



ROMANCE WRITERS
OF AMERICA

Romance Literature Statistics

Romance Literature Statistics: Readership Statistics

Romance Writers of America commissioned InfoTrends, Inc. to perform the creation, implementation and analysis of the 2009 RWA Reader Survey. The 2009 RWA Reader Survey was a Web-based survey of romance fiction readers. (May 2009)

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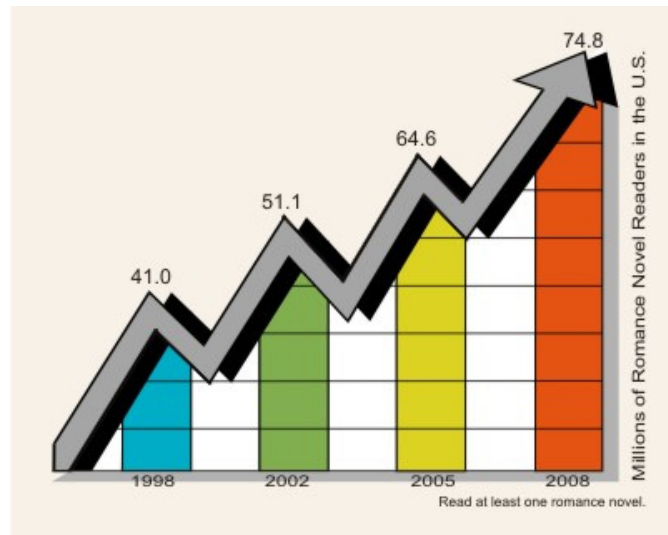
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Romance Fiction Readership Continues to Grow

The Readers

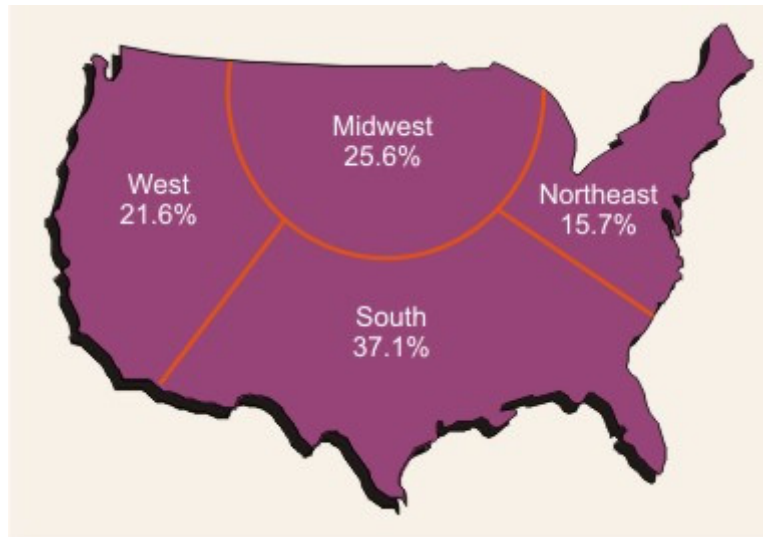


- 74.8 million people read at least one romance novel in 2008.
- The core of the romance fiction market is 29 million *regular* readers.
- 24.6 percent of all American read a romance novel in 2008, versus 21.8 percent in 2005.
- 29 percent of Americans over the age of 13 read a romance novel in 2008.
- Women make up 90.5 percent of the romance readership, and men make up 9.5 percent.
- The heart of the U.S. romance novel readership is women aged 31–49 who are currently in a romantic relationship.

Reader Marital Status

- Romance readers are more likely than the general population to be currently married or living with a partner.

Geographic Location of Romance Readers



Location of romance readers in the United States (see map above)

The percentage of people in each geographic area who read romance novels:

- Northeast: 21.5 percent
- Midwest: 28.8 percent
- South: 25.1 percent
- West: 23.6 percent

The Age of Romance Readers

The mean and median age of romance novel readers is very close to that of the general population.

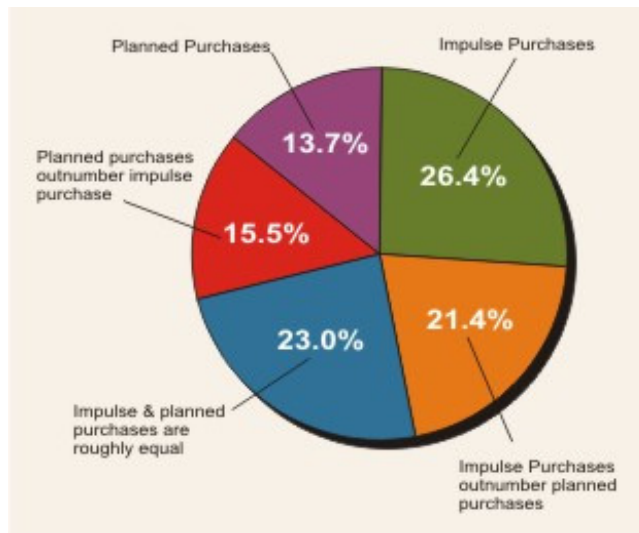
- Mean: 44.6 years
- Median: 44.9 years
- Those aged 31 to 49 are more likely to read romance and comprise 44 percent of the readership.

Purchase Behaviors

Purchase Behavior/Influences

- Impulse purchases outnumber planned romance novel purchases.
- About 12 percent of romance novels are either purchased as gifts or received as gifts.
- Most critical purchase influences:
 - Author
 - Description of the book
 - Word from friends/acquaintances
- The most popular resource romance readers use to learn about new/upcoming romance titles is *a romance novel*. Readers learn about new romance titles most often by reading the advertisements for other books contained in the books they are currently reading.
- The most popular online resource for a reader looking for information on a romance novel is a retailer Web site

Description of Romance Novel Purchases: Impulse vs. Planned



How Romance Readers Obtain Their Novels

- 60 percent of romance readers bought at least one new romance novel in 2008.
- 50 percent of romance readers bought at least one used romance title in 2008.
- Mass merchandisers such as Target and Wal-Mart remain popular, but book superstores such as Barnes & Noble, Borders, and Books-a-Million challenge the mass merchandisers in terms of where romance readers obtain romance novels.

Type of Retailer Used Most to Acquire Romance Novels*

*New book purchases only

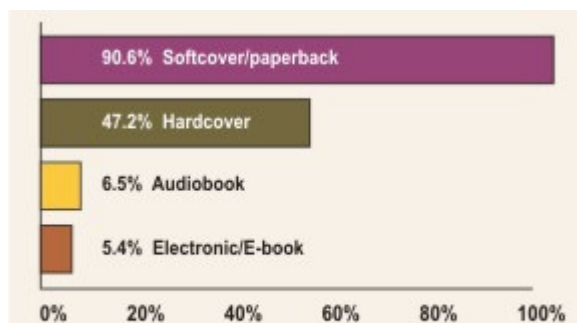
- **Mass merchandiser: 50.1 percent**
- Book superstore: 48.8 percent
- Freestanding, independent bookstore: 31.1 percent
- Online book merchant: 26.4 percent
- Grocery store: 24.3 percent
- Warehouse clubs: 21.7 percent
- Mall bookstore: 21.3 percent
- Drug store: 16.1 percent
- Book club: 12.4 percent
- Mail order: 10.5 percent
- Other online: 9.6 percent
- Airport bookstore: 9.4 percent
- Convenience store: 8.1 percent
- Department store: 7.7 percent
- Other: 13.9 percent

Reading Behavior

- The most popular places romance novels are read are at home or while traveling or on vacation.
- 29 percent of romance readers usually carry a romance novel with them.
- Romance readers typically begin and finish a romance novel within 7 days.
- Mass-market paperbacks are currently the most preferred romance novel format.
- More than half of romance readers who read romance in electronic format do not use a dedicated e-book reader, and, instead, read romances from laptops, desktops, cell phones, etc.

Book Formats Used to Read Romance Novels*

*Respondents were asked to select all formats used to read a romance novel in 2008.



Settings Where Romance Novels Are Read

- **At home: 90.3 percent**
- While traveling: 33.9 percent
- On vacation: 31.1 percent
- Spare time at work: 20.2 percent
- While commuting: 10.8 percent
- At a library: 7.2 percent
- Other: 9.9 percent

Subgenres

- There is no consensus indicating one subgenre over another as a favorite among romance readers.
- 50 percent of romance readers are somewhat or extremely likely to try a new subgenre in the next 24 months.

Authors & Readers

Of the survey respondents:

- 70 percent are likely to follow an author they like into a new subgenre
- Half have favorite romance authors
- 91 percent are likely to seek out an author's previously published titles after reading a novel from an author they like
- 88 percent are open to trying new authors
- What makes readers try new authors? Recommendations from friends or acquaintances and seeing the book on the retail or library shelf.
- 45.1 percent were not aware that authors receive no royalty payment for the purchase of used books.

RWA's statistics result from two studies commissioned by the association.

One study—on the **sales of romance fiction**—is compiled by RWA from Simba Information (an independent market research firm that studies the publishing industry), R.R. Bowker's Books In Print, the AAP, and other named sources. This study is updated every 12 months.

Another study focuses on **reader demographics, book content, and book-buying habits**. The 2009 survey was conducted by InfoTrends, Inc. This first version of this study was conducted in 1998. The follow-up surveys were conducted in Summer/Fall 2002 and Winter 2005.

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