



Library as seen by professionals

FINAL REPORT ON QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS 2019

INTRODUCTION

New information about library professionals

There are about 5,000 library professionals in Finland, and as many as a third of them responded to our questionnaire. Thank you for your interest!

The results paint an extensive picture of the present and future of the professional field.

The questionnaire results reveal library work to be a social occupation. The most important things for employees are meeting and interacting with patrons, variety of duties, and the chance to work with literature and culture.

The questionnaire introduced a typical library worker: a Finnish-speaking (93 %) woman (82 %), who is middle-aged (58 % between 41 and 60 years), loyal to their employer (55 % has been employed by the same employer for over 10 years) and is concerned about the future of libraries (72 %), but feels like their job is meaningful and important, and is often inspired by their work (90 %).

The field needs more employees from different age groups, language- and cultural backgrounds. Only with a varied professional field can we better serve the library users. We also need professional movement between different libraries. Furthermore, it is alarming how few professionals under 30 years old work in the field. We need new generations to develop an interest in the field and to create a new kind of library work.

Why a young person should study library science and work in a library? According to the questionnaire, the answer is because of values. As many as 9 out of 10 library workers feel their work is meaningful and important.

Same number of people often feel inspired by their work, and even a larger number (92 %) feel they have found their niche. According to working life research, in the future it will be even more important for the work values to meet the worker's personal values.

Values unite professionals working in different libraries. In addition to customer service, a significant part of workers' motivation originates from the values of equality, culture, and literature. Library promotes literacy and social equality, as well as promotes culture and assists in developing thinking.

This questionnaire originated in Minerva, which is a group connecting professional librarian organisations and non-profit associations. The questionnaire was carried out by Pentagon Insight Oy, and it was funded by Finnish Library Association.

Rauha Maarno

Director of Finnish Library Association

Minerva group consists of: Finland's Swedish Library Association FSBF rf, The Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors JHL (SAK), The Federation of Public and Private Sector Employees Jyty (STTK), Akava Special Branches / The association of municipal experts KUMULA ry (AKAVA), Finnish Library Association ry, The Finnish Research Library Association STKS ry, The Finnish Union of University researchers and Teachers / The Association of Academic Information Specialists INA ry (AKAVA), and The Association of Finnish University and Research Establishment Staff YHL ry (Trade Union Pro)

Carrying out the questionnaire

The questionnaire was implemented in two phases, both of which involved library professionals from different library types.

The actual questionnaire was realised online in March 2019. Information about the questionnaire was spread via different libraries' own channels. Over 3,000 library professionals viewed the questionnaire, with a total of 1,686 responding to it. There were respondents from all different library types, the most coming from public libraries.

This work was preceded by a qualitative online collection of information, which allowed library professionals to describe the questionnaire themes in their own words. A total of 31 Finnish- and Swedish-speaking library professionals from around Finland participated in the qualitative collection of information.

The phrasing and design of the questions in the quantitative questionnaire followed the perspectives and topics brought up by the library professionals themselves. This ensured the questions posed to the library professionals concerned relevant matters and were phrased correctly.

Contents

Who were the respondents?

Library professionals' everyday life

Changing libraries

Library education and working life today

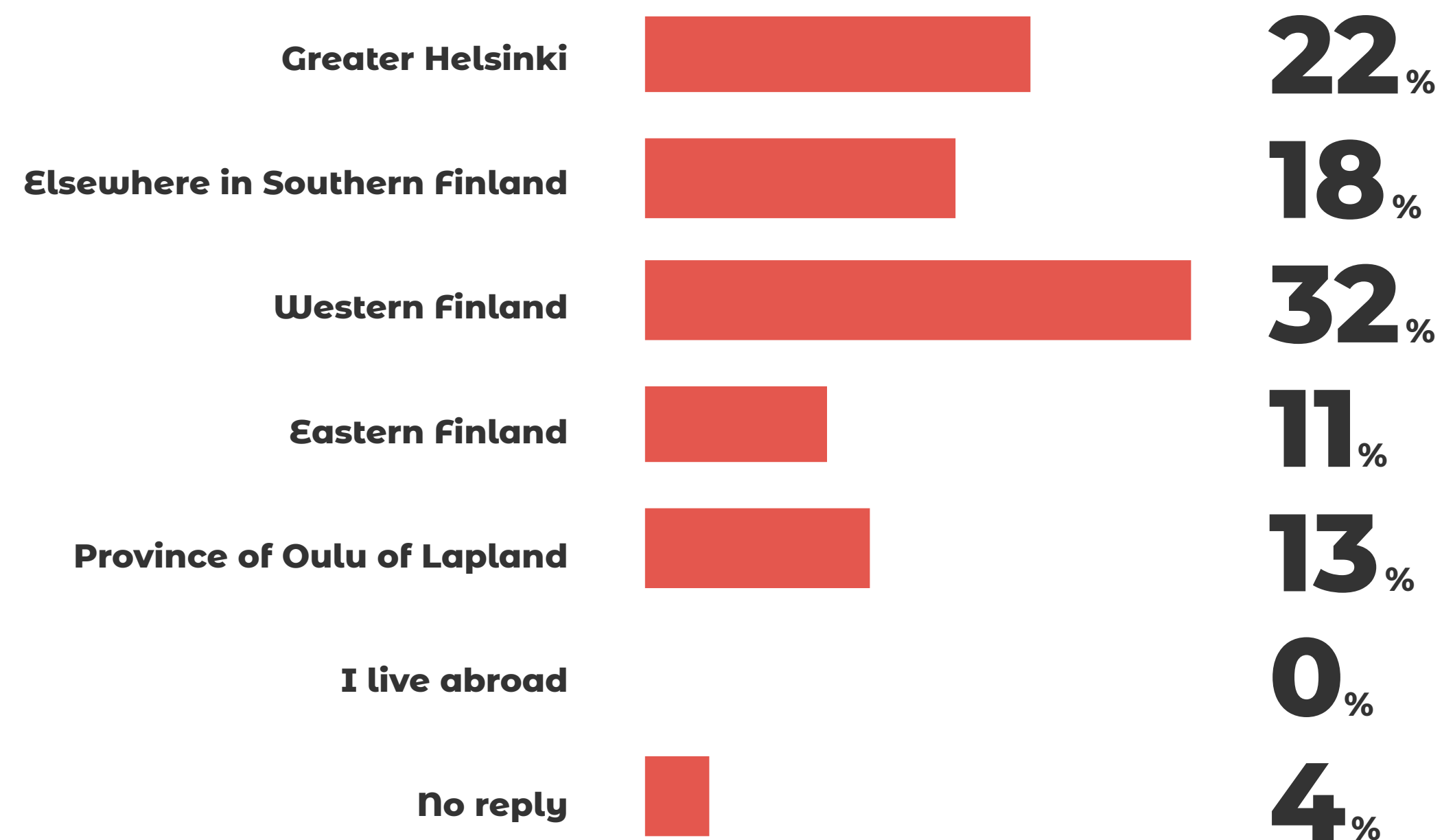
Library professionals' vision for libraries

Who were the respondents?

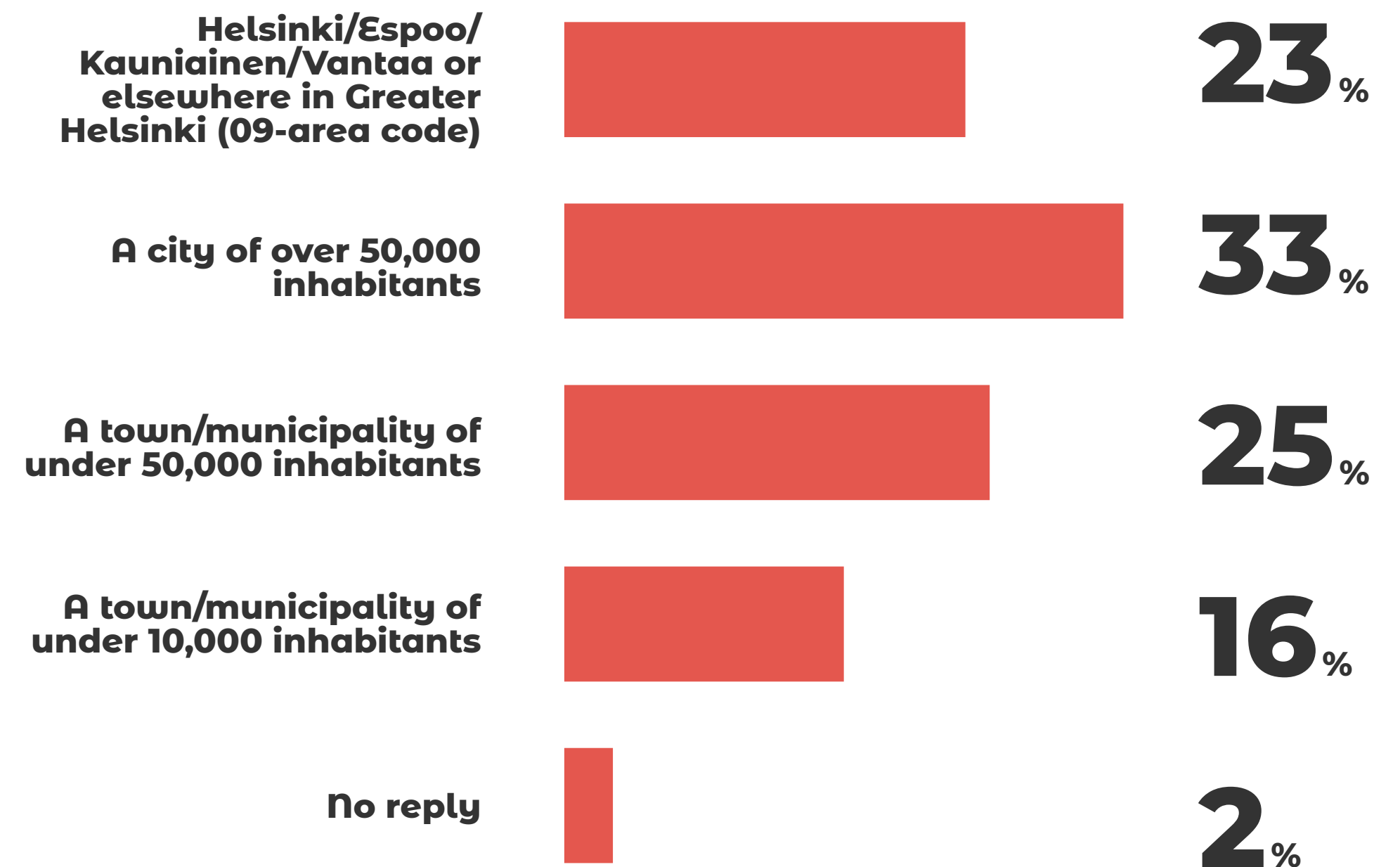
1,686 LIBRARY PROFESSIONAL FROM AROUND FINLAND AND FROM DIFFERENT LIBRARIES RESPONDED TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

The respondents live and work in different parts of Finland

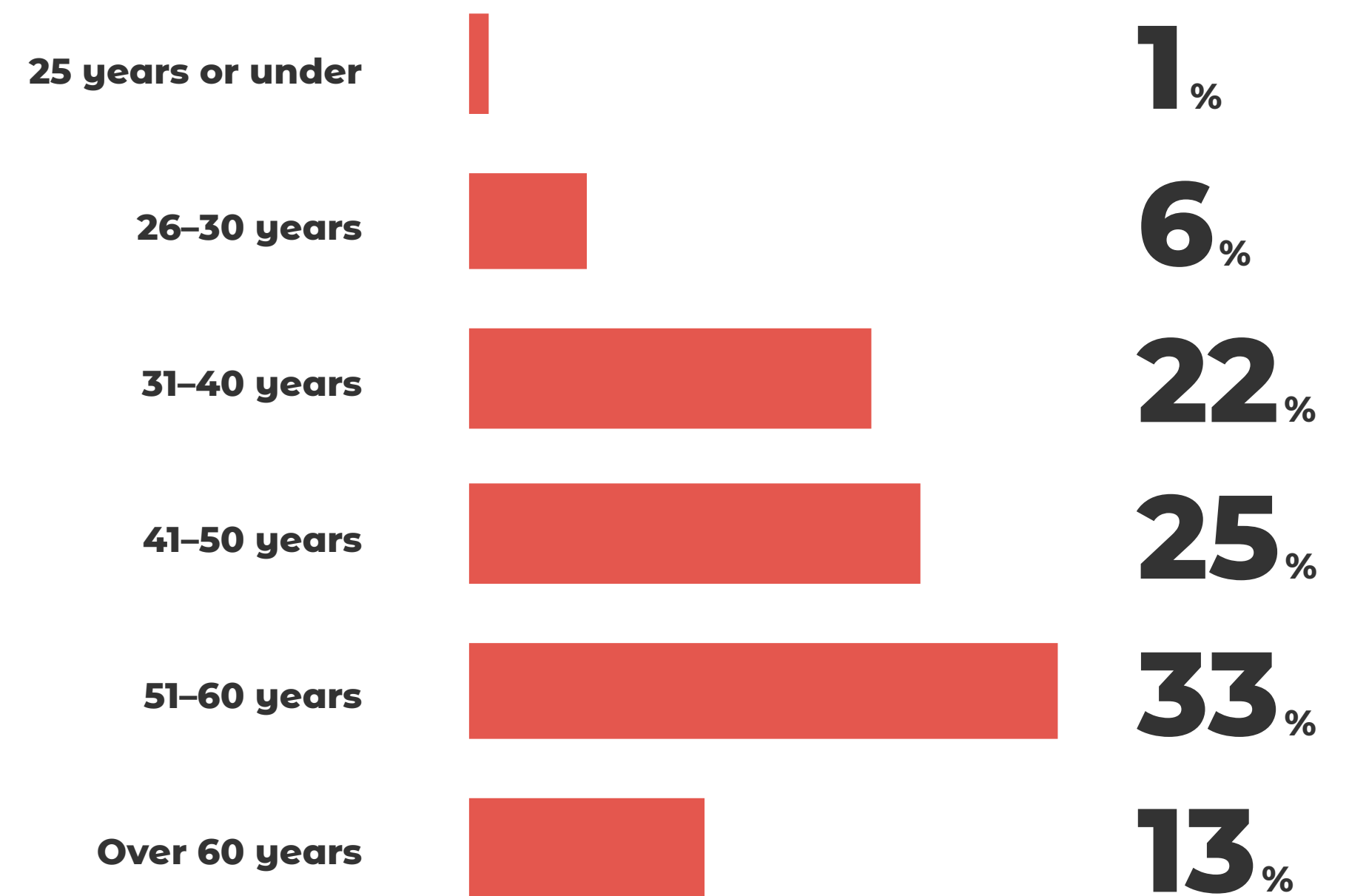
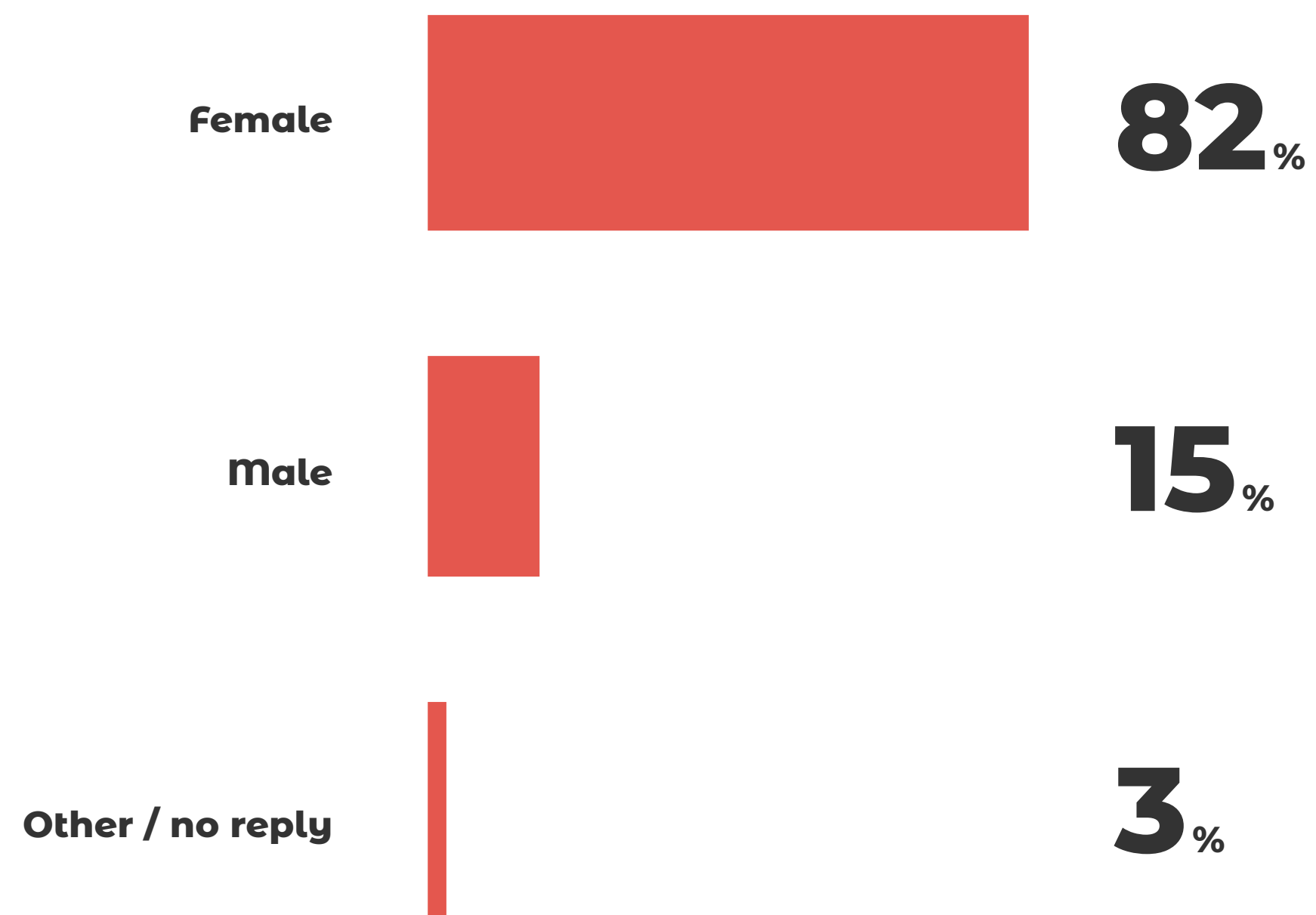
Where do you live?



What is the town or municipality where you work?

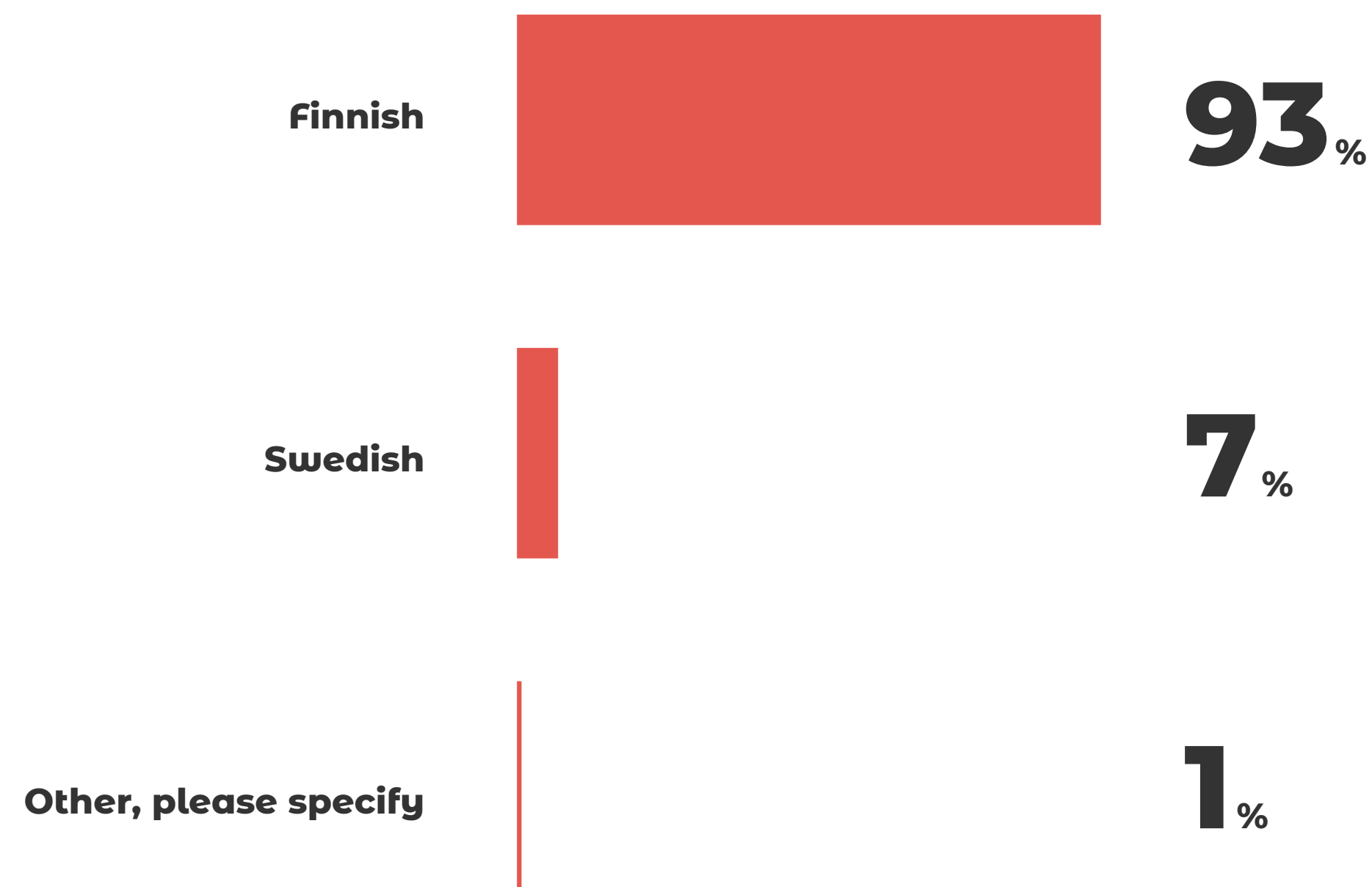


The group of respondents is female-dominated and consists mostly of those over the age of 30



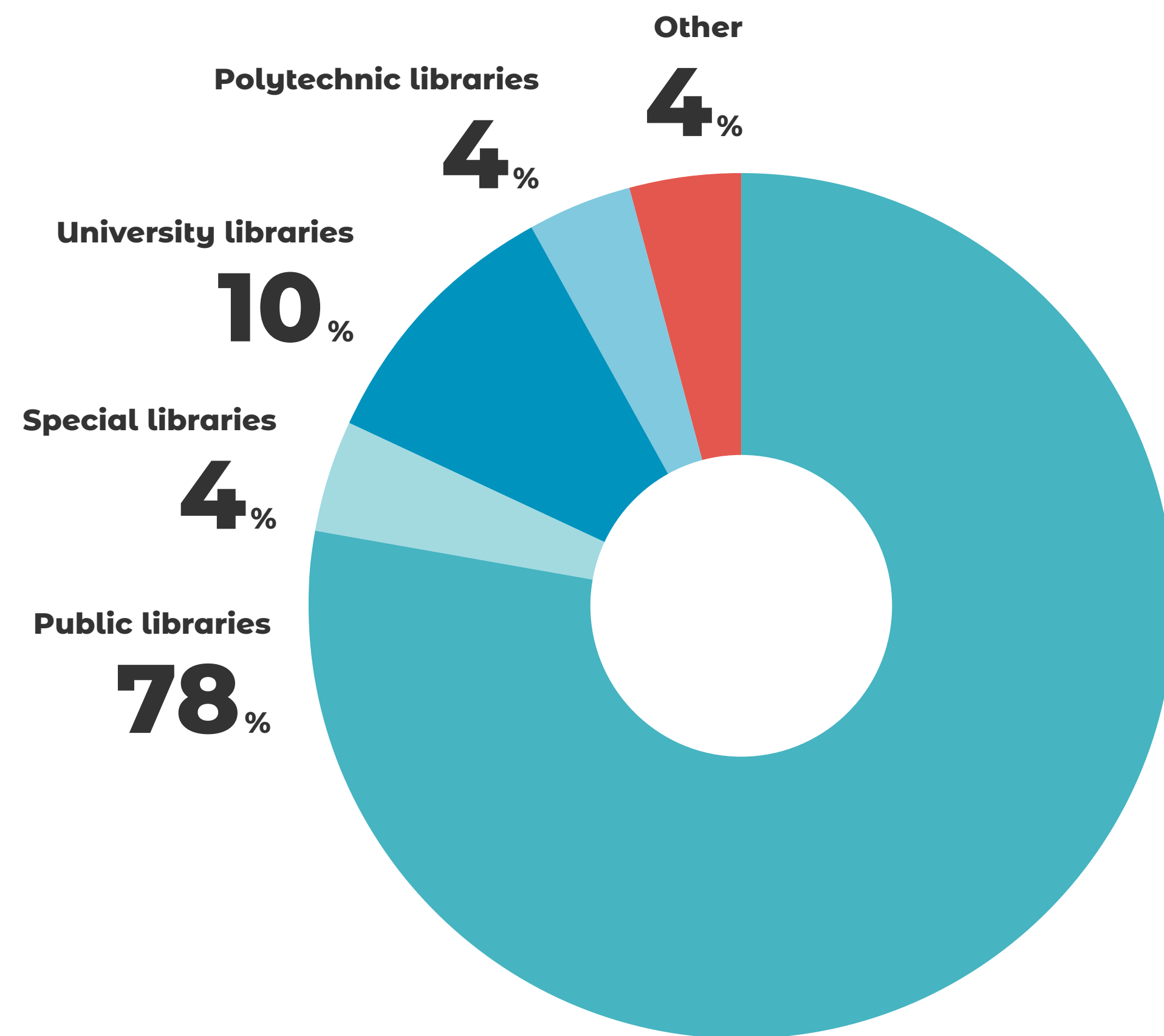
There were questionnaire responds in both official languages

Your native language?



Respondents' other native languages: Russian, Albanian, Czech, Hungarian, German, Ingrian Finnish

There were responds from different libraries, with a slight emphasis on public libraries

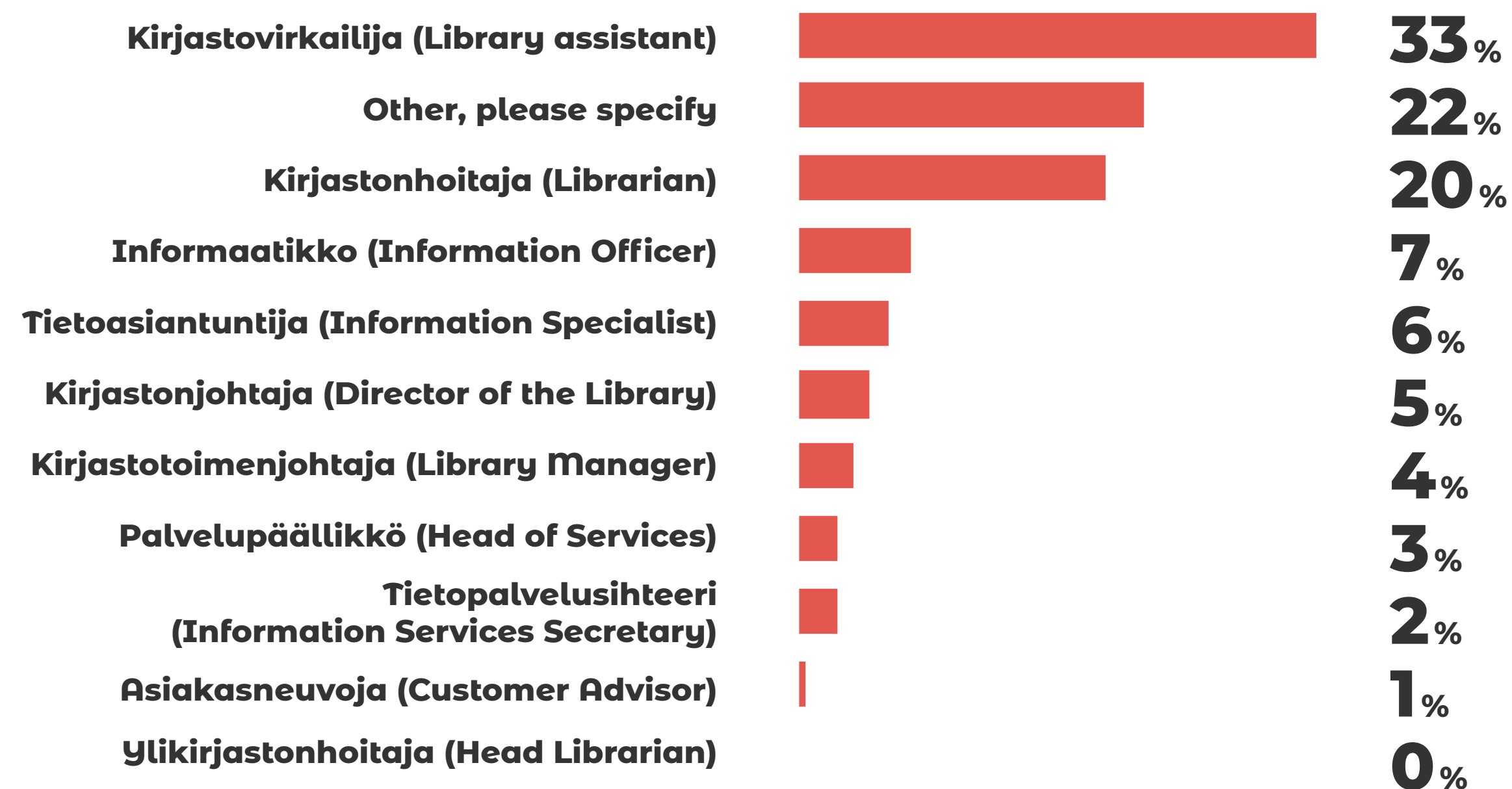


In Finland, there are about 5,000 people working in the library field, with 3,500 (70%) working in public libraries. Public library workers were therefore slightly emphasised in the respondent group.

However, all in all there were plenty of respondents from different libraries. Information about the questionnaire was disseminated evenly via different libraries' channels, so everyone had an equal opportunity to respond to it.

Library assistant and librarian are the most common titles

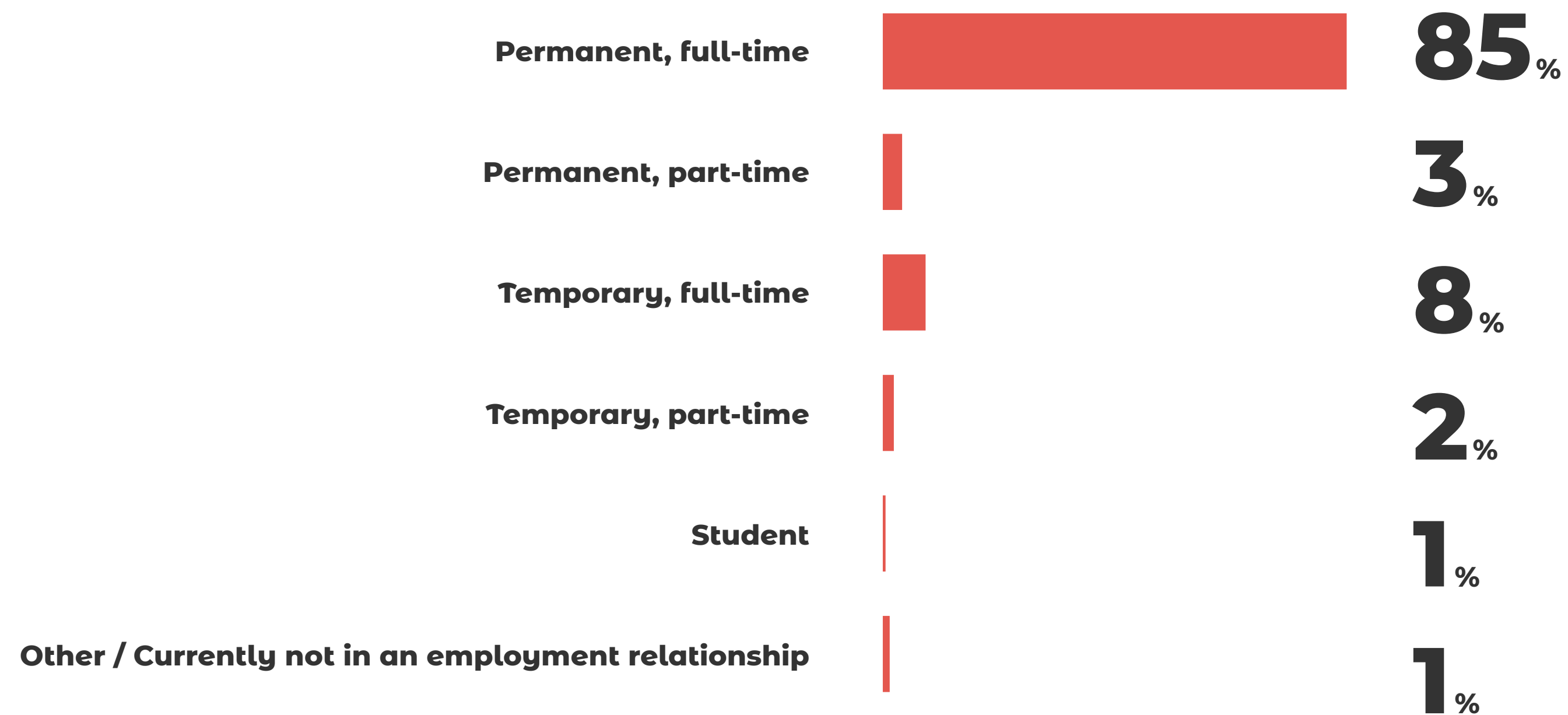
What is your job title?



There is a lot of variation in the titles. Over a fifth works under a different title than those listed here.

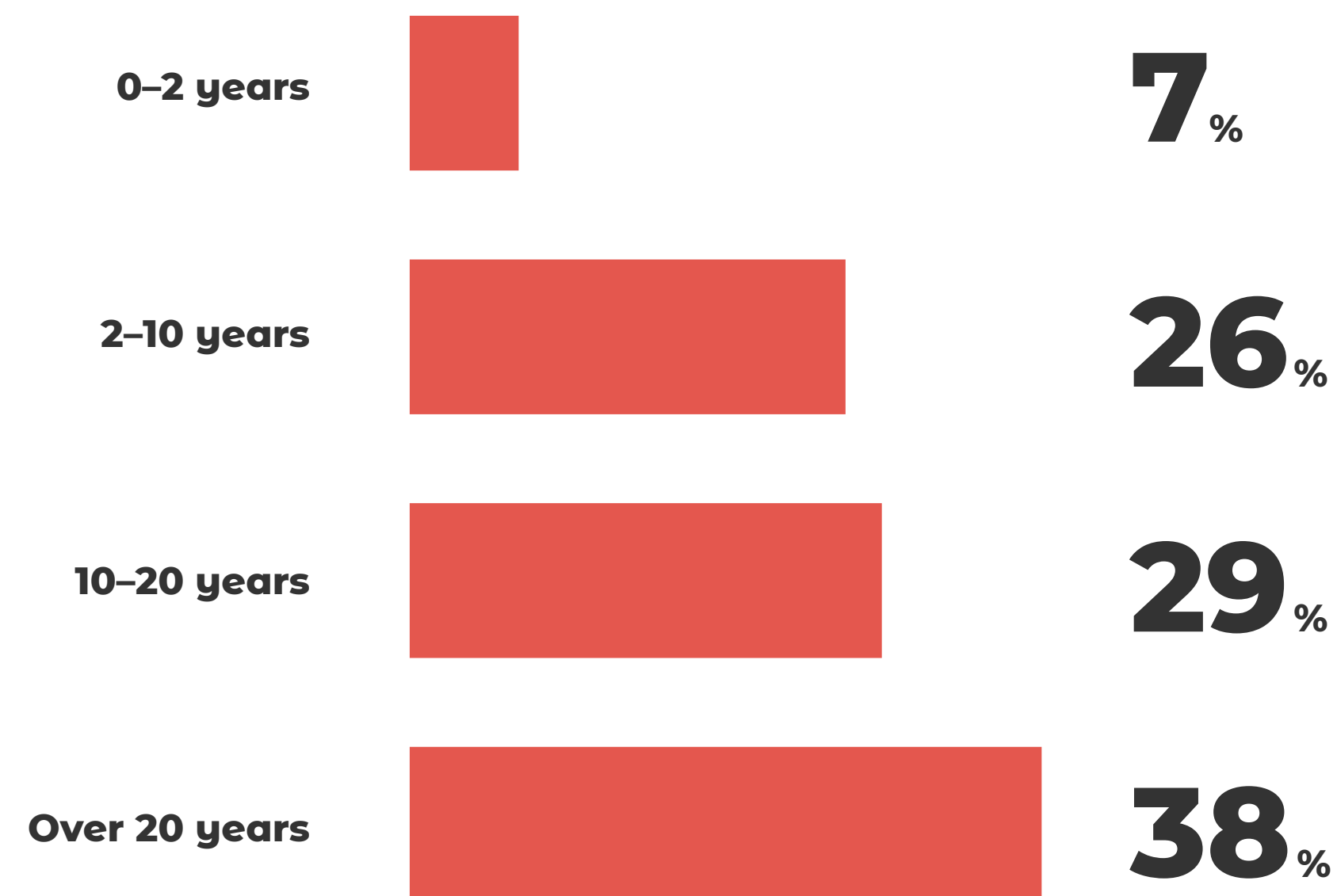
Most of the respondents have a permanent, full-time job

Type of your employment?



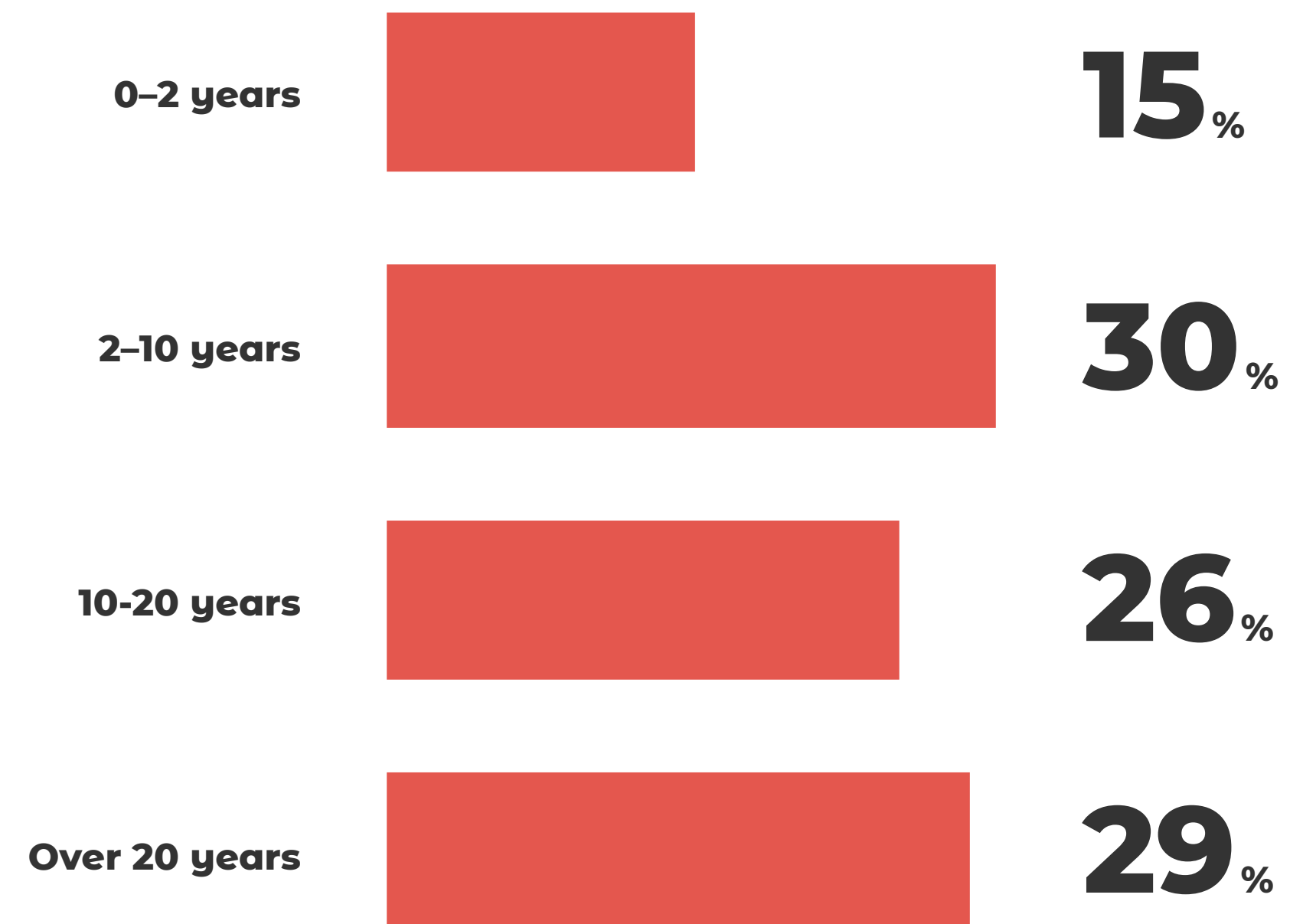
Those with a long experience on the field stand out from the respondent group

How long have you worked in the library field (at least part-time)?



Long working careers with one employer are common

How long have you worked for your current employer?

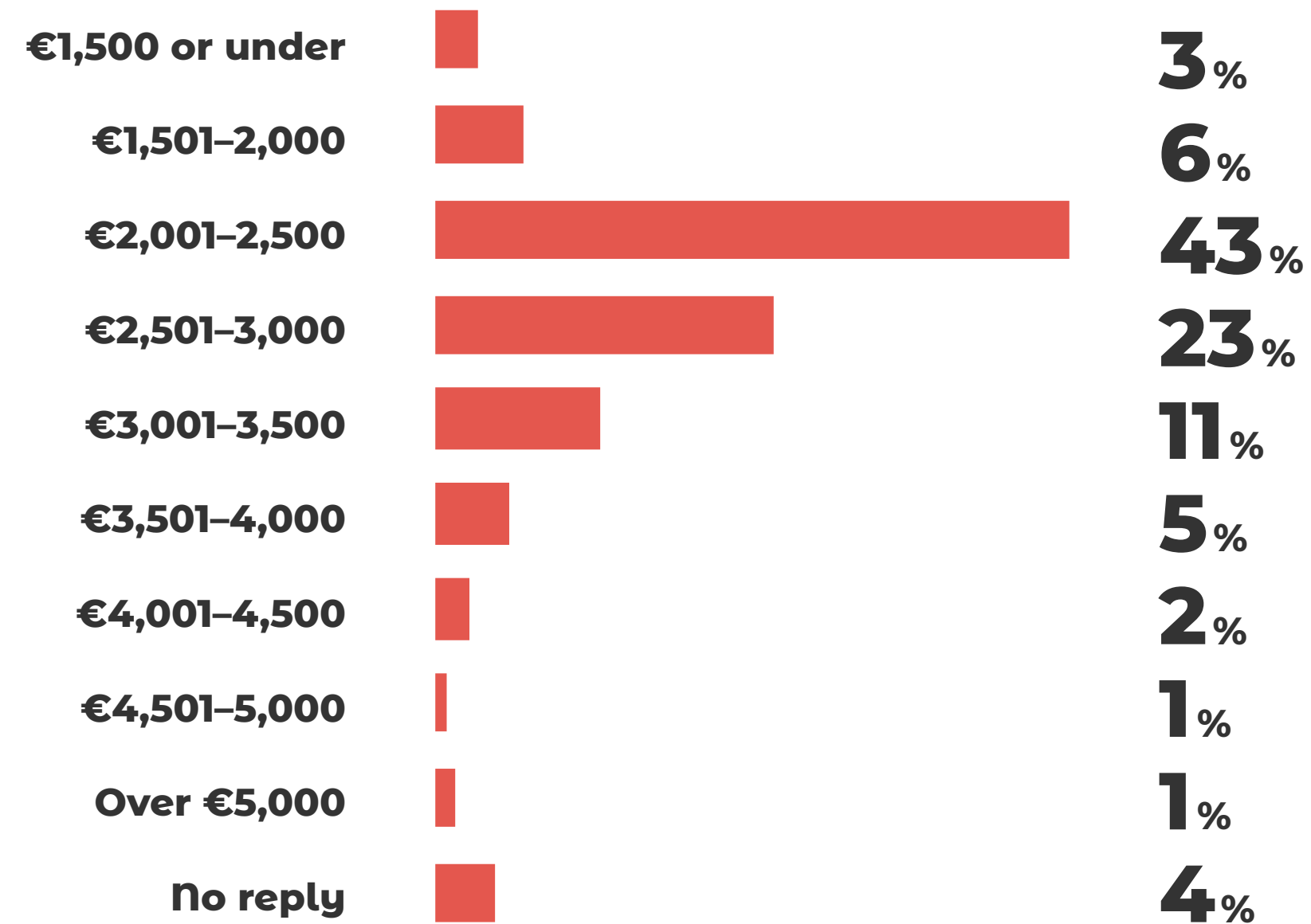


More than a half (55%) of the respondents have worked for their current employer for at least 10 years.

The most typical monthly salary is between 2,000 and 2,500 euro

What is your monthly salary from library work (before taxes)?

If there are salary components that are paid less frequently than once a month, answer according to an average monthly salary calculated based on your annual income.

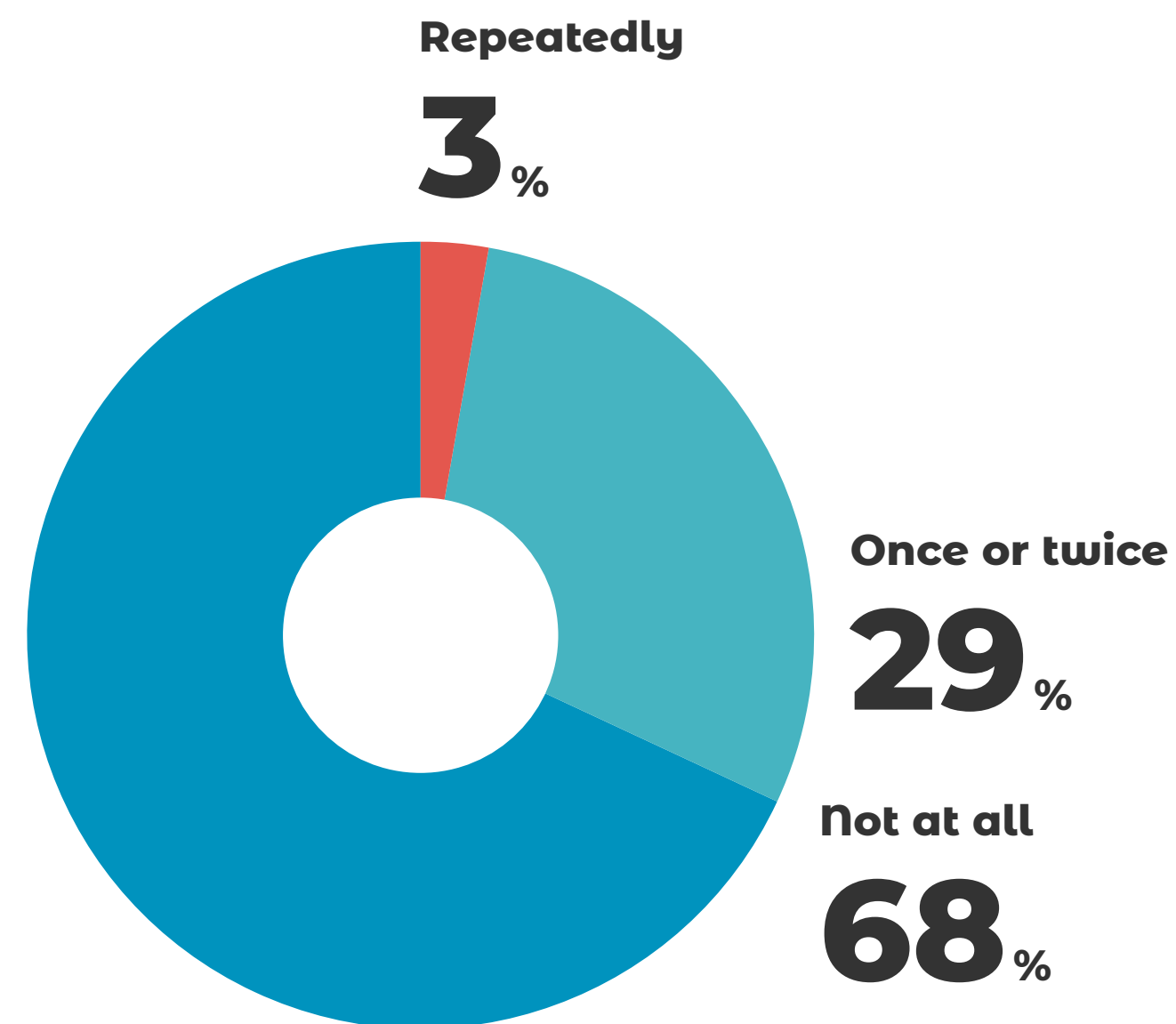


Those with a salary under €1,500 all work part-time.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY:

Nearly a third of library professionals have experienced threatening situations in the last two years


Have you experienced threatening situations in your work in the last two years?



Threatening situations concern especially public libraries. Nearly all of those experiencing continual threatening situations work in a public library. Occasional threatening situations occur in all kinds of libraries.

LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' EVERYDAY LIFE - WHAT IS IT LIKE?

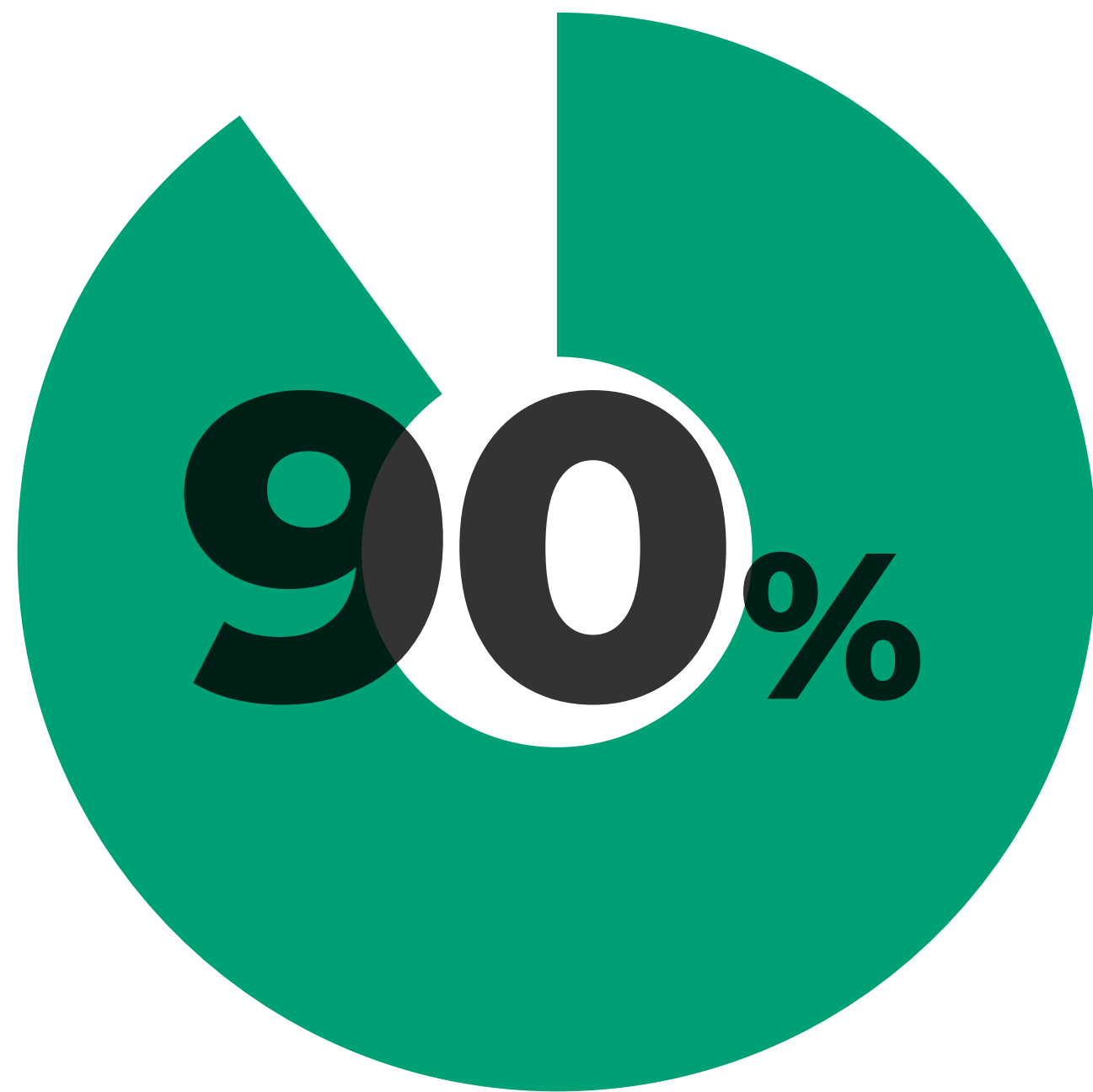
Shared interests, diverse competencies



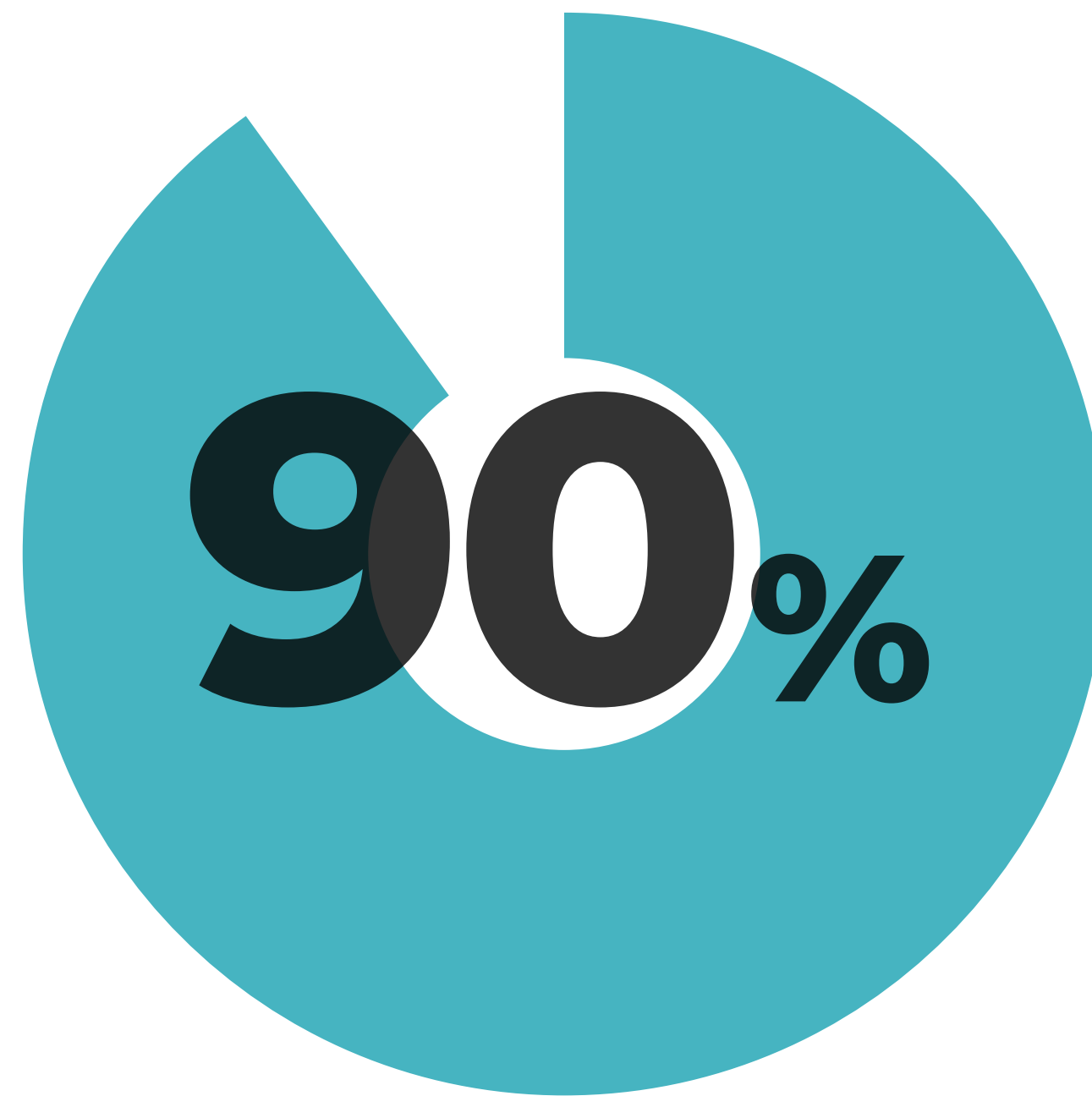
“The best thing is the people’s joy of books and reading.”

The importance of library work manifests itself as interest and dedication

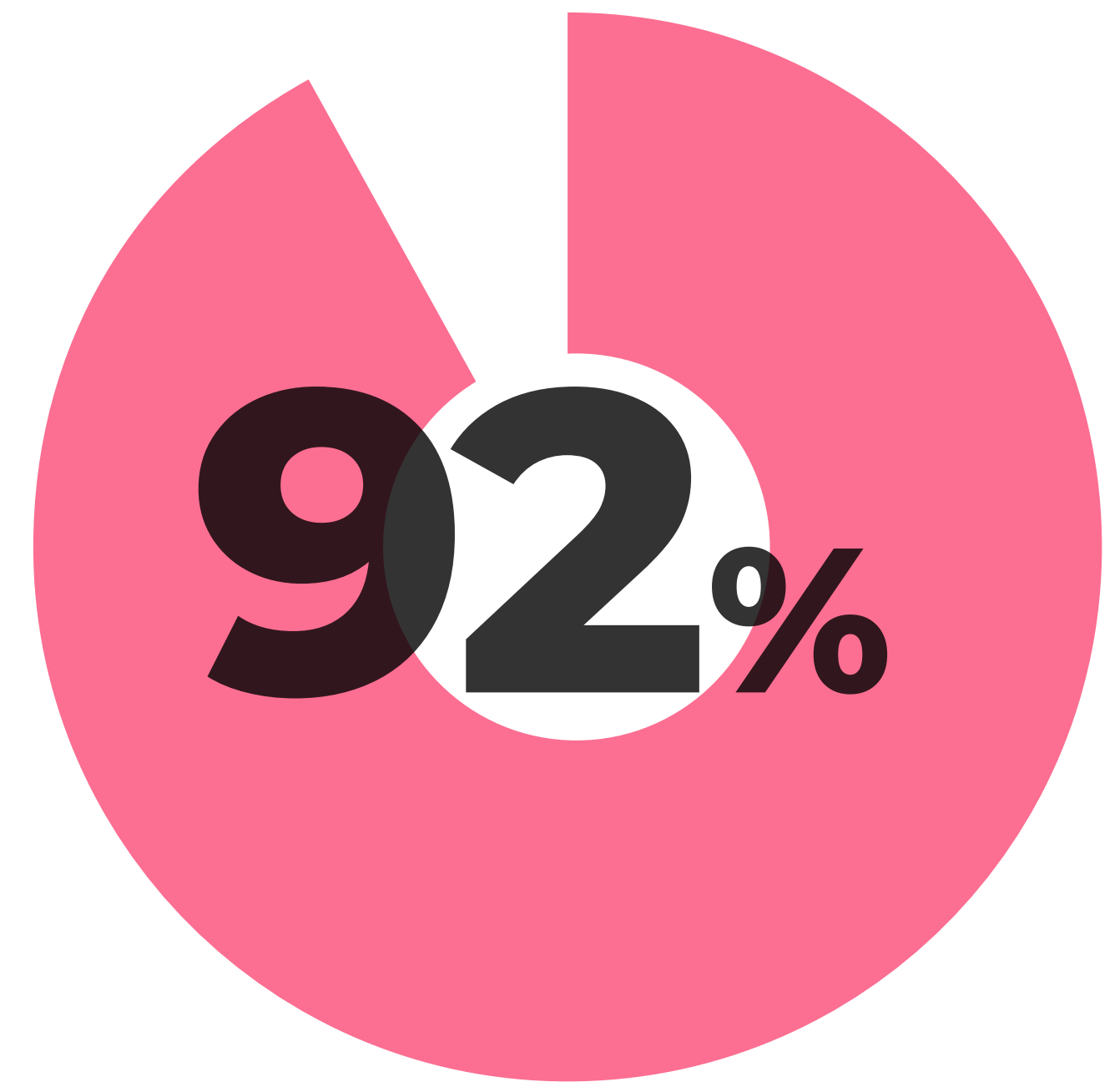
I feel my work is important and meaningful



I often feel inspired by my job

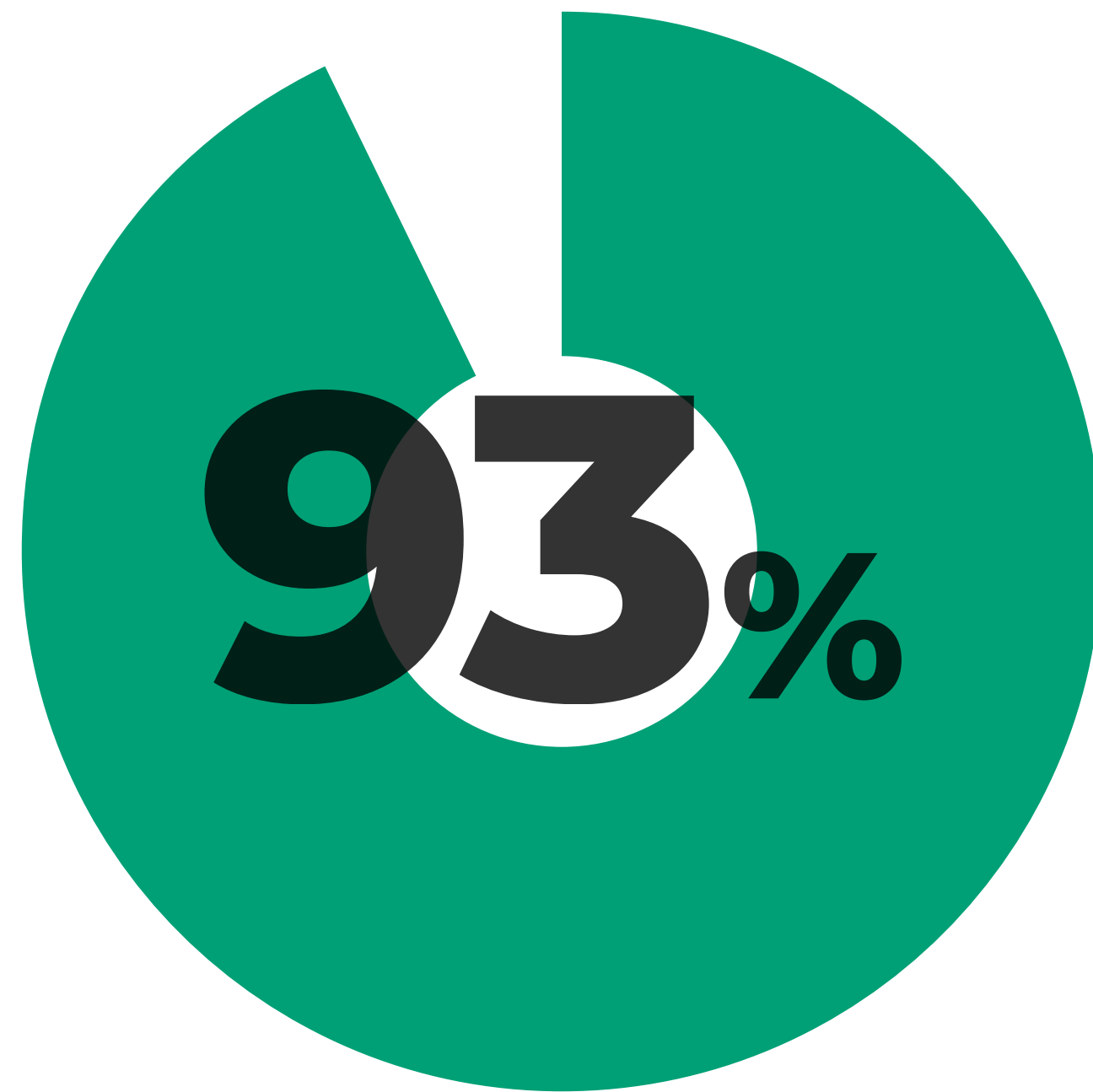


I feel I have found my niche

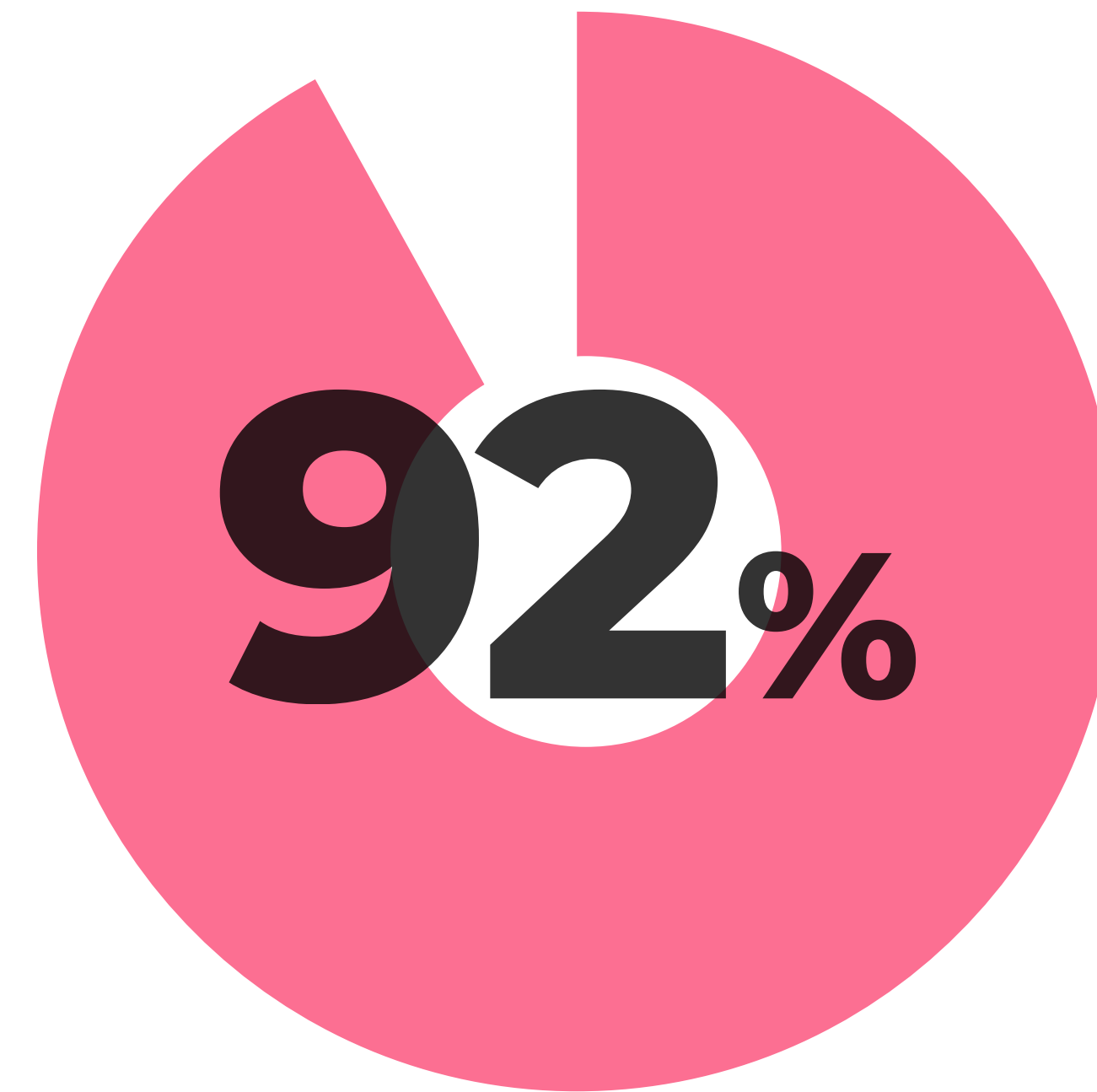


Library professionals are confident in their skills – and are respected also by customers

I feel I am professional and competent in my job

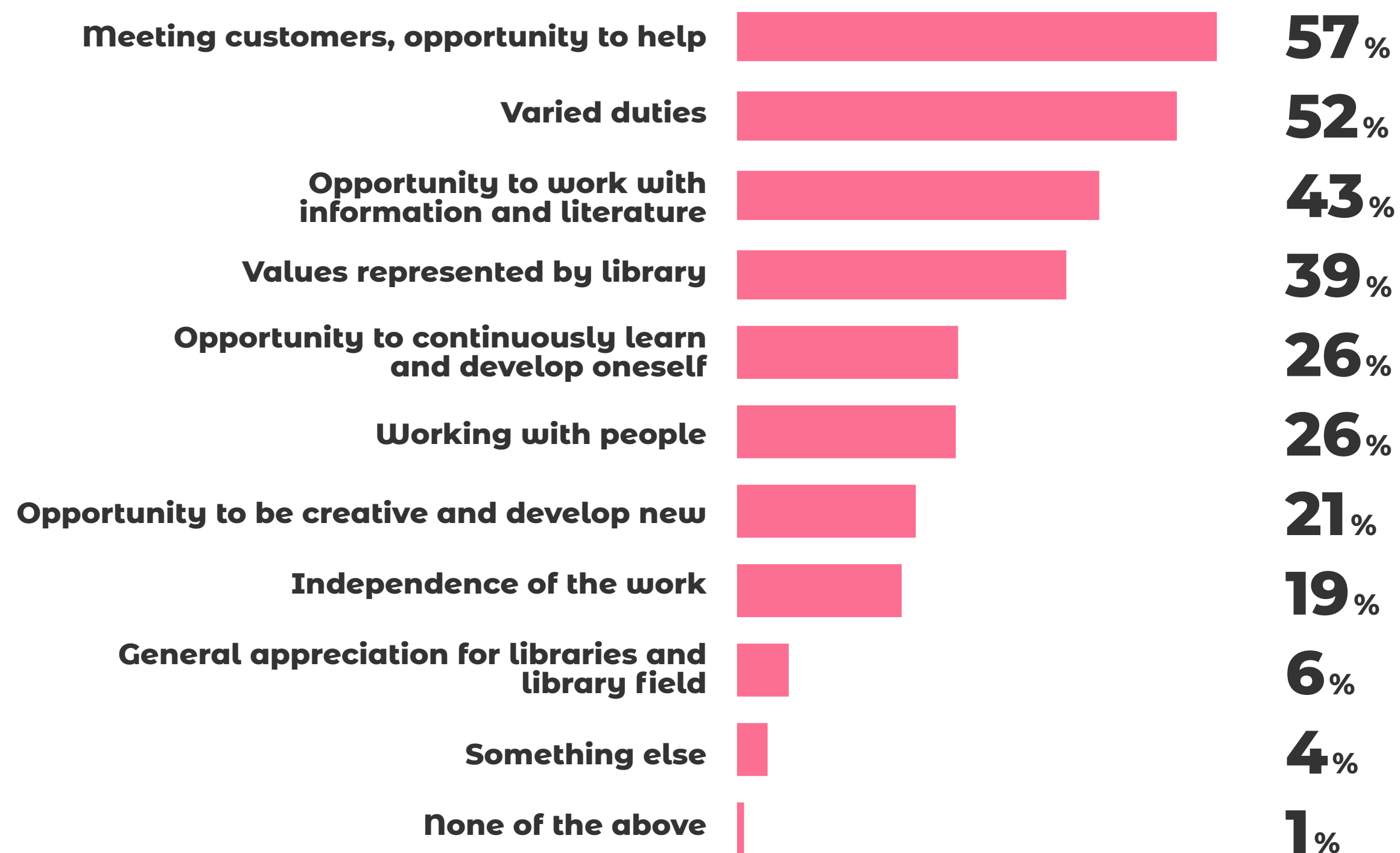


Customers respect our work in the library



The best thing about library work: Meeting people

What is the best thing about library work? Select three most important ones.



A library is a social place. The most appreciated thing in library professionals' work is meeting and helping people (57%).

WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT LIBRARY WORK?

Open responses

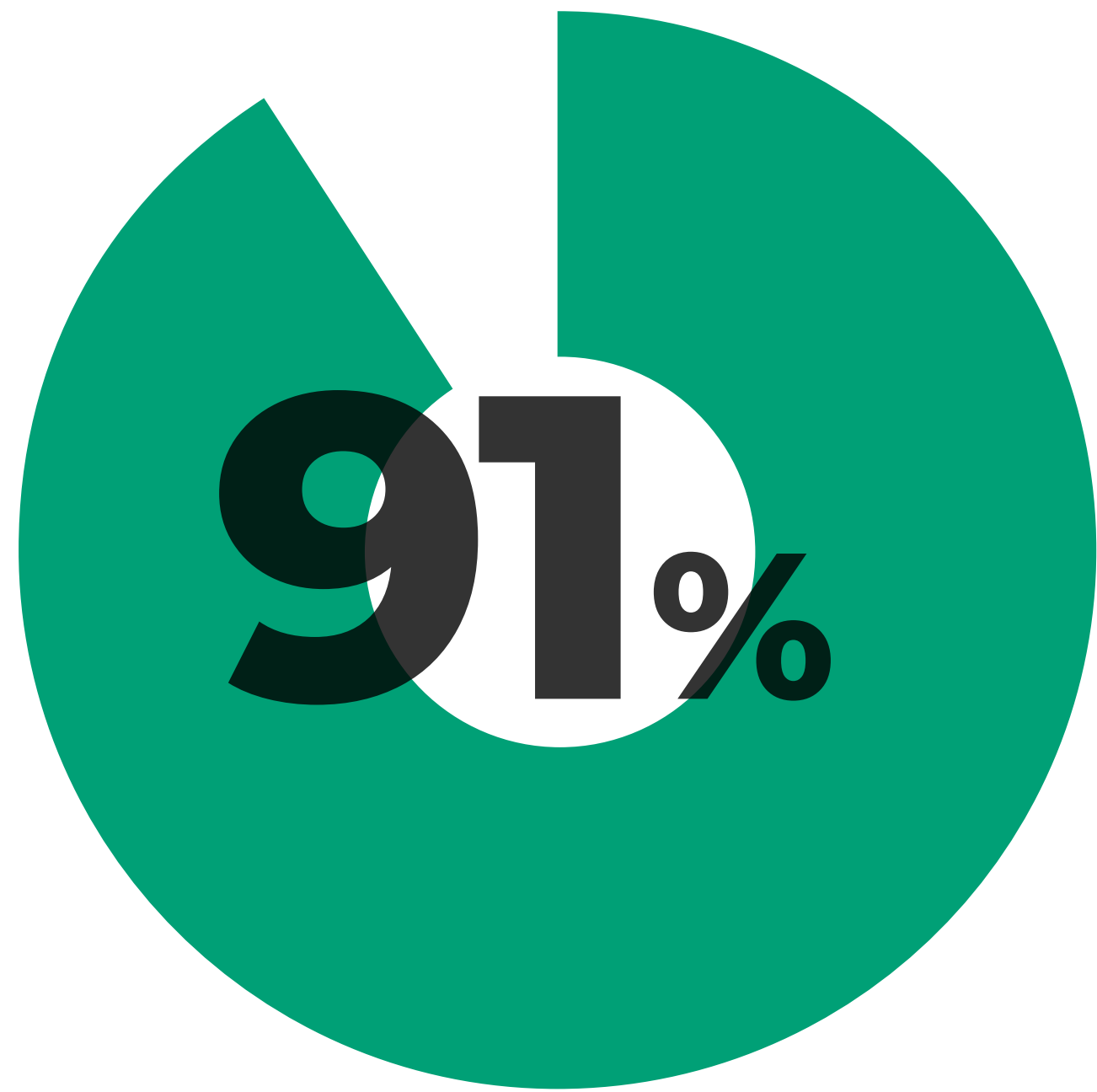
“Encouraging people to read is the best thing.”

“I love to work in a place where both students and the staff learn new things that can help in creating a better society.”

“The best thing is the possibility to open gates to the world of stories, knowledge, experiences, and thoughts.”

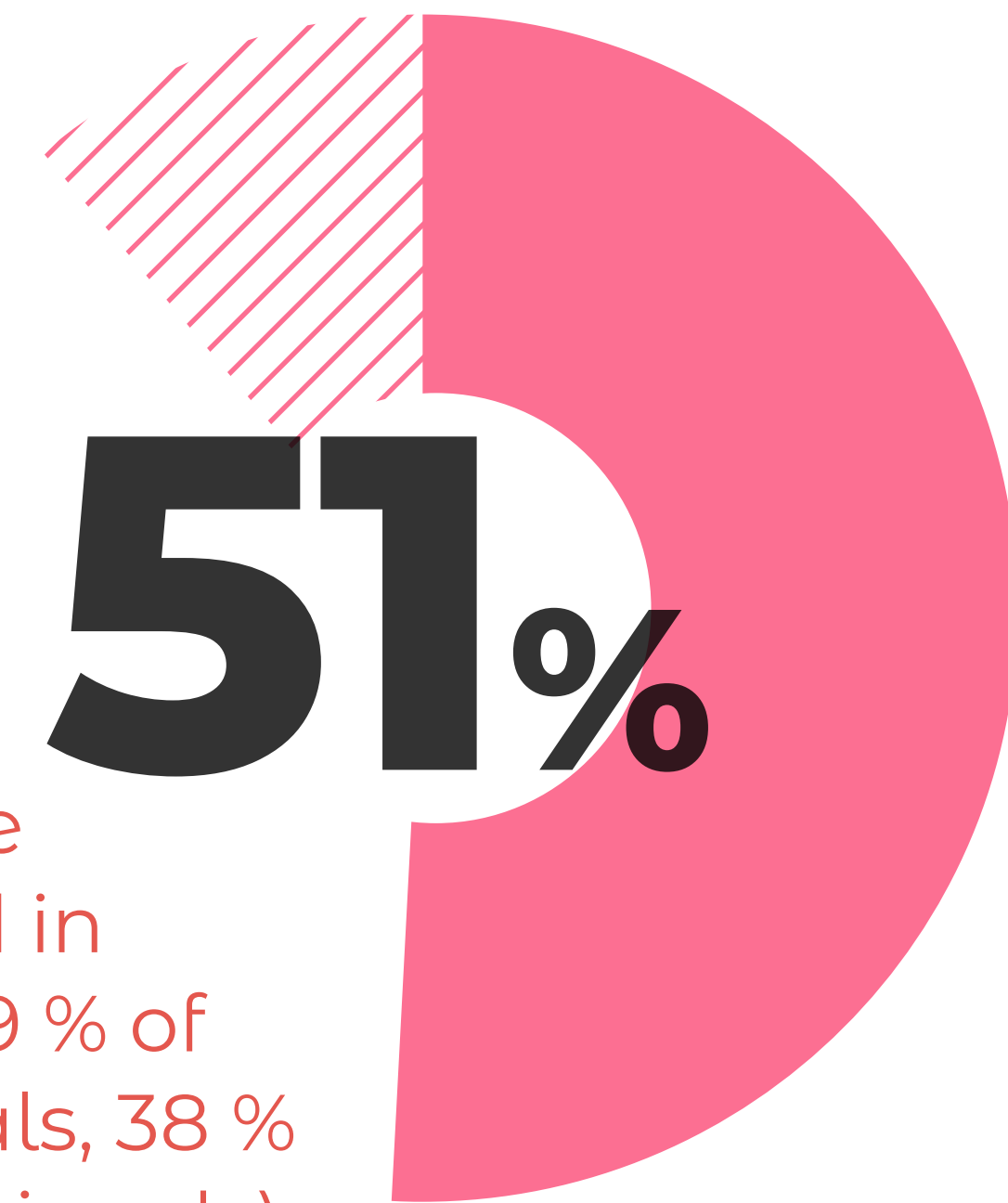
The customers appreciate library professionals' work – what about others?

The variety and importance of work done in a library is not fully understood



The appreciation of library field is increasing

Do not know
11%



The least faith in the increase of appreciation can be found in higher education libraries (39 % of university library professionals, 38 % of polytechnic library professionals)

LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' WORK INCLUDES ASPECTS INVISIBLE TO CUSTOMERS, AND THEIR RELEVANCE IS POORLY UNDERSTOOD.

What skills would library professionals themselves like to highlight?

WHAT ASPECTS OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' SKILLS SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED MORE?


Open response



“It is regrettably common to hear customers commenting on how checkout- and check-in machines are a bad thing, since they mean less work for us. We should be able to better highlight our professional tasks.”

WHAT ASPECTS OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' SKILLS SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED MORE?

Open responses



“All the diversity and creativity the staff has, and the hard, intensive work they do every day in a field that is immensely varied.”

“The fact library work is demanding and requires really varied skills. One has to be talented in customer service, but also possess e.g. showmanship and pedagogical skills, as well as marketing and communications knowledge, to be able to use different methods to promote collections, use the library system in various ways, evaluate the collections, and so on.”

“All the background work invisible to customers.”

“I firmly believe we must be better in bringing forward the invisible parts. What is needed to be able to find a right book for the right customer? Well, cataloguing, organising, searching... Show glimpses of how we work in projects, in different co-operations, events...”

Library people are multiply skilled


Which of the following skills you regularly need in your work?



No fewer than half of the respondents need at least all of these in their work!

WHAT ASPECTS OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' SKILLS SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED MORE?

Open response



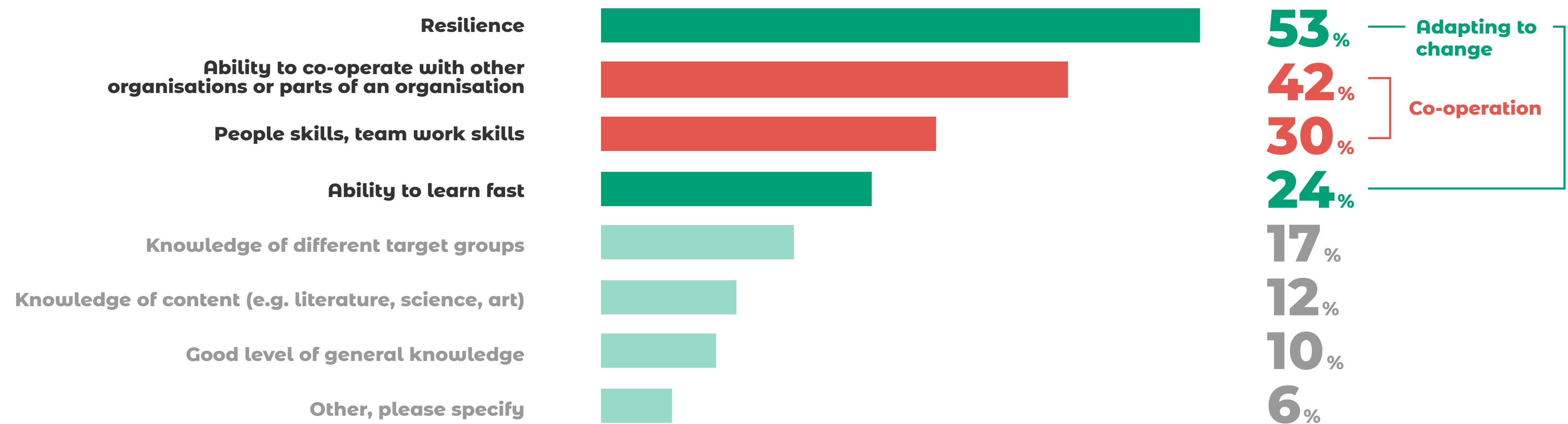
“Most of the people working in libraries are quite the renaissance wonders – l’uomo universale. Experts in every field, who master both technology and content.”



**The only
constant in a
library is change**

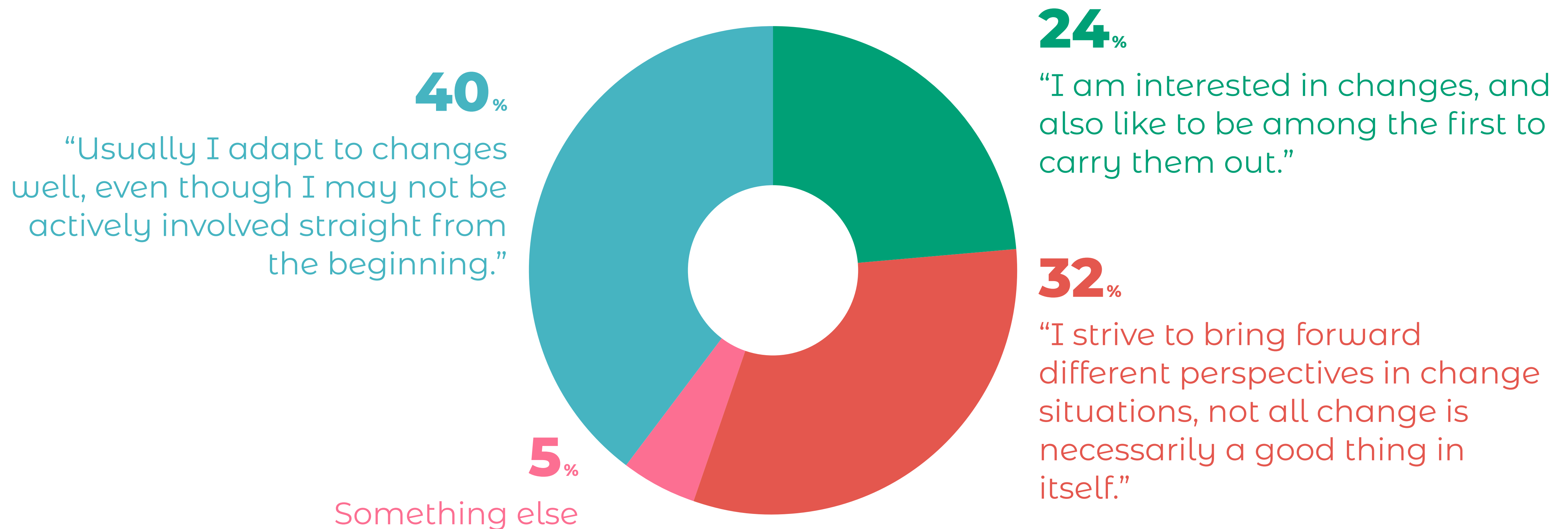
The future characteristics of a library professional emphasise resilience and co-operational skills

What are the characteristics you believe will be increasingly required from the future library professionals? Choose 1-2.



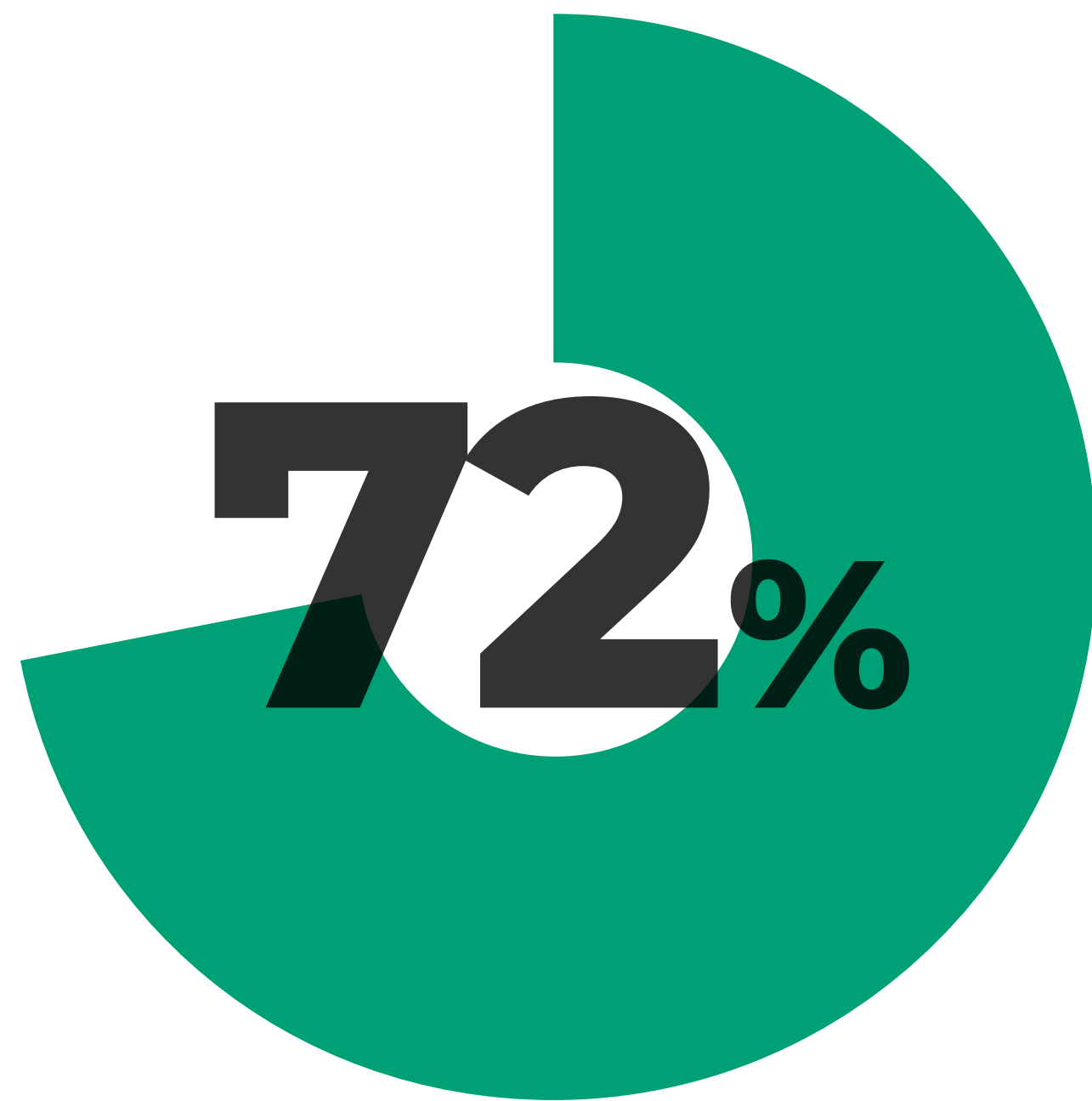
When faced with change, library people divide into three types

Which of the following best describes you when faced with changes at your workplace?
Choose the most fitting one.



Direction of changes causes worry – also the fate of the customers makes one think

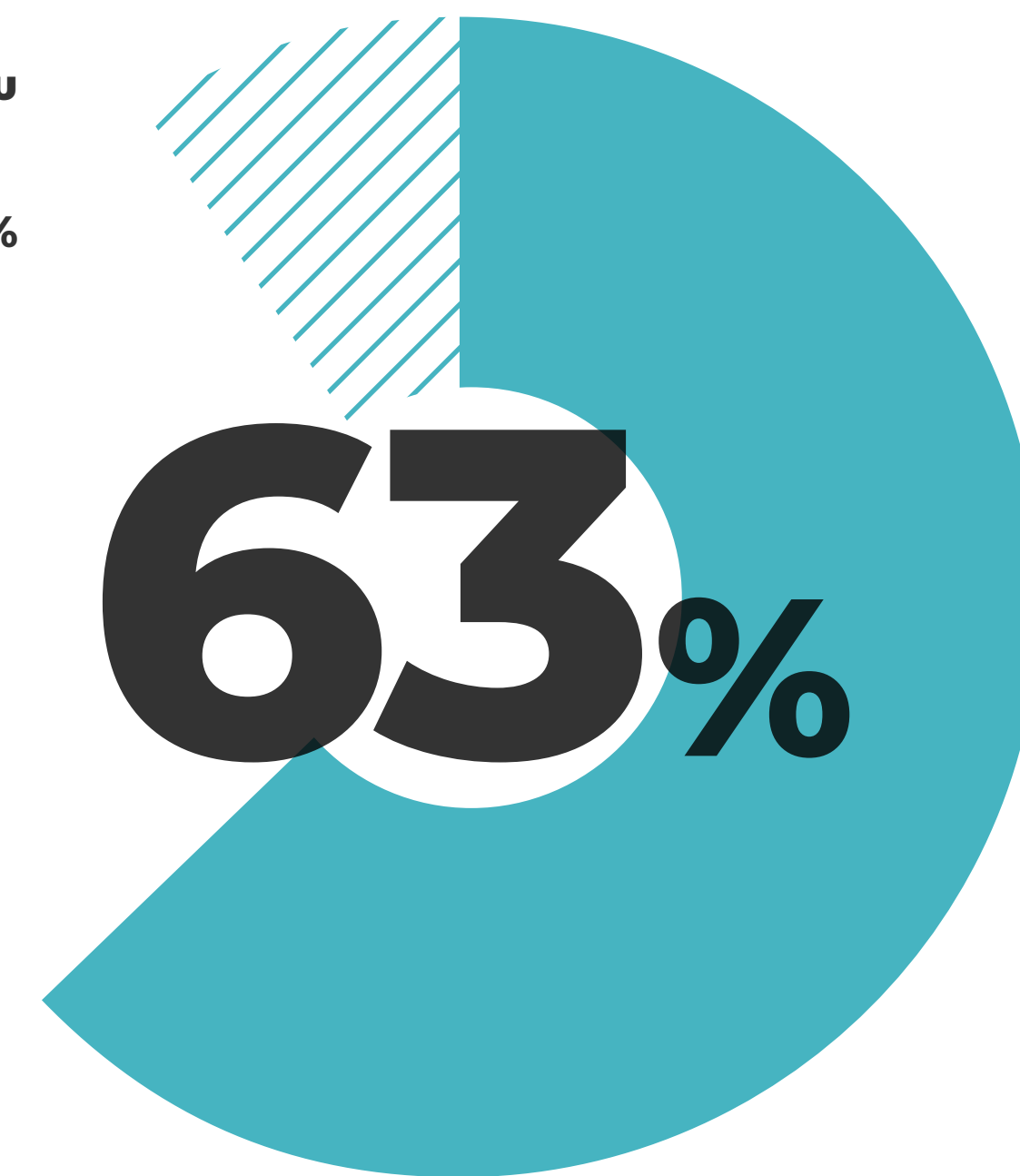
I am worried about the future of libraries



Respondents from polytechnic universities are especially worried (81%).

Continuous change does not serve the customers' interest

Do not know
9%



WHAT IS CHANGING IN LIBRARIES?

Different libraries face different dynamics

Expansion of duties changes public libraries

Public libraries have faced an expansion of duties more often than other types of libraries (70%).

Another thing changing public libraries is their opening outwards: co-operation with other organisations has been increased especially in public libraries (47%).

Higher education libraries change along the wider organisation

Changes in the wider organisation are more common elsewhere than in public libraries. Especially in higher education libraries, over half of the respondents mention these (**polytechnic libraries** 57% and **university libraries** 56%).

Also staff reductions have been most common in **polytechnics** (74%) and **university libraries** (65%).

Special libraries face changing work content

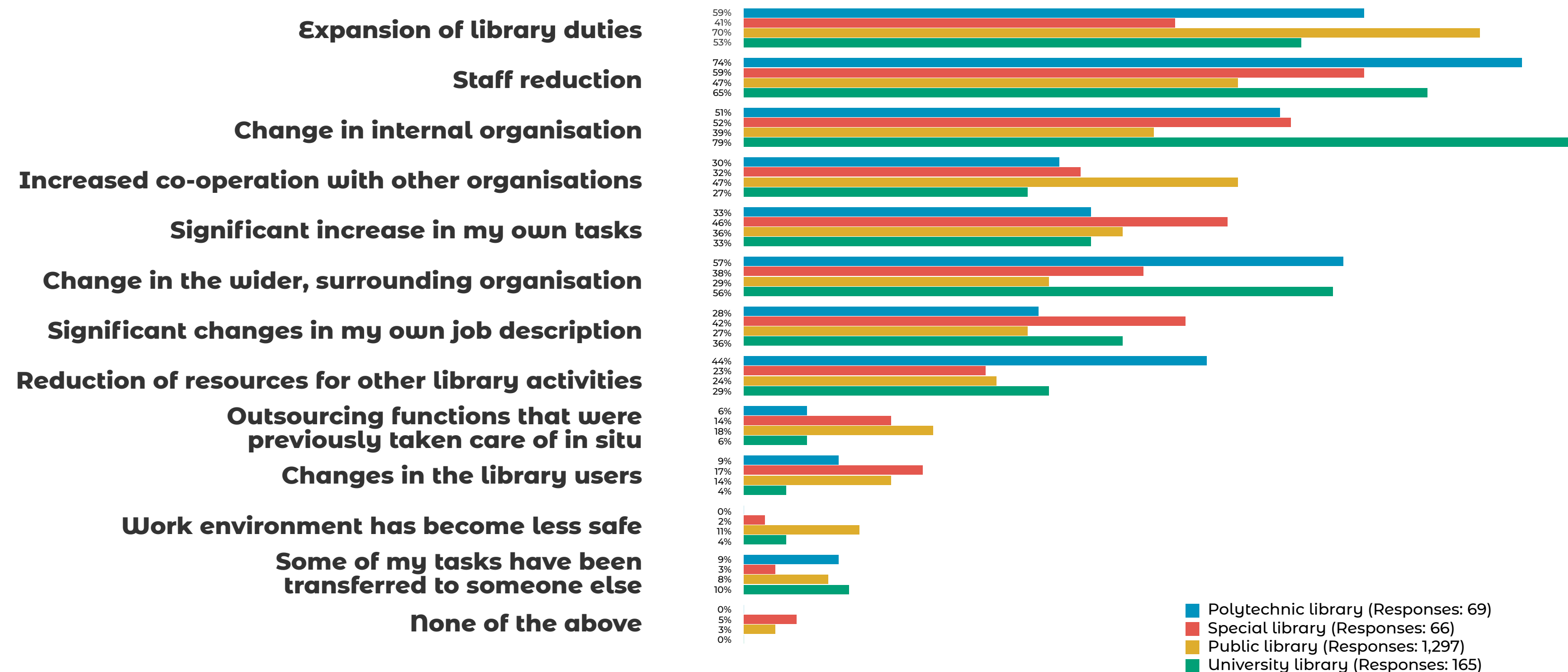
Special library workers have faced the most changes in their work profile. 42% of special library respondents reported changes in their job description.

As much as 46% of **special library** respondents also said their own tasks have increased significantly.

WHAT IS CHANGING IN LIBRARIES?

Different libraries face different dynamics

What significant changes have taken place at your workplace during the last five years? Select a maximum of five.



Public libraries have faced an expansion of duties more often than other types of libraries (70%). Also co-operation with other organisations has been increased (47%).

Changes in the wider organisation are more common elsewhere than in public libraries, especially in higher education libraries, where over half of the respondents mention these (**polytechnic libraries** 57% and **university libraries** 56%).

Staff reductions have had the most effect in polytechnics (74% of the respondents) and in university libraries (65%).

Special libraries have faced the most changes in their work profile. 42% of special library respondents reported changes in their job description, and as much as 46% said their own tasks have been increased significantly.

HOW ARE THE CHANGES EXPERIENCED?

Change effects vary from library to library

Public libraries are busier

Workers especially in **public libraries** feel they are busier because of the changes (68%).

University libraries worry about customers

University libraries feel more rarely that the changes have resulted in better customer service: only 12% feel that changes have improved their service.

Instead, university libraries more often feel that changes have resulted in making their work less effortless, at least temporarily (30%).

Polytechnic libraries believe the customer will benefit

Polytechnic libraries are more positive than universities about changes relative to customers: they feel a bit more often (28%) that changes have improved their customer service.

More often than other libraries, they experience that the work is more rewarding after changes (25%).

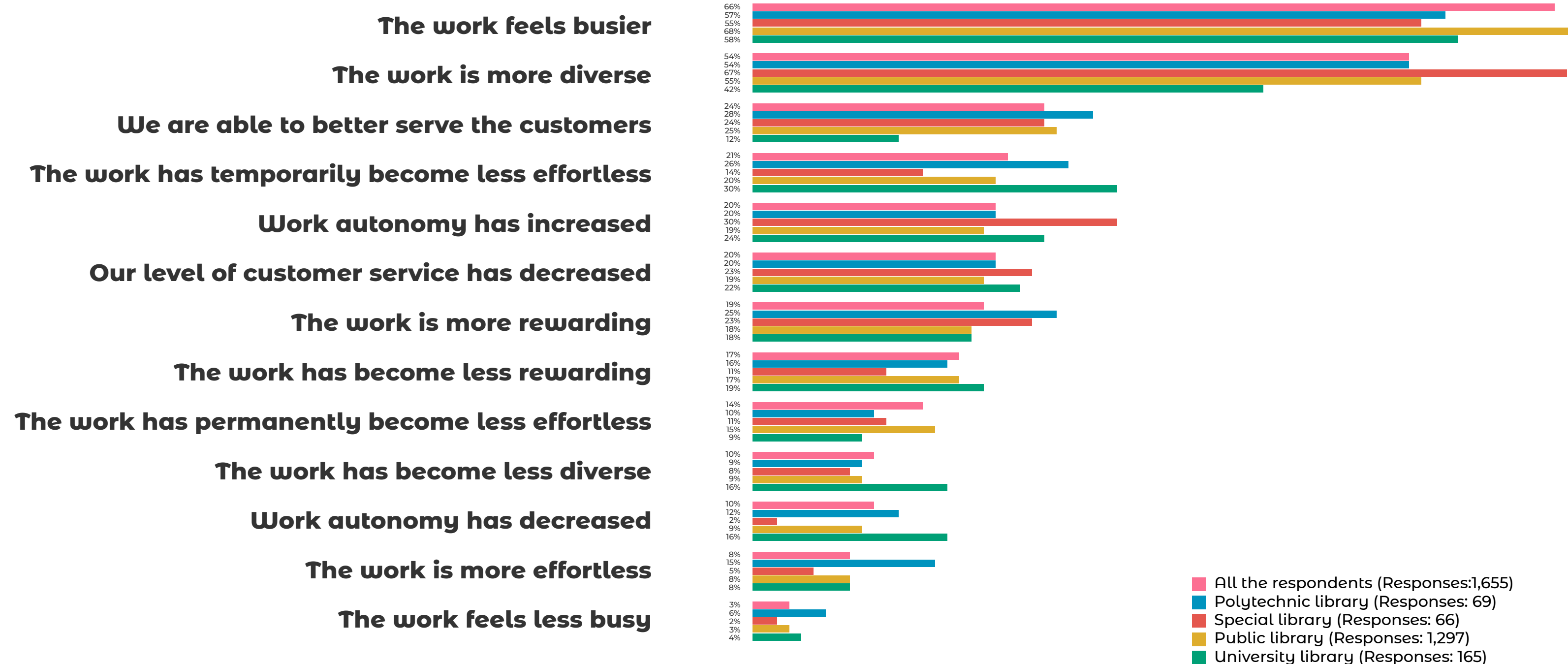
Special libraries face a positive change towards work diversification

Work diversification is most common in **special libraries** (67%). Apparently the change is positive, because in special libraries, almost a quarter (23%) feel their work is more rewarding thanks to changes.

HOW ARE CHANGES SEEN AT WORKPLACES?

Effects on work vary from library to library

How have the changes affected you and your work?
Select 1-5 most significant effects.



Public libraries especially are busier.

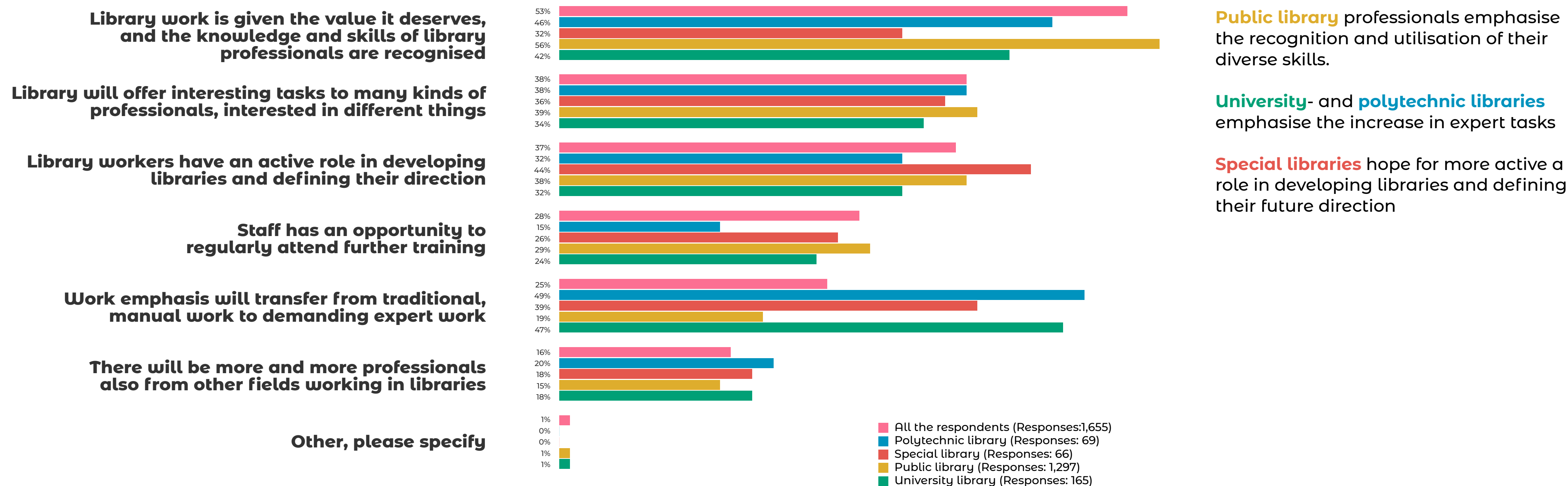
University libraries more rarely feel that changes have resulted in better customer service. They more often feel that changes have resulted in making their work temporarily less effortless.

Polytechnic libraries are more positive than universities about changes relative to customers: they feel a bit more often that changes have improved their customer service.

Work diversification is most common in **special libraries**. Apparently the change is positive, because in special libraries, almost a quarter feel their work is more rewarding thanks to changes.

Hopes concerning library as a workplace of the future have a different focus in different libraries

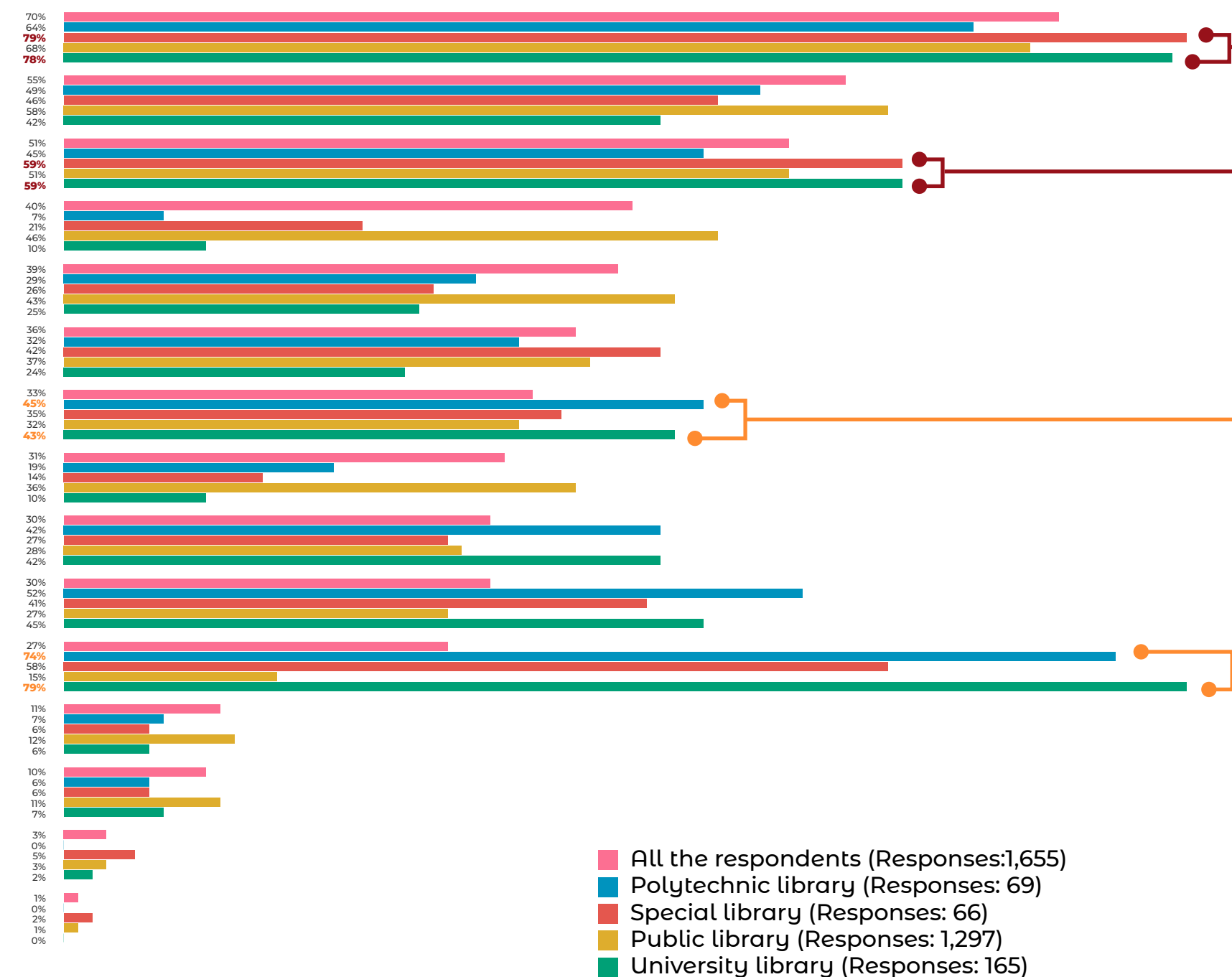
What should a library be as a workplace in the future? Select two most important ones.



Visions about libraries' tasks connect higher education, public, and special libraries

**What are the libraries' most important tasks concerning content in the future?
Select five most important ones.**

- Library helps everyone to have access to trustworthy information
- Library is a place for unhurried thinking and learning
- Library provides and stores collections
- Library offers experiences and enjoyment
- Library offers a setting and equipment for users' independent activities
- Library work in an even closer co-operation with other organisations
- Library promotes and screens correct information
- Library is a community centre, where one can participate in a wide variety of functions and activities
- Library teaches how to learn and produce new information
- Library will be a location-independent provider of electronic materials
- Library promotes and has expertise in open science
- Library offers an even more extensive collection of printed books and magazines
- Library actively takes part in social debate
- Other, please specify
- Library offers an arena for political discussions



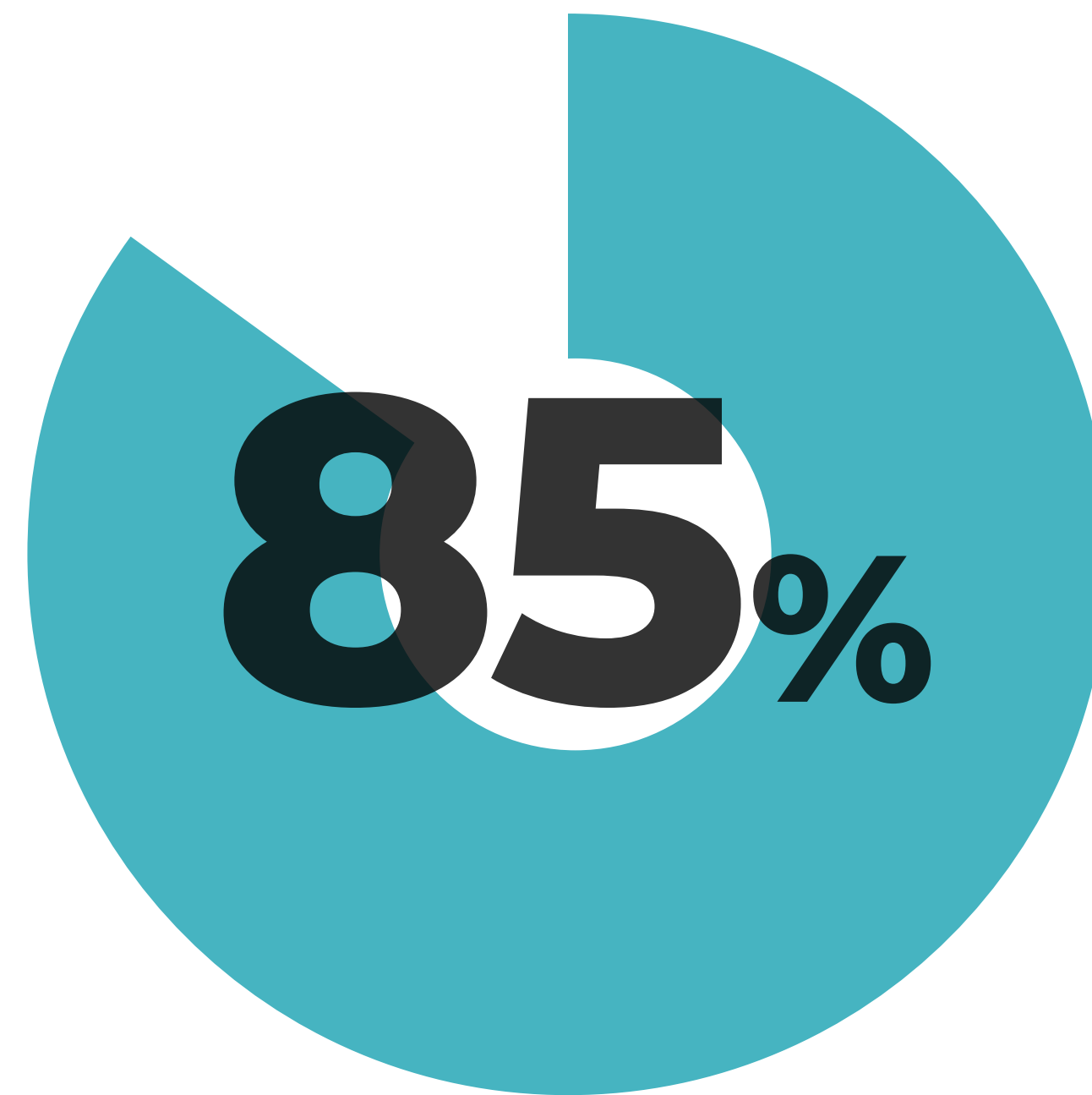
Public and special libraries highlight offering trustworthy information to all and providing collections

University and polytechnic libraries focus on screening correct information and promoting open science

How changes are experienced is connected to an organisation's activities, atmosphere – and inclusion

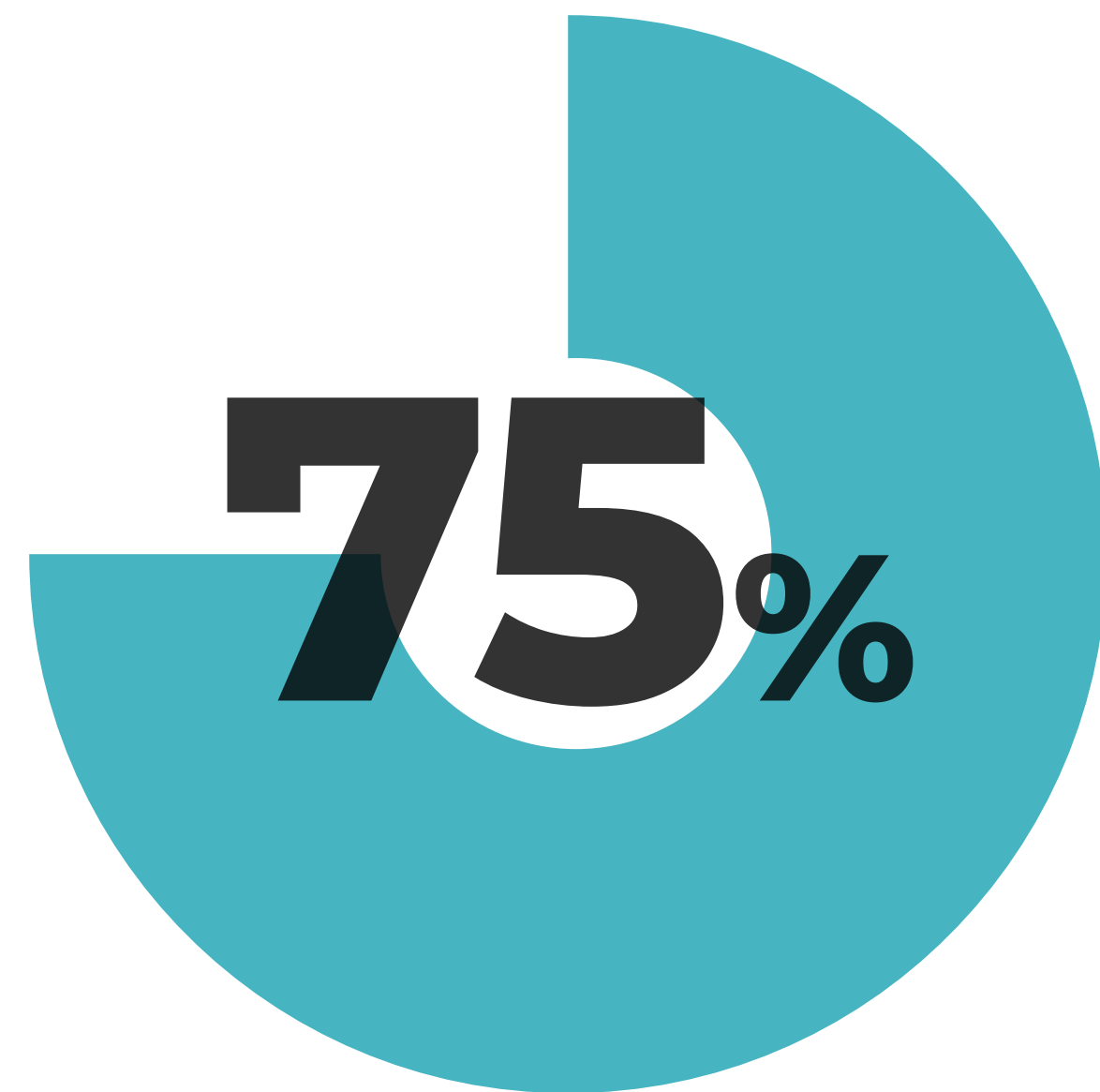
Library professionals' skills are widely trusted

I feel people trust me and my skills

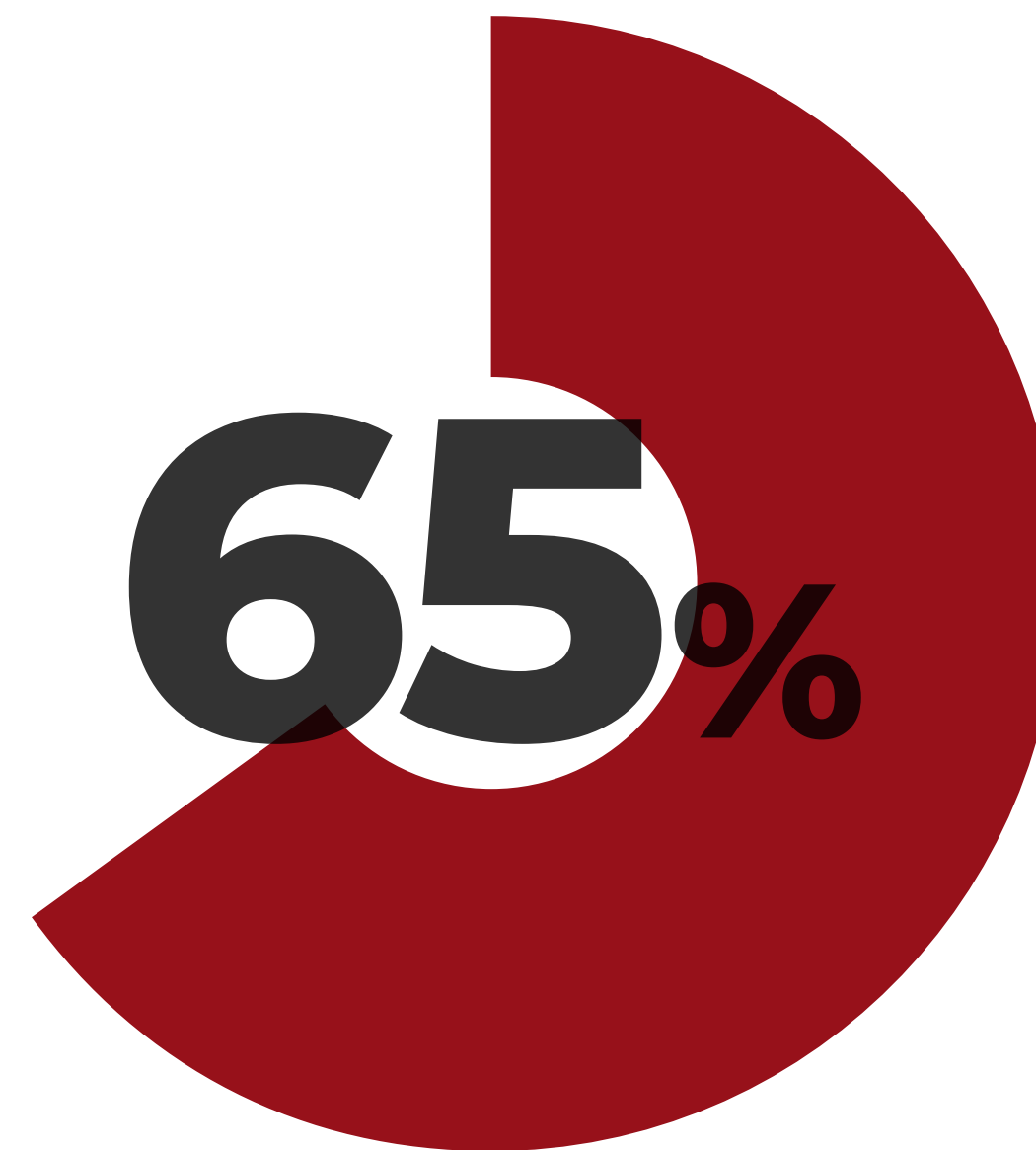


The majority receive support and praise from the management

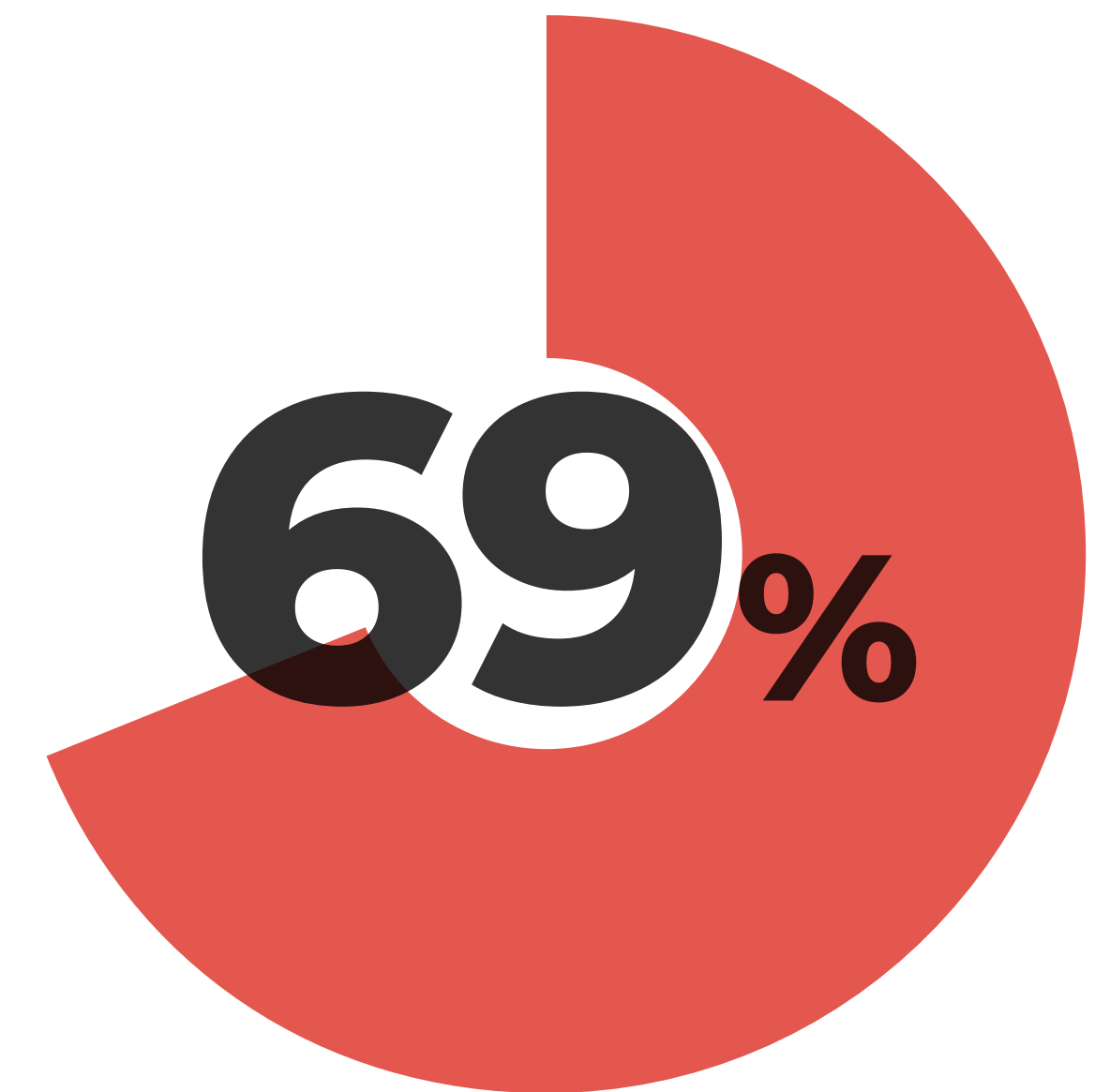
I receive the support and help I need from my boss



Workers and management work together for a common goal



I receive thanks for the work I do



Respondents from polytechnic libraries (74%) and special libraries (76%) agreed the most – university library respondents the least (53%)

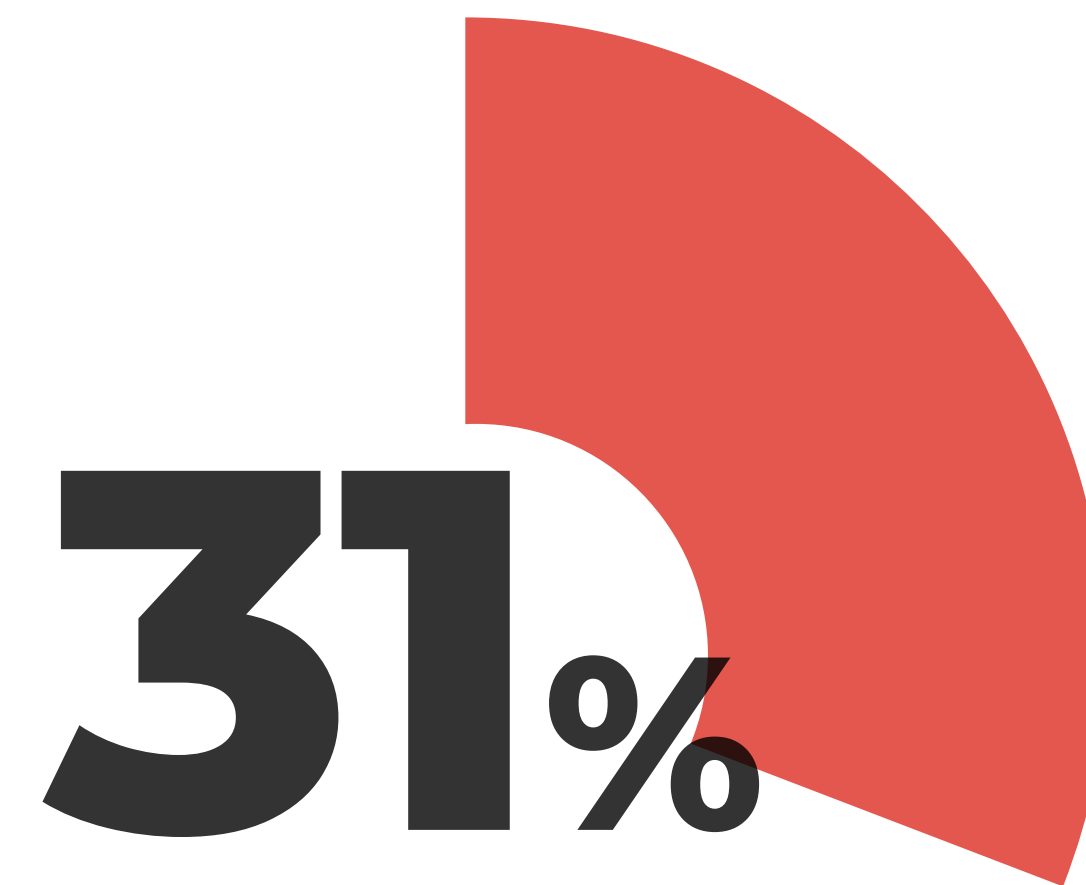
On the other hand, a significant minority feels the management is distant

Management is distant and it is hard to contact them



The management was considered distant most often by the respondents from university libraries (55%).

Management at my workplace is high-handed and the workers are not heard enough

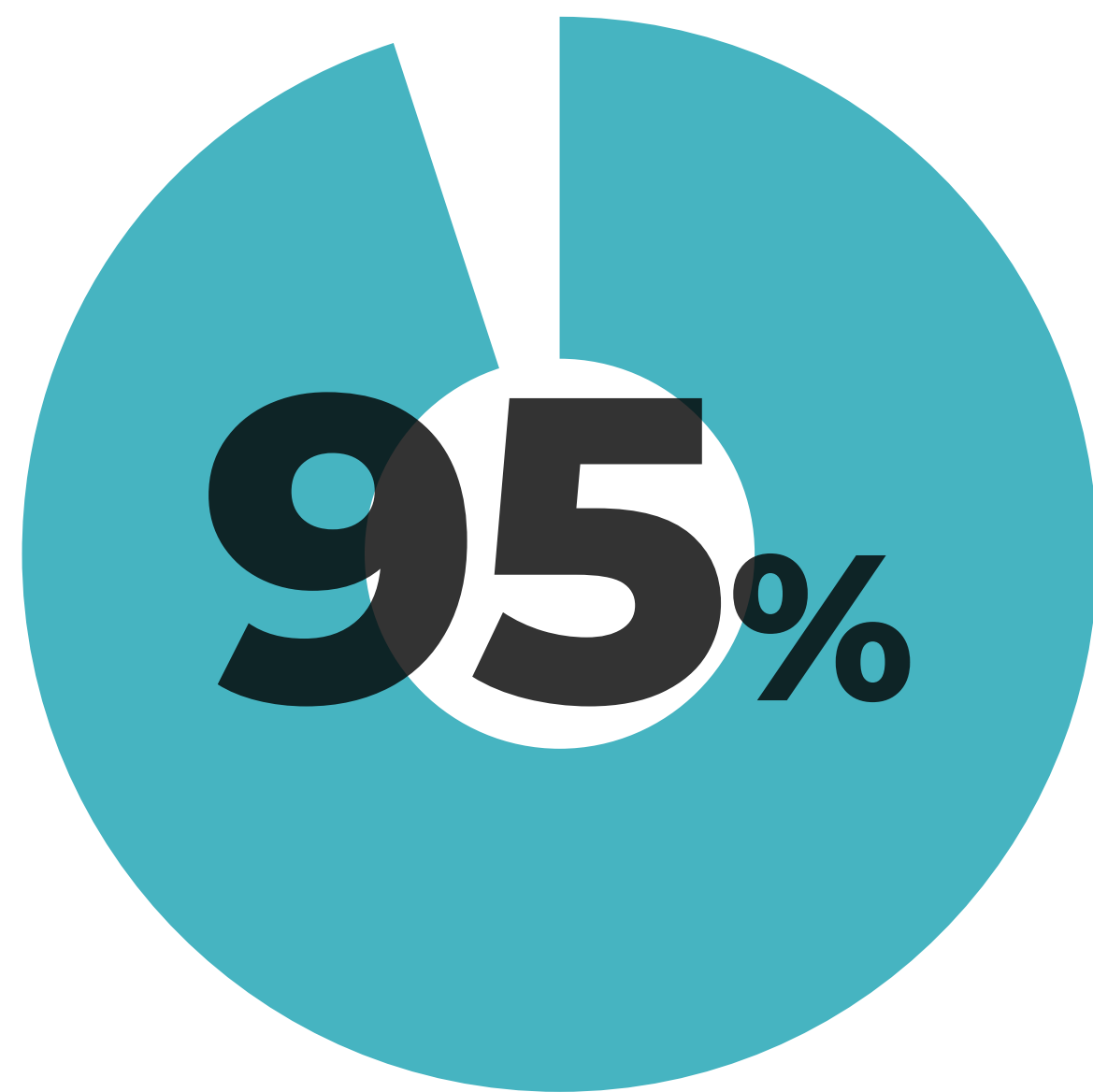


University library respondents also more often felt the workers were not heard enough (46%).

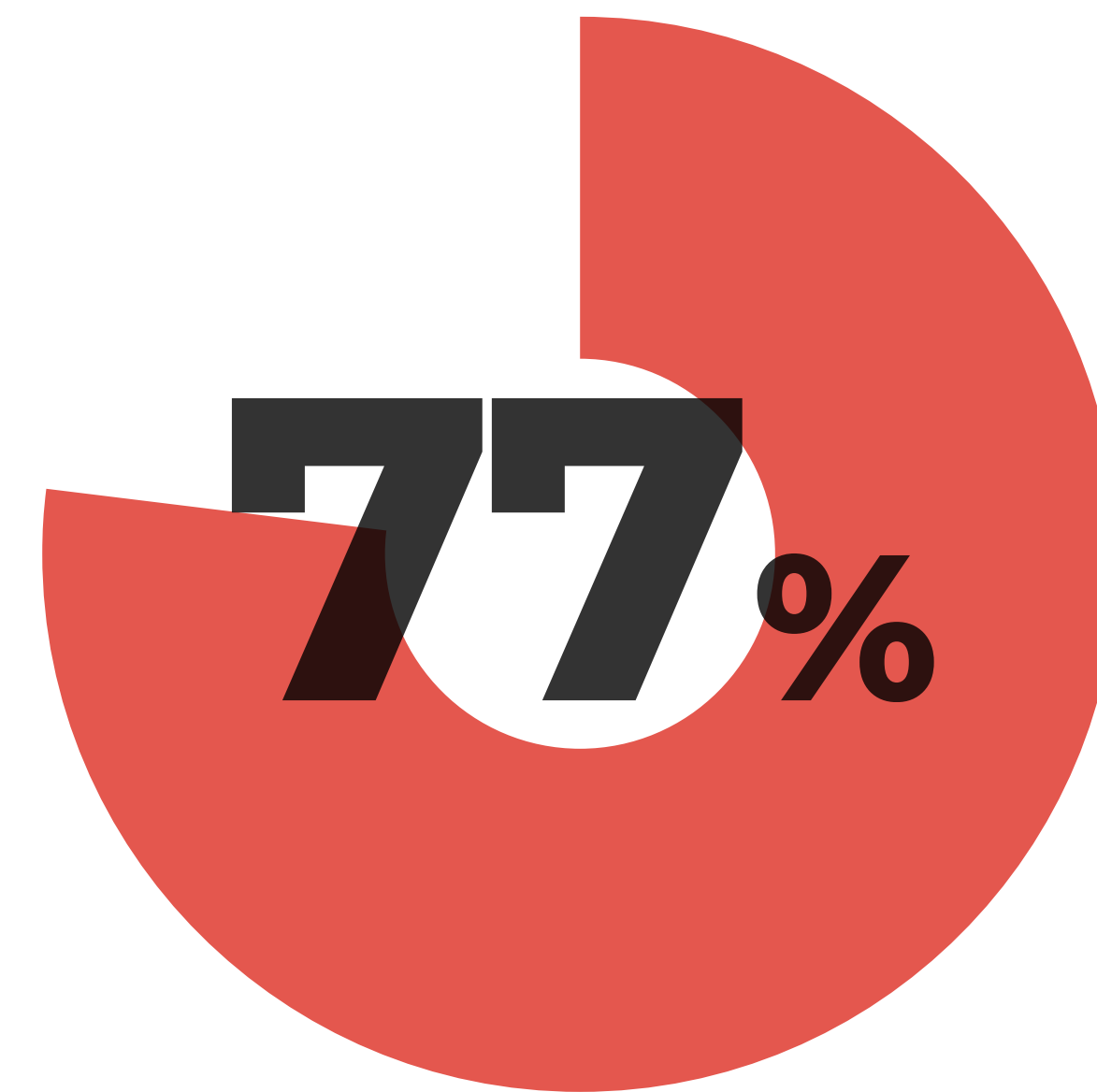
JOIN THE CHANGE!

Library professionals possess untapped potential and interest in developing libraries

Workers' competencies and ideas should be utilised more in library development



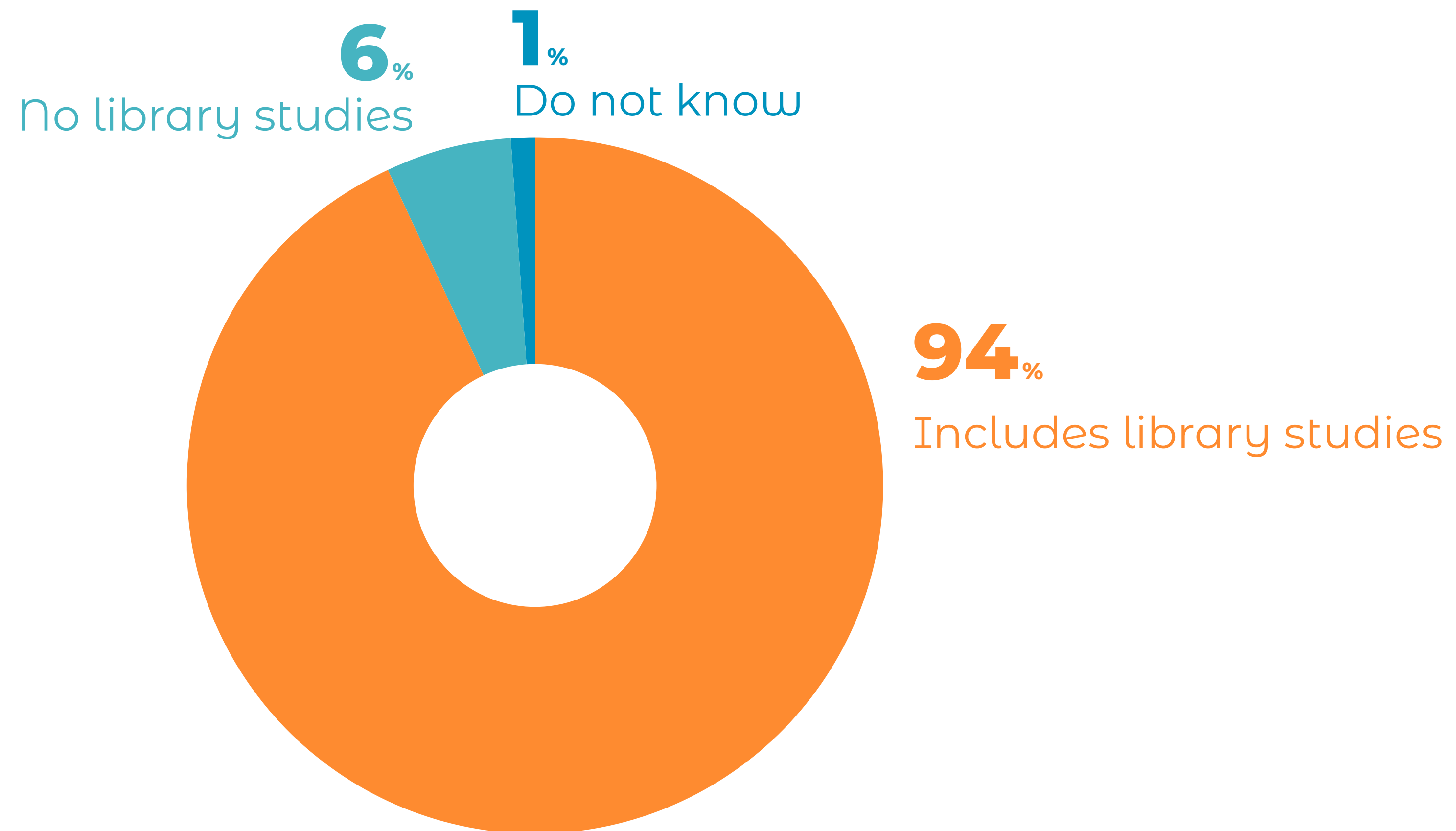
I would like to participate more and in more varied a way in innovation and development of library



Library education and working life today

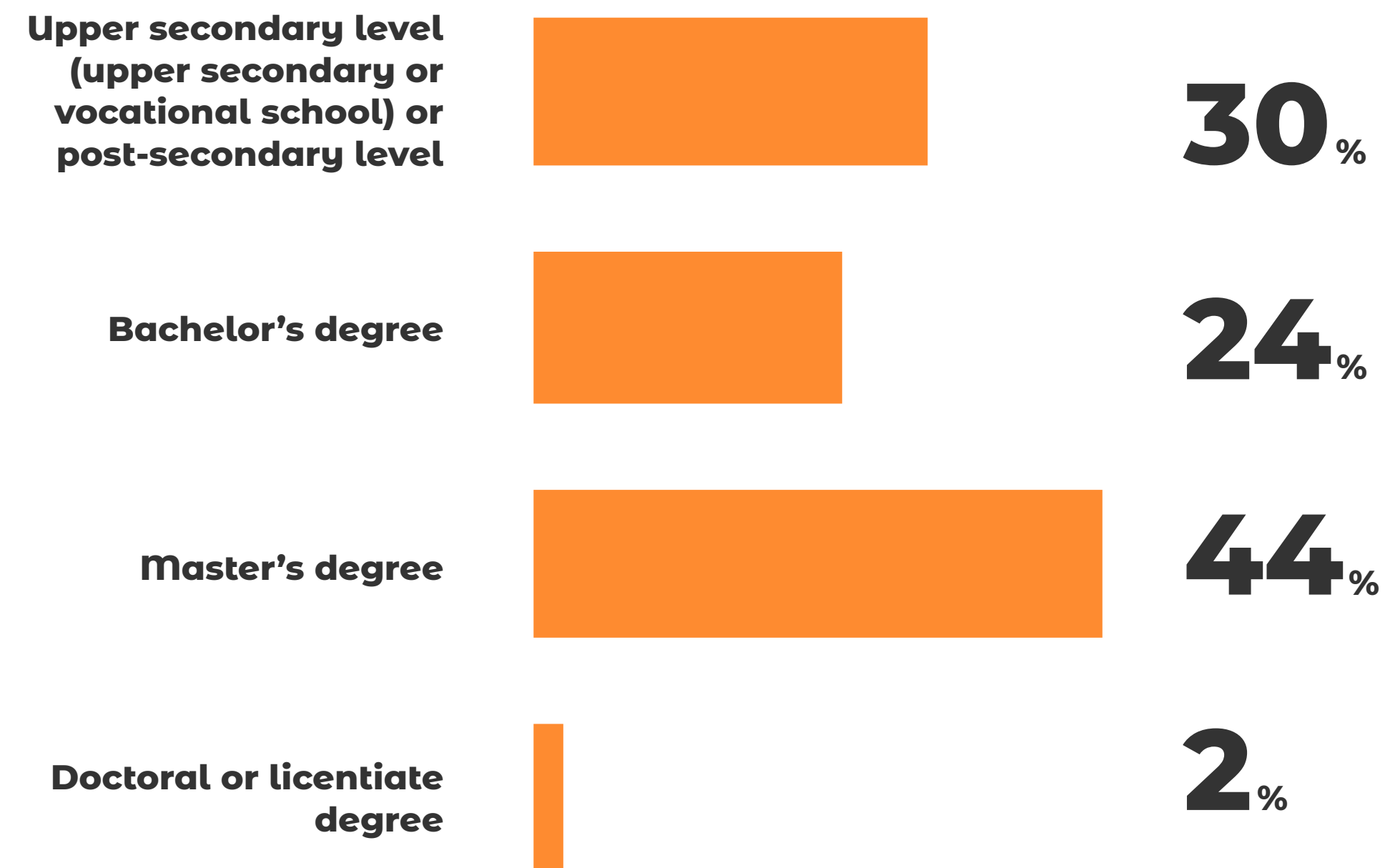
Library studies are part of nearly every library professional's education

Are library studies included in your education?



70 per cent of library professionals have a higher education degree

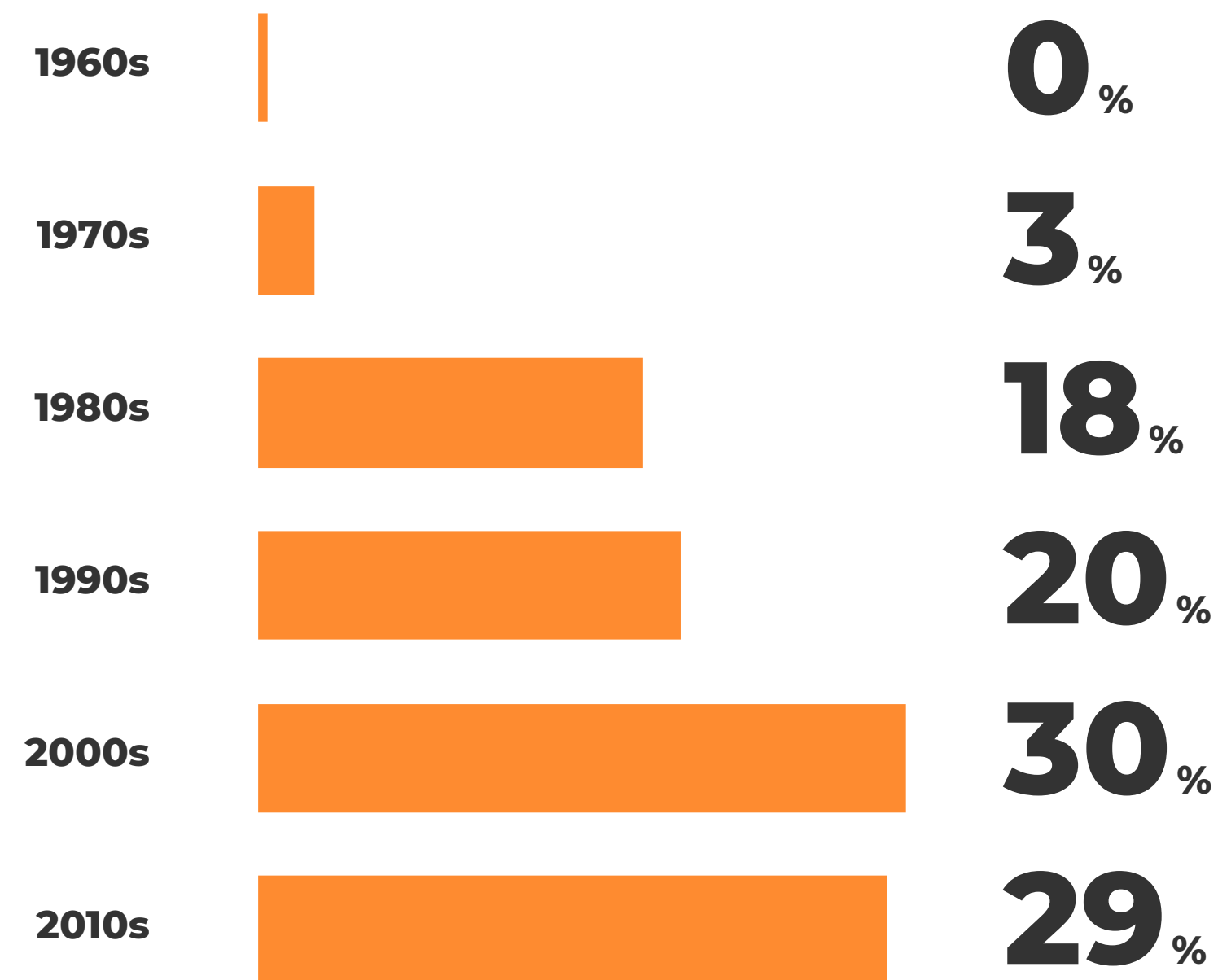
What is the highest degree you have completed?



A master's degree is the most common educational background for a library professional.

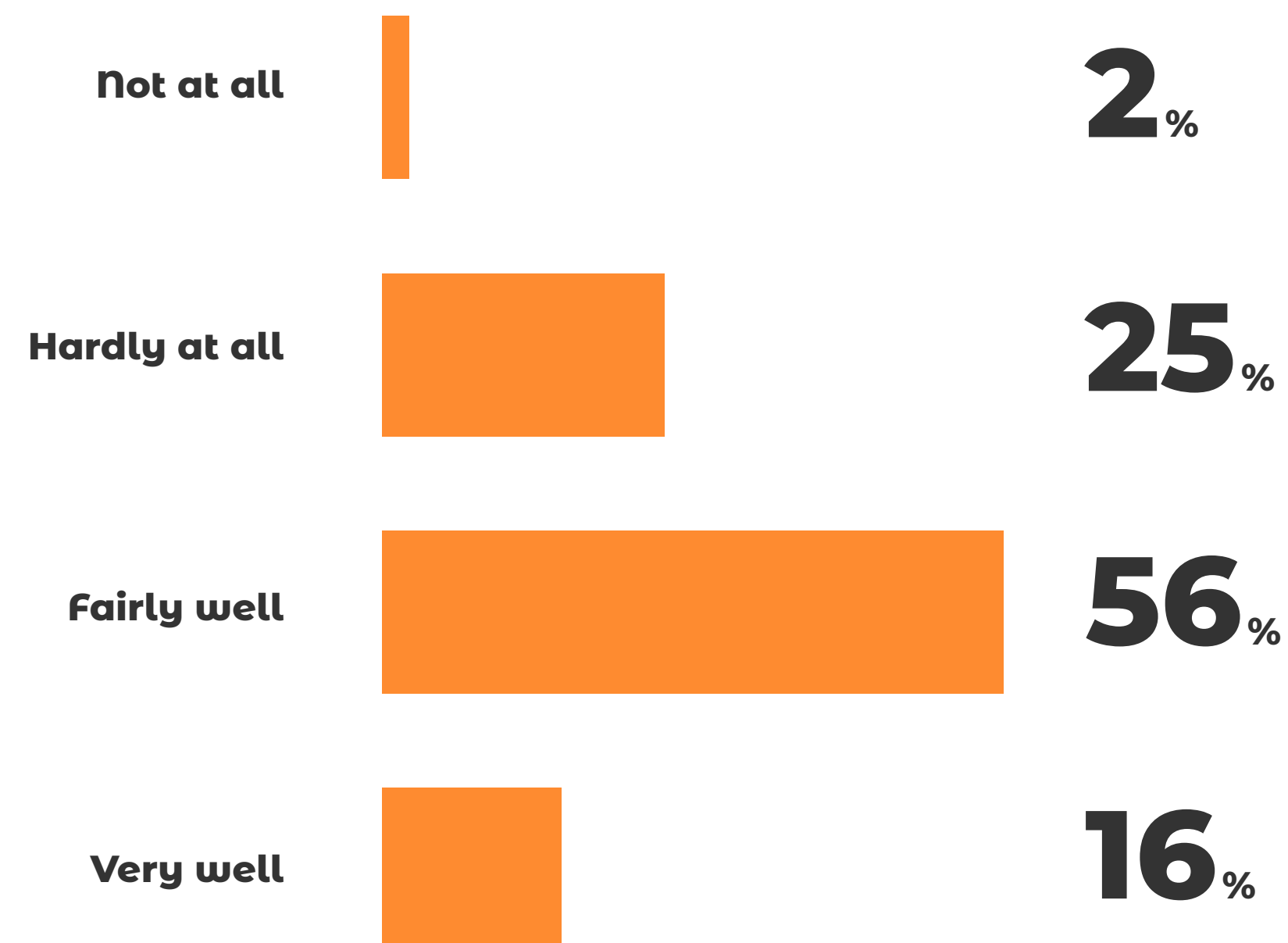
Most of the respondents have completed their degree in the 21st century

When have you completed your highest degree? If you have not completed a degree, select a decade when you have completed most of your library studies.



Education corresponds with the work requirements

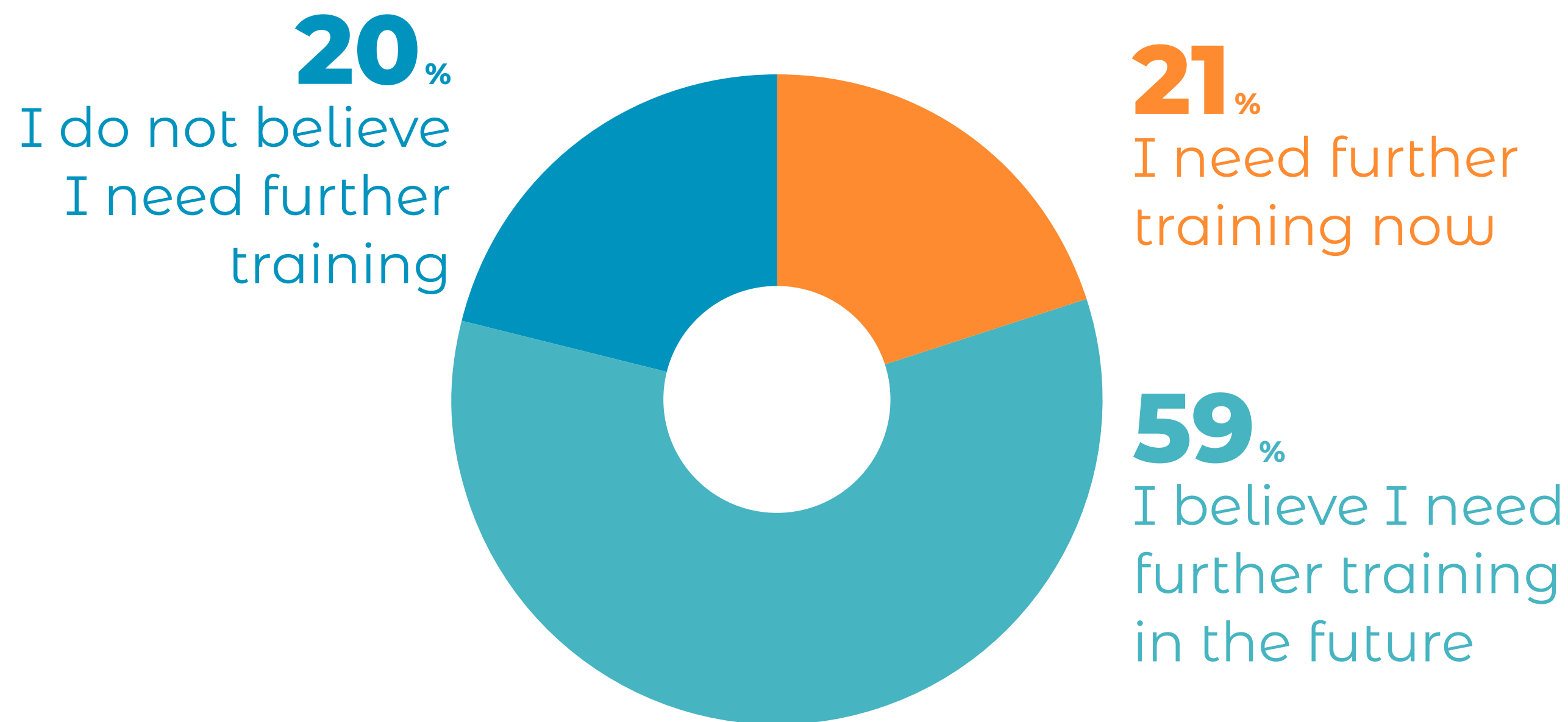
How well do you feel your education corresponds with you current work requirements?



The most (72%) feel their education corresponds with their work requirements well or fairly well.

Even though education is generally considered to correspond with current work requirements, 4/5 believe they need further training sooner or later

Do you believe you need further training while working in a library?



Continuous change and libraries' diversifying tasks increase the awareness of needing new skills.

WHAT THINGS DO YOU THINK YOU WILL NEED FURTHER TRAINING FOR (NOW OR IN THE FUTURE)?

Open responses

“When you work in a library, you need to educate yourself all the time! Digital-related things especially make me think and require improvement at present.”

“Technology and different software needed at work keep on changing, and I feel I need further training at least related to those things.”

“It is hard to define the theme of further training I will need, when I feel the whole field is going through a shake-up, and it is hard even to imagine all the areas of expertise needed in the future.”

Professionals in different libraries share a similar vision of the future of libraries

LIBRARIES' TASKS WILL INCREASE AND LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' WORK WILL DIVERSIFY.

AMID CHANGES, WHAT ARE THE LIBRARIES' MOST IMPORTANT CORE TASKS ACCORDING TO LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS?

WHAT CONNECTS PEOPLE WORKING IN DIFFERENT LIBRARIES?

Open response



“Common and overarching are values and a vision of why libraries and work in a library matter. Reason to work in a library connects library people also when their tasks and environments are completely different.”

LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' VISION

Libraries build a bridge between individuals and society

WHY?

Equality as a base value

Library promotes social equality and is open, equal, and accessible to everyone.

WHAT?

Task is to bring together and create connections

Library provides people with literature, science, art, and music.

Library strengthens inclusion in the society and prevents social exclusion.

HOW?

Developing humanity used as a method

Library promotes literacy and helps to combat false information.

Library promotes culture and assists in developing thinking.

LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS' VISION

In professionals' own words

WHY?

“With its expertise, library maintains the very structures of democratic society.”

WHAT?

“Library causes customers and collections to bump into each other.”

HOW?

“Library offers tools to help people to survive and find content to their lives.”

VISIONS OF DIFFERENT LIBRARY TYPES, TOP 3:

Values connect – customer diversifies

POLYTECHNIC LIBRARY

Library is open, equal, and accessible to everyone

62%

Library promotes culture and assists in developing thinking

49%

Library helps to combat false information

39%

SPECIAL LIBRARY

Library is open, equal, and accessible to everyone

52%

Library promotes culture and assists in developing thinking

44%

Library promotes social equality

32%

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Library is open, equal, and accessible to everyone

62%

Library promotes culture and assists in developing thinking

48%

Library provides people with literature, science, art, and music

33%

PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library is open, equal, and accessible to everyone

64%

Library promotes literacy

42%

Library strengthens inclusion in the society and prevents social exclusion

39%

WHAT CONNECTS PEOPLE WORKING IN DIFFERENT LIBRARIES?

Open responses



“We have a common goal: to ensure citizens have equal opportunities.”

“A will to help and support customers and users.”

“Compassion and library-centricity connect us! We could develop our dialogue.”

“Everyone knows what it is like to work with scant resources.”

“It is precisely visibility we need, and that comes from shared, noticeable things.”

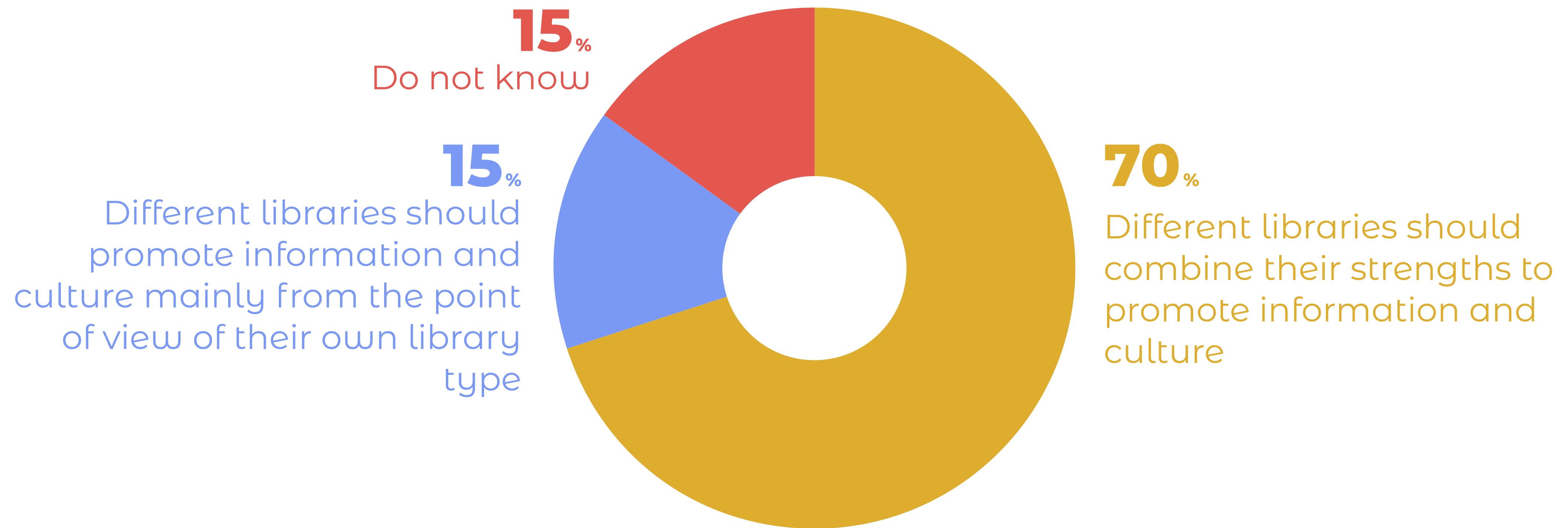
The majority feel professionals in different libraries have more in common than at variance

Which corresponds better with your view on library professionals?



More co-operation to promote common matters is wanted between different libraries' professionals

Which corresponds better with your viewpoint?

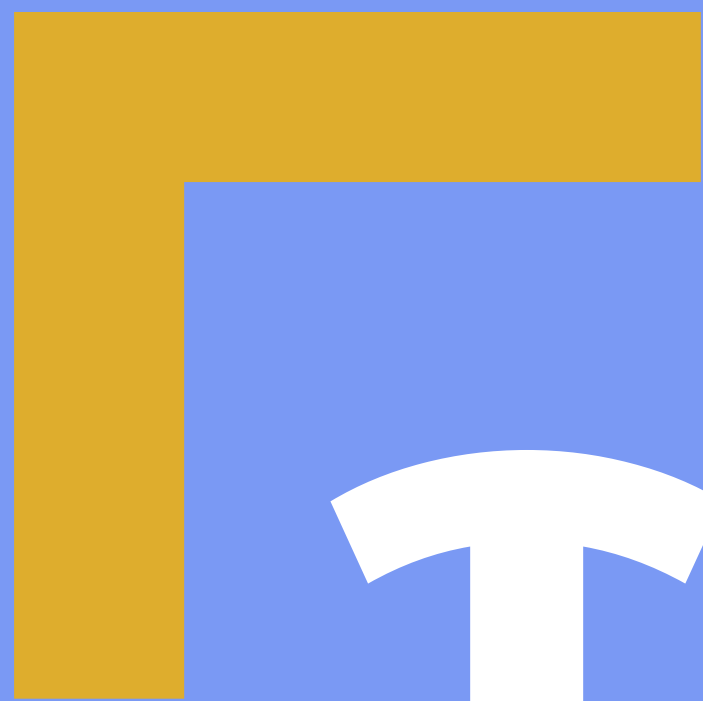


WHAT CONNECTS PEOPLE WORKING IN DIFFERENT LIBRARIES?

Open response



“Common and overarching are values and a vision of why libraries and work in a library matter. Reason to work in a library connects library people also when their tasks and environments are completely different.”



Thank you!

Laura Perjo

laura.perjo@pentagoninsight.fi

+358 40 733 6787

Tatu Malmström

tatu.malmstrom@pentagoninsight.fi

+358 44 557 3609