

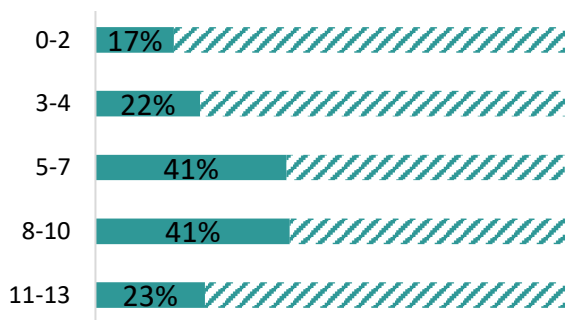
Children's Reading for Pleasure

Children's reading for pleasure remains challenged. We know the key reasons: they are not read too frequently enough or long enough (ideally children should be read to until they are well into their teens); their leisure time is filled with digital entertainment so that little time is left for other things, including reading; and many children perceive reading to be a subject to learn and not an enjoyable pastime.

Where are we today with reading and being read to?

29% of children 0-13 read books for pleasure daily or nearly every day. The percentage is different by age of child, and by age of parent.

Children who read for pleasure daily/nearly every day



Year-on-year, there has been a decline in 11-13s reading daily, from 32% in 2018 down to 23% in 2019, and growth in 5-7s reading daily, from 35% in 2018 up to 41% in 2019.

The net result is that the 0-13 average has remained the same at 29%.

15% of 14-17 year olds read for pleasure daily.

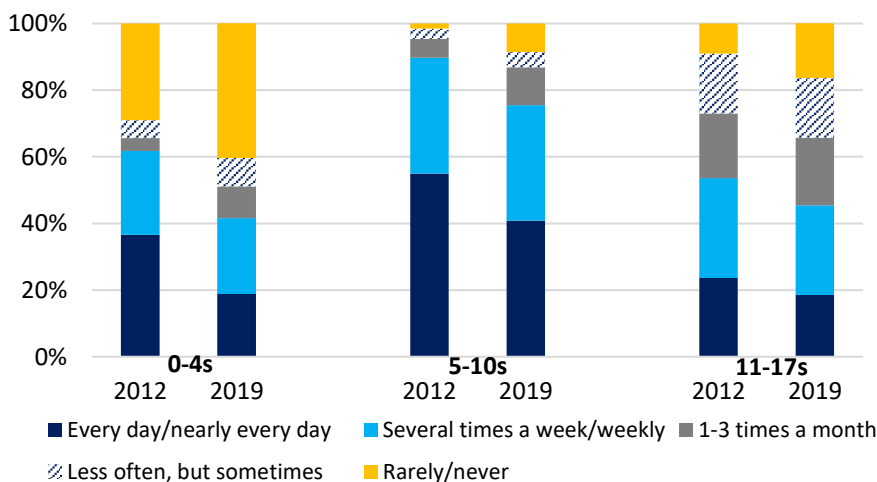
20% of 0-13s rarely or never read for pleasure

Parents of 0-13s who are part of Generation X (between the ages of 39 and 54 in 2019) are more likely to say their child reads daily/nearly every day for pleasure than Millennial parents (those between the ages of 23 and 38 in 2019).

Frequency of child (0-13) reading for pleasure independently	Parents are Millennials	Parents are Generation X
Daily/ nearly every day	27%	33%
Rarely / never	24%	16%

Notwithstanding the small increase with 5-7s since 2018, children reading for pleasure is in long term decline.

Children who read for pleasure daily/nearly every day, trend since 2012



Across the 3 age clusters (0-4s, 5-10s and 11-17s) lesser reading frequencies have been growing since 2012

Magazines appeal more than books to some children because they are a 'light touch' with reading: 35% of parents of 0-13s say their child prefers them to books, and this is more so for boys (40% of boys prefer them). They offer an important way into reading. Again, we see difference by the age of parents: children of Millennials are more likely to prefer them than children of Generation X (39% vs 31%, 8 percentage points difference, or 25%).

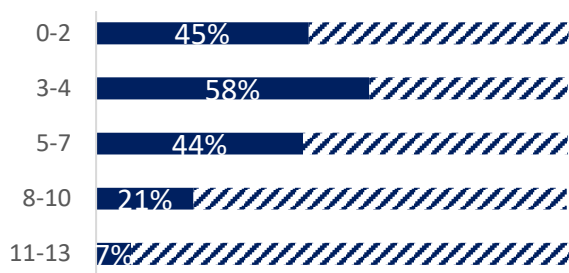
Read Magazines at least monthly	
0-4s	34%
5-10s	53%
11-13s	43%

44% of 0-13s read magazines at least monthly. They are typically read at lesser frequencies than books and are a much enjoyed part of a reading repertoire – by over half of 5-10s, for instance.

Few parents read aloud to their children frequently

We know it's important to read to children often and that doing so encourages independent reading. Just one third of children 0-13s were read to daily or nearly every day by parents in 2019. This is in long term decline. In 2012 the figure was 41%.

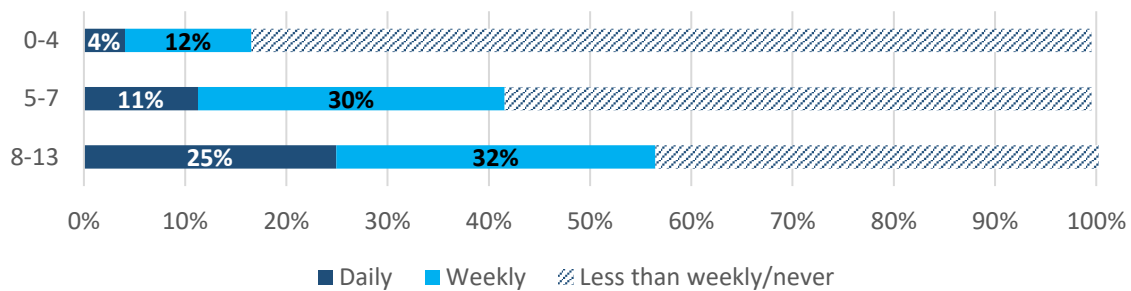
Children who are read to, daily/nearly every day



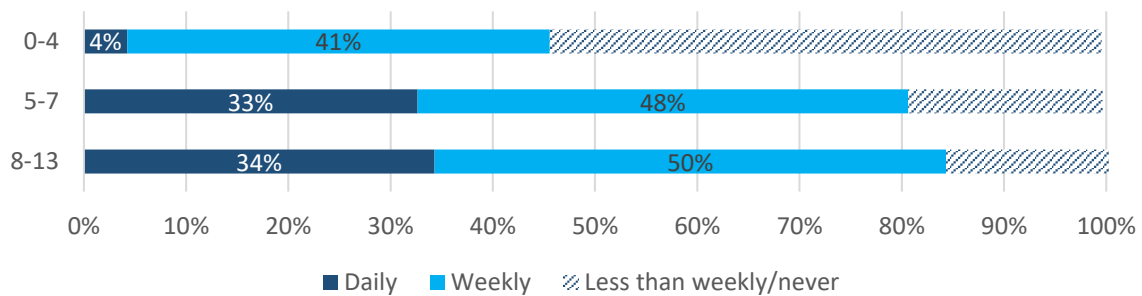
There was growth year-on-year in daily reading aloud to 5-7s, up from 39% in 2018 to 44% in 2019. The impact of this can be seen on the increase in 5-7s reading independently, daily (page 1).

The more often children are read to, the greater the likelihood of them choosing to read for pleasure themselves. The effect is clearly shown in the three following charts.

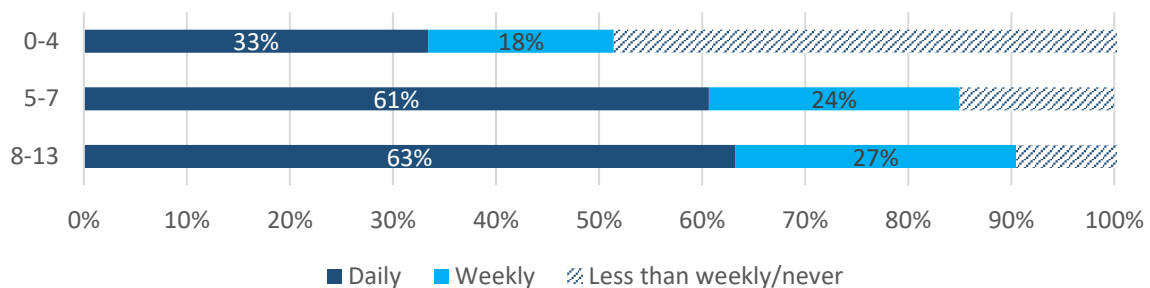
% of children who read for pleasure daily/ weekly/ less often, when they are read to less than weekly



% of children who read for pleasure daily/ weekly / less often, when they are read to **weekly**



% of children who read for pleasure daily/ weekly / less often, when they are read to **daily**



Reading: a subject to learn or a great choice of entertainment?

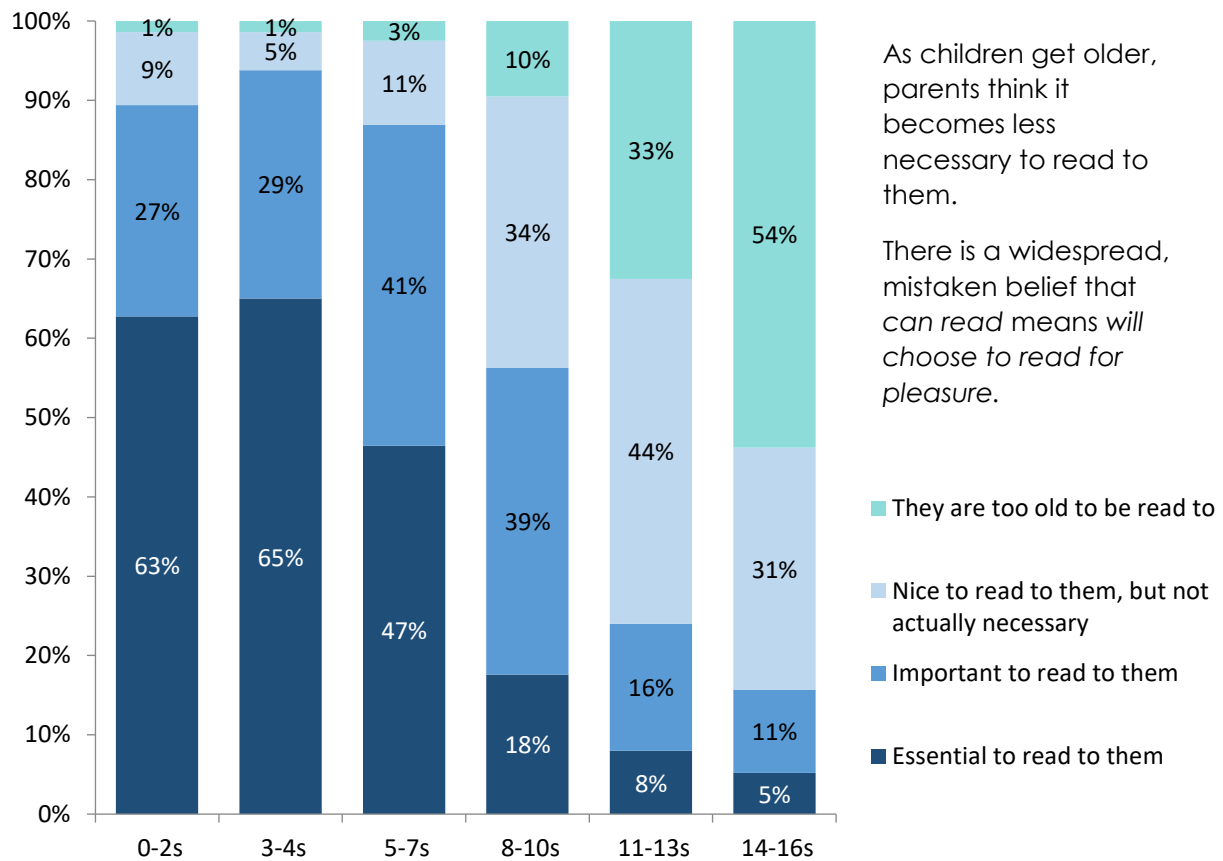
We've discussed the difference between reading for pleasure and literacy in previous research. To recap:

- Literacy is the ability to read and write. It is more about skills and this is the predominant concern of parents and of the education system
- Reading for pleasure is reading for enjoyment, done of free choice

We've found that literacy is confused and conflated with reading for pleasure by parents, children and in schools. This is in part because the curriculum is focused on the *teaching* of reading and it's largely procedural, concerned with skills and comprehension. Little time is given to fostering a love of reading for pleasure. Children easily experience reading as work, something task-based. This is compounded by the fact that many parents perceive their child's reading fluency as the goal. By school age, many parents' reading involvement is reduced to simply ensuring the child's reading homework is done.

Egmont has new data on parents attitudes to reading aloud that illustrates how this confusion plays out:

What is your view on parents reading aloud to the following age groups?



As children get older, parents think it becomes less necessary to read to them.

There is a widespread, mistaken belief that *can read* means *will choose to read for pleasure*.

It's interesting that younger and older parents of 0-7s respond differently to this question. For instance, in the case of 0-2s, Millennial parents are less likely to say it's essential to read to them (59%) than Generation X parents (67%). It indicates that reading to children may continue to decline unless action is taken.

Parents need to be made aware of the benefits and pleasure of reading to their child

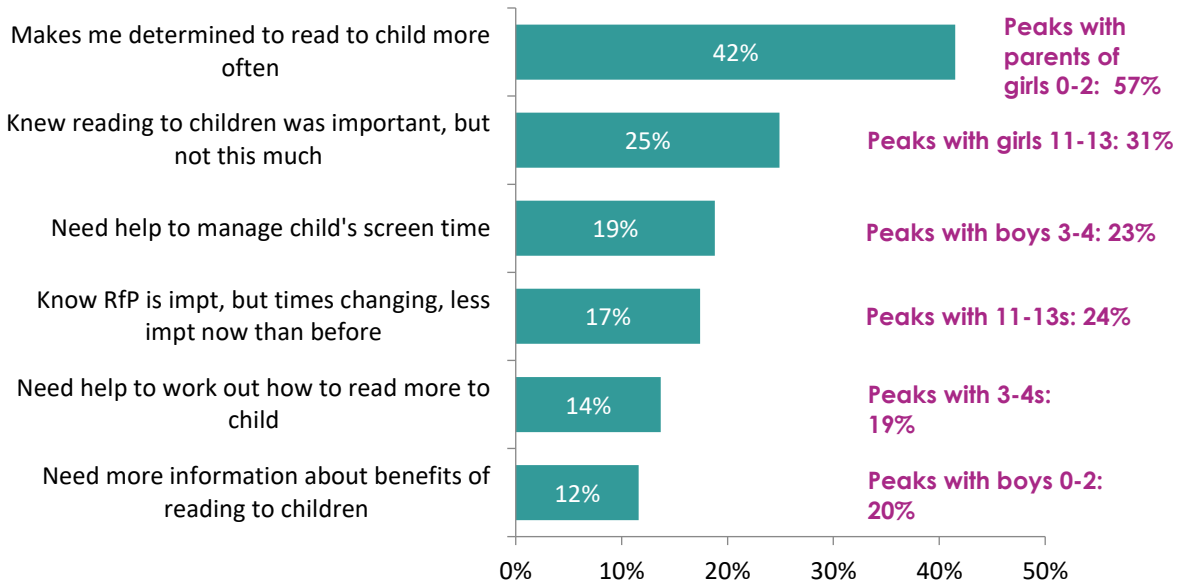
We know many parents don't read to their child because they are unaware of the need to. They are unaware of the enormous benefits and pleasure it brings. We also know that reading practitioners fear telling parents would make them feel guilty about not reading to their child often enough. So, more oblique approaches to communicating with parents, more of a nudge, tend to be favoured. Egmont decided to test being very specific about children's reading with parents to see how they would respond.

Parents were given two statements to read, and asked how they felt as a result.

Children who read for pleasure do better at school in all subjects and enjoy better wellbeing, but many children prefer screen time to reading a book.

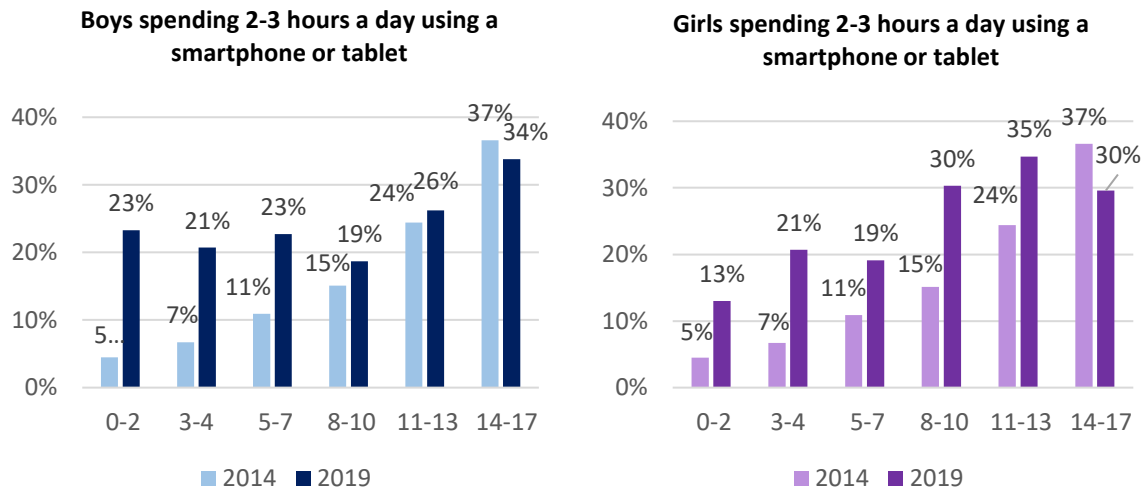
The most effective way to encourage a child to read for pleasure is to read aloud to them – from babies, through childhood and ideally into their teenage years

The findings show that parents would welcome more information:



Where are we now with screen-based entertainment?

The more time spent on digital entertainment, the less available time there is to do other things. Time spent daily using a smartphone or tablet has been increasing rapidly; the charts below show the increase in the percentage of children who spend 2-3 hours a day doing so.



14-17 year olds spending 3+ hours daily using smartphone or tablet		
	2014	2019
Boys	22%	32%
Girls	35%	42%

The 2-3 hour measure has decreased for 14-17s over this time period and, concurrently, the 3+ hour's measure has increased.

Despite the appeal of digital entertainment, eBooks and book apps have failed to encourage more children to read for pleasure. Since 2013, the digital share of the children's book market has remained unchanged at 7% (93% of books sold are printed books). Of the 7%, 3% is audio and 4% is eBooks/Book Apps. Of the 4%, almost three quarters were bought for or by readers aged 17+. In fact across all ages from 3-17 year olds, at least half prefer screen time to reading a book, peaking at 83% with boys 11-13.

Looking ahead

It's essential to effect change. Children need to be encouraged to read for pleasure.

It matters socially, because children who read for pleasure simply do better in life. They have a better sense of well-being. They reach greater levels of attainment, in all subjects. By feeding knowledge, imagination and by engaging empathy, reading feeds children's growing humanity. Nothing less than children's life chances are at stake.

It matters commercially, because children's reading for pleasure is publishers' lifeblood, not only in the children's sector but as the supply chain, our future adult readers and buyers.

We know that reading aloud to children is a key motivator for children to read for themselves. It enthuses, inspires and motivates independent reading.

Parents need to be made aware of the critical importance of reading aloud to their child, and well beyond the point at which their child is capable of reading. By sharing reading, showing it's a pleasure and sharing that pleasure, they will build their child's desire to read independently and establish a reading habit. Reading charities do excellent work targeted at specific communities. However, this is a pervading issue that is not only found in communities of disadvantage. Just 33% of 0-13s are read to daily or nearly every day by their parents.

At school there is the opportunity to read to children, just for pleasure, every day. Egmont's [Stories and Choices research](#) has proved the tremendous impact of regular storytime. If all children are read to at school, every day, then all children will be exposed to the pleasures of reading, no matter what their family circumstances. It would be the ultimate in inclusivity. Egmont is lobbying Government to change the curriculum to make storytime a statutory part of the school day for Key Stage 1 and 2. More information can be found [here](#).

All data sourced from: Nielsen Book: Understanding the Children's Book Consumer Survey