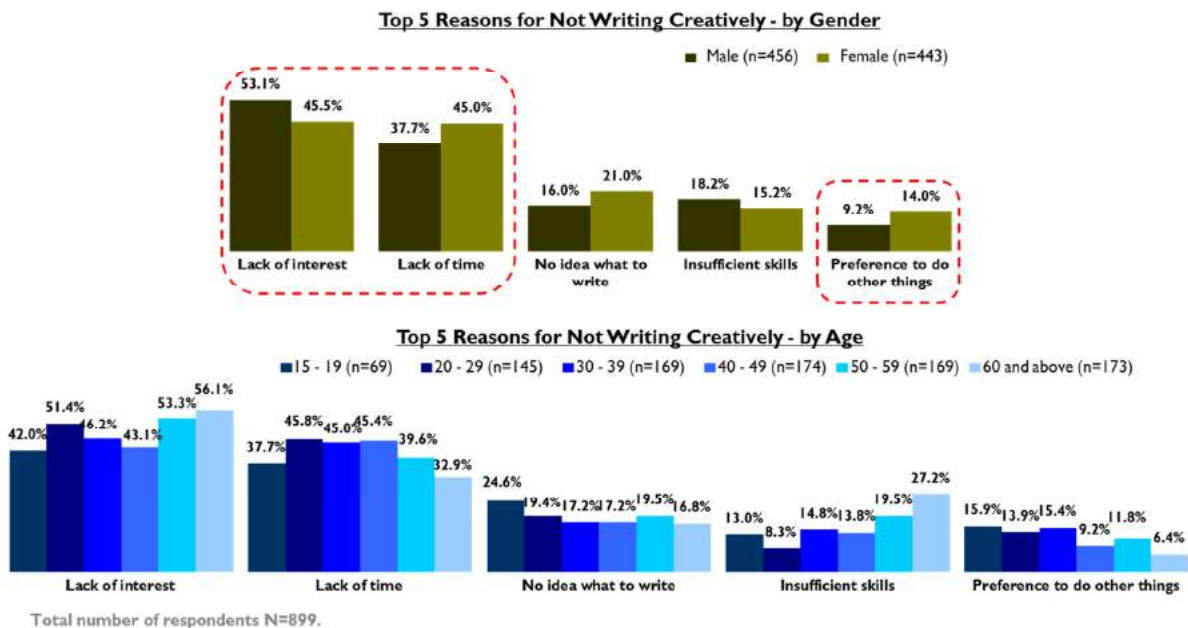
Figure 5.9 Reasons for Not Writing Creatively – by Education, Occupation

Top 5 Reasons for Not Writing Creatively - by Education

Legend: None / Primary (n=122) | "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=219) | Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=237) | Degree & Above (n=239)

Reason	None/Primary	"O" Levels	Pre-U/"A"	Degree & Above
Lack of interest	54.1%	48.4%	50.4%	42.6%
Lack of time	41.0%	36.1%	39.8%	43.4%
No idea what to write	11.5%	18.7%	20.3%	16.2%
Insufficient skills	29.5%	20.5%	11.9%	14.9%
Preference to do other things	10.7%	9.1%	13.6%	7.7%

Top 5 Reasons for Not Writing Creatively - by Occupation

Legend: PMETs (n=278) | Non-PMETs (n=232) | Students (n=130) | Not Working (n=191)

Reason	PMETs	Non-PMETs	Students	Not Working
Lack of interest	45.7%	47.4%	45.7%	55.0%
Lack of time	42.4%	41.4%	41.9%	36.6%
No idea what to write	13.7%	20.7%	22.5%	19.4%
Insufficient skills	16.5%	17.2%	9.3%	24.6%
Preference to do other things	8.3%	12.9%	14.0%	9.9%

Total number of respondents N=899.

Non-readers were more likely to cite lack of interest and lack of time as their main reasons for not writing creatively.

Figure 5.10 Top 5 Reasons for Not Writing Creatively – by Readers vs Non-Readers

Legend: Readers (n=444) | Non-Readers (n=571)

Reason	Readers	Non-Readers
Lack of interest	41.0%	55.0%
Lack of time	38.3%	43.4%
No idea what to write	19.8%	17.6%
Insufficient skills	15.2%	17.8%
Preference to do other things	10.7%	12.1%
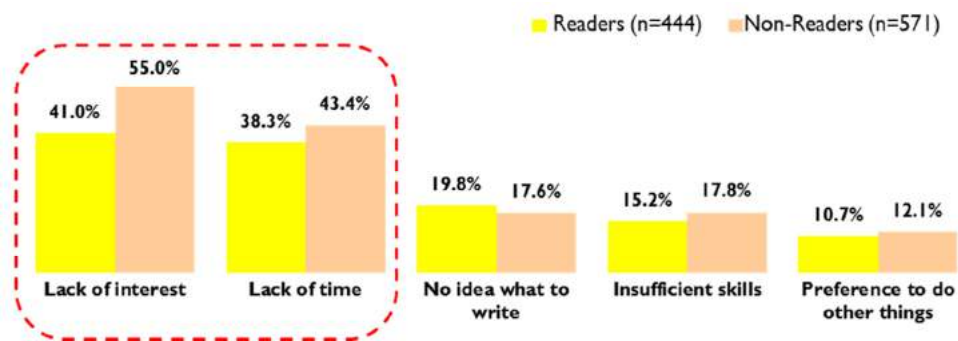
5.4   Motivations to Write in the Future

Having time to do so was the most frequently cited motivation when respondents were asked what would motivate them to engage in creative writing in the future (43%). However, more than a quarter of respondents indicated that they were not interested in writing and could not be motivated to write at all (27%).
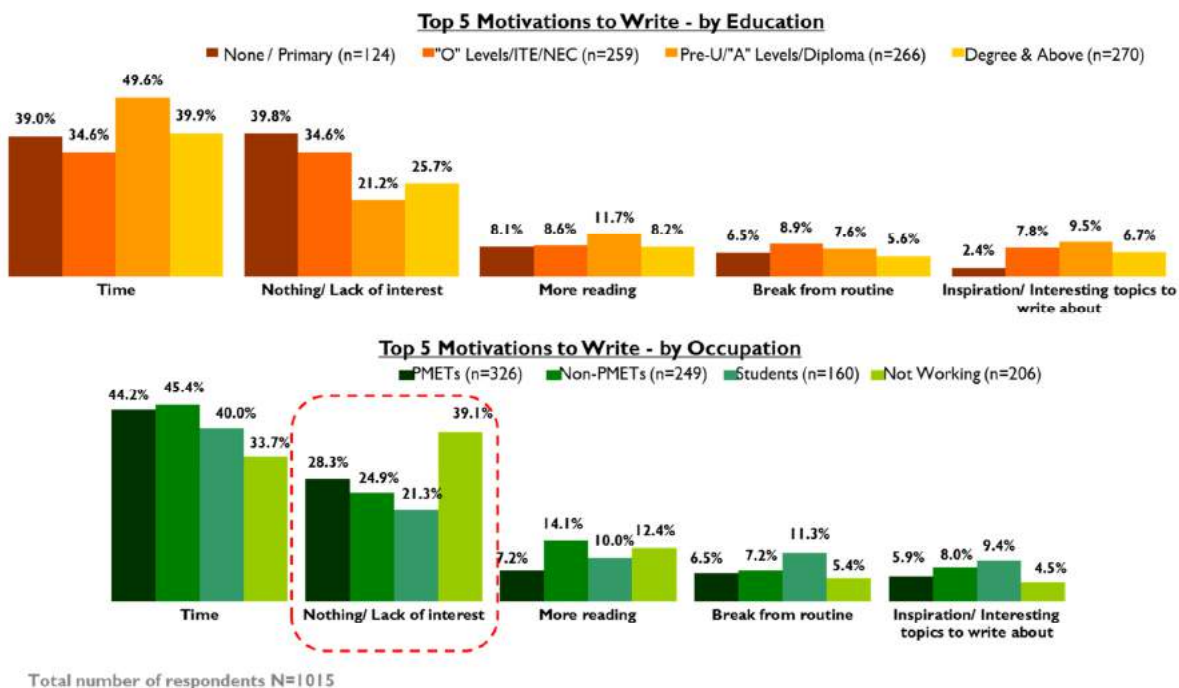
Figure 5.11 Motivations to Write – Overall

Total number of respondents N=1015.
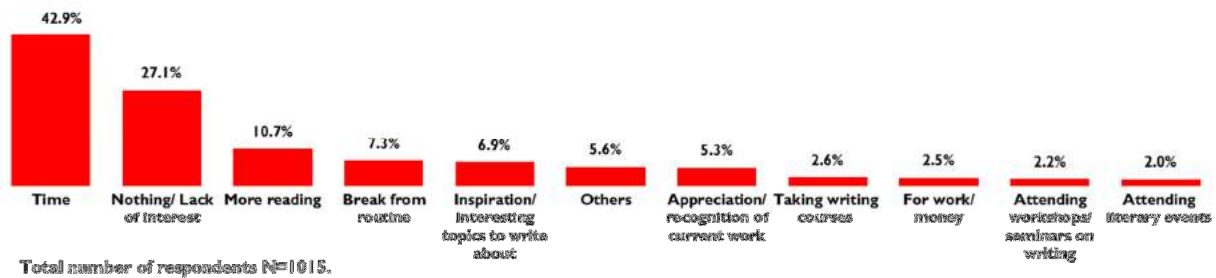
Significantly more women would be motivated to write if they had more time. Teenagers (15-19 years old) were more likely than older people to be motivated to write as a way of breaking from their routine.

Figure 5.12 Top 5 Motivations to Write – by Gender, Age

Total number of respondents N=1015.
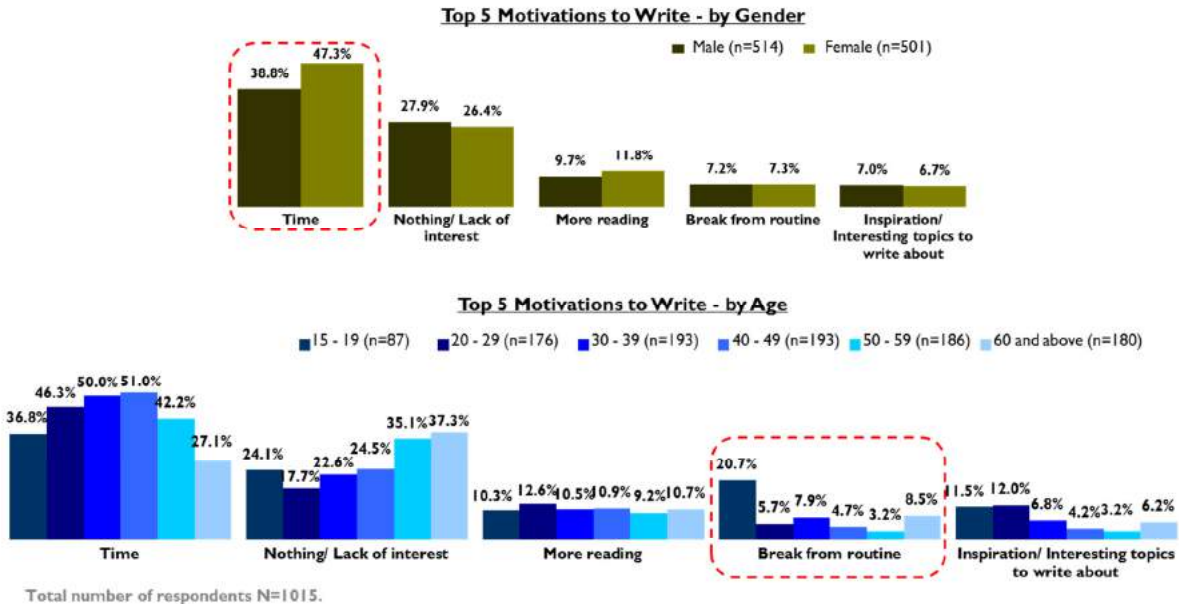
Non-working respondents were the most likely to indicate that nothing would motivate them to write.

Figure 5.13 Top 5 Motivations to Write – by Education, Occupation

Top 5 Motivations to Write - by Education

■ None / Primary (n=124) ■ "O" Levels/ITE/NEC (n=259) ■ Pre-U/"A" Levels/Diploma (n=266) ■ Degree & Above (n=270)

Time: 39.0%, 34.6%, 49.6%, 39.9%
Nothing/ Lack of interest: 39.8%, 34.6%, 21.2%, 25.7%
More reading: 8.1%, 8.6%, 11.7%, 8.2%
Break from routine: 6.5%, 8.9%, 7.6%, 5.6%
Inspiration/ Interesting topics to write about: 2.4%, 7.8%, 9.5%, 6.7%

Top 5 Motivations to Write - by Occupation

■ PMETs (n=326) ■ Non-PMETs (n=249) ■ Students (n=160) ■ Not Working (n=206)

Time: 44.2%, 45.4%, 40.0%, 33.7%
Nothing/ Lack of interest: 28.3%, 24.9%, 21.3%, 39.1%
More reading: 7.2%, 14.1%, 10.0%, 12.4%
Break from routine: 6.5%, 7.2%, 11.3%, 5.4%
Inspiration/ Interesting topics to write about: 5.9%, 8.0%, 9.4%, 4.5%

Total number of respondents N=1015

Interestingly, non-readers indicated that they would be motivated to write if they had more time, whereas readers were more likely to be motivated to write if they read more or had inspiration/interesting topics to write about.

Figure 5.14 Top 5 Motivations to Write – by Readers vs Non-Readers

■ Readers (n=444) ■ Non-Readers (n=571)

Time: 39.5%, 45.6%
Nothing/ Lack of interest: 25.1%, 28.8%
More reading: 12.4%, 9.4%
Break from routine: 6.3%, 8.0%
Inspiration/ Interesting topics to write about: 9.7%, 4.6%
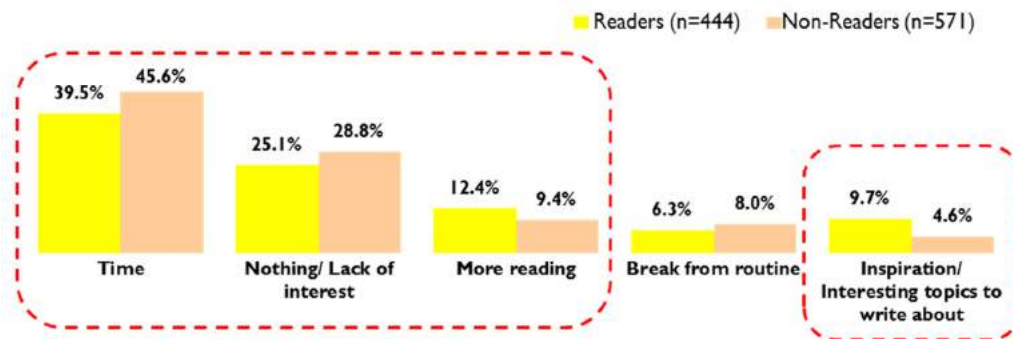
AWARENESS & PARTICIPATION

6   AWARENESS & PARTICIPATION

6.1   Reading and Writing Courses and Events

Besides literary reading and creative writing, deeper forms of engagement in literary arts include participation in writing circles, and attendance at writing workshops and festivals. Most of the respondents had not attended any writing courses before. However, 16% of them indicated an interest in attending such courses.

Figure 6.1 Participation in Courses and Interest
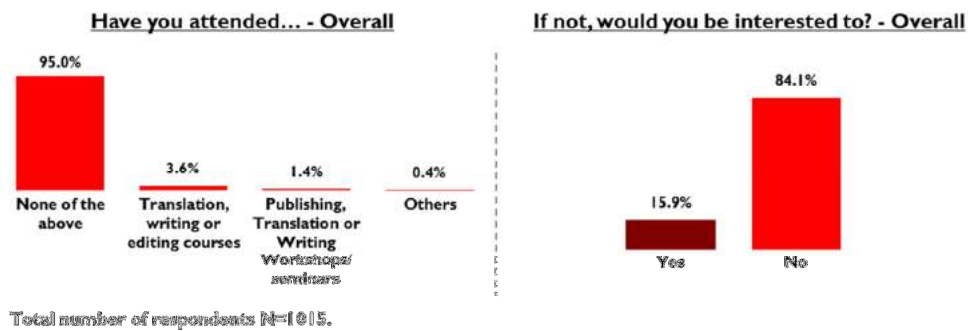
In terms of reading and writing-related events, the two most known events were the Singapore Writers Festival (16%) and Read! Singapore (13%). However, less than 10% of those who were aware of these events actually participated in them.

Figure 6.2 Awareness and Participation in Reading/Writing Events in Singapore – Overall
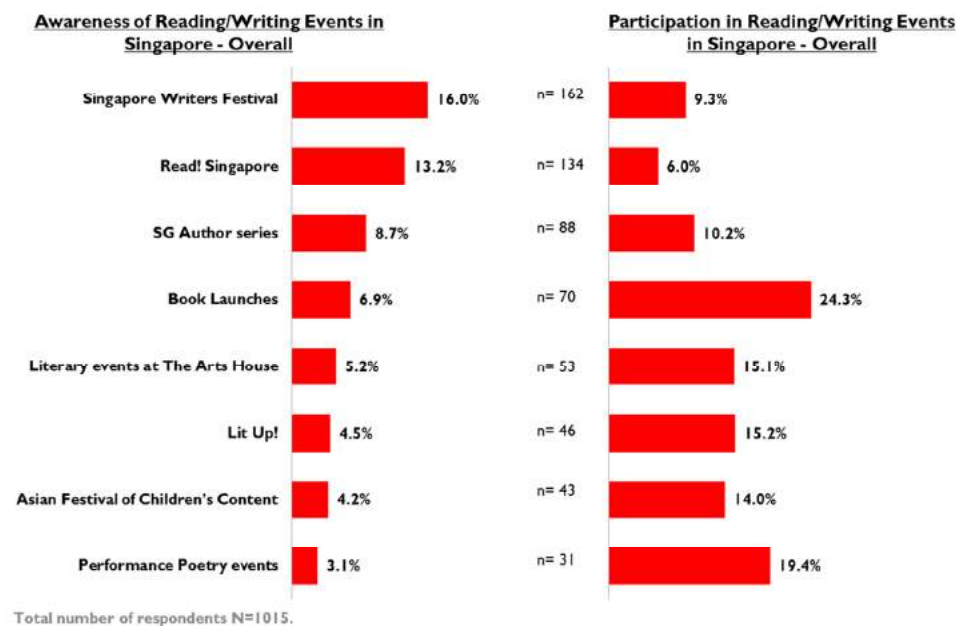
6.2   Sources of Information

The three most frequently cited sources of information about reading/writing events were: word-of-mouth (32%), newspapers (21%) and internet/websites (20%). The most frequently used newspaper and internet/website for information about reading/writing events were The Straits Times and Facebook respectively.

Figure 6.3 Sources of Information for Reading/Writing Events in Singapore – Overall

Sources of Information for Reading/Writing Events in Singapore - Overall

Source	%
Word-of-Mouth	31.9%
Newspapers	21.2%
Internet/ Websites	20.4%
Outdoor Advertising	11.9%
TV	10.0%
By chance, happen to pass by	10.0%
Street Banners	8.1%
Brochures/ Flyers	6.9%
Library	6.2%
Radio	3.8%
School	3.5%
Magazines/ Periodicals	2.7%
EDM	1.9%
Others	1.6%
Event Booklets	1.5%
Bus Advertising	1.2%
Taxi Advertising	0.4%

Total number of respondents N=282.

Newspapers (%)	2014 (n=46)
The Straits Times	89.6
Today	12.5
LianHe Zaobao	6.3

Internet/Websites (%)	2014 (n=37)
Facebook	41.5
Search Engines	24.4
SWF Website/Facebook page	22.0
Others	9.8
News Websites (e.g. Today, Straits Times, CNA)	7.3

6.3 Reasons for Participating / Not Participating

Accompanying colleagues, friends or relatives, and positive reviews were the top two reasons for attenders to participate in literary-related events. However, non-attenders cited lack of interest (37%) or lack of time (34%) as their reason for not participating in such events.

Figure 6.4 Reasons for Participating/Not Participating in Literary-Related Events – Overall
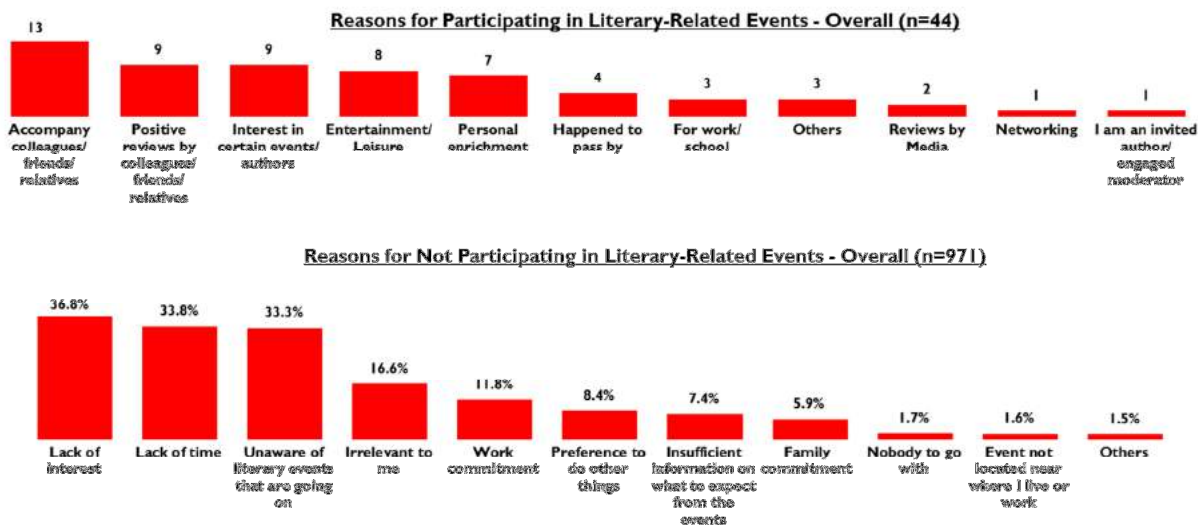
Women non-attenders were more likely to cite lack of time as a reason for not participating in literary-related events.

Figure 6.5 Top 5 Reasons for Not Participating in Literary-Related Events – by Gender, Age

58
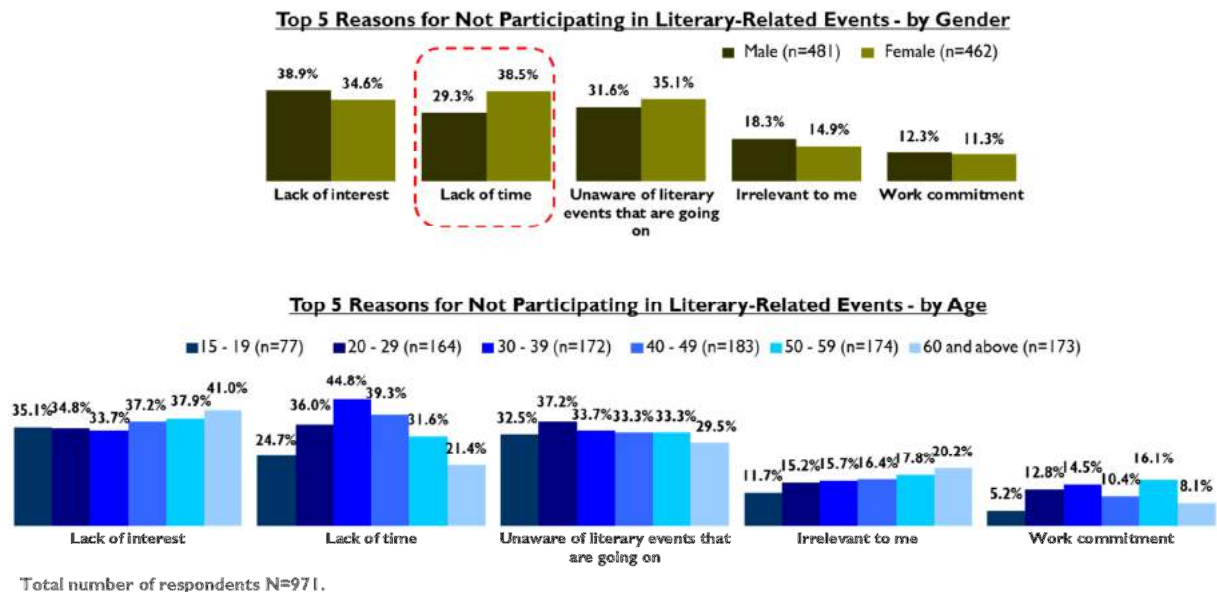
Respondents with no/primary education were more likely to find literary events irrelevant to them. Students were more likely to participate in a literary event out of personal interest, while significantly more non-PMETs cited work commitments as a reason for not participating.

Figure 6.6 Top 5 Reasons for Not Participating in Literary-Related Events – by Education, Occupation
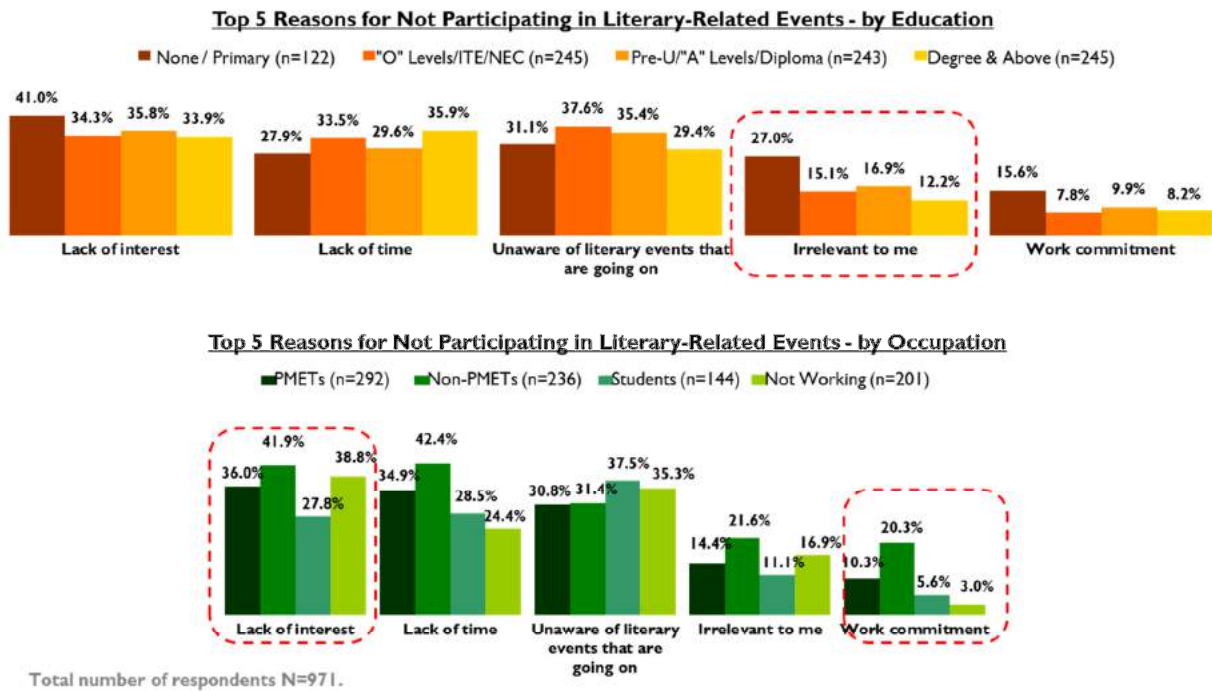
As expected, non-readers were more likely to cite lack of interest as their reason for not participating in literary-related events. 37% of readers indicated lack of awareness as their reason for not participating.

Figure 6.7 Top 5 Reasons for Not Participating in Literary-Related Events – by Readers vs Non-Readers
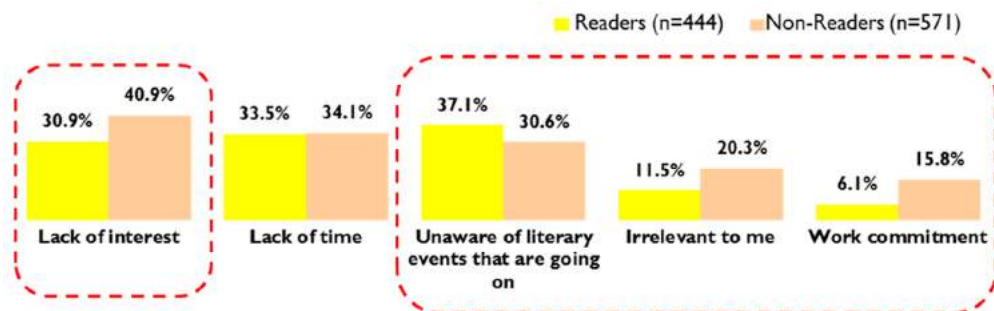
6.4   Motivations to Attend Literary Events

Nearly a quarter of all respondents were uninterested in literary events and stated that nothing would motivate them to attend such events in the future. However, free admission to literary events and greater publicity/advertisements could motivate some respondents to attend the events.

Figure 6.8 Motivations to Attend Literary Events – Overall
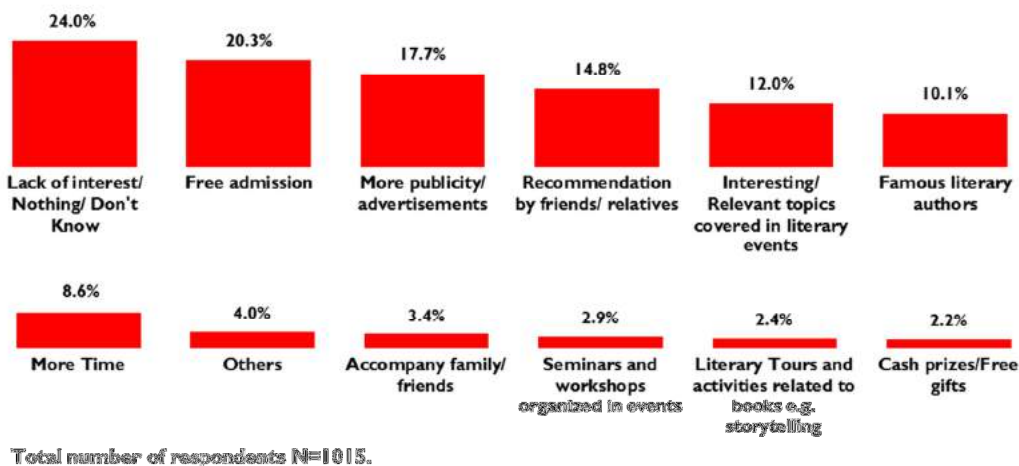
Respondents aged 60 and above were more likely to be uninterested in literary events and therefore were unmotivated to attend such events. On the other hand, students were more likely to attend literary events if the events were recommended by their friends or relatives.

Figure 6.9 Top 5 Motivations to Attend Literary Events – by Gender, Age
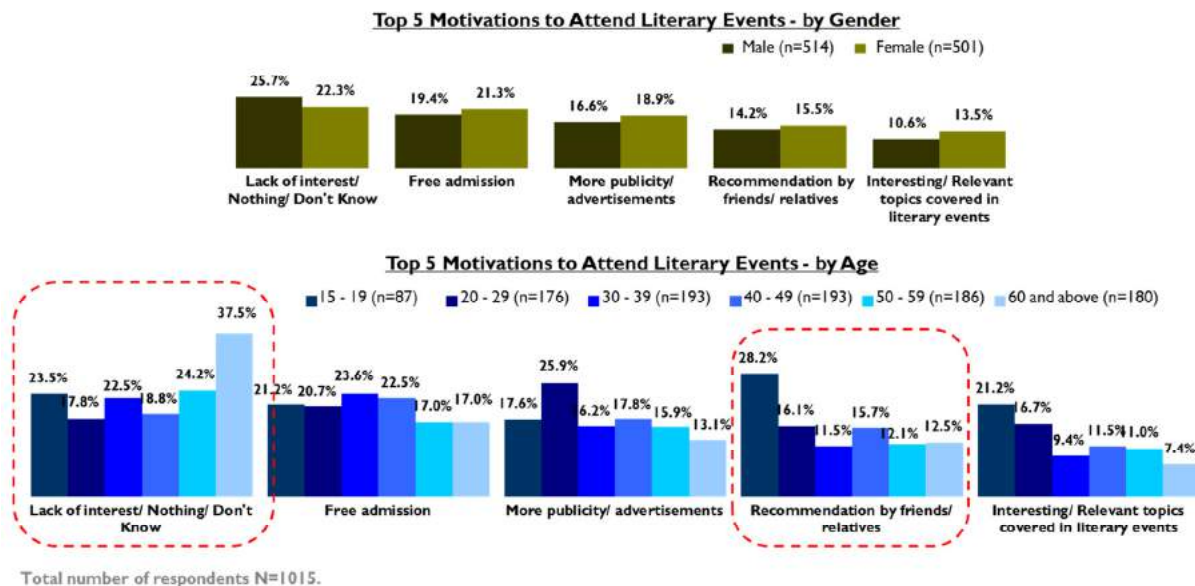
Non-PMETs were more likely to be motivated by free admissions to attend literary events.

Figure 6.10 Top 5 Motivations to Attend Literary Events – by Education, Occupation
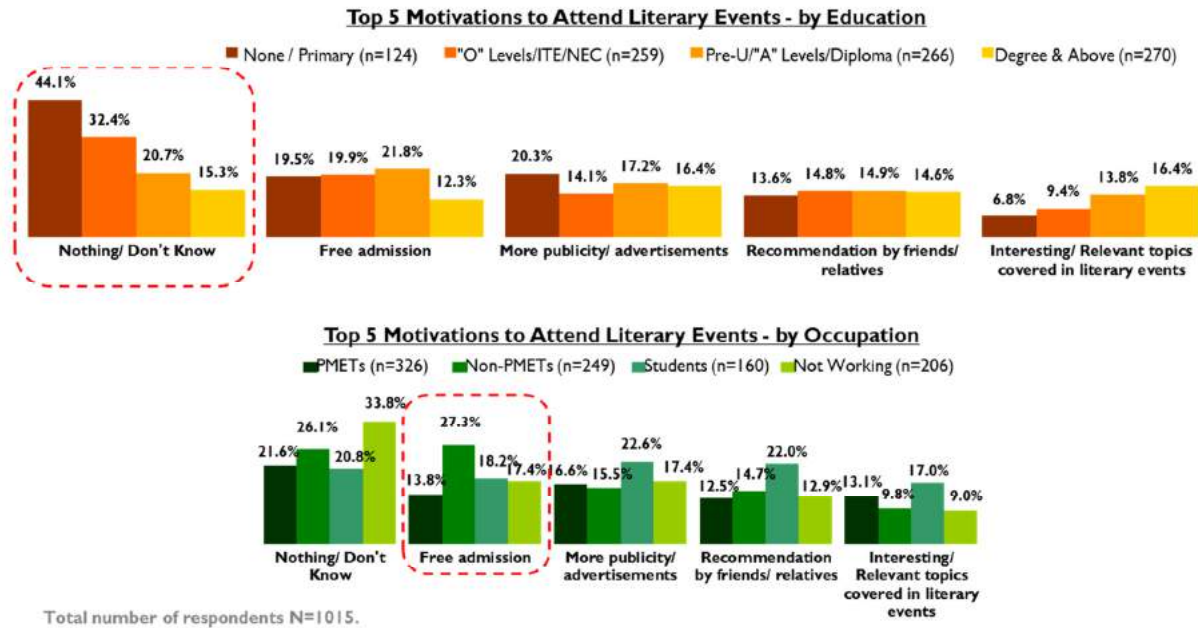
More non-readers were likely to indicate lack of interest in literary events, i.e. nothing would motivate them to attend. On the other hand, readers were more likely to attend literary events if the events were to cover interesting or relevant topics.

Figure 6.11 Top 5 Motivations to Attend Literary Events – by Readers vs Non-Readers
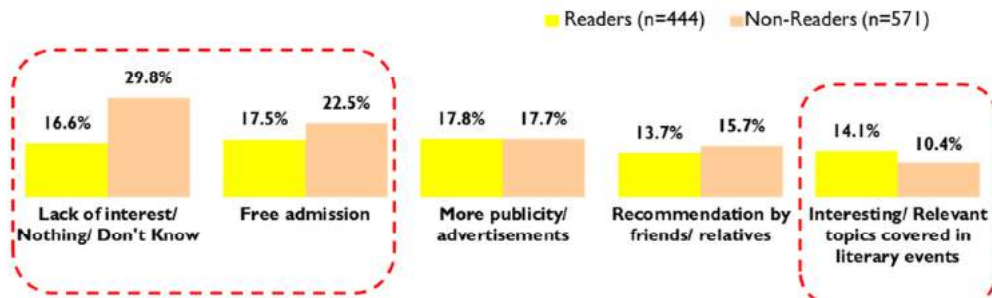
ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

7   ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

The following statements were included in the survey to measure people's attitudes towards reading:

- Benefits of reading:
  - Reading improves my life.
  - Reading helps to make me feel good.
  - Reading is relaxing.
  - Reading is fun.
  - Reading allows me to learn new things.
  - I like talking about books with other people.

- Barriers to reading:
  - Reading is pointless.
  - Reading is hard work.
  - Reading is boring.
  - I cannot find things to read that interest me.
  - I cannot find the time to read.
  - I often start reading a book, but get bored after a few chapters.

- The digital age
  - The internet and computers will replace books in the next 20 years.
  - I prefer the internet and social media to reading books.

7.1 Benefits of Reading

The benefits gained from reading appear to be well-understood. Overall, at least 60% of respondents agreed with most of the statements on the benefits of reading. In particular, 80% of respondents agreed with the statement "Reading allows me to learn new things". However, only 30% of respondents liked talking about books with other people.

Figure 7.1 Benefits of Reading

Figure 7.1 Benefits of Reading
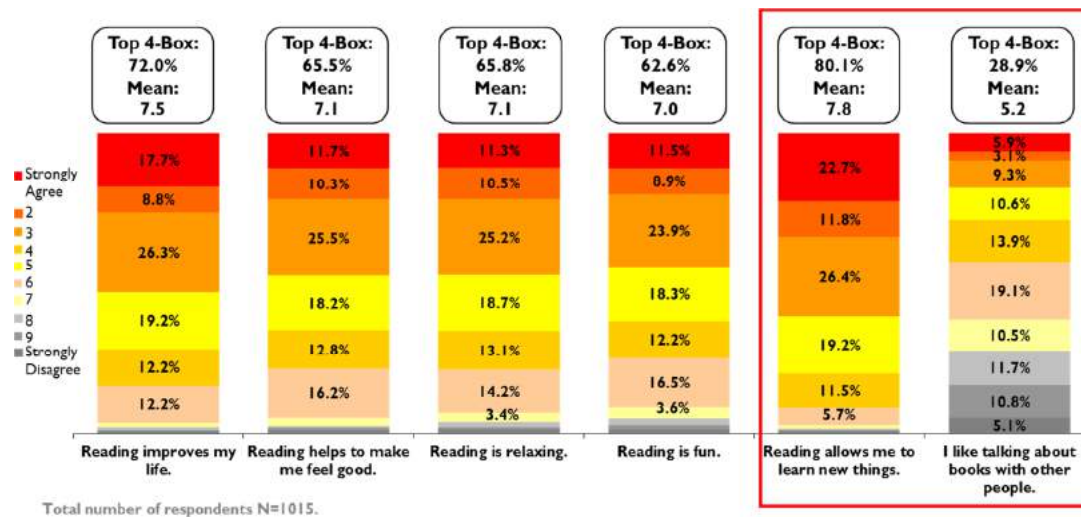
Respondents with a university degree and above tended to strongly agree with the different benefits of reading as compared to respondents with lower education levels. In terms of occupations, PMETs were more likely to agree with the benefits of reading.

Figure 7.2 Benefits of Reading – by Education, Occupation

Figure 7.2 Benefits of Reading – by Education, Occupation
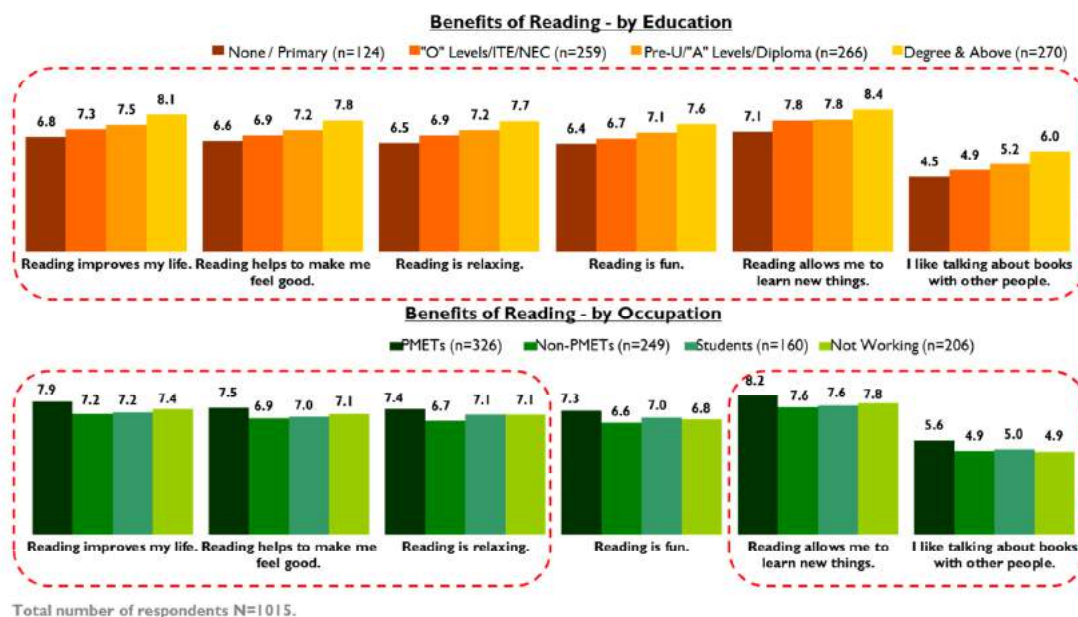
As expected, readers were more likely to strongly agree with the benefits of reading.

Figure 7.3 Benefits of Reading – by Readers vs Non-Readers

7.2 Barriers to Reading

The most significant barriers to reading were the lack of time to read (40% agreement) and the difficulty in finishing a book (26% agreement).

Figure 7.4 Barriers to Reading
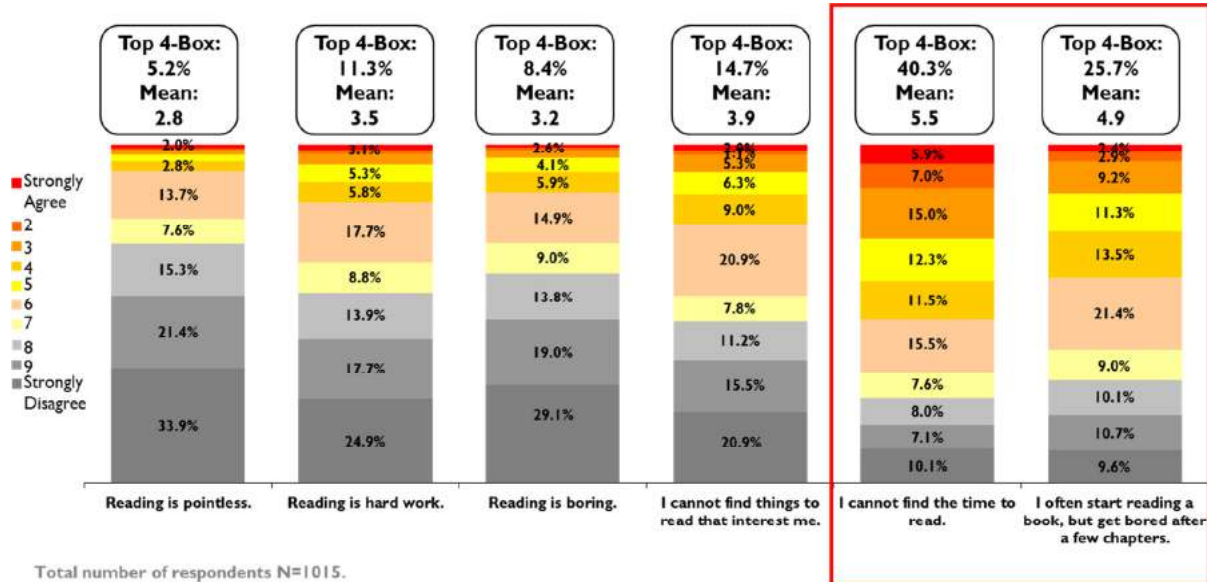
Respondents with no/primary education were more likely to agree with all the barriers to reading. Respondents with a university degree and above were less likely to agree that the lack of interesting books and the difficulty in finishing a book were barriers to reading.

Figure 7.5 Barriers to Reading – by Education

Total number of respondents N=1015.
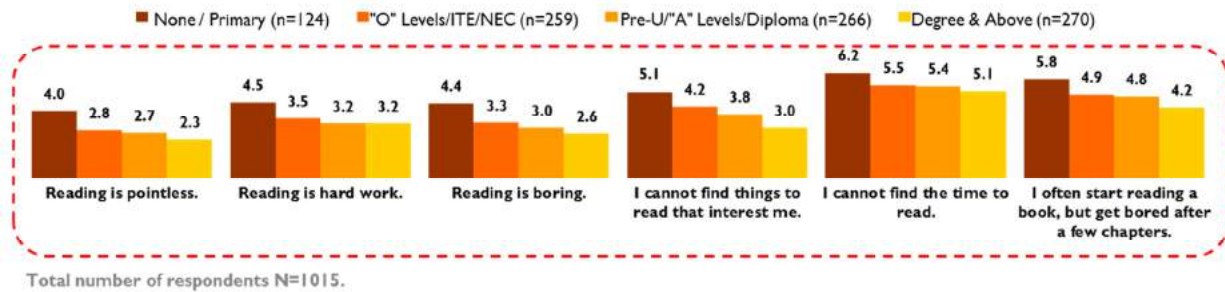
PMETs were significantly less likely to agree to the first four barriers to reading while non-PMETs were more likely to be unable to find time to read.

Figure 7.6 Barriers to Reading – by Occupation

Total number of respondents N=1015.
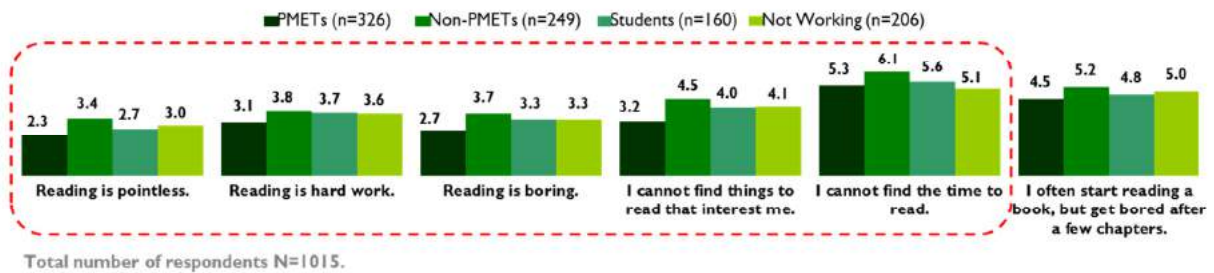
Non-readers were more likely to agree with the barriers to reading. In particular, they tended not to read because they could not find the time and had the tendency to get bored after reading a few chapters of a book.

Figure 7.7 Barriers to Reading – by Readers vs Non-Readers
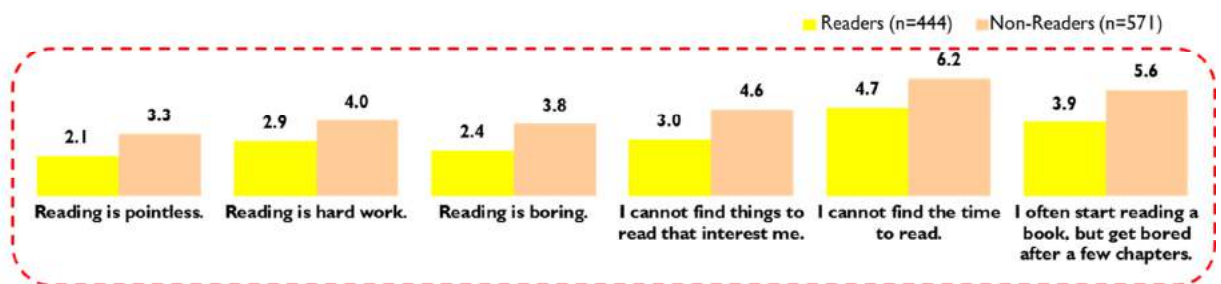
7.3 Impact of the Digital Age on Books and Reading

Although the majority of readers currently read books in the print form, more than half of the respondents (54%) agreed that that the internet and computers would replace books in the next 20 years, and 40% agreed that they preferred the internet and social media to reading books.

**Figure 7.8** Impact of the Digital Age on Books and Reading
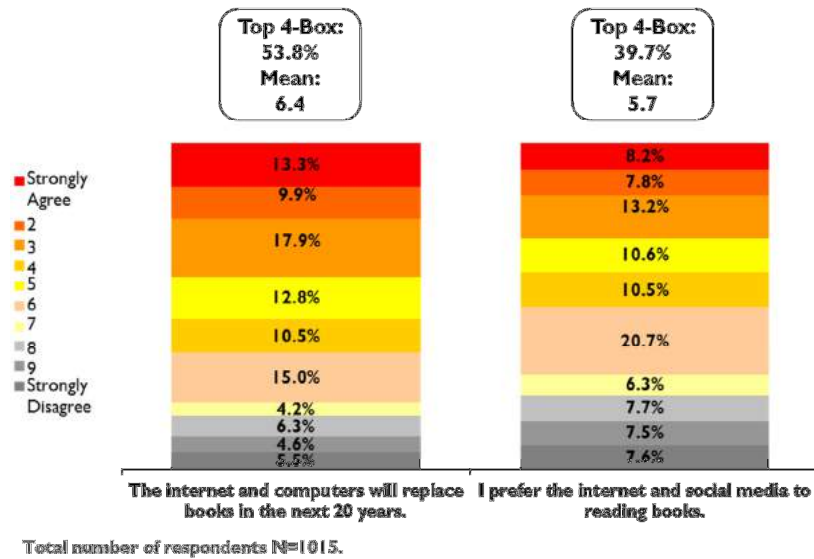
There were no significant differences in the levels of agreement across education levels and occupations.

Figure 6.9 Impact of Digital Age – by Education, Occupation
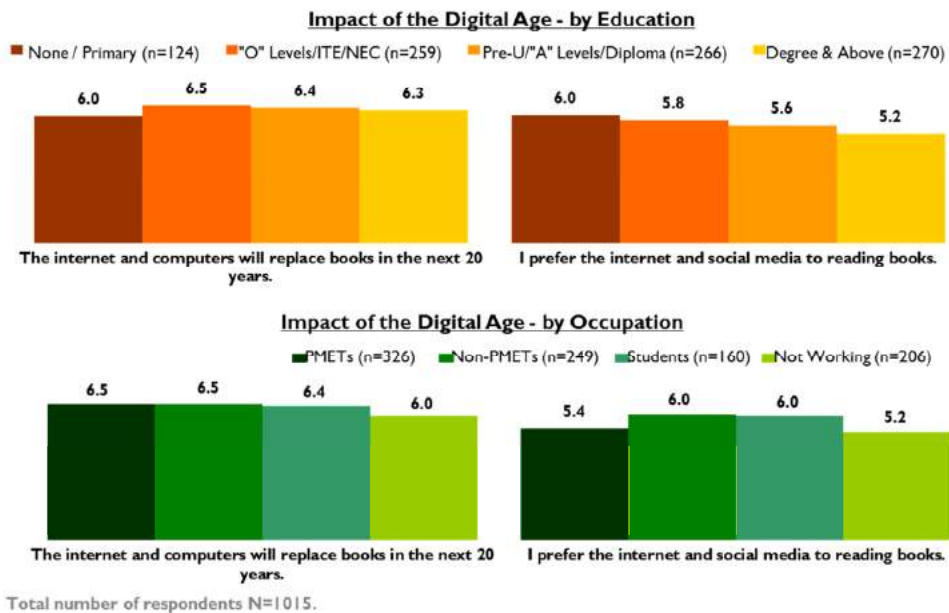
Non-readers were more likely to think that books would be replaced by the internet and computers. They were also more likely to prefer the internet and social media to reading books.

Figure 7.10 Impact of the Digital Age – by Readers vs Non-Readers
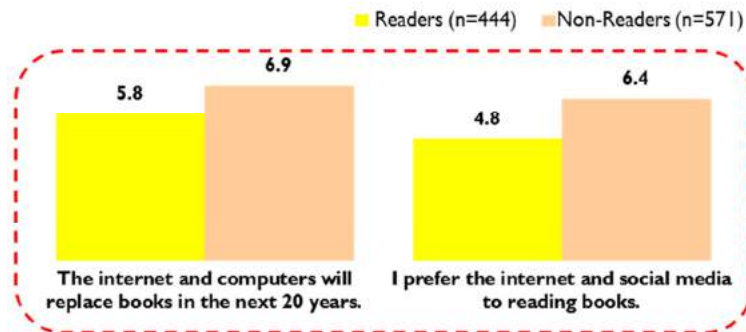
APPENDIX:
READER
SEGMENTATION

8   APPENDIX: READER SEGMENTATION

Based on their attitudes towards reading, three distinct segments of respondents were observed: keen readers (32%), practical readers (40%) and non-readers (27%).

Figure 8.1 Three Segments of Respondents

8.1   Benefits of Reading

In general, the appreciation of the benefits of reading is positively associated with the individual's affinity for reading. Keen readers and practical readers had similarly high agreement levels with the impact of reading on quality of life and knowledge acquisition. Practical readers tended to agree less with the leisure attributes of reading (such as "Reading is relaxing" and "Reading is fun"). Non-readers had significantly lower agreement levels with all the benefits of reading.

Figure 8.2 Benefits of Reading – by Segment
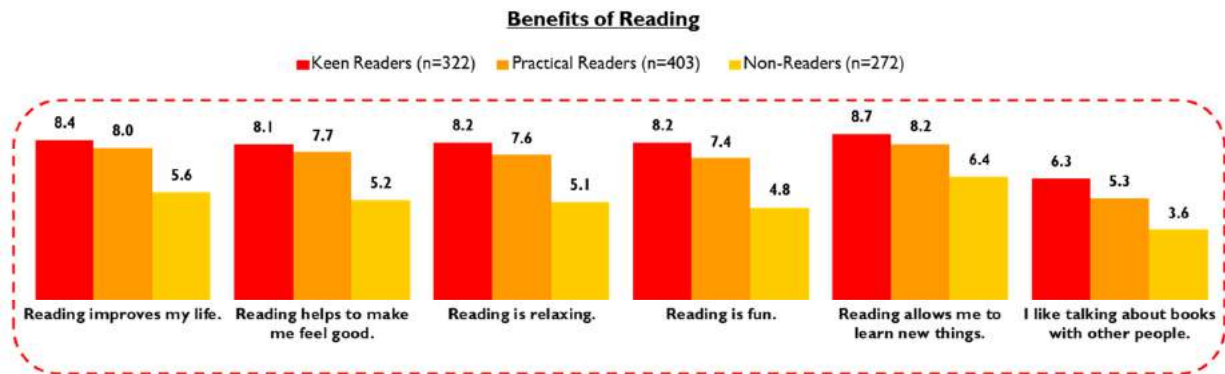
8.2   Barriers to Reading

Conversely, the perception of the barriers to reading is negatively associated with the individual's affinity for reading. Non-readers were more likely to agree with the barriers to reading. Practical readers were less likely to agree with the first four barriers to reading, which mostly related to respondents' personal perceptions of reading. However, practical readers and non-readers were twice as likely as keen readers to feel that time was an onerous barrier that hindered them from reading. In general, keen readers had low agreement levels with all the barriers to reading.

Figure 8.3 Barriers to Reading – by Segment
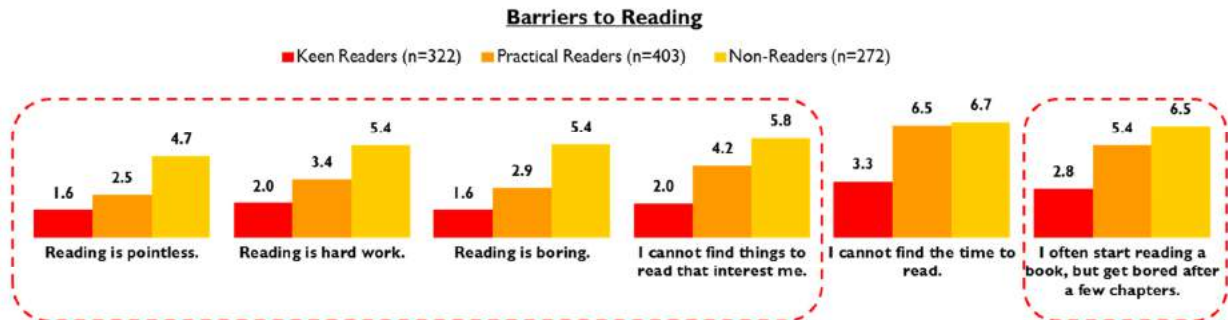
8.3   Impact of the Digital Age on Books and Reading

Practical readers and non-readers were more likely to prefer the internet and social media to books and were also more likely to agree that the internet and computers would replace books in the next 20 years.
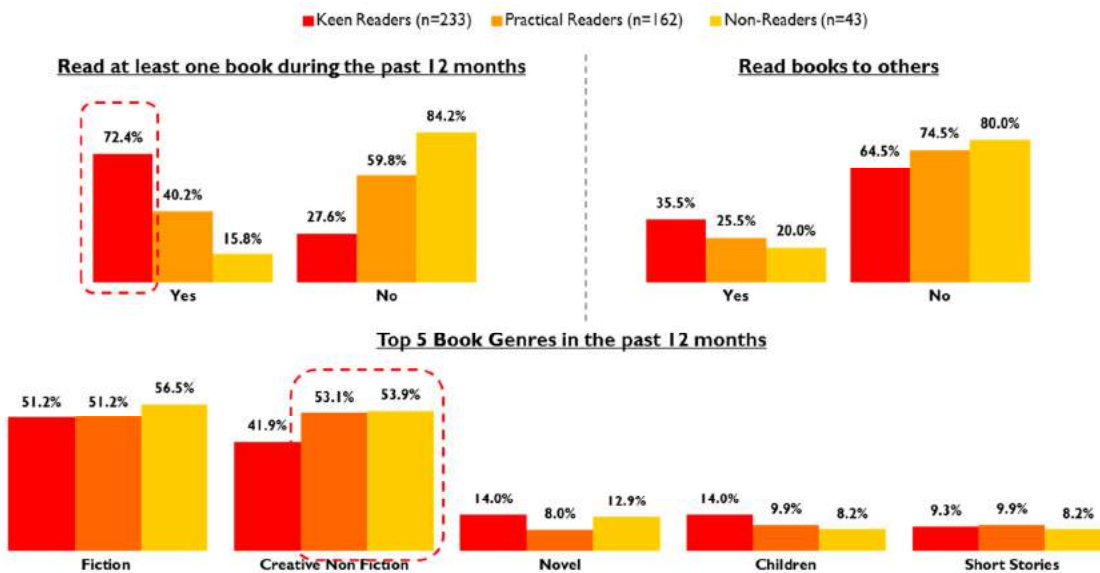
Figure 8.4 Impact of the Digital Age – by Segment
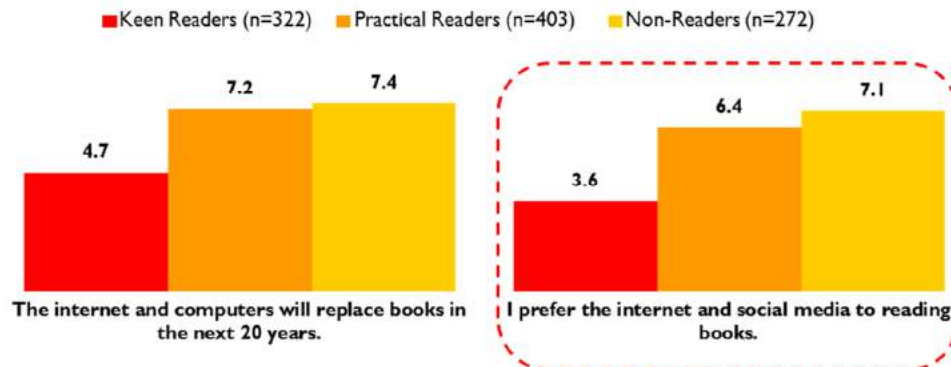
8.4   Reading Habits

There was a higher proportion of keen readers who had read at least a book in the past 12 months. Practical readers were more likely to read creative non-fiction.

Figure 8.5 Reading Habits – by Segment

In terms of motivation to read, practical readers were more likely to read for information/knowledge. A relatively higher proportion of practical readers read e-books, compared to keen readers and non-readers.

Figure 8.6 Top 3 Motivations to Read and Book Forms – by Segment

8.5 Buying Habits

Non-readers were more likely to obtain their books from the library, borrowing, or as gifts; close to 90% of them had not bought any literary book in the past 12 months. On the other hand, keen readers were more likely to buy their own books, but a third obtained their books solely through loans and gifts.

Figure 8.7 Buying Habits – by Segment
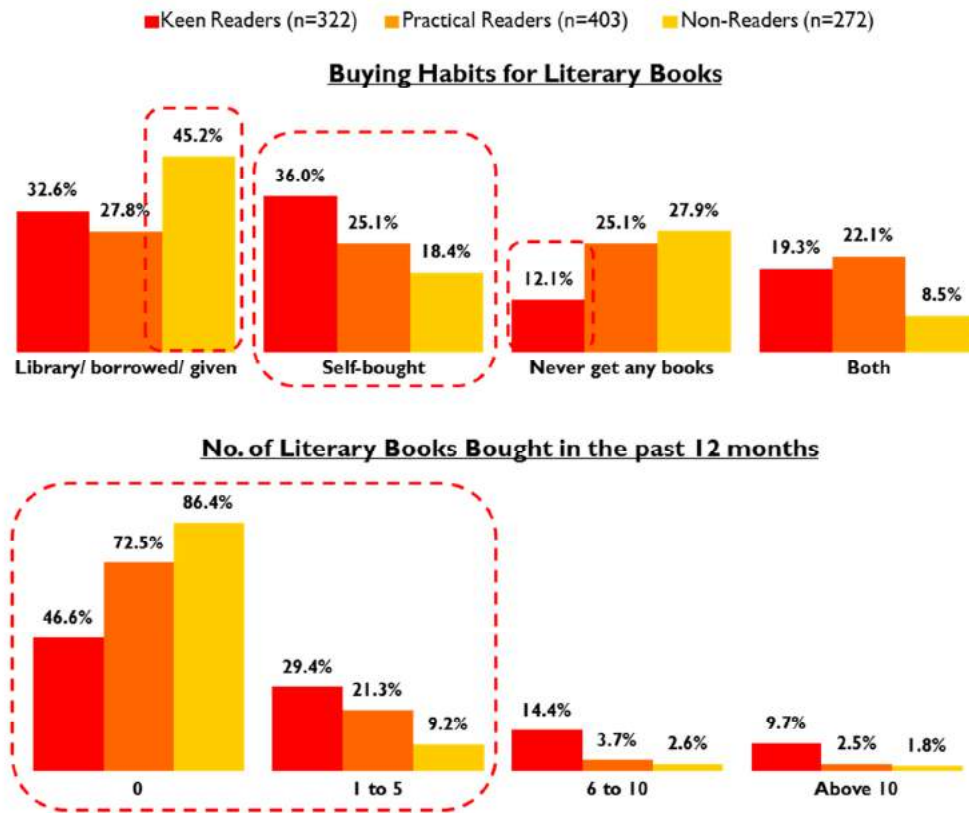
## 8.6   Socio-Demographic Profile of Reader Segments

There are keen readers across all ages, but with a slightly higher proportion of 50-59 year-olds. Also, there were higher proportions of respondents aged 15-19 years and those aged 60 years and above who were non-readers. Keen readers were more likely to be women, while non-readers were more likely to be men.

Figure 8.8 Age, Gender, Marital Status – by Segment
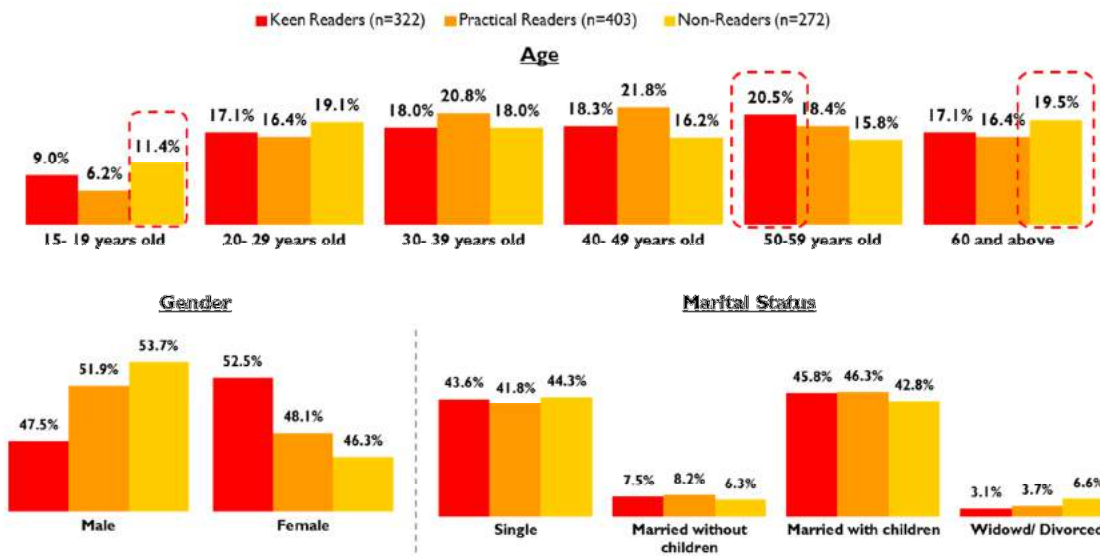
A larger proportion of keen readers and practical readers had a university degree and above, while non-readers were more likely to have no/primary education or up to secondary education. A larger proportion of keen readers and practical readers were PMETs. On the other hand, a higher proportion of non-readers were non-PMETs.

Figure 8.9 Education, Occupation, Race – by Segment
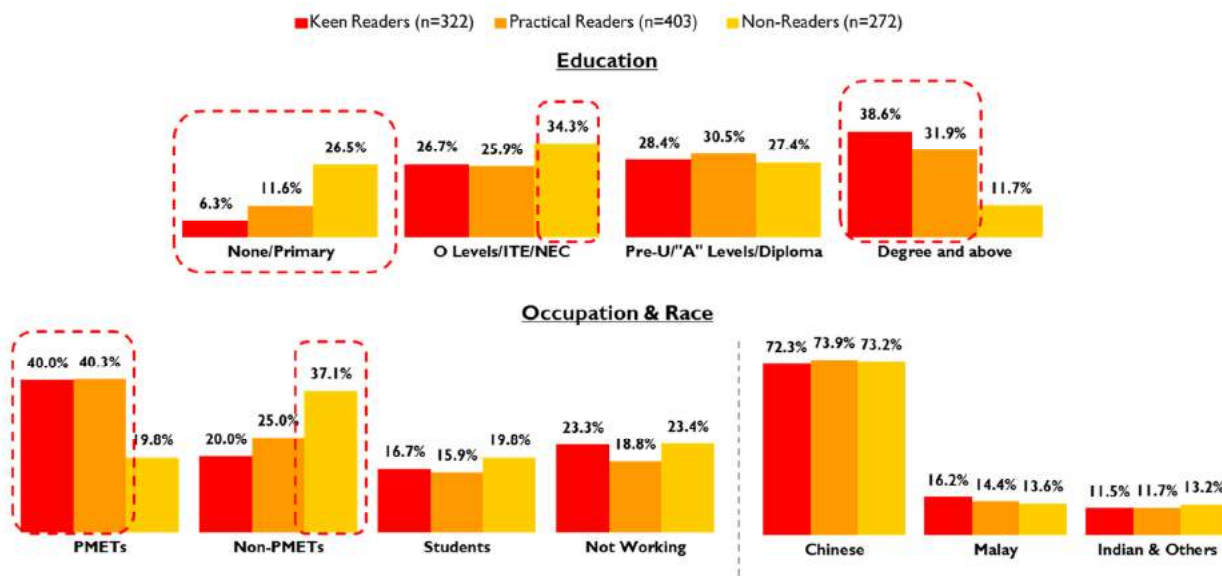
One in four keen readers had a monthly household income of $8,000 and above, while close to half of non-readers had a monthly household income below $2,000.

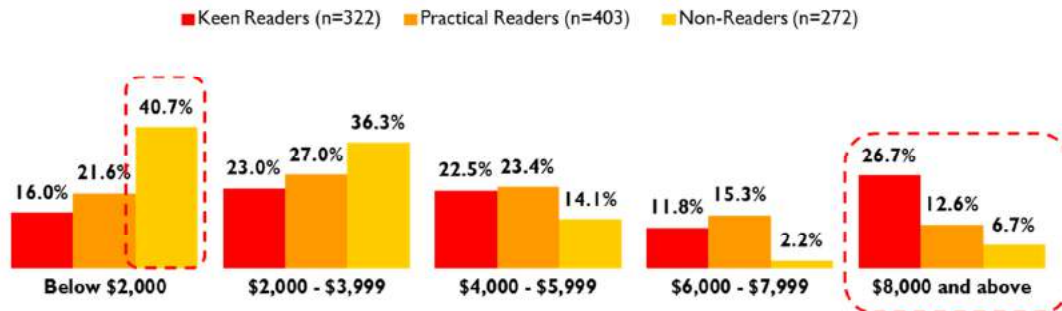**Figure 8.10** Monthly Household Income – by Segment

Table 8.11 provides a summary of the attributes of the three segments of readers.

Table 8.11 Reader Segment Attributes		
Keen Reader	**Practical Reader**	**Non-Reader**
Tends to agree strongly with the benefits of reading Prefers books to internet and social media Highest proportion of this segment read at least one book in the past 12 months Most likely to spend on books Higher proportion of women	Has a good vibe about reading but finds it hard to read and gets bored by books easily in real life Prefers the internet and social media to books. More likely to read for information / knowledge Prefers to read e-books where possible Slightly more are aged 30-49 years old	Most likely to agree with barriers to reading Prefers the internet and social media to books More likely to read fiction books and for leisure More likely to be 15-19 years old or 60 years old and above More likely to be men