



SEGMENTATION AND CHARACTERISATION OF READING AUDIENCES

DATA AND REFLECTIONS

Executive Summary



Kulturaren
Euskal Behatokia
Observatorio Vasco
de la Cultura



EUSKO JAURLARITZA
GOBIERNO VASCO

KULTURA ETA HIZKUNTZA
POLITIKA SAILA

DEPARTAMENTO DE CULTURA
Y POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reading has been, is and will be a central part of the overall cultural practices of citizens, hence the importance of devoting a study to discovering reading audiences in detail, with the aim of designing consistent strategies and policies. This research has taken a detailed approach to the profile of reading audiences, mainly using data from the 2018 Survey of Cultural Participation in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (CAE). The analysis is offered in a disaggregated manner to cover different segments of the public (from non-readers to the most voracious readers), focusing on breaking down the impact of different explanatory factors, with special interest paid to not only observing their impact, but also to understanding them.

• A CONCEPT OF READING

Although a priori **the meaning of “reading” and what is a “habit”** do not seem to cause problems, in practice, they have very different consequences and results according to how they are defined. Firstly, it is necessary to take into account what nuances are included in the concept of reading in this type of study. A distinction is usually made between two major types: reading in free time and reading for studying or work. When it comes to cultural practice analyses, reading is usually restricted to that which is freely chosen and carried out during free time. Secondly, it is worth defining the idea of habit. There are two approaches to measuring reading habits:

- _ That based on **frequency** of reading. This is the methodology followed in the annual report on → **Reading and book-buying habits** periodically conducted by the Federación de Gremios de Editores de España (FGEE) [Spanish Association of Publishers Guilds] and the Basque Sociometer.
- _ That based on the **number of books read** in a set period of time. This is the methodology followed by the Eurobarometer-Eurostat, the Ministry of Culture and the Basque Observatory of Culture.

This research focusses on the reading of books as **one’s own decision, linked to free time and considers that there is no habit unless at least three or more books a year are read.**

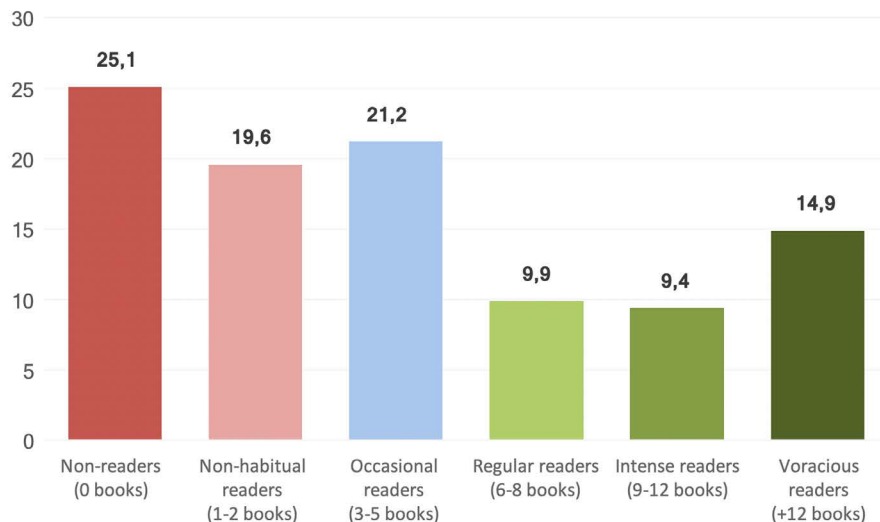
• SEGMENTATION OF READING AUDIENCES

Taking the above delimitation into account, in general terms **the audience with the habit of reading within the context of the CAE amounts to 34.2%**, with a plural composition: 9.9% of readers with a regular habit (6 to 8 books), 9.4% of readers with an intense habit (9 to 12 books) and 14.9% with a voracious habit (more than 12 books a year). In addition, up to **21.2% of the population have a latent habit** (occasional reading, 3 to 5 books a year). Together they make up **55.4% of the population with at least an active reading habit** (from occasional to voracious). The non-reading public (not having read any books in the whole of the reference year), on the contrary, amounts to 25.1%, although **up to 44.6% of the population can be considered to have no reading habit.**

Graphic 1. Population of the CAE according to reading habits (large groups) (%)



Graphic 2. Population of the CAE according to reading habits (detailed groups) (%)

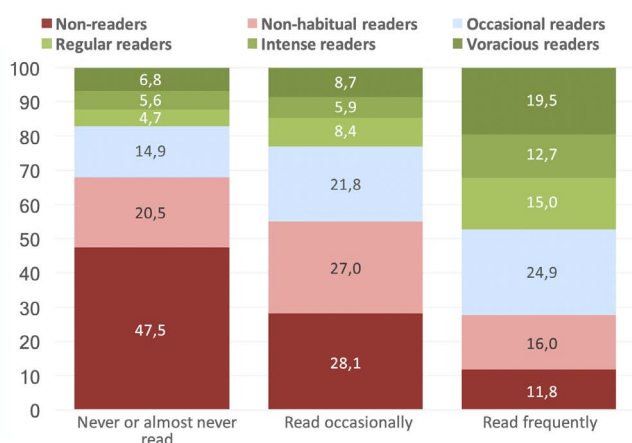


Source: Own preparation from data from the Survey of Cultural Participation in the CAE 2018.

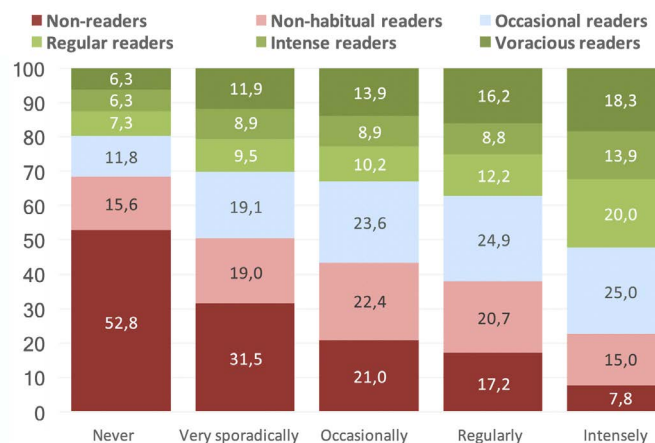
Paying attention to the characteristics of the citizens, it is possible to identify a set of explanatory factors that help understand part of these reading habits.

• INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL PRACTICES DURING CHILDHOOD

Graphic 3. Reading audiences according to frequency of reading in childhood (%)



Graphic 4. Reading audiences according to the frequency of participation in different receptive cultural practices in childhood (except reading and going to the library) (%)



Source: Own preparation from data from the Survey of Cultural Participation in the CAE 2018.

Only 2 out of every 10 people who read frequently during childhood are non-habitual readers, and 5 out of every 10 have a regular, intense or very intense habit (a category which stands out sharply). On the other hand, 7 out of 10 people who did not read or hardly ever read during childhood become people with no reading habit in the future. Therefore, it is **very influential**, above all **in the concept of non-reading**. It is necessary to highlight **that reading during childhood forms part of a general environment favourable or predisposed towards cultural activity**. To put it another way: people who read also participate in other cultural activities, and vice versa. Specifically, looking at the graphics above, **the reading habit is more intense as an adult the more cultural participation took place in childhood**, whether in receptive or active activities.

• CULTURAL PROFILE OF READING AUDIENCES

The cultural profile of the different reading audiences is important to understand them in a more complete and integrated manner. In the first place, there is a key factor feeding a general predisposition towards culture: intrinsic motivation to carry out the activity. **The reading habit is greater among people who say they are motivated for symbolic reasons** (to enrich themselves, personal self-realisation) **or cultural reasons** (to learn, acquire new knowledge) than among those motivated by social reasons (to socialise, meet friends) and emotional reasons (escapism, to disconnect, to discover new sensations). This association is predictable considering that symbolic and cultural motivations are more closely linked to reading, while other practices (cultural and non-cultural) are better positioned to meet social and emotional needs. **The most intense reading habits are related to an expressive motivation (reading for pleasure, reading for satisfaction), whereas the people least inclined to read have a more practical view of reading (reading to obtain something useful and not satisfaction).**

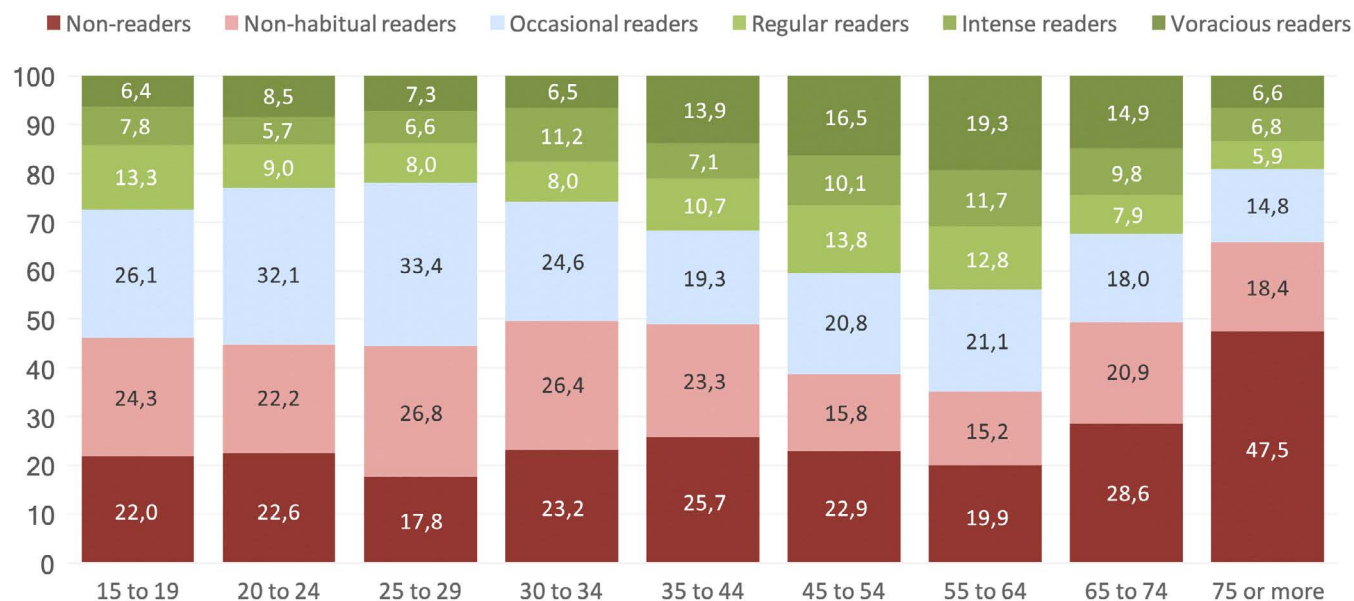
Another element of interest is the **correlation between a greater reading habit and greater habits in other cultural practices (albeit to different degrees), of reading with practically all cultural participation modes and activities**. These results support the idea of the **existence of lifestyles more inclined to cultural participation as a whole** and, specifically, to the reading of books in free time. Finally, it is worth highlighting **that television, video games and audiovisual platforms do not show any relevant impact** on the practice of reading.

• LIFE CYCLE AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

There is a sociological age or life cycle insofar as there are different social conditions accompanying different stages and processes of transition. This sociological gaze must contribute to a greater depth in the interpretation of different ages, considering the social **conditions associated to each stage of life and their transitions**. In this way, the amount of free time and age have interactions between them in the shadow of the different responsibilities of each moment. Although **variables such as free time and age have a slight effect when taken independently, their effect is greater when their interactions are considered in the shadow of each moment of the life cycle**. This is especially notable for the ages of adult life: people have less free time when they have children, especially in their early years (effects at around 35 years old), and greater when the children begin to have a more autonomous life (from 45 onwards). In addition, it is worth taking into account that variance in free time is greater at the weekend, given that there are greater responsibilities during the week and the weekend is generally a social time devoted to leisure.

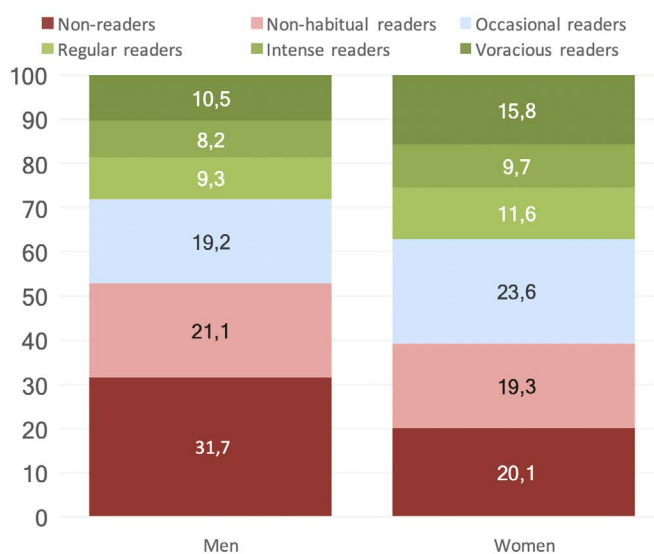
The following graphic shows the general relationship between age and reading habits. It shows that **adults aged 45 to 64 years old (empty nest and pre-retirement ages) have a greater reading habit**, and also shows how **old age brings about new problems linked to health** and, specifically in the case of reading, eyesight problems. Also, it shows a certain **loss of habits in early youth**.

Graphic 5. Levels of reading according to different age groups (%)



Source: Own preparation from data from the Survey of Cultural Participation in the CAE 2018.

Graphic 6. Levels of reading according to gender (%)



Source: Own preparation from data from the Survey of Cultural Participation in the CAE 2018

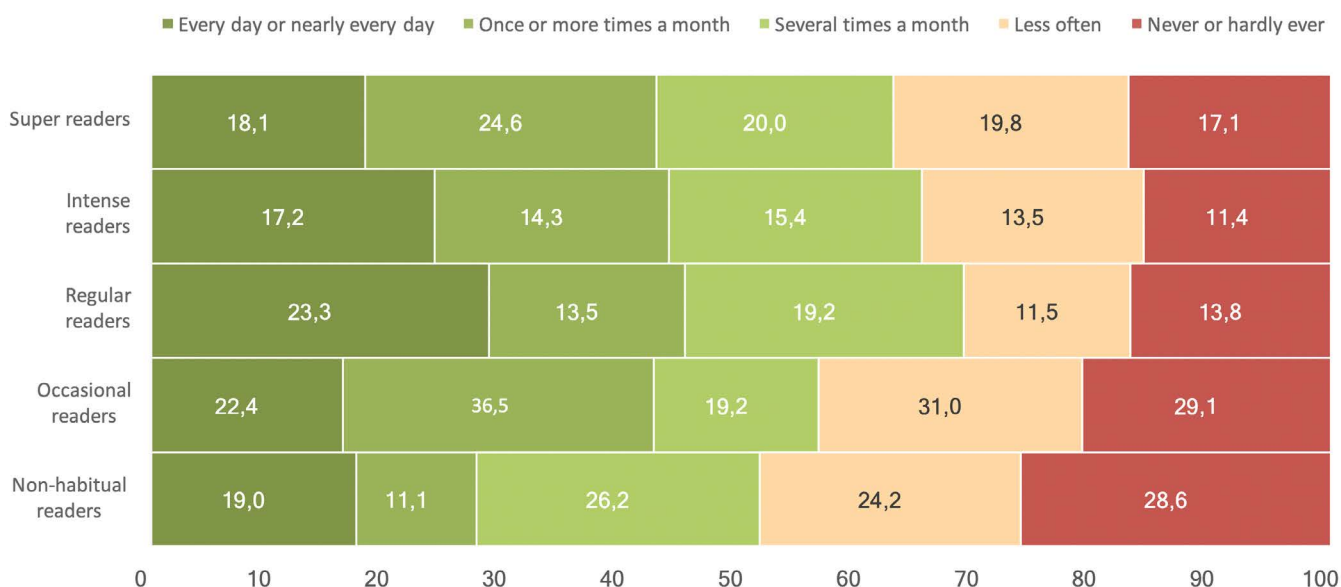
Running parallel to all these questions, another of the variables that makes most observable difference in all studies relating to reading is the fact of **being a man or a woman, with the latter reading more books in their free time**. The *Survey of Cultural Participation in the CAE* data reflect that the main difference occurs in the non-readers category (people who have not read any books in the reference year). The following category identifying most differences is the category of super-readers (people who have read more than 12 books in the reference year).

The mechanisms underlying this gender gap are still being debated. Among them are biological factors (this phenomenon is observed universally) and cultural factors (the size of the gap varies in different contexts). Aside from this question, it is relevant in both the existence of the fact and its observation that the habit persists **even in periods with greater family obligations**. That is, intrinsic motivations and the internalisation of values and attitudes (processes closely linked to childhood development, where differences in reading behaviour are already observed between males and females) are very powerful: **interest, predisposition and willingness have an enormous capacity to overcome external causes of all types**.

• READING IN THE BASQUE LANGUAGE

Reading in Basque requires a specific analysis. Its evolution over the past ten years has been identified as positive, although its growth has been lower compared to other cultural practices under consideration.

Graphic 7. Frequency of reading in Basque according to general levels of reading (%)



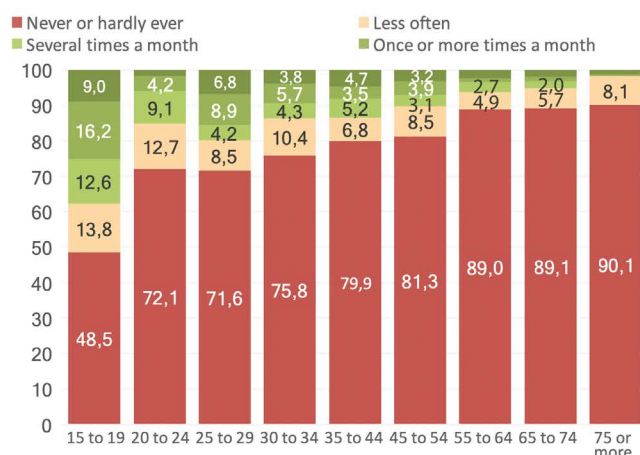
Source: Own preparation from data from the Survey of Cultural Participation in the CAE 2018.

The frequency of reading in Basque according to the general frequency of reading shows a certain association, but it is neither clear nor linear. The percentage of non-readers in Basque diminishes according to whether there is a greater reading habit, but the categories of readers with diverse frequency do not display this linear tendency. Therefore there are other factors to be considered.

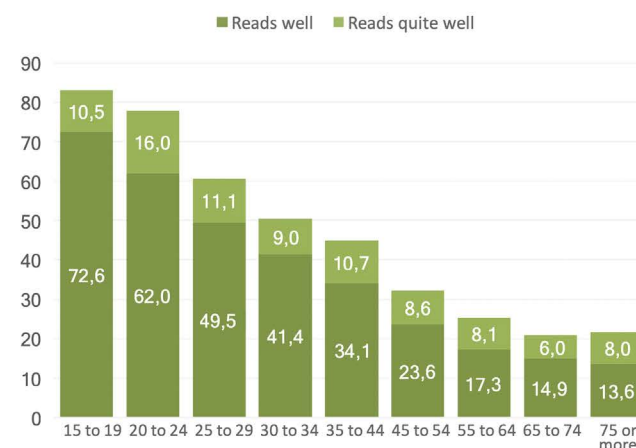
If we look according to ages at reading competence in Basque as well as the frequency of reading in Basque, we see that **young people are the main vector of change**, although this collective shows a loss of reading habit compared to childhood.

Although the average percentage of people who read well in Basque is 29.5%, this percentage rises to 72.6% among the 15-19 age group and only begins to be lower than average from the age of 44 onwards.

Graphic 8. Frequency of reading in Basque according to age (%)



Graphic 9. Good or quite good reading competence in Basque according to age (%)



Source: Own preparation from data from the Survey of Cultural Participation in the CAE 2018.

* A decision has been taken to unify the extremes of the free time variable ("Not at all" and "Quite a little" on the one hand and "Quite a lot" and "A lot" on the other hand) to avoid distortions caused by the small number of cases in these extremes (fewer than 10 people).

Lastly, although it is not about motives given for reading in Basque but rather for participating in cultural activities in Basque in general, it is worth highlighting that **commitment to the Basque language and the closeness of social settings (friends, family) are given as the two fundamental motives**. Among the youngest, social setting is a key aspect, probably in terms of the socialisation needs typical of this phase of life. Also, being comfortable with the language carries a heavier weight among the young, while older people give greater value to aspects such as the quantity and quality on offer.

Horizons

The level of detail displayed with regard to reading habits helps match the objectives to the starting points, thus granting them greater feasibility. At a general level, it is reasonable to expect the passing from one segment to the next segment, although this is important among uninterested and latent audiences, but not as important among those who are regular, intense or voracious readers. At this point, it is worthwhile crossing the segmentation carried out with a strategic vision of audience development.

Uninterested audiences or those with other interests	Non-readers (0 books)	25,1%	Diversification strategies
	Non-habitual readers (1-2 books)	19,6%	
Interested audiences (latent habits)	Occasional readers (3-5 books)	21,2%	Expansion strategies
Current audiences (active habits)	Regular readers (6-8 books)	9,9%	Deepening strategies
	Intense readers (9-12 books)	9,4%	
	Voracious readers (+12 books)	14,9%	

The data and reflections expressed in this report must make a contribution to thinking about even more specific strategies when considering the diversity of situations. Generally, without aiming to be exhaustive, but illustrating the relationship with the results obtained, it is worth observing that:

- **Diversification strategies**, aimed at **uninterested audiences**, are faced with the main difficulty of the psychological barrier, regarding people's beliefs and lifestyles. Despite that, it is worth considering that, as is shown by the case of retirement age and elderly audiences, it is possible that there are barriers beyond interest, although the latter is generally considered a key factor. In the case of psychological barriers, it is a question of trying to guide their interests towards reading by promoting a deep change in their relationship with culture in general and with reading in particular. In this regard, although it seems obvious, it is necessary to keep in perspective that, despite labels, it is generally an audience with other interests, and not simply "uninterested". This psychological barrier is especially important among non-readers: more than half say they like reading "not much" or "not at all", and 80% say "not much", "not at all" or just "a little". Among people who are not habitual readers but have read 1 or 2 books, the latter group decreases to almost half and represents 46.9%. There are as many people not interested in reading as there are people interested in it, although they do not read or read a little. It is worth considering that this second group, who already have some interest, are more easily seduced, but in these cases it is clearer that there will be competing interests. Paying attention to formats, means of acquisition and literary genres, it can be understood that paper is more attractive, that the close environment can have a positive influence, (although purchase is the main form of acquisition) and that specific interests can be a way in for non-readers (although there is a large degree of uncertainty in their own preferences).

- In this case, **extension strategies**, aimed mainly at **interested audiences who do not have a regular habit**, face questions which go beyond those related to different factors to psychological and intrinsic motivation. Although they remain important elements in the determination of the reading habit, up to 70% of them say they quite like reading or like reading very much. In addition to competing interests, in this case, recommendations are aimed at facilitating development in a more extensive, wider way, paying attention to more practical matters: reconciliation with other activities, access to what is available, marketing, a favourable environment (social initiatives, sector agents, public facilities, etc.)
- **Deepening strategies**, aimed at **current audiences**, face a different situation to those previously referred to. In this case, although current audiences with different levels can be differentiated, the objective is, above all, to consolidate, to retain and to improve their reading experience with the aim of creating loyalty. In addition, it is an audience that can be complicit in the generation of environments favourable to reading at both the formal level (organised initiatives) and the informal level (friends, family, etc.) by playing an active role.

