Survey Results:

Perspectives on HSS Publishing Consolidation: A Survey of Industry Stakeholders

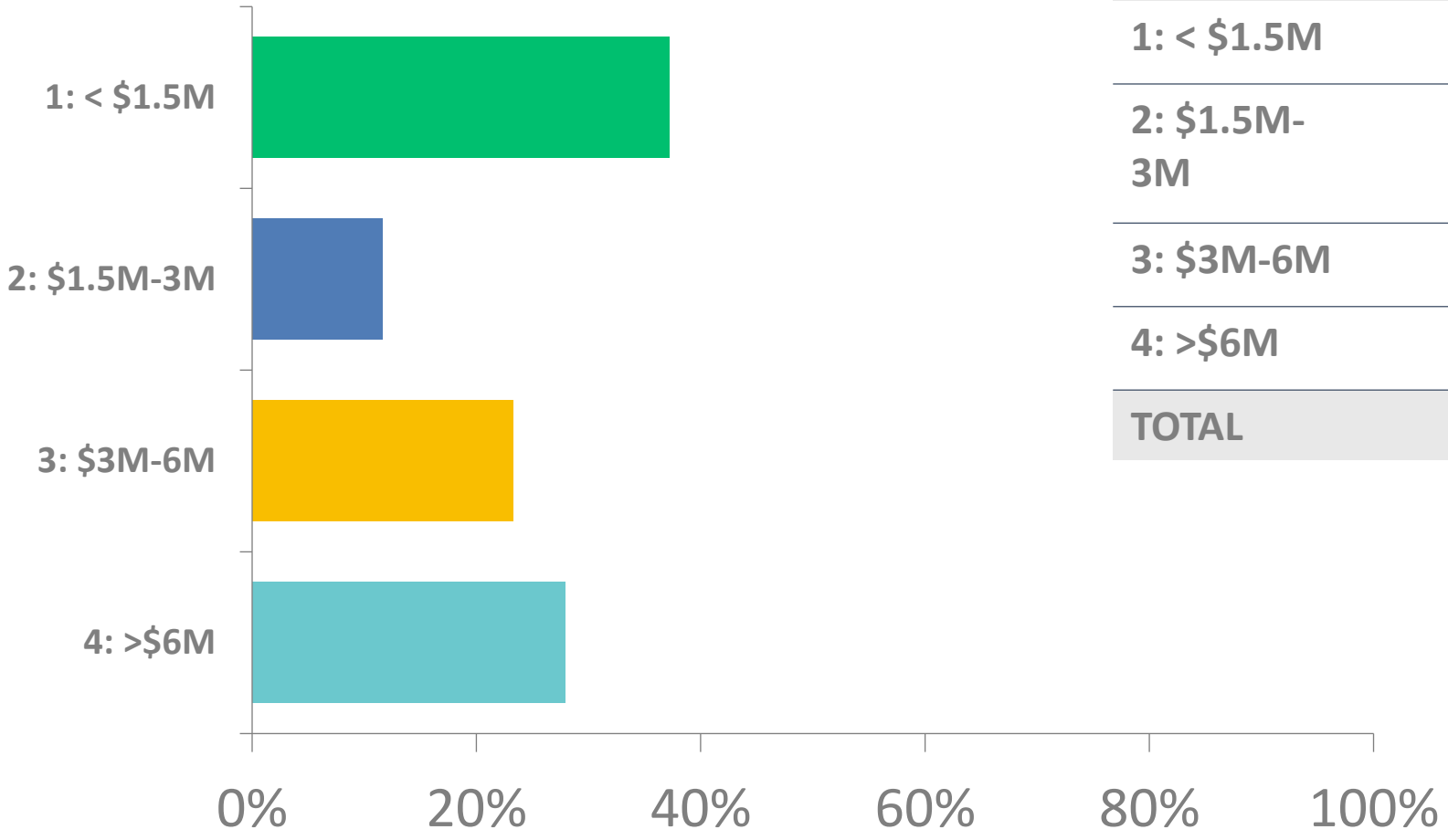
Michael Zeoli
Director, Publisher Partner Program

Survey Profile

- August 2023
- Independent Scholarly Publishers & University Presses
- Fewer than 500 books per year
- Humanities and Social Sciences

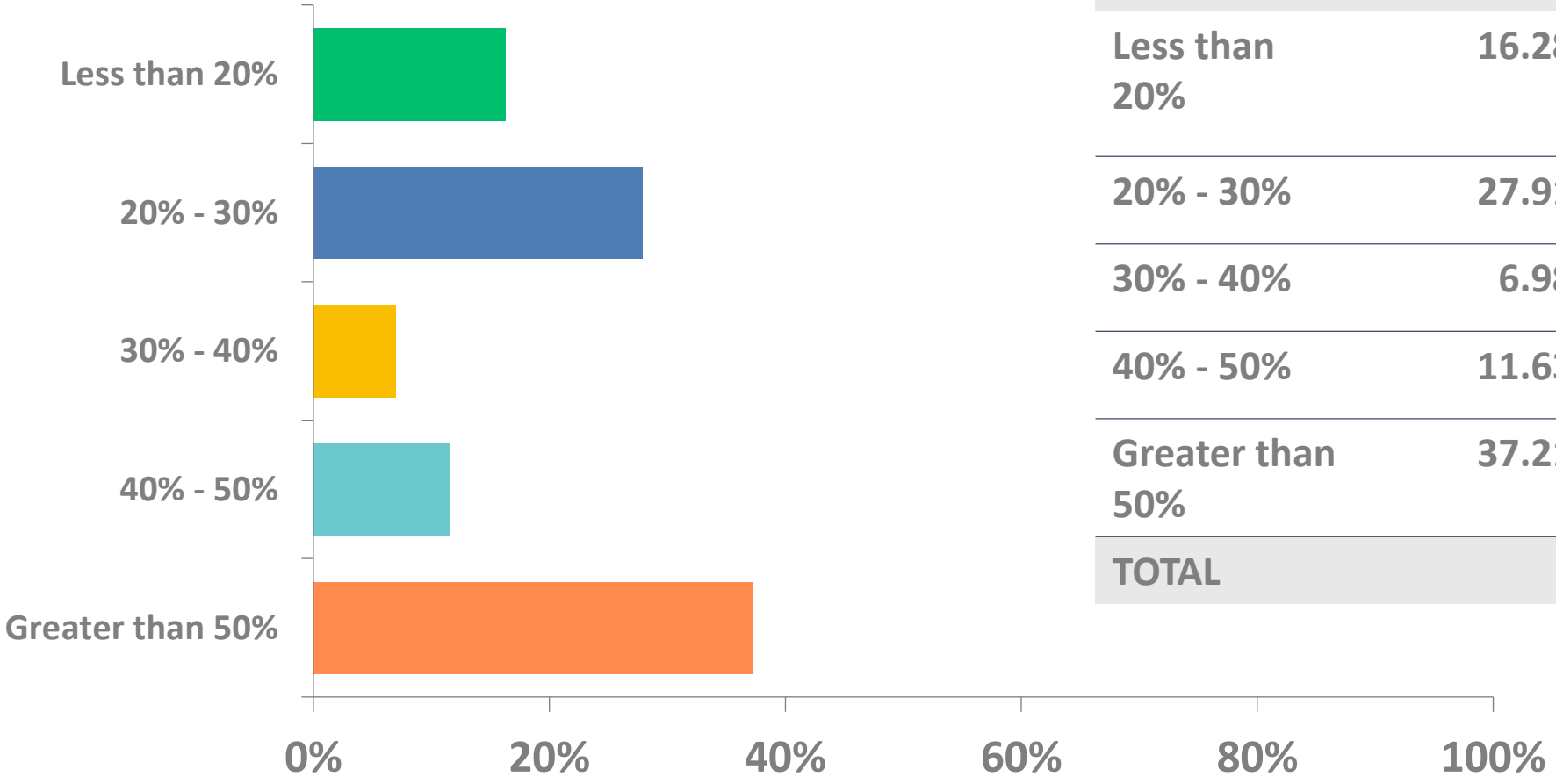
- 43 Respondents

What is the size of your publishing house?



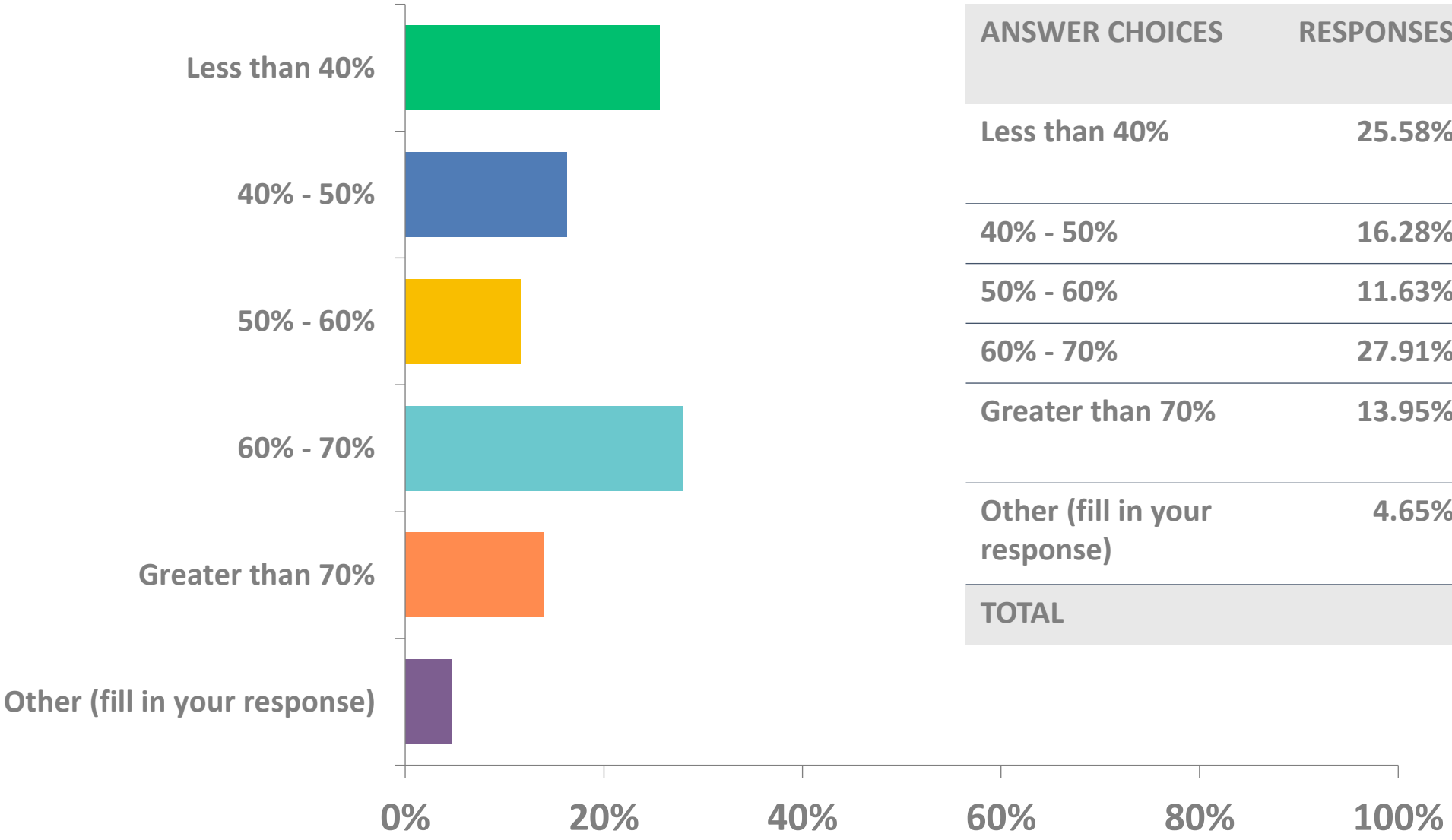
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1: < $1.5M	37.21%	16
2: $1.5M-3M	11.63%	5
3: $3M-6M	23.26%	10
4: >$6M	27.91%	12
TOTAL		43

What percentage of your overall sales come from libraries?



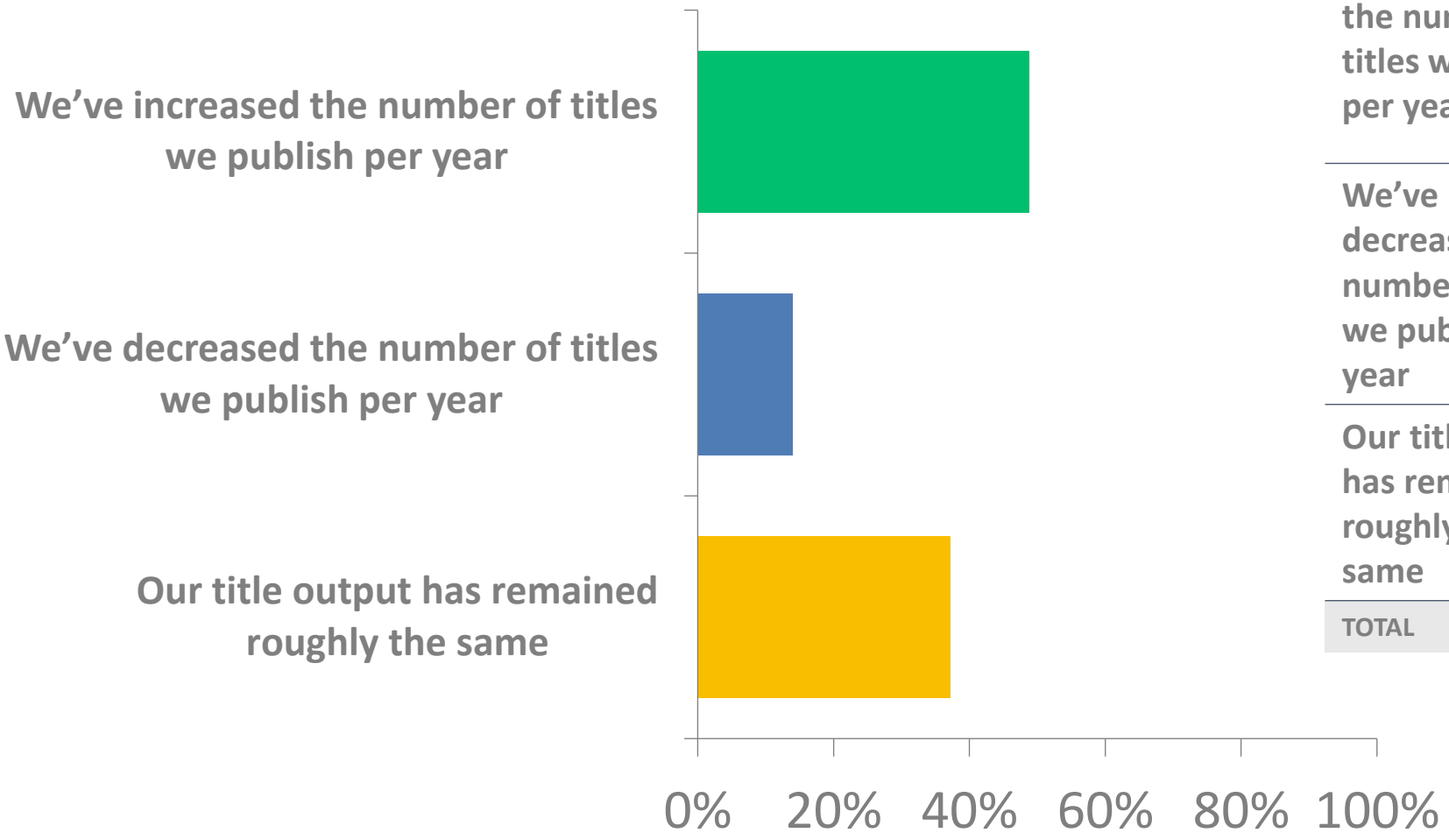
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 20%	16.28%	7
20% - 30%	27.91%	12
30% - 40%	6.98%	3
40% - 50%	11.63%	5
Greater than 50%	37.21%	16
TOTAL		43

What percentage of your sales come from backlist?



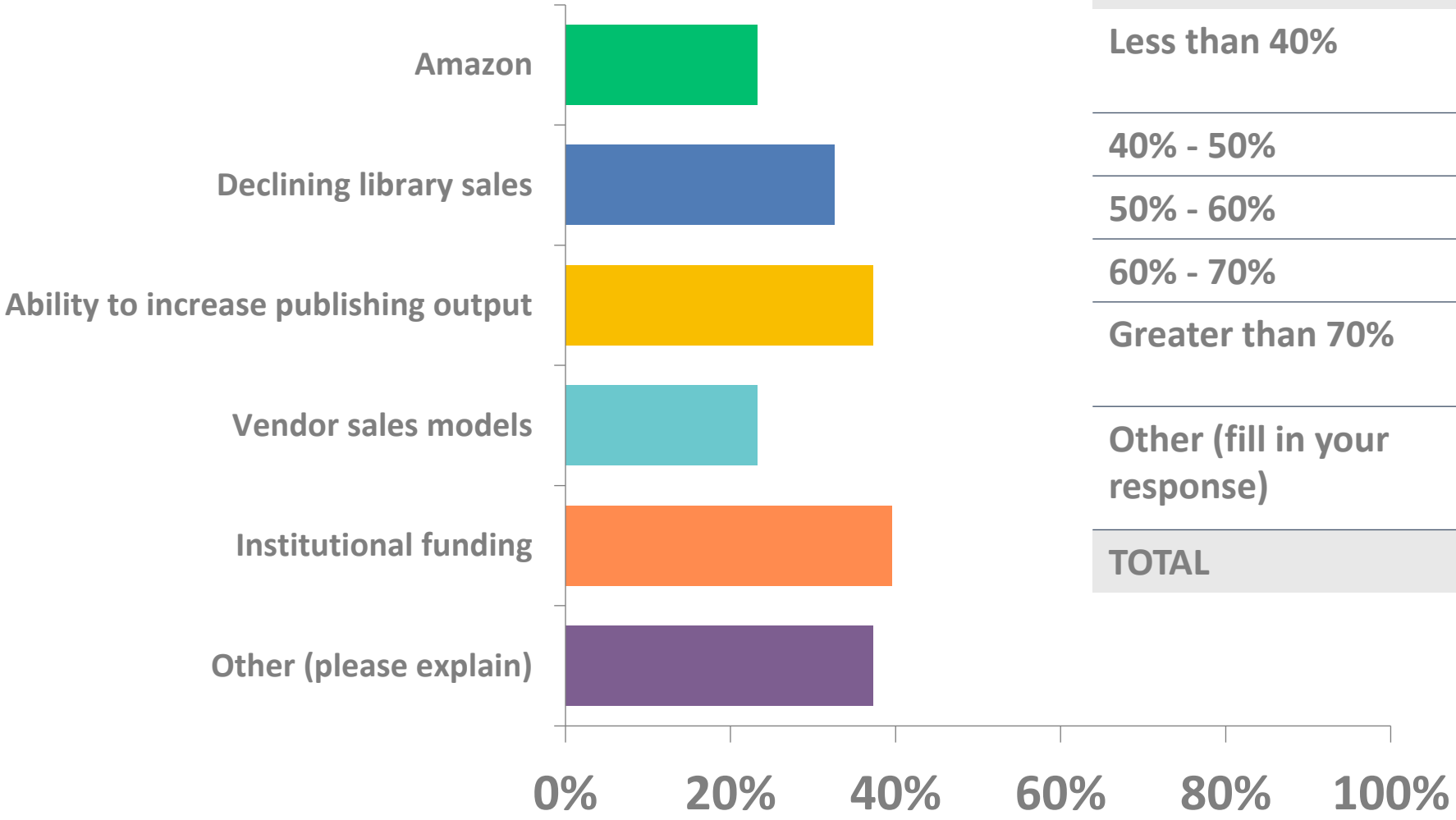
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 40%	25.58%	11
40% - 50%	16.28%	7
50% - 60%	11.63%	5
60% - 70%	27.91%	12
Greater than 70%	13.95%	6
Other (fill in your response)	4.65%	2
TOTAL		43

How has your title output changed over the past 5 years?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
We've increased the number of titles we publish per year	48.84%	21
We've decreased the number of titles we publish per year	13.95%	6
Our title output has remained roughly the same	37.21%	16
TOTAL		43

What are the major challenges to your sustainability?



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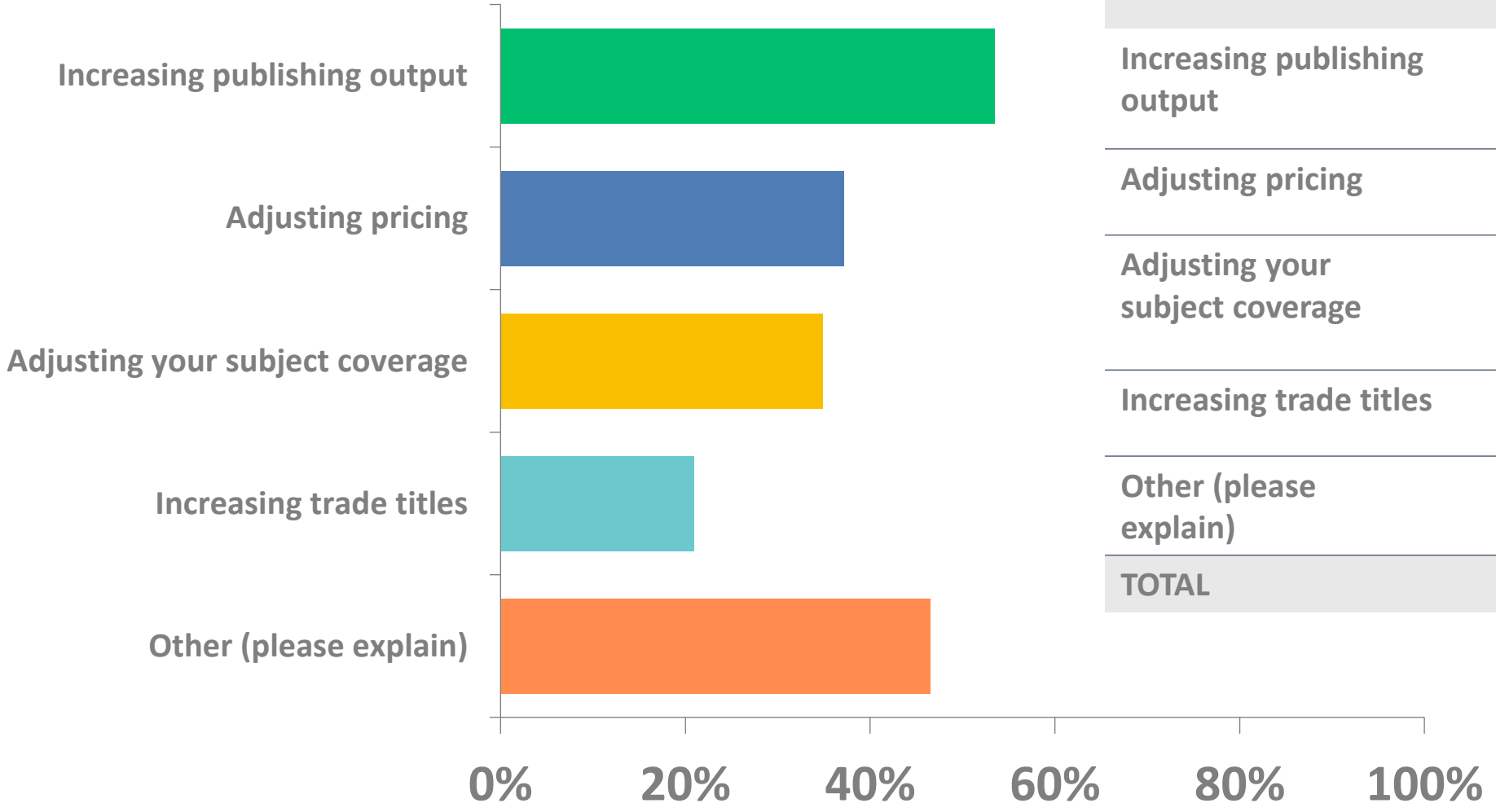
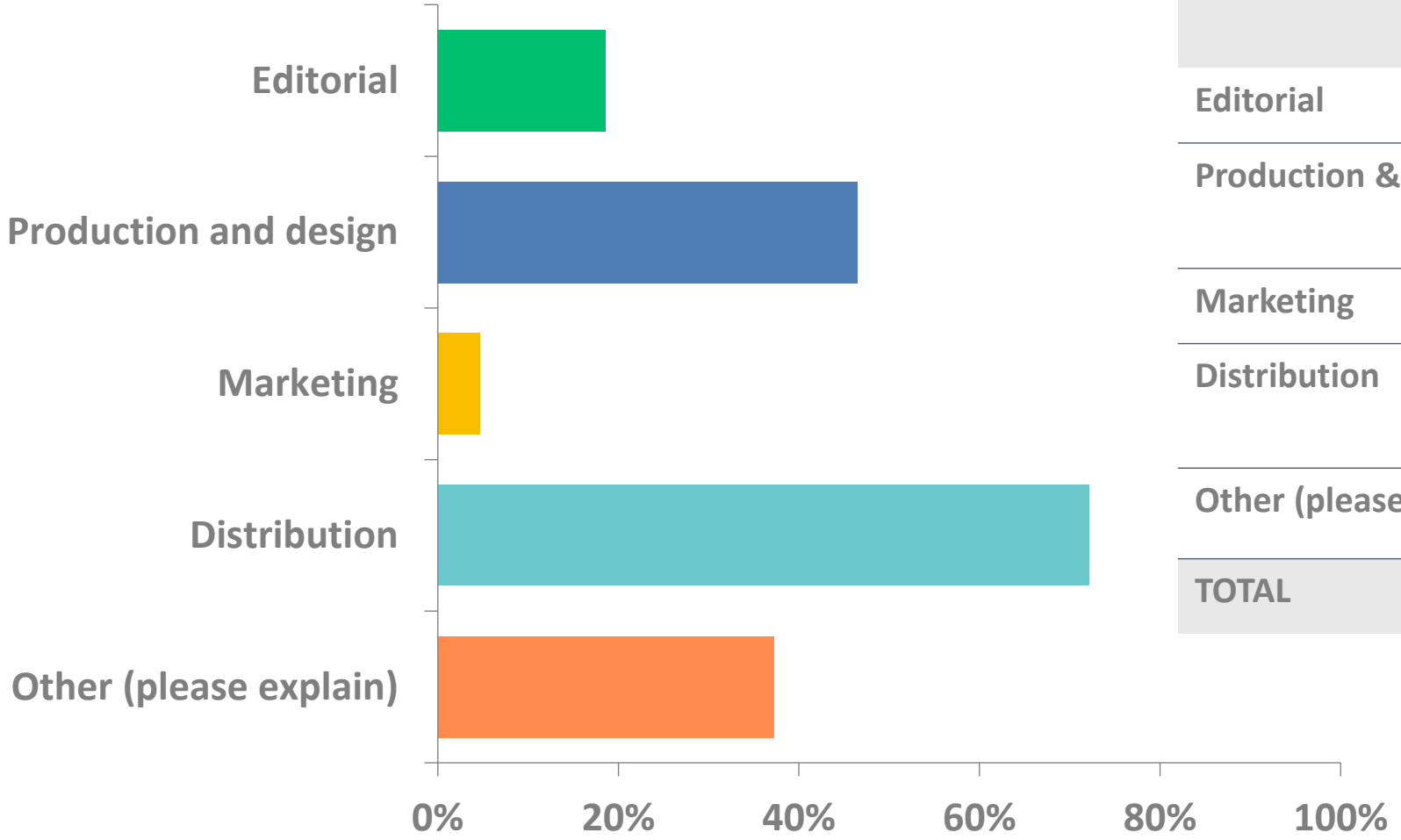
60% - 70%	27.91%	12
Greater than 70%	13.95%	6
Other (fill in your response)	4.65%	2
TOTAL		43

What are the major opportunities to your sustainability?



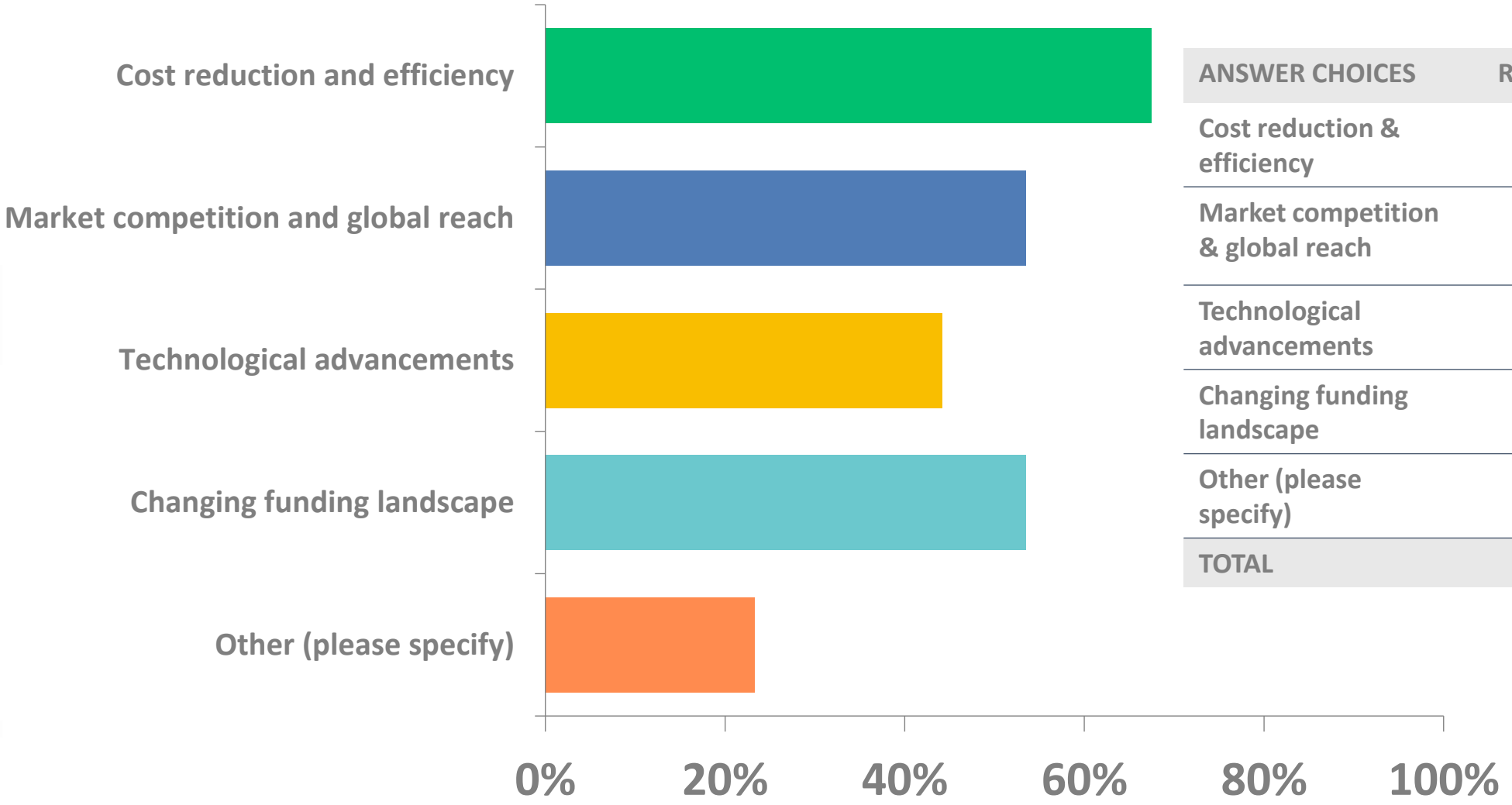
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increasing publishing output	53.49%	23
Adjusting pricing	37.21%	16
Adjusting your subject coverage	34.88%	15
Increasing trade titles	20.93%	9
Other (please explain)	46.51%	20
TOTAL		83

What areas of publishing operations do you outsource?



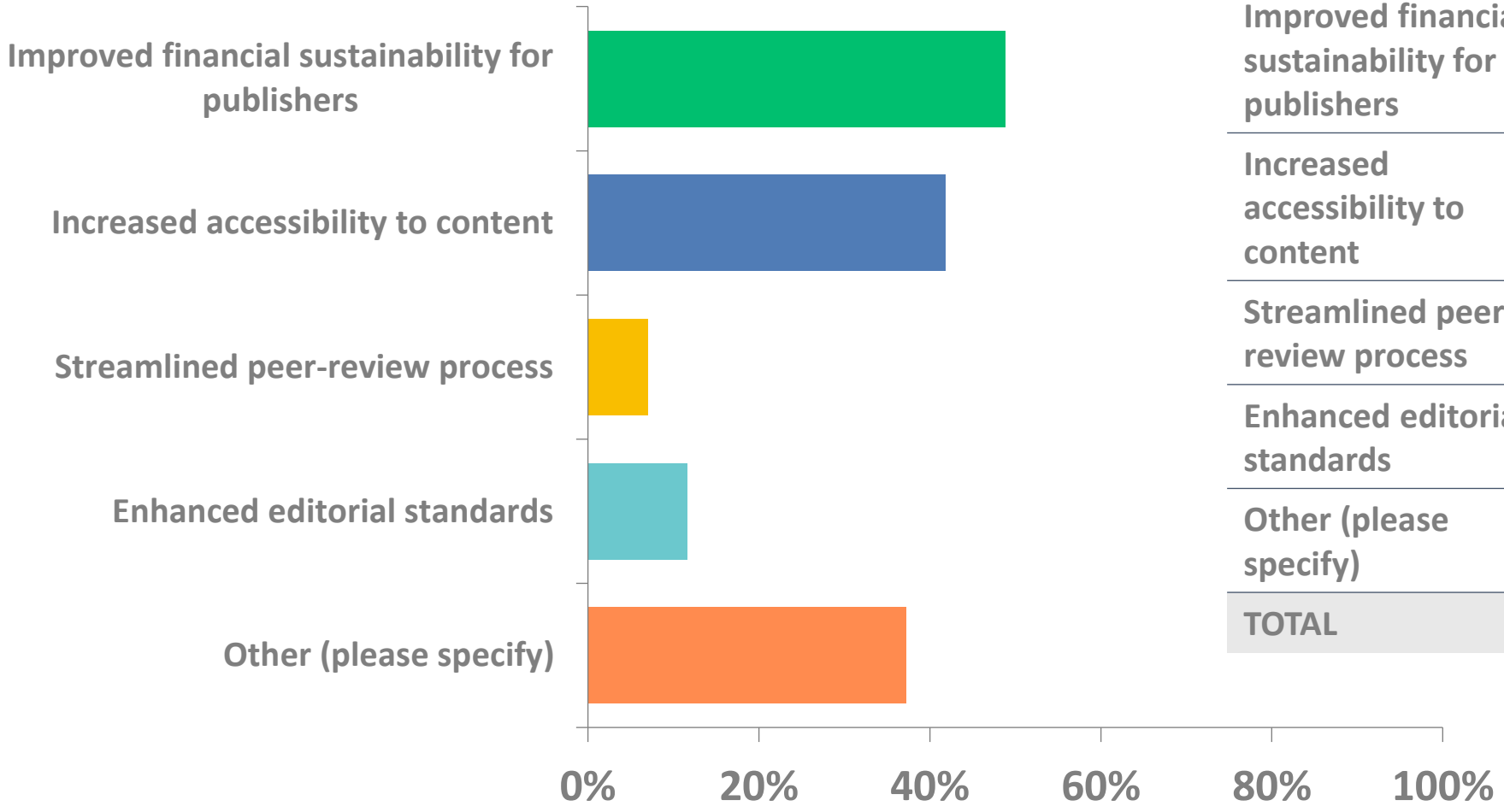
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Editorial	18.60%	8
Production & design	46.51%	20
Marketing	4.65%	2
Distribution	72.09%	31
Other (please explain)	37.21%	16
TOTAL		77

What factors will drive consolidation in publishing?



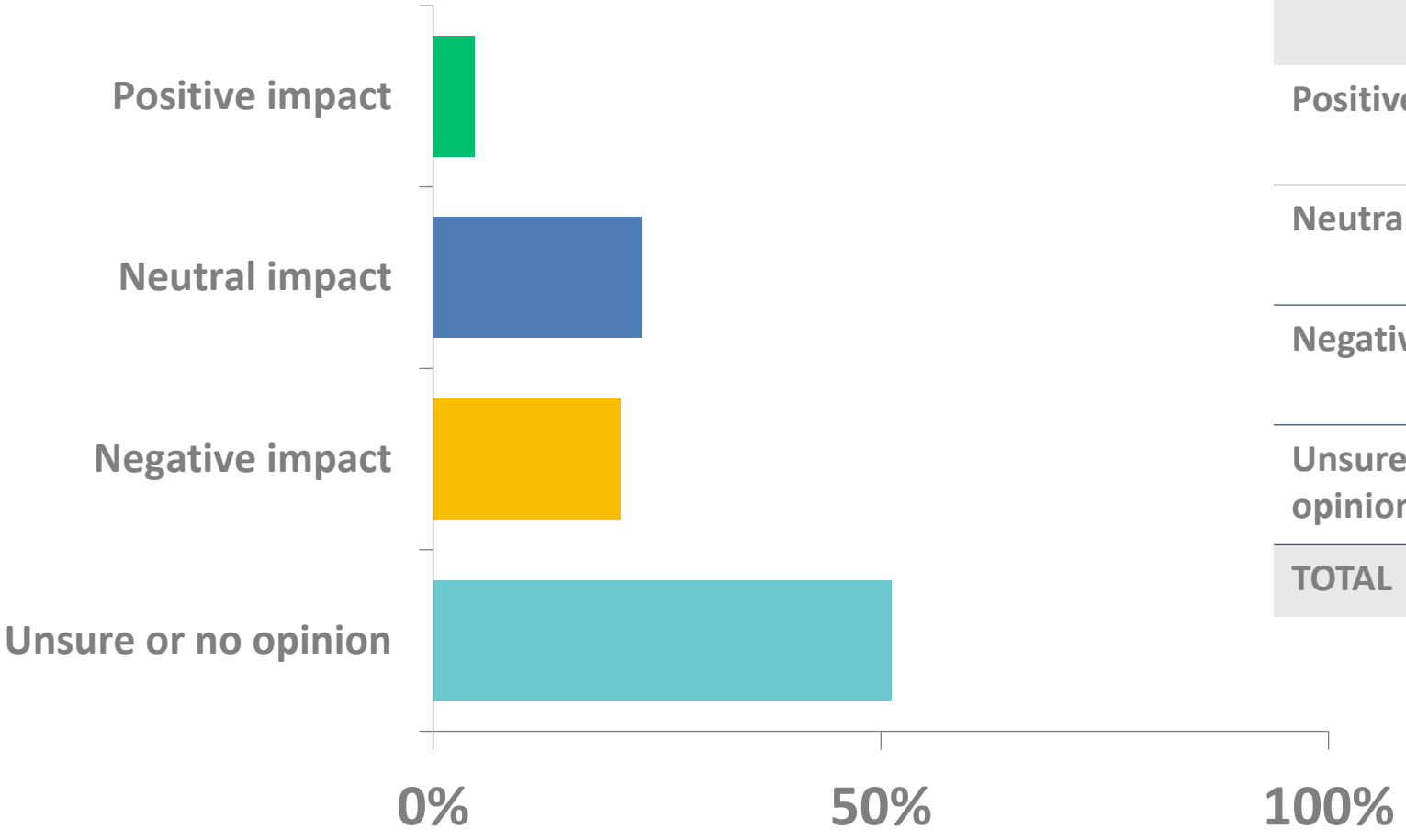
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Cost reduction & efficiency	67.44%	29
Market competition & global reach	53.49%	23
Technological advancements	44.19%	19
Changing funding landscape	53.49%	23
Other (please specify)	23.26%	10
TOTAL		104

What are the potential benefits of consolidation in the scholarly publishing ecosystem?



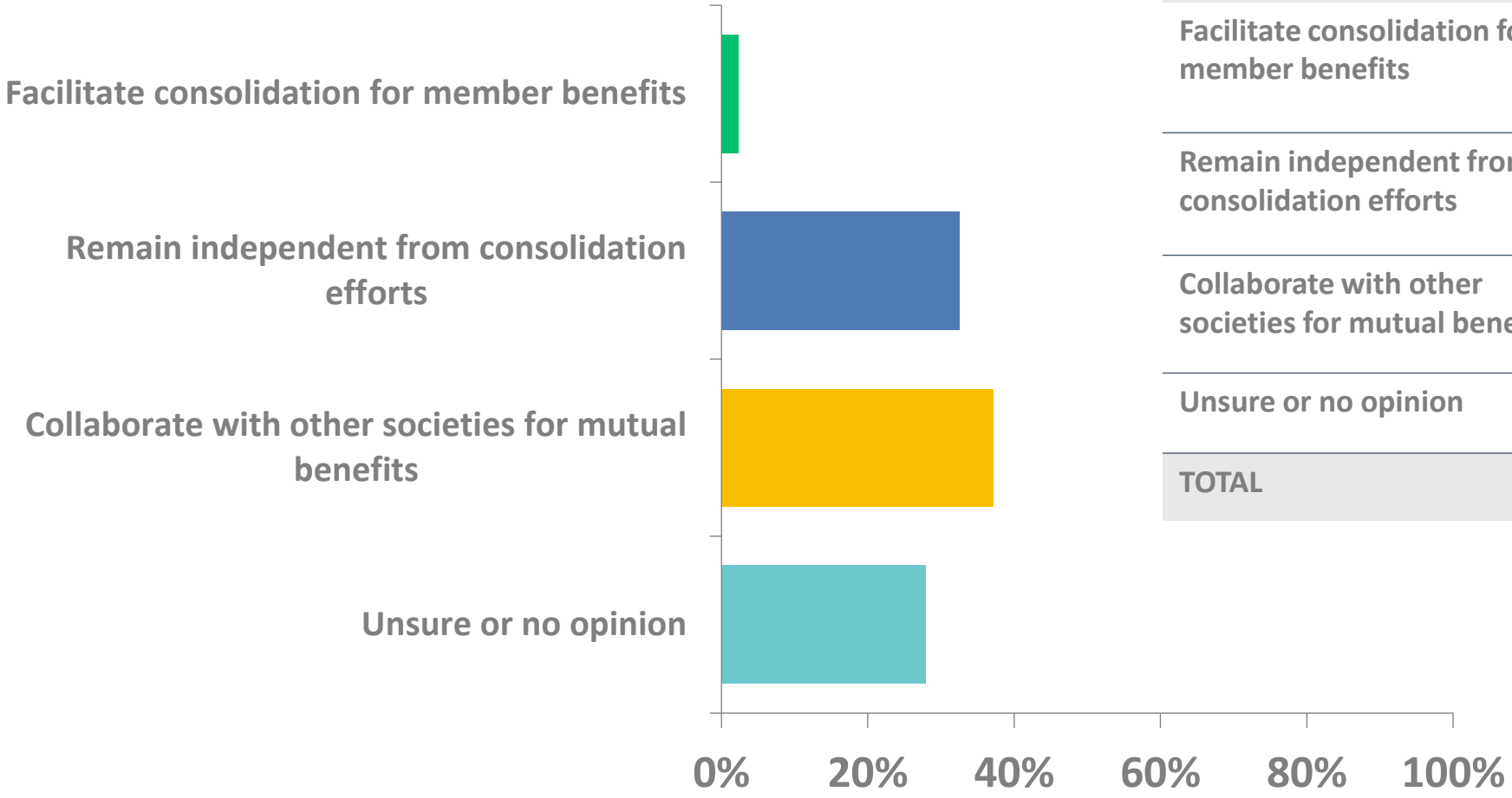
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Improved financial sustainability for publishers	48.84%	21
Increased accessibility to content	41.86%	18
Streamlined peer-review process	6.98%	3
Enhanced editorial standards	11.63%	5
Other (please specify)	37.21%	16
TOTAL		63

How does HSS consolidation affect libraries and their ability to provide access to academic content?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Positive impact	4.65%	2
Neutral impact	23.26%	10
Negative impact	20.93%	9
Unsure or no opinion	51.16%	22
TOTAL		43

What role should scholarly societies play in the context of HSS consolidation?



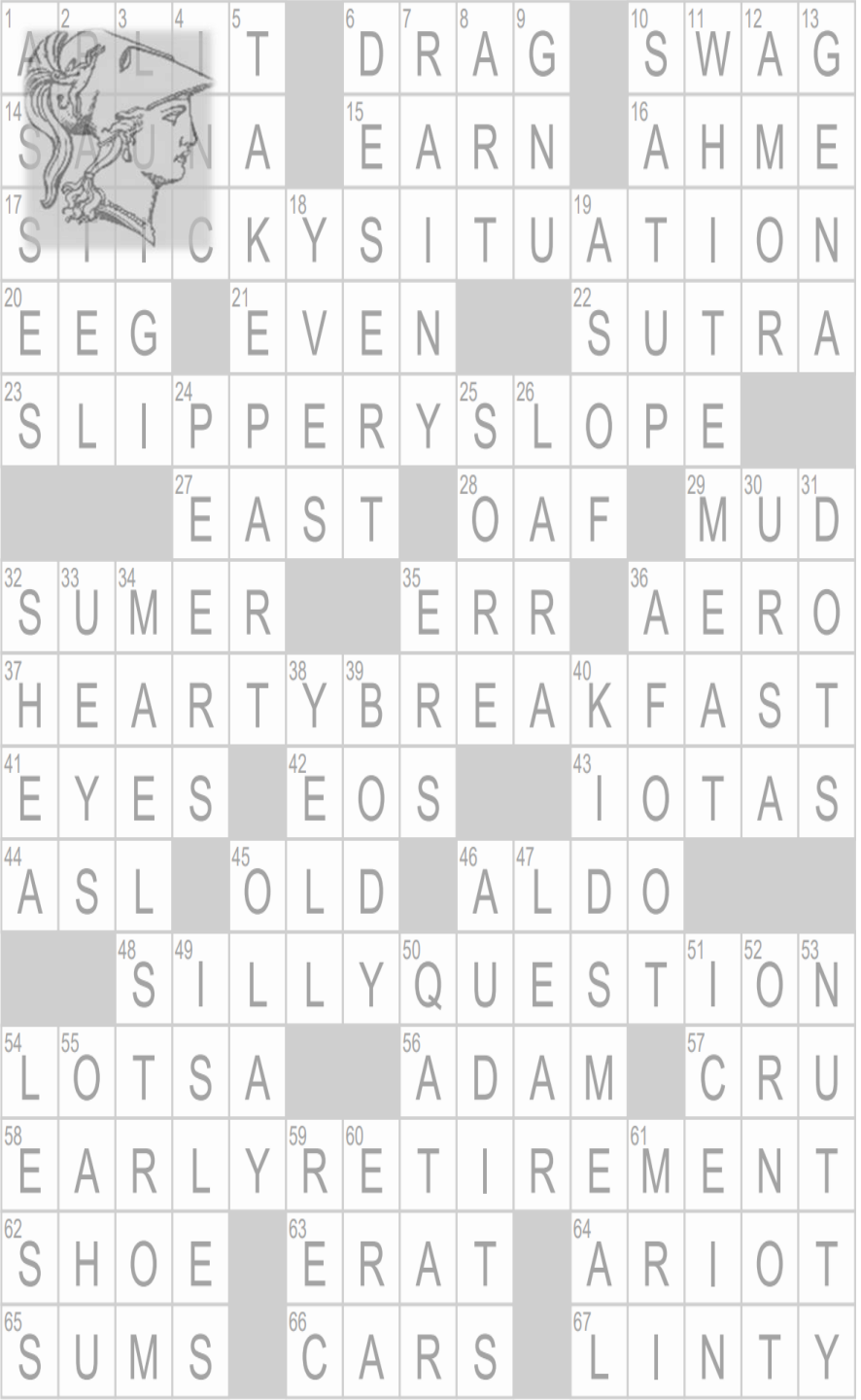
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Facilitate consolidation for member benefits	2.33%	1
Remain independent from consolidation efforts	32.56%	14
Collaborate with other societies for mutual benefits	37.21%	16
Unsure or no opinion	27.91%	12
TOTAL		43

Summary: Challenges

- Reduced per-title sales necessitates publishing more titles
- Impact of journal costs on library book budgets
- Financially viable books (reduction of subject diversity)
- Capacity to maintain quality / Quality control
- Staffing due to COVID and general turnover
- Shrinking faculty & student enrolment
- Institutional funding
- Technology & vendor model landscape
- Discoverability / visibility for smaller press content
- Decline in print sales

Summary: Opportunities

- Adding compatible publishers/imprints to expand market
- ebooks (especially shift driven by COVID)
- Increase channels & partnerships to increase visibility & sales
- Reduce redundancies in operations – repurpose funds
- New sources of funding with new models, e.g. Open Access
- Financial sustainability



Thank you

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