



Idaho Commission for Libraries Survey Results

November, 2012

The IMPACT Survey

An online tool that allows public libraries to collect information about how their communities use and benefit from the library's computers and Internet connection

Foreword

Thank you for participating in the IMPACT Survey! We hope you will find the following survey report useful for internal decision-making and planning, and for communicating the value of providing free access to computers and the Internet to policy-makers, funders, and your community.

The survey is an extension of the U.S. IMPACT Study. Conducted in 2009, the U.S. IMPACT Study was the first large-scale investigation of the ways library patrons use computers and the Internet at public libraries, why they use it, and how it affects their lives. The study was instrumental in providing evidence that access to the Internet at U.S. public libraries has a profound and measurable impact on individuals and communities. The study findings reported in first report, *Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries*, have helped public libraries throughout the United States improve public access services and advocate for better support of public access computing. The study's second report, *Opportunity for All: How Library Policies and Practices Impact Public Internet Access* was released in June of 2011.

This report summarizes how patrons use the public access technology provided by libraries in Idaho based on IMPACT Survey responses. Over the duration of the survey, 324 patrons completed the survey. The report is divided into four sections:

- The library profile contextualizes the survey results by providing an aggregated set of information about the public access computing resources managed by the library. Research has found that these inputs affect patron outcomes. The overall results section summarizes how and how often patrons access the public access technology resources and services provided by libraries in Idaho.
- The section on public access technology by activity area reports on patron use across the following domains: education, employment, eBusiness, health and wellness, eGovernment, civic engagement, eCommerce, and social inclusion.
- Finally, the patron satisfaction and demographics section provides details on the types of patrons that completed the survey, and how satisfied they are with the technology services provided by the library.

The survey results provide an overview of how providing public access technology services at the library benefits your community. To help your library effectively use these results in your advocacy efforts, we invite you to visit the IMPACT Survey website to access a number of additional advocacy tools (<http://impactsurvey.org/advocacy>).

Sincerely,

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<http://impactsurvey.org>

Library Profile (Combined data for surveyed libraries)

Library Infrastructure

Number of residents within legal service area	521,947
Number of library patron visits in the past year	2,994,227
Number of hours the library system was open in the past year	115,569
Total operational expenditures in the past year	16,601,437
Total number of full-time equivalent paid staff	285

Public Access Technology Resources

Total number of public access Internet terminals within library system	645
Technology provided by library to assist patrons with physical impairments/disabilities:	
Screen magnifier software	None
Computer screen to speech software	None
Computer screen to braille software	None
Other	None
Library uses session management software	9 of 39 libraries

Internet Connectivity

The source of the library's Internet connection	private ISP
Maximum download speed of library Internet connection	1.5-45 Mbps
Wireless Internet access available	38 of 39 libraries

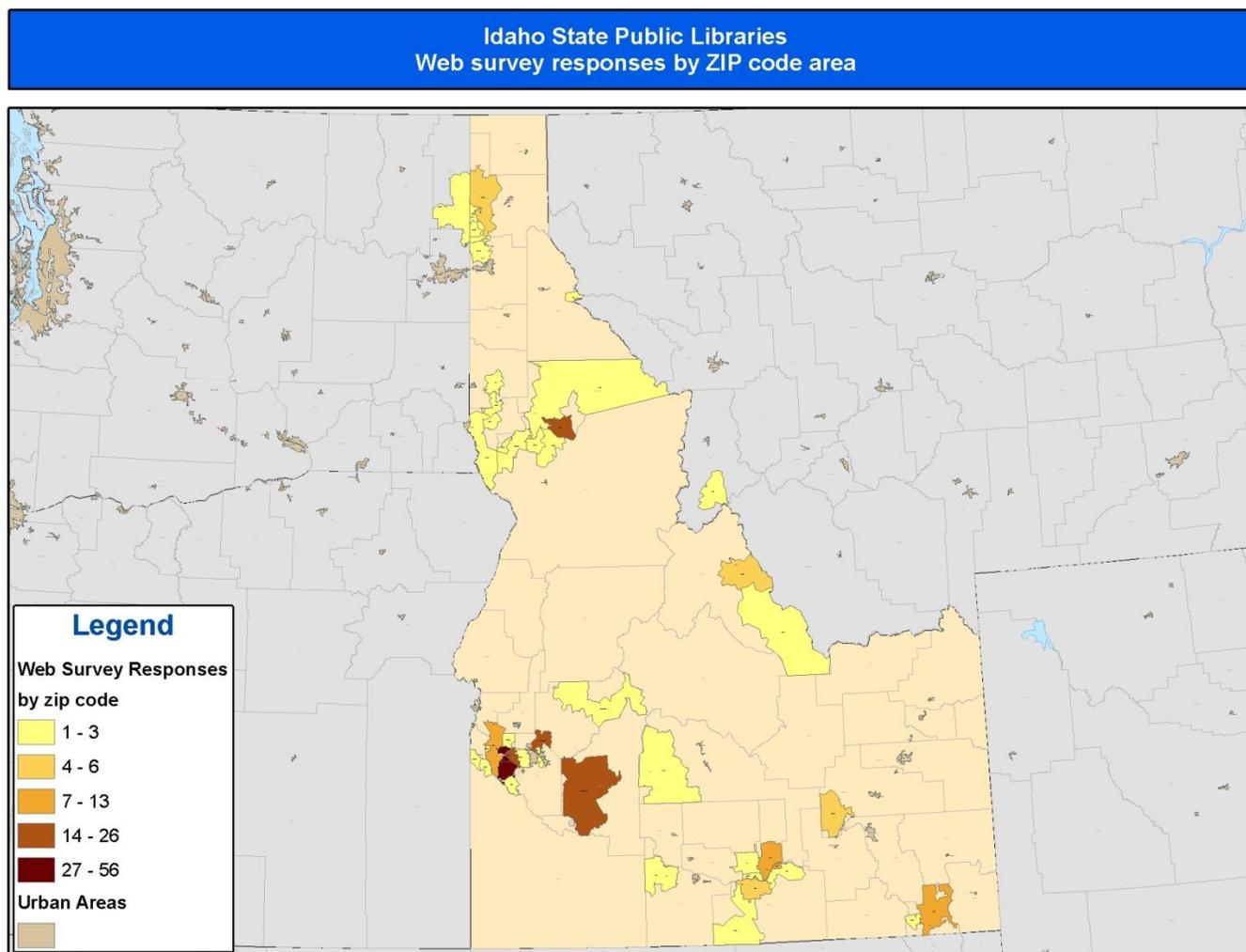
Policies

Library has a replacement plan for public access Internet terminals	37 of 39 libraries
Standard maximum daily time limit for patrons (minutes)	30 minutes to unlimited
Librarians are permitted to extend the session time for patrons.	Yes

Overall results

Libraries in Idaho ran the IMPACT survey from October 18, 2012 through November 19, 2012. A total of **324** people responded across 18 libraries. Figure 1 shows the concentration of responses by ZIP code as reported by survey respondents.

Figure 1: ZIP codes of web survey respondents



Library use

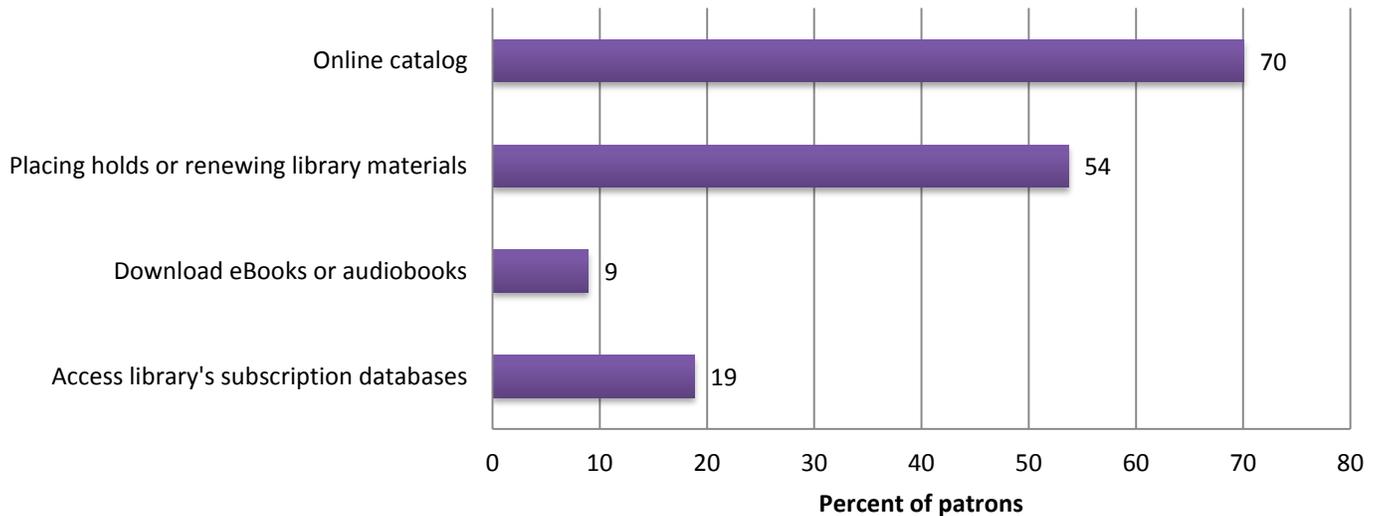
99% (320) of survey respondents visited the library over the past 12 months. Of those who did,

- **178 (57%)** visited the library once a week or more frequently;
- **115 (36%)** visited the library about 1-3 times a month;
- **27 (8%)** visited the library less than once a month.

Accessing library resources through the library website

About **84% (273)** of respondents **used the library's computers to access library resources** such as the online catalog, placing holds or renewing library materials, downloading eBooks or Audiobooks, or to access the library's subscription databases (See Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Library resources accessed using a library computer or wireless connection



Of those who reported using the library's computers or Internet connection to access library resources in the past 12 months,

- **88 (32%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **84 (31%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **101 (37%)** did so less than once a month.

Remote visits to library website

86% (278) of respondents accessed library resources through the library's website *from outside the library* (e.g. from home, school, or work). Of those who accessed library resources,

- **137 (49%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **89 (32%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **52 (19%)** did so less than once a month.

In addition, 29% (94) of respondents accessed library resources through a handheld mobile device such as a cellphone, Blackberry, or iPhone.

Use of public access computers and wireless network

Of the respondents, **61% (197)** used a computer in the library to access the Internet during the past 12 months, with frequencies as follows:

- **90 (46%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **35 (18%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **72 (37%)** did so less than once a month.

42% (137) had accessed the library's wireless network connection using their own computer. Of these respondents,

- **41 (30%)** used the library's wireless network once a week or more frequently;
- **26 (19%)** used the library's wireless network about 1-3 times a month;
- **70 (51%)** used the library's wireless network less than once a month.

Overall, 70% of survey respondents had used a public access computer or used the library's wireless network connection to access the Internet on their own computer during the past 12 months. Using either means of access qualified respondents as *public access technology users*. **71% of these users reported having regular personal access to a computer and the Internet somewhere other than the library.**

Many people with alternative means of access rely on the library for access to computers and the Internet while traveling. Of the users surveyed, **25% (57)** reported they had used a library computer or wireless Internet connection while out-of-town during the past 12 months.

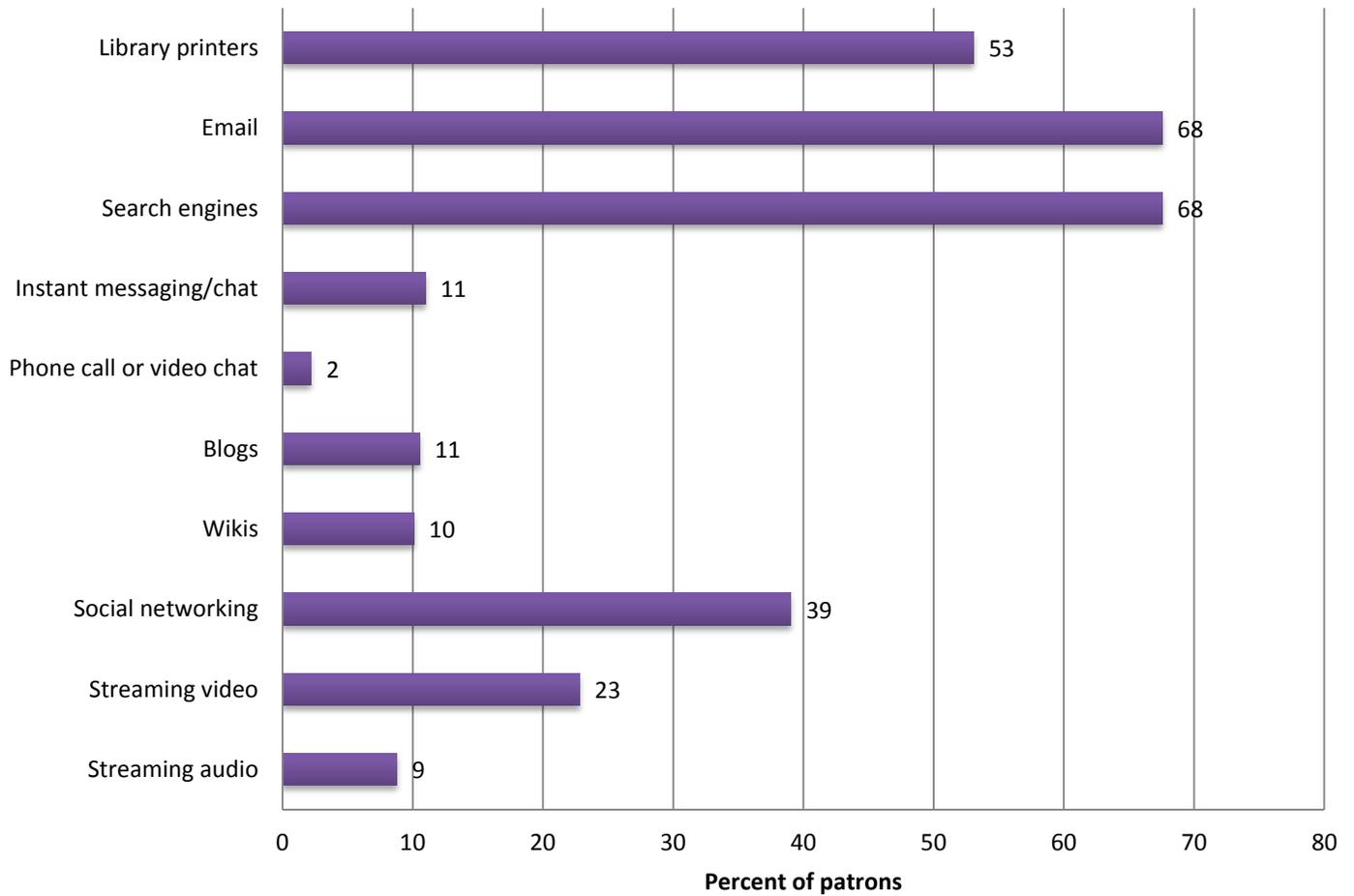
In addition to use while traveling, the U.S. IMPACT Study found several other important reasons driving respondents with alternative means of access to use technology resources at the public library:

- **Lack of access to high speed Internet at home.** The library Internet connection is used to download large files or access websites that require a high speed connection.
- **During gaps in access,** such as when moving to a new location or during power outages, or when a primary computer is broken or lacking in necessary software.
- **Household competition.** Especially among youth, competition with siblings or parents over a single household computer was a significant reason for using the library's computers when one was available at home.
- **For a change in scenery.** People who work at home sometimes use library computers and wireless Internet network to get out of the house. Job seekers also reported using computers in the library to maintain a normal schedule and stay connected to the community.
- **During lunch breaks or while out running errands.** Many users reported that they stop in to use the library's computers to check email, look up phone numbers or driving directions, or to complete other quick tasks.
- **As a supplement to the library catalog** for such activities as looking up book reviews, reading lists, and other aids for selecting materials.

Overall uses of public access technology

The public access technology services at libraries in Idaho were used by patrons to access a variety of networked or web-based tools. Figure 3 describes the types of tools accessed over the past 12 months.

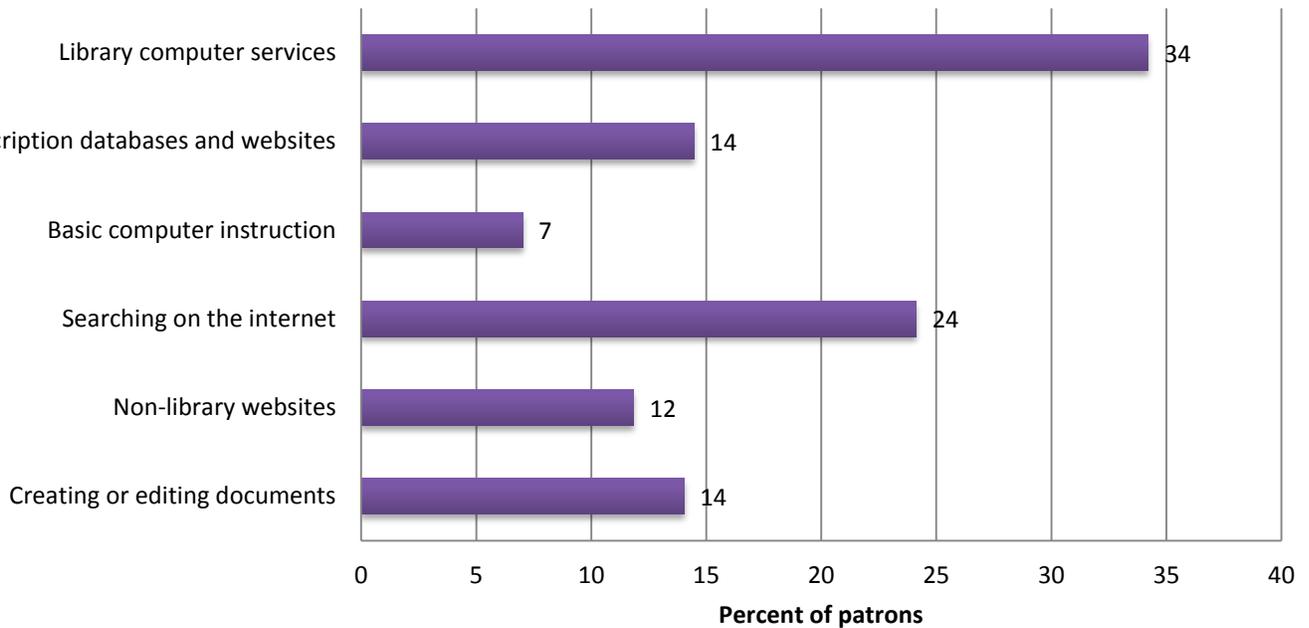
Figure 3 - Tools accessed by patrons using the library's computers or Internet connection



Help and training

The U.S. IMPACT Study showed that a major draw to public access technology in libraries is the help and training available there. At libraries in Idaho: **68% of users reported having received one-on-one technology help from library staff or volunteers over the past 12 months.**

Figure 4 - Type of help received from library staff or volunteers



Additionally, **18% (41) users attended computer-related training or classes at the library during the past 12 months.** Note that this question was not asked of nonusers; libraries in Idaho may have patrons who take computer-related training classes but otherwise do not use the library's computers or Internet connection.

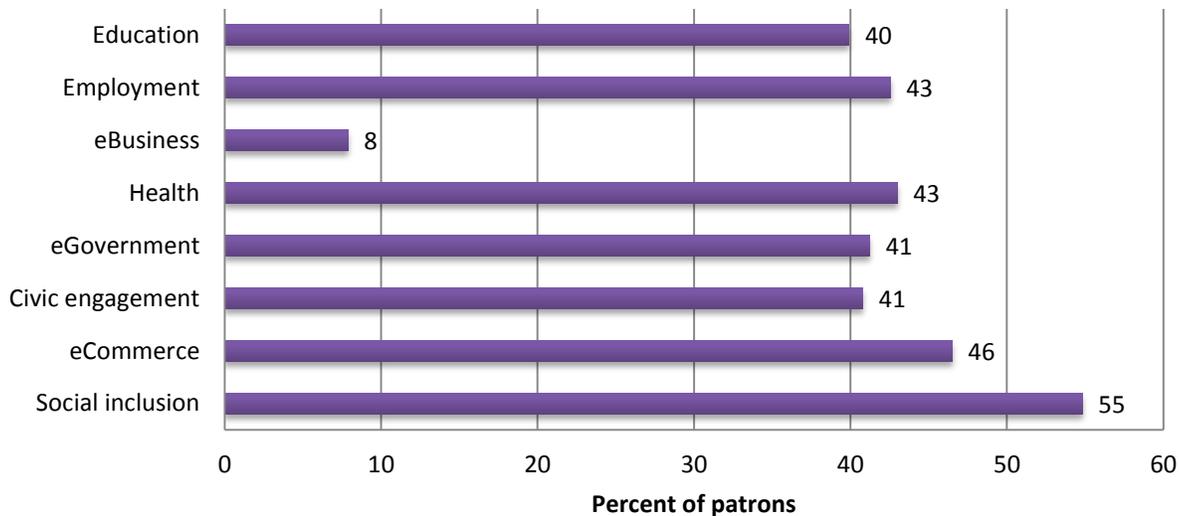
Using the library's technology resources on behalf of others

The beneficiaries of library Internet access often extend beyond the individual users; at libraries in Idaho, **53% (121) of users found information or performed tasks for other people using the library's computers or Internet connection.**

Public access technology uses by activity area

Technology in public libraries is important for helping people satisfy their needs to access information and perform tasks. Users were asked about how they used public library computers and wireless networks in relation to activities associated with education, employment, eBusiness, health and wellness, eGovernment, civic engagement, eCommerce, and social inclusion. Figure 5 shows the overall use of public access technology in those areas; the following sections further detail their activities.

Figure 5 - Public computer use by area



Education

At libraries in Idaho, 40% of users indicated they had used the public library's computers or wireless network for educational purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 31%, were between the ages of 35-44 (Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for education

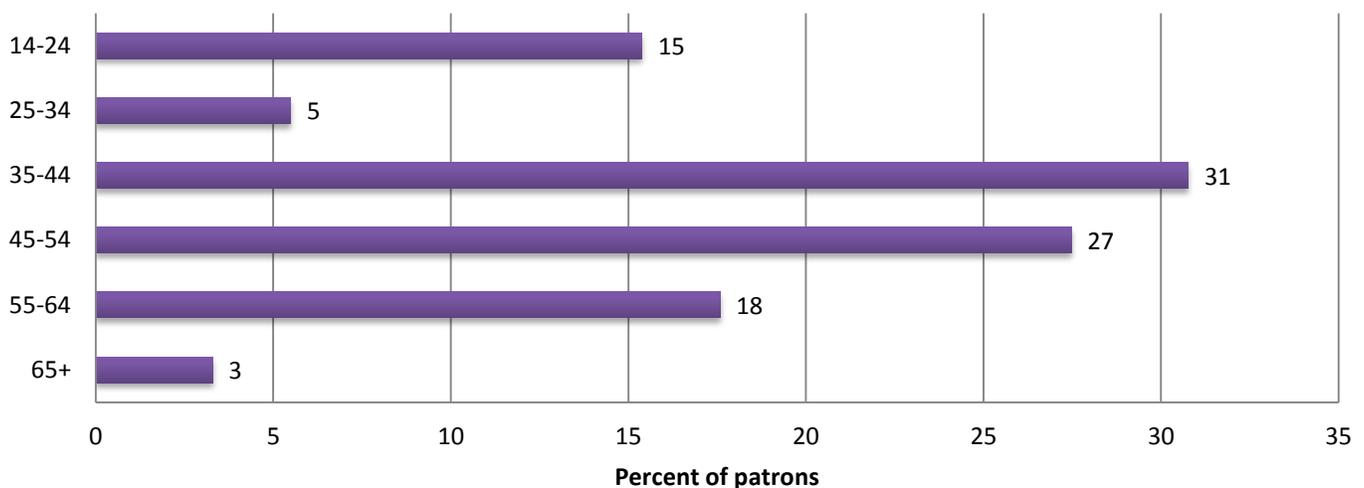


Table 1 details the education tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months. The most commonly reported task performed by users at libraries in Idaho was to do research for a class.

Table 1: Education activities

	% of users	n
Learn about a degree or certificate program	19%	44
Apply for a degree or certificate program	6%	13
Admitted to the program	2%	7
Take an online class or workshop	15%	33
Do research for a class	27%	50
Complete course work or homework	18%	40
Prepare for a standardized test	4%	12
Take any school-related test online	7%	15
Librarian served as proctor	1%	3
Applied for financial Aid	6%	14
Received financial aid	4%	10

*Bolted rows indicate activities that show outcomes of other activities, i.e. users actually followed through on their earlier information seeking to accomplish a task.

Employment

The public library plays a vital role in workforce development, providing job seekers with access to online job postings and assistance with online applications, cover letters, and resumes. 43% of public access technology users at libraries in Idaho reported they had used these resources for employment or career purposes in the past 12 months. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 28% were between the ages of 55-64 (Figure 7).

Figure 7 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for employment

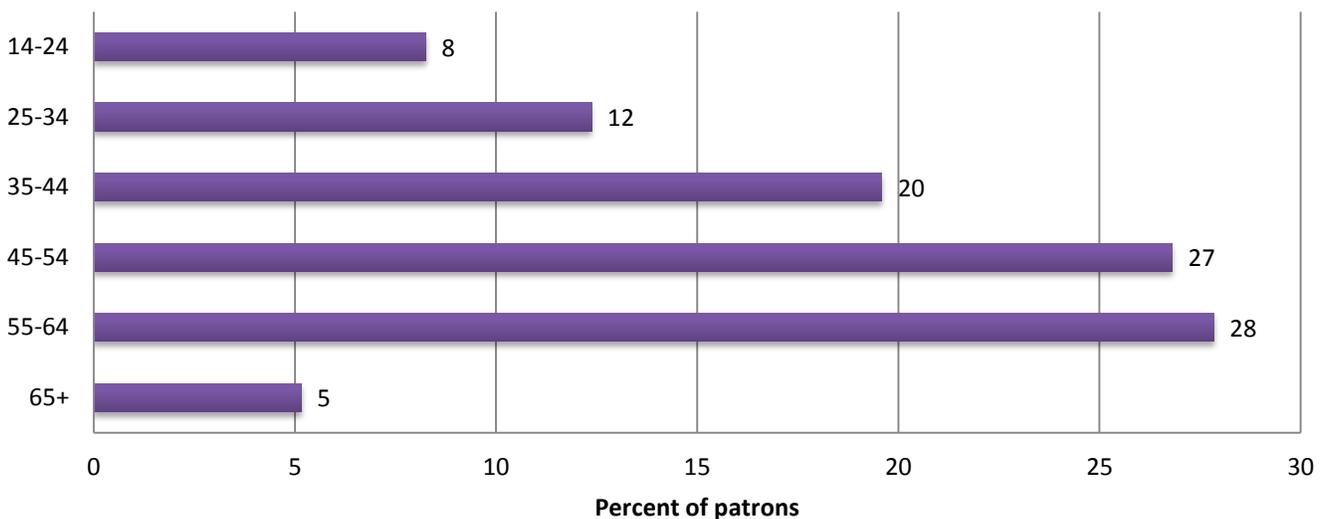


Table 2 details the employment tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months. Of the 75 who used the library's technology resources to search for a job opportunity, 37% were granted an interview and 25% were hired for a new position.

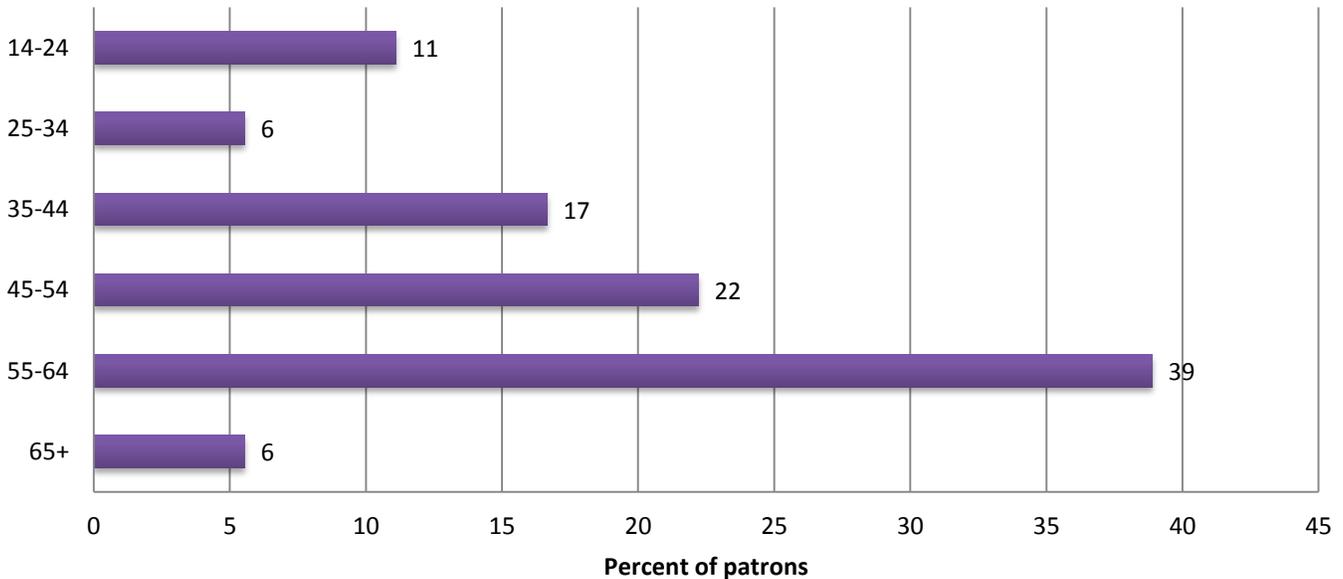
Table 2: Employment

	% of users	n
Look for job	33%	75
Applied for job/send out resume	24%	54
Got interview	13%	28
Got job	8%	18
Work on resume	20%	45
Receive skill-based training	16%	36
Research/find info related to job/profession	27%	62
Do work for current job	17%	38



By providing public access technology services, libraries are contributing to the economic health of the community. 8% of the public access technology users at libraries in Idaho reported they had used these resources for eBusiness purposes in the past 12 months. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 39%, were between the ages of 55-64.

Figure 8 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for eBusiness



Of those respondents who used the library’s technology resources to manage a current business, 33% used those resources to find potential customers, and as a result 40.0% saw business increase. Of those respondents who used the library’s computers or Internet connection to find contract opportunities, 28% secured a contract. Table 3 details the eBusiness tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

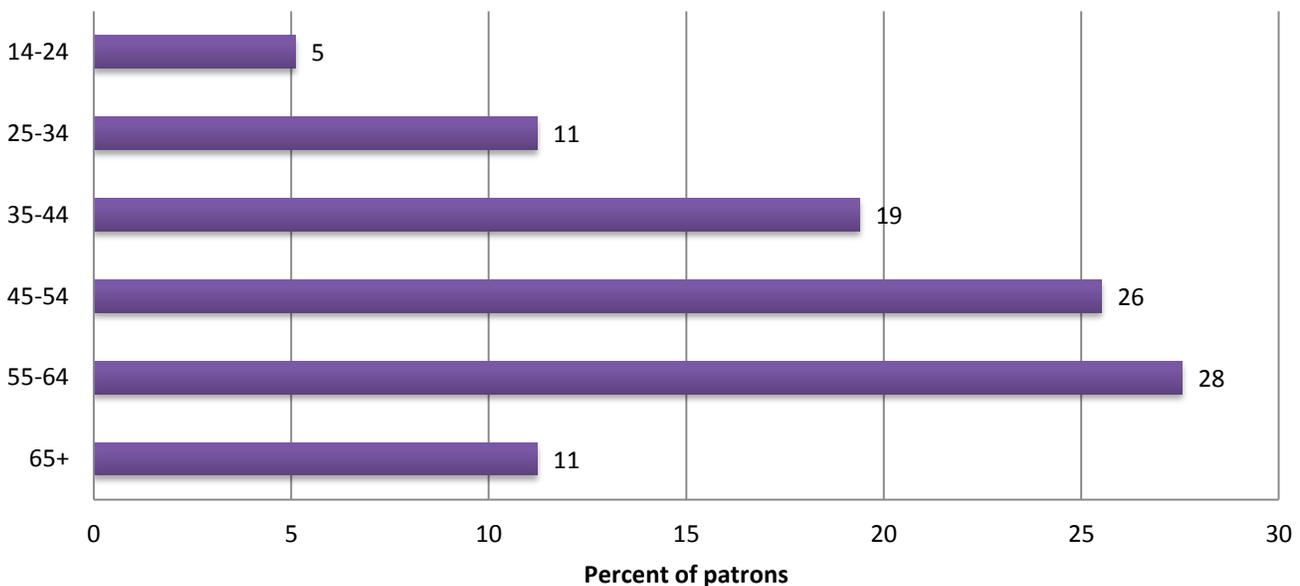
Table 3: eBusiness

	% of users	n
Started own business	1%	3
Manage an existing business	2%	5
Wrote business plan	1%	3
Perform business-related research	6%	13
Apply for business license/permit	2%	4
Found potential customers	3%	6
Business increased	1%	2
Find business-to-business contract opportunities	2%	5
Received business-to-business contract	1%	2

Health and Wellness

Increasingly, finding health information and conducting many health-related service transactions means going online. 44% of users at libraries in Idaho indicated they had used they library’s computers or Internet connection for heath or wellness purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 28% were between the ages of 55-64 (Figure 9).

Figure 9 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for health and wellness



In the U.S. IMPACT Study, health and wellness resulted in significant outcomes for users. At libraries in Idaho, of the 32% of users who reported learning about diet or nutrition, 91% of those users made a change to their diet. Of the 28% of users who reported learning about exercise or fitness, 77% made a change in their exercise habits. Table 4 details the health and wellness tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

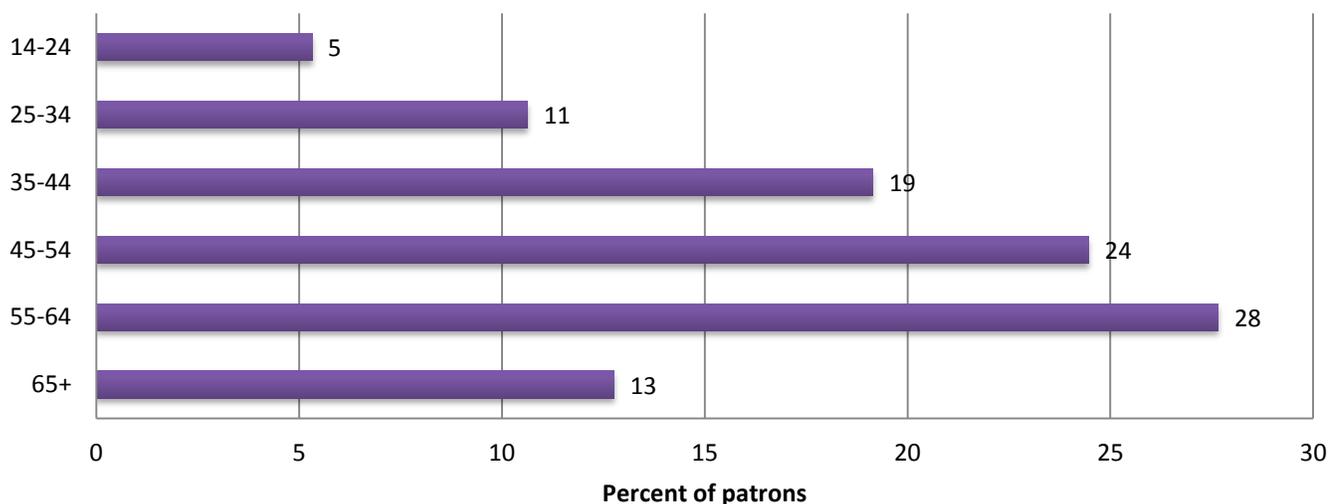
Table 4: Health and wellness

	% of users	n
Learn about illness, disease, or medical condition	36%	82
Learn about medical procedure	19%	44
Find online/in-person support groups for health need	25%	17
Learn about prescription/OTC drugs	18%	57
Find out about diet/nutrition	32%	73
Made decision about diet changes	27%	61
Learn about exercise/fitness	28%	64
Made changes in exercise habits	20%	44
Find info about doctor/health care provider	20%	45
Bought insurance/enrolled in drug discount program	4%	10
Access Medical Records	5%	12



Libraries play a significant role in connecting citizens with essential eGovernment services. 42% of users at libraries in Idaho used the library’s computers and Internet connection for eGovernment purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 28% were between the ages of 55-64 (Figure 10).

Figure 10 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for eGovernment



Of the users who engaged in eGovernment activities, the most common use was to learn about government programs/services. Table 5 details the eGovernment tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 5: eGovernment

	% of users	n
Seek help from government agency	18%	42
Get government forms	25%	56
Submit forms online	10%	22
Learn about laws/regulations	24%	54
Learn about permits/licenses	17%	38
Apply for permit/license	4%	10
Seek legal assistance/advice	18%	41
Learn about government programs/services	30%	69
Apply for government programs/services	7%	17

Civic engagement

Public libraries support civic engagement by providing a venue and resources for citizens to engage with their community. 29% of public access technology users surveyed at libraries in Idaho reported using the library’s computers or Internet connection for civic engagement purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 29%, were between the ages of 55-64 (Figure 11).

Figure 11 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for civic engagement

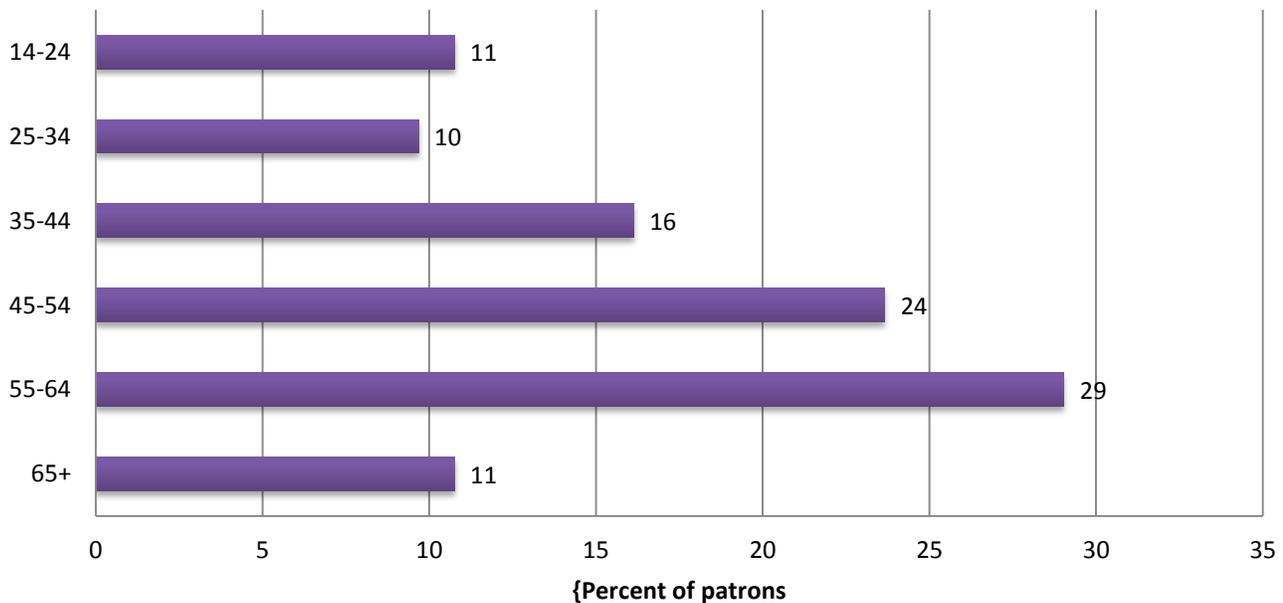


Table 6 details the civic engagement tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months. Of the users who engaged in civic engagement activities, the most common use was to keep up with news/current events.

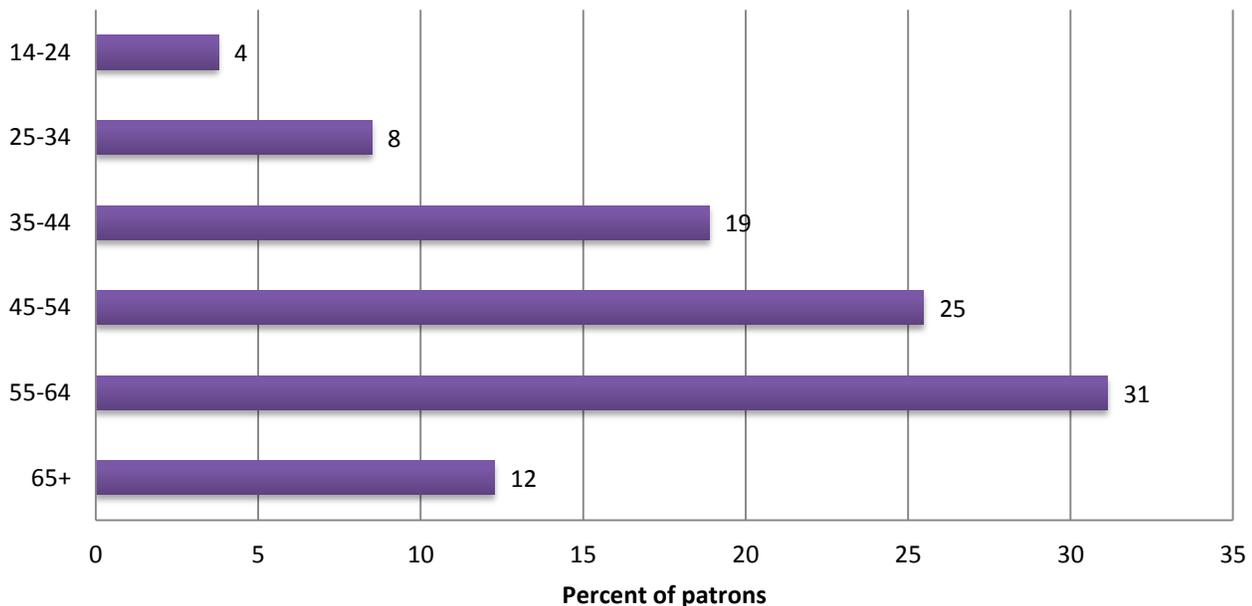
Table 6: Civic Engagement

	% of users	n
Keep up with news/current events	33%	75
Learn about political activity/candidate or social cause	28%	63
Get involved with political activity, candidate, or cause	16%	35
Started a new civic or community group	1%	1
Participate in a civic or community group	13%	29
Organized/managed club, civic/community/church group, or non-profit	2%	5



Public libraries provide patrons with the means to engage in a wide variety of eCommerce activities. Consumers connected to the Internet are able to find and compare products and services, leaving those without access at a disadvantage when it comes to making informed financial decisions. 47% of users indicated they had used a public library computer or Internet connection for eCommerce purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 31% were between the ages of 55-64 (Figure 12).

Figure 12 - Public access technology use by area



Of eCommerce users, the most common use was to make purchases online. Table 7 details the eCommerce tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

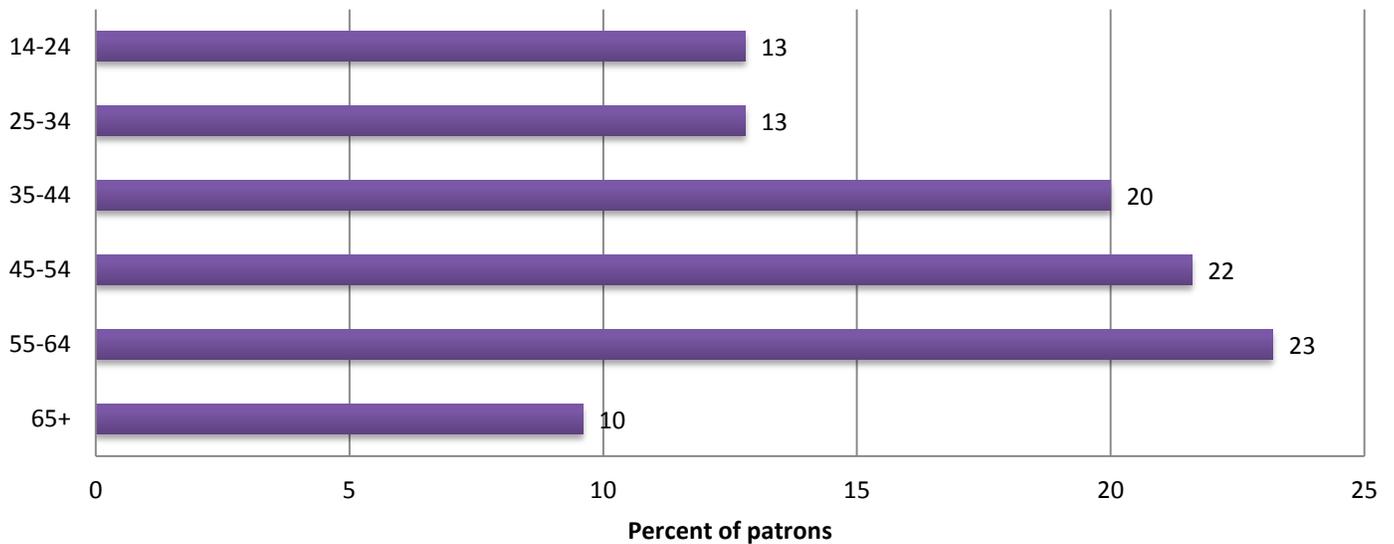
Table 7: eCommerce

	% of users	n
Find Housing	8%	17
Bank online	28%	64
Pay bills	25%	58
Get investment info	5%	12
Researched products/services	34%	77
Purchase online	30%	69
Sell online	8%	19
Make travel arrangement	28%	63
Looked up credit rating	8%	20
Learn about getting out of debt	11%	24

 **Social inclusion**

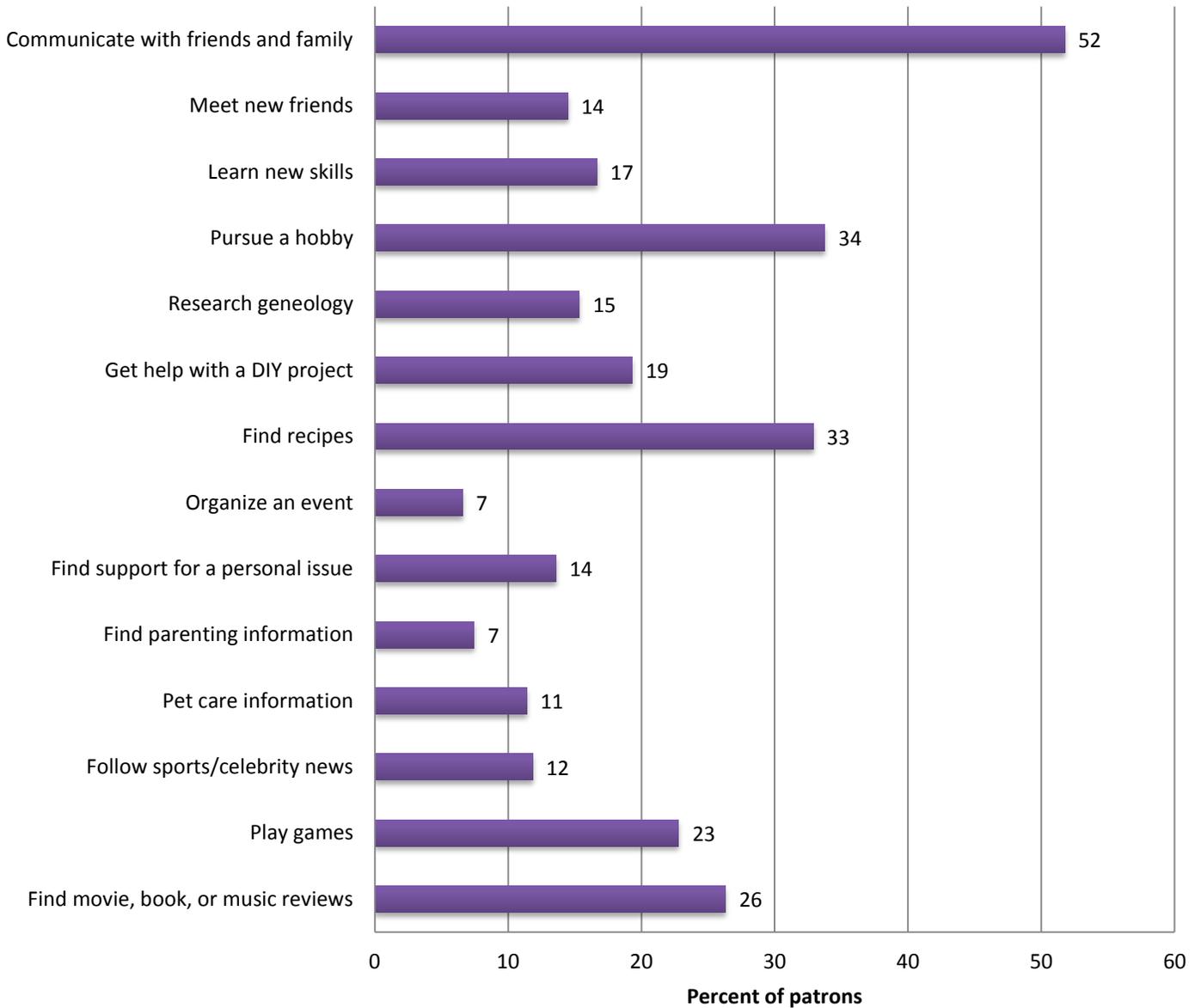
Patrons use public access technology to stay in touch with family and friends, and to build and maintain social networks. 55% of users reported having used the library’s computers or Internet connection for a social purpose. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 23% were between the ages of 55-64.

Figure 13 - Public access technology use by area



The most common social inclusion use of public library technology was to communicate with friends and family. Table 14 details the types of social inclusion activities tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

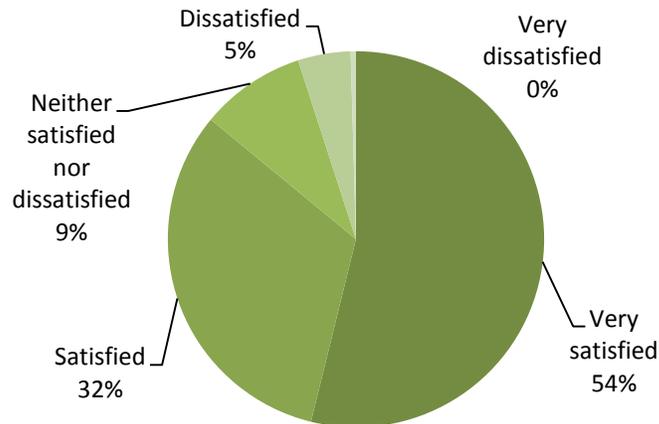
Table 14 - Social inclusion activities



Patron Satisfaction

When asked about their level of satisfaction with public access technology at libraries in Idaho, **86%** said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the access provided at the library (Figure 15).

Figure 15 - Patron satisfaction with public access technology resources and services



Importance of computer resources

All survey respondents were asked about the importance of free access to computers and the Internet for themselves and their community. 61% of respondents reported that public computing resources are important or very important to themselves, personally; even more (89%) felt that these resources are important or very important to have available for others in the community (Figures 16, 17).

Figure 16 - Public access technology importance (personal)

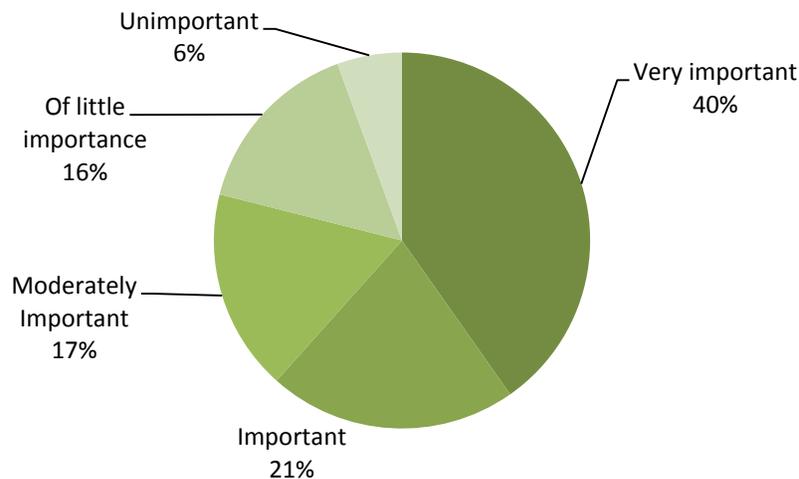
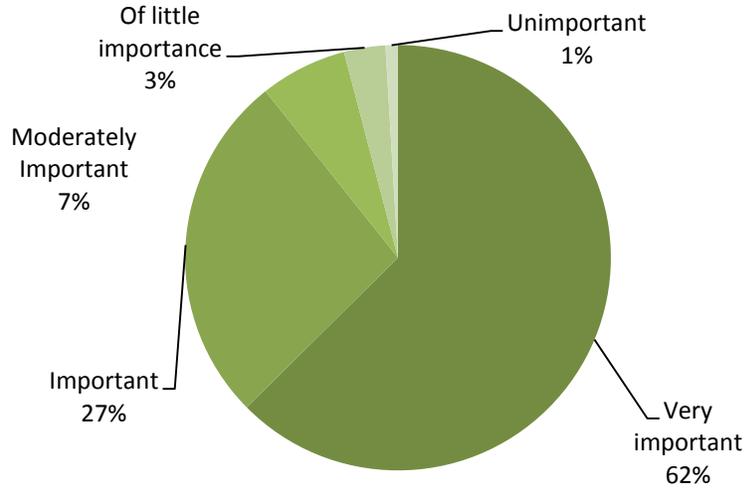


Figure 17 - Public access technology importance (community)



Demographic Information

The following Figures 18-23 provide demographic information about survey respondents from libraries in Idaho.

Figure 18 - Survey respondents by race

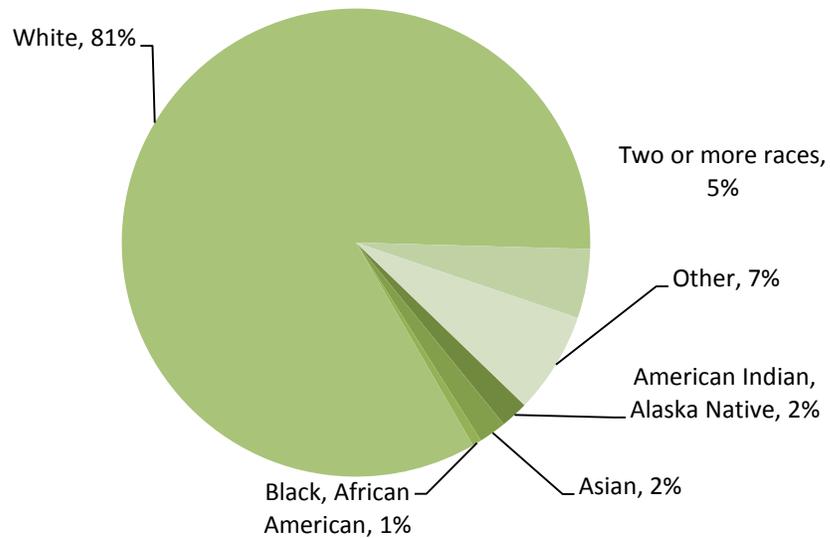


Figure 19 - Survey respondents by sex

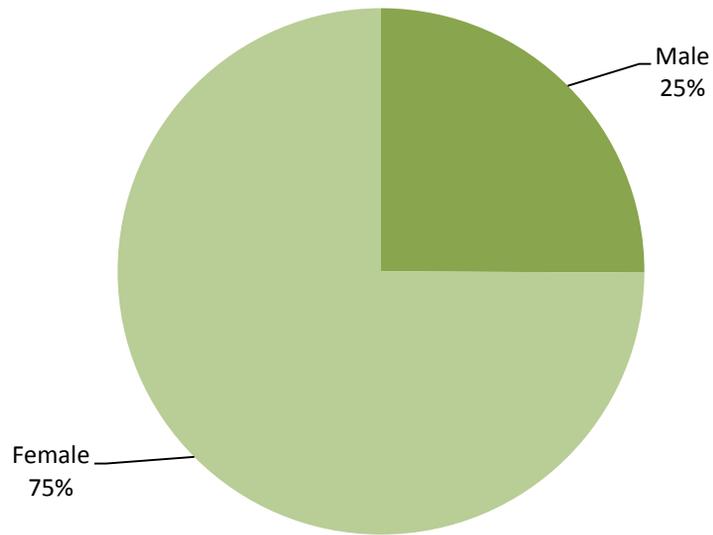


Figure 20 - Survey respondents by age

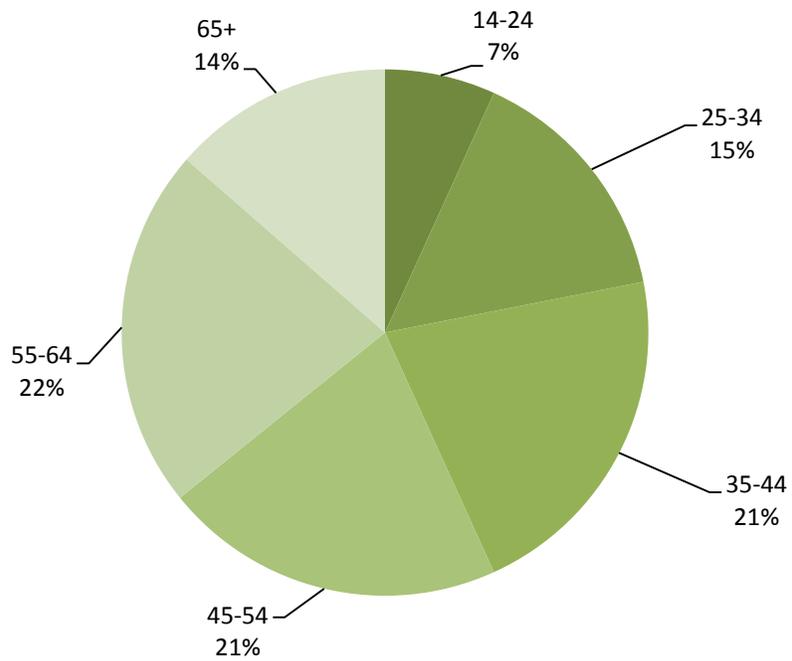


Figure 21 - Survey respondents by education level

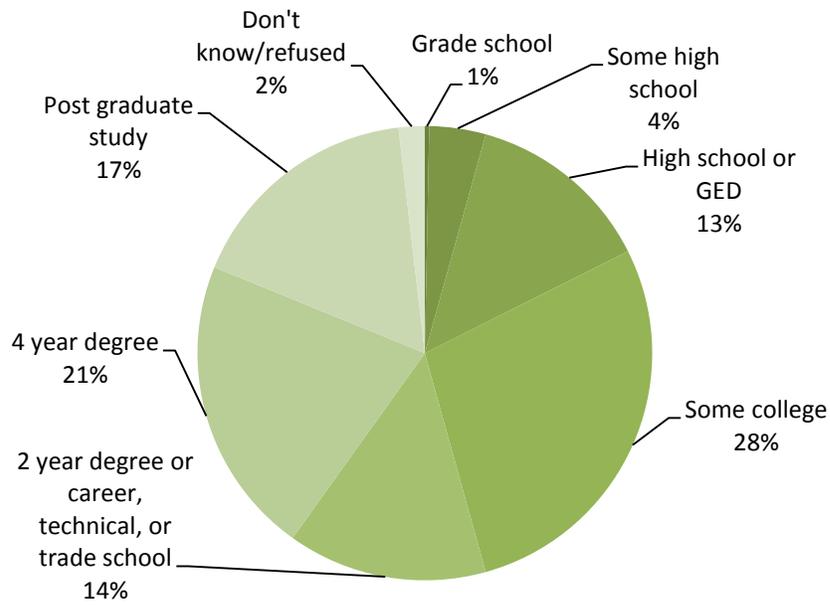


Figure 22 – Language spoken at home

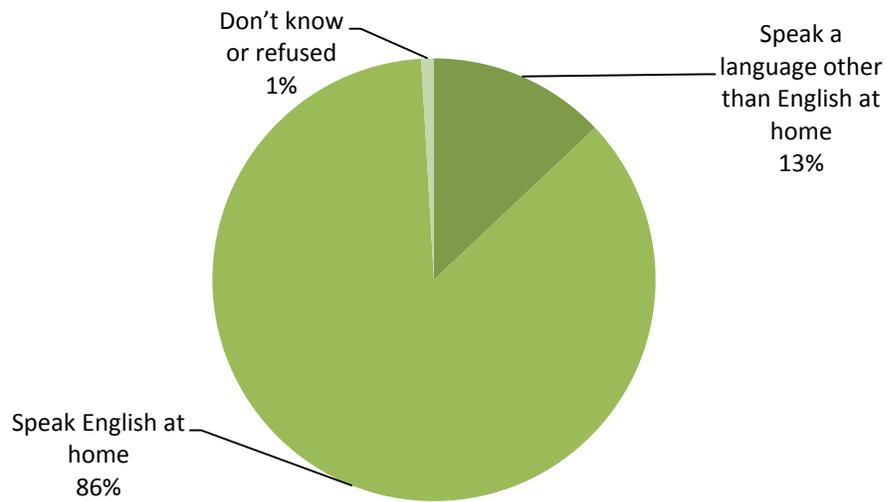


Figure 23 – Citizenship status

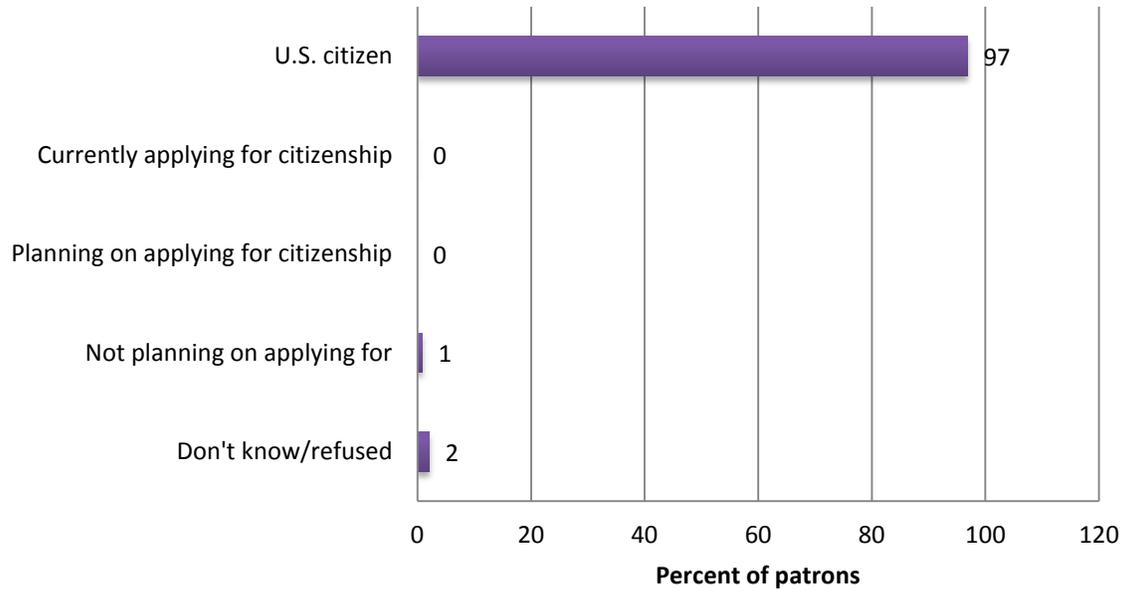
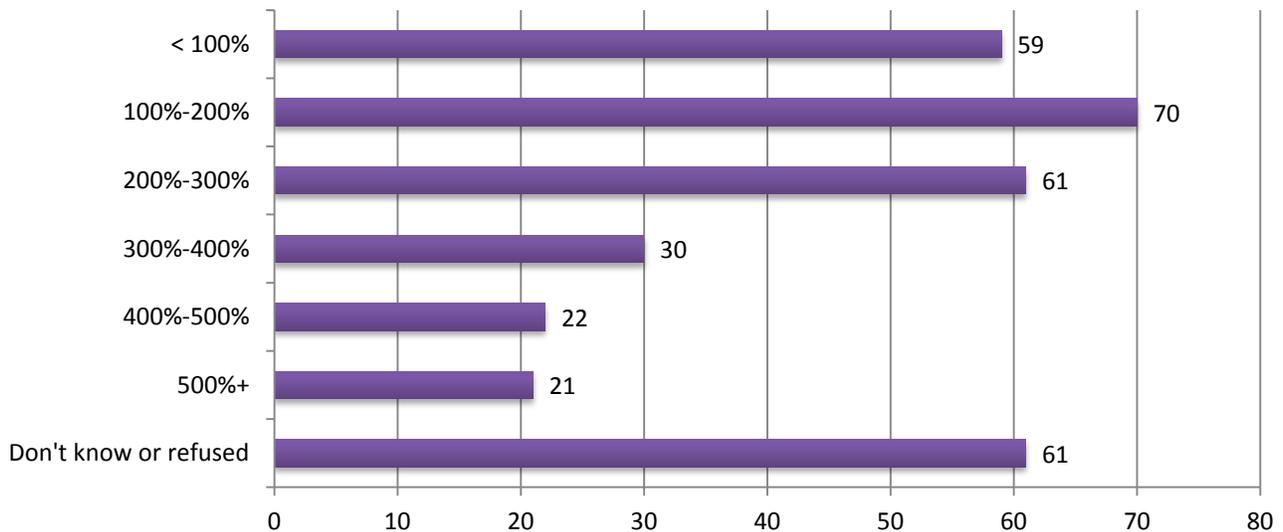


Figure 24 – Income as percent of household poverty level



Conclusion

We hope that this report has given you useful information about your library’s public access technology users.. Linking this information with higher level policy goals and current, relevant concerns in your library’s community will help demonstrate the value that the public library and free technology resources and services bring to your community. Suggestions for framing your advocacy efforts in a way that shows the value and political importance of the library’s services to policymakers, funders, and the public can be found on the IMPACT Survey website at <http://impactsurvey.org>.