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Richer families have more books, the report said.

England is suffering from a "worrying cultural divide" with poor adults much less likely to read books than their richer neighbours, a report says.

The country is divided into two nations, those who read weekly or daily, and those who prefer TV and DVDs, it says.

It finds key links between an individual's social background and how likely they are to read.

The research, from charity Booktrust, is based on a survey of 1,500 adults.

The study found that on average, the richer someone's background, the more likely they are to read.

Meanwhile a higher proportion of people from poorer backgrounds admitted they never read.

Younger people, men and those with lower levels of qualifications are also less likely to be readers.

## **'Get bored'**

More than one in four (27%) of adults from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds said they never read books themselves, compared with just 13% of those from the richest socio-economic backgrounds.

And more than six in 10 (62%) of those from the richest backgrounds said they read daily or weekly, compared with four in 10 (42%) of those from the poorest.

"More frequent book readers tend to live in areas of lower deprivation with fewer children living in poverty, while respondents who never read books tend to live in areas of higher deprivation and more children living in poverty," the study says.

It adds that adults from the highest socio-economic background own twice as many books on average as those from the lowest backgrounds (376 compared with 156).

And 83% of adults from the richest group feel that reading improves their lives, compared with 72% of those from the poorest group.

The report reveals that overall, significant minorities of adults have negative attitudes towards reading, with nearly a fifth (18%) saying they never read physical books and seven in 10 (71%) saying they never read e-books.

More than one-third (36%) say they often start a book but get bored, while a similar proportion (35%) say they cannot find time to read.

Almost half of those questioned (45%) said they prefer watching TV and DVDs to reading a novel.

## **'More satisfied'**

The findings show many people, especially those under 30, think technology is changing how people read, and could even make physical books obsolete.

More than half of adults (56%) said they think the internet and computers will replace books in the next 20 years, with nearly two-thirds (64%) of 18- to 30-year-olds stating this view.

More than one-quarter of those surveyed said they would rather surf the internet and use social media than read - rising to 56% among 18- to 30-year-olds.

The study concludes that, on average, people who read regularly are more satisfied with life, happier and more likely to feel their life is worthwhile.

Around three-quarters (76%) of all adults questioned said reading improves their lives, while almost half (49%) enjoy reading books very much.

More than one-quarter (28%) read every day, with a further 22% reading weekly.

More than half own at least 50 books, with an adult owning around 200 on average, the report added.

Viv Bird, chief executive of Booktrust, said: "This research indicates that frequent readers are more likely to be satisfied with life, happier and more successful in their professional lives.

"But there is a worrying cultural divide linked to deprivation. There will never be a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to social mobility, but reading plays an important role - more action is needed to support families."

Hannah Richardson - BBC News education reporter