

Teen Focus Groups

Community Engagement | Master Planning

Trainer Evaluation

June 2017

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The teens

The teens

Main Library

- May 17th
- 9 teens
 - 7 females
 - 2 males
 - 5 non-white
 - 4 white

Reynolds Branch Library

- May 19th
- 9 teens
 - All female
 - All white

The disclaimer

- These teens already love and use the library
- Both groups of teens were very self aware and made sure to tell me that they were biased and not representative of all teens
- Which, of course, if true
- However, many times, in order to figure out how to reach new groups of people, you have to talk to the people who already use your services

The role of the library in their lives

The library is a place to...

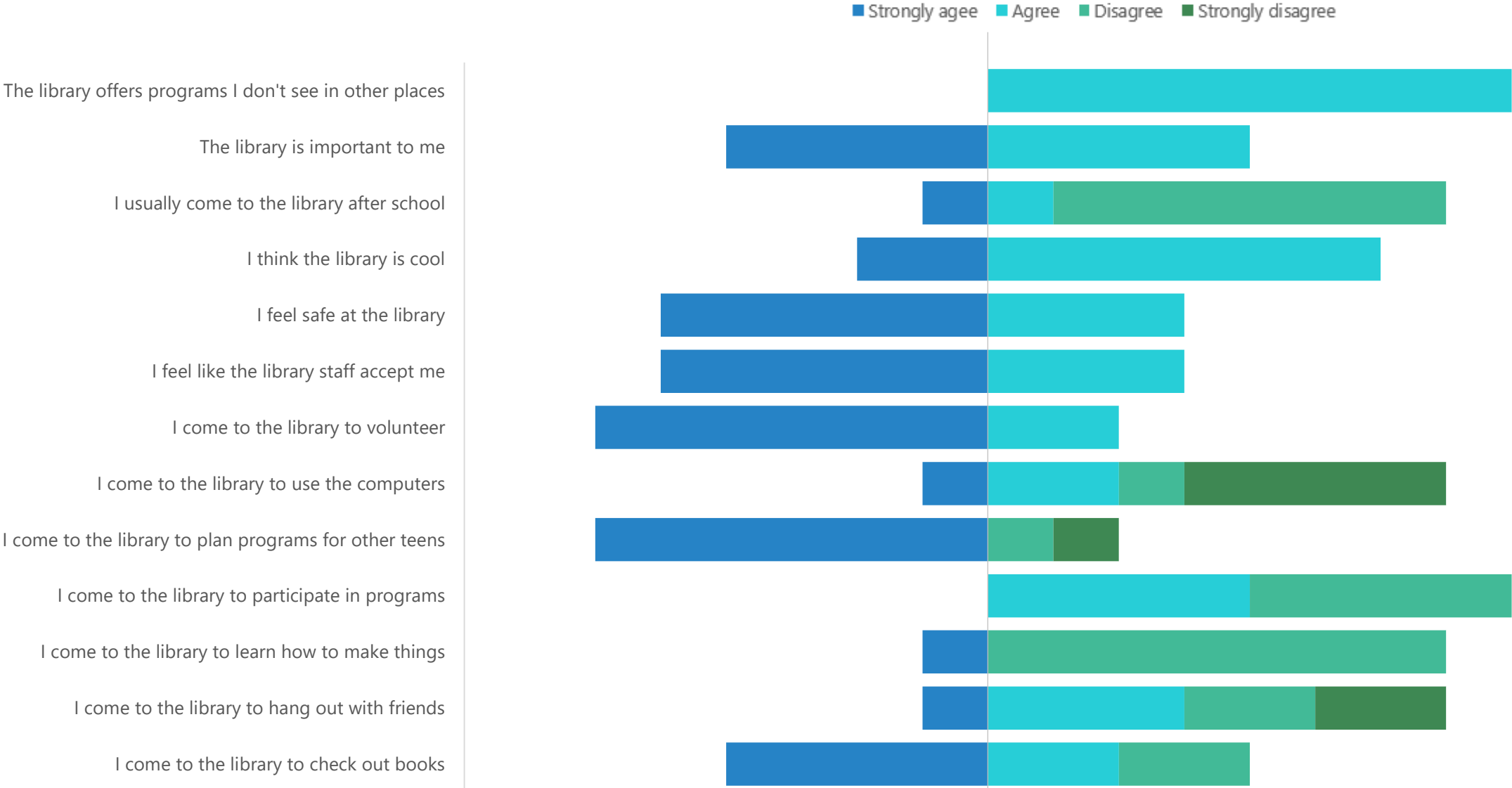
- Check out books
- Volunteer (for personal reasons and school requirements)
- Meet up with friends and hang out
- Create a community of like-minded people
- Engage in activities
- Study when you need to get things done (as opposed to Barnes & Nobles or a coffee shop)
- Feel welcomed

For teens, the library is not a place...

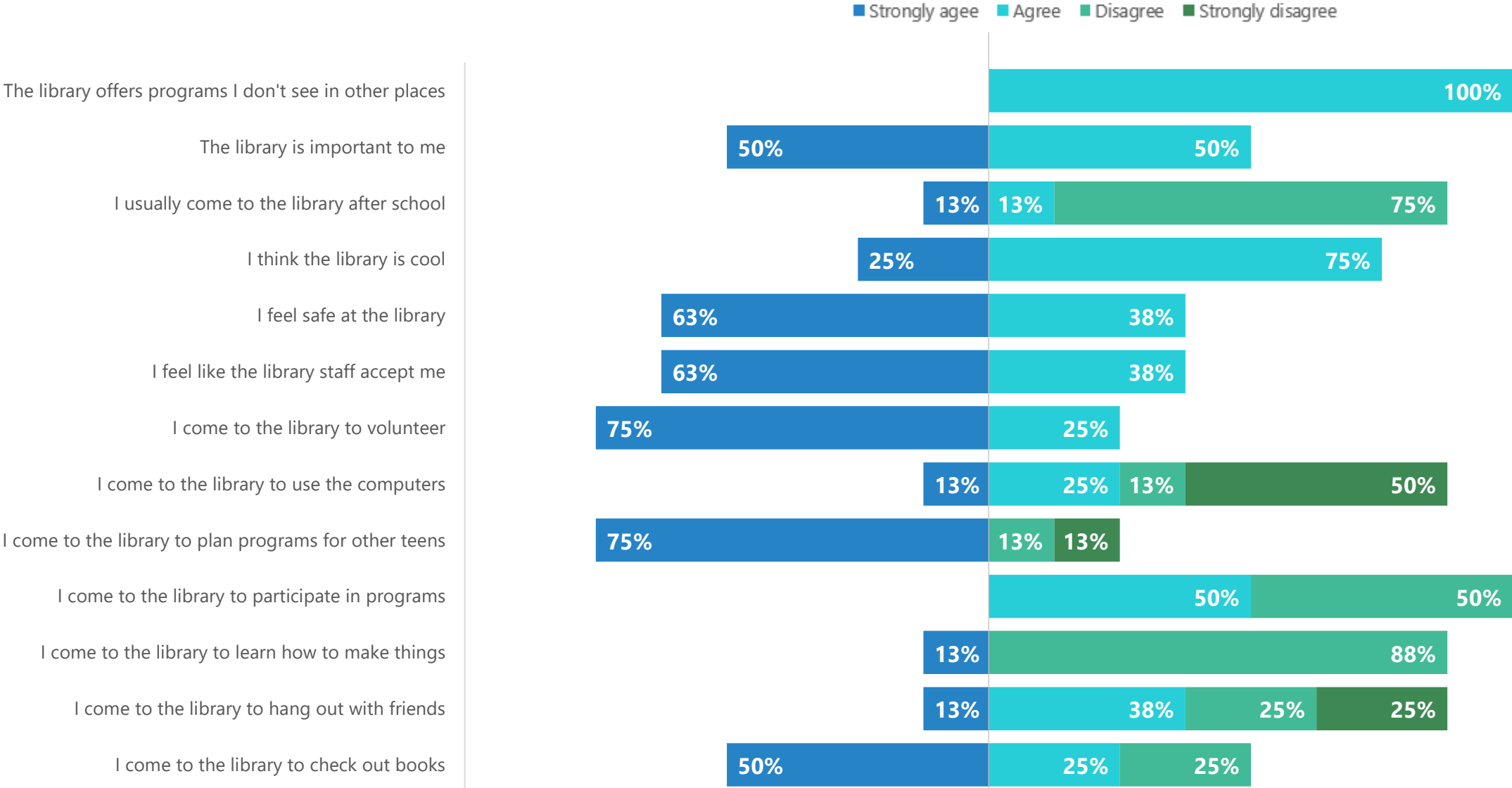
- To get information; teens don't use the library in "traditional ways," i.e. as a place to get information, they can get that at school and in other places
- To use computers for research; 17 out of the 18 teens have laptops, two teens said they played games on the computers
- For other teens – the library is not a place for them, the library is a place for kids and adults

Thoughts about the library

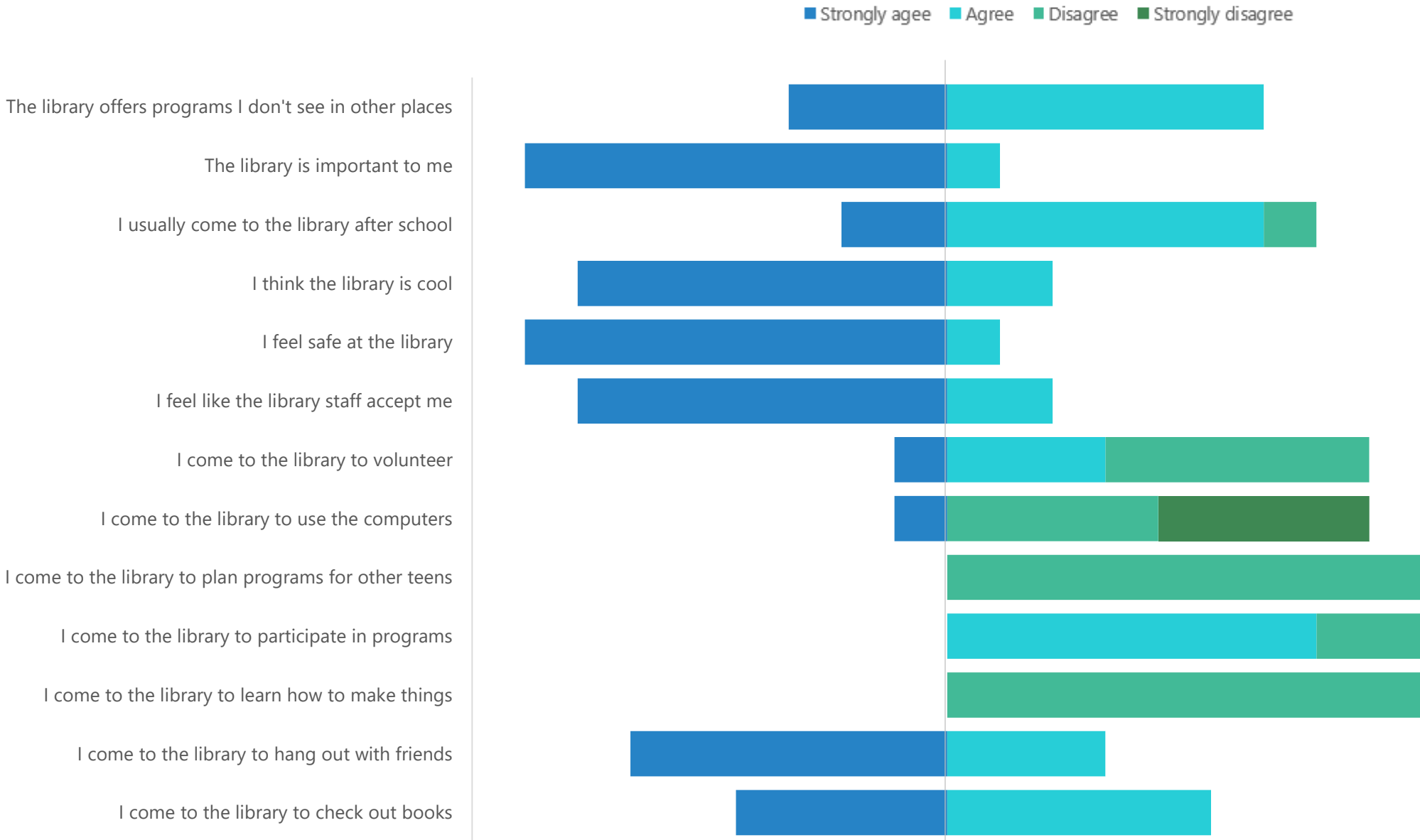
Main Teens



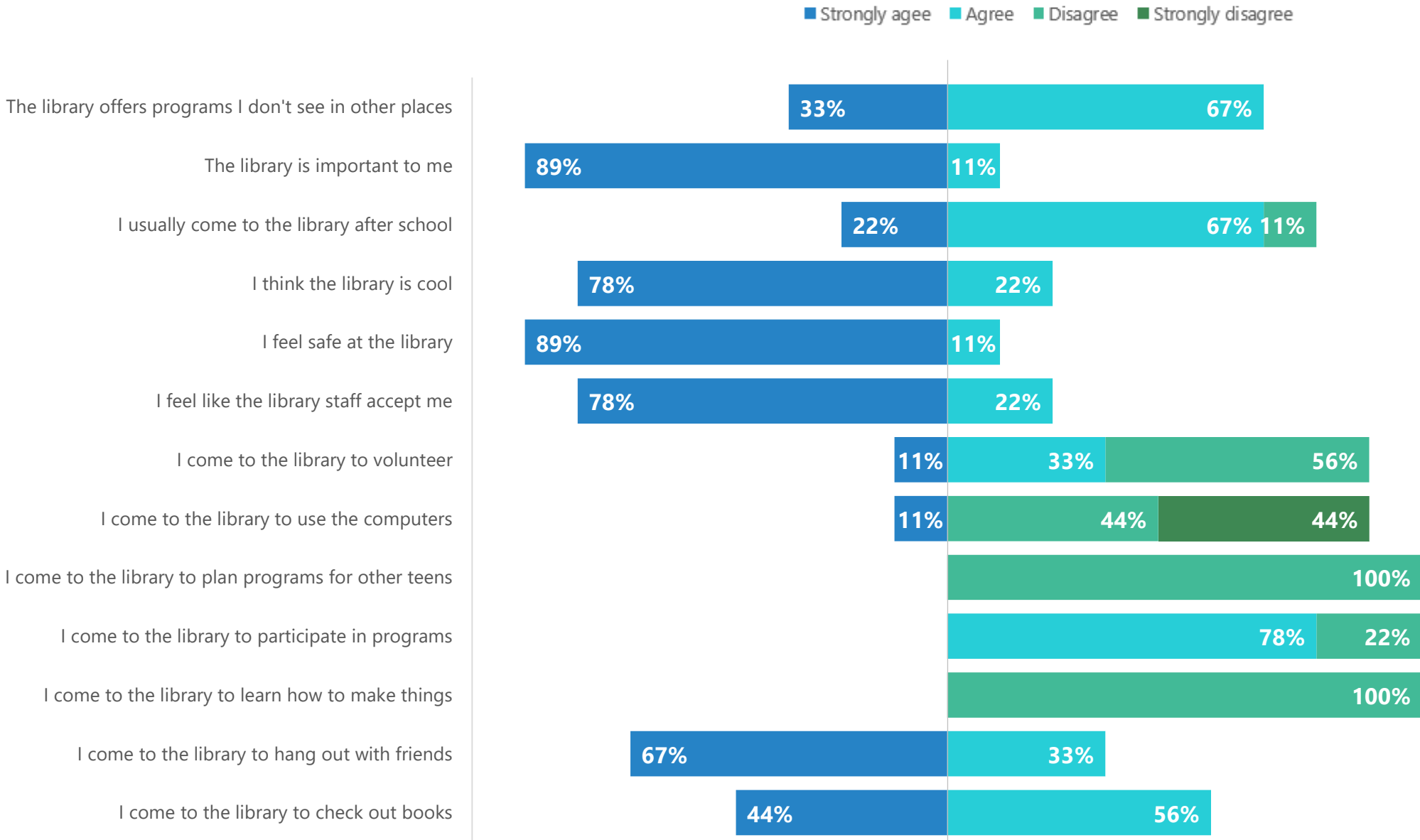
Main Teens



Reynold's Teens

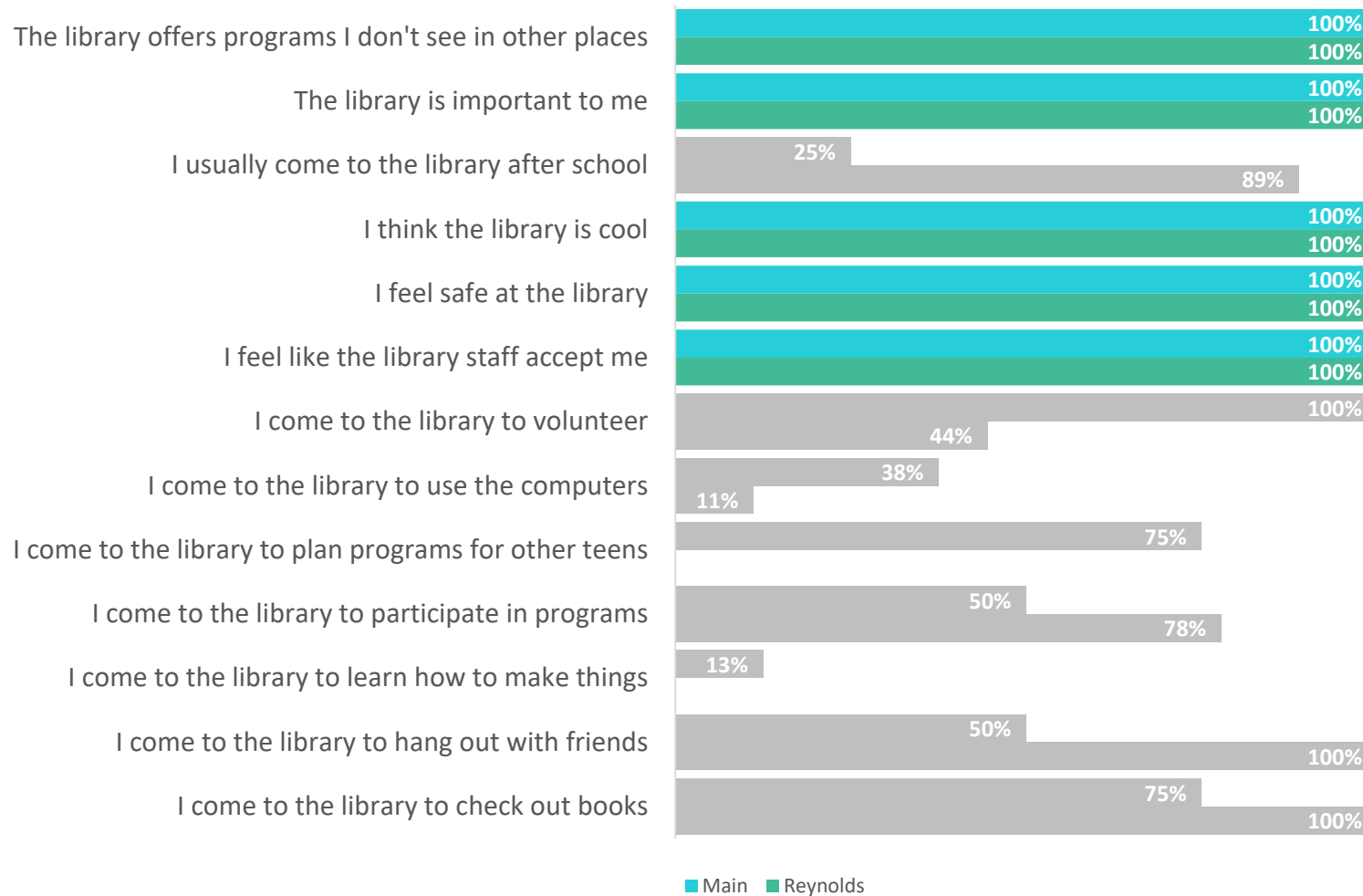


Reynold's Teens



What they have in common

Areas where teens “strongly agree” or “agree”



There were several **areas of agreement** among the two teens groups:
The library offers programs they don't find elsewhere;
The library is important to them;
The library is cool;
They feel safe at the library and accepted by library staff

They love the library

- Like, really love the library
- And they really love the teen librarians



(from Reynolds)

- They feel supported by the librarians
- And recognize that they are treated really well

The library is a place for them to escape

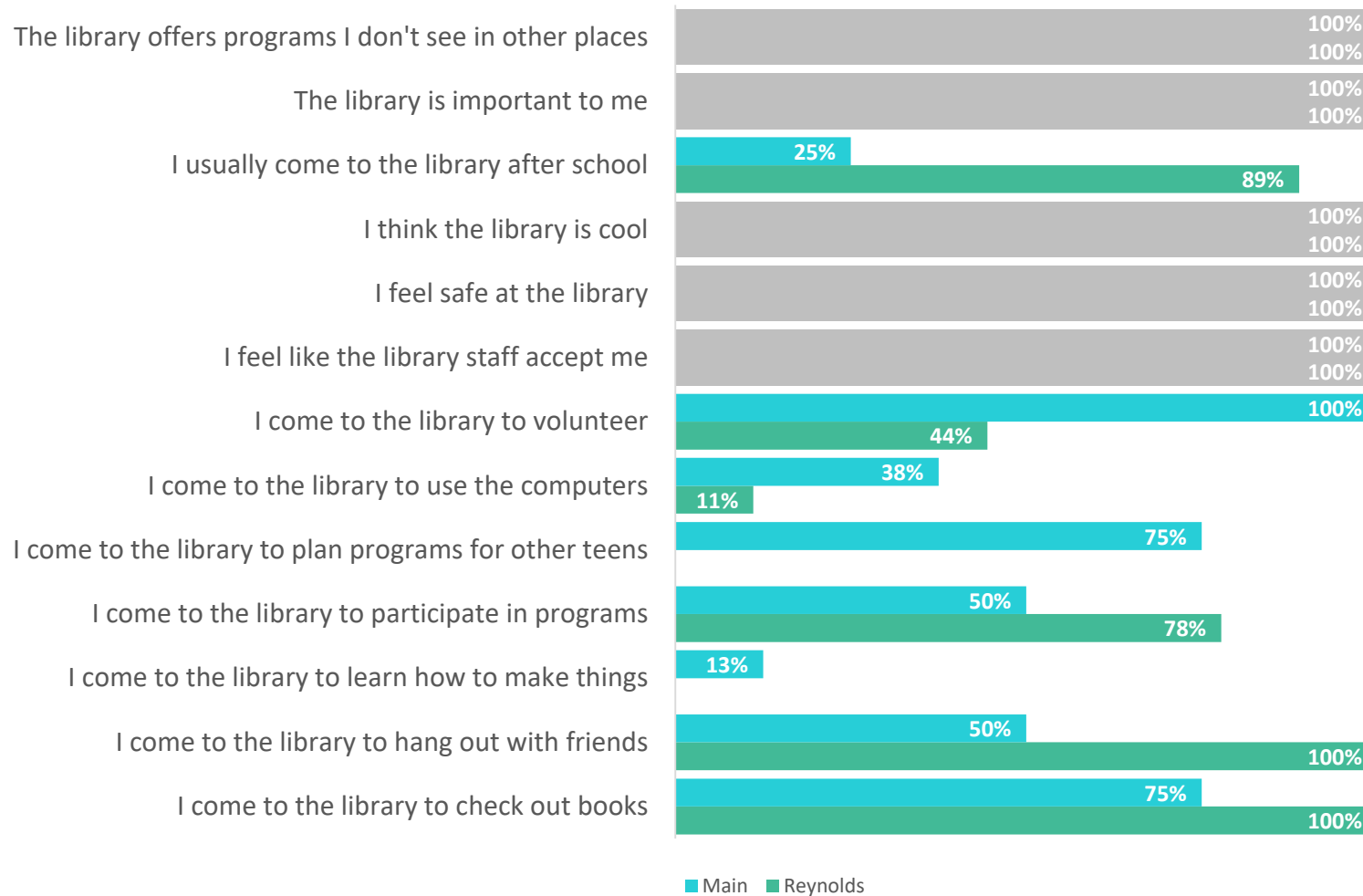
- The Teen Spaces are important places that allow them to escape
 - They are safe places where they don't feel weird
 - They are not expected to "be cool"
 - It is a place where nothing is expected of them; they can "just be"
 - They can meet people with common interests
 - They can feel like part of a community
 - They can stay as long as they want and not have to buy anything

They love books

- Books are a “relief to reality”
- They transport teens to another world
- They are “happier than real life”
- They are tools for understanding the world
- They can change perspectives

Where they differ

Areas where teens diverged



There were several areas where the two groups **diverged**:
The come to the library at different times; Main teens come to volunteer and plan program for other teens (BTAB); Reynold's teens are more likely to come to the library to hang out with friends or check out books

Main teens are very invested in BTAB

- The Boulder Teen Advisory Board is an important part of the Teen Space for Main teens
 - They enjoy planning events
 - They like being creative
 - They like collaborating with other teens
 - They enjoy volunteering and it counts towards school requirements
 - They like meeting other teens with something in common
 - It looks good on their college resume
- None of the Reynold's teens participate in BTAB and many did not know what it was

BTAB

- The teens feel supported, but...
- They want to see BTAB integrated into the library further
- They want a better understanding of what spaces and resources are available to them outside of the Teen Space
- Using the Teen Space for programming is very restrictive in terms of days and times
- They want to connect with Bldg 61 and the Makerspace
- They want to explore why a teen representative does not attend Library Commission meetings anymore and potentially restart the practice

Reynold's teens

- Do not come to the Teen Space for BTAB; most did not know what it was, a few had heard of it, but weren't sure what it entailed
- Reynold's teens come to the Teen Space for some programs (like tea on Fridays), but mostly as a place to hang out
- They have created a community around their shared interest in books
- They come to be part of a community where they feel accepted and comfortable

What other library spaces do they use?

Other Library spaces

Main Library

- Book stacks
- Café
- Meeting spaces
- Gallery
- Theater

Reynolds Branch Library

- Area next to Teen Space with outlets
- Work place area
- Hiding out in the stacks

What else would they be doing?

Range of activities

- Hanging out at home
- Hanging out with friends
- Not interacting with people
- Pursuing interests/hobbies
- Reading in their room
- Sleeping
- Studying

How to reach teens

The word is not out there

- “Teens don’t know about programs”
- “You need to advertise better”
- Signs on doors at library aren’t bad, but they only help notify people who are already coming
- “Teens don’t want to talk to librarians,” they learn about information from friends

Reach out to schools

- Partner with PTA groups
- Partner with Book Club at Fairview High School
- Bring programs to schools
- Go to classes and talk about library and programs
- Get information in weekly newsletter sent to students and parents
- Have information in morning announcements at schools
- Expand outreach with text notifications
- Put signs in bathroom stalls at schools
- Offer to host high school club meetings at library

What is not effective

- Fliers posted in hallways at school
- Social media

Teen 'hotline'

- Teens learn about programs from friends and parents
- It is snowball marketing; one teen hears about a program, tells another friend, who tells two more friends – it is very organic and starts with people already involved with programs
- They also “stumble upon” events

How teens would “sell” programs

- “You have nothing else to do”
- You can be part of a community
- “It’s a good place to meet people, you don’t have to interact, but if you want to talk you can”
- It’s “nice to plan events for other people”
- It’s a good place to “chill out, read books and drink tea”
- It’s an accepting environment; “you don’t have to be nervous about not being accepted”

Program ideas

Program ideas – consensus

- Technology programs; classes on 3D printing, how to code, how to build a robot, recording technology, how to use all of the things in the Makerspace (how to find the Makerspace)
- Zombie activities (make-up tutorials, zombies vs humans)
- Programs that bring new people with similar interests together; programs where they can make friends
- Book club (combination of talking about one book and having a discussion group around books you are reading)
- Tutoring for teens by teens

Program ideas – Main teens

- More programs in general
- Have a “teens recommend these books” area
- Language programs
- Social programs are great, but they want to see a combination of fun and “practical” programs like taxes, financial aid, applying to college, credit cards, SAT prep, etc. (teens acknowledge that it might be hard to get teens to attend at first, but they believe that these are important programs for the library to offer)
- Continue History Day and Science Day programs

Program ideas – Reynold's teens

- Discussion groups; talk about issues in a safe group, informal
- Themed game programs (e.g. Tri-Wizard Tournament)
- Teen fantasy fiction programs
- Creative writing classes, writing club
- Peer-editing classes
- Guest speakers (more of them, more information about them, better advertising)
- Question of the Week on board in Teen Space
- Photography classes and shows
- Partner with Goodreads reading challenge

Roadblocks

- Interested, but busy; teens suggested repeating programs at different times and days
- The teen age range (11-17) is too big; they aren't sure who the program is geared towards, consider creating highly-crafted programs for smaller age ranges
- The description is vague; “what is it going to be exactly?” there is a fear that it won't be fun/cool/interesting and they're hesitant to commit social capital by attending and inviting friends

Main Teen Space

Tension!

- There is a lot of tension between computer gamers and teens who want to use the Teen Space to socialize, have meetings, and/or read quietly
- Gamers are seen as loud and distracting (this was evident even during our focus group); one teen admitted she liked playing the games as well and understood wanting to have both things in one space
- Some teens expressed discomfort at hearing people being blown up on screen and watching people killing each other in the games
- The group suggested requiring gamers to use headphones while playing, this would not eliminate outbursts or discomfort with graphic images, but it would help each group coexist

Feels very oriented towards computers/TV

- Teens find the TV distracting and feel that it is the focal point of the room
- They feel that the “comfy” social spaces, i.e. the couch, are all oriented towards computers and the TV
- They want more “soft spaces” where they can hang out and socialize
- And they also want more quiet places to read
- They want the teen books to be closer to the Teen Space and would like to see more teen books in the Teen Space
- They think having the teen books closer to the Space would also help to advertise the Teen Space

Address tweens

- Teens were concerned about a space in the Library for tweens (10-13)
- They don't belong in the Children's Space anymore, but they don't fit in the Teen Space
- There is a big difference between young teens (10-14) and older teens (14-17)

Reynold's Teen Space

They want a door

- Every teen agreed that they need a door on the Teen Space
- They feel like they can't be comfortable knowing that their sound carries through the library
- They know they are being loud and distracting to other patrons, which leads to a sense that they can't be themselves in the Space

Bigger

- Generally, they want a bigger Teen Space
- They want more seating; they often feel there is “no where to sit”
- Even if just a few people are in there, it feels crowded and the teens aren’t comfortable sharing some of the very close seating
- They believe that new teens might be intimidated by the small space and the “core group” and not want to come in
- They want more “soft spaces” and tablets with e-books
- “Computers are only used by gamers,” although this doesn’t seem to cause the same tension found at the Main Library Teen Space
- They are envious of the Main Library Teen Space and the recording studio