

# LITERACY PROGRAMS RESEARCH



**- FEDERATION OF ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES -**



Executive Summary

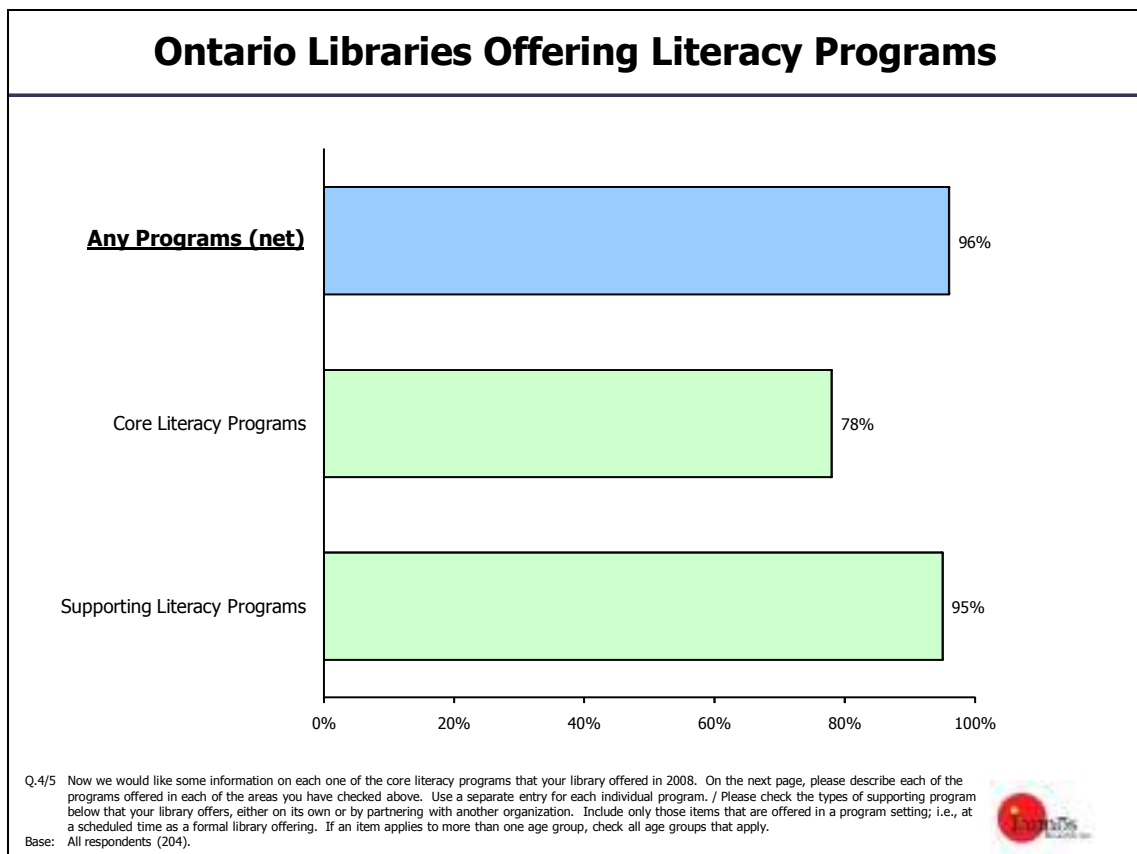
February 2010

## MAIN FINDINGS

### Ontario Libraries Offering Literacy Programs

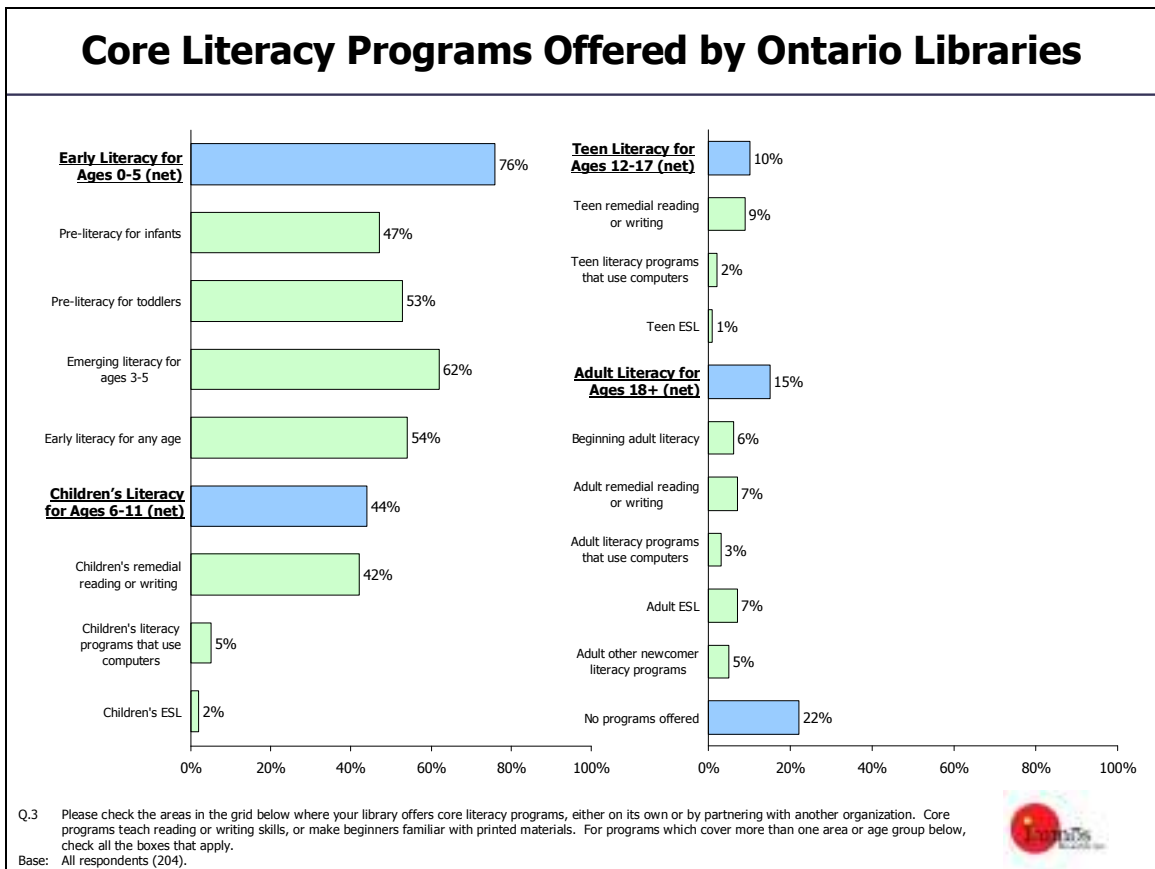
This research was conducted on behalf of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries to assist the Ontario Ministry of Culture and other government agencies by providing information on public libraries' literacy programs. A total of 204 public library boards participated, serving 87% of the Ontario population.

This study found that Ontario public libraries have a high degree of involvement in providing literacy programs to residents. Of these libraries, 78% provide core programs, a total that rises to 96% when supporting literacy programs are included (please see the note at the end of this document for our definitions of core and supporting programs).



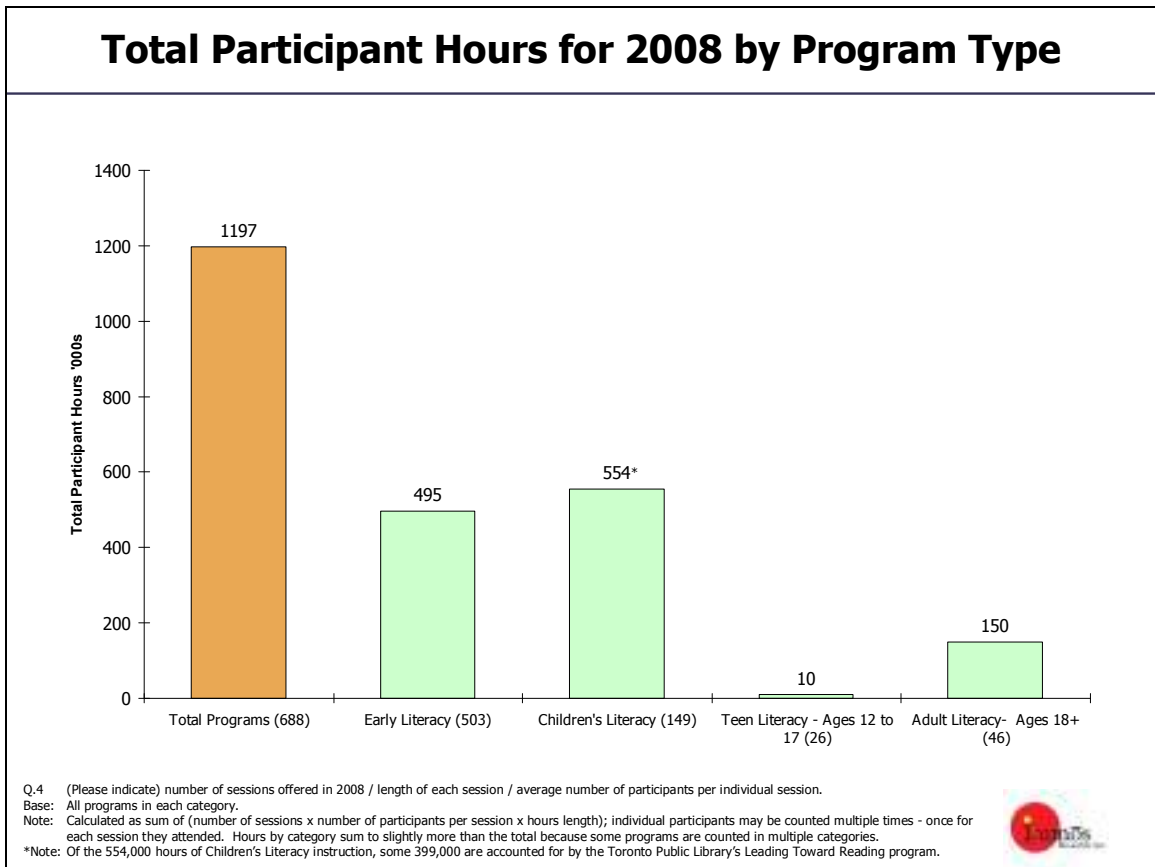
## Provision of Core Literacy Programs

Public libraries take an active role in providing core literacy programming, particularly in Early Literacy for children under six years of age, where 76% provide core programs. Further, 44% of libraries provide Children’s Literacy, 10% provide Teen Literacy, and 15% provide Adult Literacy programs.



## Total Participant Hours for Core Literacy Programs

Total hours of core literacy program instruction amount to 1.2 million per year, aggregated across a total of 688 programs offered by the surveyed libraries. Most of these instruction hours are accounted for by Early Literacy and Children’s Literacy programs, with 150,000 hours spent on Adult Literacy and 10,000 hours devoted to Teen Literacy.




**Availability of Core Literacy Programs by Library Size**

Core literacy programs are more likely to be available at libraries serving larger populations, with the overall incidence of provision rising from 59% among libraries serving 5,000 or fewer, to 97% among libraries serving over 50,000. Few libraries serving populations of under 50,000 offer Teen or Adult Literacy programs.

<b>Core Programs by Size of Service Population</b>				
	<u>Total</u> (204) %	<u>Service Population</u>		
		<u>5,000 or Less</u> (85) %	<u>5,001 - 50,000</u> (82) %	<u>Over 50,000</u> (37) %
Any Core Literacy Programs (net)	78	59	90	97
Early Literacy for Ages 0-5	76	54	89	97
Children’s Literacy for Ages 6-11	44	26	55	62
Teen Literacy for Ages 12-17	10	7	7	24
Adult Literacy for Ages 18+	15	8	10	41

Q.3 Please check the areas in the grid below where your library offers core literacy programs, either on its own or by partnering with another organization. Core programs teach reading or writing skills, or make beginners familiar with printed materials. For programs which cover more than one area or age group below, check all the boxes that apply.  
Base: All respondents in each category.




## Characteristics of Core Literacy Programs

The table below shows the median characteristics of the 688 core literacy programs profiled in this study. The median is the point where half of programs are higher and half are lower; unlike the mean, it is not susceptible to being influenced by a few very large programs. The table shows that the median core literacy program:

- Has 33 sessions in a year
- Is conducted in 60 minutes sessions
- Has 14 participants per session, and 400 participants in a year
- Comprises 360 person-hours of instruction for participants

<b>Characteristics of Core Literacy Programs</b>					
	<u>Total</u> (688)	<u>Early</u> <u>Literacy</u> (503)	<u>Children's</u> <u>Literacy</u> (149)	<u>Teen</u> <u>Literacy</u> (26)	<u>Adult</u> <u>Literacy</u> (46)
Median number of sessions per year	33	33	26	22	36
Median length of session (minutes)	60	45	60	60	75
Median participants per session	14	15	10	10	10
Median participants per year	400	476	217	205	264
Median person-hours of instruction	360	360	260	250	392

Q.4 (Please indicate) length of each session / average number of participants per individual session / number of sessions offered in 2008.  
Base: All programs in each category.



## Instruction of Core Literacy Programs

A high percentage of the core literacy programs offered by public libraries (86%) are instructed by library staff, who in many cases have specialized training (e.g., Master of Library and Information Science, Library Techniques Diploma, B.Ed. or B.A.). Volunteers are involved in just 16% of programs, and 14% instructed by community partners. Volunteers are involved in about one-third of programs offered to those aged six and above, when remedial instruction begins.

### **Program Instructors**

	<u>Total</u> (688)	<u>Early</u> <u>Literacy</u> (503)	<u>Children's</u> <u>Literacy</u> (149)	<u>Teen</u> <u>Literacy</u> (26)	<u>Adult</u> <u>Literacy</u> (46)
Library Staff	86	91	81	85	61
Other (net)	29	20	49	39	61
Volunteers	16	7	39	31	35
Community partners	14	11	13	19	37
External contractors	2	2	2	---	4

Q.4 (Please indicate) instructors (check all that apply).  
Base: All programs in each category.




## Sources of Funding of Core Literacy Programs

Of all core literacy programs, 89% are funded at least in part by library operating budgets, while 26% have other sources of funding, including donations, grants, and user fees. Funding via sources outside the library's operating budget is more common for Adult Literacy programs.

<b>Sources of Program Funding</b>					
	<u>Total</u> (688)	<u>Early</u> <u>Literacy</u> (503)	<u>Children's</u> <u>Literacy</u> (149)	<u>Teen</u> <u>Literacy</u> (26)	<u>Adult</u> <u>Literacy</u> (46)
Operating Budget	89	91	85	96	74
Other (net)	26	24	32	19	35
Donations	11	9	16	12	20
User fees	10	13	3	---	2
Grants	8	4	15	8	26
No funding	3	2	3	---	11

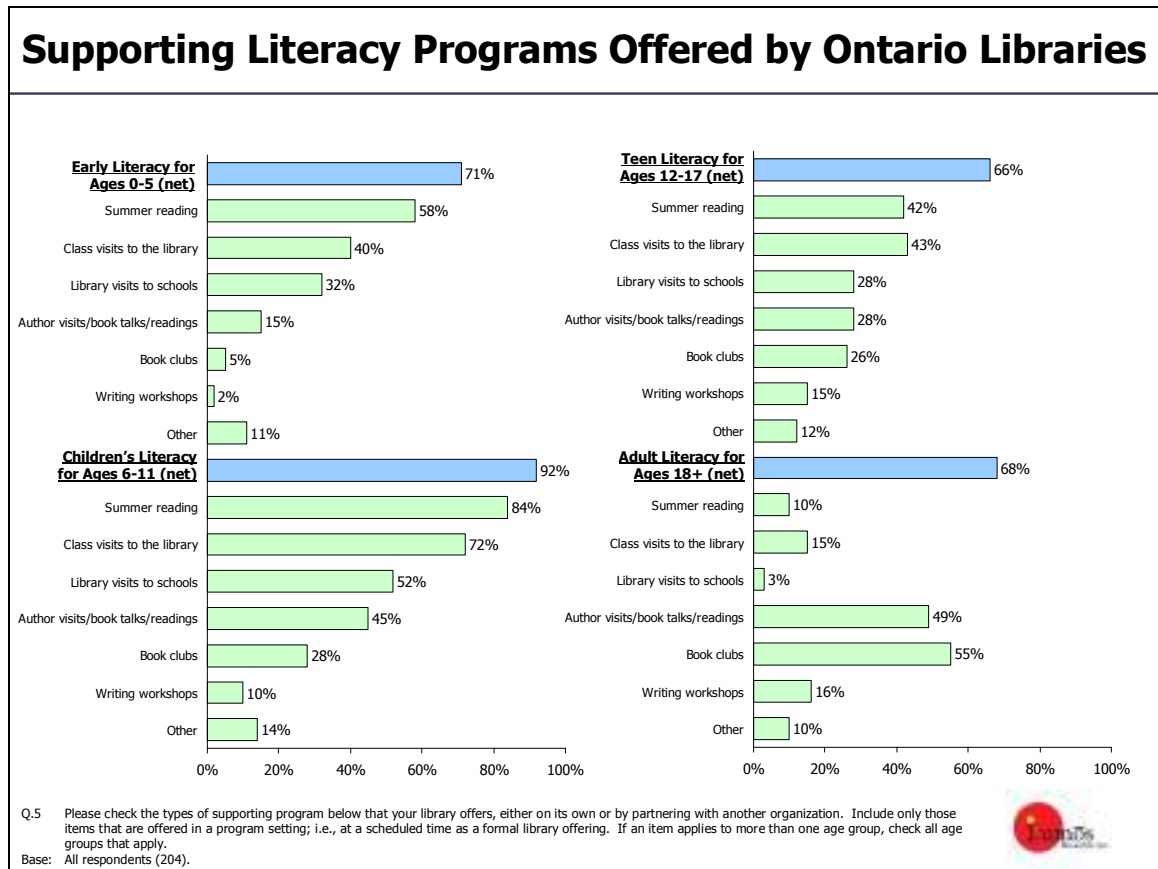
Q.4 (Please indicate) sources of funding (check all that apply).  
Base: All programs in each category.





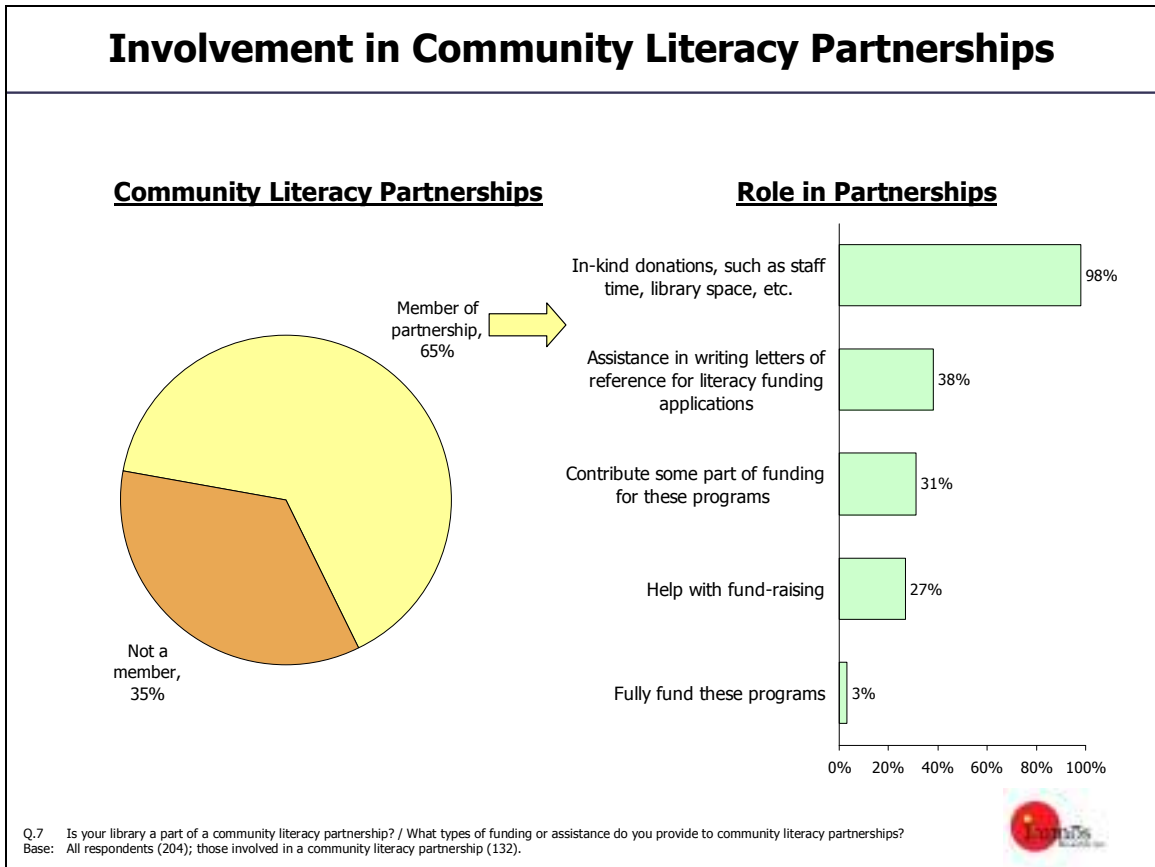
## Provision of Supporting Literacy Programs

Supporting literacy in the community is a primary role of the public library, and virtually all libraries (95%) offer some form of supporting literacy programs, such as book clubs, class visits, or summer reading programs. Supporting programs are widely available in libraries of all sizes, with Children’s supporting programs being the most common, offered by 92%.



## Community Literacy Partnerships

Overall, 65% of libraries state that they are members of a Community Literacy Partnership. Almost all such partnerships (98%) involve in-kind donations of staff time, library space, etc., with direct funding from the library involved in one-third of cases.



## **Addendum – Definitions of Core and Supporting Literacy Programs**

Literacy programs may be defined in various ways. The main objective of this survey was to obtain detailed information on the core literacy programs offered by Ontario public libraries. In formulating a definition of literacy programs, the Research Task Force distinguished between core and supporting programs:

**Core Literacy Programs** teach or demonstrate reading or writing skills, or make beginners familiar with printed materials in one of the following ways:

- a) Among teens and adults, by providing training intended to remedy shortcomings in participants' abilities to read and/or write, including in English as a Second Language.
- b) Among pre-readers and early readers, by familiarizing participants with printed materials, or by teaching basic reading and writing skills.

**Supporting Literacy Programs** are a broader set of programs that foster and promote the use of literacy skills, such as book clubs, author visits, writing workshops, etc. Participants benefit from such programs even though they already have age appropriate reading and writing skills.

The definition of literacy is sometimes extended to computer literacy. Computer literacy is not a focus of this survey, and the programs referred to as "using computer" in this report are programs in which the computer is used specifically to remedy shortcomings in participants' abilities to read and/or write.