



Ipsos MORI Scotland

**Secondary Analysis:
Comparing data on the use of
and attitudes towards public
libraries in the UK and Ireland**

A Report for the Carnegie UK Trust

Ciaran Mulholland and Colin Hockaday



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1. Introduction

Background

In 2016, the Carnegie UK Trust commissioned Ipsos MORI Scotland to undertake a study examining the use of, and attitudes towards, public libraries in the UK and Ireland. The research findings have been published in a series of reports under the title ‘Shining a Light’, available to download at <http://bit.ly/shining-a-light>. This research was, in part, a repeat of a 2011 Ipsos MORI Scotland study, published under the title ‘A New Chapter’.

In both 2011 and 2016, research was conducted by placing questions on omnibus surveys in Scotland, Wales, England, Northern Ireland and Ireland. The surveys covered a range of topics including:

- use of libraries and frequency of library use;
- the importance of libraries; and
- views on potential changes to libraries.

Given the fact that data on public libraries is also collated by other organisations, the Carnegie UK Trust commissioned Ipsos MORI Scotland to conduct secondary analysis of existing data sets in order to compare the Trust’s findings with existing data and provide a wider context for the findings. This report presents the results of that additional analysis. The focus of the analysis was on the following topics:

- library usage
- frequency of use
- reasons for use (top mentions)
- reasons for non-use (top mentions)
- user satisfaction
- what would encourage more use

National level data on the use of public libraries has been captured to varying degrees across the UK and Ireland in the past five years. The Scottish Household Survey, the Taking Part Survey in England and the

Continuous Household Survey in Northern Ireland each include questions on library usage, but there is a lack of recent comparable data for Wales or Ireland.

In Wales, public library data was captured in the Living in Wales Survey, which ran from 2004 until 2008. Its successor, the National Survey for Wales does not include questions specifically about use of libraries. Indeed, the Welsh Government’s Expert Review of Public Libraries in Wales¹ (2014), highlighted that “*the most recent comprehensive survey of public library use and non-users was carried out by Ipsos MORI for the Carnegie UK Trust.*” Therefore, there is no more recent data available at a national level for Wales.

In Ireland, data on public library use is derived from local authority administrative returns and is therefore fundamentally different from survey data. Therefore, as in 2011, there is no data available at a national level for Ireland.

The secondary research was conducted in November 2016 and as such only includes comparison with data published up to this point.

Our approach

In order to conduct the secondary analysis we analysed publicly available data on library services taken from three large-scale national surveys across three jurisdictions in the UK:

- The Taking Part Survey – England
- The Scottish Household Survey – Scotland
- The Continuous Household Survey – Northern Ireland

1 <http://gov.wales/docs/dra/h/publications/141021libraries-review-report-en.pdf>

Table 1.1 – Survey data used in each jurisdiction for comparative purposes

Location	Source	Method	Frequency	Sample size
Scotland	Scottish Household Survey	Face-to-face; CAPI	Annual	c. 10,000
England	Taking Part: the National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport	Face-to-face; CAPI	Annual	c. 14,000
Northern Ireland	Continuous Household Survey (Northern Ireland)	Face-to-face; CAPI	Annual	c. 3,500

Details of each of these surveys are shown in Table 1.1.

Our approach comprised three stages:

- We accessed and downloaded relevant data from the UK Data Archive.
- We collated data from each available year for each survey, checking which indicators were available in each jurisdiction and across the different jurisdictions, and prepared the data for analysis.
- We analysed the data, including, where available, generating trends over various years within each jurisdiction, and making comparisons between jurisdictions.

Table 2.2 outlines in detail the different aspects of library usage covered by each survey since 2011. Please note that we have focused on those aspects/questions which were relevant to the focus of the research and have therefore not reported on all the available data. Although the surveys cover similar aspects of library provision, the precise wording of questions (for example, the definition of library ‘service’ used) and the way surveys are administered, sometimes differs. We have highlighted such differences in question wording where it is appropriate to do so, but care should nevertheless be taken when comparing the results from different surveys.

Key findings

The key findings that emerged from the secondary analysis were:

- In each of the jurisdictions, around a third of adults had used a library in the past 12 months. This level

was largely unchanged in the past five years that data was available.

- The level of library use was lower than that recorded in the 2016 surveys conducted by Ipsos MORI, which found that around half of those surveyed had used a library in the past 12 months (although the difference in question wording should be borne in mind when drawing such comparisons).
- Among those that had used libraries, around half had used the library at least once a month.
- The level of those who had used a library at least once a month was broadly similar to that recorded in the 2016 surveys conducted by Ipsos MORI, which found that over 2 in 5 (41-49%) of library users had used a library at least once a month.
- In Northern Ireland the main reason for using libraries was to borrow, return or renew books. In England, common reasons respondents gave for having visited libraries more than in the past were: to encourage their children to read books, wanting to read more, and because they had more free time.
- The most common reason for not visiting libraries was a lack of interest or a preference to do other things with their spare time.
- In each jurisdiction, the vast majority of users were satisfied with the library service, a trend that has remained steady in the last five years.

Table 1.2: List of indicators available in each survey

	Scottish Household Survey					Taking Part Survey in England					Continuous Household Survey in Northern Ireland				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Library usage	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
Frequency of library usage	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x
Reasons for usage								x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Reasons for non-use								x	x	x		x	x		x
Encouraging more use														x	
Satisfaction with library services	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Other information available but not covered in research conducted for the Carnegie UK Trust															
Reasons for dissatisfaction with libraries								x	x	x					
Likelihood of visiting library again			x					x	x	x					
Recommending libraries to others								x	x	x					
Use of library website			x					x	x	x					
Reasons for visiting library website			x					x	x	x					
Awareness of services available in libraries															x
Satisfaction with public library provision in jurisdiction													x	x	x
History of library usage			x					x							

2. Library usage

The secondary analysis shows that in 2015 around a third of adults in the three jurisdictions had used a library in the past 12 months – 35% in England, 30% in Scotland and 29% in Northern Ireland (Figure 2.1).

Library usage in England declined slightly between 2011 and 2015, with a five percentage point reduction in those who had used a public library service² at least once in the past 12 months (40%, compared to 35%).

Meanwhile library usage in Northern Ireland and Scotland remained at a similar level between 2011 and 2015, despite a slight decline in users in Northern Ireland³ (31%, compared to 29%). Scottish respondents who had been to a library in the last 12 months (including mobile and online)⁴ remained between 29% and 30% across each of the five years.

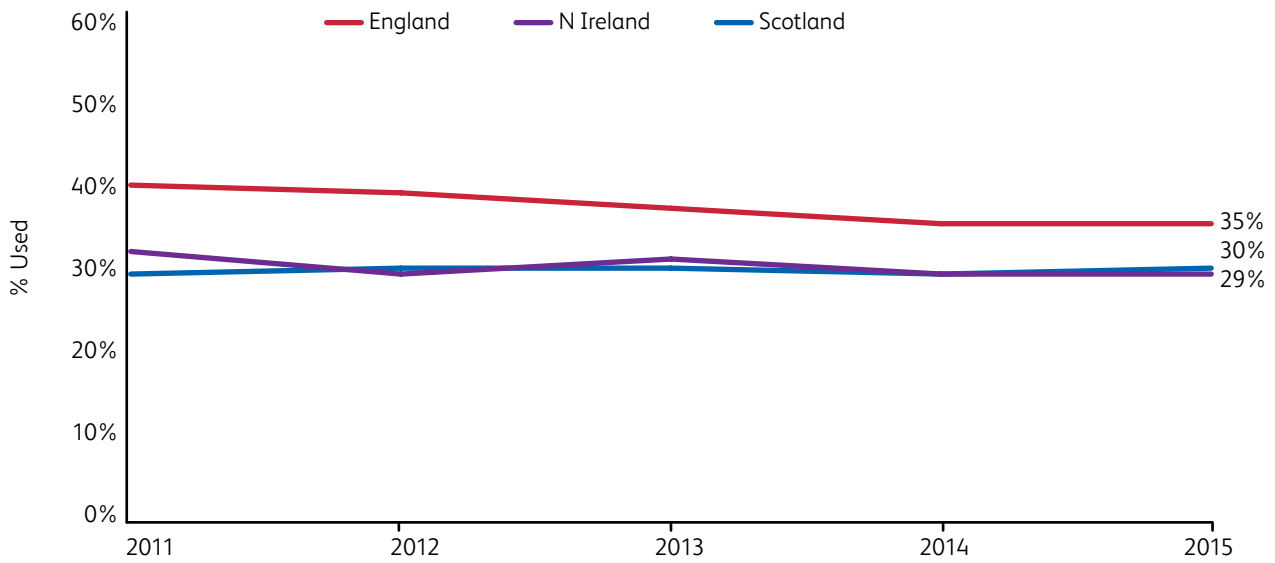
The results from the secondary analysis have been compared with the results from the omnibus surveys carried out by Ipsos MORI for the Carnegie UK Trust. Figure 2.2 shows results from the most recent year of the omnibus surveys (2016) compared with the most recent findings from the secondary analysis (2015).

In each of the three jurisdictions, the proportion of library users recorded in the Carnegie UK Trusts surveys was higher than other datasets, by 11 percentage points in England, 14 percentage points in Northern Ireland and 20 percentage points in Scotland.

It should be noted that the question wording used in each survey differs. In the Carnegie UK Trust research, respondents were asked if they had used or contacted a public library in the last 12 months, whereas in the other surveys respondents were only asked about visits to libraries, and not “contact”. Also, in the Carnegie UK Trust research the question wording defined public libraries as “*including libraries provided in public buildings, on-line library services and mobile libraries*”. In the Taking Part Survey and in the Scottish Household Survey, respondents were asked to disregard any visits made for paid work, school or academic activities, while in the Continuous Household Survey in Northern Ireland the wording specified that “*this does NOT include school, college, or university libraries*”. Wording of this nature was not included in the Carnegie UK Trust surveys, therefore results may include library use for work or academic purposes. Care should therefore be taken in comparing the results of the surveys.

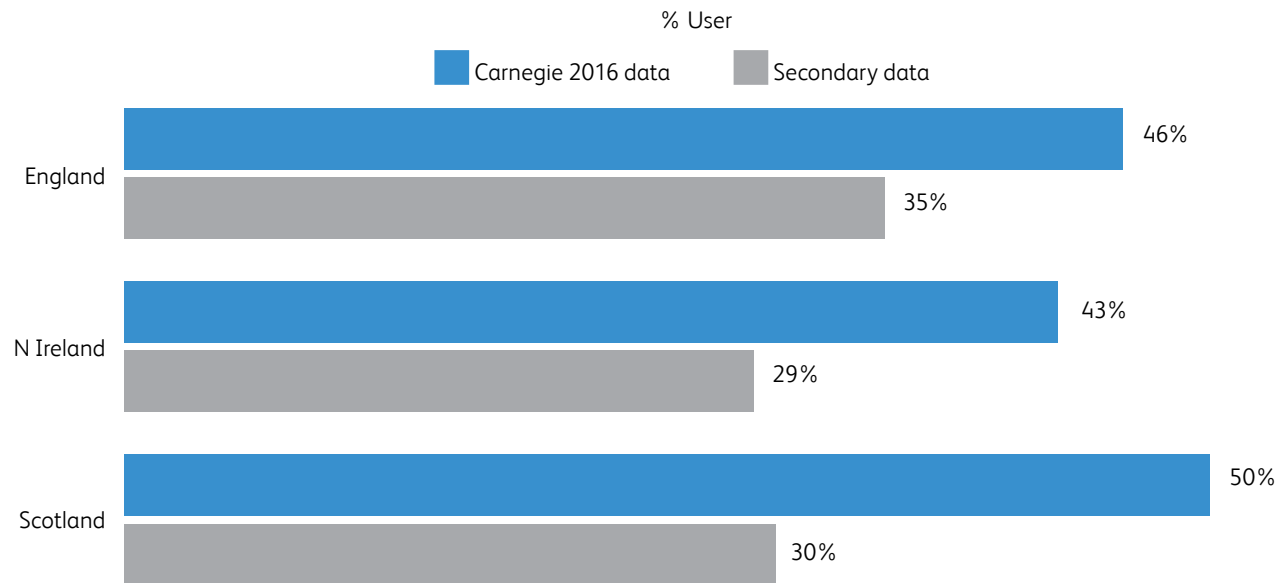
- 2 In the Taking Part Survey this is defined as any type of library: for example, a public library, mobile library. The questionnaire also instructs respondents to disregard any visits made for paid work, school or academic activities.
- 3 The questions used to determine library usage in Northern Ireland changed between 2012 and 2013. In 2011 and 2012 respondents were asked how often they went to the public library. From 2013 onwards respondents were asked if they had used a public library service in the last 12 months (either using a public or mobile library; the Libraries NI website; or attending a library event run by Libraries NI outside a library).
- 4 Similar to the Taking Part Survey, the Scottish Household Survey data excludes visits for paid work, school or academic activities.

Figure 2.1 – Proportion of adults who used a library service in the past 12 months



Base: All adults in each territory.
 Source: Taking Part Survey (England); Continuous Household Survey (N. Ireland); Scottish Household Survey

Figure 2.2 – Proportion of adults who used a library service in the past 12 months – survey comparison



Base: All adults in each territory.
 Carnegie 2016: England (1,341); Northern Ireland (1,013); Scotland (1,000); Secondary data: England (9,817); N Ireland (3,348); Scotland (9,410)
 Secondary data sources: Taking Part Survey 2015 (England); Continuous Household Survey 2015 (N. Ireland); Scottish Household Survey 2015.

3. Frequency of use

As part of the secondary analysis, we analysed data on how often respondents across the three jurisdictions used library services with particular focus on those who used the library service at least once a month and those who used the library service at least once a week.

At least once a month

The secondary analysis shows that in 2015, around half of those who had used a library in the previous year said they had done so at least once a month – 55% in Scotland, 51% in Northern Ireland and 46% in England (Figure 3.1).

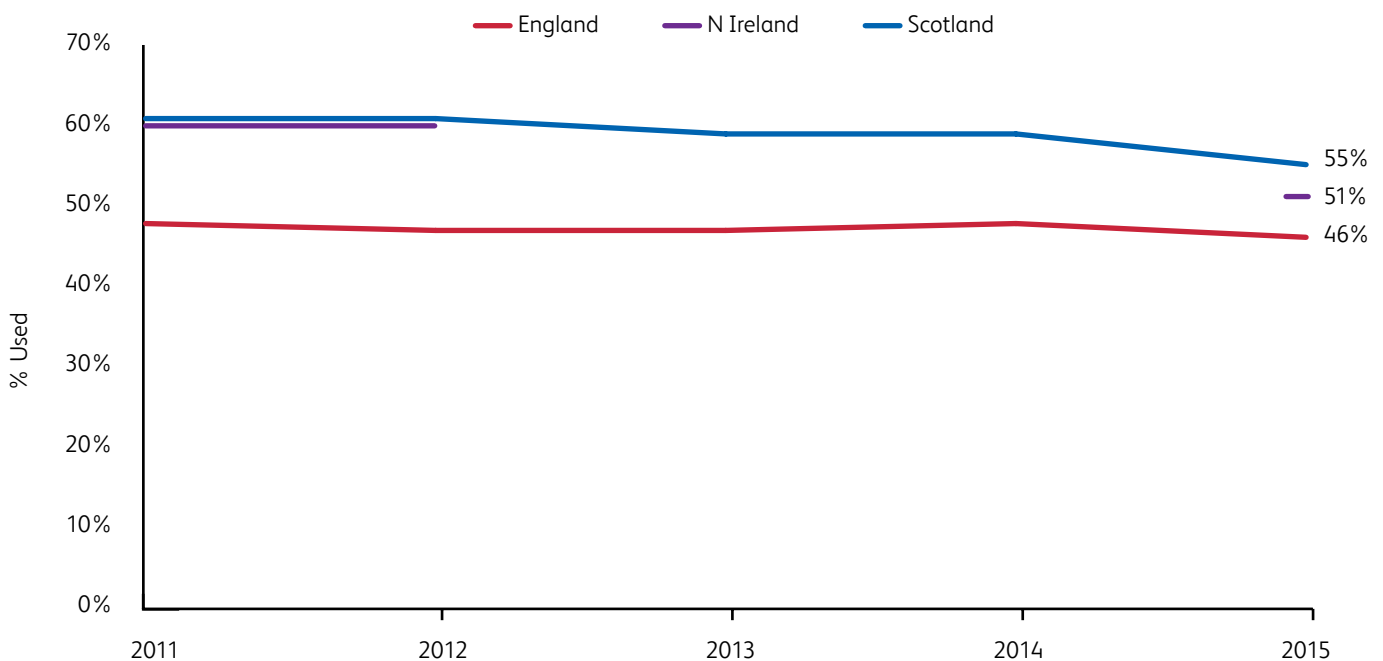
Scotland consistently had the highest proportion of users who used library services at least once a month. However, there had been a gradual decline 2011-2015, with the proportion of monthly users dropping by six percentage points.

In Northern Ireland, the question of how frequently library users used the library was asked inconsistently between 2011 and 2015. The available data shows a decline in the proportion of monthly or more frequent users since 2011, from 61% to 51% in 2015. The relevant question was not asked in 2013 and 2014.

In England, between 2011 and 2015, the proportion of frequent users remained at just under half, with levels fluctuating between 46% and 48%.

Figure 3.2 compares results on frequency of use from the Carnegie UK Trust surveys with that from the secondary analysis. For each of the three jurisdictions, results are broadly in line with each other, notwithstanding a six percentage point difference in the Northern Ireland and Scotland data.

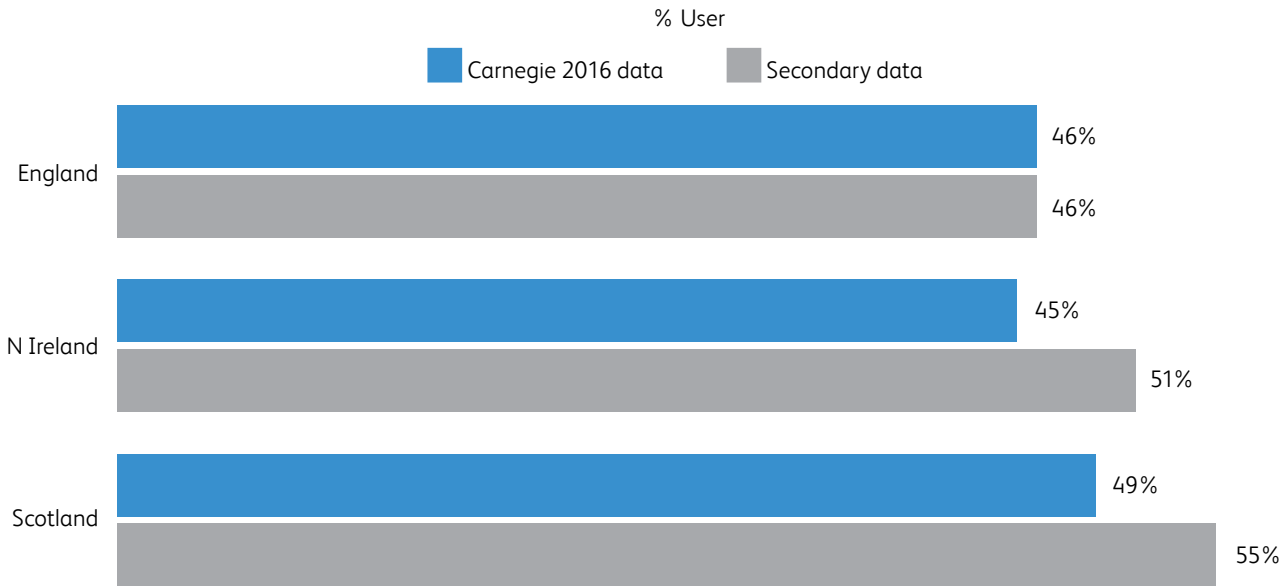
Figure 3.1 – Proportion of users who used the library service at least once a month



Base: All adults who had used a library service in the past 12 months.

Source: Taking Part Survey (England); Continuous Household Survey (N. Ireland); Scottish Household Survey

Figure 3.2 – Proportion of users who used the library service at least once a month – survey comparison



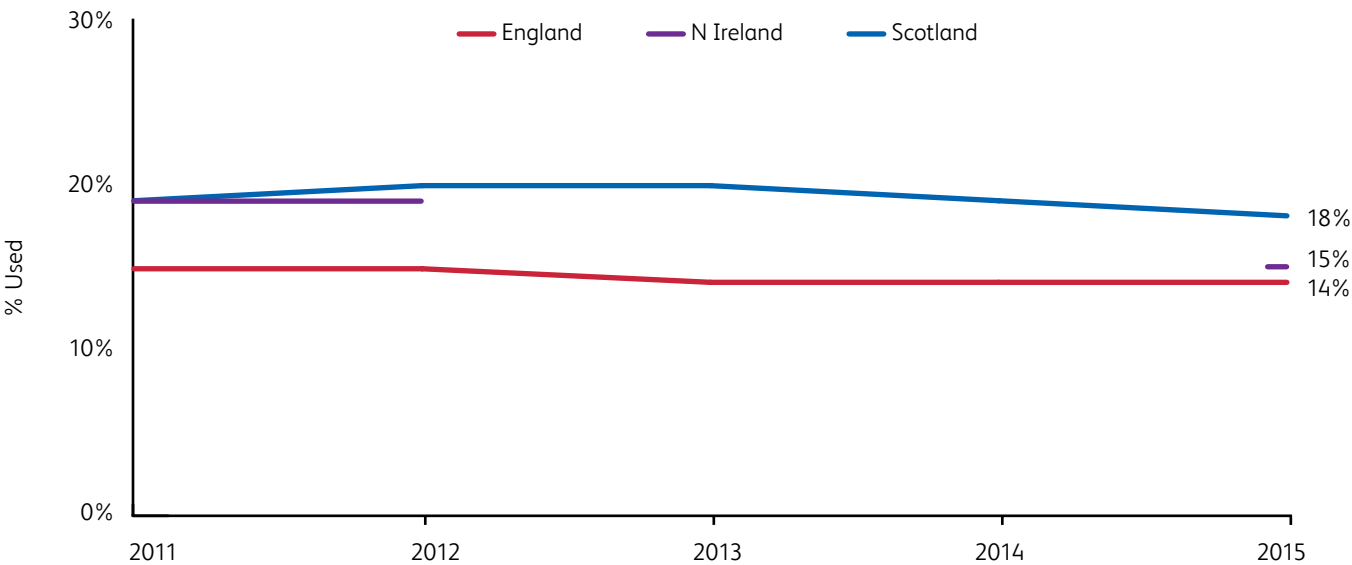
Base: All adults who had used a library service in the past 12 months.
 Carnegie 2016: England (619); Northern Ireland (429); Scotland (531); Secondary data: England (3,484); N Ireland (968); Scotland (2,890).
 Secondary data sources: Taking Part Survey 2015 (England); Continuous Household Survey 2015 (N. Ireland); Scottish Household Survey 2015.

At least once a week

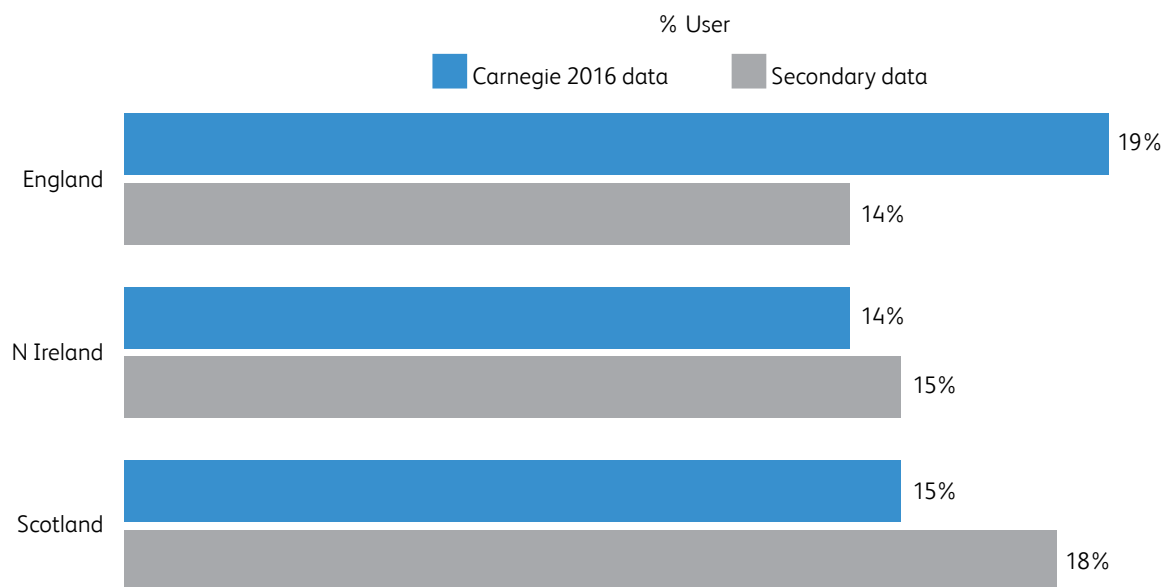
The secondary analysis shows that in 2015 fewer than two in ten library users across the three jurisdictions said that they used library services at least once a week, similar to the proportions reported in 2011 (Figure 3.3). In 2015, 18% of library users in Scotland, 15% of library users in Northern Ireland and 14% of library users in England said they used library services at least once a week (compared to 19%, 19% and 15% in 2011, respectively).

When compared with results from the Carnegie UK Trust surveys of these three jurisdictions, the results from the secondary analysis are broadly similar (Figure 3.4). The only exception are the results for England, where the proportion using a library at least once a week is slightly higher in the Carnegie research (19%) than in the Taking Part survey (14%).

Figure 3.3 – Proportion of users who used the library service at least once a week



Base: All adults who had used a library service in the past 12 months.
 Source: Taking Part Survey (England); Continuous Household Survey (N. Ireland); Scottish Household Survey

Figure 3.4 – Proportion of users who used the library service at least once a week – survey comparison

Base: All adults who had used a library service in the past 12 months.

Carnegie 2016: England (619); Northern Ireland (429); Scotland (531); Secondary data: England (3,484); N Ireland (968); Scotland (2,890).

Secondary data sources: Taking Part Survey 2015 (England); Continuous Household Survey 2015 (N. Ireland); Scottish Household Survey 2015.

4. Reasons for use and non-use of libraries

Reasons for using libraries

The omnibus surveys carried out for Carnegie UK Trust did not include questions on reasons for using libraries. Therefore, there is no comparable data on this topic.

The secondary analysis provides insights into the main reasons for using libraries in Northern Ireland

and England. In the Continuous Household Survey in Northern Ireland, users were asked “why do you use the public library service?”, while in the Taking Part Survey in England, users were asked why they had used a library *more* than in the previous year. As the question asked in the individual surveys is different, we present the data separately for each jurisdiction. There was no comparable data from the past five years in Scotland.

Table 4.1 – Reasons for using a public library – top mentions in Northern Ireland

	2011 ⁵	2012	2013	2014	2015
Reason	%	%	%	%	%
To borrow/return/renew books	69	72	72	65	68
Accompanying children (e.g. to an event)	19	23	20	21	21
To use the computer/To use the computer for personal use ⁶	11	14	16	19	21
To look up information/research	15	17	19	15	14
To access the internet	11	13	17	-	-
To use photocopier/fax/printer/scanner	4	7	14	12	12
To study/do homework	5	8	12	10	11
To browse/read books/newspapers	13	13	13	12	10
To borrow/return/renew other material (DVDs, CDs etc.)	10	12	17	6	5
To attend an event/exhibition/activity	1	3	6	5	4
To use computers to access online library resources		-	-	7	3
To use other facilities for example, cafe, toilet etc.	1	3	4	5	3
<i>Base: All who used library service in last 12 months</i>	<i>1,340</i>	<i>1,082</i>	<i>1,123</i>	<i>1,072</i>	<i>968</i>

5 It should be noted that available data for 2011 was unweighted data only, whereas data from 2012 onwards has been weighted. If weighting was applied to 2011 data, figures may therefore differ from those shown in the table, but weighted data for this question was not available.

6 There have been changes to how visiting the library to use the computer has been asked since 2011. In 2011 to 2013 the options ‘To use the computer’ and ‘To access the internet’ were shown to participants, while in 2014 and 2015 they were shown ‘To use the computer for personal use’ and ‘To use computers to access online library resources.’

Table 4.2 – Reasons for having used a library more than in the previous year – top mentions in England

	2013	2014	2015
Reason	%	%	%
I wanted to encourage my child to read books	20	21	21
I like to read/wish to read more	19	17	14
I have more free time	14	14	13
I needed to access the internet	7	8	7
The libraries facilities have improved	8	7	6
There were more events on at the library that interested me	4	5	6
I wanted to broaden my interests	11	7	5
Books have become too expensive to buy	8	4	5
I wanted to do something for myself	8	5	5
I enjoy going to the library with other people	7	6	4
<i>Base: All who have used library more than in previous year</i>	565	665	572

Table 4.3 – Reasons for not visiting a library – top mentions

	England	Northern Ireland			
Reason	2011	2011	2012	2013	2015
Not really interested/prefer to do other things	24	25	24	25	30
No need to go	5	22	25	26	25
Buy or get bought all the books I need	5	30	27	26	20
Use other sources of information	-	21	24	24	24
Difficult to find the time	-	12	8	10	10
No tradition of use	-	12	15	12	10
Never occurred to me	11	8	7	10	12
Health isn't good enough	4	5	4	5	4
Inconvenient locations/lack of transport/can't easily get to it	5	4	4	3	3
Cannot read/write English/language barriers	-	2	2	2	1
<i>Base: All who have not used library service in last 12 months</i>	2,750	2,409	2,605	2,502	2,379

In Northern Ireland, the most common reason for using a library in the past 12 months was to borrow, return or renew books, with almost two thirds of users citing this as a reason (68%). As shown in Table 4.1, this has been the most common reason for using libraries in Northern Ireland for the past five years, and echoes findings from the secondary analysis we carried in 2011, which found that this was the most common reason in the four jurisdictions covered.

In England in 2015, the main reasons cited by those who had used a library more in the past 12 months than they had in the previous year were: to encourage their child/children to read books (21%), because they liked to read and wanted to read more (14%), and because more free time (13%) (Table 4.2). These have been the top three reasons for increased library use over the past three years.

Table 4.4 – Reasons for having used a library *less* than in the previous year – top mentions in England

	2013	2014	2015
Reason	%	%	%
I had less free time	24	27	24
Started to buy books/get books elsewhere	20	14	14
I now read e-books	11	13	13
There have been other things I've preferred to do with leisure time	10	6	7
Work demands increased	6	7	9
I'm using the internet more to access information	6	6	3
Left school/university	5	3	3
Childcare responsibilities	5	3	3
Facilities got worse	3	3	2
Developed health problems or disability	3	4	3
No need to go	3	4	4
Serious illness	1	2	3
Library closed down	2	3	3
<i>Base: All who have used library less than in previous year</i>	917	792	838

Reasons for non-use

The omnibus surveys carried out for Carnegie UK Trust did not include questions on reasons for lack of library use, therefore there is no comparable data on this topic.

The secondary analysis shows that in Northern Ireland and England, people who had not used libraries in the past 12 months were asked why this was the case.⁷ In England, this was last asked in 2011, so there is no available data from the Taking Part Survey since then. There was no comparable data from the past five years in Scotland.

In Northern Ireland and England, the most common

reason for not visiting libraries was a lack of interest or a preference to do other things with their spare time. In Northern Ireland other common reasons related to personal preferences, including having no need to go, a preference for other sources of information, and having bought books instead of using a library (Table 4.3).

In England, over the past three years the main reasons given by those who had used a library *less* in the past 12 months than they had in the previous year were: having less free time (24%), buying or getting books elsewhere (14%) and reading e-books (13%) (Table 4.4).

⁷ It is worth noting that there are differences between the surveys in terms of the precise wording of the questions and answer options available. There were further differences in the way this question was administered: in the Continuous Household Survey in Northern Ireland respondents were asked to select their responses from a showcard, while in the Taking Part Survey this was an unprompted question. Care should therefore be taken when comparing the results across jurisdictions.

5. Satisfaction with library services

User satisfaction with libraries

The omnibus surveys carried out Carnegie UK Trust did not include questions on satisfaction with libraries used, therefore there is no comparable data on this topic.

The secondary analysis shows that existing surveys asked library users in each jurisdiction how satisfied they were with their experience of their library. The vast majority in each jurisdiction were very or fairly satisfied: 93% in Northern Ireland in 2012, 95% in England in 2015 and 92% in Scotland in 2015. These high levels of satisfaction have remained fairly constant over recent years of the survey, and reflect similar findings from the secondary analysis we carried out in 2011.

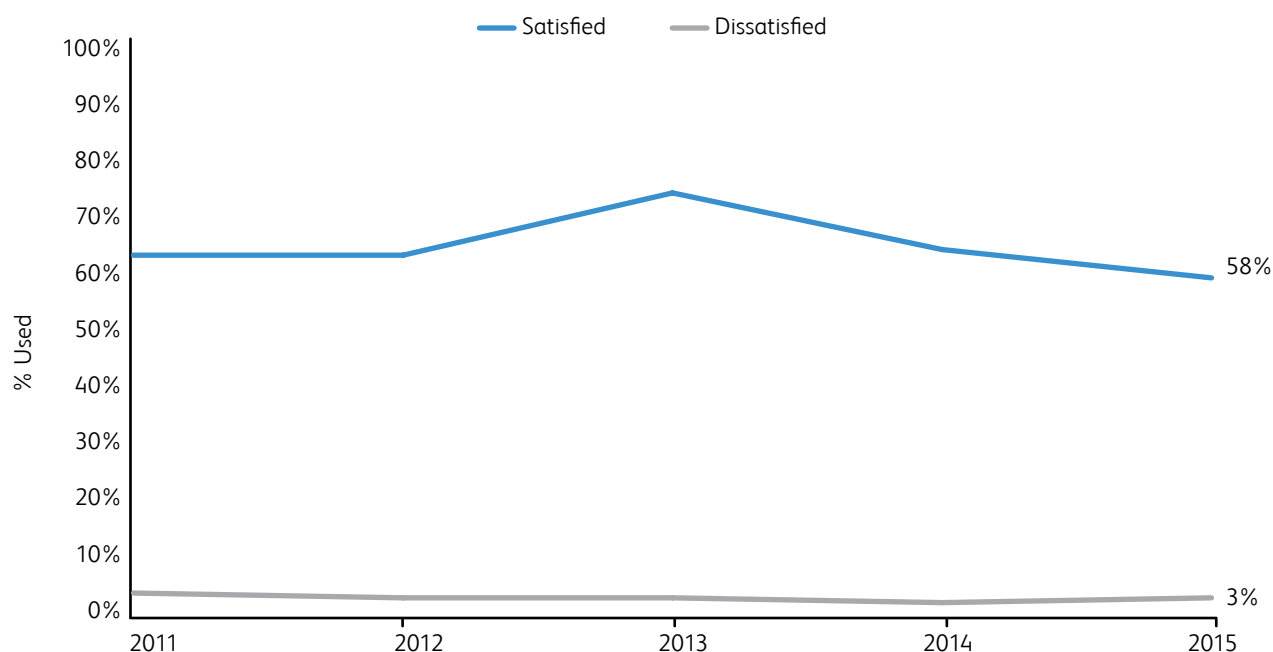
Satisfaction with overall library provision in Northern Ireland

The omnibus surveys carried out for the Carnegie UK Trust did not include questions on satisfaction with overall library provision, therefore there is no comparable data on this topic.

In Northern Ireland, all survey respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the overall provision of public libraries in the country (as opposed to their satisfaction with the library they had used, which is already presented in Table 5.1). As shown in Figure 5.1, just over half (58%) of adults in 2015 said that they were satisfied with the provision of public libraries (with 21% saying very satisfied and 37% saying fairly satisfied). This question was not asked in any of the other jurisdictions.

Table 5.1 – Satisfaction with library services – by jurisdiction and year

	Northern Ireland		England					Scotland				
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very satisfied	53	58	65	66	67	68	69	55	50	48	49	44
Fairly satisfied	40	35	27	28	26	26	26	40	44	46	45	48
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6	5	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
Fairly/slightly dissatisfied	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
Very dissatisfied	1	*	1	1	1	1	1	*	1	1	1	1
Satisfied	92	93	93	94	93	94	95	94	94	94	93	92
Dissatisfied	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3
<i>Base: All library users who gave an opinion</i>	1,339	1,060	14,102	9,188	9,838	10,355	9,817	1,738	2,780	2,811	2,650	2,631

Figure 5.1 – Satisfaction with library provision in Northern Ireland

Base: All adults who had used a library service in the past 12 months.

Source: Taking Part Survey (England); Continuous Household Survey (N. Ireland); Scottish Household Survey

Encouraging future use

The Continuous Household Survey in Northern Ireland in 2014 asked respondents what factors would encourage greater usage of libraries.⁸ Among those who gave a suggestion, the top mentions were having more free time (49%), longer opening hours (21%) and a better selection of books (20%) (Table 5.2). This question was not asked in any of the other jurisdictions.

Table 5.2 – Factors that would encourage greater usage of libraries – Northern Ireland 2014

	2014
	%
If I had more free time	49
Longer opening hours	21
Better selection of books	20
More activities for children/ young people	15
Better computer/ Internet facilities	9
Better selection of DVDs/ CDs	8
Better facilities such as toilets, shops etc.	7
<i>Base: All who gave a response</i>	1,533

⁸ This question was only asked in 2014 – before that the most recent time a similar question was asked was in 2009. Comparable questions were asked in the Scottish Household Survey and Taking Part Survey, but not since 2008 and 2006 respectively.

In the 2016 research for the Carnegie UK Trust, respondents were asked whether a range of potential improvements would encourage them to make more use of libraries. The list of potential improvements were different from the list of options in the Continuous Household Survey in Northern Ireland. This makes comparisons between the surveys difficult. Moreover, the questions were asked in a different way – in the Continuous Household Survey, respondents were asked to pick from a list of options presented on a showcard, whereas in the omnibus poll conducted for the Carnegie UK Trust each individual option was asked about separately, with respondents saying whether or not it would encourage them to visit the library more. Results from the research conducted for the Carnegie UK Trust showed that the most popular improvements that would encourage more library use in each jurisdiction were:

- providing better information on what services libraries offer, in Ireland, England and Wales (54%, 67% and 52% respectively);
- offering more events, in Northern Ireland and Scotland (58% and 55% respectively); and
- a café or coffee shop on site, in Northern Ireland (58%)

Results for all the options asked about in each jurisdiction are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 – Improvements that would encourage more use of libraries – results from 2016 omnibus surveys for Carnegie UK Trust

	England	Ireland	N Ireland	Scotland	Wales
	%	%	%	%	%
Providing better information on what services libraries offer	54	67	54	52	52
Offering more events – such as author events, gigs, film screenings and employment fairs	53	58	58	55	51
A café or coffee shop on site	50	59	58	50	49
Providing other council services in library buildings, for example, adult education classes or benefits advice	51	62	56	48	50
Improving the range and quality of books	49	60	46	49	40
Being able to look for or reserve books online	48	59	45	47	42
Longer opening hours	43	52	45	38	36
Improving the IT facilities provided in libraries	41	58	44	34	38
Being able to access library services in other locations, for example shopping centres, or community centres	40	54	42	39	36
Offering more ‘maker’ activities such as coding and robotics clubs, knitting and other crafts	38	41	42	32	35
Offering more mobile library services in your area	35	39	35	28	30
<i>Base: All adults</i>	<i>1,341</i>	<i>1,011</i>	<i>1,013</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,011</i>

For more information

Ipsos MORI Scotland
4 Wemyss Place
Edinburgh
EH3 6DH

t: +44 (0)131 220 5699

f: +44 (0)131 220 6449

www.ipsos-mori.com

<http://twitter.com/IpsosMORIScot>

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