

Who Reads the Paper?

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Abstract

Who reads a given article in a magazine? What kinds of stories do young readers like? Do some stories appeal more to farmers with high incomes? Or low incomes?

Who Reads The Paper?

RALPH S. YOHE

WHO READS A GIVEN article in a magazine? What kinds of stories do young readers like? Do some stories appeal more to farmers with high incomes? Or low incomes?

Most readership surveys give figures as global totals. They are broken down only by men and women. Beyond that there is no way of knowing who reads what.

The three Farm Progress Publications – *Prairie Farmer*, *Wisconsin Agriculturist* and *Wallaces Farmer* – break down their readership figures not only by sex, but also by age, education, and income. So it is easy to spot quickly those stories that may have a greater appeal to a specific group in each of these classifications.

Readership tends to fall off in the upper age bracket – those readers 65 years or over. Those with more education tend to read better. As men readers gross more total family income, they tend to read better. Gross family income doesn't seem to make much difference among women readers.

These figures are the average for seven readership study issues of the *Wisconsin Agriculturist*. Men readership figures do not include the home section.

The figures for the other two publications are not always so clear cut as here. But the trend is in the same direction.

Given here are the “read most” scores for seven issues of the

Average readership by age	Men, per cent	Women, per cent
21 to 34 years	42.6	39.1
35 to 49	42.6	40.6
50 to 64	41.6	43.5
65 or over	36.2	35.5
 Average readership by education		
8 years or less	38.3	39.0
9 to 12 years	43.2	41.1
Some college or more	47.2	43.2
 Average readership by gross family income		
\$5,000 or less	38.7	42.6
\$5,000 to \$9,999	40.9	41.8
\$10,000 to \$19,999	42.1	39.8
\$20,000 or more	45.4	40.0

Here are stories in our three publications that appealed more to one group than another. As you look at the figures, remember, however, that the three magazines circulate in three different states — *Wallaces Farmer* in Iowa, the *Wisconsin Agriculturist* in Wisconsin, and *Prairie Farmer* in Illinois and Indiana. The figures given here for *Prairie Farmer* are for Illinois only.

Subscriber interest varies from state to state. Readership figures of the audience of one state may not be true of another. They can vary just like demographic information, such as the number of cows milked, or the acres of soybeans planted.

Men readership on these articles increased as age went up.

Article	<i>Read most scores by age, per cent</i>			
	21-34	35-49	50-64	65 or older
John Turnipseed (regular department) <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Nov. 2, 1968	34.8	57.7	61.2	71.8
Sermonettes (regular department) <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967	16.0	25.0	39.4	56.8
Readers Say (letters to the editor, regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967	12.0	25.0	33.3	47.7
Protective Union, "You Court Trouble if You Hire Those Itinerant Roof Painters" (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967	40.0	54.7	62.1	84.1
"Good Old Days . . . When Iowa Was Way Out West," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Apr. 27, 1968	16.2	22.2	35.8	45.7

Men readership on these articles decreased as age went up.

Article	Read most scores by age, per cent			
	21-34	35-49	50-64	65 or older
Timely Tips on Crops and Soils, "Corn and Soybean Planting Dates" (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Apr. 15, 1967.....	57.7	43.7	38.9	26.7
"Soybean Champions Outline Rules for Maximum Yields," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Apr. 15, 1967.....	57.7	46.5	38.9	23.3
Hog Business: "Tie Stalls Used for Farrowing" (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Sept. 9, 1967.....	62.5	53.5	39.7	20.6
"How to Select Good Used Machinery," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Sept. 9, 1967.....	56.3	50.0	44.1	17.6
"Reducing Feed Wastes Cuts Hog Costs," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Sept. 9, 1967.....	50.0	40.7	33.8	20.6
"Favorable Outlook for Hog Producers," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Sept. 9, 1967.....	65.6	46.5	36.8	17.6

These stories had uniform appeal to men readers regardless of age.

Article	Read most scores by age, per cent			
	21-34	35-49	50-64	65 or older
"Farmer's Choice: Nixon. <i>Prairie Farmer</i> Poll Puts Dirksen Ahead for Senator, Ogilvie for Governor," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Nov. 2, 1968.....	66.7	67.4	67.1	64.7
"Heifer Feeding Gains in Popularity," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Jan. 20, 1968.....	16.7	17.8	20.2	19.4
"Top Corn Yields," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967.....	48.0	40.0	48.5	50.0
"Cattle Shrinkage Will Vary Widely in Shipping," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967.....	28.0	26.6	25.8	29.5
Agribusiness (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969.....	38.5	40.0	41.7	37.5
Farm Poll: "Farm People Believe Negro Riots Harmful," <i>Wisconsin Agriculturist</i> , Nov. 11, 1967.....	47.6	49.3	49.0	45.7
"Dairy Industry Must be on Guard Against Salmonellae," <i>Wisconsin Agriculturist</i> , Nov. 11, 1967.....	28.6	28.0	29.6	25.7

The older the farm women, the better they read these stories.

Article	Read most scores by age, per cent			
	21-34	35-49	50-64	65 or older
John Turnipseed (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Feb. 15, 1969.....	39.3	47.9	66.2	72.4
Prairie Weather (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Nov. 2, 1968.....	15.0	19.0	30.4	37.8
Sermonettes (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Jan. 20, 1968.....	32.3	41.2	45.6	67.7
"Each Dependent Lowers Taxable Income by \$600," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969.....	24.4	32.5	38.7	58.8
Iowa Weather Guide: "More Stormy Weather Ahead" (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969.....	26.8	42.5	46.8	52.9

In the four issues surveyed for this study, in each of the three magazines there was really no article or department of which you could say beyond a doubt, "The younger the woman reader, the better she read this."

But for some articles and departments you could say: **Age of the women readers made no difference on these stories.**

Article	Read most scores by age, per cent			
	21-34	35-49	50-64	65 or older
John Turnipseed (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Jan. 20, 1968.....	54.8	54.4	51.5	58.1
"Tel Farm Project Started Modern, Electronic Record Keeping Process," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Jan. 20, 1968.....	6.5	5.9	5.9	9.7
"See Big Threat in Corporate Farming," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969.....	19.5	23.8	21.0	23.5
"What Prospects for Iowa's 1968 Crop Yields?" <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Apr. 27, 1969...	17.8	18.8	14.5	22.7
"We'll be Staying on the Farm," <i>Wisconsin Agriculturist</i> , Feb. 24, 1968.....	47.1	47.3	47.9	44.4

In our studies, the better farm people are educated, the more they read. This is especially true of men readers. So it is rather difficult to find stories that readers with less education prefer to read. At least it seems to be true of the articles we run in our publications.

Here may be a couple of exceptions for men readers.

Article	Read most scores by years of schooling, per cent		
	8 or less	9-12	Some college or more
Iowa Weather Guide: "More Stormy Weather Ahead" (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969	62.0	51.6	34.8
Dairy Business (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Apr. 27, 1968	33.3	23.0	16.1

These stories rated higher with farm men as educational levels went up.

Article	Read most scores by years of schooling, per cent		
	8 or less	9-12	Some college or more
"Corporation Farming Causes Some Confusion," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Nov. 2, 1968	24.3	36.6	60.7
"USA—USSR Comparison," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Nov. 2, 1968	30.0	36.6	64.3
Paul C. Johnson: Viewpoint—"Look Beyond Those Old Line Fences!" (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Jan. 20, 1968	50.8	61.5	91.3
"Hog Business Goes to Package Production," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967	14.5	21.0	50.0
Iowa Weather Guide: "Mild to Normal Weather Ahead," (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Oct. 12, 1968	43.9	55.1	75.0
"Hybrid Companies Say . . . Look for Even Narrower Rows," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Oct. 12, 1968	45.6	62.2	81.3

Don't ask why the switch in "Iowa's weather guide." I don't know.

Readership of these stories went up as the education of women readers improved.

Article	Read most scores by years of schooling, per cent		
	8 or less	9-12	Some college or more
"Farmers Choice: Nixon. <i>Prairie Farmer</i> Poll Puts Dirksen ahead for Senator, Ogilvie for Governor," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Nov. 2, 1968	29.6	41.5	55.0
Readers Say: (letters to the editor, regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Apr. 15, 1967	33.3	40.9	62.5
"Each Dependent Lowers Taxable Income by \$600," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969	16.7	30.4	47.5
"Good Old Days . . . When Iowa was Way Out West," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Apr. 27, 1968	9.4	36.6	52.6

There were no stories in any of these issues that showed a clear-cut trend for readership among women to go down as amount of their schooling went up.

Some stories may draw more interest among men with low family income.

Article	Read most scores by family income, per cent			
	\$5,000 or less	\$5,000-\$9,999	\$10,000-\$19,999	\$20,000 or more
Engineering on the Farm: "Does Your Land Need Face-lifting?" (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Feb. 15, 1969	63.6	41.9	32.8	38.5
Protective Union: "You Court Trouble if You Hire Those Itinerant Roof Painters," (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967	85.7	67.4	59.1	55.1
"Add Strength to Your Fencing," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Oct. 12, 1968	60.0	33.3	29.0	15.5
The Law and You: "They Should Have Protected His Cows," (regular department), <i>Wisconsin Agriculturist</i> , Sept. 14, 1968	65.4	47.6	42.9	38.6

It is much easier, among men readers, to find stories where readership increases as income goes up.

Here are a few, out of many, where readership for men goes up as income climbs.

Article	Read most scores by family income, per cent			
	\$5,000 or less	\$5,000-\$9,999	\$10,000-\$19,999	\$20,000 or more
<i>Prairie Farmer</i> Says (Editorials), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Nov. 2, 1968	34.5	55.9	63.4	74.6
Perspectives in Agricultural Research (regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Jan. 20, 1968	22.2	43.6	51.7	61.4
Readers Say: (letters to editor, regular department), <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Jan. 30, 1968	22.2	41.0	46.6	57.1
"Crambe is Exciting New Oilseed Crop," <i>Prairie Farmer</i> , Oct. 7, 1967	19.0	30.4	45.1	55.1
Outside Stuff (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969	11.1	45.5	50.0	63.3
"Veterinarians Say . . . Hogs in Confinement Need Top Management," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969	11.1	18.2	28.3	42.2
Agribusiness (regular department), <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Jan. 25, 1969	11.1	30.3	38.3	44.4
"Preconditioning Helps . . . Avoid Health Problems in the Feedlot," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Oct. 12, 1968	10.0	29.2	35.5	45.1
"Fall Application of Nitrogen Fertilizer," <i>Wallaces Farmer</i> , Oct. 12, 1968	10.0	41.7	53.2	63.4

It is much more difficult to find stories with definite trends for women readership based on family income.