

# Creating Communities of Readers as an Innovative Model for Language Education

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# Introductions

The aim of this study is to show some preliminary results on the Finnish teachers knowledge on children's literature and their own reading habits.

StoRe= Stories make Readers 2017

Stories make readers (StoRe) –projects is a project concentrating on supporting educators in creating positive reading climate in accordance to the theories of communities of readers with the children in their groups.

# IKI – Creating a Map for Innovative Language Education



IKI-project  
Lead: University of  
Jyväskylä  
Partners: Åbo  
Akademi and  
University of Turku



TARU – Tarinoilla  
lukijaksi (Finnish)  
StoRe – Stories  
make Readers  
(English)

# Creating Communities of Readers

- The more ways of using books exist in the reading community, more models can be employed to develop children's reading interest and engagement with books in their free time. (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2020)
- Creating communities of readers based on reading for pleasure and engagement is a practice with significant cognitive, emotional, and social benefits. It supports the general learning outcomes, improves literacy and numeracy skills, and increases empathy and mindfulness (Hempel-Jorgensen, Cremin, Harris & Chamberlain, 2018).

**ACC** (Amount, Choices, Creativity) **model** for communities of readers rests on three pillars: increasing the *amount* of reading time and books offered, investing in individual *choices* and various literature (themes, levels of difficulty, and forms) for readers, and offering meaningful and *creative* activities to work with the experiences aroused while reading (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019).



# Perspectives on Children's Reading

- Creating a community of readers requires increasing **children's volition** as readers. (Cremin et al., 2014)
- Texts should meet the students interests, skills and create positive challenges (Merisuo-Storm & Aerila, 2018; Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019)
- Children should **be allowed to make choices**: whom to sit with, what and how to read as well as be encouraged to engage with peers informally around texts. (Cremin et al., 2014; Tauveron, 2006)
- **Teachers' support and encouragement** are crucial for children's engagement. (Aerila & Kauppinen, 2019; Cremin et al., 2014)



# Teachers as Readers

- Teachers are not sufficiently conscious of their own (and children's) everyday reading practices or identities and their relation to the reading activities implemented in the classroom. (Cremin et al., 2014; Hellmich & Hoya, 2017; Lerkkanen et al., 2012).
- Several studies indicate that teachers and other adults influence both a group's positive reading atmosphere and children's individual literacy development (Cremin et al., 2014; Hellmich & Hoya, 2017; Lerkkanen et al., 2012).
- Children make notions about the meanings of reading based on **concrete observations** like having easy access to books and experiencing teachers' interest in children's reading experiences (Merga, 2015).





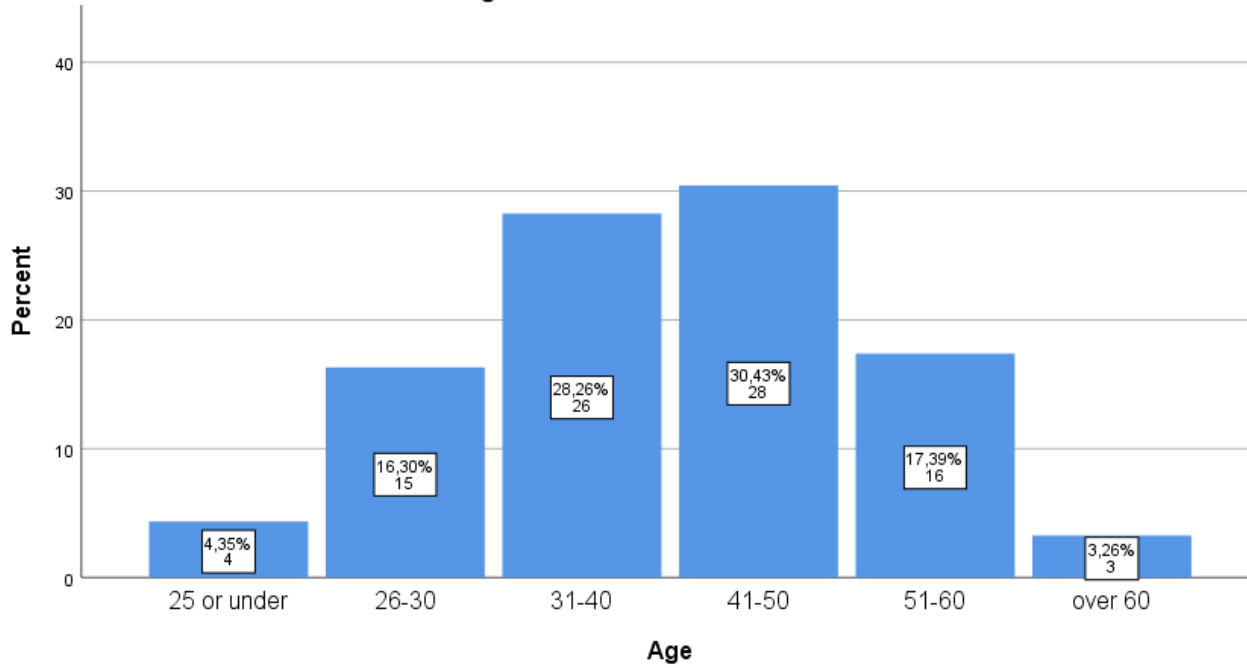


# Teachers as Experts on Children's Literature

- Teachers do not always possess sufficient subject knowledge of children's literature and other texts (Cremin et al., 2014; Hellmich & Hoya, 2017; Lerkkanen et al., 2012).
- Teachers are not always motivated to increase their knowledge on children's literature (Kauppinen & Aerila, 2019)
- The reading experience expands and deepens when the book choices remain sufficiently close to students' experiences and knowledge (Aerila & Merisuo-Storm, 2018).

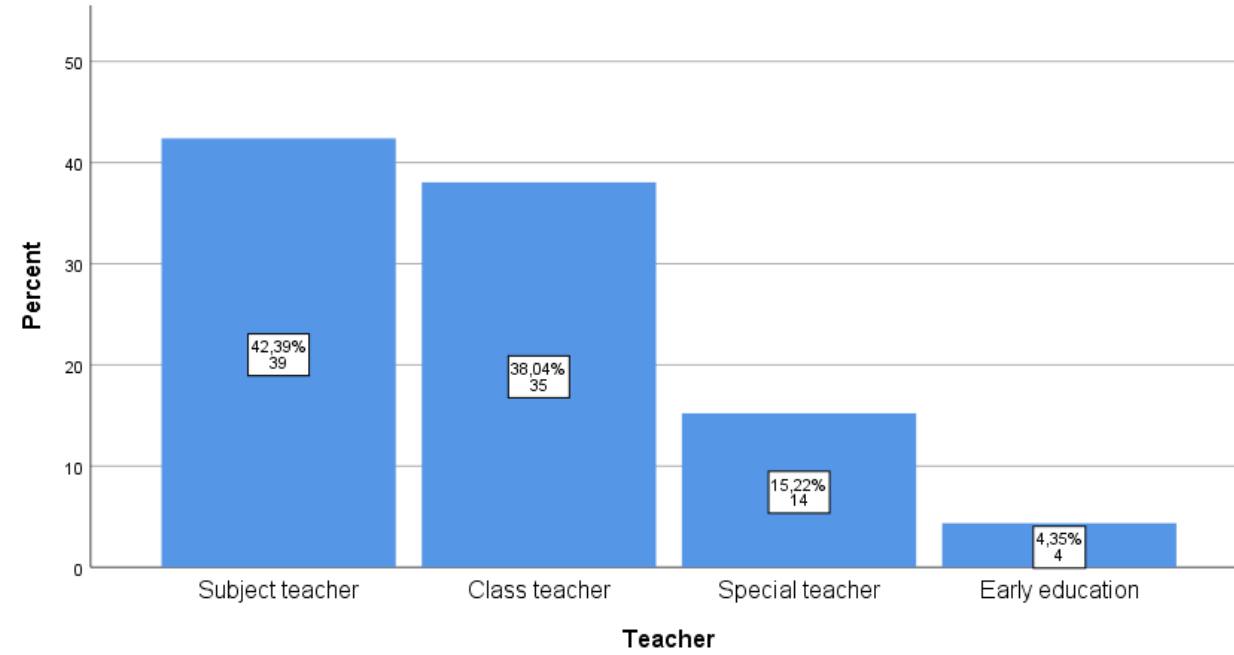
# The Data

Age Distribution of Teachers



Error Bars: 95% CI

Professional Distribution of Teachers



Error Bars: 95% CI

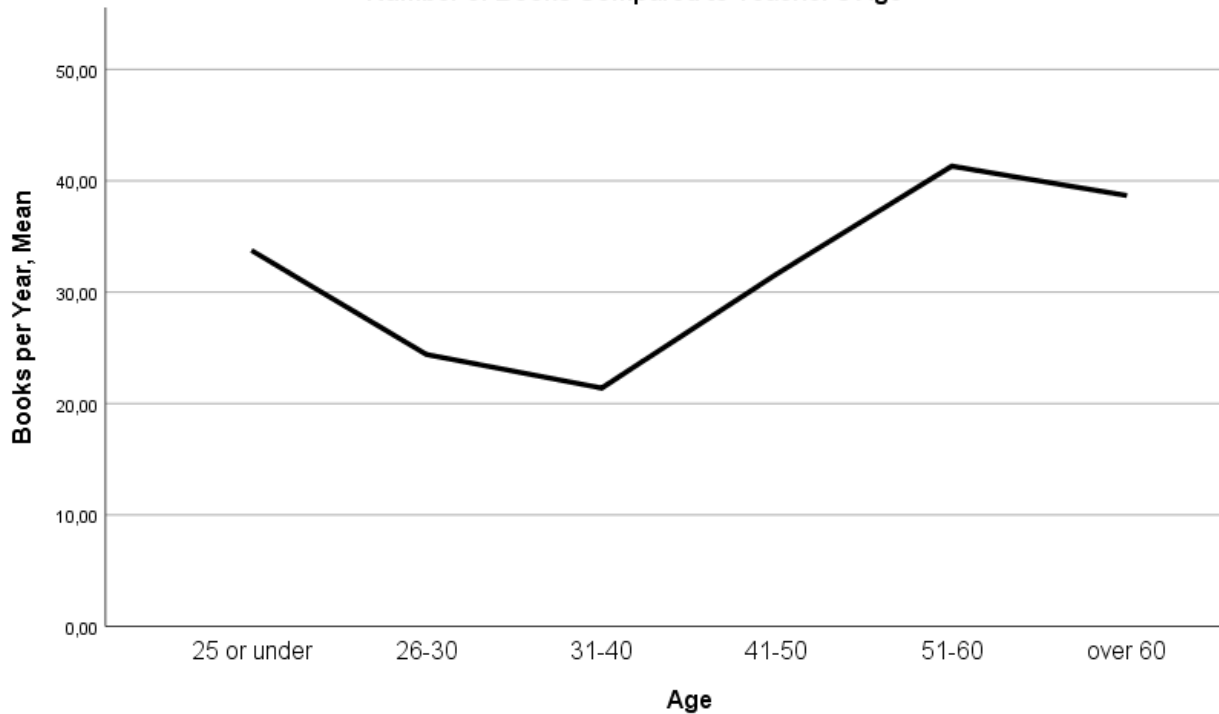


# Research Questions

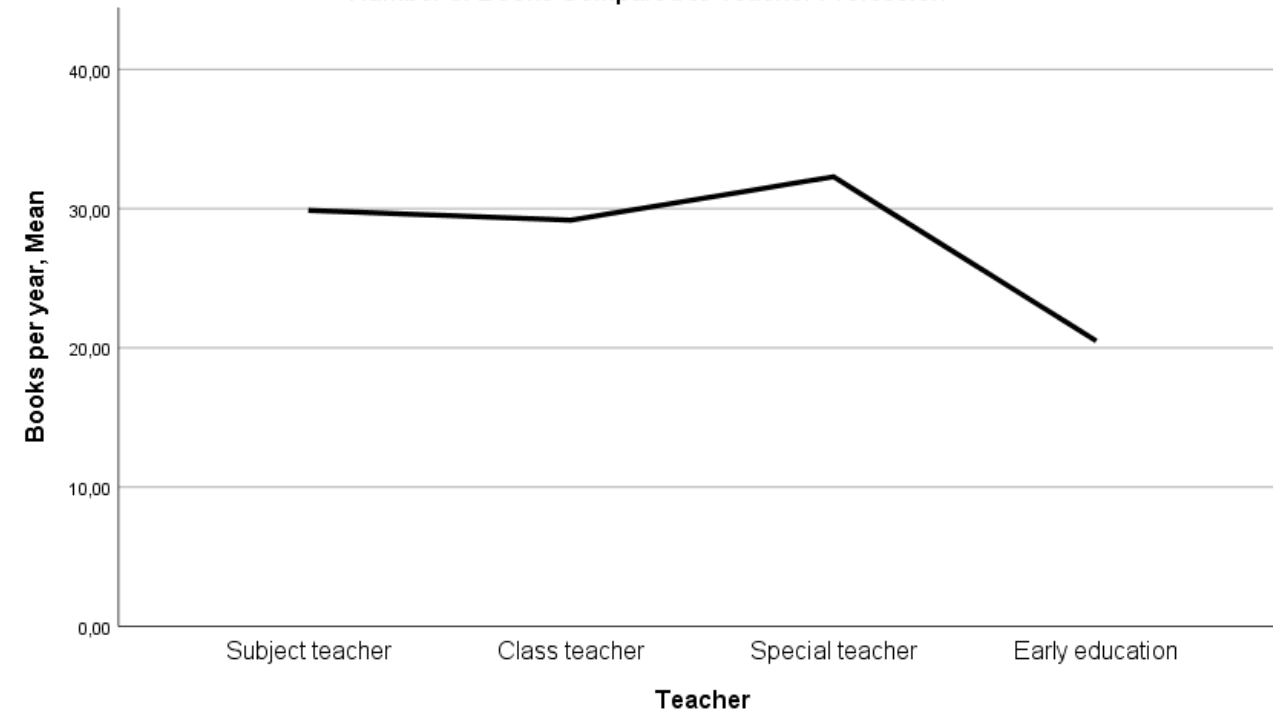
- *How many books you read in a year?*  
→ **The Readership of Teachers**
- *Describe yourself as a reader: What kind of books you like to read? What is your reader history? What is your favourite book?*  
→ **Teacher's Reading Profile**
- *Recommend a fictional book for students. Which of these following books you have read?*  
→ **Teacher as an Expert of a Children's Literature**

# The Readership of Teachers

Number of Books Compared to Teacher's Age



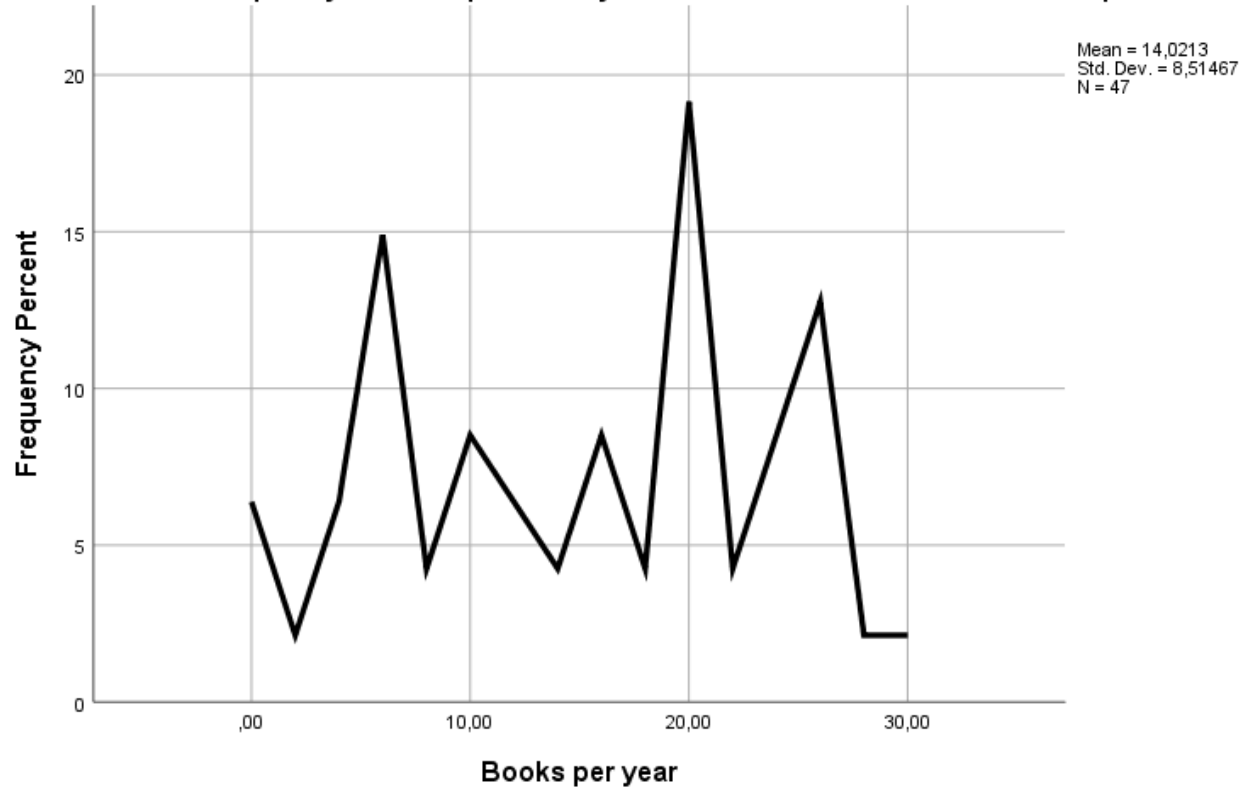
Number of Books Compared to Teacher Profession



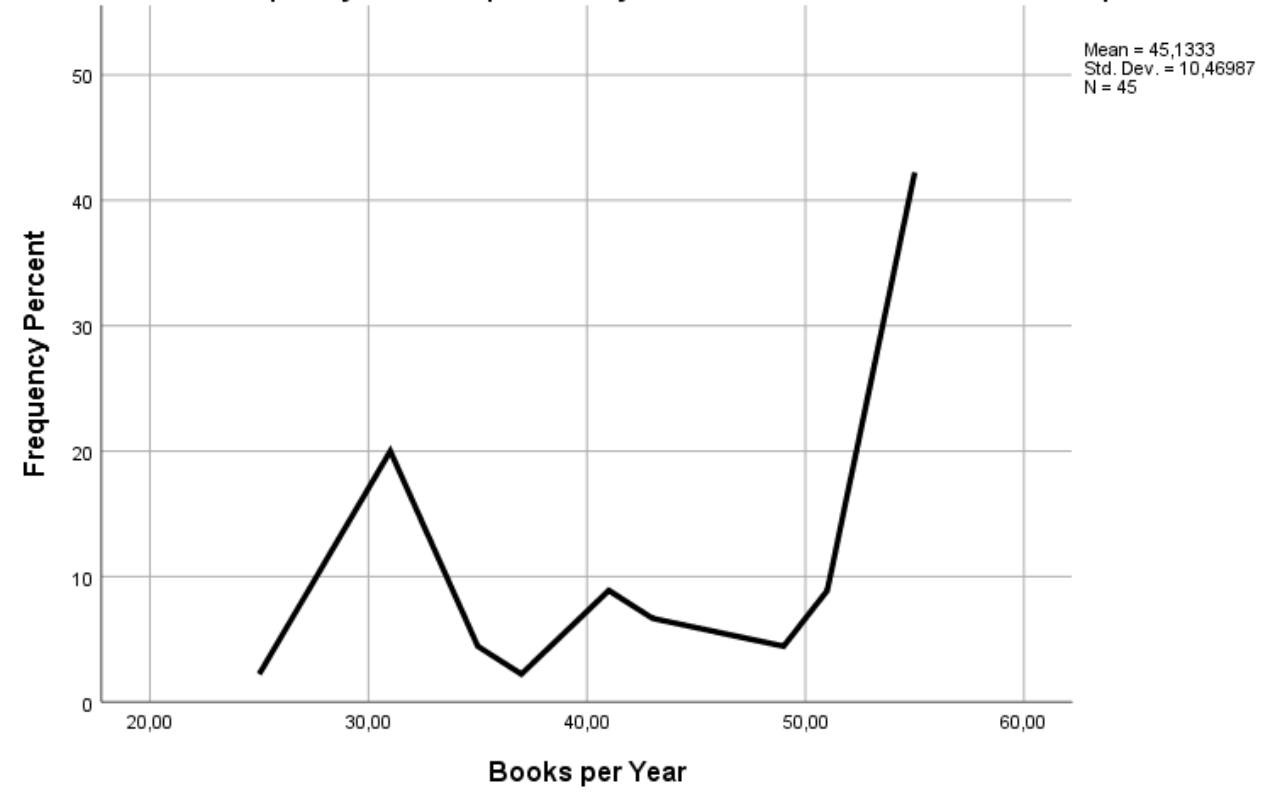
A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the amount of books teachers reads in a year and teachers scaled age.

$$r = 0.282, n = 92, p = 0.006$$

Frequency of books per Year by Teachers who reads under 30 Books per Year



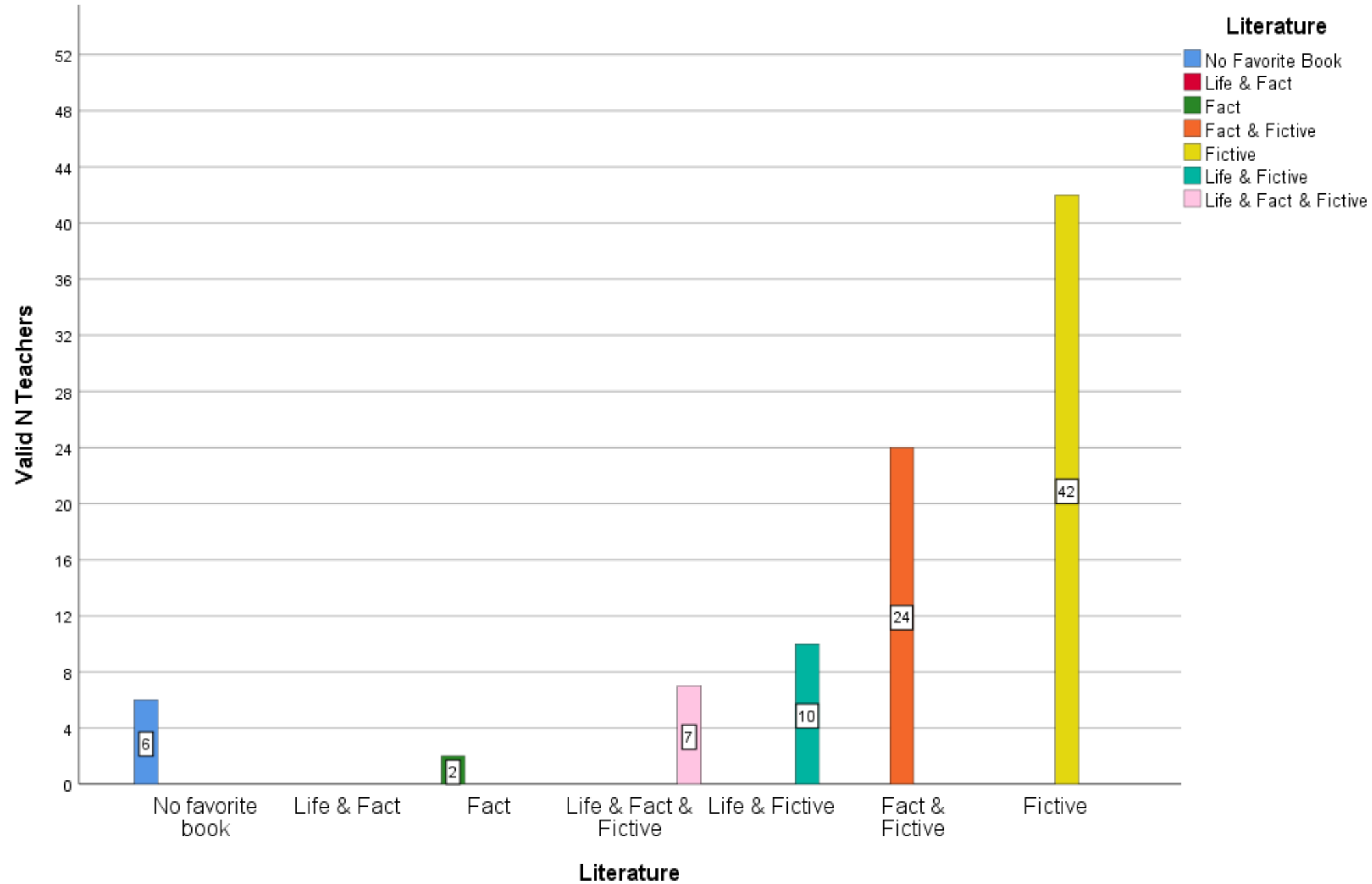
Frequency of Books per Year by Teachers who reads over 30 Books per Year





# Teacher's Reading Profile

What teachers Read?



# What is your favourite book?

74 teachers named a favourite book (79,6%)

*I can't choose one favourite, but I like Lars Kepler's books. They're real page-turners.*

*Just one?! Douglas Adams Hitchhikers Guide to Galaxy, The Lord of the Rings, The Egyptian, Södegran's poems... Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy is funny. I read it when I'm feeling down. After reading, I don't feel so bad.*

*David Eddings's The Belgariad was my inspirational book as a child and therefore it's important for me.*

# Teacher's Own Reading History

- Over half of the teachers loved reading since they were children (63,4%) and over half of them still read over the average value, over 30 books a year.
- Some teachers loved to read as a child but don't really read books now. They all were under 41 years old.
- Many teachers answered that University killed their love for reading for a while.



## Teacher

## Own Reader History

Finnish language and literature teacher  
Age 51-60  
Over 50 books/year

*I have always read a lot. When I was a child my parents took books away from me and said "You're ruining your eyes if you keep reading all the time."*

Early childhood education teacher  
Age 41-50  
Over 50 books/year

*I have read since childhood: I read in sauna and while walking home. When my kids were born my reading stopped for a while: when you have two small children there wasn't time. Recently I've found e-books and it is the best thing that could have happened!*

Swedish and German teacher  
Age 51-60  
35 books/year

*I used to read a lot, after having kids I read only in summer vacations.*

Class teacher  
Age 26-30  
13 books/year

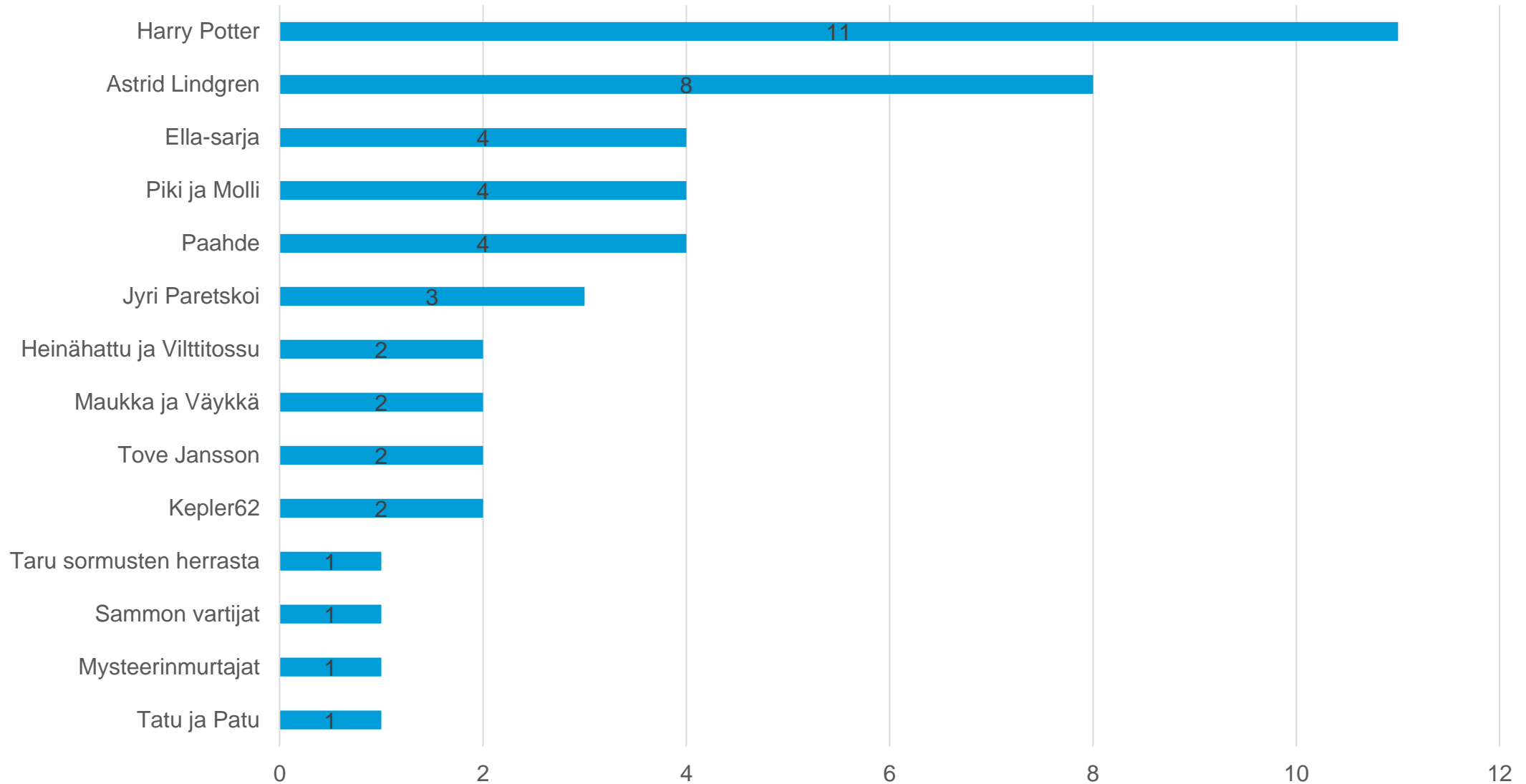
*I'm not a fast reader and I get bored easily. I didn't read for a long time, because my studies stressed me and made the idea to read revolting. Nowadays I try to read without pressure and just those books that interest me.*

Class teacher  
Age 31-40  
No answer in read books

*Everyday life is too stressing and I don't have the energy to concentrate on a book. I read to my students and my children. I was a bookworm as a child.*

# Teacher as an Expert of an Children's Literature

## Children's book recommendations

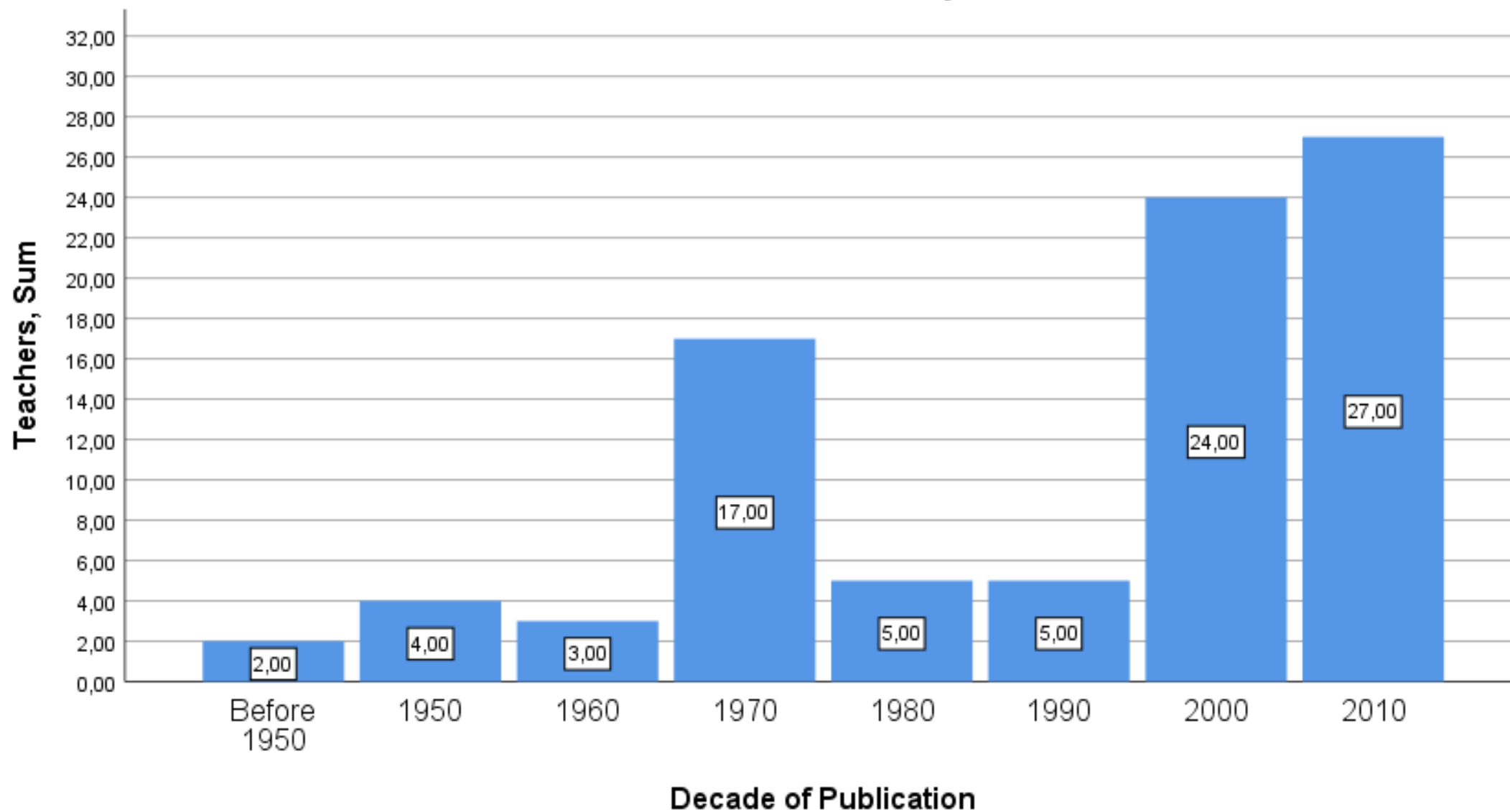


In UK they have found that teachers are too **Dahl-dependent**: teachers and children both know and like Dahl. If teachers depend on Dahl too much, they narrow the book range. (Clark & Teravainen, 2015; Cremin, 2008).

Teacher	Own favourite book	Recommend a book for student
Class teacher 26-30	<i>Harry Potter. Always have been. Wonderful world where you can lose yourself.</i>	<i>Latte-siili (Latte Igelkott). Good themes for forest or water.</i>
Class teacher 26-30	<i>Harry Potters made an impression to me when I was a child.</i>	<i>Pippi Långstrump: you can use it for writing exercises, music and for art products.</i>
Class teacher 26-30	<i>Harry Potter. I love the language and humor of it and I re-read it over and over again.</i>	<i>Ella-books. Easy to read and not too long books.</i>
Class teacher 25 or under	<i>Harry Potter was my childhood. It intrigued me reading and offered a chance for escapism.</i>	<i>Molli-books have great pictures and you you can use them in emotional pedagogy.</i>



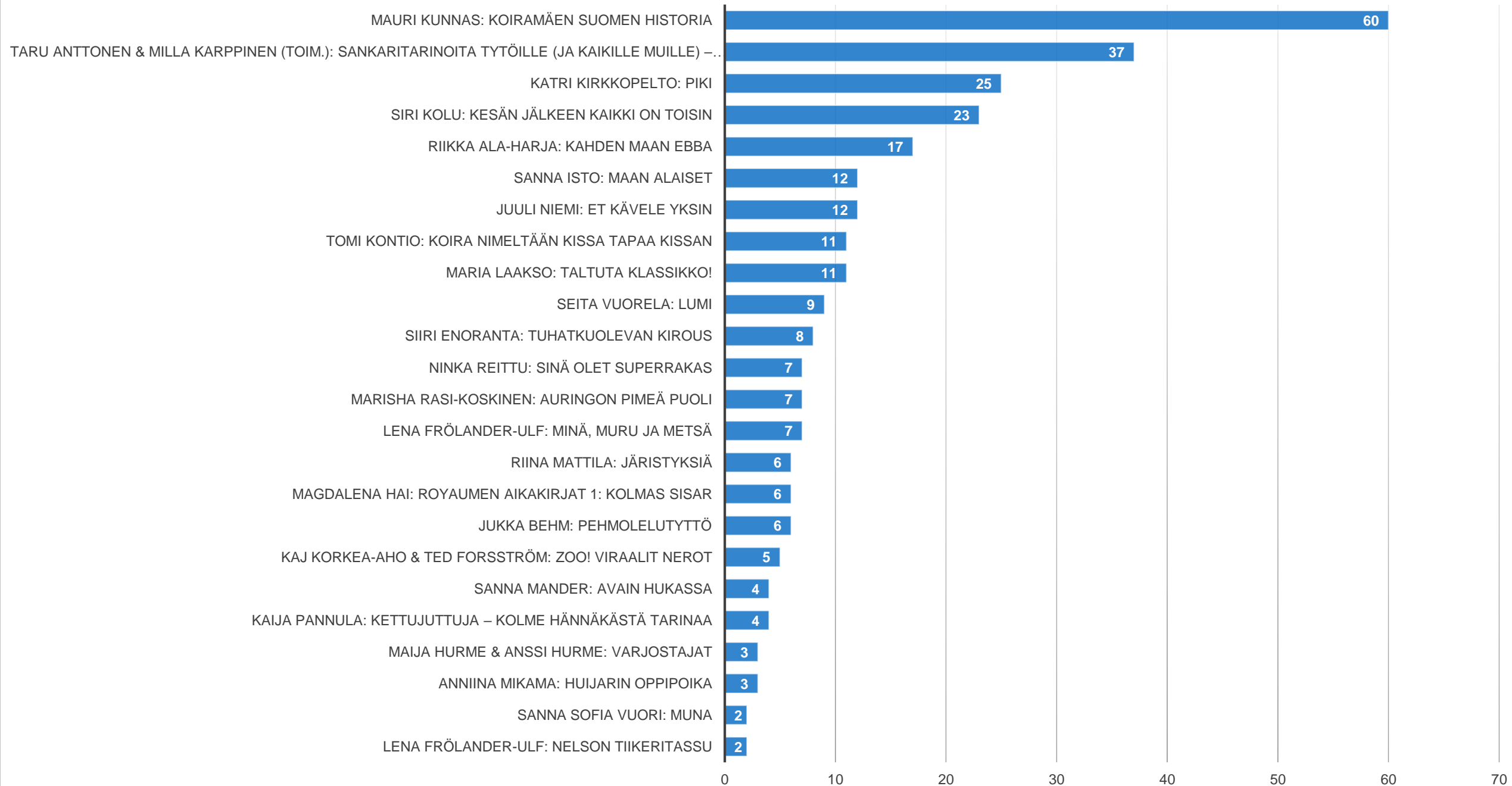
**Breakdown of Teacher-Recommended Books by Publication Decade**



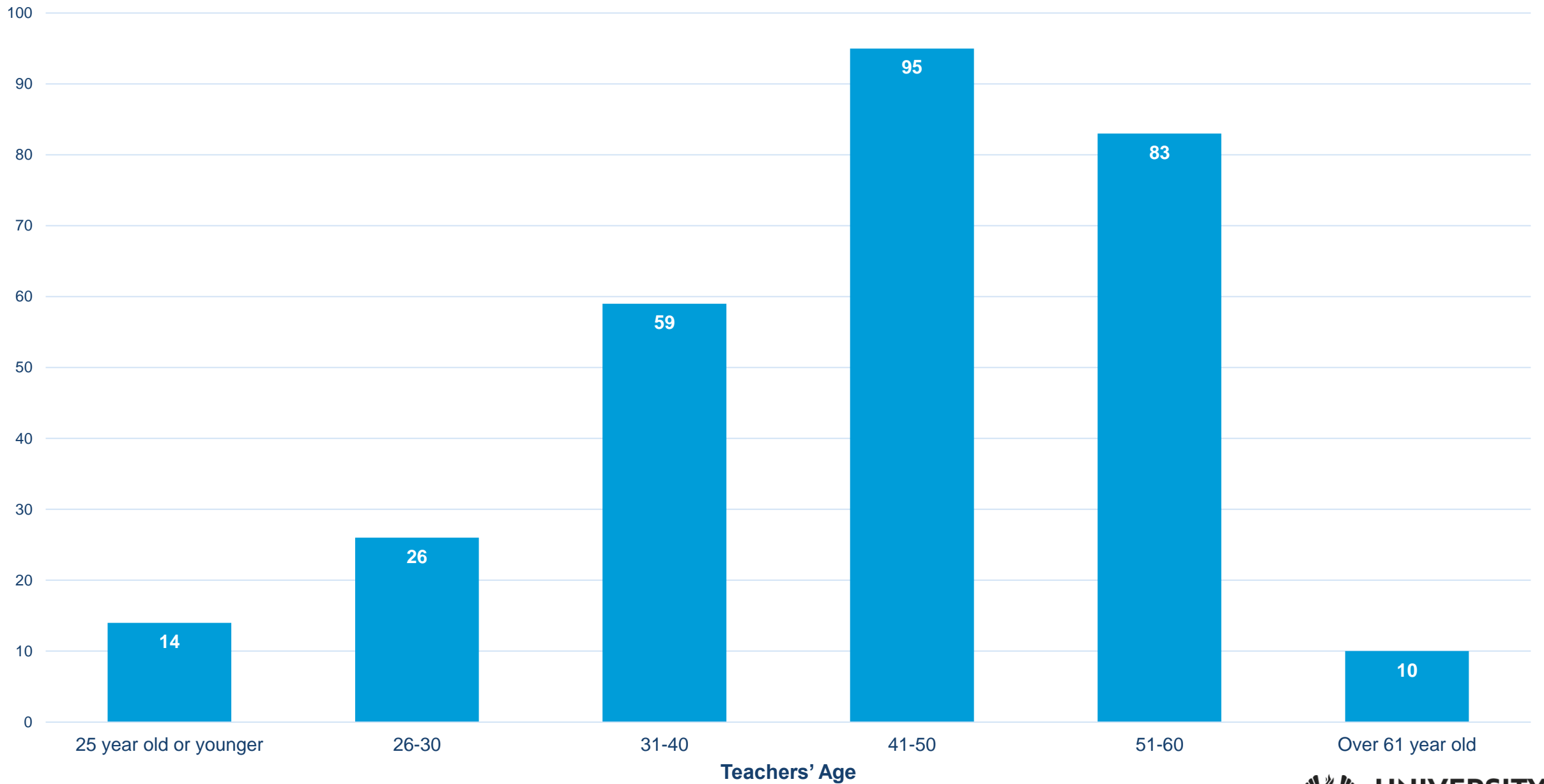
# Finlandia Junior Candidates

- Our last question for the teachers was to choose all the books they have read from a booklist. There were 23 books.
- We did this because we wanted to find out if the teachers follow the art of children's literature and are aware of the most valued books in Finland. In accordance to for example Teresa Cremin, we decided to ask the teachers on their knowledge of the books being nominated a prize of children's literature. The prize we chose was Junior Finland, which is the little brother or sister of the most valued literature prize in Finland, the Finlandia prize of Finnish Literature.
- 72% had read at least one Finlandia Junior Candidate from the last four years
- Average value was 3 Finlandia Junior Candidates/teacher

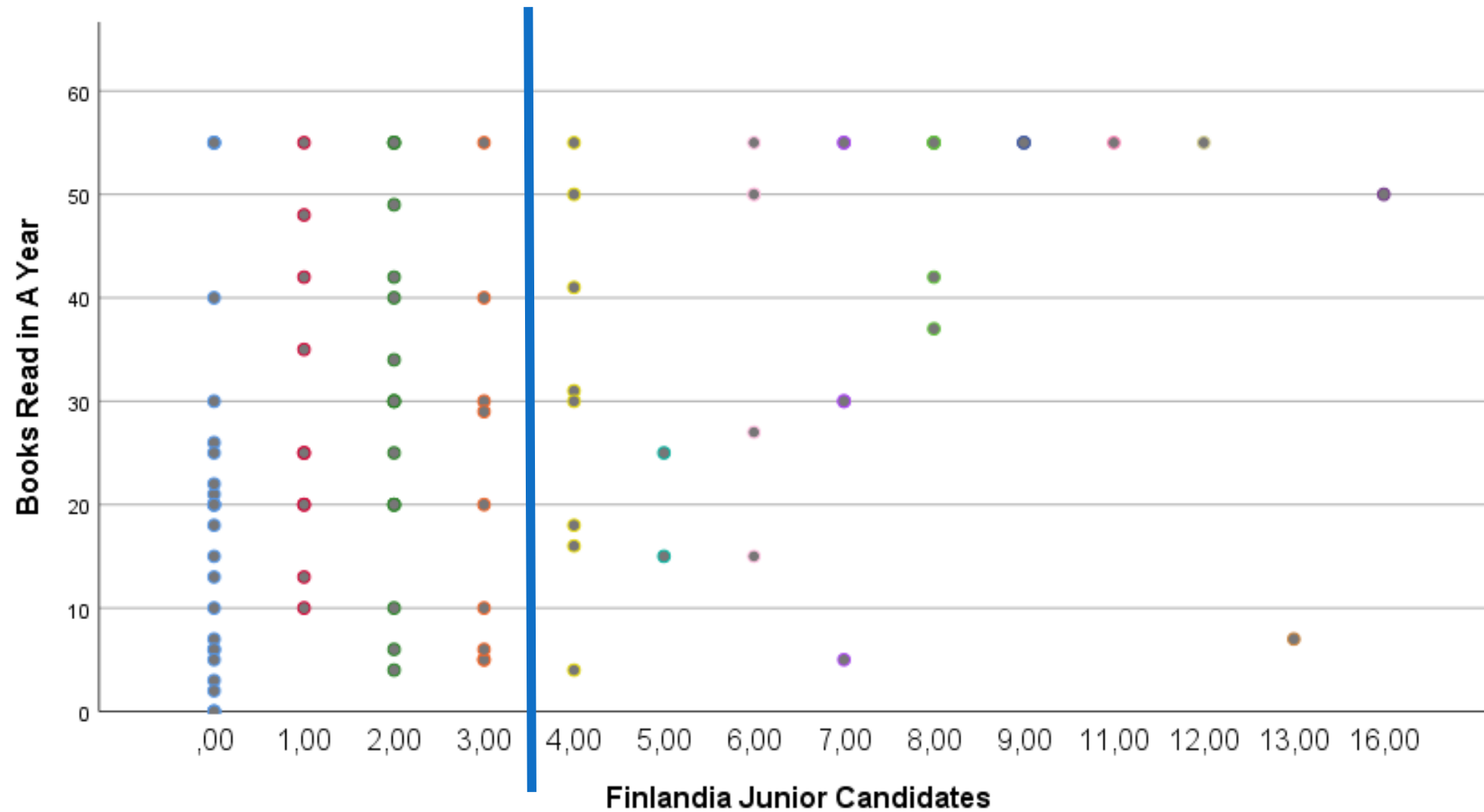
# 2016-2019 *Finlandia Junior* Candidates by the Popularity



## Teacher's Age and Finlandia Junior candidates



The Connection Between Books Read in A Year and Finlandia Junior Candidates



# Conclusions

- The interest in teacher's reading originates from childhood.
- Teachers' freetime reading concentrates on entertainment and escape from the reality.
- Teachers' freetime reading and love for books is in connection to the interest in children's literature.
- 83% of teachers recommended a book for children.
- The interest in reading increases from 40 years.





# Conclusions

- Teachers seem to concentrate on Finnish authors: the most popular and marketed authors and old classics.
- Teachers seem to ponder books from the perspective of educational material (or historical value) and entertainment.
- The recommendations do not offer a very wide picture of children's literature nor the society.
- The repertoire of books is not enough to meet the needs of all readers.
- Are Finnish teachers too Potter-dependent?



Potter-dependent teachers?



# Discussion

- The results are a bit contradictory to prior StoRe-research (2019a, 2019b), which indicated that teachers do not take advantage of their own reading experiences while guiding children to read. In this study, teachers recommendations are based on their own literary taste and interest.
- The results are indicate in accordance to other studies (Cremin et al., 2014; Hellmich & Hoya, 2017; Kauppinen & Aerila, 2019) that teachers are not very active in developing their expertise on children's literature.
- Teachers are interested in and like children's literature, but new ways would be needed to help to teachers find time and resources to increase their knowledge on children's literature.

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**Thank you! Kiitos!**