

Public Policy Institute

Western Carolina University
2017 Haywood County Library Survey



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2017, the Public Policy Institute (PPI) at Western Carolina University (WCU) facilitated a survey for the Haywood County Library System to be used in their strategic planning process. The survey explored citizen attitudes and community usage of the library. We received 714 usable responses. The survey found several points of interest for library leaders:

- Concerning current usage, 18% of respondents indicated they use the library “daily,” 29% indicated “weekly” usage, 28% said “yearly,” and 25% said they “rarely” or “never” used the library.
- The top 3 uses of the library system included checking out books and other materials (86%), reading/studying/doing homework (21%), and participating in adult programs (19%).
- The top 3 improvements respondents believe are needed for the library system: increased physical collection (54%), expanding hours/days library is open (42%), expanding adult programming (27%).
- Fifty-six percent of survey respondents indicated they would support additional public funds (including an additional tax increase) to improve the library system.
- The top reasons given by non-library users as to why they do not use the library included “no need for the library” (35%), locations are not convenient (28%), hours are not convenient (28%), collection is insufficient (17%), and that “programs do not interest me” (17%).
- After controlling for other factors, older respondents and those with children are more likely to use the library. As to support for public funding, more frequent users, older respondents, and those with children are more supportive of increasing public funding, while those that have lived in the county longer are less supportive of increasing public funds.

I. SURVEY METHODS & SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

The Public Policy Institute worked with the Haywood County Library in order to conduct this survey. The survey was mailed to approximately 4,500 property owners at their listed primary address. The properties were from all over the county with an attempt to provide proportional representation based on the geography of the county. Our mailing list was provided by Dona Stewart, Haywood County Administrator/Program Evaluator. The surveys were printed and mailed from the Print Shop at Western Carolina University. From the initial mailing, we received 714 usable responses, for a response rate of 16%.

Of the 714 respondents, 59% self-identified as female, with the remaining 37% self-identifying as male, with other/nonresponse being 4%. The sample slightly over represents the female population, as U.S. Census data for Haywood

County identifies 52% of county residents as female in 2015.¹

About 51% of respondents of this survey stated they were over the age of 65 (see Figure 1), compared to the 23% reflected in U.S. Census data.² In the survey, 37% of respondents stated they were between the ages of 45 and 64, while 12% were between the ages of 18 and 44. 2015 U.S. Census data for Haywood County shows 69.3% of residents are between the ages of 18 and 65. The average age of the respondents was 63 years old.

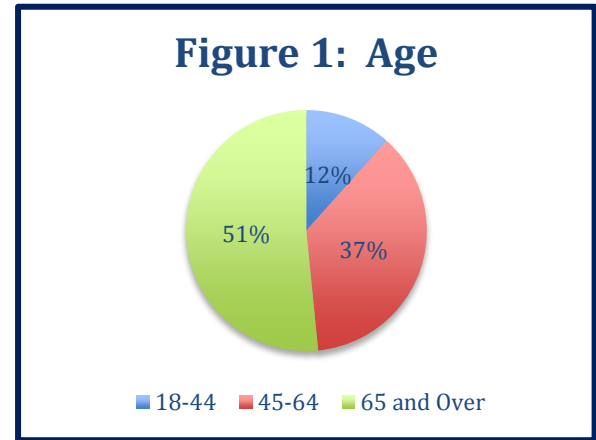
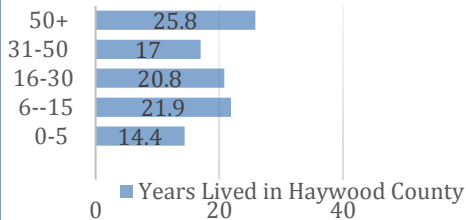
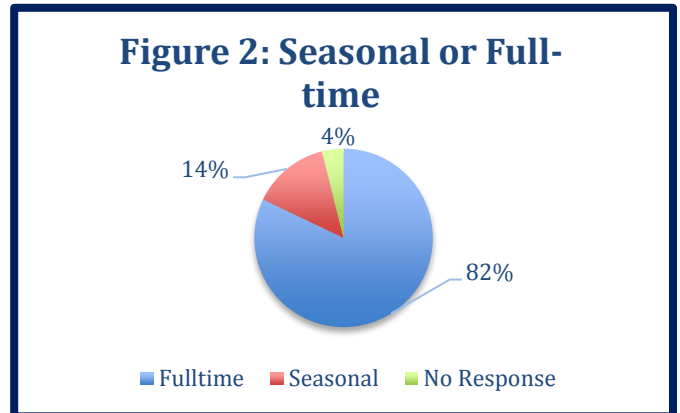


FIGURE 3: YEARS LIVED IN HAYWOOD COUNTY



The average time respondents resided in Haywood County varied. Fourteen percent of respondents stated they lived in the country between 0-5 years, 21.9% stated they lived in the county 6-15 years, 20.8% between 16-30 years, 17% between 31-50 years and the plurality of respondents, 25.8%, stated they lived in the county for over 50 years (see Figure 3). On average, people stated they lived in the county 32.5 years.

The vast majority of our respondents (82%) stated they live in Haywood County full-time while 14% stated they are seasonal residents, while 4% of respondents did not respond (see Figure 2). As to children in the home, 80% of respondents stated they had no children in the home and 20% had kids under 18 in the home. This is relatively close to the 2015 U.S. Census, which reported that 18.4% of Haywood residents have a child under 18 living in the home.³



¹ <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

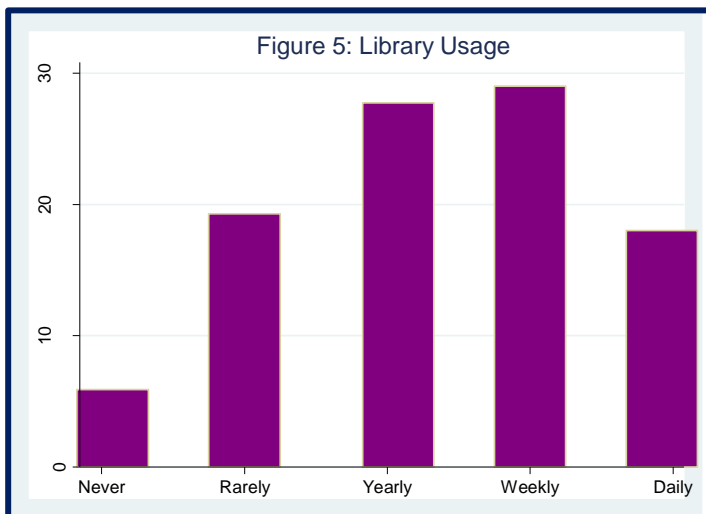
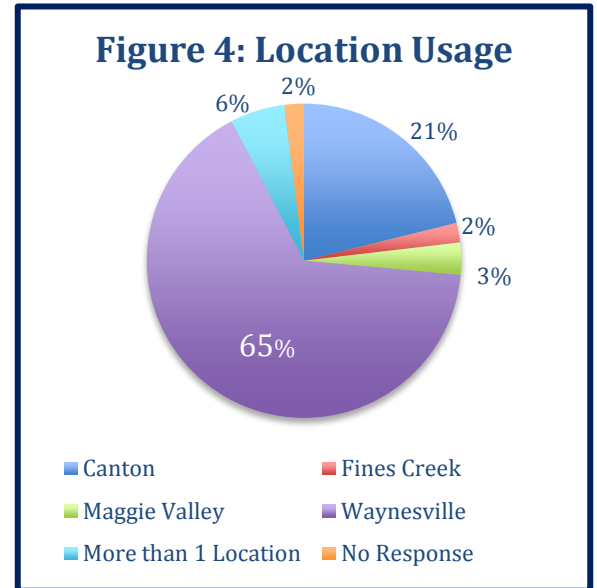
II. SURVEY RESULTS

The survey asked many questions concerning current usage of the library, reasons for using, potential improvements needed, support for increased funding for the library system, and demographic characteristics of the respondents (see the Appendix for full wording of each question and response percentages).

A. Current Usage

Most of our respondents (65%) stated that they used the Waynesville library branch. Canton was the second most used library branch (21%) among our respondents (see Figure 4). As to usage, 18% of respondents stated that they used the library “daily,” 29% said “weekly,” 28% said “yearly,” and 25% said “rarely” or “never” (see Figure 5).

We also asked respondents the main reasons that they used the library. Respondents could select up to three choices each. Here we report the percentage of respondents that



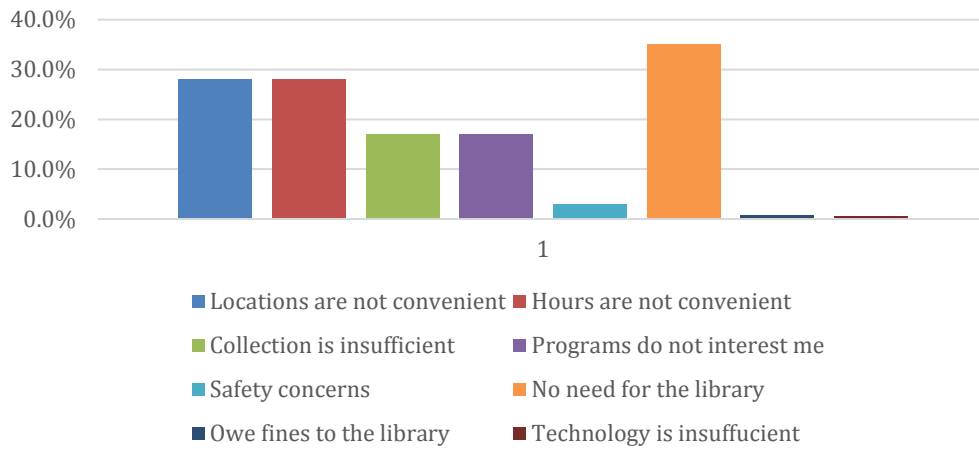
listed each use, therefore the percentages collectively will add up to more than 100%. As shown in the Appendix “Q3,” almost all respondents (86%) reported that they checked out books or other materials while at a branch of the library. This was by far the most often-cited category of usage. Over one-fifth (21%) said they use the library to read, study, or do homework. Many also stated they use technology at the library, such as using the Internet (16%), library computers (14%), or use the library’s fax, scanner, or copier (18%). Other activities included about one-fifth (19%) that use programming aimed at adults, 10% using youth programs, and 13% using the available

community rooms.

We also asked how respondents received information about the library. Again, respondents could select more than one choice. The most often indicated source of information was through the newspaper (50%), followed by word of mouth (43%), library signs and flyers (40%), the library web page (27%), and library staff (21%). Less respondents indicated that they received their information from social media (16%) or the library newsletter (11%). Eight percent of respondents indicated they were not interested in library programs (see “Q4” in the Appendix below).

We also asked why respondents *do not* currently use the library. A plurality of respondents (35%) stated that they had “no need” for the library. Others suggested that the library locations were not

**Figure 6: Reasons For Not Using The Library
Which Were Most Often Mentioned By
Participants**



convenient (28%) and hours were not convenient (28%). Other reasons survey respondents stated that they did not use the library included not being interested in the programs and the insufficiency of the collections (17%). Safety concerns as a reason survey respondents do not use the library was selected by 3% of survey respondents.

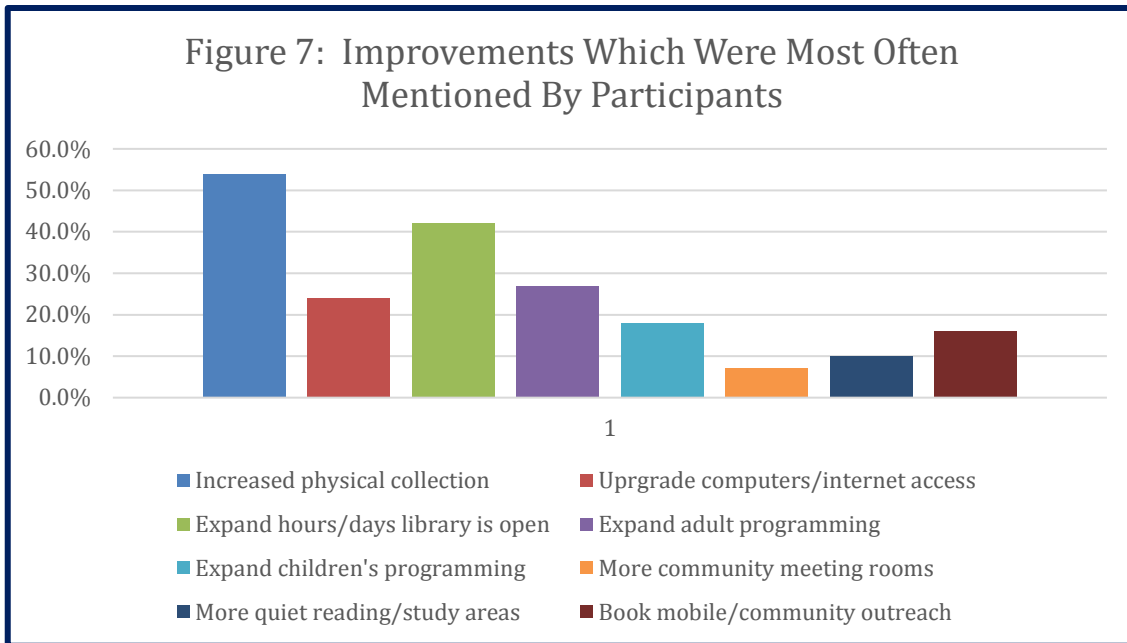
Finally, less than 1% of survey respondents listed owing fines to the library and the insufficiency of technology as a reason for why they do not use the library.

In looking at only those respondents that say they do not currently use the library, the most often cited reason was they see “no need for the library,” indicated by 44% of the non-library uses. Other reasons for not using the library included about 27% of non-users saying the locations were not convenient, about 7% saying that library hours were inconvenient, and about 11% saying that programs did not interest them. Again, this represents only “non-users” which was a small section of the overall sample (45 respondents).

B. Improvements Needed & Future Support

Respondents were also asked what improvements they would like to see in the library system. As displayed in Figure 7, responses varied and again they were allowed to select up to three choices. The most often listed improvement, noted by 54% of respondents, was that the physical collection (books and print resources) should be increased. Almost half (42%) indicated that they would like to see the hours and days of library branches expanded, while 27% also indicated a desire for more adult programs. Upgrades to computers and Internet access was noted by 24% of respondents and more children’s programming was seen as a need by 18% of respondents. Lesser noted improvements included the addition of a book mobile and more community outreach (16%), more quiet areas (10%), and more community rooms (7%).

Respondents were also asked if they would be more likely to use the library if improvements were made. Here we see that 56% indicated they would be more likely to utilize the library with improvements, 38% said “possibly,” and 6% said improvements would not make a difference. If we limit the responses to only those that said they do not currently use the library, 15%



indicated they would be more likely to use the library, 45% said they would possibly be more likely, and 39% indicated that they still would not use the library even with improvements.

Finally we asked if respondents would support additional public funding “and a possible tax increase” to improve the library system (see “Q8” in the Appendix. Overall most respondents showed support for increased funding as 58% answered “yes” while 36% said “no,” they would not support additional funding.

C. Multivariate Analysis

In order to delve a bit more deeply into these findings, we conducted statistical models on the current usage question (“Q1”) and the support for increased funding (“Q8”). In these statistical models, we can isolate frequency of use and support for increase funding after controlling for other factors, such as age, years living in Haywood County, and fulltime or part time residency. This allows us to determine if, within a margin of statistical significance, there is a relationship between these factors and current usage or support for increase funding based on our survey results.

In looking at who uses the library more often, we see that age matters, as older respondents were statistically more likely to be frequent users of the library than younger respondents. Also, those with any children in the home are more likely to use the library than those without children. However, we find that those that have lived in the county longer and those that are full-time residents are less likely to use the library than were newer county residents and those that do not live in the county full-time.

In turning to what factors influence support for additional library funding, we see that (after controlling for other factors), those that frequent the library more often are also more likely to support increased public funding. Older respondents and those with children in the home are also more supportive of additional funding, including tax dollars. However, again, those that have lived

in the county longer are less supportive of additional public funding for the library. There are no differences between support from fulltime residents or those that live in the county part time.

III. Conclusions and Moving Forward

Overall, the survey results provide a useful and interesting snap-shot of the current usage and public opinion concerning the Haywood County Library System. However, as with any survey such as this one, there are potential limitations that should be noted. First, as with any voluntary survey there could be a potential bias in that those more interested in the library and perhaps more frequent users might be more likely to answer the survey. While we did receive many responses from infrequent users (179 or about 25% said they rarely or never used the library), it is possible that bias may be present based on who responded. Relatedly, our average respondent tends to be older than the overall county population. While it is not unusual that older individuals are more likely to answer surveys, it is something worthy to note in a sample such as this. We can examine sampling weights which may help to make the results more in-line with a truly random sample.

In moving forward, the Public Policy Institute would be happy to explore the data further as needed. For example, it may be of interest to examine those infrequent users in more detail or examine other combinations (such as exploring the needed improvements for those nonusers). If there are other questions of interest that may be answered from this data, we would be happy to look further into our responses. It may also be of interest to examine the data using more multivariate analyses and expand on “Section C” above. For example, tracking responses to “needed improvements” after controlling for other factors could be one possibility.

Overall, we are grateful for the Haywood County Library System for providing our students and staff the opportunity to help with this project. As part of the University’s outreach mission to be an asset to the region and our important role in training our students to be future leaders, we are excited to continue to help with this important study. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further help.

APPENDIX: Question Wording and Results

Q1 How often do you or members of your household visit any of the Haywood County libraries?

<i>Every few days or more</i>	18%
<i>Every few weeks</i>	29%
<i>A few times a year</i>	28%
<i>It has been a year or more since I've visited a Haywood County library</i>	19%
<i>I have never visited a Haywood County library</i>	6%

Q2 If you use the library in Haywood County, which branch do you visit most often?

<i>Canton</i>	21%
<i>Maggie Valley</i>	3%
<i>Fines Creek</i>	2%
<i>Waynesville</i>	66%

Q3 What are the 3 main things you typically do (or would do) when you visit a library branch?

<i>Check out books or other materials</i>	86%
<i>Read/ study/ do homework</i>	21%
<i>Use library internet (wireless)</i>	16%
<i>Use library computers</i>	14%
<i>Use fax, scanner or copier</i>	18%
<i>Attend youth library program</i>	10%
<i>Attend adult library program</i>	19%
<i>Use a community meeting room</i>	13%

Q4 What are the 3 main ways you find out about library programs?

<i>Library website</i>	27%
<i>Social Media (Facebook or Twitter)</i>	16%
<i>Newspaper</i>	50%
<i>Library newsletter</i>	11%
<i>Signs of flyers in the library</i>	40%
<i>Word of mouth</i>	43%
<i>Library staff</i>	21%
<i>Not interested in information on library Programs</i>	8%

Q5 Indicate the 3 main potential improvements your household would use.

<i>Increased physical collection</i>	54%
<i>Upgrade computers/ internet access</i>	24%
<i>Expand hours/ days library is open</i>	42%
<i>Expand adult programming</i>	27%
<i>Expand children's programming</i>	18%
<i>More community meeting rooms</i>	7%

<i>More quiet reading/ study areas</i>	10%
<i>Book mobile/ community outreach</i>	16%

Q6 What are the 3 main reasons why you do not use the Haywood County Public Library System more often

<i>Locations are not convenient</i>	28%
<i>Hours are not convenient</i>	28%
<i>Collection is insufficient</i>	17%
<i>Programs do not interest me</i>	17%
<i>Safety concerns</i>	3%
<i>No need for the library</i>	35%
<i>Owe fines to the library</i>	0.7%
<i>Technology is insufficient</i>	0.5%

Q7 Would you utilize the library if improvements were made?

<i>Yes, definitely</i>	49%
<i>No, absolutely not</i>	6%
<i>Possibly</i>	34%

Q8 Would you support additional public funding and a possible tax increase to improve the Haywood County Public Library System?

<i>Yes</i>	56%
<i>No</i>	36%

Q9 Open Comments

Q10 With which gender do you identify?

<i>Male</i>	37%
<i>Female</i>	59%
<i>Other/ Did not respond</i>	4%

Q11 In what year were you born? (By age groups)

<i>18-44</i>	12%
<i>45-64</i>	37%
<i>65 and over</i>	51%

Q12 How long (in years) have you lived in Haywood County?

<i>0-5</i>	14%
<i>6-15</i>	22%
<i>16-30</i>	21%
<i>31-50</i>	17%
<i>50+</i>	26%

Q13 Do you consider yourself a full-time resident or seasonal resident? (Check one)

Fulltime resident 82%
Seasonal resident..... 14%

Q14 How many children of the following ages are in your home?

0 Children under 5 years old 93%
1 Child under 5 years old..... 4%
2 Children under 5 years old 2%
3 Or more children under 5 years old..... 0.1%

0 Children between 5-13 years old..... 89%
1 Child between 5-13 years old 7%
2 Children between 5-13..... 4%
3 Or more children between 5-13 years old..... 1%

0 Children between 14-18 years old..... 92%
1 Child between 14-18 years old 6%
2 Children between 14-18 years old..... 1%
3 Or more children between 14-18 years old 0%

Q15 What is the primary language spoken in your home?

English..... 97%
Spanish 2%
Other..... 1%