

Read Books, Live Longer?

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Reading books is tied to a longer life, according to a new report.

Researchers used data on 3,635 people over 50 participating in a larger health study who had answered questions about reading.

The scientists divided the sample into three groups: those who read no books, those who read books up to three and a half hours a week, and those who read books more than three and a half hours.

The [study, in Social Science & Medicine](#), found that book readers tended to be female, college-educated and in higher income groups. So researchers controlled for those factors as well as age, race, self-reported health, depression, employment and marital status.

Compared with those who did not read books, those who read for up to three and a half hours a week were 17 percent less likely to die over 12 years of follow-up, and those who read more than that were 23 percent less likely to die. Book readers lived an average of almost two years longer than those who did not read at all.

They found a similar association among those who read newspapers and periodicals, but it was weaker.

“People who report as little as a half-hour a day of book reading had a significant survival advantage over those who did not read,” said the senior author, Becca R. Levy, a professor of epidemiology at Yale. “And the survival advantage remained after adjusting for wealth, education, cognitive ability and many other variables.”