



Photo: Cambridge Public Library

The Impact of Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo Public Libraries*

* Regional impact study covering Kitchener Public Library, Cambridge Public Library, and Waterloo Public Library, conducted as part of a national study on the impact of Canadian urban libraries, led by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CULC/CBUC).



Library systems join forces to demonstrate library impact across the Waterloo region

The Kitchener Public Library, Cambridge Public Library, and Waterloo Public Library are pleased to share the results of a regional study exploring our collective social impact across the region of Waterloo.

This work builds on the important first-ever national study looking at the social impact of public libraries across the country. It was led by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) using an approach that was pioneered by Toronto Public Library. Inspired by that foundational research, this regional analysis takes a deeper look at how these impacts are experienced within our community, reflecting the unique characteristics, needs, and opportunities of our region.

Public libraries have long understood their value through traditional measures, like number of visits, books and other materials borrowed, and program attendance, as well as through

anecdotal stories shared by community members. This study, however, brings deeper meaning to the numbers and experiences by applying a structured, evidence-based approach to measuring the social benefit that people receive from using our libraries. The study enables a more comprehensive and nuanced view of how libraries contribute to individual and community well-being.

The data was gathered through online surveys with library users and non-users in Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo. Together, our three library systems serve a rapidly changing and diverse region. By placing the lived experiences of residents at the core of the research, this report explores the ways in which our public libraries support well-being across emotional, social, intellectual, and creative domains.

While the analysis is grounded in the national framework, the findings in this report offer a

regional perspective that complements and deepens the broader Canadian picture. The study highlights that our impact as social infrastructure that supports inclusion, lifelong learning, connection, and resilience is comparable to the largest urban libraries in the country. We look forward to sharing these insights and continuing to work collaboratively with municipalities, partners, and our communities to strengthen the impact of urban public libraries across the region.

We are grateful to community members who participated in this work, Toronto Public Library and CULC for leading the way with this research, and Danish companies IS IT A BIRD and It depends for innovating the model and breathing life into the data. We also want to recognize and thank library staff members for their ongoing commitment and care that enhances our communities and the lives of the people who live in them.

Executive summary

Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo Public Libraries have participated in the largest study ever conducted on the impact of public libraries with the aim of understanding the role that libraries play for individuals and communities. To explore their impacts in greater depth, the three libraries jointly decided to carry out a regional impact study. This report presents findings specific to the three library systems, which throughout the report will be referred to either by their individual names or collectively as the libraries across the Waterloo region.

Delivering impact across all service pillars

The impact profile for the libraries across the Waterloo region is well-rounded, with the strongest scores exhibited by the Intellectual and Emotional dimensions, led in particular by the *'Knowledge'* and *'Well-being'* parameters for library Collections.

The Social dimension scores lowest overall, particularly in *'Community'* and *'Relations'*, though Collections is a notable exception. Its high *'Empathy'* score reflects how collections uniquely inspire empathy through insight into the lives of others.

Programs are less used, but highly impactful

Although Programs is the least-used service, nearly half of all library users report having attended a program in the past year, compared to Collections, which 96% of users have engaged with.

Those who do participate in Programs experience a profound impact across all four dimensions, with particularly high scores in *'Knowledge'* and *'Emotional Engagement'* from the Intellectual and Emotional dimensions.

Broad support among both users and non-users

Across Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo, both users and non-users value public libraries and agree on their importance. Among non-users, three out of four agree that a public library is one of the most valuable resources a city can offer its community.

This is further supported by the finding that non-use of library services does not stem from disengagement or dislike. Rather, results indicate that non-users are simply focused on other priorities or fulfilling their needs elsewhere.

Highlighting user testimonials from the survey

Testimonials highlight how the libraries provide vital community spaces that are highly valued. Users share a range of meaningful experiences: a student found refuge and curiosity in the Collections; a newcomer to Canada built knowledge and friendships through several different programs; another user gained friendship and well-being through a peer program; and several users describe how library Staff provide a wealth of knowledge, offering advice and a sense of validation.

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1

Measuring impact

We measure impact by asking the right questions

Placing the individual experience at the heart of the inquiry

Information such as the number of people using the library, how many books are borrowed, and the popularity of certain books only tells us so much. But what imprint does the library leave on local communities? How do users engage with library services, and to what purpose?

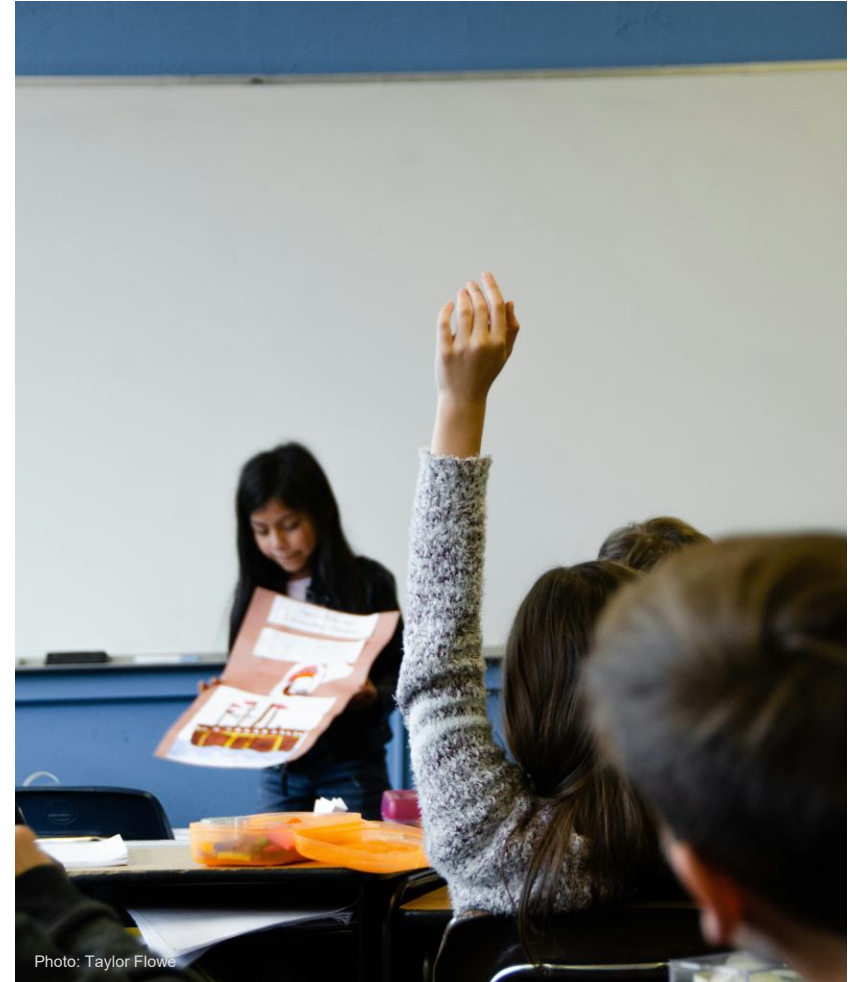
Going beyond conventional metrics, this study aims to understand how library services impact and influence the lives of the people engaging with them.

Inspired by The Cultural Value Project and building upon Toronto Public Library's social impact study

The CULC Impact Study builds on foundations laid by the comprehensive British research project *The Cultural Value Project*¹ as well as by the pioneering social impact study initiated by Toronto Public Library.²

1. Grossick G. & Kaszynska P. (2016): [*Understanding the value of arts & culture*](#). Arts and Humanities Research Council.

2. Toronto Public Library (2023): [*Enabling Torontonians to grow and thrive*](#).



Emotional Impact

The emotional dimension measures *how we feel*.

Impact parameters:
*Well-being, Immersion,
Emotional engagement*

Intellectual Impact

The intellectual dimension measures *how we think*.

Impact parameters:
*Knowledge, Reflection,
Perspective*

Social Impact

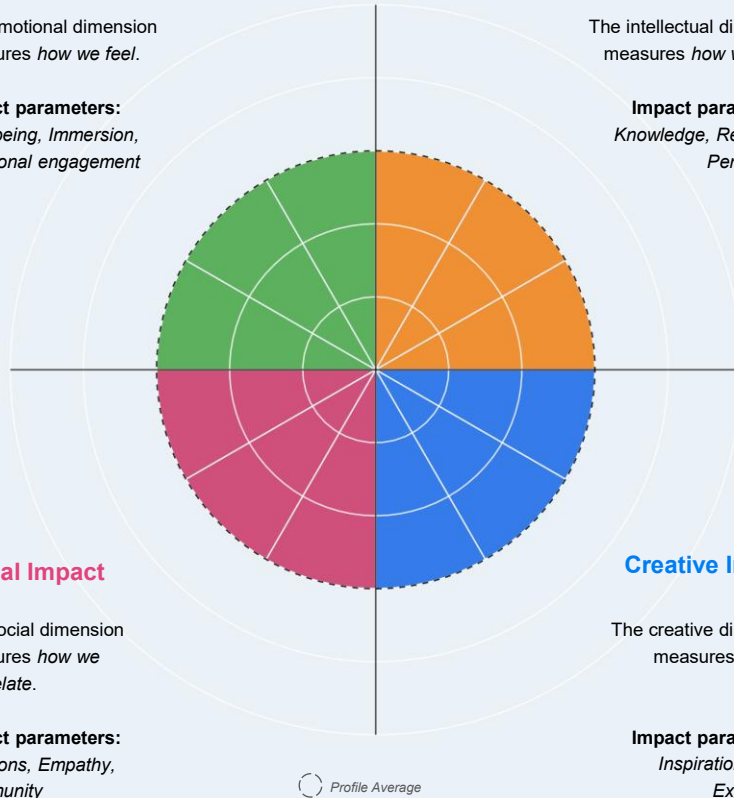
The social dimension measures *how we interrelate*.

Impact parameters:
*Relations, Empathy,
Community*

Creative Impact

The creative dimension measures *how we engage*.

Impact parameters:
*Inspiration, Skills,
Expression*



MEASURING IMPACT

How to read the Impact Profiles

Impact is measured along **4 dimensions with 3 parameters each**, designed to capture different aspects of the library experience.

- Library users **score each parameter on a scale** from “*Not at all*” (1) to “*To a very large extent*” (5).
- The values reported in the **Impact Profile** of a given library service express the **average ratings** across all users of that particular service.
- Parameters measure **the presence or absence of positive impact**. A low score on a given parameter is not reflective of negative impact. Rather, it indicates that library users have generally not experienced a specific type of impact.
- Likewise, Impact Profiles are expected to **differ across library services**. The nature of some services may influence many parameters at once, while others exhibit distinct ‘peaks’ in a few key impact parameters only.
- A score of 1 indicates that all users respond “*Not at all*”, whereas a score of 5 indicates that all users report the maximum rating. In practice, these extremes are unlikely to occur. **Ratings usually vary between scores of 2-4.**

A regional slice of the CULC National Impact Study

In 2025, Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo Public Libraries participated in a national CULC-led study to better understand the role and value of Canadian urban libraries in their local communities.

A nationwide quantitative survey makes up the foundation of this impact study. Fielded in the period May – July 2025, this survey was conducted among the general population as well as among library users, specifically.

The study is the largest of its kind, with participation from a total of 26 CULC member library systems across the country. The massive data collection garnered a total of 18,315 responses from all over Canada. A national report was published by CULC in January 2026¹.

This report is based on a regional slice of the national dataset, comprising responses from 761 users of either Kitchener, Cambridge, or Waterloo Public Libraries, along with 84 non-users.



1. Canadian Urban Libraries Council / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CULC/CBUC) (2026): [The Impact of Canadian Public Libraries](#).



Throughout this report, icons in the subheadings indicate whether the slide presents insights about 'users', 'non-users', or both.

Defining library users and non-users



Library users

Library users are known by many names across different parts of the country. Common descriptors include: patrons, visitors, guests, borrowers, clients, and customers.

Likewise, there are several ways to define a 'user'. Criteria may include holding a library card, using the library's services frequently, or having interacted with the library recently.

Following the definition from the Toronto Public Library social impact study, users of a given library are those who have used at least one of that library's services within the past 12 months.

Throughout this report, survey respondents who report that they have used library services within the past year are referred to as 'users'.



Relevant non-users

Based on the definition of users, non-users whose responses are relevant to a given library are then one of the following:

- a) respondents who have not used any library services in the past year, but who reside in an area close to the library, as identified by their postal code.
- b) respondents who have previously used this library's services, but not in the past 12 months, and who have not used other library services in the meantime.

Throughout this report, these survey respondents are referred to as 'non-users'.

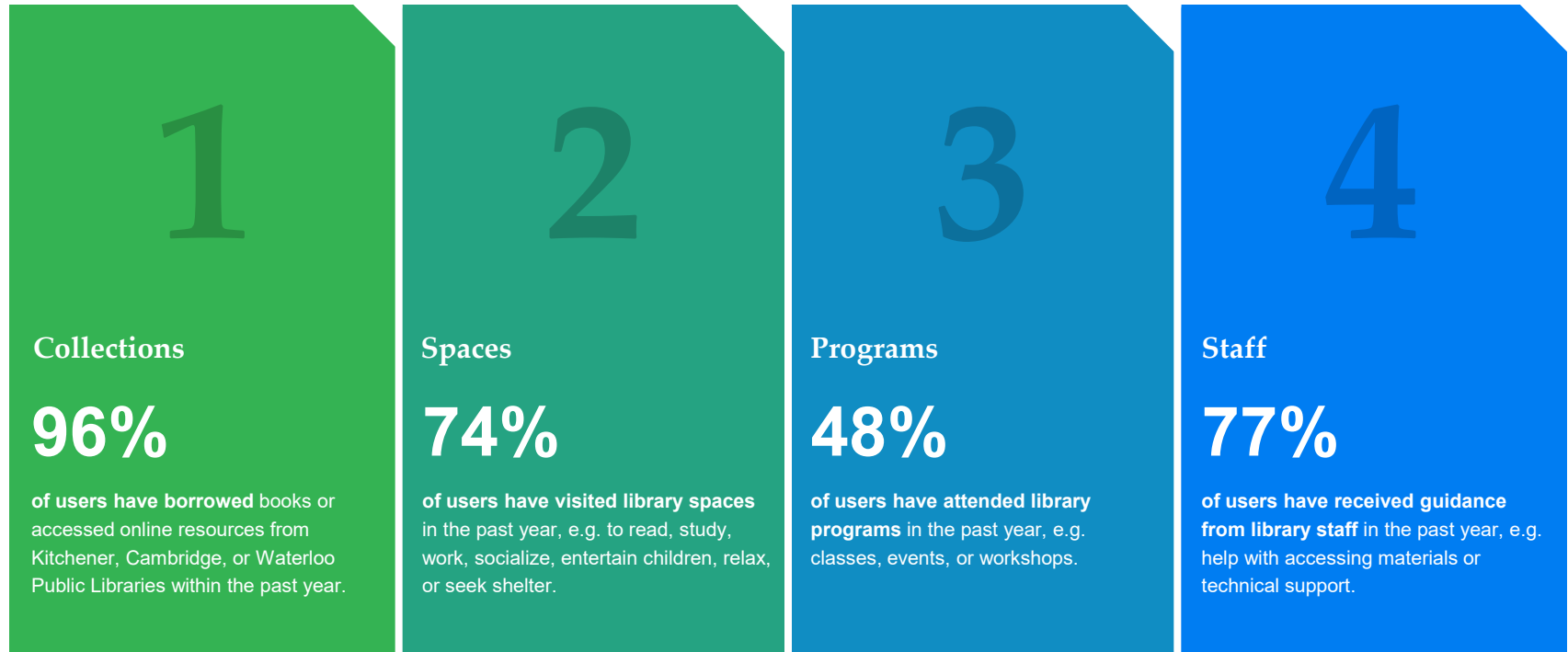


For more details on data collection and the CULC Impact Study dataset, please refer the Appendix.

2

Use of library services

User engagement with library services in the past year



n: 761

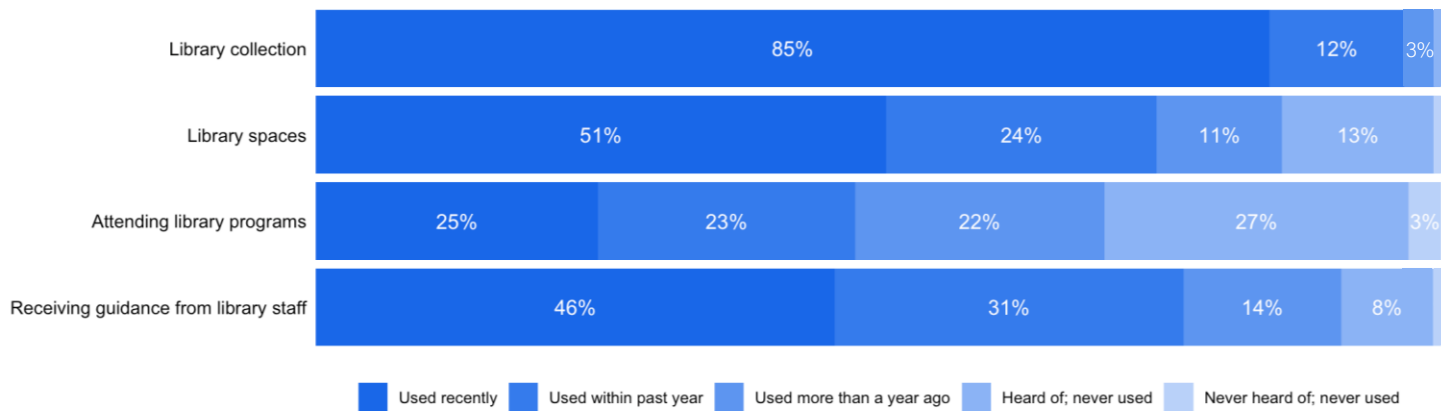
User engagement patterns

Users of Kitchener, Cambridge, or Waterloo Public Libraries who have engaged with at least one of the four services within the past year, have a good idea of the range of services on offer. However, this does not mean that all library services are used equally often. The library collection is the most popular service with more than 9 out of 10 users having borrowed books or accessed online services in the past year. This is followed by seeking staff guidance (77%) and making use of library spaces (75%). Although library programs and events see the least frequent use, nearly half of all library users have nonetheless attended within the past year.

Usage of library services

How have you used your library's services either online or in-person?

For each library service, please select the category that best describes your use of that service.



n: 761

Perceived relevance of library services by users and non-users

Users

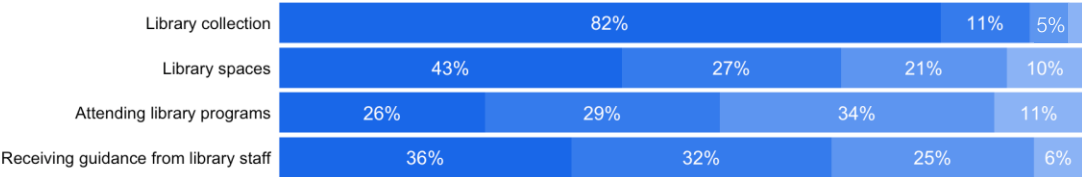
- Among users of Kitchener, Cambridge, or Waterloo Public Libraries, the perceived relevance of services quite closely mirrors their actual use.
- Although programs are used less frequently than other services, more users would potentially like to engage. 55% of users find library programs very or fairly relevant, with 48% having actually attended a program in the past year.

Non-users

- 45% of those who are not currently using library services imagine that the library collection could be very or fairly relevant to them in the future.

Users' perception of library services

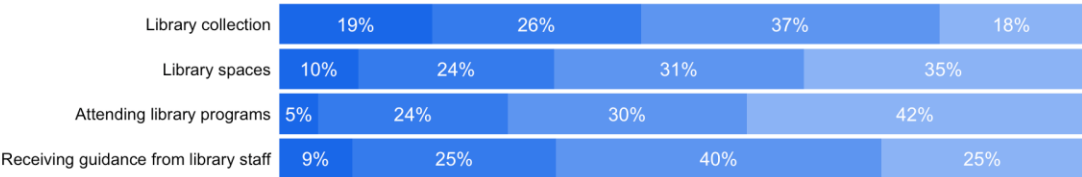
How do you feel about the following services offered by your library?



n: 761

Non-users' perception of library services

Could you imagine the following services offered by your library being relevant to you in the future?



 Very relevant to me  Fairly relevant to me  Slightly relevant to me  Not at all relevant to me

n: 84

3

Impact Profiles

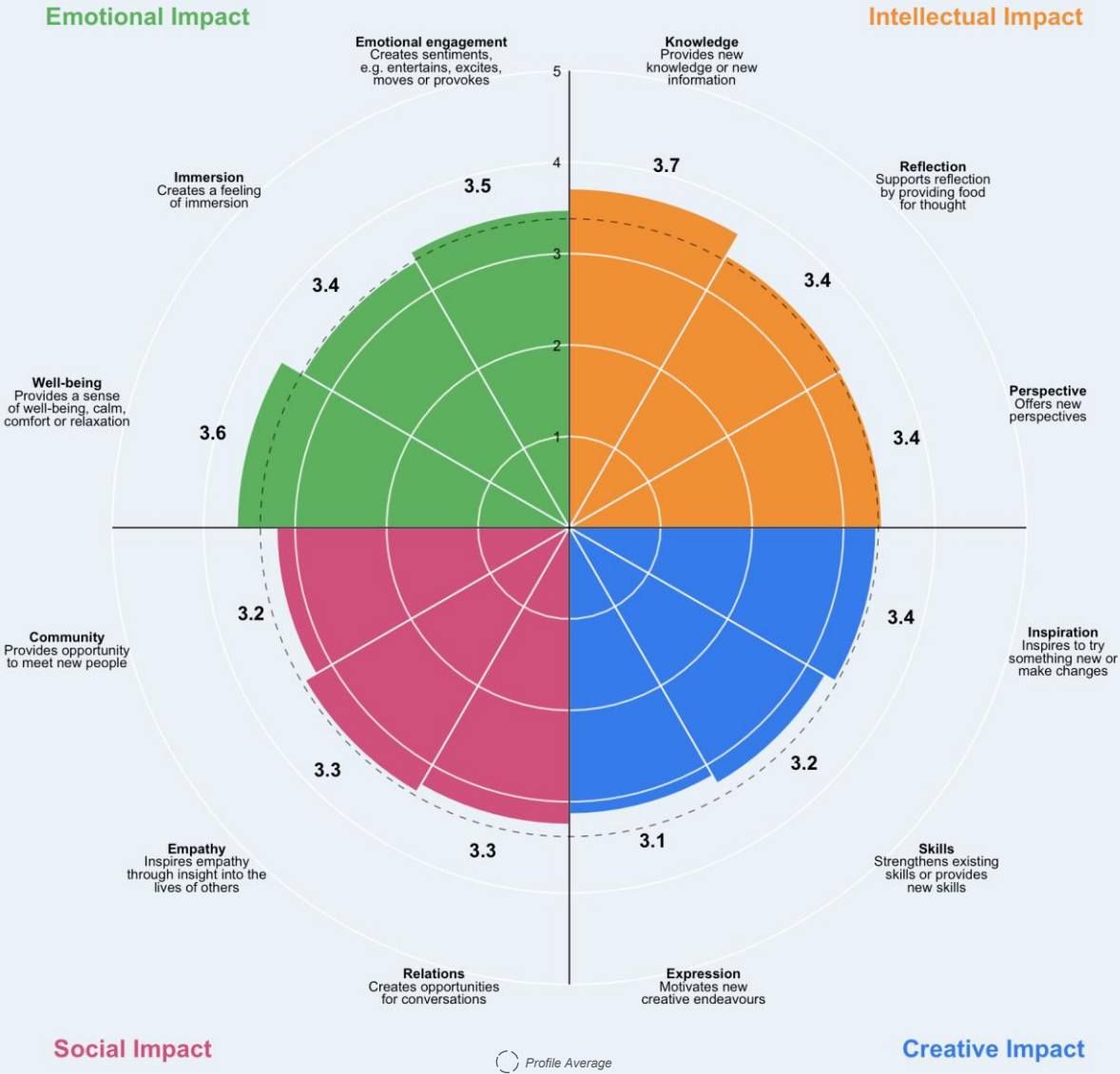
Overall impact

Profile Average: 3.4

Across all library services and all impact dimensions, the 3 libraries in the Waterloo region have an average impact score of 3.4, reflecting a well-rounded impact profile.

This is based on 761 users of Kitchener, Cambridge, or Waterloo Public Library services who have used either Collections, Spaces, Programs, or Staff within the past year.

Averaged across library services, all impact parameters measured have a score of at least 3.1. Notably, the 'Knowledge' parameter reaches the highest overall score at 3.7.





Young Adult S-Z

“It’s important that the libraries continue to provide a place for community - a space for all generations to feel a sense of belonging and spend time. The library has done a great job in creating space for all members of our community to enjoy, and there are far too few of these spaces available in many cities.”

LAURA, WATERLOO PUBLIC LIBRARY

“Being able to use the library has reopened a world for me. I feel inspired, entertained, and welcomed. I can’t begin to express my gratitude.”

ANNE, KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY

“[The library has] improved and supported my mental health when my children were young by offering a place to get out of the house and participate in low- or no-cost activities.”

JONATHAN, CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Collections

Profile Average: 3.5

The Impact Profile of **Collections** is based on 734 users who have borrowed books or accessed online resources from Kitchener, Cambridge, or Waterloo Public Library within the past year.

With a profile average of 3.5, this service scores at the higher end of the expected range.

Overall impact of Collections

- Users experience significant all-round impact from interacting with the library's Collections, with only '*Community*' scoring below 3.1.
- All parameters across the Emotional and Intellectual dimensions score at the top of the expected range, indicating a profound impact in these areas.

Key nuances

- Within the Social dimension, there is a distinct peak in the '*Empathy*' parameter, indicating how library collections build empathy for others by providing perspective on the lives of others.

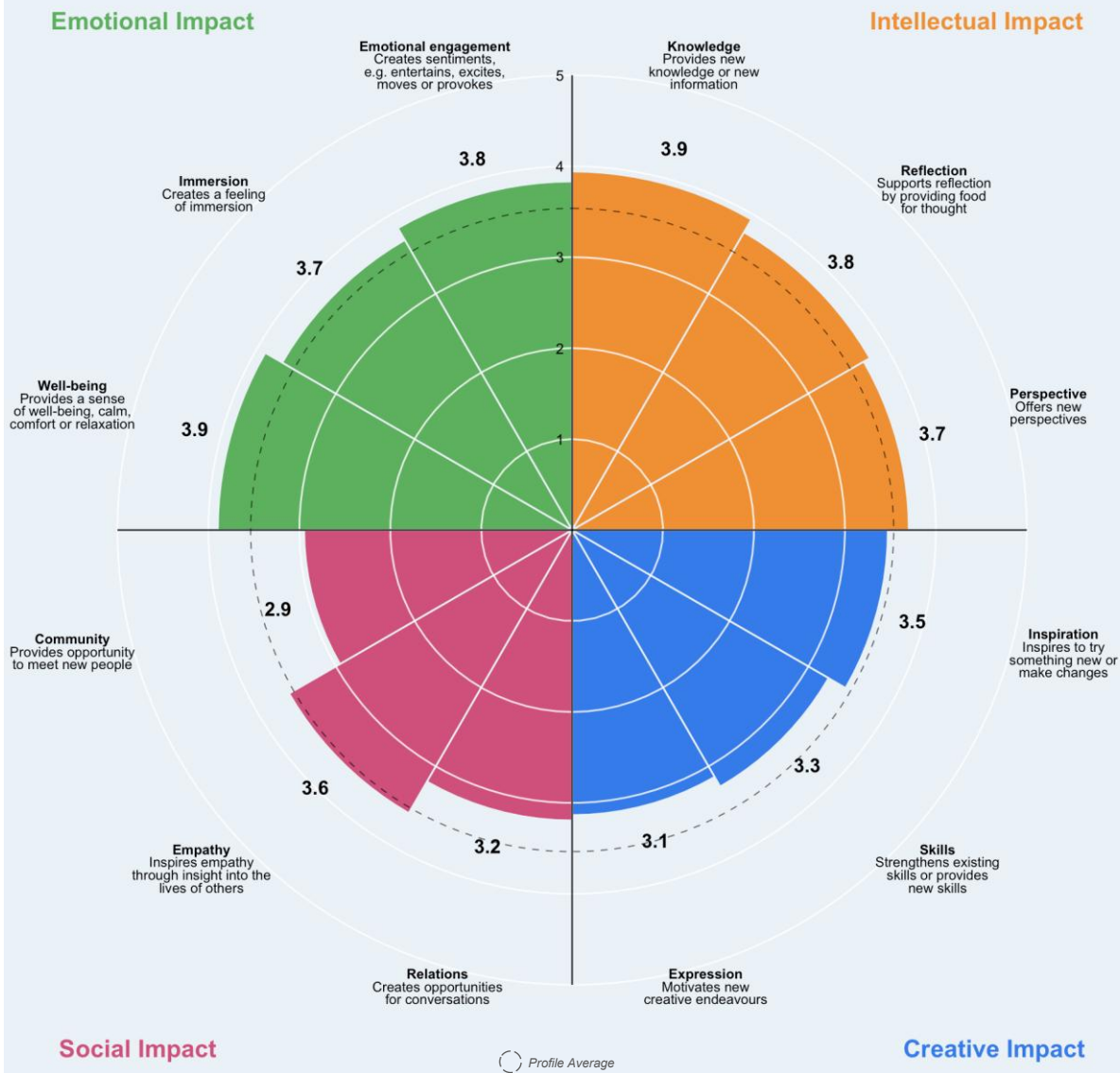




Photo: Waterloo Public Library

“I’m a parent with a limited budget, and the library provides me with free resources to inspire and to help myself, my family, and my community. When my child was a baby the reading circles at the library allowed us to meet other families and provided my child with their first group learning experiences. Now that he is older, we use the library galleries as opportunities to discuss art.”

NOAH, KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY

“The library was a refuge during my student years. A place where I discovered books, found inspiration, and nurtured my curiosity. Libraries have played a profound role in shaping my personal and intellectual journey – and continue to do so.”

THEODORE, CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

“When I had a bad concussion, I was able to access the library’s audiobooks, and this made a world of difference for my well-being.”

OLIVIA, KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Spaces

Profile Average: 3.4

The Impact Profile of **Spaces** is based on 566 users who have spent time at Kitchener, Cambridge, or Waterloo Public Library spaces in the past year.

With a profile average of 3.4, this service scores above the middle of the expected range.

Overall impact of Spaces

- Users generally experience stable all-round impact from visiting library Spaces, with most parameters varying closely around the Profile Average.

Key nuances

- All impact parameters score above 3.1, with 'Knowledge' and 'Well-being' reaching the highest scores at 3.6 and 3.7, respectively.

Emotional Impact

Intellectual Impact

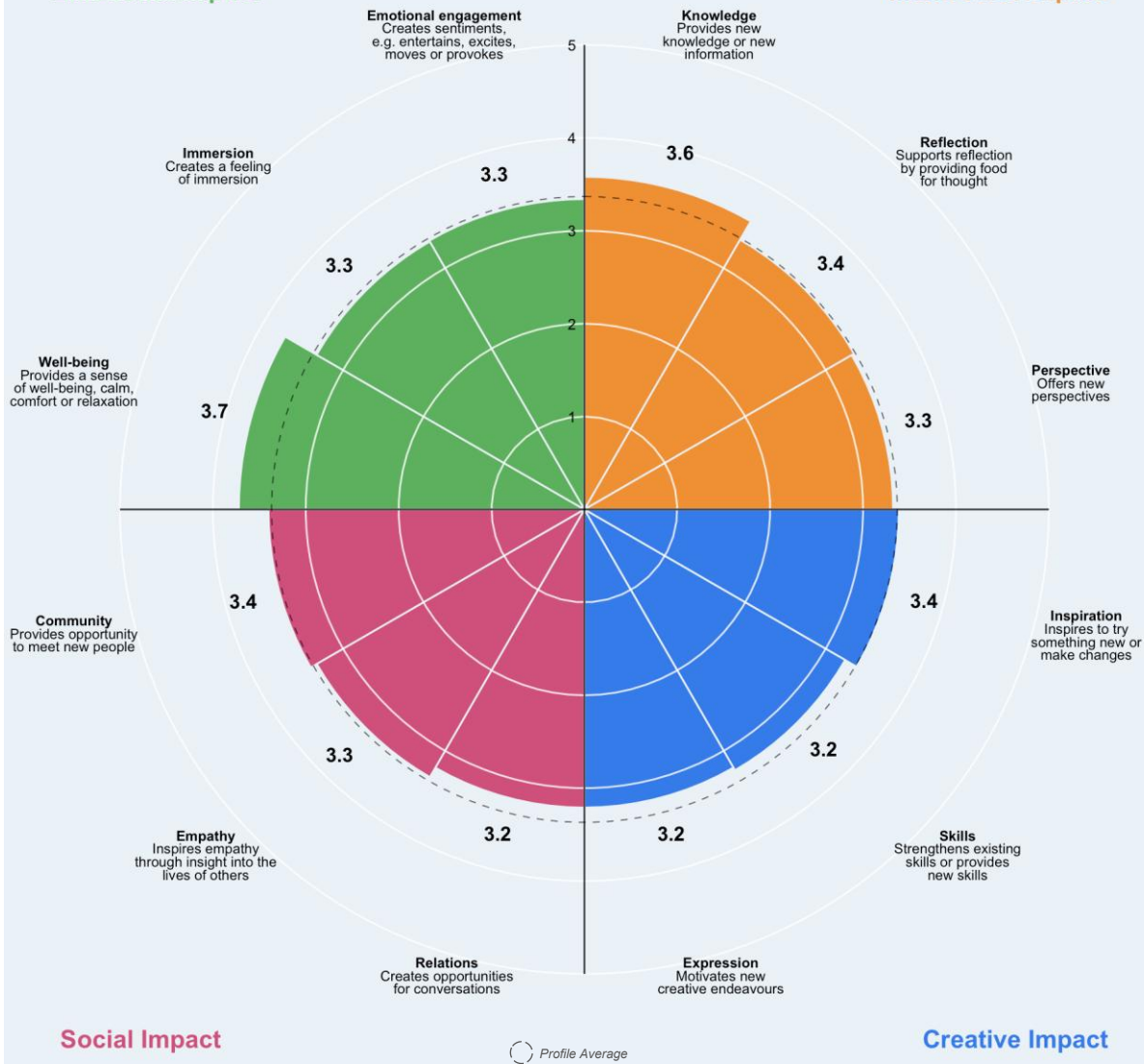




Photo: Cambridge Public Library

“I see seniors every day in my local libraries. They are reading the papers, chatting with staff, and I can’t help but smile. It is wonderful to have a place you feel connected, welcomed, and valued as a person – no matter your age, race, or gender.”

MARGARET, WATERLOO PUBLIC LIBRARY

“As a child, it was one of the very few places where I could be alone in a public space, feel safe, and not have to spend money. If I was having a hard day at home or needed a quiet refuge, it was always there for me.”

JOSHUA, KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY

“I am an immigrant and a lifelong bibliophile. My love of books led me to become a teacher. As a dedicated library volunteer, I have built strong friendships while leading different programs at the library. I believe libraries are the heart and soul of a community, and I can’t imagine my life without them.”

KAI, WATERLOO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Programs

Profile Average: 3.6

The Impact Profile of **Programs** is based on 363 users who have attended library programs at Kitcher, Cambridge or Waterloo Public Library within the past year.

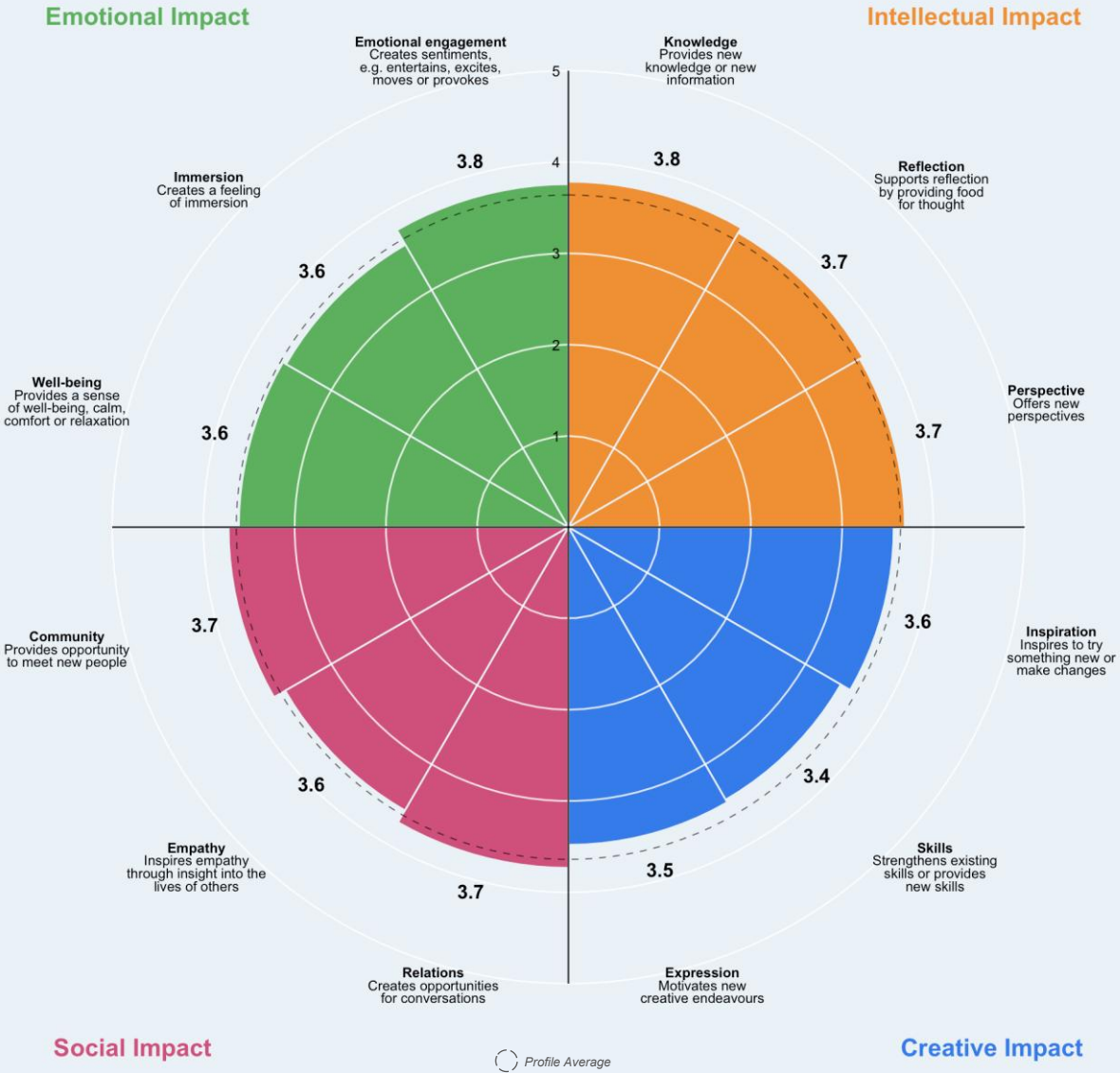
With a profile average of 3.6, this service scores at the higher end of the expected range.

Overall impact of Programs

- Programs are attended by fewer people than the other library services. However, those who do participate generally experience a strong all-round impact, with no scores below 3.4 and 6 parameters at 3.7 or above.

Key nuances

- Even though Programs is the least-used service, it has the highest profile average score of all (3.6), and the Social dimension stands out compared to other services. High Social scores reflect how attending Programs leads to connecting with new people and engaging in meaningful conversations.



IMPACT PROFILES

“The library feels like one of the few spaces in our city wholly dedicated to the betterment of our community through accessibility, empathy, and creativity, while providing an open and welcoming space for all.

It is a rare place where I see people from all backgrounds represented and engaging in the community on equal terms. Attending library events over the past year has been a bright spot during very challenging times, and the ongoing efforts of the library staff and community truly give me hope for our city.”

MAYA, KITCHENER PUBLIC
LIBRARY



“I have been taking my toddler to the programs for the past few months, and the difference in his behavior is astounding. He has so much fun and is constantly asking to go back.”

CHRISTOPHER, WATERLOO PUBLIC LIBRARY

“The library is my second home. After COVID, I started participating in a program at the library that connects peers. I recovered my well-being and felt the need to give back to the community, so I started volunteering. [...] I even made a friend through the program. I deeply appreciate what the library offers, and I always tell others about its programs.”

MARGARET, CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Staff

Profile Average: 3.0

The Impact Profile of **Staff** is based on 585 Library users who have received guidance from library staff within the past year.

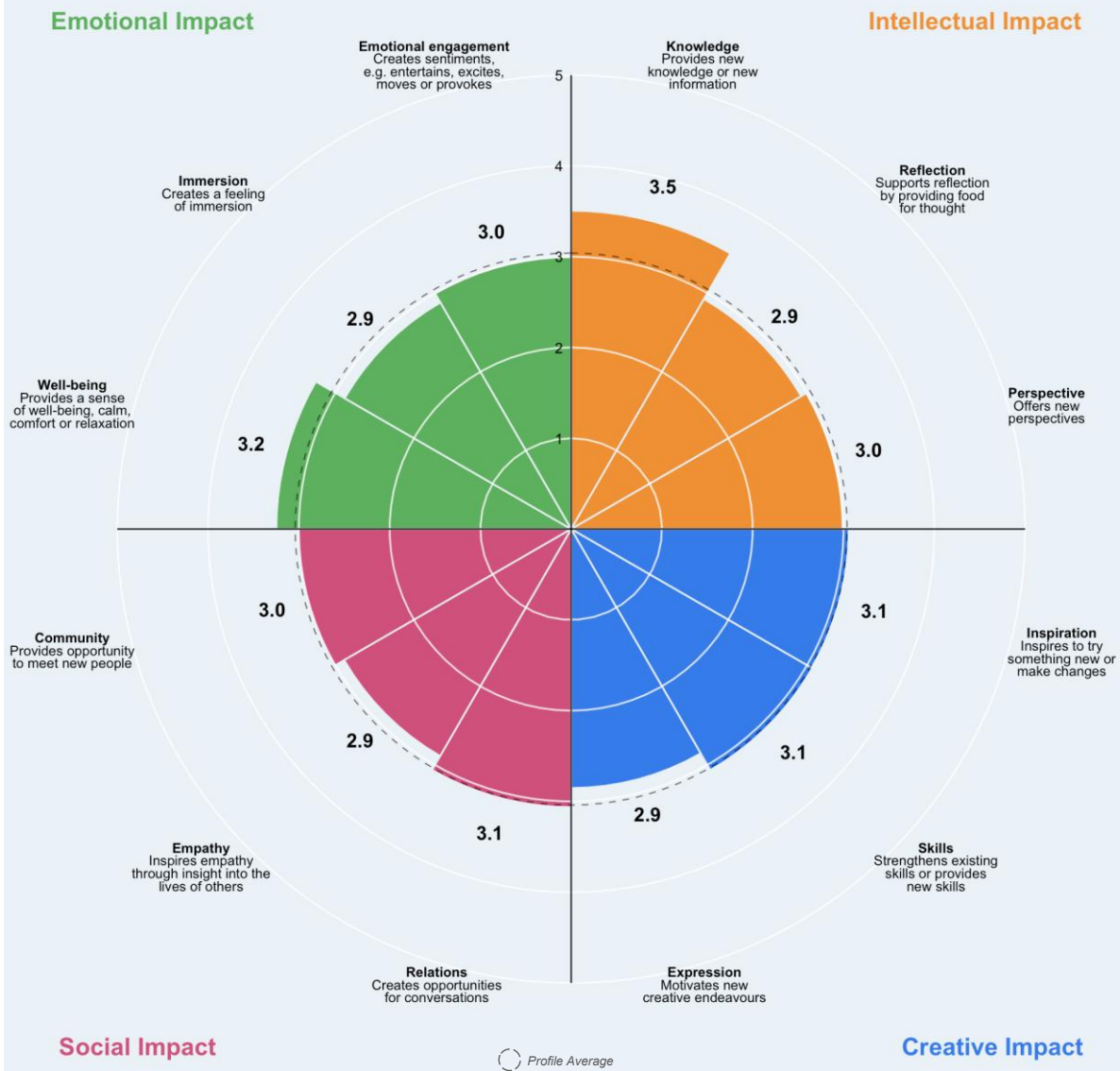
With a profile average of 3.0, this service scores around the middle of the expected range.

Overall impact of Staff

- Users generally experience the most impact within the Emotional and Intellectual dimensions, with 'Knowledge' and 'Well-being' scoring highest at 3.5 and 3.2, respectively.

Key nuances

- The Profile Average score of Staff (3.0) is lower than for other library services, with some parameters scoring below 3.0. Importantly, this does not take into account the role of Staff in facilitating Programs. The peaks on this profile nonetheless demonstrate how Staff provide knowledge and comfort to library users.



"I've never had a bad experience with any member of staff at any library; they are always very helpful. One member of staff even found a book for me without knowing the title or the author - just an outline of what it was about. Now that's service."

JOHN, CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

"Librarians have such a wealth of knowledge about books and authors that it amazes me to this day. I still take out books but often don't start them or can't finish them. I spoke to a very kind librarian who encouraged me and made suggestions on books about grieving. Most importantly, she validated what I was going through."

CAROL, KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY

"The staff is always very helpful and kind, and they make me feel more connected to my community."

SOPHIA, WATERLOO PUBLIC LIBRARY

4

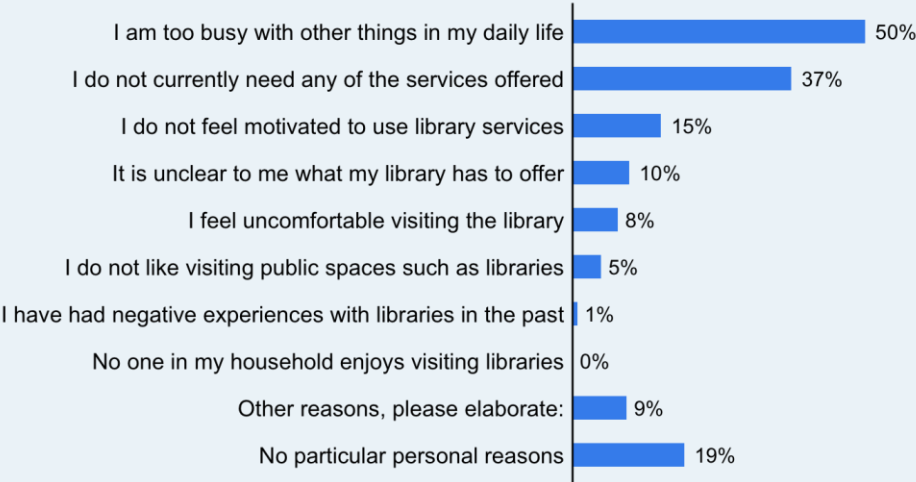
Perceived impact and
feedback from users
and non-users

Reasons for not using library services

Reasons for not using library services

Do you have any particular personal reasons for not using public library services?

Please select all that apply:



n: 84

Library non-use does not stem from unawareness or dislike of library services

- Non-users are generally aware of what their local library has to offer, but they do not feel an urgent push to use library services.
- In fact, most non-users report that they do not use library services simply because they are too busy (50%), do not currently need the services (37%), lack motivation (15%) or for “no particular reason” (19%).
- 1 out of 10 non-users feel in doubt about what their local library has to offer. Likewise, very few non-users have a dislike for libraries or adverse past experiences with them.

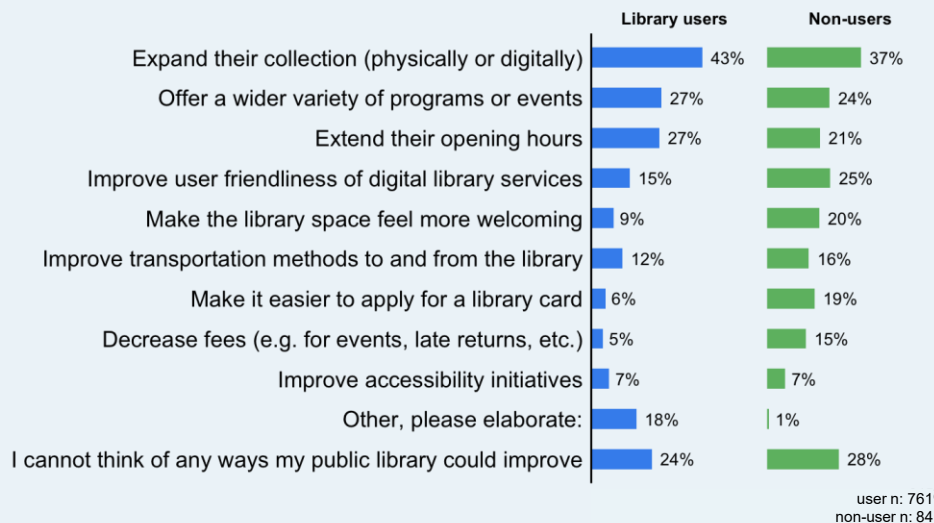


Library service feedback, users and non-users

Suggestions offered by users and non-users

If you could decide ways for your local public library to improve, what would they be?

Please select all that apply. I think my public library should...



The community would like even more ways to engage with their library, and non-users offer a wide variety of improvement suggestions

- For users and non-users alike, the most prevalent feedback relates to expanding the collection (43% and 37%, respectively).
- Users would also be interested in extended opening hours or a broader range of programs (27%). In other words, many users would like to make even more use of their library.
- Non-user preferences are less clear-cut: compared to users, they provide a wider variety of feedback without tending towards any singular improvement suggestion.
- 24% of users and 28% of non-users cannot think of any ways their local library could improve.

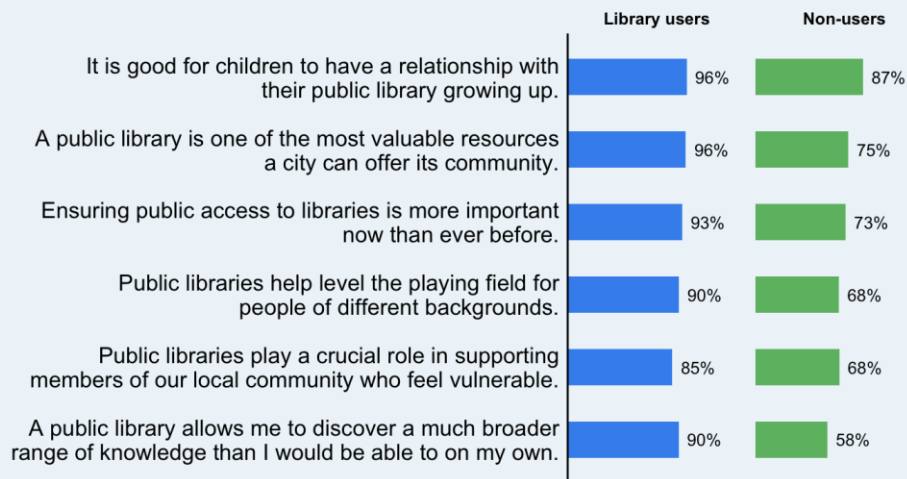


Library impact perceptions, users and non-users

Perceived library impact on individuals, communities, and society

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Percentage "Agree" or "Strongly agree":



user n: 761
non-user n: 84

Libraries are highly valued institutions by both users and non-users

- Whether asked about their individual needs, support for their local community, or about the role of libraries in society, a large majority of both users and non-users agree on the importance of public libraries.
- Even among non-users, 3 out of 4 agree that a public library is one of the most valuable resources a city can offer its community.

“Our family relies on and loves our local public libraries. We visit at least weekly for their welcoming spaces, materials, and programs. These places are more important than ever, and I fully support ensuring libraries have what they need to continue serving everyone.”

STEPHAN, CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

“Public libraries positively impact everyone’s lives, especially those on the margins during today’s social challenges around housing, food, and community insecurity. They create inclusive spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can connect and access resources that are often expensive or inaccessible. I see this impact every time I visit.”

LOGAN, KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY

“Libraries are extremely important for the health of our communities. Online access to libraries is good but not enough. We need more neighborhood libraries so people can walk to them without having to rely on any transport. I’m confident more people would visit libraries more often. I know I would.”

AGNES, WATERLOO PUBLIC LIBRARY

“The craft nights at [the library] have been a blessing for my cognitive and mental health over eight years of living with disability. The online resources provide me with escape, enrichment, and education.”

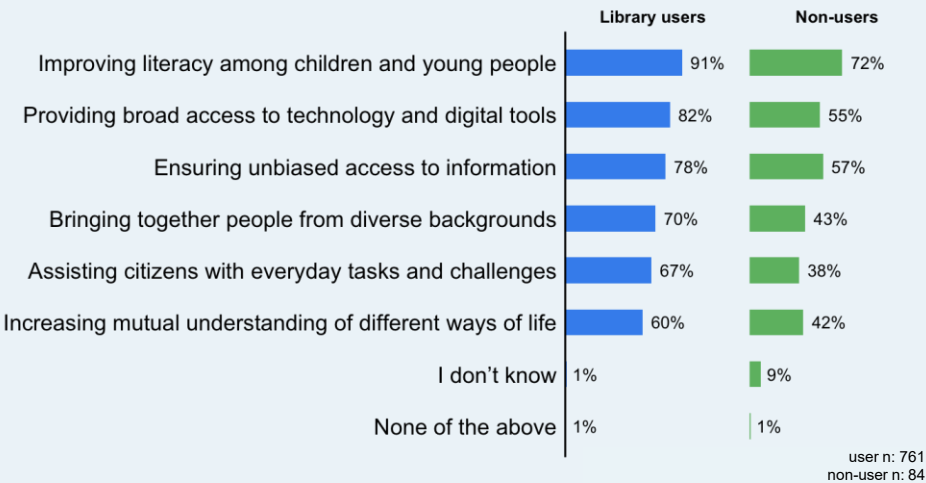
SOPHIA, KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Areas of library impact according to users and non-users

Areas with most significant library impact

In which of the following areas do you believe that public libraries have significant positive impact?

Please select all that apply:



Users and non-users alike believe in significant positive library impact

- Nearly all users of Kitchener, Cambridge, or Waterloo Public Libraries believe that public libraries have significant positive impact within at least one of the listed areas.
- 9 out of 10 users believe that this positive impact is most significant within early literacy.
- Crucially, non-use does not equate to disbelief in library impact. On the contrary, 90% of non-users believe that public libraries have significant positive impact in at least one area.
- Many respondents – especially current library users – have selected multiple areas of positive impact, indicating a conviction that public libraries deliver value broadly.

Perceived impact of technological services

The majority of library users believe that technological services offered by Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo Public Libraries have a positive impact for people in the local community.

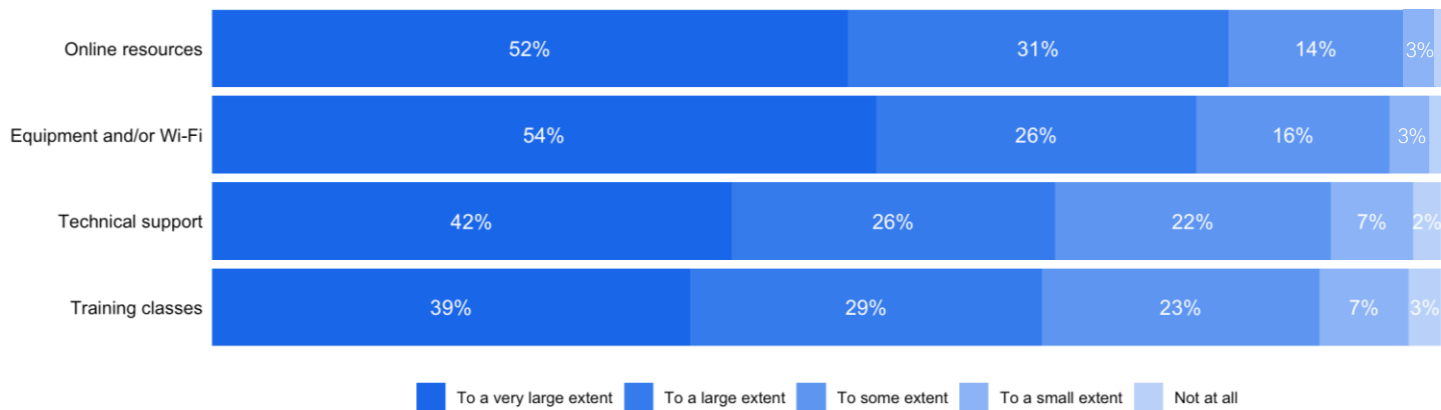
Most users find that both physical equipment and Wi-Fi as well as online resources have a large or very large positive impact (80-83%, respectively).

Although rated as the least impactful service, tech support is nonetheless believed to have a large or very large impact by 2 out of 3 users.

Impact of technological services according to library users

Public libraries offer various digital and technological services.

To what extent do you believe that these services have a positive impact for people in your community?



n: 761

A

Appendix: About the study

The team

IS IT A BIRD was established in 2011 and counts +30 employees. We are specialists in turning deep human understanding into new business opportunities.

We are on a mission to humanize business by offering our clients opportunities to shift perspectives and drive transformational change that resonates beyond the bottom line.

As part of Implement Consulting Group, we work as a transformation collective, born out of a genuine wish to turn plans into impact and dreams into progress.

For this collaboration, we put together a team across IS IT A BIRD, Implement, and It depends to enable the best possible impact study.

IS IT A 3IRD

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Copenhagen, Denmark

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LinkedIn: company/is-it-a-bird

It depends is an unconventional research consultancy, specialized in untangling the messy human experience. Our advanced quantitative methods make sense of human attitudes, needs, and behavior.

We were founded in 2023 by data scientists who left the traditional consulting industry to deliver more truthful, more efficient, and more actionable human insights. Since then, we have delivered tailored market research across more than 40 countries.

Our high-touch project team is led directly by our founding partners and comprises experts in social research and data science. Based in a former butcher's shop in Copenhagen, Denmark, we provide full-service research consulting.

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LinkedIn: company/itdepends-dk

About the national CULC Impact Study

Objectives of the National Impact Study

The CULC National Impact Study was commissioned to demonstrate the social impact of Canadian urban libraries on a national scale, beyond conventional measures (e.g. foot traffic, check-out stats, event participation figures, etc.).

That is, making tangible the social, emotional, creative, and intellectual impact of libraries.

Scope of the study

As a broad national study, this piece of research was designed to be relevant for the CULC membership at large. The point of departure is a similar study conducted for Toronto Public Library in 2023 – which has been scaled, standardised, and adapted to be feasible across a number of libraries at once.

A National Summary Report (published in January 2026) provides all CULC members with insights into public libraries' impact on Canadian library users at large, as well as perceived community-level and societal impact by both users and non-users.

This regional report is based on the slice of this original national dataset, pertaining specifically to Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo Public Libraries.

Quantitative survey

The core content of the questionnaire is based on the Toronto Public Library Social Impact Study, carried out by Seismonaut in 2023, and the work expands on the 'Experience Impact Compass', a framework open-sourced by the Experience Impact Agency.

For this study, additional impact measures and survey questions directed specifically at non-users have been developed in collaboration with CULC.

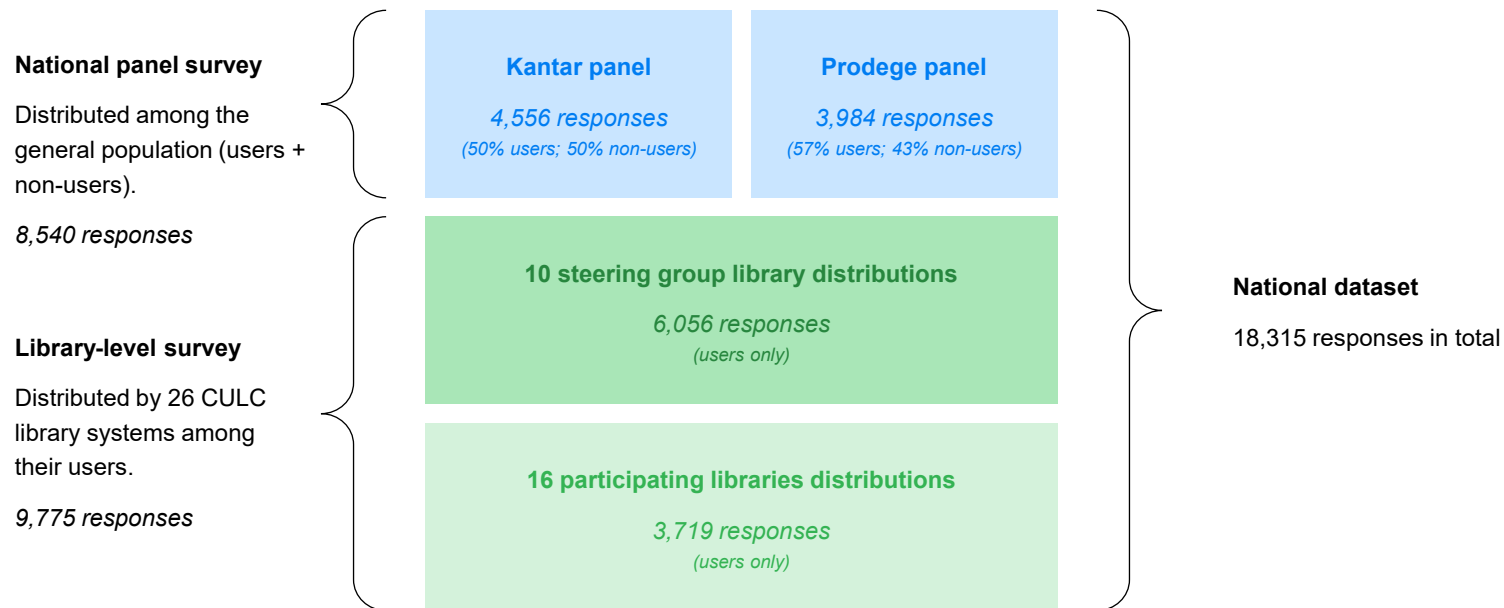
The quantitative Impact Study survey was fielded in the spring of 2025, yielding a total of 18,315 responses across Canada, excluding Toronto.

Testimonials

Quotes from library users throughout the report have been drawn from open-ended survey responses where respondents elaborate on positive library experiences: *"Has a public library contributed positively to your life – or to that of your friends or family? Feel free to share a memory or an experience that is especially significant to you."*

Testimonials have been selected in dialogue with Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo Public Libraries to reflect a broad range of experiences. To protect respondent anonymity, some key words have been substituted with synonyms, and all respondents are identified by fictitious names rather than their own.

Nationwide quantitative survey setup



Questionnaire design and impact metrics

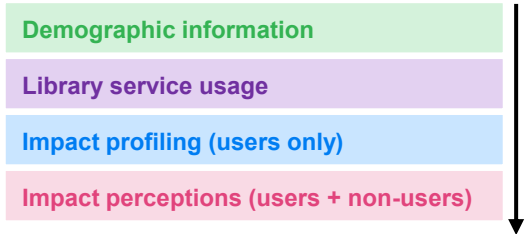
Multilingual questionnaire

The questionnaire for the national survey is based on the questionnaire used in the Toronto Public Library Impact Study. The core content measures the Impact Profiles, based on responses from users of library services.

In collaboration with CULC, questions have been added regarding the perceptions of library impact more generally. These latter questions have been posed to both users and non-users.

The survey was fielded in both English and Canadian French versions, with responses collected during the period May to July 2025.

Survey flow

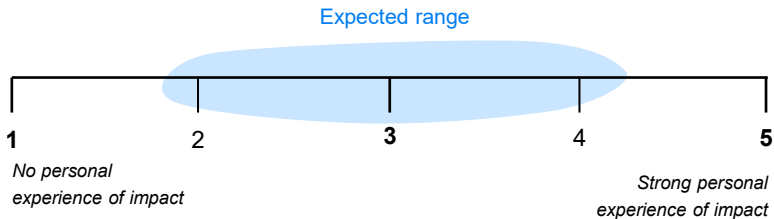


Impact Profile metrics

As in the Toronto Public Library Study, Impact Profiles summarise the extent to which library users report experiencing different types of impact when interacting with library services. Each impact parameter is measured on a scale from 1 (“Not at all”) to 5 (“To a very large extent”).

For each library service, the Profile Average displays the average score across all 12 impact parameters. The Overall Impact Profile represents the average of impact parameter scores across all 4 library services measured (Collections, Spaces, Programmes, and Staff).

Although the experience of individual Impact Profile metrics is measured on a scale from 1 (“Not at all”) to 5 (“To a very large extent”), the extremes of the scale are unlikely to occur when aggregating user responses. Average ratings will usually vary between scores of 2-4 in practice, referred to as the “expected range”. As such, an impact score close to 4 on a given parameter indicates a highly positive experience.



Quantitative survey details

Survey sampling details

Quantitative survey responses were collected during May to July 2025 using CAWI methodology across two distinct sampling approaches, resembling the Toronto Public Library Study:

1. **Panel sampling.** National-level responses were collected across Canada, outside of Toronto, through Kantar and Prodege market research panels, subject to interlocked representativity quotas for geographical region, gender, and age group.
2. **Library user base collection.** 26 CULC libraries distributed the survey to their own user bases by various means.

The combined CULC Impact Study dataset is composed of the panel dataset and each of the library user base collection datasets.

Rounding

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Likewise, impact scores of e.g. 3.234 and 3.197 are both labelled as 3.2, but their positions on a graph will not be exactly the same.

Weighting scheme

Similarly to the Toronto Public Library Study, data from the various sources involved have been weighted to mitigate skewed sampling. The nationally representative panel dataset serves as the guideline. Figures are generally quite stable whether weighted or unweighted.

National panel dataset

The quota-sampled panel data are cell-weighted on demographic characteristics to produce a nationally representative sample of library users and non-users.

Library user base collection datasets

These samples have been weighted using an iterative weighting scheme to more closely resemble the regional gender and age distributions of users in the panel sample, while ensuring no extreme weights (range: 0.5 – 2).

Regional dataset

In the regional dataset used for this report, library users from (and non-users ascribed to) Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo Public Libraries have been weighted so each library system contributes equally to all metrics. Results are easily interpretable as simple averages of the 3 systems, while yielding equivalent results to more complex weighting schemes.

Geographic identification of non-users

By definition, users of a given library are people who have used at least one of the library’s services within the past year. Thus, non-users relevant to a given library are identified as one of the following:

- a) individuals who have not used any library services within the past year, but who reside in an area close to the library, as identified by their postal code.
- b) individuals who have previously used this library services (more than 1 year ago) without having used any library services in the meantime.

Please refer to the table of postal codes (FSA) below, detailing which non-users are identified as living in an area covered by each library system.

Kitchener Public Library	N2A, N2B, N2C, N2E, N2G, N2H, N2M, N2N, N2P, N2R
Cambridge Public Library	N1P, N1R, N1S, N1T, N3C, N3E, N3H
Waterloo Public Library	N2J, N2K, N2L, N2T, N2V

Notes on regional and national results

The aim and spirit of the CULC National Impact Study was to illustrate how public libraries across Canada contribute to their communities and to society at large. Likewise, in this regional study, 3 library systems across Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo band together to illustrate their shared impact on local communities.

The CULC survey dataset cuts across library users from very different library systems (10 steering group libraries, 16 other active participants, as well as 27 additional library systems who were covered in the panel sample).

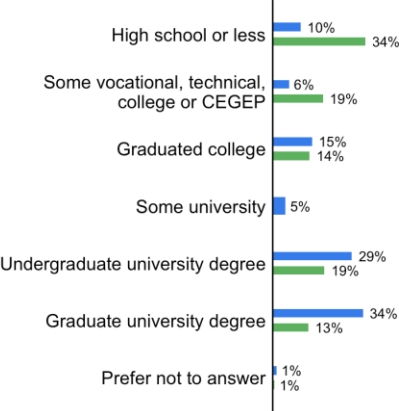
Due to differences in data collection approach across participating libraries, the research design does not facilitate between-library comparisons or benchmarking between the local and the national level.

The big-picture view, however, is that libraries demonstrate impact in very similar ways across the country, regardless of their exact scores.



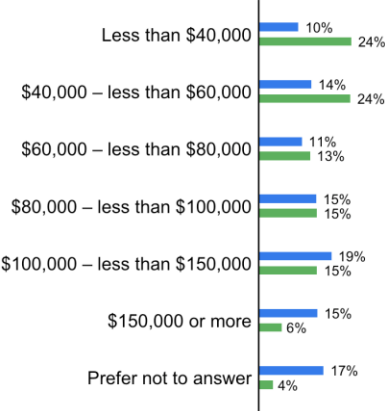
Key respondent characteristics (1/2)

Education level



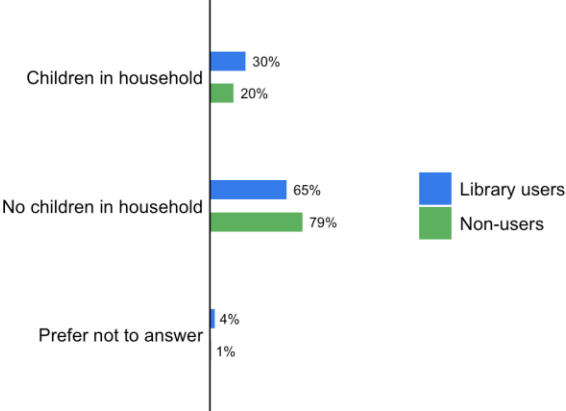
user n: 761
non-user n: 84

Household income



user n: 761
non-user n: 84

Children



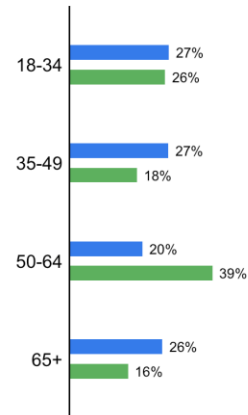
user n: 761
non-user n: 84

Library users
Non-users



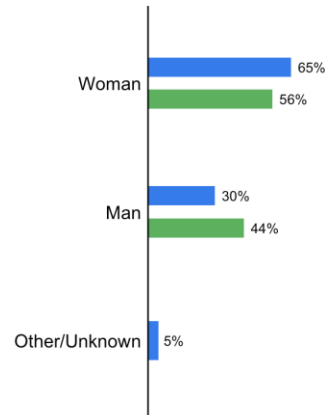
Key respondent characteristics (2/2)

Age groups



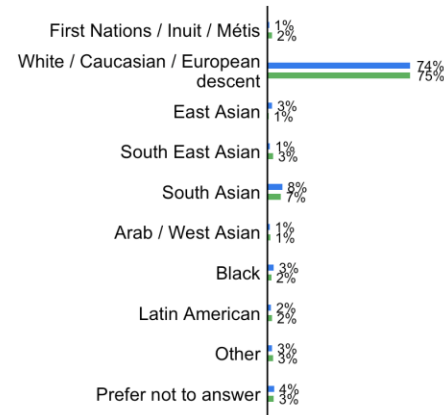
user n: 761
non-user n: 84

Gender identity



user n: 761
non-user n: 84

Ethnicity



user n: 761
non-user n: 84

Library users
Non-users

Old ways won't open new doors