

# THE Authors Guild

*Digital Library Book Lending*

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*Past Month Book Reader/Audiobook Listener  
Market Report*

December 9, 2025

 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

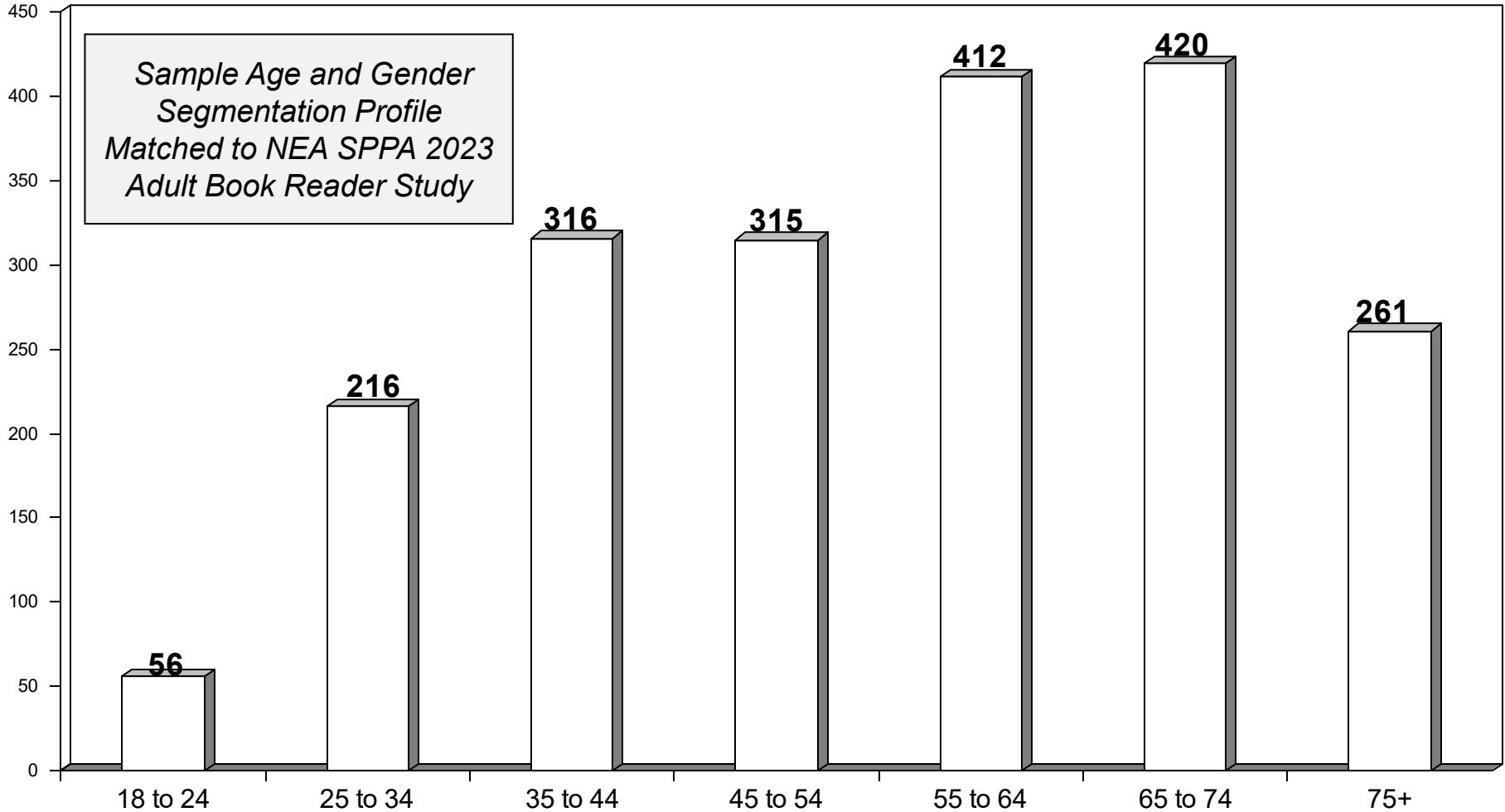
Understand book readers' overall book sourcing and book purchasing behavior.

### 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
- Readers asked about books read in last month as past Codex data has shown that many readers do not recall detailed information from prior months.

# Past Month Book Reader Survey Sample

What is your age?



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

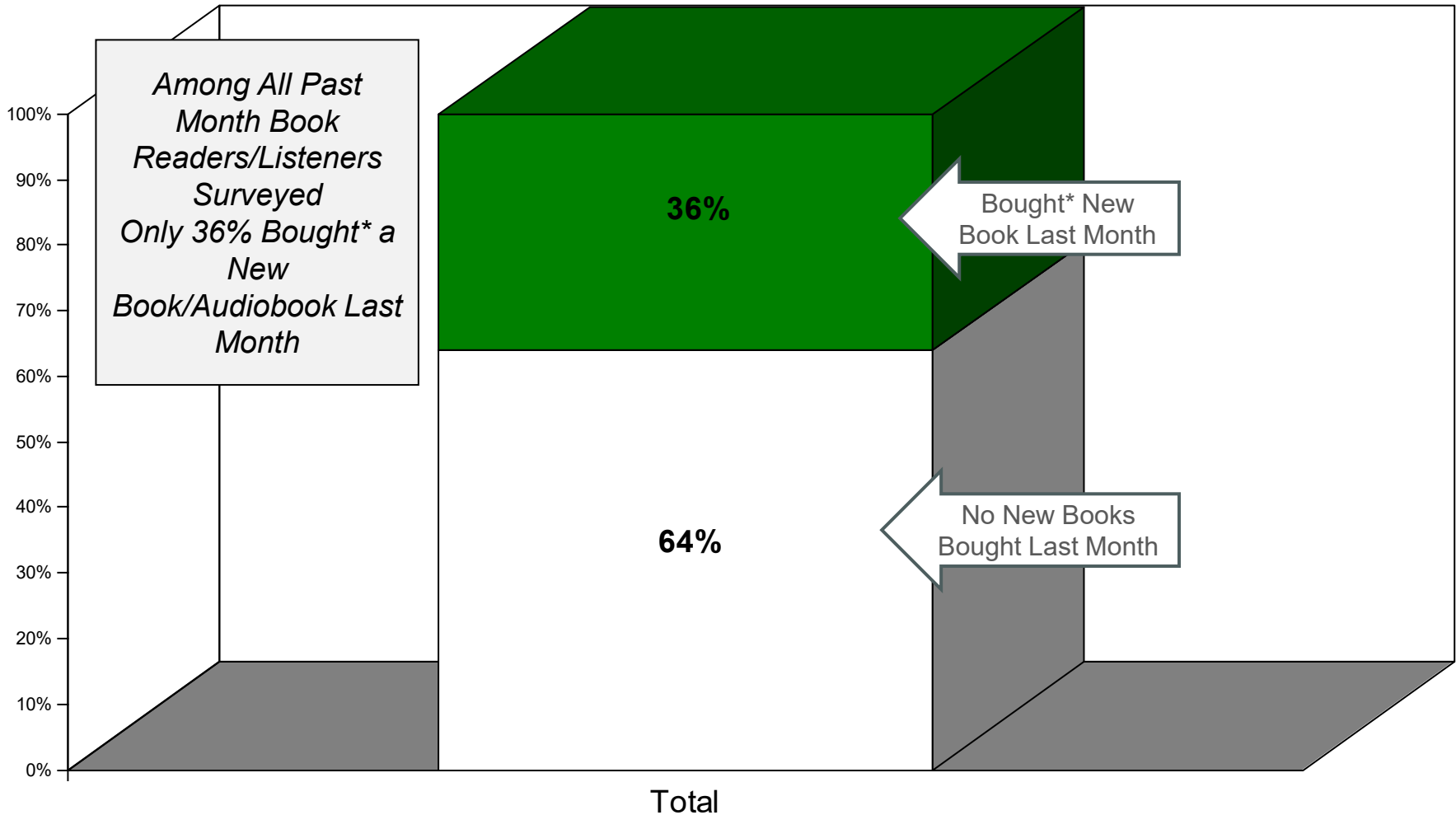
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*Sources of Books Read in Past Month*

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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)

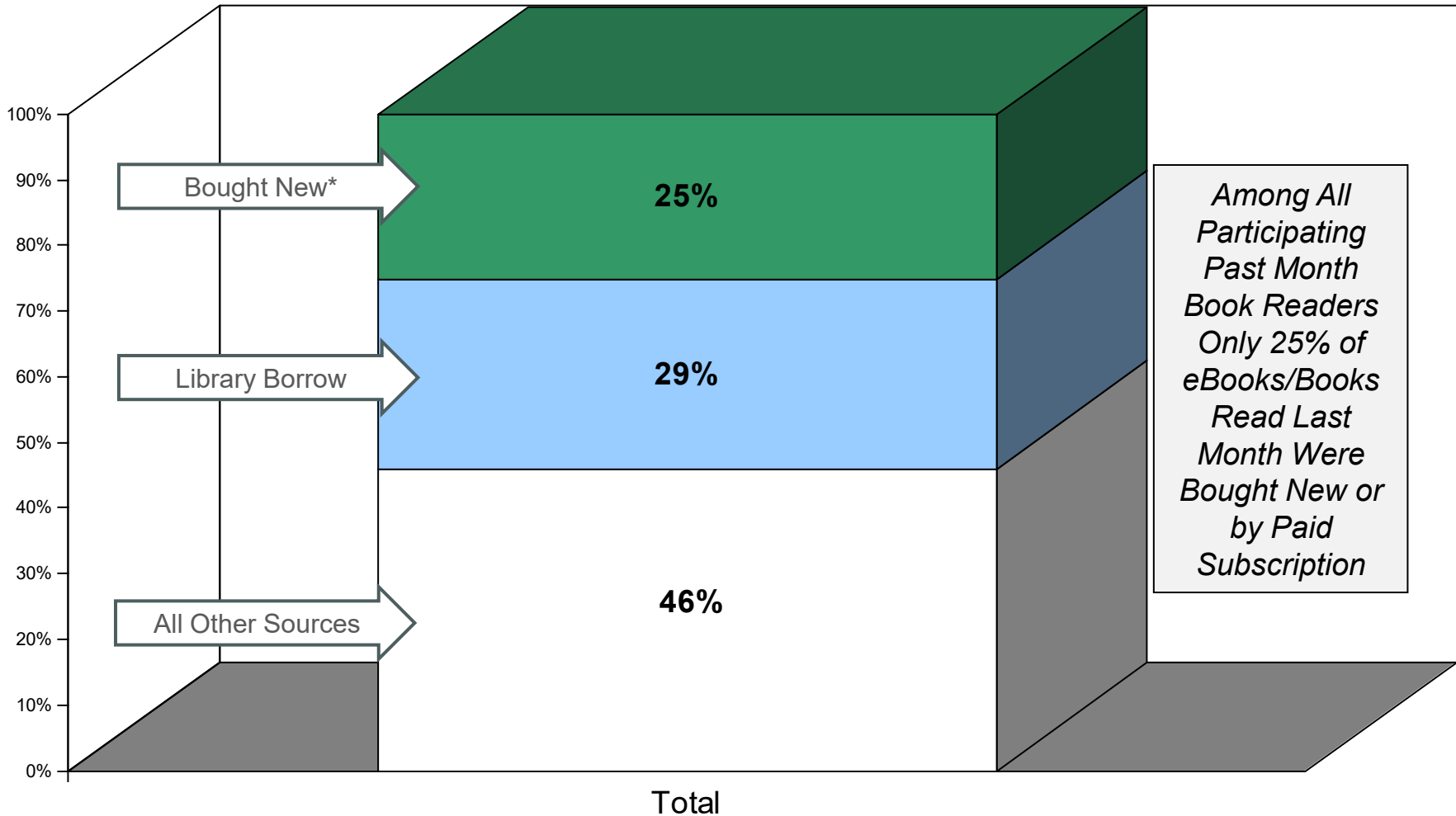


*Just under 2/3rds of book readers/listeners bought zero new books or audiobooks last month.*

\*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)

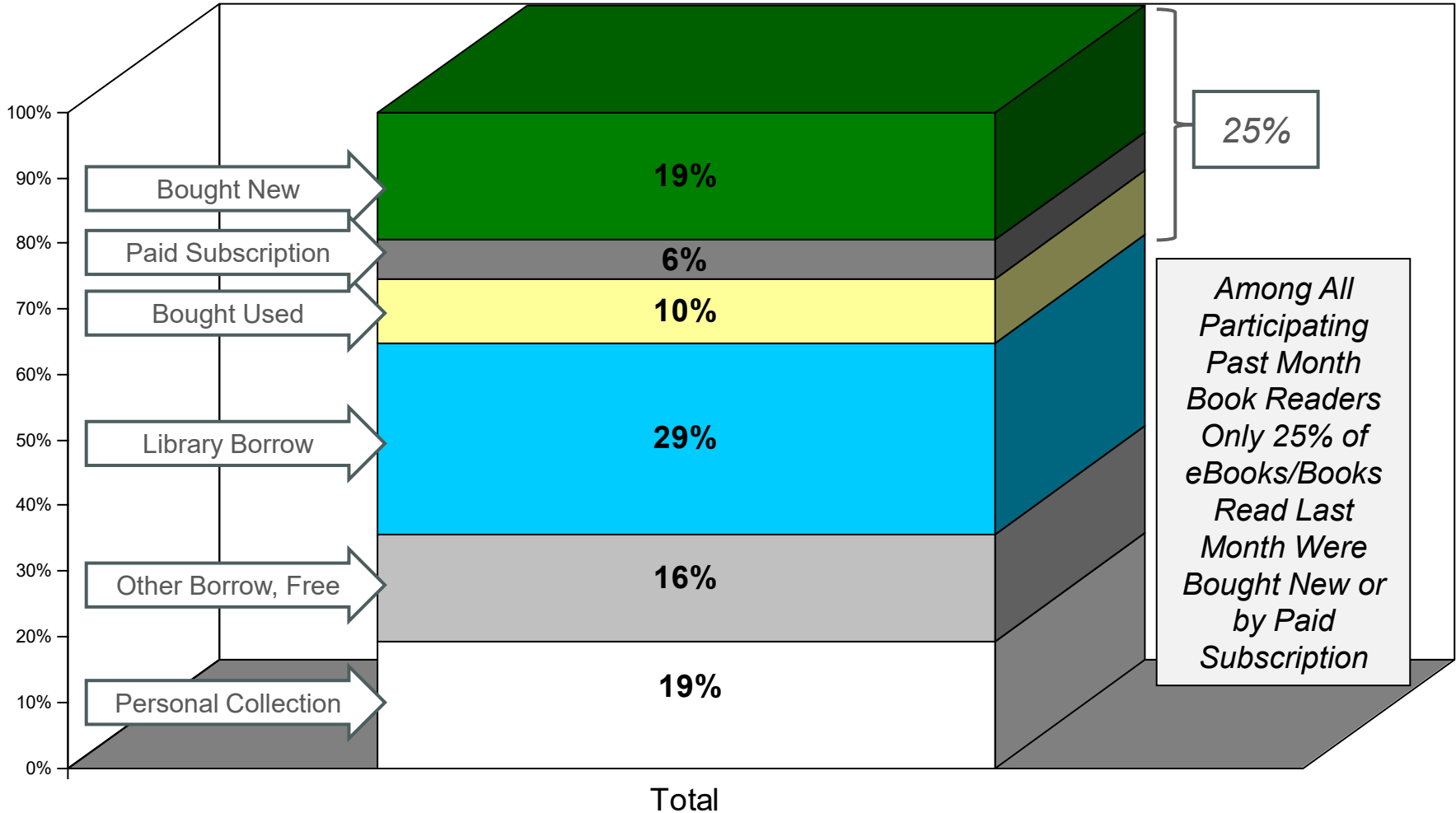


**Overall Library borrowing (eBook and Print) accounted for nearly 30% of books read last month.**

\*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

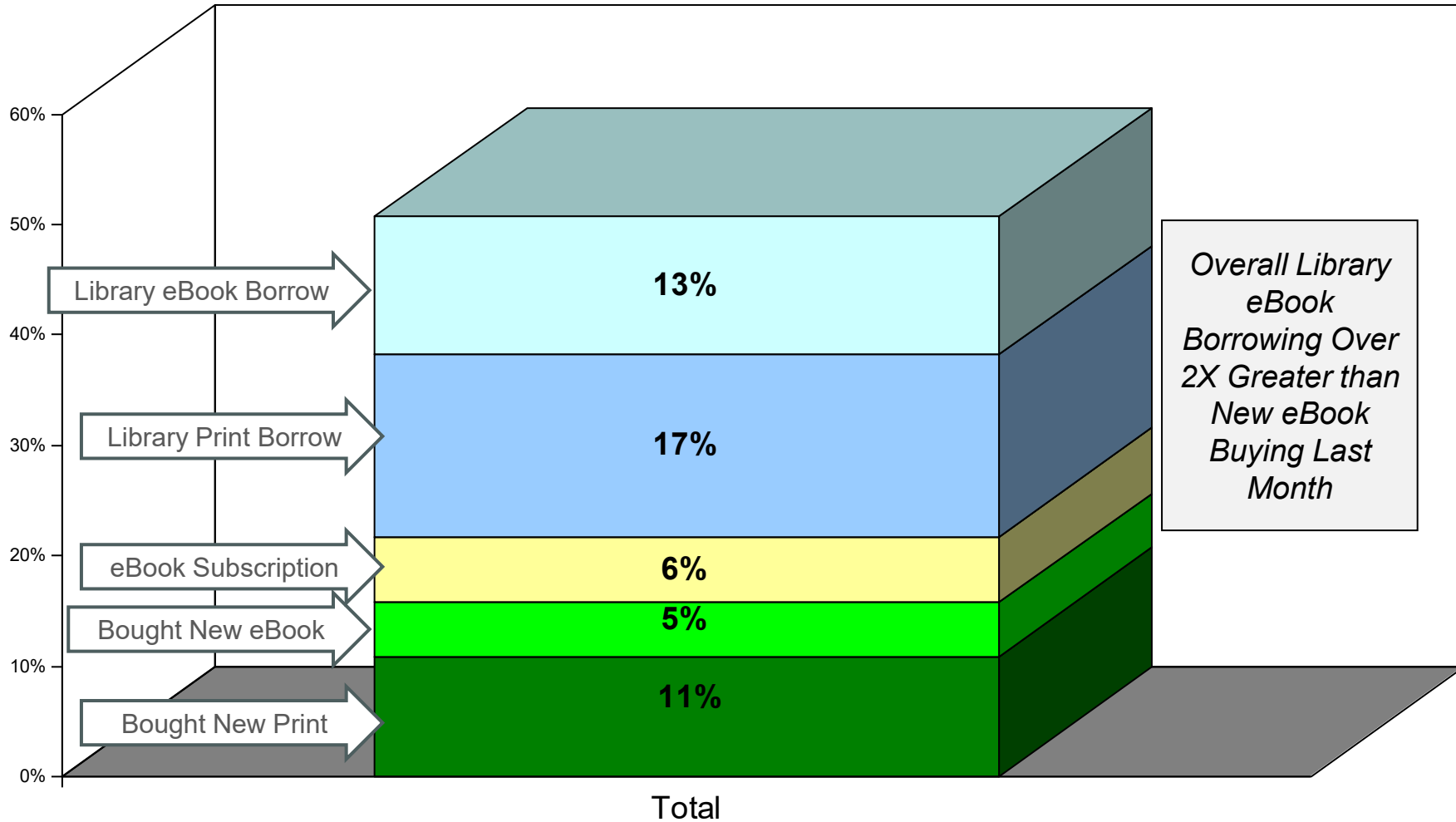
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



*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)

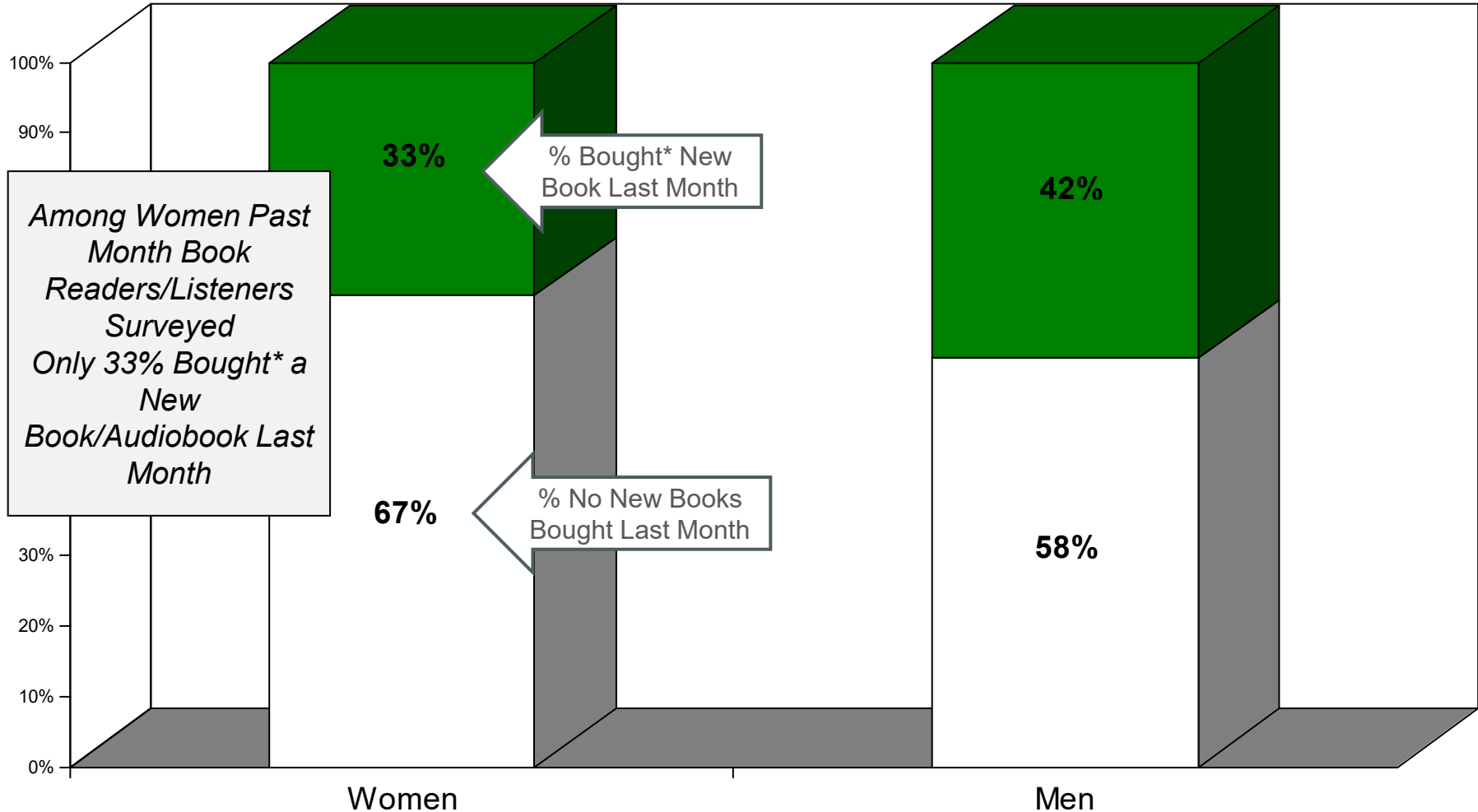


*Overall Library eBook Borrowing Over 2X Greater than New eBook Buying Last Month*

*New print book buying also twice that of eBook buying last month.*

## 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)

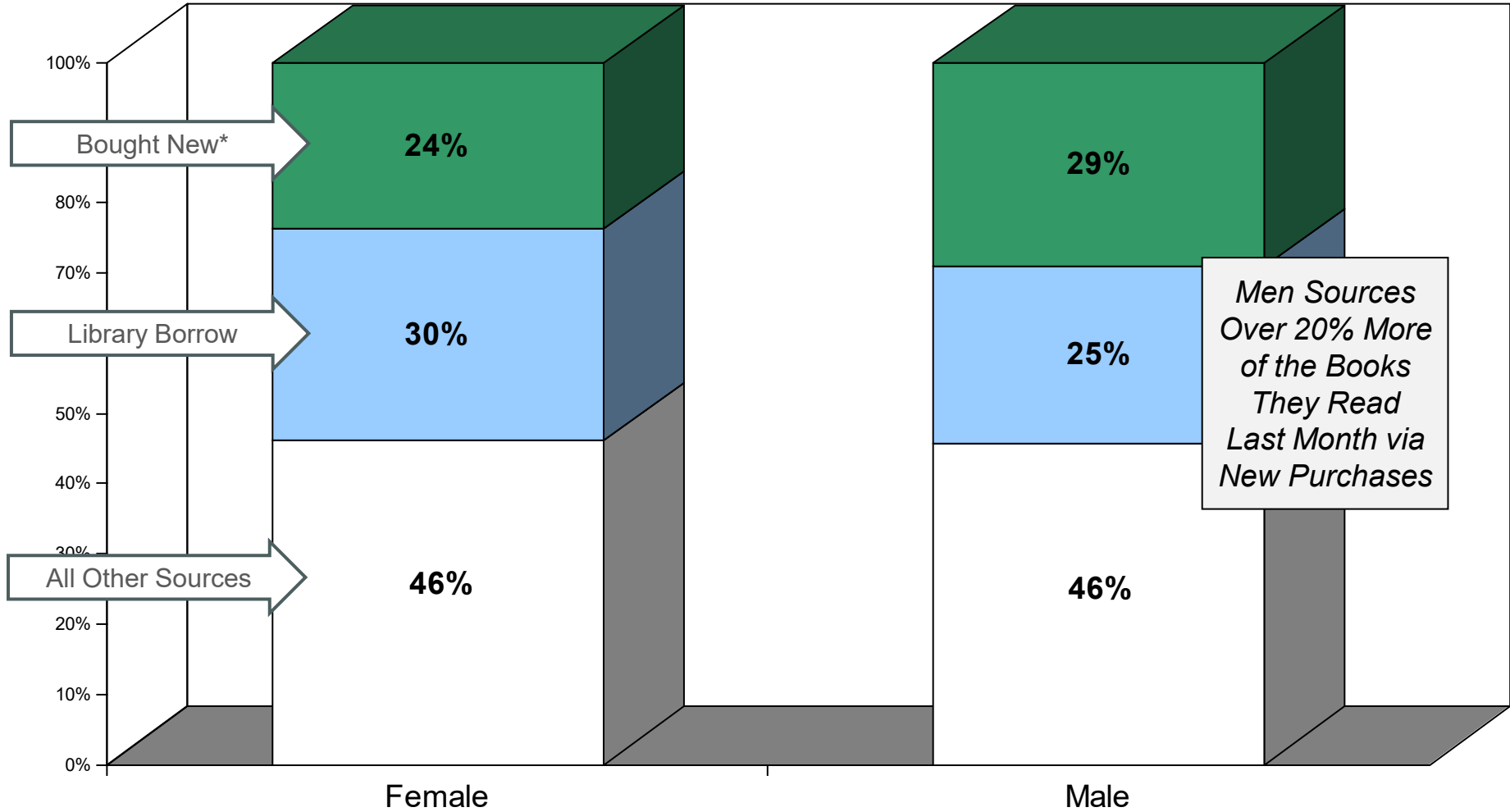


**42% of men past month book readers bought\* a new book last month, 27% more than women.**

\*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)

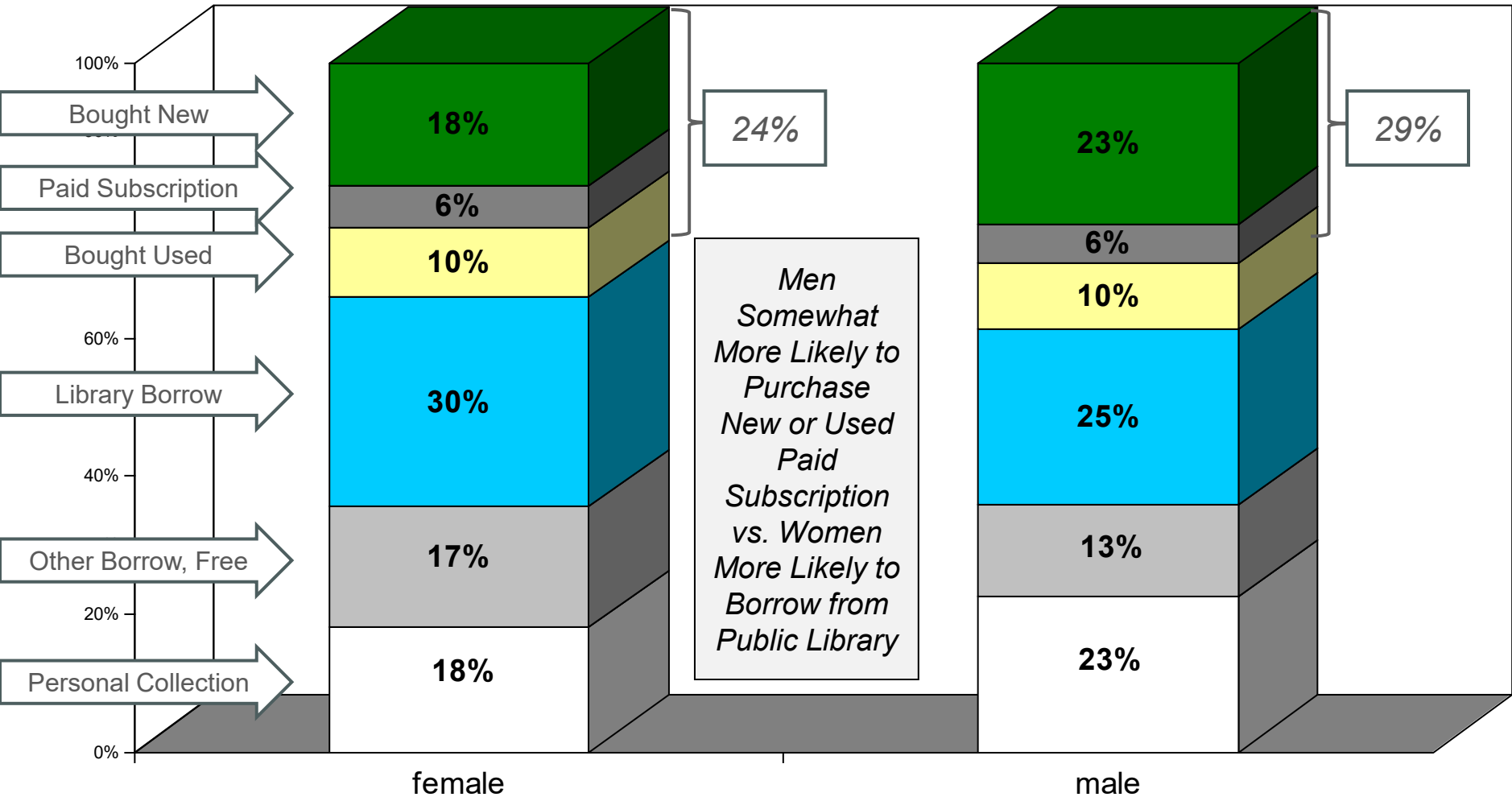


*Women sourced 25% more of their book units read last month from public library vs. new purchases*

\*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

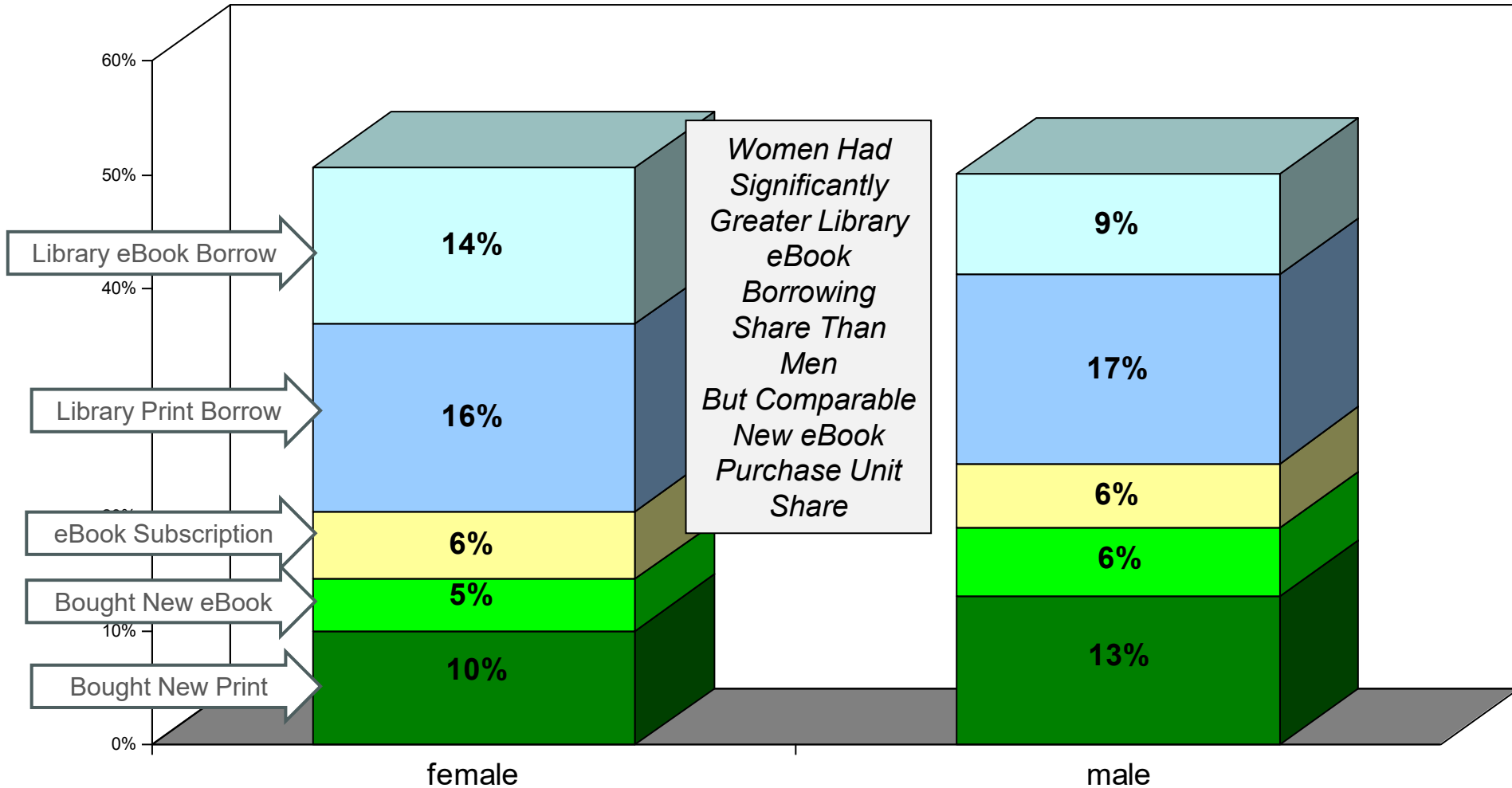
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



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)

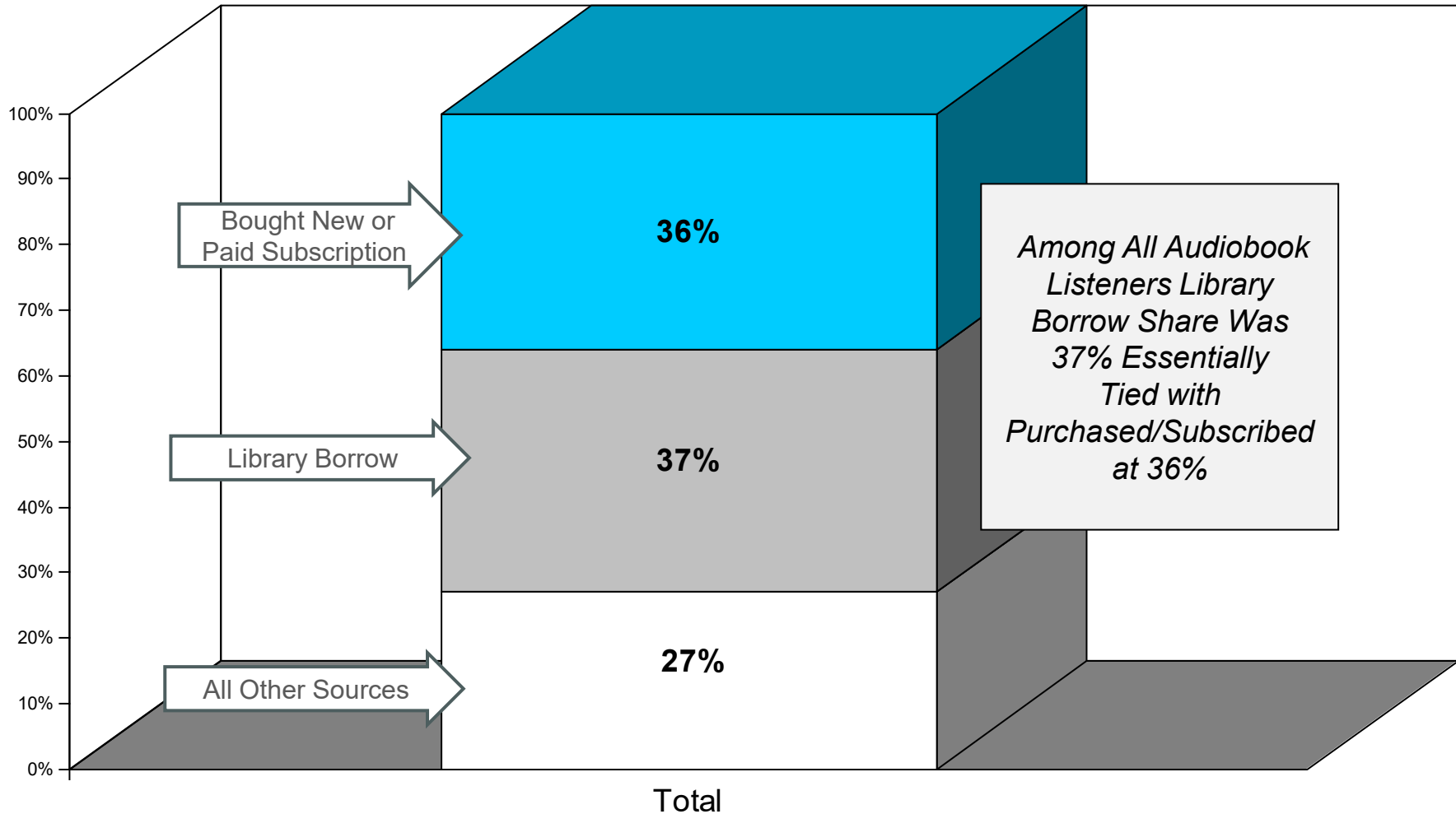


*Women Had Significantly Greater Library eBook Borrowing Share Than Men But Comparable New eBook Purchase Unit Share*

*Men had somewhat higher new print book purchase share.*

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

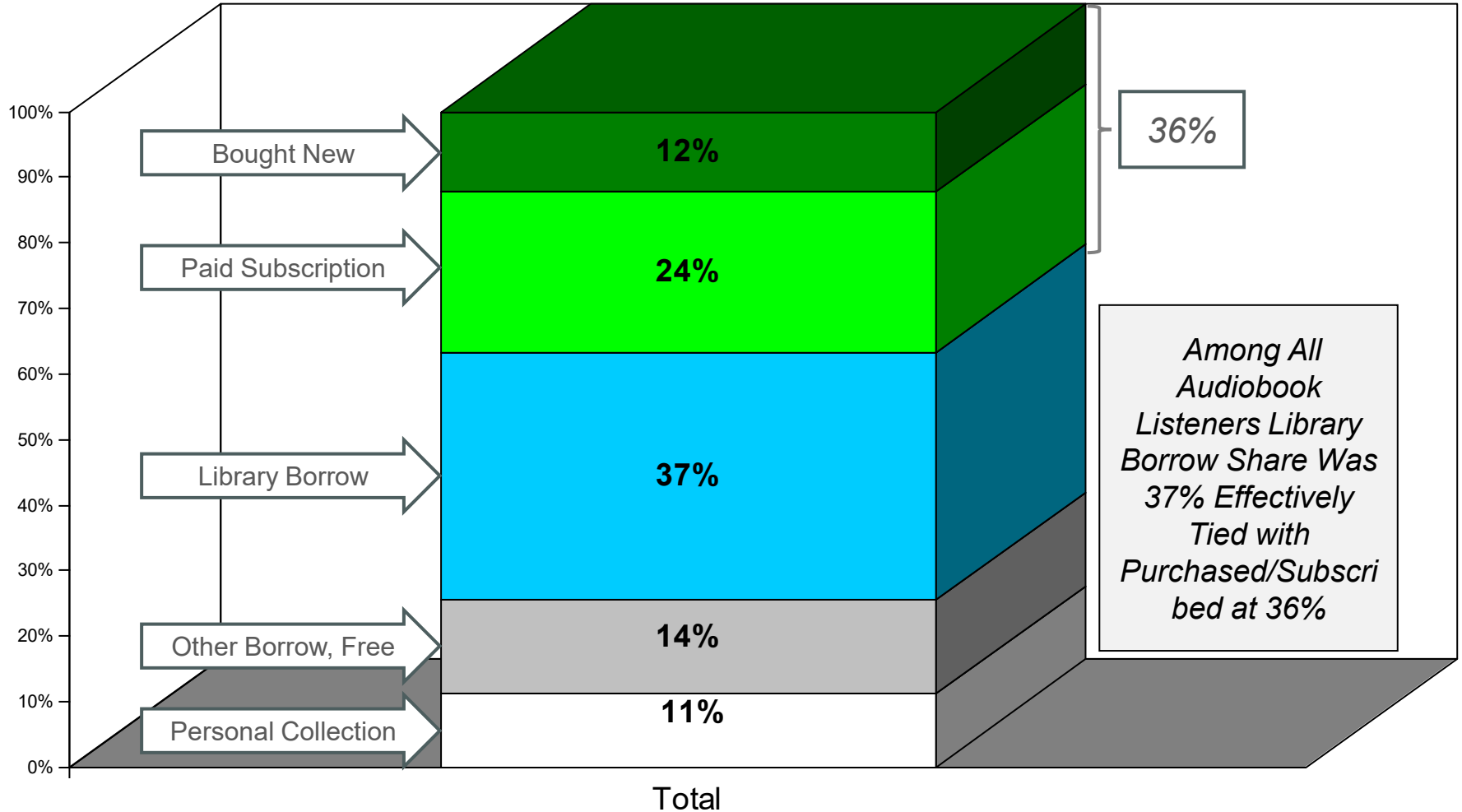
How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



*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

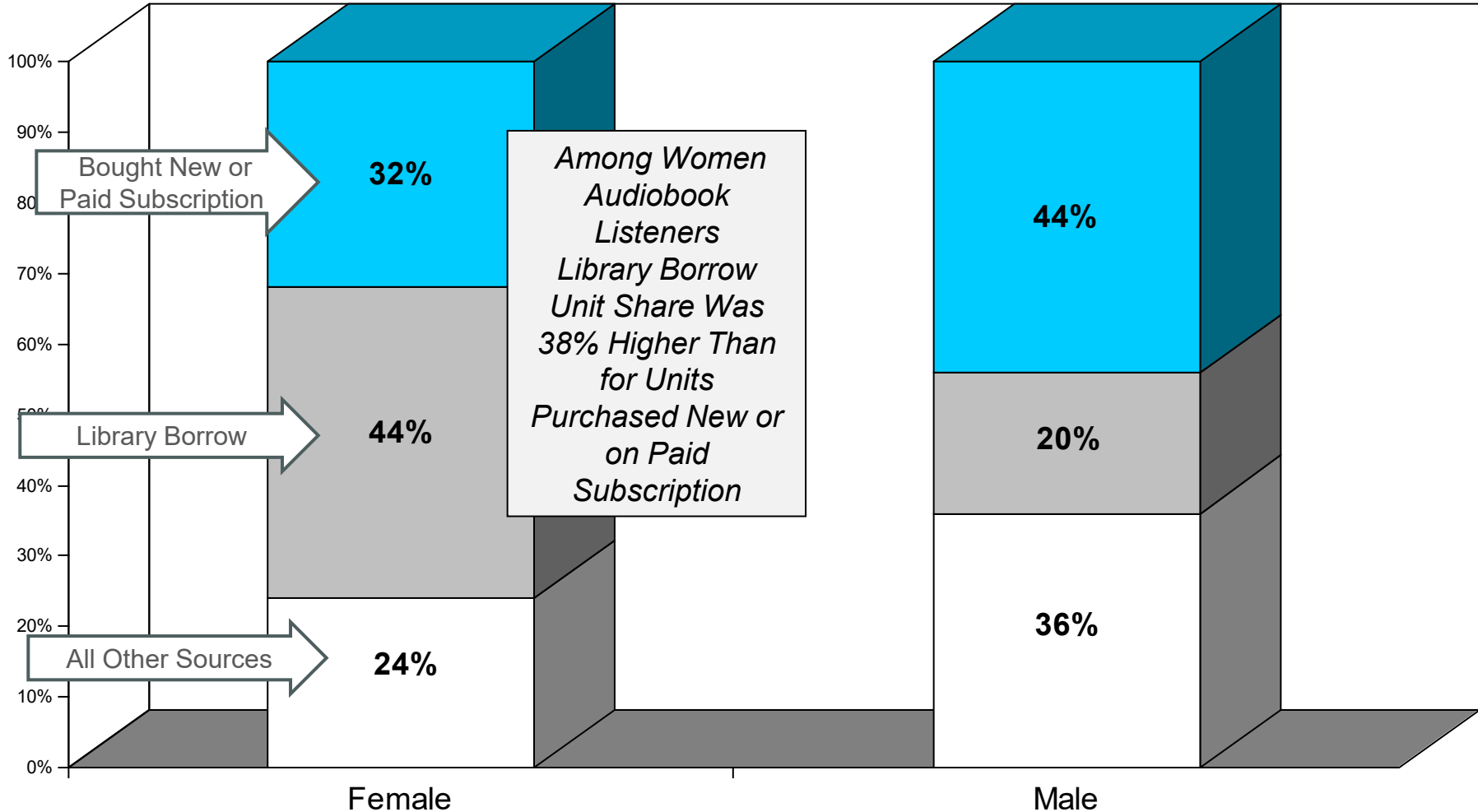
How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



*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

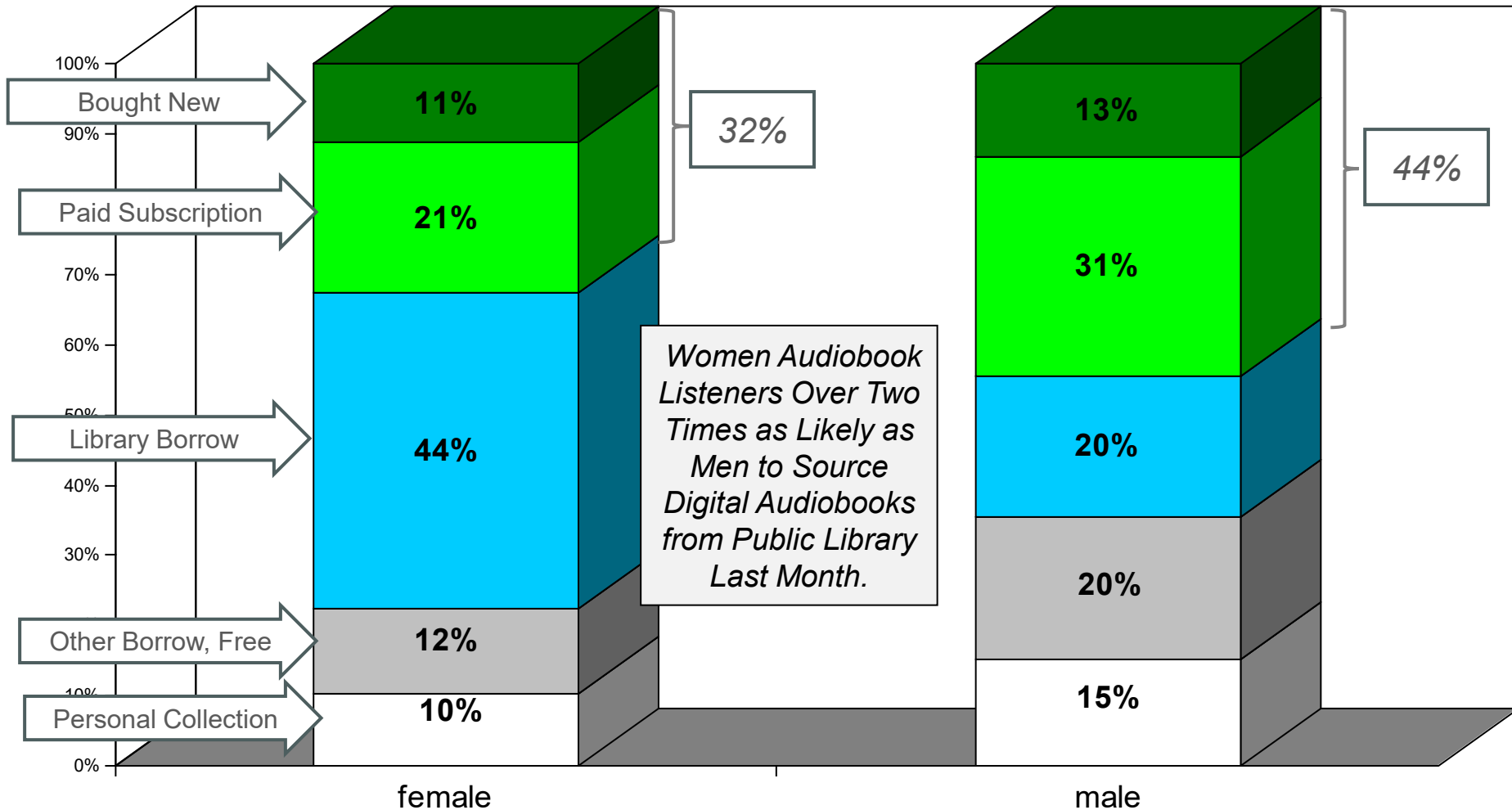
How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



**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.*

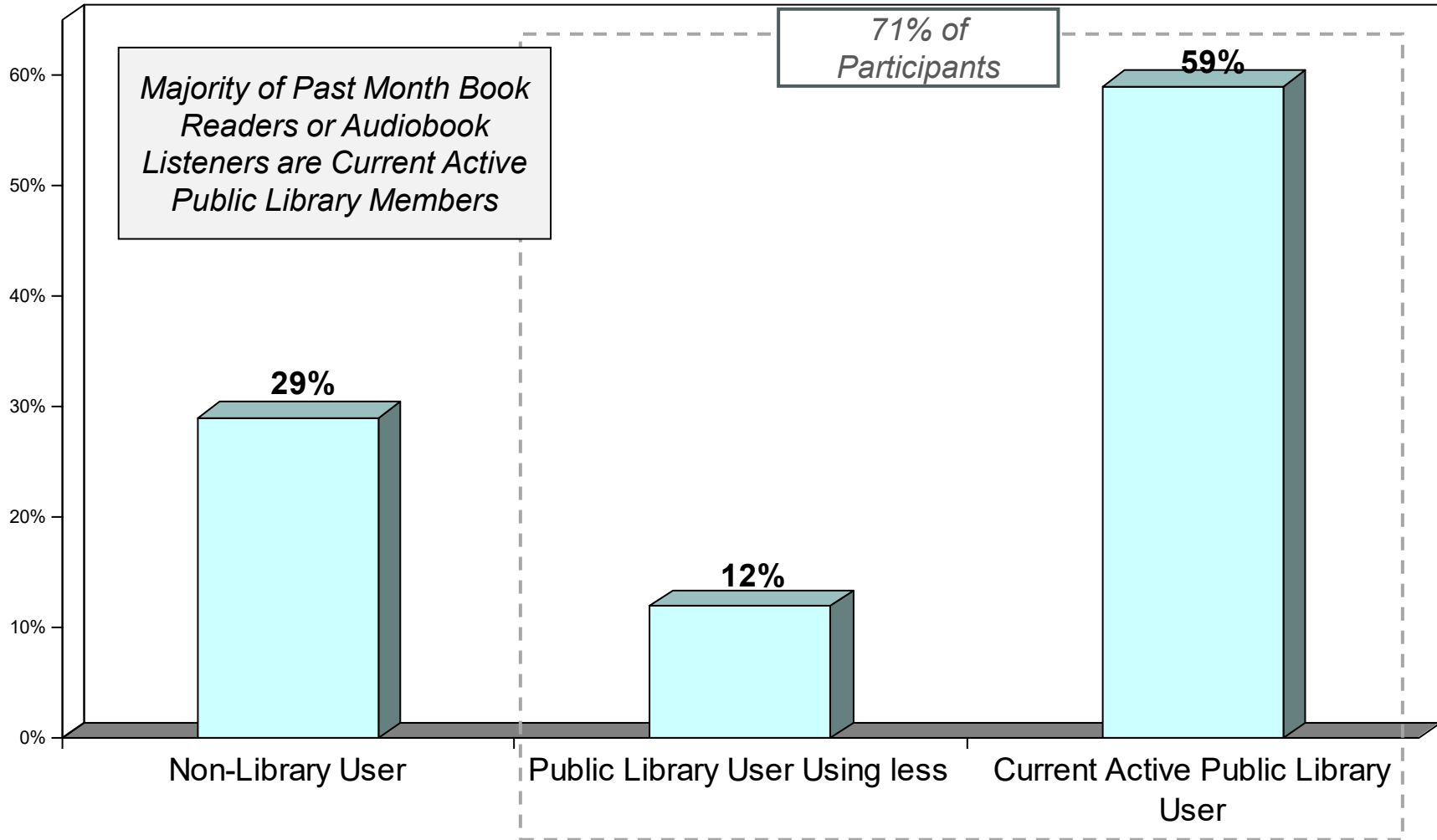
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*Past Month Book Reader/Audiobook Listener  
Detail*

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

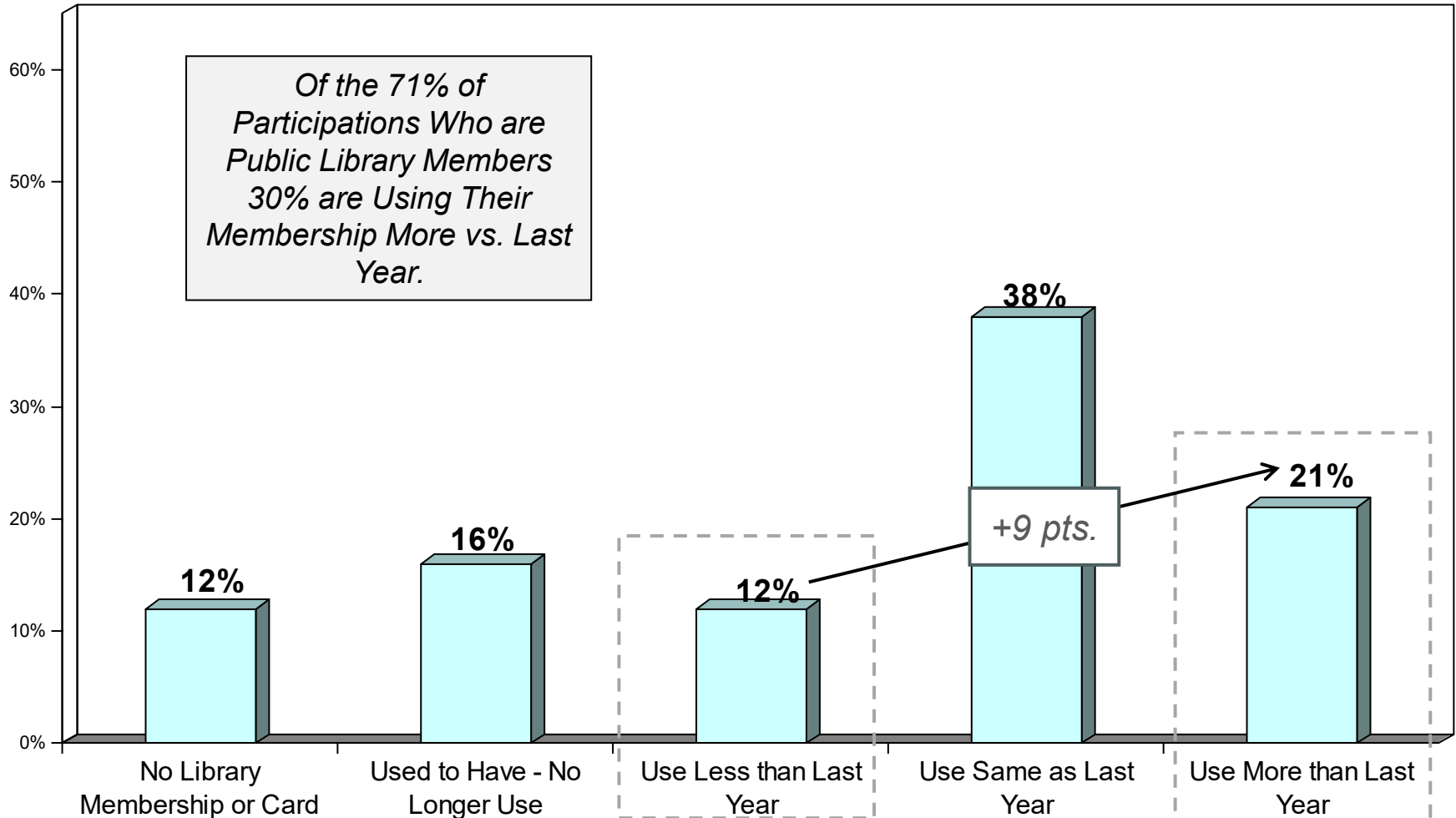
*Do you have a current public library membership or library card?*



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

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

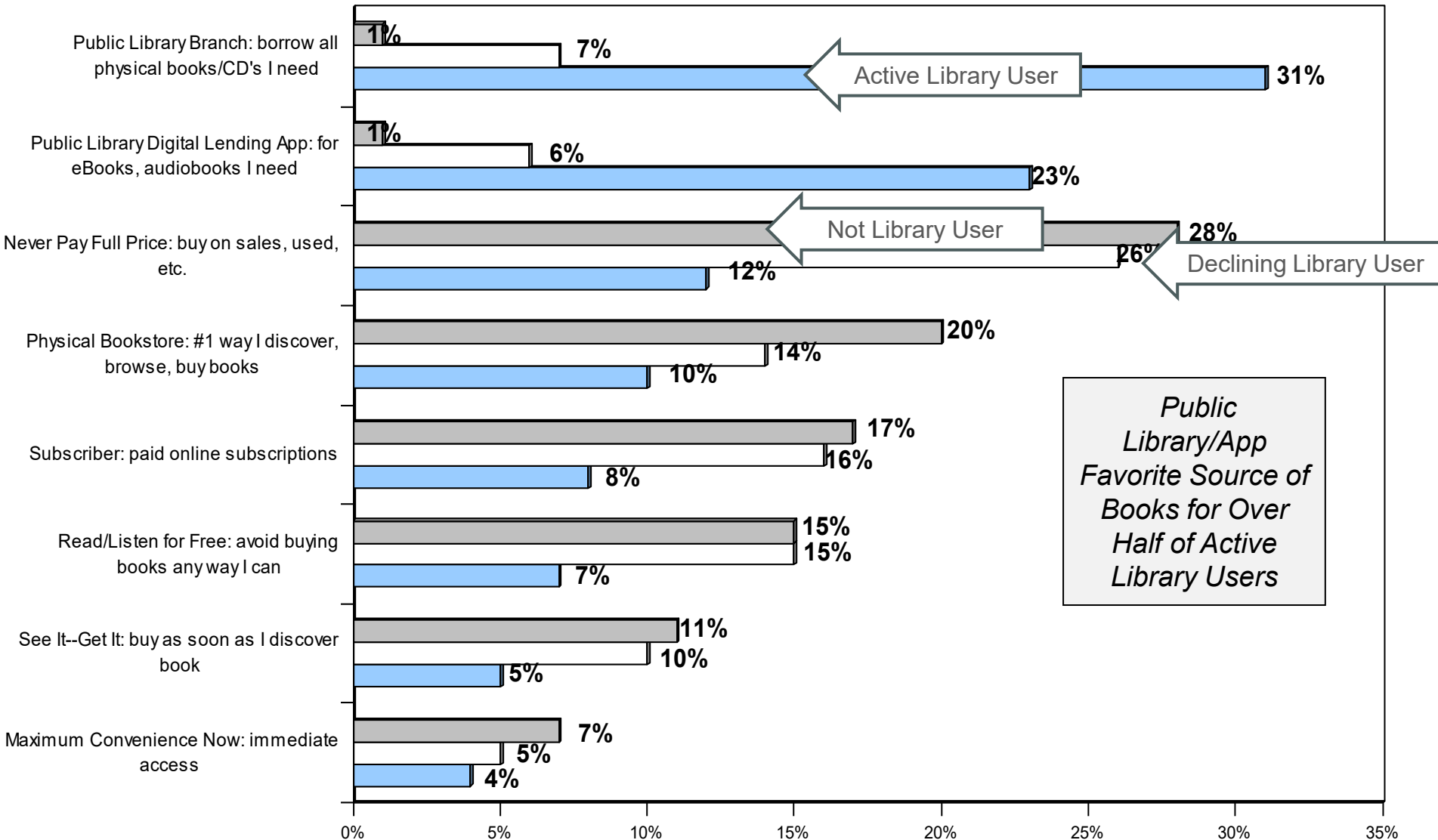
*Do you have a current public library membership or library card?*



*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.*

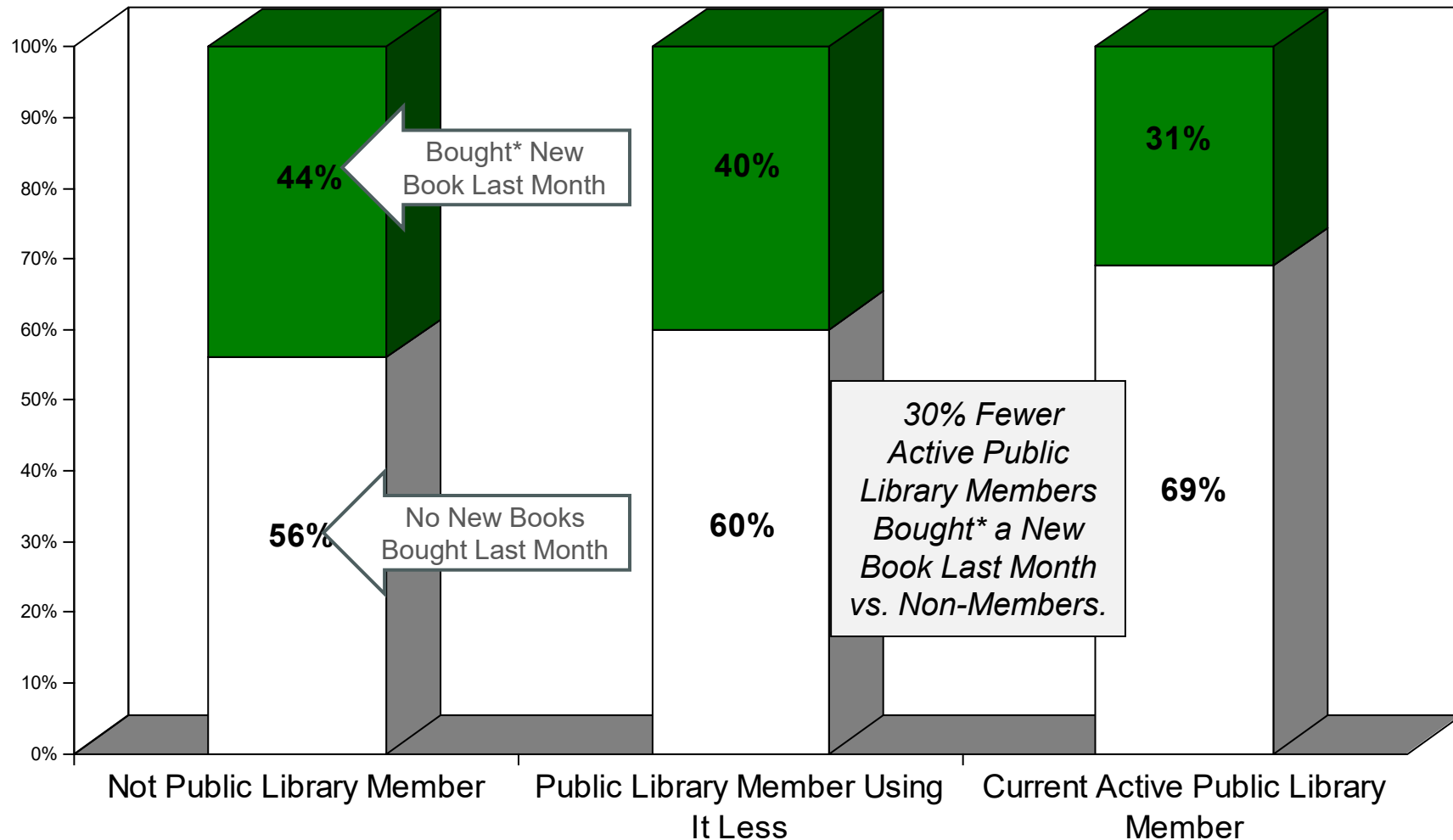
## Past Month Book Readers/Audiobook Listeners – Book Sourcing Style

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



## 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)

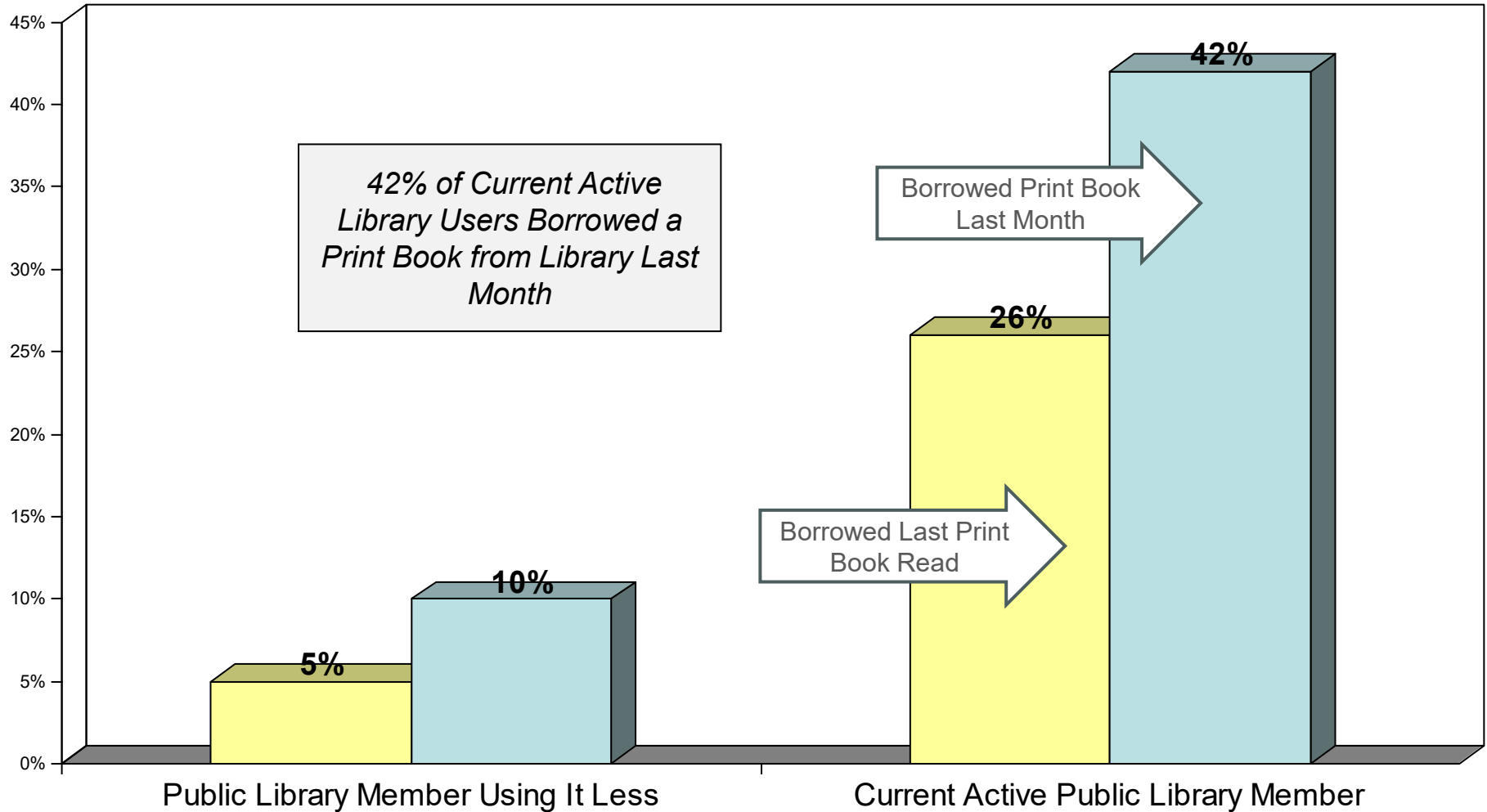


**Only 31% of past month book reader active library members bought a new book vs. 44% of non-members.**

\*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*

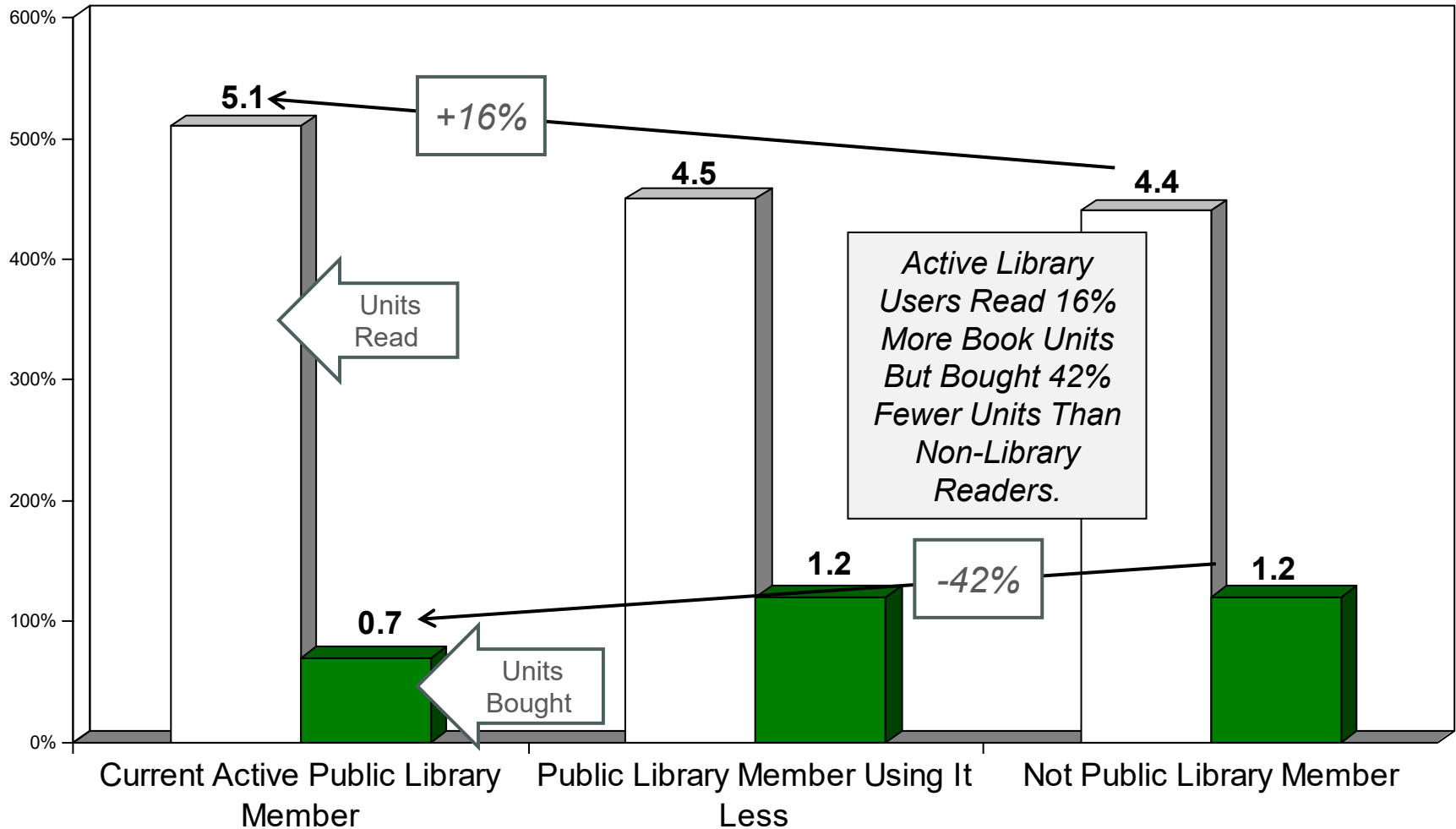
Borrowed Print Book Last Month

Borrowed Last Print Book Read

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

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

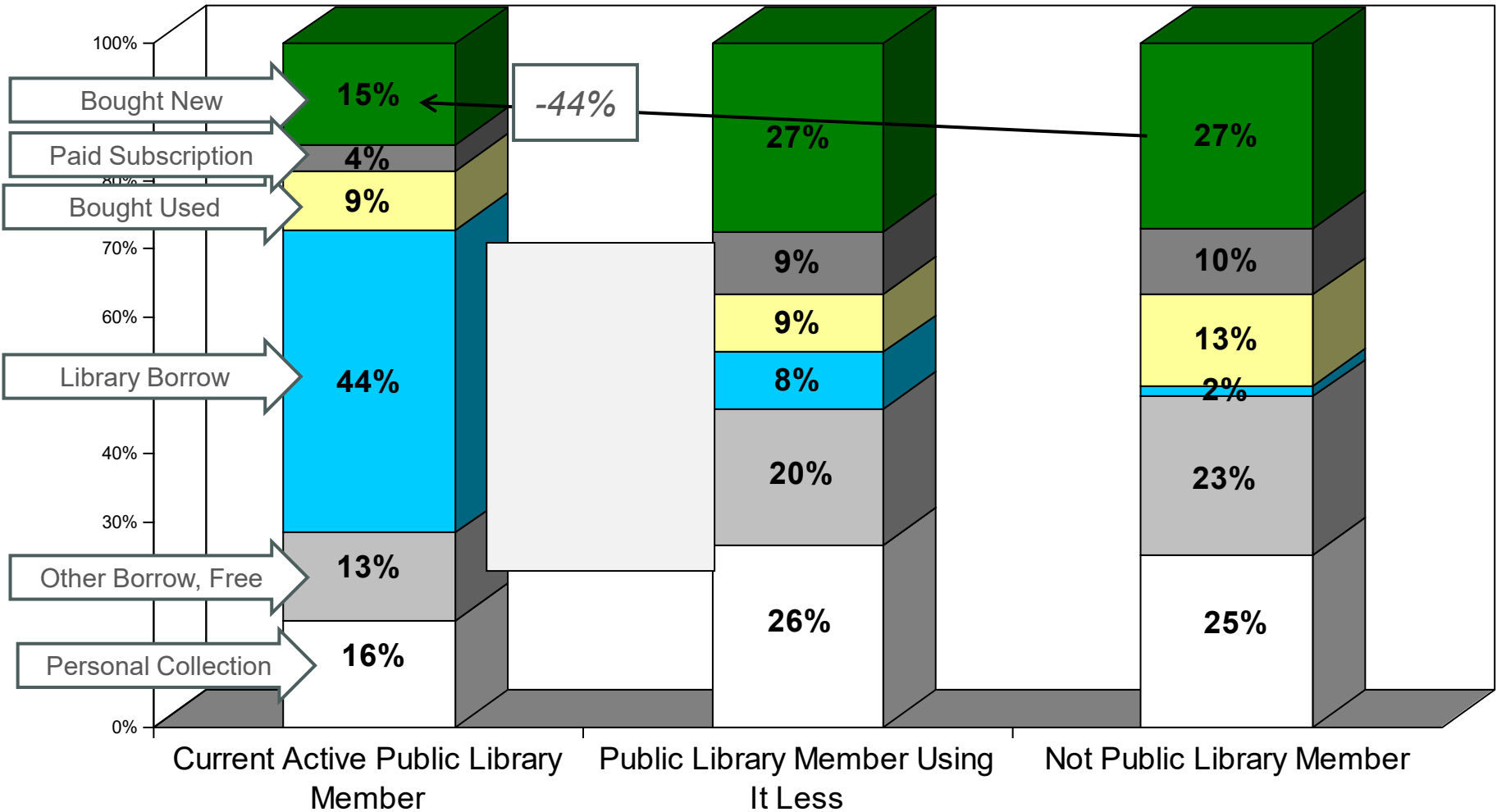
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



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

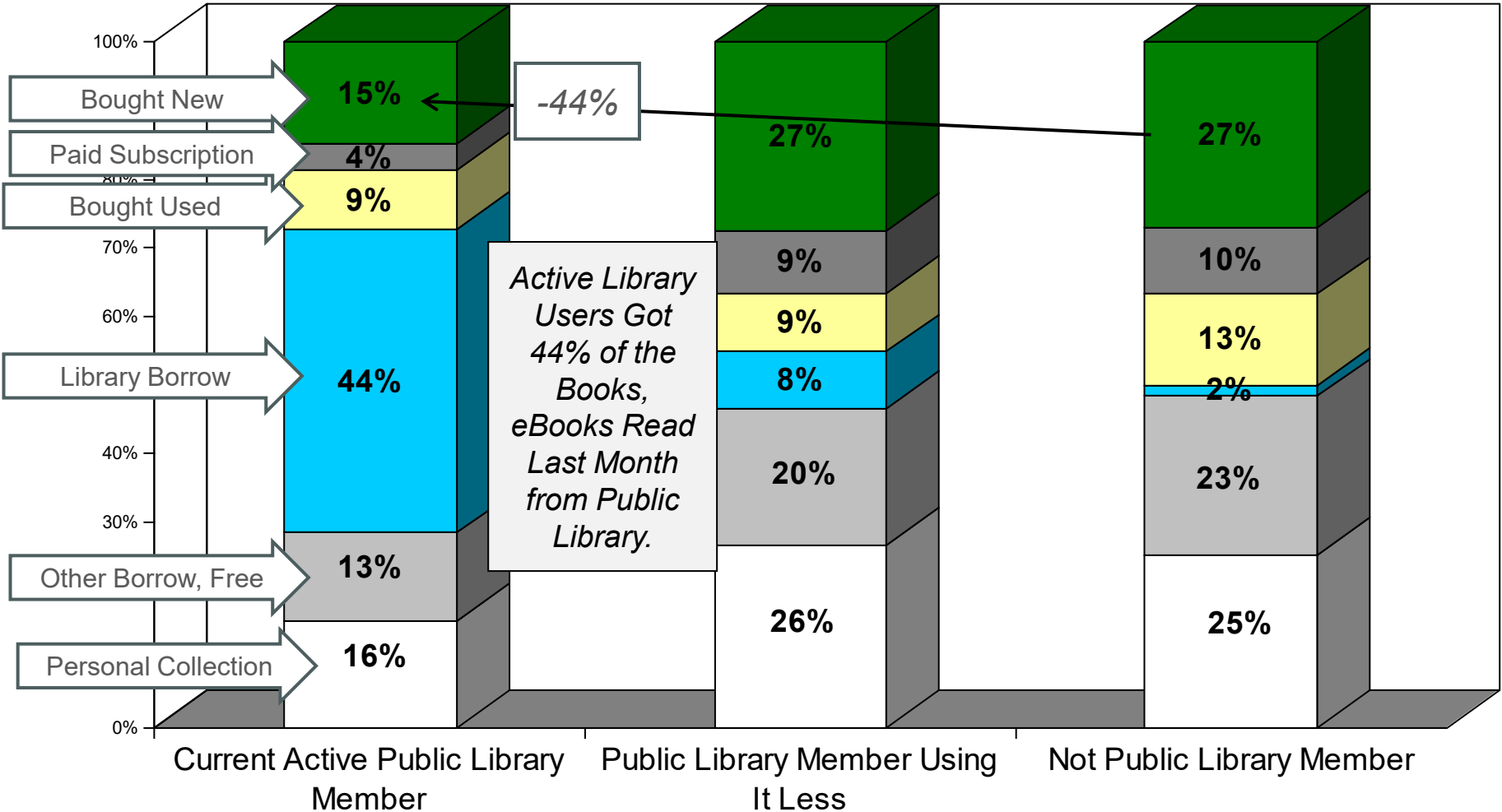
## Past Month Book Readers/Listeners – Favorite Way to Get Books, Audiobooks for Personal Use

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 – eBooks/Print Book Units Read vs. Bought New Last Month

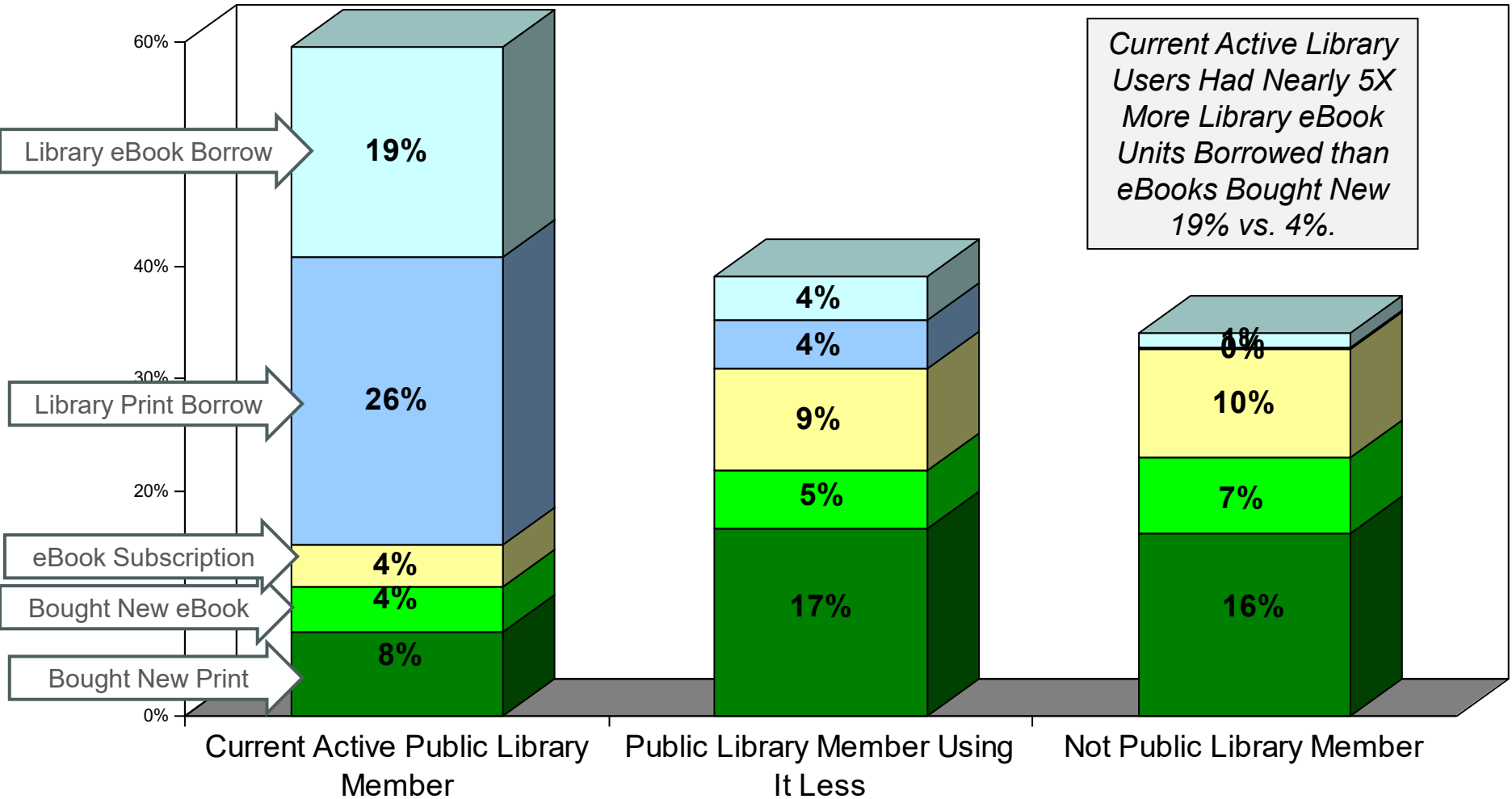
How many of the books you read in the last month came from each of the following sources? (not related to school, college, or work requirements)



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

# Past Month 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)

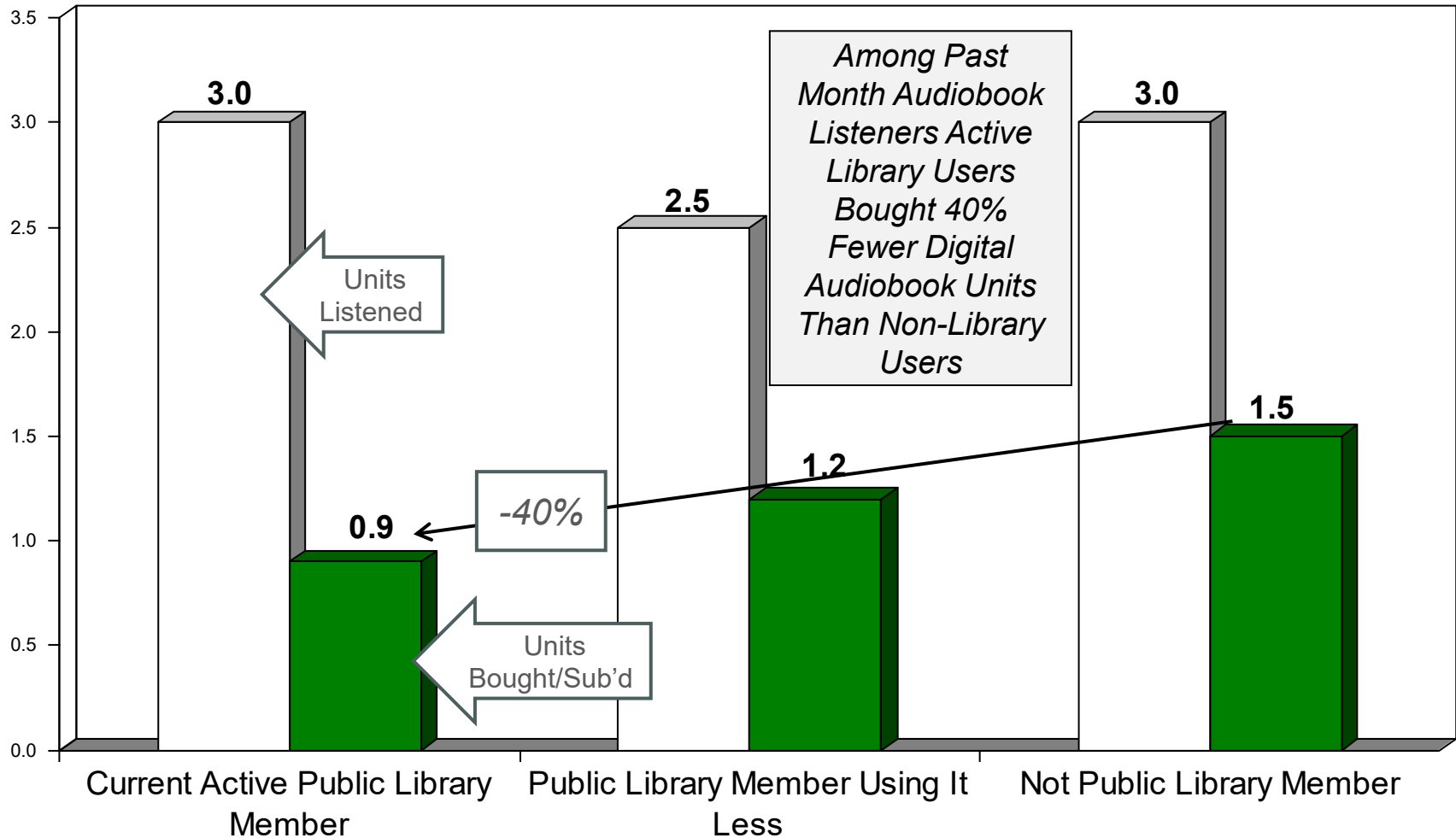


*Current Active Library Users Had Nearly 5X More Library eBook Units Borrowed than eBooks Bought New 19% vs. 4%.*

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

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

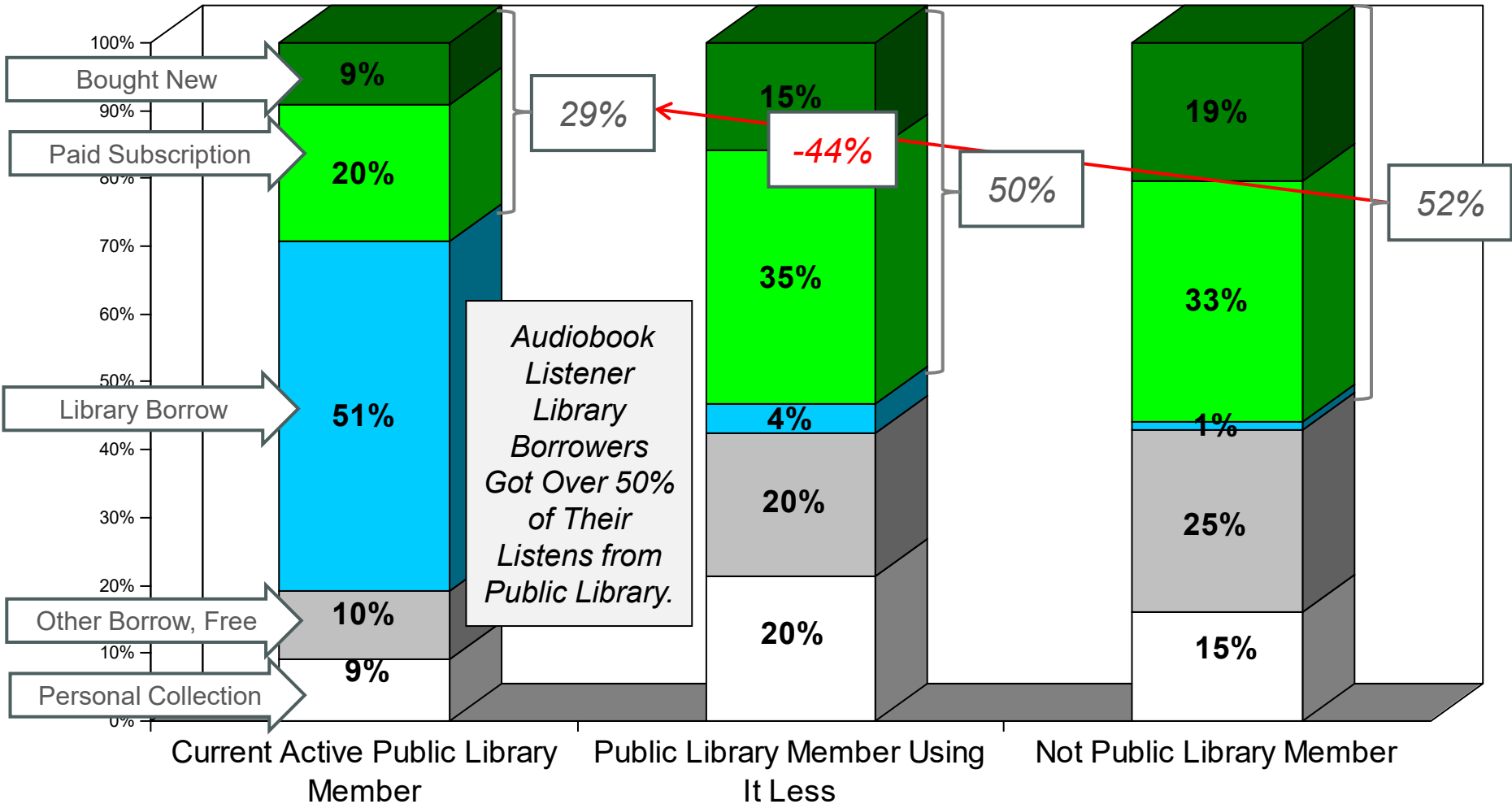
How many of the digital audiobooks you listened to last in the month came from each of the following sources?



*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.*

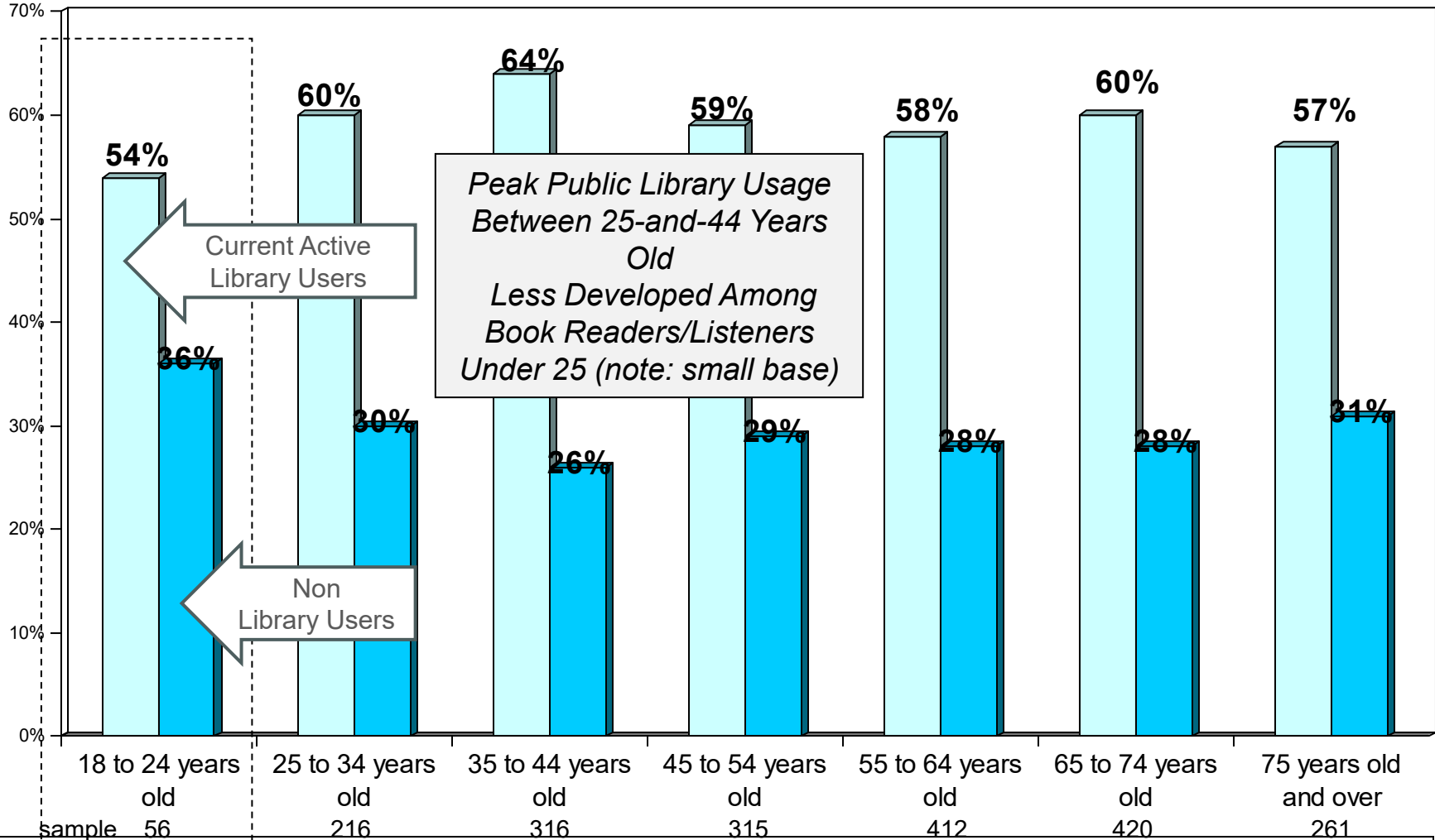
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*Active Library Users  
Detail*

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

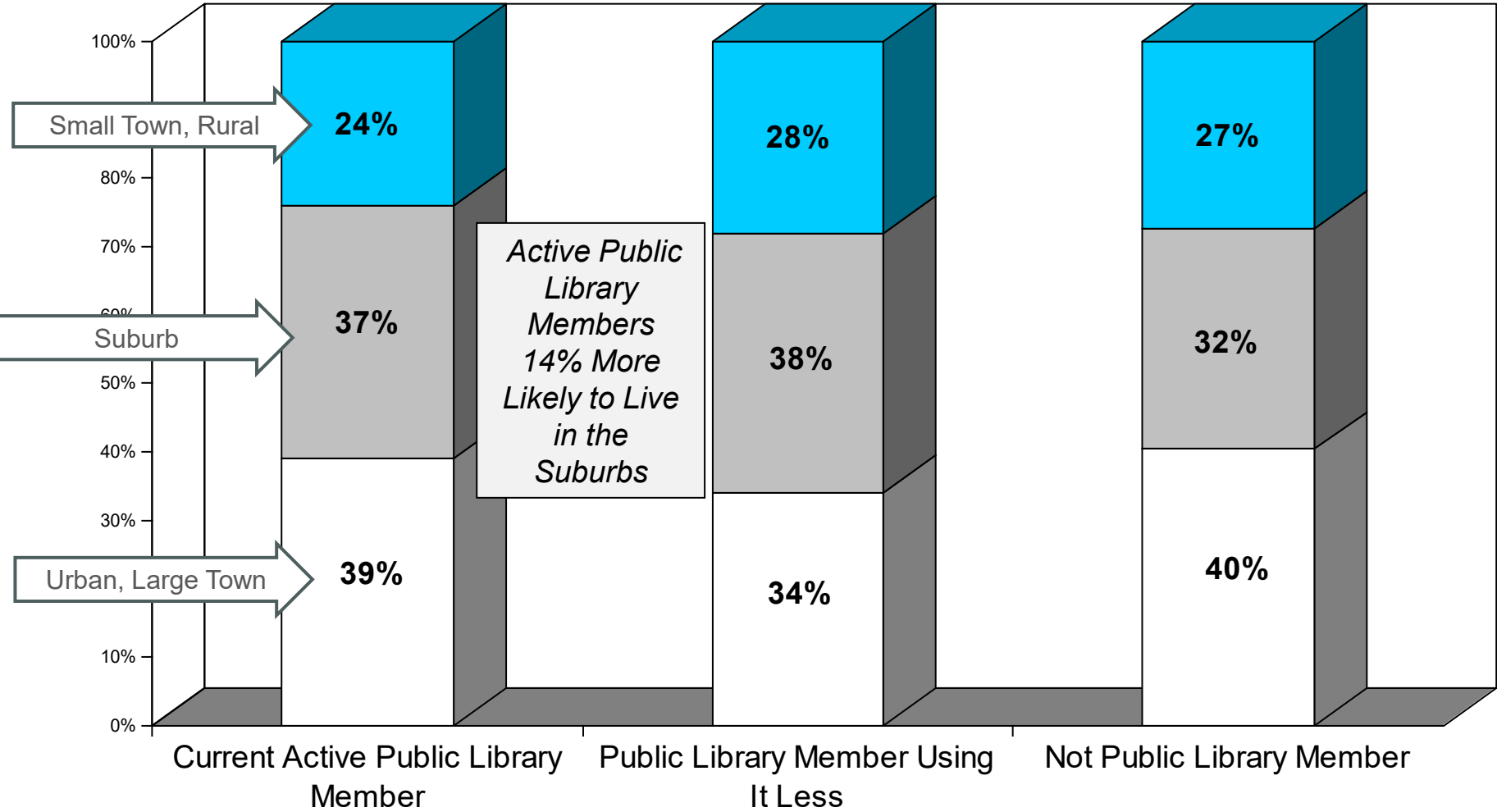
Do you have a current public library membership or library card?  
What is your age?



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%).

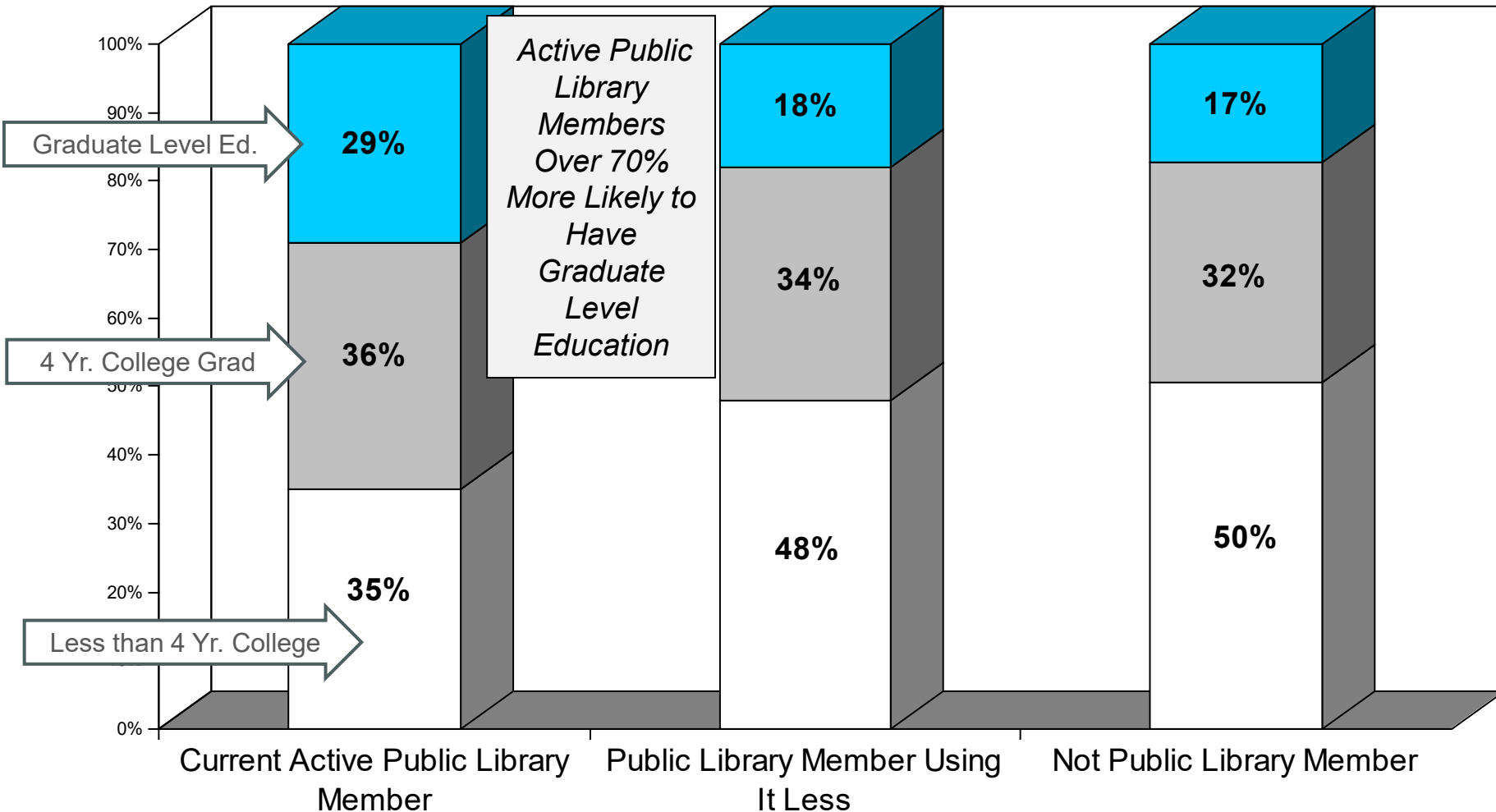
# Current Active Public Library Members vs. Non-Users: Demographics – Urban, Suburban, Rural

What type of area do you live in?



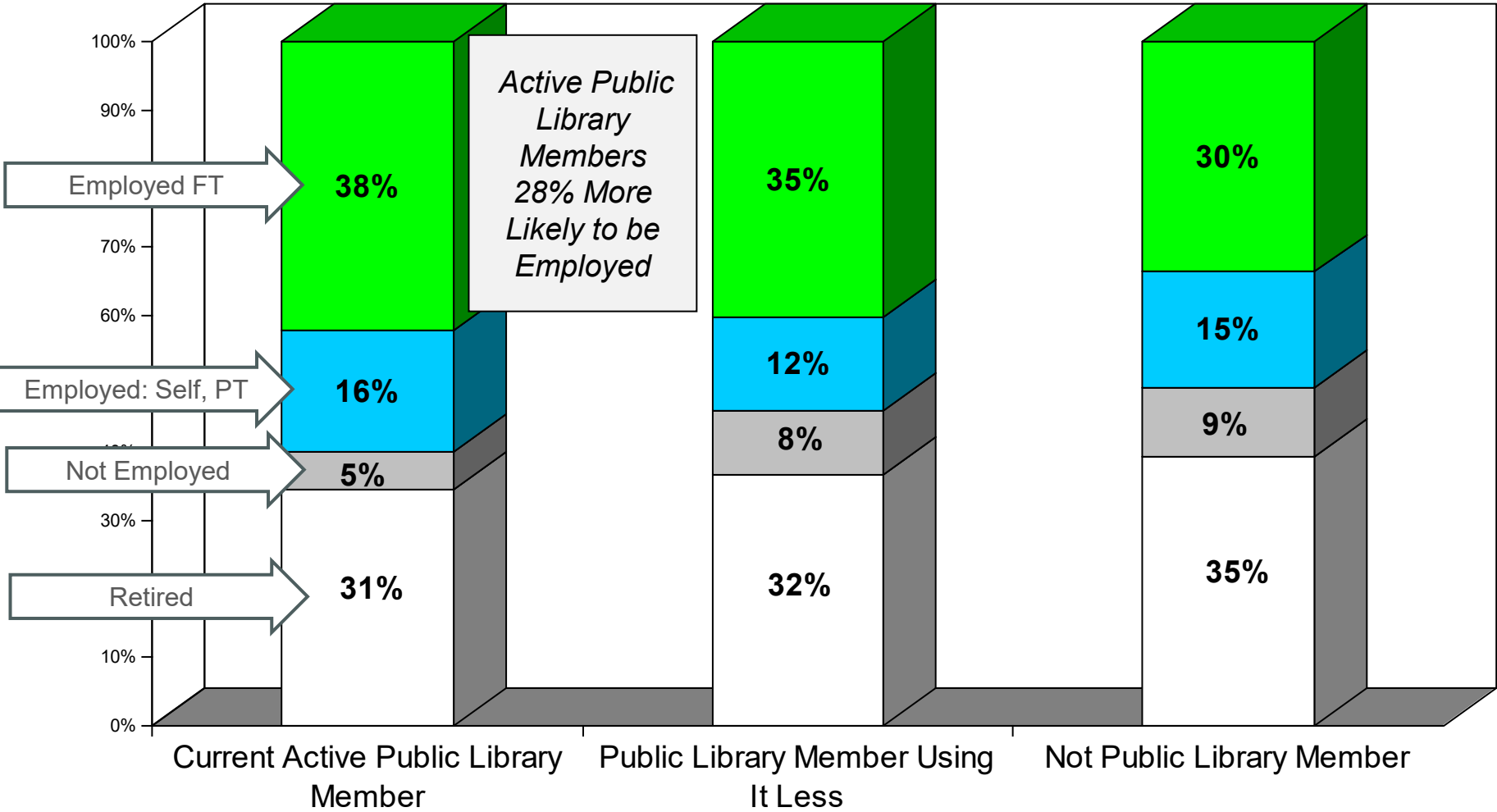
*Active public library members somewhat less likely to live in small town or rural areas.*

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



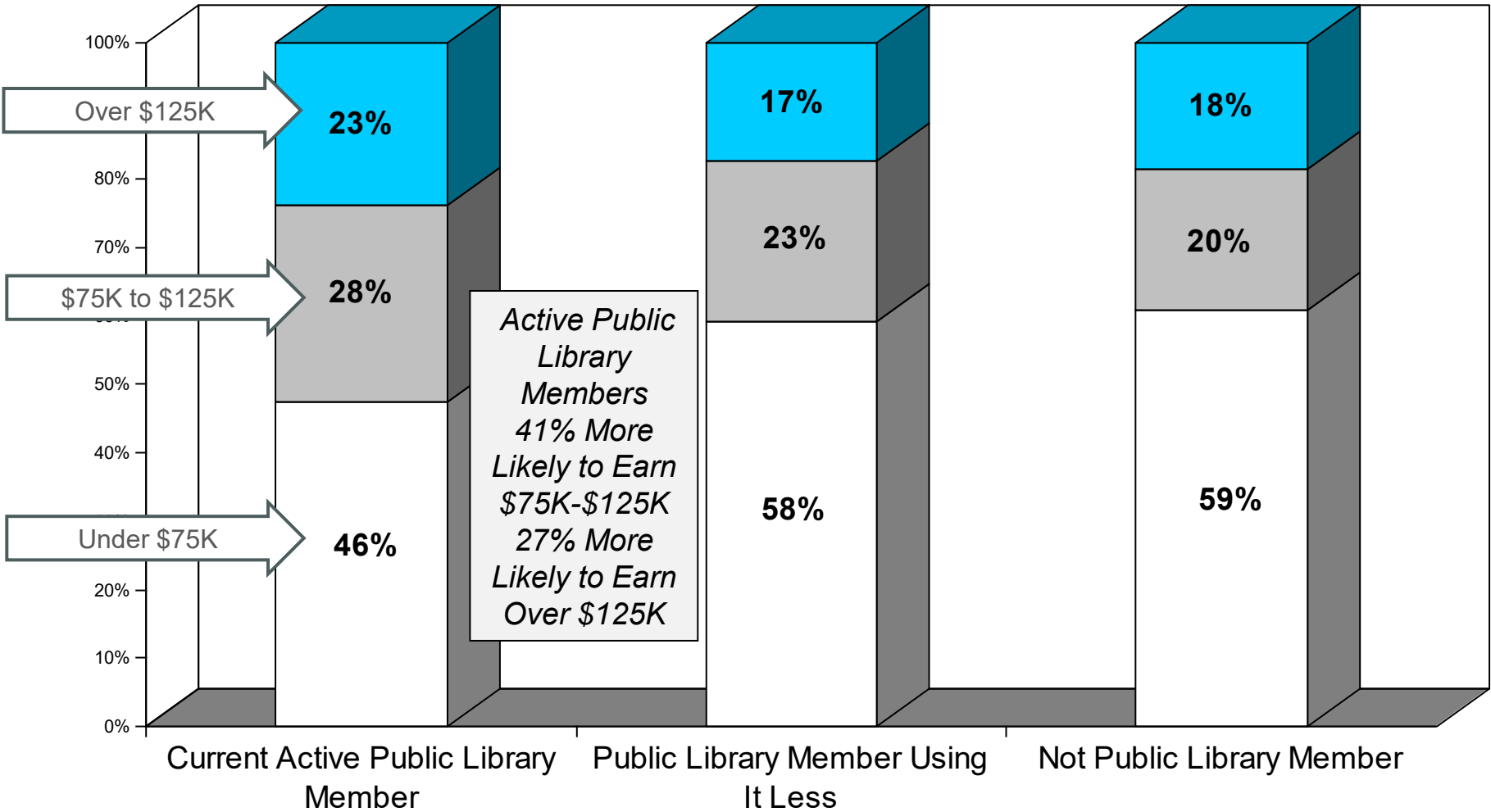
*Half of all Non-Library Members have less than a 4-year college education and are 43% more likely to be at that education attainment level.*

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



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

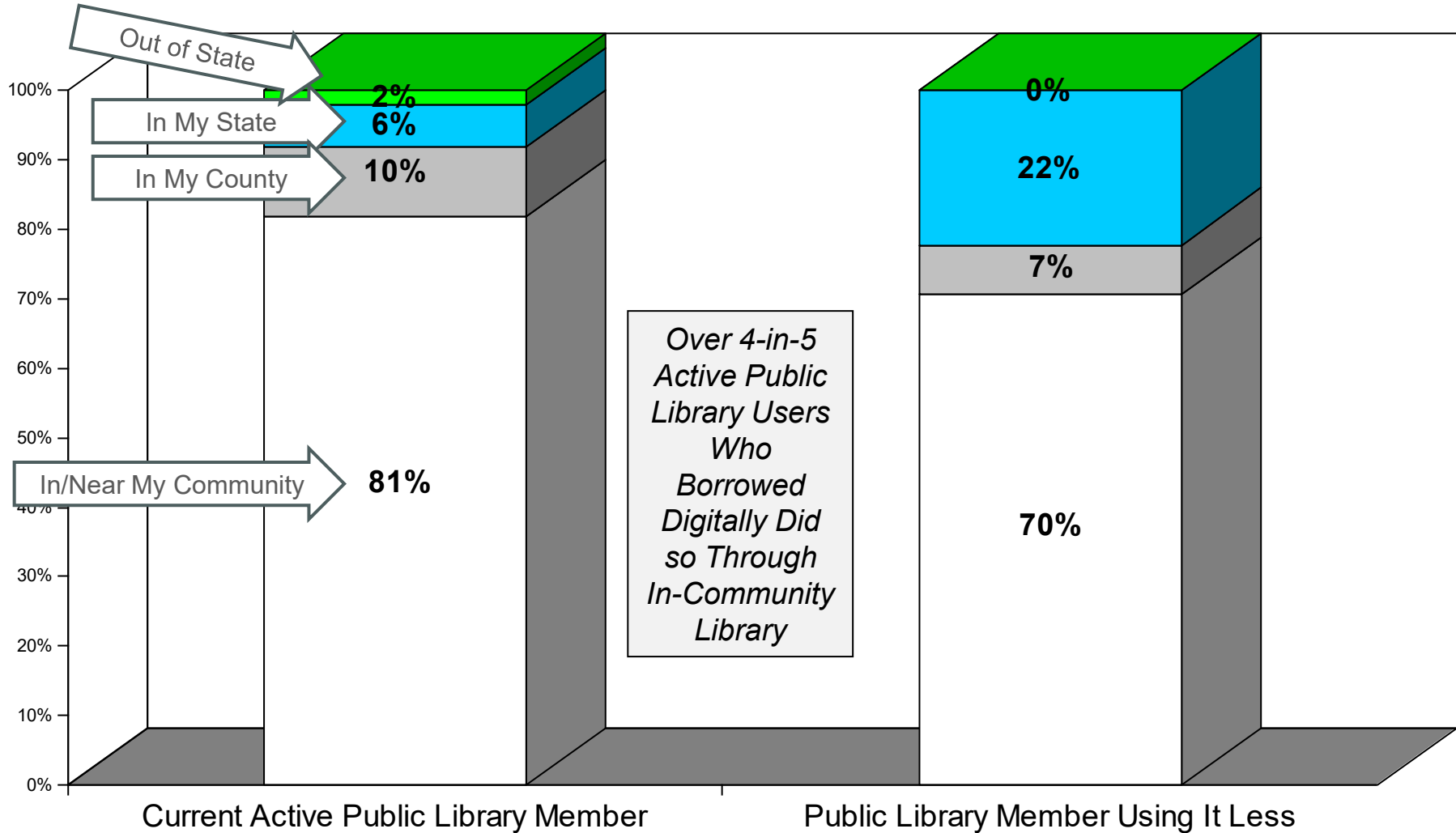
Current Active Public Library Members vs. Non-Users: Demographics – Pre-Tax Household Income Last Year



*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

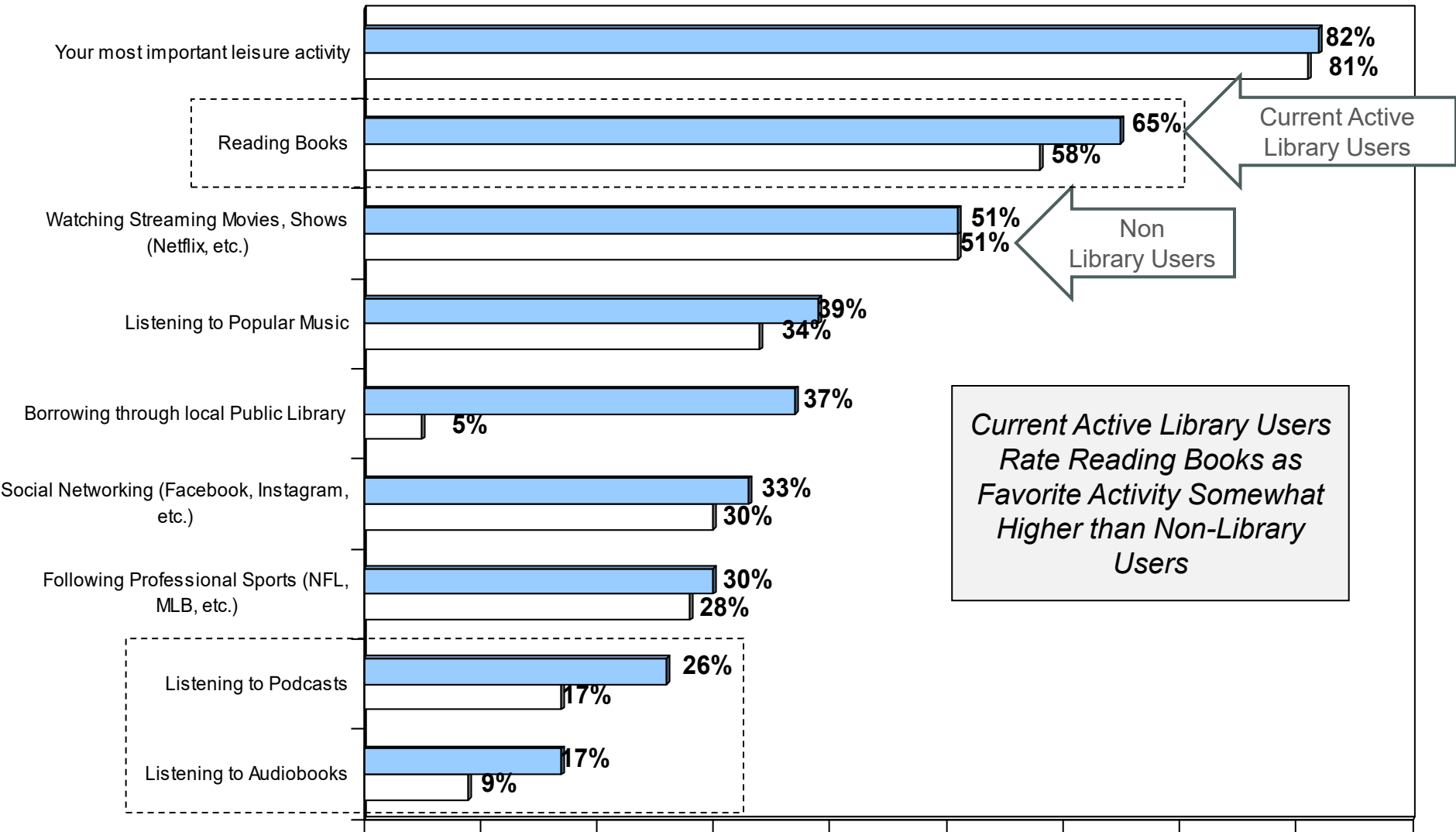
Where is the public library located that you borrowed eBooks and/or digital audiobooks through in the last month?



*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)

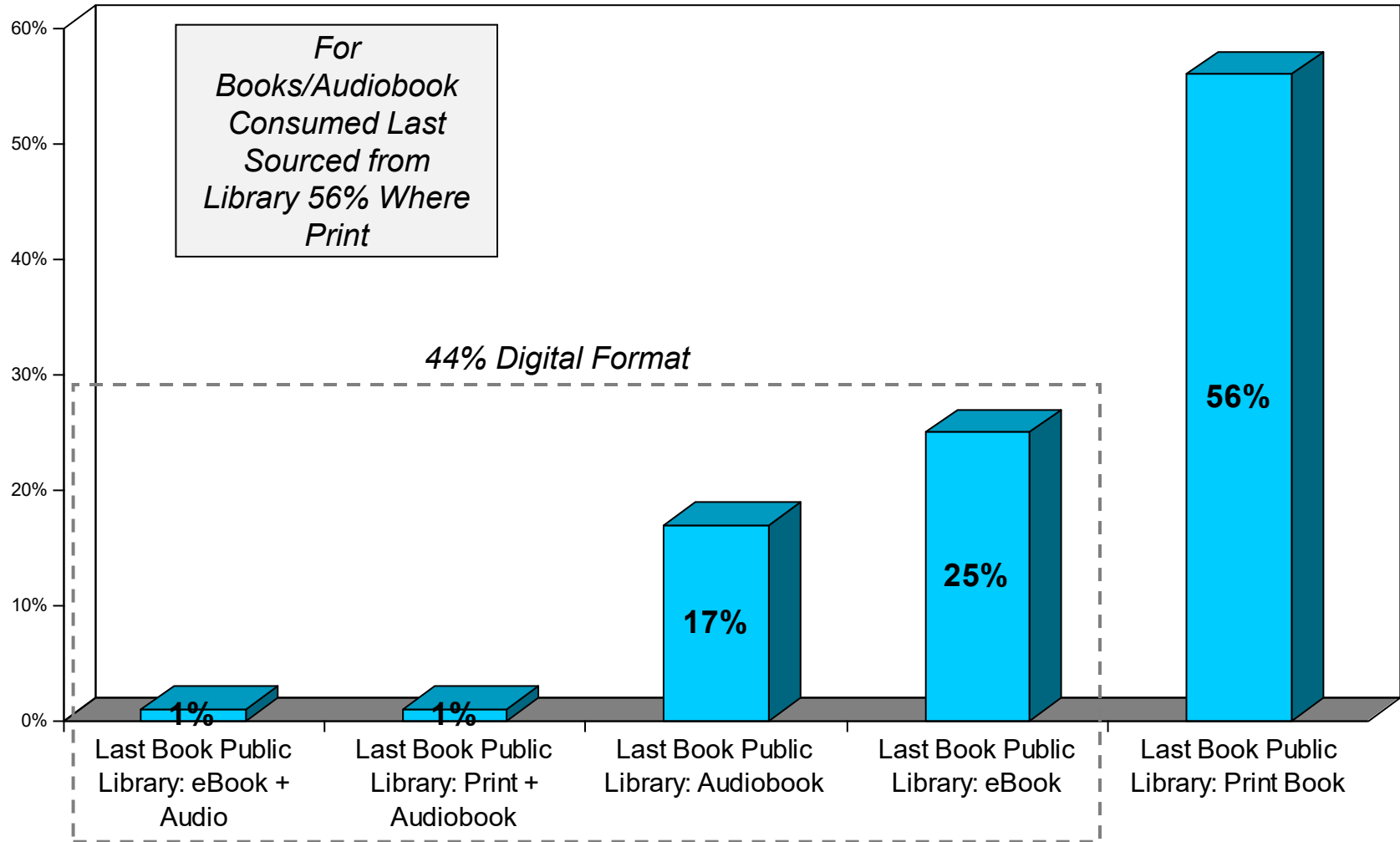


*Current Active Library Users Rate Reading Books as Favorite Activity Somewhat Higher than Non-Library Users*

*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

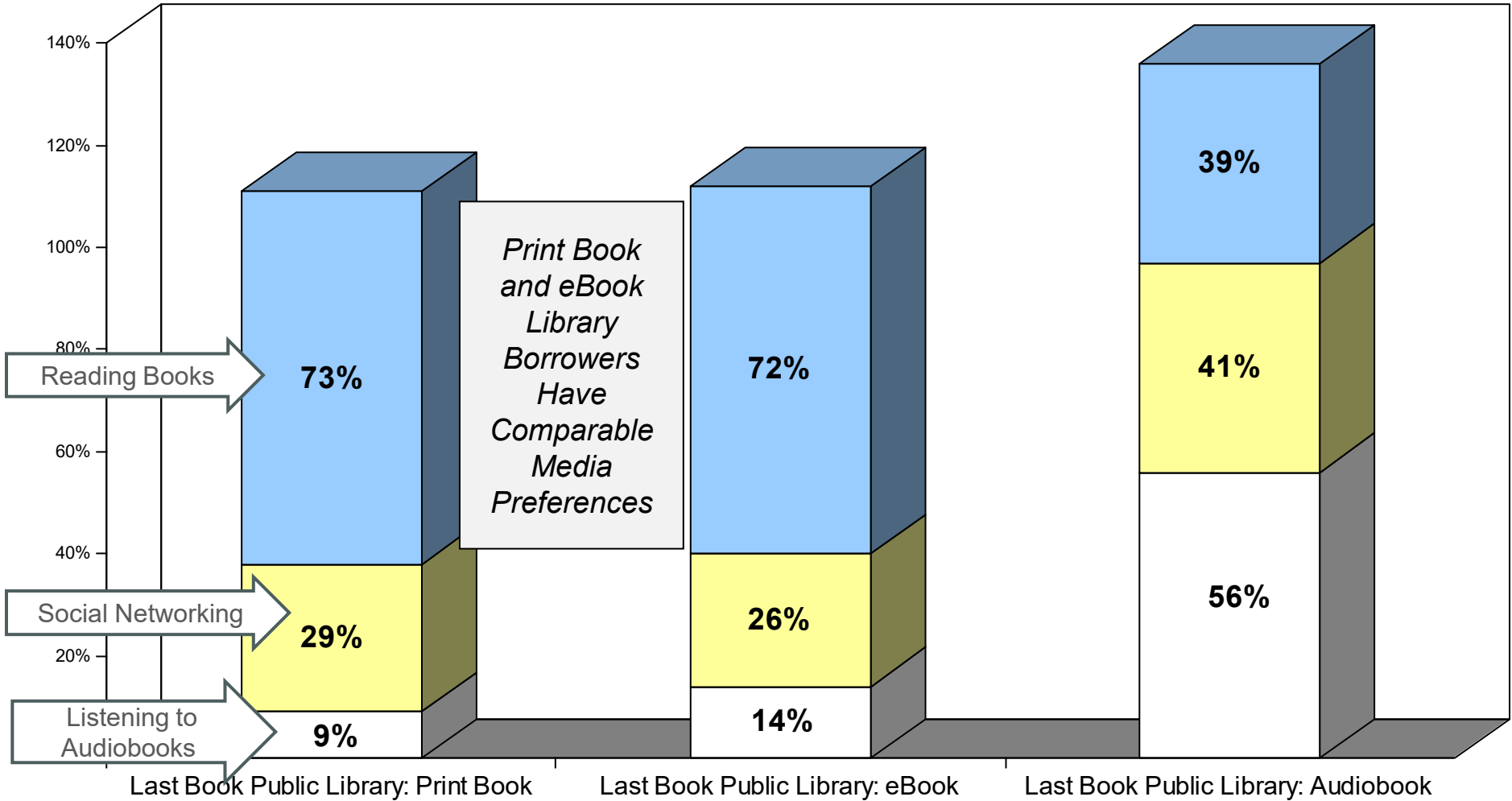
What format(s) did you primarily read and/or listen to [title of book read or listened to last] in?



*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

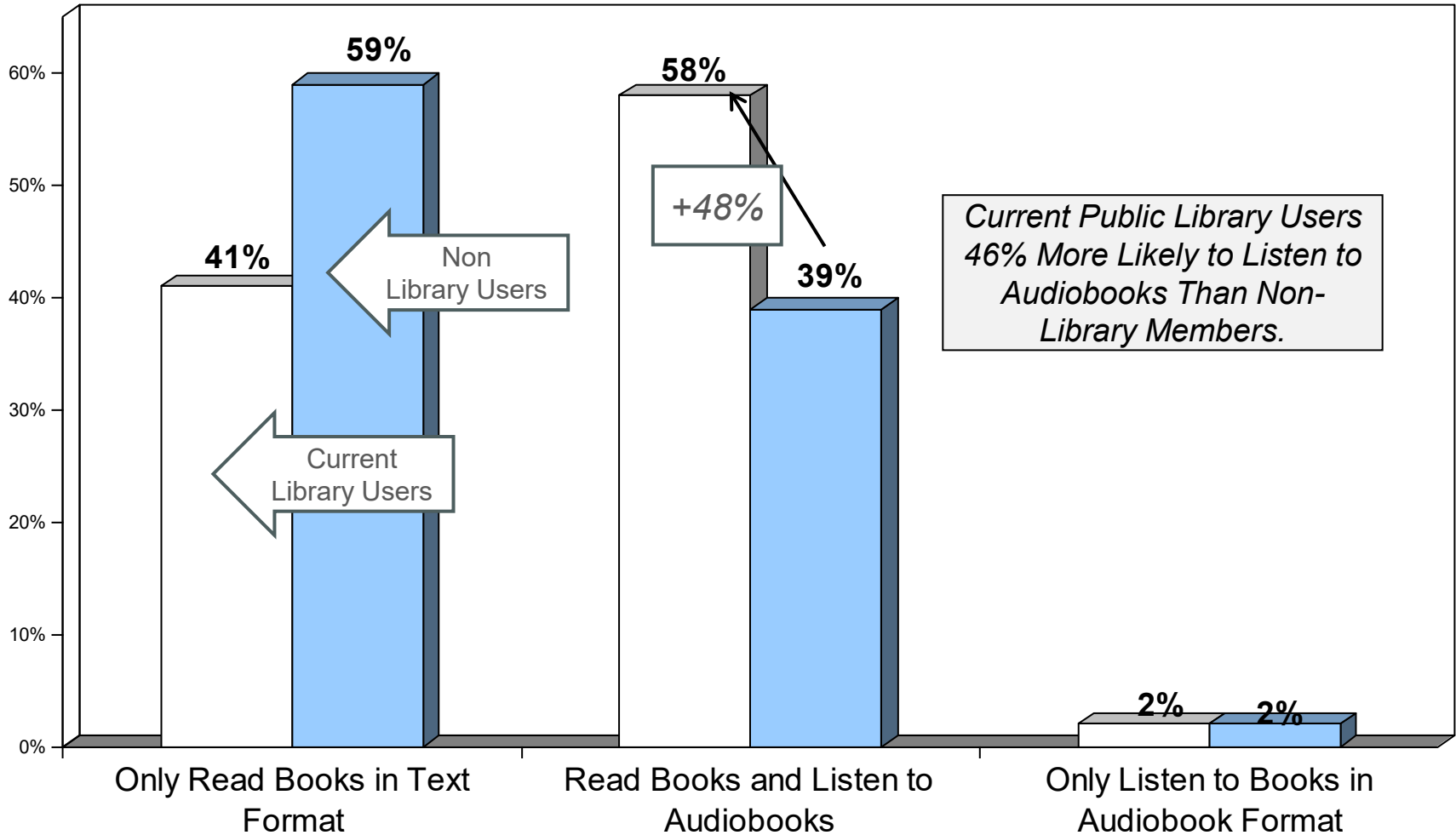
*How important are the following activities as part of your daily life?*



*Public Library audiobook borrowers are dramatically more dedicated to audiobook listening.*

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

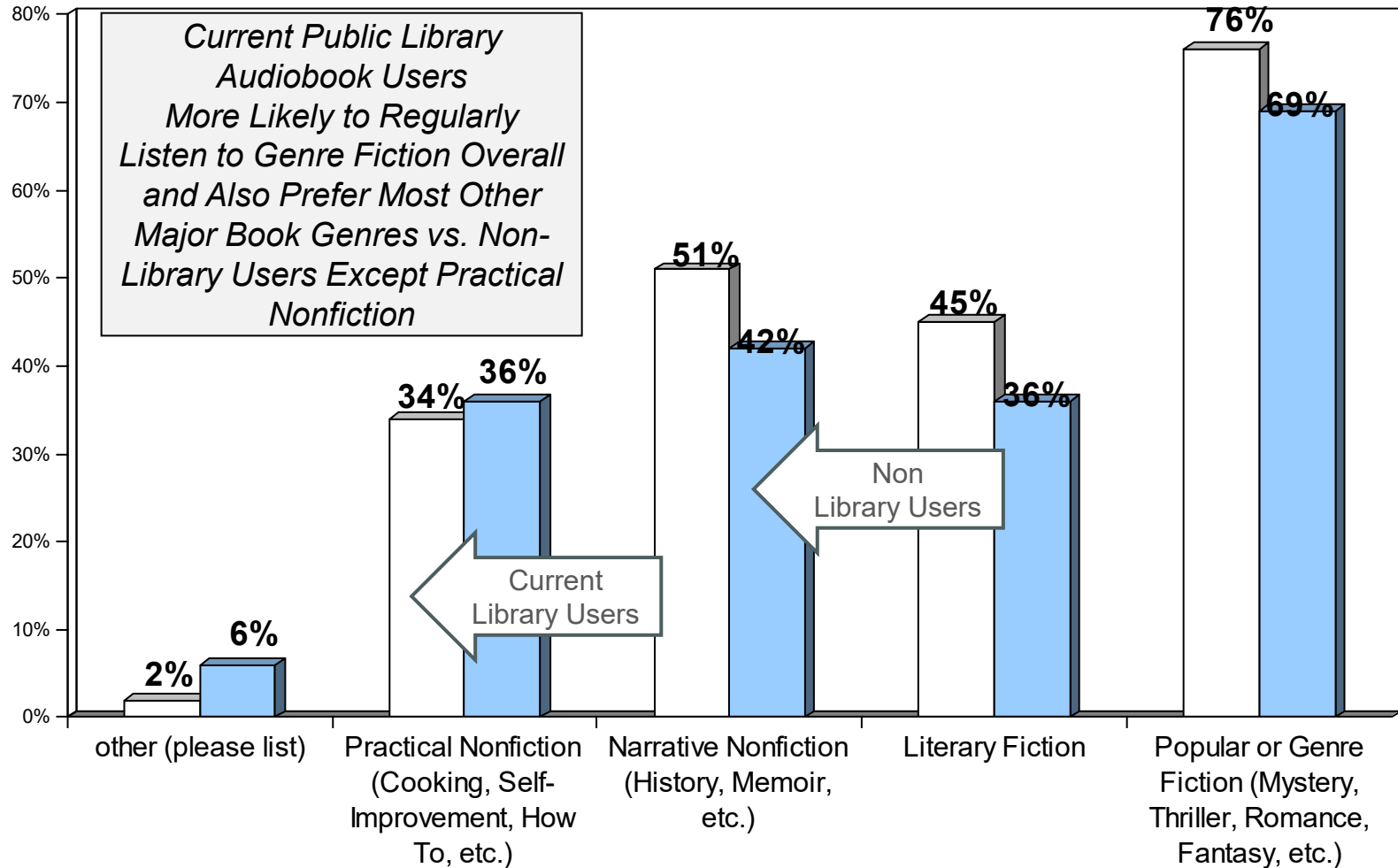
Do you have a current public library membership or library card?



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

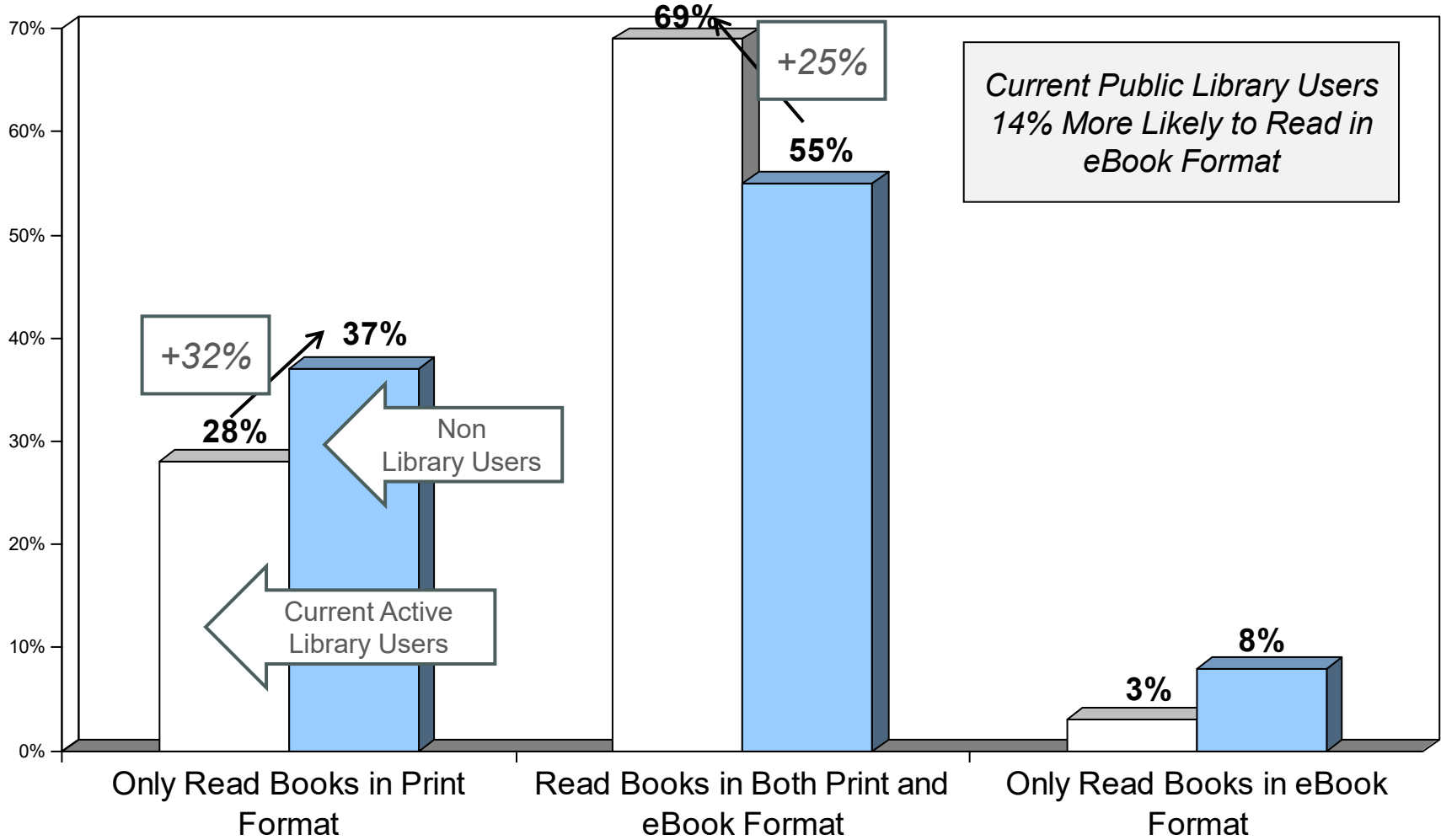
## Audiobook Listeners – Favorite Overall Audiobook Listening Genres

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?

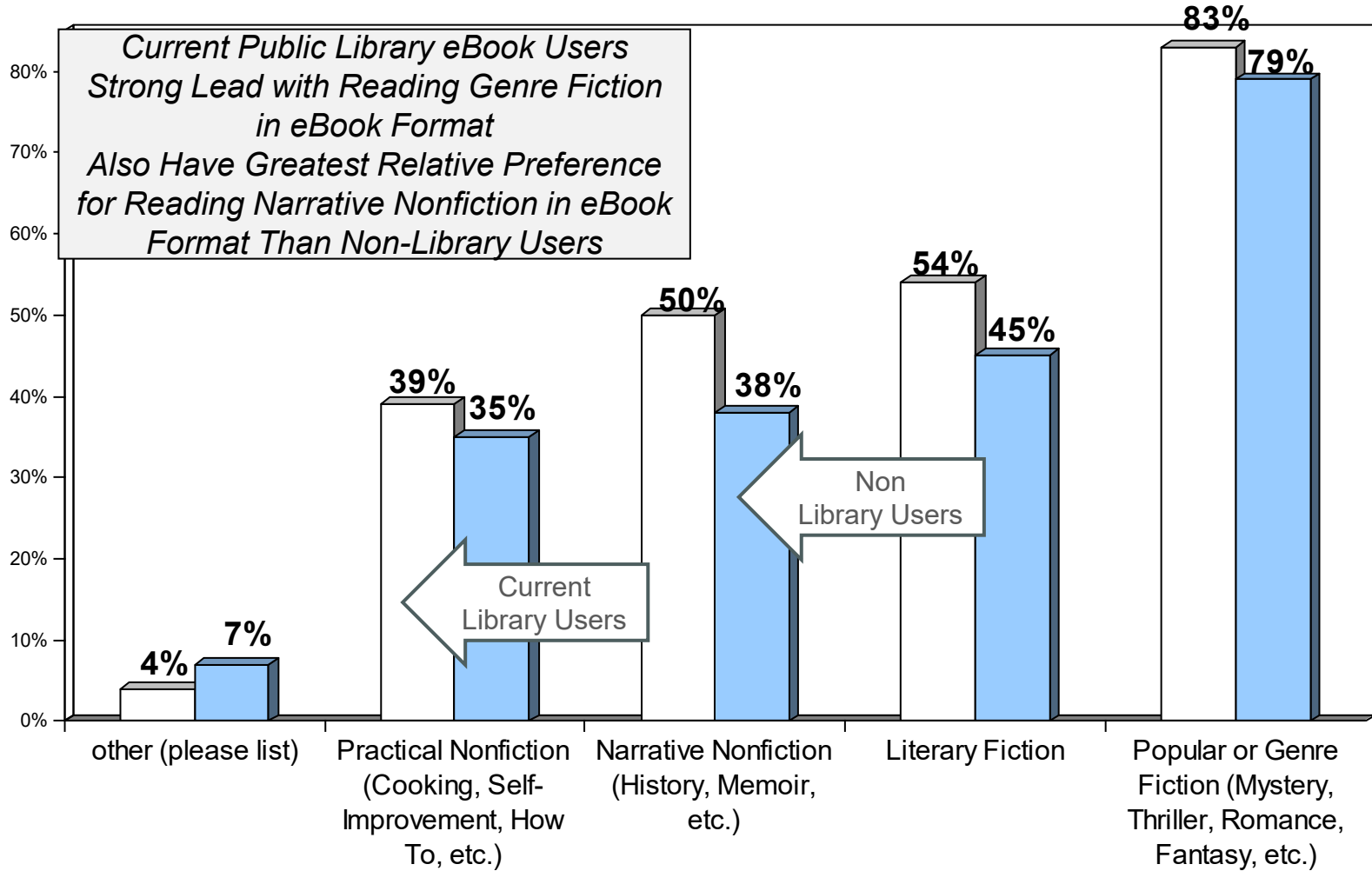


Current Public Library Users  
14% More Likely to Read in  
eBook Format

*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)



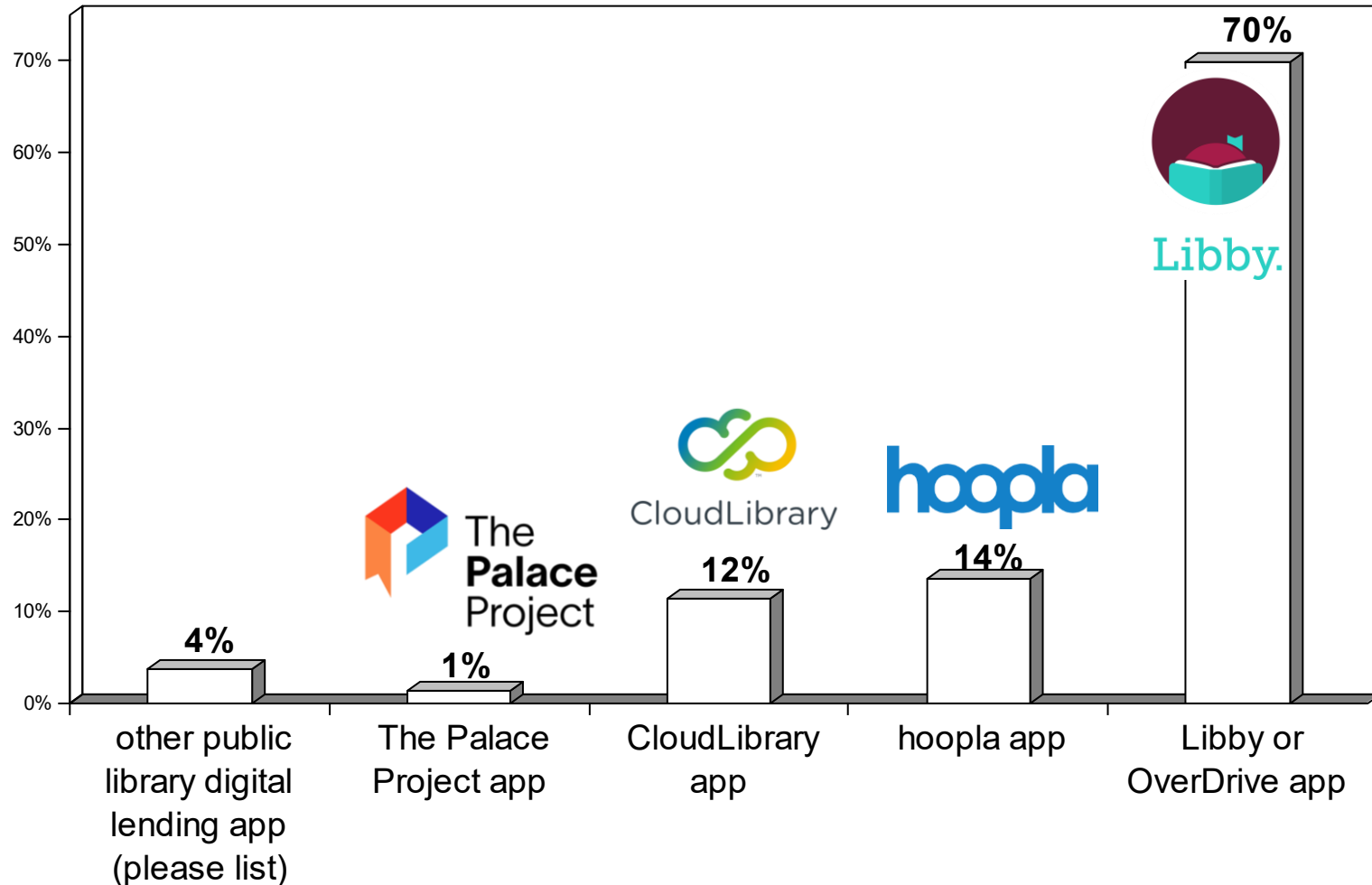
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*Digital Library Lending Platforms*  
*Borrowing Unit Share*

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

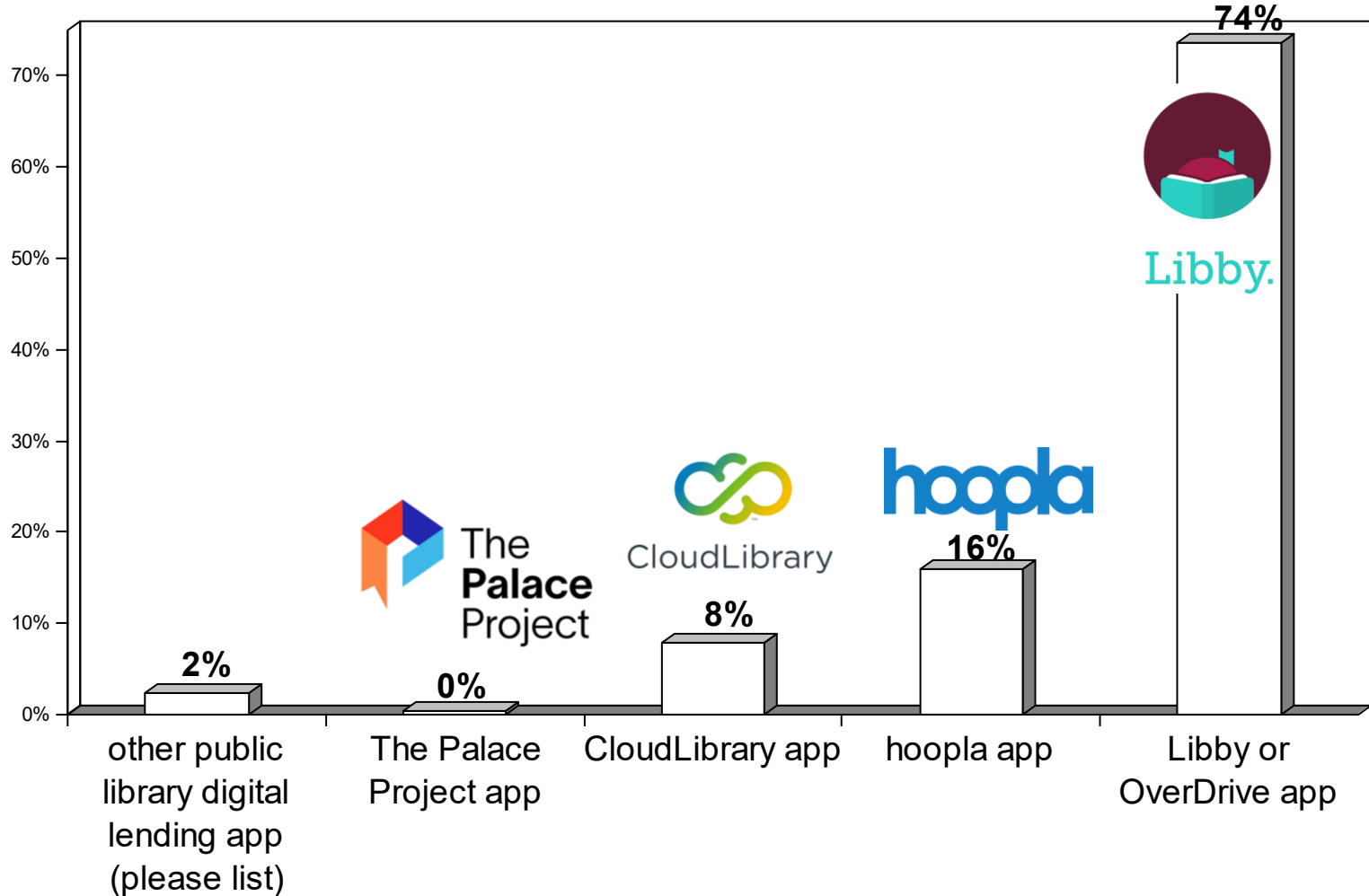
*How many eBooks did you borrow through the public library app(s) you used in the last month? (all that apply)*



*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.*