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**American Library  
Association:  
National  
Survey Results**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL  
FEBRUARY 21, 2006  
11:59 PM EST**

## Report Outline

- Methodology
- Executive Summary
- Detailed Findings:
  - Public Library Usage
  - Children's Public Library Usage
  - Satisfaction & Image
  - Value Proposition
  - Economic Proposition
  - Future of Public Libraries

# Methodology

- **DATA COLLECTION:** January 3 – January 13, 2006
- **SAMPLE SIZE:** 1,003 adults, ages 18 and older, residing in the Continental United States
- **SAMPLE:** Sample is representative of the national adult population, drawn with a “random digit dial” methodology in which each residential telephone has an equal probability of being reached
- **MARGIN OF ERROR:** +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level for the overall sample
- **SIGNIFICANCE TESTS:** Where a difference is noted as statistically significant (○), it is computed at the 95% confidence level
- **WEIGHTING:** Data was weighted by education and marital status to ensure an accurate representation of the national population of adults
- **PAST DATA:** The 2002 data displayed in the report is from a national survey of 1018 adults, ages 18 & older, conducted by KRC in March 8 – March 11, 2002. The survey methodology and sample is the same as the 2006 survey.

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# Executive Summary

## Executive Summary: Usage

- The public library usage landscape has remained relatively steady over the past 4 years
- Nearly two-thirds of Americans continue to report ownership of a library card and most still visit the library in-person
- Americans use their public libraries in multiple ways, with the most popular services being taking out books and using computers/Internet
- Educational and entertainment pursuits drive most visits to public libraries
- Most frequent users tend to be women, younger adults, college educated adults, parents of younger children and urban and suburban residents
- Nearly two-thirds of parents with children under the age of 18 continue to take their kids to their public library
- Checking out books, movies and music for free is the number one reason parents visit their public library with their children

## Executive Summary: Image

- Americans are deeply satisfied with and have positive perceptions of their public libraries
- 7 out of 10 Americans report being extremely or very satisfied with their public libraries – a 10-point increase from 2002
- Friendly, convenient, providing opportunities and comfortable are the top descriptors for public libraries
- Ratings on all positive public library attributes have risen slightly from 2002
- Experience matters – the more frequent the user, the more satisfied and the more likely they are to describe public libraries in a positive light

## Executive Summary: Value & Benefits

- Libraries and librarians – as well as the services they offer – are clearly valuable to Americans
- More than one-third of Americans put the benefits of libraries and librarians at the top of the public services and professionals list – significant increases from 2002
- The most valuable personal benefits offered by public libraries are free services, educational opportunities and information for school and work – with strong majorities believing all of these are *very* important
- The most important economic benefits of public libraries are believed to be contributing to public education, providing lifelong learning opportunities and free services

## Executive Summary: Funding & Future

- The future is bright for public libraries...More than 8 in 10 Americans agree their public library deserves more funding – including a majority who *strongly* agree
- When asked what amount *should be* spent on public libraries, a solid majority say \$25 or more per person – up 9 points from 2002
- While frequent users are the most supportive of increased funding for their public library, even a strong majority of non-users want more funding
- More than 8 out of 10 Americans across every geographic and demographic group continue to believe public libraries will be needed in the future



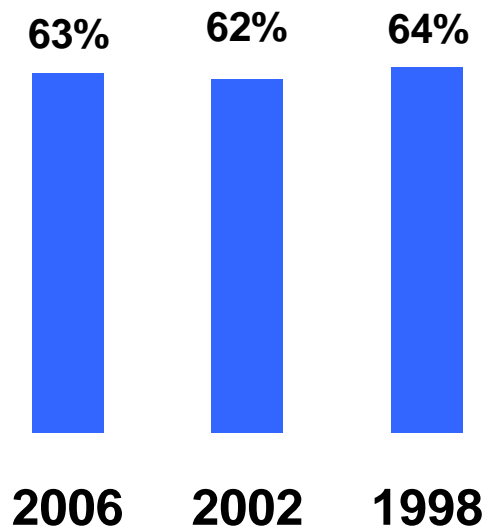
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Public Library  
Usage

## Library card ownership remains steady

*%'s of adults who say "yes"*

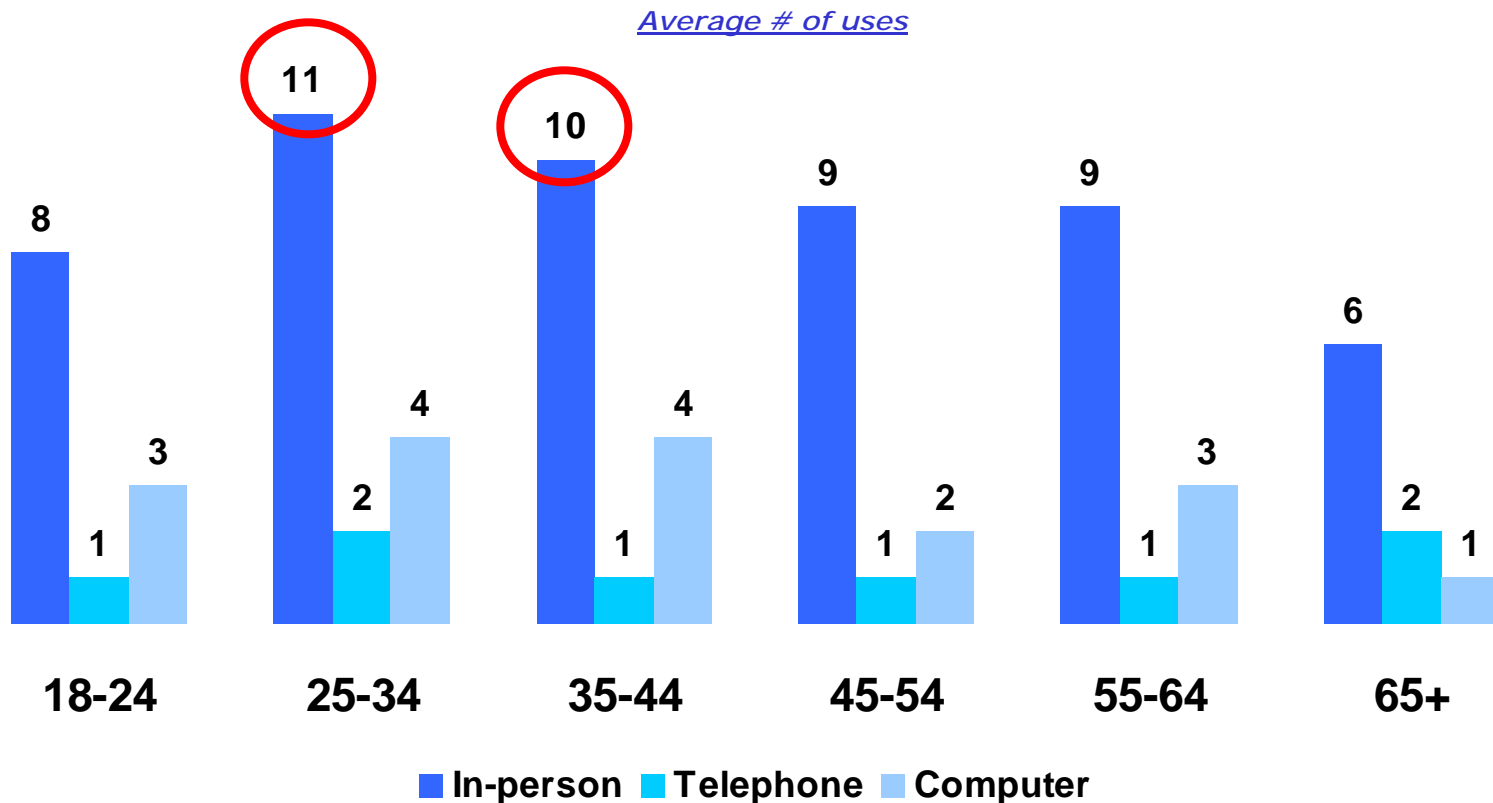


### **Most likely to have a library card:**

- Adults who visit the library 11 or more times per year (92%)
- College educated women (80%)
- Those with children ages 12-17 (79%)
- Adults who visit the library 1 to 10 times per year (73%)
- Women (71%)
- College educated adults (71%)
- Parents of children ages 18 or younger (70%)
- Adults in metropolitan areas (65%)
  
- **As in 2002, 26% of adults who say they did not visit a library in person in the past year, report having a library card.**

On average, younger adults tend to visit their public library more often than older adults

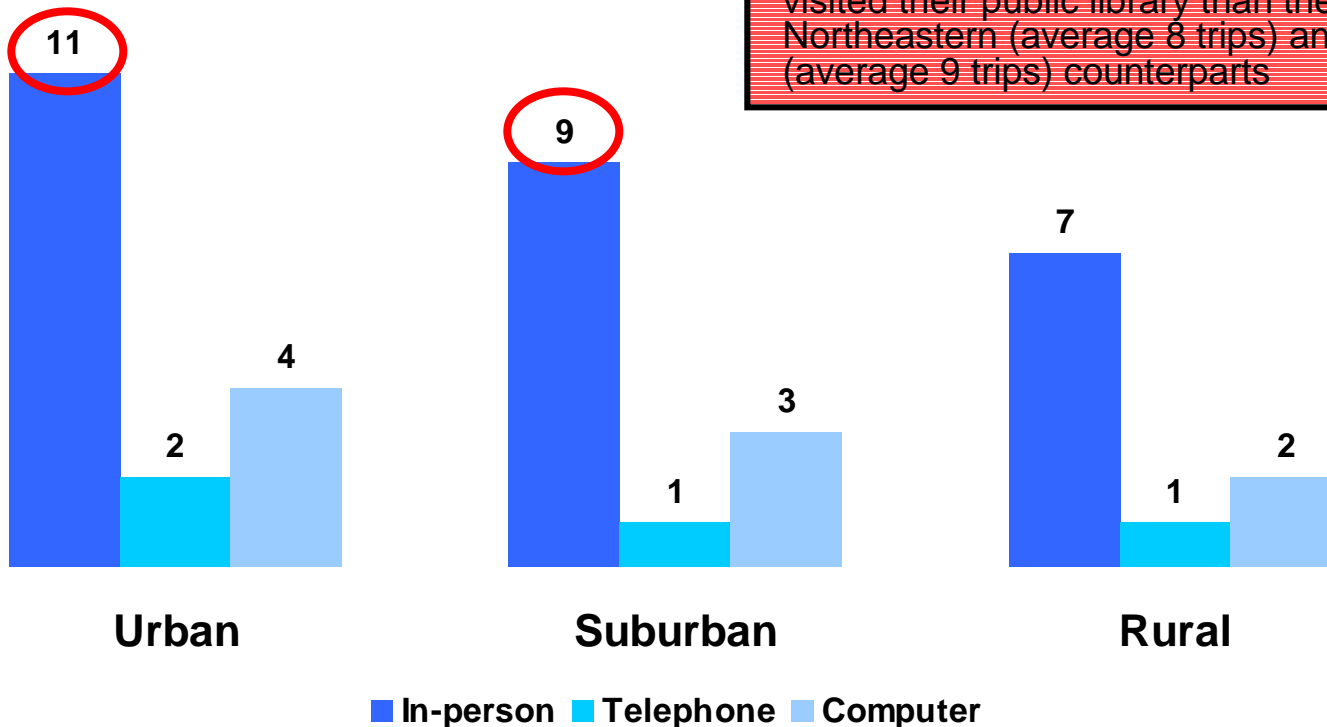
Think about how many times during the past year you have visited the public library or used public library services. How many times have you visited or used the public library:



## Urban and suburban Americans are more likely to visit their public library than rural residents

Think about how many times during the past year you have visited the public library or used public library services. How many times have you visited or used the public library:

*Average # of uses*

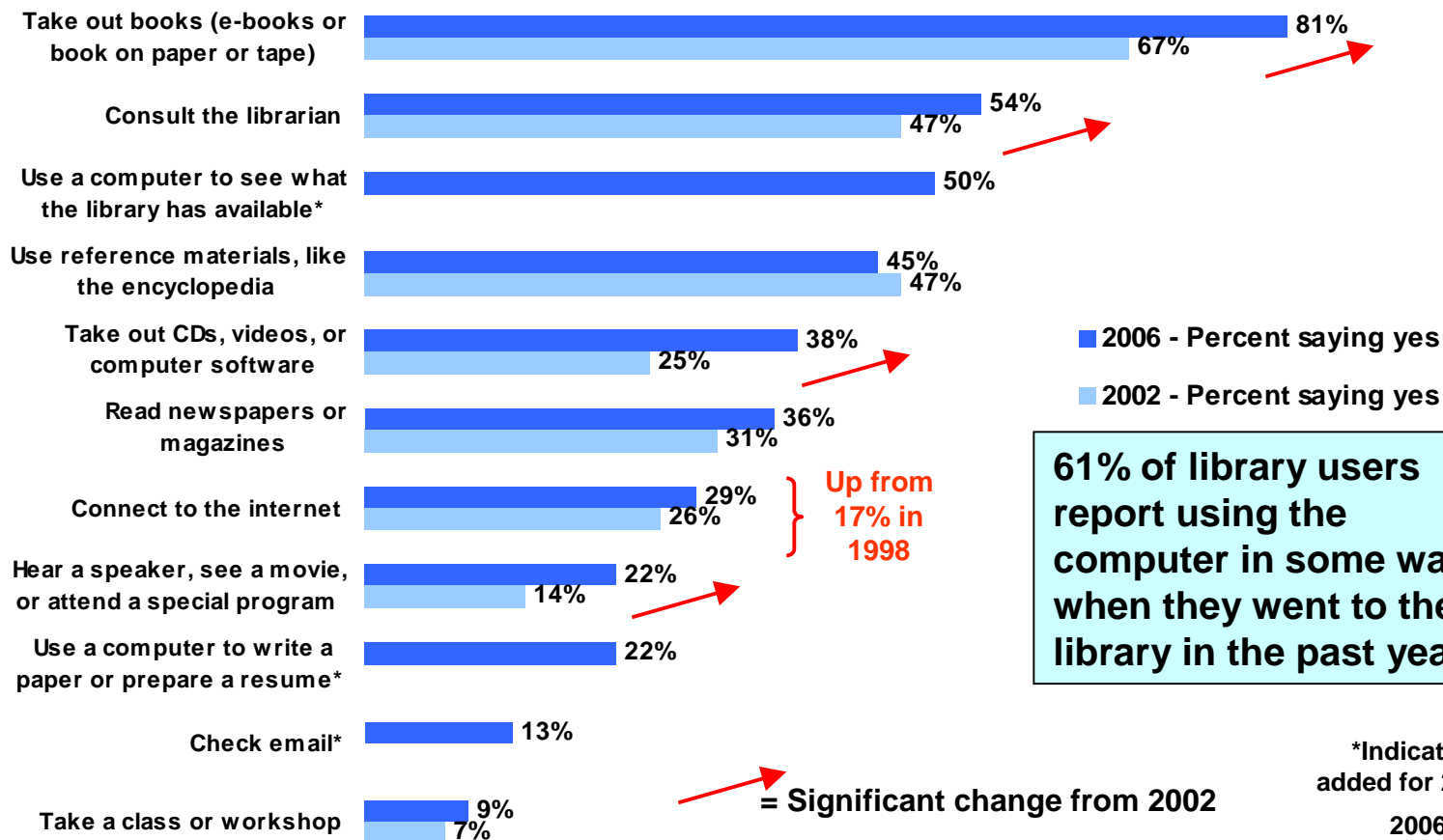


Additionally, adults in the Midwest (average 11 in-person visits) and West (average 10 visits) are significantly more likely to have visited their public library than their Northeastern (average 8 trips) and Southern (average 9 trips) counterparts

○ indicates significant difference at 95% confidence level

## Adults use the library in multiple ways: taking out books is most popular; computer usage comes second

**IF VISTED PUBLIC LIBRARY IN PERSON IN THE PAST YEAR:** When you have used the public library in person in the past year, which of the following services did you use? How about \_\_\_\_\_?



2006 N-size=684  
2002 N-size=633

## Books vs. Computers

### More likely to take out books:

- Adults with incomes between \$15K and \$35K (90%)
- Library card holders (89%)
- Adults with children (87%)
- Women (87%)
- Adults with some college or more (84%)

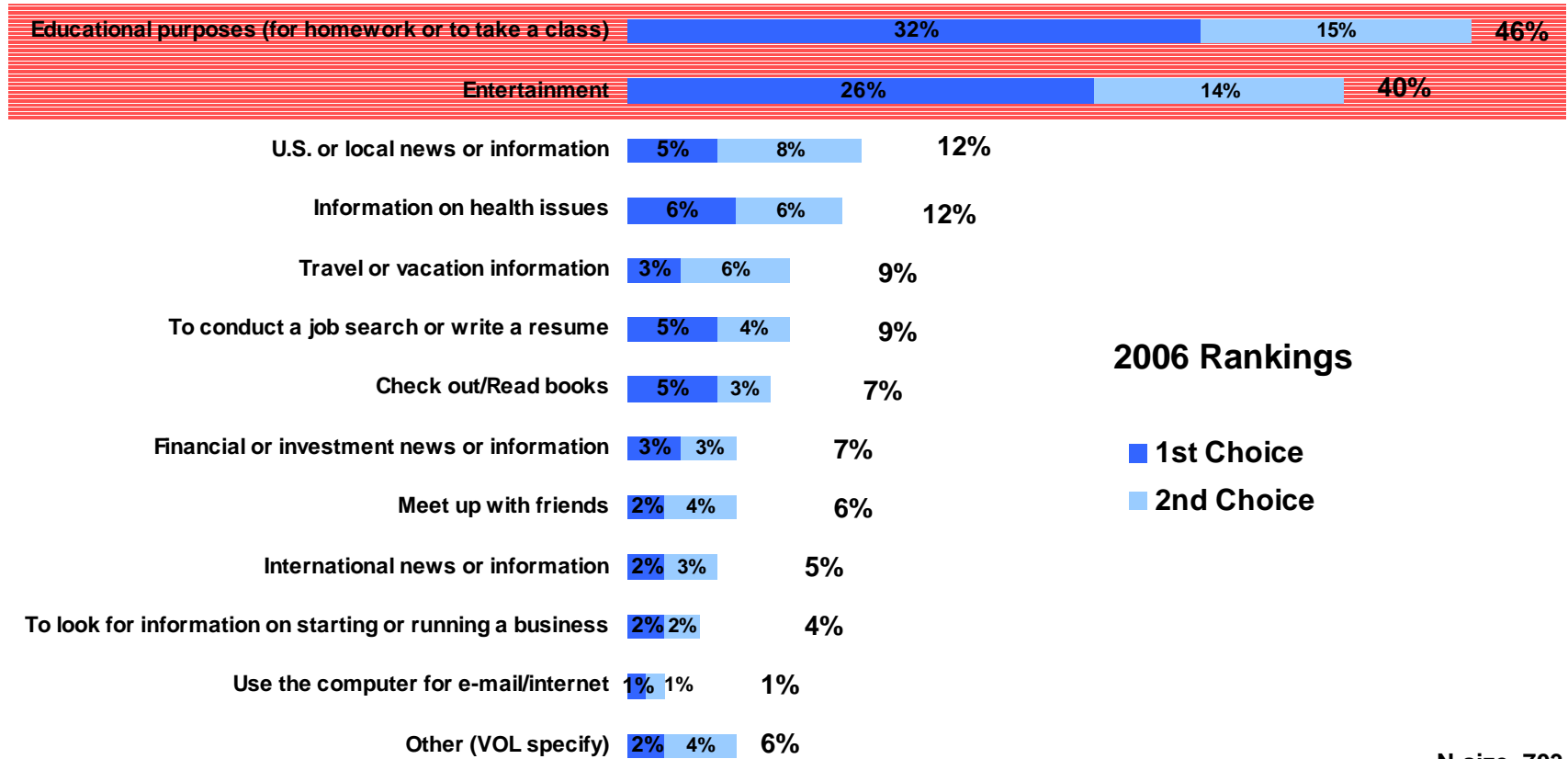
### More likely to use computer:

- African Americans (72%)
- Adults ages 18-44 (71%)
- Single Adults (69%)
- Adults in urban areas (68%)
- Adults with children (67%)

**39% of adults who make less than \$50K per year use the library to connect to the internet**

In 2006, educational purposes are the top reason adults use public libraries – followed by entertainment

**IF USED/VISITED LIBRARY IN PAST YEAR: Again, thinking back over the last year, which one of the following did you most/second most use the public library for:**



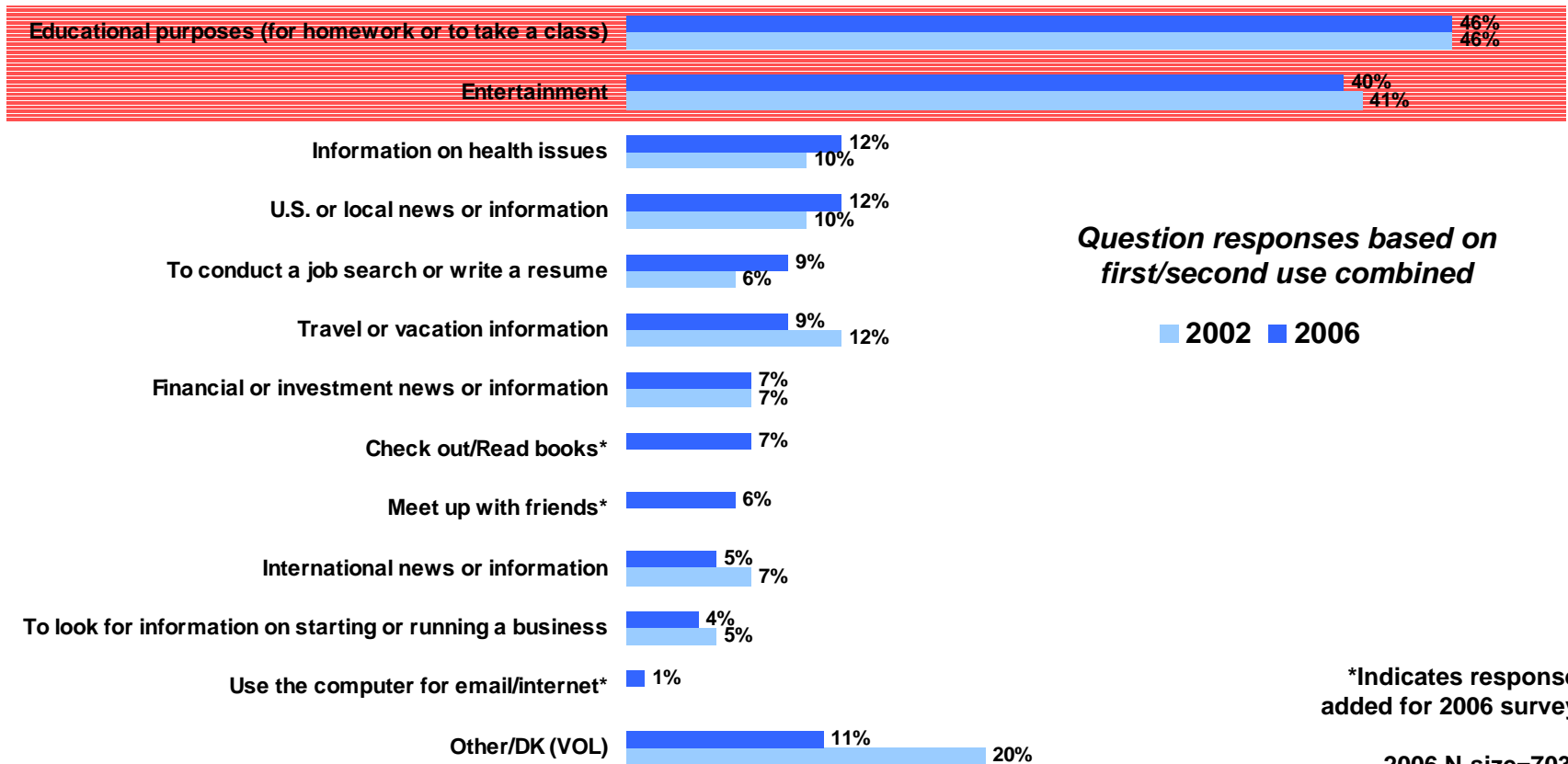
**2006 Rankings**

- 1st Choice
- 2nd Choice

N-size=703

# Trends on the type of usage remain steady

**IF USED/VISITED LIBRARY IN PAST YEAR: Again, thinking back over the last year, which one of the following did you most/second most use the public library for (COMBINED TOTALS QUESTIONS 5 & 6):**



*Question responses based on first/second use combined*

■ 2002 ■ 2006

\*Indicates response added for 2006 survey

2006 N-size=703,  
2002 N-size = 658



## Education vs. Entertainment

*% 2006 first choice among library visitors*

### **More likely to say “Education”:**

- Adults with children (42%)
- Adults under age 45 (40%)
- Adults of color (39%)
- Those living in the West (39%)

### **More likely to say “Entertainment”:**

- Adults who visit the library in-person 11+ times per year (37%)
- Women (30%)
- Library card holders (28%)
- Adults ages 45-64 (33%)
- Those living in the Midwest (30%)
- Caucasian adults (30%)

*Those without younger children in the home are more than twice as likely to use the library for information on health issues than those with younger children (7% to 3% respectively)*

*African American and Hispanic adults are significantly more likely to use their library for job searches or writing resumes than Caucasian adults (19%, 9% and 2% respectively)*

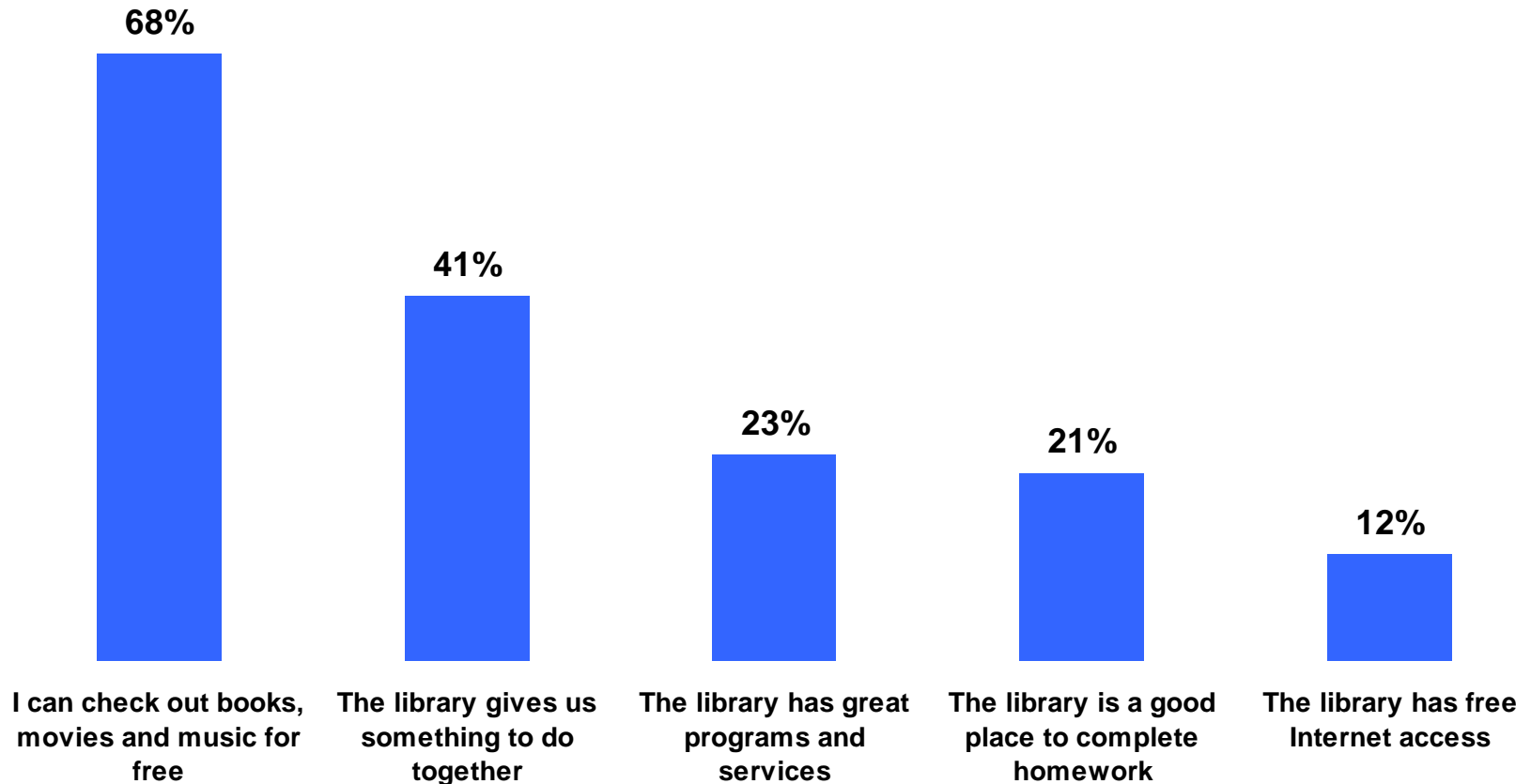
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# Children's Public Library Usage

# Checking out free books, movies and music is the most important reason parents take kids to the library

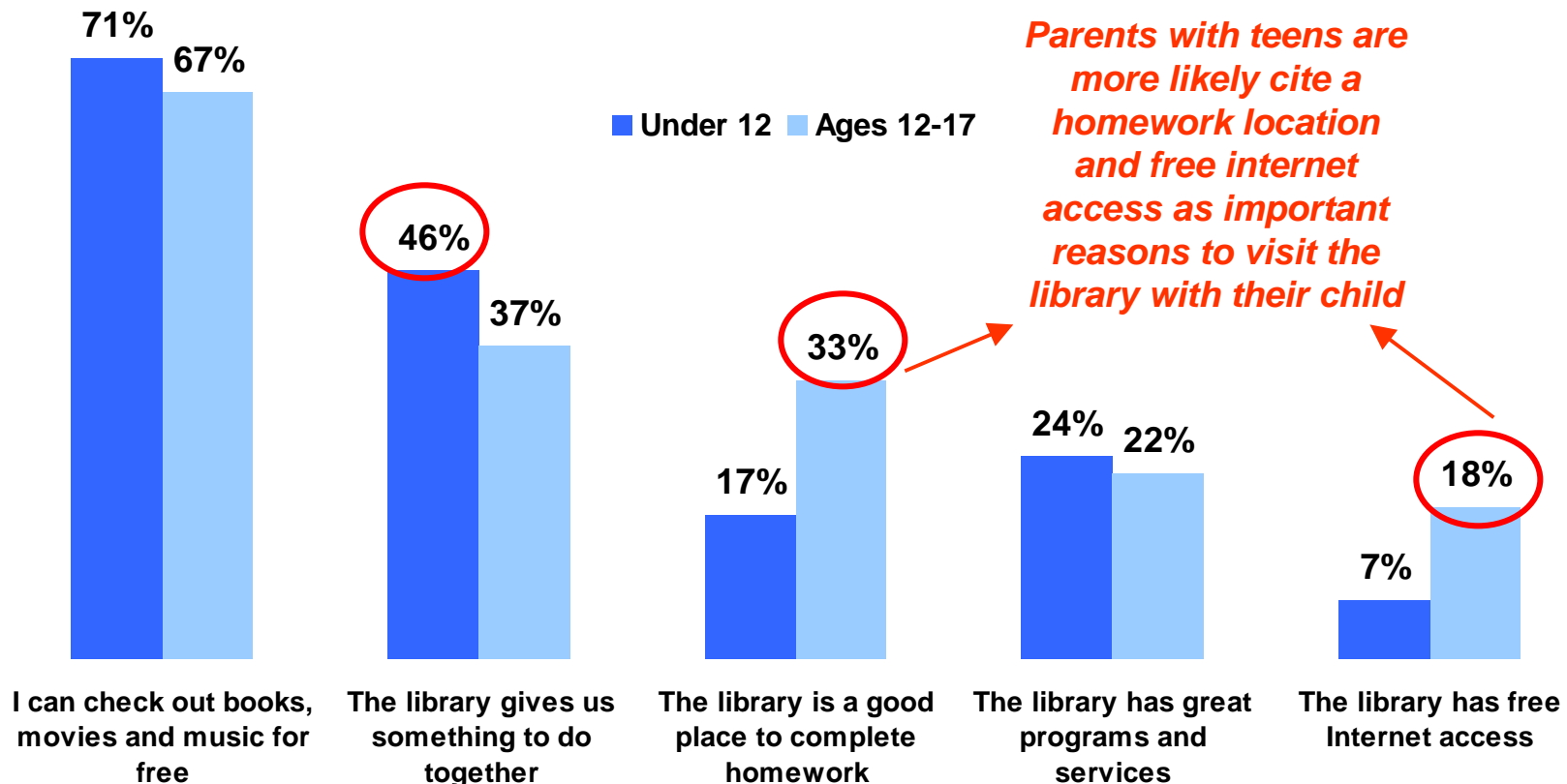
**IF VISITED WITH CHILD UNDER AGE 18: Which of the following are the most important reasons that you personally take your child(ren) to your public library? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES]**



2006 N-size=230

While free check-outs are key across the board, parents of young children are more likely to cite family time

IF VISITED WITH CHILD UNDER AGE 18: Which of the following are the most important reasons that you personally take your child(ren) to your public library? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES]



2006 N-size=230

○ indicates significant difference between subgroups at 95% confidence level

Most important reason to take children to the library:

**More likely to say “check out books, movies and music for free”**

- Parents with a college education or more (77%)
- Mothers (74%)
- Parents with an income \$50K+ (73%)

**More likely to say “gives us something to do together”**

- Parents ages 25-44 (44%)

**More likely to say “great programs and services”**

- Parents ages 35-44 (28%)

**More likely to say “good place to complete homework”**

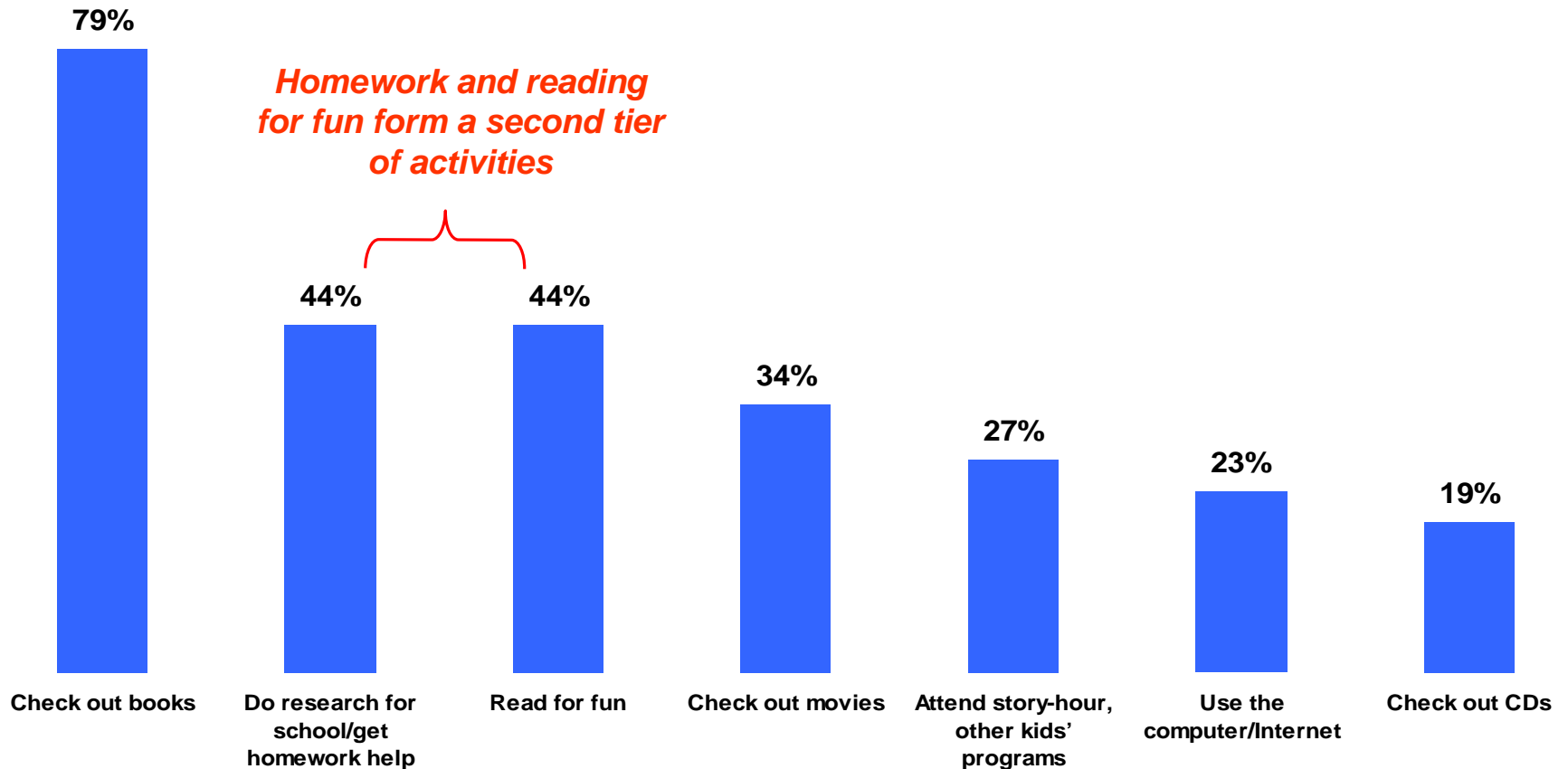
- Parents with children ages 12-17 (33%)
- Parents in urban areas (27%)
- Parents ages 35-54 (25%)

**More likely to say “free internet access”**

- Parents with incomes less than \$50K (21%)
- Parents with children ages 12-17 (18%)

## Checking out books is the number one thing parents say their children do at the library

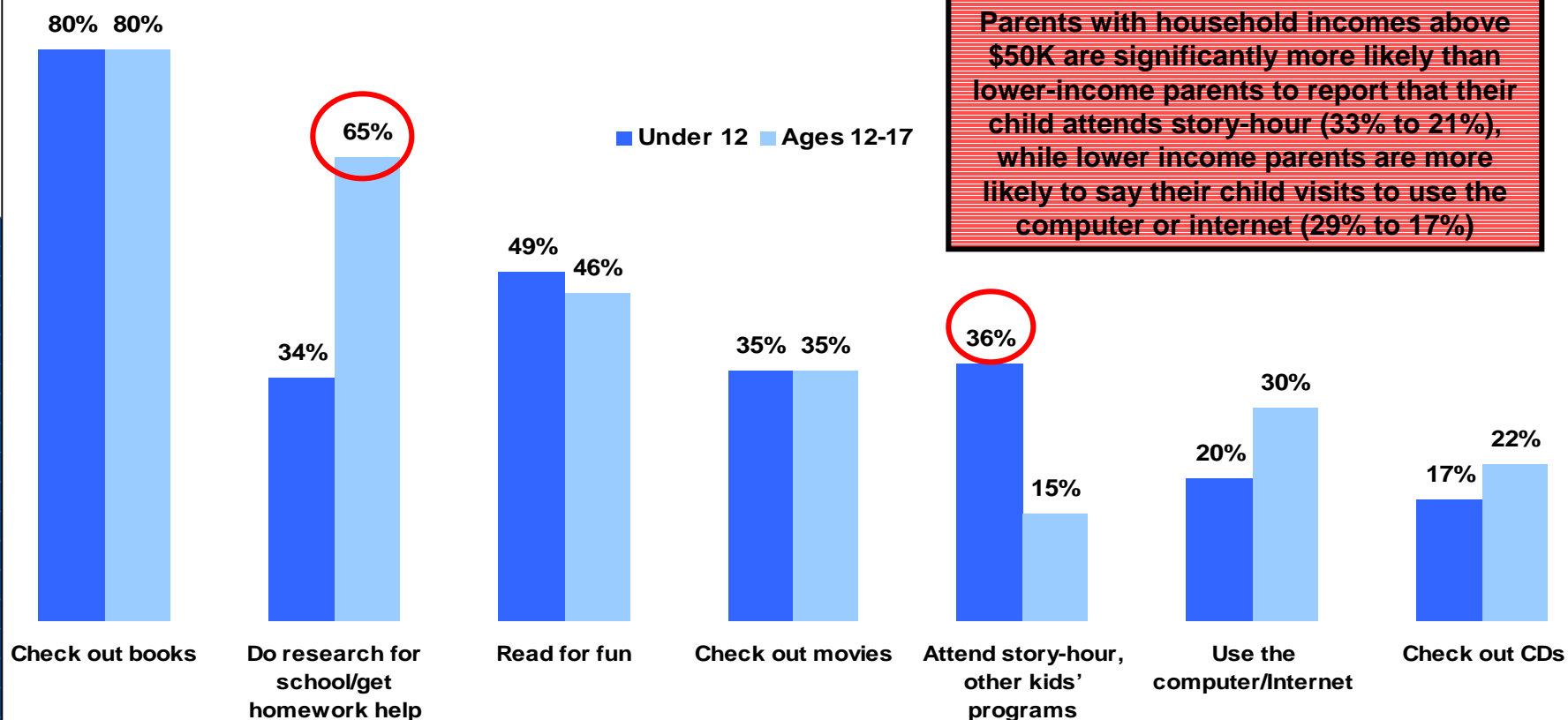
IF VISITED WITH CHILD UNDER AGE 18: Which of the following things, if any, do your children do at the public library? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES]



2006 N-size=230

While checking out books is key for all, teens are twice as likely to do homework and younger ones to participate in programs

**IF VISITED WITH CHILD UNDER AGE 18: Which of the following things, if any, do your children do at the public library? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES]**



Parents with household incomes above \$50K are significantly more likely than lower-income parents to report that their child attends story-hour (33% to 21%), while lower income parents are more likely to say their child visits to use the computer or internet (29% to 17%)

2006 N-size=230

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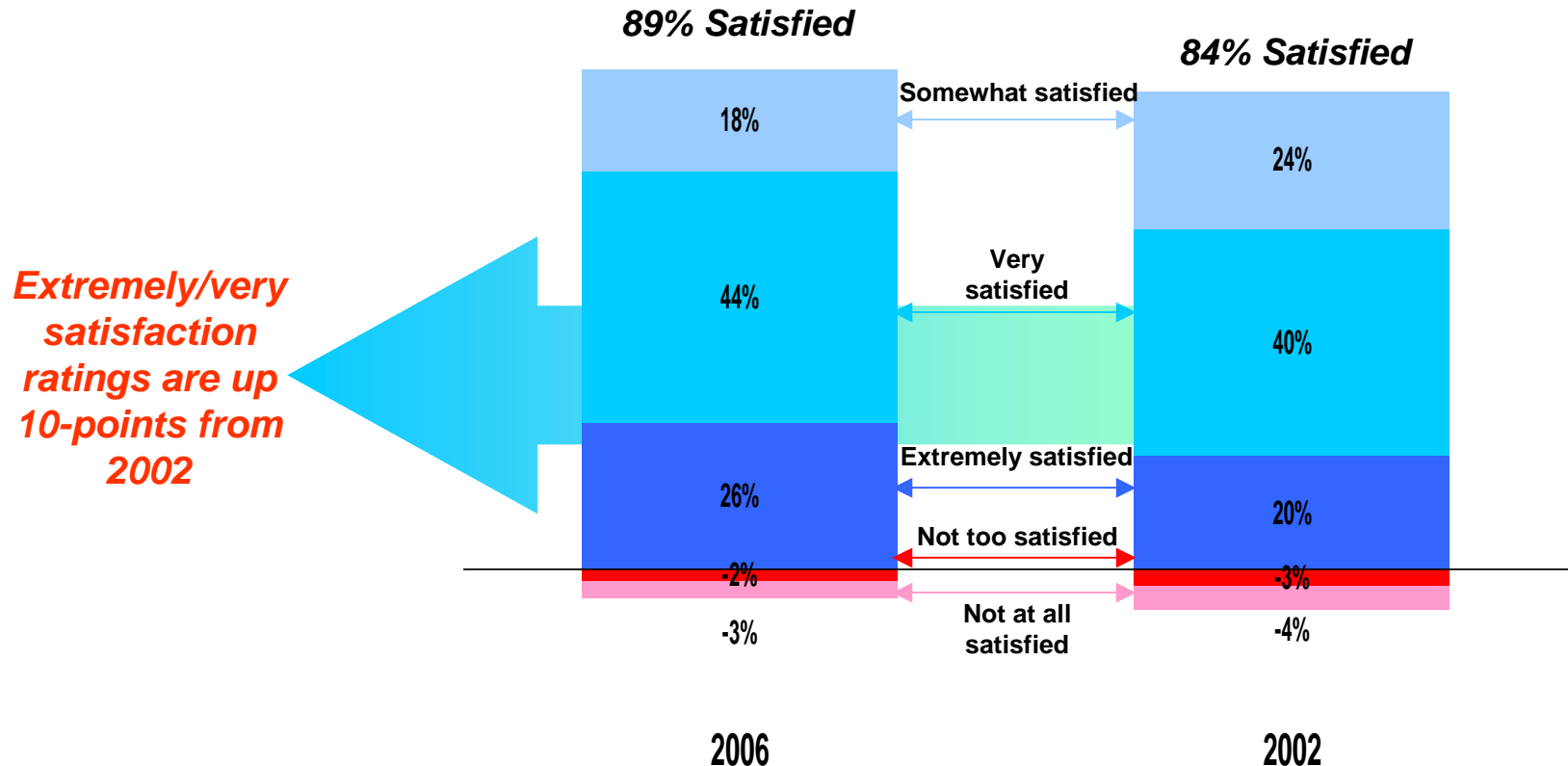
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## Satisfaction & Image



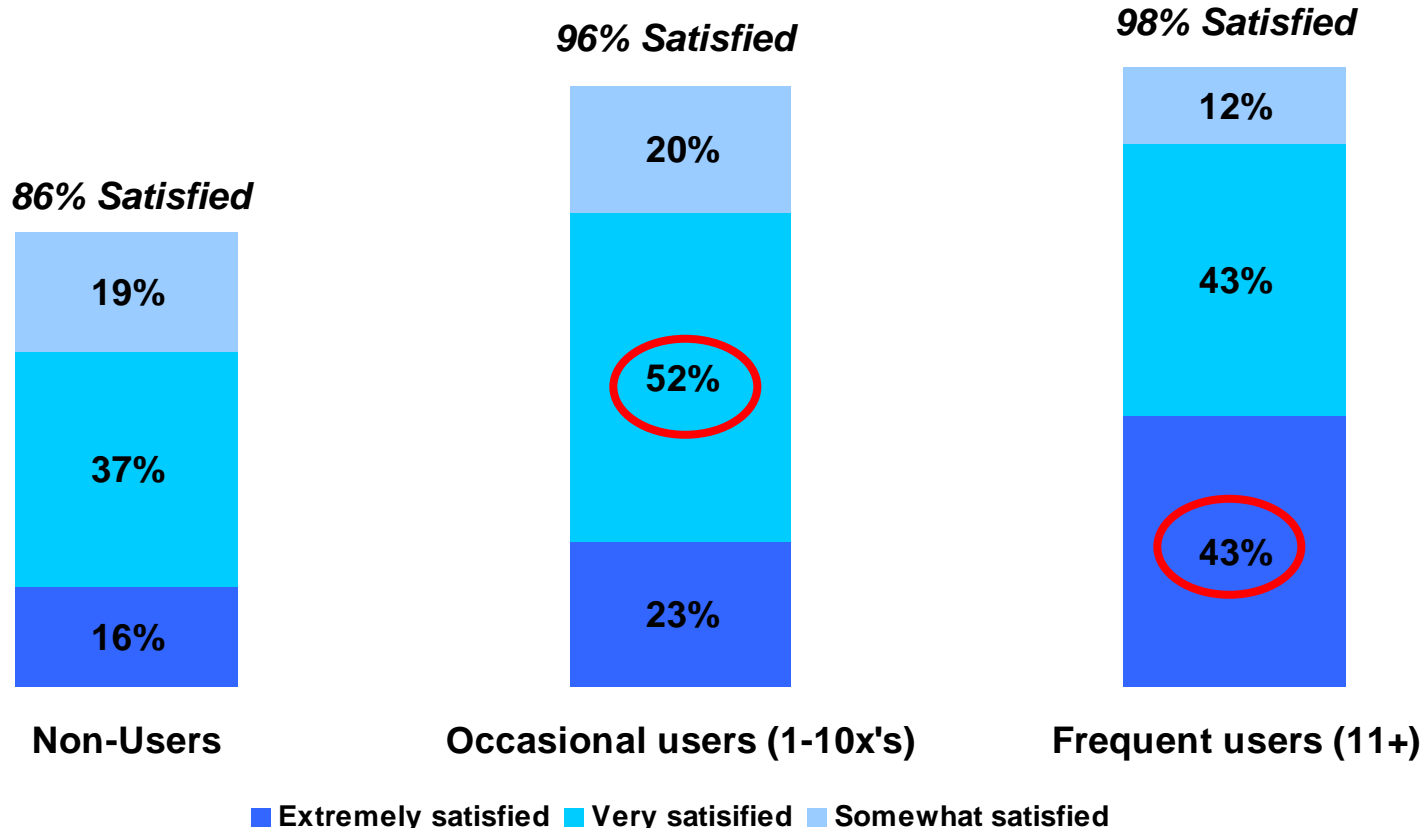
More than 8 of 10 are satisfied with their public library – including 70% who say *very or extremely* satisfied

Overall, thinking of your public library, based on what you know or have heard or read, how satisfied are you with your public library – extremely satisfied, very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, only a little satisfied, or not at all satisfied?



The more frequent the user, the more intensely satisfied the public library patron

Overall, thinking of your public library, based on what you know or have heard or read, how satisfied are you with your public library – extremely satisfied, very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, only a little satisfied, or not at all satisfied?



## Who is satisfied? Who is not?

### Most likely to be extremely satisfied:

- Those who visit 11 or more times per year (43%)
- Adults ages 55 or older (33%)
- Library card holders (32%)
- Adults in urban areas (31%)
- Women (31%)
  - College educated women (39%)
  - Older women (36%)
  - Women with children (31%)

### More likely to be dissatisfied:

- Adults without library cards (9%)
- Adults who do not visit the library in person (9%)

***More than 8 out of 10 adults across every demographic and geographic subgroup are satisfied with their libraries – except non-library card holders who report a 76% satisfaction level***

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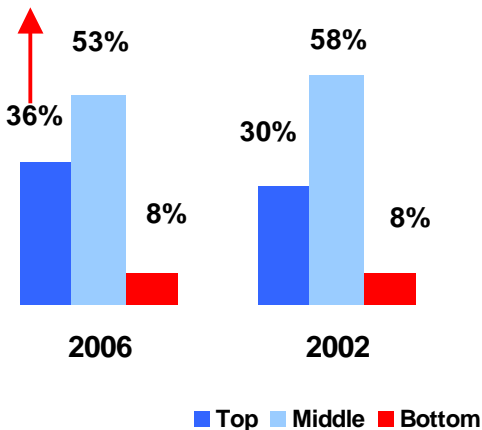
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# Value Proposition

## More than one-third of Americans put the benefits of libraries at the top of the public services list

Overall, how would you rank the benefits of the public library compared to the benefits of other tax-supported services, such as schools, parks and roads? Would you say at the top of the list, in the middle or at the bottom of the list?

*A 6-point increase from 2002*

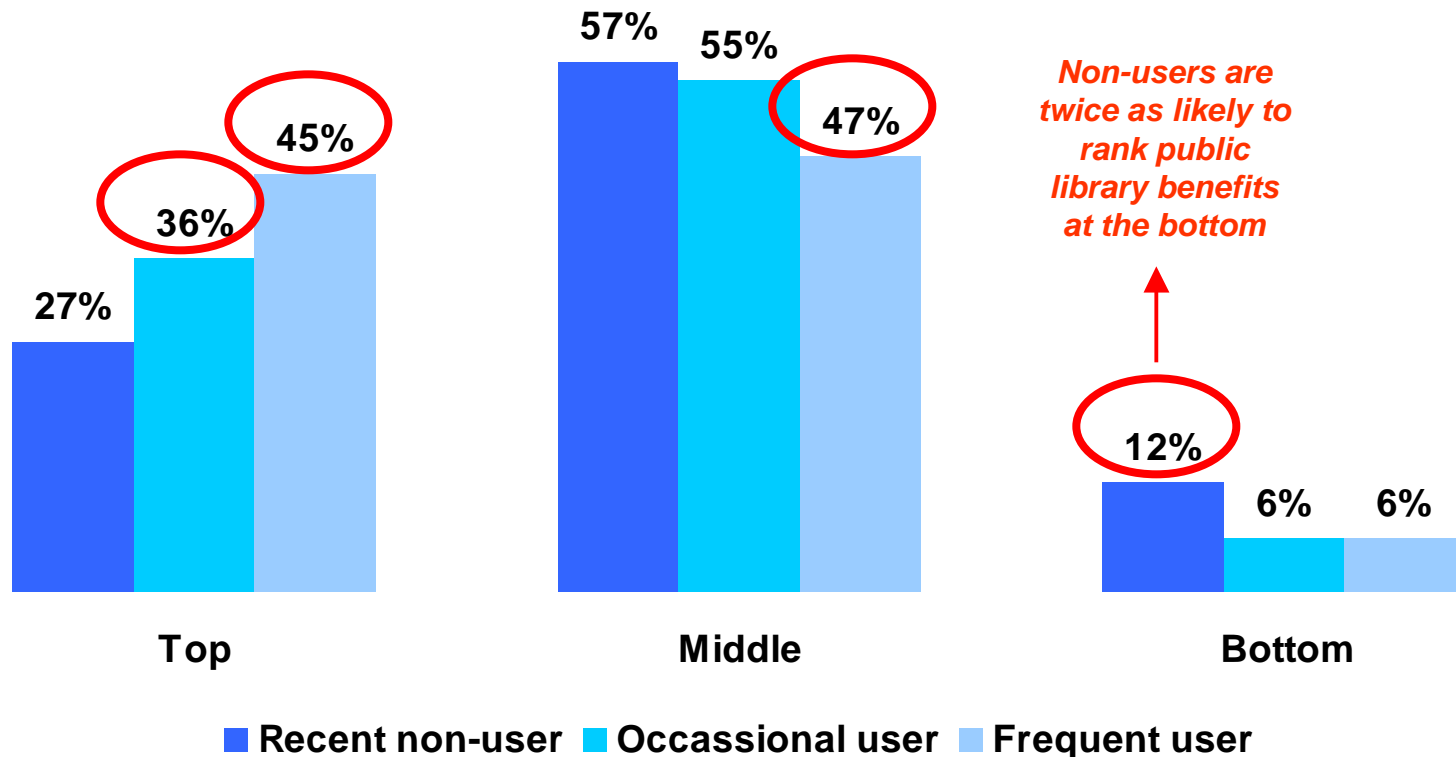


### More likely to put libraries at top of the list:

- Adults that go to the library 11+ times a year (45%)
- College educated women (43%)
- Older women (41%)
- Single adults (41%)
- Library card holders (41%)
- College educated adults (40%)
- Adults without children (38%)
- Adults in metro areas (37%)

Not surprisingly, frequent users are most likely to put the benefits of public libraries at the top of the list

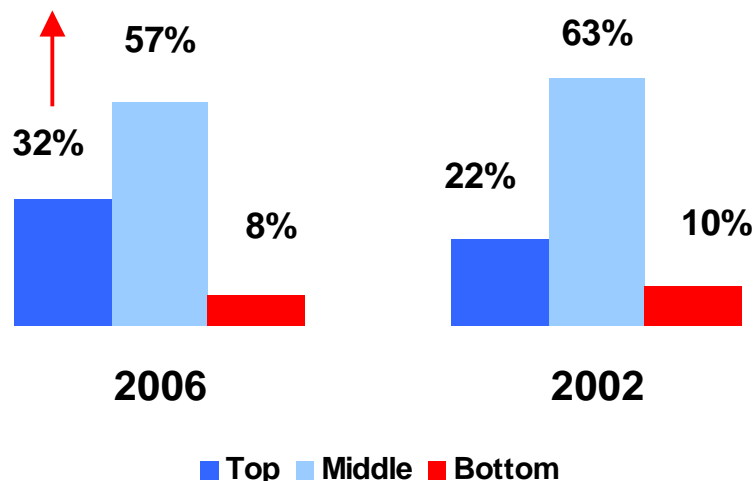
Overall, how would you rank the benefits of the public library compared to the benefits of other tax-supported services, such as schools, parks and roads? Would you say at the top of the list, in the middle or at the bottom of the list?



Further, nearly one-third place librarians at the top in terms of professional value in their community

And, how would you rank the value of librarians in public libraries compared to the value of other professionals in your community? Would you say at the top of the list, in the middle or at the bottom of the list?

*A 10-point increase from 2002*



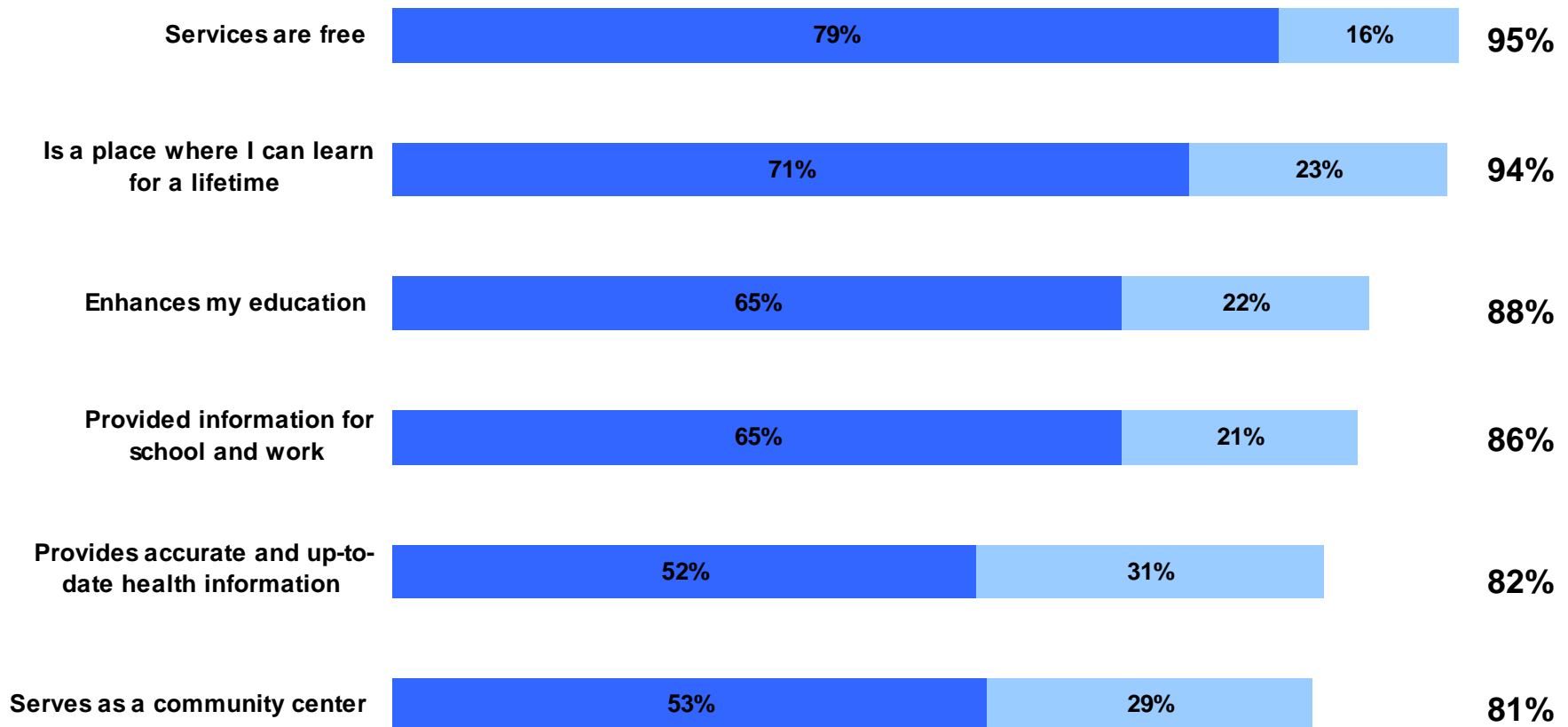
### Most likely to put librarians at the top of the list:

- Adults that go to the library 11+ times a year (45%)
- College educated women (42%)
- Adults 55 and older (38%)
- Library card holders (37%)
- College educated adults (36%)

## Top tier benefits offered by public libraries are free services, educational opportunities and information

Now, let me read you some ways in which public libraries may be valuable or beneficial to different people. For each one, please tell me how important that characteristic or service is to you personally – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all.

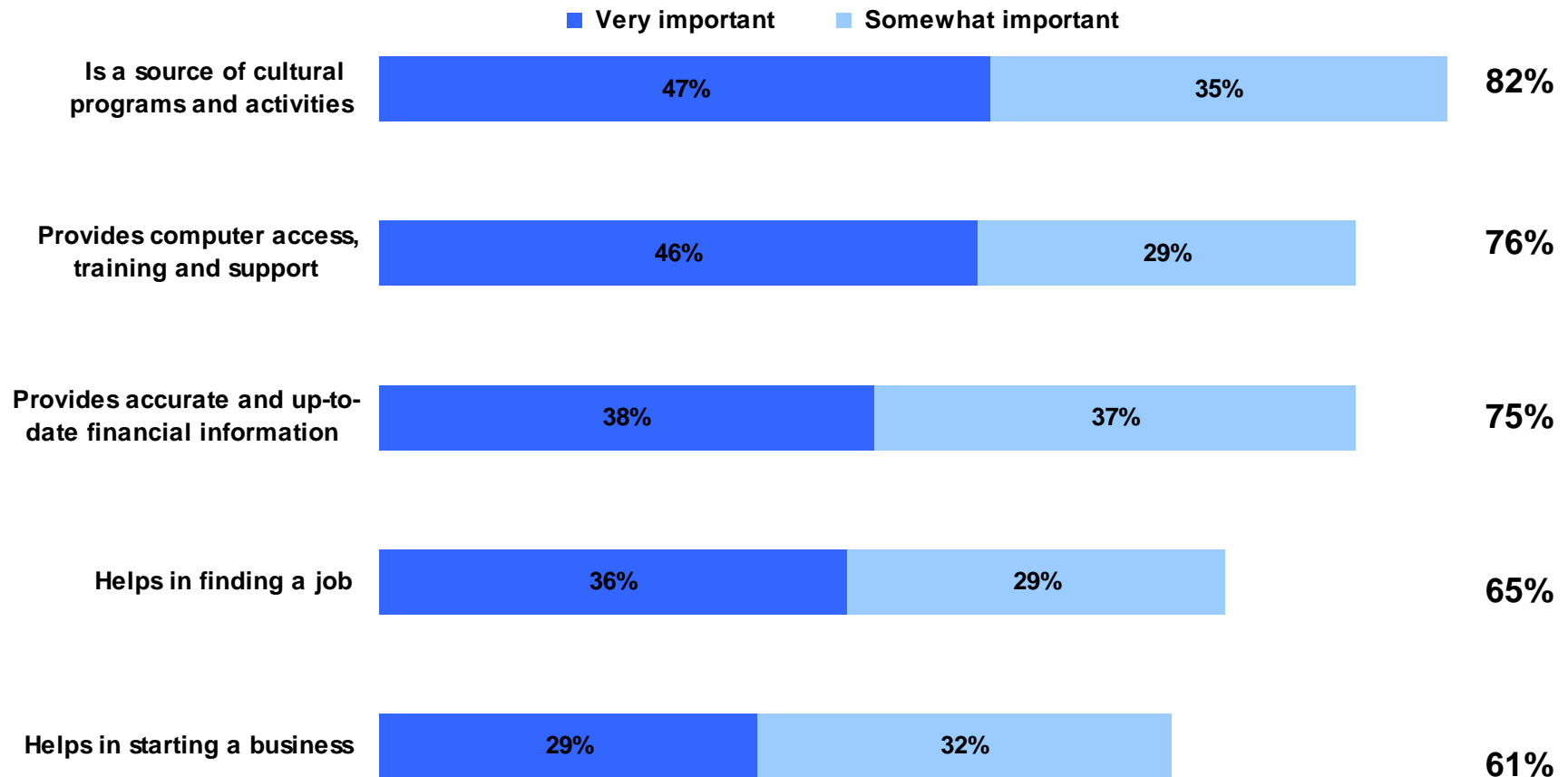
■ Very important    ■ Somewhat important





## A second tier of benefits include cultural enrichment and computer access and support

Now, let me read you some ways in which public libraries may be valuable or beneficial to different people. For each one, please tell me how important that characteristic or service is to you personally – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all.

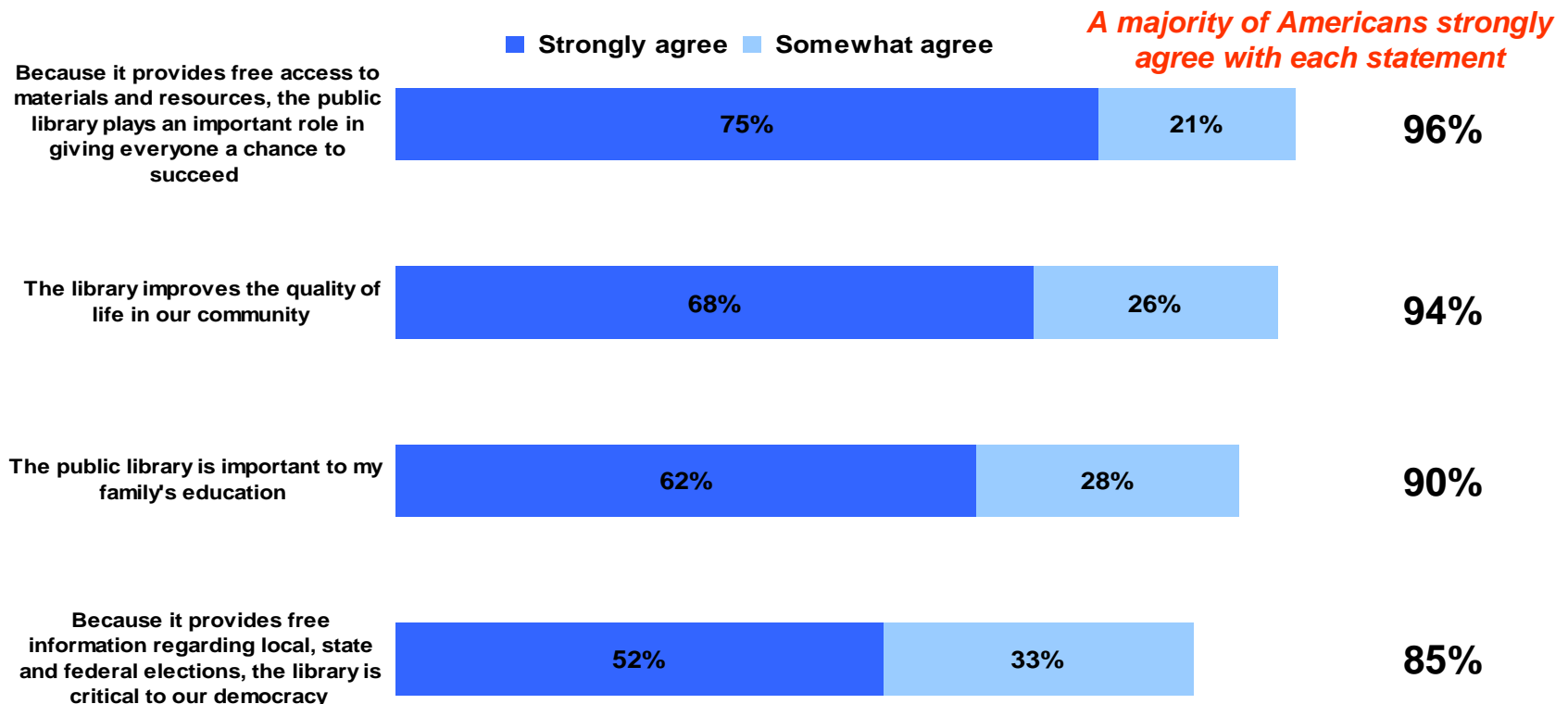


## Demographic and geographic differences

- **Frequent visitors are focused on a few key aspects:** Frequent visitors (11+ times a year) are more likely than Americans overall to say the following aspects of the library are very important: the library services are free (85% very important), it is a place where they can learn for a lifetime (79%), it enhances their education (72%), and it provides information for school and work (73%)
- **The Gender Gap:** Women are more likely than men to say the following characteristics about libraries are very important to them: services are free (84% very important), it is a place where they can learn for a lifetime (75%), it provided information for school and work (69%), provides accurate and up-to-date health information (57%), serves as a community center (59%), is a source of cultural programs and activities (50%), and provides computer access, training and support (50%)
- **Education and work support are key for Americans of Color:** Hispanics and African Americans are more likely to say enhancing their education (77% and 79% respectively) and providing information for school and work (79% and 80% respectively) are very important to them
- **Urban differences:** Adults in urban areas are more likely to say that it is very important that the library serves as a community center (54% very important) and is a source of cultural programs and activities (54%)

Further, Americans strongly agree that because the library provides free access it plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. [IF AGREE/DISAGREE: Do you strongly or somewhat agree/disagree with that statement?]



*Library card holders and library visitors are more likely to strongly agree with all of these statements*

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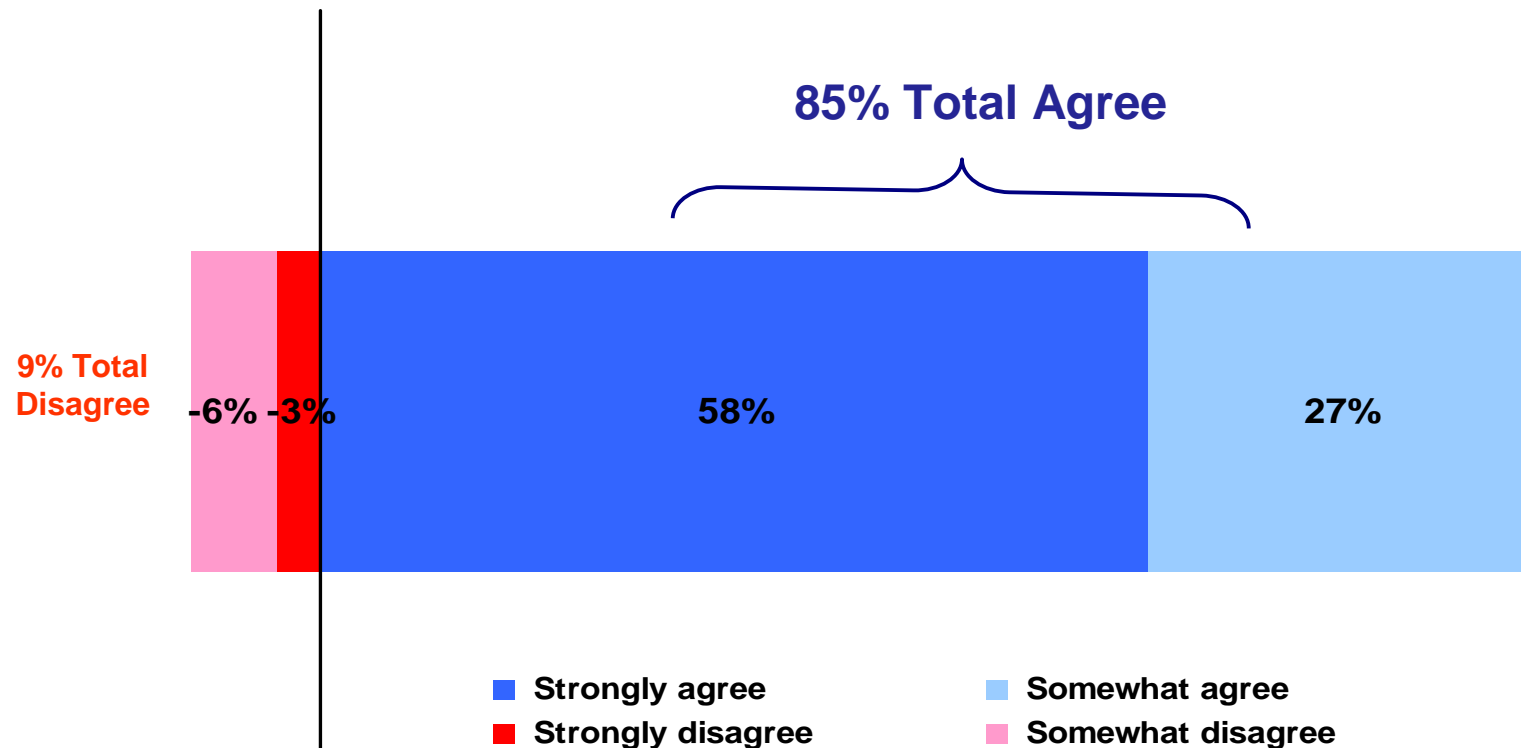
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# Economic Proposition

More than 8 in 10 Americans agree their public library deserves more funding – including a majority who *strongly* agree

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statement:

*My public library deserves more funding*



Frequent and satisfied users are most likely to demand more funding for their public library

**Most likely to *strongly* agree that their library deserves more funding:**

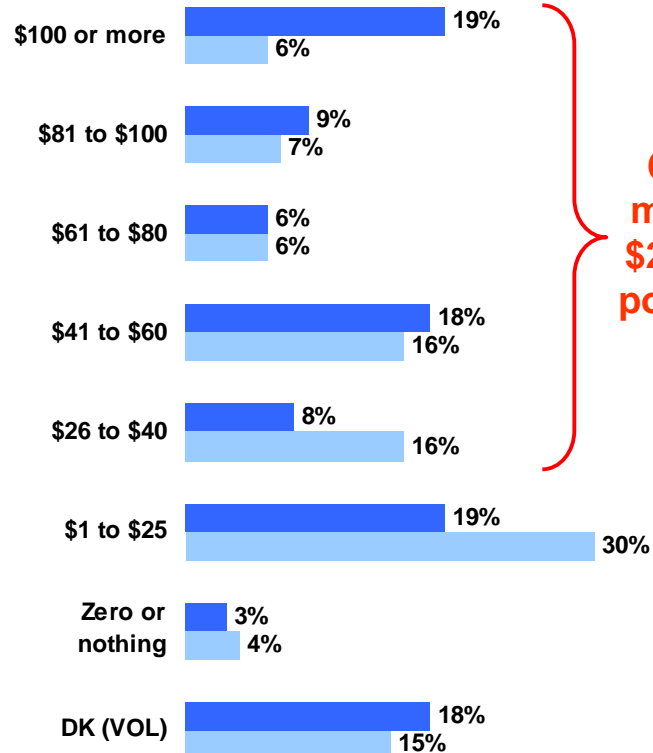
- Hispanics (70%)
- African Americans (69%)
- Mothers (66%)
- Adults who visit the library in-person 11+ times per year (65%)
- Women (64%)
- Adults in urban areas (63%)
- Parents that visit the library with their kids (63%)
- Library card holders (63%)
- Adults who visit the library in-person 1 to 10 times per year (62%)
- Adults that are satisfied with their local public library (60%)

**Most likely to *disagree* that their library deserves more funding:**

- Adults that are not satisfied with their local public library (31%)
- Adults without a library card (13%)
- Adults that have not been to the library in the past year (13%)
- Men (12%)

When asked what *should be* spent on public libraries, 60% of Americans say \$25 or more per person

Communities in the U.S. spend anywhere from less than five dollars per person on public libraries to more than one hundred dollars per person. What do you think should be spent in your community?



60% say more than \$25 - up 9-points from 2002

### Most likely to say spend more than \$25 per person:

- Adults ages 25-34 (68%)
- Adults of color (66%)
  - African Americans (69%)
- In-person library visitors (64%)
- Adults satisfied with library (62%)

### Most likely to say spend \$1-\$25 per person:

- Adults not satisfied with library (31%)
- Adults without a library card (24%)
- Adults who haven't visited the library in the past year (23%)

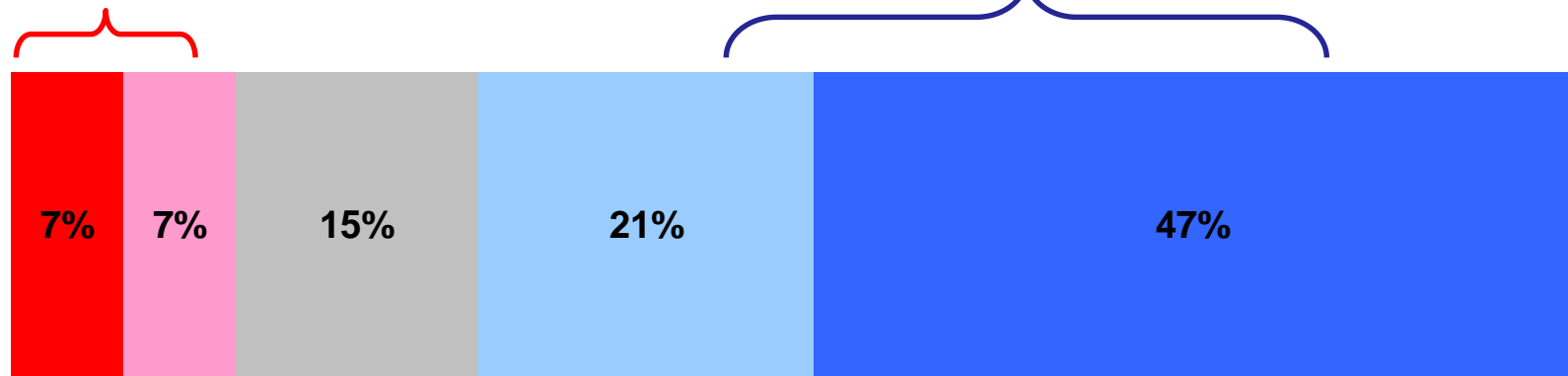
Further, Americans strongly support *increasing* public funding for their public library

On a scale from 0 to 10, where a 0 is “not at all supportive” and a 10 is “very supportive,” how supportive are you personally of increasing public funding for the public library in your community?

**Average Score = 7.01**

**13%**  
Total Not Supportive

**68%**  
Total Supportive



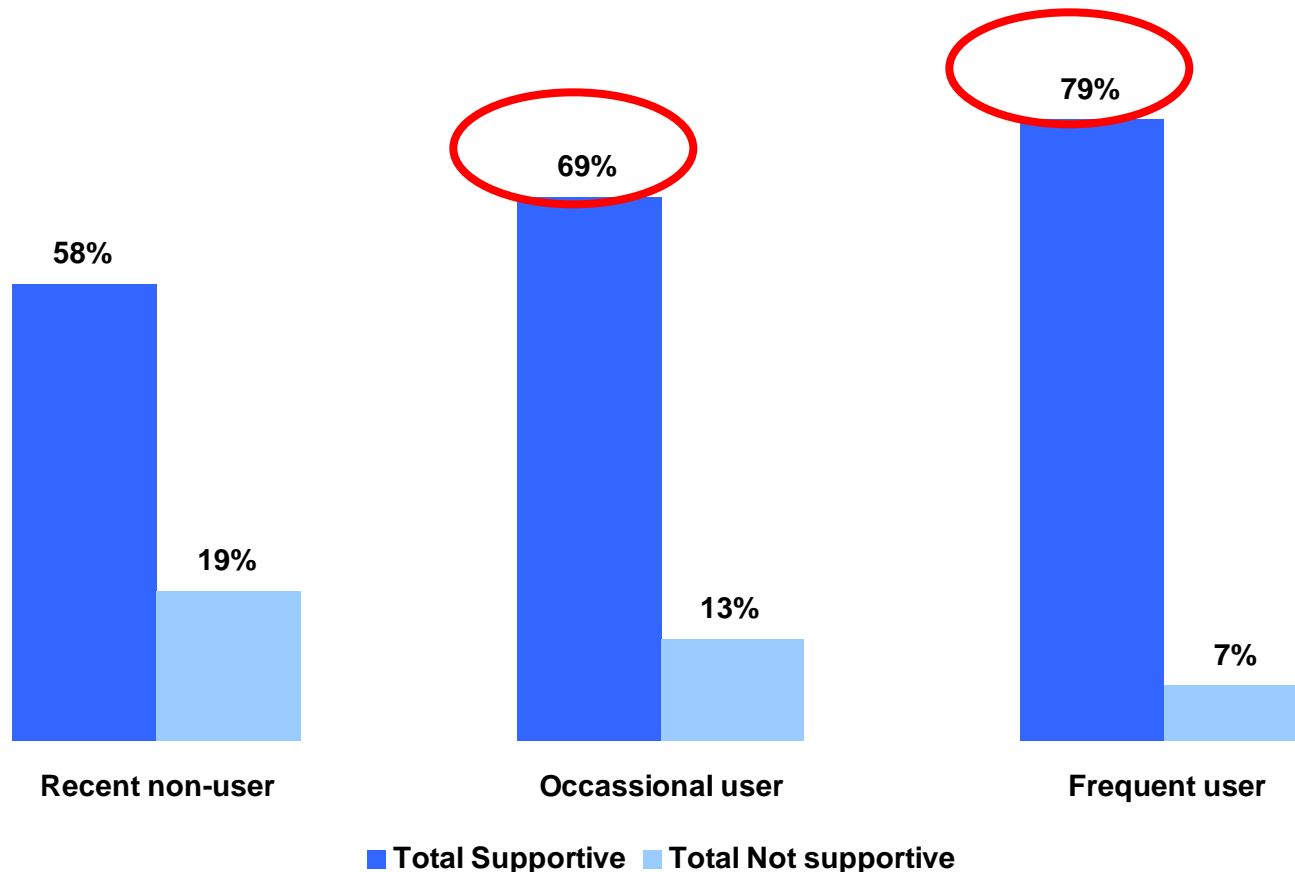
■ Not at all supportive (0,1,2)  
■ Neutral (5)  
■ Very supportive (8,9,10)

■ Not too supportive (3,4)  
■ Somewhat supportive (6,7)



## Frequent users are the most supportive – but even 58% of non-users want more public funding

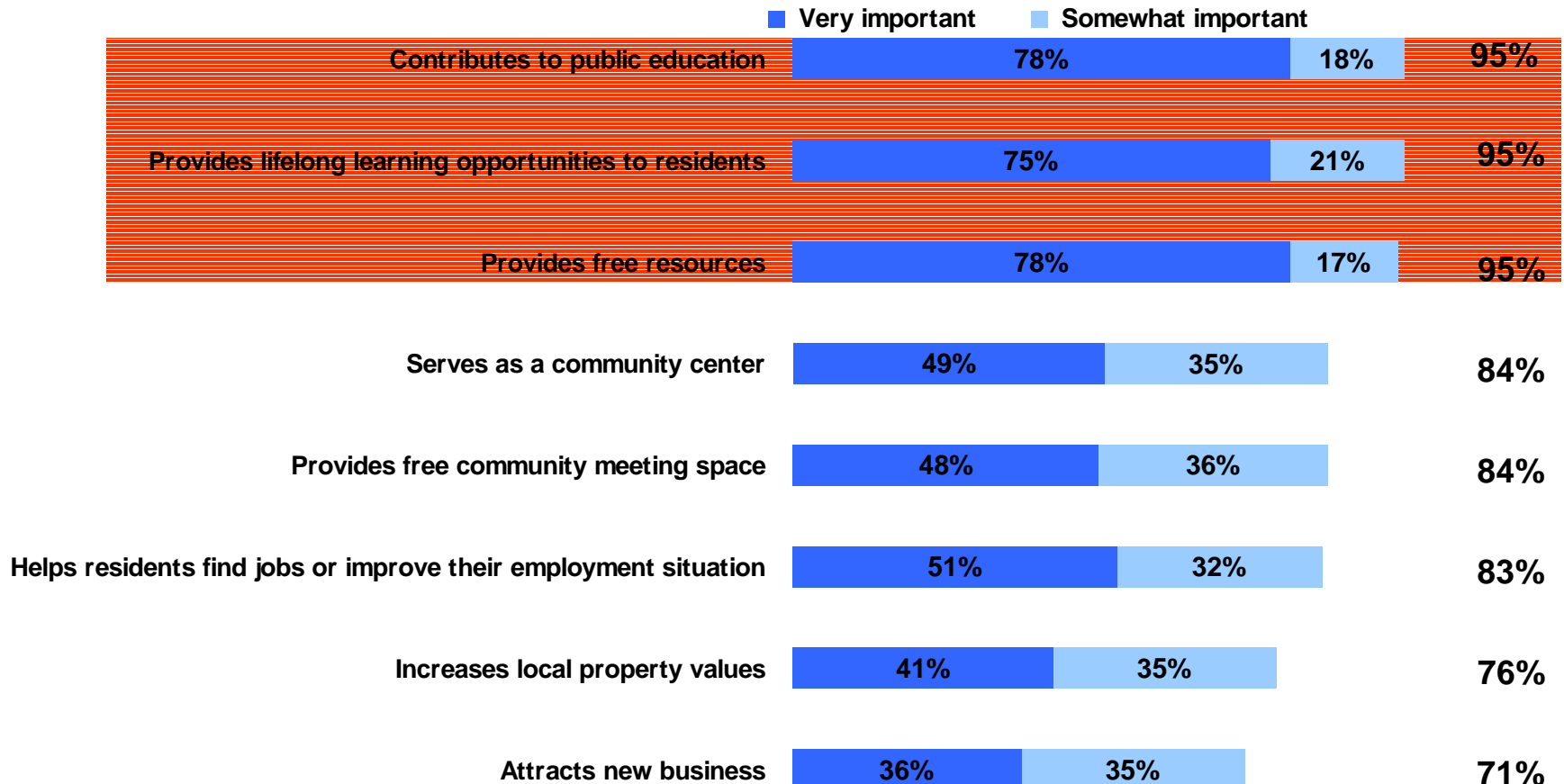
On a scale from 0 to 10, where a 0 is “not at all supportive” and a 10 is “very supportive,” how supportive are you personally of increasing public funding for the public library in your community?



○ indicates significant difference at 95% confidence level

## Contributing to education, lifelong learning opportunities and providing free resources are the top economic benefits of public libraries

Now, let me read you some possible economic benefits of public libraries. For each one, please tell me how important that benefit is to you personally – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all.



## Demographic differences

- **Frequent users place even more importance on many economic benefits:** frequent library visitors (11+ visits per year) are more likely than adults overall to say the following economic benefits are *very* important: provides free resources (88%), provides lifelong learning opportunities (85%), contributes to public education (84%), provides free community meeting space (52%), and that the public library increases local property values (48%)
- **Parents focus on free services and learning:** parents are even more likely than those without younger children to say the following economic benefits are very important: contributes to public education (82%), provides free resources (81%), and that it provides lifelong learning opportunities (78%)
- **Free services and employment assistance are key to adults of color:** African Americans are more likely to say that it is very important that the library provides free resources (85%); both African American and Hispanics say that it is very important that the public library helps residents find jobs or improve their employment situation (78% and 63% respectively)
- **Baby boomers are interested in property values:** half (50%) of adults ages 55-64 say that it is very important that the library increases local property values; in contrast, 62% of young adults (ages 25-34) say it is very important that the public library helps residents find jobs or improve their employment situation

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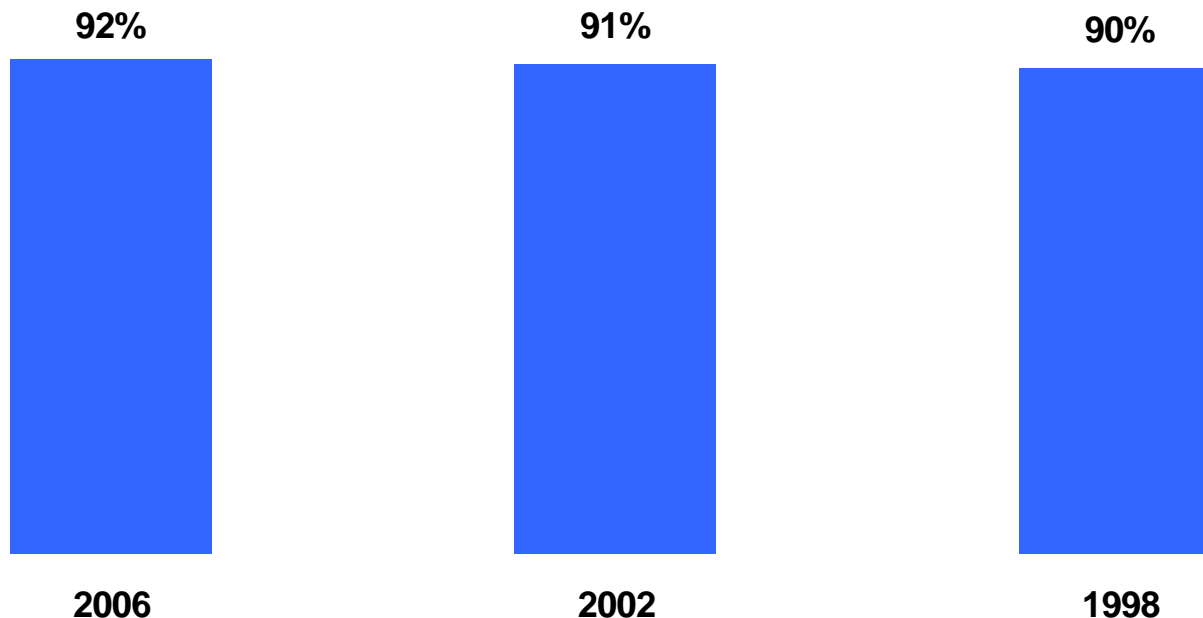
# Future of Public Libraries

## Americans almost unanimously continue to believe public libraries will be needed in the future

Let me read you two statements and please tell me which one comes closest to your own point of view: Some people think libraries will no longer exist in the future, because of all of the information available on the Internet. Other people think libraries will still be needed despite all of the information available on the Internet.

Do you think libraries will no longer exist in the future, or do you think they will still be needed?

### % saying “libraries will still be needed”

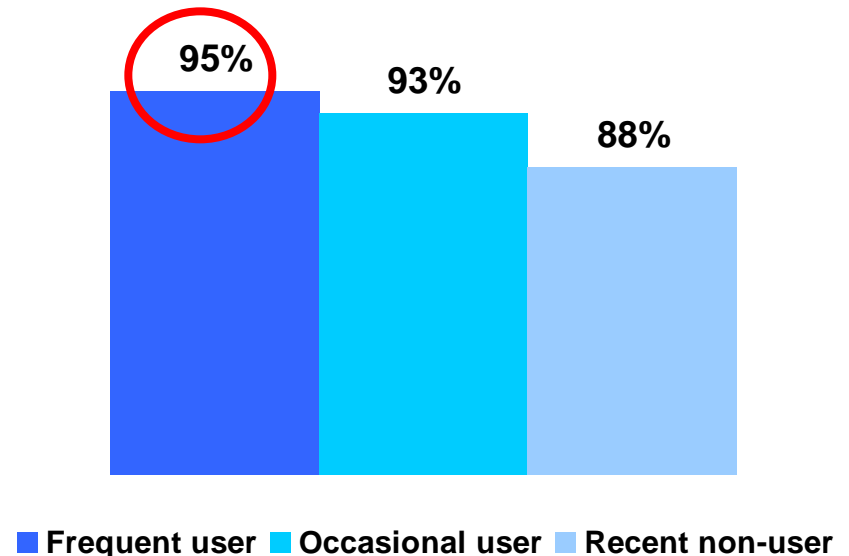
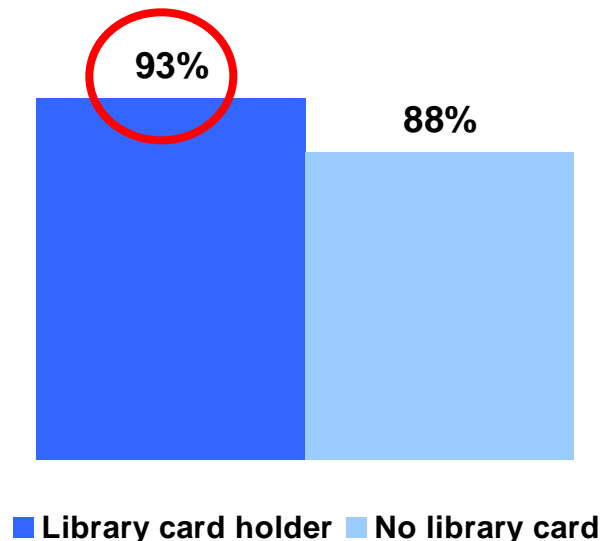


*More than 8 of 10 adults across all demographic and geographic subgroups believe libraries will be needed in the future*

## Even adults not using their public libraries strongly believe they will still be needed in the future

Let me read you two statements and please tell me which one comes closest to your own point of view. Some people think libraries will no longer exist in the future, because of all of the information available on the Internet. Other people think libraries will still be needed despite all of the information available on the Internet. Do you think libraries will no longer exist in the future, or do you think they will still be needed?

### % saying “libraries will still be needed”





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