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# Libraries at the crossroads

*The public is interested in new services and thinks libraries are important to communities*

BY John Horrigan

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## About This Report

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals.

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## Summary of Findings

American libraries are buffeted by cross currents. Citizens believe that libraries are important community institutions and profess interest in libraries offering a range of new program possibilities. Yet, even as the public expresses interest in additional library services, there are signs that the share of Americans visiting libraries has edged downward over the past three years, although it is too soon to know whether or not this is a trend.

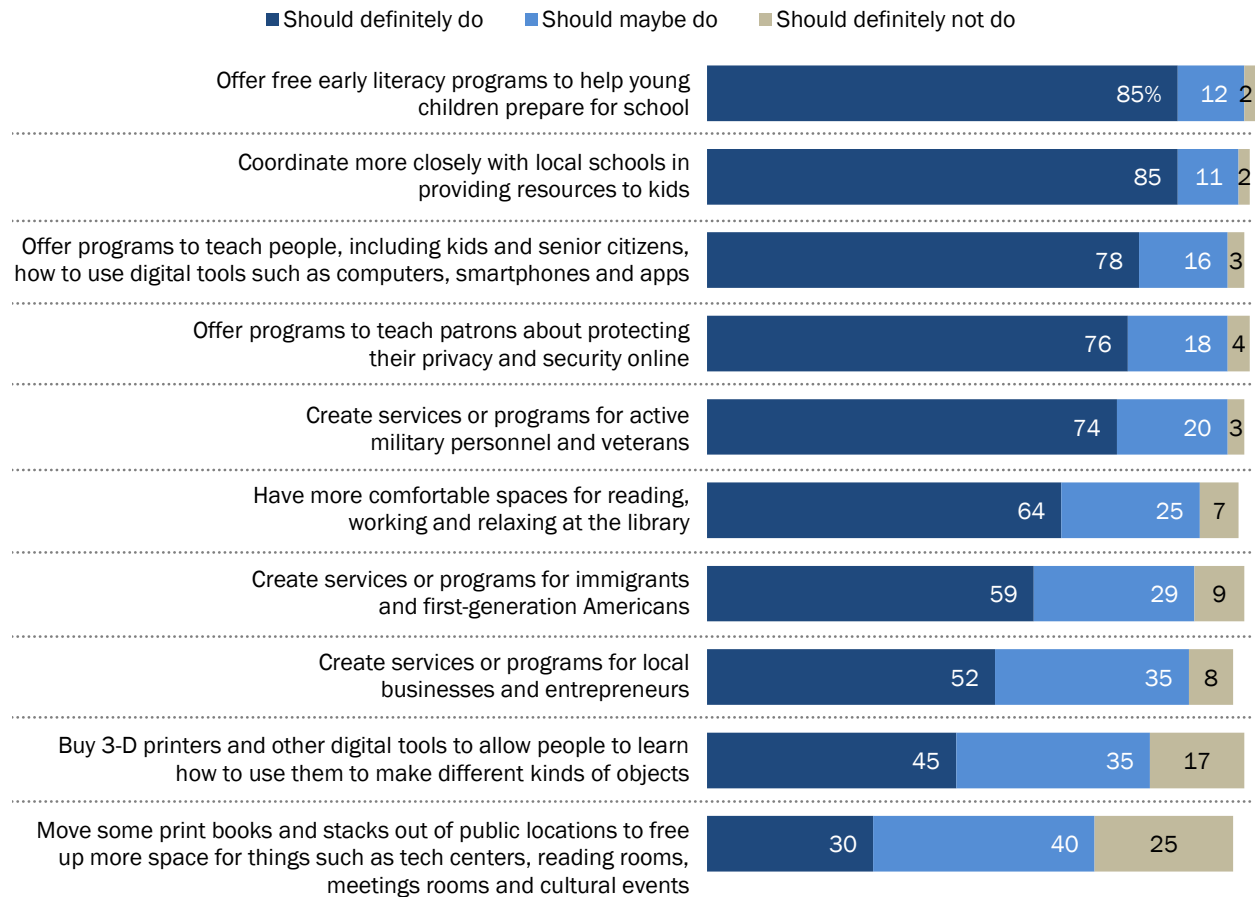
A new survey from Pew Research Center brings this complex situation into stark relief. Many Americans say they want public libraries to:

- support local education;
- serve special constituents such as veterans, active-duty military personnel and immigrants;
- help local businesses, job seekers and those upgrading their work skills;
- embrace new technologies such as 3-D printers and provide services to help patrons learn about high-tech gadgetry.

Additionally, two-thirds of Americans (65%) ages 16 and older say that closing their local public library would have a major impact on their community. Low-income Americans, Hispanics and African Americans are more likely than others to say that a library closing would impact their lives and communities.

## Public Wants Libraries to Advance Education, Improve Digital Literacy and Serve Key Groups

*% of those ages 16+ who say that libraries should definitely, maybe or definitely not do these things*



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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At the same time, the survey finds that the share of Americans who report using a library has ebbed somewhat over the past several years, though it is too early to identify a definitive national trend. Compared with Pew Research Center surveys from recent years, the current survey finds those 16 and older a bit less likely to say they have visited a library or bookmobile in-person in the past 12 months, visited a library website or used a library's computers and internet access.

- 46% of all Americans ages 16 and over say they visited a library or a bookmobile in-person in the prior year. This is roughly comparable with the 48% who said this in 2013, but down from 53% in 2012.
- 22% of those 16 and older have used library websites in the past year, compared with 30% who said this in 2013 and 25% in 2012.
- 27% of those who have visited a public library have used its computers, internet connection or Wi-Fi signal to go online in the past 12 months. This compares with 31% who said this in 2012.

A trend in the other direction is that mobile access to library resources has taken on more prominence. Among those who have used a public library website, 50% accessed it in the past 12 months using a mobile device such as a tablet computer or smartphone – up from 39% in 2012.

These findings highlight how this is a crossroads moment for libraries. The data paint a complex portrait of disruption and aspiration. There are relatively active constituents who hope libraries will maintain valuable legacy functions such as lending printed books. At the same time, there are those who support the idea that libraries should adapt to a world where more and more information lives in digital form, accessible anytime and anywhere.

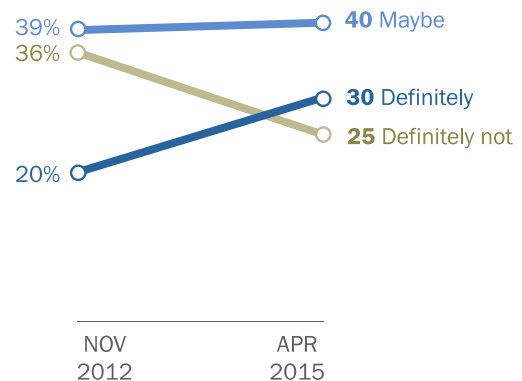
### The big questions: What should happen to the books? What should happen to the buildings?

Two key questions highlight the challenge library leaders face. First, what should libraries do with their books? Some 30% of those ages 16 and over think libraries should “definitely” move some print books and stacks out of public locations to free up more space for such things as tech centers, reading rooms, meeting rooms and cultural events; 40% say libraries should “maybe” do that; and 25% say libraries should “definitely not” do that.

### Growing Public Support for Libraries Moving Some Books and Stacks to Create Space for Community and Tech Spaces

*% of those ages 16+ who answer this question in the following ways*

Should libraries move some print books and stacks out of public locations to free up more space for things such as tech centers, reading rooms, meeting rooms, and cultural events?



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015.  
N=1,003 Americans ages 16 and older

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Since 2012, there has been an uptick of 10 percentage points in those saying libraries should “definitely” move some books and stacks (20% v. 30%) and an 11-point downtick in those saying that should “definitely not” be done (36% v. 25%).

The second key question is: Should bricks-and-mortar libraries have a smaller physical footprint in their communities? A majority do not think so. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of those ages 16 and over say libraries should “definitely” have more comfortable spaces for reading, working and relaxing. This represents a modest increase in this view since 2012, and it suggests that libraries still occupy a prominent spot in people’s minds as a place to go.

Here are other key findings that highlight the cross currents in public sentiment. They come from a survey of 2,004 Americans ages 16 and older conducted in the spring of 2015.

### **Large majorities of Americans see libraries as part of the educational ecosystem and as resources for promoting digital and information literacy**

Those 16 and older are quite clear that libraries should address the educational needs of their communities at many levels:

- 85% of Americans say that libraries should “definitely” coordinate with schools in providing resources for children.
- 85% also say that libraries should “definitely” offer free literacy programs to help kids prepare for school.
- 78% believe that libraries are effective at promoting literacy and love of reading.
- 65% maintain that libraries contribute to helping people decide what information they can trust.

People also believe that libraries should offer services to help them master digital technologies:

- 78% of those 16 and older say libraries should “definitely” offer programs to teach people how to use digital tools such as computers, smartphones and apps.
- 75% say libraries have been effective at helping people learn how to use new technologies.

People’s view on the important role of libraries in education translates into some user behavior at public libraries. Among those who have used a public library website or mobile app in the past 12 months, 42% have used it for research or homework help. For those who have used a public library’s computers or Wi-Fi signal to go online, 60% have used those tools for research or school work.

**Many believe libraries should be pathways to economic opportunity, especially when it comes to providing resources for business development, jobs search and enhancing workforce skills**

These are new questions that Pew Research Center has not previously asked, and they indicate that there is a notable share of the public interested in a somewhat expanded mission for public libraries to contribute to the economic advancement of people and communities.

- 52% of all Americans 16 and older say libraries should “definitely” create programs for local businesses or entrepreneurs. Another 35% say libraries should “maybe” do this.
- 45% say that libraries should “definitely” purchase new digital technologies such as 3-D printers to let people explore how to use them. Another 35% say libraries should “maybe” do this.

At the library itself, economic advancement is a meaningful part of some people’s patronage, but less so now than at earlier times in the Great Recession. Some 23% of those who have paid a visit to a library in the past year did so to look for or apply for a job. This is down from the 36% of patrons who used the library this way in 2012.

In addition, some 14% of those who logged on to the internet using a library’s computer or internet connection in the past year did so to acquire job-related skills or to increase their income. That amounts to 3% of the full population of those ages 16 and older.

**Many Americans think closing their local public library would affect their communities, and a third say it would have a major impact on them and their families**

Some 65% of all those ages 16 and older say that closing their local public library would have a major impact on their community; another 24% say it would have a minor impact. In addition, 32% say that closing their local public library would have a major impact on them or their family; another 33% say it would have a minor impact.

**Civic activists are more likely to use libraries**

In the past year, 23% of Americans ages 16+ say they worked with fellow citizens to address a problem in their community. Among those who have done this:

- 63% visited the library in the prior year, compared with 40% who had not participated with others in tackling a community problem.

- 28% attended a meeting at the library in the prior year, compared with 11% who had not worked with others on a community problem.

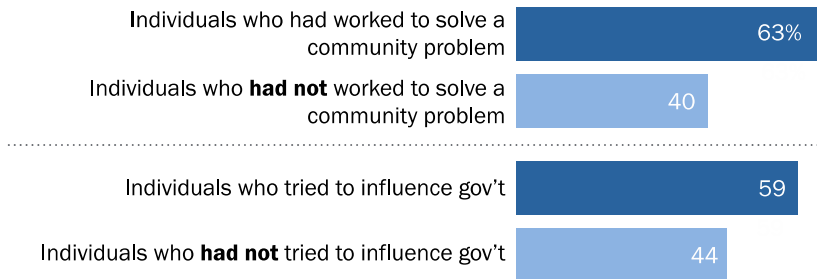
Some 11% of Americans say they have actively worked with others to influence government policy in the prior year. Among those who did this:

- 59% paid a visit to the library in the prior year, compared with 44% who had not worked with others in influencing a government policy.
- 33% had gone to a meeting at the library in the prior year vs. 13% who had not joined with others to influence government.

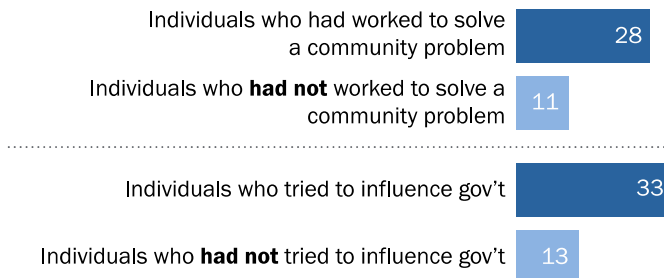
## Community Activists are More Likely to Use Libraries

*% of those ages 16+ who visited a library or bookmobile in the past 12 months*

### Visited a library



### Attended a meeting at a library



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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**A majority of Americans say libraries should offer services to help recent immigrants, veterans and active duty military personnel**

- 74% of Americans ages 16 and older think libraries should “definitely” offer programs for active duty military personnel or veterans. Another 20% say libraries should “maybe” do this.
- 59% say libraries should “definitely” offer programs for immigrants or first-generation Americans – with 78% of Hispanics saying this. Another 29% of Americans who are 16 or older say libraries should “maybe” offer such programs.

**Many view public libraries as important resources for finding health information and some conduct such searches using libraries’ online access resources**

- 73% of all those ages 16 and over say libraries contribute to people finding the health information they need.
- 42% of those who have gone online at a library using its computers, internet connections or Wi-Fi have done so for health-related searches. That comes to 10% of the full population of those ages 16 and older.

**Lower-income Americans, Hispanics and African Americans are more likely to say that libraries impact their lives and communities than other Americans**

There are some segments of the population who especially value the library’s role in their community and lives. In many cases, Americans who live in lower-income households, Hispanics and African Americans say libraries have special roles and should embrace new purposes.

For instance, 48% of all Americans 16 and older say libraries help people find jobs “a lot” or “somewhat,” but certain groups are more likely to say libraries help people find jobs:

- 58% of Hispanics say libraries help people find jobs (either “a lot” or “somewhat”).
- 55% of African Americans say this.
- 53% of those in households with annual incomes under \$30,000 say this.

Some 52% of those 16 and older say libraries should “definitely” have programs to help local businesses or entrepreneurs. Higher numbers of some groups embrace that idea:

- 56% of those in low-income households (with annual incomes under \$30,000) say this.
- 60% of African Americans say libraries should have these kinds of business development programs.
- 60% of Hispanics say libraries should have such programs.

About a third (32%) of all Americans say closing their local public library would have a major impact on them and their family. Those even more likely to back that idea include:

- 49% of Hispanics who say such closures would have a major impact on them and their families;
- 37% of low-income Americans who say this;
- 35% of African Americans who say this about the possible closure of their local public library.

### **About This Survey**

The results reported here come from a nationally representative telephone survey of 2,004 Americans ages 16 and older, conducted from March 17-April 12, 2015 by the Pew Research Center. The survey was conducted on landline phones (n=704) and cellphones (n=1,300) in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. Some of the questions were asked only of some of the respondents and the margin of error on those smaller groups are higher. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder. This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support for the project from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

## Chapter 1: Who Uses Libraries and What They do at Their Libraries

Libraries are in great flux as information is shifting from the analog age to the digital age, as people's need to acquire knowledge shifts, and as Americans' interests in personal enrichment and entertainment are reshaped.

The findings from a new survey by Pew Research Center highlight how this is a crossroads moment for libraries. The data paint a complex portrait of disruption and aspiration. There are relatively active constituents who hope libraries will maintain valuable legacy functions such as lending printed books. At the same time, there are those who support the idea that libraries should adapt to a world where more and more information lives in digital form, accessible anytime and anywhere.

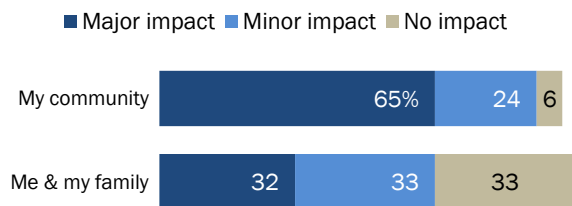
Despite the ferment, Americans remain steady in their beliefs that libraries are important to their community, their family and themselves. Two-thirds (65%) of all of those 16 and older say that closing their local public library would have a major impact on their community, similar to the 63% figure recorded in 2013. One-third (32%) say closing their local public library would have a major impact on them or their family – roughly the same as the 29% who said this in 2013.

Concerns about libraries closing do not fall evenly across different segments of Americans. Hispanics, women, parents of minor children and older adults are more likely to say that closing their local public library would have a major impact on their community than others. Compared with the 65% figure for all of those ages 16 and older:

- 78% of Hispanics say closing the library would have a major impact on their community.
- 72% of women say this, compared with 58% of men.
- 70% of parents of minors assert that a library closure would have a major impact.
- 70% of those ages 50 and older say closing the library would have a major impact.

### People Think Closing the Local Public Library Would Hurt Communities

*% of those ages 16+ who say closing the library would have an impact on ...*



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015.  
N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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When asked to think about how the closure would affect themselves or their families, the patterns are similar to assessments about community impacts. Hispanics, parents and women are more likely to say that closing their local public library would have a major impact on them or their family, as are low-income households.

- 49% of Hispanics say closing the library would have a major impact on them or their family.
- 39% of parents of minor children say this.
- 39% of women (vs. 25% of men) say closing the library would have a major impact on them and their family.
- 37% of those living in homes with annual incomes of \$30,000 or less say the possibility of closing their local public library would have a major impact.

### **Library users are evident throughout the population**

In 2015, 46% of all those ages 16 or older had visited a public library or book mobile in person during the previous 12 months. This is essentially unchanged since 2013, when 48% said this, but does represent a decline from the 53% of Americans who in 2012 had paid an in-person visit to a public library in the prior year. In the current survey, majorities of women, younger Americans, college graduates and lower- to middle-income Americans have visited a library in the past year:

- 56% of college graduates paid an in-person visit to a library or book mobile.
- 52% of those between the ages of 16 and 29 did this.
- 52% of those whose annual household income is between \$30,000 and \$50,000 went to a library in-person or visited a bookmobile.

## Women and Those With Higher Levels of Education are More Likely to Have Used a Library Last Year

*% of those ages 16+ who visited library or bookmobile in the past 12 months*

	2012	2013	2015	2012-2015 Change
All	53%	48%	46%	-7
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	48	45	39	-9
Female	59	50	52	-7
<b>Parental status</b>				
Parents of minors	64	55	53	-11
Non-Parents	49	44	43	-6
<b>Age</b>				
16-29	58	50	52	-6
30-49	59	52	50	-9
50-64	51	46	42	-9
65+	40	39	34	-6
<b>Household income</b>				
\$75K+	57	52	50	-7
\$50K-\$74,999	56	51	48	-8
\$30K-\$49,999	58	46	52	-6
Less than \$30K	51	45	41	-10
<b>Education</b>				
College+	63	58	56	-7
Some College	58	51	49	-9
HS Grad	46	39	40	-6
Less than HS grad	43	40	30	-13
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
White, non-Hispanic	53	48	45	-8
Black, non-Hispanic	55	47	45	-10
Hispanic	46	46	44	-2
<b>Community type</b>				
Rural	52	42	41	-11
Suburban	55	49	47	-8
Urban	53	48	45	-8

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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A few things stand out in these data comparing 2015 to 2012. In particular, those on the lower end of the socio-economic stratum – those with less education and household income – have reported larger-than-average declines in library use. Rural Americans and African Americans also have experienced greater declines, as have parents.

As to frequency of library use, among those who had visited a public library in the past year, 56% had done so once a month or more in 2015, with 14% doing so several times a month and 14% visiting on weekly basis. In September 2013, 57% of library users say they went to the public library once a month or more; the comparable figure for 2012 was somewhat higher at 62%.

The most frequent library visitors among library users are Hispanics: 21% say they go to the public library at least once a week, compared with the 14% figure for all respondents.

### **Who uses library websites**

Overall, 22% of those ages 16 and older visited a library website or used a library mobile app in the previous 12 months. That is down somewhat from the 25% who had visited public library websites in the previous 12 months in 2012, and is a drop from the 30% who had visited a library website when we asked in September 2013. Some of the change might have resulted from a modification in the wording of our question.<sup>1</sup>

Younger and higher educated people are more likely to use libraries virtually (via a website or an app), with 28% of those between the ages of 16 and 29 having used a public library website in the prior year and 34% of those with a college degree having done this.

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<sup>1</sup> We adjusted our question wording in 2015 and that might have affected respondents' answers. In two previous surveys, the question was whether someone had gone to a library website. In this survey, the question was whether someone used a library website *or mobile app*. We did this to try to account for the fact that [64% of adults](#) and a [majority of teens](#) have smartphones or tablet computers and that there are apps allowing people to access library resources and download e-books and audio books.

## Women, Parents and Those With Higher Levels of Education are More Likely to use Library Websites or Mobile Apps

*% of those ages 16+ who used a library website or mobile app*

	Ever used library website or mobile app	Used website or app in last 12 months
All	31%	22%
Male	26	18
Female	36	26
<b>Parental status</b>		
Parents of minors	37	29
Non-Parents	29	20
<b>Age</b>		
16-29	37	28
30-49	37	28
50-64	27	18
65+	19	11
<b>Household income</b>		
\$75K+	39	29
\$50K-\$74,999	35	26
\$30K-\$49,999	31	21
Less than \$30K	25	18
<b>Education</b>		
College+	47	34
Some College	35	24
HS Grad	20	16
Less than HS grad	15	11
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White, non-Hispanic	31	22
Black, non-Hispanic	33	25
Hispanic	24	19
<b>Community type</b>		
Rural	20	14
Suburban	33	24
Urban	33	25

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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Between use of library websites and in-person visits to libraries or bookmobiles, half (49%) of all Americans ages 16 or older have had been library users of some sort in the past 12 months. Additionally, four-out-of-five Americans (83%) say they have used the library at some point whether in the past 12 months or longer ago than that.

**Awareness of e-book lending by libraries is growing: 6% have borrowed an e-book**

People are increasingly aware that they can borrow e-books at their public library. Some 38% say their public library has e-books, compared with 31% who said this in 2012. Those more likely to be aware that their library has e-books are college graduates (52% say they are aware of e-book lending), parents (44%) and those in homes where the annual income is over \$75,000 (44%).

It is still the case, though, that almost half of Americans ages 16 and over (46%) do not know if their local library lends e-books. At least 90% of public libraries have e-book lending programs, [according to the American Library Association](#). Those between the ages of 50 and 64 and those with lower levels of educational attainment are a bit more likely to be unaware of e-books for loan.

Some 16% of those who are aware their library lends e-books have downloaded an e-book from their public library – that amounts to 6% of all those ages 16 and older who have borrowed an e-book from their library.



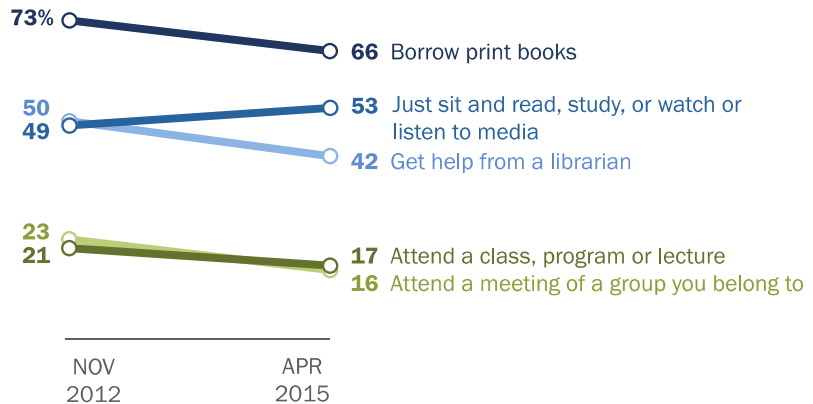
## What people do at libraries

For those who have visited a public library in the previous 12 months, traditional activities such as checking out a book or getting help from a librarian are somewhat on the decline.

- 66% of those who visited a library in the past 12 months say they borrowed print books, compared with 73% who did in 2012.
- 42% of recent library users have asked the librarian for help, down from 50% in 2012.

### Print Book Borrowing and Use of Librarians for Reference Help Has Dropped a Bit

*% of those ages 16+ who visited library or bookmobile in the last 12 months who did these things at the library*



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=933 Americans ages 16 and older

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At the same time, the number of library users who value the library as a place to simply sit and read, study or access media has increased a little. Some 53% of those who used a library in the past 12 months used it as a reading or studying locale, up from 49% who said this in 2012.

Some 16% of library users in the past year have attended a meeting there, down somewhat from 23% who did this in 2012.

Borrowing printed books is more likely to be the province of the well-off and well-educated: 80% of the library-using college graduates and 76% of those in homes with annual incomes over \$75,000 say they did this in the prior year. These figures are well above the 66% result for all Americans ages 16 and older who used a library in the past 12 months. African Americans (50%) and Hispanics (58%) are somewhat less ardent book borrowers.

Getting help from a librarian, by contrast, is something for which the library users with lower household incomes and African Americans are more likely to do. Some 52% of African Americans

and 49% of those in homes with annual incomes below \$30,000 have done this, compared with 42% of the general library-user population.

And using the library as a place to sit, read, study, or watch or listen to media is something library users who are young, Hispanic and lower-income Americans do more often. Compared with the 53% overall figure for library users, 73% of those in the 16 to 29 age group, 67% of Hispanics and 64% of those whose annual incomes are under \$30,000 have done this.

**Computers and internet access at libraries are particularly used by African Americans, Hispanics and those in lower-income households**

Use of computers, the internet or Wi-Fi connections at libraries is also down slightly since 2012. Among those who have visited a public library in the past 12 months, 27% say they used a computer, internet connection or Wi-Fi there. This compares with the 31% figure recorded in November 2012. As with some other metrics of library use, lower income and minorities are more active in using this type of library resource. The library users who are more likely to have used library technology include:

- 38% of African Americans who have used the library in the last 12 months have used the computers, the internet or Wi-Fi there
- 32% of Hispanics have used library computers, the internet or WiFi
- 31% of those living in homes whose annual incomes are \$30,000 or less have used these online resources at the library.

Among those who have used computers, the internet or Wi-Fi at libraries, there are generally modest changes in online use compared with library users in 2012. Doing research for school or work is the most popular activity, with 60% of library technology users doing this in 2015, while 58% check or send texts or emails. Incidences of research at the library using computers, the internet or Wi-Fi is down from 2012, while texting or emailing has increased. As noted, job search is down substantially – 13 percentage points – since 2012, perhaps because of the improvement in the job market in the United States since then.

The Pew Research survey this year also explored Wi-Fi use at libraries. Some 6% of those ages 16+ who visited a library in the past year also took advantage of the library's Wi-Fi when the library was closed.

## How people use library websites

Over the past several years, people's use of library websites for specific purposes has, in some cases, dropped.

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### People use Library Websites for a Variety of Purposes

*% of those ages 16+ who used library website or app for these activities in the past 12 months*

	2012	2015	Change 2012-15
Search the library catalog for print books, audiobooks, e-books, CDs or DVDs	82%	66%	-16
Reserve or place holds on print books, audiobooks, e-books, CDs or DVDs	62	55	-7
Renew a book, DVD or CD	51	47	-4
Conduct research or get homework help	44	42	-2
Use an online database	51	39	-12
Read book reviews or get book recommendations	30	33	+3
Borrow or download an e-book	22	27	+5
Check for or pay overdue fines	30	26	-4

Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=454 Americans ages 16 and older

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Use of electronic resources within libraries' store of online content has decreased sharply, with incidences of searching library catalogues online and using electronic databases down by over 10 percentage points since 2012 in each case. Using the library's website to renew books is also down. Other changes from 2012 are more modest, and the differences across samples are not statistically significant.

A portion of people also use the library as a "how to" resource for digital applications that they feel the need to explore. For visitors to public libraries or users of a library's website or mobile app in the past 12 months:

- 14% used library resources to learn how to download and use e-books or other digital content.
- 10% used public library resources to learn how to use apps on smartphones or tablets.
- 9% sought help from public library resources to figure out how to use social networking applications such as Facebook or LinkedIn.
- 8% turned to help available through the library to learn how to create digital audio or music.

- 6% undertook a similar strategy using library resources for learning how to create video.
- 6% turned to the library or its digital assets to learn how to create software or write computer code for websites, games or apps.

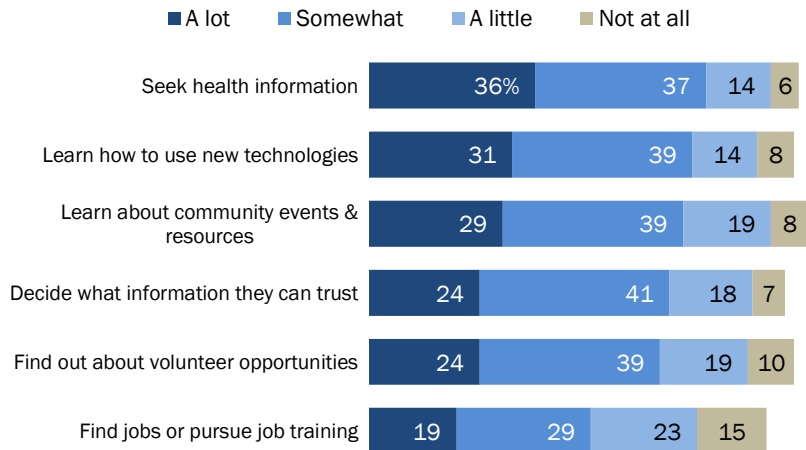
### How libraries contribute to communities

Majorities of Americans, as noted, feel that closing their local public library would have a major impact on their community. The other side of that coin is how people see libraries *helping* their community in specific ways. For the most part, strong majorities of Americans ages 16 and over say that public libraries help at least somewhat in areas such as acquiring health care information or learning about new technologies.

For seeking health care information and learning new technologies, nearly three quarters of those ages 16 and over think libraries help in these areas. Women, older adults (ages 65 and over) and Hispanics are particularly likely to think libraries help “a lot” in both areas. With respect to learning about health care information, 43% of those ages 65 and older say libraries help “a lot” and 44% of those whose annual household income is \$30,000 or below also think this. Some 42% of Hispanics and older adults say libraries help people learn new technologies a lot, as do 38% of those whose income falls below \$30,000 annually.

### People Think Libraries can be Helpful in Learning and Information Sharing Activities

*% of those ages 16+ on how helpful the library can be in different roles*



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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When it comes to community purposes, Hispanics are especially likely to see libraries helping a lot with learning information on community events and volunteer opportunities. 43% of Hispanics say libraries help a lot in communicating information about community events and other resources, and 41% say that about libraries helping convey information about volunteer

opportunities. Hispanics are also more likely to say libraries help “a lot” in how people decide what information to trust; 33% say that vs. 24% of all respondents.

Finally, when thinking about libraries’ role in helping people find a job or pursue job training, Hispanics, African Americans and low-income Americans are especially likely to say that libraries help a lot. Compared with the 19% of all those ages 16 and older who say libraries help “a lot” with job search or workforce skills:

- 34% of Hispanics say this;
- 26% of those who live in households with annual incomes under \$30,000 say this, and;
- 28% of African Americans say libraries help “a lot” in the job search and workforce skills arena.

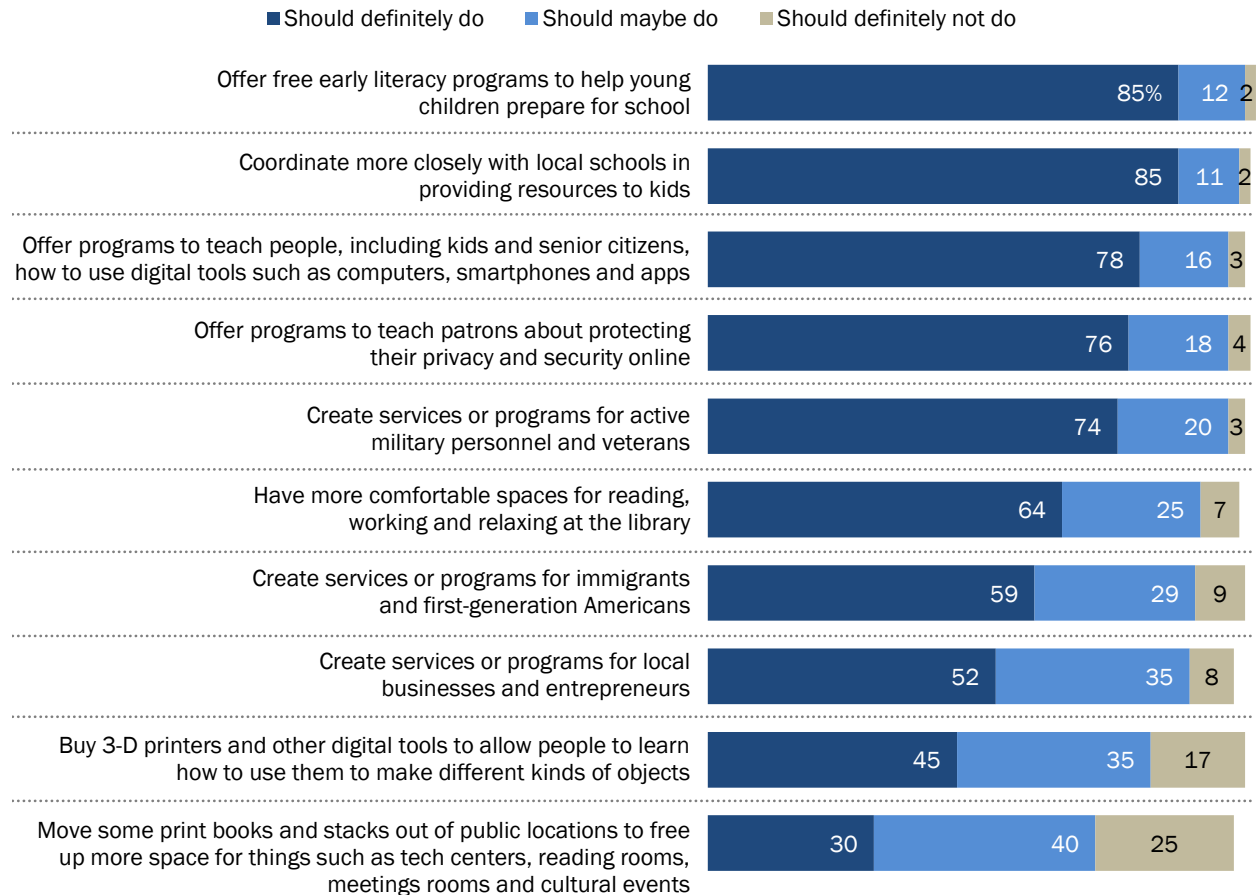
## **Chapter 2: Libraries and Services for Learning, Key Groups and Economic Opportunities**

Many see libraries as places of learning and pursuing knowledge. Pew Research Center's April 2015 survey explored those themes and took an expansive view by asking people how they see libraries as vehicles for economic opportunity and inclusion of various groups that have drawn particular attention from librarians. This scope of inquiry provides insight into how the public sees the library not just as an institution that has a history in their community, but also whether they see libraries as places that might serve groups particularly affected by technological or other cultural changes.

The nearby chart summarizes how Americans ages 16 and older think about changes libraries should consider going forward. The survey asked people to consider "some new things public libraries could do to change how they serve the public." Here is what they said:

## Public Wants Libraries to Advance Education, Improve Digital Literacy and Serve Key Groups

*% of those ages 16+ who say that libraries should definitely, maybe or definitely not do these things*



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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The remainder of this chapter addresses various themes that flow from these views of the public.

## Libraries and education

Overwhelming majorities of Americans see education as the foundation of libraries' mission. Some 85% think that coordinating more closely with local schools in providing resources to children is something libraries should "definitely" do. This is unchanged from a 2012 Pew Research survey.

The same share of those ages 16 and older (85%) say that libraries should “definitely” offer free early literacy programs to help prepare kids for school, up slightly from 82% who said this in 2012.

Additionally, 78% think the libraries in their communities are effective in promoting literacy and love of reading among people. Some 36% say libraries are “very effective” at this and 42% say they are “somewhat effective.” Hispanics and blacks (48% and 41% respectively) are more likely than others to say libraries are very effective at promoting literacy and love of reading.

When people go to the library, many do so explicitly for educational advancement. Among those who went to the library in the last 12 months and used library computers, the internet or Wi-Fi, 60% have used those tools to do research for school or work, and 17% have used them for taking an online class or completing an online certification. In addition, 17% did so to attend a class or lecture.

People’s views about libraries and education are not just about schools and basic literacy. Strong majorities of Americans believe libraries have a role in information literacy, with two-thirds (65%) agreeing with the proposition that libraries contribute to helping people decide whether they can trust information – 24% agreed with this “a lot” and 41% agreed “somewhat.” Lower income and less educated Americans are more likely to agree “a lot” that libraries contribute to people’s calculations of trustworthy information; 31% of high school graduates and 30% of those whose annual incomes fall below \$30,000 say this. Additionally, 33% of Hispanics say libraries help “a lot” in helping people decide which information warrants trust.

## **Libraries as providers of resources for immigrants and veterans – and for those who want technology help**

People see libraries as more than places to enhance educational and economic opportunities. They also see libraries as important parts of the community fabric in other ways that serve key groups in the community and help those who are not yet fully literate about technology.

The community dimension of inclusion is captured in attitudes about veterans and immigrants. Three-quarters (74%) of all Americans ages 16+ say that creating programs or services for active military personnel or veterans is something libraries should “definitely” do. Furthermore, a strong majority (59%) say that libraries should “definitely” create services or programs for immigrants or first-generation Americans – a larger share than the 52% who say this about programs for local businesses or entrepreneurs. Hispanics are far more likely to say libraries should create programs for immigrants or first generation Americans – 78% do.



As to how Americans value what libraries bring to their communities, 68% of those ages 16 and older say that libraries help people learn about local events and resources in their community; 29% say libraries help “a lot” with this and 39% say they help “somewhat.” Similarly, 63% say libraries help people find out about volunteer activities and other ways people can contribute to their community. About a quarter (24%) say libraries help “a lot” in this regard, while 39% say libraries help “somewhat.”

Beyond technology access, people see libraries as places where they can cultivate digital skills. Some 70% say libraries help people learn how to use new technologies (31% say they help “a lot” and 39% say “somewhat”). More high school graduates (39%) and lower-income households (38% for those in households whose annual income falls below \$30,000) say libraries help “a lot” in helping people learn new technologies. And a very strong majority of all Americans – 76% – say that libraries should “definitely” offer programs to teach people how to protect their privacy and security online.

Even though people strongly believe in the role of libraries in digital inclusion, relatively few library users actually used libraries for this purpose. Just 7% say they had taken a class on how to use the internet or computers when asked about their use of the library in the past 12 months.

In a similar vein, a modest number of online users also turn to libraries for help with digital applications that pertain to institutions they encounter – such as government, banks, schools or other businesses.

For the most part, online users find that engaging with these institutions through the internet or email is easy: 82% say this, with 42% saying it is “very” easy to do this and 40% saying it is “somewhat” easy. When probed about the ease of performing tasks with these institutions through mobile apps, two-thirds say it is easy, with 29% saying it is “very” easy and 37% saying it is “somewhat” easy. To the extent that people do encounter challenges in using these applications – either through email, a web browser on their computer or mobile device – 14% say they have turned to the public library for help on how to carry out tasks.

## **Libraries, economic opportunity and workforce skills**

With the nation still coping with the aftereffects of a severe economic downturn that began around 2007, jobs and business creation remain top of mind for many Americans. The upshot is that roughly half (52%) of all Americans says that public libraries should “definitely” create services or programs for local businesses and entrepreneurs. Hispanics and blacks are more likely to see the value of such programs, as 60% of each think libraries should “definitely” have them.

Additionally, 45% say that purchasing 3-D printers or other digital tools is something libraries should “definitely” do and 35% say it is something libraries should “maybe” consider doing. There is not as much public support for these activities as for others on our list. Some segments of the population are more enthusiastic than others. Those on the lower end of the socio-economic scale are more likely to say libraries should “definitely” invest in these new digital tools. Some 57% of high school graduates say libraries should do this, as do 54% in households with an annual income below \$30,000 per year. Additionally, 59% of blacks and 56% of Hispanics think libraries should “definitely” purchase 3-D printers or other digital tools.

People’s use of the library to improve their economic prospects ranges across a variety of different topics, with no single one dominating. Job seeking is the most prevalent activity. Among those who have used a public library’s computers, internet or Wi-Fi connection in the past 12 months, 23% had used one of those things to look for or apply for a job. That is down significantly from 2012, when more than one-third (36%) did so. This change likely reflects the sharp drop in the unemployment rate over that timeframe. The U.S. unemployment rate was 7.7% in November 2012 compared to the 5.4% figure for April 2015.

Building job skills was another theme for library users. Focusing on those who had visited a public library in-person the prior year:

- 14% sought to acquire job-related skills in order to increase their income.
- 9% wanted to learn how to start or expand their own business.
- 9% went to the library to use a 3-D printer or other high-tech device – something related to creativity and self-expression as well as job skills.

Finally, among those who visited a public library in-person in the prior 12 months, 15% had done so in order to search for or apply for a job.

## **Libraries as centers of civic collaboration**

As library usage patterns have unfolded over the past several years, the library’s role as an anchor of civic activity has earned particular attention among advocates and some library leaders. In this survey, we asked about civic activity in two ways. First, we queried whether someone, in the past year, has worked with fellow citizens to solve a community problem. Second, we asked whether respondents had been an active member of a group trying to influence government or public policy in the past 12 months (this excludes activities connected to political parties).

Nearly one-quarter of those ages 16 and over, in the past year, worked with fellow citizens to tackle a problem in their community – 23% say they had. Among this group, 63% visited a library or bookmobile in person in the past year and 33% had used the library’s website. For those who have not had such collaborations with fellow citizens, 40% visited a library or bookmobile in-person in the past year and only 19% had used a library’s website.

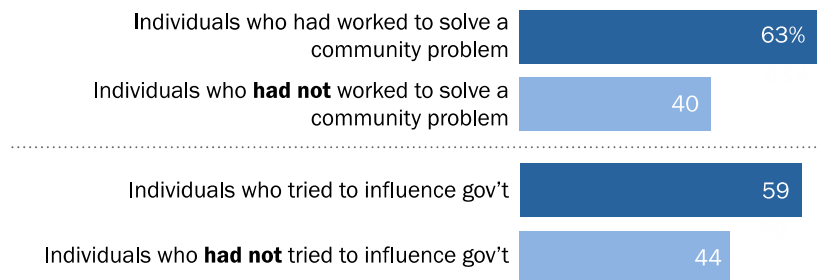
A smaller number – 11% – of Americans 16 and older have been an active member of a group seeking to influence government or policy. Among those, 59% have visited a public library or bookmobile in-person in the past year and 39% have used the library’s website. For those not active in such groups, 44% visited a library or bookmobile in the past year and 20% used a library website.

Although the survey did not directly ask whether some of these civic activities took place at the library, there are indications that this happened at least occasionally. Among those who were active in a group trying to influence government or a policy issue, 33% attended a meeting in person of a group to which they belong at a library in the past year. Just 13% of those who were not part of an effort to influence government or policy attended a meeting in person at the library during that time. Similarly, 28% of those who had worked with other community members to address a problem attended a meeting at the library in the past year, compared with 11% of those who did not collaborate with others to address a community problem.

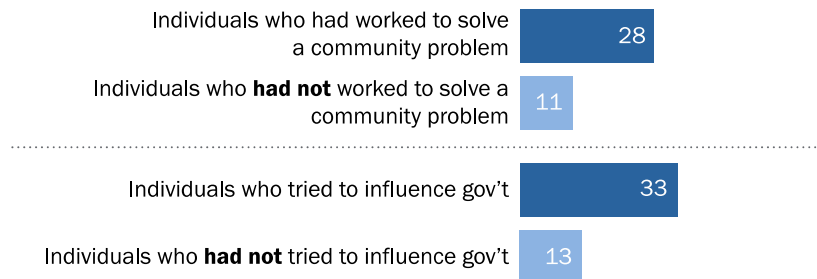
## Community Activists are More Likely to use Libraries

*% of those ages 16+ who visited a library or attended a meeting there in the past 12 months*

### Visited a library



### Attended a meeting at a library



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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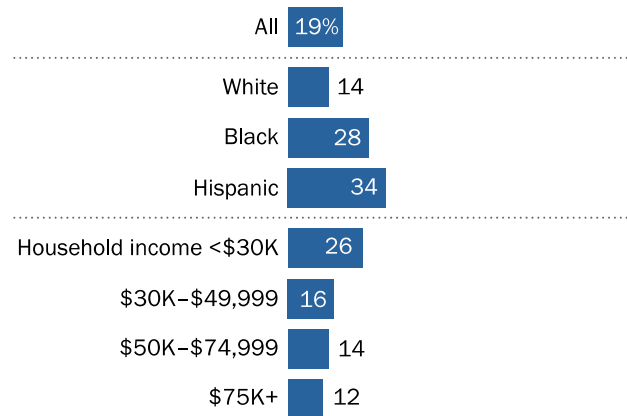
## Chapter 3: Lower Income Americans and Communities of Color More Likely to see Libraries as Community Anchors

Americans use of public libraries and generally positive attitudes about them cut broadly across all demographics surveyed. However, for lower-income Americans and those who are members of communities of color, libraries have a special role as places to learn new job skills, explore new digital technologies and provide services to them or their community.

When it comes to economic opportunity, African Americans, Hispanics and those in households with an annual income under \$30,000 are more likely to say libraries help people find jobs or pursue job training. Hispanics, in particular, are more likely than the overall population to say libraries help “a lot” or “somewhat” in job pursuits or training by a 58% to 48% margin.

### Some are More Likely to say Libraries Help People Find Jobs, Pursue Training

*% of those ages 16+ who say libraries help people in their community “a lot” to find jobs or training*



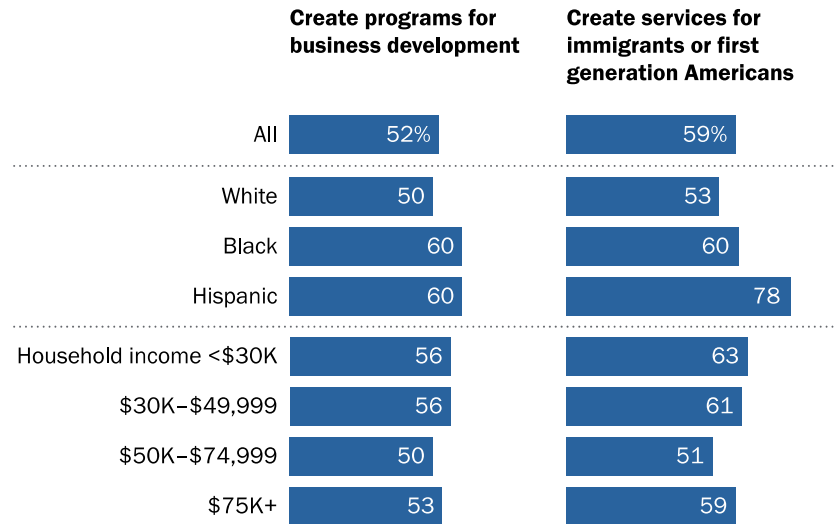
Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015.  
N=1003 Americans ages 16 and older

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These groups are also generally more likely to say libraries should “definitely” create programs that encourage business development or help immigrants or first-generation Americans. As noted, Hispanics feel strongly about libraries’ role in services for immigrants or first-generation Americans.

## Support Among Some Groups for Libraries Helping Business and Immigrants

*% of those ages 16+ who say libraries “should definitely” offer these services*



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015. N=1001 Americans ages 16 and older

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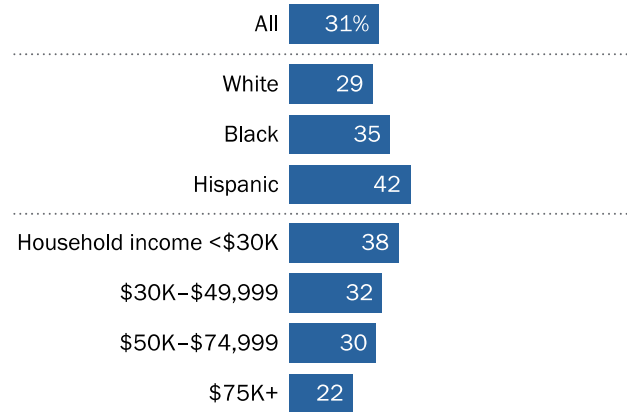
The pattern also carries over when people think about the library's role in helping learn about new technologies, find health information or how to decide what information to trust – particularly when focusing on the share of people who say libraries help “a lot” in different realms.

With respect to health searches, low-income Americans are more likely to say libraries help “a lot” in that area (44%), compared with 36% of all respondents. African Americans and Hispanics also exceed the average.

For learning about new technologies, Hispanics and low-income Americans are more likely than the typical respondent to see libraries helping “a lot” as they explore gadgets and applications, with African Americans above the norm to a lesser extent.

### Some Groups are Especially Likely to Say Libraries Help People Learn About new Technologies

*% of those ages 16+ who say libraries help people in their community “a lot” to learn about new technology*



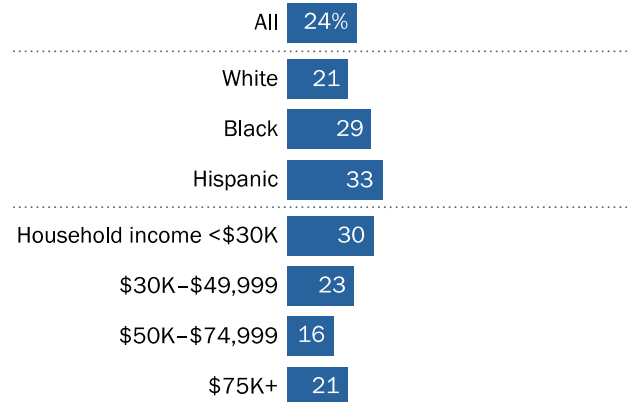
Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015.  
N=1001 Americans ages 16 and older

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Finally, with respect to trust and information online, Hispanics, African Americans and low-income Americans each see libraries helping people discern what information is trustworthy.

### A Share of the Population Believes Libraries Help People Decide What Information to Trust

*% of those ages 16+ who say libraries help people in their community "a lot" in deciding what information to trust*



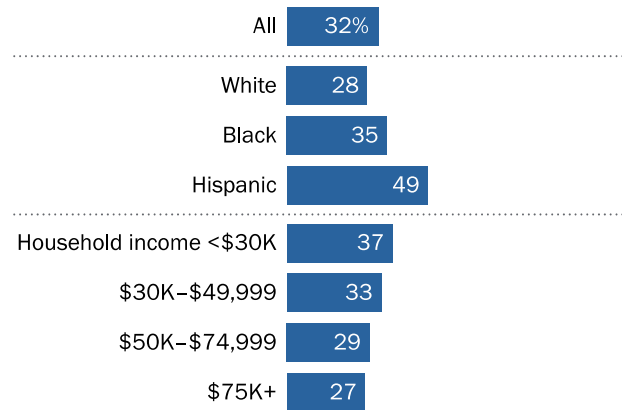
Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015.  
N=1001 Americans ages 16 and older

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It is little surprise, then, that lower-income Americans, blacks and Hispanics are more likely to say that closing their local public library would have a *major impact* on them or their family. About half (49%) of all Hispanics say closing the library would have a major impact on them or their family – far more than the 32% figure for all respondents.

### Hispanics are the Most Likely to say a Library Closing Would Have a Major Impact on Them

*% of those ages 16+ who say the closing of the local library would have a major impact on them and their families*



Source: Pew Research Center survey March 17-April 12, 2015.  
N=2,004 Americans ages 16 and older

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## Survey Questions

### Pew Research Center Libraries Survey 2015 Final Topline

March 17 – April 12, 2015

Fieldwork conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International

Sample: n=2,004 people ages **16 or older** nationwide, including 1,300 cell phone interviews

Interviewing dates: 03.17.2015 – 04.12.2015

Margin of error: ± 2.4 percentage points for results based on Total [n=2,004]

Margin of error: ± 2.6 percentage points for results based on internet users/digital connectors [n=1,718]

Margin of error: ± 2.5 percentage points for results based on cell phone owners [n=1,900]

Margin of error: ± 3.4 percentage points for results based on Form A [n=1,003]

Margin of error: ± 3.4 percentage points for results based on Form B [n=1,001]

Margin of error: ± 2.6 percentage points for results based on those who have ever used a public library [n=1,676]

Margin of error: ± 2.7 percentage points for results based on those who have ever visited a public library  
[n=1,639]

Margin of error: ± 4.3 percentage points for results based on those who have ever used a public library website or  
mobile app [n=630]

Margin of error: ± 3.5 percentage points for results based on those who visited a public library in person in the  
past 12 months [n=933]

Margin of error: ± 5.0 percentage points for results based on those who have used a public library website or  
mobile app in the past 12 months [n=454]

### **LIVE1** Which of the following BEST describes the place where you now live? [READ]

	CURRENT		SEPT 2013	JANUARY 2011	KNIGHT 2002	KNIGHT 1999
%	21	A large city	20	22	22	23
	20	A suburb near a large city	22	21	21	21
	40	A small city or town	39	37	39	36
	18	A rural area	18	20	17	19
	*	(VOL.) Don't know	1	1	1	*
	*	(VOL.) Refused	*	*	--	--

**Q2** Here's a list of activities some people might do. For each, please tell me if you have done this in the past 12 months or not. (First,) In the past 12 months, have you... [INSERT ITEMS IN ORDER]?

	YES, HAVE DONE THIS	NO, HAVE NOT DONE THIS	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
a. Been an active member of any group that tries to influence public policy or government, not including a political party				
Current	11	88	*	*
August 2012	13	86	*	*
August 2008	15	85	*	*
b. Worked with fellow citizens to solve a problem in your community				
Current	23	77	*	*
August 2012	35	65	*	*
August 2008	28	71	*	*

**LIBUSE** Have you, personally, EVER...[INSERT ITEMS IN ORDER], or is this something you've never done? [IF YES: Have you done this in the past 12 months?]<sup>2</sup>

	TOTAL YES, HAVE DONE THIS	----- IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS	----- NOT IN PAST 12 MONTHS	NO, HAVE NEVER DONE THIS	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
a. Visited a public library or used a public library bookmobile IN PERSON						
Current	82	46	36	18	*	*
September 2013	81	48	33	19	*	*
November 2012	84	53	30	16	*	0
b. Used a public library WEBSITE or mobile APP <sup>3</sup>						
Current	31	22	9	69	*	*
September 2013	44	30	14	56	*	*
November 2012	39	25	14	61	*	*

<sup>2</sup> In November 2012, follow-ups about the past 12 months were asked as separate questions later in the interview, rather than as immediate follow-up probes, as done for the September 2013 poll. Trend results shown here have been recalculated based on Total respondents.

<sup>3</sup> In September 2013, item wording was "Used a public library WEBSITE." In November 2012, item wording was "Gone on a public library WEBSITE."

**LIB\_FRQ** How often do you visit public libraries or bookmobiles in person? Would you say... [READ]<sup>4</sup>

Based on those who visited a public library in person in the past 12 months

	current		Sept 2013	Nov 2012
%	14	At least once a week	14	15
	14	Several times a month	17	19
	28	At least once a month	26	28
	43	Less often	43	38
	*	(VOL.) Don't know	*	*
	*	(VOL.) Refused	*	*
	[n=933]		[n=3,006	[n=1,238]
			]	

**LIBST\_FRQ** How often do you use a public library website? Would you say... [READ]<sup>5</sup>

Based on those who used a public library website or mobile app in the past 12 months

	CURRENT		SEPT 2013	NOV 2012
%	12	At least once a week	10	12
	13	Several times a month	15	15
	21	At least once a month	23	27
	52	Less often	52	46
	1	(VOL.) Never – only use library mobile app	n/a	n/a
	*	(VOL.) Don't know	*	*
	1	(VOL.) Refused	0	*
	[n=454]		[n=1,894]	[n=587]

**LIBAPP\_FRQ** How often do you use a public library mobile APP? Would you say... [READ]

Based on those who used a public library website or mobile app in the past 12 months [N=454]

	CURRENT	
%	6	At least once a week
	4	Several times a month
	7	At least once a month
	60	Less often
	21	(VOL.) Never – only use library website

<sup>4</sup> Response categories in November 2012 were slightly different: "Every day or almost every day, at least once a week, several times a month, at least once a month or less often". Results shown here for "At least once a week" reflect combined trend results "every day or almost every day" and "at least once a week."

<sup>5</sup> November 2012 question wording and response categories were slightly different: "How often do you use a public library website, for any service? Would you say every day or almost every day, at least once a week, several times a month, at least once a month or less often?" Results shown here for "At least once a week" reflect combined trend results "every day or almost every day" and "at least once a week."

1 (VOL.) Don't know  
 \* (VOL.) Refused

**LIBMOB** Now thinking about cell phones and other handheld mobile devices... In the past 12 months, have you used a cell phone, e-reader or tablet computer to visit a public library's website or access public library resources?<sup>6</sup>

Based on those who used a public library website or mobile app in the past 12 months

	CURRENT		NOV 2012
%	50	Yes	39
	50	No	61
	0	(VOL.) Don't know	0
	0	(VOL.) Refused	0
	[n=454]		[n=587]

**EBK\_AWR** As far as you know, does your public library loan out e-books?

	CURRENT		NOV 2012
%	38	Yes	31
	16	No	12
	46	(VOL.) Don't know	57
	*	(VOL.) Refused	*

**EBK\_BRW** Have you ever tried to borrow or download an E-BOOK from a public library, or have you not done this?

Based on those who know whether their public library loans e-books [N=800]

	CURRENT	
%	16	Yes, have tried
	84	No, have not tried
	0	(VOL.) Don't know
	0	(VOL.) Refused

<sup>6</sup> November 2012 trend was asked of all respondents. Results shown here are based on those who have gone on a public library website in the past 12 months.

No questions Q3 to Q10

**Q11** People visit public libraries for different reasons. In the past 12 months have you visited a public library IN PERSON to...[INSERT FIRST TWO RANDOMIZED ITEMS]?

How about to [REMAINING ITEMS]? [READ IF NECESSARY: Have you visited a public library IN PERSON for this reason in the past 12 months?]

	YES	NO	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
<i>Items A thru C: Based on those who visited a public library in person in the past 12 months</i>				
<b>a. Borrow print books</b>				
Current [N=933]	66	34	0	0
November 2012 [N=1,238]	73	27	*	0
<b>b. Get help from a librarian</b>				
Current	42	57	*	0
November 2012 [N=1,238]	50	50	*	*
<b>c. Just sit and read, study, or watch or listen to media</b>				
Current	53	46	0	*
November 2012 [N=1,238]	49	51	*	0
	YES	NO	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
<i>Items D thru F: Based on Form A who visited a public library in person in the past 12 months</i>				
<b>d. Take a class on how to use a computer or the internet</b>				
Current [N=470]	7	93	0	0
<b>e. Attend a class, program or lecture<sup>7</sup></b>				
Current	17	83	0	0
November 2012 [N=616]	21	79	*	0
<b>f. Attend a meeting of a group you belong to</b>				
Current	16	84	0	0
November 2012 [N=616]	23	77	*	0
<i>Items G thru J: Based on Form B who visited a public library in person in the past 12 months</i>				
<b>g. Use a 3-D printer or other new high-tech device</b>				
Current [N=463]	9	91	0	0
<b>h. Acquire new job-related skills so you can increase your income</b>				
Current	14	85	0	*

<sup>7</sup> In November 2012, item wording was "Attend a class, program or lecture for adults."

i. Learn how to start your own business or expand your business

Current	9	91	0	*
---------	---	----	---	---

j. Search online for a job or apply for a job online

Current	15	85	*	0
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**Q12** Next, I have some questions about using computers and the internet at public libraries. First, in the past 12 months, have you used computers, the internet, or a public WI-FI network at a public library?

Based on those who have ever visited a public library

	CURRENT		NOV 2012
%	27	Yes	31
	73	No	69
	*	(VOL.) Don't know	*
	0	(VOL.) Refused	*
	[n=1,639]		[n=1,920]
	]		

**Q13** In the past 12 months, have you used a public library computer, internet or WI-FI connection to... [INSERT FIRST TWO RANDOMIZED ITEMS]?

How about to [REMAINING ITEMS]? [READ IF NECESSARY: Have you used a public library computer, internet or WI-FI connection to do this in the past 12 months, or not?]

	YES	NO	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
<i>Items A thru D: Based on Form A who have used computers or internet at a public library in the past 12 months</i>				
<b>a. Check or send email or texts<sup>8</sup></b>				
Current [N=205]	58	42	0	0
November 2012 [N=285]	54	46	*	0
<b>b. Do research for school or work</b>				
Current	60	40	0	0
November 2012 [N=285]	66	34	0	0
<b>c. Visit a social media site, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram<sup>9</sup></b>				
Current	32	67	*	0
November 2012 [N=285]	35	64	1	0

<sup>8</sup> In November 2012, item wording was "Check or send email."

<sup>9</sup> In November 2012, item wording was "Visit a social networking site, such as MySpace or Facebook."

d. Take an online class or complete an online certification program of some kind

Current	17	83	0	0
November 2012 [N=285]	16	84	0	0

*Items E thru H: Based on Form B who have used computers or internet at a public library in the past 12 months*

e. Get health information online

Current [N=215]	42	58	*	0
November 2012 [N=285]	47	52	*	1

f. Visit a government website or get information about government services

Current	42	58	0	0
November 2012 [N=285]	41	59	0	0

g. Look for or apply for a job online

Current	23	76	1	0
November 2012 [N=287]	36	64	0	0

h. Download or watch online video

Current	28	72	0	0
November 2012 [N=287]	26	74	0	0

**Q14** Have you ever connected to the library's Wi-Fi system when the library building itself was closed?

Based on those who have ever visited a public library [N=1,639]

CURRENT		
%	6	Yes
	94	No
	0	(VOL.) Don't know
	0	(VOL.) Refused

**Q15** Thinking about the times you have used Wi-Fi at the library, how frequently, if at all, do you experience problems with your Wi-Fi connection that makes it difficult to do what you want on the internet? Do you often experience Wi-Fi problems at the library, sometimes, rarely, or do you never have problems with your Wi-Fi connection at the library?

Based on those who have ever used computers, internet or Wi-Fi at a public library [N=459]

CURRENT		
%	4	Often
	15	Sometimes
	21	Rarely
	53	Never
	6	(VOL.) Don't use library's Wi-Fi

\* (VOL.) Don't know  
 \* (VOL.) Refused

	YES	NO	(VOL.) CAN'T DO THIS ON WEBSITE	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
<i>Items A thru D: Based on Form A who used a public library website or mobile app in the past 12 months</i>					
a. Search the library catalog for print books, audiobooks, e-books, CDs or DVDs					
Current [N=217]	66	34	0	0	0
November 2012 [N=299]	82	18	0	0	0
b. Reserve or place holds on print books, audiobooks, e-books, CDs or DVDs					
Current	55	45	0	0	0
November 2012 [N=299]	62	38	0	0	0
c. Check for or pay overdue fines					
Current	26	74	0	0	0
November 2012 [N=299]	30	70	0	0	0
d. Renew a book, DVD or CD					
Current	47	53	0	0	0
November 2012 [N=299]	51	48	1	0	0
<i>Items E thru H: Based on Form B who used a public library website or mobile app in the past 12 months</i>					
e. Read book reviews or get book recommendations					
Current [N=237]	33	66	0	*	0
November 2012 [N=299]	30	70	0	0	0
f. Borrow or download an e-book					
Current	27	73	0	0	0
November 2012 [N=288]	22	78	*	0	0
g. Use an online database					
Current	39	60	0	1	0
November 2012 [N=288]	51	49	0	1	0
h. Conduct research or get homework help <sup>10</sup>					
Current	42	58	0	0	0
November 2012 [N=288]	44	56	0	0	0

<sup>10</sup> In November 2012, item wording was "Get research or homework help."



**Q16** In the past 12 months, have you used a public library WEBSITE or mobile APP to do any of the following? First, in the past 12 months, have you used a public library website or mobile APP to [INSERT ITEMS; RANDOMIZE]? How about to... [INSERT NEXT ITEM]?<sup>11</sup>

[READ TO ALL:] Here are some questions about public libraries in and around your community. If you do not have a library in your community, please think about the public library closest to your community.

**Q17a** Do you think public libraries have done a good job keeping up with new technologies, or not?

CURRENT	
%	
75	Yes
12	No
12	(VOL.) Don't know
*	(VOL.) Refused

**Q17b** How effective do you think libraries in your community are at promoting literacy and a love of reading to people? Are they [READ]

CURRENT	
%	
36	Very effective
42	Somewhat effective
8	Not too effective
4	Not at all effective
10	(VOL.) Don't know
1	(VOL.) Refused

**Q18** If your local public library CLOSED, would that have a MAJOR impact, MINOR impact or NO IMPACT on... [INSERT ITEMS IN ORDER]?

	MAJOR IMPACT	MINOR IMPACT	NO IMPACT	(VOL.) COMMUNITY DOES NOT HAVE A PUBLIC LIBRARY	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
<b>a. You and your family</b>						
Current	32	33	33	*	1	*
September 2013	29	38	32	*	1	*
<b>b. Your community as a whole</b>						
Current	65	24	6	*	4	*

<sup>11</sup> November 2012 question wording was "In the past 12 months, have you used a public library WEBSITE to do any of the following? In the past 12 months, have you use a public library website to [ITEM]?"

September 2013                      63              27              7              \*                      3              \*

**Q19** Now thinking about some new things public libraries could do to change how they serve the public... Please tell me if each of the following is something you, personally, think public libraries should "definitely" do, should MAYBE do, or should "definitely not" do. (First/Next) How about... [INSERT ITEMS; RANDOMIZE]? [READ IF NECESSARY: Is this something you think public libraries should "definitely" do, should MAYBE do, or should "definitely not" do?]

SHOULD "DEFINITEL Y" DO	SHOULD MAYBE DO	SHOULD "DEFINITEL Y NOT" DO	(VOL.) DOESN'T MATTER TO ME	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
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*Items A thru E: Based on Form A*

a. Have more comfortable spaces for reading, working, and relaxing at the library

Current	64	25	7	1	3	1
November 2012 [N=1,119]	59	28	9	1	2	1

b. Move some print books and stacks OUT OF public locations to free up more space for things such as tech centers, reading rooms, meetings rooms, and cultural events

Current	30	40	25	1	3	1
November 2012 [N=1,119]	20	39	36	1	4	*

c. Offer free early literacy programs to help young children prepare for school

Current	85	12	2	*	1	*
November 2012 [N=1,133]	82	14	3	*	1	1

d. Coordinate more closely with local schools in providing resources to kids

Current	85	11	2	0	2	*
November 2012 [N=1,133]	85	11	2	*	1	*

e. Buy 3-D printers and other digital tools to allow people to learn how to use them to make different kinds of objects

Current	45	35	17	*	2	*
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SHOULD "DEFINITEL Y" DO	SHOULD MAYBE DO	SHOULD "DEFINITEL Y NOT" DO	(VOL.) DOESN'T MATTER TO ME	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
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*Items F thru J: Based on Form B*

f. Create services or programs for local businesses and entrepreneurs

Current	52	35	8	*	3	2
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g. Create services or programs for active military personnel and veterans

Current	74	20	3	*	2	1
---------	----	----	---	---	---	---

h. Create services or programs for immigrants and first-generation Americans

Current	59	29	9	*	3	*
---------	----	----	---	---	---	---

i. Offer programs to teach patrons about protecting their privacy and security online

Current 76 18 4 \* 2 \*

j. Offer programs to teach people, including kids and senior citizens, how to use digital tools such as computers, smartphones and apps

Current 78 16 3 \* 2 1

**Q20** I'd like to know in what ways you think the public library contributes to your community. First, do you think the library contributes a lot in terms of [INSERT ITEMS; RANDOMIZE], contributes somewhat, a little or not at all?<sup>12</sup>

How about in [INSERT NEXT ITEM]? [READ FOR FIRST ITEM THEN IF NECESSARY: Do you think the public library contributes a lot to the community in this way, somewhat, a little, or not at all?]

	A LOT	SOME- WHAT	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	(VOL.) COMMUNITY DOES NOT HAVE A PUBLIC LIBRARY	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
<i>Items A thru C: Based on Form A</i>							
a. Helping people find jobs or pursue job training	19	29	23	15	*	13	*
b. Helping people learn about local events and resources that are available in your community	29	39	19	8	*	5	0
c. Helping people find out about volunteer opportunities and other ways people can make contributions to your community	24	39	19	10	*	8	*
<i>Items D thru F: Based on Form B</i>							
d. Helping people when they seek health information	36	37	14	6	*	7	*
e. Helping people decide what information they can trust	24	41	18	7	1	8	1
f. Helping people learn how to use new technologies	31	39	14	8	*	8	*

[READ TO ALL:] Now, we have a few questions on the role of libraries in helping people address information needs that often play out on the internet.

<sup>12</sup> April 2015 question was not asked of respondents who had previously volunteered that their community has no public library. Results shown here have been recalculated based on Total.

- Q21** These days, institutions such as government and schools often expect that people will contact them or learn about them using the internet. How easy is it for you to carry out tasks with these institutions using the internet or email? [READ]

Based on all internet users or digital connectors [N=1,718]

CURRENT		
%	42	Very easy
	40	Somewhat easy
	9	Not too easy
	6	Not at all easy
	3	(VOL.) Don't know
	*	(VOL.) Refused

- Q22** Sometimes, these institutions expect people will use mobile apps to contact them and perform other tasks, such as signing up for services or getting information. How easy is it for you to carry out tasks with these institutions using mobile apps? [READ]

Based on all internet users or digital connectors [N=1,718]

CURRENT		
%	29	Very easy
	37	Somewhat easy
	14	Not too easy
	10	Not at all easy
	6	(VOL.) Don't use mobile apps
	3	(VOL.) Don't know
	*	(VOL.) Refused

- Q23** Have you ever used the public library for help on how to use the internet or mobile apps to carry out tasks involving government, schools, banks, or other businesses?

CURRENT		
%	14	Yes
	86	No
	*	(VOL.) Don't know
	*	(VOL.) Refused

- Q24** Have you ever used the library or its website to find material or videos that would help you learn how to [INSERT ITEMS; RANDOMIZE]? How about to help you learn how to [INSERT NEXT ITEM]? [READ IF NECESSARY: Have you ever used the library or its website to find material or videos that would help you learn how to do this?]

	YES	NO	(VOL.) DON'T KNOW	(VOL.) REFUSED
<i>Items A thru C: Based on Form A who ever visited a public library or used a public library website or mobile app [N=849]</i>				
a. Use different kinds of technology applications such as how to use Linked-In, Facebook or Twitter	9	91	*	0
b. Use apps on smartphones or tablet computers	10	90	*	0
c. Download and use e-books or other digital material	14	85	*	0
<i>Items D thru F: Based on Form B who ever visited a public library or used a public library website or mobile app [N=827]</i>				
d. Create software or write computer code for websites, games, or apps	6	93	*	*
e. Create digital audio or music	8	92	0	*
f. Create videos	6	93	*	*

[READ TO ALL:] A few last questions for statistical purposes only...

*The demographic questions are not reported in this topline.*

## Methods

The Pew Research Center Libraries 2015 Survey obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative probability sample of 2,004 people ages 16 and older living in the United States. Interviews were conducted via landline ( $n_{LL}=704$ ) and cell phone ( $n_C=1,300$ ; including 760 without a landline phone). The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). The interviews were administered in English and Spanish by Princeton Data Source from March 17 – April 12, 2015. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is  $\pm 2.4$  percentage points. Results based on the 1,718 internet users/digital connectors<sup>13</sup> have a margin of sampling error of  $\pm 2.6$  percentage points.

Details on the design, execution and analysis of the survey are discussed below.

### DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

#### Sample Design

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications.

Numbers for the landline sample were drawn with equal probabilities from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained one or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

#### Contact Procedures

Interviews were conducted from March 17 – April 12, 2015. As many as seven attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. Sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of

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<sup>13</sup> Internet user is defined as those who access the internet occasionally, send or receive email, access the internet on a cell phone, tablet, or other mobile handheld device, and/or use a social media site or mobile app.

sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Interviewing was spread as evenly as possible across the days in field. When necessary, each telephone number was called at least one time during the day in an attempt to complete an interview.

For the landline sample, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest male or female ages 16 or older currently at home based on a random rotation of gender. If no male or female was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest person ages 16 or older of the other gender. This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender when combined with cellphone interviewing.

For the cellular sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone. Interviewers verified that the person was ages 16 or older and in a safe place before administering the survey. Cellular respondents were offered a post-paid cash reimbursement for their participation.

## Weighting and analysis

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. The sample was weighted to match national population parameters for ages 16 or older. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to weight this dual-frame sample.

The first stage of weighting corrected for different probabilities of selection associated with the number of adults in each household and each respondent's telephone usage patterns.<sup>14</sup> This weighting also adjusts for the overlapping landline and cell sample frames and the relative sizes of each frame and each sample.

The first-stage weight for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  case can be expressed as:

$$WT_i = \left[ \left( \frac{S_{LL}}{F_{LL}} \times \frac{1}{AD_i} \times LL_i \right) + \left( \frac{S_{CP}}{F_{CP}} \times CP_i \right) - \left( \frac{S_{LL}}{F_{LL}} \times \frac{1}{AD_i} \times LL_i \times \frac{S_{CP}}{F_{CP}} \times CP_i \right) \right]^{-1}$$

<sup>14</sup> i.e., whether respondents have only a landline telephone, only a cell phone, or both kinds of telephone.

Where  $S_{LL}$  = the size of the landline sample  
 $F_{LL}$  = the size of the landline sample frame  
 $S_{CP}$  = the size of the cell sample  
 $F_{CP}$  = the size of the cell sample frame  
 $AD_i$  = Number of adults in household  $i$   
 $LL_i=1$  if respondent has a landline phone, otherwise  $LL=0$ .  
 $CP_i=1$  if respondent has a cell phone, otherwise  $CP=0$ .

The second stage of weighting balances sample demographics to population parameters. The sample is balanced by form to match national population parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region (U.S. Census definitions), population density and telephone usage. The Hispanic origin was split out based on nativity: U.S. born and non-U.S. born. The White, non-Hispanic subgroup was also balanced on age, education and region.

The basic weighting parameters came from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey data.<sup>15</sup> The population density parameter was derived from Census 2010 data. The telephone usage parameter came from an analysis of the January-June 2014 National Health Interview Survey.<sup>16 17</sup>

Weighting was accomplished using Sample Balancing, a special iterative sample weighting program that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using a statistical technique called the *Deming Algorithm*. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the national population. Table 1 compares weighted and unweighted sample distributions to population parameters.

<sup>15</sup> ACS analysis was based on all people ages 16 and older excluding those living in institutional group quarters (GCs).

<sup>16</sup>Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, January-June, 2014. National Center for Health Statistics. Dec 2014.

<sup>17</sup> The phone use parameter used for this 16+ sample is the same as the parameter we use for all 18+ surveys. No adjustment was made to account for the fact that the target population for this survey is slightly different than a standard 18+ general population survey.



**Table 1: Sample Demographics**

	Parameter	Unweighted	Weighted
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	48.4%	48.3%	48.3%
Female	51.6%	51.7%	51.7%
<b>Age</b>			
16-17	3.3%	3.5%	3.5%
18-24	12.6%	10.5%	12.6%
25-34	16.9%	14.0%	16.7%
35-44	16.3%	12.6%	16.2%
45-54	17.5%	15.1%	17.4%
55-64	15.8%	19.0%	15.8%
65+	17.6%	25.2%	17.8%
<b>Education</b>			
HS Graduate or Less	43.1%	40.0%	42.8%
Some College/Assoc Degree	30.5%	24.9%	29.9%
College Graduate	26.4%	35.2%	27.2%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White/not Hispanic	65.4%	67.5%	65.4%
Black/not Hispanic	11.7%	12.1%	11.9%
Hisp - US born	7.9%	7.3%	8.0%
Hisp - born outside	7.3%	7.0%	7.3%
Other/not Hispanic	7.7%	6.1%	7.4%
<b>Region</b>			
Northeast	18.1%	17.5%	18.3%
Midwest	21.3%	24.0%	22.4%
South	37.2%	36.1%	36.8%
West	23.4%	22.5%	22.5%
<b>County Pop. Density</b>			
1 - Lowest	19.9%	23.7%	19.9%
2	20.0%	20.2%	19.8%
3	20.1%	18.4%	20.1%
4	20.0%	19.5%	20.2%
5 - Highest	20.0%	18.3%	20.0%
<b>Household Phone Use</b>			
LLO	7.2%	3.3%	5.6%
Dual	46.3%	58.8%	47.6%
CPO	46.5%	37.9%	46.8%

## Effects of Sample Design on Statistical Inference

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. PSRAI calculates the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called "design effect" or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from systematic non-response. The total sample design effect for this survey is 1.20.

PSRAI calculates the composite design effect for a sample of size  $n$ , with each case having a weight,  $w_i$  as:

$$deff = \frac{n \sum_{i=1}^n w_i^2}{\left( \sum_{i=1}^n w_i \right)^2} \quad \text{formula 1}$$

In a wide range of situations, the adjusted *standard error* of a statistic should be calculated by multiplying the usual formula by the square root of the design effect ( $\sqrt{deff}$ ). Thus, the formula for computing the 95% confidence interval around a percentage is:

$$\hat{p} \pm \left( \sqrt{deff} \times 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{n}} \right) \quad \text{formula 2}$$

where  $\hat{p}$  is the sample estimate and  $n$  is the unweighted number of sample cases in the group being considered.

The survey's *margin of error* is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample — the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is  $\pm 2.4$  percentage points. This means that in 95 out every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 2.4 percentage points away from their true values in the population. The margin of error for estimates based on form 1 or form 2 respondents is  $\pm 3.4$  percentage points. It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error of greater or lesser magnitude.

## Response Rate

Table 2 reports the disposition of all sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number samples. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible sample that was ultimately interviewed. Response rates are computed according to American Association of Public Opinion Research standards.<sup>18</sup> Thus the response rate for the land line samples was 6%. The response rate for the cellular samples was 6%.

**Table 2. Sample Disposition**

Landline	Cell	
2,028	460	OF = Out of Frame
2,014	460	Non-residential/Business
14	---	Cell in landline frame
33,146	15,989	NWC = Not working/computer
31,605	15,925	Not working
1,541	64	Computer/fax/modem
3,911	1,648	UHU <sub>NC</sub> = Non-contact, unknown if household/unknown other
4,819	10,568	UO <sub>NC</sub> = Non-contact, unknown eligibility
4,792	10,557	Voice mail
27	11	Other non-contact
5,134	12,346	UO <sub>R</sub> = Refusal, unknown if eligible
4,809	9,616	Refusals
325	2,730	Callbacks
36	72	O = Other
---	439	SO = Screen out
---	439	Child's cell phone
191	391	R = Refusal, known eligible

<sup>18</sup> The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2011. Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys. 7th edition. AAPOR.

704	1,300	I = Completed interviews
49,969	43,213	T = Total numbers dialed
23.6%	60.4%	$e1 = (I+R+SO+O+UO_R+UO_{NC})/(I+R+SO+O+UO_R+UO_{NC}+OF+NWC)$ - Est. frame eligibility of non-contacts
100.0%	79.4%	$e2 = (I+R)/(I+R+SO)$ - Est. screening eligibility of unscreened contacts
51.4%	55.7%	$CON = [I + R + (e2*[O + UO_R])]/[I + R + (e2*[O + UO_R + UO_{NC}]) + (e1*e2*UHUO_{NC})]$
11.6%	11.3%	$COOP = I/[I + R + (e2*[O + UO_R])]$
6.0%	6.3%	$AAPOR\ RR3 = I/[I+R+[e2*(UO_R+UO_{NC}+O)]+[e1*e2*UHUO_{NC}]] = CON*COOP$