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Virtual Reality: A Survey of Use at an Academic Library

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Authors

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VIRTUAL REALITY: A Survey of Use at an Academic Library

BYU LIBRARY

Megan Frost, Sarah Cheng, & Michael Goates - Brigham Young University

Introduction

We conducted a survey to inform the expansion of our current Virtual Reality (VR) service in the library.

We were primarily interested in user experience, demographics, academic interests in VR, and methods of discovery.



Student using the library's VR equipment:

Pilot

Currently we offer one HTC Vive VR system that can be used near the science & engineering reference desk.

It is managed by student employees at the reference desk.

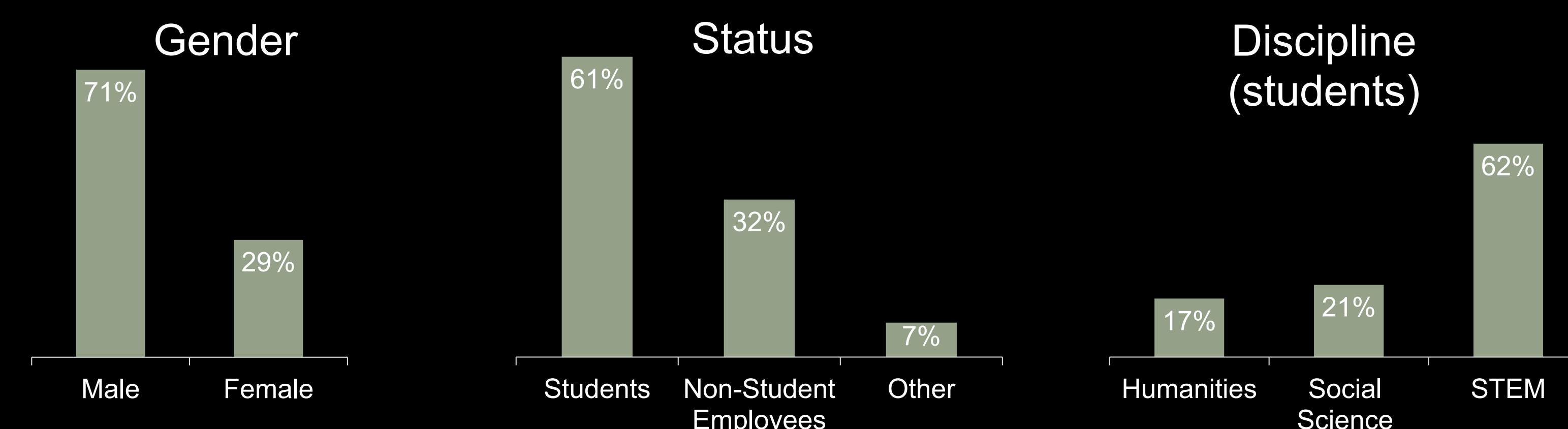
Fifteen minute timeslots are reserved on the library's website.



Our current equipment: one HTC Vive headset and controllers

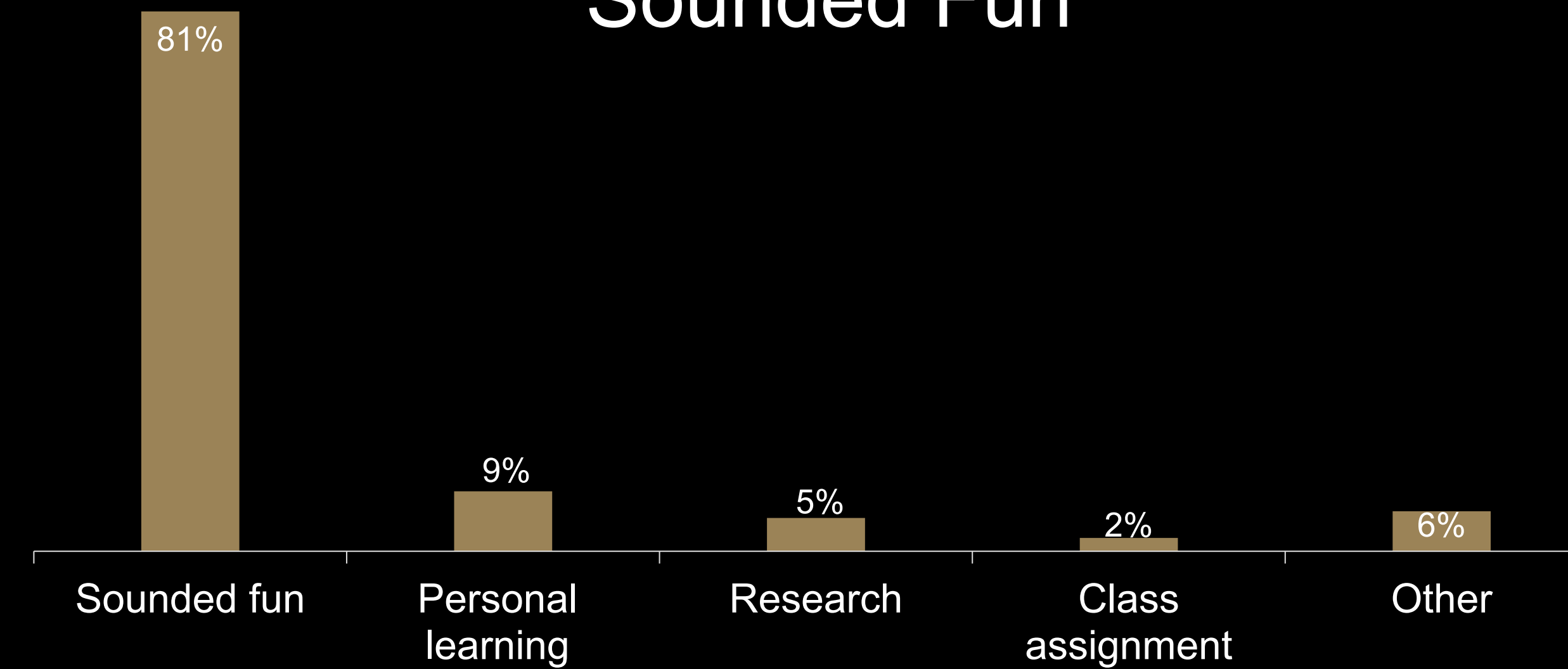
Demographics

While the most common users were male students in the STEM disciplines, there was use among all measured demographics.

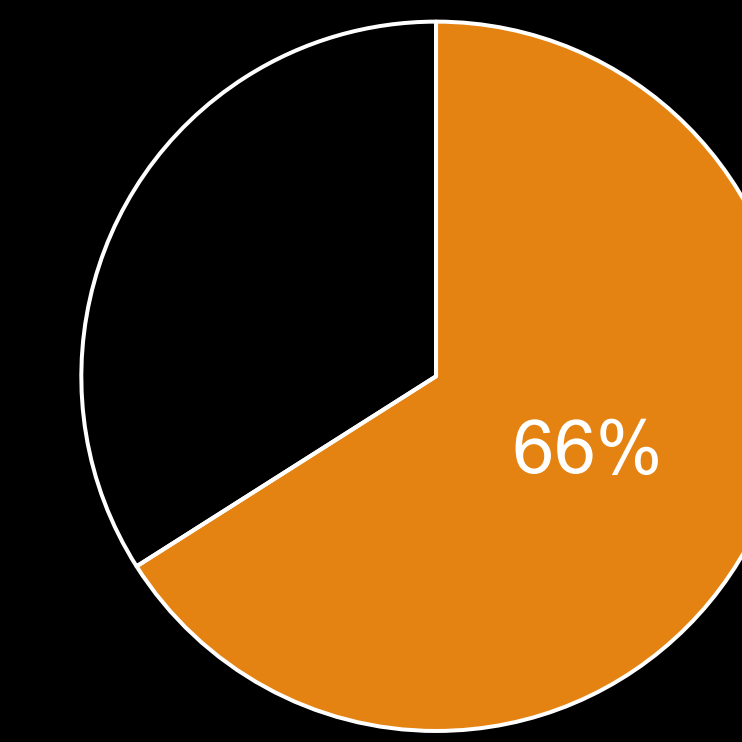


Survey Results

Most Responders Came Because it Sounded Fun



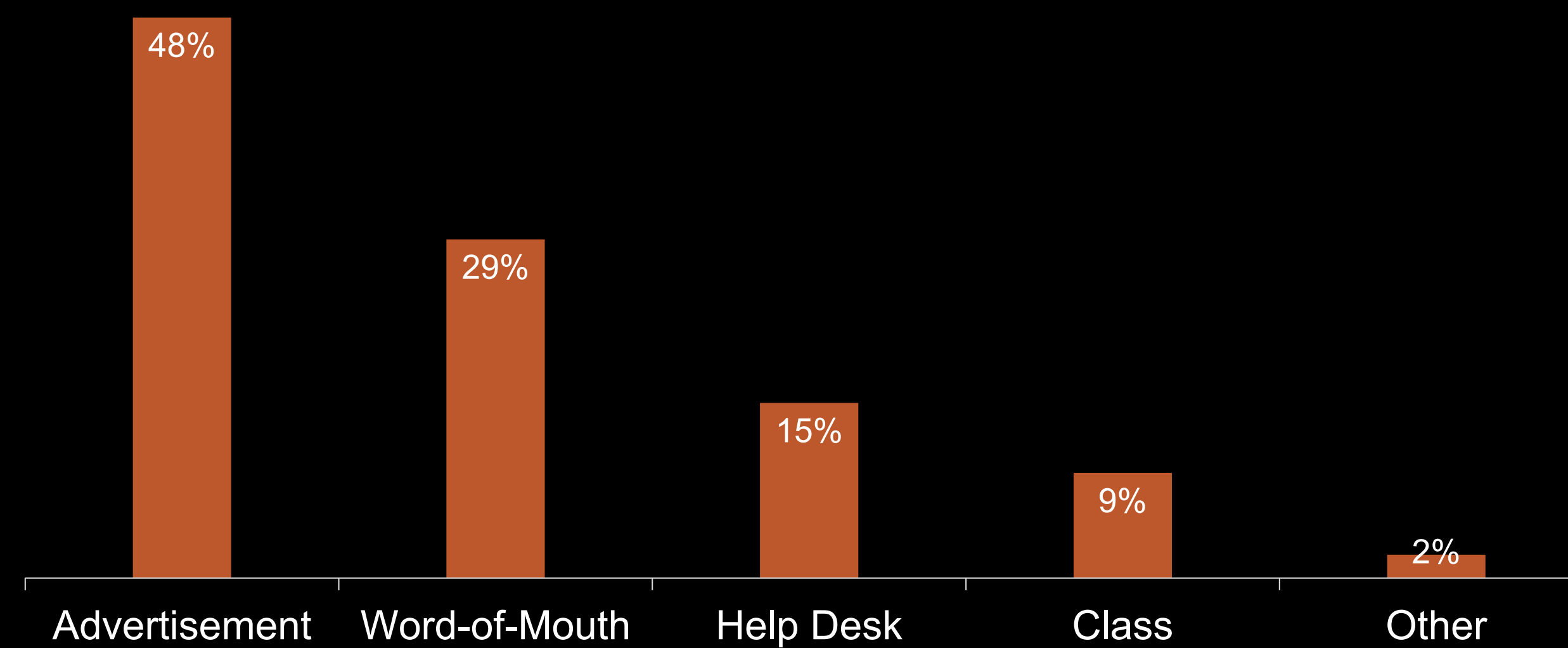
First Time Users



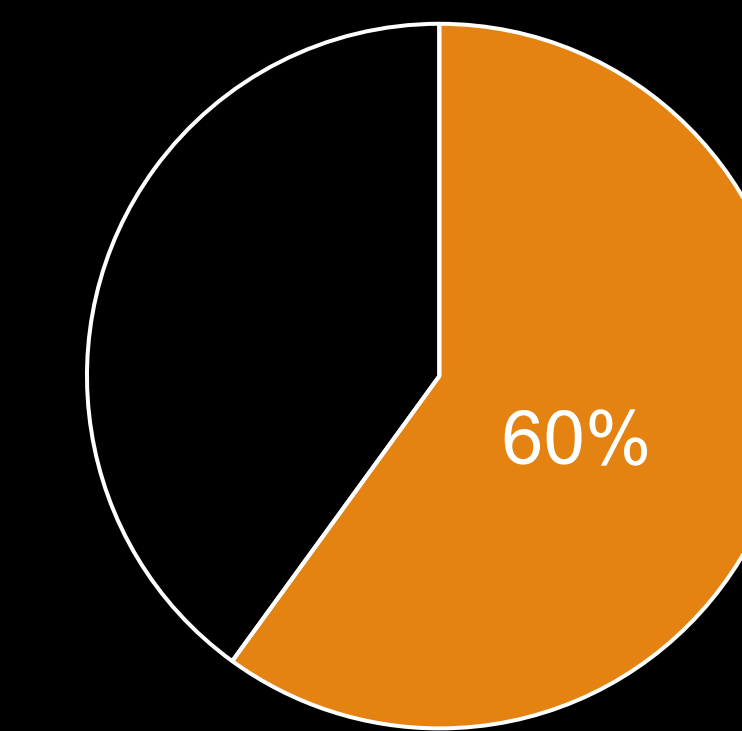
Top Five Apps Used

- Google Earth** – “Fly” over a virtual globe and view detailed images of the earth
- The Lab** – A game that offers eight short demo experiences that use different aspects of the VR capabilities
- Tiltbrush by Google** – 3D painting
- Virtual Jerusalem**– Informative tour of the temple mount during the time of Christ, developed at BYU
- 3D Organon VR Anatomy** – Interactive atlas of the human body

Most Effective Discovery Methods: Advertising and Word-of-Mouth

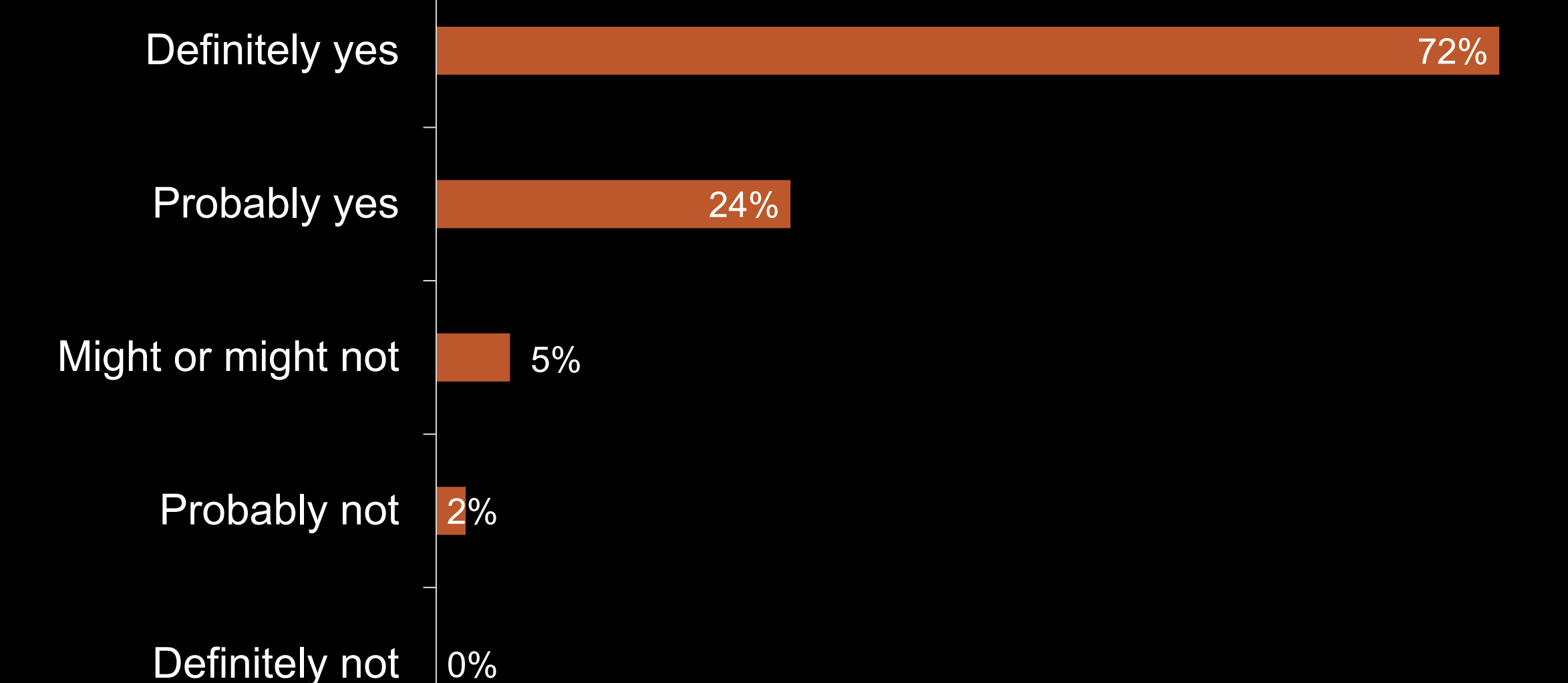


Interest in Academic Uses*

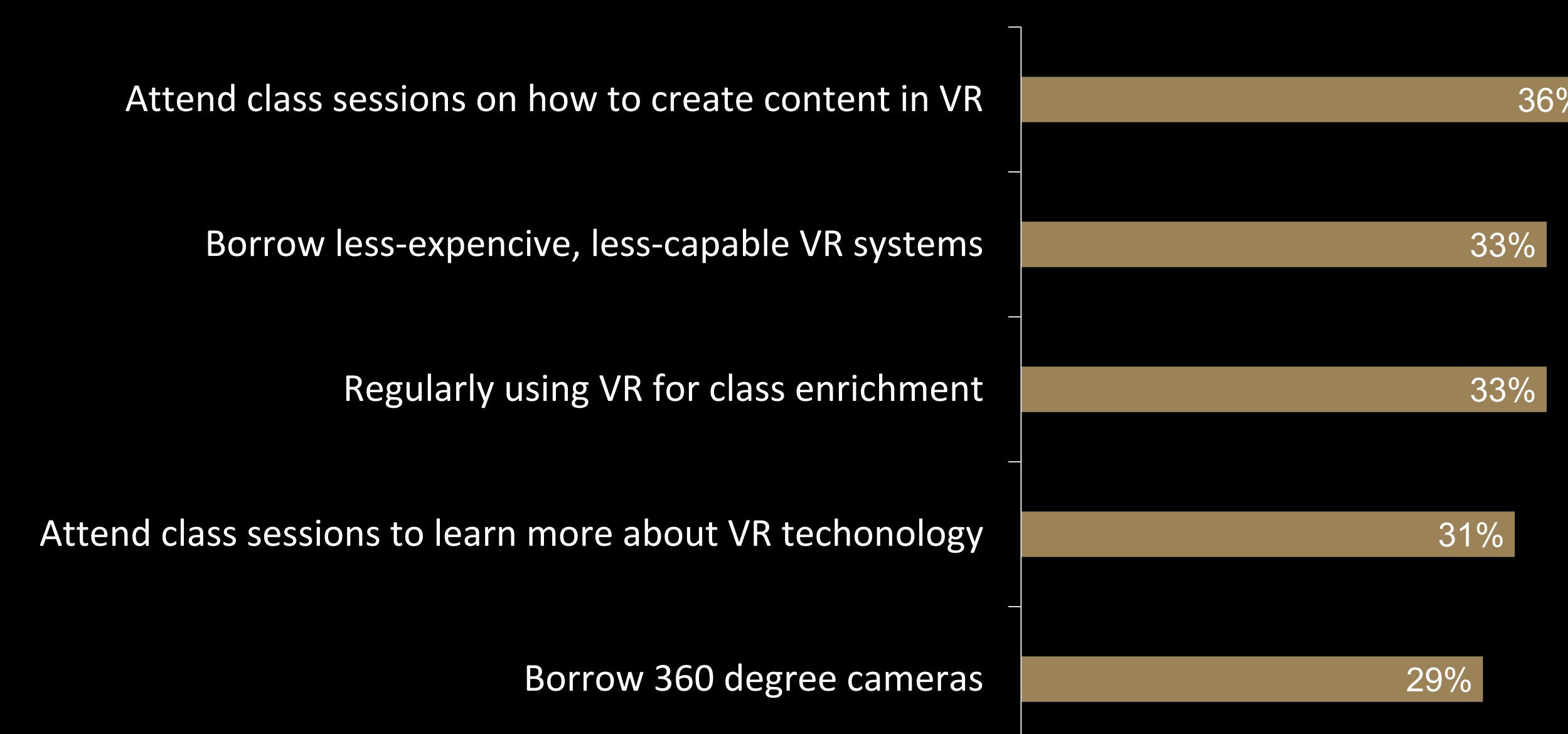


*40% of users did not express interest in using VR for academic purposes

Most Responders Intend to Reuse the Library's VR Service



Responders Would Like Us to Offer Related Services



Conclusions

Academic use wasn't as high as we expected. In future marketing we will reach out to faculty with suggested ideas for academic uses or collaboration.

Even though the VR service is located at the science & engineering reference desk, nearly 40% of users were not in STEM disciplines. This is encouraging and suggests value in a VR service directed to all library patrons.

We found sufficient patron interest for us to explore related VR services such as offering classes on creating content and acquiring less expensive headsets that can be borrowed outside of the library.