

Public Libraries in the United States Survey

FY 2011

Fast Facts

Highlights from the Public Libraries in the United States Survey, Fiscal Year 2011

- In fiscal year 2011 (FY 2011), there were 8,956 public libraries in the United States, which served 299.9 million people (95.3% of the US population).

Use of Public Library Services

- There were 1.53 billion in-person visits to public libraries – equivalent to over 4.2 million visits each day. Although this is a 10-year increase of 23.0%, in-person visitation has fallen by 3.9% since FY 2008. Public libraries were visited an average of 5.1 times per person, a decrease in per capita visitation of 3.6% from FY 2010. (Please note that the survey does not capture virtual visits.)
- Public libraries circulated 2.44 billion materials, a 10-year increase of 29.0%. There were 8.1 materials circulated per person. One-third of circulated materials (34.5%) were children's materials.
- Attendance at public library programs has increased for the eighth year with 89.0 million people attending 3.81 million programs. This is a 32.3% increase in attendance and 46.7% increase in the number of programs since FY 2004.
- There were 341.5 million usage sessions on public access Internet computers at public libraries, a decrease of 7.2% since FY 2006.

Financial Health of Public Libraries

- Public invested over \$11.4 billion to public libraries. Although this is a 10-year increase of 8.5%, revenue has decreased by 3.8% since the recession in FY 2008. Revenue per capita for public libraries was \$38.09, a decrease of 1.8% from FY 2010.
- Public libraries spent \$10.7 billion in operating expenditures, a 10-year increase of 9.2%. Operating expenditures per capita was \$32.28. Two-thirds of library operating expenditures went to support the workforce through salaries and benefits. Expenditures on electronic materials and staff benefits increased from FY 2010.

Public Library Resources and Services

- Public libraries had an increase in the number of collection materials – 3,164.1 materials per capita.
- Although books continue to comprise the majority of the nation's public library collection holdings, public library collections continue to shift from print books to non-print and digital materials.
- There were 3.8 million programs offered at public libraries, an increase of 46.7% since FY 2004. Most programs (70.0%) were targeted to children.
- There were 261,413 public access Internet computers available at public libraries throughout the United States, a 1-year increase of 6.8% and 10-year increase of 86.2%.

Public Library Staffing

- Public libraries have seen a decrease in the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff since the recession. There were 137,103 FTE staff – 11.4 FTEs per 25,000 people. This is a decrease of 5.5% since FY 2008.
- The number of public librarians has remained stable over 10 years, averaging 4.0 public librarians per 25,000 people. Librarians comprise one-third of the overall public library staff.

