

# DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

PARTICIPANT SURVEY REPORT

2024



## Introduction

The Literacy Cooperative sends out an anonymous survey every year to all the families enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) for at least six months, as a way to measure impact and satisfaction. This year, a total of 2,003 responses were gathered, representing the experiences of 2,003 children enrolled in the program. For the fourth consecutive year the results of the 2024 survey evidenced enrollment in DPIL is an overwhelmingly positive and enriching experience for families in Cuyahoga County.

New questions were added this year to capture new and relevant insights. The first of these new questions explored families' familiarity with the Science of Reading. We also asked this year if the parent or guardian who filled out the survey has an active library card. Finally, for the first time the survey assessed if participation in the Imagination Library has positively impacted family relationships.

## Summary of Findings

The results of the survey were extremely positive. Over four in five children are reading with their parents/guardians more after receiving the books, over ninety percent of respondents believe participating DPIL is helping prepare their children for kindergarten, and almost all (94 percent) respondents are sharing the benefits of participation with other parents who aren't yet enrolled. A particularly encouraging finding that comes from a new question this year is that 90 percent of parents and guardians believe that participation in DPIL has positively impacted their family relationship. This feedback shows the family-wide benefits of participating in DPIL.

Building on last year, The Literacy Cooperative continues to explore the impacts and benefits of DPIL participation by income. The results are just as insightful and encouraging as past years' results. It was optional for participants to provide their annual household income, and 1,767 (88 percent) chose to do so. 343 (19 percent) of respondents reported annual incomes of less than \$25,000. These respondents represented "lower income" households and were compared against "higher income" households earning more than \$25,000. Across the survey, the majority of families of all income levels reported experiencing the benefits of participating in DPIL, but for lower income households, the impacts were even more impressive. For example, lower income households were more likely than higher income households to

- Have their child request to be read to after receiving Imagination Library books
- Have the books inspire their child to learn more about a topic
- Find the reading tips found in Imagination library Books to be helpful
- Have the parent or guardian read more themselves since receiving Imagination Library books

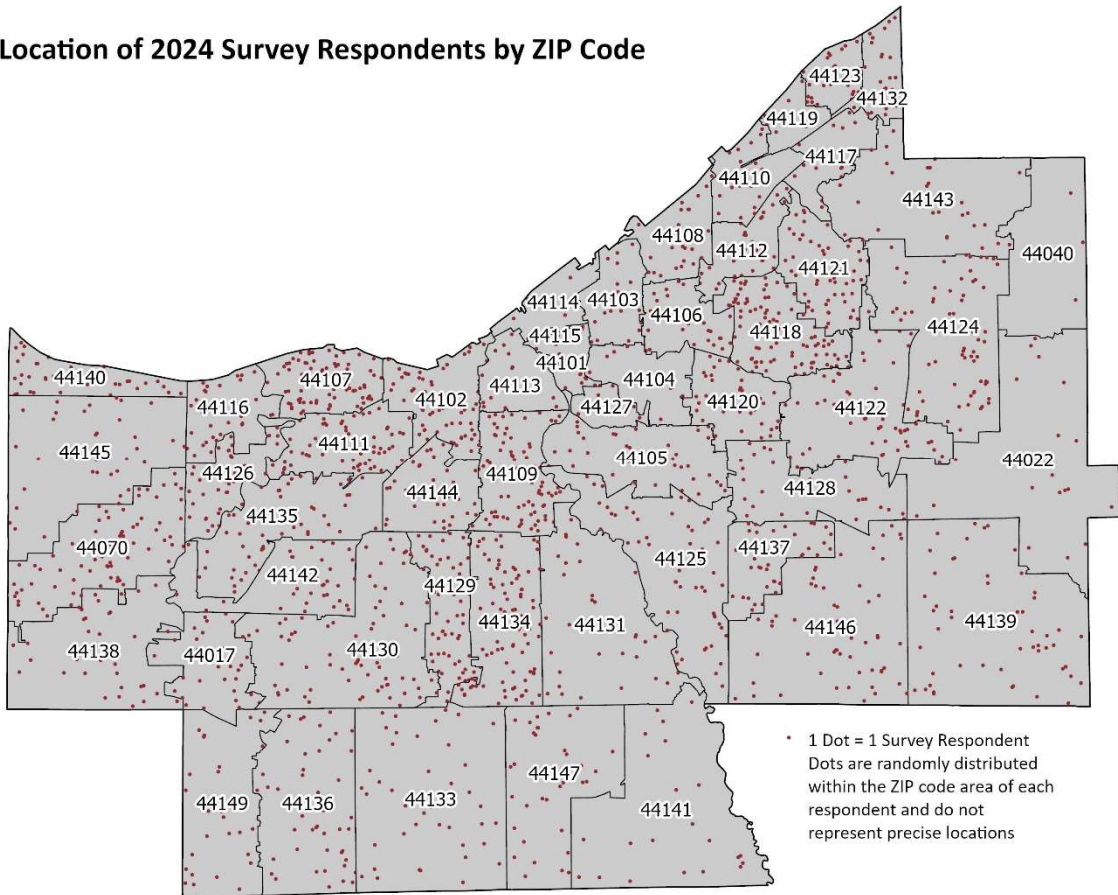
Over three-quarters of lower income households also reported that Imagination Library books comprised at least half of their home libraries. The results from this survey continually demonstrate the importance of The Literacy Cooperative and participation in DPIL for all families, but even more so for those with lower incomes.

Perhaps most telling is that in the open-ended question about the benefits of receiving Imagination Library books, over 1,800 households shared how DPIL benefits their family.

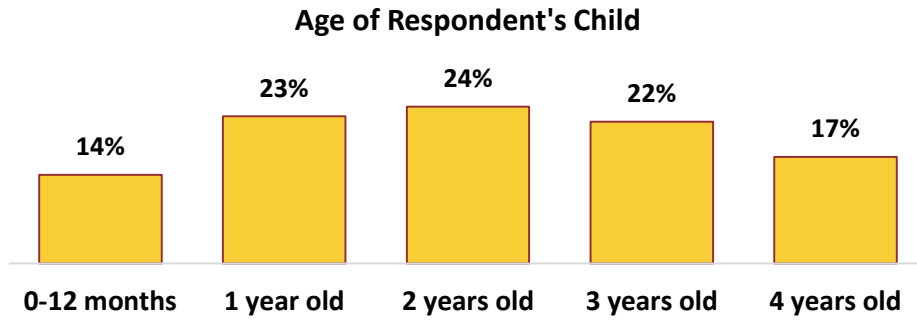
## Survey Responses

The survey was open for approximately four weeks through mid November 2024, and received 2,003 responses. Of those responses, 1,998 provided ZIP codes that could be mapped. The map below indicates a strong geographic variety of respondents throughout Cuyahoga County.

**Location of 2024 Survey Respondents by ZIP Code**

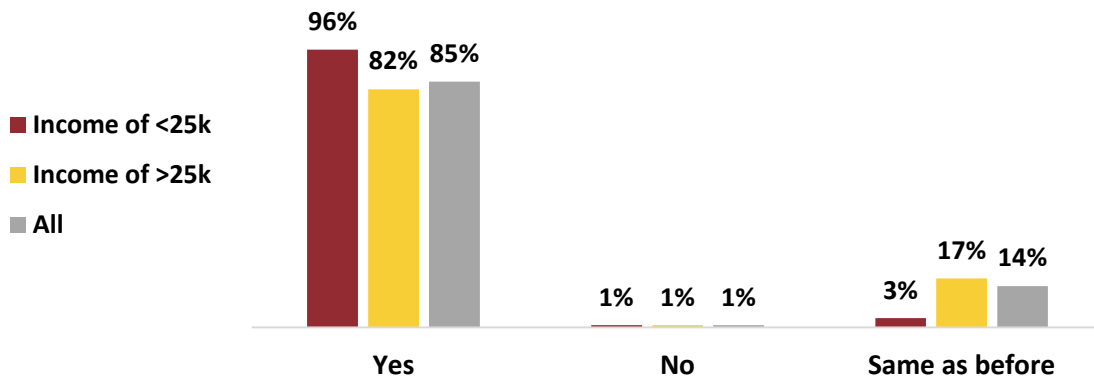


There was a relatively even distribution of eligible ages amongst respondents' children. This indicates a strong mix of insight from the perspectives of parents/guardians of children of all eligible ages.



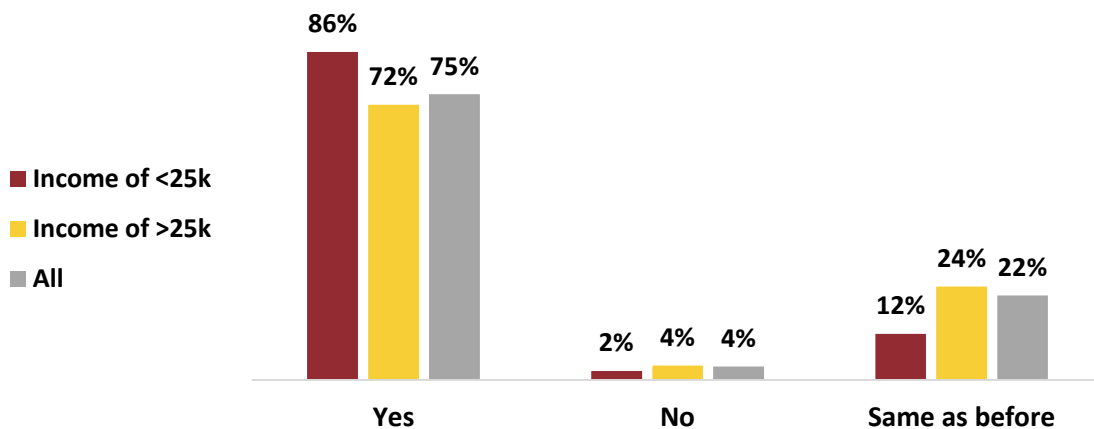
## Reading Habits

**Since you've been receiving Imagination Library books, is your child asking you to read to him/her more often?**



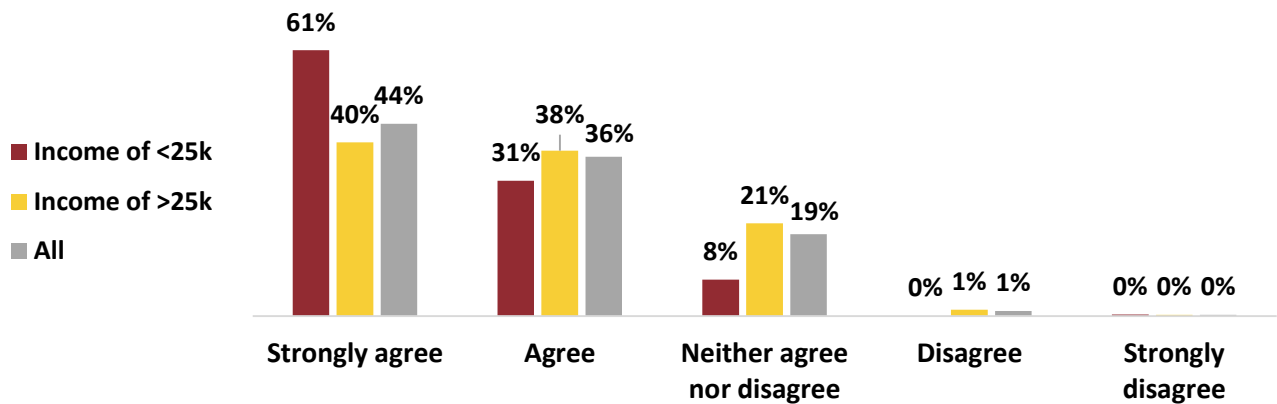
About 85 percent of respondents reported their child asking them to read with them more often after receiving Imagination Library books. About 17 percent of respondents indicated that their children were too young for this question to apply to them, so they were removed from the results. A statistically significantly larger number of lower income families (96 percent) reported reading more after receiving the books than higher income families (82 percent), according to a chi square test  $p < .001$ .

**Since you've been receiving Imagination Library books, are you personally reading more?**



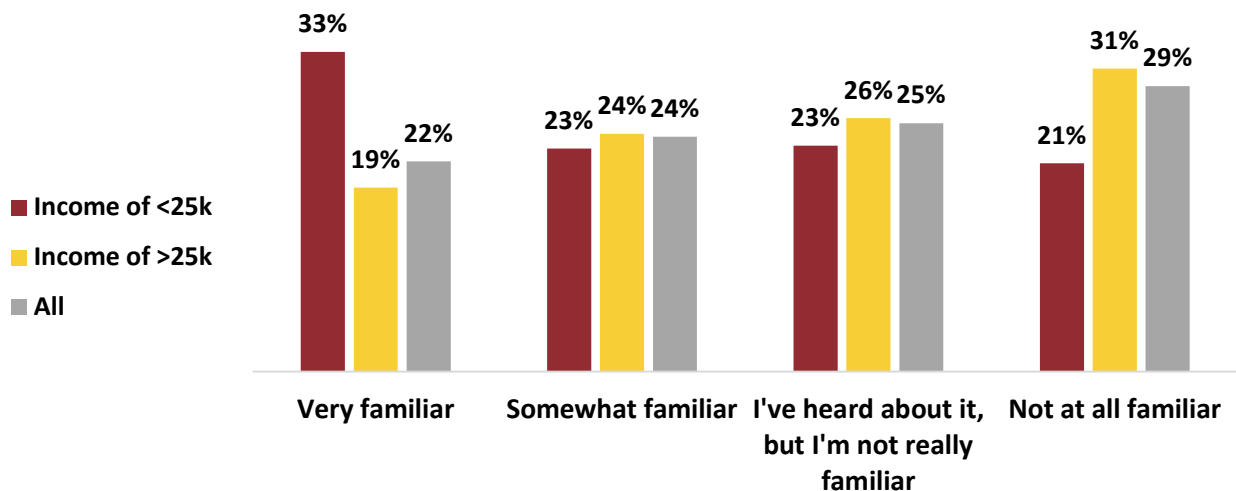
About 75 percent of parents and guardians reported reading more themselves since receiving Imagination Library books. This rate was 86 percent in lower income households, compared to 72 percent in higher income households. This represents a statistically significant larger percentage of adults in lower income households (86 percent) reading more since receiving Imagination Library books than adults in higher income households (72 percent) according to a chi-square test  $p < .001$ .

**I find the reading tips included on the inside flap of the Imagination Library books to be useful**



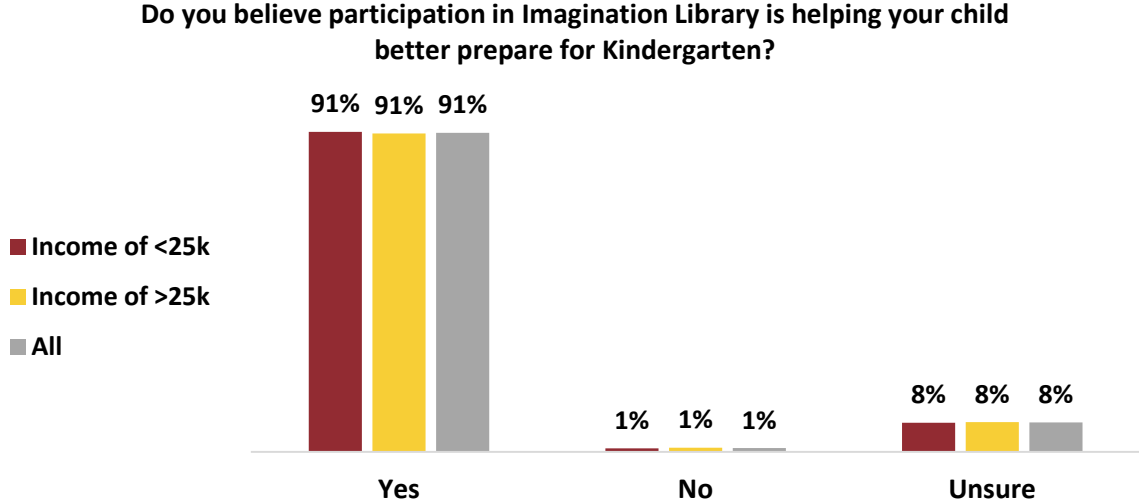
About 80 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they found the reading tips inside the Imagination Library books to be helpful, with more lower income households agreeing. After removing the 18 percent of respondents who indicated that this question wasn't applicable to them because they were receiving the "board books" which are for very young children and do not come with reading tips, the difference between the averages of how lower income households and higher income households responded to the questions was statistically significantly different according to a t-test  $p < .001$ .

**How familiar are you with the Science of Reading?**

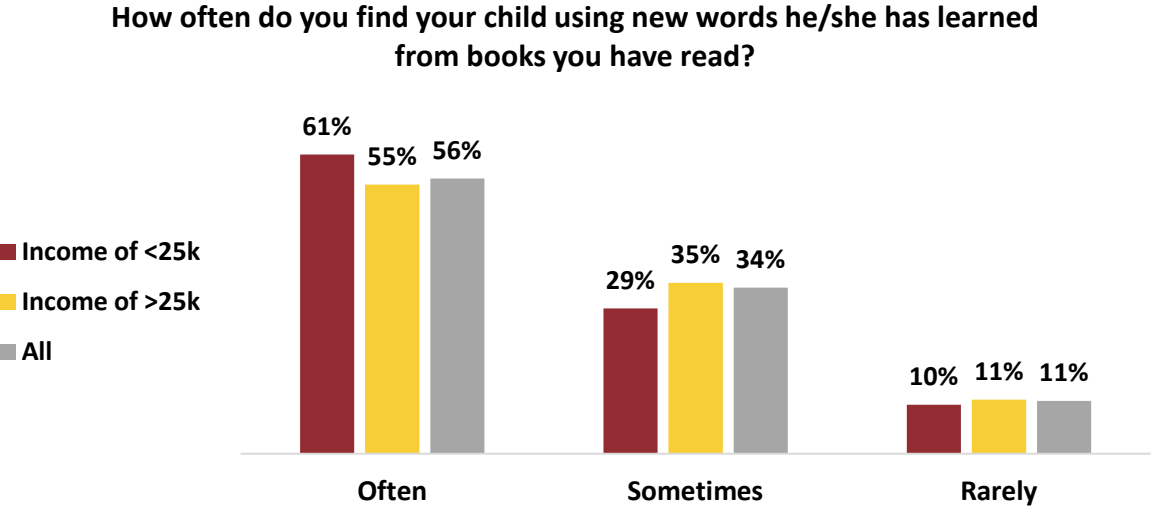


This year, the Literacy Cooperative wanted to find out how familiar households are with the Science of Reading. Households were pretty evenly split with being familiar or not familiar with the Science of Reading, with 46 percent of households being somewhat or very familiar. The difference in the rates of respondents' level of familiarity with The Science of Reading was statistically significantly different according to a t-test  $p < .001$ , with lower income households generally being more familiar with the Science of Reading.

### Impact of Receiving the Imagination Library Books

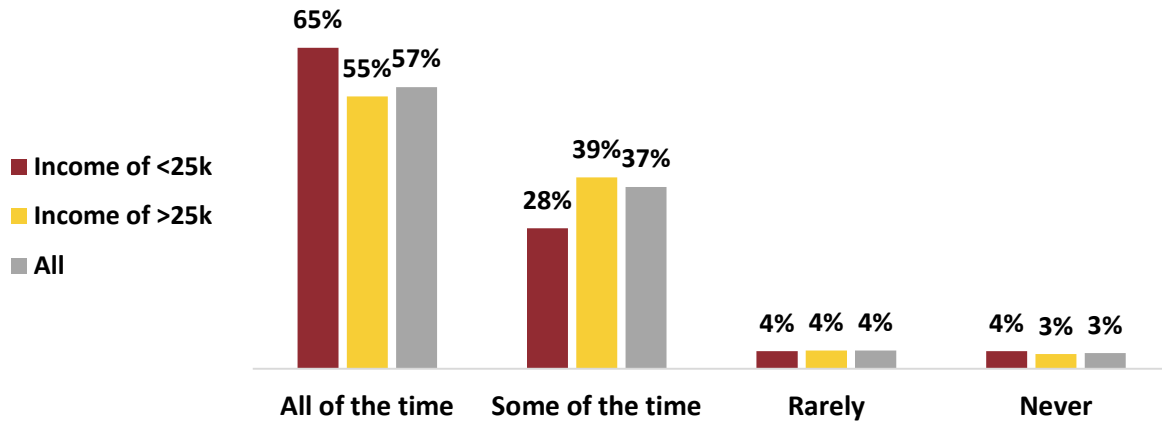


Over 9 in 10 respondents felt that participating in Imagination Library was helping their child prepare for kindergarten, regardless of household income level.



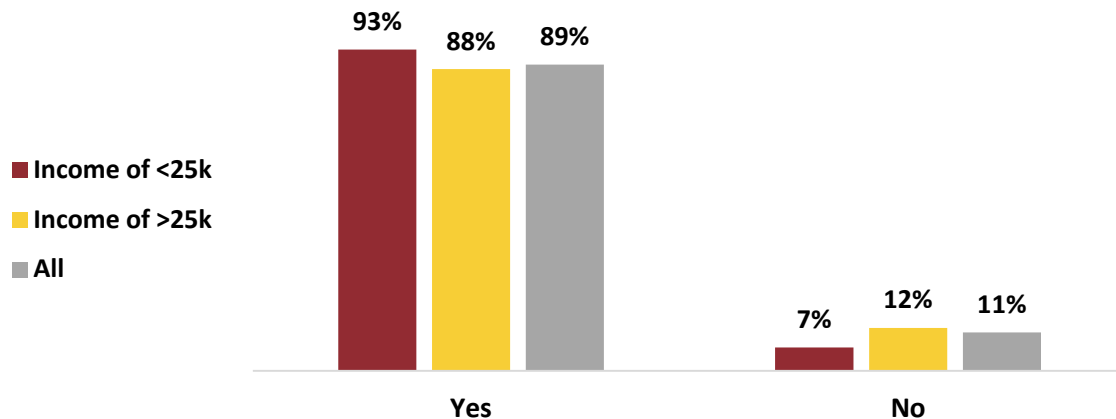
Over half of all respondents indicated that their child was often using new words they learned from the Imagination Library books they were reading. When you add in children who sometimes use new words they learned, the results increase to 9 in 10 households.

**When you read the books with your child, are you talking together about the characters, plot and pictures in the books?**



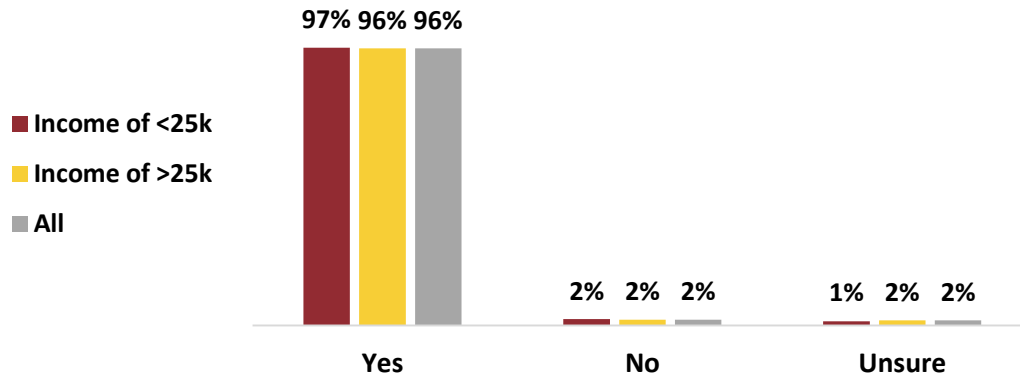
Over half (57 percent) of respondents talk with their child about the characters, plot, and pictures of the books all the time while reading together. Another 37 percent do this some of the time when reading with their child. The difference in the average responses between lower and higher income households was significant according to a t-test  $p=.04$ , evidencing that lower income households report engaging with their children about what they're reading more often.

**Have any of the books inspired your child to learn more about a topic?**



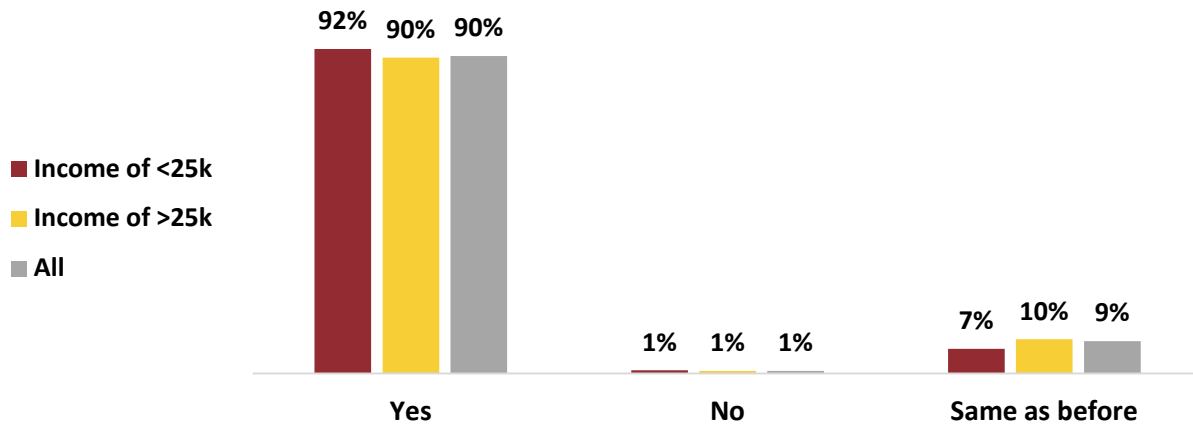
For children who were old enough (50 percent of the sample), books from Imagination Library inspired 9 out of 10 of them to learn more about a topic. This observation was about 6 percentage points more pronounced for lower income households (93.3 percent compared to 87.6 percent), a statistically significantly different rate according to a chi-square test  $p=.02$ .

**Does your child look at the books independently after you've read the book together?**



Results indicated that for applicable children (75 percent of the sample), the large majority of children spend time with the books after the parent has already read the books to them. Only four percent of parents were unsure, or believed their child did not look at the book after they read together.

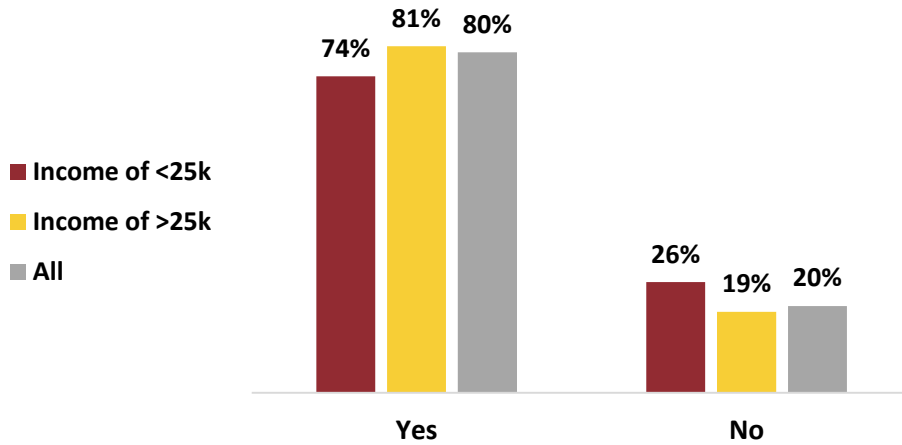
**Do you believe participation in Imagination Library has positively impacted your family relationships?**



This year, the Literacy Cooperative wanted to explore how participating in Imagination Library is impacting family relationships. Nine in 10 households report that they believe participating in Imagination Library has positively impacted their family relationships.

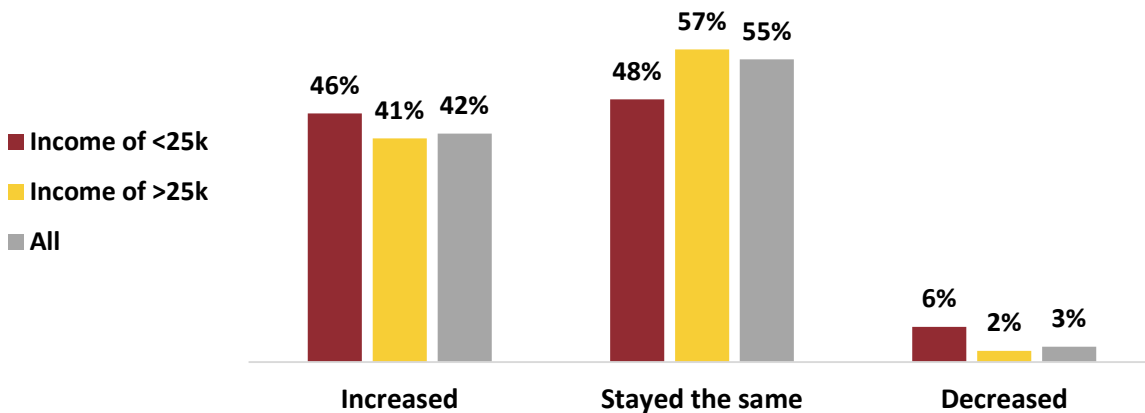


### Do you have an active library card?



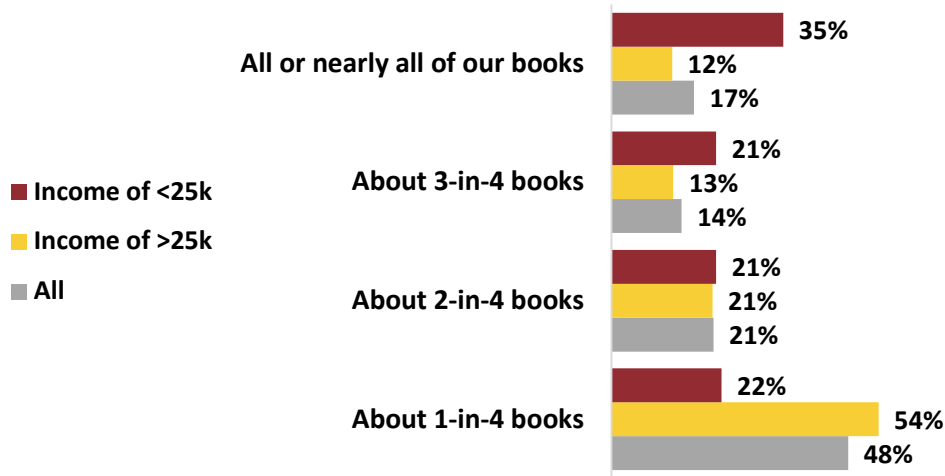
The Literacy Cooperative asked for the first time this year if households have an active library card. A large majority (80 percent) of households do have an active library card. A greater percentage of higher income households have library cards (81% compared to 74%), a statistically significant difference according to a chi-square test  $p < .01$ .

### Since participating in Imagination Library, our public library use has...



Respondents indicated that public library use increased for 42% of respondents. The way in which lower income households answered this question was statistically significantly different from higher income households according to a chi-square test  $p < .001$ . Interestingly, lower income households reported higher rates of *both* increased and decreased public library use after receiving Imagination Library books, while higher income households reported a higher rate of public library use being unimpacted by receiving the Imagination Library books.

**Imagination Library books make up what portion of your home library?**



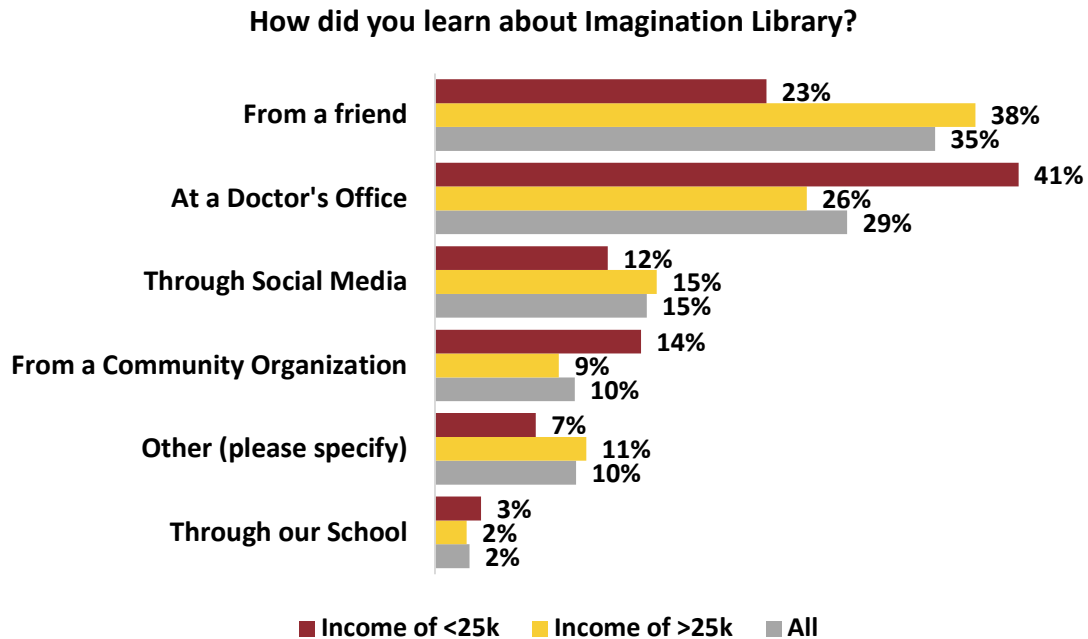
For about half of respondents (52 percent), Imagination Library books comprise at least half of their home libraries. For lower income households, about a third of respondents indicated that Imagination Library books comprise all or nearly all of their home library. These differences in the proportions of books that make of home libraries is statistically significantly different between lower and higher income households according to a t-test  $p < .001$ , with lower income households on average reporting greater proportions of home libraries being comprised of Imagination Library books.

## Benefits of Receiving the Imagination Library Books

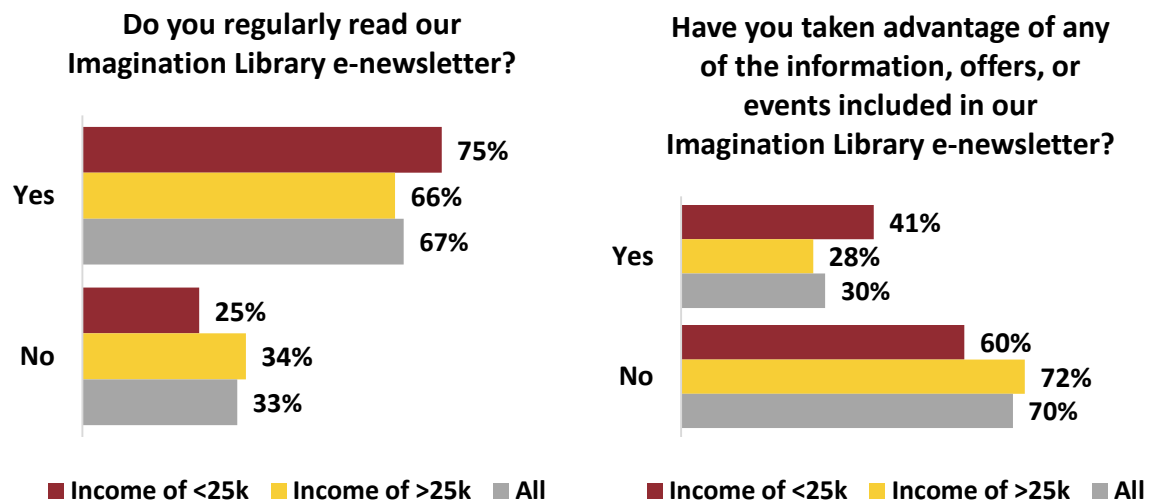
Respondents were asked what they believed were the most important benefits of receiving Imagination Library books (or conversely why they didn't believe there was a benefit to receiving the books). 1,806 respondents provided meaningful answers, which were analyzed and sorted into bullet points organized by the prevalence of the theme.

1. ***Encourages a Love of Reading***
  - The excitement of receiving a new book each month often leads to more reading time and a deeper interest in books, even before children can read on their own.
2. ***Supports Early Childhood Learning and Development***
  - Parents noted improvements in vocabulary, comprehension, and cognitive skills, such as imagination and creativity, as a result of regularly engaging with the books.
3. ***Builds a Free Personal Library for Children***
  - Many parents expressed gratitude for receiving high-quality books at no cost, which allows families who might not be able to afford books to still build their child's library.
4. ***Promotes Family Bonding and Quality Time***
  - Reading together provides quality time and strengthens relationships between parents and children as they explore stories, characters, and ideas.
5. ***Introduces New and Diverse Books***
  - Respondents appreciated how Imagination Library introduces books they might not have selected themselves, often expanding their children's experiences with diverse topics, stories, and cultures.
6. ***Creates Excitement and Anticipation***
  - When a new book arrives in the mail, it creates a sense of anticipation that makes reading time something to look forward to, often leading to repeated readings of the book.
7. ***Promotes Imagination and Creativity***
  - The engaging stories and illustrations spark new ideas, and children often start making up their own stories, demonstrating enhanced creative thinking.
8. ***Helps Prepare for Kindergarten and School***
  - The exposure to storytelling, reading routines, and educational concepts helps children get ready for kindergarten and further academic learning.

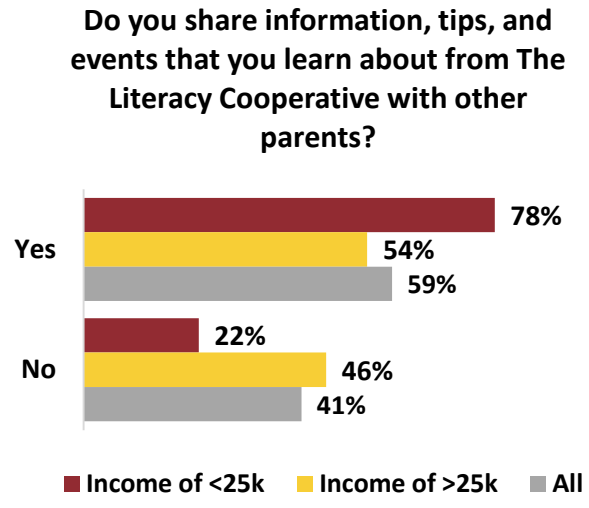
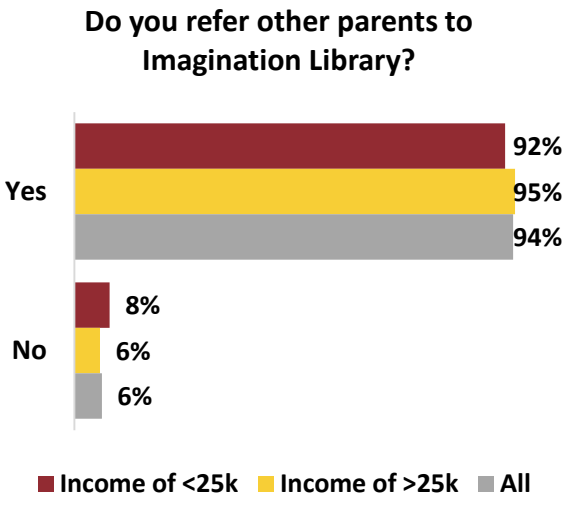
## Connection with the Program



The majority of respondents (35 percent) indicated learning about DPIL from a friend, and over another quarter of respondents (29 percent) learned about DPIL at the doctor's office. Of note, the most common way lower income households learned about DPIL was at the doctor's office (41 percent), and a much smaller percentage of these lower income households learned about the program from a friend (23 percent) compared to higher income households (38 percent).



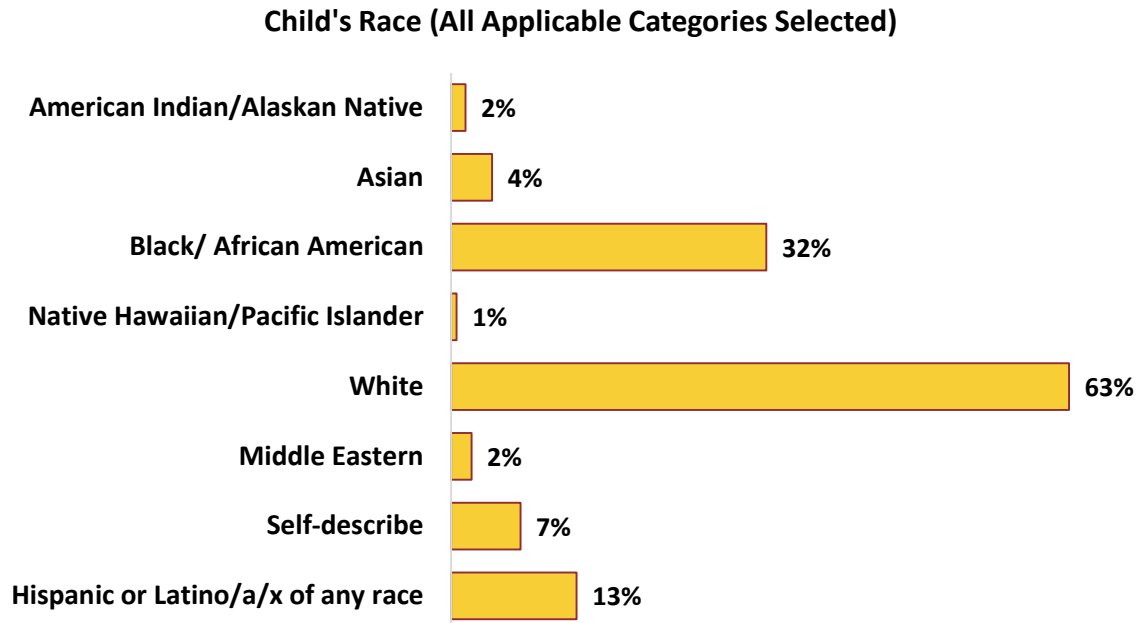
Of the respondents who received the newsletter, nearly seven in ten regularly read it, and close to a third (30 percent) report having taken advantage of information, offers, and/or events in the newsletter.



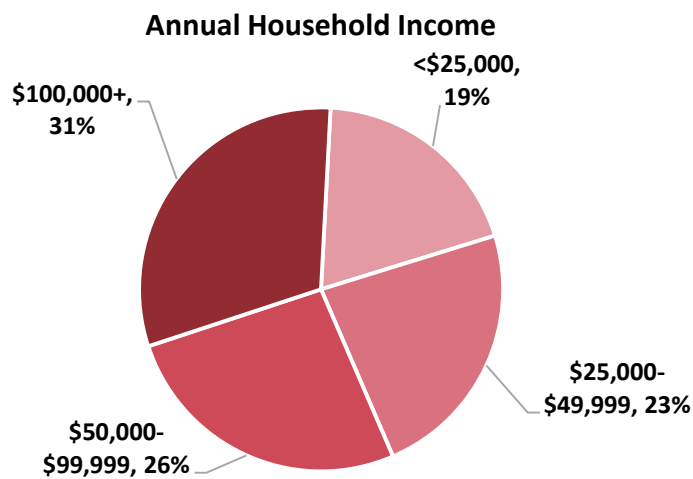
The Literacy Cooperative is interested in learning about the ripple effect, or how DPIL participants share with other parents and guardians about the benefits of the program. What the results indicate is that it is extremely common for parents to share with others about the program; 94 percent of parents or guardians refer other parents to Imagination Library and 59 percent share information, tips, and events that they learn about from The Literacy Cooperative with other parents.

## Who Was Heard From

Of the 1,815 respondents that provided information about children's race (91 percent of all respondents), there is a demographic makeup that is reflective of Cuyahoga County's racial makeup.



There was a relatively even split amongst the respondents across levels of income.



Roughly half (52 percent) of the respondents had received a degree from a four-year college, and 98 percent of the respondents had at least a high school diploma.

### What is Your Highest Level of Education

