



# 10 FACTS ABOUT READING 2024

**This information package by the Finnish Reading Centre is an up-to date and comprehensive overview of the literacy situation in Finland. It is a compilation of over 50 different studies, statistics and reports concerning the literacy development of Finnish people and their reading habits.**



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# Children's and young people's literacy is adults' responsibility

**Finnish people's literacy has been a hot topic in recent years. Particularly worrying has been the decline in literacy among children and young people, which is also reflected in studies and statistics.**

Literacy is monitored through international studies, the top rankings of which Finnish people are accustomed to dominating. According to the latest PISA study on ninth-graders' literacy, this is no longer the case. The decrease in Finnish young people's literacy was the fifth largest of all the countries included in the comparison.<sup>1</sup> The decline in literacy is also reflected in the PIRLS study, which measures the skills of fourth-graders.<sup>2</sup> According to studies, the level of literacy has decreased throughout the country, in all socio-economic groups and across genders.

The most significant factor in the development of children's literacy is the reading habits established at home.<sup>3</sup> The importance that parents' reading habits have for their children's literacy has increased. Statistically, the more parents spend time reading at home, the more literate their children are.

However, parents read less than before and few-

er parents like to read. Half of fourth-graders' parents wish they had more time to read.<sup>4</sup> 16% of fourth-graders say that they never actually see their parent or guardian reading a book. The parents of almost every fifth child say that they do not like reading. As the reading of parents decreases, the concern now is that children do not get in the habit of reading since they do not have an example to follow.<sup>5</sup>

On the positive side, reading is still one of the most popular ways Finnish people spent their time. 82% of Finns say that they either love or like to read books or listen to audiobooks.<sup>6</sup> Three out of four Finns have started a print book within the last month, and e-book and audiobook subscription services have been used by more than one in five.<sup>7</sup> However, the decline in reading is visible in the statistics. Almost one third of Finnish adults do not read even one book a year in their spare time; 75% of women and 61% of men had read a book in 2022.<sup>8</sup>

The decline in adults' reading habits also affects the development of literacy among children and young people. Adults should pay attention to how they value literature and reading: how they talk about their reading hobby and how books are included in daily life. Parents are the most important example for their children's reading habits, but any one of us can be an ambassador for reading and inspire others to read and strengthen their literacy. Adults are responsible for turning the trend in Finnish literacy.

1 Hiltunen, Ahonen, Hienonen et al.: PISA 2022 ensituloksia. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2023.

2 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

3 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

4 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

5 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

6 Suomi lukee 2023. Kirjakauppaliitto 2023.

7 Suomi lukee 2023. Kirjakauppaliitto 2023.

8 Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT): Elinolotilasto verkkojulkaisu. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus.

# Maternity and child health clinics create reading routines for families

**The number of early experiences related to reading has a clear link to children's literacy and learning.<sup>1,2</sup>**

Both Finnish and international studies show that reading habits established before children go to school are an indication of the development of their literacy up until adolescence.<sup>3,4</sup> Despite the benefits of reading, more than a quarter of the children in Finland are not often read books at home.<sup>5</sup> Studies indicate that reading is a hobby in which highly educated families in particular engage.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, reading should be supported in maternity and child health clinics so that the whole age group can be reached equally.

Lukulahja lapselle is a national book gift programme launched in 2019 where all newborn children are given the gift of a book at a maternity and child health clinic. The goal of the gift is to ensure equal opportunities for reading in all families and to support the linguistic development of children by encouraging parents to read regularly to their child. The book bag, compiled in multidisciplinary cooperation, supports families' reading habits in a diverse way. The bag contains a book of nursery rhymes for the baby's first moments, a bedtime story book for the

coming years, and information for the parents on the importance of early reading. The book bag is given to families during the child's first year, and its purpose is to increase shared reading moments and establish a reading habit within the family.<sup>7</sup>

In an impact study conducted after the first three pilot years of the book gift programme, two-thirds of the families who received the Lukulahja lapselle book bag said that the book bag increased reading in the family: 36% of families said they had read more than usual, and 27% said they had started reading after receiving the book bag. In families where reading had started thanks to the book bag, reading had become a regular part of daily life; up to 77% of families said that they now read at least once a day. Of all families, 64% reported the same.

A book gift given to all families at maternity and child health clinics is important because, for 5% of families who receive the Lukulahja lapselle book bag, the books in the bag are the only children's books in the family.<sup>8</sup> The book bag also includes an invitation to a library, guiding families to borrow books and read them at home. This helps ensure that the reading habit takes root and continues.

When examining the effects of the Lukulahja lapselle programme, public health nurses play a key role. Families can only be reached if the nurses commit

1 Ukkola & Metsämuuronen: Matematiikan ja äidinkielen taidot alkuopetuksen aikana – Perusopetuksen oppimistulosten pitkäjäsenarviointi 2018–2020. KARVI 2023.

2 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

3 Ulvinen, Psyridou, Lerkkanen ym.: Developmental leisure reading profiles and their association with reading skills across Grades 1–9. Learning and Individual Differences (109, artikkeli 102387) 2024.

4 Brown, Wang & McLeod: Reading with 1–2 year olds impacts academic achievement at 8–11 years. Early Childhood Research Quarterly (58, s. 198–207) 2022.

5 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

6 see, for example, Ukkola & Metsämuuronen: Matematiikan ja äidinkielen taidot alkuopetuksen aikana – Perusopetuksen oppimistulosten pitkäjäsenarviointi 2018–2020. KARVI 2023.

7 Lukulahja lapselle -ohjelma. Lukukeskus.

8 Lukulahja lapselle -vaikuttavuustutkimuksen tuloksia. Lukukeskus 2021.

to giving out the book bags. According to the impact study, all nurses who participated in the programme believed that the Lukulahja lapselle book bag will encourage families to read. It is noteworthy that more than half of the nurses said they wanted to improve their own competence and learn more about the importance of reading. This means that nurses are well aware of their role in enabling and encouraging reading in families. According to the nurses, talking about reading has set a positive tone for the entire client relationship, making it easier to work with the family to solve any other issues the family might have.<sup>9</sup>

The families also consider the maternity and child health clinic as a natural instructor in reading. Nearly

half of the families said that they would like the maternity and child clinic to continue informing them about the benefits of reading in the future, and more than half of the families would like to continue receiving books suitable for children.<sup>10</sup>

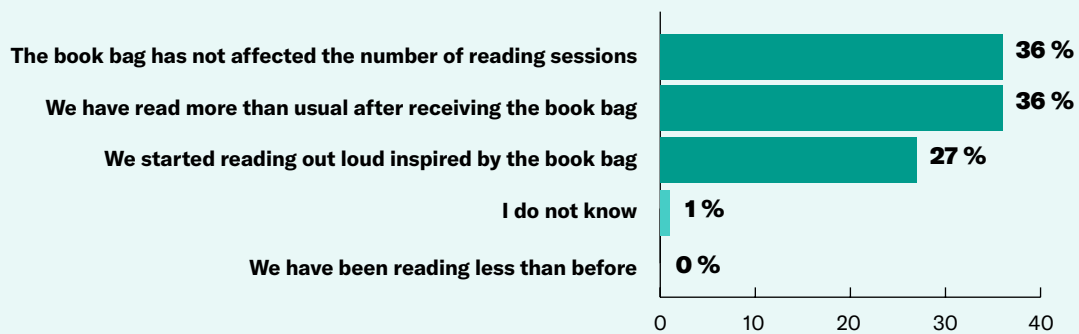
All the nurses and almost all the families who responded to the survey wanted the book bag programme to continue in the maternity and child health clinics.<sup>11</sup> This wish has been fulfilled so far. The gifting of book bags in maternity and child health clinics has continued since the Lukulahja book bag programme was included in the government programme in autumn 2023.

9 Lukulahja lapselle -vaikuttavuustutkimuksen tuloksia. Lukukeskus 2021.

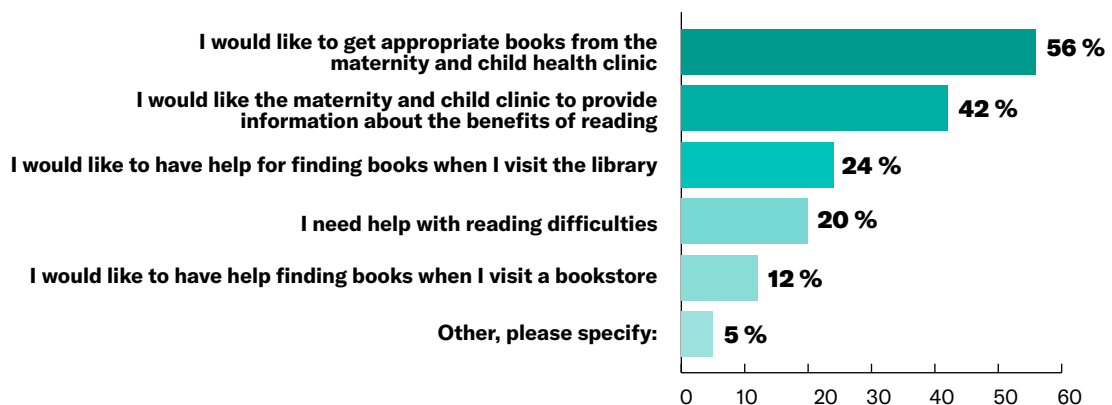
10 Lukulahja lapselle -vaikuttavuustutkimuksen tuloksia. Lukukeskus 2021.

11 Lukulahja lapselle -vaikuttavuustutkimuksen tuloksia. Lukukeskus 2021.

## How has the Lukulahja lapselle book bag affected families' reading habits?



## What kind of support do families need to support and inspire reading?



# Peace at school safeguards children's literacy

**The literacy of fourth-graders is monitored through the international PIRLS survey. Finland is still among the top countries in the PIRLS comparison, but there is a clear decline in the development of literacy.**

There are more people with poor literacy than before and the number of people with excellent literacy has fallen.<sup>1</sup> Only 14% of fourth-graders achieved an excellent level of literacy. In 2016, the percentage of fourth-graders with excellent literacy was still 18%. Particularly alarming is the fact that the share of children who read poorly has doubled in 10 years and the share of children who read very poorly has doubled in the last 5 years.<sup>2</sup>

The number of children who read has also decreased; the share of those who said that they hardly ever read or never read was 15% in leisure reading and 17% in research reading. The amount of children who read this seldom has increased by 5% in the past five years.<sup>3</sup>

Segregation of literacy can lead to considerable differences in the literacy of children of the same age. For example, a study looking at reading fluency in Swedish-speaking children found that a first-grader

with good literacy could read more fluently than a sixth-grader with poor literacy.<sup>4</sup>

The decrease in children's literacy is explained by both attitudes towards reading and the prerequisites for reading and getting interested in books. The learning environment also explains the differences in literacy.<sup>5</sup>

Children who have a positive attitude towards reading have a higher level of literacy than those whose attitude is negative; the difference between children who like reading and those who do not like it is as much as 30 literacy points. The connection between reading attitudes and literacy is two-way: reading attitudes are reflected in literacy and, on the other hand, a child's level of literacy affects their attitude towards reading. Less than a quarter of Finnish pupils liked reading a lot, which is clearly less than the international average. On the other hand, even though Finnish children did not really like reading, their trust in their literacy was fourth strongest among the countries included in the comparison.<sup>6</sup>

Children's literacy levels are increasingly influenced by how reading is treated at home and what the reading habits at home are. Children whose parents enjoy reading achieve a significantly higher level of literacy than children whose parents do not really enjoy reading. The level of literacy is also affected by how many books there are at home or how often the family goes to the library.<sup>7</sup> The number of books at home is linked to the parents' habit of reading and, through that, the model of reading relayed to the child.<sup>8</sup>

1 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

2 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023, s. 29

3 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023, s. 42

4 Salmi, Risberg, Vataja & Kronberg: Rapport: Läsningen lever. Finlandssvenska elevernas läsning och skrivning från årskurs 1 till 7. Niilo Mäki Instituutti 2022.

5, 6 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

7 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

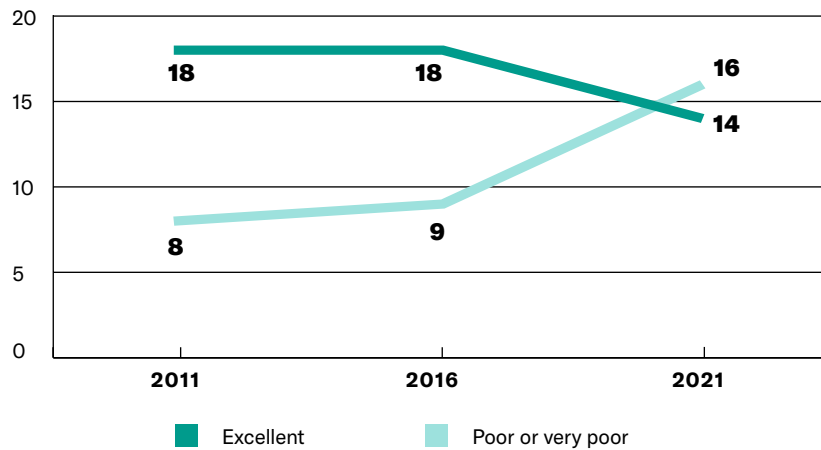
8 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

When assessing the learning environment of children, a noteworthy aspect is that children's literacy score is, on average, poorer the more often they feel bullied. In a school health survey on the well-being of children and young people, one in ten fourth- and fifth-graders said that they are bullied on a weekly basis<sup>9</sup>. In the PIRLS study, 5% of the respondents said the same. In the PIRLS study, the difference in literacy scores between those who were bullied weekly and those who were hardly ever bullied was more than 60 points<sup>10</sup>. The result highlights the importance of ensuring a safe learning environment for every

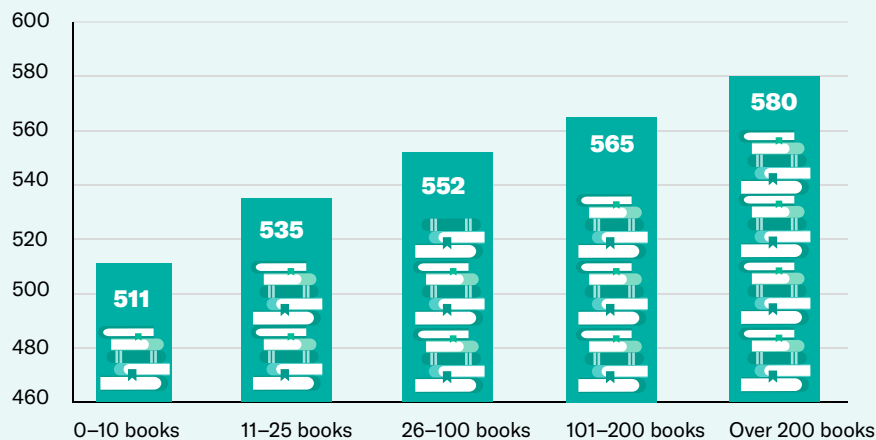
child and tackling bullying in a timely and sufficiently effective manner.

Closing the literacy gap among fourth-graders and turning literacy development into a positive one is crucial to achieving the goals of comprehensive school. If there are a growing number of fourth-graders in Finland whose level of literacy is poor, it is expected that, even at the end of comprehensive school, more and more will fail to achieve even a satisfactory level of literacy.

## In 2021, the number of people who read poorly or very poorly exceeded the number of people who read excellently



## Correlation between the number of books in the home and the literacy score in Finland 2021



9 Lasten ja nuorten hyvinvointi – Kouluterveyskysely 2023. THL 2023.

10 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

# Even half an hour of reading a day promotes literacy

**Even half an hour of daily leisure time spent reading significantly supports children's literacy.<sup>1</sup> Reading also strengthens the reader's skills in mathematics. It has been estimated that pupils who read daily get more than a year's head start on their basic skills compared to those who read less than once a week.<sup>2</sup>**

Reading fiction is linked to the best level of literacy.<sup>3</sup> Sustained reading of fiction started when the child starts school seems to predict the best reading fluency and reading comprehension skills at the end of elementary school. The reading does not need to be focused on prose: reading full-length texts such as comics and articles is useful and supports these skills. Reading digital texts also develops literacy, but it is essential to read long whole texts instead of fragmented ones.<sup>4</sup>

Statistically, reading has decreased among fourth-graders. Therefore, hearing that the reading of fiction has increased is delightful news.<sup>5</sup> Almost

one-third of fourth-graders read every day for fun. Still, only half of the fourth-graders read the amount required to strengthen literacy, that is, half an hour a day. At weekends, children say they still read a little less than on weekdays; as many as 57% of children read for less than half an hour a day.<sup>6</sup>

Reading should therefore be a regular and long-term part of daily life. It is the duty of adults to ensure that children of all ages have enough time and peace and quiet to read throughout primary school, both at school and especially at home.

In addition to peace for reading, children should have a wide range of reading material available. In the PIRLS comparison, a child's literacy score increases almost linearly as the number of children's books at the child's home increases.<sup>7</sup> It is an internationally observed fact that children who own a lot of books like reading more than others<sup>8</sup>, and these children have an increasing interest in reading and trust in their literacy.<sup>9</sup> Having plenty of books in your childhood continues to have a positive impact on literacy, mathematical skills and technology skills even when you reach adulthood, despite training acquired later.<sup>10</sup> This means that printed books still play an important role in enhancing children's literacy and we should make sure that all children have access to a wide range of literature.

1 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

2 Ukkola & Metsämuuronen: Matematiikan ja äidinkielen taidot alkuopetuksen aikana – Perusopetuksen oppimistulosten pitkäjäisarviointi 2018–2020. KARVI 2023.

3 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

4 Ulvinen, Psyridou, Lerkanen et al.: Developmental leisure reading profiles and their association with reading skills across Grades 1–9. *Learning and Individual Differences* (109, artikkeli 102387) 2024.

5 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

6 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

7 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

8 Book gifting impact study. Scottish Book Trust 2022.

9 Research evidence on reading for pleasure. Department for Education 2012.

10 Sikora, Evans & Kelley: Scholarly culture: How books in adolescence enhance adult literacy, numeracy and technology skills in 31 societies. *Social Science Research* (numero 77, s. 1–15) 2019.



# FACT 4:

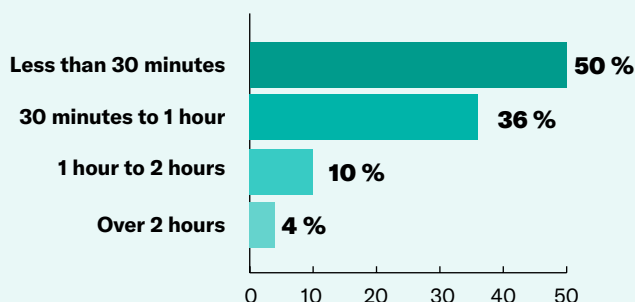
In addition to the books at home, the child's teacher's interest in books and reading has a big impact on children establishing reading habits. One in five fourth-graders feels that their teacher does not give them interesting reading material.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, as many as one in three teachers said that they read children's and young adults' books very rarely or not at all.<sup>12</sup>

Knowledge of literature makes it easier to teach pupils to read and discuss books with them. In order for children to have equal opportunities to get excited about books, it is important to ensure that every class teacher has the competence and will to support

the culture of reading in the classroom.

In Finland, only one in four primary school pupils had a teacher whose training had emphasised content related to teaching the mother tongue or reading. Slightly fewer than one in five had studied literature. In Finland, specialisation in reading content is rarer than in the other Nordic countries.<sup>13</sup> Teachers' personal skills will become increasingly important according to a plan to increase the teaching of mother tongue and literature by two periods per week in 2025.<sup>14</sup>

## Daily reading of fourth-graders



## Only half of fourth-graders read for half an hour a day.



11 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

12 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

13 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

14 Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön tiedote 5.12.2023



# Adequate literacy helps young people lead independent lives

**The development of literacy among young people is monitored through the international PISA study. The assessment of literacy focuses on coping with everyday situations and less on the basic literacy skills of young people.**

In the PISA assessments, a level of literacy with which people manage in working life and studies is considered sufficient. In Finland, 56% of young people reach this satisfactory level.<sup>1</sup>

In the 2022 PISA results, the decline of Finnish young people's literacy was the fifth largest among all the countries included in the comparison. In Finland, one in five people now read poorly, compared to less than 14% in 2018. Currently, only one in 11 readers achieve at least an excellent level.<sup>2</sup>

Literacy can only be improved by reading. Yet more and more young people are not reading voluntarily. "I only read if I have to," said more than half of the young people in the survey. However, a positive aspect is that slightly more young people consider reading beneficial.<sup>3</sup> Positive attitude change among young people is also evident in Sweden where over half of young people considered themselves to be

reading too little, according to a recent study.<sup>4</sup> Many young people seem to wish that there was room for more reading in their daily life.

In recent years, solutions to the deteriorating literacy of young people have been sought in several places such as stimulating reading interest and enthusiasm, having young people write their own texts and making reading easier with the help of things such as simple-language versions of books<sup>5</sup>. Teachers would like to have more reading aids at schools, such as book formats that facilitate reading and learning materials in simple language. The views of pupils in need of support on the best reading aids are similar to those of teachers.<sup>6</sup>

The literacy and reading skills of young people have also been studied in recent years from many different perspectives<sup>7</sup>. It is important to reverse the current trend in literacy, as the decline in young people's literacy is not only a social issue, but also a threat to young people's independence and active participation in society.

The level of literacy affects people's reliable access to information and their ability to keep up with topical issues. The importance of critical literacy has grown in our media environment where it is even more difficult to assess the reliability of content and the qualifications of the source. According to statis-

1 Hiltunen, Ahonen, Hienonen et al.: PISA 2022 ensituloksia. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2023.

2 Hiltunen, Ahonen, Hienonen et al.: PISA 2022 ensituloksia. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2023.

3 Hiltunen, Ahonen, Hienonen et al.: PISA 2022 ensituloksia. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2023.

4 Andersson: Ungar & Medier 2023. Statens medieråd 2023.

5 see Lakka: Takarivin tekstikäytänteet. Helsingin yliopisto 2024.

6 Kivijärvi: Opettajien ja oppilaiden kokemuksia lukemisen apuvälineistä. Saavutettavuuskirjasto Celia 2023.

7 E.g. Lakka: Takarivin tekstikäytänteet. Helsingin yliopisto 2024., La Rosa: Nuoret lukijat kirjallisuuden murroksessa. Helsingin yliopisto 2023., Kauppinen & Marjanen: Millaista on yhdeksäsluokkalaisten kielellinen osaaminen? Suomen kielen ja kirjallisuuden oppimistulokset perusopetuksen päättövaiheessa. KARVI 2019.

## FACT 5:



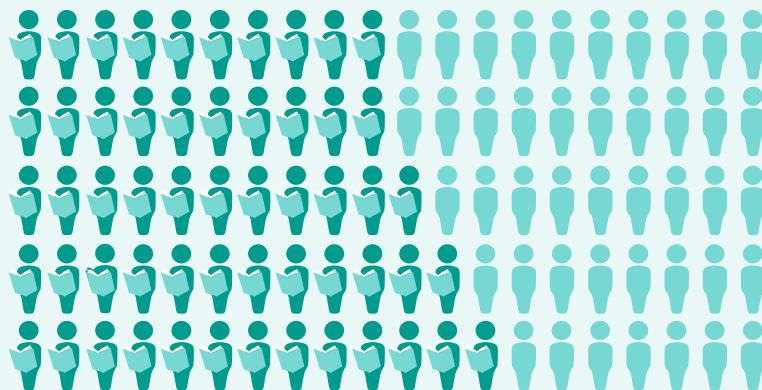
tics, digital news sites and social media are clearly the most popular sources for news among young people.<sup>8</sup> Of social media platforms, the application Tiktok where people share short videos has become young people's most watched news channel.<sup>9</sup>

However, an alarming fact is that about half of young people cannot tell the difference between opinions and facts in online sources.<sup>10</sup> About 40% of sixth-graders did not question the qualifications of an

author of a commercial text at all.<sup>11</sup> Almost one third of upper secondary school students had trouble assessing the reliability of texts found online.<sup>12</sup>

Literacy is also linked to young people's opportunities to influence things and is, therefore, important to the upholding of a democratic society and solving global issues such as social polarisation, information influencing and climate change.

### In Finland, a satisfactory level of literacy is achieved by 56% of Finnish young people



8 Newman ym: Reuters Institute Digital News Report. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism 2022.

9 Kantar Media: Nuoret ja uutis mediasuhde. Uutismedian liitto 2024.

10 OECD: Students who are taught how to detect bias are more likely to distinguish fact from opinion. OECD 2021. [In the publication:](#) OECD: 21st-Century Readers: Developing Literacy Skills in a Digital World, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris 2021.

11 Kiili, Leu, Marttunen ym.: Exploring early adolescents' evaluation of academic and commercial online resources related to health. Reading and Writing (31, s. 533–557) 2018. The role of internet specific epistemic justifications. Wiley 2021.

# Supporting multilingualism will benefit all of Finland

**Finland has about half a million permanent residents whose mother tongue is not Finnish, Swedish or Sámi<sup>1</sup>. This number has doubled since 2010. Foreign-language speakers make up 9% of the total population<sup>2</sup> and there are more than 160 different native languages spoken in Finland.<sup>3</sup>**

The Finnish legislation provides that every person residing in Finland has the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture.<sup>4</sup> The early childhood education and care plan<sup>5</sup> and national core curriculum for basic education<sup>6</sup> has taken into account language-aware education that guides pupils to understand the meaning of different languages and supports their use in different situations and pays attention to the diversity in families' cultures and convictions.<sup>7</sup> The teaching of pupils' native languages is included in curricula from pre-primary education onwards. Having a good command of your native language not only lays a good foundation for

forming your own emotions, thoughts and identity but also supports the learning of a new language, such as Finnish.<sup>8</sup>

The Finnish Reading Centre investigated the wishes of parents of multilingual families concerning the development of their children's language skills and literacy. All parents who participated in the interviews consider the knowledge and support of the home language important and relevant for learning Finnish.<sup>9</sup>

According to the families, society is mainly positive about them using their home language and supporting this. Day care centres support children being bi- and multilingual and the topic is of interest to early childhood education. At the same time, however, parents want more support in maintaining their own native language and clearly defined roles so that families are not solely responsible for the matter. Some parents are concerned about whether they are able to sufficiently support the development of their children's command of the language and whether the children are learning the family's own language well enough.<sup>10</sup> This is also important so that the children's literacy and Finnish-language skills can develop to their full potential.

1 Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT): Väestörakenne. Helsinki: Statistics Finland 2022

2 Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT): Väestörakenne. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus 2022.

3 Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT): Väestörakenne. Helsinki: Tilastokeskus 2022.

4 Perustuslaki 1999/731. Annettu Helsingissä 11.6.1999.

5 Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet 2022. Opetushallitus.

6 Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014. Opetushallitus.

7 E.g. Monikielisydestä ja koulukielen tukemisesta. Opetushallitus.

8 Oma kieli – oma mieli. Oppilaan oma äidinkieli. Opetushallitus 2016.

9 Monikielinen lukutaito -selvitys. Lukukeskus 2022.

10 Monikielinen lukutaito -selvitys. Lukukeskus 2022.



## FACT 6:



Families think that an essential aspect of learning the Finnish language and integrating into Finnish society is being able to interact with Finnish-speaking peers and adults.<sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup> The parents think that they need more diverse information about Finnish-language literature to support the Finnish language at home. The majority of the parents interviewed do not use library services at all. Library services are not used due to factors such as lack of information, minimal command of the Finnish language and being unfamiliar with how the library services are used. Families would like to be informed about library collections and services in the families' own languages. They would also like to have more multilingual cultural events, language cafés, courses held in simple language and storytimes. In terms of reaching families, a noteworthy wish expressed by

the families is to be informed about library services as soon as their children are in early childhood education. However, it is gratifying to hear that the library is already a familiar place for the children of many families.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the ever-changing global situation and the mobility of people, it is expected that the share of the multilingual population will increase in the coming years in Finland. In order to prevent inequality, the basic skills of people from an immigrant background should be safeguarded by promoting inclusion, developing cooperation between home and school, and providing sufficient support and time for the development of language skills.<sup>14</sup> It is also a prerequisite for immigrants' studies and employment.

11 Monikielinen lukutaito -selvitys. Lukukeskus 2022.

12 See also Hievanen, Laimi, Ukkola et al.: Eriarvoistumisen ehkäiseminen edellyttää maahanmuuttotasaisten väestön kieli- ja perustaitojen turvaamista. KARVI 2023.

13 Monikielinen lukutaito -selvitys. Lukukeskus 2022.

14 Hievanen, Laimi, Ukkola et al.: Eriarvoistumisen ehkäiseminen edellyttää maahanmuuttotasaisten väestön kieli- ja perustaitojen turvaamista. KARVI 2023.

# Strengthening literacy among working-age people is an effective employment measure.

**Since jobseeking services have become electronic, jobseekers are required to be more literate than before. The use of digital services requires being adequately literate and perceptive.**

If you do not know how to write well, filling out forms is difficult. The link between unemployment and poor basic skills, i.e. literacy and numeracy, is strong. Only half of 16–65-year-olds with poor basic skills are employed.<sup>1</sup>

The Finnish Reading Centre examined the experiences of the City of Helsinki's employment services experts on jobseekers' literacy. Two out of three employment services experts estimate that they have, once or more often, refrained from offering a job due to the applicant's poor literacy. As much as 83% of experts estimated that this has happened with immigrant jobseekers. In other words, poor literacy makes it difficult for both those from a Finnish background and those from an immigrant background to find work. The problem is not only explained by a poor command of the language: the survey specifically examined the jobseeker's level of literacy.<sup>2</sup>

40% of employment services experts estimated that their clients' level of literacy has declined. Half of the employment services experts believe that their clients' level of literacy is an obstacle to their job search. The majority of respondents say that jobseekers themselves have also said that poor literacy is a barrier to employment.<sup>3</sup>

For the job search to be successful, the client's level of literacy should be assessed so that the possible support services are made available as early as possible. Still, almost half of the experts in employment services do not know their client's level of literacy at the start of the job search.<sup>4</sup>

Poor literacy is a significant factor in the continuation of unemployment. Yet more than one third of employment service experts do not know how their client's literacy could be improved. Accessing services that improve literacy is difficult, which means that guiding the client forwards is difficult.<sup>5</sup>

Comprehensive support and guidance is needed to improve the adult population's digital skills.<sup>6</sup> Groups with poor basic skills can be difficult to reach with the training. Supporting the development of the competence of under-represented groups requires new, more effective and targeted means.<sup>7</sup> To renew basic skills, the availability of education must be ensured throughout life, regardless of place of residence. There must also be diverse opportunities for the

1 Malin, Sulkunen & Laine: PIAAC 2012. Kansainvälisen aikuistutkimuksen ensituloksia. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2013.

2 Selvitys työnhakijoiden lukutaidon merkityksestä työllistymiseen. Helsingin työllisyyspalvelut ja Lukukeskus 2023.

3 Selvitys työnhakijoiden lukutaidon merkityksestä työllistymiseen. Helsingin työllisyyspalvelut ja Lukukeskus 2023.

4 Selvitys työnhakijoiden lukutaidon merkityksestä työllistymiseen. Helsingin työllisyyspalvelut ja Lukukeskus 2023.

5 Selvitys työnhakijoiden lukutaidon merkityksestä työllistymiseen. Helsingin työllisyyspalvelut ja Lukukeskus 2023.

6 Rasi & Taipale: Tuki, ohjaus ja koulutus – ikääntyneet digitalisoituvassa mediayhteiskunnassa. Gerontologia (34(4), s. 328–332) 2020.

7 Työn murros ja elinikäinen oppiminen. Elinikäisen oppimisen kehittämistarpeita selvittävän työryhmän raportti. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2018.



## FACT 7:

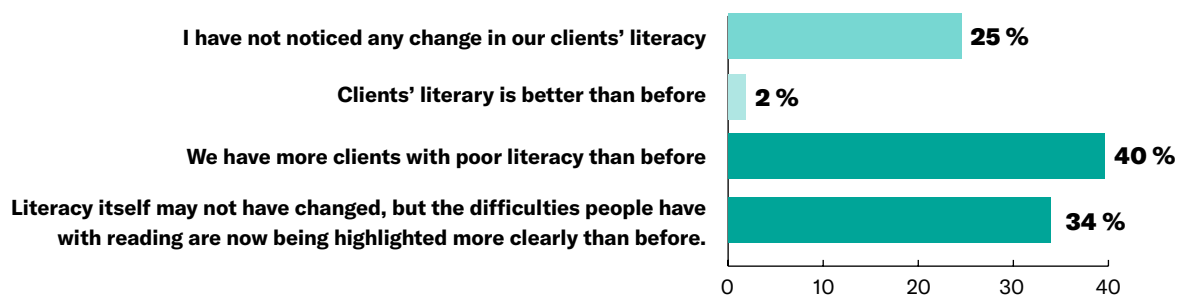
adult population to strengthen their basic skills that encompass both work and leisure.<sup>8</sup>

Third-sector actors, such as the association the Finnish Diverse Learners' Association work to secure adult learning support. The provision of learning support is a productive investment and an effective employment measure. Accessible services can be used to increase retaining people in an employment relationship or to support the employment of people who have trouble becoming employed, who are partially disabled or who are at risk of social exclusion. When the learning of working-age people is supported, the well-being of working-age people increases and the need to use health and social ser-

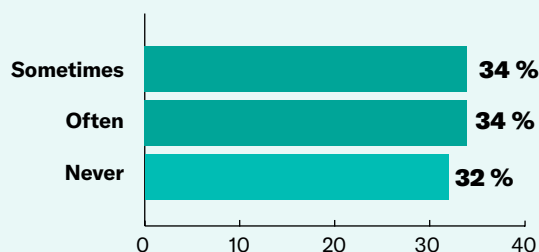
vices decreases. At the same time, the preconditions for raising the educational level of Finnish people are improved.<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of the European Pillar of Social Rights, everyone is entitled to high-quality and inclusive teaching, education and lifelong learning to acquire and maintain such skills that enable full engagement in society and help them enter the labour market.<sup>10</sup> Lifelong learning is a prerequisite for improving employment but also a way to prevent social exclusion and promote active engagement in society, which is essential for having a functioning democracy.<sup>11</sup>

### Employment services experts' observations of clients' literacy.



### How often an employment services expert has had to refrain from offering a job to a client due to client's insufficient literacy



8 Kohti elinikäistä oppimista. Yhteinen tahtotila, rahoituksen periaatteet ja muutosaasteet. Sitran selvityksiä 150. Sitra 2019.

9 Oppimisen tukea tarvitaan työelämässä -infograafi. Oikeus oppimiseen -neuvottelukunta, Erilaisten oppijoiden liitto 2023. Available: <https://www.eoliitto.fi/vaikuttaminen/hallitusohjelma-2023/>

10 Euroopan sosiaalisten oikeuksien pilarin 20 periaatetta. Euroopan komissio.

11 Työn murros ja elinikäinen oppiminen. Elinikäisen oppimisen kehittämistarpeita selvittävän työryhmän raportti. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2018.

# Libraries enhance crisis tolerance.

**The work that libraries do to encourage people to read is important in all age and cultural groups. Libraries promote the culture of reading and equal access to information, encourage lifelong learning and support active engagement in society.<sup>1</sup>**

Even if you have no books at home, you can support your and your child's reading by visiting the library together and borrowing books from the library. 64% of parents of fourth-graders say that, before their children started school, they used to take their children to the library at least once a month. However, 7% of Finnish parents have never taken their child to the library.<sup>2</sup> The active use of library services provides the child with an environment where they are encouraged to pick up a book – the library is also an opportunity to actually read the book. Children who use the library usually grow up into adults who use the library.

According to the PIRLS 2021 study, school visits to the library have also decreased in the last five years, while the average literacy level of fourth-graders has deteriorated. In addition to the decrease in school visits to the library, pupils' interest in borrowing books has decreased compared to the previous assessment. In 2016, only 5% of pupils reported that they had never borrowed books, but now the figure was 11%.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this, the library is still the most used cultural service in Finland.<sup>4</sup> In 2023, Finns made a total of 83 million loans in libraries; the last time as many books were borrowed was in 2009. Children's fiction and non-fiction were borrowed more than ever before, almost 36 million times throughout the country. The borrowing of adult fiction, on the other hand, has risen to the same level as in 2016–2018.<sup>5</sup>

The number and expertise of library staff have a direct impact on how a municipal library is able to perform its statutory tasks. Not all libraries have enough professionally trained staff. In 2020, only 36% of Finnish libraries reached the service target, which directly indicates that there are not enough employees for the tasks defined in the Public Libraries Act. The number of library staff has decreased in all regions in relation to the population.<sup>6</sup>

Approximately 95% of library employees feel that municipal decision-makers do not receive sufficient and correct information about the activities of the library and the duties of library professionals.<sup>7</sup> A survey of municipal decision-makers reveals that the decision-makers' knowledge of the work done in libraries is incomplete. More knowledge-based management, research and studies are needed as a basis for decision-making concerning libraries.<sup>8</sup>

The social role of libraries will be further strengthened in the future, and libraries will be involved in guaranteeing the security of information supply.<sup>9</sup> High-quality, free and accessible library services and the presence and expertise of professional staff strengthen the mental resilience and safe daily life of municipal residents.

1 Laki yleisistä kirjastoista 2016/1492

2 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

3 Leino, Sirén, Nissinen & Puhakka: Puoli tuntia lukemista: Kansainvälinen lasten lukutaitotutkimus (PIRLS 2021). Koulutuksen tutkimuslaitos 2023.

4 THL: Terve Suomi 2022-2023 –kyselytutkimus

5 Suomen yleisten kirjastojen tilastot 2023

6 Aluehallintovirasto: Peruspalvelujen arviointi 2021. 4/8 Yleisten kirjastojen henkilöstön riittävyys ja osaaminen sekä kirjastojen johtaminen.

7 Lindqvist, Topi. Yleiset kirjastot päätöksenteon kohteena: Kuntapäättäjiä ja kirjaston työntekijöiden näkemys erot yleisten kirjastojen palveluista, työtehtävistä, tavoitteista ja resursseista. Pro gradu –tutkielma. Tampereen yliopisto 2022.

8 Ahola ym.: Onneksi on kirjasto! Yleisten kirjastojen suunta 2021–2025. Yleisten kirjastojen neuvosto 2021.

9 Aluehallintovirasto: Peruspalvelujen arviointi 2021. 4/8 Yleisten kirjastojen henkilöstön riittävyys ja osaaminen sekä kirjastojen johtaminen.



# There is no literature without authors

**Every book is the result of an author's efforts and a huge amount of work. Finnish authors take an average of 1.6 years to write one book.<sup>1</sup>**

The most published genres of fiction in Finland are prose, children's and young adult's literature, poems and short stories. After these, the most published genres are essays and simple-language books.<sup>2</sup> General non-fiction, on the other hand, is still the best-selling literary genre in Finland.<sup>3</sup>

Literature plays an important role in keeping our language diverse, expressive and unique.<sup>4</sup> Literature plays a major role in the development of literacy and vocabulary for everyone, but especially for children and young people.<sup>5</sup>

Authors' annual earnings are modest: The median income of Finnish fiction writers for their written work during the calendar year 2022 was EUR 1,700, that of non-fiction writers EUR 606. The amount is alarmingly small and has fallen by as much as 25% in five years.<sup>6</sup> Authors' earnings for their work consist of royalties, accounts received from publishers for books sold, fee for books borrowed from libraries, and in-

come from plays and films adapted from books.<sup>7</sup>

At the moment, the collapse of authors' income is largely due to the digitalisation of literature. The compensation for an author for a book consumed through an e-book and audiobook subscription service is 80% lower than for the same book in printed format. While an author receives an average of EUR 3.00 from a printed book, the compensation for the same book in a streaming service is only EUR 0.50.<sup>8</sup>

Even if writers would like to earn their living primarily through their work, they are increasingly forced to live in uncertainty and, for example, on grants. Many are forced to do other work in addition to their work as writers.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, an author generates work for several other sectors, such as publishing houses, bookstores, e-book and audiobook subscription services, libraries, the film and theatre industry, the event industry, studios, printers and the media. The multiplier effects extend to tourism and industry. There is a worldwide demand for Finnish literature. Finnish literary exports have grown annually, and in 2022 they grew by as much as five per cent.<sup>10</sup>

Above all, however, authors' work sustains our thinking capabilities and literacy. In order for us to be able to read new high-quality literature in Finland now and in the future, we must take care of our authors and ensure that they can live off their work.

1 Suomen Kirjailijaliitto: Tilastoja ja tutkimuksia

2 Suomen Kirjailijaliitto: Kirjailijoiden tulotutkimus 2023

3 Suomen kustannusyhdistys: Vuositilasto 2023

4 Statsrådet: Nationalspråkstrategin: Statsrådets principbeslut. Statsrådets publikationer 2021:87.

5 Esim. Dunst, Simkus, Hamby: Effects of Reading to Infants and Toddlers on Their Early Language Development. CellReviews Vol. 5 Nr. 4. 2012.

6 Suomen Kirjailijaliitto: Kirjailijoiden tulotutkimus 2023

7 Suomen Kirjailijaliitto: Tekijänpalkkioselvitys 2022

8 Suomen Kirjailijaliitto: Tekijänpalkkioselvitys 2022

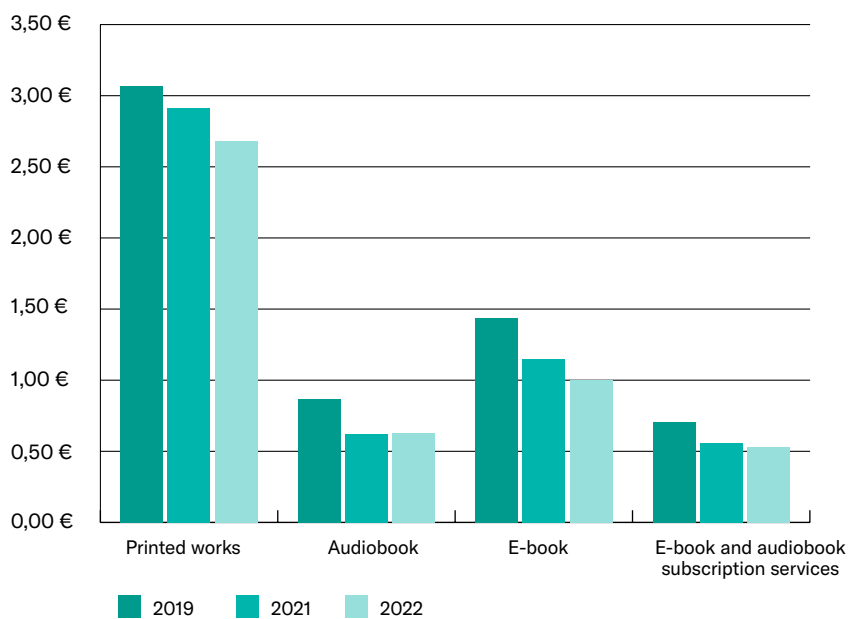
9 Suomen Kirjailijaliitto: Kirjailijoiden tulotutkimus 2023

10 FILI: Suomen kirjallisuusviennin arvo 2022



# FACT 9:

## Author's work-specific rewards



Source: Kirjailijoiden tulotutkimus ("Income survey of authors") 2023

# Literacy work requires the effort of the whole society.

**In recent years, Finnish people's literacy has been examined with a comprehensive focus.**

*The National Literacy Strategy 2030* was created in cooperation with an extensive network of experts in 2021. The vision of the National Literacy Strategy – Finland as the world's most multiliterate country by 2030 – strives for a society where the importance of literacy is widely recognised in all sectors and everyone receives support and reinforcement for their own literacy throughout their lives.<sup>1</sup>

The guidelines of the National Literacy Strategy are implemented through the literacy programme of the Finnish National Agency for Education, which has also distributed government grants to support literacy work.<sup>2</sup> Many measures are being taken in municipalities, schools, early childhood education and organisations to strengthen the literacy of Finns of different ages and to increase reading.

It is therefore crucial to invest in literacy right now. Reading formats, people's ways of spending their leisure time, the fragmentation of the media environment and the impact of new technologies on our media use are also reflected in our reading habits. The proliferation of smartphones and the operating logic

of social media as an addictive source of instant gratification challenges our ability to immerse ourselves in long bouts of reading.<sup>3</sup> New formats of literature, i.e. e-books and audiobooks, have lowered the threshold for consuming literature and made books a more accessible part of daily life.<sup>4</sup> Still, reading statistics show a decline in reading in all age groups and a record decline in literacy.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the structures of society require us to have ever better literacy and more diverse basic skills. Critical literacy, agile digital skills and means to communicate are prerequisites for managing in daily life and modern society. Advanced and deepened literacy is the guarantee of a democratic society and the best defence against fake news, hate speech and the rise of extremists.<sup>6</sup> Advanced literacy is achieved through long-term reading, which strengthens cognitive skills and expands understanding and conceptual capacity, as well as social capacity. These skills are essential for active engagement in a democratic society.<sup>7</sup>

In the coming years, citizens' literacy will be subject to very specific requirements, as artificial intelligence challenges our familiar perceptions of the reliability and logic of text environments. A recent risk report by the World Economic Forum names the spread of misinformation as the world's biggest short-term threat. The spread of misinformation is estimated to lead to a shaky perception of generally accepted truths and,

1 National literacy strategy 2030: Finland – the most multiliterate country in the world in 2030.

Publisher: Finnish National Agency for Education, Lukuliike 2021.

2 Lukutaito-ohjelma, Finnish National Agency for Education.

3 Spjeldnæs, K., & Karlsen, F. (2022). How digital devices transform literary reading:

The impact of e-books, audiobooks and online life on reading habits. *New Media & Society*, o(o).

4 Suomi lukee 2023. Kirjakauppaliiitto 2023.

5 Hiltunen, Ahonen, Hienonen ym.: PISA 2022 ensituloksia. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2023.

6 Schüller-Zwierlein, A., Mangan, A., Kovač, M., & van der Weel, A. (2022). Why higher-level reading is important. *First Monday*, 27(5).

7 The Ljubljana Reading Manifesto: Why higher-level reading is important, 2023

## FACT 10:



as a result, both propaganda and censorship threaten to become more common. Access to sources of free information, internet and media is also threatened in several countries. If the risk materialises, societies are in danger of becoming more polarised.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, it is worth supporting the literacy of Finnish people in all sectors of society. The literacy and reading habits of Finnish people must be strengthened through political decisions and societal structures. The continuity of literacy work must be committed to in

order to ensure the effectiveness of the measures. Adequate literacy is also a guarantee of competitiveness, productivity and lifelong learning.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, literacy should also be a key focus in the work life.

The direction of Finnish literacy can be reversed together. We need extensive national actions, effective programmes, literary phenomena, as well as discussion of the importance of reading and the status of literacy. Every Finnish person should have the right to learn to read and develop their literacy throughout their lives.

<sup>8</sup> Global Risks Report 2024, World Economic Forum 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Hanemann, U., Robinson, C. Rethinking literacy from a lifelong learning perspective in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and the International Conference on Adult Education. *Int Rev Educ* 68, 233–258 (2022)

# **10** **FACTS** about reading

**The “10 facts about reading” information package published by the Finnish Reading Centre provides a snapshot of Finnish literacy and reading habits. The report brings together domestic and international literacy studies, learning outcomes and surveys, and provides an overview of the different ways to support Finnish people’s reading habits and literacy. The information package is freely available for education, as a source of information or for the needs of the media.**

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When using texts and images, a reference or link to the Finnish Reading Centre information package is required.

Reference instructions: 10 facts about reading 2024, Finnish Reading Centre 2024.

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