

The Impact of Canadian Public Libraries*

* Summary report based on the national study investigating the Impact of Canadian Urban Libraries, led by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council/Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CULC/CBUC).

Overview



Initiated by Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), of which LPL is a member.



Inspired by Toronto Public Library's Social Impact Study completed in 2023, working with the same firm.



First to measure social impact using data and metrics for an empirical assessment.



Positions CULC and its member libraries to participate in local, provincial, national and global discussions around community well-being and global determiners of health.

Study facts



Conducted May – July 2025 among the general population as well as among library users.



Data was captured from 53 CULC library systems across the country, gathering input from a total of 18,315 respondents from all over Canada.



10 library systems participated in the study steering group, directing the research, and acting as sites for interviewee recruitment.



16 other library systems distributed the survey among their users (LPL was one).

LPL Demographics

410 respondents (max allotment)

All are current library users

82% identify as White/Caucasian/European descent

74% identify as women.

75% were born in Canada
17% have lived in Canada more than 10 years.

Over 50% are retired.

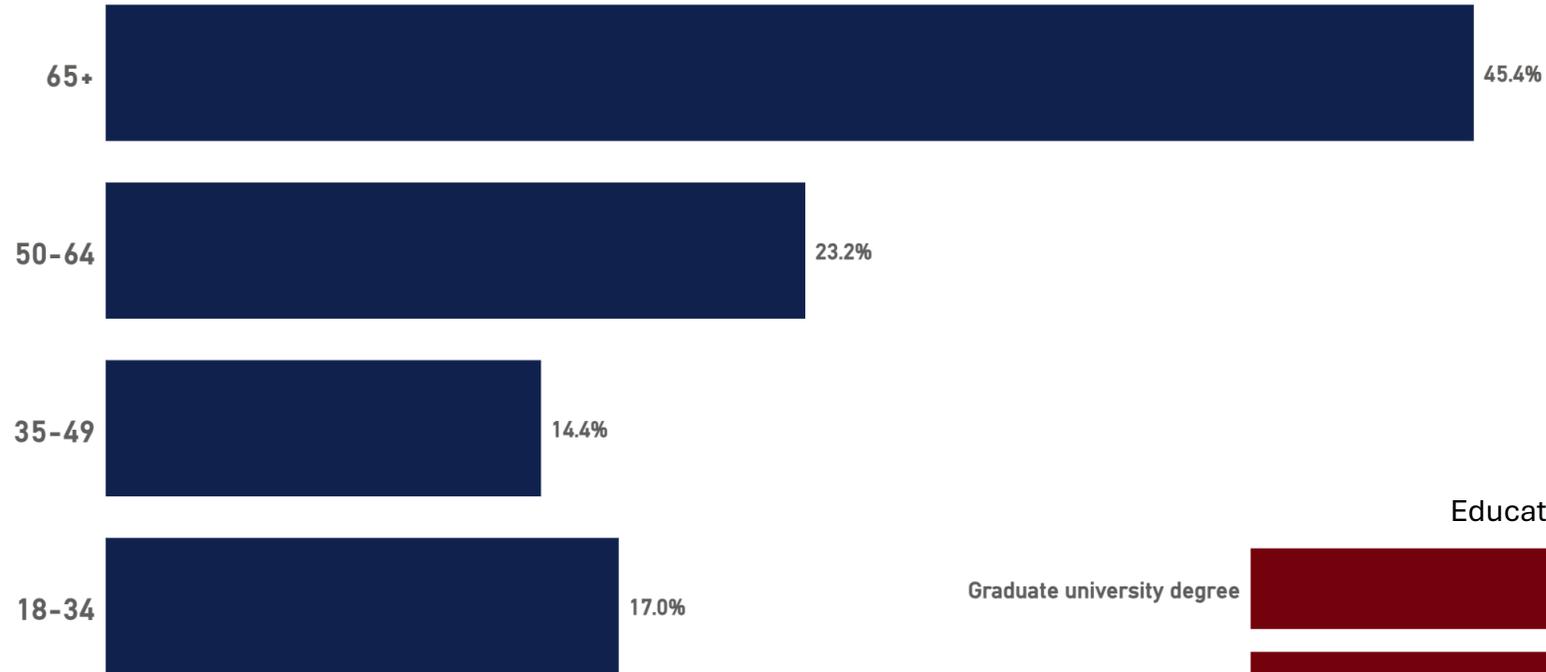
13% have children at home under the age of 18.

19% identify as a person with a disability.

8% identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

56% are currently living with their spouse
28% are live alone.

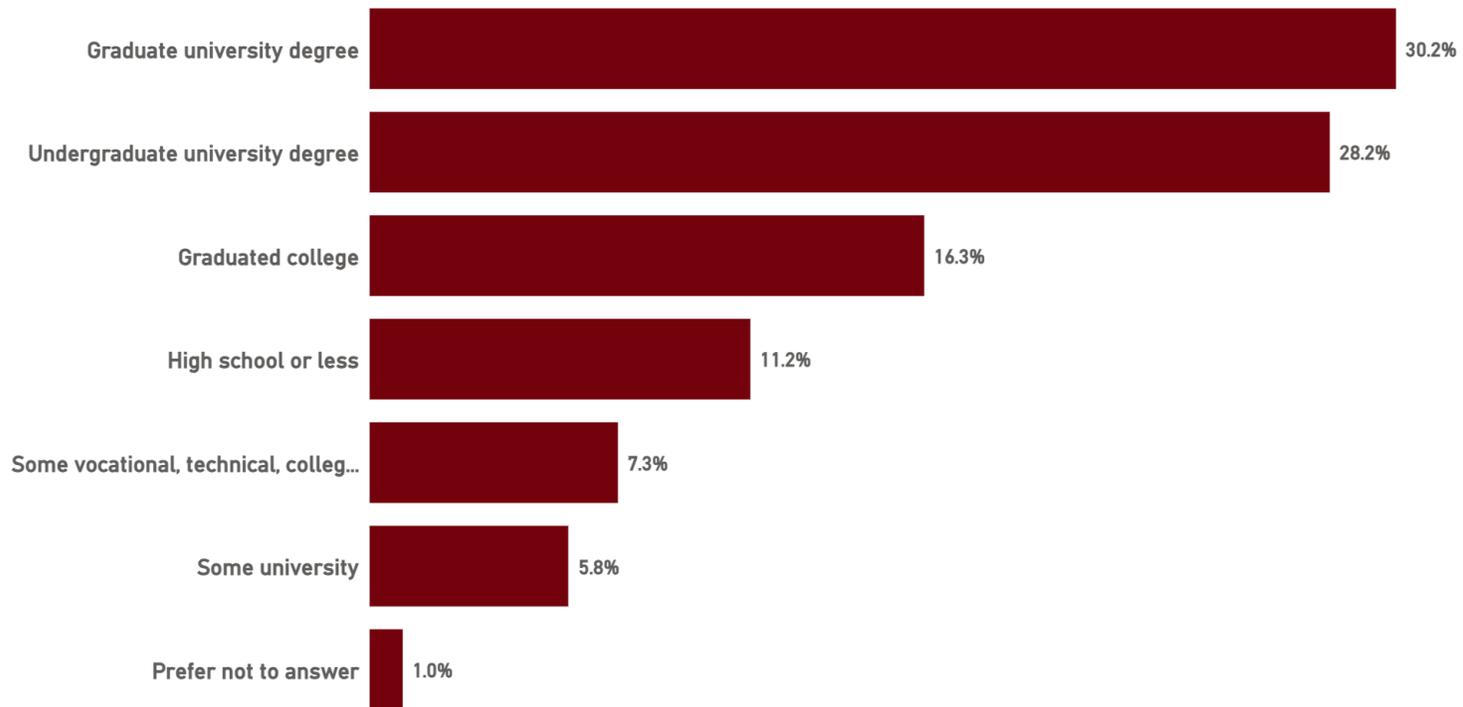
Age Range



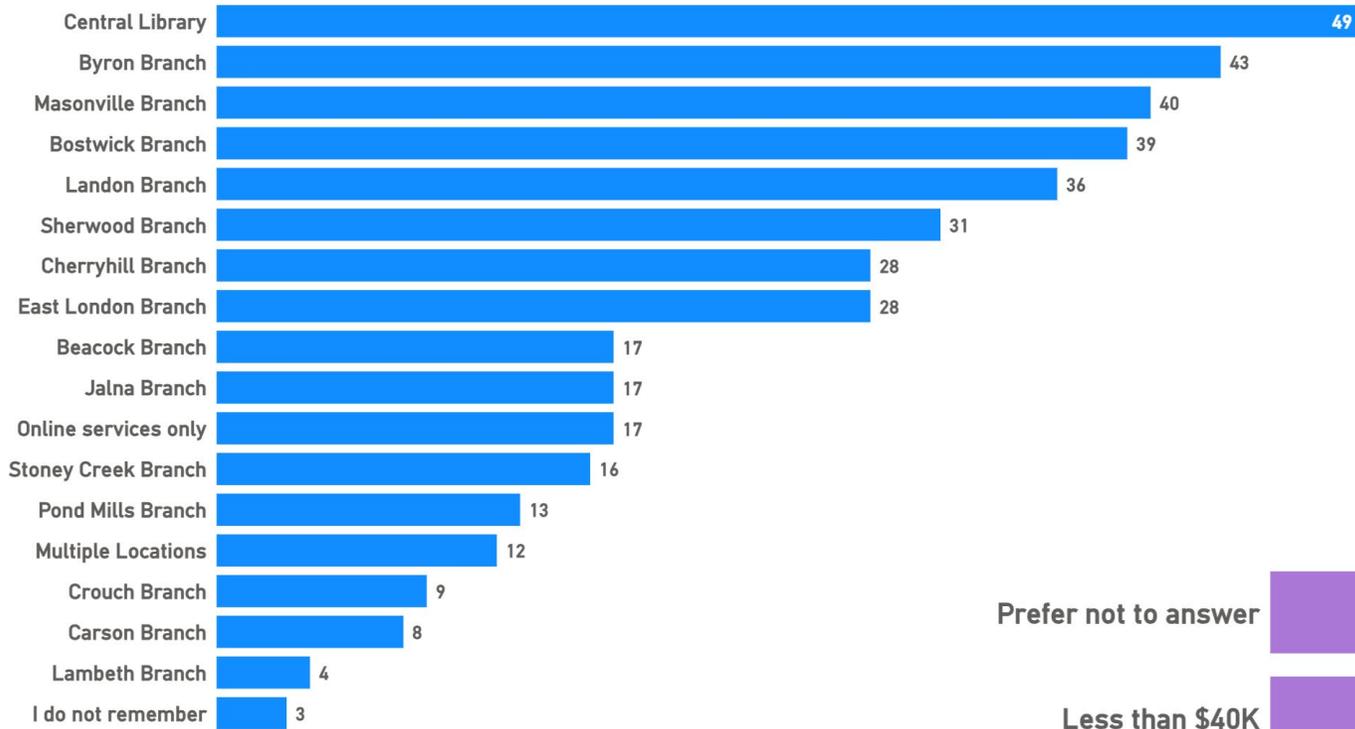
69% of respondents were 50 years old or older.

58% had a university degree or higher.

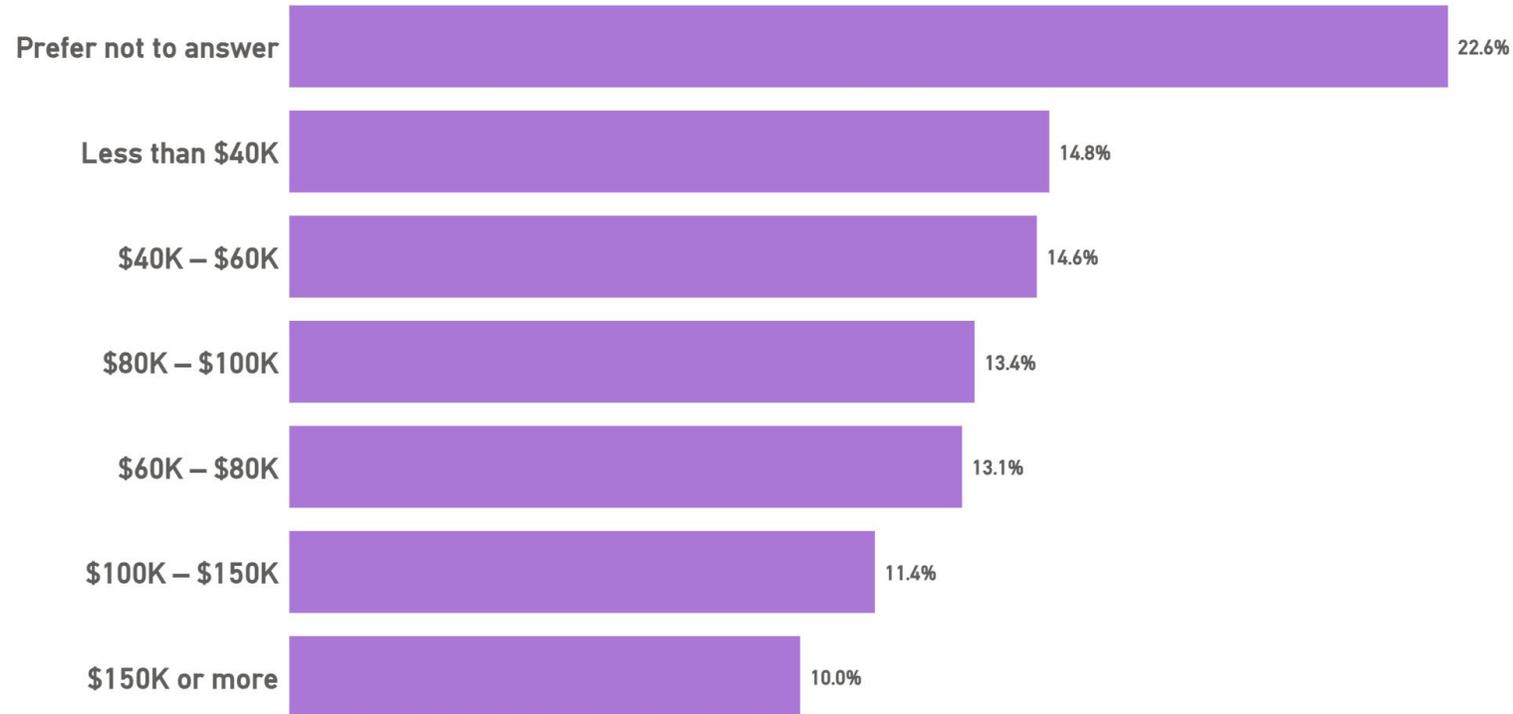
Education



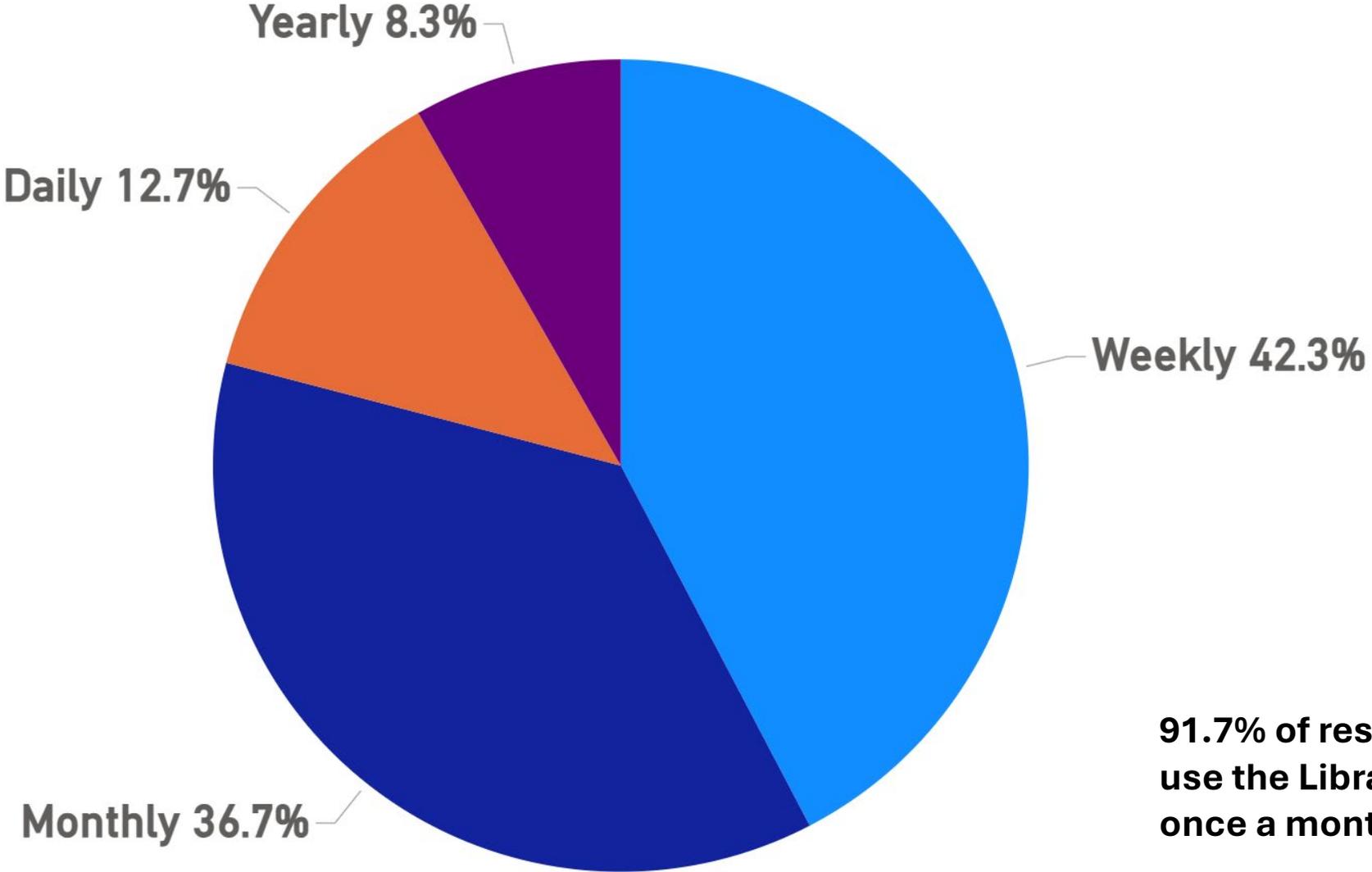
Branch Most Frequented



Income



LPL: How often do you use Library services?



91.7% of respondents use the Library at least once a month.

Main takeaways from report (All libraries)

Libraries matter to individuals, communities, and society

Libraries deliver impact across four dimensions: emotional, intellectual, creative and social

Collections is still a core library service

Broad support among nonusers

The experience of impact differs across different user segments (all libraries)

Youth (18-25): Tend to use Spaces more than the average user.

Parents: Tend to use all library services more than the average user – and Spaces and Programs much more.

Seniors (65+): Tend to use Spaces and Programs less than the average user – indicating a more Collection focused use of libraries.

Indigenous and Newcomers: Tend to use Spaces, Programs, and Staff more than the average user.

Public libraries offer various digital and technological services. To what extent do you believe that these services have a positive impact for people in your community?



LPL: 79%

**Online
resources**



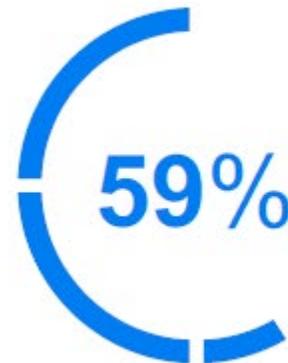
LPL: 77%

**Equipment
and Wi-Fi**



LPL: 75%

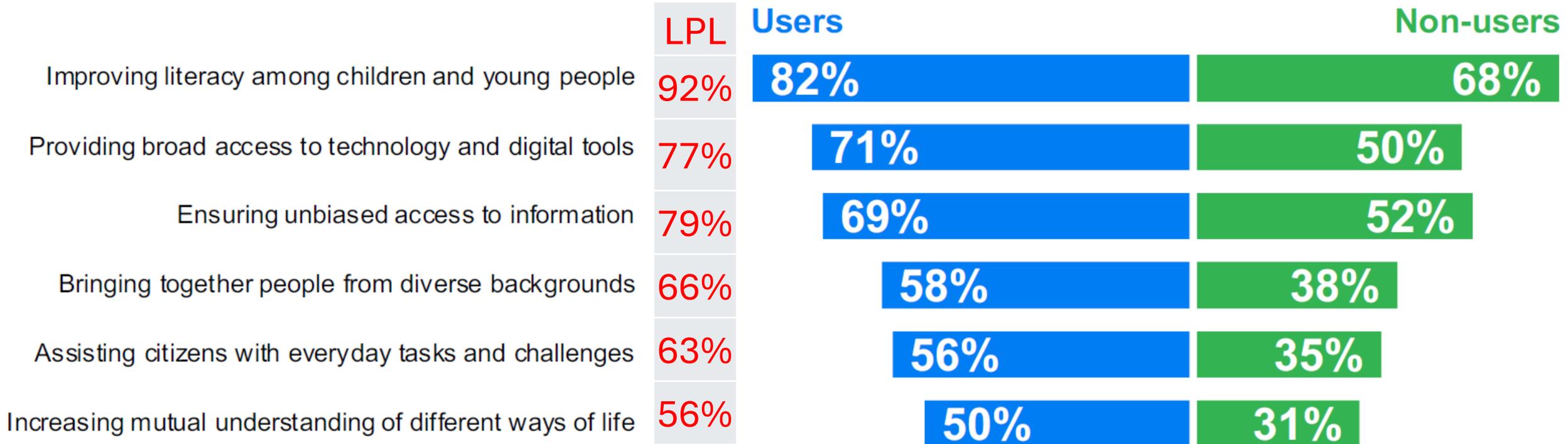
**Technical
support**



LPL: 61%

**Training
classes**

**In which of the following areas do you believe that public libraries have significant positive impact?
Please select all that apply:**



n: 13,491

n: 3,997

Impact Measured in Four Categories

Collections

Programs

Spaces

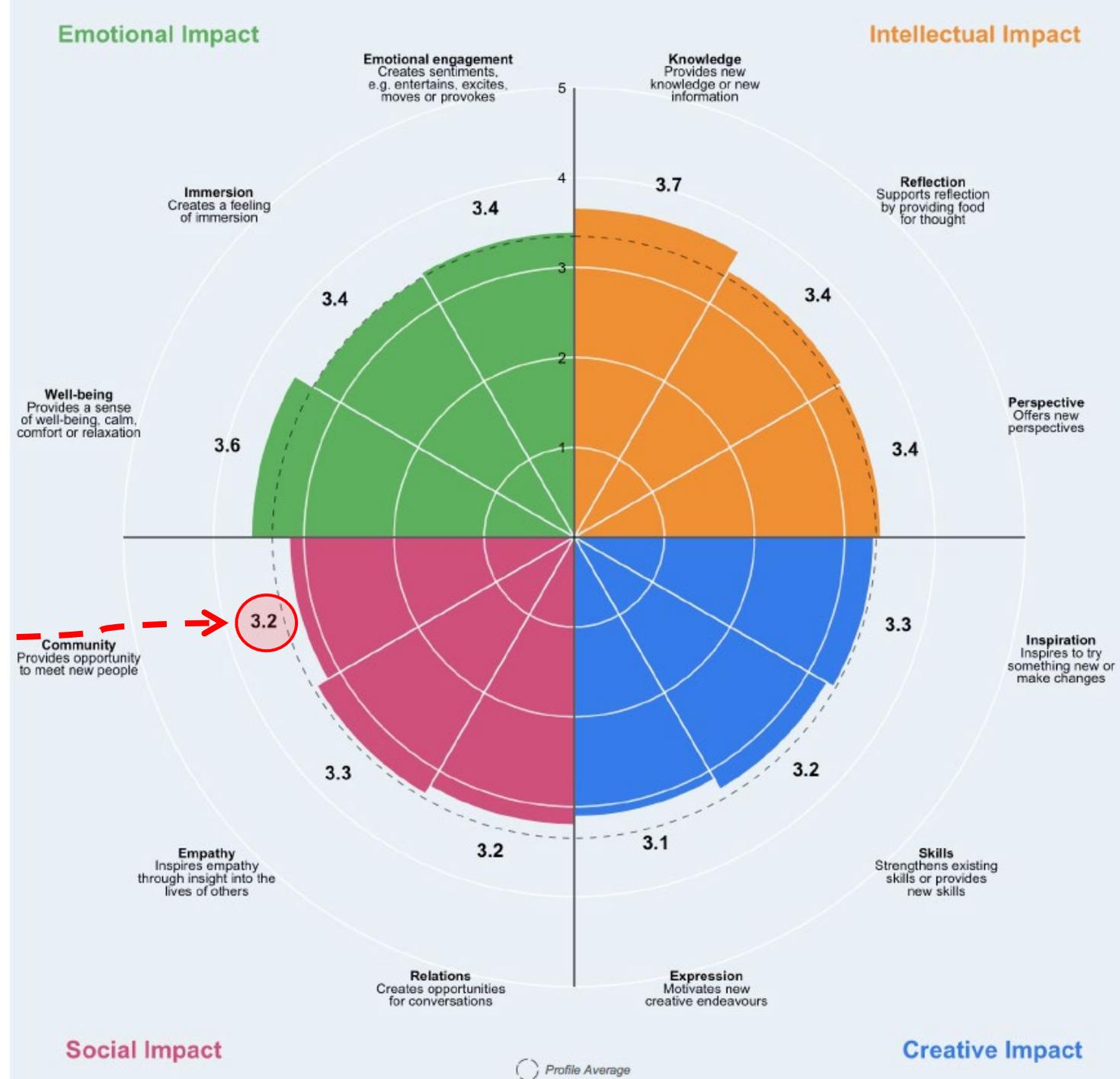
Staff

Engagement within the previous year

All	In the last year:	LPL
91%	Used Collections	87%
57%	Used Spaces	49%
35%	Attended Programs	21%
66%	Received Staff Guidance	53%

Measuring Impact - Overview

- By placing the individual experience at the heart of the inquiry, the rich results of this study map several key outcomes around the four dimensions - emotional impact, social impact, intellectual impact and creative impact - with 3 parameters each, designed to capture different aspects of the library experience.
- There is a study map for the Overall score and each of the areas of focus: Collections, Spaces, Programs and Staff.
- Participants scored each parameter on a scale from “Not at all” (1) to “To a very large extent” (5).
- Parameters measure the presence or absence of positive impact.
- A score of 1 indicates that all users responded “Not at all”, whereas a score of 5 indicates that all users report the maximum rating.
- In practice, these extremes are unlikely to occur. Ratings usually vary between scores of 2-4.



Initial Takeaways

Consistently, LPL scored higher on Emotional and Intellectual Impact.

Under Emotional Impact, Well-being consistently rated high (overall 3.5).

Under Intellectual Impact, Knowledge consistently rated high (overall 3.5).

Creative and Social Impact rated higher for Programs than other categories.

In almost every instance, the “18-34” age group and the “non-white” census group rated impacts higher than the aggregate scores for LPL and for the full survey.

How Will We Use this Information?



Advocacy: provides a compliment to the standard data that we traditionally share.



Fund Development: assists in articulating our value to potential donors.



Strategic Planning: well-timed with our 2027-30 process just beginning. Plan.