BOOKMARKS OR TABS: ANALYZING USER ACTIVITY ON MOZILLA FIREFOX

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INTRODUCTION

Research question:

Should Mozilla focus product development on bookmarks or browser tabs for the new version of Firefox?

Scope:

Using data collected about users, responses to survey questions, and user browsing activity, understand user preferences and/or habits in regards to usage of bookmarks and browser tabs to answer the research question.

INTRODUCTION

Thesis:

1. Findings suggest that users tend to use browser tabs more regularly than bookmarks. While the two features are not mutually exclusive, new versions of Firefox should focus on improving functionality and user support for browser tabs.

2. However, findings also suggest increased browser tab usage has the potential to monopolize computer memory – new versions of Firefox should work to minimize the amount of memory consumed by open tabs.

USERS AND SURVEY INFORMATION

Total users: **27,267**

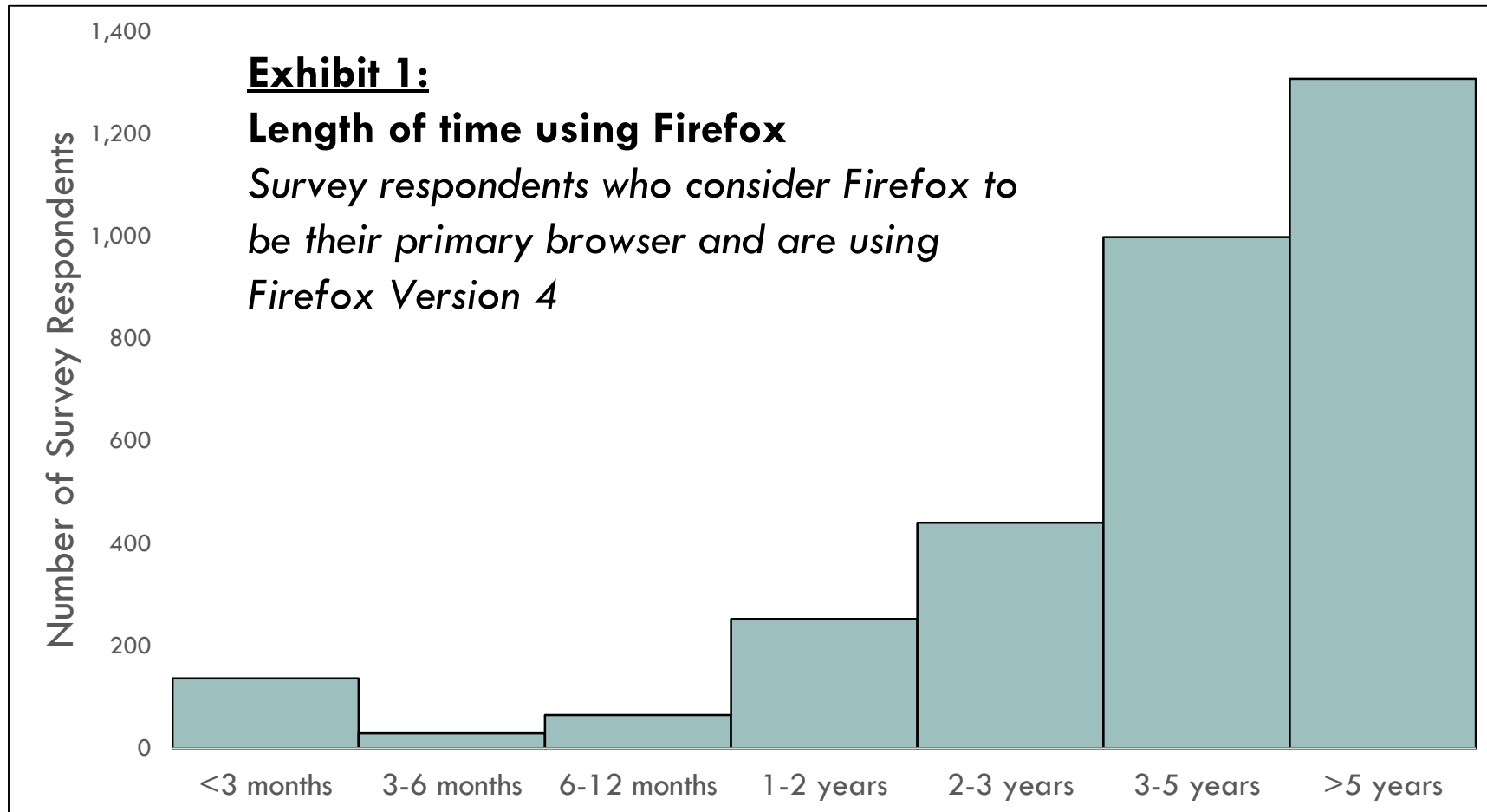Users who completed survey: **4,081 (15.0%)**

Surveyed users with one or more years of Firefox experience: **90.7%**

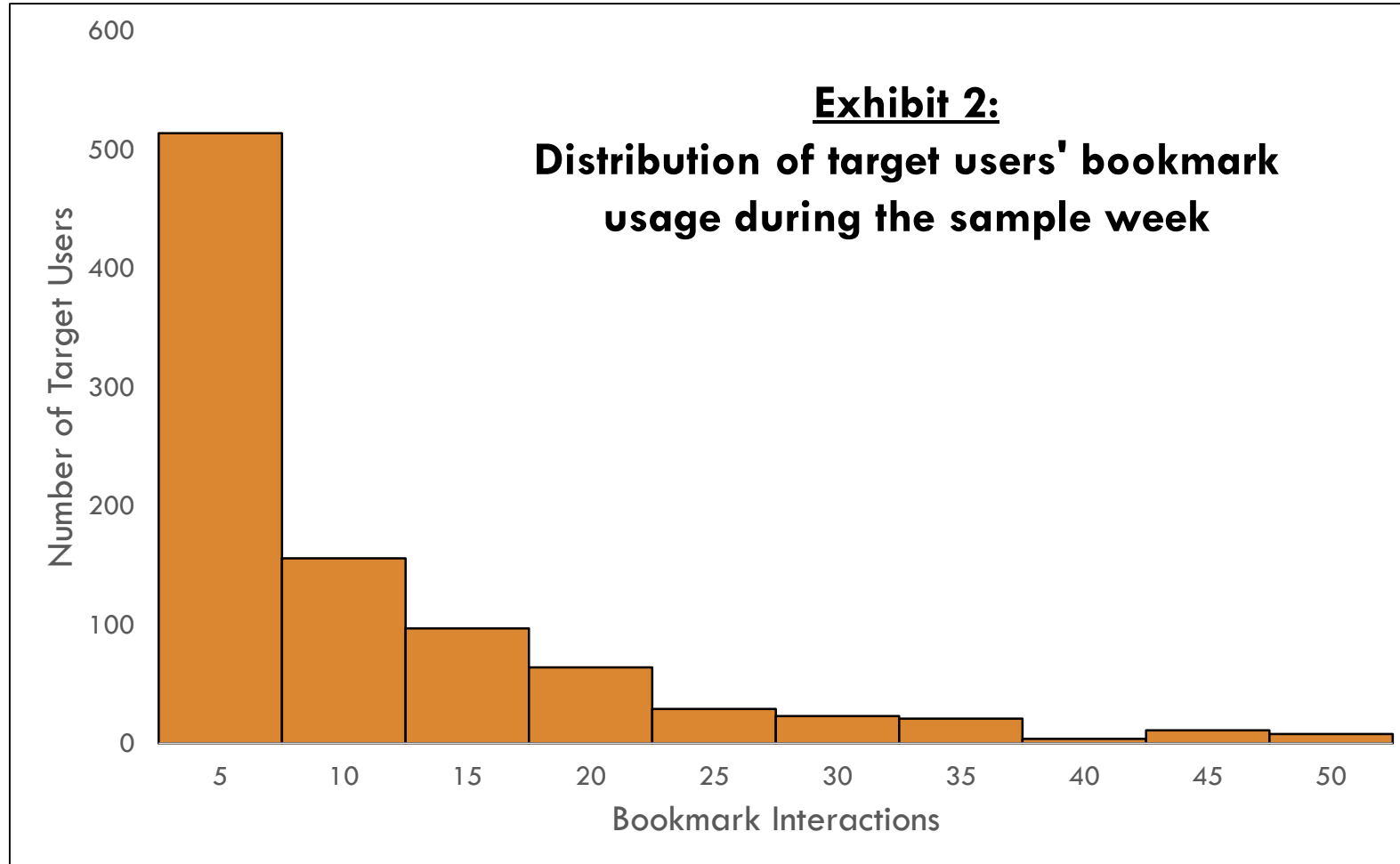Surveyed users who consider Firefox as their primary browser: **82.4%**

Target users: **2,997 (73.4%)**

a) Have one or more years of experience

b) Consider Firefox as primary browser

c) Are using Version 4 of Firefox

USERS AND SURVEY INFORMATION

Exhibit 1:
Length of time using Firefox
Survey respondents who consider Firefox to be their primary browser and are using Firefox Version 4

BOOKMARK USAGE

Exhibit 2:
Distribution of target users' bookmark usage during the sample week

Average bookmark library size for all users:

107

Average bookmark library for target users

255

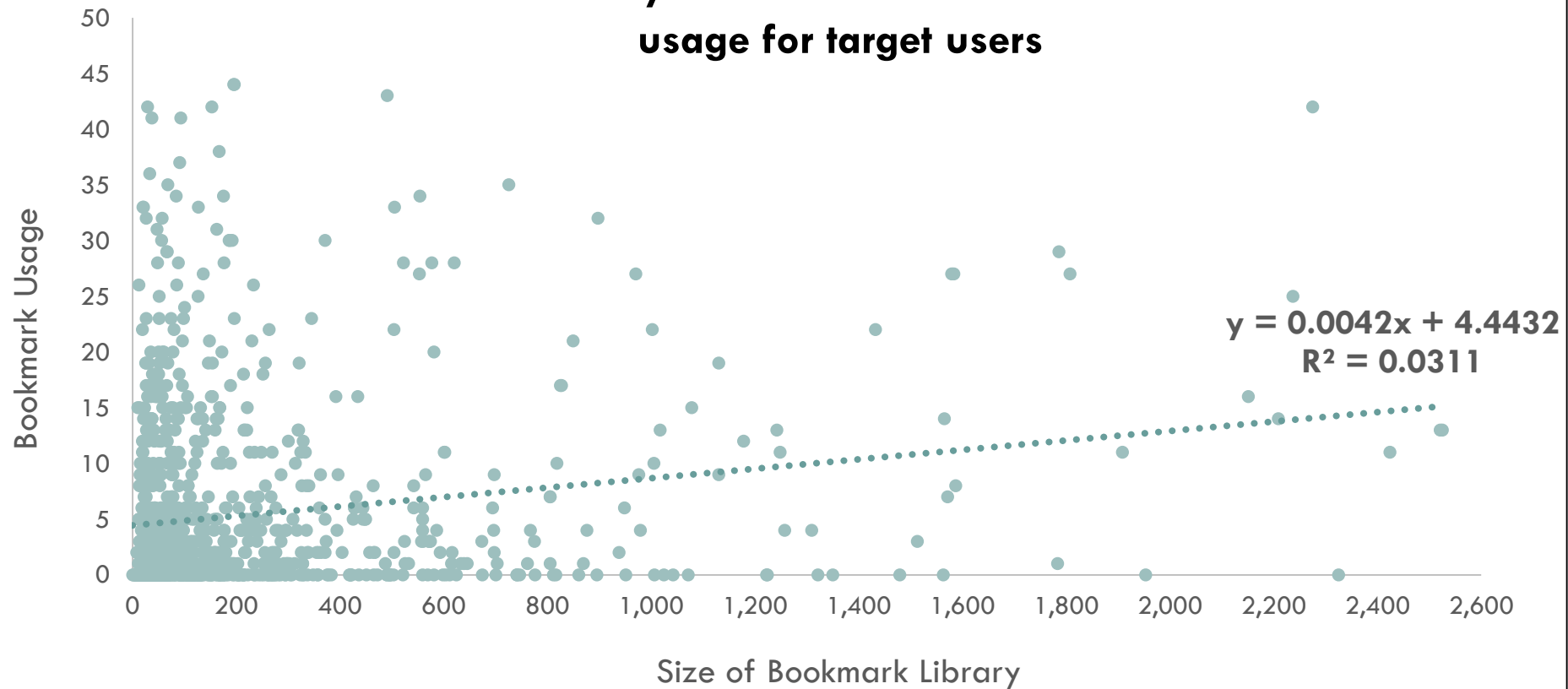Fraction of target users that clicked on a bookmark:

30.1%

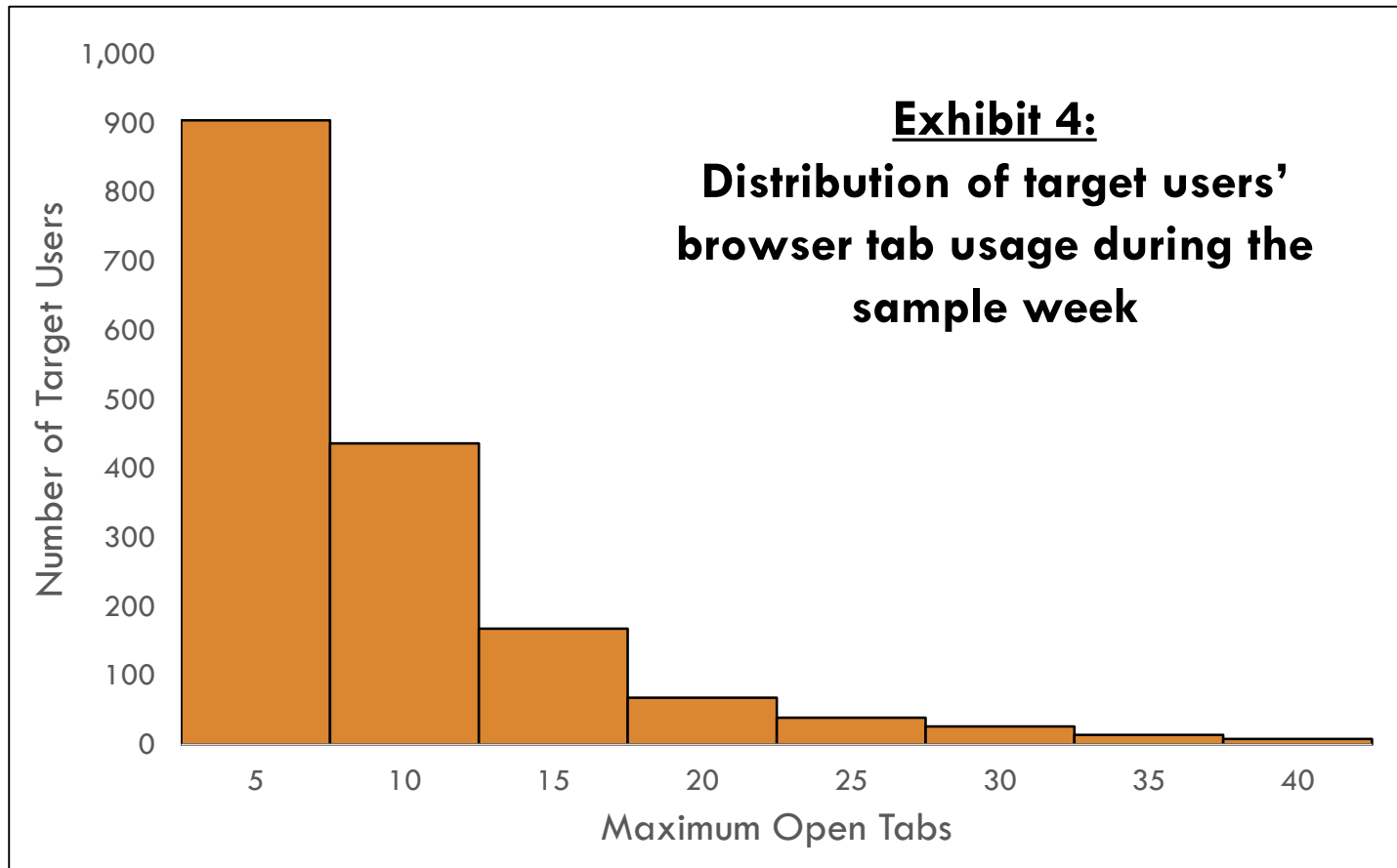Average number of bookmark interactions per target user:

3.2

BOOKMARK USAGE

Exhibit 3:
Bookmark library size is a bad indicator of bookmark usage for target users

$y = 0.0042x + 4.4432$
$R^2 = 0.0311$

BROWSER TAB USAGE

Exhibit 4:
Distribution of target users' browser tab usage during the sample week

Average maximum number of tabs open by target users:

8.0

Fraction of target users who at one point had over…

5 tabs open: **36.7%**
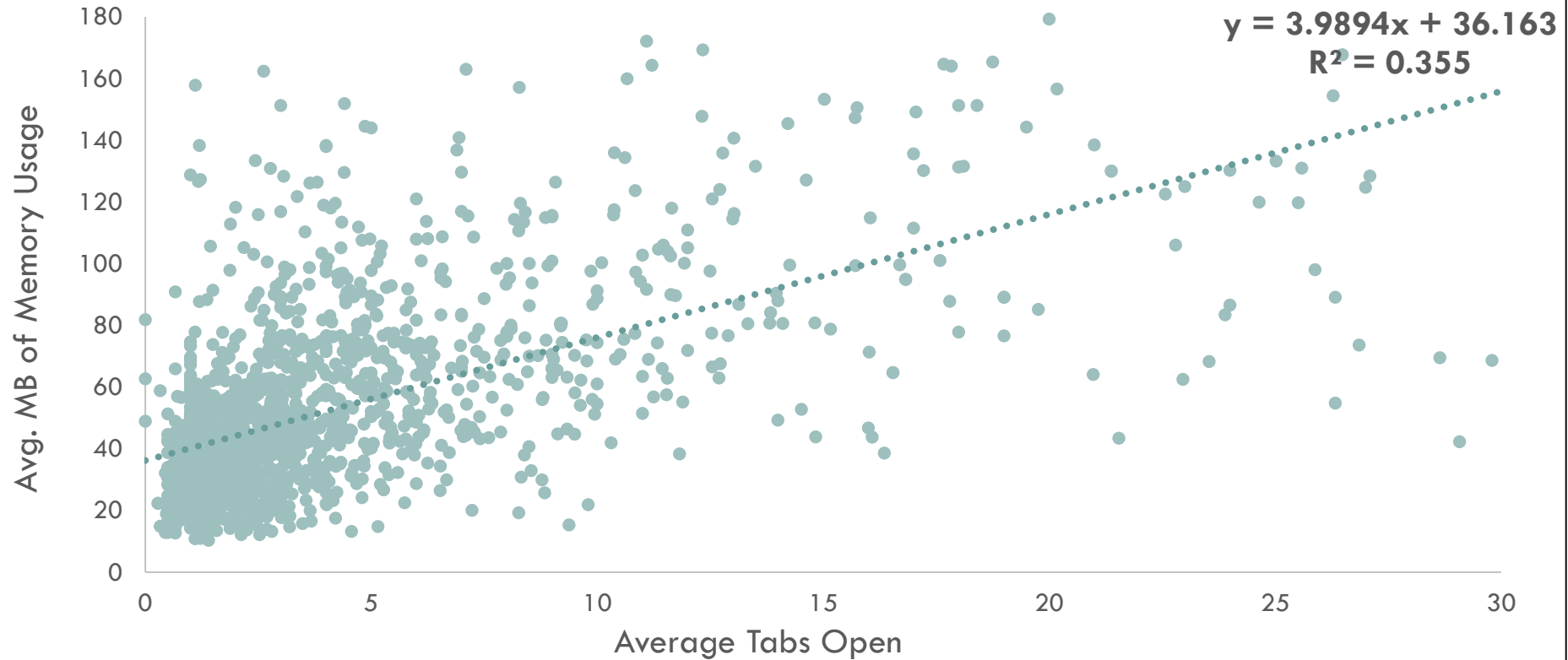
10 tabs open: **18.1%**

15 tabs open: **10.8%**

Fraction of target users who regularly had over 10 tabs open:

6.0%

BROWSER TAB USAGE

Exhibit 5: More open tabs could hog computer memory

CONCLUSION

Findings:

➢ The data suggests that more users elect to use tabs when browsing the Internet and open more tabs on average than the average times a user interacts with bookmark features.

➢ While tabs seem to be more popular, findings also suggest that increased tab usage may correspond with higher memory usage.

Recommendation and next steps:

New versions of Firefox should focus on improving tab features and functionality, but resources should be devoted to finding ways to decrease the amount of memory needed to maintain multiple open tabs.

CONCLUSION

Limitations:

➤ Findings are based on only a sub-set of the total population and should not be assumed to represent the population as a whole.

➤ Browser tab data does not differentiate between deliberate tab actions and automations such as hyperlinks opening in a new tab and pop-up windows running in the background.

➤ The data is a snapshot in time and does not allow for time series analysis to determine trends in user behavior.