



BNC RESEARCH

Canadians Reading Canadians

How interested are **Canadians**
in reading **Canadian** content?



BOOKNET
CANADA

Methodology

This study is a part of [The Canadian Book Consumer](#), an ongoing BookNet Canada initiative that tracks book-buying behaviour in Canada. All 2017 data was collected in June 2017.

To collect data from a representative Canadian panel, BookNet Canada contracted a third-party online survey provider. All respondents were English-speaking Canadian residents aged 18 years or older who purchased a minimum of one book, regardless of format, in the prior month. The panel included women and men from all regions of Canada.

The methodology between our first [Canadians Reading Canadians report in 2012](#) and Canadians Reading Canadians 2017 differs slightly, as the 2012 data was obtained through a different third-party online panel and comprised a larger sample set of monthly data that was rolled into a quarterly panel. The 2012 data comprised 1,005 respondents while 2017 data comprised 500 respondents. This represents a 4% margin of error at a 95% confidence level.

The 2012 report itself was based off a 2002 study conducted by the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP), *Canadian Book Buying Habits: What Influences Purchases?* BookNet Canada replicated the ACP study's questions, creating the unique opportunity to measure how opinions have changed over time. The ACP respondent pool was 944, and all respondents had to have bought a book, regardless of format, in the three months prior to filling out the survey. Throughout this report, we will refer to the ACP study where it provides a useful comparison to the 2012 and 2017 data. We appreciate the support of the ACP in giving us permission to use their data.

Introduction

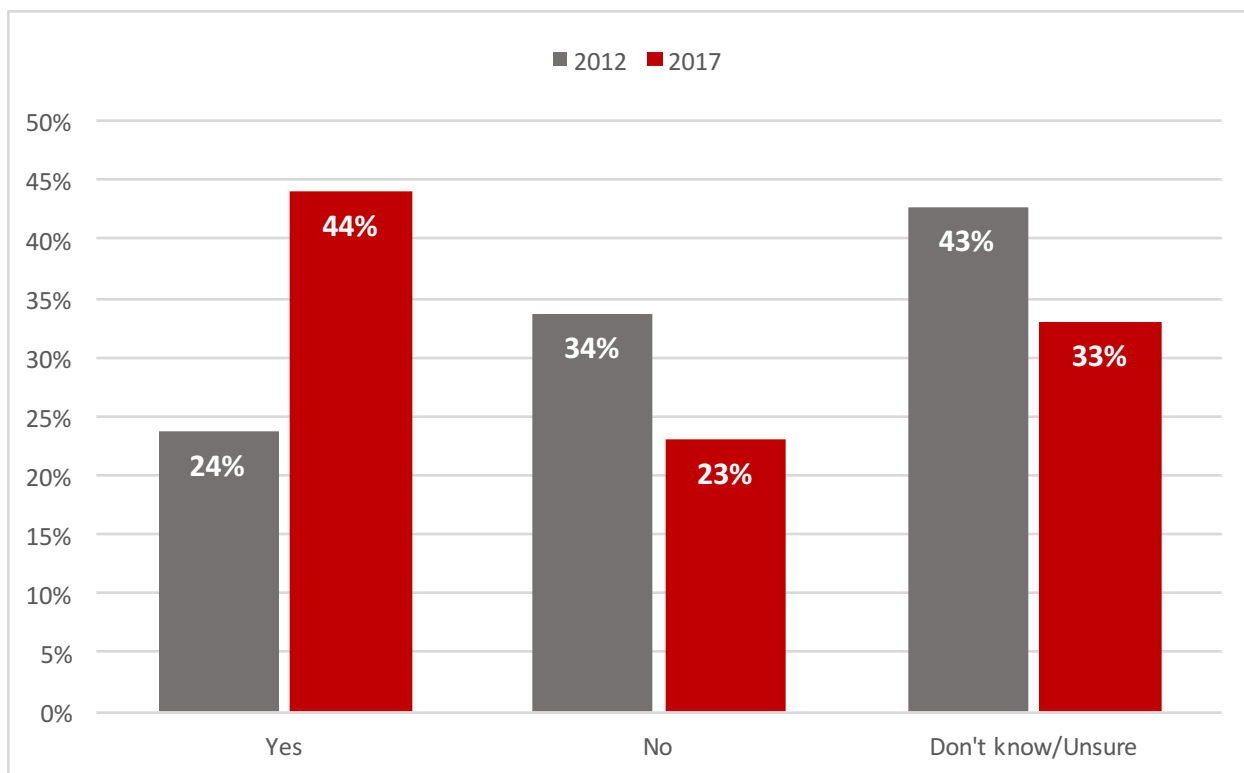
To help celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, BookNet Canada is revisiting a study that was initially conducted in 2012. The goal of both studies was to learn about respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards Canadian authors and subject matter. The results present an opportunity to examine Canadians' knowledge of and interest in Canadian books from a variety of angles. We can also consider how these impressions have changed over time by comparing our 2017 results to two similar consumer studies: one published by BookNet Canada in 2012 and one published by the Association of Canadian Publishers in 2002.

While it is important to know that the methodology differs slightly between surveys (see Methodology above), many of the questions are the same and the 2012 and 2017 studies were both conducted online to Canadians over the age of 18 who had purchased a book in any format in the prior month.

Who's Reading Canadian Books?

The percentage of Canadian book buyers who have read a Canadian author in the past year has gone up notably over the last five years, from only 24% in 2012 to 44% in 2017, which may be partly the result of an increased interest in Canadian authors for Canada 150 or because of the popularity of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* being produced for television (see Name That Author below). Similarly, those who were unsure has declined from 43% in 2012 to 33% in 2017.

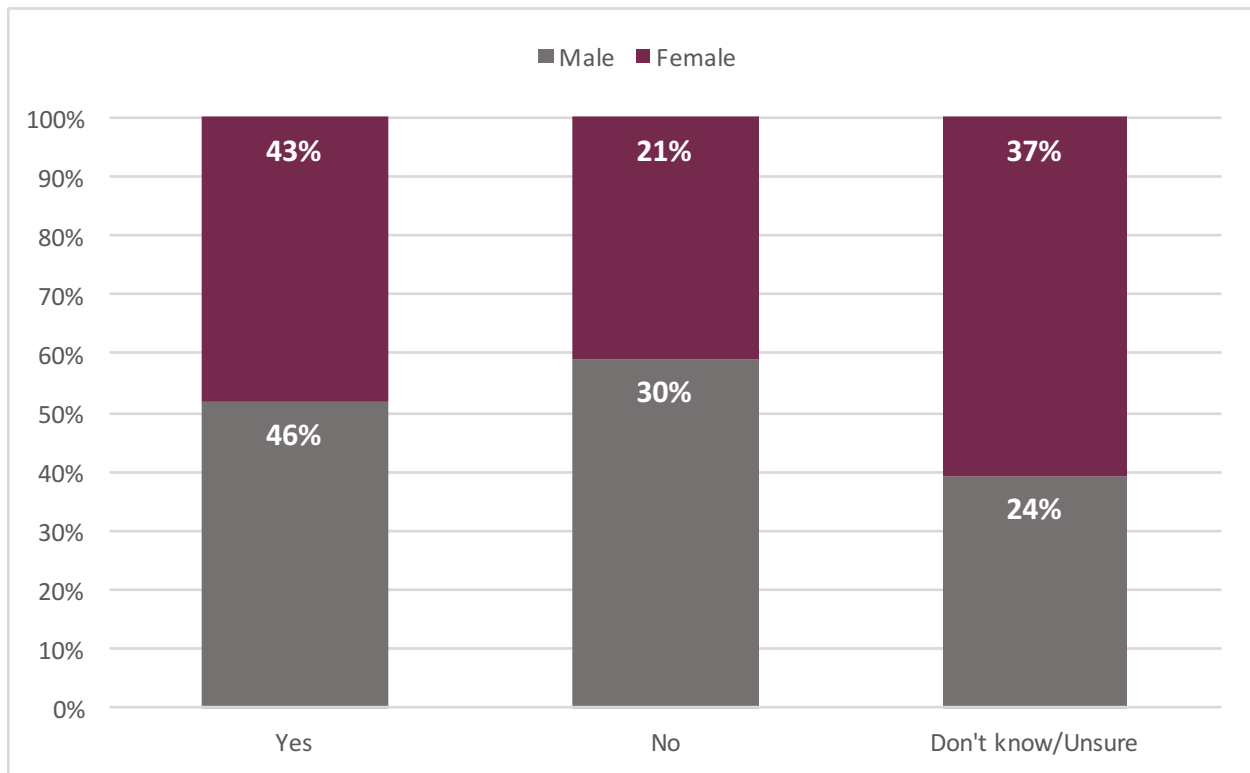
BOOK BUYERS READING CANADIAN AUTHORS



Question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? (N 2012=1,005, N 2017=500)

When we break this data down by gender we find that women and men are fairly evenly split on the question, though men have a slight lead.

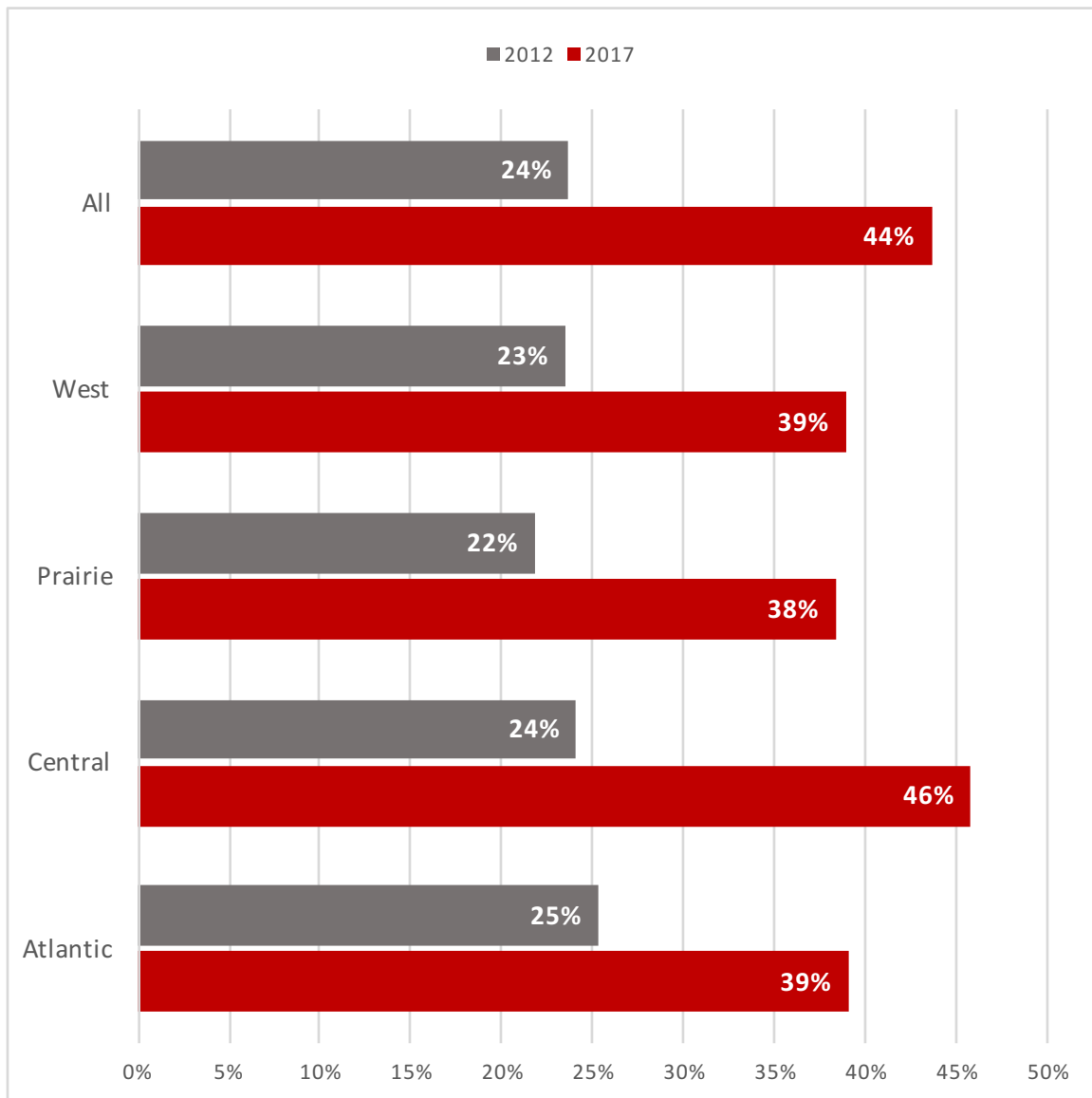
BOOK BUYERS READING CANADIAN AUTHORS – BY GENDER



Question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? Crosstab question: Gender (N 2017=500)

The percentage of book buyers reading Canadian-authored books continues to be fairly similar across all regions of the country. In 2012, the Atlantic region had the highest percentage of those who answered “Yes” by a small margin; in 2017, Central Canada had the most at 46%.

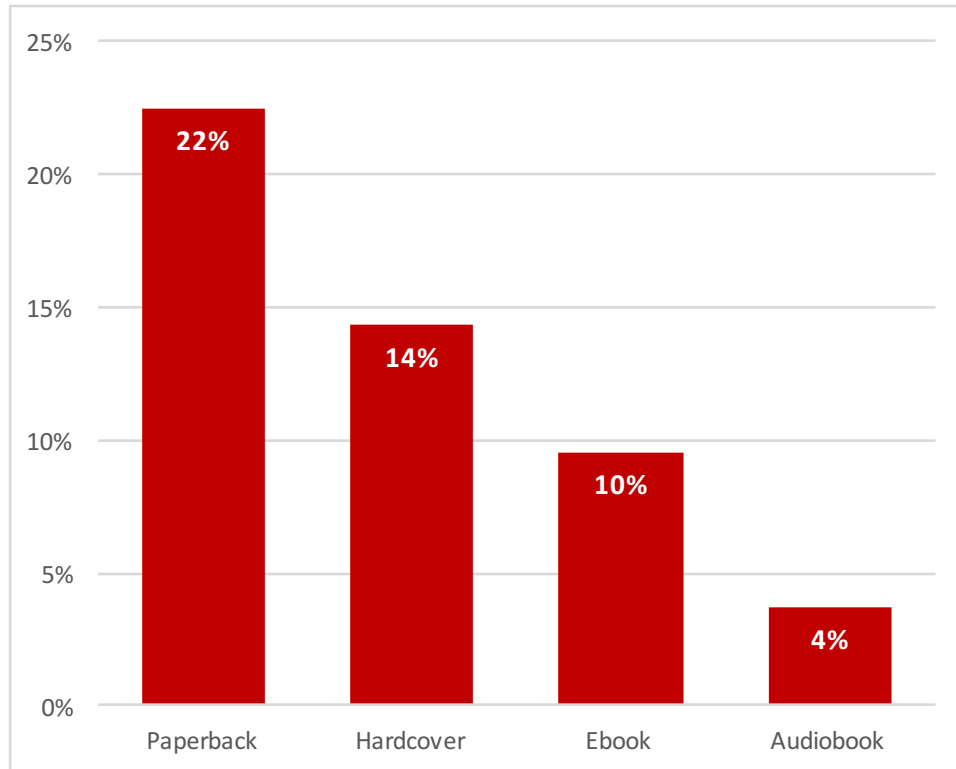
BOOK BUYERS READING CANADIAN AUTHORS – BY REGION



Question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? Crosstab question: Province/State of Residence? (N 2012=1,005, N 2017=500)

The graph below represents the formats purchased by readers of Canadian-authored titles.

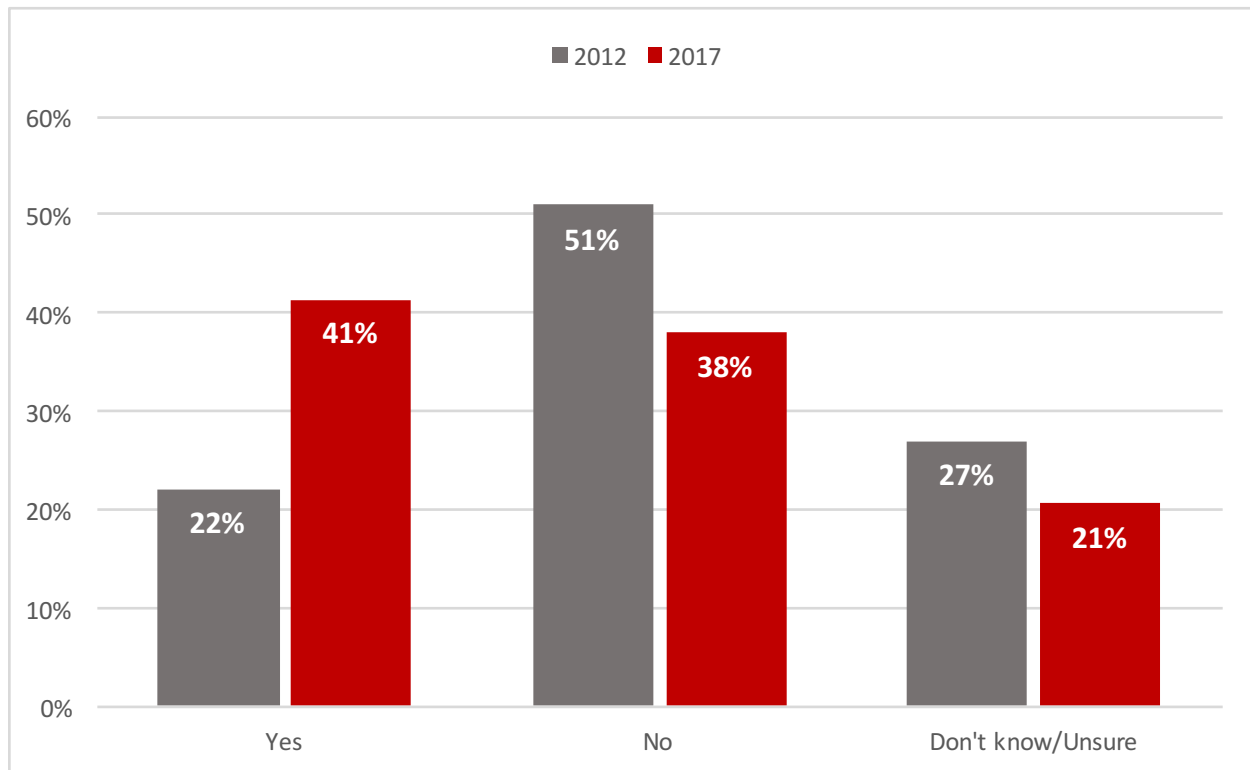
FORMATS PURCHASED BY READERS OF CANADIAN-AUTHORED TITLES



Question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? Crosstab question: Please indicate the format of this book. (Please select all that apply.) (N 2017=500 respondents, 735 purchases)

We also asked if book buyers had read a Canadian subject in the past year and found that this has gone up drastically since 2012, from 22% to 41%.

BOOK BUYERS READING CANADIAN SUBJECTS

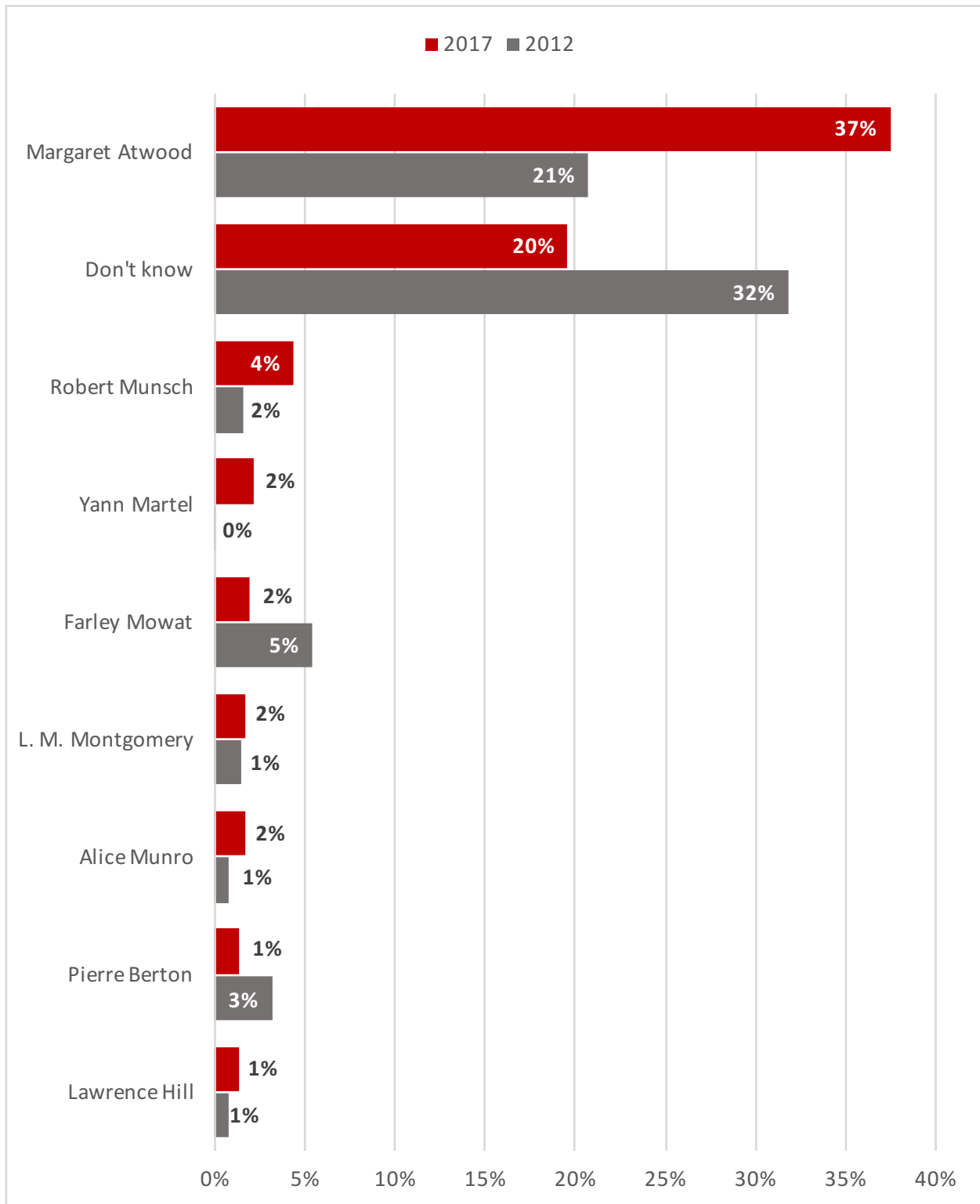


Question: Have you read a book about a Canadian subject in the last year? (N 2012=1,005, N 2017=500)

Name That Author! (a.k.a. Margaret Atwood Takes it All)

When we asked book buyers in 2012 if they could name a Canadian author, 32% of respondents said they couldn't and 21% named Margaret Atwood (the highest percentage for any Canadian author by far). In 2017, possibly as a result of *The Handmaid's Tale's* adaptation as a popular television series, those who identified Margaret Atwood increased to 37% (far above Robert Munsch, who came in second at 4%) and even managed to outnumber those who can't name any Canadian authors at all (20%). A handful of other authors, including Yann Martel and Alice Munro, all came in around 2%.

MOST POPULAR NAMED CANADIAN AUTHORS



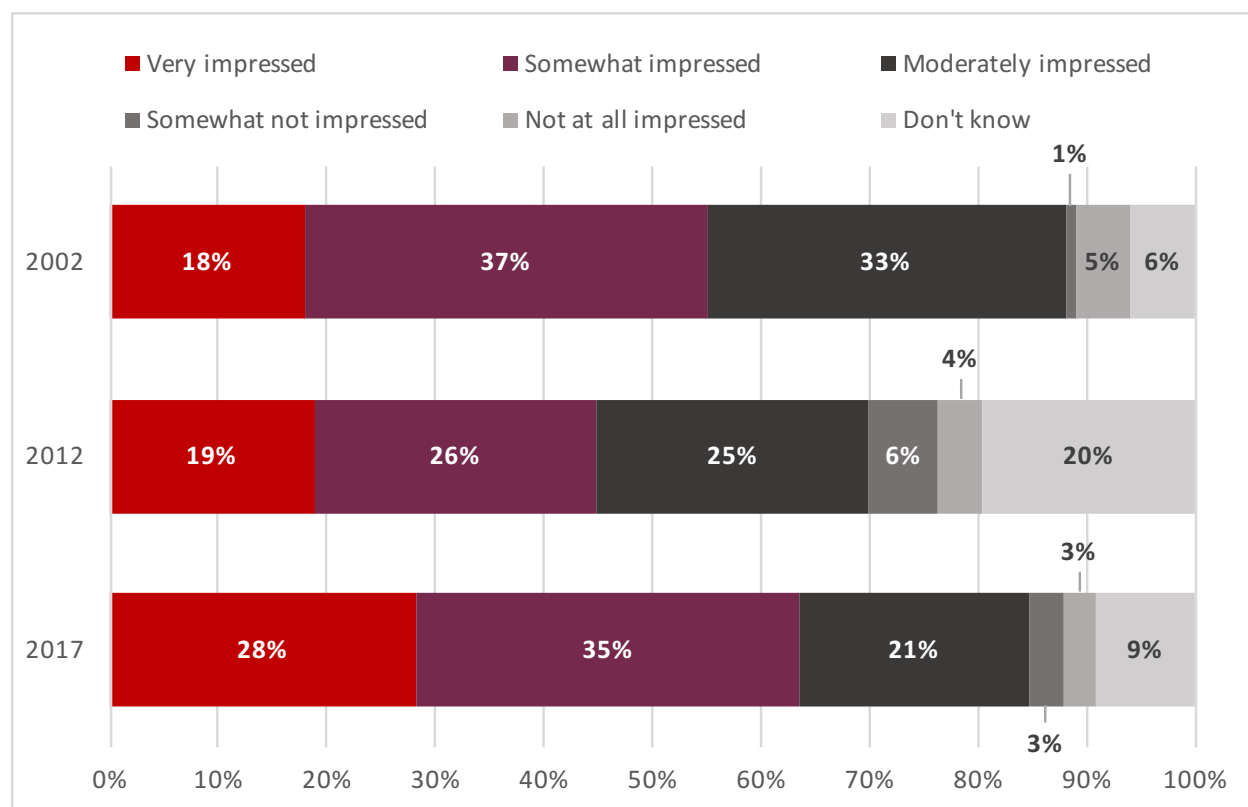
Question: Can you tell us the name of a Canadian author? (Open-ended) (N 2017=500 respondents, 526 responses; N 2012=1,005 respondents, 990 responses)

Perceptions of Canadian Books

Over the past 15 years, impressions of Canadian authors have improved. In 2017, 84% of book buyers were “moderately,” “somewhat,” or “very” impressed with Canadian-authored books, compared to only 70% in 2012.

One distinct difference between the three sets of data is that the percentage of respondents who did not know enough about Canadian-authored books to even have an impression was higher in 2012 — 20% compared to 9% in 2017 — so both awareness and favourable impressions are on the rise.

IMPRESSIONS OF BOOKS WRITTEN BY CANADIAN AUTHORS



Question: Thinking generally about your impressions of books written by Canadian authors, how impressed would you say you are? (N 2002=990, 2012=1,005, 2017=500)

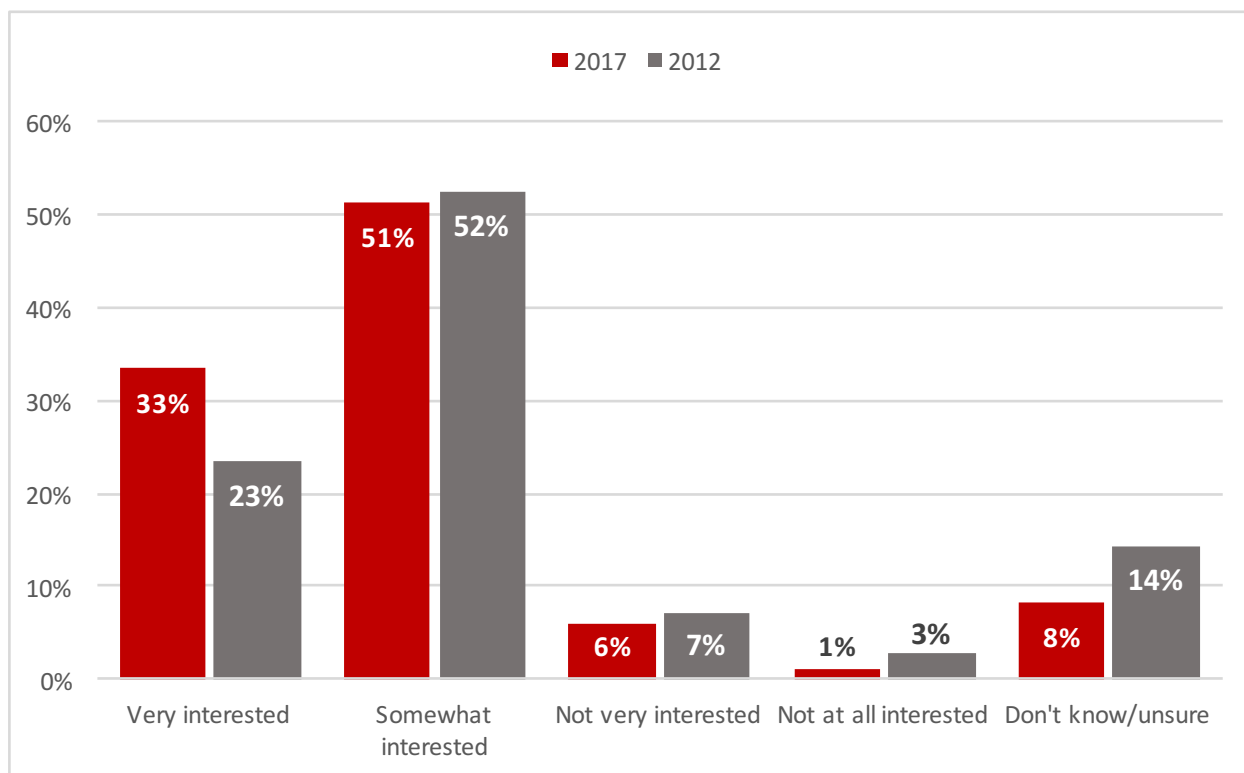
While responses continue to be both positive and negative, we did find a notable decline between 2012 and 2017 in the number of comments about Canadian books being either too expensive or too difficult to find (although one such comment is included above). It may be that the Canadian identifier is becoming more visible throughout the supply chain. Regardless, they reiterate the importance of ensuring that Canadian books are marked appropriately in their metadata in order to support discoverability.

Gauging Interest

We asked Canadian book buyers how interested they are in reading books by Canadian authors and the majority (84%) said they are either “very” or “somewhat interested,” which is up from 75% in 2012.

Relatedly, the Department of Canadian Heritage conducted an opinion survey on Canadian books, film, periodicals, and music in June 2012 that found that 92% of respondents agreed it was important for Canadians to have access to Canadian books¹.

INTEREST IN READING CANADIAN AUTHORS



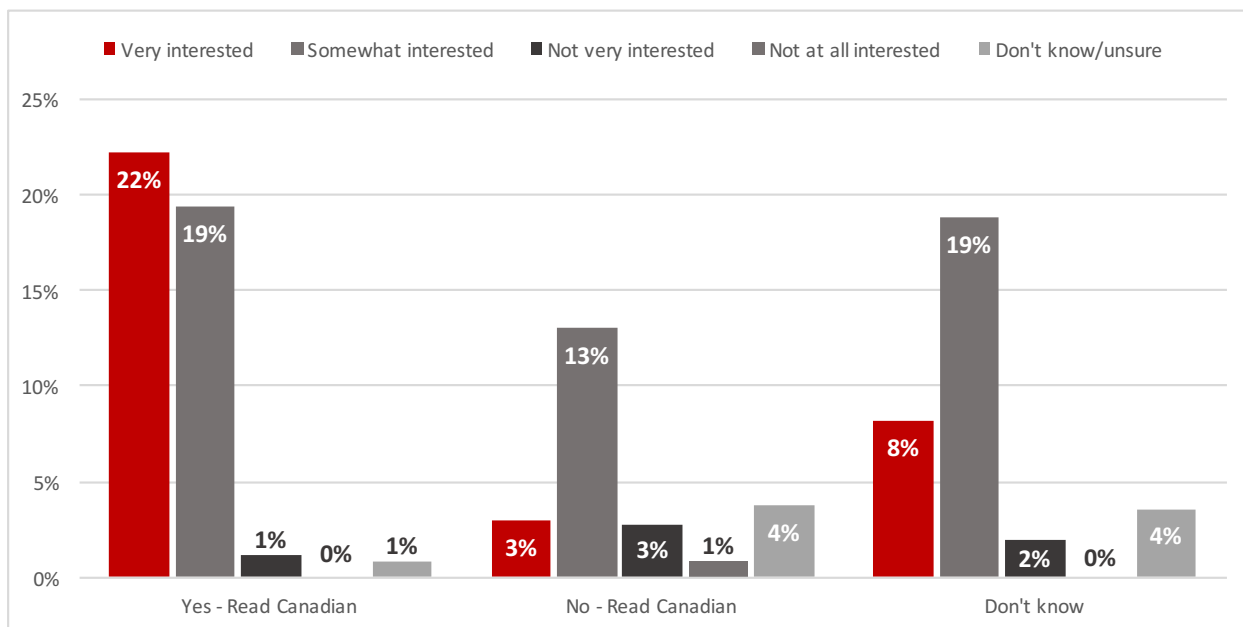
Question: How interested are you in reading books by Canadian authors? (N 2017=500, 2012= 1,005)

¹Department of Canadian Heritage, “Canadian Books, Film, Periodicals and Music Opinion Survey.” September 2012, p.48. http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/canadian_heritage/2012/090-11/index.html.

We also looked at the correlation between those who had read a Canadian author in the last year and those who are interested in reading Canadian authors. Unsurprisingly, 41% of respondents who had read a Canadian-authored book are either “very” or “somewhat” interested.

Where it gets more interesting is that 16% of respondents who had not read a Canadian author in the prior year are either “very” or “somewhat” interested in doing so, and an impressive 27% of respondents who didn’t know if they had read a Canadian author are either “very” or “somewhat” interested as well. If we combine these two groups, 43% of book buyers are interested in reading Canadian books but aren’t already, or don’t know if they are. This could be a missed opportunity that perhaps points to a shortage of identifying information on products or retail displays (physical and online) that showcase Canadian authors.

INTEREST IN READING CANADIAN AUTHORS BY READERSHIP OF CANADIAN-AUTHORED BOOKS



Question: How interested are you in reading books by Canadian authors? Crosstab question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? (N 2017=500)

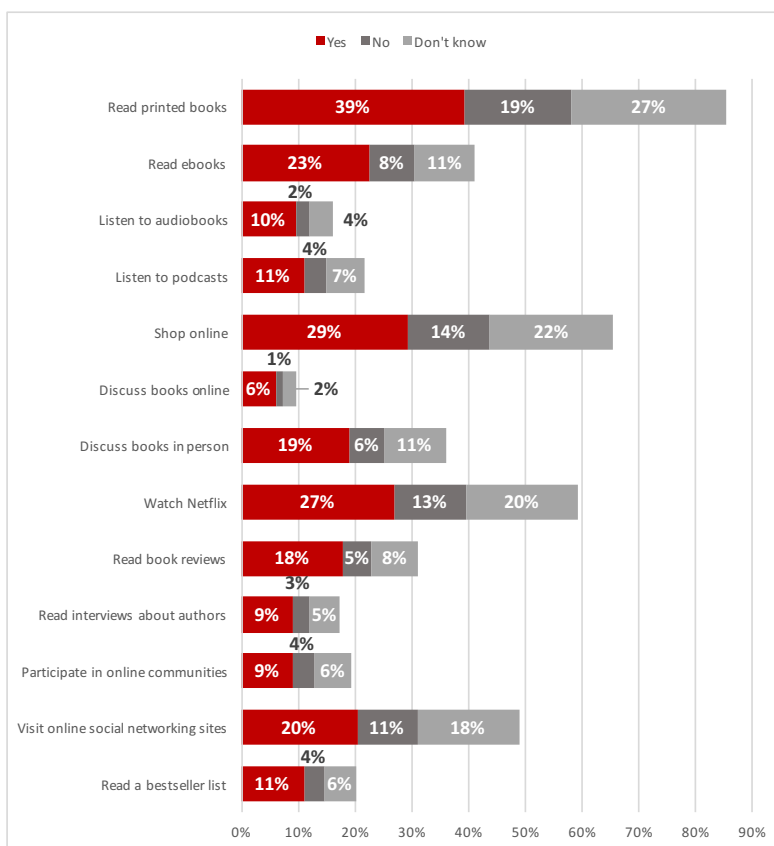
Leisure Activities and Social Media

How do Canadian book buyers spend their free time? The following graphs look at the activities book buyers participate in, broken out by those who have read a Canadian-authored book in the past year versus those who haven't or don't know if they have. We also looked at the data for those who read Canadian subjects and found that the results are almost identical to those who read Canadian authors.

Compared to those who don't read Canadian books, or don't know if they do, readers of Canadian books are more likely to:

- listen to audiobooks (10% vs. 6%);
- discuss books in person (19% vs. 17%); and,
- read bestseller lists (11% vs. 10%).

LEISURE ACTIVITIES BY READERSHIP OF CANADIAN-AUTHORED BOOKS

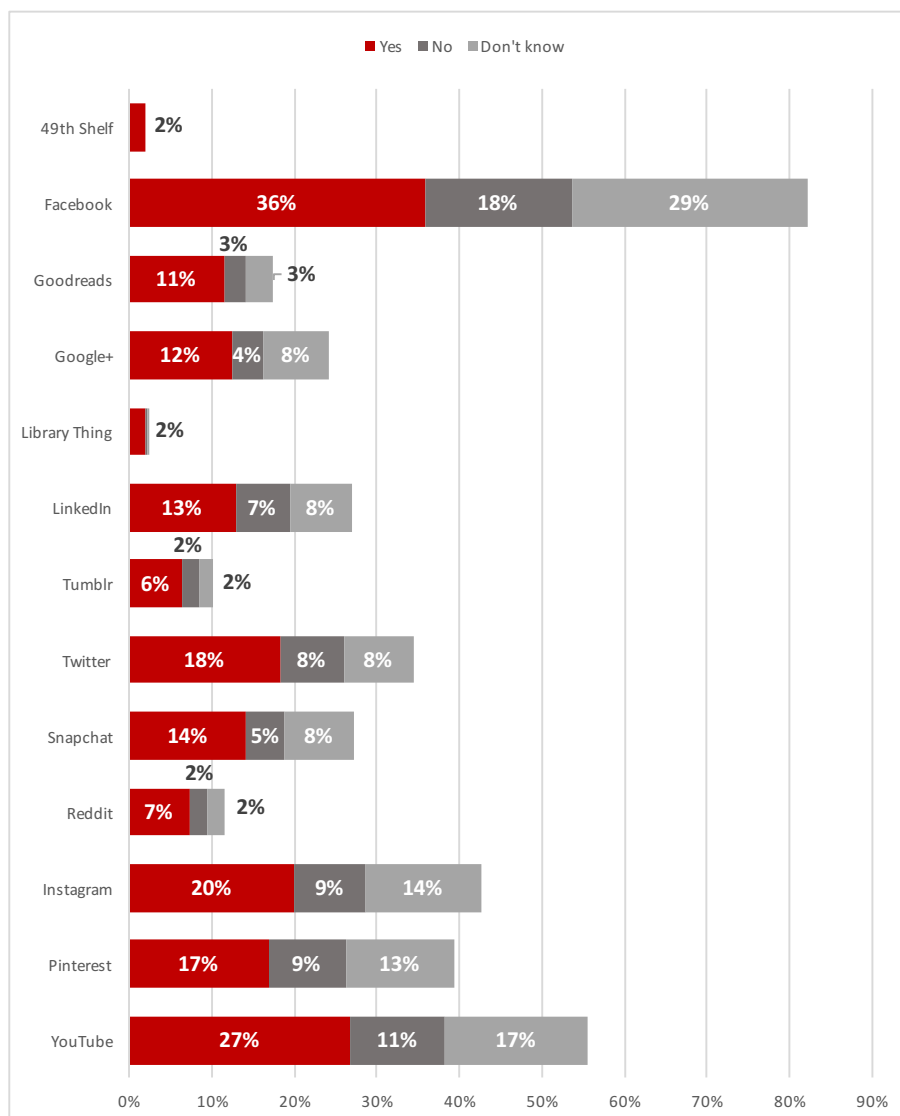


Question: Which of the following activities do you do at least once in a typical month? (Please select all that apply). Crosstab question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? (N 2017=500 respondents, 2,363 responses)

We find that book buyers who read Canadian-authored books are fairly involved in social media, with Facebook being the most-used platform followed by YouTube. When compared to book buyers who either don't read Canadian books or don't know if they do, they are more likely to participate in:

- Goodreads (11% vs. 6%);
- Twitter (18% vs. 16%); and,
- Snapchat (14% vs. 13%).

USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS BY READERSHIP OF CANADIAN-AUTHORED BOOKS

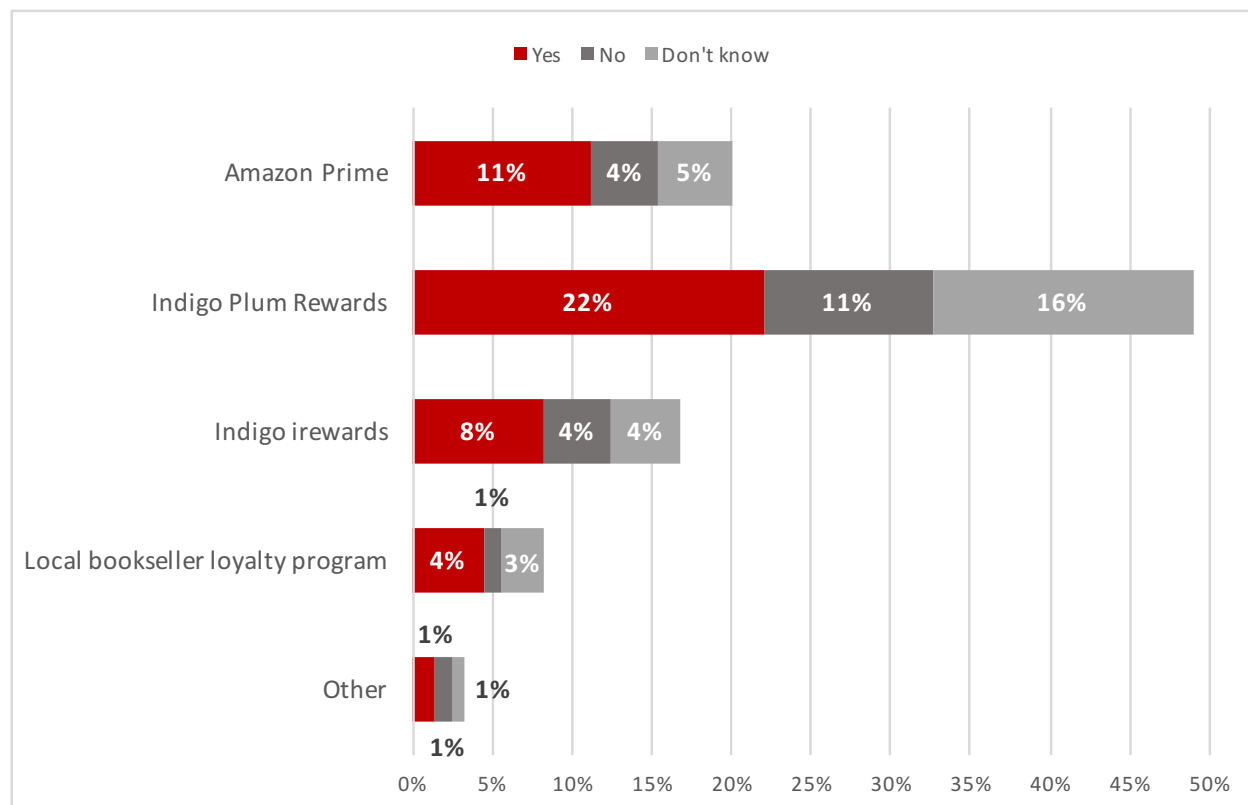


Question: In which of the following online social networks, communities, or sharing sites do you currently participate? (Please select all that apply). Crosstab question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? (N 2017=500 respondents, 1,942 responses)

Loyalty Programs

Loyalty programs are fairly popular amongst those who read Canadian authors. Of these, 30% subscribe to one or both of the two Indigo programs (Plum and irewards), and 11% to Amazon Prime.

LOYALTY PROGRAM PARTICIPATION BY READERSHIP OF CANADIAN-AUTHORED BOOKS



Question: Do you participate in any book-related awards/loyalty programs? (Please select all that apply).
 Crosstab question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? (N 2017=500 respondents, 515 responses)

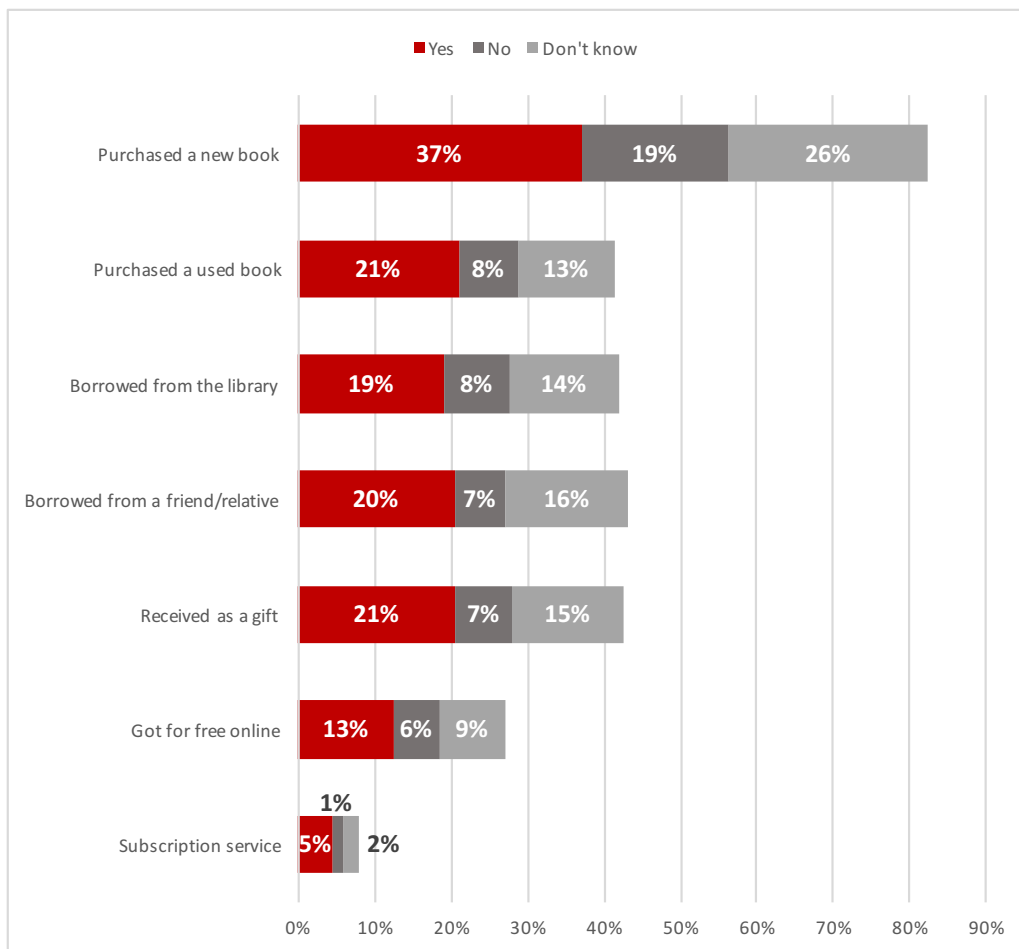
How Book Buyers Acquire Books

We asked book buyers to share all the ways they have obtained books over the last year, either for themselves or as a gift. The results are broken out by those who have read a Canadian-authored book versus those who haven't or don't know if they have.

Most book buyers are purchasing their books new (37%), but a notable amount are buying used, borrowing from the library or friends, or receiving books as a gift, all of which account for 19-21% each.

Readers of Canadian books are slightly more likely to use a subscription service — 5% versus 3% — than those who don't or don't know if they do, though this is still low compared to other methods.

BOOK ACQUISITION BY READERSHIP OF CANADIAN-AUTHORED TITLES

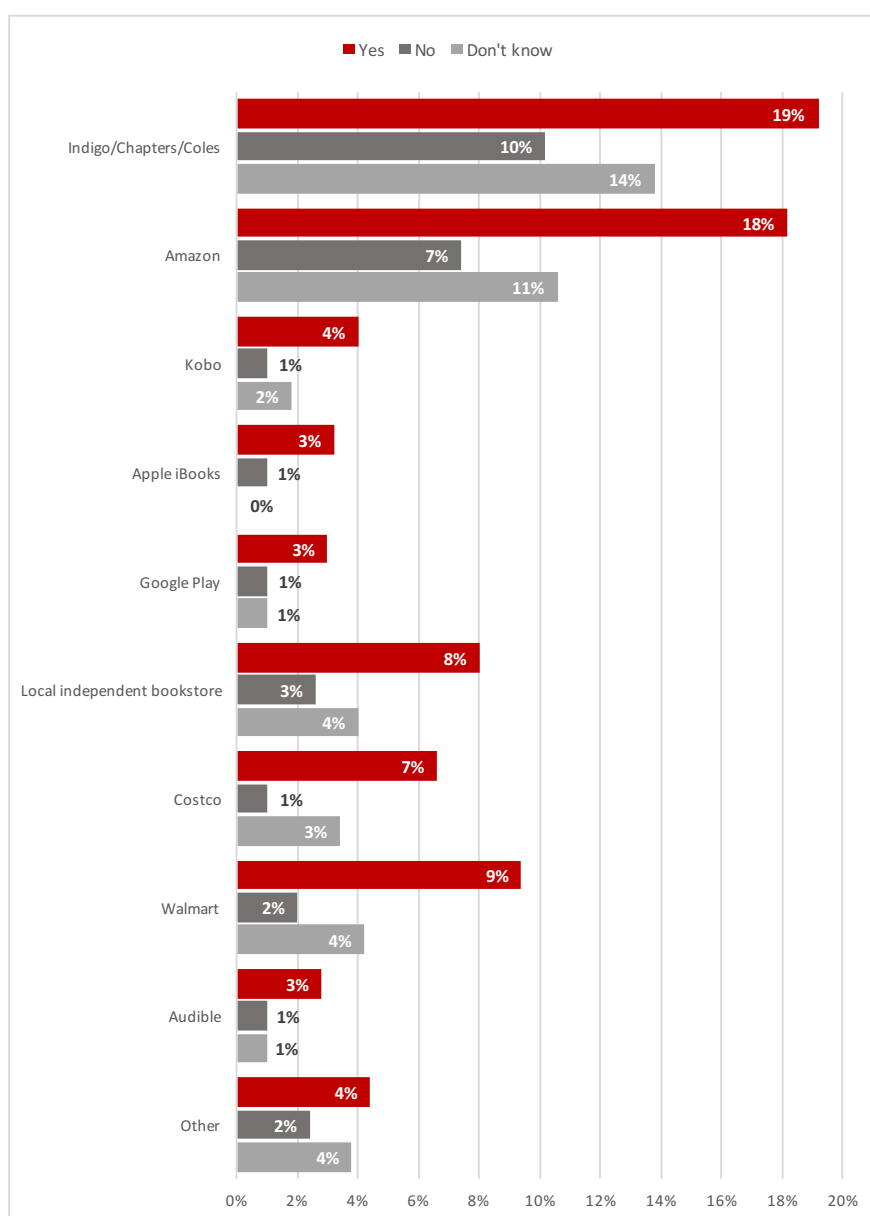


Question: In which of the following ways have you obtained books in the last 12 months, either for yourself or for a gift? (Please select all that apply). Crosstab question: Have you read a book by a Canadian author in the last year? (N 2017=500 respondents, 1,436 responses)

Where Book Buyers Shop

We asked our panel of respondents, all of whom had purchased a book in the prior month, where they made their purchases. It may not be surprising to see that while those who read Canadian books are much more likely to shop in the bigger bookstores, such as Amazon and Indigo, as well as big box stores like Costco and Walmart, they are also more likely to shop in their local independent bookstore.

PURCHASING CHANNELS BY READERSHIP OF CANADIAN-AUTHORED BOOKS



Question: Where did you buy your books in the last month? (Please select all that apply.) (N 2017=500 respondents, 755 responses)

Conclusion

Almost half of Canadian book buyers who either did not read a Canadian book in the past year or did not know if they had read one (43%) are telling us that they are interested in doing so. At the same time, both awareness and favourable impressions of Canadian books have risen since 2012.

For Canadian publishers, retailers, libraries, and content creators, the challenge continues to be one of discoverability. How do we best make sure that book buyers and readers can discover Canadian authors and subjects?

An excellent first step for publishers is to ensure they are providing rich bibliographic data that flags Canadian contributors and identifies regional themes. When the Canadian indicator is used, databases like BNC BiblioShare can flag Canadian content for special use by websites like [49th Shelf](#), and it provides guidance for the creation of Canadian bestseller lists in the media. It also makes available the data retailers, libraries, and bloggers need to showcase Canadian content. Further information on how to use the Canadian indicator can be found on the [BookNet Canada website](#). The appropriate use of subject codes and keywords that identify Canadian or regional themes is also an efficient way to communicate this information to retailers and the book buyers who are looking for Canadian content.

For retailers, whether physical or digital, chains or independents, we encourage you to take stock of how accessible Canadian content is within your store. Are users able to limit searches by Canadian content? Does a Canadian flag or other indicator highlight Canadian titles? Do you mark Canadian authors on your displays? Give consideration to how buyers may be able to more easily find both national and regional titles.

Help celebrate Canada's 150th year by waving that flag high and highlighting content as Canadian. Book buyers are telling us they want to read books by Canadian authors and about Canadian subjects, so let's work on discoverability and help them in their search.

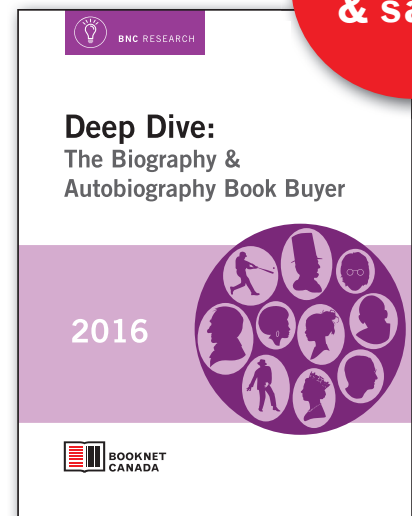
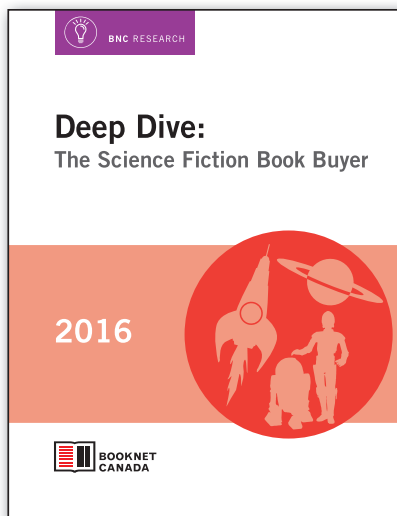
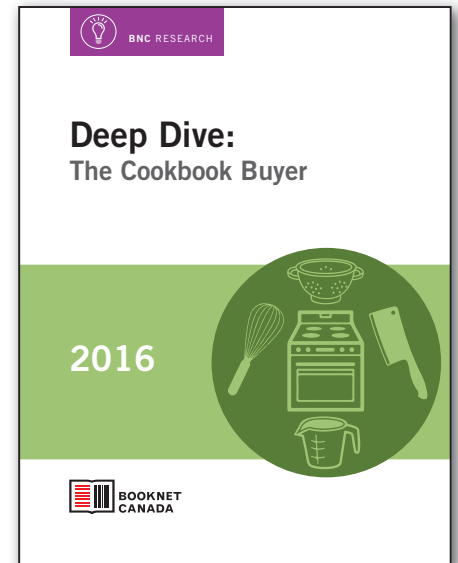
Dive right in

Deep Dive Genre Studies

In this series of in-depth studies, we combine sales and consumer data alongside thoughtful analysis to give you essential guides for the top-selling subject categories in Canada.

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