# Shining a Light

Northern 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 Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland **1,013 adults** over the age of 16 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.
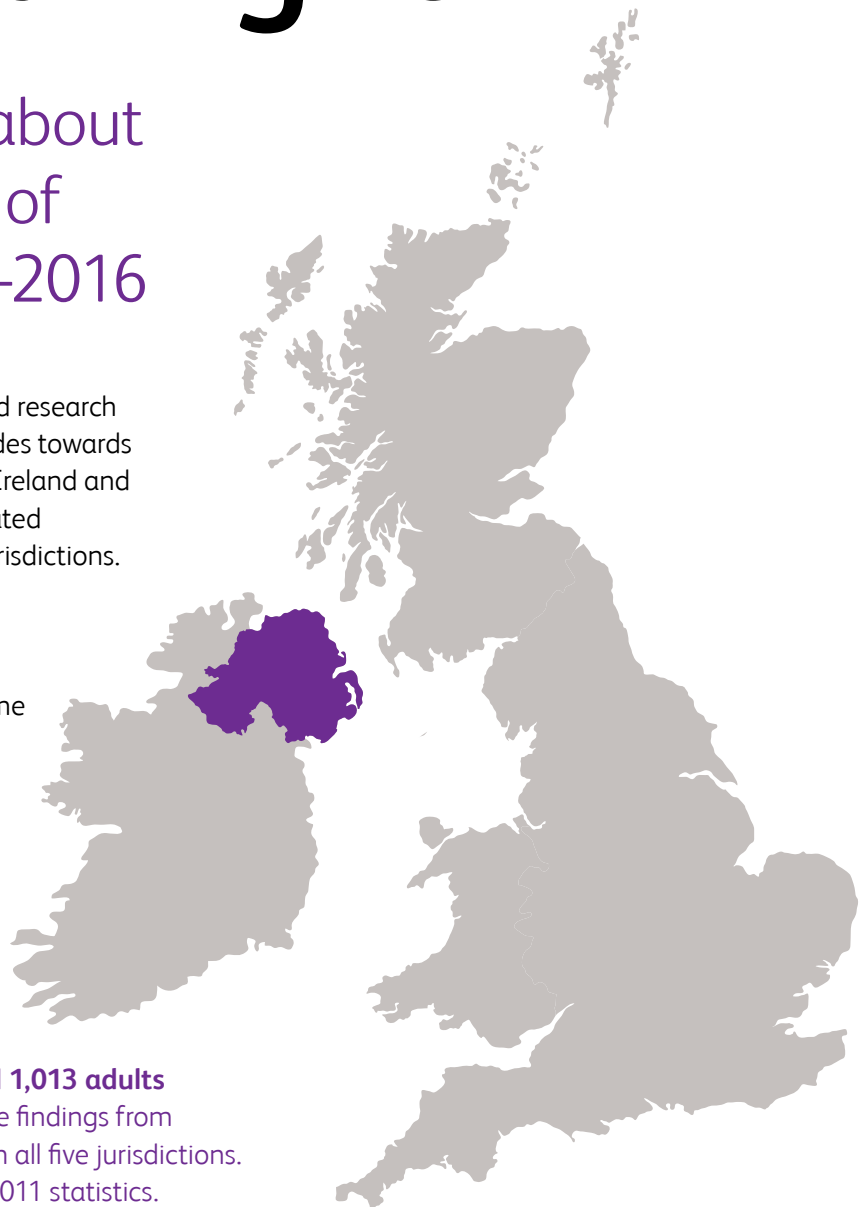
DATA FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

The factsheets covering the other four jurisdictions and a booklet comparing the various jurisdictions can be downloaded at **http://bit.ly/shining-a-light**. If you would like to access the datasets in SPSS format please contact **info@carnegieuk.org**

THE PICTURE IN **2016**

The data shows that almost 3/4 (74%) of people in Northern Ireland say that public libraries are important for their communities and around 2/5 of people (43%) used a library in the previous year. Around two thirds (37%) say libraries are important for themselves personally. These findings are comparable with those from other jurisdictions.

Women and people with children in their household are more likely to use libraries – and use them frequently – than men and those without children in their household respectively.

Over 55s are less likely to use libraries than other age groups but variation in frequent use by age is smaller. There is a 5 percentage point range in library use by working status. In terms of key variations by socio-economic group, ABC1 is more likely to use the library than C2DE, AB is more likely to use the library than C1C2, C2 and DE, and C1 is more likely to use the library than C2 or DE. However, socio-economic group has less impact on frequency of library use.

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 – library 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.

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

Northern Ireland sees an increase of three percentage points in library use from 40%-43%, and a decline in frequent use (51%-45%). Key changes in use 2011-2016 can be seen among those not working (+7 percentage points), socio-economic group C1 (-9 percentage points) and those aged 35-54 (+10 percentage points). Key changes in frequency of use include those among men (-13 percentage points), households without children (-16 percentage points), and socio-economic groups AB (-19 percentage points) and C2 (-13 percentage points).

Northern Ireland presents a mixed picture in terms of changing levels of support for improvements and changes to encourage greater library use, and people broadly support volunteers to augment existing staff but are opposed to volunteers replacing staff.

Notes
There are two differences 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.

- In 2016 data in Northern Ireland by working status was collated by the categories 'not working' and 'working' in contrast to 2011 where data was collated by the categories 'full time employee', 'part time employee', 'not working' and 'retired'.

PREDICTORS

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

- Being a woman
- Having children in the household
- Not working
- Being in socio-economic group ABC1
- Being a 'prolific' reader

THE **OVERALL PICTURE** IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Library use

2011

40%

2016

43%

2016

AROUND
2/5
of people use libraries

2011–2016

↑ Increase in library use

+3

Frequency of library use

2011

51%

2016

45%

2016

AROUND
2/5
of library users are frequent users

2011–2016

↓ Decline in frequent library use

-6

Importance of libraries to the community and personally

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Community   Personally

	Community	Personally
Essential	18% / 23%	11% / 11%
Very important	47% / 51%	28% / 25%
Fairly important	20% / 20%	14% / 18%
Not very important	8% / 4%	25% / 28%
Not at all important	5% / 2%	21% / 18%
Don't know	2% / 2%	1% / –
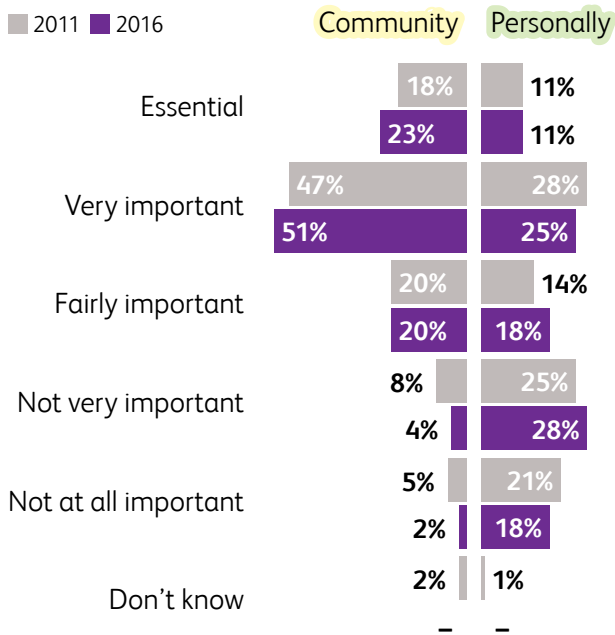
2016

AROUND
3/4
of people say public libraries important for communities

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

Library users more likely to say libraries important for community and for themselves personally
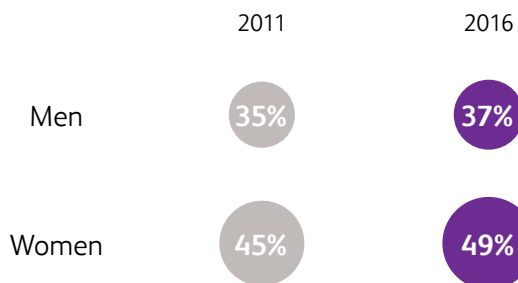
2016

Opinions of Users and Non-users

Community   Personally

User **88%**   **63%**

Non user **64%**   17%
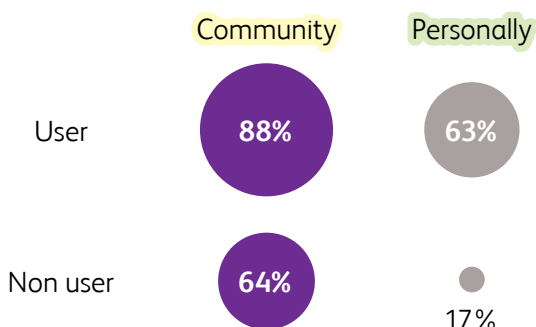
2016 SUMMARY

The overall picture in Northern Ireland

Use	**43%**
Frequency of use	**45%**
Importance to community	**74%**
Importance personally	**37%**

FOCUSING IN ON **GENDER** IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Library use by **gender**
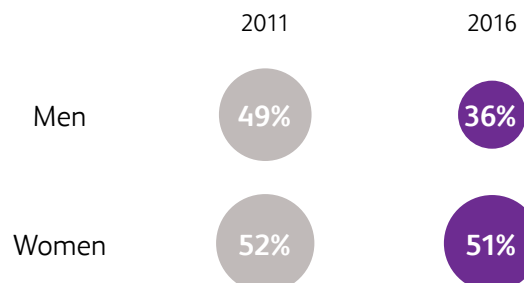
	2011	2016
Men	35%	37%
Women	45%	49%

Frequency of library use by **gender**

	2011	2016
Men	49%	36%
Women	52%	51%

Importance of libraries to community

	2011	2016
Men	61%	72%
Women	70%	76%

Importance of libraries to me personally

	2011	2016
Men	34%	29%
Women	44%	44%
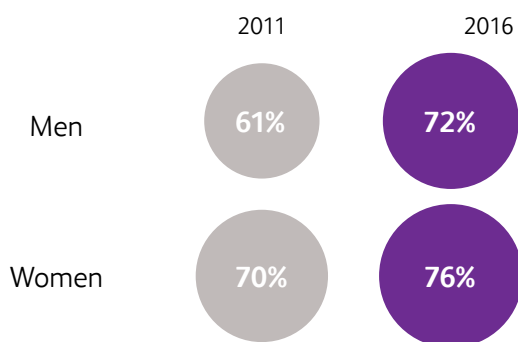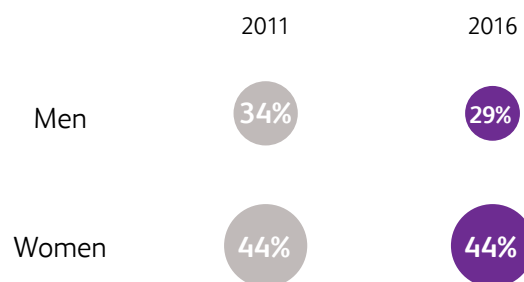
PREDICTORS

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

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

Library use by **households with children**
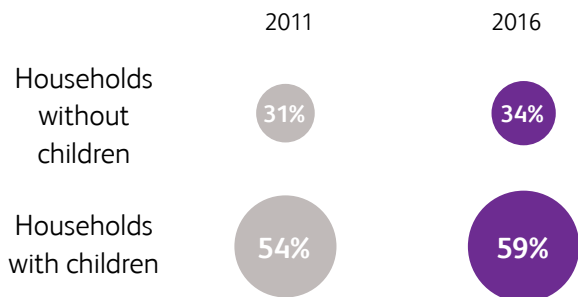
	2011	2016
Households without children	31%	34%
Households with children	54%	59%

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

	2011	2016
Households without children	54%	38%
Households with children	48%	52%

Importance of libraries to community

	2011	2016
Households without children	65%	72%
Households with children	66%	78%

Importance of libraries to me personally

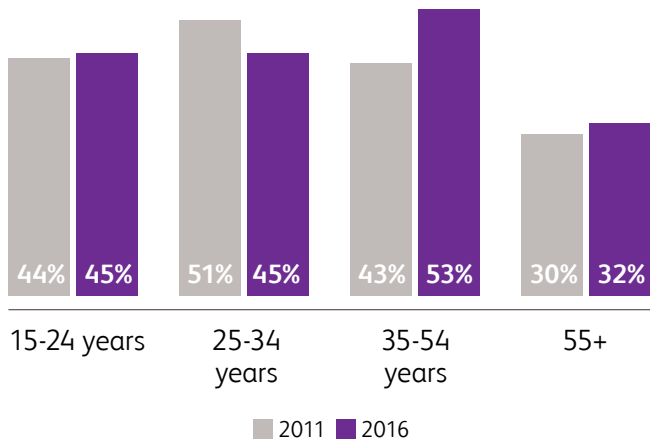|	2011	2016
Households without children	35%	31%
Households with children	47%	46%
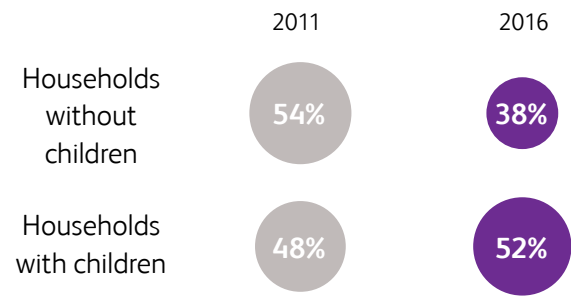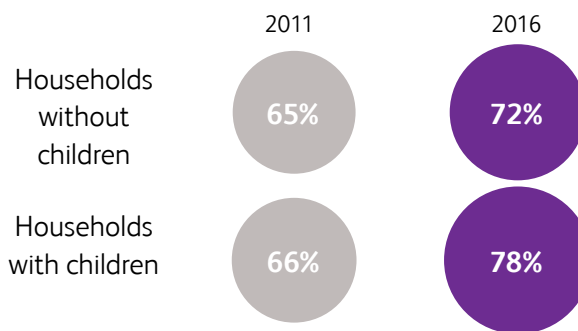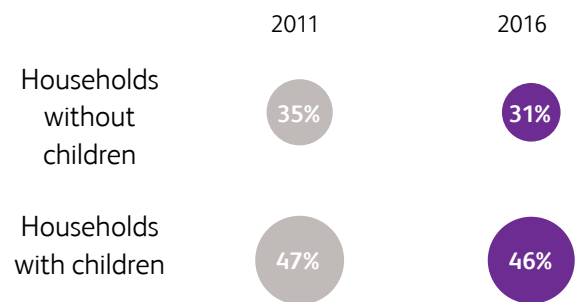
PREDICTORS

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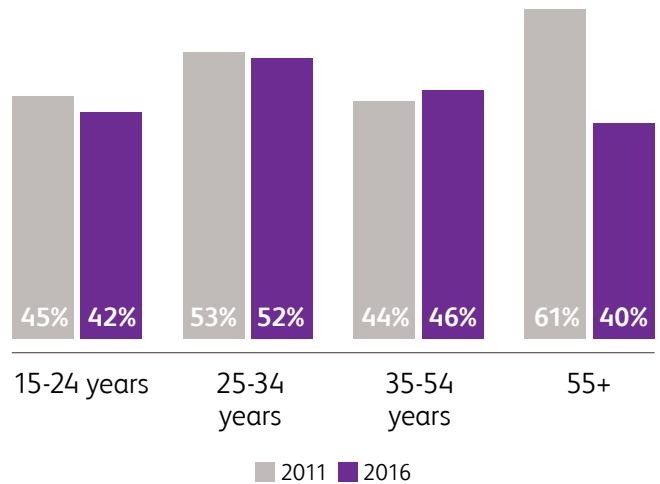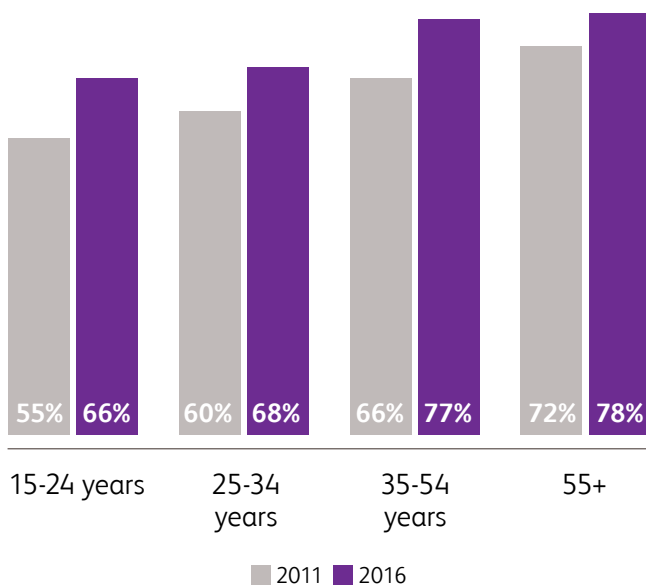
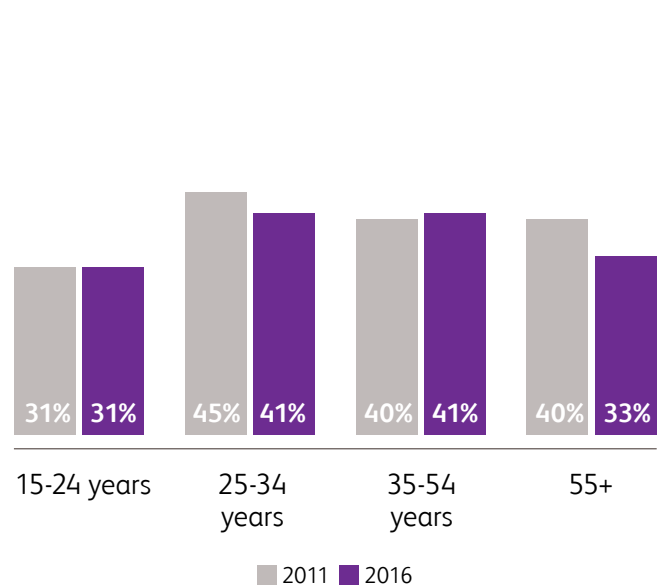# FOCUSING IN ON **AGE** IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Library use by *age*

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	44%	51%	43%	30%
2016	45%	45%	53%	32%

2011 ■ 2016 ■

Frequency of library use by *age*

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	45%	53%	44%	61%
2016	42%	52%	46%	40%

2011 ■ 2016 ■

Importance of libraries to community

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	55%	60%	66%	72%
2016	66%	68%	77%	78%

2011 ■ 2016 ■

Importance of libraries to me personally

	15-24 years	25-34 years	35-54 years	55+
2011	31%	45%	40%	40%
2016	31%	41%	41%	33%

2011 ■ 2016 ■

FOCUSING IN ON **WORKING STATUS** IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Library use by **working status**
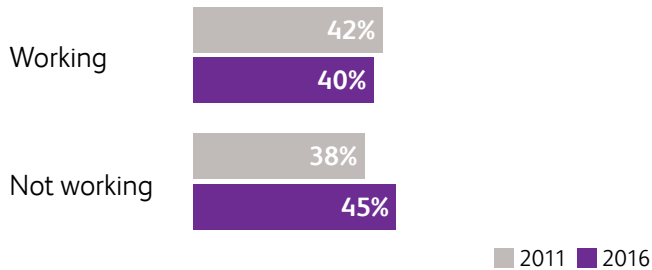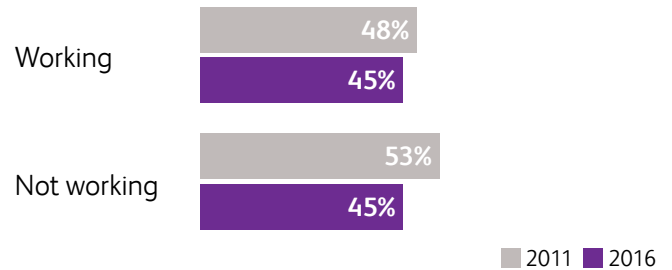
Working
42% (2011)
40% (2016)

Not working
38% (2011)
45% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Frequency of library use by **working status**

Working
48% (2011)
45% (2016)

Not working
53% (2011)
45% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to community

Working
65% (2011)
75% (2016)

Not working
66% (2011)
74% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to me personally

Working
41% (2011)
34% (2016)

Not working
38% (2011)
38% (2016)

■ 2011 ■ 2016
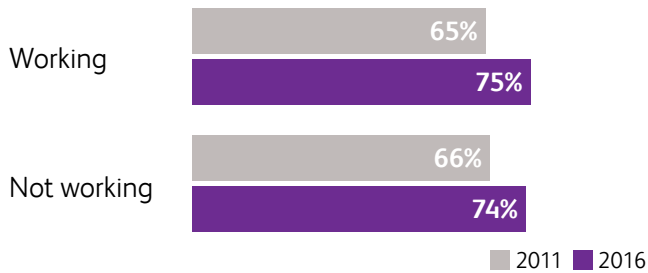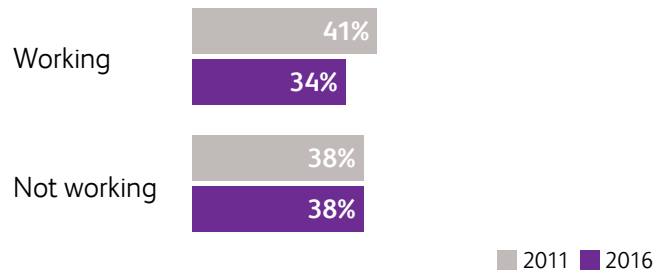
PREDICTORS

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that not working is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Northern Ireland having used a library in the past 12 months.
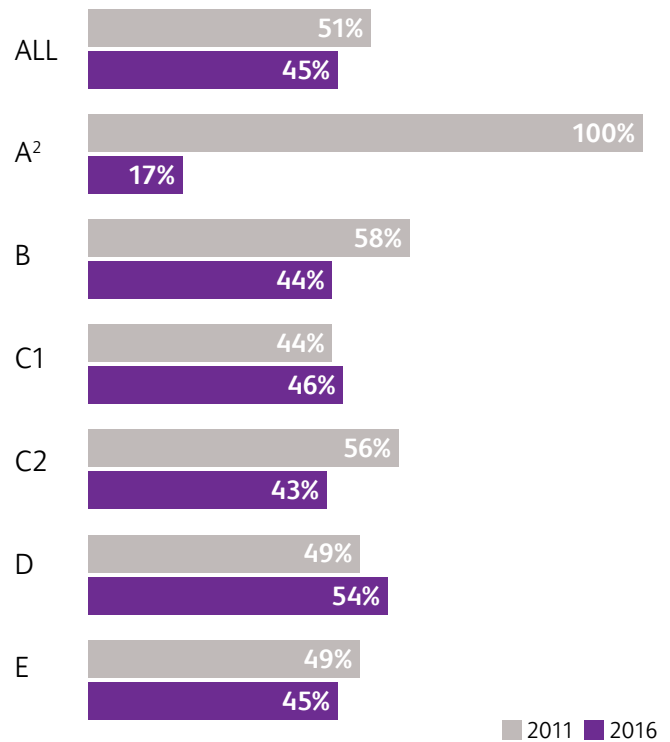
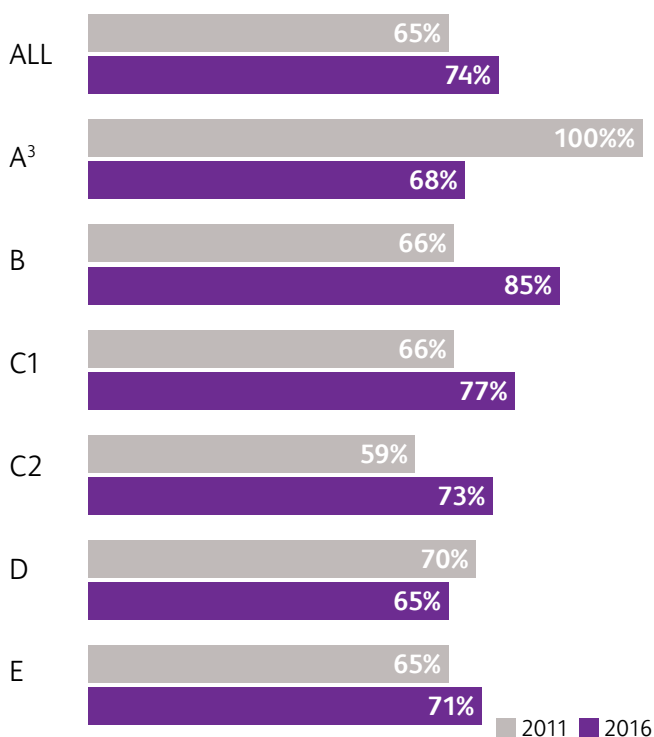# FOCUSING IN ON **SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP** IN NORTHERN IRELAND
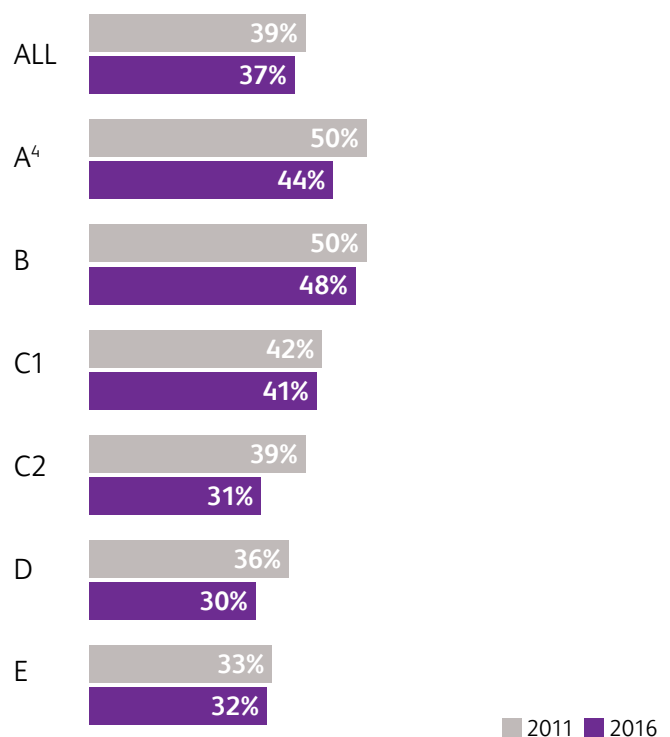
Library use by socio-economic group
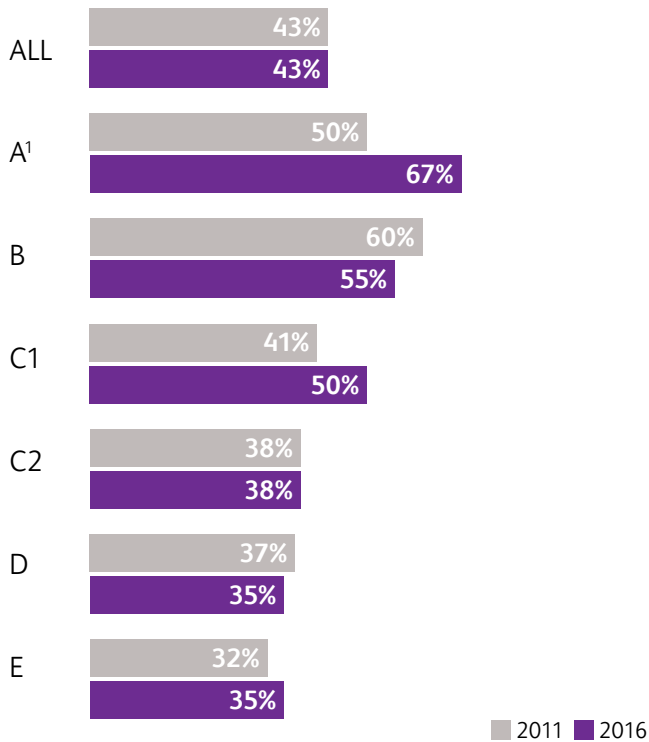
	2011	2016
ALL	43%	43%
A[1]	50%	67%
B	60%	55%
C1	41%	50%
C2	38%	38%
D	37%	35%
E	32%	35%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Frequency of library use by socio-economic group

	2011	2016
ALL	51%	45%
A[2]	100%	17%
B	58%	44%
C1	44%	46%
C2	56%	43%
D	49%	54%
E	49%	45%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to community

	2011	2016
ALL	65%	74%
A[3]	100%%	68%
B	66%	85%
C1	66%	77%
C2	59%	73%
D	70%	65%
E	65%	71%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

Importance of libraries to me personally

|	2011	2016
ALL	39%	37%
A[4]	50%	44%
B	50%	48%
C1	42%	41%
C2	39%	31%
D	36%	30%
E	33%	32%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

1-4: Figures in these categories should be treated as indicative rather than representative as the base size is small.
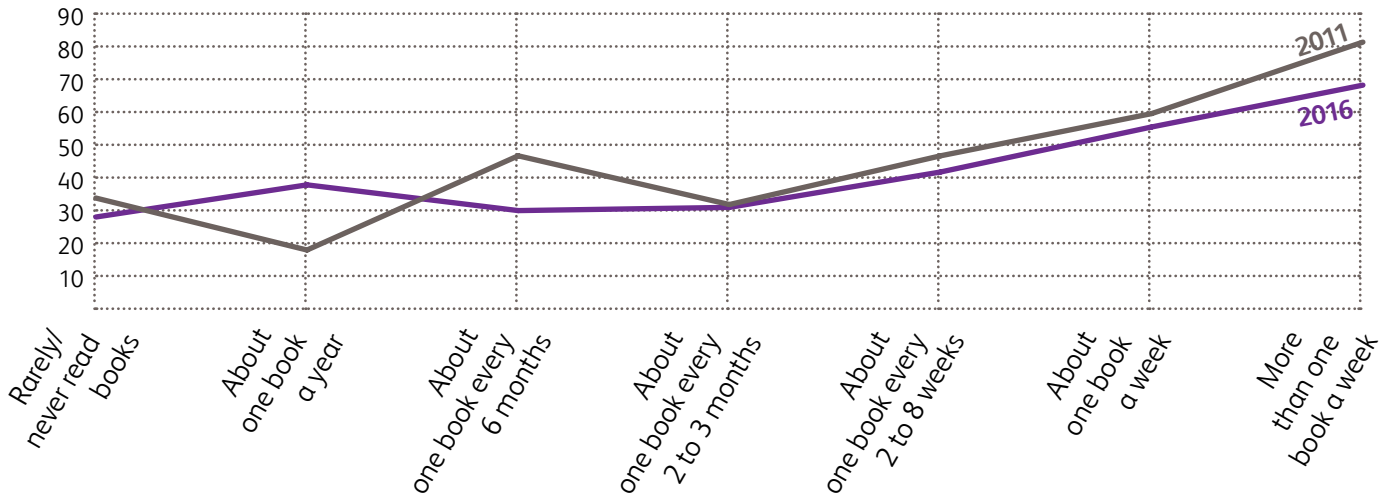
FOCUSING IN ON **READING BEHAVIOUR** IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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.
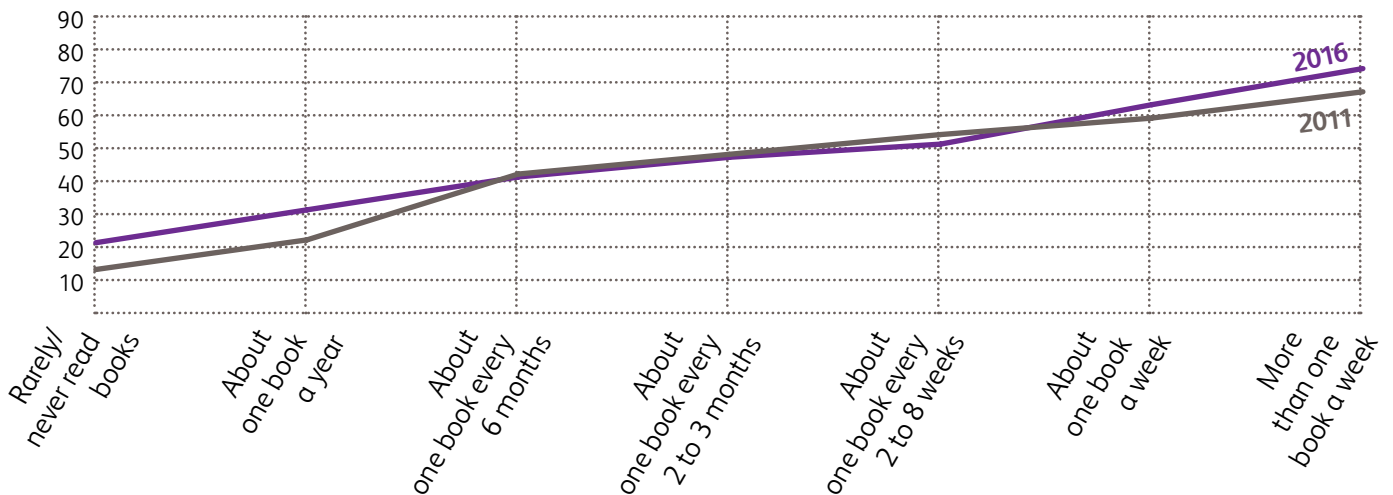
Frequency of library use by **readership** (%)

PREDICTORS

Logistic regression analysis, which controls for other factors, shows that being a prolific reader is a predictor for the likelihood of people in Northern 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 Northern Ireland having used a library frequently in the past 12 months.
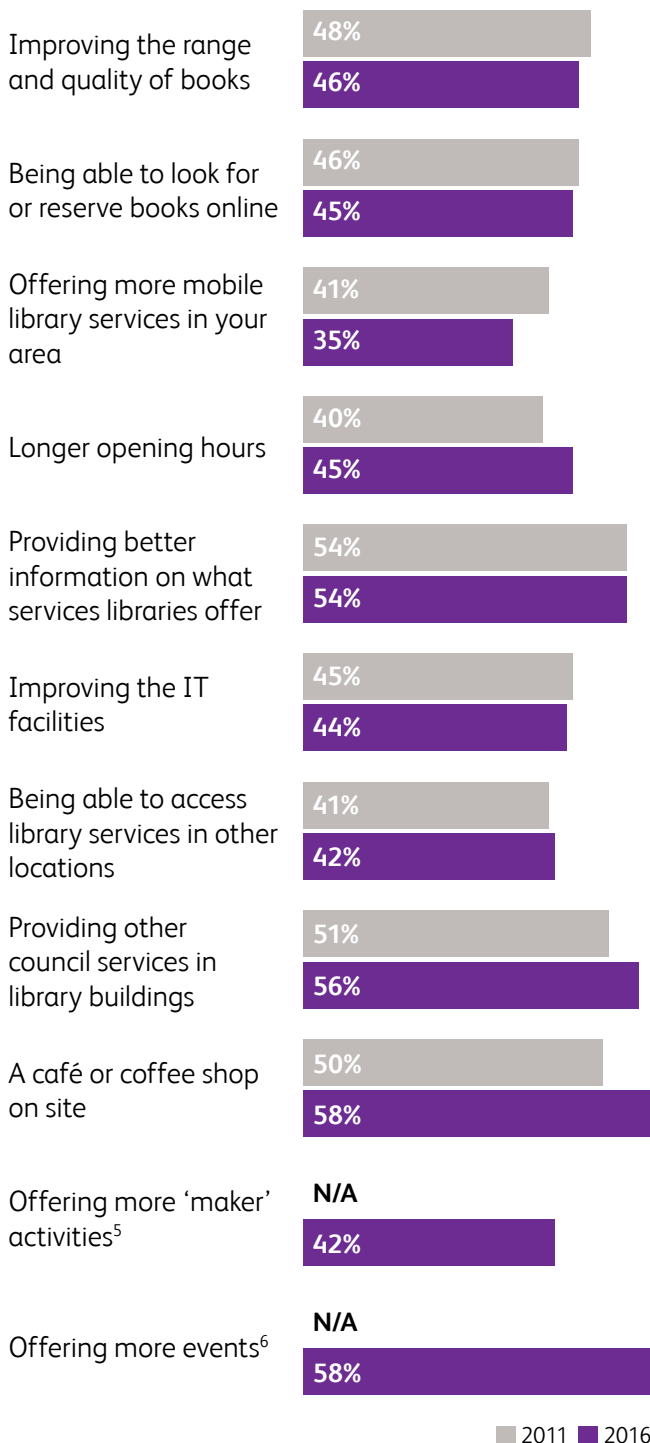
" Although there is a statistically significant relationship between library use and prolific readership, 21% of people who rarely or never read books use the library. "

ATTITUDES TO **POSSIBLE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS** IN NORTHERN IRELAND

We asked people in Northern Ireland to consider whether or not a number of potential changes would encourage them to make more use of library services. Northern Ireland presents a mixed picture in terms of changing levels of support for improvements to encourage greater library use.

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

Improving the range and quality of books
- 48%
- 46%

Being able to look for or reserve books online
- 46%
- 45%

Offering more mobile library services in your area
- 41%
- 35%

Longer opening hours
- 40%
- 45%

Providing better information on what services libraries offer
- 54%
- 54%

Improving the IT facilities
- 45%
- 44%

Being able to access library services in other locations
- 41%
- 42%

Providing other council services in library buildings
- 51%
- 56%

A café or coffee shop on site
- 50%
- 58%

Offering more 'maker' activities[5]
- N/A
- 42%

Offering more events[6]
- N/A
- 58%

■ 2011 ■ 2016

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

2011–2016

Most popular suggested improvements to the service in 2011

ⓘ Providing **better information** on what services libraries offer **(54%)**

🏛 Providing **other council services** in library buildings **(51%)**

☕ Opening a **café or coffee shop** in the library **(50%)**

Most popular suggested improvements to the service in 2016

🎤 Offering **more events (58%)**

☕ Opening a **café or coffee shop** in the library **(58%)**

🏛 Providing **other council services** in library buildings **(56%)**

USERS & NON-USERS

Most popular improvements among library users

🎤 Offering **more events** (75%)

ⓘ Providing **better information** on what services libraries offer (73%)

☕ Opening a **café or coffee shop** in the library (71%)

... and non-library users

☕ Opening a **café or coffee shop** in the library (48%)

🎤 **Offering more events** (45%)

🏛 Providing **other council services** in library buildings (45%)

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

ATTITUDES TO **POSSIBLE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS** IN NORTHERN IRELAND

2016

Most popular improvements for other groups:

Frequent users
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(73%)**

Men
Offering more events **(55%)**

Women
Providing other council services in library buildings **(63%)**

Households with children
Offering more events **(69%)**

Households without children
A café or coffee shop on site **(54%)**

15-24 year olds
Offering more events **(75%)**

25-34 year olds
Offering more events **(68%)**

35-54 year olds
Providing other council services in library buildings **(63%)**

55+ year olds
Providing other council services in library buildings **(46%)**

Working
Offering more events **(59%)**

Not working
Offering more events **(57%)**

Social grade A[7]
Providing better information on what services libraries offer **(67%)**

Social grade B
Offering more events **(68%)**

Social grade C1
A café or coffee shop on site **(58%)**

Social grade C2
A café or coffee shop on site **(56%)**

Social grade D
Offering more events **(59%)**

Social grade E
Providing other council services in library buildings **(57%)**

Prolific readers
Offering more events **(67%)**

Those that rarely/never read books
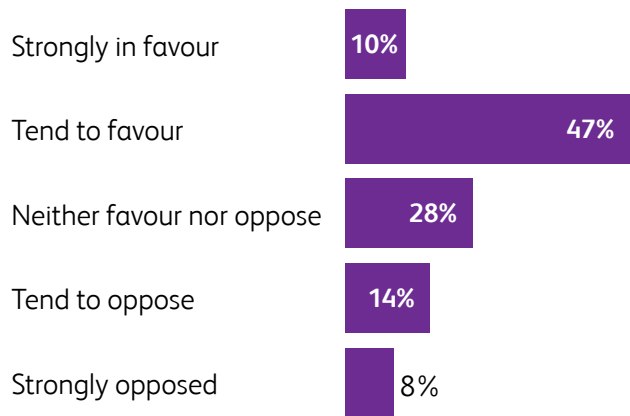Providing other council services in library buildings **(44%)**

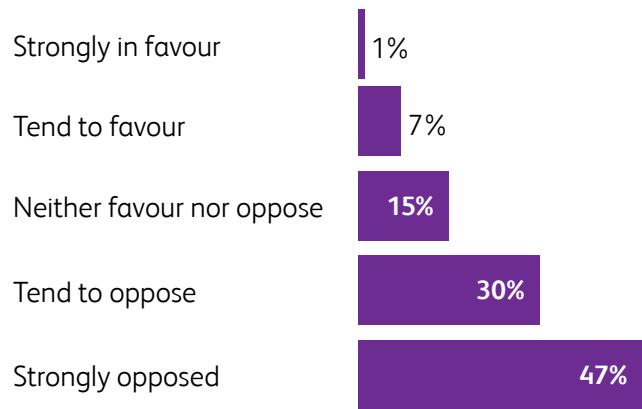7   Figure in this category should be treated as indicative as the base size is small.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE **USE OF VOLUNTEERS** IN RELATION TO THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN NORTHERN 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	10%
Tend to favour	47%
Neither favour nor oppose	28%
Tend to oppose	14%
Strongly opposed	8%

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

In favour of volunteers adding value to work of paid staff

Users 62%

Non-users 53%

Use of volunteers to replace all paid staff

Strongly in favour	1%
Tend to favour	7%
Neither favour nor oppose	15%
Tend to oppose	30%
Strongly opposed	47%

LESS THAN 1 IN 10 people in favour of volunteers replacing all paid staff

Opposed to volunteers replacing all paid staff

Users 82%

Non-users 73%
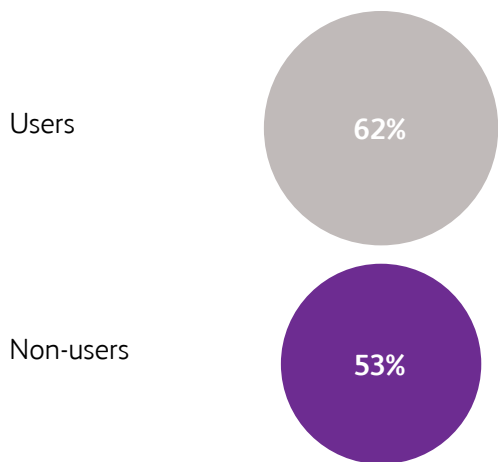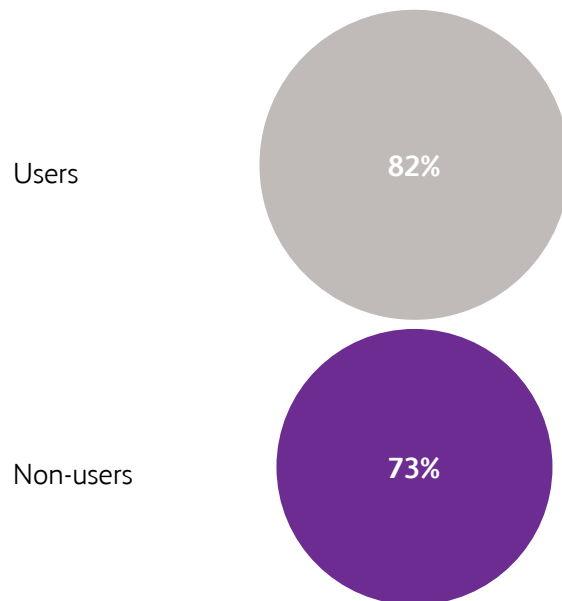
Statistically significant differences and changes over time

1) OVERVIEW

Differences over time

IMPORTANCE TO THE COMMUNITY

Increase (65% 2011, 74% 2016) = +9 percentage points

2) GENDER

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- Women (49%) higher than men (37%) = 12 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Women (51%) higher than men (36%) = 15 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- Women (44%) higher than men (29%) = 15 percentage points

Differences over time

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Decline among men (49% 2011, 36% 2016) = -13 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Increase among men (61% 2011, 72% 2016) = 11 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Increase among women (70% 2011, 76% 2016) = 6 percentage points

3) HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- Households with children (59%) higher than those without (34%) = 25 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Households with children (52%) higher than those without (38%) = 14 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Households with children (78%) higher than those without (72%) = 6 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- Households with children (46%) higher than those without (31%) = 15 percentage points

Differences over time

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Decline among households without children (54% 2011, 38% 2016) = -16 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Increase among households with children (66% 2011, 78% 2016) = 12 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- Increase among households without children (65% 2011, 72% 2016) = 7 percentage points

4) AGE

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- 15-24 year olds (45%) higher than over 55s (32%) = 13 percentage points
- 25-34 year olds (45%) higher than over 55s (32%) = 13 percentage points
- 35-54 year olds (53%) higher than over 55s (32%) = 21 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- 35-24 year olds (77%) higher than 15-24 year olds (65%) = 11 percentage points
- 35-24 year olds (77%) higher than 25-34 year olds (68%) = 9 percentage points
- Over 55s (78%) higher than 15-24% year olds (65%) = 12 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- 35-24 year olds (41%) higher than 15-24 year olds (31%) = 10 percentage points
- 35-24 year olds (41%) higher than over 55s (35%) = 6 percentage points

Differences over time

LIBRARY USE

- Increase among 35-54 year olds (43% 2011, 53% 2016) = 10 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Decline among over 55s (61% 2011, 40% 2016) = 21 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Increase among 15-24 year olds (55% 2011, 66% 2016)
  = 10 percentage points
- Increase among 35-54 year olds (66% 2011, 77% 2016)
  = 10 percentage points

5) WORKING STATUS

Differences between groups

- None

Differences over time

LIBRARY USE

- Increase among those not working (38% 2011, 45% 2016)
  = 7 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Increase among those working (65% 2011, 75% 2016)
  = 10 percentage points
- Increase among those not working (66% 2011, 74% 2016)
  = 8 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- Decline among those working (41% 2011, 34% 2016)
  = -7 percentage points

6) SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP[8]

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- ABC1 (52%) higher than C2DE (36%) = 16 percentage points
- AB (56%) higher than C1C2 (44%) = 12 percentage points
- AB (56%) higher than C2 (38%) = 14 percentage points
- AB (56%) higher than DE (35%) = 21 percentage points
- C1 (50%) higher than C2 (38%) = 12 percentage points
- C1 (50%) higher than DE (35%) = 15 percentage points
- C1C2 (44%) higher than DE (35%) = 9 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- ABC1 (80%) higher than C2DE (70%) = 10 percentage points
- AB (83%) higher than C1C2 (75%) = 8 percentage points
- AB (83%) higher than C2 (73%) = 10 percentage points
- AB (83%) higher than DE (68%) = 15 percentage points
- C1 (77%) higher than DE (68%) = 9 percentage points
- C1C2 (75%) higher than DE (68%) = 7 percentage points

IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY

- ABC1 (44%) higher than C2DE (31%) = 13 percentage points
- AB (48%) higher than C1C2 (36%) = 12 percentage points
- AB (48%) higher than C2 (31%) = 17 percentage points
- AB (48%) higher than DE (31%) = 17 percentage points
- C1 (41%) higher than C2 (31%) = 10 percentage points
- C1 (41%) higher than DE (31%) = 10 percentage points

Differences over time

LIBRARY USE

- Increase among C1 (41% 2011, 50% 2016)
  = 9 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Decline among AB (60% 2011, 41% 2016)
  = 19 percentage points
- Decline among C1 (56% 2011, 43% 2016)
  = 13 percentage points

IMPORTANCE TO COMMUNITY

- Increase among ABC1 (66% 2011, 80% 2016)
  = 14 percentage points
- Increase among C1C2 (63% 2011, 75% 2016)
  = 12 percentage points
- Increase among AB (67% 2011, 83% 2016)
  = 16 percentage points
- Increase among C1 (66% 2011, 77% 2016)
  = 11 percentage points
- Increase among C2 (59% 2011, 73% 2016)
  = 14 percentage points

7) READERSHIP

Differences between groups

LIBRARY USE

- Prolific readers (69%) higher than other readers (50%)
  = 19 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Prolific readers (37%) higher than other readers (16%)
  = 21 percentage points

Differences over time

LIBRARY USE

- Increase among infrequent readers (14% 2011, 22% 2016)
  = 8 percentage points

FREQUENCY OF USE

- Increase among infrequent readers (4% 2011, 8% 2016)
  = 4 percentage points

8   Tests carried out for: ABC1 / C2DE; AB / C1 / C2 / DE; AB / C1C2 / DE

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