

2024 ULC Library Insights Survey Background & Highlights



Library Insights Survey Background

In the Summer of 2024, ULC asked its 185 member libraries across the U.S. and Canada to complete the second-annual Library Insights Survey (LIS), gathering data from the 2023 calendar year to build on insights from 2019-2022. The LIS survey was designed to compile trends related to patron engagement with library programs and services. The insights from this year's survey provide a data-driven understanding of the post-pandemic performance of urban public library systems across the U.S. and Canada.

The survey covers data in **four categories**:



Attraction and Attendance



Programs and Services



Location Experience and Use of Space



Staffing and Budget

2024 Survey Responses

The 2024 survey recorded **115 responses** out of 185 members across the United States and Canada, a 62% response rate. These library systems represent 2,260 locations and serve a combined population total of over 87.5 million.

2024 Data Highlights



Attraction and Attendance

In-person visits to the library remain on the rise: While commercial and public service spaces have struggled to regain pre-pandemic attendance levels, the most recent data from the LIS shows that libraries recorded a 24% average increase in visits in 2023--a trend expected to continue in 2024.



Programs and Services

Significant changes observed in how patrons are engaging with library programs and services: Compared to 2022, the average number of programs offered by libraries rose by approximately 42%, while the average program attendance rose approximately 53%.

E-Resources continue to soar: Respondents reported an 11% increase in the average number of e-Resources accessed between 2022 and 2023, representing a 40% increase when compared to 2019.



Location Experience and Use of Space

Room reservations reach new highs: Between 2023 and 2022, the average number of room reservations for all libraries surveyed increased by 52%, surpassing pre-pandemic 2019 levels by 18%. This data presents one of the strongest indicators of the increased use of libraries as flexible spaces that present value to all types of patrons.



Staffing and Budget

Average and total FTE library staffing is largely at pre-pandemic levels: Overall, after a decline in 2022, the recent LIS data shows a slight increase (3%) in FTE staffing levels in 2023, returning the total FTE staffing numbers closer to pre-pandemic 2019 levels.

Moderate growth in number of new branch locations recorded, a welcomed trend in the face of rising urban populations: Data compiled for the calendar year 2023 shows that 16% of libraries in the LIS sample started construction of at least one new branch location--a total of 25 new branch locations. These new developments average a construction cost of about \$695 per square foot.

[View the 2024 Library Insights Report](#)

These data snapshots and more are analyzed in the **2024 Library Insights Report**. Access information and data visualizations of emerging trends that capture current patron engagement with library programs, access to services and the building space itself.



[Access ULC's Library Data Hive](#)

The 2024 survey data is compiled and featured in the [ULC Library Data Hive](#). The ULC Data Hive displays the data collected from each annual Library Insights Survey—as well as publicly available demographic information—in interactive dashboards, charts and maps. A [User Guide](#) is available for tips on navigating the Data Hive.