

Libraries Omnibus – Initial Findings

1) Background

In December 2009, DCMS commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out research into public library usage. This involved face-to-face surveys with a representative sample of 5000 people aged 15+ ¹ in England. Through Taking Part and CIPFA, we have knowledge about the number of public library users and of visits made, but have been lacking data regarding other aspects of library usage.

This omnibus was therefore designed with two main aims:

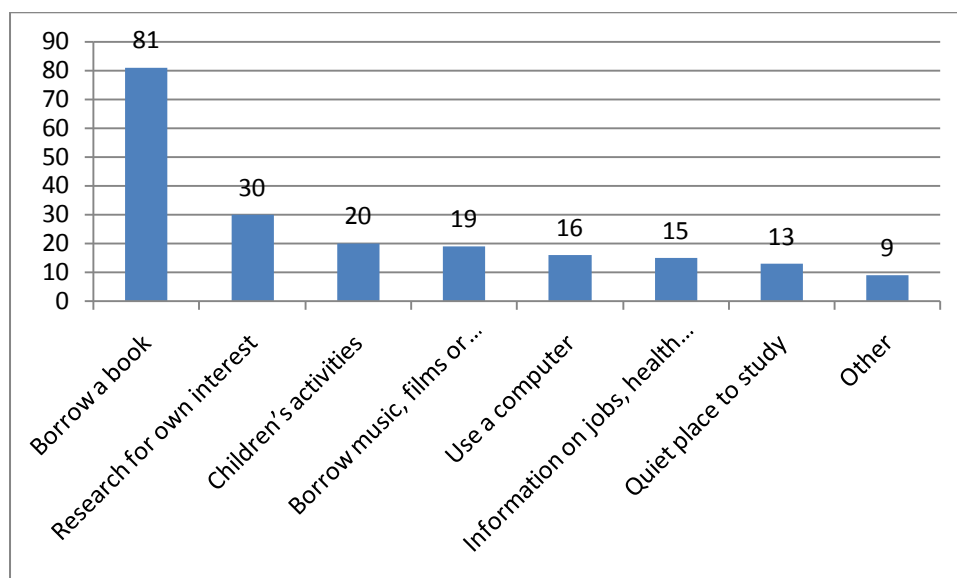
- To find out what people visit public libraries to do.
- To investigate the level of latent demand – that is, how many people are doing activities elsewhere that could potentially be done in a library?

The headline findings are outlined below, with references to the tables of data which can be found in appendix 1.

2) Library users

41.0% of our sample had been to a public library in the past 12 months. This is higher than the most recent Taking Part figure (37.5%). Although this could represent a recent upswing in engagement – mirroring an upswing seen in other sectors in Taking Part data – it is more likely down to sampling differences in the two surveys.

The activities done by these library users is summarised below²:

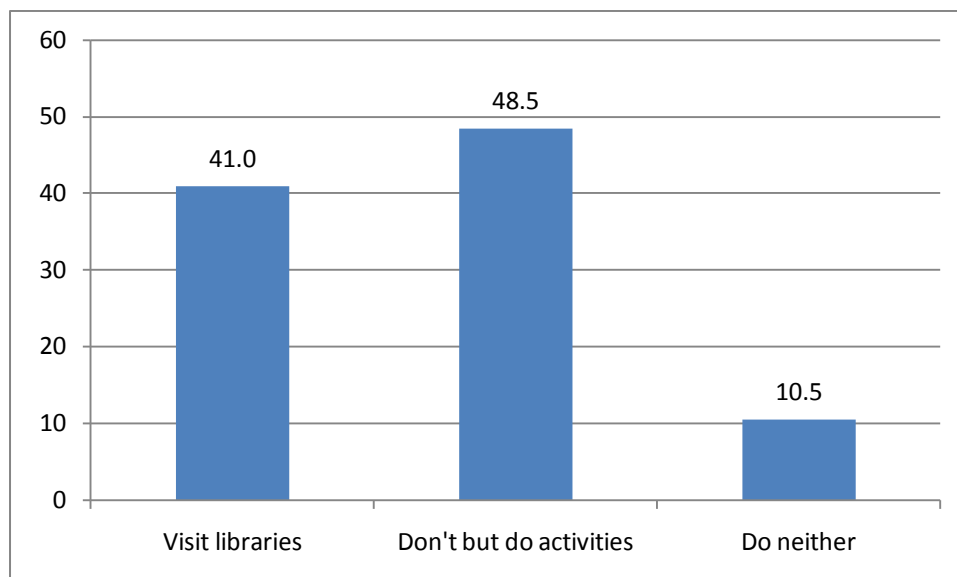


¹ Under 16 year olds were removed from the analysis due to the small sample size.

² Borrow films, music or computer games; Information on jobs, health, training, local events etc; 'Other' includes attending a group or class, getting help using a computer, reading a magazine or newspaper, and using a photocopier.

3) Potential library users

There is a high degree of possible latent demand – that is people who have not been to a public library in the past 12 months, but who have done an activity which could be done there such as borrowing a book. Therefore there is the potential that many of these people could become library users if the offer better meets their needs.



Of the 48.5% of our sample who had not visited a library in the past 12 months, 31.2% had either borrowed or wanted to borrow a book. **That is 15% of our total sample if half of these could be persuaded to borrow from a library - that would increase the total library engagement to closer to 50%**

4) Digital engagement

Of those who access the internet via a public place (4.8% of our sample), just over half had done so in a public library. So there is potential for a modest rise in the number of people using public libraries for internet access.

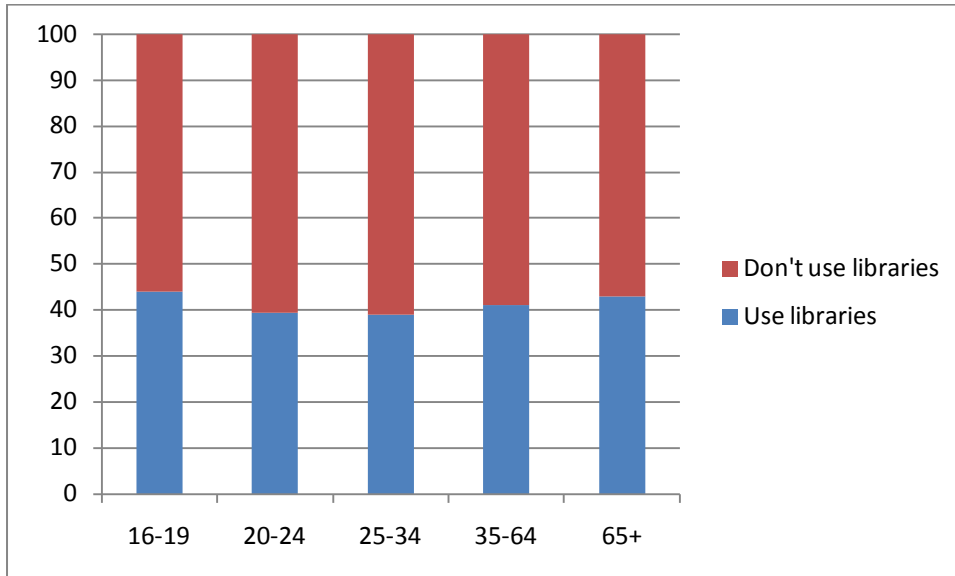
Computer usage in a public library reduces as income rises, suggesting that this provision is serving the lower income members of the community. Usage was highest amongst those still in education (of the students in our sample who had visited a library, 33% had used a computer there) and the unemployed (30% of unemployed library users in our sample).

12% of our sample had used the internet to look at public library websites.

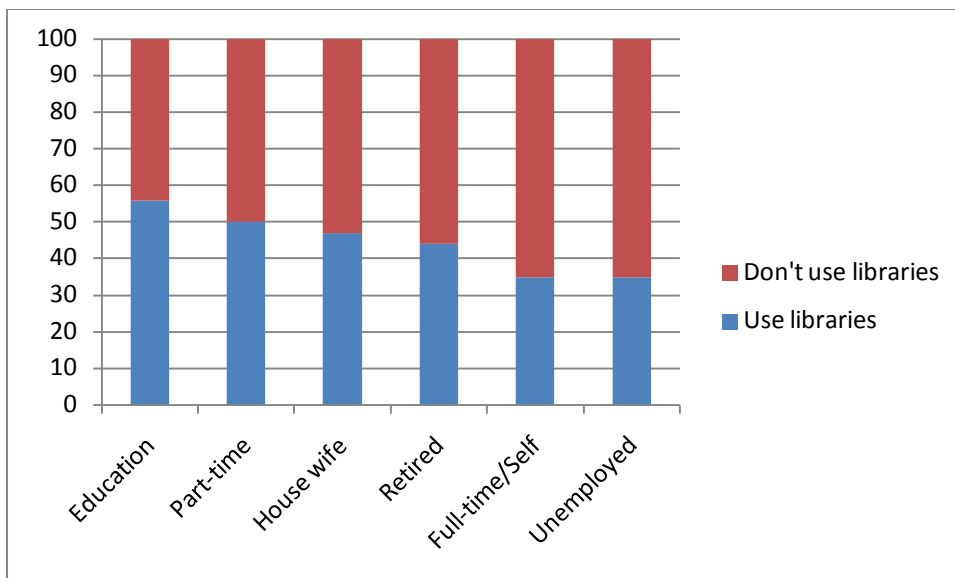
5) Demographic influences

In order to try and paint a picture of who is and is not using public libraries, we need to look at some basic demographic information. Are certain characteristics more prevalent in either group, for instance?

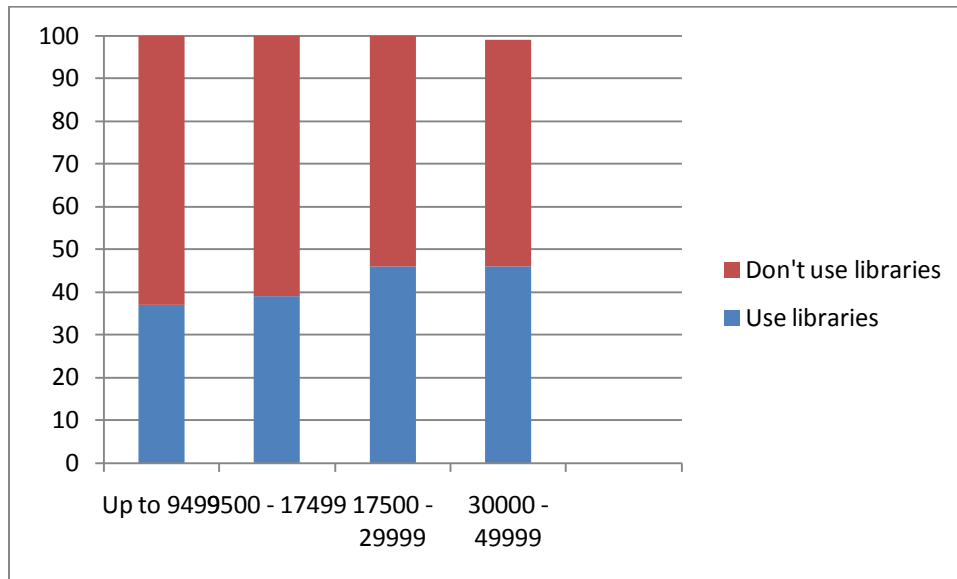
By age:



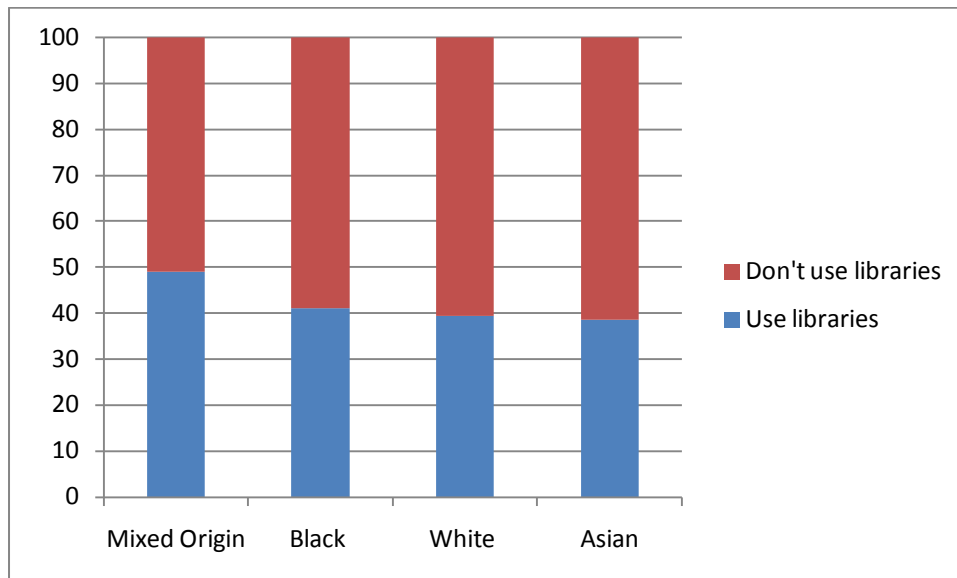
By employment status:



By income:



By ethnicity:



Whilst public library usage does not vary much across age groups, we see some variance in different income levels with the highest usage amongst people with average salaries.

We see greater differences across ethnicity and different employment status.

To explore this further, the tables below show what activities people within these groups are doing in public libraries:

% By ethnicity:

	White	Mixed	Asian	Black
Borrow book	81	85	83	69
Do own research	30	51	26	48
Children's activities	20	31	28	13
Borrow music etc	22	40	9	18
Use PC on own	18	15	15	28
Info on health etc	16	25	25	25
Quiet study	16	39	17	18

	Most popular activity
	Second most popular activity
	Third most popular activity
	Forth most popular activity

We can see that book borrowing is the main activity for all groups, but that the highest level occurs in the mixed ethnicity group, and the lowest in black group.

Doing own research is a secondary activity to most groups but beyond this activity priorities vary, although we see seeking information and health, jobs and so on remaining significant.

The latest Taking Part data also show highest proportional library usage amongst ethnically mixed groups, but alongside Asian rather than black people. Ethnic minority groups tend to be harder to reach in surveys and so, given the slightly differing methods used by Taking Part and the omnibus, this could account for this difference. However, in both instances we see BME groups proportionally being the highest users of public libraries.

% By employment status:

	In education	Full-time/self	House wife	Part-time	Unemployed	Retired
Borrow book	80	76	87	84	69	88
Do own research	36	32	19	29	35	28
Children's activities	4	25	44	31	17	7
Borrow music etc	11	22	22	25	21	15
Use PC on own	33	16	13	17	30	8
Info on health etc	12	15	13	20	29	14
Quiet study	38	14	6	13	10	4

	Most popular activity
	Second most popular activity
	Third most popular activity
	Forth most popular activity

Here we see that once again book borrowing is the most common activity across all groups, and is highest amongst retired people and housewives, along with visiting children's section for the latter.

Beyond this, secondary activities vary across the groups although doing own research remains important.

Those still in education mainly use the library primarily for the activities one would expect - for doing their own research and a quiet place to study.

Computer use is highest amongst those still in education and unemployed. The latter group also has the highest rate of seeking information on health, jobs etc and getting help to use a computer suggesting that libraries are able to provide important services for this group.