



Netloan Public Library Survey 2025

February 2026



lorensbergs

About the annual Netloan public library survey

Lorensbergs carries out annual research to explore how library needs and their use are changing and hear plans for services in the year ahead. The 2025 survey was circulated to our Netloan customer library community with 80 public library authorities taking part.

The early survey findings were discussed and explored in the annual Netloan customer user groups, which took place in November and December 2025. These virtual events were attended by over 120 delegates from over 80 library authorities.

The findings highlight the vital role of libraries and the People's Network of PCs. It includes library plans for the year ahead. User experiences – who they are and what they need – are examined. Finally, funding constraints and answers to addressing these challenges are fully explored.

We hope you find the results both interesting and useful.

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Key findings

- Libraries and their PCs are integral to ensuring inclusivity in a digital-first world: **80%** of library authorities are **very often** or **often** seeing PC users directed to the library by local and central government departments
- Nearly **80%** rated digital skills support provided by libraries as **important** to **essential**
- Nearly **75%** of libraries are seeing job seekers use their PCs **very often** or **often**. Benefit claimants and retirees are the next most frequent users
- Over **95%** of library authorities rate PCs and printing from them as **essential** services, yet over a **third** feel PC funding is inadequate or poor
- Microsoft Office availability is important to PC users for completing tasks: nearly **90%** of libraries provide access. Library budgets are being challenged with steep rises in costs for these software licences
- It's important library PCs stay up to date and secure. Over **40%** have plans to carry out PC refreshes to Windows 11 in 2026. Nearly **50%** are already on this operating system



Key findings – cont'd

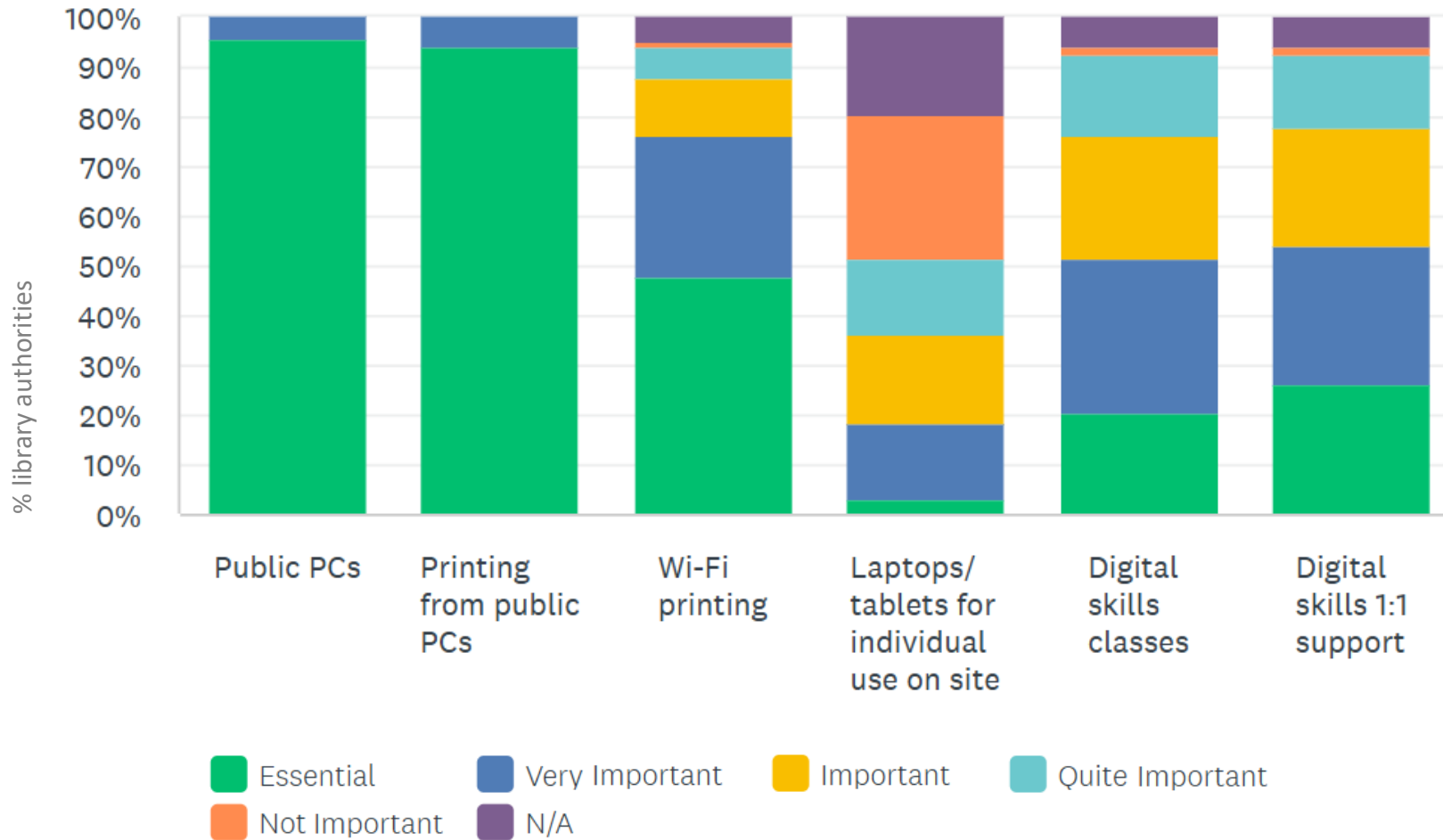
- Library self-service continues to be centred on kiosks; over **70%** are expecting to include them in longer term library planning. Nearly **50%** are using or planning to use an unstaffed model at some sites and for some service hours
- Overall library funding is rated **inadequate** or worse by at least **half** of libraries; it leads to tough choices on resourcing, site closures, and impairs service reliability and innovation. Only a **third** of authorities describe their funding as **adequate** or better
- Over **50%** of libraries rely on additional funding to what's routinely provided by councils, rating these sources as **important** to **essential**. However, bids take time and resource which are often limited
- The top 3 ways libraries feel they can strengthen cases for funding are: promote recognition and understanding of services; highlight how they support wider strategy and other depts' priorities; and demonstrate library value using data and evidence



The People's Network – Review and Year Ahead

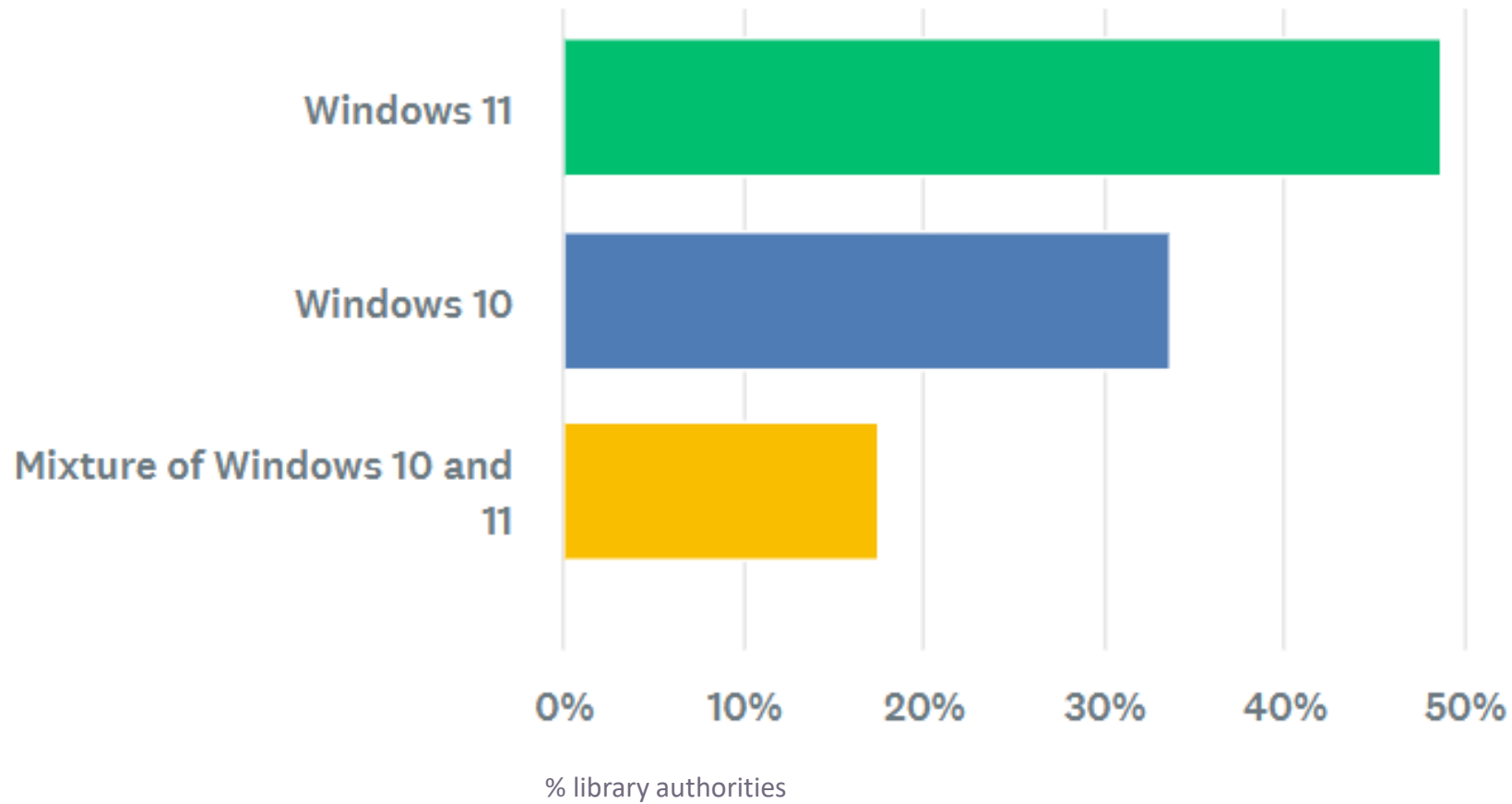


Importance of library resources and services

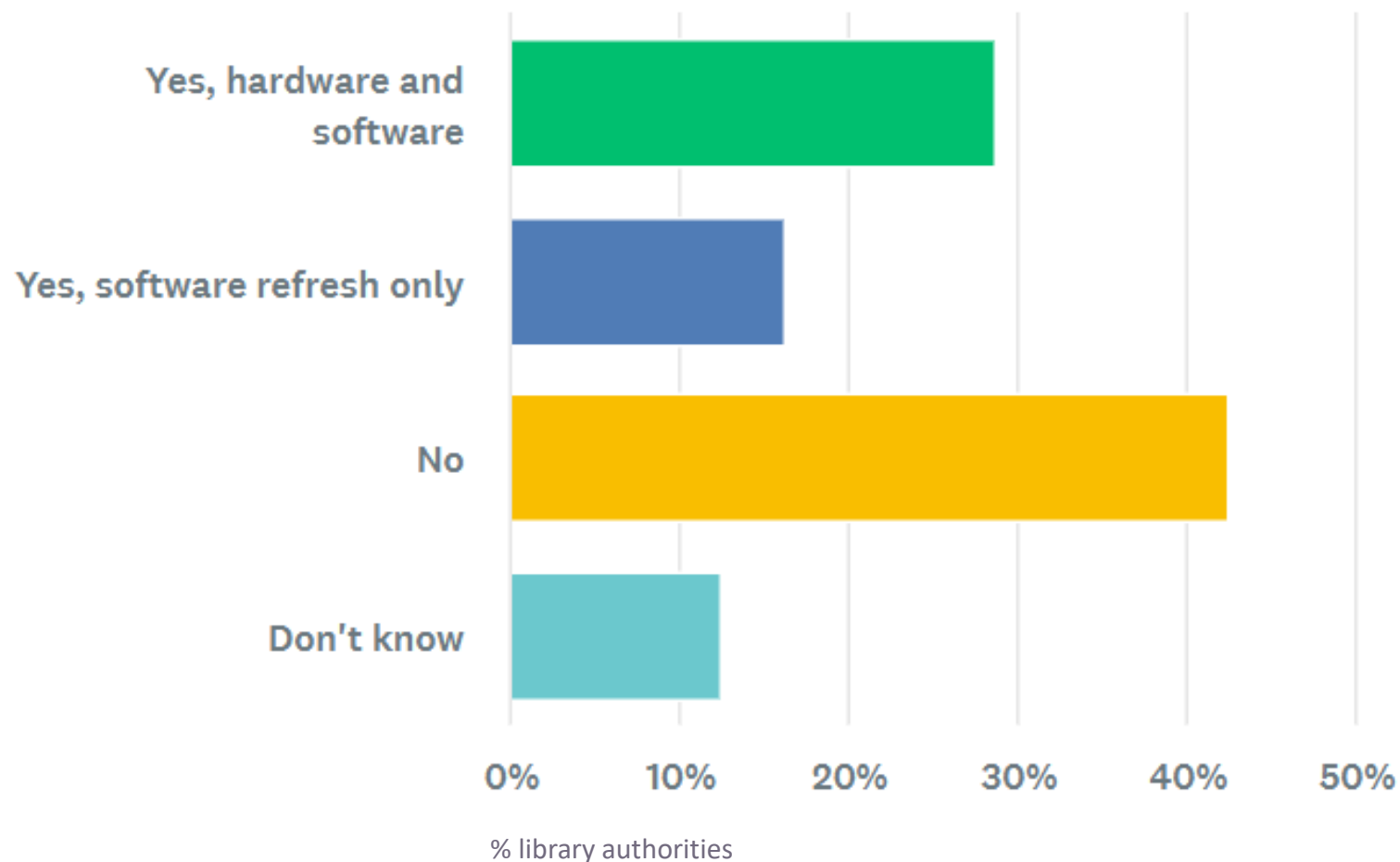


- Over 95% of libraries rated public PCs as an **essential** service
- Printing from PCs was rated **essential** by nearly 95%
- Almost 90% rated Wi-Fi printing as at least **important**; nearly 50% rated it **essential**
- Nearly 80% rated digital skills support, both classes and 1:1 as at least **important**
- Compared to regular PCs, laptops and other devices are considered far less important

People's Network operating systems



PC Refresh plans for 2026



Related comments:

"Moving to Windows 11. Hardware replacement will be required in a lot of cases"

"There is likely to be some changes but it's IT who lead this and until they let us know we have no information"

"Various PCs are being updated to Windows 11. We have a mix of compatible and incompatible; where they are not compatible, we are replacing them"

"We are planning to refresh our larger libraries with high spec machines"

"All public PCs replaced in October 2025"

"Just had all new hardware including printers in the last 12 months"

"[Plans are] for some sites as property is refurbished"

PCs, Printing and Netloan – recent changes and plans

Changes made by libraries in 2025

- New connectors following LMS changes or to upgrade to LCF version
- Introduction of print release from kiosks
- PCs reviewed and moved based on usage and library closures
- Additional volunteer-run libraries added to the Netloan PC and print system
- Netloan Wi-Fi print launches, both pilots and authority-wide rollouts
- New web filtering for public PCs
- Changes in self-service hours
- Windows 10 phased out and replaced with Windows 11
- Removal of Citrix for thin client platform
- New cloud-hosted systems

2026 plans

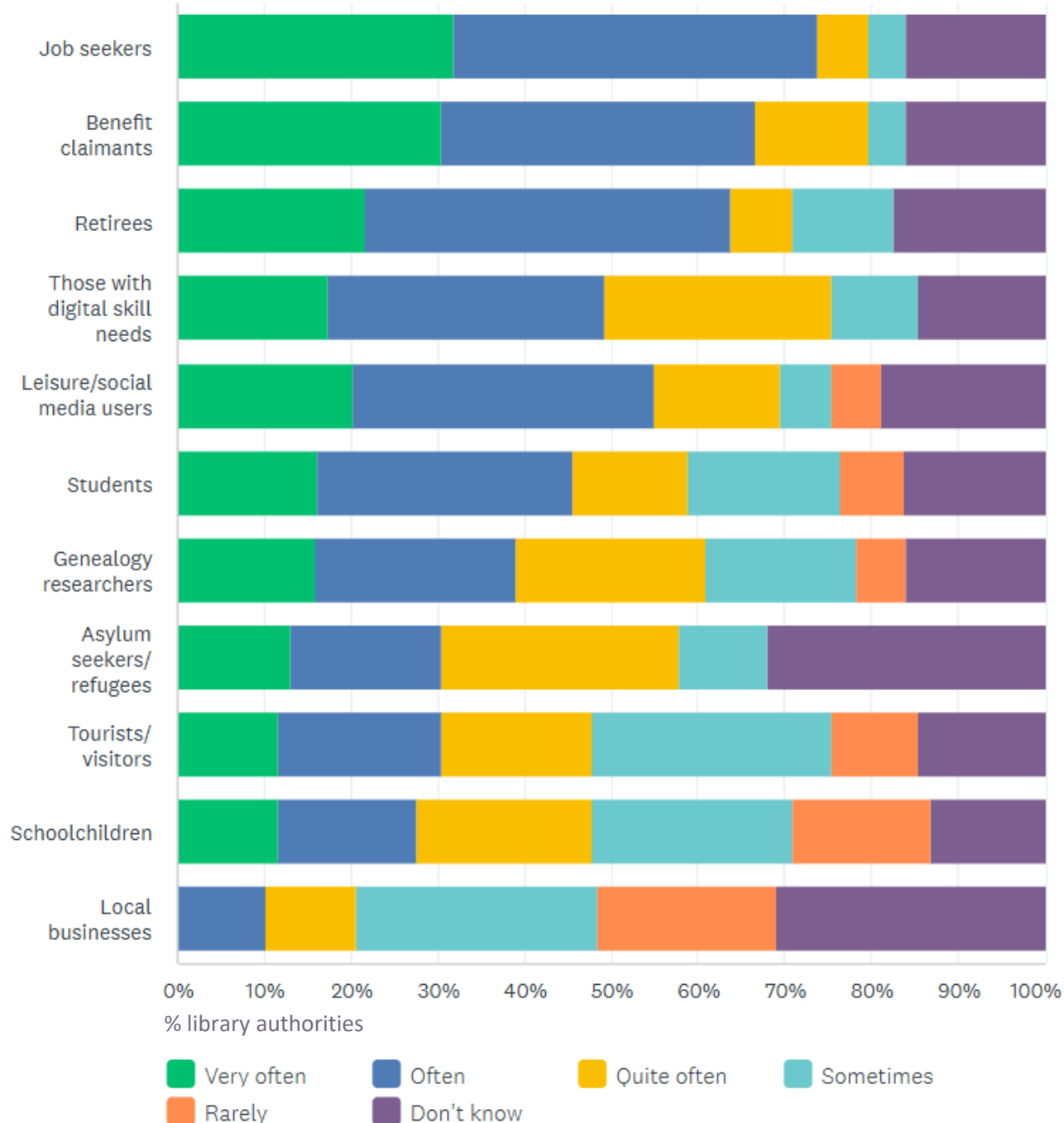
- Increasing PC session time allowance
- Public network server upgrades to Windows 2025
- More PC refreshes with Windows 11
- Re-imaging on Windows 11 clients
- Wi-Fi print expansion
- Self-service printing on kiosks expansion



Library User Experience



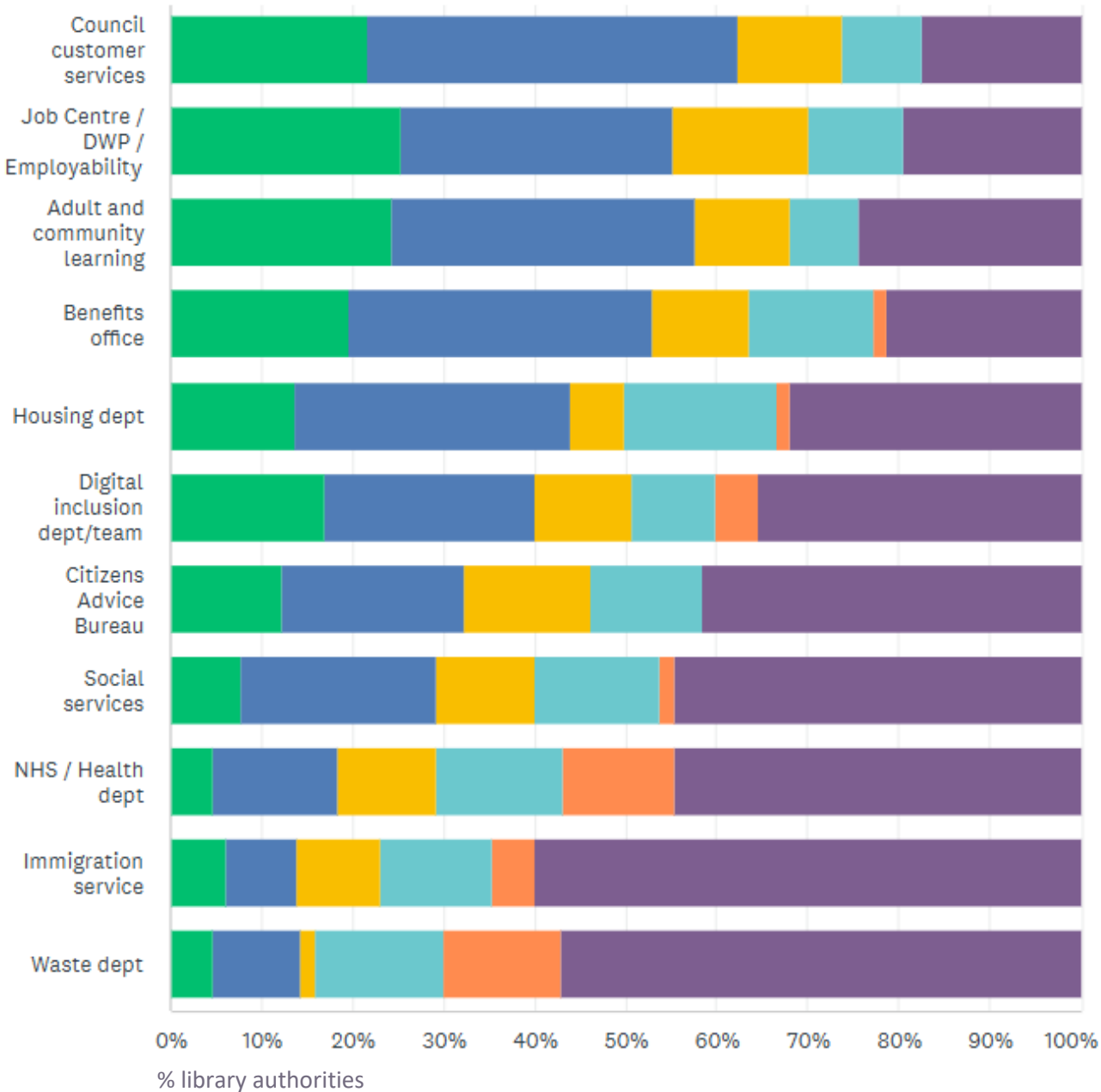
Library PC users – who they are



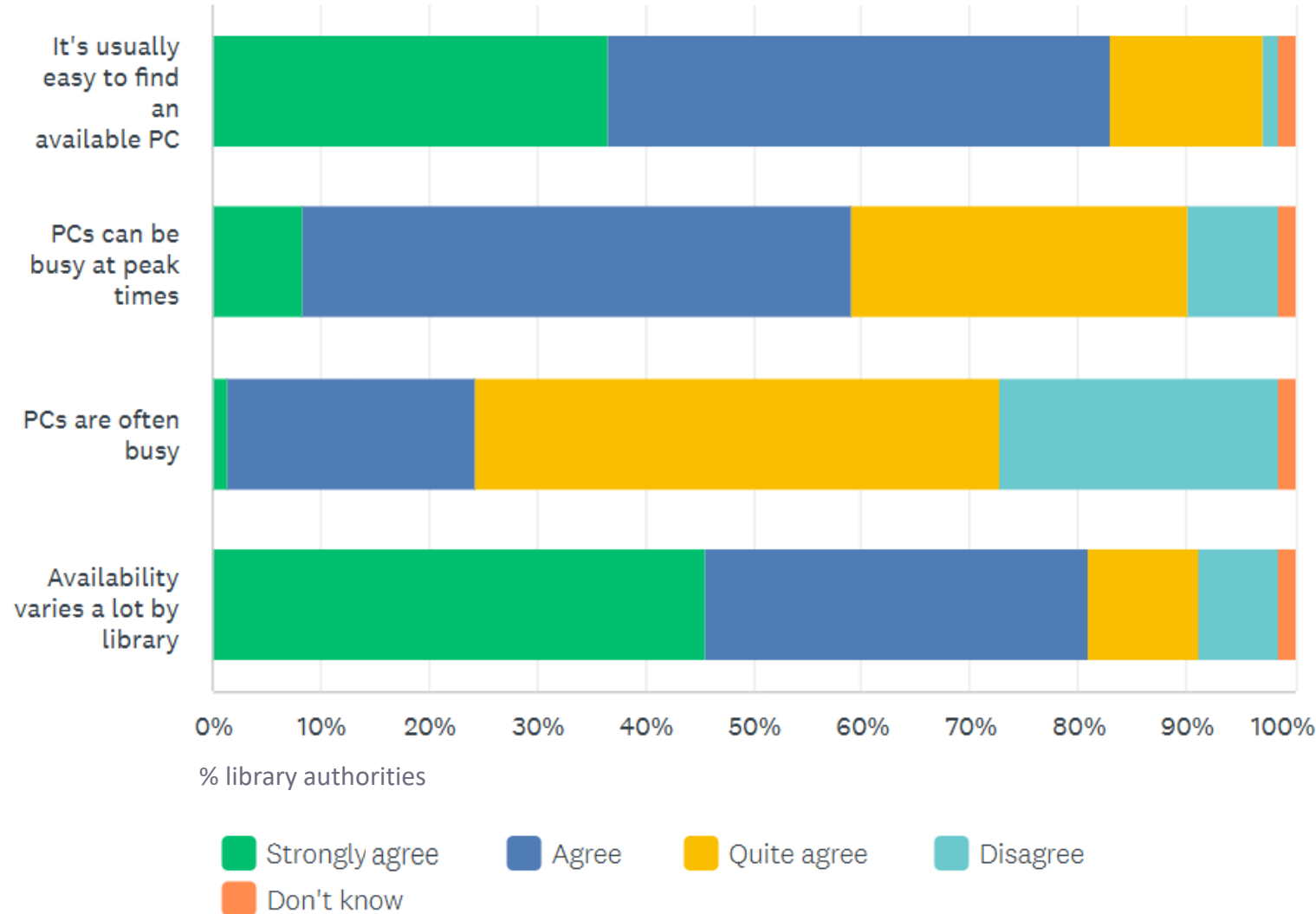
- Nearly 75% of libraries are seeing job seekers use their PCs **very often** or **often**
- Benefit claimants and retirees are the next most frequent users
- Libraries are a popular destination for online leisure time and social media use: 55% often saw PCs used in these ways
- Libraries have potential to grow footfall by publicising PC services to local businesses schoolchildren/families, tourists and visitors
- Nearly 50% are often seeing students in the library, providing local facilities for those attending college or university

Which council depts and organisations are directing users to library PCs?

- As a result of referrals from across these departments and organisations, 80% of library authorities are **often** or **very often** seeing PC users directed to their libraries
- Council customer services are responsible for the most referrals, followed by Job Centres/DWP/Employability depts

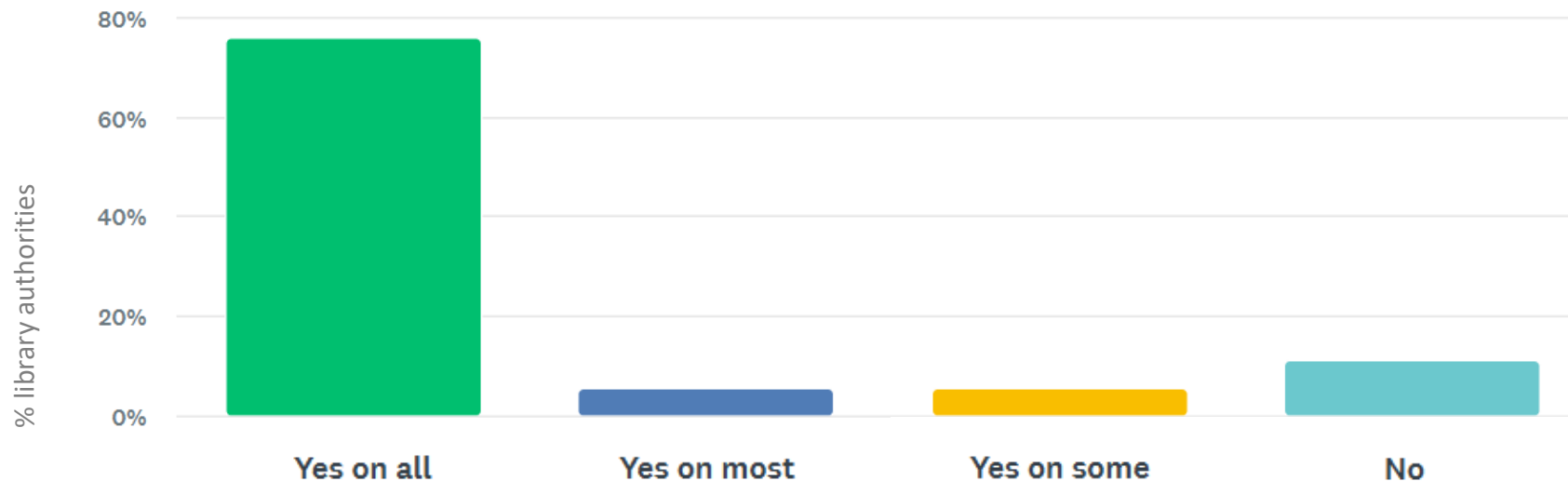


Public PCs – User experience



- The People's Network ensures good access to PCs and internet when users need them
- PCs can be busy at peak times: only **10%** of authorities don't report this
- Nearly a **quarter** reported their PCs as often busy, rising to over **70%** when including those that **quite agree**
- Availability of PCs varies a lot by library site for most authorities

Availability of Microsoft Office on library PCs



Nearly 90% of libraries provide Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc) on their public PCs. Over 75% include it on all PCs. Examples of use:

- CVs
- Job applications
- Letters
- Essay work (school/college)
- Other homework
- Writing articles for publication
- Writing books
- Posters
- Menus
- Admin spreadsheets
- Managing accounts
- Taxes
- Analysis models
- Writing poetry
- Party invitations
- PowerPoint presentation printing
- Word processing generally

Public library budgets are being challenged with rises in Microsoft licence costs. If this is affecting your library, please contact your Netloan account manager for support and advice.

Usage of Microsoft Office on library PCs

- **Microsoft Word** average annual use per library authority

Times used:	8,000 times
Total time used:	2,300 hours
Total running time:	5,000 hours

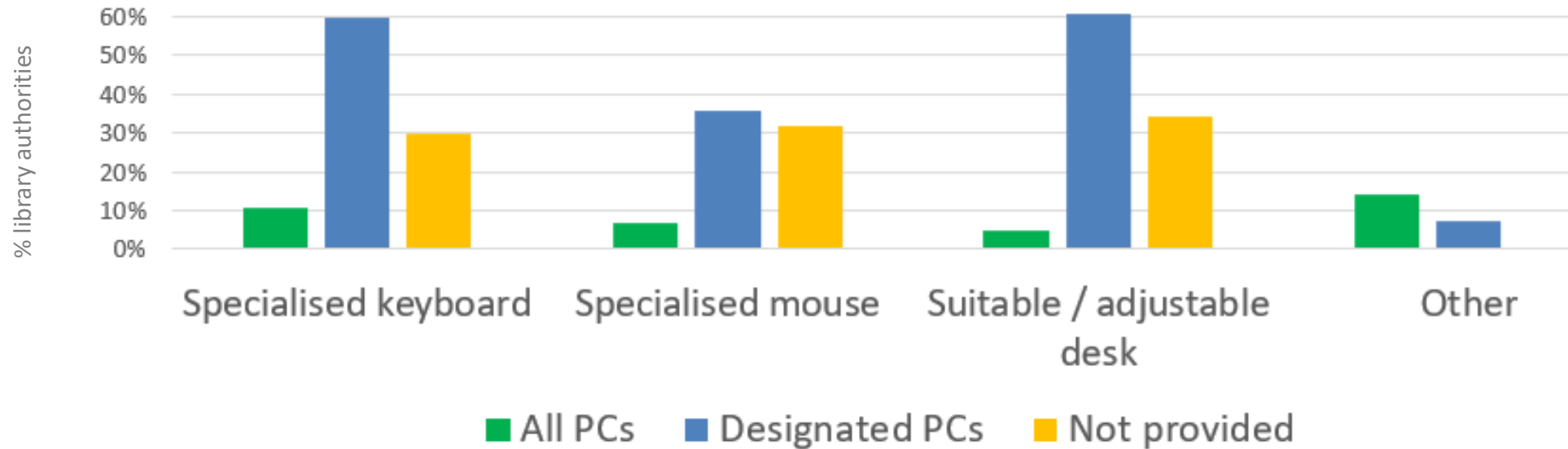
- **Microsoft Excel** average annual use per library authority

Times used:	900 times
Total time used:	300 hours
Total running time:	650 hours

- **Microsoft PowerPoint** average annual use per library authority

Times used:	600 times
Total time used:	170 hours
Total running time:	400 hours

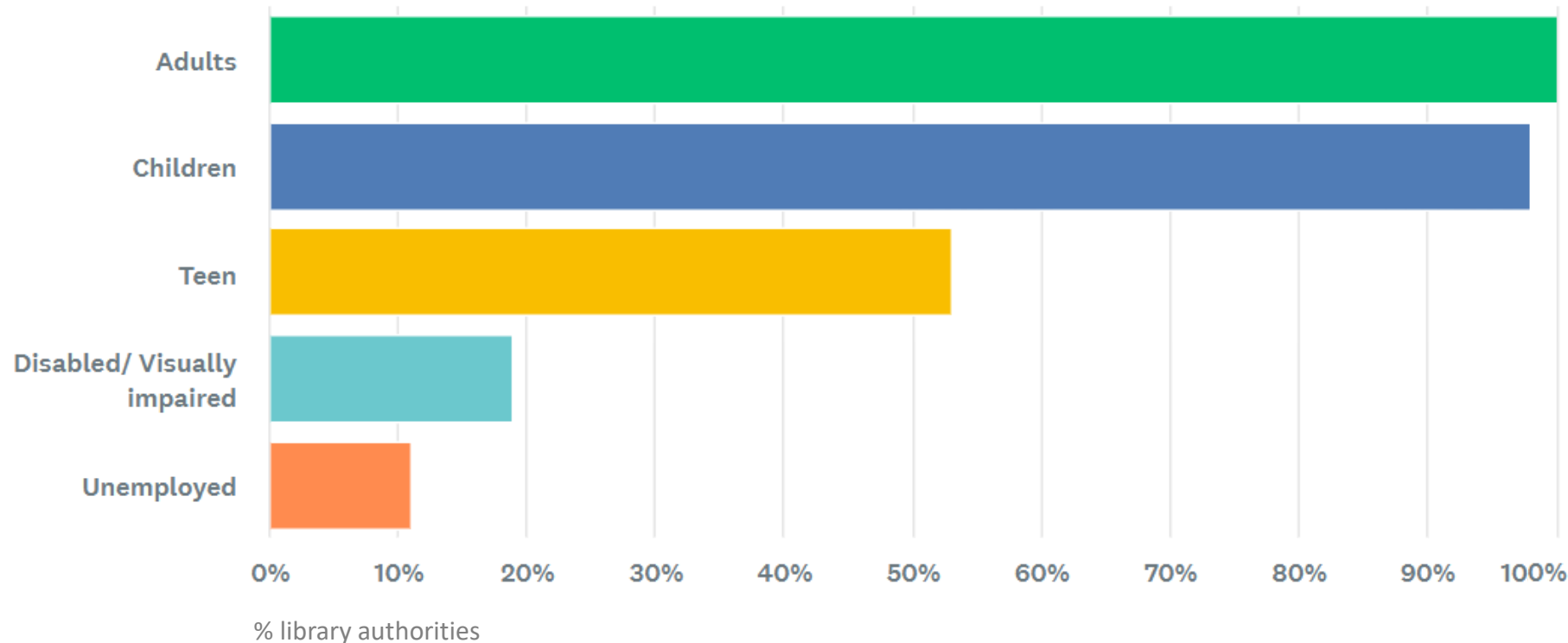
Public PC accessibility options



‘Other’ includes adjustable chairs, dyslexia support, colour filter sheets (placed directly on the screen to assist users), and links on desktops to support customers needing access to inbuilt Windows accessibility features.

Software-based accessibility: Screenreaders, narrators and high contrast mode are provided by the Windows operating system. Some libraries yet to move to Windows 11 are anticipating greater support for users with an improved accessibility package available upon upgrading. Additional packages in use include Dolphin Supernova and NVDA.

Managing access: Netloan user group categories

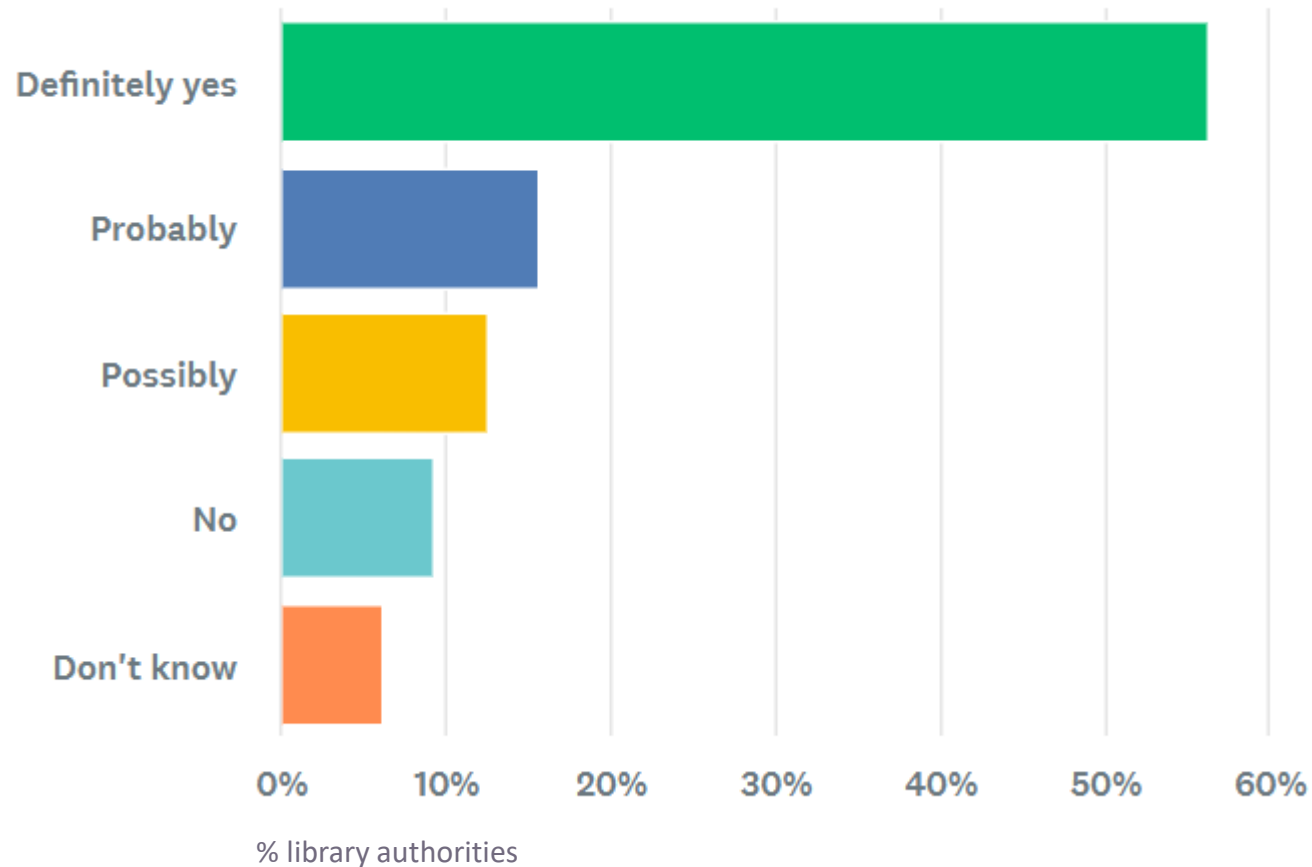


- Practically all libraries categorise PC users by adult or child, which helps distinguish and manage PC access in each area of the library building. Some libraries offer more time to adults than children on PCs
- Some libraries apply additional demographic-based categories to how they manage services. This distinction helps to focus service availability where it's needed most, with longer sessions automatically available to those needing extra time on PCs. In some cases, print prices are set by user group, to allow cheaper printing or free prints allowance

Self-Service Plans

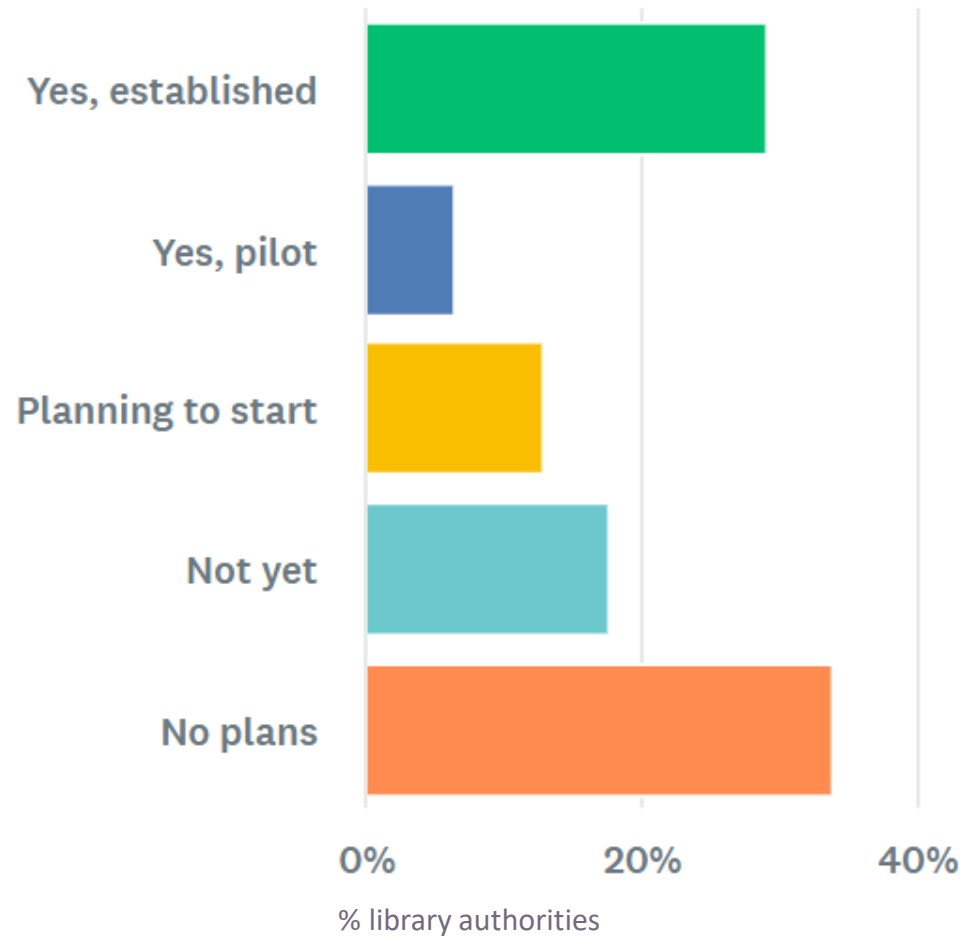


Inclusion of kiosks in library self-service: plans for next 5+ years



- Many libraries have been using RFID kiosks for over 10 years
- Their continued use looks likely, with over **70% definitely or probably** including them in longer term plans
- Kiosks are considered vital due to minimal staff levels, plus the need to support a range of activities in the library
- Kiosks are relied on for book transactions, with many libraries also using them for self-service print payments
- Continuation of kiosks depends on funding availability

Use of unstaffed model in library services

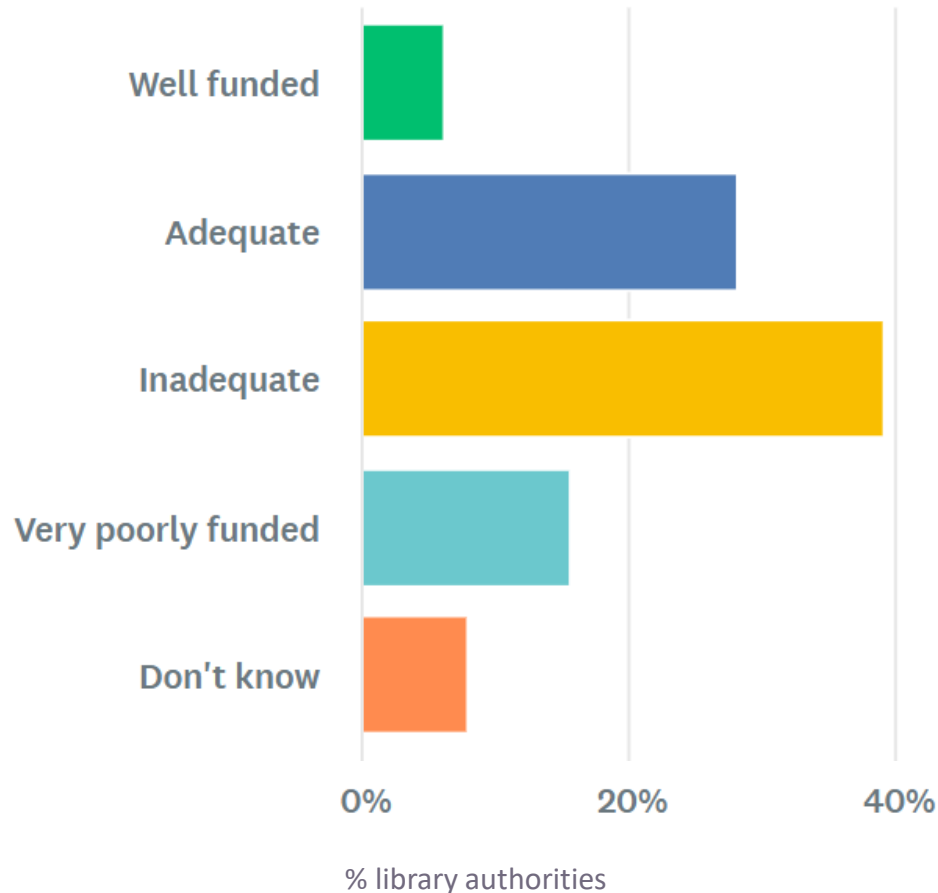


- Nearly 50% are using or planning to use an unstaffed model at some sites
- The unstaffed library model provides access to a selection of library services
- It is often used to extend library opening hours, whilst retaining some staffed hours

Library Funding



Opinions on library funding levels



- Only a **third** of authorities describe their funding as at least **adequate**
- Funding that is rated **inadequate** or worse accounts for at least **half** of libraries
- Some comments in relation to **adequate** funding still suggest financial challenges, for example:

“Only adequate because community managed libraries/volunteers filling gap in provision which would exist without them”

“Our budget has been reduced over the past 8-10 years and therefore have had to adjust and adapt accordingly”

Library funding – comments



Further comments on funding levels include:

“Like most authorities, we have experienced savings and cuts in recent years, which unfortunately led to the closure of 3 libraries within the borough”

“[Funding inadequate] in order for us to offer a reliable, innovative service that will attract new users”

“Very little for infrastructure, fixtures and fittings or electronic resources”

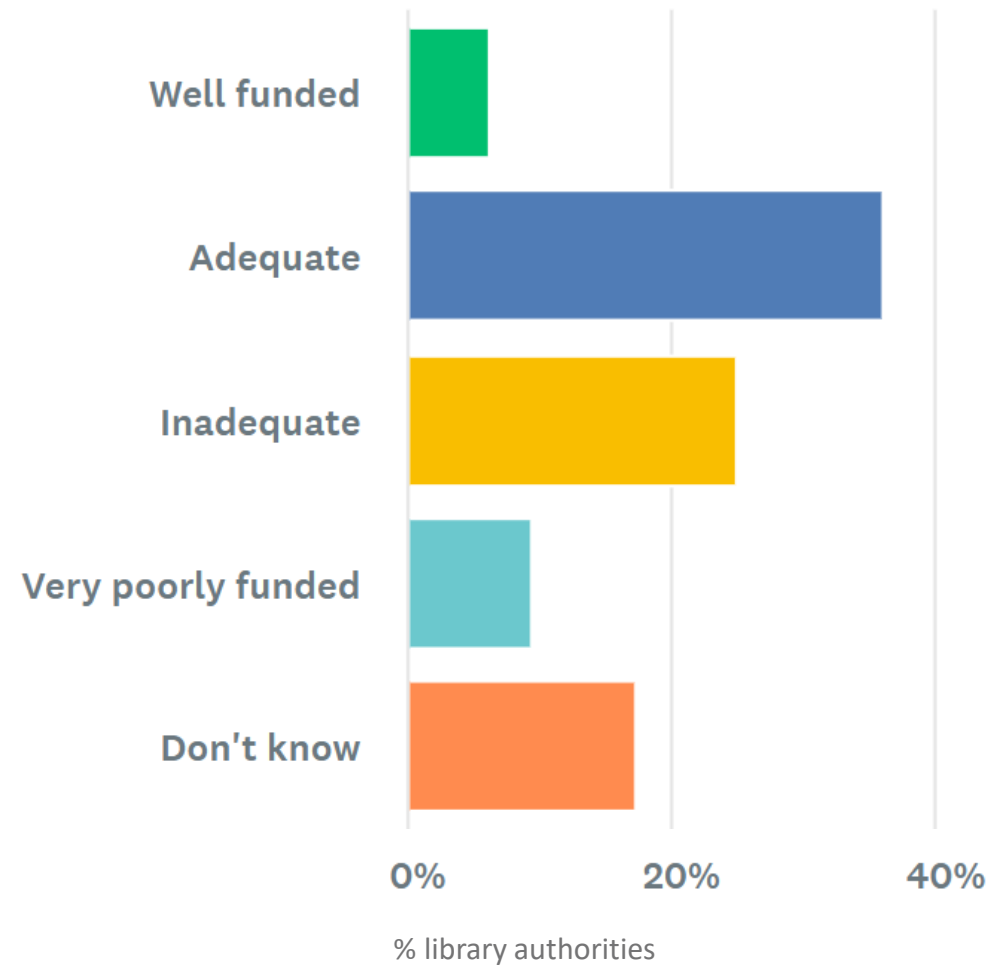
“Like most library authorities, our local authority continues to go through severe budget cuts, which affect library staff and services”

“Whilst the budget is adequate, it has not taken account of rising costs with vendors”

“Inadequate sounds harsh but we do have to make difficult choices regarding the resources we provide so I cannot say it is adequate”

“At the moment in a yearly cycle of cuts to the library service which impinges on resources, staffing, buildings etc.”

People's Network PCs – funding rating



- Funding of PCs is slightly better than overall funding: over **40%** consider it's at least **adequate**
- Over a **third** feel it's **inadequate** or **very poorly funded**

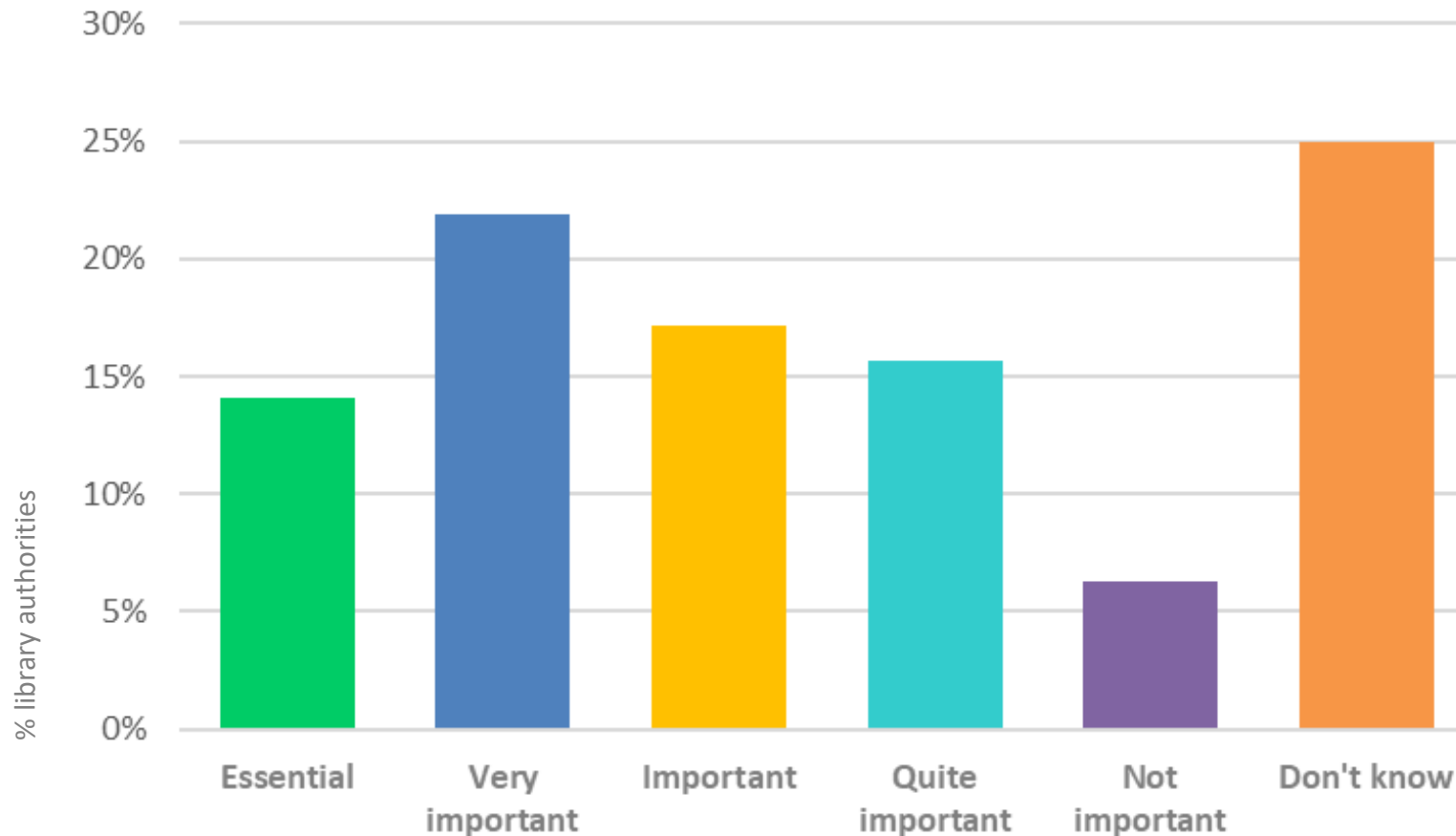
Comments include:

"We have a dedicated core set of highly skilled IT professionals who deal with the maintenance, security and day to day upkeep of the Peoples Network. However since their duties also cover the wider council staff workforce they will at times need us to bear with them in some instances due to staff availability"

"Lack of investment in IT hardware"

"We don't pay for hardware. It's all corporately funded"

Importance of additional funding sources



* Further findings from Netloan customer discussion groups are available [here](#).

Over half of libraries rely on additional funding, rating it **important, very important** or **essential**

Indications are that libraries are successful accessing these funds between **25%** and **60%** of attempts made

What helps:

Being a non-profit/separate from Council; dedicated team for making bids; senior management input *

What hinders:

Lack of time and human resource for making bids for funds; if successful, same constraints impact ability to manage projects

Other issues: grants quite small; good for add-on kit, but not for basic hardware & software; good for new initiatives but not for core offer; is it sustainable to keep accessing additional funding – time it takes and what happens when it stops?

Additional funding sources – comments



"We're a separate organisation from the county council so that enables us to get funding in ways many public library services can't"

"External funding – that is the only way to support service development and new initiatives"

"We do receive a fair amount of project grant money which allows us to refresh sites, acquire technology"

"Fairly successful but often quite small scale grants"

"Ok [success in bidding], but mainly VR, add-on kit, interactive projectors etc. Poor for base kit, software or staff training"

"We do ok for funding bids, but we have a dedicated team to handle these"

"A capacity issue – do not have the human resource to put in bids"

"We have secured some funding to develop services but doesn't affect core offer"

"Senior Management Team have secured funding from the Arts Council and the DCMS for projects spanning many years of the service"

"Some project bids have been successful but the downside is it takes time to put together the bid/application and then time to manage the project. May not always be sustainable. Raises questions about being able to continue providing the service after funding stops"

Library funding – what helps to make a stronger case

	At local government level	At central government level	From other funding sources
Promote recognition and understanding of the library offer	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Highlight how libraries support wider strategy and other depts' priorities	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
Demonstrate library value using data and/or other evidence	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Emphasise critical role and success in meeting specific customer needs	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
Support reform to funding process and/or legislation		✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Ensure library well organised and managed to apply for and win funding	✓✓✓		✓
Expand library role via new initiatives or models	✓✓		

The survey asked what would help each library make a stronger case for funding.

Ideas and opinions have been categorised and quantified in this table to indicate where it is felt efforts should be focused and maintained.

Making a stronger case for funding – further details

Survey participants provided lots of suggestions about ways to make a stronger funding case. These are summarised under the relevant categories in the following slides.

Promote recognition and understanding of the library offer

- Ensure services are fully understood; greater visibility of services offered
- Increase advocacy; case studies on positive impact; national promotional campaign
- Highlight strengths to challenge and disrupt funding cuts e.g. wide role and reach, innovation, reliability, cost-effectiveness of services
- Communicate case to local government senior management, councillors, central government policy makers
- Raise profile through current affairs and events e.g. literacy and National Year of Reading participation; get behind other initiatives lead by sector support organisations
- Collaborate with neighbouring authorities; build and promote a national case
- Encourage the public to speak up for libraries

Highlight how libraries support wider strategy and other depts' priorities

- Emphasise how library is a key part of the wider council offer; importance of library buildings as access points
- Position libraries as critical social infrastructure for community participation, cohesion and individual wellbeing
- Publicise savings made by libraries for other departments e.g. social care
- Assert role of libraries in progressing digital inclusion – vital work which needs to be well funded
- Increase partnership working with council colleagues and third sector
- Garner support for libraries at a national level with reference to economic and political climate e.g. crises involving mental health, cost of living, economic inactivity

Making a stronger case for funding – cont'd

Demonstrate library value using data and/or other evidence

- Calculate worth of libraries to customers and the community
- Link performance and impact of libraries to prioritised outcomes e.g. employability, digital inclusion, health
- Use evidence-based storytelling
- Use comparative data on a regional basis or with similar authorities
- Present evidence of impact of funding received and spent
- Measure the preventative value of libraries – proactive, reducing demand on more expensive reactive services
- Position libraries as the relatively low-cost answer

“Aligning government policy goals and demonstrating national impact”

Emphasise critical role and success in meeting specific customer needs

- Emphasise importance of libraries in areas of deprivation, rural isolation, or requiring regeneration
- Use measurements that reflect needs of the patrons supported
- Highlight how libraries address personal challenges: cost of living, mental health, employability and job opportunities, digital upskilling, lifelong learning

“Area high in SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) so doesn't look good if not funding libraries”

Making a stronger case for funding – cont'd (2)

Support reform to funding process and/or legislation

- Make legislation regarding library services stronger and clearer; emphasise statutory nature of provision
- Halt to commissioning new services that seek to replicate work of libraries: recognise and fund libraries first
- Ringfence funding for libraries
- Stop requiring libraries to bid for essential funds
- Lengthen notice period of bid windows
- Equality of access to funding: smaller services have fewer resources to organise bids

Ensure library is well organised and managed to apply for and win funding

- Partnership working for better awareness of additional funding sources
- Senior management support and involvement in the library funding case
- Joined up approach and vision of council leaders for maximising value of libraries

Expand library role via new initiatives or models

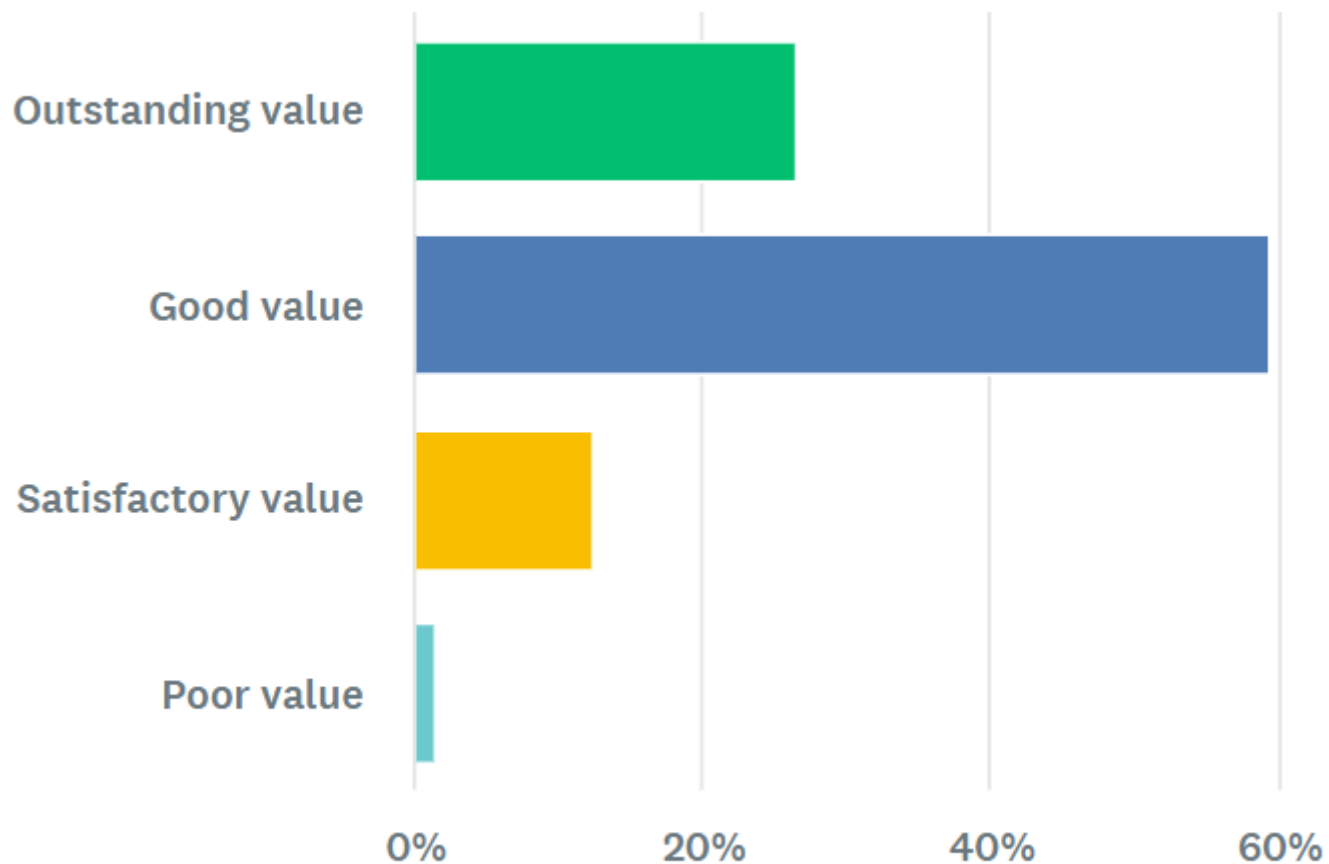
- Move past what's conventional in service delivery
- More integrated Community Hub models of working

“We do a lot for our local authority that's not traditionally library work, so offering new tasks usually helps”

Services from Lorensbergs



Service rating for Lorensbergs



About Lorensbergs

Lorensbergs works closely with libraries to improve access to services and resources.

Our market-leading solution, **Netloan** provides a comprehensive session management system for greater control and accessibility to library PCs, together with self-service print payment and release. The solution integrates Wi-Fi printing capability for a holistic, modern way to use and manage services.

With our position as one of the leading public library suppliers we are motivated and privileged to learn from the experiences of our customer library community. We are pleased to share findings for the benefit of the wider sector and its future.

www.lorensborgs.co.uk

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Thank you to all libraries participating in this survey

The Lorensbergs Team

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

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