Podcast Preservation Survey Findings

February 5, 2019

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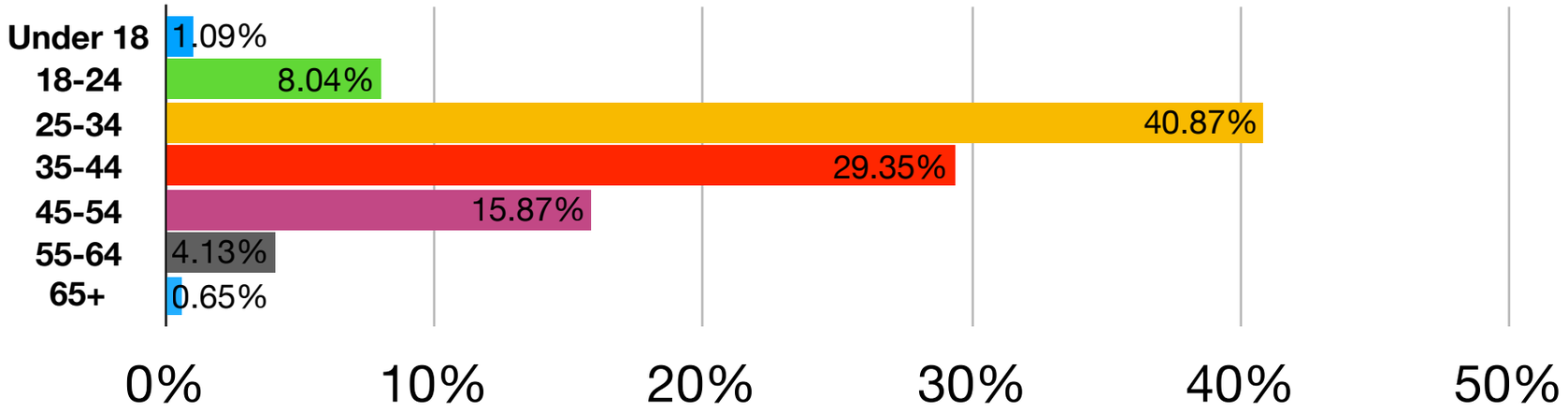
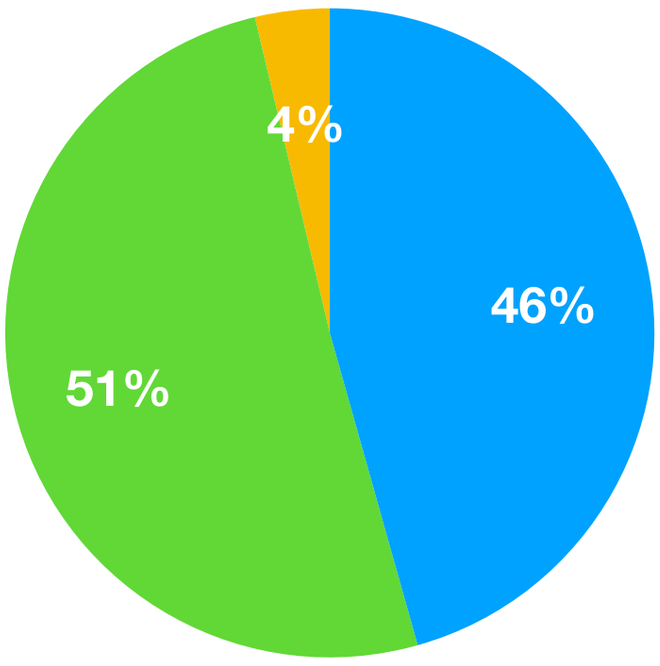
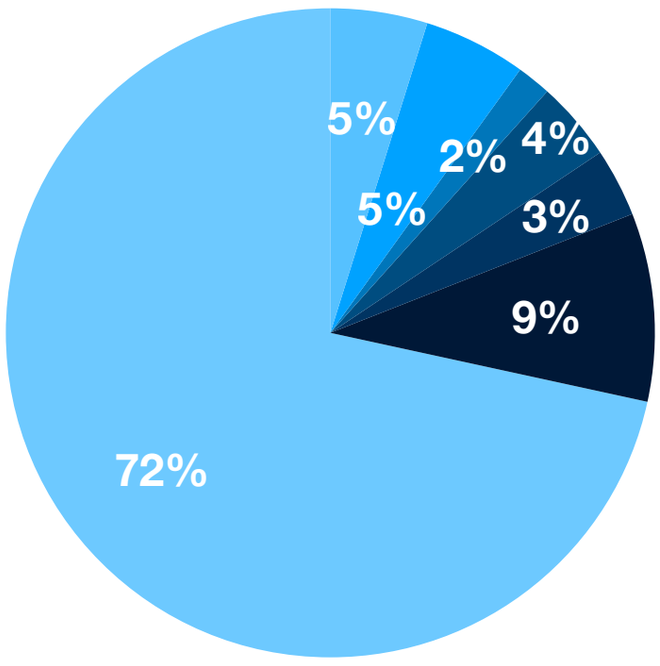
Demographics

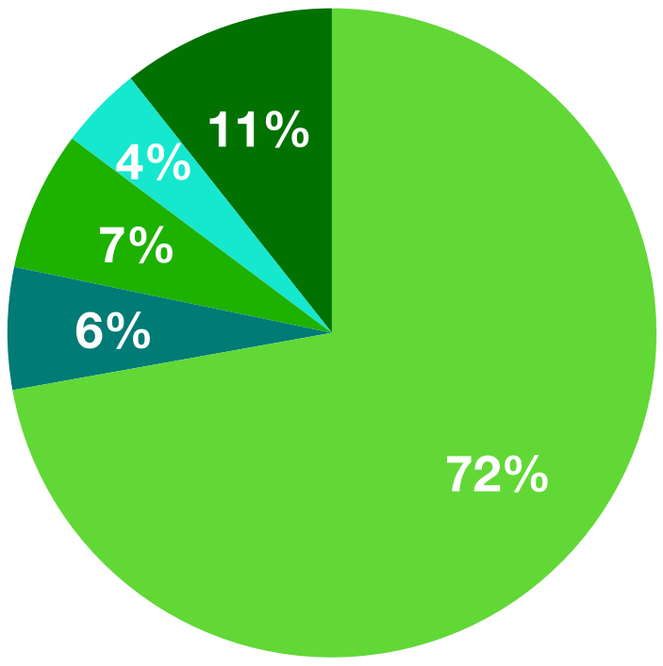




Female
Male
Non-binary



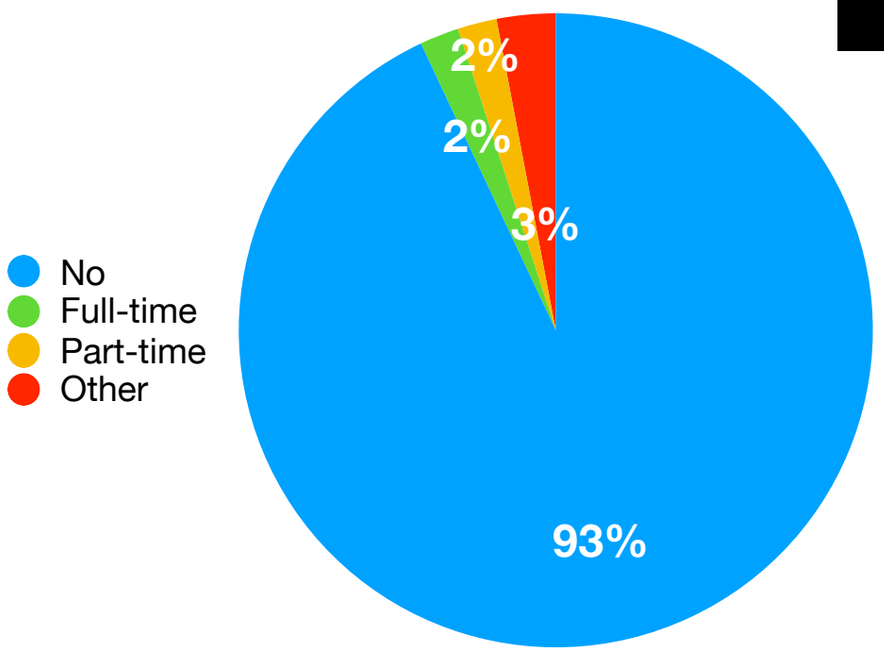
Asian or Asian American
Black or African American
American Indian, Alaska or Hawaii Native
Another race or ethnicity not listed
Middle Eastern or North African
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
White



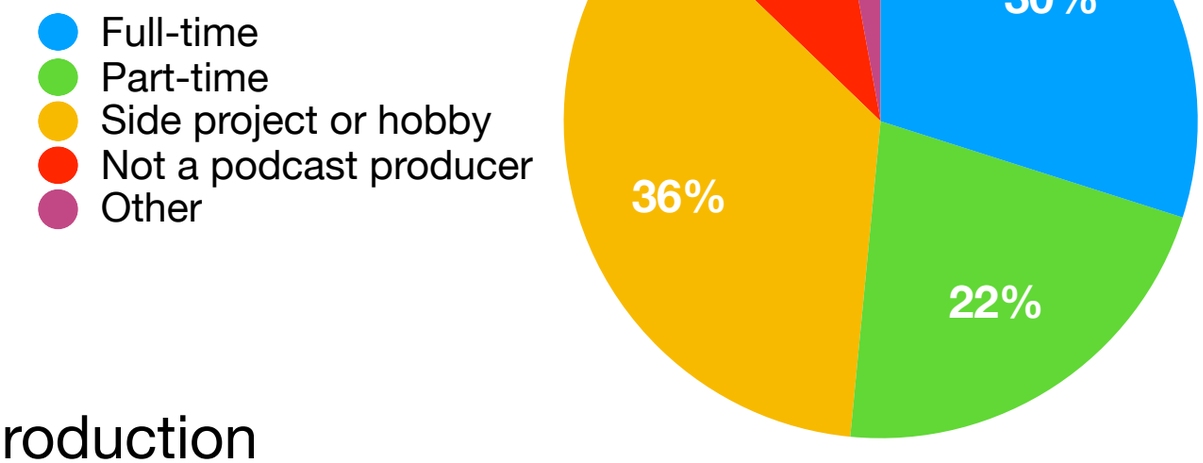
United States
Canada
UK
Australia
Other

Occupation(s)

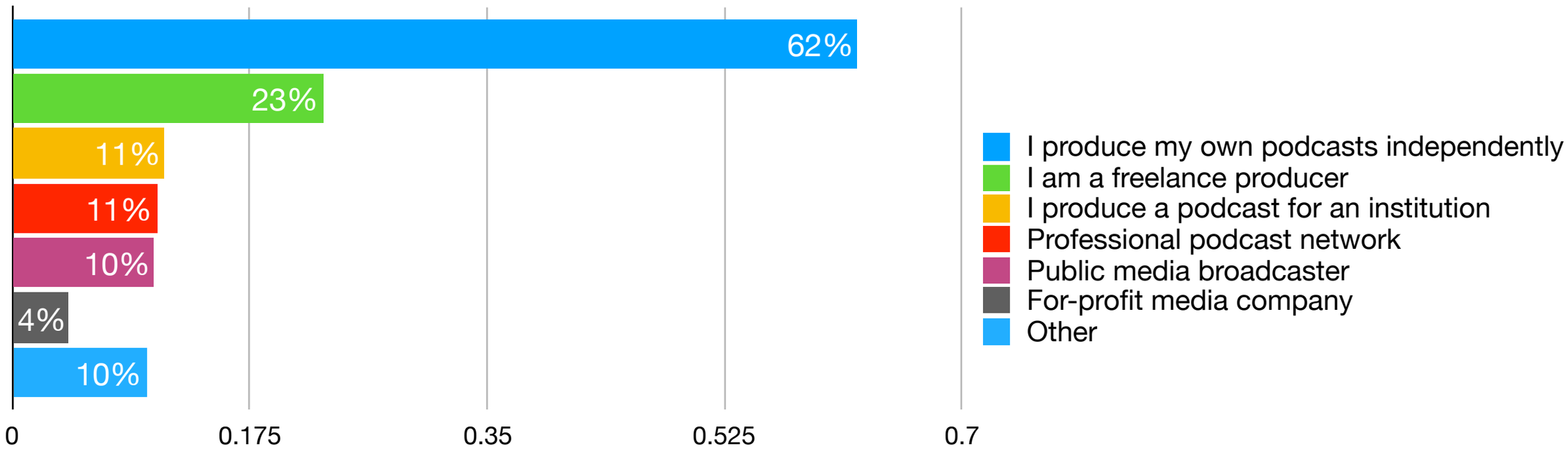
Archivist?



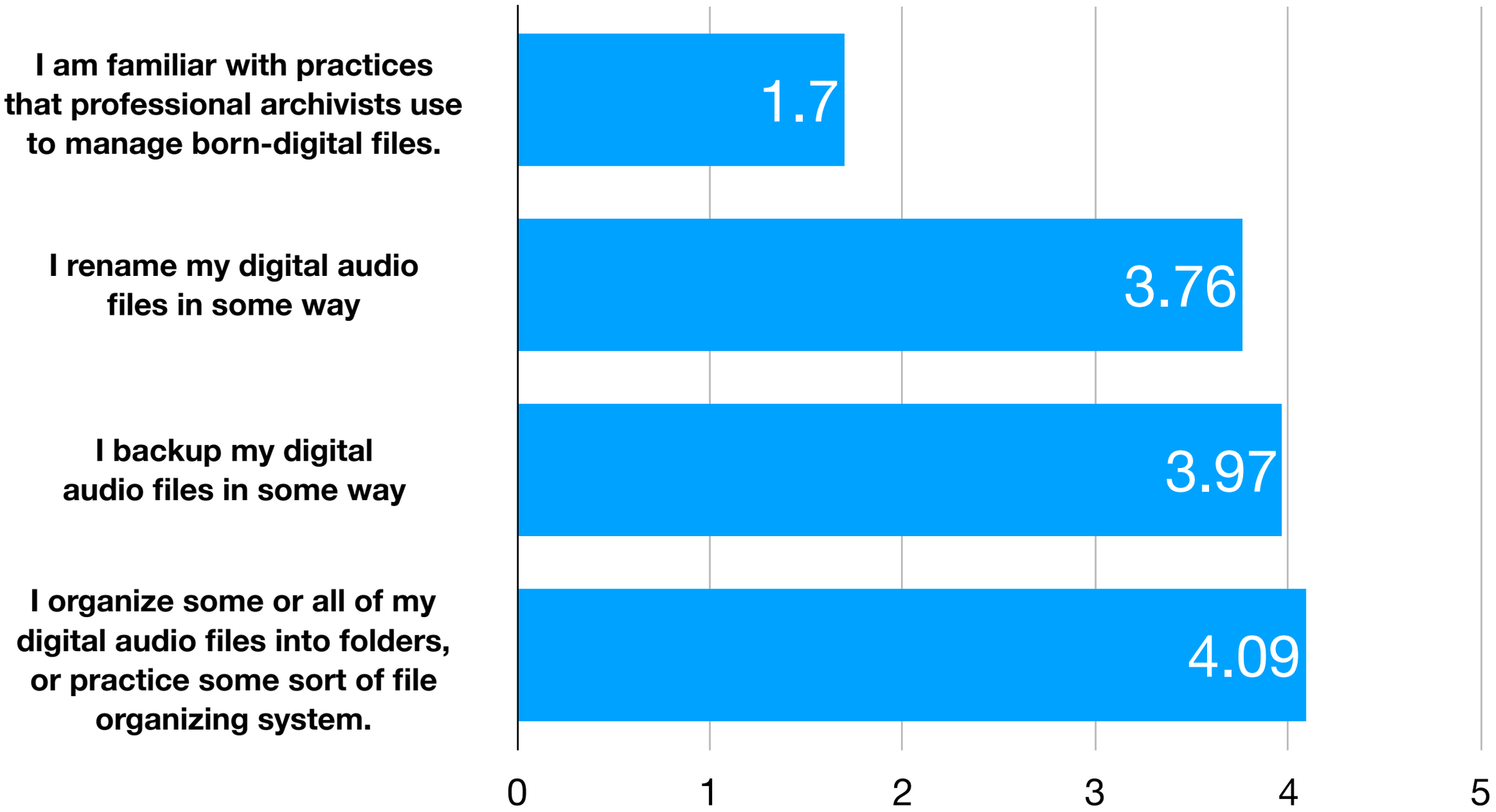
Podcast Producers



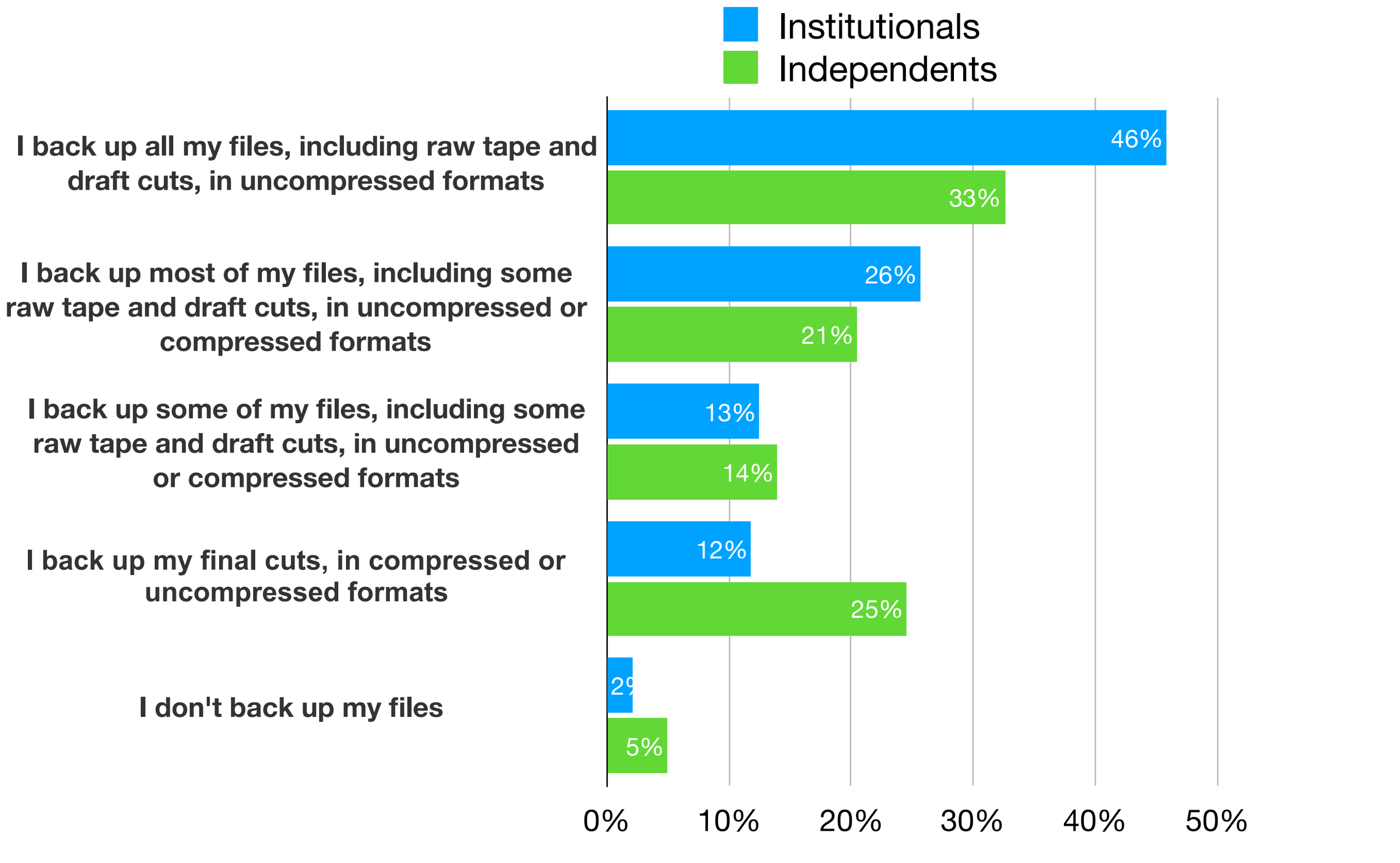
Types of Podcast Production



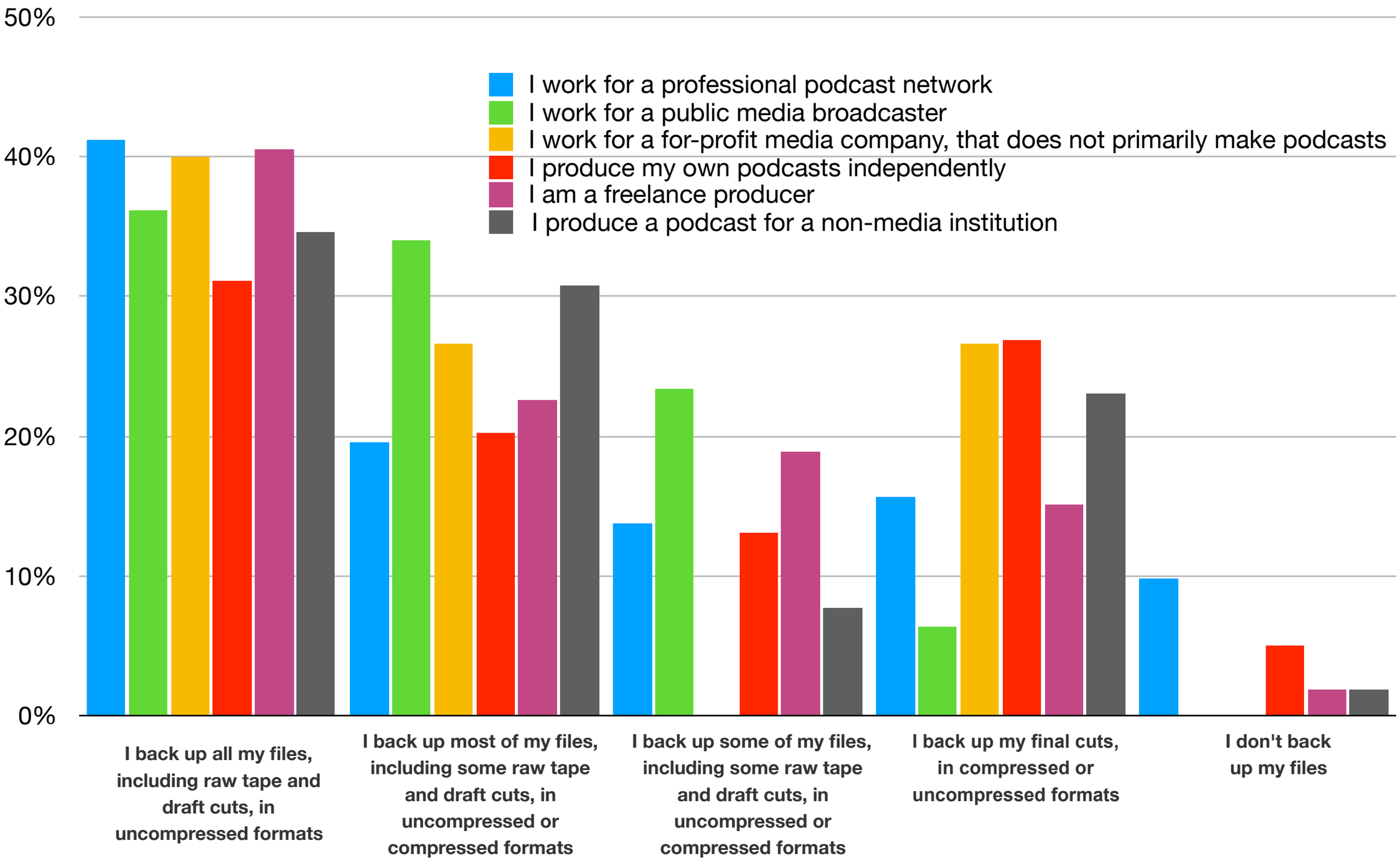
Behaviors


I am familiar with practices that professional archivists use to manage born-digital files.
1.7
I rename my digital audio files in some way
3.76
I backup my digital audio files in some way
3.97
I organize some or all of my digital audio files into folders, or practice some sort of file organizing system.
4.09
0
1
2
3
4
5

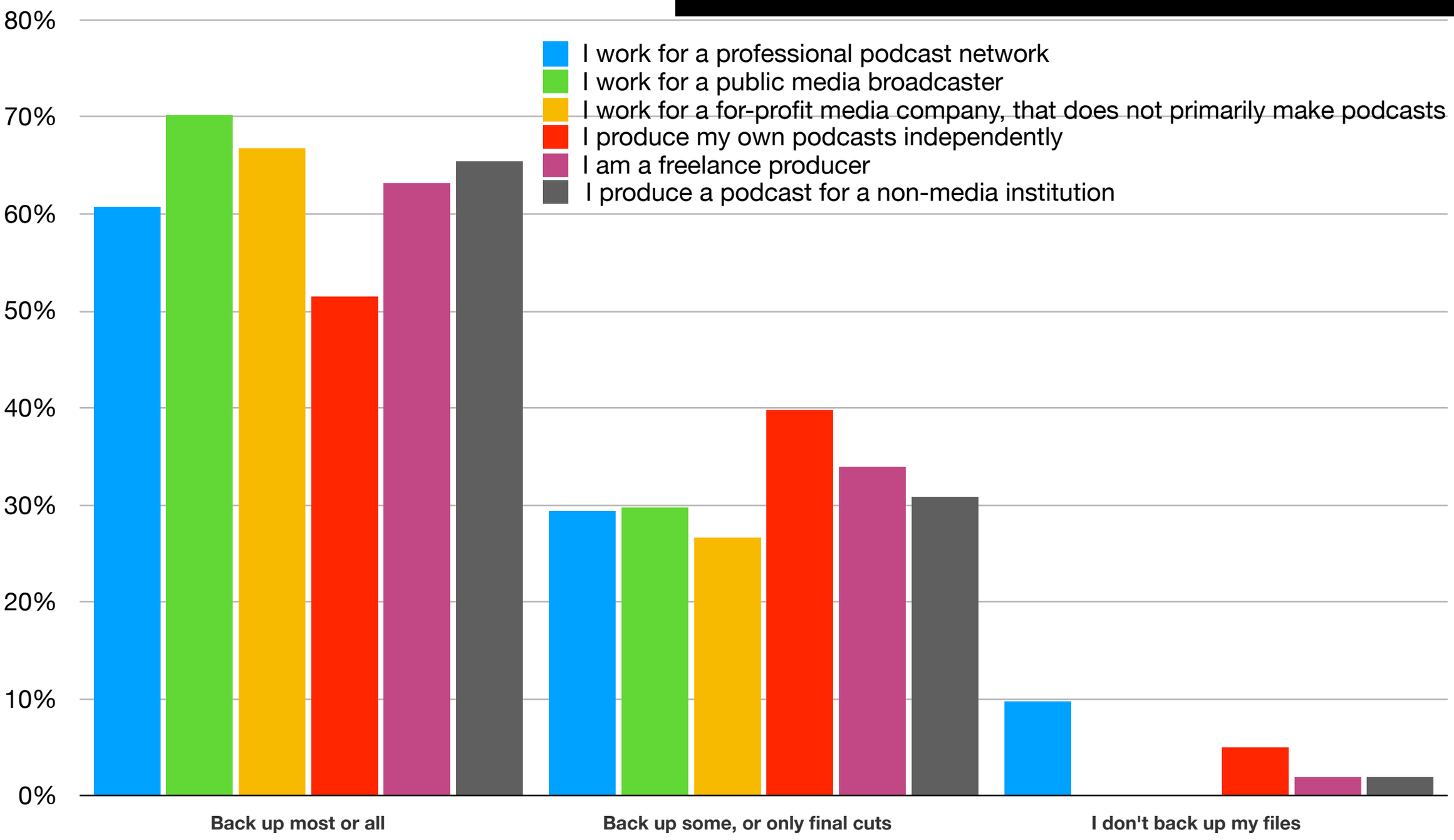
Behaviors


Institutionals
Independents
I back up all my files, including raw tape and draft cuts, in uncompressed formats
46%
33%
I back up most of my files, including some raw tape and draft cuts, in uncompressed or compressed formats
26%
21%
I back up some of my files, including some raw tape and draft cuts, in uncompressed or compressed formats
13%
14%
I back up my final cuts, in compressed or uncompressed formats
12%
25%
I don't back up my files
2%
5%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%

Behaviors


50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
I work for a professional podcast network
I work for a public media broadcaster
I work for a for-profit media company, that does not primarily make podcasts
I produce my own podcasts independently
I am a freelance producer
I produce a podcast for a non-media institution
I back up all my files, including raw tape and draft cuts, in uncompressed formats
I back up most of my files, including some raw tape and draft cuts, in uncompressed or compressed formats
I back up some of my files, including some raw tape and draft cuts, in uncompressed or compressed formats
I back up my final cuts, in compressed or uncompressed formats
I don't back up my files

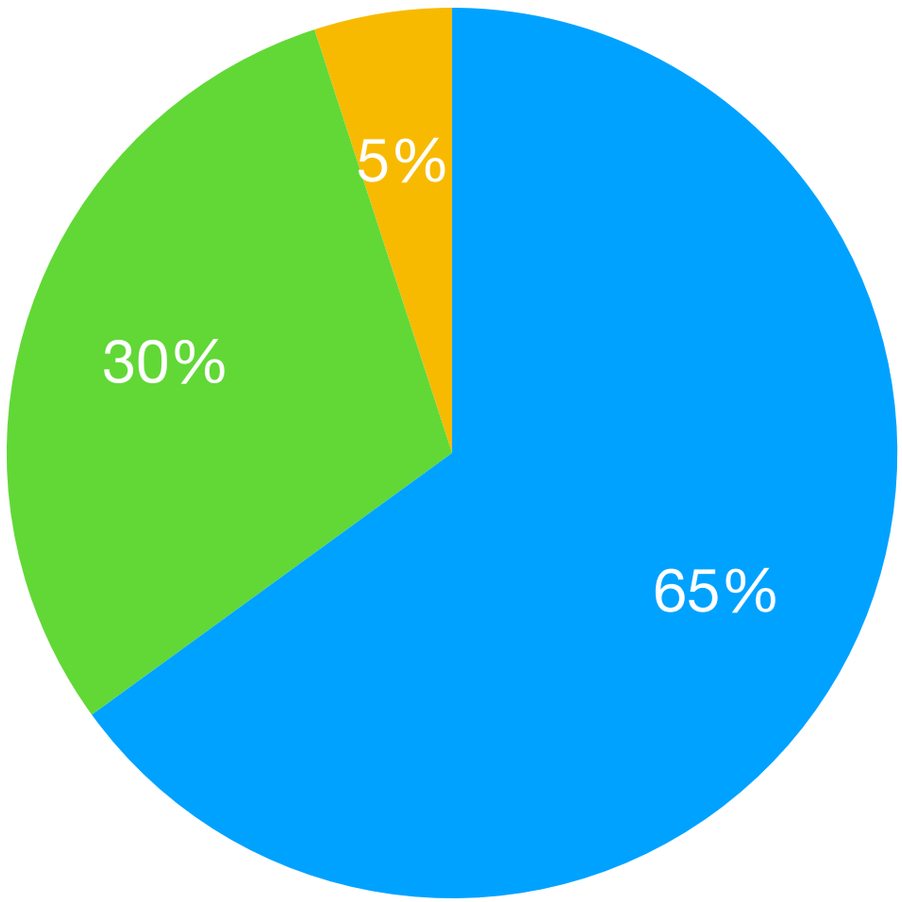
Behaviors


80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
I work for a professional podcast network
I work for a public media broadcaster
I work for a for-profit media company, that does not primarily make podcasts
I produce my own podcasts independently
I am a freelance producer
I produce a podcast for a non-media institution
Back up most or all
Back up some, or only final cuts
I don't back up my files

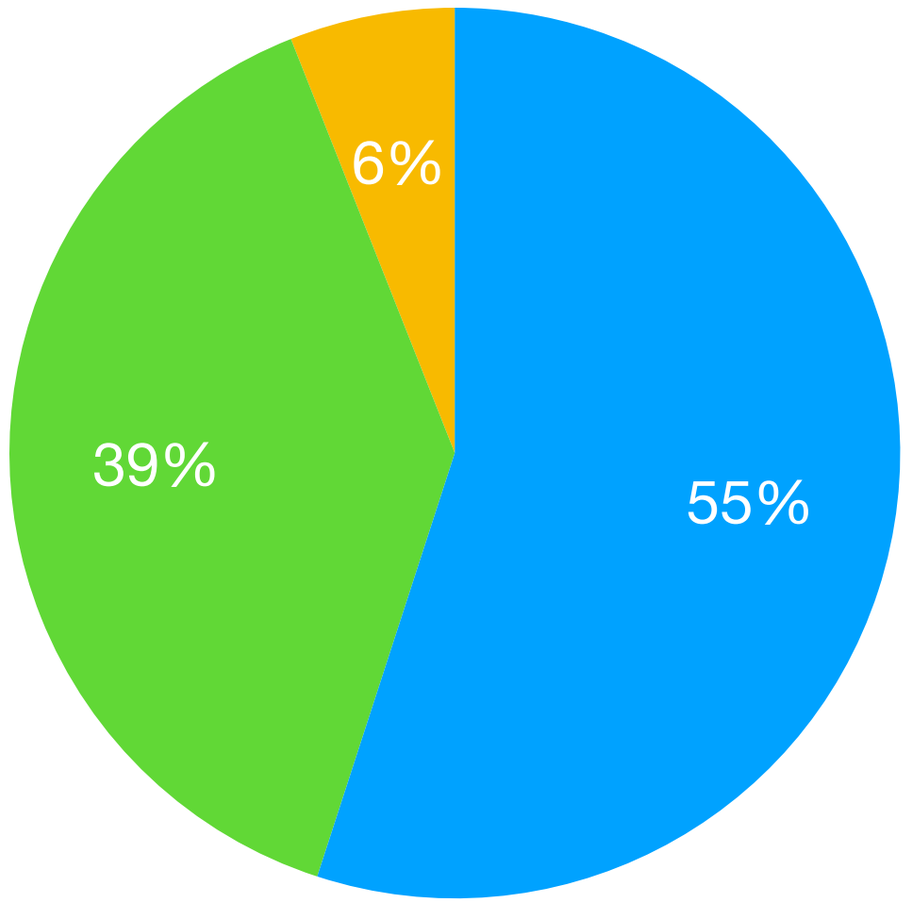
Behaviors

How much of a podcast's files do you preserve?

Institutionals



Independents and Freelancers



Most or all Some or final cuts None

Those who back up on the Internet Archive are different!

Internet Archivers

70% produce podcasts independently, as opposed to 49% of the total sample

They also tend to back up on both external hard drives (69%) and cloud storage (65%) - and those who use cloud storage tend to use both Google Drive (67%) and Dropbox (63%)

They feel strongly about the Internet Archive - one says, “All podcasts should have at least their final cut archived at the Internet Archive, as a bare minimum.”

Another has made improvements on their own, saying, “I used to only archive raw audio and compressed final cuts. Now, in addition to raw audio and compressed final cuts, I archive each individual track of a final cut (so as to rebuild a multi-track at a later date and make changes, ie for possible updated re-publish), a compressed final cut without any music tracks, and the individual music tracks.”

They have broad awareness of institutional issues, as well, as one says, “As someone who works for a public broadcaster, I often worry about whether we're archiving our work properly. Our latest archiving system is relatively new, but I find it difficult to search and retrieve files. Often, I find myself putting final cuts of my work in personal cloud storage because I'm not sure whether I'll be able to find it in our organization's system in a few years.

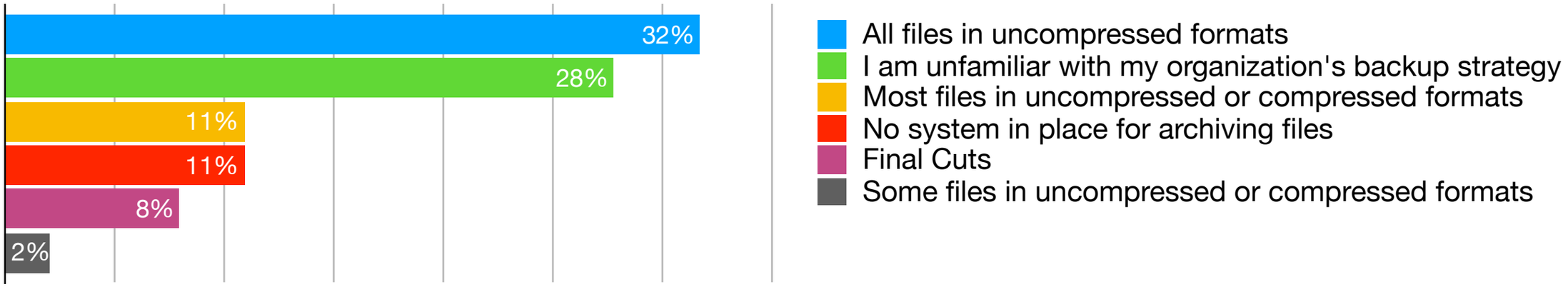
And another pushes for greater public discussion, saying, “I don't think the archiving of digital files is every really discussed among artists who are web-based (musicians, comedians, podcasters, etc). Any basic info somewhere would be extremely helpful.”

Even among users who are completists in their preservation practices, organizations don't support that practice

Model Users - Problematic Organizations

27% of respondents back up all their files in uncompressed formats; and of those, 68% work for a larger organization - these are those organizational practices

What's your organization's backup and archival strategy?



This points to a major problem in media organizations - that even for the individuals who are most thorough, over a quarter are unfamiliar with the organizational strategy, and over 10% of those organizations don't even have a backup strategy

One respondent gets to the core of this tension, saying, "I feel like the backups I make I make with the intention that if something happens during a podcast's production - the dreaded coffee spill all over the computer/I get mugged, etc. - I will have another copy. I don't know that I've thought much about storing them for the long term. If I leave my position, I don't think they have a plan in place to maintain the files. I might take some with me (for example, wavs of final episodes) but would I take everything? Probably not."

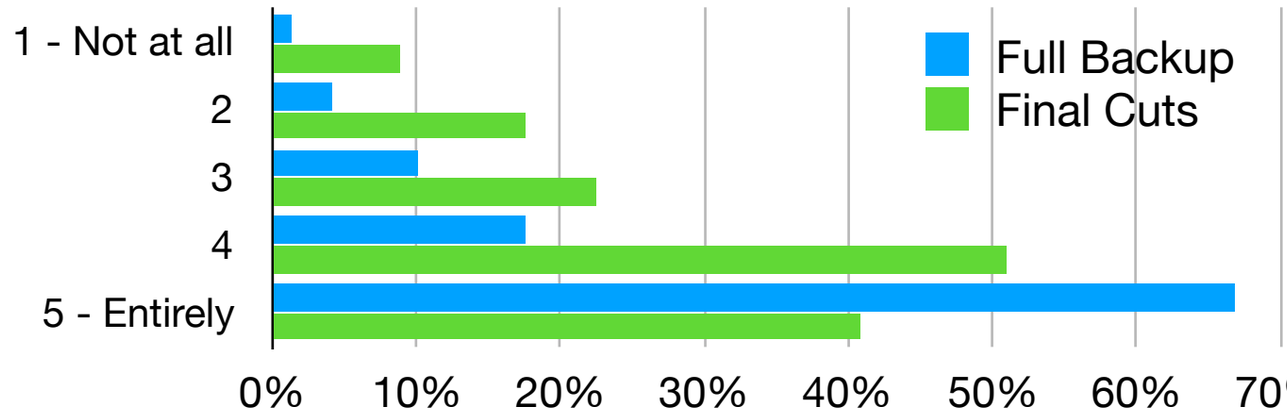
And even some of these completists feel at sea - one says, "I'm a mess, please help! I feel generally lost and know I am not being organized in the best way."

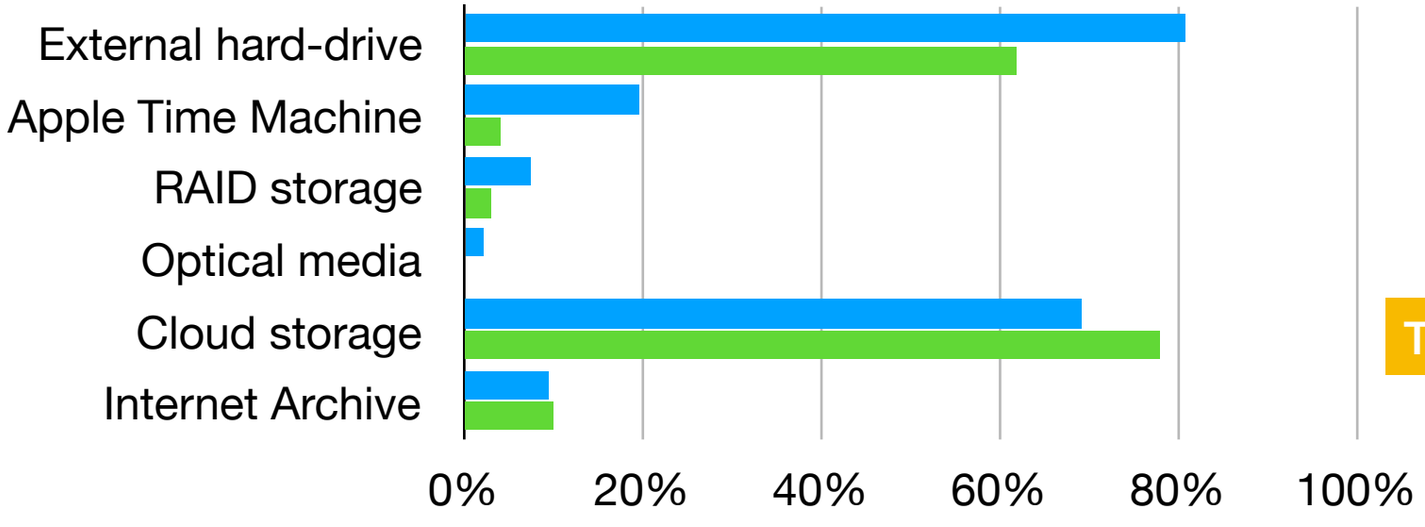
Comparing the samples of those who back up all files in compressed formats (27%) vs. those who only back up final cuts (18%) is revealing

Full Backup vs. Final Cuts

27% of respondents back up all their files in uncompressed formats; and of those, 68% work for a larger organization - these are those organizational practices

When asked the degree to which they organized their audio files into a system, those who make full backups recorded much higher overall scores (4.45) than those who only backup final cuts (4.16)





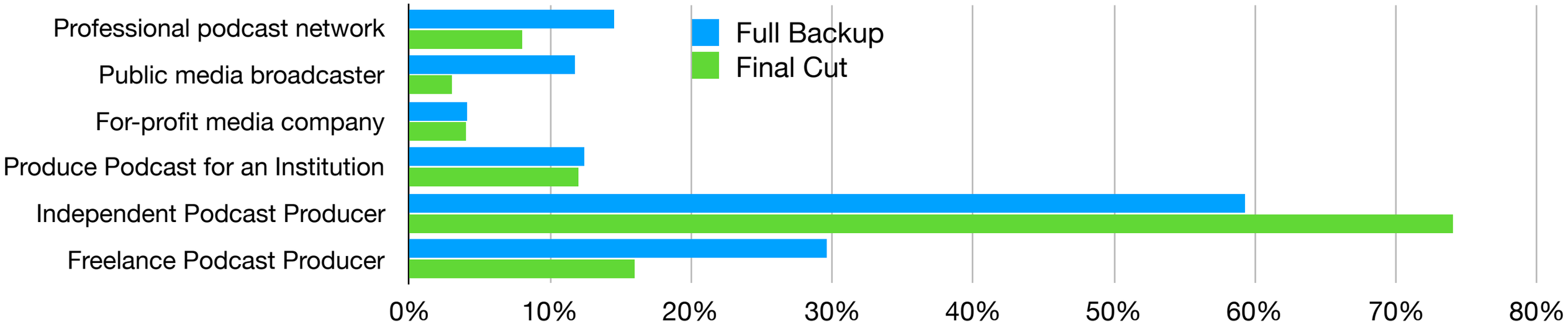
Those who made full backups were significantly more focused on using external hard drives (81%) than final cut users (62%); similarly they used Apple Time Machine far more (20% vs. 4%)

The inverse was true of cloud storage (70% vs. 78%)

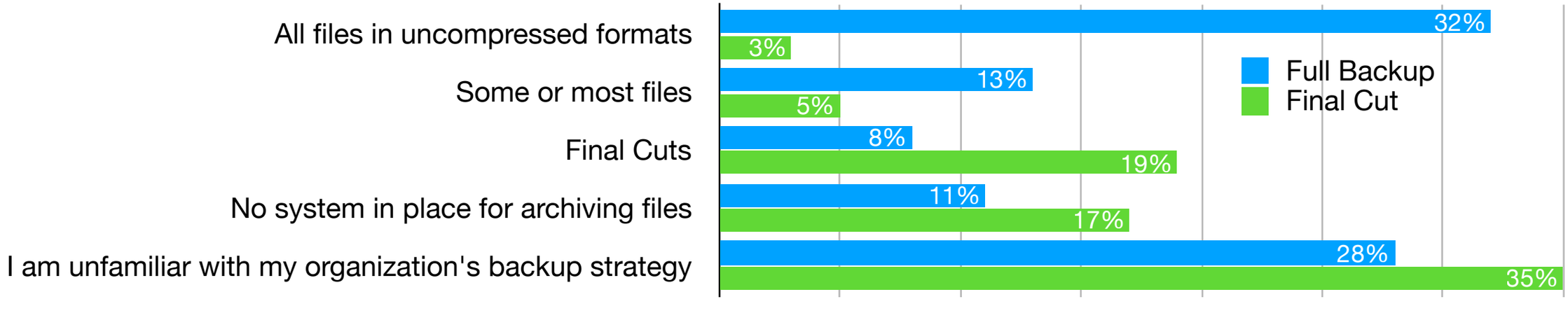
Comparing the samples of those who back up all files in compressed formats (27%) vs. those who only back up final cuts (18%) is revealing

Full Backup vs. Final Cuts

Those who make full backups tend to wear more hats (avg. 1.4 affiliations) than those who only backup final cuts (avg. 1.2), and are more represented in public media, and professional podcast networks, whereas those who only backup final cuts tend to be more often independent podcast producers



Among those who work for an organization, those organizations' strategies and institutional awareness seem to have a strong relationship with individuals' own practices - the contrast is strongest when the policy is in accordance with the users' own practice, and again, it is striking how often both users are unaware of their organizations' strategy



Only a very small share of respondents (<7%) don't back up their files at all. What else can we learn from these outliers?

The Precarious Outliers

A plurality also don't rename their audio files (49%) or organize them into some sort of file system (46%)

For those who have an institutional affiliation, a plurality (47%) also aren't familiar with that organization's backup practices

One of these respondents shows the need for better education around these practices, saying, "We don't manage this well and I would like to get better at it. We work with the KSU library very effectively to manage our print digital files (from newspaper, magazines) but have yet to cross this river. "

The small size of this sample is hopeful, and the responses show that along with even the best individual practice, better institutional policies can help close the gap and promote better preservation practices

Other Thoughts

"Releasing all my podcasts with a Creative Commons 4.0 license allows others to download, store, rehost and distribute without any copyright issues. As long as the attribution is not edited out, anyone can do anything with the files. I hope this encourages or allows any archiving or library service, or third party hosting service, to do with them what they want, including commercial exploitation."

"We have 20 years of audio to back up. Our final cuts are all available online, but we need a better system for backing up raw audio files and sessions. We are looking into cloud storage."