Shining a Light

Irish data about attitudes to and use of public libraries 2011–2016

Five years ago the Carnegie UK Trust conducted research into the use of public libraries and public attitudes towards libraries in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland. This was the first time data was generated that enabled direct comparison across these jurisdictions.

In 2016 we ran the survey again to examine whether attitudes towards libraries and levels of use have changed since 2011. We added some new questions to reflect some of the current debate around volunteers and changes in services. Research was carried out by Ipsos MORI for the Carnegie UK Trust. The research consisted of an omnibus poll carried out in all five jurisdictions covered by the Trust in its work.

This factsheet contains the data which relates to Ireland. In Ireland **1,011 adults** over the age of 15 were included in the poll. The findings from the omnibus poll provide comparable data from all five jurisdictions. Where relevant, comparison is made with the 2011 statistics.

THE PICTURE IN **2016**

The data shows that around 4 in 5 of people in Ireland (79%) say that public libraries are important for their communities and exactly half of people used a library in the previous year. Around two-fifths (44%) say libraries are important for themselves personally. These findings are comparable with those from other jurisdictions.

In Ireland, women are more likely than men to use libraries and to use them frequently. Those with children in their household are also more likely to use libraries than those without children in their household. However, the presence of children in the household has less impact on the frequency of library use.

In terms of key differences between age groups, over 55s are the least likely to use libraries and 25-34 year olds are the least likely to use libraries frequently. Meanwhile, part time employees and those not working are more likely to use libraries than fully time employees and retirees. Part time employees and those not working are also more likely to use libraries frequently than full time employees. In respect to key variations by socio-economic group, ABC1 is more likely to use the library than C2DEF and C1 is more likely to use the library than C2, DE or F.

PREDICTORS

Logistic regression identifies the following factors as predictors for the likelihood of respondents in Ireland having used a library in the previous 12 months:

- being a woman
- having children in the household
- being 15-24 years old
- not working full-time
- being a 'prolific' reader

COMPARING **2011** AND **2016**

Ireland sees a very marginal decline in library use (51%-50%) and a bigger drop in frequency of use since 2011 (57%-49%). Changes in use 2011-2016 by gender, age, working status, socio-economic group or by households with/without children are relatively small. Key changes in frequent use include those among full time employees (-15 percentage points), men (-11 percentage points) and those in socio-economic groups ABC1 (-7 percentage points), C1C2 and C2DE (both -10 percentage points) and F(-29 percentage points).

Overall there is an increase in support for improvements and changes to encourage library use in Ireland, and people broadly support volunteers to augment existing staff but are opposed to volunteers replacing staff.

Notes
There is one difference in how data was collated in 2016 compared with 2011. In 2016 the definition of 'prolific readership' was changed to 'one or more books every eight weeks' from 'one or more books in six weeks' to better align answers to interview questions.

TERMINOLOGY

Use – used or contacted the library in the 12 months prior to the omnibus poll

Frequent use – used or contacted the library at least once every month in the 12 months prior to the omnibus poll

Library user – refers to those who used the library in the 12 months prior to the omnibus poll

Non-user – refers to those who have not used the library in the 12 months prior to the omnibus poll

Frequent user – users that used or contacted the library at least once every month in the 12 months prior to the omnibus poll

Prolific reader – refers to those who read at least one book every eight weeks

Important – refers to the categories of 'essential' and 'very important' alone. 'Fairly important' has been excluded from this definition to sharpen analysis.

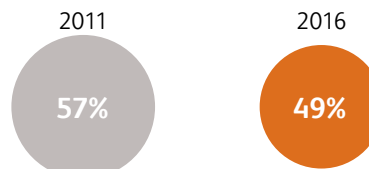# THE **OVERALL PICTURE** IN IRELAND

Library use

2011
51%

2016
50%

2016

EXACTLY
1 IN 2
of people use libraries

2011–2016

↓ **-1**
Marginal decline in library use

Frequency of library use

2011
57%

2016
49%

2016

ALMOST
½
of library users are frequent users

2011–2016

↓ **-8**
Decline in frequent library use

Importance of libraries to the community and personally

■ 2011 ■ 2016

	Community	Personally
Essential	29% / 43%	12% / 19%
Very important	51% / 37%	34% / 24%
Fairly important	15% / 16%	19% / 21%
Not very important	3% / 3%	19% / 19%
Not at all important	1% / 1%	15% / 17%
Don't know	2% / 2%	2% / 2%
	*	*
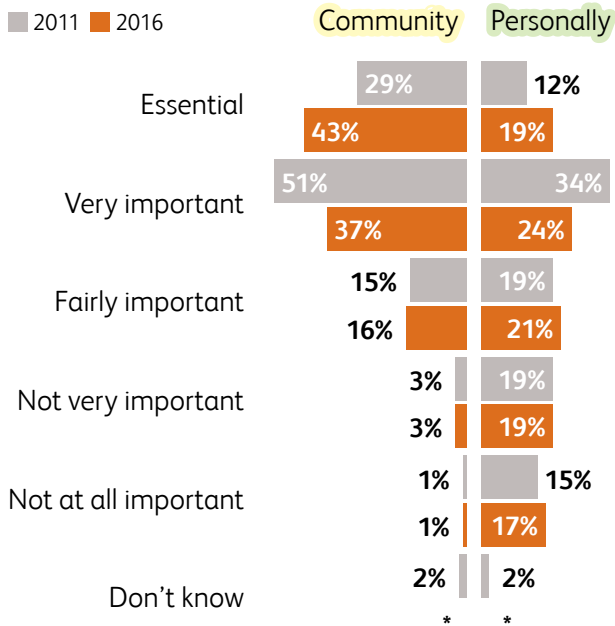
2016

AROUND
4/5
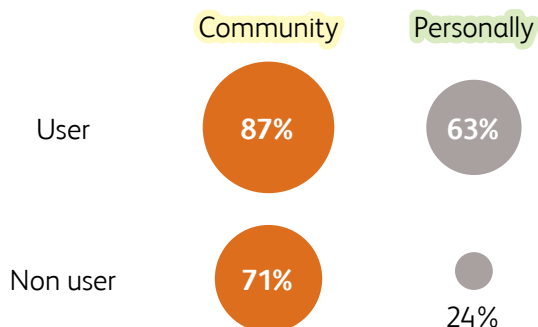of people say public libraries important for communities

AROUND
2/5
of people say libraries important to themselves personally

Library users more likely to say libraries important for community and for themselves personally

2016

Opinions of Users and Non-users

	Community	Personally
User	87%	63%
Non user	71%	24%

2016 SUMMARY

The overall picture in Republic of Ireland

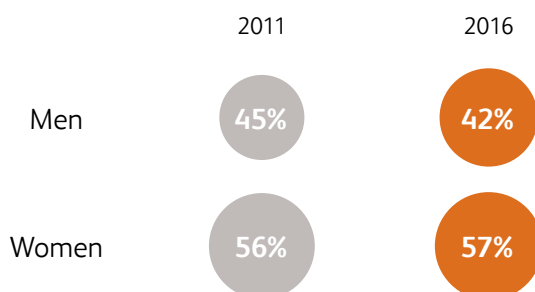|	
Use	50%
Frequency of use	49%
Importance to community[1]	79%
Importance personally	44%

1 This is the percentage obtained when working with the numbers in the raw data as opposed to adding the relevant percentages provided in the barchart "Importance of libraries to the community and personally".
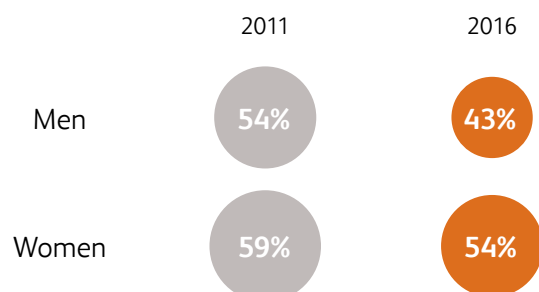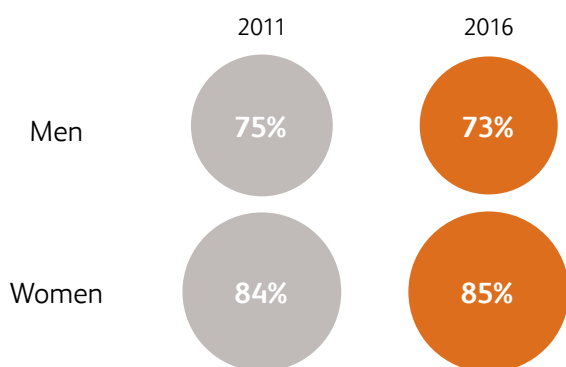
FOCUSING IN ON **GENDER** IN IRELAND
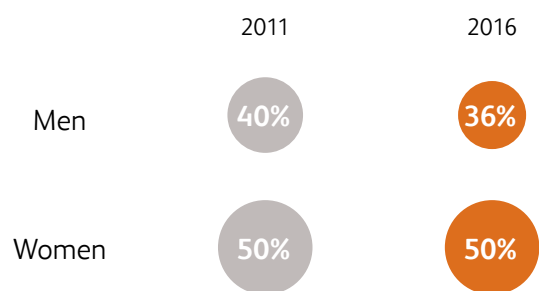
Library use by **gender**

	2011	2016
Men	45%	42%
Women	56%	57%

Frequency of library use by **gender**

	2011	2016
Men	54%	43%
Women	59%	54%

Importance of libraries to community

	2011	2016
Men	75%	73%
Women	84%	85%

Importance of libraries to me personally

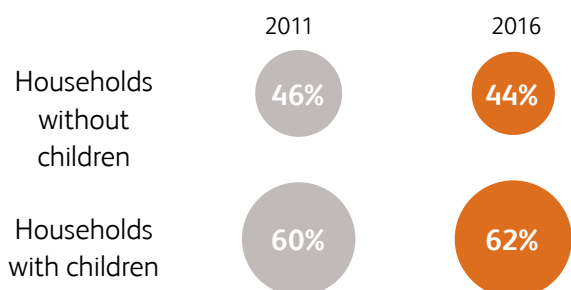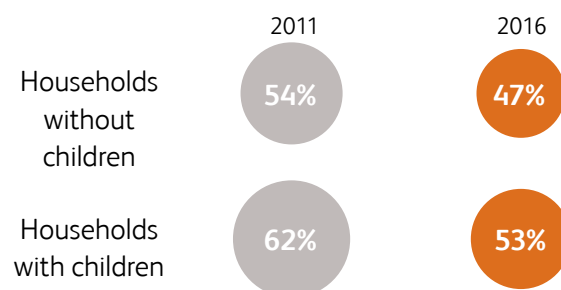|	2011	2016
Men	40%	36%
Women	50%	50%

PREDICTORS

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that being a woman is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Ireland having used a library in the past 12 months.

# FOCUSING IN ON **HOUSEHOLDS WITH AND WITHOUT CHILDREN** IN IRELAND

Library use by **households with children**

	2011	2016
Households without children	46%	44%
Households with children	60%	62%

Frequency of library use by **households with children**

	2011	2016
Households without children	54%	47%
Households with children	62%	53%

Importance of libraries to community

	2011	2016
Households without children	79%	81%
Households with children	81%	76%

Importance of libraries to me personally

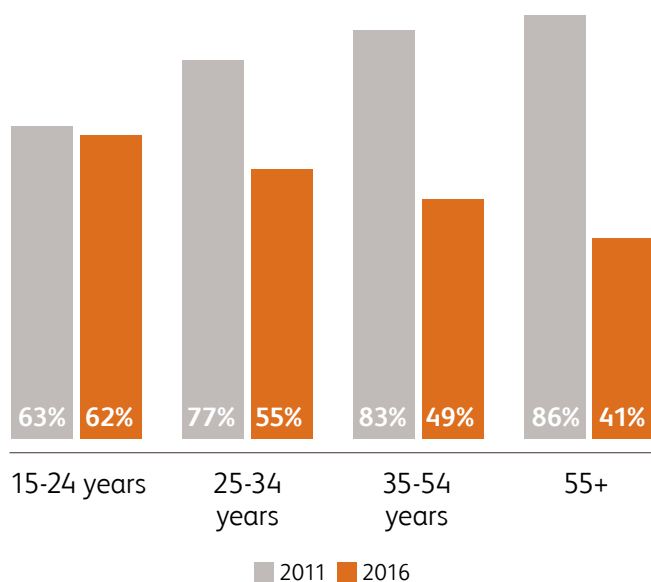|	2011	2016
Households without children	45%	40%
Households with children	46%	50%
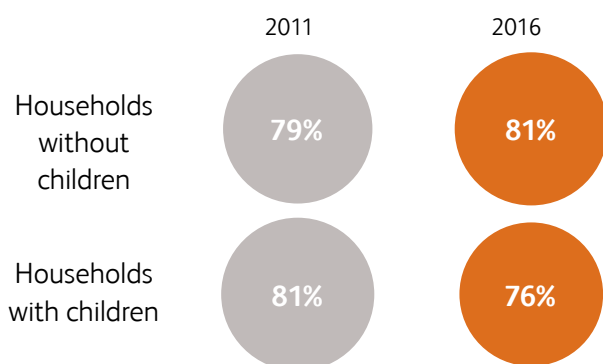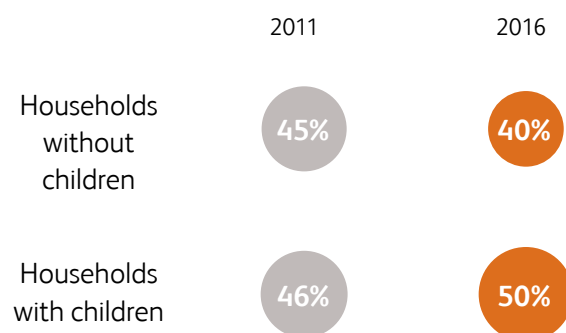
PREDICTORS

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that having children in the household is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Ireland having used a library in the past 12 months.
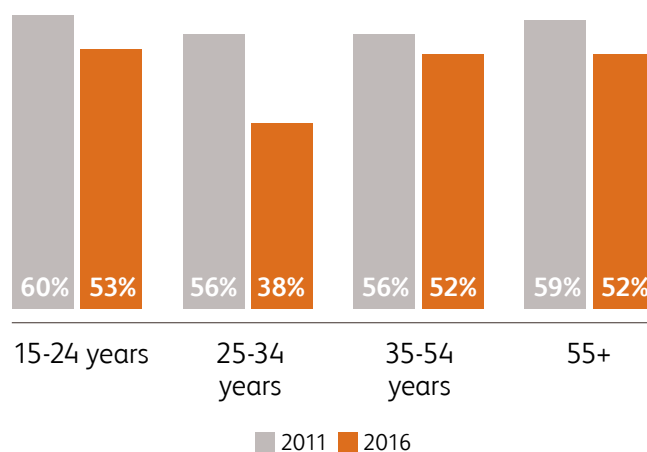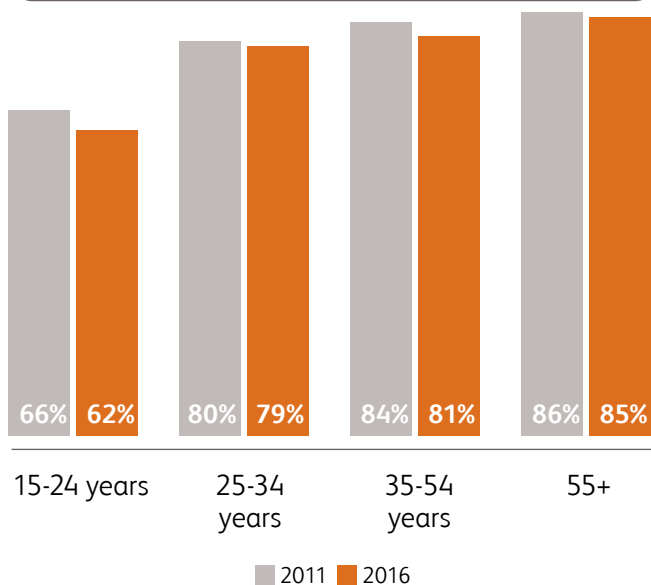
FOCUSING IN ON **AGE** IN IRELAND
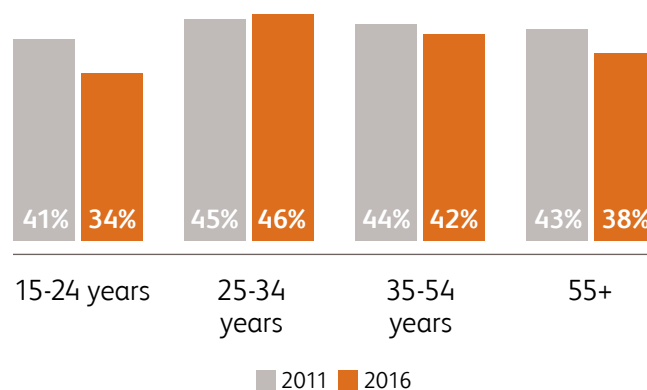
Library use by **age**

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	63%	77%	83%	86%
2016	62%	55%	49%	41%

Frequency of library use by **age**

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	60%	56%	56%	59%
2016	53%	38%	52%	52%

Importance of libraries to community

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	66%	80%	84%	86%
2016	62%	79%	81%	85%

Importance of libraries to me personally

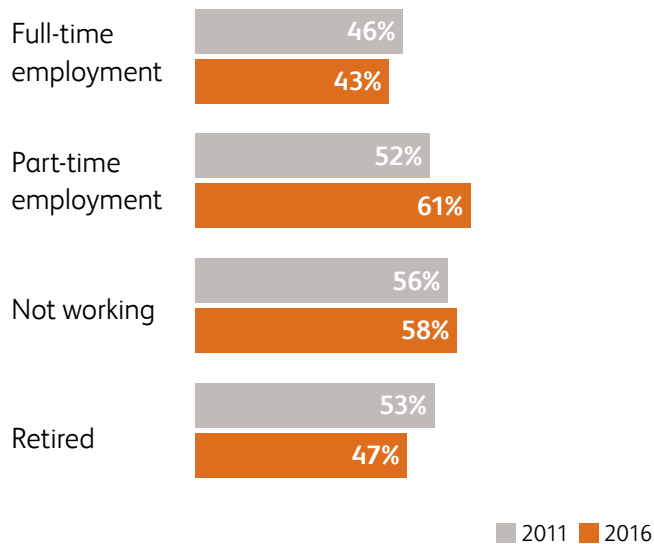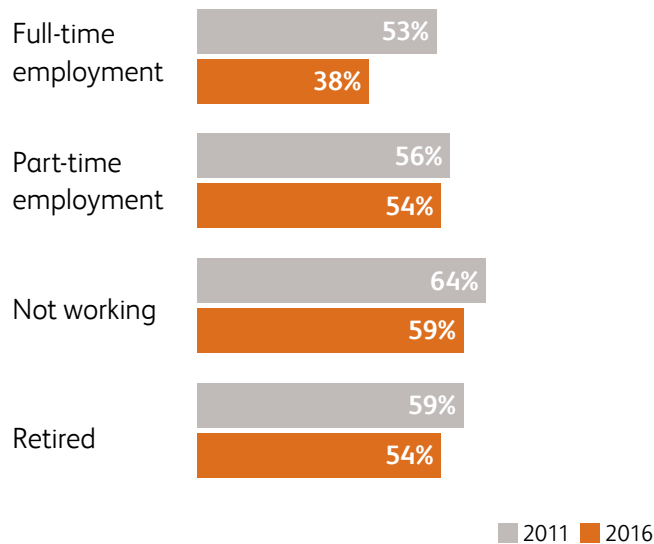|	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	41%	45%	44%	43%
2016	34%	46%	42%	38%

PREDICTORS

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that being 15-24 years old is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Ireland having used a library in the past 12 months.
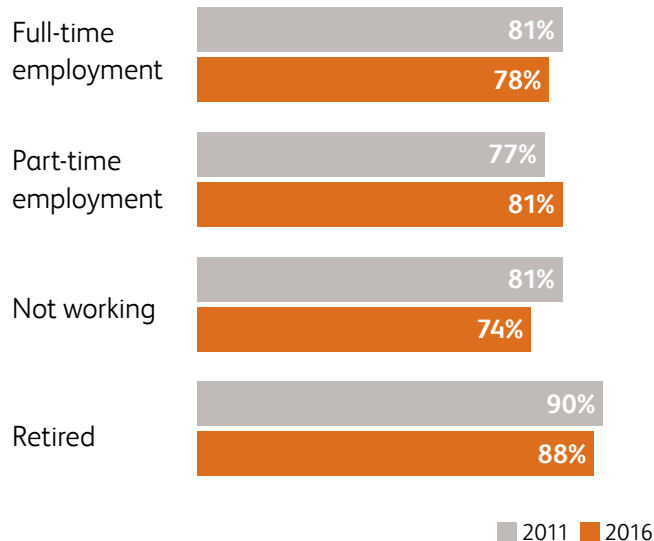
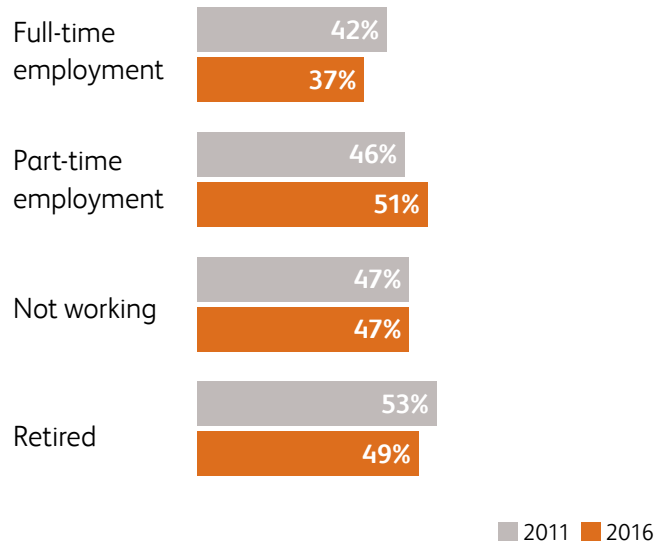# FOCUSING IN ON **WORKING STATUS** IN IRELAND

Library use by **working status**

Full-time employment
- 46% (2011)
- 43% (2016)

Part-time employment
- 52% (2011)
- 61% (2016)

Not working
- 56% (2011)
- 58% (2016)

Retired
- 53% (2011)
- 47% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Frequency of library use by **working status**

Full-time employment
- 53% (2011)
- 38% (2016)

Part-time employment
- 56% (2011)
- 54% (2016)

Not working
- 64% (2011)
- 59% (2016)

Retired
- 59% (2011)
- 54% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to community

Full-time employment
- 81% (2011)
- 78% (2016)

Part-time employment
- 77% (2011)
- 81% (2016)

Not working
- 81% (2011)
- 74% (2016)

Retired
- 90% (2011)
- 88% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to me personally

Full-time employment
- 42% (2011)
- 37% (2016)

Part-time employment
- 46% (2011)
- 51% (2016)

Not working
- 47% (2011)
- 47% (2016)

Retired
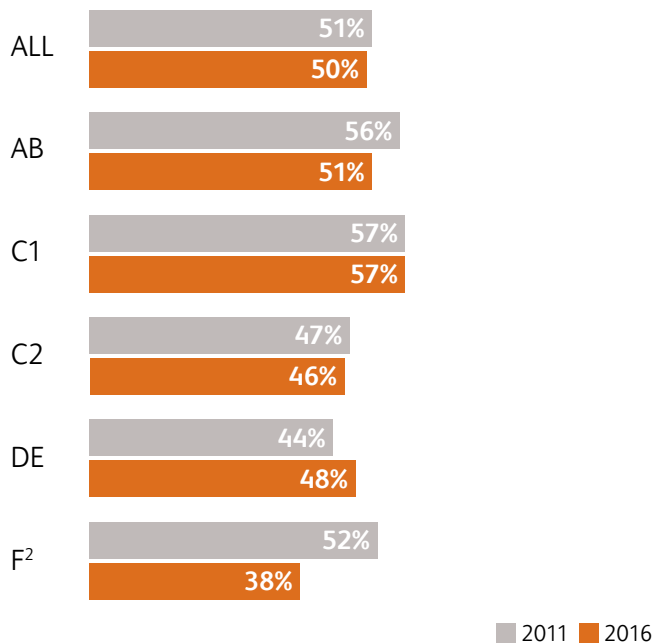- 53% (2011)
- 49% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016

PREDICTORS

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that not working full time is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Ireland having used a library in the past 12 months.
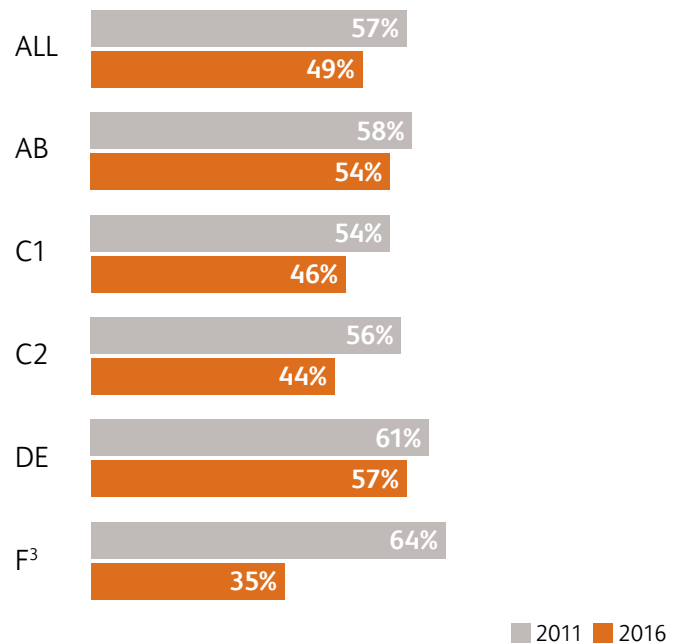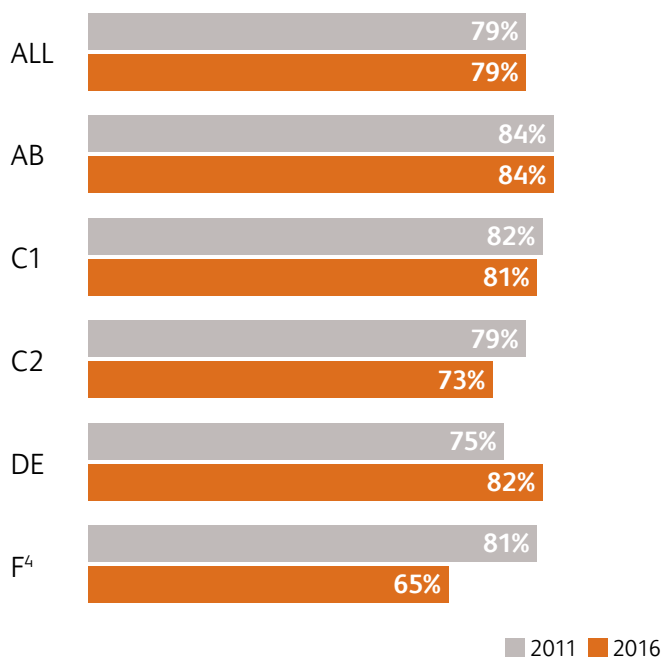
FOCUSING IN ON **SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP** IN IRELAND
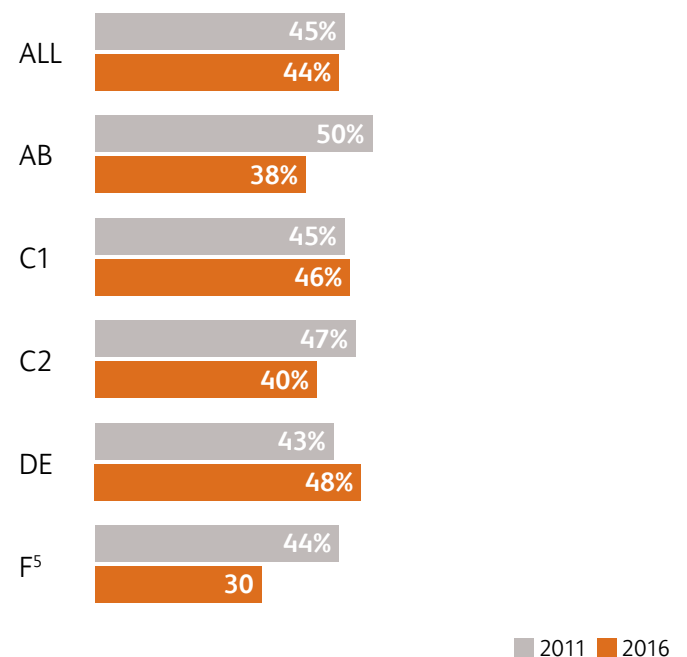
Library use by socio-economic group

	2011	2016
ALL	51%	50%
AB	56%	51%
C1	57%	57%
C2	47%	46%
DE	44%	48%
F[2]	52%	38%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Frequency of library use by socio-economic group

	2011	2016
ALL	57%	49%
AB	58%	54%
C1	54%	46%
C2	56%	44%
DE	61%	57%
F[3]	64%	35%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to community

	2011	2016
ALL	79%	79%
AB	84%	84%
C1	82%	81%
C2	79%	73%
DE	75%	82%
F[4]	81%	65%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to me personally

|	2011	2016
ALL	45%	44%
AB	50%	38%
C1	45%	46%
C2	47%	40%
DE	43%	48%
F[5]	44%	30

■ 2011 ■ 2016

2   Figure in this category should be treated as indicative rather than representative as the base size is small.
3   Figure in this category should be treated as indicative rather than representative as the base size is small.
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5   Figure in this category should be treated as indicative rather than representative as the base size is small.
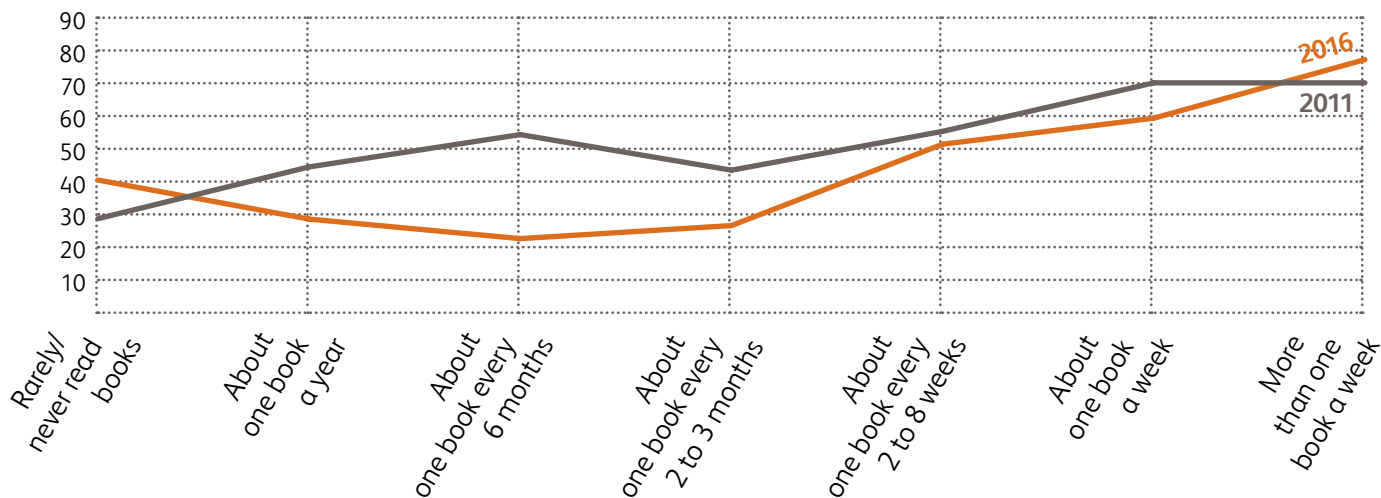
FOCUSING IN ON **READING BEHAVIOUR** IN IRELAND

Library use by **readership** (%)

Readership is defined in terms of books that are read in any format (eg a physical book, on a e-reader or other device, or audio book) not including books that are read for paid work or academic study.
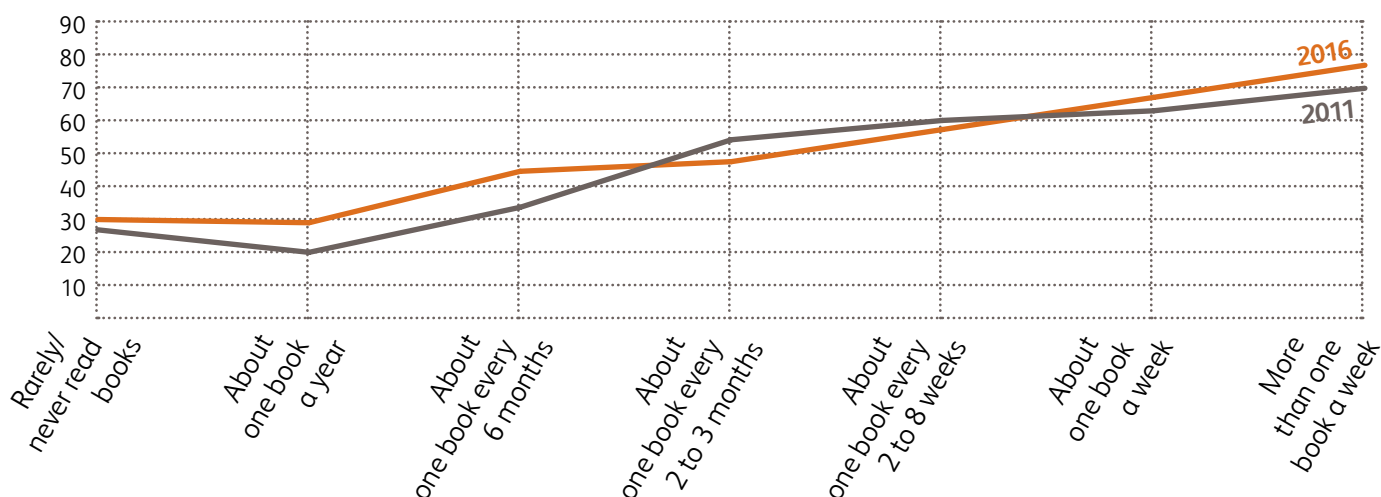
Frequency of library use by **readership** (%)

PREDICTORS

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that being a prolific reader is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Ireland having used a library in the past 12 months.

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that being a prolific reader is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Ireland having frequently used a library in the past 12 months.
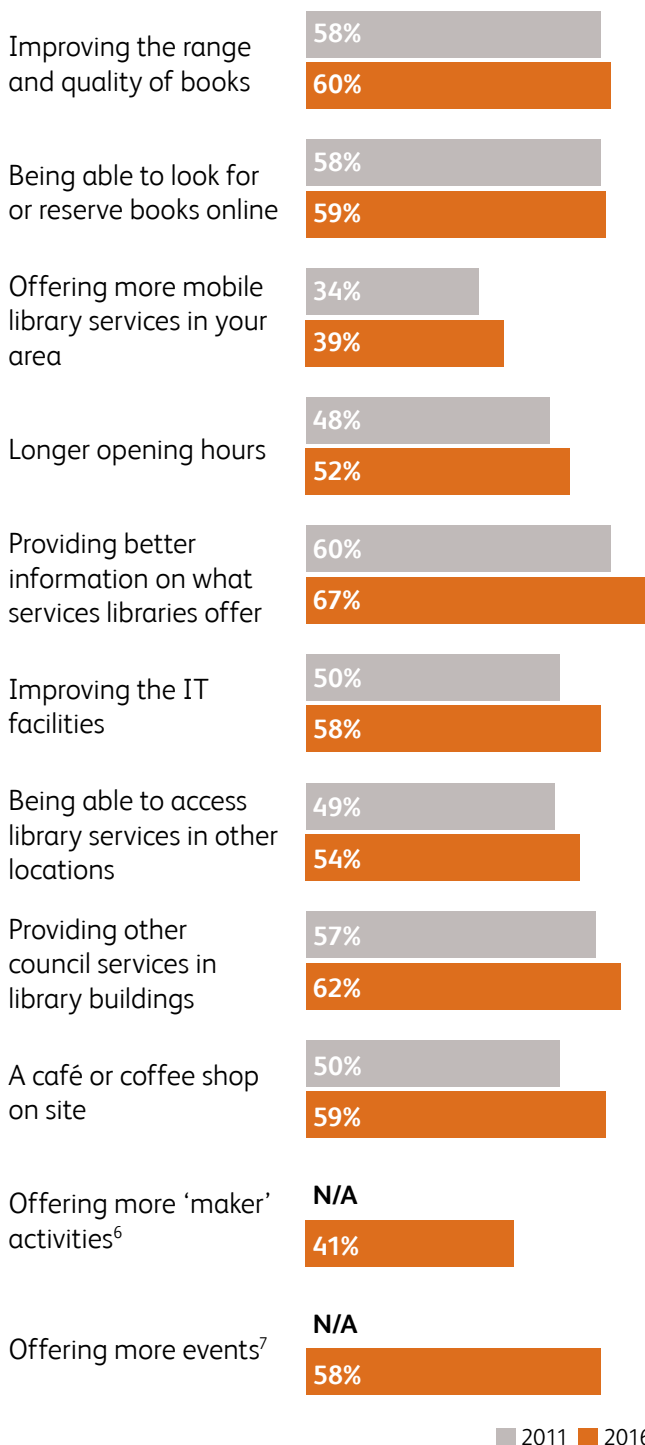
> Although there is a statistically significant relationship between library use and prolific readership, 30% of people who rarely or never read books use the library.

ATTITUDES TO **POSSIBLE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS** IN IRELAND

We asked people in Ireland to consider whether or not a number of potential changes would encourage them to make more use of library services. Overall, compared with 2011, respondents were more likely to be encouraged to use their library if services were to change or improve.

Support for suggested **improvement and changes** to service 2011 and 2016

Improving the range and quality of books
58%
60%

Being able to look for or reserve books online
58%
59%

Offering more mobile library services in your area
34%
39%

Longer opening hours
48%
52%

Providing better information on what services libraries offer
60%
67%

Improving the IT facilities
50%
58%

Being able to access library services in other locations
49%
54%

Providing other council services in library buildings
57%
62%

A café or coffee shop on site
50%
59%

Offering more 'maker' activities[6]
N/A
41%

Offering more events[7]
N/A
58%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

6   This was a new category for 2016.
7   This was a new category for 2016.

2011–2016

Most popular suggested improvements to the service in 2011

- Providing **better information** on the services that are delivered **(67%)**
- Providing **other council services** in the library building **(62%)**
- Improving the **range and quality** of books **(60%)**

Most popular suggested improvements to the service in 2016

- Providing **better information** on the services that are delivered **(60%)**
- Improving the **range and quality** of books **(58%)**
- To look for and reserve books **online (58%)**

USERS & NON-USERS

Most popular improvements among library users

- Providing **better information** on what services libraries offer **(81%)**
- Improving the **range and quality** of books **(76%)**
- Being able to look for and reserve books **online (73%)**

... and non-library users

- Offering **mobile services** in your area **(68%)**
- Offering more **'maker' activities (67%)**
- Offering **more events (55%)**

" Overall, users more likely to say suggested improvements would increase library use than non-users. "

ATTITUDES TO **POSSIBLE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS** IN IRELAND

2016

Most popular improvements for other groups:

Frequent users
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(83%)**

Men
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(62%)**

Women
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(72%)**

Households with children
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(71%)**

Households without children
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(65%)**

15-24 year olds
A café of coffee shop on site **(73%)**

25-34 year olds
Offering more events **(72%)**

35-54 year olds
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(70%)**

55+ year olds
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(60%)**

Full time employed
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(66%)**

Part time employed
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(72%)**

Not working
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(72%)**

Retired
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(59%)**

Social grade A[8]
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(64%)**

Social grade B
Improving the range and quality of books **(70%)**

Social grade C1
Being able to look for or reserve books online **(60%)**

Social grade C2
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(72%)**

Social grade D
Providing other council services in library buildings **(72%)**

Social grade E
Providing other council services in library buildings **(63%)**

Social grade F[9]
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(59%)**

Prolific readers
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(76%)**

Those that rarely/never read books
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(49%)**

8   Figure in this category should be treated as indicative rather than representative as the base size is small.
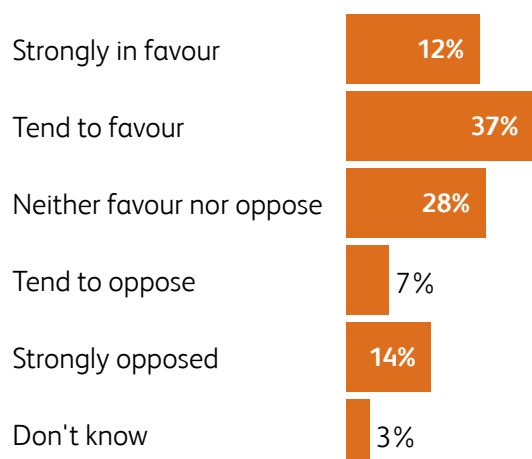9   Figure in this category should be treated as indicative rather than representative as the base size is small.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE **USE OF VOLUNTEERS** IN RELATION TO THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN IRELAND
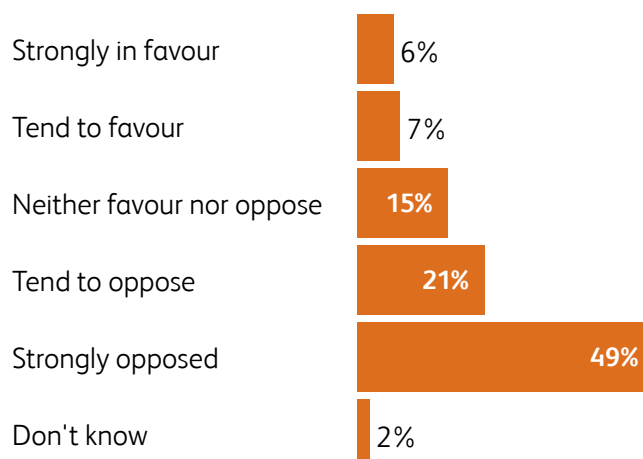
In 2016 we introduced a question to gauge people's opinions on volunteer involvement with public libraries.

### Use of volunteers to add value to the services paid staff offer

Strongly in favour	12%
Tend to favour	37%
Neither favour nor oppose	28%
Tend to oppose	7%
Strongly opposed	14%
Don't know	3%

JUST OVER **½** of people are in favour of volunteers adding value to the services that paid library staff offer

Use of volunteers to replace all paid staff

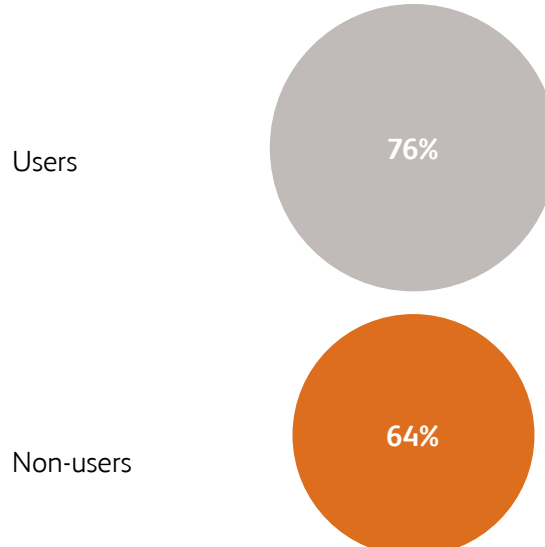|	
Strongly in favour	6%
Tend to favour	7%
Neither favour nor oppose	15%
Tend to oppose	21%
Strongly opposed	49%
Don't know	2%

JUST OVER **1 IN 10** people in favour of volunteers replacing all paid staff

In favour of volunteers adding value to work of paid staff

Users 56%

Non-users 49%

Opposed to volunteers replacing all paid staff

Users 76%

Non-users 64%
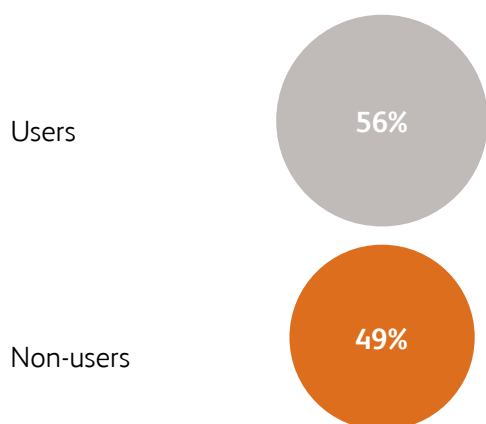
APPENDIX

Statistically significant differences and changes over time

1) OVERVIEW

Differences over time

FREQUENCY OF USE
- Decline (57% 2011, 49% 2016) = -8 percentage points

2) GENDER

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE
- Women (57%) higher than men (42%)
  = 15 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE
- Women (59%) higher than men (43%)
  = 16 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY
- Women (85%) higher than men (73%)
  = 12 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY
- Women (50%) higher than men (36%)
  = 14 percentage points

Differences over time

FREQUENCY OF USE
- Decline among men (54% 2011, 43% 2016)
  = -11 percentage points

3) HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE
- Households with children (62%) higher than households without (44%) = 18 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY
- Households with children (50%) higher than households without (40%) = -10 percentage points

Differences over time
- None

4) AGE

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE
- 15-24 year olds (62%) higher than over 55s (41%)
  = 21 percentage points
- 25-34 year olds (55%) higher than over 55s (41%)
  = 14 percentage points
- 35-54 year olds (49%) higher than over 55s (41%)
  = 8 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE
- 15-24 year olds (53%) higher than 25-34 year olds (38%)
  = 15 percentage points
- 35-54 year olds (52%) higher than 25-34 year olds (38%)
  = 14 percentage points
- Over 55s (59%) higher than 25-34 year olds (38%)
  = 21 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO THE COMMUNITY
- 15-24 year olds (62%) lower than 24-34 year olds (79%)
  = -17 percentage points
- 15-24 year olds (62%) lower than 35-54 year olds (81%)
  = -19 percentage points
- 15-24 year olds (62%) lower than over 55s (85%)
  = -23 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY
- 25-34 year olds (46%) higher than 15-24 year olds (34%)
  = -12 percentage points

Differences over time

FREQUENCY OF USE
- Decline among 25-34 year olds (56% 2011, 38% 2016)
  = -18 percentage points

5) WORKING STATUS

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- Part-time employees (61%) higher than full-time employees (43%) = 18 percentage points
- Part-time employees (61%) higher than retirees (47%) = 14 percentage points
- Not working higher (58%) than full-time employees (43%) = 15 percentage points
- Not working higher (58%) than retirees (47%) = 11 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Full-time employees lower (38%) than part-time employees (54%) = -16 percentage points
- Full-time employees lower (38%) than not working (59%) = -21 percentage points
- Full-time employees lower (38%) than retirees (54%) = 16 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Retirees (88%) higher than full-time employees (78%) = 10 percentage points
- Retirees (88%) higher than those not working (74%) = 14 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Full-time employees (37%) lower than part-time employees (51%) = -14 percentage points
- Full-time employees (37%) lower than not working (47%) = -10 percentage points
- Full-time employees (37%) lower than retirees (49%) = -12 percentage points

Differences over time

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Decline among full-time employees (53% 2011, 38% 2016) = -15 percentage points

6) SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP[10]

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- ABC1 (55%) higher than C2DE (46%) = 9 percentage points
- C1 (57%) higher than C2 (46%) = 11 percentage points
- C1 (57%) higher than DE (48%) = 9 percentage points
- C1 (57%) higher than F (38%) = 19 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- ABC1 (82%) higher than C2DEF (77%) = 5 percentage points
- AB (84%) higher than C2 (73%) = 11 percentage points
- AB (84%) higher than F (65%) = 19 percentage points
- C1 (81%) higher than C2 (73%) = 8 percentage points
- C1 (81%) higher than F (65%) = 16 percentage points
- DE (82%) higher than C2 (73%) = 9 percentage points
- DE (82%) higher than F (65%) = 17 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- C1 (46%) higher than F (30%) = 16 percentage points
- DE (48%) higher than AB (38%) = 10 percentage points
- DE (48%) higher than F (30%) = 18 percentage points

Differences over time

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Decline among ABC1 (55% 2011, 48% 2016) = -7 percentage points
- Decline among C2DE (60% 2011, 50% 2016) = -10 percentage points
- Decline among C1C2 (55% 2011, 45% 2016) = -10 percentage points
- Decline among F (64% 2011, 35% 2016) = 29 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Increase among DE (75% 2011, 82% 2016) = 7 percentage points
- Decline among F (81% 2011, 65% 2016) = -16 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- Decline among AB (50% 2011, 38% 2016) = -12 percentage points

7) READERSHIP

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- Prolific readers (65%) higher than other readers (37%) = 28 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

Prolific readers (39%) higher than other readers (11%) = 28 percentage points

Differences over time

- None

10 Tests carried out for: ABC1 / C2DEF; AB / C1C2 / DEF; AB/C1/C2/ DE / F

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