

Exclusive preview of findings from The Reading Agency's nationally representative research on adult reading habits (full report expected September 2025) show the lasting importance of family reading, including impact on happiness and ability to relax in adult life.

The state of childhood reading

Children's reported reading enjoyment and frequency are at all-time lows. Alongside this, family reading levels are also low. Only around a third (36%) of 5-7-year-olds are read to frequently at home, and only a fifth of 8-10-year-olds ([Farshore, 2025](#)).

Research from [HarperCollins](#) (2025) shows that fewer than half (40%) of parents with children aged 0-13 agreed that reading with children is fun. It also finds that Generation Z parents – those born between 1997 and 2012 - are most likely to consider reading as 'more a subject to learn than a fun thing to do', especially in comparison to earlier generations who did not grow up with digital entertainment.

Being more likely to reach for digital entertainment as a parent also has knock-on-effects. Research conducted for [World Book Day 2025](#) reveals that only 1 in 4 children say their parents relax by reading, vs. 56% scrolling on their phone, watching TV (52%) and watching their phone or tablet (40%). However, nearly 1 in 5 children say that seeing their parents read would encourage them to read more.

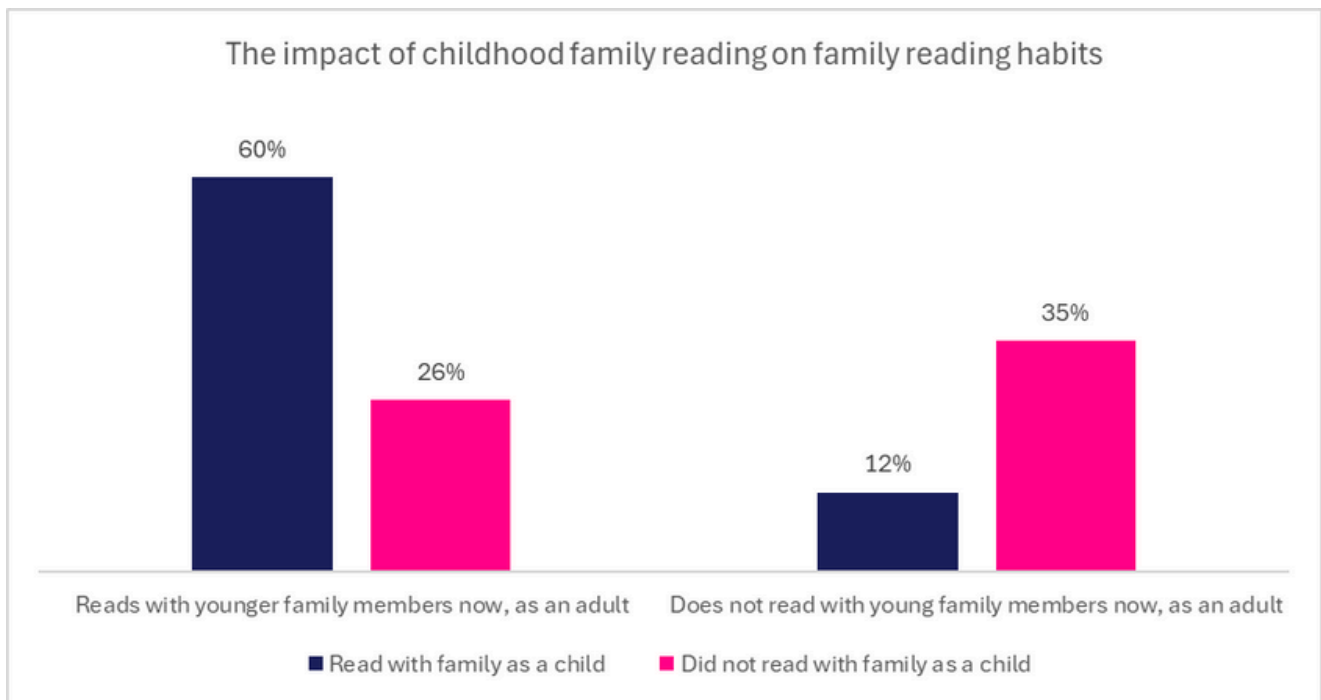
The lifelong benefits of family reading

The benefits of reading with a family member are well established. Children who are read to daily by their parents are three times more likely to read independently for enjoyment every day (59%) compared to children who are read to weekly (19%) ([HarperCollins, 2024](#)). They are also more likely to think of reading as a fun thing to do and to recommend and discuss books with friends and family ([Farshore, 2025](#)).

Original and exclusive research from the Reading Agency shows the impact of childhood reading on family habits. As seen in the below graph, of adults who read with younger family members, 60% were read to as a child, compared to only 26% who were not read to as a child.



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Furthermore, findings from this original and exclusive research from the Reading Agency suggests that childhood family reading has a strong correlation with positive wellbeing later in life. Our data shows that adults who read with family as a child report feeling generally happy with a **36% higher** incidence than adults who did not read as a child. Adults who read as a child with a member of their family reported finding it easy to relax with a **33% higher** instance than those who did not.

Barriers to family reading

Research shows that many parents want to spend more time reading to their children. Two in five parents in the UK (39%) say they'd like to spend more time reading with/to their child for fun ([Parentkind, 2024](#)). The biggest barriers to spending time on family activities – including, but not limited to, reading to children – is the cost (44%), not having enough time due to paid work (38%) and unpaid responsibilities (33%) and lack of child interest (26%) ([Parentkind, 2024](#)). A recent study shows that 1 in 5 parents are buying fewer books for their children due to the cost of living ([National Literacy Trust, 2024](#)).

In addition to these barriers, many parents also lack an awareness of the well-established benefits of childhood reading. Less than half (40%) of parents of 0-13s consider themselves 'well aware' that children who read for pleasure do better in life, 15% said they were not very aware and 12% said they had no idea. Lack of awareness is higher amongst parents of light/non readers ([Farshore, 2025](#)).



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Dads had less awareness than mums; just 36% of dads were 'well aware' that the best way to encourage your child to read books for fun is to read aloud to them, compared to 48% of mums, and 35% of dads were well aware that children who read books for pleasure do better in life, compared to 42% of mums ([Farshore, 2025](#)).

Encouraging childhood and family reading

- Sign-up Saturday for the Summer Reading Challenge is on 5 July! We would love our publisher partners to support this great initiative which is shown to increase children's reading enjoyment. Find out more about the [Summer Reading Challenge](#)
- Continue to [book in campaigns with your membership](#) with The Reading Agency Connects to help libraries and schools run year-round reading opportunities for children and their families
- Share book sets for book clubs on the Book Club Hubs so that book clubs of all ages can apply to experience your books and help inspire their next reads
- Reading Families is a fun reading programme, building skills, confidence and connections through shared reading between adults and younger family members. Reading Families is an annual programme that can be delivered throughout the year in prisons, colleges, schools, libraries and across many other learning community settings. Find out more about [Reading Families](#)

