

Alternative Approaches to Safety and Security

Presentation to Toronto Public Library Board

May 24, 2022



Background



“The Toronto Public Library is the busiest public library system in North America and second busiest in the world. It circulates more books than the libraries of Los Angeles and Chicago combined. Toronto’s public libraries **are so popular** they enjoy **more visits than any other entertainment draw in town**—more than even the Toronto Maple Leafs. But an examination of **the past 20 years** of Toronto’s public **library budgets** shows this cherished community hub is reeling from **chronic underfunding.**”

(Rao, Govind C., 2012)



Staff Perspective

Staff want to be able to work in a safe environment in order to serve the under represented, often marginalized citizens of the City.

But they are concerned with the rise of violent incidents over the years and fear for their and the public's safety.



How did we get here?



Underfunding



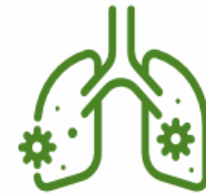
Understaffing



Precarious
Work



Changing
Communities
with complex
needs



Covid-19
Pandemic





Issue: Impacts of Lack of Social Supports

"It's really tragic that the library can't be more of a resource for them. "

(Beattie, S. (2021, October 2))

"We are the ones expected to pick up the pieces, but we simply can't."

(Beattie, S. (2021, October 2))



Issue: Rise in Violence

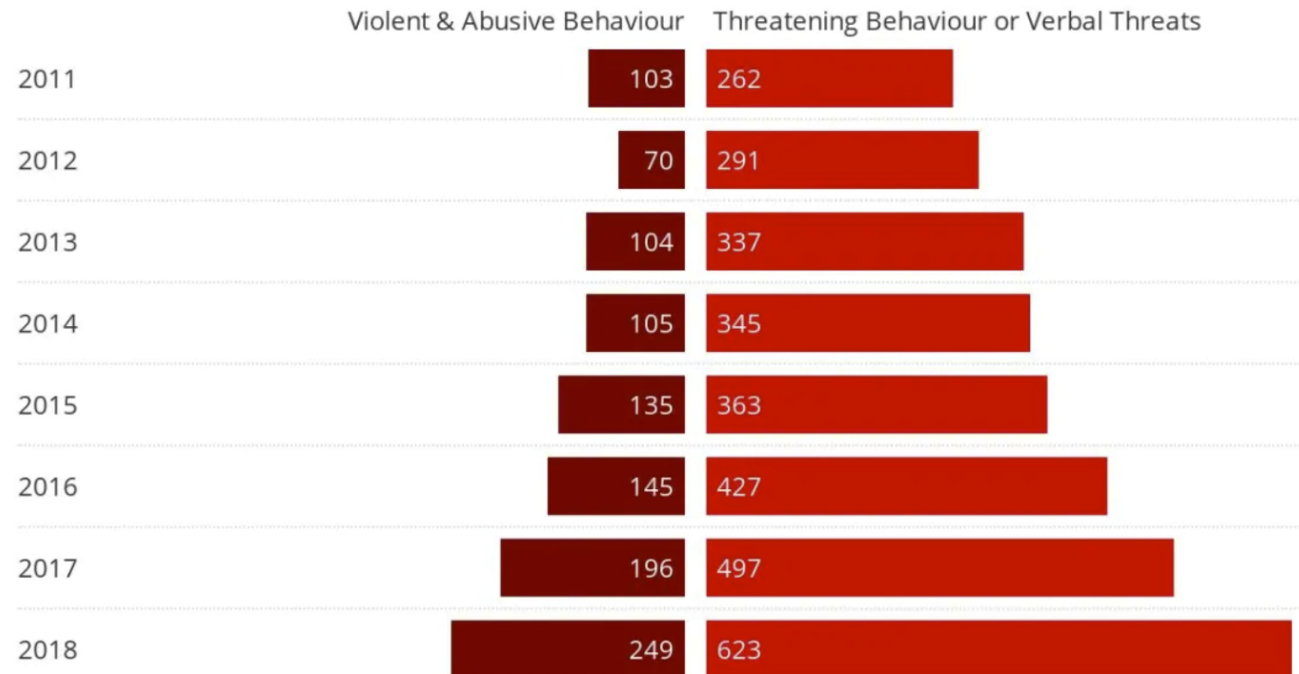
"There's that tendency for customers to feel that they can **intimidate you more**, that they can push the envelope **because you're a woman**...It's not nice to have to be **consistently dealing** with a lot of that kind **misogynistic tendency and sexism**."

(Beattie, S. (2021, October 24))



Issue: Rise in Violence

Violence against librarians on the rise



Please note:

Violent Behaviour includes Harassing/Threatening Behaviour under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Source: Toronto Public Library



HEALTH AND SAFETY CULTURE AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

LISTENING TO THOSE ON OUR FRONTLINES



IMAGE CREDIT: ALEXSANDRA SUZI/ADOBE STOCK



Siobhan Stevenson / siobhan.stevenson@utoronto.ca





Issue: Impacts of Violence on Mental Health

“The message I have received so far is that **my mental wellness and stability is my responsibility alone and has nothing to do with my workplace.**”

(Stevenson, S. (2021, Nov/Dec))





Issue: Too many incidents

Pre pandemic, the frontline staff were **so overwhelmed with incident reports** and the demands of their other duties that they did not have time to write-up incident reports for all of the incidents. They were terribly fatigued," and "**there are too many things going on at one time** and not enough time away to write up, so 'minor' incidents that 'just involve shouting, swearing, etc. are considered 'not worth writing up.'"

(Stevenson, S. (2021, Nov/Dec))



Issue: Why Bother?

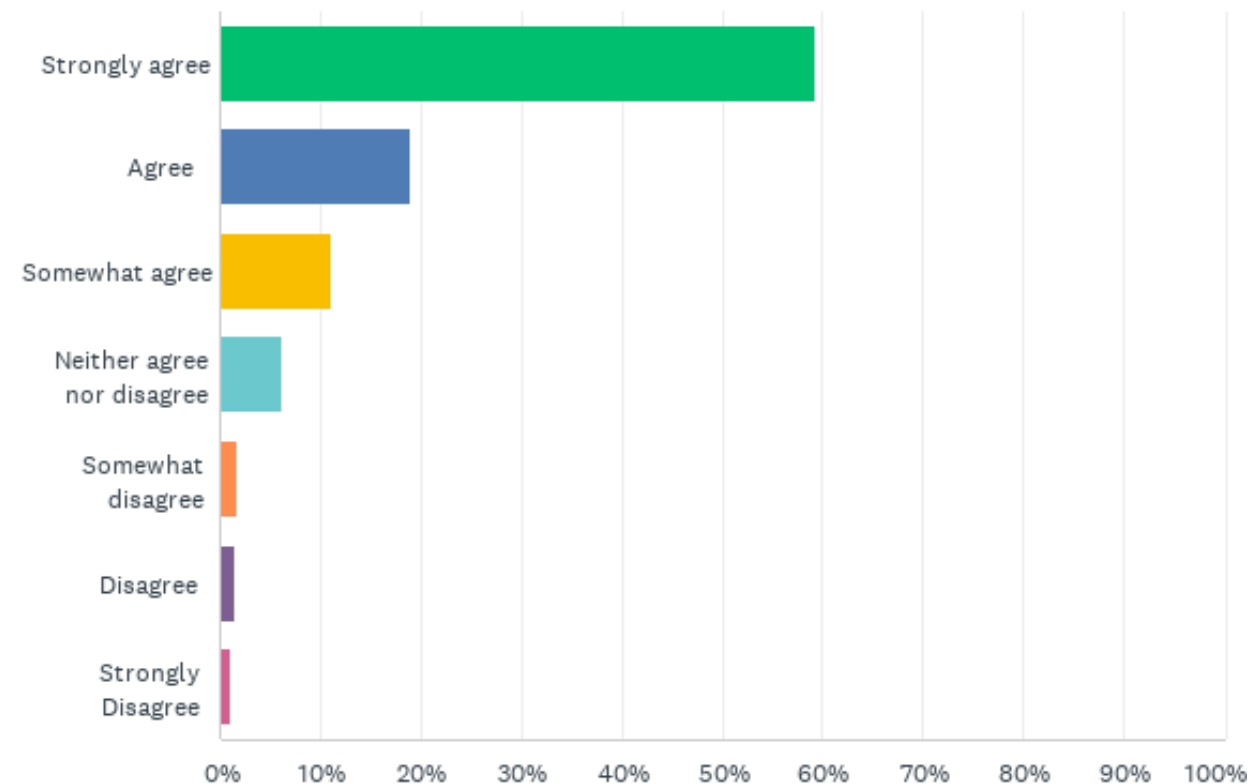
"**Incident reporting has never** included a step in the process where the staff member receives a **confirmation or the results of submitting a report**. This has caused me and other staff to question whether and **how the report was acted upon**, and whether submitting reports is actually useful at all"; and "we are encouraged to file reports, but **historically staff didn't report because they have no faith anything would be done about it.**"

(Stevenson, S. (2021, Nov/Dec))



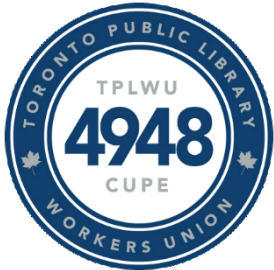
Q21: To what extent do you agree with this statement: "Chronic understaffing at TPL is having a negative impact on my mental and/or physical health".

Answered: 510 Skipped: 56



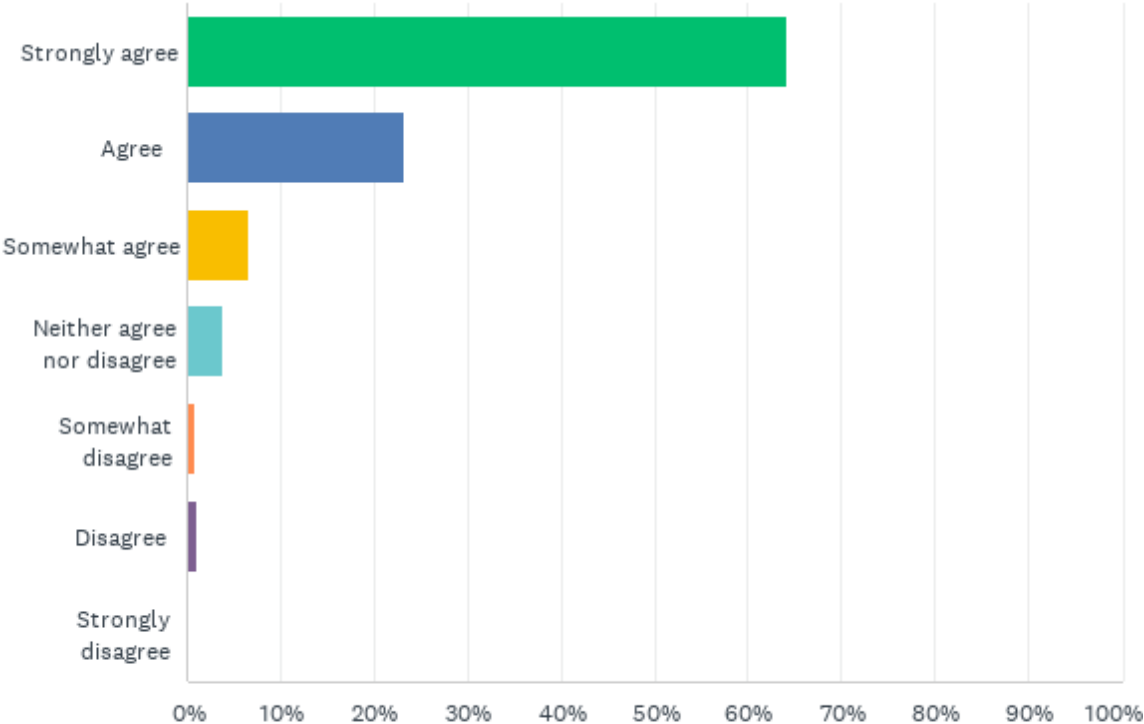
TPLWU4948
Bargaining Survey Results
(2019)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	59.22%	302
Agree	19.02%	97
Somewhat agree	11.18%	57
Neither agree nor disagree	6.27%	32
Somewhat disagree	1.76%	9
Disagree	1.57%	8
Strongly Disagree	0.98%	5
TOTAL		510



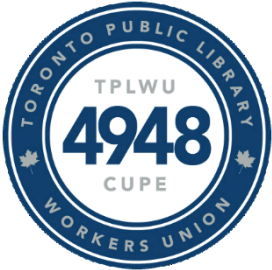
Q22: To what extent do you agree with this statement: "Chronic understaffing at TPL is having a negative impact on customer service"

Answered: 510 Skipped: 56



TPLWU4948
Bargaining Survey Results
(2019)

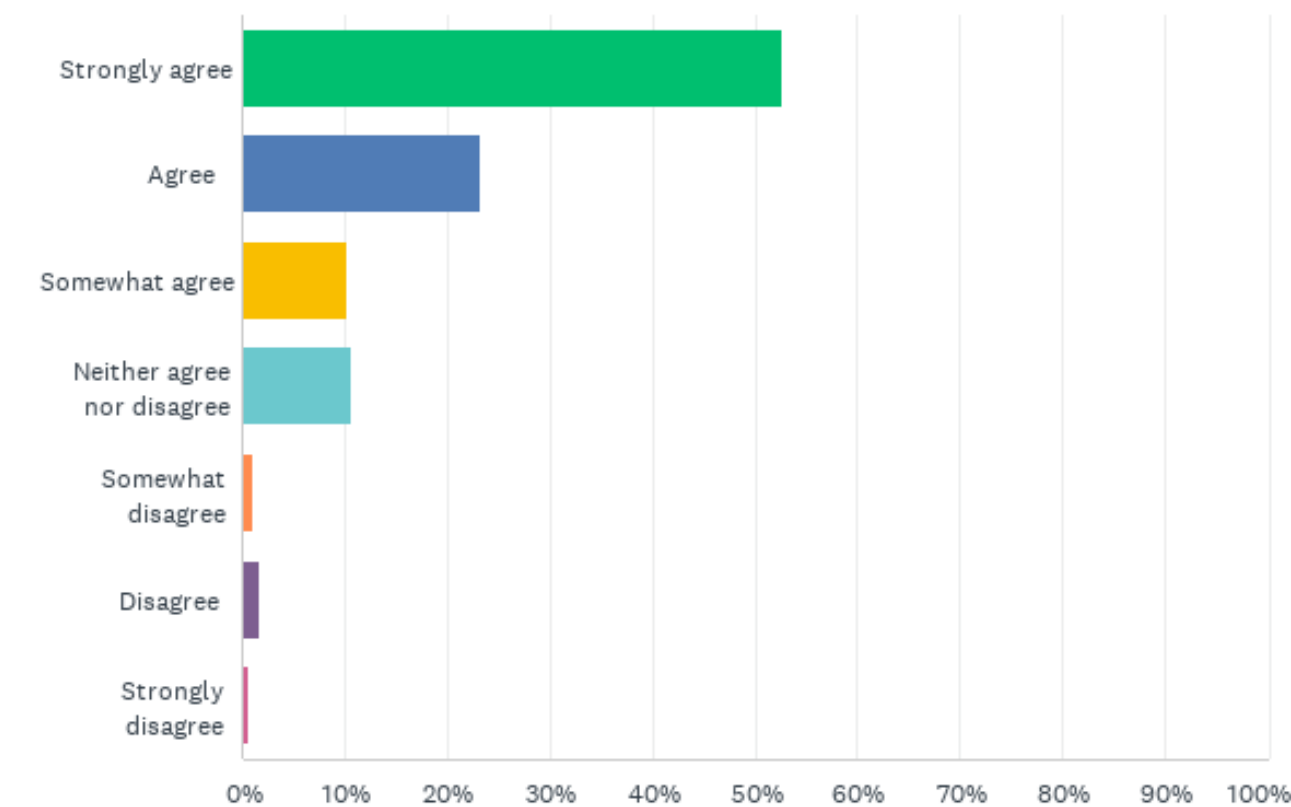
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	64.12%	327
Agree	23.33%	119
Somewhat agree	6.67%	34
Neither agree nor disagree	3.92%	20
Somewhat disagree	0.78%	4
Disagree	0.98%	5
Strongly disagree	0.20%	1
TOTAL		510



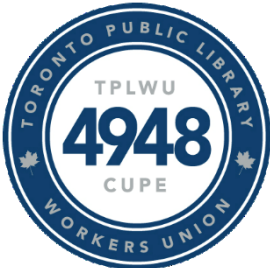
Q23: To what extent do you agree with this statement: "Chronic understaffing at TPL affects my personal safety and/or the safety of patrons"

Answered: 509 Skipped: 57

TPLWU4948
Bargaining Survey Results
(2019)

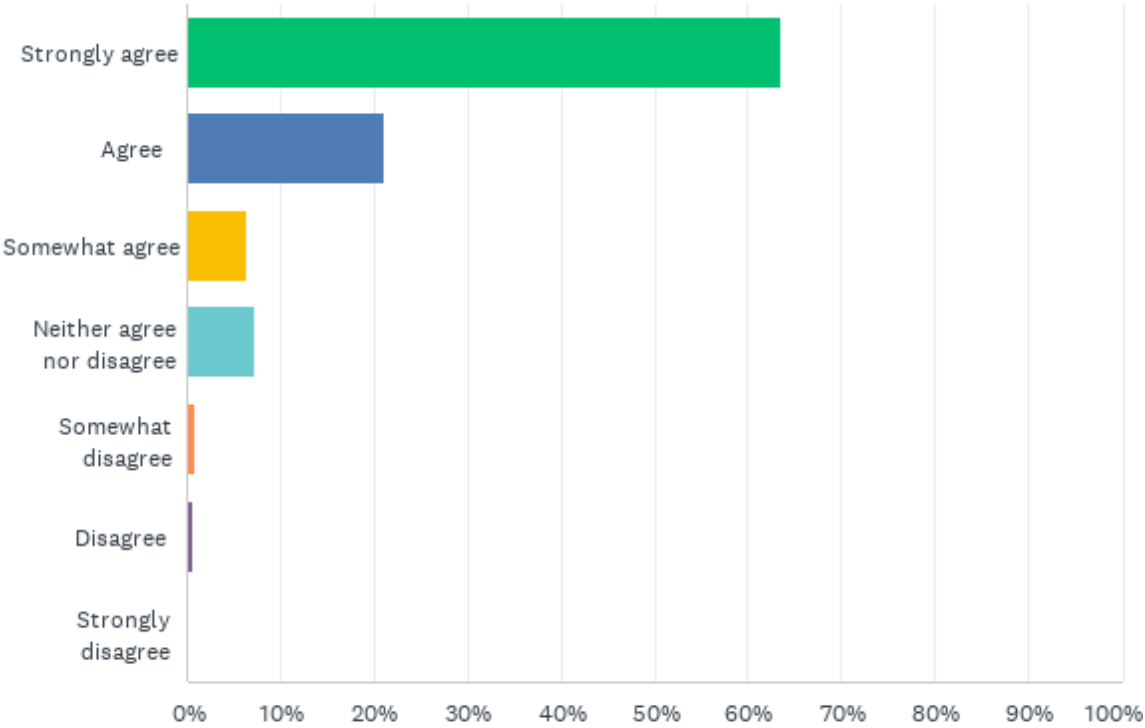


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	52.65%	268
Agree	23.18%	118
Somewhat agree	10.22%	52
Neither agree nor disagree	10.61%	54
Somewhat disagree	0.98%	5
Disagree	1.77%	9
Strongly disagree	0.59%	3
TOTAL		509



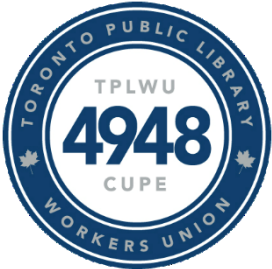
Q26: To what extent do you agree with this statement: "Violent and/or abusive incidents are on the rise at TPL"

Answered: 492 Skipped: 74



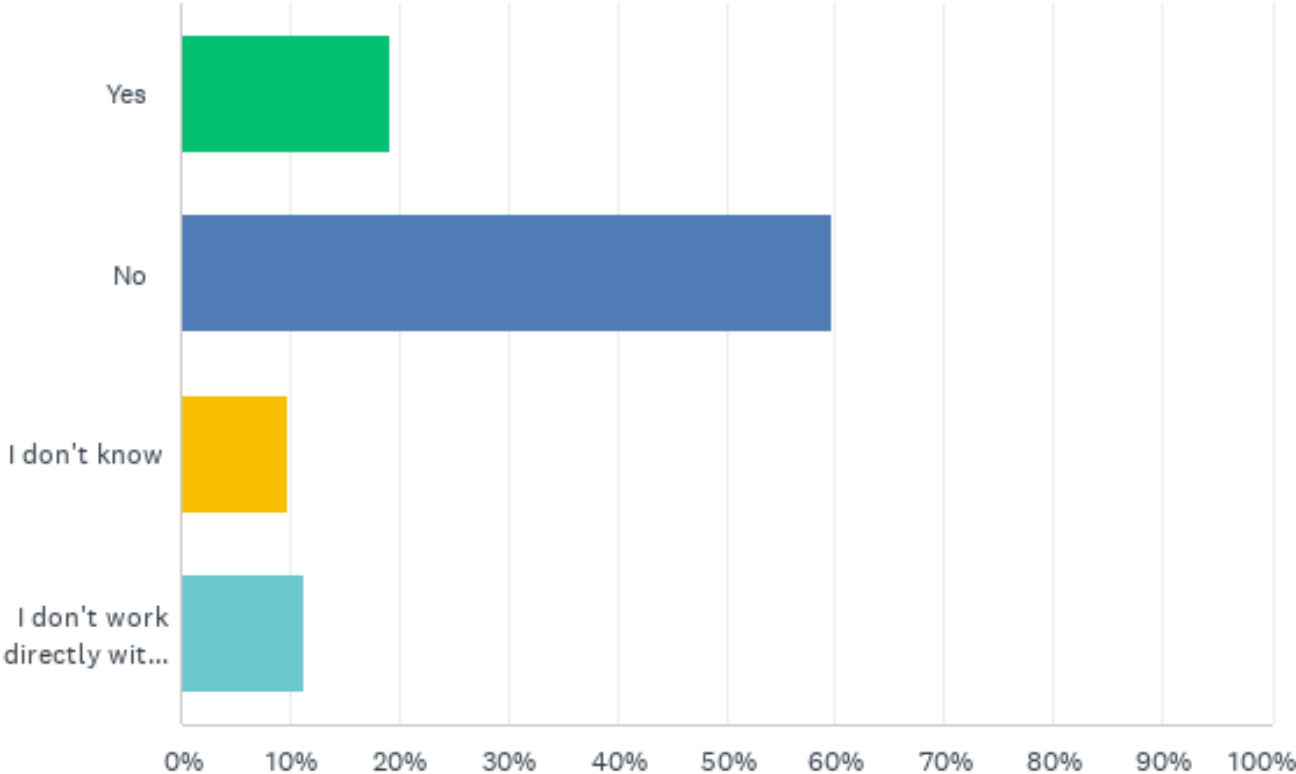
TPLWU4948
Bargaining Survey Results
(2019)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	63.62%	313
Agree	21.14%	104
Somewhat agree	6.30%	31
Neither agree nor disagree	7.32%	36
Somewhat disagree	0.81%	4
Disagree	0.61%	3
Strongly disagree	0.20%	1
TOTAL		492



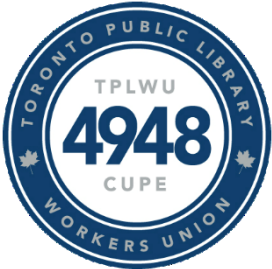
Q29: Do you receive regular and sufficient information regarding banned or disruptive patrons from *other* TPL work locations?

Answered: 493 Skipped: 73



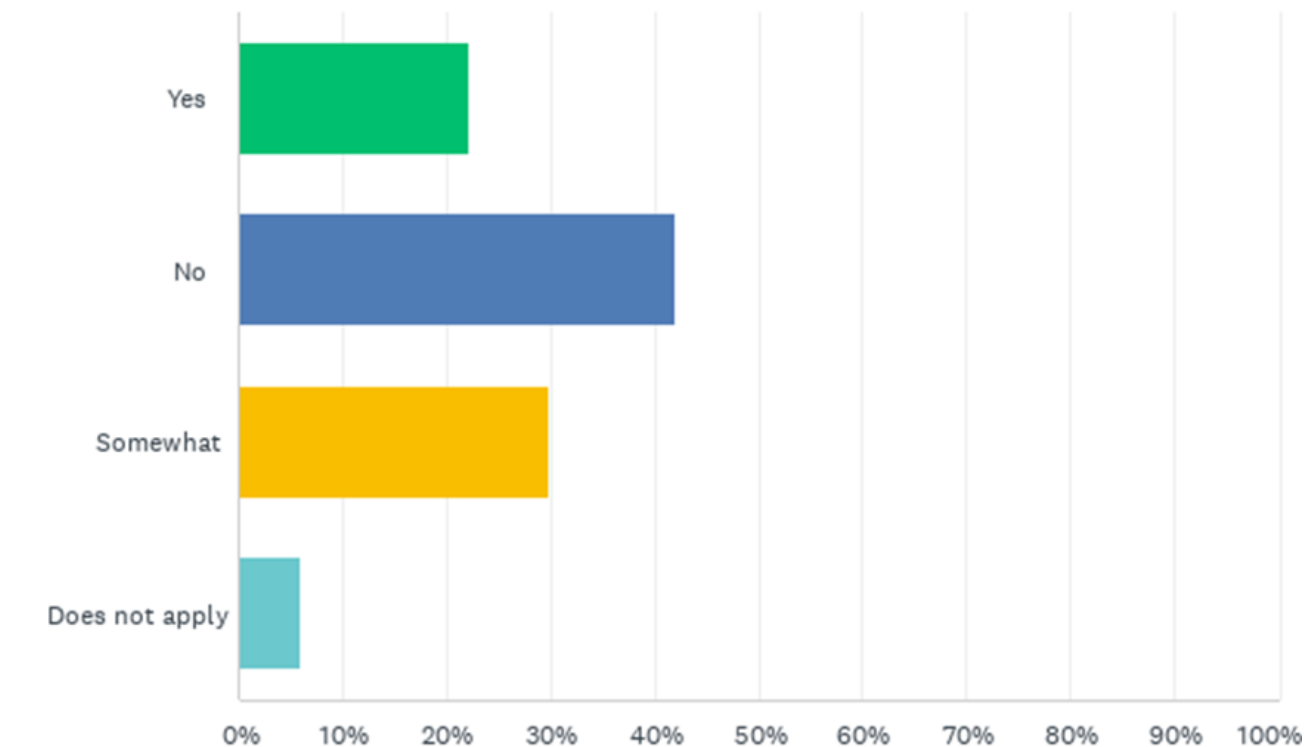
TPLWU4948
Bargaining Survey Results
(2019)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	19.27%	95
No	59.63%	294
I don't know	9.74%	48
I don't work directly with the public - does not apply	11.36%	56
TOTAL		493



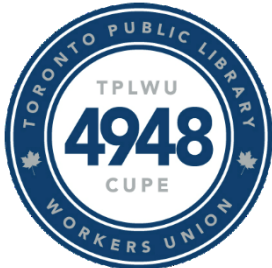
Q31: Do you feel that there is a sufficient amount of security in your work location?

Answered: 494 Skipped: 72



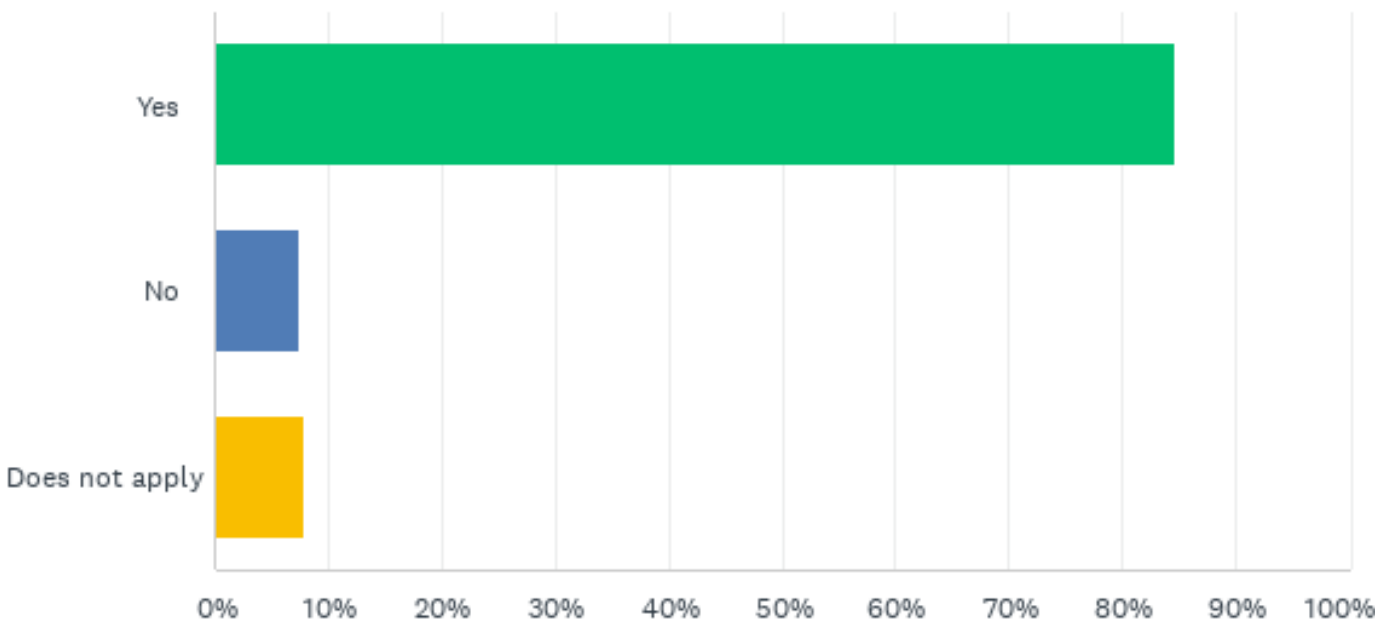
TPLWU4948
Bargaining Survey Results
(2019)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	22.27%	110
No	41.90%	207
Somewhat	29.76%	147
Does not apply	6.07%	30
TOTAL		494



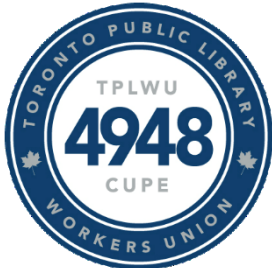
Q32: Do you feel there should be a higher level of security in work locations that would allow more intervention by the security guards?

Answered: 489 Skipped: 77



TPLWU4948
Bargaining Survey Results
(2019)

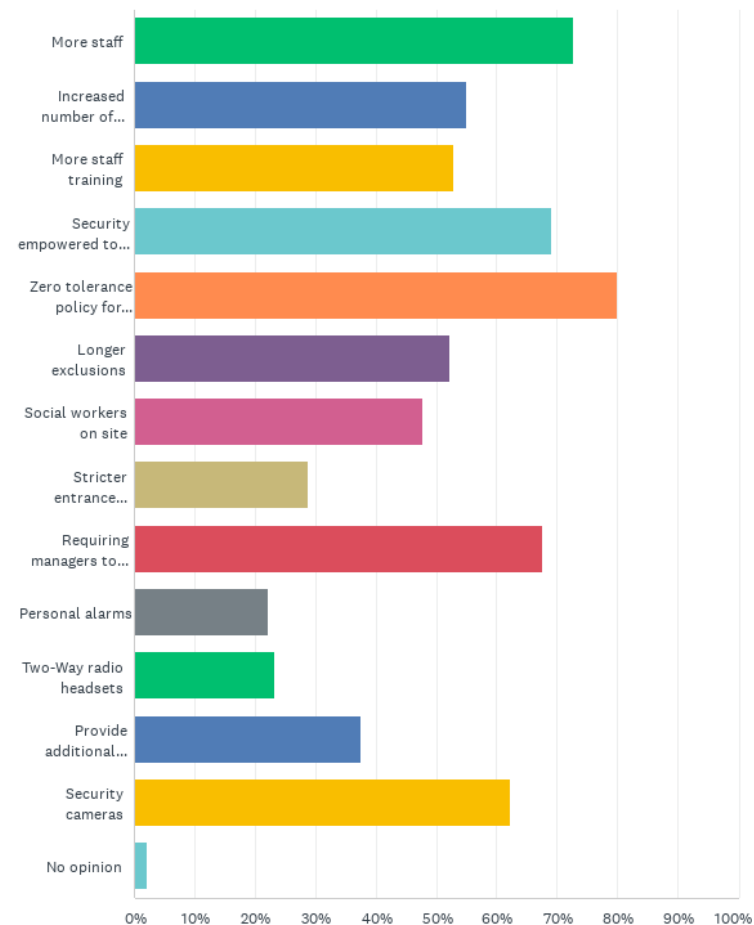
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.66%	414
No	7.36%	36
Does not apply	7.98%	39
TOTAL		489



Q35: What are some of the ways that TPL can affect positive change with regard to health and safety issues and workplace incidents? Please check any that you feel would apply.

Answered: 510 Skipped: 56

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More staff	72.62%	358
Increased number of security guards	54.97%	271
More staff training	52.94%	261
Security empowered to deliver a higher level of intervention	69.17%	341
Zero tolerance policy for violent/abusive behaviour	79.92%	394
Longer exclusions	52.33%	258
Social workers on site	47.67%	235
Stricter entrance procedures for Youth Hubs	28.80%	142
Requiring managers to experience front line work regularly	67.55%	333
Personal alarms	22.11%	109
Two-Way radio headsets	23.33%	115
Provide additional staffing & supports to Youth Hub Librarians	37.53%	185
Security cameras	62.27%	307
No opinion	2.23%	11
Total Respondents: 493		



TPLWU4948 Bargaining Survey Results (2019)



Issue: Security Guards

**Job
Description
of Guards**

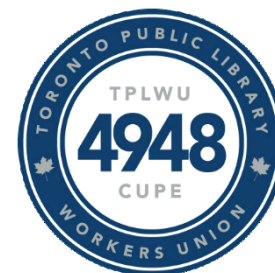
**Quality of
Guards**

**Secondary
to Staff**

**Not utilizing
the
skills/training
they have**



Other Approaches to Safety



Where do we want to be?



Safe working environment



Staff feel safe and supported



Support from management during incidents



More funding for TPL



Where do we want to be?



TPS connection with TPL



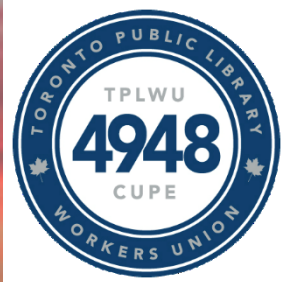
Additional Social Workers to support public



Increase community agencies partnerships



Multi-way communication, open dialogue



Where do we want to be?



Evaluate existing policies and services



Increased engagement with library workers re: safety & security



Actionable steps to decrease the number of incidents



Sources

Beattie, S. (2021, October 2). *Sexual harassment, intimidation, violence on the job worsened during pandemic, librarians report*. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/sexual-harassment-intimidation-violence-on-the-job-worsened-during-pandemic-librarians-report-1.6196576>

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