

Student Demographics

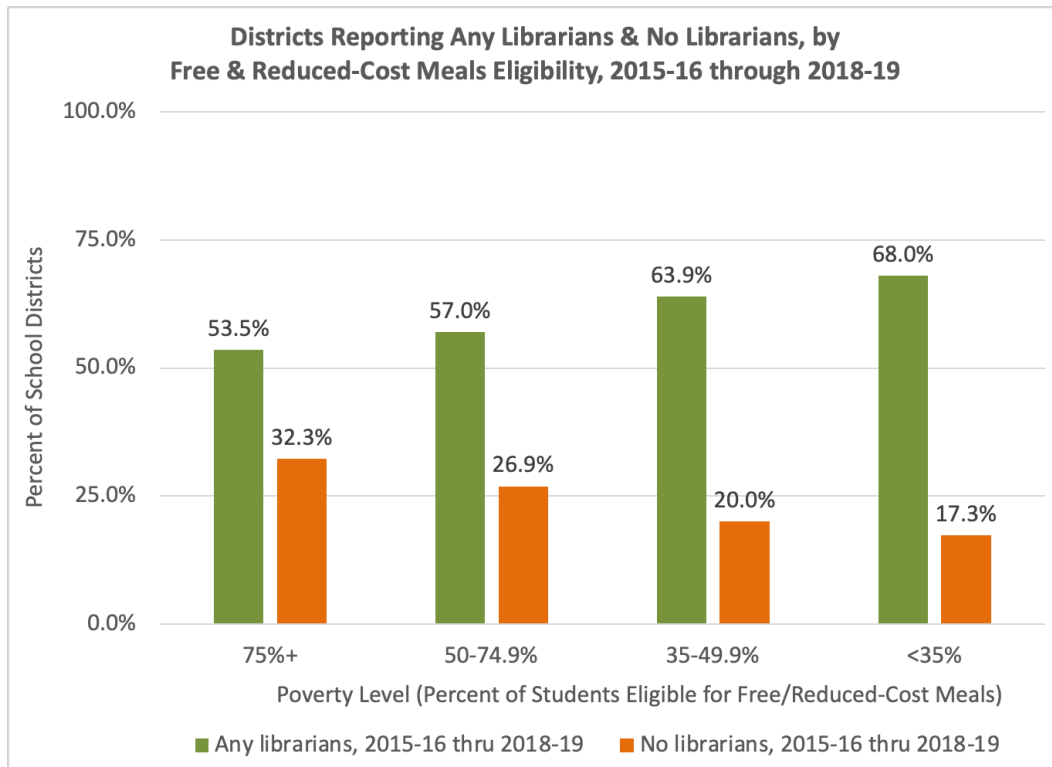
Socio-economic differences between districts are also powerful drivers of long-term inequality of access to school librarians. The Common Core of Data (CCD) provides data on three student demographics that demonstrated strong, significant relationships to the presence and absence of librarians between 2015-16 and 2018-19: Free and Reduced-cost Meals eligibility (a poverty indicator), race/ethnicity, and language status.

How does poverty relate to the long-term presence or absence of school librarians?

Over the 4-year time period studied, just over half of the districts with the highest poverty levels (53.5%) reported having librarians consistently since 2015-16 compared to more than two-thirds of the districts with the lowest poverty levels (68.0%). (See Chart 27.) The indicator of poverty is the percentage of a district’s students who are eligible for the federal Free and Reduced-cost Meals program. (See Appendix B.) Conversely, almost a third of districts with the highest poverty levels (32.3%) did not have librarians throughout the 4 years, while only fewer than 1 in 6 of districts with the lowest poverty levels (17.3%) had no librarians for multiple years. Notably, a student in one of the poorest districts was almost twice as likely to have had little or no exposure to a librarian as their counterpart in one of the least poor districts.

Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, districts with the most students in poverty were the most likely to have been without school librarians consistently. Districts with the fewest students in poverty were the most likely to have had librarians all 4 years.

Chart 27



How do race and ethnicity relate to the long-term presence or absence of school librarians?

Differences in long-term employment of librarians are related strongly to the racial makeup of a district's student body. More than 3 out of 5 majority white districts (63.3%) have had librarians consistently between 2015-16 and 2018-19, while just over half (55.5%) of majority non-white districts have experienced the same. Conversely, almost 3 out of 10 majority non-white districts (29.0%) have been without librarians since 2015-15 compared with only about 1 out of 5 majority white districts (21.6%). (See Chart 28.)

Majority non-white districts were less likely to have had librarians between 2015-16 and 2018-19. Over the same period, more than twice as many majority Hispanic districts as majority non-Hispanic districts were consistently without librarians.

The differences in long-term school librarian employment were more extreme for majority Hispanic versus majority non-Hispanic districts. More than 3 out of 5 majority non-Hispanic districts (64.1%) had librarians between 2015-16 and 2018-19, compared with fewer than 2 out of 5 majority Hispanic districts (38.4%).

The most egregious inequity based on ethnicity, however, concerns districts that were without librarians for at least 4 years. Almost half of majority Hispanic districts (46.7%) were without librarians compared with only 1 out of 5 majority non-Hispanic districts (21.0%). Notably, a student in a majority Hispanic district was more than twice as likely to have had little or no experience of a school librarian as their counterpart in a majority non-Hispanic district.

How does the presence of English Language Learners relate to the long-term presence or absence of school librarians?

Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, as a district's percentage of students who were English Language Learners grew, the odds of it having had librarians since 2015-16 declined, while the odds of it having had no librarians increased. Of districts with the most English Language Learners (top quartile), only about half (51.9%) had librarians all 4 years, while more than a third (34.4%) had no librarians during the same period. Of districts with the fewest ELL students (bottom quartile), more than 7 out of 10 (72.7%) had librarians all 4 years, and only about 1 out of 7 (13.5%) had been without librarians. (See Chart 29.)

Districts with the most English Language Learners were least likely to have had librarians consistently between 2015-16 and 2018-19, and more than twice as likely as districts with the fewest ELL students to have had no librarians throughout the same period.

Chart 28

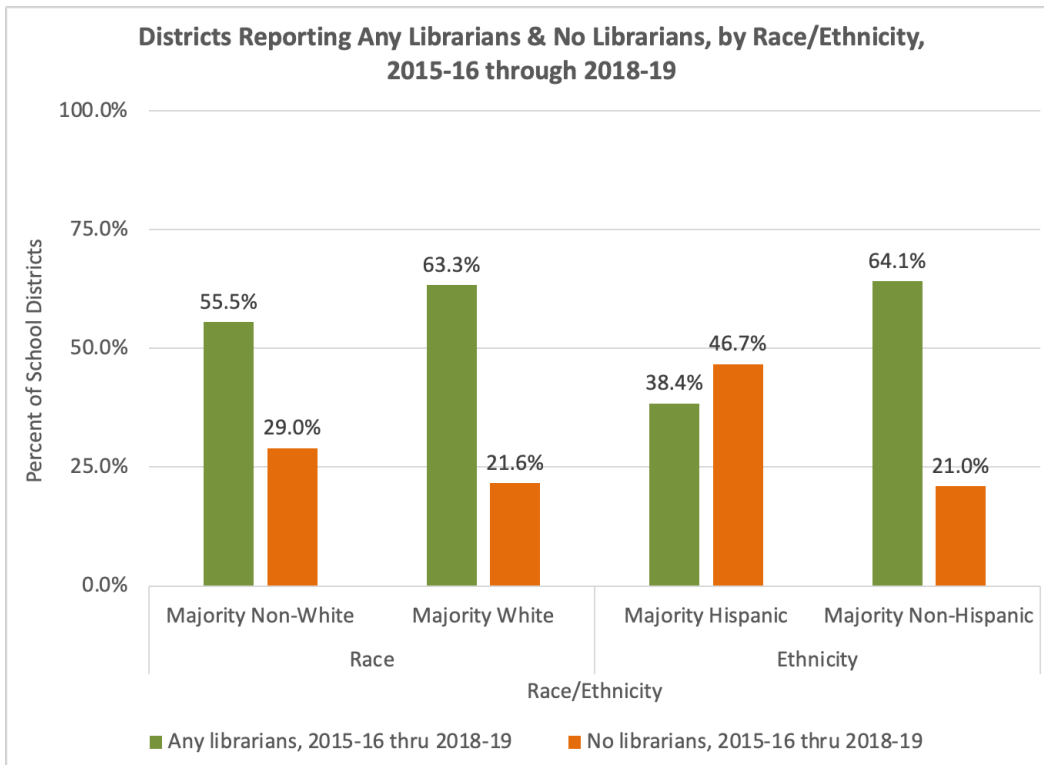


Chart 29

