



HAVERING LIBRARY
STRATEGY 2024-2029
CONSULTATION REPORT



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Executive Summary

- 1.1 The London Borough of Havering (Havering Council) has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for the people who live, work and study in the local authority area.
- 1.2 Against a backdrop of continuing significant financial pressures for the Council, which included needed to request exceptional financial support from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in order to set a balanced budget for the financial year 2024/25.
- 1.3 That budget included proposals to reduce the revenue budget of the Council's library service by £300,000 over two years. The library service accordingly developed a draft library strategy which included a set of proposals to close a number of libraries in order to deliver that saving.

The draft strategy

- 1.4 The draft strategy comprised:
 - The proposals to reduce the revenue budget of the service by means to closing four of the five "branch" libraries (Collier Row, Elm Park, Gidea Park, Harold Wood, South Hornchurch);
 - Proposals to reduce the service's book stock budget by 61% (£161,000) in 2024/25 and £30,000 (from the 2023/24 base) in both 2025/26 and 2026/27.
 - A detailed needs and usage assessment which was used to develop the proposals;
 - A refreshed vision and strategic priorities to underpin the statutory service in coming years;
 - Proposals to develop an investment business case seeking capital funding to improve the quality of the library estate;
 - Proposals seeking views on whether a purpose-designed children's library – either at a fixed site or as a mobile provision – could better meet library need in the future.
- 1.5 A copy of the draft strategy is at Appendix A

The Consultation

- 1.6 The draft strategy was subjected to full public consultation beginning on 10 May 2024 and ending on 2 August 2024. The consultation included:
 - Online consultation on the draft strategy via the Council's *CitizenSpace* portal;
 - Hard copy paper version of the above, copies of which were made available at all libraries in the borough (hard copy consultations were subsequently manually entered on to the electronic portal);
 - A series of 15 public meetings held across the entire library estate;

- “SHOUT about Libraries”, a version of the consultation designed for children and young people. The SHOUT consultation commenced in mid July 2024 and closed in September 2024.

1.7 The consultation attracted a large response: more than 3,000 responses were made via *CitizenSpace* and more than 300 hard copy responses were received during the consultation. The hard copy responses were subsequently manually uploaded on to the *CitizenSpace* system in order that a comprehensive set of results could be analysed. The SHOUT survey saw a further 1,000-plus responses received.

1.8 Public meetings held at each library to discuss the proposals were well-attended.

Meeting type	Venue	Date and time
Private (all member briefing)	Online	Tuesday 21 May 1730
Private (Compact briefing for voluntary and charity partners)	Online	TBD
Public	Havering Town Hall	Tuesday 9 July 1830-2000
Public	Gidea Park Library	Thursday 11 July 1730-1900
Public	Collier Row Library	Friday 12 July 1730-1900
Public	Elm Park Library	Thursday 18 July 1730-1900
Public	South Hornchurch	Friday 19 July 1430-1600
Public	Harold Wood Library	Friday 19 July 1730-1900
Public	Gidea Park Library	Wednesday 24 July 1030-1200
Public	Collier Row Library	Thursday 25 July 1730-1900
Public	Elm Park Library	Friday 26 July 1430-1600
Public	South Hornchurch Library	Friday 26 July 1730-1900
Public	Harold Wood Library	Saturday 27 July 1030-1200
Public	Harold Hill Library	Monday 29 July 1100-1230
Public	Hornchurch Library	Tuesday 30 July 1100-1230
Public	Upminster Library	Wednesday 31 July 1100-1230
Public	Rainham Library	Thursday 1 August 1100-1230

1.9 A number of petitions pertaining to individual libraries were received during and after the consultation. Petitions were received on behalf of each of the five branch libraries proposed for closure.

Consultation Summary

Introduction

- 2.1 The Havering Council Libraries Consultation gathered insights from 3,399 respondents regarding the usage, importance, and impact of potential closure of libraries within the borough. This report presents a detailed analysis of the responses, highlighting key findings, trends, and concerns raised by the community. This report also details, in a separate section, the analysis of the SHOUT about libraries survey.

Characteristics of responses

- 2.2 The vast majority of consultation responses – more than 90% of all responses received – came from residents who declared that they are current library members. Almost two thirds of responses (63%) came from residents whose declared “main local library” was one of the five libraries proposed for consideration of closure.
- 2.3 This is relevant because the library needs assessment published as part of the strategy set out that only 23% of library visits in 2023/24 took place at these five libraries. This data speaks to a pattern of residents in areas identified for potential closure being extremely motivated to respond to the consultation whereas residents whose main or only use of a library is one of the sites not proposed for closure may have been less motivated to respond or perceived little direct impact on their library usage from the proposals.
- 2.4 Of the main library sites, there is a statistically relevant difference in the quantum of responses received. Whereas Hornchurch and Upminster library users made up more than 10% each of the total consultation responses, responses from those who cited Harold Hill, Rainham or Romford as their main/only library comprised in sum only 12% of responses received.
- 2.5 As much as the data shows that it was overwhelmingly current library members who chose to respond to the consultation, it also shows that those who responded are regular users of the service. More than 40% of respondents declared that they visit libraries daily or weekly and eight out of ten stated that their usage was at least monthly.
- 2.6 More than 70% of respondents told us that they borrow books or other material from libraries at least as frequently as monthly, but a 26% told us that they did so rarely or never, an indication that the secondary main use of libraries by the public is for events and activities that occur there. This evidence will be relevant for the development of the final strategy as preserving access to and developing events and

activities will be crucial going forward and library usage is discussed in more detail below.

Demographic makeup of respondents

- 2.7 More than 70% of respondents answered one or more equalities question in the consultation. From this data, we can understand that there is no outlier in the age range of respondents, which reflects a service used regularly by a broad cross-section of residents. The age range with the largest volume of responses – 19%, was from those who told us they are between 35 and 44 years of age. Respondents aged 65-74 (14%), 55-64 and 45-64 (both 13%) were next highest in volume. Residents aged 75 and over (7%) and 25-34 (6%) followed, with just 1.5% of responses coming from those who told us they were aged up to 24. 22% of responses either did not answer the question or selected that they preferred not to say.
- 2.8 Nearly 25% of respondents did not tell us their gender. 57% of responses came from people who told us they are female and 18% from people who told us they are male.
- 2.9 More than 2,500 responses were received from residents who told us whether or not they have a disability, impairment or health condition. Of that figure, 19% told us they do have a disability, impairment or health condition. Declaration of a long-term illness or health condition accounted for most responses (7%), followed by sensory disability or impairment (5%), mental health condition (4%) and physical impairment or disability (4%).
- 2.10 In total 851 respondents told us they did have a disability, impairment or health condition. However, far more respondents answered questions in the main part of the consultation about the specific services in libraries used by people with such conditions, suggesting that either some respondents feel the need for some form of assistance but do not qualify that formally as a “disability, impairment or health condition” and/or that some respondents were also remarking on the services used by a household member who perhaps did not themselves respond to the consultation.
- 2.11 More than 2,000 respondents told us they use some form of assistance in accessing library services. This ranged from use of accessible formats (large print, audiobooks) at 20%, accessible facilities like ramps and elevators (17%), and assistive technology (screen readers, magnifiers) at 9%.
- 2.12 A significant majority of respondents (nearly 75% of responses received) told us they were concerned or significantly concerned about the availability of alternative accommodations or services for individuals with disabilities if the library were to close. More than 750 responses (23%) were received telling us that the closure of a nearest library impact would impact or significantly impact ability to access other libraries due to a disability.

Views expressed on the proposal to close four libraries and reduce the book stock budget

- 2.13 As could be expected from the difficult choices presented in the consultation, the vast majority of responses (more than 82%) declared that they either disagreed or

strongly disagreed with the proposal to close four of the five branch libraries. Just under 10% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposals and 7% told us they neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposals.

- 2.14 Proposals to reduce the book stock budget were also opposed in the consultation responses, albeit by a smaller margin. The stock budget reduction proposals were either disagreed or strongly disagreed with by 57% of respondents, with 19% agreeing and 23% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Draft library vision

- 2.15 Two thirds of responses endorsed the service's proposed refreshed vision, with 20% disagreeing. Library members provided valuable evidence on the activities they enjoy and pursue in libraries and on what other services libraries could provide. Despite the broad range of services that libraries provide, books are still the bedrock of the service and remain as the most frequently used service at a library. Children's activities, computer use and personal/school study were also cited by large numbers of residents. This is relevant as outside of the professional library world books tend to be overlooked by policymakers as key drivers of why people visit libraries. This may seem counterintuitive given for many it is the *raison d'être* of the library but it is clear from the consultation that books as a driver of library visits and therefore satisfaction with and efficiency of libraries is still vital. Any future estate development will need to have regard to the reasons why residents use libraries.
- 2.16 More community programmes and events (59%) more digital and online resources (26%), job search assistance (24%) and enhanced language learning resources (21%) were cited by respondents as events or activities they wanted to see more of in libraries. This evidence provides an imperative to look at partnership work across the borough to meet demand.

A Children's Library for Havering?

- 2.17 The consultation provided for early engagement with library users on a proposal to explore whether a purpose-designed Children's Library – either at a fixed site in the borough or as a mobile service – could contribute to service development and respond to demographic change in future years. The draft strategy was clear that any development would require growth and was not proposed at the expense of the loss of any current library site.
- 2.18 In consultation, respondents gave mixed views on the proposal. 32% of responses told us they were likely or very likely to use such a facility and gave feedback on the range of facilities such a library could contain. There was a particularly strong response from those indicating that such a facility should contain opportunities to develop more activities and materials for children with special educational needs and disabilities. However, the proposal was, as could be expected, overshadowed by the consultation on library closures. Many attendees of meetings told us they would prefer children's sections of libraries to be improved rather than a new library to be commissioned. There was no consensus on what form that library should take either – some residents accepted that a mobile library for children could mitigate anticipated reductions in classroom visits to local libraries in the event of closures, while others

questioned whether a mobile provision could replace a building. The geography of the borough, one based on localities rather than an acknowledged centre, was cited by those who did not feel a fixed site library to be workable.

Quality of library buildings and views on a business case to secure capital improvements

- 2.19 In spite of the condition survey for the library estate setting out significant challenges in coming years with the quality of and facility mix in current buildings, respondents told us that they are broadly content with the comfort of buildings.
- 2.20 Two thirds of respondents told us the condition and comfort of buildings was very or extremely important to their overall satisfaction with library services. More than 90% told us they were satisfied or very satisfied with the condition and cleanliness of their local library building and more than 90% also told us that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the comfort and amenities available within the library.
- 2.21 While the data sets out a level of satisfaction with library buildings that

Means of access to current libraries and impact of closure

- 2.22 The draft strategy identified that those whose means of access to the library is currently on foot (with a particular focus on the elderly, disabled people, parents and children) were likely to be negatively impacted by library closures as proposed. In the consultation we asked a number of questions to develop evidence on transport options.
- 2.23 A large majority of respondents, more than 76% of all responses received, told us that their usual mode of travel to the library was on foot. 29% told us they travel usually by car and 20% by bus or train.
- 2.24 More than 58% of respondents told us they were somewhat or very reliant on public transport if they had to access another library in the event of their local site closing. 59% told us they had some or significant concerns about the reliability or availability of local transport options for accessing alternative libraries.
- 2.25 The qualitative data received during the consultation, either via free text boxes in the consultation or at public meetings, echoed these concerns. We heard very clearly from a large number of residents, particularly older residents, who travel on a limited basis in the borough and usually visit only familiar places – shopping districts, restaurants, supermarkets etc. Some residents told us that they would not be able to visit a different library if their nearest one was to close, while others told us that crossing major arterial routes (such as the A12 to reach Harold Hill library in the event of Harold Wood closing) would be a significant barrier.

Other alternative library models not proposed in the consultation

- 2.26 A theme that emerged particularly during the consultation public meetings was the possibility that library closures could be avoided or limited if individuals or community groups donated time, energy and skills in volunteering and contributing to the running of libraries. This was particularly prevalent at consultation events in Collier Row, Gidea Park and Harold Wood.

- 2.27 The consultation did not develop evidence as to whether alternate models are viable and could deliver the same or increased revenue budget savings as closures, but the service considers that unlikely, certainly in the short term.
- 2.28 Alternate models of libraries – in particular libraries that benefit in some way from council grant funding and professional librarian support but are run by community groups or charities on a day-to-day basis have been set up to varying degrees of success in other parts of the country. Further work and consultation would need to be developed if the council wishes to take this forward.

Positive impact of libraries on community health and wellbeing

- 2.29 Respondents gave clear and compelling evidence on the benefits they believe regular use of libraries brings them. To the question “*Are there specific benefits to your health and wellbeing that you have identified as a direct result of regular attendance at your local library or activities within libraries?*” 57% agreed that their mental health and 25% that their physical health had improved. More than 50% agreed that they felt less lonely or had made more friends because of regular attendance at their local library.
- 2.30 The public meetings held during the consultation built on this. We found residents prepared to talk with passion and no little emotion about the positive impact of libraries on their lives and those of people they know and love.
- 2.31 The conclusions and recommendations section of this report builds on the issue of library impact on health and wellbeing.

Evidential drawbacks of the consultation

- 2.32 Although the consultation saw a significant response in numbers, there are issues which will be material to future political decisions on the future of the service that the consultation either did not touch on or on which a clear picture has not emerged.
- 2.33 The consultation did not seek to identify evidence from respondents about why one library should remain open at the expense of another. Rather, the consultation was designed to evidence impact from geographic communities about the usage of and impact of losing a specific library. It did not, for example, ask residents to express a preference to retain one library over another. The service believes that the needs and usage assessment published in the draft strategy, combined with condition surveys, information about the facility mix of buildings which includes income-generating potential, plus the response to this consultation, provides sufficient evidence to make an informed and evidenced decision on the future of the service. However, in other recent closure proposals elsewhere in the country a second phase of consultation seeking more detail has been taken forward. Members and senior officers may want to consider this moving forward.
- 2.34 Further to the above, the consultation did not seek views on any of the alternate library operating models outlined in the draft strategy, nor on whether respondents are prepared to volunteer time in order to make any of those models viable. For reasons set out in the strategy the service did not consider achieving the savings through means of reducing opening hours across the entire service but not closing

libraries as satisfactory or likely to meet statutory obligations. If this is revisited further public consultation will be essential.

- 2.35 Any consultation is only informed by those who choose to take part. Although the council considers that it did take active steps to promote the consultation and exhort residents to respond, and taking into account the volume of response being one of the largest responses in recent council history, a large majority of residents and in particular non-library users (but residents whose council tax still contributes to library services) chose not to respond.

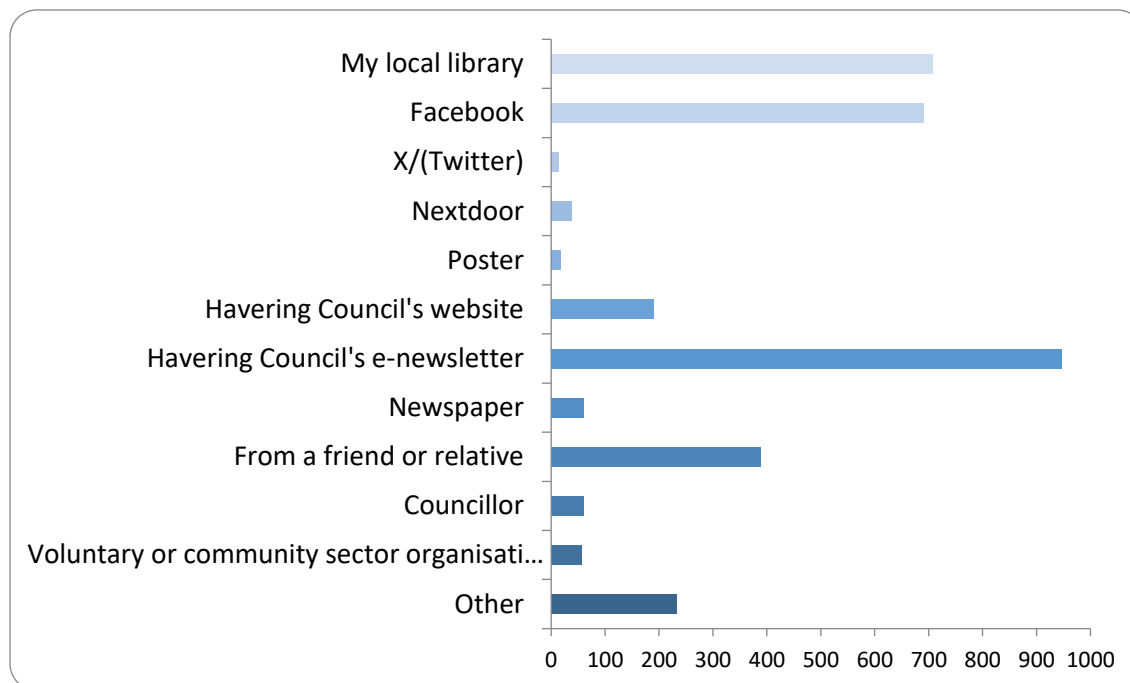
Acknowledgements

- 2.36 We would like to thank the residents who took part in the consultation, whether through signing a petition, coming to a public meeting, commenting on social media or responding to the consultation questions.
- 2.37 We are grateful to members for their engagement and interest in the consultation and their efforts to encourage responses to it.
- 2.38 Above all, we thank library service and communications and engagement team staff for their dedication, support and hard work throughout the consultation.

Consultation response detail

How did you find about this consultation?

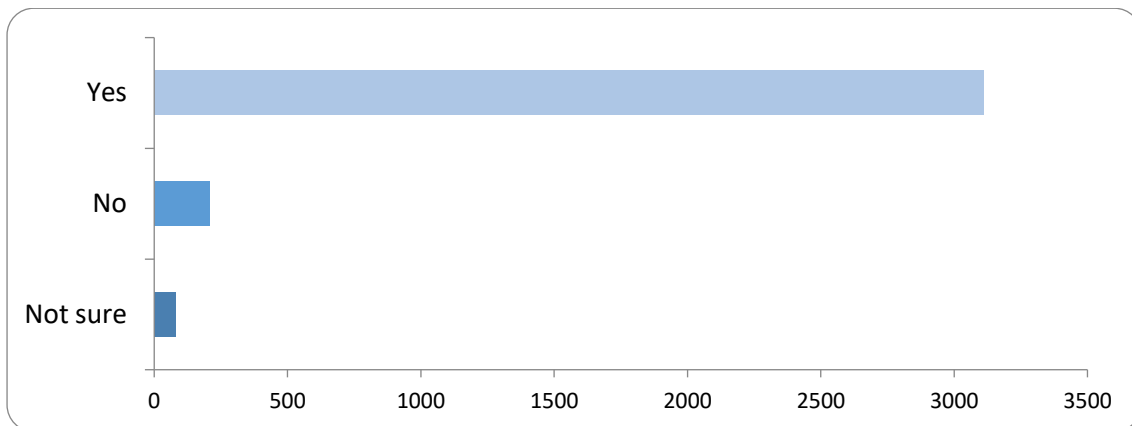
There were 3399 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
My local library	708	20.83%
Facebook	691	20.33%
X/(Twitter)	13	0.38%
Nextdoor	38	1.12%
Poster	17	0.50%
Havering Council's website	190	5.59%
Havering Council's e-newsletter	946	27.83%
Newspaper	60	1.77%
From a friend or relative	388	11.42%
Councillor	60	1.77%
Voluntary or community sector organisation	56	1.65%
Other	232	6.83%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Are you a Havering Library member?

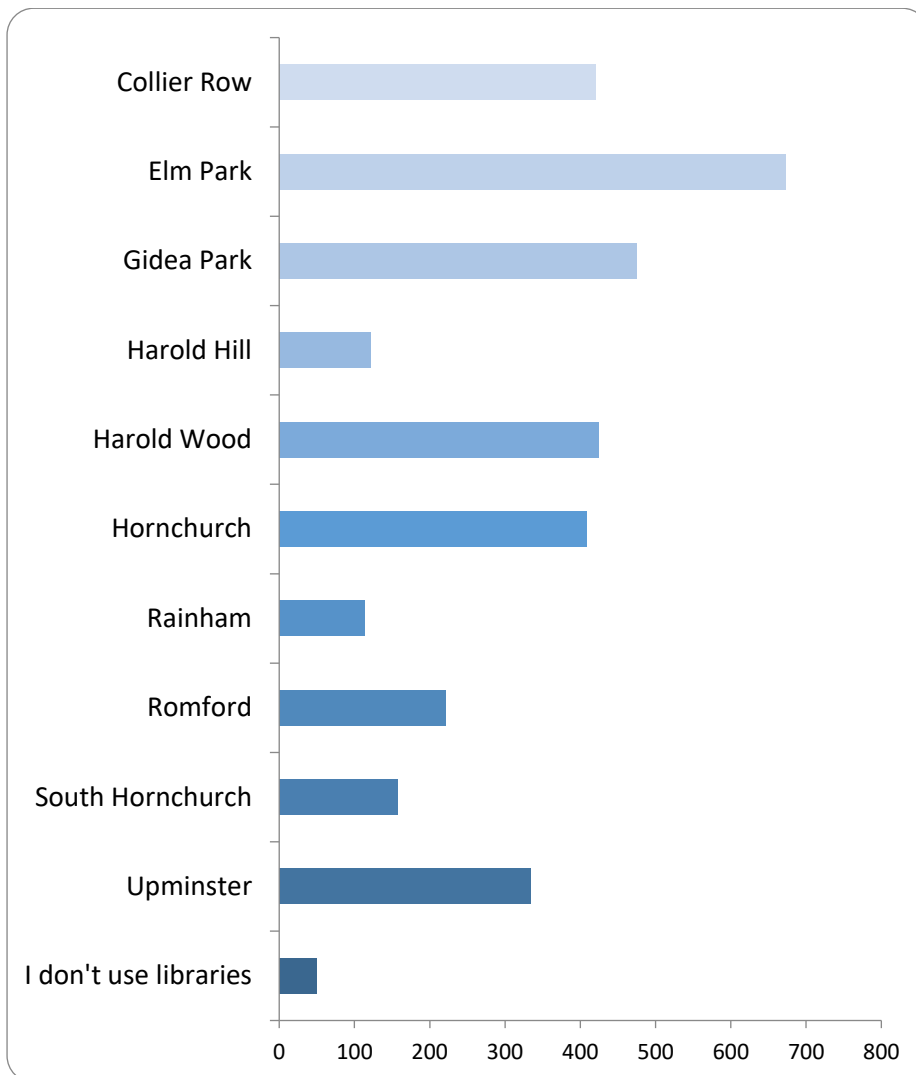
There were 3399 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	3111	91.53%
No	208	6.12%
Not sure	80	2.35%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Which is your main local library, that is, the one that you use most frequently?

There were 3399 responses to this part of the question.

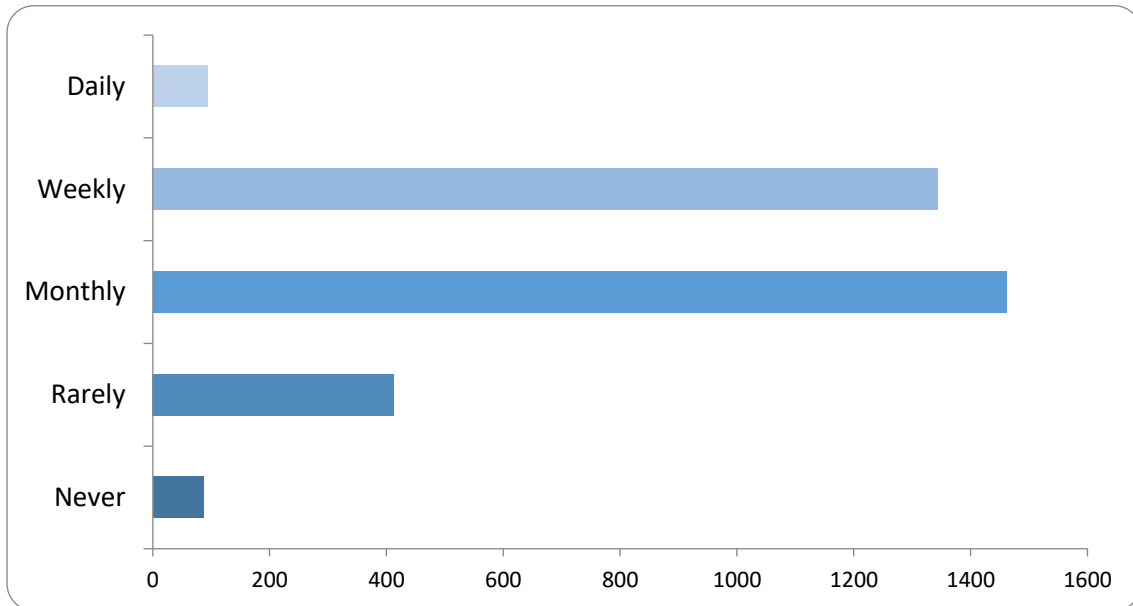


Option	Total	Percent
Collier Row	421	12.39%
Elm Park	673	19.80%
Gidea Park	475	13.97%
Harold Hill	121	3.56%
Harold Wood	424	12.47%
Hornchurch	408	12.00%
Rainham	114	3.35%
Romford	221	6.50%
South Hornchurch	158	4.65%

Upminster	334	9.83%
I don't use libraries	50	1.47%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Please tell us how often you visit your main local library and how often you borrow books.

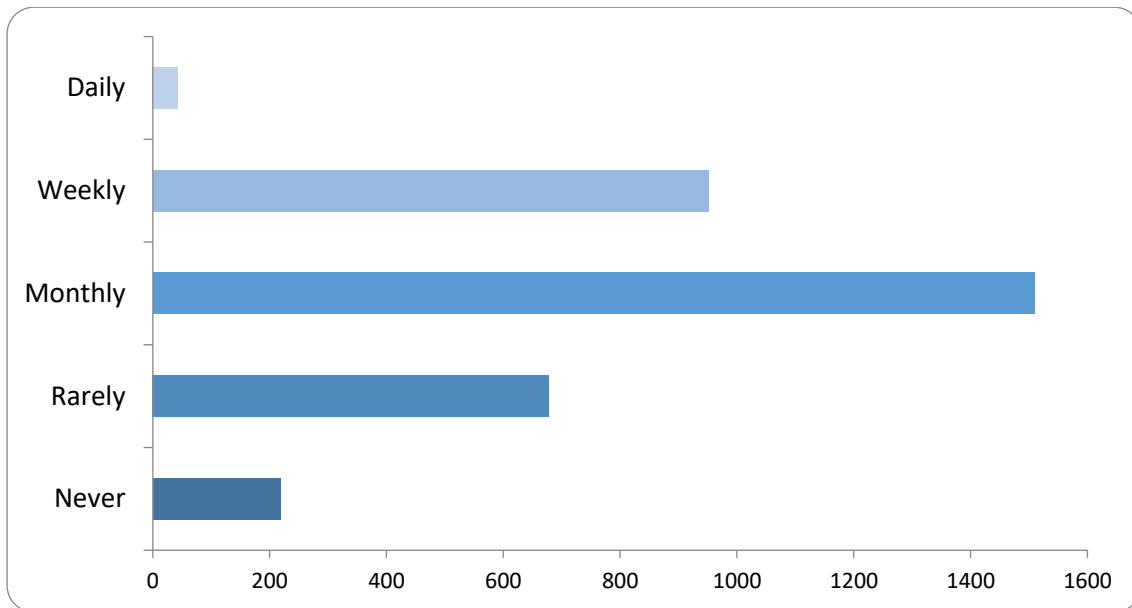
There were 3399 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Daily	94	2.77%
Weekly	1344	39.54%
Monthly	1461	42.98%
Rarely	413	12.15%
Never	87	2.56%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

How often do you borrow books or other materials from your main local library?

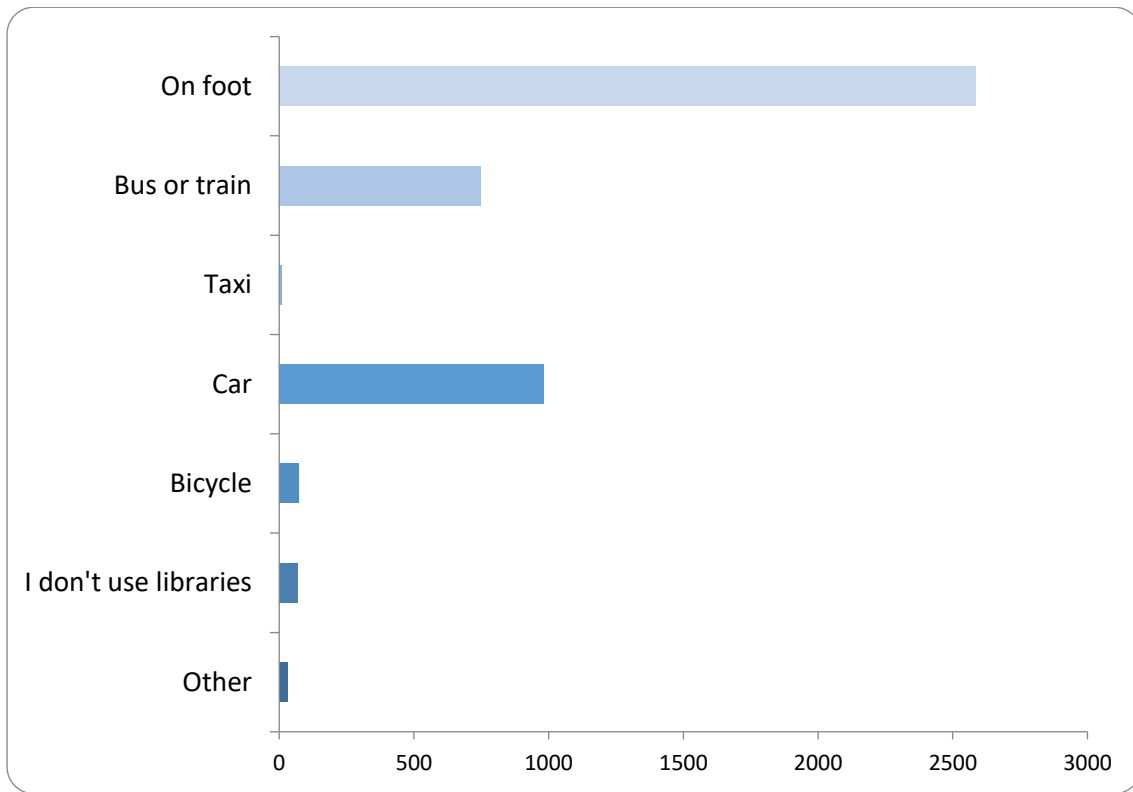
There were 3399 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Daily	43	1.27%
Weekly	951	27.98%
Monthly	1509	44.40%
Rarely	678	19.95%
Never	218	6.41%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

How do you usually travel to the library?

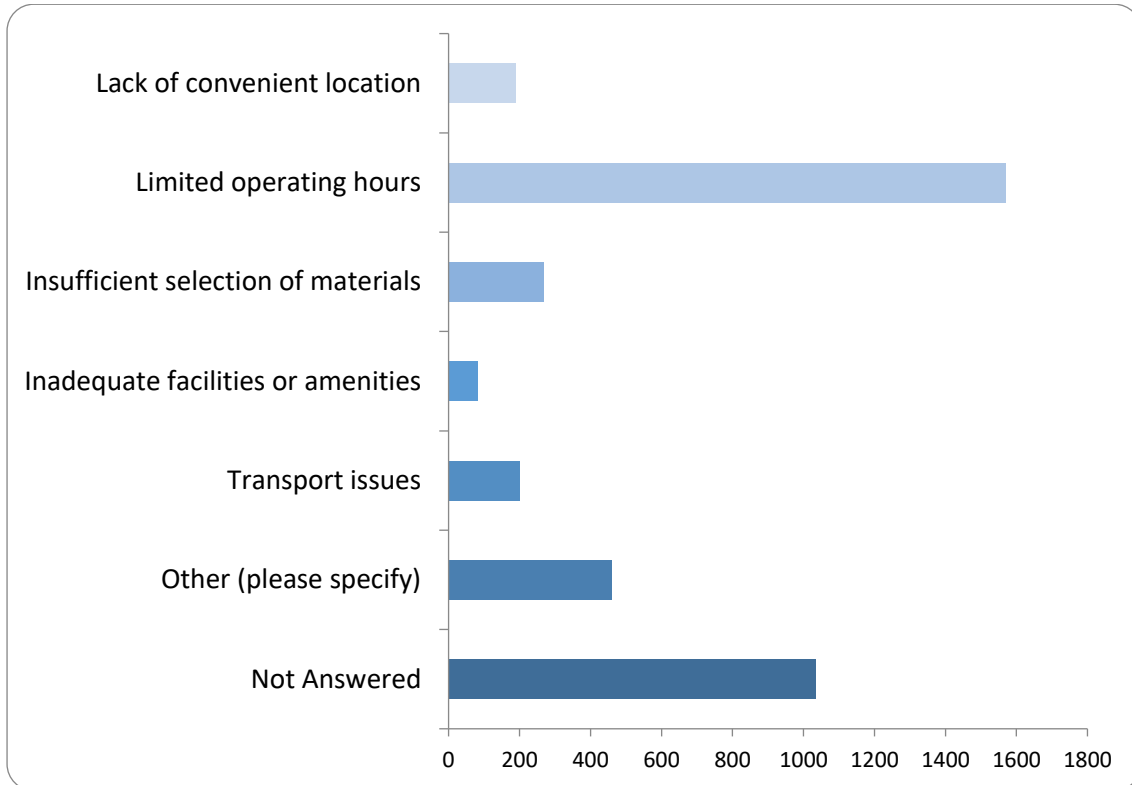
There were 3399 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
On foot	2586	76.08%
Bus or train	749	22.04%
Taxi	8	0.24%
Car	980	28.83%
Bicycle	71	2.09%
I don't use libraries	68	2.00%
Other	33	0.97%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Is there anything that prevents you from using libraries more?

There were 2364 responses to this part of the question.

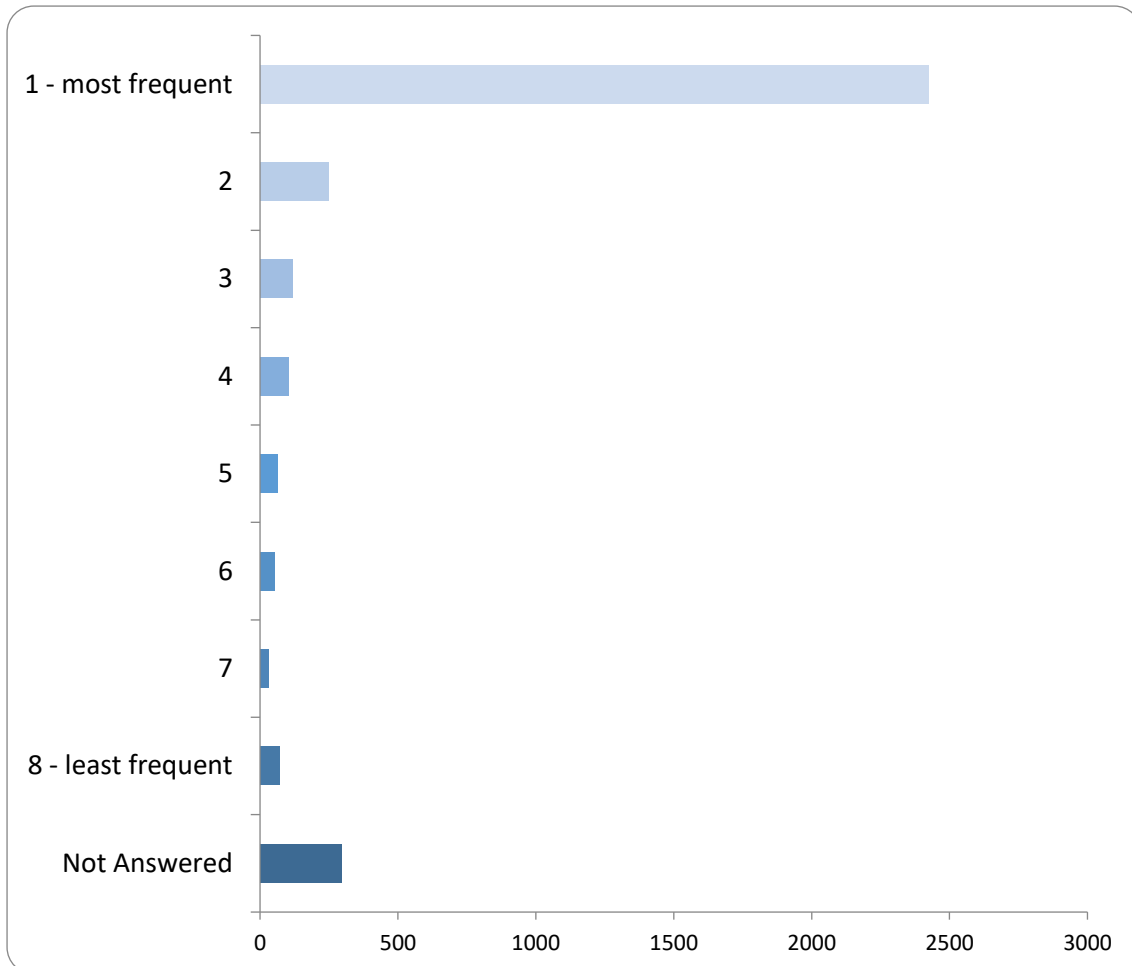


Option	Total	Percent
Lack of convenient location	189	5.56%
Limited operating hours	1570	46.19%
Insufficient selection of materials	270	7.94%
Inadequate facilities or amenities	84	2.47%
Transport issues	200	5.88%
Other (please specify)	461	13.56%
Not Answered	1035	30.45%

What services or resources do you use at your local library?

Books

There were 3105 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	2422	71.26%
2	248	7.30%
3	119	3.50%
4	102	3.00%
5	62	1.82%
6	52	1.53%
7	30	0.88%
8 - least frequent	70	2.06%

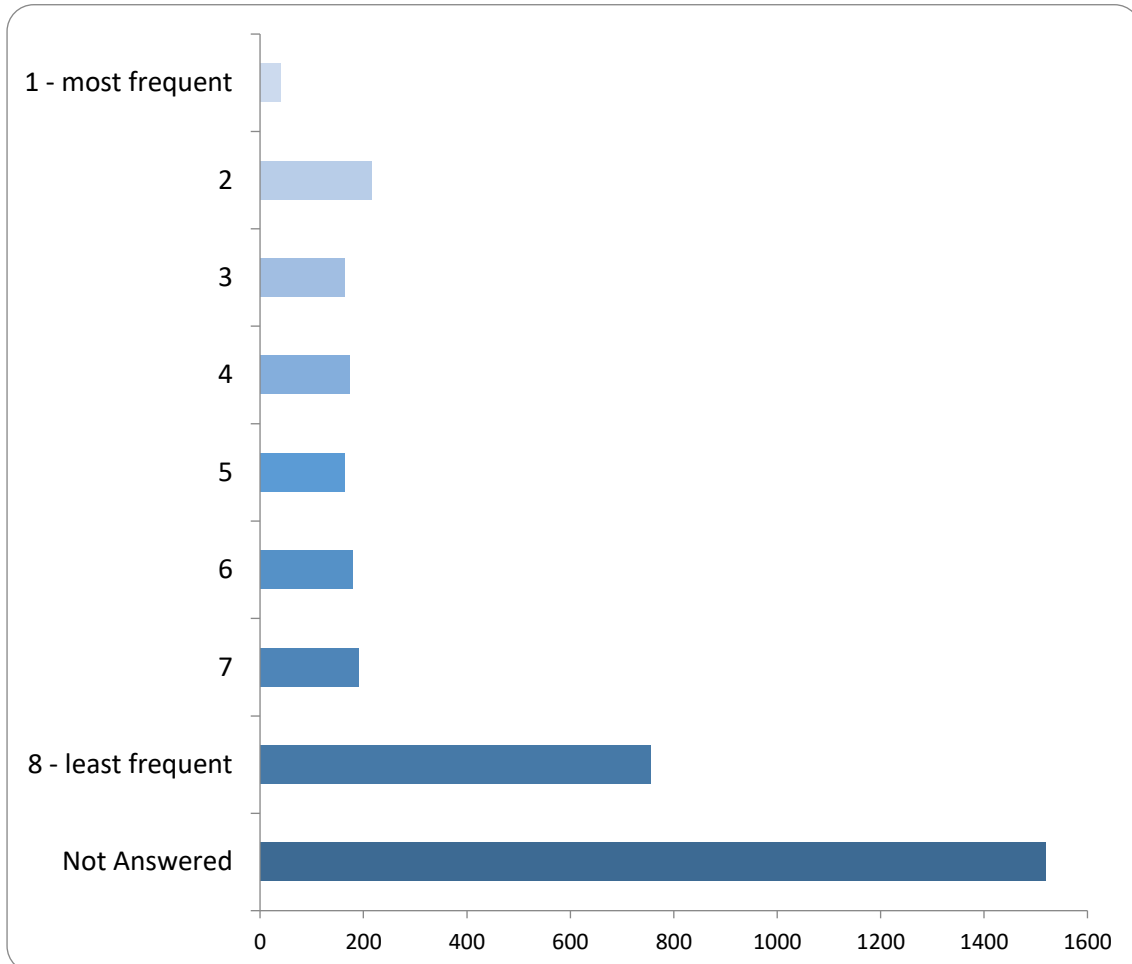
Not Answered

294

8.65%

Newspapers, periodicals and magazines

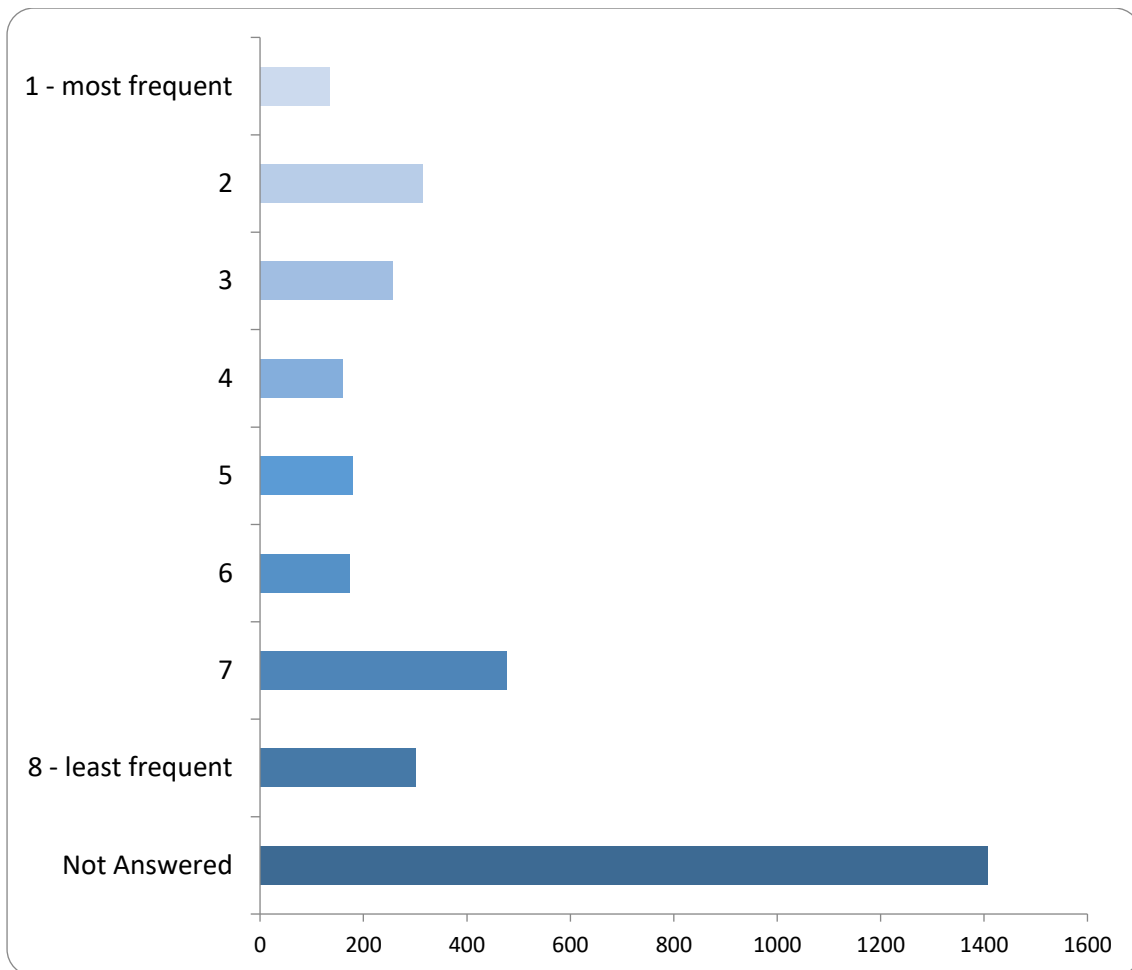
There were 1881 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	39	1.15%
2	215	6.33%
3	164	4.82%
4	174	5.12%
5	164	4.82%
6	179	5.27%
7	191	5.62%
8 - least frequent	755	22.21%
Not Answered	1518	44.66%

Internet and computer access

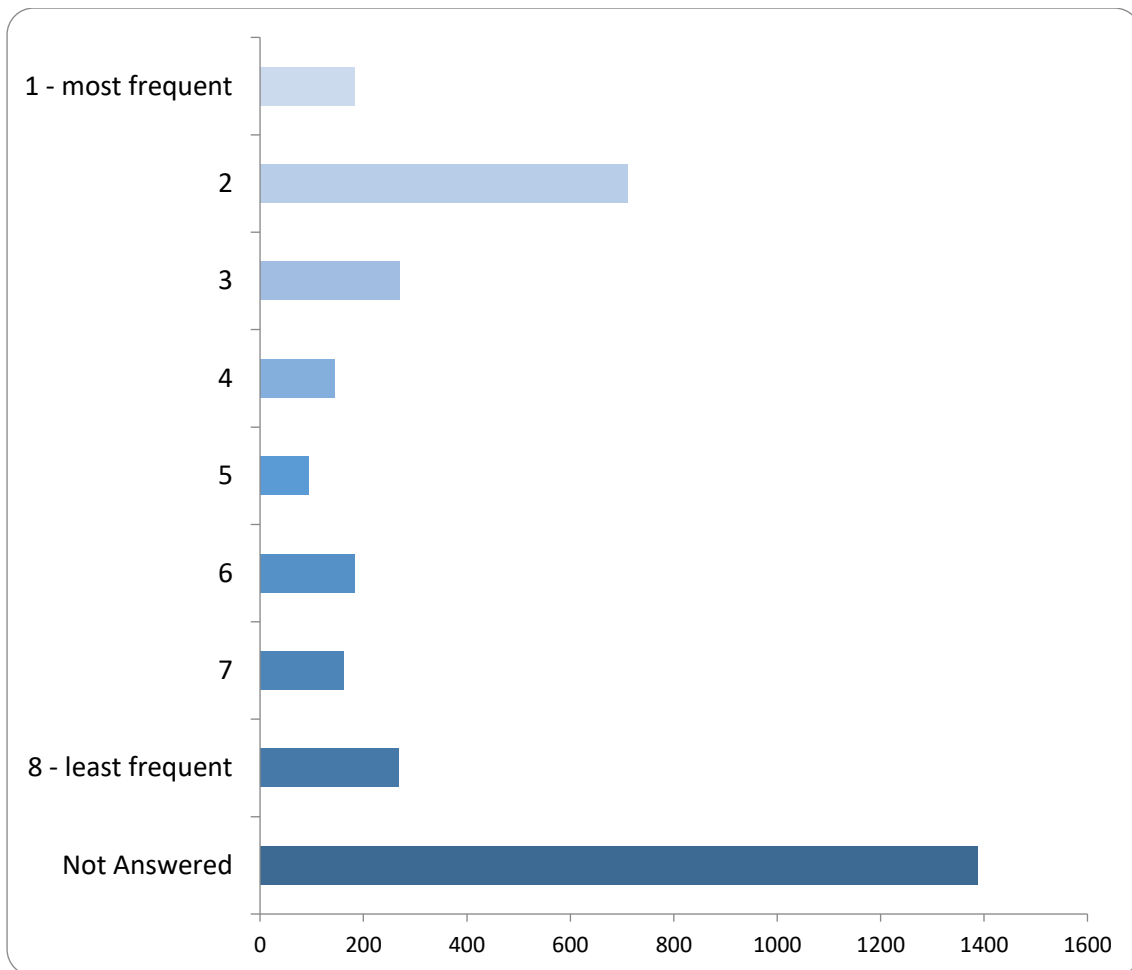
There were 1993 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	134	3.94%
2	315	9.27%
3	257	7.56%
4	160	4.71%
5	178	5.24%
6	173	5.09%
7	476	14.00%
8 - least frequent	300	8.83%
Not Answered	1406	41.37%

Children's activities

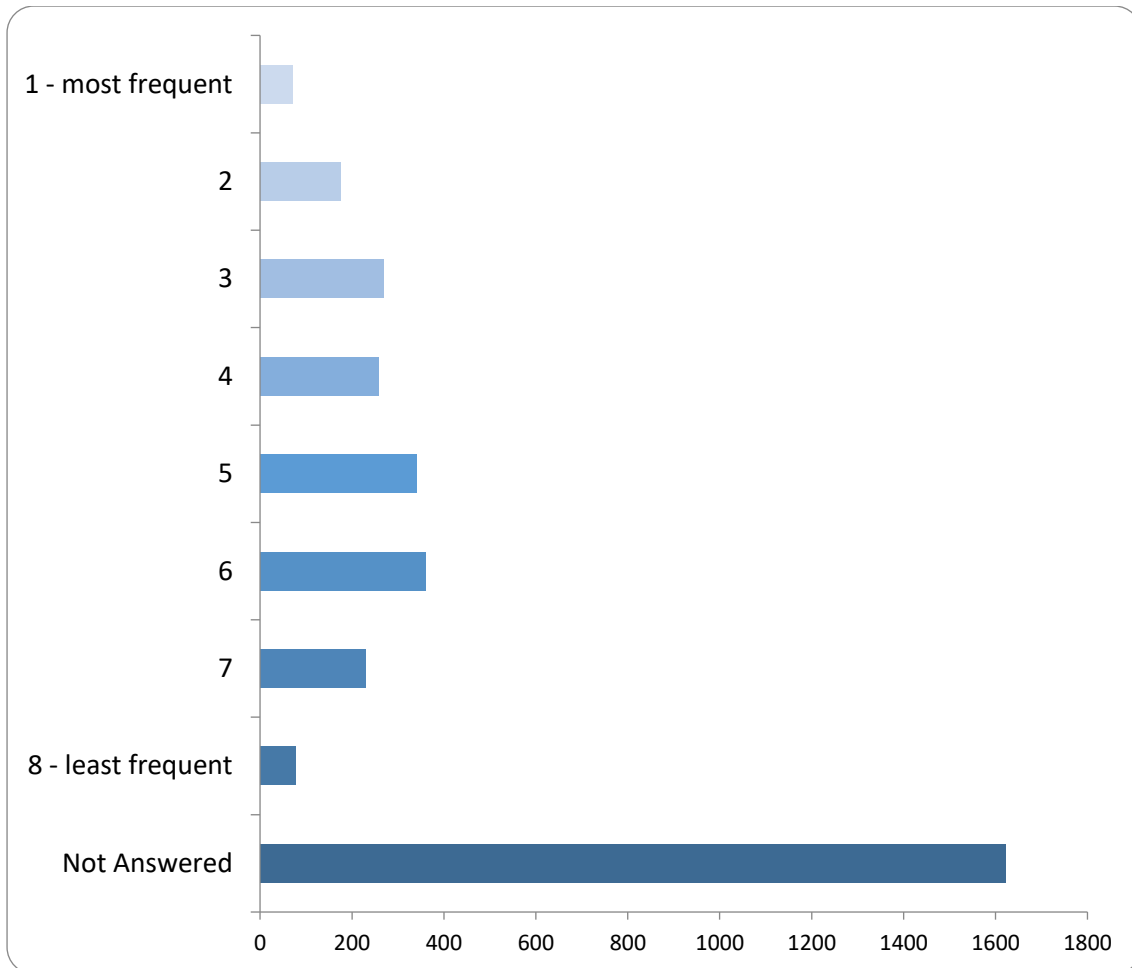
There were 2011 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	182	5.35%
2	711	20.92%
3	269	7.91%
4	144	4.24%
5	94	2.77%
6	182	5.35%
7	162	4.77%
8 - least frequent	267	7.86%
Not Answered	1388	40.84%

Adult activities

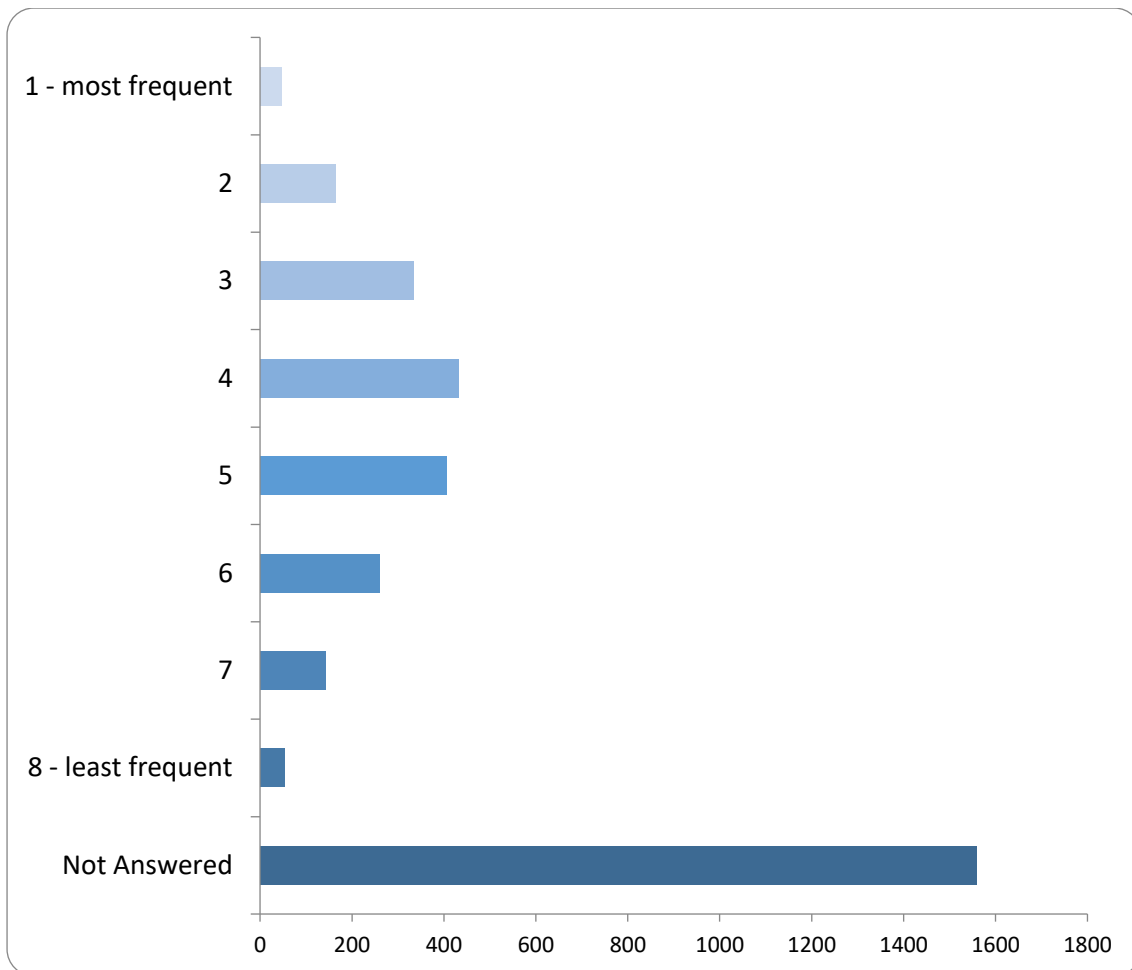
There were 1778 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	71	2.09%
2	175	5.15%
3	269	7.91%
4	258	7.59%
5	340	10.00%
6	359	10.56%
7	229	6.74%
8 - least frequent	77	2.27%
Not Answered	1621	47.69%

Community events and meetings

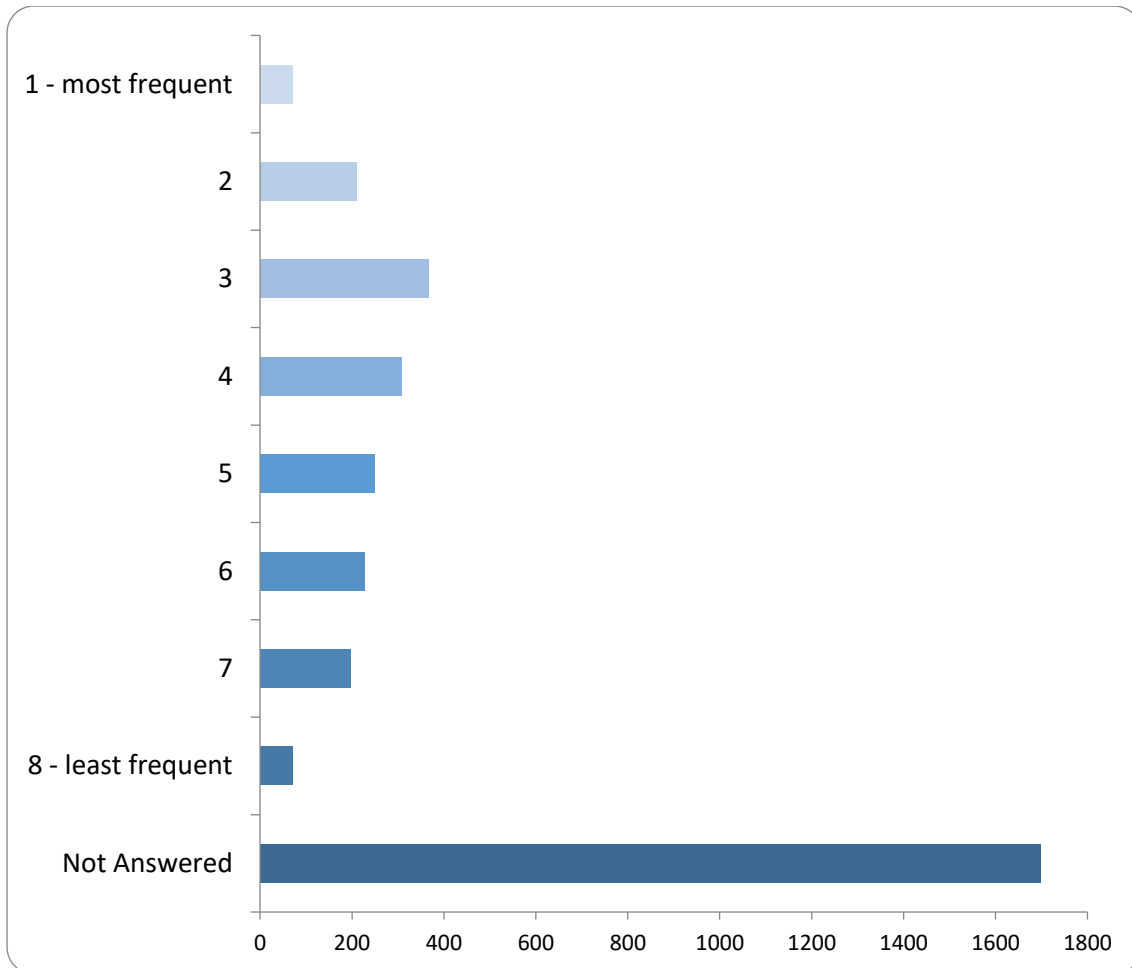
There were 1841 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	46	1.35%
2	165	4.85%
3	335	9.86%
4	432	12.71%
5	406	11.94%
6	261	7.68%
7	142	4.18%
8 - least frequent	54	1.59%
Not Answered	1558	45.84%

Personal or school study

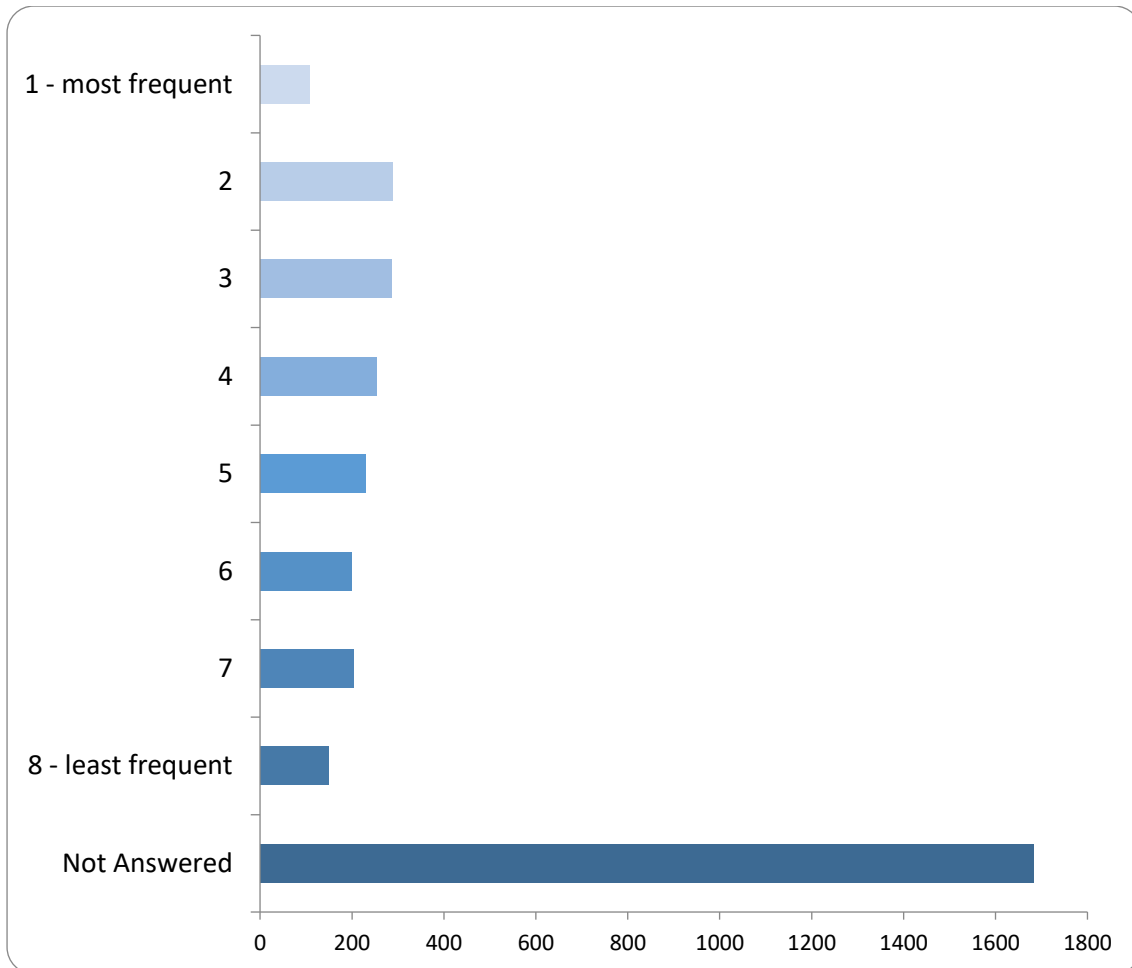
There were 1702 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	71	2.09%
2	211	6.21%
3	367	10.80%
4	308	9.06%
5	250	7.36%
6	228	6.71%
7	196	5.77%
8 - least frequent	71	2.09%
Not Answered	1697	49.93%

Online resources such as e-books or audiobooks

There were 1716 responses to this part of the question.

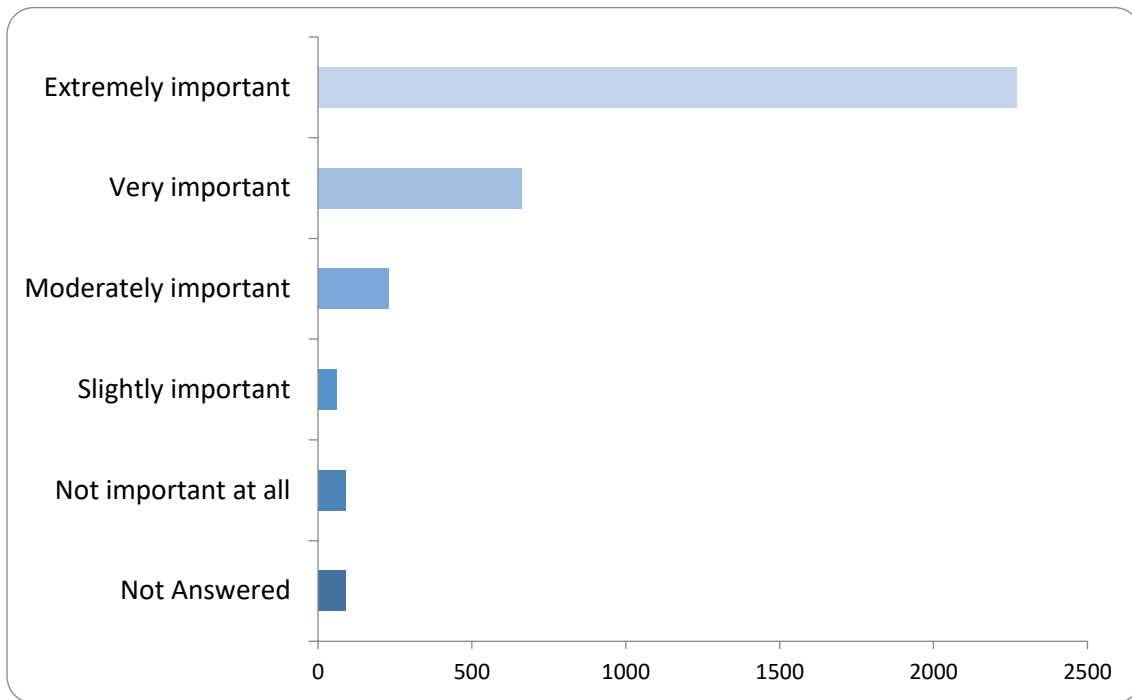


Option	Total	Percent
1 - most frequent	107	3.15%
2	289	8.50%
3	286	8.41%
4	254	7.47%
5	229	6.74%
6	199	5.85%
7	203	5.97%
8 - least frequent	149	4.38%
Not Answered	1683	49.51%

How important have you found libraries are for health and wellbeing?:

Fostering a sense of community in your area

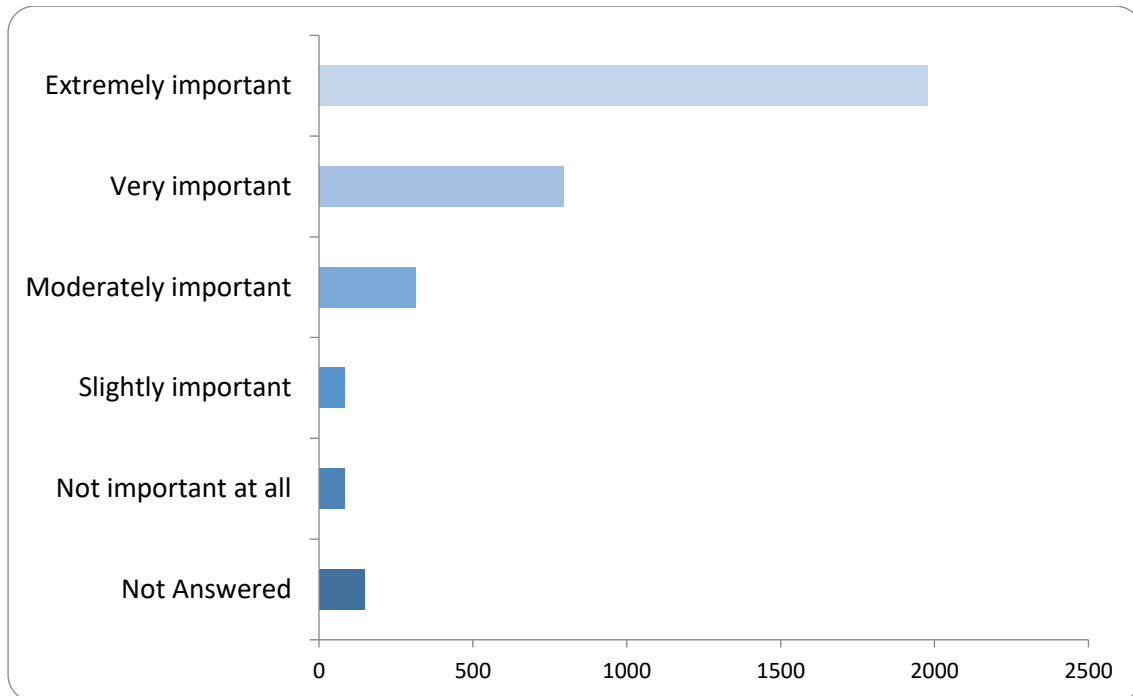
There were 3311 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Extremely important	2270	66.78%
Very important	662	19.48%
Moderately important	228	6.71%
Slightly important	61	1.79%
Not important at all	90	2.65%
Not Answered	88	2.59%

Improving health and wellbeing in your area

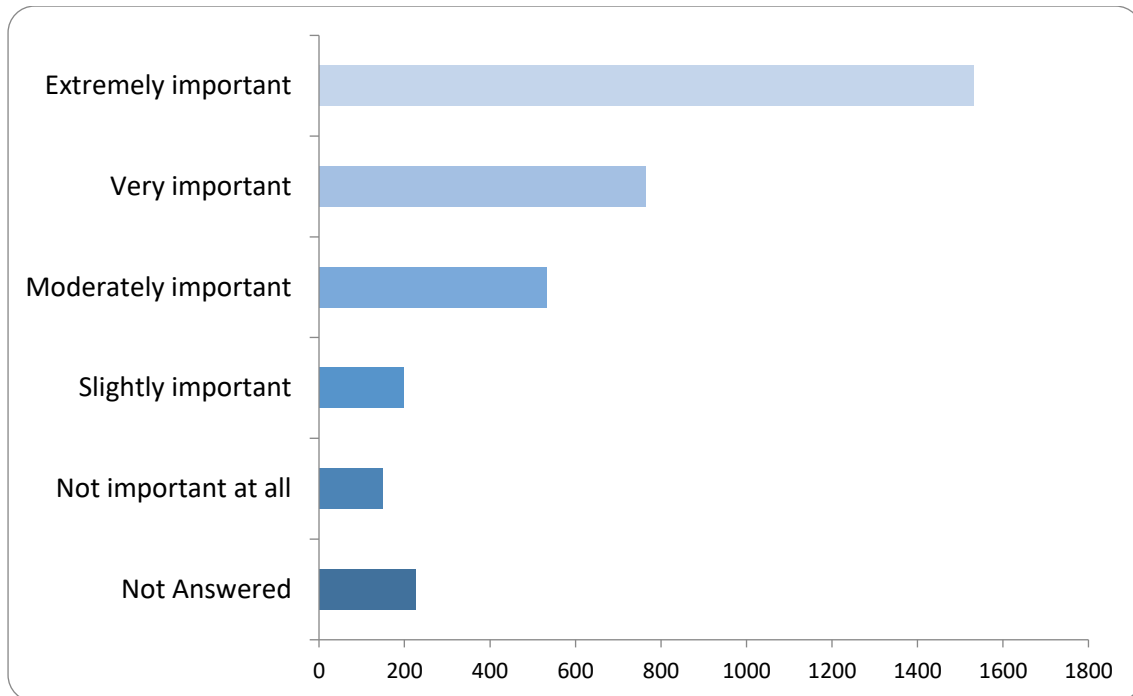
There were 3250 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Extremely important	1976	58.13%
Very important	795	23.39%
Moderately important	314	9.24%
Slightly important	82	2.41%
Not important at all	83	2.44%
Not Answered	149	4.38%

Positively impacting the local job economy or job market

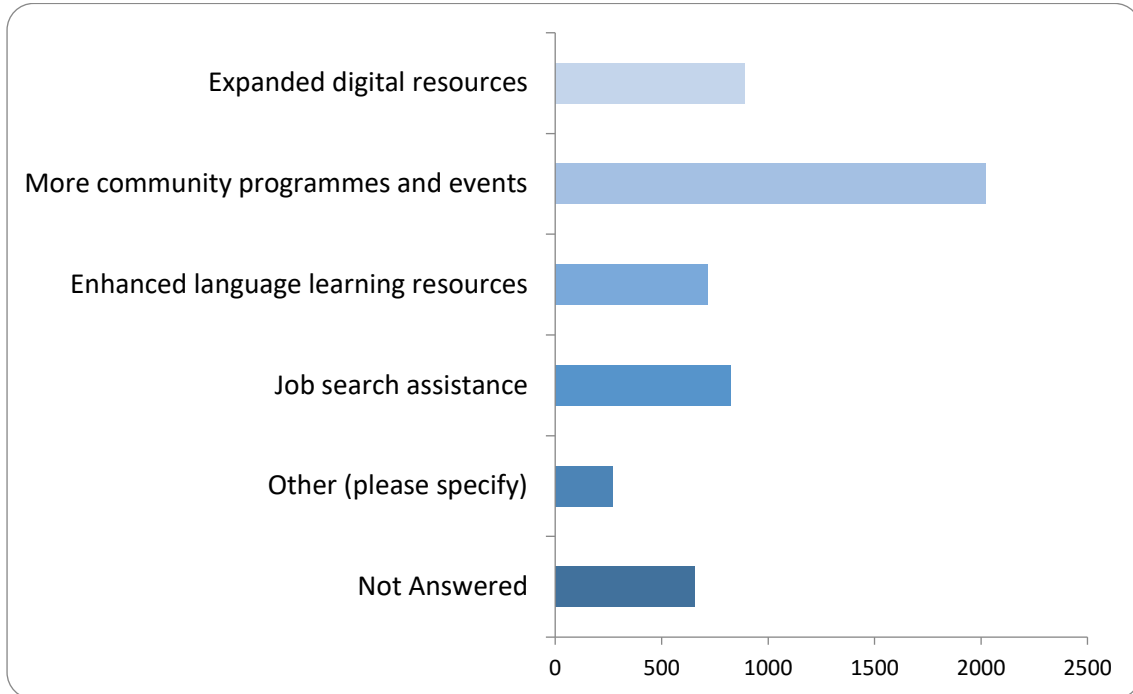
There were 3173 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Extremely important	1532	45.07%
Very important	763	22.45%
Moderately important	533	15.68%
Slightly important	197	5.80%
Not important at all	148	4.35%
Not Answered	226	6.65%

Are there any additional services or resources that you would like to see provided by your local library to better meet the needs of the community?

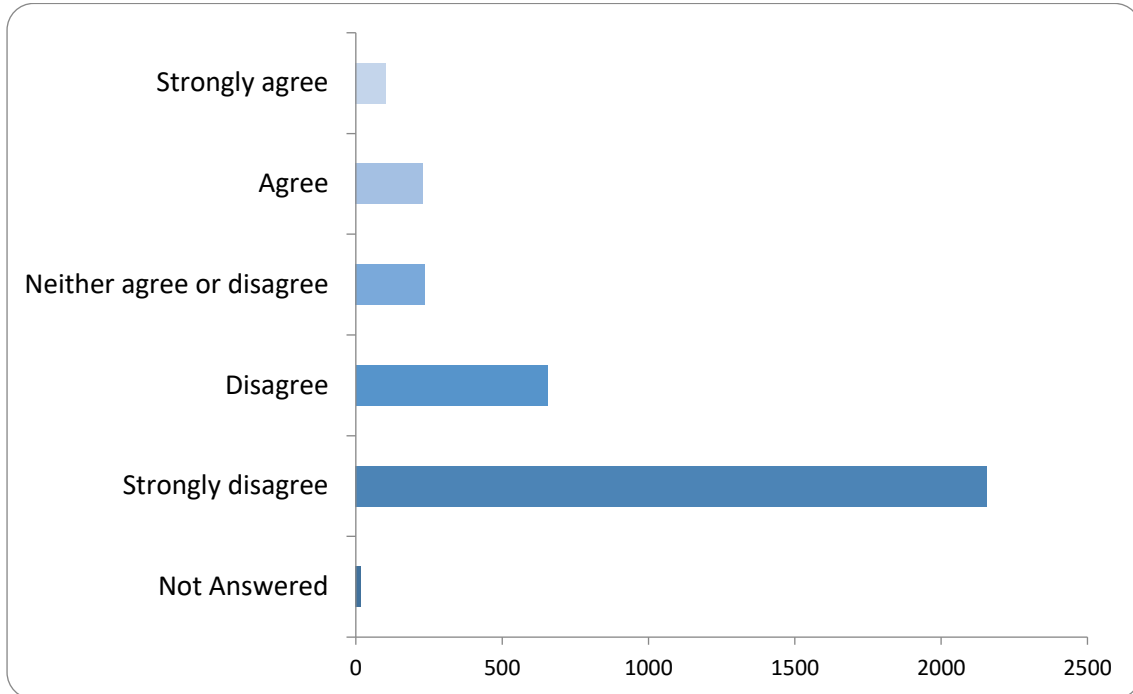
There were 2743 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Expanded digital resources	892	26.24%
More community programmes and events	2020	59.43%
Enhanced language learning resources	718	21.12%
Job search assistance	825	24.27%
Other (please specify)	268	7.88%
Not Answered	656	19.30%

Do you agree with our proposals that in order to meet the Council's financial savings targets we need to close up to four branch libraries?

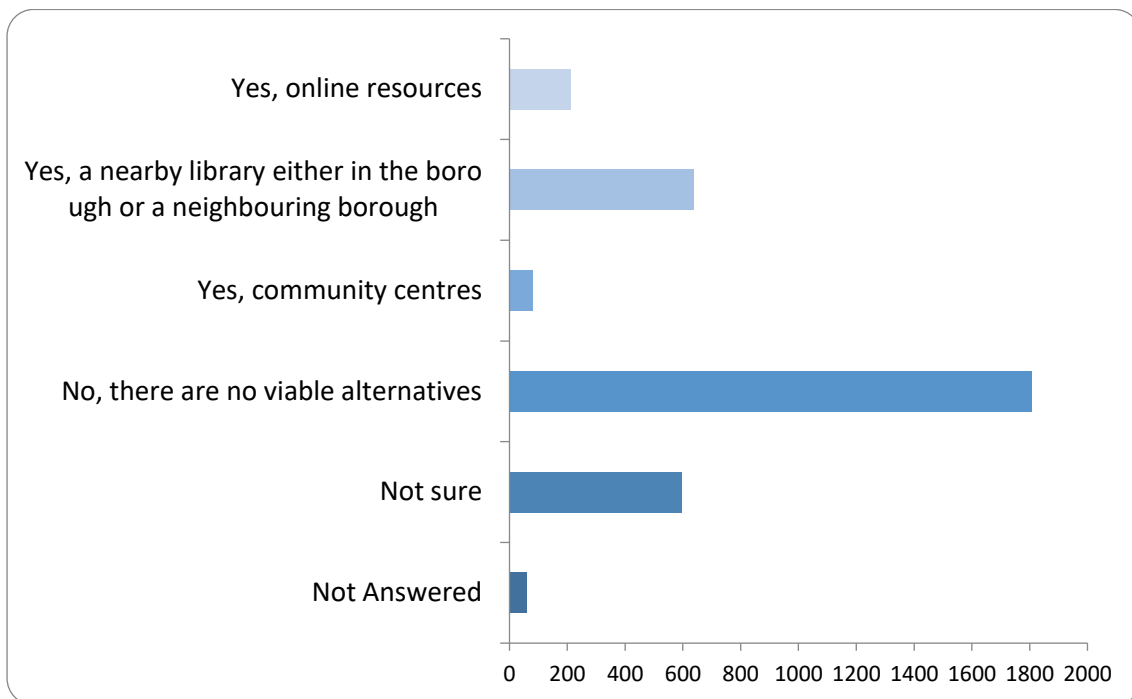
There were 3381 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	103	3.03%
Agree	229	6.74%
Neither agree or disagree	236	6.94%
Disagree	656	19.30%
Strongly disagree	2157	63.46%
Not Answered	18	0.53%

Are there any alternative means of accessing some or all of the services provided by your local library that you could use if it were to close?

There were 3338 responses to this part of the question.

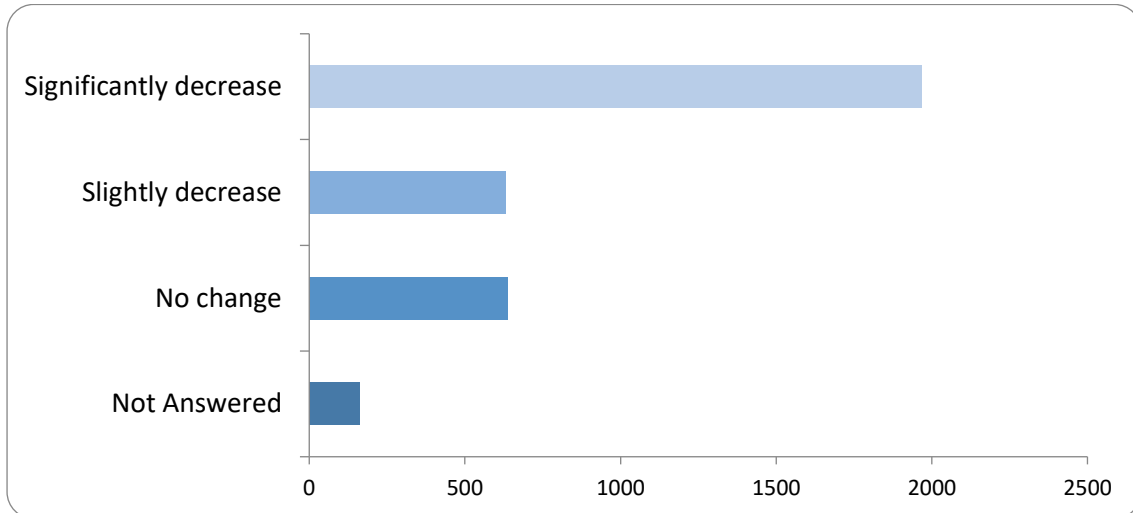


Option	Total	Percent
Yes, online resources	214	6.30%
Yes, a nearby library either in the borough or a neighbouring borough	640	18.83%
Yes, community centres	81	2.38%
No, there are no viable alternatives	1807	53.16%
Not sure	596	17.53%
Not Answered	61	1.79%

How would the closure of up to four branch libraries affect your ability to access these services or participate in these activities?

Accessing information and resources

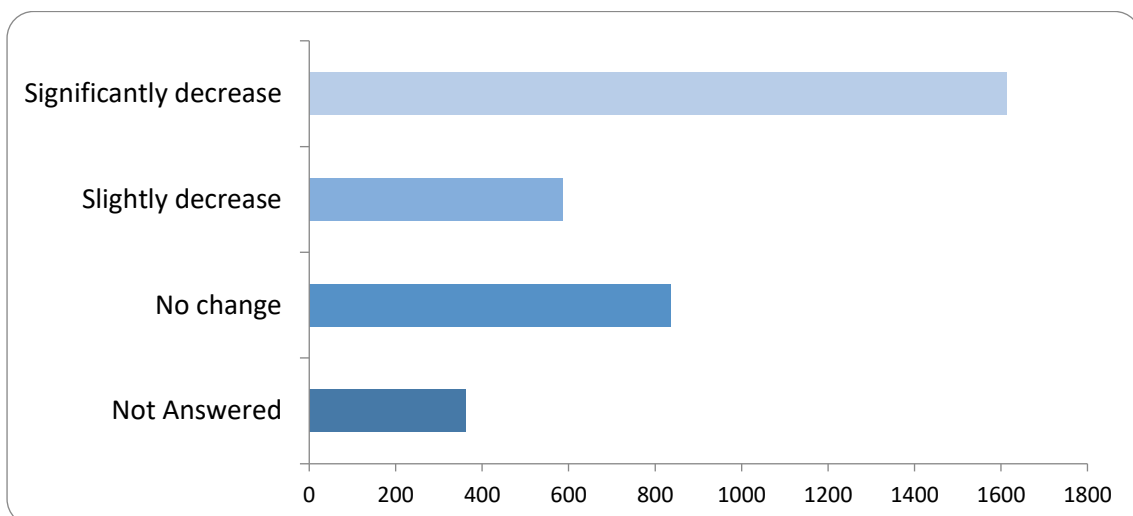
There were 3238 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Significantly decrease	1968	57.90%
Slightly decrease	631	18.56%
No change	639	18.80%
Not Answered	161	4.74%

Accessing educational materials or support

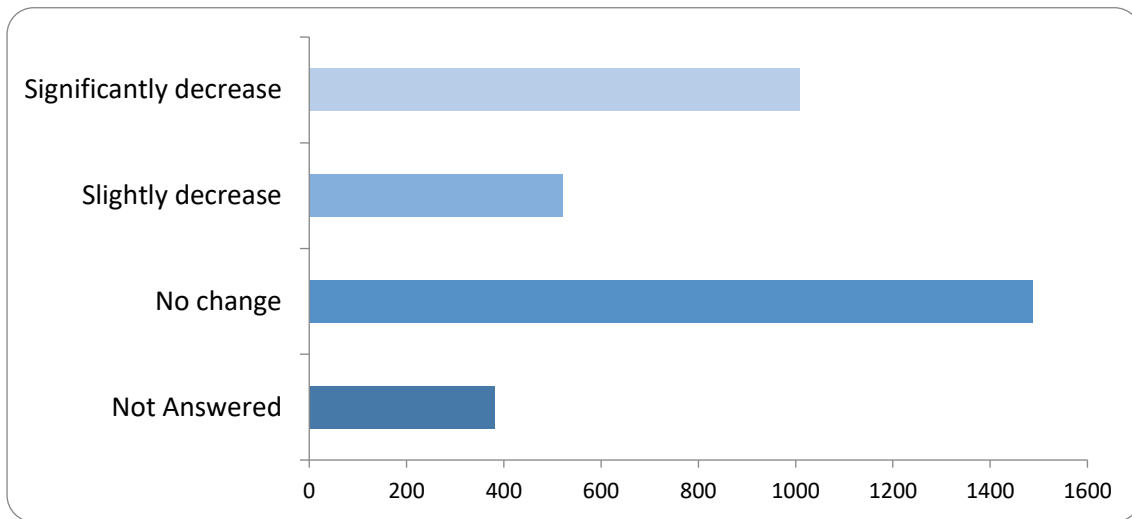
There were 3037 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Significantly decrease	1614	47.48%
Slightly decrease	586	17.24%
No change	837	24.62%
Not Answered	362	10.65%

Accessing computers or the internet

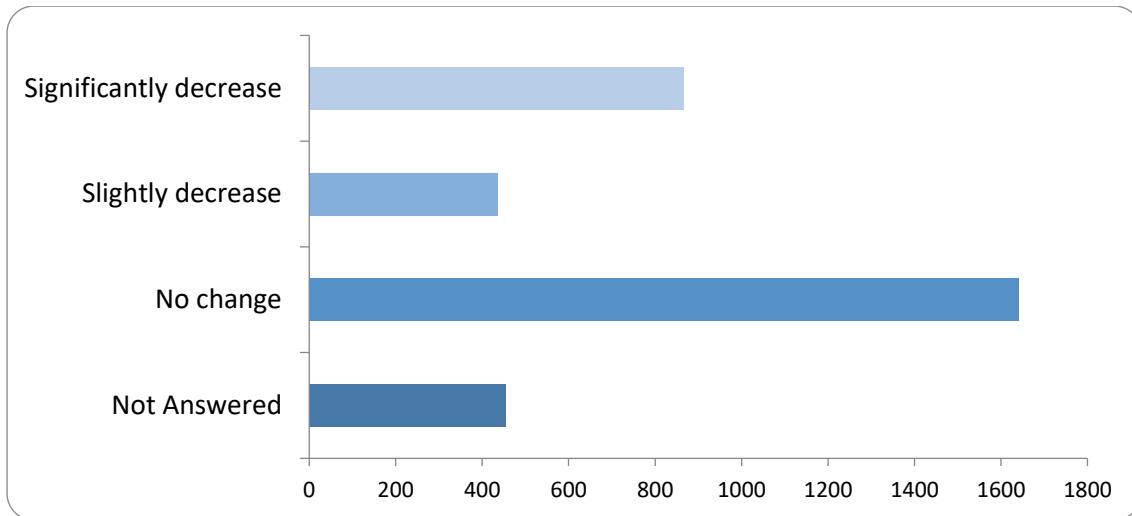
There were 3018 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Significantly decrease	1009	29.69%
Slightly decrease	521	15.33%
No change	1488	43.78%
Not Answered	381	11.21%

Accessing support for job searching or career development

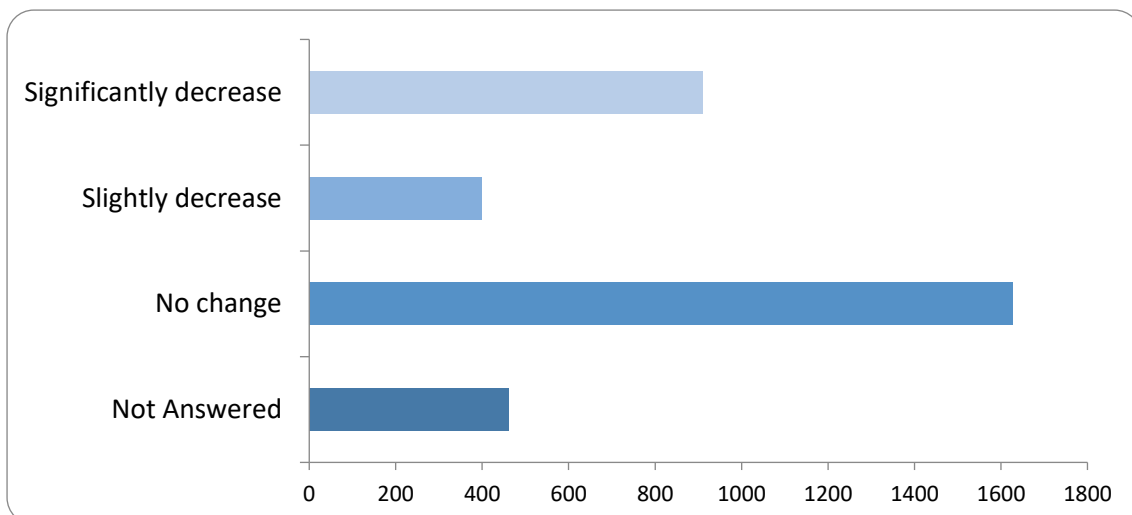
There were 2944 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Significantly decrease	866	25.48%
Slightly decrease	436	12.83%
No change	1642	48.31%
Not Answered	455	13.39%

Accessing materials or support for learning English or other languages

There were 2937 responses to this part of the question.

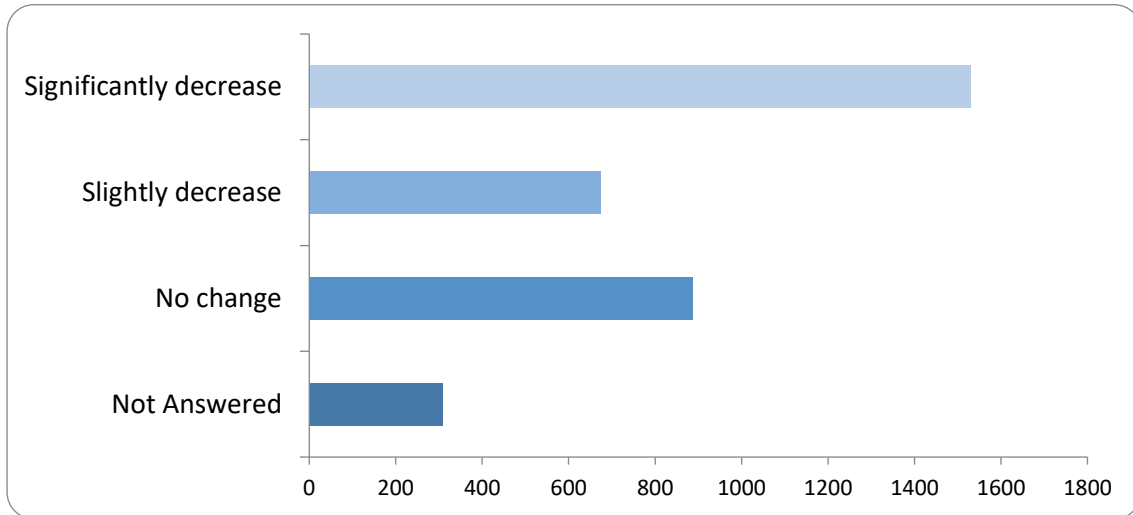


Option	Total	Percent
Significantly decrease	911	26.80%
Slightly decrease	399	11.74%

No change	1627	47.87%
Not Answered	462	13.59%

Participation in cultural or recreational activities

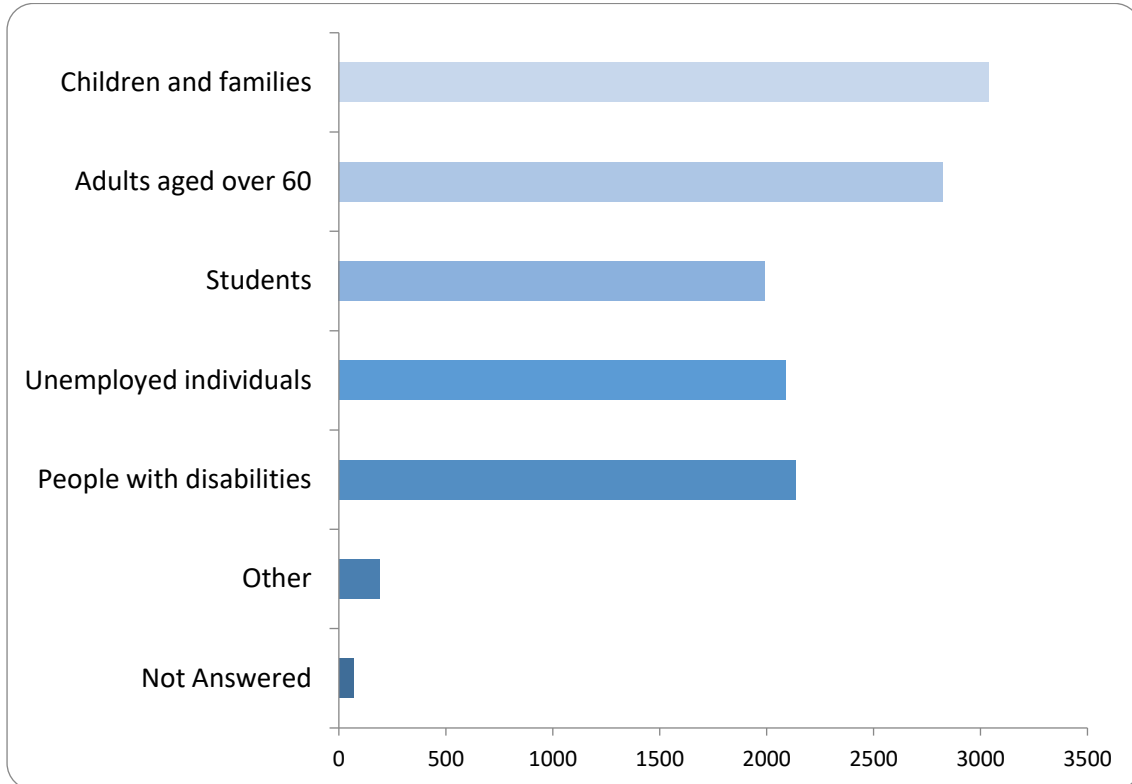
There were 3091 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Significantly decrease	1529	44.98%
Slightly decrease	674	19.83%
No change	888	26.13%
Not Answered	308	9.06%

Are there any specific groups within the community that you believe would be disproportionately affected by the closure of the library?

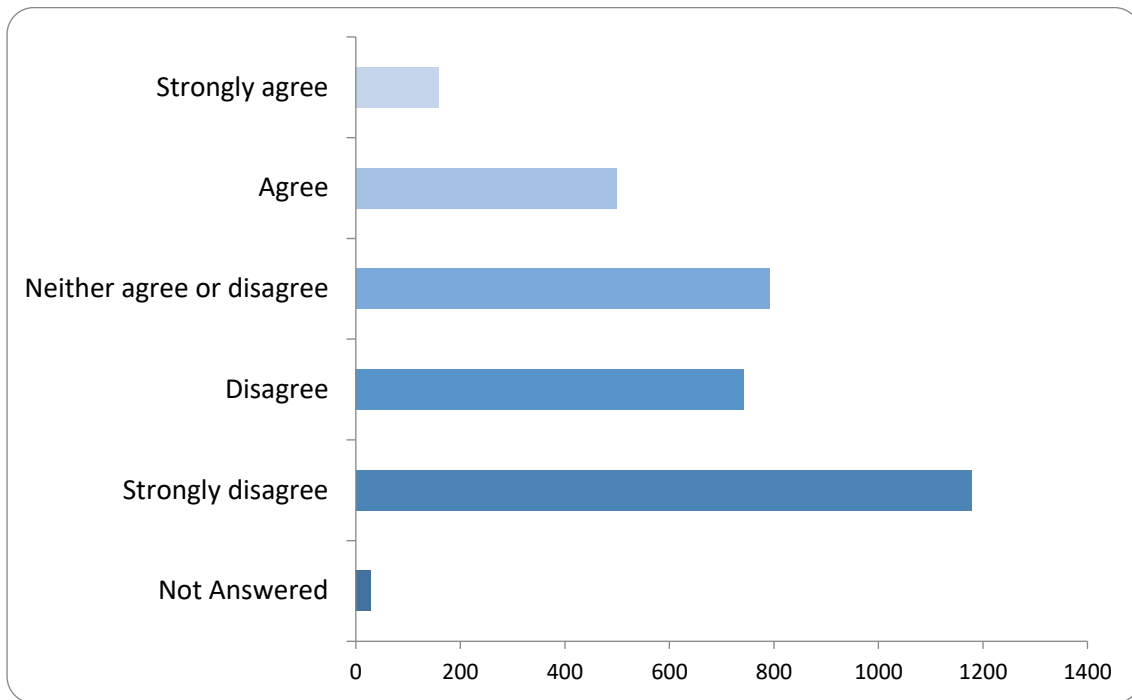
There were 3330 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Children and families	3037	89.35%
Adults aged over 60	2822	83.02%
Students	1992	58.61%
Unemployed individuals	2087	61.40%
People with disabilities	2134	62.78%
Other	190	5.59%
Not Answered	69	2.03%

We propose that in order to contribute to the savings the Council needs to make, the library budget to buy new stock should reduce by a one-off 61% (£161,000) in 2024/25 and £30,000 in each of the two following years. Do you agree with our proposal?

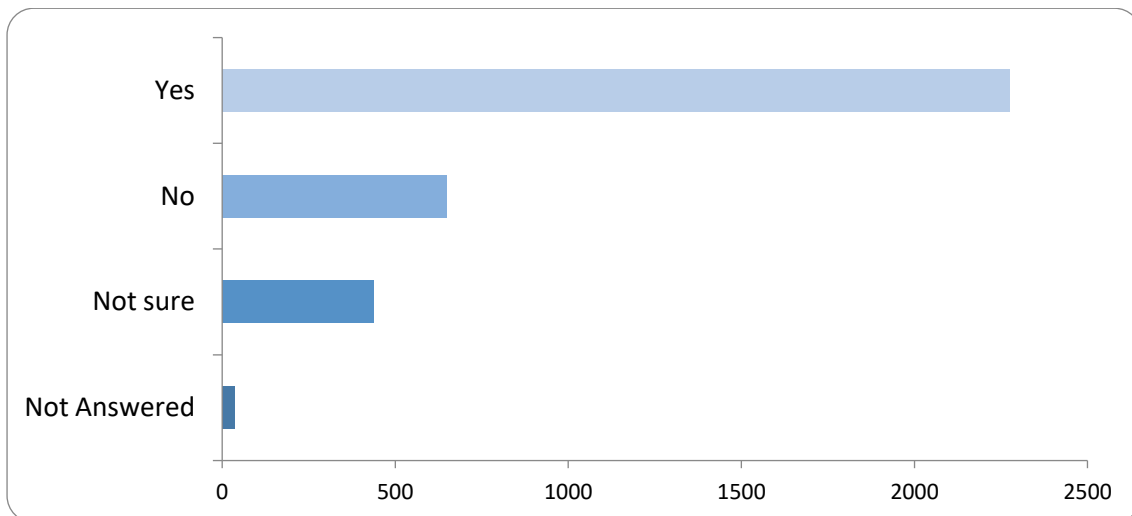
There were 3370 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	159	4.68%
Agree	499	14.68%
Neither agree or disagree	791	23.27%
Disagree	743	21.86%
Strongly disagree	1178	34.66%
Not Answered	29	0.85%

Do you agree that the library service has published an appropriate vision?

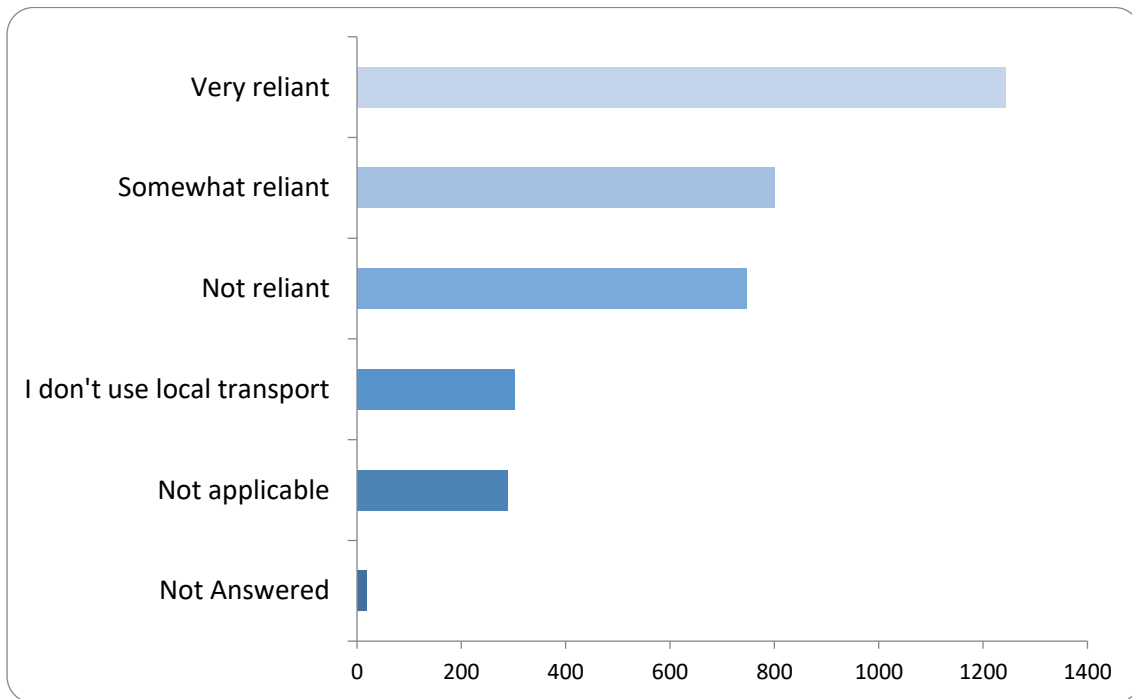
There were 3363 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	2275	66.93%
No	650	19.12%
Not sure	438	12.89%
Not Answered	36	1.06%

How reliant are you on local public transport links to access other nearby libraries if your nearest library were to close?

There were 3380 responses to this part of the question.

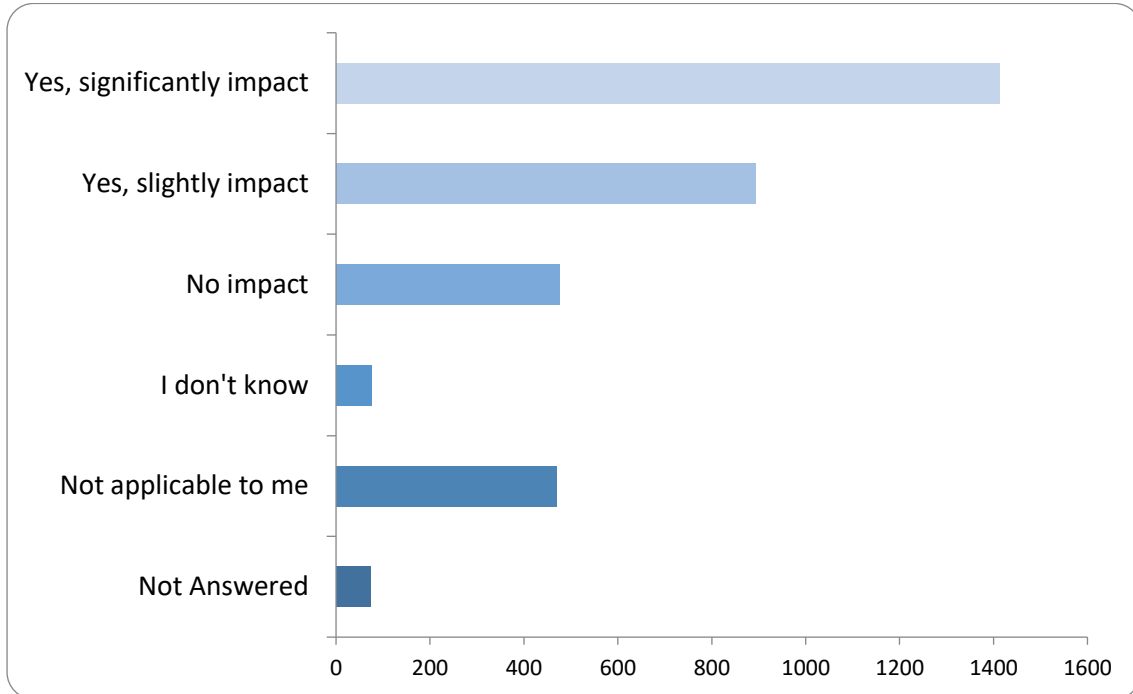


Option	Total	Percent
Very reliant	1242	36.54%
Somewhat reliant	801	23.57%
Not reliant	747	21.98%
I don't use local transport	301	8.86%
Not applicable	289	8.50%
Not Answered	19	0.56%

Would the closure of your nearest library impact your ability to access other libraries due to transportation limitations or a disability?

Transport limitations

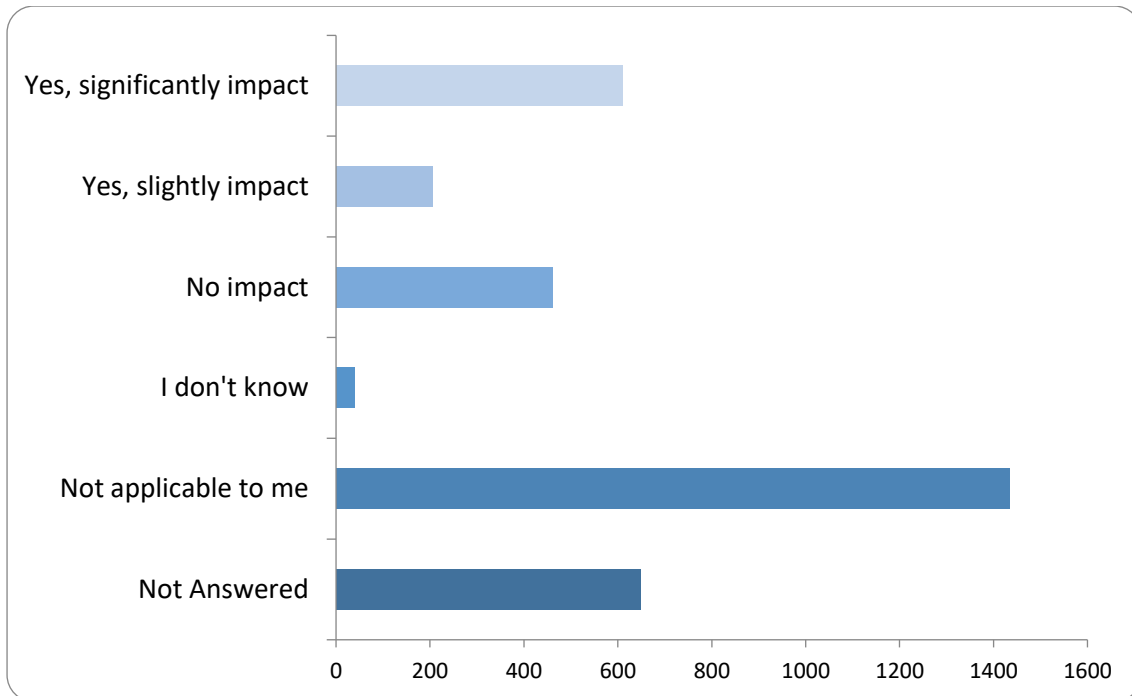
There were 3326 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, significantly impact	1412	41.54%
Yes, slightly impact	893	26.27%
No impact	476	14.00%
I don't know	75	2.21%
Not applicable to me	470	13.83%
Not Answered	73	2.15%

Disability

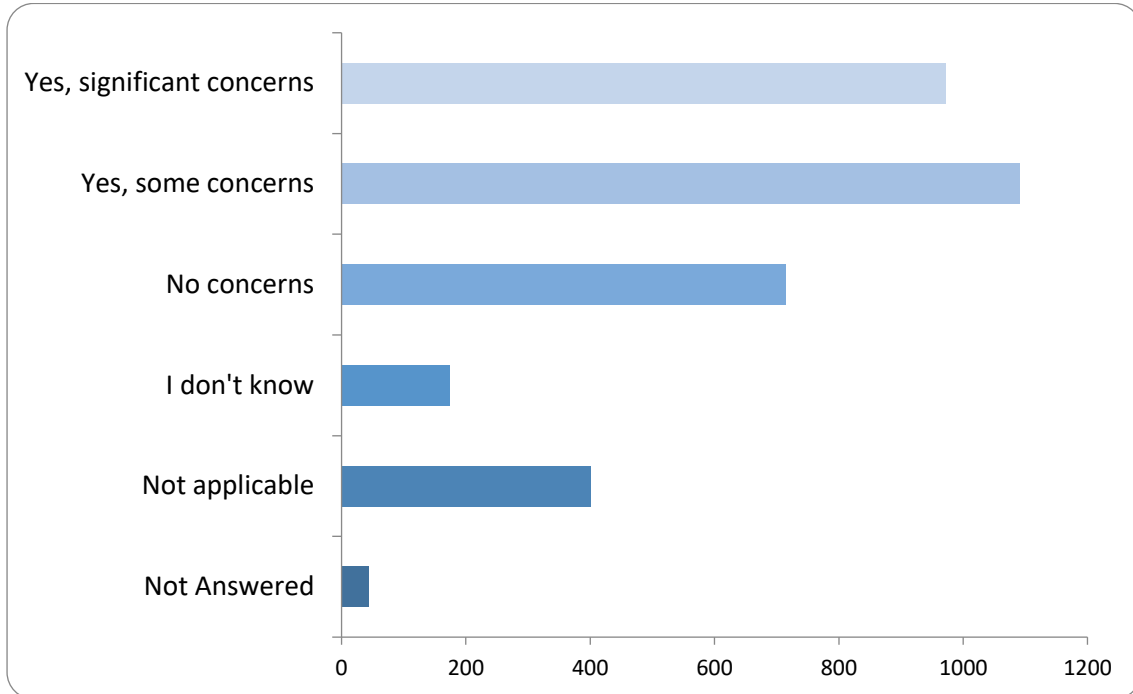
There were 2750 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, significantly impact	611	17.98%
Yes, slightly impact	205	6.03%
No impact	461	13.56%
I don't know	40	1.18%
Not applicable to me	1433	42.16%
Not Answered	649	19.09%

Do you have any concerns about the reliability or availability of local transport options for accessing alternative libraries?

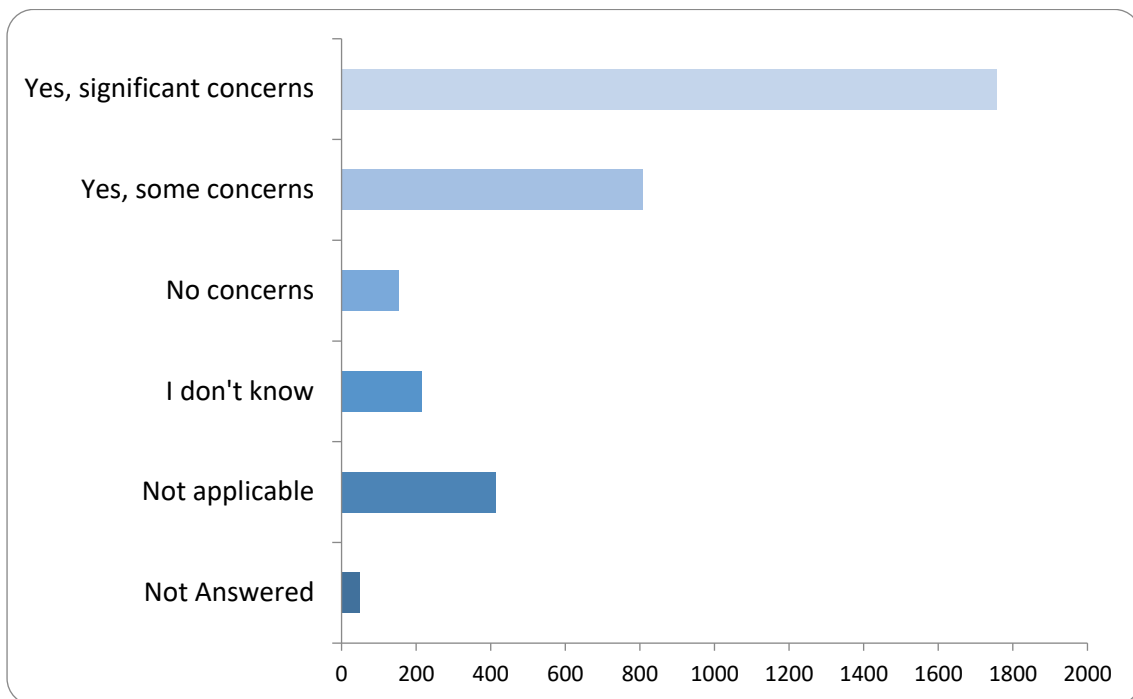
There were 3355 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, significant concerns	972	28.60%
Yes, some concerns	1091	32.10%
No concerns	715	21.04%
I don't know	175	5.15%
Not applicable	402	11.83%
Not Answered	44	1.29%

Do you have any concerns about the availability of alternative accommodations or services for individuals with disabilities if the library were to close?

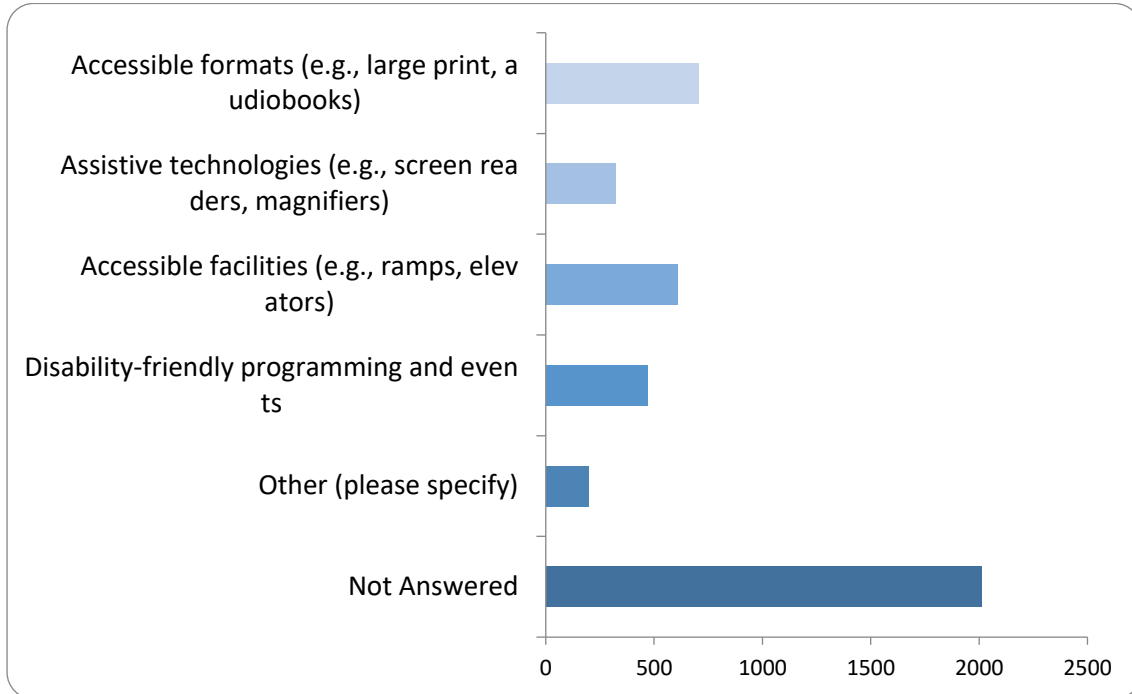
There were 3350 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, significant concerns	1757	51.69%
Yes, some concerns	808	23.77%
No concerns	154	4.53%
I don't know	216	6.35%
Not applicable	415	12.21%
Not Answered	49	1.44%

Are there any specific disability accommodations or services provided by your local library that you or a household member rely on?

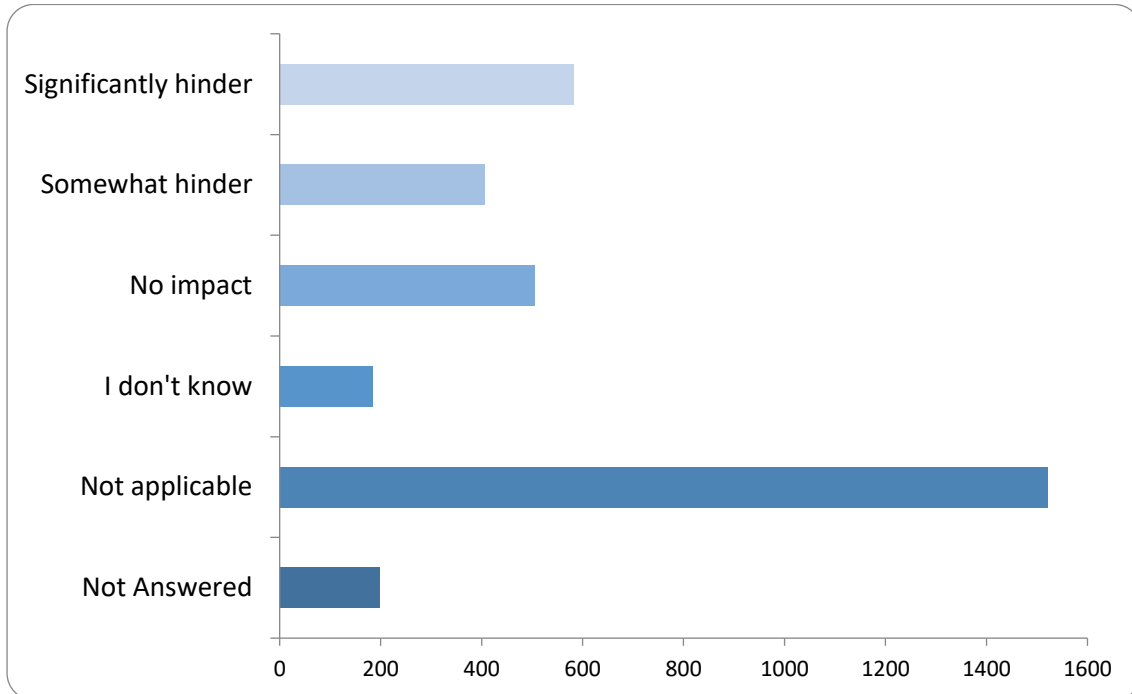
There were 1388 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Accessible formats (e.g., large print, audiobooks)	708	20.83%
Assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, magnifiers)	323	9.50%
Accessible facilities (e.g., ramps, elevators)	610	17.95%
Disability-friendly programming and events	470	13.83%
Other (please specify)	196	5.77%
Not Answered	2011	59.16%

Would the closure of the library impact your ability, or a household member's ability to access disability-specific resources or accommodations?

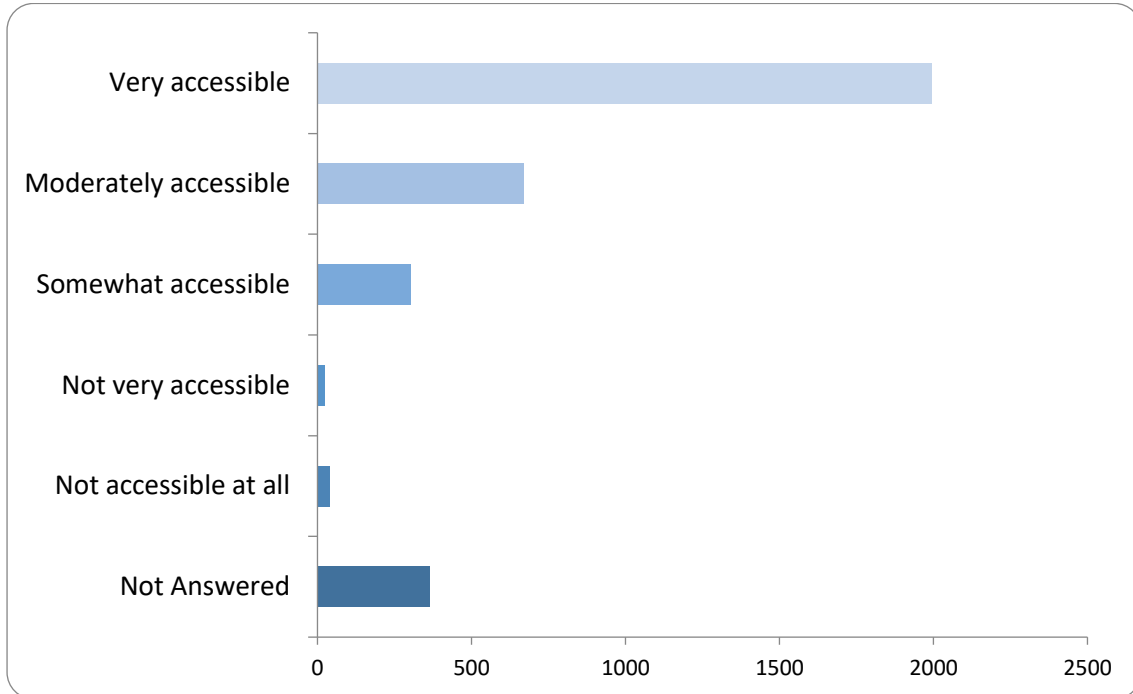
There were 3200 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Significantly hinder	583	17.15%
Somewhat hinder	406	11.94%
No impact	505	14.86%
I don't know	185	5.44%
Not applicable	1521	44.75%
Not Answered	199	5.85%

How accessible do you find the current library facilities and services for individuals with disabilities?

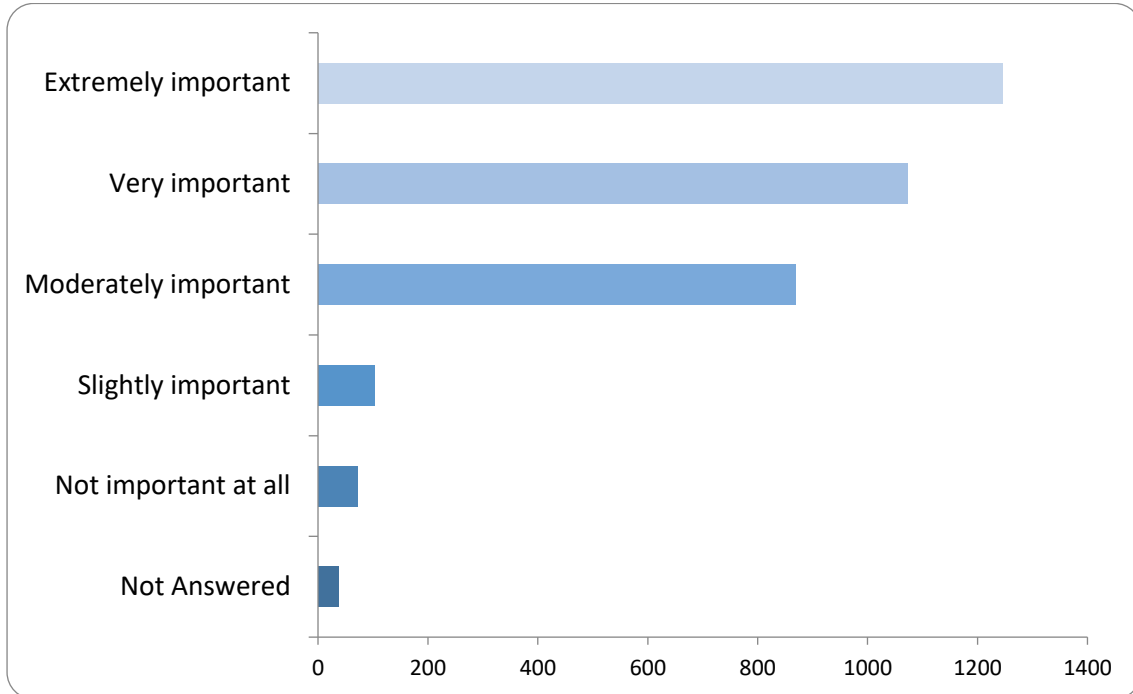
There were 3033 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Very accessible	1996	58.72%
Moderately accessible	671	19.74%
Somewhat accessible	303	8.91%
Not very accessible	24	0.71%
Not accessible at all	39	1.15%
Not Answered	366	10.77%

How important is the condition and comfort of the library building to your overall satisfaction with library services?

There were 3362 responses to this part of the question.

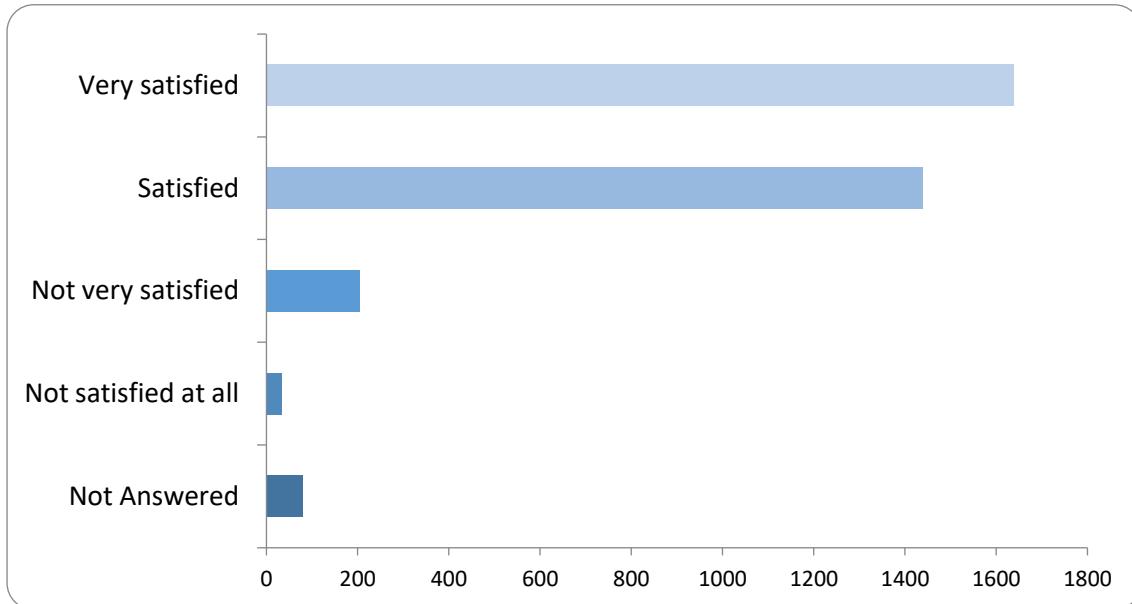


Option	Total	Percent
Extremely important	1246	36.66%
Very important	1073	31.57%
Moderately important	869	25.57%
Slightly important	103	3.03%
Not important at all	71	2.09%
Not Answered	37	1.09%

Please tell us how satisfied you are with our current library facilities

The variety and quality of books available at your local library

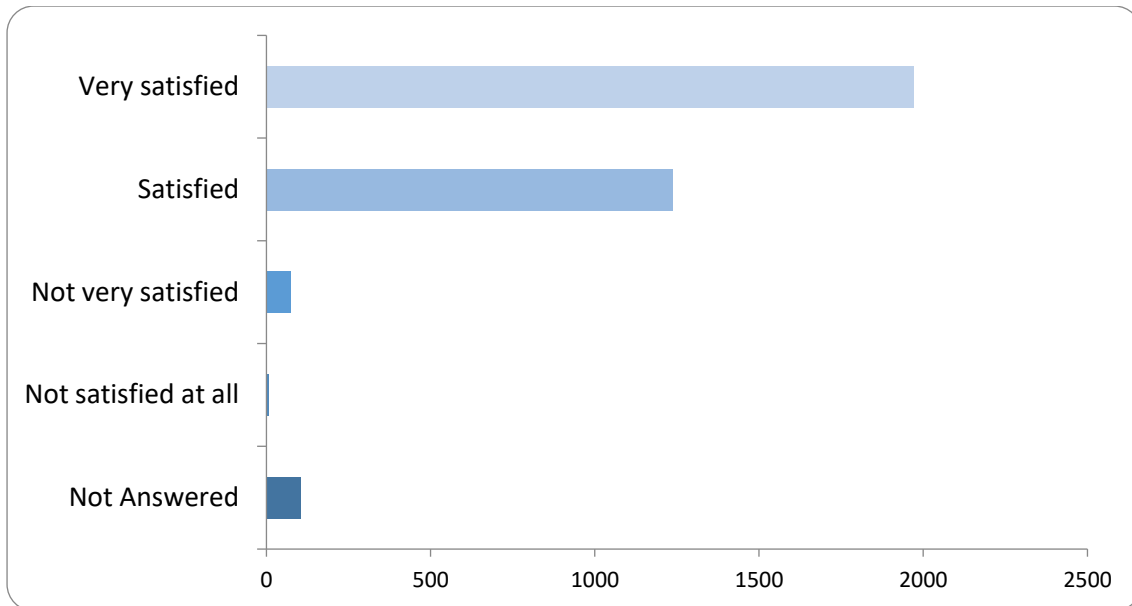
There were 3319 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Very satisfied	1639	48.22%
Satisfied	1439	42.34%
Not very satisfied	206	6.06%
Not satisfied at all	35	1.03%
Not Answered	80	2.35%

The condition and cleanliness of your local library building

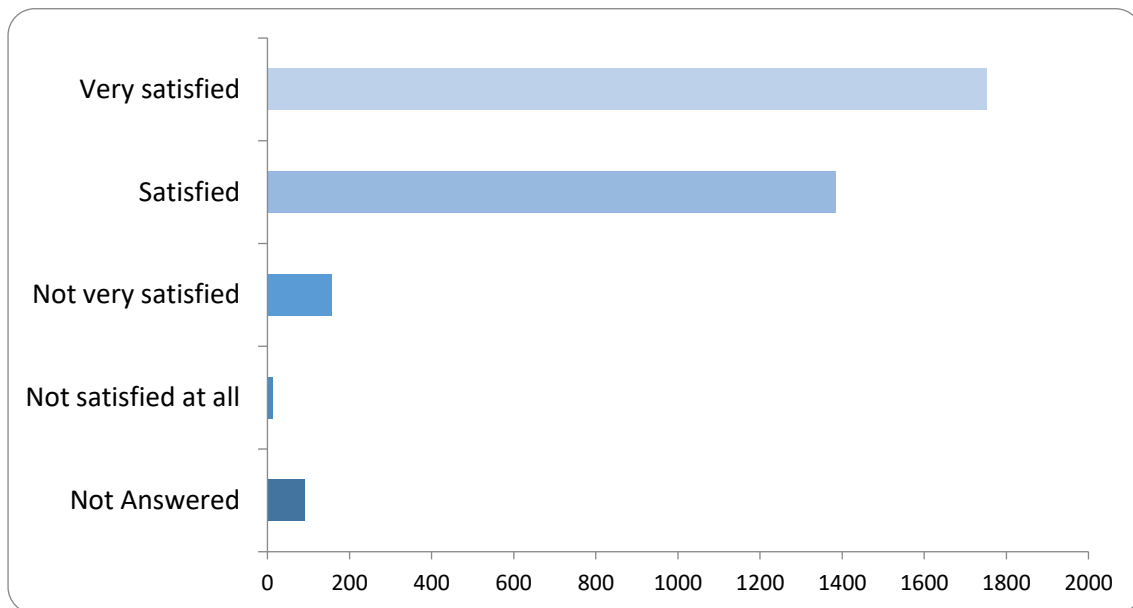
There were 3294 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Very satisfied	1972	58.02%
Satisfied	1238	36.42%
Not very satisfied	75	2.21%
Not satisfied at all	9	0.26%
Not Answered	105	3.09%

Comfort and amenities available within the library building (eg seating, lighting, heating/cooling etc)

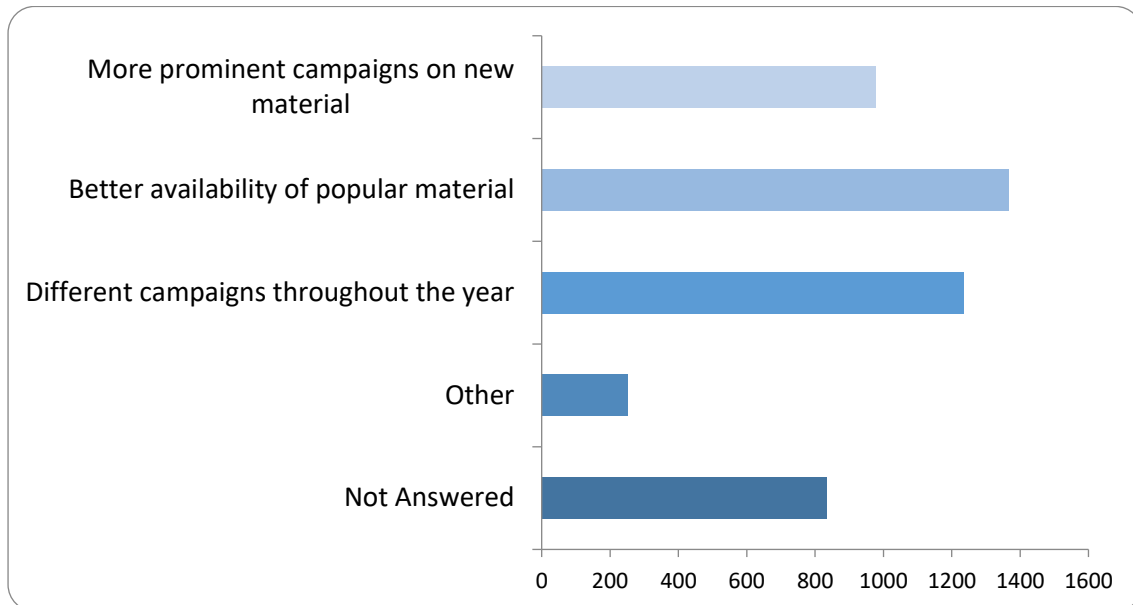
There were 3308 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Very satisfied	1753	51.57%
Satisfied	1385	40.75%
Not very satisfied	156	4.59%
Not satisfied at all	14	0.41%
Not Answered	91	2.68%

Do you have any specific suggestions for improving the variety and quality of books available at the library?

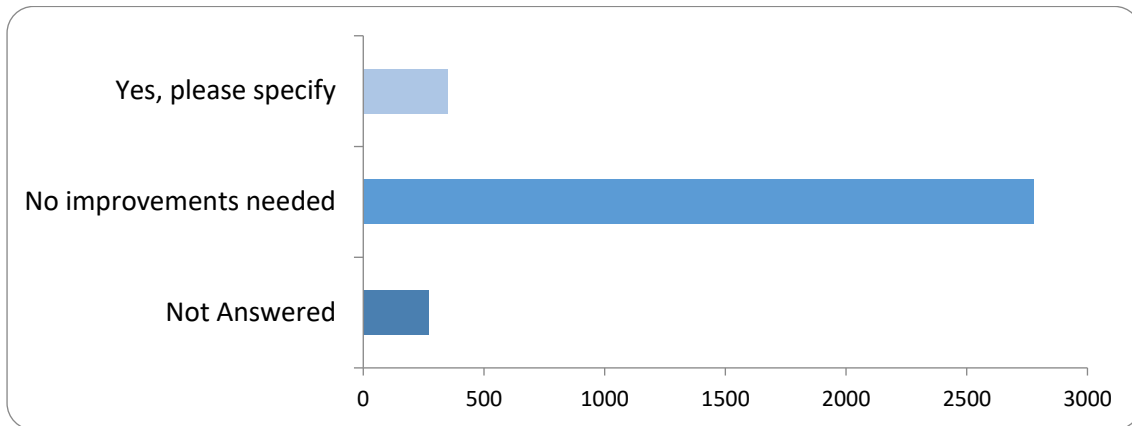
There were 2564 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
More prominent campaigns on new material	977	28.74%
Better availability of popular material	1367	40.22%
Different campaigns throughout the year	1234	36.30%
Other	253	7.44%
Not Answered	835	24.57%

Are there any specific improvements you would like to see in the condition and cleanliness of the library building?

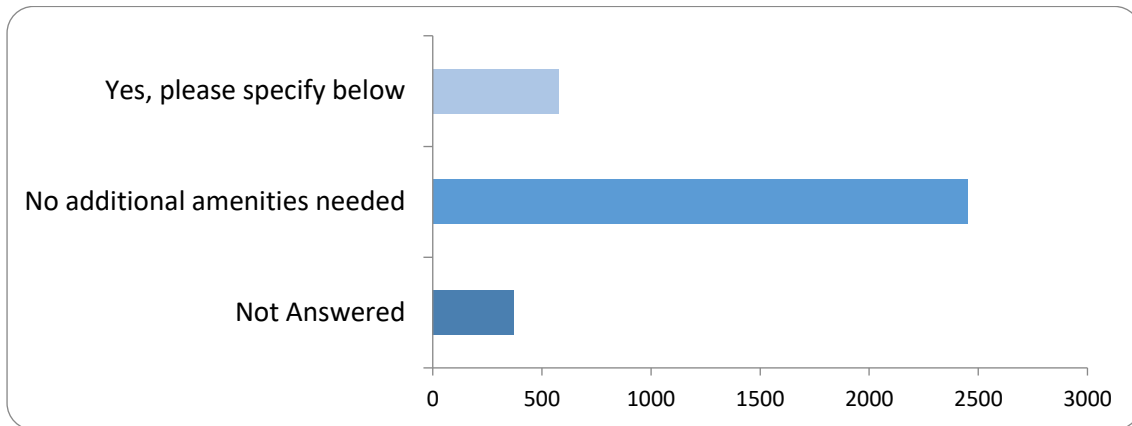
There were 3128 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, please specify	351	10.33%
No improvements needed	2777	81.70%
Not Answered	271	7.97%

Are there any additional amenities or facilities you would like to see added to enhance the comfort and usability of the library building?

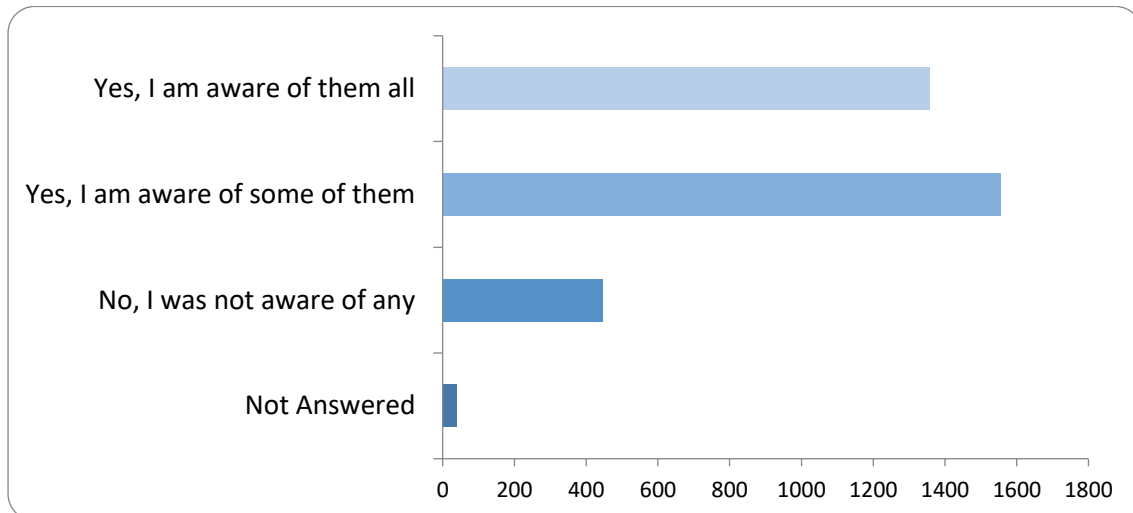
There were 3027 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, please specify below	576	16.95%
No additional amenities needed	2451	72.11%
Not Answered	372	10.94%

Are you aware of the various activities and programmes offered at your local library, such as Baby Bounce, Wiggle and Giggle, Stay and Play, and Knit and Natter?

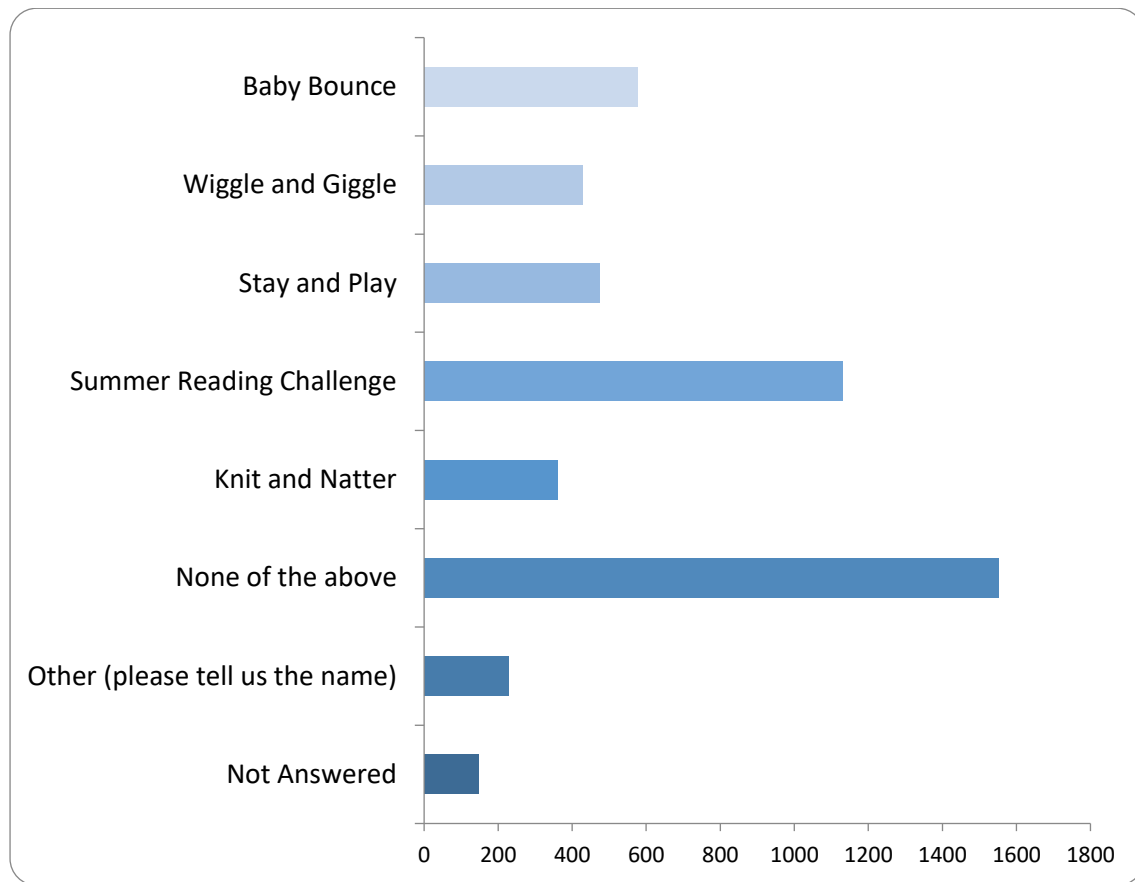
There were 3360 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, I am aware of them all	1359	39.98%
Yes, I am aware of some of them	1555	45.75%
No, I was not aware of any	446	13.12%
Not Answered	39	1.15%

Have you participated in any of the following library activities in the past year?

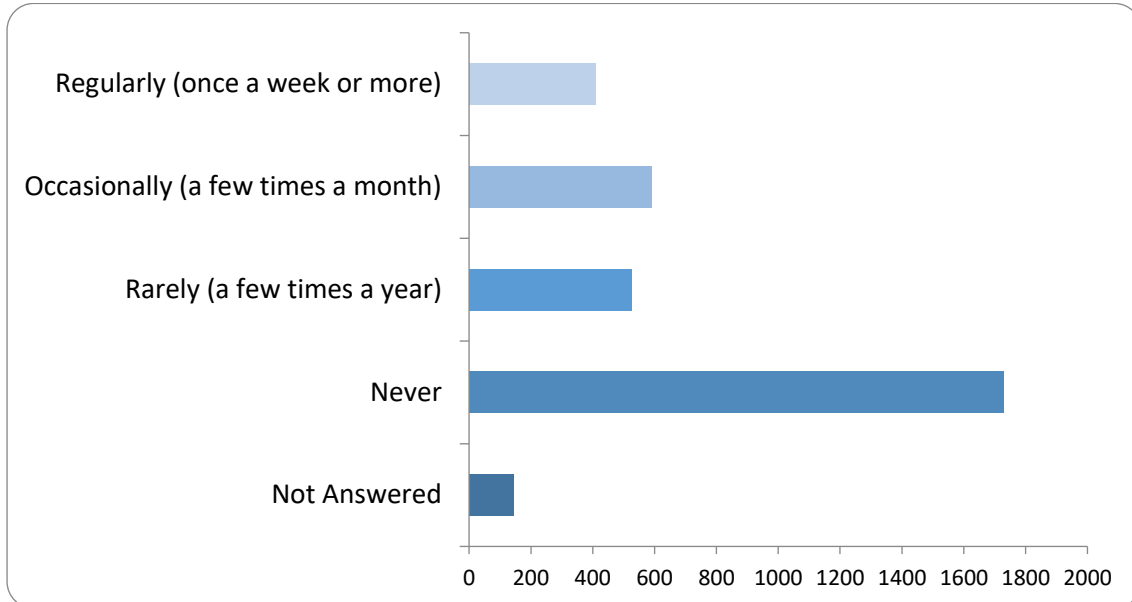
There were 3251 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Baby Bounce	576	16.95%
Wiggle and Giggle	429	12.62%
Stay and Play	473	13.92%
Summer Reading Challenge	1131	33.27%
Knit and Natter	361	10.62%
None of the above	1553	45.69%
Other (please tell us the name)	228	6.71%
Not Answered	148	4.35%

How often do you participate in library activities such as Baby Bounce, Wiggle and Giggle, Stay and Play, or Knit and Natter?

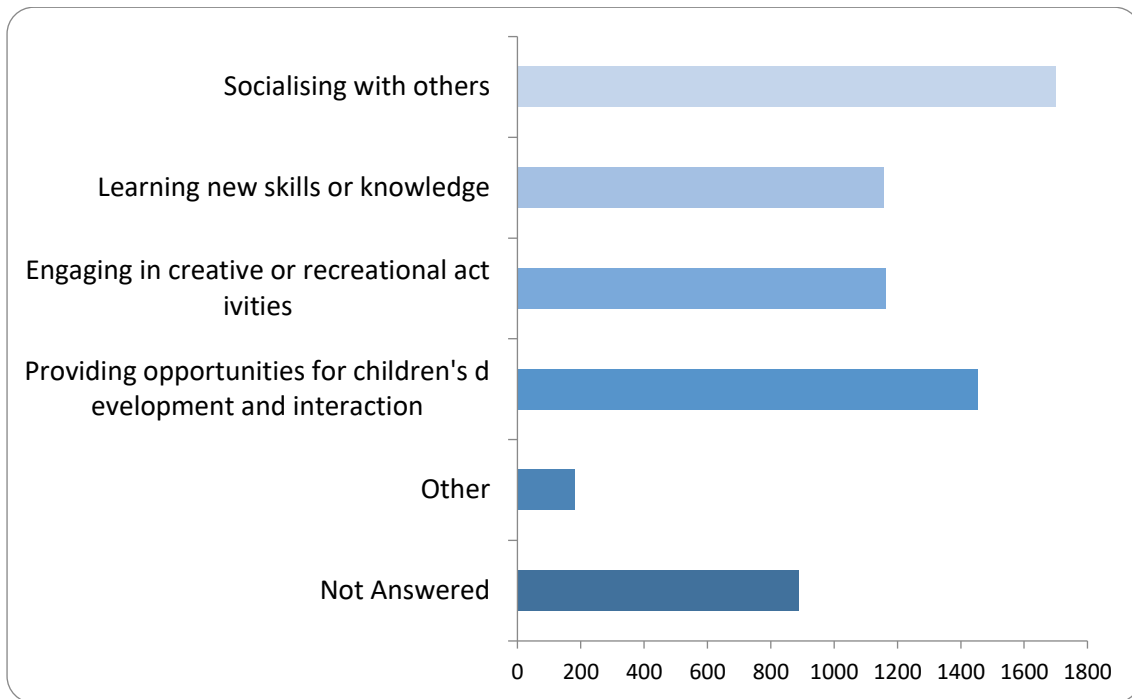
There were 3254 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Regularly (once a week or more)	410	12.06%
Occasionally (a few times a month)	589	17.33%
Rarely (a few times a year)	525	15.45%
Never	1730	50.90%
Not Answered	145	4.27%

What do you enjoy most about the library activities you have participated in?

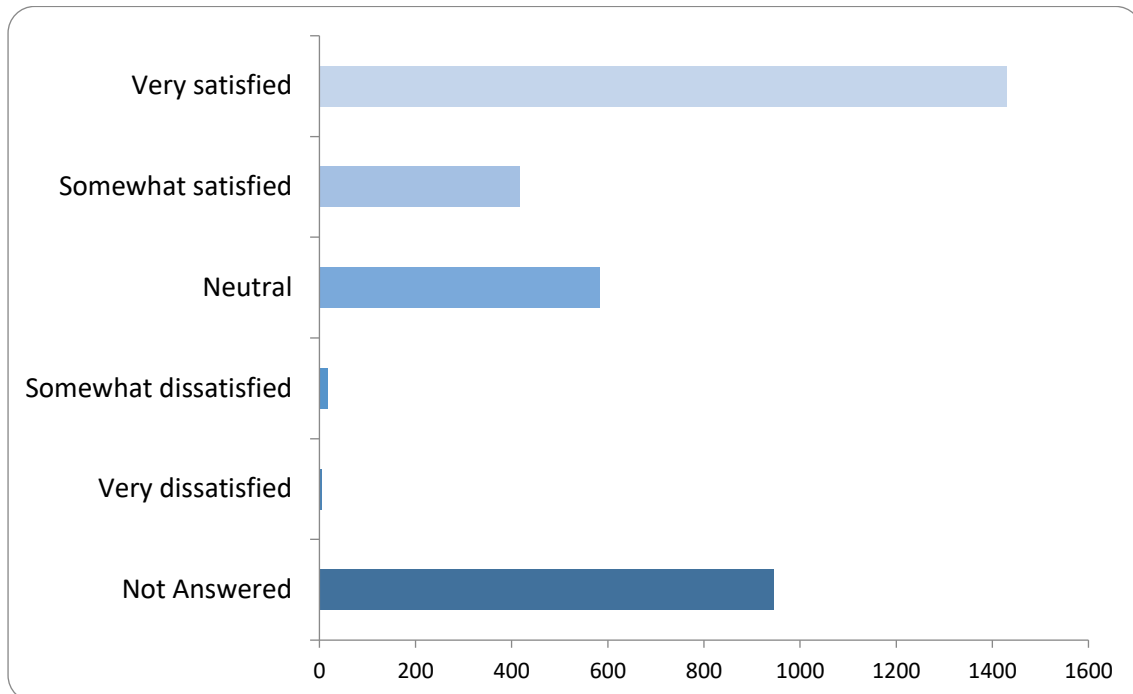
There were 2510 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Socialising with others	1701	50.04%
Learning new skills or knowledge	1158	34.07%
Engaging in creative or recreational activities	1165	34.27%
Providing opportunities for children's development and interaction	1455	42.81%
Other	181	5.33%
Not Answered	889	26.15%

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the library activities you have participated in (e.g., Baby Bounce, Wiggle and Giggle, Stay and Play, Knit and Natter)?

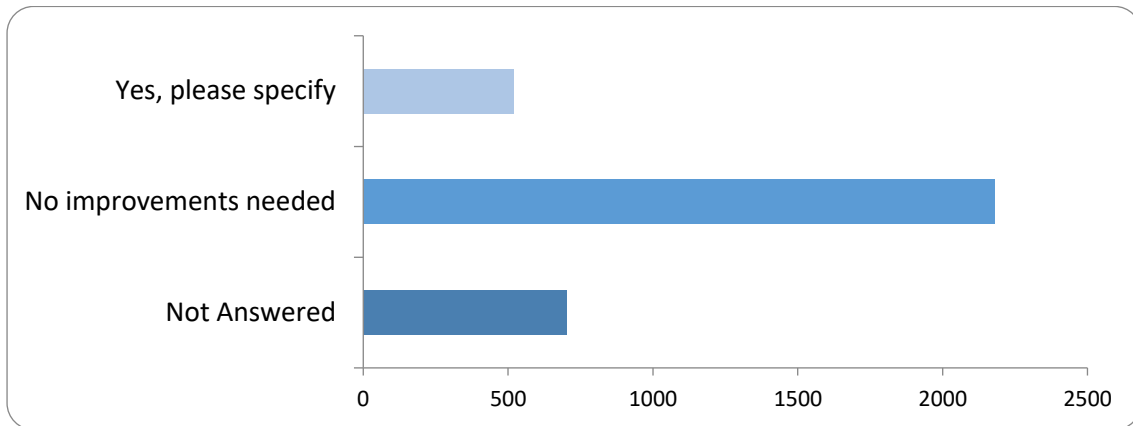
There were 2454 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Very satisfied	1431	42.10%
Somewhat satisfied	417	12.27%
Neutral	583	17.15%
Somewhat dissatisfied	18	0.53%
Very dissatisfied	5	0.15%
Not Answered	945	27.80%

Are there any improvements or changes you would like to see in the library activities to enhance your experience?

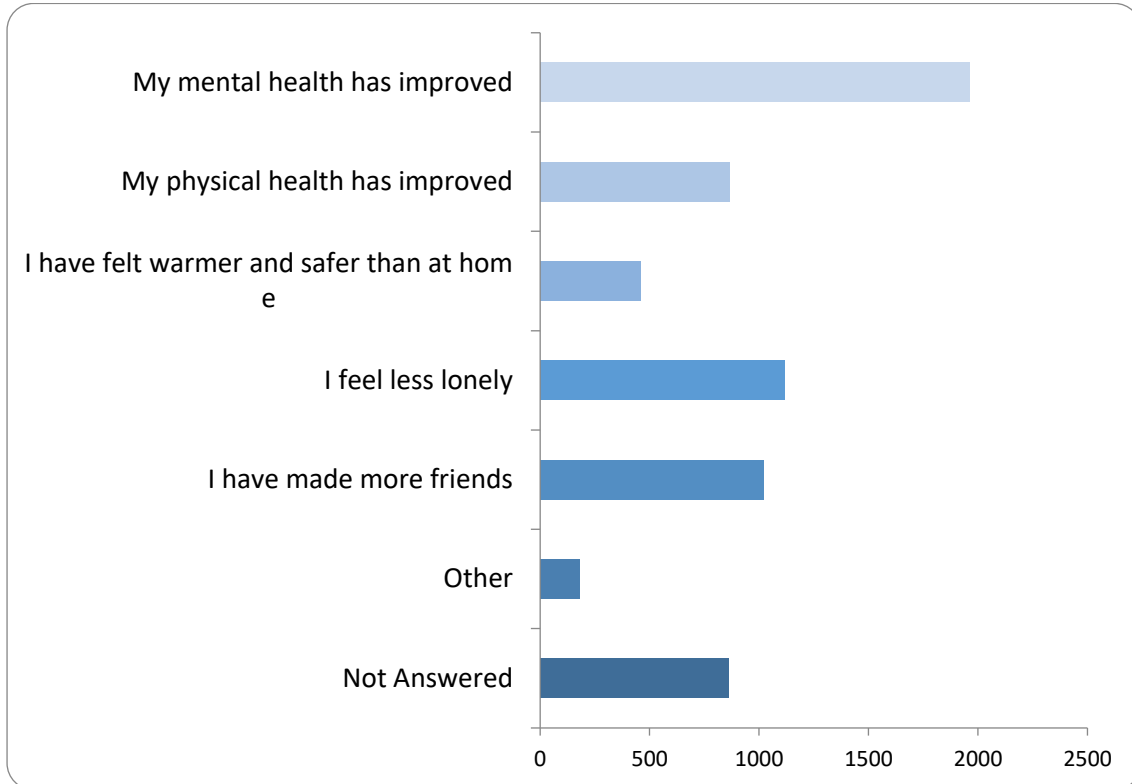
There were 2697 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes, please specify	518	15.24%
No improvements needed	2179	64.11%
Not Answered	702	20.65%

Are there specific benefits to your health and wellbeing that you have identified as a direct result of regular attendance at your local library or activities within libraries?

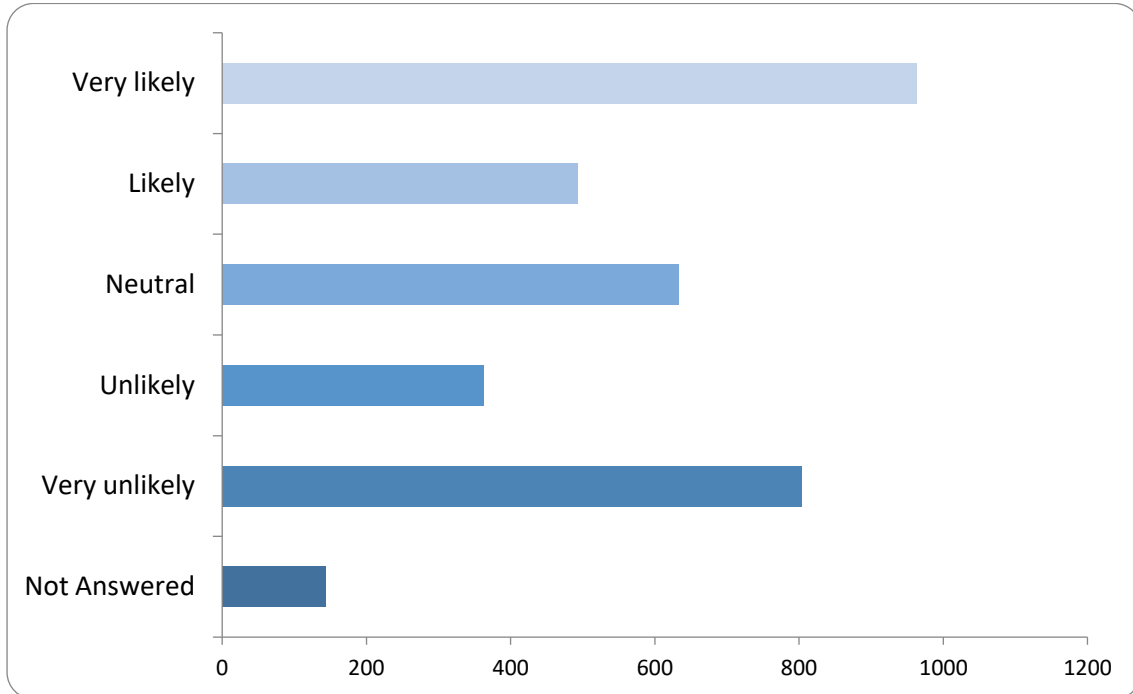
There were 2538 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
My mental health has improved	1963	57.75%
My physical health has improved	866	25.48%
I have felt warmer and safer than at home	461	13.56%
I feel less lonely	1119	32.92%
I have made more friends	1022	30.07%
Other	182	5.35%
Not Answered	861	25.33%

We think there may be a case to develop proposals for a new Havering Children’s Library. How likely would you or your family be to use a dedicated children's library in Havering?

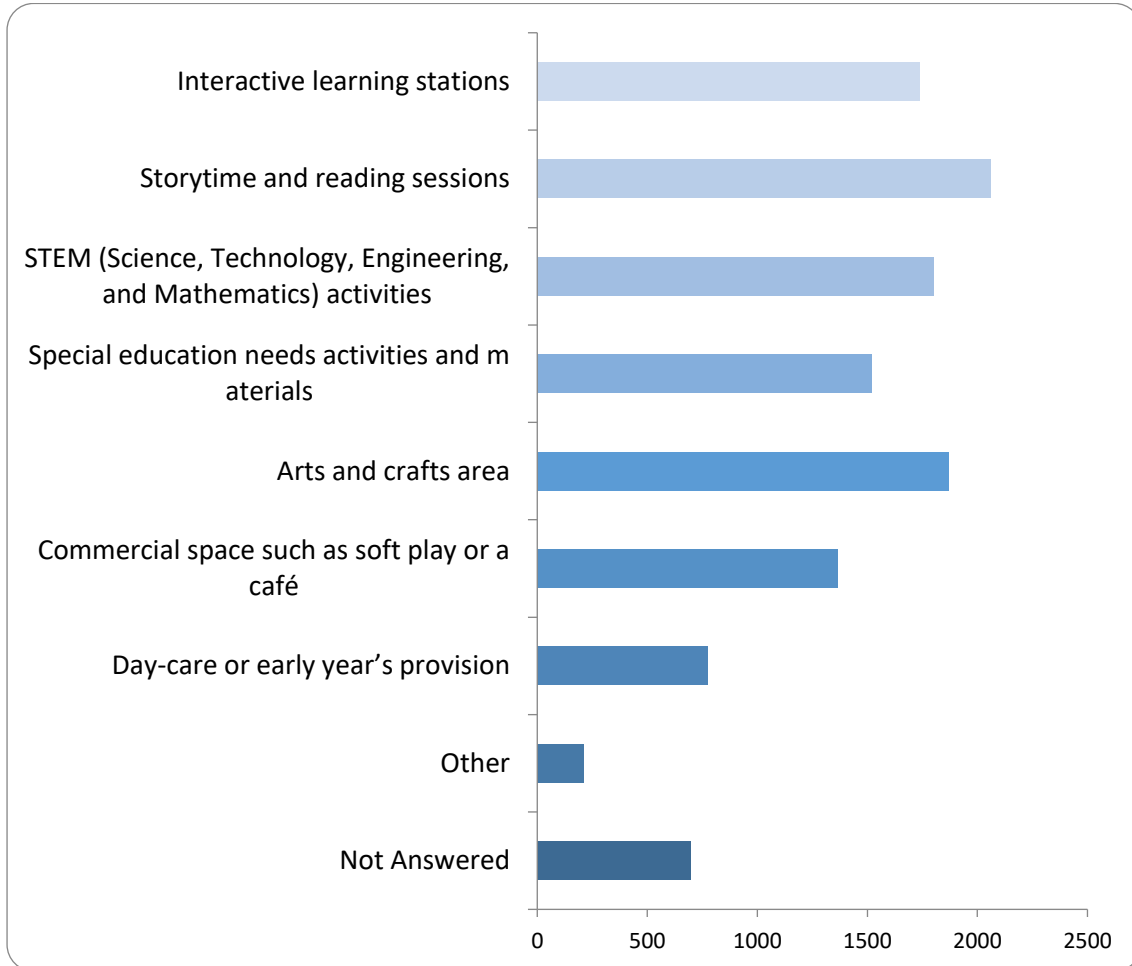
There were 3255 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Very likely	963	28.33%
Likely	493	14.50%
Neutral	633	18.62%
Unlikely	363	10.68%
Very unlikely	803	23.62%
Not Answered	144	4.24%

What specific features or resources would you like to see included in the new Children's library to best serve the needs of Havering's young readers?

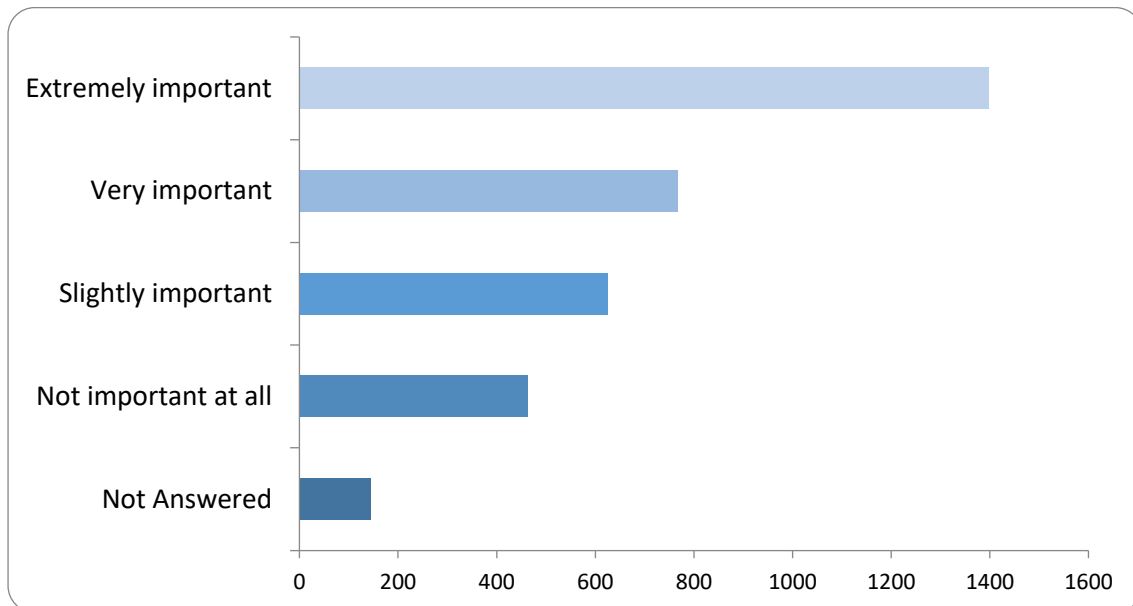
There were 2701 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Interactive learning stations	1736	51.07%
Storytime and reading sessions	2060	60.61%
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) activities	1800	52.96%
Special education needs activities and materials	1521	44.75%
Arts and crafts area	1869	54.99%
Commercial space such as soft play or a café	1366	40.19%
Day-care or early year's provision	776	22.83%
Other	213	6.27%
Not Answered	698	20.54%

How important do you think it is to have a specialised library space dedicated to children in Havering?

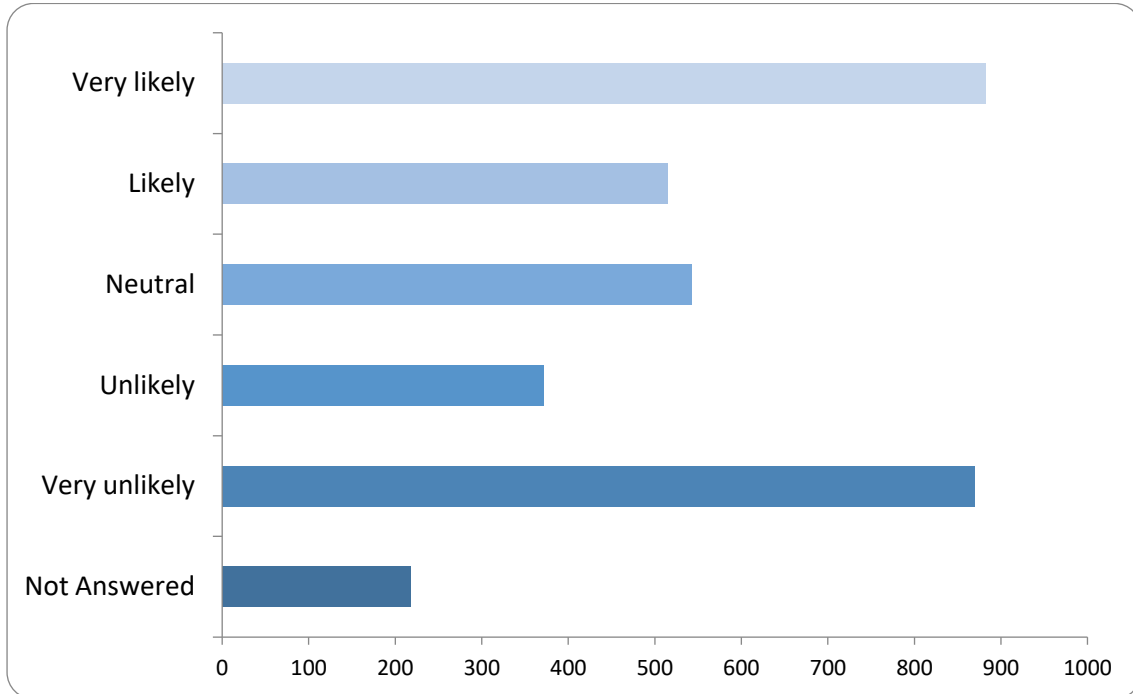
There were 3255 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Extremely important	1398	41.13%
Very important	768	22.59%
Slightly important	626	18.42%
Not important at all	463	13.62%
Not Answered	144	4.24%

How likely would you be to attend or participate in children's literacy and educational programmes and activities offered at a new Children's library?

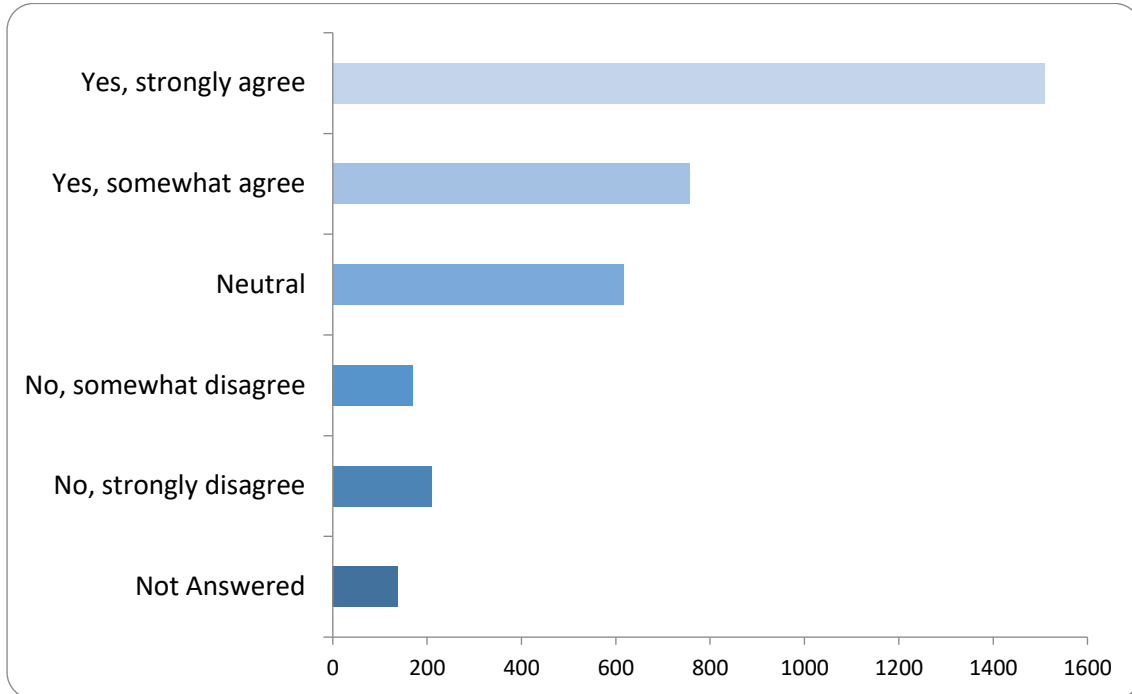
There were 3181 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Very likely	882	25.95%
Likely	515	15.15%
Neutral	543	15.98%
Unlikely	371	10.91%
Very unlikely	870	25.60%
Not Answered	218	6.41%

Do you believe that the establishment of a Children's library in Havering would positively impact literacy rates and educational outcomes for local children?

There were 3261 responses to this part of the question.



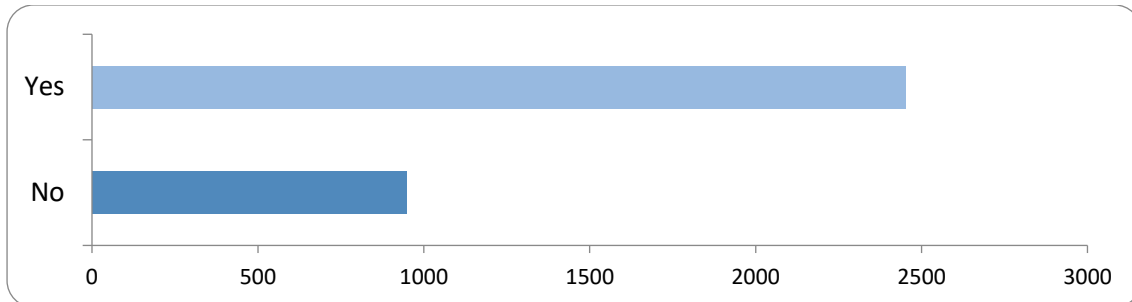
Option	Total	Percent
Yes, strongly agree	1510	44.42%
Yes, somewhat agree	756	22.24%
Neutral	616	18.12%
No, somewhat disagree	170	5.00%
No, strongly disagree	209	6.15%
Not Answered	138	4.06%

Equalities data captured in the consultation

I am happy to answer equalities questions

Equalities questions y/n

There were 3399 responses to this part of the question.

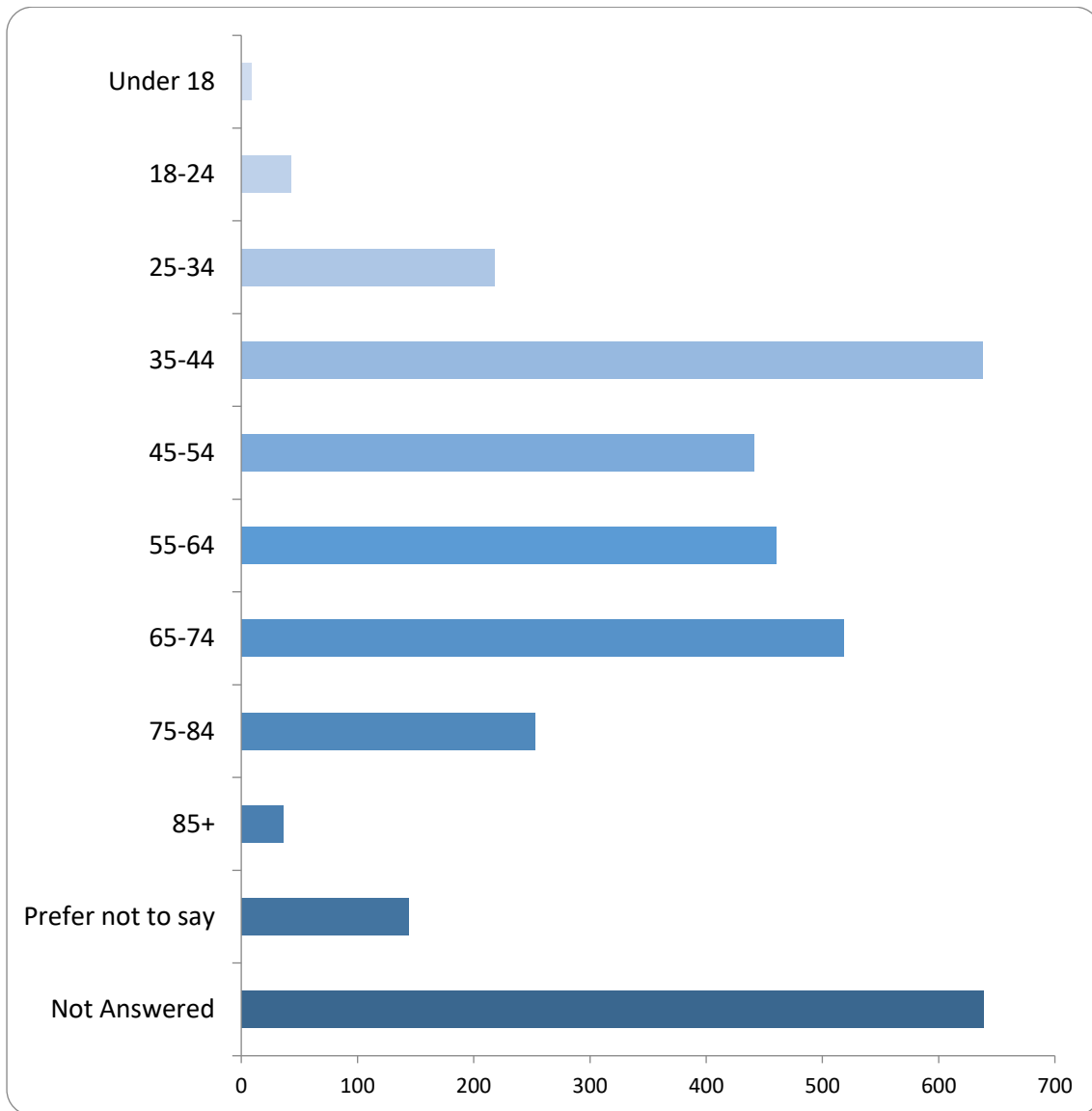


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	2451	72.11%
No	948	27.89%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

How old are you?

Age

There were 2760 responses to this part of the question.

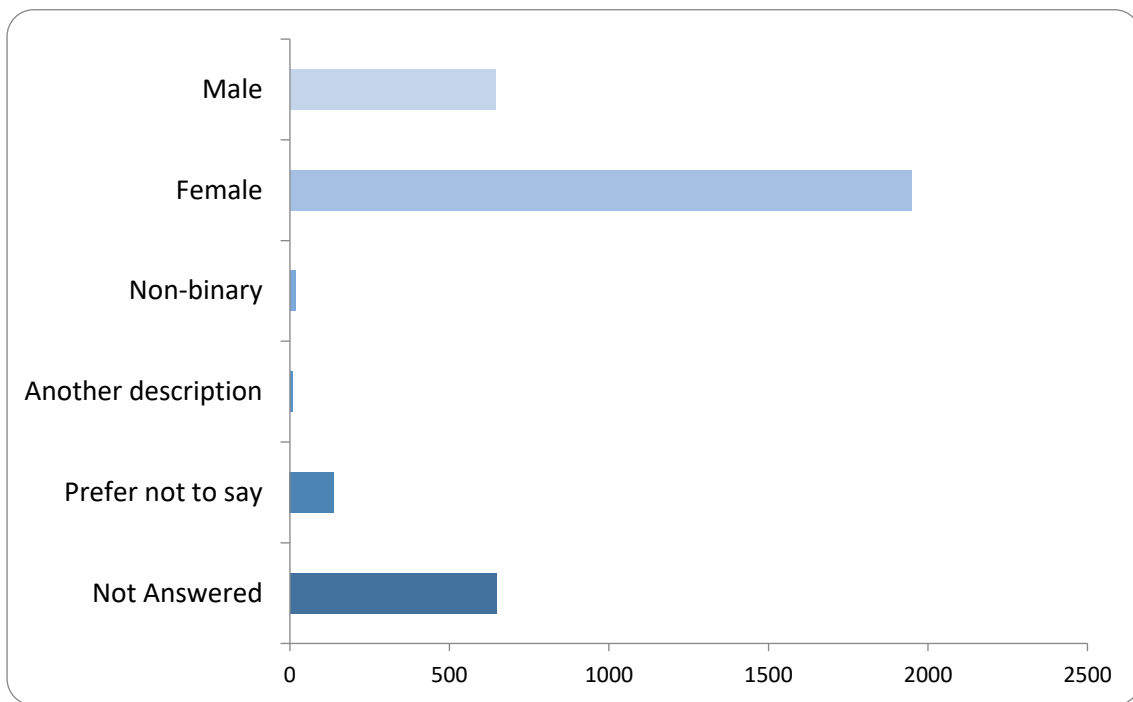


Option	Total	Percent
Under 18	9	0.26%
18-24	43	1.27%
25-34	218	6.41%
35-44	638	18.77%
45-54	441	12.97%
55-64	460	13.53%
65-74	518	15.24%

75-84	253	7.44%
85+	36	1.06%
Prefer not to say	144	4.24%
Not Answered	639	18.80%

How would you describe your gender identity?

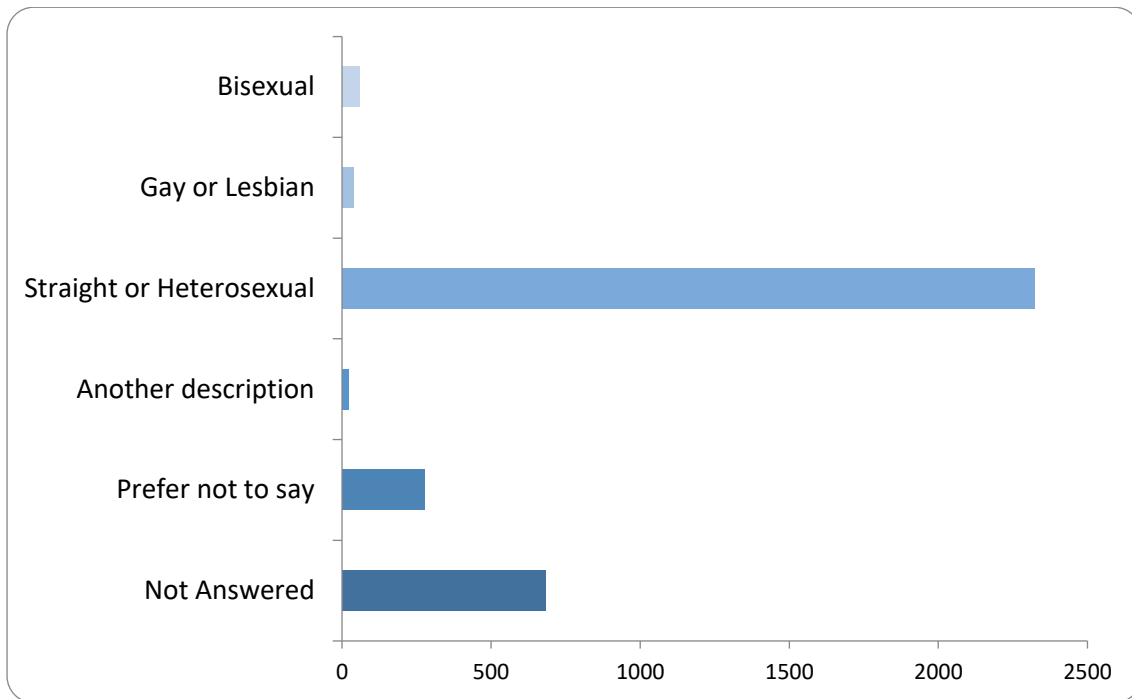
There were 2752 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Male	643	18.92%
Female	1947	57.28%
Non-binary	17	0.50%
Another description	7	0.21%
Prefer not to say	138	4.06%
Not Answered	647	19.04%

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

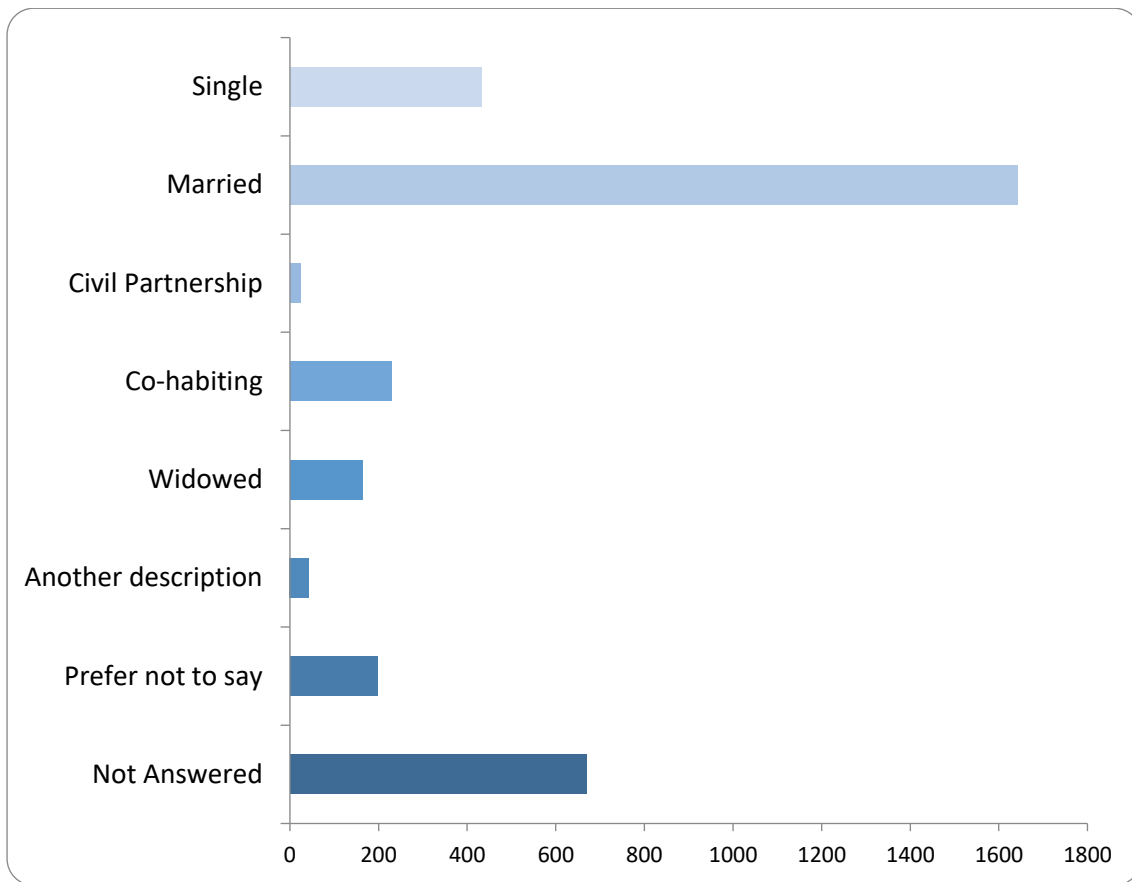
There were 2717 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Bisexual	58	1.71%
Gay or Lesbian	40	1.18%
Straight or Heterosexual	2323	68.34%
Another description	21	0.62%
Prefer not to say	275	8.09%
Not Answered	682	20.06%

What is your marital or civil partnership status?

There were 2730 responses to this part of the question.

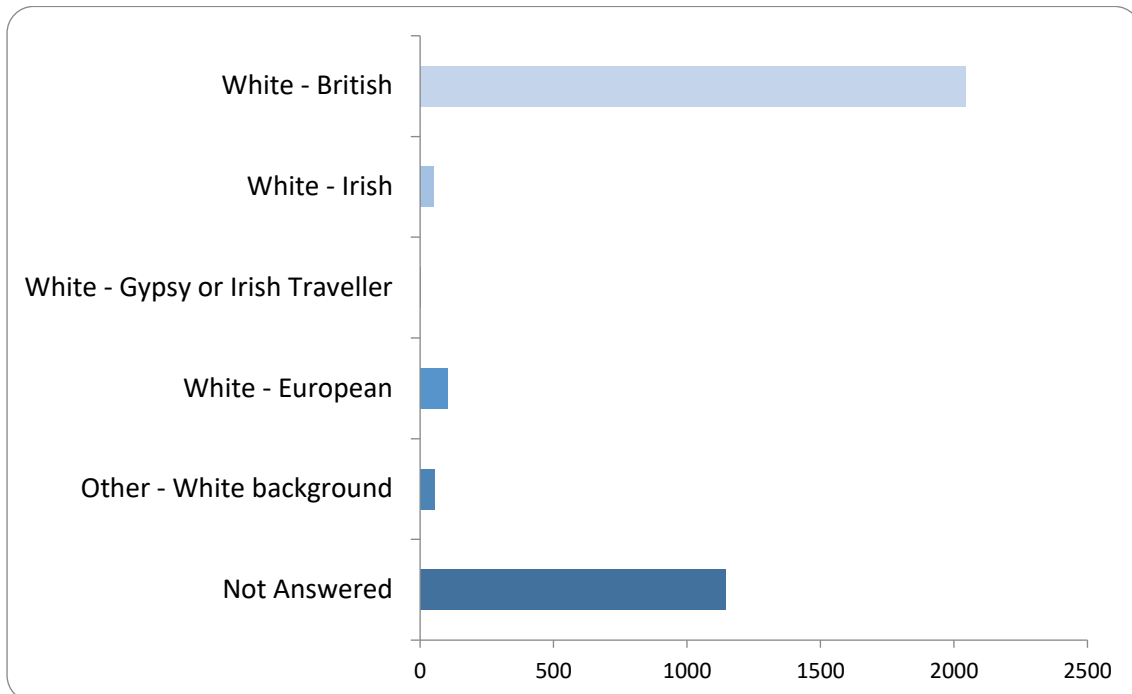


Option	Total	Percent
Single	432	12.71%
Married	1642	48.31%
Civil Partnership	23	0.68%
Co-habiting	229	6.74%
Widowed	163	4.80%
Another description	43	1.27%
Prefer not to say	198	5.83%
Not Answered	669	19.68%

Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong.

White

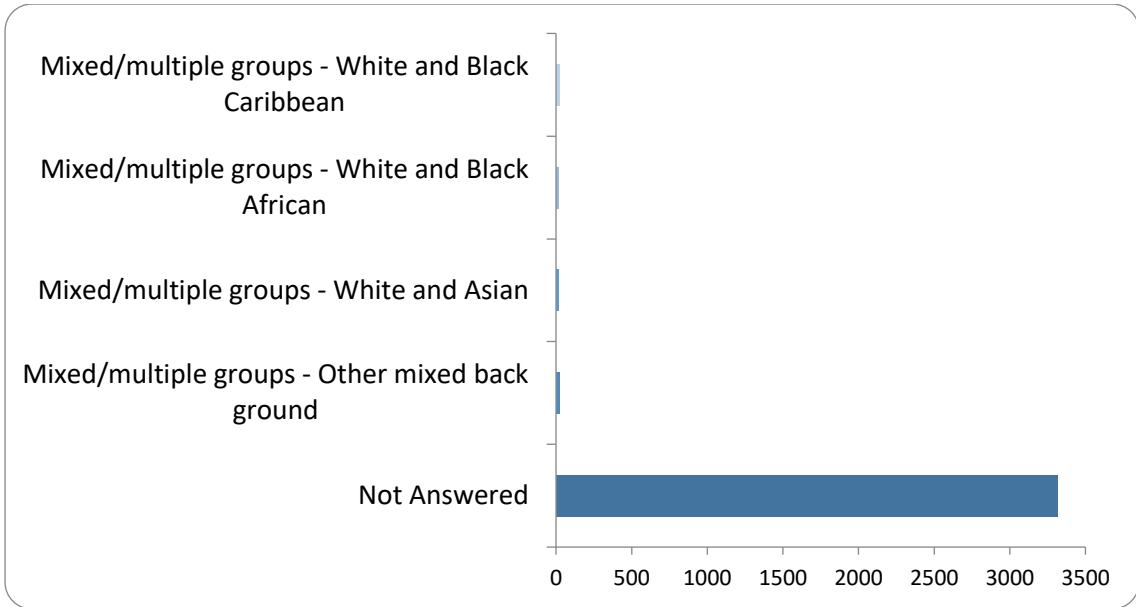
There were 2255 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
White - British	2043	60.11%
White - Irish	52	1.53%
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2	0.06%
White - European	102	3.00%
Other - White background	56	1.65%
Not Answered	1144	33.66%

Mixed/multiple groups

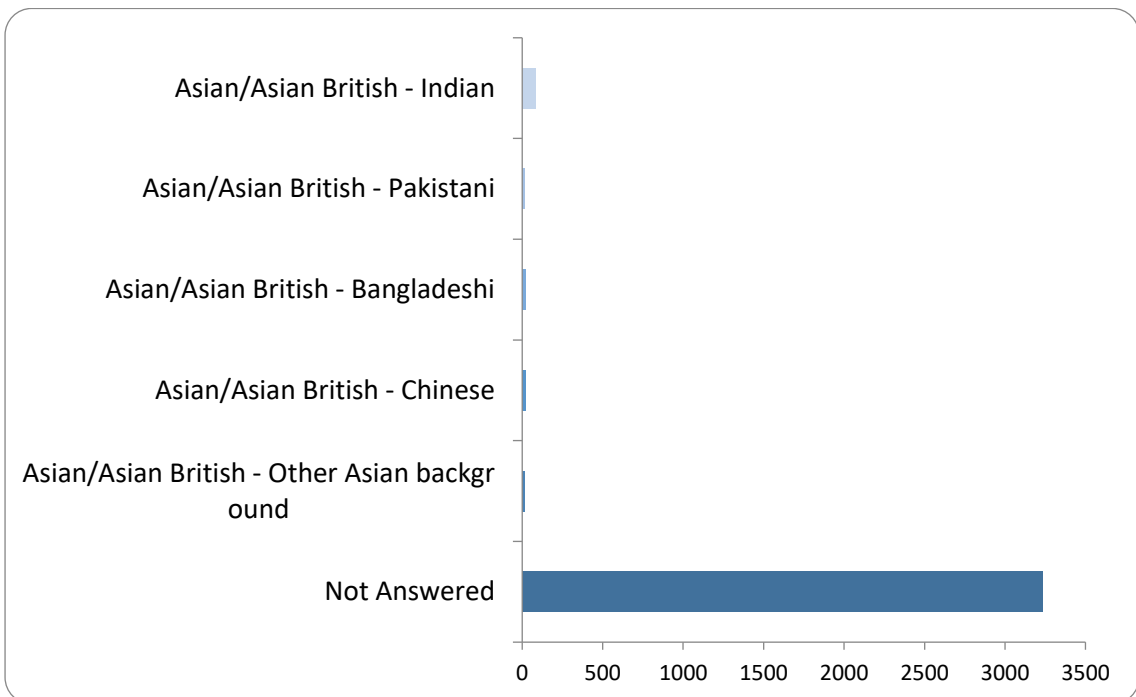
There were 81 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Mixed/multiple groups - White and Black Caribbean	26	0.76%
Mixed/multiple groups - White and Black African	14	0.41%
Mixed/multiple groups - White and Asian	15	0.44%
Mixed/multiple groups - Other mixed background	26	0.76%
Not Answered	3318	97.62%

Asian/Asian British

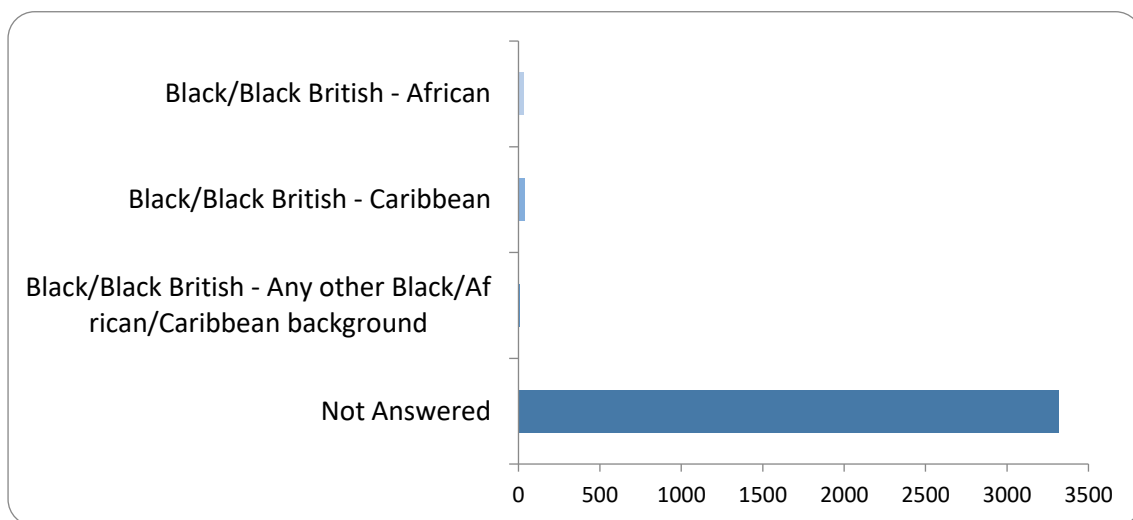
There were 162 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Asian/Asian British - Indian	86	2.53%
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	16	0.47%
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	22	0.65%
Asian/Asian British - Chinese	24	0.71%
Asian/Asian British - Other Asian background	14	0.41%
Not Answered	3237	95.23%

Black/Black British

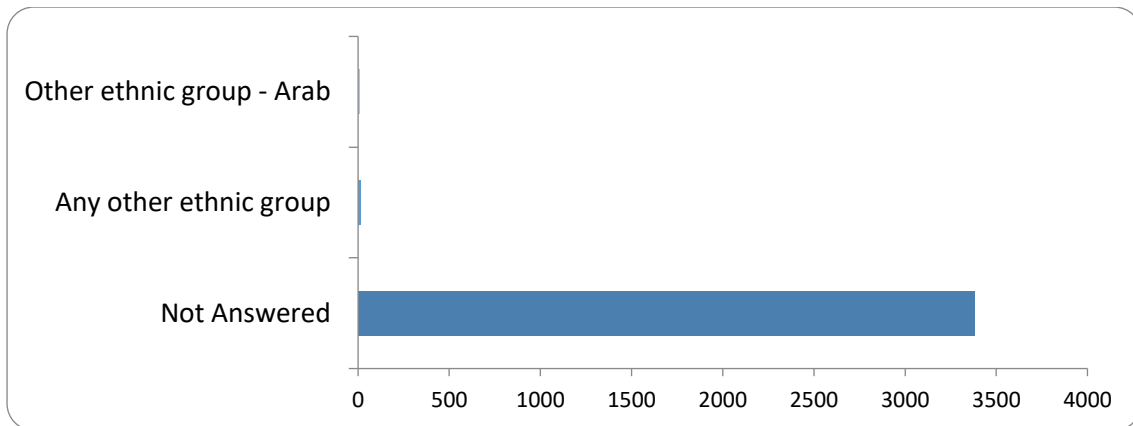
There were 79 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Black/Black British - African	31	0.91%
Black/Black British - Caribbean	38	1.12%
Black/Black British - Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	10	0.29%
Not Answered	3320	97.68%

Other ethnic group

There were 17 responses to this part of the question.



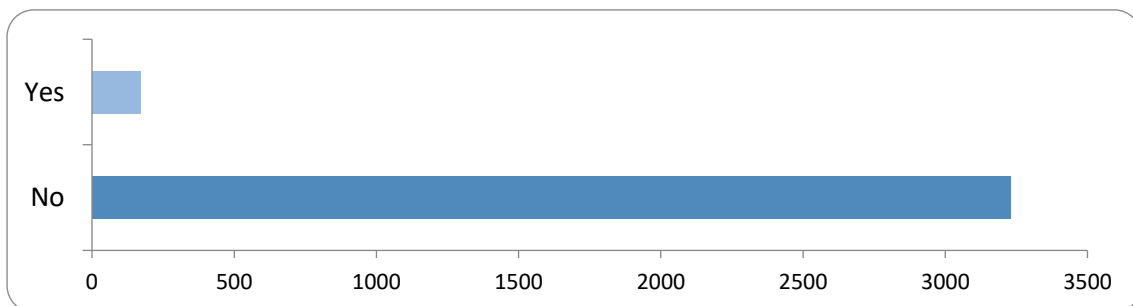
Option	Total	Percent
Other ethnic group - Arab	6	0.18%
Any other ethnic group	11	0.32%
Not Answered	3382	99.50%

Other - ethnic origin

There were 28 responses to this part of the question.

Prefer not to say ethnicity

There were 171 responses to this part of the question.

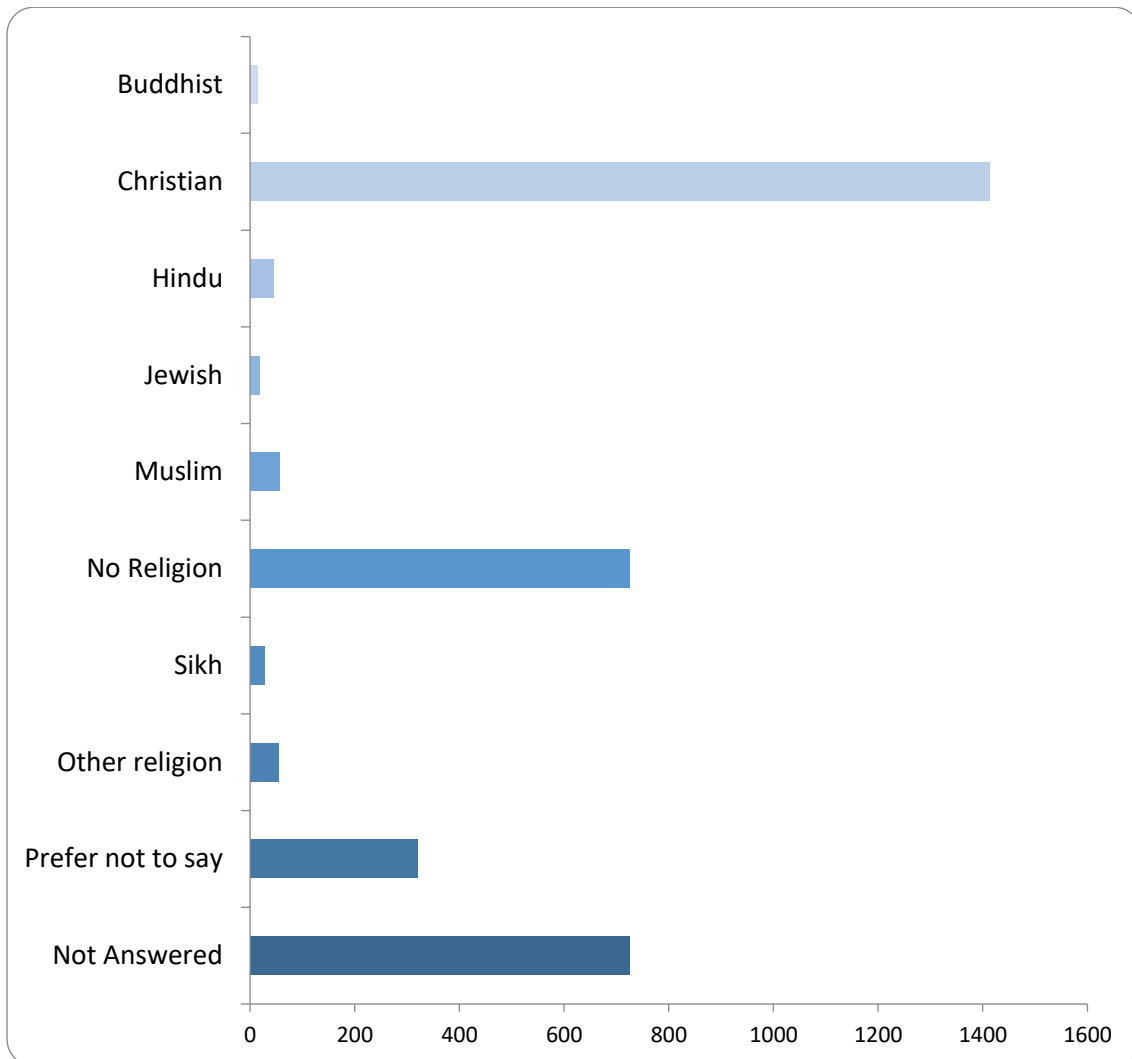


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	171	5.03%
No	3228	94.97%

Faith, Religion or Belief

Religion

There were 2674 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Buddhist	15	0.44%
Christian	1413	41.57%
Hindu	45	1.32%
Jewish	18	0.53%
Muslim	56	1.65%
No Religion	725	21.33%
Sikh	27	0.79%
Other religion	54	1.59%
Prefer not to say	321	9.44%

Not Answered

725

21.33%

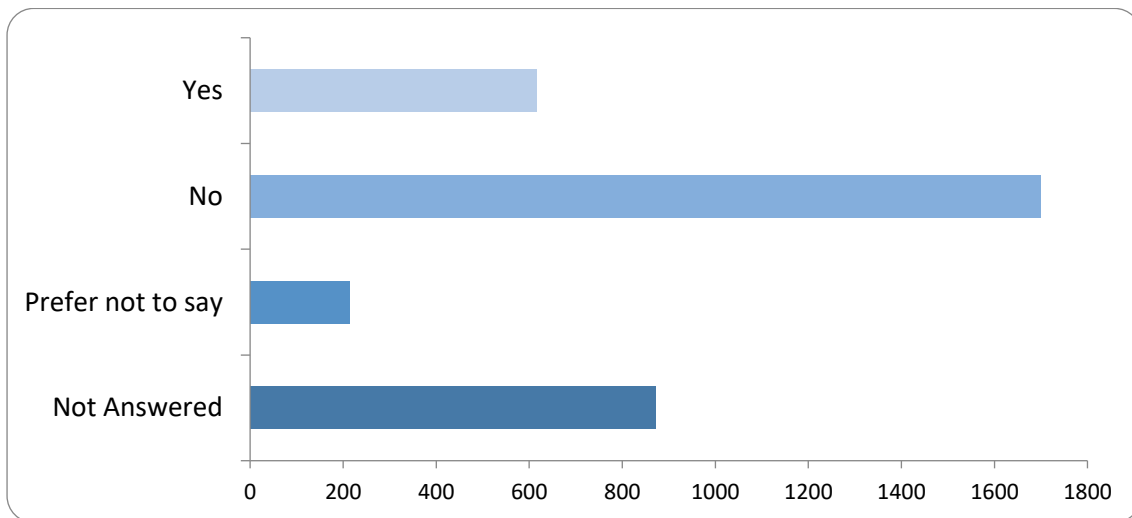
Other - religion

There were 63 responses to this part of the question.

Do you consider yourself to have a disability, impairment or health condition?

Disability

There were 2528 responses to this part of the question.



Option

Total

Percent

Yes

615

18.09%

No

1699

49.99%

Prefer not to say

214

6.30%

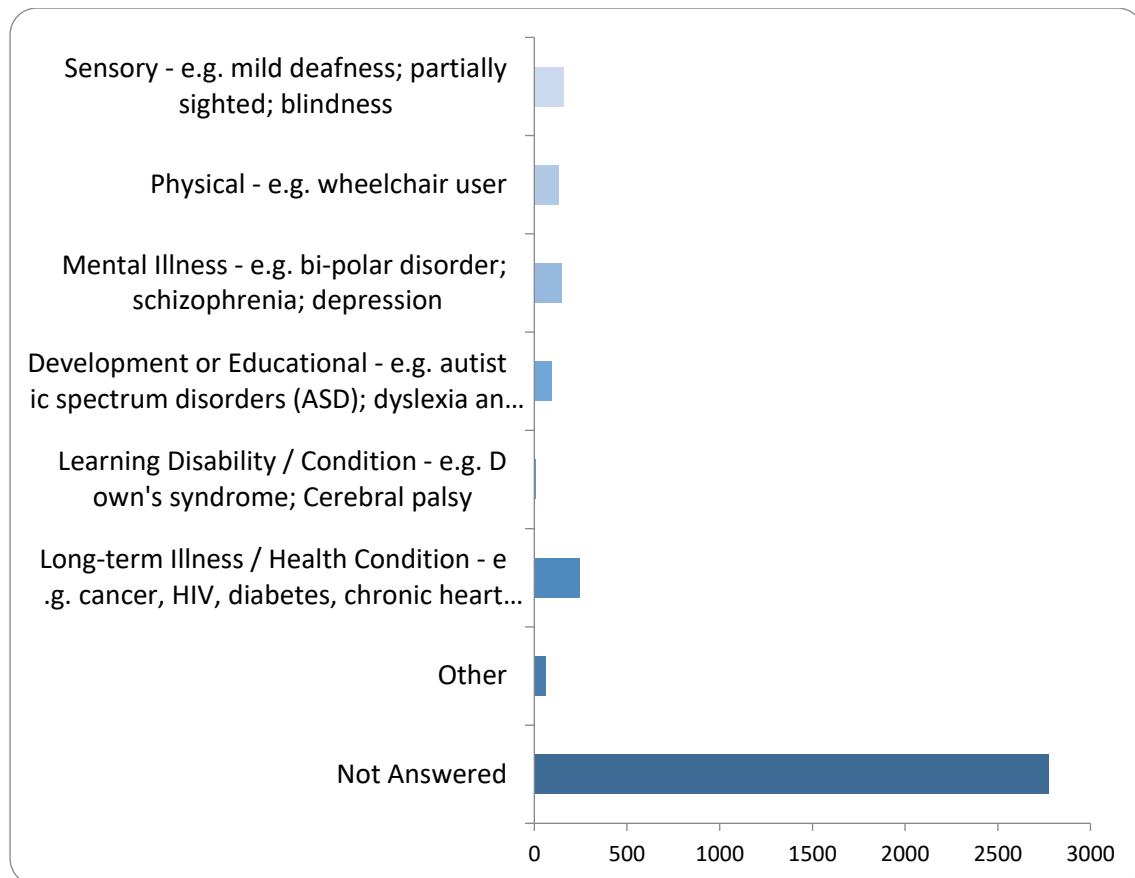
Not Answered

871

25.63%

Impairment

There were 623 responses to this part of the question.

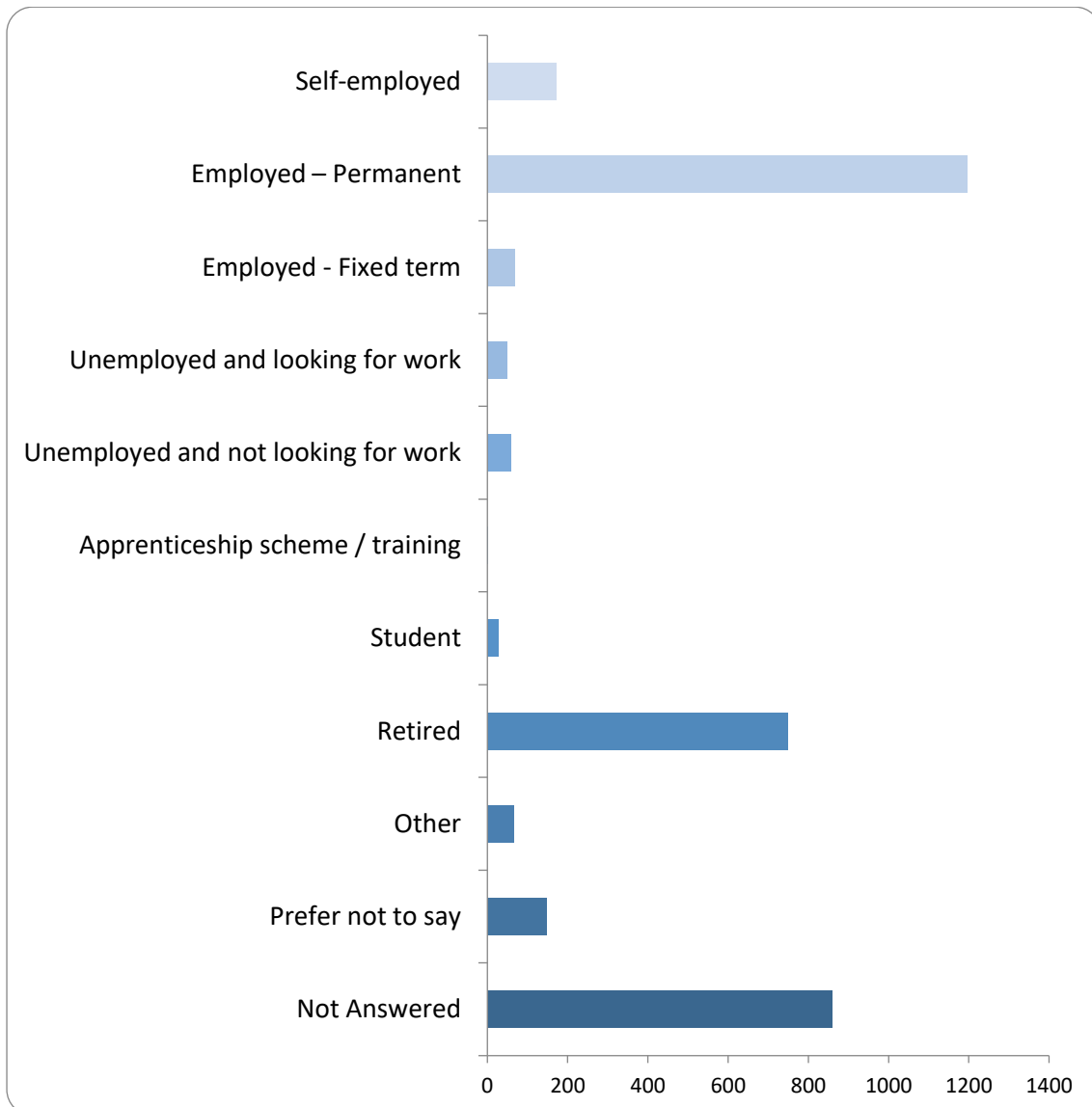


Option	Total	Percent
Sensory - e.g. mild deafness; partially sighted; blindness	160	4.71%
Physical - e.g. wheelchair user	133	3.91%
Mental Illness - e.g. bi-polar disorder; schizophrenia; depression	150	4.41%
Development or Educational - e.g. autistic spectrum disorders (ASD); dyslexia and dyspraxia, neurodiversity	94	2.77%
Learning Disability / Condition - e.g. Down's syndrome; Cerebral palsy	10	0.29%
Long-term Illness / Health Condition - e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, stroke	243	7.15%
Other	61	1.79%
Not Answered	2776	81.67%

What is your employment status?

Employment status

There were 2540 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Self-employed	173	5.09%
Employed – Permanent	1196	35.19%
Employed - Fixed term	69	2.03%
Unemployed and looking for work	50	1.47%
Unemployed and not looking for work	59	1.74%
Apprenticeship scheme / training	1	0.03%
Student	28	0.82%

Retired	750	22.07%
Other	67	1.97%
Prefer not to say	147	4.32%
Not Answered	859	25.27%

SHOUT about libraries analysis

- 4.1 The SHOUT about libraries survey was commissioned in May 2024 and taken forward via an existing contractual relationship the Council had with Mind of My Own. The survey was publicised directly with schools and on the council's social media. The consultation was aimed at primary and secondary school children.
- 4.2 The consultation was responded to by 1,214 residents.

What do you think would be important for a library made just for children?

What do you think would be important for a library made just for children?		
Answer	Response Percent	Response Total
Help with reading	77.3%	861
Borrowing books	76.8%	856
Help with school projects	58.2%	648
Arts and Crafts activities	53.8%	599
Playing games	32.6%	363
Soft play area	27.6%	308
Borrowing games/sports equipment	24.4%	272
Can travel to different schools	22.8%	254
Something we missed (see below)	21.7%	242

Would you prefer a new library for young people or to improve your current library?

Would you prefer a new library for young people or to improve your current library?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
I would improve my current library	60.8%	711
I would prefer a children's library	24.7%	289
I don't use libraries	14.5%	170

How often do you go to the library?

How often do you go to the library?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
Less often	38.4%	449
Once a month	28.7%	335
Once a week	21.7%	253
More than once a week	11.2%	131

How would you be impacted if your local library closed?

How would you be impacted if your local library closed?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
It would make things difficult for me	30.9%	363
It would make life worse	30.2%	354
It would be ok	22.3%	261
It wouldn't affect me at all	16.6%	195

What do you do when you visit the library?

What do you do when you visit the library? Please select multiple		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
Borrow books	76.5%	890
Read books	69.5%	808
Summer reading challenge	46.0%	535
Study/do homework	33.7%	392
Go to events or activities	26.5%	308
Use computers	24.0%	279
Use free wifi	19.9%	232
Something we missed:	12.1%	141

What do you like about spending time in a library?

What do you like about spending time in the library?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
I have a quiet place to read, study or relax	66.8%	761
I learn about new things	56.7%	646
My reading has improved	55.9%	637
I like being creative	31.2%	355
I learn about people from different backgrounds	26.4%	301
Meeting friends at events	25.5%	291
Computers / Internet access is better than at home	18.1%	206
Something we missed:	10.3%	117

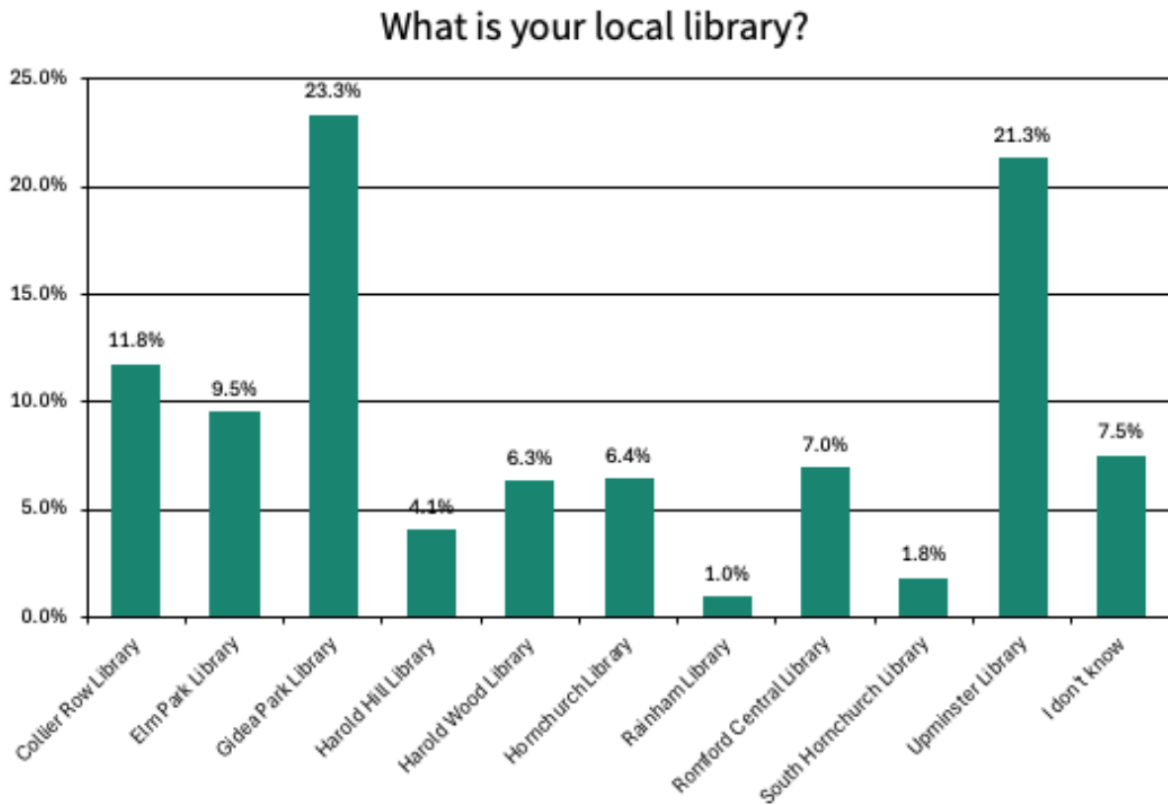
What are some of the things you'd feel or experience if your nearest library closed?

What are some of the things you'd feel or experience if your nearest library closed?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
I wouldn't be able to borrow books anymore	70.3%	799
I wouldn't have anywhere quiet to go	47.7%	542
I would miss going to library events or activities	39.3%	446
Use school library	31.8%	361
I wouldn't have somewhere to go after school	26.7%	303
I wouldn't have access to computers or technology	14.7%	167
Something we missed:	8.3%	94

If your nearest library closed, would you be able to visit another library?

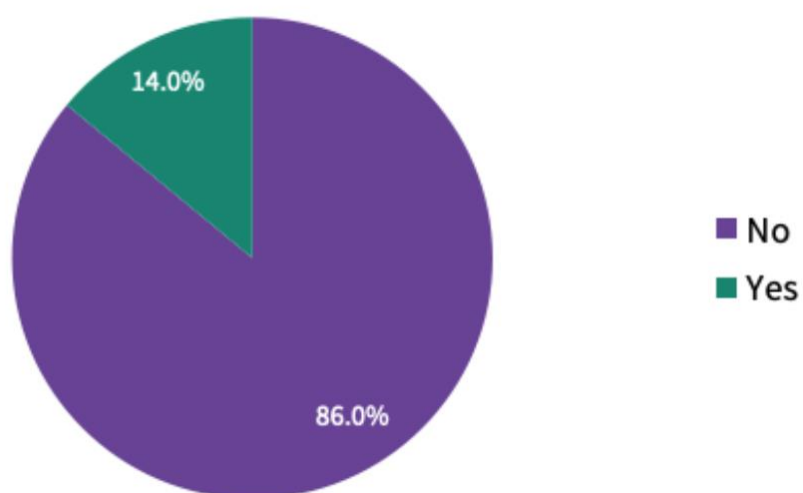
If your nearest library closed, would you be able to visit another library?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
I couldn't go by myself	41.8%	482
The other library is too far away	40.8%	470
Travelling to another library would be difficult	38.6%	445
I could visit another library	30.7%	354
Something we missed:	7.2%	83

What is your local library?

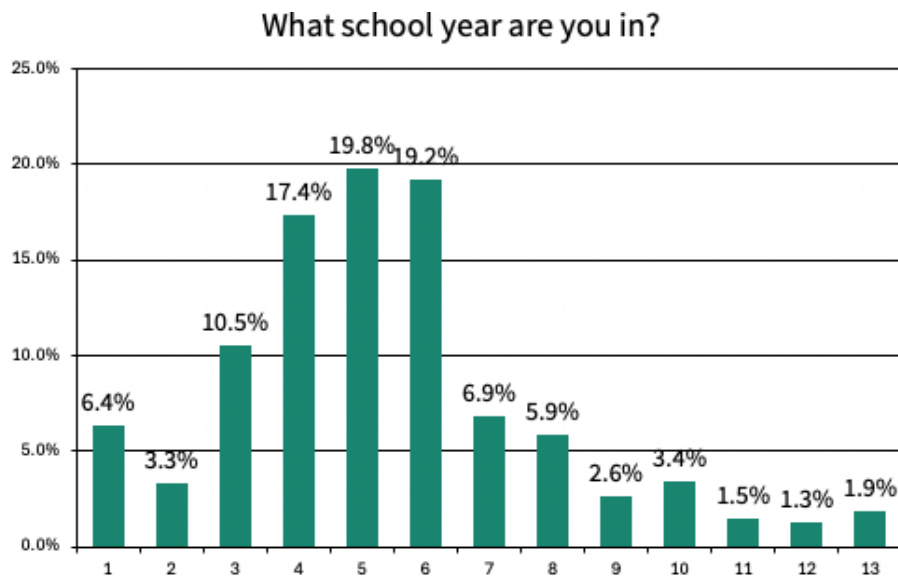


Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?



What school year are you in?



Petitions

5.1 A number of petitions were received during the course of the consultation. While the council constitution makes a formal recognition of a petition that meets criteria and is subsequently presented at a meeting of full council, this report simply sets out all the petitions of which its authors are aware.

Petitions in respect of Collier Row library

5.2 A petition against the closure of Collier Row library signed by 162 residents was presented to council officers at the conclusion of the consultation.

5.3 Further petitions against the closure of the library comprising 538 signatures from students of Parklands school and 197 signatures from Crownfield school were presented at full council in August 2024.

Petitions in respect of Elm Park library

5.4 A petition containing 883 signatures advocating against the closure of Elm Park library was presented to full council in July 2024.

Petitions in respect of Gidea Park library

5.5 A petition containing 570 signatures advocating against the closure of Gidea Park library was presented to full council in September 2024. A further petition against the closure of the library was presented to council officers by the Green Party and was signed by 100 people.

Petitions in respect of Harold Wood library

5.6 The council was provided with a petition comprised of hard copy and digital signatures comprising 2036 residents advocating against the closure of Harold Wood library.

Petitions in respect of South Hornchurch library

5.7 A petition comprised of 79 residents advocating against the closure of South Hornchurch library was received by council officers at the close of the consultation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- 6.1 The consultation has revealed strong community engagement with and reliance on Havering's libraries. The data underscores the critical role these libraries play in providing educational resources, fostering community ties, and supporting vulnerable populations. The widespread opposition to library closures and budget cuts reflects deep concern about the potential negative impacts on community well-being and access to essential services.
- 6.2 We found a picture of consultation responses that share significant similarities with our data on library usage (demographics, frequency of use), but some significant differences. Resident use of libraries other than a main or "home" library does not come across as extensively in the consultation responses as it does in our data on how library cards are used.
- 6.3 The health, wellbeing and community benefits of library visitorship come across passionately in the consultation, as does a perception that those benefits would be difficult or impossible to find in other settings. This may be a perception and there may be other settings that could deliver benefits, but the pattern we have discerned is one of residents using a library for a small range of direct reasons (books, events and activities, PC use) but also inheriting a number of indirect benefits (reducing loneliness and isolation, intergenerational contact) as a result of library usage.
- 6.4 The evidence developed during the consultation was never intended to answer the question "if libraries should close, which ones should close". Rather the evidence has identified a range of risks and potential disbenefits that will need to be fully understood – and ultimately accepted or mitigated – if libraries are too close to deliver revenue budget savings.
- 6.5 Even though it is a statutory service with obligations set out in legislation, the library service must operate within the broader financial framework of the local authority. As was set out in legal precedent:
- "... the availability of resources is highly material to the question of what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient library service. The section 7 duty cannot be exempt or divorced from resource issues and cannot in law escape the reductions which have been rendered inevitable in the light of the financial crisis engulfing the country."*
- R (Green) v Gloucestershire City Council (2011)*
- 6.6 If the Council seeks to proceed with reducing the revenue budget of the service by £300,000 and that there are no plausible alternatives to fund that reduction other than closing libraries as proposed in the consultation, the evidence on need assessment and library usage should be used to contribute to a decision.
- 6.7 Based on that assessment, and on the outcome of this consultation not contradicting the evidence of needs and usage as published in the draft strategy, were four of the five branch libraries in the borough to close, Collier Row would be the library in most "need" of the five, although this is a very fine decision to make.
- 6.8 This conclusion does not take into account alternate options or models and does not take into account other cross-council initiatives or strategies that might contribute to savings in other ways.

- 6.9 Whatever the future makeup of the service looks like – whether in terms of numbers of libraries or opening hours, the consultation response endorses the new vision and strategic objectives of the service, which provides a stable base to move forward.

Key Recommendations:

- 7.1 Explore Alternatives to Closures: Given the strong opposition and evidence of significantly positive impact of libraries – particularly in vulnerable groups, the Council could explore alternative cost-saving measures that do not involve closing libraries. This could include partnerships, fundraising, operating or re-evaluating other budget areas. The work the Council began on taking an area-based approach to assets may be a significant factor in this work.
- 7.2 Reviewing Operating Hours: Whatever decisions are taken about the future resourcing of the service and the number of libraries provided within that resource envelope, the service should review its opening hours to ensure that they maximise opportunity for residents to visit the library. While a 24-hour per week library is never going to be able to adequately meet the demands of every prospective library user, feedback from this survey combined with hourly visitor count numbers can be used to build a model of opening hours more in tune with local need. This may mean 24 hour per week libraries having different opening hour patterns, which will be difficult to build a staff timetable for.
- 7.3 Implement the new strategic vision and objectives as published in the strategy and identify any resourcing implications.
- 7.4 If members decide to go ahead in closing libraries, comprehensive equality impact assessments will need to be compiled for each library proposed for closure. This may warrant further public consultation.

This comprehensive analysis should inform future decisions regarding the provision and funding of library services in Havering, ensuring that these valued community resources continue to serve residents effectively.

Appendix A – Q&A compilation from consultation public meetings

Libraries Consultation FAQ's

The Consultation Process:

Q: How will you assess each library?

A: We will look at each library holistically. Many factors will be considered, including: footfall, population size, deprivation, the quality of the building, local transportation options and personal impacts.

Q: How were digitally-excluded residents contacted?

A: We provided 100 hard copies to each library and library staff were encouraged to talk to visitors about the consultation. Posters have been put up across the borough and in each library. We have also written to every head teachers in the borough to encourage young people to complete the consultation.

Q: Has the decision already been made?

A: No. We take consultation seriously and have not made any decisions. Following the budget consultation, the administration did wind back on the original proposals in light of what residents suggested.

Q: How are visits counted?

A: There are counters within each library that use a beam to count people as they enter. We have been recording these numbers since the libraries opened. Our library management system also records whether a book has been issues or IT has been accessed by users, so we know that most library-users visit more than one library. We have calculated the average number of visitors per hour to allow fair comparison for this consultation.

Q: I have a petition, how can I submit it?

A: There is a formal process to submit petitions to the council. Please contact committee services.

Library Buildings:

Q: Why have some of the libraries been allowed to deteriorate?

A: For many years, the budget has been reduced and stretched. We have been able to keep the libraries in the current condition, but not to make improvements.

Q: Could you put a coffee shop in our libraries or rent out rooms to businesses?

A: These options are being looked at. The buildings are not in good condition and we do not have access to funding to put new facilities in place, but we maximise income wherever we can. Opportunities for investment will continue to be assessed, especially if we are able to redevelop any libraries in the future.

Q: Could the libraries be moved into community centres of children's centres?

A: Yes, we have considered sharing assets so that we can retain the service. However, there would still be a closure at some point. The best performing libraries are on high streets so we need to consider whether the library will still reach the same amount of people. We have also looked into combining the libraries with children's centres, however, a good library looks very different to a good children's centre. Perfect will not be the enemy of good so we will consider all options.

Q: Do all libraries have public toilets and parking?

A: No, the toilets are not safe enough to be used by the public in many of our libraries. We also do not have parking at all libraries.

Q: If you close the libraries, what will happen to the buildings?

A: We did not include the value of the land our libraries sit on as part of this consultation as it did not feel fair to bias decisions in this way. If a library closes, it will be transferred to our asset management team. They may decide to use it for a different service or sell it on. However, unfortunately, we are not be able to sell the land to run the library service because of local government accounting rules.

Local Government Funding:

Q: Why does Havering receive less funding than other councils?

A: The funding formula is based on the 2011 census and Havering's demographic has changed massively over the past decade. We have a fast growing population of young people and older people but our funding does not reflect this. This means our social care costs are now taking up 79% of our overall budget. We have been lobbying for fair funding and will continue to put pressure on central government to address the issues but a review of the funding formula has not been scheduled at this stage.

Q: What if the new government injects more money into library services, or local government as a whole?

A: Unfortunately, local government funding has not featured in any of the new government's commitments, so we are unsure if more money will be reaching us soon. We are aware that it seems like very little money for such an impactful loss, however, we have to demonstrate to the government that we are making cuts and considering all options. We are talking to the civil service and MPs about the real effect our budget is having on our community, but we are not finding much support back.

Q: What are you doing to address the funding challenge?

A: We are lobbying for fairer funding. We have reached out to the other 18 boroughs in the same position and are hoping to join together as a united voice. We have spoken to CIPFA, the Public Finance Accountancy body, who may be able to speak out nationally and also the LGA, another national voice. We have also written to Angela Rayner and all of our MP's in Havering to arrange meetings to discuss our position.

Q: Do libraries have to pay business rates? Does this money go back to the council?

A: We have to pay business rates on our libraries but the money does not go directly back to the council. It is a national system where money is distributed across the borough and the country, towards TFL and the LGA, for example.

Q: Why are you making long term decisions on short term funding issues?

A: We are no longer able to base our decisions on whether they are short-sighted or not, these closures would mean that we no longer incur **350k a year**. Unfortunately, central government need proof that we are cutting costs. The alternative would be issuing a section 114 notice, which would lead to commissioners taking over the council. Commissioners must find savings regardless of the cost to the community, so we could have lost many more libraries if this happened.

Q: Can we use the Community Infrastructure Levy to save the library?

A: There are rules around what CIL can be used for and the amount changes year on year so we would not be able to rely on it as a stable income. However, it could be used towards some aspects of the library.

Q: Will you be saving unspent budget or actual expenditure?

A: Actual expenditure. We were able to spend less last year by adding a vacancy factor to staffing and cutting our stock budget. We also got some money from public health. However, we are still not meeting our income target.

The Library Service:

Q: If you had more time, could you make libraries self-sustaining?

A: We did do a feasibility study in 2019 to assess the viability of putting housing above some libraries. This was taken to our asset management board and it was deemed minimally viable, and in 2019 finances were slightly better. Any self-sustaining option would need to be more than marginally viable as we do not have the risk appetite or financial ability to take those chances right now.

Q: We know that young people and older people rely more on local libraries, will they lose out?

A: We are uncomfortable with the impact closures will have, especially our most vulnerable residents. Closing the library will have a significant impact on loneliness and sense of community. This is why we would not have made these proposals if they were not absolutely essential.

Q: Could we start charging a membership fee for people to use the library?

A: As libraries are a statutory service, we cannot offer a paid membership. We also would not want to exclude residents.

Q: Have you looked into volunteer or community managed libraries?

A: Yes. There was no appetite for a community run service when we consulted in 2019, and we would lose the statutory-nature of the service if it is just a room with books. A statutory-service community library would see us providing the space, internet, and librarian support for the volunteers. This would equate to £70-80k a year - which is not worth the trade-off. However, we would welcome proposals from the community to set up volunteer-run 'friends of libraries' groups that could access more funding.

Q: Could we ask people to donate or sponsor libraries?

A: There are risks and legal barriers to sponsoring libraries. We have approached other local services to use our building in times that we are closed e.g. doctors, dentists, NHS etc. but there was no appetite. We will continue to look into whether private companies can donate to our libraries.

Q: If Library Services and Social Care are both statutory services, why can't we use the money set aside for Social Care?

A: At the moment, about £40 million is spent on Adult Social Care, and £53 million on Children's. This is because the statutes for children and adult services are extremely detailed. We cannot change this and have to provide the service. In comparison, the libraries statutes are very broad and there is no clear definition of what constitutes a viable service.

Q: Will you lose money in the long-term by reducing early-help measures?

A: A recent study by the University of East Anglia found that a library service similar to ours delivers 6x its running cost in social value. We know that. However, we need money now.

Q: If a children's library is created, would this be in one location?

A: We are still in the process of discussing ideas for a potential children's library. The vision could be for a library that is mobile. Or, with funding, in five to ten years there could be a facility that provides a state of the art SEN-friendly children's library. We know that the population of children and young people is growing and that other authorities have begun providing such services.

