

Australian School Library Survey Report 2021



Based on responses to the 2021 Softlink School Library Survey
Australia

Background and objective

The Australian School Library Survey, conducted by Softlink on behalf of the school library sector, examines key trends and issues impacting school libraries.

This report provides survey findings with a breakdown of findings for Catholic, Government, and Independent schools.

Points for analysis include annual school library budgets and staffing levels as well as the use of digital resources in school libraries, school library services, trends, and other key factors important to school libraries.

The results help to advocate the role of school libraries and library professionals to education decision makers, as well as through industry associations and networks.

Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the survey

School libraries are thriving centres of learning both in the physical library space and in the virtual classroom, and school library staff enrich school teaching and learning programs through their specialist role.

In 2010, the Australian Federal Government requested submissions to the 'Inquiry into school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian schools. Softlink undertook a survey of Australian school libraries to provide data that enabled a unique and informed response to the Inquiry.

Since then, the survey has been used to highlight the issues and opportunities school libraries are experiencing. Softlink has continued to survey Australian schools annually and in 2015 extended this to include New Zealand and UK schools. The annual surveys continue to build an accurate reference point for understanding changes, impacts, and trends over time.

1.2 About Softlink

Established in 1983, Softlink is proudly an Australian company with a global presence across 60 countries. Softlink continues to work with school libraries and educators to provide solutions that engage students and support school library staff.

With the help of our customers, our flagship school library system, [Oliver v5](#) is continually evolving to meet the changing needs of libraries, educators, and students. We would like to thank all the libraries out there that continue to contribute ideas to make each iteration of Oliver v5 the best yet.

More recently, from ideas submitted by our customers, we have released a new information curating tool for libraries - [LearnPath](#). LearnPath provides an easy-to-use online space for students to develop their research skills while promoting the value of school libraries and resources.

Softlink products offer secure deep digital integration with eBooks and streamlined integration with virtual learning environments and school administration systems.

We are passionate about School Libraries and have had a long relationship with the library and information industry. We strive to make the best products we can to help navigate the challenges and opportunities the 21st Century teaching and learning environment presents for school libraries.

2.0 Survey findings summary

Key findings from the 2021 Australian School Library Survey:

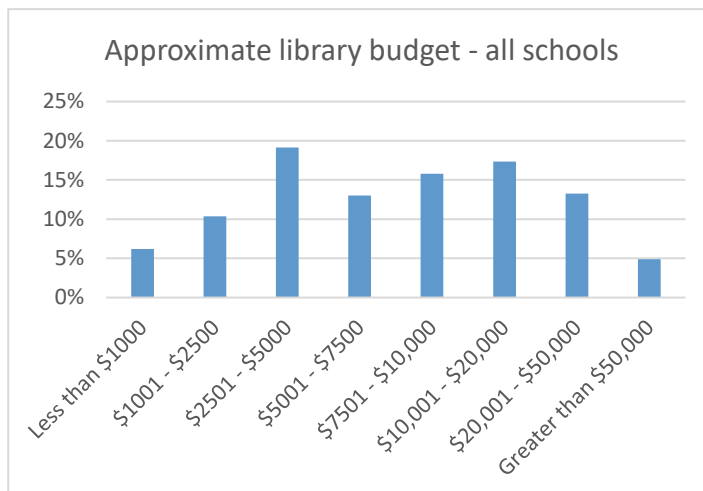
- 55% of respondents indicated that they think their school library budget is adequate.
- 47% indicated that they think their school library is adequately staffed.
- 59% of respondents reported that their library budget had not changed from the previous year, 14% reported it had increased, and 27% reported it had decreased.
- 67% of respondents reported no change to their staffing levels from the previous year, 7% reported it had increased, and 26% reported a decrease.
- COVID-19 was attributed as a reason for both budget and staffing decreases.
- When asked about their school library space, respondents reported that the following best describes their library:
 - Classroom library/libraries: 2%
 - Designated library area in an open-plan space: 17%
 - Designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building: 74%
 - Shared space: 7%
- The top 3 responsibilities of school library staff (over and above managing the collection) were:
 - Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (59%)
 - Providing regular timetabled library lessons (52%)
 - Performing a teaching role (45%)
- The top 3 avenues school library staff use to promote the library and resources were:
 - School library displays (91%)
 - In the school newsletter (51%)
 - Via the Library Management System (42%)
- When asked about the level of support the school library receives from the Senior Leadership Team, 41% of respondents reported a high to very high level of support, 33% reported a moderate level of support, and 26% reported a low to very low level of support.
- When asked about the level of teacher engagement with the library, 32% of respondents reported a high to very high level of engagement, 47% reported a moderate level of engagement, and 21% reported a low to very low level of support.
- When asked about the level of student engagement with the library, 59% of respondents reported a high to very high level of engagement, 32% reported a moderate level of engagement, and 9% reported a low to very low level of support.

3.0 School library budgets

3.1 Approximate library budget all schools

When looking at reported budgets for all Australian schools, the highest percentage of respondents (19%) reported a budget in the \$2501-\$5000 range.

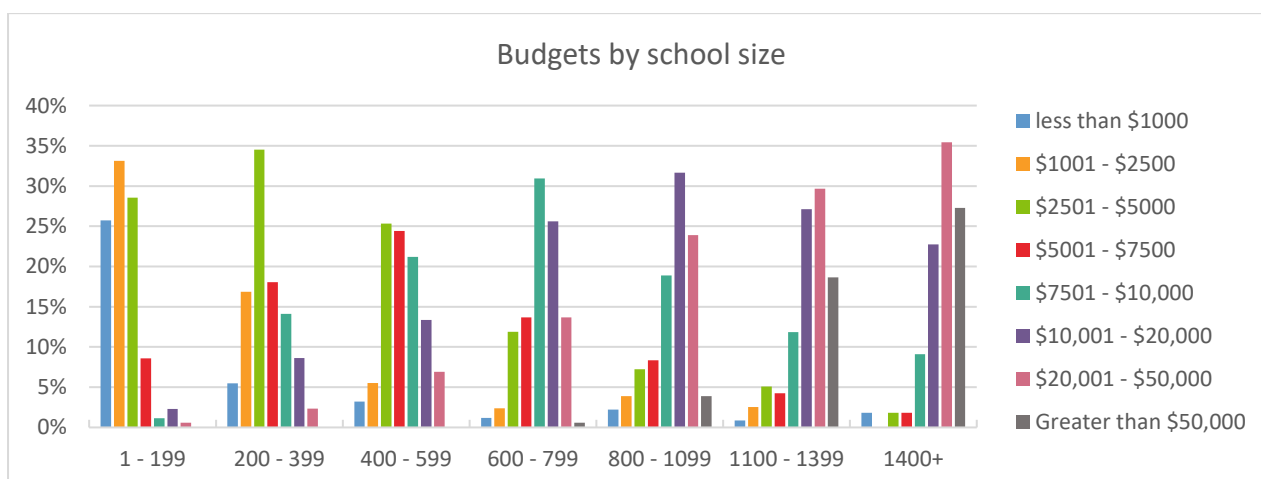
Further breakdown of school budgets by school size, education provider, and school type has been provided on the following pages.



Note: Reported "Unknown" budgets have not been included

3.2 Budgets by school size

When looking at library budgets by school size, respondents reported the following budget ranges:



School size (number of students)							
School library budgets	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
less than \$1000	26%	5%	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%
\$1001 - \$2500	33%	17%	6%	2%	4%	3%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	29%	35%	25%	12%	7%	5%	2%
\$5001 - \$7500	9%	18%	24%	14%	8%	4%	2%
\$7501 - \$10,000	1%	14%	21%	31%	19%	12%	9%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	2%	9%	13%	26%	32%	27%	23%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	1%	2%	7%	14%	24%	30%	35%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	0%	0%	1%	4%	19%	27%

Note: small schools reporting in the high range reported that it was a one-off payment to refurbish the library, update the collection or because they were a new school. Large schools reporting in the low ranges reported budget freezes due to COVID.

3.3 Budget changes

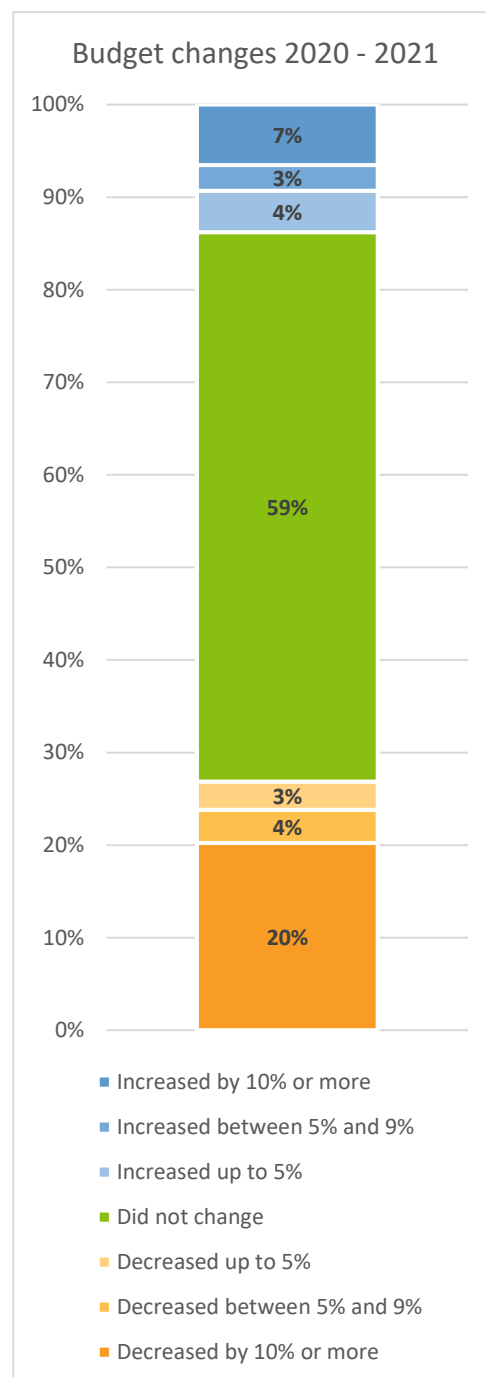
In 2021, 59% of respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2020. 27% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 14% reported a budget increase.

Reasons provided for budget **decreases** include:

- Change in school leadership
- Impacts of COVID-19 (school-wide budget cuts, need to purchase cleaning supplies, fee relief for parents, need for classrooms to provide access to online learning, reduced income from international students, decrease in fundraising and parent voluntary contributions)
- A decrease in enrolments
- Previous year's budget was higher due to refurbishment
- Other priorities/projects within the school
- A decrease in Government funding
- School leadership not valuing the school library
- Reduction due to previously over-spending
- A decrease in the demand for non-fiction books with teachers referring students to Google instead

Reasons provided for **increases** include:

- Library refurbishment
- Increased student numbers
- Donations from trusts, parents, and the P&C
- Increased staff and student interest in the library
- Change in library staffing
- Strong advocacy for the library
- Change in school leadership
- To purchase eResources, Accelerated Reader, Library Management System
- New library
- To update the collection after significant weeding

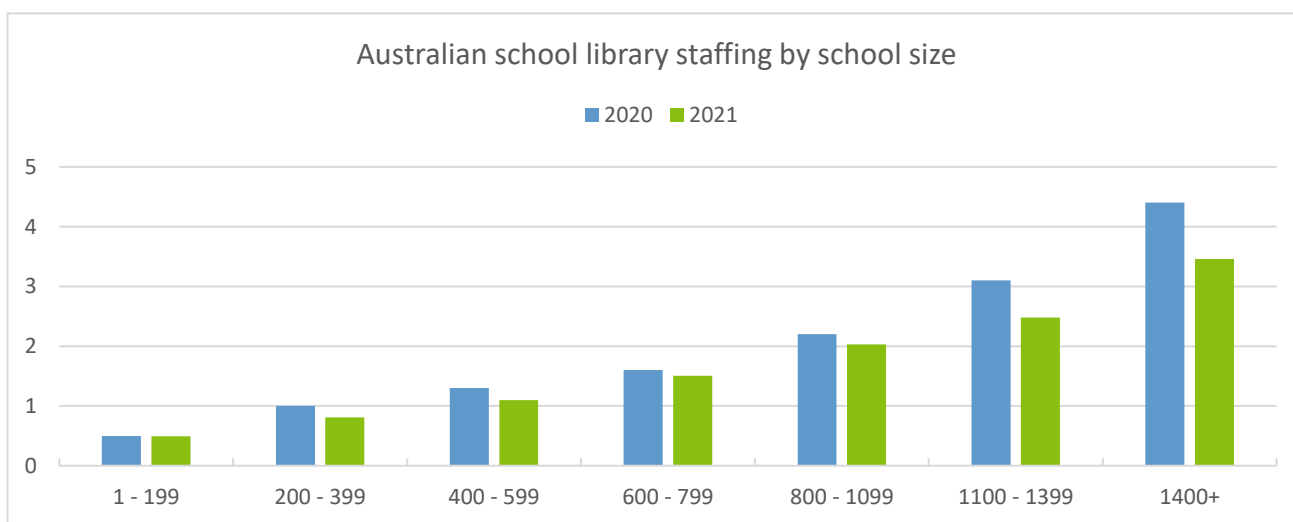


4.0 School library staffing

4.1 Staffing by school size

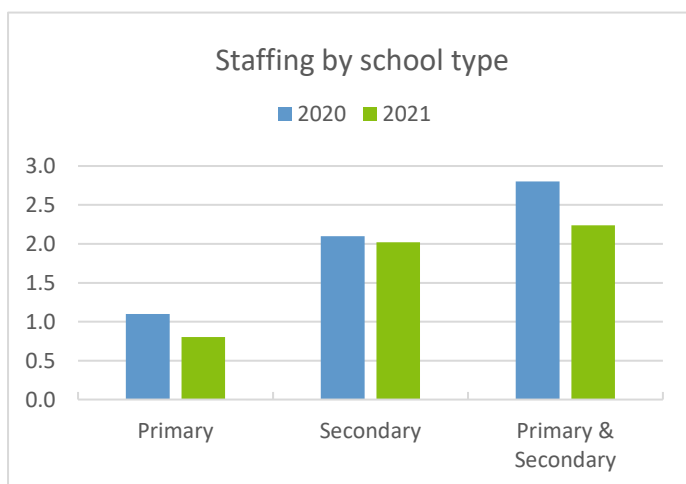
When looking at school library staffing by school size, the reported full time equivalent (FTE) staffing average comparison for 2020 and 2021 is as follows:

School Size	2020	2021
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE
200 - 399	1.0 FTE	0.8 FTE
400 - 599	1.3 FTE	1.1 FTE
600 - 799	1.6 FTE	1.5 FTE
800 - 1099	2.2 FTE	2.0 FTE
1100 - 1399	3.1 FTE	2.5 FTE
1400+	4.4 FTE	3.5 FTE



4.2 Staffing by school type

When looking at school library staffing by school type, the reported full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing average comparison for 2020 and 2021 is as follows:



School Type	2020	2021
Primary/Contributing	1.1 FTE	0.8 FTE
Secondary	2.1 FTE	2.0 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.8 FTE	2.2 FTE

4.3 Staffing changes

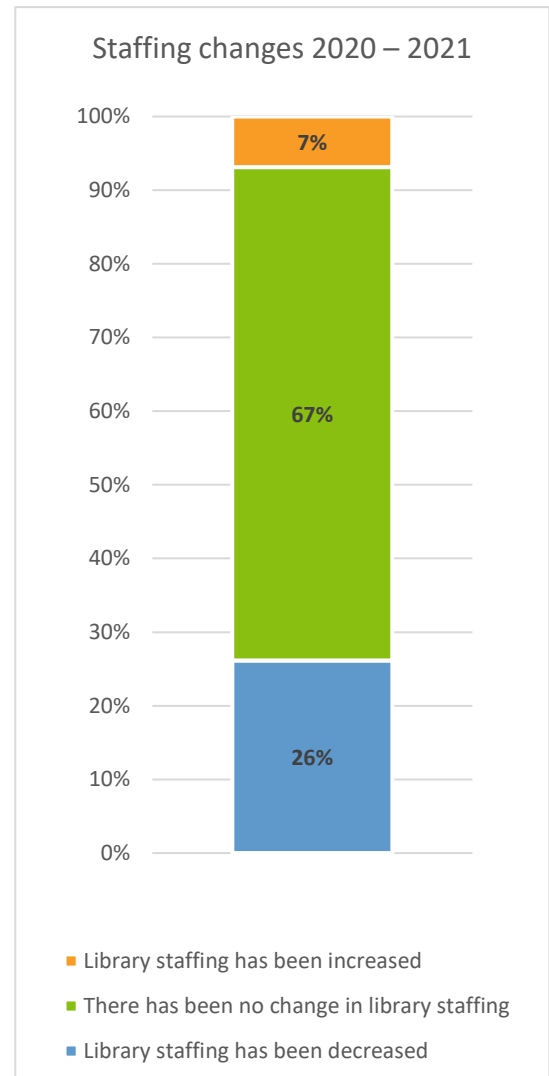
In 2021, 67% of respondents reported that there had been no change in staffing from 2020. 26% of respondents reported staffing decreases; 7% reported staffing increases.

Reasons provided for staffing **decreases** include:

- Staff leaving and not being replaced
- No staff available
- COVID NSW border closure
- Decrease in student enrolments
- COVID restrictions limiting the number of people that could be onsite
- Library Assistant/Teacher Aide needed to support other departments
- Teacher Librarian reallocated to a teaching role
- School-wide budget cuts
- Teachers running their own library sessions
- Library closed due to COVID lockdowns
- Staff on leave
- A reduction in library lessons

Reasons provided for staffing **increases** include:

- An increase in enrolments
- Increased workload
- Advocacy for library programs
- Request for assistance
- Library hours extended
- School received a grant
- New school leadership

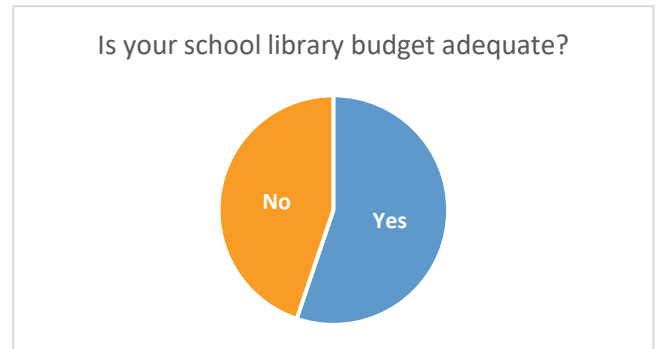


5.0 Resourcing the library

5.1 Is your school library budget adequate?

Participants were asked if they think their school library budget is adequate.

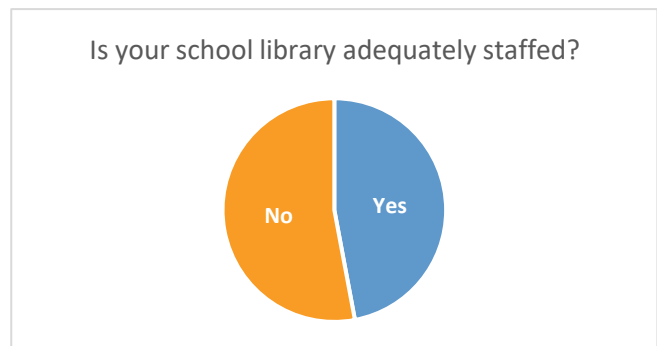
55% of respondents said “yes”; 45% said “no”.



5.2 Is your school library adequately staffed?

Participants were asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed.

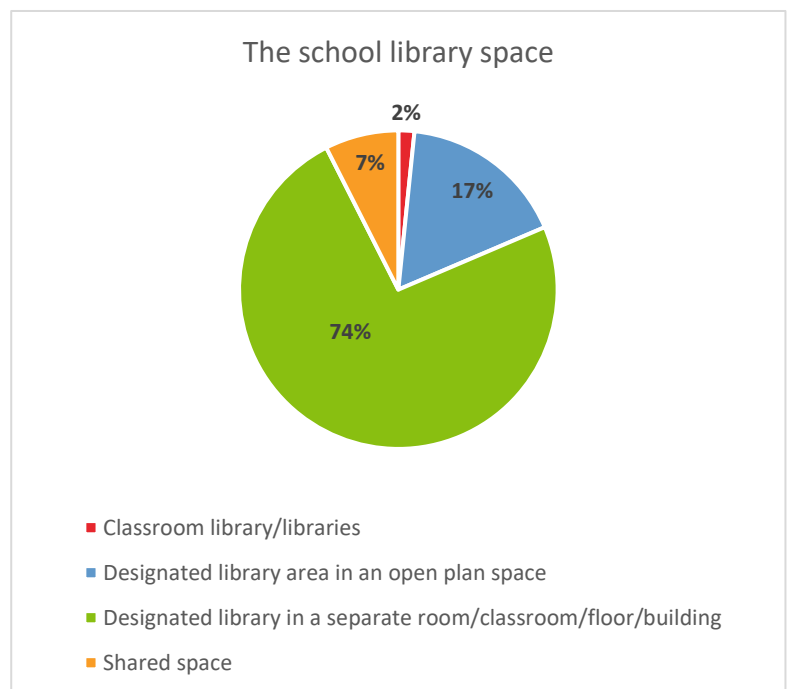
47% of respondents said “yes”; 53% said “no”.



6.0 The school library space

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 2% of respondents reported that they have a classroom library
- 17% reported they have a designated library area in an open-plan space
- 74% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 7% reported their library operates in a shared space



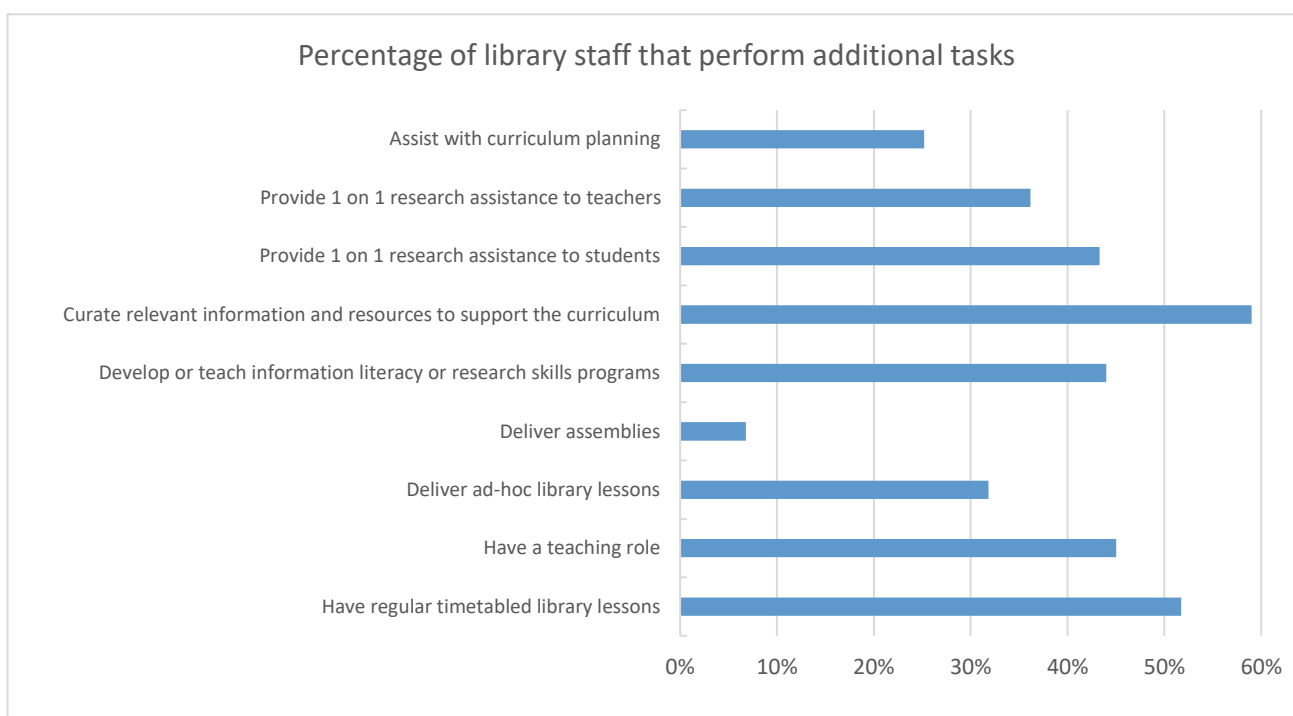
7.0 Tasks performed by school library staff

Library staff do a lot more than manage the collection. To highlight these additional responsibilities, we asked participants to select from a list of tasks that the main library staff member performs, beyond managing the collection.

The top 3 reported tasks were:

- Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (59%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (52%)
- Performing a teaching role (45%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



Other responses provided include:

- Assisting with reading intervention
- Creating displays
- Study period supervision
- IT support
- Delivering extracurricular activities such as coding, public speaking, book clubs, and debating
- Facilitating EALD Parent English class
- Managing the school website
- Careers adviser
- Sports coach

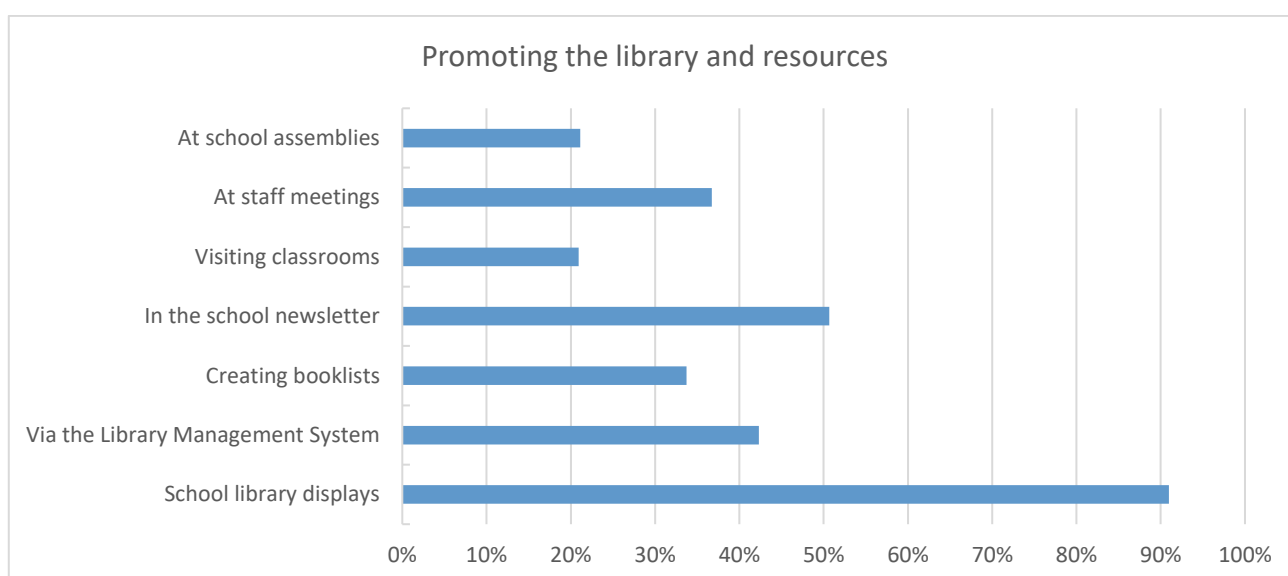
8.0 Promoting the library and resources

Participants were asked how they promote their school library and resources.

The top 3 avenues for promotion were:

- School library displays (91%)
- In the school newsletter (51%)
- Via the Library Management System (42%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



Other responses include:

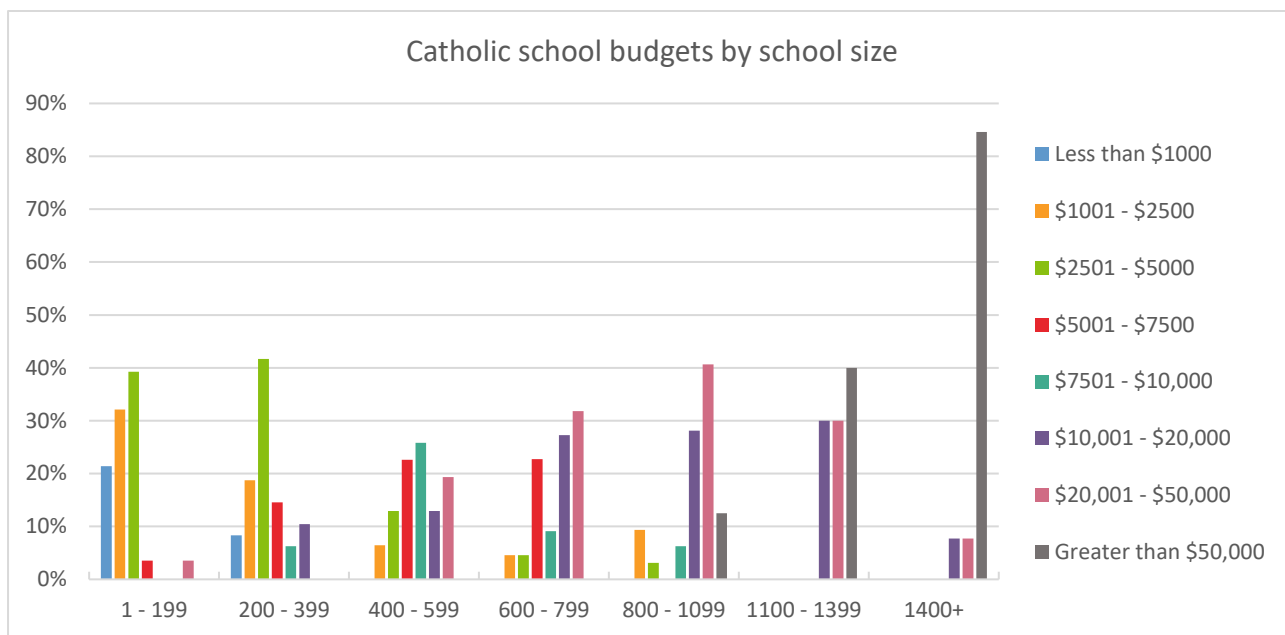
- Social media
- Emails to staff and students
- During lessons
- Competitions and reading challenges
- Author, Illustrator, Poet, and film maker visits
- Events – Book Week, Reading days, Premiers Reading Challenge, Book Fairs, National Simultaneous Storytime, CBCA Book of the year Award
- Daily notices
- Speaking directly to staff
- On the school website
- Through the teaching staff
- Promotional videos
- Posters around the school
- Student clubs and hubs
- Library blog
- Using sliders in their Library Management System to promote newly purchased books

9.0 Catholic schools in Australia

9.1 Catholic school budgets

9.1.1 Catholic school budgets by school size

When looking at library budgets by school size, Catholic school respondents reported the following budget ranges:



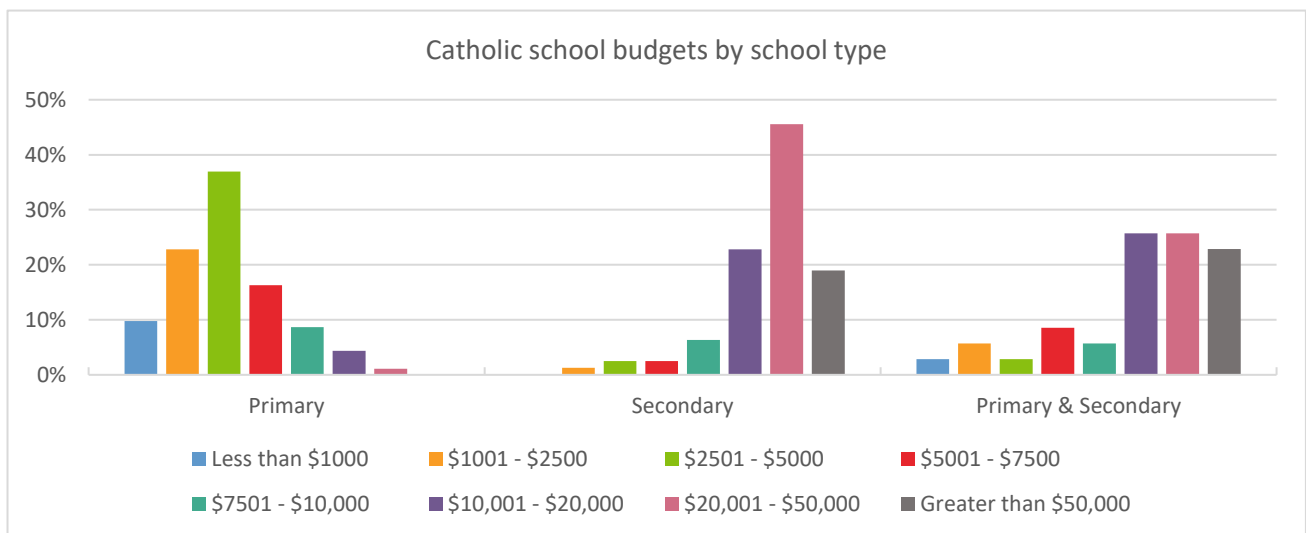
School size (number of students)							
Budget ranges	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
Less than \$1000	21%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
\$1001 - \$2500	32%	19%	6%	10%	5%	0%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	39%	42%	13%	5%	5%	0%	0%
\$5001 - \$7500	4%	15%	23%	5%	23%	0%	0%
\$7501 - \$10,000	0%	6%	26%	15%	9%	0%	0%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	0%	10%	13%	30%	27%	30%	8%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	4%	0%	19%	30%	32%	30%	8%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	40%	85%

Note: small schools reporting in the high range reported that they were a new school

9.1.2 Catholic school budgets by school type

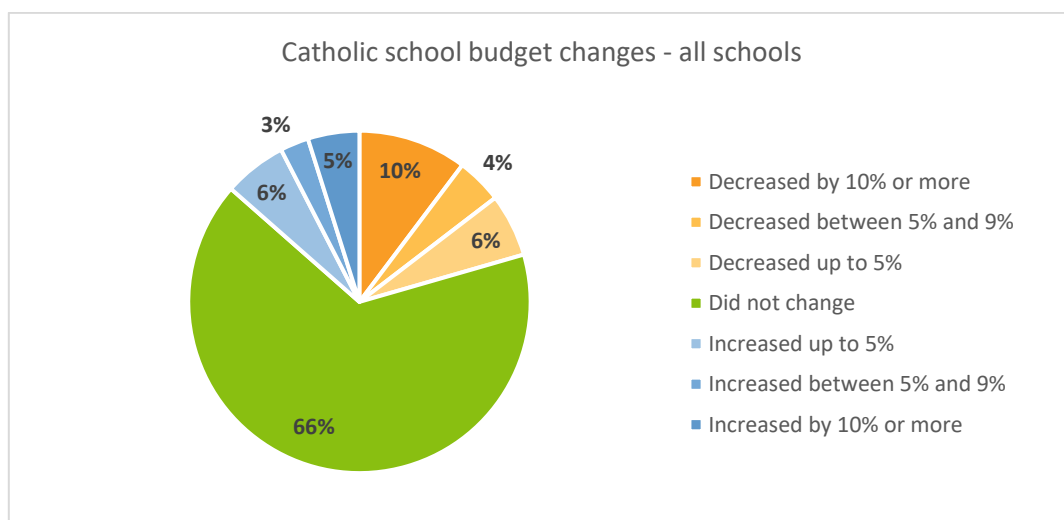
When looking at library budgets by school type, Catholic school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

Budget ranges	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
less than \$1000	10%	0%	3%
\$1001 - \$2500	23%	1%	6%
\$2501 - \$5000	37%	3%	3%
\$5001 - \$7500	16%	3%	9%
\$7501 - \$10,000	9%	6%	6%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	4%	23%	26%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	1%	46%	26%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	19%	23%



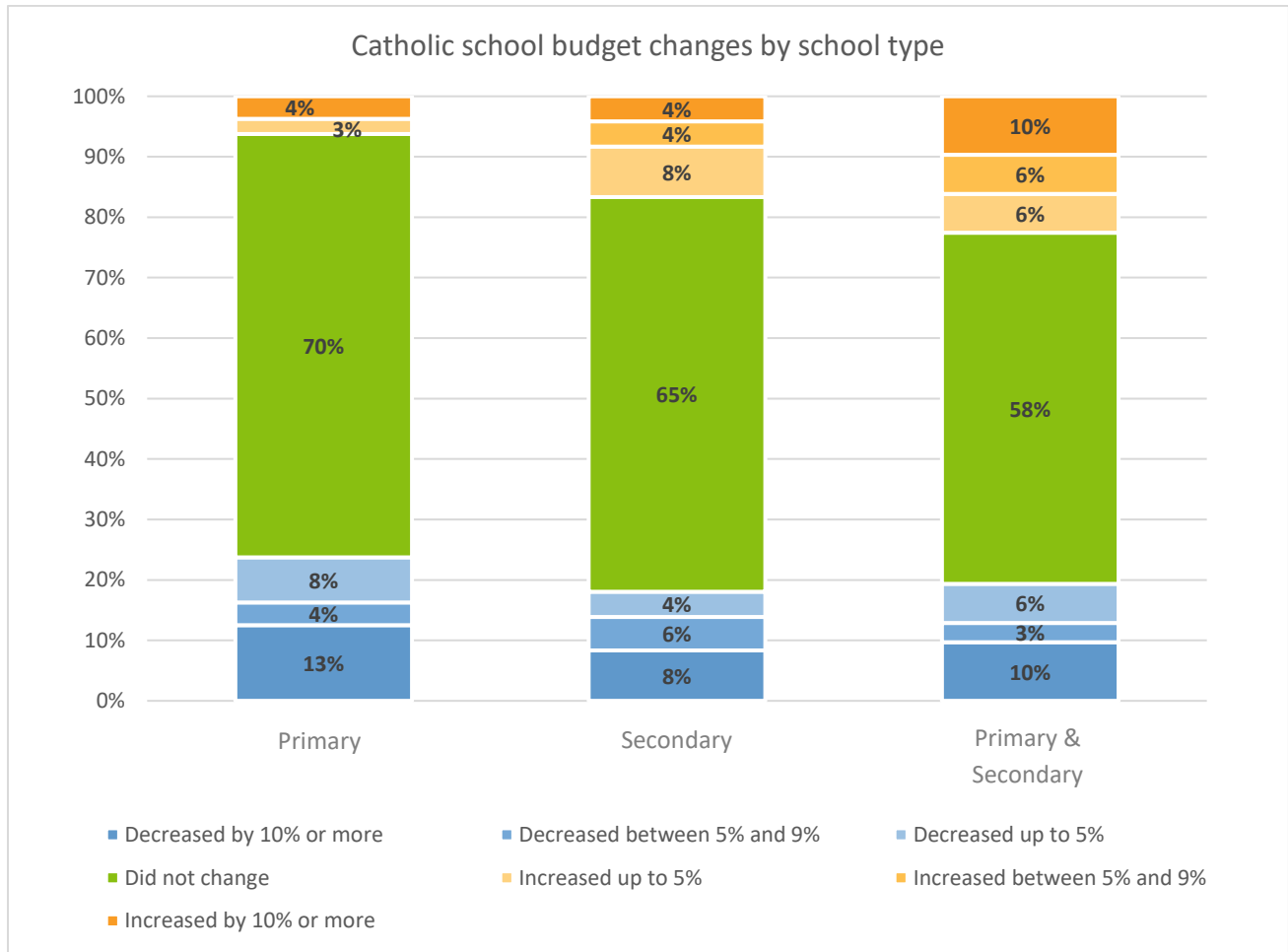
9.1.3 Catholic school budget changes: 2020 – 2021

In 2021, 66% of Catholic school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2020. 20% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 14% reported a budget increase.



When looking at library budget changes by school type, Catholic school respondents reported the following:

School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	7%	70%	24%
Secondary	17%	65%	18%
Primary & Secondary	23%	58%	19%

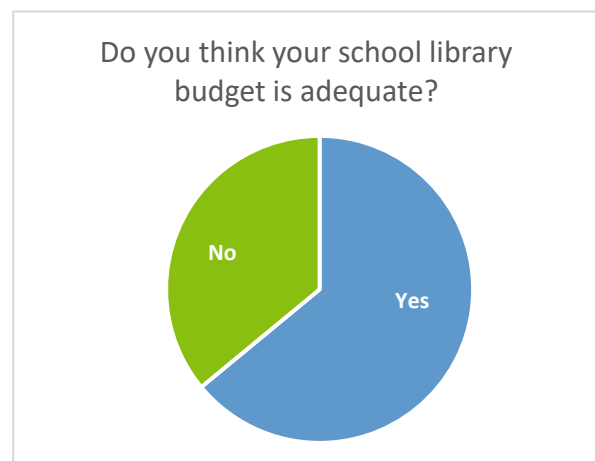


Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

9.1.4 Catholic schools on adequate budgets

Participants were asked if they think their school library budget is adequate.

64% of Catholic school respondents said “yes”; 36% said “no”.



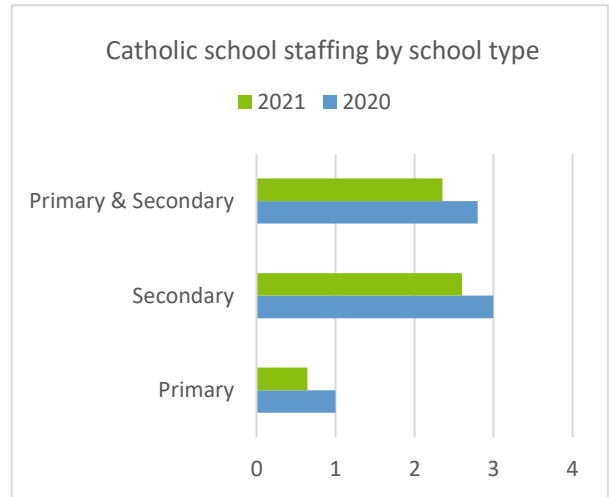
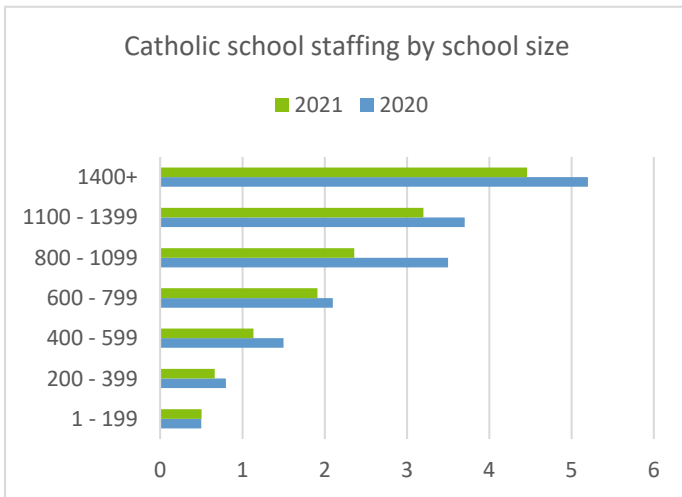
9.2 Catholic school staffing

9.2.1 Catholic school staffing by school size and type

When looking at Catholic school library staffing comparisons by school size and type, respondents reported the following average full-time equivalents (FTE):

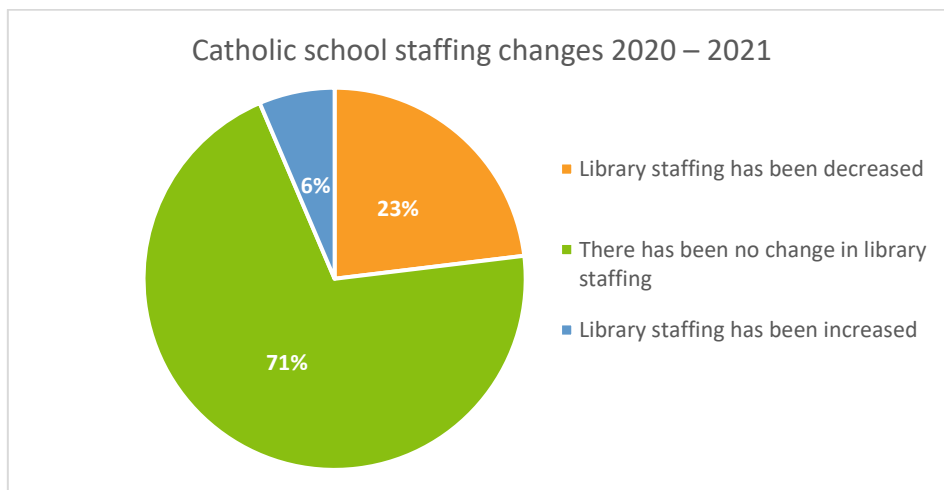
School Size	2020	2021
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE
200 - 399	0.8 FTE	0.7 FTE
400 - 599	1.5 FTE	1.1 FTE
600 - 799	2.1 FTE	1.9 FTE
800 - 1099	3.5 FTE	2.4 FTE
1100 -1299	3.7 FTE	3.2 FTE
1400+	5.2 FTE	4.5 FTE

School Type	2020	2021
Primary	1.0 FTE	0.6 FTE
Secondary	3.0 FTE	2.6 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.8 FTE	2.4 FTE



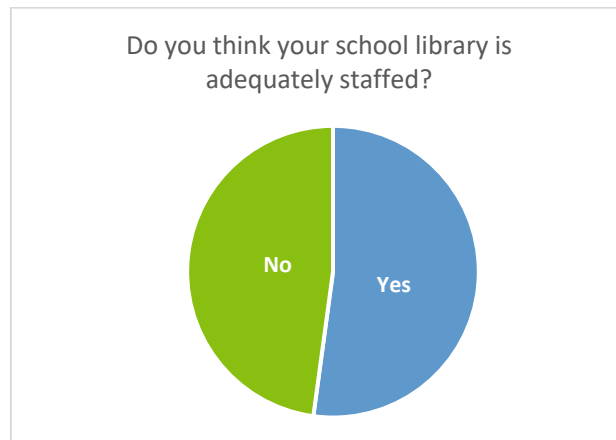
9.2.2 Catholic school staffing changes: 2020 – 2021

In 2021, 71% of Catholic school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from 2020. 23% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 6% reported a staffing increase.



9.2.3 Catholic schools on adequate staffing

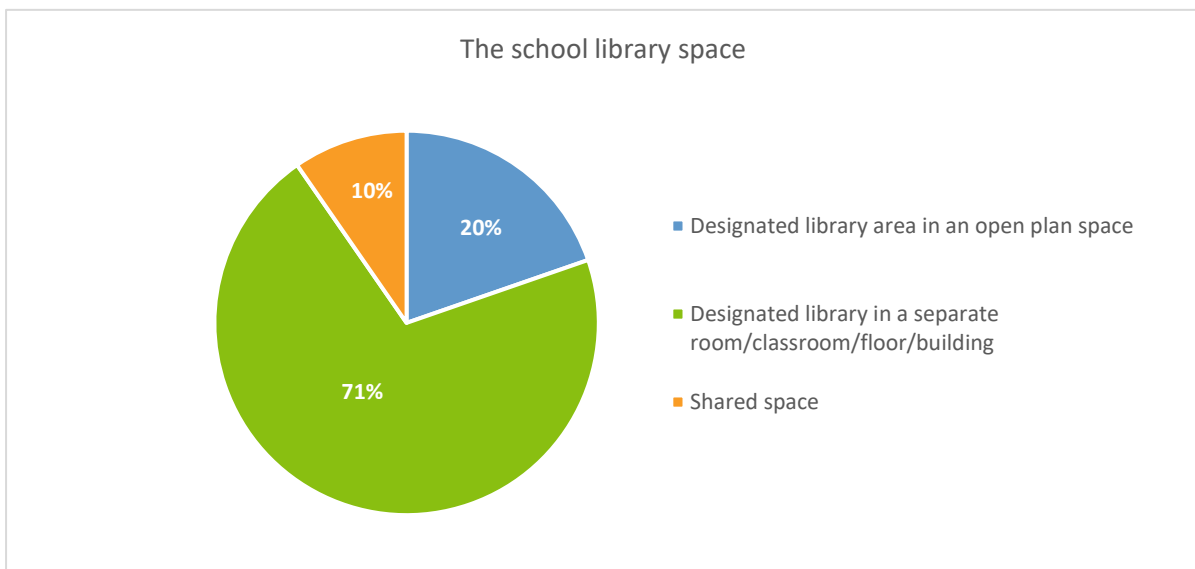
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 52% of Catholic school respondents said “yes”; 48% said “no”.



9.3 The school library space

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 20% reported they have a designated library area in an open-plan space
- 71% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 10% reported their library operates in a shared space



Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

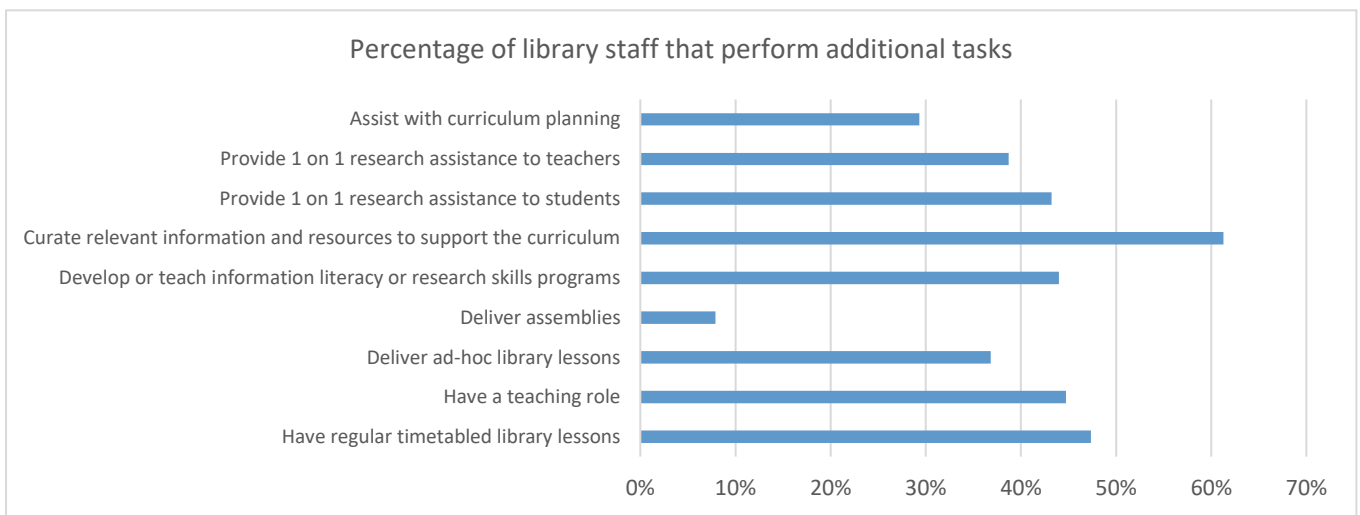
9.4 Tasks performed by school library staff

We asked participants to select from a list of tasks, beyond managing the collection, that the main library staff member performs.

The top 3 reported tasks were:

- Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (61%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (47%)
- Performing a teaching role (45%).

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



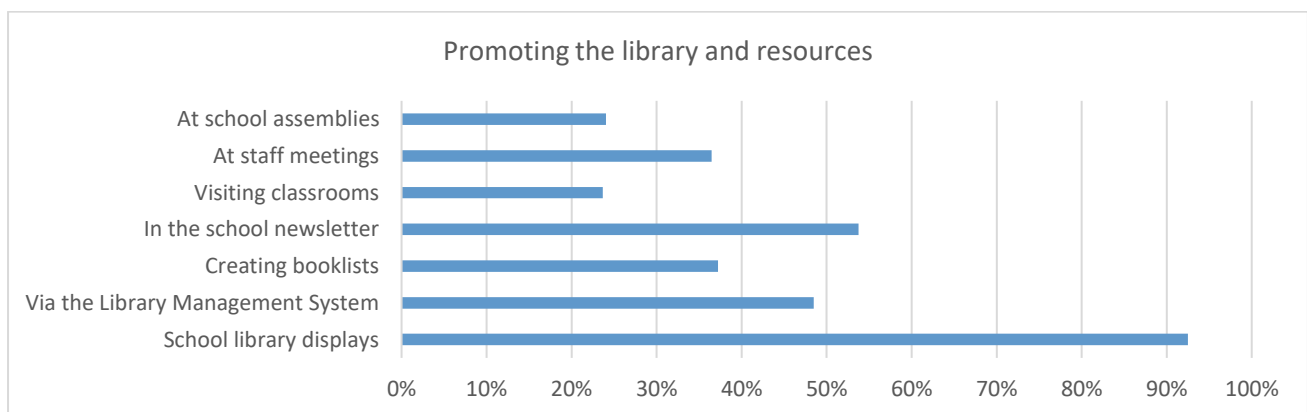
9.5 Promoting the library and resources

Participants were asked how they promote their school library and resources.

The top 3 avenues for promotion were:

- School library displays (92%)
- In the school newsletter (54%)
- Via the Library Management System (48%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.

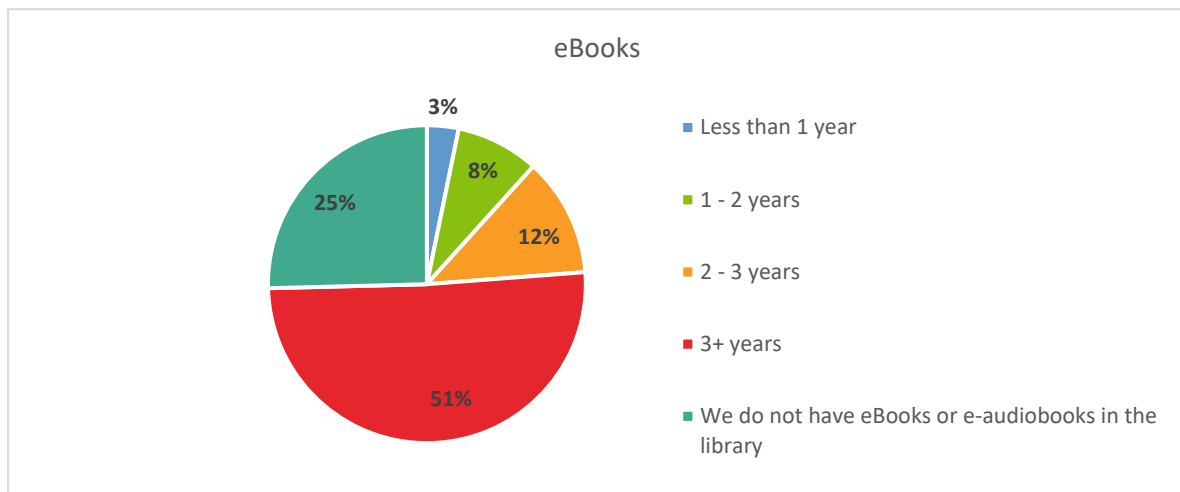


9.6 Online Resources in Catholic schools

9.6.1 eBooks

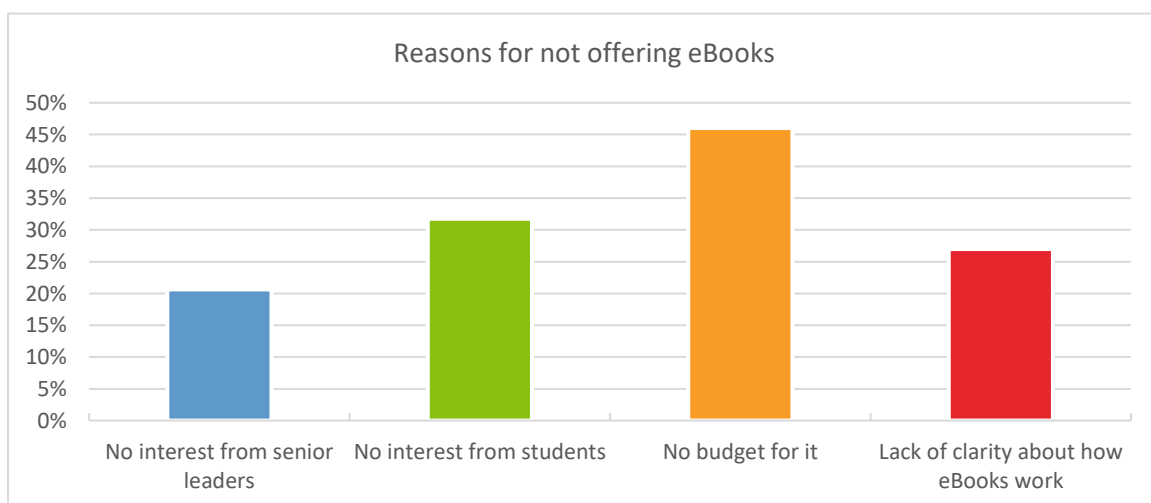
Participants were asked how long they have offered eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library. In 2021, Catholic schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	3%
1 – 2 years	8%
2 – 3 years	12%
3+ years	51%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	25%



When asked why eBooks and e-audiobooks are not offered, participants reported the following:

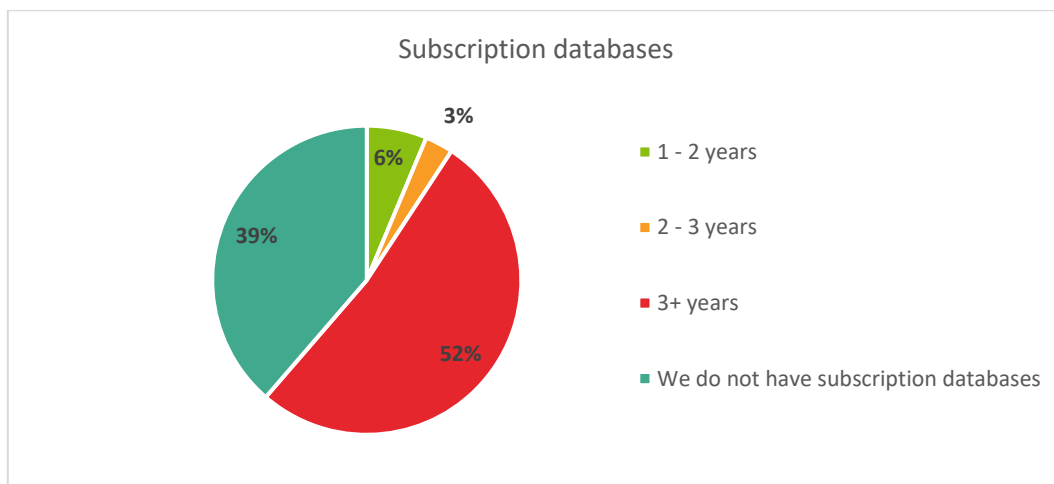
- No interest from senior leaders: 21%
- No interest from students: 32%
- No budget for it: 46%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 27%



9.6.2 Subscription databases

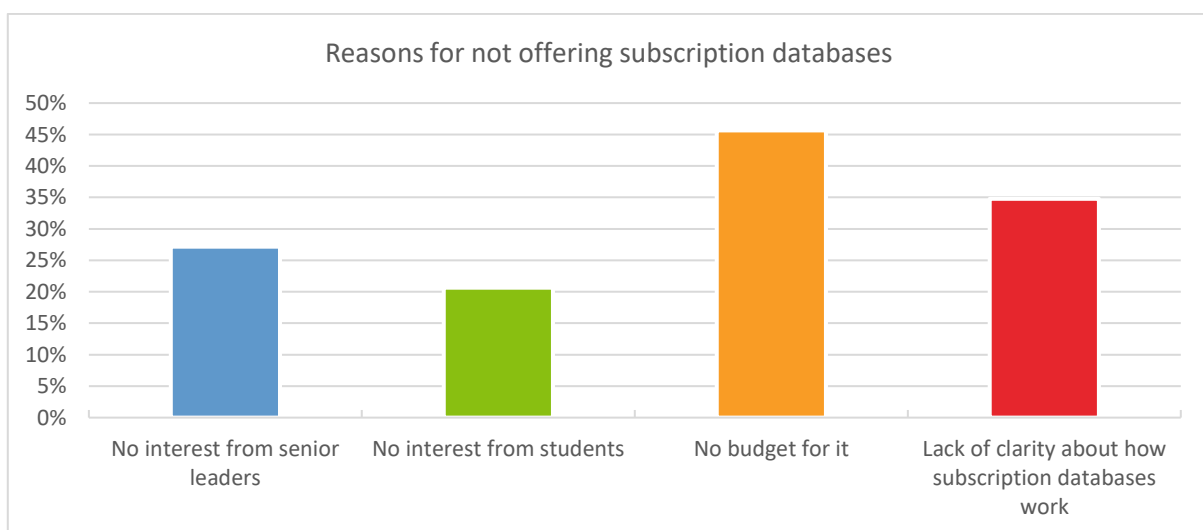
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2021, Catholic schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	0%
1 – 2 years	6%
2 – 3 years	3%
3+ years	52%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	39%



When asked why subscription databases are not offered, participants reported the following:

- No interest from senior leaders: 27%
- No interest from students: 21%
- No budget for it: 46%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 35%

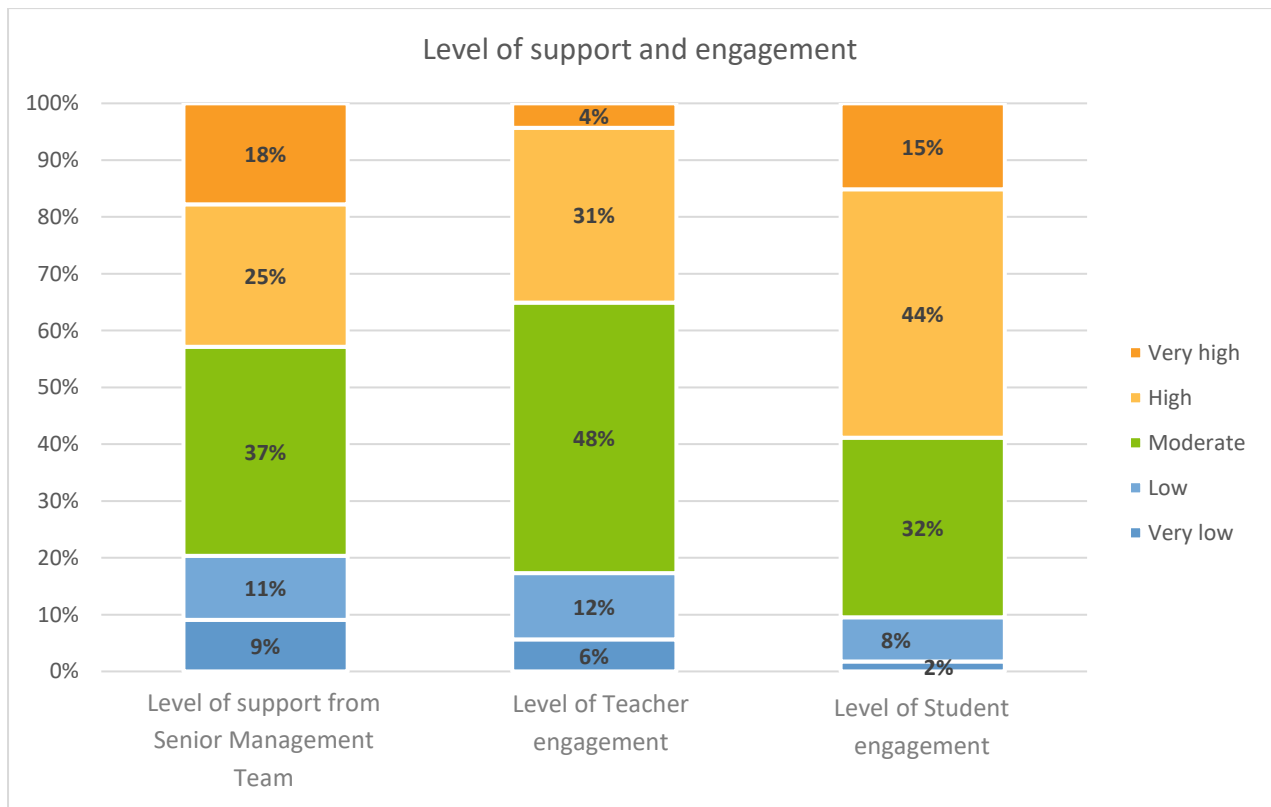


9.7 Level of support and engagement in Catholic schools

Participants were asked about the level of support they receive from the Senior Management Team and the level of teacher and student engagement with the library.

The percentages of Catholic school respondents, for categories ranging from “very low” to “very high”, are as follows:

	Level of support from Senior Management Team	Level of Teacher Engagement	Level of Student Engagement
Very high	18%	4%	15%
High	25%	31%	44%
Moderate	37%	48%	32%
Low	11%	12%	8%
Very low	9%	6%	2%

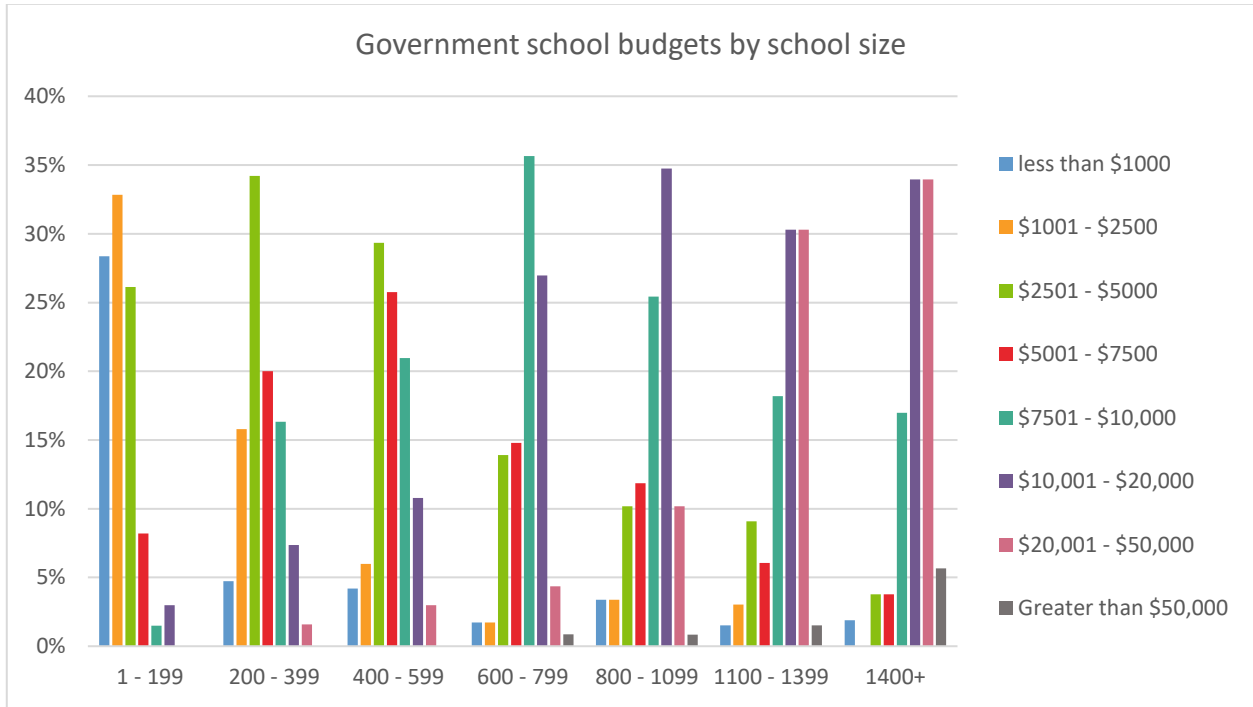


10.0 Government schools in Australia

10.1 Government school budgets

10.1.1 Government school budgets by school size

When looking at library budgets by school size, Government school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

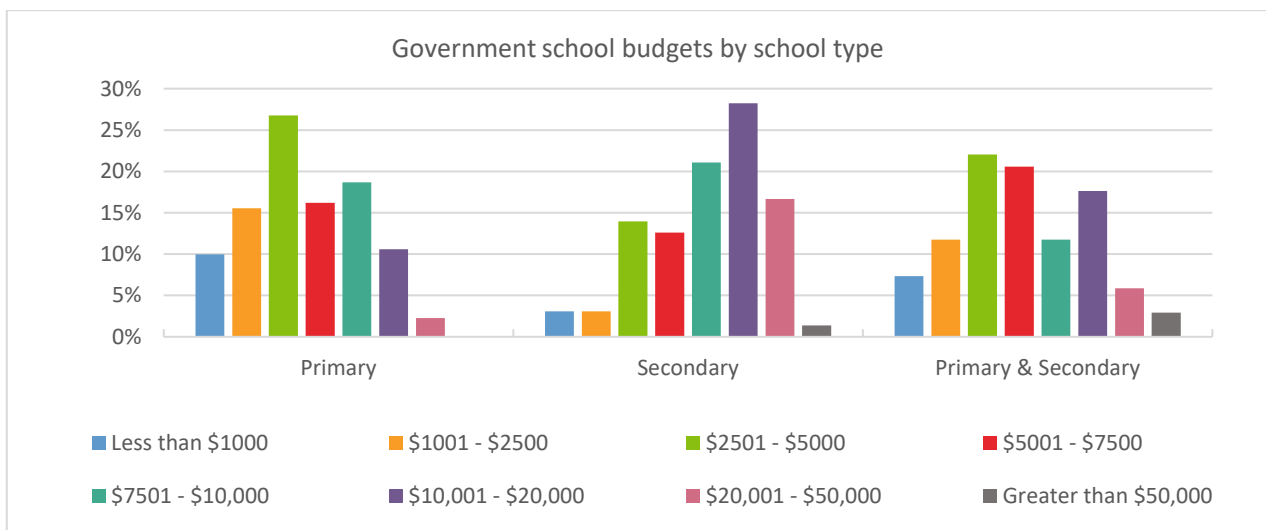


School Size (Number of students)							
	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
less than \$1000	28%	5%	4%	2%	3%	2%	2%
\$1001 - \$2500	33%	16%	6%	2%	3%	3%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	26%	34%	29%	14%	10%	9%	4%
\$5001 - \$7500	8%	20%	26%	15%	12%	6%	4%
\$7501 - \$10,000	1%	16%	21%	36%	25%	18%	17%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	3%	7%	11%	27%	35%	30%	34%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	0%	2%	3%	4%	10%	30%	34%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	6%

10.1.2 Government school budgets by school type

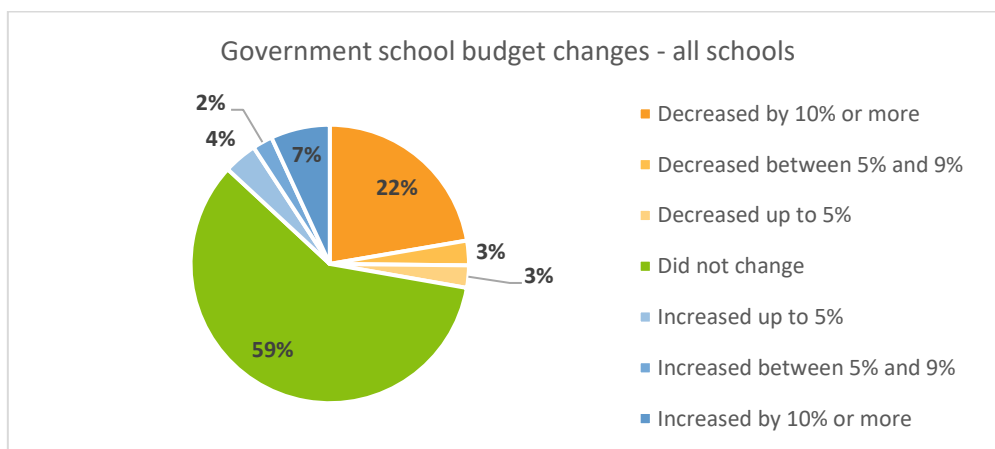
When looking at library budgets by school type, Government school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
less than \$1000	10%	3%	7%
\$1001 - \$2500	16%	3%	12%
\$2501 - \$5000	27%	14%	22%
\$5001 - \$7500	16%	13%	21%
\$7501 - \$10,000	19%	21%	12%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	11%	28%	18%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	2%	17%	6%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	1%	3%



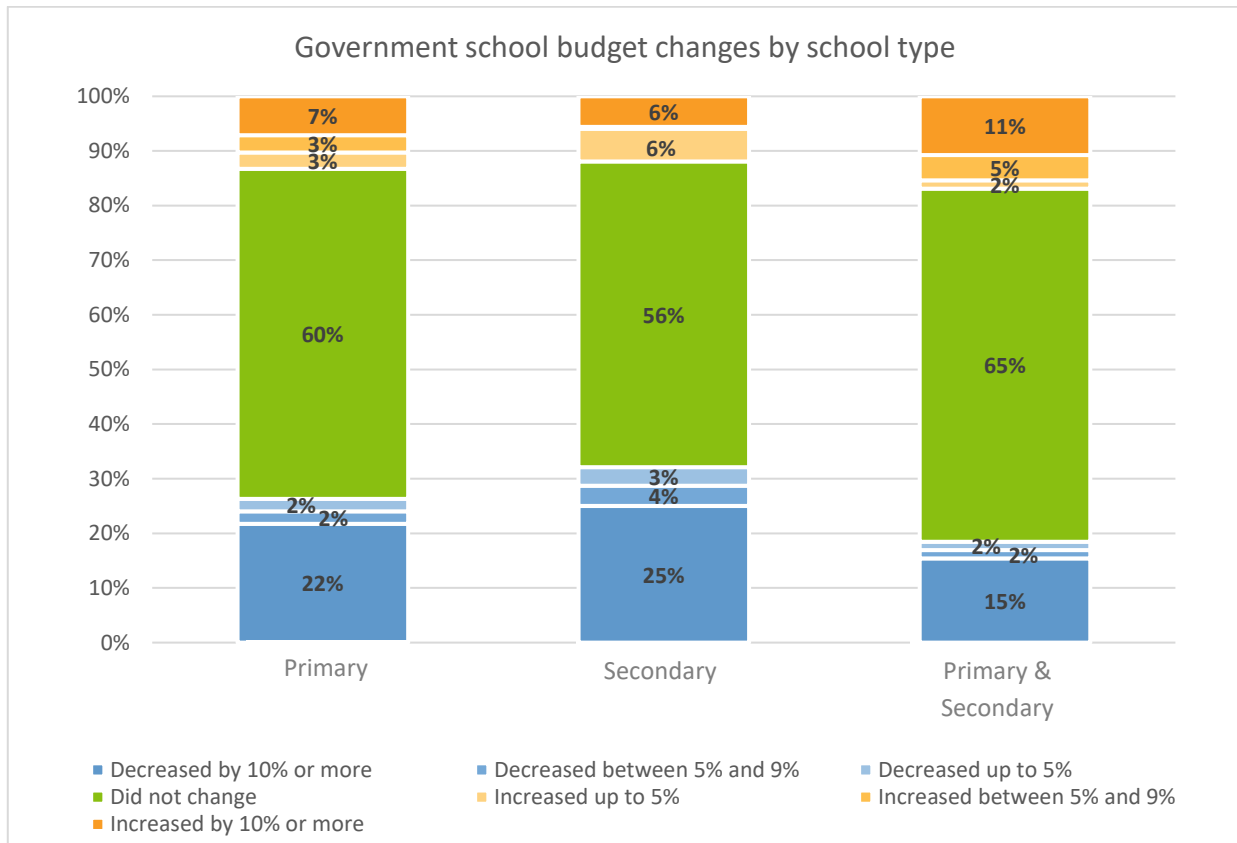
10.1.3 Government school budget changes: 2020 – 2021

In 2021, 59% of Government school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2020. 28% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 13% reported a budget increase.



When looking at library budget changes by school type, Government school respondents reported the following:

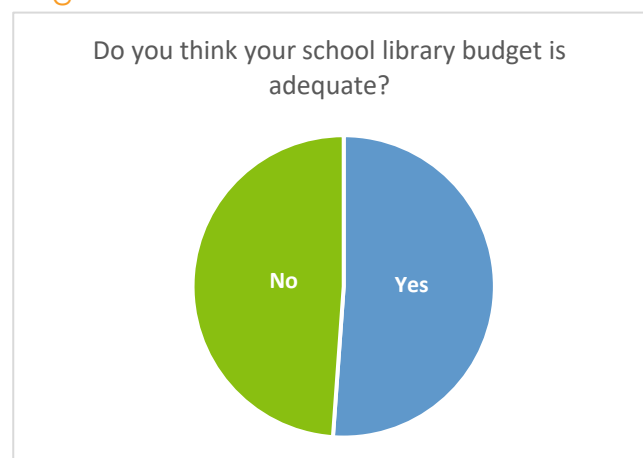
School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	13%	60%	26%
Secondary	12%	56%	32%
Primary & Secondary	17%	65%	18%



10.1.4 Government schools on adequate budgets

Participants were asked if they think their school library budget is adequate.

51% of Government school respondents said “yes”; 49% said “no”.



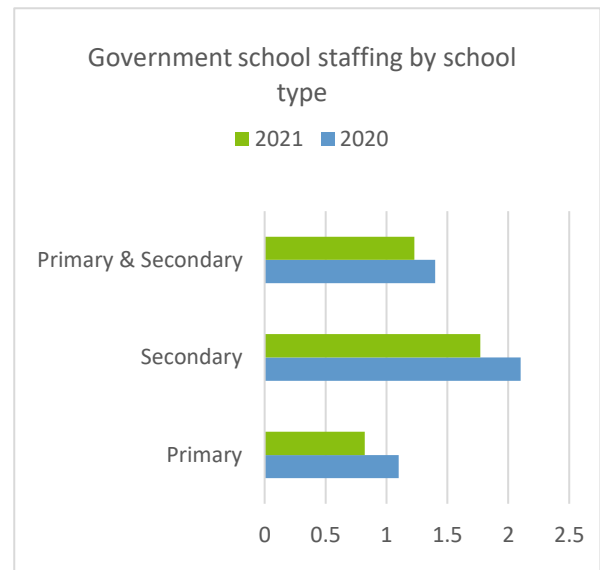
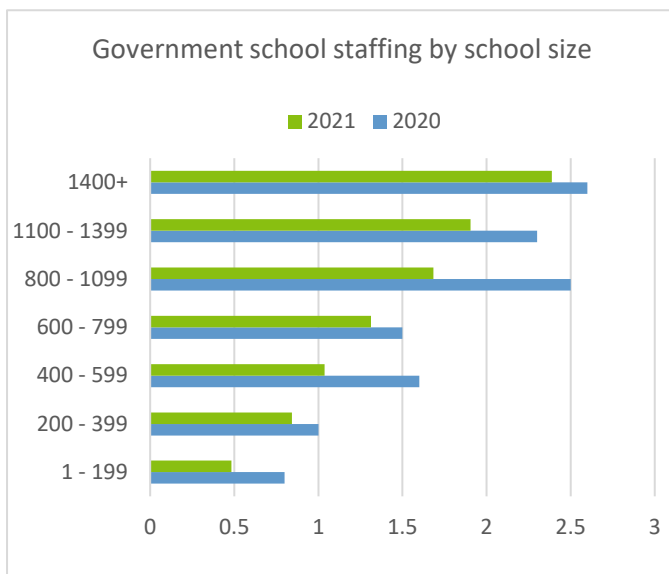
10.2 Government school staffing

10.2.1 Government school staffing by school size and type

When comparing full time equivalent staffing in 2020 and 2021, Government school respondents reported the following:

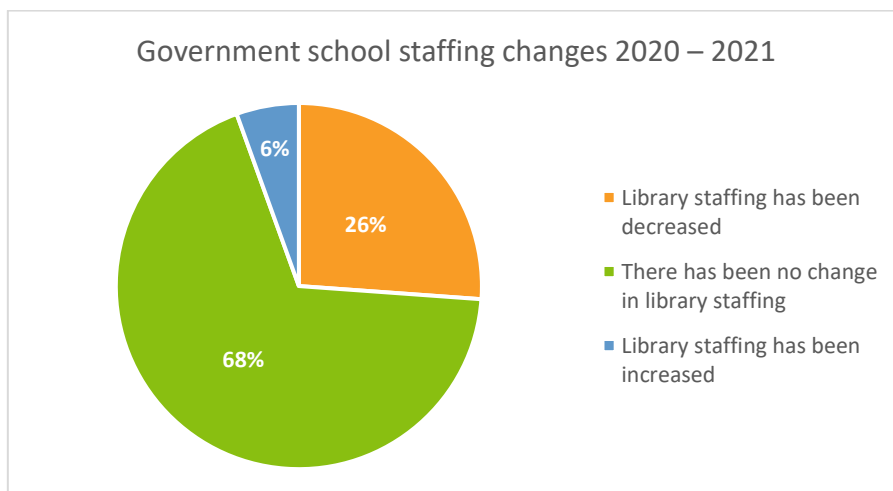
School Size	2020	2021
1 - 199	0.8 FTE	0.5 FTE
200 - 399	1.0 FTE	0.8 FTE
400 - 599	1.6 FTE	1.0 FTE
600 - 799	1.5 FTE	1.3 FTE
800 - 1099	2.5 FTE	1.7 FTE
1100 - 1299	2.3 FTE	1.9 FTE
1400+	2.6 FTE	2.4 FTE

School Type	2020	2021
Primary	1.1 FTE	0.8 FTE
Secondary	2.1 FTE	1.8 FTE
Primary & Secondary	1.4 FTE	1.2 FTE



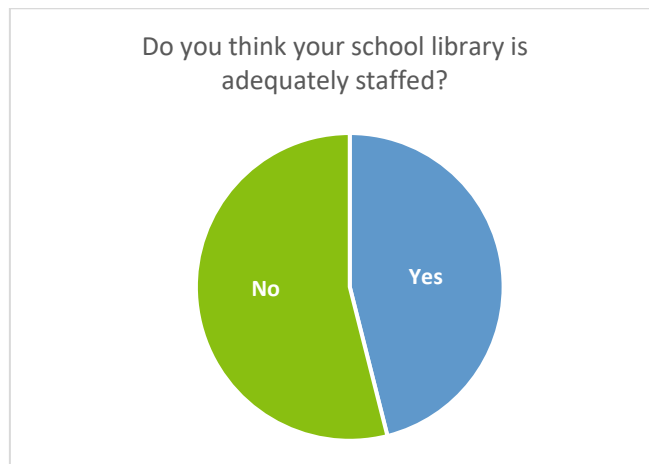
10.2.2 Government school staffing changes: 2020 – 2021

In 2021, 68% of Government school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from 2020. 26% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 6% reported a staffing increase.



10.2.3 Government schools on adequate staffing

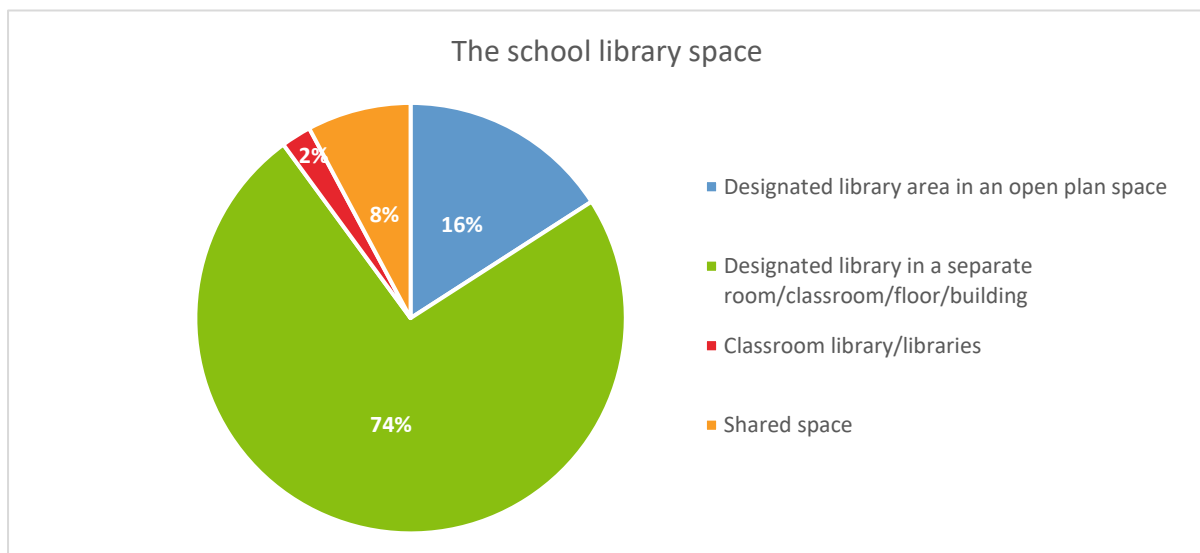
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 46% of Government school respondents said “yes”; 54% said “no”.



10.3 The school library space

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 16% reported they have a designated library area in an open-plan space
- 74% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 2% reported that they have a classroom library
- 8% reported their library operates in a shared space



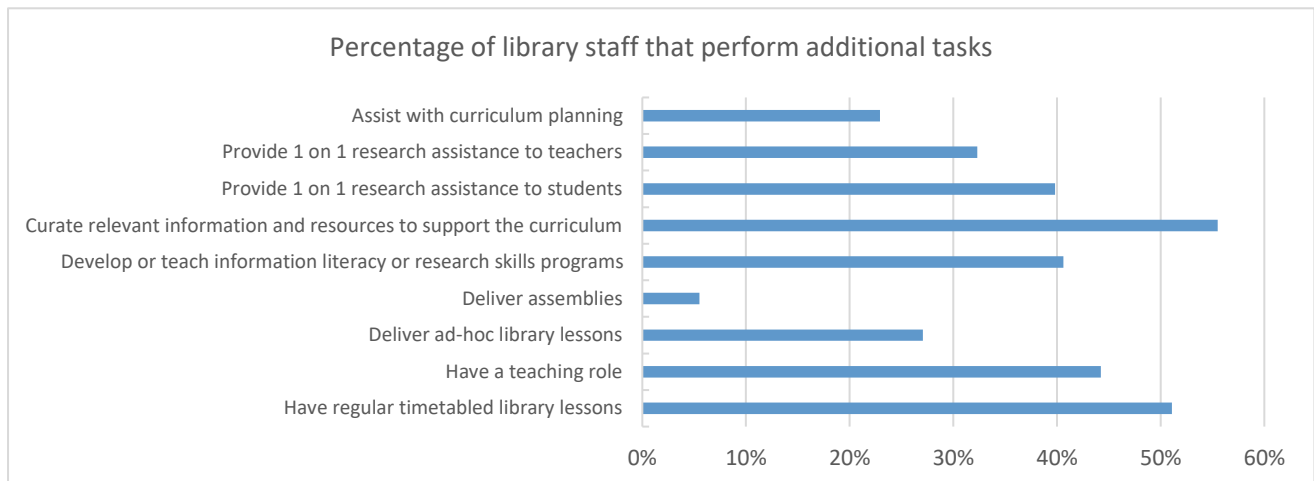
10.4 Tasks performed by school library staff

We asked participants to select from a list of tasks, beyond managing the collection, that the main library staff member performs.

The top 3 reported tasks were:

- Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (56%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (51%)
- Performing a teaching role (44%).

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



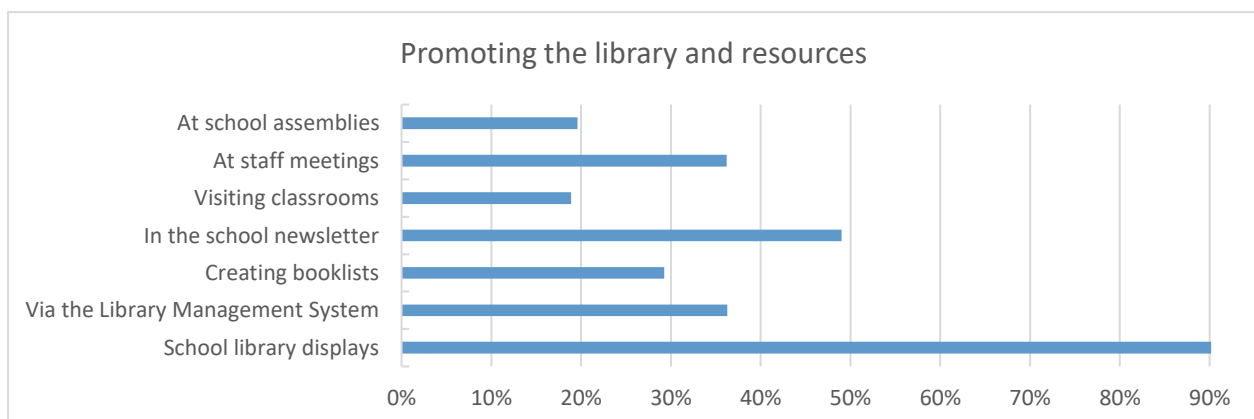
10.5 Promoting the library and resources

Participants were asked how they promote their school library and resources.

The top 4 avenues for promotion were:

- School library displays (90%)
- In the school newsletter (49%)
- Via the Library Management System (36%)
- At staff meetings (36%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



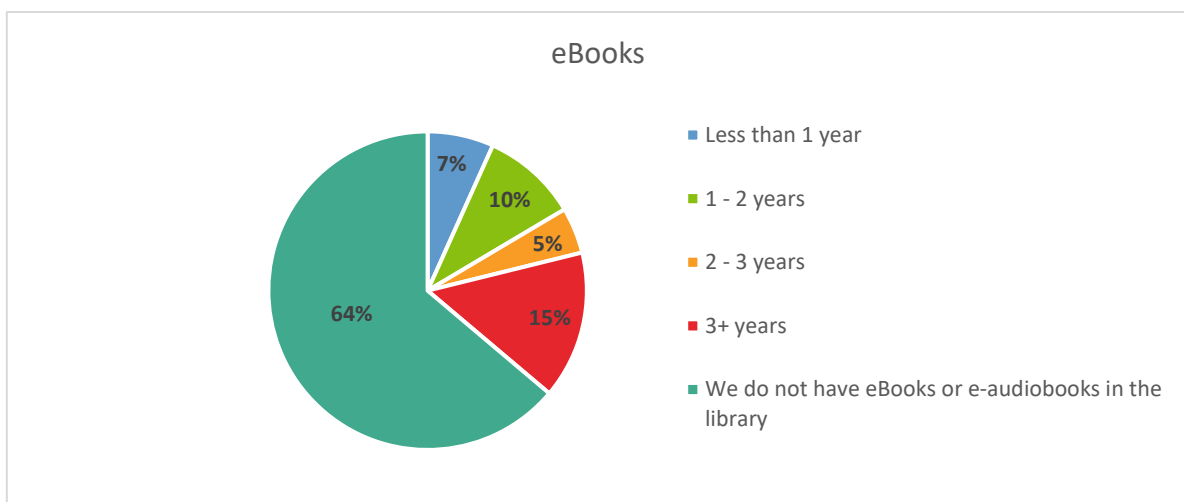
10.6 Online resources in Government schools

10.6.1 eBooks

Participants were asked how long they have been offering eBooks and e-audiobooks in the library.

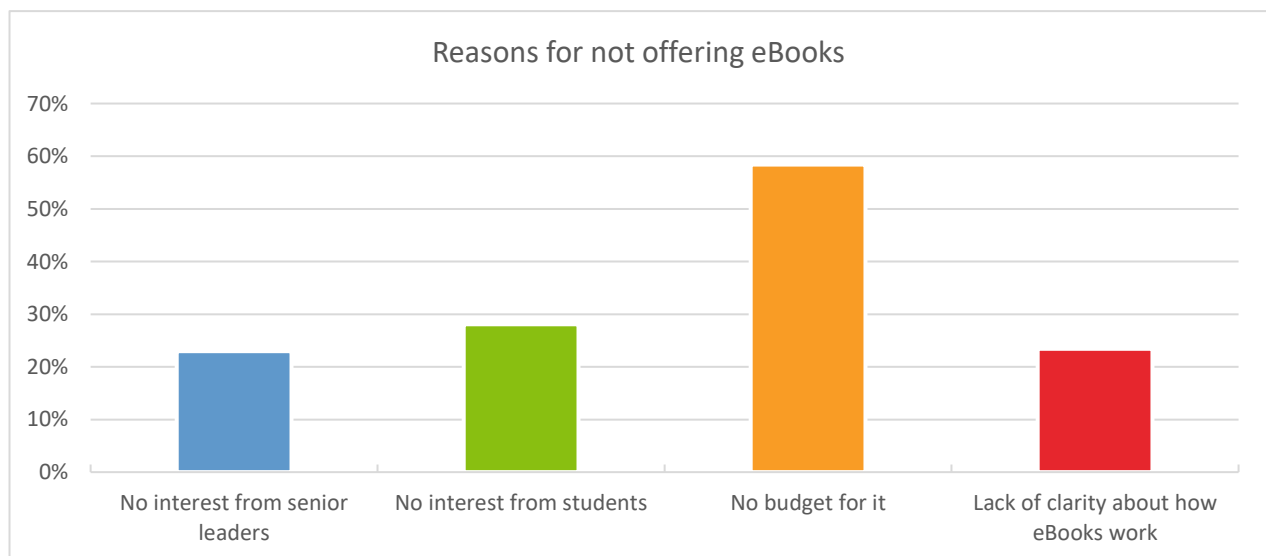
Government schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	7%
1 – 2 years	10%
2 – 3 years	5%
3+ years	15%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	64%



When asked why eBooks and e-audiobooks are not offered, participants reported the following:

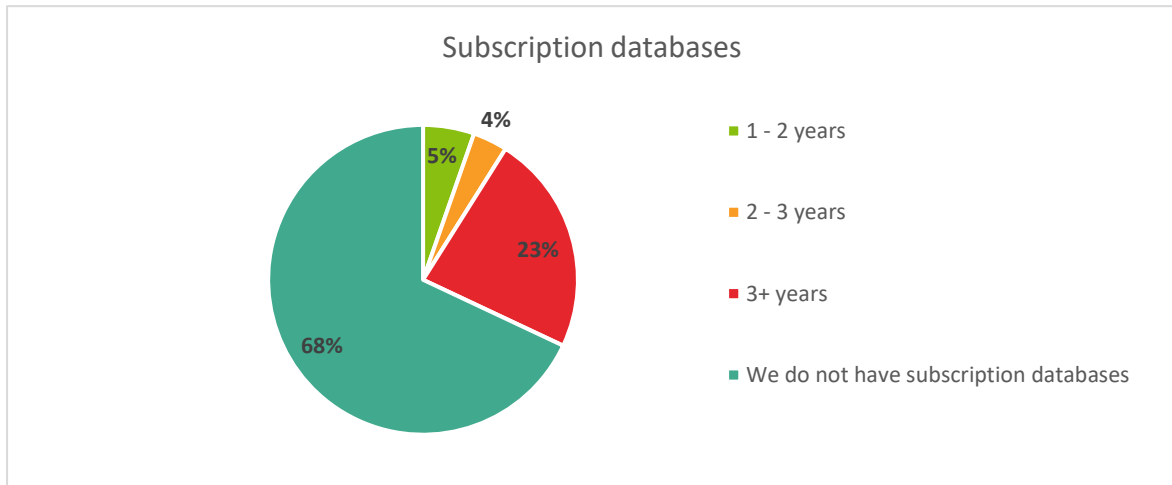
- No interest from senior leaders: 23%
- No interest from students: 28%
- No budget for it: 58%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 23%



10.6.2 Subscription databases

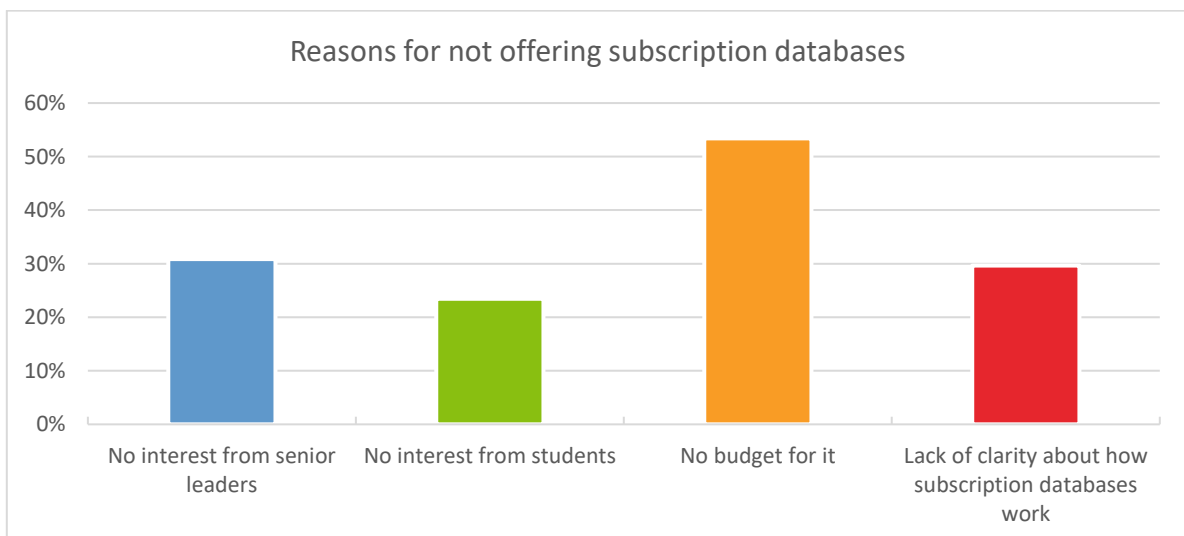
Participants were asked how long they have been offering subscription databases in the library. In 2021, Government schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	0%
1 – 2 years	5%
2 – 3 years	4%
3+ years	23%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	68%



When asked why subscription databases are not offered, participants reported the following:

- No interest from senior leaders: 31%
- No interest from students: 23%
- No budget for it: 53%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 30%

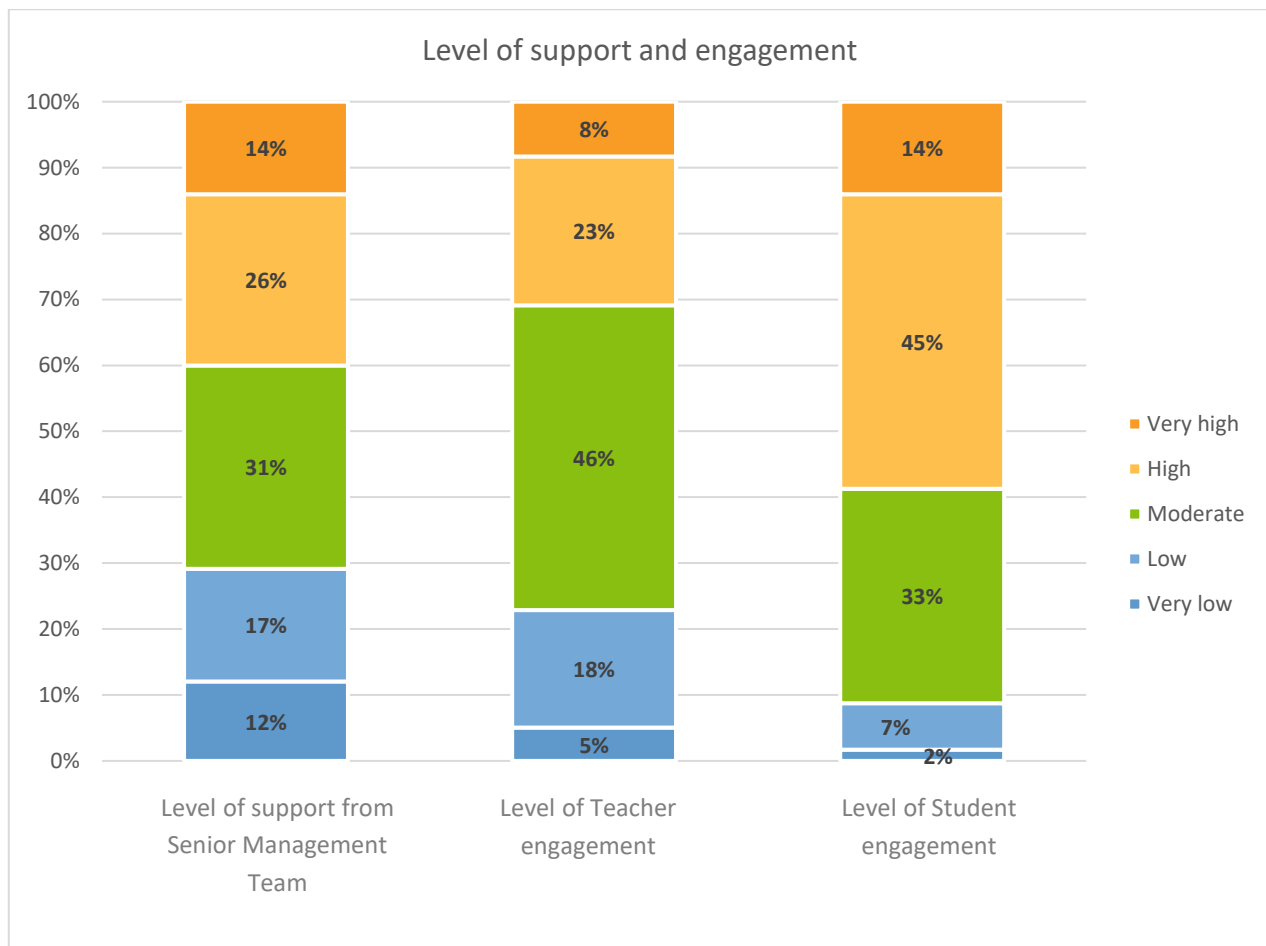


10.7 Level of support and engagement in Government schools

Participants were asked about the level of support they receive from the Senior Management Team and the level of teacher and student engagement with the library.

The percentages of respondents from Government schools, for categories ranging from “very low” to “very high”, are as follows:

	Level of Support from the Senior Management Team	Level of Teacher Engagement with the Library	Level of Student Engagement with the Library
Very high	14%	8%	14%
High	26%	23%	45%
Moderate	31%	46%	33%
Low	17%	23%	7%
Very low	12%	8%	2%

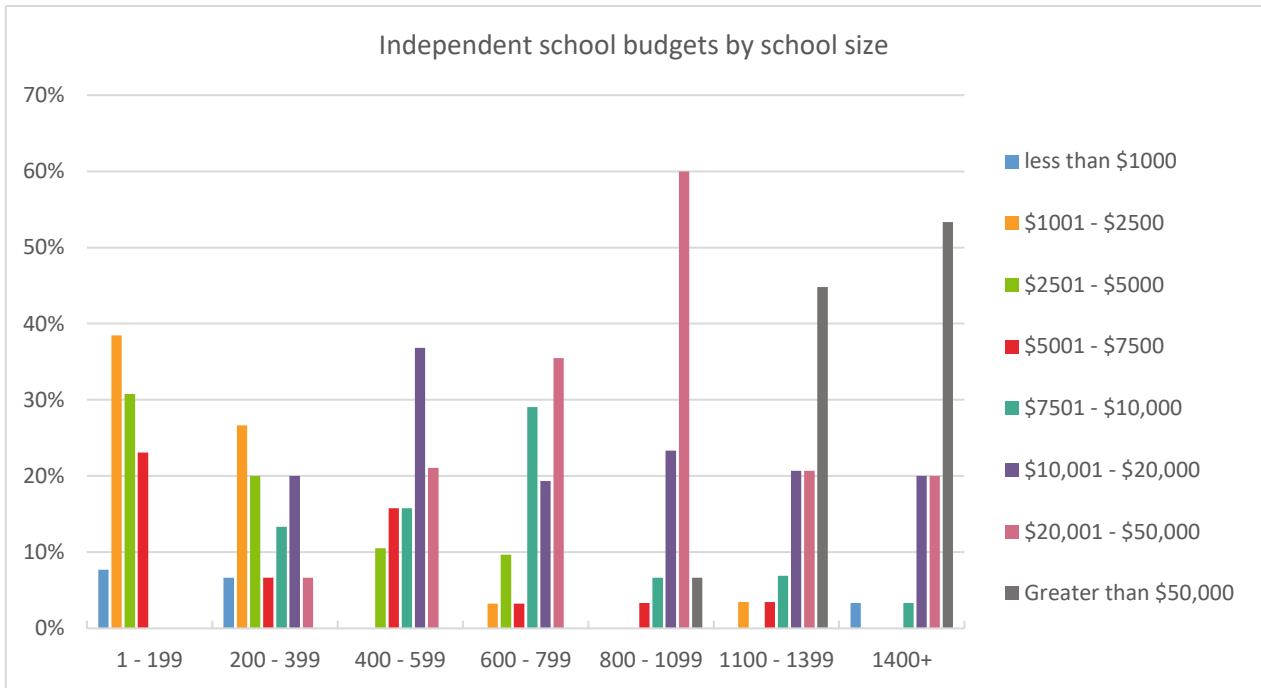


11.0 Independent schools in Australia

11.1 Independent school budgets

11.1.1 Independent school budgets by school size

When looking at library budgets by school size, Independent school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

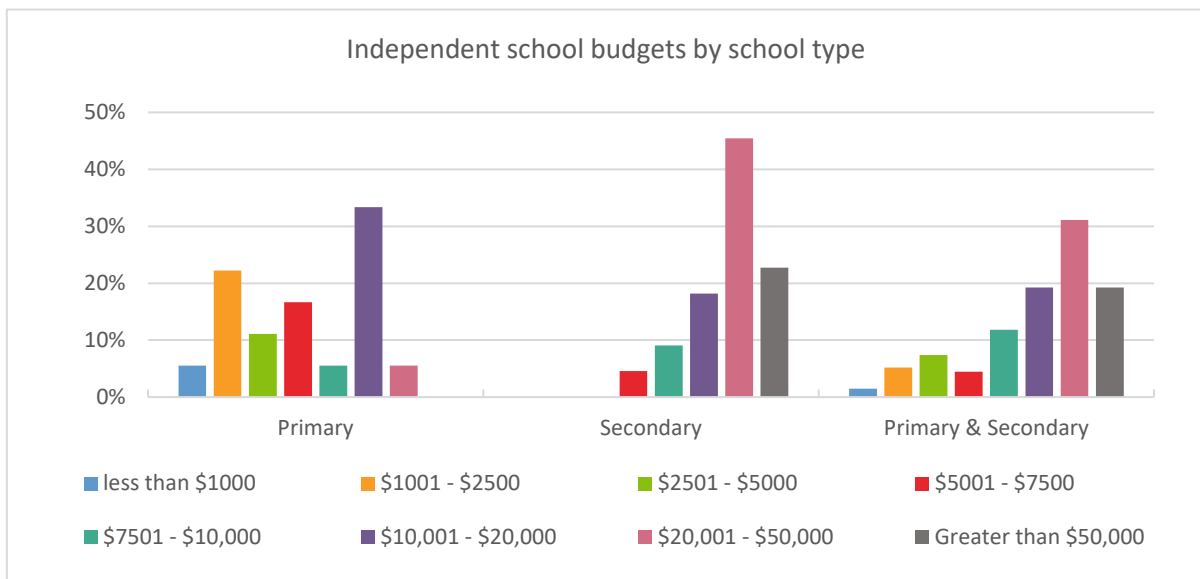


	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
less than \$1000	8%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
\$1001 - \$2500	38%	27%	0%	3%	0%	3%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	31%	20%	11%	10%	0%	0%	0%
\$5001 - \$7500	23%	7%	16%	3%	3%	3%	0%
\$7501 - \$10,000	0%	13%	16%	29%	7%	7%	3%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	0%	20%	37%	19%	23%	21%	20%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	0%	7%	21%	35%	60%	21%	20%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	45%	53%

11.1.2 Independent school budgets by school type

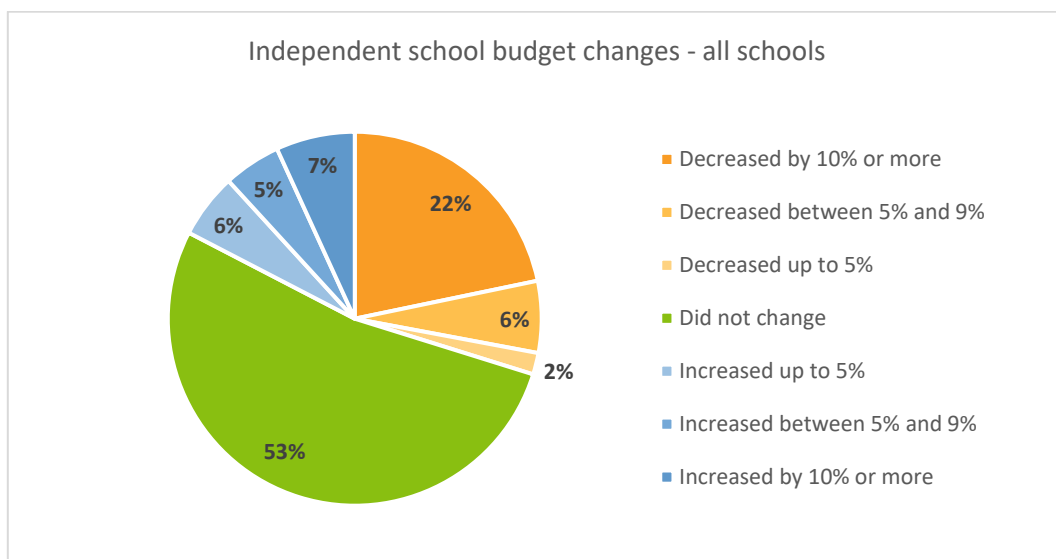
When looking at library budgets by school type, Independent school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
less than \$1000	6%	0%	1%
\$1001 - \$2500	22%	0%	5%
\$2501 - \$5000	11%	0%	7%
\$5001 - \$7500	17%	5%	4%
\$7501 - \$10,000	6%	9%	12%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	33%	18%	19%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	6%	45%	31%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	23%	19%



11.1.3 Independent school budget changes: 2020 – 2021

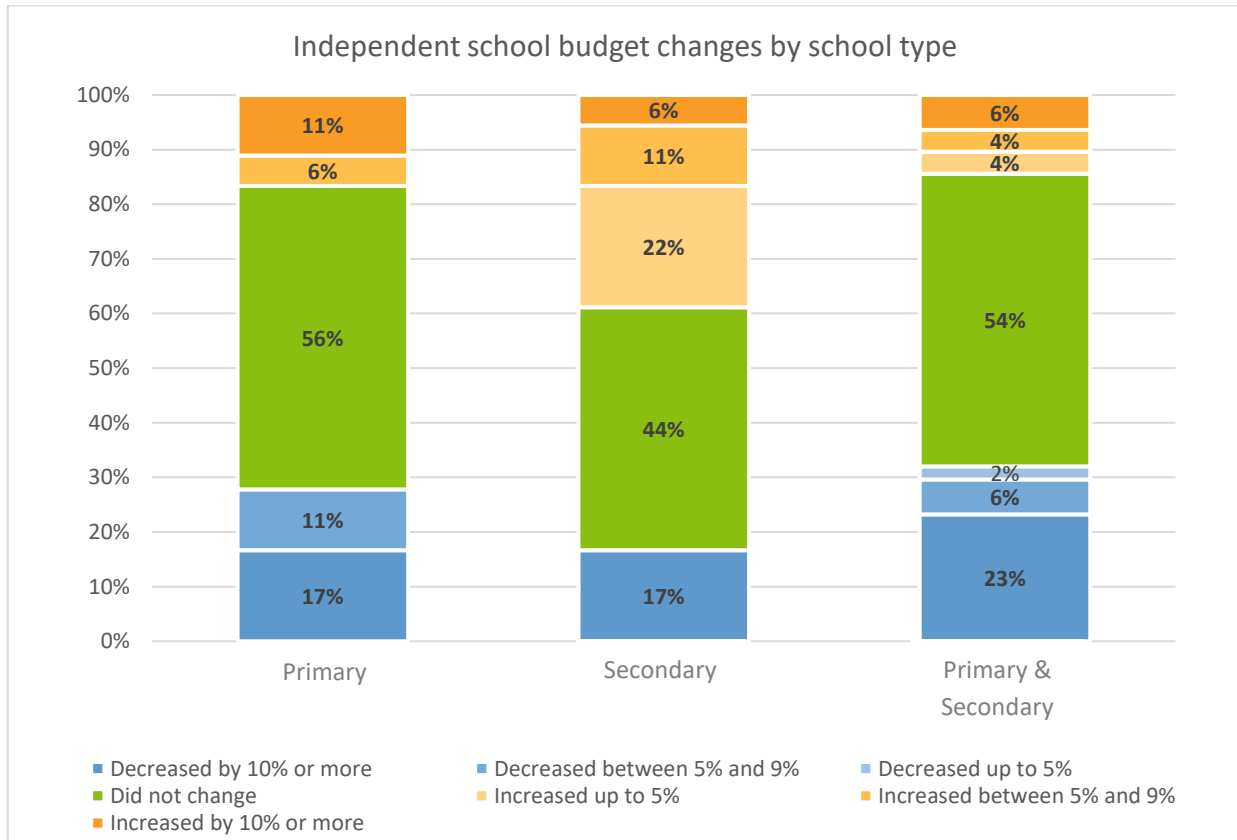
In 2021, 53% of Independent school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2020. 30% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 18% reported a budget increase.



Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

When looking at library budget changes by school type, Independent school respondents reported the following:

School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	17%	56%	28%
Secondary	39%	44%	17%
Primary & Secondary	14%	54%	31%

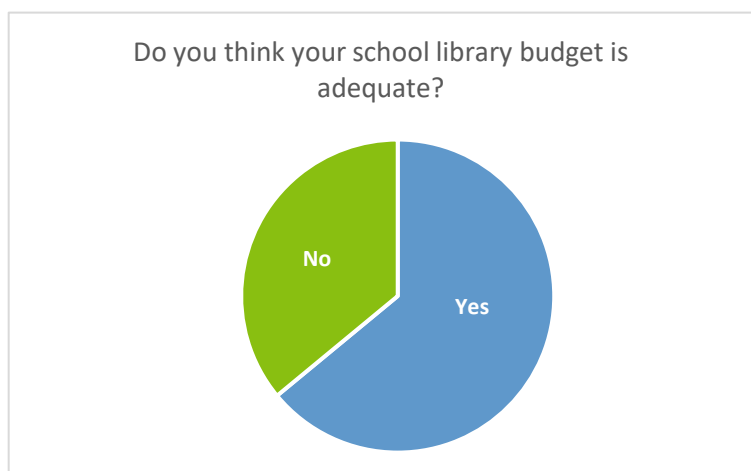


Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

11.1.4 Independent schools on adequate budgets

Participants were asked if they think their school library budget is adequate.

64% of Independent school respondents said “yes”; 36% said “no”.



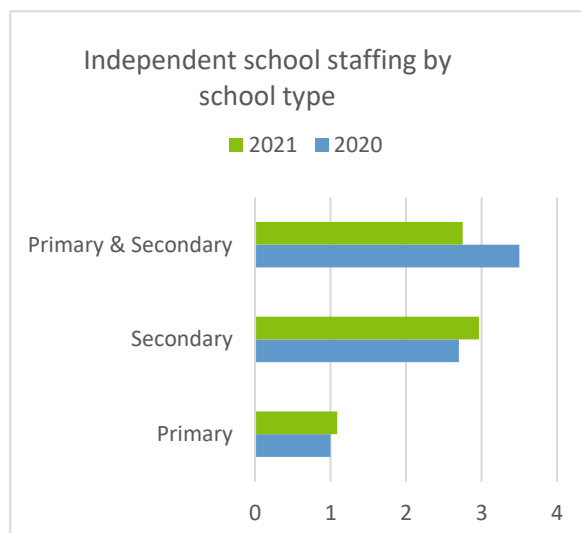
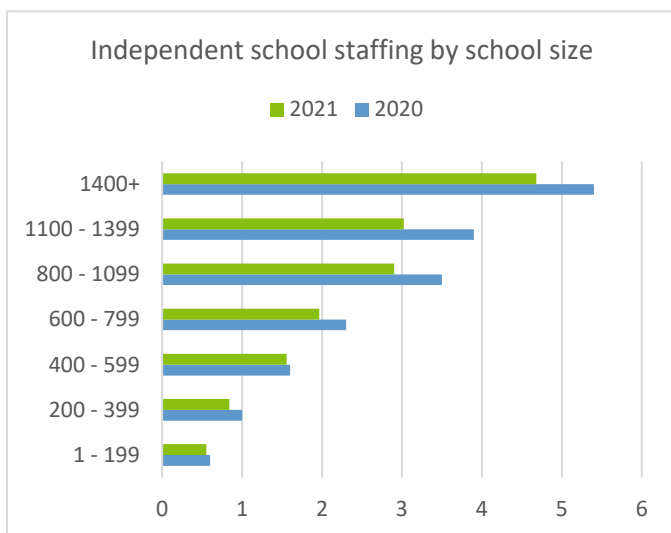
11.2 Independent school staffing

11.2.1 Independent school staffing by school size and type

When looking at Independent school library staffing by school size and type, respondents reported the following average full-time equivalents (FTE):

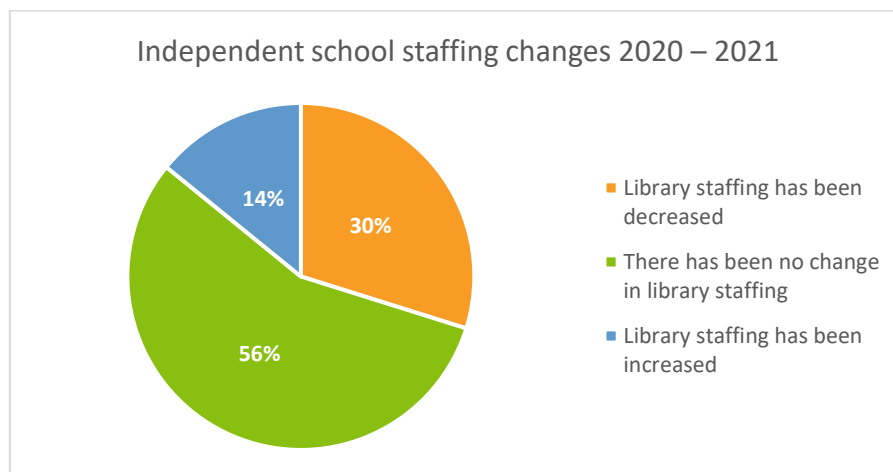
School Size	2020	2021
1 - 199	0.6 FTE	0.6 FTE
200 - 399	1.0 FTE	0.6 FTE
400 - 599	1.6 FTE	1.6 FTE
600 - 799	2.3 FTE	2.0 FTE
800 - 1099	3.5 FTE	2.9 FTE
1100 -1299	3.9 FTE	3.0 FTE
1400+	5.4 FTE	4.7 FTE

School Type	2020	2021
Primary	1.0 FTE	1.1 FTE
Secondary	2.7 FTE	3.0 FTE
Primary & Secondary	3.5 FTE	2.7 FTE



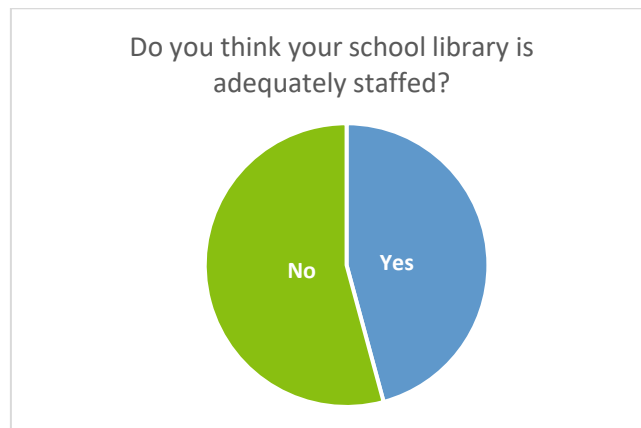
11.2.2 Independent school staffing changes: 2020 – 2021

In 2021, 56% of Independent school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from 2020. 30% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 14% reported a staffing increase.



11.2.3 Independent schools on adequate staffing

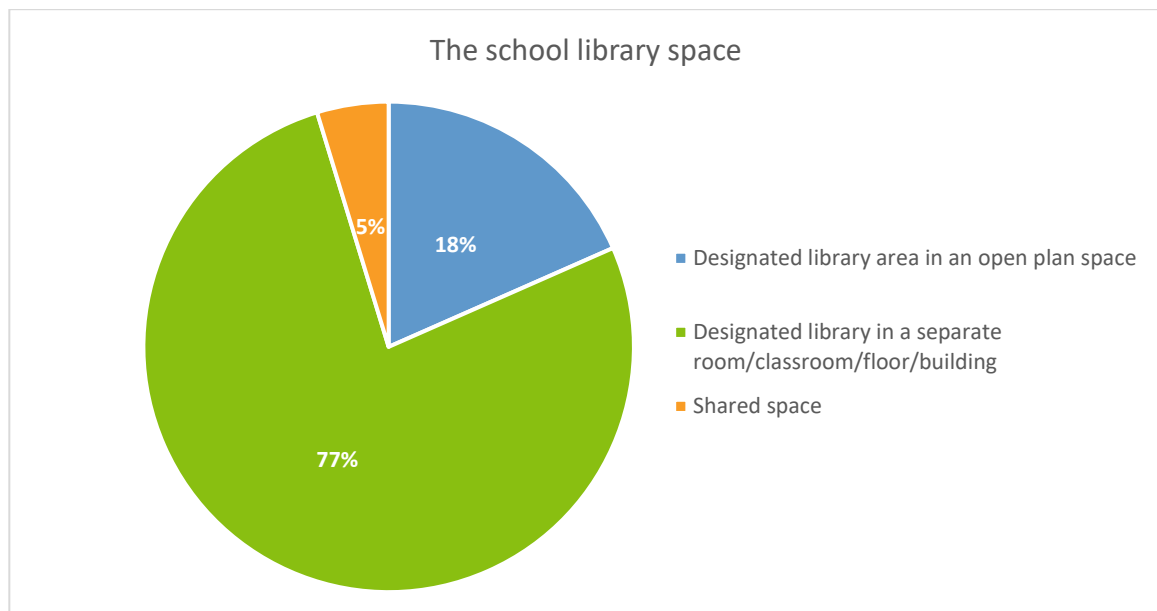
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 46% of Independent school respondents said “yes”; 54% said “no”.



11.3 The school library space

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 18% reported they have a designated library area in an open-plan space
- 77% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 5% reported their library operates in a shared space



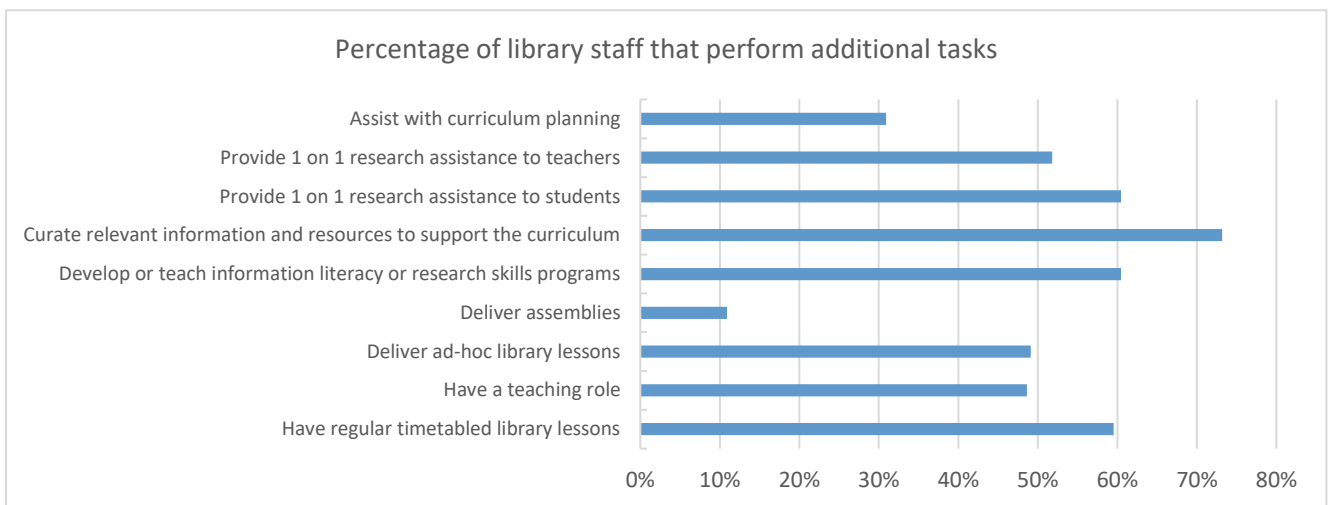
11.4 Tasks performed by school library staff

We asked participants to select from a list of tasks, beyond managing the collection, that the main library staff member performs.

The top 4 reported tasks were:

- Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (73%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (60%)
- Developing or teaching information literacy or research skills programs (60%)
- Providing 1 on 1 research assistance to students (60%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



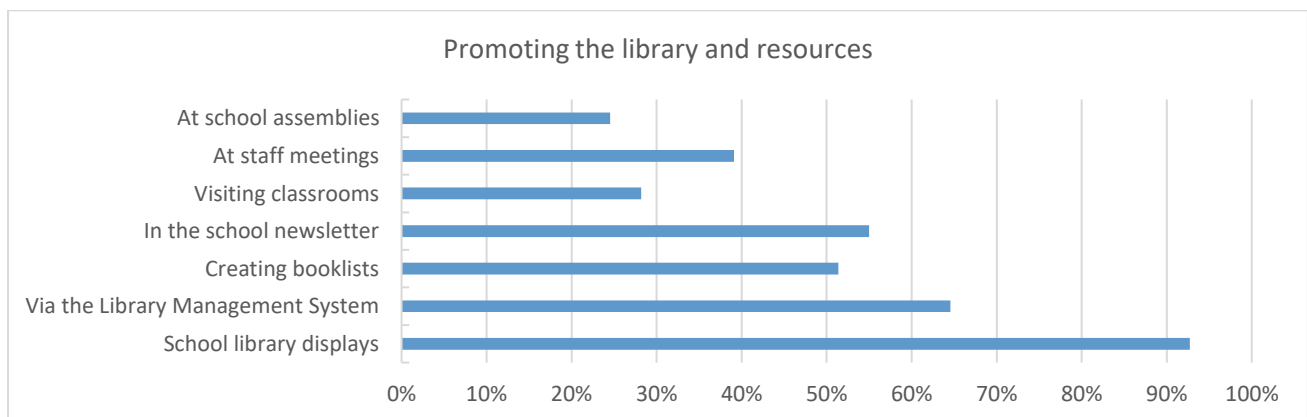
11.5 Promoting the library and resources

Participants were asked how they promote their school library and resources.

The top 3 avenues for promotion were:

- School library displays (93%)
- Via the Library Management System (65%)
- In the school newsletter (55%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.

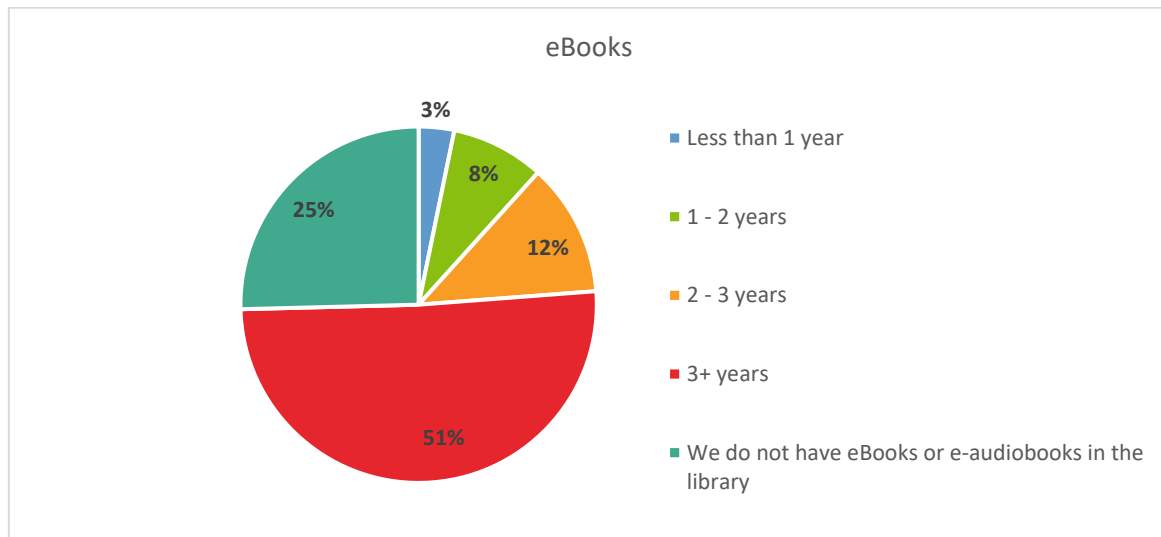


11.6 Online Resources in Independent schools

11.6.1 eBooks

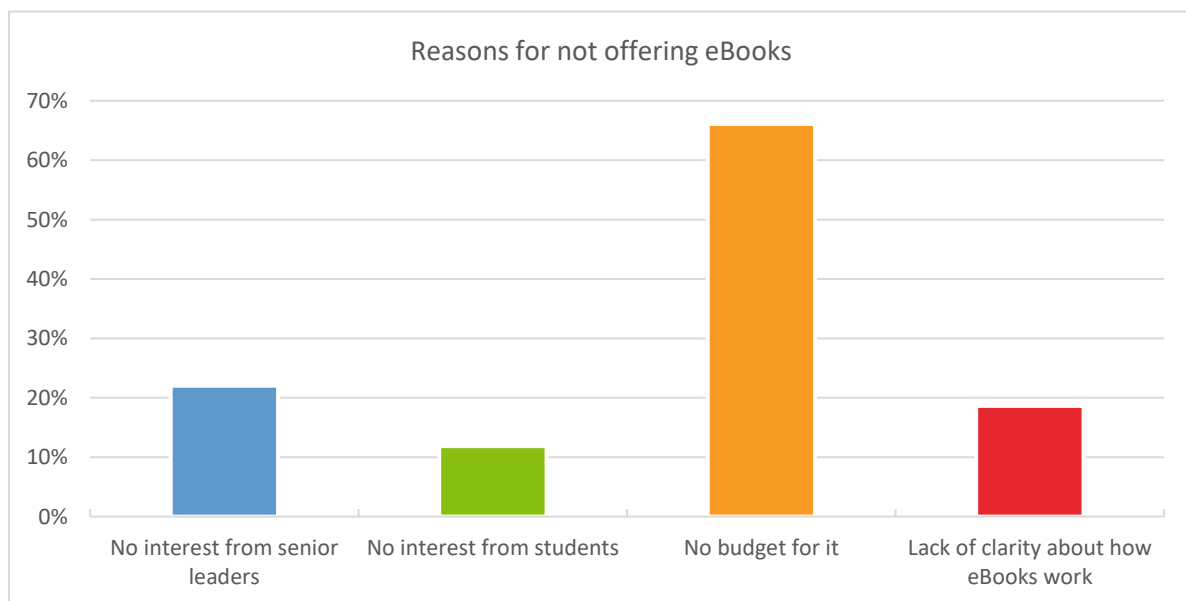
Participants were asked how long they have been offering eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library. In 2021, Independent schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	4%
1 – 2 years	10%
2 – 3 years	9%
3+ years	48%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	28%



When asked why eBooks and e-audiobooks are not offered, participants reported the following:

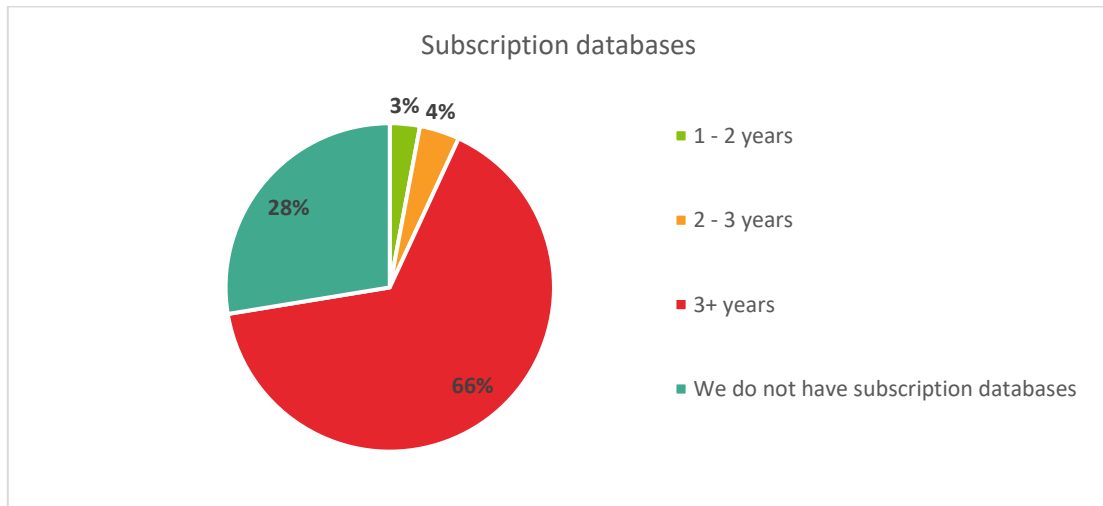
- No interest from senior leaders: 22%
- No interest from students: 12%
- No budget for it: 66%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 19%



11.6.2 Subscription databases

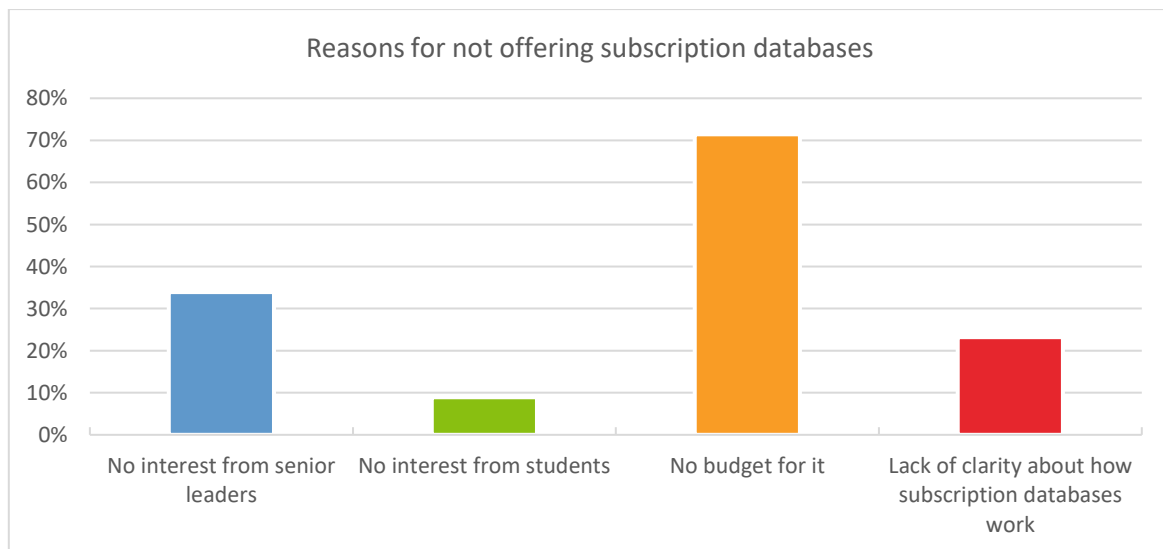
Participants were asked how long they have been offering subscription databases in the library. In 2021, Independent schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	0%
1 – 2 years	3%
2 – 3 years	4%
3+ years	66%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	28%



When asked why subscription databases are not offered, participants reported the following:

- No interest from senior leaders: 34%
- No interest from students: 9%
- No budget for it: 71%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 23%

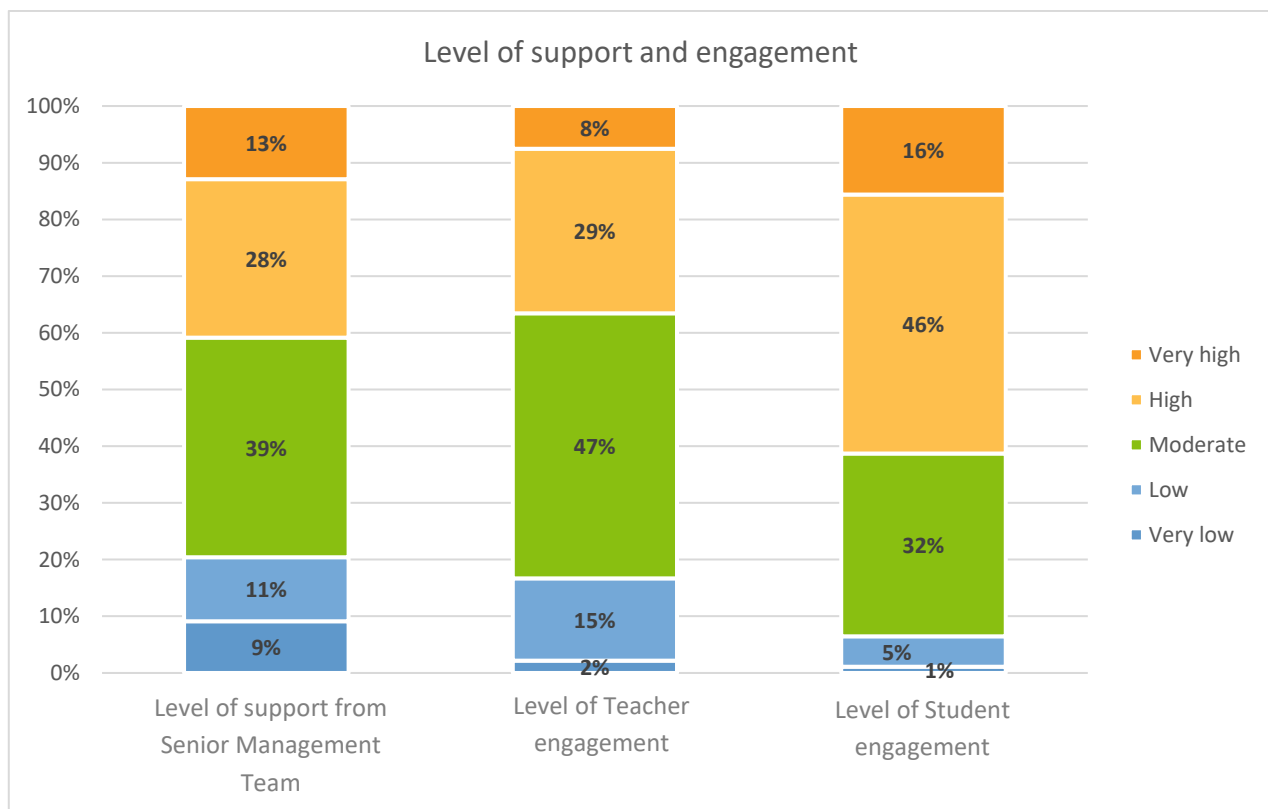


11.7 Level of support and engagement

Participants were asked about the level of support they receive from the Senior Management Team and the level of teacher and student engagement with the library.

The percentages of respondents from Independent schools, for categories ranging from “very low” to “very high”, are as follows:

	Level of Support from the Senior Management Team	Level of Teacher Engagement with the Library	Level of Student Engagement with the Library
Very high	13%	8%	16%
High	28%	29%	46%
Moderate	39%	47%	32%
Low	11%	15%	5%
Very low	9%	2%	1%



12.0 Feedback themes

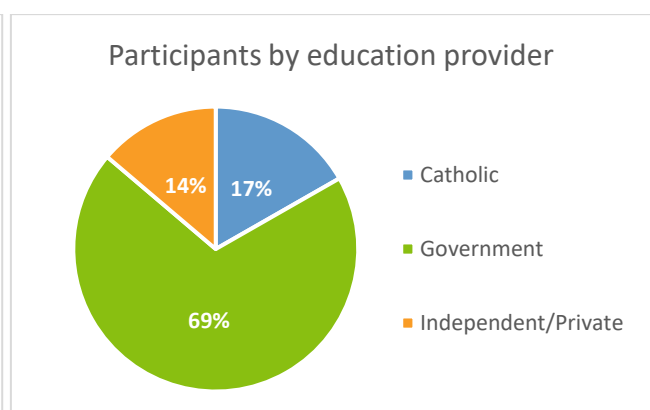
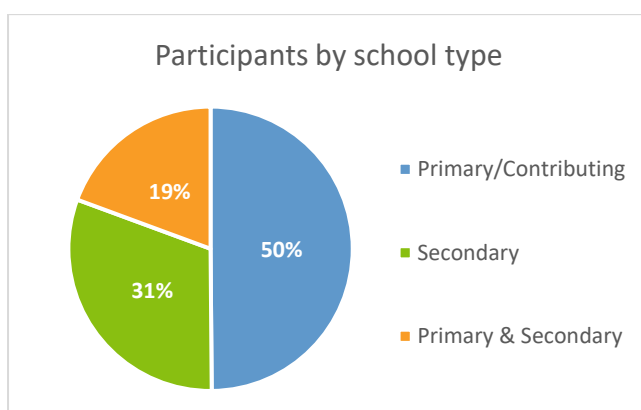
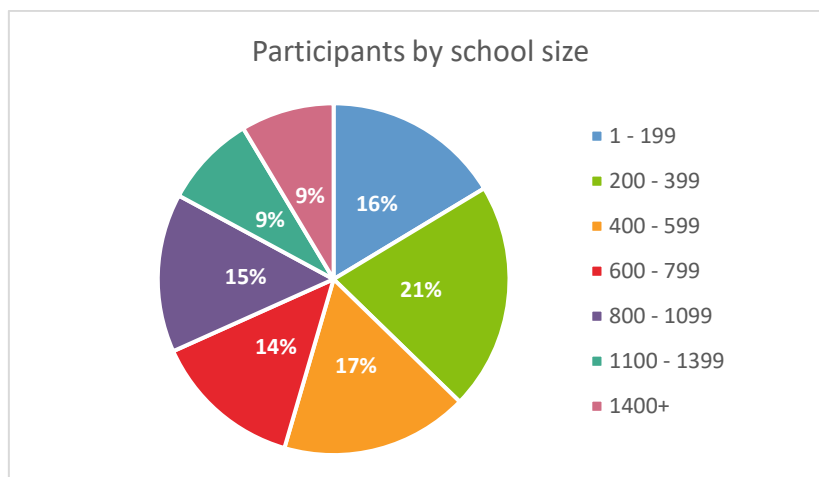
The survey asked open-ended questions giving participants an opportunity to comment and share their ideas and reflections on working in a school library. Responses to these questions will be explored in feature documents that will be published throughout the year.

13.0 Participant breakdown

The 2021 Softlink Australian School Library Survey was released August 18, 2021 and closed September 30, 2021. Invitations to participate were extended to all schools (including schools that are not Softlink customers) in the Australia via email, Twitter, LinkedIn, OZTL_Net, and promoted by a number of our partners, associates, and school library groups.

Despite the challenges of COVID and lockdowns in some states, we are pleased to share that there were 1595 participants.

The breakdown of schools by size, education provider, and school type can be seen in the charts below.



Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the Softlink 2021 Australian School Library Survey.

Your willingness to participate and share information about your school library means that we can continue to provide this valuable, annual analysis of school libraries.

The survey results provide a critical reference point for changes, impacts, and trends across school libraries in Australian school libraries. Softlink will continue to work with industry associations to help advocate the role of school libraries and teacher librarians to Education Ministers, departments, and decision makers, as well as through industry networks.

Softlink is proud to continue to sponsor and grow this initiative.

Additional resources

The Softlink School Library Surveys are used to produce a range reports and feature documents to help inform and support school library staff and the greater school community. A selection of these has been included below, to view more visit softlinkint.com/resources/reports-and-whitepapers/

[School libraries share: What I would change](#)

This feature shares comments from the 2020 survey, highlighting what respondents would like to change about their library or role.

[School libraries share: library love](#)

This feature shares comments from the 2014 – 2020 surveys demonstrating the love and passion school library staff have and what they love most about coming to work. It also shares comments that demonstrate the love the school has for the library.

[School Libraries Share Ideas for Promoting the Library](#)

Published in 2019, this feature is based on responses to the question *“What practices are in place or what ideas do you have to promote the library, the services it provides, or the role and skills of the school library staff in your school?”* in the 2018 School Library Surveys.

[From the Principal’s desk – reflections on the school library](#)

This feature shares collated comments from the 2014 – 2020 School Library Surveys and represent the voice of school Principals in Australia in Australia as they reflect on the value of their library and library staff, as well as changes they would make to the library.

We are always looking for ways to improve and refine the School Library Survey and associated reports and whitepapers. If you would like to offer feedback, please email communications@softlinkint.com