

# World Book Night 2019: Programme Review and Evaluation

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## 1. Introduction

World Book Night is an annual celebration of reading and books that takes place on 23 April. In 2019, the programme's ninth year and its sixth at The Reading Agency, we saw **42,580** books donated by publishers given away in prisons, homeless centres, hospitals, colleges, public libraries and other organisations with the aim of reaching and engaging people who don't regularly read. This year, we piloted an audiobook offer; making a limited number of free downloads available to the public. There was also research undertaken into reading habits, encouraging a 'notification nation' – those of us who are distracted by smart phone alerts – to read a chapter a day to build up regular reading habits.

This report summarises World Book Night activities and gives an overview of its impact in participating organisations.

## 2. Programme Overview



Important facts and headlines for World Book Night 2019 include:

- **42,580** books were donated by publishers for World Book Night 2019, comprised of donations of **23** titles from a range of genres including crime, memoir, literary fiction and sci-fi. **Six** of the chosen titles were aimed at Young Adults.
- Publishers donated between **960** and **2,000** copies of each title to be distributed to organisations.

- Books were chosen through careful discussions with publishers to establish which titles were best suited to reach key audiences.
- A range of male and female writers were chosen, and **five** of the authors come from a BAME background.
- Books were given away in a total of **365** organisations, including colleges, prisons, public libraries, homeless shelters, hospitals among others.
- Events took place up and down the country, including quizzes, book swaps, author readings and talks, including **nine** events with authors from the booklist.
- **2,000** audiobook downloads were offered to individuals.
- A survey was commissioned to research reading habits in the UK and what distractions people face in our 'notification nation.' We launched a 'Chapter a Day' campaign, encouraging people to read build up their daily reading habits.

### 3. Participating Organisations and Events

Books were distributed to a total of 365 organisations across the UK including:

- **3** Care homes
- **7** Family learning projects
- **4** Youth centres/projects (16+)
- **9** Social and supporting housing projects
- **4** Homeless centres or hostels
- **23** Literacy and learning support organisations
- **42** Hospitals or health centres
- **49** Prisons and/or Young Offenders Institutions
- **58** Colleges
- **75** Public libraries
- **91** Other; e.g. arts organisations or charities

These were chosen from over **1,200** applications, as they best demonstrated how they would reach people who do not regularly read. Of the successful organisations, **134** had not received World Book Night books before, and **258** were holding an event specifically to distribute their books. Organisations received boxes of either **80** or **160** copies (depending on their size) of a single title to give to their users along with supporting resources and guidance. **500** copies of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood were additionally handed out by staff from The Reading Agency and Vintage to commuters outside King's Cross station on the morning of 23 April.





## 4. Research and Press Release

A survey was commissioned asking **2,000** members of the British public about the distractions that stop them reading, with the results used for a press release entitled: **Living in a Notification Nation: constant smartphone distractions prevent Brits from picking up a book**

Key findings of the survey:

- **66%** of respondents would spend more time reading if they spent less time scrolling.
- **72%** of 16-24-year-old respondents feel like they lack sufficient self-control because they can't stop checking their smartphone.
- **31%** of respondents said constant notifications on their phone stop them reading and the same number are distracted by TV.
- Over half of the respondents also experience phone fatigue with **54%** struggling to concentrate after spending time scrolling through social media apps and the internet on a smartphone.

The Reading Agency responded to these findings by encouraging Brits to read a 'Chapter A Day', motivating the nation to read a few pages of a book every day, building up to one, or a few chapters. Material (including infographics) was provided on The Reading Agency website and social media channels, providing advice to people starting their reading journey and how to continue. An additional list of shorter reads was included to offer options for people with literacy levels and time commitments.

Press coverage from our consumer campaign with our PR agency, Stand, received **24** pieces of coverage across national, broadcast and consumer, including **14** local BBC radio stations and 2 podcasts.

There was also a significant amount of regional press coverage of events and giveaways, with **106** pieces of coverage across the country, evenly split between online and print media, with a combined reach of **1,082,280**.

**D**o you live in Notification Nation? We all do, according to the Reading Agency, whose research shows that 66% of us feel that we'd spend more time reading if we spent less time scrolling. I have to say, I don't. My emails, Twitter chitchat and WhatsApp conspiracies all finish around 6pm. After that, I'm scrolling for nothing, prowling, pacing, longing for a notification. This is no condition in which to lose yourself in a book, the no-man's land between ending an online skirmish and waiting for box set hour. (Which, since you ask, is 9pm.)

Ah yes, box sets. Like the other bookend to our collective shelf of failure, the sheer proliferation of good telly has collapsed the final 40 minutes of the day. This used to be when you might reconnect with a partner by bitching about friends, or clear the hump of pages 70 to 100, where the set-up section had become long-winded, and the interesting stuff yet to happen. Now, it's a 30-second dilemma: pass out or watch one more? I can't even remember the last time I really properly destroyed anyone's character, or found out who was still alive at the end of a *Timothy Mo*.

The peculiar thing about modern life is that nobody's trying very hard to defend themselves. Back in the day, a failure of self-improvement would be followed by swift self-justification: I cannot go to the gym because *I don't have time*. It's hard to eat healthily when you're *on the road* (whatever that means, for anyone who isn't in a band). Now we have surrendered to our own shortcomings. That Reading Agency survey comes with case studies: Lydia, 24, who knows that the two hours she spends on social media are a "time vacuum"; and Bella, 15, who "would love to spend more time reading and expanding her knowledge", but unfortunately puts in a four-hour shift checking social media, and any more close looking at stuff with her eyes is just not viable.

The Guardian

**Chapter & Verse**  
World Book Night 23 April 2018

Whether you're an avid book lover or a lapsed reader, enjoy World Book Night's celebration of reading and books on April 23

**A Warm Welcome for All**  
Wendy Kirk is a librarian at Glasgow Women's Library, which is dedicated to women's lives, histories and achievements. The library participated in World Book Night since the first year and we always look forward to it, says Wendy. "This year we're having a book giveaway party, when we'll welcome people from our local community who have maybe not come to the library before or people who are new or emerging readers. Some of the volunteers who work at the library, our 'book champions', will read from their favourite books and talking about what reading means to them. People can also chat to our 'book doctors' if they feel they need some advice about books to surprise, to inspire, and so on. There are many books published and so much information online, but sometimes it's nice to be able to speak to someone for a personal recommendation. We'll be running a fun book quiz, there will be a book-themed soundtrack and we'll be serving tea and cake!"

**Reading Changes Lives**  
"Research shows that reading can promote better health and wellbeing and help us build relationships with others," says Sue Whitson, CEO of The Reading Agency, which co-ordinates the nationwide celebration of reading on April 23rd. "This is why we want World Book Night 2018 to get the 31% of adults and 46% of 16 to 24-year-olds who can't read in their free time into the reading habit. "Every year we run a targeted book giveaway focused on reaching those who don't regularly read. Books donated by publishers are gifted through

"That's what's great about a library - you can access so many books for free"

My Weekly

Apple Podcasts Preview

**Dorothy Koomson and Amanda Prowse (Leather Pyjamas at the ready!)**  
Book Off!

Arts

Listen in iTunes

Dorothy Koomson and Amanda Prowse discuss World Book Night, eavesdropping and how the simplest of stories can spark a whole novel.

They also go head to head in the Book Off, putting Mairoie Blackman's 'Noughts And Crosses' against 'Lemony Snicket' by Daniel Handler.

36 min

Play

Episode Website

More Episodes

**GETTING STARTED**  
How to make time for reading

**TALK TO A LIBRARIAN**  
Librarians spend their days around books so they will have loads of tips for great books across a whole range of genres.

**FIND A QUIET CORNER**  
Once you've chosen your book, you'll become more absorbed in it if you find some peace and quiet - try turning your smartphone to mute for a bit.

**SET ASIDE TIME**  
It doesn't have to be hours a day! Put aside ten minutes or so each day, perhaps before you fall asleep, for reading.

**DON'T RUSH**  
Don't worry if it's taking you a while to finish your book - as long as you're enjoying it of course! Go at your own pace.

**PUT THE BOOK DOWN**  
If you find yourself losing concentration, put your book down and start another. The world of books is too big to waste on something boring!

World Book Night 23 April 2018

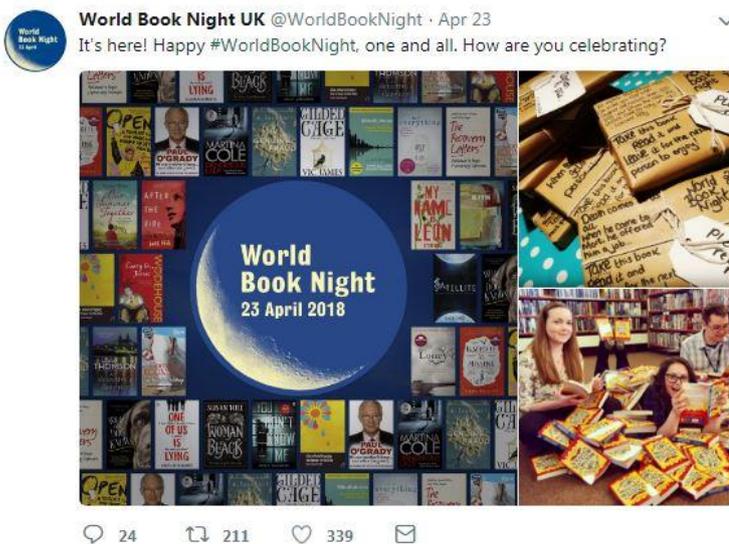
THE READING AGENCY

## 5. Online Engagement (December 2018-April 2019)

2019 was most successful year to date for World Book Night social media. A series of successful posts over Twitter (World Book Night and The Reading Agency accounts), Facebook (World Book Night and The Reading Agency pages) and Instagram (The Reading Agency) between the launch in December 2018 and April 2019 resulted in a total of **28,208 engagements**. There were **813,779 impressions** across Twitter and Instagram, and reach of **37,318** across Facebook and Instagram. **#WorldBookNight trended at #1** on Twitter across the UK on 23 April. Additionally, [worldbooknight.org.uk](http://worldbooknight.org.uk) received over **143,000** visits between December 2018 and April 2019.

The Reading Agency participated in a takeover of the Arts Council England Instagram account, promoting World Book Night to a wider audience. A series of posts throughout the day received **472 engagements**, including the Arts Council's most liked post to date.

2019 also saw considerable engagement from celebrities and book influencers who promoted particular titles from the booklist on social media., with a combined reach of **692,200**.



**Mahsuda Snaitth**  
@mahsudasnaitth

My heart is full of #WorldBookNight love today as #TheThingsWeThoughtWeKnew is given out for FREE to a variety of communities across the UK at venues tonight. Check out your local event and celebrate the power of books (I'm heading to @leicesterlibrar!) Happy World Book Night!



1:28 am - 23 Apr 2019



womenslibrary • Following  
Glasgow Women's Library

womenslibrary We're so excited to have 100 copies of these beauties by Tomi Adeyemi to give away tomorrow at our World Book Night Book Party Giveaway! Pop by GWL between 2pm and 4pm for free books, a fabulous quiz and readings from our staff and volunteers. The perfect literary afternoon!

#WorldBookNight #BooksByWomen #WomenWriters #AmReading #Glasgow #WhatsOn

15w

118 likes  
APRIL 24

Add a comment... Post

## 6. Evaluation and Impact

### Evaluation Methodology

In May 2019, The Reading Agency circulated an online survey to the 365 organisations that took part in World Book Night 2019. The survey ran until 28 June 2019 and received **164** responses, a **45%** response rate. In addition to questions about the process of taking part in World Book Night as a giver, the survey asked them to assess the impact of World Book Night in their organisation.

Anyone who received a book was also encouraged, via social media and directly through these organisations, to complete a short survey about the impact of World Book Night on them and their own reading habits, which received **70** responses. As many organisations choose to give out their books in passing, it is not always possible to connect directly with recipients, and feedback from this group has been historically difficult to capture. In future, we would recommend the use of a flyer, bookmark or other piece of promotional material, containing further information about World Book Night and a link to the survey, to be handed out with or inside of World Book Night books. This would work to both make explicit the gifted book's connection to World Book Night and potentially increase evaluation response rates, thereby gaining a fuller picture of the lasting impact on recipients.

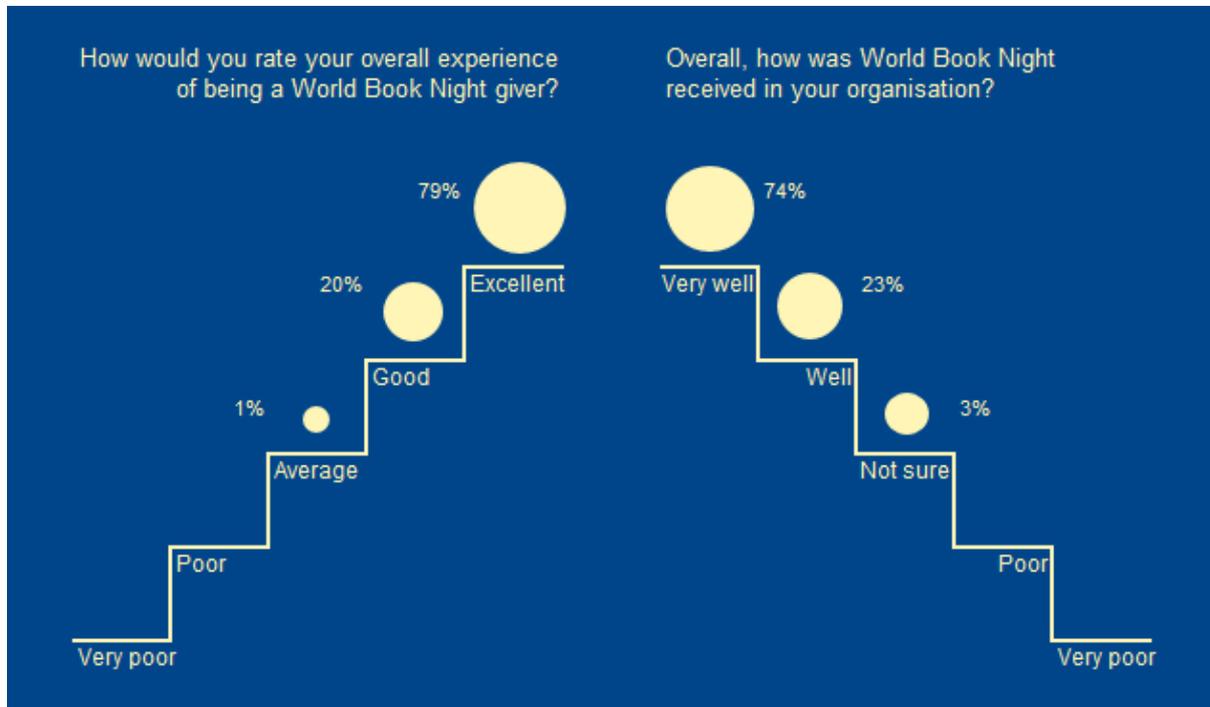
Throughout the following sections, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding of numbers, totals may not add up to 100%.

### Organisational Givers

All organisations giving out books were contacted directly through emails and our newsletter and asked to complete the survey. The greatest number of respondents came from public libraries (**26%**) and 'other'; e.g. arts organisations and charities (**23%**) followed by colleges (**18%**), hospital or health settings (**15%**), prison and/or young offenders institutions (**8%**) and literacy and learning support

organisations (7%). Most organisations taking part in the survey are repeat-givers, with 75% having taken part at least once before.<sup>1</sup>

Organisations responded overwhelmingly positively to taking part in World Book Night, with 99% rating their experience of being a giver as 'excellent' or 'good'. Similarly, 97% of respondents felt that World Book Night was received 'very well' or 'well' in their organisation.



This was echoed by qualitative responses, where a significant number of organisational givers mentioned the value of being part of a nationwide event that brings diverse groups and communities together to celebrate books and reading.

The opportunity to choose the method of giving books to reach target groups was viewed as a positive factor by responding organisations. Many commented on the ways World Book Night helped to raise the profile of their organisation, with some using it as an opportunity to introduce recipients to the library or community centre or to create spaces for conversation between different groups:

*It raised the profile of the library and highlighted the importance of reading and the value of print books. (Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals, NHS Trust Library and Information Services)*

*It enabled students who do not routinely read books for pleasure to find an excellent and readable book of fiction freely available to them, and accessible in locations they do not normally associate with reading/books. (The Sixth Form College, Farnborough)*

<sup>1</sup> This is slightly higher than the total percentage (63%) of all organisations having taken part at least once before.

*We give the books to prisoners and staff so both can discuss the books together. Also in education we use them in our book club. These events help encourage readers to attend the library and also education. (HMP Lowdham Grange)*

The choice of books was praised by both organisational givers and recipients, with many noting the particular draw of books by well-known authors from a range of genres. Some organisations raised the possibility of including content warnings with the books in future to signal to potential recipients that the gifted book may feature issues related to difficult topics and experiences, such as trauma, domestic violence or suicide.

One common request from organisations was a desire for a 'mixed bag' of books or the option to choose two or three books to give away. This has been explored as a possibility in previous years; however, due to the logistics required to provide a range of books to each organisation, this is currently not a feasible option. The World Book Night website clearly notes the reasons why we are unable to do so on its Frequently Asked Questions page; going forward this will also be noted on the application itself so the reasoning is clear to all potential applicants.

### **Organisational Givers: Events**

While most organisations created some form of visual display for their World Book Night giveaways, many also coupled their book gifting with independently organised celebratory events. Of responding organisations, **71%** ran a formal event (**85%** of total organisations, according to application details); these varied widely but all retained the common thread of creating a space for people to come together and have conversations about books and reading. **Coffee mornings** and **afternoon teas** proved most popular, followed closely by **author visits** and **raffles, games** and **book quizzes**. Other activities held at World Book Night events included book swaps, sharing book reviews, creative writing workshops and speakers around the theme of mental health. Some sites organised particular creative offerings, such as fancy dress or hosting a touring play, film screening, chili night, pyjama party, murder mystery party or open mic night.

Most of the events that took place incorporated several activities into a full evening or day of celebrating World Book Night, for example:

*Two author events, a memoir workshop, book review competition, sharing favourite books and a co-authored project on what reading means to us. (Haringey Adult Learning Service)*

*We organised a World Book Night with background music, raffle, poetry reading, refreshments, book reviews and a quiz as well as a social space to sit and chat! (Edenfield, Prestwich Hospital)*

*Our guest speakers were a crime fiction author and one of our adult learners, who described his journey to learning via addiction issues and coping with that in his life. We provided tea, coffee and cake and had workshops for learners to try – we also had a prize draw and gave away prizes for completion of a quiz. It was one of the most successful events we've ever hosted. (Youth, Family and Community Learning Service, South Lanarkshire Council)*

Several organisations (particularly schools, colleges, family organisations and prisons) made direct connections to education, preparing lessons and formal classroom discussions around the books, while others were used to explicitly highlight the benefits of reading and/or promote family reading:

*[We] also gave away resources to support children's reading and displayed quotes/stats related to reading. (Ongar Place Primary School)*

*People said they thought it was a great idea and felt it would help their children to see them reading and setting an example (Family Support, Birmingham)*

Some organisations centred their events on the theme of mental health and difficult conversations. For example:

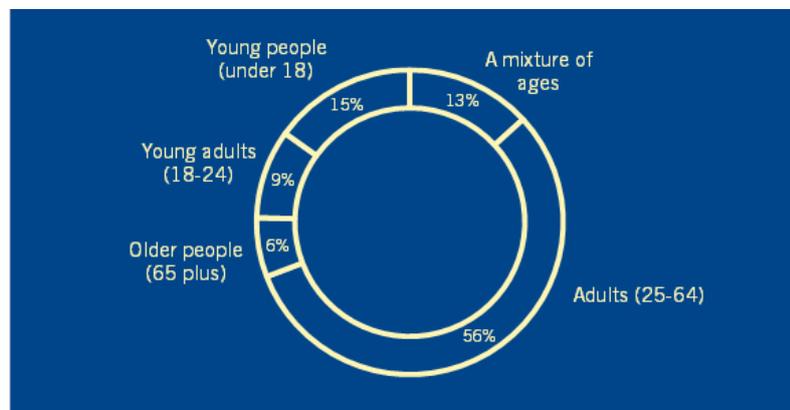
*We used the World Book Night theme of difficult conversations. Each person who received a book also received a 'difficult conversation starter' bookmark. There were 11 different starts including 'I want to tell you about how I've been feeling...', 'I can't explain why, but I feel...'. Every book also came with a 'Time for a cuppa?' pack which contained 2 teabags and a mini pack of biscuits, this was also to promote starting a difficult conversation. (Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust)*

Finally, many organisations also found that World Book Night inspired wider opportunities for charity fundraising (for The Reading Agency or their own chosen charity) and book-based giving:

*It also inspired our staff team to donate children's books which we gave to the local foodbank to deliver to the families they supported with food parcels over the Easter school holidays. (Warrington Housing Association)*

## Reach: Recipient Profile

Organisations taking part in World Book Night across the UK reach a wide range of recipients through their work<sup>2</sup>:

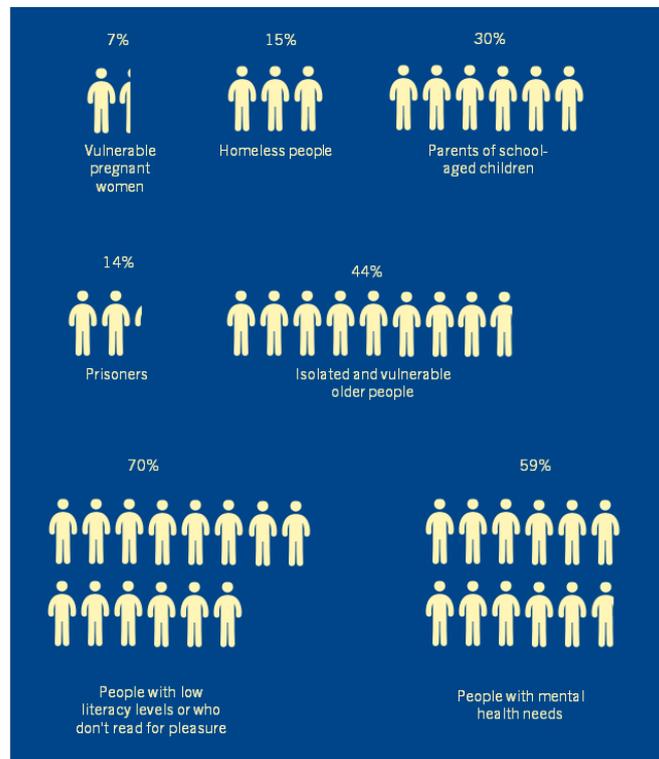


The responses from organisations indicate that World Book Night's aim of more closely reaching and engaging people who don't regularly read is being achieved: **87% of respondents reported that all, most or some of their book recipients don't already regularly read for pleasure.** While some organisations give out books on site, others take the books outside and into the wider community. In many cases, organisations specifically target groups whom research has found would benefit most

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<sup>2</sup> Data is not collected on the gender or ethnicity of recipients from the organisational survey; responses to the recipient survey indicate that the ethnic groups of those receiving books are 78% White British and 22% White Other, Asian or British Asian, Black or Black British, or mixed or dual heritage. These results should be taken as indicative only, however, due to the low response rate for the recipient survey.

from being gifted a book. The following groups were specifically targeted and reached by responding organisations in 2019:



The significance of targeted giving was highlighted in qualitative responses as well:

*I think making sure you target specific groups is the way forward [...] it has shown me that even hard to reach students want to read, they just need to be given a decent book and the opportunity (Kettering Science Academy)*

Together, these findings demonstrate that through World Book Night's careful selection process and targeted organisational giving, The Reading Agency is reaching its goal of engaging people who don't already regularly read for pleasure. The impact this reach has on both organisations and book recipients will be discussed in the next section.

## Impact

Data on the impact of World Book Night is collected from both organisational givers and recipients. The two sets of surveys strongly indicate that taking part in World Book Night has a positive impact on everyone involved, both those who give and receive books.

The measurable impact discussed in the following sections offers indicative results rather than statistical significance due to the low response rate to the recipient survey (70 respondents); however, qualitative responses coupled with recipient feedback provided by participating organisations offer a fuller picture of the impact of World Book Night on those who receive books.

Six key impact themes emerged from our qualitative research, three of which came up in at least a quarter of responses:

- the value of the opportunity to give or receive a new book for free
- the importance of social connections and conversations about reading
- the impact on reading behaviour through the introduction or a re-ignited interest in reading

Other common themes across qualitative responses to organisational and recipient surveys included the following:

- the value of recommending or sharing books with others
- the influence of reading on gaining a greater understanding of the world and other people's lives
- the role of reading as a leisure activity that supports wellbeing and positive mental health

### **Receiving a book as a free gift**

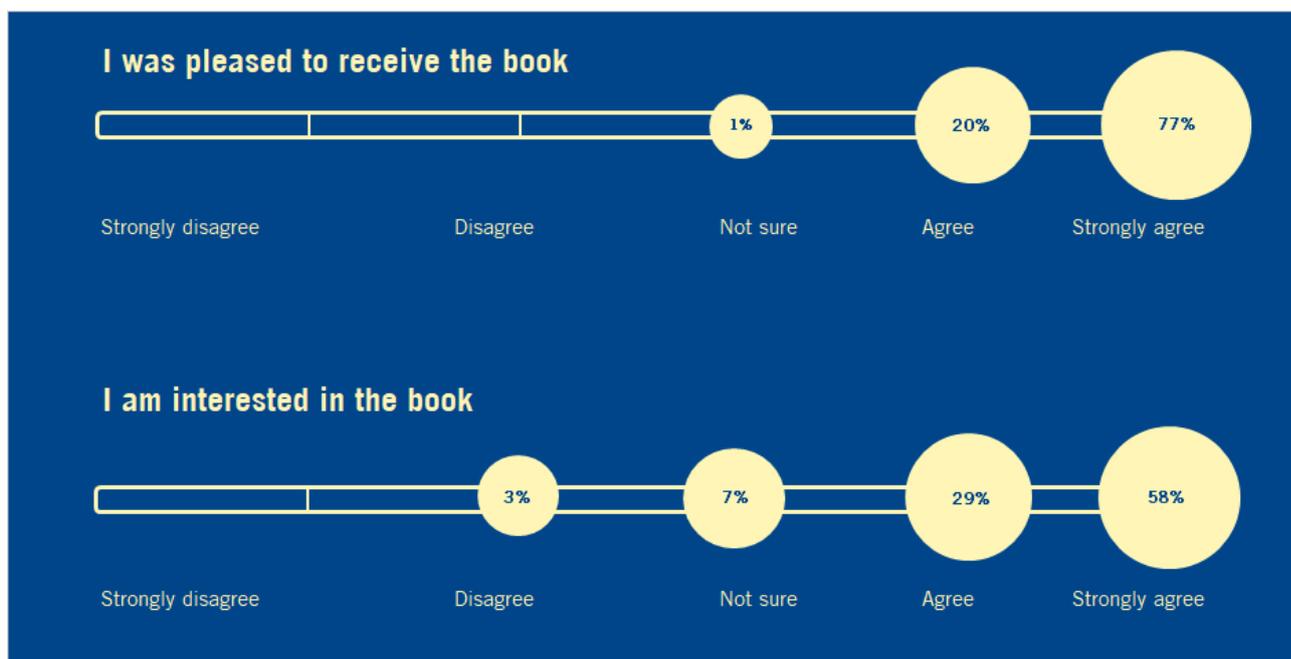
The most common response from both recipients and organisations was the impact of giving and receiving a book for free. Recipients mentioned this in **60%** of their qualitative responses, noting their happiness, surprise and gratitude at being offered a free book and, as a sub-theme of this category, recipients particularly enjoyed the fact that the book was new, high quality and a well-known author or title. In many cases, respondents commented on the connection between book gifting and lasting interest in reading for pleasure:

*It felt really special to be given something to keep which was new and for free. (World Book Night recipient, received *Orphan Monster Spy*)*

*I had lost all interest in reading until I read my World Book Night book but since then I have read 3 more books. Thank you for helping me find my reading mojo again. (World Book Night recipient, received *Me Mam. Me Dad. Me.*)*

*One service user has slowed down reading the book to prolong the enjoyment. [...] One or two service users also said they have taken books as they would like to get back in to reading and decided to read a few pages a night. (Fromside Unit (NHS), gave *Thinking Out Loud*)*

The impact of receiving a free book was further supported by quantitative measures in the recipient survey:



In many cases, the impact of book gifting was reciprocal, affecting both giver and receivers:

*We gave out all the books to our young people and to some of them it was like we had given them gold, they couldn't believe that they had been given a book and many told us this was the first book they have ever owned which had some of us welling up. The following week they told us they had been reading the book at night and they want to do a review display board. I have no doubt whatsoever that some of these young people will become readers now, some of whom said they "don't like reading". [...] This is an isolated impoverished estate, and this meant the world (Prevention Service, Eastfield Youth Club, gave *Children of Blood and Bone*)*

*It makes me feel very happy and gives prisoners hope and a bit of relief. (Sodexo Justice Services, gave *Children of Blood and Bone*)*

These findings demonstrate the importance of a programme that exists to introduce non- or lapsed readers, firstly, to the act of reading for pleasure, and secondly, to the many benefits that reading for pleasure imparts. These benefits are discussed in further detail in the following sections.

### **Social connections and discussing books with others**

As a national celebration of reading, World Book Night offers opportunities for both givers and receivers to discuss books and reading. The ability to take part in conversations about reading was noted by respondents to both surveys as a highlight of the event and an aspect that had an impact on them on the day and going forward. In some cases, World Book Night even created the space for social connections amongst groups that wider research indicates are most at risk for loneliness and social isolation:

*It was great to get together socially around reading, hear a range of opinions on the reading materials for World Book Night and to receive a free book! (World Book Night recipient, received *The Handmaid's Tale*)*

*I like the idea of lots of people reading the same book at the same time and then finding out how different that experience can be for individual readers. (Orkney Library and Archive, gave Turtles All the Way Down)*

*I give to people who find it hard to get out due to physical or mental illness or carers. It is not only the book but also their chance to have a conversation. As in previous years I have been asked if they could speak to someone I am also giving the book to. So a secondary effect is that these folk can have new friends – even if it is only on the phone. (Rotary Club Enfield, gave Shadows in Heaven)*

To better understand this connection, the role of World Book Night in supporting reduced loneliness and social isolation is an area that should be explored further in future evaluations.

As an additional sub-theme of this category, the decision to start or join a reading group or book club was mentioned by several respondents from the organisational givers survey, suggesting that taking part in discussions about books and reading and the act of group reading together as part of World Book Night can also lead to reported changes in not just reading frequency, but also reading habits due to World Book Night.

### Reading habits and behaviour

As noted in the previous section, responses to both surveys indicate that taking part in World Book Night has a positive impact on reading behaviour and reading habits. Both organisational givers and book recipients commented on the ways taking part in World Book Night either introduced them to the act of reading for pleasure or, in many cases, re-ignited a lost interest in reading for pleasure. The recipient survey asked respondents specific questions related to this outcome:



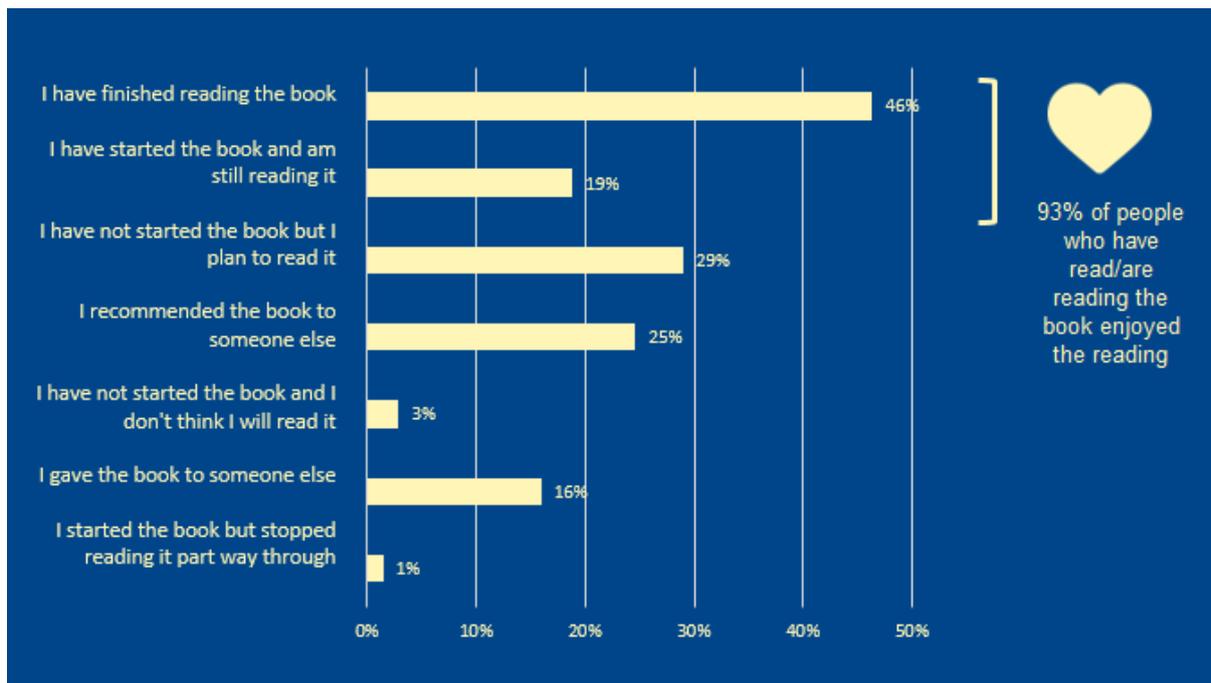
The book choices themselves also have an impact on the reading habits of recipients: **95%** of organisational givers thought that the books donated by publishers in 2019 would help encourage people to read more often, suggesting that the book selection process plays a key role in the impact of World Book Night.



95% respondent organisations thought the books donated would help encourage people read more often.



90% respondent organisations thought that a book given away on World Book Night makes them more interested in reading the book.



This is supported by responses to the recipient survey, which indicate that most people begin reading their World Book Night book fairly quickly after receiving it: **46%** of respondents had already finished reading the book and **19%** had started but were still reading it. Of all respondents who had started reading their World Book Night book, **93% enjoyed reading the book**.

These findings are echoed in qualitative responses as well, with a significant number of both givers and receivers noting the impact of being introduced to a new author or genre through the programme:

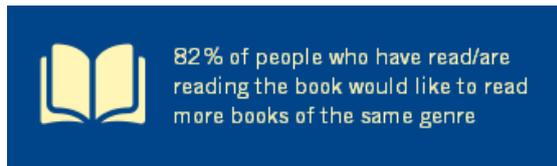
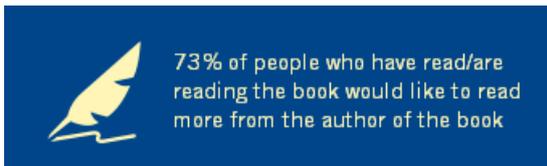
*I would not have read this book without being offered it for World Book Night, although I am interested in this genre, and am glad that I did. (World Book Night recipient, received *The Handmaid's Tale*)*

*World Book Night encourages me to read books I wouldn't otherwise read. (World Book Night recipient, received *Me Mam. Me Dad. Me.*)*

*I think it's made me more confident to branch out my reading habits, too. I'm a twenty something and at school our class were always encouraged to reach for a certain type of book, usually with a famous name and 'respected', and my English teacher when I was 13 even told us to stop reading Young Adult novels as they were too young for us! As a result I've never really*

*considered crime, YA or romance genres until this year. (World Book Night giver, gave Juliet, Naked)*

In addition to broadening out reading choices, in some cases the introduction to a new author or genre can have further impact by changing reading habits. Of recipients who had either started or finished reading their World Book Night book, **73% would like to read more by the same author** and **82% would like to read more of the same genre**. This was supported by qualitative responses from both givers and receivers, as well as some respondents noting they had now started following the author on social media or had already started reading a sequel or other book by the author.



### Sharing books and recommending reading to others

Another theme emerging from qualitative responses was the impact of World Book Night on leading both givers and receivers to recommend and share books more often with people and, in some cases, to feel more confident doing so. This was further supported by our recipient survey: **41% of respondents either recommended or passed their book on to someone else**. Respondents commented on the ways the act of receiving a free book invoked a desire to reciprocate:

*One parent could not believe someone was giving something to her and that she did not have to return it and promised once she had read it she would make sure it was passed on to someone else so they could read it next. (World Book Night giver, gave The Ice Cream Girls)*

*I always love receiving books and also have great pleasure in passing them on. (World Book Night recipient, received Close Enough to Touch)*

*I feel more comfortable recommending books to people, as a result of conversations I had on World Book Night. (World Book Night giver, gave The Chalk Pit and Juliet, Naked)*

These responses demonstrate the ways that World Book Night acts as a wider celebration of reading, prompting those involved as both givers and receivers to share their views on the books chosen for that year's list. When coupled with the reported pass-along of physical copies of the World Book Night books, it indicates that the World Book Night's reach is even wider than measured through our current evaluation process.

### Relevance to the world and understanding of other people's lives

The content of this year's selected books is reported to have had an additional impact on both giver and receivers' experiences of taking part in World Book Night. Some of the books on the list tackled societal issues like police brutality, crime and violence, while others centred on autism or physical and mental health conditions such as cancer, depression and anxiety. Events run by some World Book Night organisations complemented this theme; in several locations discussions about mental health issues were a key focus.

Several responses to the organisational giver and recipient surveys noted the particular effect this had on both their reading experience and broader understanding of the world around them:

*Exciting talks that ran alongside giving out the books. Encouraged discussion and the opening up the theme of forgiveness as a topic to connect people. (World Book Night recipient, received *The Forgiveness Project*)*

*It gave me an insight into people's lives from another group in society and so I feel as though I can understand problems we face in the present day. (World Book Night recipient, received *The Hate U Give*)*

*A student with SEN siblings was impressed by the choice of book and felt it was a true to life accounting of what could happen. (World Book Night giver, gave *Rosie Loves Jack*)*

This outcome connects to a body of research that examines the relationship between reading and increased empathy: studies have found that reading for pleasure enhances empathy, understanding of the self, and the ability to understand one's own and others' identities.<sup>3</sup> The impact of World Book Night in enabling givers and receivers to broaden their understandings of society – and the lasting changes this might influence – is an aspect that should be explored further in future World Book Night evaluations and related research.

## **Wellbeing**

In addition to the social connections discussed in a previous section, wellbeing was also a common theme, being mentioned in responses across both sets of surveys. In these instances, respondents commented on the connection between the act of reading and relaxation, mental health and wellbeing:

*It's lovely to have a treat. As mums we often put ourselves and self care at the bottom of the to do list. It's nice to have a reminder to look after yourself too! (World Book Night recipient, received *The Chalk Pit*)*

*I struggle to find time to read, and it has re-established in my own mind that it is important for my mental health to make time to read. I always feel better and more motivated in life when I do. (World Book Night giver, gave *Mad Girl*)*

Existing research in this area supports these comments: regular readers for pleasure report fewer feelings of stress and depression than non-readers and stronger feelings of relaxation from reading than from watching television or engaging with technology-intensive activities.<sup>4</sup> The responses from both sets of surveys suggest that World Book Night participants are aware, if in some cases only at an anecdotal level, of the wider benefits of reading, and future evaluations should include questions specific to health and wellbeing to gain a greater understanding of the connection for both World Book Night givers and recipients.

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<sup>3</sup> J Billington (2015), 'Reading between the Lines: The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure', The University of Liverpool.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## 7. World Book Night's First Audiobook offer



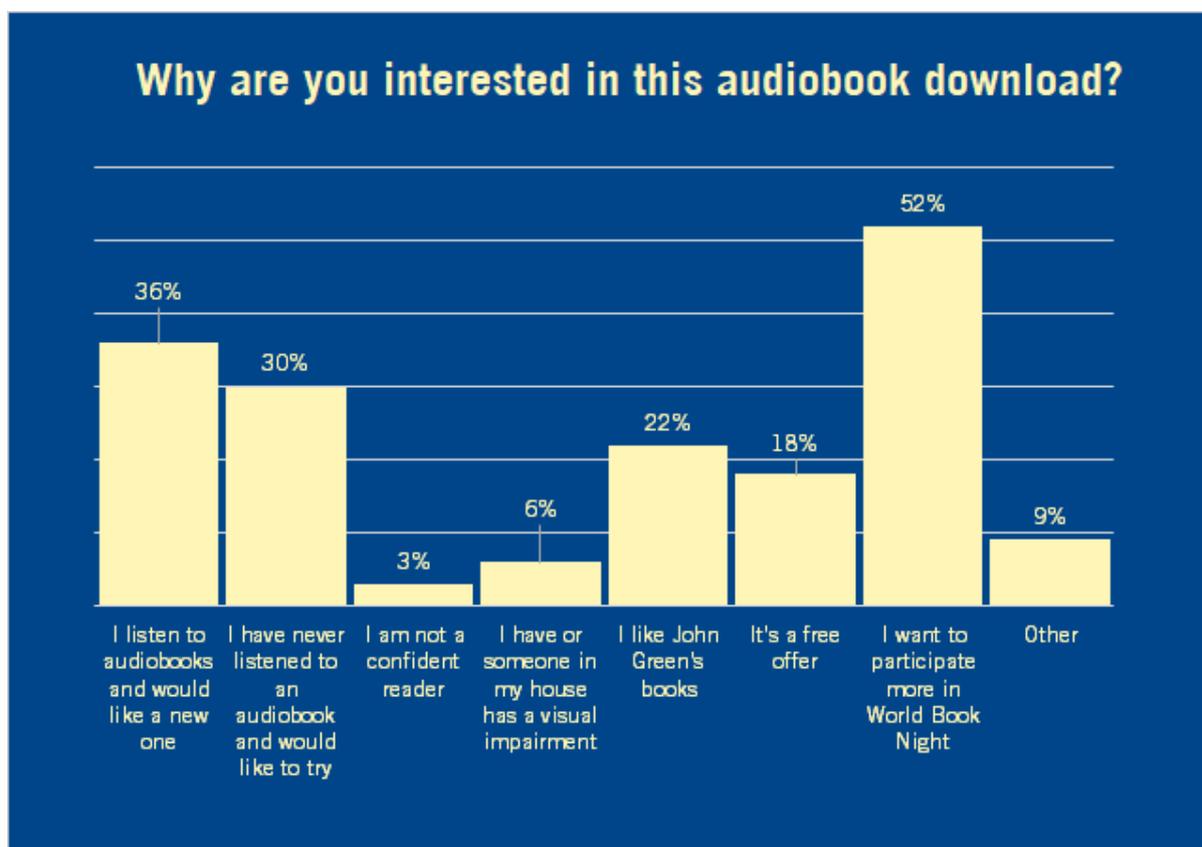
This year, an audiobook offer was piloted for the first time. **2,000** downloads of *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green were offered by Penguin Random House Audio to individuals who were invited to register interest via an online form.

**1,456** people signed up and **342** downloaded the audiobook on receipt of an exclusive code. The 23% uptake reflected the publisher's expectations for this kind of promotion.

Optional questions were asked in the registration form to find out more information about the audience interested in the audiobook. These responses will be used to determine how an audiobook format is integrated into World Book

Night in the future.

In addition to questions on demographics, those registering interest in the audiobook were also asked to comment on their reasons for applying for the opportunity. The opportunity to download an audiobook attracted a range of people, with **36%** already audiobook listeners who want to try a new book, and **30%** new to audiobooks. This shows the wide appeal of the offer and the potential to bring new audiobook listeners into the market. Significantly, **52%** of respondents indicated that they wanted to participate more in World Book Night, emphasising the role and influence of the programme in engaging people.



More detailed insights were found in the qualitative data collected from those individuals interested in trying an audiobook for the first time:

*I often listen to serialised audiobooks and would like to try a whole novel.*

*I used to listen to audiobooks as a child (on tape) but haven't listened to one for probably about 15 or 20 years. I would like to try again and see if I like it.*

*I don't usually listen to audiobook and I would like to try again, I also have dyslexia and I think it might help with that.*

The 'other' responses provided additional reasons for applicants' interest in an audiobook, with particular themes of timing and health emerging as key reasons for listening to a book rather than reading.

### **Timing**

Several respondents noted a lack of time to sit and read a book, especially while commuting, as their top reason for being interested in receiving a free audiobook:

*I have a long journey ahead of me and thought an audiobook would be a good opportunity to pass the time.*

*I rarely have enough time to read, something to listen while I'm commuting makes a big difference.*

*Audiobooks help me keep up with my reading in spite of my very full schedule.*

*I spend a lot of time in the car for work and I would love to be able to enjoy a book whilst driving!*

### **Health-related reasons**

While the question on interest included options such as having a visual impairment or not being confident in reading, many of those who selected one of these two options also chose to follow up in the 'other' open text box with more specific details related to their choice:

*I have an autistic teenager who listens to audiobooks.*

*Since experiencing a major depression I have found reading challenging and find processing the spoken word more comfortable than the written word.*

*Heard about this book yesterday and understand the main character has OCD. My son has OCD and, although I have ordered the book, he is more likely to listen to it than read it.*

*Used to giveaway books and I miss it. Not so good eyesight so considering this.*

*I struggle with fatigue and would like to try an audiobook.*

*As an insomniac audiobooks help get me through the long nights.*

*I am going to have surgery over that period and audiobooks will become all the more useful for a while!*

## Results following download

Feedback was also collected from those who downloaded the audiobook on World Book Night to evaluate the success of the offer. Of the 342 people who used the download code, 49 responded to the survey (14% response rate). When examining the qualitative data collected in particular, it is clear that the offer both encouraged people to engage with reading more and that many people benefitted from the audio format:

*I sent the audiobook out to all staff who entered, they were delighted with the opportunity to receive a free audiobook, especially staff who don't read!*

*Encouraging reading is a great thing to do. I usually read books but thought I would experiment with an audiobook and now listen to it on the way to work. I am really enjoying the book I received and looking forward to seeing where the story goes.*

*It was a new experience for me and a welcome one. I've been bemoaning my inability to find time to read due to the business of life (a common tale I am certain) and this was an unexpected gift as I could listen whilst travelling when reading would have been inappropriate or impossible. The particular text wasn't up my street per se but I enjoyed it none the less and have since downloaded other texts I think I will enjoy listening to. I used to participate in WBN but with life changes this has fallen by the wayside. Thanks for getting me back on track.*

*I really enjoyed the book and the app. I've been listening to it while out walking – great idea!*

*Was thrilled to bits to receive this. He's my daughter's favourite author too, so she's going to share with me.*

*Excellent experience. My first audiobook and found it to be the right medium to complement my hectic lifestyle.*



89% of respondents were pleased to receive the audiobook.



48% of respondents enjoyed listening to the audiobook.



81% of respondents would like to listen to more audiobooks.

Survey responses also highlighted some practical issues with the download, including clarity on the download process, signing up for the app, and the time limit on the download code meaning some people were unable to use it. As this was a pilot offer, these issues can be examined and resolved for future offers.

## **8. World Book Night in the Future**

World Book Night has once again been successful and continues to benefit both the recipients of the books and the communities within and around the organisations that give them out. Results from our targeted giveaway prove the positive impact of receiving a book and the role that World Book Night plays in engaging non- and lapsed readers with reading.

The success of World Book Night on social media channels and in the press further demonstrates that the programme engages a high number of people in using the day as an opportunity to celebrate reading.

Key objectives for the future will include:

- To further extend our reach to those who life chances we can help by inspiring them to become readers.
- To build on the successes of the press and social media campaign to engage more people in celebrating books.
- To encourage more engagement from libraries, bookshops, businesses and charities to access more readers and non-readers.
- To integrate an audiobook strategy into the World Book Night model.
- To embed fundraising activity into the programme and promote this in our communications, for 2020 and beyond.

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- Usborne
- Walker Books
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