

COVID-19 Impact Report – 2021 Year in Review

Date:	April 25, 2022
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the Toronto Public Library Board with a year-end retrospective on COVID-19 impacts for 2021.

Since March of 2020, Toronto Public Library (TPL) has been committed to assess and measure the pandemic's impact on its operations and business planning through the COVID-19 Impact Reports. TPL has been working to gradually transition the measures from these reports into operational reporting on services, and this report will mark the conclusion of the COVID-19 Impact Reporting process to the Board.

The key highlights contained in this 2021 year in review report are organized from the perspectives of the following four key stakeholders:

- Torontonians
- TPL's Customers
- TPL as an Organization
- TPL Staff

This report is consistent with the Library's commitment to accountability, evaluation and transparency in supporting evidence-based decision-making and delivery of outcomes for all Torontonians.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from this report.

COVID-19 continued to impact Library operations throughout 2021 which resulted in a net underspending of the operating budget of \$5.020 million or

2.3% of the gross budget, and a lower spending rate of 68.5% of the capital budget.

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

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

This report supports TPL's evidence-based decision making practice, ensures that TPL delivers on targeted outcomes, and that TPL continues to be transparent and accountable to Torontonians. This report is a product of TPL's strategic plan "evaluation and accountability" enabler.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

TPL continues to focus on understanding and breaking down barriers to access and ensuring inclusion, so that everyone who wants to use the Library feels welcomed and is able to access TPL services. In particular, digital access continues to be a top TPL priority in order to address ongoing social inequality that may be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

DECISION HISTORY

At the April 27, 2020 Toronto Public Library Board meeting, TPL provided an update on its operations, services and responses to the COVID-19 public health emergency in the [COVID-19 Emergency Response](#) report. Highlights from March's COVID-19 impact report were attached to the update.

At its meeting on June 22, 2020, the Library Board received the [COVID-19 Impact Report – March-May: A Three-Month Retrospective](#) assessing the impact of COVID-19 on customer experiences and services, operations, staff experiences and key initiatives

At its meeting on October 19, 2020, the Library Board received the [COVID-19 Impact Report – June-August: A Three-Month Retrospective](#) assessing the impact of COVID-19 on customer experiences and services, operations, staff experiences and key initiatives.

At its meeting on November 16, 2020, the Library Board received the [TPL Board Education - Implementation of Strategic Plan Execution Roadmap](#) presentation. The Board also received a verbal update for information, describing how TPL will move towards integrated reporting for the Strategic Plan, consolidating reporting from the Annual Performance Measures and Benchmarking into the balanced scorecard and COVID-19 monthly reports.

At its meeting on January 25, 2021, the Library Board received the [COVID-19 Impact Report - September-November: A Three-Month Retrospective](#) assessing the impact of COVID-19 on customer experiences and services, operations, staff experiences and key initiatives.

At its meeting on April 26, 2021, the Library Board received the [COVID-19 Impact Report – 2020 Year In Review](#)

At its meeting on September 27, 2021, the Library Board received the [COVID-19 Impact Report – January - June 2021: A Six-Month Retrospective](#)

ISSUE BACKGROUND

After the closure of all TPL branches in March 2020, the need to understand the pandemic's impact on operations and services led to the implementation of a monthly COVID-19 impact reporting process. These monthly reports continued to be provided to TPL's leadership team until December 2021, as TPL worked to gradually transition them into the operational reporting process.

The resulting analysis from the COVID-19 Impact Reports has been instrumental in helping the Library adapt to the changes brought on by the pandemic, and the retrospective reports such as this one have allowed TPL to remain accountable as it navigated the various stages of the pandemic.

COMMENTS

Starting in March 2020, TPL has been actively monitoring and analyzing the impacts of the pandemic on Library services, navigating the changing environment of health measures, seizing opportunities and continuing to deliver innovative services that meet the needs of Torontonians. The lessons learnt in 2020 influenced organizational improvements of the Library's business planning and operations into 2021 and will continue to do so into the future. Provided below is a brief summary of some of the key activities from 2021.

In January 2021, Ontario entered the second State of emergency. During this time, TPL remained open, offering contactless service and curbside pickup.

Starting in February 2021, TPL began offering Grab & Go bags at most library branches. These bags contained staff curated materials on different topics and provided a means for customers to discover and explore new items, when browsing of the collection was restricted.

In early March 2021, Toronto re-entered the grey lockdown and stay-at-home orders were lifted. This was followed by the expansion of limited services at 81 branches. By early April, Ontario entered the third state of emergency and a province-wide shutdown was announced. Branches continued to remain open with limited services and curbside pickup. In support of the City's ongoing effort to ensure the wellbeing of all Torontonians, TPL began calling seniors to ensure they were aware of how to register for COVID-19 vaccinations. This outreach built on the Seniors' Wellness program that was launched in 2020 to connect with isolated customers during the pandemic. During the calls, TPL staff offered information provided by the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health, and connected them to Toronto Public Health or other appropriate resources. A total of 14,584 vaccination calls were made between April and June, on top of the 13,253 wellness check-in calls.

In May 2021, TPL partnered with Ontario Health to host five vaccination clinics at Parkdale, Maria A. Shchuka and Goldhawk Park branches. In total, 1,123 individuals were vaccinated as a result of targeted outreach. This initiative was supported by 46 TPL staff volunteers who helped run and set up the clinics.

In June 2021, restrictions were lifted as Ontario entered Step One of its Roadmap to Reopen. Services at TPL branches were expanded, returning to contactless circulation (indoors), allowing customer access to in-branch computers and the use of public restrooms. The quarantining of library materials was discontinued as was the curbside pickup service.

In July 2021, Ontario entered Step 3 of its Roadmap to Reopen. This allowed TPL to reinstate Step 2 followed quickly by Step 3 of the Library's reopening plan. Additional library services resumed, such as seating was made available again. And, capacity limits in branches increased to 25%.

In August 2021, the Library reinstated several services, including public access to the TD Gallery, Musical Lending Library, Piano Rooms, Digital Innovation Hubs, KidsStops and the Fabrication Studio. At the provincial level, the arrival of the 4th Wave of COVID-19 was announced and further reopening plans past Step 3 were paused. In hopes of slowing the wave and reducing transmissions, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health recommended that Toronto employers institute a COVID-19 vaccination policy. TPL announced shortly after that it would adopt the City's mandatory vaccine approach for staff.

In September 2021, the Province launched its vaccine certification system, along with a vaccine passport, limiting access to certain establishments to only those vaccinated against COVID-19. The Library implemented its mandatory vaccination policy, and

continued to reinstate several services such as public access to recording studios, pay phones, drinking fountains and its magazine collections.

In October 2021, the Province launched phase 2 of the vaccine passport system, using QR codes. This allowed the lifting of capacity limits in settings where showing proof of vaccination was a requirement. TPL began offering free printing services for vaccination certificates for the public, and lifted capacity limits and physical distancing requirements for library rental spaces. Additionally, Sunday library service resumed at 58 library branches.

By November 2021, more vaccination milestones against COVID-19 were reached, with 85% of Toronto residents fully vaccinated. Vaccines were approved for 5 to 11 year-olds and booster doses became available for particular at risk groups. By the end of October the first cases of the Omicron variant were confirmed in Ontario. Following through with its mandatory vaccination policy, TPL suspended unvaccinated staff or staff that did not disclose their vaccination status at the start of November. Staff were given until December 13 to submit proof of vaccination or would be terminated with cause. This deadline was extended to January 2nd, after updated guidance from Health Canada recommended increasing the interval between the two doses of the vaccine.

December 2021 saw the province's COVID-19 cases rapidly rise from the Omicron variant. Ontario paused the lifting of capacity limits and expanded booster eligibility to everyone over the age of 50, then quickly made them available to all adults in an effort to stop the spread. The availability of publicly funded PCR tests was reduced to only high risk symptomatic individuals. This lack of testing and rise in cases impacted library services, and opening hours for several branches were affected from the shortage of available staff who were quarantining.

In early January 2022, 44 branches would temporarily close, to allow TPL to focus on maintaining consistent services at the remaining locations. Despite many challenges, TPL continued to invest in and support its workforce in 2021, placing increased focus on building connections with the staff through regular town halls, providing remote work and training opportunities and by enforcing strict health and safety protocols.

Provided below is a more detailed look at some of TPL's successes from 2021, through the perspectives of the following four key stakeholders: Torontonians, customers, TPL as an organization and TPL staff.

Torontonians

As the pandemic completed its second year, TPL continued to play an essential role in the City's pandemic recovery and response, disseminating accurate information to the

public and helping to increase vaccine rates in hotspot communities. The library also continued to provide supports for those hardest hit by pandemic-related distress.

TPL partnered with various health agencies to support the equitable rollout of vaccines. The library also found ways to support Torontonians as they strived to manage and maintain their mental health throughout the pandemic.

- In May 2021, the Library offered pop-up vaccination clinics in partnership with Ontario Health at 5 branch locations; Parkdale, Maria A. Shchuka and Goldhawk Park.
- Over 46 TPL staff volunteers helped support this initiative.
- 1,123 people were vaccinated at these clinics.
- An information webpage set up by TPL on the vaccine clinics received over 11,000 views.
- TPL distributed over 3,372 Care Kits to vulnerable persons, ranging from winter warmth kits and hygiene kits to socks.
- The Library continued its Senior Wellness Check-In calls, while working to ensure that vulnerable seniors were aware of how to register for COVID-19 vaccinations. In 2021, a total of 14,936 vaccination calls were made, and 16,079 Senior Wellness Check-In calls.

While the pandemic helped accelerate the adoption of technology, this transformation was far from equitable and was not experienced evenly. For TPL, the pandemic acted as a catalyst for addressing digital disparities, and the library is committed to ensuring that Torontonians have equitable access to the digital infrastructure, resources and skills that have become even more essential in the new reality.

The library not only strengthened its commitment in providing digital infrastructure and literacy but also began to offer free tech assistance for seniors.

- In 2021, TPL conducted over 1,471 Seniors Tech Help sessions, teaching seniors how to use technology to access materials or critical services, as well as remain connected with friends and family.
- Together with the City and community partners, TPL identified eligible recipients for the Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending program and assisted in the distribution of 1,000 Wi-Fi hotspots.
- The Library equipped some of the City's most vulnerable residents with 365 Internet connectivity kits. The kits included laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and four months of unlimited data.
- Through the closures in 2021, the Library kept offering its Wi-Fi service at all locations, with an average of 3,638 daily sessions for the year. Average daily Wi-Fi Sessions increased 55% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.
- Digital Literacy Programs offered in 2021 include computer training, science, technology, engineering, and math, and saw a 100% fill rate and 97% customer satisfaction with the programs

TPL's digital communication channels (web, email, social) have been critical for customer service and communications during a crisis or emergency. More and more, the public has turned to the Library's digital channels to find the latest service information. This was especially important in the first few months of the pandemic where these channels were TPL's only mode of communications with the public. This explains the slight decrease in engagement with the Library's E-mail blasts during 2021, as restrictions were gradually lifted and library services resumed.

- In 2021, there were an average of 305,797 subscribers for the Library's email blasts, a decrease of 21% from 2020.
- The average open rate for the E-mail blasts remained constant at 62%, only 2% lower than in 2020.
- The average click rate in 2021 was 3.2%, 80% lower from the 16.2% average witnessed at the height of the pandemic in 2020.

TPL's Customers

During the pandemic, the Library had to rethink and redesign its service delivery model, adjusting for changing restriction levels in order to meet the needs of customers. In 2020, this shift helped push the rapid growth in use of TPL's digital collections. Despite intermittent lockdowns in 2021, the overall trend saw customers returning to TPL's branches in higher numbers than 2020, accompanied by a return to the use of in-branch services.

- In-branch visits steadily climbed by 77% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period in 2020, as restrictions eased and the vaccine rollout helped stem the spread of infections.
- The resurgence in customer visits was accompanied by a growth of other in-branch services such as Reserve-a-Computer (RAC). Sessions for RAC increased by 61% in Q2-Q4 2021, compared to the same period last year. On average, over 10% of visitors used a computer during the pandemic, down from over 20% prepandemic.
- To help compensate for the limited browsing and circulation caused by the lockdown periods of 2021, TPL continued its curbside pickup service until June. Additionally, in early 2021 the Library launched the "Grab & Go" bags service, through extensive promotion on all social media platforms. These pre-selected bags are curated by librarians, and organized by genre, age range or topics.
- The service proved incredibly popular with TPL customers. Customers praised Grab & Go for reinjecting exploration and chance discovery into their library experience, largely missing during the pandemic. Many positive reviews were from parents thrilled with the books curated for children. Overall, initiatives such as curbside pickup and "Grab & Go" bags accounted for roughly 40% of total physical checkouts in 2021.

Digital borrowing continued to remain strong in 2021, especially for services such OverDrive, PressReader, and BrainFuse as the ongoing demand for electronic resources helped push total checkouts to near prepandemic levels.

- OverDrive checkouts increased by 7% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year, for a total over 7.3 million checkouts. This sustained growth in 2021 is particularly impressive, as it follows a 38% increase seen in Q2-Q4 of 2020 from the same period in 2019.
- The frequency of users checking out 30 or more items from OverDrive increased by 20% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period in 2020 and over 100% since same period in 2019 suggesting there is a small proportion of users that are increasingly checking out more digital items.
- There was also increased appetite for PressReader as well, an online database offering access to newspapers and magazines from over 100 countries in over 60 languages. PressReader clickthroughs increased by 13% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year, having previously seen a 73% jump from the same period in 2019.
- Demand for BrainFuse, an online homework help service for students in grades K-12 remained constant in 2021, after experiencing rapid growth in the second half of 2020. Q2-Q4 2021 saw a small 3% increase in sessions versus 2020, while the same period in 2020 experienced an impressive 82% increase compared to Q2-Q4 of 2019.

Starting in March 2020, when all TPL branches closed, remote home access to Ancestry Library Edition was generously provided by Ancestry temporarily. Limited remote access ended in December of 2021. Throughout the pandemic, demand for Ancestry was high:

- During Q2-Q4 2020, the remote availability of the service resulted in a 275% increase in sessions from the same period in 2019, when service was only available in libraries.
- The same period in 2021 saw an increase of 77% from 2020.
- Ancestry Library Edition does not offer a remote option in their licences. Moving forward into 2022, the service will only be accessible on library computers. The hope is that access to the temporary remote service has sparked interest and will encourage customers to continue their research in-person as COVID restrictions continue to be lifted.

At the start of the pandemic, TPL quickly launched two initiatives to enable online library card registration, the Overdrive Instant Digital Card and the online card for City staff. By the end of 2020, online registration had settled into the Digital Access Card, which allowed customers to sign up for immediate access to the Library's digital resources.

- The Digital Access Card helped compensate for the reduced access to in-branch registration caused by lockdowns, and accounted for over one third of total registrations in 2021.
- Online registrations have served as a gateway to other library resources and services beyond digital, with roughly 16% of Digital Access Card holders converting to full service library cards within 14 days.
- Total registrations (online and in-branch) rebounded in the second half of 2021, nearing prepandemic levels and increased 35% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.

While there has been a clear upside to online programming for some customers, in-person programming still plays a significant role.

- In 2021, TPL was able to balance reopening efforts and maintain focus on both online programming and in-branch offers, with Library staff increasing delivery of both online and in-person programs by 212% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year. Delivery of online programs increased by 89% while the number of in-person programs increased by 502% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.
- The result being that total attendance for programs increased by 35% in Q2-Q4 2021, when compared to the same period in 2020.
- In a Q4 2021 online program survey, 30% of respondents indicated they would prefer to attend online programs while 40% said they preferred in-person programming.
- For some customers online programs were more accessible and anonymity allowed greater engagement. In fact, online program attendance increased by 17% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.
- Survey respondents mentioned connectivity and social interaction as some of the main reasons for preferring in-person versus online programs. In-person attendance increased by 904%, when compared to the same period in 2020.

TPL as an Organization

The pandemic has transformed the way that we work, accelerating the future of work to the present with hybrid work, training for future skills, plus investments in digital infrastructure. TPL continued to build on its experience from the first year of the pandemic. 2021 brought on a better, more certain outlook, aided by the increased availability of the vaccines and the lifting of restrictions. This allowed the Library to better refine and target its initiatives and direct resources and focus towards reopening efforts and the supporting the health and safety of staff.

Throughout the pandemic, staff have had to navigate between digital and physical workspaces. To improve staff's work experience, TPL deployed over 360 laptops. Staff training is a key strategic objective for TPL. Throughout the last two years of the pandemic, TPL's focus has been to improve virtual learning for staff and ramp up on-

demand training content. Engagement with subject matter experts, key investments in the hiring of staff to develop in-house content, along with the acquisition of new subscriptions have laid the groundwork to enable staff to access thousands of courses.

1,788 staff completed the Cybersecurity Awareness Training curriculum empowering them to adopt better digital practices. And, over 300 staff completed the Online Programming Training Curriculum on Learn:TPL to help support the delivery of online programs.

The lockdowns in 2020 reshaped customer behaviour and their engagement with the Library through the Answerline service. In 2021, Answerline continued to be relied upon to answer questions and help navigate and clarify the changing levels of service and closures. In 2021 customers showed increased preference for engaging digitally through instant chat services, rather than using email or the telephone service.

- Overall, customer engagement with Answerline by chat increased by 155% in 2021 compared to 2020.
- Phone calls to Answerline decreased slightly by 3% in 2021 compared to 2020. The service was not offered for two months in 2020. When comparing periods where the service was available (i.e. June to December), the number of calls declined by 7% in 2021 versus the same period in 2020.
- Email service from Answerline was never interrupted, and when comparing 2021 to 2020 there was a decrease of 29% in the number of emails received.

As the first line of contact with the Library throughout the pandemic, the Answerline service and staff worked hard to adapt operations and to ensure that customer satisfaction remained a top priority. Customer engagement metrics for Answerline services were introduced in June of 2020, to measure customer satisfaction and helpfulness.

- Average customer satisfaction rose by 6% in 2021, for the period of June to December, from 87% in 2020 to 93% in 2021.
- Similarly, customer satisfaction with the level of helpfulness of Answerline staff increased by 5% in 2021, from 88% in 2020 to 93% in 2021.

Throughout the pandemic, TPL has made the health and safety of staff a top priority by rigorously maintaining and updating safety protocols, providing updated PPE to staff, and following directions from Toronto Public Health.

- Staff were supported and provided with access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). 222 calls were made by staff to EAP in 2021. Calls were down 6% when we compare Q2-Q4 2021 with the same period in 2020.
- Staff confirmed Covid cases remained low, with an average of 4 cases per month between September 2020 and November 2021. Staff cases jumped to 52 in December 2021 with the Omicron wave.

TPL Staff

In 2021, staff worked hard to maintain high levels of service for the public, working to support the new services and initiatives that were created in response to the lockdowns, while also working on the safe and gradual reopening process of branches and in-branch services.

Staff use and engagement with the Learning Management System (Learn:TPL) increased in 2021. Staff made training a priority inspite of increased responsibilities stemming from reopening efforts. Launched mid-way in 2020, the immediate focus has been to offer more asynchronous and on-demand content, while working to promote and engage with staff on upcoming training opportunities.

- The average number of staff completing at least one learning object rose by 11% between June to December 2021 compared to same period in 2020. On average 1,151 staff completed at least one learning object each month.
- The number of learning objects completed by staff also increased by 115%, for a total of 73,186 learning objects completed in 2021.
- The LMS team researched and acquired two new training content subscriptions in 2021, enabling staff to access hundreds of courses.
- The process of assigning training to staff was also automated, significantly improving the rollout and tracking of assignments.

In 2021, TPL continued its commitment to organizational communication, working on better engagement with staff across TPL about COVID-19 and operational impacts. Staff were strongly motivated to tune in for updates and ask questions through the Monthly Staff Town Halls.

- Total staff live attendance to the 10 Staff Town Halls conducted in 2021 was 3,524, with an average of 352 staff attending each town hall.
- Staff satisfaction with the staff town halls reached 71% in 2021.

CONCLUSION

The monthly COVID-19 Impact Report has proven effective for the analysis of the pandemic's impact on Library services and operations to the TPL Leadership Team. Retrospective reports such as this one have demonstrated the Library's commitment to accountability, evaluation and transparency in supporting evidence-based decision-making through the various stages of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 Impact Analysis has also informed the update of the balanced scorecard metrics, targets and initiatives, and supported the development of divisional scorecards in the organization. The transition away from the COVID-19 impact reports to the Library's operational reporting on services has been completed.

This will be the final COVID-19 Impact Report to the Board. However, as TPL moves into the post-pandemic future, it will continue to measure and assess the impact of the pandemic on the community, customers, organization and staff.

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: COVID-19 Impact Report: 2021 Year in Review

COVID-19 Impact Report: January to December 2021

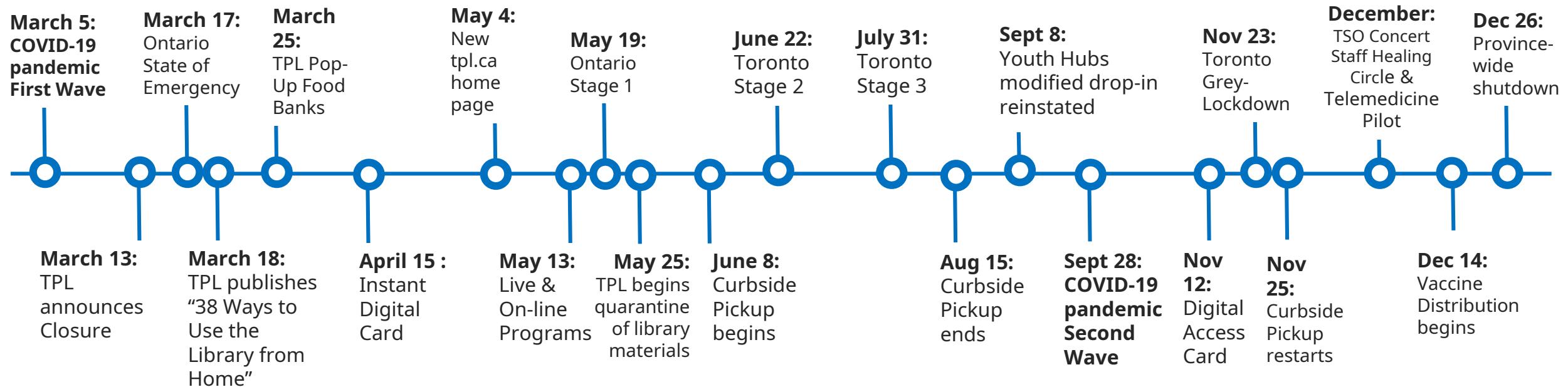
Toronto Public Library Board

April 25, 2022



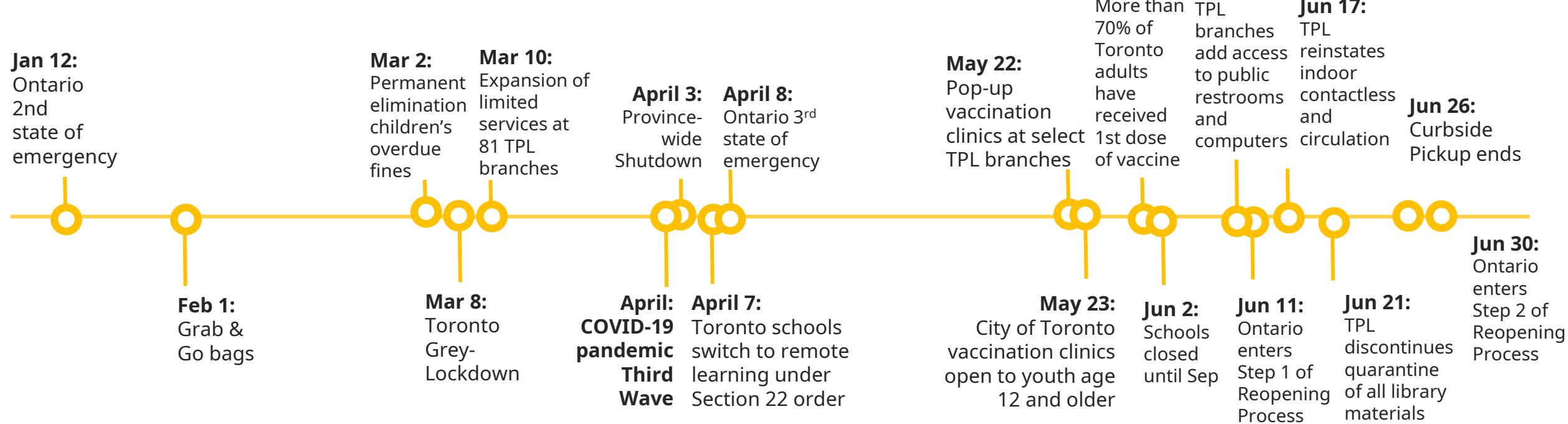
COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline of Events

2020



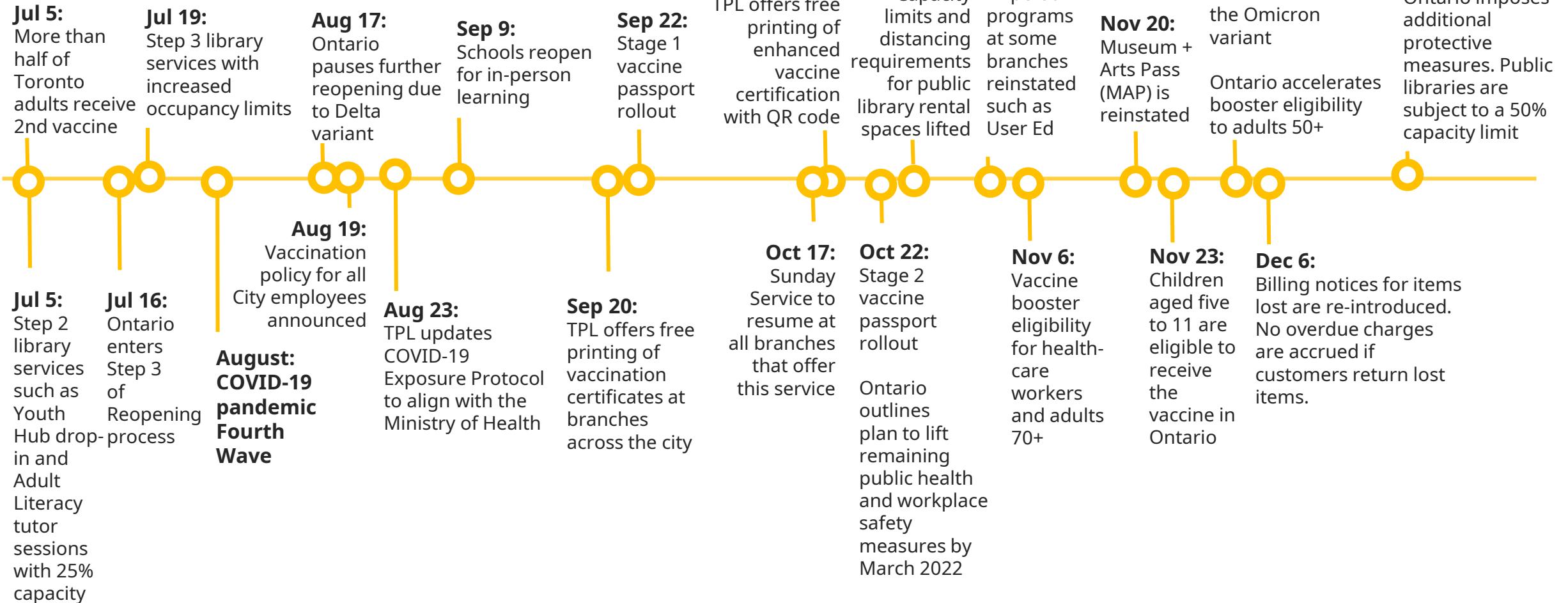
COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline of Events

2021



COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline of Events

2021



Torontonians:

- Throughout the pandemic, it has been clear that COVID-19 has had an outsized impact on marginalized communities, exposing health and digital disparities.
- TPL continued to play an essential role in the City's pandemic recovery and response, disseminating accurate information to the public and helping to increase vaccine rates in hotspot communities.
- TPL continued to provide supports for those hardest hit by pandemic-related distress.
- TPL is committed to ensuring that Torontonians have equitable access to the digital infrastructure, resources and skills that have become even more essential in the new reality.

TPL's customers:

- In year two of the pandemic, we saw a swing back to physical borrowing buoyed by innovative initiatives like "Grab & Go".
- Digital borrowing continued to be strong especially for OverDrive, PressReader, and BrainFuse which helped to push total checkouts to near prepandemic levels.
- Online registrations have served as a gateway to other library resources and services beyond digital. Roughly 16% of Digital Access cardholders converted to full service library cards within 14 days.
- For some customers there was a clear upside to being able to interact with programs online as it meant improved access and engagement. However, in-person programming still plays a significant role as customers tend to prefer to attend in-person for social interaction and connectivity.

TPL as an organization:

- The pandemic has transformed the way that we work, accelerating the future of work to the present with hybrid work, training for future skills, plus investments in digital infrastructure.
- Development and delivery of online programs was a learning experience for TPL and for TPL staff.
- TPL continued to build on its experience from the first year of the pandemic, refining its initiatives, focusing on the reopening effort and supporting the health and safety of staff.

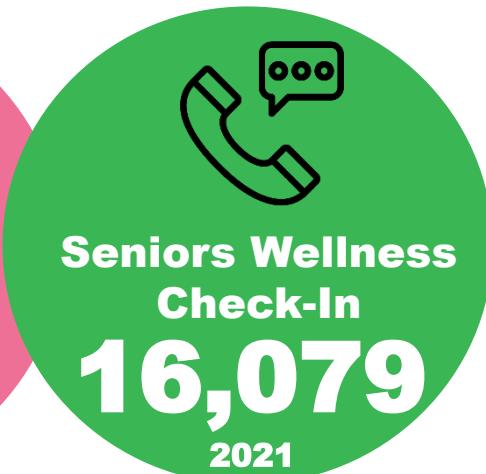
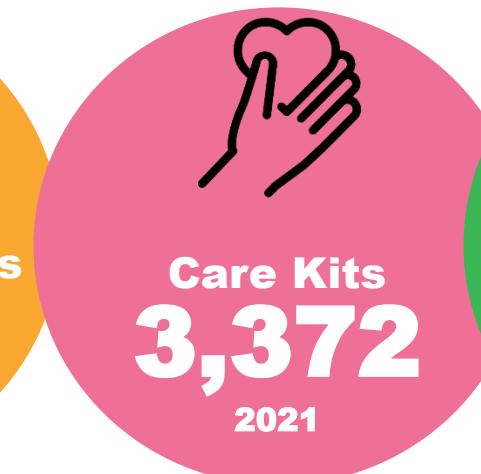
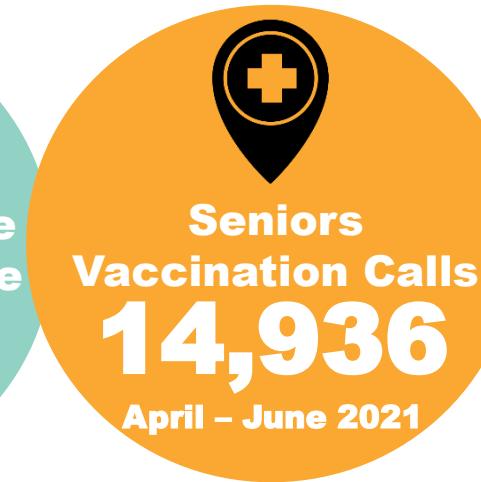
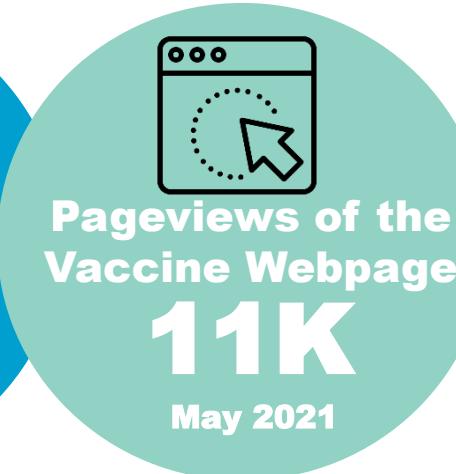
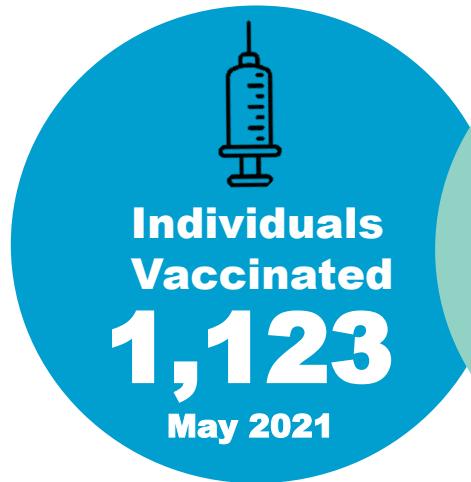
TPL staff:

- In 2021, staff worked hard to maintain high levels of service for the public, balancing the support of new services and initiatives created in response to the lockdowns and working on the safe and gradual reopening process of branches and in-branch services.

01 TORONTANIANS

TPL continued to play an essential role in the City's pandemic recovery and response, disseminating accurate information to the public and helping to increase vaccine rates in hotspot communities. The library also continued to provide supports for those hardest hit by pandemic-related distress.

TPL partnered with various health agencies to support the equitable rollout of vaccines. The library also found ways to support Torontonians as they strived to manage and maintain their mental health throughout the pandemic.



01 TORONTONIANS

The pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology but the transformation was experienced unevenly. The library is committed to ensuring that Torontonians have equitable access to the digital infrastructure, resources and skills that have become even more essential in the new reality.

The pandemic was a catalyst for addressing digital disparities. The library not only strengthened its commitment in providing digital infrastructure and literacy but also began to offer free tech assistance for seniors.

Seniors Tech Help

1,471 calls/ emails/ appointments

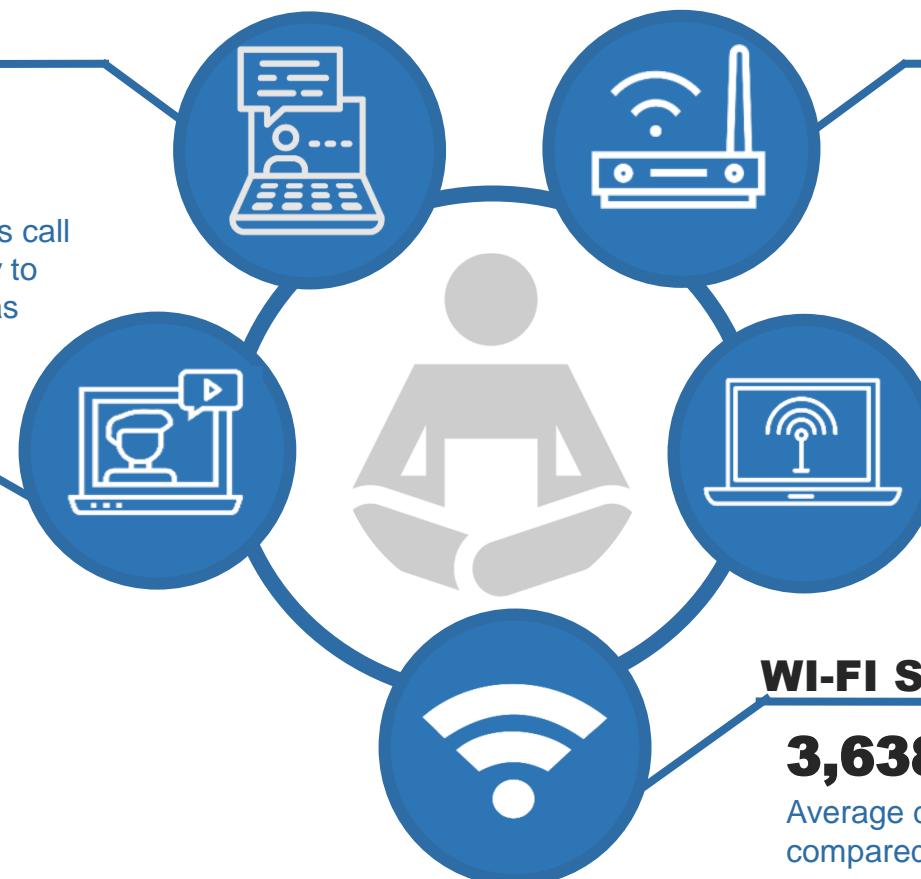
Customers who are seniors or their caregivers call to receive free help on how to use technology to access materials or critical services, as well as connect with friends and family.

Digital Literacy Programs

100% fill rate

97% customer satisfaction

Programs include computer training, science, technology, engineering, and math.

**Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending**

1,000 Wi-Fi hotspots

Together with the City and community partners, TPL identified eligible recipients for the Wi-Fi Hotspot Lending program and assisted in the distribution.

Internet Connectivity Kits

365 kits distributed

TPL equipped some of our city's most vulnerable residents with internet connectivity kits. The kits included laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots, and four months of unlimited data.

Wi-Fi Sessions

3,638 average daily sessions

Average daily Wi-Fi Sessions increased 55% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year.

E-mail blasts were effectively used to communicate the availability of TPL's services throughout the course of the pandemic.



62.2%
Average open rate
2021

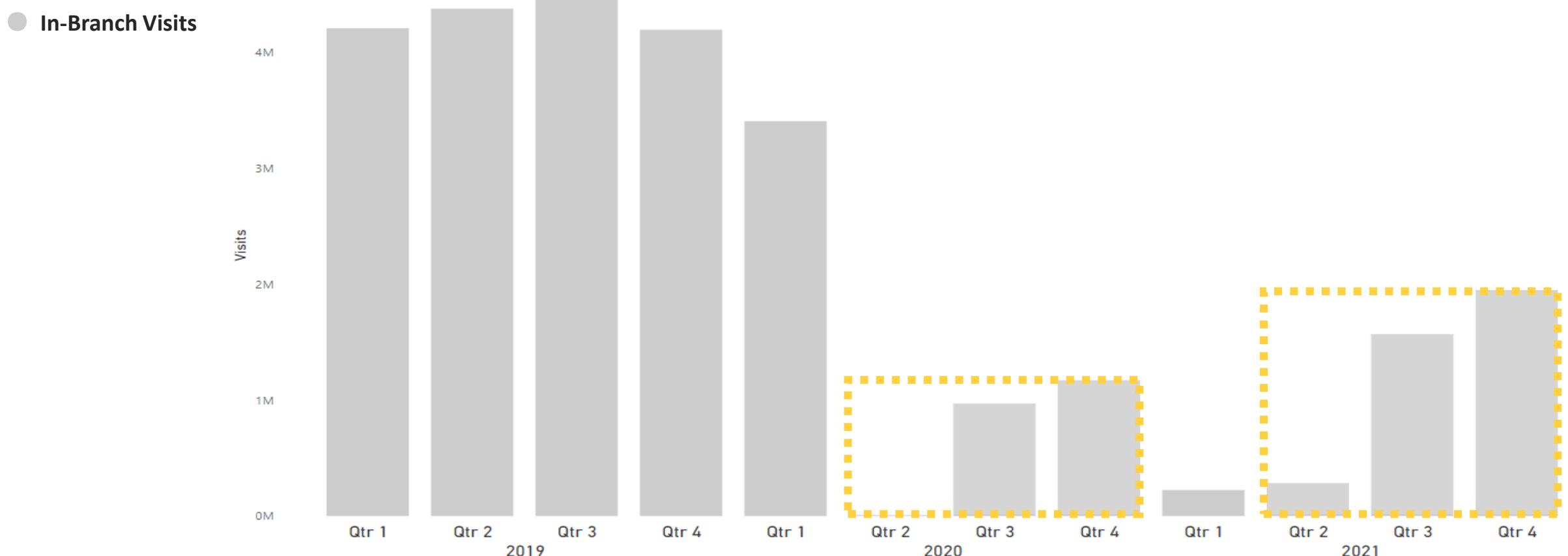
3.2%
Average click rate
2021

305,797
Average number of e-mail blast
subscribers in 2021

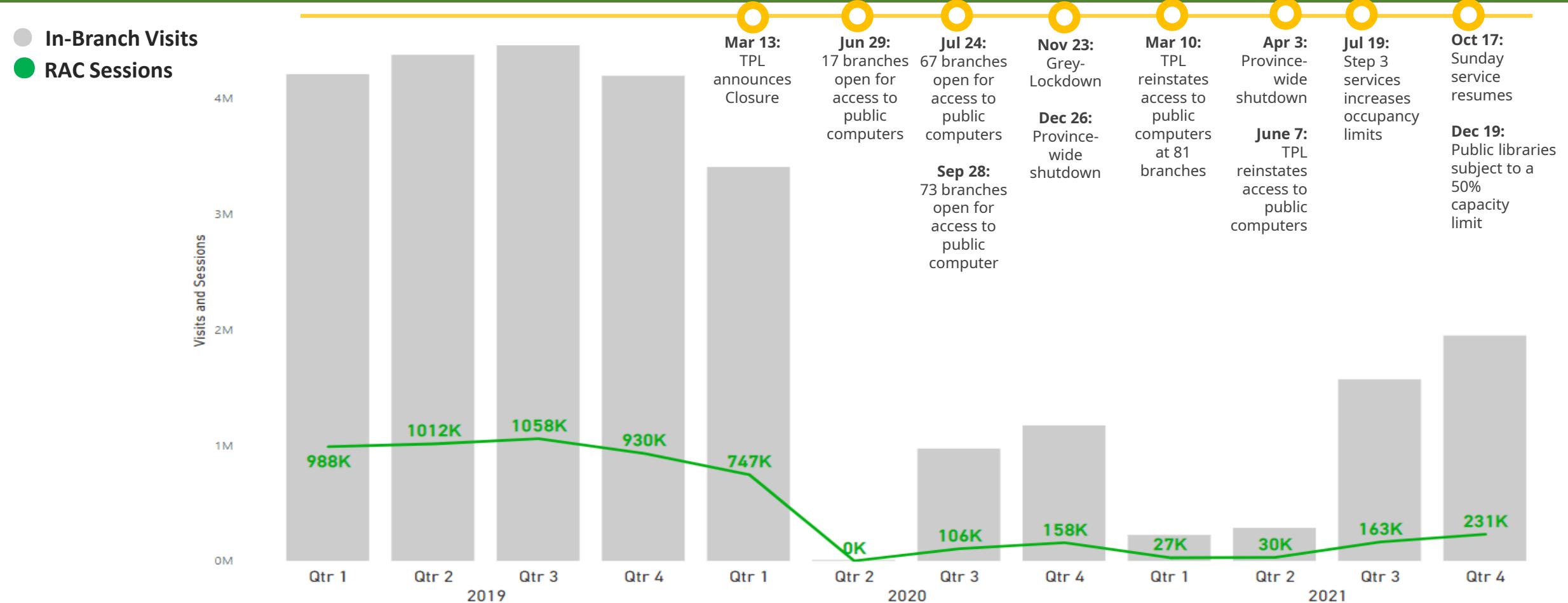
02 TPL'S CUSTOMERS

In year two of the pandemic, we saw a swing back to physical borrowing buoyed by innovative initiatives such as “Grab & Go”.

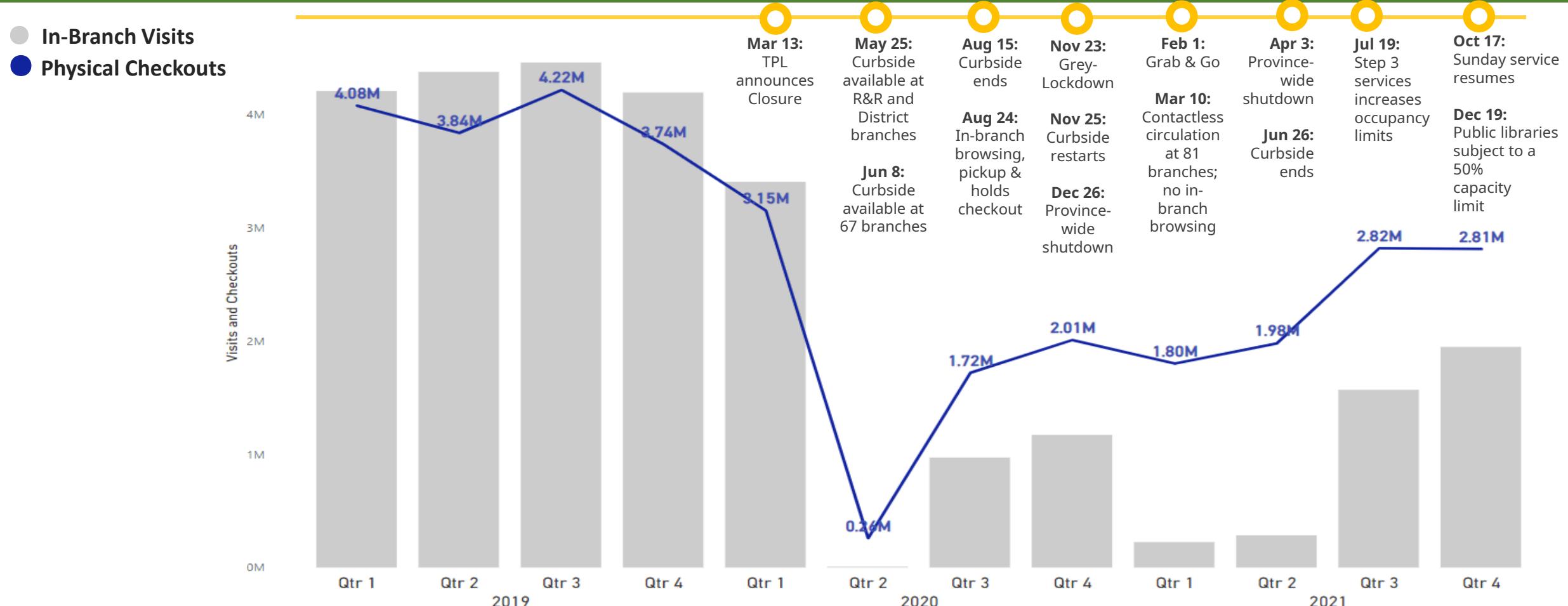
Intermittent lockdowns continued to suppress in-person visits in 2021. However, visits steadily climbed 77% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year as restrictions eased and the vaccine rollout helped stem the spread of infections.



Reserve-A-Computer sessions also increased in Q2-Q4 2021 by 61%, compared to the same period last year. On average, over 10% of visitors used a computer during the pandemic, down from over 20% prepandemic.



Continuation of curbside pickup and new initiatives such as “Grab & Go” compensated for the lockdown periods that limited browsing and circulation, accounting for roughly 40% of total physical checkouts in 2021.



Customers praised Grab & Go for reinjecting exploration and chance discovery into their library experience, which was largely missing during the pandemic. Many positive reviews were from parents thrilled with the children's books that TPL staff curated.



Some of the libraries in Toronto are doing this brilliant 'grab and go' scheme for people who don't want to spend time inside browsing, but want to borrow books. I am intrigued by the 'murder and cats' grab bag 😊

9:41 PM · Apr 15, 2021 · Twitter for Android

232 Retweets 50 Quote Tweets 1,593 Likes



11h · View on Twitter

I love reading now. New books are so exciting! - 6yo after leaving our local @torontolibrary

Besides keeping everyone healthy, making sure she didn't lose her new reading skills during virtual school was my only other goal. Parenting achievement unlocked! <https://t.co/qyjHFWxJd>

Melanie



In reply to [...](#) and 1 more

Claire 32 mins ago

We picked up grabbed bags last week! One for me, one for my mom and one for my toddler! They didn't disappoint! It was like opening the best birthday present ever!



3:04 PM · 80% ...

West Rouge Residents

Like Comment Send

Good afternoon West Rouge!

Highland Creek library offering 'Grab and Go' book bags filled with great reads for all age groups. The librarians are super helpful and are happy to find some great reads for your family 📚.

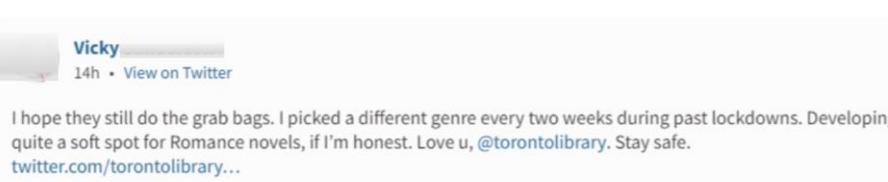
My son thought it was Christmas with all the awesome books the library found for him 😊.

Social distancing/Covid restrictions are still in place if you go.

Happy Reading !!! ❤️

40 16 Comments

Like Comment Send



Vicky 14h · View on Twitter

I hope they still do the grab bags. I picked a different genre every two weeks during past lockdowns. Developing quite a soft spot for Romance novels, if I'm honest. Love u, @torontolibrary. Stay safe. twitter.com/torontolibrary...

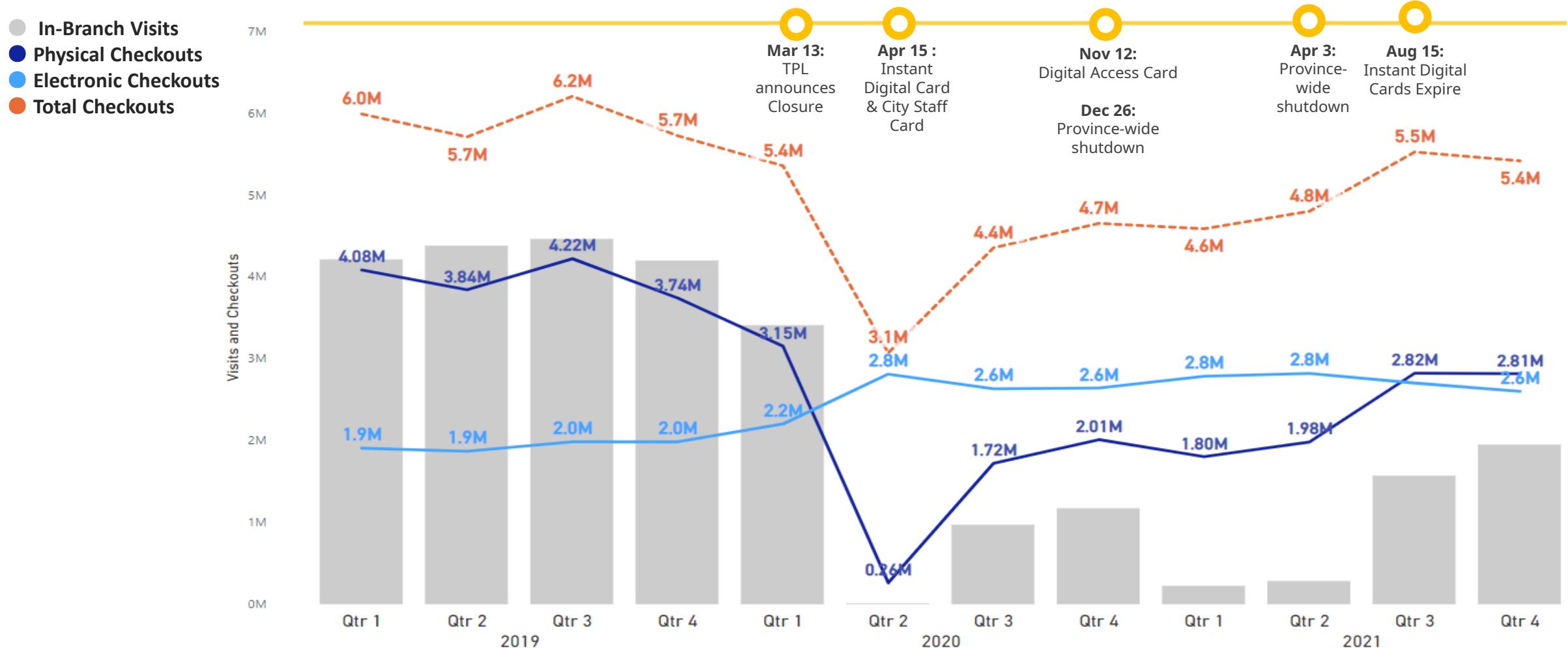
This is amazing! What a creative solution and way to introduce new authors, books you might never have stumbled on and classics! Good job @torontolibrary

1:22 PM · Apr 16, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

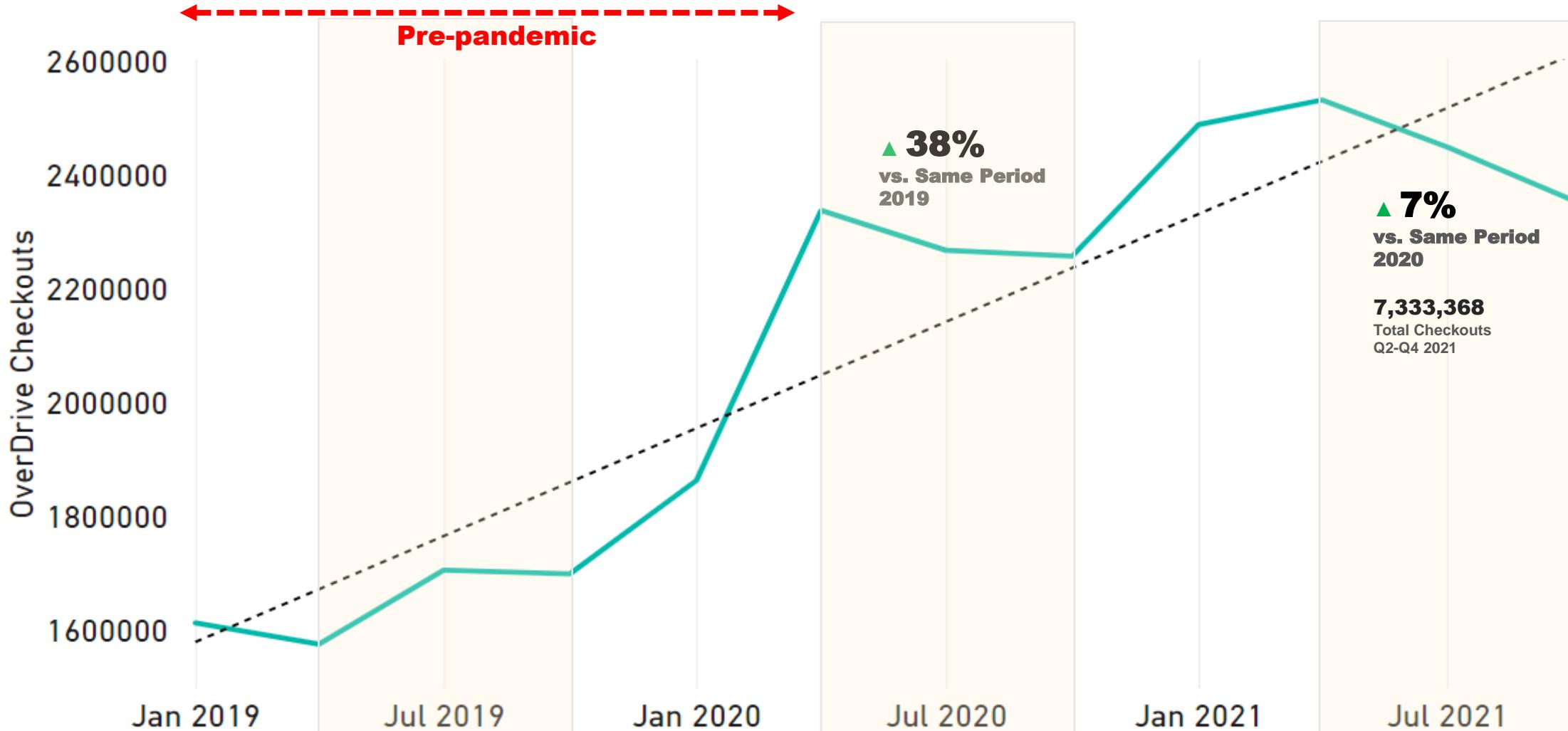
02 TPL'S CUSTOMERS

Digital borrowing continued to be strong especially for OverDrive, PressReader, and BrainFuse which helped to push total checkouts to near prepandemic levels.

Ongoing demand for electronic resources remained strong in 2021, helping to push total checkouts to near prepandemic levels.

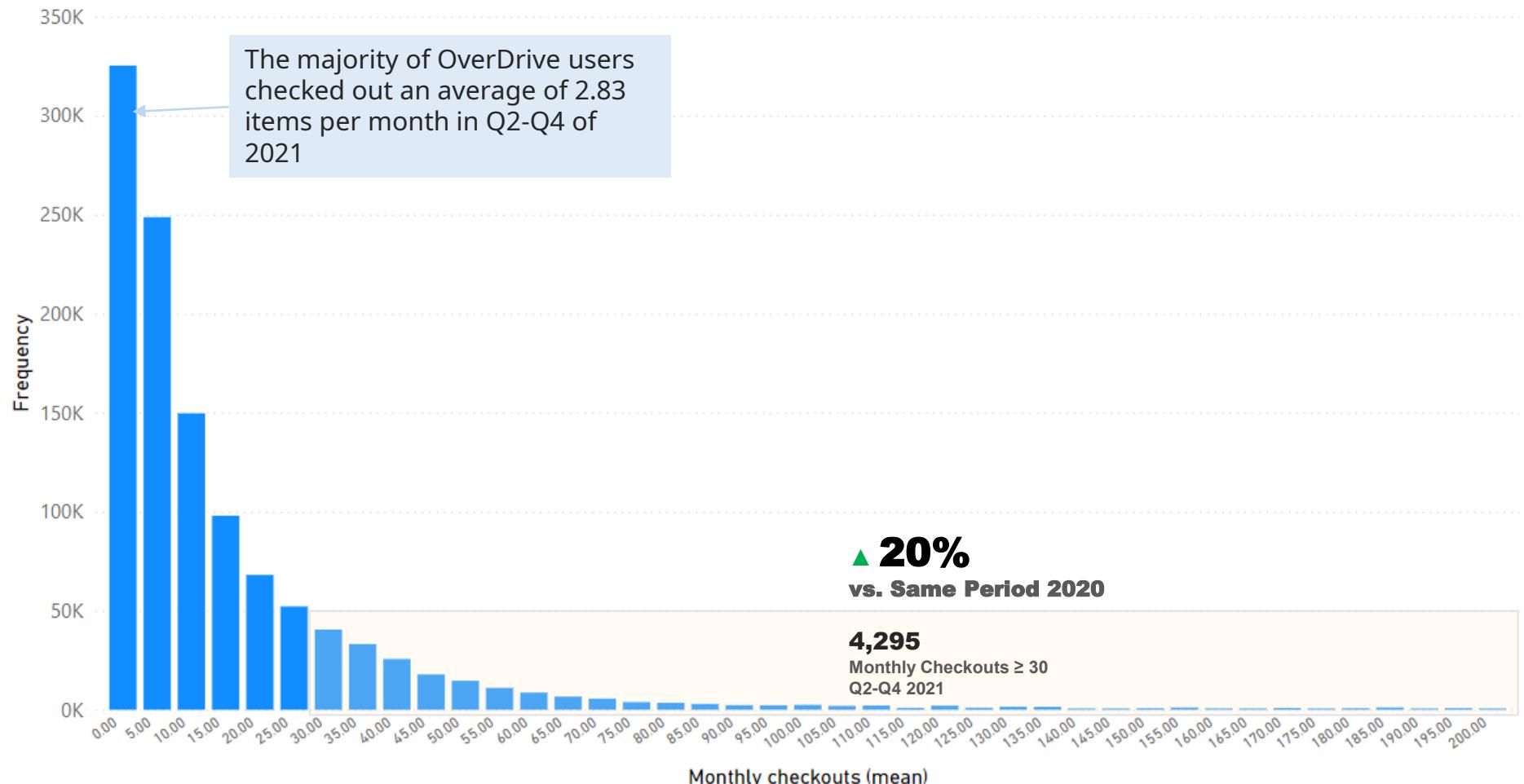


Total OverDrive checkouts increased 7% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year.

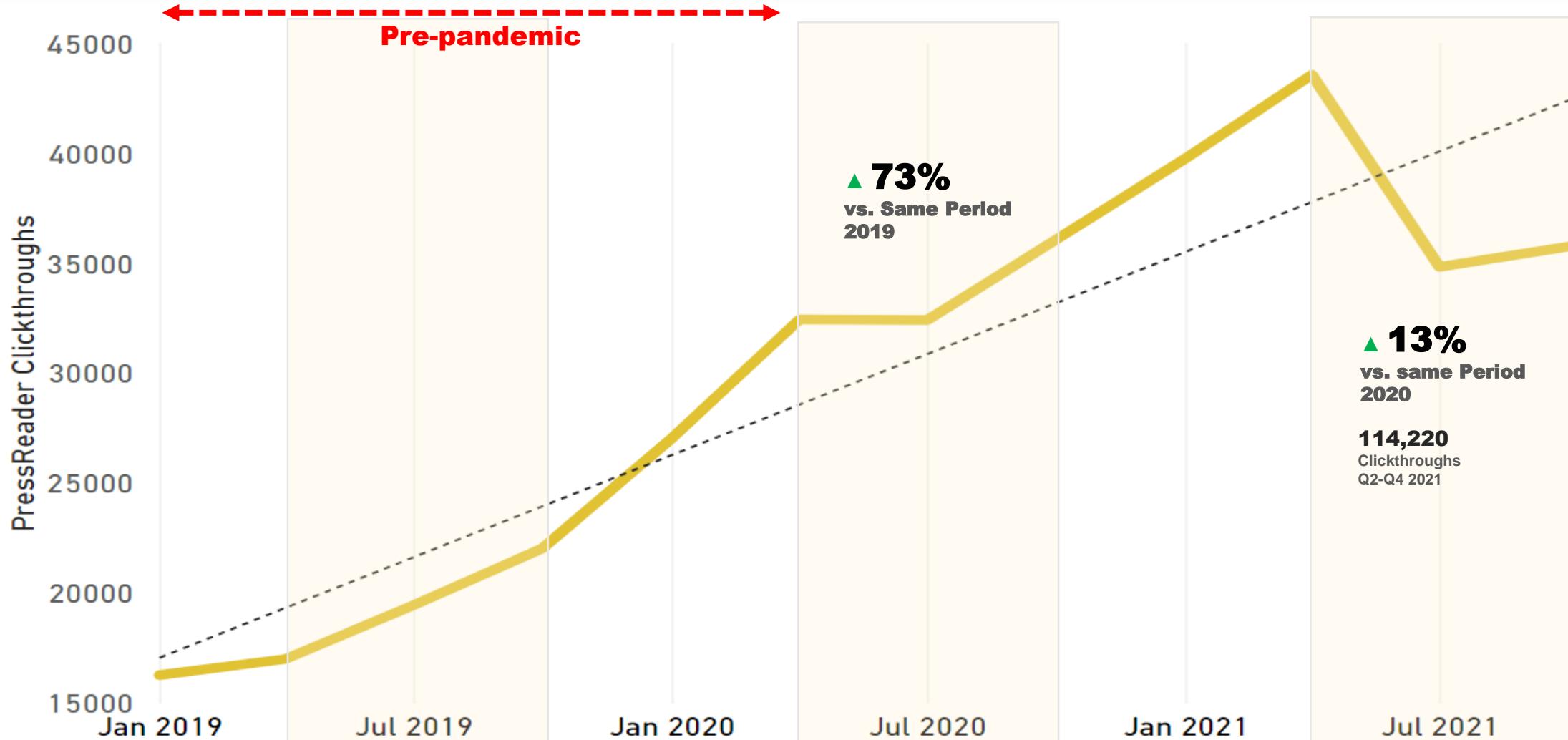


Frequency of users checking out 30 or more items monthly from OverDrive increased by 20% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.

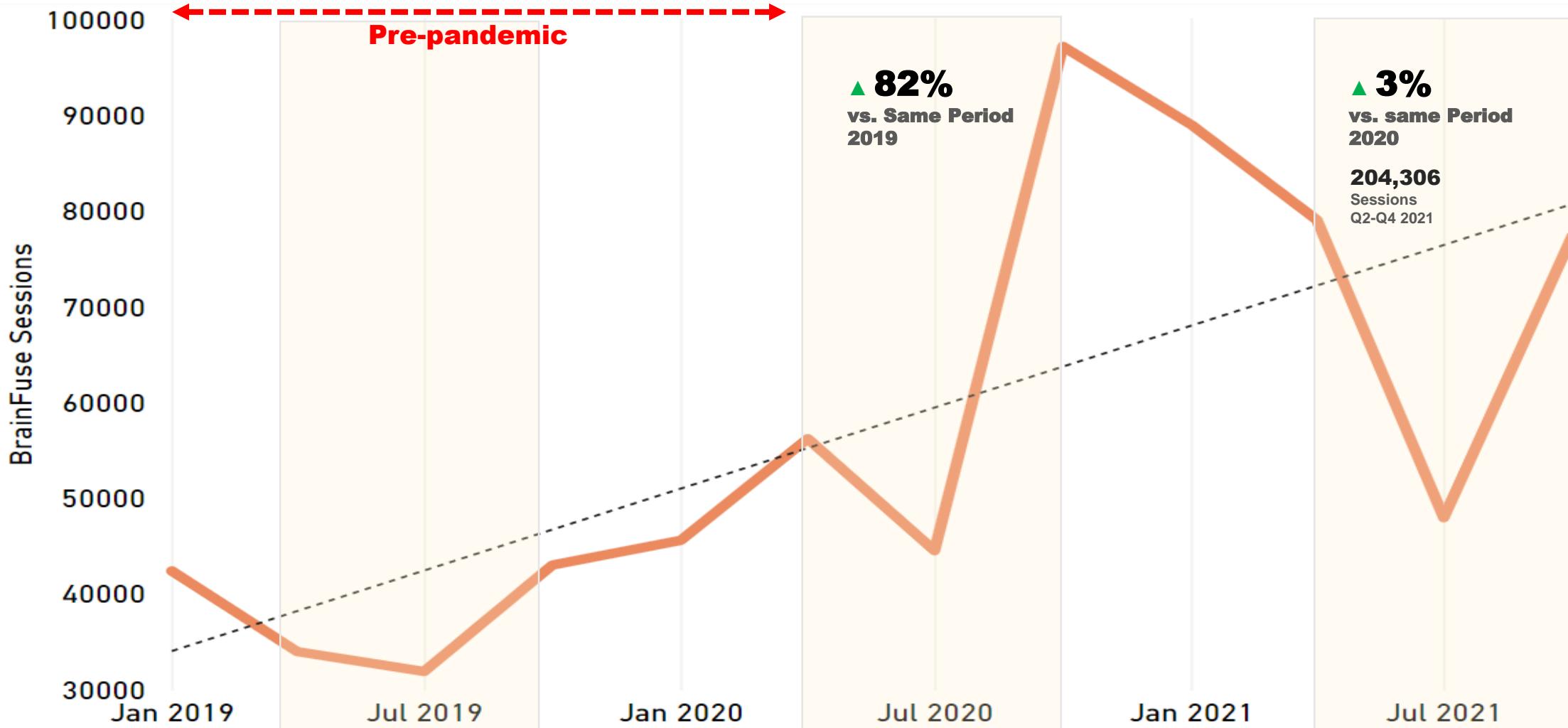
Average Monthly Checkouts Per User



PressReader clickthroughs increased 13% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year.



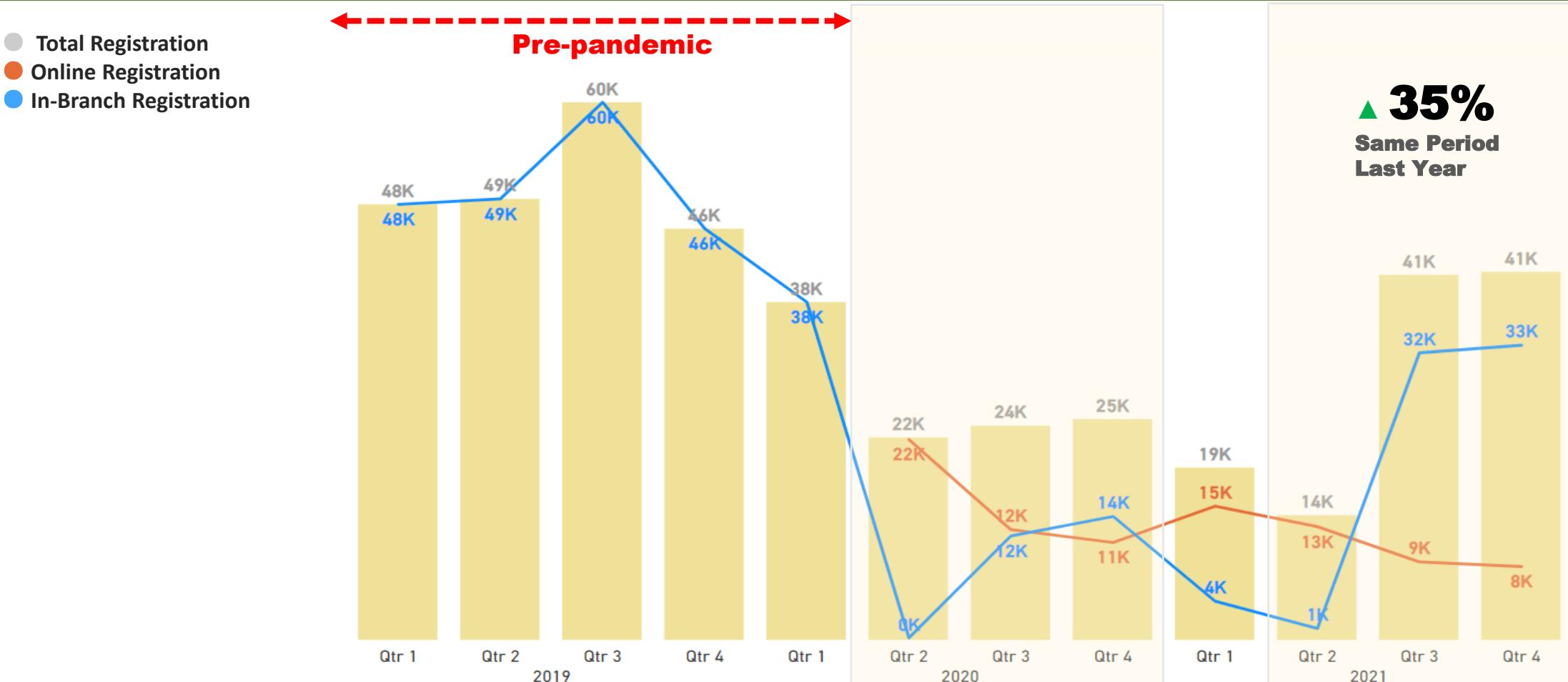
Demand for BrainFuse stayed constant in 2021 after a rapid climb in the second half of 2020. Compared to Q2-Q4 of 2019, sessions rose 82% in 2020.



02 TPL'S CUSTOMERS

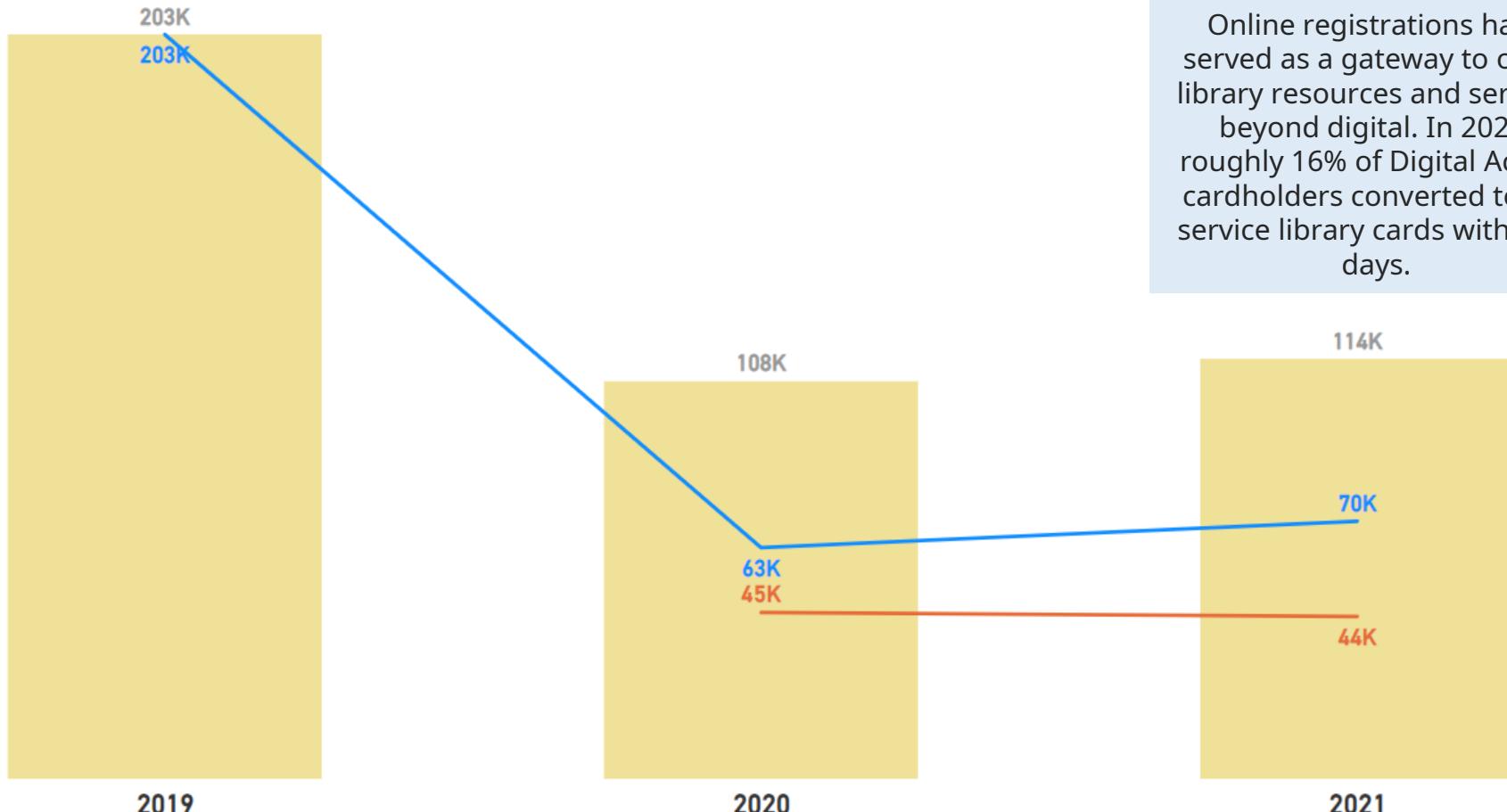
Online registrations have served as a gateway to other library resources and services beyond digital. And, while there has been a clear upside to online programming for some customers, in-person programming still plays a significant role.

Total registrations rebounded in the second half of 2021, nearing prepandemic levels and increased 35% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year.



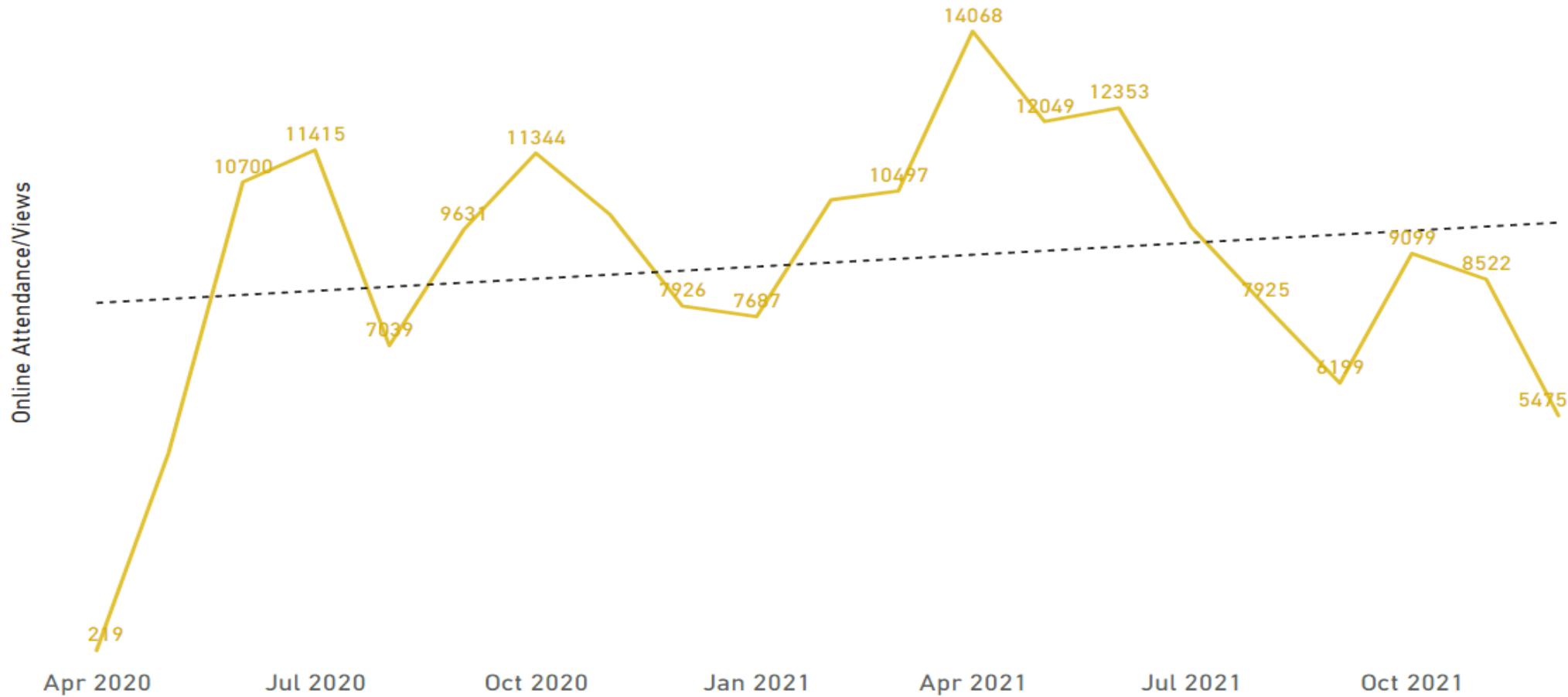
TPL's acceleration of online registration allowed customers to sign up for immediate access to TPL's digital resources and accounted for over one third of total registrations in 2021.

- Total Registration
- Online Registration
- In-Branch Registration



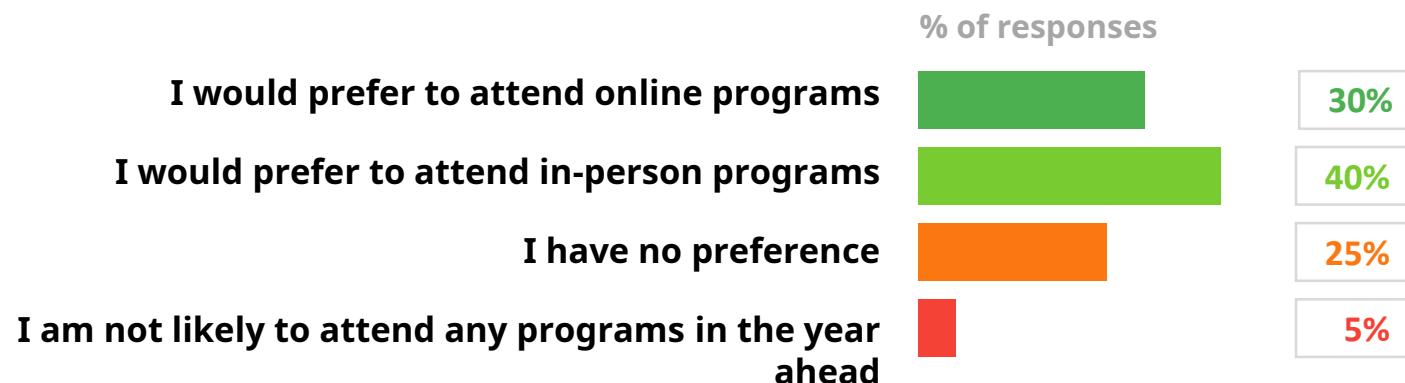
Online registrations have served as a gateway to other library resources and services beyond digital. In 2021, roughly 16% of Digital Access cardholders converted to full service library cards within 14 days.

For some customers there was a clear upside to attend programs online as it meant improved access and engagement. Online program attendance increased by 17% in Q2-Q4 2021 compared to the same period last year.

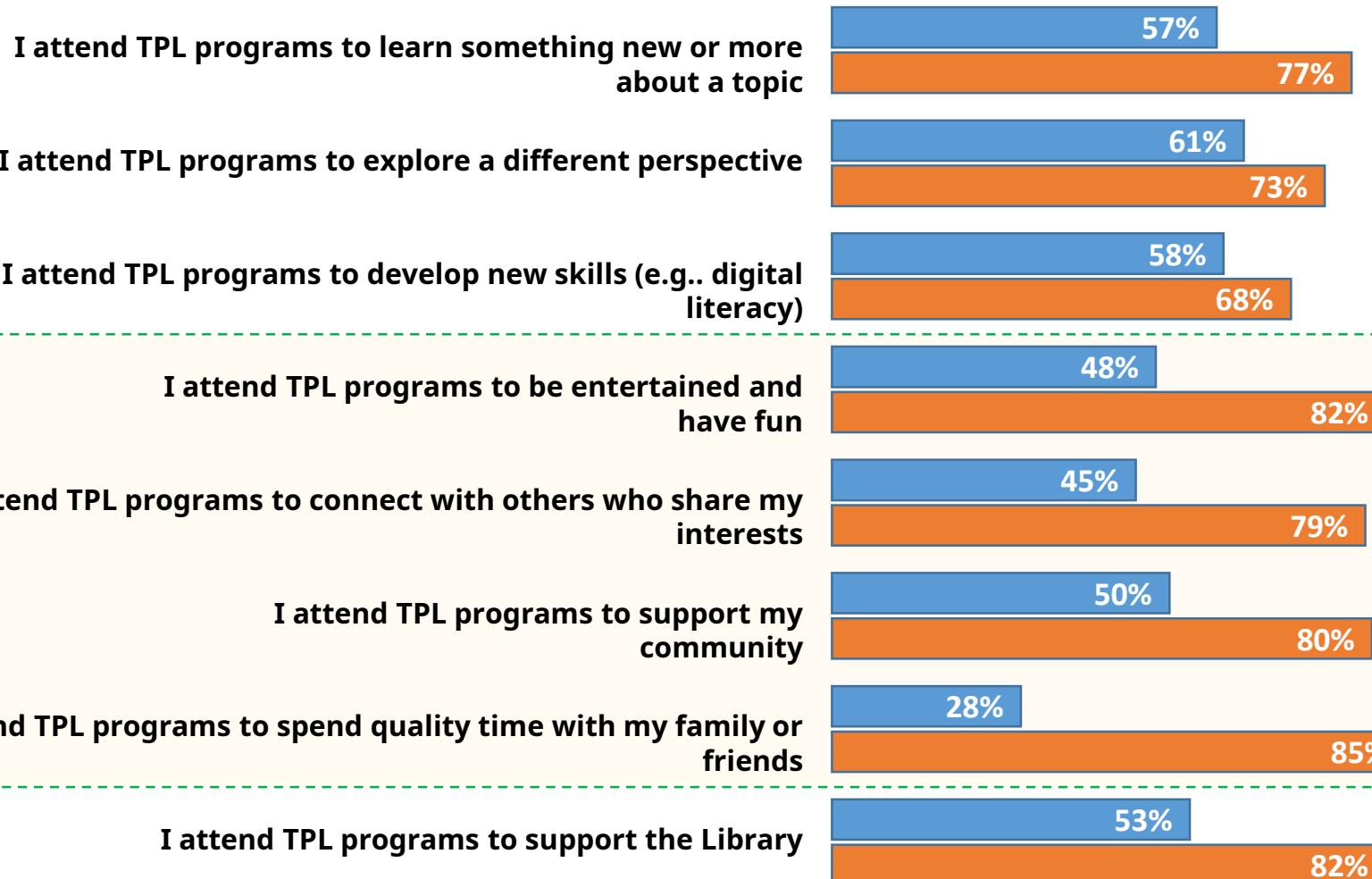


From the 2021 Online Programs Survey, 30% of respondents indicated they would prefer to attend online programs. However, in-person programming still plays a significant role as 40% responded they still prefer that channel.

In the year ahead, would you be more inclined to attend in-person programs at a branch or online programs? (Sample = 1k)



Connectivity and social interaction are some of the main reasons customers cite for attending programs in-person.



ONLINE programs
IN-PERSON programs

Sample = 999

03 TPL AS AN ORGANIZATION

The pandemic has transformed the way that we work, accelerating the future of work to the present with hybrid work, training for future skills, plus investments in digital infrastructure. TPL continued to build on its experience from the first year of the pandemic, refining its initiatives, focusing on the reopening effort and supporting the health and safety of staff.

Throughout the pandemic, staff have had to navigate between digital and physical workspaces. To improve staff's work experience, TPL deployed over 360 laptops and empowered staff to adopt better digital practices.



**Cybersecurity
Awareness Training
on Learn TPL**

1,788

Curriculum Completed
2021



**Laptops Deployed
To Staff**

360+

Laptops*

Note: Deployment of laptops includes those as recent as publication of this report

Development and delivery of online programs was a learning experience for TPL and for TPL staff. In 2021, the online programming training curriculum was launched to help support staff delivering online programs.

Online Programming Training on Learn TPL

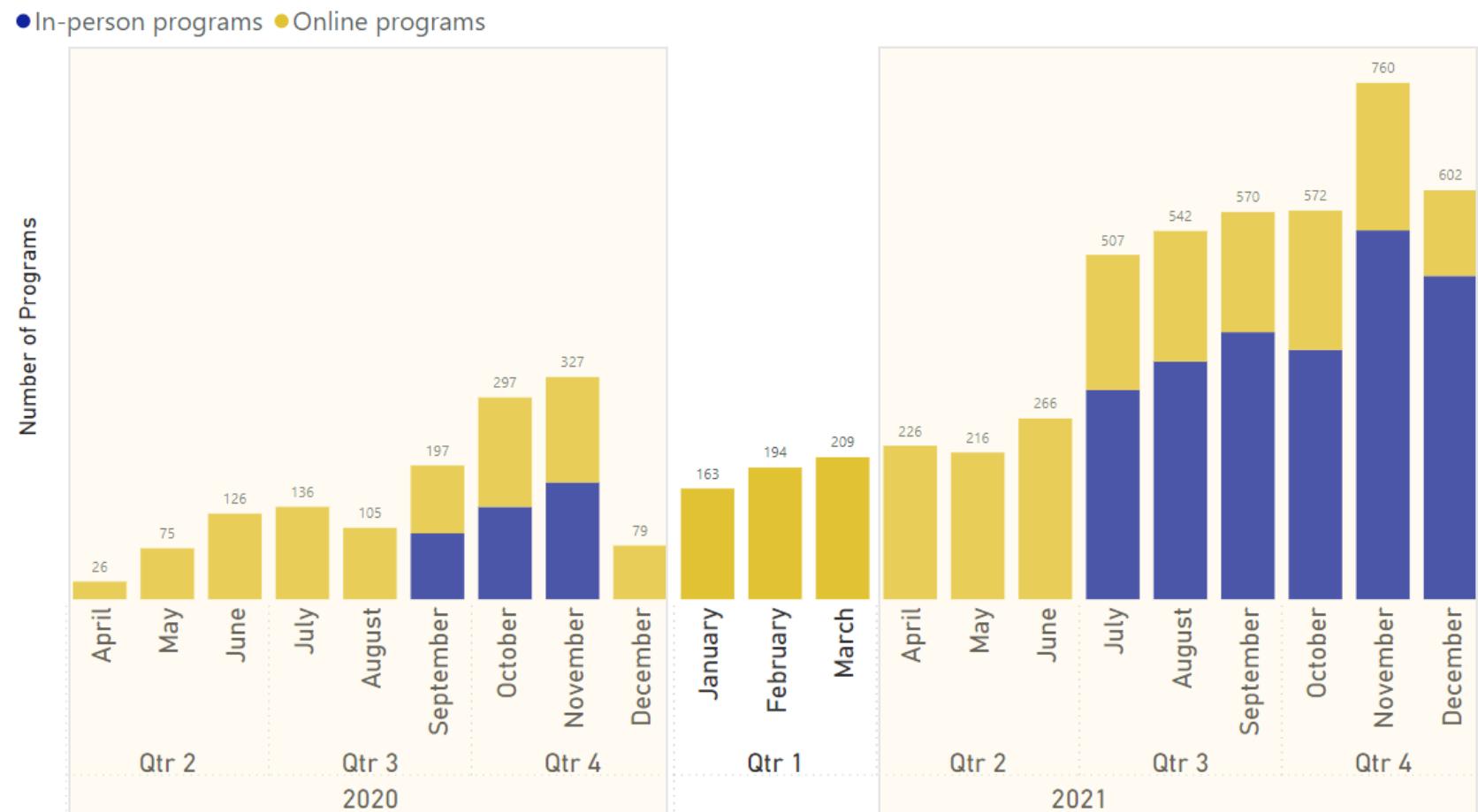
326

Curriculum
Completed

1,603
Knowledge Tests
Taken

829
Videos Watched

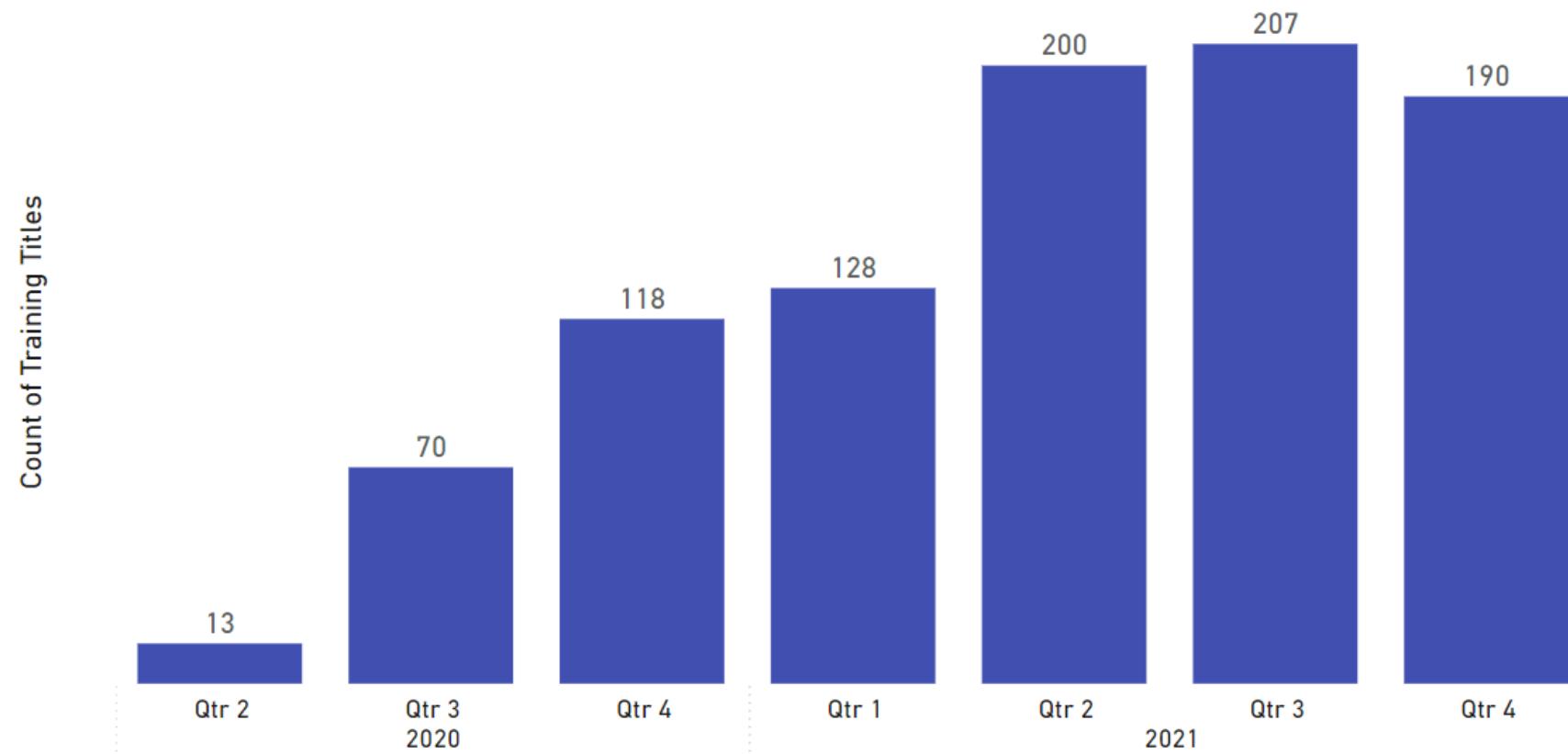
638
Transcripts/Bulletins
Read



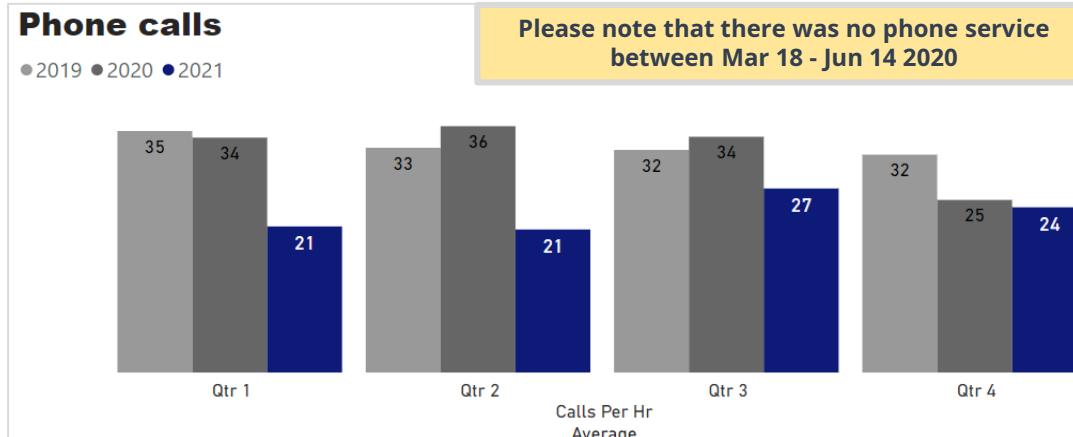
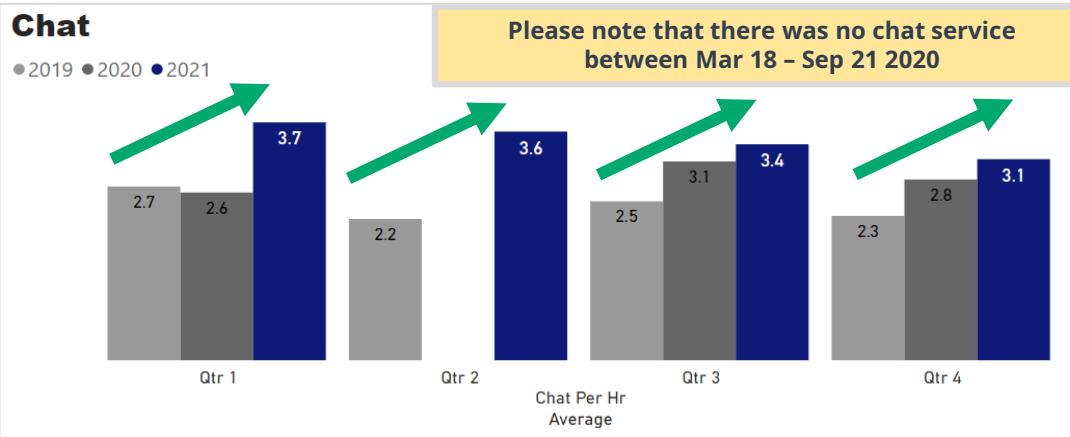
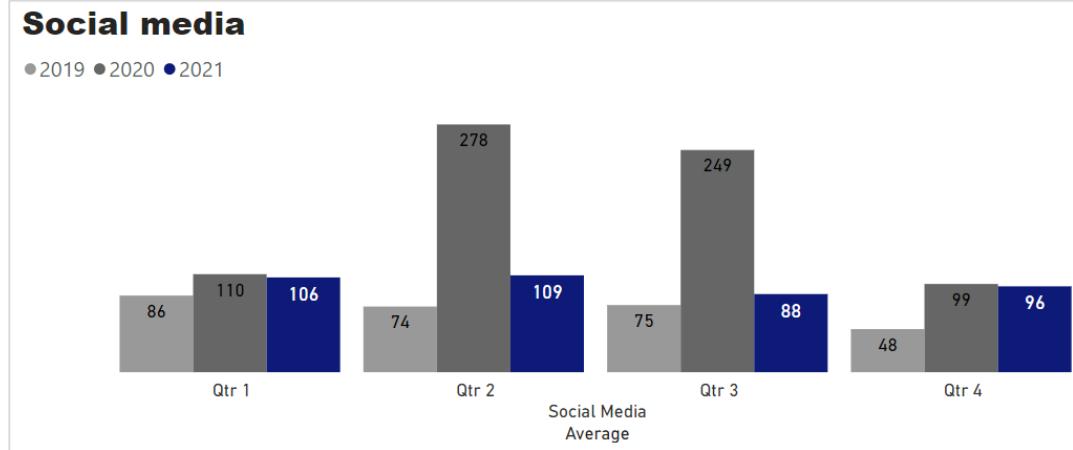
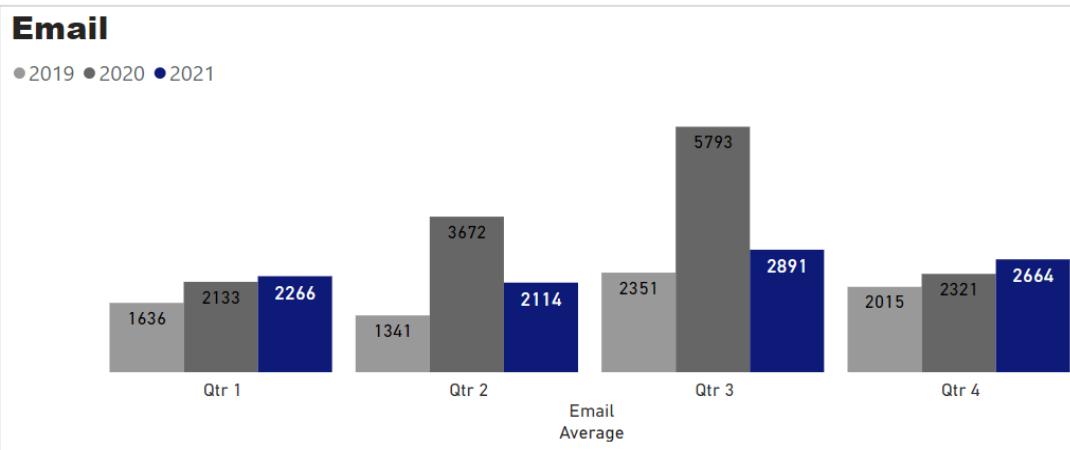
03 TPL AS AN ORGANIZATION

Throughout the last two years of the pandemic, TPL's focus has been to improve virtual learning for staff and ramp up on-demand training content. Engagement with subject matter experts, key investments in the hiring of staff to develop in-house content, along with the acquisition of new subscriptions have laid the groundwork to enable staff to access hundreds of courses on Learn:TPL.

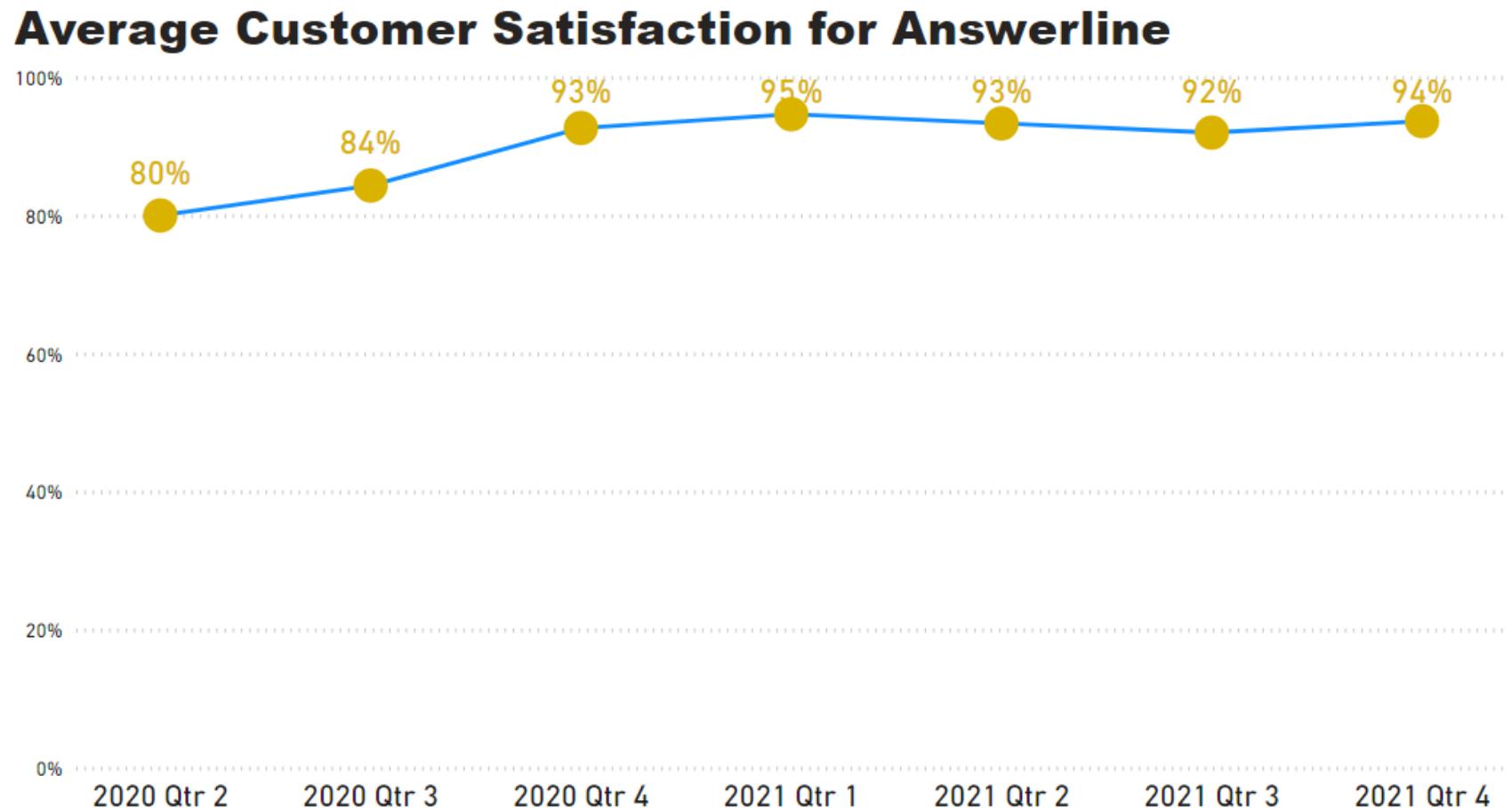
Learning Objects Available



Answerline continued to be heavily relied on to answer questions and help navigate the changing levels of service and closures. Customers showed increased preference for engaging digitally through instant chat services.



In 2021, satisfaction levels for Answerline's services rose by 6%, reflecting the organization's and the department's dedication to improving customer satisfaction.



The organization's efforts to support staff safety through Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and vaccination efforts were effective, keeping Covid cases low until the arrival of the Omicron wave.

**Health
Status**



109

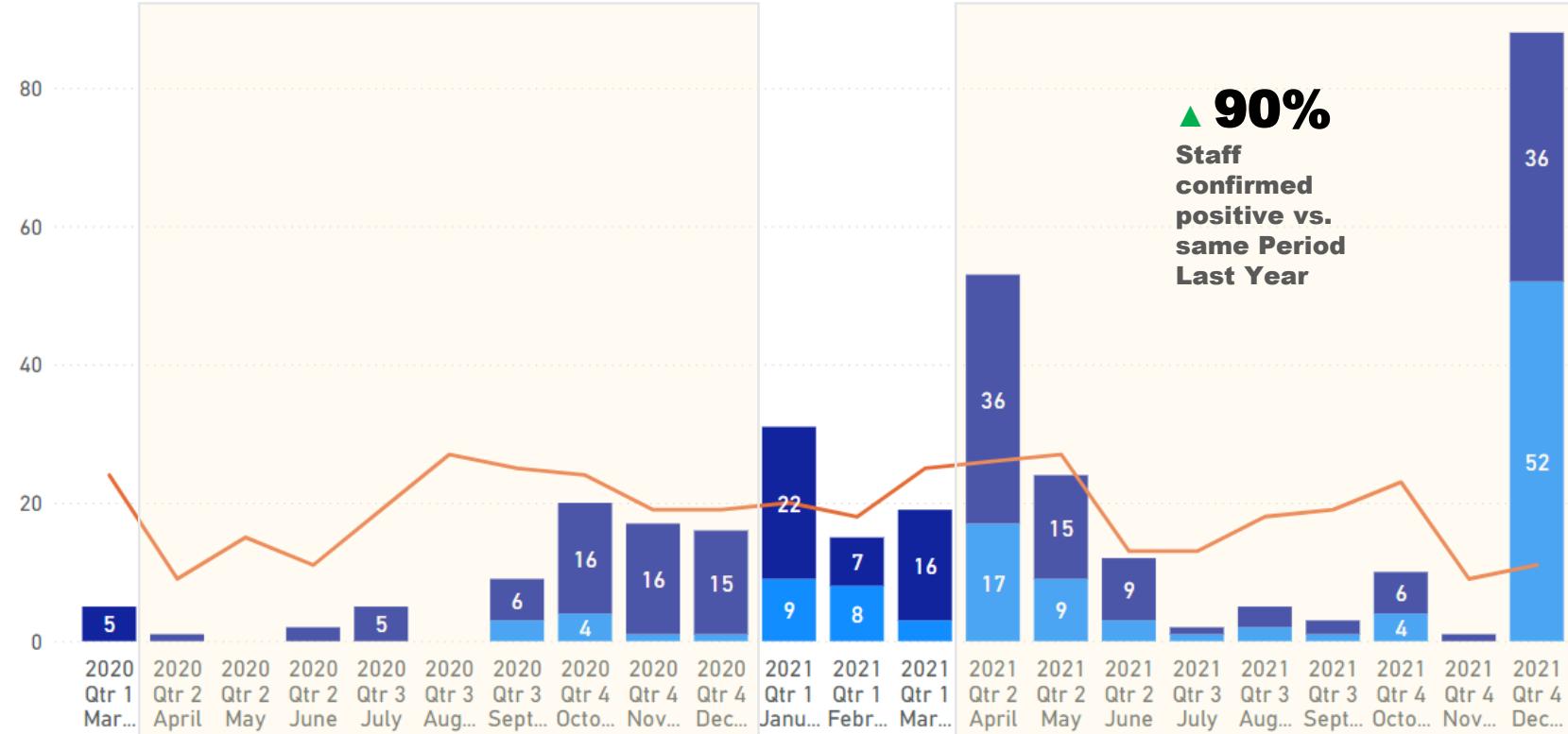
**Staff Confirmed Positive With
COVID-19 2021**

222

**Staff calls to Employee
Assistance Program (EAP)
2021**

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

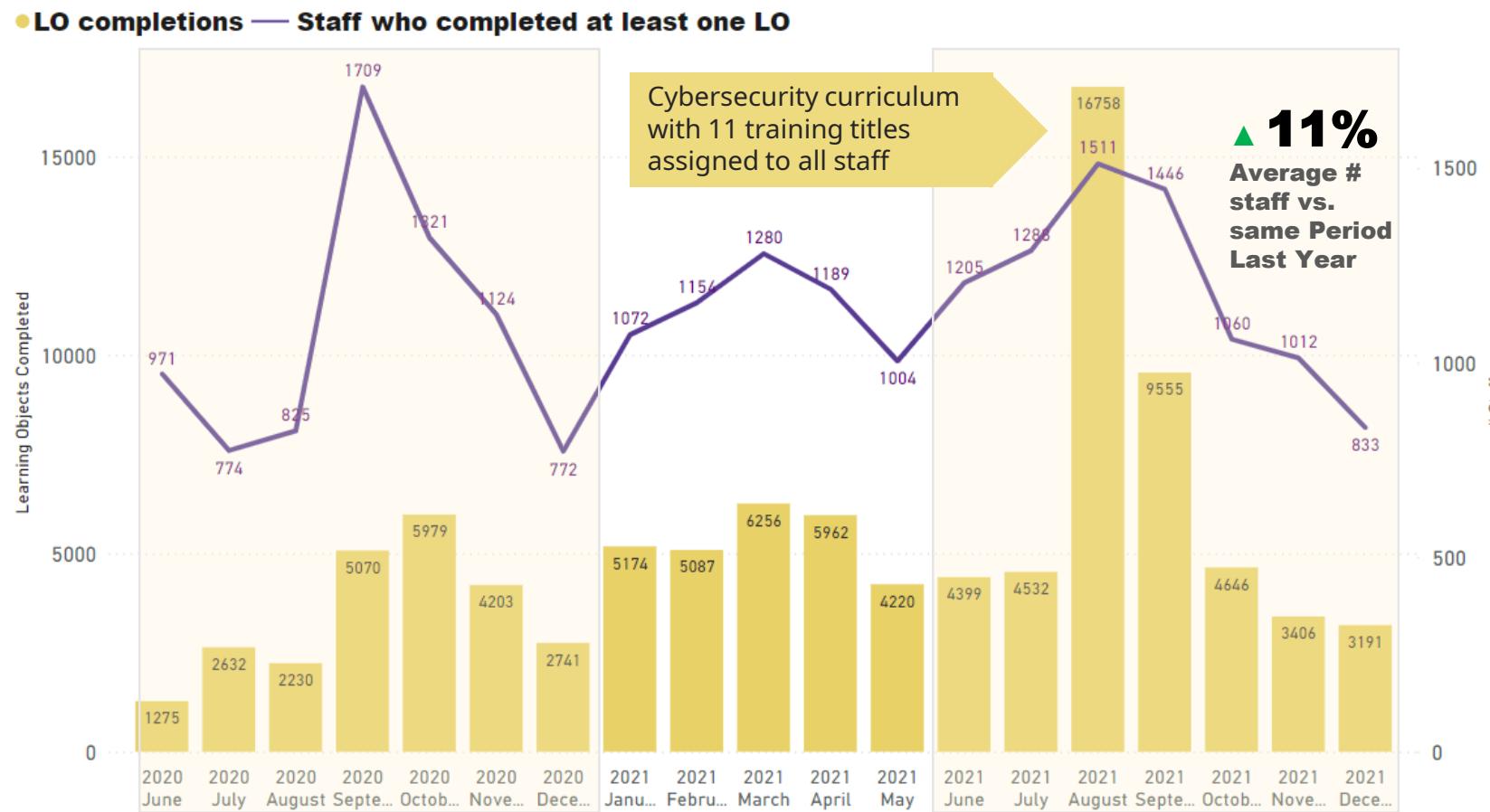
● Staff Confirmed Positive with COVID-19 ● Have had contact with someone with Confirmed COVID-19 ● # of staff calls to EAP



04 TPL STAFF

In 2021, staff worked hard to maintain high levels of service for the public, balancing the support of new services and initiatives created in response to the lockdowns and working on the safe and gradual reopening process of branches and in-branch services.

Staff use and engagement with the Learning Management System (LMS) increased in 2021, in spite of staff having increased responsibilities stemming from reopening efforts.



learn:tpl

73,186

Total Learning Objects Completed 2021

1,151

Average number of staff who complete at least one learning object per month 2021

TPL has continued its commitment to organizational communication and engagement, with a consistent number of staff regularly tuning in for updates through the Monthly Staff Town Halls.

**Online Staff
Town Hall**



352

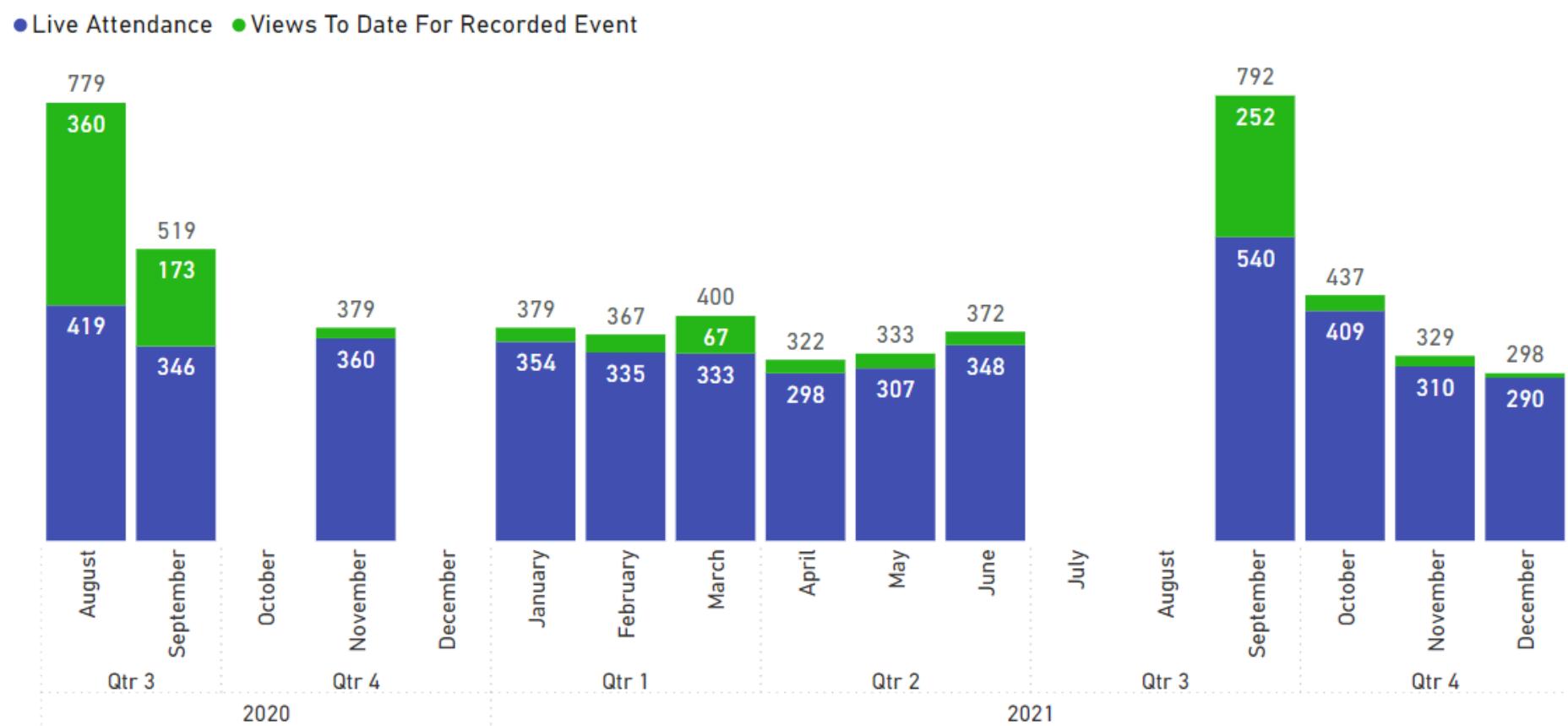
**Average live attendance
per month 2021**

51

**Average views for video
replay per month 2021**

71%

**Overall staff satisfaction
2021**



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