

Reading habits of Lithuanian citizens

Research summary

2024



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS
KULTŪROS MINISTERIJA



THE
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JACOIRIO

RESEARCH
& DESIGN

Aim

- ▶ To capture **reading habits, reading scope, purpose and needs of different age Lithuanian citizens**. The research aims to collect representative data covering a wide demographic and analyzing socio-cultural issues in relation to reading.

Objectives

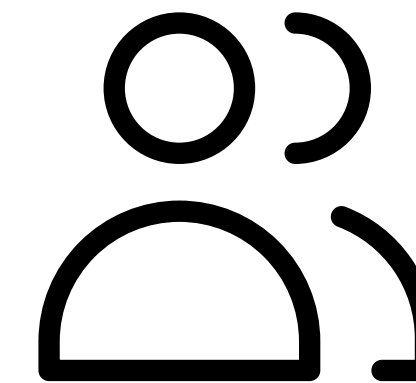
- ▶ To capture reading habits, reading scope, purpose and needs of different age (14-65+) Lithuanian citizens. To collect representative statistical data on reading motivation and priorities;
- ▶ To assess citizens' awareness of various reading benefits and identify reasons for the existing attitudes towards reading among different age groups;
- ▶ To find correlations between reading levels and prevailing attitudes towards reading benefits, as well as beliefs about reading stereotypes;
- ▶ To capture the visibility and awareness of reading promotion activities among Lithuanian citizens and their attitudes towards such initiatives;
- ▶ To identify potential changes to reading habits directly related to: changes in the variety of book formats; impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; and Russia's war on Ukraine;
- ▶ To identify the intersections between reading and informal learning (incl. lifelong learning), the main competitors to reading, and the reasons for not reading;
- ▶ To contextualise the data collected by comparing it with previous studies on reading in Lithuania.

Research methodology



Desk research

The study analysed relevant legislation and documents, previous research conducted on reading in Lithuania and other countries, methodological materials, reading promotion initiatives, and other sources of information.



Representative survey of Lithuanian citizens

The survey was implemented between March 20 to April 5 2024. The survey employed a mixed-methods approach by conducting both telephone (CATI, N=400) and online (CAWI, N=452) surveys. The survey was implemented by a market research company UAB „RAIT“.

Reading habits

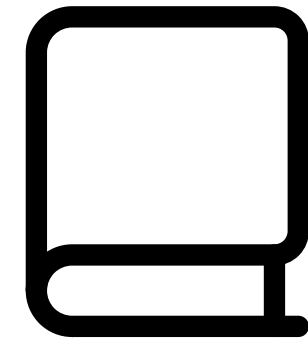


Reading of books

77%

of citizens have **read at least one book** in the last 12 months in a format chosen by them (printed, electronic or audio book). **The format of printed books remains to be most popular** in comparison to electronic or audio books.

In the last 12 months, citizens on average read:



Printed books



Electronic books



Audiobooks

Total average:

9.5

4.5

5.3

Women:

11.4

4.9

5.2

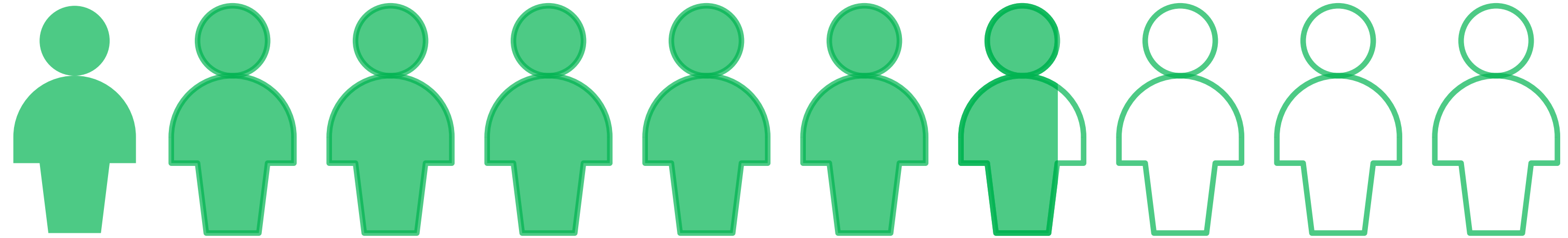
Men:

6.4

4.2

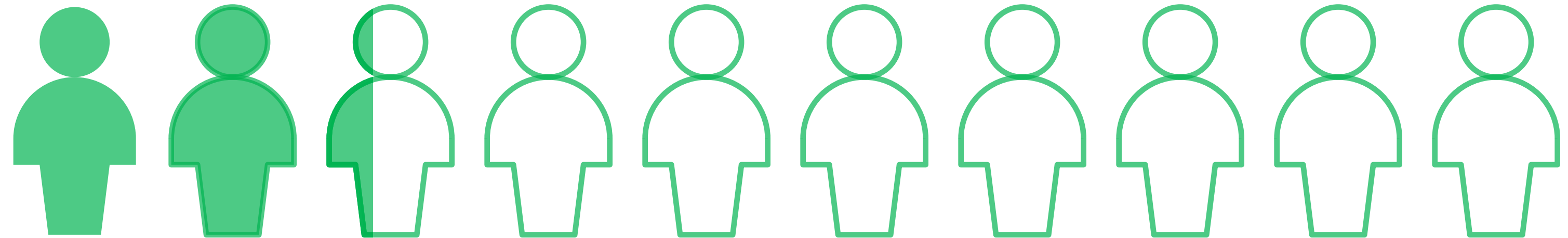
5.3

69%



7 out of 10 respondents on average read **10** books in the last 12 months.

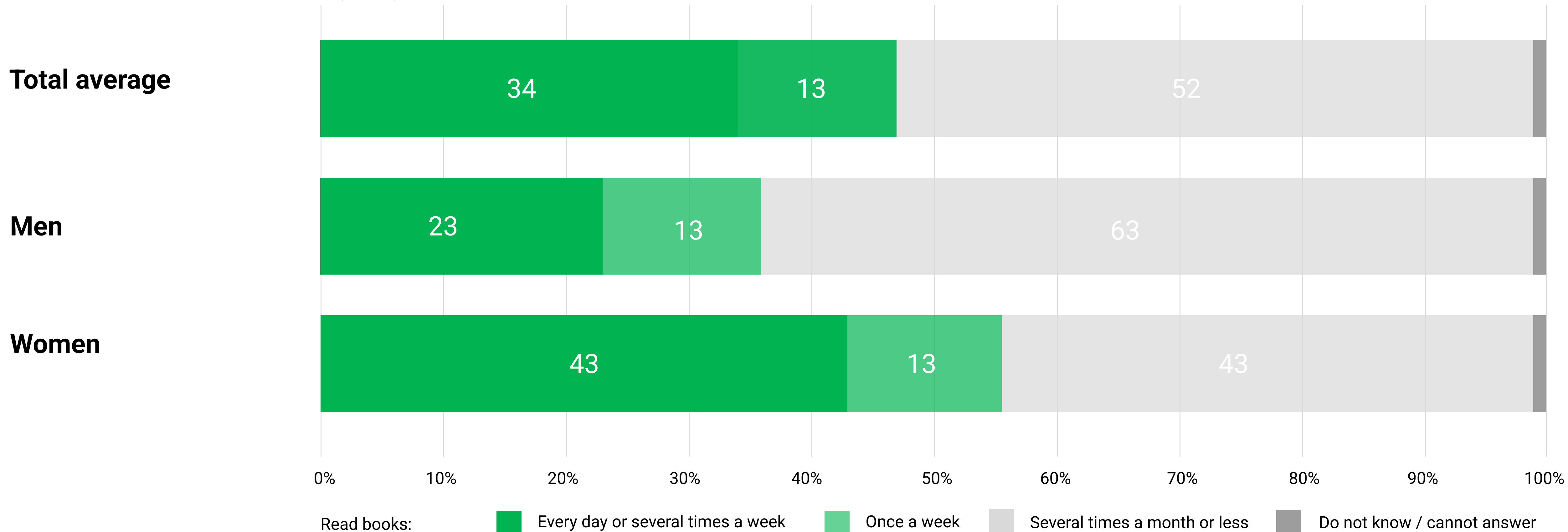
23%



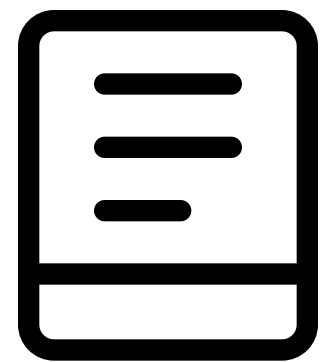
2 out of 10 respondents **have not read any books** in the last 12 months in any format (printed, electronic or audio).

Reading frequency

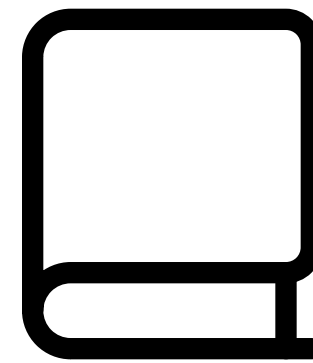
One third (34%) of respondents read books (incl. audiobooks) everyday or several times a week. 13% – read at least once a week. Hence, almost half (47%) of respondents are regular readers.



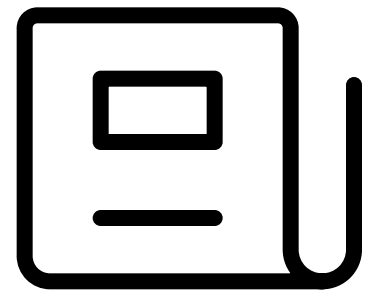
Reading of news, periodicals and other content



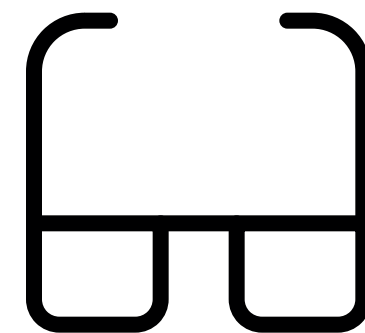
51% of respondents spent time everyday or a few times a week reading **text information online** (other than news or periodical articles).



Respondents less often chose to read news and periodicals in a printed format.



Content in a printed format was more popular among older respondents (65+).



Early reading

- ▶ A quarter (26,6%) of respondents had children under the age of 18. Out of them, 47,5% had pre-school children.
- ▶ 44% of respondents who had children aged 0-2 read daily or several times a week to their children, and 49% - to children aged 3-6 years.
- ▶ 14% of respondents with children under age of 18 have never read or read less than once a month to/with their child.

Reading interests

Top 3 choices of books:

66% Fiction / prose

41% Psychological / personal and spiritual development literature

35% History, political genres, memoirs

Reading sources

Top 3 reading sources:

42% Physical and electronic bookshops or shops

40% Libraries

30% Borrowing from other persons

► The age group 25-34; respondents with children; those with a higher per capita income of EUR 1501-2000 are more likely to buy books from bookshops or shops.

► Frequency of reading had a greater impact on borrowing books from libraries: 56% of those who read daily or several times a week borrowed books from libraries.

Alternatives to reading

► **Citizens most often spent their free time by:**

- 80%** browsing the internet and social networks;
- 78%** spending time with friends and family;
- 73%** watching TV, movies;
- 55%** being in nature;
- 54%** listening to radio shows, podcasts.

► **Regular readers** (those who read daily or several times a week) were also quite active in other leisure activities: 85% of regular readers daily or several times a week were socialising with family and friends, 83% - browsing the internet and social networks, and 74% - watching TV, movies. This suggests that being a regular reader does not have a negative impact on undertaking other forms of leisure.

► The distribution of those who **never read** by other leisure activities does not significantly differ from regular readers. This may indicate that other factors, such as motivation, developing the habit to read at a young age, etc., may play a more important role in promoting reading than having free time.

Attitudes towards reading and motivation to read



Motivation to read

- ▶ Respondents most often read for **pleasure**, without a specific purpose (59% - "often"). A slightly smaller proportion of respondents (52%) often read to broaden their horizons. Less than half of the respondents also read to **spend their leisure time** (49%), **for personal development** (47%), or to **improve their knowledge in a particular field** (41%).
- ▶ The answer options that were most popular among respondents can be linked to **intrinsic motivation**. Meanwhile, reasons associated to **extrinsic motivation** were not relevant among respondents: only about 1 in 10 respondents (12%) read frequently to implement various commitments.
- ▶ Reading **press and periodicals** is mostly purposeful, with readers usually doing so to find out and **understand current events** (52% 'often') or **events in their field of interest** (49%). A fifth of respondents do so to **get away from everyday life** (23%), without a specific purpose, just **out of habit** (21%) or wanting to learn more about **other people's daily lives** (18%).

Attitude towards reading

Most of respondents 'strongly agree' that reading:

- ▶ Develops imagination (72%);
- ▶ Helps broadening understanding of the world (71%);
- ▶ Helps broadening vocabulary (70%);
- ▶ Helps learning about different cultures (68%);
- ▶ Helps to relax (58%);
- ▶ Encourages critical thinking (54%).

Most of respondents 'strongly disagree' that reading:

- ▶ Is not a meaningful way to spend leisure time (61%);
- ▶ Is a boring activity (57%).

Reasons for not reading



Photo by Patrick Tomasso on Unsplash

Reasons for not reading

► Respondents' needs to read:

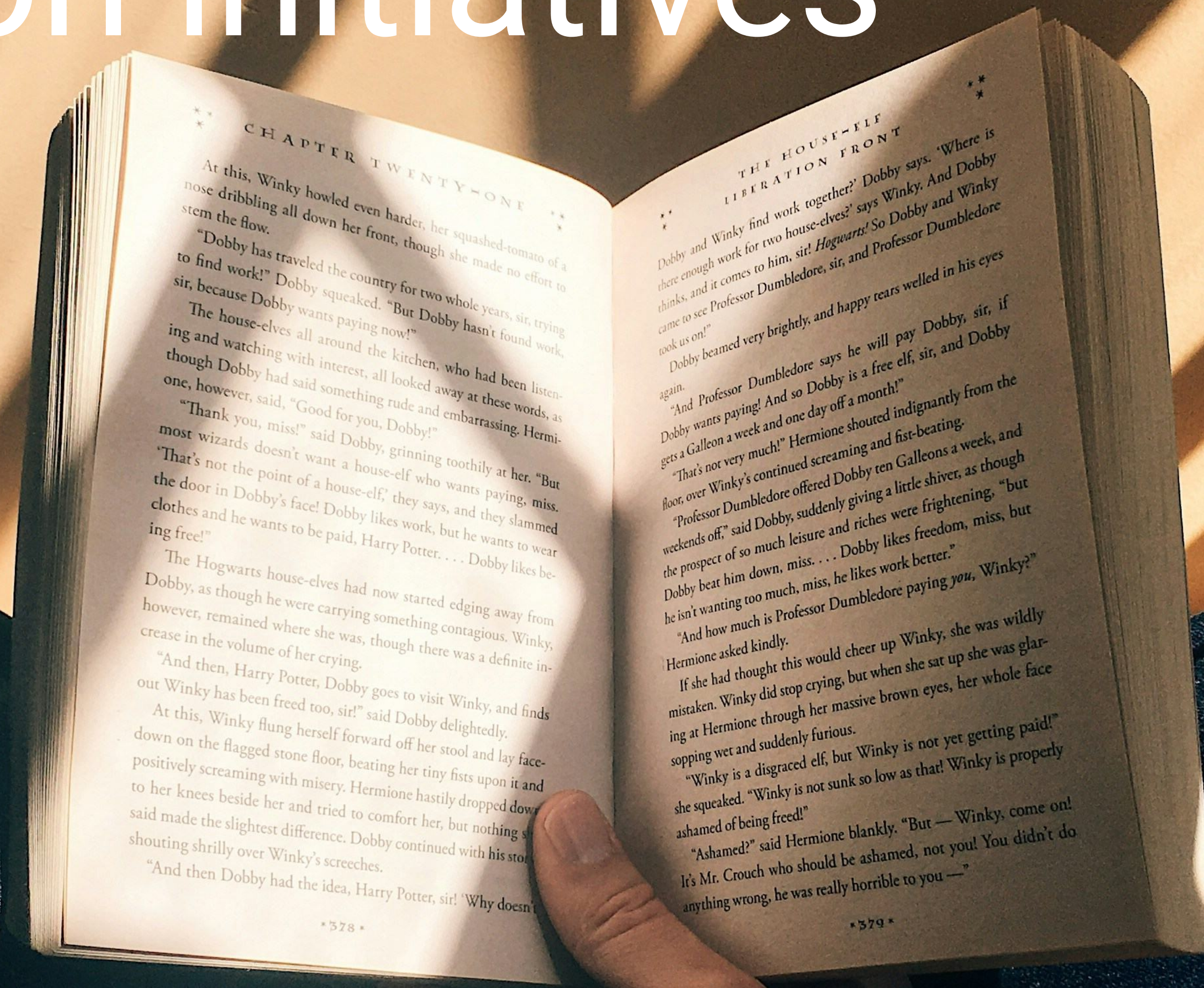
The need to read more books is higher among those aged 25-44, those with children, and widowers. The need to read is lower among those aged 55 and older.

More than half of the 14-18 year olds surveyed are satisfied with the frequency with which they read books, but 18% would like to read less. Respondents aged 19-24 are statistically significantly more likely to want to read more news / media and periodical literature.

► Reasons that hinder reading:

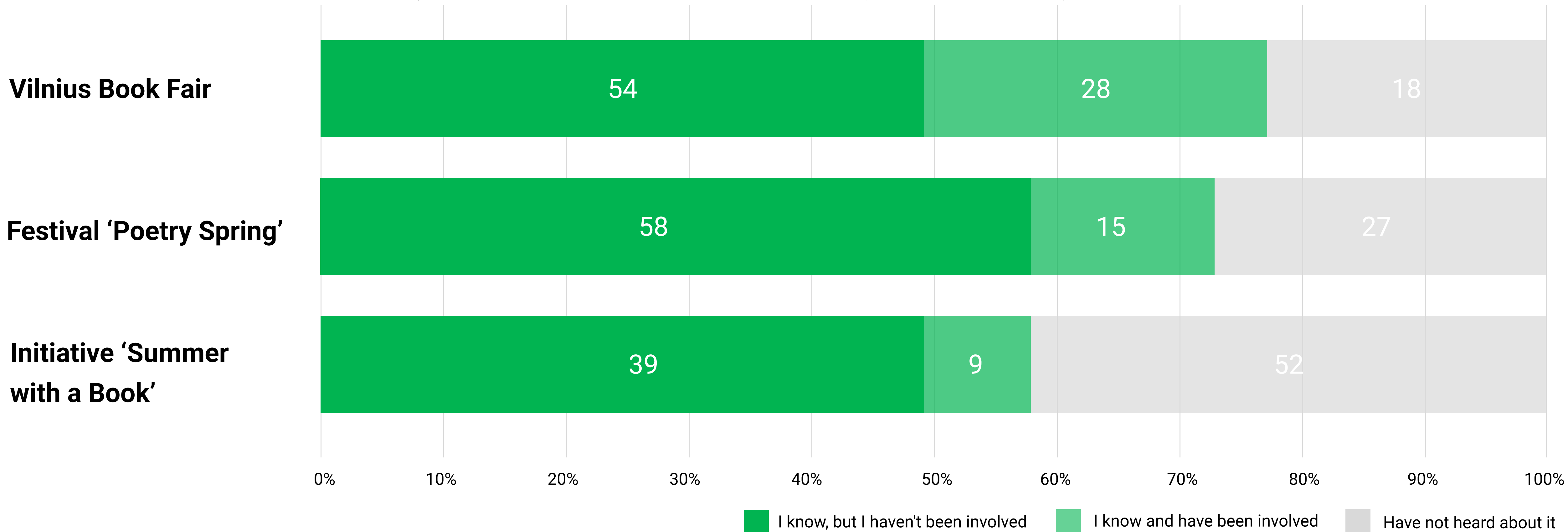
Lack of time (54%);
Excessive fatigue from work and household tasks (34%);
Nothing (17%).

Participation in reading promotion initiatives



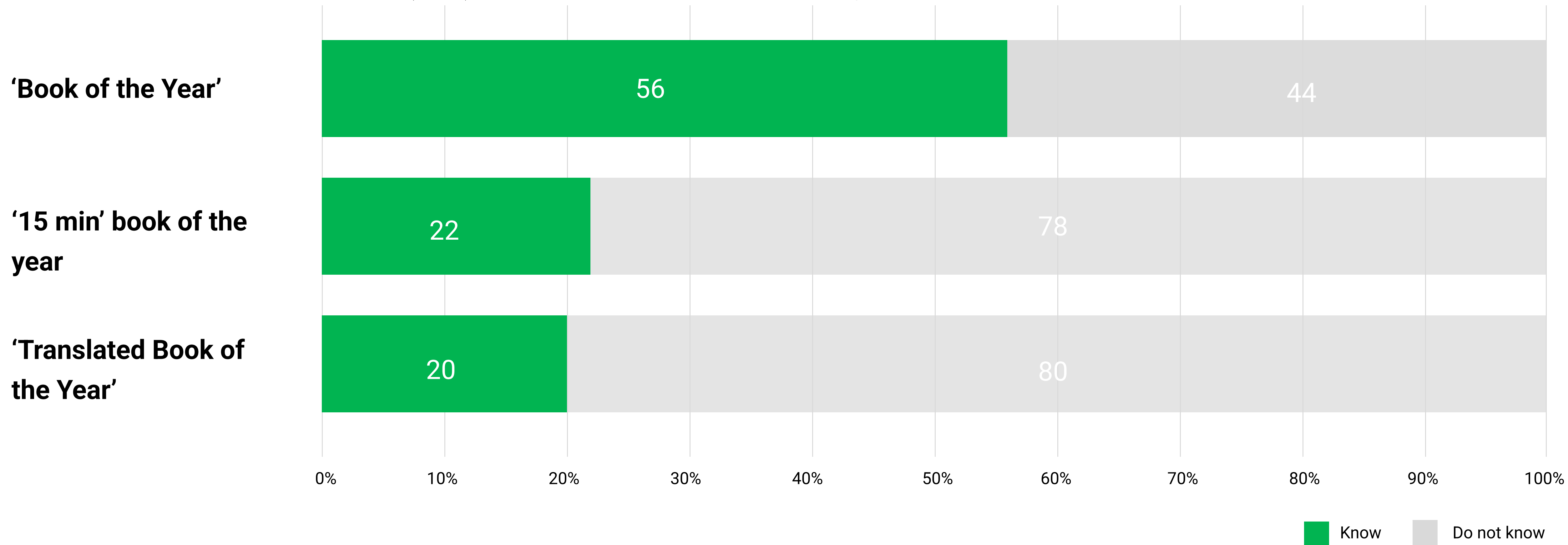
Reading promotion initiatives

The most well-known events and initiatives related to literature and reading are the Vilnius Book Fair, festival 'Poetry Spring' (Poezijos pavasaris), and initiative 'Summer with a Book' (Vasara su knyga).



Awards

Most respondents were aware of 'Book of the Year' (Metų knyga) contest, '15 min' book of the year contest, and 'Translated Book of the Year' contest. A third (35%) of respondents did not know any awards provided in the answer options.



Conclusions



Research and data

- ▶ There is a lack of regular research conducted on citizens' reading habits and scope in Lithuania.
- ▶ To assess how certain indicators and the reading situation change in the long term, it is important to repeat such research, as discussed in this report, regularly.

Reading scope

- ▶ Looking at the last decade (2014-2024), the reading level of the Lithuanian population, in terms of people who have read a book at least once in the last 12 months, is increasing. This shows that a growing number of people have at least tried to engage in this leisure activity. However, 23.2% say that they have not had any contact with this activity and have not read/listened to a single book in the last 12 months.
- ▶ In terms of frequency of reading, almost half (47%) of respondents are regular readers. Although young people spend time reading regularly, they read fewer books.

- ▶ Women; 25-44 year olds; and university graduates were more likely to have read more books and spent more often time reading in the last 12 months. Those who never read books in the last 12 months were more likely to be male; to have primary or general secondary education; and to have a lower income (up to €500 per family member per month).

Reading motivation and barriers to reading

- ▶ There is no significant difference in the distribution of frequent and infrequent readers in terms of the activities that they undertake during their leisure time (excl. reading).
- ▶ The importance of motivation for reading frequency can be seen by analysing the reasons for reading among active readers. Those who read daily or several times a week were more likely than others to mention that they read for pleasure, leisure, broadening horizons or personal development.
- ▶ Respondents see many positive aspects of reading. Most of them associate reading with a meaningful and personal development activity.
- ▶ Respondents indicated lack of time (54%), work/household fatigue (34%) and financial reasons (lack of money to buy books, subscriptions; 14%) as the main barriers preventing them from reading more.

- ▶ Libraries play an important role in increasing access to reading. Borrowing from libraries was more common among those with lower income and those who read frequently. This shows that a functioning library network is essential in ensuring access to literature for all, as for some groups this is the primary way of accessing the books they read.

Early reading

- ▶ Different studies show that establishing a reading habit at a young age is crucial for children to remain readers into adulthood. Women were more likely to read with/to their child than men. This demonstrates the importance of campaigns such as 'Dads Read to Kids' (Tėčiai skaito vaikams) and shows the untapped potential of involving dads in the development of children's reading habits and co-parenting.

Visibility of reading promotion initiatives

- ▶ The survey made it possible to measure the visibility of reading promotion initiatives and to assess the main audiences that are least familiar with the activities implemented at national level. It is noticeable that large-scale reading promotion initiatives such as 'Summer with a Book' (Vasara su knyga) or 'Lithuania Reads' (Lietuva skaito) are less known among men. Poetry-related events (e.g. 'Poetry Spring') are also less known among men and younger respondents. The target groups of early reading promotion initiatives are slightly more familiar than other groups with initiatives dedicated to promote early reading.

Recommendations

Research and data

- ▶ Regularly conduct research on reading issues, combining quantitative (representative survey of Lithuanian population) and qualitative (interviews, focus groups) methods. While conducting such research, it is important to establish what criteria define a 'reader'.
- ▶ To track the changes in the reading levels of the Lithuanian population, it is recommended to set target values for indicators measuring the reading levels of the population at a strategic level.

Reading scope

- ▶ Given that younger respondents on average read fewer books than other age groups, it is important to expand reading promotion initiatives targeting adolescents and young adults aged 14-24.
- ▶ Given that 23% of respondents have not tried reading/listening to a book in the last 12 months, it is important to further develop reading promotion initiatives, especially those that are focused on attracting non-readers to become readers.

Early reading

- ▶ To promote early reading, it is important to extend the reach of programmes such as 'Book Start' (Knygų startas) or 'Dads Read to Kids' (Tėčiai skaito vaikams) and to raise awareness of the benefits of early reading. Taking into account the experience of other countries, efforts can be made to encourage the public and other stakeholders to contribute to such initiatives through sponsorship.

Reading promotion

- ▶ Continue and further develop coordination between the different ministries and public bodies directly or indirectly involved in the field of reading (libraries, educational institutions, market regulation institutions, etc.). This should be done with a view to increasing access to books and reducing stereotypes related to reading.

Visibility of reading promotion initiatives

- ▶ To raise visibility of the reading promotion initiatives (in addition to the previously mentioned recommendations for the expansion of the reading promotion programme and increased funding), more cooperation and promotion between organisations active in the field of reading could be sought.
- ▶ To encourage public and non-governmental organisations to initiate such actions, funding for projects (e.g. through the Lithuanian Council for Culture) or public awards/recognition for their work in the field of reading promotion (currently awarded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport) could help. The involvement of the National Broadcaster in publicising reading promotion initiatives could also contribute to raising the profile of such actions.

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