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Some Results From an Official Survey**

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BOOK DEMAND IN CANADA  
BY LINGUISTIC GROUP  
SOME RESULTS FROM AN OFFICIAL SURVEY

Jean Mirucki

In February 1978 Statistics Canada conducted an extensive survey of leisure time activities, with an emphasis on Canadian reading habits. The purpose of this paper is to present and to comment on some of the results concerning book demand by Anglophone and Francophone groups.

The book industry is important in Canada. At the time of the 1978 survey over 702 million dollars worth of books were sold. French publications represented just 14.4% of this total. Imports were a major part of the market with 71% for all Canadian sales and 59% for the French sector.

When Statistics Canada conducted its survey in 1978, 15,768 persons responded by completing a questionnaire in either English or French. People who knew both languages could express their linguistic preference (44 per cent of the Francophones and 15 per cent of the Anglophones).

Another preliminary requirement, defining the book reader, became both a delicate and an arbitrary choice. For the purpose of this study and to make the results compatible with those of James Lorimer, (1983) the respondents indicating a minimum of one hour of book reading during the previous six weeks were classified as book readers. A larger sample would have been made available by including anyone who ever read a book, but it would certainly confuse and limit the usefulness of the analysis of active readers. Ken Watson (1980), on the other hand, using the same survey data, chose a 12 month period for book reading participation.

Table 1 indicates the various types and levels of reading activity found in the survey and the computed figures estimating the corresponding 1978 Canadian population. Out of the 13,027 anglophone respondents, 6,810 were considered book readers (52 per cent) while there was only 41 per cent among the Francophones. Other book readers are those who claim some book reading before the last six weeks but within the twelve months preceding the date of the survey, about one person out of eight. Still more book readers could be found in the group of "other readers" which, in addition to the readers of newspapers or magazines, would include persons who have spent at least one hour at book reading as a leisure activity in their lifetimes. There are relatively more "non-readers" and "other readers" among the Francophones.

The 1978 adult Canadian population has been estimated by using a weighting factor proper to each respondent in order to account for socio-demographic factors. Data adjustments, made because of the presence of cases of "not specified" in the survey sample, have also modified the relative composition of the estimates. Out of an estimated population of 15,872,000 adults, more than half have been classified as book readers in accordance with the proposed definition (58 percent Anglophones and 44 per cent Francophones).

Table 1  
Survey Respondents and Estimated Adult Population  
by Type of Reader

Type of Reader	Survey Respondents				Estimated Population (1)			
	Anglophone		Francophone		Anglophone		Francophone	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Book reader (last 6 weeks)	6,820	52	1,125	41	6,839,000	58	1,772,000	44
Other book reader (last 12 months) (2)	1,558	12	349	13	1,473,000	13	544,000	13
Other reader newspapers (3) magazines	3,155	24	782	29	2,631,000	22	1,135,000	28
Non-reader	1,027	8	391	14	858,000	7	618,000	15
Not specified	467	4	94	3	-	-	-	-
Total:	13,027	100	2,741	100	11,802,000	100	4,070,000	100

- (1) Population estimates are adjusted for the "not specified".
- (2) Not including the previous group.
- (3) Including persons who have read a book since more than 12 months.

Several measures of book demand could be adopted. The number of participants in the reading process, presented before, is a straightforward head-count approach which does not provide any specific indication of the volume of consumption. In order to try to assess it, since such information would be more useful as market-input data, the number of weekly hours spent in reading during the last week before the date of the survey has been computed for each linguistic group and each sex (Table 2). Individual estimates on reading time of newspapers, magazines and books were used to compute average reading time for each group. The median for each class of hours/week was multiplied by the matching group percentage and then added to produce totals (last class median value was set at 12).

The overall estimated average weekly time for all three types of reading varies from 10.07 to 11.46 hours for the book readers and between 4.28 and 5.5 hours for the others. The Anglophones spent more

time reading than the Francophones, usually by about one hour.

Newspapers were slightly more popular than books and twice as popular as magazines. Differences between the sexes do not appear to be very significant except in the noticeable case of the Anglophone women readers, who are the more avid readers, with 11.46 hours. It should be noted that these estimates are based on the answers provided by the respondents for the last week of reference and show that about one book reader in five did not indicate any reading during that last week but has claimed reading a book during that last six weeks period.

Without any exception, book readers of each group spent more time reading newspapers or magazines than the rest of the population. This suggests that book reading, which is constrained by the amount of available leisure time, is not a substitute for other forms of reading. In fact, book readers seem to find even more time to read newspapers and magazines expressing thereby their keen motivation for reading and implicitly, the prevalence of a cultural attitude over the time factor.

Various factors may be invoked by book readers to justify the choice of their leisure activity (Table 3). The respondents, who could provide multiple preferences, predominantly favored entertainment and relaxation (from 47% to 80%). Next, the Anglophones indicated special interest in a given subject (45% and 34% by sex), general information (38% and 29%) and personal development (31% and 31%) while the Francophones favored personal development reasons (52% and 53%) ahead of special subject information (39% and 29%) and general information (23% and 24%). Women cite relaxation more often than information or career development as their reading motivation, but with a special interest in health, family and well-being reading. Men concentrate more on personal development, information or career objectives, stressing the practical and economic implications of reading, even as a pastime.

In a similar way, constraints on book reading, as a leisure activity, were identified. Since the answers were provided by actual book readers, it is interesting to notice that lack of time is the single most important factor across all groups (49% to 56%). Half of the readers would like to have even more time available to read more books underlining their motivation for this activity. In fact, fewer constraints than incitements were reported by all the groups, and few differences exist between the sexes in expressing the complaints. The cost of books came second (25% and 34%) for the Francophones and a distant third for the Anglophones (11% and 12%) who seem to find easier access to libraries. Overall, economic constraints are not a major factor, but this may be understandable since books can be borrowed through non-market channels.

The main socio-demographic variables associated with book demand are sex, age group, level of education and type of occupation. While these variable choices are not exhaustive, as a first step, they help to identify general relationships between specific population groups and book consumption. To a great extent, such factors as leisure time available and cultural predisposition towards reading are implicitly reflected, albeit in some partial form, in the treatment of these four variables. Four age-group classes are proposed to examine their impact, by sex and by linguistic group, on book reading participation (Table 4). As seen before,

Table 2

## Weekly Reading Time, by Sex and by Type of Reading

	Book Readers (%)				Others (%)			
	Anglophones		Francophones		Anglophones		Francophones	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Number of Hours/Week								
Newspapers								
None	5	8	11	14	19	22	31	35
1 or 2 h.	30	34	27	34	26	28	25	26
3 to 5 h.	30	29	29	30	24	23	20	19
6 to 10 h.	28	22	25	17	24	22	18	15
11 h. or more	6	6	8	5	7	4	6	5
Average: (Hours/Week)	4.61	4.15	4.53	3.67	4.11	3.58	3.34	2.95
Magazines								
None	22	24	34	30	56	55	70	60
1 or 2 h.	42	44	37	39	26	26	19	22
3 to 5 h.	24	22	19	19	12	13	8	12
6 to 10 h.	10	8	7	10	5	5	3	5
11 h. or more	2	2	3	3	1	1	1	1
Average: (Hours/Week)	2.63	2.42	2.24	2.51	1.39	1.43	0.97	1.33
Books								
None	20	17	22	25	-	-	-	-
1 or 2 h.	26	19	32	22	-	-	-	-
3 to 5 h.	26	25	25	26	-	-	-	-
6 to 10 h.	19	24	15	18	-	-	-	-
11 h. or more	9	14	6	9	-	-	-	-
Average: (Hours/Week)	3.83	4.89	3.40	3.89				
Total (Hours/Week)	11.07	11.46	10.17	10.07	5.50	5.01	4.31	4.28

Table 3

## Incitations and Constraints to Book Reading, by Sex

	Book Readers (%)			
	Anglophones		Francophones	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1. Incentives				
Entertainment	68	80	47	60
Information				
- General	38	29	23	24
- Practical	19	14	18	12
- Special subject	45	34	39	29
Personal development				
- General	31	31	52	53
- Career	17	10	26	13
Health and well-being	7	12	10	16
2. Constraints				
Lack of time	51	53	49	56
Lack of energy	20	21	9	9
Lack of access to libraries	2	3	6	5
Cost of books	11	12	25	34
Lack of access to bookstores	2	3	2	3
Reading difficulty	4	2	5	3
Lack of material in				
language read	1	1	1	1
Social influence	2	1	2	1
No quiet place to read	5	7	4	4

Note: Respondents could provide multiple answers.

the Anglophones (58% against 44%) show the greatest level of book reading. However, it appears now that women are much more active in reading in each linguistic group (64% and 52% against 52% and 35% for men) and this dominance prevails in each linguistic group, although the differences are more pronounced within the Francophones.

Table 4 also shows that book reading is negatively related with age. The Francophones, again, display a stronger conformity to this tendency. Here we should caution against a hasty interpretation of the various percentages presented in this table. For the anglophone male book readers, the first row contains the percentage of individuals in each age group (ranging from 31% to 19%) the same was as the fourth row does for the total estimated adult population of the corresponding group (27% to 22%). We can tentatively conclude that a majority of male

Table 4

## Book Readers and Adult Population, by Sex and by Age Group

	15-24		25-34		35-54		55 or more		Total Number (1,000)
	Number (1,000)	%	Number (1,000)	%	Number (1,000)	%	Number (1,000)	%	
Anglophones									
Males									
Book readers	935	31	695	23	821	27	572	19	3,023
% of total		58		54		48		46	52
Others	672		587		902		682		2,842
Total	1,607	27	1,282	22	1,723	29	1,254	22	5,865
Females									
Book readers	1,145	30	869	23	1,030	27	772	20	3,816
% of total		75		68		62		52	64
Others	373		407		632		709		2,121
Total	1,518	26	1,276	21	1,662	28	1,481	25	5,937
Total Book readers									
Book readers	2,080	30	1,564	23	1,851	27	1,344	20	6,839
% of total		67		61		55		49	58
Others	1,045		994		1,534		1,391		4,963
Total	3,125	26	2,558	22	3,385	29	2,735	23	11,802
Francophones									
Males									
Book readers	255	37	199	29	151	22	94	13	699
% of total		46		41		26		26	35
Others	299		285		440		271		1,294
Total	554	28	484	24	591	30	365	18	1,993
Females									
Book readers	360	34	300	28	293	28	121	11	1,073
% of total		62		64		48		30	52
Others	224		173		322		285		1,004
Total	584	28	473	23	615	30	406	19	2,077
Total Book readers									
Book readers	615	35	499	28	444	25	215	12	1,772
% of total		54		52		37		28	44
Others	522		457		762		556		2,298
Total	1,137	28	956	23	1,206	30	771	19	4,070

Anglophones under age 25 are book readers. The same demonstration can be carried out for each other group and class.

To facilitate this previous analysis, the percentage in the second row reveals the relative importance of the book readers in each case. For example, the percentage of book readers in the anglophone male population (935,000 out of 1,607,000 or 58%) follows a relative decline passing from 58% to 54% then to 48% and finally to 46%, this clearly suggests an inverse relationship between age group and book reading participation.

In this study levels of education have been grouped into four classes: Completion of eight grades or less; completion of grades 9 to 11; completion of grades 12 or 13; and completion in any post-secondary experience.

Table 5 shows that education is positively correlated with book reading, until the end of the secondary level, for each linguistic group (from 10% to 34% for the Anglophones and from 17% to 39% for the Francophones). It should be noted that the real number of anglophone book readers with a post-secondary education is over ten times higher than their francophone equivalents (1,607,000 against 151,000) and distributed more evenly across the age groups. Among the Francophones with a post-secondary education, 58% are in the 25-34 age group.

As seen before, younger people tend to be book readers, but they also are usually better educated. Among the Francophones, 56% (49% plus 7%) in the 15-24 group have reached at least the senior secondary level with only 51% for the anglophones.

Francophones in the older age group have the lower level of education (48%), compared with the Anglophones (26%). Consequently, this age group has the smallest percentage of book readers (20% and 12%). In other words, age may implicitly reflect the level of education of a given group.

Information reflected by the type of occupation of a person may have several implications. For example, average income varies among professions and this would, in turn, affect the consumption of certain commodities due to changes in income-elasticity. Furthermore, the level of education is often a prerequisite to access some professions and this implies further time to complete those studies. Finally, women have traditionally earned less than men. Given their importance among book readers and some of their traditional areas of employment, type of occupation may be only a reflection of several other factors.

Overall, the patterns are generally similar between the two linguistic groups (Table 6) and the book readers are well distributed over the categories except for the class of students (5% and 8%). People aged less than 25, who make up about one third of all the book readers (Table 4), are under-represented in the group of managers and professionals with only 12% and 16%. But the situation is quickly corrected by observing the second age group, where professionals and managers constitute one third of the book readers. As expected, students are found most exclusively in the youngest age group. On the other hand, an important proportion of young Anglophones fill up half of the jobs in the services



Table 5

## Book Readers by Age Group and Level of Education

Level of Education (Grade)	8 or less		9 to 11		12 to 13		University		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Age Group and Linguistic Group										
15 - 24 years										
English	88	4	904	41	846	41	242	12	2,080	(30%)
		12		41		36		15		
French	38	6	220	36	346	56	10	2	615	(35%)
		13		35		49		7		
25 - 34 years										
English	77	5	342	22	559	36	586	37	1,564	(23%)
		11		16		24		36		
French	45	9	181	36	186	37	87	18	499	(28%)
		16		29		27		58		
35 - 54 years										
English	198	11	517	28	613	33	523	28	1,851	(27%)
		28		24		26		33		
French	106	24	173	39	126	28	39	9	444	(25%)
		36		27		18		26		
55 or more										
English	346	26	409	30	333	25	256	19	1,344	(20%)
		49		19		14		16		
French	103	48	58	27	40	19	14	6	215	(12%)
		35		9		6		9		
Total										
English	709	10	2,172	32	2,351	34	1,607	24	6,839	
French	292	17	632	36	697	39	151	9	1,772	

Table 6

## Book Readers by Age Group and by Type of Occupation

Management Professional		White Collar		Services		Blue Collar		Other		Student		Total
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Age Group and Linguistic Group												
15 - 24 Years												
English												
243	12	580	28	400	19	485	23	50	2	322	16	2,080
French												
100	16	165	27	65	11	135	22	28	5	122	20	615
25 - 34 Years												
English												
551	35	429	27	136	9	305	20	131	8	11	1	1,564
French												
169	34	122	24	59	12	80	16	63	13	6	1	499
35 - 54 years												
English												
568	31	481	26	128	7	362	20	301	16	10	1	1,851
French												
94	21	124	28	49	11	65	15	109	25	4	1	444
55 or more												
English												
201	15	216	16	100	7	194	14	627	47	6	0	1,344
French												
28	13	19	9	28	13	39	18	100	47	0	0	215
Total												
English												
1,563	23	1,706	25	764	11	1,348	20	1,109	16	348	5	6,839
French												
390	22	429	24	201	11	320	18	300	17	133	8	1,772

(400,000 out of 764,000) and roughly one third in the white collar and blue collar workers (34% and 36%). Among the Francophones, blue collars (43%) and white collars (38%) are equally well represented with young book readers. The older book readers, aged 55 or more, have little representation in any of the categories. Despite the relative importance of young Anglophones in the services, their number shrinks in the upper age groups suggesting that it could be a matter of transitory employment usually accepted as a form of entry in the job market. Among the Francophones, a similar phenomenon is observed with blue collars but to a lesser degree.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the survey material produced by Statistics Canada in 1978 on the leisure time activities of Canadians, one can observe that the majority of the population, half of the Francophones and two-thirds of the Anglophones, spend some of their leisure time on book reading.

While there is a larger proportion of women among the book readers, the average weekly reading time is roughly equal between the sexes. Book reading is obviously an entertaining activity for a large number of participants, but it is also used to provide various types of information especially for the Anglophones, and for career and personal development for the Francophones.

Book readers spend more time than the rest of the population reading newspapers or magazines, yet they complain about the lack of time to satisfy fully their reading needs. Cultural attraction to book reading prevails over economic factors, such as the cost of books, in both linguistic groups, and even more with Anglophones who tend to have better access to and to make better use of public libraries.

The analysis of the demand components has been carried out with variables like sex, age group, level of education and type of occupation. More women are book readers and Anglophones are proportionally more active than Francophones. Book reading is inversely correlated with age and positively with the level of education at least up to the end of the secondary level. Actually, these two variables show some interaction especially when examining the Francophones, where recent generations have benefited from past governmental efforts in raising the level of education. Finally, whenever the type of occupation suggests a higher level of education or a younger age group, then its relation with book reading is expected to be positive.

To conclude, this study has allowed us to observe that, from the data provided by anglophone and francophone respondents in the 1978 survey, economic factors, such as income or leisure time available, are relatively less significant than cultural aspects, like level of education or reading motivation, in determining the demand for books in Canada.

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