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STAFF REPORT
INFORMATION ONLY

Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Results of Survey of Toronto Residents

Date: September 23, 2024

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The Toronto Public Library Board approved a third-party survey of Toronto residents as part of the Library's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan consultation process. The survey, which is conducted every five years, gathered demographic data about Toronto Public Library's (TPL) users, infrequent users, and non-users, as well as measured awareness of, attitude towards, and use of TPL services. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the survey results. Library staff will further analyze the survey results in greater detail to inform actions for the new strategic plan and service planning.

TPL procured Forum Research Inc, a third-party research firm, to conduct this survey from June 17 to July 1, 2024, using a statistically valid random sample of 1,207 residents aged 18 and older. The results have been statistically weighted by age, gender, and income to ensure the sample accurately reflects the target population based on the 2021 Census data. The survey was translated and made available in the five most spoken languages besides English and French (Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Portuguese, Tagalog, Spanish).

Additionally, an oversampling of equity-deserving groups was carried out to ensure diversity in the sample. This is the sixth time the Library has conducted the survey, enabling comparisons over time.

Overall, the survey found that usage is up from 2019, while engagement patterns have shifted. A large majority of Torontonians are aware of the value of public libraries, and have a strong general awareness of library services, but many respondents also expressed lack of awareness for some key library services.

Highlights from the survey include:

- Overall usage of TPL increased, with 81% of the population reporting that they accessed the library in the previous 12 months, which is a 13% increase from 2019 when it was 68%.
- Physical visits to the library also increased, with 68% of the population reporting that they visited the library last year, showing a 6% increase from the 62% recorded in 2019.
- The number of people visiting a branch frequently (more than once a month) decreased from 33% (2019) to 28% (2024), while infrequent visits (once or twice a year) increased from 21% (2019) to 29% (2024).
- The reasons people visit the library have changed. Browsing for books of interest to borrow remains the top reason people visit the library; however, compared to 2019, there has been an 11% decline. Conversely, there has been an increase since 2019 in the use of the library's in-branch technology as reasons for people visiting the library, specifically: printer, scanner, or photocopier use (15%), computer use (9%), and wireless internet access (5%).
- There is high awareness among the public of many TPL services, including free use of computers with internet in every branch (90%) as well as access to free wireless internet (85%). However, fewer respondents are aware of other services TPL provides, including school assignment help for children and teens (55%), access to specialized technology (54%), and entrepreneurial support (54%).
- The vast majority of respondents agree that public libraries are an important resource for the community (93%) and support literacy (93%), reflecting the important social role of libraries.
- TPL usage is strong across nearly all key demographic groups. Those most likely to be library users include: individuals under 55 years of age,

particularly those aged 35-44 (91%), unemployed or job seekers (89%), stay-at-home caregivers (86%), those with a postgraduate or professional degree (86%) or a bachelor's degree/diploma (83%), and those who identify as transgender, non-binary or two-spirit (89%).
- Under-represented and equity-deserving groups show high engagement with library resources for essential services and support.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report has no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on December 4, 2023, the Board approved *Creating a New Strategic Plan: 2025-2029*, including a survey of Toronto residents by a third-party as a component of TPL's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan consultation process.

COMMENTS

The Library Board approved a third-party survey of Toronto residents as part of the Library's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan consultation process. Similar public surveys of Toronto residents were conducted in 2001, 2006, 2012, 2015, and 2019. Baseline questions from the 2019 survey were repeated in the 2024 survey, with new questions developed to address new service areas and survey objectives. Customer satisfaction questions were not included in the 2024 survey as the Library now conducts an annual satisfaction survey that started in 2022. Survey results will enable the Library to track awareness, usage, and attitudes about the Library over time and provide benchmark data to measure the progress of the Library's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

The survey objectives included:

- Gathering demographic and market data about the Library's users and non-users;
- Measuring awareness of, and attitudes toward, library services by users, infrequent uses, and non-users;
- Service usage trends among equity-deserving groups;
- Identifying the percentage of Torontonians who use the Library through any channel; and
- Understanding users' and non-users' perceptions and preferences for library services in the future.

The report includes an analysis of trends from previous reports whenever possible.

Methodology

The survey included a statistically valid random sample of 1,207 Torontonians aged 18 and older. It was conducted from June 17 to July 1, 2024, using a hybrid online/telephone methodology. Respondents were given the option to complete the survey either online or by telephone. 807 (67%) of the respondents completed a telephone survey, while 400 (33%) completed an online survey.

The sample was large enough that key demographic groups could be analyzed separately including non-users, persons with disabilities, persons with low income, newcomers, and members of the 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

To ensure the sample is proportionate to the population of the city of Toronto, the data was weighted based on key census demographic data, including age, gender, and income. The survey was translated and made available in the five most spoken languages besides English and French (Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Portuguese, Tagalog, Spanish). Additionally, strategic oversampling of equity-deserving groups was conducted to ensure that the sample reflects the diversity of the community.

Key Findings

Overall, the survey found that usage is up from 2019, while engagement patterns have shifted. A large majority of Torontonians are aware of the value of public libraries, and have a strong general awareness of library services, but

many respondents also expressed lack of awareness for some key library services.

Usage

- Overall usage of TPL increased, with 81% of the population reporting that they accessed the library in 2024, which is a 13% increase from 2019 when it was 68%.
- Physical visits to the library also increased, with 68% of the population reporting that they visited the library last year, showing a 6% increase from the 62% recorded in 2019.
- The number of people visiting a branch frequently (more than once a month) decreased from 33% (2019) to 28% (2024), while infrequent visits (once or twice a year) increased from 21% (2019) to 29% (2024).
- Usage of TPL's digital channels has increased, continuing an upward trend over the years. TPL's website usage increased to 47% (from 46% in 2019) and visits to the Library's social media channels increased to 11% (from 8% in 2019).
- The reasons people visit the library have changed. Browsing for books of interest to borrow remains the top reason people visit the library; however, compared to 2019, there has been an 11% decline. Conversely, there has been an increase since 2019 in the use of the library's in-branch technology as reasons for people visiting the library, specifically: printer, scanner, or photocopier use (15%), computer use (9%), and wireless internet access (5%).
- In 2024, 62% of TPL users used the library's computers for various purposes during their library visits. Additionally, 32% of TPL users reported using the library's wireless internet.
- Among respondents who attended programs, classes, or events, 32% attended Culture, Arts & Entertainment. Other popular events included Computer & Library Training (27%), Author Talks & Lectures (25%), Hobbies, Crafts & Games (25%), and Reading Programs & Story Times (24%).
- In 2024, Computer & Library Training had the biggest increase, rising by 17%. Similarly, Career & Job Search Help and Reading Programs & Story Times saw an 8% increase each compared to 2019.
- TPL usage is strong across nearly all key demographic groups. Those most likely to be library users include: individuals under 55 years of age, particularly those aged 35-44 (91%), unemployed or job seekers (89%),

stay-at-home caregivers (86%), those with a postgraduate or professional degree (86%) or a bachelor's degree/diploma (83%), and those who identify as transgender, non-binary or two-spirit (89%).
- Those least likely to be library users include: Young adults aged 18-24 (74%), seniors aged 65 and over (75%), individuals with a high school education or less (52%), those who are casually employed or self-employed (77%), and retirees (78%).

Awareness

- There is high awareness among the public of many TPL services, including free use of computers with internet in every branch (90%) as well as access to free wireless internet (85%).
- However, fewer respondents are aware of other services TPL provides, including school assignment help for children and teens (55%), access to specialized technology (54%), and entrepreneurial support (54%).

Attitudes toward the Library

- The vast majority of respondents agree that public libraries are an important resource for the community (93%) and support literacy (93%), reflecting the important social role of libraries.
- The vast majority of respondents also report feeling welcomed at the library (85%).
- The top three priorities for library users are providing the community with a variety of reading resources in different formats (e.g. ebooks, large print, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers), providing literacy support for people of all ages and a centre for lifelong learning and self-directed learning.

Non-Users

- The majority of TPL non-users (86%) have used the library regularly in the past and remain highly interested in several TPL resources.
- The main reason TPL non-users didn't use public libraries more often was that they had online access through electronic devices (33%).
- Approximately three in four non-users (74%) indicated that they might use a public library more often if it had the books they are interested in, while 73% would be encouraged by really good programs or special events.

Under-represented and equity-deserving groups

- Under-represented and equity-deserving groups show high engagement with library resources for essential services and support.
    - Newcomers show a strong reliance on library resources, with 60% using the library as a quiet place to study or read, 57% using the printer, scanner, or photocopier, 51% using the wireless internet, and 40% using the computers.
    - Individuals with lower incomes (<$49,999) rely heavily on library resources, with 46% using the library as a quiet place to study, 48% using printers/scanners, 40% using wireless internet, and 36% using computers.
    - Individuals who identify as non-binary, transgender or two-spirit are more likely to use library services (89%), more likely to interact with library staff and/or customers and use specialized technology.

Implications

- With 81% of respondents accessing TPL services in the past year, engagement has reached a new peak, highlighting the library's successful blend of in-person and digital offerings.
- TPL remains a cornerstone of the community, providing essential support for lifelong learning, literacy, and social connection, deeply integrated into the social fabric of Toronto.
- The reliance on TPL's technology resources underlines the library's critical role in addressing the digital divide, as more users depend on library computers and wireless internet.
- Engagement patterns indicate that the library continues to be a valuable resource to Torontonians. Shifts in these patterns also indicate that user behaviour may be evolving due to the increased availability of digital resources and other competing demands.
- Awareness gaps around specialized services indicate a potential disconnect between TPL's offerings and public knowledge, particularly among non-users.

Opportunities

- Continue expanding access to and awareness of digital resources and technology, which are critical for many users.
- Improve outreach efforts to close awareness gaps, focusing on promoting lesser-known services, such as help with school assignments, specialized technology access and entrepreneurial support.
- Adapt to evolving usage patterns and explore strategies to maintain and enhance physical spaces while also leveraging digital offerings to keep users engaged.
- Maintain and reinforce the Library's role in providing a safe, welcoming environment for all Torontonians.
- Leverage the Library's deep integration within the community to pilot new programs and services that resonate with diverse type of users, ensuring it continues to serve as a dynamic hub for lifelong learning and social interaction.

Conclusions

Preliminary reflection on the results, implications and opportunities identified by Forum Research Inc highlight several key considerations to inform future planning. Torontonians believe strongly in the importance of the Library as a valuable and trusted community resource. This awareness and goodwill offers an important foundation for the Library to continue to build on. Based on significant increases in reach and trends in service use patterns, there is opportunity to deepen engagement with existing customers to increase the frequency of use of the broad range of services offered by TPL. The results also confirm the need to maintain and expand the critical library services that equity deserving-groups, including newcomers and low-income residents, rely on.

Next Steps

Library staff will further analyze the survey results in greater detail to inform actions for the new strategic plan and service planning, including marketing and engagement strategies. By using strategies to deepen engagement, increase usage and improve service among Toronto residents, the Library will strengthen its contribution to Toronto communities and fulfill its mission to provide free and equitable access to services that meet the changing needs of Torontonians.

CONTACT

Shawn Mitchell; Director, Policy, Planning and Performance Management;
Tel: 416-395- 5602; Email: smitchell@tpl.ca

SIGNATURE

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Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Results of Survey of Toronto Residents Presentation

2024 Survey of Toronto Residents

tpl: toronto public library

FORUM RESEARCH

Sections

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Background, Objectives and Methodology

02 Key Findings

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04 Library Services Awareness

05 Attitudes about the Library

06 Library Non-Users

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INTRODUCTION

Background, Objectives and Methodology

1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Toronto Public Library is the world's busiest urban public library system, attracting over 46 million visits annually, both in-person and online. The library empowers Torontonians to thrive in the digital age and knowledge economy by providing easy access to technology, lifelong learning, and a rich array of cultural and leisure experiences, available whenever and however our customers need them. For more information, visit tpl.ca.

Forum Research Inc. is pleased to present the Toronto Public Library with the results of the 2024 Survey of Toronto Residents. The data collected from this survey will support evidence-based decision-making and guide the development of the Library's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

The survey included a random sample of Toronto residents and achieved the following objectives:

- Gathered demographic and market data about the Library's users and non-users;
- Measured awareness of, and attitudes toward, library services by users, infrequent users, and non-users;
- Service usage trends among equity-deserving groups;
- Identified the percentage of Torontonians who use the Library through any channel; and
- Deepened the understanding of users' and non-users' perception and preferences for library services in the future.

Specifically, we accomplished the following:

- The survey identified the percentage of Toronto residents who use the Library annually, taking into account changes in service use patterns during the pandemic and the impact of the cybersecurity incident in October 2023. Library usage included visits to branches, website interactions, phone calls, social media engagement, and other forms of contact.
- The characteristics of users versus non-users, including those who frequently use the Library, were analyzed.
- Attitudes toward the Library among both users and non-users were thoroughly assessed.
- Awareness of library services among non-users was evaluated.
- Service usage trends and their reach among equity-deserving groups were also analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY

Method	CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interview) and CAWI (Computer Aided Web Interview)
Criteria for Participation	Toronto residents who are 18 years of age or older
Sample Size	CATI: n = 807 / CAWI: n = 400 , Total n = 1207
Average Length	15 minutes
Margin of Error	±2.81% (for a 95% confidence interval)
Fieldwork Dates	June 17th – July 1st, 2024
Additional Notes	The survey was translated and made available in the five most spoken languages besides English and French (Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Portuguese, Tagalog, Spanish). The CATI sample was drawn using random digit dialing (RDD) among City of Toronto residents, incorporating a mix of landline and cell phone numbers. The results presented in this report have been statistically weighted by age, gender, and income to ensure the sample accurately reflects the target population based on the 2021 Census data. Additionally, strategic oversampling of equity-deserving groups was conducted to ensure the sample represents the community's diversity.

INTRODUCTION

REPORTING CONSIDERATIONS

TOP2 / BTM2
Top 2 (TOP2) and Bottom 2 (BTM2) reference the collected TOP2 positive and BTM2 negative responses, respectively where applicable. For example, a TOP2 grouping referred to as “satisfied” may be the combined result of “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied,” where a grouping of “not satisfied” (BTM2) may be the combined result of “not very satisfied” and “not at all satisfied.”

Rounding
Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this document may not add up to the totals provided. For example, in some cases, the sum of all question values may add up to 101% instead of 100%. Similar logic applies to TOP2 and BTM2 groupings.

Multi-mentions
In some cases, more than one answer option is applicable to a respondent. Multiple mention questions allow respondents to select more than one answer category for a question. For questions that ask for multiple mentions (e.g., “If you were to make a donation to Toronto Public Library, which area(s) of focus would you like to support?”), it is important to note that the percentages typically add to over 100%. This is because the total number of answer categories selected for a question can be greater than the number of respondents who answered the question. For example, respondents were able to select both “Youth Pathways to Success and Resilience” and “Children Literacy” in their answer.

Trending
Throughout the report, trends from the previous reports are highlighted in the relevant sections whenever possible. The trending section only includes options that were part of the 2024 survey.

tpl: toronto public library

Key Findings

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1

Overall, respondents highly regard public libraries as essential community resources.

- The majority of respondents, including both users and non-users, agreed that public libraries were an important resource for the community (TOP2: 93%), libraries supported literacy (TOP2: 93%), libraries were a place for lifelong learning (TOP2: 92%).
- The most important key aspects of a public library, according to respondents (both users and non-users), were providing the community with a variety of reading resources in different formats (46%), providing literacy support for people of all ages (29%) and serving as a center for lifelong and self-directed learning (29%).

2

81% of respondents reported accessing the library in the past twelve months.

- 81% of respondents reported accessing at least one of Toronto public library services in the past twelve months, an increase from 68% in 2019.
- In-person visits has also increased - 68% of respondents reported visiting a Toronto Public Library branch in the past twelve months, reflecting an increase from the 62% recorded in 2019, and the highest level since 2012.
- The number of people visiting a branch frequently (more than once a month) decreased from 33% to 28%, while infrequently visits (once or twice a year) increased from 21% to 29%.

3

Browsing for books of interest to borrow remains the top reason people visit the library.

- The most common reason for visiting the TPL was to browse for books of interest to borrow (53%), followed by picking up specific items on hold (41%), finding a quiet place to study or read (39%), and using the printer, scanner, or photocopier (37%).
- However, compared to 2019, there has been an 11% decline in both browsing for books of interest and picking up specific items on hold.
- Conversely, there has been a 15% increase in the use of the library's printer, scanner, or photocopier, along with a 9% rise in the use of computers and a 5% increase in wireless internet access since 2019.

4

Many TPL users use the library's computers for various purposes.

- 62% of TPL users had used the library's computers for various purposes during their library visits, reflecting an increase from 59% in 2019. The most common reasons included using email (44%) and accessing the library's website (40%).
- 32% of TPL users reported using the library's wireless internet, reflecting an increase from 27% in 2019. The most common reasons for using the wireless internet were using email (57%), searching the Internet for personal interest (56%), and searching the Internet for school or work (45%).
- The increases in both computer and Wi-Fi access highlight the continued importance of TPL's resources in bridging the digital divide, providing essential technology access for those who may not have it at home.

5

Many respondents are unaware of services TPL provides, including school assignment help, access to specialized technology, and entrepreneurial support.

- A substantial portion of the respondents are unaware of services such as help with school assignments for children and teens (55%), access to specialized technology (54%), programs, resources, and spaces for small businesses and entrepreneurs (54%), access to streamed music and video services (49%), and bookmobile service throughout the city to areas that are not close to the library branches (49%).
- Notably, non-users exhibit significantly lower awareness of the availability of e-books and free passes to Toronto's arts, cultural experiences, and attractions compared to users. This suggests a need for targeted outreach to non-users to raise awareness of these valuable services and encourage greater engagement with the library's offerings.

6

The majority of TPL non-users have used the library regularly in the past and remain highly interested in several TPL resources.

- Most TPL non-users (86%) recalled using the library regularly in the past.
- TPL non-users were most interested in access to free passes for Toronto's arts, cultural experiences, and attractions (TOP2: 81%). This was followed by access to the library's online catalogue (TOP2: 79%), online research databases and learning resources (TOP2: 74%), best-selling books that can be borrowed (TOP2: 74%), literacy/cultural/learning programs for adults on a variety of subjects/interests (TOP2: 71%), and access to free wireless internet (TOP2: 70%).
- The main reason TPL non-users didn’t visit public libraries more often was that they had online access through electronic devices (33%).

7

Improving awareness of book selection and available programs could drive library usage among non-users.

- Approximately 3 in 4 non-users (74%) indicated that they might use a public library more often if it had the books they are interested in, while 73% would be encouraged by really good programs or special events.
- Other impactful factors include access to up-to-date technology (67%) and offering the most recently published books (67%).

8

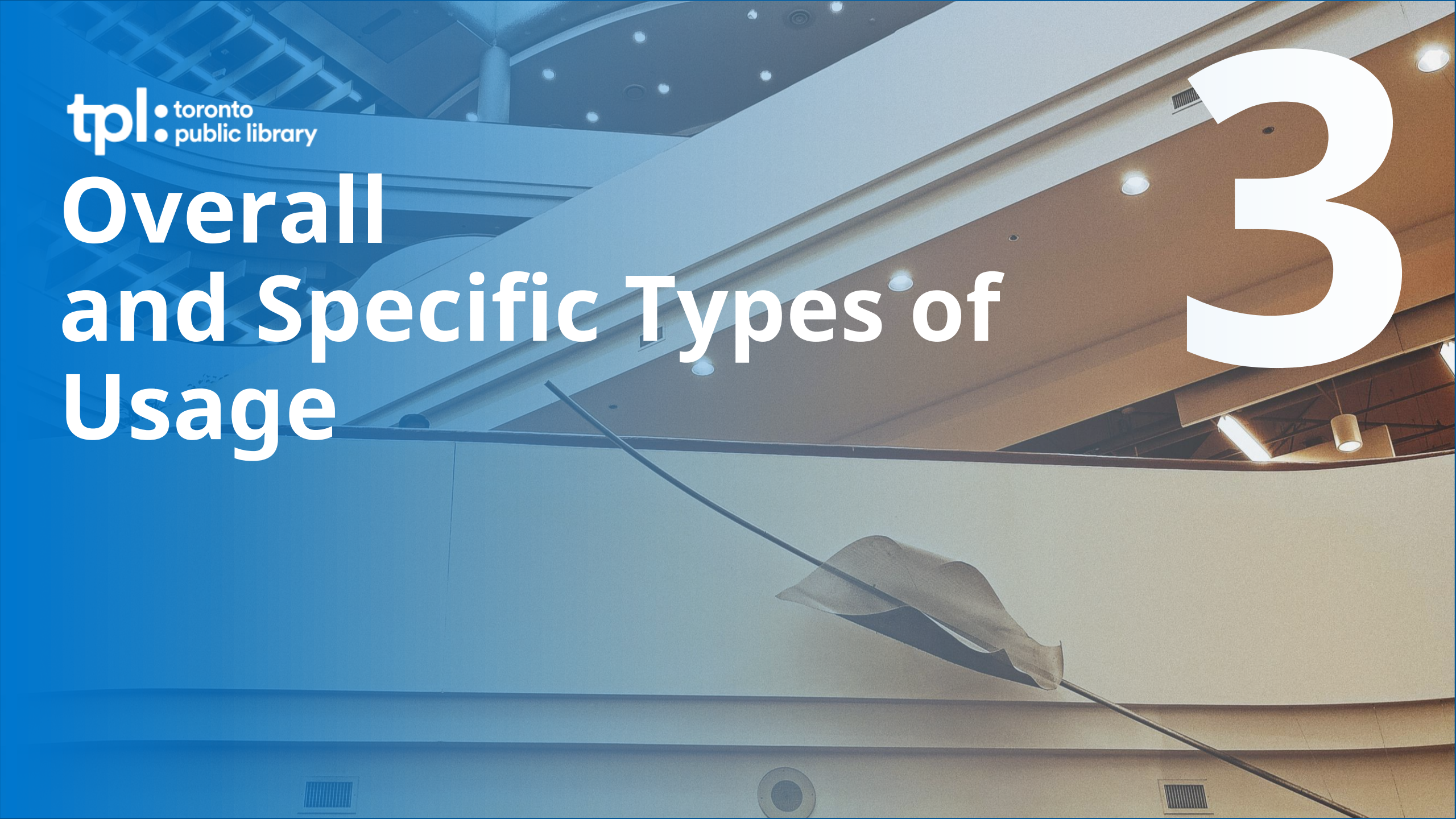
TPL usage is strong across nearly all key demographic groups.

- Those most likely to be library users include: Individuals under 55 years of age, particularly those aged 35-44 (91%), unemployed or job seekers (89%), stay-at-home caregivers (86%), those with a postgraduate or professional degree (86%) or a bachelor's degree/diploma (83%), and those who identify as transgender, non-binary or two-spirit (89%).
- Those least likely to be library users include: Young adults aged 18-24 (74%), seniors aged 65 and over (75%), individuals with a high school education or less (58%), those who are casually employed or self-employed (73%), and retirees (72%).

9

Under-represented and equity-deserving groups show high engagement with library resources for essential services and support.

- Newcomers show a strong reliance on library resources, with 60% using the library as a quiet place to study or read, 57% using the printer, scanner, or photocopier, 51% using the wireless internet, and 40% using the computers.
- Individuals with lower incomes (<$49,999) rely heavily on library resources, with 46% using the library as a quiet place to study, 48% using printers/scanners, 40% using wireless internet, and 36% using computers.
- Individuals who identify as transgender, non-binary or two-spirit are more likely to interact with library staff and/or customers (24%) and use specialized technology (20%).



Overall and Specific Types of Usage

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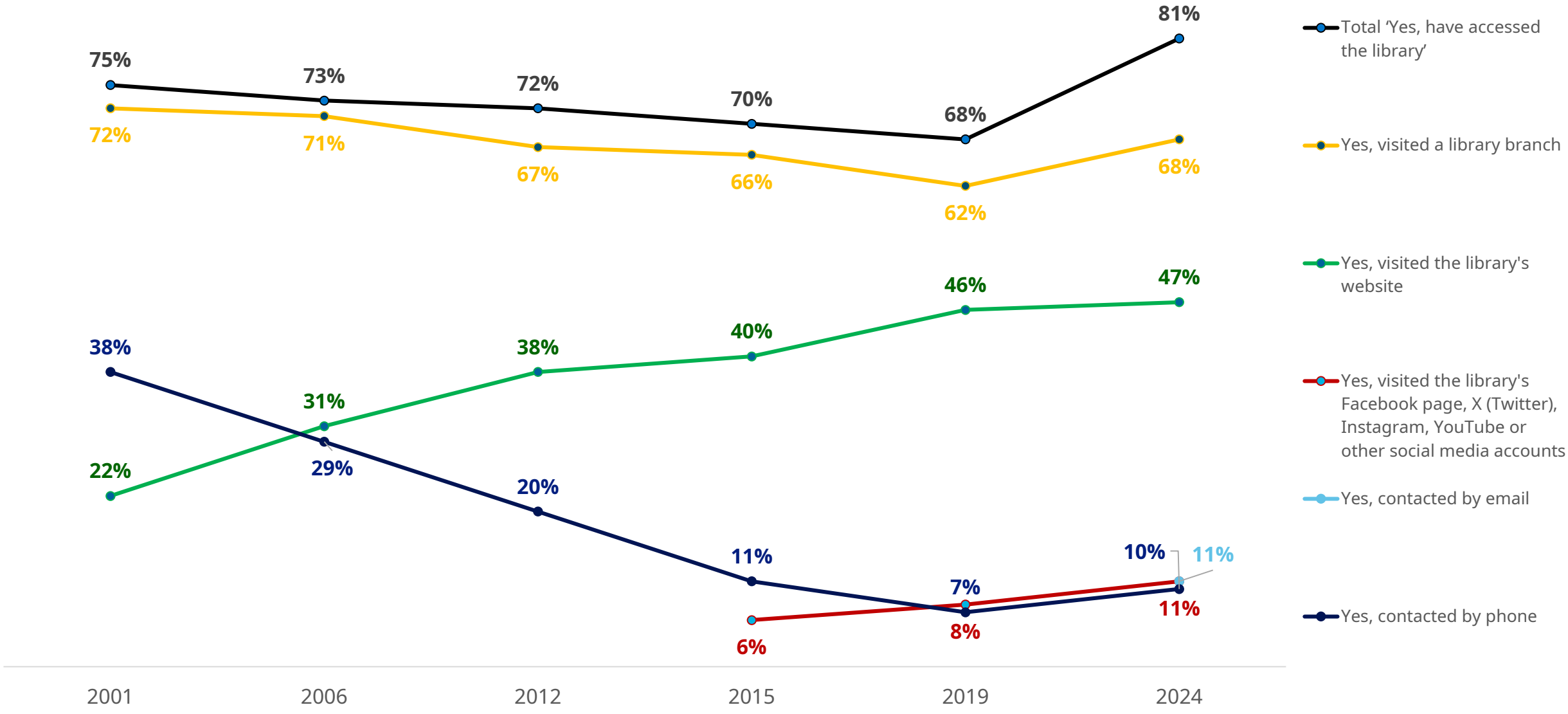
LIBRARY USAGE (TRENDING)

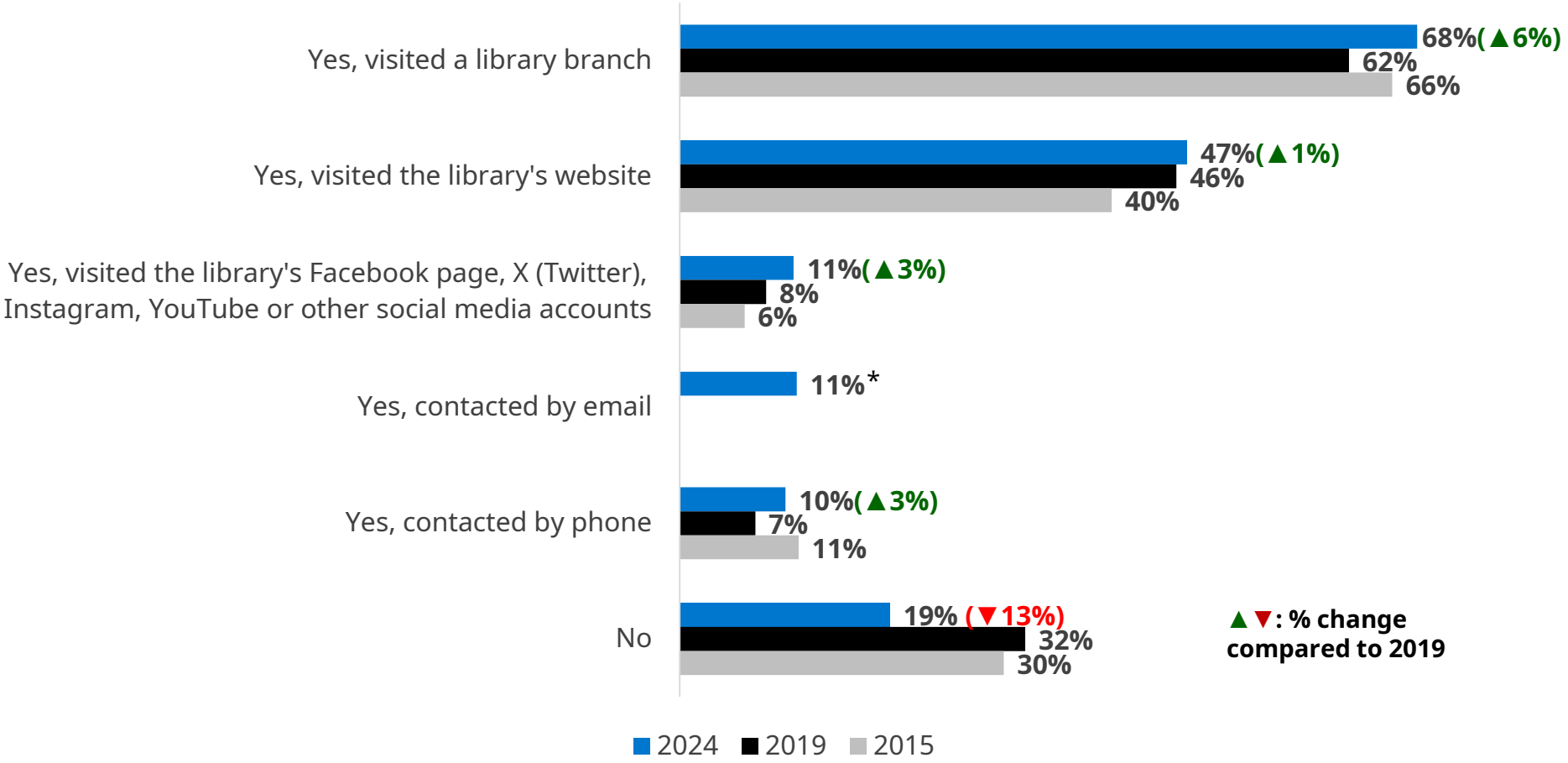


Q1. In the past twelve months, have you visited a branch of the Toronto Public Library, accessed the library online, visited any of the library's social media sites or contacted the library by telephone? (Multi-response)

Base: All respondents (2001 n=1250; 2006 n=1255; 2012 n=1220; 2015 n=1204; 2019 n=1260; 2024 n=1207)

LIBRARY USAGE

- 4 in 5 respondents (Yes: 81%) have visited or contacted the Toronto Public Library in the past twelve months, with 68% specifically visiting a library branch.



- Less than 1 in 5 respondents have not visited or contacted the Toronto Public Library in the past twelve months, a significant decrease from 2019 (19% vs 32%).
- Respondents aged 25 to 34, 35 to 44, and 45 to 54 are significantly more likely to have **visited a branch**, compared to respondents aged 65 or older (76%, 73% and 76% vs 58%, respectively).

Q1. In the past twelve months, have you visited a branch of the Toronto Public Library, accessed the library online, visited any of the library's social media sites or contacted the library by telephone? (Multi-response)
Base: All respondents (2001 n=1250; 2006 n=1255; 2012 n=1220; 2015 n=1204; 2019 n=1260; 2024 n=1207)

* 'Yes, contacted by email' is an option added in 2024, however, only approximately 1% (after weighting) selected email as their sole method of contact. This indicates email is not a significant factor driving the overall increase

LIBRARY USAGE (DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT – BY USERS / NON-USERS)

- The 35 to 44 age group has the highest library usage rate at 91%.
- Young adults aged 18 to 24 and seniors aged 65 or older are the most likely non-users, with non-user rates of 26% and 25% respectively, suggesting opportunities for increased outreach to these age groups.

	Overall	Age						Income				
		18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 or older	<$49,999	$50,000 - $69,999	$70,000 - $99,999	$100,000 - 149,999	$150,000 or over
Users	**81%**	74%	86%	91%	86%	78%	75%	81%	83%	83%	83%	83%
Non-Users	**19%**	26%	14%	9%	14%	22%	25%	19%	17%	17%	17%	17%

Q1. In the past twelve months, have you visited a branch of the Toronto Public Library, accessed the library online, visited any of the library's social media sites or contacted the library by telephone? (Multi-response)
Base: All respondents (2001 n=1250; 2006 n=1255; 2012 n=1220; 2015 n=1204; 2019 n=1260; 2024 n=1207)

LIBRARY USAGE (DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT – BY USERS / NON-USERS)

- Individuals with postgraduate or professional degrees have the highest library usage rate at 86%.
- Those identifying as transgender, non-binary or two-spirit are the most frequent library users, with a usage rate of 89%.
- Nearly half (48%) of individuals with less than a high school education are non-users.

	Overall	Education				Born in Canada			Gender		
		Less than high school	High school	Degree / diploma	Postgrad / Professional	Yes	No: 0 to 5 years (Newcomers)	No: 6 years or more	Woman	Man	Trans Woman/Man/Nonbinary / Two-Spirit/Not listed/Prefer Not to Answer
Users	**81%**	52%	75%	83%	86%	81%	83%	82%	81%	80%	89%
Non-Users	**19%**	48%	25%	17%	14%	19%	17%	18%	19%	20%	11%

Q1. In the past twelve months, have you visited a branch of the Toronto Public Library, accessed the library online, visited any of the library's social media sites or contacted the library by telephone? (Multi-response)
Base: All respondents (2001 n=1250; 2006 n=1255; 2012 n=1220; 2015 n=1204; 2019 n=1260; 2024 n=1207)

LIBRARY USAGE (DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT – BY USERS / NON-USERS CONT.)

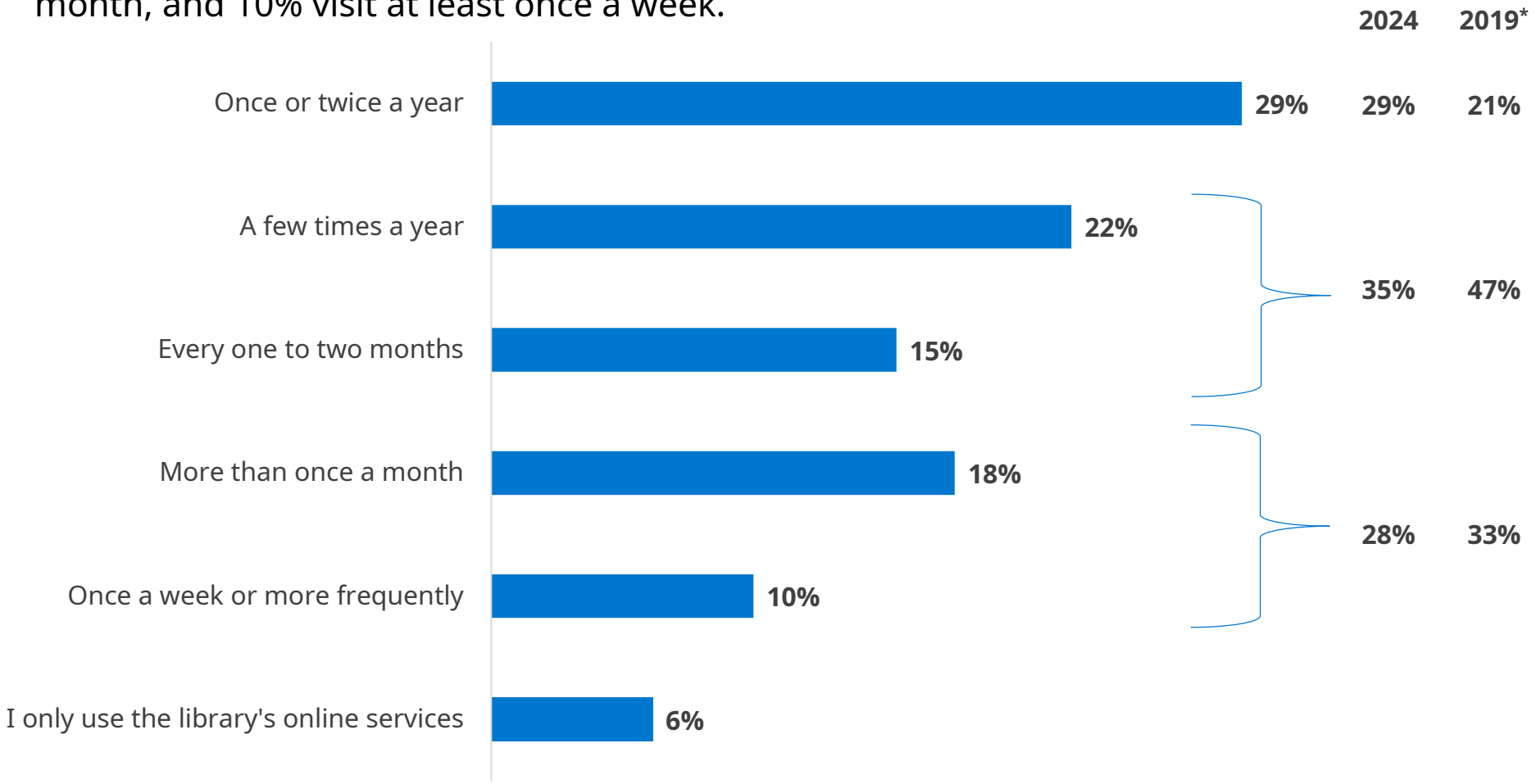
- Unemployed individuals or those looking for a job have the highest library usage rate at 89%.
- Stay-at-home caregivers are also frequent library users, with an 86% usage rate.
- Retirees have the highest non-user rate at 23%, followed by casually employed or self-employed individuals (22%).

	Overall	Disability		Employment							
		Yes	No	Employed - full-time	Employed - part-time	Employed - casual/self-employed	Unemployed or looking for a job	Student	Retired	Unable to work/Parental leave	Stay at home caregiver
Users	**81%**	82%	81%	81%	83%	78%	89%	80%	77%	80%	86%
Non-Users	**19%**	18%	19%	19%	17%	22%	11%	20%	23%	20%	14%

Q1. In the past twelve months, have you visited a branch of the Toronto Public Library, accessed the library online, visited any of the library's social media sites or contacted the library by telephone? (Multi-response)
Base: All respondents (2001 n=1250; 2006 n=1255; 2012 n=1220; 2015 n=1204; 2019 n=1260; 2024 n=1207)

FREQUENCY

- Visit behavior has shifted from pre-pandemic patterns. While more people are visiting, they are coming less frequently. About 3 in 10 respondents (29%) visit a branch once or twice a year, while 18% visit more than once a month, and 10% visit at least once a week.

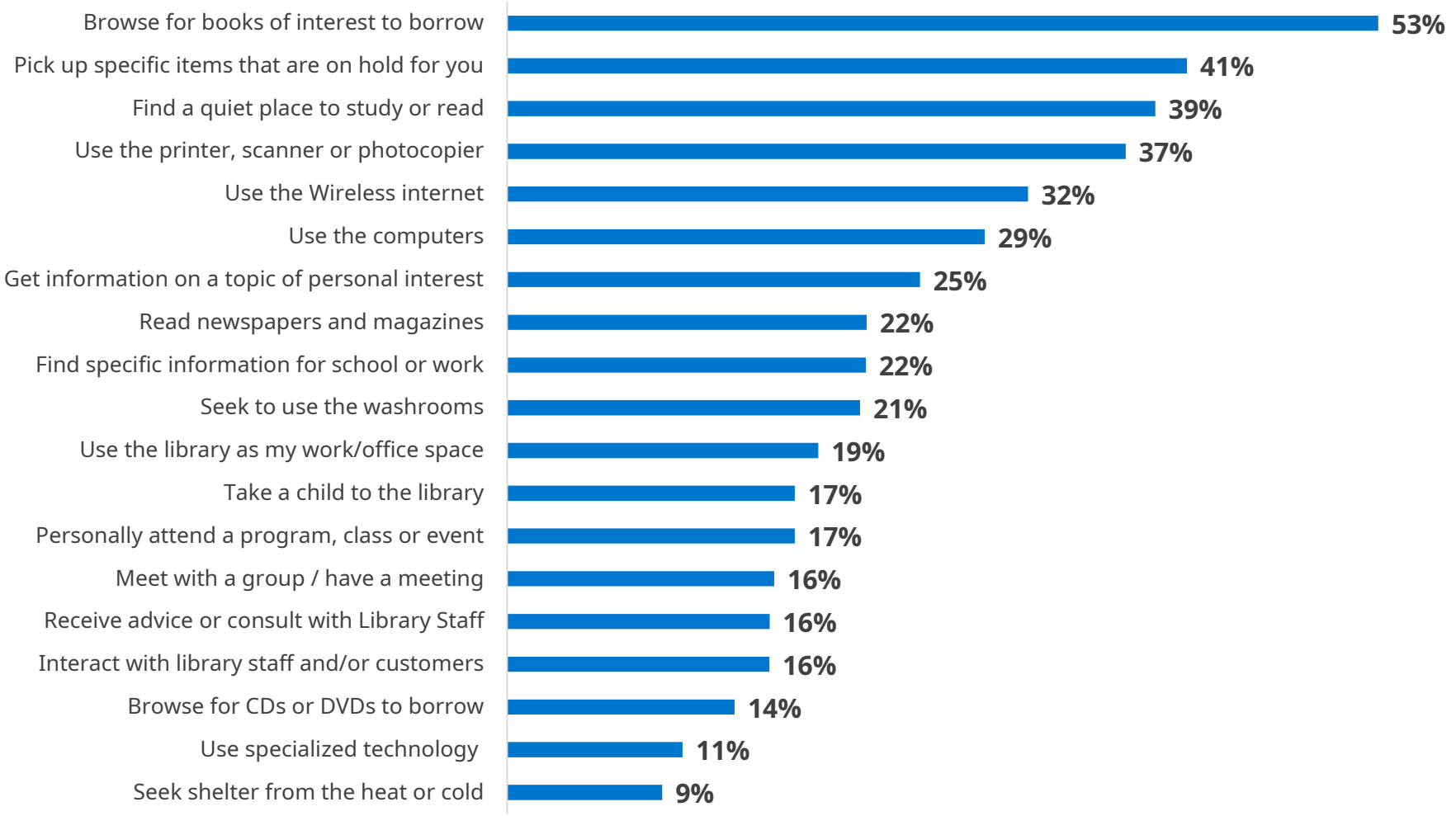


- Respondents with an annual household income of **less than $49,999** and an annual income **between $50,000 to $69,999** are **more likely** to visit a branch just once or twice a year, compared to respondents with an annual income **between $100,000 to $149,999** (25% and 27% vs 16%, respectively).

Q2A. Do you recall how many times you have personally visited a Toronto Public Library branch in the past twelve months?
Base: All respondents, exclude DK/NA (2019 n=826; 2024 n=1024)

REASON FOR VISITING A LIBRARY

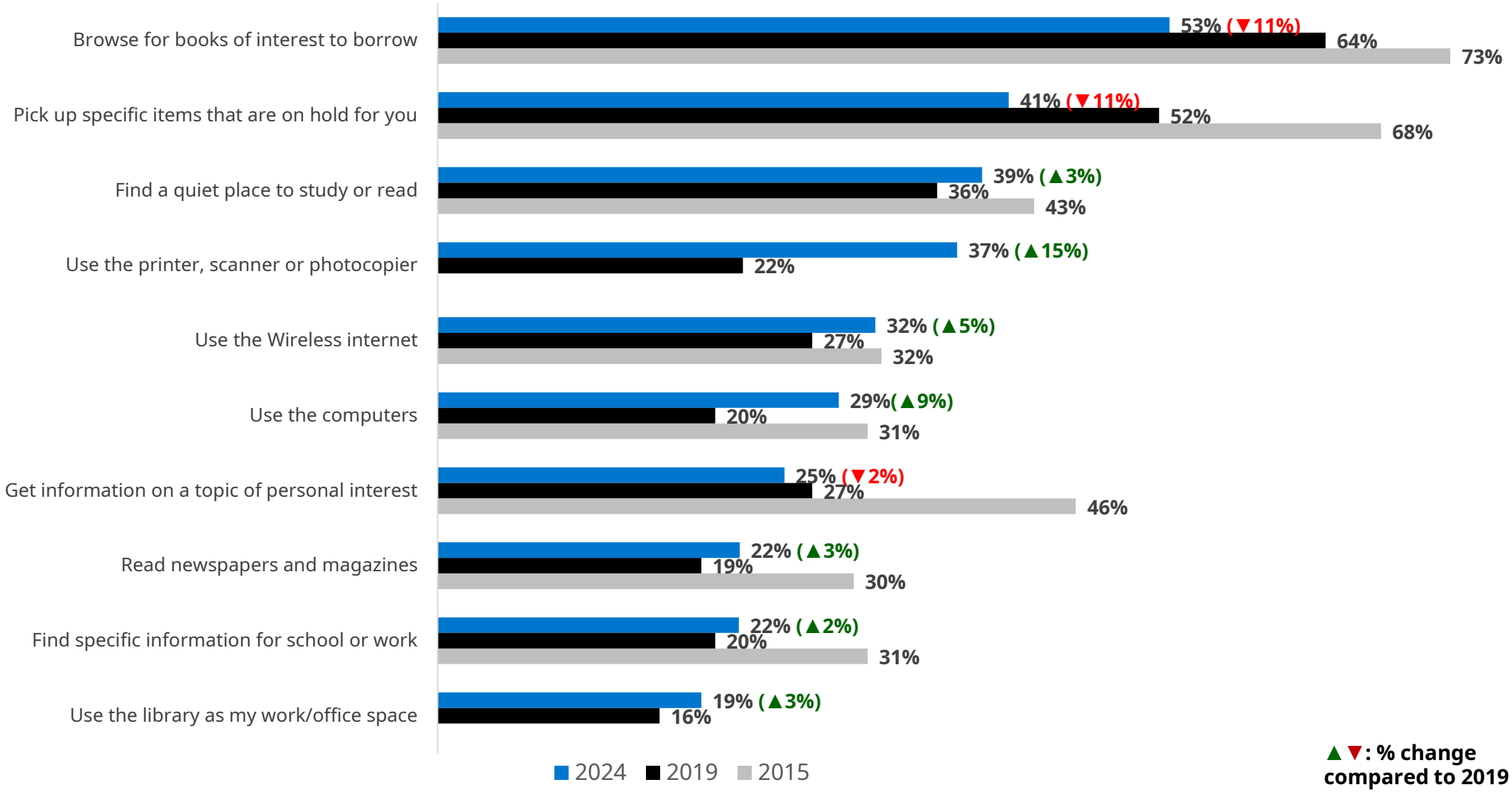
- The most common reason for visiting a library continues to be browsing for books of interest to borrow (53%), although this has decreased from 64% in 2019.



- Other reasons to visit a library include picking up specific items on hold (41%), finding a quiet place to study or read (39%), and using the printer, scanner, or photocopier (37%).

Q6. When you visit the library is this usually to... (PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY) (Multi-response)
Base: Those who have visited a public library in the past year (2001 n=905; 2006 n=889; 2012 n=856; 2015 n=798; 2019 n=827; 2024 n=972)
Note: Not including responses less than 2%

REASON FOR VISITING A LIBRARY (TRENDING)



▲▼: % change compared to 2019

Q6. When you visit the library is this usually to... (PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY) (Multi-response)
Base: Those who have visited a public library in the past year (2001 n=905; 2006 n=889; 2012 n=856; 2015 n=798; 2019 n=827; 2024 n=972)
Note: Not including responses less than 2%

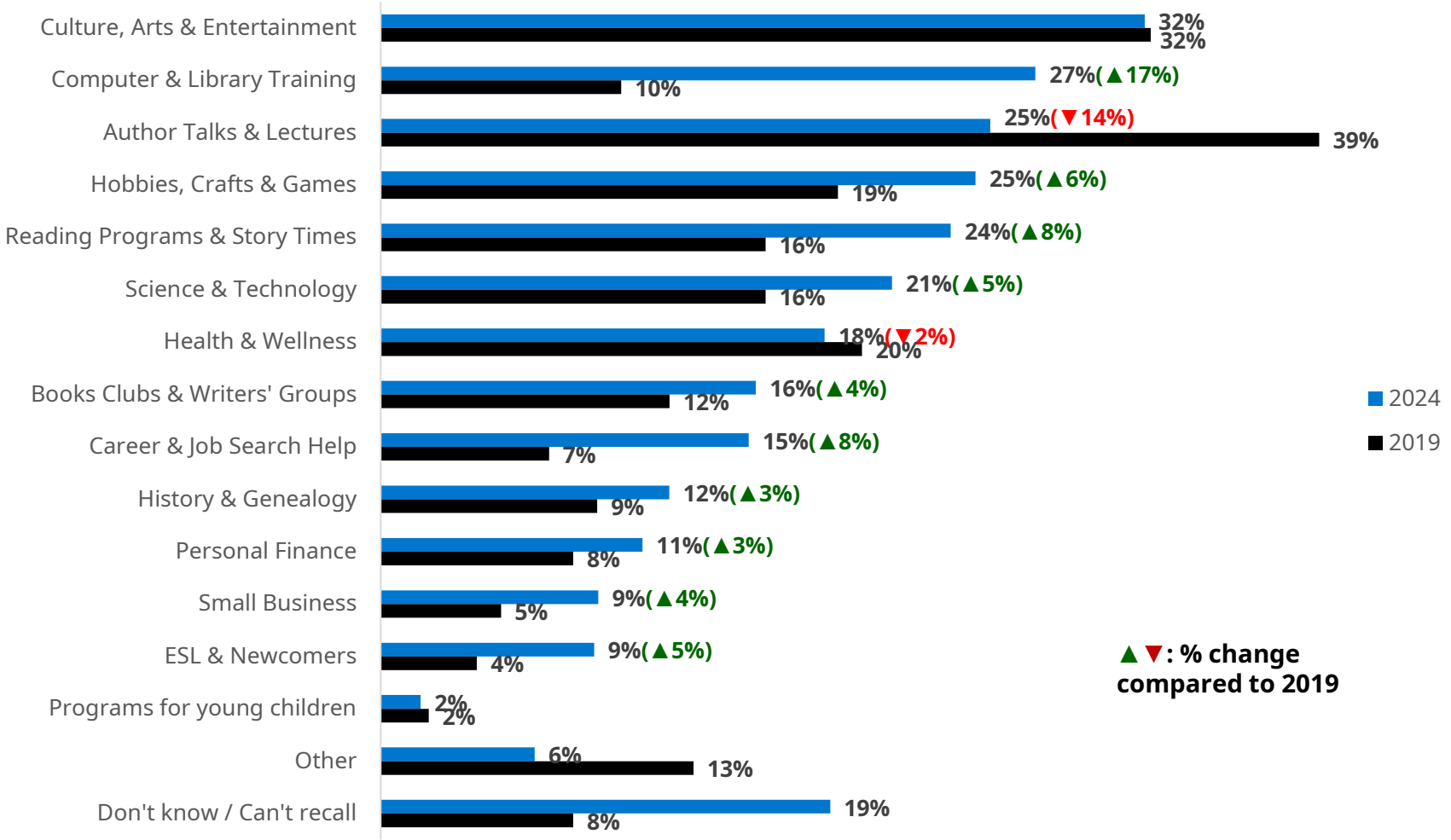
Key Demographic Insights at a Glance

	Total	Youth (18-24)	Trans Woman/Man/Non-binary/Two-Spirit/Not Listed/Prefer Not to Answer	Low Household Income Residents (<$49,999)	Individuals with Disabilities	Newcomer
Overall Usage (Users)	81%	74%	89%	81%	82%	83%
Reason for Visiting Library – (Find a quiet place to study or read)	39%	58%	56%	46%	34%	60%
Reason for Visiting Library – (Use the printer, scanner or photocopier)	37%	34%	20%	48%	41%	57%
Reason for Visiting Library – (Use the wireless internet)	32%	40%	48%	40%	35%	51%
Reason for Visiting Library – (Use the computers)	29%	36%	28%	36%	26%	40%
Reason for Visiting Library – (Meet with a group/have a meeting)	16%	31%	12%	18%	12%	17%
Reasons for Visiting Library – (Seek shelter from the heat or cold)	9%	12%	20%	13%	14%	6%

*The highlighted yellow cells indicate that the group has a substantial higher percentage compared to other segments in that category

ATTENDED PROGRAMS, CLASSES & EVENTS

- Among respondents who have attended a program, class, or event, 1 in 3 (32%) have attended Culture, Arts & Entertainment.

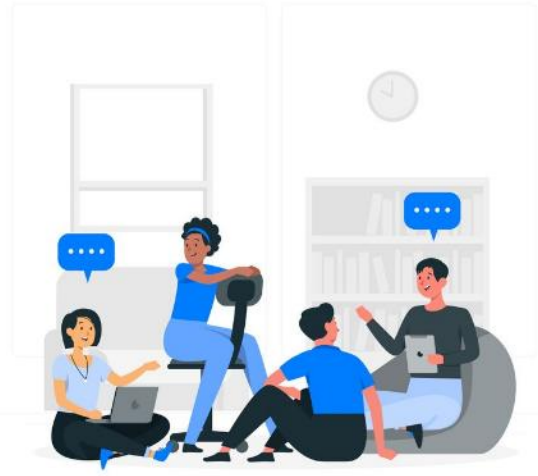


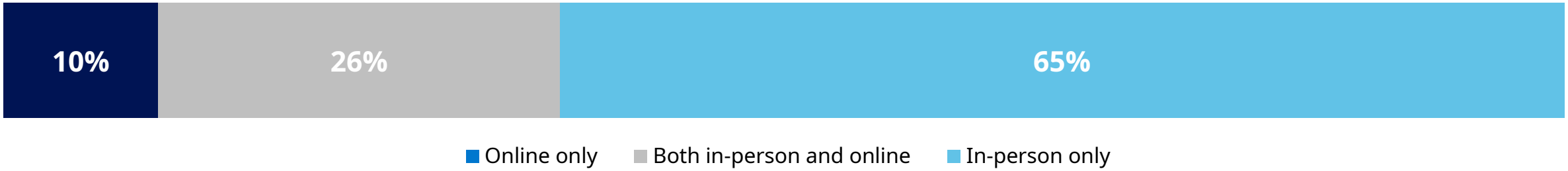
- Other programs, classes, or events that respondents have attended include Computer & Library Training (27%), Author Talks & Lectures (25%), Hobbies, Crafts & Games (25%), and Reading Programs & Story Times (24%).
- Computer & Library Training has experienced the largest increase, rising by 17% in 2024. Similarly, Career & Job Search Help has seen a significant jump compared to 2019.
- Reading Programs & Story Times" as this also increased by 8%.

Q9A. Do you recall the name or type of programs, classes or events you attended in the last year? (PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY) (Multi-response)
Base: Those who have attended a program, class or event (2024 n=169)
Note: Not including responses less than 2%

PROGRAMS ATTENDANCE PREFERENCE

- Among respondents who have attended a program, class or event, more than 1 in 3 (36%) have attended programs, classes, or events online.

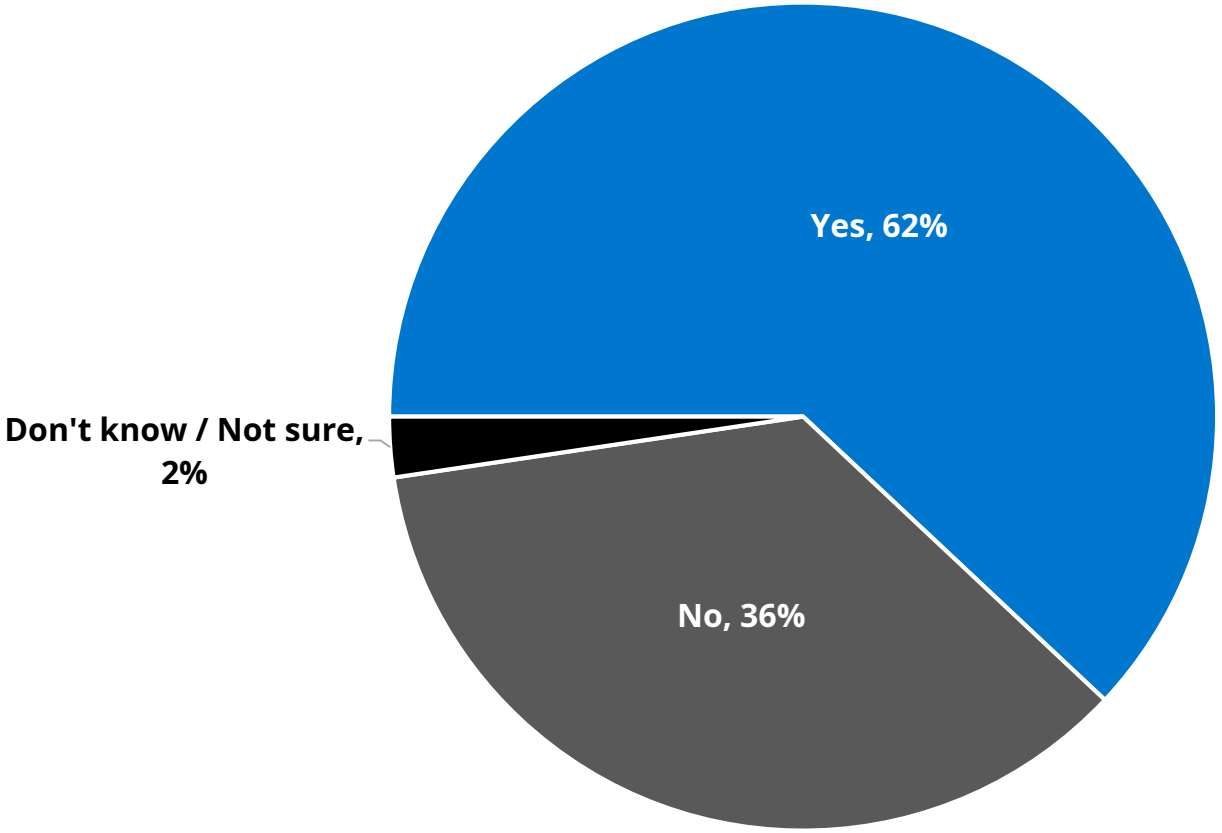




Q9B. Have you attended programs in-person or online?
Base: Those who have attended a program, class or event (n=169)

LIBRARY COMPUTERS USAGE

- Among TPL users, more than 3 in 5 (62%) have used the library's computers.

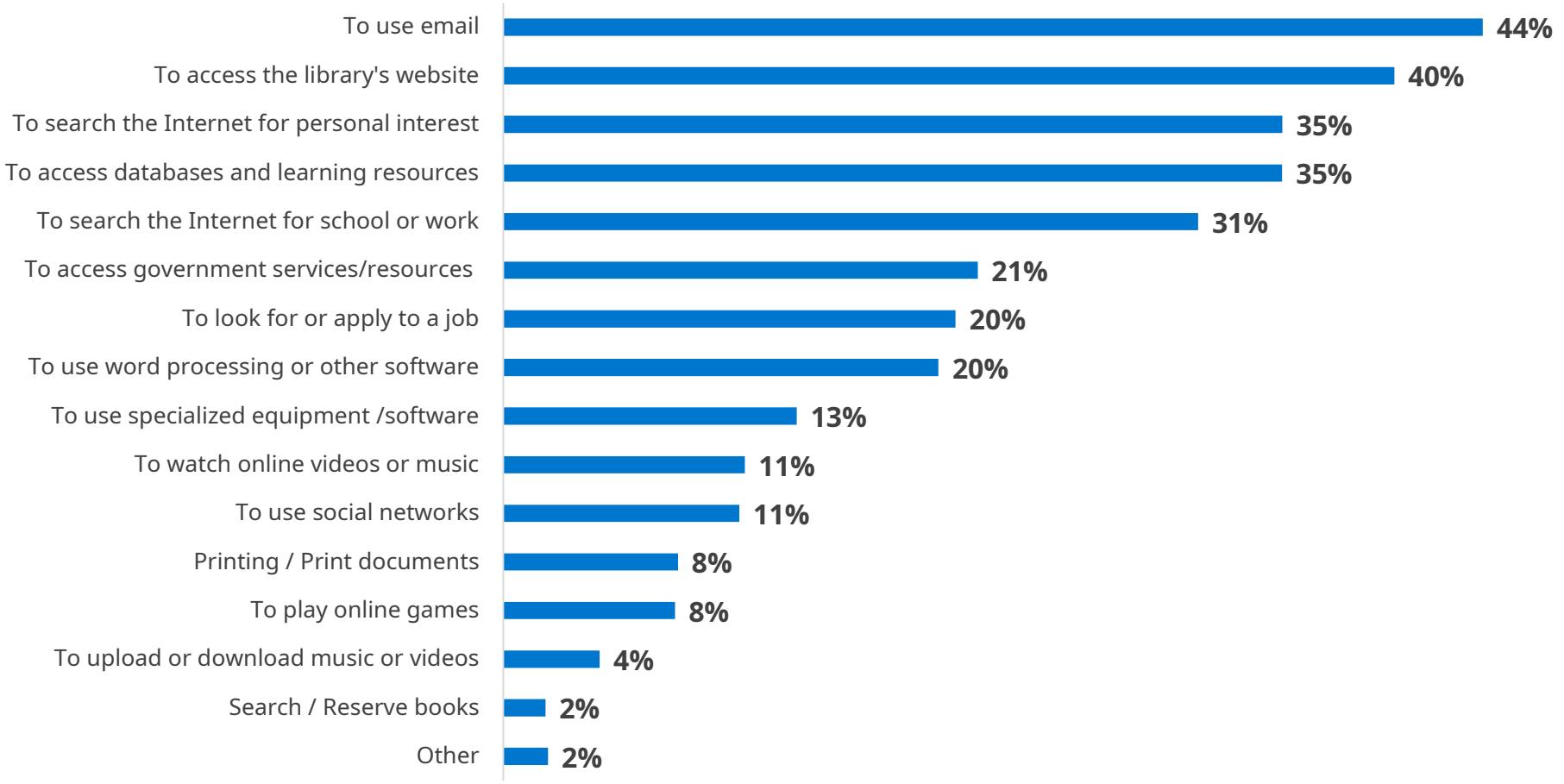


- Respondents aged 18 to 64 are more likely to have used the library's computers compared to respondents aged 65 or older (66% vs 46%).

Q10. When you have visited a public library have you used one of the library's computers for any purpose? Base: Those who have visited a public library in the past year (2001 n=905; 2006 n=889; 2012 n=829; 2015 n=798; 2019 n=827; 2024 (n=972)
Q11. When you have used computers at the library, what did you use them for? Base: Those who have used computers at the library (2006 n=488; 2012 n=601; 2015 n=532; 2019 n=484; 2024 n=603)
Note: Not including responses less than 2%

LIBRARY COMPUTERS USAGE (CONT.)

- Among those users, the most popular purposes are using email (44%) and accessing the library website (40%).

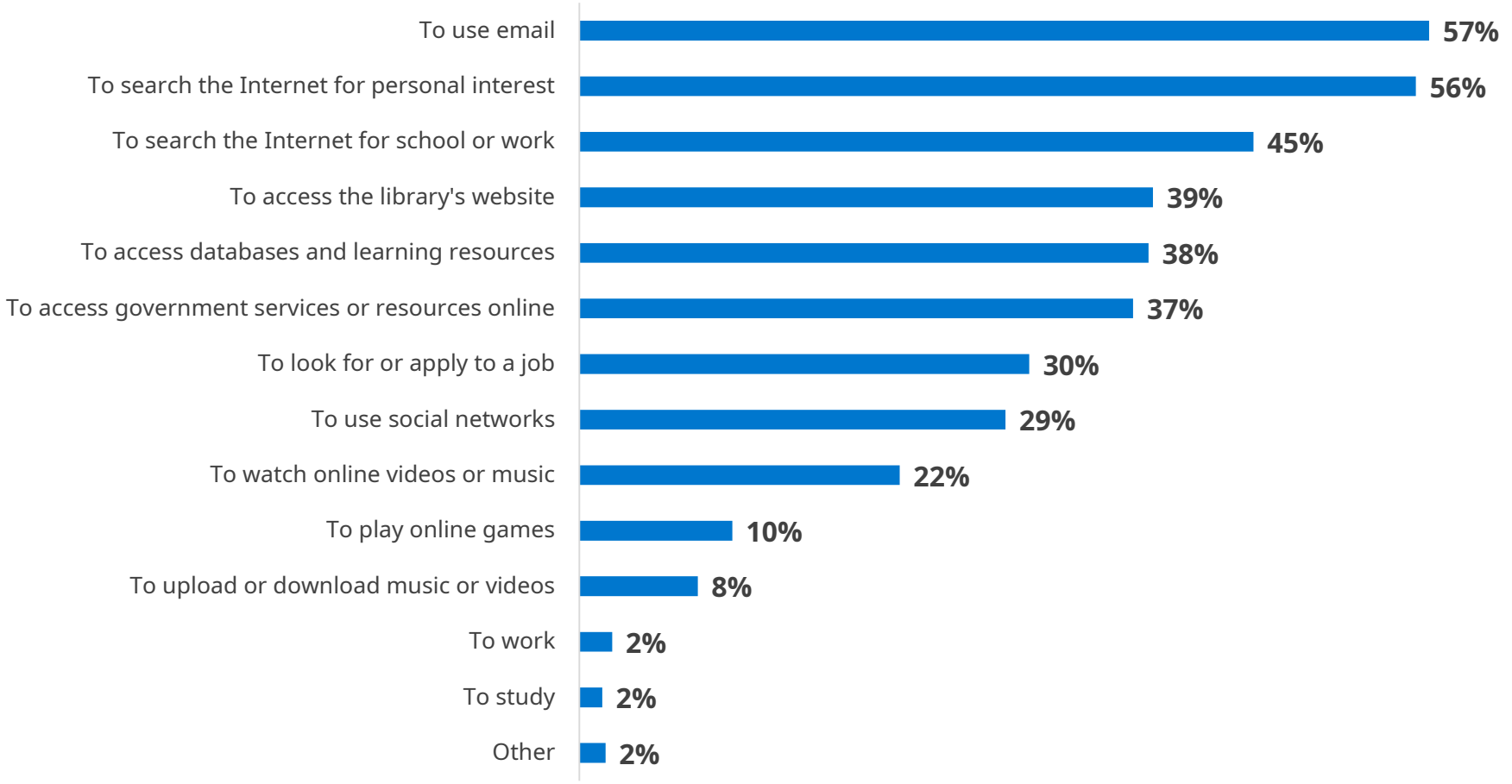


- Other reasons for using the computers include searching the Internet for personal interests (35%), accessing online research databases and learning resources (35%), and searching the Internet for school or work (31%).
- Respondents with lower household income (less than $49,999) are more likely to use the library's computers (70%).

Q10. When you have visited a public library have you used one of the library's computers for any purpose? Base: Those who have visited a public library in the past year (2001 n=905; 2006 n=889; 2012 n=829; 2015 n=798; 2019 n=827; 2024 (n=972)
Q11. When you have used computers at the library, what did you use them for? Base: Those who have used computers at the library (2006 n=488; 2012 n=601; 2015 n=532; 2019 n=484; 2024 n=603)
Note: Not including responses less than 2%

WIRELESS INTERNET USAGE

- More than half of respondents use wireless internet for email (57%) or to search the Internet for personal interests (56%).

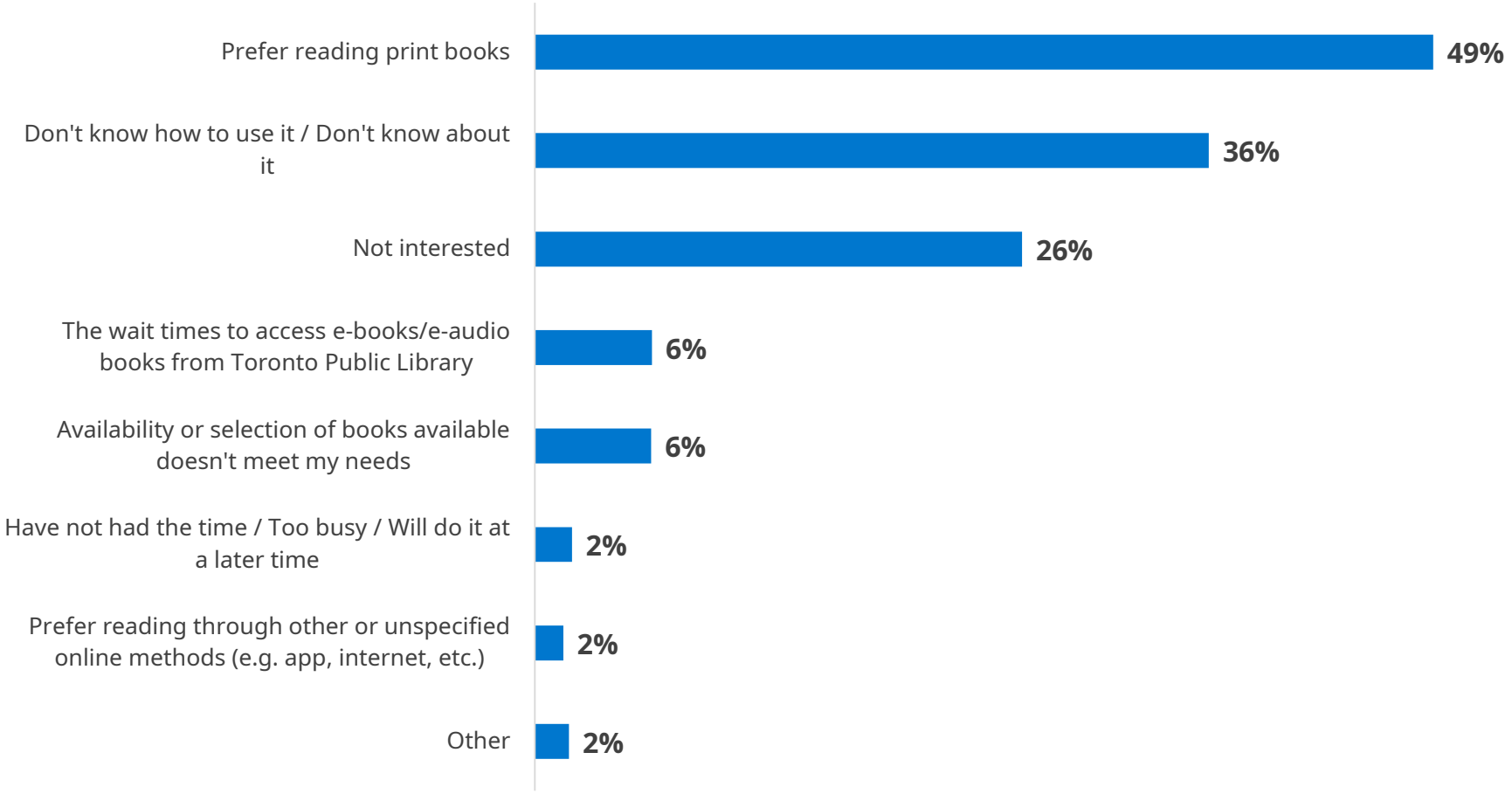


- Other reasons for using wireless internet include searching the Internet for school or work (45%), accessing the library's website (39%), accessing online research databases and learning resources (38%), and accessing government services or resources online (37%).

Q12. Previously you indicated that you used the wireless internet at the library, what did you use it for?
Base: Those who have used wireless internet at the library (2015 n=251; 2019 n=223; 2024 n=307)
Note: Not including responses less than 2%

E-BOOKS/E-AUDIOBOOKS USAGE

- Among TPL users, more than half (58%) have not downloaded an e-book or e-audiobook. Among those users, the primary reason is a preference for reading print books (49%).



- Other reasons for not downloading an e-book or e-audiobook include being not interested (26%), not knowing how to use it (21%), and not knowing about it (15%).
- Young users (aged 18 to 24) are more likely to not download e-books or e-audiobooks due to lack of knowledge on how to use them, compared to users aged 35 to 44 (32% vs. 14%).
- Respondents with household incomes of $70,000 to $99,999 are more likely to prefer reading print books compared to those with incomes less than $49,999, or $50,000 to $69,999 (66% vs 45% and 49%, respectively).

Q16. Have you downloaded an e-book, or e-audiobook from Toronto Public Library? Base: Those who have visited a public library in the past year (n=972)
Q17. Why have you not downloaded an e-book, or e-audiobook from Toronto Public Library? Base: Those who have not downloaded an e-book, or e-audiobook from Toronto Public Library (n=566)
Note: Not including responses less than 2%

tpl
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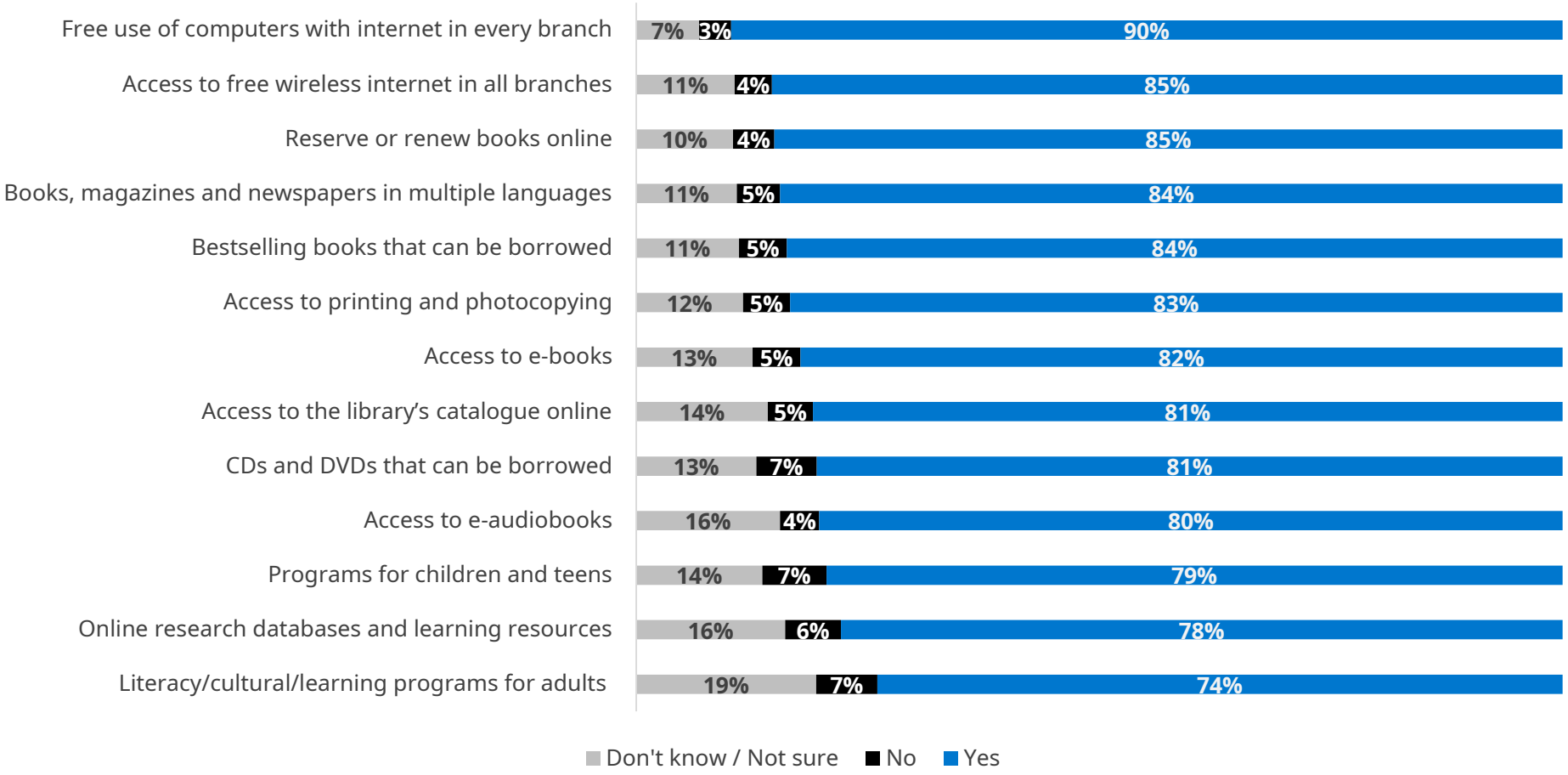
public library
Library Services
Awareness
4

TPL SERVICE AWARENESS

- There is high awareness among the public of free use of computers with internet in every branch (90%) as well as access to free wireless internet (85%).

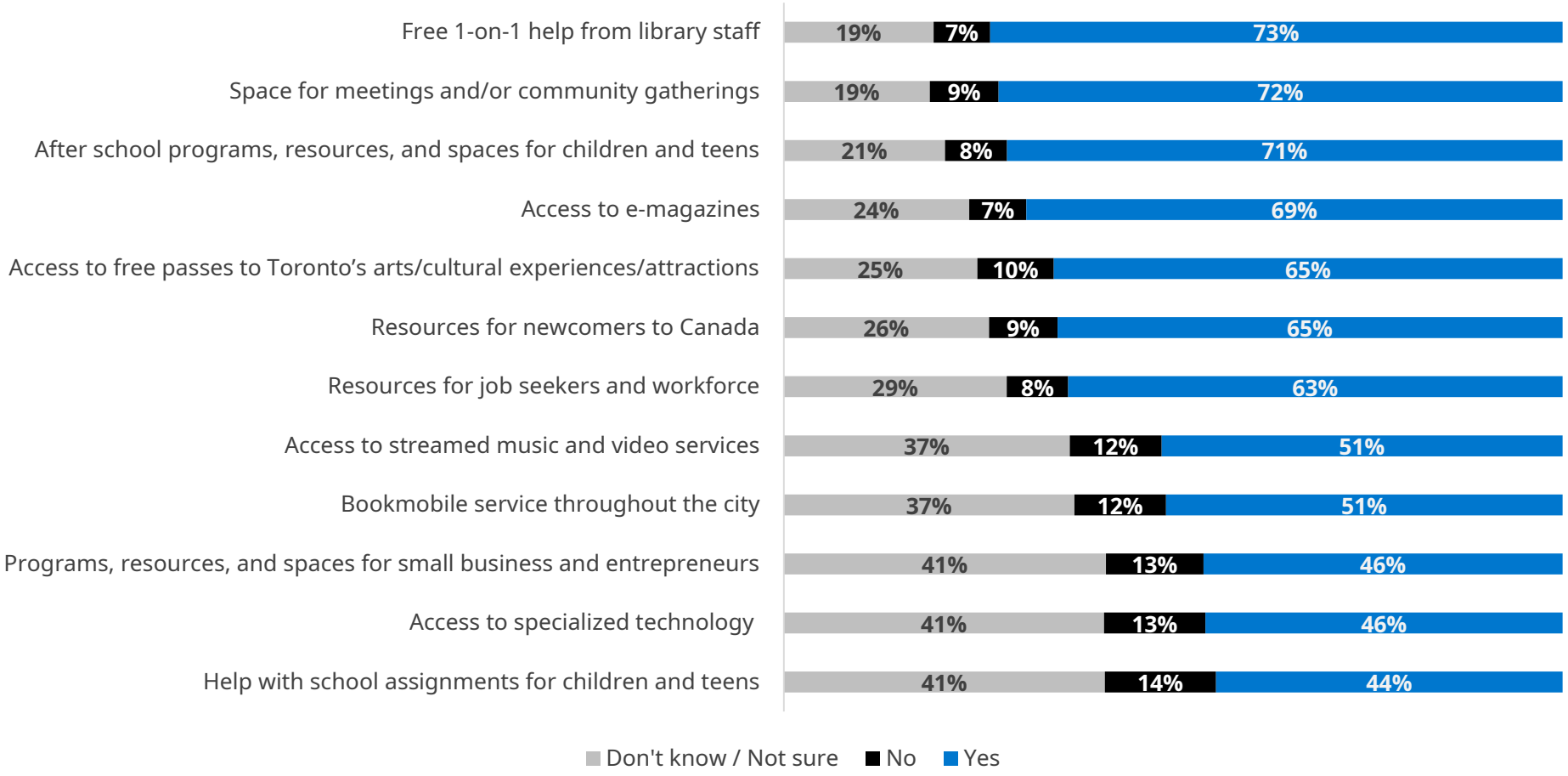


- Other services that respondents are most aware of include access to free wireless internet in all branches (85%), reserve or renew books online (85%), books, magazines and newspaper in multiple languages (84%), and bestselling books that can be borrowed (84%).

Q4. To the best of your knowledge, which services do the public libraries in Toronto offer to residents of the city?
Base: All respondents (n=1207)

TPL SERVICE AWARENESS (CONT.)

- More than half (55%) of respondents are unaware that public libraries in Toronto offer to help with school assignments for children and teens.



- Other services that respondents are most unaware of include help with school assignments for children and teens (55%), access to specialized technology (54%), and programs, resources, and spaces for small businesses and entrepreneurs (54%).

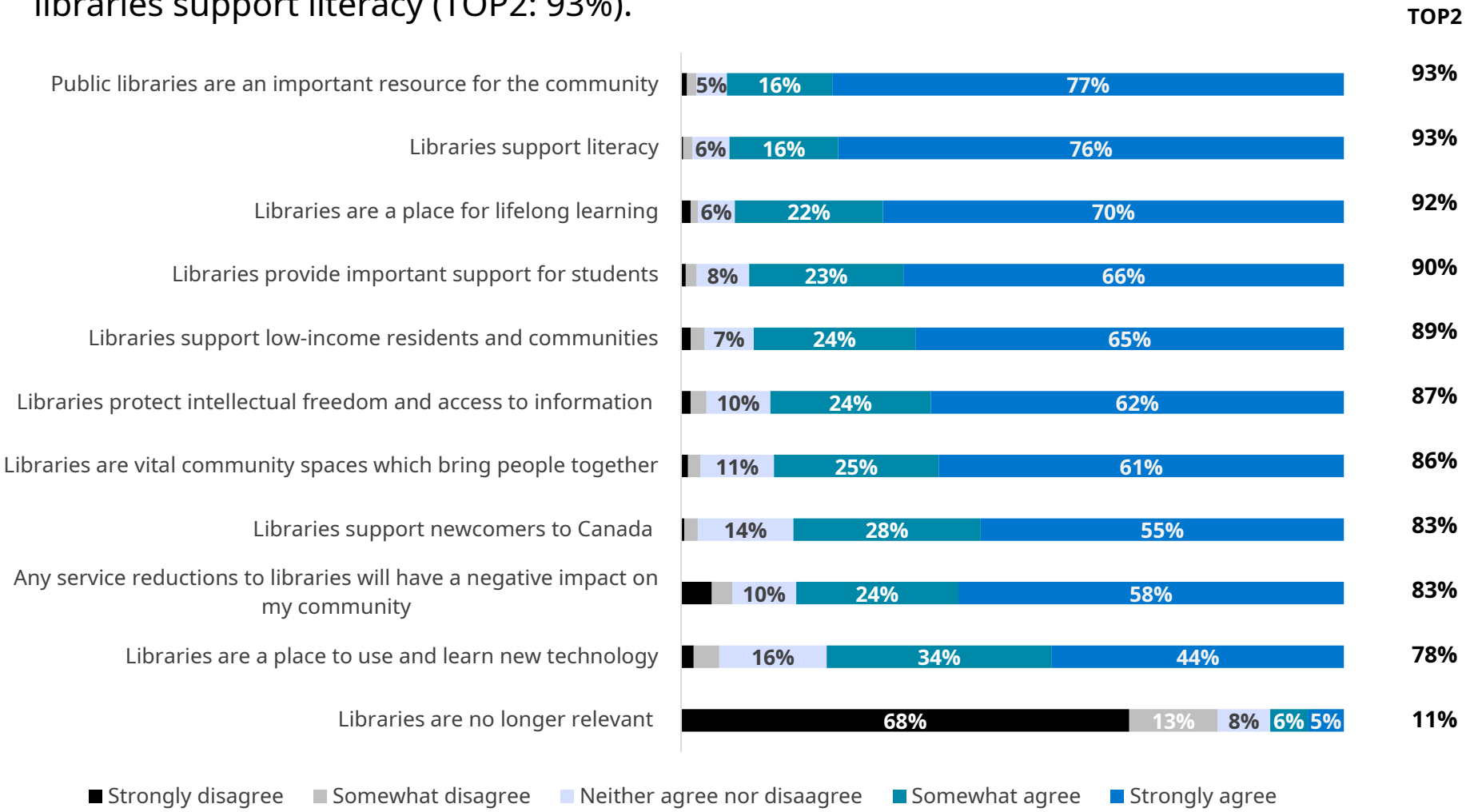
Q4. To the best of your knowledge, which services do the public libraries in Toronto offer to residents of the city?
Base: All respondents (n=1207)

Attitudes about the Library

5

ATTITUDES ABOUT THE VALUE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- The majority of respondents agree that public libraries are an important resource for the community (TOP2: 93%) and libraries support literacy (TOP2: 93%).

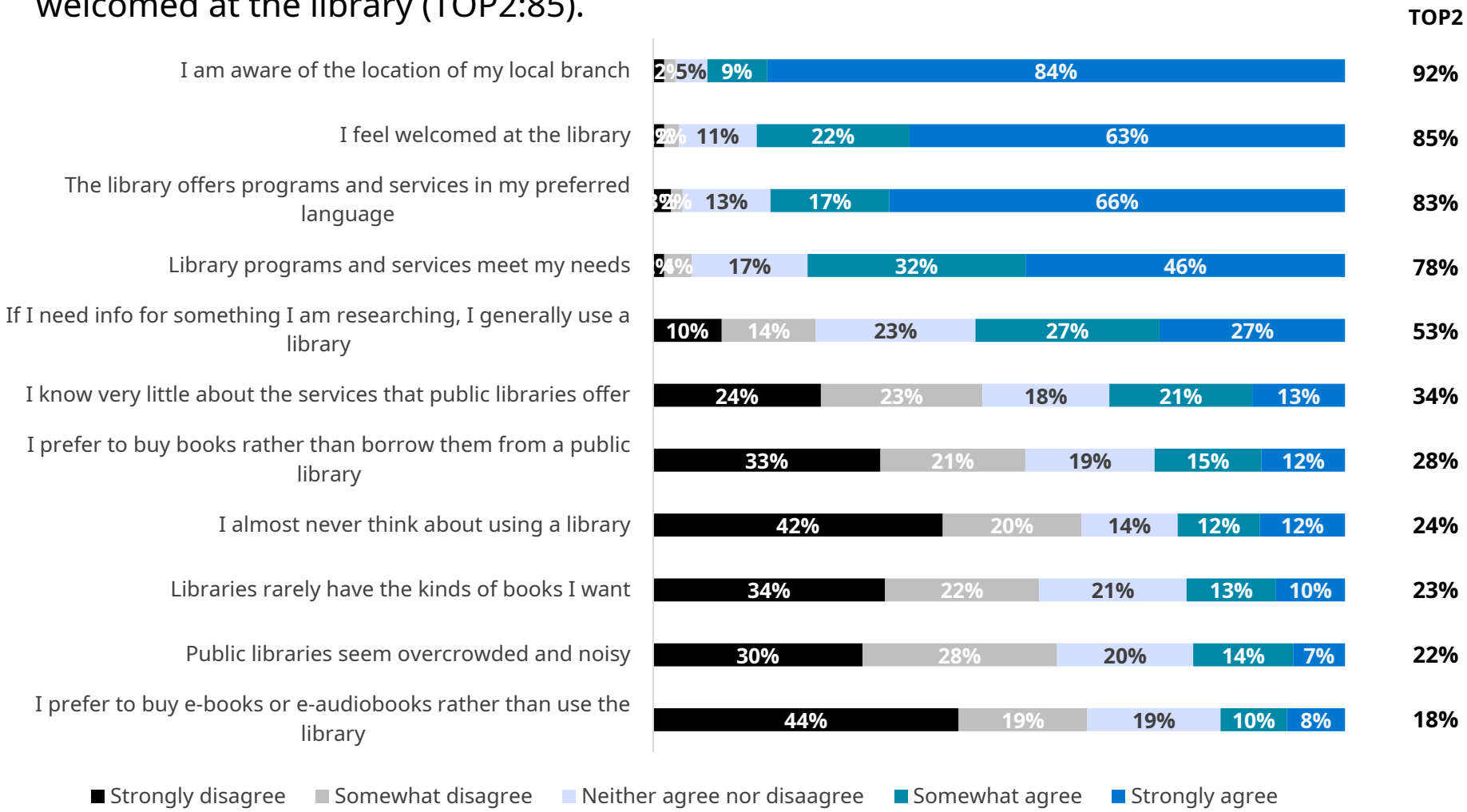


- Only 1 in 10 respondents (11%) think that libraries are no longer relevant.

Q21. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
Base: All respondents (n=1207)

PERSONAL ATTITUDES ABOUT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- Respondents also strongly agree that they are aware of the location of their local branch (TOP2: 92%), and they feel welcomed at the library (TOP2:85).



Q21. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
Base: All respondents (n=1207)

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Services related to reading, literacy, and learning are the top three priorities for library users, with 46% respondents believe that offering a variety of reading resources in different formats is the most important aspect of a public library. This is followed by providing literacy support for all ages (29%) and serving as a hub for lifelong and self-directed learning (29%).

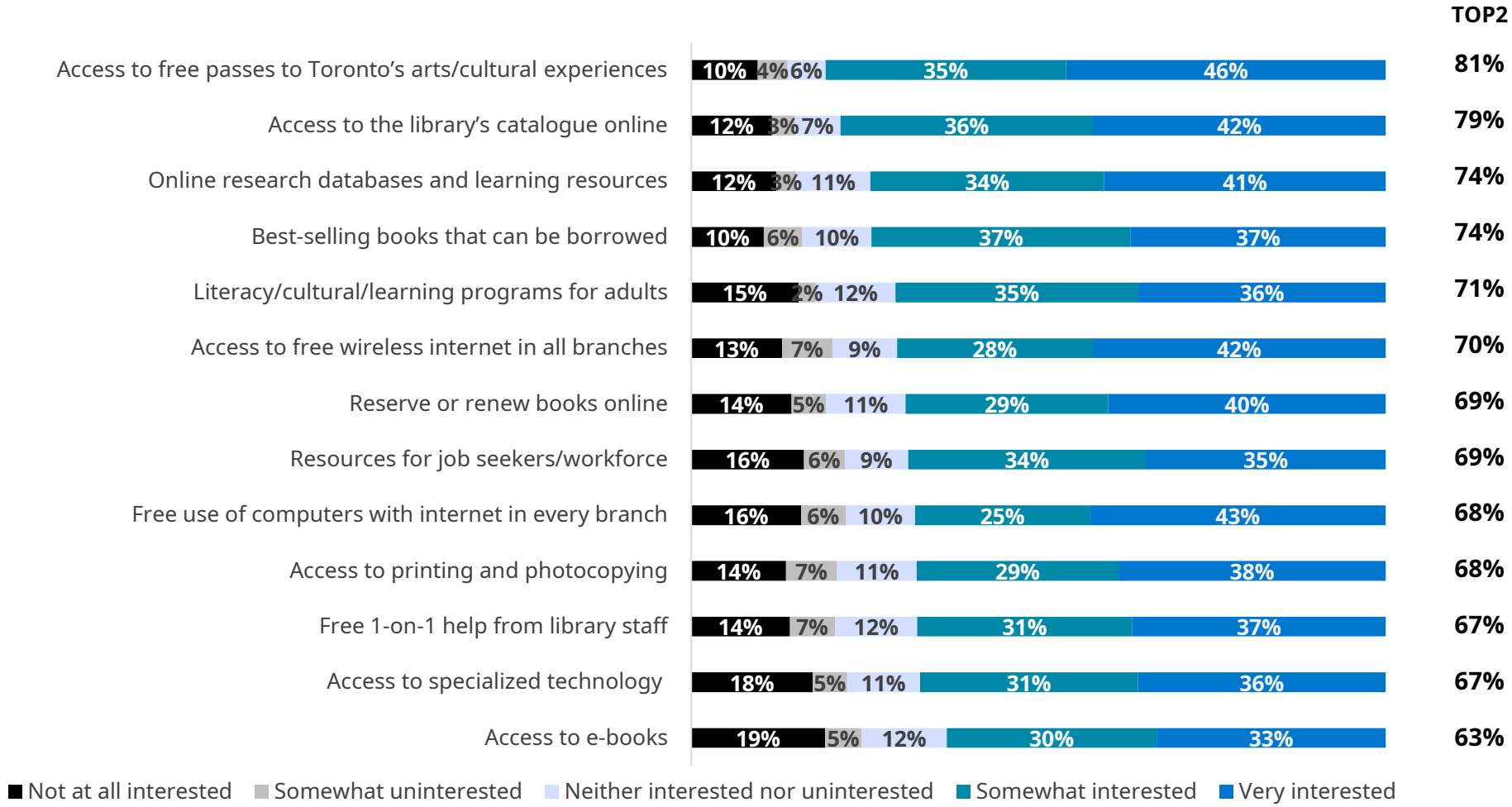
Q22. Below is a list of ways in which a public library can help serve its local community. If you had to choose only two, which of the following do you feel are the most important aspects of a public library? (PLEASE SELECT NO MORE THAN TWO OPTIONS) (Multi-response, max 2)
Base: All respondents (n=1207)

Library Non-Users

6

LIBRARY SERVICE INTEREST

- 4 in 5 non-users (81%) are interested in accessing free passes to Toronto's arts, cultural experiences, and attractions.

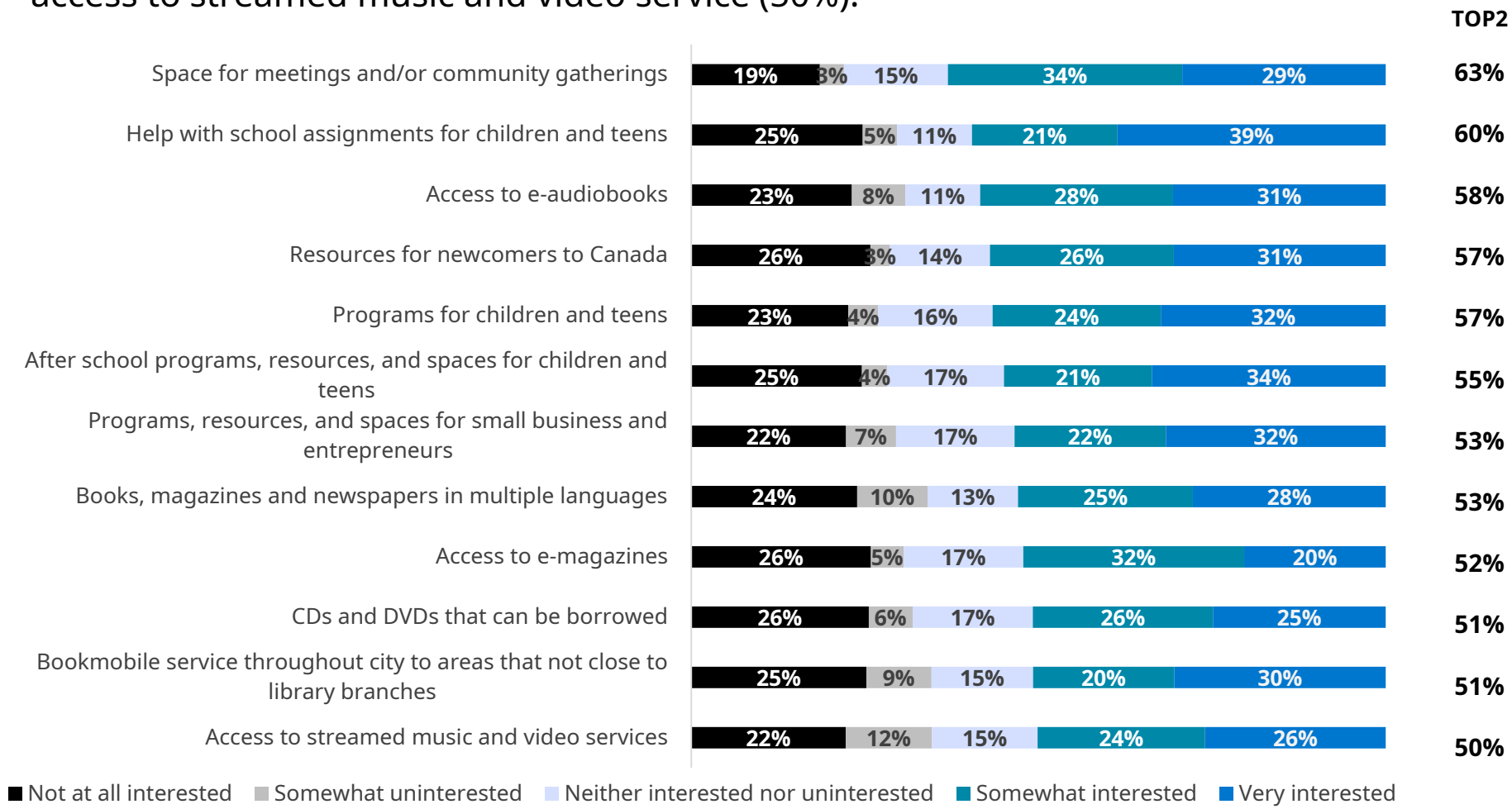


- Other services that respondents are interested in include access to the library's online catalog (79%), online research databases and learning resources (74%), and best-selling books that can be borrowed (74%).

Q24. The Toronto Public Library system provides a wide range of services. Please indicate how interested you are in making use of each of the services personally or with your family.
Base: Those who have NOT visited a public library in the past year, excluded DK/NA (n=235)

LIBRARY SERVICE INTEREST (CONT.)

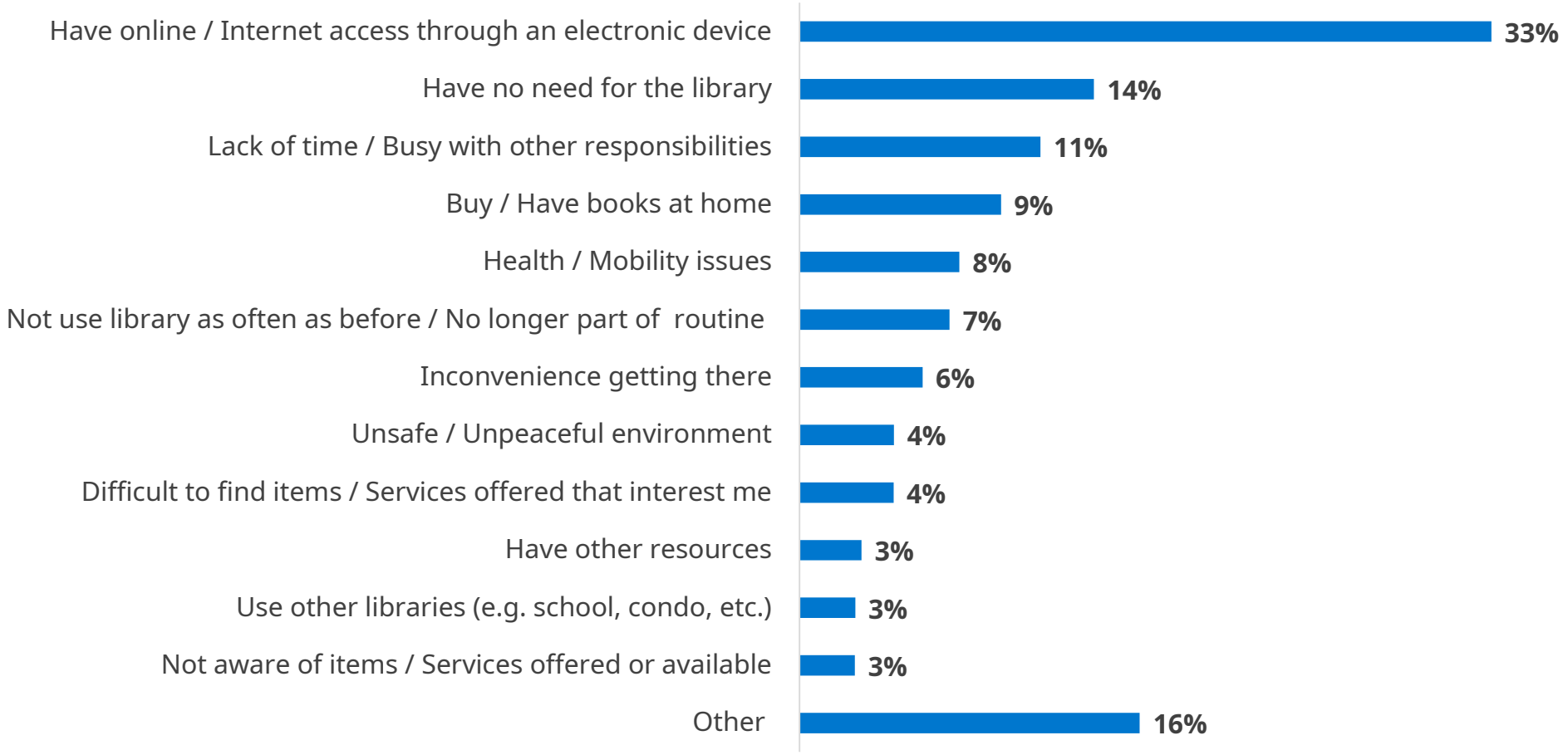
- On the other hand, services with the least interest are borrowing CDs and DVDs (51%), bookmobile service (51%) and access to streamed music and video service (50%).



Q24. The Toronto Public Library system provides a wide range of services. Please indicate how interested you are in making use of each of the services personally or with your family.
Base: Those who have NOT visited a public library in the past year, excluded DK/NA (n=235)

REASONS FOR NOT USING PUBLIC LIBRARY

- For non-users, the main reason for not using the public library more often is because they have online/internet access through an electronic device (33%).

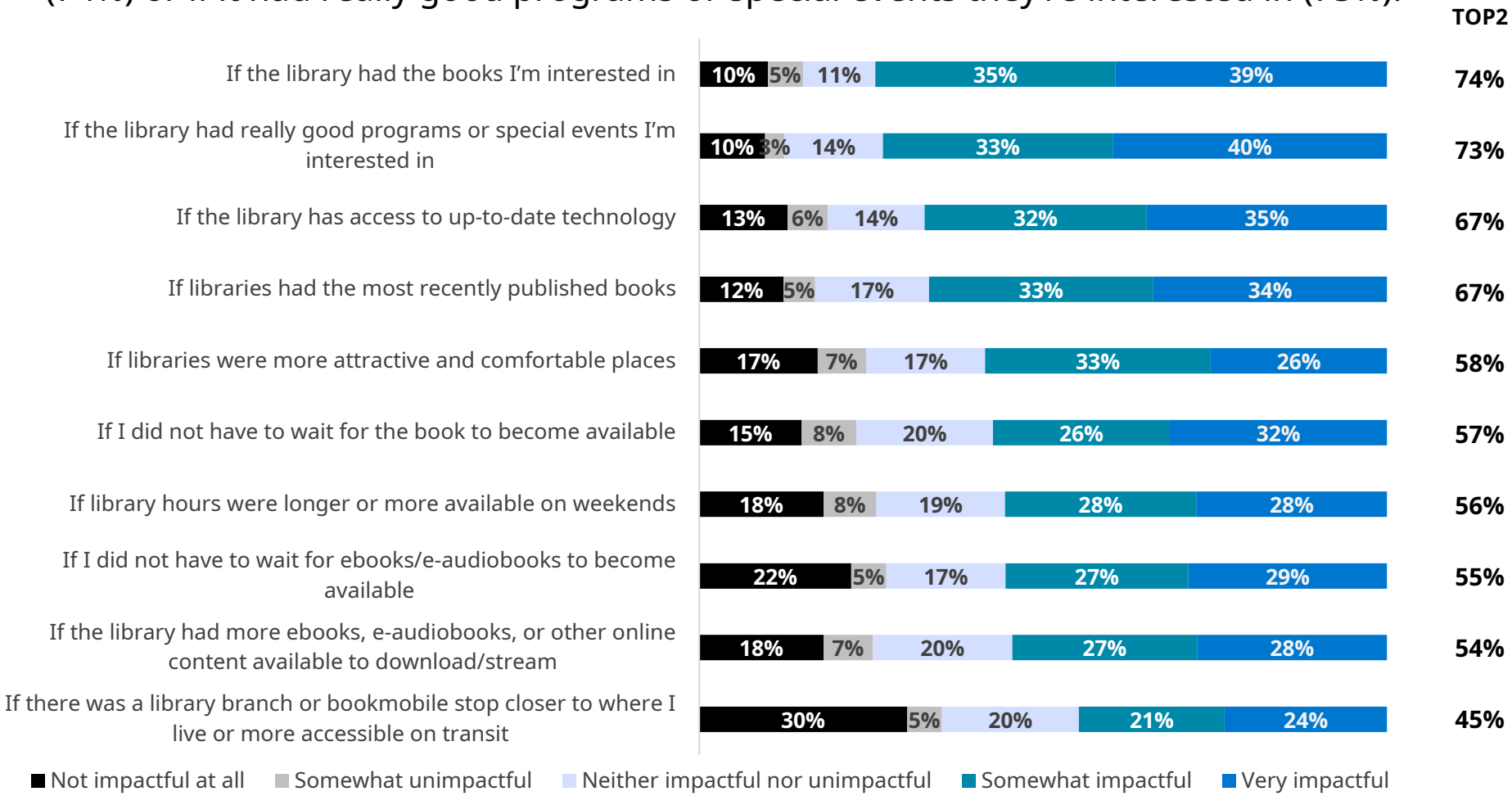


- Other reasons for not using the public library more often are having no need for the library (14%) or lack of time / busy with other responsibilities (11%).

Q26. And aside from time, which is always an issue for people, what would you say is the main reason you don't use a public library more often?
Base: Those who have NOT visited a public library in the past year (2019 n=433; 2024 n=235)
Note: Not including responses less than 3%

PUBLIC LIBRARY USAGE FACTORS

- About 3 in 4 non-users state that they might use a public library more often if it had the books they are interested in (74%) or if it had really good programs or special events they're interested in (73%).



- Other impactful factors include having access to up-to-date technology (67%) and offering the most recently published books (67%).

Q28. Please indicate how much of a factor each of the following would be in encouraging you to use a public library more often
Base: Those who have NOT visited a public library in the past year (n=235)

Implications and Opportunities

7

tpl toronto public library

Implications

Key implications on TPL's expanding role and reach:

With **81%** of respondents accessing TPL services in the past year, engagement has reached a new peak, highlighting the library's successful blend of in-person and digital offerings.

Toronto Public Library remains a **cornerstone** of the community, providing essential support for lifelong learning, literacy, and social connection, deeply integrated into the social fabric of Toronto.

The reliance on TPL's **technology resources** underlines the library's critical role in addressing the digital divide, as more users depend on library computers and wireless internet.

Engagement patterns indicate that the library continues to be a valuable resource. Shifts in these patterns also indicate that **user behaviour** may be evolving due to the increased availability of digital resources and other competing demands.

Awareness gaps around **specialized services** indicate a potential disconnect between TPL's offerings and public knowledge, particularly among non-users.

Opportunities

To continue driving and amplifying its success, TPL should:

Continue expanding access to and awareness of **digital resources and technology**, which are critical for many users.

Improve outreach efforts to **close awareness gaps**, focusing on promoting lesser-known services, such as help with school assignments, specialized technology access and entrepreneurial support.

Adapting to evolving usage patterns and explore strategies to maintain and enhance **its physical spaces** while also **leveraging its digital offerings** to keep users engaged.

Maintaining and reinforce the library's role in providing a **safe, welcoming environment** to all Torontonians.

Leverage its deep integration within the community to pilot new programs and services that **resonate with diverse type of users**, ensuring it continues to serve as a dynamic hub for lifelong learning and social interaction.