



# impact of technology services in Ontario public libraries: Bridge 2023/2024 Report

## toronto public library results

### key highlights

- TPL customers continue to rely on technology services, with more than a third of respondents noting they used technology they would not otherwise have access to.
- In particular, those using TPL for internet access were much more likely not to have access at home (10%) compared to the general population (2%).
- TPL technology is used by 41% of customers to establish and maintain social connections.
- The results show that TPL technology has a significant impact on helping people succeed in advancing their education and career development.
- The data demonstrates the vital role TPL plays in bridging the digital divide in Toronto, particularly for Indigenous persons, low-income households, newcomers and 2SLGBTQ+ customers.

# primary outcomes

## digital inclusion & equitable access

TPL is essential to building a digitally-inclusive Toronto, bridging inequities in technology access.

The results show that more than a third of the people who use library technology services would not have had access to that technology otherwise, and this is even higher for equity - deserving groups.

In particular, for those without internet access at home, the library is a critical point of access. While only 2% of the general Toronto population does not have home internet access,<sup>1</sup> those using TPL for internet access are much more likely not to have access at home.



*"I'm a low income senior and having access to the library's technology saves me hundreds of dollars a year if I were to have Internet services at home."*

overall top technology reported used:



**89%** reported they were very satisfied or satisfied with library technology service(s)

**35%** reported the library gave them access to technology they would not otherwise have had

..... **57%** among Indigenous persons

..... **51%** among gender minorities

..... **49%** among persons with disabilities

**10%** reported they do not have internet service installed at home, which is significantly higher than the general Toronto population

## digital literacy & adoption

TPL is responsive in supporting digital literacy in Toronto.

The results show that TPL not only plays a role in introducing customers to new technologies and building confidence in using them, but the high rate of longer-term adoption indicates that these new technologies continue to be relevant to customers even after their initial introduction.

*"The technology courses and services offered are priceless. Would not have had access to the same otherwise. Incredible to be able to take courses, learn new things, and have access to technology such as 3D printing. I am constantly surprised by how much the library offers!"*

**75%** reported increased digital comfort as a result of using library technology service(s)

..... **87%** among gender minorities

..... **83%** among sexual minorities

..... **82%** among newcomers

**15%** reported they were introduced to new technology

**89%** of those introduced to new technology, continued to use it

*"I was able to print out a lengthy document and use classes for seniors to adapt to new technology."*

# secondary outcomes

## community, social & civic engagement

TPL technology enables customers to establish and maintain social connections, and provides critical access to government services.

The results show that customers use technology at the library to collaborate, find communities of shared interest, and connect with friends and family, thus increasing their levels of social and civic engagement. With the increasing digitization of government services, the need to have access to online resources and forms is increasingly critical, especially for vulnerable populations and equity-deserving groups.

*"I can always rely on the library to be a place where I can be productive and connect with my local community."*

*"The library enabled me to be creative or access government services and many other things that I otherwise would have struggled to have the resources for."*

*"Staff have been amazing with helping me fill out government forms."*

**41%**

reported increased community or social engagement as a result of using library technology service(s)

..... **59%** among gender minorities

..... **56%** among newcomers

..... **53%** among sexual minorities

activities that contributed to community or social engagement:

collaborating for research or homework

**32%**

hobbies, entertainment and social media

**30%**

communication with friends or family

**26%**

**20%**

reported using technology service(s) to access online government resources

..... **37%** among Indigenous persons

..... **36%** among gender minorities

..... **33%** among low-income households

## creativity & innovation

TPL technology fosters innovation and creative expression.

The results show that TPL's cutting-edge creative digital tools foster creativity and skill development, and introduce community members to the potential of digital tools to advance their artistic expression and innovation.

*"I enjoy experimenting with the fabrication equipment and 3D printers. I do not have room at home for this kind of equipment and it has helped me to broaden my skills and prototype items for a potential side hustle."*

**17%**

reported using technology service(s) to make creative products

..... **33%** among gender minorities

..... **29%** among Indigenous persons

..... **28%** among sexual minorities

creative products technology was used for:

coding or writing

**26%**

photo or image editing

**20%**

graphic design

**15%**

3D printing or modeling

**12%**

audio or music recording or editing

**10%**

# secondary outcomes

## workforce development

TPL technology facilitates education, enables employable skills and supports the various stages of the job search process.

The results show that TPL technology is helping to bridge the homework gap and facilitate access to online learning opportunities, particularly for groups like youth and newcomers. The results also show that technology services at TPL assist people of all ages in updating their skills, finding work, running a business and excelling academically and professionally.

*"At my library the technology helped me finish my homework... It gave me a quiet place to study and use the technology."*

*"Access to technology at the library in the past gave me the skills I needed to start my own business."*

*"I love going to the library to upskill and do my job search. I find the environment to be more conducive to learning and focus time. Using the library's internet, I get to take interviews and meetings that I would otherwise have to take at a noisy cafe."*

**35%** reported using technology service(s) for educational activities

..... **66%** among youth

..... **58%** among newcomers

..... **53%** among Indigenous persons

**92%** of the same respondents reported success in advancing their education as a result of library access

activities library technology was used for:

completing coursework or homework

**38%**

taking an online class, workshop or test

**33%**

taking a degree or certificate program

**23%**

**26%** reported using technology service(s) to develop employable skills or meet career goals

..... **45%** among newcomers

..... **41%** among Indigenous persons

..... **37%** among gender minorities

**83%** of the same respondents reported success in advancing their employable skills or career goals as a result of library access

activities library technology was used for:

technical skills

**21%**

business, finance and administrative skills

**13%**

arts, culture, recreation and sports skills

**13%**

management skills

**12%**

education, law, social, community and government skills

**12%**

entrepreneurial skills

**12%**

**18%** reported using technology service(s) to develop skills related to finding employment

..... **37%** among newcomers

..... **33%** among Indigenous persons

..... **30%** among low-income households

**52%** of the same respondents reported success in finding employment as a result of library access

activities library technology was used for:

job search or application

**35%**

resume building or interview skills

**24%**

employment networking or research skills

**22%**