

A New Chapter

Public library services in the 21st century

Scottish data about attitudes to and use of public libraries

This factsheet reports on the data from research carried out by Ipsos MORI for the Carnegie UK Trust. The research consisted of an omnibus poll carried out in all five jurisdictions covered by the Trust in its work (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland).

This factsheet contains the data which relates to Scotland. Where relevant, comparison is made with data from the other jurisdictions. A full report of the research can be obtained from the Carnegie UK Trust website www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk. Separate factsheets covering the other four jurisdictions are also available, as well as a short discussion paper setting out the Trust's view of the key policy issues.



Research findings



The findings from the omnibus poll provide comparable data from all five jurisdictions. In Scotland, 1,002 adults aged 18 and over were included in the poll.

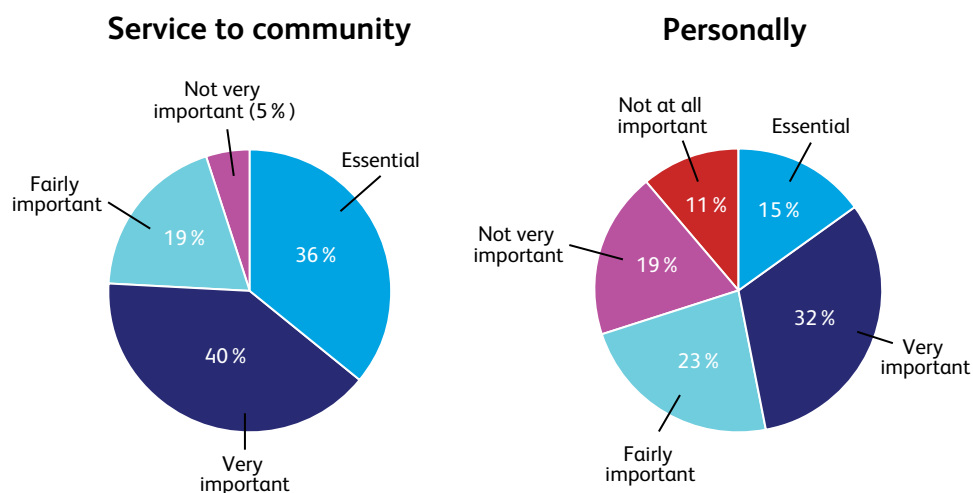
2.1 Importance of public libraries

- Our data shows that around three quarters (76%) of those surveyed in Scotland felt that libraries were 'very important' or 'essential' for communities, while less than half (47%) said that they were very important or essential to them personally. These figures are similar to those in other jurisdictions
- Of those reporting that libraries were 'essential' for communities, there was very little difference between those from the most deprived (37%) and least deprived (38%) communities.
- Similar percentages of people across each category of deprivation felt that libraries are 'very important' for communities.

2.2 Use of public libraries

- At the time of the survey, three fifths of people in Scotland had visited a public library within the last 12 months (61%). This was the highest level of use in all five jurisdictions, comparing with 40% in Northern Ireland at the other extreme, and 50% in England.
- There was little variation in use between deprivation classifications.
- More women than men had used the service (68% compared to 54%) in Scotland, and this was more variation than in other jurisdictions.
- Library use by 15-24 year olds (54%) was slightly below the average, while 25-34 year olds used libraries slightly more than the average at 64%. This contradicts some earlier research findings which suggested that libraries did not appeal to younger people.
- People working full-time were less likely to use the service (57%) compared with those not working (69%), working part-time (65%) or retired (61%).

Table 1: Importance to the community and to the individual: Generally speaking, how important or unimportant do you think public libraries are as a service to the community? How important or unimportant are public libraries to you personally?



- There was a strong and statistically significant relationship between library use and four other factors: being a prolific reader (reading at least one book every 6 weeks); having children; being a woman; and not working full-time.
- The relationship with reading is consistent across all five jurisdictions, the relationship with having children is found in all jurisdictions except Wales; the relationship with gender was only significant in Scotland; and the relationship with full-time employment was also found in Ireland .
- There was little difference in use between urban and rural areas.

2.3 Frequency of use

- Just over half (56%) of those who had used a library in the previous year were frequent users, ie using the public library at least once a month. This is in line with statistics from the other four jurisdictions.
- 63% of frequent users are women, and 47% are men.

- In Scotland, there was a statistically significant relationship between four factors and frequency of use: having children; being a prolific reader; being a woman; and not working fulltime. Scotland was the only jurisdiction in which all four factors were associated significantly with frequency of library use.
- There was little difference between urban and rural areas in relation to frequency of use.

2.4 Reading behaviour

We asked people how many books they read.

- The percentage in Scotland of people who never or rarely read books is very low at 12%.
- In general people in Scotland and Ireland read more, while people in Wales and Northern Ireland read less, with England in the middle.
- Across the five jurisdictions, those who are most likely to be prolific readers (reading at least one book every six weeks) are women and retired people.

Table 2: Reading behaviour in Scotland

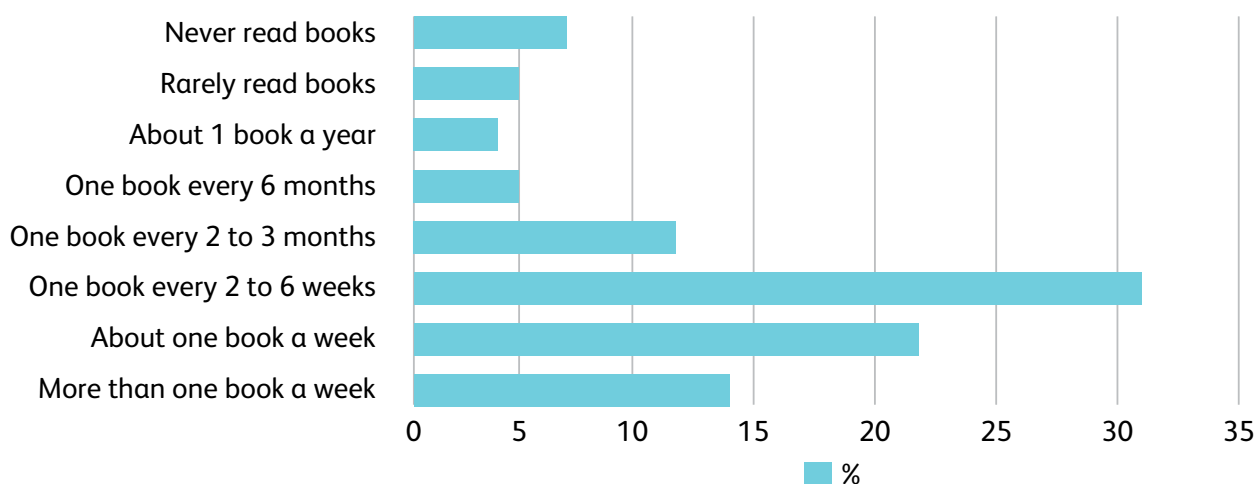
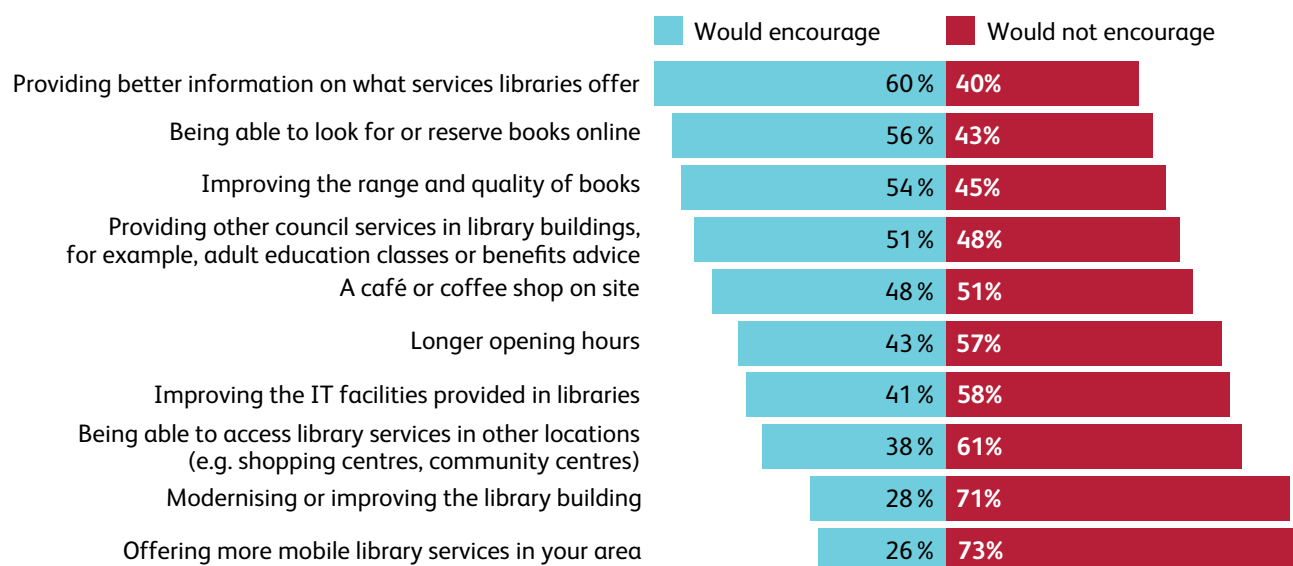


Table 3: Which particular changes or improvements would affect library use



Base: All Scottish adults 15+ (1,002), 25-29 August 2011

Ipsos MORI

2.5 Attitudes to possible service improvements

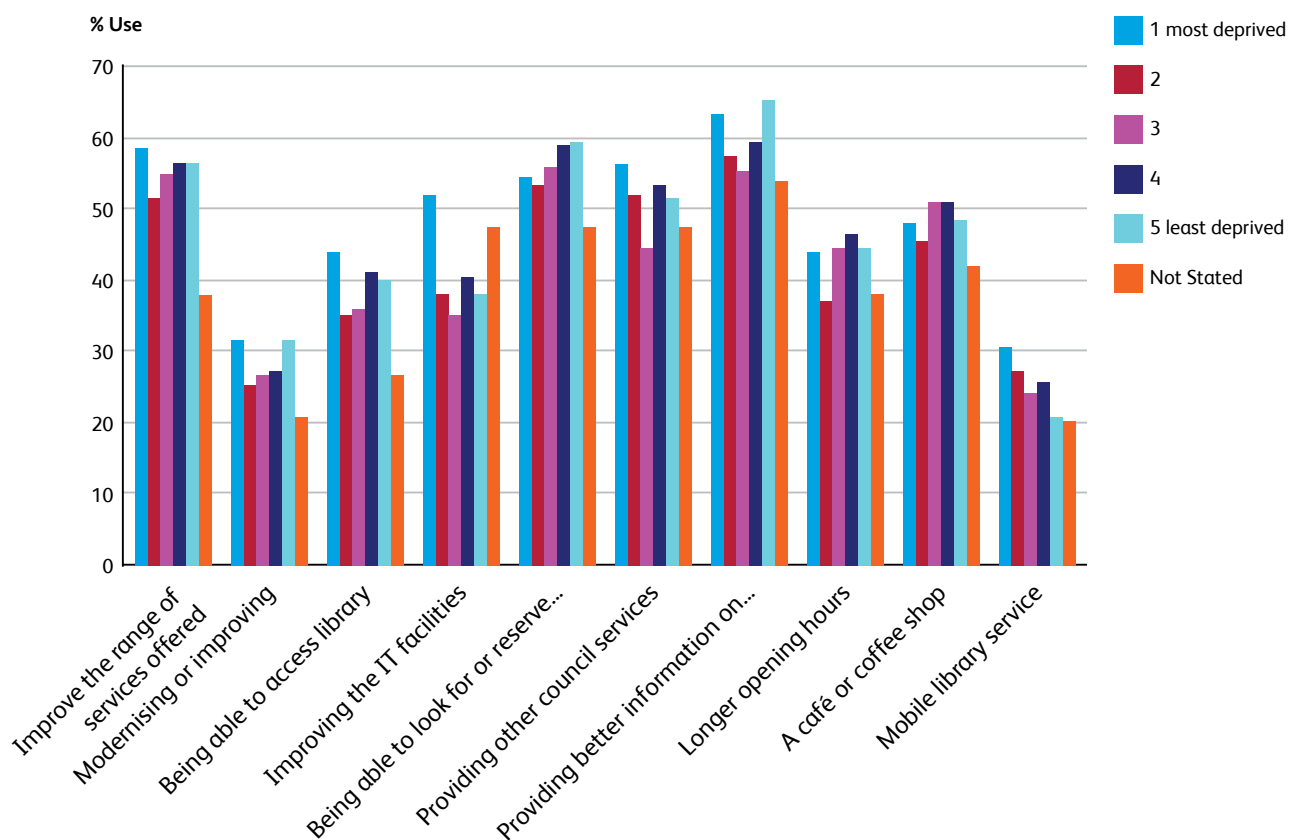
- Overall, this data shows that four of the possible improvements would make a difference to more than half of those surveyed, with the others appealing to less than half. The most popular improvements to the service in Scotland would be providing more information about the services available at the library, being able to look for or reserve books online, and improving the range and quality of books. It is almost certainly the case that all library authorities do already provide the facility to look for or reserve books online, so these figures suggest that a lot of people are unaware of the kind of service currently offered by public libraries.

Although most people say that modernising or improving the library building would not make a difference, most evidence shows that new or improved library buildings does lead to significant increase in use, so people's attitudes may not be reflected in their behaviour.

- In all five jurisdictions there was more difference between users and non-users of the service than between frequent and infrequent users. Users were more likely to say that the improvements would increase their use of the service than non-users, with little difference between frequent and infrequent users.
- With regards to improvements in library IT facilities, differences were found between those in the most and least deprived areas of Scotland. For example, 52% of those in the most deprived areas felt that IT improvements would encourage their library use compared with 38% of those within in the least deprived areas of Scotland.

- Those in the least deprived areas of Scotland (65%) were significantly more likely than other classifications to say that they would increase their library use if there was better information on the services that libraries offer.
- Those who were unemployed were significantly more likely than others to say they would use libraries more often if they were open longer or if they provided other council services (53% and 69% respectively).

Table 4: Attitudes to service changes or improvements by social class



Definition of socio-economic groups

1	Most deprived
5	Least deprived

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

Andrew Carnegie House

Pittencrieff Street

Dunfermline

KY12 8AW

Tel: +44 (0)1383 721445

Fax: +44 (0)1383 749799

Email: info@carnegieuk.org

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