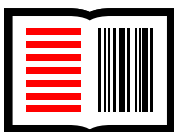
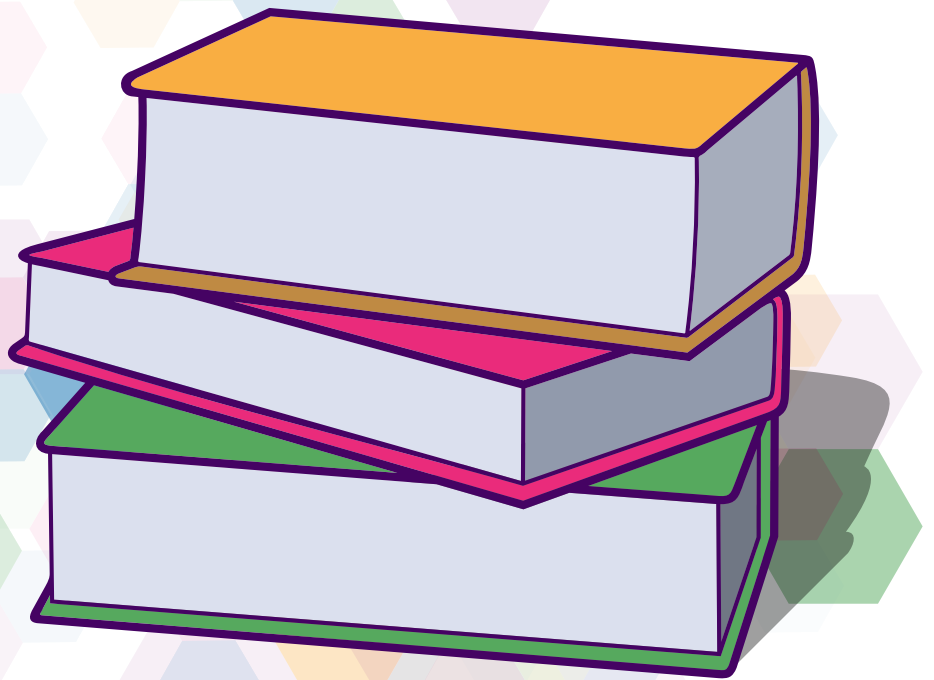


Turning Pages: Print Book Use in Canada 2023



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Introduction

Print books continue to be the format of choice for the Canadian book market. Over 90% of Canadian readers reported reading a print book in the [Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023](#). At the same time, 79% of books purchased by Canadians in 2023 were print books, as tracked by the [Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023](#). While BookNet Canada has been tracking the sales of print books through BNC SalesData since 2005 and the habits of print book consumers through the Canadian Book Consumer Survey since 2011, *Turning Pages: Print Book Use in Canada 2023* is the first study exclusively devoted to the behaviour of print book consumers.

Turning Pages: Print Book Use in Canada 2023 benchmarks print book use in Canada, exploring the buying, borrowing, and reading habits of Canadian print book consumers. This study also tracks the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current economic climate on print book use, by comparing data from 2023 with past years.

Methodology

This study incorporates both published data from our annual publications the [Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023](#) and [Canadian Leisure and Reading Study 2023](#) as well as unreleased data from those consumer surveys.

The *Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023* includes results from quarterly surveys of Canadian book consumers about their book acquisition behaviour during March, June, September, and December 2023. The 2023 edition of this study contains data from 4,270 Canadians, 2,045 of whom were book buyers and 1,048 of whom were book borrowers. Of those, 1,508 Canadians surveyed for the *Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023* were print book buyers and 812 Canadians were print book borrowers, having bought a print book or borrowed a print book from the library in 2023.

The *Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023* presents data from a survey of Canadians fielded in January 2024. The survey queried Canadians about how they spent their leisure time in 2023, with a focus on reading. The 2023 edition of this study contains data from 1,247 Canadians, 1,000 of whom were readers and 923 of whom were identified as print book readers, having read at least one print book in 2023.

For both the *Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023* and *Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023*:

- The survey was fielded online through an external provider, to their consumer panel of nearly two million Canadians. The survey was limited to those with internet access who were able and wanted to participate in our panel in exchange for non-monetary incentives as offered by our survey partner (e.g., loyalty reward “point” programs).
- Respondents were English-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older, located throughout Canada, and representative of the Canadian population based on age, gender, and geographical region. Selective sampling was based on demographic results from Statistics Canada.
- There is a margin of error of ± 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, meaning that statistics for this group could fluctuate about 3% in either direction if the survey was fielded to the entire Canadian population.
- The data is unweighted.

Turning Pages: Print Book Use in Canada 2023 is divided into four sections:

- print book buying, which delves into the behaviours of print books buyers as reported in the *Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023*;
- print book borrowing, which explores the behaviours of print book borrowers as reported in the *Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023* and the *Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023*;
- print book reading, which analyzes the behaviours of print book readers, regardless of print book acquisition method, as reported in the *Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023*; and
- print book preference, which explores the format preferences of all Canadian buyers, borrowers, and readers for print books, reported in the *Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023* and the *Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023*.

This study was prepared by BookNet Canada staff.

Highlights

- Canadians are reading print books more than any other format — 92% of all Canadian readers read at least one print book in 2023.
- The average price that print book buyers paid for their books has increased over the last five years. Print book buyers spent an average of \$17.72 for paperbacks and \$24.04 for hardcovers in 2024.
- Print book buyers purchased books more in-person than online in 2023 — 53% in-person purchases and 47% online purchases.
- In 2023, 84% of all Canadian book borrowers borrowed print books.
- The majority of Canadian print book borrowers visited the library online and in-person at least once in 2023 — 92% of print book borrowers visited the library online and 71% visited the library in-person.
- Print book borrowers were more likely than all book borrowers to borrow books for someone else in 2023. Just 59% of Canadian print book borrowers borrowed books only for themselves, compared to 65% of all book borrowers.
- Canadian print book readers in 2023 are more concerned with sustainability than ever before. Over three quarters (76%) of print book readers donate or give away a print book after they finish reading it, and 70% want books to be made from sustainably-sourced paper.

Print books in Canada

Print isn't dead: Canadians are reading print books more than any other format. Over 90% of all Canadian readers surveyed for the *Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023* read print books in 2023 and according to the *Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023*, 73% of all Canadian book buyers bought print books and 84% of all Canadian book borrowers borrowed print books from the public library last year.

Canadian print book consumers of all types in 2023 share a similar demographic profile to all Canadian book consumers, with some exceptions:

- Canadian print book buyers are slightly more likely than all book buyers to live in an urban area (51%), to have university/college degree (52%) or graduate/professional degree (23%), and to be employed either full time (45%) or part time (10%).
- Canadian print book borrowers are slightly more likely than all book borrowers to be men (45%), have a graduate/professional degree (24%), work full time (42%), and be single (37%).
- Canadian print book readers are slightly more likely than all book readers to be ages 18-29 (22%) and be a caregiver (59%).

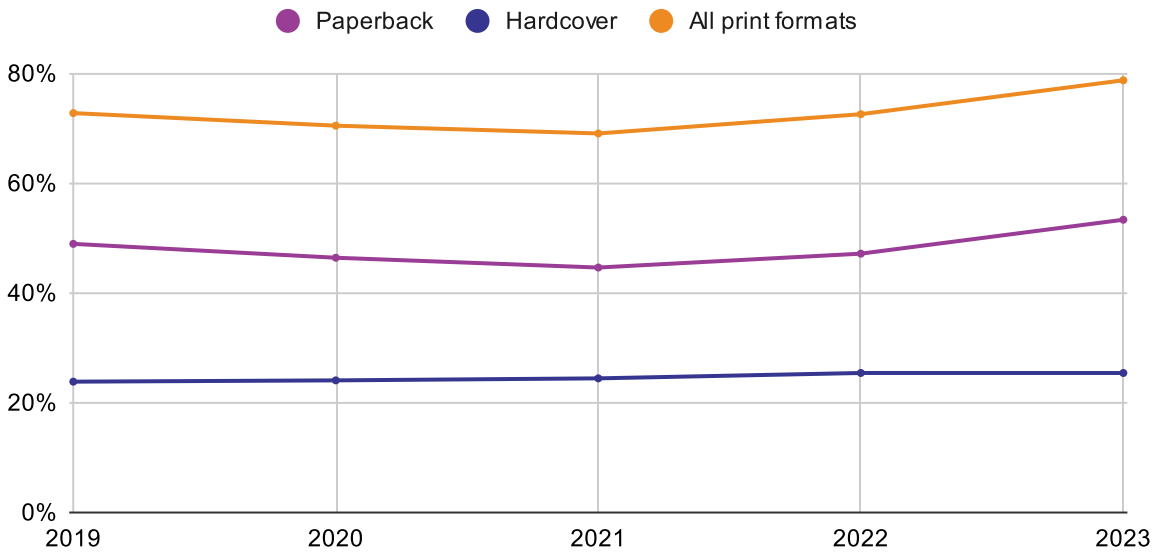
Full demographics for Canadian print book buyers, borrowers, and readers, along with the demographics of all Canadians, are available in appendices A, B, and C.

Print book buying

As found in the [Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023](#), 73% of Canadian book buyers bought at least one print book in 2023. Print books made up 84% of all book purchases made by these book buyers — 27% were hardcover books and 56% were paperback books. Print book buyers also purchased some ebooks and audiobooks, at 10% and 3% of all purchases respectively.

Compared to all purchases made by all Canadian book buyers in 2023, 79% were print books, 14% ebooks, and 4% audiobooks. Year over year, purchasing print books has fluctuated slightly — from 73% of all purchases in 2019, 70% in 2020, 69% in 2021, and returning to 73% in 2022.

Paperback and hardcover purchases by all Canadian book buyers, 2019–2023



Source: BookNet Canada

Print book pricing

The majority of print book buyers spent between \$1 and \$49 on print books in a given month in 2023 (59%), while others spent \$50 to \$99 (21%), \$100 to \$149 (8%), or more.

In 2023, many print book buyers paid full price for the print books they purchased — 67% of paperback purchases were bought at full price, as well as 61% of hardcover purchases. This has been trending up over the last five years, from 59% of paperbacks and 56% of hardcovers bought at full price in 2019. More print book buyers paid full price than did Canadian book buyers overall — 57% of all Canadian book buyers in 2023 paid full price for their books.

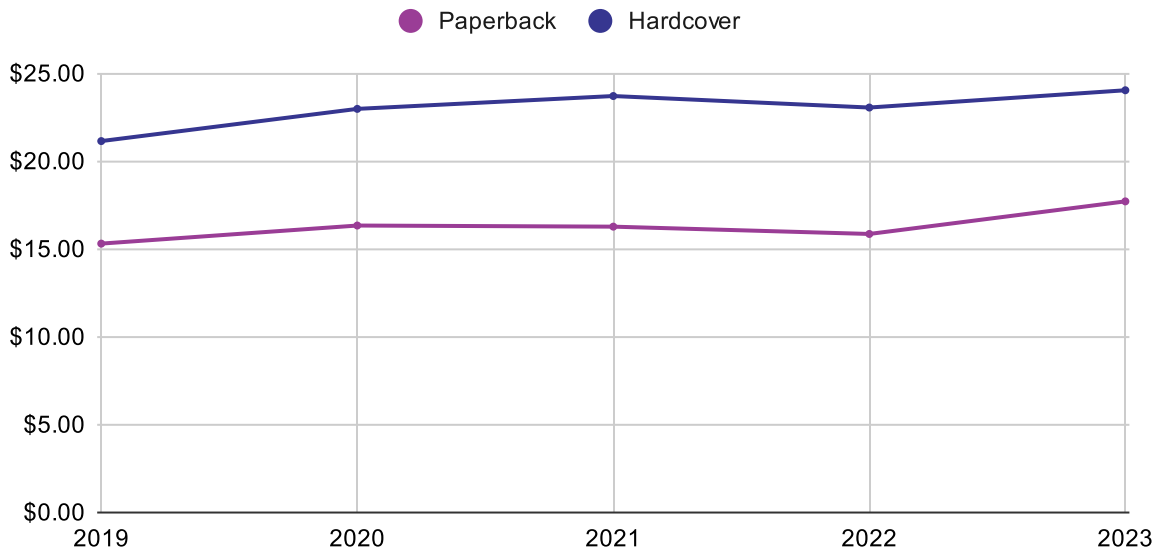
The percentage of print books purchased on sale or at a discount in 2023 was also lower than previous years — 22% of paperbacks and 28% of hardcovers in 2023, compared to 28% of paperbacks and 32% of hardcovers in 2019. For all Canadian book buyers in 2023, 24% purchased books on sale or at a discount.

Pricing models used by Canadian print book buyers, 2019–2023

	Paperback					Hardcover				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Paid full price	59%	60%	61%	61%	67%	56%	57%	60%	57%	61%
Book was discounted/in a sale/had money off	28%	26%	25%	26%	22%	32%	31%	31%	33%	28%
Used a coupon/money-off voucher from the shop	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%
Bought as part of multi-buy deal (e.g. 3 for 2; 2 for \$20; Buy 1 get second half price)	4%	5%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Bought as part of subscription	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	1%	2%	3%
Other special price/offer	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%

Print book buyers spent an average of \$17.72 for paperbacks and \$24.04 for hardcovers in 2024. This number has also increased over the last five years, up from an average of \$15.31 for paperbacks and \$21.15 for hardcovers in 2019. The graph below shows this increase, up 16% for paperbacks and 14% for hardcovers over this time period.

Paperback and hardcover prices paid by Canadian print book buyers, 2019–2023



Source: BookNet Canada

Despite price increases in 2023, print book buyers continue to rate their value for money as relatively high, with the majority of purchases rated at excellent (49% paperback, 42% hardcover) or good (37% paperback, 44% hardcover) value for the price paid. For both paperback and hardcover purchases, 12% were rated as fair in 2023 and a further 2% of purchases were rated as poor. For paperbacks only, 1% reported value for money for their paperback purchase as bad. Compared to all Canadian book buyers in 2023, 49% reported that they received excellent value for money from their book purchase, with 38% reporting good value, 12% reporting fair value, and 1% reporting poor value.

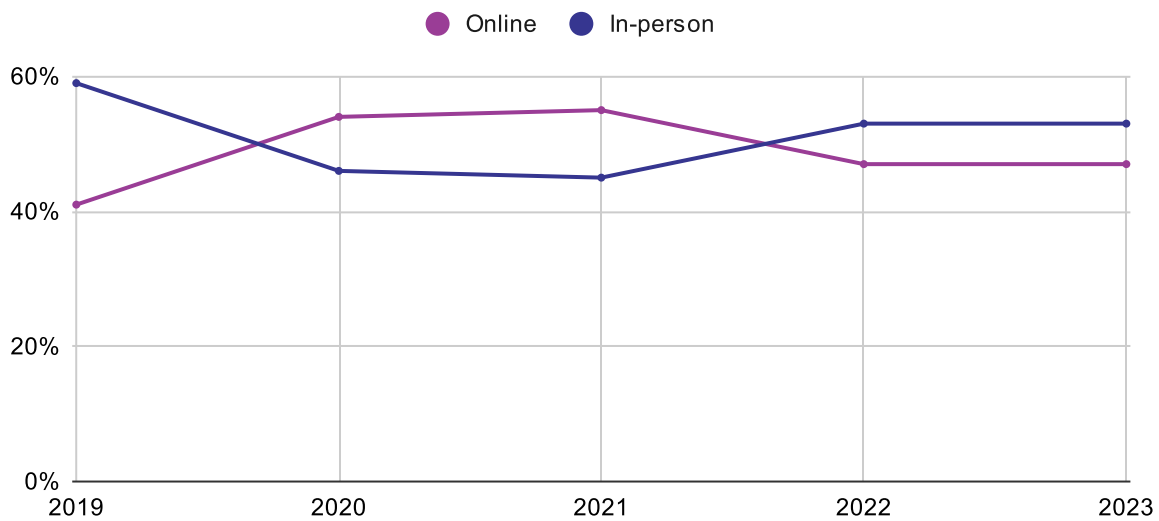
Perceived value for money by Canadian print book buyers, 2019-2023

	Paperback					Hardcover				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Excellent	47%	45%	44%	35%	49%	46%	44%	40%	43%	42%
Good	41%	41%	41%	46%	37%	41%	41%	44%	42%	44%
Fair	11%	13%	13%	16%	12%	11%	14%	15%	13%	12%
Poor	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Bad	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Print book purchasing behaviours

Print book buyers purchased books more in-person than online in 2023 — 54% of paperback purchases and 52% of hardcover purchases were in-person, while 46% of paperback purchases and 48% of hardcover purchases were online. Taken together, that's 53% in-person purchases and 47% online purchases. This percentage has fluctuated considerably over the last five years, due in large part to the impact of COVID-19, shown in the graph below. These numbers are also different compared to all books purchased in 2023 — 57% of book purchases were online and 43% were in-person.

Online and in-person print book purchases by Canadian print book buyers, 2019–2023



Source: BookNet Canada

In 2023, the most popular reasons why Canadians print book buyers purchased their books at a specific location were:

- convenient place to shop — 33%;
- book(s) in stock/available immediately — 32%;
- good price/offer/promo — 29%;
- good selection of books — 23%; and
- easy checkout process to buy books — 20%.

Canadian print book buyers became aware of the print books they purchased in 2023 by reading another book by the same author (21%), recommendations or reviews (20%), browsing or searching online or in person (18%), social media (12%), and bestseller lists (10%).

Awareness of print books purchased by Canadian print book buyers, 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Read other books by author/illustrator	21%	24%	23%	22%	21%
Recommendation/review	12%	19%	18%	19%	20%
Browsing or searching online or in person	17%	17%	19%	19%	18%
Social media	6%	9%	10%	10%	12%
Bestseller list	9%	10%	9%	9%	10%

Most Canadian print book buyers shopping in-person in 2023 found the print book they purchased on the book's main shelf (53%) or on a display table (14%). For Canadian print book buyers shopping online, the majority of buyers first saw the book by having searched for the particular book they purchased (46%), browsing genre/subject area (13%), or browsing books by author/illustrator (11%).

Increasingly, Canadian print book buyers purchased print books in 2023 due to their interest in the book's subject, at 33% overall — 32% of paperback purchases and 37% of hardcover purchases. In total this percentage is up from 26% in 2019.

Purchase decision-making factors for Canadian print book buyers, 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Like/interested in subject	26%	28%	30%	31%	33%
Description of the book	18%	19%	19%	18%	18%
Recommendation/review	11%	15%	14%	16%	18%
Like the series	15%	17%	17%	17%	17%
Like the main character(s)	9%	11%	11%	13%	14%

Similar to all Canadian book purchases in 2023, most print book purchases in 2023 were planned. Canadian book buyers:

- planned ahead to buy this particular book at that specific time — 38% of print book buyers vs. 38% of all book buyers;
- planned to buy this particular book, but not necessarily at that specific time — 27% of print book buyers vs. 22% of all book buyers;
- was not planning to buy a book at that specific time; it was an impulse purchase — 17% of print book buyers vs. 18% of all book buyers; and
- was planning to buy a book at that specific time, but had not planned to buy this particular book — 16% of print book buyers vs. 18% of all book buyers.

More than all Canadian book buyers, the top reasons print book buyers bought, rather than borrowed print books in 2023 were:

- to be able to reread it whenever they want, as much as they want — 18% of print book buyers vs. 15% of all buyers;
- to have it right away — 17% of print book buyers vs. 15% of all book buyers; and
- to own it for their display, collection, or archive — 17% of print book buyers vs. 13% of all book buyers.

While most print book buyers purchased print books for themselves in 2023 (84%), 16% purchased print books for someone else — 14% as a gift and 2% not as a gift. Most print books purchased for others were purchased for an adult 18 or over (51%). However, looking more closely at the division between paperback and hardcover purchases in 2023 reveals that hardcover books are more commonly purchased for readers ages 0-12 (43%), while paperback books are more commonly purchased for readers ages 8-17 (38%).

Recipients of paperback and hardcover books purchased by Canadian print book buyers, 2023

	Paperback	Hardcover
For a young child aged 0-3	2%	14%
For a young child aged 4-7	9%	11%
For a middle grade child aged 8-12	22%	17%
For a young adult aged 13-17	16%	8%
For an adult aged 18 or over	51%	49%

As book consumers, print book buyers were slightly more likely than all Canadian book buyers in 2023 to agree or sometimes agree with the statements:

- I prefer to pay for a bundle of content more so than buying one single item — 72% of print book buyers vs. 70% of all buyers;
- The environmental impact of the book industry matters to me — 68% of print book buyers vs. 66% of all buyers;
- I add books to my online cart to get free shipping — 67% of print book buyers vs. 65% of all buyers;
- I see marketing campaigns/ads for the types of books I'm interested in — 66% of print book buyers vs. 65% of all buyers;
- I pre-order books/buy books pre-sale — 51% of print book buyers vs. 50% of all buyers; and
- I buy whichever book is least expensive, regardless of its format (print book, ebook, audiobook) — 46% of print book buyers vs. 45% of all buyers.

At the same time, print book buyers were just as likely as all Canadian book buyers in 2023 to agree with these statements:

- I look for sales, promotions, and coupons when I shop for books — 88% of print book buyers and all book buyers;
- I compare book prices before making a purchase — 82% of print book buyers and all book buyers;
- Having books in accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, etc.) matters to me — 66% of print book buyers and all book buyers; and

- I finish reading a book before I buy or borrow a new one to start — 64% of print book buyers and all book buyers.

Behaviours and attitudes for Canadian print book buyers, 2023

	Yes	Sometimes	No
I look for sales, promotions, and coupons when I shop for books.	52%	36%	12%
I compare book prices before making a purchase.	43%	39%	18%
I prefer to pay for a bundle of content more so than buying one single item.	36%	35%	28%
Having books in accessible formats (e.g. braille, large print, ...) matters to me.	35%	31%	34%
The environmental impact of the book industry matters to me.	30%	38%	32%
I add books to my online cart to get free shipping.	30%	37%	33%
I see marketing campaigns/ads for the types of books I'm interested in.	19%	47%	34%
I finish reading a book before I buy or borrow a new one to start.	17%	47%	36%
I pre-order books/buy books pre-sale.	16%	35%	49%
I buy whichever book is least expensive, regardless of its format (print book, ebook, audiobook).	14%	32%	54%

Print book subjects

In 2023, most print books purchased by Canadian print books buyers were adult books, at 74%. Some also purchased young adult books (18%) and children's books (8%). Overall, the majority of these books were Fiction titles (61%), rather than Non-Fiction (39%). However, this division changes when we look at paperback and hardcover formats — 64% of paperback books purchased in 2023 were Fiction and 36% were Non-Fiction, but only 53% of hardcover books were Fiction, while 47% were Non-Fiction.

The most popular subjects for print book buyers in 2023 were also distinct for paperback and hardcover purchases. Among both formats the most popular Fiction subjects in 2023 were:

- Fantasy — 14% of paperback purchases vs 21% of hardcover purchases;
- Romance — 16% of paperback purchases vs. 10% of hardcover purchases; and
- Suspense and Thriller — 15% of paperback purchases vs. 13% of hardcover purchases.

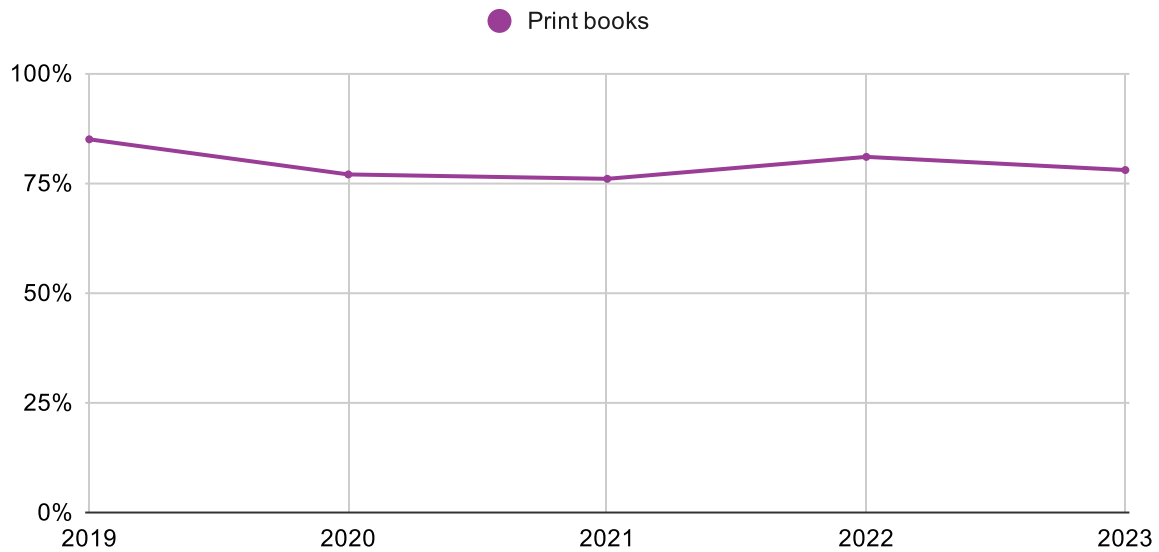
The most popular Non-Fiction subjects for print books in 2023 were:

- Biography or Memoir — 17% of paperback purchases vs. 32% of hardcover purchases;
- Self-Help — 19% of paperback purchases vs. 14% of hardcover purchases; and
- History — 12% of paperback purchases vs. 11% of hardcover purchases.

Print book borrowing

The [Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023](#) reported that 84% of all Canadian book borrowers borrowed print books in 2023. Over three quarters of all books borrowed from the library by print book borrowers in 2023 were print books (78%) — they also borrowed ebooks (14%) and audiobooks (9%). The graph below shows how the percentage of print book borrowing has fluctuated over the last five years, down from 85% in 2019.

Print book borrowing by Canadian print book borrowers, 2019–2023

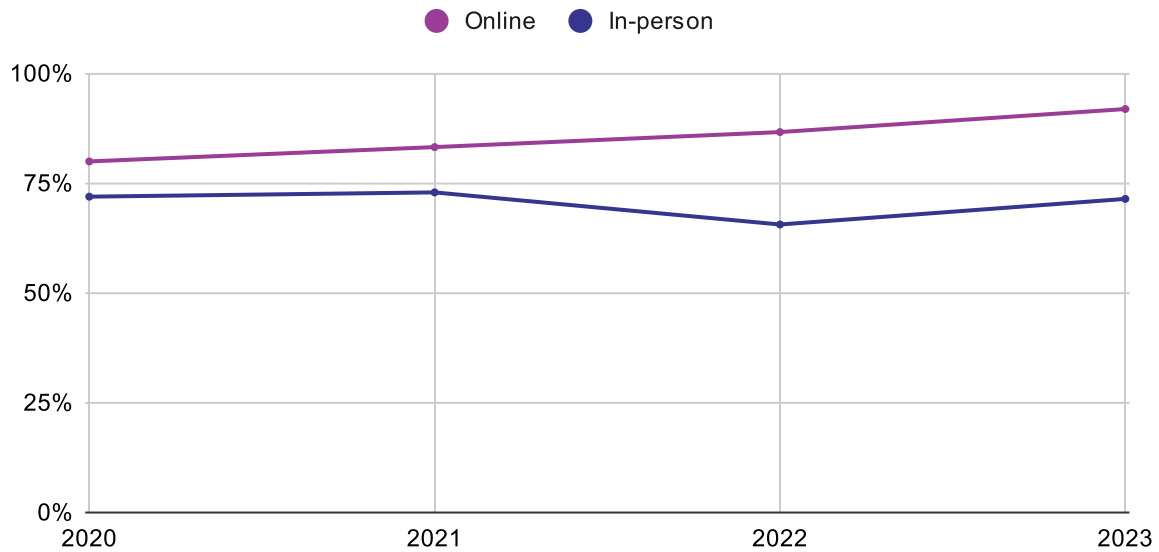


Source: BookNet Canada

Print book borrowing behaviours

The majority of Canadian print book borrowers visited the library online and in-person at least once in 2023 — 92% of print book borrowers visited the library online and 71% visited the library in-person. Online library visiting has increased over the last number of years, shown in the graph below.

Online and in-person library visits by Canadian print book borrowers, 2020–2023



Source: BookNet Canada

Canadian print book borrowers visited the library both online and in-person in 2023 for a variety of reasons, including:

- to pick up hold(s) — 44%;
- to browse shelves and displays for books to borrow — 35%; and
- to discover a new book, author, and/or illustrator — 24%.

Library visit behaviours (in-person and online) by Canadian print book borrowers, 2019–2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
To pick up hold(s)	61%	33%	44%	48%	44%
To browse displays and shelves for books to borrow	60%	22%	24%	38%	35%
To discover a new book, author, and/or illustrator	N/A	N/A	N/A	25%	24%
To study/work/research	10%	12%	10%	11%	18%
To put books/materials on hold	22%	13%	15%	17%	17%
To read magazines/newspapers	17%	11%	12%	16%	14%
To use the computers/internet	15%	12%	10%	11%	13%
To use the printer/photocopier	10%	9%	9%	10%	12%

Just like all Canadian library book borrowers, most print book borrowers only borrowed books from the library in 2023 (68%). Yet some print book borrowers did borrow other things, like DVDs (9%) and magazines (8%).

Print book borrowers were more likely than all book borrowers to borrow books for someone else in 2023. Just 59% of Canadian print book borrowers borrowed books only for themselves, compared to 65% of all book borrowers. Print book borrowers also borrowed books for:

- an adult aged 18 or over — 14%;
- a middle grade child aged 8-12 — 10%;
- a young child aged 4-7 — 8%;
- a young adult aged 13-17 — 7%; and
- a young child aged 0-3 — 2%.

The most popular ways Canadian print borrowers became aware of the books they borrowed in 2023 were:

- browsing genre/subject area — 40%;
- having searched specifically for this book — 34%;
- browsing books by author/illustrator — 24%;
- having read other books by the author/illustrator — 21%; and
- getting a recommendation or reading a review — 18%.

Print book borrowers, similar to all Canadian book borrowers, were most likely to take these actions in 2023 when deciding whether or not to borrow a book:

- Read the book description — 49% of print book borrowers vs. 50% of all borrowers.
- Check to see if the library has it — 39% of print book borrowers vs. 39% of all borrowers.
- Read reviews about the book — 33% of print book borrowers vs. 33% of all borrowers.
- See what subject/genre the book is in — 30% of print book borrowers vs. 29% of all borrowers.
- Look at the cover — 30% of print book borrowers vs. 30% of all borrowers.

Decision-making behaviours by Canadian print book borrowers, 2020–2023

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Read the book description	53%	48%	54%	49%
Check to see if the library has it	37%	42%	48%	39%
Read reviews about the book	32%	29%	29%	33%
See what subject/genre the book is in	33%	26%	28%	30%
Look at the cover	33%	25%	29%	30%
See who the author/illustrator is	37%	26%	25%	23%
Read about the author/illustrator	23%	17%	16%	18%
Compare the price in multiple places	16%	12%	12%	18%

In 2023, Canadian print book borrowers borrowed books from the library instead of buying them because they wanted to save money (51%) or they didn't want to spend money on them (40%).

Similarly to all Canadian borrowers, print book borrowers agreed or sometimes agreed with the statements in 2023:

- Having books in accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, etc.) matters to me — 70% of ebook borrowers vs. 68% of all borrowers.
- The environmental impact of the book industry matters to me — 69% of print book borrowers vs. 68% of all borrowers.
- I finish reading a book before I buy or borrow a new one to start — 64% of print book borrowers vs. 65% of all borrowers.
- I prefer books that have been published in the last year or so (new releases) over older books — 60% of print book borrowers vs. 58% of all borrowers.

Print book subjects

The [Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023](#) tracks the book subjects read by Canadian print book borrowers in 2023. In it, we found that 92% read adult titles, with some young adult (21%) and children's books (19%). Of the adult titles, they read both Adult Fiction (66%) and Adult Non-Fiction (64%) almost equally.

The most popular Fiction subject read by Canadian print book borrowers in 2023 was overwhelmingly Mysteries or Thrillers, at 54%. Print book borrowers in 2023 also read:

- Romance — 34%;
- Historical Fiction — 31%; and
- Fantasy — 30%.

The most popular Non-Fiction subjects for Canadian print book borrowers in 2023 were:

- History — 39%;
- Biographies or Memoir — 33%; and
- Health or Fitness — 32%.

Print book reading

According to the [Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023](#), 92% of all Canadian readers read at least one print book in 2023. This number has slightly decreased since 2019 — down from 96%. Most Canadian print readers in 2023 read a print book daily (27%) — 8% of those readers read more than once a day and 19% read once a day. Other print book readers read once a week (25%), once a month (17%), less than once a month (17%), or a few times a year (18%) in 2023.

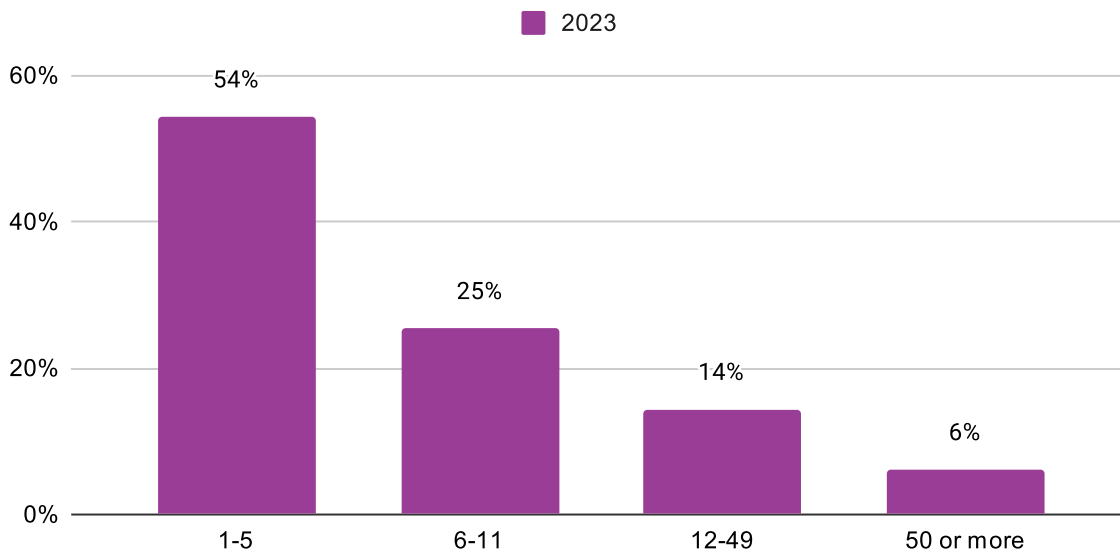
Frequency of print book reading by Canadian readers, 2019–2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
More than once a day	9%	10%	9%	10%	8%
Once a day	25%	26%	24%	21%	19%
Once a week	24%	27%	22%	25%	25%
Once a month	15%	13%	14%	16%	17%
Less than once a month	11%	11%	13%	12%	13%
A few times a year	15%	13%	18%	17%	18%

Most Canadian print book readers reported having the same amount of time for reading print books in 2023 than in the previous year (60%), while 23% said they had more time and 15% said they had less time.

Over half of all Canadian print book readers in 2023 read between one and five print books (54%), while 25% read 6 to 11 print books, 14% read 12 to 49 print books, and 6% read 50 or more.

Number of print books read by Canadian print book readers, 2023

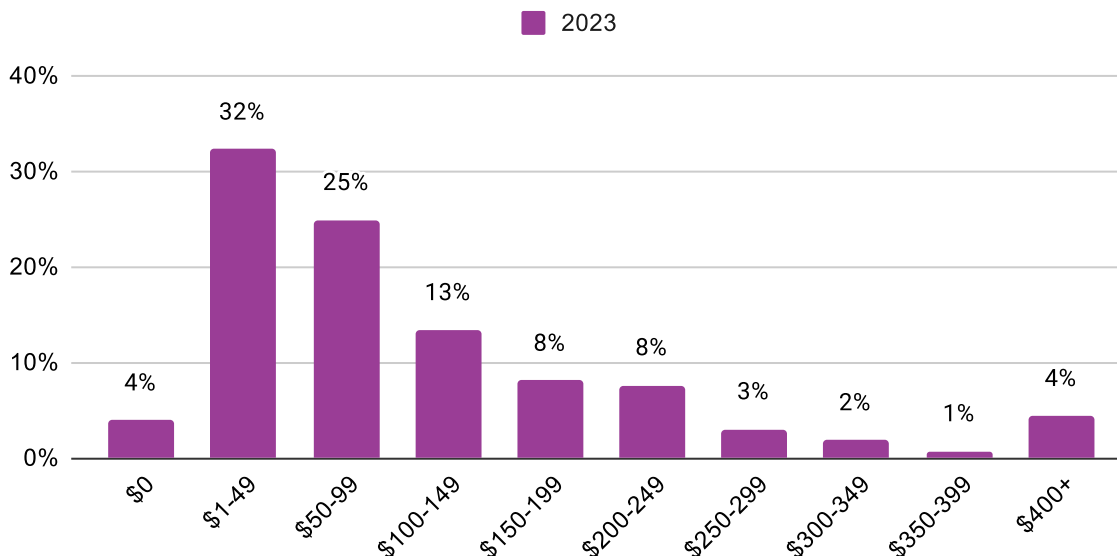


Source: BookNet Canada

Print book selection

Most Canadian print book readers spent from \$1 to \$49 on print books in 2023 (32%), many others spent \$50 to \$99 (25%), \$100 to \$149 (13%), \$150 to \$199 (8%), or \$200 or more (18%) on print books. Only 4% of Canadian print book readers did not spend any money on print books in 2023.

Print book spending by Canadian print book readers, 2023



Source: BookNet Canada

In 2023, the most popular ways that Canadian print book readers acquired the print books they read were:

- From the public library — 22%
- From an online retailer — 12%
- From a physical bookstore selling new books — 12%
- From a used bookstore or thrift store — 11%
- I borrowed them from someone I know — 11%
- I received them as a gift — 10%
- From a general retailer (e.g., Costco, Walmart, Shoppers Drug Mart, grocery store, etc.) — 9%
- I received them for free (e.g., freebie, Free Little Library, ARC, etc.) — 8%
- From a subscription service (e.g., subscription box, etc.) — 3%

In 2023, the most popular way that Canadian print book readers discovered the books they read was by word-of-mouth (29%), slightly more than all Canadian readers at 28%. Canadian print books readers also discovered books through:

- general retailers — 28% of print book readers vs. 27% of all readers;
- the public library — 26% of print book readers vs. 25% of all readers; and
- social media — 22% of print book readers vs. 22% of all readers.

The factors that most influenced print books readers' choices to read a specific book in 2023 were the subject or topic (41%), the author (32%), and the book's description (28%).

Influences for Canadian print book readers, 2019–2023

	2019	2020	2021	2020	2023
The subject/topic	44%	48%	43%	43%	41%
The author	37%	34%	40%	33%	32%
The book's description	34%	35%	30%	32%	28%
Recommendation(s)	29%	28%	25%	24%	25%
The main character/series	20%	19%	19%	17%	17%
It's a bestseller	20%	15%	14%	17%	16%
It has content/information needed for reference	13%	12%	14%	11%	13%
Sample, excerpt, or preview of the book	7%	10%	10%	9%	10%
Front cover or interior images / inside of books	8%	10%	9%	9%	9%
It was trending on social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, etc.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	7%	9%
It was adapted for the screen	13%	11%	5%	7%	7%
It was selected for me	5%	3%	4%	5%	7%
Large print or preferred format is available	3%	5%	6%	8%	6%
Nominated for or winner of a literary award	9%	7%	5%	6%	5%
The book comes with a readers' guide or discussion questions	2%	3%	4%	3%	5%

In 2023, the most important factors that influenced a Canadian print book readers' choice to read a print book, instead of an ebook or audiobook were:

- Readable (text is easy on the eyes) — 55%
- Affordable (fits within an acceptable price range) — 48%
- Focus (easy to read with no distractions from other technology) — 30%
- Acquisition (easy to purchase, borrow, or receive) — 29%
- Visibility (easy to show that you are reading and what you are reading) — 20%
- Tactile (adds to physical experience, e.g., page turning, book smell) — 17%
- Reference (easy to make notes in book or refer back to it) — 15%
- Display (adds to collection or home decor) — 11%

Print book reading behaviours

In 2023, Canadian print book readers preferred reading paperback (59%) and hardcover (50%) print books, over other print formats like:

- large print — 18%;
- pocketbook-sized softcover — 17%;
- comics or graphic novels — 17%; or
- braille — 4%.

It's worth noting that 27% of Canadian print book readers read using a magnifying glass in 2023 — 11% agreed and 16% agreed sometimes with the statement "I read using a magnifier."

Over half of all print book readers skim or speed read their print books (55%), while half read while doing something else, like listening to music or watching TV (50%). When reading, print book readers are just as likely as all Canadian readers to agree or sometimes agree that they only read sections of a book that interest them (60%). They are also equally likely as all Canadians to agree or sometimes agree that they stop reading a book if they don't like it (83%).

Canadian print book readers in 2023 are more concerned with sustainability than ever before. Over three quarters (76%) of print book readers donate or give away a print book after they finish reading it, and 70% want books to be made from sustainably-sourced paper.

Sustainable attitudes for Canadian print book readers, 2021-2023

	2021	2022	2023
I donate or give away a print book after I finish reading it.	76%	74%	76%
I want books to be made from sustainably-sourced paper.	71%	70%	70%
I want my books delivered in ecological-friendly packaging.	65%	64%	66%
I want to know where books are printed or shipped from.	46%	49%	53%

Print book subjects

Most print book readers read either adult Fiction (68%) or Non-Fiction (63%) print books, with others reading young adult (19%) and children's (15%) in 2023.

Similar to previous years, the most popular Adult Fiction print book subjects in 2023 were:

- Mystery or Thriller — 55%;
- Romance — 33%;
- Fantasy — 30%;
- Historical Fiction — 30%; and
- Science Fiction — 28%.

The most popular Non-Fiction subjects for Canadian print book readers in 2023 remained:

- History — 38%;
- Biography or Autobiography — 36%;
- Health or Fitness — 27%;
- Cookbooks — 26%; and
- Self-Help — 25%.

Slightly more than all Canadian readers, print book readers in 2023 read:

- Books that were made into movies or TV shows — 42% of print book readers vs. 41% of all readers
- Books that had a sequel (duology, trilogy, series, etc.) — 35% of print book readers vs. 34% of all readers
- Comics, manga, or graphic novels — 21% of print book readers vs. 20% of all readers
- Books in a language other than English (including multilingual books) — 18% of print book readers vs. 17% of all readers
- Poetry, books in verse, or plays — 15% of print book readers vs. 14% of all readers
- Controversial books or books that have been banned elsewhere — 13% of print book readers vs. 13% of all readers

Apart from English, the most popular languages read by Canadian print book readers were French (30%), Spanish (13%), and Punjabi (10%).

More than all Canadian readers (48%), 50% of Canadian print readers also read books that were by or about:

- Canadians/locals — 29% of print book readers vs. 28% of all readers
- People who belong to religious minorities — 18% of print book readers vs. 17% of all readers
- Black, Indigenous, or person/people of colour — 17% of print book readers vs. 16% of all readers
- People with immigrant status — 17% of print book readers vs. 16% of all readers
- People with a disability (physical, mental, or emotional activity impairment/limitation temporarily, episodically, or permanently, etc.) — 12% of print book readers vs. 12% of all readers
- LGBTQIA+ people — 9% of print book readers vs. 9% of all readers

Print book readers were often slightly more likely than all Canadian readers in 2023 to agree or sometimes agree that:

- Books should be representative of a variety of experiences — 90% of print book readers vs. 90% of all readers.
- It is important that authors accurately represent their material through research, fact-checking, and/or hiring reviewers and sensitivity or beta readers — 86% of print book readers vs. 85% of all readers.

- A greater variety of authors should be published and stocked — 78% of print book readers vs. 77% of all readers.
- It is important that books about a group or culture should be written by people from that group or culture — 71% of print book readers vs. 71% of all readers.

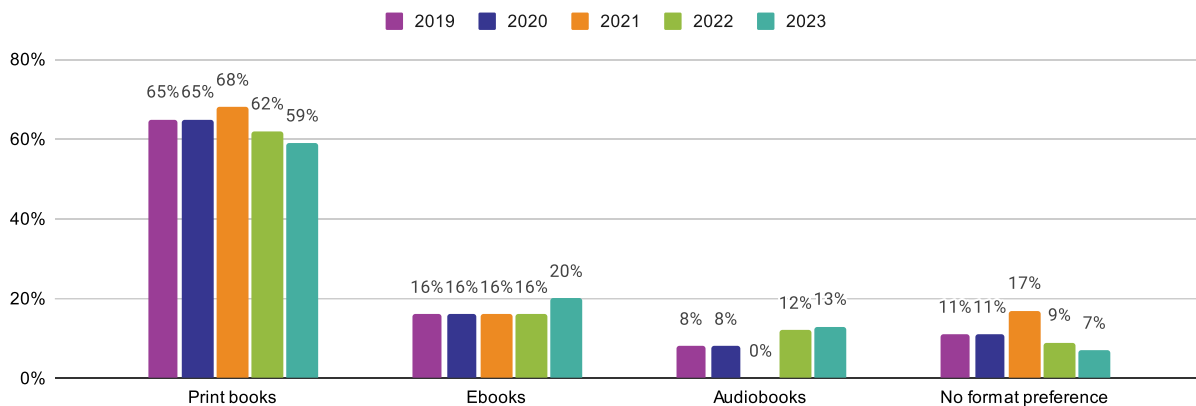
Print book preference

Preferences of Canadian readers

Out of all Canadian readers surveyed for the [Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023](#), 59% prefer print books over ebooks or audiobooks.

While still the largest group of Canadian readers, this percentage is down year over year. The graph below shows the book format preferences for all Canadian readers over the last five years. The percentage of Canadian readers who prefer print books has decreased 9% from 65% in 2019 to 59% in 2023.

Canadian readers' format preferences, 2019–2023



Source: BookNet Canada

Even with this decrease, the importance and vitality of print books is still on the minds of Canadian readers:

“Keep printing books.”

“I prefer a hardcover book. I like to have a physical book because then I can pass it along to others to read.”

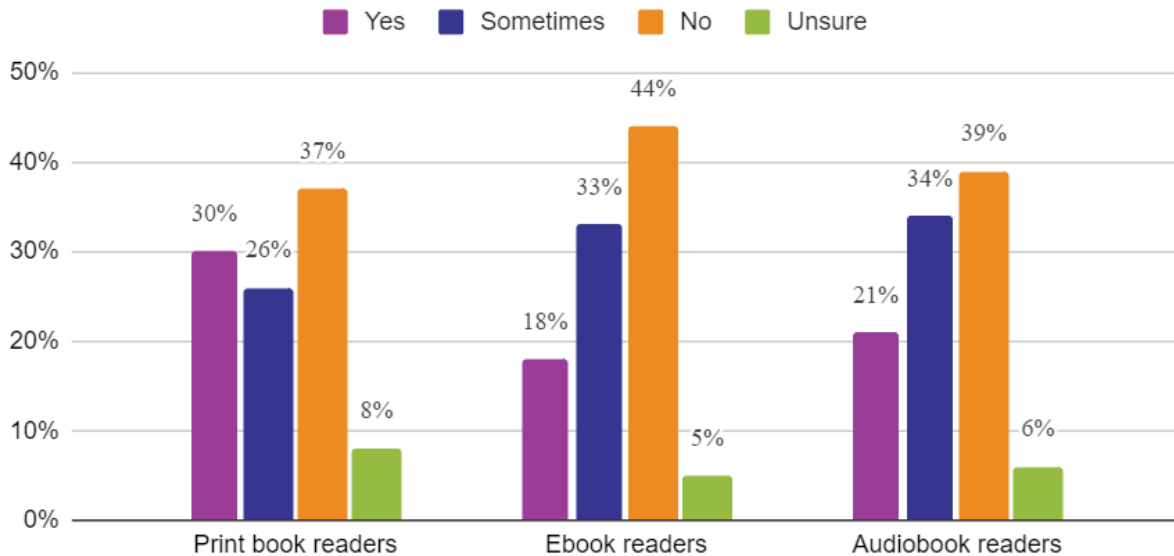
“Physical print books can never replace screens.”

“Touching, smelling and feeling the texture of a book is the food of life. Once you buy a book it is yours for life and unsubscribing doesn’t take it away. You can share it with others and read it over and over again. I would rather read a visual book than an ebook.”

Canadian print readers are also loyal to the print format in another way — they’re the least likely group of readers to read a book in another format. In responding to the question “If I can’t find the print version of a book, I won’t read it in another format,” 30% of print readers responded “yes” and 25% responded “maybe”. Meanwhile, only 37% responded “no” and 8% were “unsure.”

The graph below compares responses to these questions with ebook readers’ responses to the question “If I can’t find the ebook version of a book, I won’t read it in another format,” and audiobook listeners’ responses to “If I can’t find the audiobook version of a book, I won’t read it in another format.” Here, we can see that only 18% of ebook readers and 21% of audiobook listeners responded “yes” to the questions and are more open to reading books in other formats.

Canadian readers' agreement with the statement "If I can't find the ____ version of the book, I won't read it in another format", 2023

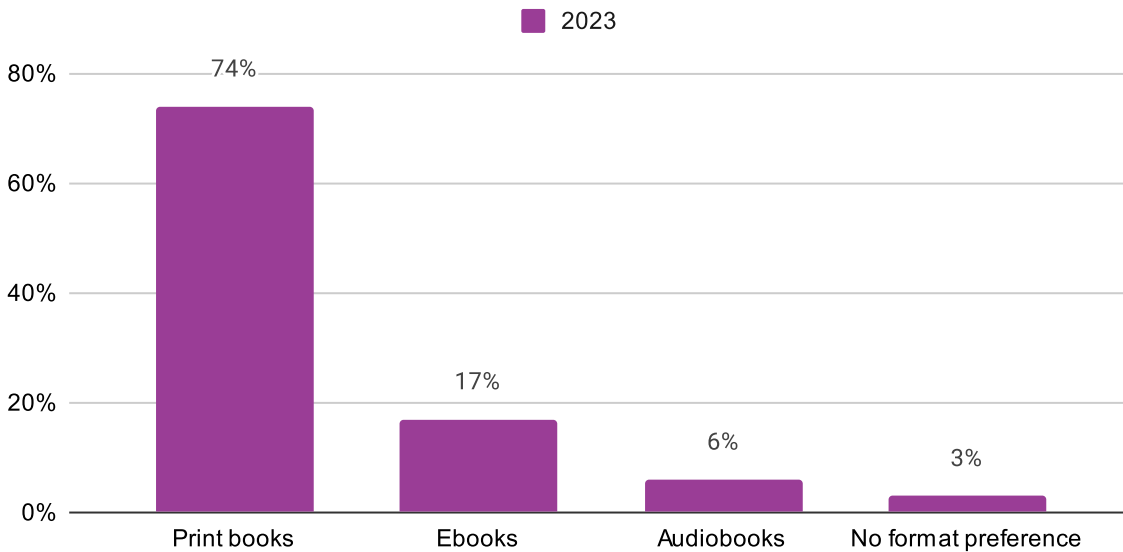


Source: BookNet Canada

Preferences of Canadian book buyers

According to the [Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023](#), 74% of Canadian book buyers prefer print books over any other book format. The graph below shows the book format preferences of Canadian book buyers in 2023. While Canadian book buyers who prefer print books make up almost three-quarters of all book buyers, 17% prefer ebooks, 6% prefer audiobooks, and 3% do not have a preferred book format.

Canadian book buyers' format preferences, 2023

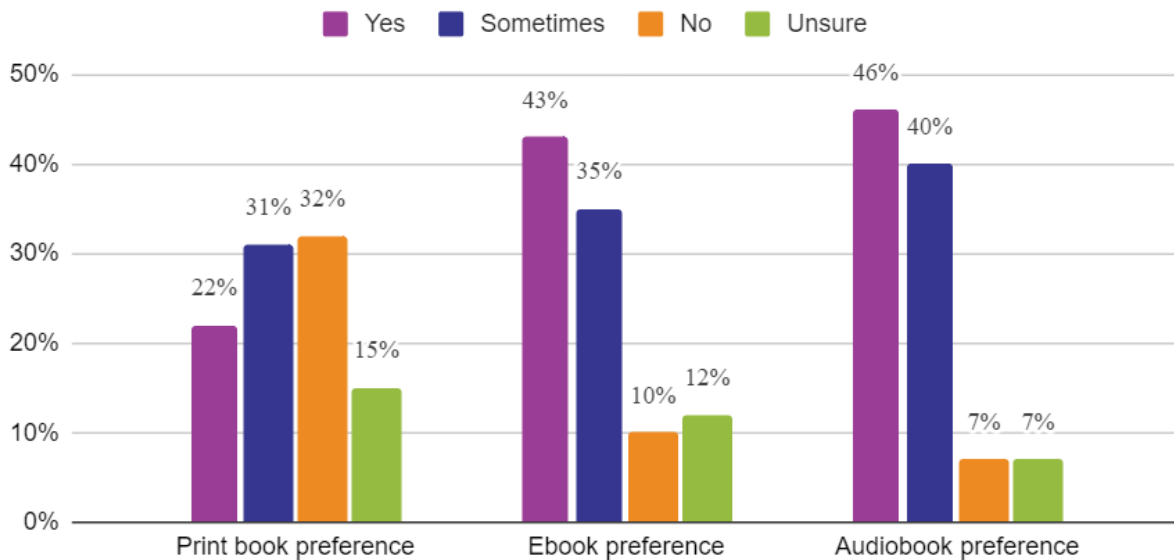


Source: BookNet Canada

Similar to Canadian readers, Canadian book buyers who prefer print books are the least likely to get a book of another format.

For this survey, Canadian book buyers were asked "If your preferred book format is not available, would you choose to get the book in another format?" Only 22% of book buyers who prefer print books answered "yes" to this question, compared 43% of book buyers who prefer ebooks and 46% of book buyers who prefer audiobooks, shown in the graph below. Canadian book buyers who prefer print books also responded "no" to this question at much higher rates — 32%.

Canadian book buyers' agreement with the statement "If your preferred book format is not available, would you choose to get the book in another format?", 2023

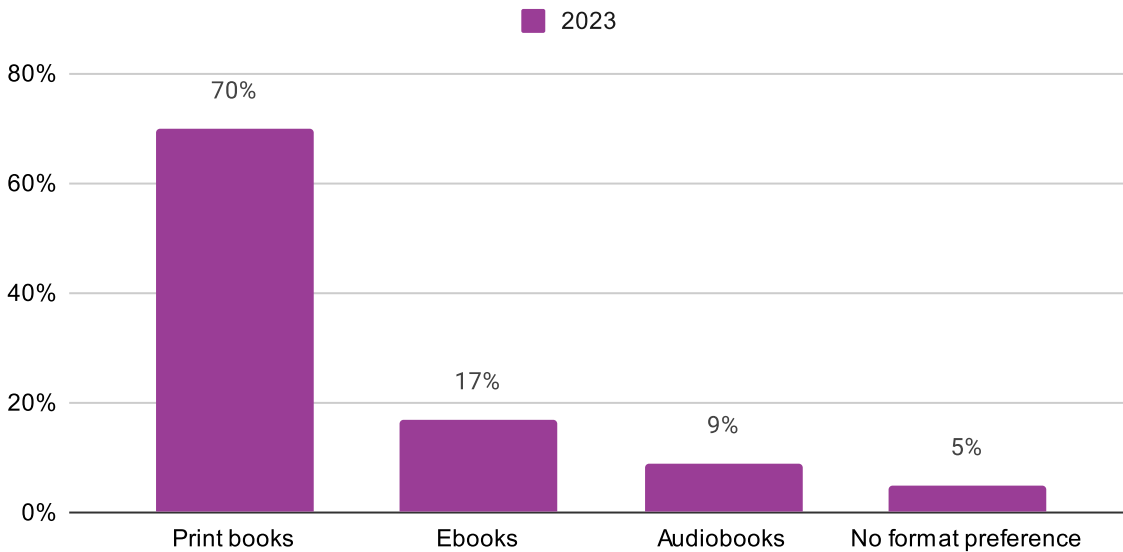


Source: BookNet Canada

Preferences of Canadian book borrowers

Canadians who borrow books from the public library also prefer print books, according to the [Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023](#). Shown in the graph below, 70% of Canadian book borrowers prefer print books, compared to 17% who prefer ebooks, 9% who prefer audiobooks, and 5% who have no preferred book format.

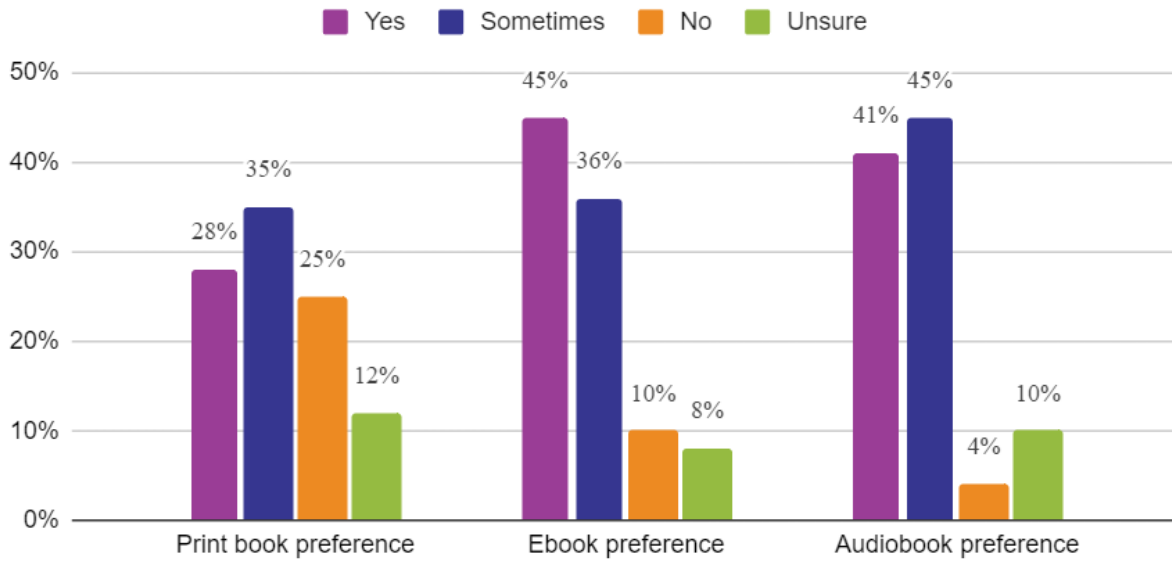
Canadian book borrowers' format preferences, 2023



Source: BookNet Canada

Canadian book borrowers who prefer print books are also less likely to get a book in another format. Only 28% of Canadian book borrowers who prefer print books answered “yes” to the question “If your preferred book format is not available, would you choose to get the book in another format?” Meanwhile, 45% of book borrowers who prefer ebooks and 41% of book borrowers who prefer audiobooks answered “yes” to that question. The graph below also reveals that book borrowers who prefer print books are still the most likely group to respond “no” to this question, at 25%.

Canadian book borrowers' agreement with the statement "If your preferred book format is not available, would you choose to get the book in another format?", 2023



Source: BookNet Canada

About BookNet Canada

BookNet Canada is a non-profit organization that develops technology, standards, and education to serve the Canadian book industry. Founded in 2002 to address systemic challenges in the industry, BookNet Canada supports publishing companies, booksellers, wholesalers, distributors, sales agents, and libraries across the country.

BookNet Canada acknowledges that its operations are remote and our colleagues contribute their work from the traditional territories of the [Mississaugas of the Credit](#), the Anishinaabe, the [Haudenosaunee](#), the Wyandot, the Mi'kmaq, the Ojibwa of Fort William First Nation, the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations (which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie), and the Métis, the original nations and peoples of the lands we now call Beeton, Brampton, Guelph, Halifax, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Vaughan, and Windsor. We endorse the [Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) and support an ongoing shift from gatekeeping to spacemaking in the book industry.

The book industry has long been an industry of gatekeeping. Anyone who works at any stage of the book supply chain carries a responsibility to serve readers by publishing, promoting, and supplying works that represent the wide extent of human experiences and identities, in all its complicated intersectionality. We, at BookNet Canada, are committed to working with our partners in the industry as we move towards a framework that supports “spacemaking,” which ensures that marginalized creators and professionals all have the opportunity to contribute, work, and lead.

BookNet Canada’s services and research help companies promote and sell books, streamline workflows, and analyze and adapt to a rapidly changing market. BookNet Canada sets technology standards and educates organizations about how to apply them, performs market research, and tracks 85% of all Canadian English-language print trade book sales through BNC SalesData.

BookNet Canada has extensive research available on our [website](#), both free and for purchase.

[Canadian Leisure & Reading Study 2023](#): The most recent insight into the behaviours and attitudes of Canadian readers in 2023.

[Canadian Book Consumer Study 2023](#): New results from our quarterly survey of Canadians about their book buying, borrowing, and more in 2023.

[Canadian Book Market 2023](#): A comprehensive guide to the Canadian print sales market in 2023 with in-depth category data and new insight into Canadian library print circulation.

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Industry-led and partially funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, BookNet Canada has become, as *The Globe and Mail* puts it, “the book industry’s supply-chain nerve centre.”

Learn more at booknetcanada.ca.