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READING INCREASES IN LOCKDOWN

Two in five UK adults say they are consuming books more since lockdown, with readers almost doubling their total reading hours per week.

London, 13 May 2020—Nielsen Book today published the latest research on UK book consumer habits during the lockdown. Online interviews with a nationally-representative sample of 1,000 UK adults revealed that readers have been reading more since the UK Government implemented its lockdown on 23 March 2020.

Two in five UK adults said they were reading more books since the lockdown began, with just 10% of adults reading less, while the nation as a whole has almost doubled the amount of time it spends reading books—from around 3.5 hours per week on average, to 6.

Of consumers surveyed from 29 April to 1 May, 41% reported reading more books since the lockdown began, with a third saying they read more printed books, 18% saying they were reading more e-books, and 9% stating they were listening to more audiobooks. In addition, a third of respondents said they had increased their time spent reading books to children.

However, the increase in time spent reading has not necessarily led to an increase in book sales. Of the consumers surveyed, 25% said they had bought more books since the lockdown began, compared to their normal buying habits, but 18% had bought fewer books. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common reason stated by consumers for reading or buying fewer books related to their inability to visit bookshops, making it harder to choose books.

Other reasons given by respondents for reading or buying fewer books during the lockdown included "doing other things instead" (25%) and "less money available/worried

about finances" (24%). Comparatively, reasons given for reading and buying more books included: "more spare time" (52%), "to keep entertained during lockdown" (51%) and "books provide an escape from the crisis" (35%).

For those who are buying new books, the leading influences on book choice were word of mouth, online browsing, online offers and reviews and sticking with tried and tested authors.

Two thirds of those reading books or listening to audiobooks indicated that their fiction reading interests have changed since the outbreak of COVID-19, most commonly being more interested in crime/thrillers or popular fiction. The same proportion also indicated that their non-fiction book interests have changed since lockdown, most commonly being more interested in food/drink books, history, puzzle/quiz, gardening/DIY and various genres to help improve mind, body & spirit.

There is currently little appetite for dystopian fiction or fiction and non-fiction titles relating to the pandemic.

For those with children in the home and buying books for them, three-quarters indicated that the genres they were interested in buying for children have changed since the outbreak of COVID-19, most commonly being more interested in funny stories and books to help with schoolwork.

Sourcing books has changed in lockdown and we see one in eight consumers buying more books from the online stores of physical book retailers such as Waterstones, WHSmith and independents.

In a promising sign, a sixth of adults who have been reading more think they will continue this trend after lockdown ends and we'll wait to see if the ongoing Nielsen tracker confirms this.

About Nielsen Book

Nielsen Book provides a range of services to the book industry internationally, aiding the discovery and purchase, distribution and sales measurement of books. Our Research services provide retail sales analysis alongside research from our Books and Consumers Survey. Nielsen runs the ISBN and SAN Agencies for UK & Ireland as well as providing search and e-trading services for booksellers and libraries. For publishers we offer a range of services from assigning ISBNs to adding metadata to our database and promotional tools to help market books. The company is wholly owned by Nielsen. For more information, visit nielsenbook.co.uk

About Nielsen

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industry required for markets to function. Nielsen Global Connect provides consumer packaged goods manufacturers and retailers with accurate, actionable information and insights and a complete picture of the complex and changing marketplace that companies need to innovate and grow.

Our approach marries proprietary Nielsen data with other data sources to help clients around the world understand what's happening now, what's happening next, and how to best act on this knowledge.

An S&P 500 company, Nielsen has operations in over 100 countries, covering more than 90% of the world's population. For more information, visit nielsen.com