



# Assessment of Reading and Public Library Awareness

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## Background

Pediatricians play a key role in the promotion of the physical health and safety of children and serve as advocates for their cognitive development as well. One way in which Pediatricians contribute to such development is through the encouragement of early literacy. Great success has been found in the Reach Out and Read Program in which the modeling of dialogic reading and the gifting of books during well child visits encourages parents to read aloud to their children. Research has shown that this intervention increases the receptive and expressive language capacities of children thereby providing needed skills for school success (1).

Although a focus has been placed on the promotion of early literacy, only 48% of children in the United States are read to on a daily basis. There continue to be disparities between socioeconomic groups as well as racial and ethnic groups (2). Data specific for Texas shows an even bleaker picture; only 42% of children between 0-5 years of age are read to daily, placing Texas 49<sup>th</sup> in the state rankings. The National Survey of Early Childhood Health, a telephonic survey completed in 2000, examined factors associated with reading to young children. Among the factors found to be significantly associated with reading was number of books in the home. Not surprisingly, those homes with fewer resources were statistically less likely to read to their children. (3) In resource limited households books may not be a feasible purchase and accessibility to stores offering children's books may be problematic.

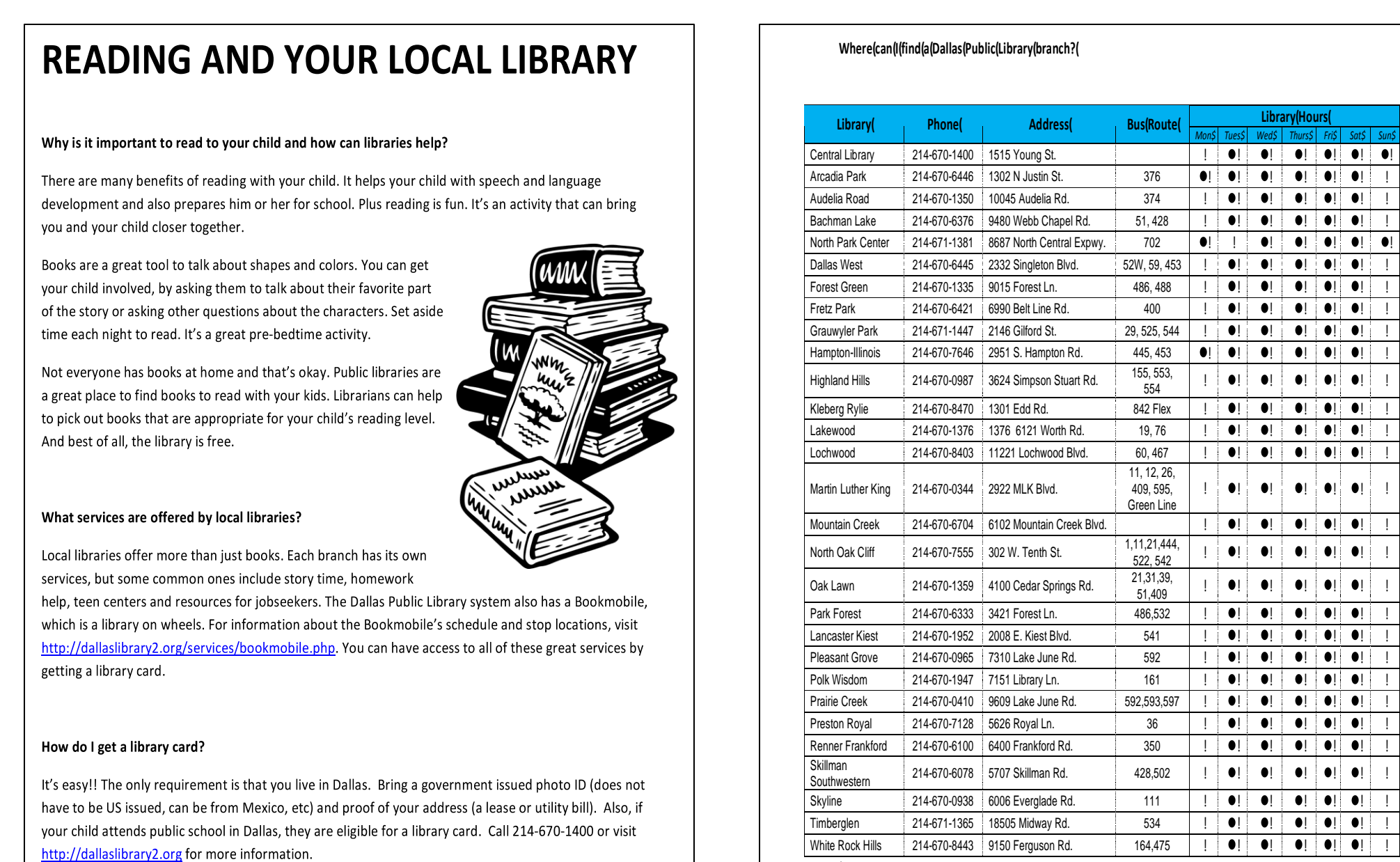
In the United States we have the luxury of having a well-developed relatively accessible library system. Libraries not only offer a great variety of reading materials, but also events and programs including summer reading programs, ESL and computer classes, tax help and story time for the youngest of readers. While the average Reach Out and Read participant will acquire 10 books during their time in the program, a library card can afford them the opportunity to explore hundreds if not thousands of additional titles.

## Objectives

- Create a library handout that can be incorporated into well child visit anticipatory guidance
- To increase awareness among continuity clinic families of local library offerings
- To increase library membership amongst continuity clinic families
- Increase reading frequency in the homes of continuity clinic families

## Materials & Methods

A handout was created for use during the anticipatory guidance portion of the well child check. The handout outlined the importance of reading to children and highlighted public libraries as a source of books and other services. Both English and Spanish language documents were available for distribution.



In the three week period prior to the roll-out of the library handout, a survey was conducted of continuity clinic families presenting for the 4 month to 2 year well child checks. These anonymous surveys assessed frequency of reading in the home, library card ownership, public library usage and basic demographic information. A follow-up survey was conducted two months after the roll-out of the library handout which assessed similar information.

## Results

TABLE I. Demographics of Survey Participants

Category	Pre Survey Totals		Post Survey Totals	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Asian	2	2.4%	1	1.7%
Black	26	31.7%	16	27.6%
White	1	1.2%	1	1.7%
Hispanic	32	39.0%	28	48.3%
Multiple Races	9	11.0%	5	8.6%
Other	1	1.2%	0	-
<b>Income</b>				
< \$15,000 US	25	30.5%	11	19.0%
\$15,001 - \$25,000 US	15	18.3%	16	27.6%
\$25,001 - \$35,000 US	9	11.0%	12	20.7%
\$35,001 - \$45,000 US	6	7.3%	8	13.8%
\$45,001 - \$55,000 US	3	3.7%	0	-
> \$55,001 US	1	1.2%	0	-
<b>Primary Language</b>				
English	47	57.3%	27	46.6%
Spanish	17	20.7%	21	36.2%
Both English and Spanish	4	4.9%	3	5.2%
Other	2	2.4%	0	-
<b>Education Attainment</b>				
High School Diploma or GED	48	58.5%	32	55.2%
Associate Degree	7	8.5%	7	12.1%
Bachelor Degree	6	7.3%	3	5.2%
Master and/or Advanced Degree	1	1.2%	1	1.7%

Notes: 82 Participants completed the Pre Survey and 58 participants completed the Post Survey.

## Results

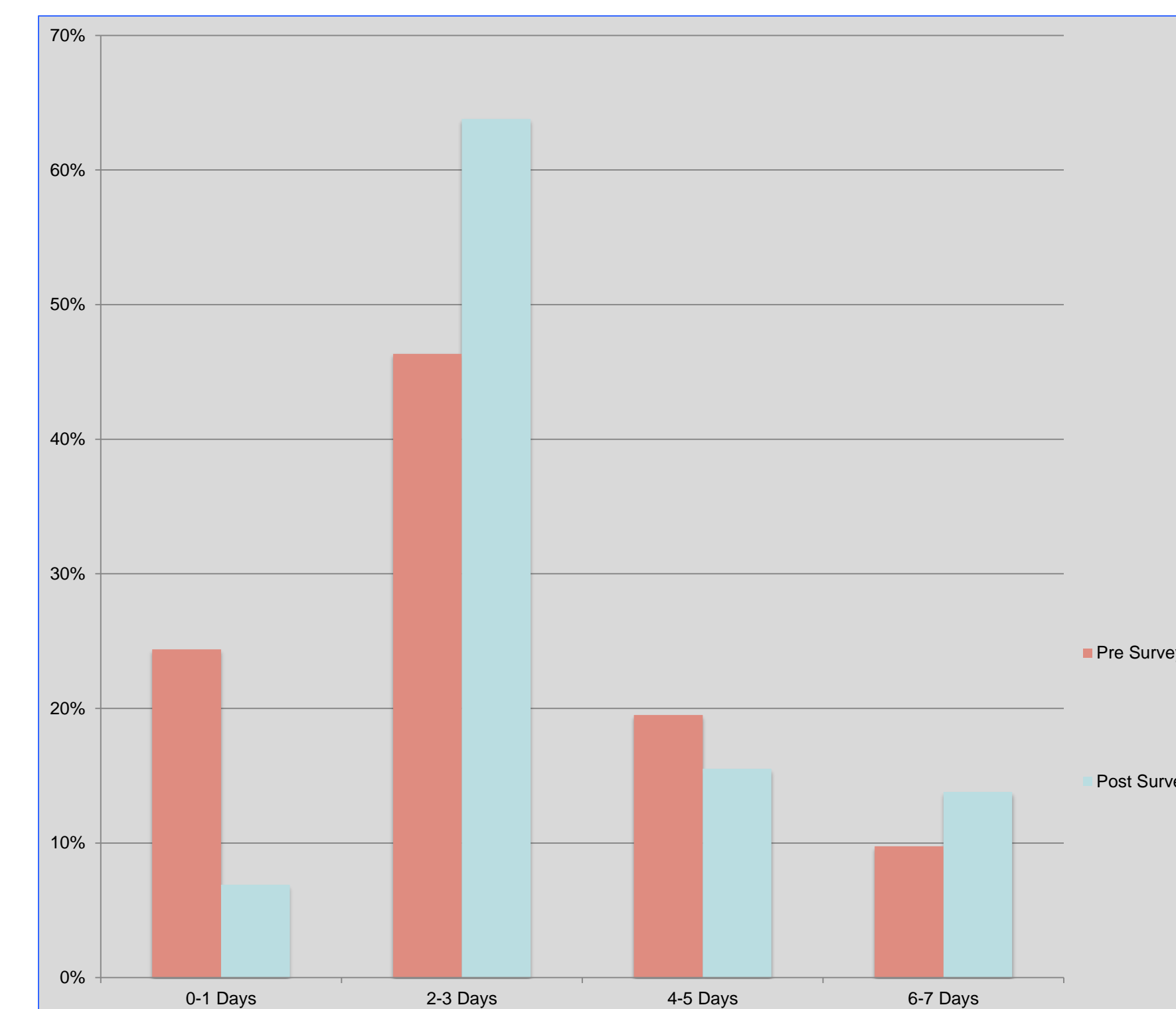


Figure 1. Reported frequency of reading, days per week

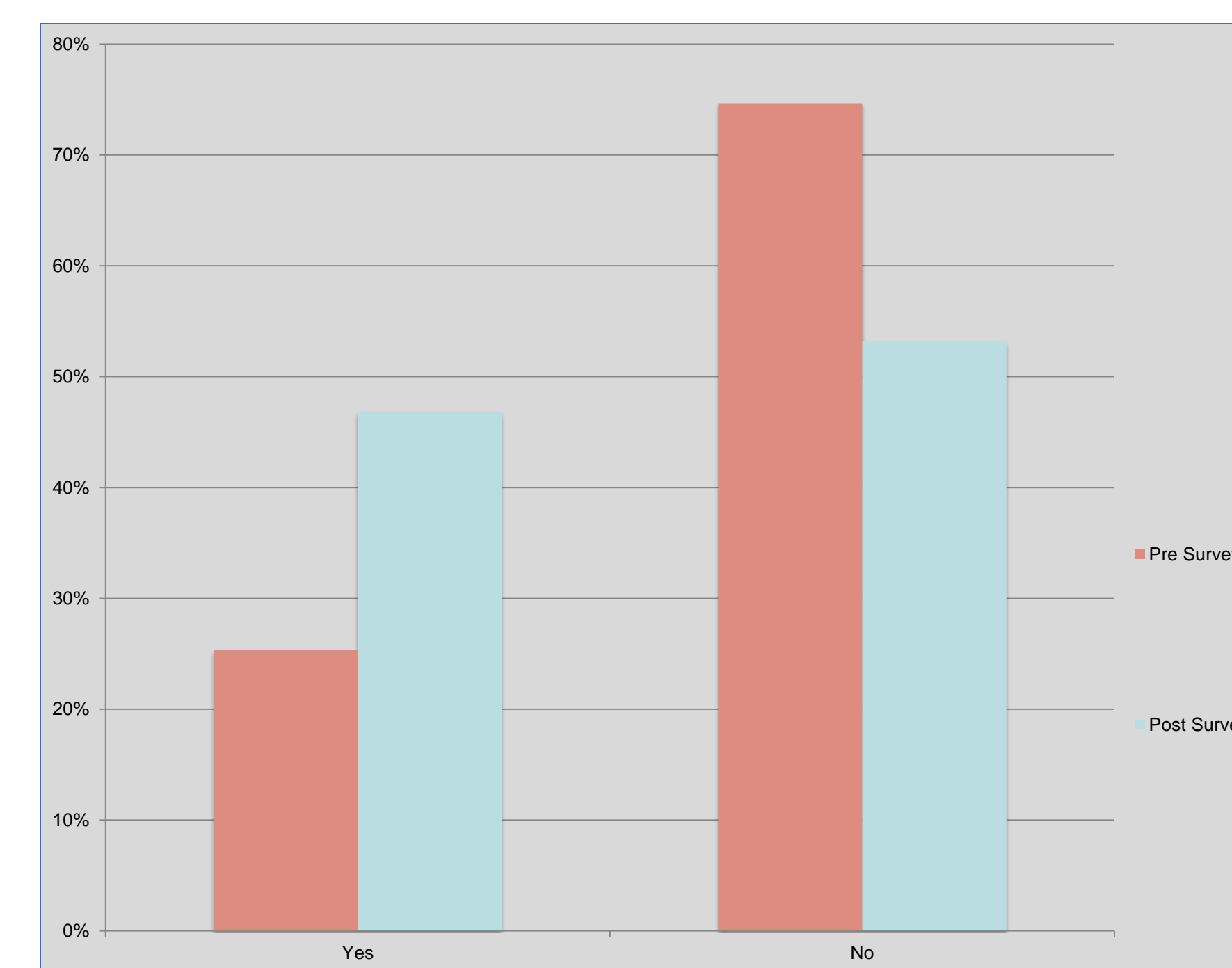


Figure 2. Provider discussed public libraries

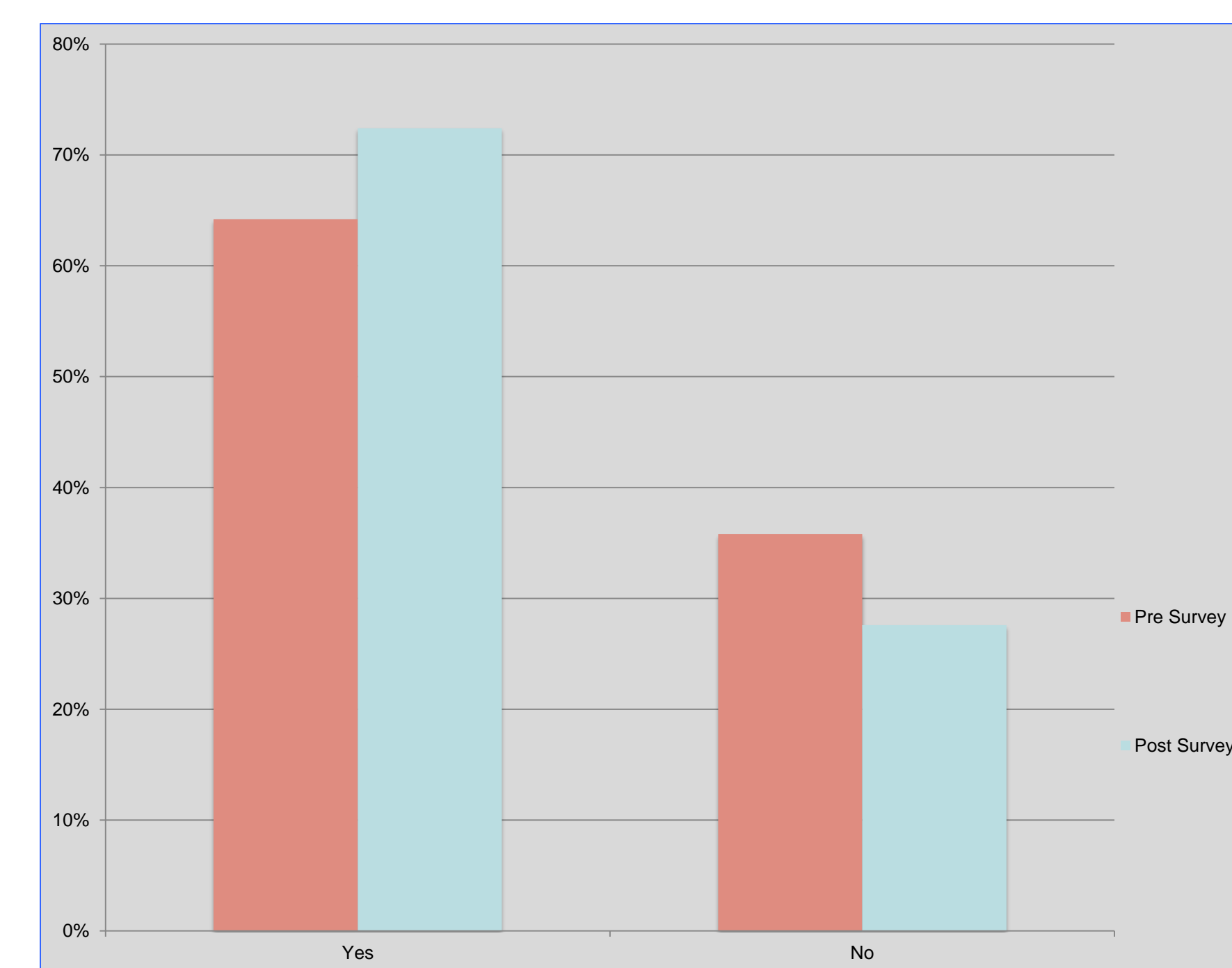


Figure 3. Library card ownership

## Conclusions

A handout discussing the importance of reading and the use of public libraries was created for distribution during routine Pediatric well child checks. Pre and post surveys revealed that parents were able to correctly identify some but not all of the resources available to them at local libraries. Approximately 50% of households surveyed owned 15 or more books, whereas 10% owned just zero to four books.

Library card ownership and library attendance both increased during the study period. It is unlikely however that the increase in the latter can be attributed to distribution of the handout alone. Despite the increase in library card ownership, visits to the library remained stagnant. One in four families surveyed in the post-intervention period had not visited their local library in the prior six months, suggesting that barriers remain. We did not explore possible barriers in this study.

Families routinely receive anticipatory guidance regarding the importance of reading. Just eleven percent of parents could not recall having discussed reading with their child's provider. Following roll-out of the library handout, parents were more likely to indicate that their Pediatrician had discussed local libraries during the anticipatory guidance portion of the well child visit.

One limitation of the study was the that the handout was specific to the Dallas Public Library system. The RPP clinic serves families from Dallas as well as other jurisdictions. It is possible that neighboring communities may have different accessibility and offerings from Dallas.

## References

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