2024 Australian School Library Survey Report

Based on the Australian responses to the 2024 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 2024 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.

Softlink Education

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the survey

For over a decade, Softlink has proudly conducted the annual Australian School Library Survey, gathering valuable insights into the state of school libraries across the country. This report serves as a critical resource for library staff, educators, and decision-makers, providing data that helps advocate for ongoing investment in school libraries and highlight their essential role in student learning and engagement.

Since the survey's inception in 2010, school libraries have had to adapt to significant shifts—from rapid advancements in technology and digital literacy requirements to changes in school funding and staffing structures. The 2024 survey results reflect both the resilience and challenges facing school libraries today, revealing how they continue to evolve as hubs for literacy, research, collaboration, and digital learning, even amid budget and staffing constraints.

This year's survey explores several critical focus areas shaping the future of school libraries:

- Budgets & Staffing Pressures – Over half (51%) of respondents feel their library budget is insufficient, and 52% believe their staffing levels are inadequate. These concerns underscore ongoing resource limitations that affect the ability to deliver comprehensive library services.
- Library Spaces & Student Engagement – A majority (70%) of libraries operate in dedicated spaces, and student engagement remains strong, with 56% of respondents reporting high to very high levels of student interaction.
- Diversifying Library Collections – Many school libraries are actively working to ensure their collections reflect diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, helping students see themselves represented and access a broad range of perspectives.
- Technology & AI in Libraries – While AI adoption remains in its early stages, some school libraries are beginning to explore its potential, while also ensuring students understand its capabilities and limitations. Libraries play a key role in helping students critically assess AI-generated information, use it responsibly, and integrate it alongside traditional research methods.

The findings from the 2024 Australian School Library Survey reinforce the critical role that school libraries play in student literacy, research skills, and digital fluency. However, they also highlight the ongoing need for advocacy, particularly around funding, staffing, and recognition of the library's contribution to student success.

Softlink remains committed to supporting school libraries, library staff, and the broader education community by providing this annual report as a tool for awareness, advocacy, and action.

We extend our sincere thanks to all the school library professionals who contributed to this year's survey. Your insights help build a stronger case for investment in school libraries, ensuring they remain accessible, innovative, and inspiring learning spaces for students now and into the future.

1.2 The 'Typical' Australian School Library in 2024

In 2024, school libraries continue to be bustling, multi-functional spaces that serve as the heart of student learning, research, and creativity. From the moment the doors open, the library welcomes a diverse mix of students - some eager to borrow their next favourite book, others searching for a quiet place to study, collaborate, or simply take a break from the busy school environment.

Throughout the day, library staff take on a variety of roles, far beyond managing collections. They curate diverse and inclusive resources, ensuring students see themselves reflected in the books they read while also broadening their worldviews. Many school libraries run scheduled lessons, teaching students research skills, digital literacy, and critical thinking, while also providing one-on-one support to help them navigate everything from academic databases to credible online sources.

Technology continues to play an increasing role in modern school libraries. While print books remain at the heart of collections, many libraries are embracing eBooks and subscription databases to enhance student learning. Some libraries are exploring AI to understand its capabilities and limitations, while others are focusing on teaching digital literacy skills to help students evaluate information critically in an AI-driven world.

Beyond academic support, school libraries offer a welcoming space for students to connect, create, and collaborate. Whether it's students gathering to work on group projects, taking part in book clubs and reading challenges, or simply finding a comfortable space to relax, the library remains a trusted and inclusive environment for all.

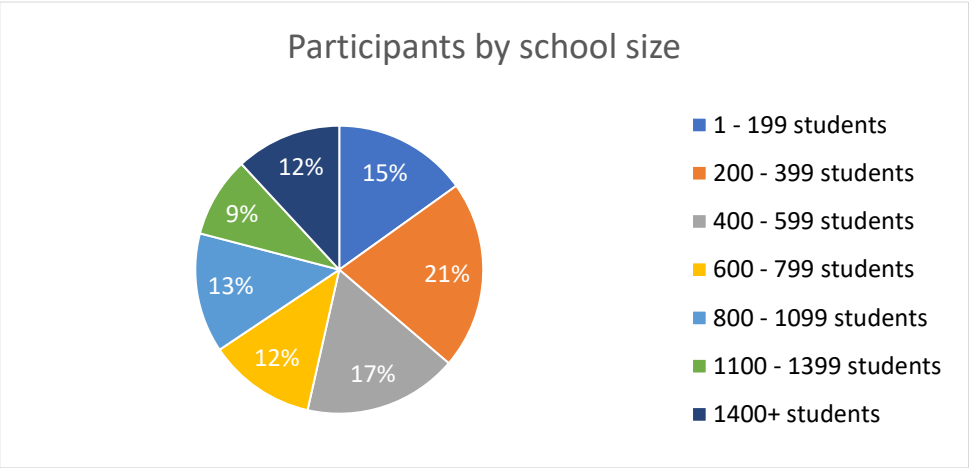
Despite ongoing challenges - such as budget constraints and staffing shortages - school library professionals continue to advocate for their role in student learning and wellbeing. Their commitment ensures that, regardless of limitations, libraries remain engaging, supportive, and essential spaces where students can explore, discover, and grow.

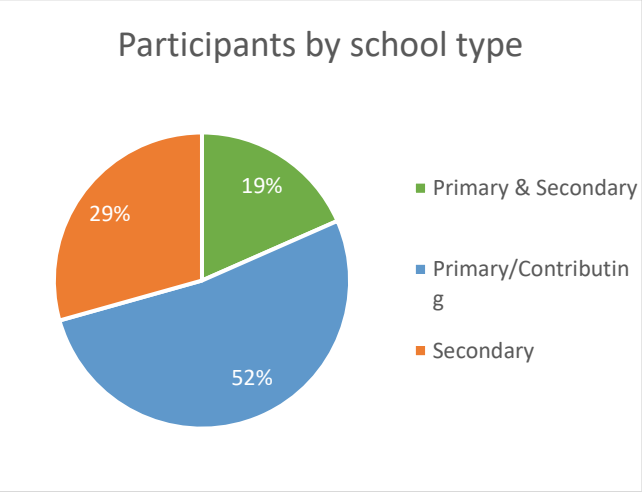
2.0 Participant breakdown

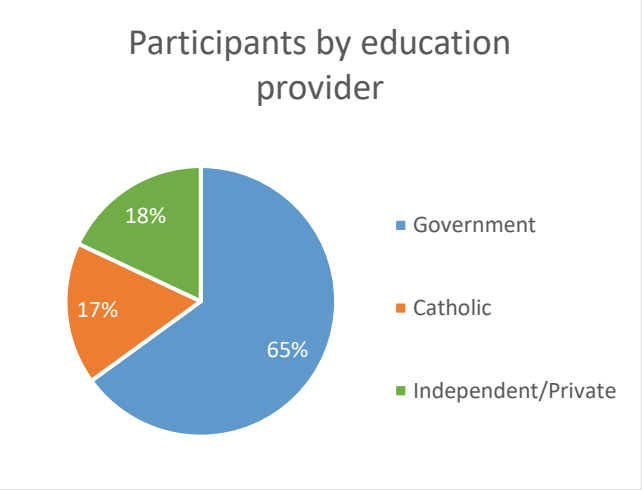
The 2024 Softlink Australian School Library Survey was released last year. Invitations to participate were extended to all schools (including schools that are not Softlink customers) in the Australia via email, Facebook, LinkedIn, OZTL_Net, and promoted by a number of our partners, associates, and school library groups.

We are thrilled to report that we received a total of 961 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 2024 Australian School Library Survey:

- 51% of respondents indicated that they think their school library budget is inadequate.
- 48% indicated that they think their school library is adequately staffed.
- 54% of respondents reported that their library budget had not changed from the previous year, 17% reported it had increased, and 29% reported it had decreased.
- 67% of respondents reported no change to their staffing levels from the previous year, 9% reported it had increased, and 24% 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: 17%
    - Designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building: 70%
    - Shared space: 8%
    - Other: 4%
- The top 3 responsibilities of school library staff (over and above managing the collection) were:
    - Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (58%)
    - Providing regular timetabled library lessons (54%)
    - Providing 1 on 1 research assistance to students (40%)
- The top 3 avenues school library staff use to promote the library and resources were:
    - School library displays (96%)
    - In the school newsletter (43%)
    - Via the Library Management System (41%)
- When asked how long they have offered eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library, respondents reported the following:
    - less than 1 year (4%)
    - 1-2 years (4%)
    - 2-3 years (5%)
    - 3+ years (27%)
    - We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library (60%)

- When asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library, respondents reported the following:
    - less than 1 year (1%)
    - 1-2 years (2%)
    - 2-3 years (3%)
    - 3+ years (33%)
    - We do not have subscription databases in the library (61%)

- 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, 31% of respondents reported a high to very high level of engagement, 46% reported a moderate level of engagement, and 23% reported a low to very low level of support.

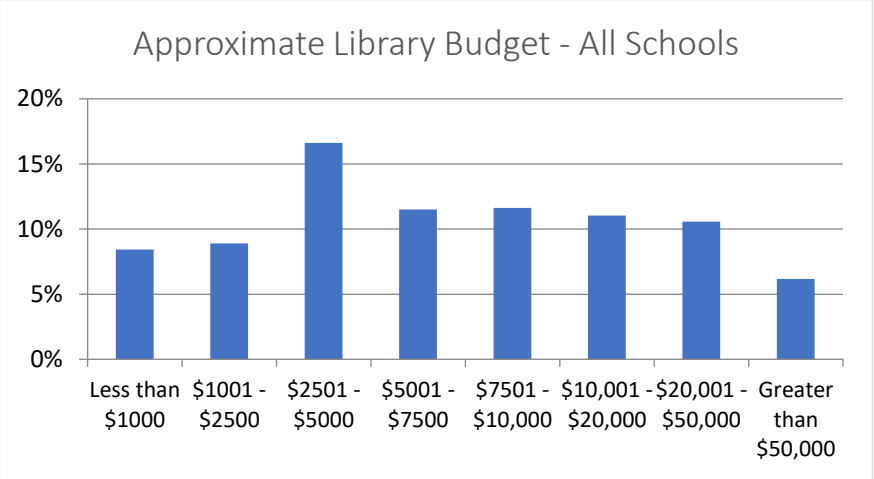
- When asked about the level of student engagement with the library, 56% of respondents reported a high to very high level of engagement, 35% reported a moderate level of engagement, and 9% reported a low to very low level of support.

4.0 School library budgets

4.1 Approximate library budget for all schools

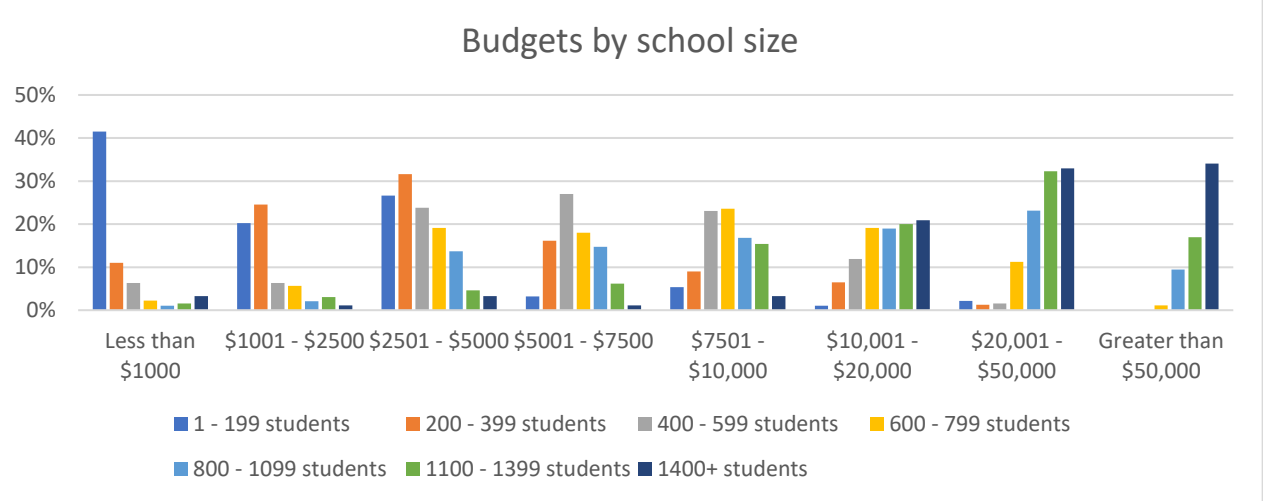
When looking at library budgets reported for all Australian schools in 2024, budgets between $2501 - $5000 had the highest percentage of respondents (17%) reported.

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



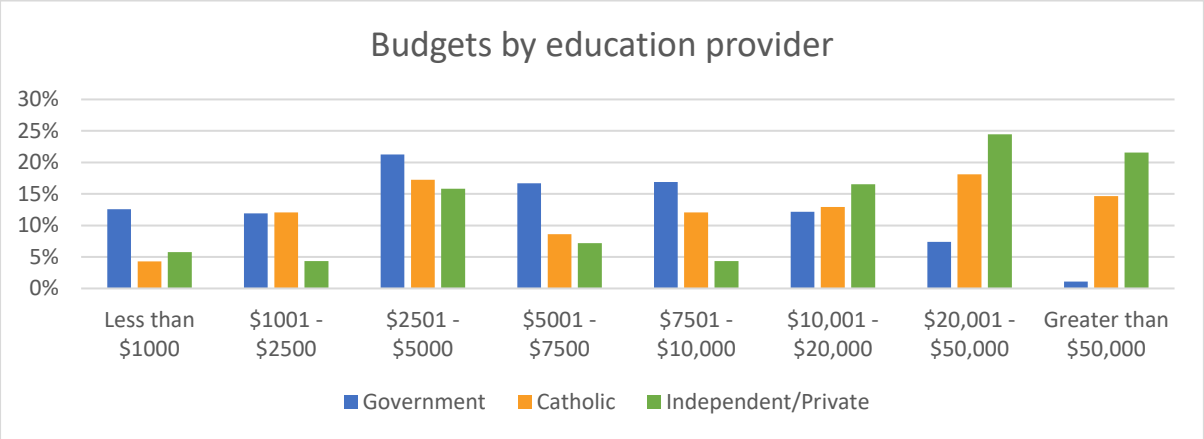
Note: Reported "Unknown" budgets have not been included

4.2 Approximate library budget by school size



	School size (number of students)						
School library budgets	**1- 199**	**200-399**	**400-599**	**600-799**	**800-1099**	**1100-1399**	**1400+**
Less than $1000	41%	11%	6%	2%	1%	2%	3%
$1001 - $2500	20%	25%	6%	6%	2%	3%	1%
$2501 - $5000	27%	32%	24%	19%	14%	5%	3%
$5001 - $7500	3%	16%	27%	18%	15%	6%	1%
$7501 - $10,000	5%	9%	23%	24%	17%	15%	3%
$10,001 - $20,000	1%	6%	12%	19%	19%	20%	21%
$20,001 - $50,000	2%	1%	2%	11%	23%	32%	33%
Greater than $50,000	0%	0%	0%	1%	9%	17%	34%

4.3 Approximate library budget by education provider



4.4 Budget changes

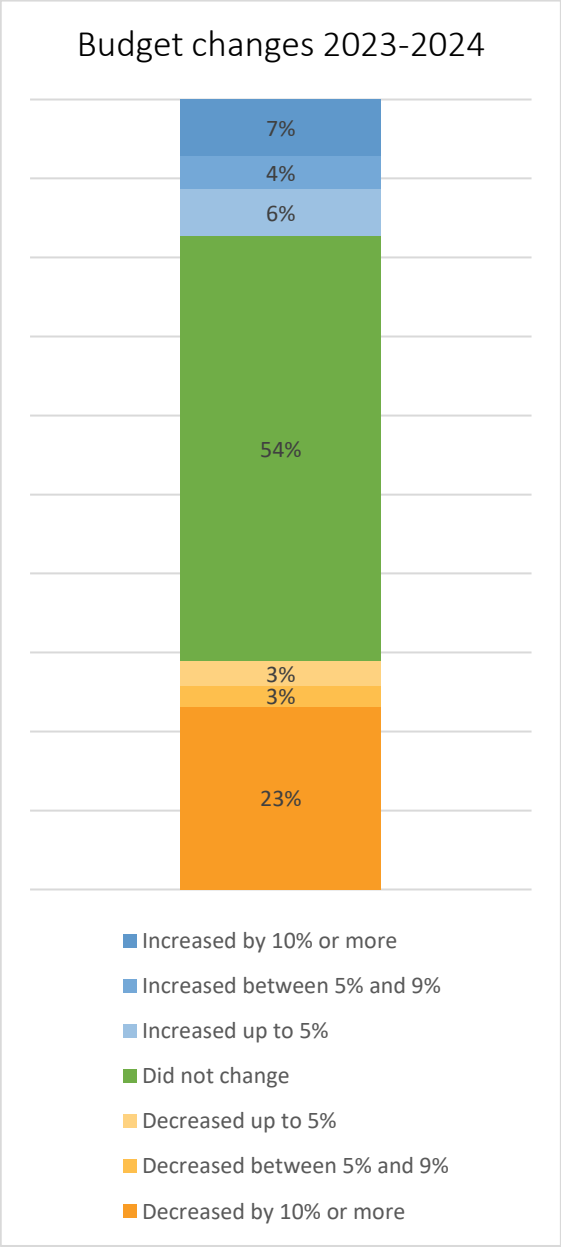
In 2024, 54% of respondents reported that their budget had not changed from the last school year. Of those who knew of their budget and any variances, more reported a budget decrease (at 29%) than those that reported an increase in funding (17%).

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



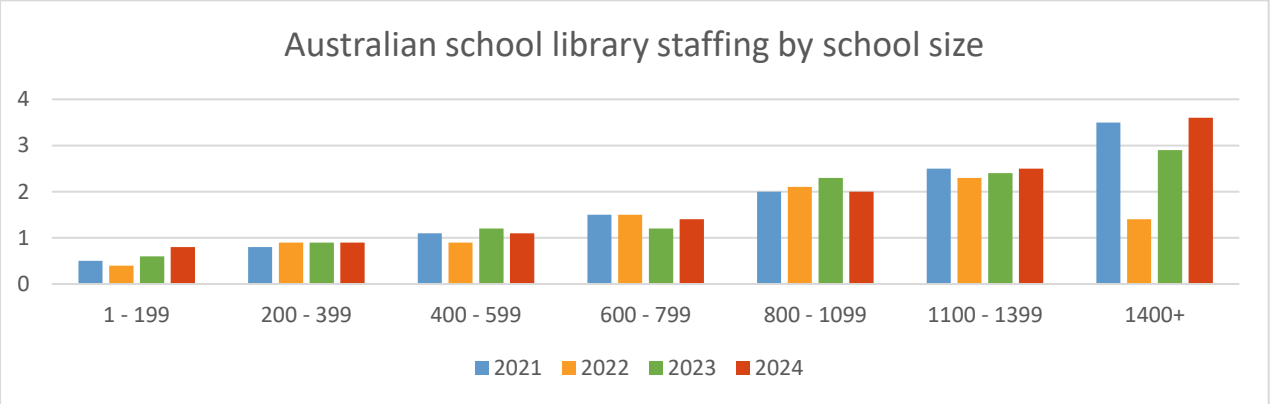
5.0 School library staffing

5.1 Staffing by school size

Resourcing in 2024 has been stable, with slight increase in Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff for most school libraries.

The most significant change in 2024 was an increase in resourcing at Australia's largest schools in the study, a rise of more than 0.7 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, from 2.9 to 3.6 FTE resources.

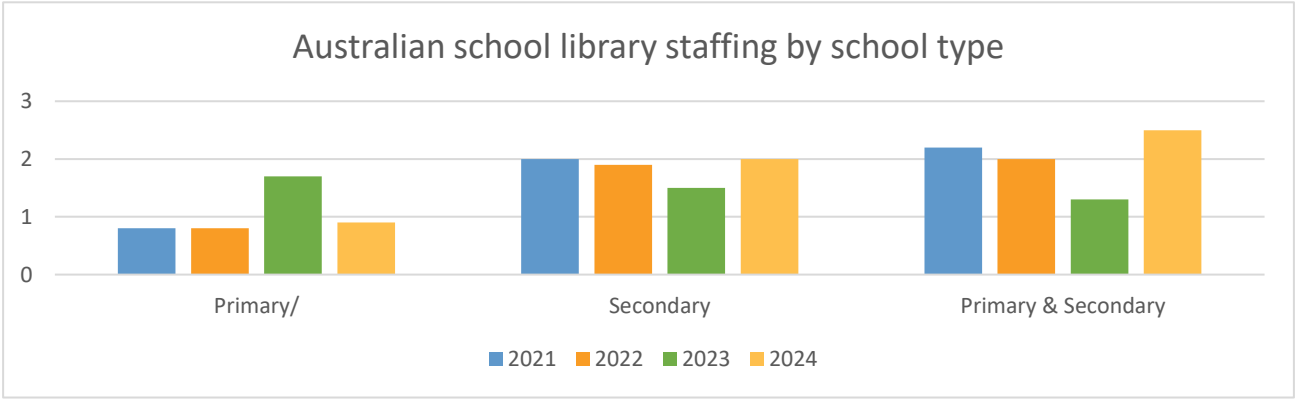
School Size	2021	2022	2023	2024
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.4 FTE	0.6 FTE	0.8FTE
200 - 399	0.8 FTE	0.9 FTE	0.9 FTE	0.9 FTE
400 - 599	1.1 FTE	0.9 FTE	1.2 FTE	1.1 FTE
600 - 799	1.5 FTE	1.5 FTE	1.2 FTE	1.4 FTE
800 - 1099	2.0 FTE	2.1 FTE	2.3 FTE	2.0 FTE
1100 - 1399	2.5 FTE	2.3 FTE	2.4 FTE	2.5 FTE
1400+	3.5 FTE	1.4 FTE	2.9 FTE	3.6 FTE



5.2 Staffing by school type

The 2024 school library staffing data shows fluctuations, with Secondary schools stable, Primary & Secondary schools at a four-year high (2.5 FTE), and Primary schools declining after a 2023 peak. Larger schools saw staffing recovery, while Primary/Contributing schools experienced a slight drop.

School Type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Primary/ Contributing	0.8 FTE	0.8 FTE	1.7 FTE	0.9 FTE
Secondary	2.0 FTE	1.9 FTE	1.5 FTE	2.0 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.2 FTE	2.0 FTE	1.3 FTE	2.5 FTE



5.3 Staffing changes

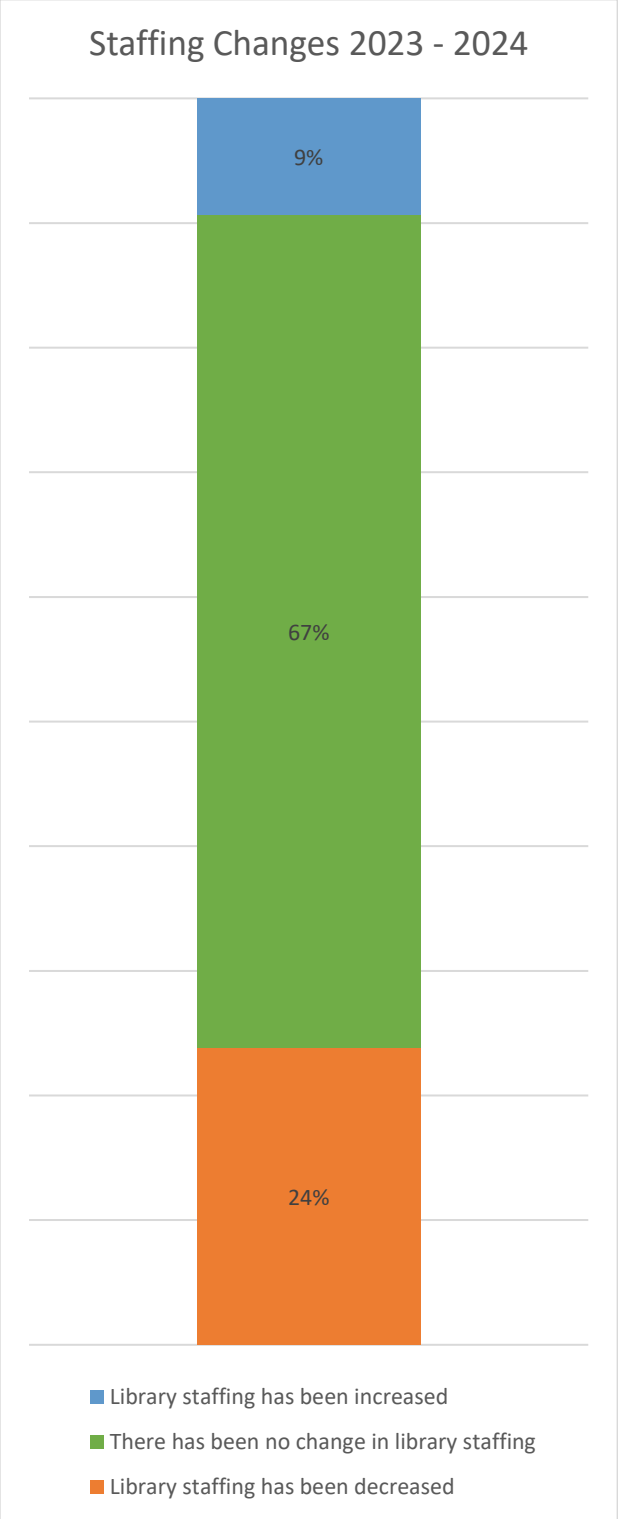
In 2024, 67% of respondents reported that there had been no change in staffing from 2023. 24% of respondents reported staffing decreases; 9% reported staffing increases.

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

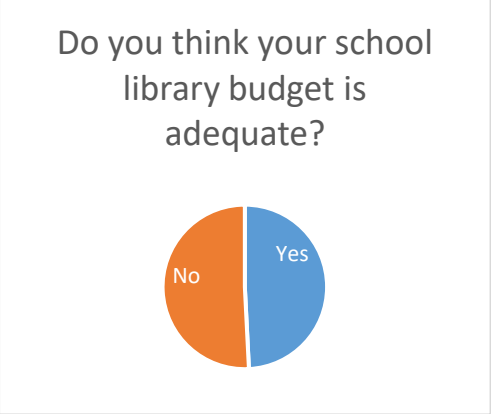


6.0 Resourcing the library

6.1 Is your school library budget adequate?

Participants were asked if they their school library budget adequate.

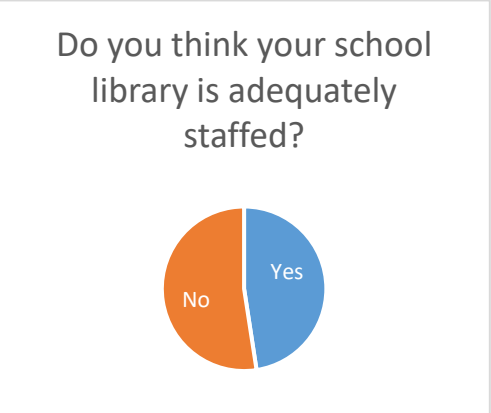
49% of respondents said “yes”; 51% said “no”.



6.2 Is your school library adequately staffed?

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

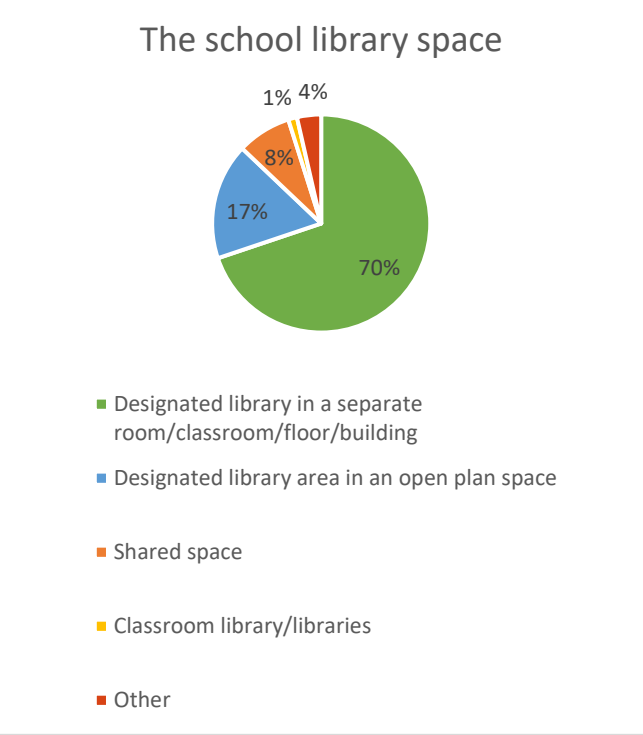
48% of respondents said “yes”; 52% said “no”.



7.0 The school library space

Participants were surveyed about the setup of their school library spaces, revealing a diverse range of library environments:

- 1% of respondents reported that they have a classroom library.
- 17% reported they have a designated library area in an open-plan space.
- 70% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building.
- 8% reported their library operates in a shared space.
- 4% selected ‘other’, with common responses including:
  - Library ‘hubs’ on each year group level.
  - Library shared with ICT services.



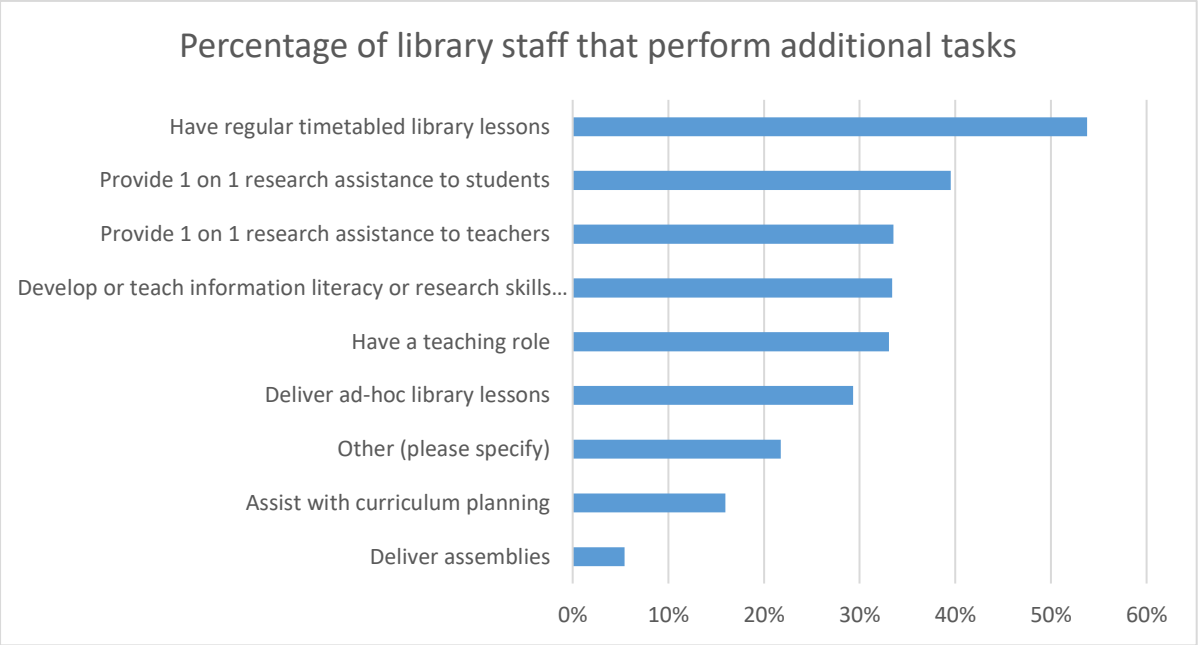
8.0 Tasks performed by school library staff

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 (58%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (54%)
- Providing 1 on 1 research assistance to students (40%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



Other responses provided include:

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

9.0 Promoting the library and resources

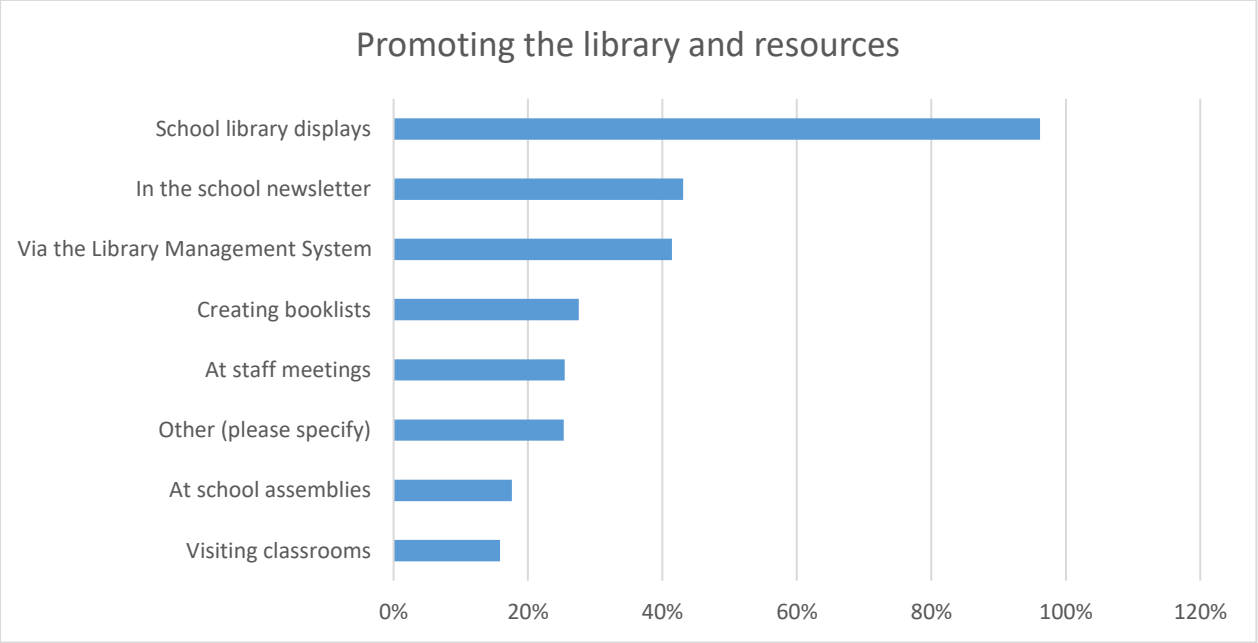
School libraries are essential hubs for learning, where promoting their resources is vital to emphasise their significance within the school community. To understand how school library staff achieve this, participants were asked to share their strategies for engaging students and educators. Their insights 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 (96%)
- In the school newsletter (43%)
- Via the Library Management System (41%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



Other responses include:

- Manages social media pages
- Organises events - Book Fairs, Reading Challenges, Book Clubs
- 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

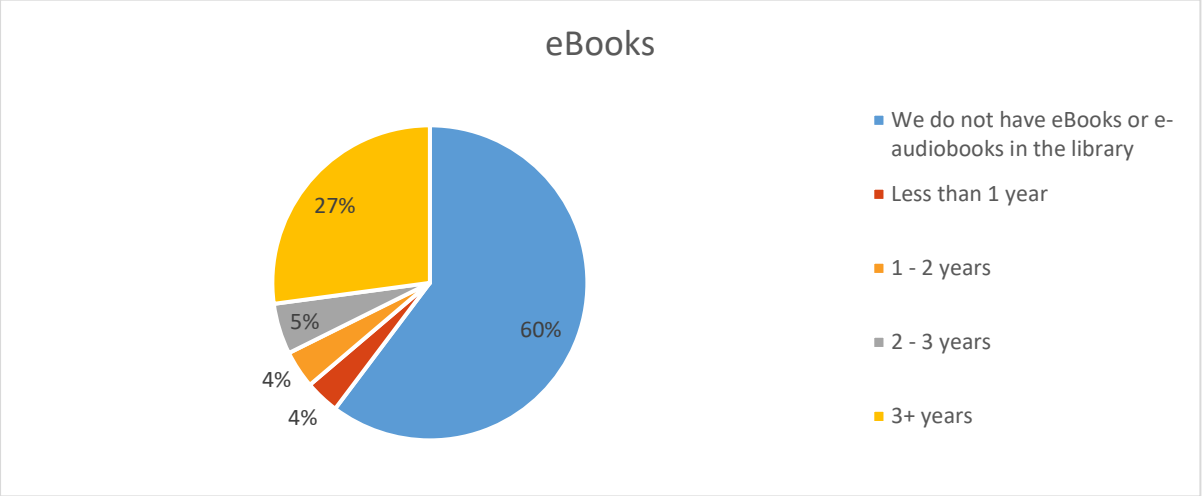
10.0 Online Resources

10.1 eBooks

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

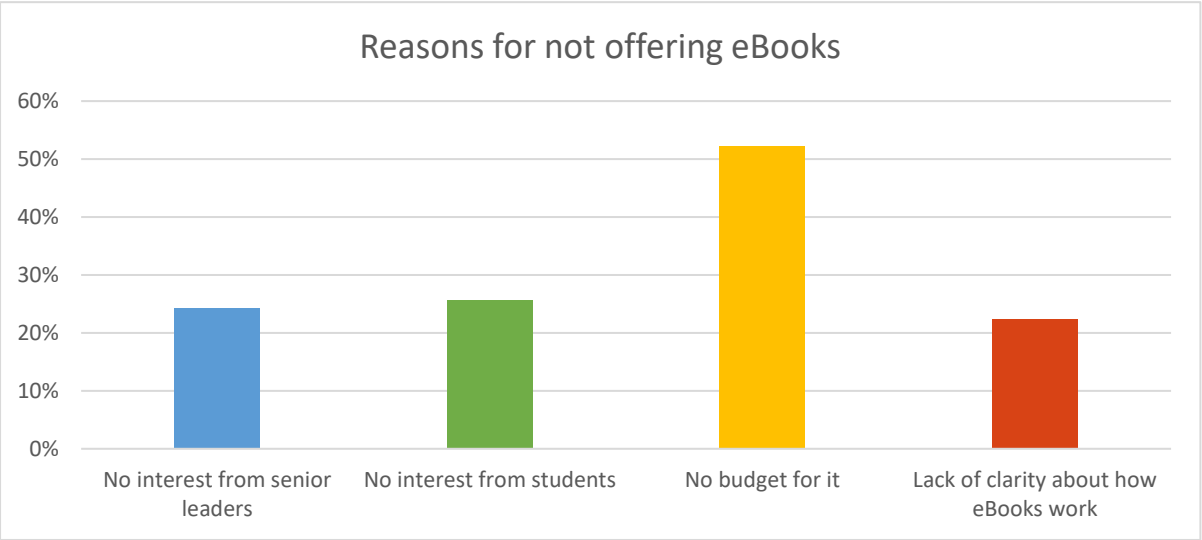
In 2024, participants reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	4%
1 – 2 years	4%
2 – 3 years	5%
3+ years	27%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	60%



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

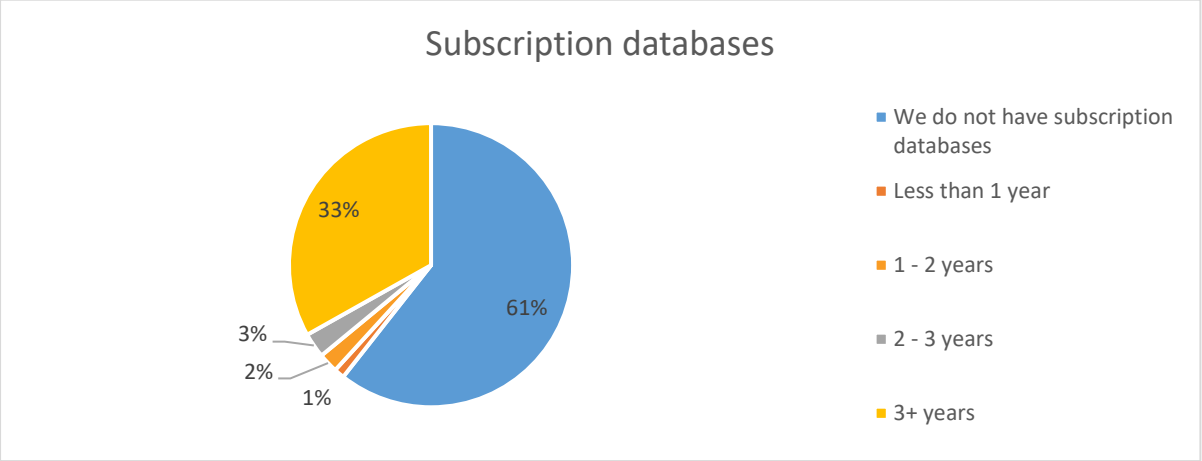
- No interest from senior leaders: 24%
- No interest from students: 26%
- No budget for it: 52%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 22%



10.2 Subscription databases

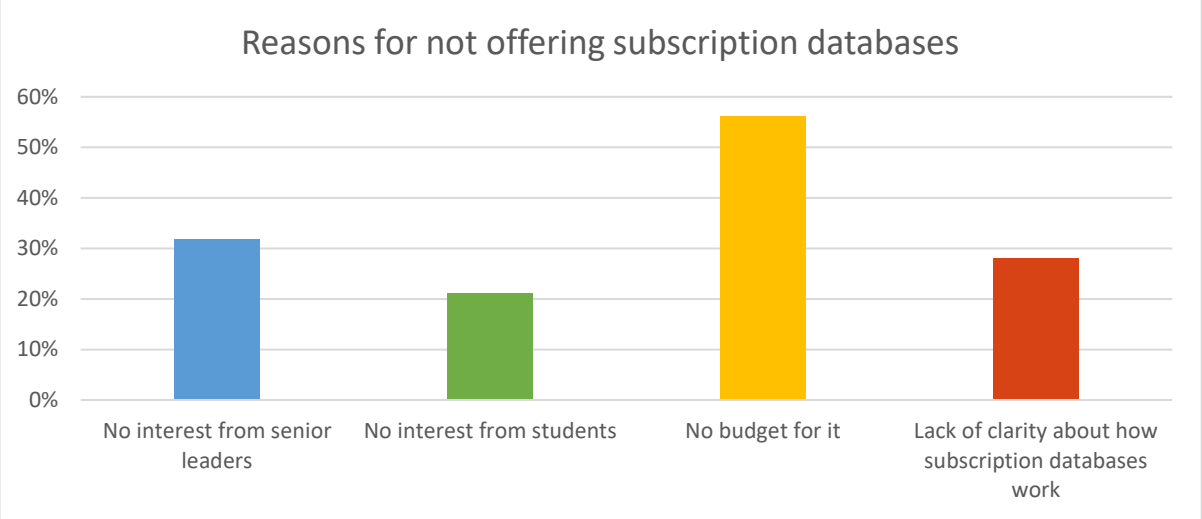
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2024, participating schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1%
1 – 2 years	2%
2 – 3 years	3%
3+ years	33%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	61%



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

- No interest from senior leaders: 32%
- No interest from students: 21%
- No budget for it: 56%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 28%

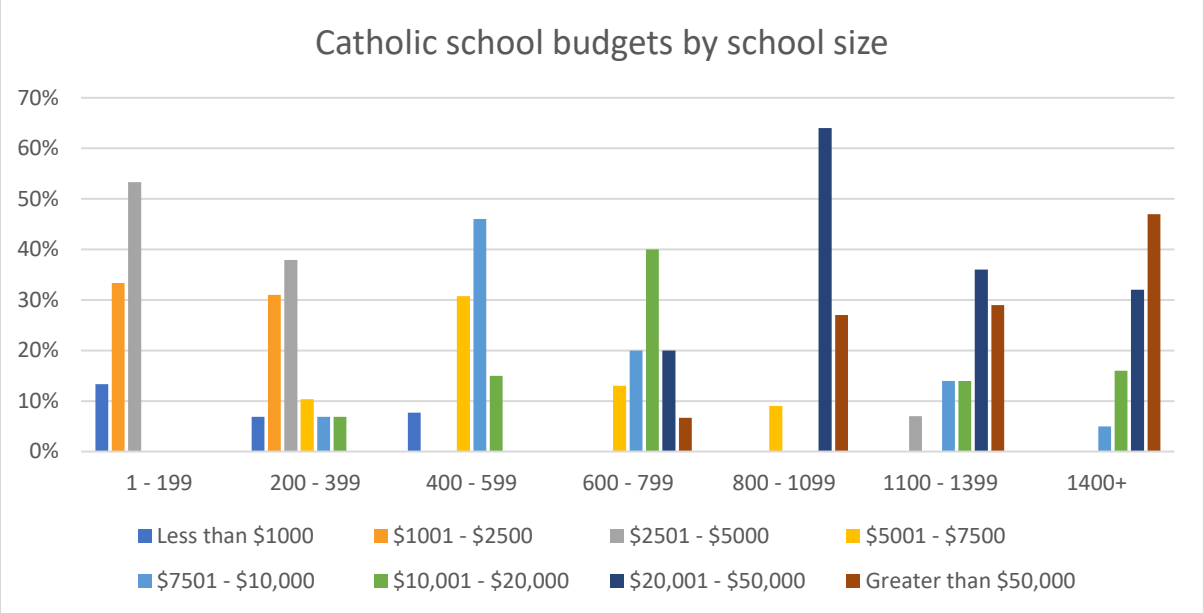


11.0 Catholic schools in Australia

11.1 Catholic school budgets

11.1.1 Catholic school budgets by school size

Australian Catholic school respondents reported the following budget ranges in 2024:

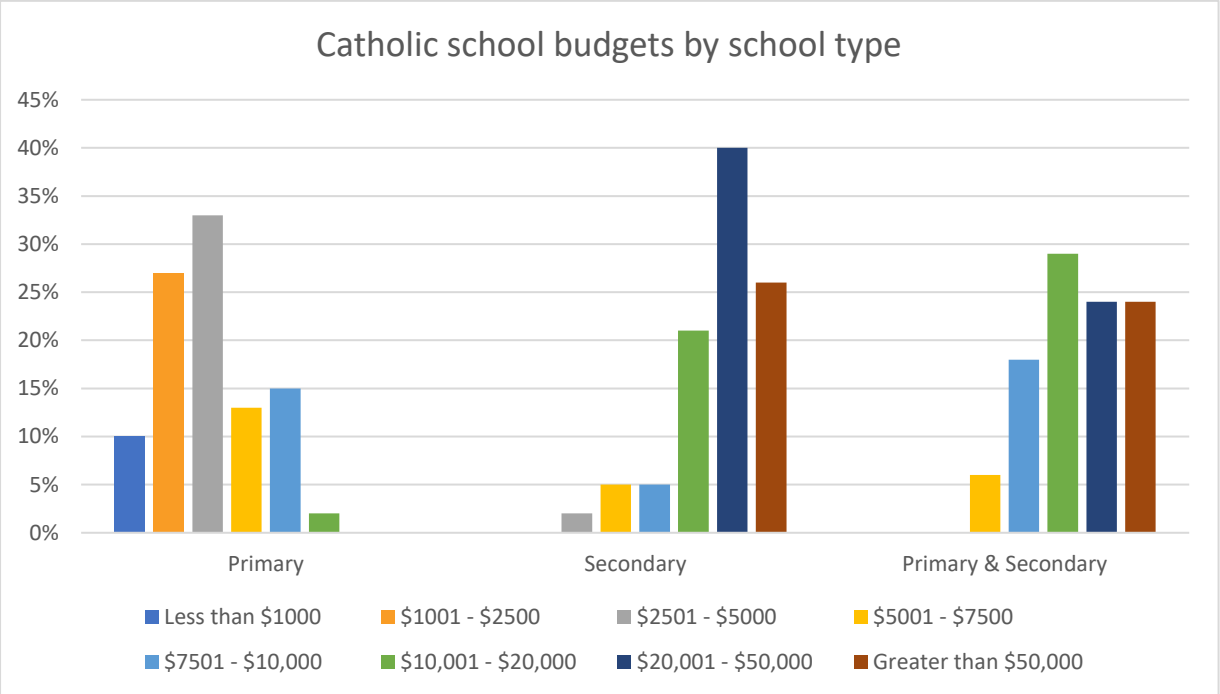


	School size (number of students)						
Budget ranges	**1 - 199**	**200 - 399**	**400 - 599**	**600 - 799**	**800 - 1099**	**1100 - 1399**	**1400+**
Less than $1000	13%	7%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
$1001 - $2500	33%	31%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
$2501 - $5000	53%	38%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%
$5001 - $7500	0%	10%	31%	13%	9%	0%	0%
$7501 - $10,000	0%	7%	46%	20%	0%	14%	5%
$10,001 - $20,000	0%	7%	15%	40%	0%	14%	16%
$20,001 - $50,000	0%	0%	0%	20%	64%	36%	32%
Greater than $50,000	0%	0%	0%	7%	27%	29%	47%

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

11.1.2 Catholic school budgets by school type

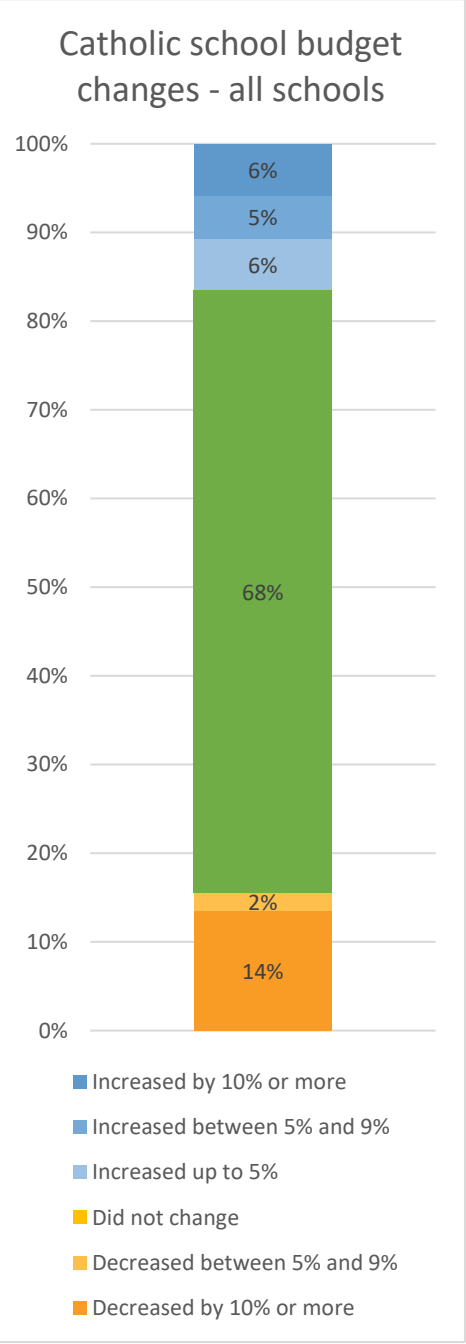
When looking at library budgets across different school types, Catholic school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

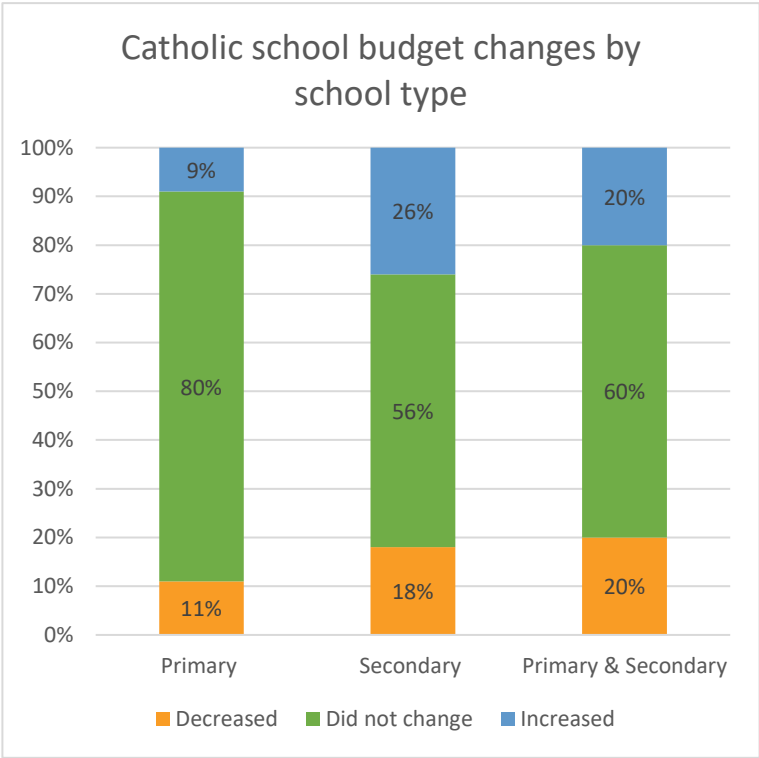


Budget ranges	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
Less than $1000	10%	0%	0%
$1001 - $2500	27%	0%	0%
$2501 - $5000	33%	2%	0%
$5001 - $7500	13%	5%	6%
$7501 - $10,000	15%	5%	18%
$10,001 - $20,000	2%	21%	29%
$20,001 - $50,000	0%	40%	24%
Greater than $50,000	0%	26%	24%

11.1.3 Catholic school budget changes: 2023 - 2024

In 2024, 68% of Catholic school respondents reported no budget changes, while 17% saw an increase and 16% experienced a decrease. Budget increases were more common in secondary schools (26%) compared to primary schools (9%), with combined primary and secondary schools seeing a 20% rise. However, these schools also faced the highest budget cuts (20%), followed by secondary (18%) and primary schools (11%), indicating greater volatility in funding for multi-level schools.



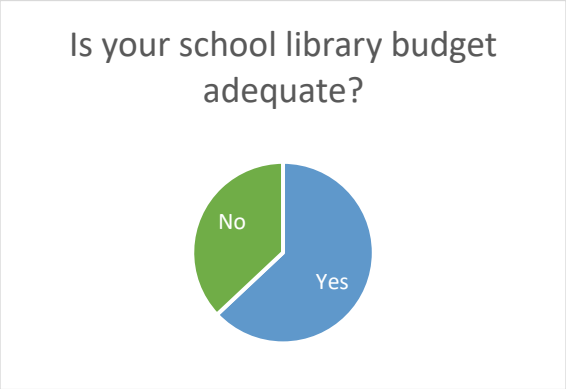


School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	9%	80%	11%
Secondary	26%	56%	18%
Primary & Secondary	20%	60%	20%

11.1.4 Catholic schools on adequate budgets

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

63% of Catholic school respondents said “yes”; 37% said “no”.



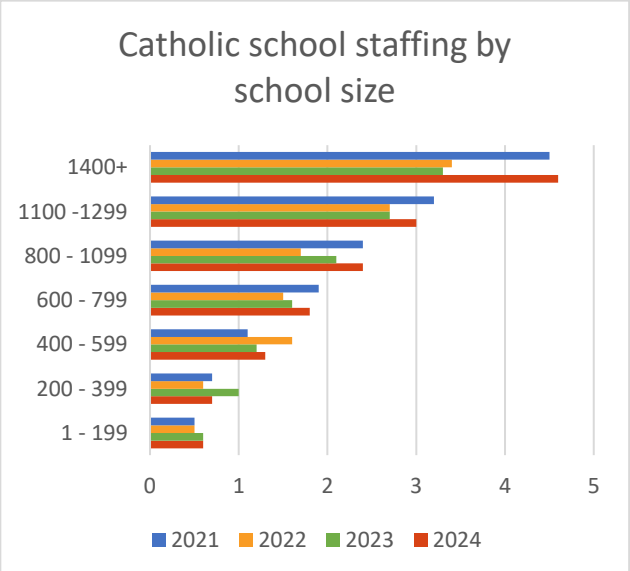
11.2 Catholic school staffing

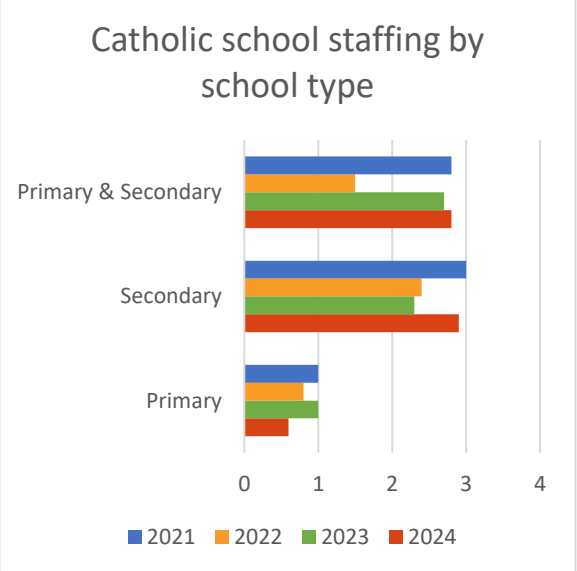
11.2.1 Catholic school staffing by school size and type

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	2024
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.6 FTE	0.6 FTE
200 - 399	0.7 FTE	0.6 FTE	1 FTE	0.7 FTE
400 - 599	1.1 FTE	1.6 FTE	1.2 FTE	1.3 FTE
600 - 799	1.9 FTE	1.5 FTE	1.6 FTE	1.8 FTE
800 - 1099	2.4 FTE	1.7 FTE	2.1 FTE	2.4 FTE
1100 -1299	3.2 FTE	2.7 FTE	2.7 FTE	3.0 FTE
1400+	4.5 FTE	3.4 FTE	3.3 FTE	4.6 FTE

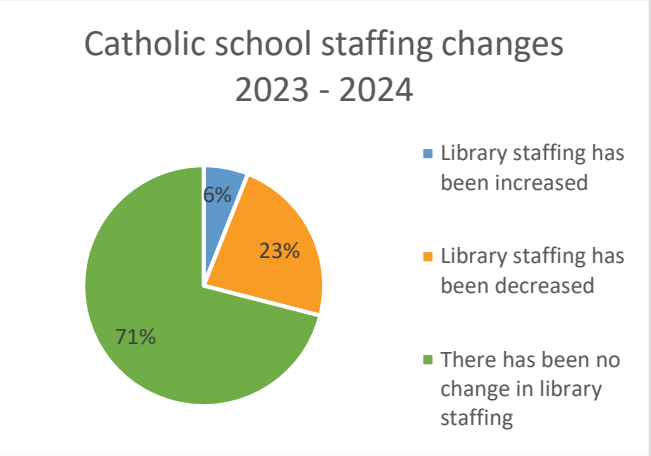
School Type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Primary	1.0 FTE	0.8 FTE	1 FTE	0.6 FTE
Secondary	3.0 FTE	2.4 FTE	2.3 FTE	2.9 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.8 FTE	1.5 FTE	2.7 FTE	2.8 FTE





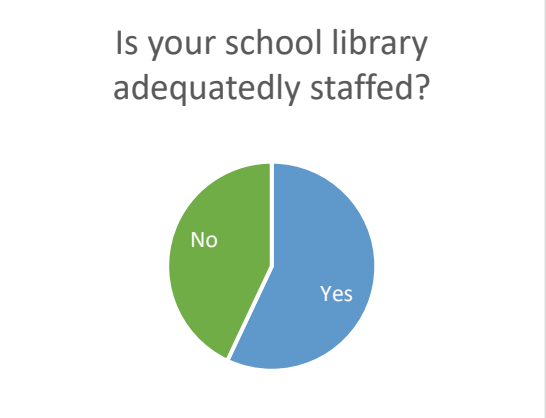
11.2.2 Catholic school staffing changes: 2023 – 2024

In 2024, 71% 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 2024, 23% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 6% reported a staffing increase.



11.2.3 Catholic schools on adequate staffing

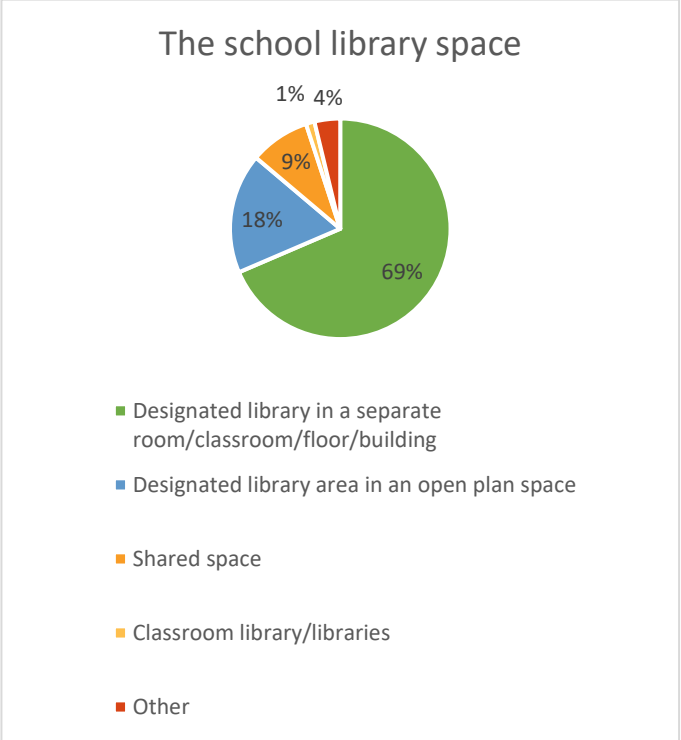
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 57% of Catholic school respondents said “yes”; 43% said “no”.



11.3 The school library space in Catholic Schools

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 18% reported they have a designated library area in an open plan space.
- 69% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 9% reported their library operates in a shared space
- 1% reported their classroom is a library
- 4% selected ‘other’, with the most common response being library ‘hubs’ on each year group level.



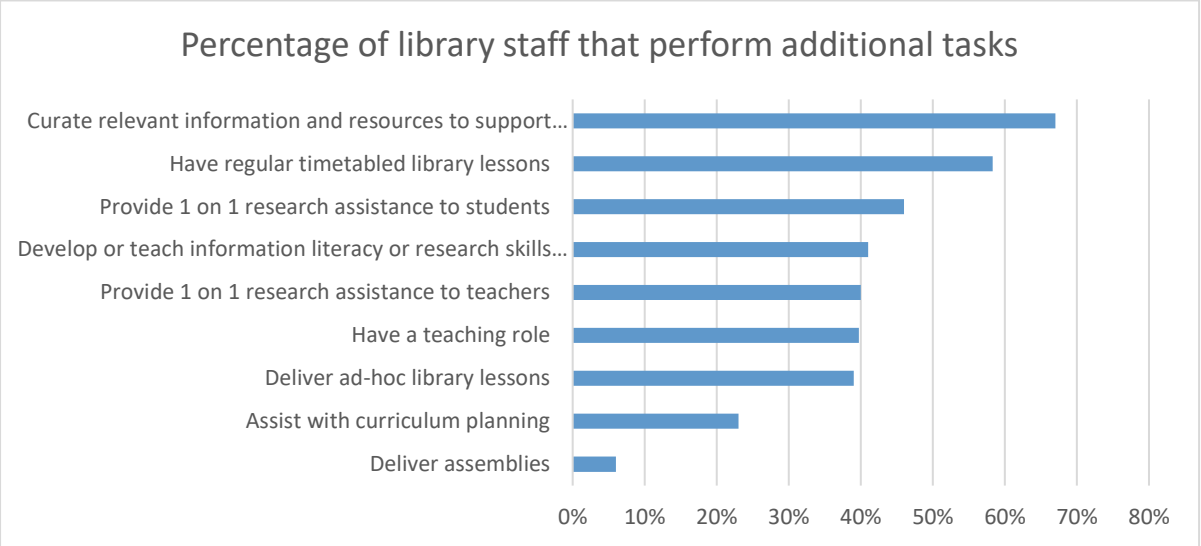
11.4 Tasks performed by school library staff in Catholic Schools

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 (67%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (58%)
- Provide 1 on 1 research assistance to students (46%).

Additional findings have been provided in the following graph:



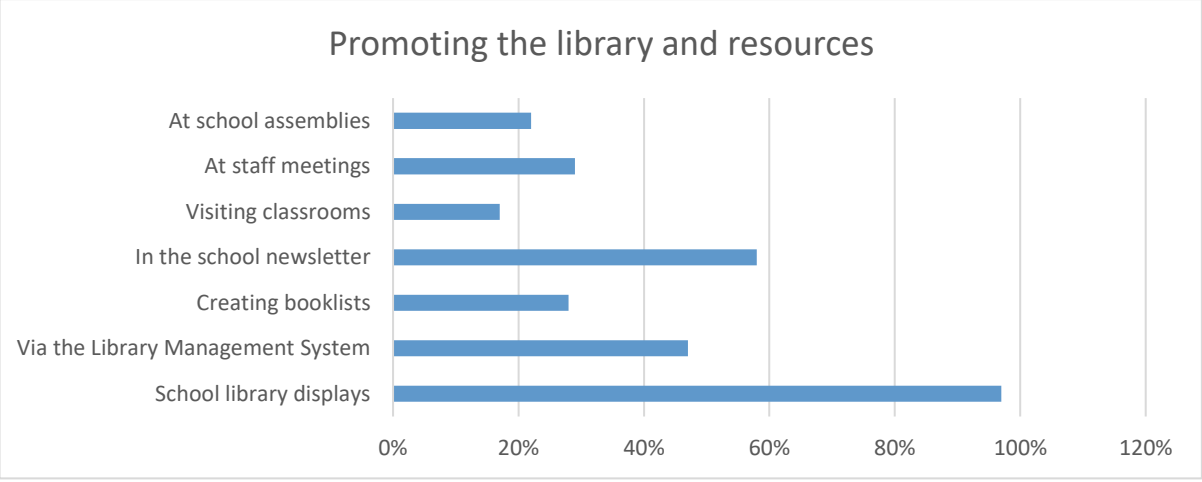
11.5 Promoting the library and resources in Catholic Schools

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 (58%)
- Via the Library Management System (47%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



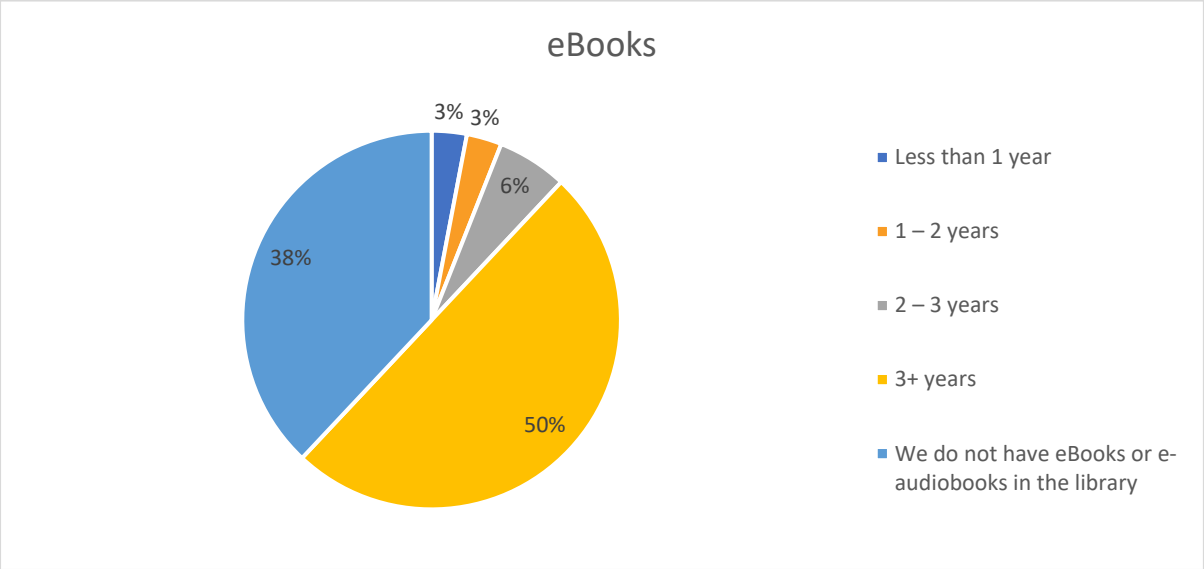
11.6 Online Resources in Catholic schools

11.6.1 eBooks

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

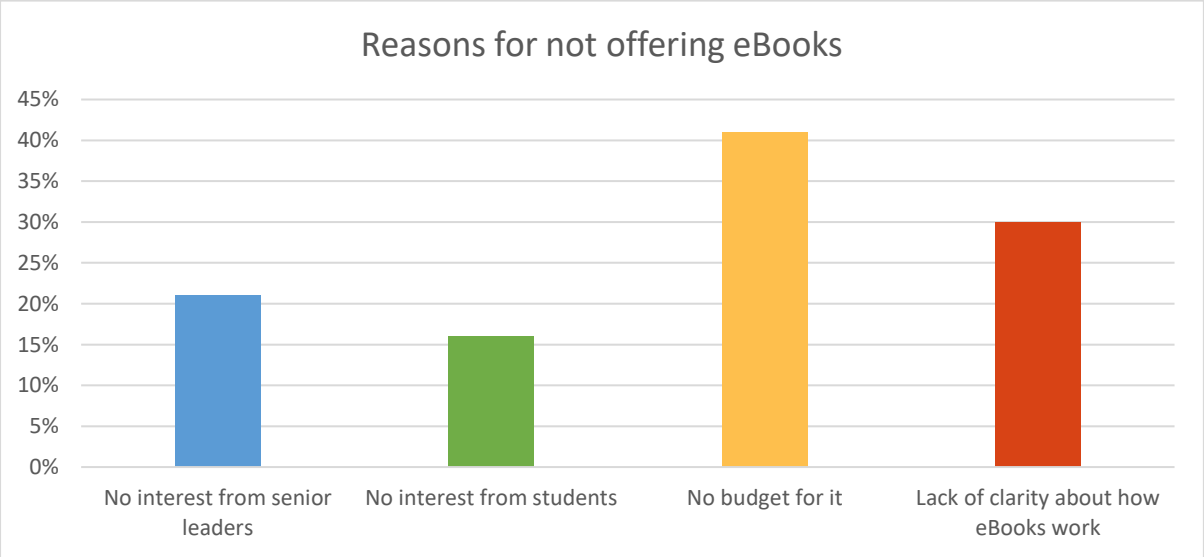
In 2024, Catholic schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	3%
1 – 2 years	3%
2 – 3 years	6%
3+ years	50%
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:

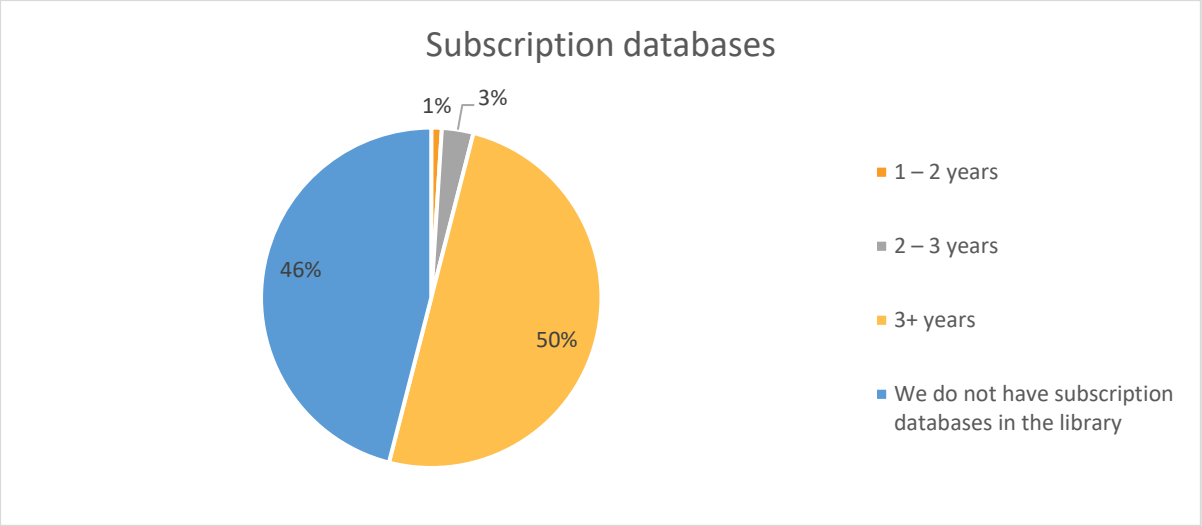
- No interest from senior leaders: 21%
- No interest from students: 16%
- No budget for it: 41%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 30%



11.6.2 Subscription databases

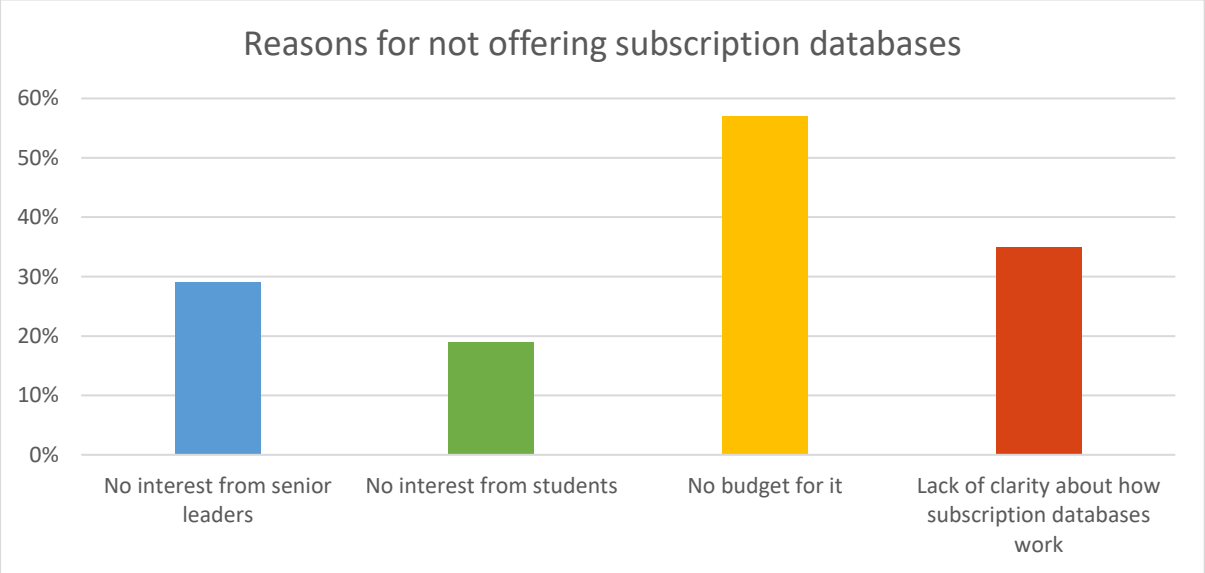
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2024, Catholic schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	0%
1 – 2 years	1%
2 – 3 years	3%
3+ years	50%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	46%



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

- No interest from senior leaders: 29%
- No interest from students: 19%
- No budget for it: 57%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 35%

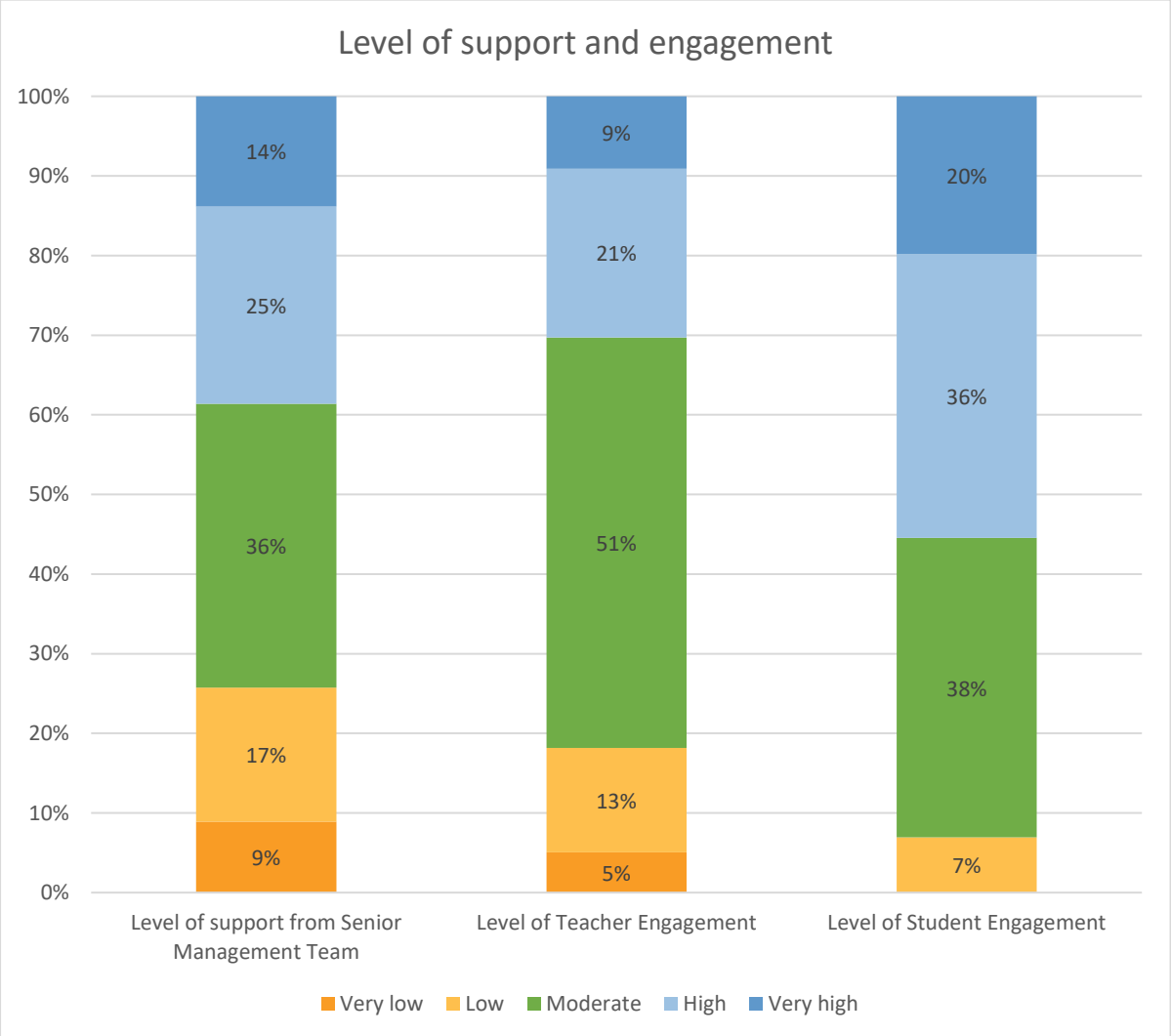


11.7 Level of support and engagement in Catholic schools

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	14%	9%	20%
High	25%	21%	36%
Moderate	36%	51%	38%
Low	17%	13%	7%
Very low	9%	5%	0%

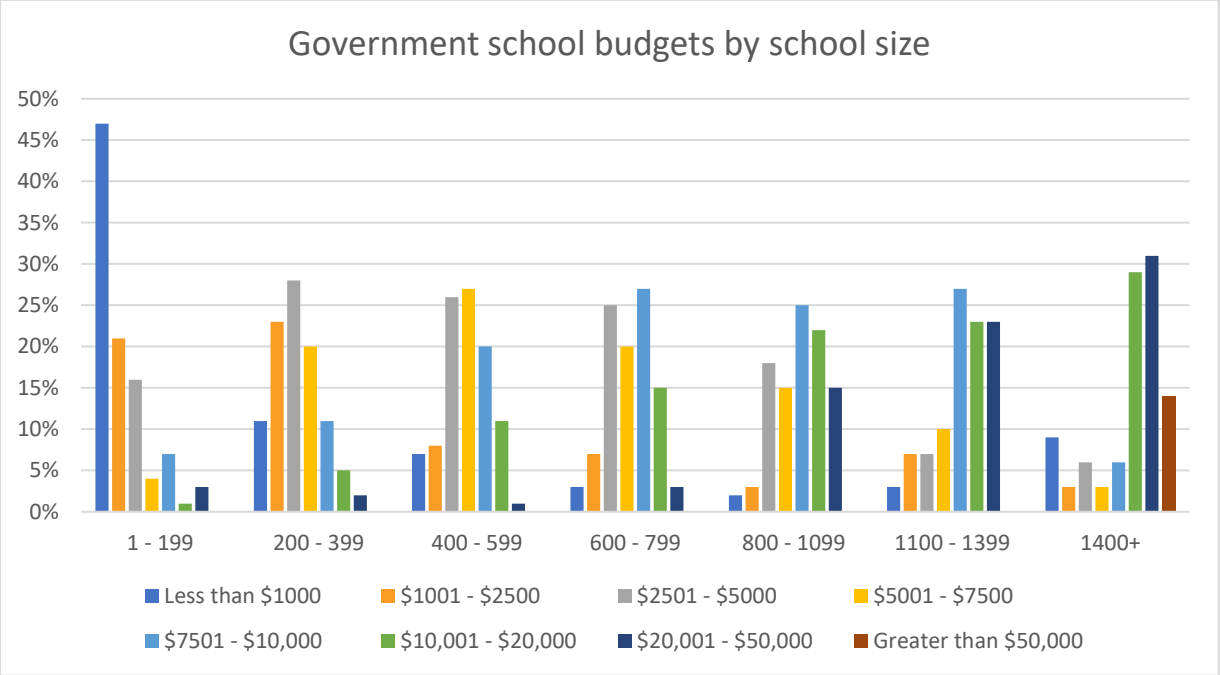


12.0 Government schools in Australia

12.1 Government school budgets

12.1.1 Government school budgets by school size

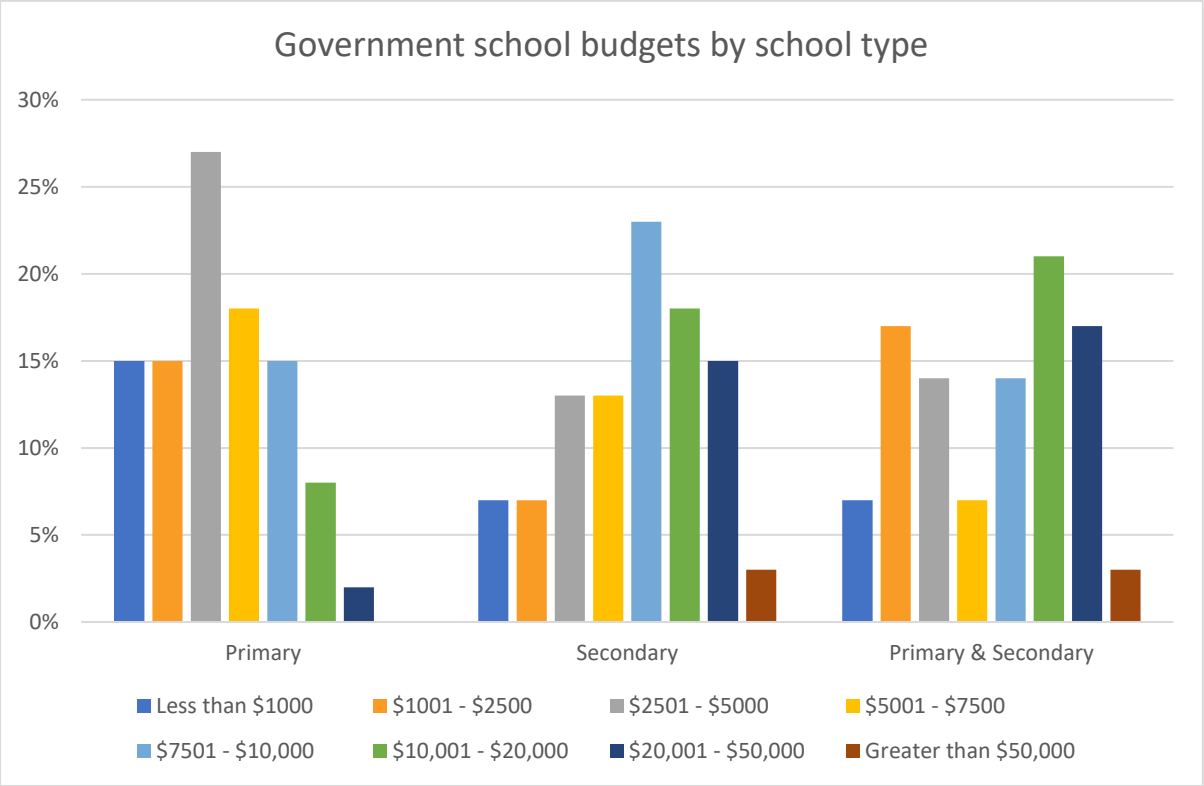
Government school respondents reported the following budget ranges in 2024 according to the size of their school:



	School Size (Number of students)						
	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
Less than $1000	47%	11%	7%	3%	2%	3%	9%
$1001 - $2500	21%	23%	8%	7%	3%	7%	3%
$2501 - $5000	16%	28%	26%	25%	18%	7%	6%
$5001 - $7500	4%	20%	27%	20%	15%	10%	3%
$7501 - $10,000	7%	11%	20%	27%	25%	27%	6%
$10,001 - $20,000	1%	5%	11%	15%	22%	23%	29%
$20,001 - $50,000	3%	2%	1%	3%	15%	23%	31%
Greater than $50,000	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%

12.1.2 Government school budgets by school type

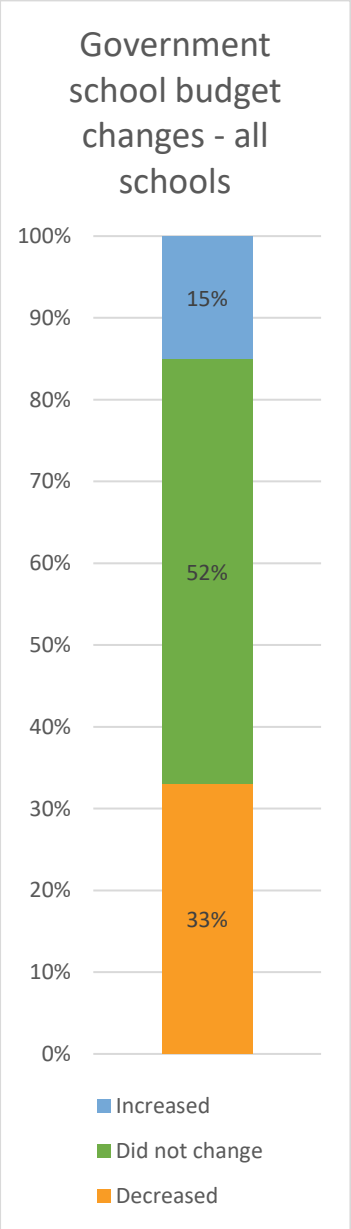
When broken down by school type, Government school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

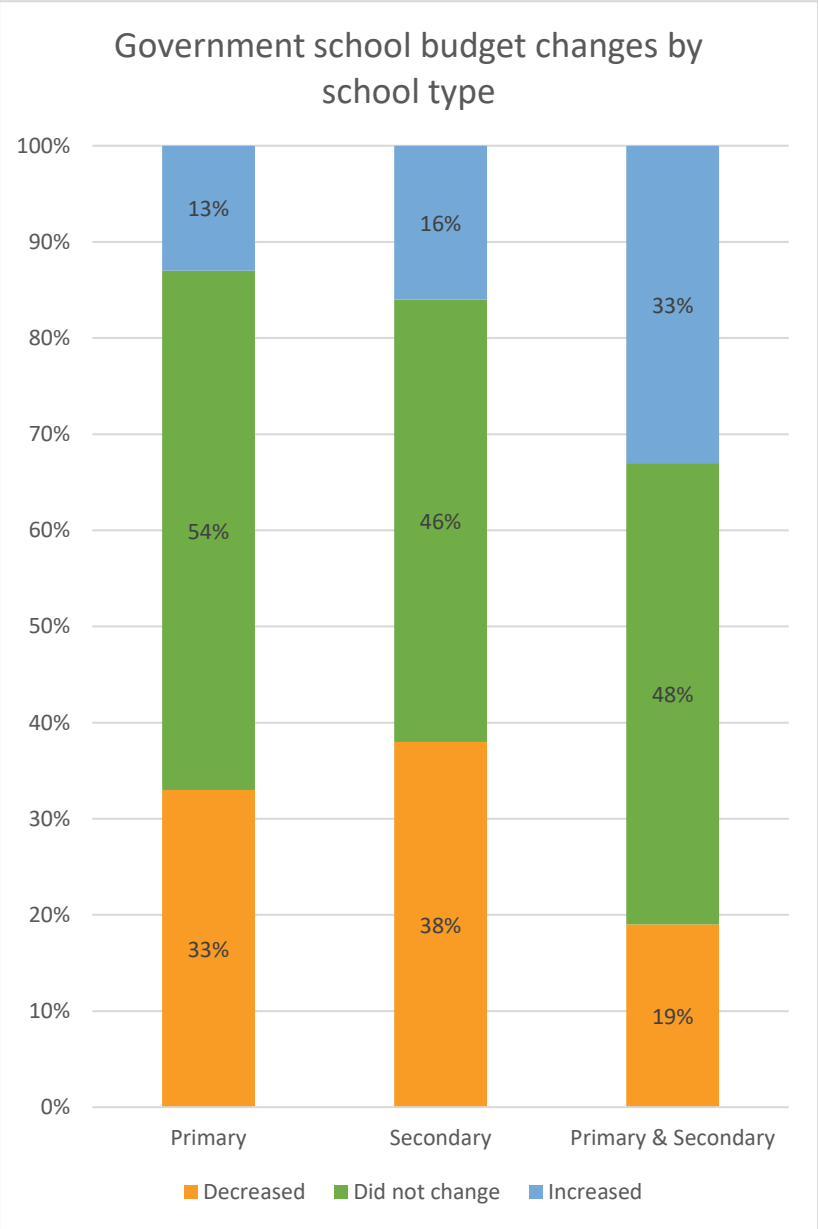


	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
Less than $1000	15%	7%	7%
$1001 - $2500	15%	7%	17%
$2501 - $5000	27%	13%	14%
$5001 - $7500	18%	13%	7%
$7501 - $10,000	15%	23%	14%
$10,001 - $20,000	8%	18%	21%
$20,001 - $50,000	2%	15%	17%
Greater than $50,000	0%	3%	3%

12.1.3 Government school budget changes: 2023 - 2024

In 2024, 52% of Government school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2023. 33% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 15% reported a budget increase.





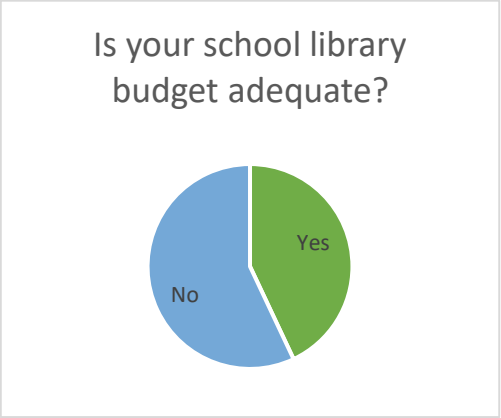
For many Government school libraries, budgets did not change. Budgets in 2024 compared with 2023 across Government primary, secondary and combined schools were reported as follows:

School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	13%	54%	33%
Secondary	16%	46%	38%
Primary & Secondary	33%	48%	19%

12.1.4 Government schools on adequate budgets

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

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



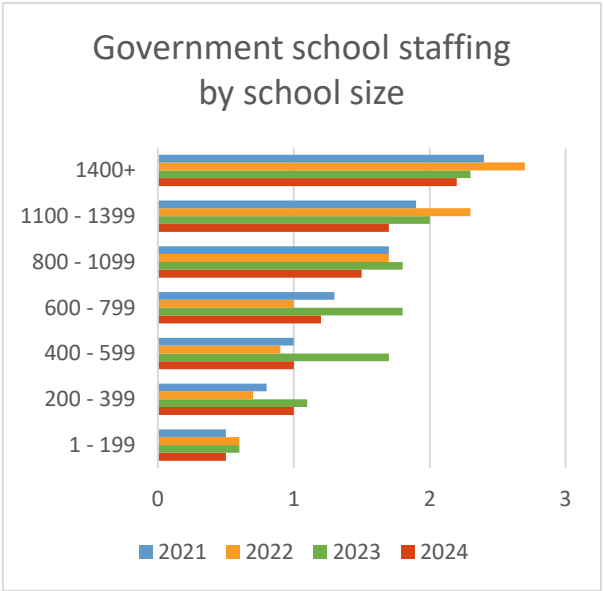
12.2 Government school staffing

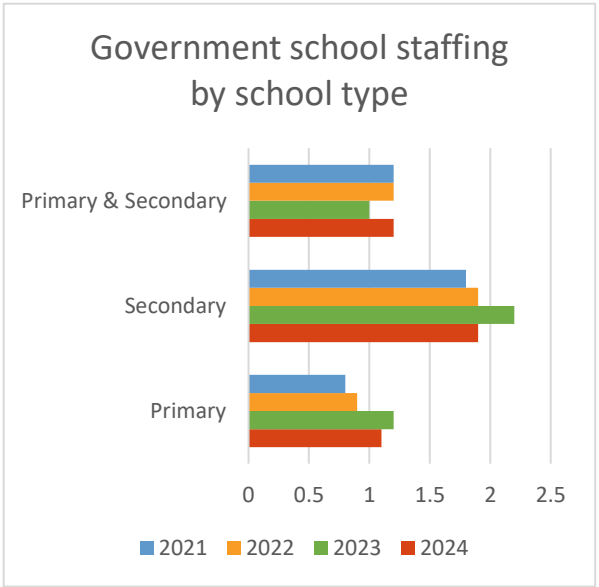
12.2.1 Government school staffing by school size and type

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

School Size	2021	2022	2023	2024
1 - 199	0.5 FTE	0.6 FTE	0.6 FTE	0.5 FTE
200 - 399	0.8 FTE	0.7 FTE	1.1 FTE	1.0 FTE
400 - 599	1.0 FTE	0.9 FTE	1.7 FTE	1.0 FTE
600 - 799	1.3 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.8 FTE	1.2 FTE
800 - 1099	1.7 FTE	1.7 FTE	1.8 FTE	1.5 FTE
1100 - 1399	1.9 FTE	2.3 FTE	2 FTE	1.7 FTE
1400+	2.4 FTE	2.7 FTE	2.3 FTE	2.2 FTE

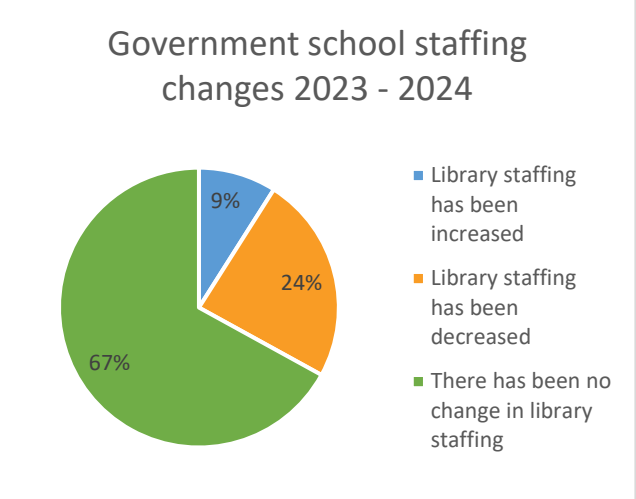
School Type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Primary	0.8 FTE	0.9 FTE	1.2 FTE	1.1 FTE
Secondary	1.8 FTE	1.9 FTE	2.2 FTE	1.9 FTE
Primary & Secondary	1.2 FTE	1.2 FTE	1 FTE	1.2 FTE





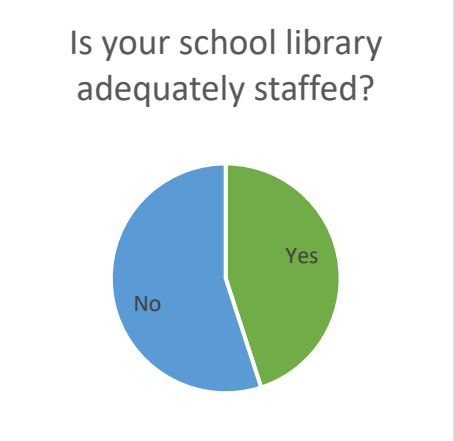
12.2.2 Government school staffing changes: 2023 – 2024

In 2024, 67% of Government school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from 2023. 24% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 9% reported a staffing increase.



12.2.3 Government schools on adequate staffing

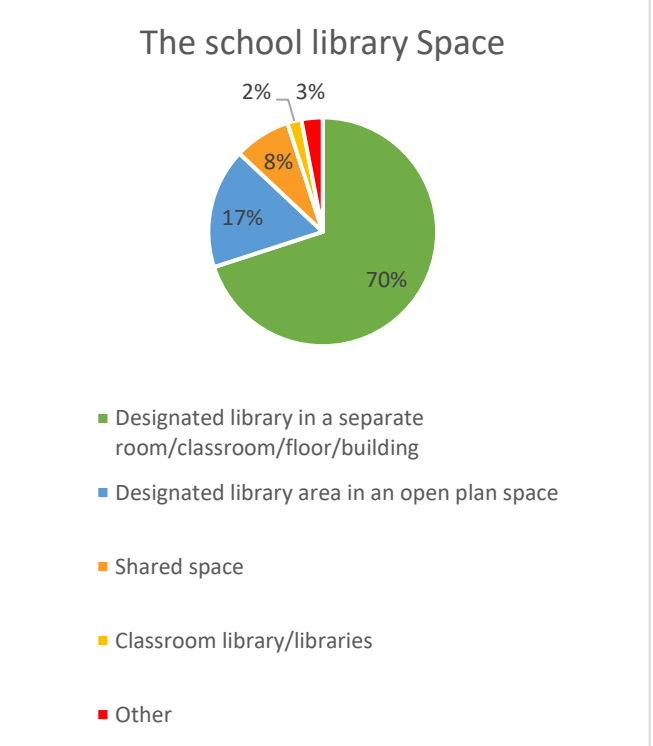
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 45% of Government school respondents said “yes”; 55% said “no”.



12.3 The school library space in Government Schools

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 17% reported they have a designated library area in an open plan space
- 70% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 8% reported their library operates in a shared space
- 2% reported their classroom is a library



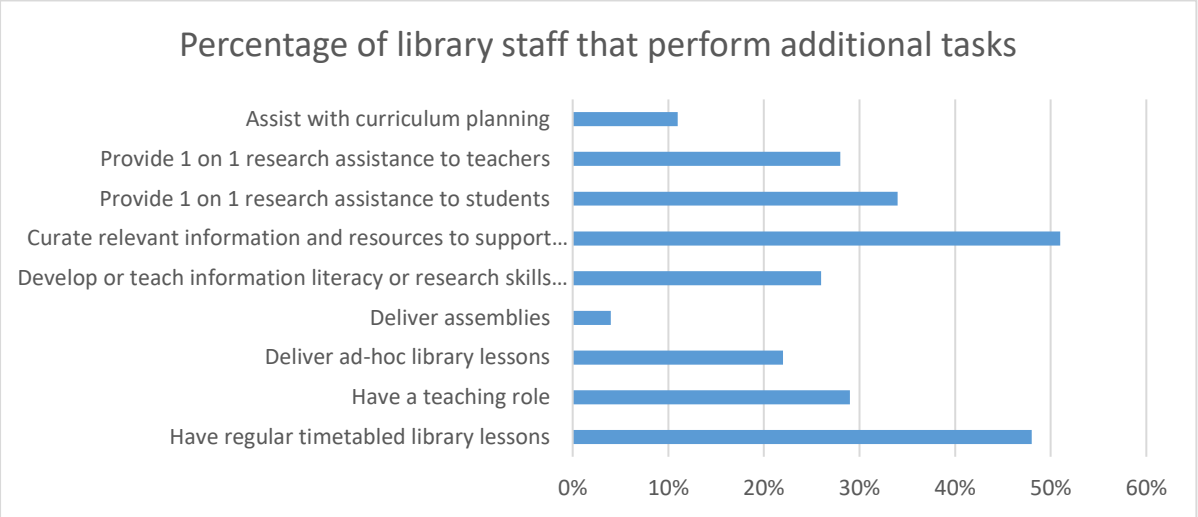
12.4 Tasks performed by school library staff in Government Schools

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:

- Curating relevant information and resources to support the curriculum (51%)
- Providing regular timetabled library lessons (48%)
- Provide 1 on 1 research assistance to students (34%).

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



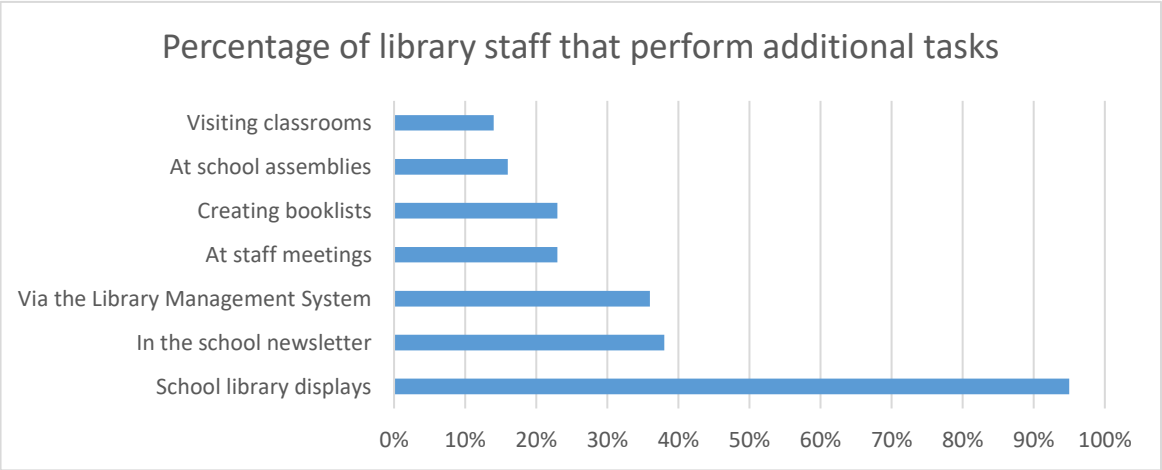
12.5 Promoting the library and resources in Government Schools

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 (38%)
- Via the Library Management System (36%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



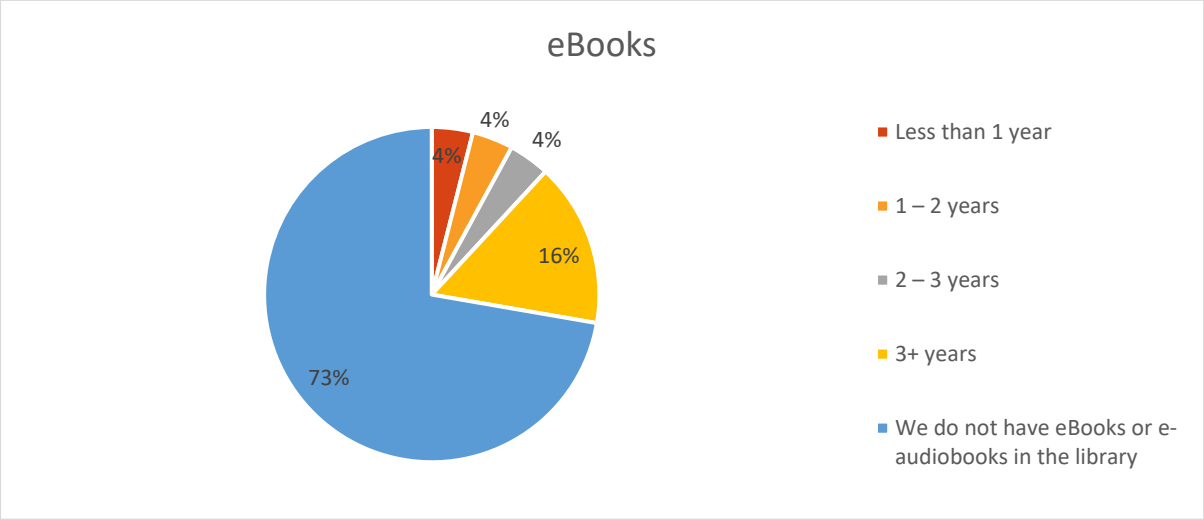
12.6 Online resources in Government schools

12.6.1 eBooks

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

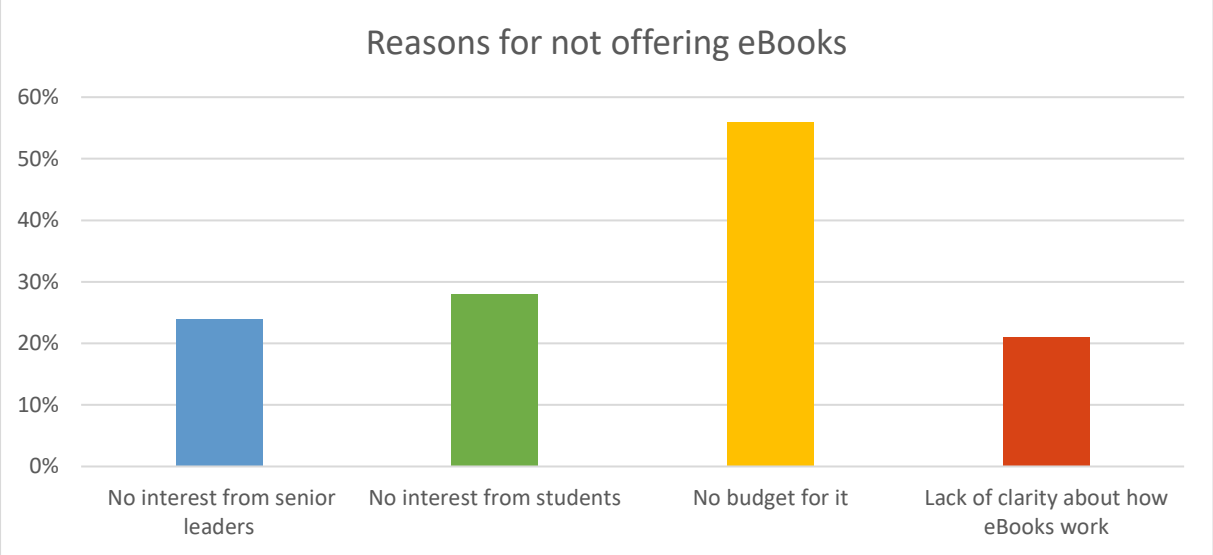
In 2024, Government schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	4%
1 – 2 years	4%
2 – 3 years	4%
3+ years	16%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	73%



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

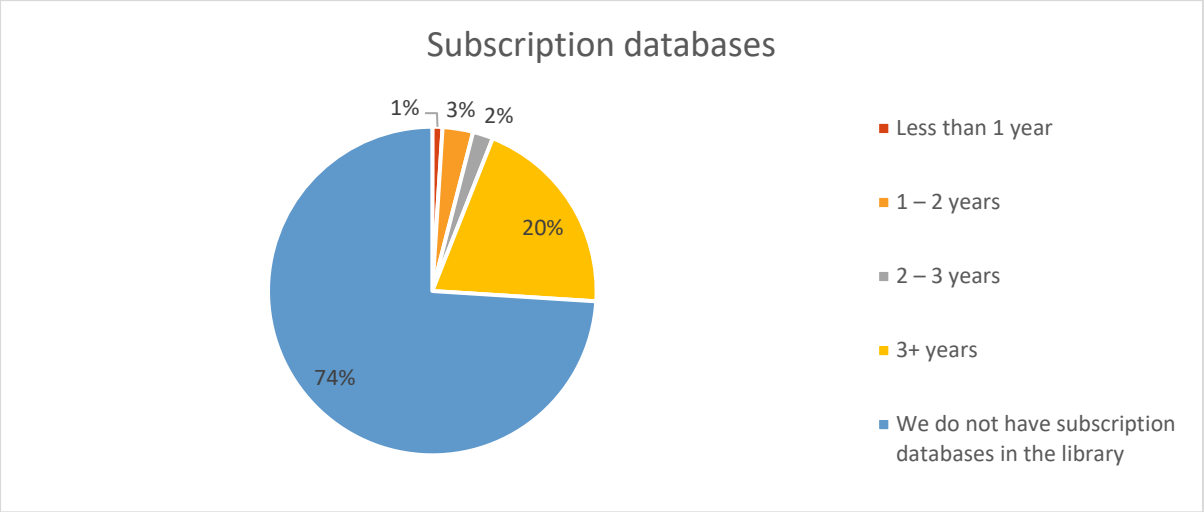
- No interest from senior leaders: 24%
- No interest from students: 28%
- No budget for it: 56%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 21%



12.6.2 Subscription databases

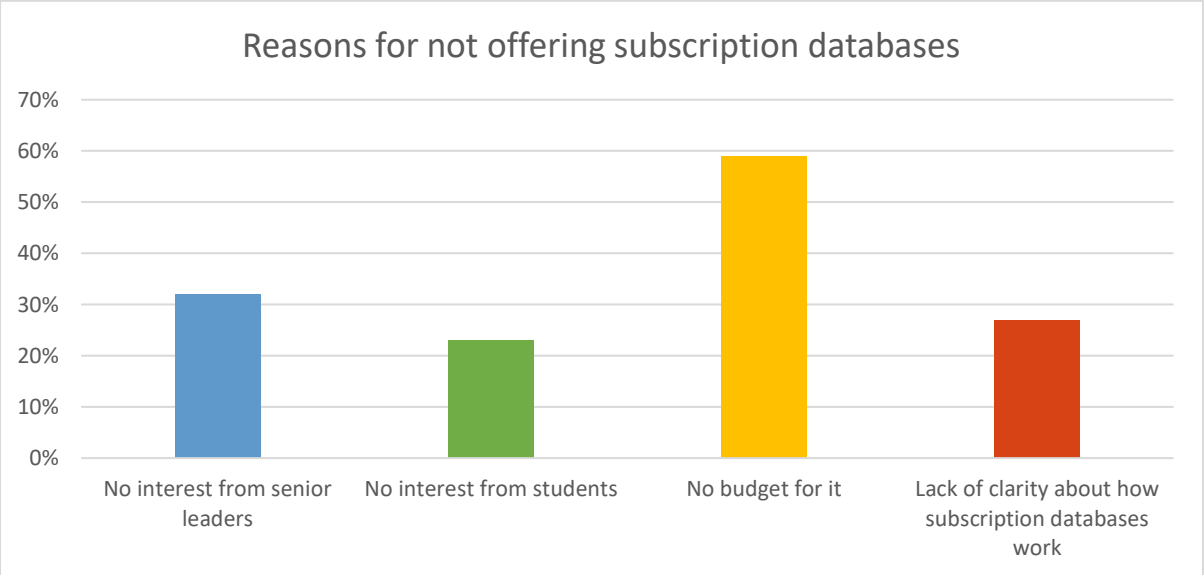
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2024, Government schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	1%
1 – 2 years	3%
2 – 3 years	2%
3+ years	20%
We do not have subscription databases in the library	74%



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

- No interest from senior leaders: 32%
- No interest from students: 23%
- No budget for it: 59%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 27%

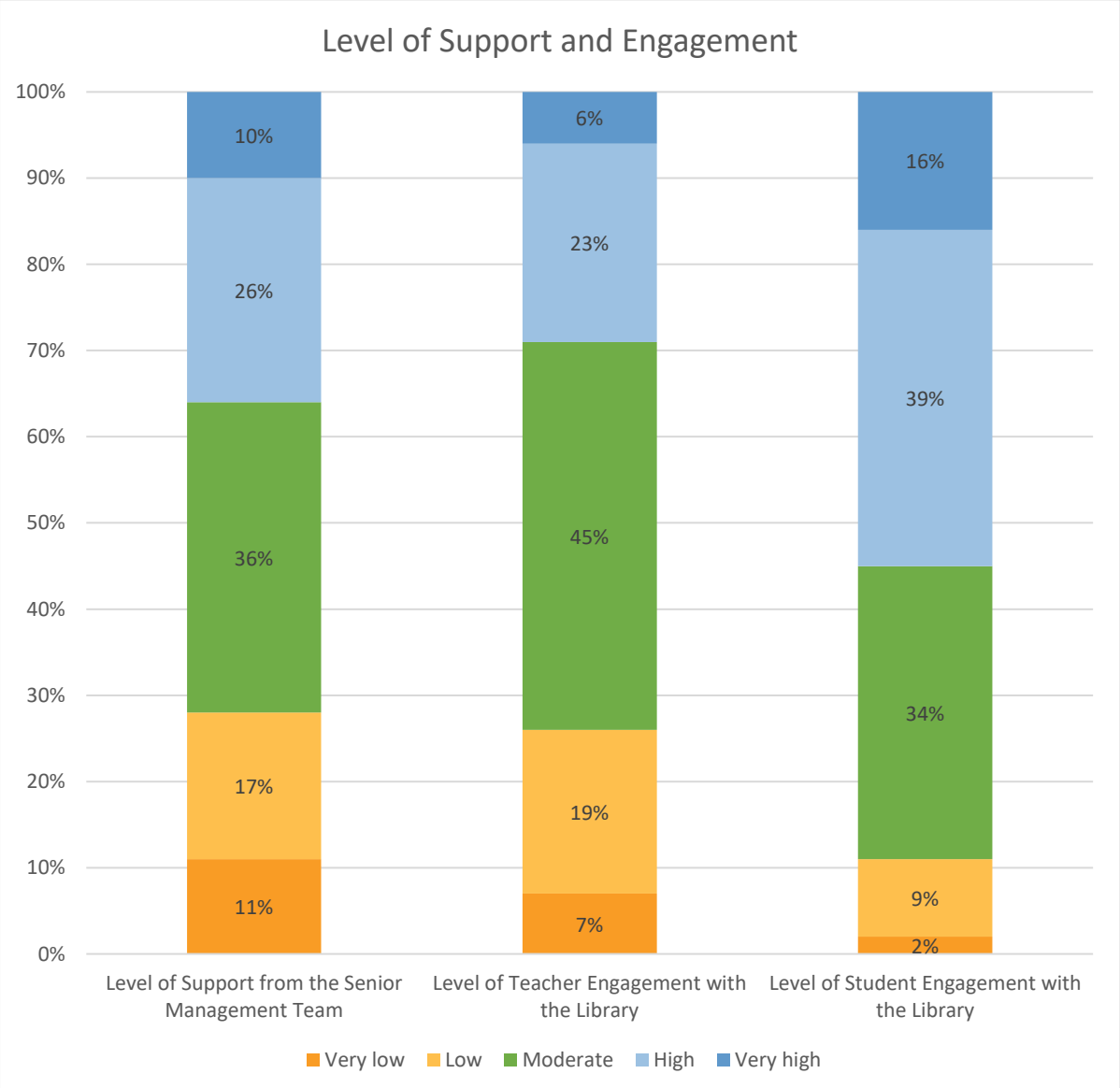


12.7 Level of support and engagement in Government schools

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	26%	23%	39%
Moderate	36%	45%	34%
Low	17%	19%	9%
Very low	11%	7%	2%

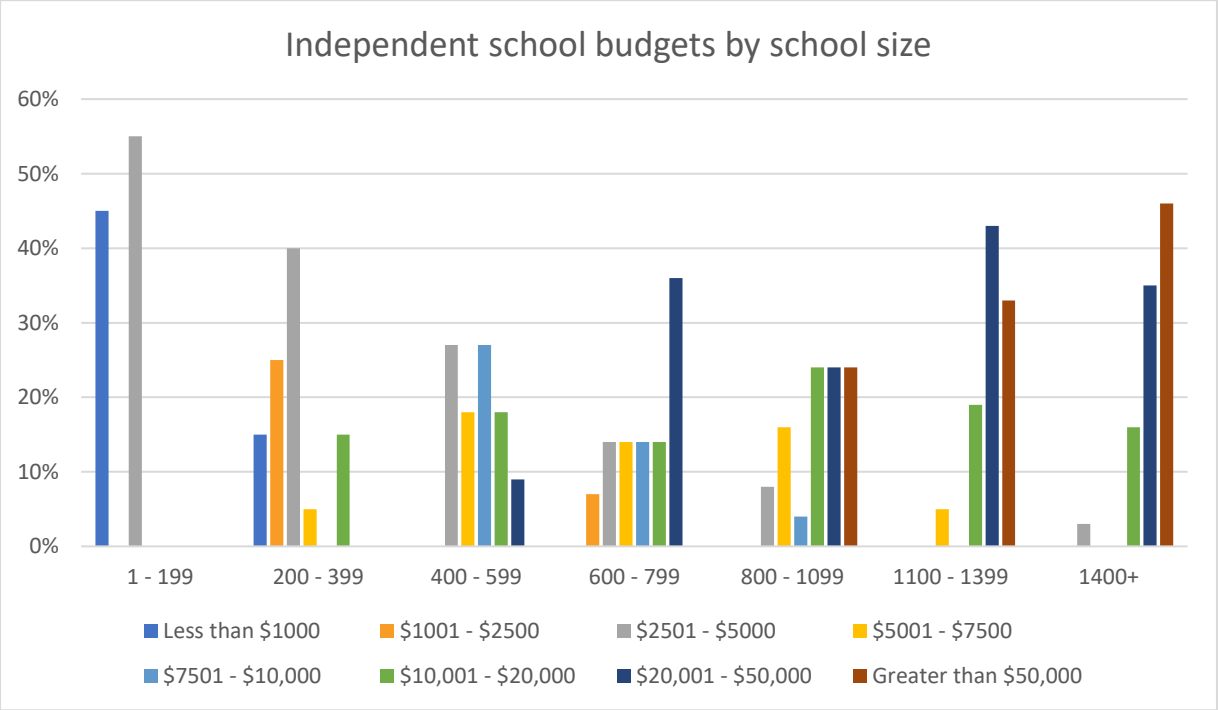


13.0 Independent schools in Australia

13.1 Independent school budgets

13.1.1 Independent school budgets by school size

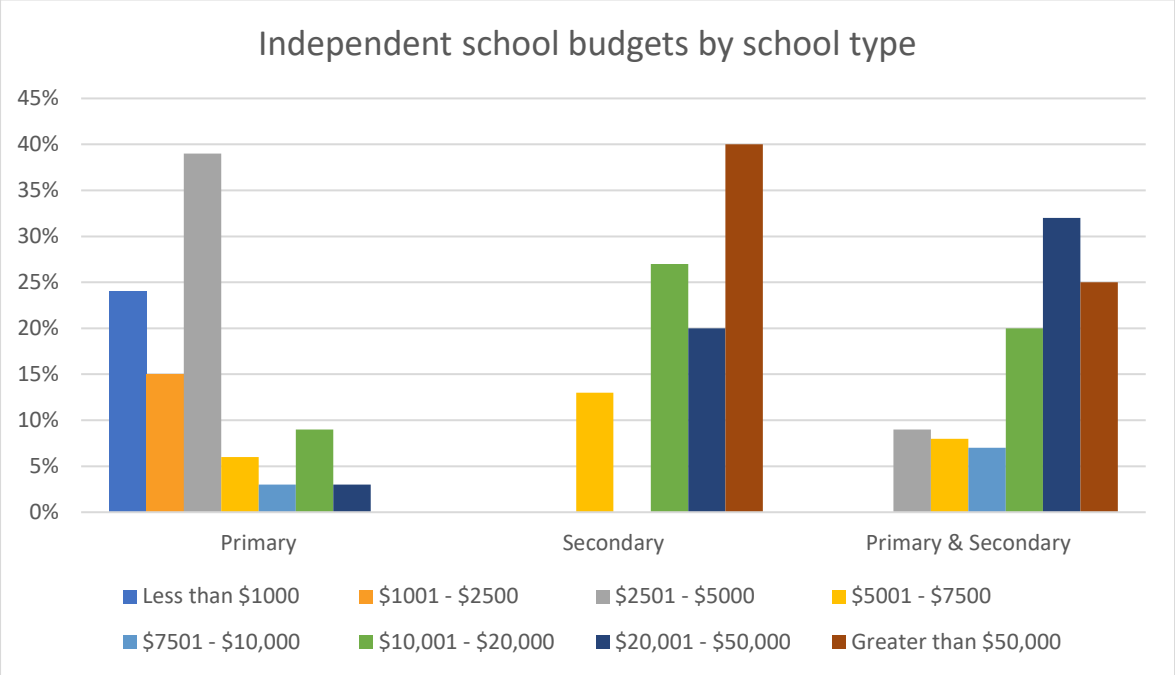
When asked about library budgets and school size, Independent school respondents reported the following ranges of budget in 2024:



	1 - 199	200 - 399	400 - 599	600 - 799	800 - 1099	1100 - 1399	1400+
Less than $1000	45%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
$1001 - $2500	0%	25%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%
$2501 - $5000	55%	40%	27%	14%	8%	0%	3%
$5001 - $7500	0%	5%	18%	14%	16%	5%	0%
$7501 - $10,000	0%	0%	27%	14%	4%	0%	0%
$10,001 - $20,000	0%	15%	18%	14%	24%	19%	16%
$20,001 - $50,000	0%	0%	9%	36%	24%	43%	35%
Greater than $50,000	0%	0%	0%	0%	24%	33%	46%

13.1.2 Independent school budgets by school type

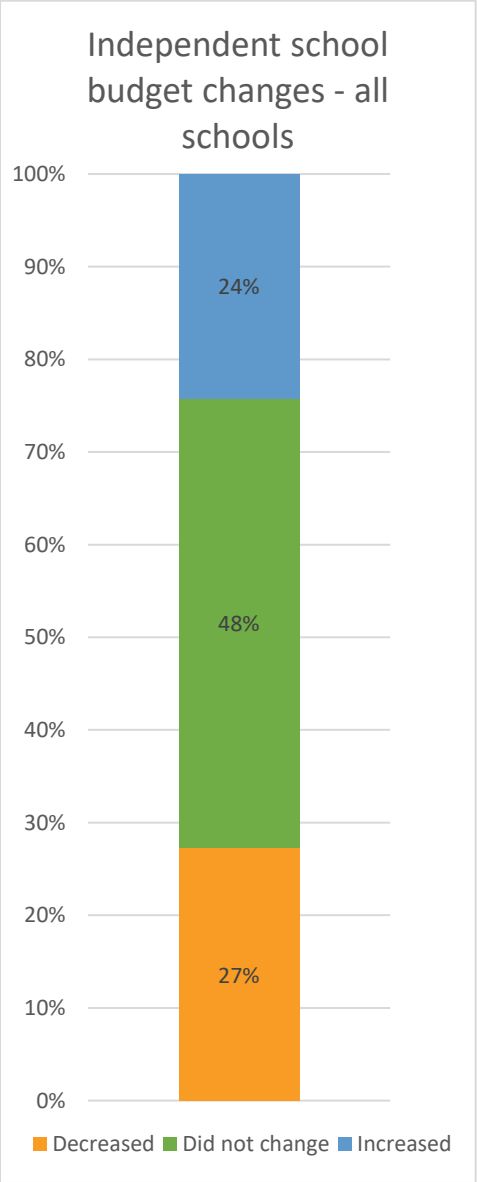
When looking at library budgets by school type, Independent school respondents reported the following budget ranges:

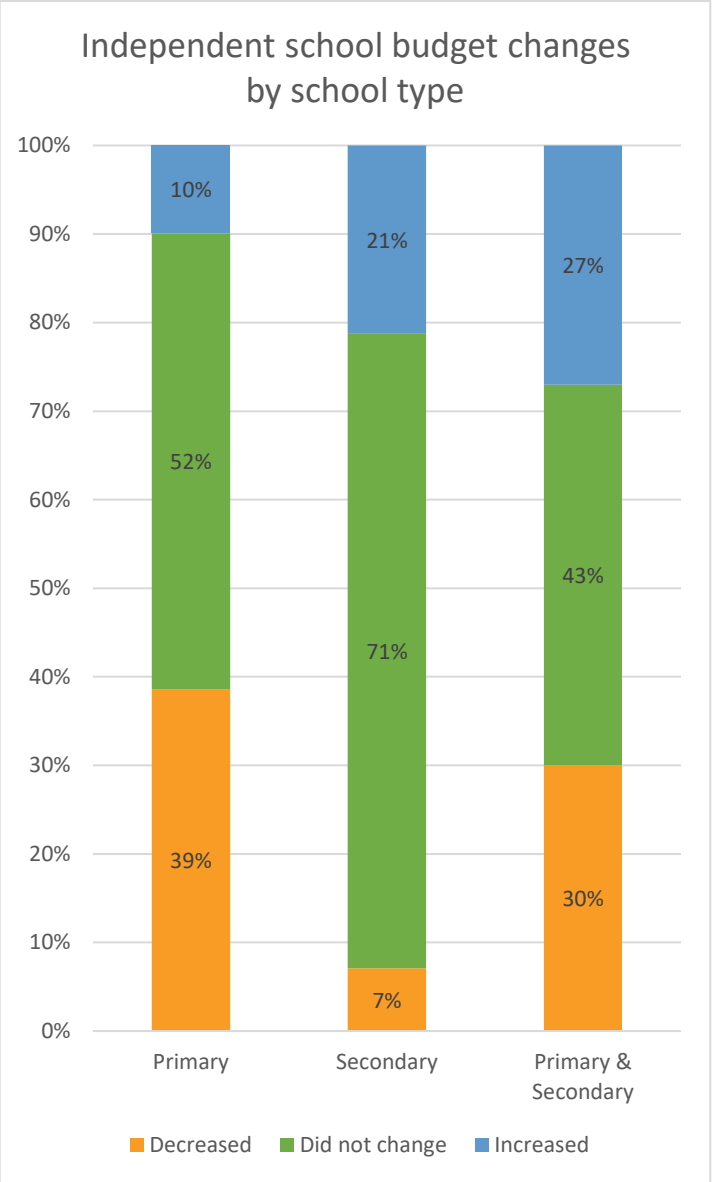


	Primary	Secondary	Primary & Secondary
Less than $1000	24%	0%	0%
$1001 - $2500	15%	0%	0%
$2501 - $5000	39%	0%	9%
$5001 - $7500	6%	13%	8%
$7501 - $10,000	3%	0%	7%
$10,001 - $20,000	9%	27%	20%
$20,001 - $50,000	3%	20%	32%
Greater than $50,000	0%	40%	25%

13.1.3 Independent school budget changes: 2023 – 2024

In 2024, 48% of Independent school respondents reported that their budget had not changed from 2023. 27% of respondents reported a budget decrease; 24% reported a budget increase.





Independent school library respondents reported the following variances in budgets in 2024:

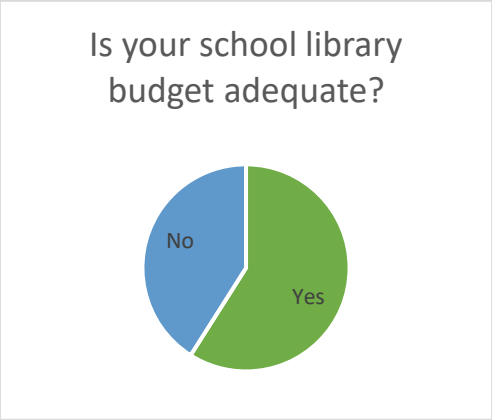
School Type	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
Primary	10%	52%	39%
Secondary	21%	71%	7%
Primary & Secondary	27%	43%	30%

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.

59% of Independent school respondents said “yes”; 41% said “no”.



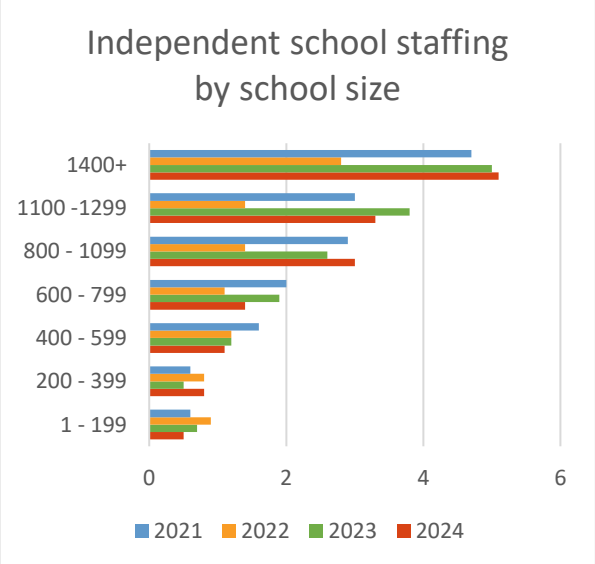
13.2 Independent school staffing

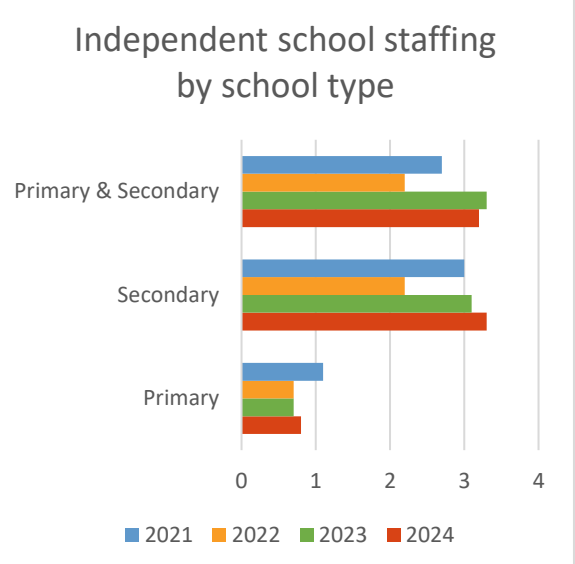
13.2.1 Independent school staffing by school size and type

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 for the past three years.

School Size	2021	2022	2023	2024
1 - 199	0.6 FTE	0.9 FTE	0.7 FTE	0.5 FTE
200 - 399	0.6 FTE	0.8 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.8 FTE
400 - 599	1.6 FTE	1.2 FTE	1.2 FTE	1.1 FTE
600 - 799	2.0 FTE	1.1 FTE	1.9 FTE	1.4 FTE
800 - 1099	2.9 FTE	1.4 FTE	2.6 FTE	3.0 FTE
1100 -1299	3.0 FTE	1.4 FTE	3.8 FTE	3.3 FTE
1400+	4.7 FTE	2.8 FTE	5.0 FTE	5.1 FTE

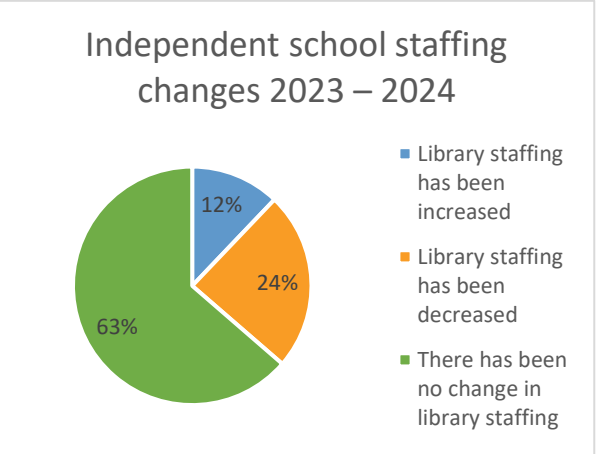
School Type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Primary	1.1 FTE	0.7 FTE	0.7 FTE	0.8 FTE
Secondary	3.0 FTE	2.2 FTE	3.1 FTE	3.3 FTE
Primary & Secondary	2.7 FTE	2.2 FTE	3.3 FTE	3.2 FTE





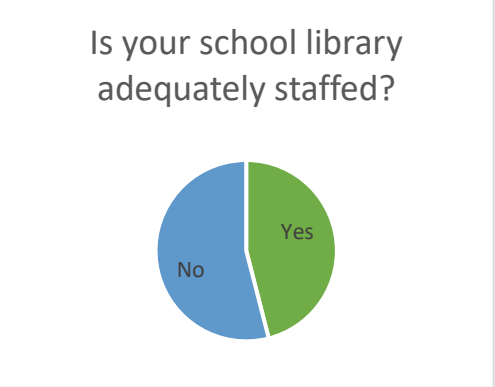
13.2.2 Independent school staffing changes: 2023 – 2024

In 2024, most (63%) Independent school respondents reported that staffing had not changed from 2023. Meanwhile, 24% of respondents reported a staffing decrease; 12% reported a staffing increase.



13.2.3 Independent schools on adequate staffing

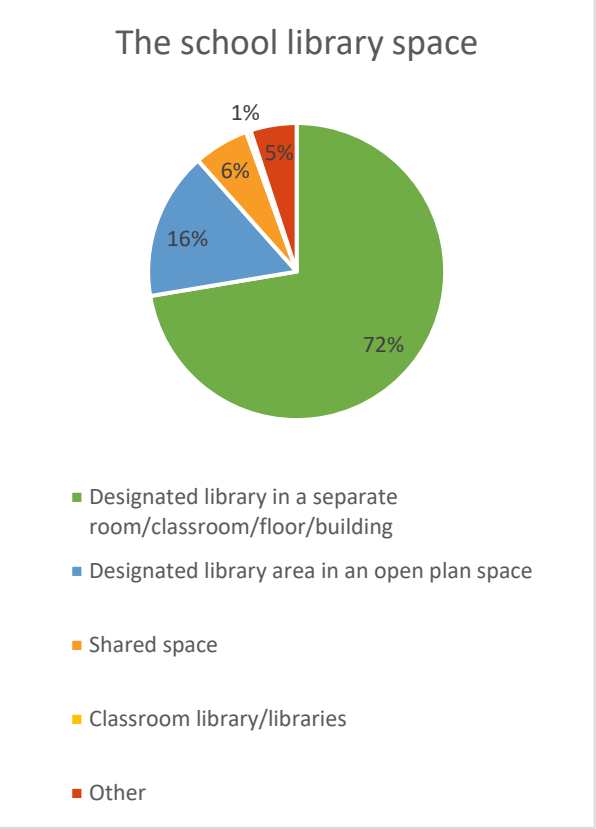
When asked if they think their school library is adequately staffed, 46% of Independent school respondents said “yes”; 54% said “no”.



13.3 The school library space in Independent Schools

Participants were asked about their school library space.

- 16% reported they have a designated library area in an open plan space
- 72% reported that they have a designated library in a separate room/classroom/floor/building
- 6% reported their library operates in a shared space
- 1% reported their classroom is a library
- 5% reported ‘other’



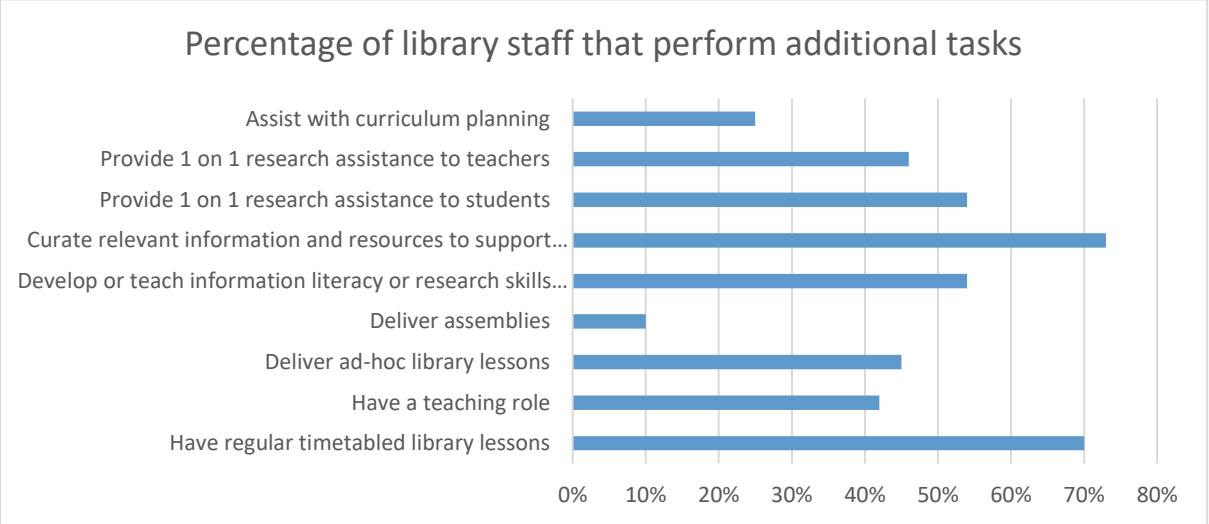
13.4 Tasks performed by school library staff in Independent Schools

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 (73%)
- Provide regular timetabled library lessons (70%)
- Provide 1 on 1 research assistance to students (54%).

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.

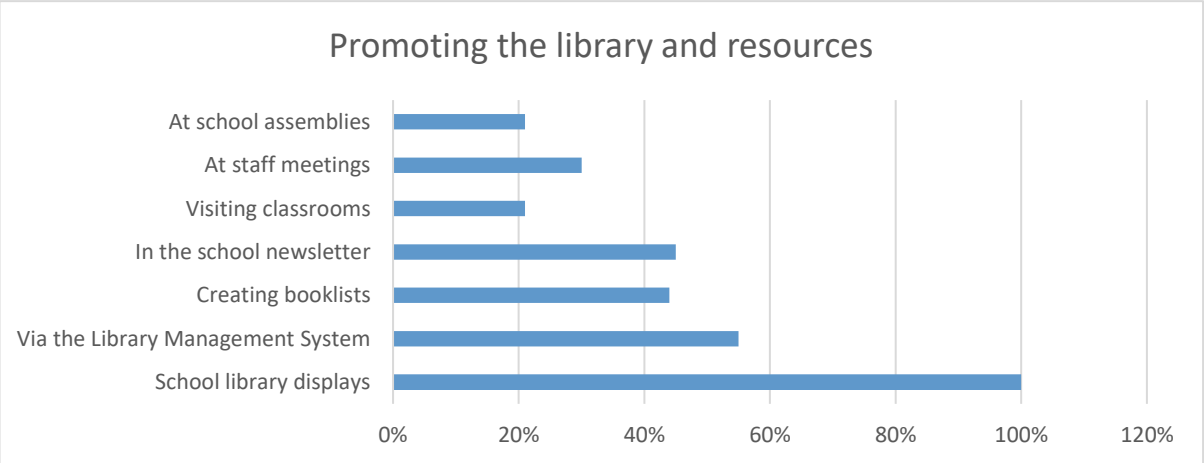


13.5 Promoting the library and resources in Independent Schools

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

- School library displays (100%)
- Via the Library Management System (55%)
- In the school newsletter (45%)

Additional findings have been provided in the graph below.



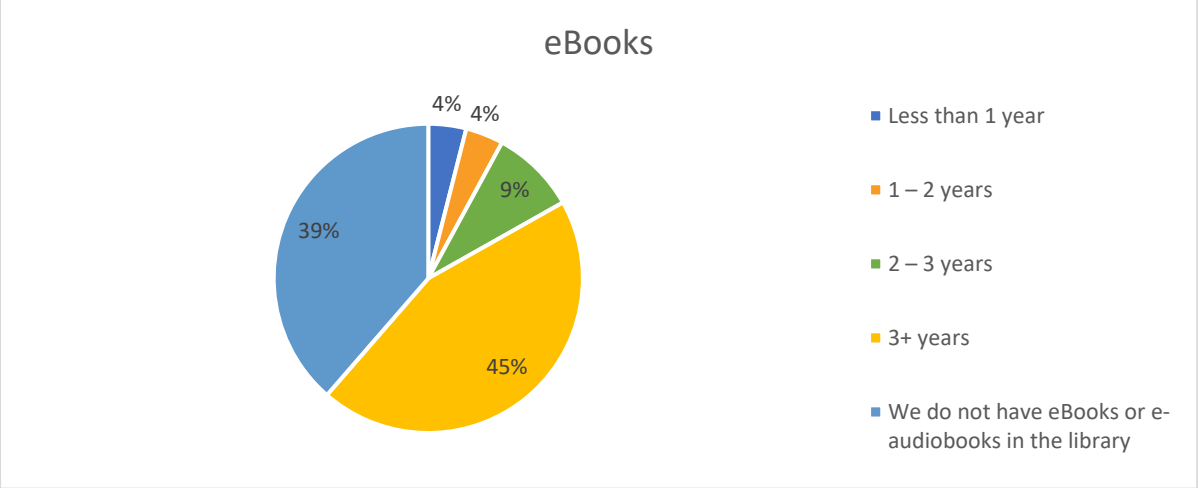
13.6 Online Resources in Independent schools

13.6.1 eBooks

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

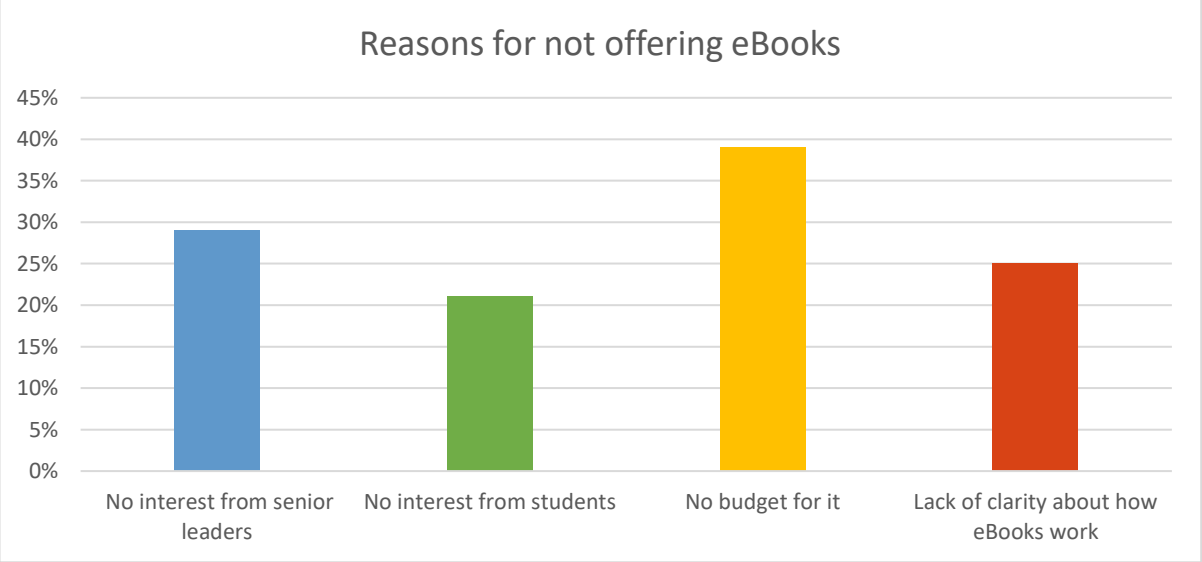
In 2024, Independent schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	4%
1 – 2 years	4%
2 – 3 years	9%
3+ years	45%
We do not have eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library	39%



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

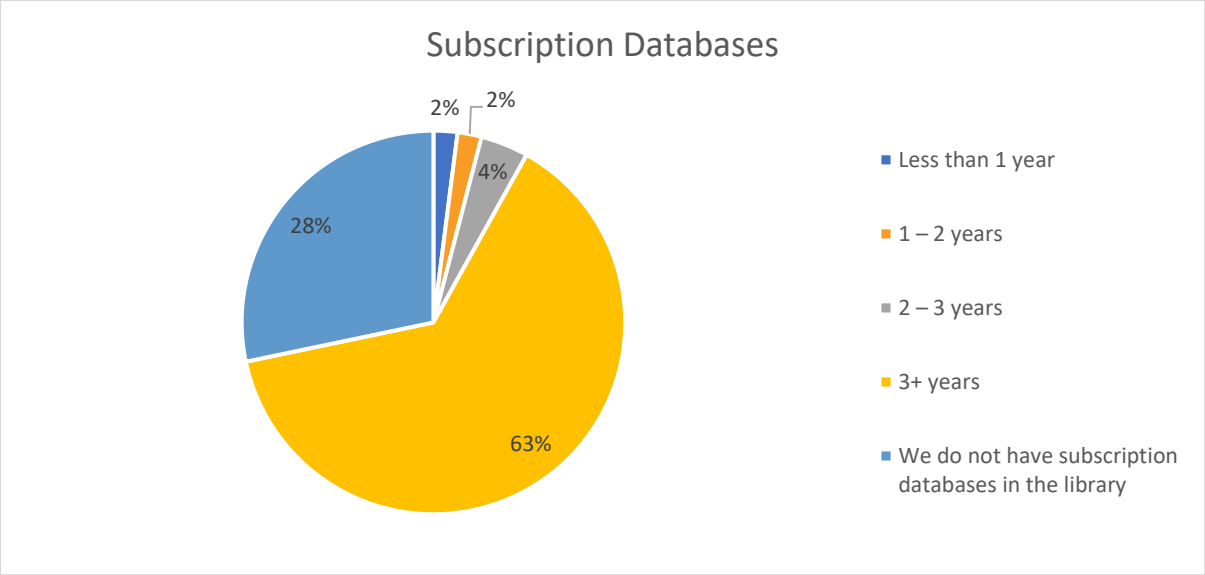
- No interest from senior leaders: 29%
- No interest from students: 21%
- No budget for it: 39%
- Lack of clarity about how eBooks work: 25%



13.6.2 Subscription databases

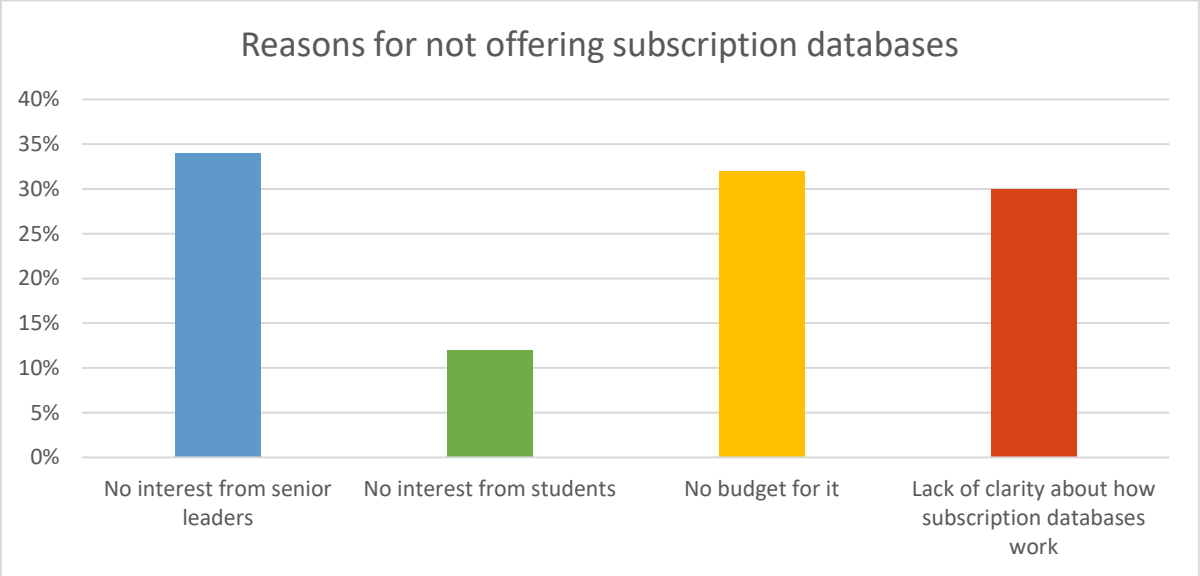
Participants were asked how long they have offered subscription databases in the library. In 2024, Independent schools reported the following:

	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2%
1 – 2 years	2%
2 – 3 years	4%
3+ years	63%
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: 12%
- No budget for it: 32%
- Lack of clarity about how subscription databases work: 30%

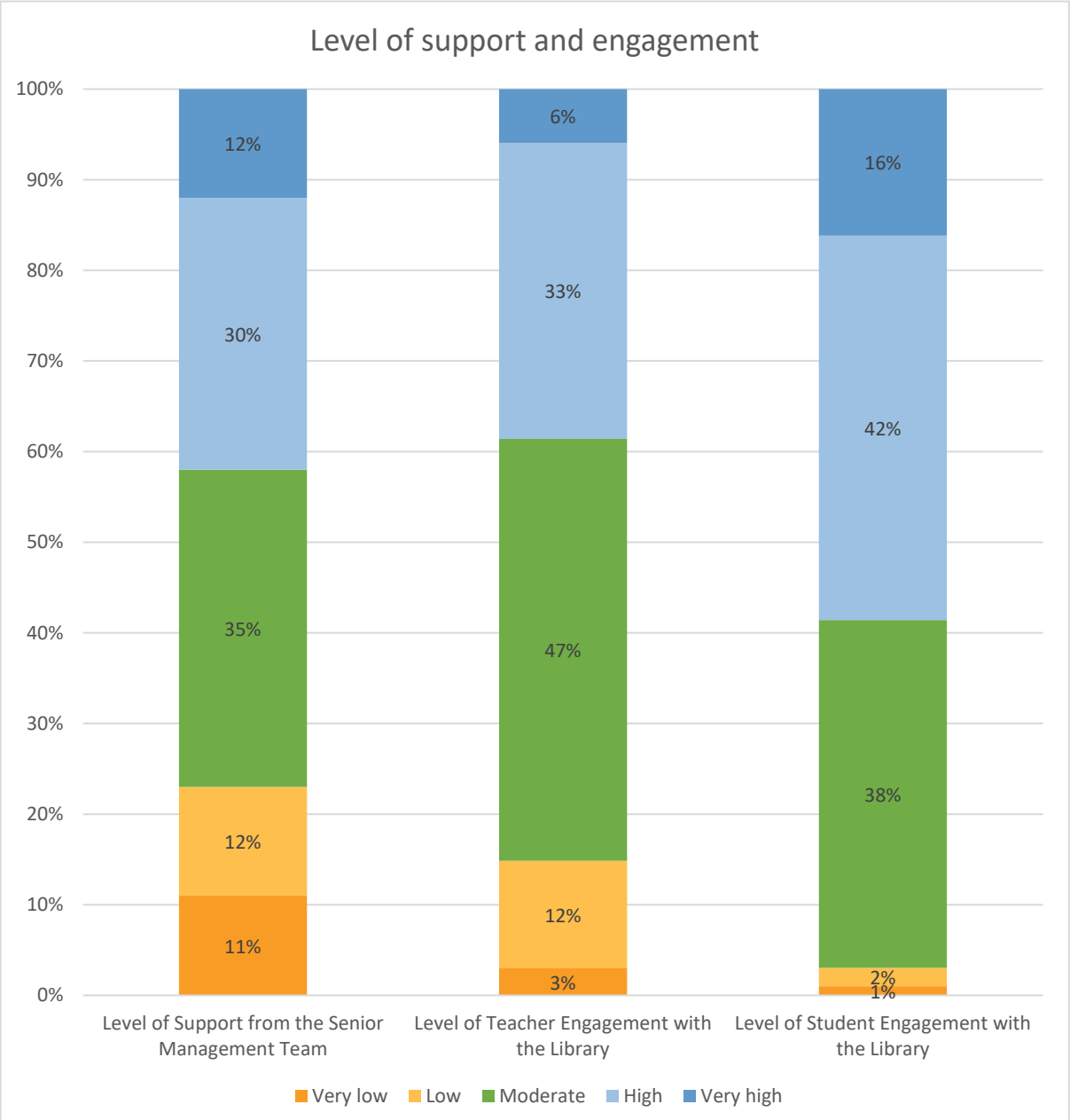


13.7 Level of support and engagement in Independent Schools

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	12%	6%	16%
High	30%	33%	42%
Moderate	35%	47%	38%
Low	12%	12%	2%
Very low	11%	3%	1%



14.0 Feedback themes

The 2024 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 2024, 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?
- How are you incorporating AI in your school library?
- What are some strategies you have implemented or are considering to diversify your school library collection to better reflect the diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences of your students?

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 2024 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.

How can school libraries improve students' emotional health or well-being?

This feature shares responses from school library staff on how their libraries contribute to student well-being. It highlights real-world examples of how libraries create safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for students.

2023 Whitepaper: Why I Love Working in a School Library

This whitepaper compiles heartfelt responses from school library staff, sharing what they love most about their roles and the impact they have on students and the school community.

2023 Australian Librarians Share: The Impact of AI on School Libraries

Based on survey responses, this feature explores how AI is affecting school libraries, with insights into both the opportunities and challenges AI presents for the future of library services.

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