PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Knight Foundation & NORC at the University of Chicago

Three Things You Should Know

63%
of Americans view their local public library as an essential public service

93%
say budget cuts to their local public library would impact their community

81%
highly value their local library for giving people access to books, media and information

A majority of adults in the United States - across every age, race, party affiliation and income group measured - view their local public library as an essential public service.

- **63%** of adults say their local public library is an essential public service
- **31%** say it is valuable but not an essential public service
- **6%** say it is neither valuable nor an essential public service

93%

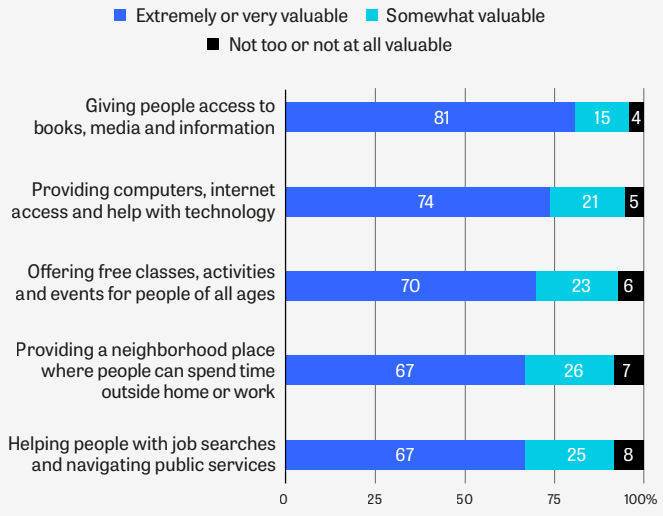
of adults overall view libraries as an *essential* or *valuable* public service.

Specific library services – including book access, internet access, classes and community space – are valued especially highly.

In a world with an abundance of free information, 81% cite the value of libraries giving people access to books, media and information.

Two-thirds or more see high value in other library services.

Question How valuable are each of the following aspects of your local public library to your community?



Most Americans view their local public library as an asset to the community. They also view their local public library as valuable to them personally, regardless of how often they visit.

62%
of adults say their local public library is extremely or very valuable to their community

57%
say it is valuable to them personally

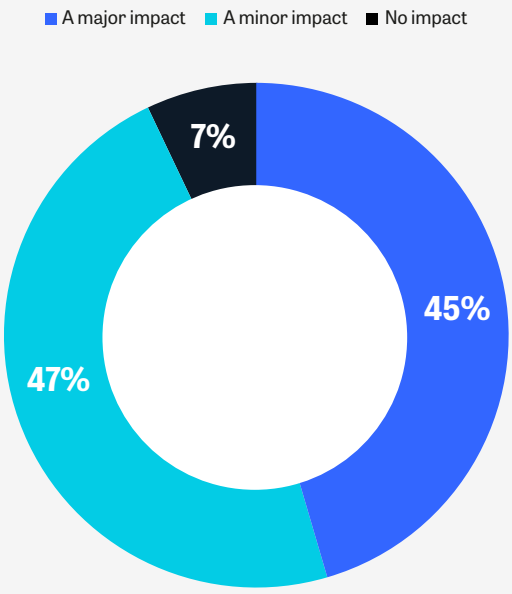
30%
say it is somewhat valuable

8%
say it is not valuable

Nearly all adults say cuts to their local public library would affect their community.

93% of the public thinks that budget cuts to their local public library would have an impact on their community

Question If budget cuts forced your local public library to reduce hours, programs, or other services, how much of an impact, if any, do you think it would have on your community?



45%
think that impact would be major

47%
say that impact would be minor

7%
believe it would have no impact

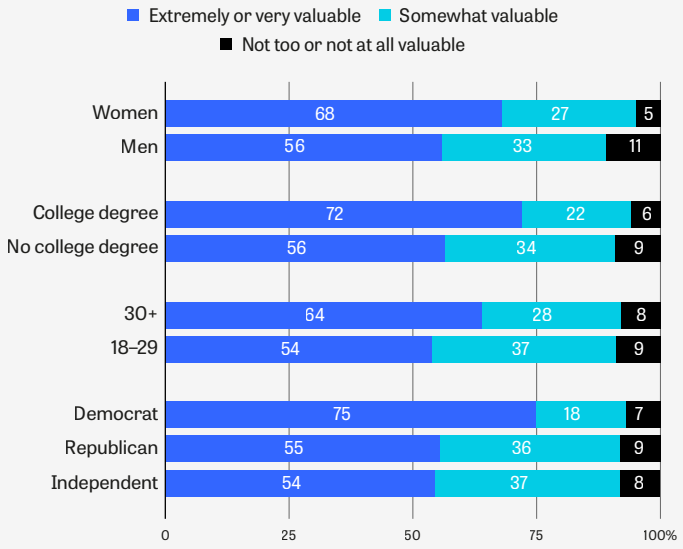
While most groups have positive associations with their local public library, some groups are especially favorable toward libraries.

Women are consistently more positive toward libraries, their services and their potential impact than men.

College graduates and adults age 30+ are more likely to recognize public libraries' personal and community value and anticipate an impact to their community from a budget cut than those without a degree or younger adults.

Democrats are more likely to recognize the personal and community value of public libraries, express strong support for library services and see cuts to library funding as having a major impact on their community compared to Republicans.

Question How valuable is your local public library to your community?



Study Methodology

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation. Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, and interviews were conducted between May 14–18, 2026, with 1,047 adults age 18 and older via web and telephone in English and Spanish. The overall margin of sampling error is +/-3.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

Additional information on the AmeriSpeak Panel methodology is available at **https://amerispeak.norc.org**