

District Characteristics

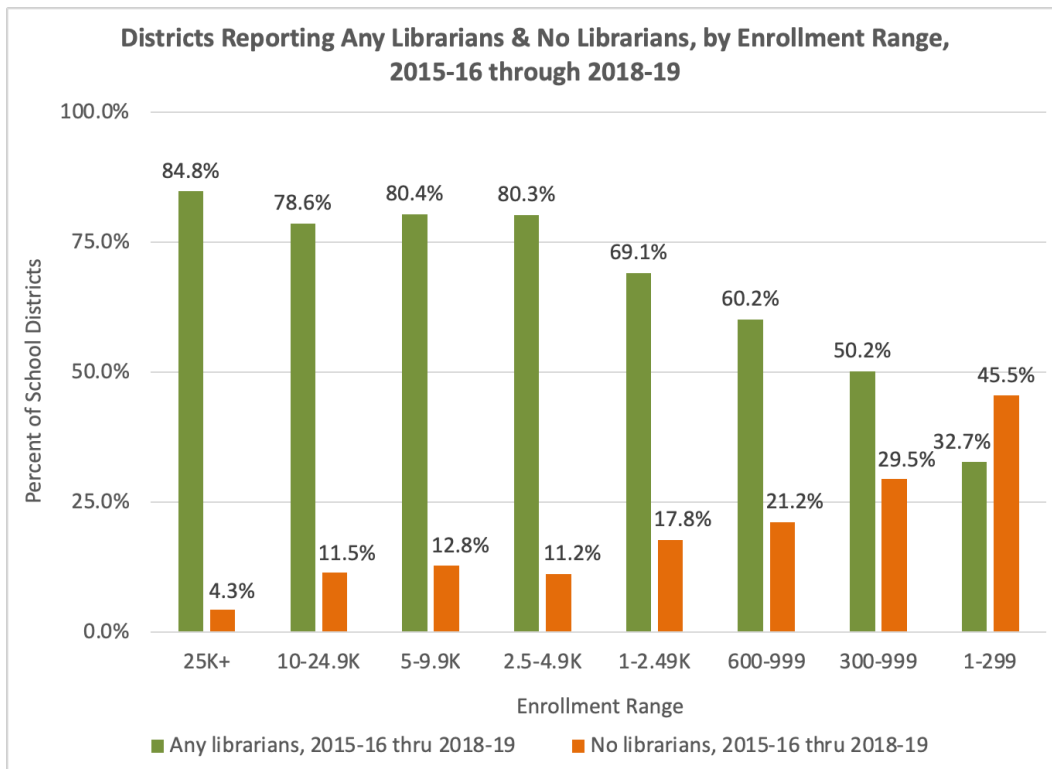
The long-term presence or absence of a school librarian, as reported by districts, is strongly related to three district characteristics: enrollment, locale, and per-pupil expenditures.

How does a district's enrollment relate to the long-term presence or absence of librarians?

Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, 4 out of 5 districts (more than 80%) with enrollments of 2,500 or more reported consistently having librarians. However, the proportion of districts with stable librarian staffing dropped off sharply for smaller enrollments, ranging from 7 out of 10 (69.1%) for enrollments between 1,000 and 2,499 to fewer than a third (32.7%) for those with fewer than 300 students. Conversely, only 1 out of 23 of the largest districts—those with 25, 000 or more students—(4.3%) were without librarians during this four-year period, compared with almost half (45.5%) of districts with fewer than 300 students. (See Chart 24.)

From 2015-16 through 2018-19, districts serving larger enrollments were more likely to employ librarians consistently, while districts serving smaller enrollments were more likely to have had no librarians.

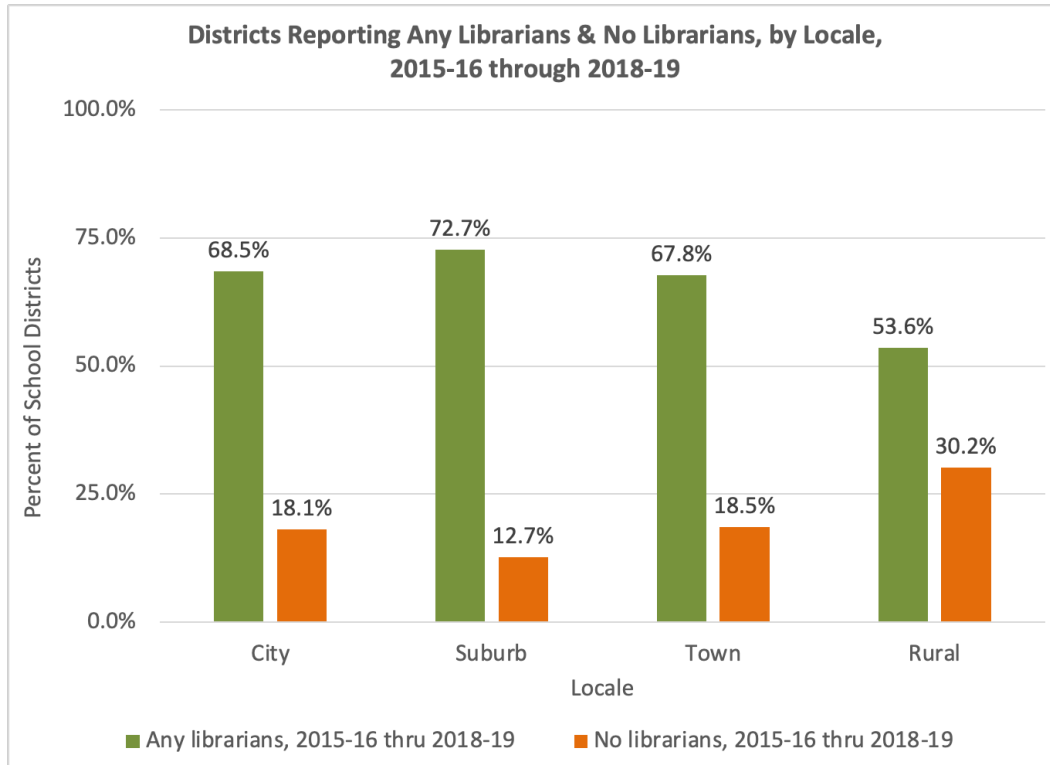
Chart 24



How does a district’s locale relate to the long-term presence or absence of librarians?

Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, suburban districts were most consistent in employing school librarians, while rural districts were most consistently without them. Librarians were employed, at some level, consistently between these years by more than 7 out of 10 suburban districts (72.7%), more than two-thirds of districts in central cities (68.5%) and outlying towns (67.8%), and just over half of districts in rural areas (53.6%). Conversely, 3 out of 10 rural districts (30.2%) have been without librarians, compared with about 1 out of 6 districts in central cities (18.1%) and outlying towns (18.5%) and fewer than 1 out of 8 suburban districts (12.7%). (See Chart 25. See Locale in Appendix B for definitions of city, suburb, town, and rural areas.)

Chart 25



Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, more suburban districts consistently employed school librarians, and more rural districts were consistently without librarians.

How does a district's funding relate to the long-term presence or absence of school librarians?

Data about the consistency with which districts do or do not employ school librarians and its relationship to per-pupil spending challenge the often-heard claim that school librarians were cut because of insufficient funding. The districts most likely to have had librarians consistently between 2015-16 and 2018-19 were the wealthiest and the poorest ones (65.8% of districts spending \$15,000 or more per pupil and 65.7% of those spending less than \$10,000 per pupil in 2016-17). Fewer than 3 out of 5 districts spending between \$10,000 and \$14,999 per pupil employed librarians consistently. Conversely, a quarter or more of districts with middling funding (25.1% to 28.1%) were the ones most likely to be without librarians over this time period. (See Chart 26.)

School funding alone cannot explain librarian staffing decisions. Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, districts most likely to have employed librarians consistently were those spending the most—and the least—per pupil.

