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Households' Use of Public Libraries, May 2007 (v.10, n.3)

The National Center for Education Statistics recently released a report titled, Households' Use of Public and Other Types of Libraries: 2002, based on data collected as part of the October 2002 Current Population Survey Library Supplement conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Selected nationwide (US) and Massachusetts (MA) findings include:

Households' Use of Libraries

- >> Almost one-third of households (31% in US, 34.3% in MA) had used a public library in the month preceding the survey. Almost half (48% in US, 46.6% in MA) had used a public library in the year preceding the survey.
- >> The use of public libraries was higher nationwide for households that were closer to a library, but mixed for households in Massachusetts. In the year preceding the survey, 52% of households less than a mile from a public library had used a public library (45.7% in MA), 50% of households 1-2 miles from a public library had used a public library (47.4% in MA), 47% of households 3-5 miles from a public library had used a public library (45.5% in MA), and 41% of households 6-10 miles from a public library had used a public library (46.3% in MA).
- >> A larger proportion of two-parent and single-mother households (69% and 60% in US, 75% and 59.3% in MA) had used a public library in the previous year than households consisting of single females (34% in US, 30.2% in MA), single males (28% in US, 26.9% in MA) or other households without children (42% in US, 40.8% in MA).
- >> Two-thirds of households with children under 18 (66% in US, 69.5 in MA) had used a public library in the previous year.
- >> Thirty-six percent of households (32.5% in MA) with retired persons had used a public library in the previous year.
- >> Households varied in their use of public libraries by income and education. Sixty-one percent of households (56.2% in MA) with incomes in the top 20 percent had used a public library in the previous year compared to 33 percent of households (33.9% in MA) with incomes in the lowest 20 percent.
- >> Twenty-one percent of households (14.4% in MA) where the highest education level was less than a high school diploma had used a public library in the previous year; of households where the highest education level was an advanced degree, 66 percent (65.4% in MA) had used a public library in the previous year.
- >> Sixty-nine percent of households (72.7% in MA) with a high school student and 65 percent of households (74% in MA) with a college student had used a public library in the previous year.
- >> More households had used a public library in the previous month to borrow materials (26% in US, 29.94% in MA) or for enjoyment or hobbies (19% in US, 21.4% in MA) than to get information for personal use (9% in US, 8.8% in MA) or attend a meeting (2% in US, 2.4% in MA).
- >> Nine percent of U.S. households (8.5% in MA) had used a public library in the previous month to use a computer or the Internet.

Use of Libraries by Household Characteristics

- >> Among households with a disabled person, 65 percent (67.7% in MA) reported that their public library had made it easier for disabled people to access the library or materials; 17 percent (9.6% in MA) reported barriers to the disabled person's use of the public library.
- >> Two percent of households with members age 55 or older (2.5% in MA) had participated in public library programs or activities for people age 55 or older in the previous month.
- >> Among households with children under 18, a larger percentage of Black and Asian households (25% and 26% respectively) had used a public library in the previous month for a school assignment than had white or Hispanic households (22% and 20% respectively).
- >> A smaller proportion of white, non-Hispanic households (8%) than Black, non-Hispanic households (13%), Hispanic households (12%), Asian/Pacific Islander households (11%) or mixed households (12%) had used a public library in the previous month to use a computer or the Internet.
- >> Eighteen percent of households with a high school student, 16 percent of households with a college student, and 17 percent of households with job-seekers had used a public library in the previous month to use a computer or the Internet.
- >> Ten percent of households with job-seekers had used a public library in the previous month to get information to help find a job.
- >> Forty-one percent of households with children under 18, 28 percent of households with any members ages 18 through 64, and 19 percent of households with any members age 65 and older had used a public library or bookmobile in the previous month to borrow materials.

For the complete report, see:

Glander, M., and Dam, T. (2006). Households' Use of Public and Other Types of Libraries: 2002 ([NCES 2007-327](#)). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

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