

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY 2024 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

An impressive 913 people filled out the survey between January 10 and February 10, 2024.

We received a **7% response rate** (when 1-2% is standard) and **50% more responses** than in our 2015 survey. Our strategic planning consultant said she has never seen such a strong response from a community survey—neither a completion rate in the 90s (ours was 92%), nor such overwhelmingly positive results from a library survey (her specialty). (*GPL staff to our community: We ♥ you, too!*)

The survey was promoted in the library, online, on social media, and throughout town, with a print copy mailed to every Groton household. The survey consisted of 14 questions with one open feedback option at the end. The questions were on library usage and services, ease of access, hours, programs, the best ways to communicate library events, and more. 252 people (28% of respondents) signed up to receive GPL's biweekly email newsletter. ("I did not know you had all this awesome stuff!" was one write-in comment.)

Who Responded?

All ages were represented, but over half (53%) were between ages 36 and 64:

50-64: 27% **36-49: 27%** 65-74: 10% 75+: 10% 26-35: 10% 12-18: 3% 19-25: 2% <12: 1%

87% of respondents were Groton residents. Length of residency:

20+ Years (37%) 0-4 Years (18%) 5-9 Years (17%) 10-19 Years (15%)

The 13% of respondents who are not currently residents (many were former residents) were from adjacent towns, primarily: Pepperell (2.6%), Ayer (2.3%), Dunstable (1.8%), and Townsend (1%).

SURVEY RESPONSES SUMMARIZED

How often respondents used GPL services in person or online (on average): (901 answers, 12 skipped)

75% used it **daily (3%), weekly (39%), or monthly (33%),** with 12% quarterly, 11% rarely, and 2% never.

Top 3 Main Reasons for Using GPL: (770 answers, 143 skipped)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Borrow Traditional Materials (88%) | 5. Browse Collections or Exhibits (13%) |
| 2. Attend Programs (48%) | 6. Research/Reading Support/Staff Help (13%) |
| 3. Borrow Non-Traditional Materials (35%) | 7. Meet with Others (12%) |
| 4. Quiet Space to Focus, Work, or Study (16%) | 8. PCs/Equipment/Tech. Assistance/Wi-Fi (7.5%) |

Other (10%) offered a variety of reasons, but visiting the Children's Room was by far the top response. Additional answers included programs, puzzles, genealogy research, museum passes, book clubs, books, art exhibits, knitting club, public copier, magazine swap, tax help, DVDs, summer reading, and more, including "I sometimes visit for no particular reason at all."

Top 3 Main Reasons for NOT Using GPL – Skipped by 88% of respondents. Of the 12% who answered:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Not in the Habit/Not a Library User (49%) | 4. Buy What I Need (22%) |
| 2. Too Busy/No Time (40%) | 5. Other (18%) – <i>see below</i> |
| 3. Kids Are Grown & I Went Mainly for Them (27%) | 6. Use Another Library (11%) |

Other answers: Attend programs elsewhere (6%), Hours don't fit schedule (4%), Can't find what I want / Inconvenient location (both 3%). Also: schedule, new to town, tired, kids grown, get there when I can, and more, including, "Working but plan on using more when retired."

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY 2024 COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

Rate GPL Services:

1. **Customer Service: 87% Excellent, 7% Good**
2. **Library Overall: 82% Excellent, 14% Good**
3. **Programs/Activities: 55% Excellent, 27% Good**
4. Hours: 56% Good, 36% Excellent
5. Physical Collections: 46% Excellent, 34% Good
6. COVID Responsiveness: 44% Excellent, 11% Good
7. Website: 41% Excellent, 40% Good
8. Digital Collections: 29% Excellent, 23% Good
9. Public Wi-Fi: 25% Excellent, 18% Good
10. Computers/Equipment: 21% Good, 20% Excellent

GPL was rated “Poor” at 0% in all areas, except for 1% in Wi-Fi. “Fair” ratings were selected only 0-5%, with the highest at 5% for the revamped website. Computers/Equipment and Wi-Fi received the most “Don’t Know” responses (55% and 53%), followed by COVID Responsiveness (44%) and Digital Collections (44%). Most people were familiar with other library areas.

Of the following potential library services, what respondents (and their families) would like most:

1. **Creative Space/Crafting Area for Adults & Teens (28%)**
2. **Expand Partnerships with Schools, Groups, Orgs (18%)**
3. Expand Hours (17%)
4. More Equipment to Borrow (17%)
5. Local History/Genealogy Resources Online (17%)
6. Add Study Rooms, Pods, or Booths (16%)
7. Outdoor Lockers for 24/7 Pickup (16%)
8. Older Kids’ Area in Children’s Room (11%)
9. Mobile Library Services/More Outreach (9%)
10. More Literacy/Language Support (4%)

“More” was the most commonly used word, as in more programming, new books, digital books and audiobooks, weekend and evening kids’ programs, more hours, etc. Also of interest was a space for patrons to take Zoom and phone calls (to reduce noise for others) and a media room for audio and video recording.

What difficulties, if any, impact your ability to get to or use GPL?

Fortunately, 82% of respondents reported having no difficulty getting to or using the library. Still, several comments were made about road issues, noise levels, full programs, high activity levels on early release days, hours not open, Wi-Fi issues, and technology challenges.

Most of the comments about difficulties regarded road access: Broadmeadow Road flooding and closures, confusion about exiting via the private property at the top of Playground Road, and the difficulty exiting onto Main Street at that point:

- “Exiting the library parking lot is always a question since Broad Meadow is blocked off due to flooding at times and there is a do not enter sign at the other end of the parking lot.”
- “Broadmeadow Road closures discourage me from attempting to access library.”
- “Traffic pattern getting in and out. I avoid it at certain times of day.”
- “Connecting road being closed, hard to exit back on to main Street after visiting library, not sure if I can take the private road...”
- “The Library needs to be a strong advocate for the completely unacceptable roadway conditions leading to and from the Library. Right now, a driver has to ignore a sign that says enter at your own risk in order to get back to Main Street. It’s a ridiculous situation.”

Which days and times are best for you (or your family) to visit GPL?

1. **Sunday afternoons (84%)**
2. **Saturday afternoons (78%)**
3. **Saturday mornings (66%)**
4. Thursday evenings (60%)
5. Tuesday evenings (58%)
6. Monday evenings (58%)
7. Sunday mornings (57%)
8. Wednesday evenings (57%)
9. Friday evenings (51%)

Weekday mornings were the least popular times to visit (in order): Mon-Tue-Thu-Wed-Fri, followed by weekend evenings.

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

If GPL could expand hours, which would be most useful to you (or your family)?

1. **Existing Hours are Fine/No Preference (44%)**
2. **Summer Sundays 1-5 pm (32%)**
3. Mondays 5-9 pm (17%)
4. Mondays 1-5 pm (15%)
5. Mondays 10-1 (11%)
6. 9-10 am on Weekdays (10%) or Saturdays (9%)

How do you find out about LIBRARY news and events?

1. **Library website/calendar (48%)**
2. **Library print newsletters (45%)**
3. Library email newsletters (31%)
4. Library direct mailing (31%)
5. Library social media (31%)
6. Local newspapers/pubs (15%)
7. Library signs (12%)
8. Library staff (10%)
9. Outdoor sign (4%)

How do you find out about GROTON news and events?

1. **Facebook (47%)**
2. **Word of mouth (43%)**
3. **Local news/pubs (42%)**
4. Town sign/banner (26%)
5. Direct mailing (21%)
6. Org's newsletter (18%)
7. Community posting (16%)
8. Org's online calendar (7%)
9. Instagram (5%)

Other: Groton Cable, talk @ Groton listserv, Salt & Light newsletter, GBA, and internet searches.

The majority of respondents (55%) do not have children in their household or care, but the kids' ages for those who do were 5-10 (23%), 0-4 (19%), 11-14 (13%) and 15-18 (11%). Of those with kids in their home or care:

When do you and your family prefer to attend programs for the following age groups (374 answers):

Responses varied widely, but it's clear that **weekend afternoons are best for whole family programs (39%), followed by weekend mornings (30%), and weekday evenings (26%)**. Weekend afternoons were best for 5- to 10-year-olds (27%), followed by weekday evenings (24%), weekend mornings (23%), and weekday afternoons (22%). The least popular time for family or school-aged children's programs was weekday mornings (1-6%) but for 0- to 4-year-olds, 27% picked weekday mornings as their top choice, followed by 21% for weekend mornings.

Open feedback for any details to add or ideas or suggestions for improving GPL over the next 5 years?

Of the 239 open feedback responses received (26%), **92% were positive**, 4% were mixed feedback, and 5% were critical feedback. Many comments expressed how much residents love, use, and appreciate the library. Thanks, praise, and appreciative comments were abundant—especially for library staff, particularly for the Children's staff and how much the Children's Dept. has meant to families growing up in Groton—going back decades.

There were many other suggestions for improvement, most commonly involving the word "more"—as in, more programs, more popular books, etc. *(GPL to our community: We hear you, and we're grateful for your feedback. Please keep sharing! We will incorporate many of your suggestions into our five-year strategic plan.)*

We Hear You! Suggestions and Areas Recommended in the Survey for Improvement:

- Noise levels, especially in third floor quiet area—at all times, but especially during after-school hours
- Library Wi-Fi issues
- Expand Library of Things—more circulating equipment, games, toys, etc.
- Reupholster lounge chairs
- Broadmeadow and Playground Road access issues
- More copies of bestselling and popular books, audiobooks, and music
- Reduce wait times for e-books and e-audiobooks
- Open before 10 am
- Add study rooms
- More programs by group: kids, older kids, tweens, teens, homeschoolers, adults, families, etc.

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

- More programs by type: creative, intellectual, Zoom, in-person, lecture series, how-tos, singalongs, language groups, genealogy classes, and neurodivergent-friendly
- More programs by time: afternoons, evenings, weekend mornings, and weekend afternoons
- More input from the community on our book collections
- Expand used books for sale
- Improve visibility and communication about GPL services and resources (circulating equipment, museum passes, digital content, information resources, and more), how to place holds, how to find good books to read, what's new at GPL, and more about the art on display
- Create a dedicated area for older kids (ages 5-10/11) in the Children's Room

Comments on the Value of the Groton Public Library to Residents:

- "Great job by all, workers and town finances well spent."
- "GPL is one of the best things about living in Groton!"
- "You all are AMAZING in general! I've never seen a library offering as many programs. You're doing SUCH a great job! GPL is a MAJOR selling point to this town!!"
- "IMO, a robust public library is one of the most important services the Town of Groton can provide its residents."
- "I use the library often. I find every aspect awesome. The staff, the resources, the program calendar. I am so grateful for our town library!"
- "We both consider the GPL a treasure in our town. We've been cardholders for 40 years or so. Though we are less mobile now, we love the building and find it accessible to us, from handicapped parking to the elevator. Use of the library has changed as we have gotten older. We draw heavily on the movie DVDs, also books, and appreciate access to the regional collection. ... Thanks for being there."
- "I just wanted to comment on how welcoming and friendly the staff is! We moved to Groton during the pandemic shutdown, and we don't have children. We had very little contact with other Groton residents/stores/community events during that time, but we did use the library and it was a lifeline and relief to be seen as town members and experience some kindness. I was even able to set up an electronic card until the building opened again. Thank you for your support during that time, and the continued support now."
- "The library staff is excellent, helpful, and cordial. The library is a welcoming place and the best place to allocate taxes."
- "The GPL provides excellent customer service. A full range of programs and materials are available. Great job. Love Groton Reads too - especially the partnerships with other organizations for a theme. Great community activity."
- "The Groton Public Library is an absolute gem. The best 'new book' collection I could imagine. And the interlibrary loan is incredibly responsive. The children's area is fantastic. Thank you for all that you do. It is so appreciated. I feel so fortunate to live in a town with such a strong and thriving public library."

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

- “We absolutely LOVE the GPL. I went as a child, and have now been bringing my 7YO daughter weekly since she was 6 months old. The staff is incredible, and the programs are fabulous. My daughter started reading very early, and now is a voracious reader, thanks in part to the lovely ladies in the Children’s Room, your incredible programs, and the vast selection of books and other items. We are so grateful for all the GPL provides.”
- “Just to say the GPL is a calm and soothing place to browse books, enjoy the exhibits and do research. Although my children are grown, I appreciate the many offering for young families and adolescents. The enrich our town and create a inclusive, welcoming atmosphere. Thanks for all you do to keep the GPL vital and up-to-date.”
- “Thank you for being there, especially through Covid. The library was an important refuge and comfort place to work. It’s my happy place.”
- “The people are what make our library truly special. The staff is so much more than just staff. Keep up the fantastic work! I always say our library is like a home away from home.”
- “The Children’s library staff is excellent! Lauren is truly a treasure and Nancy is so personable and kind. I love living in Groton and getting to know them and the rest of the staff. Keep up the great work!”
- “Thank you for all the hard work and being available for the community. GPL is a huge part of the town.”
- “The GPL was one of the major reasons we moved to town 19 years ago and we still love everything about it! Keep up the great work.”
- “I just want to say that I am grateful for the beautiful, calm space and wealth of resources that the Groton Public Library provides the community. Thank you.”
- “First- the library staff are awesome! Thank you for your hard work, lots of preparation, and many smiles. Please continue your expansive event program- we enjoy your adult activities and special events, whether thru the library or partnering with other community organizations.”
- “Just want to say how much that I appreciate the GPL staff for everything they do. I will NEVER forget how Nancy, Lauren, and the other children’s librarians supported us during the worst years of the pandemic by picking out thoughtful collections of children’s books for my daughters for remote pickup. GPL is one of the best parts of living in Groton, and I don’t say that lightly.”
- “No additional details other than you are my favorite place in the world! I’ve grown up coming here and finding so much comfort!”
- “I have been a member of the library since I moved to town in 1972. It is an exceptional resource. I am an avid reader and appreciate the opportunity to sign up for bestsellers and also more obscure books that I learn about. When my children were growing up, the library was also a wonderful resource for them as well. I don’t know where the library can improve as I am extremely pleased with it the way it is now!”
- “I would be in despair if our library changed anything which is now crucially important to our little community. I have dependent on our library for 32 years- the old building & the new. It is an important, very important part of our well-being. Keep doing what you do so well!”

GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

- "...I will say our Groton Public Library is TERRIFIC. In the 90's we'd take out a huge bag of children's books per week. All 3 of my daughters (ages 36, 39, 42) are voracious readers to this day."
- "Your staff are excellent and create a warm and inviting atmosphere that is not present in every library. Keep up the great work! :)"
- "I have lived in Groton for 25 years and have always participated in library offerings. When my son was young, he always enjoyed the Children's Room and the programs that were age specific. Now that my husband and I are retired - we have even more time to enjoy the library. We have taken advantage to use the library's museum passes many times over the years. Thank you"
- "We love the library and have been so excited by the programs and services offered here since moving to Groton!"
- "Decor, layout, furnishings, and plants are all a treat. The space is very pleasant to be in. Three cheers for GPL!"
- "The Groton Public Library does a great job of offering many diverse programs for all ages."
- "I love the Groton Public Library! For its size, it is remarkable in the breadth of its offerings. I particularly like the zoom and adult programming. The staff has always been wonderful. They're top notch!"
- "I occasionally have trouble reserving a book on line but if I call or come in you always help me. I think you are the best library I've ever used. Your staff is friendly and always helpful. You run wonderful programs and collaborate with other community organizations--eg. Nicole and the Groton Center Book Group, Beth with 'Let's Talk About It.' In couldn't be better. Thanks for all you do."
- "The children's room is fantastic! My daughter loves the weekly crafts and it is so great to have a place to take my tween son. We LOVE the selection of events kids yoga, lego, drumming and robots there really is something for everyone! We are so very fortunate to have such a kind and helpful group of librarians, my children and I love it. We are always greeted with a smile by Ms.Lauren and her wonderful staff. I never have time to look upstairs but frequently reserve books or passes online. Nicole is helping with a new bookclub too. GPL is great and a big part of that is everyone who works there!"
- "None. You are doing a great service to the community of Groton and other towns. Keep the great work 😊"
- "GPL is amazing. I love all the programs, the books, and the beautiful space. The staff for the kids library are top notch, warm, kind, and professional. We love GPL and intend to make use of all it offers as we retire in Groton."
- "Recently the main challenge for me is the noise level. When trying to work/research at the Library, many fellow patrons are loud, particularly the kids of half days. The librarians are placed in a difficult position of acting as 'hockey referees.' Other than this, which is really symptomatic of our society more generally, the GPL is an ABSOLUTE TREASURE. Keep up the vital work!"

GPL to our community: Thank you! We will continue to do our very best to serve you!