

The need to read?

Poll gauges literary habits and favored forms of literature

The Lebanese public's literary habits in the media of newspapers, magazines and books were explored in a recent poll undertaken by Information International in the Greater Beirut area. A sample of 600 people was surveyed with a gender distribution of 58.5% males and 41.5% females.

Roughly one-third of the sample said they do not read (see Graph 1), citing the following reasons:

- n Lack of time: 49.3%
- n Boring: 16.3%
- n Did not develop the habit as a child: 13.2%
- n Did not specify: 10.6%
- n Have other hobbies: 7.5%
- n Other: 3.1%

Readership rates were found to be higher among women (i.e., there are more women who read than women who don't read) than among men, although the total percentage of male readers was higher, with 56.1% who considered themselves readers compared to 43.9% female readers.

The poll also identified a trend showing progressively higher readership rates in the younger age brackets, as follows:

- n Ages 15-24: 34%
- n 25-34: 30.4%
- n 35-44: 20.8%
- n 45-54: 9.1%
- n 55-64: 4.3%
- n 65 and above: 1.6%

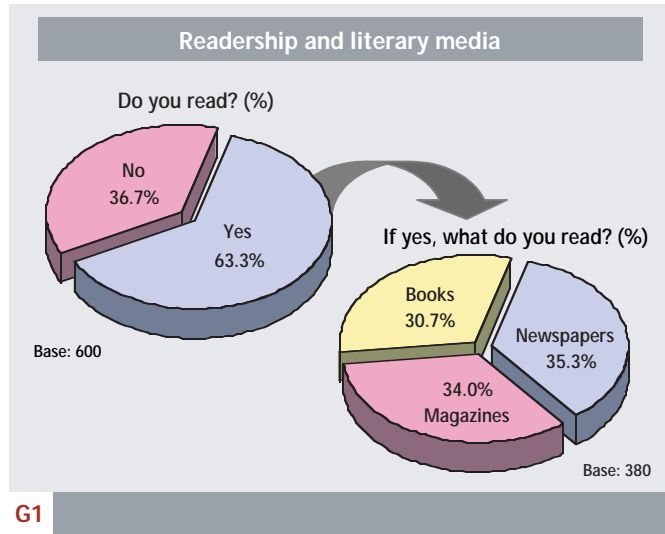
University graduates made up the majority of readers (41.4%), followed by those holding a secondary education (36%). The preferred literary mediums are:

- n Newspapers: 35.3%
- n Magazines: 34%
- n Books: 30.7%

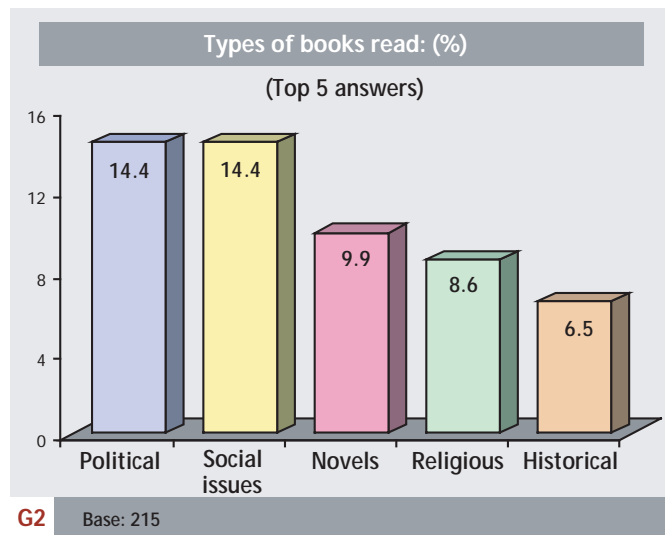
Most respondents (67.2%) to the poll read in Arabic, followed by 15.3% who read in French, 14.8% in English and 2.5% in Armenian.

Books

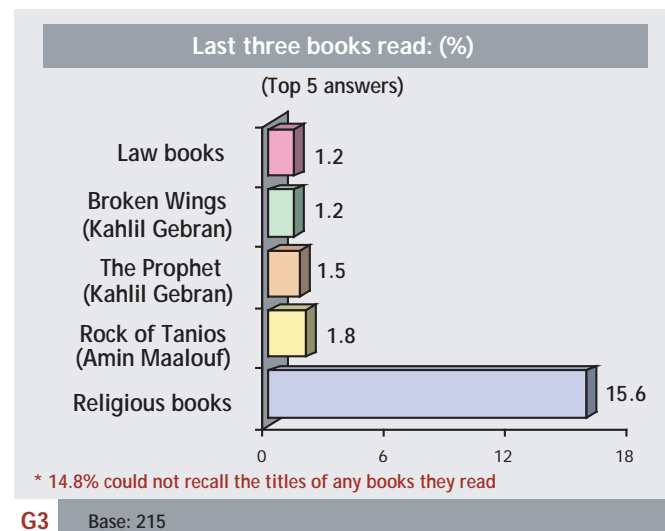
Based on Lebanon's 14% illiteracy rate and our sample of readers, estimates sizing up the number of serious readers of books reaches a mere 14% of the population. To those who read books, political literature and books concerning social issues were the most popular, followed by novels, religious books and history books, as indicated in Graph 2.



G1



G2



G3

However, when asked to name the last three books they had read, almost 15% could not recall a single one. Another contradiction was detected, showing that the most popular books named were of a religious nature, as illustrated in Graph 3, as opposed to the responses shown in Graph 2.

The majority of those who read books only do so from time to time (41.4%), as opposed to 35.3% who read on a daily basis and 20% who said they read weekly. The biggest readers were university graduates and those in the youngest age bracket, ranging from 15–24, followed by the 25–34 age bracket.

Still, 44.1% of respondents read only three to five books per year, while 21.1% read six to 10, 14.2% read less than three and 12.3% read 11 to 15 books (see Graph 4).

Newspapers and magazines

According to the poll, 62.1% of newspaper readers only read one paper, as shown in Graph 5. When asked how frequently they read the paper, it was revealed that over 60% of respondents were not daily readers. The results showed that 38.4% read the paper six to seven times per week, compared with 34.3% who read it three to five times per week and 27.3% who followed the paper only once or twice per week.

Magazine readers were fewer, but each of them reads an average of three magazines per month. One quarter of respondents said they only read one magazine per month, while 29.7% read two and 45.3% read three or more.

Social magazines were the most popular at 19.4%, followed by art magazines at 17%, political publications at 14.7% and health-related publications at 10.4%. Respondents named the magazines 'Al Shabaka' and 'Nadine' as their favorites.

Acquiring reading material

Over half of respondents (55.1%) purchase their own books, newspapers or magazines, while 44% resort to borrowing. Out of those, 27.1% borrow from friends, 9.1% from public libraries or cultural centers and 7.8% from the workplace.

The majority of buyers, or 43.2%, spend less than LL 10,000 on reading material per month; 35% spend between LL 10,000 to LL 20,000; and 12.4% spend an average of LL 26,000 to LL 50,000.

Finally, the poll showed that 43.7% of respondents do not have a home library. Of those who do, 42.9% said they own between 20 to 60 books; 17.8% own 60 to 100 books; and 21.2% have more than 100 books.

