



Public Libraries 2020: Netloan Customer Survey Results

January 2021

lorensbergs

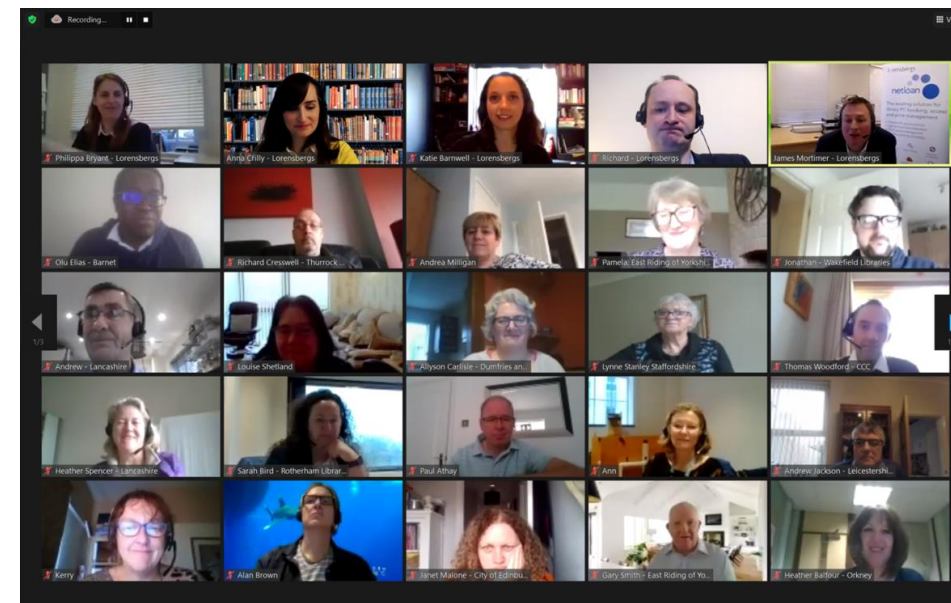


About the netloan customer survey



Each year, Lorensbergs carries out research to explore how library needs are changing and hear our customers' plans for their services in the year ahead. The 2020 survey was circulated to all netloan library customers. Over 80 public library authorities took part.

The survey findings are discussed and explored further during annual netloan user groups. In November 2020, these took place online for the first time, in response to Covid-19.



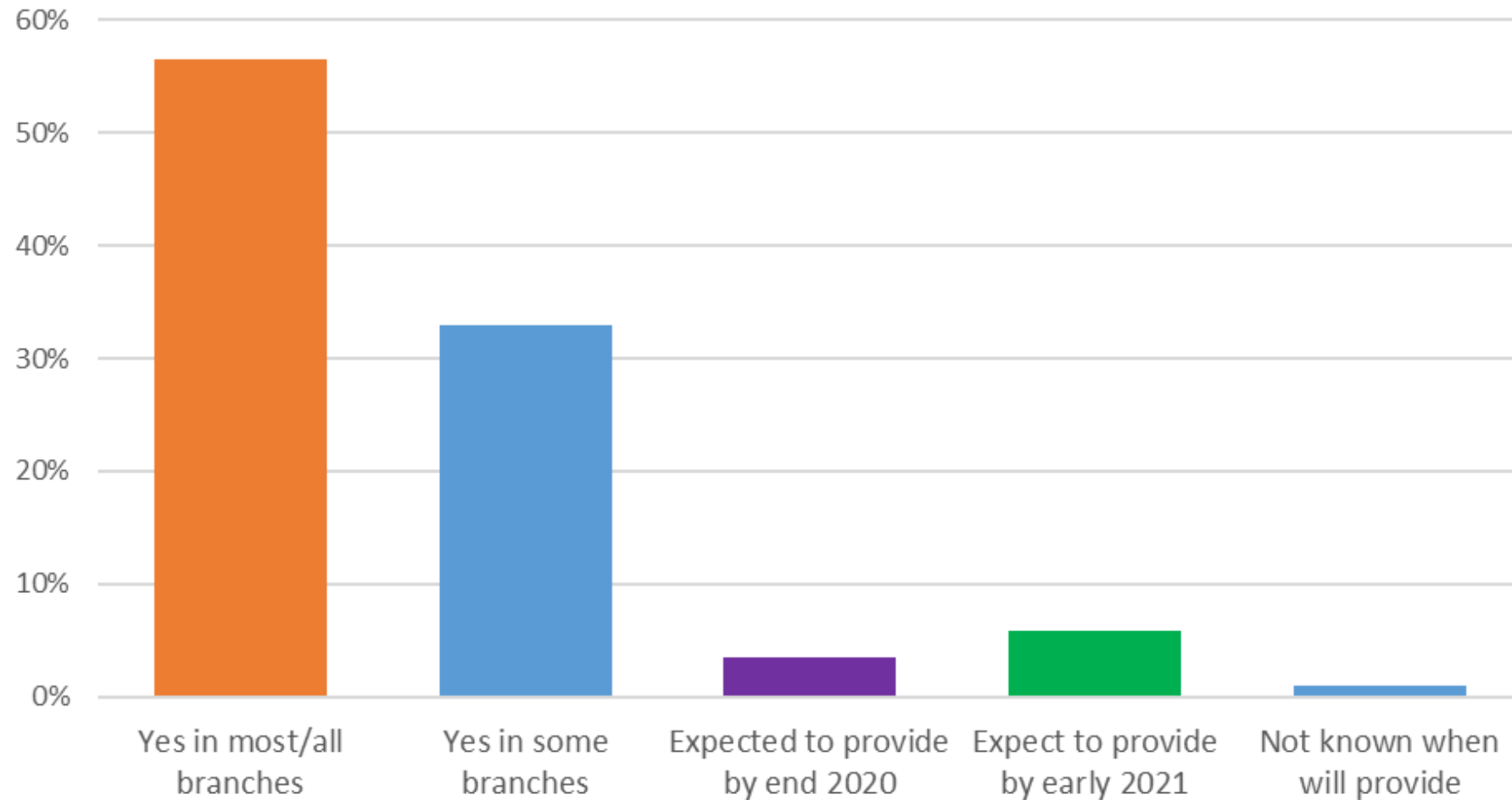
The netloan portfolio of library solutions

Lorensbergs works closely with libraries to improve access to services and resources, via 24/7 online bookings. Our market-leading solution, **netloan** provides a comprehensive session management system for greater control and accessibility to library PCs and Wi-Fi, together with self-service print payment and release. A Wi-Fi print solution is also available, giving library users the opportunity to print from their smartphones, tablets and laptops.

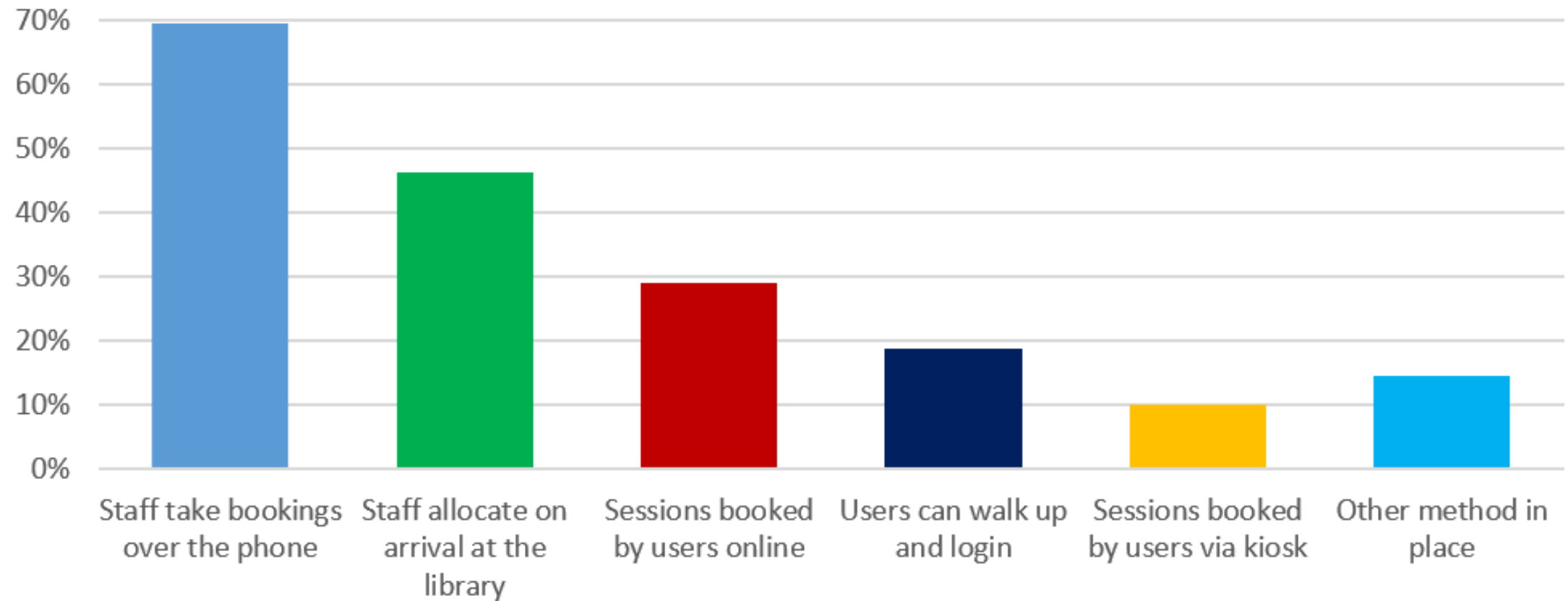
Key findings

- **90%** of library authorities provided some PC access in the second half of 2020
- User and staff safety is of top importance in managing how PC access is enabled
- Finding jobs, obtaining benefits and government services are users' most frequently desired outcomes from library PC use. CVs are the most commonly printed items
- Using email and printing services are in the top 4 activities when using library PCs
- Libraries are overcoming challenges to safely support users with digital skills through the pandemic – nearly **40%** have been helping users directly with using library PCs and nearly **80%** have offered some form of digital skills support
- Libraries have adapted services and continue to enforce safety rules despite **70%** having to manage with fewer staff at this time
- **100%** of respondents consider library PC access for jobseekers important for supporting economic recovery post-Covid. **80%** say it's essential. Libraries' digital literacy support, job clubs, co-working space and Wi-Fi also figured highly for aiding economic recovery
- Greatest concerns for the future involve funding pressures and the ability to restore full services, as well as how to regain footfall following users' caution and possible changes in habit. However, **40%** of respondents have identified some positive outcomes from 2020 challenges

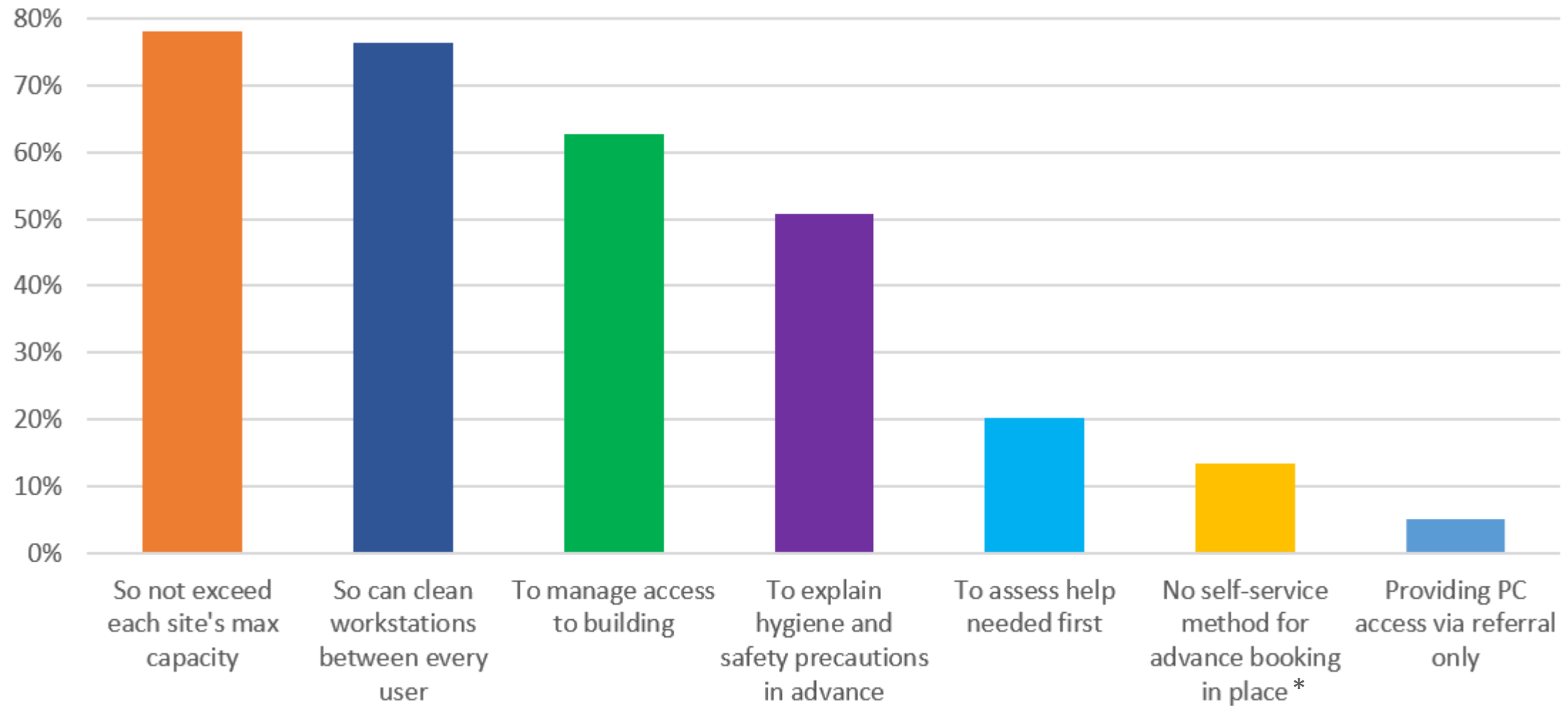
Library authorities providing PC access since initial 2020 lockdown ended



How has PC access been managed?



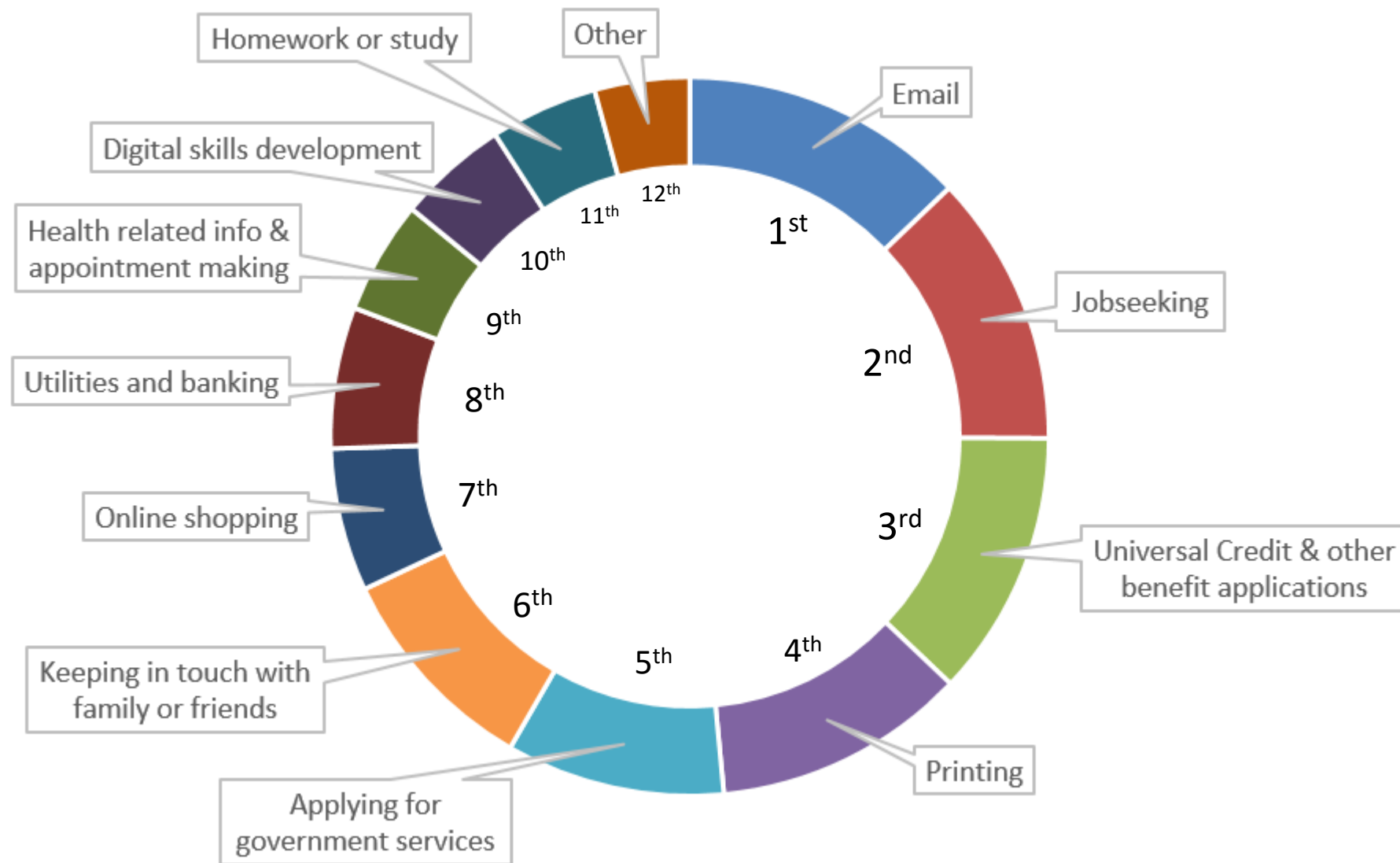
Why is so much PC access in libraries currently managed via staff?



* N.B. Majority of netloan customers usually enable online advance booking feature

What are library PCs being used for?

- Finding jobs and applying for benefits and government services are among the top reasons for library PC use
- Keeping in touch with family or friends has been a significant reason for use during the pandemic, helping to reduce social isolation and supporting mental health
- Use of both email and printing support the top reasons for PC use and other tasks



What are library PCs being used for?



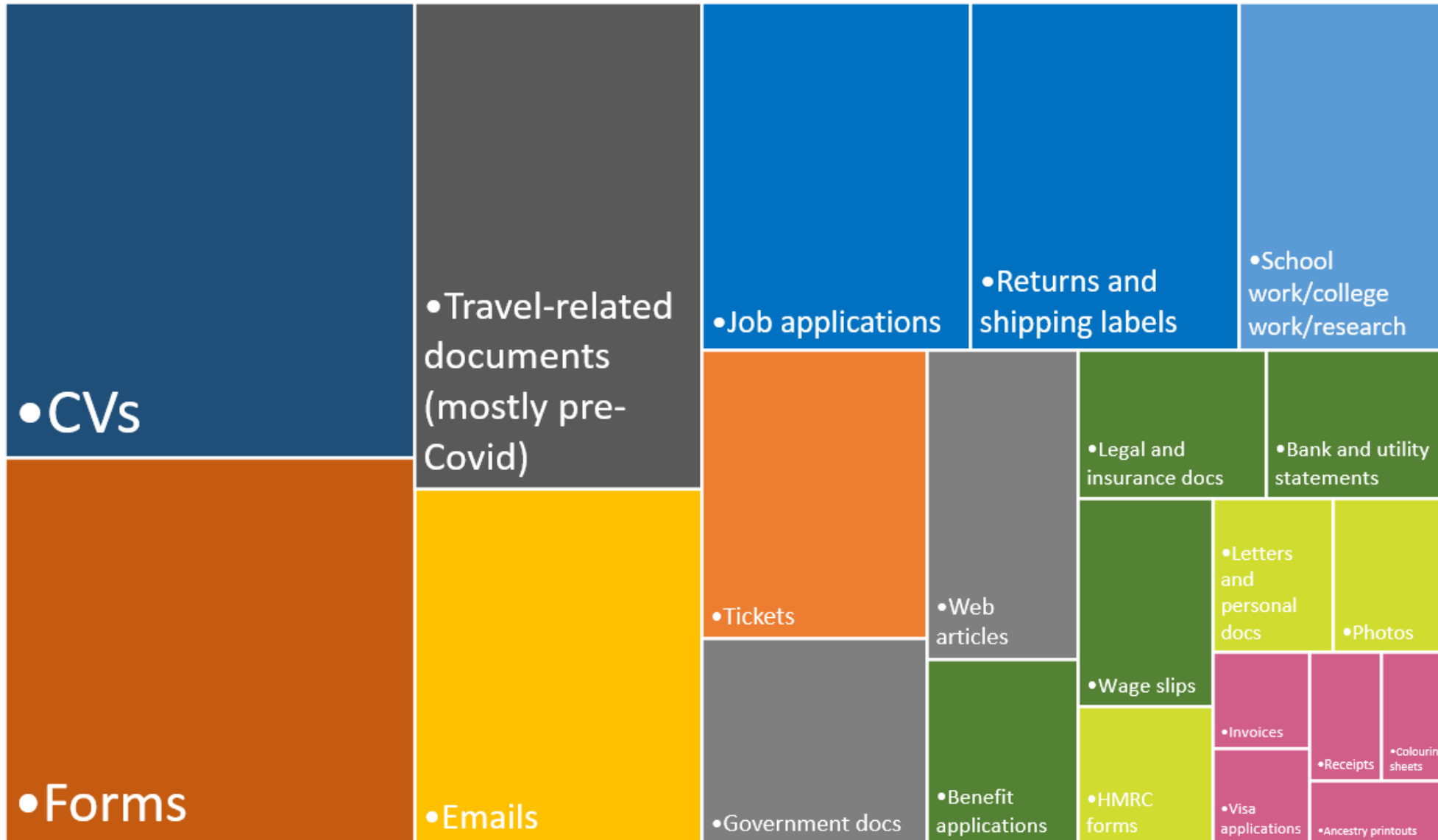
“Anecdotally we know that people who have been keenest to get back onto the computers and most affected by our closures were job seekers and those needing to claim Universal Credit. As well as those, people wanting to stay in touch with family and friends and paying bills and shopping online for the best deals have been big drivers for people wanting to come back in. Universal Credit and job seekers access has been the driver for the council to allow us to remain open for computer access in this latest lockdown, especially as the Job Centre has closed for computer access.”

“We have actively discouraged people from just general browsing during the second national lockdown period to allow people to complete specific tasks they can't complete at home.”

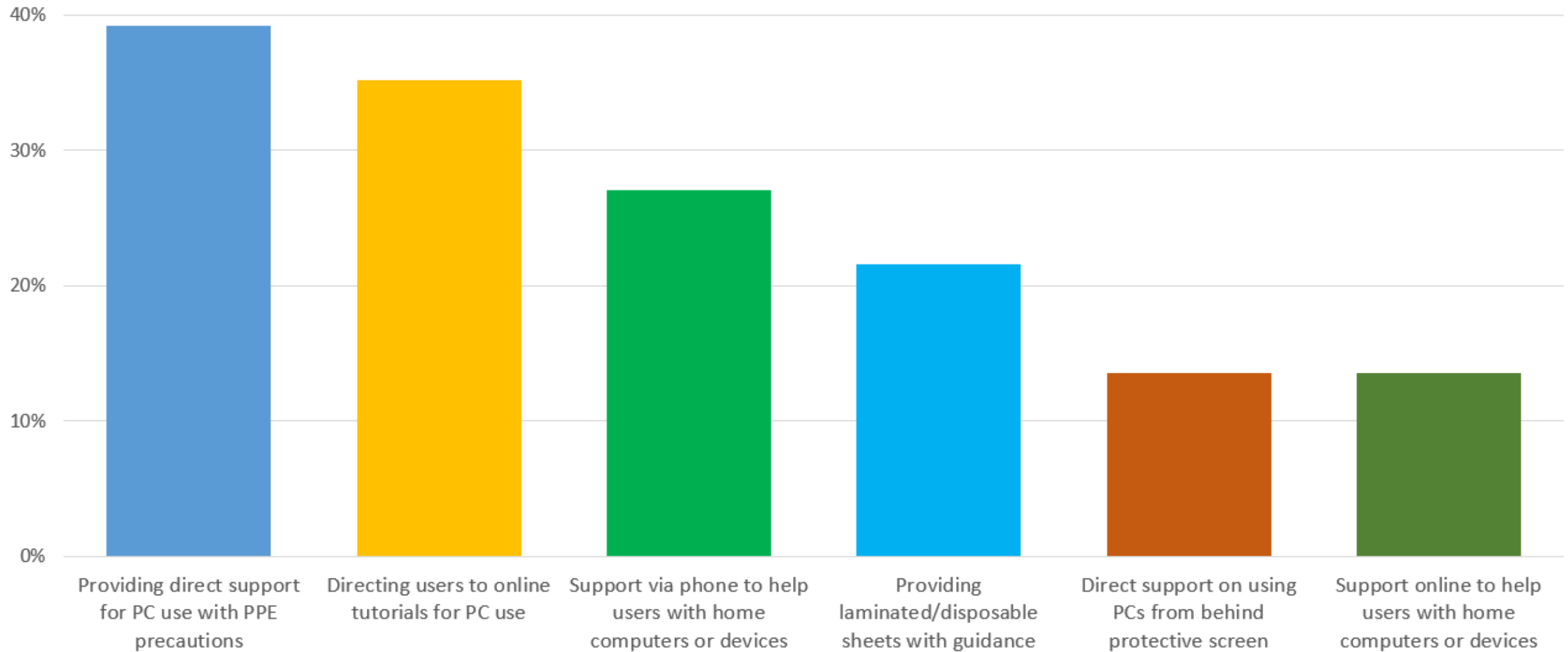
“Don't know what customers are using PCs for but on booking they are told PC use is only for essential needs.”

“Difficult to know what our customers are using the computers for, unless they are printing.”

What do users typically print in libraries?



How libraries are providing digital skills support



Provision of digital skills support



- Nearly 40% of libraries continue to provide direct help to users, although safety and caution remain paramount, limiting the extent of help provided:

“Only providing very minimal computer help and doing so at a distance wearing PPE.”

“Staff can offer verbal assistance from a safe distance for simple things like how to print an email or scan a document with a desktop scanner.”

- Practice may diverge from official policy, as users continue to seek the support of library staff :

“Our default policy since re-opening has been that staff don’t assist PC or Wi-Fi users for reasons of staff safety. However the reality has been we have been offering socially distanced assistance on occasions.”

- Libraries are aiming to be cautious and sensitive to staff safety when offering help:

“We are keeping this to an absolute minimum and it is entirely up to each staff member whether or not they are comfortable with this.”

“Masks, hand sanitation, aprons, social distancing as much as possible.”

Provision of digital skills support (cont.)



- Problem solving and pragmatic approaches are being taken to deliver support:

“We are not sitting with users or running IT events at present. We have an HTML page that pops up when users go to the Internet; the page features useful sites including online learning.”

“We are investigating installing protective screens around some PCs, and laser pointers to be able to provide more direct support.”

“We have marked areas round the pcs and staff stand outside this box and assist verbally or if the user needs significant help then the staff member uses the pc and the user stands outside the box and explains what they need doing. This avoids close contact and sharing of the pc.”

- Multi-channel support is on offer, going beyond the library building to users at home:

“We currently help users when visiting the library, our digital team provides digital skills and service support by email, phone and we have just started to offer online support.”

“We offer a dedicated phone support line and email support with online ebook/eaudio services, online catalogue e.g. placing holds.”

Netloan changes made by libraries in response to Covid

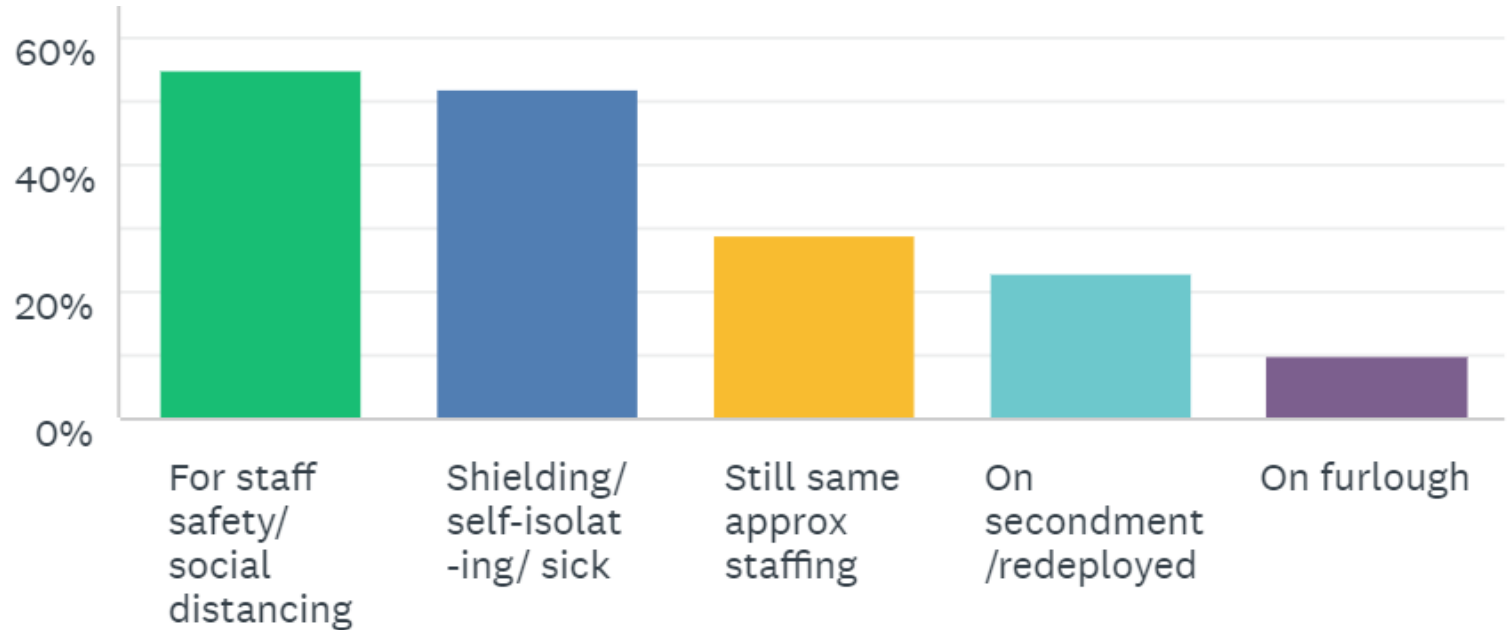


- **70%** of libraries have adjusted their standard PC session length – sessions are shorter to accommodate cleaning schedules and manage capacity of buildings
- **10%** more libraries have recently published netloan online for advance PC bookings (majority of customers already provide this)
- A third are using **Reservation timepads** to manage cleaning between user sessions
- Nearly a third have edited their PC session login or logout messages since reopening

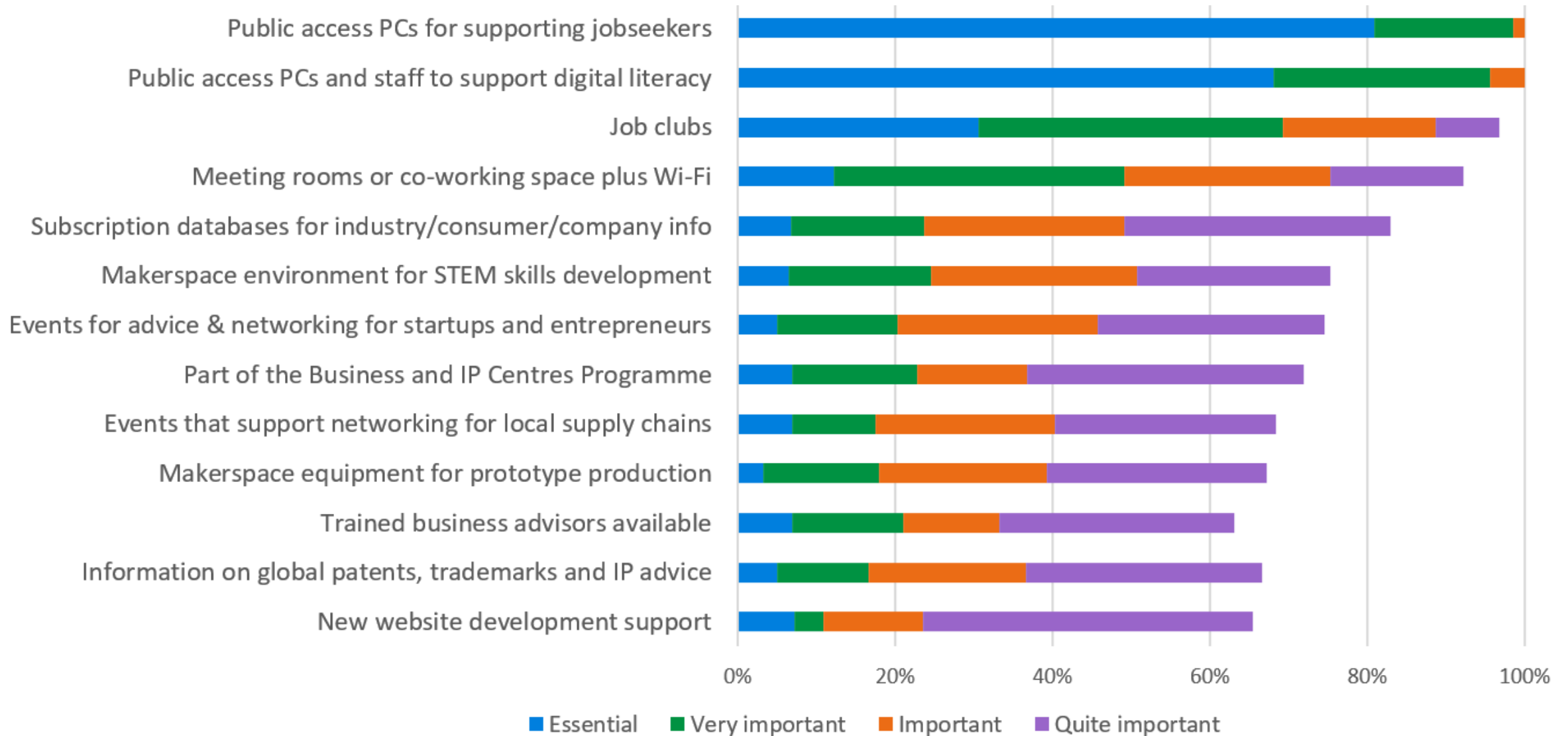
Most libraries are needing to manage with fewer staff



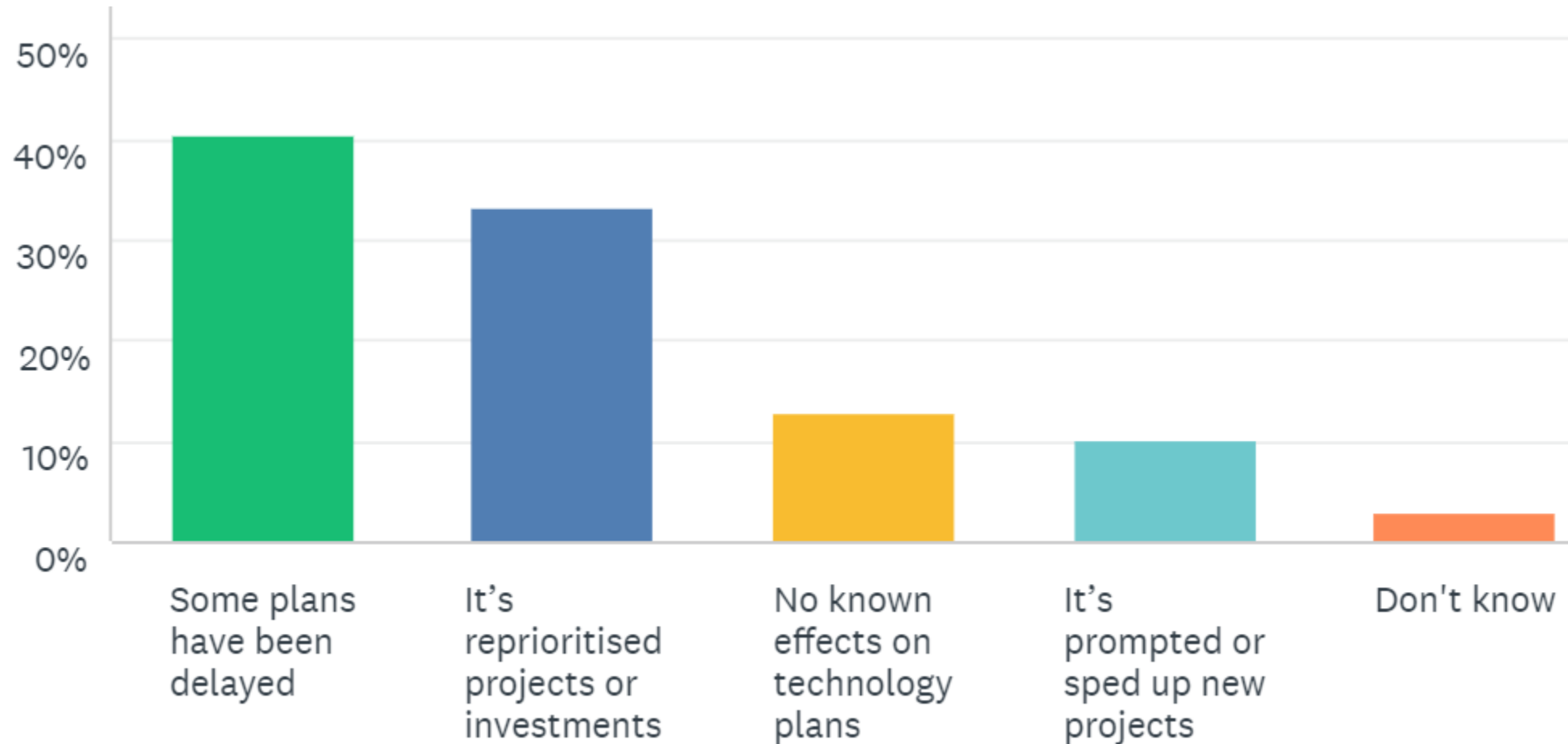
- Where libraries are open, more staff are needed to adhere to health and safety requirements, e.g. for door control
- Where libraries are closed for general access, staff may still be stretched running click and collect services or offering online support and services
- Digital-help volunteers remain in place in under 10% of cases, although some are being used for help online or by phone
- Although no redundancies were indicated in these results, recruitment is often on hold, and for some, voluntary release or restructuring is a concern



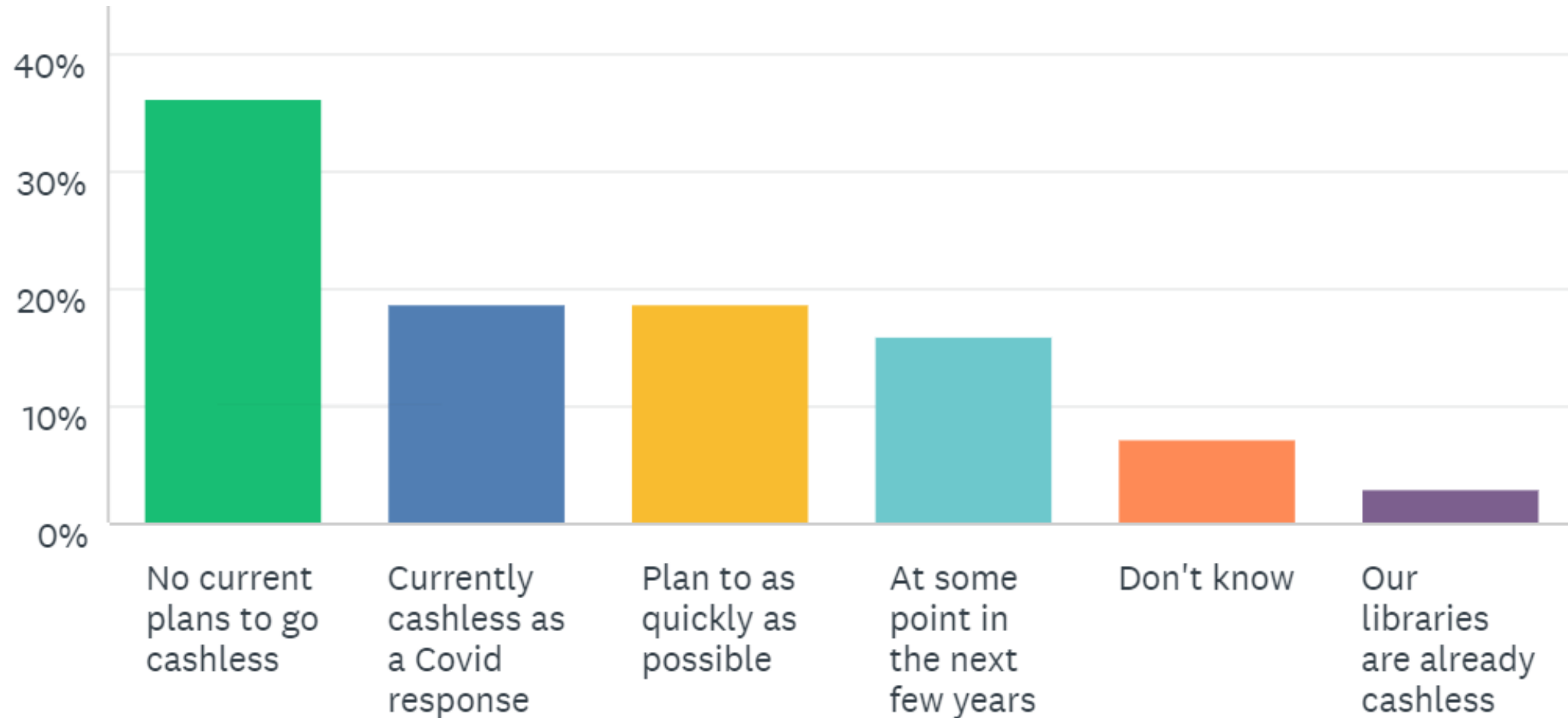
How important are libraries for supporting economic recovery post-Covid?



Effects of pandemic on new technologies investment and roll out in libraries



Library plans for moving to a cashless environment



What were libraries' greatest concerns towards the end of 2020?



Top concerns:

- Footfall is down due to users' safety concerns (despite extensive precautions being taken by libraries)
- Being able to stay open or reopen, as well as restrictions on service availability

Other significant areas of worry:

- Users' wellbeing is being impacted, with social interactions not currently supported inside the library
- Digital exclusion has increased due to less PC access and customers staying away
- Ensuring users' and staff stay safe

Further concerns include the impact of pausing group activities, reduced hours and budget pressures

Looking further ahead what are libraries' greatest concerns?



Two key concerns emerged:

- Funding pressures mainly due to local government budgets are causing worry over the ability to restore much-needed physical services, potential closures and the future of services in general
- If customers will return and how to support this. This is beyond ongoing safety fears, with concerns that users lose their 'library habit' or stick with online service use only

Additional longer term concerns include ensuring a safe environment, fewer staff, users' wellbeing particularly when from vulnerable groups, and digital exclusion.

Positive outcomes identified from 2020



Adaptable working and service development (from online events to click and collect), new skills learnt, more online members and e-resource usage, customer gratitude, team working, resilience, customer outreach and good publicity have all contributed to some positive comments on recent events:

“We do seem to be getting a higher profile in our council. Library staff and their skills were appreciated as very able COVID workers during lockdown. The online library info frequently gets a mention in the council bulletins as has our service between lockdowns.”

“Our online engagement has gone up both in the services we provide like ebooks and also our engagement on social media.”

“Majority of customers have been grateful for the services our libraries have been able to offer and the safety precautions put in place.”

“Very successful delivery and take up of new digital services, such as online events.”

Positive outcomes identified from 2020 (cont.)



“We have created new ways to provide some of our library services which only came around due to lockdown and these have proved a hit with library users.”

“Since reopening we have had more face to face interactions with customers as we are meeting and greeting at the door.”

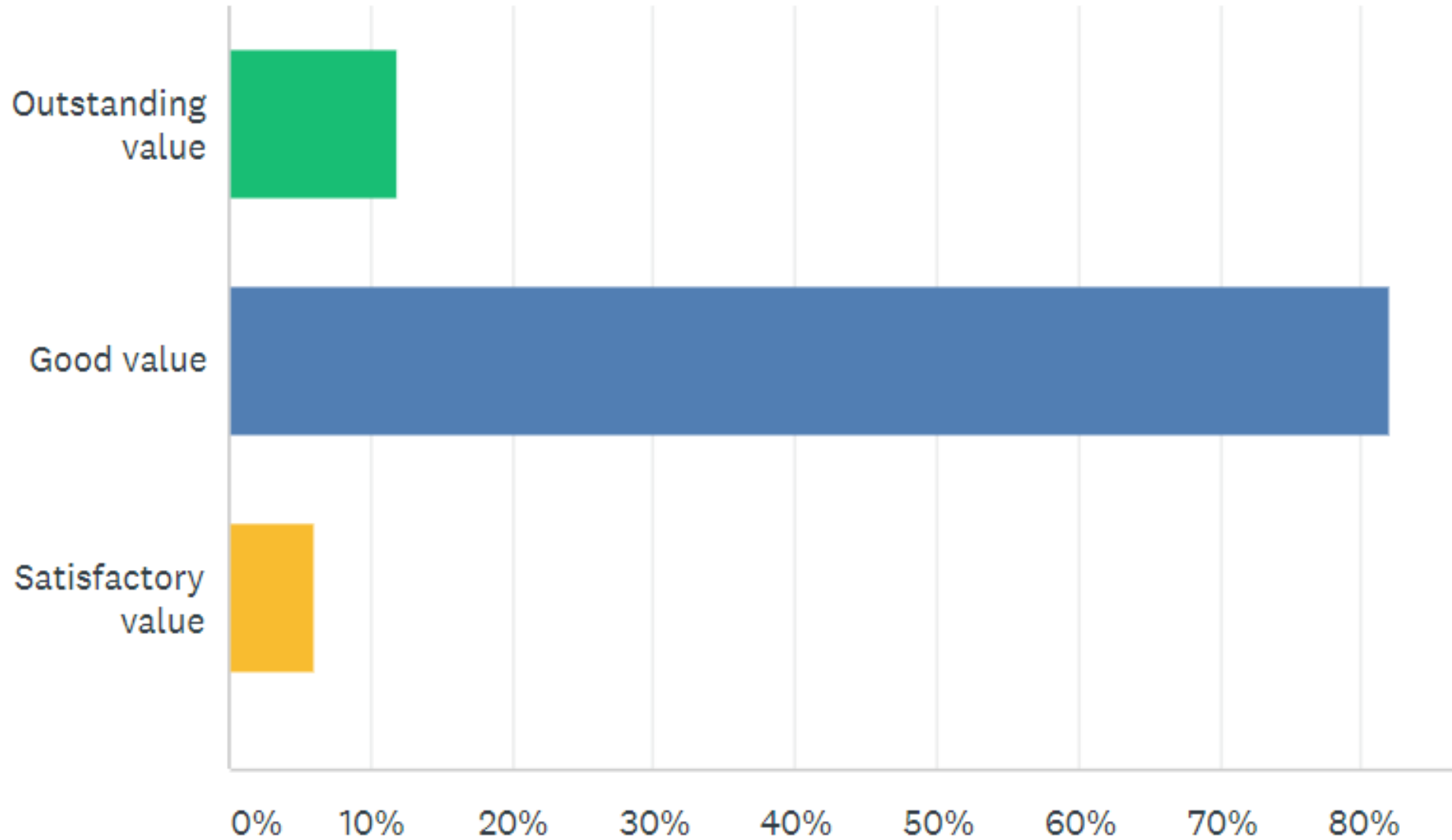
“Users know now about our digital services which they didn't before - we've add 3000+ new users who want to access eBooks.”

“Forced us to do as much as we could remotely or online which has been a learning opportunity.”

“Request and Collect has provided an opportunity to remain engaged with our core services users and introducing them to titles and authors they might not have necessarily chosen personally... We have received plenty of feedback to support this.”

“Team working and support of the staff has been humbling.”

How Lorensbergs service rated



Thank you to all our customers
who participated in this survey

The Lorensbergs Team

Any questions, please contact: enquiries@lorensbergs.co.uk

