



BNC RESEARCH

#AmReading: Canadian Book Buyers on Twitter



BOOKNET
CANADA

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#AmReading: Canadian Book Buyers on Twitter

About BookNet Canada's #AmReading Series

This series takes an in-depth look at how Canadian book buyers interact with social media platforms. Each #AmReading report includes two sections:

- Using Twitter to Market Books: background information on the platform, including what it is, how publishers and retailers are engaging with it, and tips and tricks
- Book Buyers on Twitter: a detailed analysis of which book buyers are using this platform, the subjects they are purchasing, and how they are making their purchases

Consumer data for these reports have been obtained through BookNet Canada's Consumer Research in which adult book-buying Canadians participate in online surveys about their book purchases from the prior month. Book buyers report on such information as what they purchased, where they made the purchase, what influenced their purchase, and other quantitative data. The data panel comprises the following number of respondents:

- 2015 – 1,858 book buyers
- 2016 – 1,827 book buyers
- 2017 – 2,169 book buyers

Part I – Using Twitter to Market Books

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a social networking service on which users post and interact with one another via short-form messages called “tweets.” Users can also send direct messages to each other and add photos, videos, polls, and other multimedia to their tweets. Users can follow anyone with a public profile, including celebrities. The platform has become a reliable source for breaking news coverage, such as the 2016 US presidential election with 27,000 election-related tweets sent every minute.¹

The initial concept for the platform was intentionally vague so Twitter could be used by anyone for any purpose. It was first described by developers as a kind of live journal that you could update from anywhere at any time, and could be read by your friends in real time. It was thus dubbed micro-blogging. There had never been anything like it before and, over time, it has evolved into more of an information network than a social network.² Twitter's development was based on how early users were tweeting and interacting with the service, which led to the addition of a search feature, hashtags, and retweets. Simplicity was the goal.

¹ Isaac, Mike, and Sydney Ember. 2016. “For Election Day Influence, Twitter Ruled Social Media”. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/technology/for-election-day-chatter-twitter-ruled-social-media.html>. Nov. 6, 2018.

² Lapowsky, Issie. 2013. “Ev Williams On Twitter's Early Years”. *Inc.com*. <https://www.inc.com/issie-lapowsky/ev-williams-twitter-early-years.html>. Nov. 6, 2018.

By 2010, users were sending an average of 50 million tweets per day, 20% of which contained a reference to a product or brand.³ It was at this stage that Twitter launched promoted tweets, which are paid tweets sent by businesses and brands to targeted users. A 2016 redesign prioritized recommended tweets over chronological order. Subsequent developments have included: a “While you were away” feature that highlights tweets made by a user’s most liked accounts; a “Moments” tab that features the most popular trends in a variety of categories such as News, Sports, Entertainment, and Fun; sections for current trending topics (which can be tailored based on a user’s location and who they follow); live streams; a search feature; and replacing the ‘favourite’ option, which was denoted by a star, with a ‘like’ option denoted by a heart. The biggest change came at the end of 2017 when the character limit was doubled to 280 characters in all languages except Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.

Today Twitter has 335 million monthly active users worldwide⁴ — many of whom use the platform to promote social change, debate, and get involved in political discussions. At the same time, it remains an important tool for advertisers and the book industry.

How are publishers and retailers using Twitter?

Twitter is one of the most regularly used platforms in the book industry. Publishers, retailers, authors, and readers alike use it to stay up to date on major trends (both locally and internationally), new releases, reviews, book events, awards, and other industry news, as well as to establish relationships and open communication between the book industry and consumers. The platform is a great tool for encouraging communication between all parts of the supply chain — from authors and publishers to retailers and readers.



³ Beaumont, Claudine. 2010. “Twitter Users Send 50 Million Tweets Per Day”. *Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/7297541/Twitter-users-send-50-million-tweets-per-day.html>. Nov. 6, 2018.

⁴ “Twitter: Number Of Active Users 2010-2018”. 2018. *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users>. Nov. 6, 2018.

Promoting new titles

Twitter can be used in a myriad of ways to promote new releases. The most obvious way is by tweeting a photo of your book with a caption detailing what readers can expect and where they can find out more. You can tag the author, publisher, retailer, or any other involved parties to encourage users to learn more about the book. However, the fewer clickable items you include, the better you will be able to direct and monitor engagement with your tweet. Try different types of photos and captions to see what types of tweets are most effective with your followers.

Additionally, if you find that people are clicking your photos, but not your links, consider using link previews instead. These previews still contain a visual element, but when users click on the photo in a link preview, they will be directed to your site. This also ensures your visuals are a consistent size.

You can also use promoted tweets. These are targeted ads that look like regular tweets, which have been purchased by advertisers to reach a wider audience or to engage existing followers. They also function like regular tweets in that they can be retweeted, liked, and replied to, but they display a “Promoted” identifier so users know it is an ad. However, promoted tweets do not appear for users who employ an ad blocker. Anyone can create a promoted tweet, and it is quick and easy to do.

Generally, Twitter is unable to identify a user’s gender, so it’s best not to segment your ads by gender. However, you can use promoted tweets to segment by location or to reach followers of a specific author, brand, television show, publisher, etc. This way you can easily target the audience most likely to click on your ad. You pay only for the specific results you want to achieve, which means that this is a viable option for all budgets.

The third way you can promote new releases is by retweeting third-party content like reviews, media mentions, and award nominations. You could tweet links to these websites yourself, but users are often more likely to trust a link if they see it posted by the original source in your retweet. This is also a great way to curate a feed of links and articles without it feeling like blatant self-promotion.



Promoting backlist titles

Twitter is best used to promote backlist titles if they can be connected to a new or relevant happening, such as an upcoming film adaptation or anniversary. Sharing a list of books curated around a relevant topic is another good way to bring older titles to the attention of your followers, and the best part is that it can be done for almost any topic (e.g., five calming reads for election day). Pay attention to Twitter trends and promote books that are topical and relevant, even if they are older.



Promoting authors

Twitter is a great platform for authors to connect with their readers, even if they do not have a new book coming out. It's easy to use (even for those who do not use social media) and offers readers a direct channel to the authors they know and love. There are also cons, of course: An author may tweet something that conflicts with your brand's values, and the platform has been known to open some authors up to abuse, particularly sexist and racist comments. Pay attention to what they are tweeting and use your judgment to advise accordingly and distance your brand, if necessary.

Events

Twitter can be used to promote events and give prospective or registered attendees up-to-date information on things like ticket availability and accessible accommodations. If your audience is widespread, be sure to mention events happening all over, if possible, and make sure it is clear where each event is happening.

Creating a unique hashtag for your event is a great way for attendees to share feedback, photos, or information, and it gives other users who may not be attending a way to follow along. Hashtags should be short and simple so they are easy to remember and fit easily into a tweet. Make sure people know what the hashtag is well in advance so it can be most effective. If possible and appropriate, consider displaying a live Twitter feed at your event to encourage attendees to tweet about it and follow your account.

Tips for developing a Twitter strategy

What do you hope to achieve?

Do you want to increase brand awareness? Sell more titles? Promote an app or website? Do you want to establish a relationship with other publishers or retailers? Do you want to promote your authors on Twitter? Are you looking for feedback? Once you decide what your goals are, you can determine what kind of Twitter account to develop and whether or not promoted tweets are necessary to achieve your goals.

Develop a consistent style

Your Twitter account should have a consistent voice and style. Decide early on if you want your tweets to have a business or casual tone, which will also influence your retweets and follower interactions. If you are going to retweet readers who tag you, doing so consistently will encourage others to do the same.

When it comes to posting images, a landscape 2:1 ratio work best. If Twitter automatically crops your images, adjust them so the portion you want to be seen is visible. If you are relying on a link preview, make sure the image is displayed clearly and correctly. If it isn't, try uploading your own image with a shortened URL. There are several programs you can use to shorten URLs, such as Google URL Shortener and Bitly, and many content scheduling programs shorten URLs automatically. If you are going to use any of these programs, make sure you use the same one every time to ensure links are easily recognized by your followers.

Make sure every tweet has a call to action, especially promoted tweets. This can be a link, an account to follow, or a request to like or retweet — regardless, you should always include something that encourages action. This not only fosters engagement, but also gives you a metric by which you can measure the success of your tweets.



Gather the right audience

Building an audience can be a tedious process. You should start by following similar accounts, and then following their followers. Whenever you follow a new account, Twitter will helpfully suggest other similar accounts to follow.

You can expand your reach by using popular hashtags and tweeting about trending topics. This will help you join existing conversations and your tweets will become searchable according to those topics. Similarly, you should like, retweet, and reply to content that is relevant to your profile and audience. Twitter is like one giant networking event in that the most effective way to promote yourself is by joining the conversation. Lurking in the background is a great way to learn when you are first starting out, but it won't get you noticed.

Contests are useful for building a following, as long as one of the requirements for entering is that users must be following your account. You could even partner with a like-minded account that already has a large following (perhaps an author, publisher, or retailer) and host a joint giveaway, which will help you reach new followers in your target audience.



Use Twitter's built-in features

Familiarize yourself with all of Twitter's features to see which ones can help you achieve your goals. Explore the different sections, such as trending topics and Twitter Moments. You can create your own Moment (a collection of tweets and images relating to a particular event or occasion), for the release of a major title, for example, or add to a Moment that already exists.

Pinned tweets are a helpful feature if you don't have an advertising budget, but want your followers to know about a specific promotion, new release, or upcoming event. By pinning a tweet to the top of your profile, you ensure that everyone who visits your profile sees that tweet.

Ads

If you are able, test whether promotional tweets are worth the investment or if you can achieve your goals with ordinary tweets. Twitter ads are easy to customize to your budget.

For each ad campaign, you can select the desired outcome (e.g., build a following), your daily budget (there is no minimum spend), and how long you would like the campaign to run. Once these factors are determined, you must select the tweets that will be included in the campaign. Make sure each one has a strong call to action. Once the campaign begins, you will only be billed for the achieved results of your desired outcome (e.g., the number of followers you receive) until you hit your maximum budget.



Metrics and analytics

Audience Insights

Twitter analytics is a free tool you can use to measure the success of your account. You can track audience engagement, impressions, followers, profile visits, top tweets, popular events, video analytics (if you are posting video content), and website conversion. Keeping track of both your successes and failures will help you determine which tactics are most effective in reaching your goals. This means monitoring which images, links, books, authors, hashtags, and events are most effective in engaging your existing followers and attracting new ones.

Content scheduling

Invest in a content scheduling program. This is particularly useful for a platform like Twitter where millions of tweets are published every day — posting frequently, at least daily, is the best way to remain visible. You can schedule content ahead of time, but also make sure you are paying attention to trends and replying to comments and messages whenever possible. The more time you put into your Twitter account, the more you will get out of it.

There are several free and subscription-based content scheduling programs available, such as Twuffer, HootSuite, and TweetDeck. Many programs allow you to manage multiple social media accounts in one dashboard for free, with an additional cost for accounts above a certain cap. Research your options to figure out which one will best suit your needs and budget.

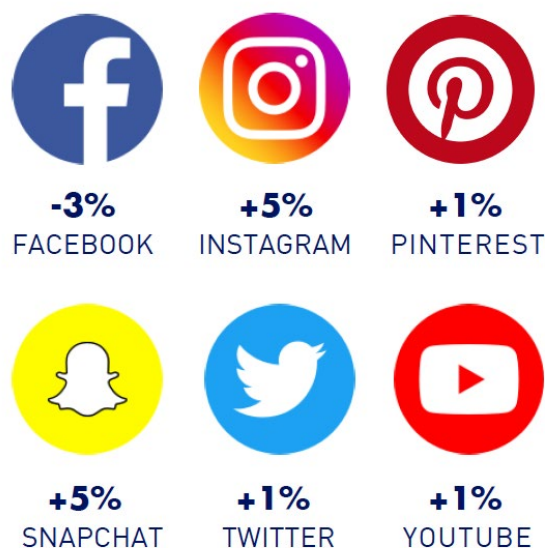
Part II – Book Buyers on Twitter

It is estimated that about 42% of Canadians were Twitter users in 2017.⁵ According to *The State of Social Media in Canada 2017* by the Social Media Lab at Ryerson University, 45% of Canadian Twitter users are on the platform daily with an additional 21% using it weekly. It cites Twitter as the fourth-most popular social media platform in Canada for 2017.

The graphic below indicates that Twitter use by book buyers has remained fairly flat between 2016 and 2017, only seeing a 1% increase.

Changes in social media use

by Canadian book buyers in 2017 show that Twitter users grew 1% from 2016



Source: BookNet Canada's consumer survey
booknetcanada.ca/amreading-research-series

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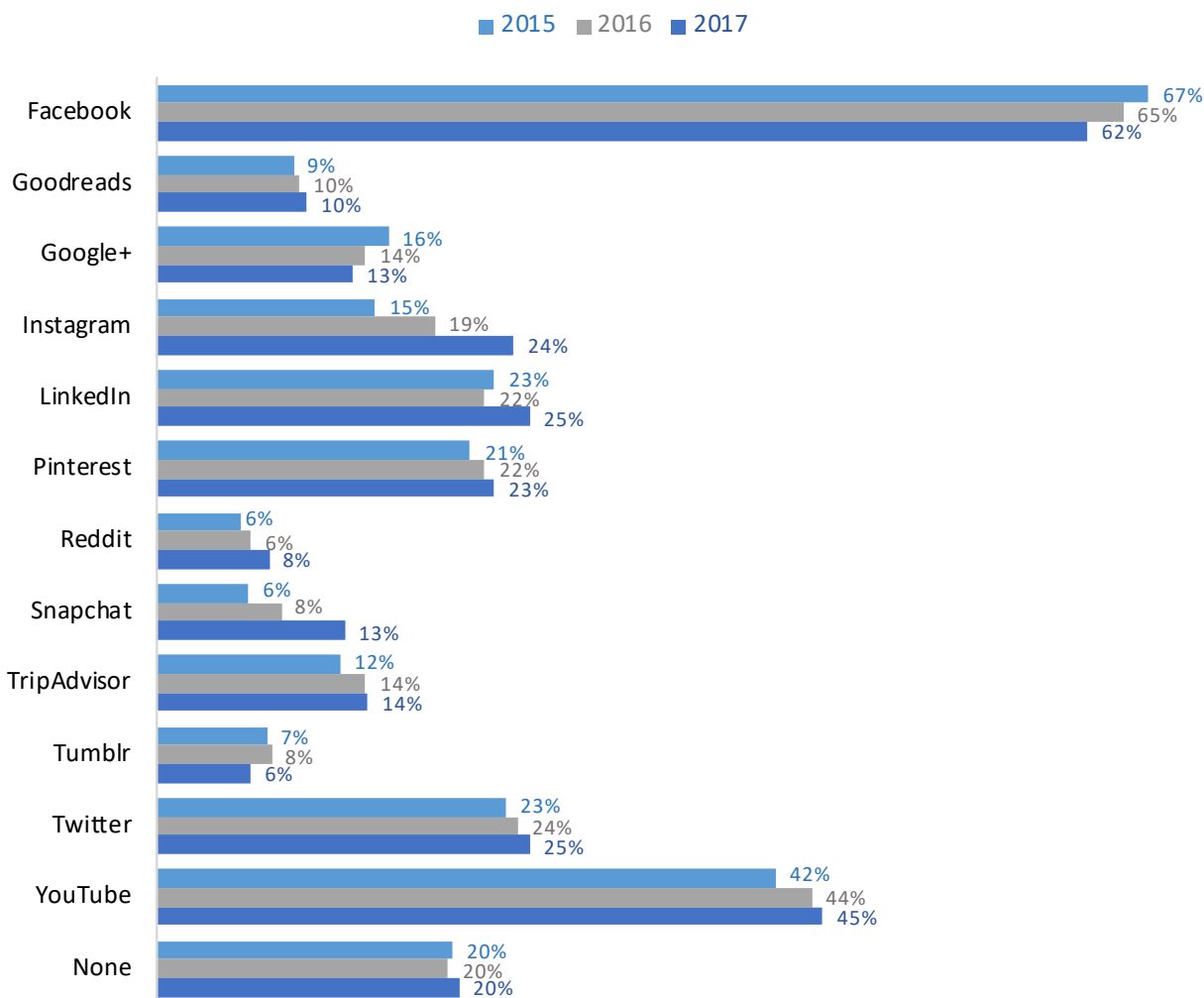
But how does Twitter use break down specifically for book buyers? To examine this question, BookNet Canada turned to our consumer data. We survey adult book buyers (age 18+) from across Canada every quarter to ask them about their book purchases, preferences, and activities, including their use of social media platforms.

For this section of the study, we will take an in-depth look at the Canadian book buyers who use Twitter and offer insights into what they like to purchase and where they shop.

⁵ Gruzd, Anatoliy, Jenna Jacobson, Philip Mai, and Elizabeth Dubois. 2018. "The State Of Social Media In Canada 2017". *Social Media Lab*. <https://socialmedialab.ca/2018/02/25/state-of-social-media-in-canada/>. Nov. 6, 2018.

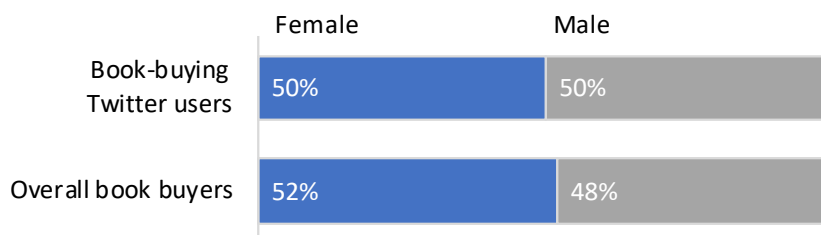
In the following graph, we compare year-over-year shifts of social media use by book-buying Canadians between 2015 and 2017. We found that in 2017, 25% of book-buying Canadians were Twitter users, which is up 1% from 2016. As a comparison, Facebook saw a decline of 3% while Instagram saw a 5% increase.

Year-over-year social media use by book buyers



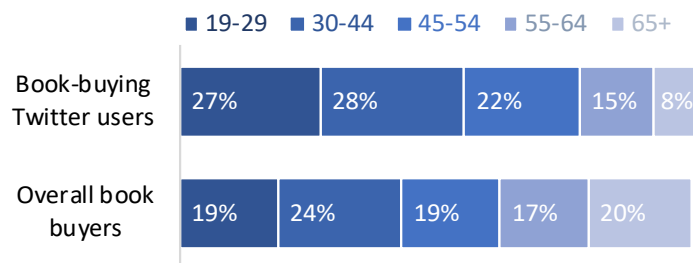
Who is the average book-buying Twitter user?

Gender identification

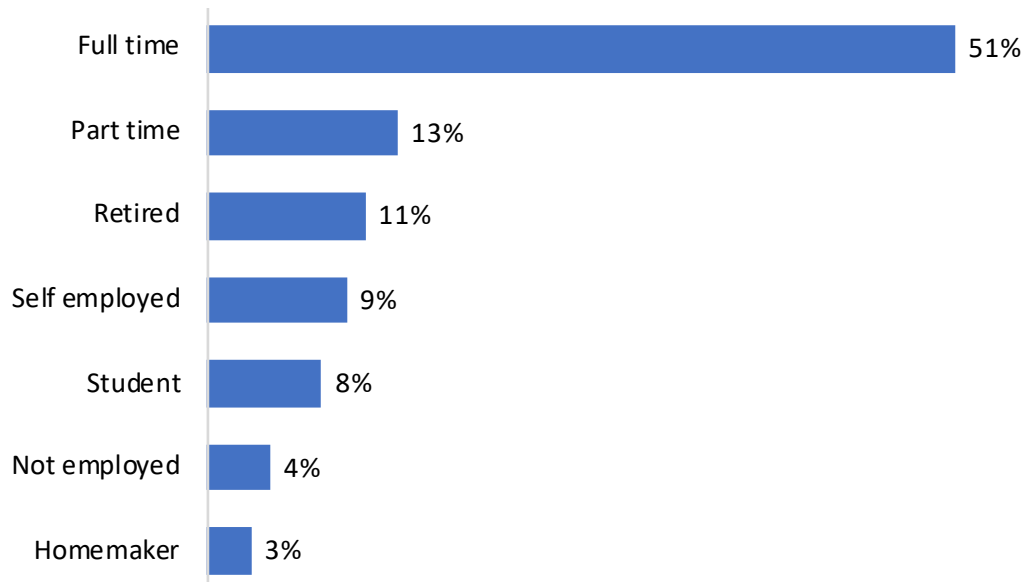


Keeping in mind that we only surveyed adult book buyers (18 and up), the average age for book-buying Twitter users is 42 years old, while most fall in the range of 19 to 29 years old.

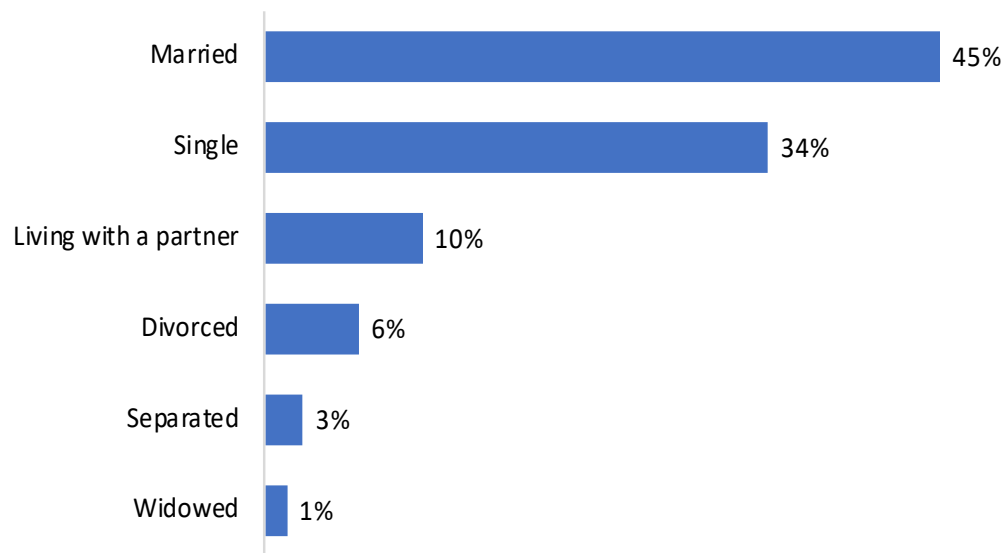
Age



Employment status



Relationship status

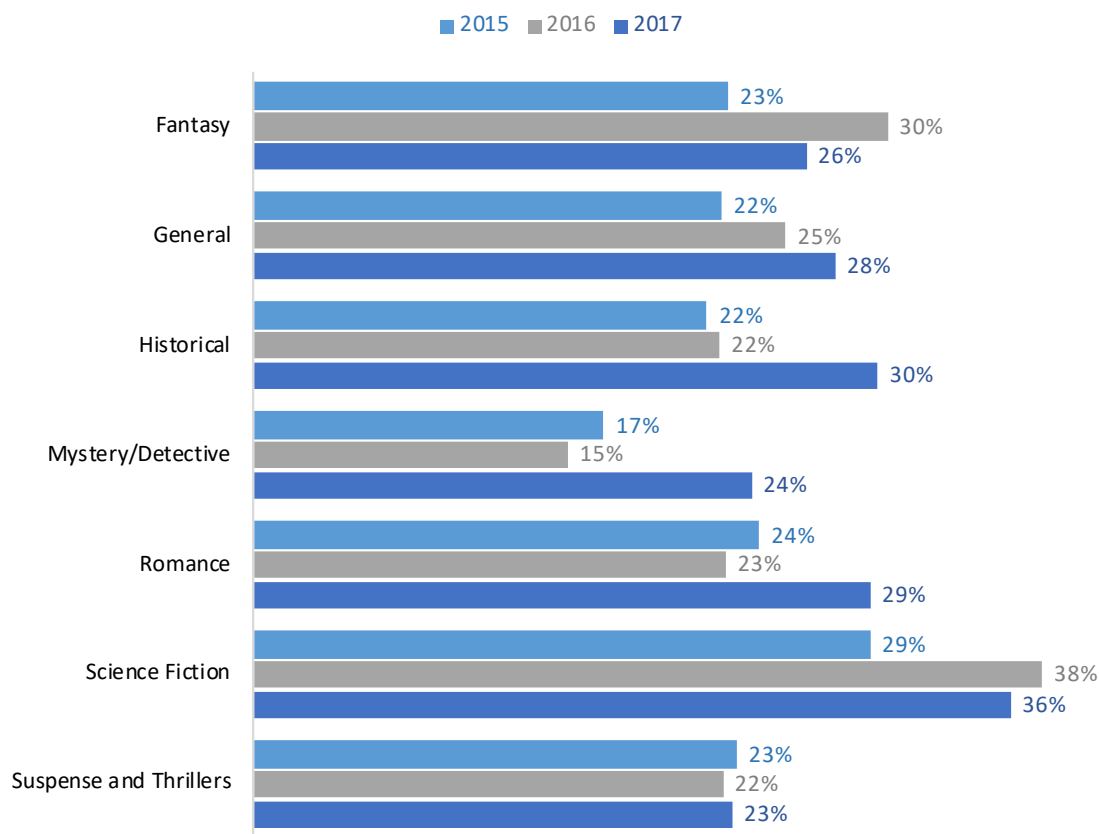


Twitter users by subject

In the following graphs, we look at the percentage of book buyers who use each social media platform, broken out by the particular subjects they purchased. For example, in 2017, 26% of Fantasy buyers were Twitter users compared to 36% of Science Fiction buyers. In order to keep the data statistically valid, we have limited the number of subjects to the top-selling categories.

Since each respondent could report multiple purchases in various genres and use more than one social media platform, totals will not add up to 100%.

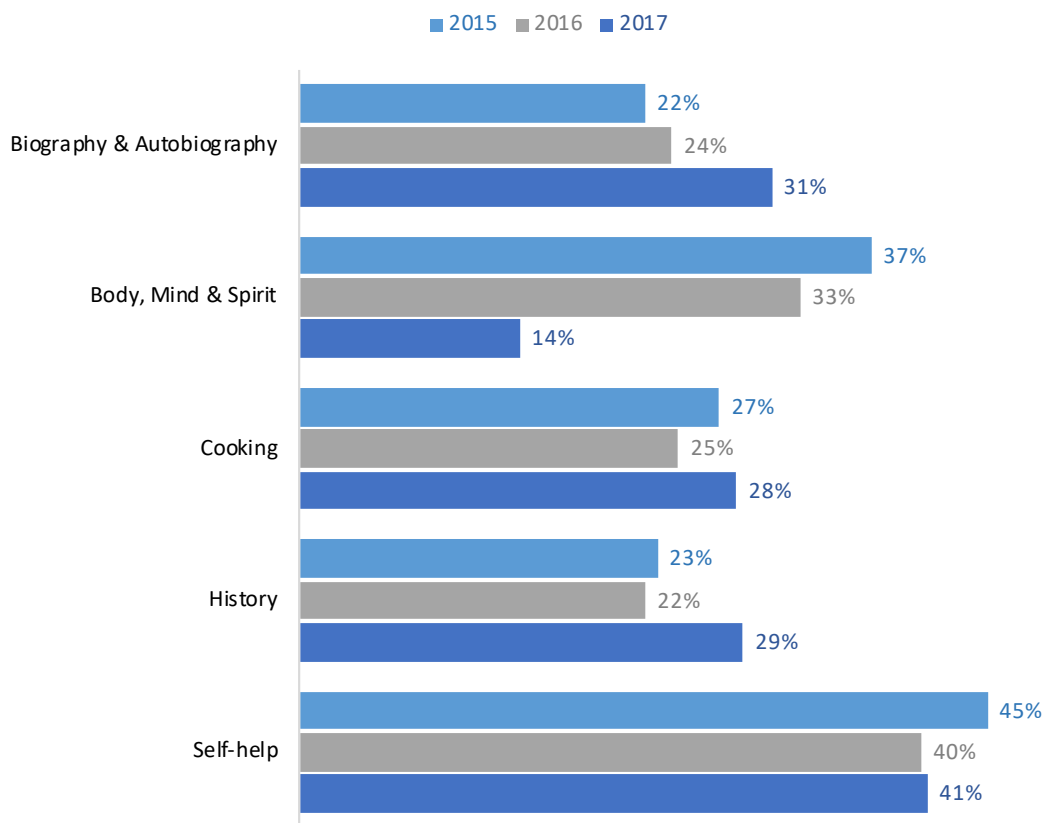
Twitter users by fiction genre



Social media users by fiction genre

	Fantasy	General	Historical	Mystery & Detective	Romance	Science Fiction	Suspense & Thrillers
Facebook	58.5%	56.3%	62.6%	59.2%	66.5%	72.2%	63.9%
Goodreads	16.3%	19.3%	20.6%	10.4%	14.7%	17.3%	15.9%
Google+	15.5%	12.2%	18.3%	10.4%	11.2%	23.3%	13.0%
Instagram	20.2%	29.0%	25.2%	20.1%	28.8%	33.1%	27.7%
LinkedIn	26.4%	28.2%	29.8%	24.4%	27.1%	22.6%	27.5%
Pinterest	21.7%	26.1%	30.5%	16.4%	32.4%	22.6%	26.9%
Reddit	14.7%	8.4%	9.9%	5.7%	4.7%	22.6%	6.1%
Snapchat	18.6%	16.4%	7.6%	9.4%	16.5%	18.8%	9.5%
TripAdvisor	12.8%	15.1%	16.0%	16.7%	19.4%	15.8%	15.9%
Tumblr	10.5%	8.8%	7.6%	4.7%	8.2%	16.5%	4.6%
Twitter	26.4%	27.7%	29.8%	23.7%	29.4%	36.1%	22.8%
YouTube	49.2%	41.2%	50.4%	41.1%	41.2%	59.4%	43.4%
None	15.9%	20.6%	16.8%	26.4%	18.2%	12.8%	21.4%

Twitter users by non-fiction genre



Social media users by non-fiction genre

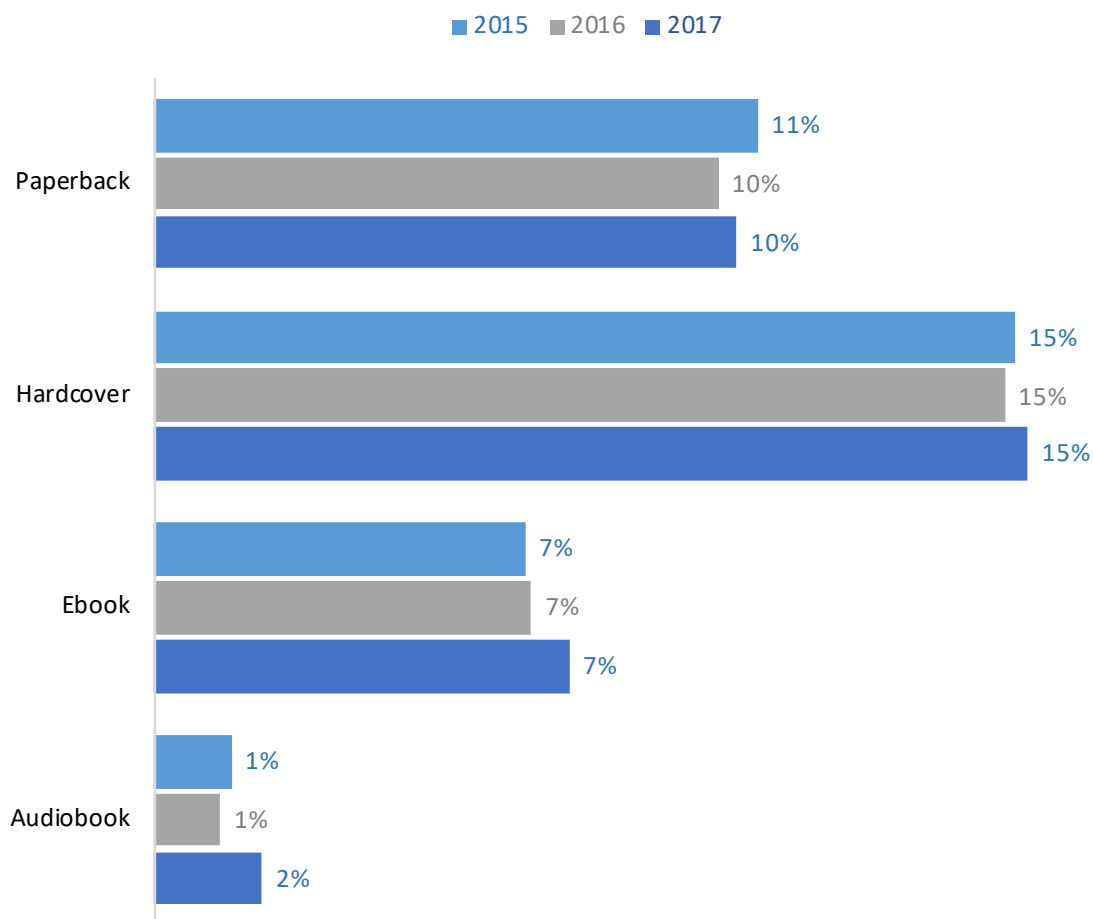
	Biography & Autobiography	Body Mind & Spirit	Cooking	History	Self-Help
Facebook	60.7%	62.3%	60.5%	64.0%	73.7%
Goodreads	12.7%	11.7%	12.3%	10.8%	10.5%
Google+	12.0%	15.6%	14.8%	12.6%	22.4%
Instagram	26.7%	24.7%	33.3%	18.0%	34.2%
LinkedIn	29.3%	23.4%	29.6%	27.9%	36.8%
Pinterest	22.7%	27.3%	27.2%	18.0%	35.5%
Reddit	11.3%	9.1%	6.2%	7.2%	10.5%
Snapchat	12.7%	10.4%	12.3%	10.8%	25.0%
TripAdvisor	19.3%	13.0%	17.3%	9.0%	10.5%
Tumblr	5.3%	6.5%	4.9%	7.2%	7.9%
Twitter	30.7%	14.3%	28.4%	28.8%	40.8%
YouTube	52.7%	45.5%	40.7%	46.8%	57.9%

Twitter users by format

When breaking out purchases by format, we find that, in 2017, 50% of overall book purchases in Canada were paperback, 25% hardcover, and 19% ebook.

When we look at the book buyers who use Twitter, 2% buy audiobooks and 10% buy paperbacks. Purchases by format have remained very flat over the past three years.

Twitter users by format



Social media platforms by format

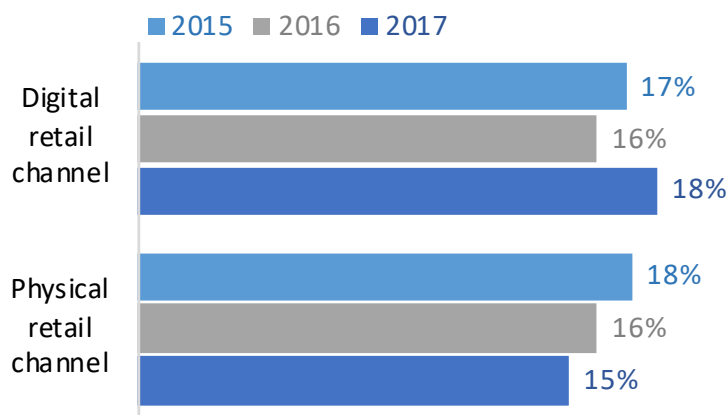
	Paperback	Hardcover	Ebook	Audiobook	Other
Facebook	39.4%	25.2%	14.9%	3.1%	1.1%
Goodreads	6.5%	5.3%	3.2%	0.7%	0.1%
Google+	8.3%	5.7%	4.2%	0.8%	0.3%
Instagram	15.6%	10.5%	6.5%	1.7%	0.6%
LinkedIn	16.6%	10.5%	6.3%	1.2%	0.4%
Pinterest	14.9%	9.6%	6.1%	1.5%	0.4%
Reddit	5.1%	3.3%	2.0%	0.6%	0.2%
Snapchat	8.5%	5.4%	3.3%	1.2%	0.2%
TripAdvisor	9.4%	6.4%	3.6%	1.0%	0.4%
Tumblr	4.1%	3.0%	1.8%	0.6%	0.1%
Twitter	15.4%	10.2%	7.3%	1.9%	0.5%
YouTube	28.7%	19.1%	10.2%	2.6%	1.0%

Twitter users by retail channels

The following graphs look at social media users according to the retail channels where they made their book purchases (e.g., mobile app).

Looking at the whole market in 2017, we found that approximately 55% of book buyers are making their purchases through digital retail channels, which includes book clubs, ebook/audiobook downloads, mobile app downloads, and online retailers. Of all book-buyers who shop digitally, 18% are Twitter users; of all book-buyers who buy in physical stores, 15% are Twitter users. Physical retail channels include indie and chain bookstores, discount bookstores, general retailers, and grocery stores.

Twitter users by physical vs. digital retail channels

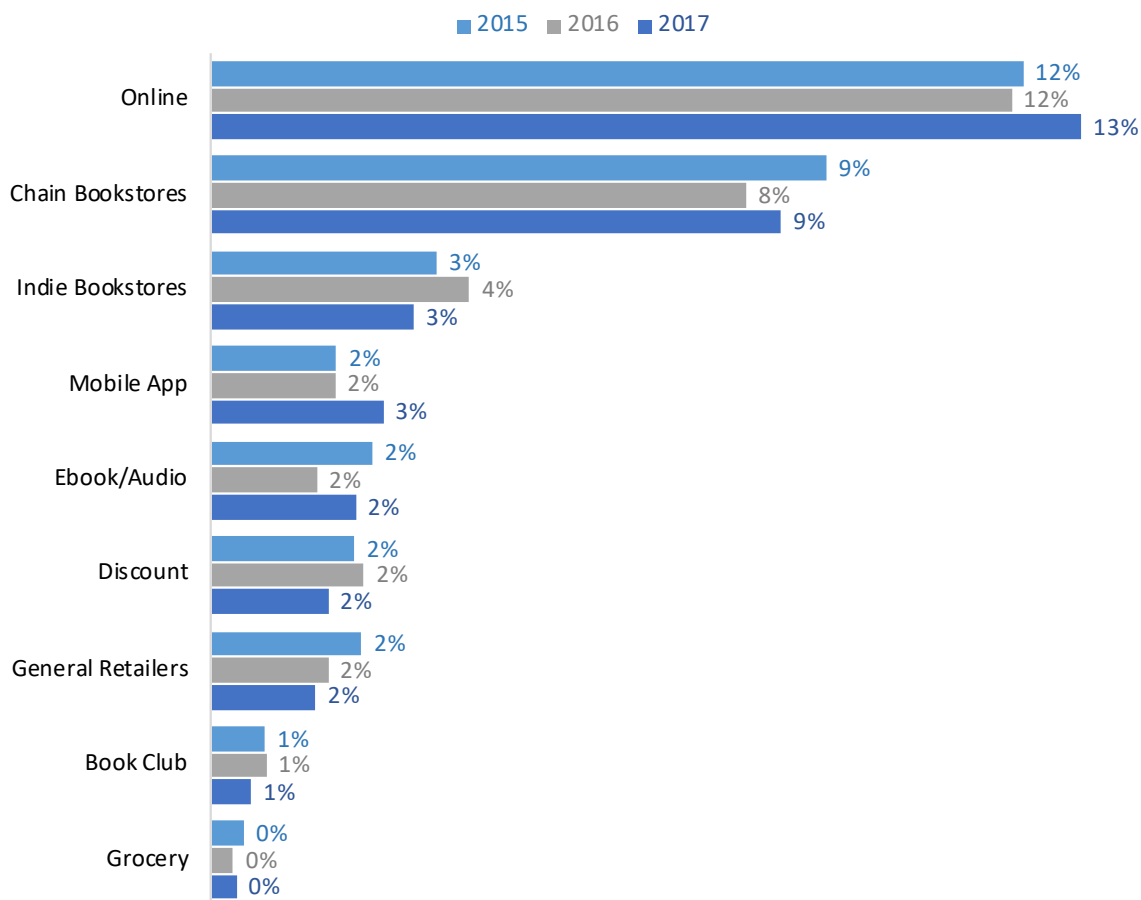


Social media users by physical vs. digital retail channels

	2015		2016		2017	
	Digital	Physical	Digital	Physical	Digital	Physical
Facebook	41.0%	52.0%	39.0%	44.0%	42.0%	38.0%
Goodreads	7.0%	8.0%	8.0%	5.0%	8.0%	6.0%
Google+	10.0%	13.0%	8.0%	11.0%	10.0%	9.0%
Instagram	10.0%	13.0%	13.0%	13.0%	19.0%	14.0%
LinkedIn	14.0%	18.0%	15.0%	16.0%	17.0%	17.0%
Pinterest	14.0%	17.0%	15.0%	15.0%	16.0%	14.0%
Reddit	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.9%
Snapchat	4.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	10.0%	8.0%
TripAdvisor	9.0%	10.0%	10.0%	9.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Tumblr	5.0%	7.0%	6.0%	6.0%	5.0%	4.0%
Twitter	17.0%	18.0%	16.0%	16.0%	18.0%	15.0%
YouTube	27.0%	32.0%	27.0%	32.0%	31.0%	28.0%

Looking at purchases by retail channel, we found that 13% of book buyers who shopped online are Twitter users. Interestingly, even though only 2.6% of mobile app users are also Twitter users, only a small percentage of book buyers shop via mobile apps to begin with (5% in 2017), meaning that about half of mobile-app book buyers are also Twitter users.

Purchases by Twitter users per retail channel



Social media users by retail channel

	Book Club	Chain Bookstores	Discount	Ebook/Audio	General Retailers	Grocery	Indie Bookstores	Mobile App	Online
Facebook	44.8%	60.9%	61.7%	64.2%	55.6%	47.7%	57.2%	74.6%	67.7%
Goodreads	6.9%	10.3%	9.3%	11.7%	7.9%	6.8%	8.7%	14.6%	13.5%
Google+	12.6%	13.8%	13.1%	11.7%	10.6%	20.5%	16.3%	27.7%	14.9%
Instagram	23.0%	22.1%	23.5%	23.5%	20.5%	15.9%	23.6%	47.7%	28.7%
LinkedIn	17.2%	27.4%	21.3%	22.2%	25.8%	13.6%	25.7%	33.8%	26.7%
Pinterest	21.8%	22.8%	21.3%	22.2%	21.2%	20.5%	22.5%	36.2%	25.7%
Reddit	0.5%	1.4%	0.7%	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Snapchat	18.4%	13.6%	9.8%	8.6%	8.6%	9.1%	13.8%	25.4%	14.8%
TripAdvisor	16.1%	13.8%	17.5%	21.0%	17.9%	22.7%	15.2%	23.8%	14.6%
Tumblr	10.3%	5.3%	3.3%	6.8%	7.3%	4.5%	7.6%	11.5%	8.2%
Twitter	14.9%	25.1%	20.8%	29.0%	22.5%	18.2%	23.9%	43.1%	29.8%
YouTube	40.2%	44.5%	42.6%	44.4%	45.0%	36.4%	43.1%	54.6%	49.0%

About BookNet Canada

BookNet Canada is a non-profit organization that develops technology, standards, and education to serve the Canadian book industry. Founded in 2002 to address systemic challenges in the industry, BookNet Canada supports publishing companies, booksellers, wholesalers, distributors, sales agents, and libraries across the country.

BookNet Canada's services and research help companies promote and sell books, streamline workflows, and analyze and adapt to a rapidly changing market. BookNet Canada sets technology standards and educates organizations about how to apply them, performs market research, and tracks 85% of all Canadian English-language print book sales through BNC SalesData.

Industry-led and partially funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, BookNet Canada has become, as *The Globe and Mail* puts it, "the book industry's supply-chain nerve centre."

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