

Appendix G. The School Librarian Equity Gap: Inequities Associated with Race and Ethnicity Compounded by Poverty, Locale, and Enrollment

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The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution? (SLIDE) project is a federally funded study of the almost 20% national decline in the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) of school librarians between 2015 and 2019, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. In this update to the project’s original research, school librarian employment data for the 2020-2021 school year were examined for 12,537 school districts and associated with district characteristics (poverty, locale, and district enrollment) and student demographics (race and ethnicity).

Data supported previous findings that access to school librarians is strongly related to race and ethnicity and further exacerbated for students living in extreme poverty, in more-isolated locales, and in the smallest districts—locales where students are less likely to have access to the educational resources available in large urban areas. In school year 2021, three million students in majority nonwhite districts were without any librarians; they were 54% of the 5.6 million students in all districts without any librarians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The gap between students in districts with a “library privilege” and those without librarians continues to widen.

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