

Chapter
6

Libraries

Grade **Change**

B **↑**

Positive evaluations of San Francisco’s public library system have returned to some of the highest levels seen since the survey began in 1997, raising the overall grade for the library system from a “B–” to a solid “B.” Specific findings include the following:

- The average rating for collections, assistance from library staff, and programs for adults and youth each rose by 3 points or more.
- Frequent library users offer substantially more positive ratings across all categories of library service as compared to other users. Income is also highly correlated with positive evaluations, with the less affluent offering more favorable ratings.
- Upper income residents are less likely to visit city libraries, while parents with children under age 18 are more likely to visit both the Main Library and branch libraries than their counterparts who do not have children in this age range.
- Overall, those who visit the city’s libraries are doing so more often. The percentage of residents who visit the Main Library frequently is up 5 percent, while the proportion who visit branch libraries frequently is up by 10 percent.

Library Ratings Improve in All Categories

San Franciscans express high levels of satisfaction with the library system across all categories. Seventy-eight percent of residents give an “A” or “B” rating for library staff, an increase of 3 points over the 2007 results. Ratings for the Library’s collections (including books and tapes) rose by 5 points and now match the highest ratings received for this question.

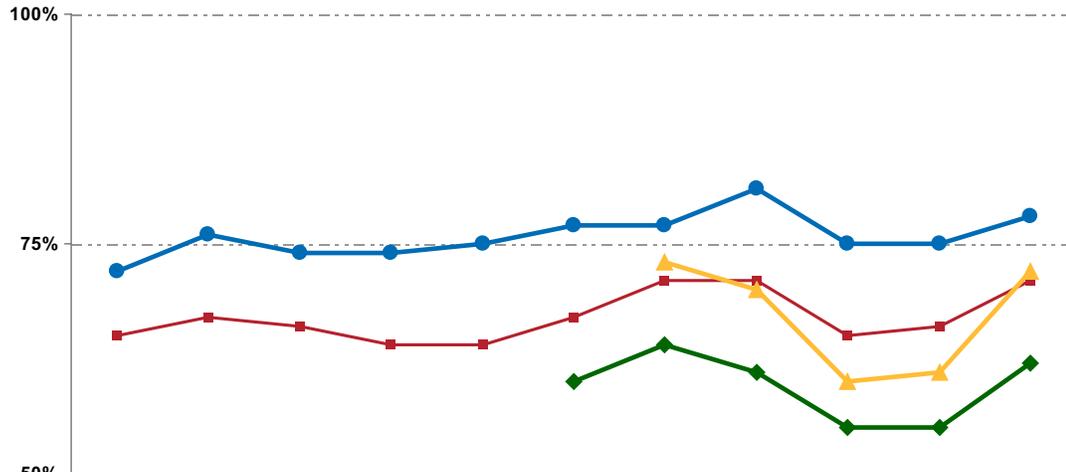
Positive ratings for programs and activities for children and youth under 18 years of age increased by 11 percentage points – more than any other area. The current finding nearly equals the 73 percent who gave a positive rating for youth programs in 2003, the first year the question was included in the survey.

Programs for youth have consistently received stronger ratings than those for adults, presumably reflective of the large number of youth-oriented programs available versus programming aimed at adults.¹ Sixty-two percent have a positive perception of programs and activities for adults 18 and over. This is up from 55 percent in 2007.

¹ 1,000 adult programs versus 7,800 children and teen programs offered in fiscal year 2007-08

Favorable Ratings of the Library System Improve Since 2007
(Proportion Giving an “A” or “B” Grade)

● Library Staff ■ Library Collections ◆ Adult Programming ▲ Children and Youth Programming

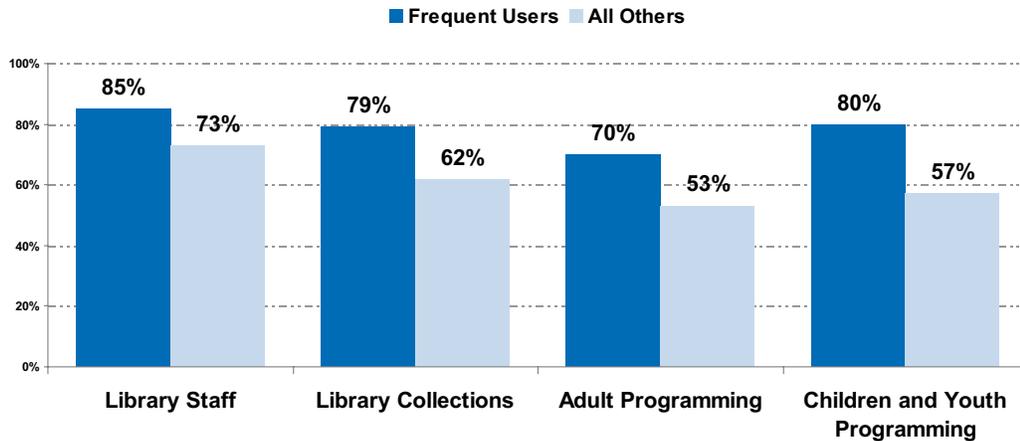


	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007	2009
Library Staff	72%	76%	74%	74%	75%	77%	77%	81%	75%	75%	78%
Library Collections	65%	67%	66%	64%	64%	67%	71%	71%	65%	66%	71%
Adult Programming	-	-	-	-	-	60%	64%	61%	55%	55%	62%
Children and Youth Programming	-	-	-	-	-	-	73%	70%	60%	61%	72%

Frequent Users of Libraries Continue to Offer More Positive Ratings

Ratings of the Library system vary across several parameters. Frequent library users are more likely to have a positive impression of it in each of the four areas tested – repeating a trend seen in 2005 and 2007. Positive ratings for adult programs decline with income, from a high of 70 percent for those earning under \$25,000 a year to 51 percent for those earning \$100,000 a year or more. Positive ratings for youth programs are higher among less affluent residents, those with less than a high school education, and those under the age of 30.

Residents Who Use the Library Most Often Provide the Most Favorable Ratings
(Proportion Giving an “A” or “B” Grade)



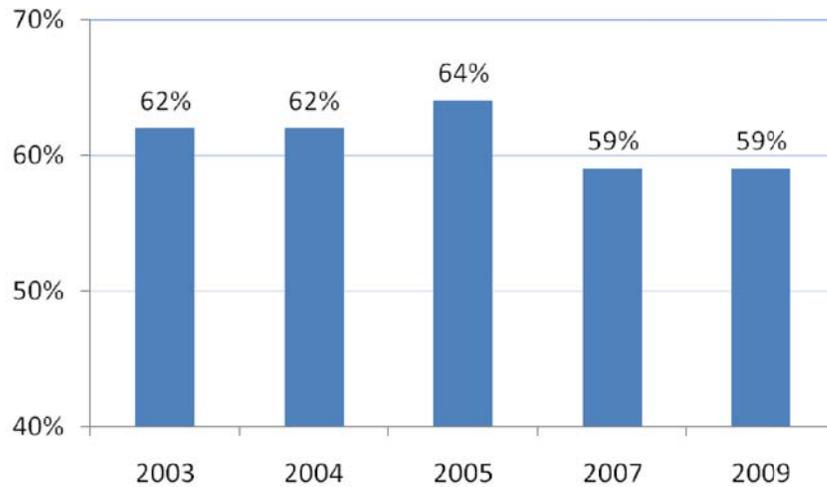
The Branch Library Improvement Program (BLIP), funded by the Branch Library Improvements Bond passed in 2000, is the largest capital improvement campaign in the history of the San Francisco Public Library. The program includes renovation of 16 libraries and construction of 8 new ones. Renovations have been completed in Excelsior, Sunset, West Portal, Marina, Western Addition, and Noe Valley, and brand new libraries are now open in Mission Bay, Portola, and Glen Park.

Those Who Visit the Library Are Doing so More Often

The percentage of residents visiting the Main Library appears to have remained constant since 2007, while branch library visitation has increased. In 2009, 65 percent of residents said they visited a branch library at least once in the past year, up slightly from 62 percent in 2007. In both 2007 and 2009, 59 percent² of residents reported visiting the Main Library over the course of the year. Although patronage levels are relatively high, there has been a slight decline in visits to the Main Library over the last two survey years which may be caused by new branch openings.

² Survey respondents may overstate actual visitation.

Patronage of the Main Library Has Tapered Slightly Over Time



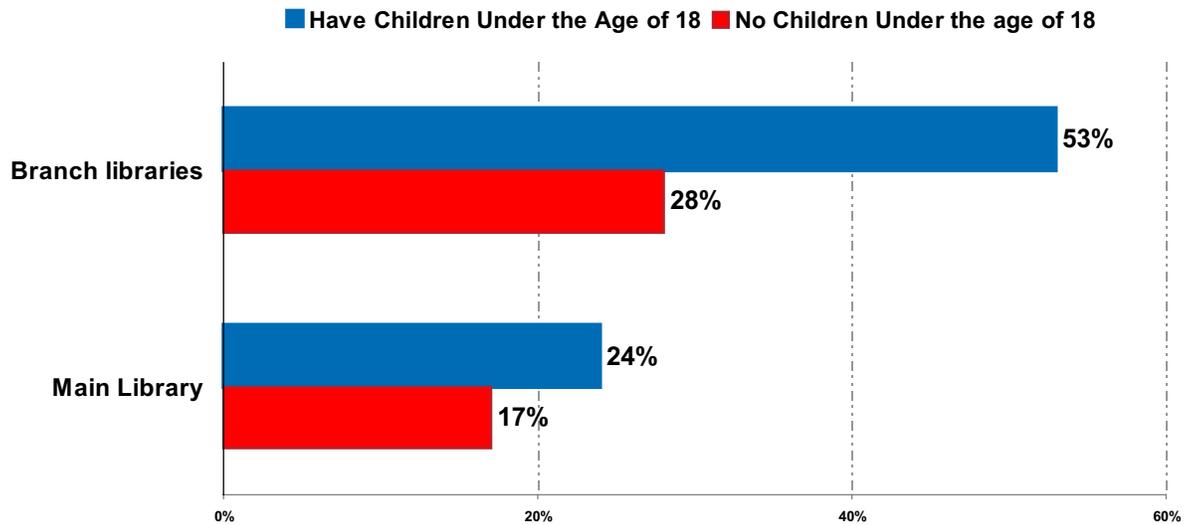
Household income and library use are highly correlated. The proportion of residents who say they *never* visited the Main Library or a branch library in the past year rises with income. While just 24 percent of the least affluent (those earning less than \$10,000 a year) say they did not visit the Main Library, 55 percent of the most affluent (those earning \$100,000 a year or more) gave this response. Just 26 percent of the least affluent did not visit a branch library in the past year, compared to 44 percent of the most affluent.

Those with children ages 17 or younger are far more likely to have been to a branch library in the past year (82 percent) than are those without children (58 percent).

Despite no change in overall rates of library visitation, the results show that those who visit the library are doing so more often. Nineteen percent of respondents said they went to the Main Library frequently (at least once a month), up from 14 percent in 2005 and 2007. This is the highest proportion to report frequent usage since the survey began in 1997. Similarly, 34 percent went to a branch library frequently, up from 24 percent in 2007 – the highest proportion since the question was first asked in 1997.

Those with children 17 years of age or younger are more likely to be frequent users of the Main Library or a branch library. In fact, they are nearly twice as likely as those without children of these ages to use a branch library frequently. The difference is less dramatic with regard to the Main Library.

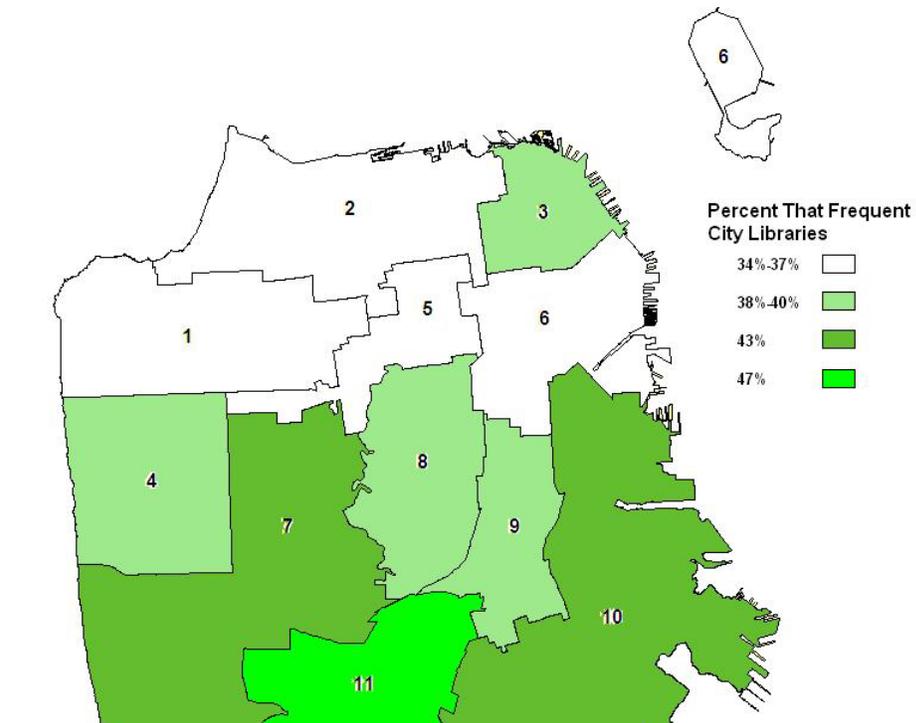
Those With Children Under 18 Years of Age Are More Frequent Library Visitors
(Proportion That Visit Frequently)



A number of demographic factors connected with the presence of children in the household also show a connection with library use. Those in households with four or more members are more likely to use a branch library frequently than are those in smaller households. And likelihood to visit the Main Library or a branch library frequently declines with age.

Overall, residents in District 11 are the most likely to be frequent users of the City's libraries. When visits to the Main Library are considered apart from visits to branch libraries, residents of Supervisorial Districts 1 and 2 emerge as the least likely to have been to the Main Library in the past year. Those in District 6 (53 percent) are least likely to have used a branch library, and those in Districts 4 (77 percent), 7 (71 percent), 9 (71 percent), and 10 (73 percent) are the most likely to have done so.

District 11 Contains Highest Percentage of Residents Who Frequently Visit City Libraries



In addition to traditional “visits” to library facilities, the Library reports increased usage in public computers and online services provided through the Library’s website (www.sfpl.org) and numerous subscription databases. Visits to the Library’s web pages have increased steadily since 2005, when this data was first captured, with a total of more than 13 million hits in fiscal year (FY) 2007-08 (4 percent to the Chinese and Spanish sites). Use of online tutoring services increased 37 percent between FY 2006-07 and FY 2007-08. To meet demand, the Library increased the number of public computers 23 percent in FY 2006-07 and 26 percent in FY 2007-08.

“I am always surprised by the excellent service the library has been able to offer despite the limited budget they are allotted. Give them a larger budget and the library will serve many more people.” – Female, Age 60-74, District 3

“The library could use more books.” – Female, Age 20-29, District 6

SURVEY RESPONSES

In general, how do you rate the City's libraries in the following categories?

	Falling F	Poor D	Average C	Good B	Excellent A	Number of Responses	Mean Score
Collections of books, tapes, etc.	1%	4%	24%	47%	24%	1,953	3.89/B
Assistance from library staff	1%	2%	18%	47%	32%	1,850	4.05/B+
Programs and activities for adults (18 and over)	2%	8%	28%	40%	21%	945	3.70/B
Programs and activities for children (under 18)	3%	5%	21%	48%	24%	885	3.85/B

In the past year, how often did you visit the City's libraries?

	Never 1	Once or Twice per Year 2	Several Times per Year 3	At Least Once per Month 4	At Least Once per Week 5	Number of Responses
The City's Main Library	41%	19%	21%	11%	8%	2,677
A branch library	35%	13%	17%	19%	15%	2,544

Note: Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding.