
Reading from paper or reading from screens. What do consumers prefer?

A survey of UK consumers undertaken by Two Sides, May 2015

As the world of communication continually shifts towards digital, books, magazines and other forms of communication are increasingly read on screen.

There have been many studies to try and find out if people actually prefer to read from screens or whether the convenience and immediacy of digital communication is forcing a change of reading habits.

This survey explores how consumers feel about this development and reveals that print and paper is still preferred by many who also have concerns for learning and literacy in an increasingly digital world.

There are lessons for all in this report; from the perspective of citizens coping in a changing media world to the concerns of advertisers and educators who need to know how information, by whatever means it is delivered, is being received, processed and retained.

Print on paper is also seen as a 'safe' medium, with significant apprehension being raised about the impact on health from increasing on-line usage.

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Executive Summary

The survey was commissioned by Two Sides and carried out by international research company Toluna in May 2015. 500 UK and 1000 US consumers were asked their opinion on a variety of issues relating to the switch from paper-based to digital media. The report details the responses from UK consumers and reveals fundamental concerns about the digital reading experience. The results of the survey undertaken with US consumers are being published in a companion report.

The results of the UK survey have lessons for all those who choose the way in which information is distributed, particularly advertisers and educators. Whilst on-screen reading occupies an increasing amount of consumer time, people's preferences are still for a physical reading experience which they believe is more informative and less distracting.

It is not evident that younger ages are significantly different to older groups. Whilst acceptance of digital media is stronger amongst younger ages, a preference for print on paper still exists for all ages and indicates a more fundamental and more human way that we react to the physicality of print on paper.

There is also a concern that the increasing time spent with electronic media is damaging to health.

Key Findings:

- 84% of people believe that they understand and can retain or use information much better when they read print on paper. Only 31% of people thought mobiles and smart phones were useful for imparting understandable, useful and memorable information.
- 79% of people are most relaxed when reading print on paper. Mobiles or smart phones being seen as a relaxing media by only 23%
- 60% of mobile or smart phone users, (71% 18 -24's), 57% of computer users, (74% 18 -24's), and 46% of e-readers, are worried that these devices may be damaging their health; (eyestrain, headaches, insomnia).
- 83% of all respondents state a clear preference for reading print on paper for complicated documents. Mobiles and smart phones were preferred by only 2% of all respondents.
- Only 21% are easily distracted when reading print on paper whereas other electronic channel show high distraction rates ranging from 65% for mobiles and smart phones to 42% for e-readers.
- Many people print out important documents:
 - 72% believe printed documents are easier to read
 - 49%, believe printed documents are more secure
 - 53% believe printed documents are better for storage and archiving
 - 43% believe printed documents are less likely to be lost
- Almost 50% of people want to have a paper bill for their Financial Services. For other services; 40% of utility customers, 36% of landline customers, 29% of mobile phone customers, 28% of broadband customers and 33% of TV services customers prefer to get their bills and statements on paper.

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- 69% of respondents are more relaxed and receptive when reading a newspaper on paper compared to 25 % who felt more relaxed and receptive when reading a newspaper from a mobile device.
 - 66% of respondents are more relaxed and receptive when reading a magazine compared to 18 % who feel more relaxed and receptive when reading a magazine from a mobile device.
 - Print is an important advertising medium
 - 54% pay more attention to advertising when reading magazines in print compared to 19% who pay more attention to advertising when reading magazines on line
 - 52% pay more attention to advertising when reading newspapers in print compared to 21% who pay more attention to advertising when reading newspapers on line
 - 67% of 18 – 25's and 65% of 25 -34's pay more attention to adverts when reading magazines in print, higher than other age groups.
 - 50% of 25 – 34's and 43% of 35 – 44's pay more attention to advertising using mail or door drops
 - The switch to digital learning methods is of concern
 - 66% believe that books are more likely to encourage learning and the development of other skills than using screens.
 - 58% worry that children are not going to learn as much without books
 - 57% believe that learning from books is the best way to learn.
 - 56% would insist that their children learn from books
 - When given a choice, 78% of people prefer to read in print, on paper.

About Two Sides

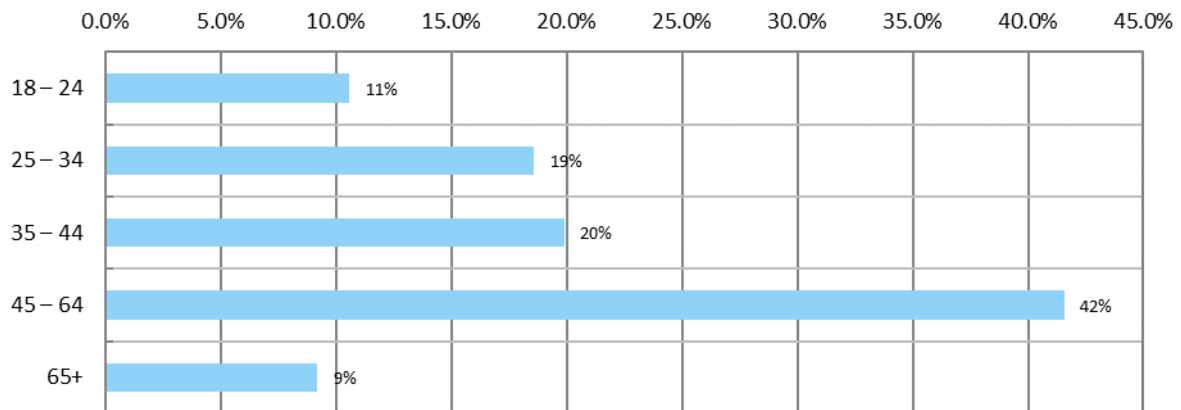
Two Sides is a global initiative by companies from the Graphic Communication Value Chain including forestry, pulp, paper, inks and chemicals, pre-press, press, finishing, publishing, envelopes and printing. Our common goal is to dispel common environmental misconceptions, by providing users with verifiable information on why print and paper is an attractive, practical and sustainable communications medium.
www.twosides.info

Contacts:

The UK Survey

1. Sample size and breakdown

The survey was conducted by independent research organisation Toluna with 500 UK consumers in May 2015. The split in each age range of consumers was as follows:

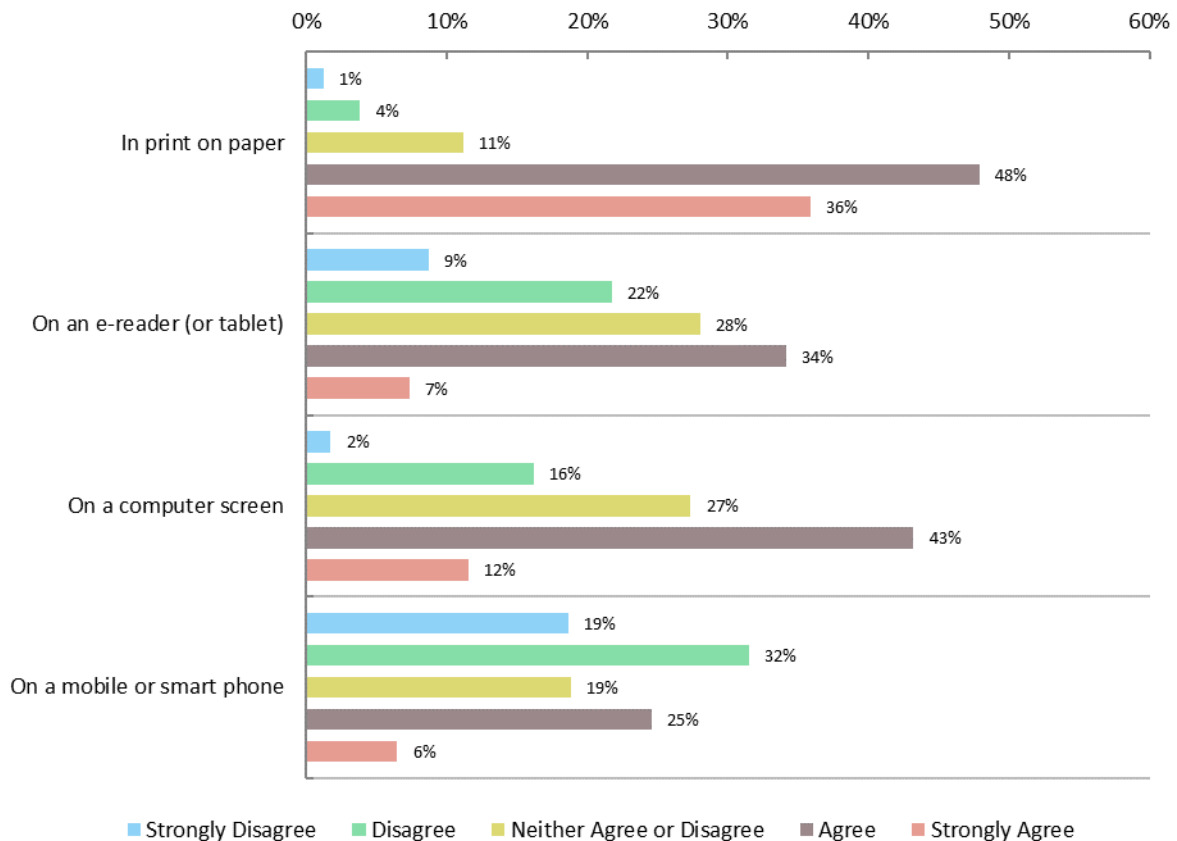


39% of the consumers were male and 61% female. Individuals working in the paper, printing or allied industries were excluded from the survey.

Consumers were spread across the UK

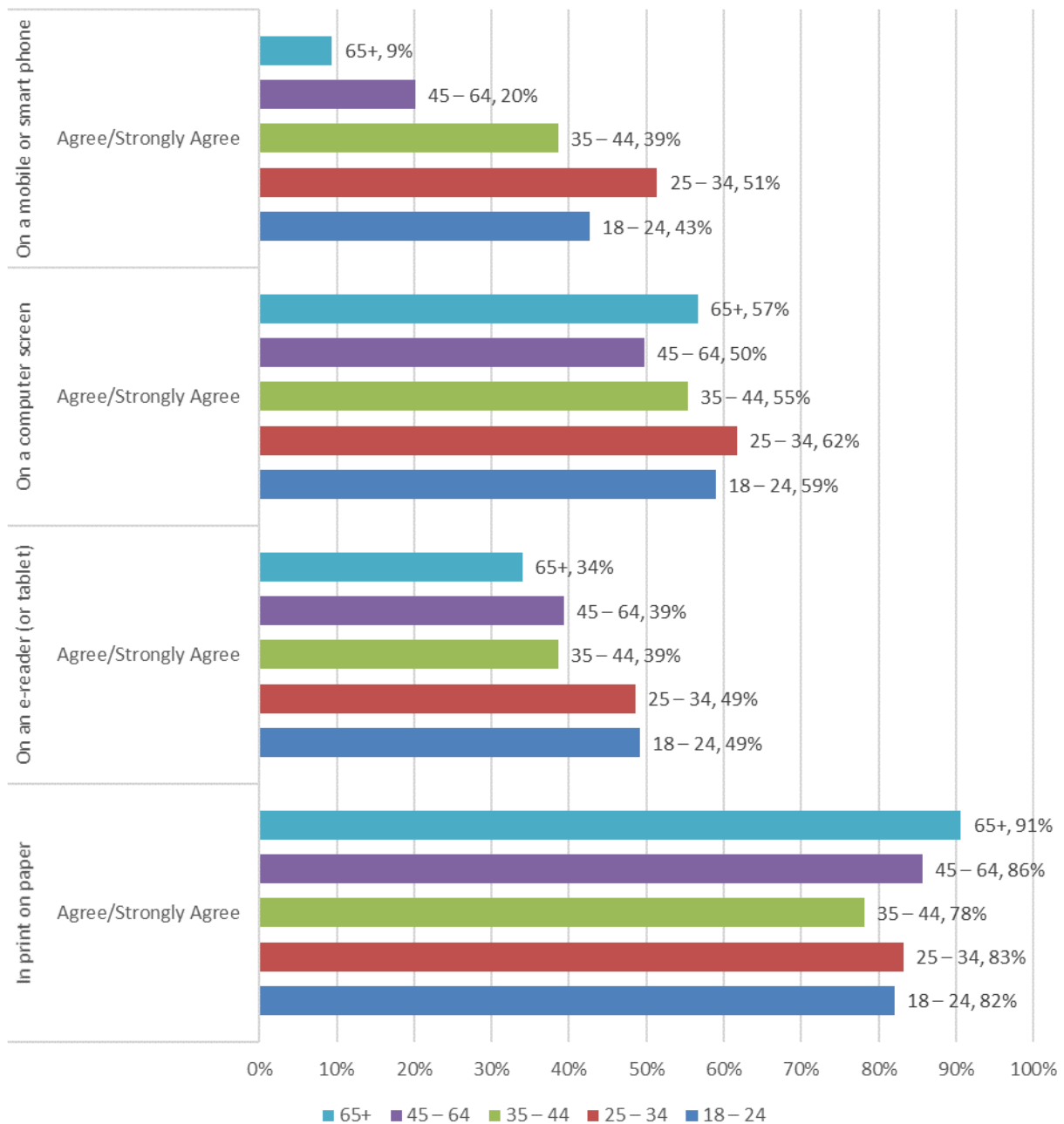
Questions and Responses

2. I understand and can retain or use information better when I read. (Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements)



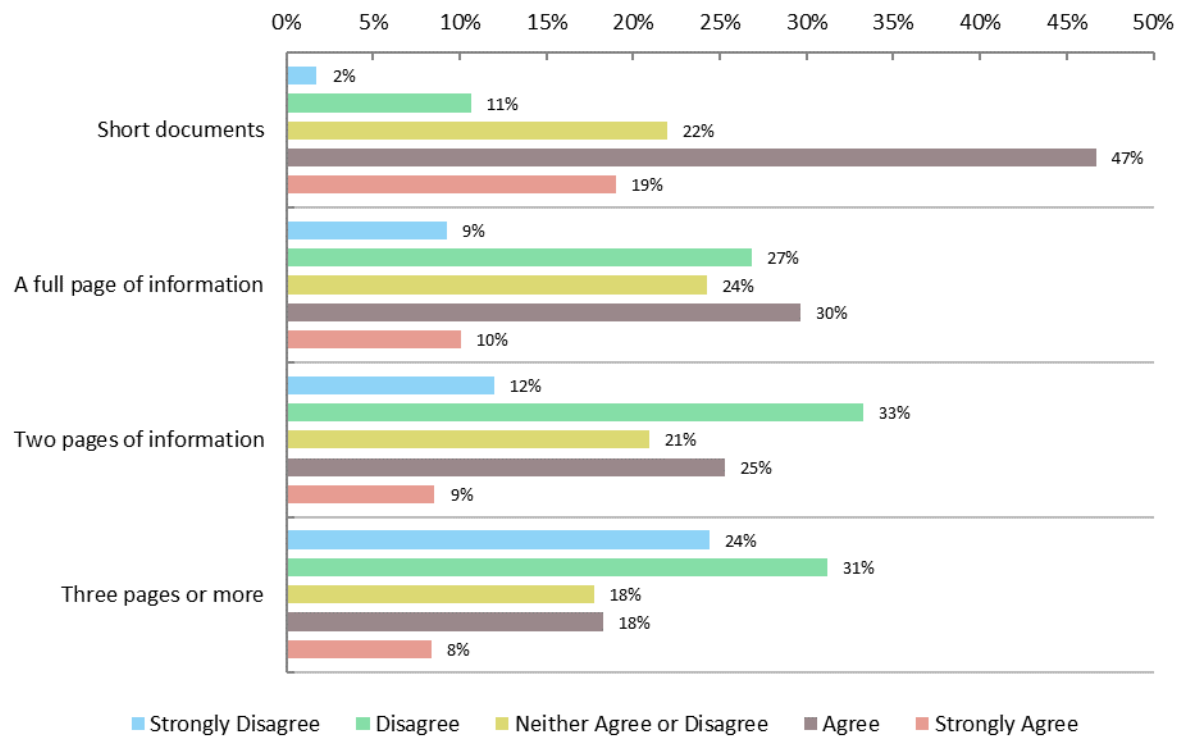
84% of people believe that they understand and can retain or use information much better when they read print on paper. Computer screens come next, 55%, and e-readers follow with 41%. Only 31% of people think mobiles and smart phones are useful for imparting understandable, useful and memorable information.

I understand and can retain information better when I read (Age difference):



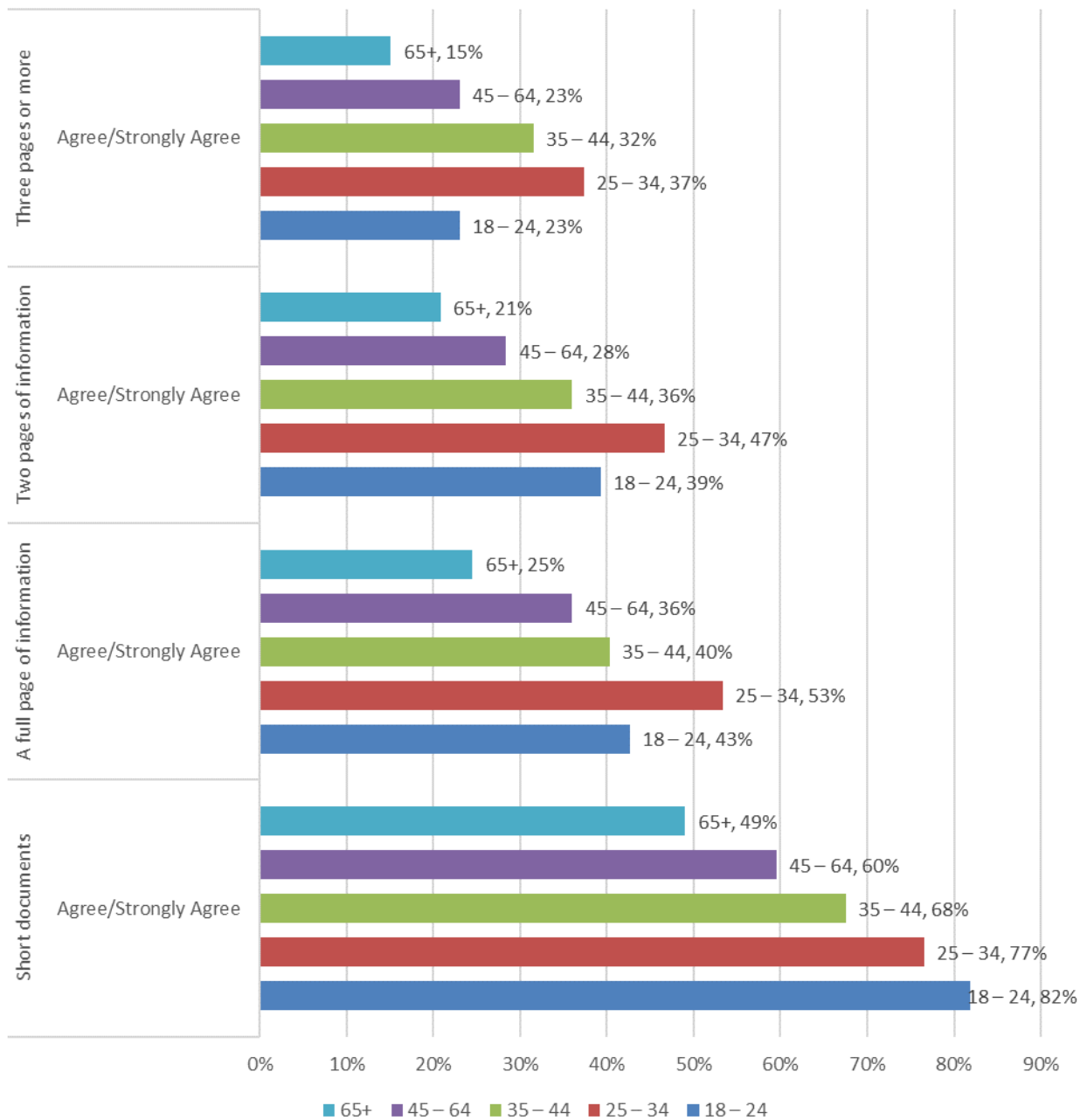
For all age groups the preference for paper for understanding, retaining and using information is clear. When it comes to reading from screens, computer screens are preferred to e-readers/tablets and mobile devices which show a marked decline in appreciation by older age groups.

3. I prefer reading on screen (electronic) when I read the following:



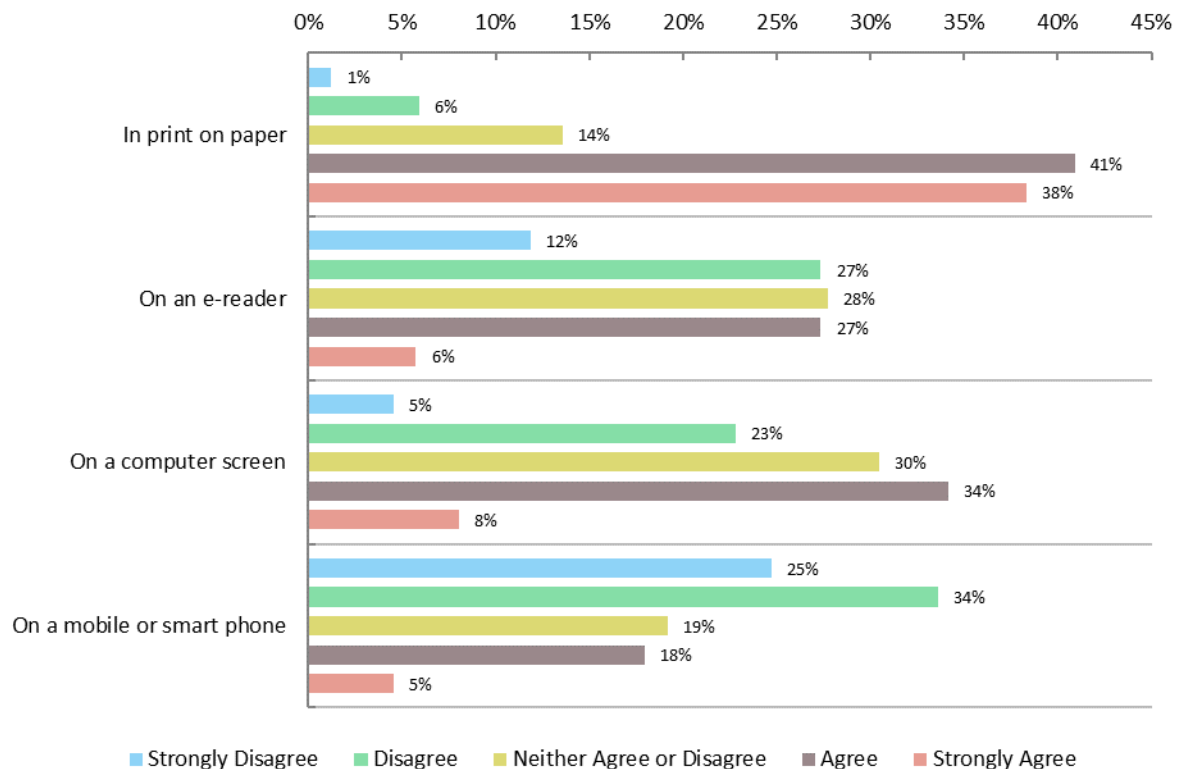
66% of people prefer reading on screen for short documents, less than a page, but this falls away quickly for documents of one page or more.

I prefer reading on screen when I read (Age difference):



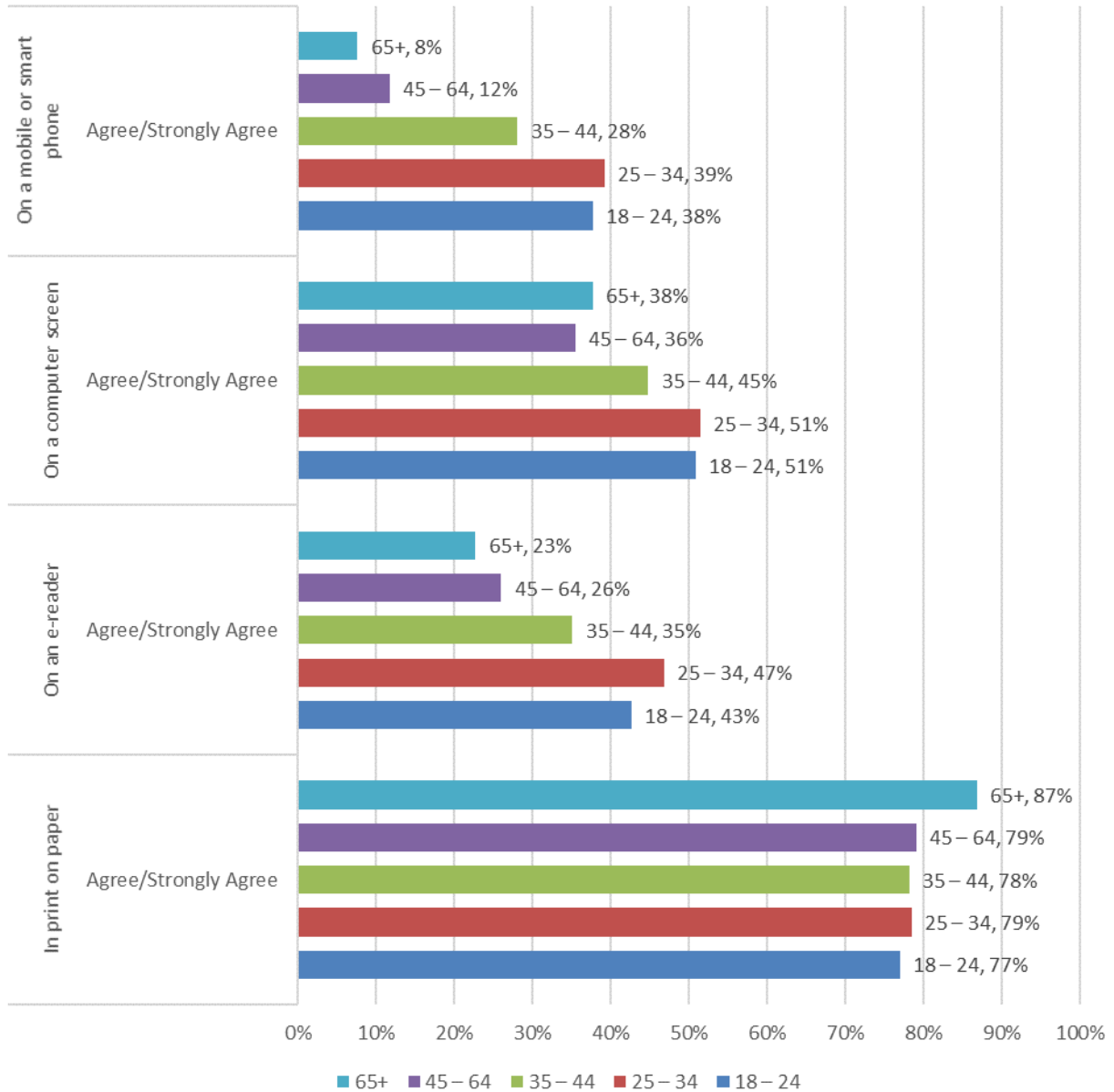
As might be expected, any preference for reading documents on screen declines with age but all age groups show a dislike of screens for longer documents.

4. I am at my most relaxed when reading information:



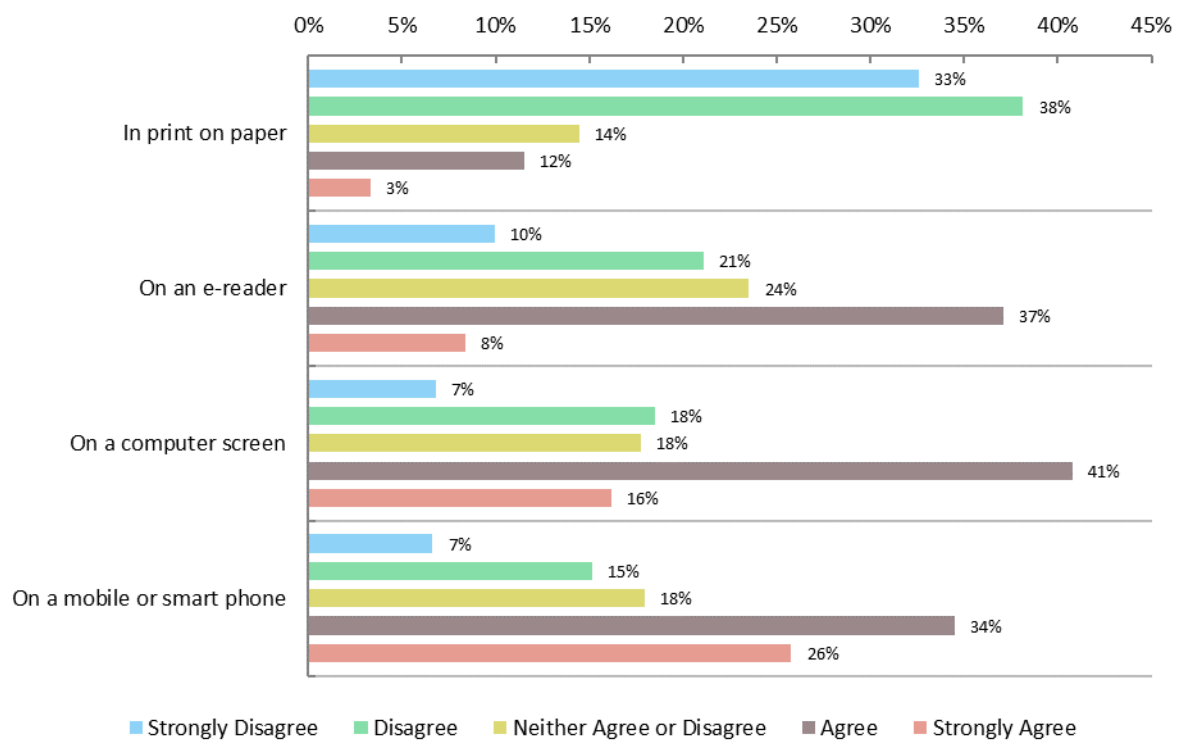
Relaxation whilst reading is important, particularly if communicators wish to have information retained. Reading print on paper is closely associated with being relaxed. 79% of people are most relaxed when reading print on paper. This falls away quickly with other media with mobiles or smart phones being seen as a relaxing media by only 23%

I am at my most relaxed when reading information (Age difference):



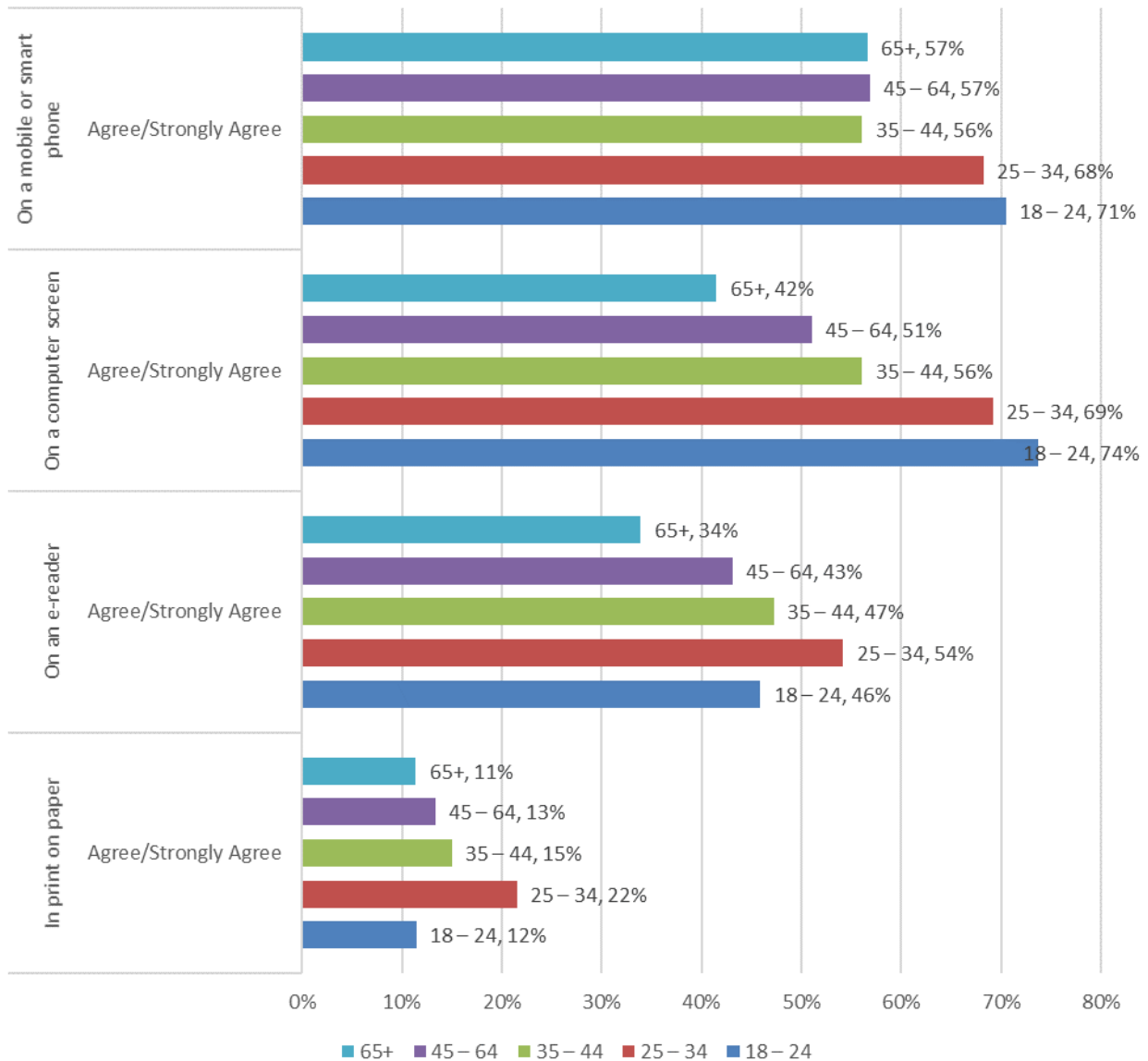
The preference for print and paper as a relaxing media is universal across age groups: 77% of 18 – 24's. Younger age groups, as may be expected, appear to be more at ease with digital media. Computer screens are next best but when it comes to mobile platforms, there is a marked decline of appreciation with older age groups; (39% of 25 – 34's agree that mobiles or smart phones are relaxing compared to 12% of 45 – 64's.)

5. I worry that I might be damaging my health (ex: eyestrain, headaches, insomnia) when I view or spend too much time reading:



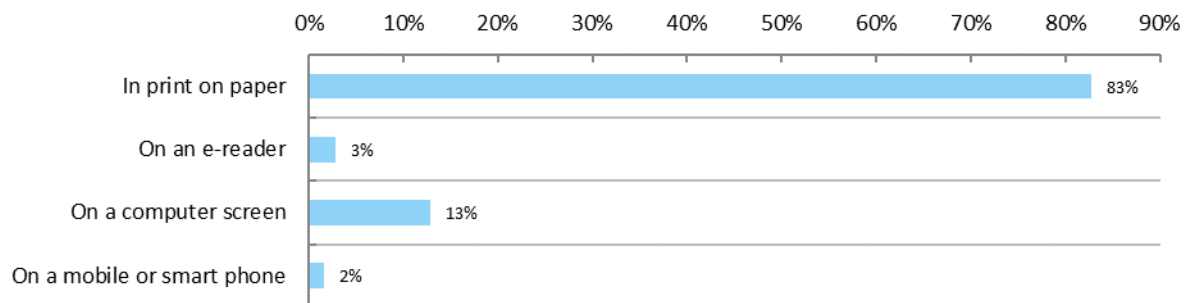
There is marked concern about health issues in connection with electronic media with 60% of mobile or smart phone users, 57% of computer users and 46% of e-readers, worried that they may be damaging their health. Print on paper is seen as a 'safe' medium.

I worry that I might be damaging my health (ex: eyestrain, headaches, insomnia) when I view or spend too much time reading (Age difference):



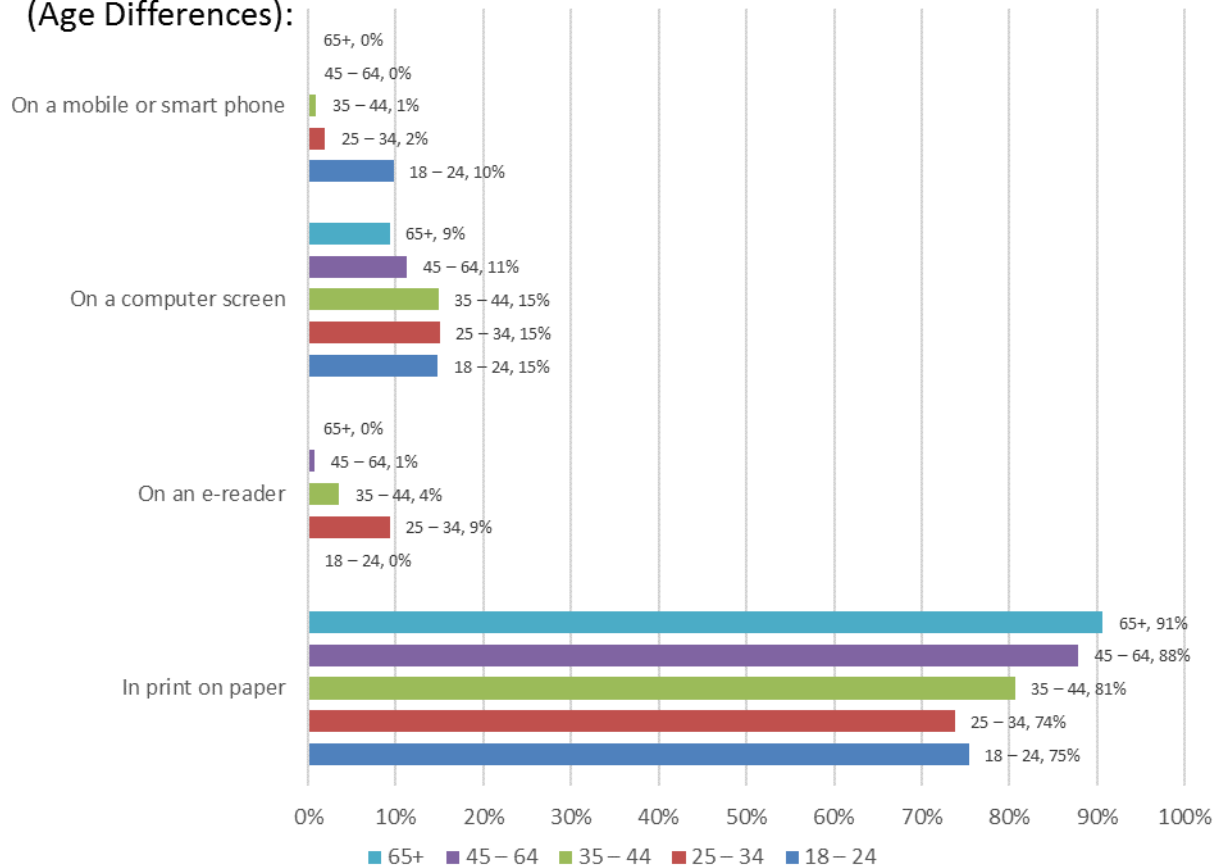
Younger age groups are more concerned about their health when using e-media. Whilst 15% of all age groups have low concerns about reading from paper some differences emerge when examining the concerns about using electronic media. In the age group 18-24, 74% have health concerns over using computer screens and 71% are similarly concerned about using mobiles or smart phones. This compares surprisingly with the older age group, 45 – 64, where 51% have health concerns over using computer screens and 57% are concerned about using mobiles or smart phones.

6. When I have something complicated to read, I prefer to read:



83% of all respondents state a clear preference for reading print on paper. Mobiles and smart phones are preferred by only 1.6% of all respondents for reading.

When I have something complicated to read, I prefer to read (Age Differences):

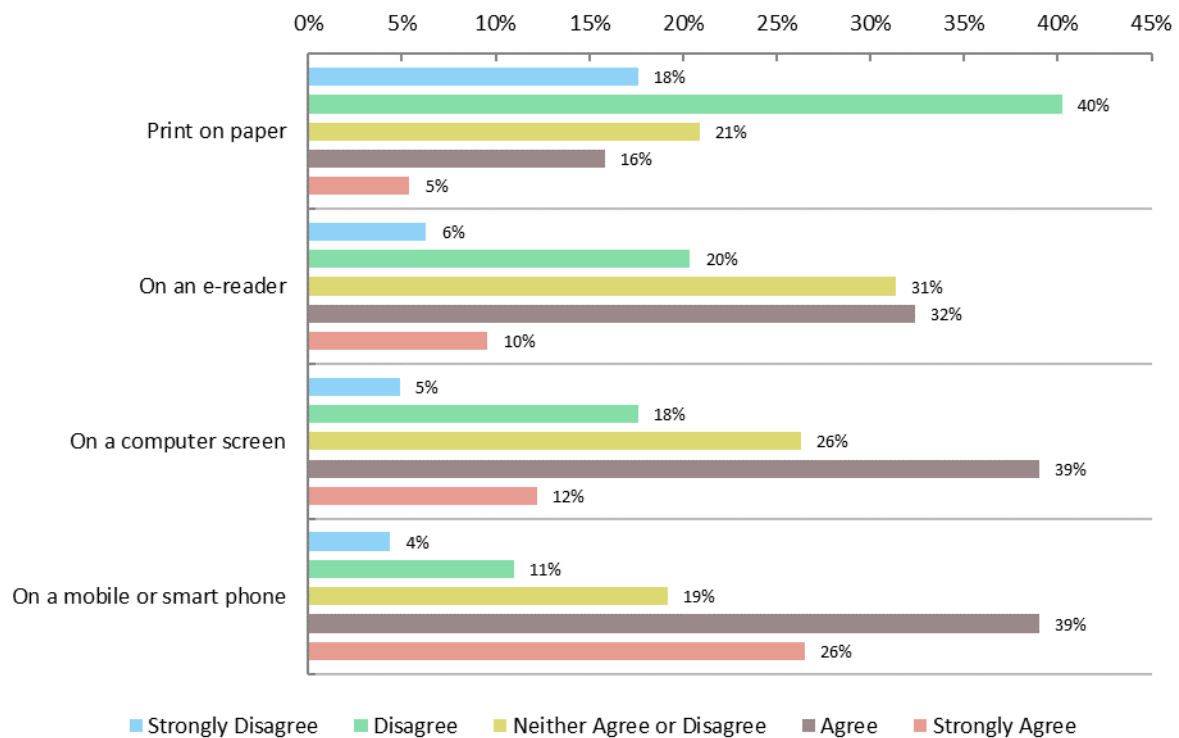


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5% of 18 – 24's say that print on paper is easier to read for complicated documents and the preference

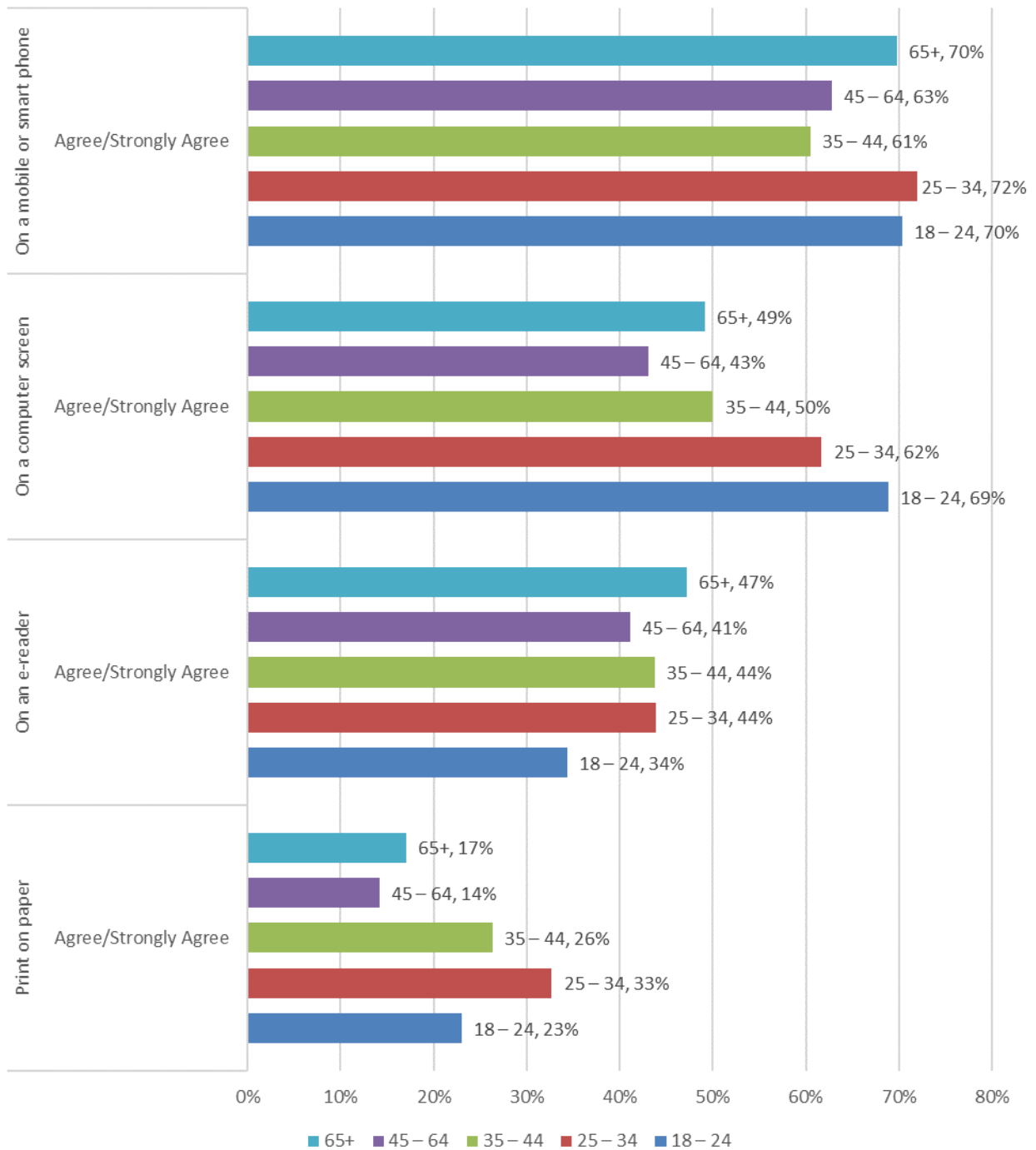
trends to paper as age increases. The age group 18 – 24 shows the highest preference for reading complicated documents on mobiles but this is only 10%.

7. I am more easily distracted when I read:



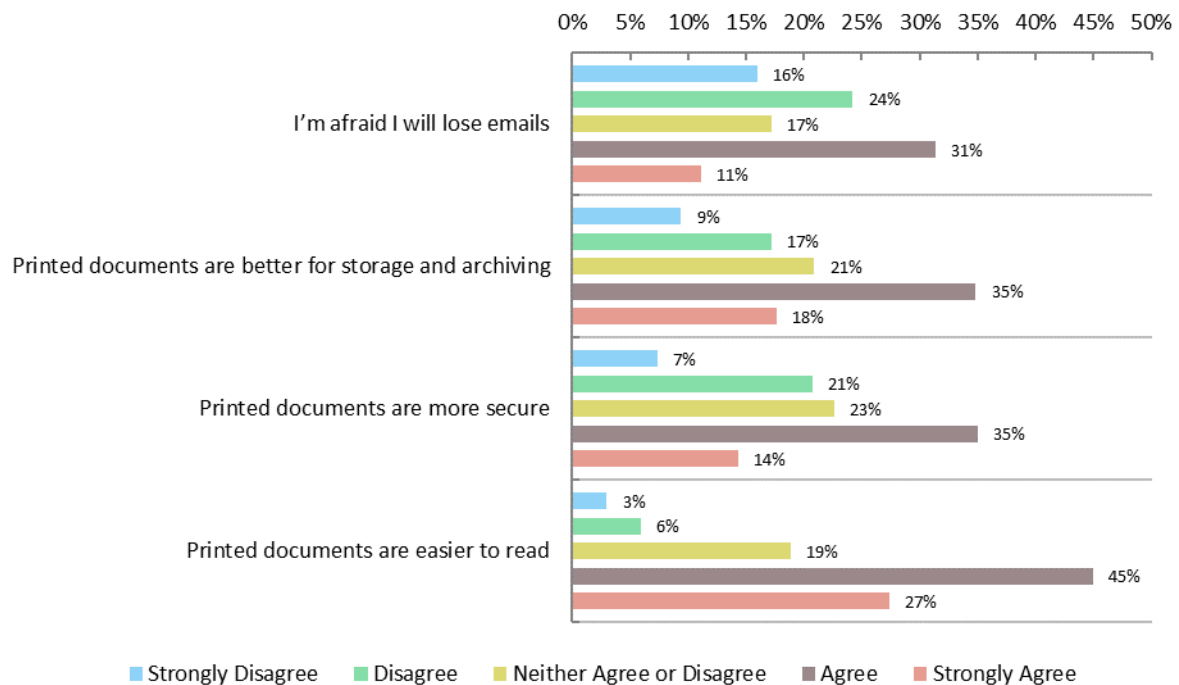
Print on Paper is clearly the most immersive medium with overall 21% being easily distracted whereas other electronic channels show high distraction rates ranging from 65% for mobiles and smart phones to 42% for e-readers.

I am more easily distracted when I read (Age difference):



The higher distraction rates for digital media stretch across age groups

8. I often print out complicated documents; financial information; important information because:



Many people admit to printing out documents. The main reasons are;

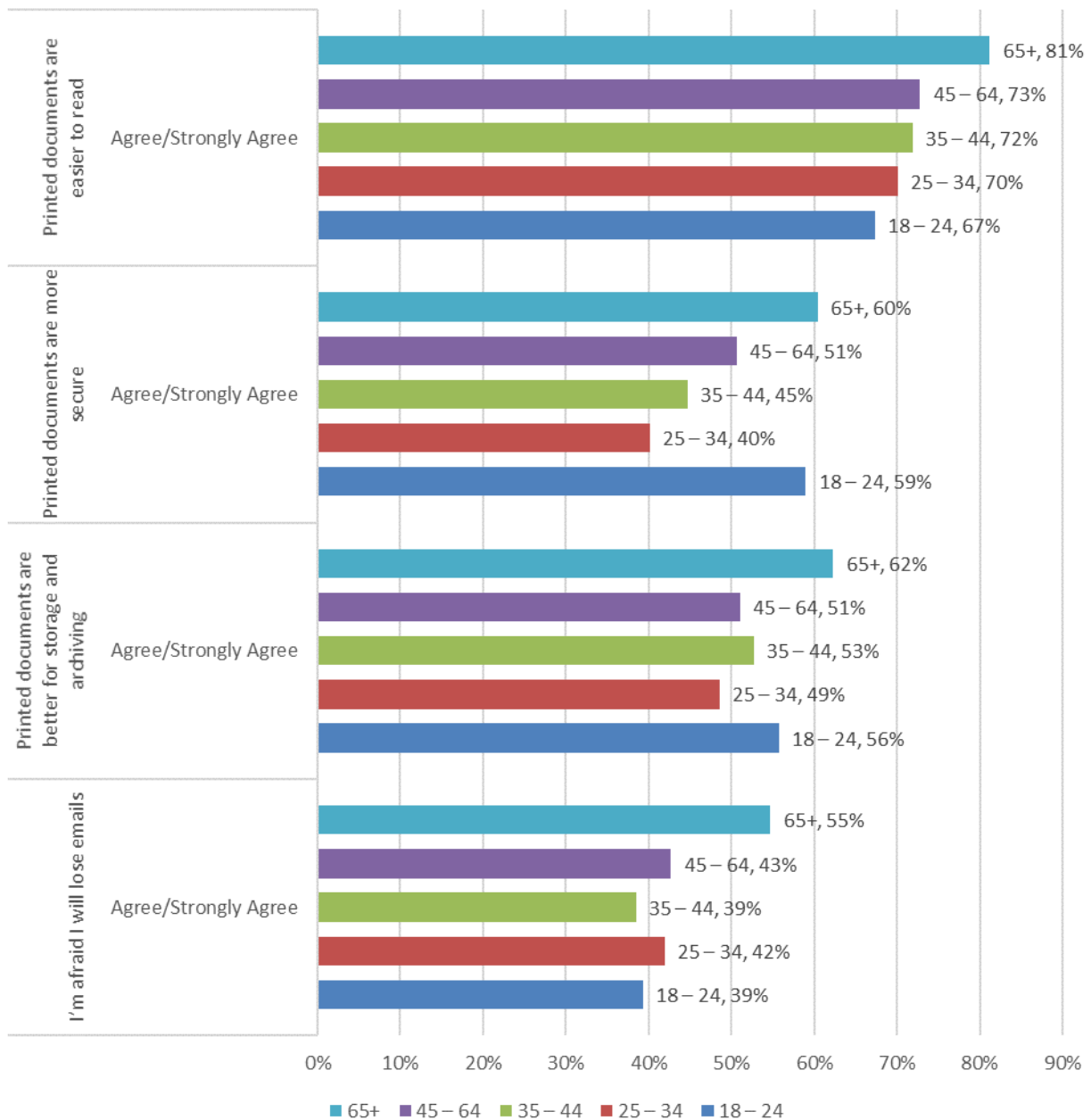
72% believe printed documents are easier to read

49%, believe printed documents are more secure

53% believe printed documents are better for storage and archiving

43% believe printed documents are less likely to be lost

I often print out complicated documents; financial information; important information because (Age difference):



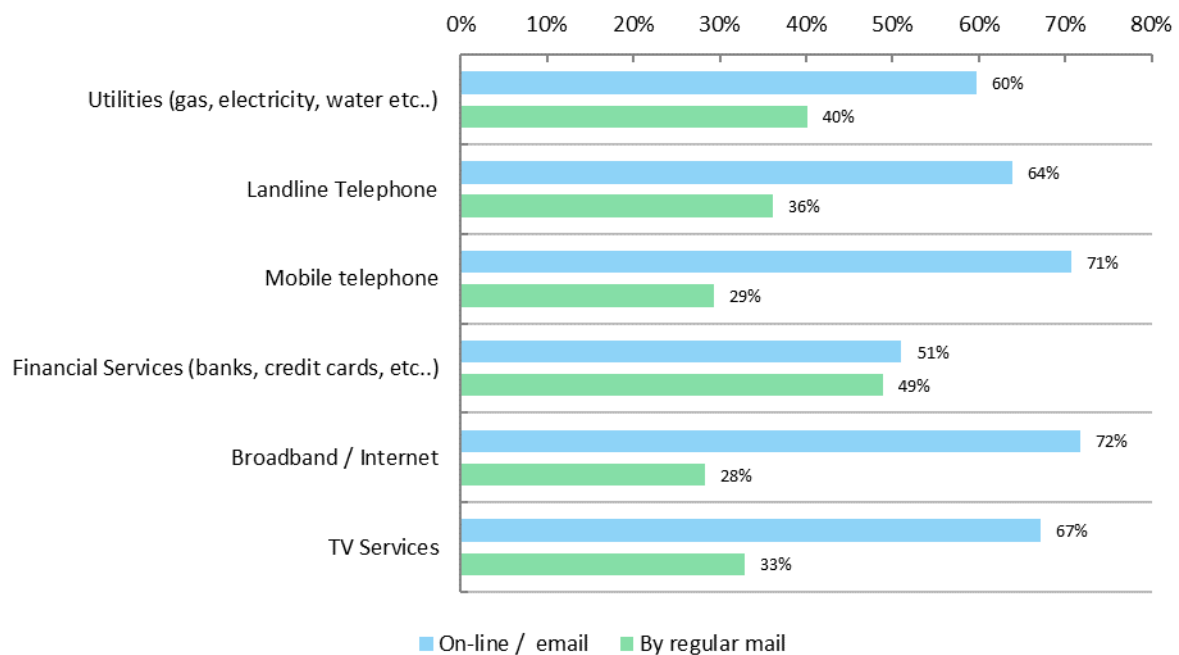
The concern that emails will get lost tends to increase with age. Varies between 39% for 18 -25's, 55% for the 65+ age group.

56% of 18 -24's often print out complicated documents; financial information; important information because they believe it is better for storage and archiving, with similar results for other age groups.

A belief that printed documents are more secure was held by between 40% and 60% of different age groups. The younger generation with a particular preference of 59% of 18 – 25's.

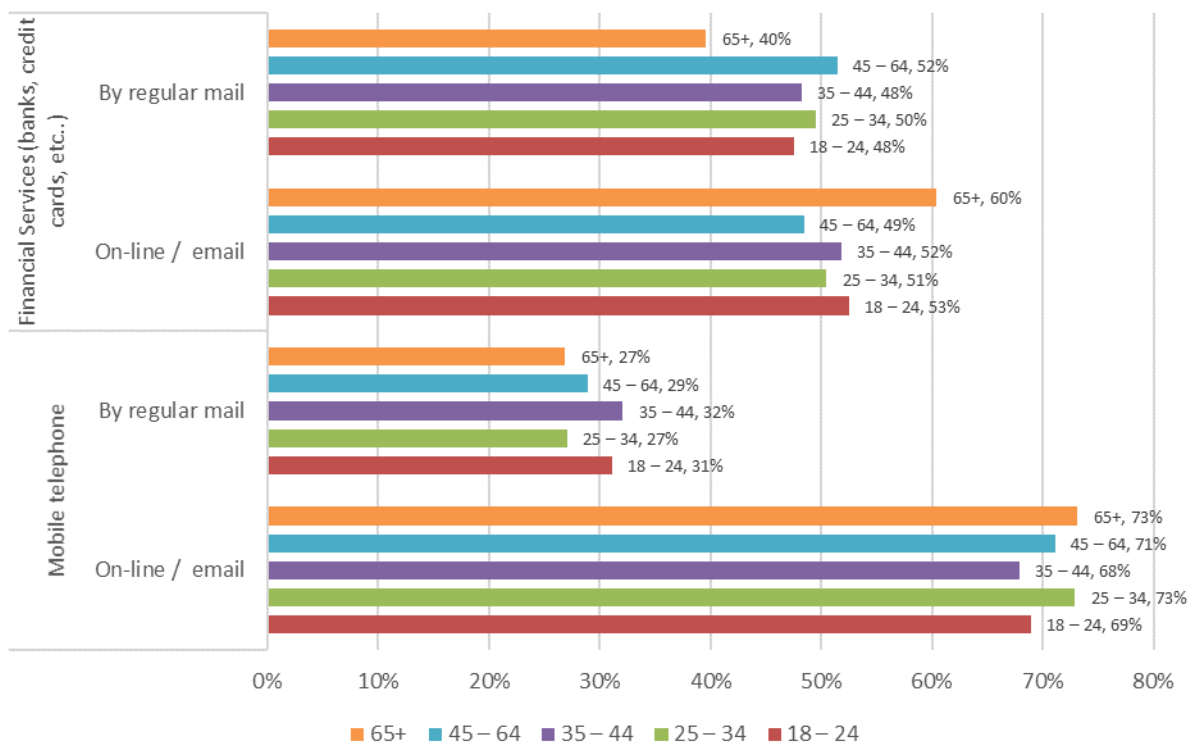
72% of all age groups often print out because they believe printed documents are easier to read

9. I prefer to get my regular bills and statements:

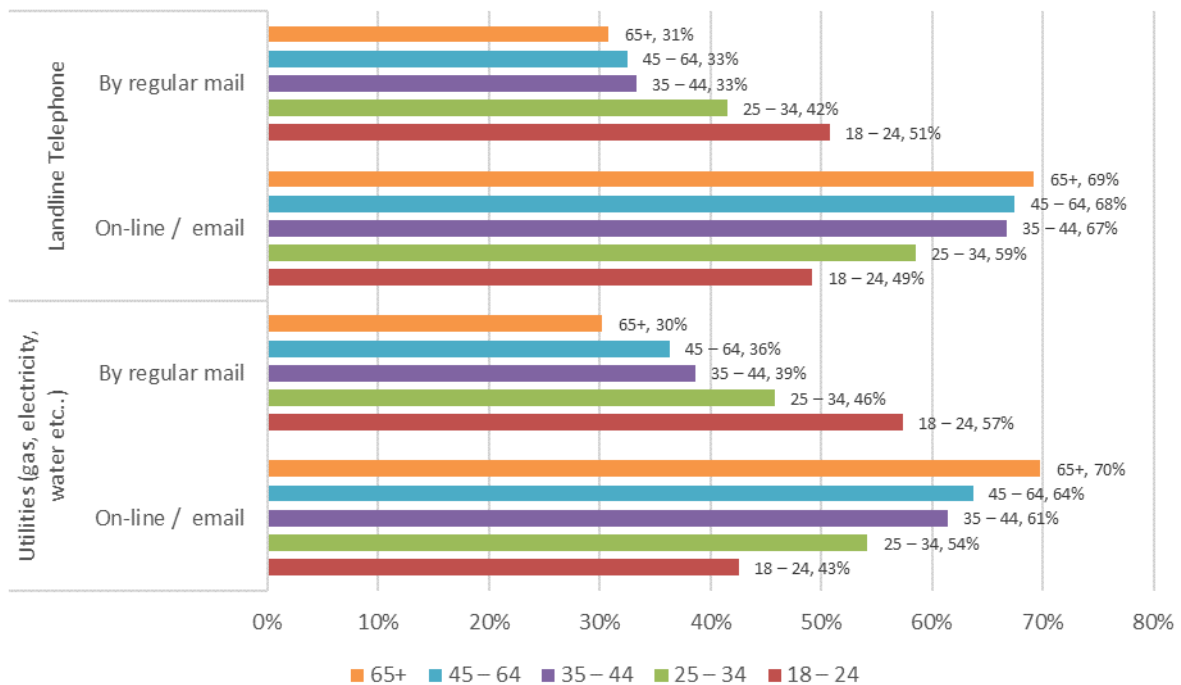


Clearly on line billing is now established but a preference for paper bills and statements is still evident amongst all age groups. When it comes to financial services almost 50% of people still want to have a paper bill. For other services; 40% of utility customers, 36% of landline customers, 29% of mobile phone customers, 28% of broadband customers and 33% of TV services customers prefer to get their bills and statements on paper.

I prefer to get my regular bills and statements
(Age Differences):

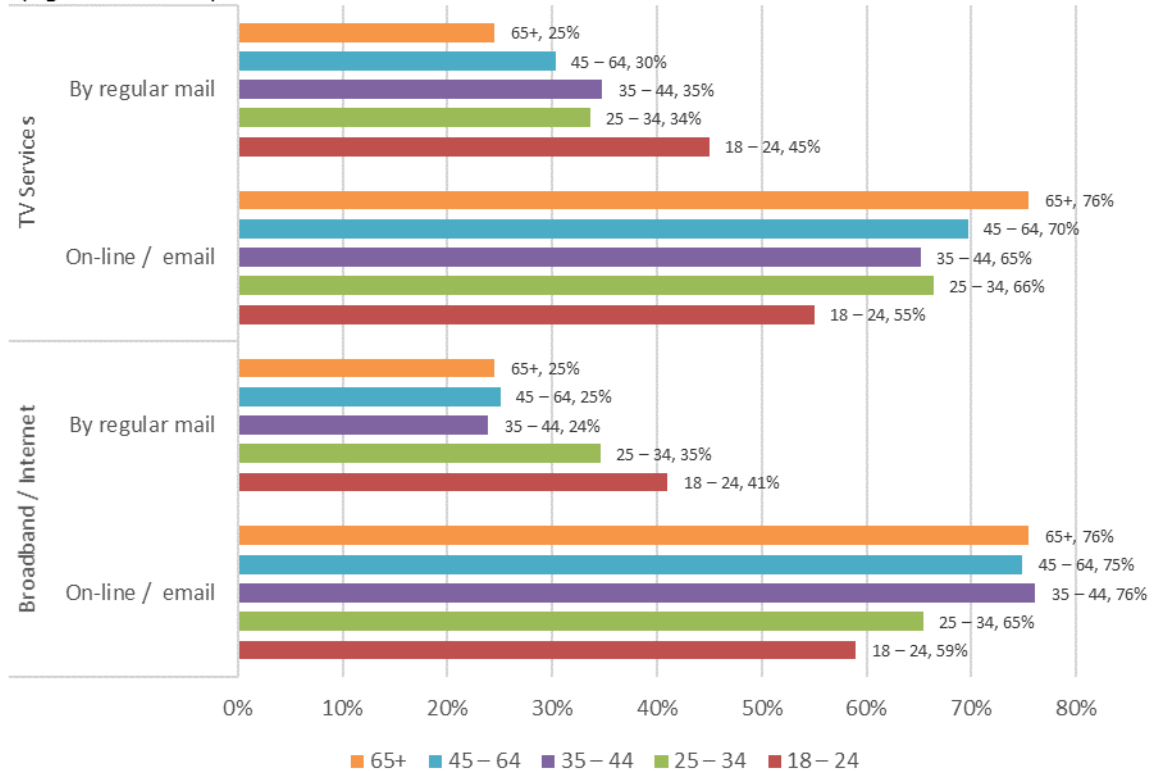


I prefer to get my regular bills and statements
(Age Differences):



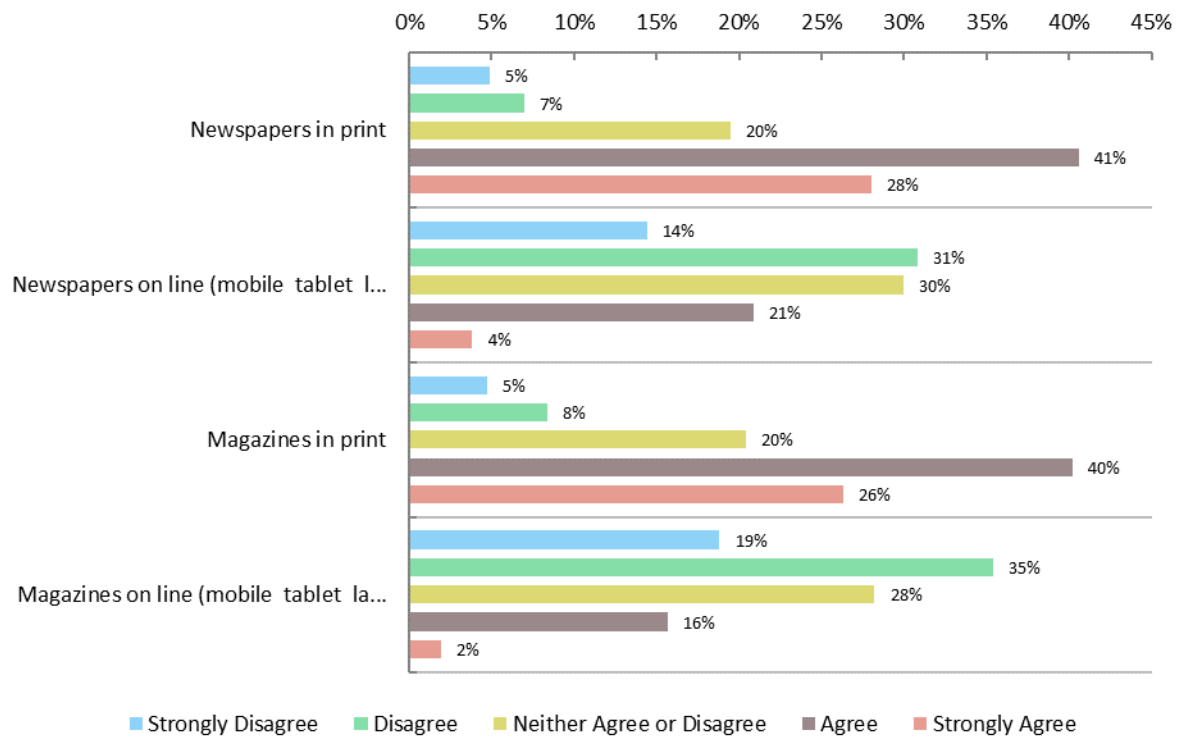
I prefer to get my regular bills and statements

(Age Differences):



Perhaps surprisingly, the younger 18-24's show a preference for bills and statements by regular mail for many services. Generally Utilities and Financial services register the strongest preferences for bills and statements by regular mail for all ages with 48% of the 18 – 24's showing a greater preference to receive financial information by regular mail.

10. I am more relaxed and receptive when I read:

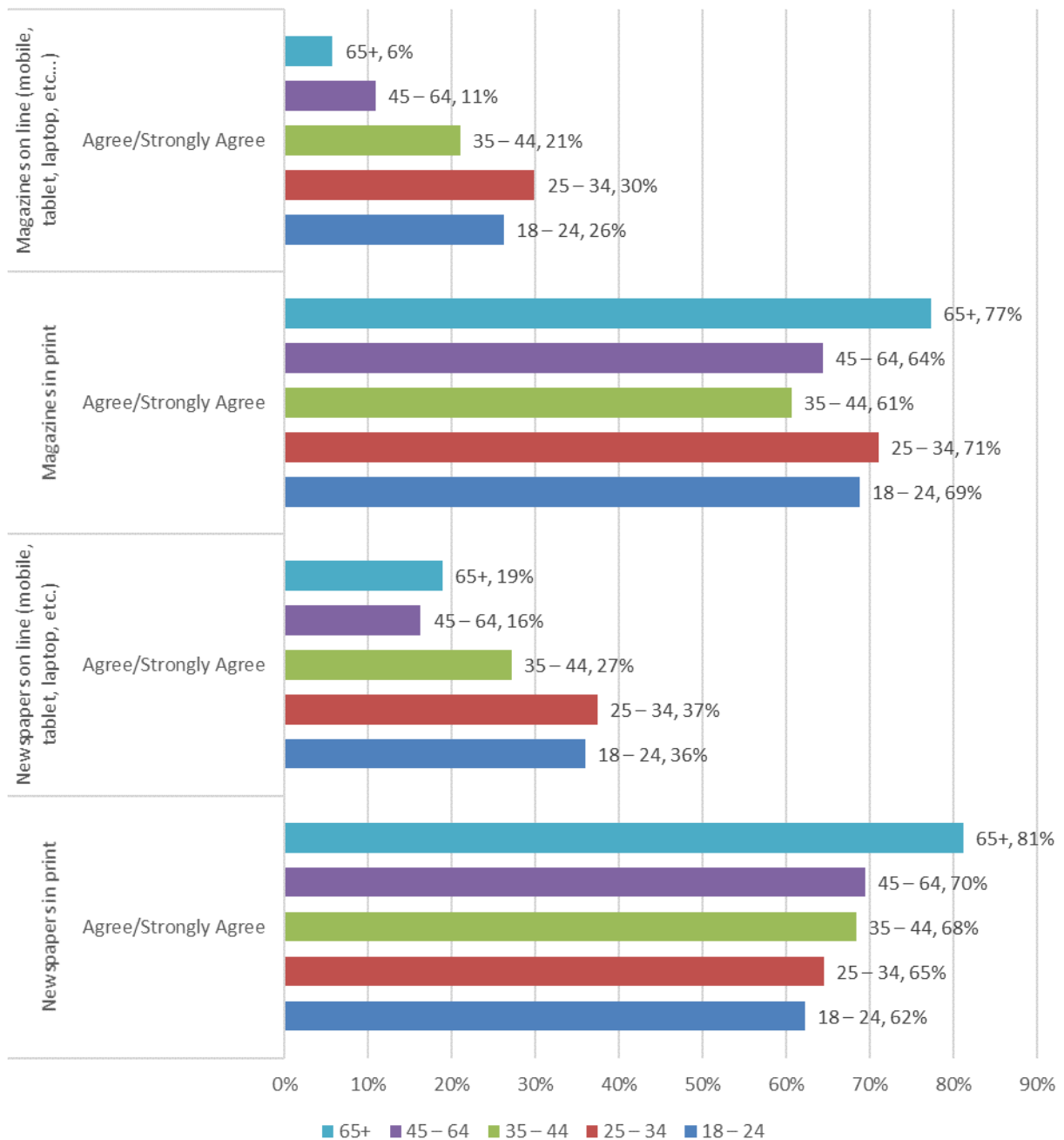


A clear preference for print on paper emerges when considering relaxation and receptiveness.

69% of respondents are more relaxed and receptive when reading a newspaper in print compared to only 25% who feel more relaxed and receptive when reading newspapers from a mobile device.

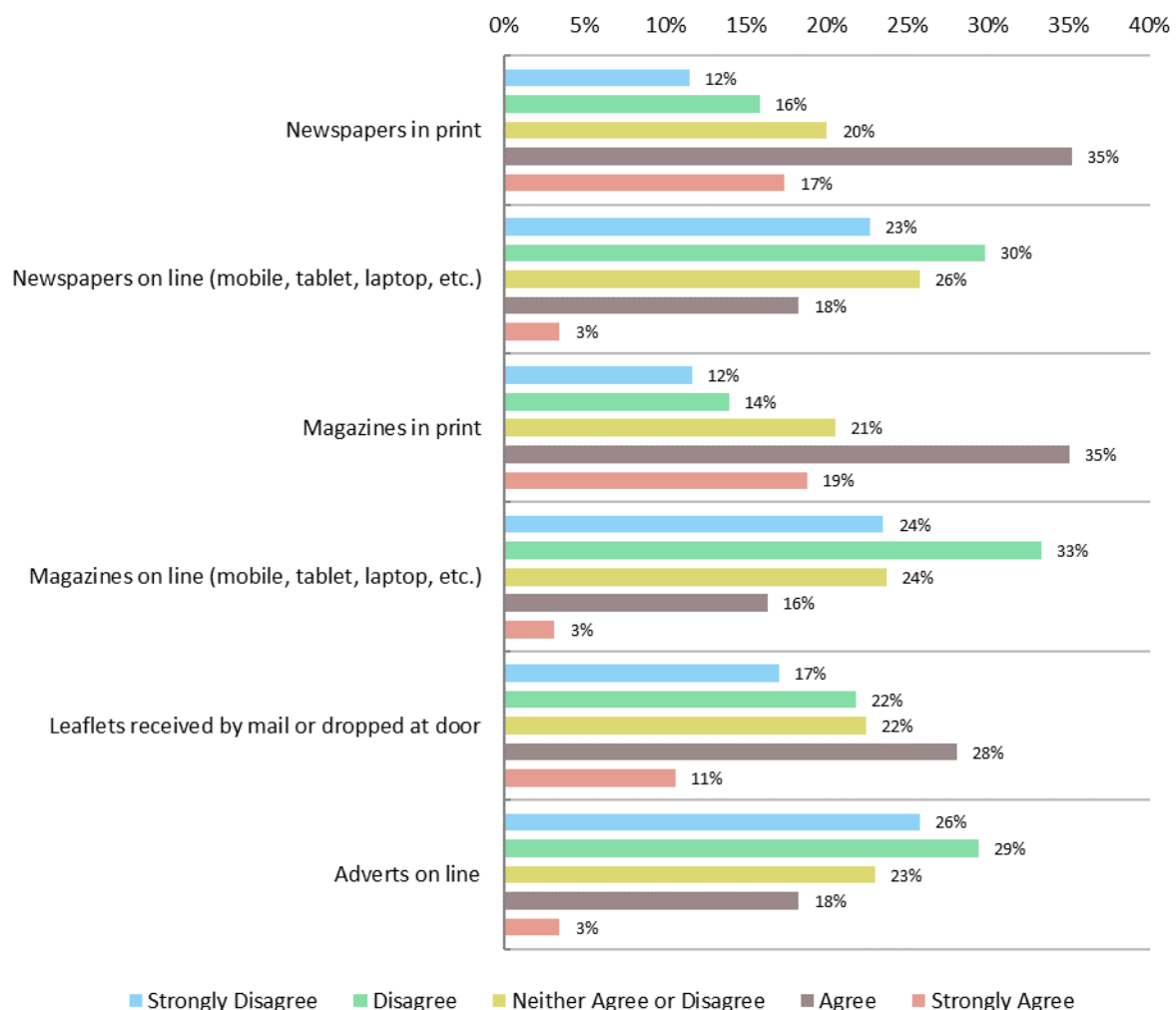
66% of respondents are more relaxed and receptive when reading a magazine in print compared to 18 % who feel more relaxed and receptive when reading magazines from a mobile device.

I am more relaxed and receptive when I read (Age difference):



The belief that reading newspapers and magazines in print makes readers more relaxed and receptive is held by all ages. Younger age groups, whilst still more relaxed when reading newspapers and magazines in print, are more relaxed with an online reading experience than older age groups.

11. I pay more attention to advertising when I read:



Advertisements in print are clearly given more attention than their online equivalent:

54% pay more attention to advertising when reading magazines in print

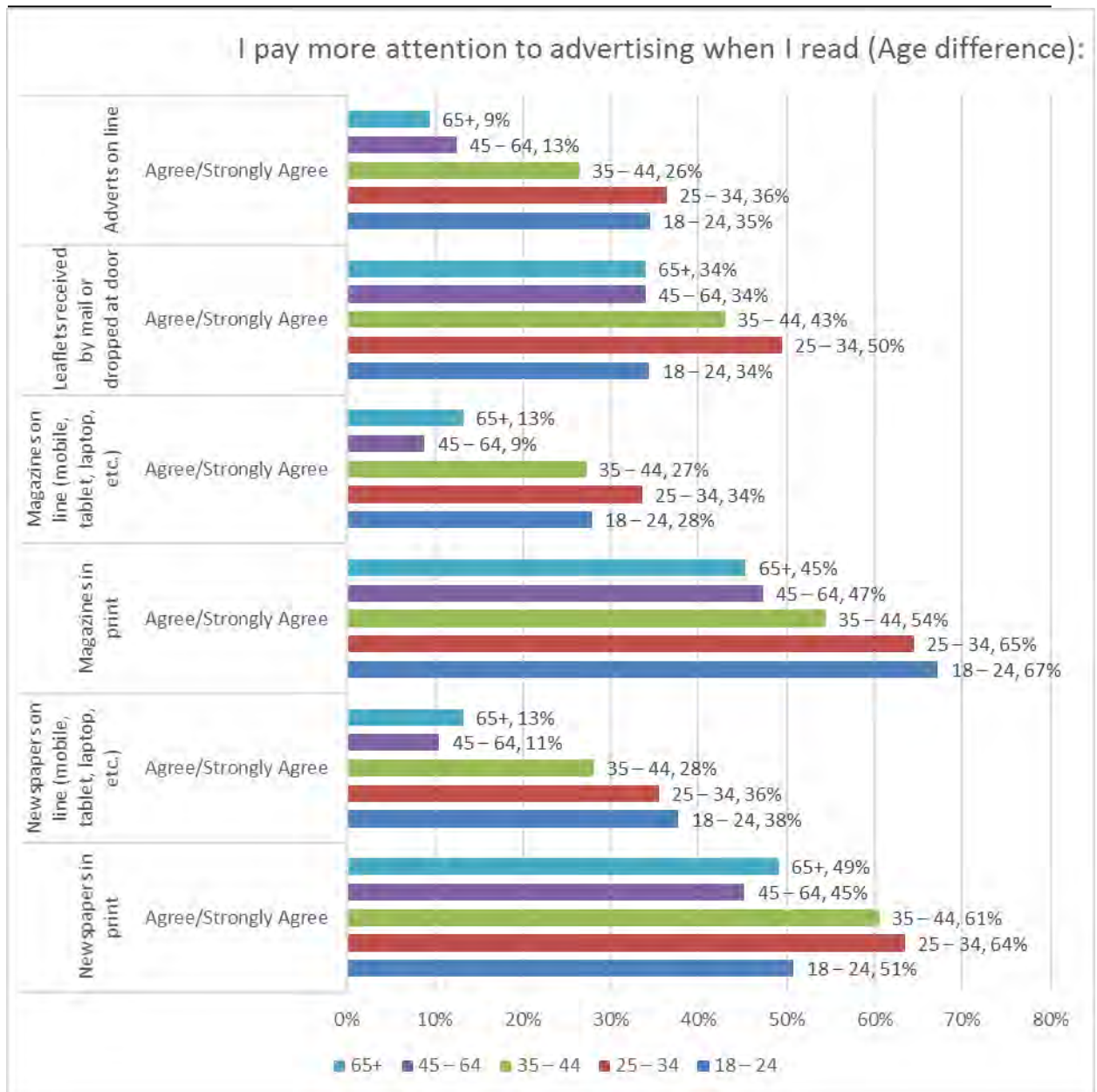
52% pay more attention to advertising when reading newspapers in print

39% pay more attention to advertising when reading letters received by mail or dropped at the door

21 % pay more attention to advertising when reading newspapers on line

19% pay more attention to advertising when reading magazines on line

21% pay more attention to advertising when reading adverts on line



In general, older age groups say that they do not pay as much attention to adverts as other age groups; particularly for mobile and on-line adverts.

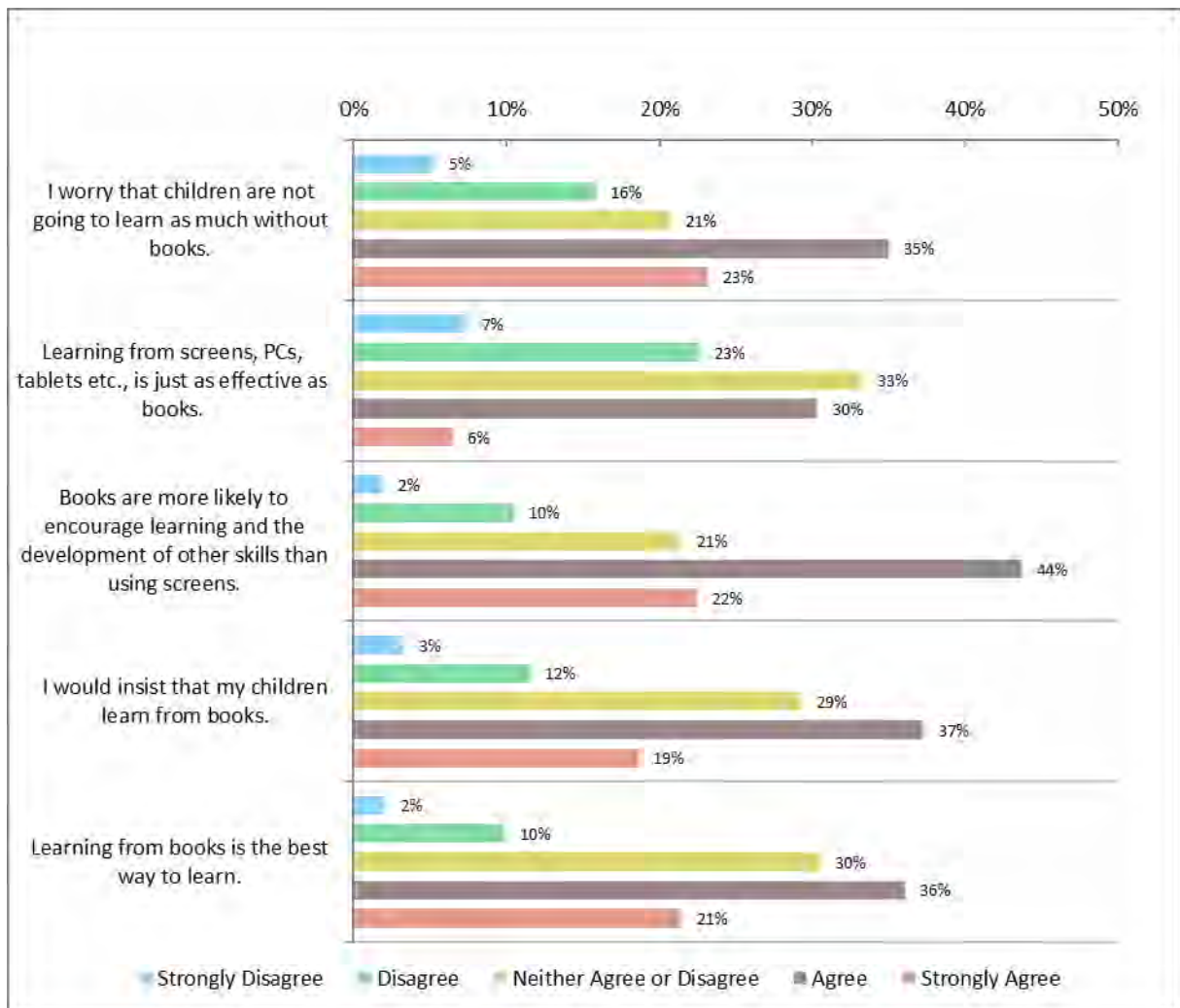
On line and mobile advertising is more popular for younger age groups but, even in this age group, print leads for commanding attention.

Advertising in printed magazines gets more attention from younger age groups with 67% of 18 – 24's and 65% of 25 – 34's paying more attention to adverts when reading magazines in print, higher than other age groups.

Attention to advertising in printed newspapers is more evenly spread amongst age groups but 64% of 25 – 34's pay more attention to advertising in newspapers.

Leaflets delivered by mail or dropped at the door appear effective for the 25 – 44's with 50% of 25 – 34's and 43% of 35 – 44's paying more attention to advertising using mail or door drops

12. Schools and other centres of learning are turning to on-screen learning and using printed books less. (Tell us how you react to the following statements)



There are clear concerns about the drift away from books in education.

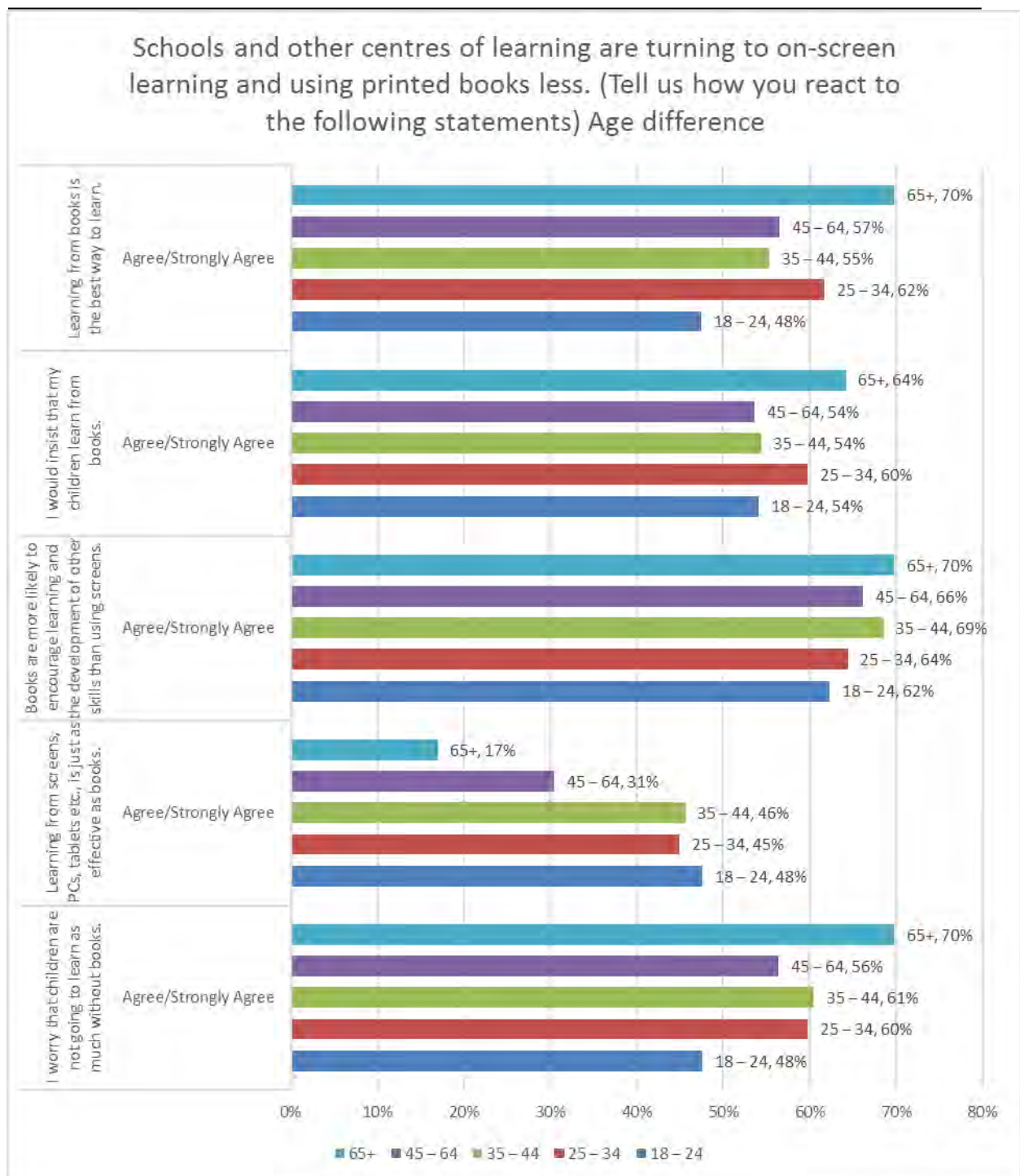
66% believe that books are more likely to encourage learning and the development of other skills than using screens.

58% worry that children are not going to learn as much without books

57% believe that learning from books is the best way to learn.

56% would insist that their children learn from books.

Only 36% believe that learning from screens, PCs, tablets etc. is just as effective as books.

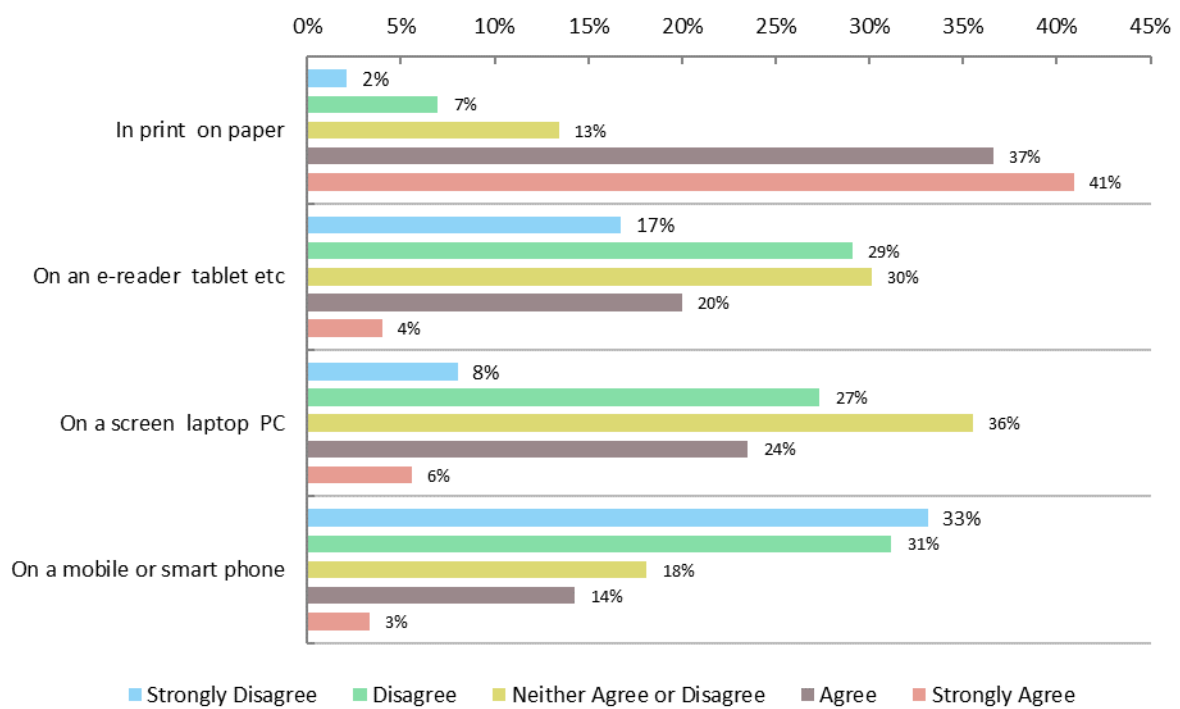


The younger age group, clearly more affected by changing teaching methods, is enthusiastic about using printed books but are more open to digital methods. Older age groups have the greatest concerns about the move to screen based education.

48% of 18 -25's believe that learning from books is the best way to learn although a similar number, 48%, of 18 – 25's believe that learning from screens, PCs, tablets etc., is just as effective as books.

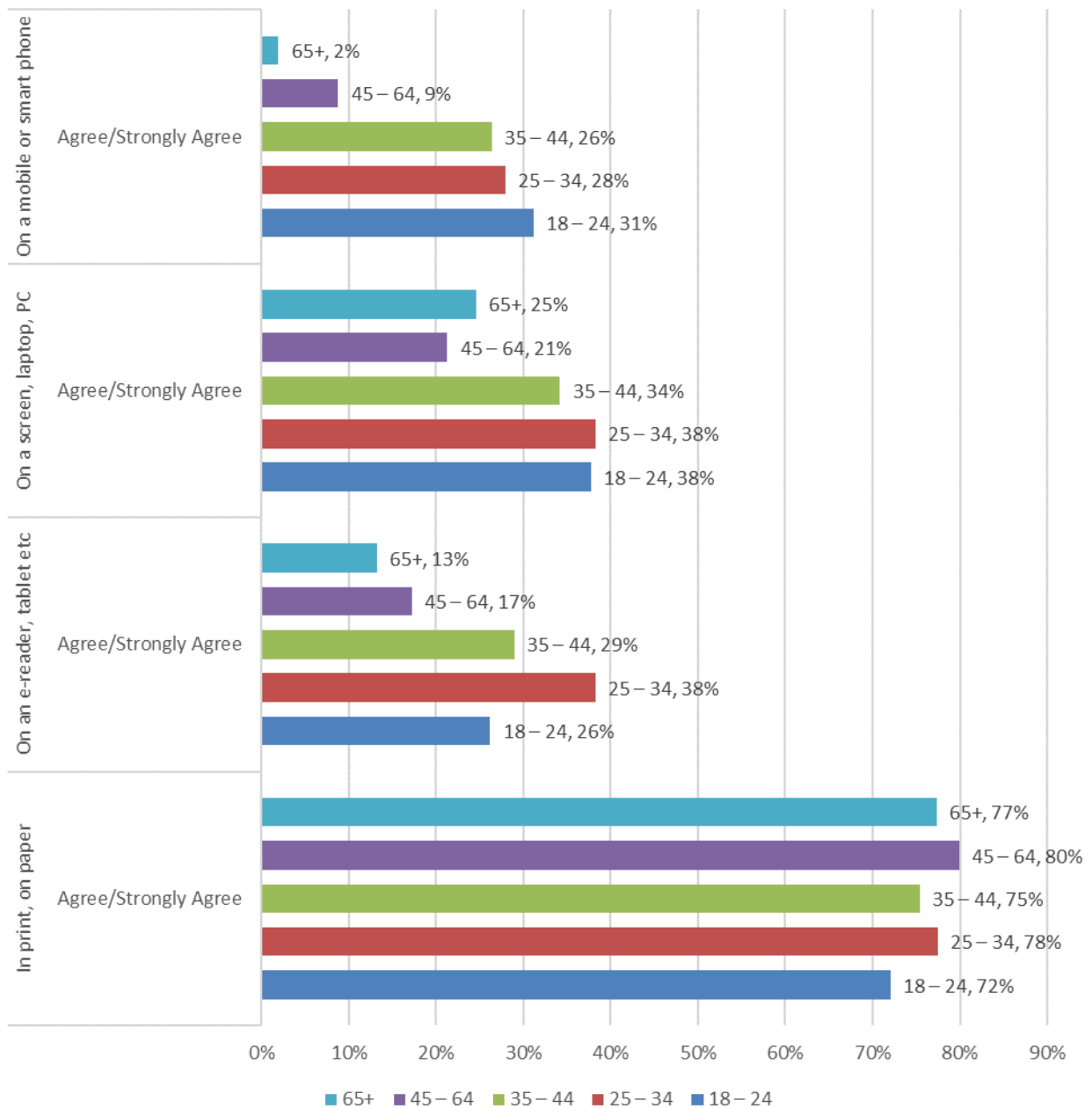
So, whilst books are favoured by many, the familiarity of the younger generation with digital teaching methods is reducing concerns.

13. When given a choice, I prefer to read:



78% of all age groups prefer to read in print, on paper. Screens, e-readers and mobiles are not popular

When given a choice, I prefer to read (Age difference):



In general, all age groups exhibit the same preferences. However the younger 18-25 year old group is clearly becoming more familiar with mobiles and smart phones with 31% of 18-25 year olds preferring to read from these devices compared to the all age average of 17%