

Australian School Library Survey Report 2023



Based on the Australian responses to the 2023
Softlink School Library Survey.

Background and objective

Conducted by Softlink on behalf of the school library sector each year since 2010, the School Library Report examines key trends and topics impacting library staff and services.

The 2023 report provides survey findings from a comprehensive range of schools, including Australian Government, Independent or Private, and Catholic Education schools.

The data and analysis collected encompass various aspects such as school library budgets, staffing, the availability of digital resources, and other pertinent trends shaping school library services.

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.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the survey

For over a decade, Softlink has been producing the annual School Library Report, providing crucial data on libraries across Australia and New Zealand to inform schools and communities about the state of school libraries. Since its inception in 2010, school libraries have undergone significant transformations due to advancements in technology, changes in school systems, and evolving student expectations. These changes have not only impacted the physical library space but also the virtual classroom.

The 2023 Australian NAPLAN results have indicated a concerning reality: a significant portion of Australian students are struggling to meet educational benchmarks. Approximately one-third of students have not achieved expected proficiency levels in numeracy, reading, and writing, with over 40% of year 3 and year 9 students demonstrating deficiencies in grammar and punctuation. In light of these findings, it's evident that school libraries play an increasingly vital role in addressing these challenges. They serve as essential hubs for fostering improved literacy and academic performance, providing resources and environments conducive to learning. Now more than ever, investing in school libraries is crucial to supporting students in their educational journey and enhancing their chances for success.

In addition to their academic role, school libraries also play a significant role in promoting students' overall wellbeing. Research has shown that access to well-equipped libraries positively impacts students' mental health and emotional development. By providing a safe and welcoming space for students to explore literature, engage in quiet study, or seek support from library staff, school libraries contribute to a holistic approach to education.

In conclusion, school libraries are not only vital for academic success but also serve as essential hubs for promoting students' overall wellbeing. By fostering a love for reading and providing resources to support mental health, libraries play a crucial role in nurturing students' emotional development. As we navigate educational challenges, investing in the wellbeing aspects of school libraries is paramount to ensuring the holistic growth and flourishing of our students in both academic and personal spheres.

1.2 The 'Typical' Australian School Library in 2023

Based on the results from the latest School Library Report, it's evident that many school libraries nationwide are grappling with challenges such as staffing shortages and inadequate budgets. Despite these obstacles, your library remains a vital hub within the school community, serving as a beacon of literacy, learning and student wellbeing.

Your library is a cornerstone of educational support with most libraries occupying a dedicated space, whether it's nestled within a single room, occupying a designated floor, or spanning an entire school building. You effectively promote the wealth of resources and services available to students and educators by leveraging engaging displays within the library, featuring regular updates in the school newsletter and utilising your Library Management systems.

Your role transcends traditional library duties; you curate materials not only to bolster the curriculum but also to cultivate a culture of literacy and inquiry. Through library lessons and instruction, you empower students to navigate the vast landscape of information, fostering critical thinking skills and a lifelong love of learning.

While resource constraints may pose challenges, it's heartening to know that there is strong support from senior leadership—a testament to the indispensable role that school libraries play in shaping student success. Though teacher engagement may vary, your dedication to promoting literacy remains unwavering.

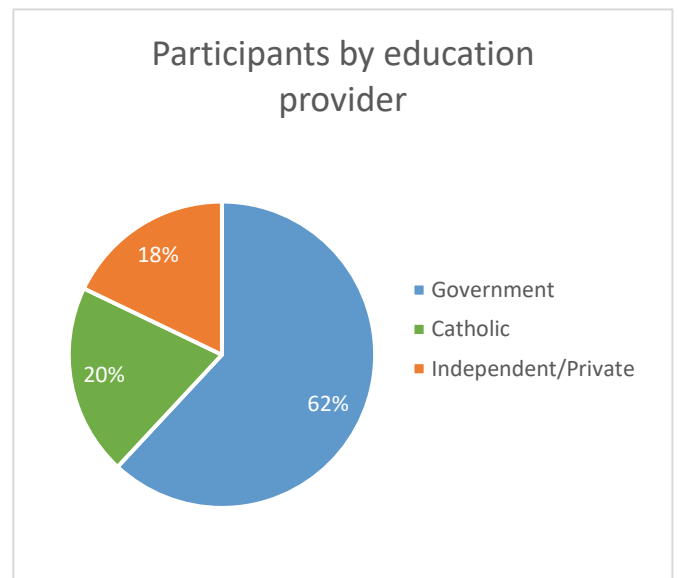
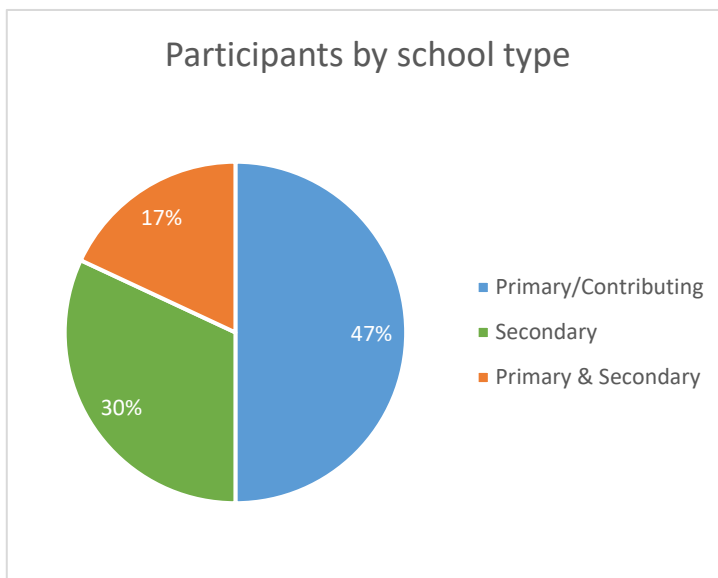
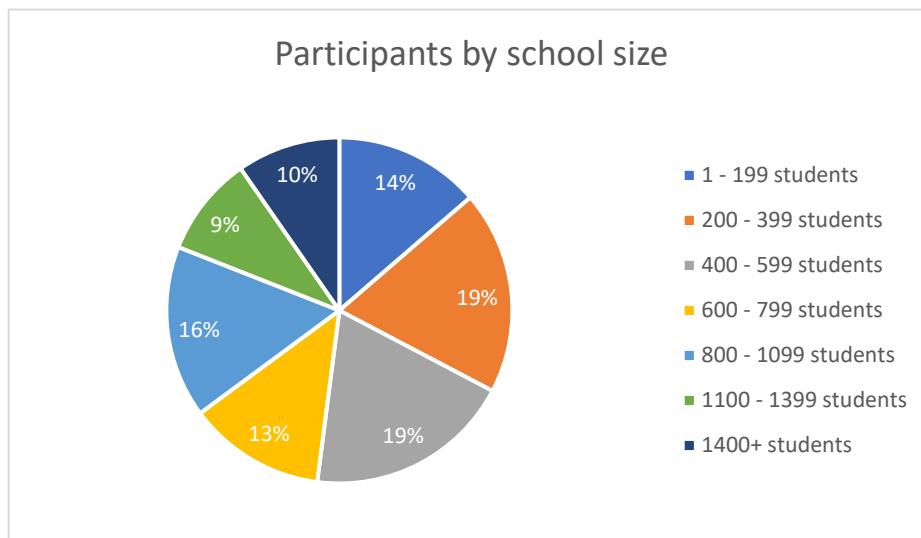
Most importantly, your efforts are reflected in the high level of student engagement, underscoring the profound impact of the school library on fostering a community of eager readers and informed citizens. Your commitment to advocacy for the school library and literacy is commendable and essential in ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive academically and beyond.

2.0 Participant breakdown

The 2023 Softlink Australian School Library Survey was released last year. 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.

We are thrilled to report that we received a total of 951 participants.

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



3.0 Survey findings summary

Key findings from the 2023 Australian School Library Survey:

- 57% of respondents indicated that they think their school library budget is adequate.
- 48% indicated that they think their school library is adequately staffed.
- 60% of respondents reported that their library budget had not changed from the previous year, 17% reported it had increased, and 23% reported it had decreased.
- 65% of respondents reported no change to their staffing levels from the previous year, 9% reported it had increased, and 26% reported a decrease.
- Budget cutbacks and new leadership were 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: 1%
 - Designated library area in an open-plan space: 16%
 - Designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building: 77%
 - Shared space: 5%
- The top 3 responsibilities of school library staff (over and above managing the collection) were:
 - Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (56%)
 - Providing regular timetabled library lessons (54%)
 - Performing a teaching role (40%)
- The top 3 avenues school library staff use to promote the library and resources were:
 - School library displays (91%)
 - In the school newsletter (46%)
 - Via the Library Management System (40%)
- When asked how long they have offered eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library, respondents reported the following:
 - less than 1 year (3%)
 - 1-2 years (5%)
 - 2-3 years (7%)
 - 3+ years (31%)
 - We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library (54%)

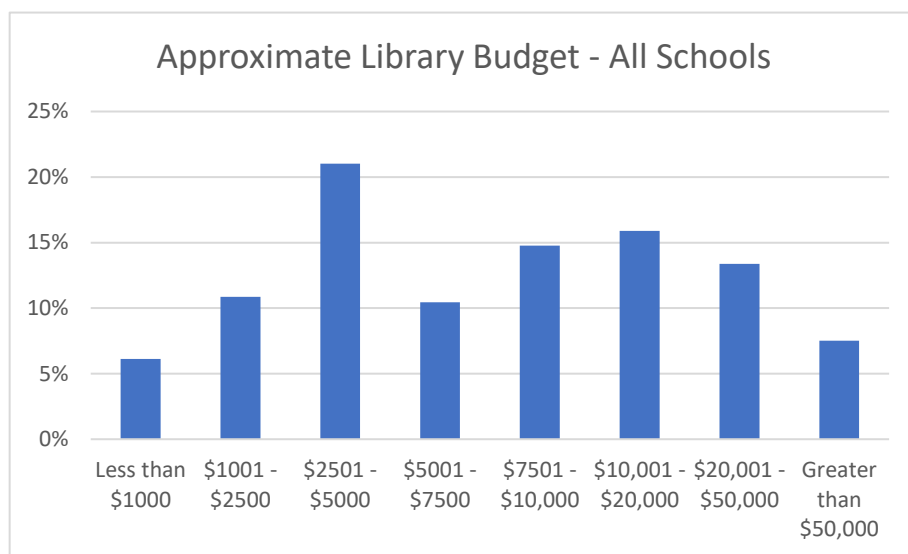
- When asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library, respondents reported the following:
 - less than 1 year (2%)
 - 1-2 years (4%)
 - 2-3 years (3%)
 - 3+ years (36%)
 - We do not have subscription databases in the library (55%)
- When asked about the level of support the school library receives from the Senior Leadership Team, 37% of respondents reported a high to very high level of support, 36% reported a moderate level of support, and 27% reported a low to very low level of support.
- When asked about the level of teacher engagement with the library, 34% of respondents reported a high to very high level of engagement, 43% reported a moderate level of engagement, and 22% 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, 33% reported a moderate level of engagement, and 8% reported a low to very low level of support.

4.0 School library budgets

4.1 Approximate library budget for all schools

When looking at library budgets reported for all Australian schools in 2023, budgets between \$2501 - \$5000 had the highest percentage of respondents (21%) reported.

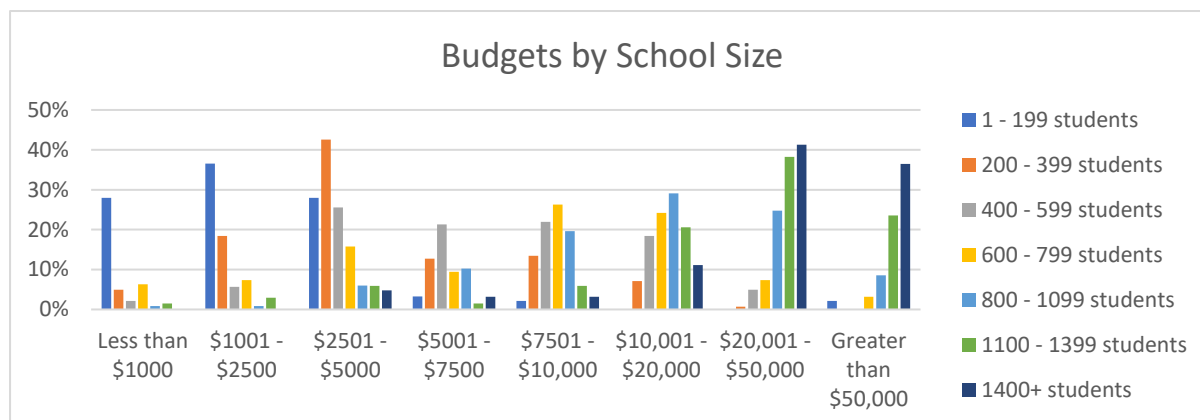
Further breakdown of school budgets by school size, education provider, and school type has been provided on the following pages.



Note: Reported "Unknown" budgets have not been included

4.2 Budgets by school size

A breakdown of school library budgets by school size, according to school library report respondents.



School library budgets	School size (number of students)						
	1- 199	200-399	400-599	600-799	800-1099	1100-1399	1400+
less than \$1000	28%	5%	2%	6%	1%	1%	0%
\$1001 - \$2500	37%	18%	6%	7%	1%	3%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	28%	43%	26%	16%	6%	6%	5%
\$5001 - \$7500	3%	13%	21%	9%	10%	1%	3%
\$7501 - \$10,000	2%	13%	22%	26%	20%	6%	3%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	0%	7%	18%	24%	29%	21%	11%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	0%	1%	5%	7%	25%	38%	41%
Greater than \$50,000	2%	0%	0%	3%	9%	24%	37%

4.3 Budget changes

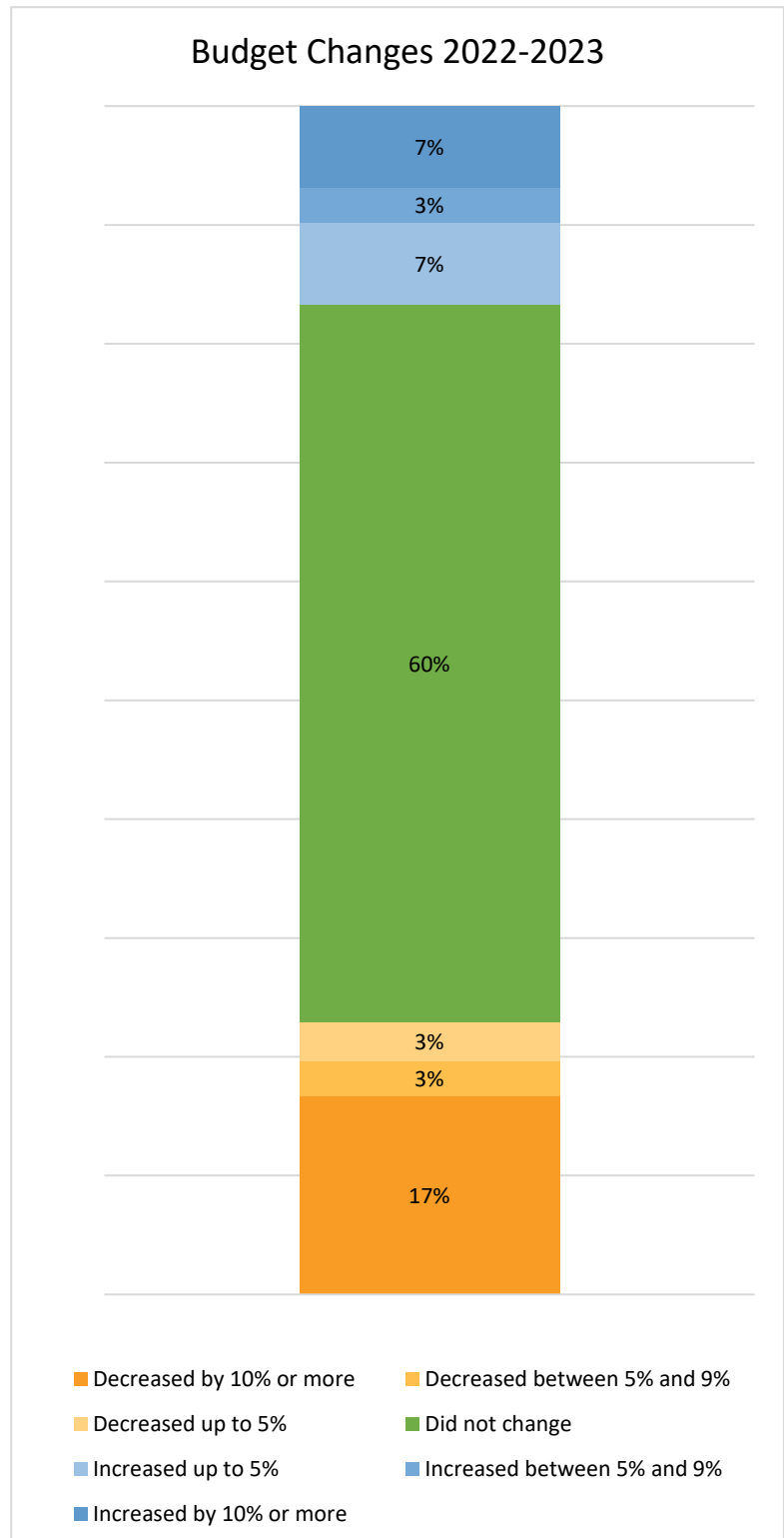
In 2023, 60% of respondents reported that their budget had not changed from the last school year. Of those who knew of their budget and any variances, more reported a budget decrease (at 23%) than those that reported an increase in funding (17%).

Reasons provided for budget **decreases** include:

- Budget cutbacks throughout the entire school
- New leadership at the school
- A decrease in enrolments at the school
- Funding allocations have changed and were needed elsewhere
- Less emphasis on the library with other resources required to be budgeted for

Reasons provided for **increases** include:

- Increased student numbers
- Strong advocacy for the library
- Change in school leadership
- Cost of database subscriptions rising
- Supportive leadership
- Moving into a new school build



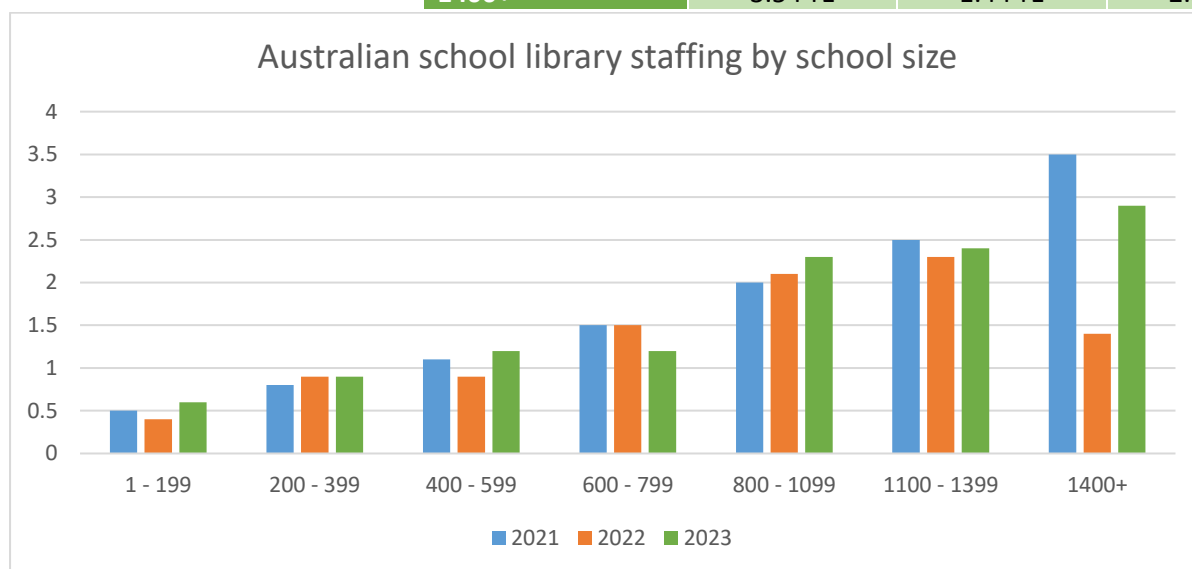
5.0 School library staffing

5.1 Staffing by school size

Resourcing in 2023 has been stable, with slight increase in Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff for most school libraries.

The most significant change in 2023 was an increase in resourcing at Australia's largest schools in the study, a rise of more than 1.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, from 1.4 to 2.9 FTE resources.

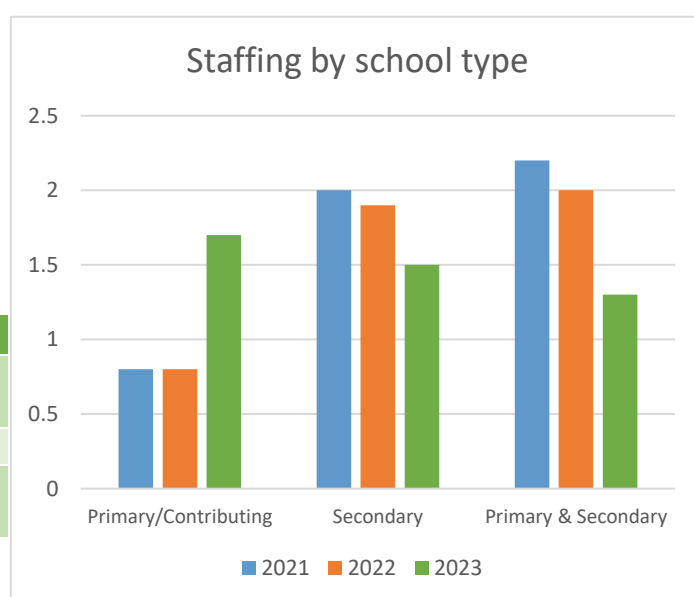
School Size	2021	2022	2023
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.4 FTE	0.6 FTE
200 - 399	0.8 FTE	0.9 FTE	0.9 FTE
400 - 599	1.1 FTE	0.9 FTE	1.2 FTE
600 - 799	1.5 FTE	1.5 FTE	1.2 FTE
800 - 1099	2.0 FTE	2.1 FTE	2.3 FTE
1100 - 1399	2.5 FTE	2.3 FTE	2.4 FTE
1400+	3.5 FTE	1.4 FTE	2.9 FTE



5.2 Staffing by school type

School library staffing figures by school type slightly dropped when compared with the previous years, except for Primary/Contributing Schools where they have doubled from the previous year:

School Type	2021	2022	2023
Primary/Contributing	0.8 FTE	0.8 FTE	1.7 FTE
Secondary	2.0 FTE	1.9 FTE	1.5 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.2 FTE	2.0 FTE	1.3 FTE



5.3 Staffing changes

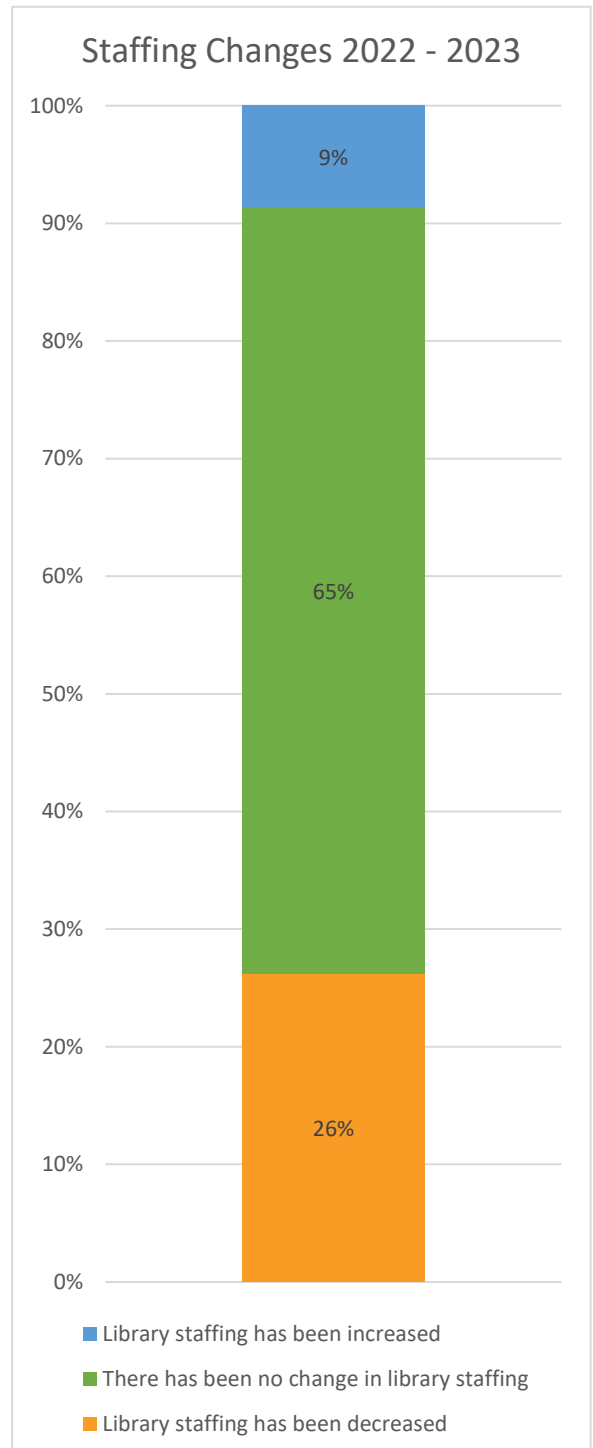
In 2023, 65% of respondents reported that there had been no change in staffing from 2022. 26% of respondents reported staffing decreases; 9% reported staffing increases.

Reasons provided for staffing **decreases** include:

- Staff leaving and not being replaced
- Budget constraints
- Reduction in staff hours
- Decrease in student enrolments
- Staff on leave

Reasons provided for staffing **increases** include:

- Increase in hours given
- Advocacy for library programs
- Increase in school organisation priorities
- Increase in enrolments
- Increase in workload



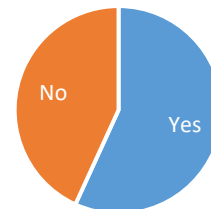
6.0 Resourcing the library

6.1 Is your school library budget adequate?

Participants were asked if they their school library budget adequate.

57% of respondents said “yes”; 43% said “no”.

Do you think your school library budget is adequate?

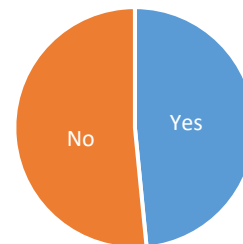


6.2 Is your school library adequately staffed?

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

48% of respondents said “yes”; 52% said “no”.

Do you think your school library is adequately staffed?

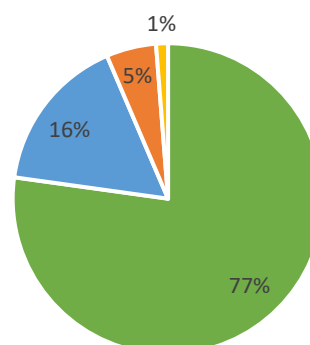


7.0 The school library space

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 1% of respondents reported that they have a classroom library
- 16% 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

The School Library Space



- Designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- Designated library area in an open plan space
- Shared space
- Classroom library/libraries

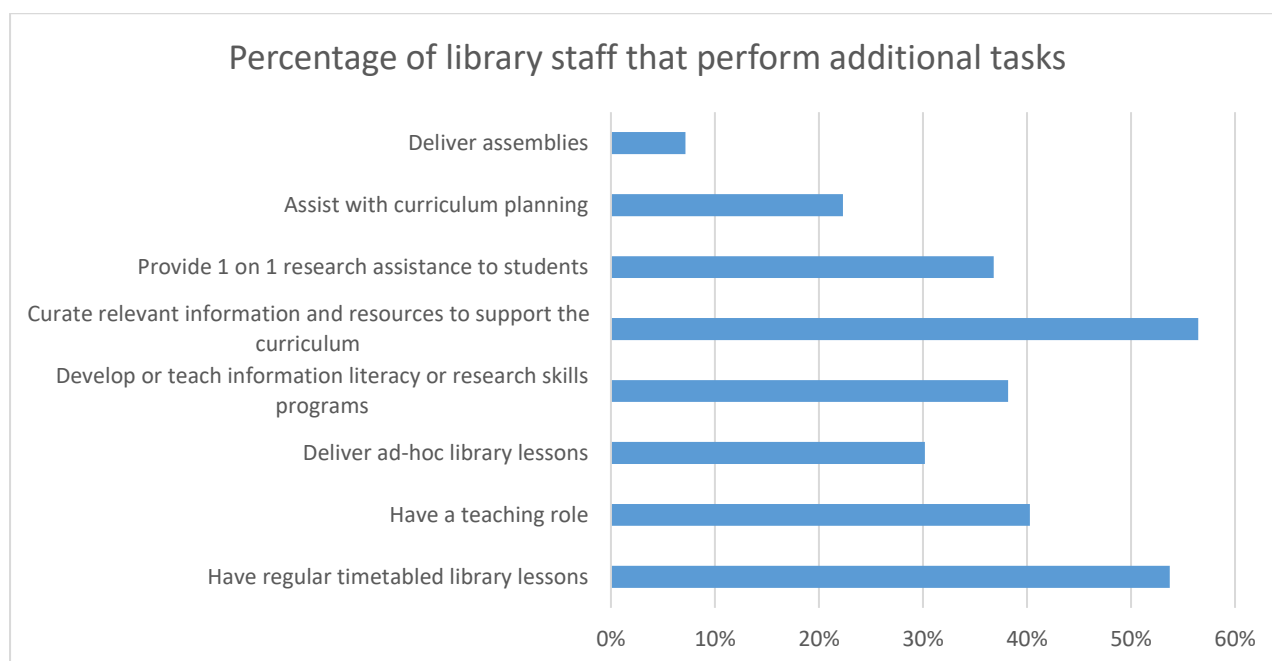
8.0 Tasks performed by school library staff

Beyond the tradition role of managing collections, school library staff serve as invaluable mentors, nurturing critical thinking and research abilities. They teach students how to sift through digital databases, discern credible sources, and cite references accurately. To understand 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 (56%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (54%)
- Performing a teaching role (40%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



Other responses provided include:

- General administrative tasks
- Management of book collections and storage solutions
- Reading stories to classes
- Supervises private study for senior students

9.0 Promoting the library and resources

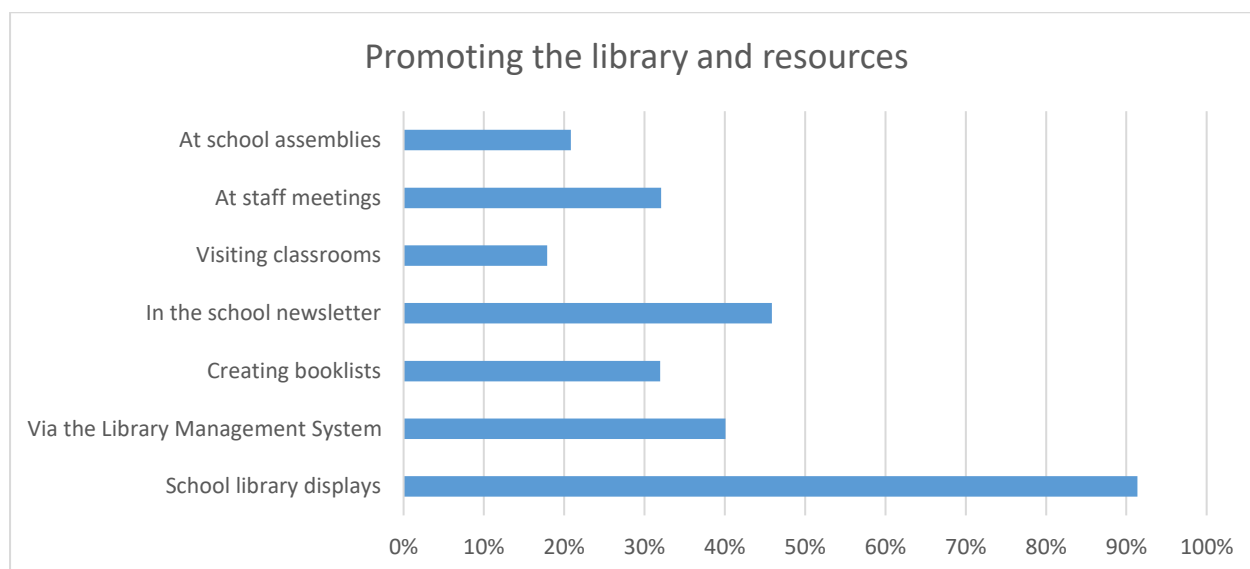
School libraries are essential hubs for learning, where promoting their resources is vital to emphasise their significance within the school community. To understand how school library staff achieve this, participants were asked to share their strategies for engaging students and educators. Their insights offer a glimpse into the diverse methods employed, from traditional approaches to leveraging digital platforms, all aimed at fostering a culture of literacy and learning.

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 (46%)
- Via the Library Management System (40%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



Other responses include:

- Manages social media pages
- Organises events - Book Fairs, Reading Challenges, Book Clubs
- Create newsletters for staff and students
- Competitions and reading challenges
- Manages the school website
- Creating bulletin boards and school posters
- Emailing staff and students
- Talking to teachers and helping them with resources for students
- Managing the library blog

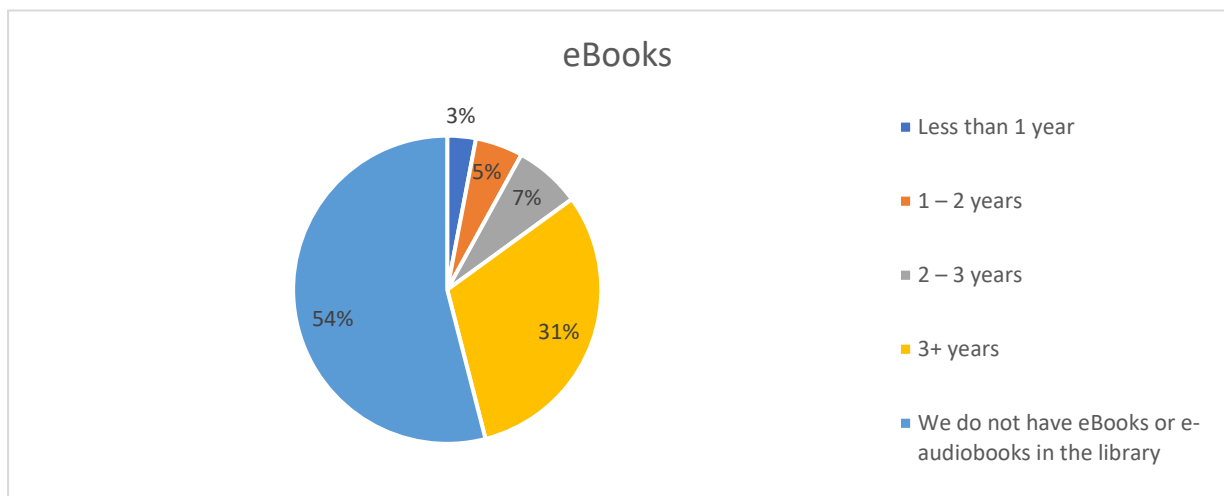
10.0 Online Resources

10.1 eBooks

Participants were asked how long they have offered eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library.

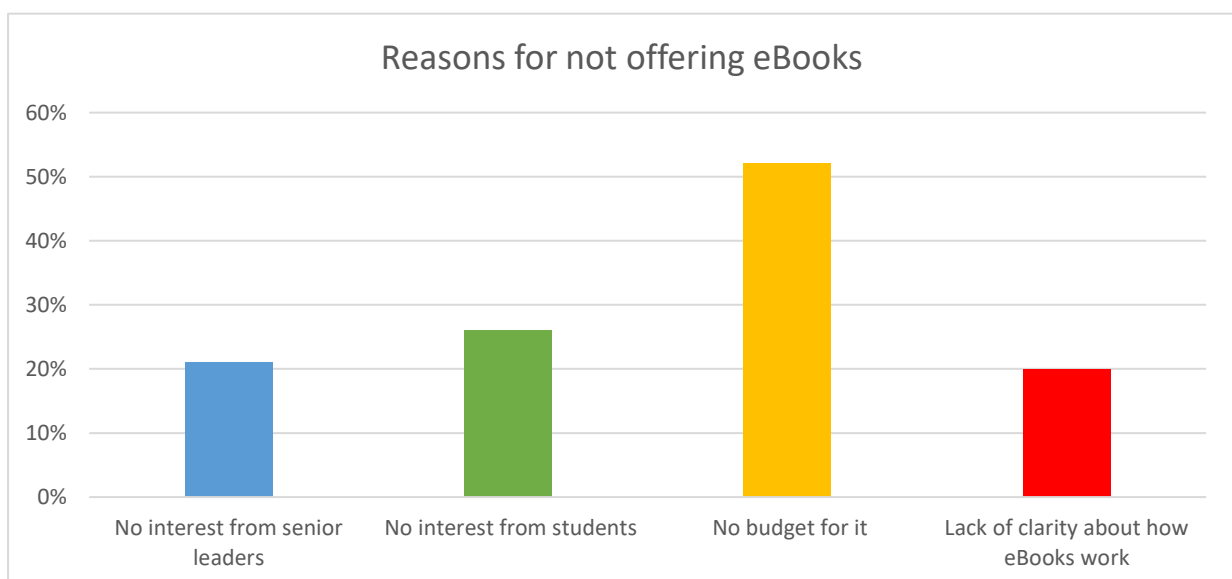
In 2023, participants reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	3%
1 – 2 years	5%
2 – 3 years	7%
3+ years	31%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	54%



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

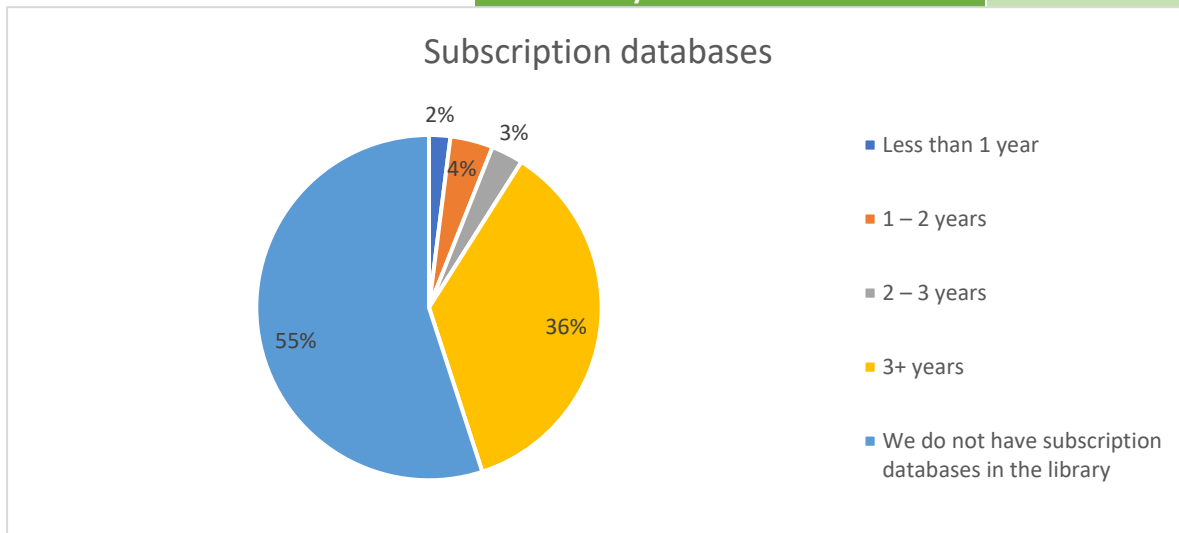
- No interest from senior leaders: 21%
- No interest from students: 26%
- No budget for it: 52%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 20%



10.2 Subscription databases

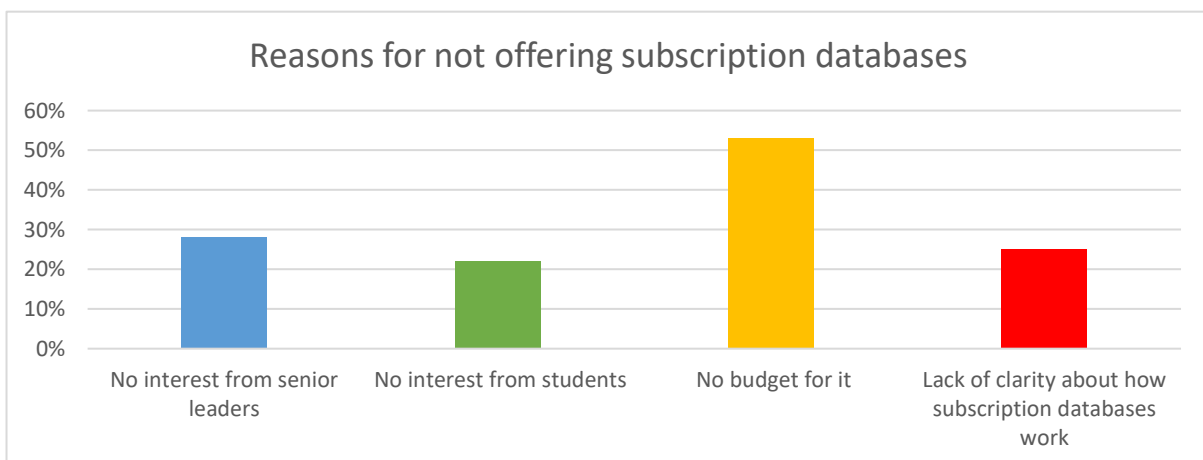
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2023, participating schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2%
1 – 2 years	4%
2 – 3 years	3%
3+ years	36%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	55%



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

- No interest from senior leaders: 28%
- No interest from students: 22%
- No budget for it: 53%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 25%

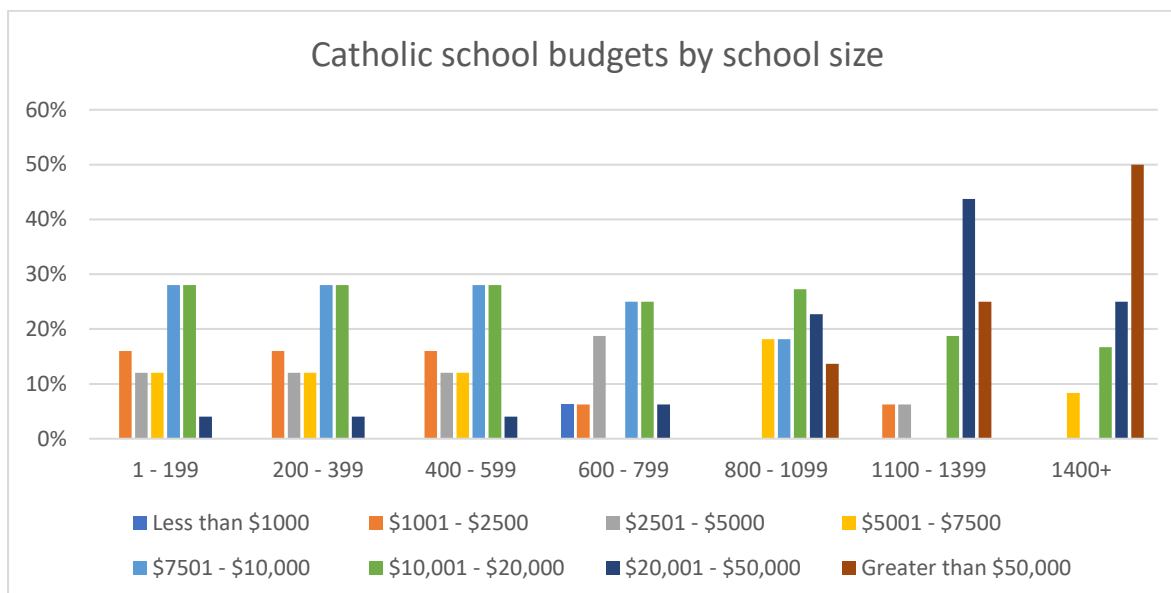


11.0 Catholic schools in Australia

11.1 Catholic school budgets

11.1.1 Catholic school budgets by school size

Australian Catholic school respondents reported the following budget ranges in 2023:

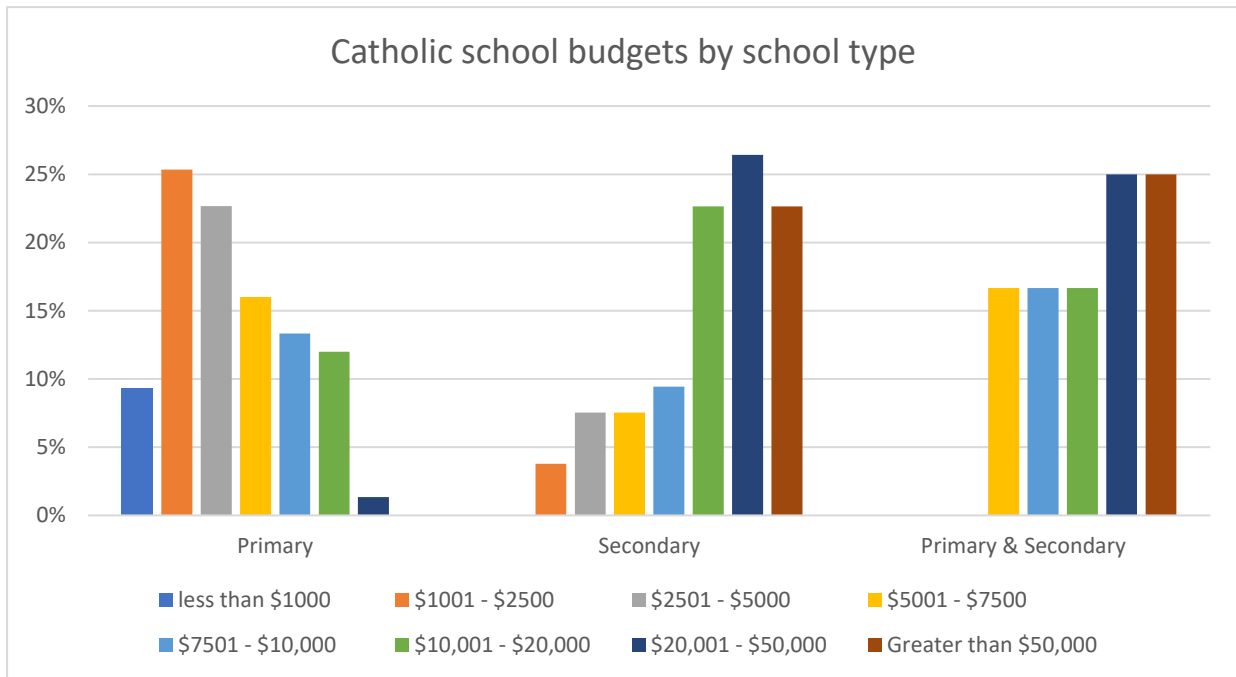


School size (number of students)							
Budget ranges	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
Less than \$1000	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%
\$1001 - \$2500	16%	16%	16%	6%	0%	6%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	12%	12%	12%	19%	0%	6%	0%
\$5001 - \$7500	12%	12%	12%	0%	18%	0%	8%
\$7501 - \$10,000	28%	28%	28%	25%	18%	0%	0%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	28%	28%	28%	25%	27%	19%	17%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	4%	4%	4%	6%	23%	44%	25%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%	25%	50%

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

11.1.2 Catholic school budgets by school type

When looking at library budgets across different school types, Catholic school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

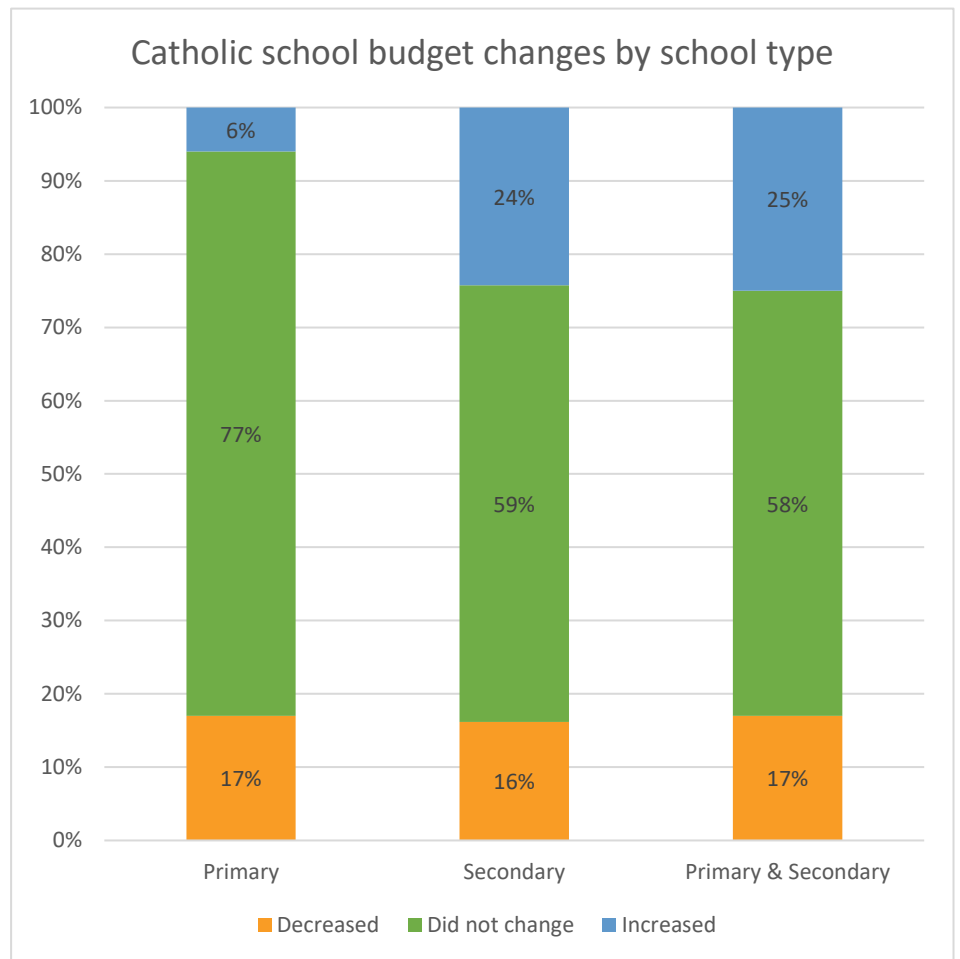
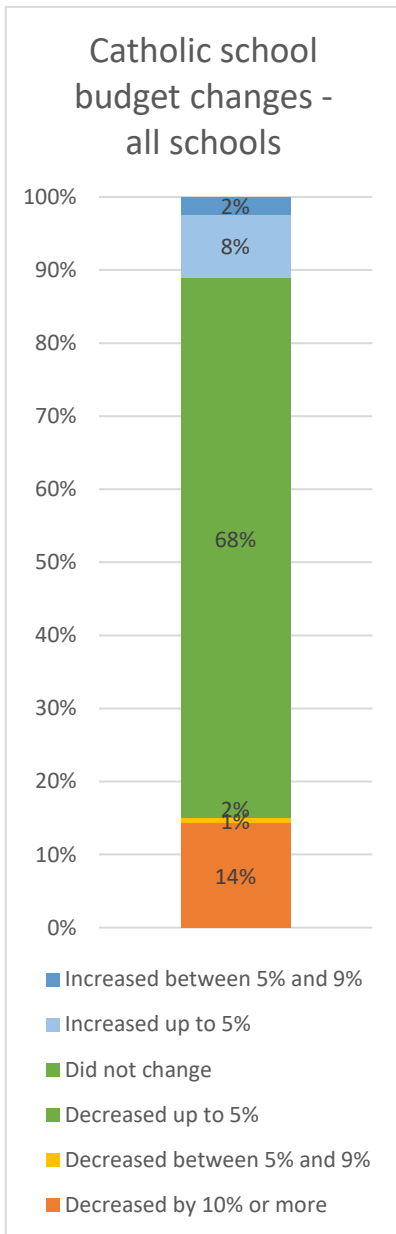


Budget ranges	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
less than \$1000	9%	0%	0%
\$1001 - \$2500	25%	4%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	23%	8%	0%
\$5001 - \$7500	16%	8%	17%
\$7501 - \$10,000	13%	9%	17%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	12%	23%	17%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	1%	26%	25%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	23%	25%

11.1.3 Catholic school budget changes: 2022 – 2023

In 2023, 68% of Catholic school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2022. 17% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 15% reported a budget increase.

While most Catholic school respondents reported no change to budgets in 2023, increases in funding were more common than any decrease, except for Primary Schools.



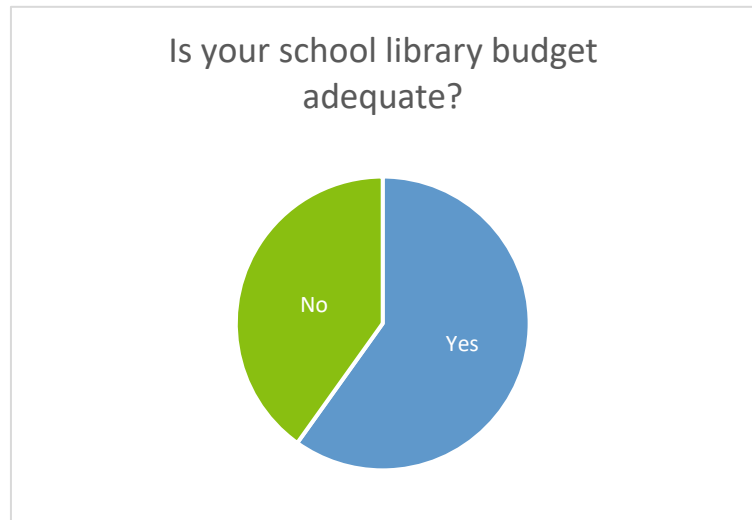
School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	6%	77%	17%
Secondary	24%	59%	16%
Primary & Secondary	25%	58%	17%

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

11.1.4 Catholic schools on adequate budgets

Participants were asked if they thought their school library budget was adequate.

60% of Catholic school respondents said “yes”; 40% said “no”.



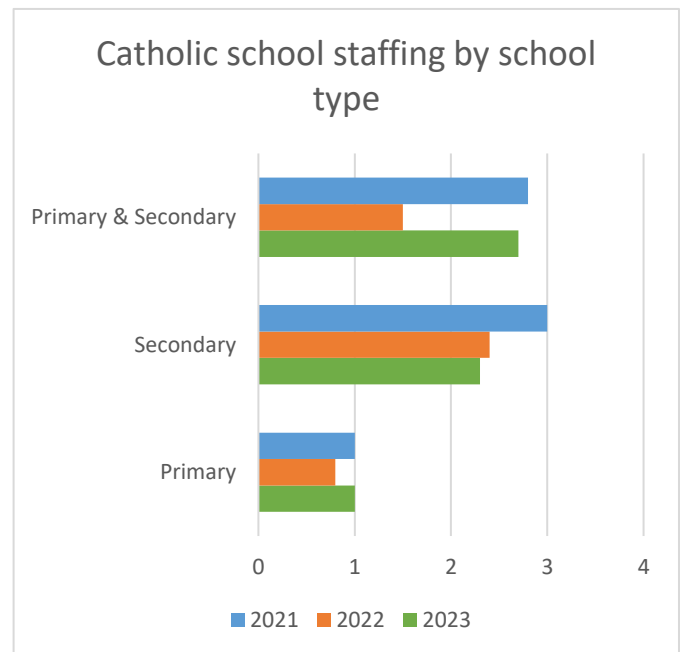
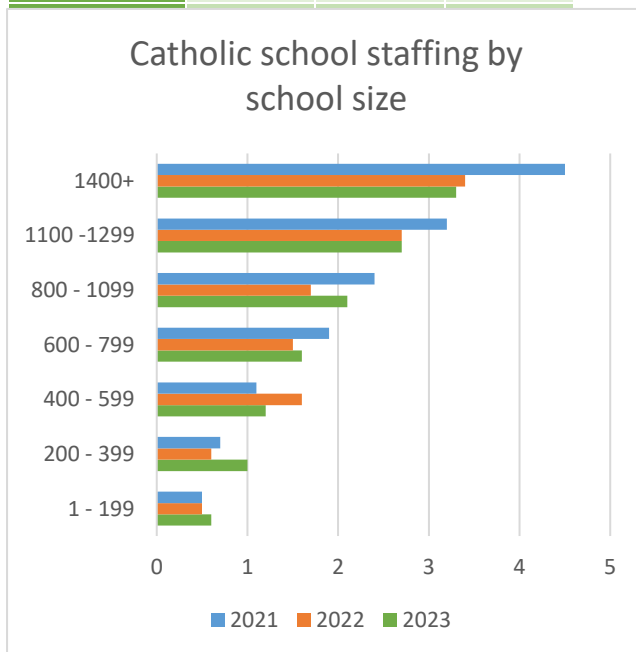
11.2 Catholic school staffing

11.2.1 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):

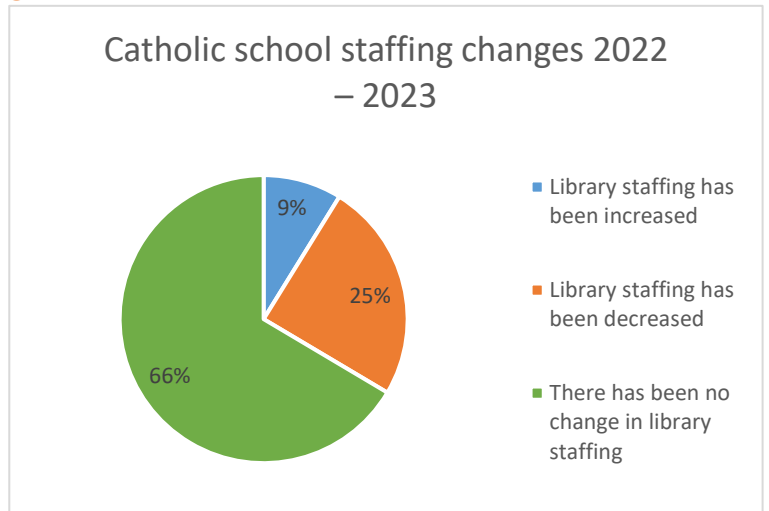
School Size	2021	2022	2023
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.6 FTE
200 - 399	0.7 FTE	0.6 FTE	1 FTE
400 - 599	1.1 FTE	1.6 FTE	1.2 FTE
600 - 799	1.9 FTE	1.5 FTE	1.6 FTE
800 - 1099	2.4 FTE	1.7 FTE	2.1 FTE
1100 -1299	3.2 FTE	2.7 FTE	2.7 FTE

School Type	2021	2022	2023
Primary	1.0 FTE	0.8 FTE	1 FTE
Secondary	3.0 FTE	2.4 FTE	2.3 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.8 FTE	1.5 FTE	2.7 FTE



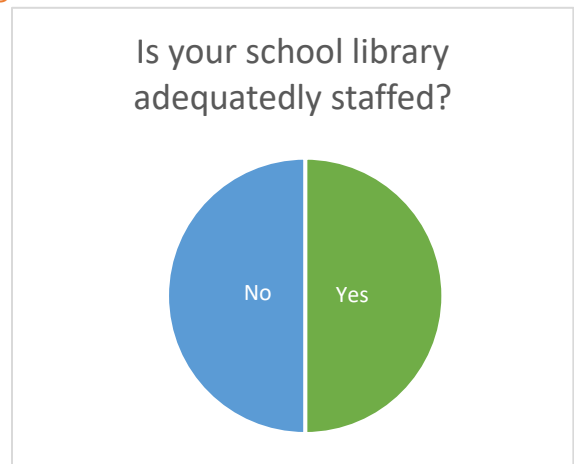
11.2.2 Catholic school staffing changes: 2022 – 2023

In 2023, 66% of Catholic school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from the previous year. Of those who did experience a change in staffing levels in the school library in 2023, 25% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 9% reported a staffing increase.



11.2.3 Catholic schools on adequate staffing

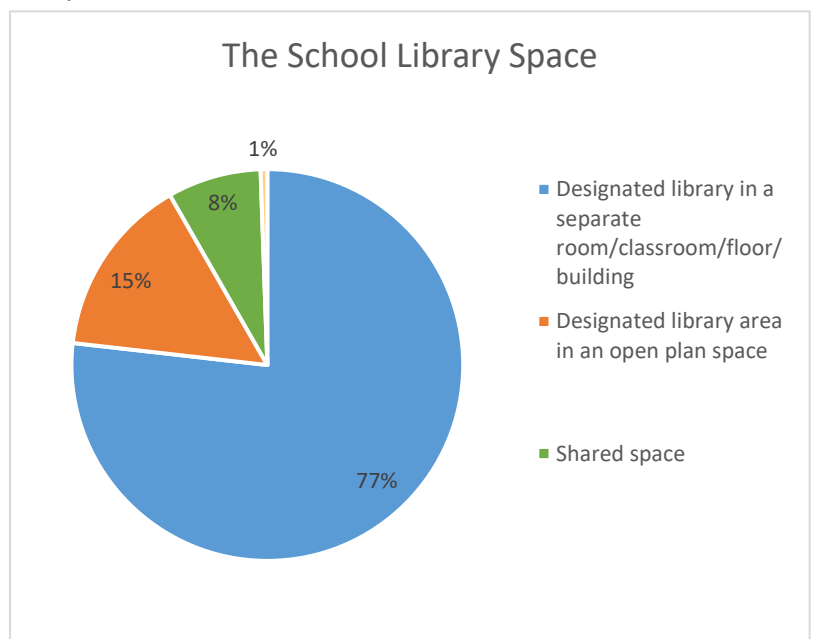
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 50% of Catholic school respondents said “yes”; 50% said “no”.



11.3 The school library space in Catholic Schools

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 15% 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
- 8% reported their library operates in a shared space
- 1% reported their classroom is a library



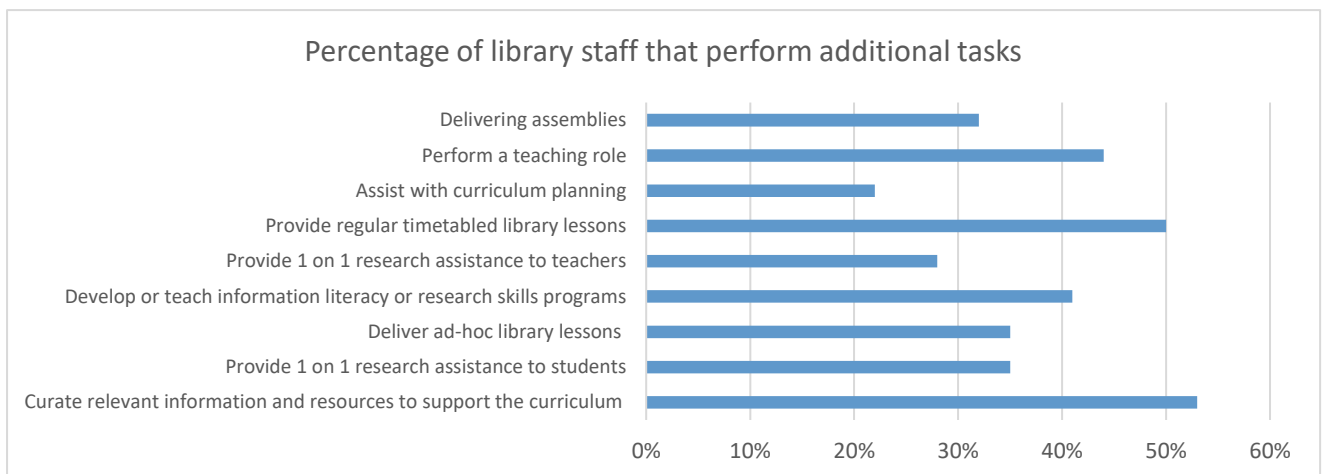
11.4 Tasks performed by school library staff in Catholic Schools

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 (91%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (71%)
- Performing a teaching role (69%).

Additional findings have been provided in the following graph:



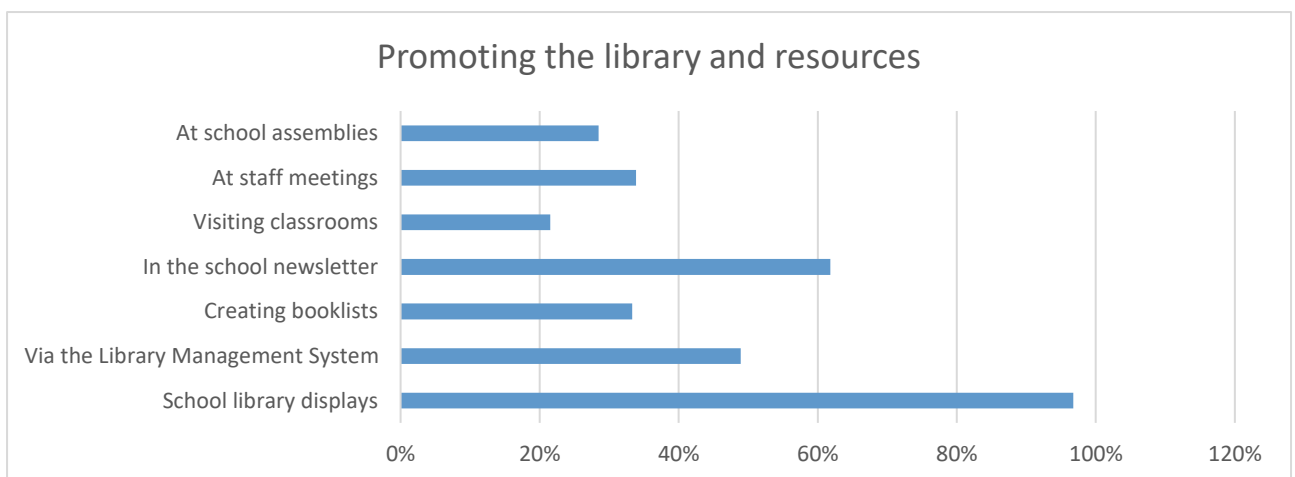
11.5 Promoting the library and resources in Catholic Schools

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

The top 3 avenues for promotion were:

- School library displays (97%)
- In the school newsletter (62%)
- Via the Library Management System (49%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



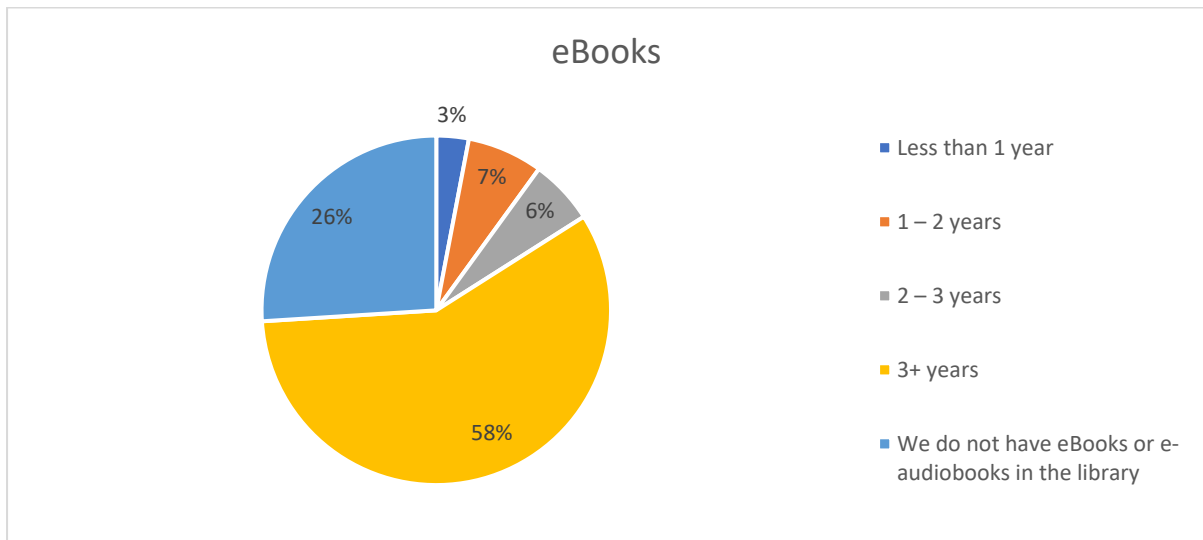
11.6 Online Resources in Catholic schools

11.6.1 eBooks

Participants were asked how long they have offered eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library.

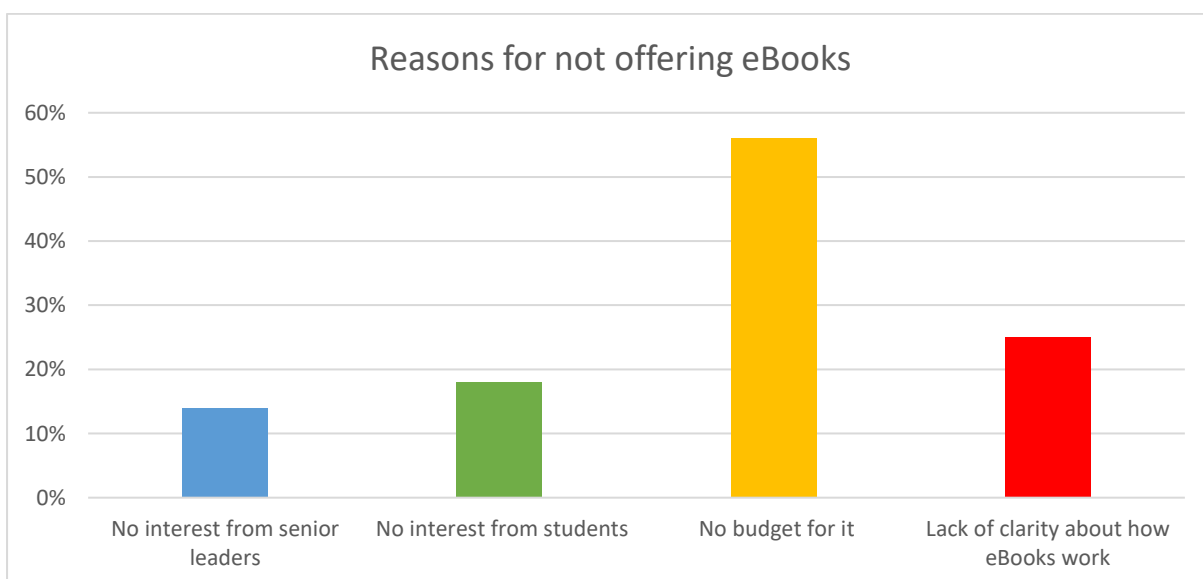
In 2023, Catholic schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	3%
1 – 2 years	7%
2 – 3 years	6%
3+ years	58%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	26%



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

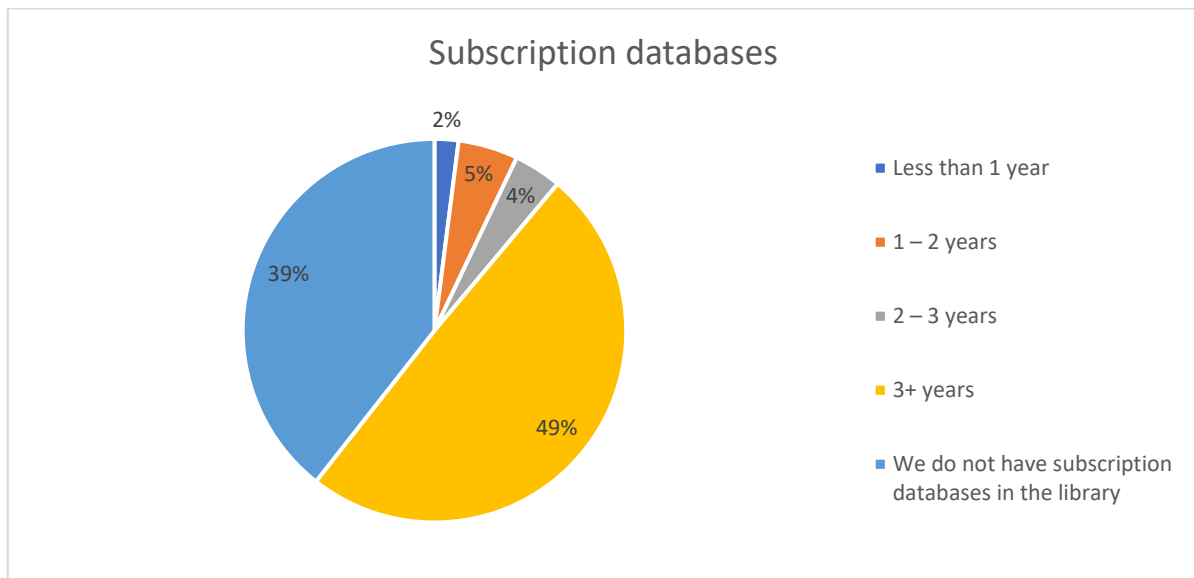
- No interest from senior leaders: 14%
- No interest from students: 18%
- No budget for it: 56%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 25%



11.6.2 Subscription databases

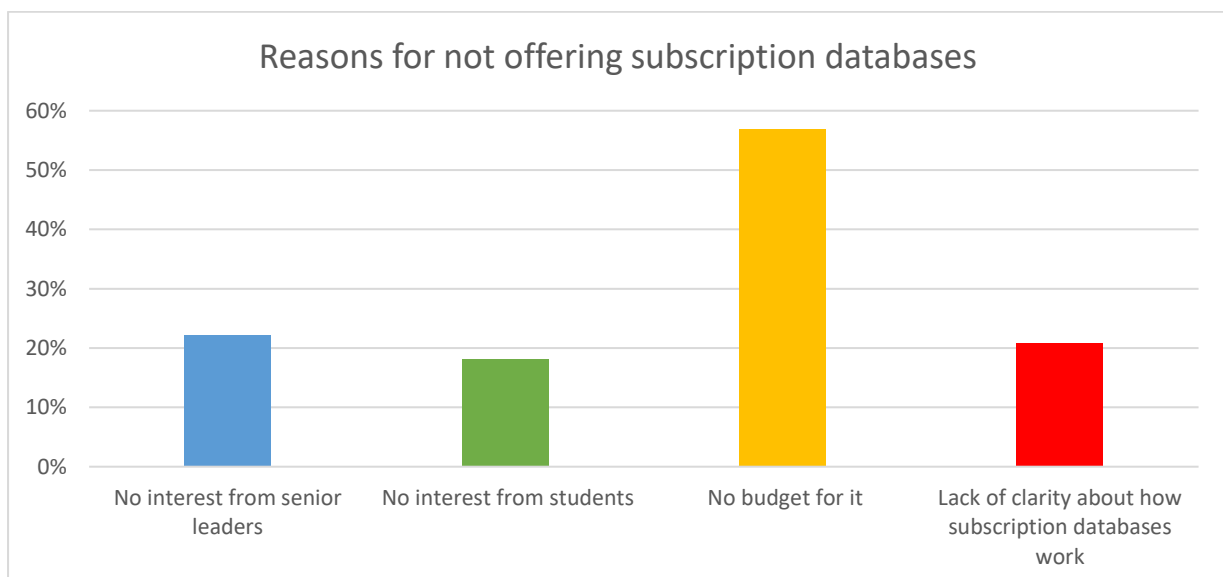
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2023, Catholic schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2%
1 – 2 years	5%
2 – 3 years	4%
3+ years	49%
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: 22%
- No interest from students: 18%
- No budget for it: 57%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 21%

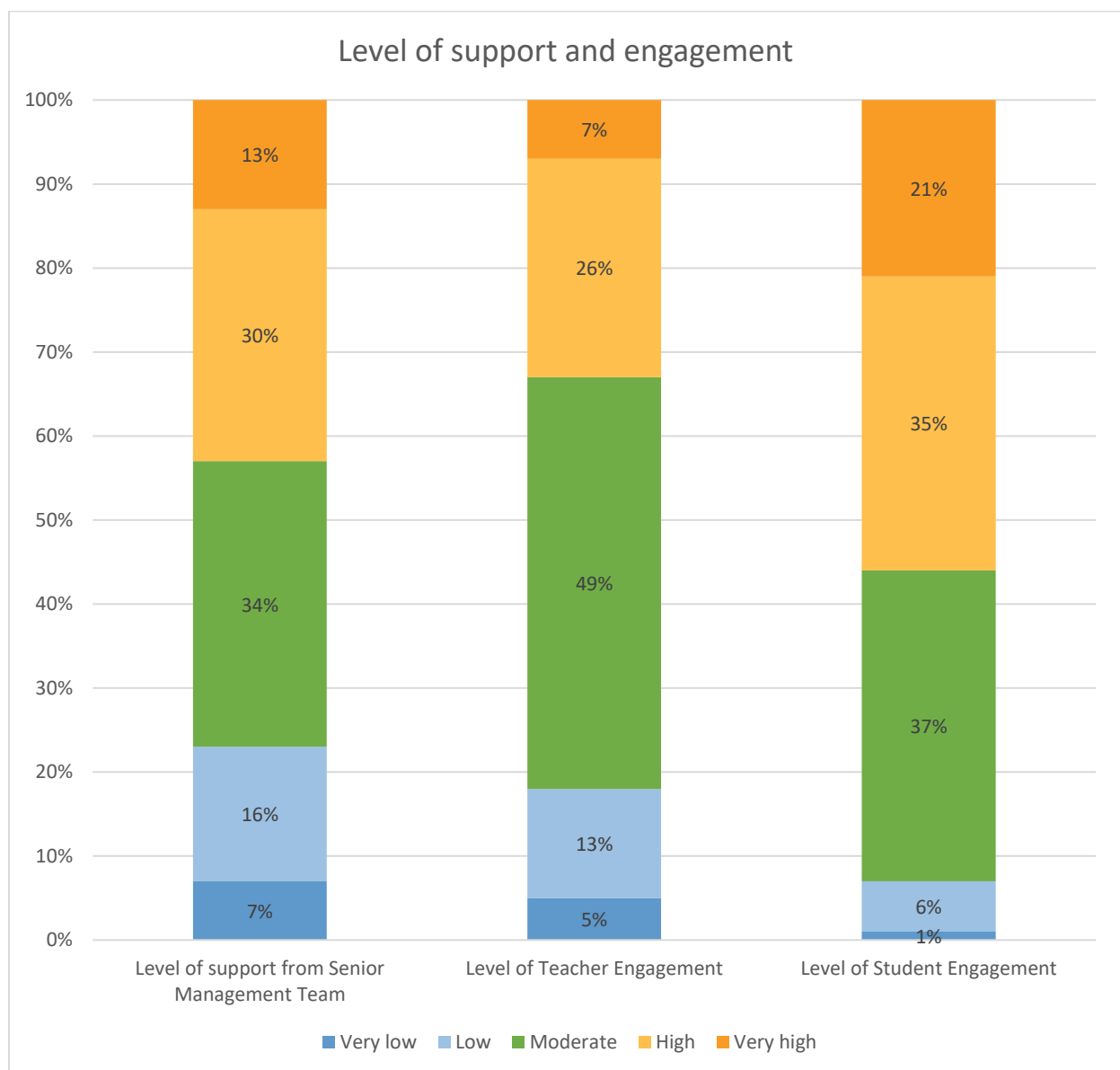


11.7 Level of support and engagement in Catholic schools

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	13%	7%	21%
High	30%	26%	35%
Moderate	34%	49%	37%
Low	16%	13%	6%
Very low	7%	5%	1%

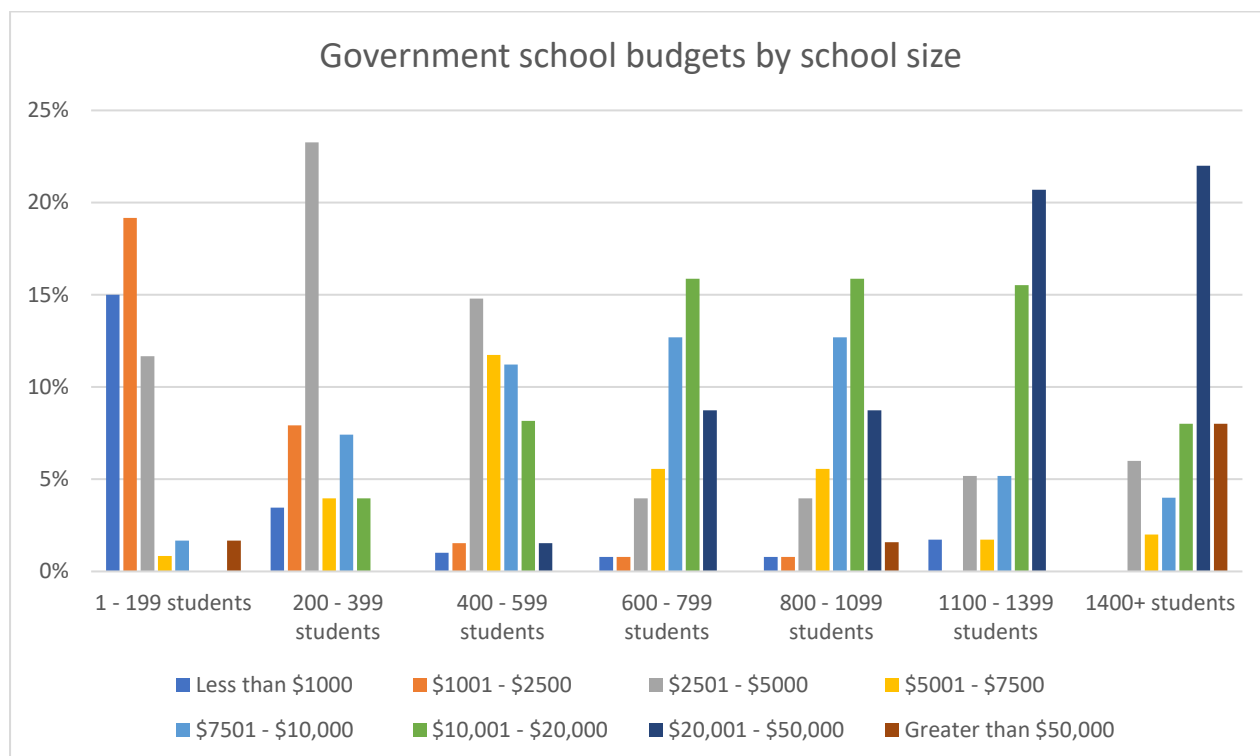


12.0 Government schools in Australia

12.1 Government school budgets

12.1.1 Government school budgets by school size

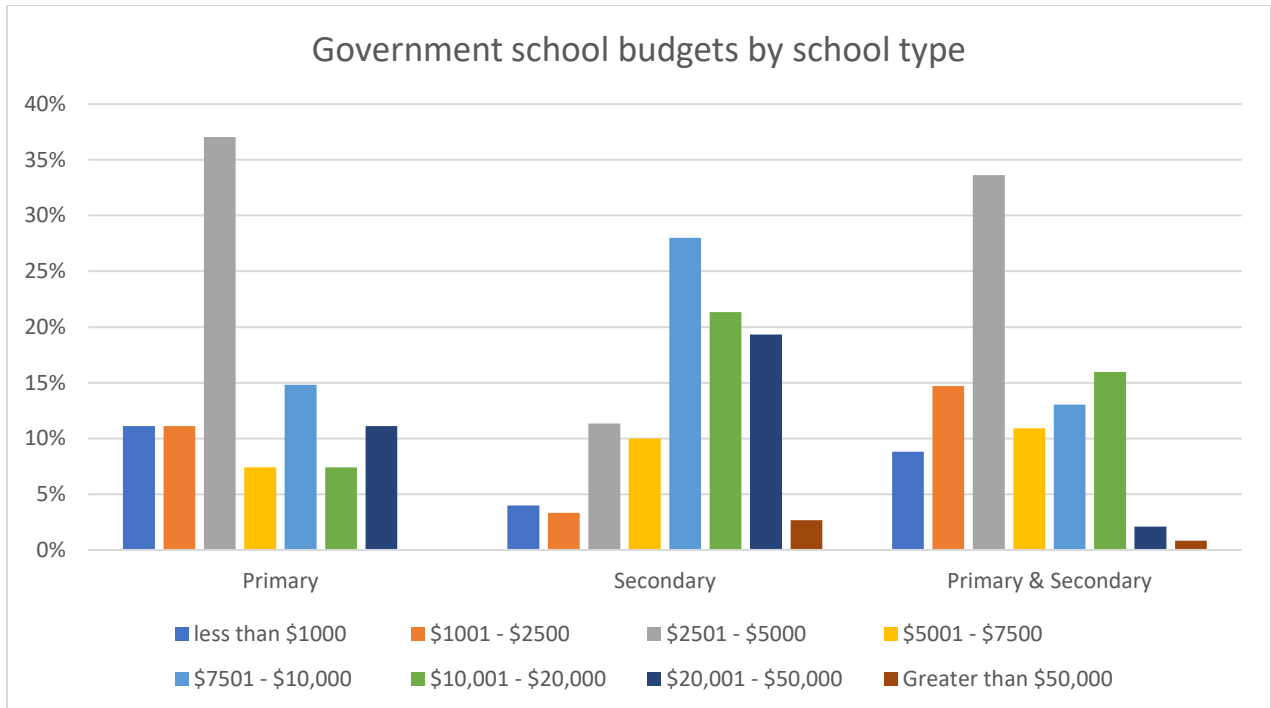
Government school respondents reported the following budget ranges in 2023 according to the size of their school:



School Size (Number of students)							
	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
Less than \$1000	15%	19%	12%	1%	2%	0%	0%
\$1001 - \$2500	3%	8%	23%	4%	7%	4%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	1%	2%	15%	12%	11%	8%	2%
\$5001 - \$7500	1%	1%	4%	6%	13%	16%	9%
\$7501 - \$10,000	1%	1%	4%	6%	13%	16%	9%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	2%	0%	5%	2%	5%	16%	21%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	0%	0%	6%	2%	4%	8%	22%
Greater than \$50,000	15%	19%	12%	1%	2%	0%	0%

12.1.2 Government school budgets by school type

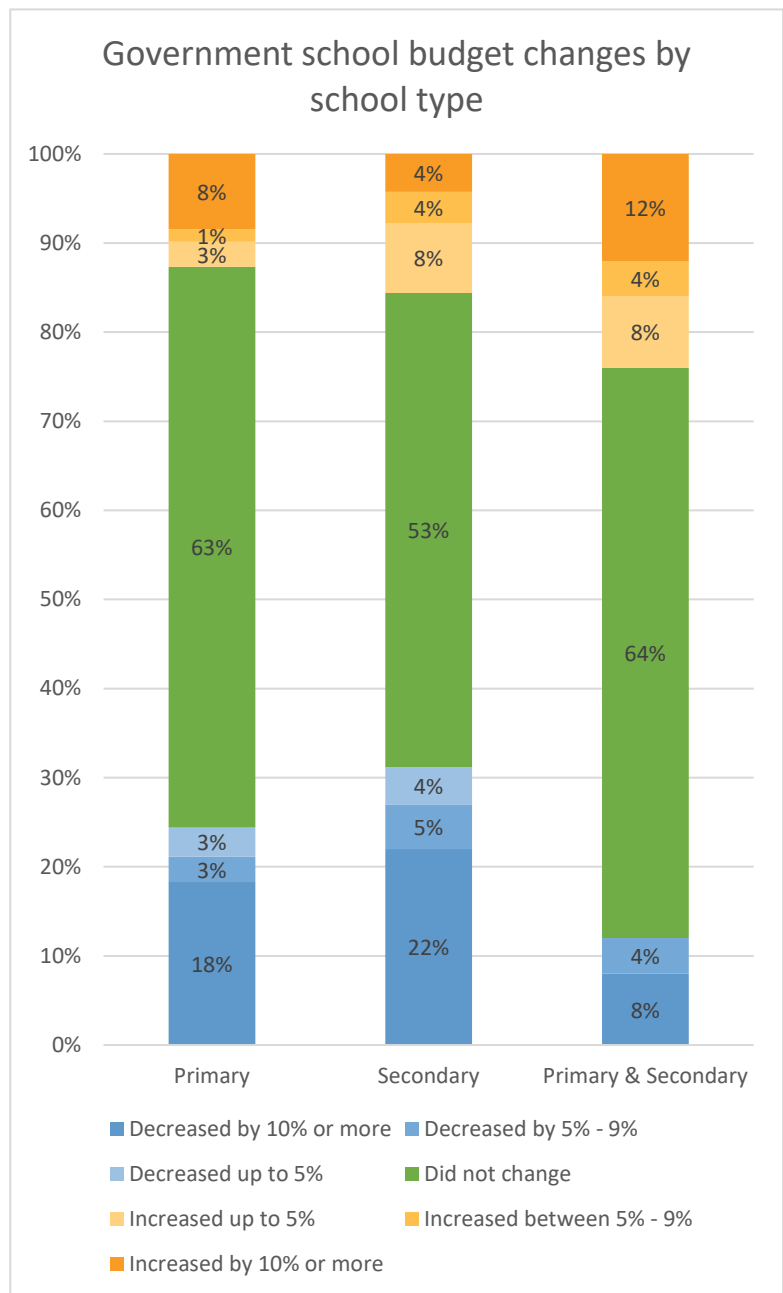
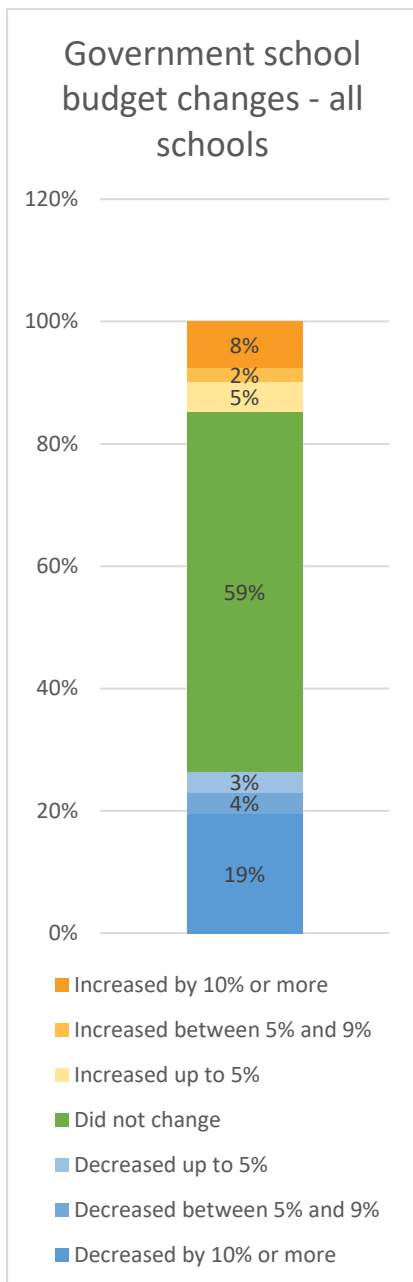
When broken down by school type, Government school respondents reported the following budget ranges:



	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
less than \$1000	11%	4%	9%
\$1001 - \$2500	11%	3%	15%
\$2501 - \$5000	37%	11%	34%
\$5001 - \$7500	7%	10%	11%
\$7501 - \$10,000	15%	28%	13%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	7%	21%	16%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	11%	19%	2%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	3%	1%

12.1.3 Government school budget changes: 2022 - 2023

In 2023, 59% of Government school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2021. 26% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 15% reported a budget increase.



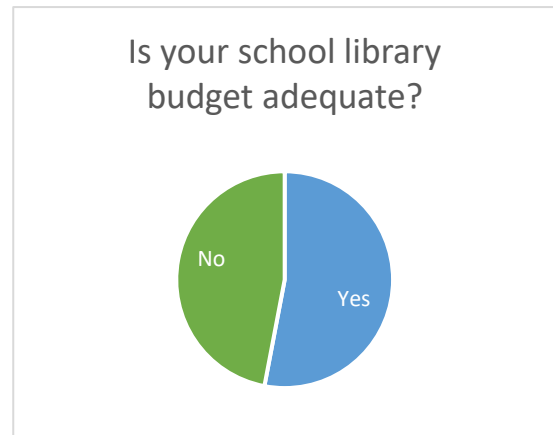
For many Government school libraries, budgets did not change. Budgets in 2023 compared with 2022 across Government primary, secondary and combined schools were reported as follows:

School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	13%	63%	24%
Secondary	16%	53%	31%
Primary & Secondary	24%	64%	3%

12.1.4 Government schools on adequate budgets

Participants were asked if they thought their school library budget was adequate.

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



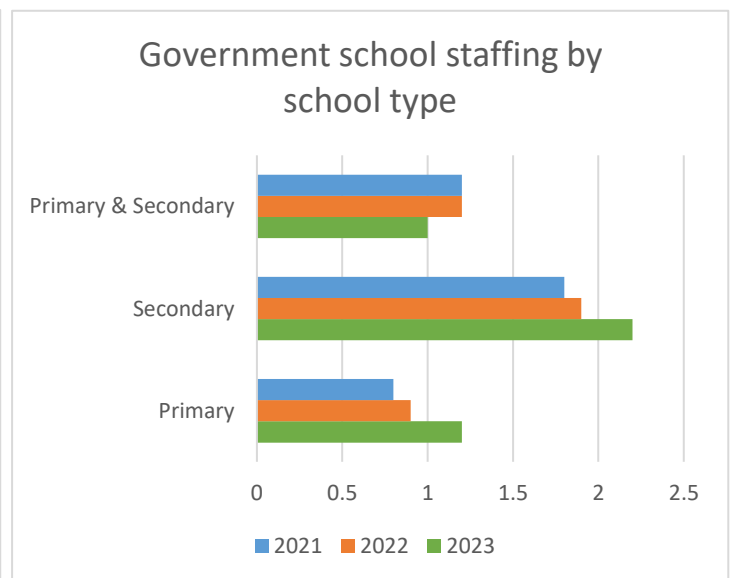
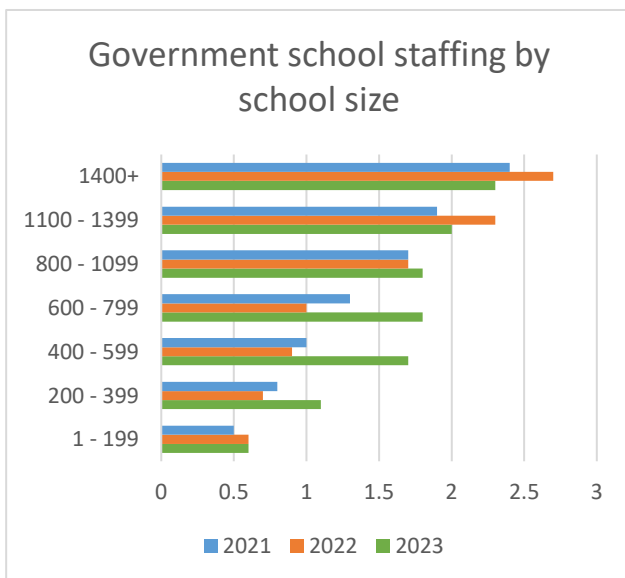
12.2 Government school staffing

12.2.1 Government school staffing by school size and type

When comparing full-time equivalent staffing in the past three years, Government school respondents reported the following:

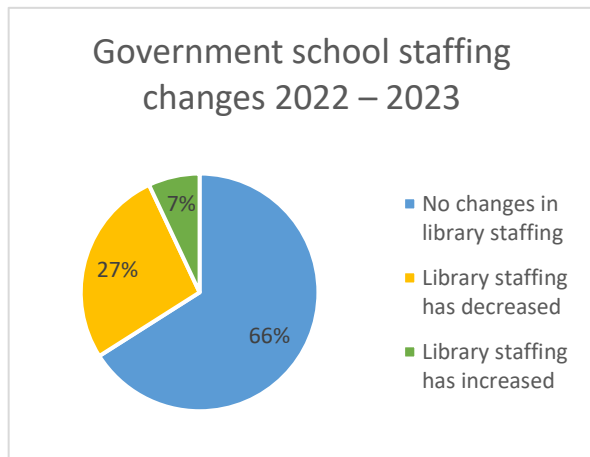
School Size	2021	2022	2023
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.6 FTE	0.6 FTE
200 - 399	0.8 FTE	0.7 FTE	1.1 FTE
400 - 599	1.0 FTE	0.9 FTE	1.7 FTE
600 - 799	1.3 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.8 FTE
800 - 1099	1.7 FTE	1.7 FTE	1.8 FTE
1100 - 1399	1.9 FTE	2.3 FTE	2 FTE
1400+	2.4 FTE	2.7 FTE	2.3 FTE

School Type	2021	2022	2023
Primary	0.8 FTE	0.9 FTE	1.2 FTE
Secondary	1.8 FTE	1.9 FTE	2.2 FTE
Primary & Secondary	1.2 FTE	1.2 FTE	1 FTE



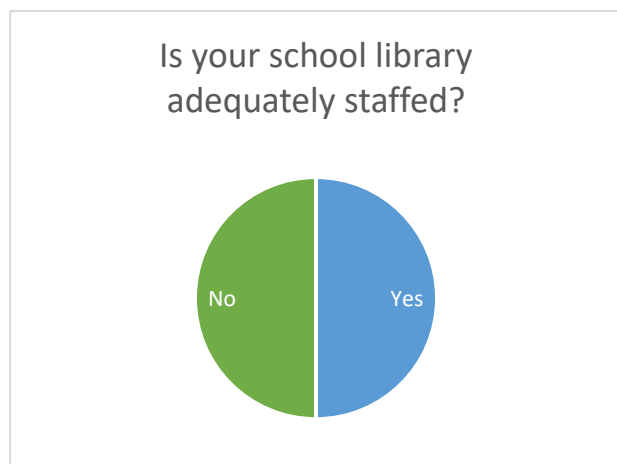
12.2.2 Government school staffing changes: 2022 – 2023

In 2023, 66% of Government school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from 2022. 27% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 7% reported a staffing increase.



12.2.3 Government schools on adequate staffing

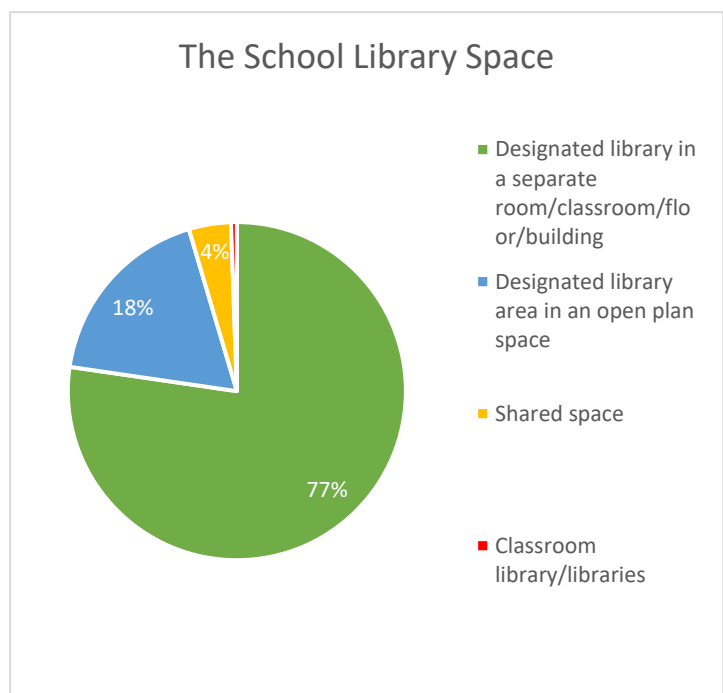
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 50% of Government school respondents said “yes”; 50% said “no”.



12.3 The school library space in Government Schools

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
- 4% reported their library operates in a shared space
- 1% reported their classroom is a library



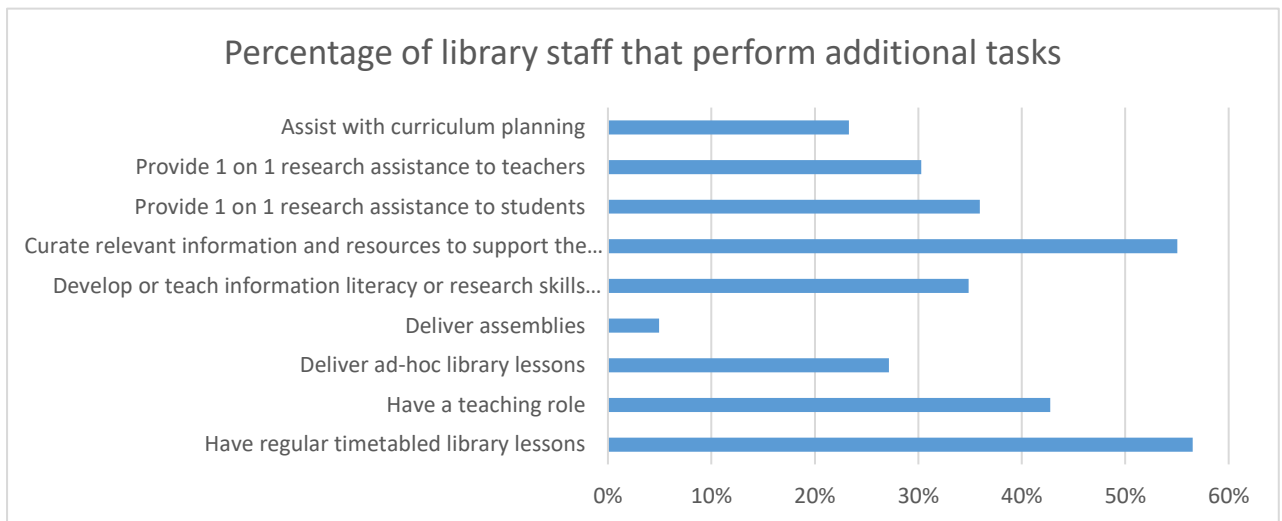
12.4 Tasks performed by school library staff in Government Schools

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:

- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (57%)
- Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (55%)
- Performing a teaching role (43%).

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



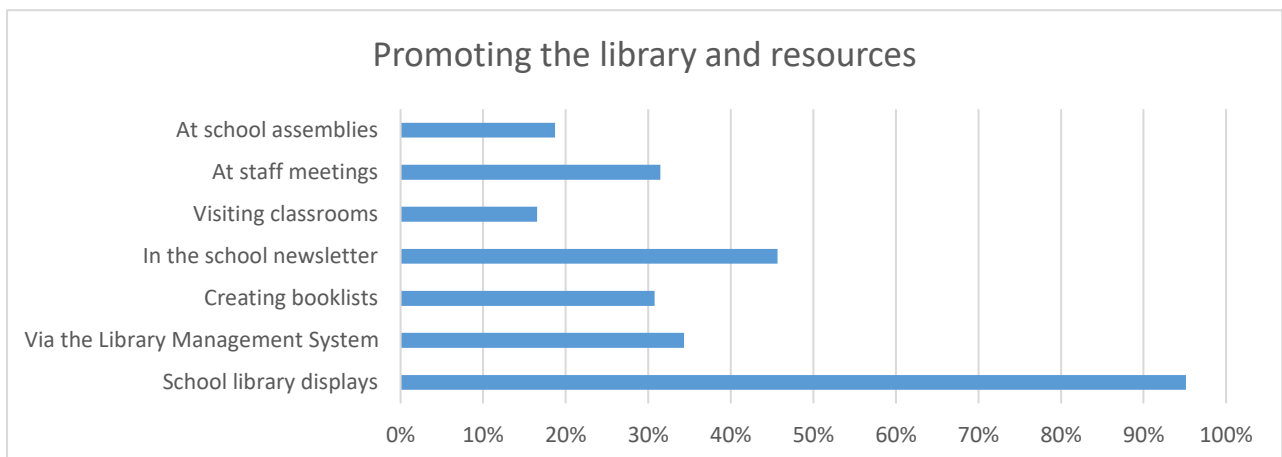
12.5 Promoting the library and resources in Government Schools

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

The top 3 avenues for promotion were:

- School library displays (95%)
- In the school newsletter (46%)
- Via the Library Management System (34%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



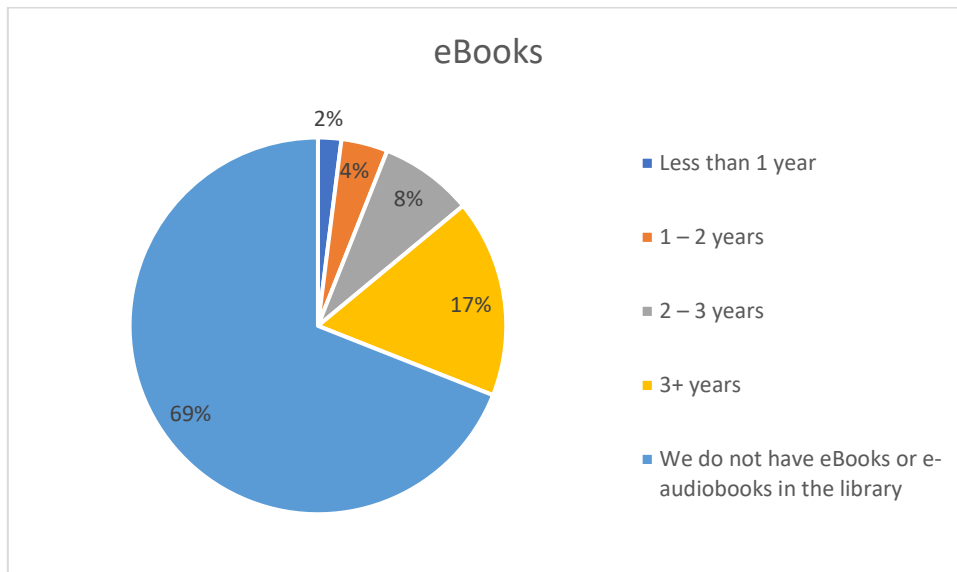
12.6 Online resources in Government schools

12.6.1 eBooks

Participants were asked how long they have offered eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library.

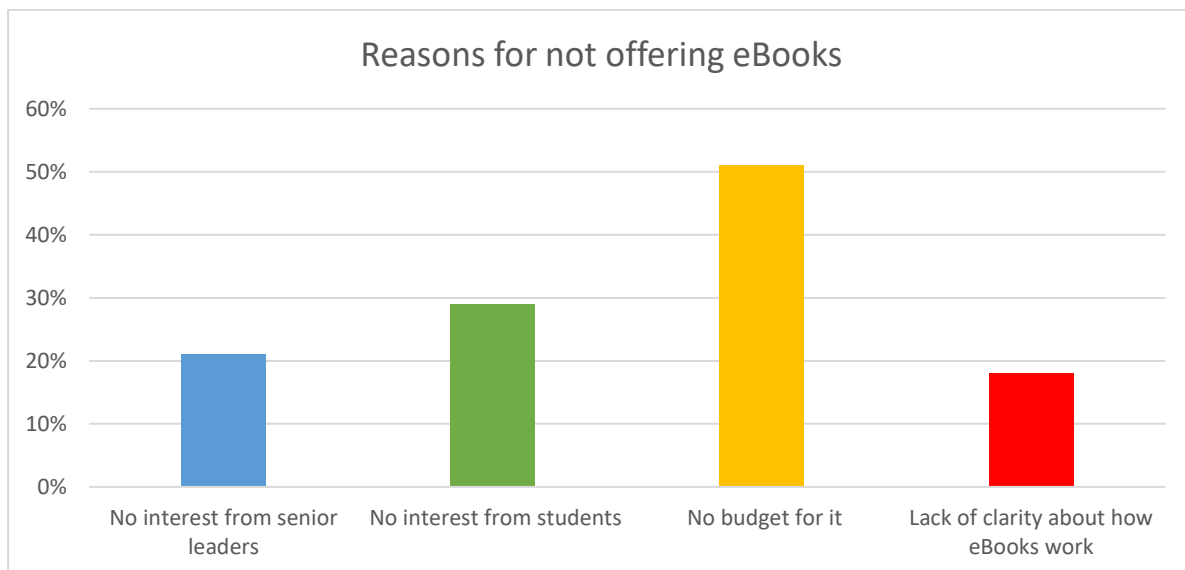
In 2023, Government schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2%
1 – 2 years	4%
2 – 3 years	8%
3+ years	17%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	69%



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

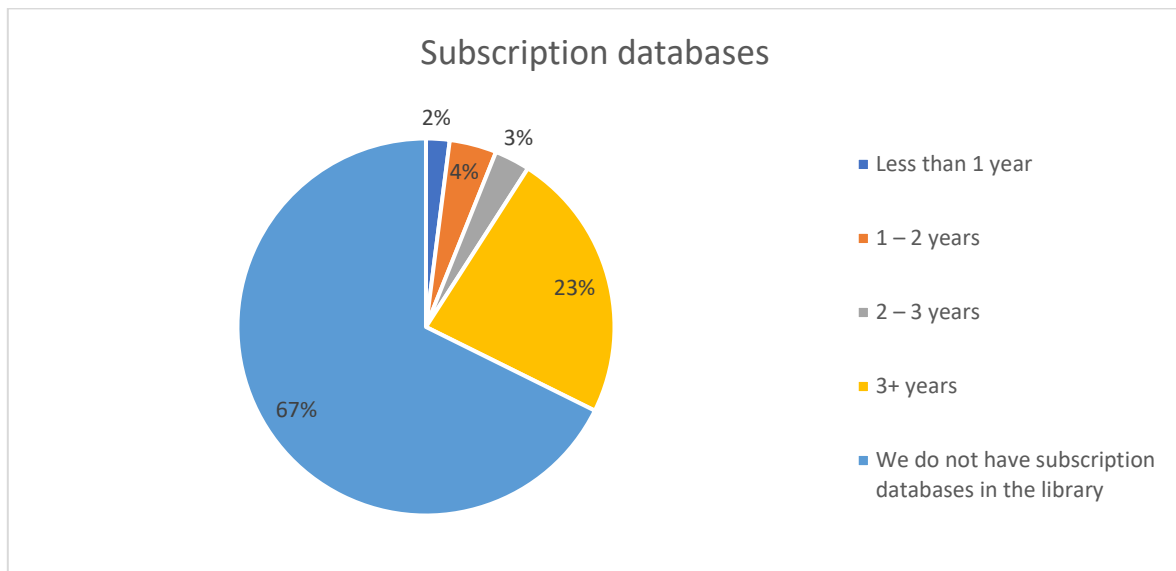
- No interest from senior leaders: 21%
- No interest from students: 29%
- No budget for it: 51%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 18%



12.6.2 Subscription databases

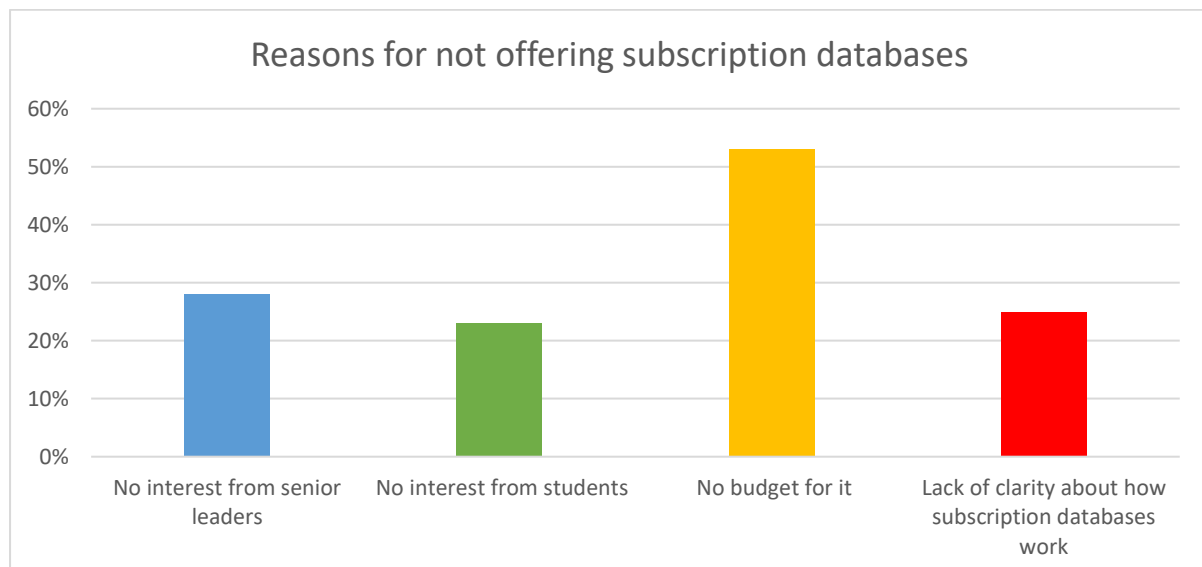
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2023, Government schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2%
1 – 2 years	4%
2 – 3 years	3%
3+ years	23%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	67%



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

- No interest from senior leaders: 28%
- No interest from students: 23%
- No budget for it: 53%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 25%

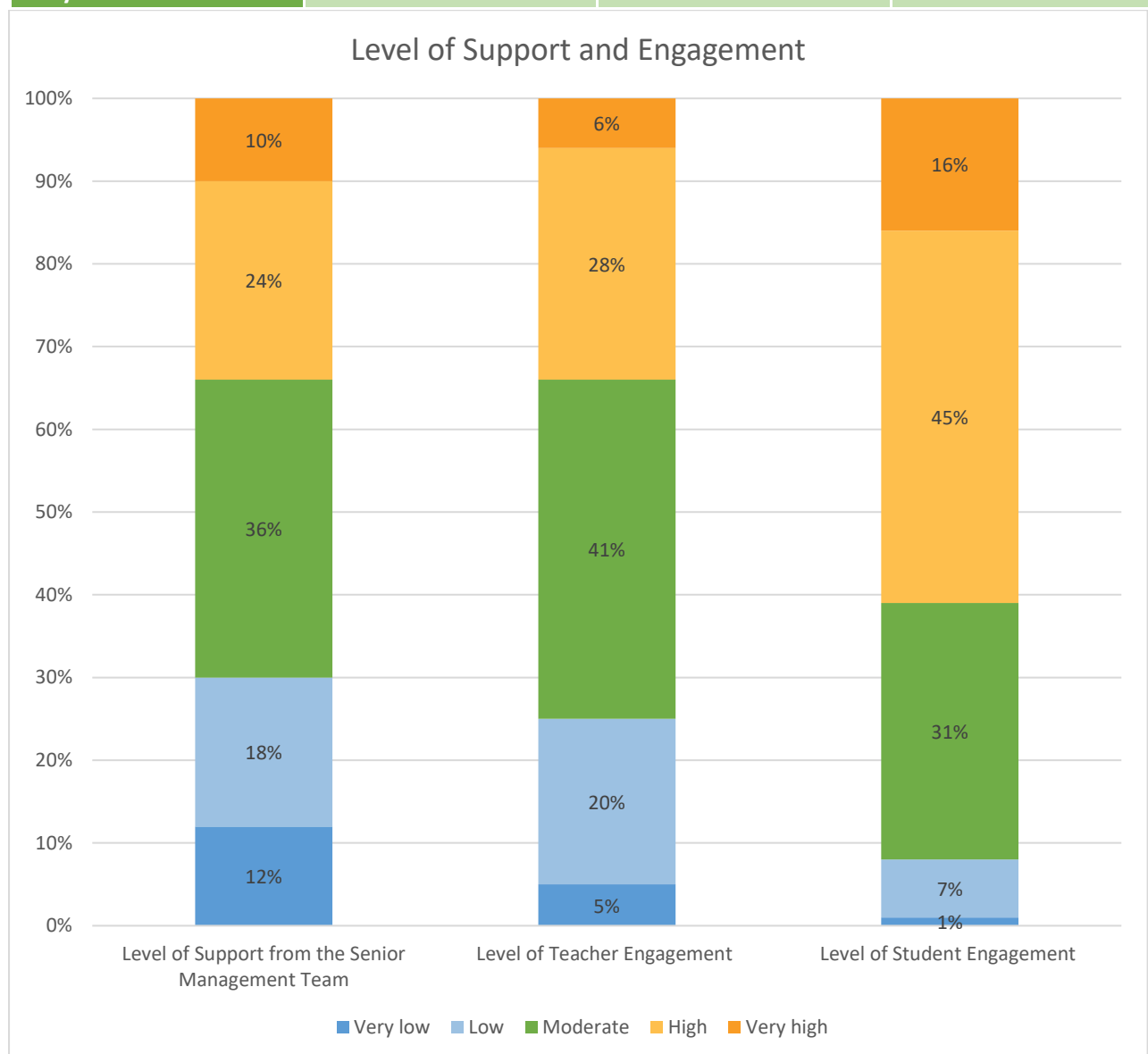


12.7 Level of support and engagement in Government schools

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 Government school respondents, 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	10%	6%	16%
High	24%	28%	45%
Moderate	36%	41%	31%
Low	18%	20%	7%
Very low	12%	5%	1%

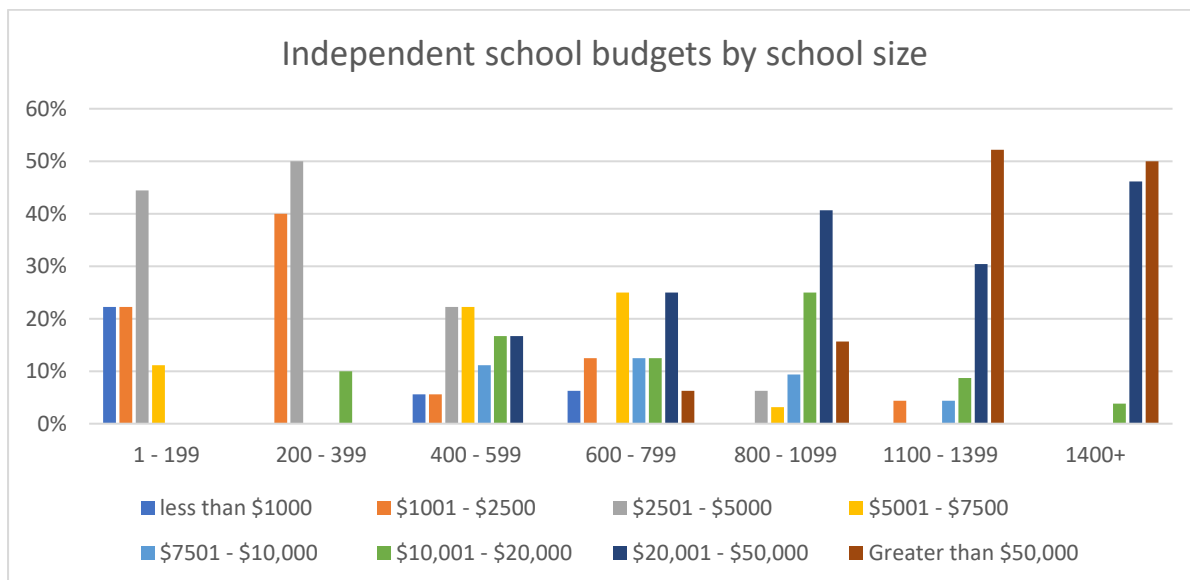


13.0 Independent schools in Australia

13.1 Independent school budgets

13.1.1 Independent school budgets by school size

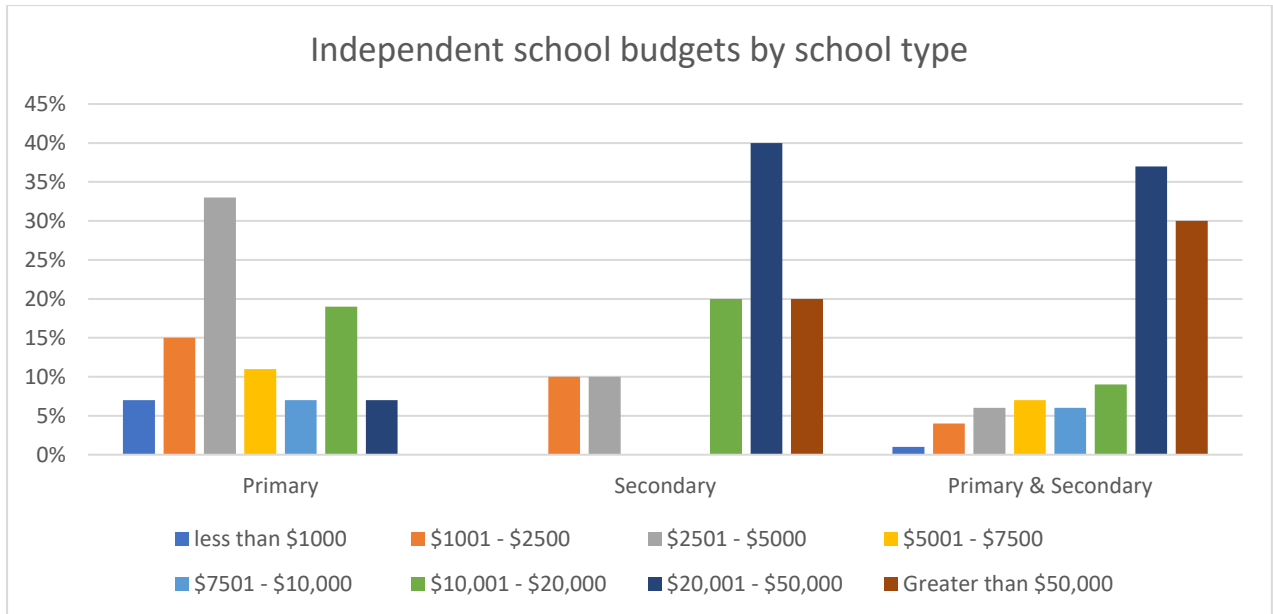
When asked about library budgets and school size, Independent school respondents reported the following ranges of budget in 2023:



	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
less than \$1000	22%	0%	6%	6%	0%	0%	0%
\$1001 - \$2500	22%	40%	6%	13%	0%	4%	0%
\$2501 - \$5000	44%	50%	22%	0%	6%	0%	0%
\$5001 - \$7500	11%	0%	22%	25%	3%	0%	0%
\$7501 - \$10,000	0%	0%	11%	13%	9%	4%	0%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	0%	10%	17%	13%	25%	9%	4%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	0%	0%	17%	25%	41%	30%	46%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	0%	0%	6%	16%	52%	50%

13.1.2 Independent school budgets by school type

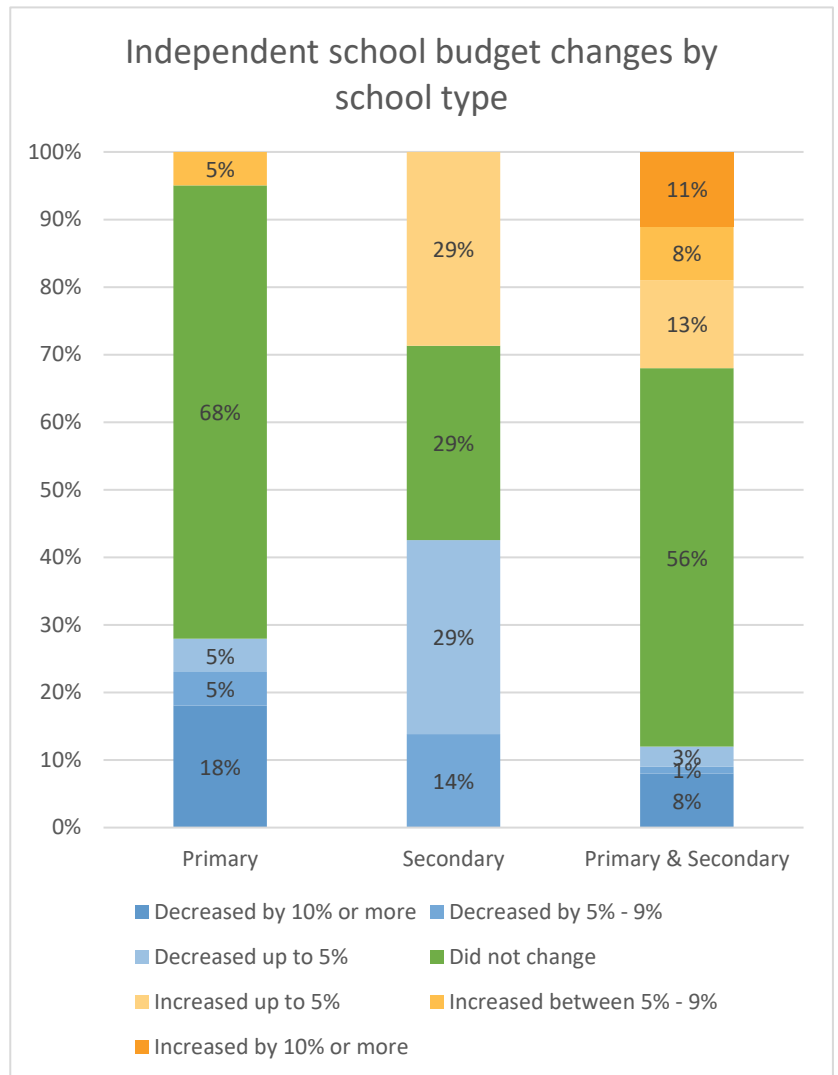
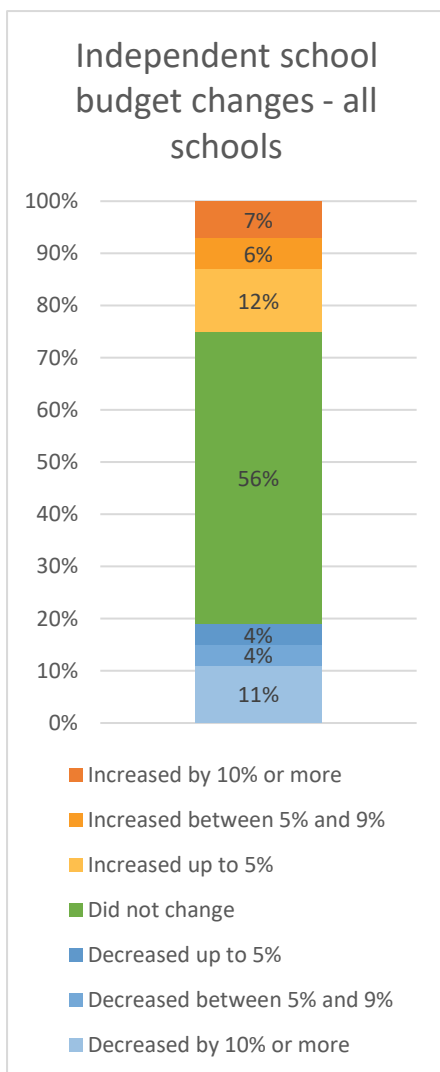
When looking at library budgets by school type, Independent school respondents reported the following budget ranges:



	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
less than \$1000	7%	0%	1%
\$1001 - \$2500	15%	10%	4%
\$2501 - \$5000	33%	10%	6%
\$5001 - \$7500	11%	0%	7%
\$7501 - \$10,000	7%	0%	6%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	19%	20%	9%
\$20,001 - \$50,000	7%	40%	37%
Greater than \$50,000	0%	20%	30%

13.1.3 Independent school budget changes: 2022 – 2023

In 2023, 56% of Independent school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2021. 19% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 25% reported a budget increase.



Independent school library respondents reported the following variances in budgets in 2023:

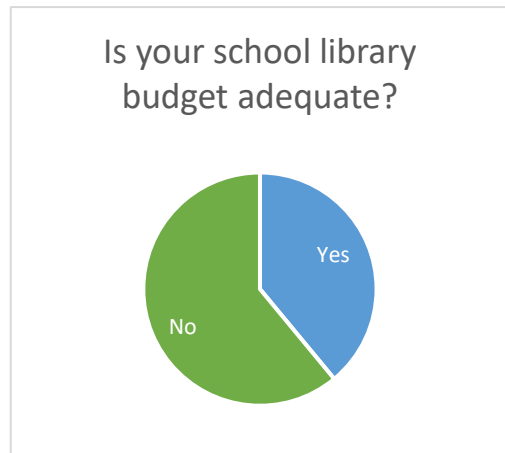
School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	5%	68%	28%
Secondary	29%	29%	43%
Primary & Secondary	32%	56%	12%

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

13.1.4 Independent schools on adequate budgets

Participants were asked if they thought their school library budget was adequate.

67% of Independent school respondents said “yes”; 33% said “no”.



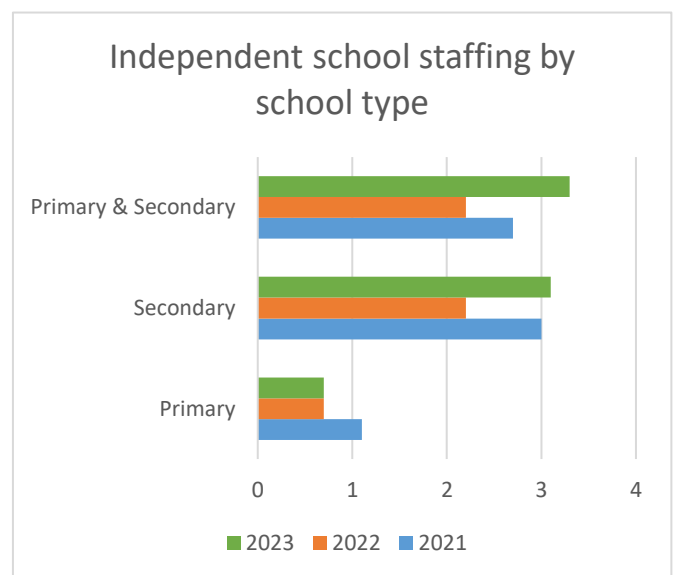
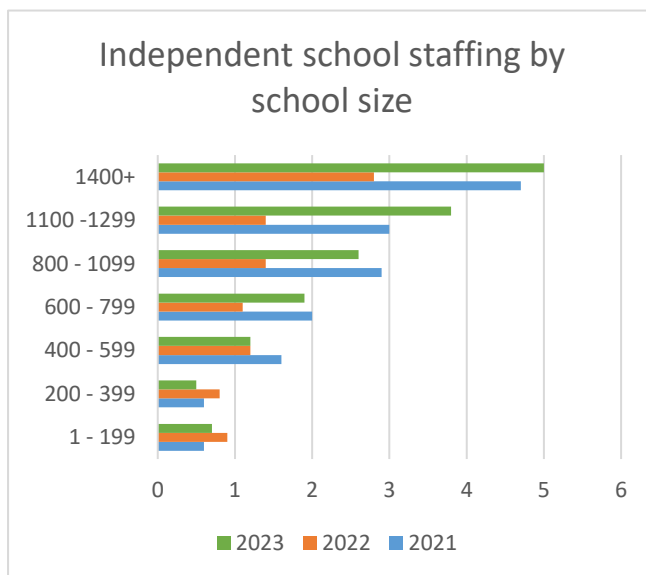
13.2 Independent school staffing

13.2.1 Independent school staffing by school size and type

When looking at Independent school library staffing comparisons by school size and type, respondents reported the following average full-time equivalents (FTE). We also included a comparison with reported figures in 2021 and 2022.

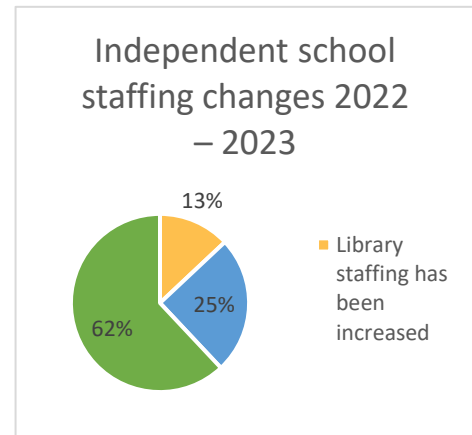
School Size	2021	2022	2023
1 - 199	0.6 FTE	0.9 FTE	0.7 FTE
200 - 399	0.6 FTE	0.8 FTE	0.5 FTE
400 - 599	1.6 FTE	1.2 FTE	1.2 FTE
600 - 799	2.0 FTE	1.1 FTE	1.9 FTE
800 - 1099	2.9 FTE	1.4 FTE	2.6 FTE
1100 -1299	3.0 FTE	1.4 FTE	3.8 FTE
1400+	4.7 FTE	2.8 FTE	5 FTE

School Type	2021	2022	2023
Primary	1.1 FTE	0.7 FTE	0.7 FTE
Secondary	3.0 FTE	2.2 FTE	3.1 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.7 FTE	2.2 FTE	3.3 FTE



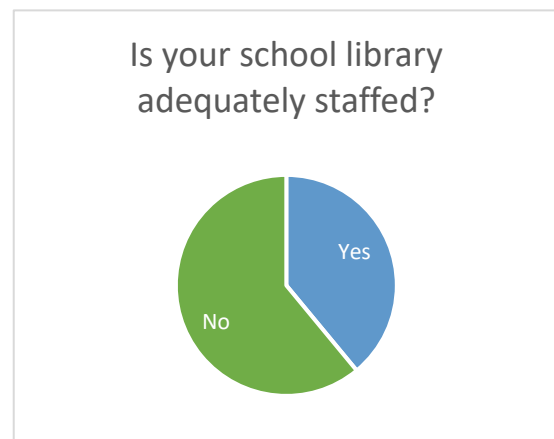
13.2.2 Independent school staffing changes: 2022– 2023

In 2023, most (62%) Independent school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from 2022. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 13% reported a staffing increase.



13.2.3 Independent schools on adequate staffing

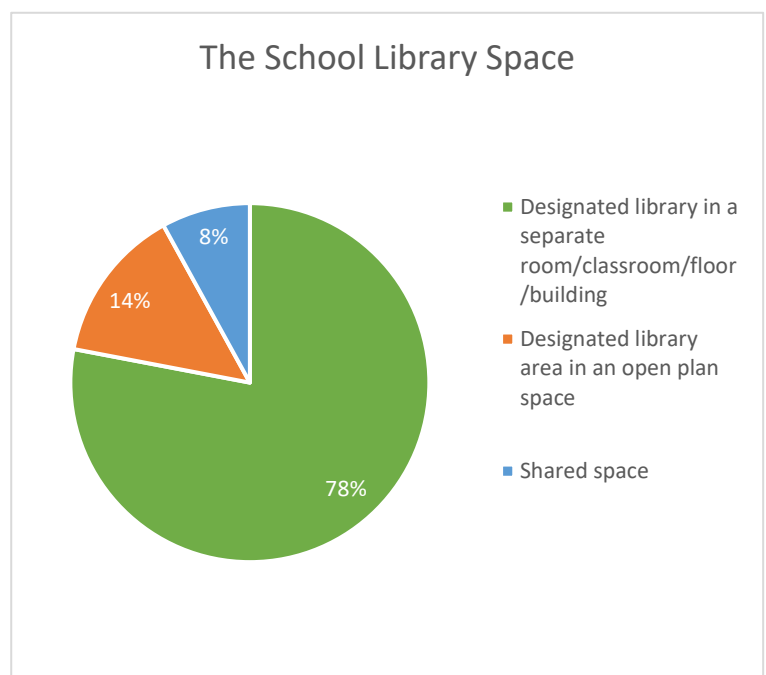
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 39% of Independent school respondents said “yes”; 61% said “no”.



13.3 The school library space in Independent Schools

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 14% reported they have a designated library area in an open plan space
- 78% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 8% reported their library operates in a shared space



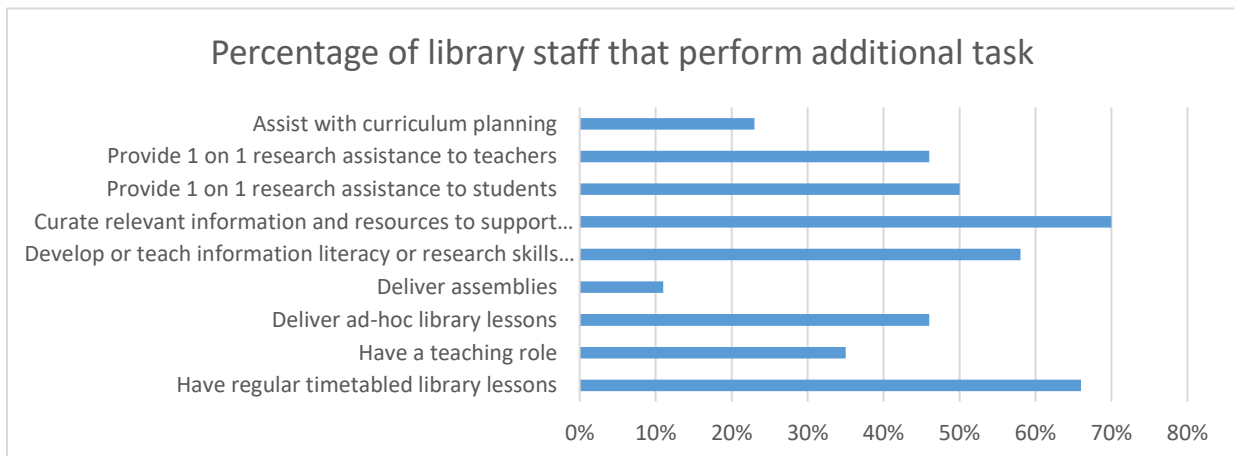
13.4 Tasks performed by school library staff in Independent Schools

We asked Independent school library staff 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 (70%)
- Provide regular timetabled library lessons (66%)
- Provide 1 on 1 research assistance to students (50%).
- Deliver ad-hoc library lessons (46%).

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.

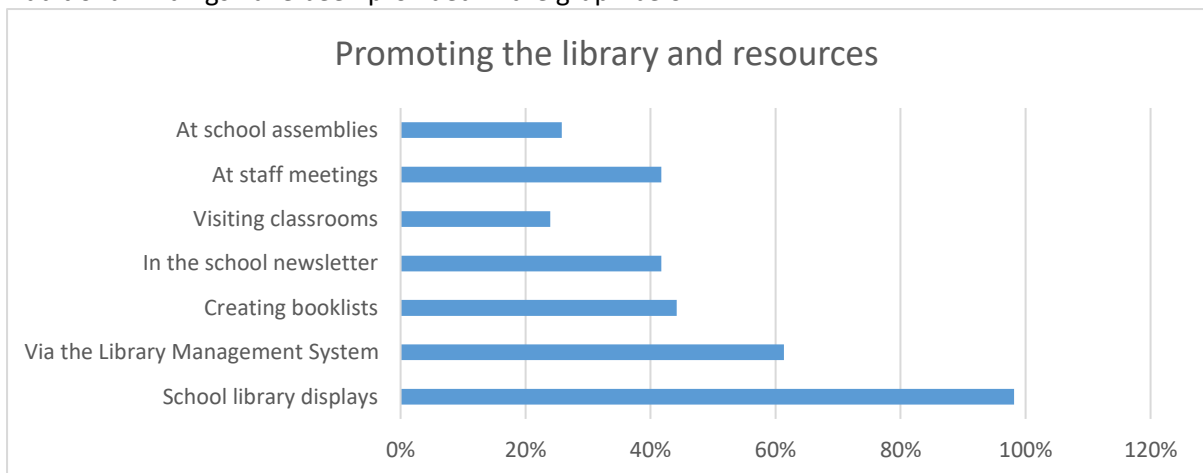


13.5 Promoting the library and resources in Independent Schools

Participants were asked how they promote their school library and resources. The top 3 avenues for promotion were:

- School library displays (98%)
- Via the Library Management System (61%)
- Creating booklists (44%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



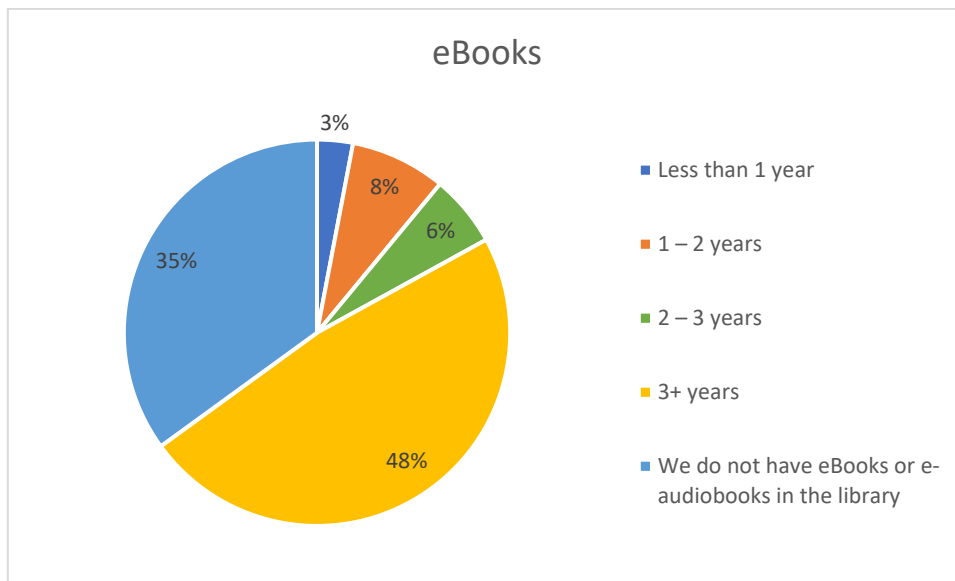
13.6 Online Resources in Independent schools

13.6.1 eBooks

Participants were asked how long they have offered eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library.

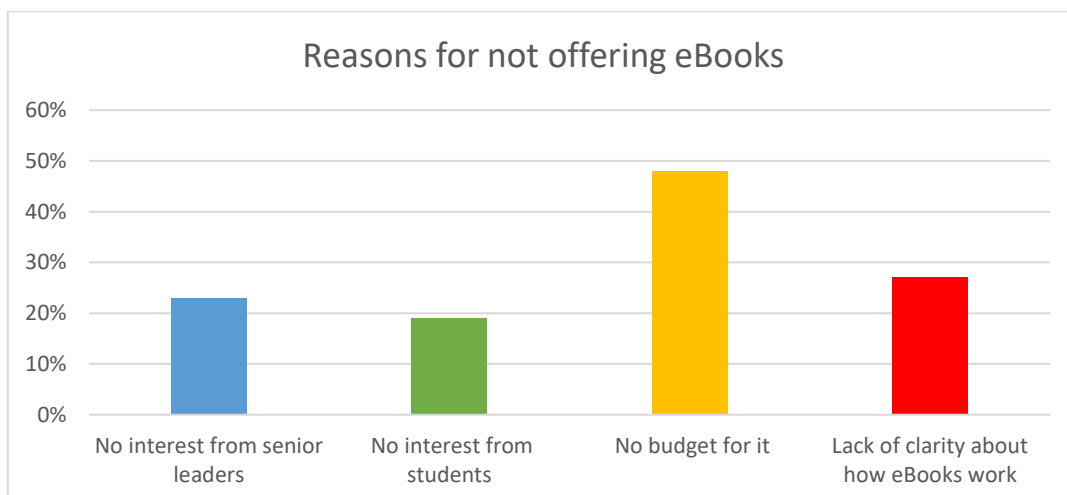
In 2023, Independent schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	4%
1 – 2 years	6%
2 – 3 years	7%
3+ years	44%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	38%



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

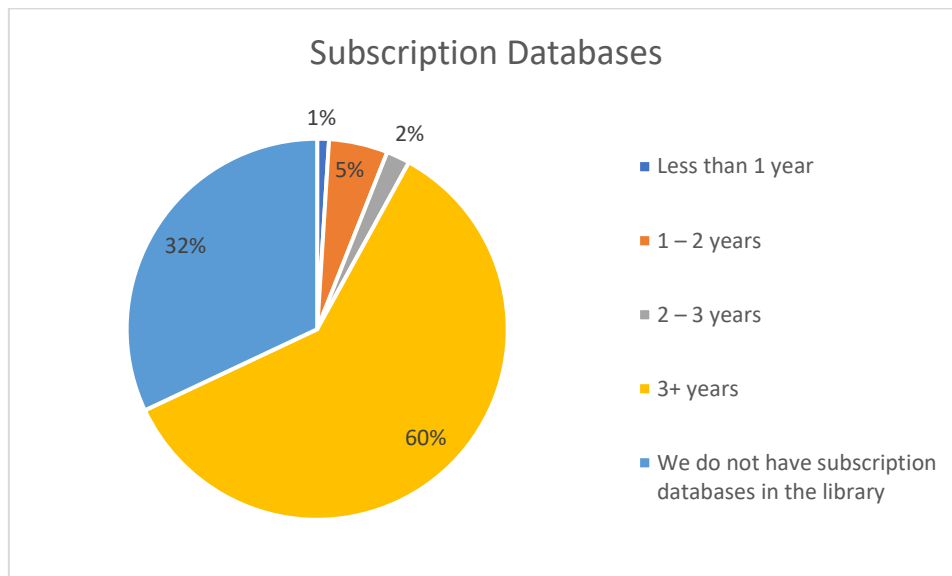
- No interest from senior leaders: 23%
- No interest from students: 19%
- No budget for it: 48%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 27%



13.6.2 Subscription databases

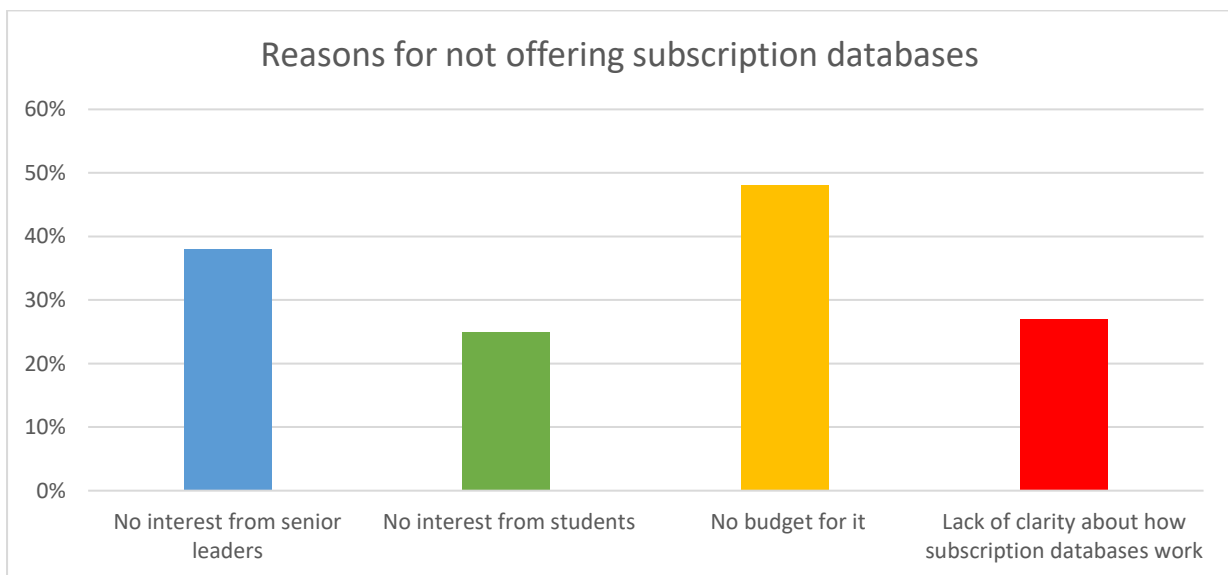
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2023, Independent schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1%
1 – 2 years	5%
2 – 3 years	2%
3+ years	60%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	32%



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

- No interest from senior leaders: 38%
- No interest from students: 25%
- No budget for it: 48%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 27%

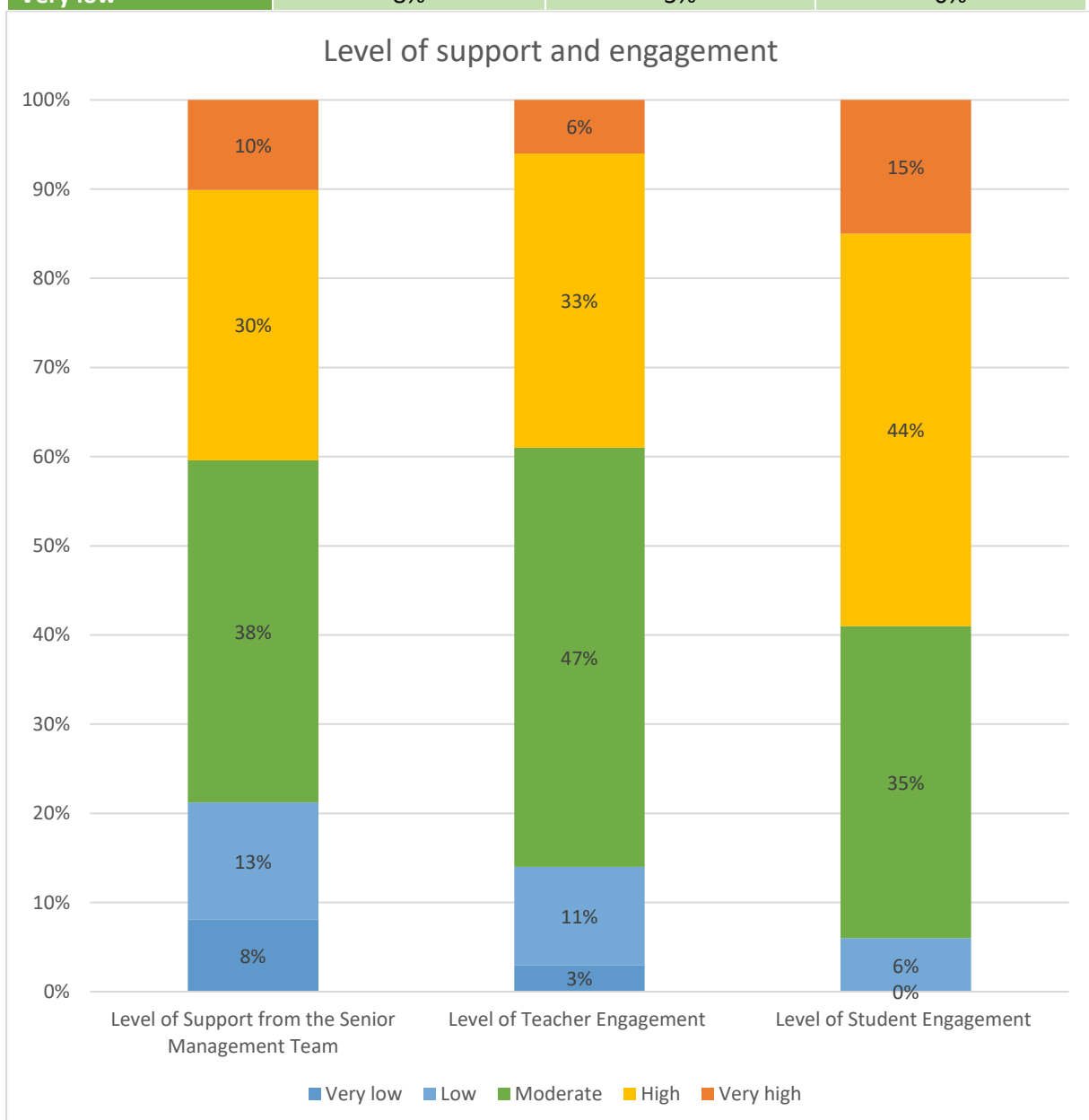


13.7 Level of support and engagement in Independent Schools

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 Independent school respondents, 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	10%	6%	15%
High	30%	33%	44%
Moderate	38%	47%	35%
Low	13%	11%	6%
Very low	8%	3%	0%



14.0 Feedback themes

The 2023 survey provided participants with an opportunity to express their thoughts and insights through open-ended questions, allowing them to comment and share their perspectives on the dynamics of working within a school library environment. To ensure the continual relevance of our survey, we will integrate a new question each year, focusing on relevant issues pertinent to school libraries. This practice ensures that our survey remains aligned with the current trends and concerns within the field.

In 2023, the open-ended questions posed were as follows:

- What is the one thing you would change about your school library or your role?
- What is the best thing about working in a school library?
- What do you see as the main impact of AI on school libraries moving forward?
- How can school libraries improve students' emotional health or well-being?

Responses to these questions will be explored in feature documents that will be published throughout the year.

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the Softlink 2023 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 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 feature documents from our previous survey findings have been included below, to view more visit softlinkint.com/resources/reports-and-whitepapers/. Stay tuned as we actively work on new papers informed by this year's findings.

Here are some of the insights we've gained from previous surveys.

[Australian School Libraries Share: Unveiling the Joys and Rewards of School Library Work](#)

This feature shares comments from the 2022 survey, 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: 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 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 document 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