



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

2025-2029 Strategic Plan: Results of Library Service Use and Awareness Pulse Survey

Date: May 25, 2026
To: Toronto Public Library Board
From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

TPL is tracking progress on its 2025–2029 Strategic Plan using an outcome-focused Measurement Framework. This framework translates the Plan’s four priorities into 16 objectives, each with a specific outcome metric. One of these priorities, Awareness and Availability, aims to increase awareness and service use among current library users, measured by the rate of service use.

To effectively evaluate the initiatives under this priority and the associated outcome metric, TPL introduced the 2025 Library Service Use and Awareness Pulse Survey. This survey provides baseline measures of service use, engagement patterns, and awareness among users, infrequent users, and non-users across Toronto, serving as a key evaluation tool to track progress and guide future improvements. The survey will be repeated in 2027 and 2029 to track changes over the Strategic Plan period.

TPL procured Forum Research Inc., a third-party research firm, to conduct this survey from October 29 to November 24, 2025, using a statistically valid random sample of Toronto residents over the age of 18.

The survey provides new insights into the service use patterns of residents and indicates that TPL continues to play an integral role in the lives of Torontonians, with library use levels similar to those reported in the Library's [2024 Toronto Residents Survey](#).

Highlights from the survey include:

- On average, each library user accesses nearly eight distinct services and engages with four of TPL's five unique service pillars: spaces, collections, staff expertise, programs, technology, and specialized services. This highlights the variety and volume of services used.
- Expanded Sunday hours were the topic most people recalled hearing about the Library (32%), reflecting strong awareness of the Library's increased access and its relevance to users.
- The most commonly used services remain borrowing physical and accessing electronic materials (85%) and using Wi-Fi (52%), highlighting the Library's impact in enabling access to information and technology.
- Library engagement includes both frequent (44%) and infrequent (56%) users, providing the Library a framework to monitor trends and guide strategies to strengthen engagement with infrequent users.
- Compared to 2024, branch visits are shifting toward more regular use, with fewer users visiting only once or twice a year and more visiting several times annually, demonstrating growing engagement with Library services.
- The library holds deep personal significance for many users, with 70% saying it is very or extremely important to them. Equity-deserving groups rely on the library even more: 50% of respondents who identify as having a disability and 41% of longer-settled newcomers say the library is extremely important, well above the overall average of 35%. These findings underscore the library's vital role in supporting inclusion, access, and connection across Toronto's diverse communities.

These baseline findings will guide TPL's focus on maintaining and potentially expanding this diversity of service use, with particular emphasis on increasing access to and awareness of the full range of services offered.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

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

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

TPL's Strategic Plan outlines TPL's priorities, defines what success looks like, and provides examples of how these goals will be achieved. The Strategic Plan Measurement Framework tracks progress towards the Plan's outcomes and are reported to the Board annually. By measuring performance, TPL can make data-informed decisions, adjust to shifts in the service environment as needed, and ensure accountability and transparency to Torontonians.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

TPL's Strategic Plan includes a commitment to helping level the playing field for all Torontonians, with a particular focus on equity-deserving groups and vulnerable populations. The Plan integrates a focus on equity in everything TPL does to understand and break down barriers to access and increase inclusion. This ensures that everyone who wants to use the Library feels welcome and represented in its spaces, is able to access services, and can benefit from the outcomes TPL is working towards.

TPL's Strategic Plan Measurement Framework tracks progress towards these outcomes and the equity goals identified in [TPL's Equity Statement](#).

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on April 22, 2025, the Board received the [2025-2029 Strategic Plan Implementation and Measurement Framework and 2020-2024 Strategic Plan Results](#) that provided an overview of how TPL plans to achieve the outcomes of its Strategic Plan over the five years.

At its meeting on April 20, 2026, the Board received the [2025 Strategic Plan Progress Annual Report](#) that provided an update on the progress of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, including key data sources used to track progress and measure success.

BACKGROUND

TPL is tracking progress on its 2025-2029 Strategic Plan using an outcome-focused Measurement Framework. This framework translates the Plan's four priorities into 16 objectives, each with a specific outcome metric. Each priority includes one strategic objective focused on the supports needed for staff to achieve that priority and drive overall success. In addition to the outcomes TPL is striving to achieve for Torontonians, the Library is also working towards longer-term impacts for the organization, the city, and the global community.

Progress is measured using multiple data sources, including customer, program and staff surveys, as well as library service data such as visits, circulation, and membership.

COMMENTS

To effectively evaluate the initiatives under the Awareness and Availability priority and the associated outcome metric of service use, TPL introduced the 2025 Library Service Use and Awareness Survey. This survey provides baseline measures of service use, engagement patterns, and awareness among users, infrequent users, and non-users across Toronto, serving as a key evaluation tool to track progress and guide future improvements.

The survey objectives included:

- Gathering demographic and market information about Library's users and non-users;
- Measuring awareness of the Library's offerings among users, infrequent users, and non-users;
- Identifying patterns of service use and the variety of services accessed by users and infrequent users;
- Building on the findings of the Library's [2024 Toronto Residents Survey](#), which measured awareness, attitudes, and use of TPL services.

Methodology

TPL procured Forum Research Inc, a third-party research firm, to conduct the survey from October 29 to November 24, 2025, using a statistically valid random sample of 1,323 residents aged 18 and older. Respondents could complete the survey online or by telephone, with 80% (1,065) responding online and 20% (258) by phone.

The results have been statistically weighted by age, gender, and income to ensure the sample accurately reflects the population based on the 2021 Census data. The survey was also 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

The survey provides new insights into the service use patterns of residents and indicates that TPL continues to play an integral role in the lives of Torontonians, with library use levels similar to those reported in the Library's [2024 Toronto Residents Survey](#).

Awareness and User Base

- Expanded Sunday hours were the topic most people recalled hearing about the Library (32%), reflecting strong awareness of the Library's increased access and its relevance to users.
- TPL serves a diverse customer base, including long term loyal users, with more than half (52%) engaged for over a decade, as well as newer customers, with nearly four in ten (38%) joining within the past five years, highlighting the Library's ongoing relevance and appeal.
- Library engagement is especially high among younger residents (under 45) and newcomers to Canada, with 90–93% of these groups using the library.

Usage

- On average, each library user accesses nearly eight distinct services and engages with four of TPL's five unique service pillars: spaces, collections, staff expertise, programs, technology, and specialized services. This highlights the variety and volume of services used.
- The most commonly used services remain borrowing physical and accessing electronic materials (85%) and using Wi-Fi (52%), highlighting the Library's impact in enabling access to information and technology.

- Library engagement includes both frequent (44%) and infrequent (56%) users, providing the Library a framework to monitor trends and guide strategies to strengthen engagement with infrequent users.
- Website use is frequent and consistent, with 41% of users visiting the site 11 times or more over the past year.
- Compared to 2024, branch visits are shifting toward more regular use, with fewer users visiting only once or twice a year and more visiting several times annually, demonstrating growing engagement with Library services.
- The library holds deep personal significance for many users, with 70% saying it is very or extremely important to them. Equity-deserving groups rely on the library even more: 50% of respondents who identify as having a disability and 41% of longer-settled newcomers say the library is extremely important, well above the overall average of 35%. These findings underscore the library's vital role in supporting inclusion, access, and connection across Toronto's diverse communities.

CONCLUSION

These baseline findings will guide TPL's focus on maintaining and potentially expanding this diversity of use, with particular emphasis on increasing access to and awareness of the full range of services offered. They will support evidence-based decision-making, inform ongoing improvements to programs and services, and provide a foundation for evaluating progress on the Library's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan. The survey will be repeated in 2027 and 2029 to track changes over the Strategic Plan period.

CONTACT

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

SIGNATURE

Moe Hosseini-Ara
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: 2025-2029 Strategic Plan: Results of the Library Service Use and Awareness Survey Presentation



tpl:
toronto
public library



FORUM
RESEARCH

2025 Service Use and Awareness Pulse Survey

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 2025 Service Use and Awareness Pulse Survey. The data collected from this survey will establish the baseline measures for service use, patterns of engagement, and levels of awareness among users, infrequent users, and non-users across Toronto. These findings will support evidence-based decision-making, inform ongoing improvements to programs and services, and provide a foundation for evaluating progress against the Library's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan.



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 and use of Library services by users, infrequent users and non-users;
- Built on the findings of the Library's 2024 Survey of Toronto Residents which measured awareness of, attitude towards, and use of TPL services.

Specifically, we accomplished the following:

- The survey identified the percentage of Toronto residents who use the Library annually, including key service pillars such as spaces, collections, staff expertise, programs, technology, and specialized services.
- The patterns of service use and the variety of services used by users and infrequent users.
- The level of awareness among users, infrequent users, and non-users of the Library's offerings.



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 = 258 / CAWI: n = 1065 , Total n = 1323

Margin of Error ±2.69% (for a 95% confidence interval)

Average Length 11.6 minutes

Fieldwork Dates October 29th – November 24th, 2025

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.

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 “important” may be the combined result of “very important” and “extremely important,” where a grouping of “not important” (BTM2) may be the combined result of “not at all important” and “slightly important.”

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., “In the past twelve (12) months, have you visited a branch of Toronto Public Library, accessed the library online, visited any of the library’s social media sites or contacted the library by telephone, email or live chat? Please select all that apply”), 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 “Yes, visited a library branch” and “Yes, visited the library’s website” in their answer.

Significant Differences

Throughout the report, statistically significant differences (at the 95% confidence level) between demographic segments have been highlighted in light pink. Significance testing is conducted within each category but not between categories.

Key Findings

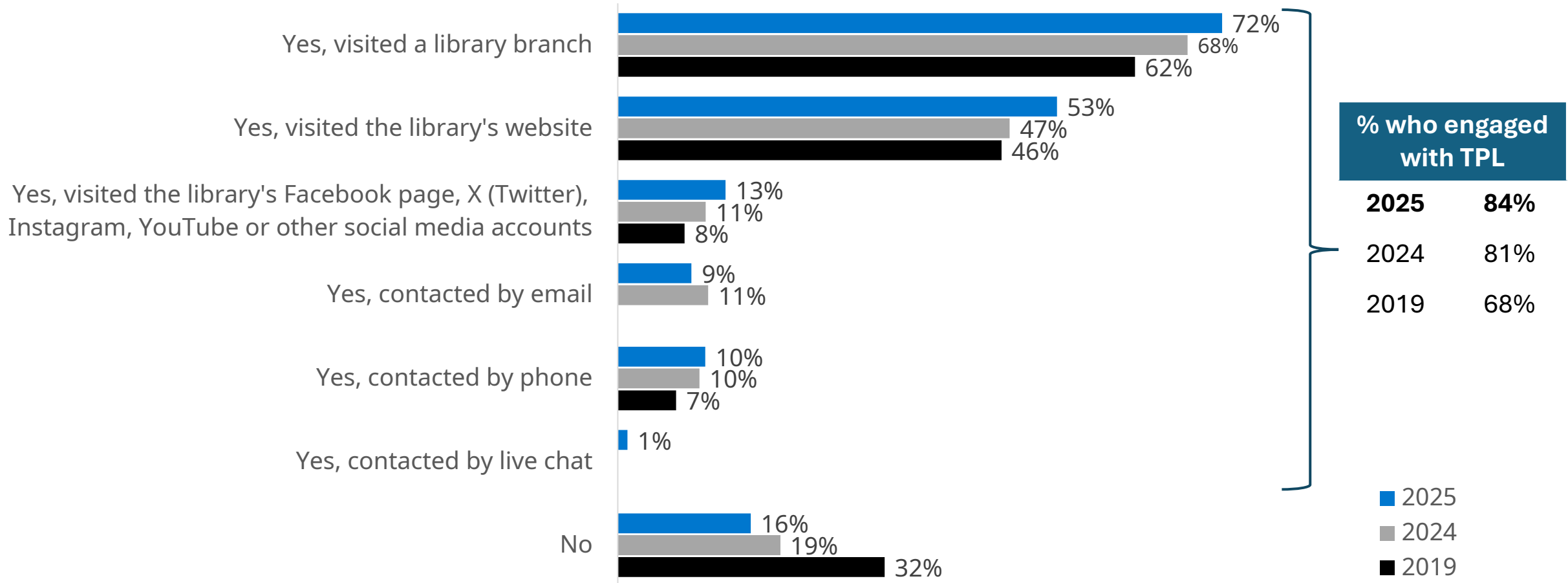


TPL continues to play an integral role in Torontonians' lives, with residents accessing the library at levels comparable to 2024.

- The library continues to be experienced first and foremost as a *place*, with 72% visiting a library branch.
- Website engagement remains strong, with over half of users (53%) accessing the library online.
- Library engagement is especially high among younger residents (under 45) and newcomers to Canada, with 90–93% of these groups using the library.

Library Usage

More than 4 in 5 respondents (Yes: 84%) engaged with Toronto Public Library in some way in the past twelve months, with 72% visiting a library branch.



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)

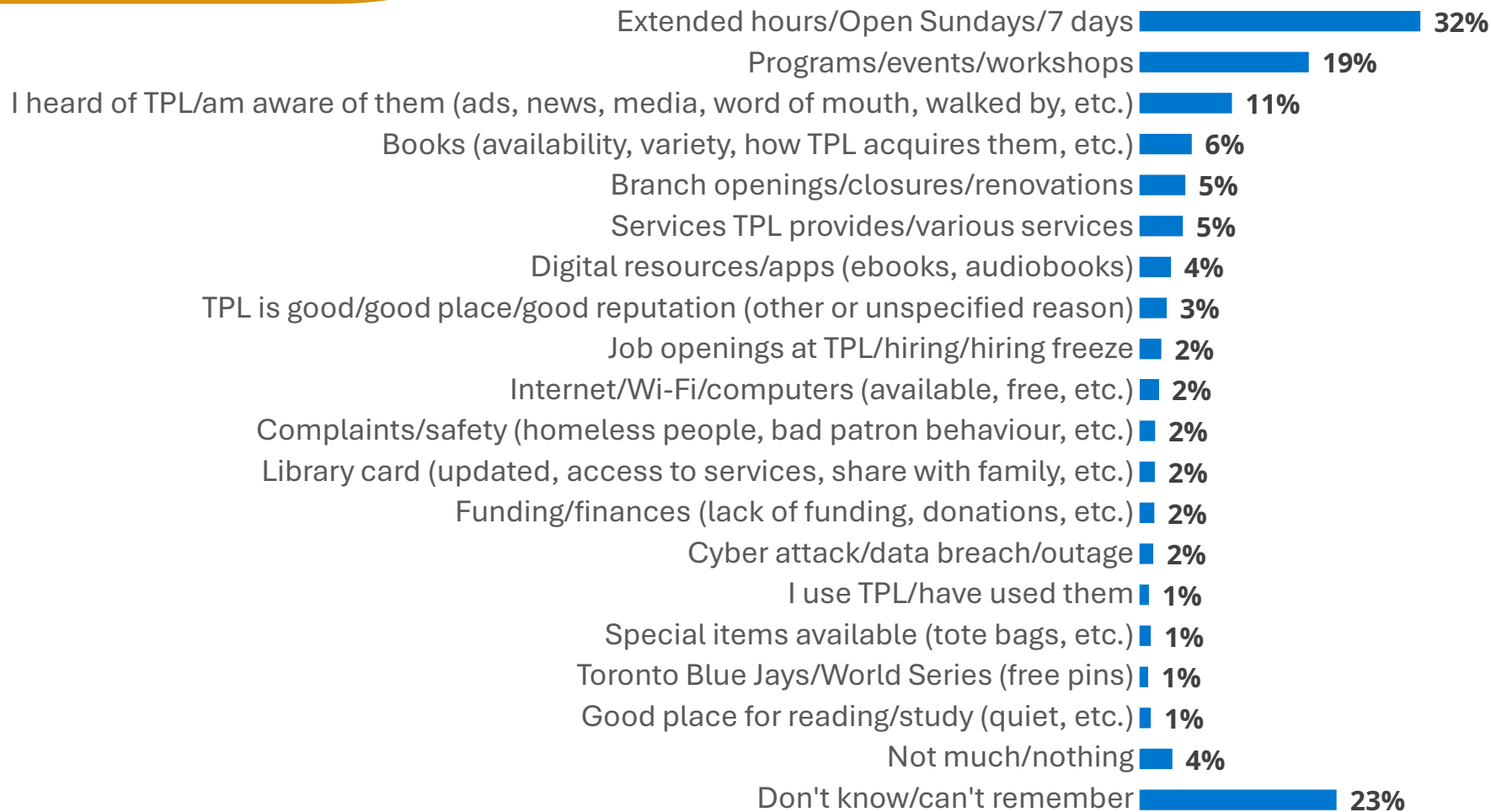
Base: All respondents (2025 n=1323)

Around half of the respondents (46%) have recently come across information about the Toronto Public Library.

- **Expanded Sunday hours** emerged as the most recalled topic (32%), indicating strong awareness of the Library's increased access and its relevance to respondents.

Read, Seen, or Heard (Open-End)

Around 1 in 3 (32%) respondents have read, seen, or heard that the Toronto Public Library has extended hours, is open on Sundays, and open 7 days a week.



The following demographic groups are significantly more likely to have read, seen, or heard something about the Toronto Public Library in the news media:

- Older respondents (aged 55+; 55%-71%) compared to younger respondents (aged 18-44; 20%-35%).
- Respondents with a household income of \$150k+ (58%) compared to those earning <\$70k (41%-43%).
- Those who are born in Canada (50%) and those who have been in Canada for 6+ years (45%) compared to newcomers (<6 years; 18%).
- Retired respondents (70%) compared to those working full-time (38%) and part-time (32%).
- Men (54%) compared to women (37%).

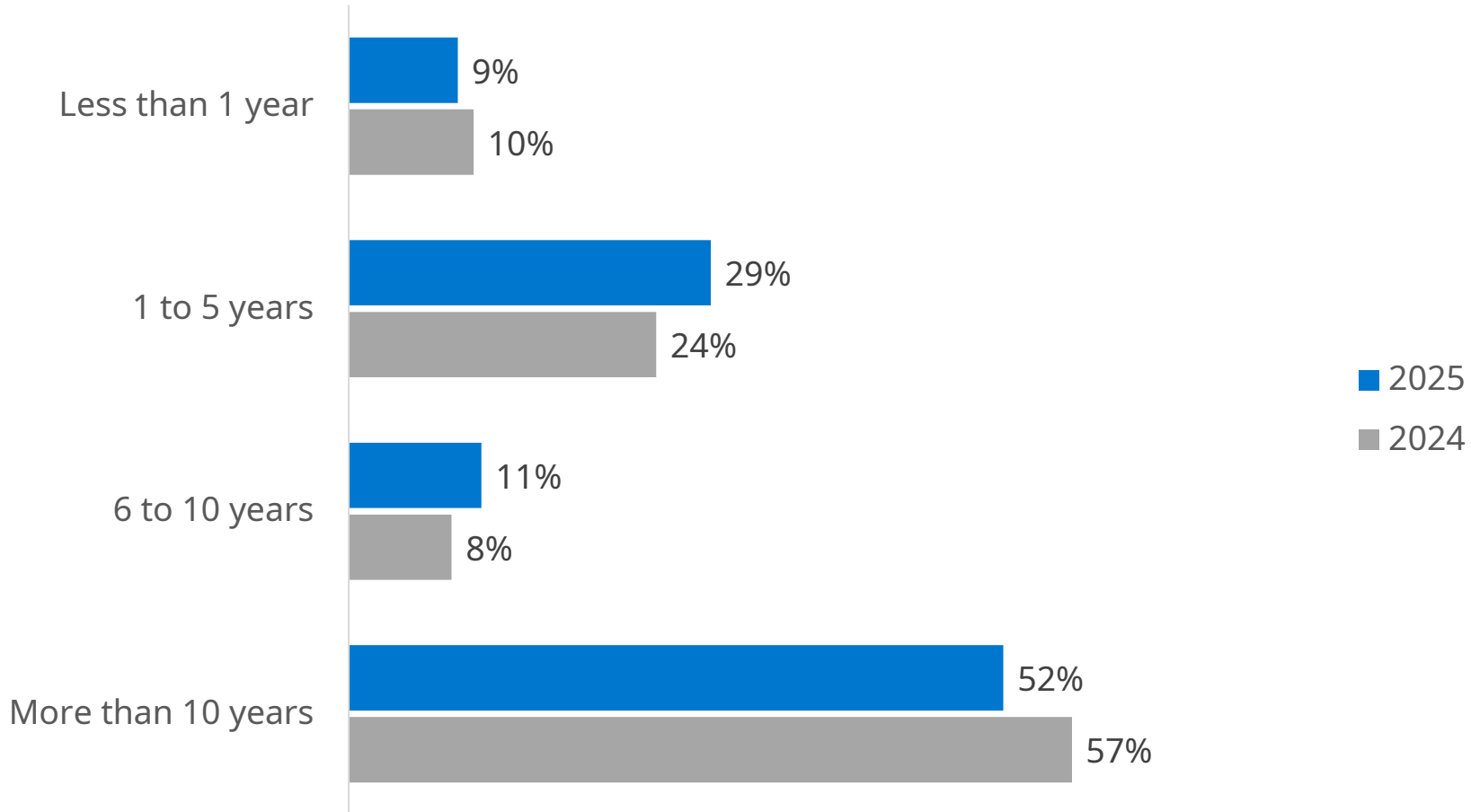
Q7C. Please specify what you have read, seen or heard about Toronto Public Library:
 Base: Respondents that have read, seen, or heard about TPL (2025 n= 613)
 *Note: Response options <2% are not displayed

TPL's customer base includes both loyal, long-term users and new customers.

- More than half (52%) of users have been engaged for over a decade
- Nearly four in ten users (38%) have joined the library within the past five years, indicating continued relevance and ongoing renewal
- 90% of users report holding a library card

Library User Duration

More than half (52%) of the Library Users have been a Toronto Public Library user for more than 10 years.



Q5. How long have you been a Toronto Public Library user?
Base: Respondents that are Library Users (2025 n= 1112)

On average, a library user engages with four (4.0) service pillars and uses nearly eight distinct services (7.8), highlighting the variety and volume of services used by library customers.

- Collections – This is the most widely used service (85%), including borrowing both physical and electronic materials.
- Technology - The second most widely used service was accessing the Wi-Fi (52%).
- Spaces – In-branch browsing for materials to borrow (51%) also saw strong engagement.

Service Use Rate

On average, users engage with four service pillars. Each user accesses an average of 7.8 distinct services, including multiple services within the same pillar.

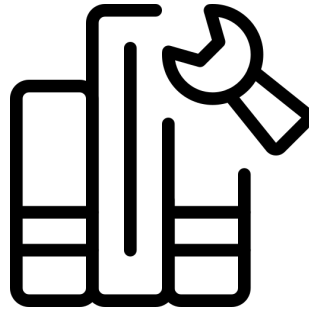


4.0

Average Service Pillars Used

Service Pillars Used

- Sum the number of unique pillars a respondent used (E.g. Spaces, Collections, etc.)
- Divide the sum by the number of respondents
- There are six (6) unique service pillars



7.8

Average Distinct Services Used

Distinct Services Used

- Sum the number of distinct services a respondent used (E.g. Wi-Fi, borrowing physical books, magazines, movies, music, or audiobooks, etc.)
- Divide the sum by the number of respondents
- There are 36 distinct services

Nearly 2 in 5 respondents (38%) have engage with four service pillars.

On the other hand, nearly 3 in 10 respondents (28%) have used 7-10 library services.

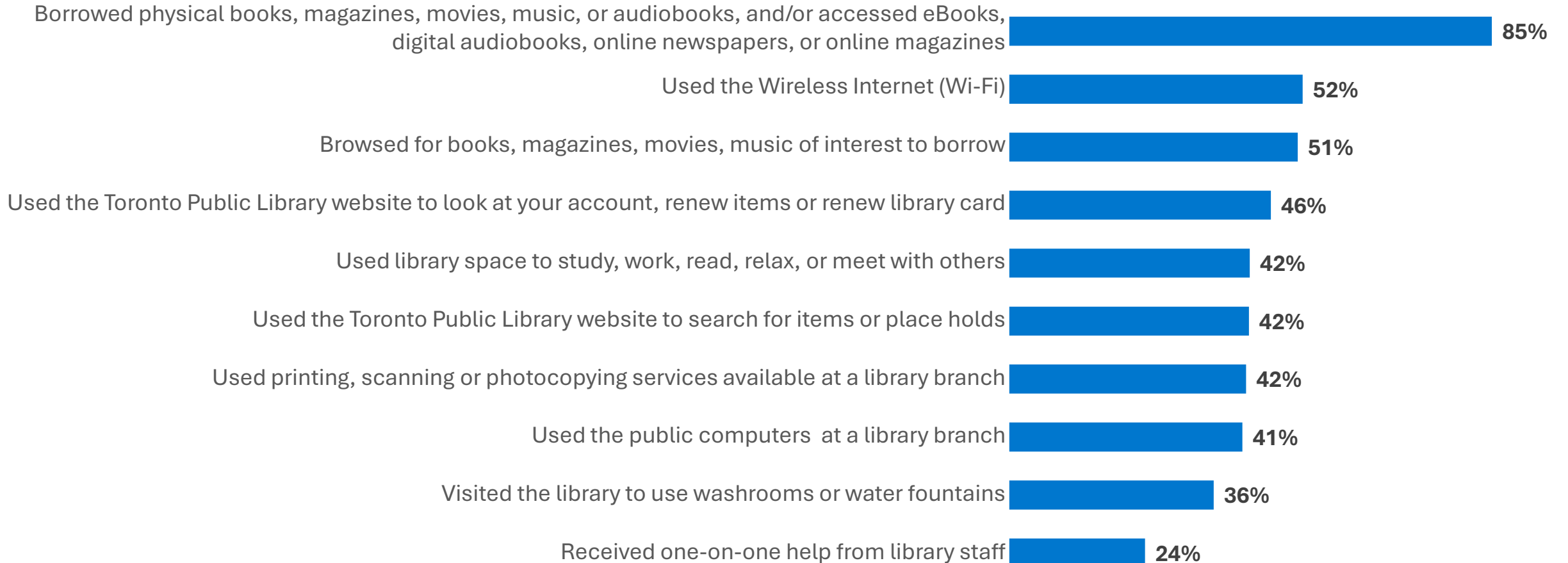
The following demographic groups are significantly more likely to used 7-10 library services:

- Respondents aged 35-44 (36%) compared to those aged 18-24 (22%).
- Frequent users (44%) compared to infrequent users (16%).

Base: Library Users

Services Used

The most commonly used services were borrowing physical or electronic materials (85%).



Q9A. Now, which of these services have you used in the past twelve months? Please select all that apply

Base: Library Users (2025 n=1112)

*Note: Borrowed physical books, magazines, movies, music, or audiobooks and/or accessed eBooks, digital audiobooks, online newspaper, or online magazines are displayed independently and as a grouped category

Key service usage patterns by demographic

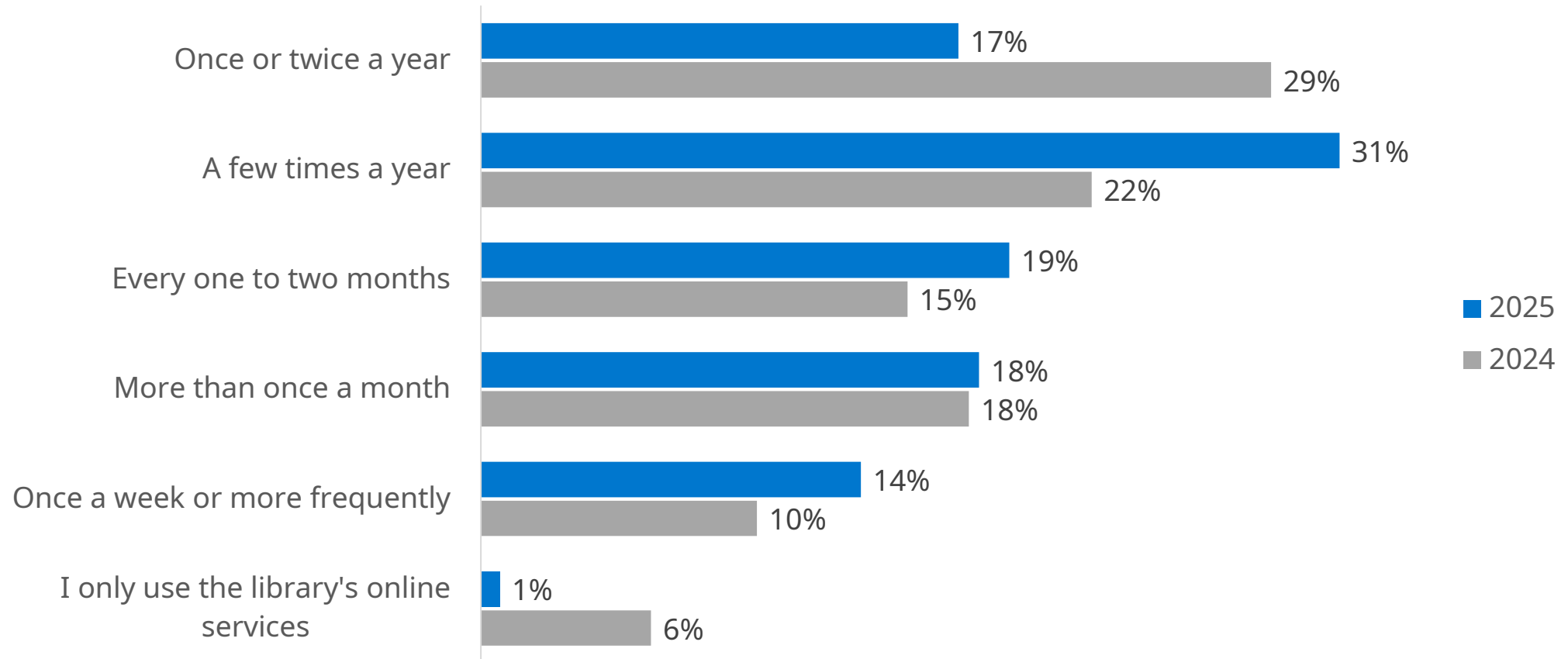
- Older adults and higher income households show stronger use of collection and online account services.
- Younger adults use the library more as a flexible public space.
- Families are more connected to programming and youth services.
- Lower income users rely more heavily on practical access and support services.

Library engagement includes both frequent (44%) and infrequent (56%) users. This distinction provides a framework for monitoring engagement trends and informing strategies to strengthen connections with infrequent users.

- While website use is characterized by frequent, repeat access across the year, with 41% accessing the site 11 times or more in the past year (16% accessed it 11–20 times; 25% more than 20 times).
- Frequent users are significantly more likely than infrequent users to engage across multiple service pillars, with nearly half engaging with four pillars (47% vs. 32%) and substantially more using seven to ten services (44% vs. 16%).
- Compared to 2024, branch visiting appears to be shifting away from very infrequent use, with fewer users visiting only once or twice a year and more visiting several times a year or more frequently.

Frequency

Nearly a third (31%) of respondents visit a branch a few times a year, while 19% visit every one to two months.



Q2. Do you recall how many times you have personally visited a Toronto Public Library branch in the past twelve months?

Base: Respondents who visited a library branch (2025 n=959)

*Note: Frequent user if they use the library every one to two months or more frequently or if they visit the library website 6 times or more. Infrequent user if they use the library a few times a year or less frequently or if they visit the library website 5 times or less.

Frequency establishes a baseline for future tracking

Among service users, several areas show notable repeat engagement:

- Digital services are embedded in regular routines.
- Programs have smaller reach but meaningful repeat engagement.
- Community and support services appear highly valued by those who use them.
- Technology services show both practical reach and recurring reliance.

Frequent vs Infrequent Users

44%

Frequent users

Highly educated adults in mid-career years

AGE

- Strongest among ages **35–44 (58%)**

EDUCATION

- Postgraduate degree holders **(53%)**

INCOME

- Higher income households **\$100k–\$149k (54%)**

EMPLOYMENT

- Stay-at-home caregivers **(54%)**, unemployed **(47%)**

IMMIGRATION STATUS

- Settled immigrants (6+ years) **(48%)**

56%

Infrequent users

Younger and older adults with lower income, less formal education, and newer immigrant status

AGE

- Strongest among ages **55–64 (71%)** and **18–24 (62%)**

EDUCATION

- Less than high school **(94%)**, high school **(63%)**

INCOME

- Lower income households **<\$50k (58%)**

EMPLOYMENT

- Casual/self-employed **(62%)**, students **(60%)**

IMMIGRATION STATUS

- Newcomers (<6 years) **(62%)**

Base: All respondents (2025 n=1323)

*Note: Frequent user if they use the library every one to two months or more frequently or if they visit the library website 6 times or more. Infrequent user if they use the library a few times a year or less frequently or if they visit the library website 5 times or less.



The library holds meaningful personal significance for many users, with 70% of users saying it is very or extremely important to them.

- People with disabilities view the library as especially essential, with 50% of respondents who identify as having a disability say the library is extremely important—well above the overall average of 35%.
- Longer-settled newcomers show stronger-than-average reliance on the library, with 41% rate the library as extremely important, exceeding the overall average of 35%.

THANK YOU

