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Reading Habits of Croatian Citizens

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate reading habits of Croatian citizens. We are interested in how often people read books, where they like to read, and how often and what content they read on electronic devices. In addition, we are interested in how many people are enrolled in public libraries, and how often they borrow books from those libraries.

We conducted a field survey on a nationally representative random sample of 750 adult participants (18 years and older) (356 men and 394 women).

Our results show that almost one third of Croatian citizens never read books, and 6% of them read almost every day. Most often they read at home, but also out in the open – on the beach or in a park. Almost two thirds of participants own electronic devices that can be used for reading and what they most often read on them are daily newspapers, web portals, blogs and magazines, and only rarely electronic books. Only a third of participants are enrolled in public libraries, and fewer than half of those participants often borrow books from libraries.

As for gender differences, our results show that women read more often than men, and are also more often enrolled in public libraries. There are no age differences found in reading habits.

Keywords: reading habits, Croatia, books, e-books

Introduction

At its most simple level, reading can be defined as decoding of written language. It is an activity we can engage in anytime and anywhere. However, written language can be very different in terms of complexity – one can read a nutrition facts label on a can of beans, a Facebook status, a poem written by a 7-year old child or a novel by a world famous novelist. At a more elaborate level, reading can be defined as a process of deriving meaning from a written text. This process is described as a cognitive experience, but also as a communication and creative activity (National Strategy for Encouraging Reading, 2017).

Reading is a skill most often acquired in childhood, in the first grades of primary school. It is not a static skill that remains unchanged throughout life, but rather a skill that can be further developed at any life stage (Willms & Murray, 2007). Researchers who study reading focus on different aspects of this skill, such as the emerging literacy skills and their development, reading impairments or reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Stanovich, 2000). Another way to study reading is through its impact on practically all aspects of our lives. Research shows that reading books affects one's empathy (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013), theory of mind (Kidd & Castano 2013) and personality (Yahaya, Mohamed, & Ismail, 2012). When we read fiction, we create mental simulations of social experiences described in the book, we get transported into the mental lives and emotional experiences of the characters, and such transportation is related to better empathy (our ability to understand or feel what another person is experiencing, from that person's perspective), as well as to better social skills in real life (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, de la Paz, & Peterson, 2006). Furthermore, people who read fiction have better quality social networks (Billington, 2015), better mental health and improved well-being (The Reading Agency, 2015), they are less lonely (Toepoel, 2013) and less depressive (Billington, 2015). Interestingly, that is the opposite of how "book nerds" are usually perceived by the general public.

Reading also improves vocabulary size (Frijters, Barron & Brunello, 2000), verbal fluency (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992), reasoning, concentration, as well as critical thinking skills (Stanovich, West, & Harrison, 1995; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992; Wolf & Barzillai, 2009). One study even showed that elderly people who read an average of 30 minutes a day have a 20% survival advantage compared to people who don't read books, or read magazines (Bavishy, Slave & Levy, 2016). The authors explained those results through the effect of a cognitive mechanism.

Apart from reading benefits for an individual, there are also reading benefits for the society as a whole. Research shows that better reading literacy has a positive effect on engaging in higher education and life-long learning and, what's also important, on being an active member of the society. The level of literacy is related to family income and thus to economic growth of the country, quality of work, mobility and employment (Murray & Shillington, 2011). In addition, low literacy rates are linked to poverty and crime (Ivanova, 2011).

The question of how much people read is the basis of studying reading habits. In other words, research on reading habits most often entails reporting on reading frequency, reading amount, or reading activity (Schmidt & Retelsdorf, 2016). There are several ways to investigate this matter through self-report, the most elaborate one being the use of reading diaries (Allen, Cipielewski, & Stanovich 1992). Although this method is very informative, it is also very time consuming and often prevents researchers from reaching a larger number of participants. The simplest method is to ask the participants directly how many books they read in a specific period. This method, however, is not very reliable, because people sometimes have difficulties remembering the exact number of books they have read. Another thing we need to consider is the tendency to give socially desirable answers, since reading tendency is often related to intelligence and refinement (West, Stanovich & Mitchell, 1993). It was for that reason that Stanovich and West devised the Author Recognition Test (ART) to measure print exposure (Stanovich and West, 1989). Participants are

given a list of real and made-up names, and their task is to choose those that they recognize as the names of book authors. They are discouraged from choosing the ones they are not sure about because they are told there are negative points for wrong answers. This measure doesn't indicate the exact number of books a person has read, but it does give us information on the extent to which a person has been exposed to books and reading surrounding and this tendency is positively related to book reading (West, Stanovich & Mitchell, 1993). Another way to investigate reading habits is by the comparative reading habits method (Acheson, Wells & MacDonald, 2008). This method consists of asking participants how much time they spend reading, how much they enjoy reading, how fast they read and how complex their reading materials are compared to their peers. The logic of this comparison stems from research on social comparison, which shows that such self-reported comparative judgements can be more accurate than the ones that don't include such comparisons (e.g. Bandura, 1997).

Reading habits and their outcomes in adult population, especially regarding people's psychological well-being, have not been systematically investigated in Croatia, but their importance is becoming more recognized. In November 2017, the Croatian government adopted the National Strategy for Encouraging Reading, which aims to "develop the reading culture and allow for greater number of Croatian citizens to read with pleasure and understanding" (National Strategy for Encouraging Reading, 2017, p. 5). As for research on reading habits of Croatian citizens, most data come from a continuing research on reading habits and book sales rates conducted annually since 2011 by the Croatian branch of GfK (Growth from Knowledge) agency specialized in market research. The data show that approximately one half of Croatian citizens (from 47% in 2016 to 56% in 2011 and 2018) report reading at least one book in the past year (Book Market Research in Croatia, 2018). Although this research is conducted on a representative sample of Croatian citizens (N=1000), the information about the sample characteristics and the sampling procedure are scarce, since the data have never been published in a scientific paper.

One of the strategic goals of the Croatian National Strategy for Encouraging Reading is to establish an efficient social framework for reading support. We feel that the scientific data on reading habits of Croatian citizens are an important input for the development of specific strategies for achievement of that specific goal. This is precisely why this preliminary study aims to provide data that could be used to develop programs aiming at encouraging reading in the most vulnerable groups of citizens, in accordance with the Croatian National Strategy for Encouraging Reading.

In this research we aim to investigate the reading habits of Croatian citizens. We also aim to describe the group of participants who are frequent readers and the group of participants that report reading books very rarely or never, in terms of their age, gender, education level and the county they live in. We report the data from a survey on a nationally representative sample of Croatian citizens. To investigate reading habits, we have employed a self-report measure of reading frequency and the comparative reading habits method. Furthermore, we aim to investigate the use of libraries as means of providing easier access to reading material. Finally, we investigate reading habits as regards the use of digital media. This aspect is particularly important when it comes to creating strategies for encouraging reading, because we live in a digitally saturated world. If there are no well-developed reading habits in a population, reading is more in danger to be simply neglected due to digital media use.

Methods

Research questions

The research questions we want to answer are how often Croatian citizens read, where they read, whether they are enrolled in public libraries, whether they read from electronic devices, and, if yes, what content they read from such devices. We also look at the possible age and gender differences in regard to those research questions.

Procedure

The results reported here come from a larger study on the attitudes and opinions of Croatian citizens on social processes, named “Pilar’s Barometer of Croatian Society“, which was carried out by the Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, from 15 April to 15 May 2016, on a representative sample of 750 adults (18 years and over). The study was approved by the Ethics Committee at the Ivo Pilar Institute.

The sample was stratified in multiple stages, and units were randomly selected within each strata. It included all Croatian counties, and the settlements in the counties were classified according to the formal criteria of settlement types. The survey was conducted in 102 chosen settlements (143 sample points). At each sample point, the households chosen to be part of the survey were selected randomly from a list of addresses, and the respondent in each household was determined according to the next birthday method.

All the participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. They were explained the manner in which they were randomly chosen as participants, the purpose of the study and the way the data would be used. After the survey was finished, the participants were given an opportunity to mix their questionnaire, which contained no personal information, with other questionnaires.

Participants

Participants were 356 men (47.5%) and 394 women (52.2%). Participants were asked to report the year of their birth, and based on that data we created the age groups that were later used for analysing the data. The number of participants in each age group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Number and percentage of participants according to age*

| Age in years | N (%) |
|--------------|-------------|
| 18 to 30 | 168 (22.4%) |
| 31 to 40 | 126 (16.8%) |
| 41 to 50 | 141 (18.8%) |
| 51 to 60 | 138 (18.4%) |
| 61 to 70 | 87 (11.6%) |
| 71 and older | 90 (12%) |
| Total | 750 (100%) |

As for education levels, almost one quarter of the participants was low-skilled ($n=191$, 25.5%),

more than half of them were medium-skilled ($n = 418$, 55.7%), and high-skilled participants were least represented ($n = 141$, 18.8%).

Questionnaire

In order to investigate the research questions we were interested in, we constructed a series of questions about reading habits. The first question was how often participants engaged in different activities, one of which was reading (fiction, fine literature). Participants gave their answers on a scale from 1 – *never* to 8 – *every day*. The next two questions were intended for participants whose answer to the previous question indicated that they read at least on some occasions. We first asked them how much they enjoyed reading compared to other people they know. The answers were given on a scale from 1- *a lot less*, to 5 – *a lot more*, and there was also an option to choose the “*I don't know*” answer. The following question was where they most liked to read. Possible answers were: a) *at home*; b) *at work, school or university*; c) *in a library*; d) *outdoors (in a park, at the beach, on a field trip)*; e) *in a cafe or a similar surrounding*; f) *in public transportation*; g) *somewhere else*. As for enrollment in public libraries, the participants were asked if they are enrolled in a public library with possible answer options: a) *no*; b) *yes, but I rarely take out books*; c) *yes, and I often take out books*.

To investigate if and how often they use electronic devices (smartphone, tablet, computer, e-reader) for reading, we asked the participants whether they owned such a device. Those that did were then asked how often they used them to read electronic books (fiction), professional literature (for work or study), daily newspapers and web portals, blogs or magazines. Their answers were given using a scale from 1 – *never* to 4 – *regularly*, separately for each type of content.

We also collected data on the highest level of education obtained (low-skilled, medium-skilled or high-skilled education level) and on the county in which the participants live.

Analyses

All the analyses were done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, version 21 (IBM Corp., 2012). As the distribution of the results differed from normal and data were collected using ordinal scales, the Spearman rho correlation coefficients were used to calculate correlations between the measures and the Mann Whitney U-test was used to evaluate gender differences in those variables. χ^2 test was used for testing relationships between categorical variables.

Results

The first question that we wanted to answer was how often Croatian citizens read and what defines the readers subgroup. The results show that an alarming third of Croatian citizens never read (30.8%), while another third of them read once or a few times a year (30.3%). The remaining third of participants can be described as the readers subgroup, with 6.2% of participants reading almost every day, and 19.3 % and 13.4% reading on a monthly or weekly basis, respectively. There is a significant positive correlation between the reported reading frequency and how much participants enjoy reading (Spearman's $\rho = .501$, $p = .000$). The measure of reading enjoyment was used to explore the convergent validity of the self-report measure of reading frequency and the positive correlation between these measures confirms this validity.

When we look at the age of our readers subgroup (persons who read at least on some occasions), we notice that there are represented readers from all age groups (Table 2).

Table 2 Number and percentage of participants according to age who read at least on some occasions (reader subgroup), those who read at least once a week or more often (frequent reader subgroup) and those who never read

| Age groups | Participants who read at least on some occasions <i>n</i> (%) | Participants who read at least once a week or more often <i>n</i> (%) | Participants who never read <i>n</i> (%) |
|--------------|--|--|---|
| 18 to 30 | 124 (24%) | 31 (21.2%) | 44 (19.0%) |
| 31 to 40 | 95 (18.4%) | 27 (18.5%) | 31 (13.4%) |
| 41 to 50 | 99 (19.2%) | 27 (18.5%) | 42 (19%) |
| 51 to 60 | 94 (18.2%) | 30 (20.5%) | 44 (19%) |
| 61 to 70 | 55 (10.7%) | 17 (11.6%) | 31 (13.4%) |
| 71 and older | 49 (9.5%) | 14 (9.6%) | 39 (16.9%) |
| Total | 516 (100%) | 146 (100%) | 231 (100%) |

To further investigate the relation between the readers' age and reading frequency, we calculated non parametric Spearman rho correlation coefficients because the distribution of the results differs from normal (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was .149 and .179, $p=.000$ for age and reading frequency respectively) and the data come from ordinal scales. Results point to a significant but low negative correlation (Spearman's rho=-.088, $p=.016$), showing that the older the participants are, the less often they read. Furthermore, there is a significant positive correlation between reading frequency and the level of education (Spearman's rho=-.211, $p=.000$) in the readers subgroup, with higher educated participants reporting that they read more often.

As for gender differences, the Mann Whitney *U*-test test shows that women read more often than men (Mean rankwomen=402.95, Mean rankmen=341.86, $M-W U=58183.500$, $p=.000$).

Who reads most?

We were particularly interested in the subgroup that can be described as frequent readers – people who read on a weekly basis or every day. There were 146 participants (19.5%) who read at least once a week or more often. Two thirds of them (63%) are women, 32.9% are high-skilled, and 39.7% are under 40 years of age. A more detailed distribution according to age is shown in Table 2. As for their education level, the participants are most often have medium-skilled (55.5%), a third of them are high-skilled, and only 11.6% are low-skilled as the maximum level of education obtained. Almost one third of frequent readers (28.8%) live in the capital city of Croatia – Zagreb. In terms of the number of frequent readers, Zagreb is followed by Split-Dalmatia County (9.6%) in the second, and Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (7.5%) in the third place. There are some counties that have no frequent readers at all, e.g. Šibenik-Knin, Koprivnica-Križevci and Bjelovar-Bilogora County.

Who doesn't read?

There are 231 participants who never read (30.8%). This group includes more men (58.4%) than women (41.6%). A more detailed distribution according to age is shown in Table 2, but all age groups are represented. When we look at the maximum education level obtained, nearly a half of participants who don't read are medium-skilled, 42.9% of them are low-skilled, and only 7.8% are high-skilled. Most non-readers

live in Zagreb (11.3%), Split-Dalmatia County (8.2%) and Zagreb County (8.2%), and the fewest non-readers live in Istria (3%) and Dubrovnik-Neretva County (1.7%).

Where do they read?

We were also interested in where people read the most, and the results show that 75.4% of participants who read at least on some occasions prefer to read at home. For 6.8% of participants the favorite reading place is out in the open – at the beach, in a park, on a field trip or alike. Around 2% or less say they most like to read at work or at university, in the library, in a café or in public transportation.

Public libraries

As for enrollment in the public libraries, a half of participants in the reading group is not enrolled in public libraries (52.1%). From the other half, 25.3 % rarely take out books and 115 participants or 22.3% of the reading subgroup take them out regularly. Gender analyses show that among those who read at least on some occasions, there are more women enrolled in libraries than men (Table 3).

Table 3 *Number of participants who read at least on some occasions and are enrolled in public libraries, according to gender*

| | | Not enrolled in libraries | Enrolled in libraries | |
|--------|--------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Gender | Male | 136 | 82 | $\chi^2=15.616, p=.000$ |
| | Female | 133 | 164 | |

To see how enrollment in public libraries is related to age, we created two age groups. The first one included all the participants from 18 to 50 years of age, and the second one included all the participants aged 51 and older. Results (Table 4) show that older participants are less often enrolled in public libraries compared to those younger than 51.

Table 4 *Number of participants who read at least on some occasions and that are enrolled in public libraries, according to age*

| | | Not enrolled in libraries | Enrolled in libraries | |
|-----|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Age | 18 to 50 | 139 | 178 | $\chi^2=23.231, p=.000$ |
| | 51 and older | 130 | 68 | |

Reading and digital media

We had a special interest in the prevalence of reading on digital media, and our results show that 70.7% of all the participants in the sample own a device that can be used for reading (smartphone, tablet, computer, e-reader), but over half of them (53.7%) never use those devices to read e-books. Such devices are most often used for reading web portals, blogs and magazines (54.7% read such content regularly or often) or daily newspapers (47.1% read such content regularly or often). Only 13% of participants read e-books regularly or often and one quarter of them (25.2%) read professional literature for work or school.

To look at how access to electronic devices is related to age, we again grouped the participants in two age groups, with the first one including all the participants younger than 51, and the second one includ-

ing all the participants aged 51 and older. The results (Table 5) suggest that the older participants don't own electronic devices as often as the younger ones do.

Table 5 *Number of participants who do or don't own an electronic device that can be used for reading texts, according to age*

| | | Own an electronic device that can be used for reading texts | Don't own an electronic device that can be used for reading texts | |
|-----|--------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Age | 18 to 50 | 381 | 52 | $\chi^2=143.230,$ $p=.000$ |
| | 51 and older | 149 | 162 | |

Discussion

The first aim of this study was to find out how often Croatian citizens read. Our results show that only one third of population older than 18 reads on a more regular basis (at least once a month or more often), while another third reads at least on some occasions, which taken together shows that 69.2% of Croatian citizens can be described as at least occasional readers. Other research on reading habits and book sales for the same year shows that 47% of Croatian citizens report reading at least one book in the past year, and this percentage rises to 53% and 57% for 2017 and 2018, respectively (Book Market Research in Croatia, 2018). The differences in the results stem from differently formulated questions that were used to assess the participants' reading frequency. Nonetheless, the research shows that a large part of population in Croatia does not read on regular basis. Unfortunately, it is difficult to compare those data to data from other countries because researchers use different methods to assess reading habits, and many of the cross-national comparative studies did not include Croatia.

The frequent reader group was composed of participants who reported reading on a weekly basis or every day. The type of question we used to assess reading frequency didn't allow us to make distinctions regarding the type of books (fictional, factual, scholarly), the reason for reading (studying, leisure, information) or the media used for reading (print or digital). Our data show there are more women than men in this group, that one third of them are high-skilled, and that 39.7% are under 40 years of age. Previous research also shows that those who read more than average are more often female, younger than 24 years of age, and are high-skilled (Book Market Research in Croatia, 2018). The same research also showed that frequent readers most often come from Zagreb and coastal counties, which is very similar to the finding from this research, which shows that frequent readers most often come from the capital and the coastal counties (Split-Dalmatia County and Primorje-Gorski Kotar County).

Gender differences

Our results point to gender differences in reading habits of Croatian citizens. Not only do women read more often than men, but there are also more women in the frequent reader group and more women enrolled in public libraries. These findings are not surprising, since previous research also points to gender differences in reading habits (Robinson, Zill, & Winglee, 1990; Logan & Johnson, 2010). Explaining the exact reasons for this gap is beyond the scope of this article and gender differences in reading habits in adulthood are an extension of gender differences evident at an earlier age. Girls outperform boys in reading achievement, but girls also enjoy reading more than boys (Chuy & Nitulescu, 2014). Research shows that in explaining the gender gap in reading, biological (differences in cognition and self-motivation), cultural

(the influence of childhood socialization and gender stereotypes), as well as family factors (the time parents spend with boys and girls at preschool ages) are to be taken into account (Baker & Miligan, 2016; Matthews, Ponitz, & Morrison, 2009; Tepper, 2010).

Where they read

Another matter we wanted to investigate is where people like to read. Research shows that reading cannot be excluded from the physical environment (Kuzmičova, 2016) and one's home, as well as the practices performed in it, represent the opposite of public space (Cieraad, 1999). Most participants in our research like to read at home. This is not a surprising finding, since home is where they are most likely to find the time, as well as peace and quiet they need to focus on reading (Burgess, 1985).

Public libraries

It is important to highlight the distinction between how much we read, and how well we read. For example, research shows that in the UK, reading skills are improving, but the reading frequency is decreasing (Massey, Elliot & Johnson, 2005). Still, there is a connection between reading frequency and reading skills and an important factor to consider in this relation is access to books. It was the early large-scale assessment studies of reading literacy that showed that the selected school variables, such as class size and teaching practices, had a relatively small effect on reading achievement compared to the family background variables (Thorndike, 1973). In particular, the number of books in one's home was found to be one of the best predictors of reading literacy. Book access was later investigated not only in the family context, but also in the community, specifically through public libraries (McQuillan, 1998; Krashen, 2004, Krashen, Lee, & McQuillan, 2012), showing there is a strong positive relation between the library quality and reading achievement in school children. The rationale behind this relation is that when people have easy access to books, they have a greater probability to read more often and reading then affects their literacy development (Krashen, 2004). Furthermore, previous research shows that Croatian citizens most often read books they borrow from libraries, compared, for example, to books they buy or borrow from friends. It is for this reason that we wanted to investigate how many Croatian citizens are enrolled in public libraries and how often they take out books. There are 261 public libraries in Croatia (Public Library Portal, 2018). Yet, our data show that only half of the citizens who read at least on some occasions are enrolled in public libraries, and only 22.3% of them take out books regularly. Our data did not allow us to analyse other aspects of library use, which also might affect reading habits. Libraries are often valued for their potential to bring cultural empowerment to society, which leads to social, political and economic changes in the community (Awoyemi & Yusuf, 2016; Itsekor & Nwokeoma, 2017). Therefore, being enrolled in a public library might facilitate the development of reading habits in ways that go beyond just providing access to reading material.

Reading and digital media

Another important aspect of research on reading habits is the impact of digital media on those habits. Digital media affect reading in different ways. Researchers worry that digital media interfere with reading because they take away our time that would otherwise be spent reading, and this might be particularly dangerous when there are no strong reading habits developed. Contemporary decline in reading skills most critically endangers the most complex narratives, which are often most difficult to read from digital devices (Wolf & Barzillai, 2009). However, digital media might also encourage reading by offering one a chance to read certain content in electronic mode, which might make the reading material more accessible and also

make the reading process more mobile.

Our results show that almost two thirds (70.7%) of all the participants in the sample own a device that can be used for reading (smartphone, tablet, computer, e-reader), which is almost the exact percentage obtained in other research from the same year that points to the fact that 71% of Croatian citizens over 15 years old have an opportunity to read books on electronic devices (Book Market Research in Croatia, 2018), but that opportunity is rarely used. Our data show that only 13% of participants read e-books regularly or often. In comparison, other research from the same period shows that only 9% of those who have access to electronic devices use them at least sometimes to read e-books (Book Market Research in Croatia, 2018). In our research, the participants most often use digital devices to read web portals, blogs and magazines or daily newspapers, and other research supports such findings, showing that 72% of participants at least sometimes read daily newspapers in digital format (Book Market Research in Croatia, 2018).

Limitations of the study and guidelines for future research

The main limitation of the study is that since it was part of a larger survey on attitudes of Croatian citizens on social processes in Croatian society, it was not able to focus on reading habits in more detail. Therefore, we suggest further research that would include different methods of assessing reading frequency, and also gather information on the number of books owned or bought in a specific period, on different reading rituals, different reading materials, information regarding the language people read in, as well as the information on reading motivation and possible barriers. Research on motivation for reading and particularly on the conditions surrounding one's home reading practices is particularly important because we need more information on what drives people to choose to spend their leisure time reading or doing something else. Additionally, it would be important to study how reading rituals are related to different types of literature being selected (fiction/nonfiction). Another important aspect that might motivate people to engage in reading is their perception of individual reading benefits, which also needs further exploration.

In addition, we suggest a more detailed investigation of preference of paper vs. print media when it comes to reading, as well as an investigation of the types of content which participants read on a specific digital device they own and for what purposes (study, work, leisure).

Furthermore, the data presented in this paper come from a study conducted in 2016, so we might expect a slight change in the results over several years. Still, based on similar research (Book Market Research in Croatia, 2018), we don't expect such changes to be significant, and we find it is important to report that data in a scientific manner, for future reference.

Conclusion

The importance of reading for emotional, social and psychological benefits is often neglected in psychological research. Still, it is well documented. For example, in the study conducted by Billington (2015) on 4,164 adults in the UK, who were divided into two groups – readers and non or lapsed readers, the results showed that those who read for pleasure for 30 minutes or more a week reported a number of benefits when compared to the non-readers. Some of those benefits include less frequent feelings of stress and depression and stronger feelings of relaxation from reading than from watching television or using social media, but also higher levels of self-esteem and a greater ability to cope with difficult situations. Furthermore, reading helped them to feel less lonely and closer to their friends and their community. Finally, readers had greater understanding and empathy for others, as well as stronger and more engaged awareness of social issues and of cultural diversity (Billington, 2015).

Our results show that only one third of Croatian citizens older than 18 read on a more regular basis (at least once a month or more often), another third reads at least on some occasions, and almost one third never reads books. Most often they read at home, and although almost two thirds of them own an electronic device that can be used for reading, they rarely read electronic books. Only a third of participants are enrolled in public libraries, and less than a half of those participants often borrow books from libraries. Furthermore, our results show that women read more often than men, and are also more often enrolled in public libraries. Based on these results, we recommend interventions that should aim at providing effective reading support and target all groups of Croatian citizens, particularly men with lower-skilled education and those over 51. If we could raise the awareness of the psychological benefits of reading for just half an hour a week, and investigate in more detail the motivation for reading or the problems related to the absence of reading in Croatian citizens, we might provide the foundation for better psychological well-being of our citizens in the long run.

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