



Washington County Library, Minnesota Survey Results

October, 2011

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.

Prepared for **Washington County Library, Minnesota** by the University of Washington Information School with generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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 Washington County Library, Minnesota based on IMPACT Survey responses. The report is divided into four sections:

- The library profile contextualizes the survey results by providing 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 Washington County Library, Minnesota.
- 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 Details

Number of residents within legal service area:	213,085
Number of patron visits during past year:	1,066,826
Number of hours the library system was open during the past year:	17,426
Total operational expenditures during past year:	6,511,204
Total number of full-time equivalent paid staff:	64.68
Total number of public access Internet terminals within the library system:	125
Number of public access Internet terminal uses during past year:	223,635

Resources and Infrastructure

-
- Source of IT support:
 - County/City IT staff
 - Source of library Internet connection:
 - State network
 - Maximum download speed of library Internet connection: 20 Mbps
 - Library provides wireless Internet access
 - Library provides the following assistive technologies for people with physical impairments/disabilities:
 - No, the library does not provide this sort of assistive technology
-

Training

-
- Library provides staff with access to learning resources and opportunities relevant to public access technology during working hours
-

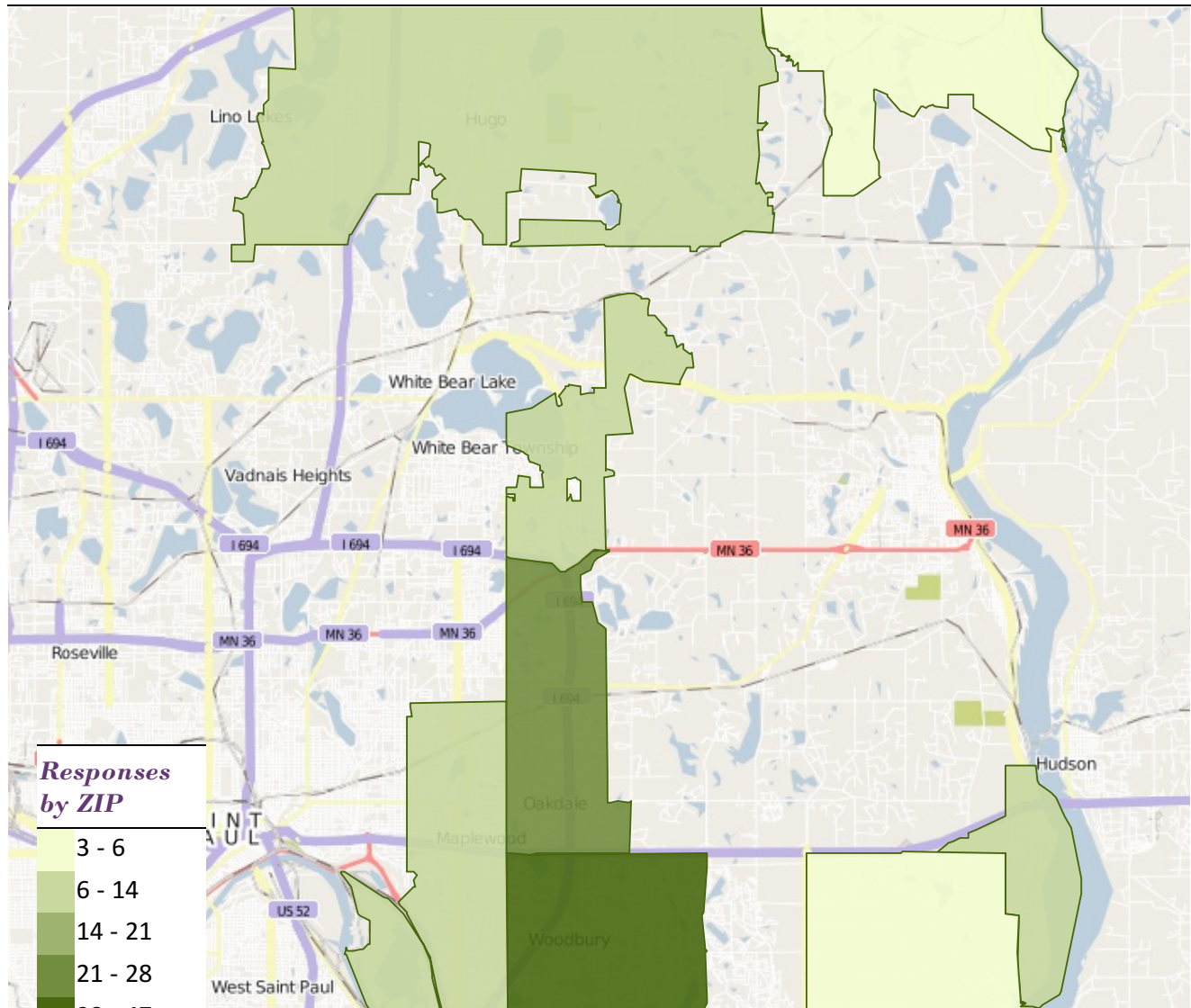
Policies

-
- Library includes public access technology in its strategic plan
 - Library engages community partners in delivering public access technology services
 - Library tracks expenses related to public access technology service provision
 - Library has a public access technology hardware replacement plan
 - Standard maximum daily time limit for patrons using public access Internet terminals: 60 minutes
 - Librarians are permitted to extend the session time for patrons
 - Library staff are permitted to extend the session time for patrons
-

Overall results

Washington County Library, Minnesota ran the IMPACT Survey for **27** days between the dates of October 03, 2011 and October 30, 2011; a total of **201** people responded. 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% (199) of survey respondents visited the library over the past 12 months. Of those who did,

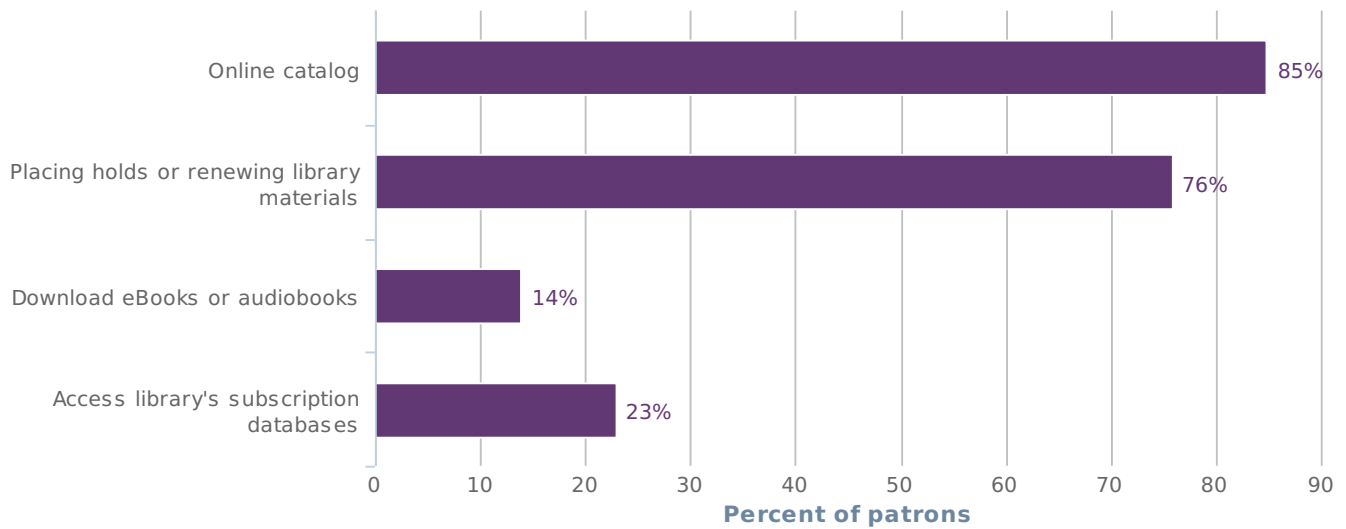
- **105 (53%)** visited the library once a week or more frequently;
- **72 (36%)** visited the library about 1-3 times a month;
- **22 (11%)** visited the library less than once a month.

Accessing library resources through the library website

88% (176) 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



Of those who reported using library computers for these purposes in the past 12 months,

- **55 (31%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **55 (31%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **66 (38%)** did so less than once a month.

Remote visits to library website

83% (166) 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 remotely,

- **93 (56%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **51 (31%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **22 (13%)** did so less than once a month.

In addition, 17% (34) of respondents accessed library resources through a handheld mobile device such as a cellphone, Blackberry, or iPhone.

Use of public access computers or wireless network

Of the respondents, **71% (142) used a library computer to access the Internet during the past 12 months**, with frequencies as follows:

- **58 (41%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **30 (21%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **54 (38%)** did so less than once a month.

37% (74) accessed the library's wireless network connection using their own computer. Of these respondents,

- **20 (27%)** used the library's wireless network once a week or more frequently;
- **15 (20%)** used the library's wireless network about 1-3 times a month;
- **39 (53%)** used the library's wireless network less than once a month.

Overall, 79% of survey respondents had used a public access computer or the library's wireless network connection to access the Internet in the past 12 months. Using either means of access qualified respondents as *public access technology users*. **75% of these users had regular 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 travelling. Of the users surveyed, **31% (49) reported they had used a library computer or wireless Internet connection while out-of-town during the past 12 months.**

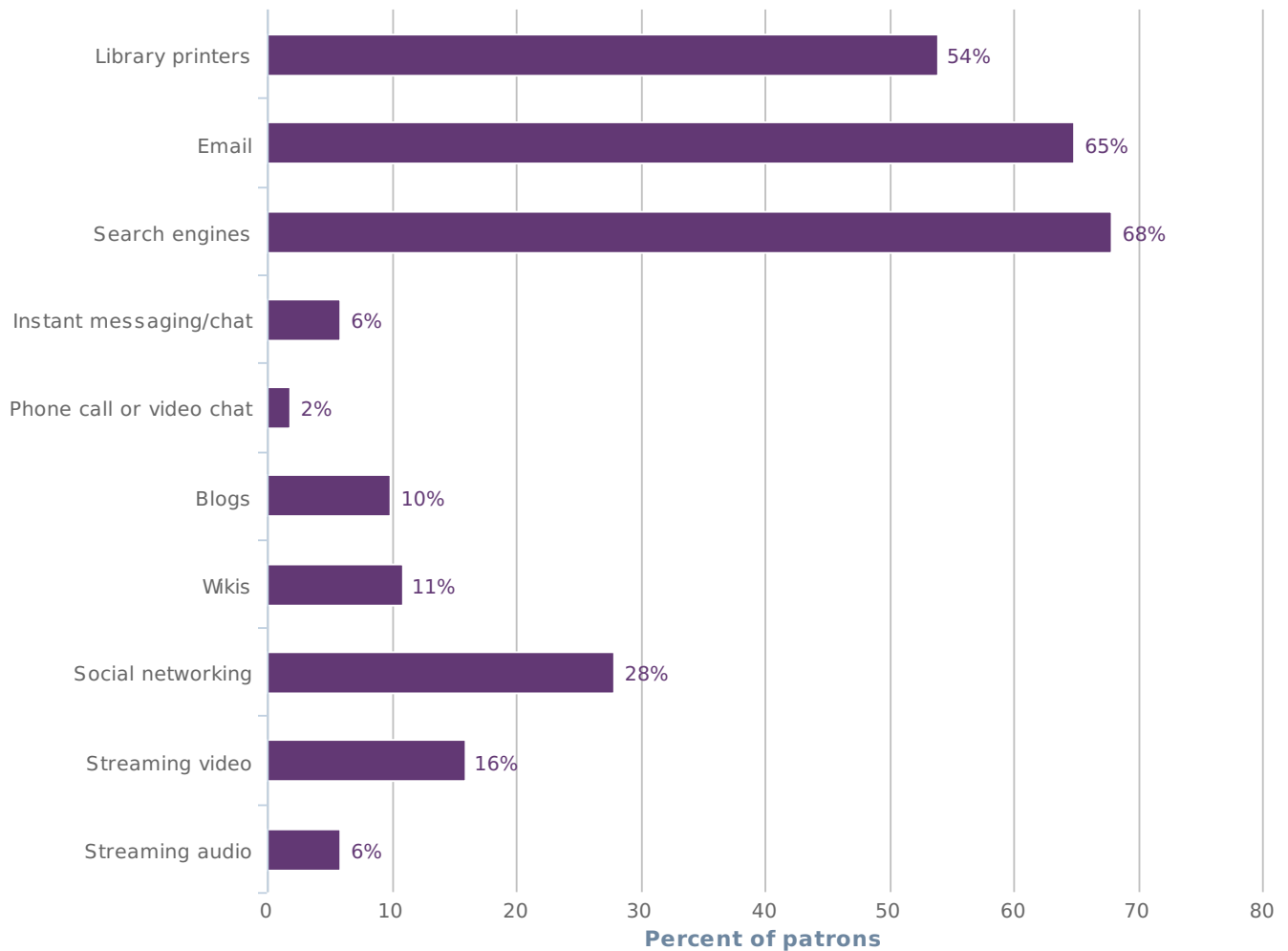
In addition to use while traveling, the U.S. IMPACT Study found several other important reasons driving respondents with alternative means of access to use technology resources at the public library:

- **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 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

Public access technology users at Washington County Library, Minnesota reported accessing a variety web-based resources and network tools. Figure 3 describes the types of tools accessed over the past 12 months.

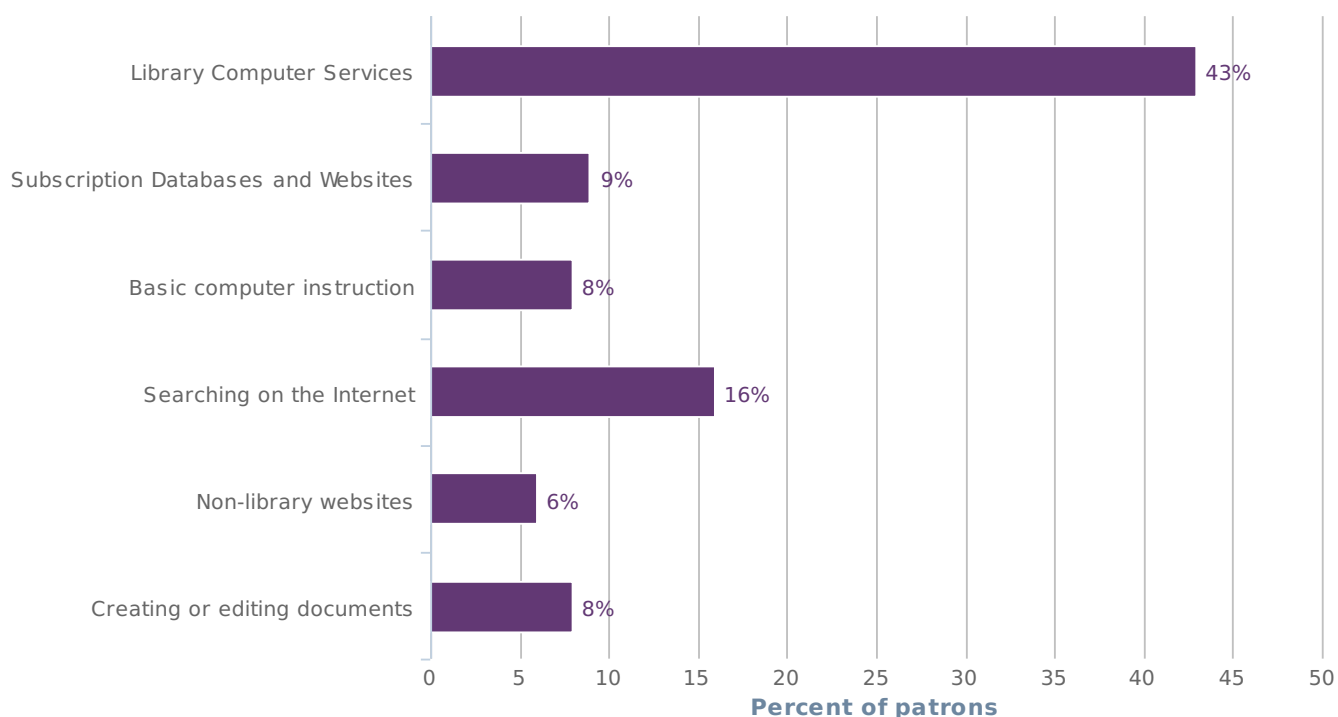
Figure 3 - Tools accessed by patrons using the library's computers or Internet connection



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 Washington County Library, Minnesota, **43% of users reported having received one-on-one technology help from library staff or volunteers over the past 12 months.** Figure 4 shows the types of help these users received from library staff or volunteers.

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



Additionally, **9% (15) of users attended computer-related training or classes at the library during the past 12 months.** Note that this question was not asked of nonusers; **Washington County Library, Minnesota** may have patrons who take computer-related training classes but otherwise do not use the library's computers or Internet connection.

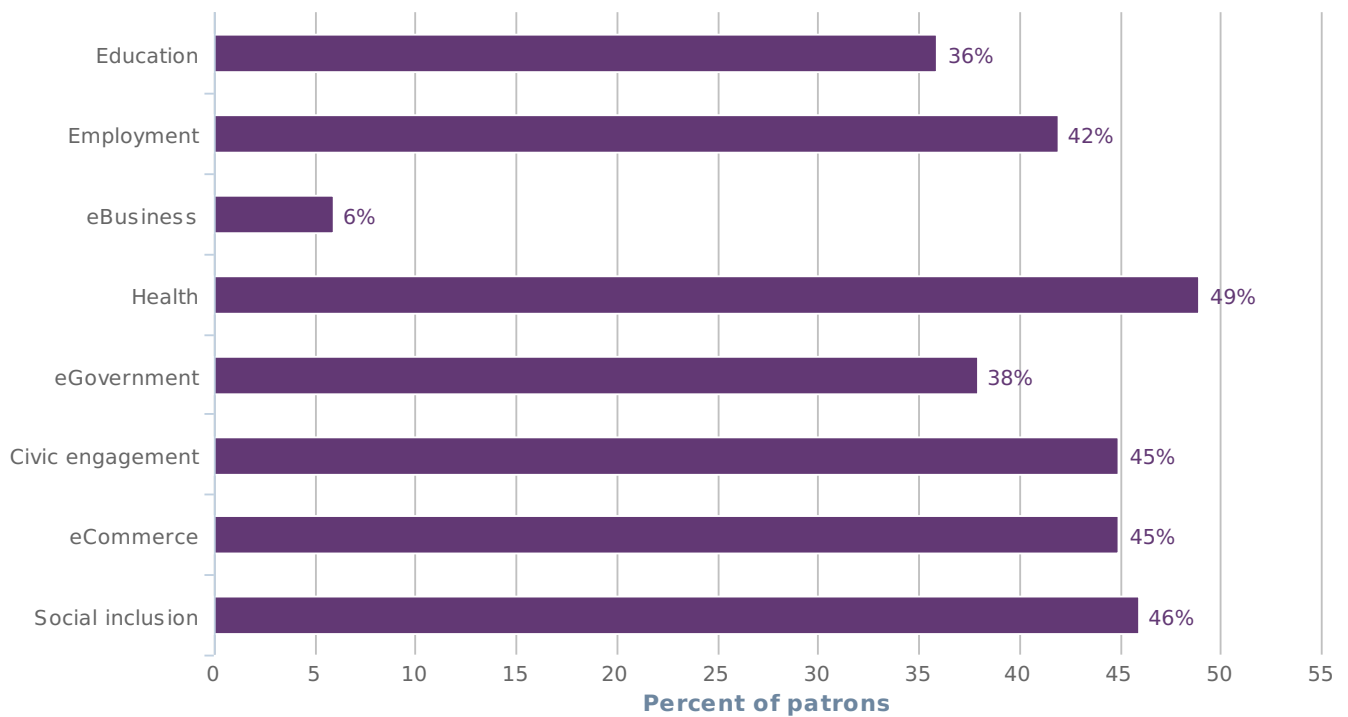
Using the library's computers on behalf of others

The beneficiaries of library Internet access often extend beyond the individual users; at Washington County Library, Minnesota, **50% (79) of users found information or performed tasks for family or friends 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 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 Washington County Library, Minnesota, 36% 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, 28%, were between the ages of 14 and 24 (Figure 6).

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

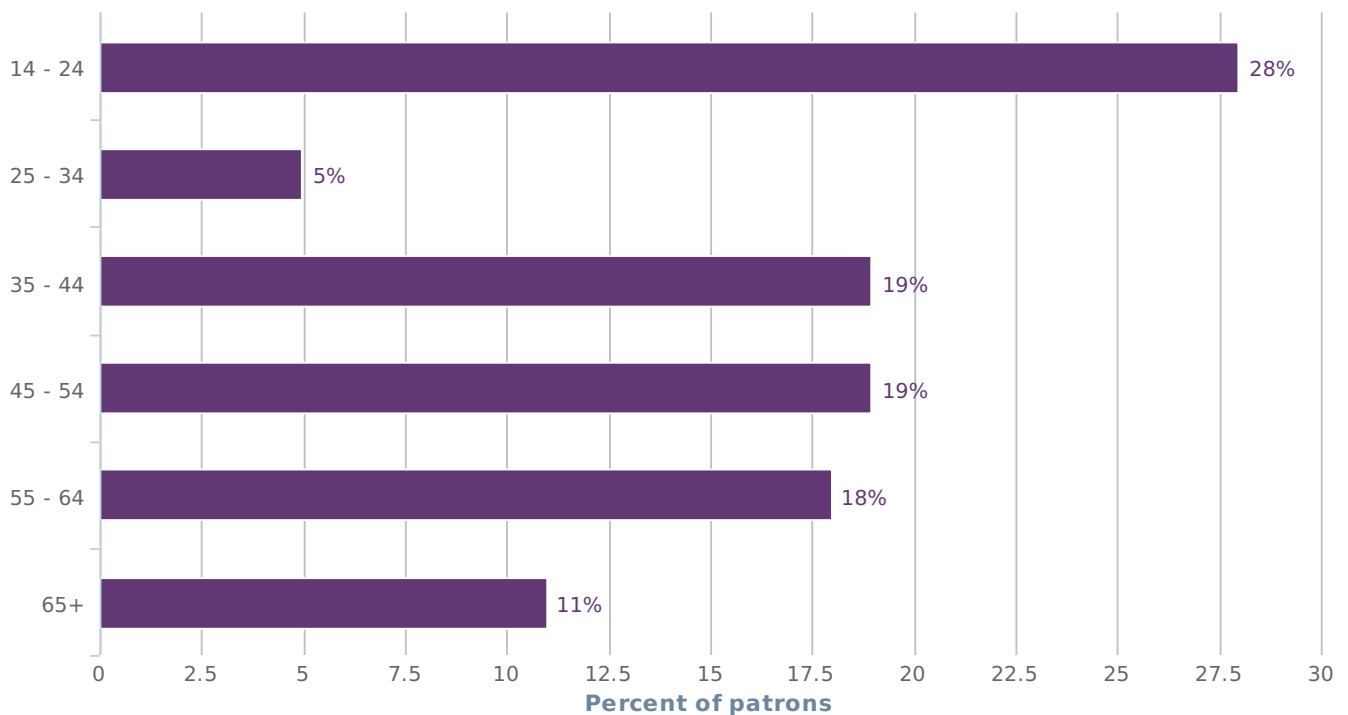


Table 1 details the education tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months. The most commonly reported task performed by users at Washington County Library, Minnesota was to do research for a class.

Table 1: Education activities

	% of users	n
Learn about a degree or certificate program	15%	24
Apply for a degree or certificate program	5%	8
Admitted to the program	4%	6
Take an online class or workshop	9%	14
Do research for a class	23%	36
Complete course work or homework	21%	33
Prepare for a standardized test	4%	6
Take any school-related test online	6%	9
Librarian served as proctor	1%	1
Apply for financial Aid	4%	7
Received financial aid	3%	5

*Bolded 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. 42% of the public access technology users at Washington County Library, Minnesota 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, 29%, were between the ages of 55 and 64 (Figure 7).

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

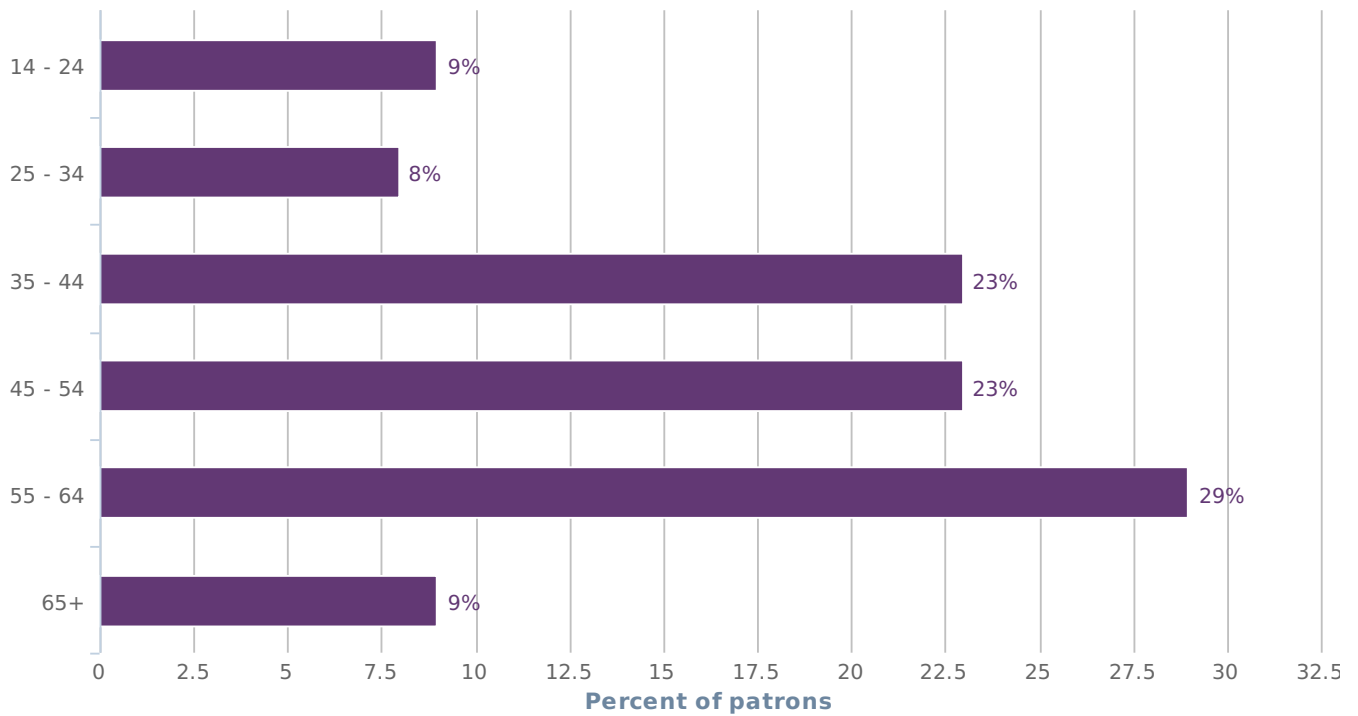


Table 2 details the employment tasks which users performed over the past 12 months. Of the 35 who used the library's technology resources to search for a job opportunity, 40% were granted an interview and 24% were hired for a new position.

Table 2: Employment activities

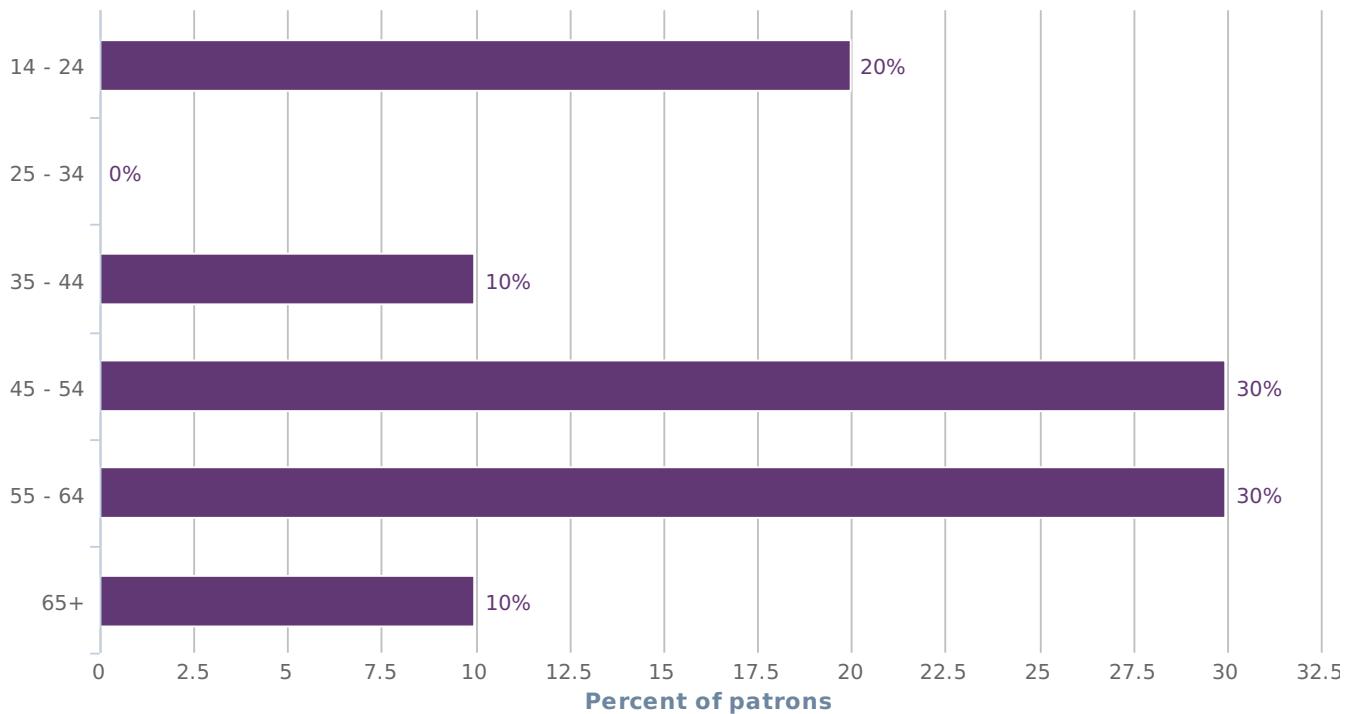
	% of users	n
Look for job	35%	55
Applied for job/sent out resume	19%	31
Got interview	14%	22
Got job	8%	13
Work on resume	20%	32
Receive skill-based training	11%	17
Research/find info related to job/profession	33%	52
Do work for current job	16%	26



eBusiness

By providing public access technology services, the library is contributing to the economic health of the community by helping users start and manage their own businesses. 6% of the public access technology users at Washington County Library, Minnesota reported they had used these resources for these eBusiness purposes in the past 12 months. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 30%, were between the ages of 45 and 54.

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, 70% found potential customers, and as a result 57% saw business increase. Table 3 details the eBusiness tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

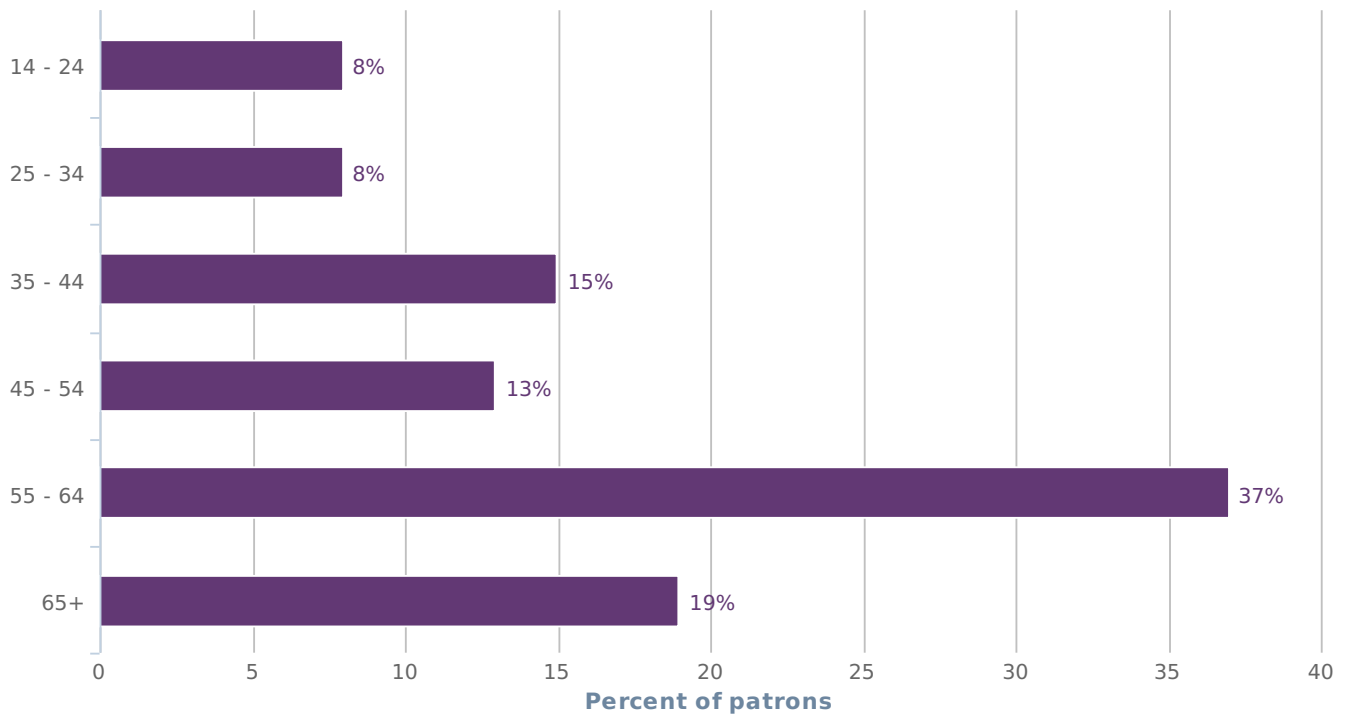
Table 3: eBusiness activities

	% of users	n
Started own business	4%	7
Manage an existing business	3%	4
Wrote business plan	5%	8
Perform business-related research	6%	9
Apply for business license/permit	1%	2
Find potential customers	4%	7
Business increased	3%	4
Find business-to-business contract opportunities	3%	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. 49% of users at Washington County Library, Minnesota indicated they had used their library's computers or Internet connection for health or wellness purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 37%, were between the ages of 55 and 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 Washington County Library, Minnesota, of the 30% of users who reported learning about diet or nutrition, 89% of those users made a change to their diet; of the 26% of users who reported learning about exercise or fitness, 83% made a change in their exercise habits. Table 4 details the health and wellness tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

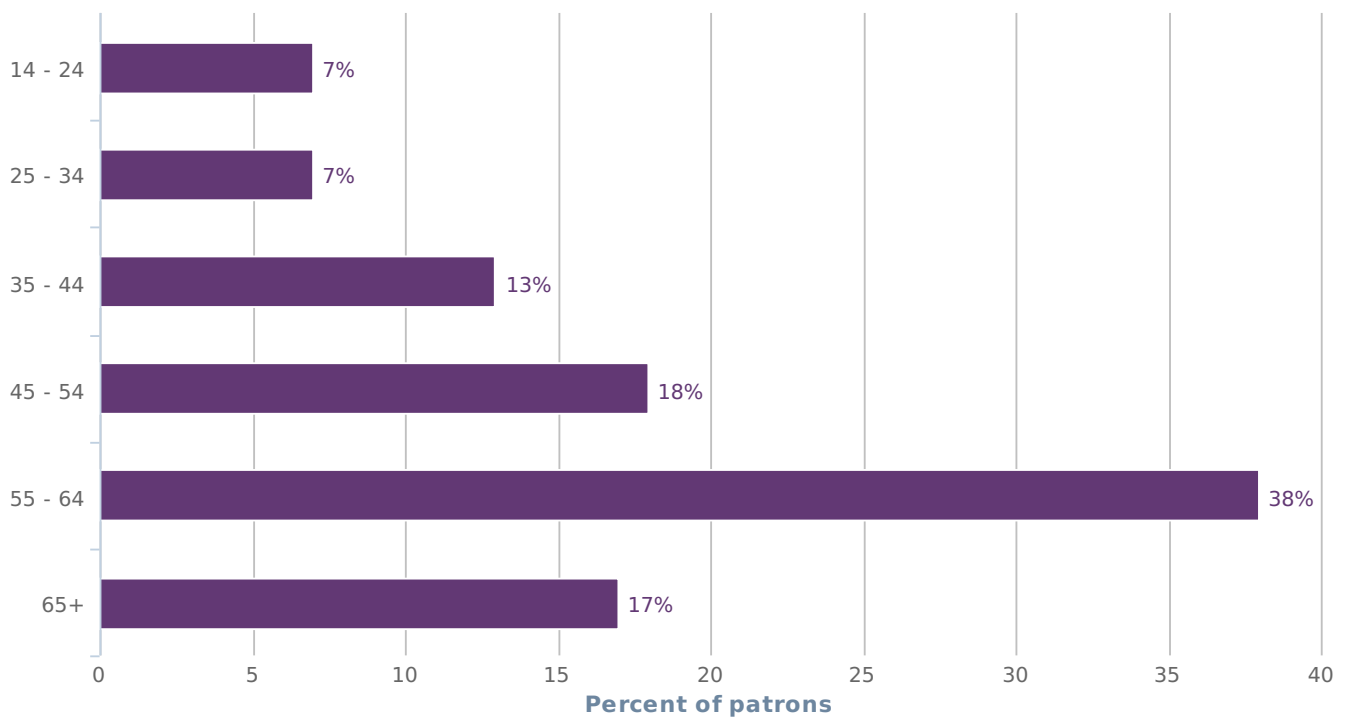
Table 4: Health and wellness activities

	% of users	n
Learn about illness, disease, or medical condition	43%	68
Learn about medical procedure	26%	41
Find online/in-person support groups for health need	6%	9
Learn about prescription/OTC drugs	28%	44
Find out about diet/nutrition	30%	47
Made diet changes	26%	42
Learn about exercise/fitness	26%	42
Made changes in exercise habits	22%	35
Find info about doctor/health care provider	23%	37
Buy insurance/enroll in drug discount program	9%	14
Access Medical Records	10%	16

eGovernment

Libraries play a significant role in connecting citizens with essential eGovernment services. 38% of users at Washington County Library, Minnesota used the library's computers and Internet connection for eGovernment purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 38%, were between the ages of 55 and 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 activities

	% of users	n
Seek help from government agency	23%	37
Access justice system	9%	14
Get government forms	27%	43
Submitted forms online	12%	19
Learn about laws/regulations	21%	33
Learn about permits/licenses	18%	28
Applied for permit/license	5%	8
Seek legal assistance/advice	14%	22
Learn about government programs/services	28%	44
Applied for government programs/services	11%	17

Civic engagement

Public libraries support civic engagement by providing a venue and resources for citizens to engage with their community. 45% of public access technology users surveyed at Washington County Library, Minnesota reported using the library's computers or Internet connection for civic engagement purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 42%, were between the ages of 55 and 64 (Figure 11).

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

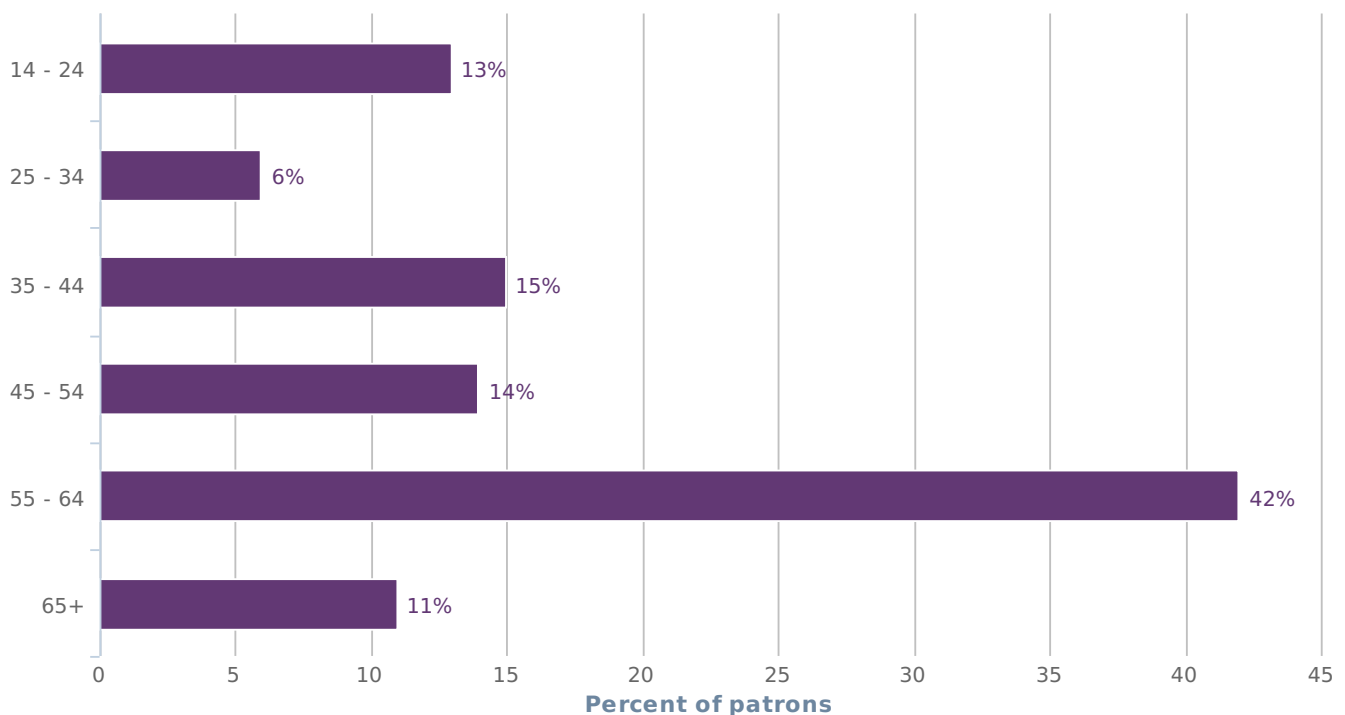


Table 6 details the civic engagement activities patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months. Of the users who engaged in civic engagement activities, the most common use was to keep up with news/current events.

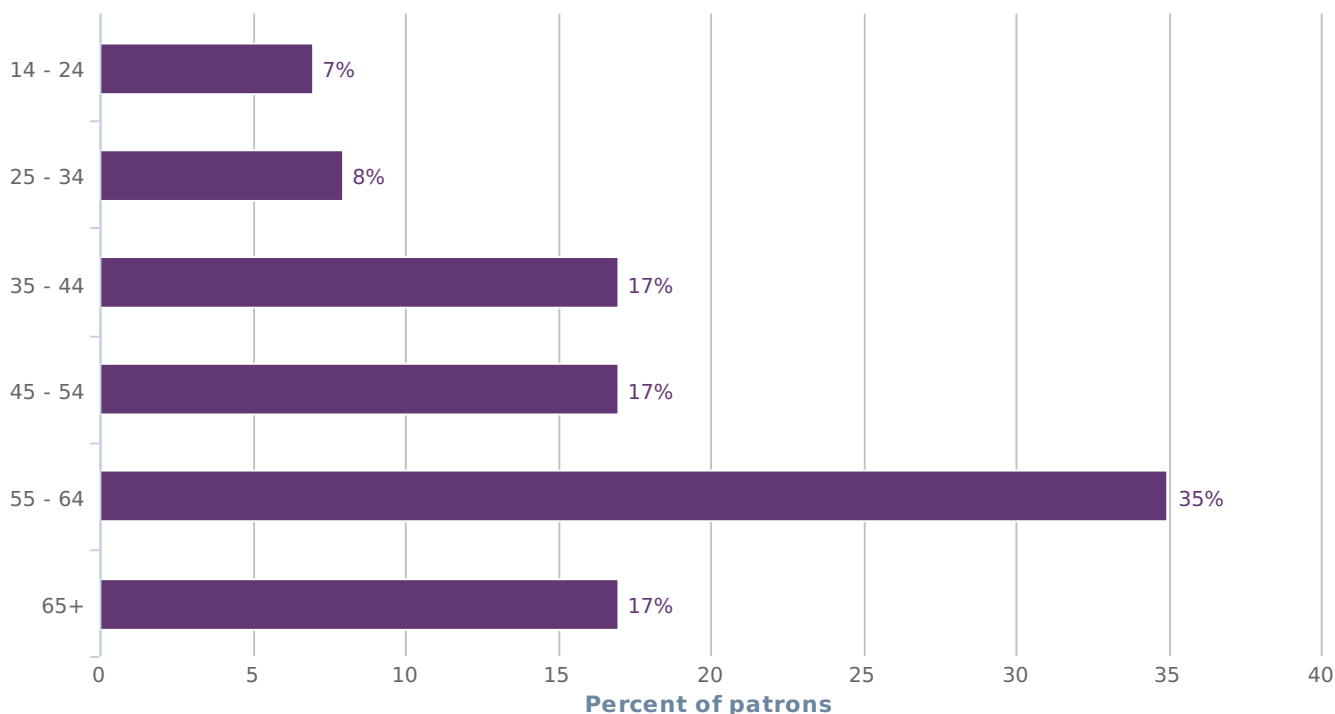
Table 6: Civic engagement activities

	% of users	n
Keep up with news/current events	41%	65
Learn about political activity/candidate or social cause	31%	50
Got involved with political activity, candidate, or cause	18%	28
Start a new civic or community group	3%	4
Participate in a civic or community group	11%	17
Organize/manage club, civic/community/church group, or non-profit	4%	6



The library provides 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. 45% of patrons at Washington County Library, Minnesota indicated they had used a public library computer or Internet connection for eCommerce purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 35%, were between the ages of 55 and 64 (Figure 12).

Figure 12 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for eCommerce



Of eCommerce users, the most common use was to research products/services. Table 7 details the eCommerce tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

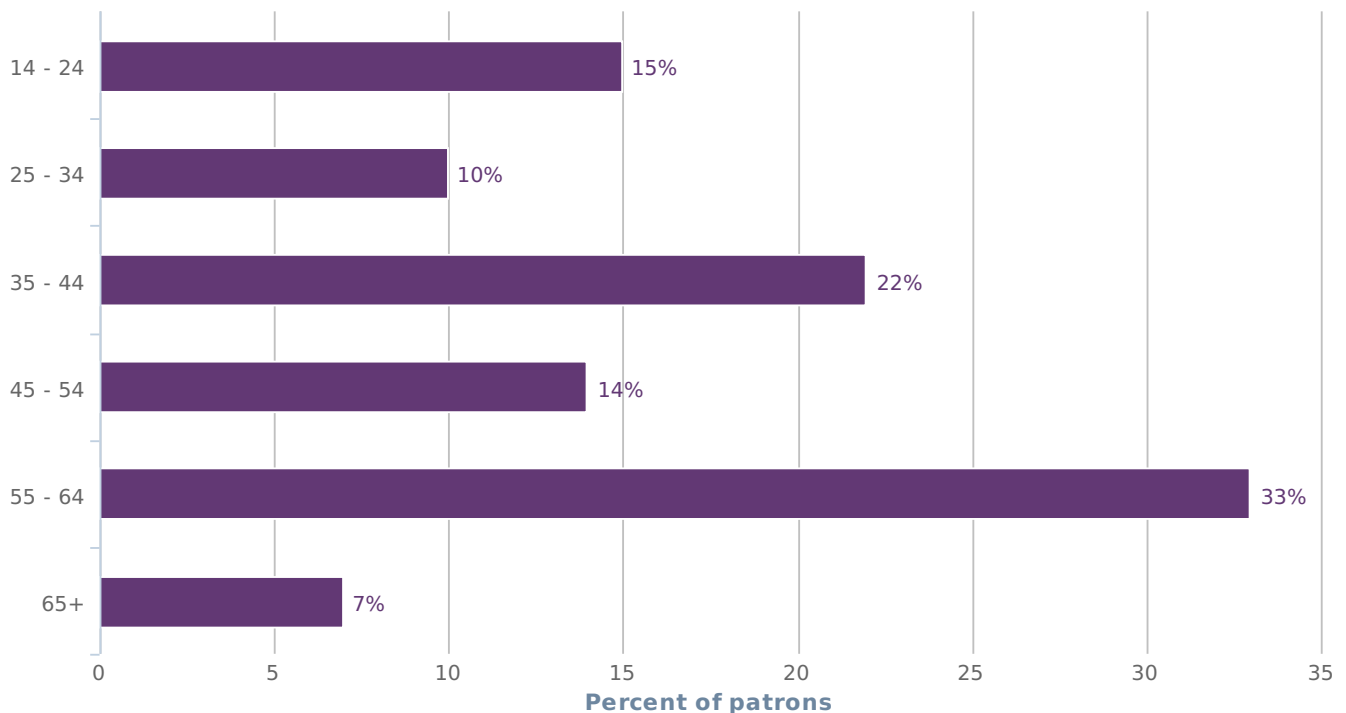
Table 7: eCommerce activities

	% of users	n
Find housing	9%	14
Bank online	23%	36
Pay bills	19%	30
Get investment info	9%	15
Research products/services	36%	57
Purchase online	27%	43
Sell online	5%	8
Make travel arrangements	32%	51
Look up credit rating	4%	7
Learn about getting out of debt	7%	11

Social inclusion

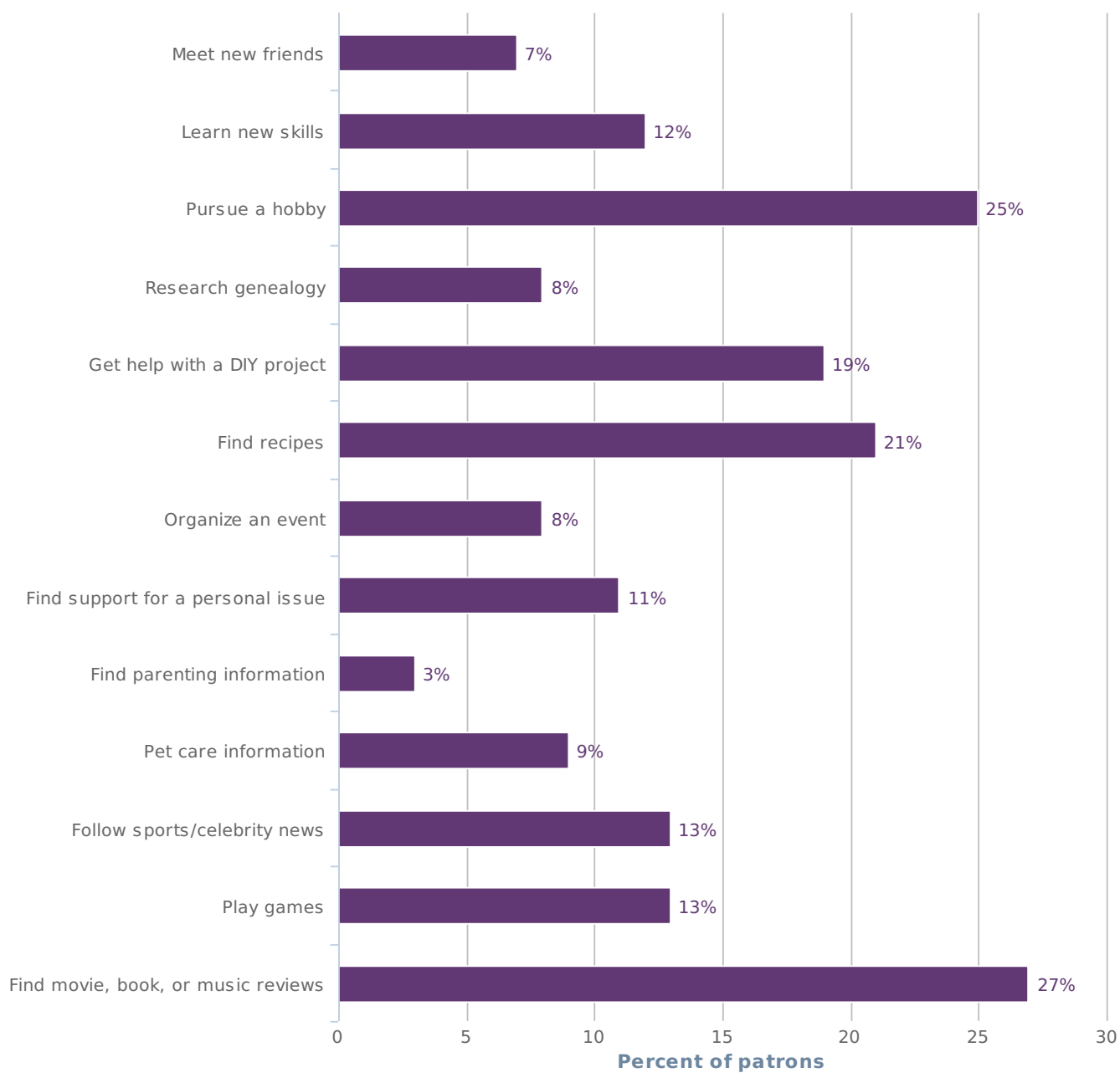
Patrons use public access technology to stay in touch with family and friends, and to build and maintain social networks. 46% of users reported having used the library's computers or Internet connection for social inclusion purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 33%, were between the ages of 55 and 64 (Figure 13).

Figure 13 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for social inclusion



The most common social inclusion use of public library technology was to find movie, book, or music reviews. Figure 14 shows the types of social inclusion activities patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

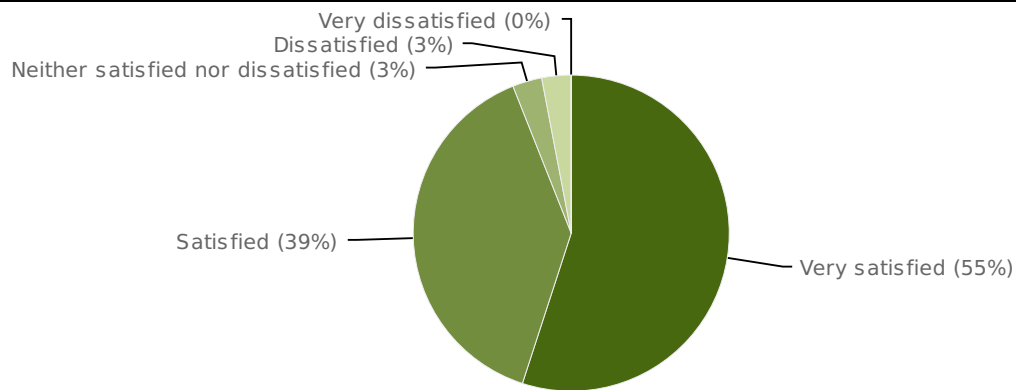
Figure 14 - Social inclusion activities



Patron Satisfaction

When asked about their level of satisfaction with public access technology at Washington County Library, Minnesota, **94%** of users said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the access provided at the library (Figure 15).

Figure 15 - User 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. 66% of respondents reported that public computing resources are important or very important to themselves, personally; even more (90%) felt that these resources are important or very important to have available for others in the community (Figures 16 and 17).

Figure 16 - PAC importance (personal)

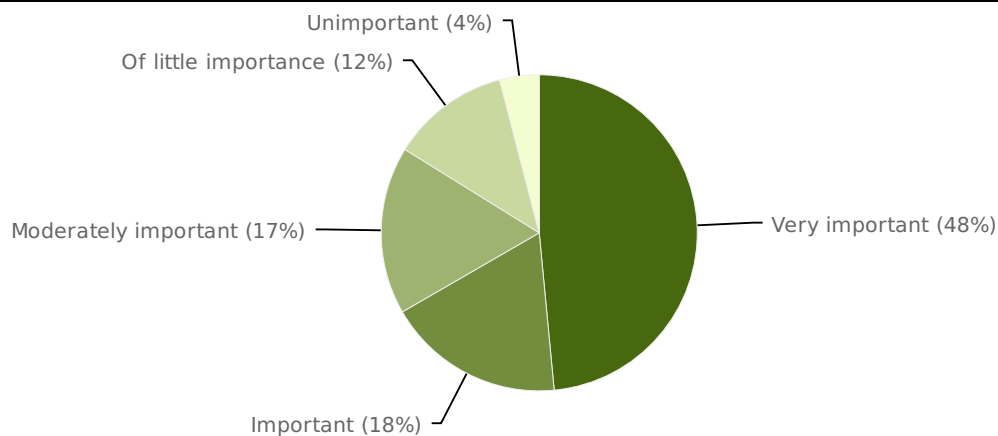
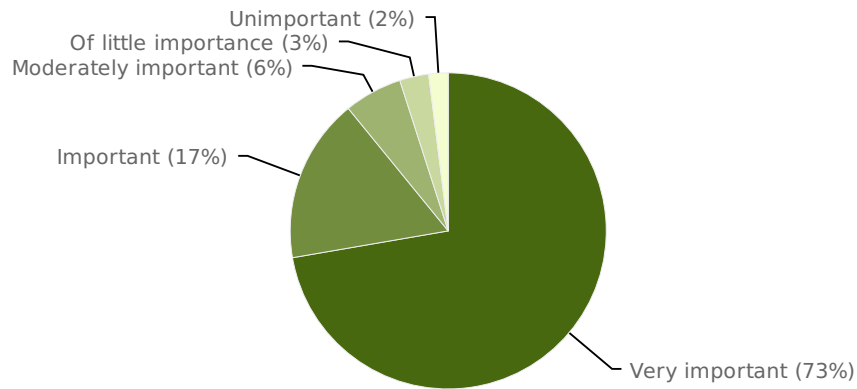


Figure 17 - PAC importance (community)



Demographic Information

The following Figures 18-23 provide demographic information about survey respondents from Washington County Library, Minnesota

Figure 18 - Race

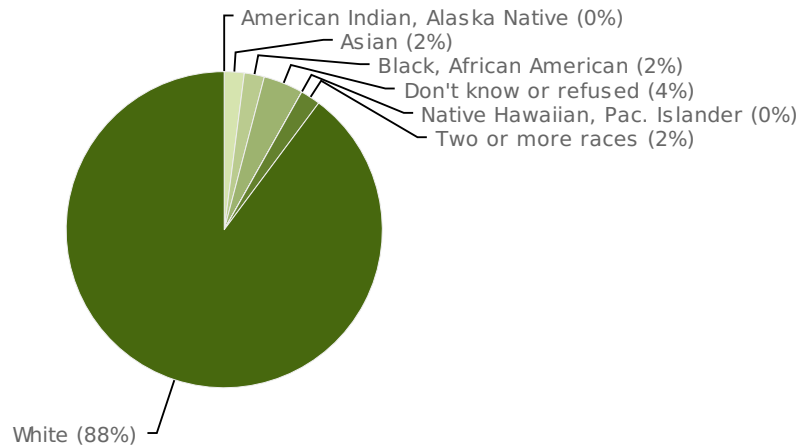


Figure 19 - Sex

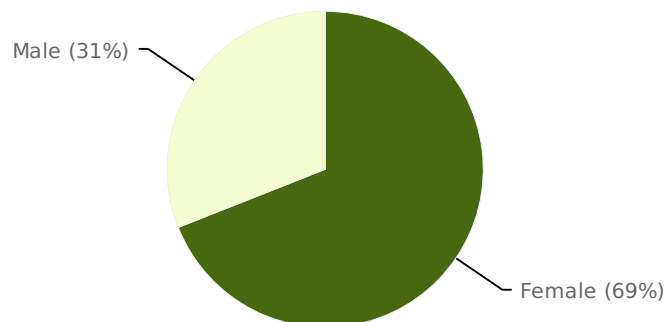


Figure 20 - Age

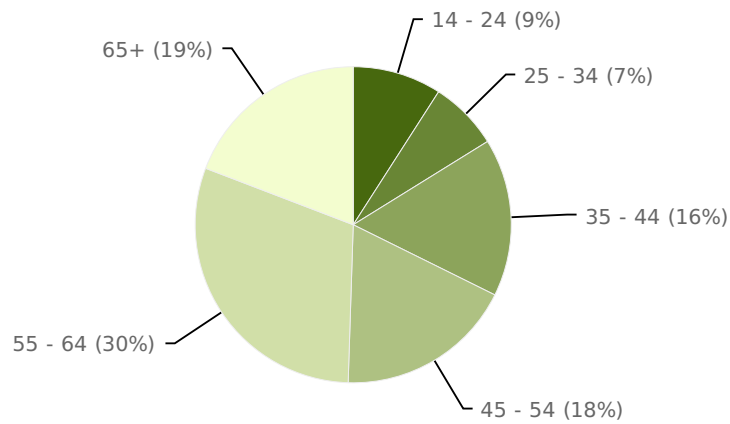


Figure 21 - Education level

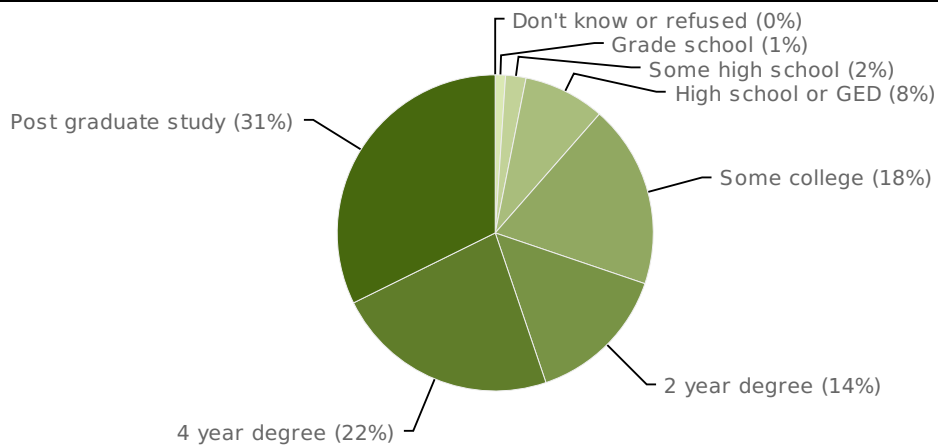


Figure 22 - Language spoken at home

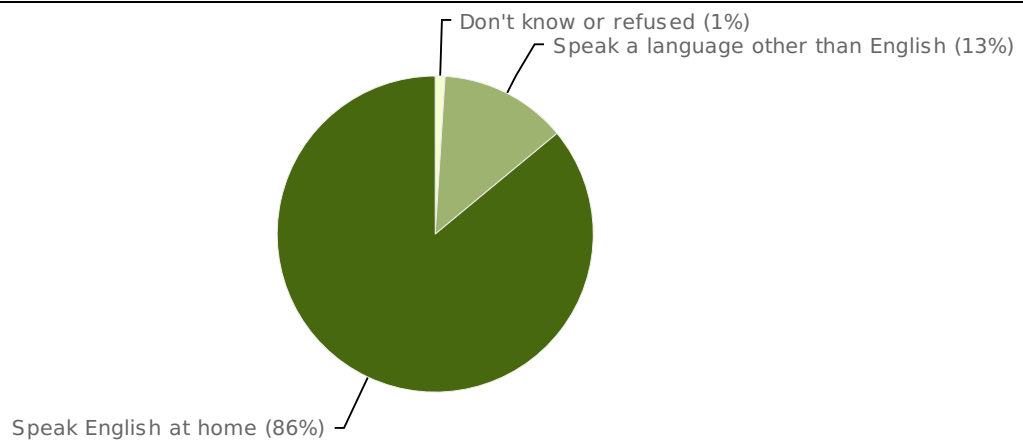


Figure 23 - Citizenship status

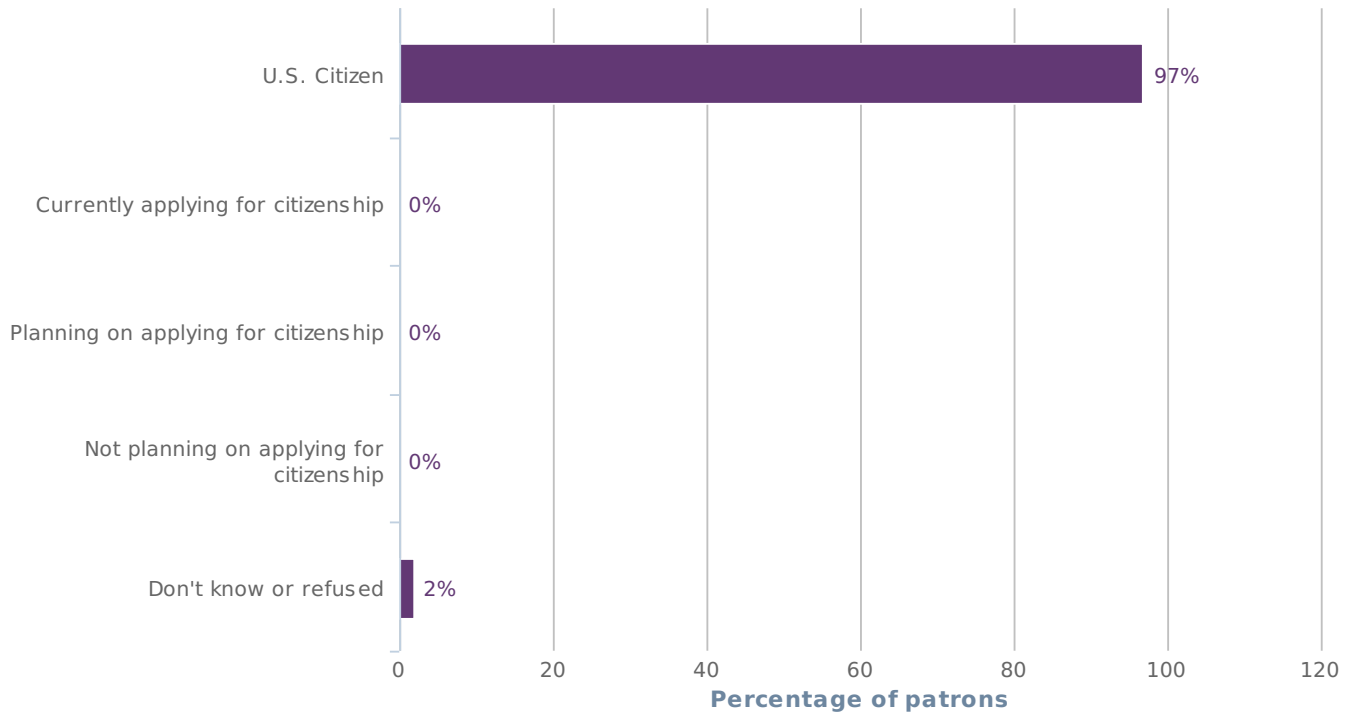
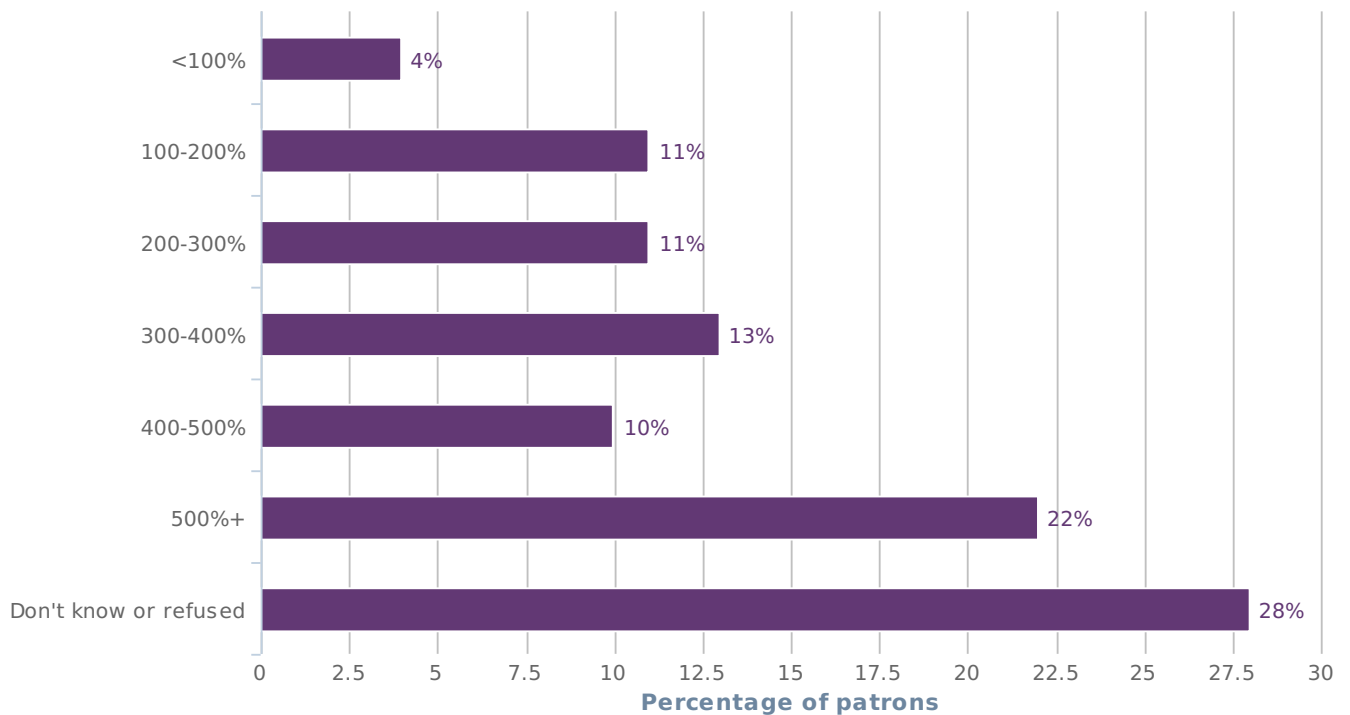


Figure 24 - Income as a percent of household poverty level



Conclusion

We hope that this report has given you useful information about the public access technology users at Washington County Library, Minnesota and the contributions the library makes to ensuring access to opportunity for all members of the community.