SCHOLASTIC

KIDS & FAMILY READING REPORT™

7TH EDITION

THE SUMMER READING IMPERATIVE

YouGov

From my background teaching high school students in New York City and working as a public librarian in New Mexico, to my current role as the corporate librarian at Scholastic, you could say I'm a full-time resident in the world of literacy. It's my job to know a lot about books (and I love it). I have seen the power of books first-hand: the latest book in a graphic novel series devoured standing right in front of the shelf, or a biography of someone's hero never returned because "I need that book, Miss." In order to facilitate moments like these, kids must have our support—not just on paper, but in concrete ways—to find books that capture their attention. Summer presents an opportunity for families and communities to play an active role in ensuring all children can find their story and enjoy the benefits of summer reading.

Let's start with the power of sharing information. Summer reading is critical to student success; it allows kids to seamlessly build upon what they are learning from one year to the next. When kids don't read over the summer, they are at risk of entering the next grade level having lost important momentum and key academic skills from the previous school year over break. This "summer slide," as it is often called, is hyper-present in educators' minds and has a real impact in the classroom. I remember clearly during my first year as a teacher, a mentor explaining that I had to spend the first few weeks reviewing content from the previous year's curriculum before I could start doing the lessons I'd planned for September.

The *Kids & Family Reading Report* shows us there is much more work to be done to increase awareness among parents around the summer slide. Nearly half of parents are still unaware of this phenomenon, and just having this knowledge can make a real difference. The data show that if parents are aware of the summer slide, they and their kids are more engaged in summer reading—how motivating! And there's more good news: the majority of kids say they understand the importance of summer reading—and, better yet, that they really enjoy it.

But there are challenges. The data reveal a troubling increase over the past few years in the percentage of kids across all ages who report reading **zero** books during the summer. Which brings me to the topic of access, especially for historically underserved groups, because access to books is often limited to the academic year. The data show 53% of kids get most of the books they read for fun through schools—so what happens for that majority when school isn't in session? Public libraries and communities can be crucial partners to help close this gap by working with families over the summer.

In my own childhood, my sisters and I embraced the hot and lazy afternoons of summer reading and trading our library finds on the beach, immersing ourselves in the books of newly favorite authors, discovering interesting people and moments in history, and teaching ourselves creative arts and crafts. I hope for every child to have a similar experience. But this can't happen unless we commit as parents, caregivers, educators and community partners to find inventive ways to get books into the hands of every child over the summer—the books *they* want to read. When this happens, a child doesn't just maintain their literacy skills, they try something new—and even have fun doing it.

DEIMOSA WEBBER-BEY

SCHOLASTIC SENIOR LIBRARIAN & MANAGER,

LIBRARY SERVICES

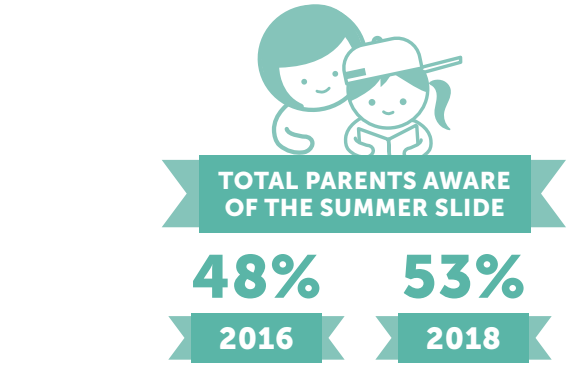
A SUMMER READING AWARENESS GAP FOR PARENTS

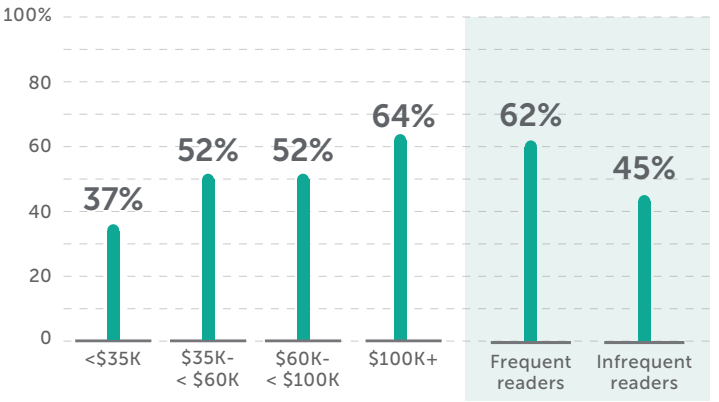
At first glance, parents seem aware of the importance of summer reading, as 94% agree reading over the summer can help their child during the school year. And yet, nearly half of parents with school-age children are unaware of the "summer slide" (47%), the loss of academic skills that occurs when school is not in session and which is attributed largely to the lack of reading. This is of critical importance as the effects of the summer slide are cumulative. Researchers estimate that by the time a struggling reader reaches middle school, summer reading loss has accumulated to a two-year lag in reading achievement[1]. A case can be made that we can begin to address this contributing factor to the reading achievement gap by addressing an information gap. The *Kids & Family Reading Report* reveals that when parents are aware of the summer slide, both children and parents are more engaged in summer reading.

It's encouraging that awareness of the summer slide has increased five points since 2016 (48% vs. 53%). However, there are significant disparities around awareness among certain subsets. Similar to other reading habit trends, parents of frequent readers (kids who read books for fun 5–7 days a week) are far more likely to have the summer slide on their radar than are parents of infrequent readers (kids who read for fun less than one day a week). Lower-income families, as was the case in 2016, remain less likely to be aware *(See figure 1)*. This is of notable concern as the summer slide is a primary contributor to the reading achievement gap between lower- and higher-income students[2]. What's more, out-of-school experiences, particularly unequal summer learning during early formative years, have been shown to account for the majority of achievement differences among socio-economic statuses by the time students reach ninth grade[3]. All heightening a need for greater communication around summer reading for lower-income families.

A "summer slide" awareness gap

Figure 1. Percentage of parents who are aware of the "summer slide" in total and by household income and child's reading frequency





Base: Parents with kids ages 6–17

[1] Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Olson, L. S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72(2), 167–180.; Cooper, H., Charlton, K., Valentine, J. C., & Muhlenbruck, L. (2000). Making the Most of Summer School: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review. *Society for Research in Child Development*, vol. 65, no. 1. Allington, R. L., & McGill-Franzen, A. M. (2003). The impact of summer setback on the reading achievement gap. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(1), 68–75.
[2] National Summer Learning Association, (2017). State of summer learning: 2017 state policy snapshot.
[3] Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Olson, L. S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72(2), 167–180.

SUMMER READING TRENDS TO WATCH AMONG KIDS

Most kids know that summer reading provides benefits that extend well past the summer months. Seventy-seven percent agree that reading over the summer will help them during the school year and on average, kids read nine books in the summer of 2018.

Where the significant concern lies, is in the number of kids who do not read any books at all over their summer breaks *(See figure 2a)*. Thirty-two percent of kids ages 15–17 said the number of books they read over the summer was zero, up sharply since 2016 (22%). The trend line among kids ages 9–11 also needs to be watched: the percentage who read zero books over the summer has doubled since 2016 (7% to 14%). Notably, if a parent is aware of the summer slide, their child is less likely to read zero books over the summer (16% vs. 25%).

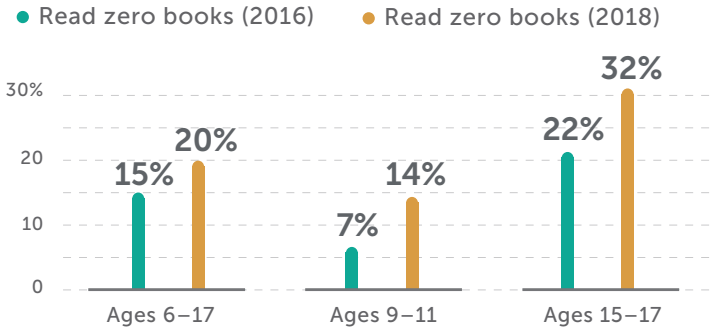
As with many trends found in the *Kids & Family Reading Report*, the number of books read over the summer varies widely by age *(See figure 2b)*: kids ages 6–8 read an average of 19 books; that number drops to nine among 9–11s, six among 12–14s and two among 15–17s. Some of the decline in the number of books read can be attributed to the length of books kids are reading increasing as children grow older. Nonetheless, the trend line is troubling.

Frequent readers are by far the most active readers over the summer months, reading an average of 21 books vs. only two among infrequent readers. This difference is largely due to the high percentage of infrequent readers who do not read any books at all during the summer: 46% of infrequent readers ages 6–11 and 52% ages 12–17 read zero books over the summer.

And knowing that frequent readers are far more likely than infrequent readers to have books in their homes (139 vs. 74 books on average), access during the summer is undoubtedly a factor.

More kids read zero books over the summer

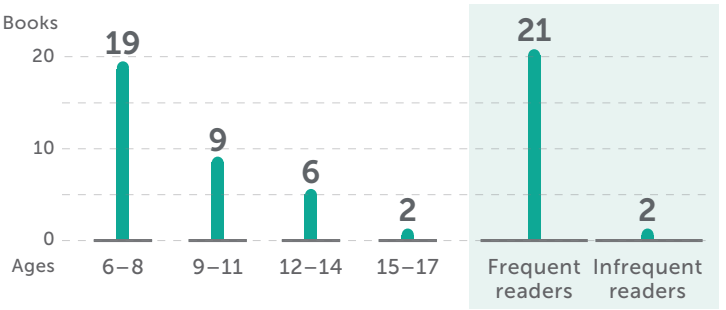
Figure 2a. Percentage of children who read zero books over the summer, compared with 2016



Base: Children ages 6–17

Number of books read over the summer varies by age and by reading frequency

Figure 2b. Average number of books read over the summer



Base: Children ages 6–17

BOOK ACCESS DIMINISHES DURING THE SUMMER

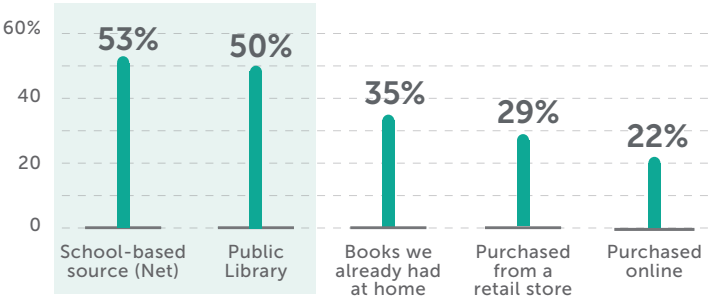
Kids identify schools and public libraries as the main sources for most of the books they read for fun. With 53% of kids getting access to books through school and 50% getting them from the public library, it is no surprise that the vast majority of parents believe that every child needs to have a school library (95%) and every community needs to have a public library (95%) *(See figure 3a/b).* Even a new mother shared her appreciation for libraries, saying, *"I want to borrow books from the library and attend story hour and learning events when she is older."* Yet in most cases, school-related points of access are the least available over the summer. Research on book deserts—areas with a stark lack of access to print materials—showed in the studied urban areas that the summer months drastically limit book access in high-poverty neighborhoods[4].

The *Teacher & Principal School Report*[5], a companion study to the *Kids & Family Reading Report*, found that the vast majority (96%) of teachers, principals and school librarians say that providing year-round access to books at home is important to enhancing student achievement. An example of how taking an active role in this can lead to results was displayed recently in two district-wide initiatives that provided books and family literacy nights to K–6 students and families over the summer. Research conducted by Scholastic Research & Validation revealed that this approach was associated with students maintaining or increasing literacy skills while school was out. Specifically, 78% of students in one district maintained or increased their reading levels from spring to fall; in the second district fewer struggling readers (21% vs. 30%) and fewer advanced readers (34% vs. 43%) experienced summer reading loss when they had access to these resources before the start of summer[6].

[4]Neuman, S. B., & Moland, N. (2019). Book Deserts: The Consequences of Income Segregation on Children's Access to Print. *Urban Education*, 54(1), 126–147
[5]scholastic.com/teacherprincipalreport
[6]Scholastic Research & Validation. (2018). *Empowering students and families to address summer reading loss in Greenville, SC and Stoughton, MA 2017*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Schools and public libraries are main sources of books for kids

Figure 3a. Percentage of kids who get most of the books they read for fun from each source



Base: Children ages 6–17

Parents show strong support for public and school libraries

Figure 3b. Parents' agreement with statement

Base: Parents with kids ages 6–17

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES CAN BE A BRIDGE FOR SUMMER READING

Bringing schools, communities and families together is a powerful combination to support summer reading. First and foremost, schools are the top source of information on the summer slide, with 59% of parents who are aware of the summer slide citing their child's teacher, or school in general, as providing information on the topic. News media is the number two source, coming in at a distant 24%.

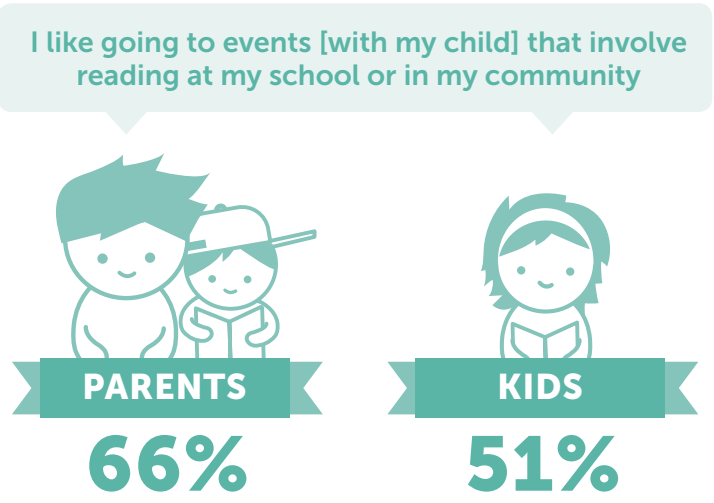
In the Scholastic Research & Validation research referenced earlier[7], providing K–6 students and their families with increased access to books and learning opportunities over the summer displayed positive impacts among families. The research highlighted that in the two participating districts, 95% and 85% of families agreed that the Family Reading Night was valuable in learning how to support their children's reading. Additional supportive findings include: 60% of families agree they learned ways to talk to their children about books and 94% of families agree the Family Reading Night was a great way to connect families and schools.

Yet only some families are benefiting from school and community literacy events. Data from the *Kids & Family Reading Report* reveal about four in 10 (39%) parents say their school or community has hosted a reading event in the past few years and two in three of these parents say the event was attended by their child (64%) or themselves (37%). Many of these events likely take place during the school year, diminishing parents' access to support around literacy over the summer. Since half of kids and two-thirds of parents agree that they like going to events involving reading *(See figure 4)*, communities have an opportunity to come together to help foster summer reading. Similar to the trends observed in reading frequency, enjoyment and importance in the *Kids*

[7]Scholastic Research & Validation. (2018). *Empowering students and families to address summer reading loss in Greenville, SC and Stoughton, MA 2017.* New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Families enjoy literacy events

Figure 4. Parent and child agreement with statement

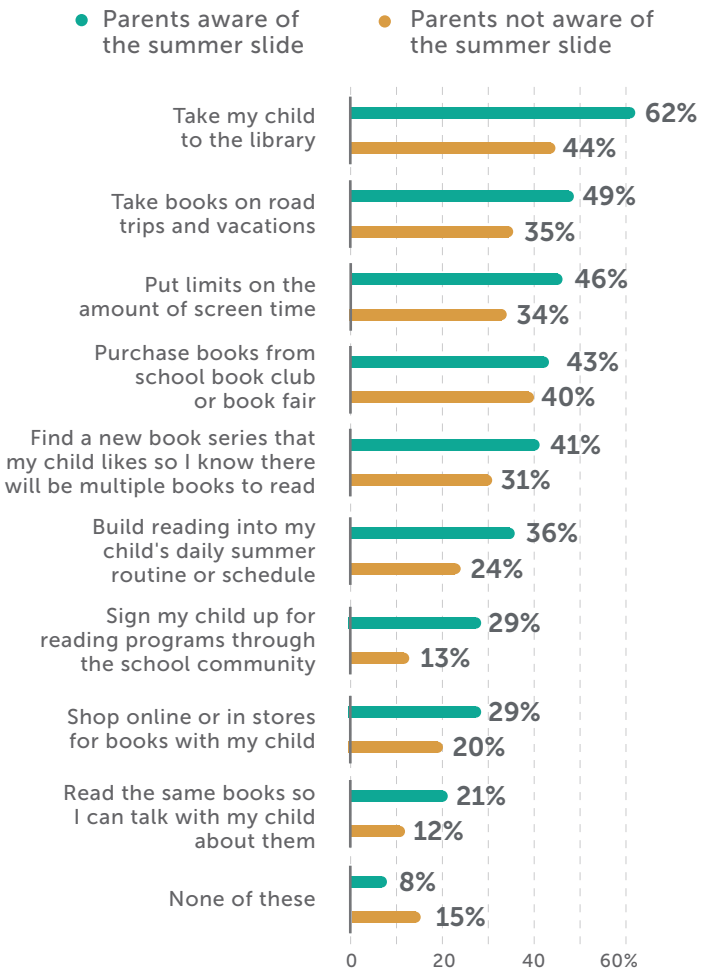


Base: Parents with kids ages 6–17; Children ages 6–17

> "I ENJOY LOSING MYSELF IN A GOOD BOOK. I LOVE VISITING FARAWAY LANDS AND MEETING CHARACTERS."
>
> 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Parents aware of the summer slide employ more strategies to encourage summer reading

Figure 5. Percentage of parents who encourage summer reading in each way, by awareness of the summer slide



Base: Parents with kids ages 6–17

& Family Reading Report: Finding Their Story, enjoyment of these events diminishes as kids age, from a high of 72% among children ages 6–8 to a low of 29% among children ages 15–17. Parent interest, however, remains relatively high across children's ages at 75% among parents of kids ages 6–8 and about six in 10 among parents of both 12–14 and 15–17 year-olds.

AT HOME, PARENTS FOCUS ON BOOK ACCESS TO SUPPORT SUMMER READING

To better understand reading behavior among kids and their parents when school is out, the *Kids & Family Reading Report* probed the different strategies parents use to encourage summer reading at home. Notably, the top three all centered on creating book access and choice for the child: taking trips to public libraries ranked first (54%), followed by ordering from school book clubs or book fairs (42%) and taking books on road trips or vacations (42%). Parents also reported putting limits on screen time (40%), finding new book series (36%) and purposefully making reading part of the summertime daily routine (30%), with fairly significant variation across ages of children. As one 14-year-old boy noted, "*Reading for fun is a habit now. I enjoy reading and learning about different things. This summer I read less, because of football, but my mom made sure we went to the library before practice.*"

Parents who are aware of the summer slide are more likely to engage in nearly all activities to encourage their children to read while school is out *(See figure 5)*. And a peer-reviewed study—published by the American Library Association in 2017 and centered on the effect of summer program participation among fourth grade students in North Carolina—found that if parents understand the summer slide, they prioritize transportation to the library to facilitate summer reading[8].

[8]Becnel, K., Moeller, R. A., & Matzen, N. J. (2017). "Somebody Signed Me Up": North Carolina Fourth-Graders' Perceptions of Summer Reading Programs. *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*, 15(3), 3–8.

THE POWER OF CHOICE DRIVES KIDS' ENJOYMENT OF SUMMER READING

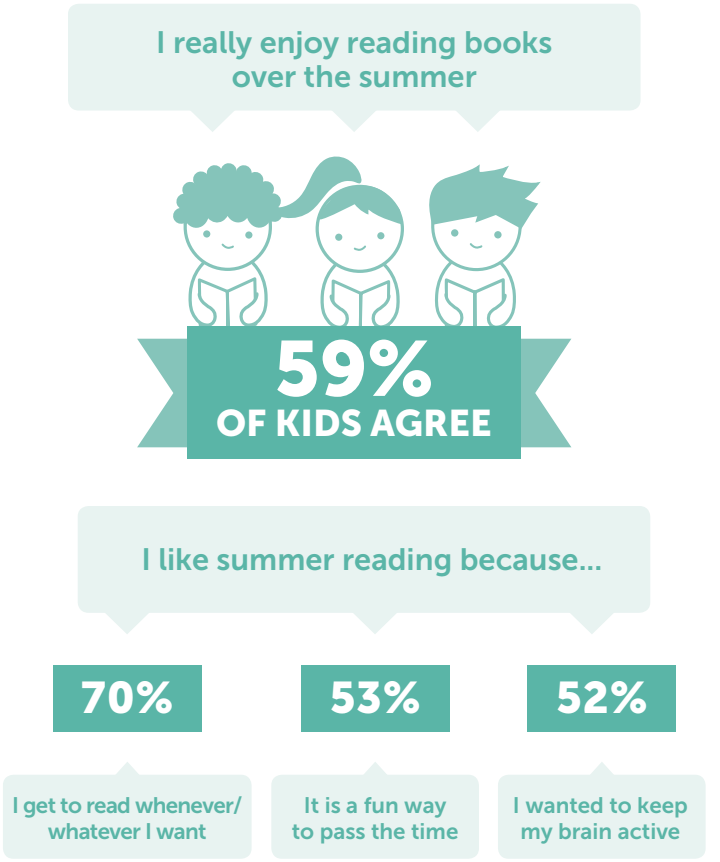
Counter to conventional thought, the view that summer reading is a chore is not shared by a majority of kids today. More than half (59%) of all kids ages 6–17 say "I really enjoy reading books over the summer" *(See figure 6).* Perhaps unsurprisingly, given other patterns observed throughout the findings of the *Kids & Family Reading Report*, younger children and frequent readers are more likely than teens and infrequent readers to enjoy reading books over the summer. Additionally, kids whose parents are aware of the summer slide also feel more positively about summer reading.

When given the opportunity, kids believe participating in a summer reading program prompts them to read more. Twenty-two percent of kids told us that they participated in a summer reading program or contest and 65% said their participation resulted in reading more than they otherwise would have. Yet this opportunity was not afforded to all children: half said they didn't know of any summer reading program in which they could have participated.

Regardless of access to summer reading programs, frequency of reading books for fun, or whether a child is entering their early elementary years or is a rising senior in high school, the top reasons kids enjoy summer reading remain the same: it's about the power to choose their books and read whatever and whenever they want (70%), to have an enjoyable way to pass the time (53%) and, in a nod to the savviness of kids, they want to keep their brains active (52%), and they know reading books can deliver on this.

Many kids enjoy summer reading because of choice

Figure 6. Percentage of kids who agree with statement and selected reasons why



Base: Children ages 6–17

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

STUDY METHODOLOGY

- The study was managed by YouGov and was fielded between September 6, 2018 and October 4, 2018. The total sample size of 2,758 parents and children includes:
  - 678 parents with children ages 0–5,
  - 1,040 parents with children ages 6–17, plus one child ages 6–17 from the same household.
- Parents of children ages 6–17 completed their survey questions first before passing the survey on to one randomly selected child in the target age range. The survey sample was sourced and recruited by GfK using their nationally representative KnowledgePanel®[1].
- To further ensure proper demographic representation within the sample, final data were weighted according to the following benchmark distributions of children ages 0–17 from the most recent (March 2018) Current Population Survey (CPS) from the U.S. Census Bureau:
  - Child gender within each of six age groups (0–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–11, 12–14, 15–17), region, household income, and child race/ethnicity.

ADDITIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

- Some survey language was modified in age-appropriate ways to ensure comprehension among children ages 6–8.
- Children ages 6–8 were not asked some survey questions that involved more sophisticated thinking than is reasonable to ask 6–8 year-olds.
- Parents were invited to help young children read the survey but they were asked to allow children to independently answer all questions. At the end of the survey, children were asked to record the degree to which a parent helped them with the survey. Consistent with prior research, an analysis

comparing the responses of children with and without parental involvement showed no significant differences.

- Virtually all (99%) of the adults interviewed were the parent or stepparent of the child surveyed. Therefore, throughout this report, we refer to adult respondents as "parents."

- Ethnicity and Race data were collected using the United States Census Bureau approach; where race and ethnicity are two distinct concepts. An individual can select one or more of the following: White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or some other race.

- According to the Census Bureau, ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken out in two categories, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics may report as any race.

- For the purposes of subgroup analysis, four groups are compared to each other: Hispanics (of any race); Non-Hispanic Whites; Non-Hispanic Blacks; and Non-Hispanic Multiple race, Asian, or Other races. These labels are shortened throughout the report to: Hispanic; White; Black; Multiple, Asian or Other.

- Data may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

[1] The survey was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The recruitment process employs an address-based sampling methodology from the latest Delivery Sequence File of the USPS—a database with full coverage of all delivery points in the U.S. As such, samples from KnowledgePanel cover all households regardless of their Internet or telephone status, providing fully representative online samples to the research community. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection. People who already have computers and internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research.
[2] (www.census.gov/mso/www/training/pdf/race-ethnicity-onepager.pdf)

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SAMPLE

AGE OF CHILD RESPONDENTS	
6–8	**24%**
9–11	**25%**
12–14	**25%**
15–17	**26%**

GENDER OF CHILD RESPONDENTS	
Total Boys	**51%**
Total Girls	**49%**
Total Prefer to Describe as (Specify)	**0%**

RACE/ETHNICITY OF CHILD RESPONDENTS	
Non-Hispanic White	**51%**
Hispanic	**25%**
Non-Hispanic Black	**13%**
Non-Hispanic, Other	**6%**
Non-Hispanic, Multiple Races	**4%**

AGE OF CHILD THAT PARENTS OF CHILDREN 0–5 ANSWERED ABOUT	
0–2	**49%**
3–5	**51%**

GENDER OF CHILD THAT PARENTS OF CHILDREN 0–5 ANSWERED ABOUT	
Total Boys	**51%**
Total Girls	**49%**
Total Prefer to Describe as (Specify)	**0%**

RACE/ETHNICITY OF CHILD THAT PARENTS OF CHILDREN 0–5 ANSWERED ABOUT	
Non-Hispanic White	**50%**
Hispanic	**26%**
Non-Hispanic Black	**14%**
Non-Hispanic, Other	**6%**
Non-Hispanic, Multiple Races	**5%**

MARITAL STATUS OF PARENT RESPONDENTS	PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
Married/Living with partner (NET)	**87%**	**84%**
Married	**79%**	**79%**
Living with partner	**9%**	**5%**
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	**7%**	**9%**
Never married	**6%**	**7%**

AGE OF PARENT RESPONDENTS	PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
Under age 35	**53%**	**19%**
Age 35–44	**40%**	**48%**
Age 45–54	**5%**	**29%**
Age 55+	**2%**	**5%**
Mean	**34.8 years**	**41.5 years**

GENDER OF PARENT RESPONDENTS	PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
Male	**45%**	**47%**
Female	**55%**	**53%**
Prefer to self-describe	**0%**	**0%**

RELATIONSHIP OF ADULT RESPONDENTS TO CHILD	PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
Parent (NET)	**99%**	**99%**
Parent	**97%**	**94%**
Stepparent	**1%**	**4%**
Other legal guardian (NET)	**1%**	**1%**
Grandparent	**1%**	**0%**
Other legal guardian	**0%**	**1%**

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION EARNED BY PARENT RESPONDENTS	PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
High school graduate or less (NET)	**22%**	**34%**
Less than high school	**3%**	**7%**
High school	**19%**	**26%**
Some college or more (NET)	**78%**	**66%**
Some college	**25%**	**25%**
Bachelor's degree +	**52%**	**41%**

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
Less than $35K	**23%**	**23%**
$35K–$60K	**20%**	**17%**
$60K–$100K	**27%**	**24%**
$100K+	**30%**	**37%**
Mean	**$81K**	**$91K**
Median	**$80K**	**$80K**

RACE/ETHNICITY OF PARENT RESPONDENTS	PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
Non-Hispanic White	**59%**	**57%**
Hispanic	**17%**	**21%**
Non-Hispanic Black	**13%**	**14%**
Non-Hispanic, Other	**8%**	**6%**
Non-Hispanic, Multiple Races	**4%**	**2%**

APPENDIX C: SUBGROUP SAMPLE SIZES

AGE OF CHILD RESPONDENTS	
Total	**1,040**
6–8	**275**
9–11	**241**
12–14	**262**
15–17	**262**
GENDER OF CHILD RESPONDENTS	
Boys ages 6–17	**509**
Girls ages 6–17	**529**
AGE OF CHILD RESPONDENTS WITHIN GENDER	
Boys ages 6–8	**130**
Girls ages 6–8	**145**
Boys ages 9–11	**117**
Girls ages 9–11	**124**
Boys ages 12–14	**133**
Girls ages 12–14	**127**
Boys ages 15–17	**129**
Girls ages 15–17	**133**
AGE OF CHILD THAT PARENTS ANSWERED ABOUT	
Parents of children ages 0–17	**1,718**
Parents of children ages 0–5	**678**
Parents of children ages 0–2	**313**
Parents of children ages 3–5	**365**
Parents of children ages 6–17	**1,040**

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	KIDS/PARENTS OF 0–5 YEAR-OLDS	KIDS/PARENTS OF 6–17 YEAR-OLDS
Less than $35K	**109**	**206**
$35K–$60K	**118**	**161**
$60K–$100K	**203**	**261**
$100K+	**248**	**412**

READING FREQUENCY OF CHILD AGES 6–17	
Frequent readers (read books for fun 5–7 days a week)	**339**
Moderately frequent readers (read books for fun 1–4 days a week)	**410**
Infrequent readers (read books for fun less than 1 day a week)	**289**

RACE/ETHNICITY OF CHILD RESPONDENTS	
Non-Hispanic White	**596**
Hispanic	**244**
Non-Hispanic Black	**100**
Non-Hispanic, Other, Multiple Races	**100**

PARENT AWARENESS OF THE SUMMER SLIDE	
Aware	**591**
Not aware	**440**

The Summer Reading Imperative is the third installment of the Scholastic *Kids & Family Reading Report™: 7th Edition*, and explores the "summer slide" awareness gap, libraries and community support to drive summer reading, and supporting summer reading through book access and choice. Additional installments of the report examine the rise of read-aloud, attitudes and behaviors around reading books for fun, the latest trends in children's reading habits, what both kids and parents want in books, and the importance of book access.

scholastic.com/readingreport