

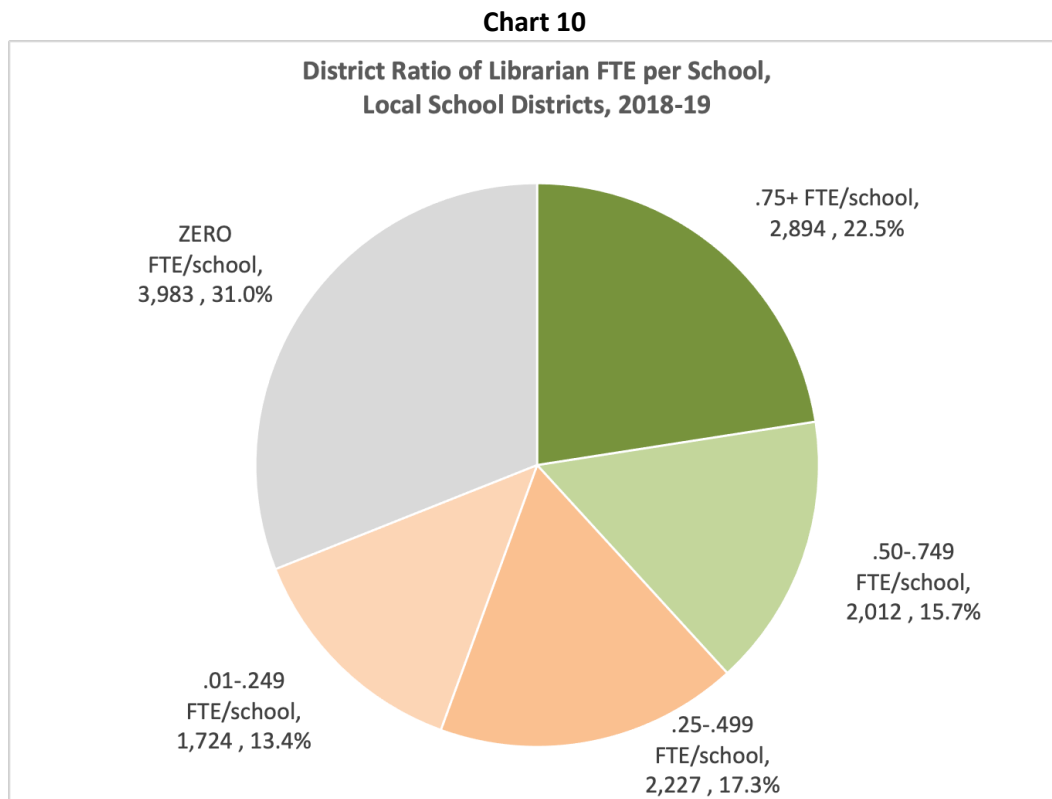
District Perspective

State and national figures belie enormous discrepancies in school librarian employment at the local district level. Access to a school librarian is impacted strongly by several district characteristics—enrollment, locale, and per pupil spending—and student demographics—poverty, race/ethnicity, and language status. This is evident when one examines variations in district figures for three ratios: librarian full-time equivalent (FTE) per school, students per librarian FTE, and teacher FTE per librarian FTE.⁶ In addition to zeroing in on how much these figures can vary from district to district, this perspective also profiles districts that have been most stable over time (either having or not having librarians from 2015-16 through 2018-19). It also examines how school librarian employment patterns and trends differ between districts that had signed the Future Ready Schools pledge and those that had not. Finally, this perspective describes what is happening in two circumstances where school librarians are absent: where school librarians have been replaced by library support staff and where school librarians have been present, and absent, for four or more years.

District Ratio of Librarian FTE per School

In 2018-19, how many districts had school librarians and, if they did, at what FTE levels per school?

In the absence of school data on librarian employment, the best way to address this issue is by reporting the district ratio of librarian FTE per school. (See Chart 10.) Five levels of librarian FTE per school were created for this analysis: .75 or more FTE per school (i.e., almost a full-time librarian in every school or a full-time librarian in most schools), .50 to .749 FTE (at least half-time, but less than three-quarter time), .25 to .499 FTE (at least



⁶ The district ratio of librarian FTE per school is a district's total number of librarian FTEs divided by the district's total number of schools minus its number of charter schools. (Because 9 out of 10 charter schools do not have librarians, a separate analysis of them appears later in this report.) The district ratio of students per librarian FTE is a district's total number of students divided by the district's total number of librarian FTEs. The district ratio of teacher FTEs per librarian FTE is a district's total number of teacher FTEs divided by the district's total number of librarian FTEs.

one-quarter time, but less than half-time), .01 to .249 FTE (less than one-quarter time, but greater than zero), and zero FTE per school.

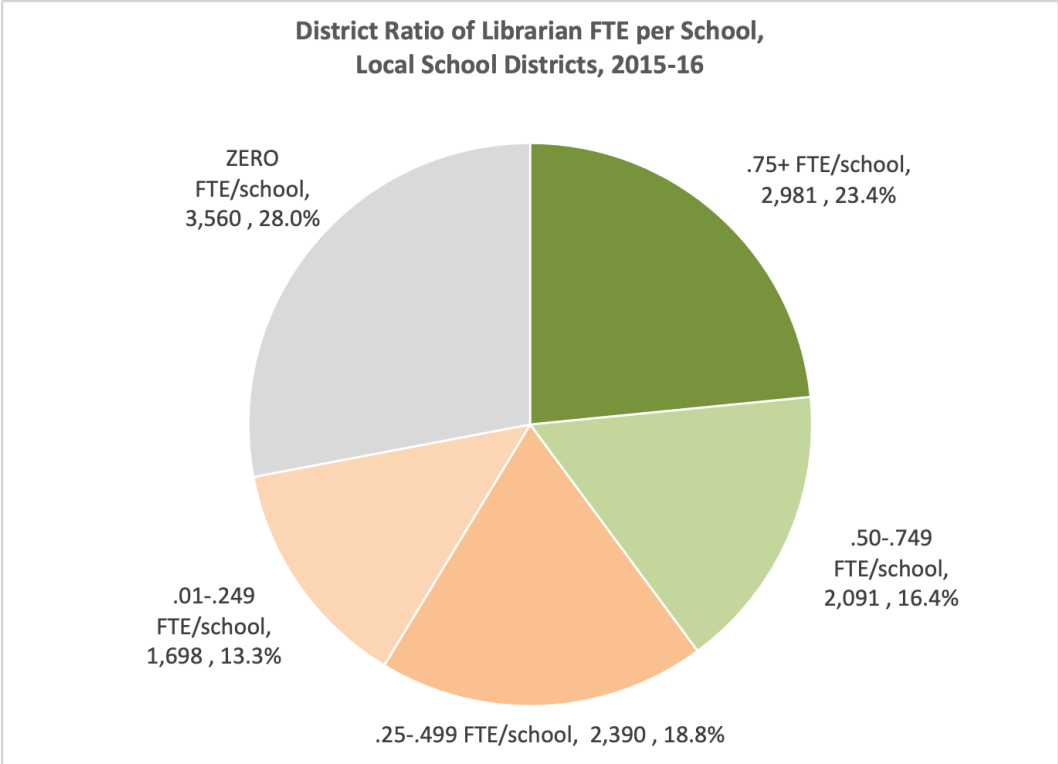
In 2018-19, school librarians were present at some level in 8,857 districts (69.0%). Another 3,983 (31.0%) reported having no librarians. (Notably, this excludes the small number of districts which did not report about librarian FTE at all.) More than 1 out of 5 (22.5%) had enough librarians to have .75 FTE or higher in every school. More than 1 out of 6 (15.7%) had enough librarians to have .50 to .749 FTE in every school. Almost 1 out of 6 (17.3%) had enough librarians to have .25 to .499 FTE in every school. More than 1 out of 7 had enough librarians to have .01 to .249 librarians in every school. Three out of 10 districts reported no librarians. These figures illustrate the extent of inequality of access to librarians among districts when compared to the national ratio of .43 FTE per school.

In 2018-19, 31% of districts had no librarians, and only 23% reported enough for full-time librarians in most schools. Since 2015-16, numbers and percentages of districts with no librarians have increased.

At the district level, how have school librarian employment patterns and trends changed over time?

The best baseline for district comparisons over time is 2015-16, the year for which the most complete data were available prior to 2018-19. (See Chart 11.) As at state and national levels, from a district perspective, school librarian employment was stronger in 2015-16. More districts reported employing school librarians at the 3 highest FTE levels, and fewer districts reported having no school librarians.

Chart 11



How did these district patterns vary from state to state?

Table 11 reports librarian FTE per school levels by district for each state and D.C. As a cursory scanning of this table makes evident, FTE per school levels—including districts with no school librarians—varied wildly among the states.

Table 11. District Ratio of Librarian FTE per School by FTE Level and State, 2018-19

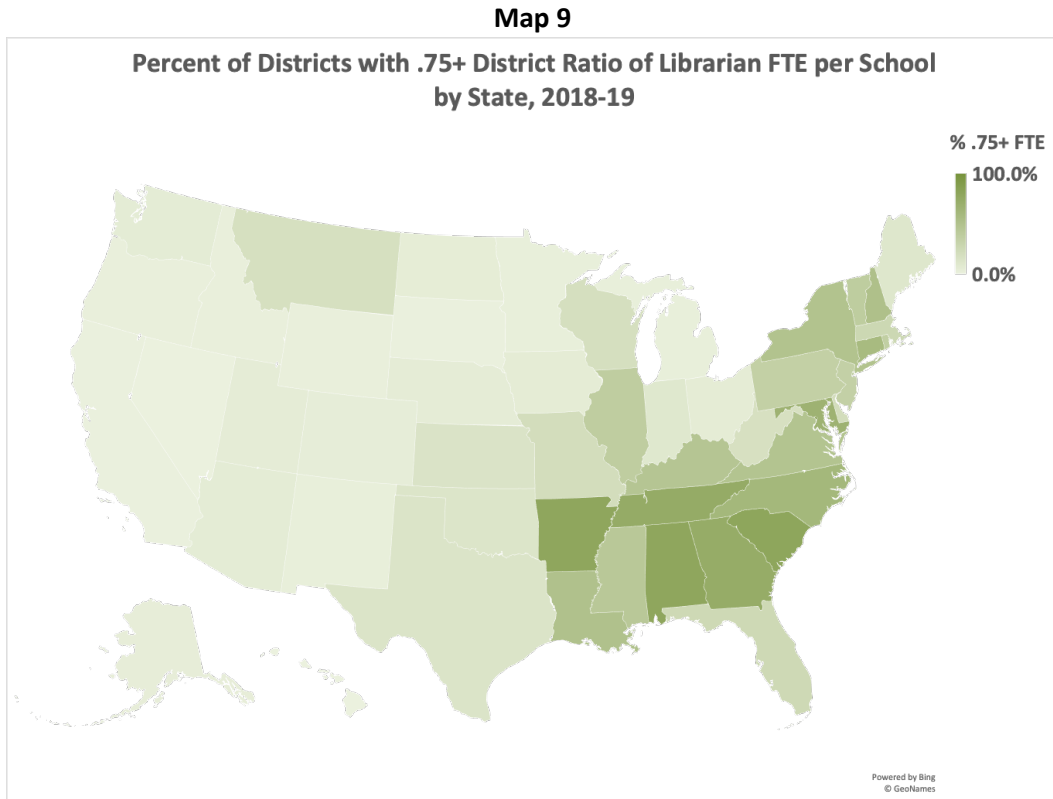
State	.75 FTE/school	.50-.749 FTE/school	.25-.499 FTE/school	.01-.249 FTE/school	ZERO FTE/school	Total
AK	3.8%	3.8%	7.7%	7.7%	76.9%	100.0%
AL	79.6%	20.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
AR	79.4%	20.2%	0.0%	0.0%	.4%	100.0%
AZ	5.6%	4.2%	9.3%	12.1%	68.7%	100.0%
CA	0.6%	0.6%	1.2%	4.0%	93.6%	100.0%
CO	3.9%	8.4%	17.4%	14.6%	55.6%	100.0%
CT	58.0%	13.0%	14.8%	3.0%	11.2%	100.0%
DC	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
DE	21.1%	26.3%	15.8%	21.1%	15.8%	100.0%
FL	25.4%	25.4%	29.9%	10.4%	9.0%	100.0%
GA	73.3%	15.6%	10.6%	0.0%	.6%	100.0%
HI	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
IA	5.5%	7.3%	33.3%	51.5%	2.4%	100.0%
ID	1.7%	1.7%	5.2%	24.3%	67.0%	100.0%
IL	38.3%	19.9%	24.7%	16.2%	.9%	100.0%
IN	9.9%	12.6%	26.6%	22.5%	28.3%	100.0%
KS	14.3%	21.0%	18.5%	7.7%	38.5%	100.0%
KY	46.2%	31.2%	16.8%	4.0%	1.7%	100.0%
LA	50.7%	12.7%	8.5%	12.7%	15.5%	100.0%
MA	26.9%	12.3%	17.3%	23.8%	19.8%	100.0%
MD	66.7%	16.7%	8.3%	4.2%	4.2%	100.0%
ME	11.0%	15.7%	18.8%	24.1%	30.4%	100.0%
MI	2.2%	3.5%	8.2%	17.7%	68.3%	100.0%
MN	2.4%	10.6%	18.2%	12.8%	55.9%	100.0%
MO	21.1%	25.7%	26.9%	15.1%	11.2%	100.0%
MS	43.3%	33.3%	21.3%	1.4%	0.7%	100.0%
MT	18.5%	11.3%	17.5%	23.0%	29.8%	100.0%
NC	60.8%	20.8%	10.0%	4.2%	4.2%	100.0%
ND	4.7%	22.4%	31.2%	22.9%	18.8%	100.0%
NE	4.9%	32.8%	48.0%	13.9%	0.4%	100.0%
NH	52.1%	23.0%	8.5%	4.8%	11.5%	100.0%
NJ	34.7%	24.1%	12.4%	8.0%	20.8%	100.0%
NM	2.3%	5.7%	8.0%	23.9%	60.2%	100.0%
NV	0.0%	11.8%	11.8%	47.1%	29.4%	100.0%
NY	49.3%	23.8%	13.8%	5.4%	7.7%	100.0%
OH	5.5%	11.0%	24.5%	17.5%	41.5%	100.0%
OK	13.1%	19.7%	25.6%	17.8%	23.8%	100.0%

Table 11. District Ratio of Librarian FTE per School by FTE Level and State, 2018-19—continued

State	.75 FTE/school	.50-.749 FTE/school	.25-.499 FTE/school	.01-.249 FTE/school	ZERO FTE/school	Total
OR	1.7%	2.8%	8.0%	17.6%	69.9%	100.0%
PA	34.9%	31.9%	21.8%	6.2%	5.2%	100.0%
RI	36.1%	47.2%	13.9%	0.0%	2.8%	100.0%
SC	80.2%	16.0%	2.5%	0.0%	1.2%	100.0%
SD	0.7%	2.0%	20.1%	17.4%	59.7%	100.0%
TN	74.3%	16.0%	5.6%	2.1%	2.1%	100.0%
TX	13.4%	11.3%	18.1%	14.4%	42.9%	100.0%
UT	4.9%	2.4%	19.5%	39.0%	34.1%	100.0%
VA	48.1%	32.1%	13.7%	6.1%	0.0%	100.0%
VT	38.8%	23.1%	11.6%	6.1%	20.4%	100.0%
WA	5.7%	11.8%	15.2%	12.8%	54.5%	100.0%
WI	19.4%	20.3%	34.7%	16.5%	9.1%	100.0%
WV	17.6%	14.7%	29.4%	38.2%	0.0%	100.0%
WY	2.1%	12.5%	22.9%	33.3%	29.2%	100.0%
U.S.	22.5%	15.7%	17.3%	13.4%	31.0%	100.0%

In which states did more districts provide the highest level of librarian FTE per school in 2018-19?

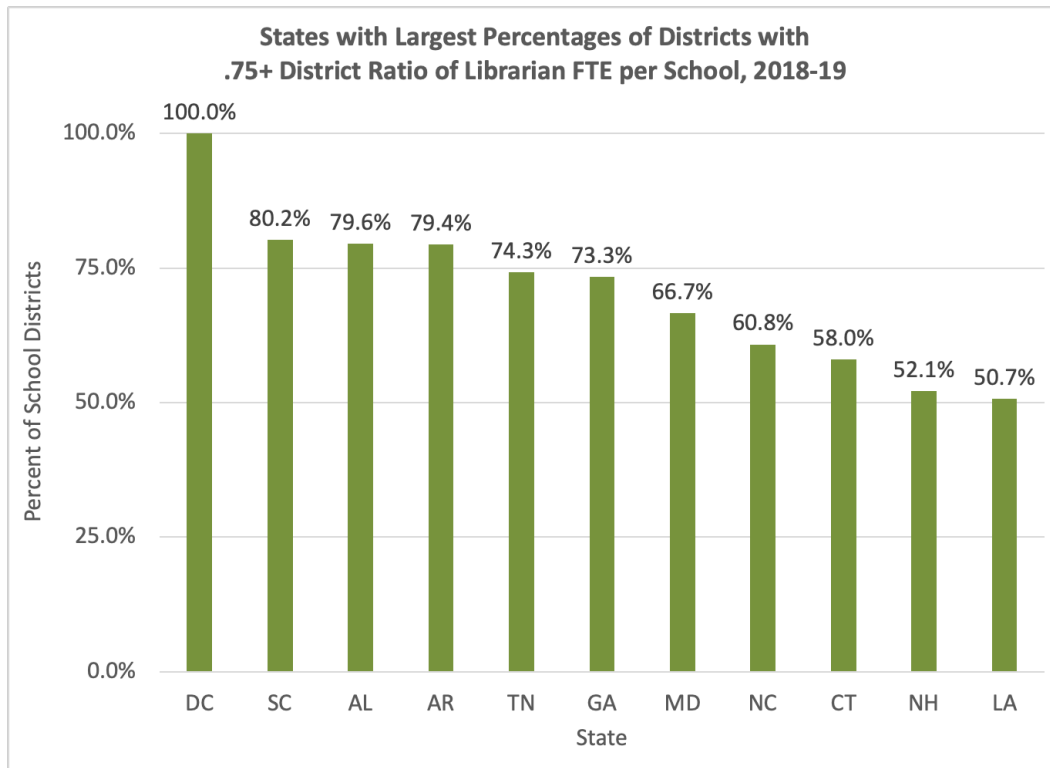
Districts with a librarian FTE per school of .75 or more were far more likely to be in the “deep” South, the Mid-Atlantic, and the Northeast. Such districts were far less likely to be in the plains of the Midwest and the Mountain and Pacific West. (See Map 9.) Notably, because this is an FTE ratio to schools, that pattern is not merely a reflection of population concentration in the former regions. State factors identified earlier as predictors of school librarian employment—state mandates and numbers of higher education institutions preparing school librarians—help to explain why districts in certain states in particular regions were more likely to have a substantial librarian FTE in most schools.



Districts that come closest to having full-time librarians in their schools were more prevalent in the South and the Northeast than in the Midwest and the West.

Besides Washington, DC (a single school district), a majority of districts in 10 states had this highest level of librarian FTE per school. About four out of five districts have such librarian staffing in South Carolina (80.2%), Alabama (79.6%), and Arkansas (79.4%). About three out of four districts had this level of librarian staffing per school in Tennessee (74.3%) and Georgia (73.3%). Two-thirds (66.7%) of Maryland districts have such staffing. About three out of five districts had .75+ librarian FTE per school in North Carolina (60.8%) and Connecticut (58.0%). And just over half of districts had this highest staffing level in New Hampshire (52.1%) and Louisiana (50.7%). It is no coincidence that eight of these 10 states are in the South, where states are more likely to mandate having librarians in schools and to provide more institutions where aspiring school librarians can attend graduate programs. (See Chart 12.)

Chart 12



In which states were there the most districts reporting no school librarians in 2018-19?

States with the most districts reporting no school librarians tend to be concentrated in the West and the Great Lakes region. (See Map 10.) As reported earlier, states in these regions were least likely to provide structural supports for the profession—such as a state mandate for the position and numerous (or indeed any) institutions offering school librarian preparation programs.

By far, the hotspot for no-librarian districts is California, where more than 9 out of 10 districts (93.6%) lack school librarians. (See Chart 13.)⁷ Over 3 out of 4 Alaska districts (76.9%) were in a similar position. Two-thirds or more of districts lacked librarians in Oregon (69.9%), Arizona (68.7%), Michigan (68.3%), and Idaho (67.0%). Three out of 5 districts were librarian-less in New Mexico (60.2%) and South Dakota (59.7%). And more than half of districts had no school librarians in Minnesota (55.9%), Colorado (55.6%), and Washington (54.5%).⁸

Tables 12 and 13 provide state rankings for districts at both library staffing extremes—those with .75+ librarian FTE per school and those with zero librarian FTE per school, respectively. The range of percentages in each table indicates the extremity of the extent to which local districts vary in librarian staffing by state. To find these staffing levels reported by state in alphabetical order, return to Table 11.

⁷ Notably, reporting of school librarian FTEs in California has been problematic in recent years, due to a shift toward reporting “teacher librarians” as teachers rather than librarians. Fortunately, state data made it possible to revise NCES’s district data to reclaim those FTEs. Efforts are underway to improve the accuracy of district reports to NCES on school librarian FTEs.

⁸ Most likely, Illinois does not appear in Chart 13 only because more than 48% of its districts did not report school librarian staffing for 2018-19. Illinois accounts for 429 of the nation’s 465 non-reporting districts for that year; but, only 4 of its districts reported no librarians. This suggests that many, if not most, of the missing-data districts should have reported zero.

Map 10

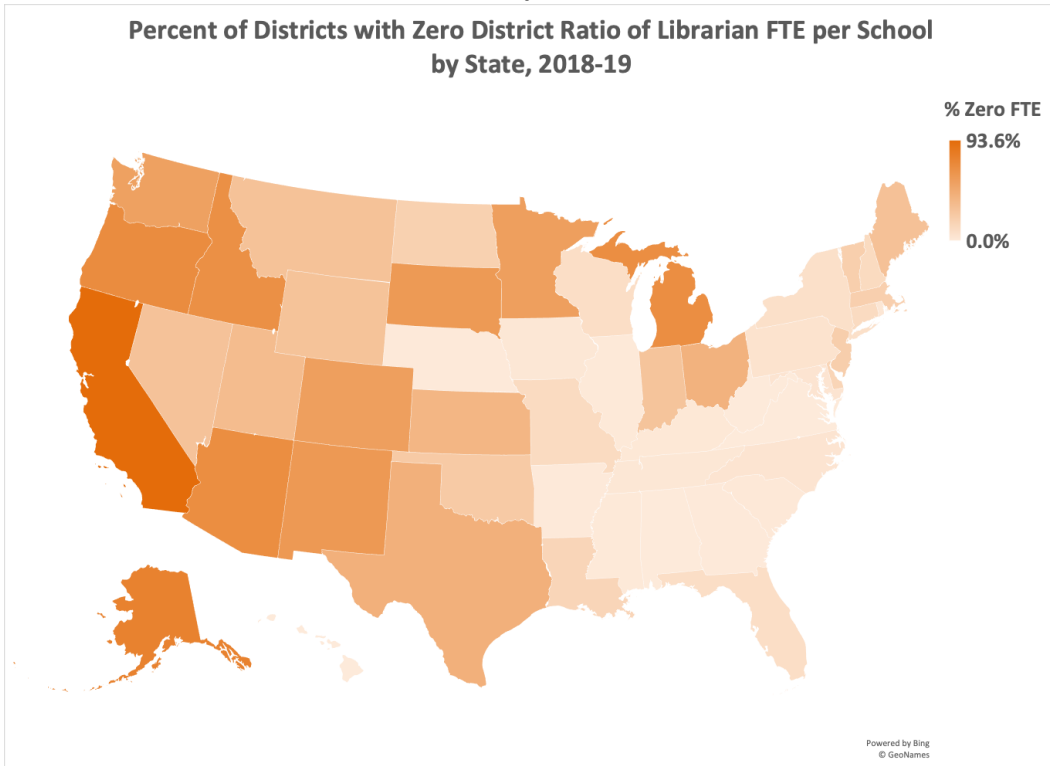
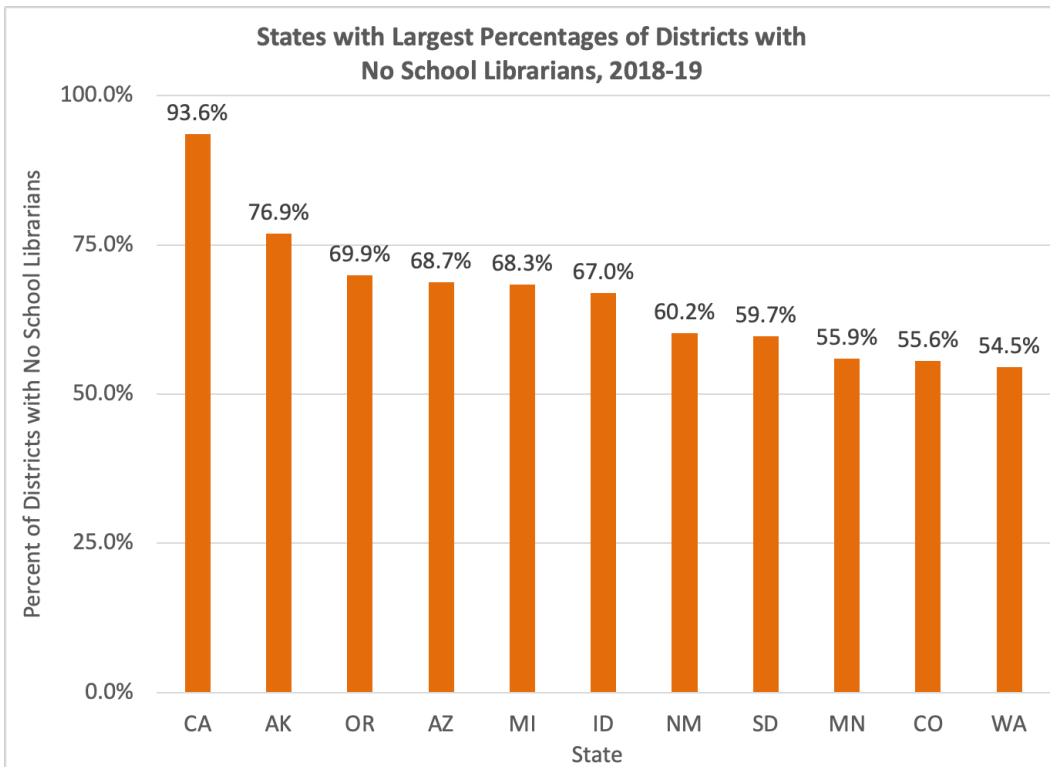


Chart 13



Perspectives on School Librarian Employment in the United States, 2009-10 to 2018-19

Table 12. States Ranked by Percent of Districts with .75+ School Librarian FTE per School, 2018-19

Rank	State	Percent of districts with DRLS .75+ FTE/school
1	DC	100.0%
2	SC	80.2%
3	AL	79.6%
4	AR	79.4%
5	TN	74.3%
6	GA	73.3%
7	MD	66.7%
8	NC	60.8%
9	CT	58.0%
10	NH	52.1%
11	LA	50.7%
12	NY	49.3%
13	VA	48.1%
14	KY	46.2%
15	MS	43.3%
16	VT	38.8%
17	IL	38.3%
18	RI	36.1%
19	PA	34.9%
20	NJ	34.7%
21	MA	26.9%
22	FL	25.4%
23	MO	21.1%
23	DE	21.1%
25	WI	19.4%
26	MT	18.5%
27	WV	17.6%
28	KS	14.3%
29	TX	13.4%
30	OK	13.1%
31	ME	11.0%
32	IN	9.9%
33	WA	5.7%
34	AZ	5.6%
35	OH	5.5%
35	IA	5.5%
37	NE	4.9%
37	UT	4.9%
39	ND	4.7%
40	CO	3.9%
41	AK	3.8%
42	MN	2.4%
43	NM	2.3%
44	MI	2.2%
45	WY	2.1%
46	ID	1.7%
46	OR	1.7%
48	SD	.7%
49	CA	.6%
50	HI	0.0%
50	NV	0.0%
	State Average	27.7%
	State Median	18.5%

Table 13. States Ranked by Percent of Districts with Zero School Librarian FTE per School, 2018-19

Rank	State	Percent of districts with zero FTE/school
1	CA	93.6%
2	AK	76.9%
3	OR	69.9%
4	AZ	68.7%
5	MI	68.3%
6	ID	67.0%
7	NM	60.2%
8	SD	59.7%
9	MN	55.9%
10	CO	55.6%
11	WA	54.5%
12	TX	42.9%
13	OH	41.5%
14	KS	38.5%
15	UT	34.1%
16	ME	30.4%
17	MT	29.8%
18	NV	29.4%
19	WY	29.2%
20	IN	28.3%
21	OK	23.8%
22	NJ	20.8%
23	VT	20.4%
24	MA	19.8%
25	ND	18.8%
26	DE	15.8%
27	LA	15.5%
28	NH	11.5%
29	CT	11.2%
29	MO	11.2%
31	WI	9.1%
32	FL	9.0%
33	NY	7.7%
34	PA	5.2%
35	MD	4.2%
35	NC	4.2%
37	RI	2.8%
38	IA	2.4%
39	TN	2.1%
40	KY	1.7%
41	SC	1.2%
42	IL	.9%
43	MS	.7%
44	GA	.6%
45	AR	.4%
45	NE	.4%
47	AL	0.0%
47	DC	0.0%
47	HI	0.0%
47	VA	0.0%
47	WV	0.0%
	State Average	24.6%
	State Median	15.8%

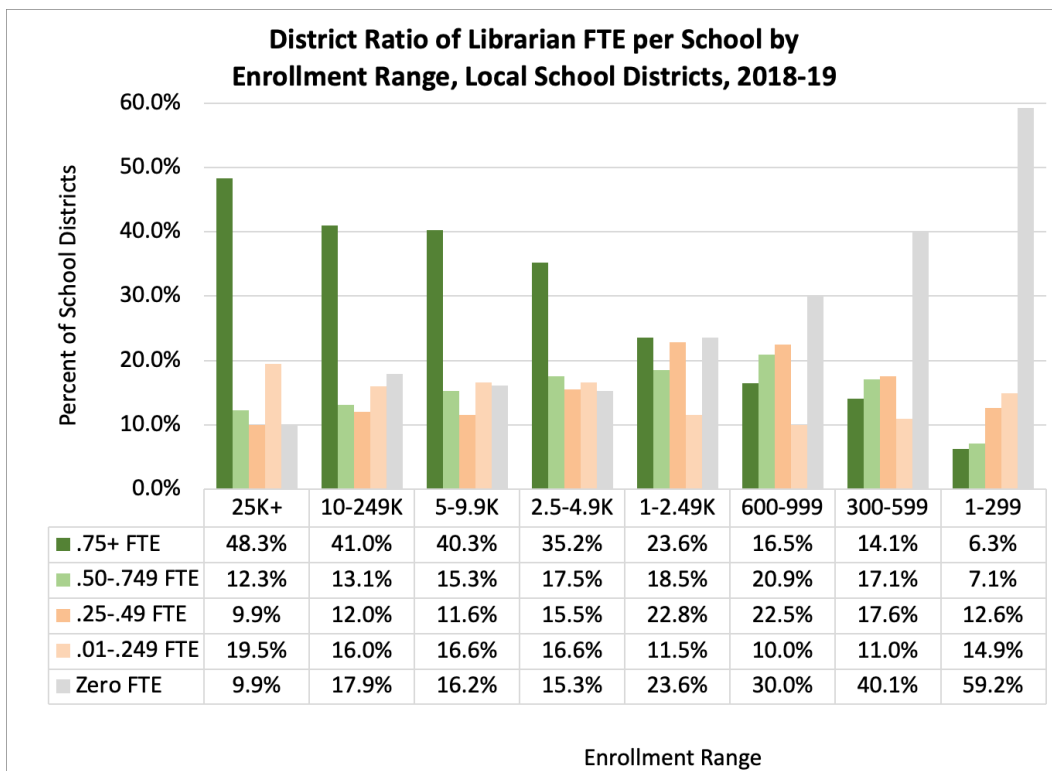
District Characteristics

Enrollment range, locale type, and per pupil expenditures are district characteristics associated significantly with inequality of access to school librarians. Data on these characteristics were strongly related to the District Ratio of Librarian FTE per School.

How does a district's enrollment relate to its level of librarian staffing?

Unsurprisingly, local districts serving larger enrollments were more likely to have a substantial librarian presence in most schools (.75+ FTE), while those serving smaller enrollments are more likely not to have librarians at all. (See Chart 14.) In 2018-19, 48.3% of districts with enrollments of 25,000 and over had .75+ librarian FTE per school. The same year, 59.2% of districts with enrollments under 300 reported zero librarians.

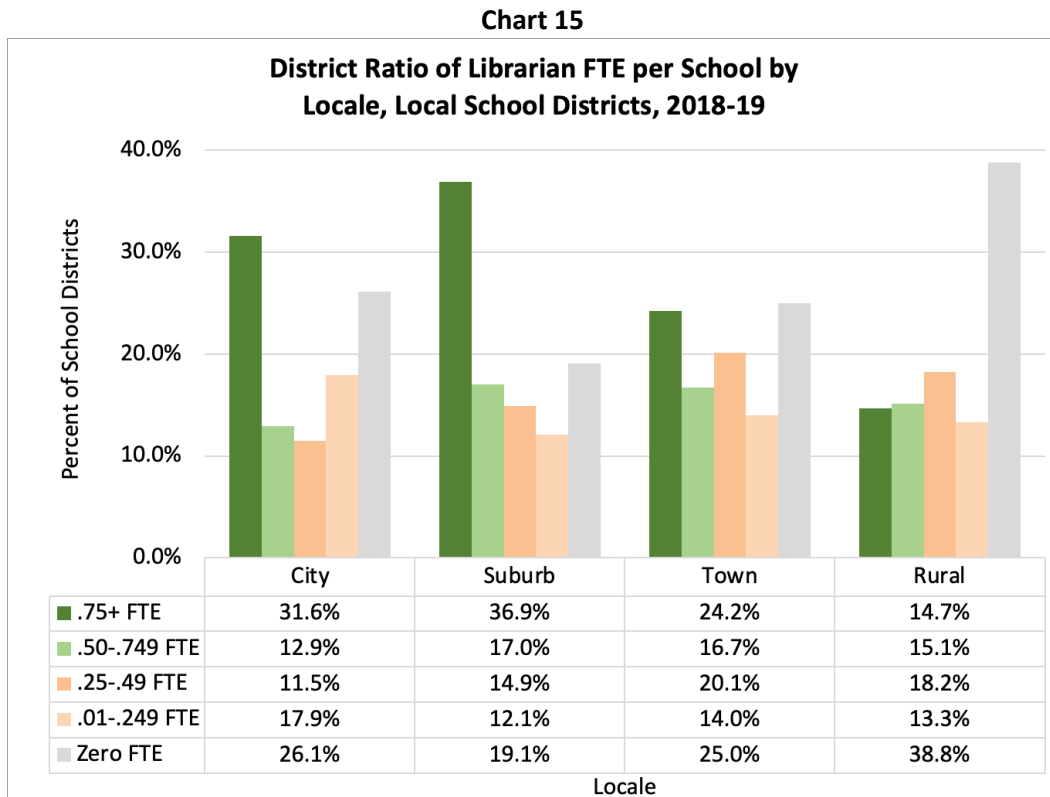
Chart 14



Districts with larger enrollments were more likely to report the highest level of librarian staffing and least likely to report no librarians. For districts with smaller enrollments, the opposite was true.

How does a district's locale relate to its level of librarian staffing?

The location of a district can affect all of the other equity factors that influence access to school librarians: enrollment size, per-pupil spending, poverty level, race/ethnicity, and language status. Districts located in suburbs were most likely to have .75+ librarian FTE per school, while those located in rural areas were most likely to report no librarians. In 2018-19, 36.9% of suburban districts had the highest librarian FTE levels per school, followed by city districts at 31.6%. The same year, 38.8% of rural districts reported no librarians. (See Chart 15. See Locale in Appendix B for locale type definitions.)



Suburban districts were most likely to report higher levels of librarian staffing and least likely to report no librarians. The opposite was true for rural districts.

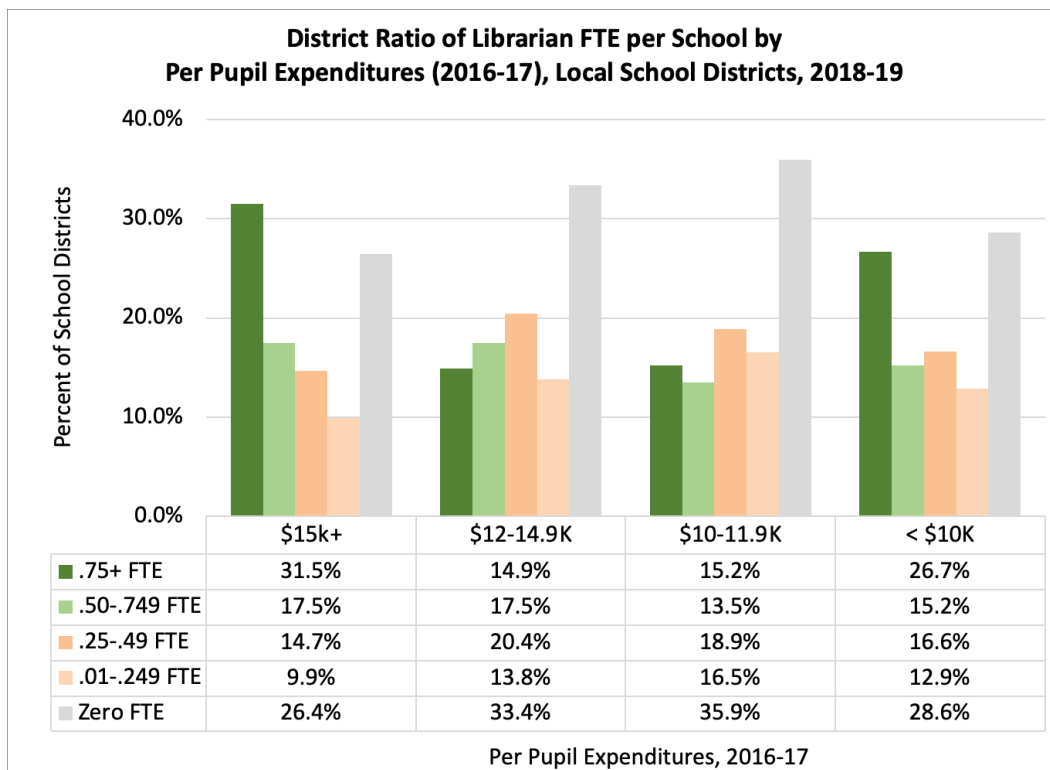
How does a district's funding relate to its level of librarian staffing?

Local districts that spent the most per pupil (in 2016-17, the latest available data) were most likely to report the highest level of librarian staffing in 2018-19. Surprisingly, however, there was not a linear relationship between K-12 spending and librarian FTE per school. (See Chart 16.) Almost a third (31.5%) of districts spending \$15,000 or more per pupil had .75+ librarian FTE per school. More than a quarter (26.7%) of the poorest districts—those spending less than \$10,000 per pupil—had similar staffing levels. Districts with more middling per-pupil spending (\$10,000 to \$14,999 per pupil) were the least likely—at about 15%—to have similarly high levels of librarian staffing.

Conversely, districts that spent the most per pupil (\$15,000 or more) and the least (less than \$10,000) were almost equally less likely to report not having librarians—just over a quarter for each group (26.4% and 28.6%, respectively). Districts with more middling spending (\$10,000 to \$11,999 and \$12,000 to \$14,999 per pupil) were almost equally more likely to report no librarians—just over a third for each group (33.4% and 35.9%, respectively).

These findings challenge the notion that employment of school librarians is mostly a matter of funding. This implies that other factors besides financial pressures drive decisions about whether or not to employ librarians. The SLIDE interviews of school decision-makers will attempt to elicit some of those factors as well as the thinking involved in assessing the tradeoffs between financial and other factors when making staffing decisions.

Chart 16



Based on the non-linear relationship between per pupil spending and librarian staffing, funding cannot be the only factor determining whether or not a district has school librarians.

Student Demographics

Socio-economic differences between districts were also powerful drivers of inequality of access to school librarians. The Common Core of Data (CCD) provides data on three student demographics that demonstrated strong, significant relationships to the District Ratio of Librarian FTE per School: Free and Reduced-cost Meals Eligibility (a poverty indicator), race/ethnicity, and language status.

How does poverty relate to a district’s level of librarian staffing?

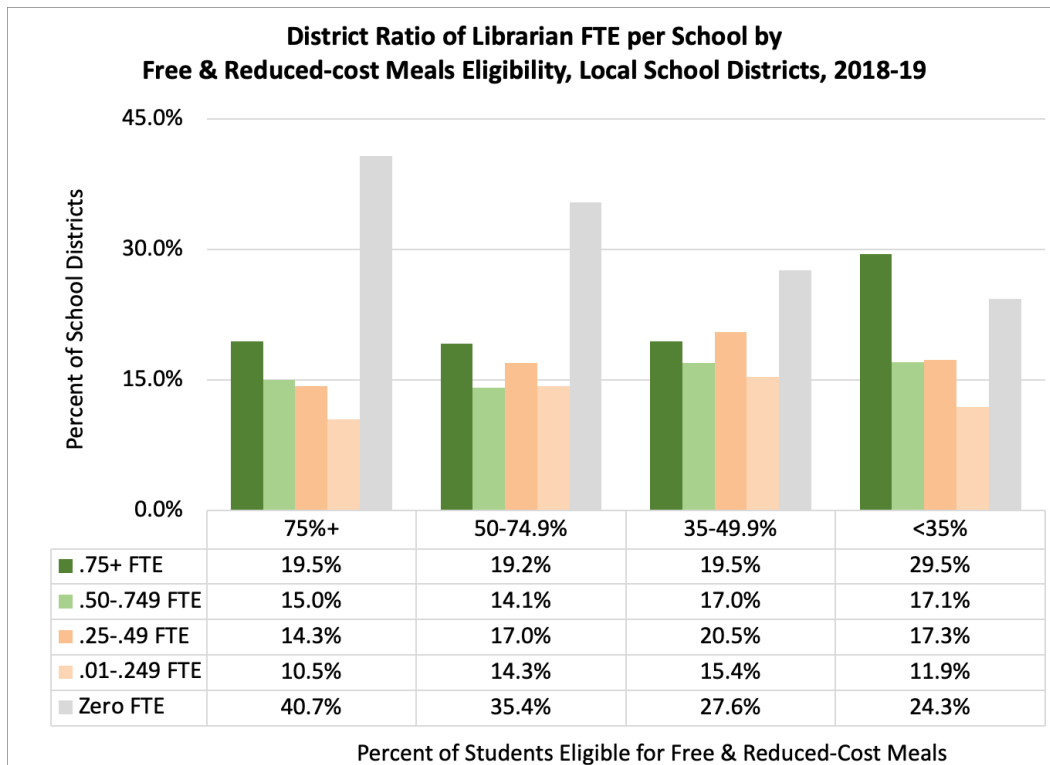
A common measure of poverty in education research is the percentage of a district’s students who are eligible for the federal Free and Reduced-cost Meals program. Notably, unlike school spending, this financial variable was more predictably related to librarian staffing levels. (See Chart 17.) In 2018-19, almost 3 out of 10 districts with the fewest students eligible for the federal meals program (29.5%) had .75+ librarian FTE per school. Of other districts, only 1 out of 5 (19.2% to 19.5%) had that highest staffing level.

The relationship between poverty and having no librarians was more linear. Two out of 5 (40.7%) districts with 75% or more of their students in poverty reported no librarians, while fewer than a quarter (24.3%) of districts with fewer than 35% of their students in poverty reported no librarians.

Districts with the most students in poverty were most likely to have no librarians. Districts with the fewest students in poverty were most likely to have librarians in all or most schools.

These findings are concerning, as they indicate that schools in poorer communities were less likely than schools in wealthier communities to enjoy the benefits of the services librarians have to offer to students and their teachers. Despite decades of federal and state education programs intended to reduce such inequities, they continue. Ironically, students in schools experiencing such inequities need the services of librarians even more than their counterparts in more prosperous schools.

Chart 17



How does the racial and ethnic composition of a district's student body relate to its level of librarian staffing?

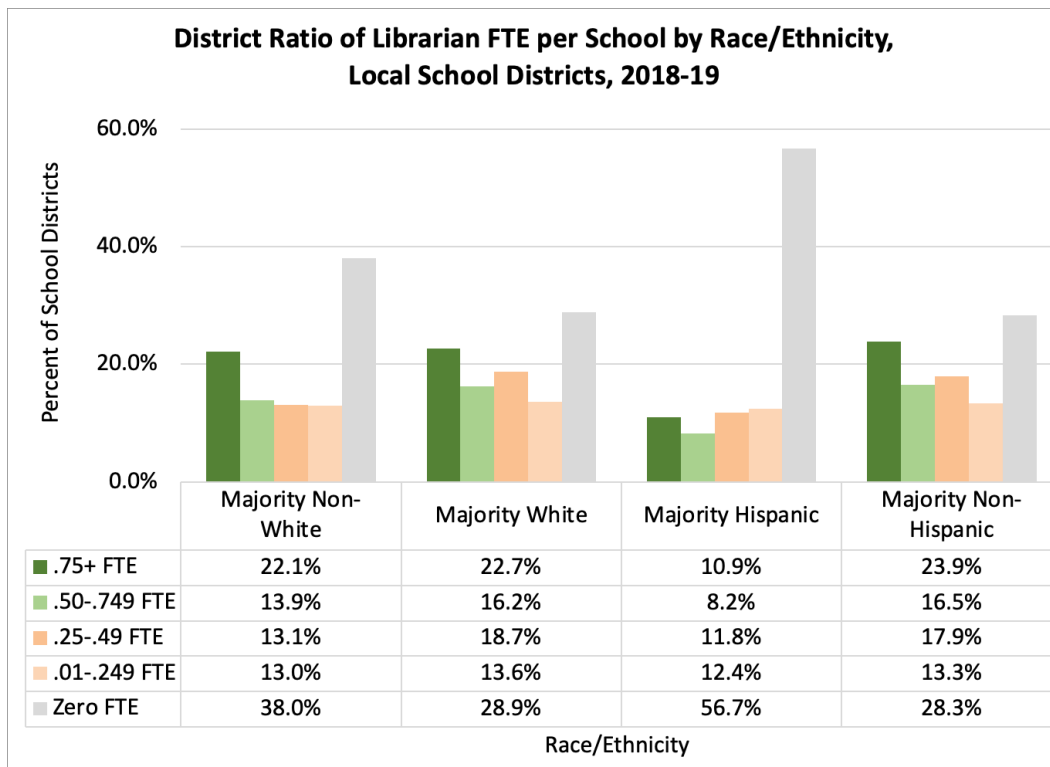
There were predictable differences in librarian staffing associated with majority non-white versus majority white districts as well as majority Hispanic versus majority non-Hispanic ones. The extremity of the two sets of differences is somewhat surprising. (See Appendix B for explanations of “race” and “ethnicity.”)

Majority white and majority non-Hispanic districts were more likely than others to have higher levels of librarian staffing. Majority Hispanic districts were twice as likely not to have librarians as majority non-Hispanic districts.

In 2018-19, the percentages of majority non-white and majority white districts with .75+ librarian FTE per school were almost equal at 22.1% and 22.7%, respectively. The same year, however, 38.0% of majority non-white districts reported no librarians compared with 28.9% of majority white districts. (See Chart 18.)

Differences associated with ethnicity were much more extreme than those associated with race. Also, in 2018-19, fewer than half as many majority Hispanic districts (only 10.9%) reported .75+ librarian FTE per school compared to majority non-Hispanic districts (23.9%). Conversely, twice as many majority Hispanic districts (56.7%) reported no librarians compared to majority non-Hispanic districts (28.3%).

Chart 18



How does the presence of English Language Learners relate to a district's level of librarian staffing?

Districts with the most English Language Learners (ELL) were least likely to have .75+ librarian FTE per school and most likely, by far, to have no librarians. In 2018-19, the highest level of librarian staffing (.75+ FTE per school) was found in fewer than 1 in 5 districts (18.7%) with the most ELL students compared to more than a quarter of districts (26.4%) with the fewest ELL students. The same year, more than 2 out of 5 districts (42.7%) with the most ELL students had no librarians compared with 1 out of 5 districts (19.5%) with the fewest ELL students. (See Chart 19.)

Districts with the most English Language Learners were least likely to have the highest level of librarian staffing and most likely, by far, to have no librarians.

Chart 19

