Bennington Free Library
Photo – Mark McClary

Vermont Department of Libraries

**Vermont Public Library
FY2024 Annual Report Summary**

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Introduction

The Public Library Annual Report is a broad statistical summary of a year in the life of Vermont's public libraries. The Vermont Department of Libraries gathers this data annually as part of a national survey coordinated by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), known as the Public Library Survey (PLS). The PLS covers a variety of information, from visits, programming, finances, and staffing, to circulation and holdings (both physical and digital).

The resulting data is used by a wide range of organizations to better understand and support libraries: IMLS, state (and territorial) libraries throughout the nation, federal and state government policymakers and officials, and national library leadership. At the local level, it's also heavily used by individual library staff, trustees, and local officials to see trends and compare themselves with similar institutions.

In the 2024 report, 148 of Vermont's 187 public libraries submitted data. These libraries range from one-room libraries run by volunteers and open five hours a week to large libraries with multiple staff and open 50+ hours a week. Reporting is a significant undertaking, with nearly 200 questions, some of which require digging into stats or coordinating with municipal partners. We present this summary report with thanks to our library community.

2024 Report Statewide Totals

(Percentage changes in parentheses are from 2023 to 2024)

Hours, Visits, and Borrowers

- Library Hours Open – 232,004 (+1%)
- Annual Visits – 2,514,354 (+18%)
- Registered Borrowers – 274,292 (steady)

Circulation and Usage

- Physical Circulation – 2,970,883 (-2%)
- eBook/eAudiobook Circulation – 813,891 (correction +12%)
- Database Usage – 250,041 (-13%)

Interlibrary Loan

- Provided – 92,592 (+10%)
- Received – 104,830 (+11%)

Programming

- Programs – 30,786 (+18%)
- Program Attendance – 390,909 (+15%)
- Non-Library Sponsored Programs – 11,170 (+18%)

Items in the Collection

- Print – 2,548,605 (+3%)
- Physical Video – 207,055 (-5%)
- Physical Audio – 98,888 (-4%)
- Non-Traditional Physical Items – 10,913 (+7%)

Computer Use and Reference Questions

- Public Computer Sessions – 170,459 (+10%)
- WiFi Sessions – 908,116 (steady)
- Reference Questions - 233,570 (+2%)

Fun Statistical Facts

Annual Visits: 2,514,354

This averages out to every single Vermonter visiting libraries more than 3.8 times in a year.

Physical Item Circulation: 2,970,883

That's the equivalent of every single book in Fletcher Free's collection (in Burlington) being checked out more than 25 times.

Interlibrary Loans: Provided – 92,592 Received – 104,830

At $12.00 per item, it would have cost Vermont libraries over $1.2 million to purchase them independently.

Library Programs: 30,786

If you ran fast enough, you could attend an average of 84 library programs in Vermont every day of the year.

WiFi Sessions: 908,116

If Vermont patrons had to buy a $3.00 cup of coffee to use the public WiFi, this would have cost them over $2.7 million in total.

Vermont Library Metrics:
Insights Through Median Statistics

Median Numbers and Ranges by Question

2024 Library Directors' Summit at the Vermont State House

A note on median numbers – there are a number of ways to describe the middle/average of a group of numbers (mean/average, median, mode, etc). The Department of Libraries most often uses the median. To find the median, you line up the numbers lowest to highest and find the one in the middle. Medians are especially useful where outliers (either high or low) would make the mean a poor description of a set. In Vermont, we have many small libraries, but the few (much) larger libraries would tend to skew the average, making it look bigger than it really should be.

2024 Median Statistics

(Percentage changes in parentheses are from 2023 to 2024)

General:

- **Library Service Area Population**: 1,844
  Ranges from 158 to 44,649 residents

- **Hours Open**: 1,527 per year / 29 per week (-5%)
  Ranges from 364 to 3,016 hours

- **Registered Borrowers**: 1,056 (steady)
  Ranges from 91 to 13,329 patrons

- **Annual Visits**: 6,536 (+12%)
  Ranges from 100 to 168,610 visits

- **Reference Questions**: 491 (+15%)
  Ranges from 2 to 31,729 questions

Facilities:

- **Year Building was Built**: 1912
  Ranges from 1800 to 2021

- **Square Footage**: 2,865
  Ranges from 527 to 48,348 sq. ft.

Staffing:

- **Total Paid Staff Hours per Week**: 58 (+2%)
  Ranges from 0 (volunteer run) to 940 staff hours

- **Volunteer Hours per Week**: 9 (+13%)
  Ranges from 0 to 133 volunteer hours

Income:

- **Local Tax Support**: $80,219 (+3%)
  Ranges from $0 to $2.7 million

- **Other Income**: $12,492 (+10%)
  Ranges from $0 to $810,344

Expenses:

- **Material Expenses**: $9,444 (+1%)
  Ranges from $25 to $240,139

- **Staff Expenses**: $69,036 (+7%)
  Ranges from $0 to $2,148,521

- **Other Expenses**: $25,576 (+23%)
  Ranges from $0 to $325,842

Collection:

- **Physical Circ**: 8,683 (+2%)
  Ranges from 146 to 232,553 circs

- **Electronic Circ**: 2,403 (+30%)
  Ranges from 0 to 81,932 circs

- **Physical Books in Collection**: 13,116 (+2%)
  Ranges from 2,104 to 116,944 books

Interlibrary Loan:

- **ILL Provided to Other Libraries**: 304 (+1%)
  Ranges from 0 to 6,207 items

- **ILL Received from Other Libraries**: 354 (+7%)
  Ranges from 0 to 7,456 items

Computers:

- **Public Computer Sessions**: 414 (-2%)
  Ranges from 0 to 23,760 sessions

- **WiFi Sessions**: 1,872 (-22%)
  Ranges from 0 to 115,290 sessions

Programming:

- **Programs**: 129 (+17%)
  Ranges from 0 to 1,074 programs

- **Program Attendance**: 1,597 (+19%)
  Ranges from 0 to 16,741 attendance

Median Comparison Year-by-Year

Survey Year	Pop.	Weeks Open	Hours Open	Square Footage	Librarian Hours	Total Staff Hours	Local Tax Support*	Tax Support Divided by Calculated Pop.	Other Local Income	Total Grants	Total Revenue
2018	1,849	52	1,560	2,700	33	48	$48,949	$27.02	$9,907	$1,015	$80,020
2019	1,907	52	1,550	2,700	35	49	$48,991	$27.78	$9,496	$743	$83,104
2020	1,918	39	1,281	2,713	35	51	$65,790	$29.62	$9,446	$590	$89,422
2021	1,867	33	600	2,713	38	50	$74,944	$30.55	$10,111	$2,020	$93,843
2022	1,880	52	1,352	2,720	40	50	$66,000	$30.15	$13,066	$8,366	$108,463
2023	1,853	52	1,612	2,713	40	57	$78,002	$31.25	$11,384	$3,623	$110,563
2025	1,844	52	1,527	2,865	43	58	$80,219	$32.05	$12,492	$4,218	$127,725

Survey Year	Collection Expenses	Staff Expenses	Other Expenses	Registered Patrons	Visits	Per Capita Visits	Physical Circ	eCirc
2018	$9,123	$47,414	$19,700	978	7,991	3.99	9,075	921
2019	$8,323	$49,046	$18,991	1,010	8,625	3.83	8,526	1,189
2020	$8,653	$52,765	$18,616	1,102	6,046	2.76	7,881	1,202
2021	$8,823	$57,409	$19,596	1,095	1,571	0.72	6,121	1,528
2022	$9,064	$61,120	$21,627	1,025	4,543	1.94	7,181	1,605
2023	$9,307	$64,674	$20,270	1,055	5,845	2.59	8,544	1,842
2024	$9,444	$69,036	$25,576	1,056	6,536	2.66	8,683	2,403

Survey Year	Programs	Program Attendance	Program Attendance Divided by Calculated Pop.	Public Comp Uses	WiFi Sessions
2018	138	1,516	0.64	1,055	689
2019	133	1,574	0.68	949	1,200
2020	107	1,193	0.62	604	1,500
2021	37	400	0.13	100	1,400
2022	72	815	0.30	313	1,500
2023	110	1,337	0.48	423	2,400
2024	129	1,597	0.55	414	1,872

* Though medians are typically a good fit for our data, they can shift up or down slightly, depending on exactly which and how many libraries respond. For example, the drop in Local Tax Support for 2022 seems to be due to these year-to-year variations.
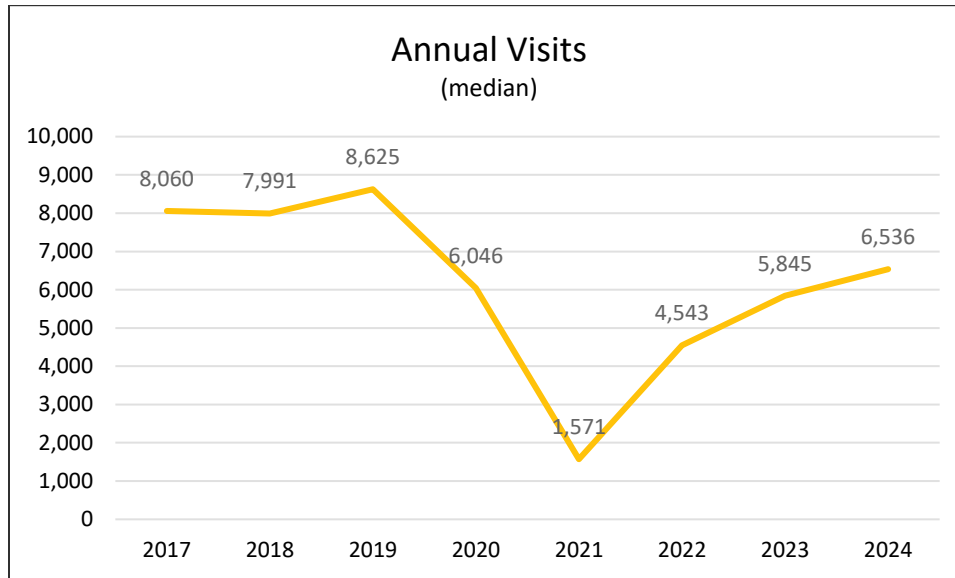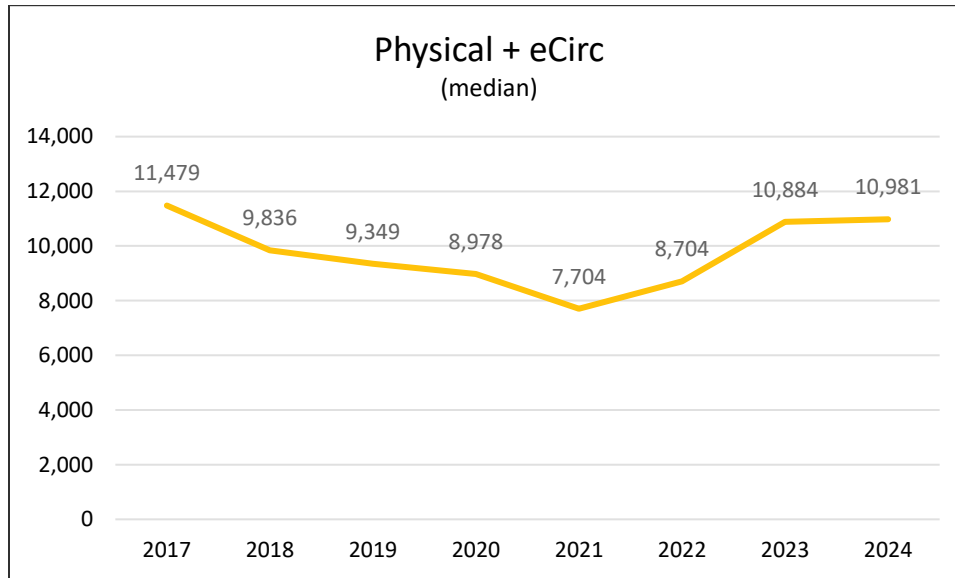
Broad Trends Using Medians

In most categories we see a continuation of the increases from 2023 but at a slightly slower pace, while a few others show flat numbers or a minor decrease. The main exception is WiFi usage, which showed a significant drop in the median, but this could have several causes.

Open Hours per Year
(median)

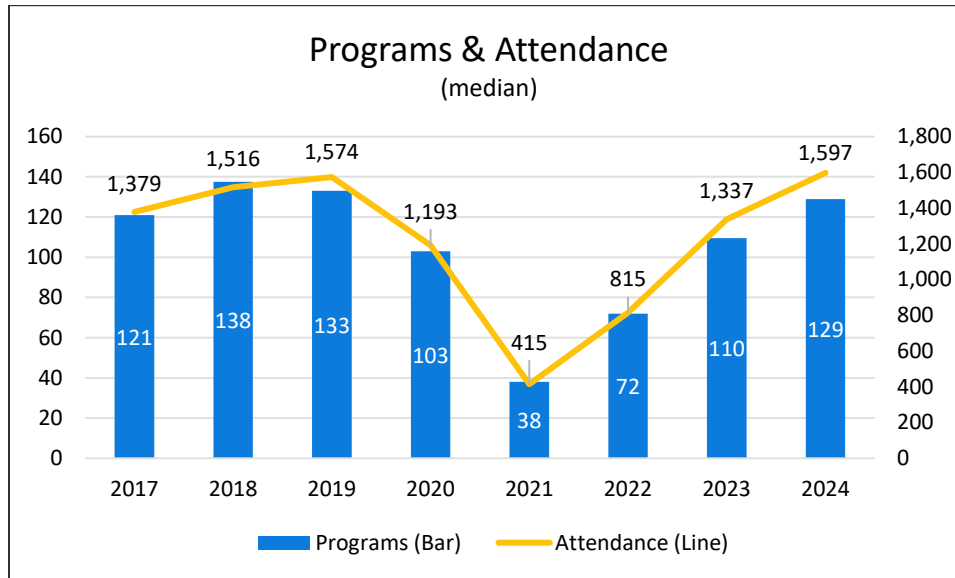| Year	Value
2017	1,560
2018	1,560
2019	1,550
2020	1,281
2021	371
2022	1,346
2023	1,612
2024	1,527

Open hours have regained pre-pandemic levels. The small downtick for the median is likely a quirk of which libraries responded to the survey this year, as the average increased very slightly.
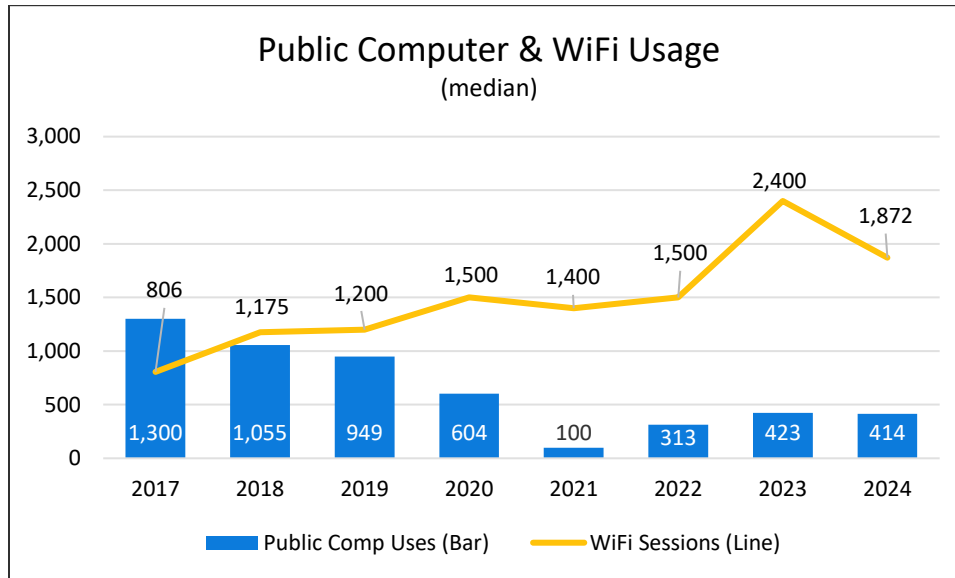
Annual Visits
(median)

Year	Value
2017	8,060
2018	7,991
2019	8,625
2020	6,046
2021	1,571
2022	4,543
2023	5,845
2024	6,536

Annual visits are still catching up to pre-pandemic numbers, though increasing at a slightly slower rate.

Physical + eCirc
(median)

Physical and e-circulation numbers show a slight increase and are nearing recent pre-pandemic levels.

Programs & Attendance
(median)

Programs and attendance continue to increase and are very close to pre-pandemic levels.

Public Computer & WiFi Usage
(median)

Public computer usage has leveled off a bit for 2024. The median number of WiFi sessions dropped a bit for 2024, but this could be a quirk of which libraries participated in the survey, as the average number remains relatively consistent. It could also be indicative of the overall challenge of capturing WiFi stats.