Summary of Lakefront Library Input Gathering:
Key Findings and Insights | July 2023

Who we heard from

Surveys:
- 2,729 Library users, nonusers, staff, volunteers

Interviews:
16 key stakeholders
(staff, partners, users, residents, volunteers, business and community leaders)

Listening sessions:
- 168 virtual
- 254 in person

3,167 total participants

Who we heard from

▶ 3,167 community members between April and July 2023 through listening & engagement sessions and a community survey available in five languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Mandarin, and Korean).

▶ Hundreds of community members through engagement displays (one adult-sized, one for children, and one mobile) that we used to garner input at Central Branch and community events from April through June.

Key Themes Overall

- The library is well-known in the community as a great equalizer – fosters lifelong learning for people of all ages

- Community values HCLS' strong leadership and staff, welcoming environments and forward-thinking system

- Refine vision and mission to more closely align with community expectations and experiences.

- Improve internal and external communication to grow community awareness of resources and engagement and build trust with staff.

- More staff capacity (or more efficient use of staff time) to support existing staff is needed to meet community expectations and support growth

- Key aspirations for Lakefront Library:

  - Inclusive and accessible resource hub (spaces for neuro-divergent individuals, ADA compliance, transportation, income inequality, culturally sensitive, age/ability appropriate)

  - Language Learning courses, various classes offered (yoga, technology, knitting, etc.)

  - Dedicated spaces for children and teens

  - Engaging outdoor spaces

Key Themes: Design

Design Priorities for Lakefront Library:

▶ ADA compliant and accessible (transportation, multiple languages)

▶ Room for large collection of materials (printed and online)

▶ Café with food and coffee (not vending machines)

▶ Large meeting areas and event/auditorium space

▶ Community resource stations (social services, workforce development, emotional support)

▶ Dedicated, interactive children and teen spaces

▶ Quiet areas/workstations

▶ Welcoming outdoor spaces

▶ Sufficient parking

▶ Innovative learning spaces (teaching kitchen, language learning, yoga, knitting, music)

▶ State-of-the-art technology

Key Themes: Planning and Programs

- Refine vision and mission to more closely align with community expectations and experiences
- Most important resources:
  - Collection of books, DVDs, reference materials
  - Passionate, knowledgeable and committed Library leadership and staff
  - Programs and classes
  - Robust library system with unique offerings at each branch
- Top barriers for non-users: transportation, distance, language barriers, and lack of awareness
- Improve internal and external communication to grow community awareness of resources and engagement and build trust with staff.
- More staff capacity (or more efficient use of staff time) and support for existing staff (promote from within, increase salaries, professional development)
- Expand partnerships (and/or awareness of partnerships) with all county entities (schools, government, local businesses)

Key Takeaways from Community

- General:
  - Ambiguous Mission: library vs. community center
  - Balance facilities/services for senior/adult and youth
  - Expand inventory of books
  - Multilingual/multi-generational
  - Integrate modern technology (facilities, services)
  - Transportation/access pose challenges
  - Increase hours, services, capacity, partnerships, languages, variety of spaces, technology, book/ebook collections

- ▶ Use of Services:
  - ▶ Most visited: Miller, Central, East Columbia
  - ▶ How often? Monthly, weekly
  - ▶ How use? Branch (94%), Online (74%)
  - ▶ Expect to find: Books (98%), Classes (41%), Computers (35%) Also: CDs/DVDs, audio/ E-books, media/online, movies, magazines/newspapers, reference & resource materials, helpful staff, quiet reading areas, children's room, community events
- ▶ Resources:
  - ▶ Most important resources: Collection of books, DVDs and other reference materials to borrow (94%), Helpful library staff (66%), Access to information and resources, i.e., library databases, internet (48%)
  - ▶ Resources most aware of: Passport Services (66%), DIY/Tool Collection (57%), Enchanted Garden (56%)
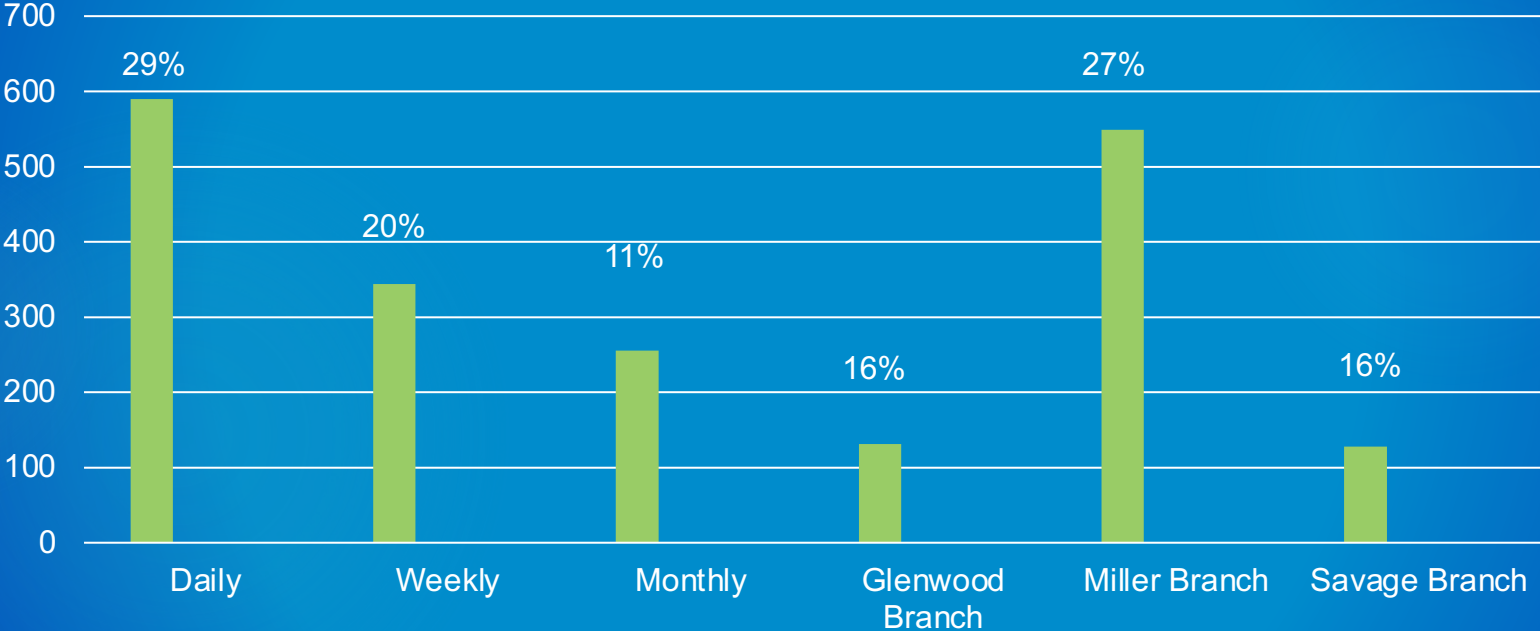
- Vision:
  - Missing: Safe, equitable, trusted, neutral hub that provides free resources and activities to support lifelong learning; idea exchange; gathering/connecting; self-betterment; elevating humanity
- Core role: Educator (78%), Community hub (67%), Provide enjoyable spaces for children and youth after school (49%)
- Mission:
  - Missing: Community, personal enrichment, safe, free resources, "levels the playing field"
  - How nurture inclusion, belonging, connections: intergenerational; consistent pop-up library; spaces that afford variety of learning/experiences; multi-lingual
  - Reduce or eliminate barriers: targeted communications/outreach; transportation
  - Increase community awareness, engagement: partnerships; enhanced communication; community events; outreach to schools
  - HCLS do more of to address inequities: research best practices; introduce metrics/accountability; plan for 3 years, think about 20; build capacity (staff, volunteer, partnerships); increase DIY loans/materials
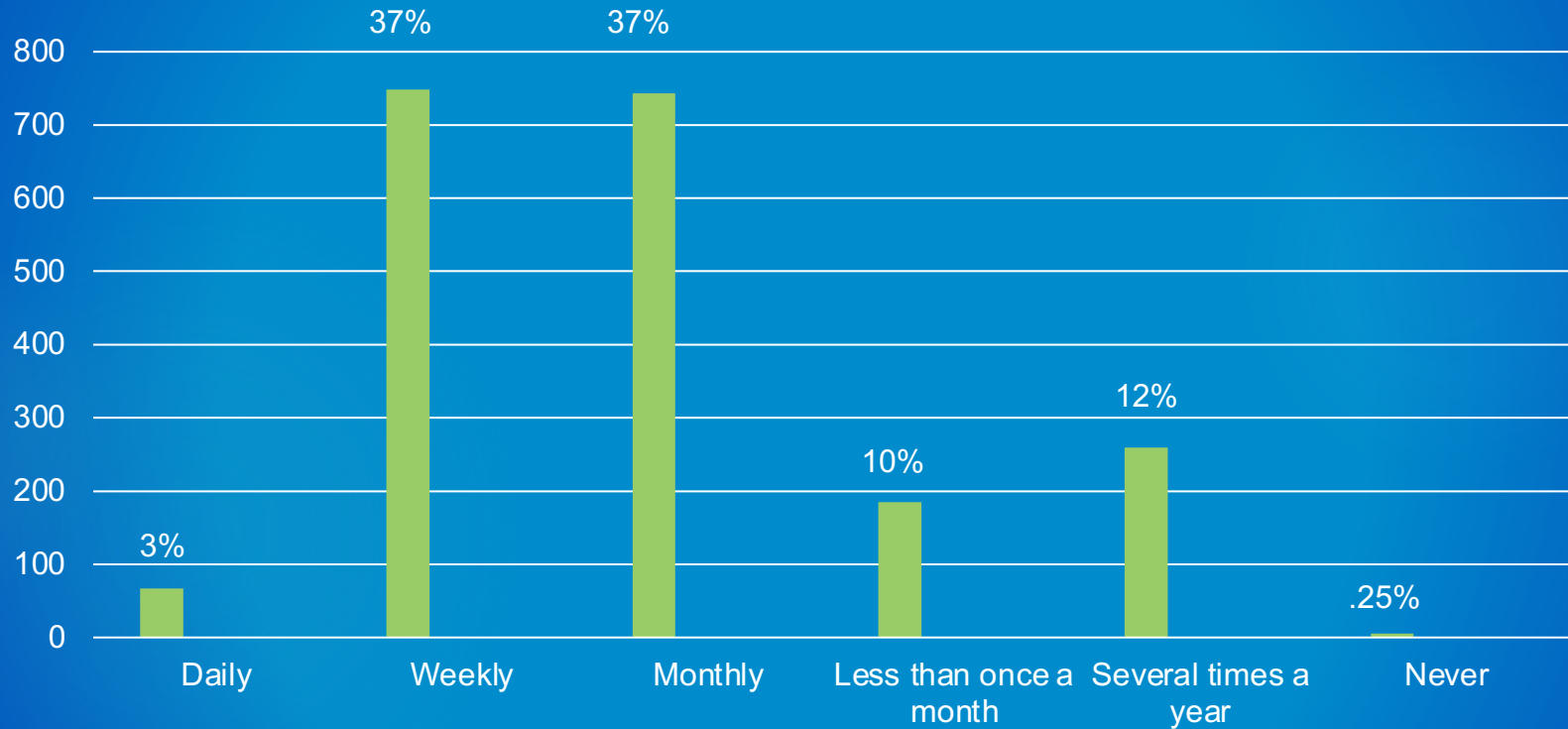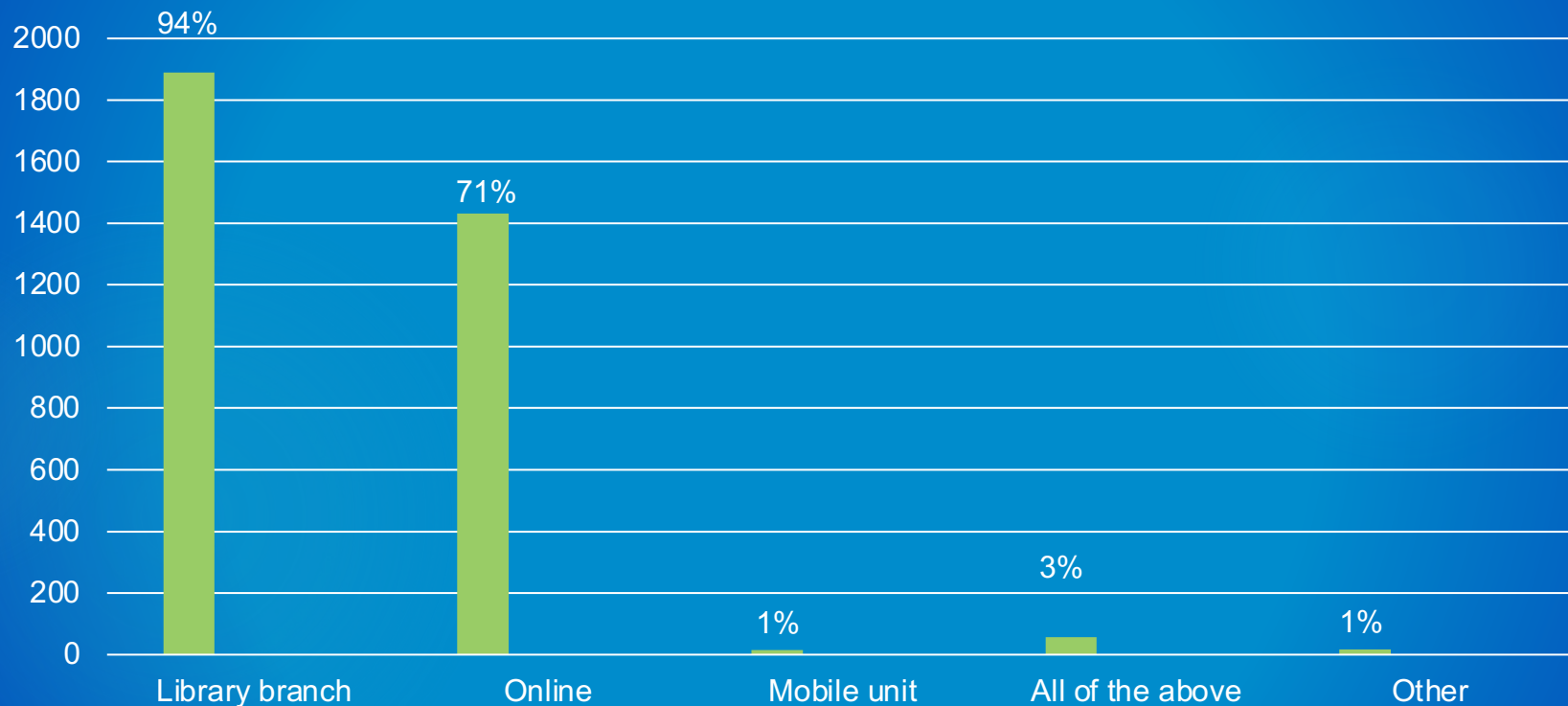
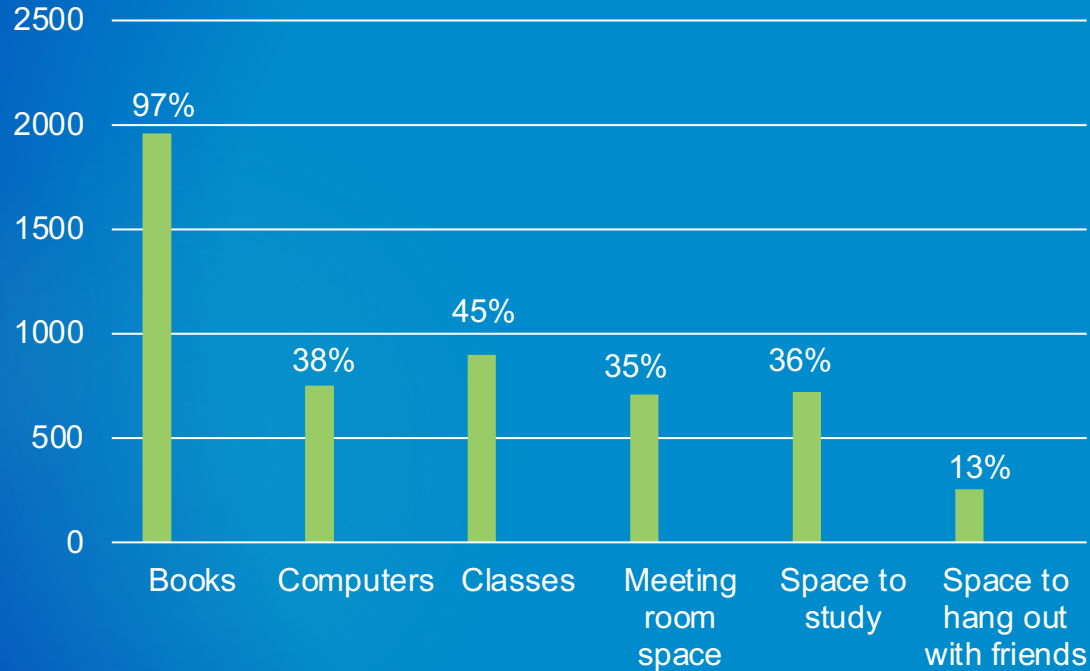On average, how often do you use or visit the library?

How do you use the library?

Other: Farmer's market, Libby app, eBbooks

When you visit a HCLS branch in person or online, what do you expect to find or discover?

Bar chart:
- Books: 97%
- Computers: 38%
- Classes: 45%
- Meeting room space: 35%
- Space to study: 36%
- Space to hang out with friends: 13%

(Y-axis: 0, 500, 1000, 1500, 2000, 2500)

▶ Docking stations for electronics

▶ Research materials

▶ Tutoring space

▶ Community information (local events

▶ Free subscriptions (Ancestry, Consumer Reports)

▶ Free cultural programs

▶ Comfortable, quiet place

▶ Large print books

▶ Tech/equipment (3D printer, cutting machine, fax, scanning)

When you visit a HCLS branch in person or online, what do you expect to find or discover?

- Audiobooks
- Children's room
- Digital media
- Movies
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Toys
- DVDs/CDs
- Videos
- Helpful staff

- Place to read
- Makerspace
- Books
- Book clubs
- Community events
- Art
- Printers + laptops

"21st century tools to help individuals build their best lives

Community Survey Results: Resources

Which of the following library resources are most important to you?

- **Collection of books, DVDs, and reference materials – 91%**

- **Helpful library staff – 63%**

- **Public meeting spaces – 62%**

- **Welcoming engaging environment – 50%**

- **Free events and activities – 50%**

- Access to information and resources – 48%

- Drive up book drop – 44%

- Programs, classes and books for children and teens – 40%

- Parking – 38%

- Free technology – 30%

- Quiet study spaces – 27%

- Children's room – 27%

- More/accessible parking – 23%

- Website tools and resources – 20%

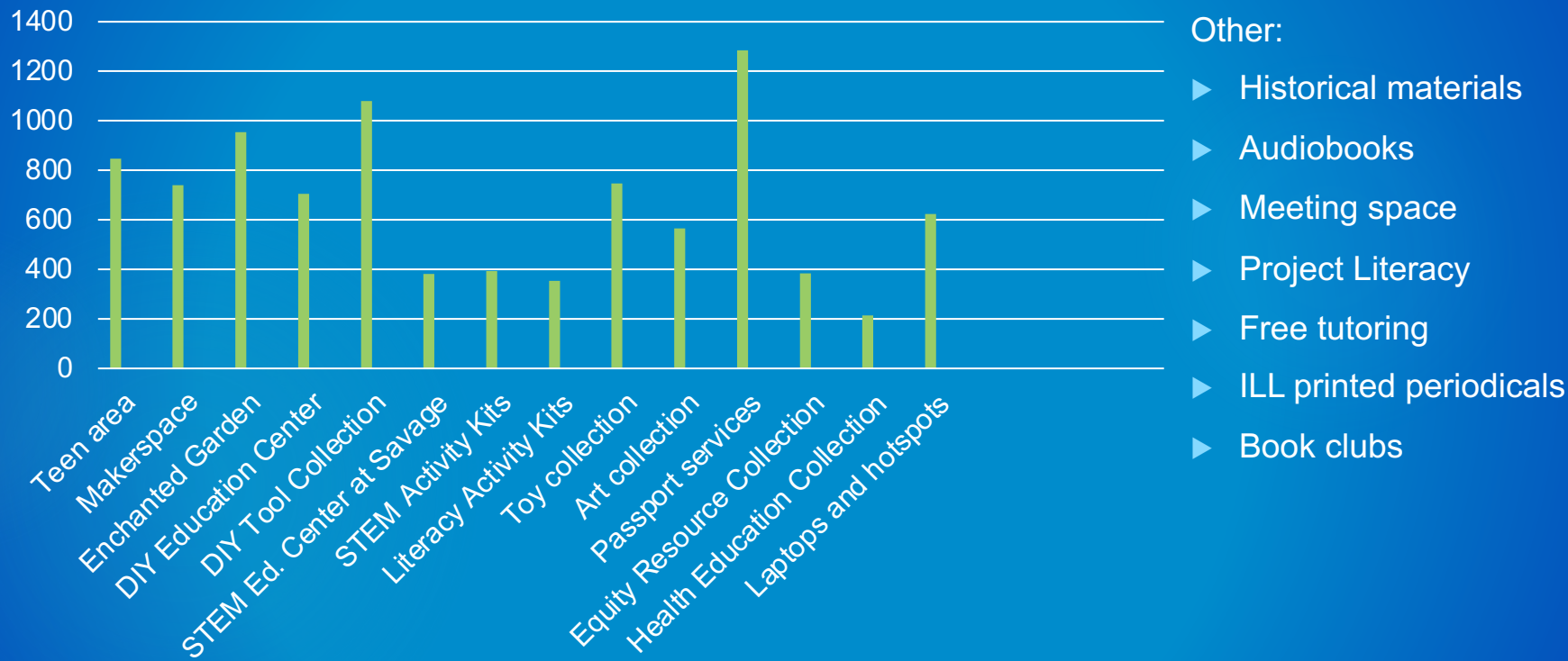- Teen Area – 13%

- Job, employment, and career resources – 10%

Which of the following library resources are most important to you?

Other:

- Adult, senior classes, book clubs
- Makerspace (DIY tools)
- Community resources, information, events/seminars/classes
- Ebooks (Kindle)
- Online classes (continuing Ed, hobbies)
- Quiet, private spaces to read
- More parking (Central, handicap, bikes)
- Historical research materials (digitized microfiche, artifacts on display, speakers)

- Bilingual staff
- Healthy snacks and beverages
- Access for disabled
- Libby App
- Access to paywalled scholarly articles
- Interlibrary loan for hard-to-find materials

" *If you begin with engaging and encouraging parents and grandparents to attend library events, the children will follow.*

Which of the following library resources are you aware of?

Other:
- ▶ Historical materials
- ▶ Audiobooks
- ▶ Meeting space
- ▶ Project Literacy
- ▶ Free tutoring
- ▶ ILL printed periodicals
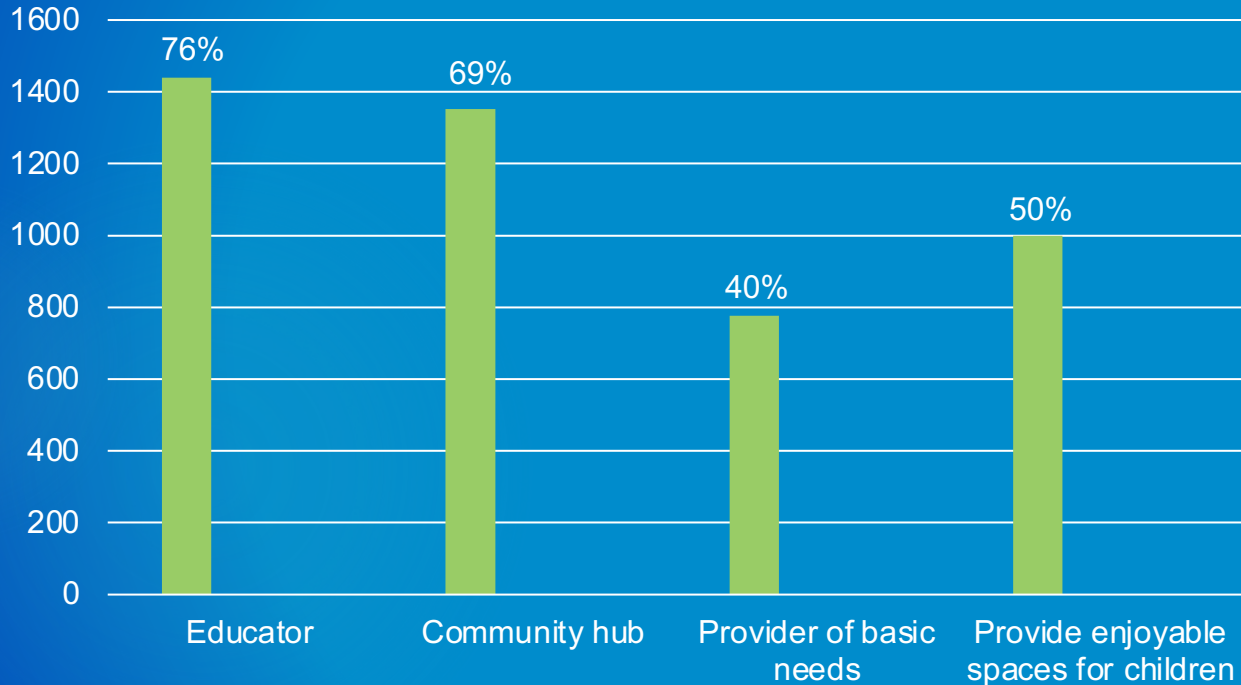- ▶ Book clubs

Vision and Mission

> *A library is a cathedral for learning—it should be welcoming, beautiful, comfortable, inclusive, and also feel calm and alive as a place of thinking and discovery.*

In your opinion, what is the core role(s) of libraries in our community?

Other:
- ▶ Trusted resource
- ▶ Intellectual freedom
- ▶ Meetings/events (town halls, voting site, nonprofits, adult/senior classes)
- ▶ Quiet space for reading, study
- ▶ Source of new ideas and connections
- ▶ Support wide range of interests including culture, music, arts, history and geography

If you could design your dream library, what spaces would you include?

Community survey:

▶ **Designated quiet areas/workstations – 80%**

▶ **Community event spaces – 70%**

▶ **Outdoor spaces – 64%**

▶ Coffee Bar – 51%

▶ Exhibit area – 50%

▶ Podcasting and video production labs – 33%

▶ Wine bar and happy hours – 18%

▶ Gaming lounges – 15%

▶ Virtual and augmented reality zones – 14%

▶ Light exercise machines – 11%

Community sessions:

▶ A coffee shop that offers healthy food

▶ Quiet and loud spaces

▶ Youth and Senior areas

▶ Visible bulletin board

▶ Library liaison (connects library to community)

▶ Welcome center

▶ Historical archives

▶ Tools lending center

If you could design your dream library, what spaces would you include?

Other:

▶ Need designated and separated quiet and "non-quiet" areas

▶ Lots of books - stacks, shelves, collections

▶ Light, airy, welcoming places; nooks, crannies, cubbies, kiosks (with plug-ins)

▶ Outdoors: gardens, sculpture, bike repair station, pet area

▶ Digital media storage and circulation

▶ Coffee shop at entrance, food trucks outside

▶ Exhibit space; literature displays; bulletin board for locals/businesses

▶ Wisdom space (for expert mentoring)

▶ Group study rooms

▶ Film theatre, gathering room

If you could design your dream library, what new and/or innovative services or programs would it include?

Community survey:

- **eBooks – 66%**
- **Language learning tools – 63%**
- **Mobile app for services & programs – 57%**
- **Tech classes to help navigate new tools – 53%**
- Recreational classes (yoga, cooking) – 40%
- Basic needs (food drives, COVID tests) – 40%
- Performing and cultural arts – 39%
- Coding clubs – 38%

- Streaming services – 37%
- Library kiosks throughout the community – 33%
- Convenient, one-stop shop (post office, amazon) – 28%

If you could design your dream library, what new and/or innovative services or programs would it include?

Other:

- **Resources:** Magazine area, seed library, open art studio, job/career, meditation space

- **Classes:** Writing taught by published authors, language immersion, K-12 tutoring

- **Groups/Clubs:** Books, writing, opera, video game, language, movies

- **Cultural:** Art (exhibitions), music (incl. practice rooms), ESL children, garden

- **Logistics:** EV charging stations, e-bike access, safe bike racks, locker system, walking paths, soundproofing, meeting spaces, convenient parking (ADA), virtual event access, drive-thru book pick up

- **Services:** sell stamps, bilingual staff, Daisy reader books (for blind), after hours pickup, eBook and online help, visits to senior housing

- **Partnerships:** Library for the Blind, prison in Jessup (i.e., Books Behind Bars in VA), mental health agency(s), Senior housing

Thinking about your ideal library and the goals you are trying to achieve in your own life, please finish these sentences in your own words: I want the library to be a place where…

Community sessions:

▶ **People would feel:**

▶ Welcomed

▶ Joyful

▶ Safe

▶ Invited

▶ **Where people can:**

▶ Eat healthy foods

▶ Host professional meetings

▶ Enjoy a variety of programming for children and adults

What would your dream library offer?

Community sessions:

▶ Loan of tools for gardening, carpentry, etc.

▶ Place for children to do recordings of music, videos, and other similar facilities to help with homework and recreation

▶ Books, resources, self-enrichment materials

▶ Healthy foods (sit-down coffee shop)

▶ Makerspaces (more hands-on, experiential spaces)

▶ STEM classes for high school students and adults

▶ Vocational classes such as upholstery

▶ Good socializing for teens, as well as a space to get away

▶ Digital access to out-of-print titles

How does this vision mesh with your experience of the library today? Specifically, what would you like to see HCLS do more of or differently to better support your goals?

Community sessions:

- More books (incl., multilingual, cultural)
- Extend weekend hours
- Classes for parents with newborns
- Enhance and simplify communication
- Transportation; better public transport; more mobile outreach

- Target 20-somethings (next generation families)
- Accessibility and parking concerns at Lakefront Library
- Match computer/internet access with client needs
- Cross-agency collaboration (health, education)
- Concierge (greeter; help people find resources)

What are the most important 2-3 areas (strategic priorities) for HCLS to focus on to advance this vision?

Community sessions:

▶ Safe, clean space

▶ Lifelong learning for all ages (in-person and virtual)

▶ Adapt with times (i.e., technology)

▶ Financial sustainability

▶ Partnerships: intergovernmental, school system

▶ Staff development, retention

▶ Marketing/communications (equity focus) – publicize services, programs; use social media

▶ Civic engagement, younger generations

▶ Transportation (shuttles) to/from library

▶ Extended hours

Thinking about our mission, consider how HCLS can continue to nurture inclusion, belonging and community connections across differences within our libraries and throughout our community?

Community sessions:

▶ Intergenerational learning and connections

▶ Staff are professionals who provide outstanding public service

▶ Spaces that afford variety of learning, experiences

▶ Integrate classes (i.e., English classes include Latinx and Asian communities)

▶ Develop consistent schedule for pop-up library; focus on areas with less public transport, underserved communities

▶ Partner with Community Action Council, school media specialists)

Thinking about our mission, consider how HCLS can reduce or eliminate barriers that prevent community members from using our libraries either in person or online?

Community sessions:

- Outreach: billboards, diverse influencers (i.e., sports celebrities), ESL communities, social media, local papers

- Mobile van, classroom visits

- Engage youth (start early)

- Displays in community gathering areas and children's play areas

- Multilingual catalogues, collections

- Update website (hard to navigate, creates barriers)

- Reinvigorate volunteer base (seniors, retirees)

- Sync activities with bus schedules/routes or provide shuttle transport

Considering HCLS' aspiration to enhance the quality of life for all, what should HCLS do (or do more of) to address educational, economic, health and other inequities that limit or harm people's lives?

Community sessions:

▶ Mobile library

▶ Visit schools

▶ Increase loan of tools and DIY materials

▶ Research best practices in other states/countries

▶ Diverse customer base – meeting needs is difficult

▶ 3-year plan more feasible but think 10-20 years out

▶ Increase volunteer opportunities

▶ Collaborate with partners

▶ Bridge intergenerational gap

What else would improve our local libraries?

- **Focus:** Learning; storytelling; politically neutral place

- **Staff:** Knowledgeable, positive staff that are fluent in current books and available resources; need more "floor" librarians; bi-lingual

- **Hours:** Extended hours – weekend, summer, after school/evening hours

- **Resources:** More books/eBooks, digitize and make publicly available the collections from the Howard County Historical Society

- **Outreach:** Locations in Malls, college and job fairs, local businesses, Scouts, Science Fair,

- **Infrastructure:** Sufficient parking; pollinator garden/fall-winter garden; mix of interactive and soundproof/quiet areas; environmentally sustainable; walking trails from all adjacent neighborhoods

- **Services:** Improve website; patron suggestion boxes; armed security; transparent list of patron book/media requests so others can "second" them; transparency on reasons for acceptance or denial of requests; decrease wait times for eBooks; digital newsletter/calendar of events
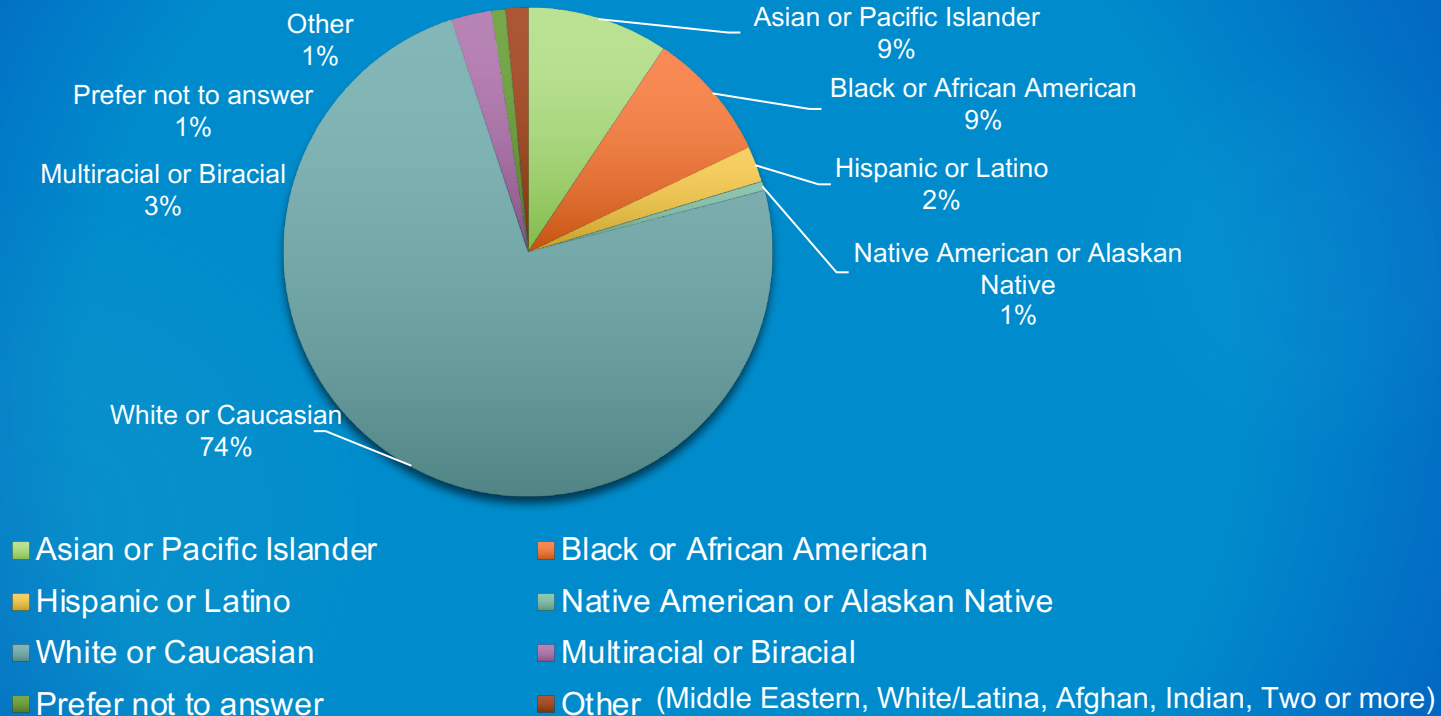
What else would improve our local libraries?

- Classes: Tutoring for at-risk youth; add virtual element to DIY classes; finance/budgeting; mental health/resilience/trauma; crafts; issues challenging our society; remove drag queen story hours with children

- Partnerships: Howard County Board of Elections; other libraries/systems; Master Gardeners; Senior Centers; Social Services
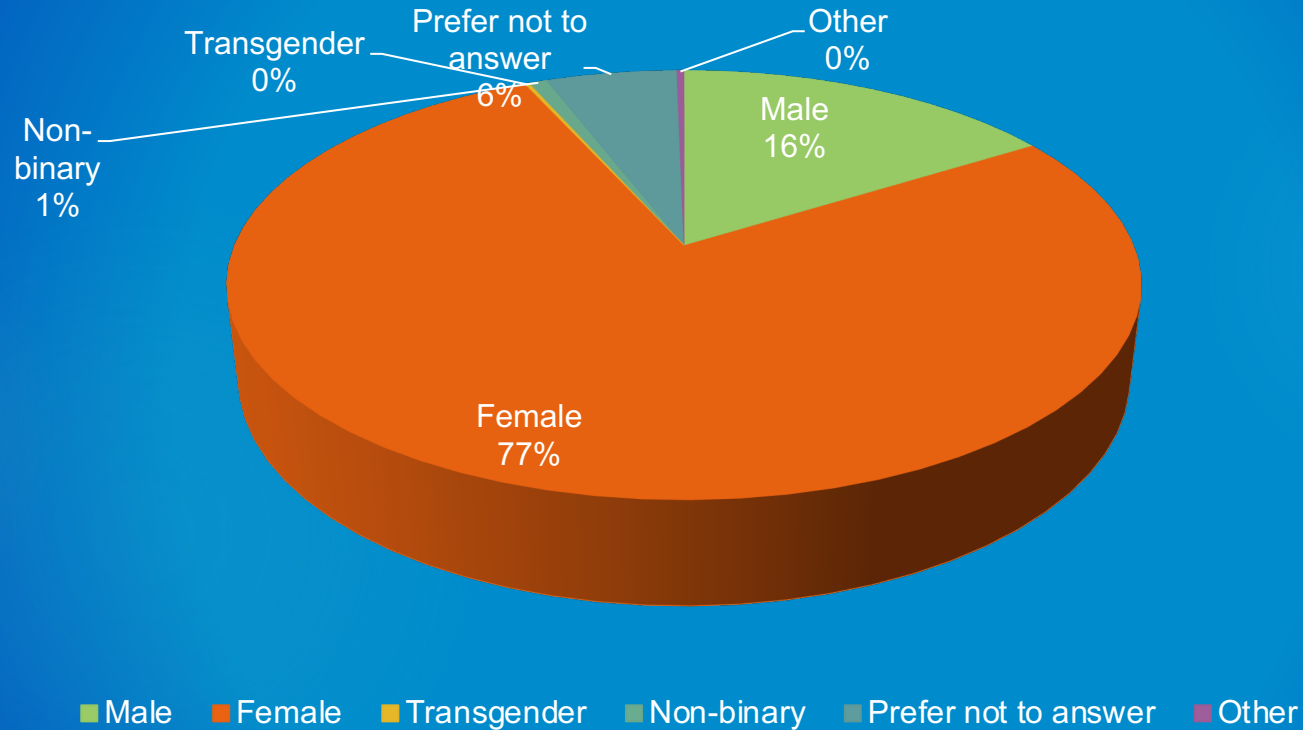
Survey Participant Information
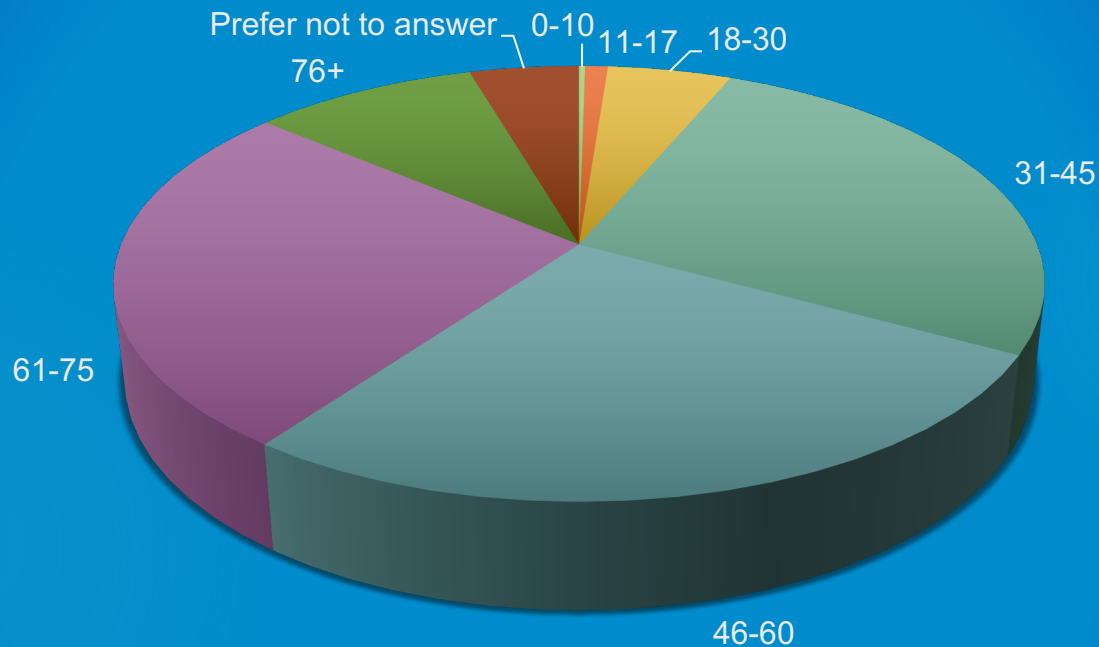
Which of the following best describes you?

- Asian or Pacific Islander 9%
- Black or African American 9%
- Hispanic or Latino 2%
- Native American or Alaskan Native 1%
- White or Caucasian 74%
- Multiracial or Biracial 3%
- Prefer not to answer 1%
- Other 1%

Legend:
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- White or Caucasian
- Multiracial or Biracial
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (Middle Eastern, White/Latina, Afghan, Indian, Two or more)

Question was optional; 600 respondents skipped this question

What gender do you identify as?

What is your home zip code?

Zip code	Responses
20701	3
20723	120
20759	35
20763	4
20777	16
20794	26
21029	84
21036	5
21041	2
21042	333
21043	219

Zip code	Responses
21044	407
21045	288
21046	136
21075	146
21104	16
21163	17
21737	12
21738	14
21765	1
21771	4
21784	13

Zip code	Responses
21797	32
21794	7
20707	3
20678	1
21228	3
20904	1
21794	7
21076	11
21090	1
20866	2
21227	3