

# THE Authors Guild

*Digital Library Book Lending*

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*Past Month Book Reader/Audiobook Listener  
Market Report*

January 20, 2026

 codex  
GROUP

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## Agenda

- Executive Summary
- Goals and Methodology
- Public Library User Impact on Book and Audiobook Consumption
- Past Month Book Reader/Audiobook Listeners Detail
- Active Library Users Detail
- Brand Status Author Title Library Borrowing
- Digital Library Lending Platforms Borrowing Unit Share
- Next Steps

## Executive Summary – Key Findings

**Book Sourcing:** only 36% of past month book reader/audiobook listeners bought a new book or audiobook in the prior month

**Book Units Consumed:** only 25% of books in text format (print and eBook) read in the last month were bought new. 29% of those units were sourced through public library borrowing

**Digital Audiobooks Consumed:** only 36% of digital audiobooks listened to in the last month were either purchased or through paid subscription, with subscriptions 2-to-1 over unit purchases. 37% were sourced through digital library borrowing

**Active Public Library Membership:** 59% of past month book readers/audiobook listeners consider themselves to be current active public library members

**The Most Active Library Borrowers:** women; income over \$75K; graduate level education attainment; employed fulltime, more committed to reading books, even more to listening to podcasts/audiobooks

**Brand Level Author Books Sourcing Impact:** Fans of authors with leading author equity scores were 35% more likely to source books they read by their favorite brand level authors through library borrowing, 28% less like to purchase those books new than those reading less-known authors

**Digital Library Lending Platforms:** Libby/Overdrive dominates both eBook and digital audiobook library lending with estimated last month borrowing unit shares at 70% and 74% respectively

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*Program Goals and Methodology*

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## Program Goal and Methodology

### Program Goal

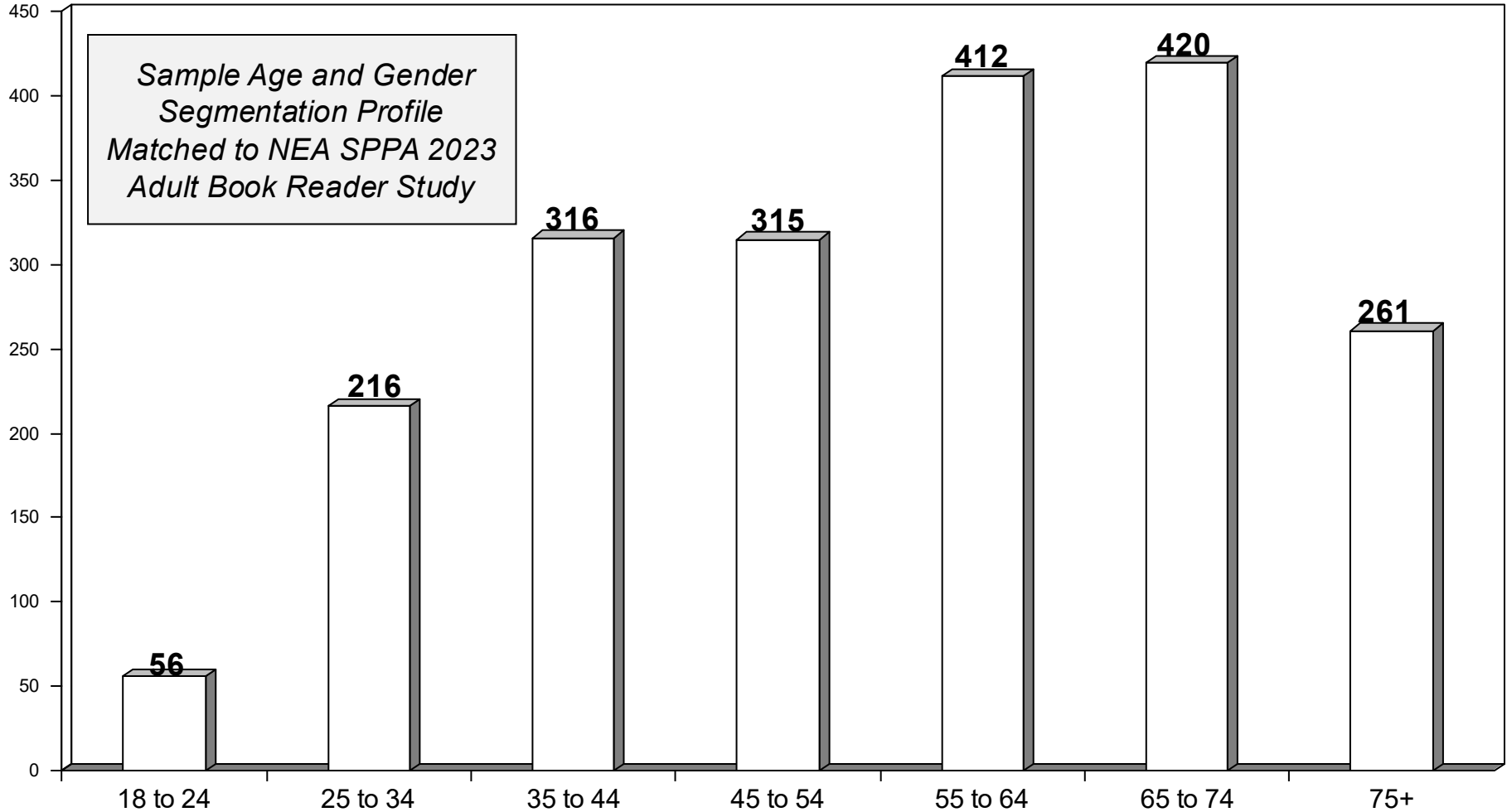
Understand the impact of digital library lending – text and audiobook formats – on book readers' overall book sourcing and book purchasing behavior, particularly as may affect major brand level authors.

### Methodology

- Online survey fielded October 21 to November 6, 2025
- Past month book readers, read 1+ books in last month, 4+ books in last 12 months
- Participants recruited at random from national consumer panel
- Total responses = 1,998 book reader and/or audiobook listeners 18 and older

# Past Month Book Reader Survey Sample

What is your age?



*Under 35-year-old book readers less active in survey participation.*

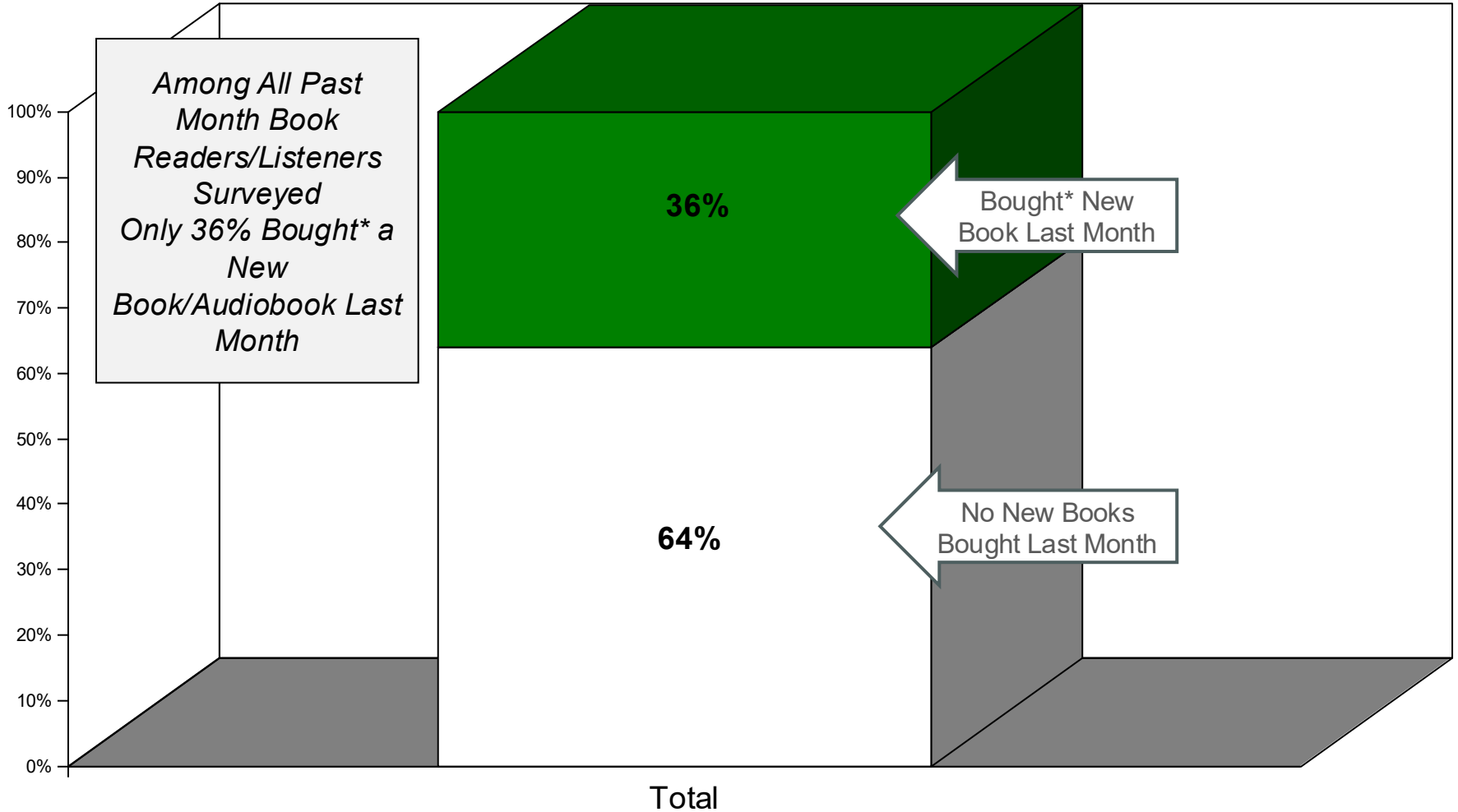
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*Public Library Users Impact on Book and  
Audiobook Sales*

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All Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – % Penetration Bought New Book/Audiobook Last Month

How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)

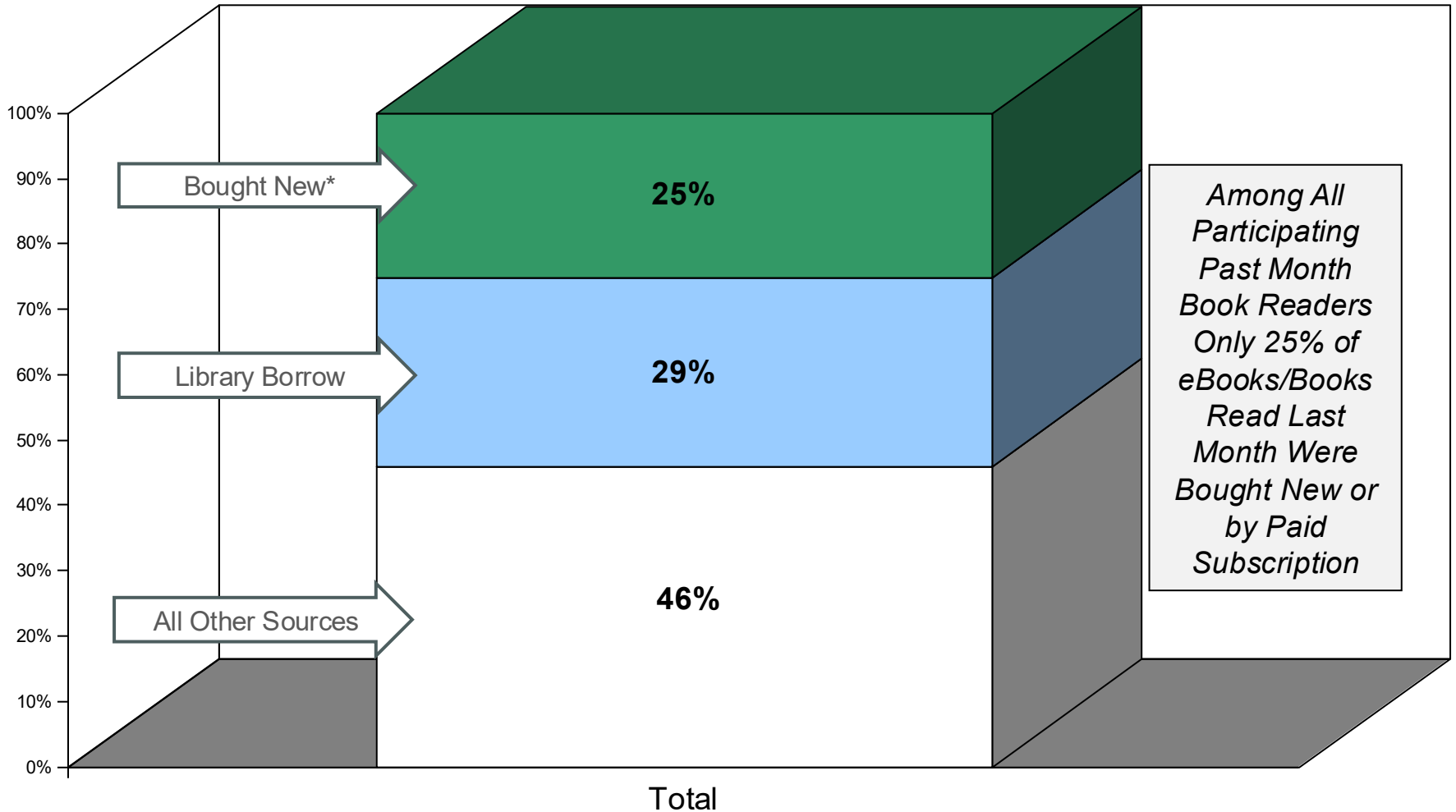


*Just under 2/3rds of book readers/listeners bought zero new books or audiobooks last month.*

\*Bought a new book or digital audiobook unit or obtained it through a paid subscription service (Audible, Spotify, etc., excluding Kindle Unlimited)

## Past Month Book Readers – eBooks/Print Books Read Sources – Unit Share New Last Month

*How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)*

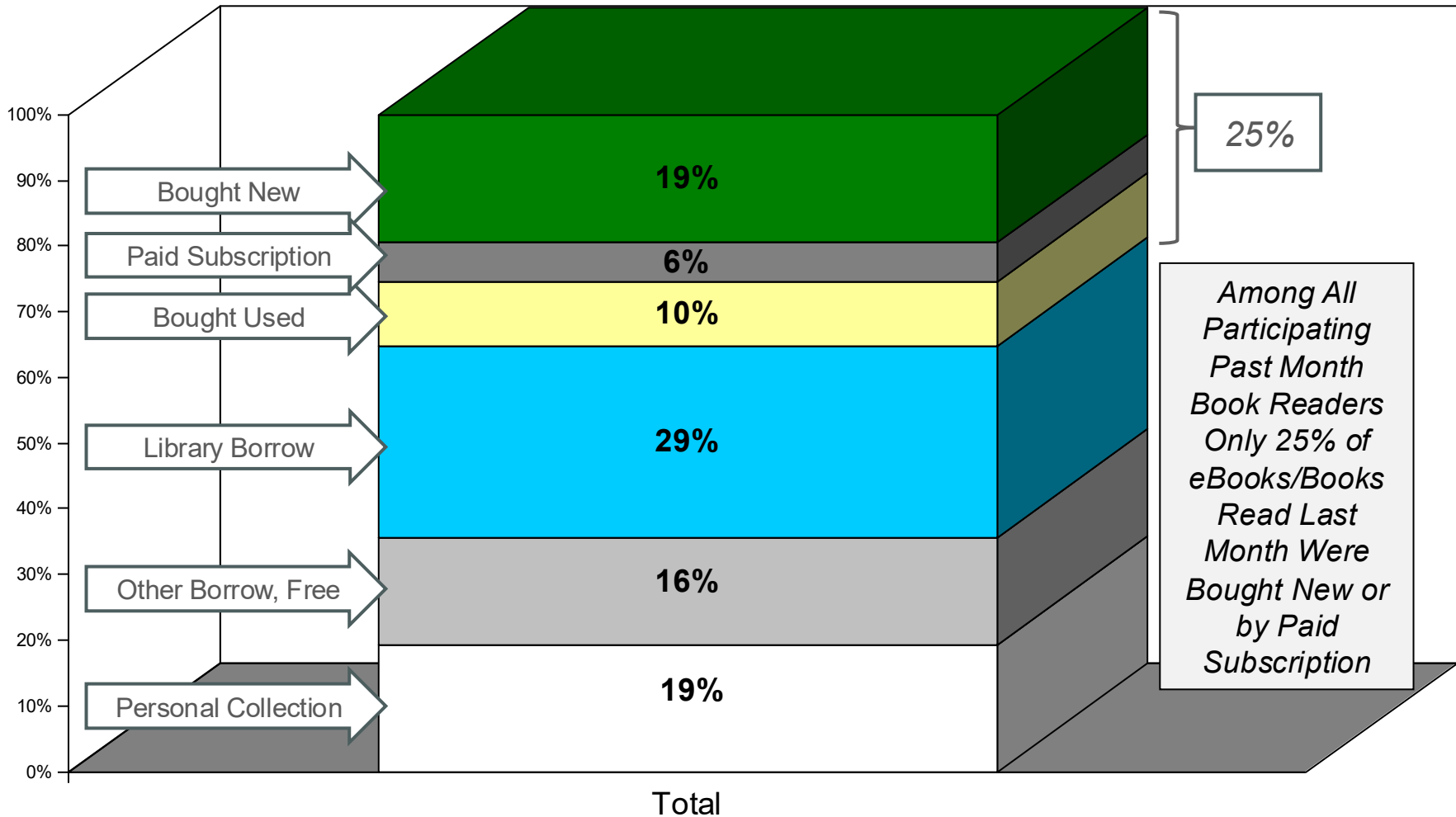


**Overall Library borrowing (eBook and Print) accounted for nearly 30% of books read last month.**

\*Bought a new book or eBook or obtained it through a paid subscription service (Kindle Unlimited, etc.).

## Past Month Book Readers – eBooks/Print Book – Unit Share Read vs. Bought New Last Month

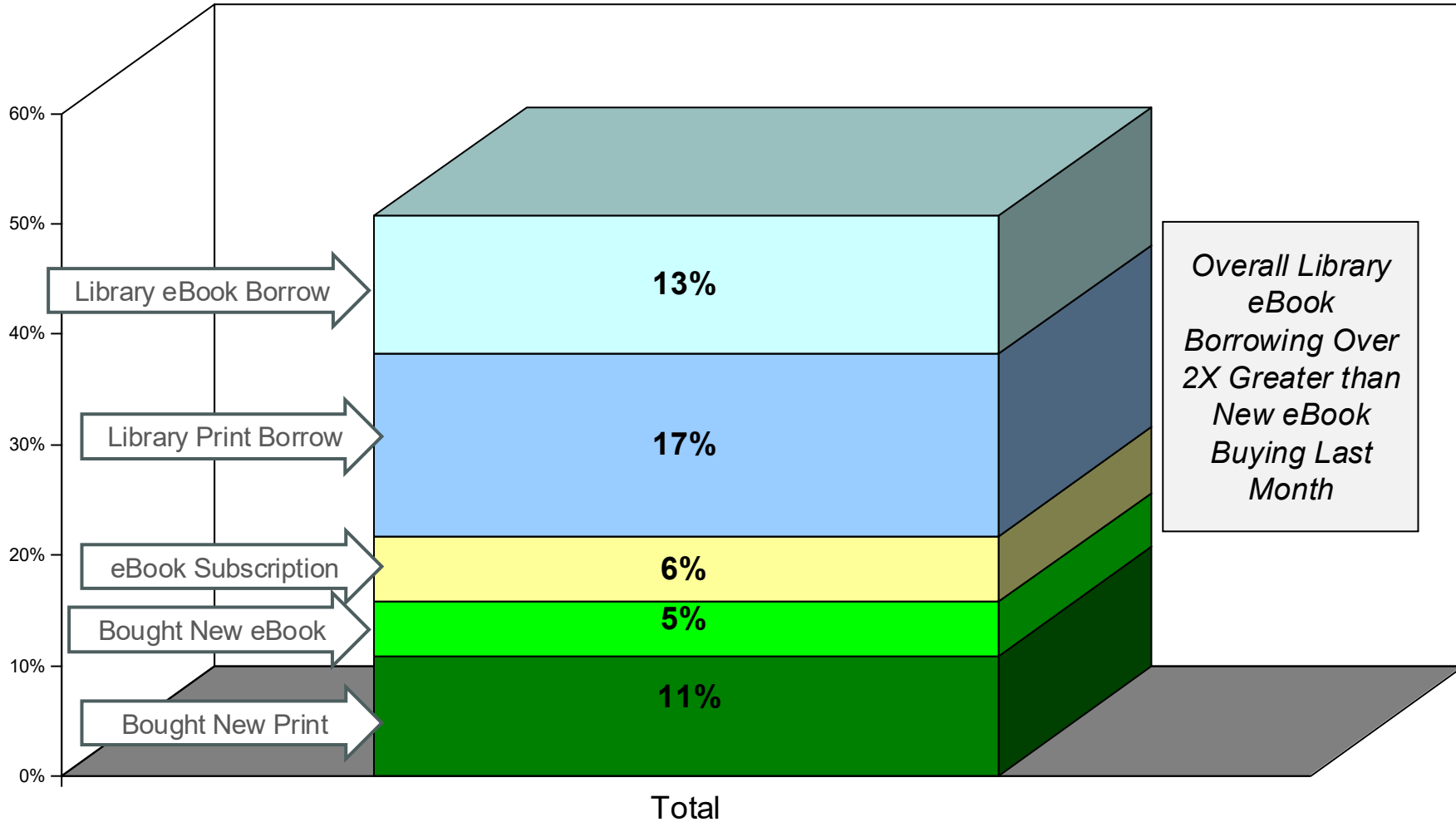
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



*Overall Library borrowing (eBook and Print) accounted for nearly 30% of books read last month.*

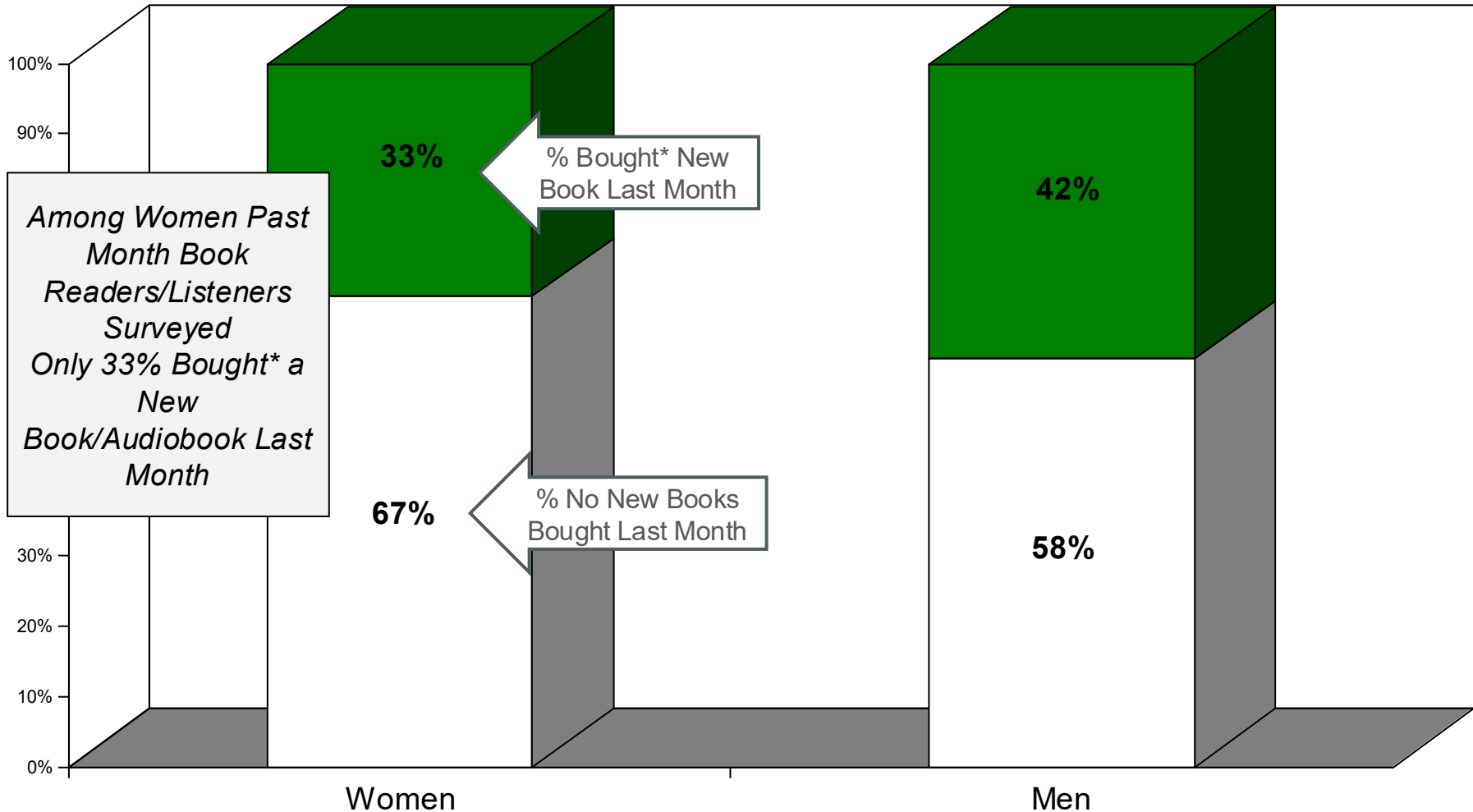
# Past Month Book Readers – eBook vs. Print Book Unit Share Detail Read vs. Bought New Last Month

How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



# All Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – % Bought New Books or Paid Subscription Last Month

*How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)*



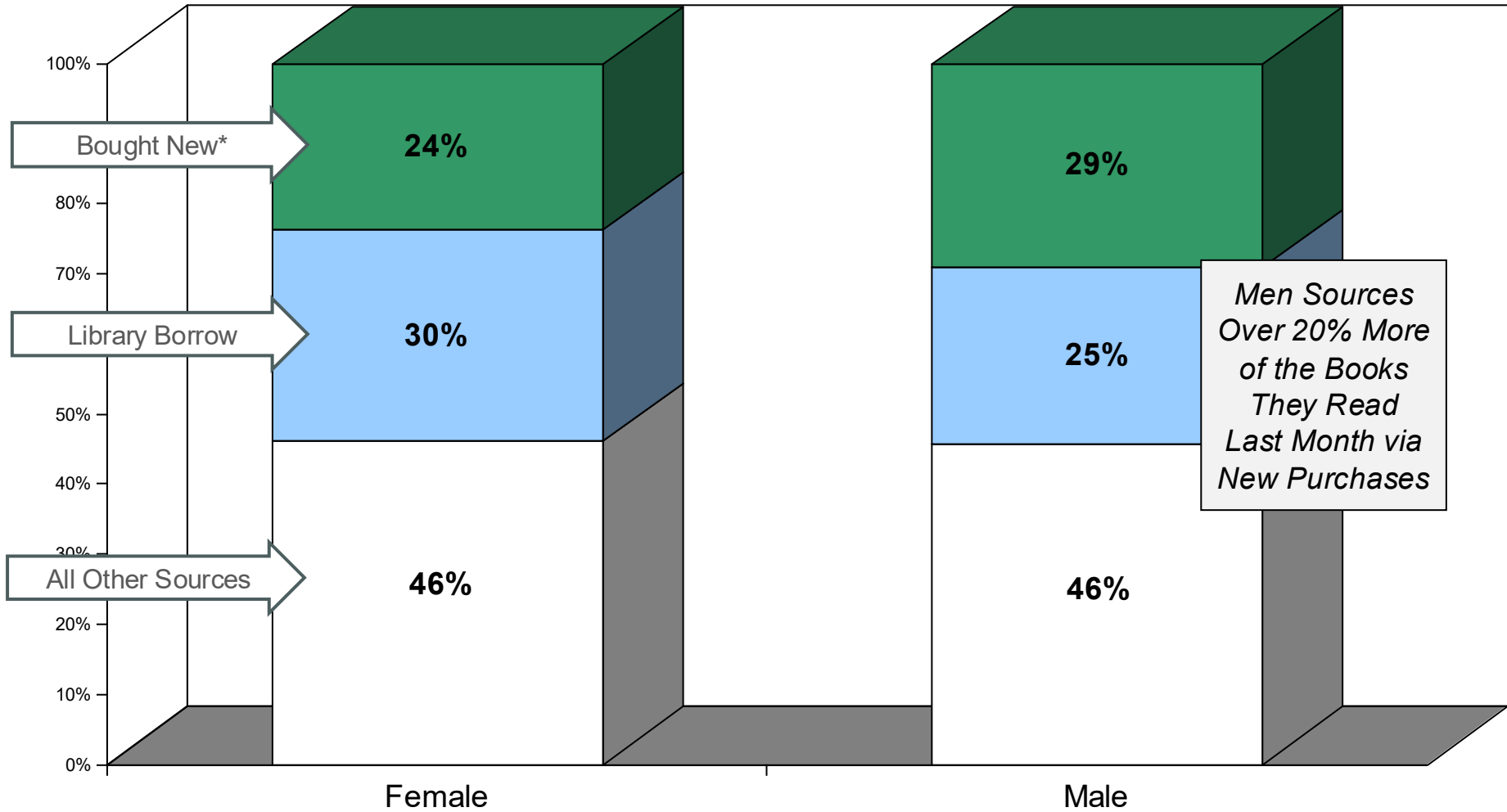
*Among Women Past Month Book Readers/Listeners Surveyed Only 33% Bought\* a New Book/Audiobook Last Month*

***42% of men past month book readers bought\* a new book last month, 27% more than women.***

\*Bought a new book or digital audiobook unit or obtained it through a paid subscription service (Audible, Spotify, etc., excluding Kindle Unlimited)

## Past Month Book Readers – eBooks/Print Books Read Sources – Unit Share New Last Month

*How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)*

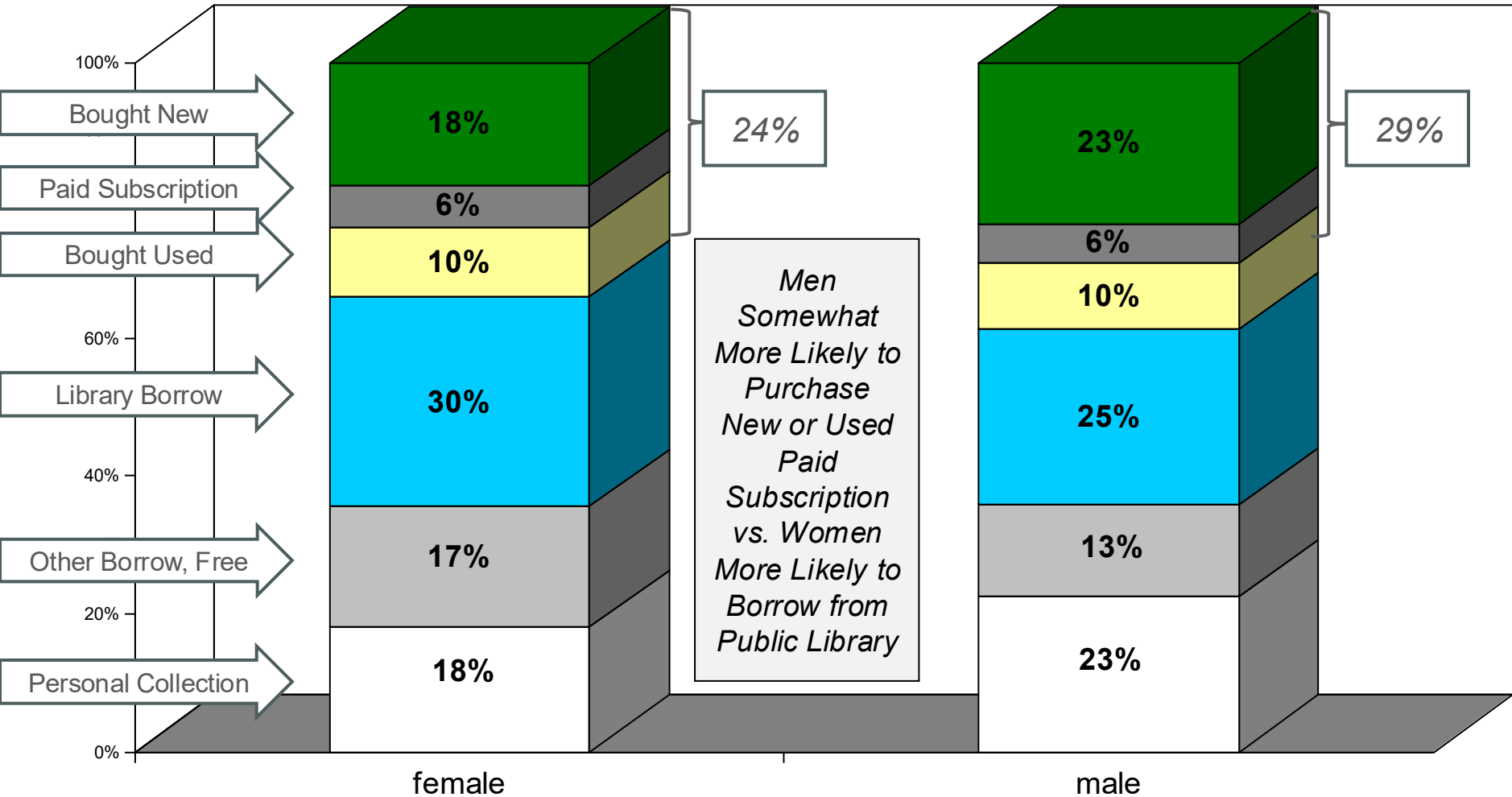


*Women sourced 25% more of their book units read last month from public library vs. new purchases*

\*Bought a new book or eBook or obtained it through a paid subscription service (Kindle Unlimited, etc.).

# Past Month Book Readers – eBooks/Print Book Unit Share Read vs. Bought New Last Month by Gender

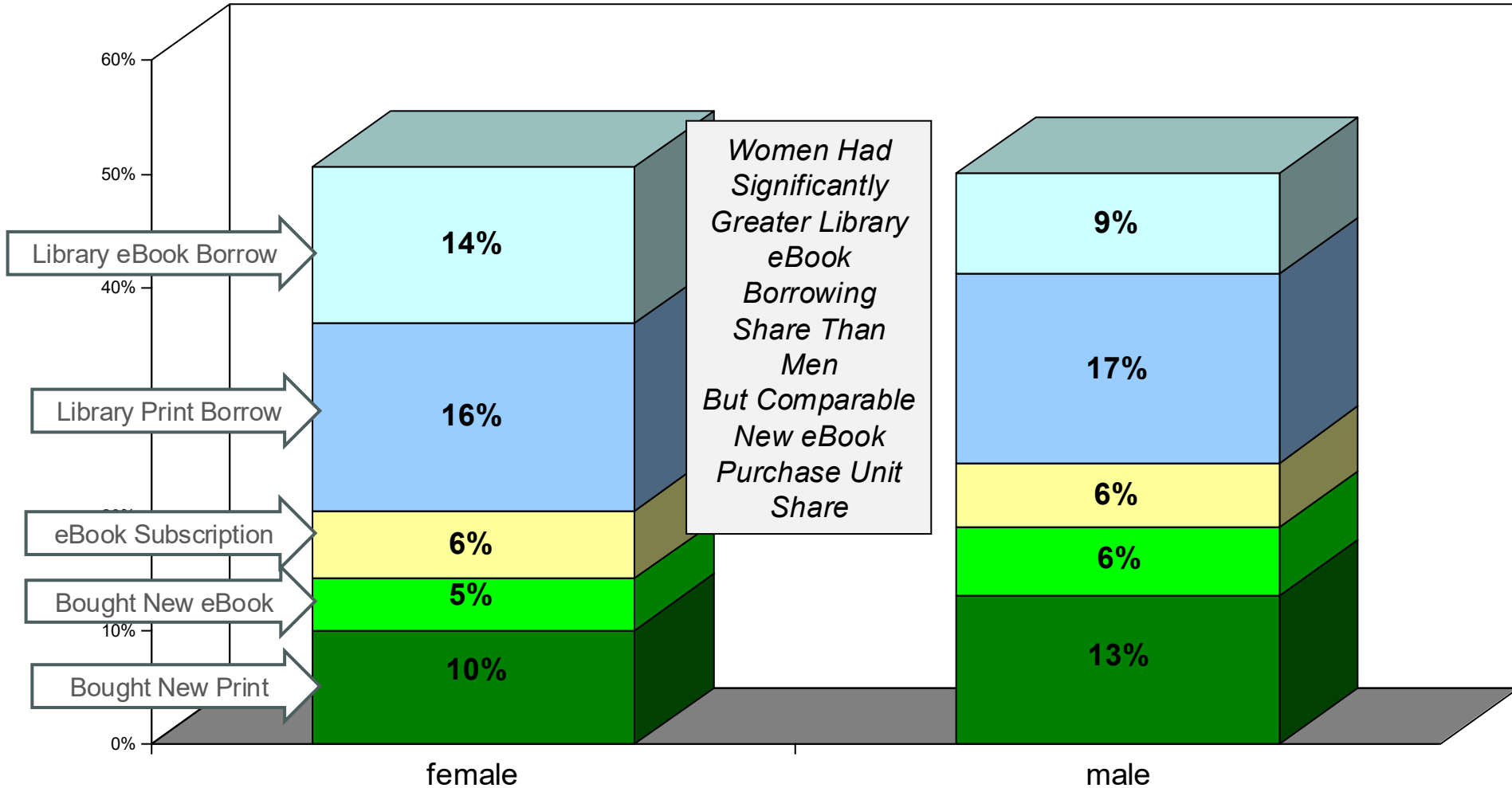
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



*Existing personal collections are also a major source of books read, particularly among men.*

# Past Month Book Readers – eBook vs. Print Book Unit Share Detail Read vs. Bought New Last Month

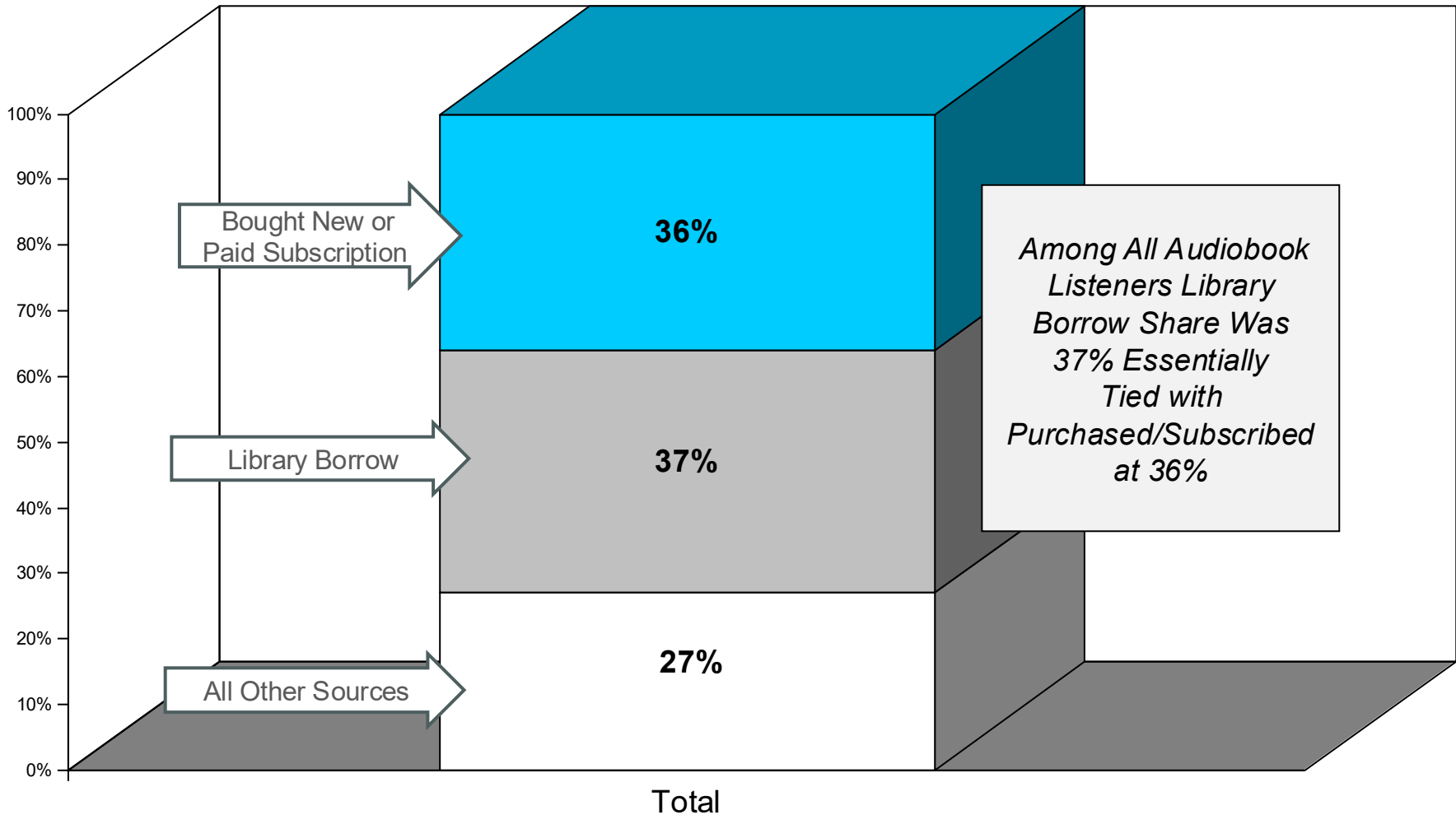
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



Men had somewhat higher new print book purchase share.

## Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Digital Audiobook Source Unit Share – Last Month

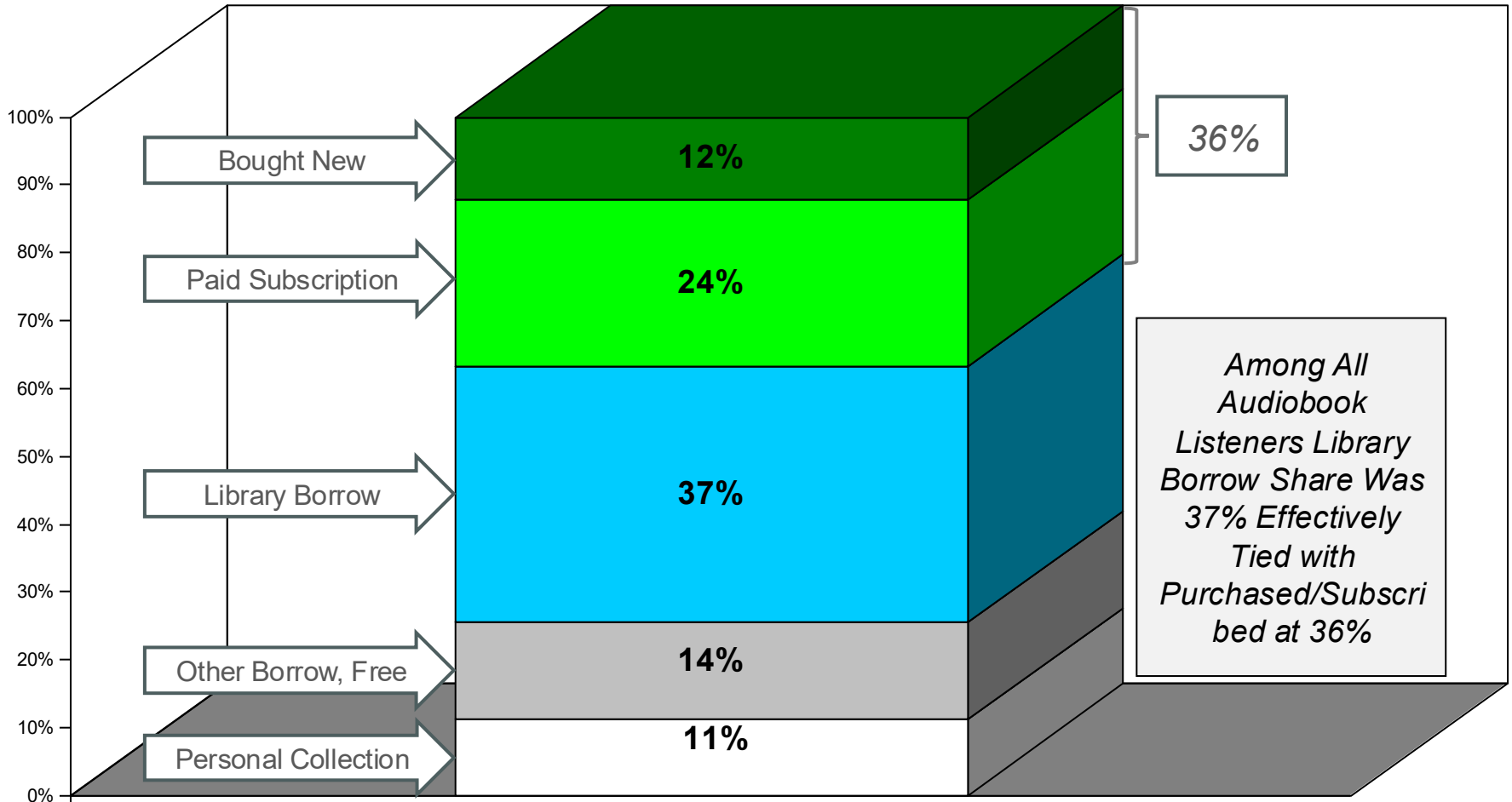
How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



*Public Library single greatest source of digital audiobooks listened to among past month listeners.*

# Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Digital Audiobook Units Listened – Source Unit Share Last Month

How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?

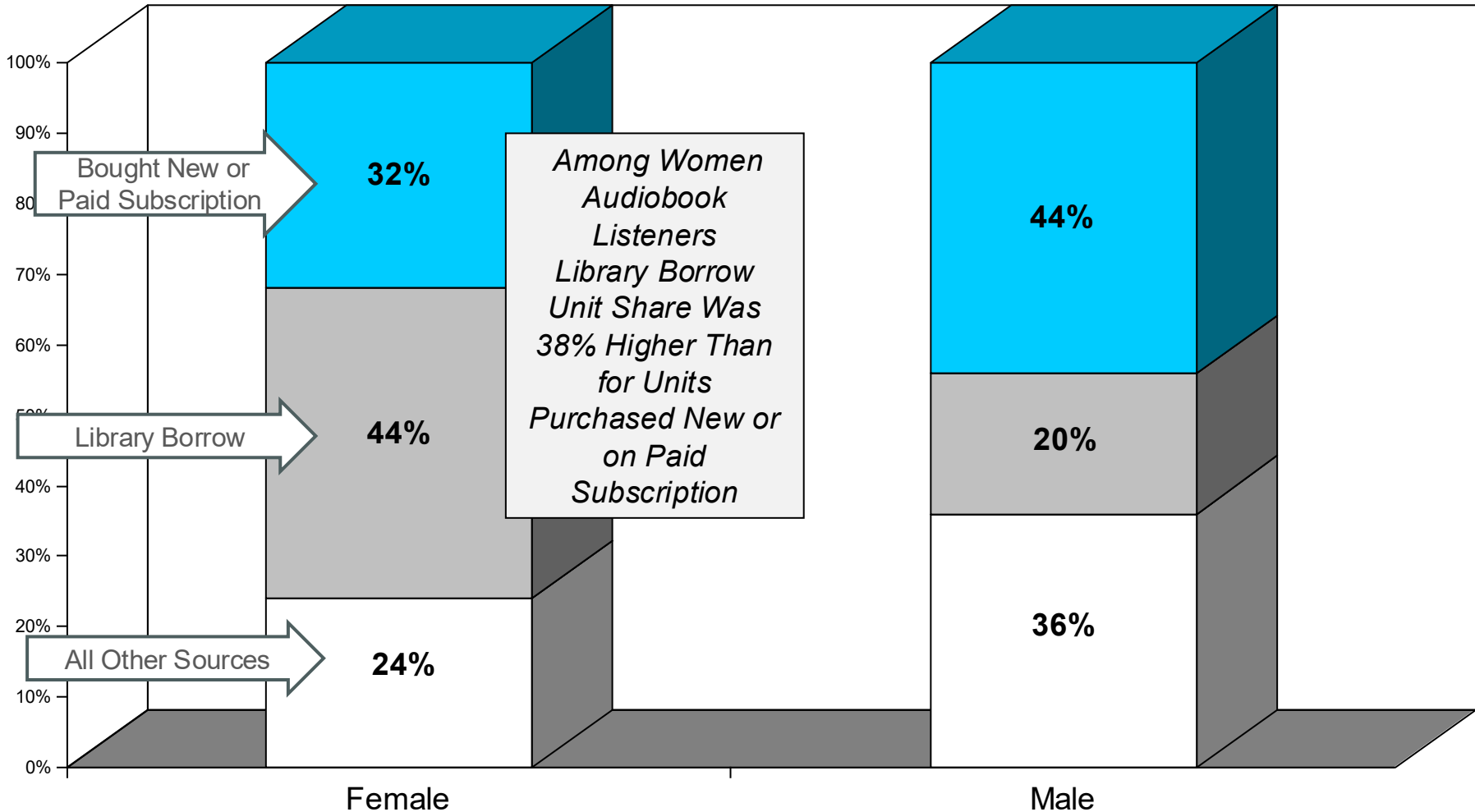


*Among All Audiobook Listeners Library Borrow Share Was 37% Effectively Tied with Purchased/Subscribed at 36%*

*Paid subscriptions had double the unit share of single purchase digital audiobooks.*

## Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Digital Audiobook Source Unit Share – Last Month by Gender

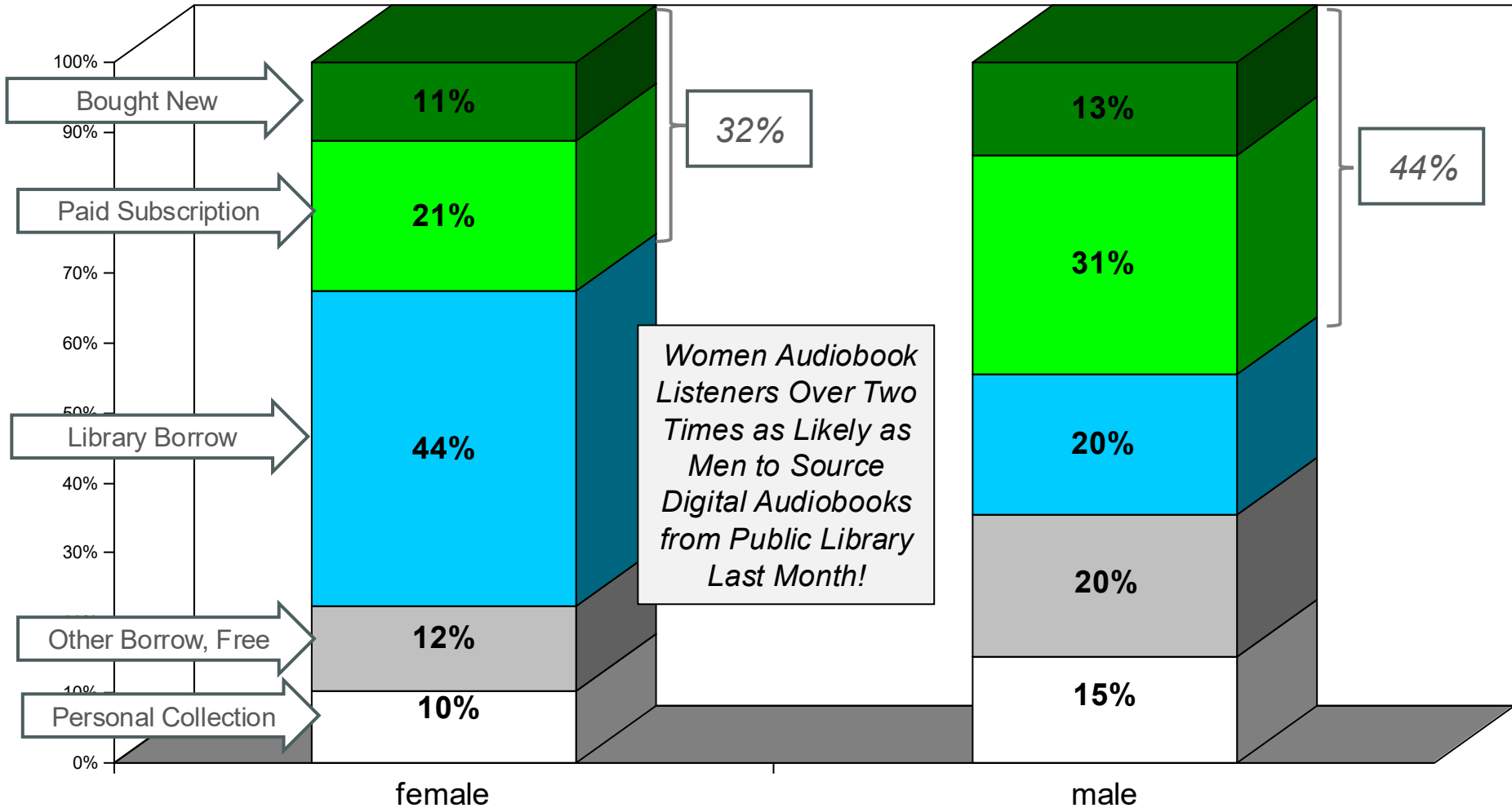
*How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?*



*Male last month digital audiobook listeners sourced over 2X more digital audiobooks from purchases or paid subscriptions than from Public Libraries.*

## Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Digital Audiobook Source Unit Share Last Month by Gender

How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



**Men digital audiobook listeners significantly more likely to pay for digital audiobook access last month!**

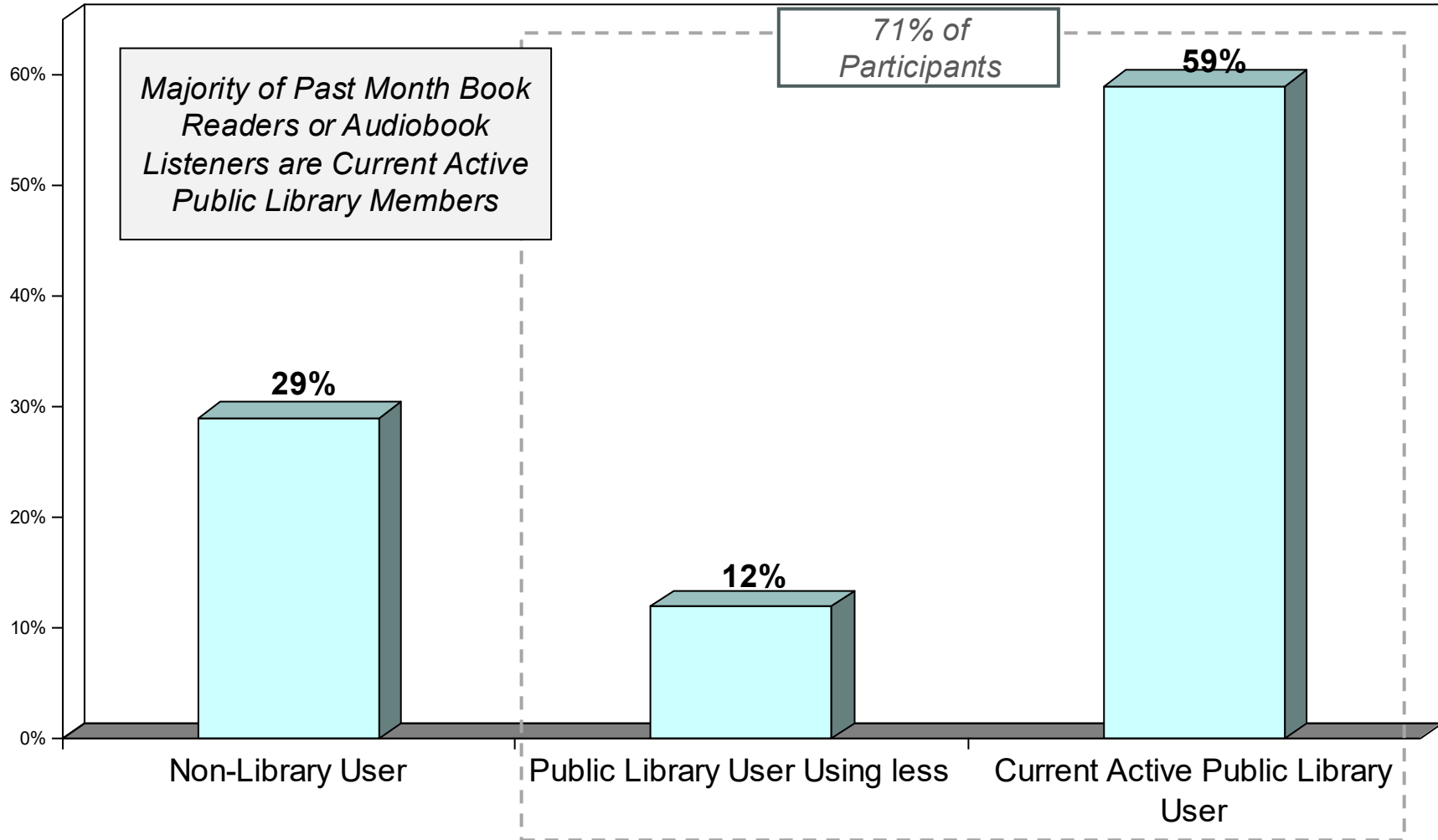
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*Past Month Book Reader/Audiobook Listener  
Detail*

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### Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – Public Library Membership

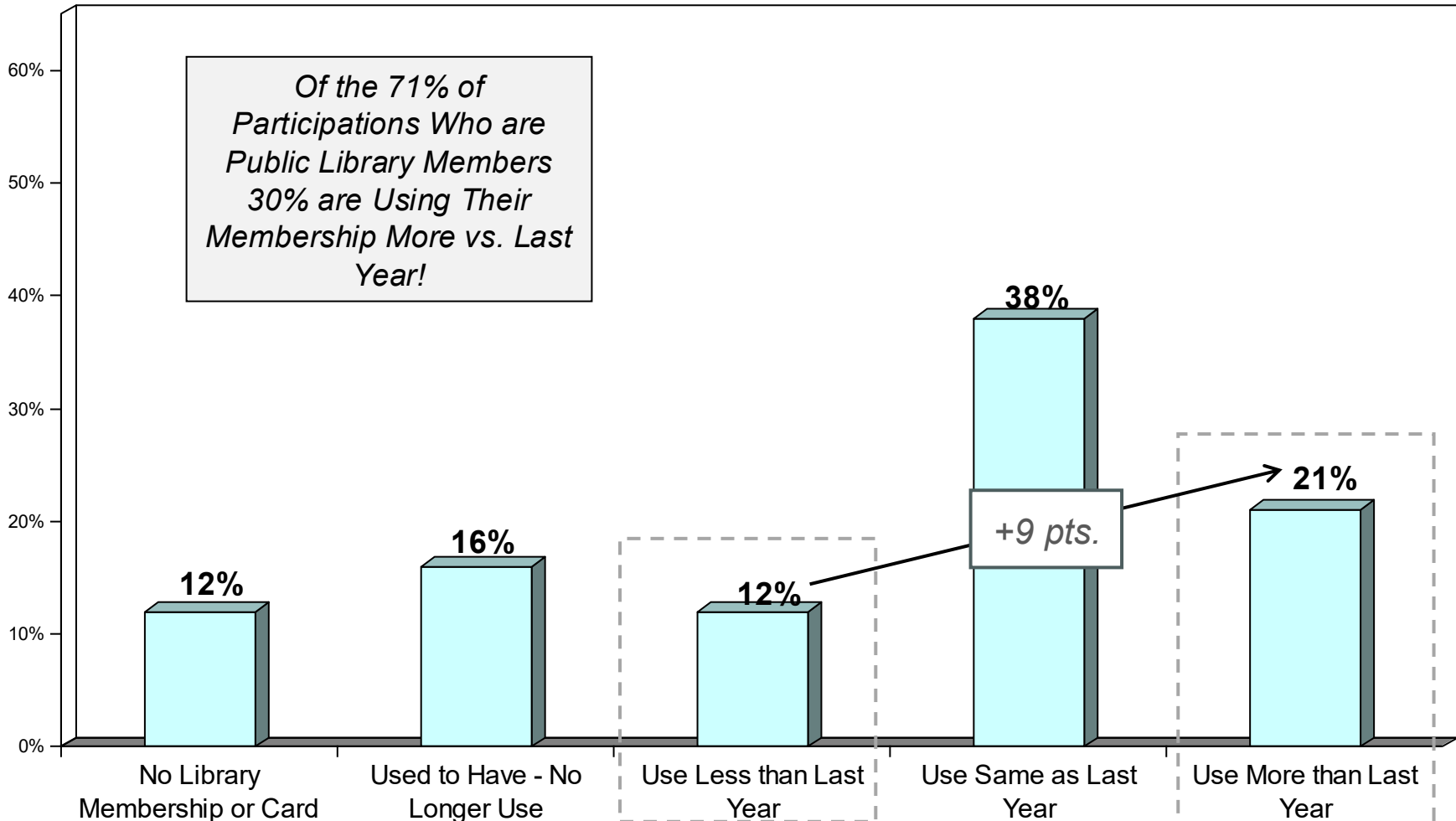
*Do you have a current public library membership or library card?*



*Only 71% of past month book readers/audiobook listeners are public library members.*

## Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – Public Library Membership Detail

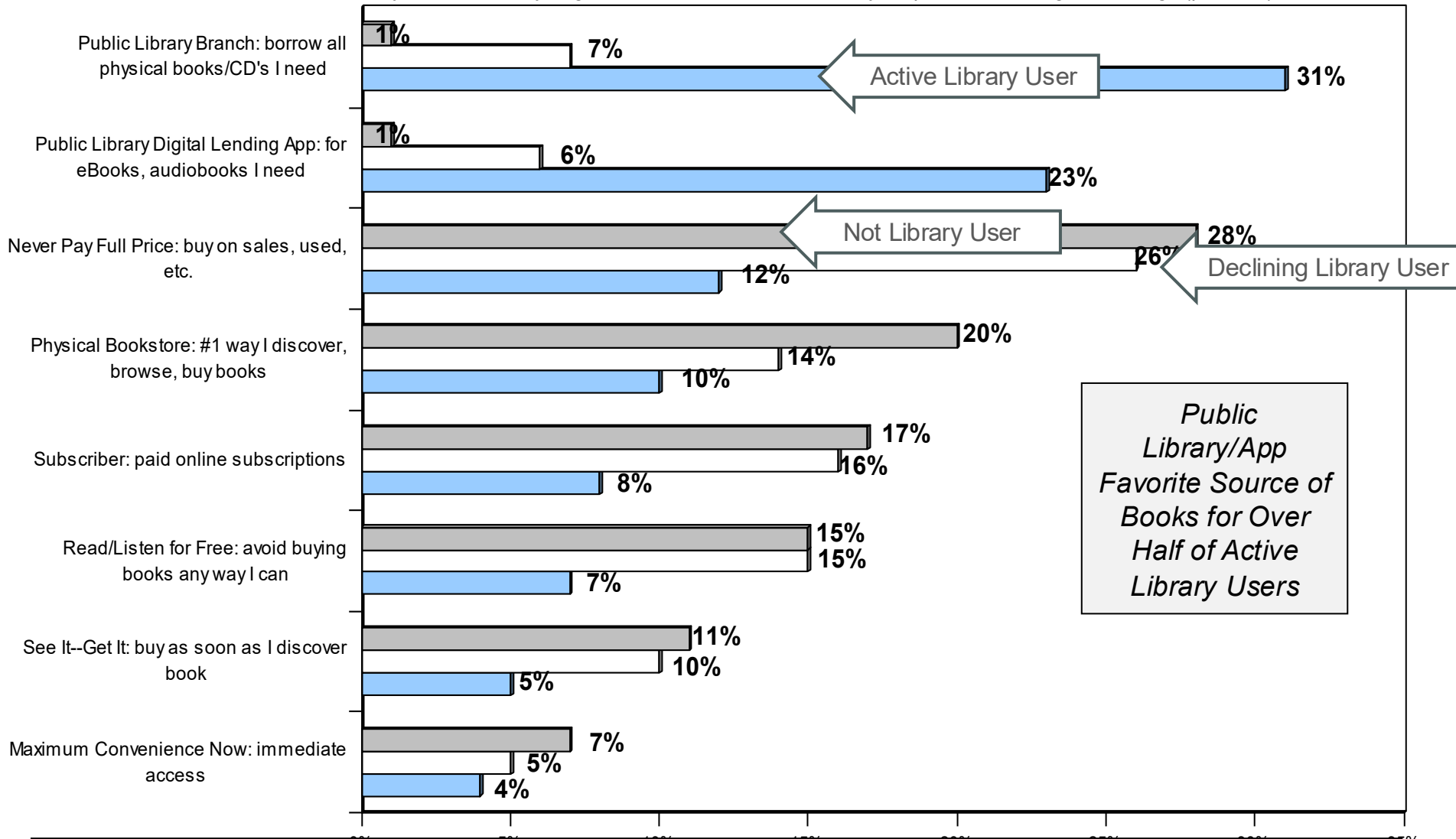
*Do you have a current public library membership or library card?*



*Largest audience of past year book readers/audiobook listeners in the survey sample are more active public library users, with those using the library more outpacing those using it less.*

## Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – Book Sourcing Style

Which statement comes closest to your favorite way to get books and/or audiobooks for your personal reading or listening? (pick one)

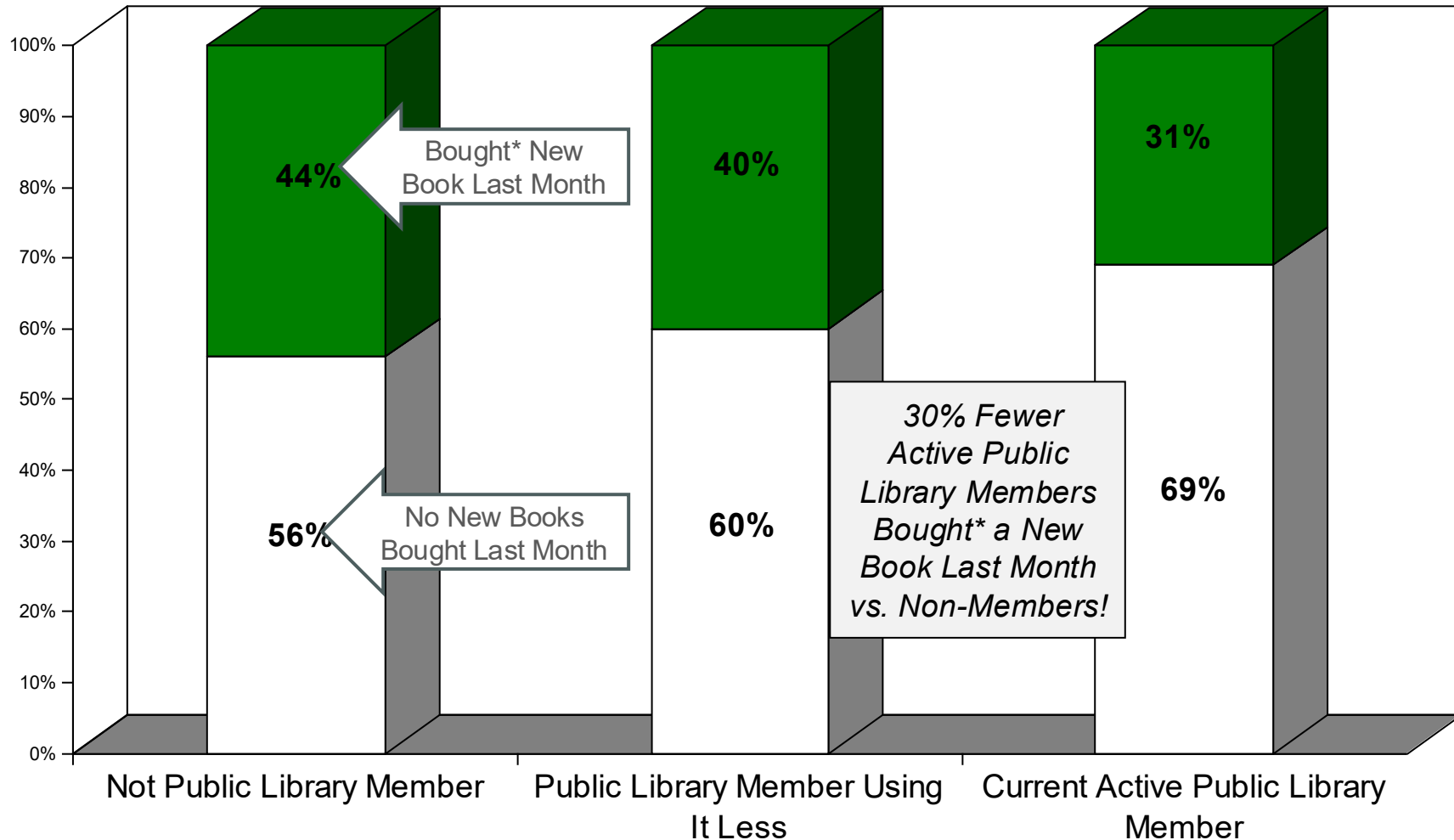


*Public Library/App Favorite Source of Books for Over Half of Active Library Users*

*Non-library users lead with avoiding 'full price' purchases -- similar to declining library users, but more physical store focused. Impulse and convenience buying are smallest segments.*

## Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – % Bought New Books or Paid Subscription Last Month

How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)

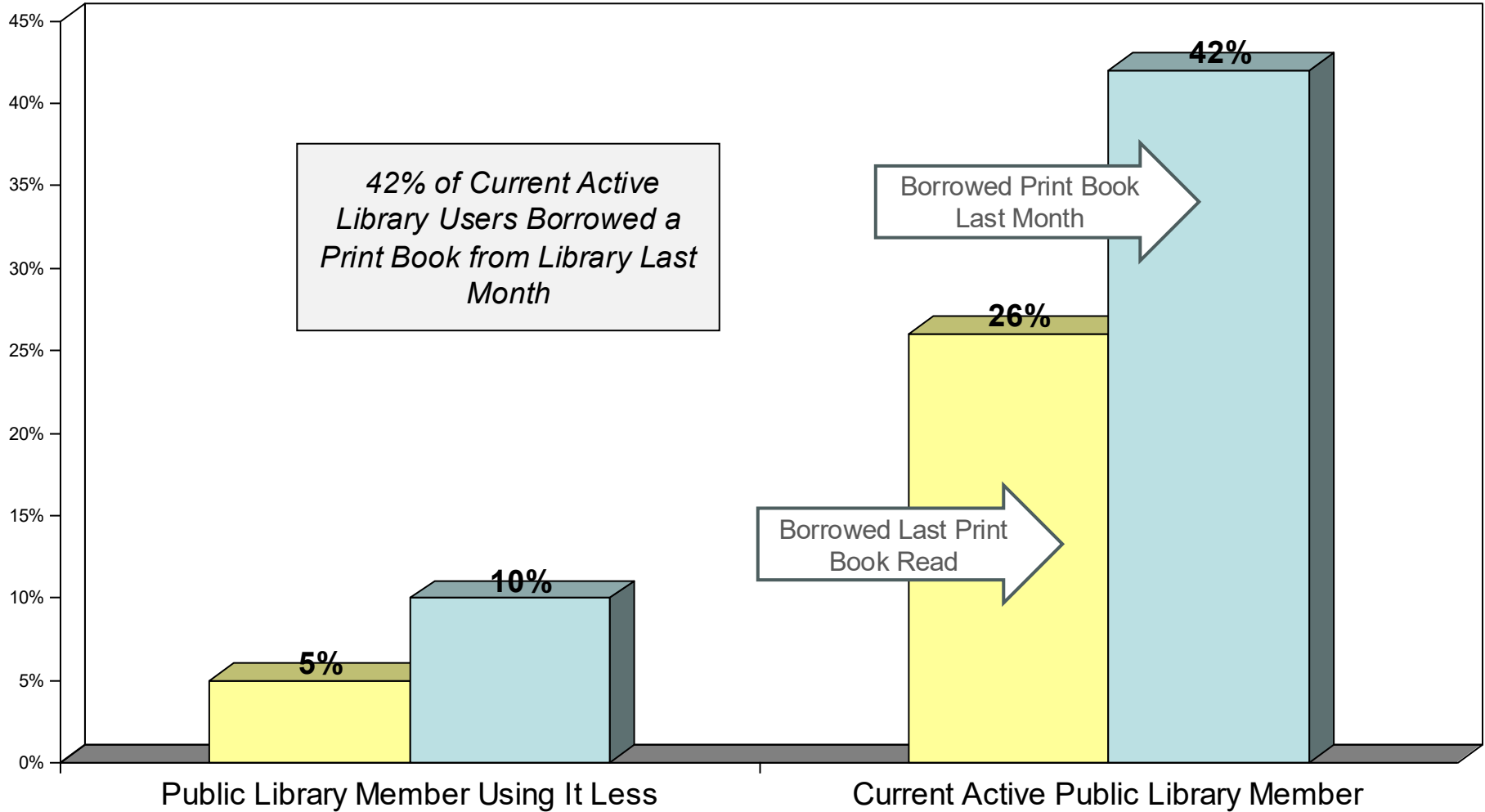


**Only 31% of past month book reader active library members bought a new book vs. 44% of non-members!**

\*Bought a new book or digital audiobook unit or obtained it through a paid subscription service (Audible, Spotify, etc., excluding Kindle Unlimited)

# Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – % Borrowed Print Book from Public Library

*Do you have a current public library membership or library card?*



*42% of Current Active Library Users Borrowed a Print Book from Library Last Month*

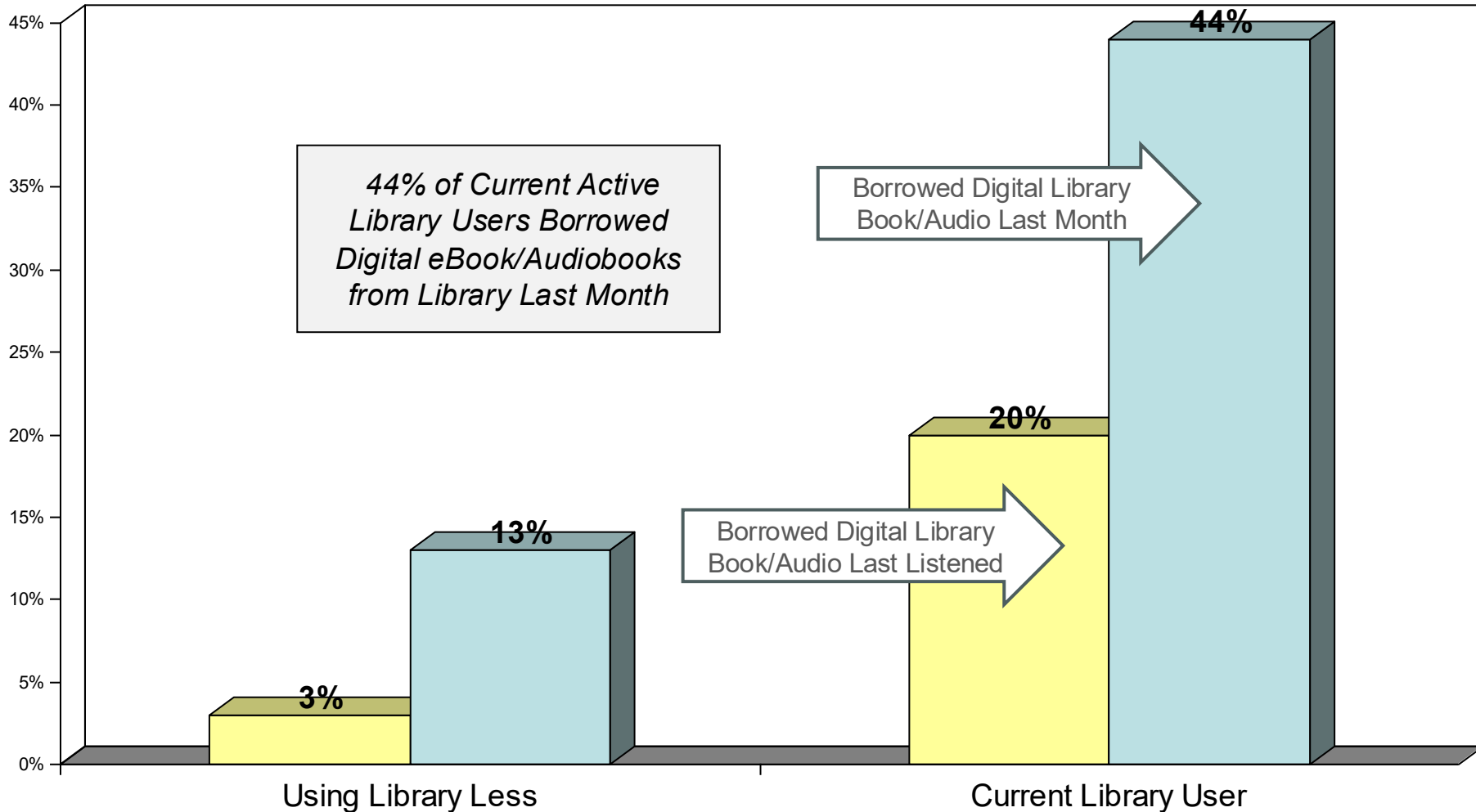
*Borrowed Last Print Book Read*

*Borrowed Print Book Last Month*

*26% of current active library users borrowed their last book read in print format.*

Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – % Borrowed Digital Book/Audiobook from Public Library

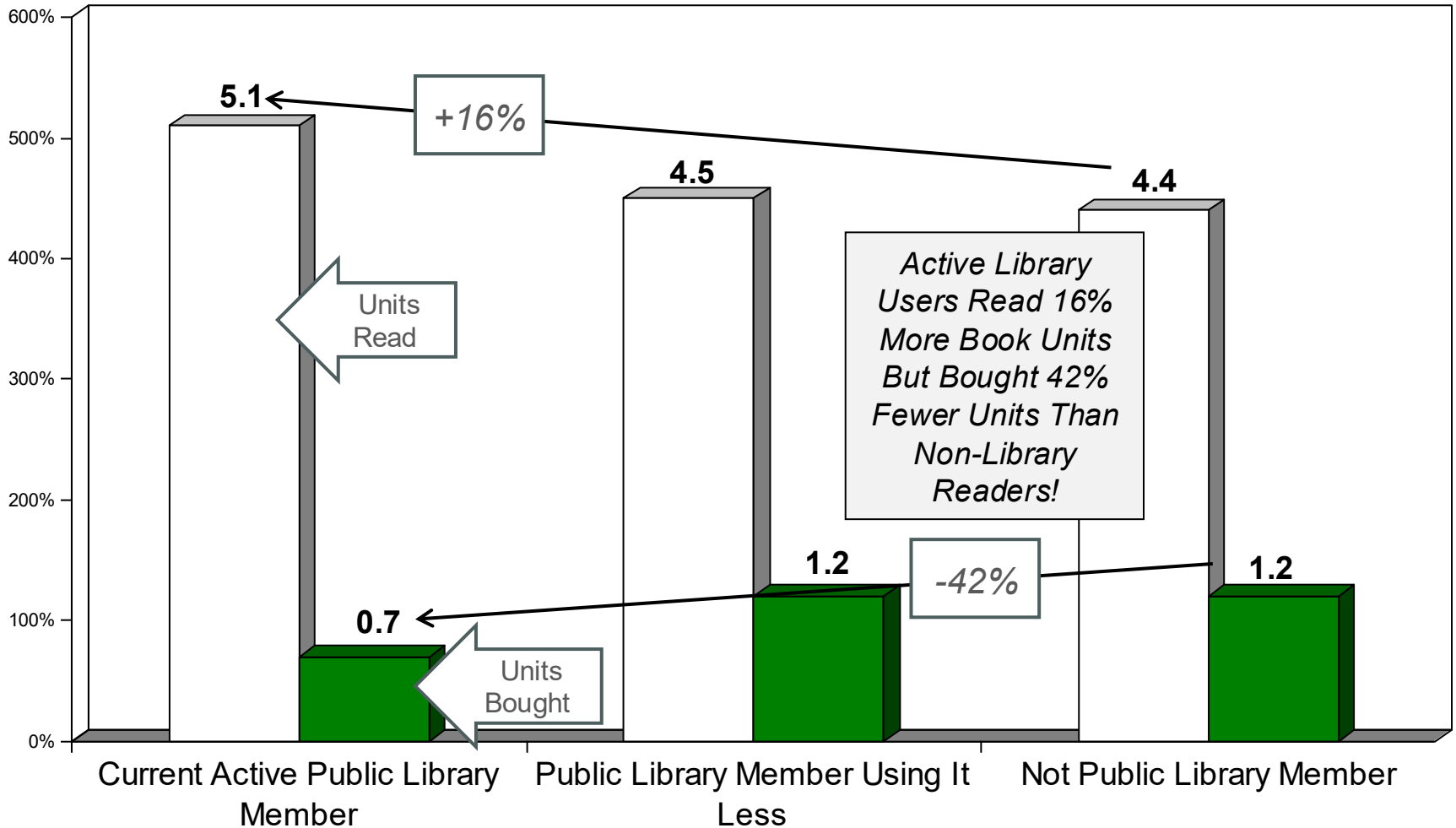
*Do you have a current public library membership or library card?*



*Only 20% of current active library users borrowed their last book read digitally from library.*

## Past Month Book Readers – eBooks/Print Book Units Read Last Month vs. Bought/Subscribed New

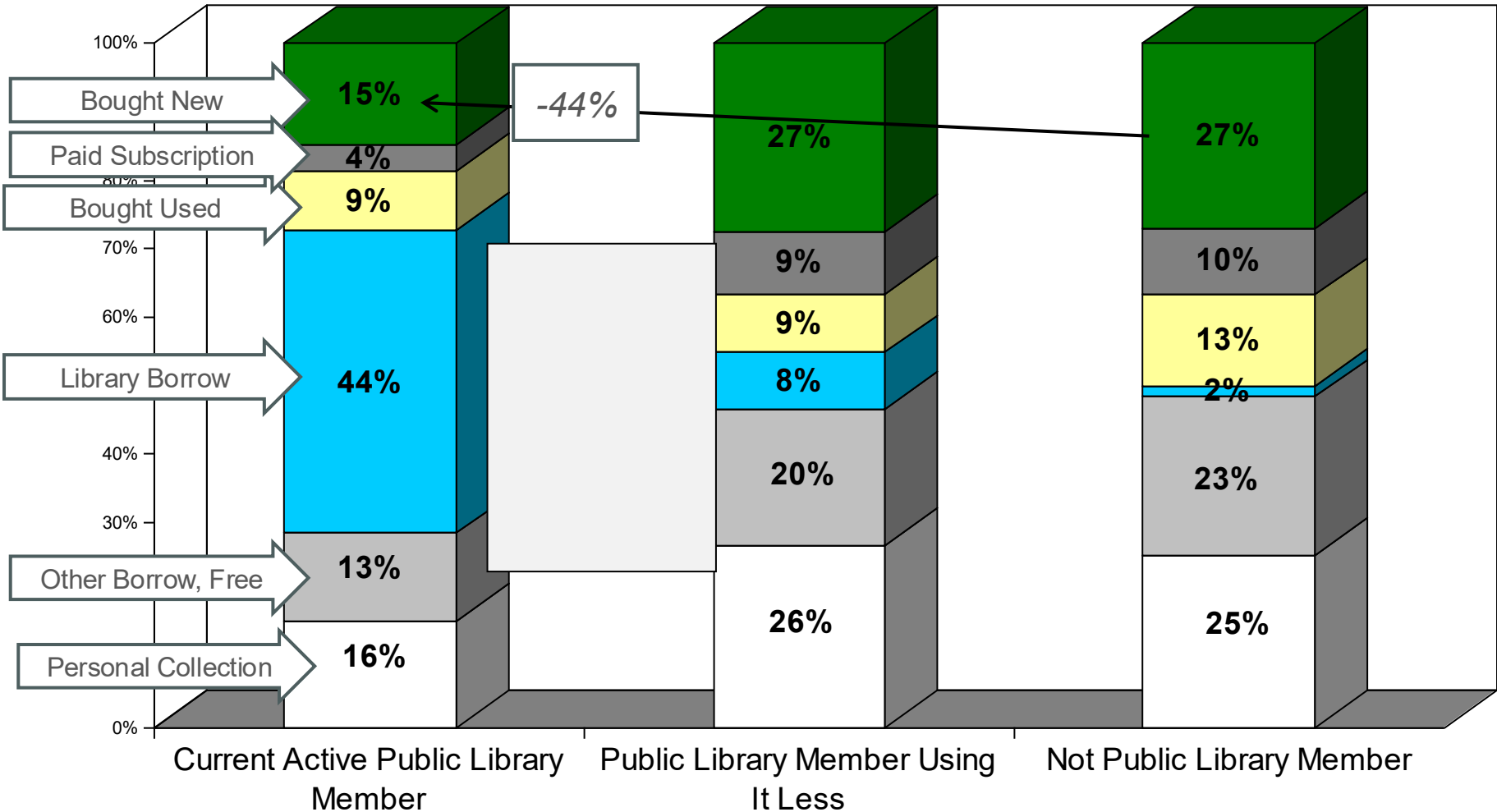
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



*Active library users new bought (excludes subscription) books only 0.7 units vs. non-users 71% higher at 1.2 new bought book units!*

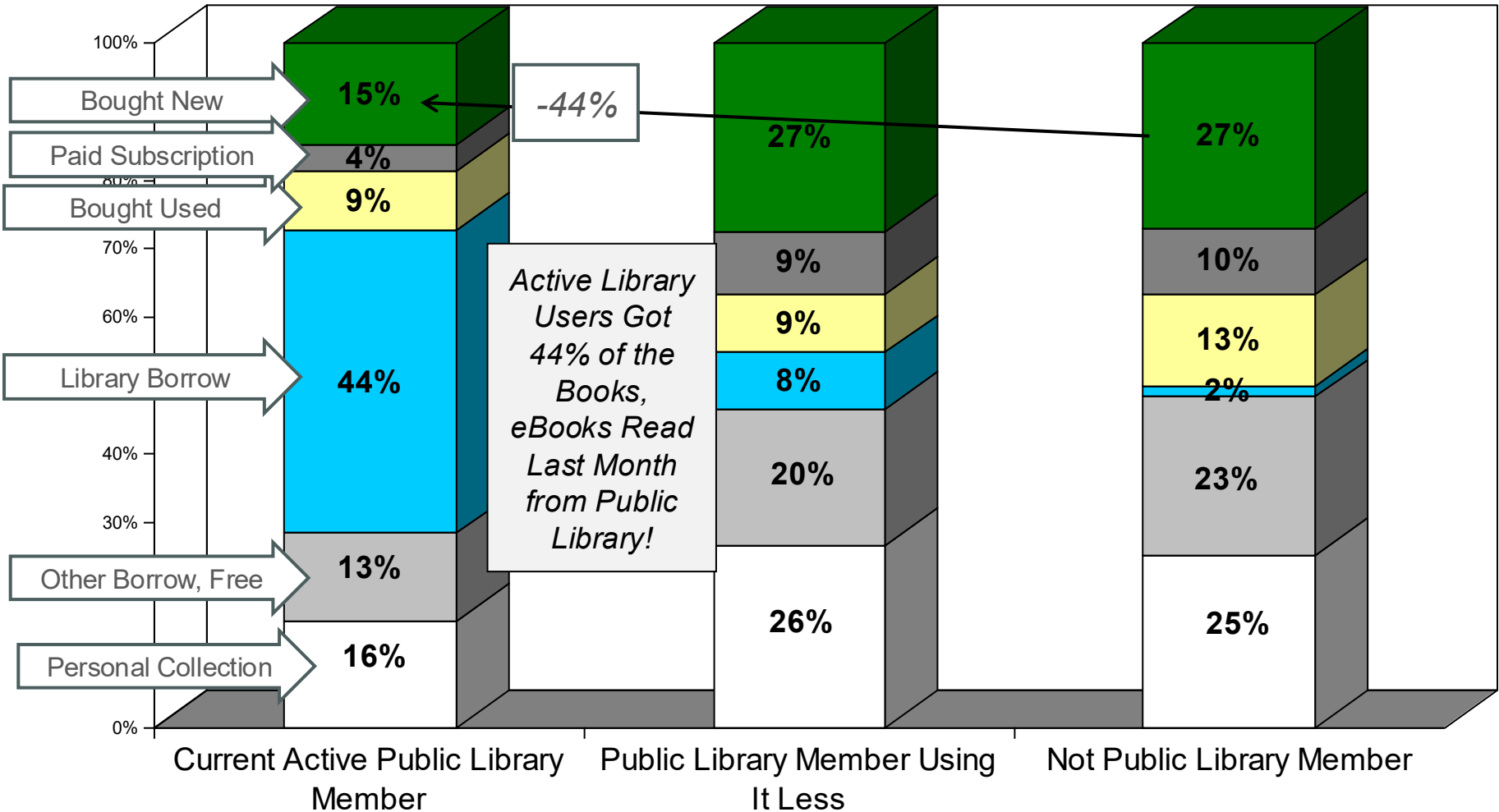
## Past Month Book Readers/Listeners – Favorite Way to Get Books, Audiobooks for Personal Use

Which statement comes closest to your favorite way to get books and/or audiobooks for your personal reading or listening? (pick one)



## Past Month Book Readers – Share of eBooks/Print Book Units Read vs. Bought New Last Month

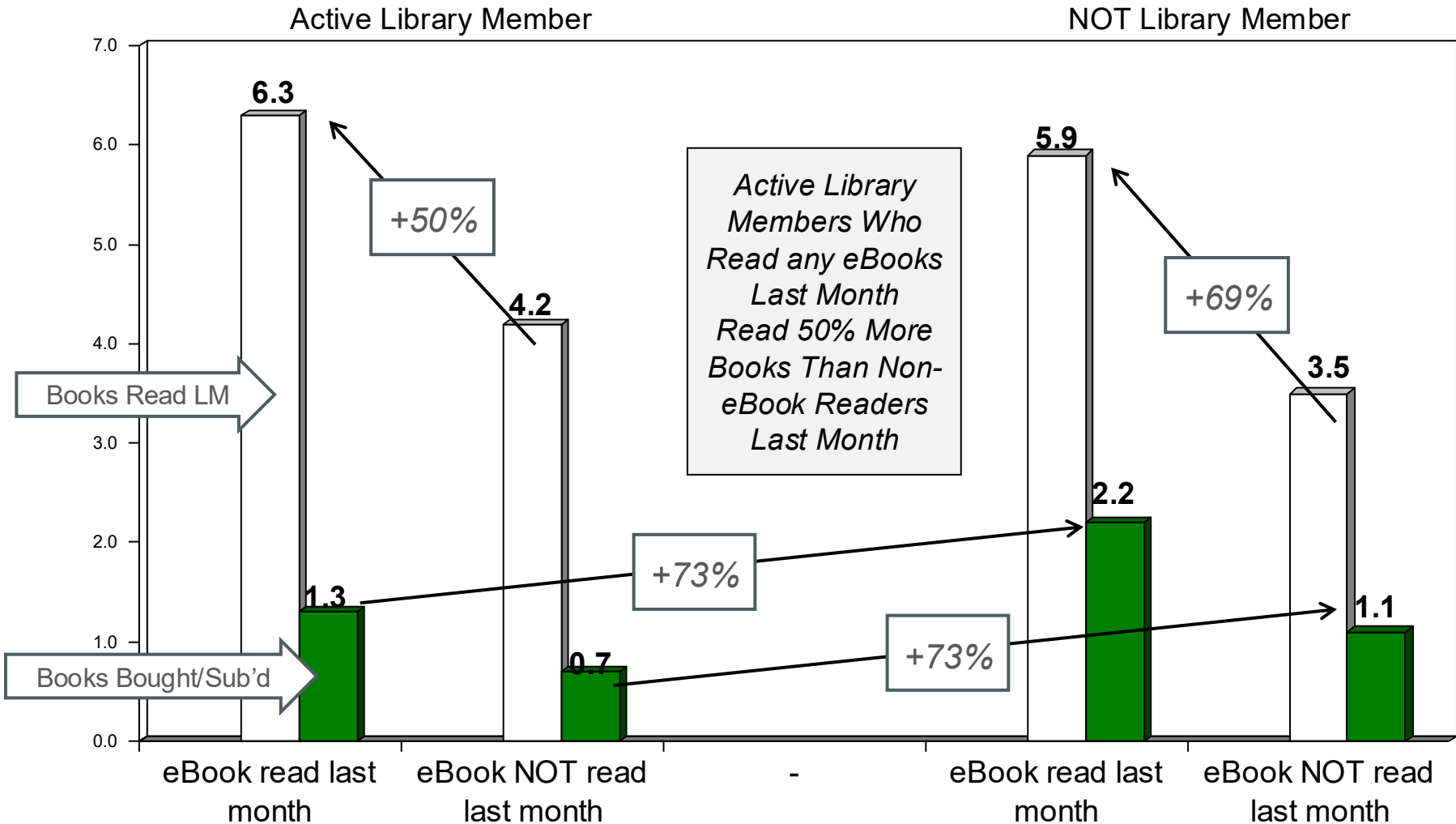
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



Non-library users got 50% of the books they read from paid sources – new, subscription, used.

### Past Month eBook v Non-eBook Readers – Number of Book Units Read Last Month

How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



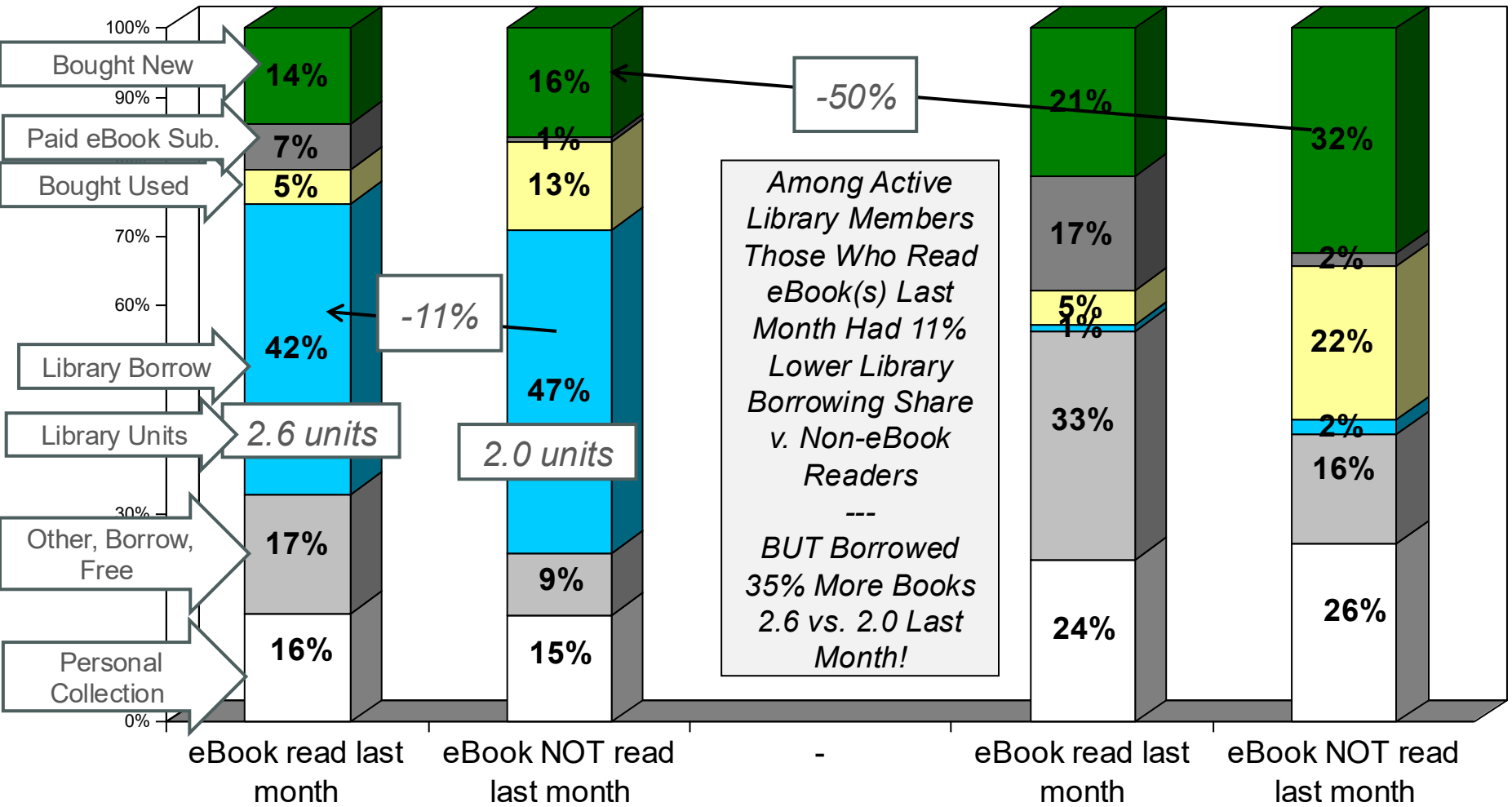
**Among library non-members those who read any eBooks last month read nearly 70% more total book units in the last month. They also purchased 73% more book units that month!**

# Past Month eBook v Non-eBook Readers – Share of eBooks/Print Book Units Read v. Bought New Last Month

How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)

Active Library Member

NOT Library Member

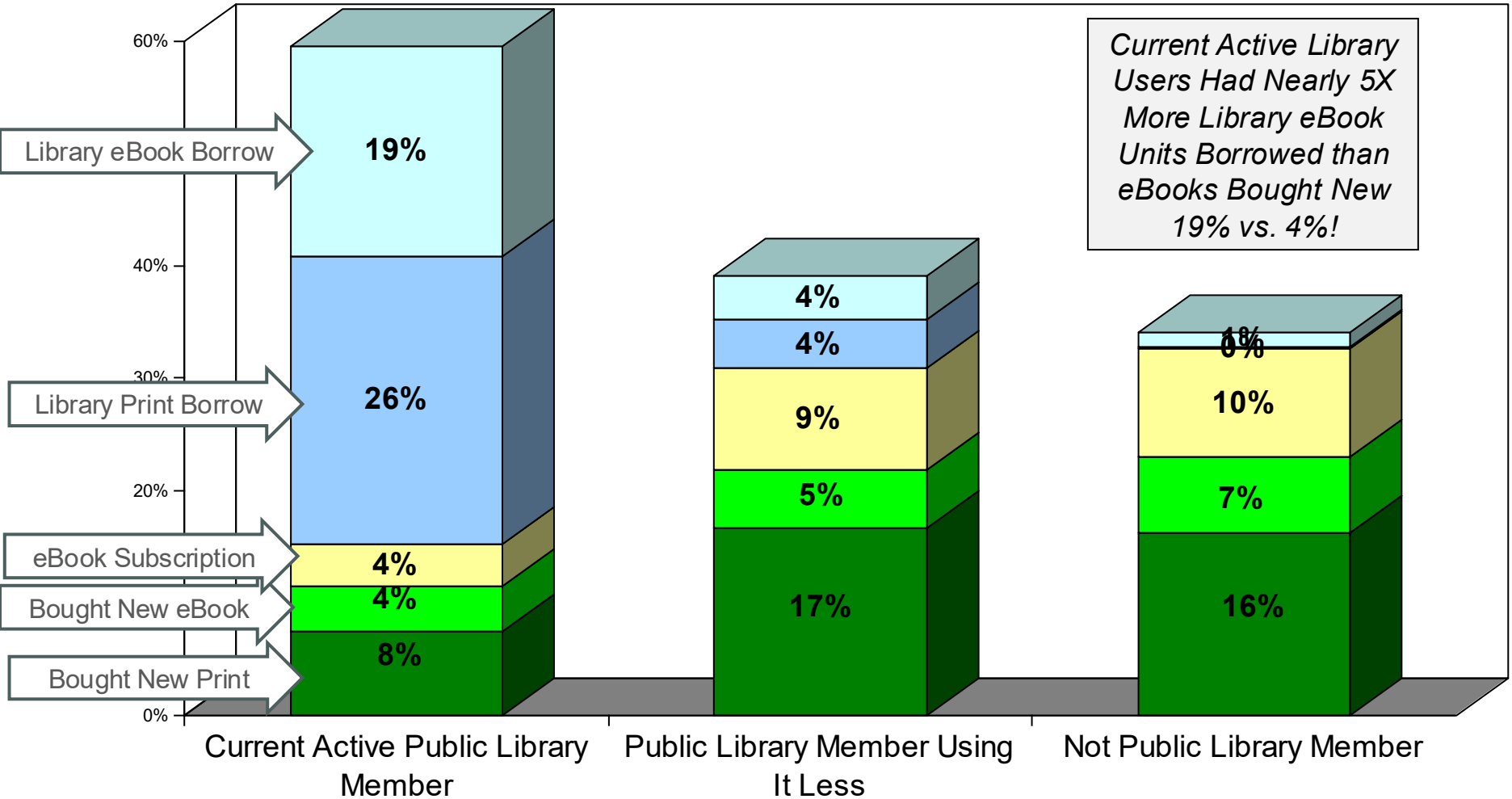


Among Active Library Members Those Who Read eBook(s) Last Month Had 11% Lower Library Borrowing Share v. Non-eBook Readers --- BUT Borrowed 35% More Books 2.6 vs. 2.0 Last Month!

Non-eBook readers who were not library members had the highest level of new book purchase share in the last month at 32%. Non-eBook reading library members had half the new purchase share 16%.

## Past Month Book Readers – eBook vs. Print Book Unit Share Detail Read vs. Bought New Last Month

How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)

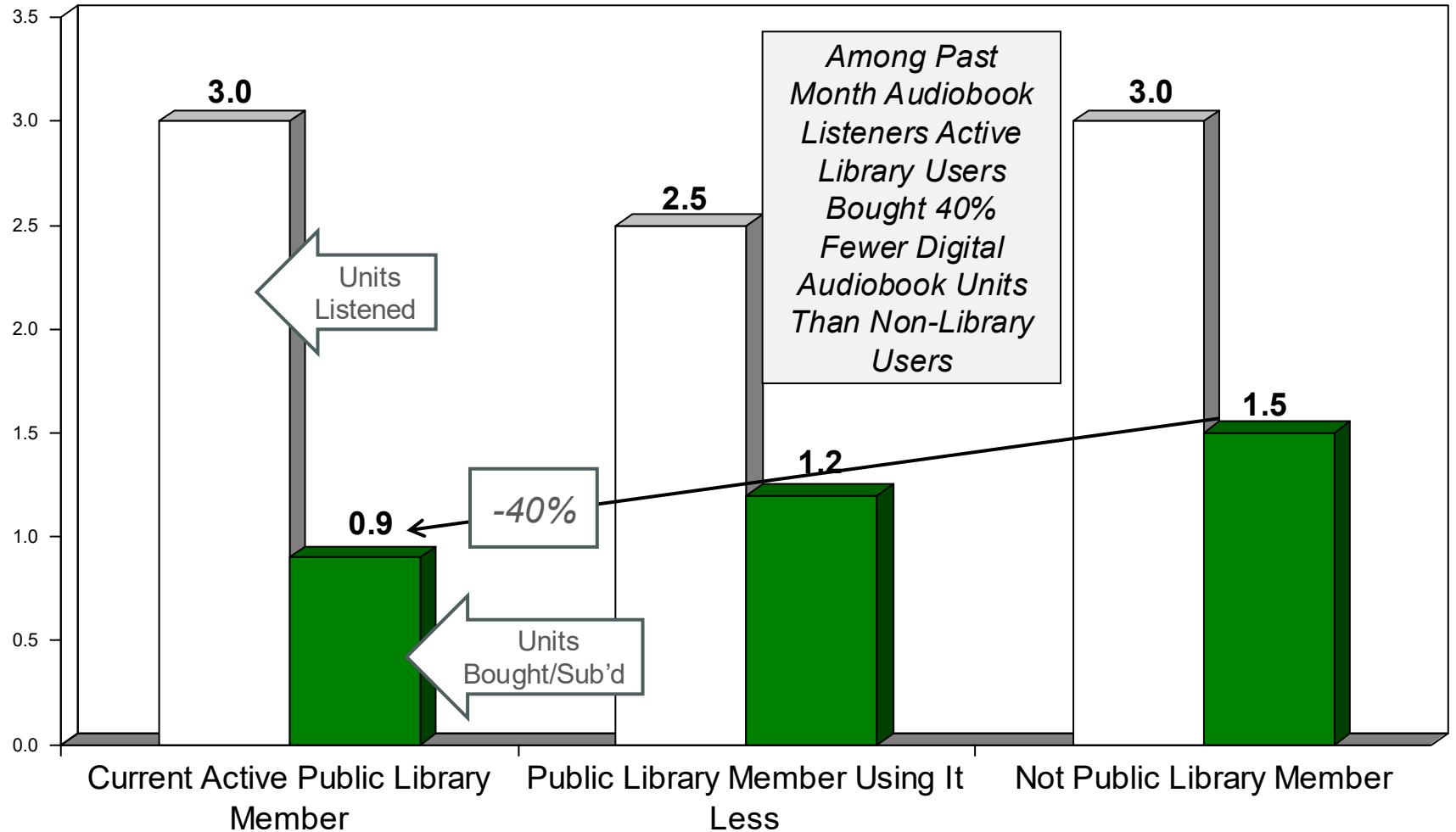


*Current Active Library Users Had Nearly 5X More Library eBook Units Borrowed than eBooks Bought New 19% vs. 4%!*

*eBook subscription share over 2X higher among non-Library users.*

# Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Digital Audiobook Units Listened Last Month vs. Bought, Subscribed New

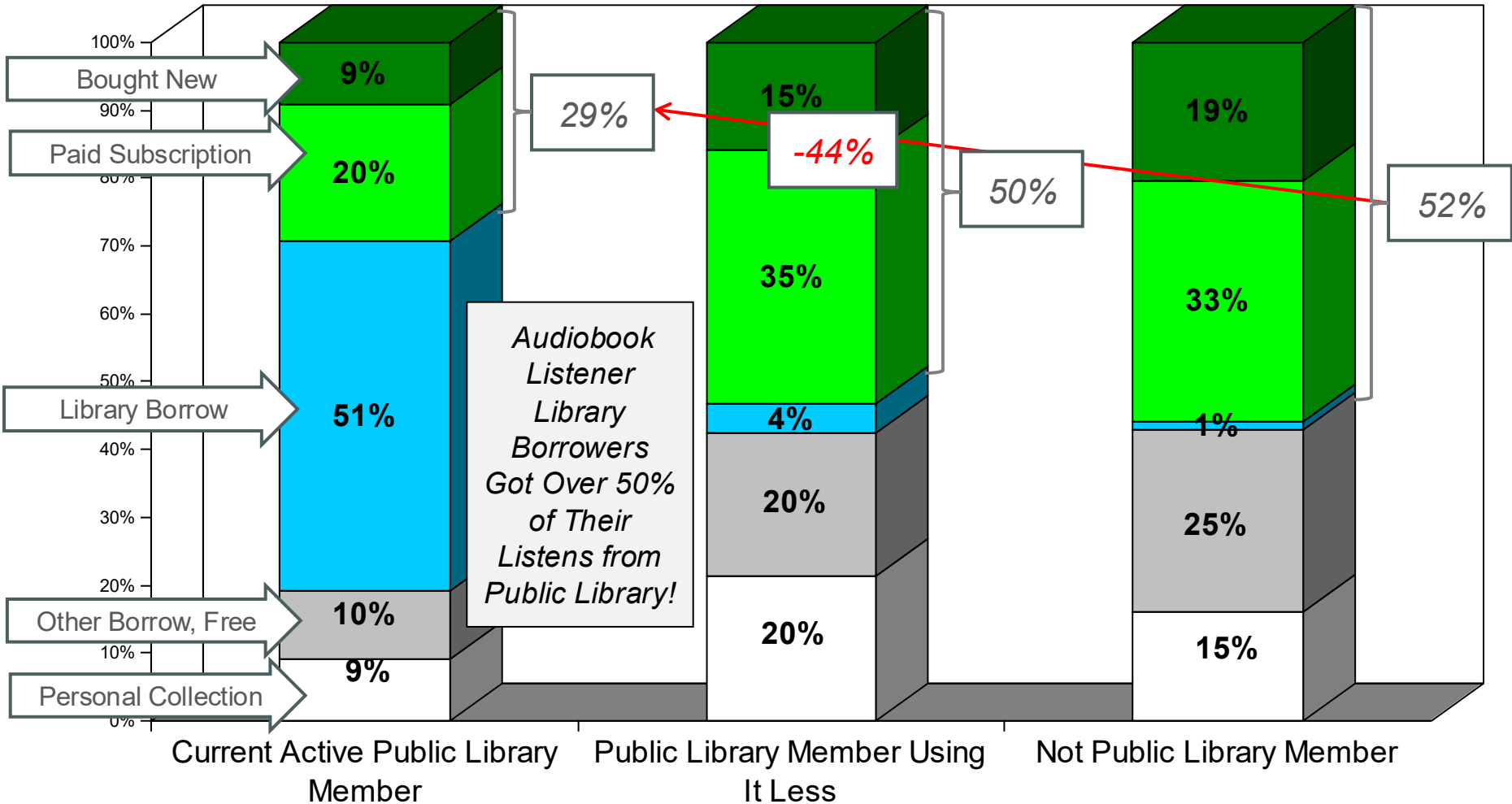
How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



*Active library users new bought/subscribed audiobooks only 0.9 units vs. non-library users 67% higher at 1.5 units last month!*

# Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Digital Audiobook Units Listened vs. Bought New Last Month

How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



**Non-library digital audiobook listeners had 79% higher new/subscription digital audiobook unit share!**

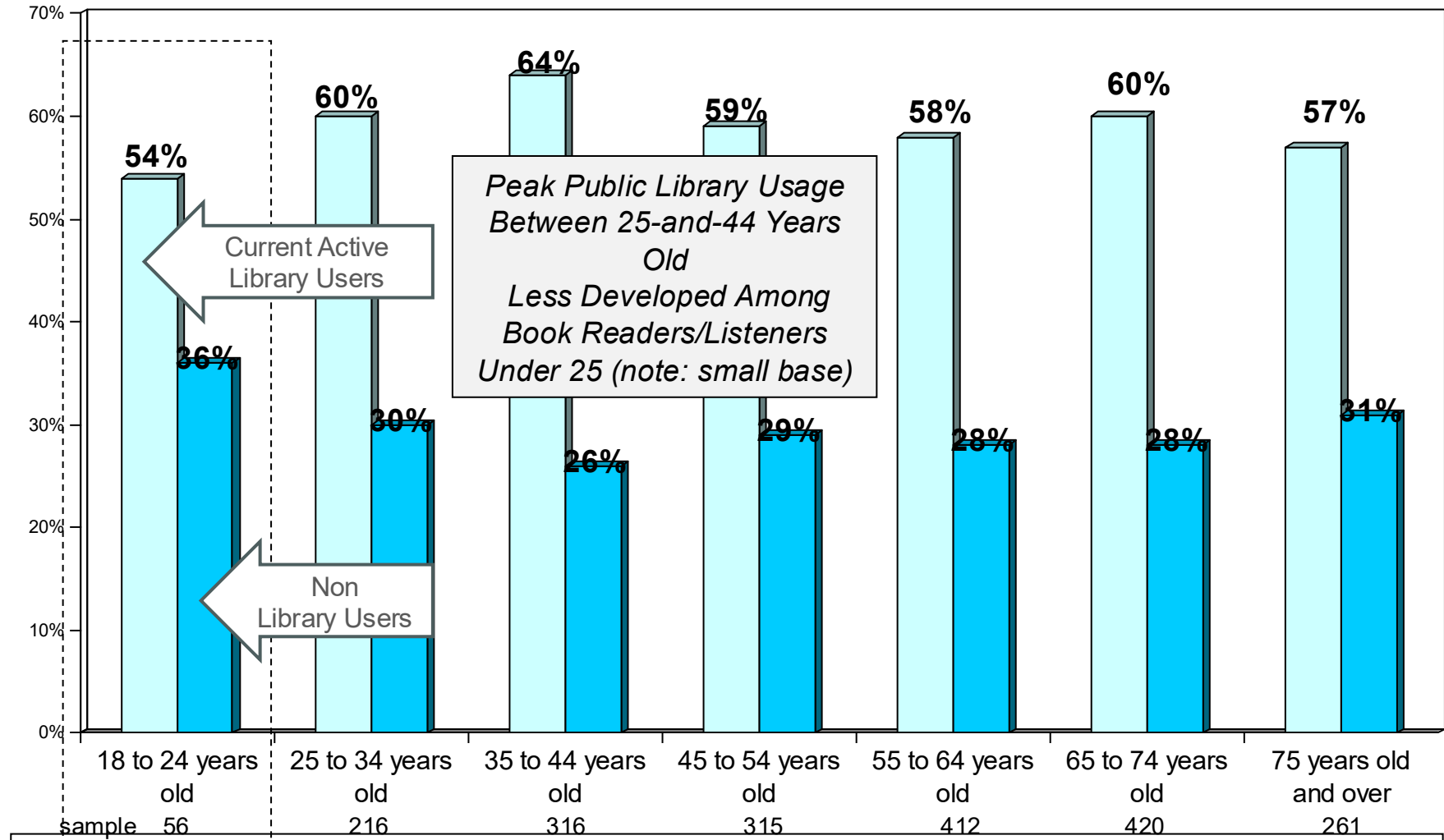
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*Active Library Users  
Detail*

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### Current Active Public Library Members: % of Total Base by Age

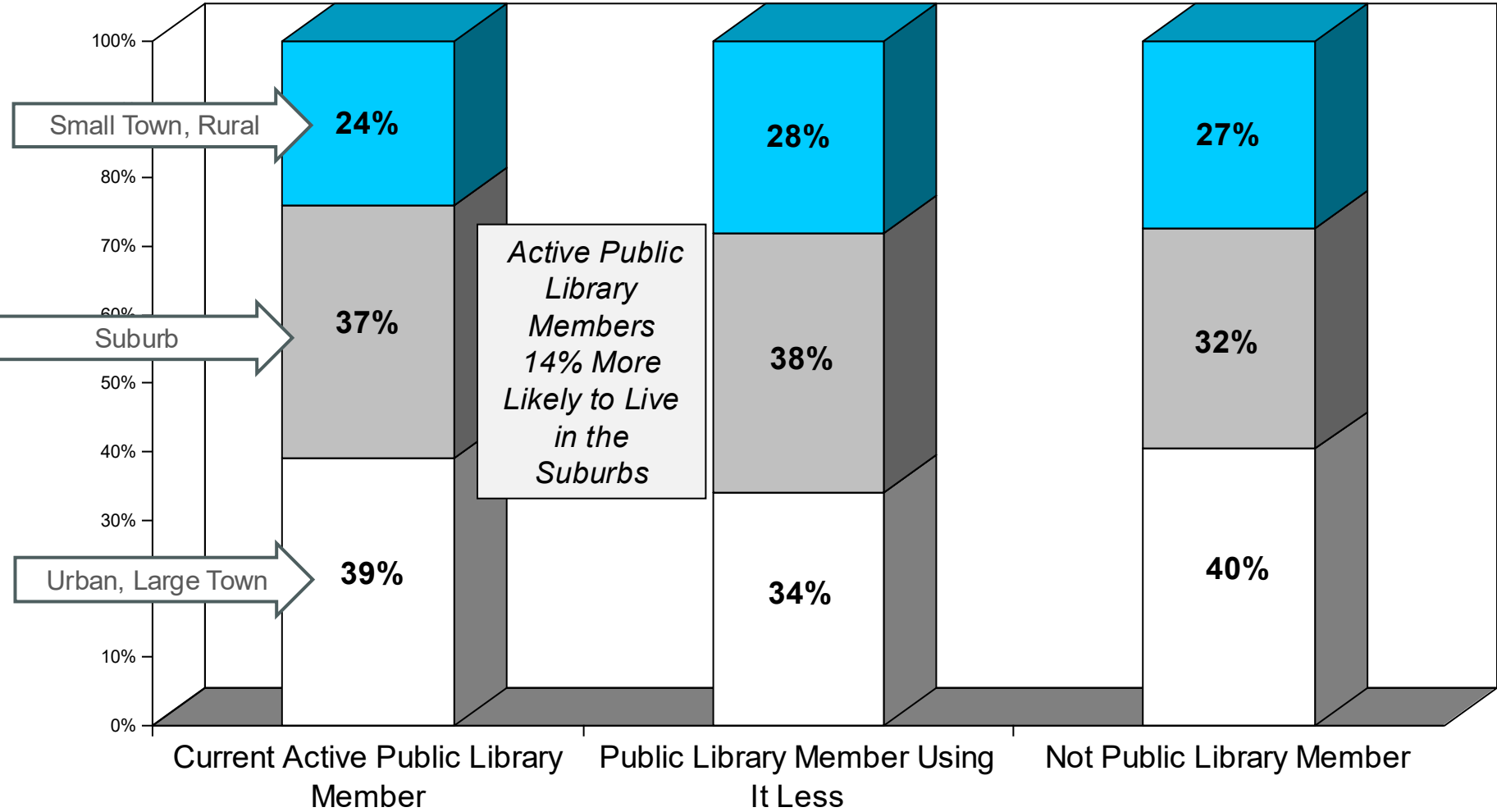
Do you have a current public library membership or library card?  
What is your age?



Among past month book readers/listeners there is only a modest difference in current active library user concentration by age group, or by gender (men 59%, women 60%).

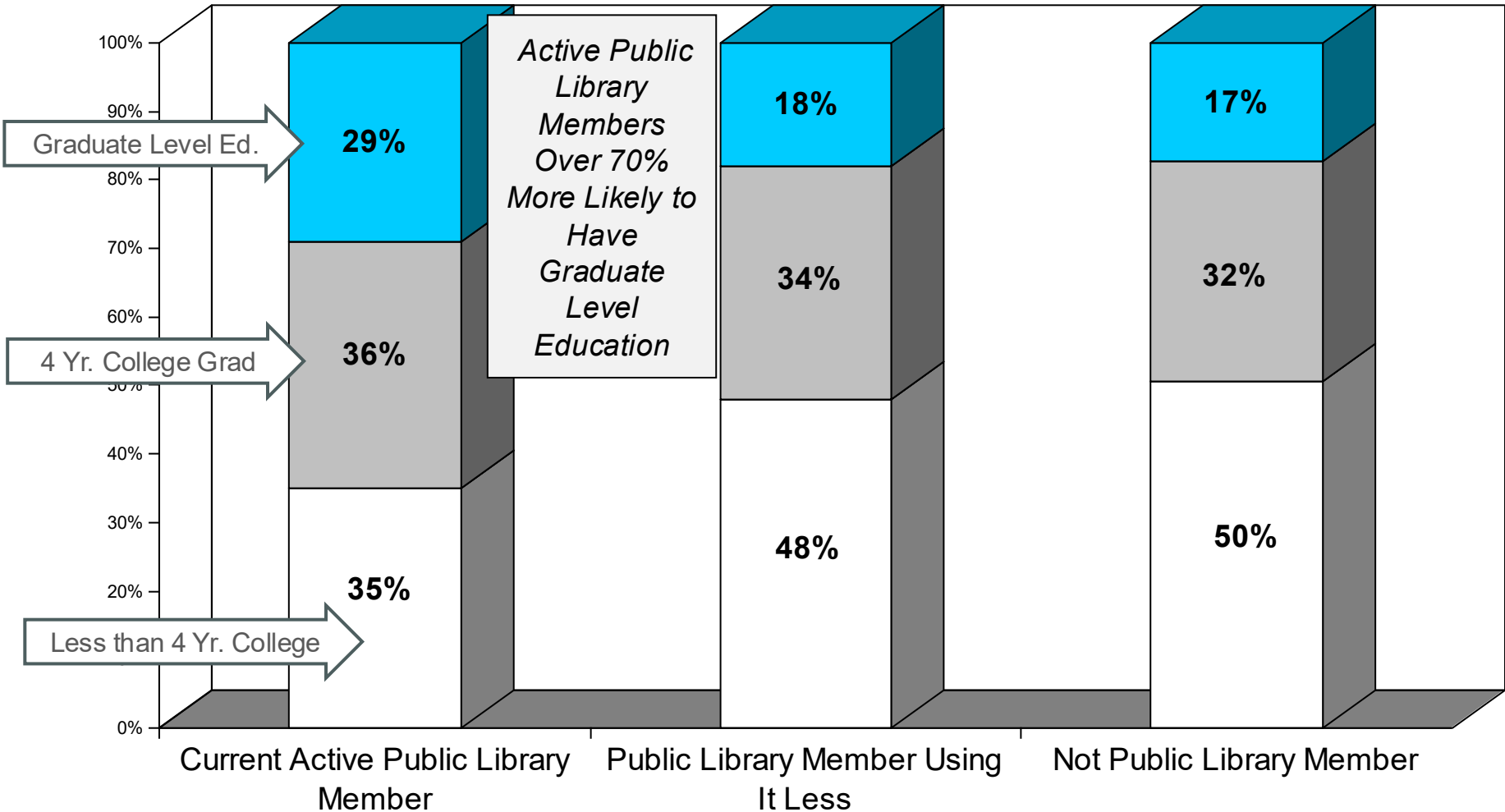
# Current Active Public Library Members vs. Non-Users: Demographics – Urban, Suburban, Rural

What type of area do you live in?



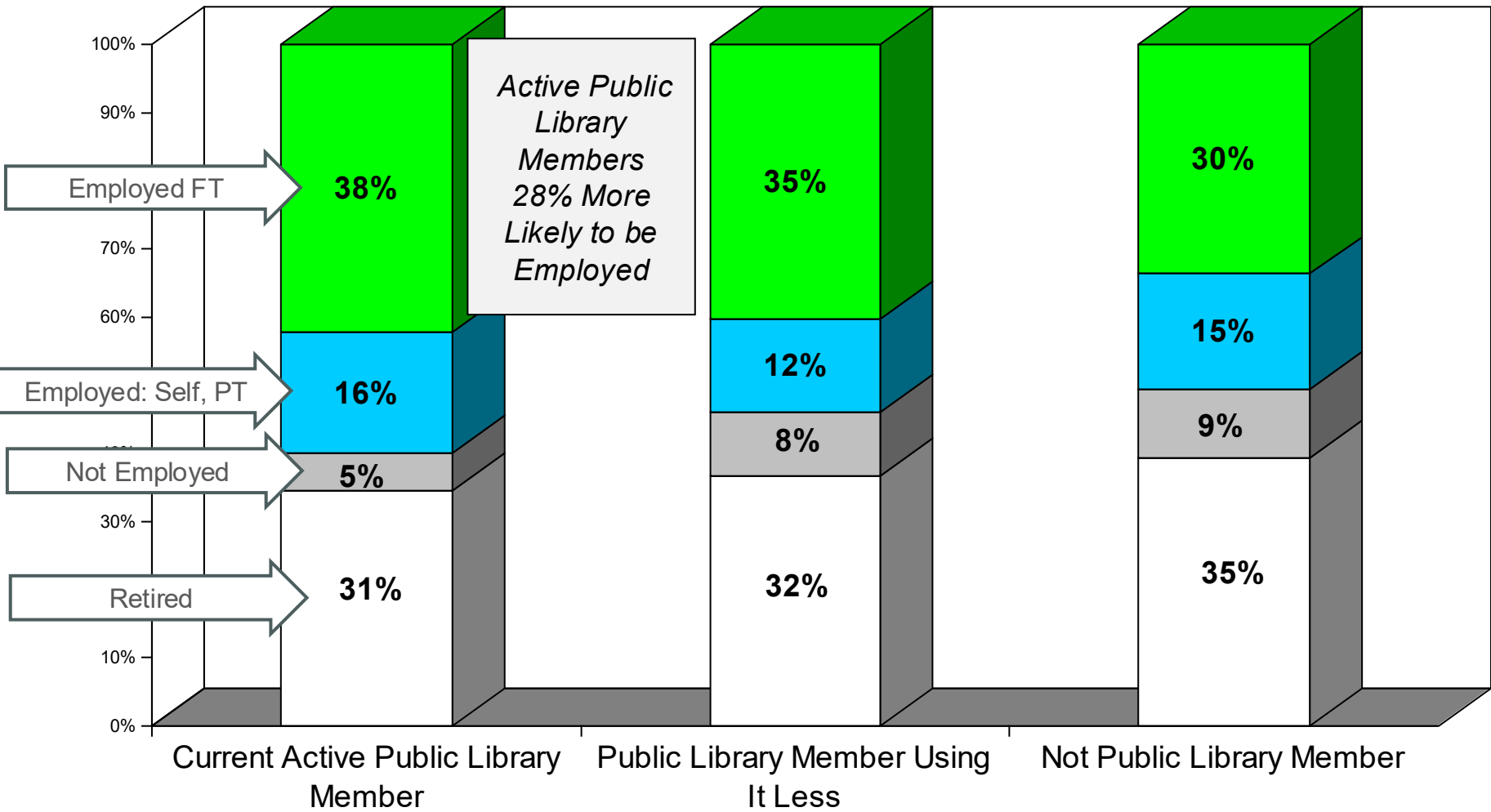
*Active public library members somewhat less likely to live in small town or rural areas.*

## Current Active Public Library Members vs. Non-Users: Demographics – Education



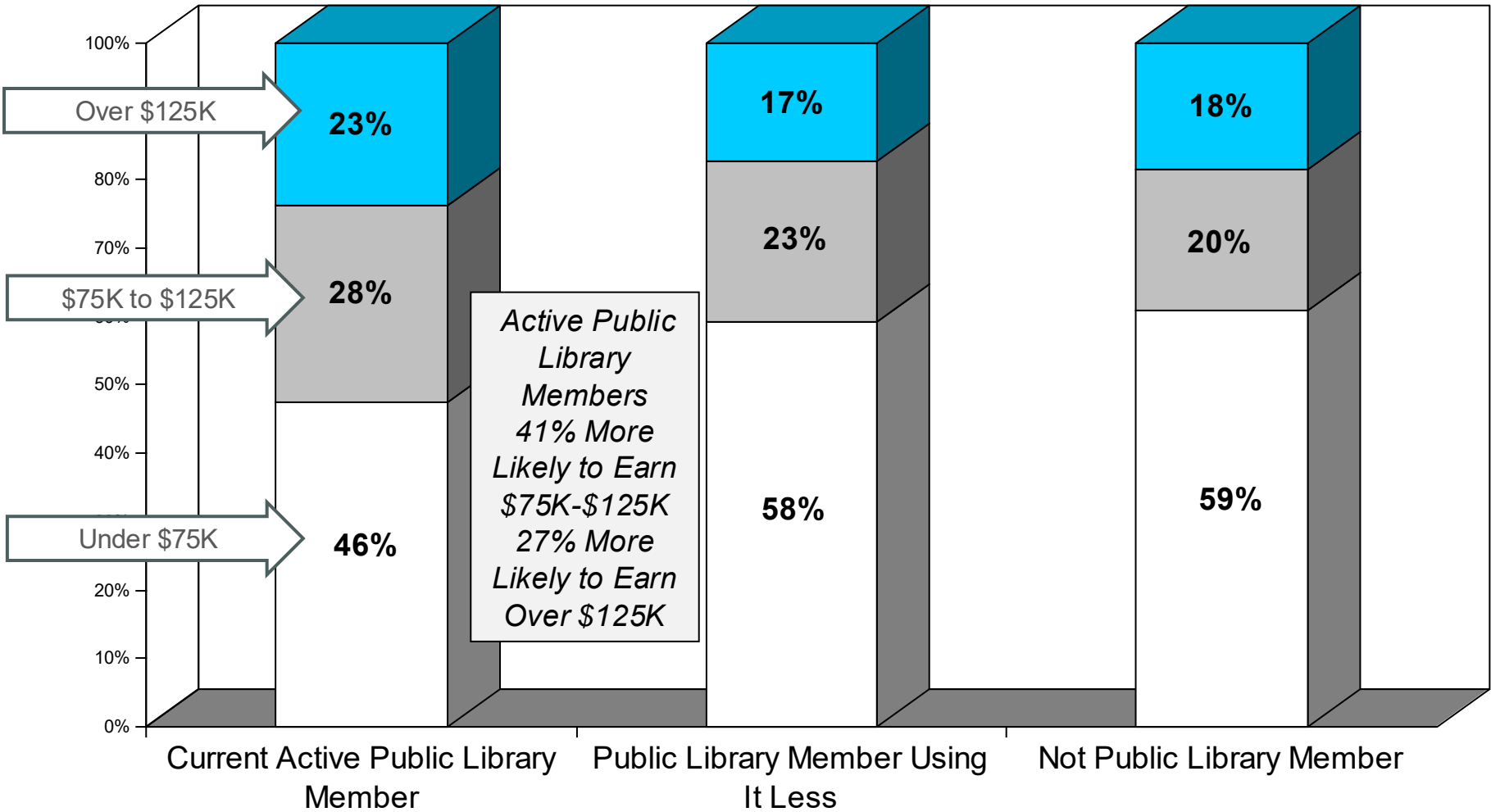
*Half of all Non-Library Members have less than a 4-year college education and are 43% more likely to be at that education attainment level.*

### Current Active Public Library Members vs. Non-Users: Demographics – Employment



*Non-Library members more likely to be retired or not currently employed.*

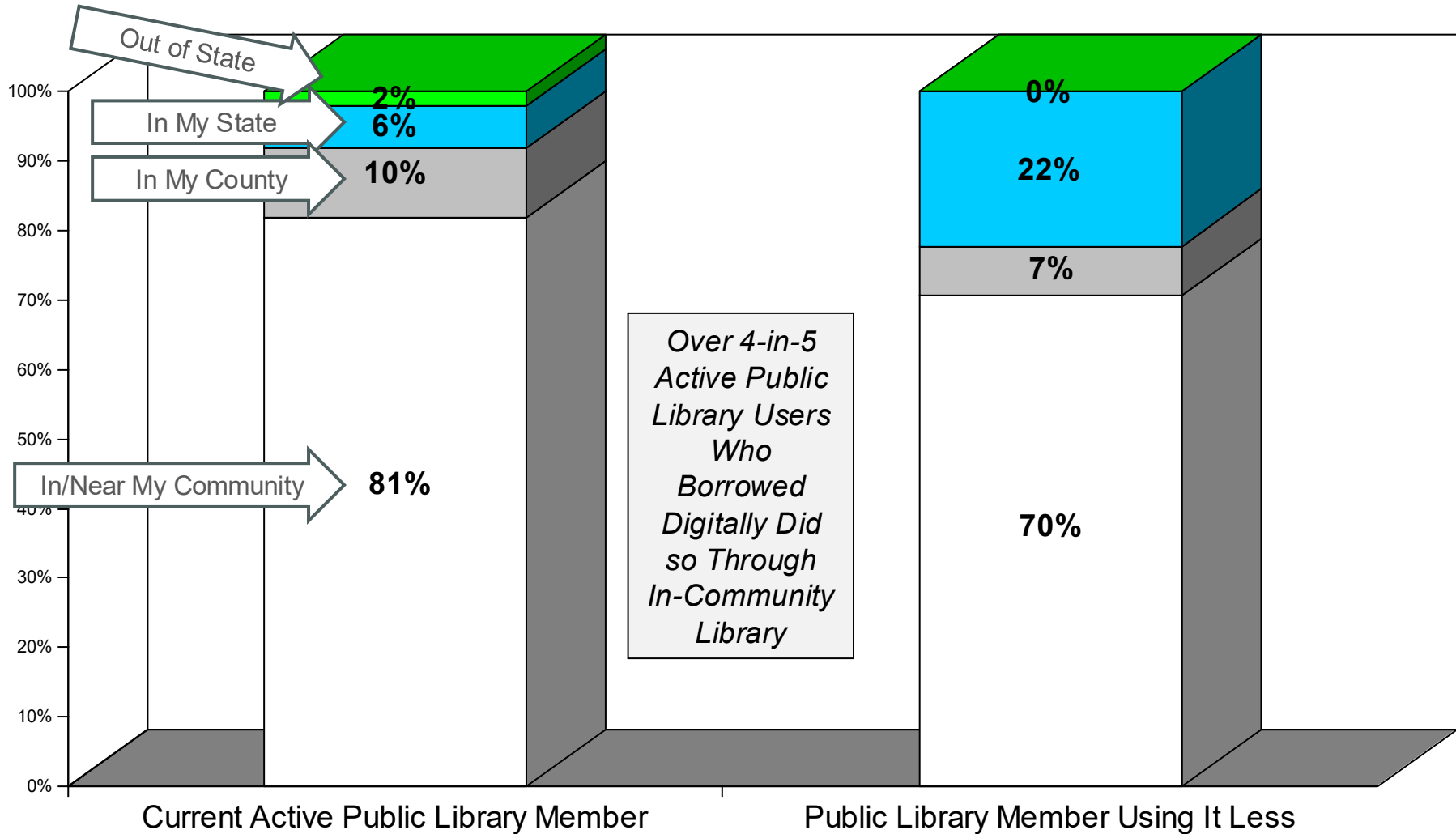
Current Active Public Library Members vs. Non-Users: Demographics – Pre-Tax Household Income Last Year



*Those earning under \$75K are 28% more likely to not be active public library members.*

## Current Active Public Library Members vs. Non-Users: Demographics – Public Library Proximity

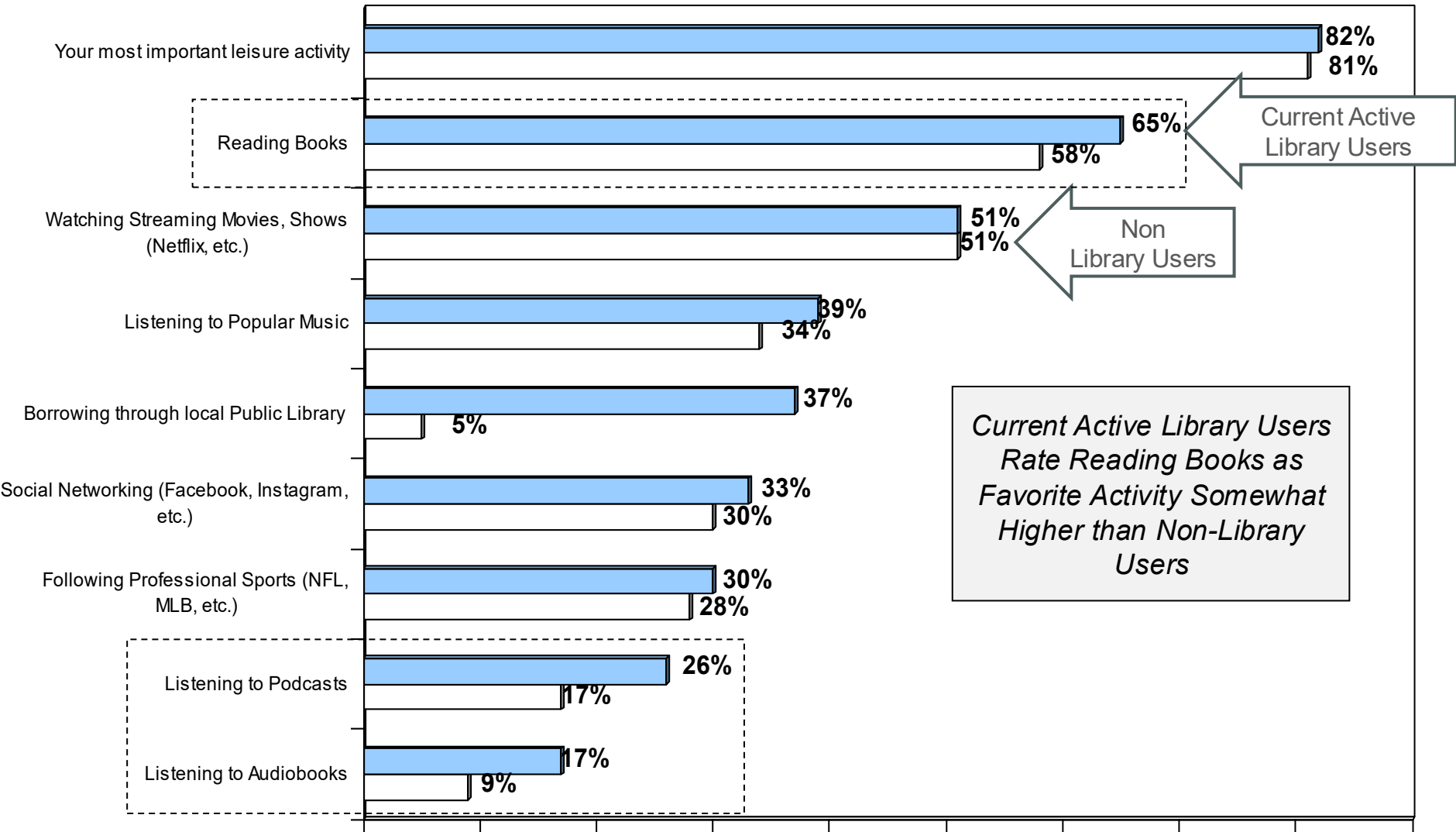
Where is the public library located that you borrowed eBooks and/or digital audiobooks through in the last month?



*Nearly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of lapsing public library users borrowed digitally from libraries outside their communities.*

## Current Active Public Library Members: Favorite Activity or Personal Priority in Daily Life

How important are the following activities as part of your daily life? (top 2 ratings combined out of 5)

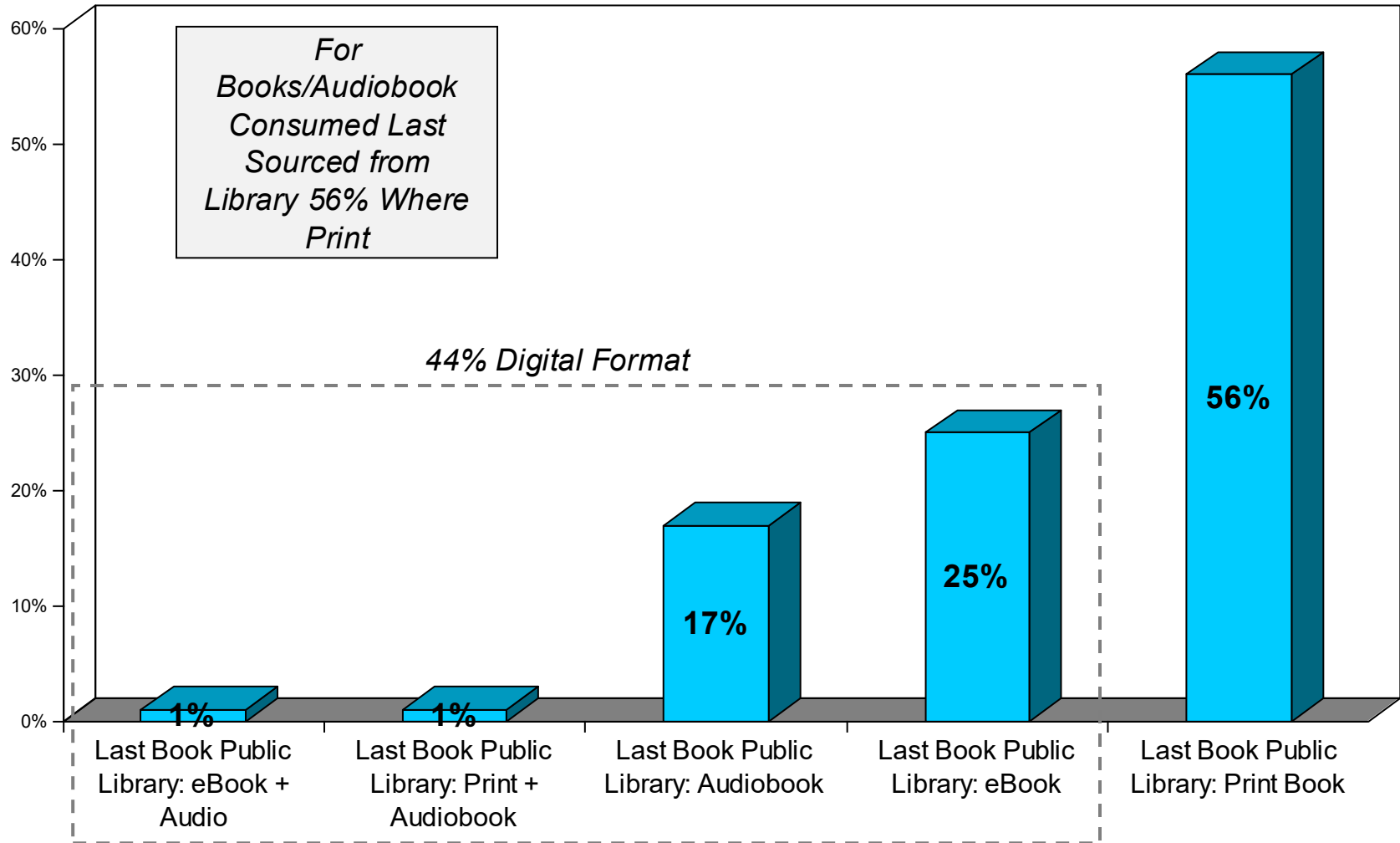


*Current Active Library Users Rate Reading Books as Favorite Activity Somewhat Higher than Non-Library Users*

*Current active library users give top rating to listening to audiobooks nearly 2X non-library users. Both rate podcasts much higher on this top measure.*

## Last Book Consumed: % by Format if Borrowed from Public Library

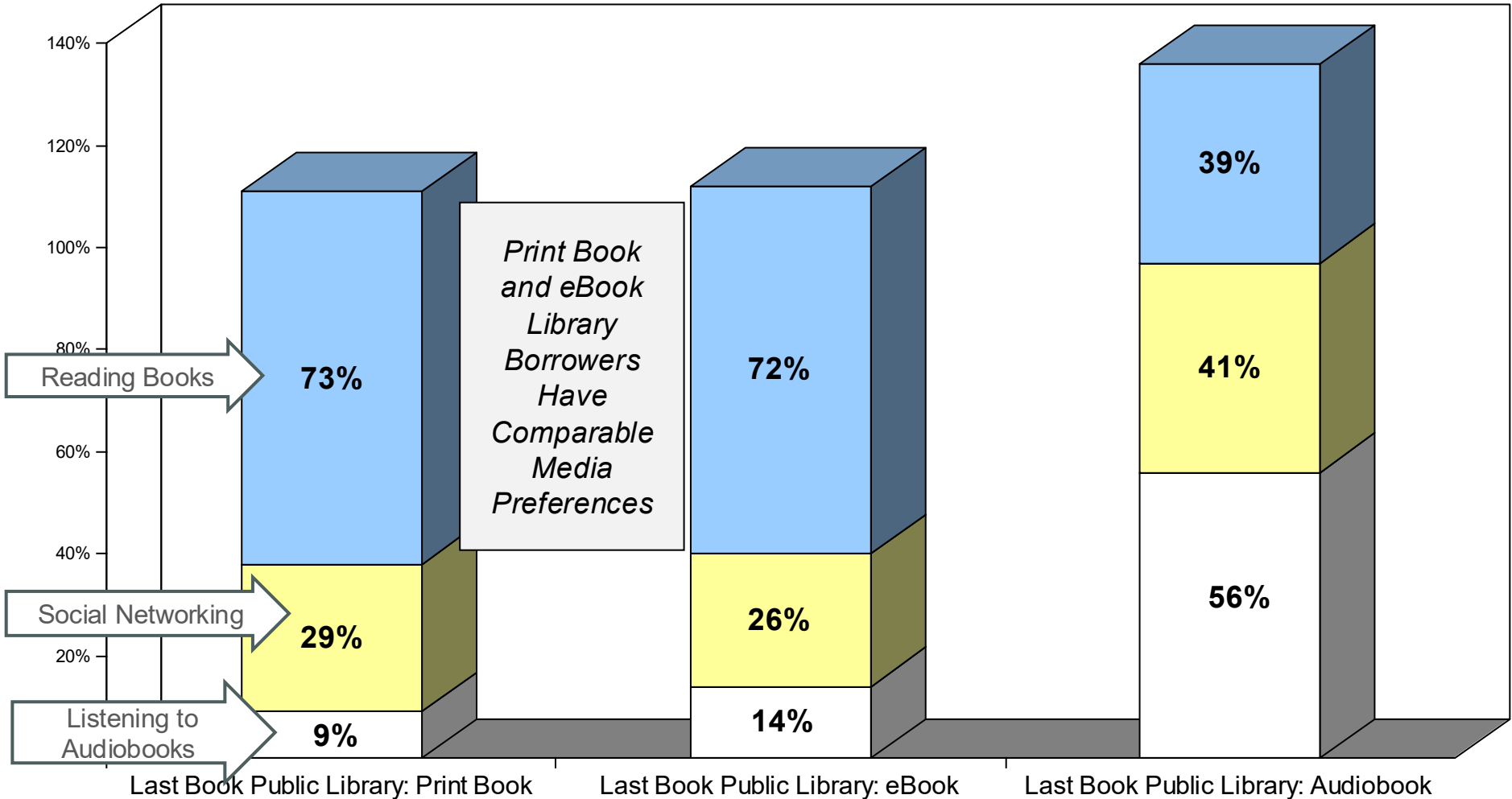
What format(s) did you primarily read and/or listen to [title of book read or listened to last] in?



*44% of last book borrowed were in digital format – led by eBook and Audiobook. Very few borrowed both text and audio formats of the same title.*

## Last Book Borrowed from Public Library by Format – Favorite/Personal Priority Activities

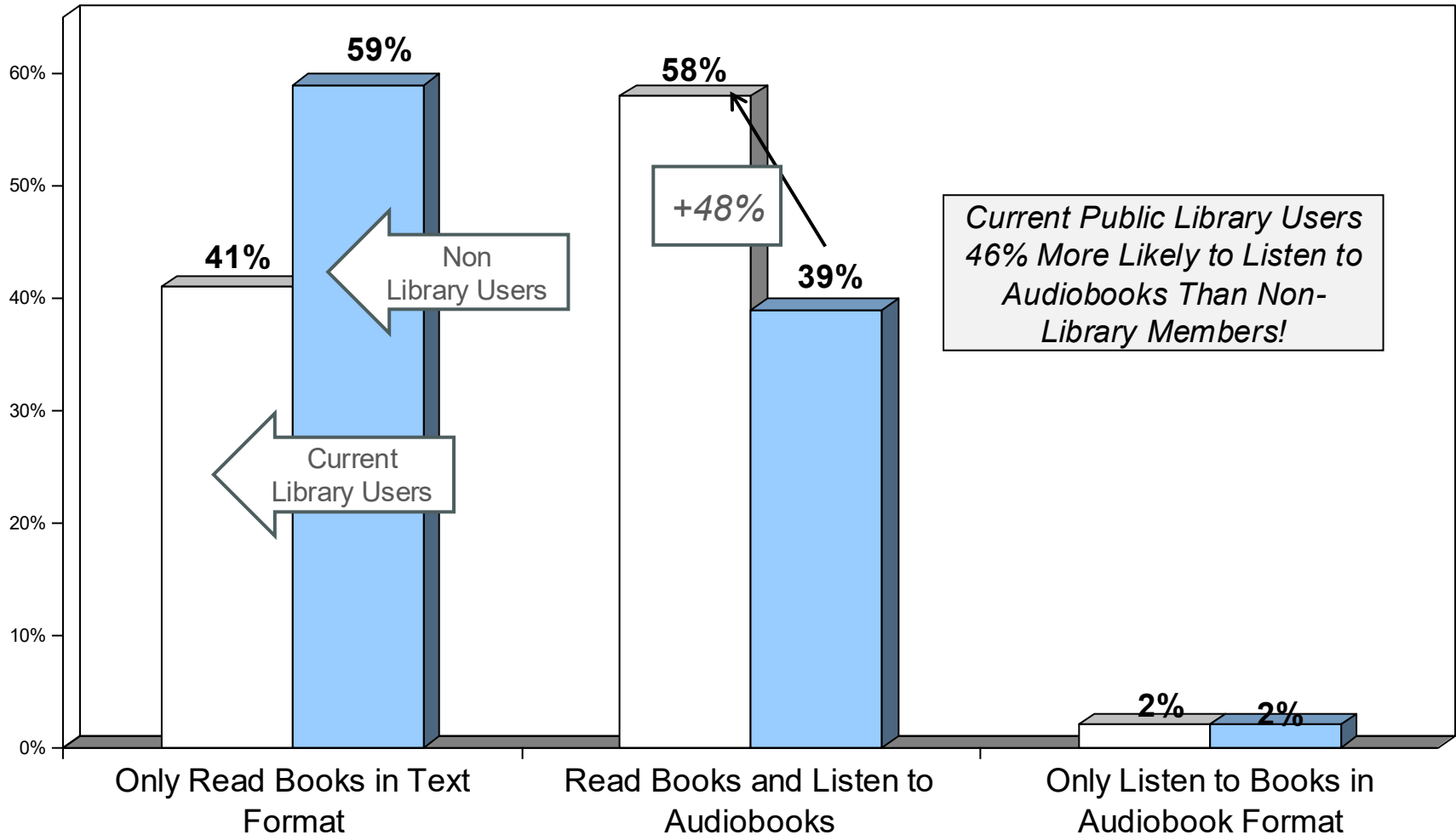
*How important are the following activities as part of your daily life?*



*Public Library audiobook borrowers are dramatically more dedicated to audiobook listening, and nearly 2X less committed to reading books as a favorite active or personal priority!*

## Current Public Library Members – Book Reading vs. Audiobook Listening Preference

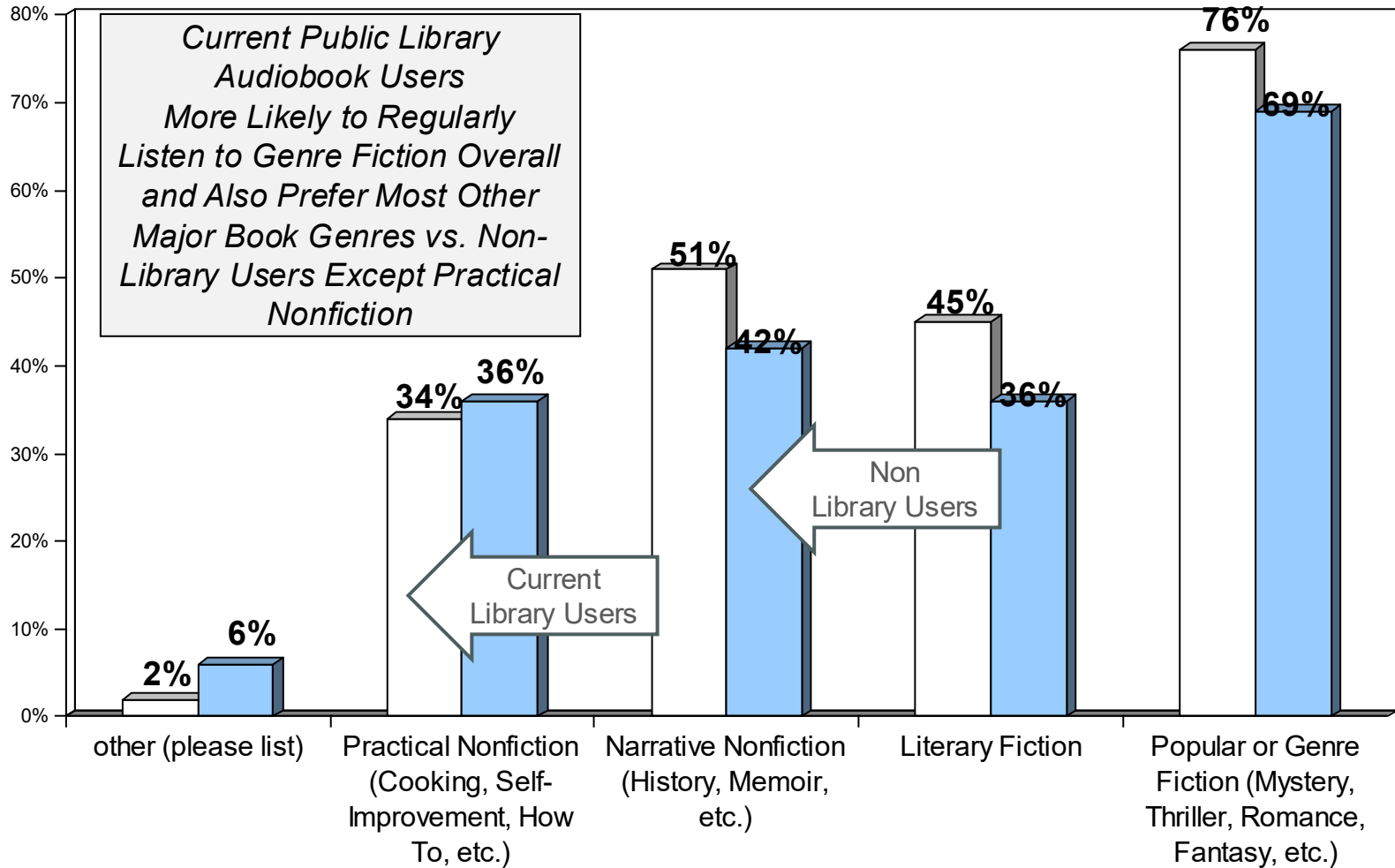
*Do you have a current public library membership or library card?*



*Non-Public Library Users far more likely (59%) to only read books in text format.*

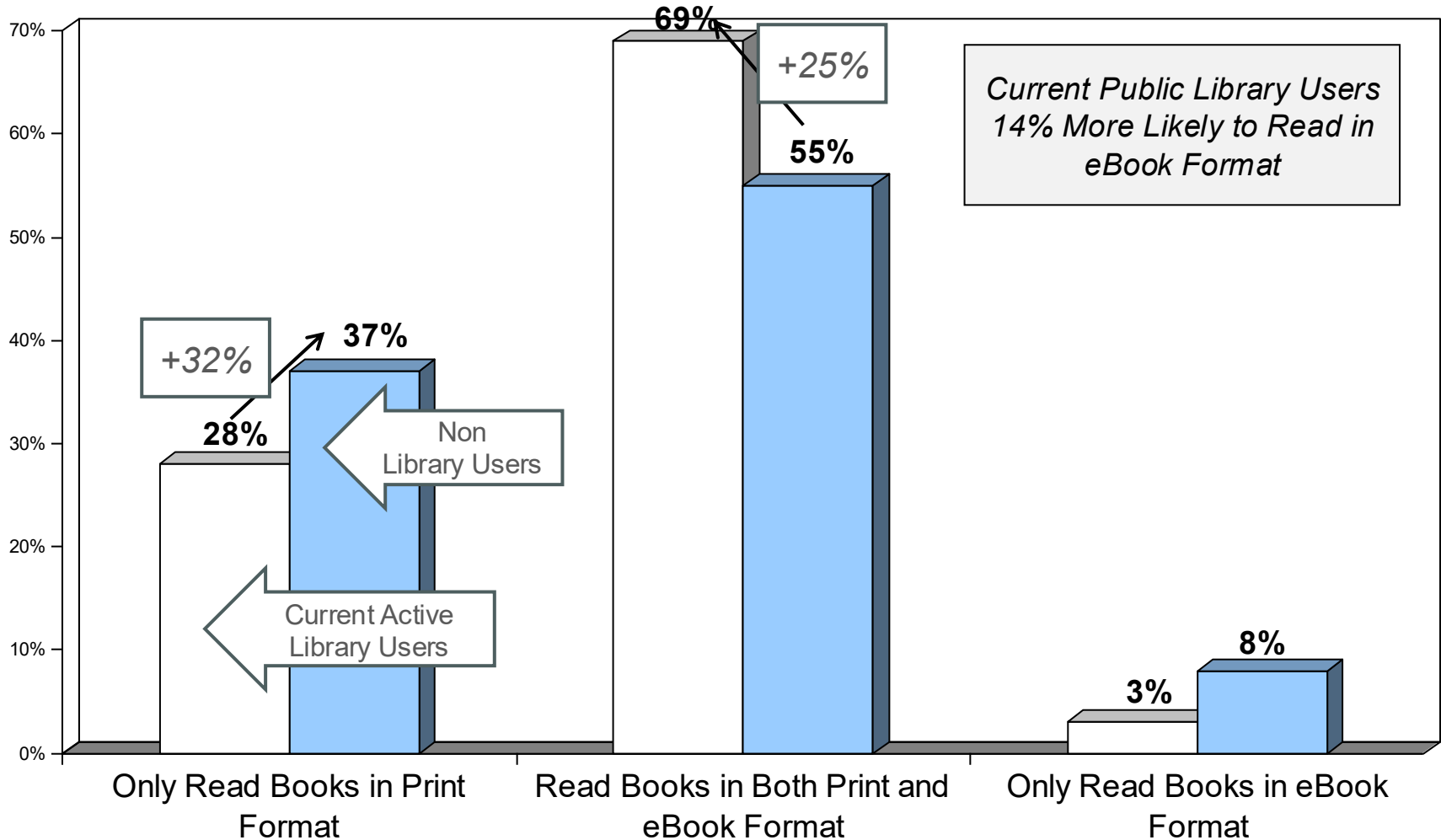
## Audiobook Listeners – Favorite Overall Audiobook Listening Genres

Excluding school, college, or work requirements -- which of these overall categories do you listen to regularly in audiobook format? (all that apply)



## Current Active Public Library Members – Print Book vs. eBook Reading Preference

Do you have a current public library membership or library card?

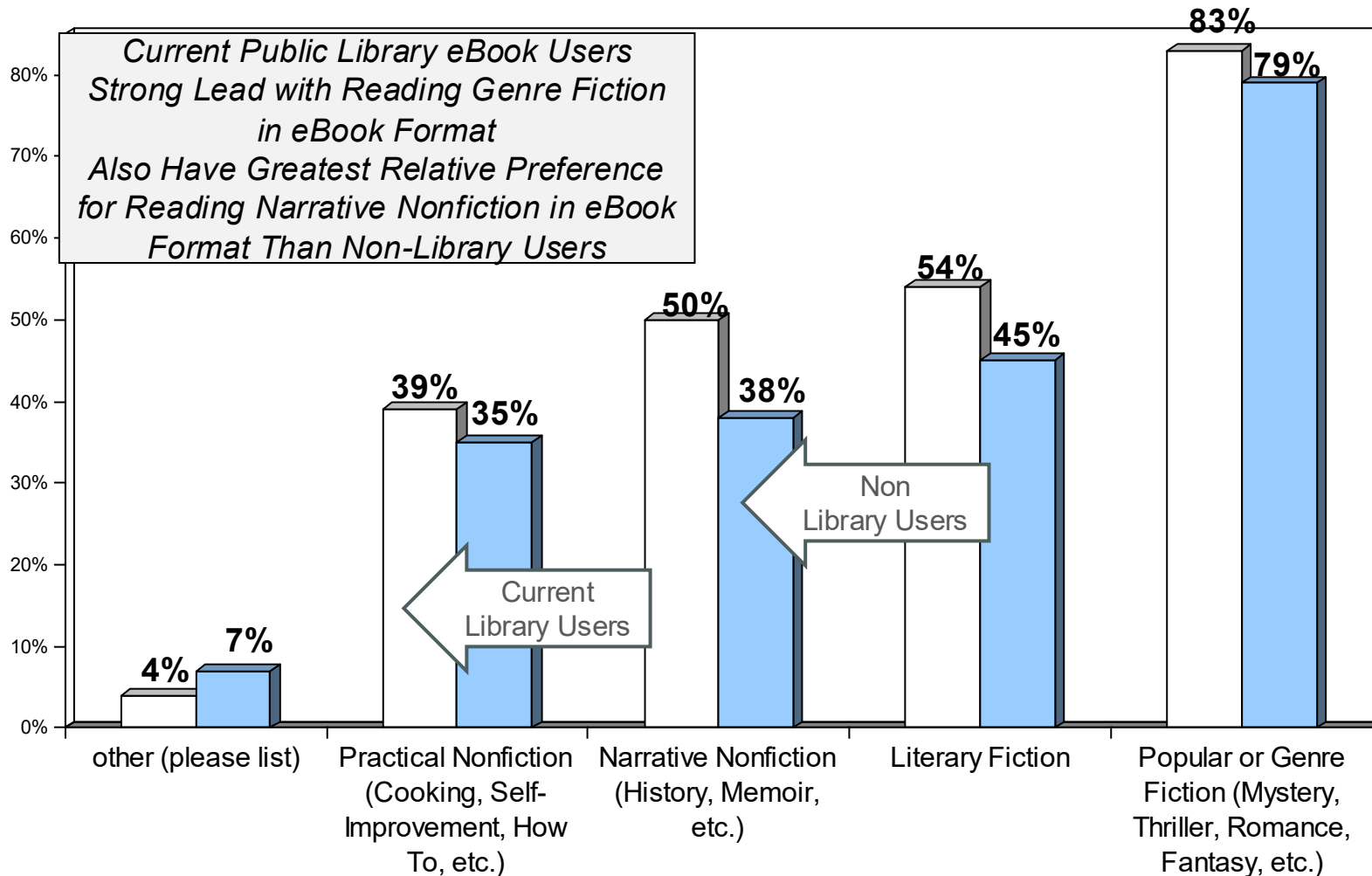


Current Public Library Users  
14% More Likely to Read in  
eBook Format

*Non-Public Library Users far more likely to only read books in print format.*

## eBook Readers – Favorite Overall eBook Reading Genres

Excluding school, college, or work requirements -- which of these overall categories do you listen to regularly in audiobook format? (all that apply)



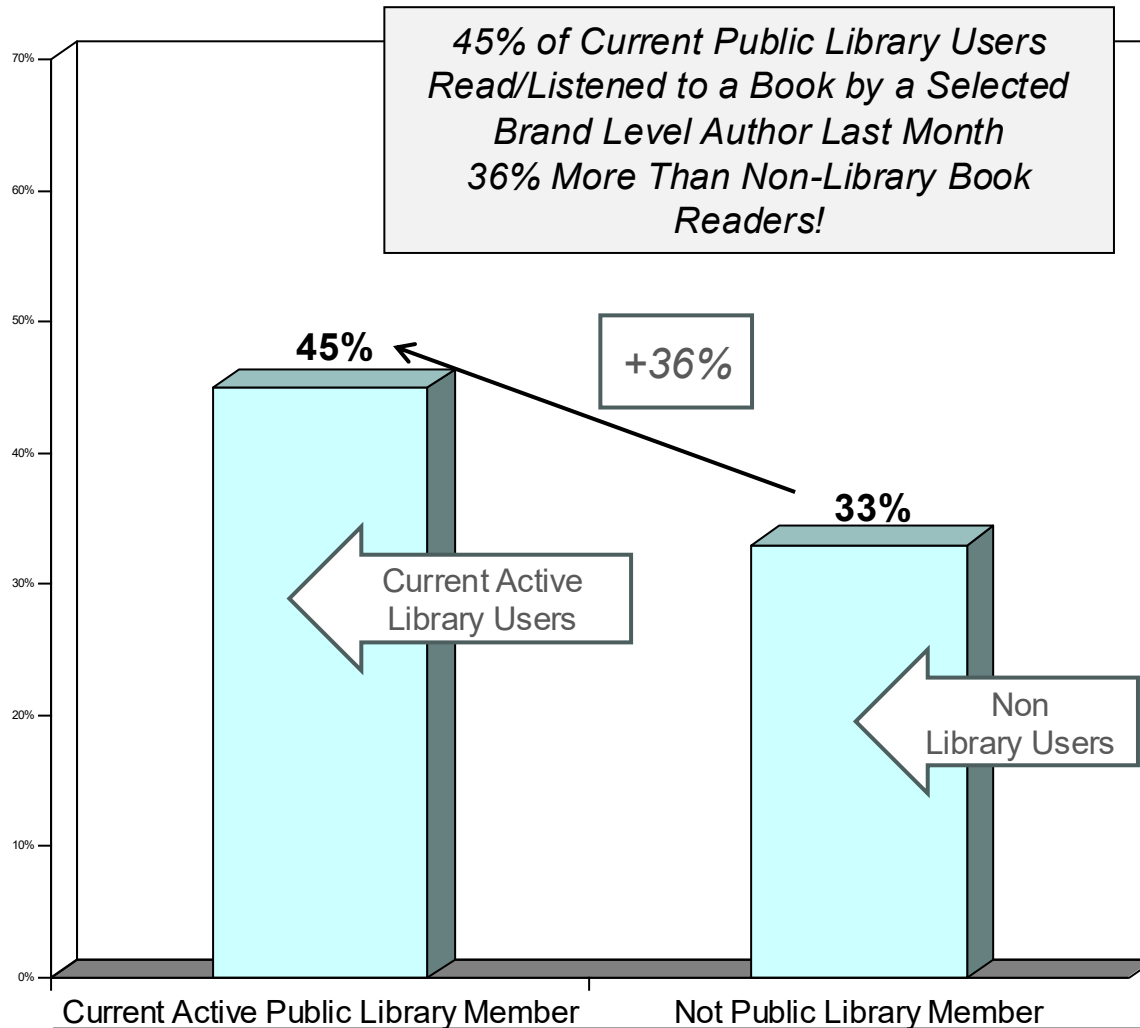
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*Brand Status Author Title*  
*Library Borrowing*

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# Book Read Last was by a Favorite Brand Name Author (Selected List of 35 Major Authors)

Listed favorite author's book read within the last month



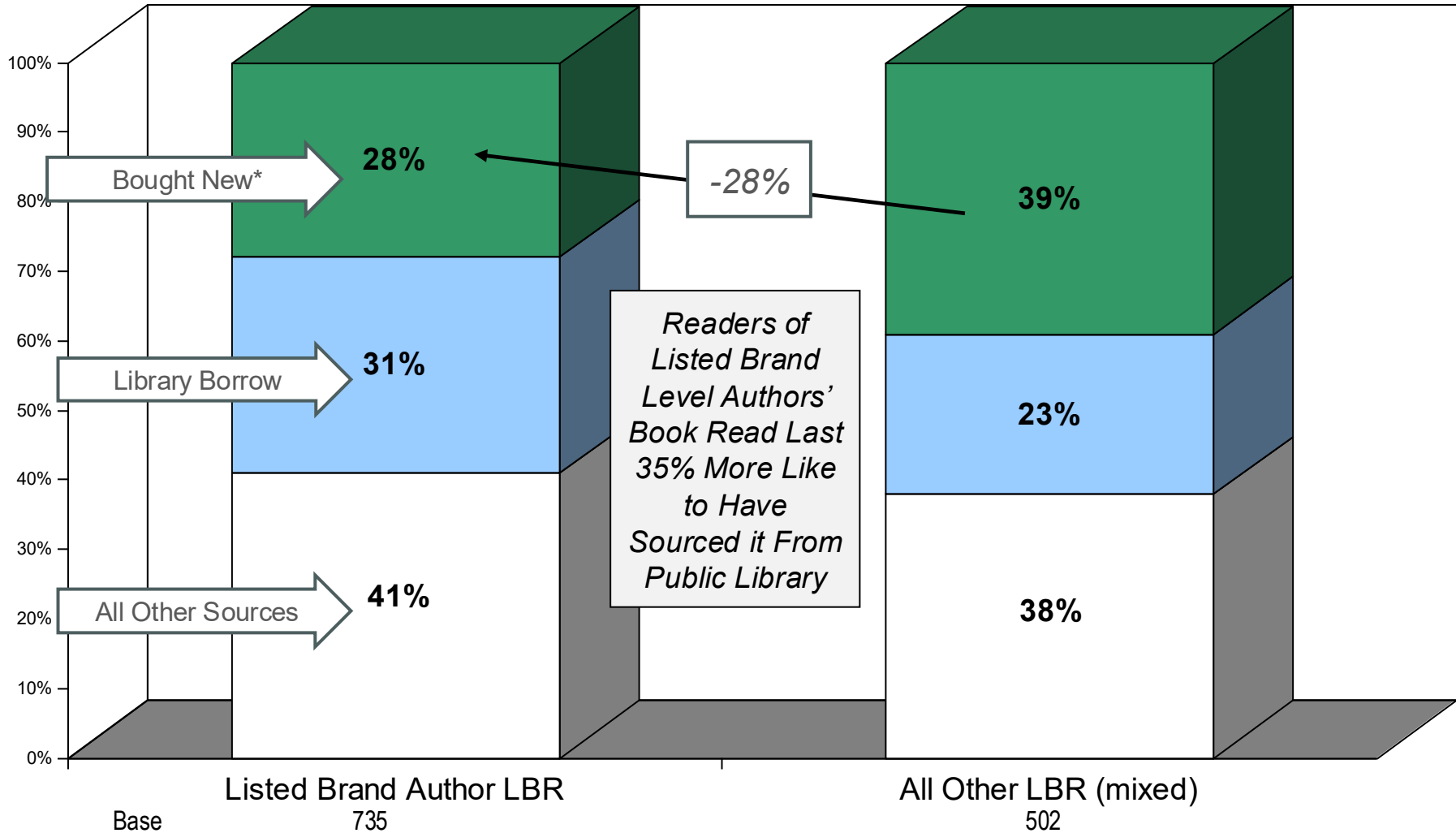
## “Brand List Authors”

Selected Brand Level Author List	
Amy Tan	Lisa See
Colleen Hoover	Louise Penny
Colson Whitehead	Malcolm Gladwell
Dan Brown	Mel Robbins
David Baldacci	Michael Lewis
Douglas Preston	Nicholas Sparks
Elin Hilderbrand	Nora Roberts
Freida McFadden	Percival Everett
Harlan Coben	Rebecca Yarros
Isabel Allende	Ruth Ware
James McBride	Sarah J. Maas
James Patterson	Stephen King
Jennifer Weiner	Suzanne Collins
Jodi Picoult	Ta-Nehisi Coates
John Grisham	Tess Gerritsen
Ken Follett	Walter Isaacson
Kristen Hannah	Walter Mosley
Lee Child	

*Non-Public Library Users less likely to read books by major brand authors and potentially affect new book sales through digital library borrowing.*

Past Month Book Readers – Source of Last eBook/Print Book Read by Brand List Author vs. All Other\*\*

Where did you get [title of book read last] in text format?



Readers of Listed Brand Level Authors' Book Read Last 35% More Like to Have Sourced it From Public Library

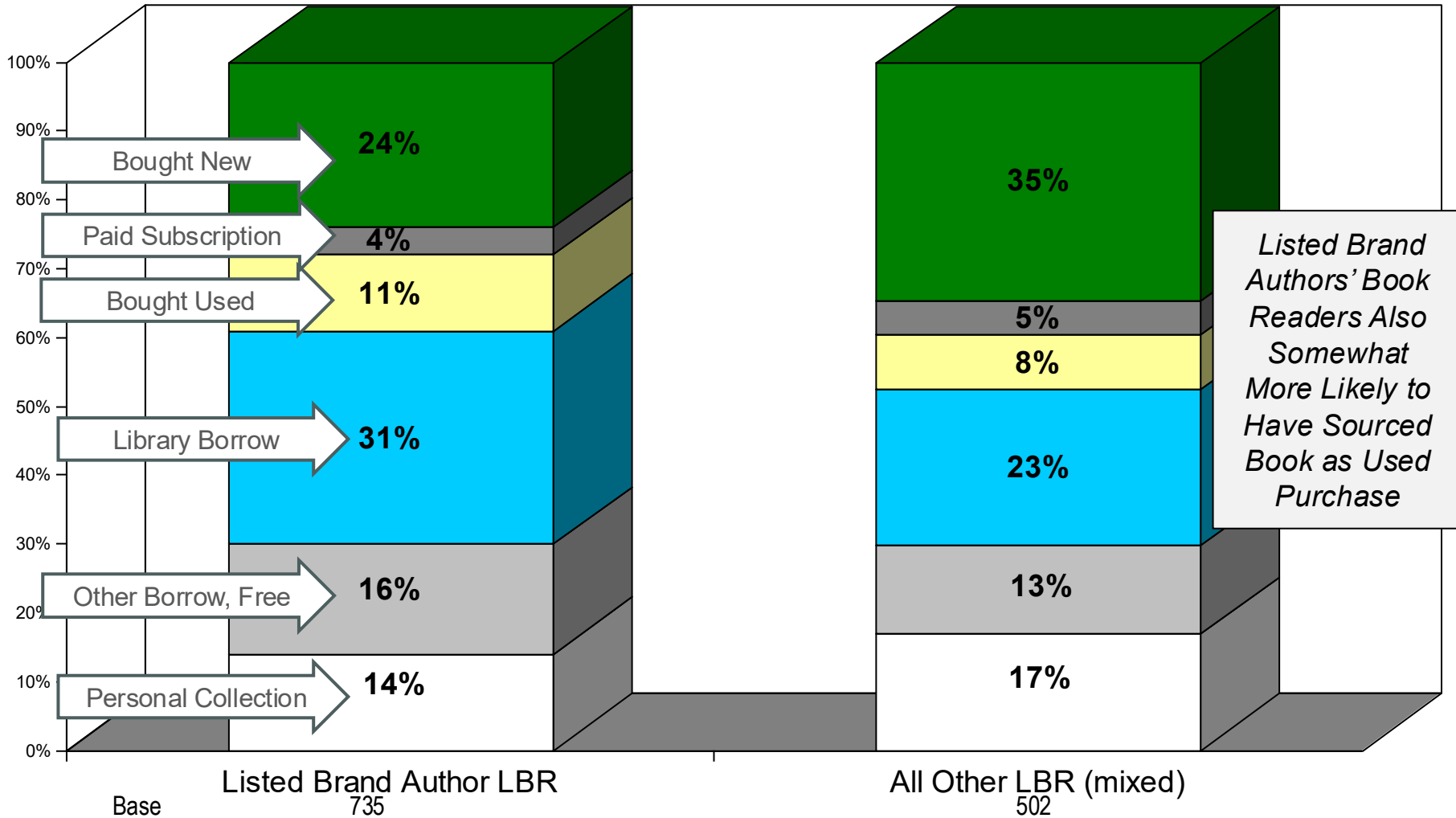
Readers of listed brand level authors' book read last 28% less likely to have bought it new.

\*Bought a new book or eBook or obtained it through a paid subscription service (Kindle Unlimited, etc.)

\*\*"All Other" Authors excludes other brand level authors, 'canonical authors' and public figures.

### Past Month Book Readers – Source of Last eBook/Print Book Read by Brand List Author vs. All Other\*\*

Where did you get [title of book read last] in text format?

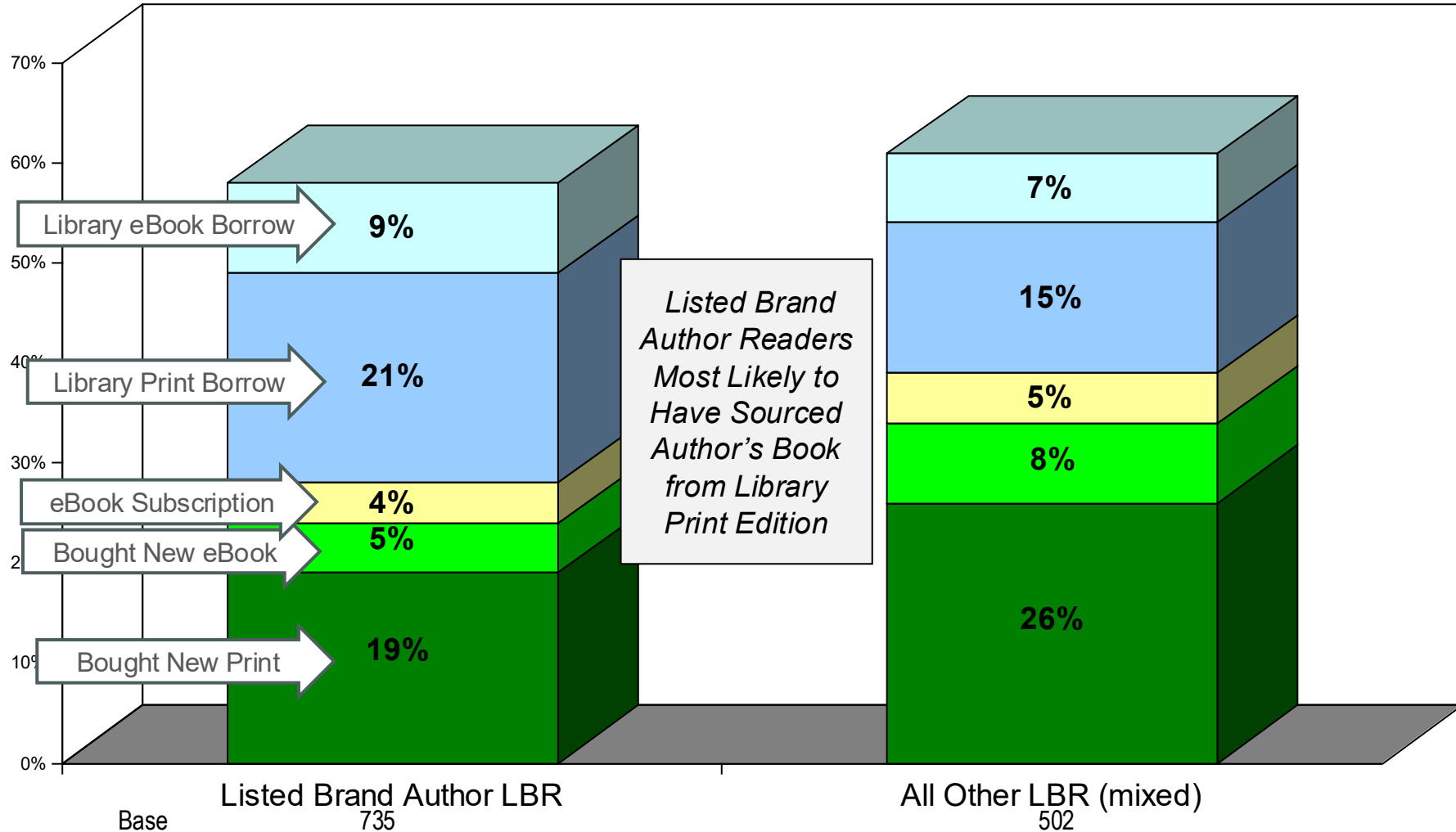


*All other authors' readers somewhat more likely to have sourced last book read in personal collection.*

\*\*"All Other" Authors excludes other brand level authors, 'canonical authors' and public figures.

# Past Month Book Readers – Source of Last eBook v. Print Book Read by Brand List Author vs. All Other\*\*

Where did you get [title of book read last] in text format?



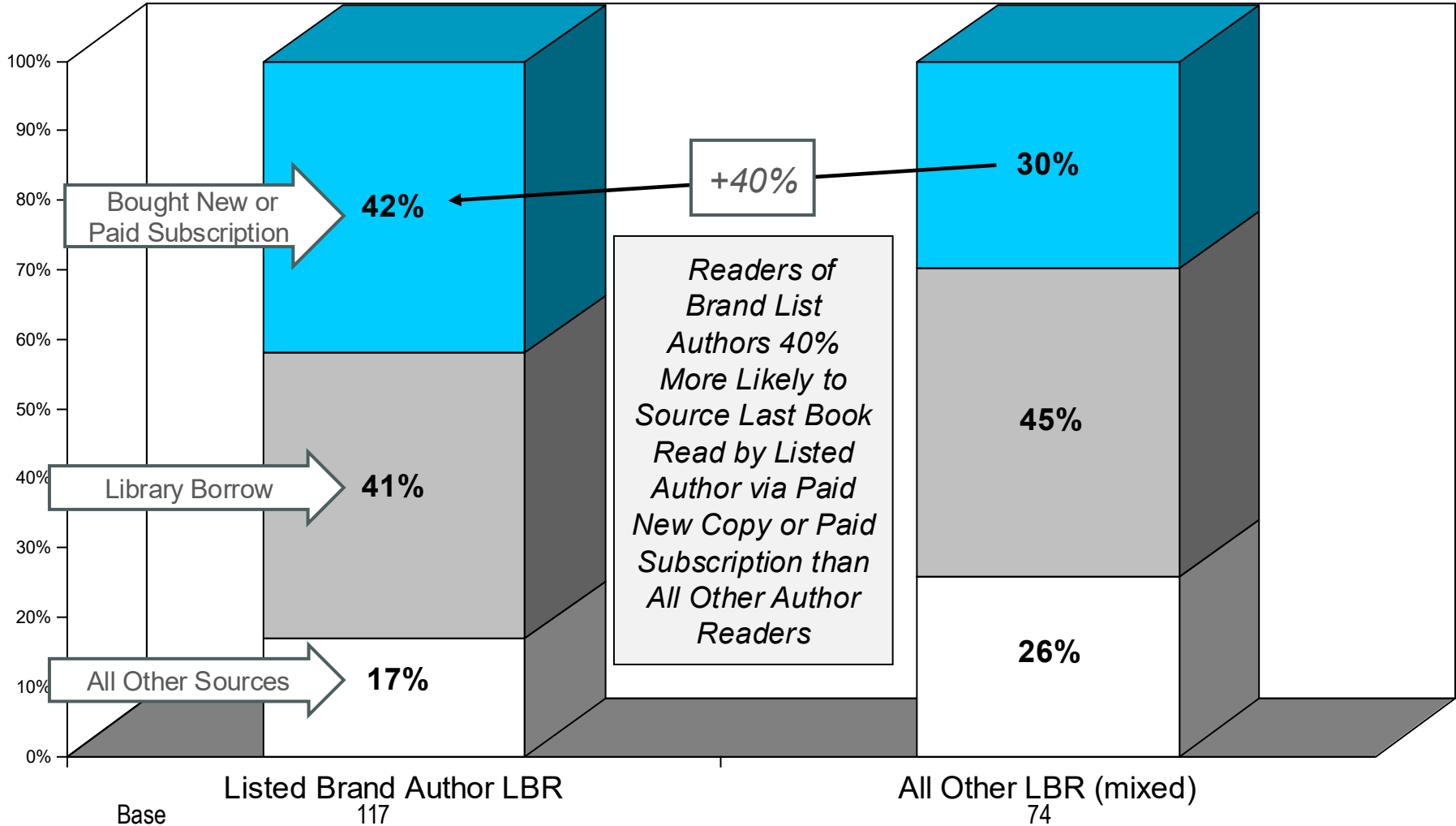
Listed Brand Author Readers Most Likely to Have Sourced Author's Book from Library Print Edition

*All other authors of last book read most likely to have sourced book as new print purchase.*

\*\*"All Other" Authors excludes other brand level authors, 'canonical authors' and public figures.

Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Source of Last Digital Audiobook Listened to – Brand List Author v. Other\*\*

Where did you get [title of audiobook listened to last] in digital audiobook format?

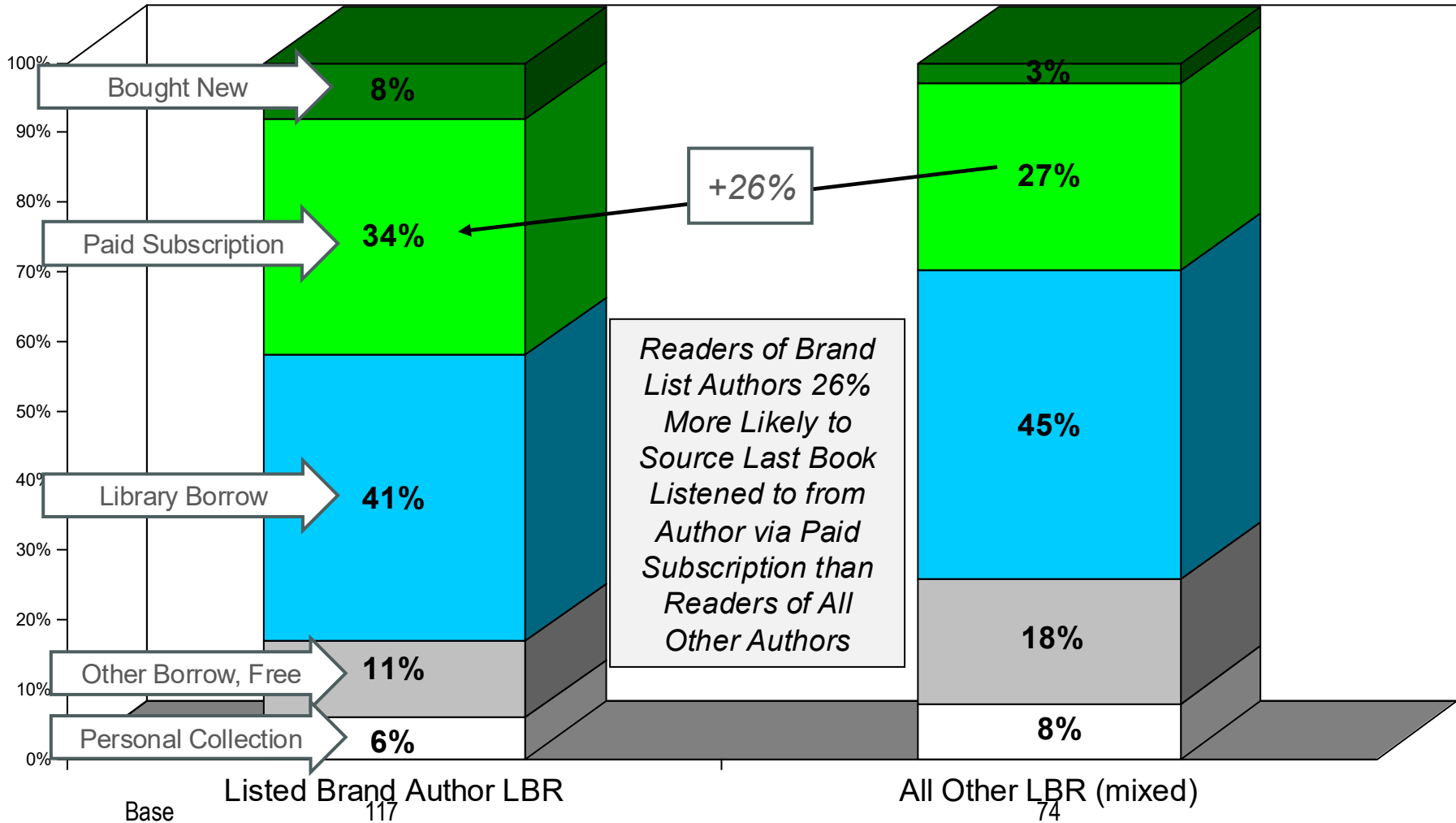


Readers of all other authors more likely to source book read last from other channels.

\*\*"All Other" Authors excludes other brand level authors, 'canonical authors' and public figures.

# Past Month Audiobook Listeners – Source of Last Digital Audiobook Listened to – Brand List Author v. Other\*\*

Where did you get [title of audiobook listened to last] in digital audiobook format?



**Brand List Author readers were also somewhat more likely to have bought audiobook new.**

\*\*\*"All Other" Authors excludes other brand level authors, 'canonical authors' and public figures.

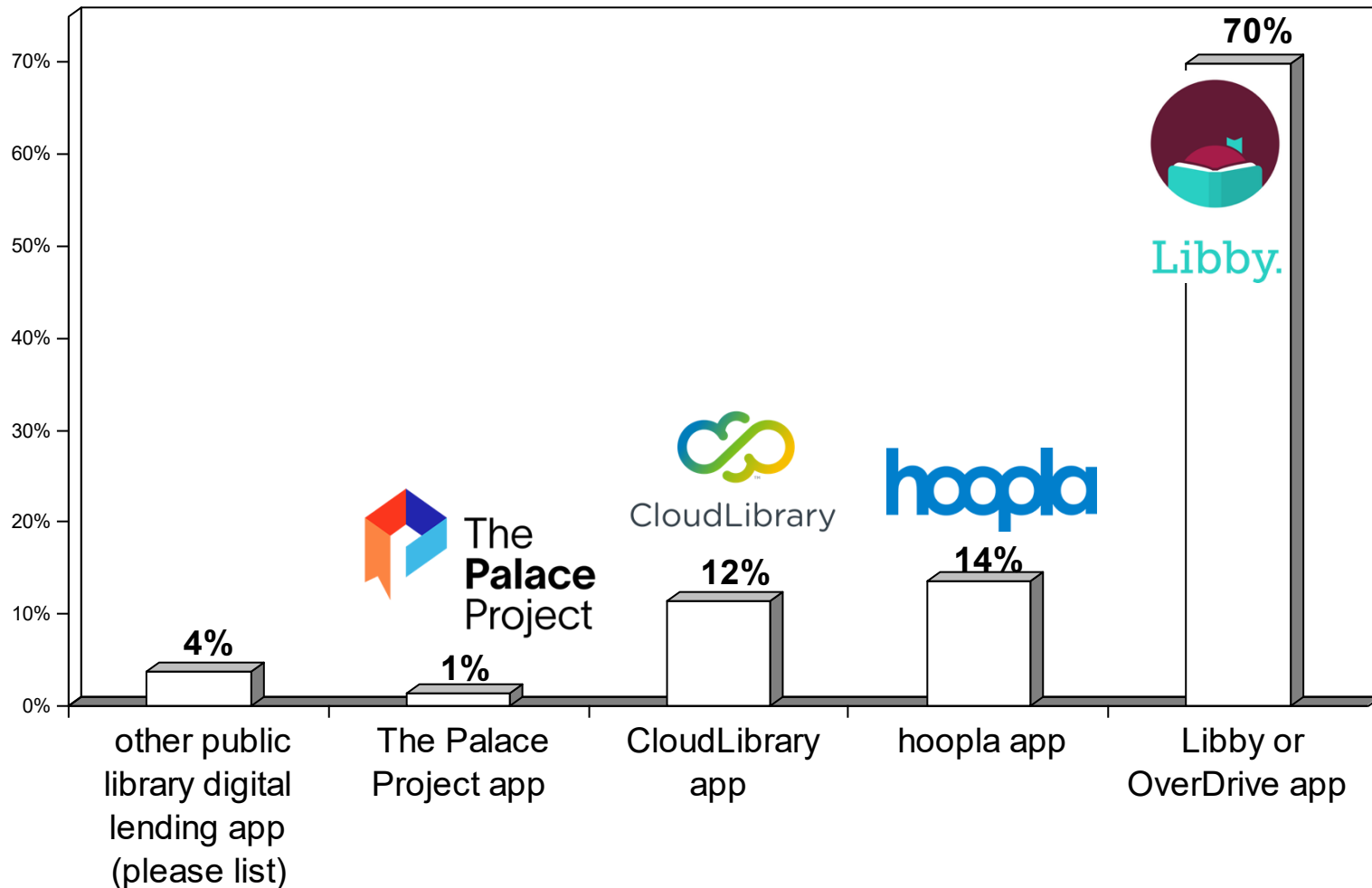
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*Digital Library Lending Platforms*  
*Borrowing Unit Share*

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## Current Active Public Library Members – Digital Lending Platform Unit Share – eBooks

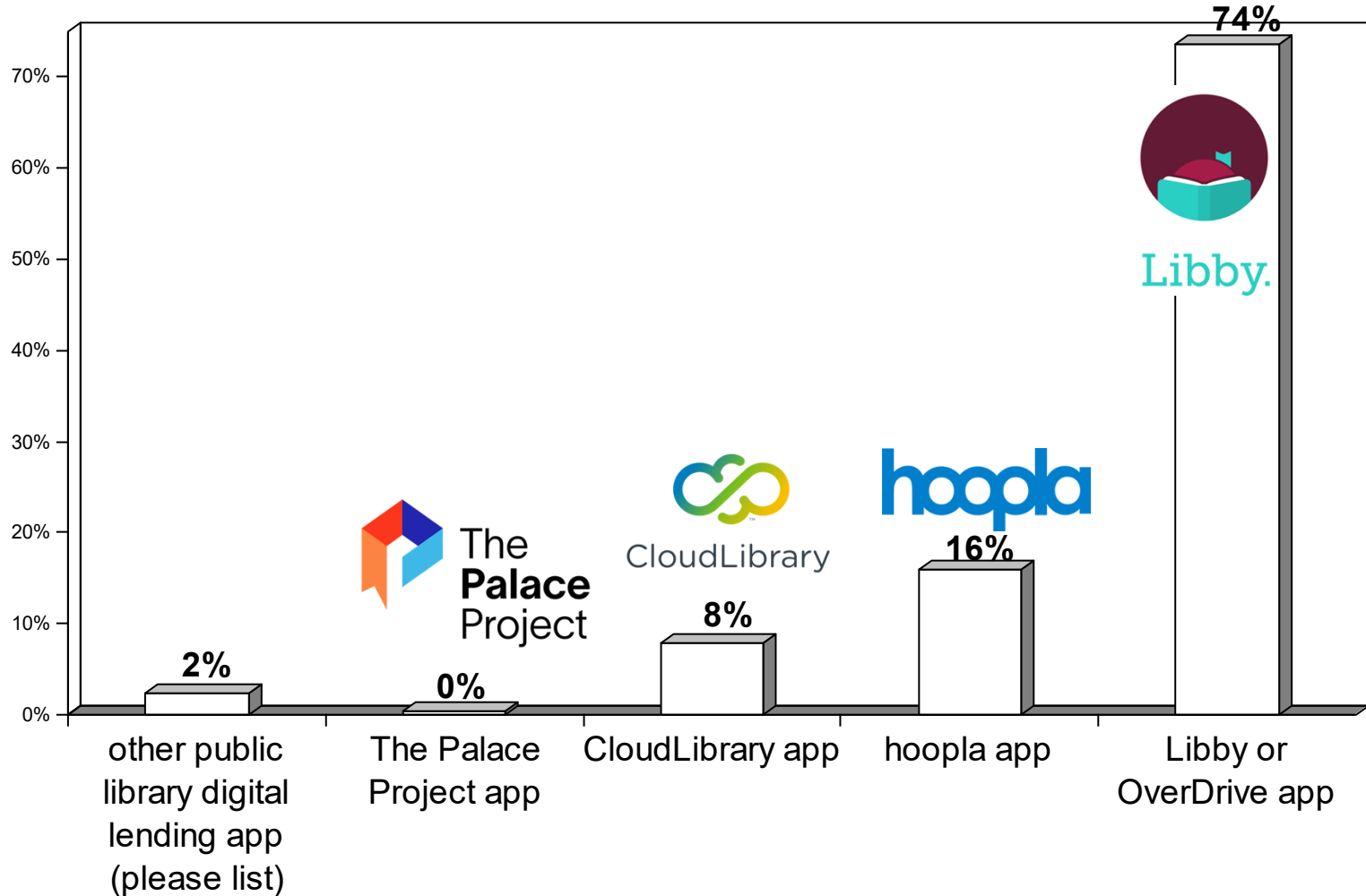
*How many eBooks did you borrow through the public library app(s) you used in the last month? (all that apply)*



*Libby/Overdrive app had by far the highest borrowing unit share in the prior month among active digital public library borrowers. Hoopla and CloudLibrary are distant seconds.*

## Current Active Public Library Members – Digital Lending Platform Unit Share – Digital Audiobooks

*How many digital audiobooks did you borrow through the public library app(s) you used in the last month? (all that apply)*



*Libby/Overdrive app has the dominant digital audiobook borrowing unit share, followed by Hoopla. CloudLibrary is less developed in digital audiobooks.*

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*Next Steps*

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## Next Steps

- Further questions?
- Additional analysis?
- External presentation?