

Resilient Public Libraries

OPLA's 2022 Survey of Public Libraries

Agenda

1. Introduction, overview and context
2. Findings & Lessons Learned
3. Next steps

OPLA Research & Evaluation Committee

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OPLA Research & Evaluation Committee's Mandate

- **Conducting applied research**
- **Supporting professional development** for research and program evaluation.

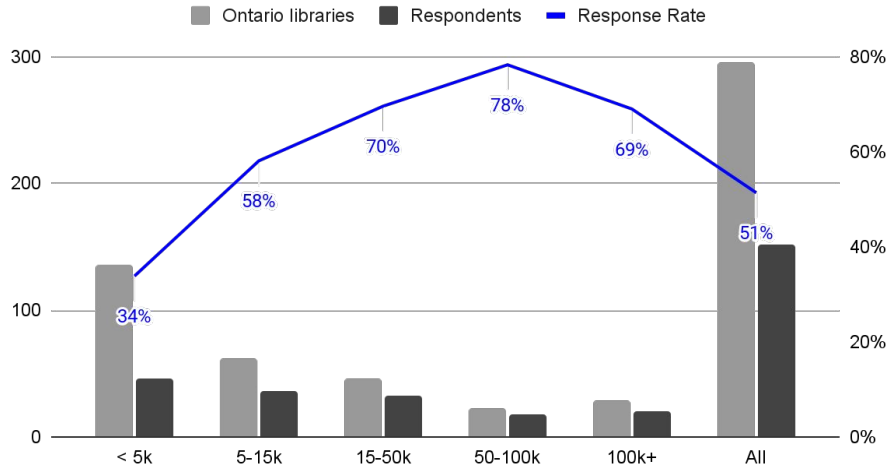
How have public libraries **evolved and adapted** since 2020?

What **changes were accelerated**
by the pandemic?

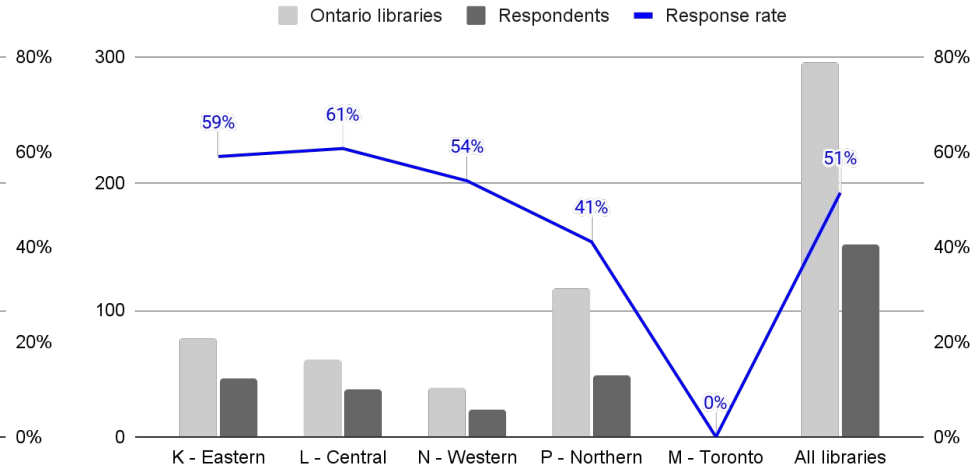
What **changes have reverted**
to pre-pandemic reality?

51% of Ontario libraries responded

Respondents, by population served



Respondents, by geography

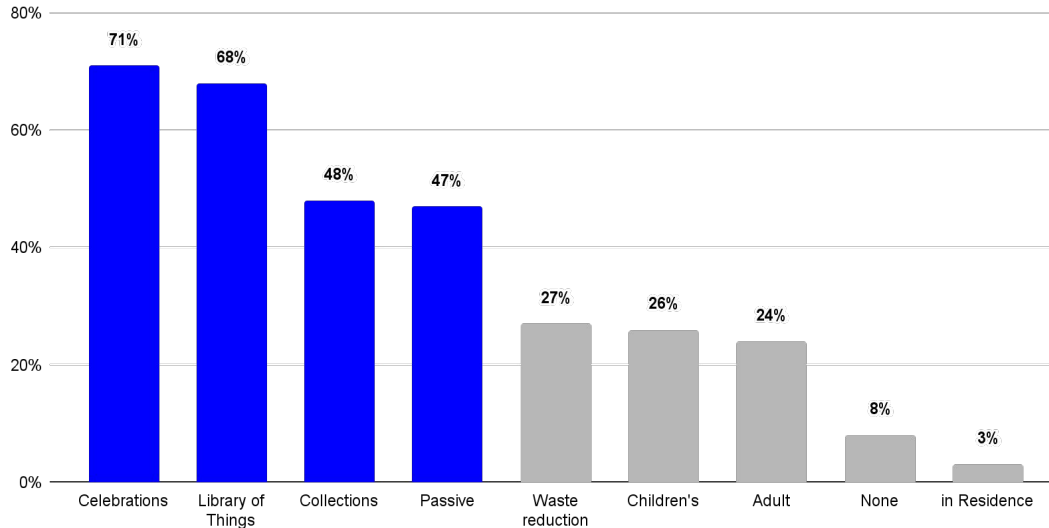


FINDINGS

What is the current
state of libraries in
addressing climate
change?

Climate Change Educational and Awareness Activities are common

The most frequently cited climate action in libraries was education focused

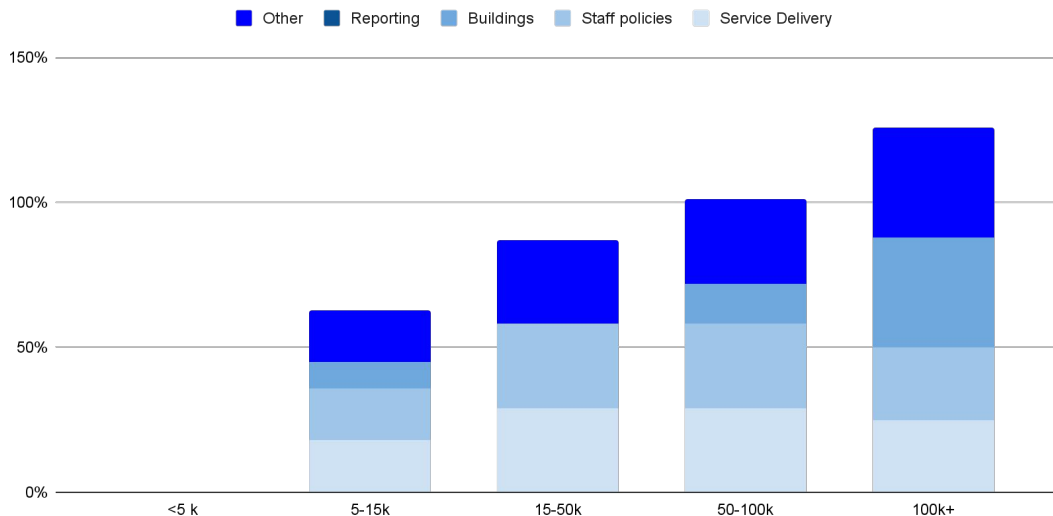


The most common activities are:

- Participating in Celebrations
- Coordinating a “Library of Things”
- Curating Climate Focused collections
- Passive programming

Larger Library systems have greater capacity to engage in climate action

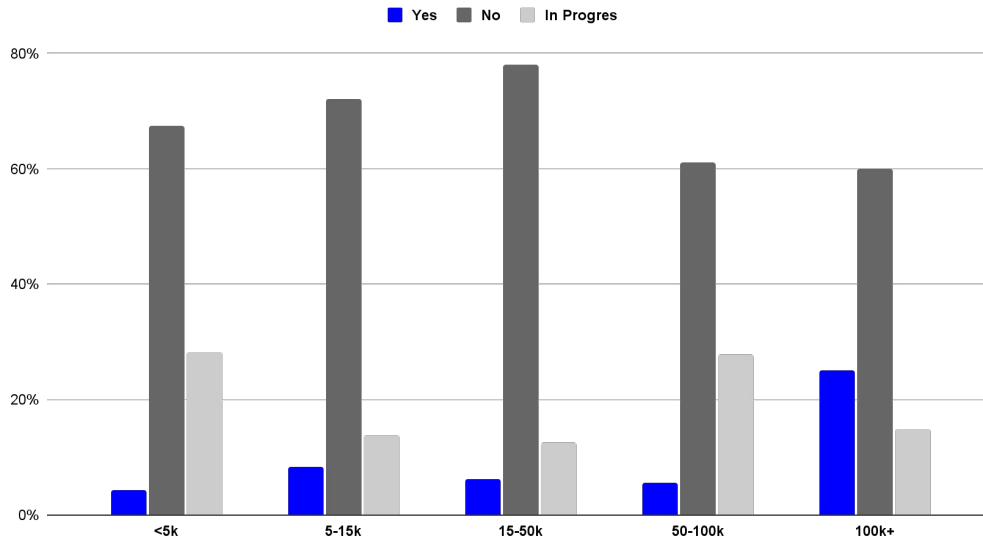
Policies to reduce carbon emission, by population served



- Climate action requires resources. Larger libraries with bigger budgets are more likely to be able to make those investments.
- This trend was seen across all climate-related questions.
- None of the library serving populations of fewer than 5,000 people reported any policies in place to reduce carbon emissions.
- 40% of libraries serving populations of over 100k reported policies in place re: library buildings.

Most libraries do not have Climate Goals represented in their Strategic Plan

Climate action goals are not typically represented in current strategic plans



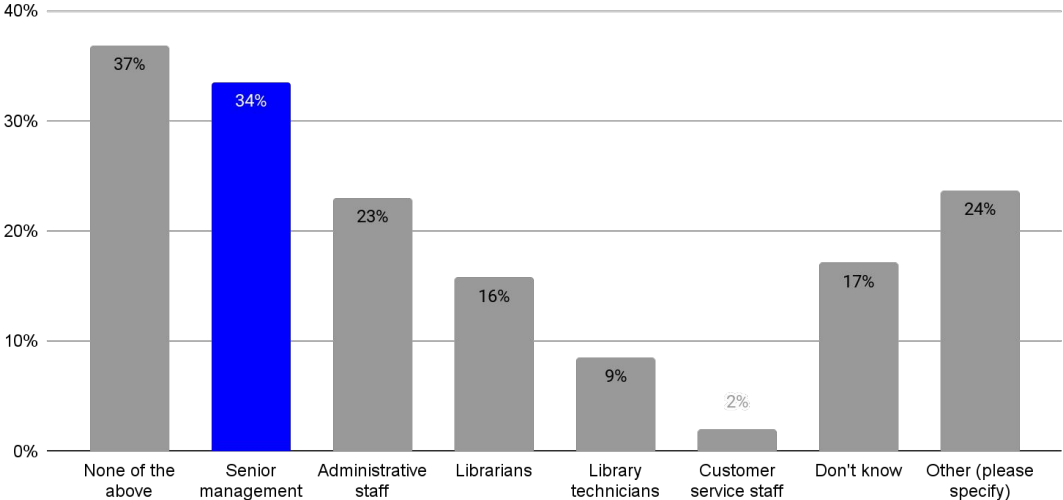
Comments from libraries noted that future strategic plans would include climate goals.

Many reported that the municipal strategic goals usually include climate action and while not explicitly included in the library strategic plan, libraries are expected to support municipal climate goals.

Do libraries plan to
have remote work
options?

Senior management positions are most likely to continue to have remote work options.

In the next 12 months, are any of your staff going to be working remotely?



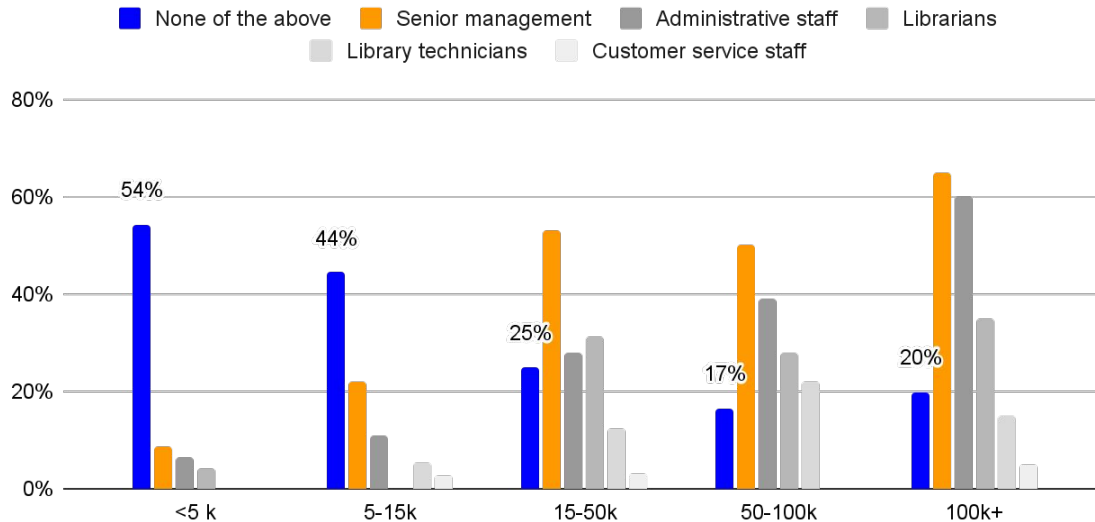
Remote work is primarily seen in senior management and administrative positions. Customer service had very few remote work options.

37% of respondents reported that none of the positions outlined with have remote work options in the next 12 months. Many systems have implemented or will implement a return to work.

Larger library systems will have more work being done remotely in the next 12 months than smaller systems.

In the next 12 months, are any of your staff going to be working remotely?

This is likely due to the overall size of staff in smaller systems.

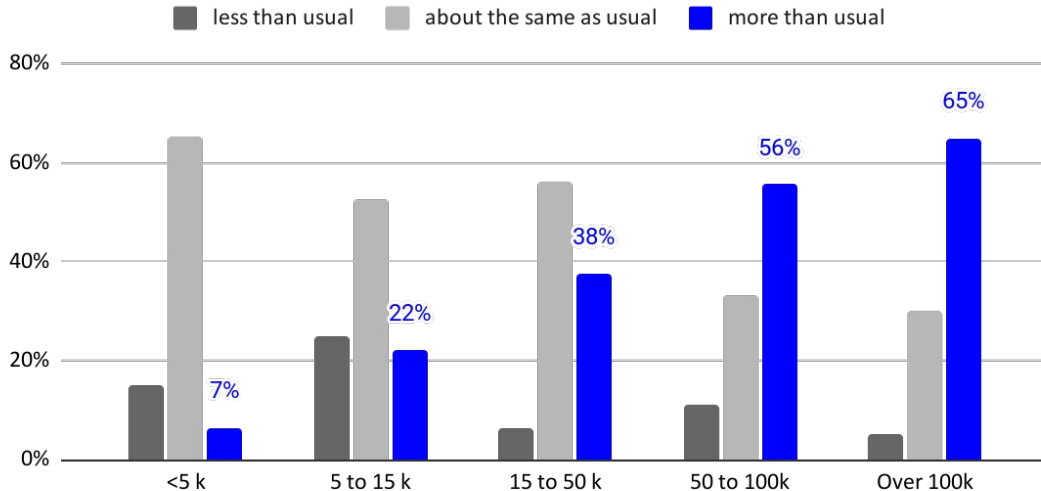


What is the level of
staff vacancies in
libraries?

Larger library systems are experiencing more staff vacancies than smaller libraries.

What level of staff vacancies is your library currently experiencing?

Smaller systems are reporting “about the same as usual”.



Are libraries including
Diversity, Equity
and Inclusion in
strategic plans?

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

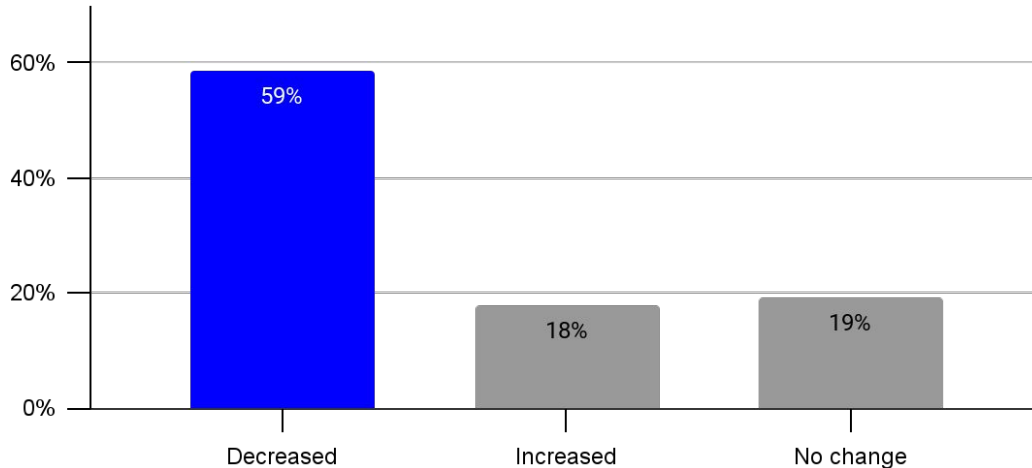
Sadly, we had an accidental filter set for this question which meant we only got 30% of the total survey responses. As a result, the data integrity for the DEI set of questions was low. Here are some of the responses to the question about new DEI initiatives:

- “We are in a small urban-rural municipality, so have limited ability to diversify our staffing complement. Plus staff change-over is low. But we do make efforts to be inclusive in everything we do, from our collection to our programming to our social media presence. Truth and Reconciliation is a part of that, and we are working to build our Indigenous Voices collection.”
- “For the first time, a drag queen storytime was held at our system in system in collaboration with.....Pride - we will continue this initiative in future.”
- “Received the International Dyslexia Association Grant to put in more materials regarding Dyslexia.”
- “Implementation of Anti-Racism Action Plan”
- “The Library has adopted the City's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Policy and Action Plan.”
- “Expanded partnership with town for Black History Month, Pride, and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation”
- “We have established an Indigenous Voices initiative in which we put custom labels on books written by Indigenous Authors to better identify them and increase exposure.”
- “County has hired new DEI officer. They will be reviewing all library policies and making recommendations”

How have libraries
changed access to
technology services?

At the time of the survey, most libraries had decreased access to public computers due to pandemic restrictions

Compared to January 2020, how has your level of in-library access to public computers changed?

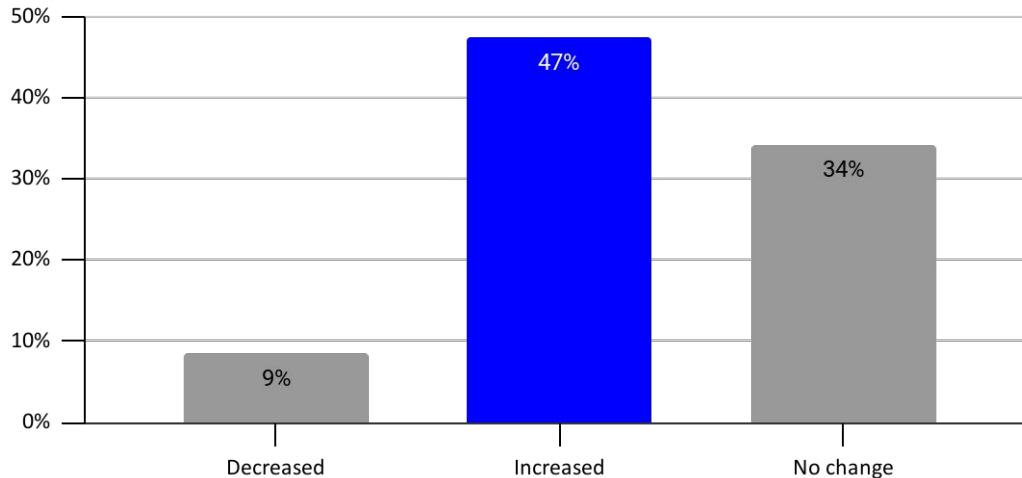


Comments:

- Usage is still high but we have fewer public computers available.
- Decreased to provide physical distancing, but we are about to bring it back to pre-pandemic levels.
- Several other libraries observe that usage is increasing as things open up more.

Most libraries experienced increased “bring your own device” service, or did not see any changes in the service compared to January 2020.

Compared to January 2020, how has your “bring your own device” service changed? (eg. laptop bar, charging stations)

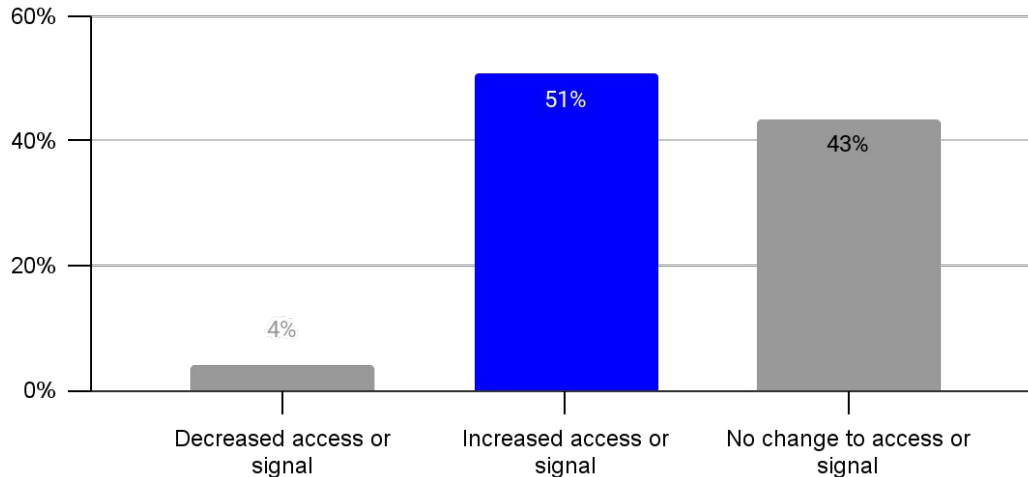


Comments:

- We are in the process of installing charging bars at any branches that don't have them yet
- Now that more seating is available access to wifi has increased

Most libraries have increased or haven't changed access to public wi-fi or the wi-fi signal.

Compared to January 2020, how has your library's public wi-fi service changed?



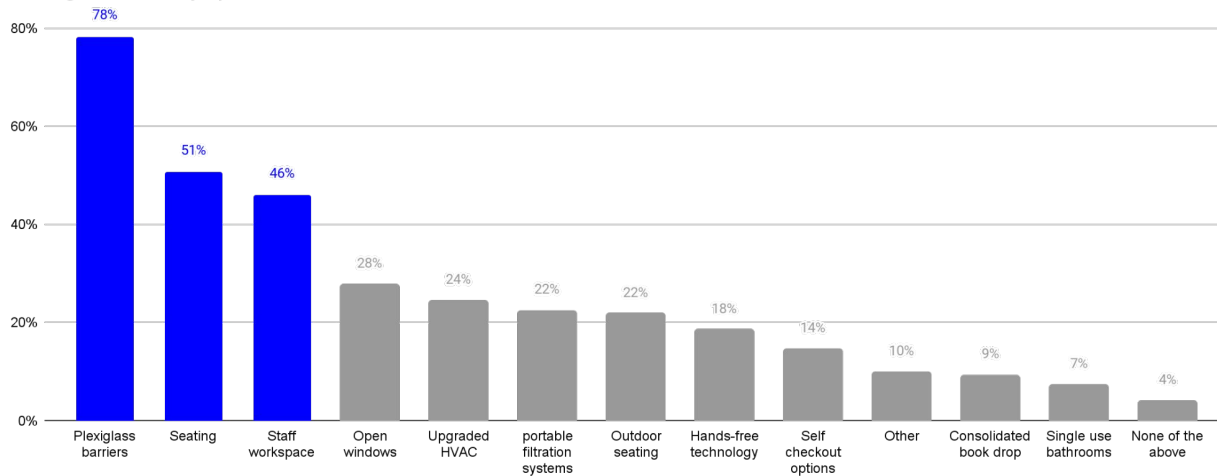
Many libraries who responded that they increased their signal or access to public wi-fi commented that they did so to reach outside areas such as parking lots and park areas during pandemic restrictions.

Libraries responded that they are **not** planning on making changes to public computer access, their “bring your own devices” programs, or the signal or access to public wi-fi in the next 12 months.

What
pandemic-related
changes to library
spaces are here to
stay?

Plexiglass barriers and physical distancing are common

Changes to Library space that will be retained for 12 months

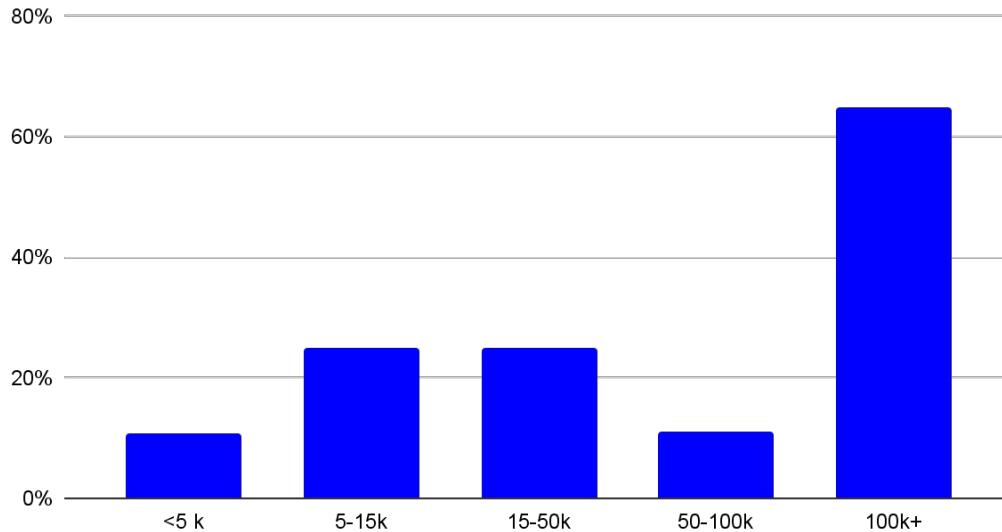


Plexiglass barriers and physical distancing for patron and staff seating will be retained at a majority of libraries over the next 12 months.

Will this continue past that time? How will this impact the customer service experience going forward?

HVAC upgrades mostly occurred at large library systems

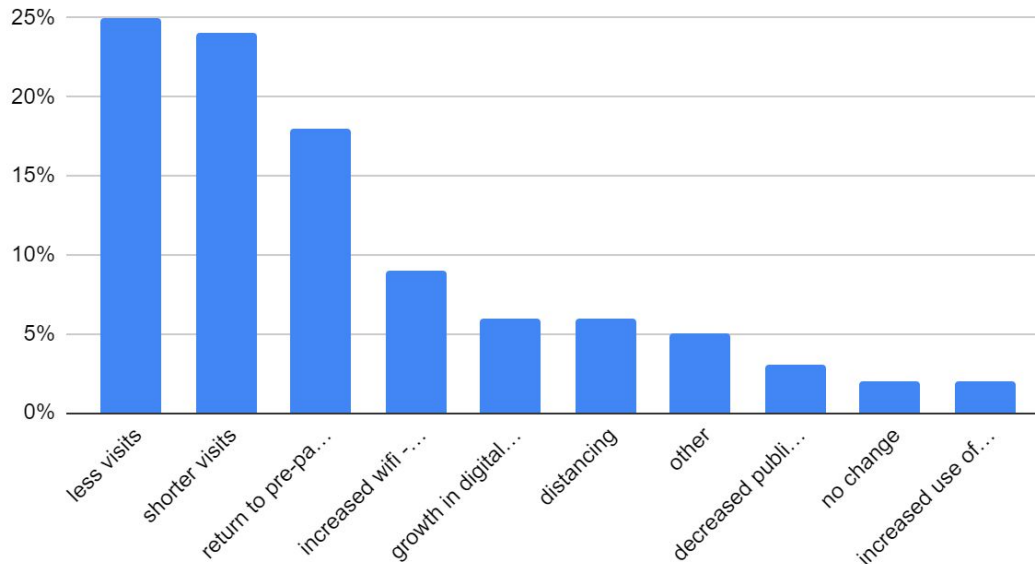
Libraries that made upgrades to HVAC



Most libraries who upgraded their HVAC systems to improve ventilation serve a population of over 100,000

Use of library space is changing

changes to public's use of library space



“We feel like people have lost the “habit” of coming to the library and it is challenging to draw them back.”

Many libraries also note a trend towards:

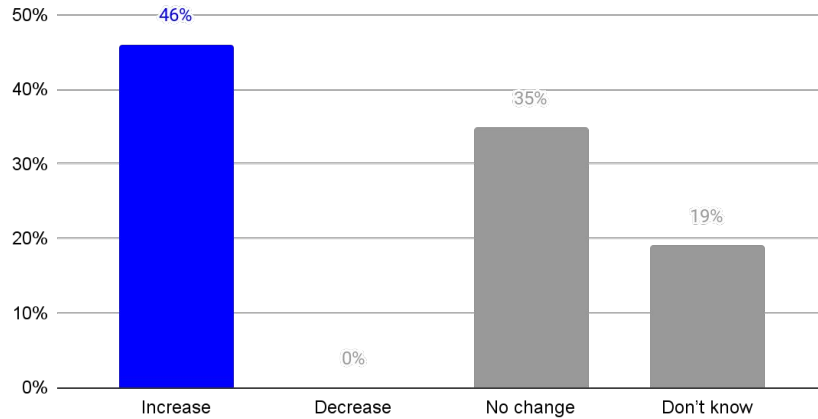
- shorter visits
- increased use of WiFi
- growth in digital borrowing

Will these trends continue?
How will it affect our spaces?

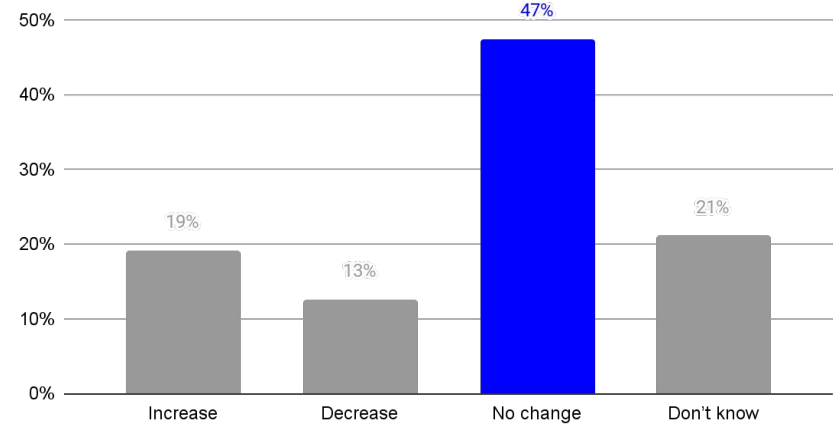
What changes are
happening in
collections?

E-resource budgets on the rise while print resources are languishing

Changes to e-resources budget



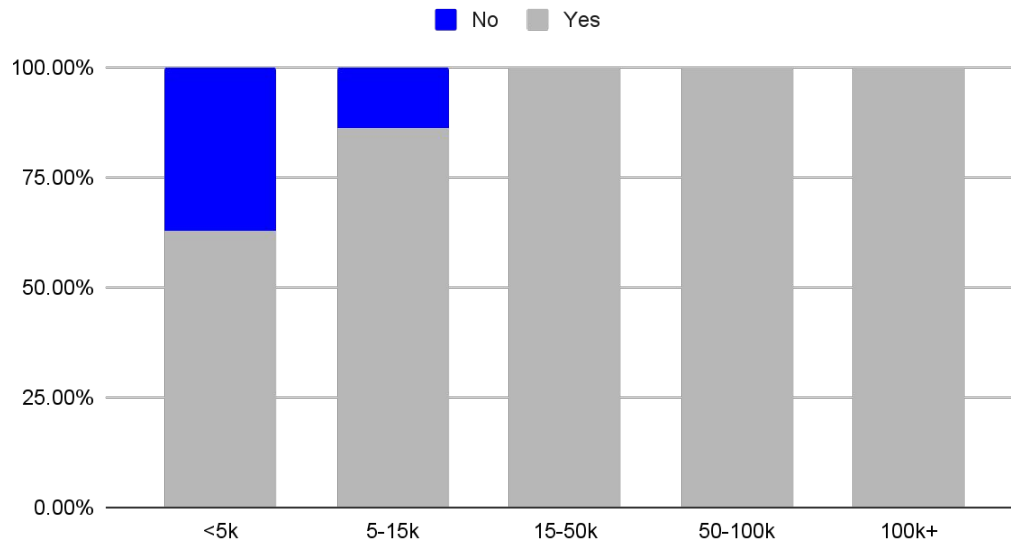
Changes to print resources budget



How have libraries
approached virtual
programming? Will
that continue?

Smaller library systems were less likely to have offered virtual programming

Libraries offering virtual programming

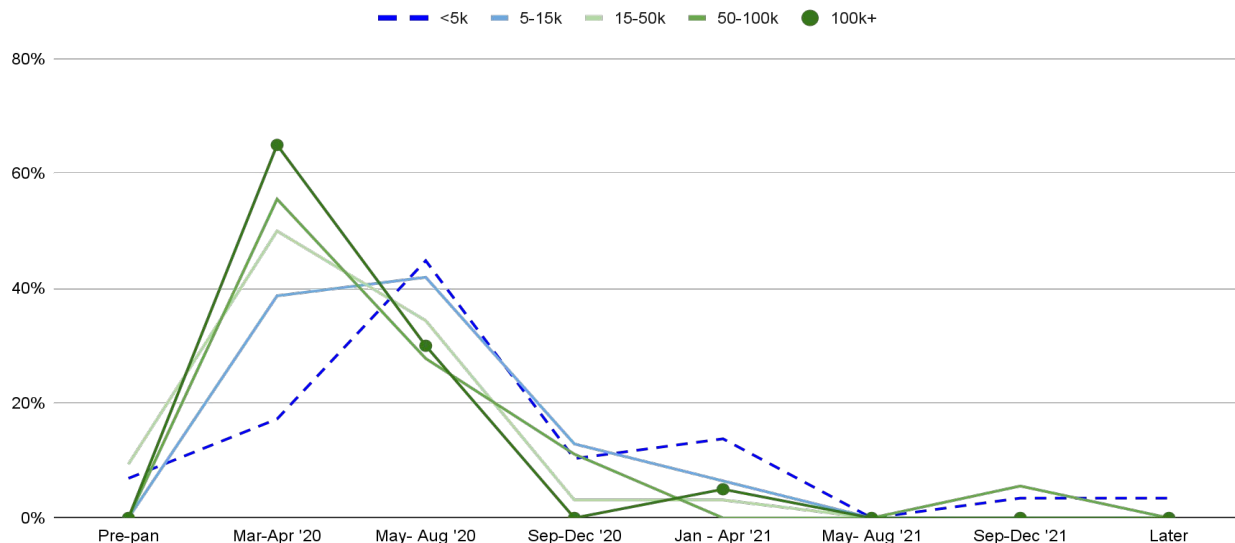


Of libraries who did not offer virtual programming, reasons given included

- Lack of staff
- Lack of technology/ staff comfort to deliver programming
- Limited tech/internet capacity of patrons
- Not enough interest in community

Smaller library systems were also later in implementing virtual programming.

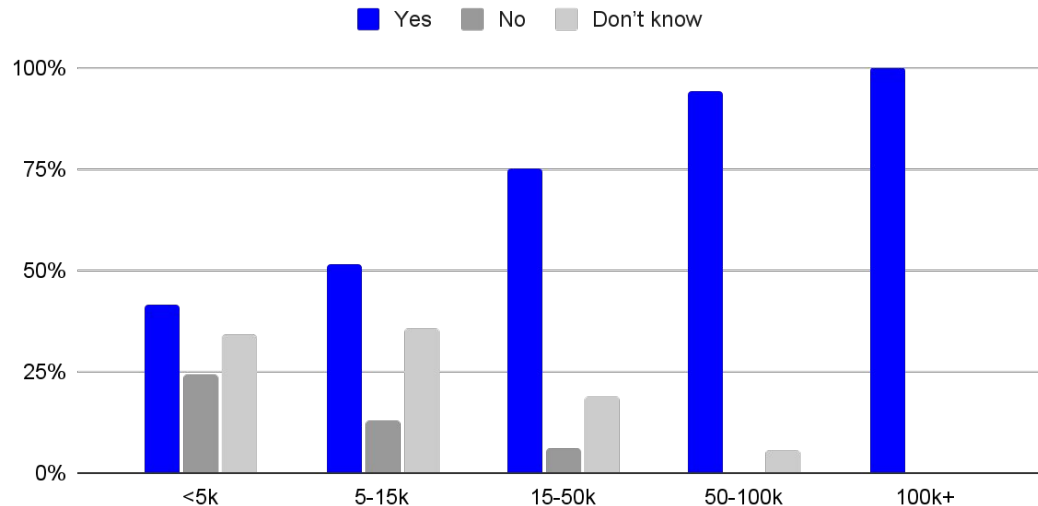
When did you start offering virtual programming?



On average, smaller library systems started offering virtual programming later, in May-August of 2020, compared to March-April of 2020 for larger systems.

All libraries serving populations of over 100k were planning on continuing with virtual programming

Do you plan on continuing on offering virtual programming in the next 12 months?

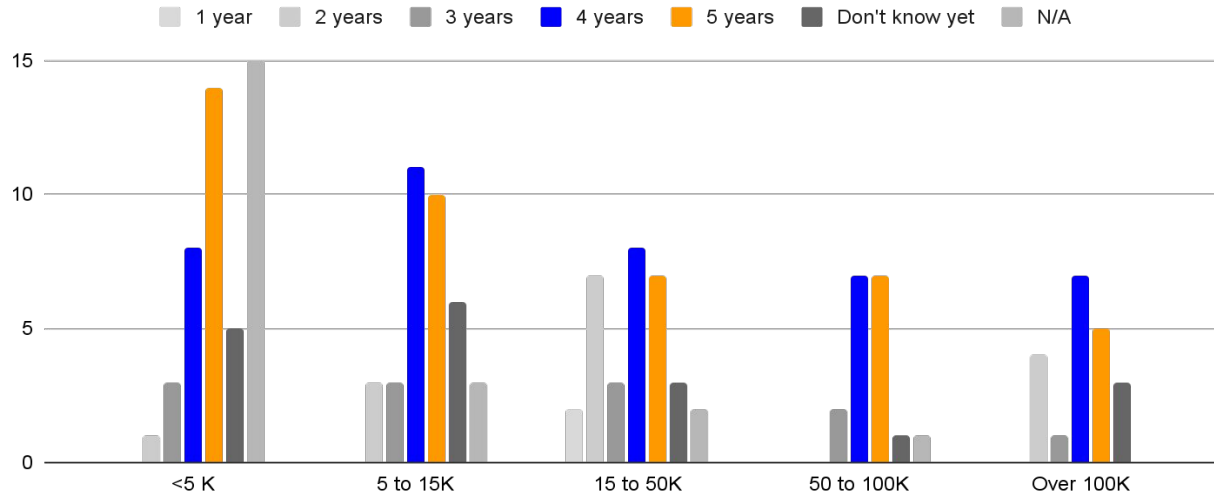


The likelihood that libraries planned on continuing to offer virtual programming over the next 12 month increased with the library's size..

How have libraries
approached strategic
planning during the
pandemic? Are plans
longer or shorter?

Four year strategic plans were the most popular among respondents, with **five** year strategic plans growing in popularity.

Duration of next strategic plan

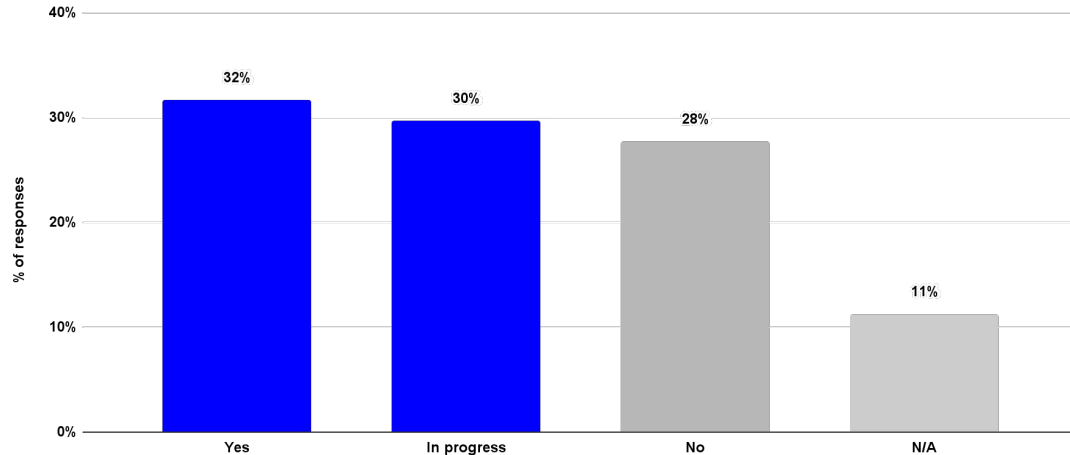


Libraries serving populations of less than 5K are less likely to have a formal strategic plan.

Libraries serving 15-50K populations have a broader collection of strategic plan lengths - with 2 years rivalling 5 for most second place.

60% of respondents either use metrics or are in the process of adding metrics to their strategic plans.

60% use metrics, or are in progress with adding metrics to the strat plan



Respondents comments highlight:

- **Use of KPIs**
- Evaluation plans with metrics
- Use of smartsheet
- Use of Ministry data, ILS status, Census data and Environics.

Others noted:

- “We are currently **writing our first** Strategic plan”

Major **challenges** in the next two years?

- **Budget** continues to be the #1 concern
- **Staffing**
- **Customer needs post-COVID**

Check out [OLS resources on how to value library services when drafting your next budget](#)

Major **opportunities** in the next two years?

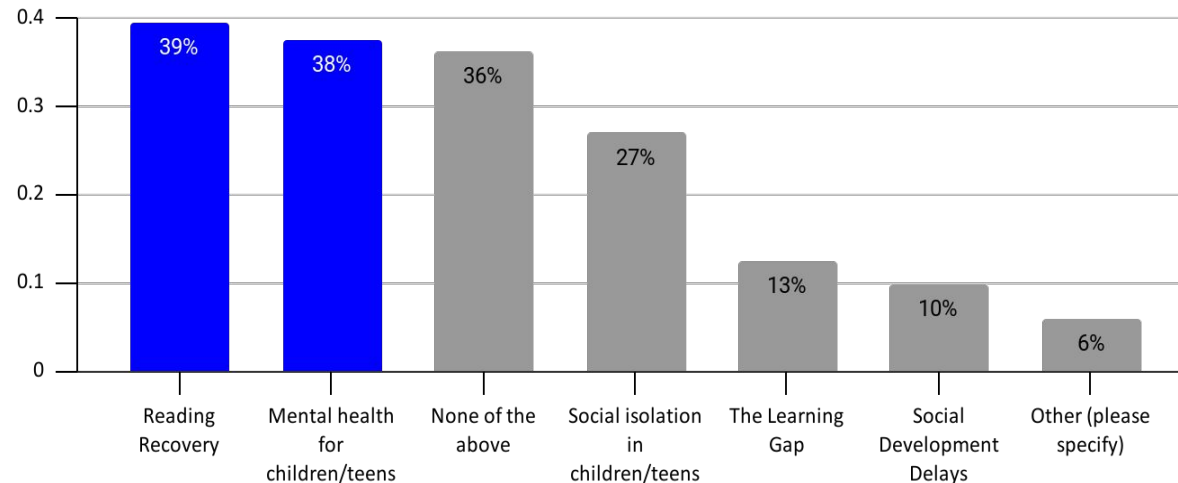
- More **partnerships**
- More residents - and **more space** required to fill needs -
- More programs/technology/outdoor space/**hybrid** offerings to reflect community needs
- Meeting more **complex & different** community needs
- Opportunity to change things for the future - **break away from traditional** way of doing things

Favourite comment: “New 100% net zero community library, high-level hybrid programming and events using state-of-the-art streaming technology, 4-day work week for full-time staff”

What are libraries
planning for children
& youth?

Reading recovery & mental health are the most frequently cited programs for children & youth

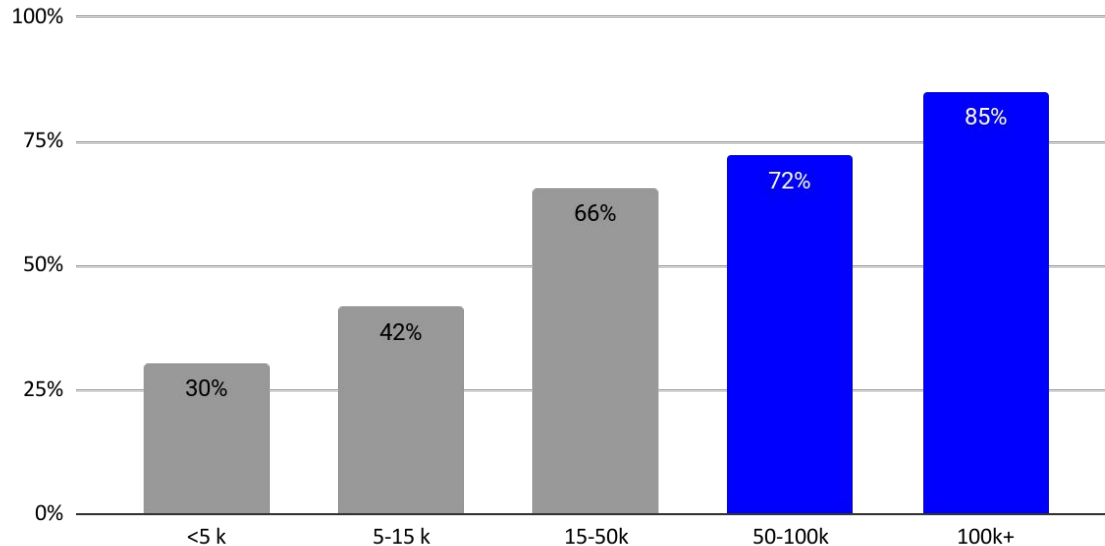
Does your library support children and youth with programming focused in any of the following areas ? Select all that apply.



Over a third of library systems were not focusing on any of the options listed in our survey.

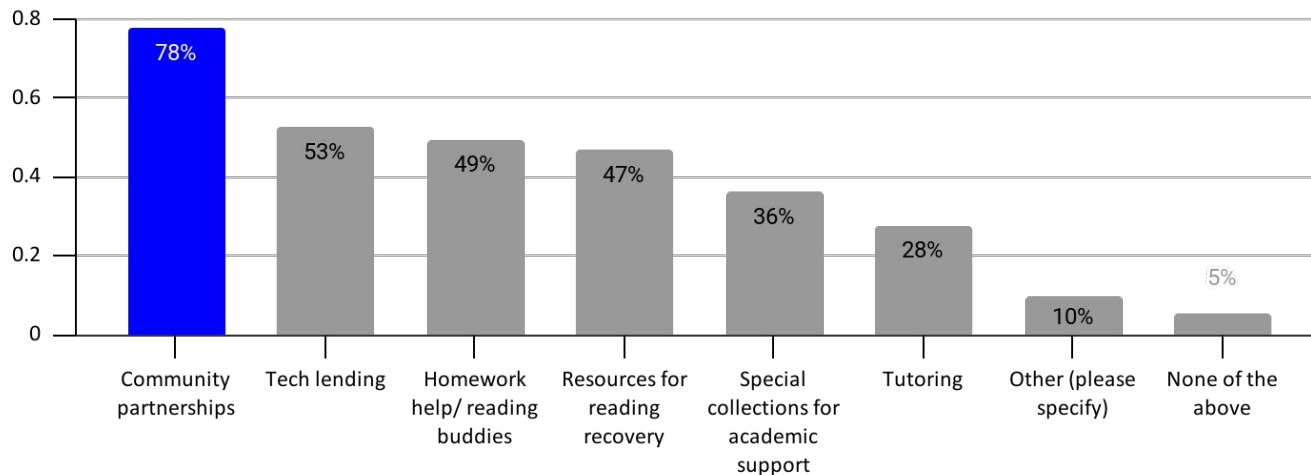
Larger systems are planning to invest in loanable technology to support children & youth

Which, if any, of the following services is your library planning to support children and youth in the next 12 months: tech lending



Community partnerships are the primary focus for children & youth services in the next 12 months.

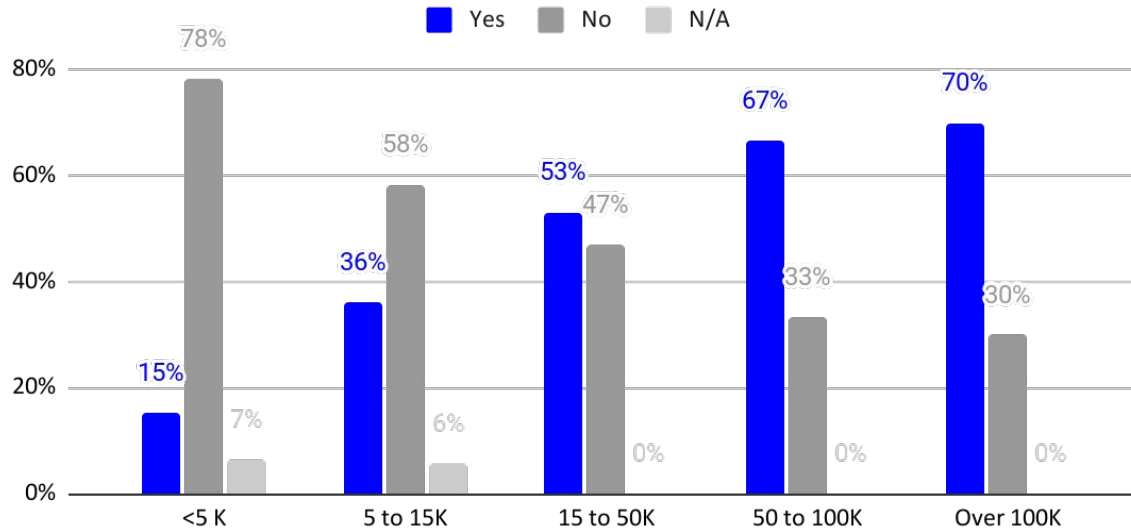
Which, if any, of the following services is your library planning to support children and youth in the next 12 months:



How were important
public health decisions
made by libraries
during the pandemic?
What roles did Boards
have CEOs have?

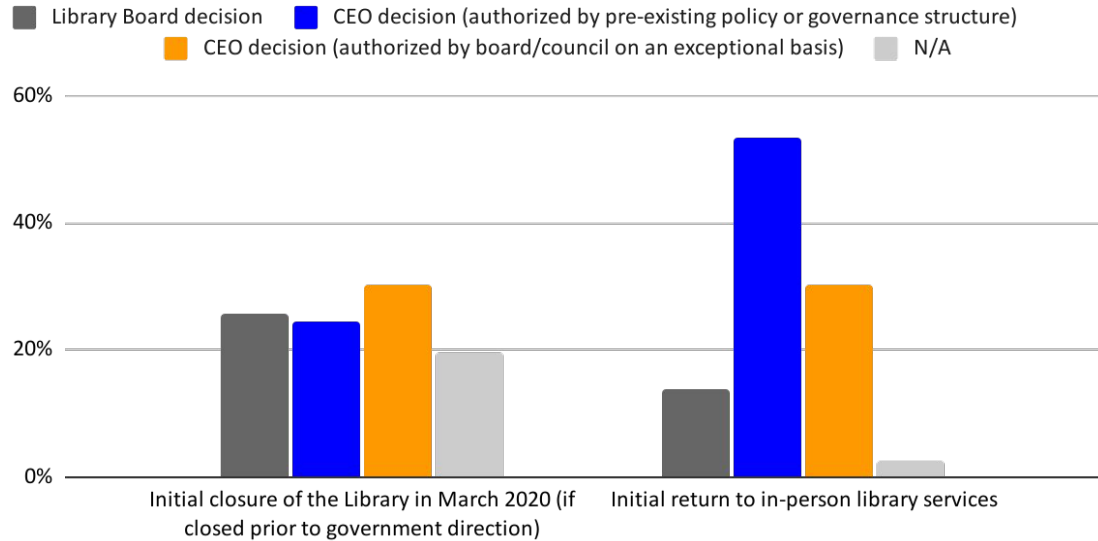
The larger the resident population served, the greater likelihood the library participated in pandemic management at the municipal or regional level

Was your library involved in pandemic management at the municipal level or regional? (Emergency Management Team)



Library CEOs had more autonomy to make the decision to re-open, than to do the initial closure.

At the outset of the pandemic who had the decision-making authority for the following decisions?

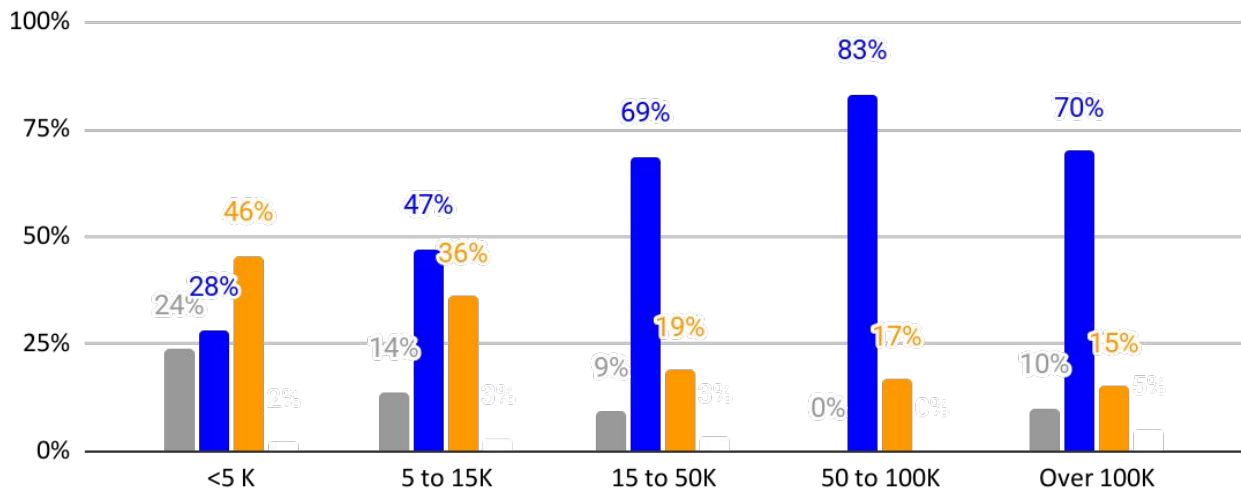


Two kinds of CEO decision are noted here: one authorized based on the **existing governance structure** and one authorized on an **exceptional basis**.

Return to in-person service was primarily a CEO decision for library systems of all population ranges.

Initial return to in-person library services

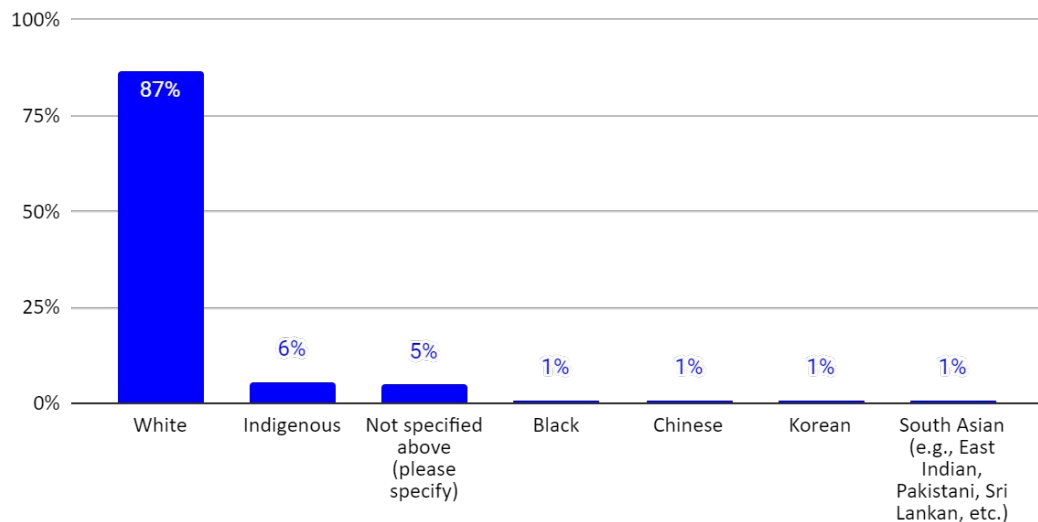
■ Library Board decision ■ CEO decision (authorized by pre-existing policy or governance)
■ CEO decision (authorized by board/council on an exceptional basis) □ N/A



What is the
demographic makeup
of Ontario library
leadership?

Most representative demographic: White (87%); Woman(82%); Heterosexual(89%)

What best describes your racial background (Select all that apply)?

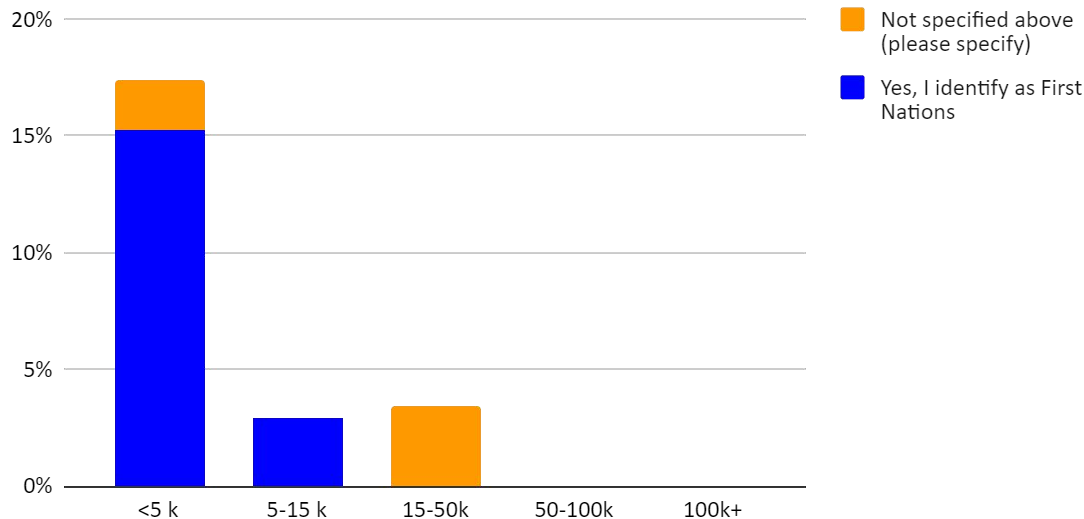


Limitations:

The survey design allows respondents to select more than one option for all questions, which will skew the results slightly: each response selected (even if by the same person) is counted equally as a unique response.

17% of leaders of libraries serving a population of under 5,000 are Indigenous

Are you Indigenous to Turtle Island?



This group includes First Nations Public Libraries.

Future Research Topics

- Public Libraries & Strategic planning - are we really being strategic, or just tactical?
- Staffing recruitment challenges - designing work for the future of public libraries
- Alternative sources of funding
- Bringing customers back post-COVID? Are losses permanent or only temporary?

- What else?

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