



Department  
for Education

# **Additional findings from PIRLS 2021**

## **Research report**

**September 2024**

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of Oxford**

# Acknowledgments

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**This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 5 July 2024. As a result, the content may not reflect current Government policy.**

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# Executive Summary

## About PIRLS

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international comparative study directed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The aim of PIRLS is to assess and compare the reading performance of pupils at approximately 10 years of age – that is, in what is internationally considered ‘fourth grade’, or year 5 in England. A total of 57 education systems took part in PIRLS 2021.

England has taken part in PIRLS cycles every 5 years since 2001, though for PIRLS 2021 this involved a delay to data collection until 2022 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, England’s sample consisted of 4,150 year 5 pupils from 162 primary schools.

PIRLS focuses on 3 different aspects of reading literacy – how pupils read different types of texts, what reading comprehension processes pupils use to understand those texts, and what attitudes pupils have towards reading. The first 2 aspects are assessed through a reading literacy test that bears many similarities to the types of comprehension tests that pupils in England sit at school, such as the key stage 2 reading test. Attitudes towards reading are assessed through the use of a questionnaire completed by pupils after finishing their test. Questionnaires are also completed by these pupils’ teachers and headteachers, providing additional information about their reading lessons and wider school environments.

## About this further research report

The National Report for England (Lindorff, Stiff & Kayton, 2023) reports the main results from PIRLS 2021 in England, placing these in the context of international comparisons where appropriate. This further research report focuses on several key questions of specific interest within England, drawing on data from PIRLS linked to data from the National Pupil Database in England. The questions on which this report focuses are:

- How do pupils’ self-reported attitudes to reading (including their confidence in reading, liking of reading and engagement in reading lessons) differ across groups of pupils if we consider gender, ethnic group, disadvantage (via free school meal eligibility in the last 6 years), English as an Additional Language status and birth season in combination, rather than separately?
- Do any particular groups of pupils perform substantially differently to the overall patterns of performance found in England, if we consider gender, ethnic group,

disadvantage (via free school meal eligibility in the last 6 years), English as an Additional Language status and birth season in combination, rather than separately?

- To what extent do different aspects of pupils' attitudes to reading relate to one another (e.g. do those who are very engaged in reading lessons tend to also be very confident in reading and/or very much like reading)?
- What proportion of pupils who do not meet the expected standard in the year 1 phonics screening check (PSC) "catch up" by year 5, the year in which PIRLS assesses reading performance in England, in terms of meeting the "High" benchmark for PIRLS?

## Highlights from this report

### **Looking at reading performance across the intersections of gender, disadvantage, ethnic group, EAL status and birth season:**

- Gender gaps, with girls outperforming boys on average in terms of their overall PIRLS scores, were largest for pupils in the Asian group, those eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, and pupils with EAL.
- Gaps between pupils who had and who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years were widest amongst Mixed and White pupils, and narrowest amongst Black pupils.
- For White pupils there was little to no difference in PIRLS 2021 reading performance between pupils with and without EAL. Amongst pupils in the Black, Asian and Mixed groups, however, pupils without EAL had consistently higher reading performance than pupils with EAL.
- Autumn-born pupils scored consistently higher than Summer-born pupils, regardless of other characteristics.
- Amongst pupils who had been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, pupils with EAL had higher overall PIRLS 2021 scores than pupils without EAL. This pattern was reversed amongst pupils who had not been eligible for FSM.

### **Looking at pupil attitudes to reading across the intersections of gender, disadvantage, ethnic group, EAL status and birth season:**

- Gender differences in pupils' self-reported confidence in reading were similar across ethnic groups, but gender differences in pupils' self-reported engagement in reading lessons and liking of reading varied somewhat across ethnic groups.
- Gender differences in pupils' self-reported confidence in reading were more pronounced amongst pupils who were eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, with

boys less likely to report being “somewhat confident” and more likely to report being “not confident” in this group. Girls who had not been FSM eligible in the last 6 years were more likely to report being “very engaged” in reading lessons than other groups, but otherwise differences by gender and FSM eligibility in the last 6 years were minimal. Girls tended to report higher liking of reading than boys regardless of FSM eligibility in the last 6 years, while regardless of gender pupils who had been FSM eligible in the last 6 years were less likely to report that they “somewhat like” and more likely to report that they “do not like” reading than their peers who had not been FSM eligible in the last 6 years.

- Gender differences in confidence in reading were not large, but pupils without EAL in general were more likely to report being “not confident”. Girls were slightly more likely to report being “very engaged” regardless of EAL status. Girls were more likely to say they “very much liked” reading – and less likely to say they “did not like” reading – than boys regardless of EAL status, but girls with EAL were somewhat more likely to say they “very much liked” reading, and less likely to say they “did not like” reading, than girls without EAL.
- The relationships between birth season and attitudes to reading were mostly small and inconsistent across other demographic characteristics, though for confidence there were some clearer patterns of Autumn-born pupils being the most and Summer-born pupils being the least likely to report being “very confident” readers.

**In general, pupils who were more confident in reading tended to report greater liking of reading, pupils who reported more liking of reading tended to say they were more engaged in reading lessons, and pupils who were more confident in reading tended to say they were more engaged in reading lessons.**

However, the proportions of pupils reporting that they “somewhat like reading” was rather similar (around half) regardless of how confident pupils were in reading, suggesting that there is scope to encourage liking of reading even for pupils who may not be confident in their reading.

Additionally, nearly a third (30%) of pupils who reported being “less than engaged” in reading lessons reported that they were “very confident” in reading, compared to 51% of those who reported being “very engaged”. This might suggest that some very confident pupils do not feel sufficiently challenged in reading lessons.

**Looking at the relationship between phonics screening check outcomes in year 1 and reading performance in PIRLS 2021 in year 5:**

- Around 20% of pupils who did not meet the expected standard on the phonics screening check in year 1 “caught up” on their reading performance by year 5.



That is, they went on to attain at least the “High” benchmark in PIRLS 2021. Just under half of pupils who did not meet the expected standard scored below the Intermediate benchmark (scoring at or below the Low benchmark).

- Of the pupils who did meet the expected standard on the phonics screening check in year 1, about 60% attained at least the “High” benchmark in PIRLS 2021, while only a little more than 10% attained below the Intermediate benchmark.
- The persistence of the gap between those who experience difficulties with reading early in primary school and those who do not may be, at least in part, attributable to pupils’ age within their cohort. 92% of Autumn-born pupils met the expected standard in year 1, compared to 88% of Spring-born and 83% of Summer-born pupils.

# 1 Introduction

## Purpose of this report

This report is a supplement to the PIRLS 2021 National Report for England. Its purpose is to provide additional insight on a selection of key questions identified in consultation between the research team and the Department for Education.

The questions on which this report focuses are:

- Do any particular groups of pupils perform substantially differently to the overall patterns of performance found in England, if we consider gender, ethnic group, disadvantage (via free school meal eligibility in the last 6 years), English as an Additional Language status and birth season in combination rather than separately?
- How do pupils' self-reported attitudes to reading (including their confidence in reading, liking of reading and engagement in reading lessons) differ across groups of pupils if we consider gender, ethnic group, disadvantage (via free school meal eligibility in the last 6 years), English as an Additional Language status and birth season in combination rather than separately?
- To what extent do different aspects of pupils' attitudes to reading relate to one another (e.g. do those who are very engaged in reading lessons tend to also be very confident in reading and/or to very much like reading)?
- What proportion of pupils who do not meet the expected standard in the year 1 phonics screening check (PSC) "catch up" by year 5, the year in which PIRLS assesses reading performance in England, in terms of meeting the "High" benchmark for PIRLS?

## Approach to analysis

The results presented in this report are descriptive. They reflect differences, relationships or patterns observed in the PIRLS 2021 sample that suggest possible aspects in need of further scrutiny towards relevant policy decisions. Such differences, relationships and patterns are not tested for statistical significance, largely because in so many instances the numbers of pupils at the intersection of different demographic characteristics are too small to form a basis for statistical generalisation to the wider population of pupils in England.

Demographic variables<sup>1</sup> used in this report are drawn from the National Pupil Database (NPD) in England. The only exception to this was gender, which was based on PIRLS 2021 data. Individual pupil records were matched to the PIRLS data, except for 373 of the 4,150 PIRLS pupils who could not be matched to the NPD. Where there was no match, this was mainly because some of the pupils in PIRLS were in independent schools not required submit School Census data.

The demographic characteristics focused on in this report, and the categories for each, include:

- Gender (boy/girl)
- Major ethnic group (Black/Asian/Mixed/White/Other)
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) status (Yes/No)
- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility within the last 6 years (Yes/No)
- Birth season (where Autumn corresponds to September-December, Spring corresponds to January-April, and Summer corresponds to May-August)

In some instances, results are not reported where, for a particular combination of demographic characteristics, the count on which calculations are based is less than 30. Although standard Department for Education and Office for National Statistics statistical disclosure policy (ONS & DfE, 2023) suggests a threshold of 10, the more stringent threshold of 30 used in this report takes into account the way in which statistics must be calculated for PIRLS, taking into account appropriate weighting and (where the outcome of interest is PIRLS performance) plausible values.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the categories used in this report for demographic variables are based on the information available in the NPD (and PIRLS, for gender). These categories may not fully account for the ways in which individuals represented in the data would identify themselves in terms of gender or ethnic group.

## 2 Reading performance across subgroups of pupils

### Chapter overview

This chapter presents the results of an analysis looking at how pupils' performance in PIRLS 2021 differs across groups of pupils. The main PIRLS 2021 National Report for England (Lindorff, Stiff & Kayton, 2023) considered pupils' overall PIRLS scores according to gender, ethnic group, disadvantage (via free school meal eligibility), English as an Additional Language status and month of birth. This chapter provides results that consider pupil demographic characteristics in combination rather than separately to provide a more nuanced account of patterns across groups.

### Key findings

- Gender gaps, with girls outperforming boys on average in terms of their overall PIRLS scores, were largest for pupils in the Asian group, those eligible for FSM, and pupils with EAL.
- Gaps between pupils who had and who had not been eligible for FSM were widest amongst Mixed and White pupils, and narrowest amongst Black pupils.
- For White pupils there was little to no difference in PIRLS 2021 reading performance between pupils with and without EAL. Amongst pupils in the Black, Asian and Mixed groups, however, pupils without EAL had consistently higher reading performance than pupils with EAL.
- Autumn-born pupils scored consistently higher than Summer-born pupils, regardless of other characteristics.
- Amongst pupils who had been eligible for FSM, pupils with EAL had higher overall PIRLS 2021 scores than pupils without EAL. This pattern was reversed amongst pupils who had not been eligible for FSM.

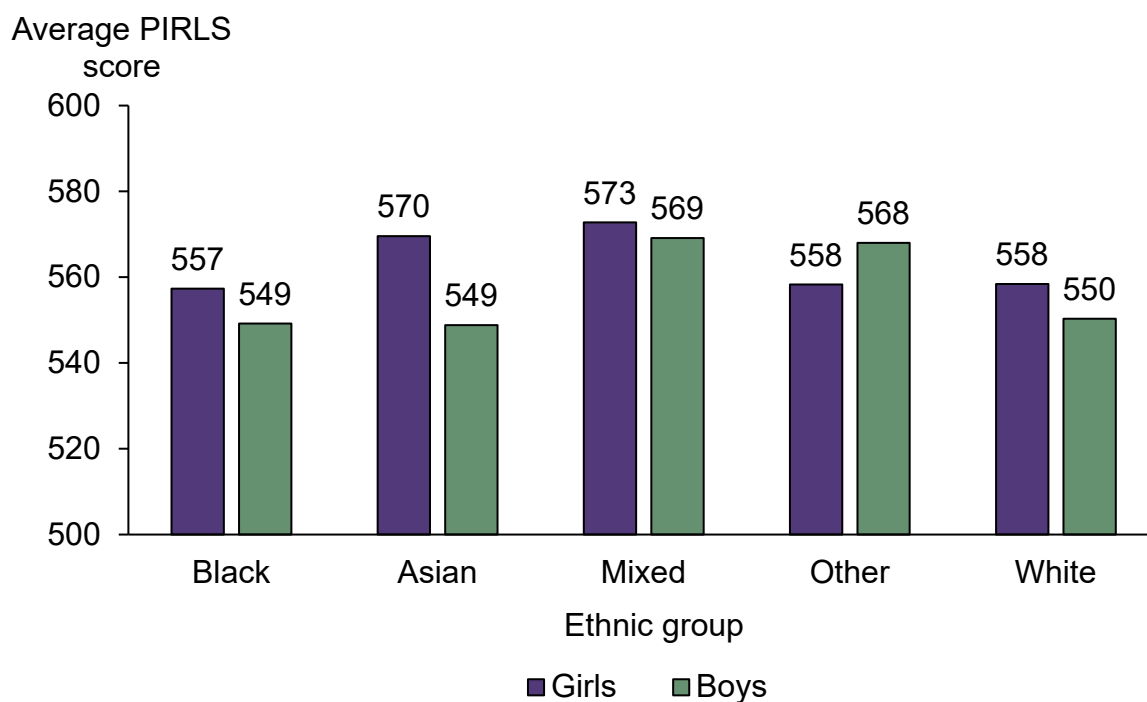
### Overall reading performance at the intersection of pupil demographic characteristics

#### Reading performance by gender and ethnic group

As shown in **Figure 1**, across most major ethnic groups, girls tended to have higher performance than boys. This gap was particularly pronounced for the Asian group, in which the average scores for girls and boys were 570 and 549, respectively (over twice the difference for any other ethnic group). The gender difference was reversed amongst pupils in the Other group, with boys outperforming girls on average by 10 points.

However, the Other group is relatively small compared to other major ethnic groups, so these results should be interpreted with some caution.

**Figure 1: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by gender and ethnic group**



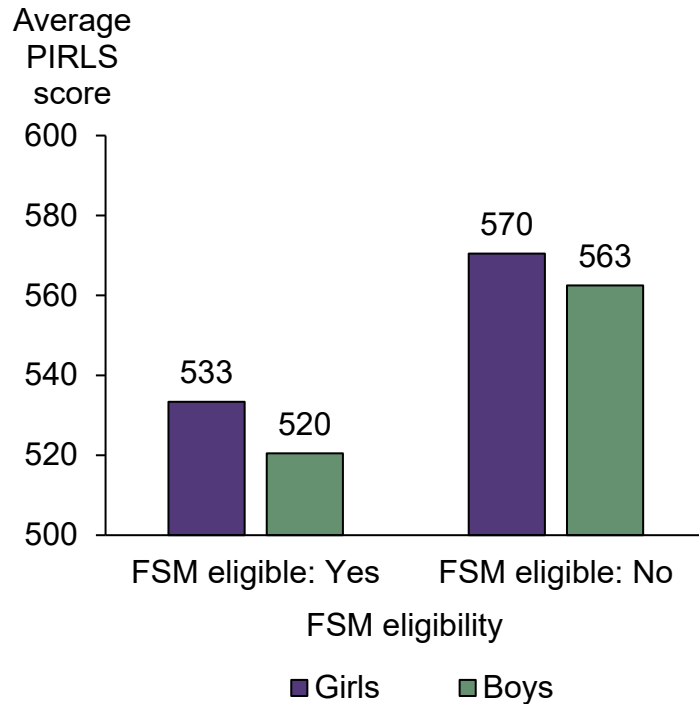
Overall PIRLS score	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other	White
Girl	557	570	573	558	558
Boy	549	549	569	568	550

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## Reading performance by gender and disadvantage

The gap between girls' and boys' performance in PIRLS 2021 varied across the groups of pupils who had and had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years. For the FSM-eligible pupils, girls outperformed boys by nearly twice as many points as for the pupils not eligible for FSM, as displayed in **Figure 2**.

**Figure 2: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by gender and FSM**



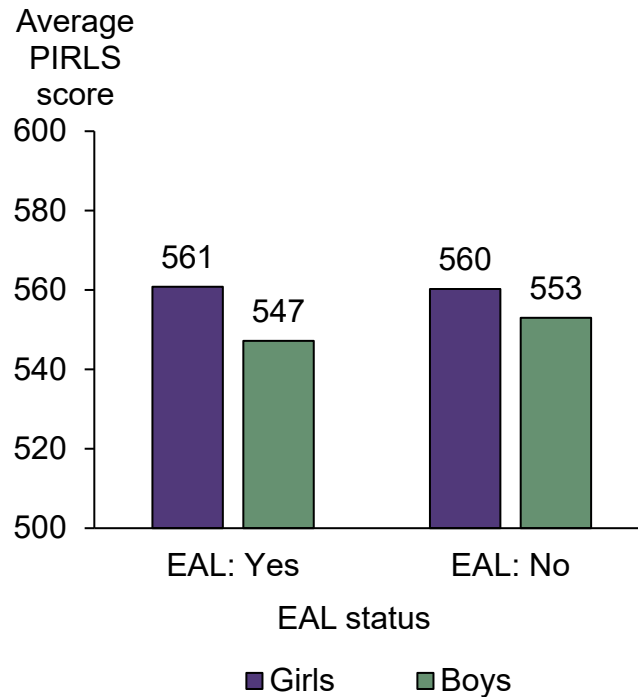
Overall PIRLS score	FSM eligible: Yes	FSM eligible: No
<b>Girl</b>	533	570
<b>Boy</b>	520	563

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Reading performance by gender and EAL status

**Figure 3** shows PIRLS 2021 overall scores by EAL status and gender. Across the groups of pupils with and without EAL, girls scored consistently higher than boys on average. However, the difference was about twice as large for those with EAL than for those without.

**Figure 3: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by gender and EAL status**



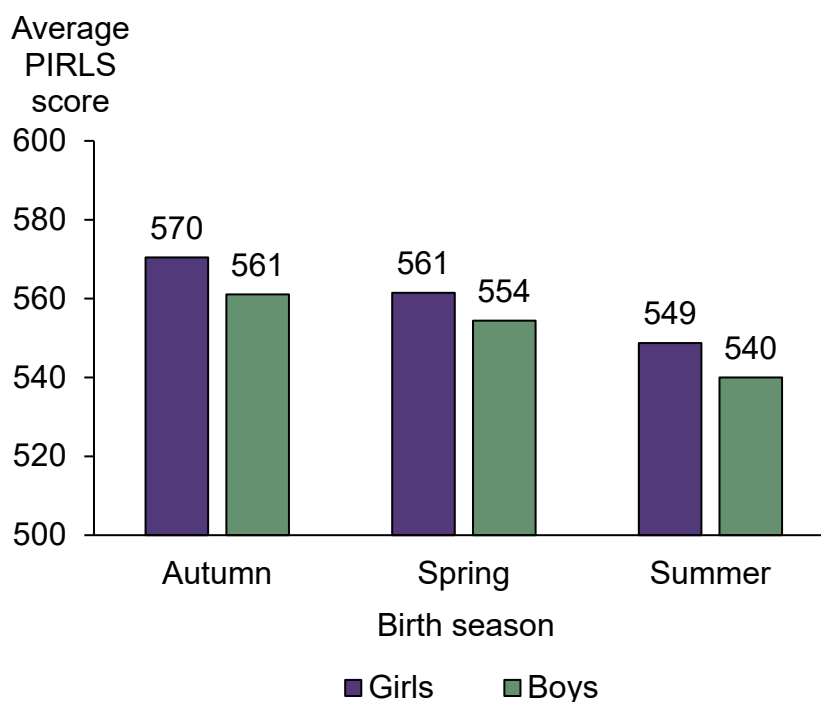
Overall PIRLS score	EAL: Yes	EAL: No
Girl	561	560
Boy	547	553

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Reading performance by gender and birth season

Girls' reading performance was higher than boys' regardless of birth season. As **Figure 4** shows, the size of this difference was also similar across birth seasons. In other words, the gender gap in reading performance does not seem to be compounded by differences in age within year.

**Figure 4: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by gender and birth season**



Overall PIRLS score	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Girl	570	561	549
Boy	561	554	540

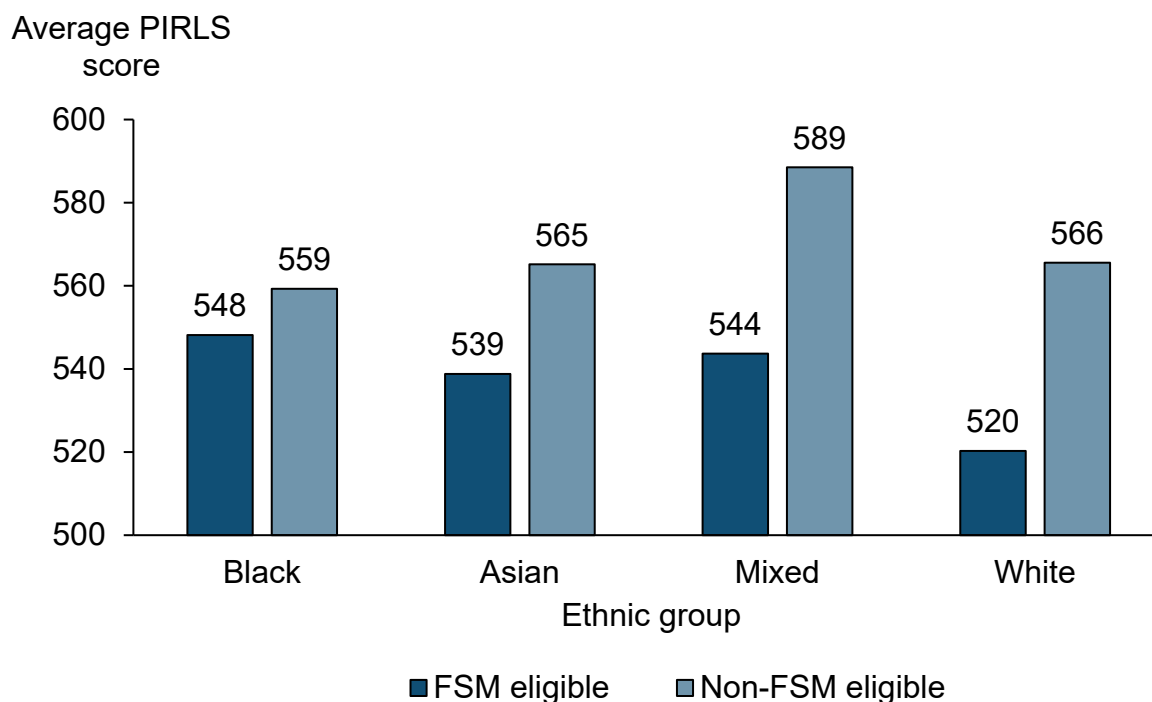
Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Reading performance by ethnic group and disadvantage

**Figure 5** displays overall PIRLS 2021 scores by ethnic group and FSM eligibility for the groups for which numbers of pupils were high enough to report results. Although pupils who had not been eligible for FSM had consistently higher reading performance across these groups, the gap between pupils who had and who had not been eligible for FSM varied. The smallest gap (11 points) was amongst Black pupils, while gaps were largest amongst the Mixed and White groups (45 and 46 points, respectively).



**Figure 5: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by ethnic group and FSM**



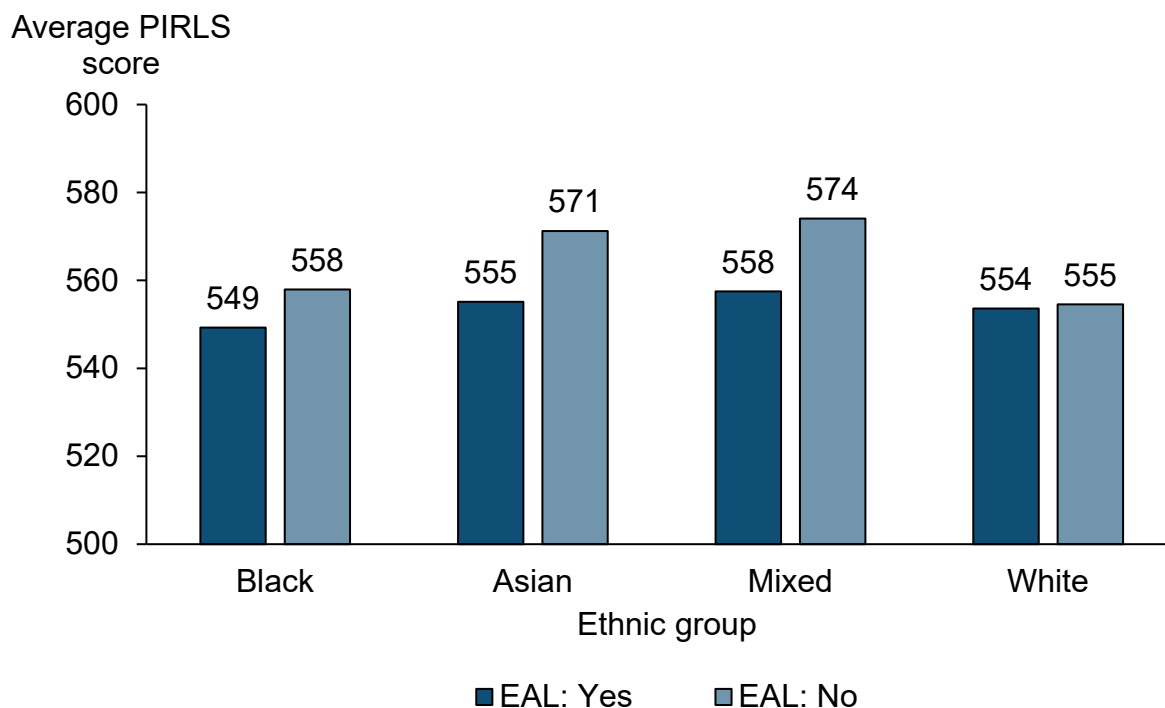
Overall PIRLS score	Black	Asian	Mixed	White
FSM: Yes	548	539	544	520
FSM: No	559	565	589	566

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## Reading performance by ethnic group and EAL status

Overall PIRLS 2021 scores by ethnic group and EAL status are shown in **Figure 6**. Amongst the Black, Asian and Mixed ethnic groups, pupils without EAL tended to score higher than those with EAL, and the gaps between those with and without EAL did not vary too widely. For White pupils, however, there was almost no difference at all in reading performance between pupils with and without EAL. This demonstrates the importance of a closer look at how different demographic characteristics might interact, as it shows that the finding from the main National Report for England (Lindorff, Stiff & Kayton, 2023) that there was little to no difference in reading performance by EAL status was clearly driven by results for the majority White ethnic group.

**Figure 6: Overall PIRLS performance by ethnic group and EAL status**



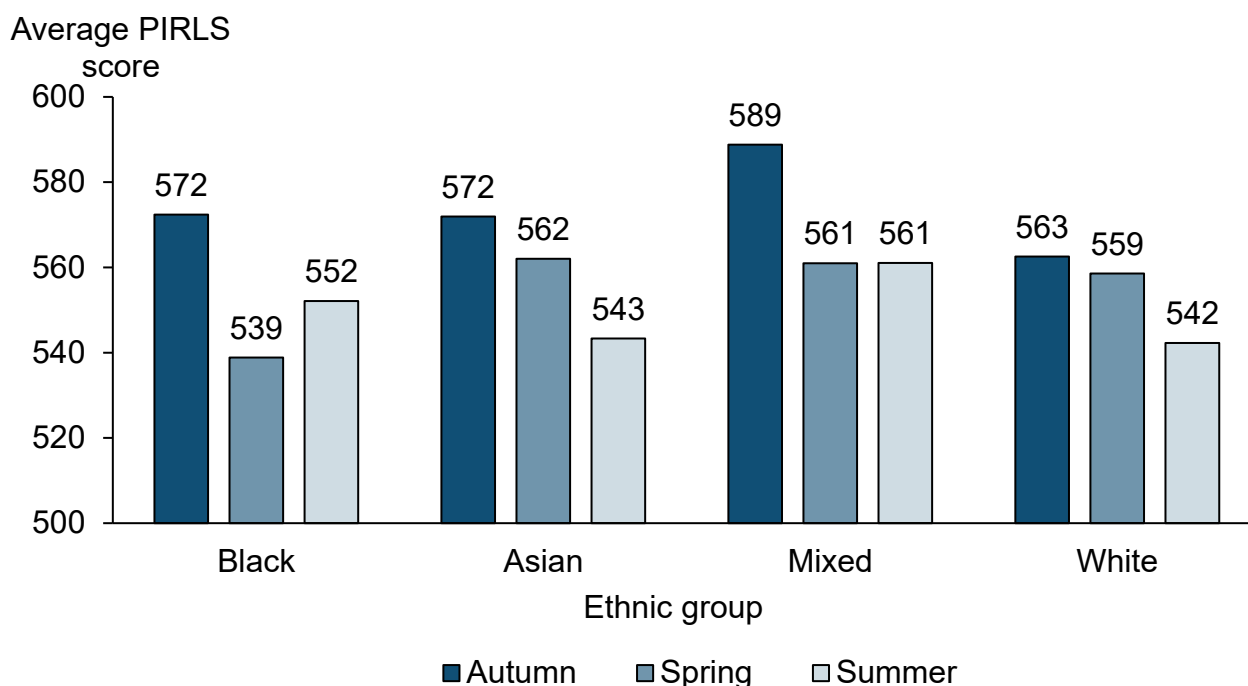
Overall PIRLS score	Black	Asian	Mixed	White
EAL: Yes	549	555	558	554
EAL: No	558	571	574	555

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## Reading performance by ethnic group and birth season

As **Figure 7** shows, there was some variation in how overall PIRLS 2021 scores differed by birth season for each ethnic group that had sufficient numbers to report. Autumn-born pupils scored consistently higher, on average, compared to Summer-born pupils, by between 20 to 30 points depending on the particular ethnic group. The reading performance of Spring-born pupils, relative to Autumn- and Summer-born pupils, varied somewhat across ethnic groups. It is worth noting that some group sizes are somewhat small (under 100) when separating by ethnic group and birth season, so results must be interpreted with some caution.

**Figure 7: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by ethnic group and birth season**



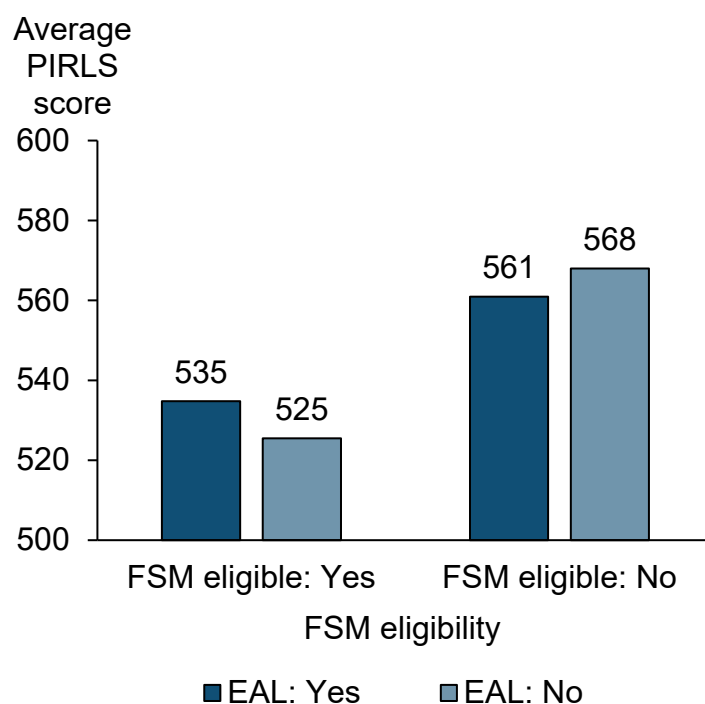
Overall PIRLS score	Black	Asian	Mixed	White
Autumn	572	572	589	563
Spring	539	562	561	559
Summer	552	543	561	542

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## Reading performance by disadvantage and EAL status

**Figure 8** shows overall PIRLS 2021 scores by FSM eligibility and EAL status. Amongst pupils who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, those without EAL performed slightly higher (by 7 points) relative to those with EAL. Amongst pupils who had been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, however, pupils with EAL scored higher than those without by a similar number of points (10). This may reflect the fact that for pupils eligible for FSM, who have substantially lower reading performance than their counterparts without FSM, support available to pupils with EAL may help somewhat to mitigate the effects of disadvantage.

**Figure 8: Overall PIRLS performance by FSM and EAL status**



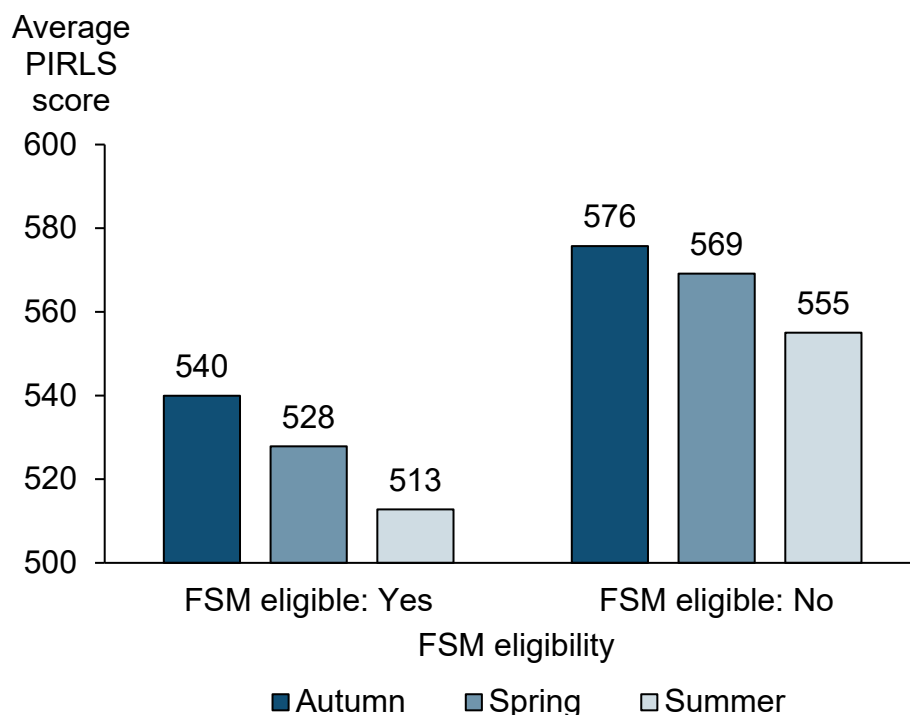
Overall PIRLS score	FSM eligible: Yes	FSM eligible: No
EAL: Yes	535	561
EAL: No	525	568

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Reading performance by disadvantage and birth season

As evident in **Figure 9**, the patterns of performance across birth seasons were fairly similar regardless of whether pupils had or had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years. Autumn-born pupils consistently scored higher than their Spring- and Summer-born peers, while Summer-born pupils scored consistently lowest.

**Figure 9: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by FSM and birth season**



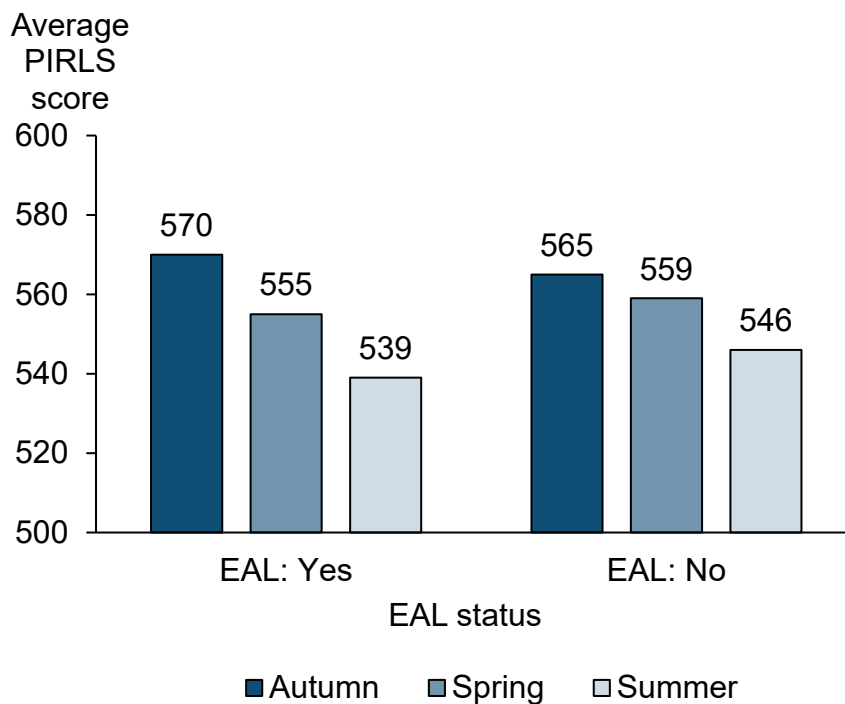
Overall PIRLS score	FSM eligible: Yes	FSM eligible: No
<b>Autumn</b>	540	576
<b>Spring</b>	528	569
<b>Summer</b>	513	555

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Reading performance by EAL status and birth season

**Figure 10** displays overall reading performance by EAL status and birth season. It is clear that Autumn-born pupils scored higher than Spring-born pupils, and Spring-born pupils scored higher than Summer-born pupils regardless of EAL status. However, these gaps were somewhat smaller amongst pupils without EAL than amongst those with EAL, suggesting that having EAL may compound the challenges faced by pupils who are younger within their year group.

**Figure 10: Overall PIRLS 2021 performance by EAL status and birth season**



Overall PIRLS score	EAL: Yes	EAL: No
<b>Autumn</b>	570	565
<b>Spring</b>	555	559
<b>Summer</b>	539	546

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## 3 Attitudes to reading across subgroups of pupils

### Chapter overview

This chapter presents the results of an analysis looking at how pupils' self-reported attitudes to reading, including their confidence in reading, their liking of reading and their engagement with reading lessons, differ across groups of pupils. The main PIRLS 2021 National Report for England (Lindorff, Stiff & Kayton, 2023) considered self-reported reading attitudes according to gender, ethnic group, disadvantage (via free school meal eligibility), English as an Additional Language status and month of birth. This chapter provides results that consider pupil demographic characteristics in combination rather than separately to provide a more nuanced account of patterns across groups.

### Key findings

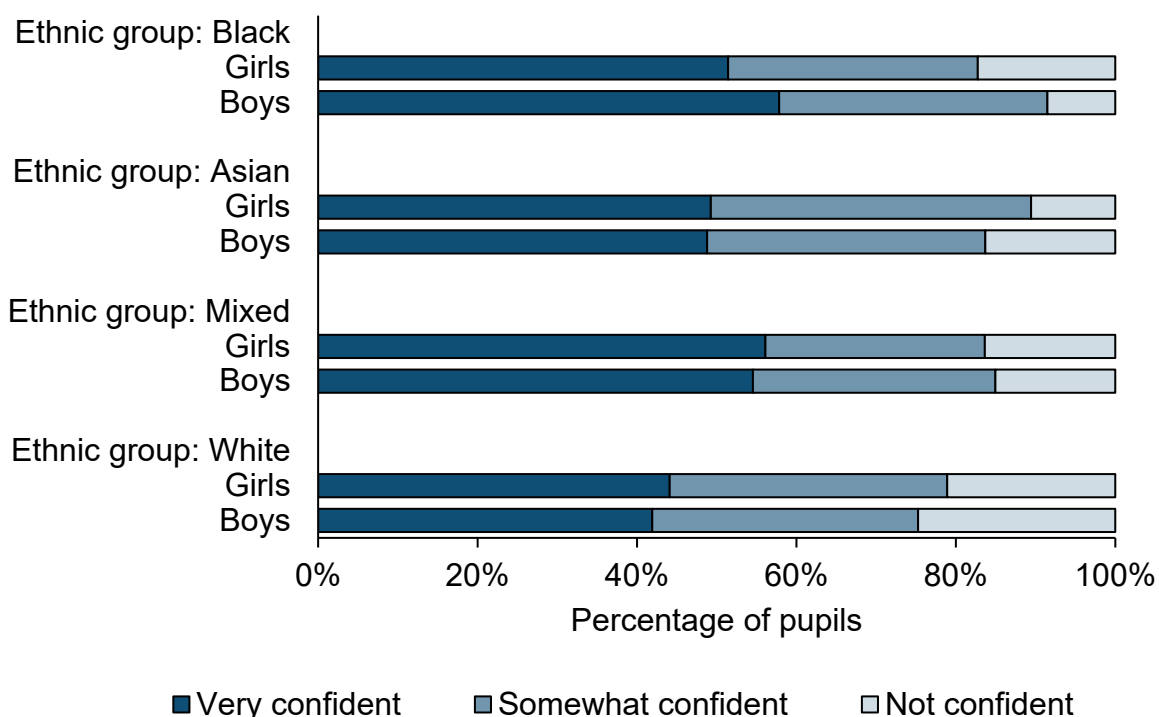
- Gender differences in pupils' self-reported confidence in reading were similar across ethnic groups, but gender differences in pupils' self-reported engagement in reading lessons and liking of reading varied somewhat across ethnic groups.
- Gender differences in pupils' self-reported confidence in reading were more pronounced amongst pupils who were eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, with boys less likely to report being "somewhat confident" and more likely to report being "not confident" in this group. Girls who had not been FSM eligible in the last 6 years were more likely to report being "very engaged" in reading lessons than other groups, but otherwise differences by gender and FSM eligibility in the last 6 years were minimal. Girls tended to report higher liking of reading than boys regardless of FSM eligibility in the last 6 years, while regardless of gender pupils who had been FSM eligible in the last 6 years were less likely to report that they "somewhat like" and more likely to report that they "do not like" reading than their peers who had not been FSM eligible in the last 6 years.
- Gender differences in confidence in reading were not large, but pupils without EAL in general were more likely to report being "not confident". Girls were slightly more likely to report being "very engaged" regardless of EAL status. Girls were more likely to say they "very much liked" reading – and less likely to say they "did not like" reading – than boys regardless of EAL status, but girls with EAL were somewhat more likely to say they "very much liked" reading, and less likely to say they "did not like" reading, than girls without EAL.
- The relationships between birth season and attitudes to reading were mostly small and inconsistent across other demographic characteristics, though for confidence there were some clearer patterns of Autumn-born pupils being the most and Summer-born pupils being the least likely to report being "very confident".

# Pupil attitudes to reading at the intersection of pupil demographic characteristics

## Attitudes to reading by gender and ethnic group

Pupils' self-reported confidence in reading was mostly fairly similar between girls and boys across ethnic groups, as **Figure 11** shows. The largest differences in confidence by gender were apparent amongst Black pupils, with boys somewhat more likely to report being "very confident" and somewhat less likely to report being "not confident" than girls.

**Figure 11: Confidence in reading by ethnic group and gender**



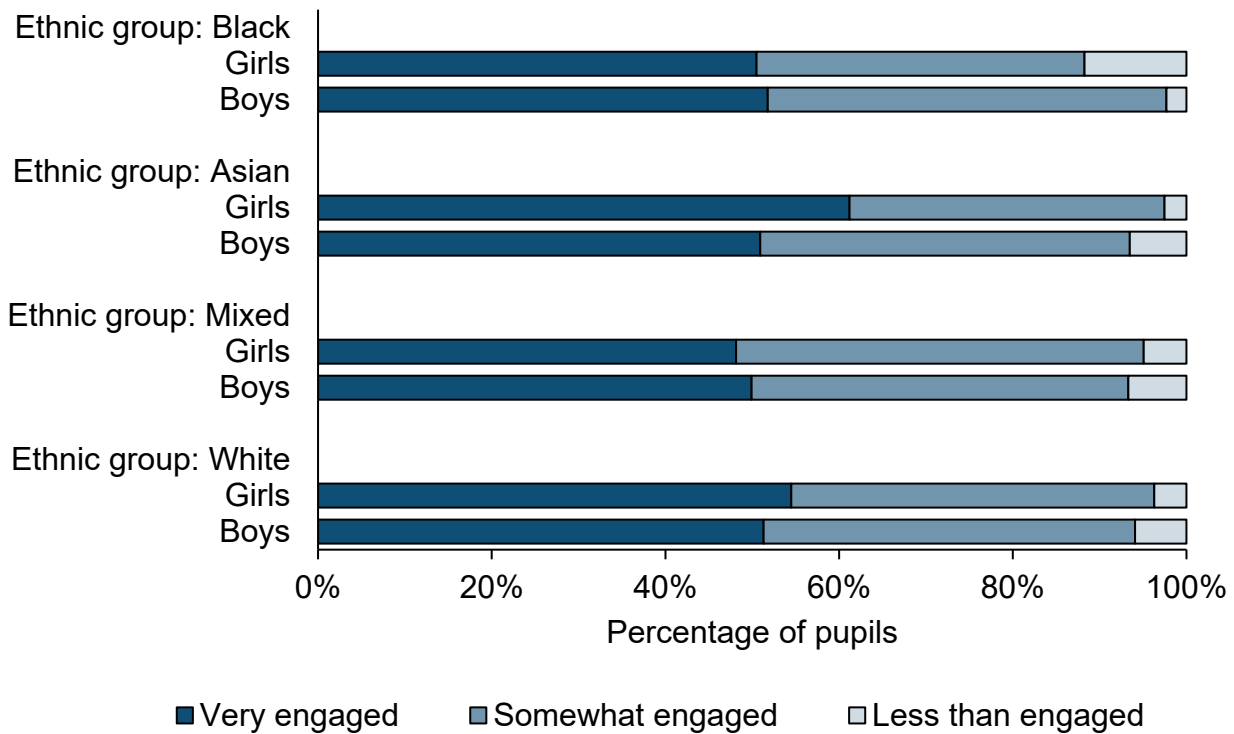
Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
<b>Black: Girls</b>	51%	31%	17%
<b>Black: Boys</b>	58%	34%	9%
<b>Asian: Girls</b>	49%	40%	11%
<b>Asian: Boys</b>	49%	35%	16%
<b>Mixed: Girls</b>	56%	28%	16%
<b>Mixed: Boys</b>	55%	30%	15%
<b>White: Girls</b>	44%	35%	21%
<b>White: Boys</b>	42%	33%	25%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021



Patterns of pupil-reported engagement in reading lessons by gender varied somewhat across ethnic groups, as can be seen in **Figure 12**. In particular, amongst Asian pupils, girls were somewhat more likely to report being “very engaged” than boys, and amongst Black pupils, boys were somewhat less likely to report being “less than engaged” than girls.

**Figure 12: Engagement in reading lessons by ethnic group and gender**

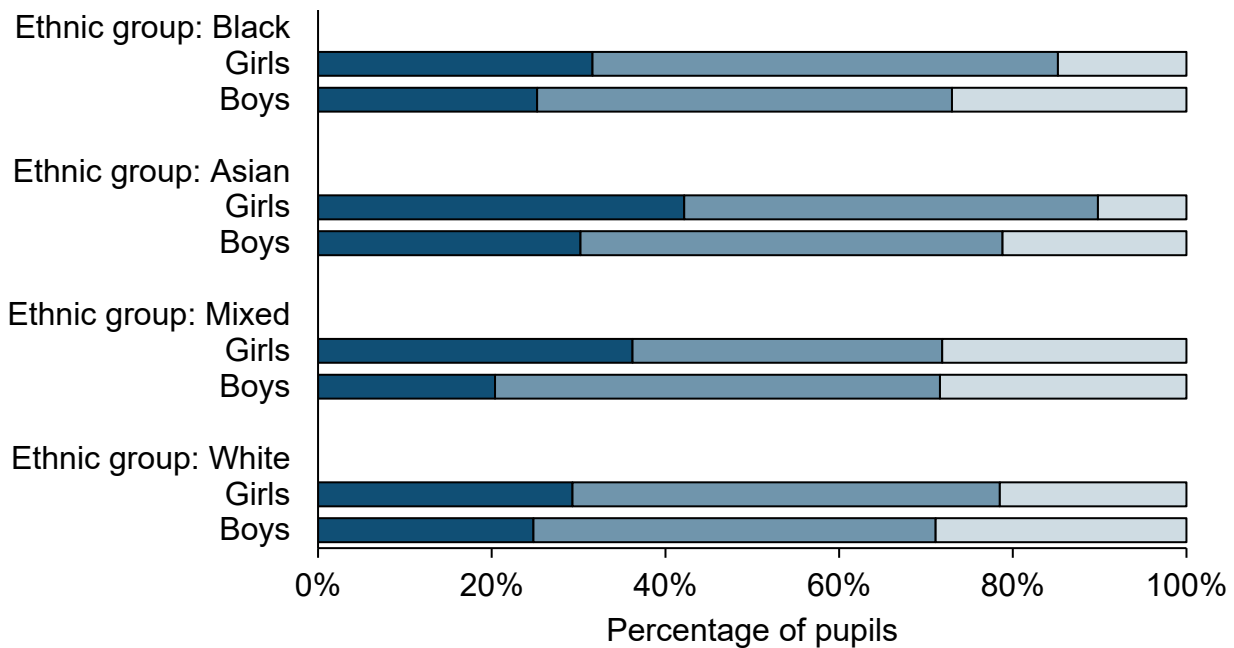


Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
<b>Black: Girls</b>	50%	38%	12%
<b>Black: Boys</b>	52%	46%	2%
<b>Asian: Girls</b>	61%	36%	3%
<b>Asian: Boys</b>	51%	43%	7%
<b>Mixed: Girls</b>	48%	47%	5%
<b>Mixed: Boys</b>	50%	43%	7%
<b>White: Girls</b>	54%	42%	4%
<b>White: Boys</b>	51%	43%	6%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 13** shows pupils' self-reported liking of reading by ethnic group and gender. While girls were generally more likely to report that they “very much like” reading than boys, this difference varied in size across ethnic groups (from a 4% difference in percentage amongst White pupils, to a 16% difference in percentage amongst Mixed ethnic group). At the other end of the scale, the differences in proportions of girls and boys who said they “did not like” reading varied from 0% amongst Mixed pupils to 11% and 12% amongst Asian and Black pupils, respectively.

**Figure 13: Liking of reading by ethnic group and gender**



■ Very much like reading    ■ Somewhat like reading    □ Do not like reading

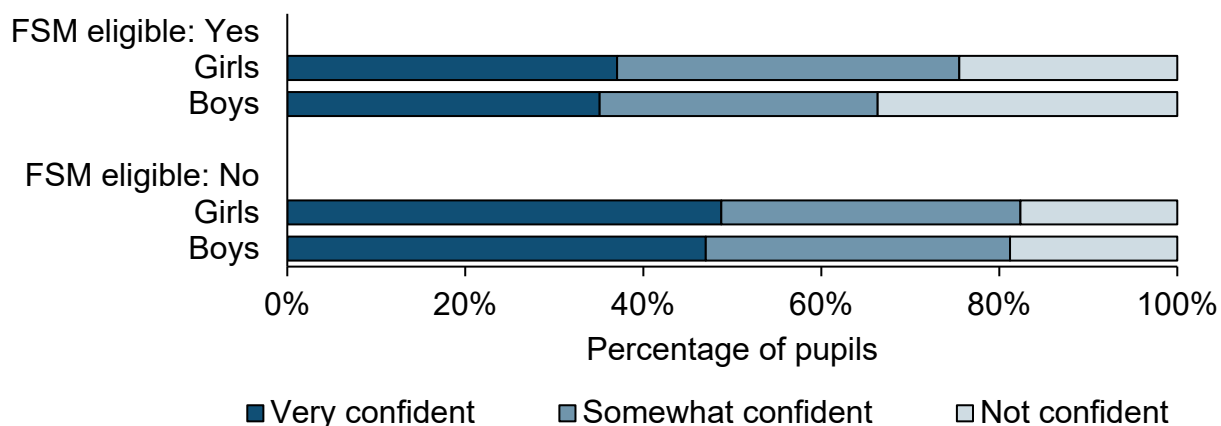
Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Black: Girls</b>	32%	54%	15%
<b>Black: Boys</b>	25%	48%	27%
<b>Asian: Girls</b>	42%	48%	10%
<b>Asian: Boys</b>	30%	49%	21%
<b>Mixed: Girls</b>	36%	36%	28%
<b>Mixed: Boys</b>	20%	51%	28%
<b>White: Girls</b>	29%	49%	21%
<b>White: Boys</b>	25%	46%	29%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## Attitudes to reading by gender and disadvantage

**Figure 14** shows confidence in reading by FSM eligibility and gender. For pupils who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, there was little difference between boys and girls in terms of their self-reported confidence. Amongst pupils who had been FSM-eligible in the last 6 years, though, boys were somewhat less likely to report being “somewhat confident” and more likely to report being “not confident” than girls.

**Figure 14: Confidence in reading by FSM and gender**

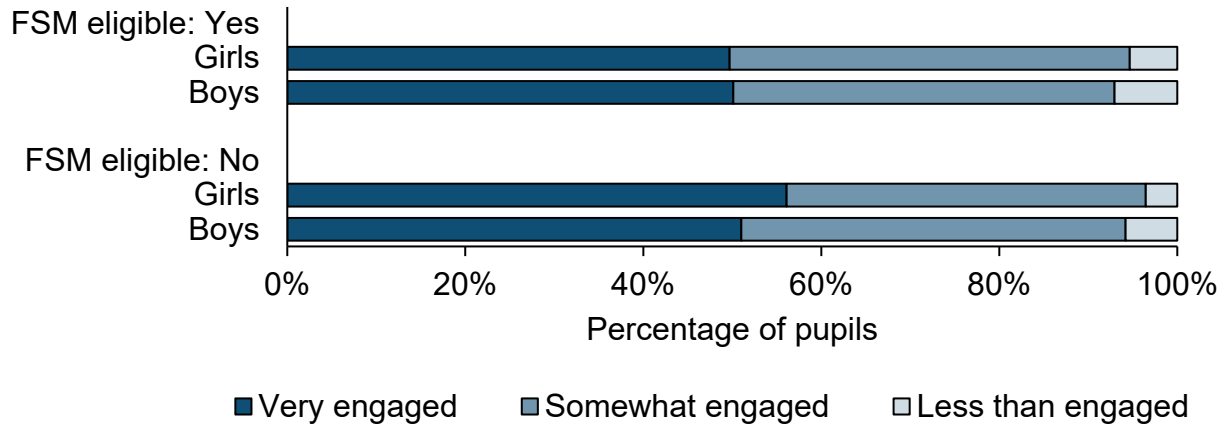


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
<b>Yes FSM: Girls</b>	37%	38%	24%
<b>Yes FSM: Boys</b>	35%	31%	34%
<b>No FSM: Girls</b>	49%	34%	18%
<b>No FSM: Boys</b>	47%	34%	19%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 15** shows pupils' self-reported engagement in reading lessons by FSM eligibility and gender. In general, differences were not large based on either of these demographic characteristics, though girls who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years were slightly more likely to report being “very engaged” than other groups.

**Figure 15: Engagement in reading lessons by FSM and gender**



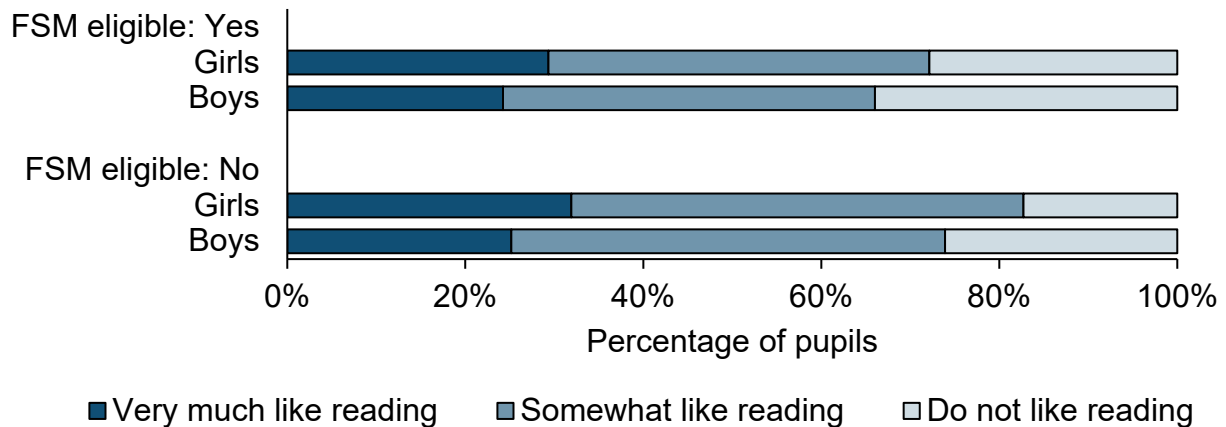
Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
Yes FSM: Girls	50%	45%	5%
Yes FSM: Boys	50%	43%	7%
No FSM: Girls	56%	40%	4%
No FSM: Boys	51%	43%	6%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

Pupils' liking of reading by gender and FSM eligibility is displayed in **Figure 16**.

Differences based on gender were fairly consistent across pupils who had and who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, although overall pupils who had been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years were more likely to report that they “do not like” reading, and somewhat less likely to report that they “somewhat liked” reading, than their FSM-ineligible peers.

**Figure 16: Liking of reading by FSM and gender**



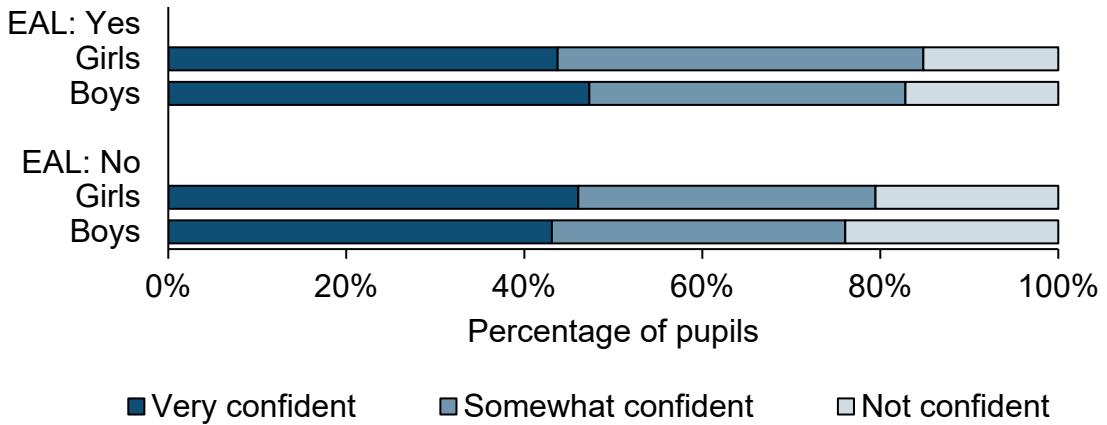
Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Yes FSM: Girls</b>	29%	43%	28%
<b>Yes FSM: Boys</b>	24%	42%	34%
<b>No FSM: Girls</b>	32%	51%	17%
<b>No FSM: Boys</b>	25%	49%	26%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Attitudes to reading by gender and EAL status

**Figure 17** shows pupils' confidence in reading by gender and EAL status. While the differences were not dramatic across these demographic characteristics, girls with EAL were somewhat more likely to report being "somewhat confident" in reading than other groups, and pupils without EAL in general were somewhat more likely to report being "not confident" than those with EAL regardless of gender.

**Figure 17: Confidence in reading by EAL status and gender**

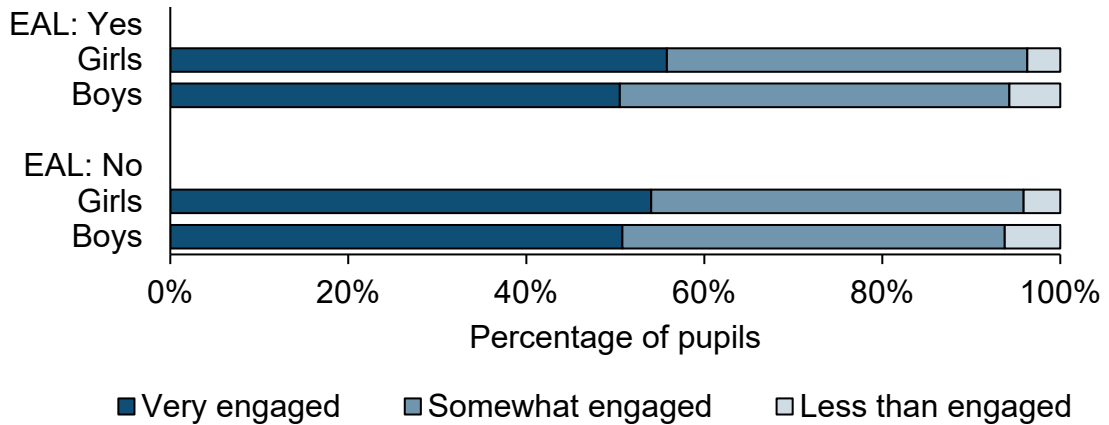


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
Yes EAL: Girls	44%	41%	15%
Yes EAL: Boys	47%	36%	17%
No EAL: Girls	46%	33%	21%
No EAL: Boys	43%	33%	24%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 18** shows pupils' engagement in reading lessons by EAL status and gender. All differences across this combination of demographic characteristics were quite small, with girls slightly more likely to be "very engaged" regardless of EAL status.

**Figure 18: Engagement in reading lessons by EAL status and gender**

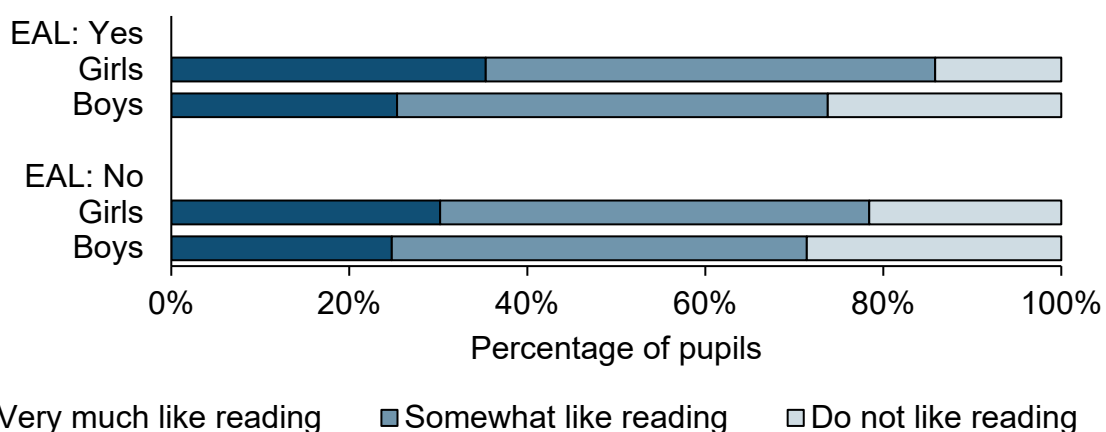


Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
Yes EAL: Girls	56%	40%	4%
Yes EAL: Boys	51%	44%	6%
No EAL: Girls	54%	42%	4%
No EAL: Boys	51%	43%	6%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

Pupils' liking of reading by EAL status and gender is displayed in **Figure 19**. The pattern for boys was almost identical across pupils with and without EAL, and girls were more likely to say they "very much liked" reading – and less likely to say they "did not like" reading – than boys regardless of EAL status. However, girls with EAL were somewhat more likely to say they "very much liked" reading, and less likely to say they "did not like" reading, than girls without EAL.

**Figure 19: Liking of reading by EAL status and gender**



Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
Yes EAL: Girls	35%	50%	14%
Yes EAL: Boys	25%	48%	26%
No EAL: Girls	30%	48%	22%
No EAL: Boys	25%	47%	29%

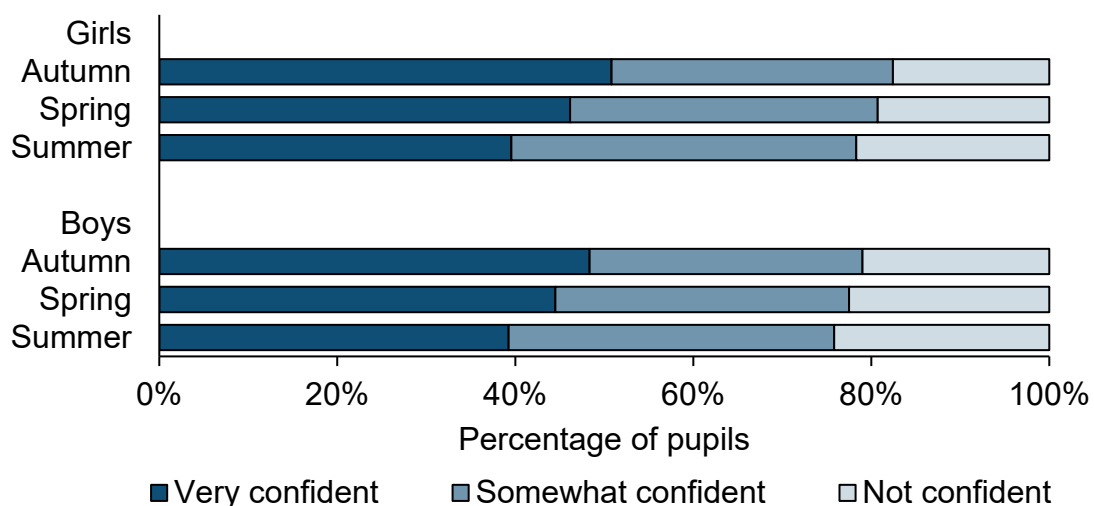
Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Attitudes to reading by gender and birth season

**Figure 20** shows pupils' confidence by gender and birth season. While Autumn-born pupils were somewhat more likely to report being "very confident" and slightly less likely to report being "not confident" than Spring-born pupils, and Spring-born pupils were somewhat more likely to report being "very confident" and slightly less likely to report being "not confident" than Summer-born pupils, there was little variation in these differences between girls and boys.



**Figure 20: Confidence in reading by gender and birth season**

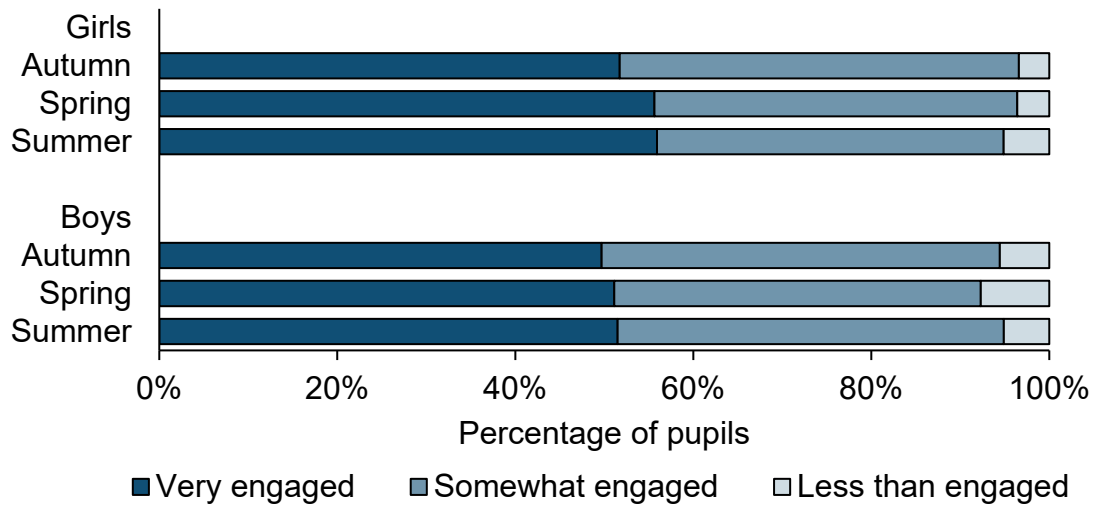


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
<b>Girls: Autumn</b>	51%	32%	18%
<b>Girls: Spring</b>	46%	35%	19%
<b>Girls: Summer</b>	40%	39%	22%
<b>Boys: Autumn</b>	48%	31%	21%
<b>Boys: Spring</b>	45%	33%	22%
<b>Boys: Summer</b>	39%	37%	24%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 21** shows pupils' engagement in reading lessons by gender and birth season. Patterns across birth season were less consistent for engagement than for confidence in reading, though in general the differences based on the combination of birth season and gender were fairly small.

**Figure 21: Engagement in reading lessons by gender and birth season**

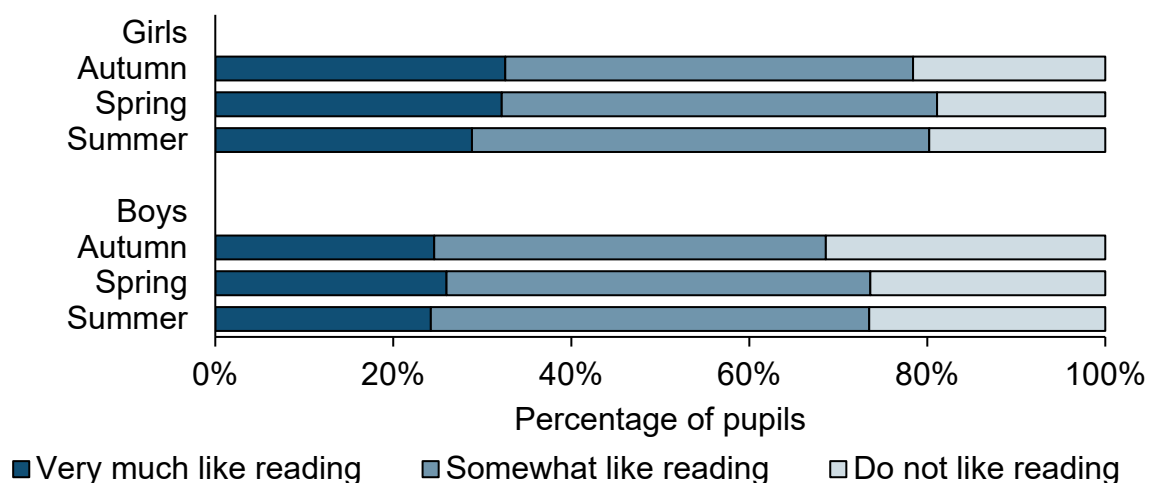


Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
<b>Girls: Autumn</b>	52%	45%	3%
<b>Girls: Spring</b>	56%	41%	4%
<b>Girls: Summer</b>	56%	39%	5%
<b>Boys: Autumn</b>	50%	45%	6%
<b>Boys: Spring</b>	51%	41%	8%
<b>Boys: Summer</b>	52%	43%	5%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

As apparent in **Figure 22**, differences in pupils' liking of reading by birth season were fairly small. In general, regardless of birth season, girls were at least somewhat more likely to report that they "very much liked" reading and somewhat less likely to say they "did not like" reading.

**Figure 22: Liking of reading by gender and birth season**



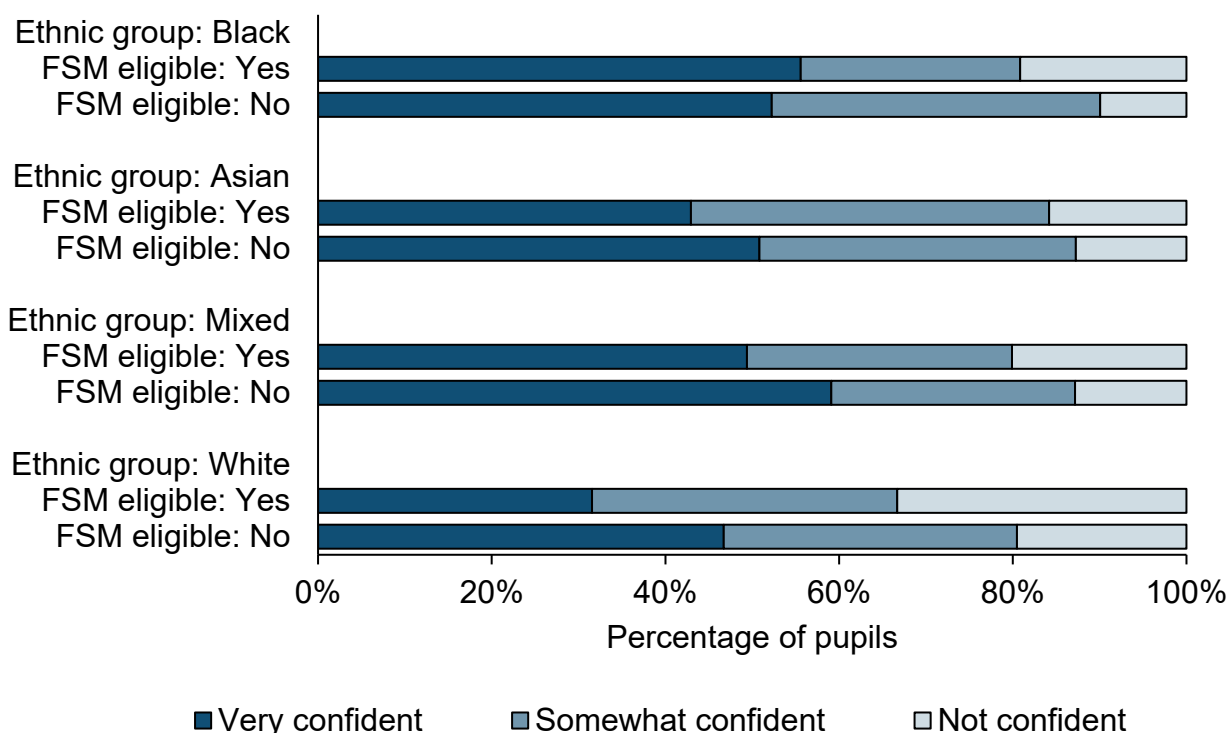
Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Girls: Autumn</b>	33%	46%	22%
<b>Girls: Spring</b>	32%	49%	19%
<b>Girls: Summer</b>	29%	51%	20%
<b>Boys: Autumn</b>	25%	44%	31%
<b>Boys: Spring</b>	26%	48%	26%
<b>Boys: Summer</b>	24%	49%	27%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Attitudes to reading by ethnic group and disadvantage

**Figure 23** shows pupils' confidence in reading by ethnic group and FSM eligibility. White pupils overall were more likely to report being "not confident" than their peers in other ethnic groups. There was a greater disparity between pupils according to FSM eligibility amongst White pupils – with pupils who had been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years substantially less likely to say they were "very confident" and more likely to say they were "not confident" than their non-eligible peers -- than amongst pupils in other ethnic groups. Amongst Black pupils, on the other hand, the difference between those who had and who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years, in terms of proportions of pupils who reported being "very confident" in reading, was smaller than for other ethnic groups and in the opposite direction, though like pupils in other ethnic groups, Black pupils who had been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years were more likely to say they were "not confident" than those who had not been eligible.

**Figure 23: Confidence in reading by ethnic group and FSM**



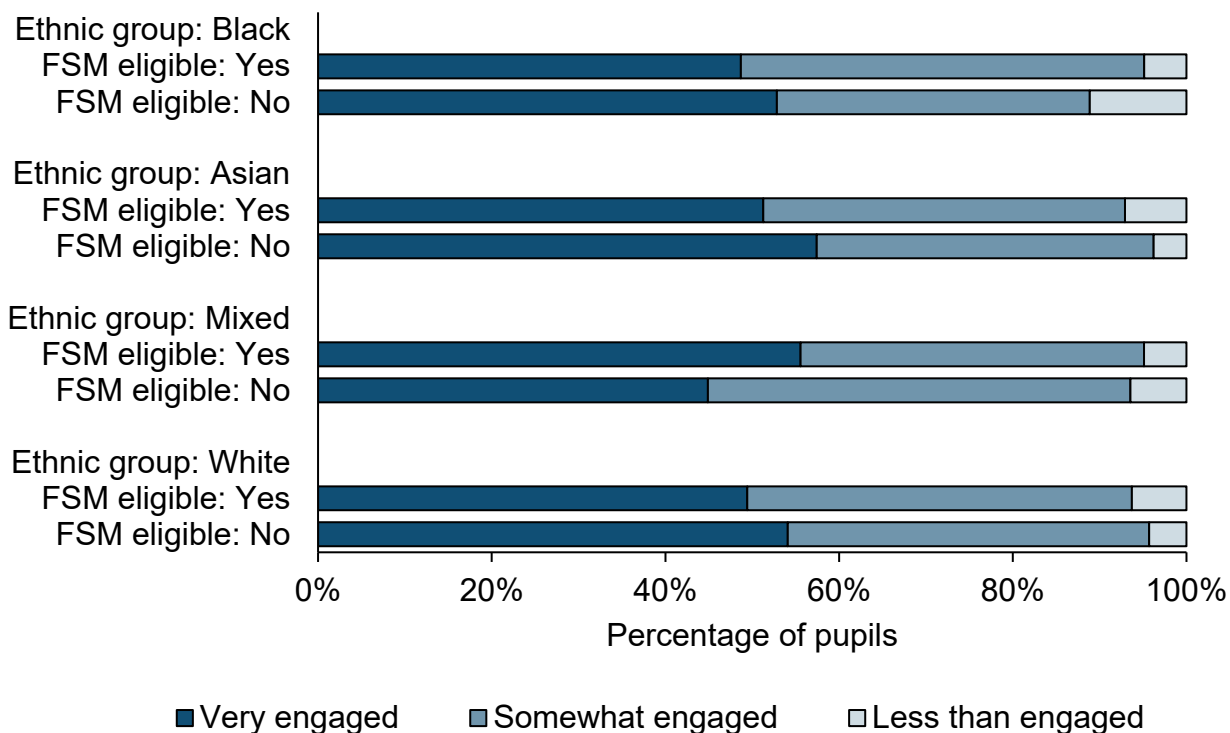
Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
<b>Black: Yes FSM</b>	56%	25%	19%
<b>Black: No FSM</b>	52%	38%	10%
<b>Asian: Yes FSM</b>	43%	41%	16%
<b>Asian: No FSM</b>	51%	36%	13%
<b>Mixed: Yes FSM</b>	49%	31%	20%
<b>Mixed: No FSM</b>	59%	28%	13%
<b>White: Yes FSM</b>	32%	35%	33%
<b>White: No FSM</b>	47%	34%	20%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 24** shows engagement in reading lessons by ethnic group and FSM eligibility in the last 6 years. For the most part, the patterns in self-reported engagement were similar across ethnic groups and FSM-eligibility. The main exception to this was that amongst Mixed ethnic group pupils, those who had been FSM-eligible in the last 6 years were more likely to report being “very engaged” than their peers who had not been FSM-eligible. For other ethnic groups, pupils who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years tended to be slightly more likely to report being “very engaged” than their FSM-eligible counterparts. Black pupils who had not been FSM-eligible in the last 6 years were

also somewhat more likely to report being “less than engaged” than their FSM-eligible peers, while for other ethnic groups this difference was smaller and not consistent in direction.

**Figure 24: Engagement in reading lessons by ethnic group and FSM**



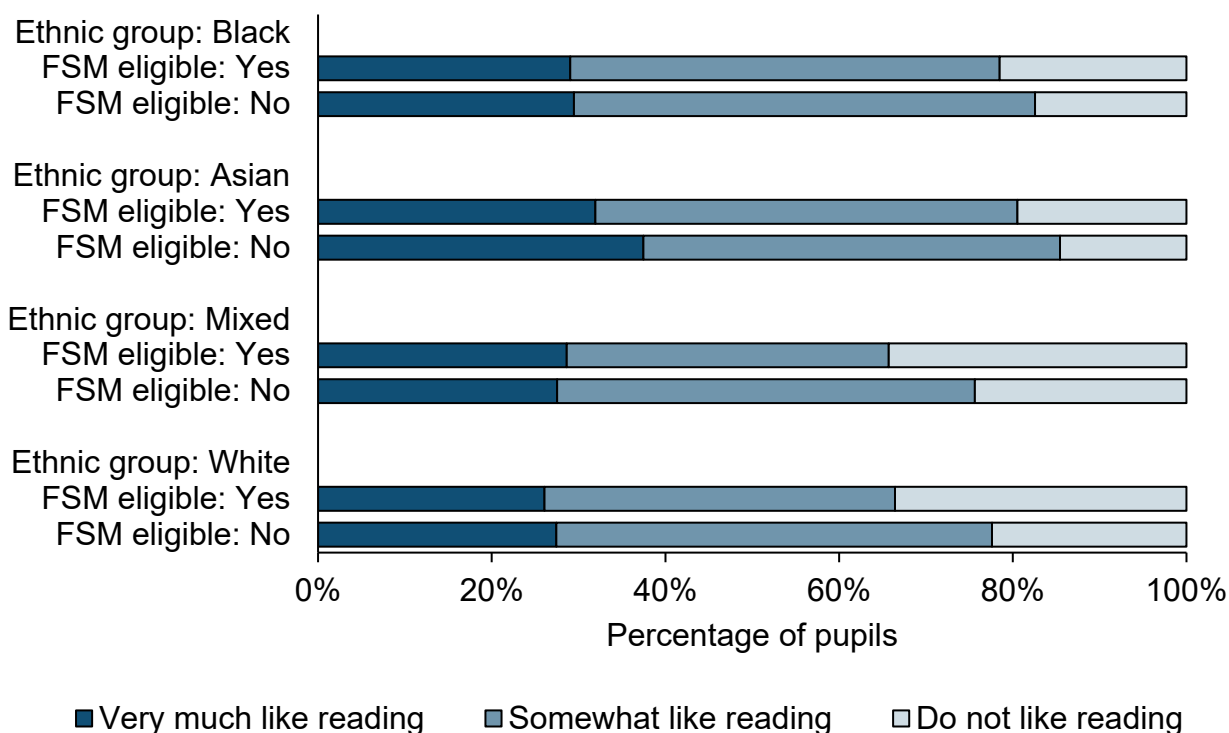
Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
<b>Black: Yes FSM</b>	49%	46%	5%
<b>Black: No FSM</b>	53%	36%	11%
<b>Asian: Yes FSM</b>	51%	42%	7%
<b>Asian: No FSM</b>	57%	39%	4%
<b>Mixed: Yes FSM</b>	56%	40%	5%
<b>Mixed: No FSM</b>	45%	49%	6%
<b>White: Yes FSM</b>	49%	44%	6%
<b>White: No FSM</b>	54%	42%	4%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA’s PIRLS 2021

**Figure 25** shows pupils’ liking of reading by ethnic group and FSM eligibility in the last 6 years. Asian pupils, and particularly those who had not been FSM-eligible, were somewhat more likely to report “very much liking” reading than their peers in other groups. Pupils in the Mixed and White ethnic groups were more likely to report that they “did not like” reading than their peers in the Black and Asian ethnic groups. Differences in

proportions of pupils who said they “did not like” reading based on FSM-eligibility were also larger for the Mixed and White ethnic groups than for the Black and Asian ethnic groups, though pupils who had been eligible for FSM were more likely to say they “did not like” reading regardless of pupil ethnic group.

**Figure 25: Liking of reading by ethnic group and FSM**



Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Black: Yes FSM</b>	29%	49%	22%
<b>Black: No FSM</b>	29%	53%	17%
<b>Asian: Yes FSM</b>	32%	49%	19%
<b>Asian: No FSM</b>	37%	48%	15%
<b>Mixed: Yes FSM</b>	29%	37%	34%
<b>Mixed: No FSM</b>	28%	48%	24%
<b>White: Yes FSM</b>	26%	40%	34%
<b>White: No FSM</b>	27%	50%	22%

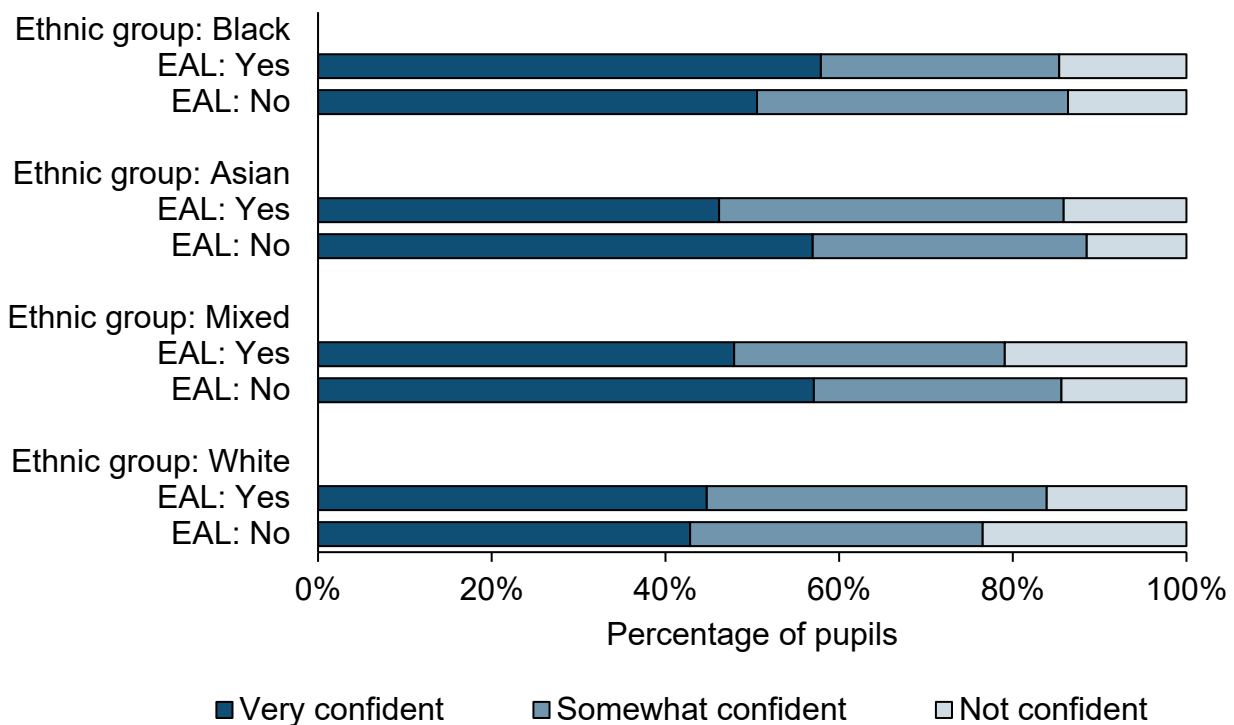
Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Attitudes to reading by ethnic group and EAL status

As **Figure 26** shows, there were some differences across ethnic groups in terms of how pupils reported their confidence in reading amongst those with and without EAL.

Amongst White pupils, those with and without EAL were very similar in terms of proportions who said they were “very confident” in reading. Amongst Asian and Mixed pupils, those without EAL were more likely to report being “very confident” than their peers with EAL, while this difference was reversed and slightly smaller amongst Black pupils. At the other end of the scale, White pupils without EAL were somewhat more likely to report being “not confident” than their peers with EAL, while this difference was reversed amongst pupils in the Mixed ethnic group, and amongst Black and Asian pupils there was little such difference at all.

**Figure 26: Confidence in reading by ethnic group and EAL status**

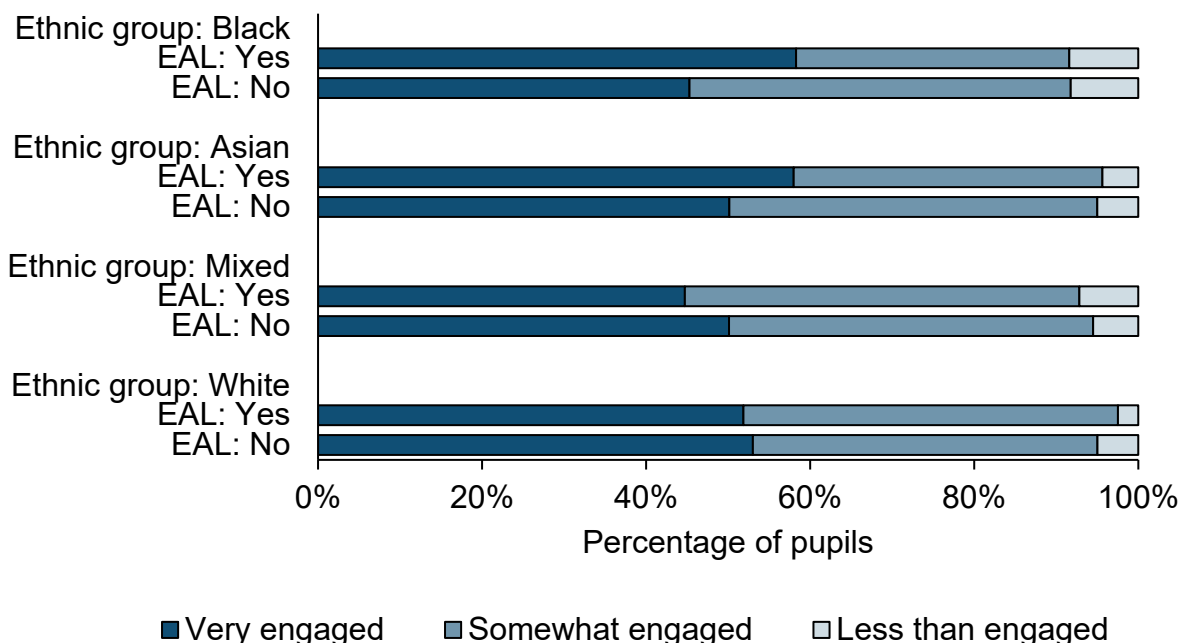


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
<b>Black: Yes EAL</b>	58%	27%	15%
<b>Black: No EAL</b>	51%	36%	14%
<b>Asian: Yes EAL</b>	46%	40%	14%
<b>Asian: No EAL</b>	57%	32%	11%
<b>Mixed: Yes EAL</b>	48%	31%	21%
<b>Mixed: No EAL</b>	57%	29%	14%
<b>White: Yes EAL</b>	45%	39%	16%
<b>White: No EAL</b>	43%	34%	23%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 27** shows pupils engagement in reading lessons by ethnic group and EAL status. Amongst Black and Asian pupils, those with EAL were somewhat more likely to report being “very engaged” than their peers without EAL. Amongst Mixed, however, this difference was smaller and reversed, and amongst White pupils this difference was negligible.

**Figure 27: Engagement in reading lessons by ethnic group and EAL status**



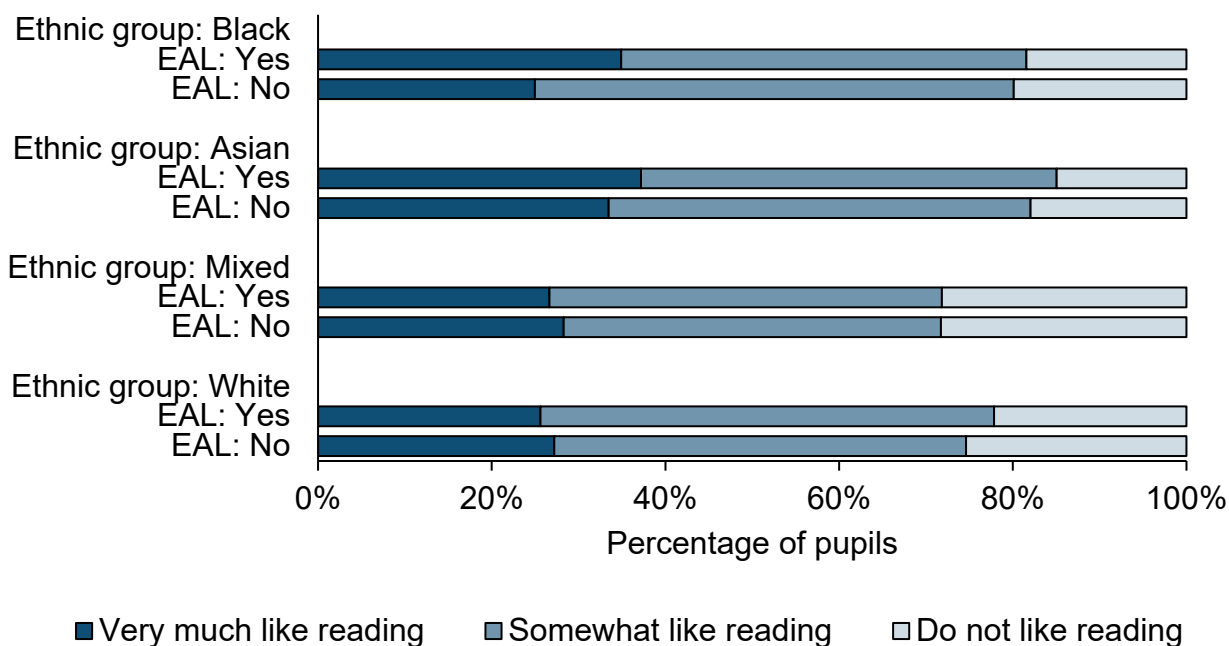
Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
<b>Black: Yes EAL</b>	58%	33%	8%
<b>Black: No EAL</b>	45%	46%	8%
<b>Asian: Yes EAL</b>	58%	38%	4%
<b>Asian: No EAL</b>	50%	45%	5%
<b>Mixed: Yes EAL</b>	45%	48%	7%
<b>Mixed: No EAL</b>	50%	44%	6%
<b>White: Yes EAL</b>	52%	46%	2%
<b>White: No EAL</b>	53%	42%	5%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 28** shows pupils' liking of reading by ethnic group and EAL status. Patterns of liking of reading were fairly similar across the Mixed and White ethnic groups, with little difference between pupils who had or did not have EAL. Amongst Black pupils, however, those with EAL were more likely to say they “very much liked” reading, and for Asian pupils this pattern was similar though less pronounced.



**Figure 28: Liking of reading by ethnic group and EAL status**



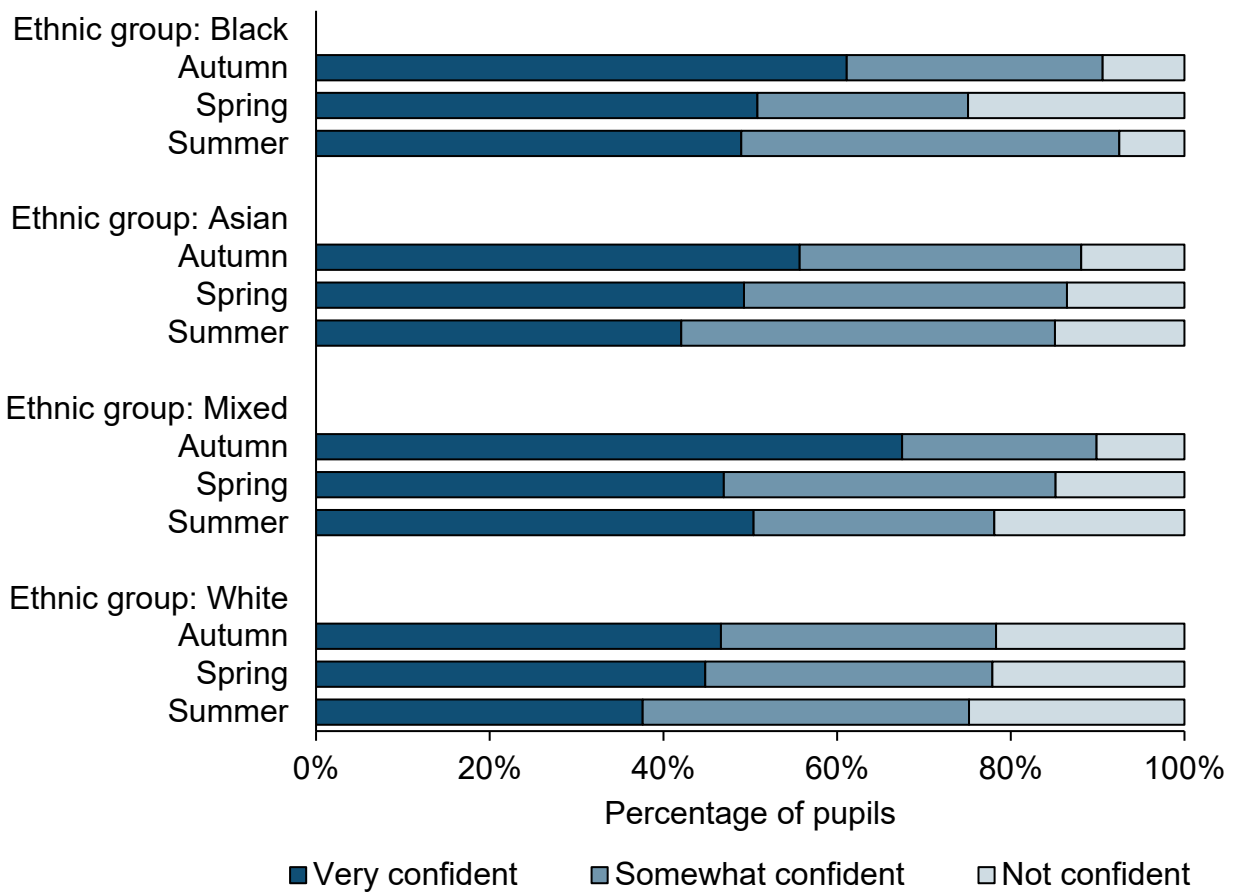
Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Black: Yes EAL</b>	35%	47%	18%
<b>Black: No EAL</b>	25%	55%	20%
<b>Asian: Yes EAL</b>	37%	48%	15%
<b>Asian: No EAL</b>	33%	49%	18%
<b>Mixed: Yes EAL</b>	27%	45%	28%
<b>Mixed: No EAL</b>	28%	43%	28%
<b>White: Yes EAL</b>	26%	52%	22%
<b>White: No EAL</b>	27%	47%	25%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Attitudes to reading by ethnic group and birth season

There was some variation in pupils' self-reported confidence in reading by birth season across ethnic groups, as evident in **Figure 29**. Spring-born pupils in the Black ethnic group were more likely to report being "not confident" than might be expected based on the patterns apparent across other ethnic groups; however, this result seems to be in keeping with a similar pattern in reading performance amongst Black pupils by birth season (see **Figure 7** in the previous chapter). The effect of being Autumn-born also appears to be somewhat more dramatic in the Mixed ethnic group.

**Figure 29: Confidence in reading by ethnic group and birth season**

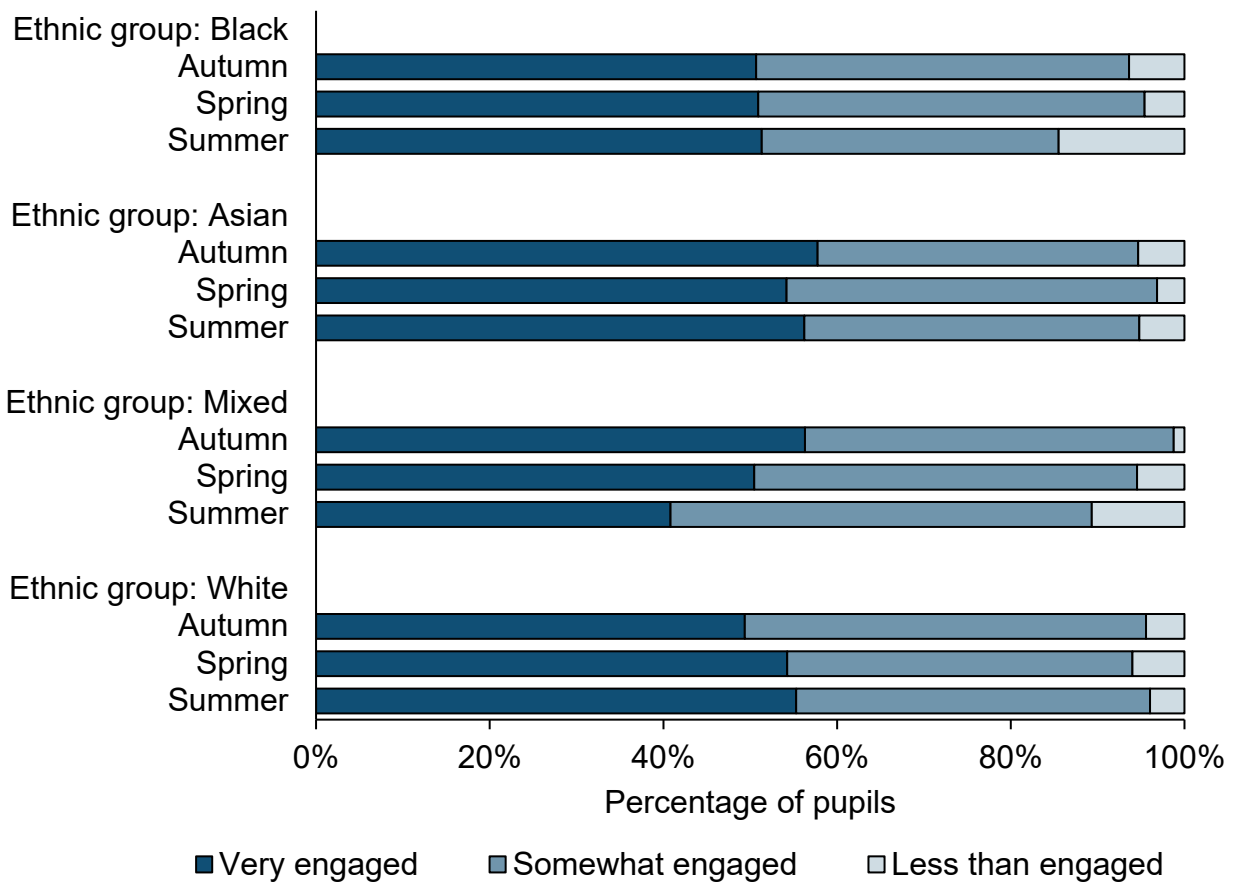


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
<b>Black: Autumn</b>	61%	29%	9%
<b>Black: Spring</b>	51%	24%	25%
<b>Black: Summer</b>	49%	44%	8%
<b>Asian: Autumn</b>	56%	32%	12%
<b>Asian: Spring</b>	49%	37%	14%
<b>Asian: Summer</b>	42%	43%	15%
<b>Mixed: Autumn</b>	67%	22%	10%
<b>Mixed: Spring</b>	47%	38%	15%
<b>Mixed: Summer</b>	50%	28%	22%
<b>White: Autumn</b>	47%	32%	22%
<b>White: Spring</b>	45%	33%	22%
<b>White: Summer</b>	38%	38%	25%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 30** shows pupils' engagement in reading lessons by ethnic group and birth season. Differences by birth season appear more pronounced amongst Mixed pupils than in other groups, with Autumn-born pupils somewhat more likely to be "very engaged" and somewhat less likely to be "less than engaged" than Spring-born pupils, and Spring-born pupils somewhat more likely to be "very engaged" and somewhat less likely to be "less than engaged" than Summer-born pupils. The effect of being Summer-born also appeared to be larger in the Black group, with Summer-born pupils more likely to report being "less than engaged" than their Autumn- and Spring-born peers.

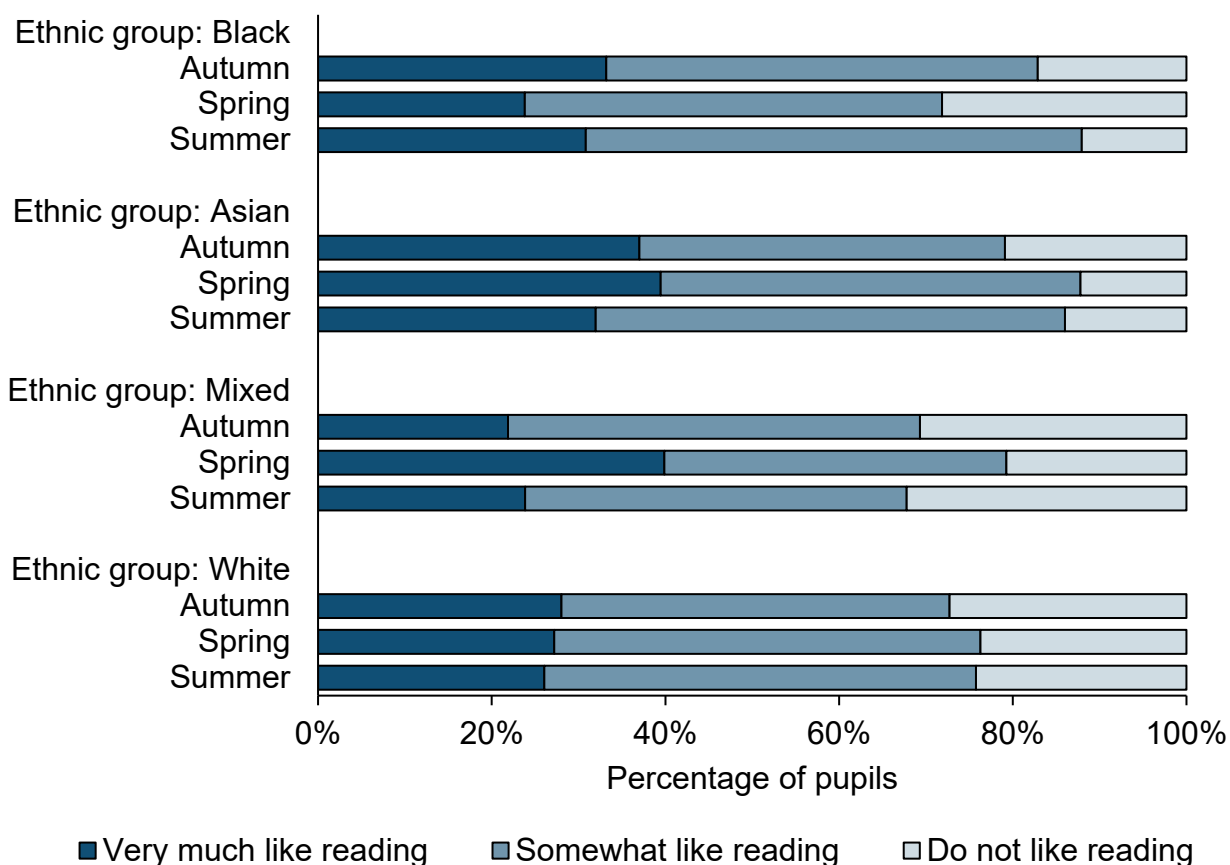
**Figure 30: Engagement in reading lessons by ethnic group and birth season**



Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 31** shows pupils' liking of reading by ethnic group and birth season. Patterns across birth seasons were less consistent for liking of reading than for confidence in reading across the same combination of demographic characteristics. There was little difference at all amongst White pupils by birth season. For Asian and Mixed groups Spring-born pupils appeared more likely than their Autumn- and Summer-born peers to say that they "very much liked" reading, and less likely to say they "did not like" reading, with a more pronounced difference in the Mixed group. Amongst Black pupils, this difference was reversed, with Spring-born pupils less likely to report that they "very much liked" reading and more likely to report that they "did not like" reading than pupils who were older or younger within year. Although it is difficult to say what might have brought about these patterns, the fact that they seem to differ from what we might expect based on broad patterns of reading performance by birth season (except within the Black group) suggest that liking of reading and reading performance may be affected by different factors.

**Figure 31: Liking of reading by ethnic group and birth season**



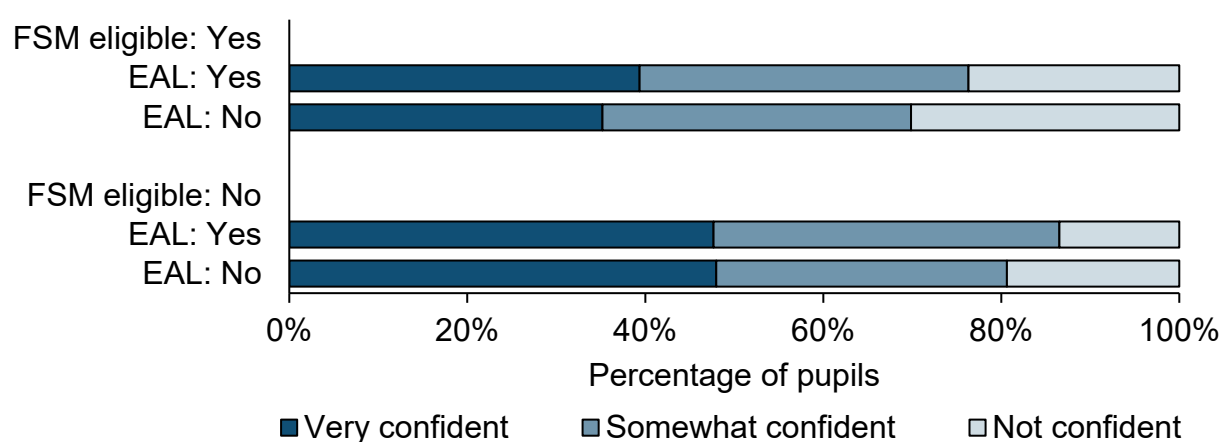
Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Black: Autumn</b>	33%	50%	17%
<b>Black: Spring</b>	24%	48%	28%
<b>Black: Summer</b>	31%	57%	12%
<b>Asian: Autumn</b>	37%	42%	21%
<b>Asian: Spring</b>	39%	48%	12%
<b>Asian: Summer</b>	32%	54%	14%
<b>Mixed: Autumn</b>	22%	47%	31%
<b>Mixed: Spring</b>	40%	39%	21%
<b>Mixed: Summer</b>	24%	44%	32%
<b>White: Autumn</b>	28%	45%	27%
<b>White: Spring</b>	27%	49%	24%
<b>White: Summer</b>	26%	50%	24%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## Attitudes to reading by disadvantage and EAL status

**Figure 32** shows pupils' confidence in reading by FSM-eligibility and EAL status. While pupils who had not been eligible for FSM in the last 6 years were less likely overall to say they were "not confident" in reading than their FSM-eligible peers, within each of these groups, pupils without EAL were somewhat more likely to say they were "not confident" in reading than pupils with EAL. Amongst FSM-eligible pupils, those without EAL were somewhat less likely to say they were "very confident" in reading than those with EAL, while amongst pupils who had not been eligible for FSM there was no difference at all in the proportions of pupils reporting that they were "very confident" according to EAL status.

**Figure 32: Confidence in reading by FSM and EAL status**

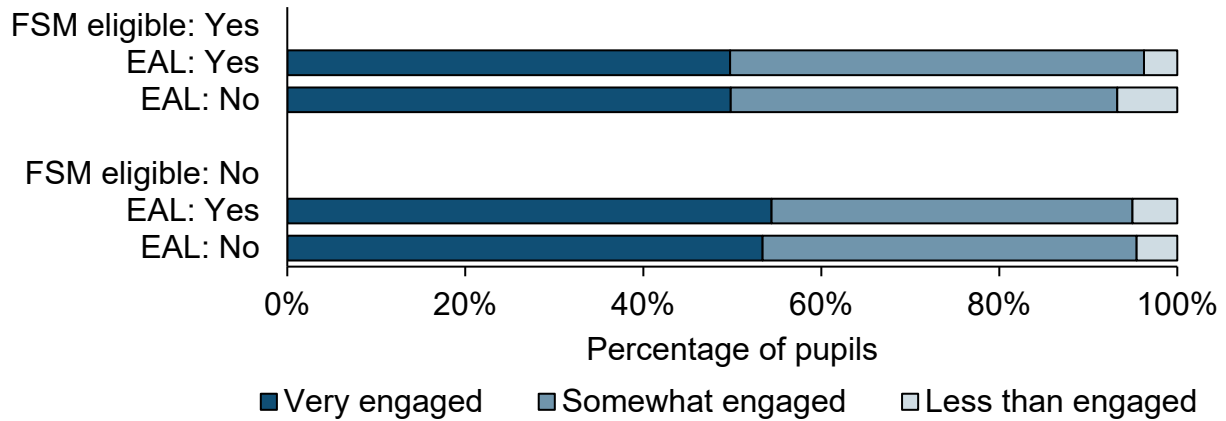


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
Yes FSM: Yes EAL	39%	37%	24%
Yes FSM: No EAL	35%	35%	30%
No FSM: Yes EAL	48%	39%	13%
No FSM: No EAL	48%	33%	19%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

As **Figure 33** shows, across FSM eligibility in the last 6 years and EAL status, there were only very small to negligible differences in pupils' self-reported engagement in reading lessons, with FSM-ineligible pupils slightly more likely to say they were "very engaged" regardless of EAL status.

**Figure 33: Engagement in reading lessons by FSM and EAL status**



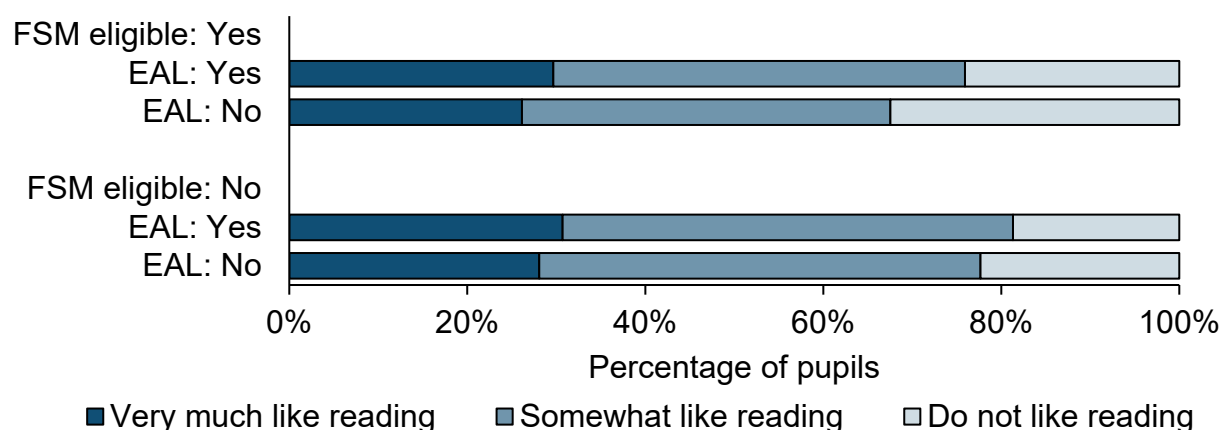
Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
Yes FSM: Yes EAL	50%	47%	4%
Yes FSM: No EAL	50%	43%	7%
No FSM: Yes EAL	54%	41%	5%
No FSM: No EAL	53%	42%	5%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 34** shows pupils' liking of reading by FSM eligibility and EAL status. The main patterns apparent across this combination of demographic characteristics were that pupils eligible for FSM in the last 6 years were somewhat more likely to report that they "did not like" reading than their FSM-ineligible peers, and within these groups, pupils without EAL were more likely to say they "did not like" reading (with a more pronounced difference amongst the FSM-eligible pupils).



**Figure 34: Liking of reading by FSM and EAL status**



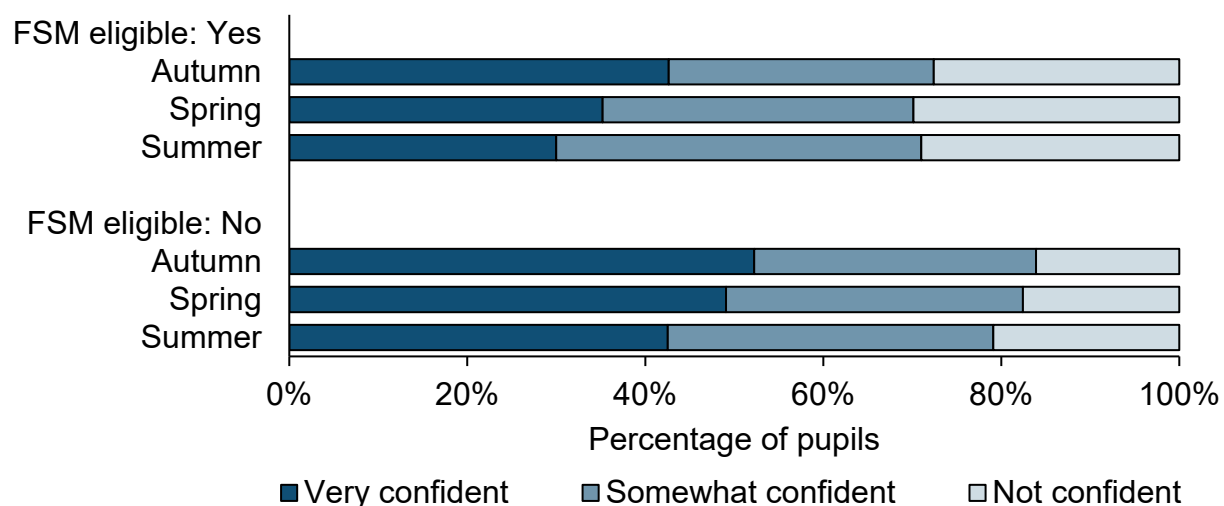
Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
Yes FSM: Yes EAL	30%	46%	24%
Yes FSM: No EAL	26%	41%	32%
No FSM: Yes EAL	31%	51%	19%
No FSM: No EAL	28%	50%	22%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Attitudes to reading by disadvantage and birth season

**Figure 35** shows pupils' confidence in reading by FSM eligibility in the last 6 years and birth season. Amongst both FSM-eligible and FSM-ineligible pupils, the proportions of pupils who were "very confident" were greatest for Autumn-born and least for Summer-born pupils. However, there was little difference amongst FSM-eligible pupils according to birth season in terms of the proportions of pupils saying they were "not confident". There were only small differences by birth season amongst FSM-ineligible pupils, with Autumn-born pupils slightly less likely to say they were "not confident" than Spring-born pupils, and Summer-born pupils slightly more likely to say they were "not confident" than their Spring-born peers.

**Figure 35: Confidence in reading by FSM and birth season**

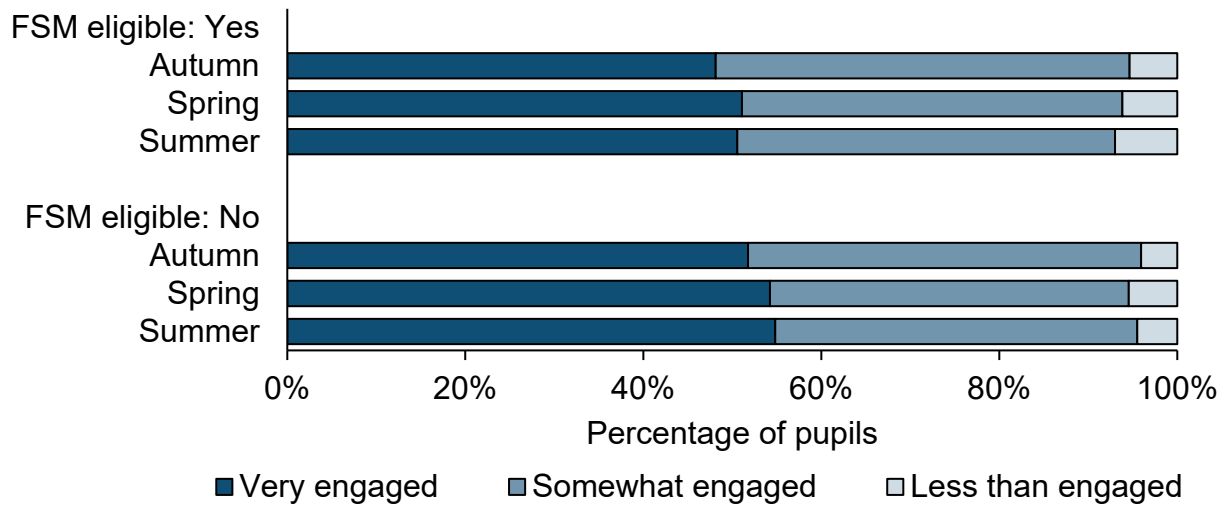


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
Yes FSM: Autumn	43%	30%	28%
Yes FSM: Spring	35%	35%	30%
Yes FSM: Summer	30%	41%	29%
No FSM: Autumn	52%	32%	16%
No FSM: Spring	49%	33%	18%
No FSM: Summer	43%	37%	21%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 36** displays pupils' engagement in reading lessons by FSM-eligibility and birth season. Differences across these combinations of demographic characteristics were fairly small and not consistent.

**Figure 36: Engagement in reading by FSM and birth season**

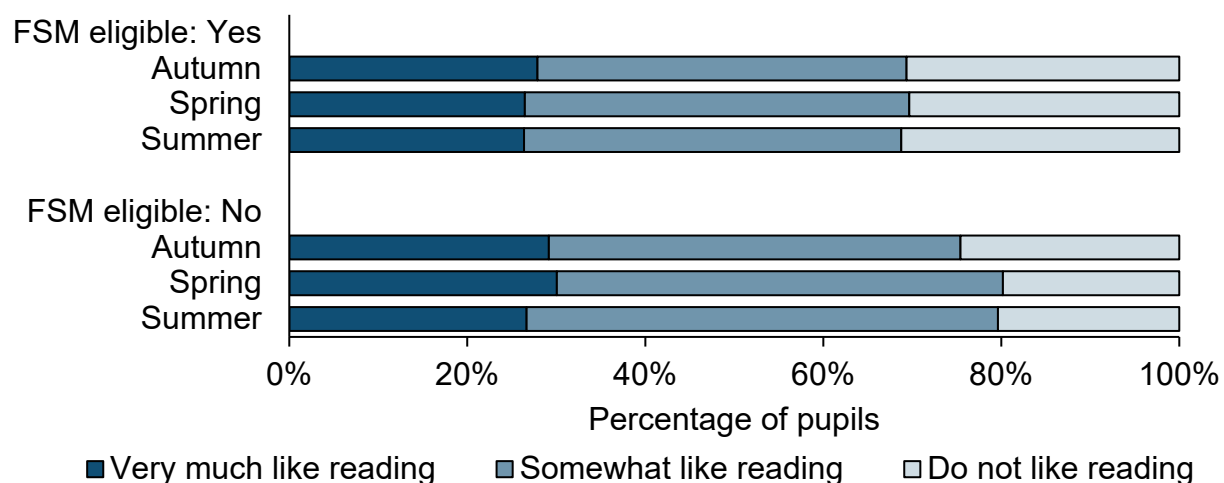


Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
<b>Yes FSM: Autumn</b>	48%	47%	5%
<b>Yes FSM: Spring</b>	51%	43%	6%
<b>Yes FSM: Summer</b>	51%	42%	7%
<b>No FSM: Autumn</b>	52%	44%	4%
<b>No FSM: Spring</b>	54%	40%	5%
<b>No FSM: Summer</b>	55%	41%	4%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 37** shows pupils' liking of reading by FSM-eligibility and birth season. Differences were mostly small across this combination of demographic characteristics, though FSM-ineligible pupils were at least somewhat less likely to say they "did not like" reading than their FSM-eligible peers. Autumn-born pupils in the FSM-ineligible group were somewhat more likely to report that they "did not like" reading than their Summer-born and Spring-born peers.

**Figure 37: Liking of reading by FSM and birth season**



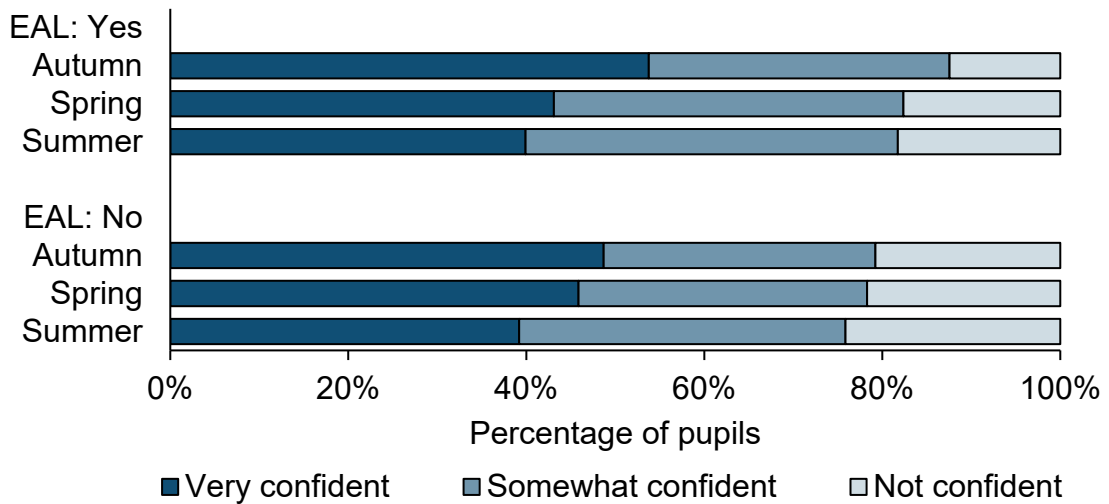
Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
Yes FSM: Autumn	28%	41%	31%
Yes FSM: Spring	26%	43%	30%
Yes FSM: Summer	26%	42%	31%
No FSM: Autumn	29%	46%	25%
No FSM: Spring	30%	50%	20%
No FSM: Summer	27%	53%	20%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

### Attitudes to reading by EAL status and birth season

As **Figure 38** shows, pupils' confidence in reading displayed fairly similar patterns across EAL status and birth season, though pupils without EAL were slightly more likely to say they were "not confident" than those with EAL in general.

**Figure 38: Confidence in reading by EAL status and birth season**

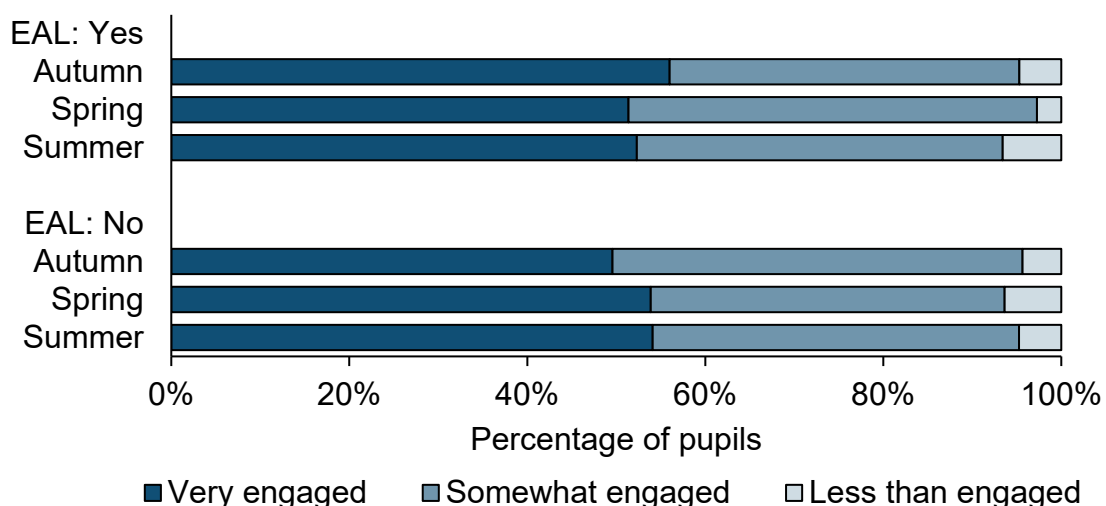


Confidence in reading	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
Yes EAL: Autumn	54%	34%	12%
Yes EAL: Spring	43%	39%	18%
Yes EAL: Summer	40%	42%	18%
No EAL: Autumn	49%	31%	21%
No EAL: Spring	46%	32%	22%
No EAL: Summer	39%	37%	24%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 39** shows pupils' engagement in reading by EAL status and birth season. Differences in engagement were fairly small and inconsistent across this combination of demographic characteristics.

**Figure 39: Engagement in reading lessons by EAL status and birth season**

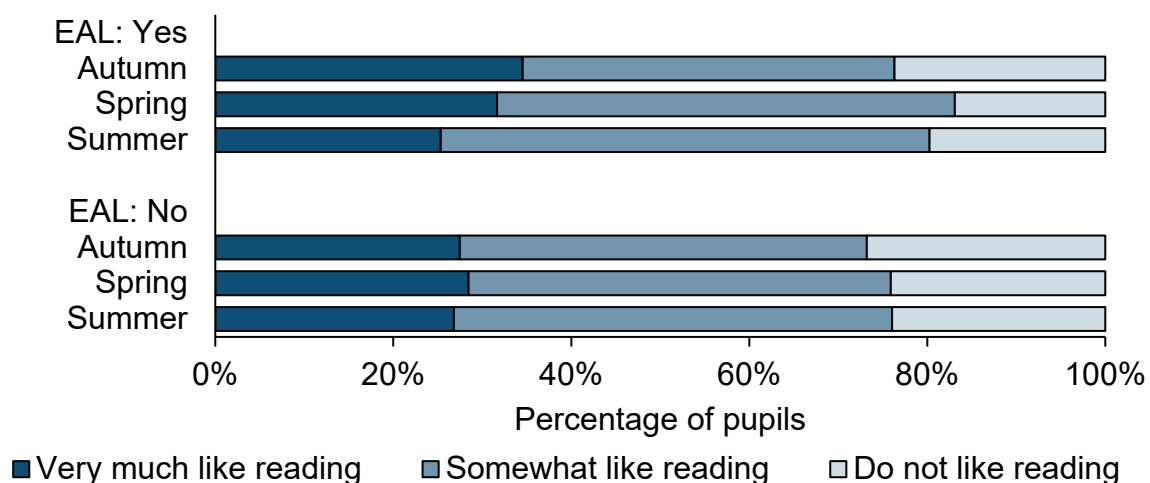


Engagement in reading lessons	Very engaged	Somewhat engaged	Less than engaged
Yes EAL: Autumn	56%	39%	5%
Yes EAL: Spring	51%	46%	3%
Yes EAL: Summer	52%	41%	7%
No EAL: Autumn	50%	46%	4%
No EAL: Spring	54%	40%	6%
No EAL: Summer	54%	41%	5%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

**Figure 40** shows pupils' liking of reading by EAL status and birth season. While pupils without EAL were at least slightly more likely to report that they "did not like" reading across birth seasons than pupils with EAL, differences within these groups according to birth season tended to be small. The exception to this was a clear pattern amongst pupils with EAL at the positive end of the liking of reading scale, with Autumn-born pupils slightly more likely to say they "very much liked" reading than Spring-born pupils, and Spring-born pupils somewhat more likely to say they "very much liked" reading than Summer-born pupils.

**Figure 40: Liking of reading by EAL status and birth season**



Liking of reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Yes EAL: Autumn</b>	35%	42%	24%
<b>Yes EAL: Spring</b>	32%	51%	17%
<b>Yes EAL: Summer</b>	25%	55%	20%
<b>No EAL: Autumn</b>	27%	46%	27%
<b>No EAL: Spring</b>	28%	47%	24%
<b>No EAL: Summer</b>	27%	49%	24%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## 4 Relationships between pupil attitudes to reading

### Chapter overview

In the PIRLS 2021 National Report for England (Lindorff, Stiff & Kayton, 2023), overall patterns in pupils' self-reported attitudes to reading were considered. Relationships between pupils' reading attitudes and their PIRLS performance, within England and across participating education systems, were also discussed. Chapter 4 of this report further considers how pupils' attitudes to reading relate to one another, for example, whether pupils who are very engaged in reading lessons also tend to be very confident in reading or to very much like reading.

### Key findings

- In general, pupils who were more confident in reading tended to report greater liking of reading, pupils who reported more liking of reading tended to say they were more engaged in reading lessons, and pupils who were more confident in reading tended to say they were more engaged in reading lessons.
- However, the proportions of pupils reporting that they “somewhat like reading” was rather similar (around half) regardless of how confident pupils were in reading, suggesting that there is scope to encourage liking of reading even for pupils who may not be confident in their reading.
- Additionally, nearly a third (30%) of pupils who reported being “less than engaged” in reading lessons reported that they were “very confident” in reading, compared to 51% of those who reported being “very engaged”. This might suggest that some very confident pupils do not feel sufficiently challenged in reading lessons.

### Relationships between attitudes to reading

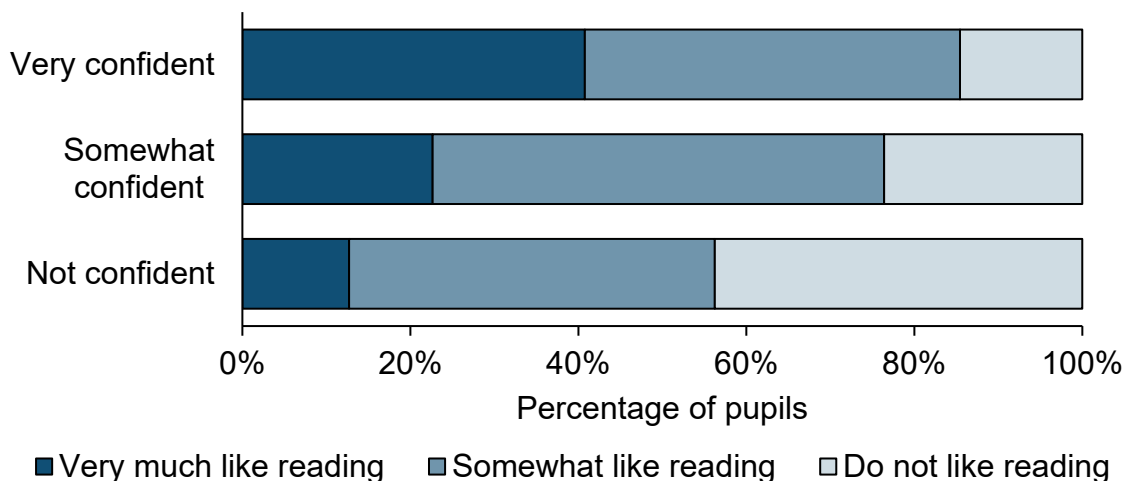
As **Figure 41** shows, close to half (41%) of the pupils who were “very confident” in reading also “very much liked” reading. By comparison, only 23% of those who were “somewhat confident” in reading, and even fewer (13%) of those who were “not confident” in reading, reported that they “very much liked” reading. At the other extreme, only 15% of those who were “very confident” also reported that they “do not like” reading, while 24% of those who were “somewhat confident” and 44% of those who were “not confident” reported that they “did not like” reading.

Taken together, this evidence suggests that pupils with more confidence in reading tend to like reading more, and vice versa. However, it is worth noting that the proportions of pupils reporting that they “somewhat like reading” is rather similar (around half),



regardless of how confident pupils were in reading. This suggests that there is scope to encourage liking of reading even for pupils who may not be confident in their reading, and could be a useful direction for further investigation to better understand what practices and policies may encourage liking of reading across different pupil confidence levels.

**Figure 41: Liking of reading by confidence in reading**

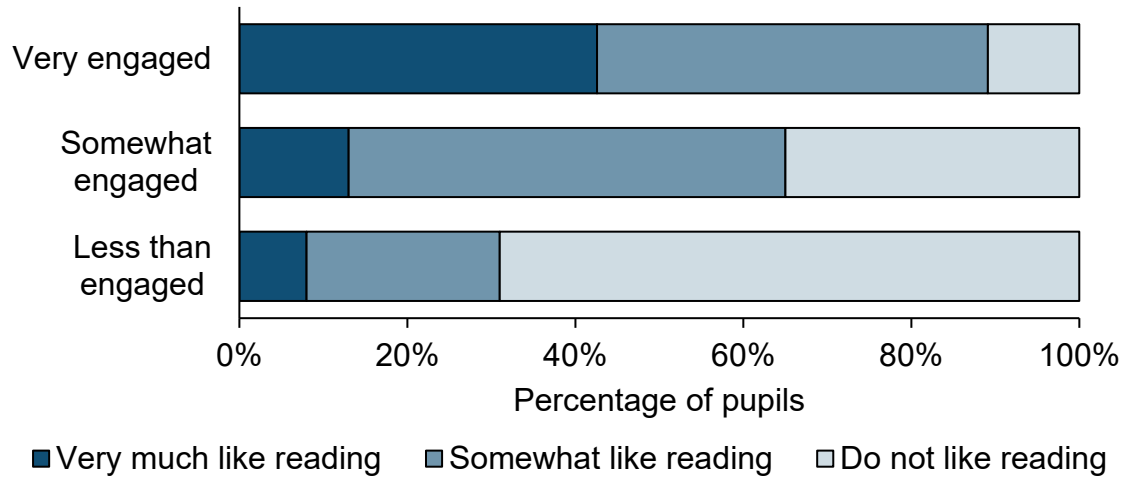


Confidence in reading	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Very confident</b>	41%	45%	15%
<b>Somewhat confident</b>	23%	54%	24%
<b>Not confident</b>	13%	44%	44%

Source: IEA's PIRLS 2021

As was the case for confidence in reading and liking of reading, there appears to be a positive relationship between self-reported engagement in reading lessons and liking of reading. That is, pupils who reported being more engaged in reading lessons were more likely to report “very much liking” reading. This pattern is somewhat more pronounced than the pattern for confidence in and liking of reading, with 43% of pupils who were “very engaged” reporting that they “very much liked” reading, compared to only 13% of those who were “somewhat engaged” and 8% of those who were “less than engaged” in reading lessons. **Figure 42** displays this relationship in terms of the proportions of pupils who “very much liked”, “somewhat liked” and “did not like” reading by level of engagement (“very”, “somewhat”, or “less than”) in reading lessons.

**Figure 42: Liking of reading by engagement in reading lessons**

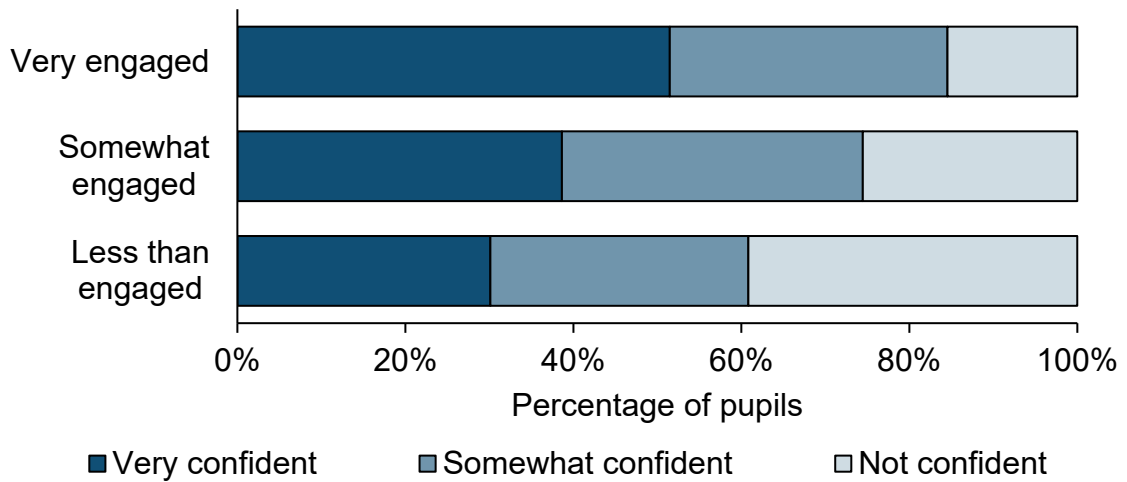


Engagement in reading lessons	Very much like	Somewhat like	Do not like
<b>Very engaged</b>	43%	47%	11%
<b>Somewhat engaged</b>	13%	52%	35%
<b>Less than engaged</b>	8%	23%	69%

Source: IEA's PIRLS 2021

Given that pupils who were more confident in reading and those who were more engaged in reading lessons were more likely to report greater liking of reading, it is somewhat unsurprising that, as **Figure 43** shows, pupils who were more engaged in reading lessons also tended to report greater confidence in reading. Even so, nearly a third (30%) of pupils who reported being “less than engaged” in reading lessons reported that they were “very confident” in reading, compared to 51% of those who reported being “very engaged”. This might suggest that some very confident pupils do not feel sufficiently challenged in reading lessons. It might also mean that their confidence in reading applies to reading tasks other than those taking place in reading lessons. Both possibilities could be useful avenues for further investigation.

**Figure 43: Confidence in reading by engagement in reading lessons**



Engagement in reading lessons	Very much like	Somewhat confident	Not confident
Very engaged	51%	33%	15%
Somewhat engaged	39%	36%	26%
Less than engaged	30%	31%	39%

Source: IEA's PIRLS 2021

# 5 Pupils' progress in reading between year 1 and year 5

## Chapter overview

Chapter 5 provides results from an analysis investigating pupils' progress between the phonics screening check in year 1 and PIRLS performance in year 5. The PIRLS 2021 National Report for England (Lindorff, Stiff & Kayton, 2023) included an analysis of the relationship between pupils' phonics screening check marks (from 0 to 40) in year 1, as well as in year 2 for pupils who did not meet the expected standard in year 1, and their overall reading scores in PIRLS 2021. This chapter extends that analysis to consider the proportions of pupils attaining each benchmark in PIRLS 2021 (including "Below low", "Low", "Intermediate", "High", and "Advanced") according to whether they met the expected standard on the year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils who did not meet the expected standard on the year 1 phonics screening check might be seen as having "caught up" by year 5 if they attain at least the "High" benchmark in PIRLS 2021.

## Key findings

- Around 20% of pupils who did not meet the expected standard on the phonics screening check in year 1 "caught up" on their reading performance by year 5. That is, they went on to attain at least the "High" benchmark in PIRLS 2021. Just under half of pupils who did not meet the expected standard scored below the Intermediate benchmark (scoring at or below the Low benchmark).
- Of the pupils who did meet the expected standard on the phonics screening check in year 1, about 60% attained at least the "High" benchmark in PIRLS 2021, while only a little more than 10% attained below the Intermediate benchmark.
- The persistence of the gap between those who experience difficulties with reading early in primary school and those who do not may be, at least in part, attributable to pupils' age within their cohort. 92% of Autumn-born pupils met the expected standard in year 1, compared to 88% of Spring-born and 83% of Summer-born pupils.

## PIRLS benchmarks by phonics screening check outcomes

Hardly any pupils who met the expected standard on the phonics screening check in year 1 went on to attain below the "Low" benchmark in PIRLS 2021, as shown in **Table 1**. Approximately 60% of pupils who met the expected standard in year 1 went on to attain at least the "High" benchmark in PIRLS 2021, with about another 30% attaining the "Intermediate" benchmark. Correspondingly, very few pupils who did not meet the

expected standard in the year 1 phonics screening check went on to attain the “Advanced” benchmark in PIRLS 2021. Of those who did not meet the expected standard in year 1, only about 20% went on to attain the “High” benchmark in PIRLS, with nearly half (45%) attaining the “Low” benchmark or lower.

**Table 1: PIRLS 2021 benchmarks by phonics screening check (Y1) outcome**

PIRLS 2021 Benchmark	Met the expected standard (Y1 PSC)	Below the expected standard (Y1 PSC)
<b>Advanced</b>	20%	<3%
<b>High</b>	40%	20%
<b>Intermediate</b>	30%	35%
<b>Low</b>	10%	30%
<b>Below low</b>	<3%	15%

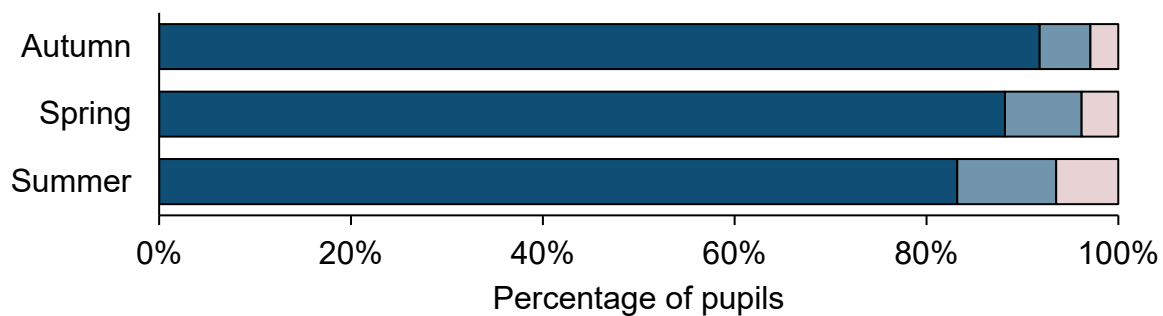
Some values have been masked or rounded due to counts too small to report in at least one cell.

Percentages may, as a result, appear to add up to more or less than 100% in each column.

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA’s PIRLS 2021

It is important to note that pupils’ phonics screening check outcomes in year 1, and in year 2 for those who do not meet the expected standard in year 1, are at least somewhat related to birth season. **Figure 47** shows the percentages of pupils who met the expected standard in year 1, those who did not meet the expected standard in year 1 but went on to do so in year 2, and those who were still reading below the expected standard in year 2.

**Figure 44: Pupil birth season and phonics screening check outcomes (years 1 & 2)**



■ Met the expected standard in Y1     
 ■ Met the expected standard in Y2  
■ Below the expected standard in Y2

Phonics screening check outcome	Autumn	Spring	Summer
<b>Met the expected standard, Y1</b>	92%	88%	83%
<b>Met the expected standard, Y2</b>	5%	8%	10%
<b>Below the expected standard, Y2</b>	3%	4%	6%

Source: National Pupil Database (NPD) & IEA's PIRLS 2021

## References

Lindorff, A., Stiff, J. & Kayton, H. (2023). *PIRLS 2021: National Report for England [DfE RR1353]*. London: Department for Education.

Office for National Statistics & Department for Education (2023). *Statistical disclosure control policy for DfE data*. Available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1166845/DfE\\_ONS\\_statistical\\_disclosure\\_control\\_policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1166845/DfE_ONS_statistical_disclosure_control_policy.pdf)



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