

Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2023–24



Australian Library and
Information Association



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Front and back cover images: Paranalpe Centre, which houses Devonport Library. Credit: Libraries Tasmania.

Foreword

Welcome to the *Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2023–24*. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) collaborate annually to provide insights and to advocate for the value of public library services across the country, and the importance of a local library to its community.

For the first time, this year's report includes case studies, drawn from public libraries across Australia, that speak to the valuable services that our libraries offer every day in promoting digital inclusion, assistance with e-government, and other impactful programs. The case studies also speak to the evolving use of public libraries across the country. We observe that membership numbers are decreasing at the same time as physical visitations to libraries continue to rise; increasingly, Australians are welcome to access many library services without membership. Our profession and our libraries remain aware of the immeasurable value to democracy and to community cohesion of Australians seeking knowledge, comfort, connection or solitude, and finding it within their public library—freely available to everyone.

As librarians in leadership positions, we also reflect on this data set with strong interest in light of the findings of the report by Australia Reads and BehaviourWorks Australia on *Understanding Australian Readers: Behavioural insights into recreational reading*.¹ Our profession plays a vital role in building and maintaining a reading culture at all stages in life, and we celebrate the national increase in library loans over 2023-24: this year, Australians on average borrowed from their library 6.5 times, up from 6.1 in 2022-23 and 5.5 in 2019-20. We hope to see these figures continue to rise with each successive release of these reports. We also acknowledge the work of our colleagues nationally in leading more than 184,000 literacy and lifelong learning programs this year, ensuring that libraries remain places where people can discover or rediscover the joy of reading.

We hope that you and your community will benefit from the data and case studies offered in this report. We look forward to welcoming you to one of Australia's 1,716 public library outlets very soon.



Catherine Clark

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Jane Cowell

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¹ Wright, B., Lennox, A. & Mata, F. *Understanding Australian readers: Behavioural insights into recreational reading*. Melbourne, Australia: BehaviourWorks Australia, Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Monash University, February, 2025.

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Executive Summary

The *Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report 2023-2024* provides a snapshot of Australia's public library services, and their diverse collections and services to the public. With increasing cost of living concerns, free and accessible public library services have been embraced by the community, with visitation and loans significantly increasing.



Key trends

Physical visitation grows: Libraries experienced a significant rebalancing toward in-person services, with physical visits increasing by almost 10% to 88 million, while online visits decreased by 10% to 60 million.

Diverse services: People visited the library for a range of activities, including attending programs (7 million participants), using wifi (14 million hours), using computers (14,500 public use devices) and meeting rooms (750,000 hours), or simply to borrow one of the almost 48 million collection items.

Record collection usage: Australians borrowed library items 174 million times in 2023-24, averaging 6.5 loans per person annually, the highest in five years.

Growing digital collections: Digital collections now represent 28% of total holdings (up from 12% in 2019-20), with digital borrowing accounting for 32% of all loans.

Community hubs: Libraries offered a record 409,000 programs attracting over 7 million attendees, with literacy and lifelong learning programs being most popular. This was an increase in program attendance by nearly 1 million from 2022-23.

Funding challenges: Despite increased activity, funding for libraries is under pressure. While total expenditure increased 6% to \$1.385 billion, when adjusted for inflation, per capita spending has decreased 12% in real terms over five years. Collection expenditure similarly shows a 14% decrease when adjusted for inflation.

The story in numbers

Key figures from 2023-24:

- public library services were provided through 1,717 service points, including 1,413 branches, 78 mobile libraries, and 226 other outlets (including self-serve kiosks, library depots and collection vending machines).
- there were 88 million in-person library visits.
- public library collections were used 174 million times, including 119 million physical item loans and 55 million digital loans, downloads and retrievals from electronic collections.
- on average, every person in Australia borrowed 6.5 library items across the year.
- 48 million items (1.8 items per capita) were available for the use of the community, with investment of \$139 million keeping these collections current and relevant.
- a record 409,000 library programs attracted over 7 million attendees.
- 1,654 bookable rooms and meeting spaces were occupied for over 754,000 hours.

About this report

This *Australian Public Libraries Statistical Report* covers the financial year 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024. This report is intended to provide a broad snapshot of Australia's public library services. Public libraries are governed by a variety of jurisdictional administrative arrangements, ranging from services wholly delivered by the state/territory government through to services wholly delivered by local government, resulting in a lack of consistency in data gathered across jurisdictions. Furthermore, significant variations in social, demographic and geographic criteria between and within jurisdictions create differing community demands and needs, affecting the type and scope of public library services provided. As such these data cannot be used to accurately compare state/territory services against each other, and should instead be used as a descriptive resource.

Public libraries continually change and update the services they provide to communities, reflecting shifting demographics and social and cultural expectations and needs. Accordingly, the kinds of data collected for national statistical reports are reviewed periodically to highlight the most relevant data. The last national review was in 2020-21 as part of the [*ALIA-APLA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*](#), in which several changes were made to the annual data collection survey, meaning that some questions have had data collected for only three years. There will be another national review in 2025-2026.

Data is supplied by the state or territory authority responsible for public library services, compiled by National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), and the report created by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). Collating and processing data from all states and territories takes time, and the authors acknowledge this report reflects public libraries activity and usage at a delay.

NSLA is a collaboration between national, state and territory libraries of Australia and Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, the National Library of New Zealand. In Australia, NSLA members represent the interests of public library networks within their jurisdictions. ALIA is the peak body and national professional association for the library and information services sector. ALIA's public library sector committee, the ALIA Australian Public Library Alliance (ALIA APLA) is the peak body for public libraries in Australia and comprises representatives from the state-based public library associations, the territory libraries and Libraries Tasmania.

1. Five-year national comparison



1.1 Service points

Public library services were provided across Australia through a total of 1,716 outlets in 2023-24, a small increase from 1,714 in 2022-23 and 1,706 in 2021-22. This figure includes mobile libraries and other outlets (self-serve kiosks, depots and collection vending machines). There was a small increase in the number of library branches in Victoria and Western Australia, and a small decrease in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. The Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania maintained the same number of branches as in 2022-23.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of library branches	1,407	1,419	1,405	1,412	1,413
Number of mobile libraries	80	71	74	76	78
Number of other library outlets ²	177	200	227	226	226
Total number of library outlets	1,664	1,690	1,706	1,714	1,717
Total opening hours	2,774,524	2,884,922	2,944,811	2,910,186	3,023,634

1.2 Physical and online library visits

There were almost 10 million more physical visits to public libraries in 2023-24 than the previous reporting period, rising from 79 million to 88 million.

Digital visits to library websites reduced by a similar number, from 70 to 60 million, though this number was impacted by changes in the way that one major jurisdiction collected data this period which reduced their reported visits significantly. Even accounting for that change, the figures suggest a continued rebalancing towards more in-person library visits as we move further from pandemic restrictions, with physical visitations now slightly greater than the pre-pandemic numbers in 2019-2020.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Library visits (physical facilities)	84,229,103	57,747,548	56,329,191	78,878,875	87,577,447
Physical visits per month	7,019,092	4,812,296	4,694,099	6,573,240	7,298,121
Physical visits per capita	3.3	2.2	2.2	3.0	3.2
Website visits	63,627,539	55,077,627	55,607,292	70,615,778	60,256,708
Website visits per capita	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.7	2.2

² Includes self-service kiosks (in separate locations from branches), automated vending machines, deposit and unstaffed depots and all other outlets.

Case Study: Changing nature of library use and membership, Millmerran Public Library

The town of Millmerran, situated in the Toowoomba Region in South-East Queensland, is two and a half hours' drive west of Brisbane, and 90 minutes' drive north of the New South Wales border. Millmerran Library opens three days per week from 10am-5pm with lunch time closure from 1-2pm.

Millmerran's official township population is 1,371. Unofficial estimates place the actual population much higher due to a number of off-the-grid communities and settlements to the west of town, and the population estimate doubles when including the surrounding catchment, for which Millmerran is the rural centre.

Notable for Millmerran Library is that over 30% of Millmerran Library customers travel over 25km to attend the branch, owing to the remote location of the community with few close alternatives for shopping and commerce.



Supplied: Millmerran public library

Millmerran's predominant industry is rural primary production and is responsible for a substantial proportion of the area's employment. Additionally, located just outside Millmerran is a large coal-fired power station which employs local permanent and seasonal staff.

Millmerran Public Library reports a large volume of customers who are non-members using the library.

The community is home to a diverse range of residents with English as a second language who are employed on skilled working visas throughout the various farms in the area, as well as back-packers on working holidays seeking short-term employment while travelling. Most are only in Millmerran on a temporary basis and do not have access to a computer or internet.

The most frequent requirement of these customers is access to the Library's public computers where they create copies of identification, generate documents, submit paperwork, open bank accounts and access their email. The Library is essential to their ability to live and work in Australia, and the only service of this kind within 40 km.

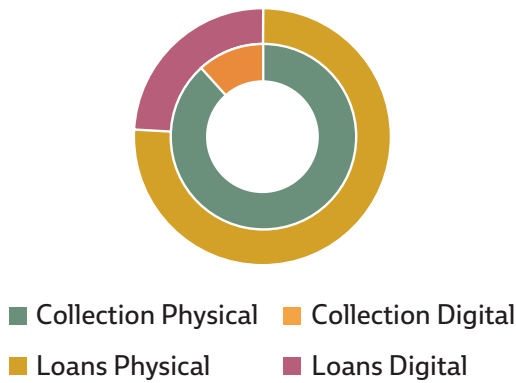
1.3 Collections and usage

Loans of collection items (physical and digital combined) have increased by 23% over the five-year period to almost 175 million loans. On a per capita basis this is an increase of 7% from last reporting period, with loans per capita at a five year high, at 6.5 loans per person annually.

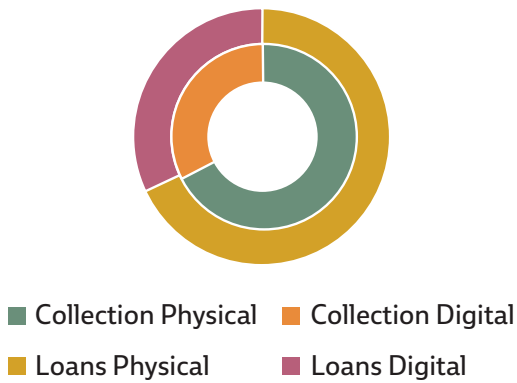
Public library collections have steadily grown over the 2019-2024 period from around 37 million items to 48 million items (physical and digital combined). On a per capita basis there are 1.8 public library collection items for every person in Australia, a marginal increase from last reporting period and a five-year high.

Digital collections, including ebooks and audiobooks, now account for a larger proportion of total collection holdings, growing from around 12% in 2019-20 to 28% in 2023-24. These larger digital collections are in turn reflected in greater lending figures of digital collection items, which have increased over the same period from around 34 million in 2019-2020 (24% of loans) to 55 million in 2023-24 (32% of loans).

Collection item and loans by format 2019-20

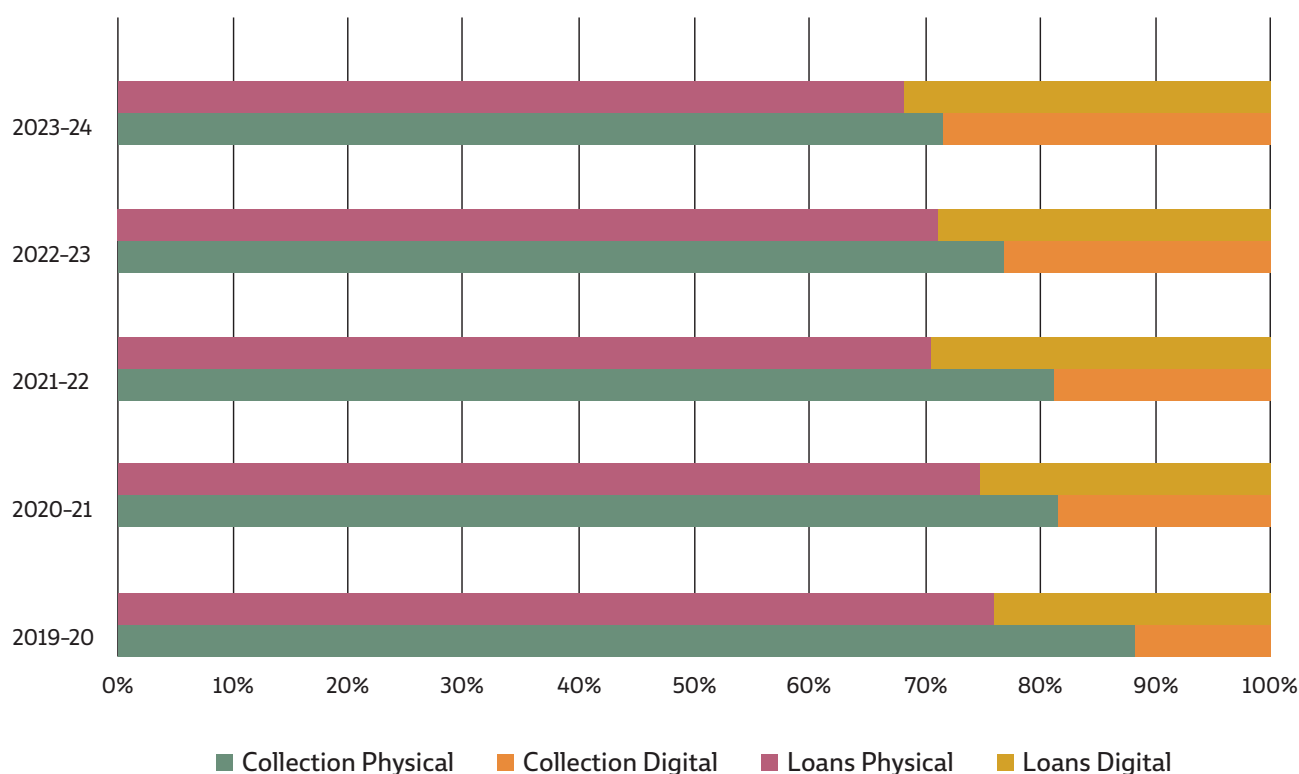


Collection item and loans by format 2023-24



	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Physical collection items	32,378,219	32,543,251	34,289,207	33,483,271	34,330,881
Digital collection items	4,345,410	7,326,673	7,946,203	10,060,510	13,551,906
Total collection items (physical & digital)	36,723,629	39,869,924	42,235,410	43,543,781	47,882,787
Collection items per capita	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8
Physical collection usage	107,962,238	101,072,889	102,951,529	113,403,662	118,767,707
Digital collection usage	34,003,898	33,956,538	43,095,123	45,585,736	55,188,827
Total collection usage (physical & digital transactions)	141,966,136	144,833,515	146,046,652	159,058,567	173,956,534
Collection usage per capita	5.5	5.6	5.7	6.1	6.5

Five-year comparison of physical and digital collections and physical and digital loans



1.4 Services

Digital access

Much of today's information is provided and sought online, and libraries play an essential role connecting people with information through public internet access devices and wifi for bring-your-own devices (BYOD).

Service provision in this area continues to expand rapidly. From the four of the eight Australian states and territories that report on the number of hours of wifi use, more than 14 million hours of internet access was provided in 2023-24, more than double the first year data was collected in 2021-22. Due to the non-reporting on this metric from four jurisdictions, the total wifi hours will be substantially higher nationally.

Hours of use of public access devices increased for the third year in a row, to more than 5.7 million hours, from a slightly decreased number of 14,640 public access devices.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Public access internet devices ³	14,235	12,683	14,247	14,704	14,640
Number of hours public access devices in use	-	-	3,538,690	5,336,213	5,705,835
Hours of wifi use on BYOD and public access devices	-	-	6,587,260	11,806,269	14,061,725

³ Inclusive of all public access internet devices for use within library branches, including desktops, laptops and tablets.

Case Study: Reconnecting generations through digital literacy, the digital room at Doncaster library, Whitehorse Manningham Libraries



Father and son pictured at Malta's Saluting Battery, beneath the Upper Barrakka Gardens in Valletta, Malta, circa. 1952. Supplied: Doncaster Library, Whitehorse Manningham Libraries

A man in Wales receives an image of himself with his father – previously he has had no photos of them together. This significant personal moment was made possible by The Digital Room at Doncaster Library, Whitehorse Manningham Libraries.

The man originally asked his cousin Claire, who lives in Victoria, if she had any images of him with his father. Claire had a series of negatives, but she didn't know what the images held and could not have them printed. Through use of the equipment at the digital library, Claire was able bring in her negatives for scanning. Once the image of the father and son was discovered, Claire excitedly emailed their cousin the image while still in the library scanning additional negatives. It was impactful, as the cousins had grown up in Malta and over time each had moved overseas. Claire shares "Not only did you give me the opportunity to discover what these negatives held, but also cheered my cousin and his family at the right time ... precious memories shared with overseas family."



The Digital Room. Supplied: Doncaster Library, Whitehorse Manningham Libraries

The Digital Room is a digital literacy initiative as well as a family history resource that helps individuals reconnect with their own personal histories. The impact for individuals reconnecting with their own personal histories has been profound. Patron Liz shares “It was emotional, poignant and wonderful. I am so grateful for the opportunity to do this”.

Meeting rooms

Since data on meeting rooms and hours booked to use them began being collected in 2021-22 there has been a marked increase year-on-year in their usage, despite a fluctuation in the number of bookable spaces provided.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Bookable meeting rooms/ spaces	n/a	n/a	1,478	1,292 ⁴	1,654
Hours booked in meeting rooms/spaces	n/a	n/a	518,940	646,583	754,011

⁴ This figure was incorrectly reported in the previous statistical report (2022-23) as 1,918.

1.5 Programs

Public library program sessions have continued a four-year upward trend. This is matched by increased public participation in library programs across all target audiences and outcome areas in 2023-24. Over 400,000 programs attracted some 7 million attendees, an increase in attendance of nearly 1 million from 2022-23 to 2023-24.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Programs ⁵	213,295	148,591	259,620	354,978	409,444
Program attendances	6,425,311	3,887,526	3,527,149	6,148,529	7,030,453
Library-facilitated book clubs	n/a	n/a	5,323	6,232	6,124
Local history collections	n/a	n/a	488	526	554

Case Study: Healthy Aging - Geri-Fit at Libraries ACT

In 2023, the Geri-Fit program—a strength training and wellness initiative tailored for older adults—was piloted at Woden Library in partnership with Curtin University. Founded in the US, the Geri-Fit program is designed to enhance physical health, mobility, and overall wellbeing, and quickly gained popularity among Canberra's senior community.

Due to its success the program has expanded and now runs eight sessions per week across four public library branches in Canberra. The program continues to attract strong participation, with many attendees returning week after week—not just for the fitness benefits, but for the sense of connection and community it fosters.

Geri-Fit offers a wide range of benefits for older adults, especially those aiming to maintain or regain physical function, manage chronic conditions, and stay active and independent. Participants have reported significant improvements in strength and mobility.

"I can now walk up and down stairs without holding the railing and carry groceries with ease."
– Program participant

Beyond the physical gains, Geri-Fit has become a powerful tool for combating social isolation. The sessions provide a welcoming space for social interaction and friendship. The program's success highlights the value of accessible, community-based health initiatives that support both physical and emotional wellbeing in older adults.

"I look forward to catching up with my Geri-Fit friends every week—we even go for coffee together afterwards." – Program participant

Literacy and lifelong learning sessions continue to be the most popular type of public library program, both in terms of session numbers and participant numbers. This reflects public libraries' commitment to supporting diverse forms of literacy. Just under half of program sessions and over half of participants were connected to literacy and lifelong learning in 2023-24.

The number of programs delivered by library partners (both onsite and offsite) rose in 2023-24, demonstrating the pivotal role public libraries play connecting service providers with community needs.

⁵ Excluding Victoria until 2021-22.

Case Study: Partnering for impact in youth programming - CHILL @ Hervey Bay Library, Fraser Coast Libraries

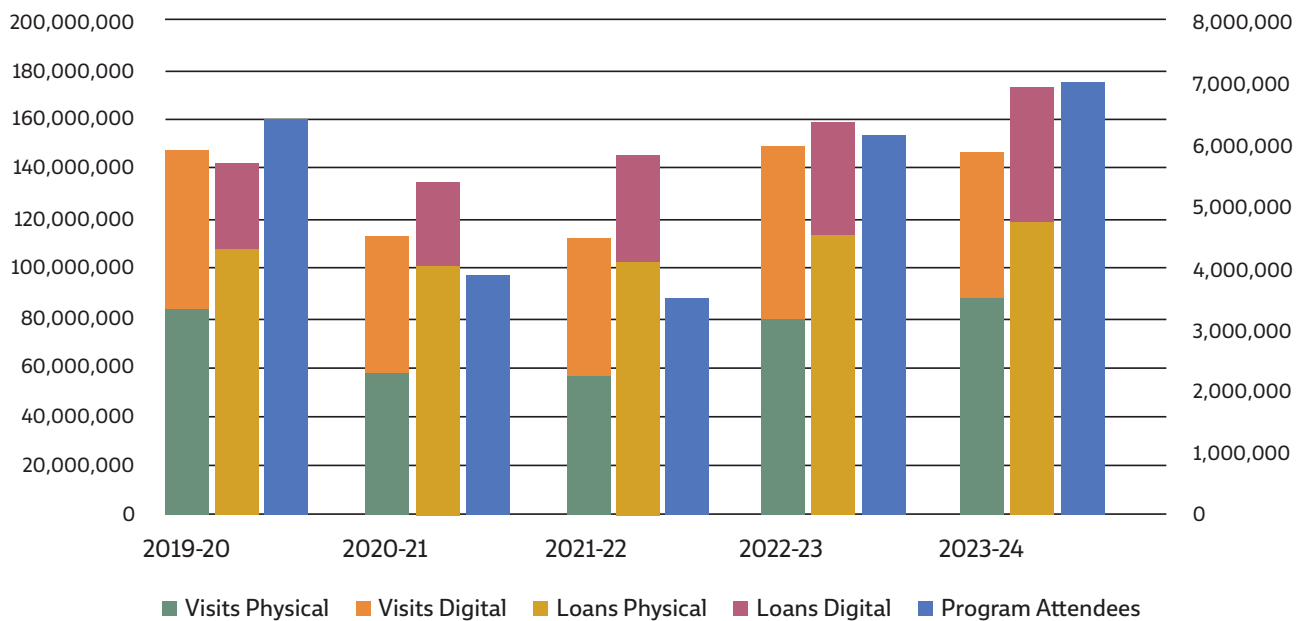
By changing the hours of the CHILL program to align with local school finish times, the Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) Librarian was able to draw more young people to Hervey Bay Library's Creative Space. At the library, young people were able to hang-out with friends, receive free afternoon tea, engage in craft activities, board and card games, and work both independently or collaboratively on their homework with access to laptops and technology purchased specially for this program.



CHILL has now become a vibrant and welcoming hub, full of young people who enjoy being together in a supportive and technologically safe space. Early success led to partnerships with other community organisations including Headspace and the Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre, who now alternate Fridays in the space. Through these partnerships services were increased, with new technologies incorporated, including the introduction of podcasting. Access to new and emerging technologies has expanded opportunities for young people in the community, showing that the regional location is no longer an insurmountable barrier to technologies as a potential career pathway.

The program has strengthened relationships with a local school (who actively promote CHILL) and the students who now engage with the library service outside of CHILL. Most importantly, the library has contributed to student wellbeing by providing innovative and timely programming.

Five-year comparison of physical and digital visits, physical and digital loans and program attendance



1.6 Library membership

Active library membership in real figures and as a percentage of the population decreased slightly in 2023-24. To some extent this reflects a redefinition of 'active library membership' in a number of jurisdictions, alongside a move to single-card family memberships.

While membership is normally a pre-requisite for loans, many library services are available to members and non-members, such as attending programs and events, study and remote work, family visitation, getting help with accessing government services like Centrelink and using wifi and other digital resources on site. People may also use the library physical space without formally accessing other services, such as those seeking a respite from weather or who are experiencing homelessness.

Case Study: The growing role of Newman Library as a community hub

The Newman Library is a vital hub for the local community. While traditional library memberships may be declining, visitation is steadily increasing, with an impressive 31% growth between 2022-23 and 2023-24. This rise reflects the library's purpose beyond books, providing a multifunctional space where people gather to learn, connect, and access essential resources.

Visitors engage in a diverse range of programming and events, from Adults' Arts & Crafts sessions, where community members unleash their creativity, to School Holiday Programs, which provide engaging activities for children. The library also hosts one-off events such as Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, bringing people together to support meaningful causes while enjoying great company. In addition, the space serves as a central location for community meetings, fostering discussions, collaboration, and social connection among residents.



Library programs. Supplied: Newman Library

More visitors now are utilising the library's computers and wi-fi, seeking assistance with technology, and participating in various group activities and social outings. The library's adaptability highlights its role in bridging the gap between education, technology, and community engagement.

Newman Library's transformation demonstrates the power of libraries in fostering creativity, connection, and lifelong learning. By embracing a welcoming and supportive environment, it remains a cornerstone of the community, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for everyone. With continued growth in visitation, the library's innovative approach positions it as a thriving space for knowledge, engagement, and enrichment in Newman.

Libraries continually evolve to meet the changing needs and priorities of communities. Engaging with and using library spaces and services is changing, and therefore what it means to use a library, with or without library membership reflects these changes. While we continue to measure and report membership data, it is acknowledged that this is not an accurate representation of library usage and engagement.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Registered library members	9,320,784	9,048,570	8,407,465	8,260,566	8,133,262
Members as % of total population	36.3%	35.2%	32.6%	31.0%	30.2%

Case Study: Monash Public Library service partnership with Services Australia

Since April 2024 Monash Public Library Service has been running weekly information sessions with a Services Australia Multicultural Services Officer (MSO) about the different services that Services Australia provide. At the end of each session, people have the chance to ask for personalised help.

Impact and Success Stories

1. A young person had been receiving Centrelink payments in the past but lost access due to housing instability and mental health challenges. The MSO was able to direct them to support to reinstate their payment and guide them through the process. With assistance from library staff, they were connected to material aid agencies, enabling them to access immediate support.
2. An asylum seeker approached the MSO seeking financial assistance and employment support. Due to his residency status, he was ineligible for Centrelink income support. The MSO encouraged him to reach out to a local organisation regarding potential job opportunities. Two weeks later, he was offered a long-term contract in case management.

The collaboration between Services Australia and Monash Public Library Service has demonstrated the power of community engagement through accessible support services. By providing a welcoming space and structured assistance, the library continues to play a vital role in bridging gaps and fostering positive social outcomes.

People can find more information about Services Australia at servicesaustralia.gov.au

Services Australia have information in over 70 languages for people to read or listen to at servicesaustralia.gov.au/yourlanguage

1.7 Staff

Public libraries staff numbers increased slightly in 2023-24, reversing the steady decrease in previous years, but not at a level adequate to reverse the steady decline in per capita terms.

While the number of positions that require an ALIA accredited higher education qualification remained relatively unchanged, the number of positions that require a Diploma level qualification or a non-library qualification increased.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Total staff (full time equivalent – FTE)	7,852	7,798	7,727	7,753	7,787
Staff members (FTE) per 10,000 persons	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9
Number of positions (not FTE) that require an ALIA-recognised library technician qualification.	1098	1044.22	968.91	953.71	1083.09
Number of positions that require an ALIA-recognised library and information science qualification at undergraduate or postgraduate levels.	1718	1666.3	1516.13	1592.8	1579.55
Number of positions that require a non-library qualification, e.g. accounting, marketing, education.	N/A	N/A	525.24	527.44	586.92

1.8 Expenditure⁶

Overall funding for public library services increased by 6% from 2022-23 to 2023-24, which is equal to a \$1.63 per capita increase without adjusting for inflation. Adjusting for inflation, there has been a 12% funding decrease in real terms over five years.

Even with real value decreases in funding, public libraries continue to expand physical and digital collections, program offerings, wifi access, local history collections, bookable meetings rooms, and have seen physical and digital visitation and borrowing figures increase significantly.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Expenditure on public library services	\$1,286.90m	\$1,264.77m	\$1,259.89m	\$1,306.39m	\$1,391.42m
Expenditure per capita	\$50.11	\$49.15	\$48.90	\$49.74	\$51.60
Expenditure per capita adjusted for inflation to 2023-2024	\$58.51	\$56.91	\$55.04	\$52.52	-
Collections expenditure	\$137.76m	\$132.54m	\$135.83m	\$143.51m	\$138.66m
Collection expenditure per capita	\$5.36	\$5.15	\$5.27	\$5.46	\$5.16
Collection expenditure per capita adjusted for inflation	\$6.26	\$5.96	\$5.93	\$5.77	-

⁶ Note that these figures have not been adjusted to reflect Consumer Price Index changes over the period.

Case Study: Devonport Library NAIDOC Week story time

Devonport Library hosted a special NAIDOC Week Storytime on 5 July 2023. They read *We Love Country* and introduced two new First Nations cultural elements to Storytime: a basket of interactive learning objects to share, and clapping sticks, which were made locally by Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

After the story, attendees participated in a sea-themed craft activity based on Auntie Patsy Cameron's award-winning book *Sea Country*, which details life on Flinders Island in Tasmania's north east and shares the stories and traditional ways of life of the Pairebeenne Trawlwoolway clan. It tells the stories of children growing up on the island collecting shellfish, picking wild cherries in the summer and learning when to look for mutton birds. Auntie Patsy is a local elder and author, and Devonport Library celebrated her unique contribution to connecting Tasmanians with the deep history, heritage and culture of Tasmanian Aboriginal people.



NAIDOC week at Devonport Library. Photo credit: Libraries Tasmania

Children drew and coloured their own pictures of colourful sea life, creating a beautiful Sea Country of their own, which was put on display in the library for all to enjoy. While the children at the event were quite young, they and their parents enjoyed learning more about First Nations people and sharing in the stories of connection to Country.



2. State and territory comparative data

This section presents comparative data across the eight states and territories in 2023-24.

2.1 Service points

Service points stayed relatively steady, with the largest increase in Victoria. Opening hours increased in all jurisdictions bar the Northern Territory.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Number of library branches	10	361	32	304	135	45	293	233	1,411
Number of mobile libraries	0	30	1	14	8	0	24	1	78
Number of other library outlets ⁷	0	68	3	25	23	5	91	11	226
Total number of library outlets	10	459	36	343	166	50	408	245	1,717
Total opening hours	22,797	829,129	29,728	562,202	286,355	66,937	795,978	430,508	3,023,634

2.2 Collections and usage

Collections

In 2023-24 physical collections increased slightly overall, with increases in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia, while physical holdings in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria decreased slightly. All states' and territories' digital holdings increased, apart from Tasmania, where digital collection holdings decreased by a very small number, and South Australia, where adjustments in data collection see an on-paper decrease in digital holdings.

Total collection holdings across Australia have increased steadily over the last five years, with fluctuations across jurisdictions. The general trend across states and territories is for physical collections to remain relatively steady, with a year-on-year increase in digital collections.

Local history collections increased again, from 487 in 2021-22 to 526 in 2022-23, and 554 in 2023-24, with small changes across states and territories.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Total collection items (physical & digital)	0.69m	17.31m	0.33m	11.02m	2.73m	0.59m	9.20m	6.02m	47.88m
Total number physical items	0.47m	14.05m	0.27m	5.63m	2.63m	0.48m	7.18m	3.62m	34.33m
Total number digital items	0.22m	3.27m	0.56m	5.38m	0.10m	0.10m	2.02m	2.40m	13.55m
Local history collections	1	90	9	60	143	45	50	156	554

⁷ Includes self-service kiosks (in separate locations from branches), automated vending machines, deposit and unstaffed depots and all other outlets.

Usage

Digital borrowing increased across the board in all jurisdictions. Physical items loans increased in all states and territories apart from South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania.

Overall, usage of collections increased by 15 million instances compared with the previous reporting period. This was made up by around 5 million more physical loans and around 10 million more digital loans.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Total collection usage	2.58m	50.83m	0.94m	41.40m	13.23m	3.34m	45.43m	16.21m	174.00m
Total physical items usage	1.53m	36.99m	0.65m	25.64m	7.50m	2.22m	33.51m	10.73m	118.77m
Total digital items usage	1.05m	13.84m	0.30m	15.76m	3.21m	1.12m	11.92m	5.49m	55.19m
Per capita collection usage	5.5 loans	6.0 loans	3.7 loans	7.8 loans	7.1 loans	5.8 loans	6.6 loans	5.5 loans	6.5 loans

2.3 Visitation

There were 8.7 million more in-person library visits, reflecting an 11% increase in the 2023-24 reporting period. All jurisdictions apart from the Northern Territory and Tasmania reported higher in-person visitation numbers in 2023-24.

There is a counter-trend in online visitation, with overall website (including catalogue) visits decreasing by 14.7% from 2022-23 to 2023-24, or just over 10 million visits. The biggest drops were in Victoria and the ACT, the latter having re-defined website visits to better align with reporting from other jurisdictions. However, not all jurisdictions followed this trend, with increases in New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland and Tasmania.

This is the third year that libraries have provided data on hours booked in publicly available meeting rooms. The total number of hours booked increased from 518,940 hours in 2021-22 to 646,583 hours in 2022-2023, and to 754,011 in 2023-2024. Hours booked in meeting rooms increased in more than half of all jurisdictions.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Onsite visitors	1.46m	26.54m	0.76m	17.02m	7.96m	2.26m	22.30m	8.58m	87.58m
Website visits, inc. catalogue	1.28m	14.02m	0.43m	17.02m	8.36m	1.93m	12.94m	4.27m	60.26m
Hours booked in rooms / spaces	7,906	212,723	4,820	191,892	50,856	26,319	186,851	72,644	754,011

2.4 Internet access

Despite there being around 60 fewer devices available across the country, their usage increased by some 370,000 hours. The number of wifi sessions rose from 12 million in 2022-23 to 15.4 million in 2023-24, and the number of hours of wifi use increased from 6.5 million in 2022-23 to 8.4 million in 2023-24, an increase of 29% in both cases.

Currently only four jurisdictions are able to report on the number of wifi sessions and hours of wifi use.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Public access devices	108	4,750	285	3,180	1,488	334	3,286	1,199	14,640
Public device usage hours	52,630	1.9m	100,441	1.19m	597,457	n/a	1.45m	416,350	5.7m
Total wifi sessions	n/a	9.44m	298,477	4.55m	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.15m	15.4m
Hours of wifi use	n/a	n/a	332,535	2.45m	n/a	n/a	5.08m	487,480	8.36m

2.5 Public programs

In 2023-24 there were over 400,000 program sessions, attracting over 7 million participants, an average of 17 people per session. There were around 55,000 more sessions in 2023-24 than 2022-23, a 15% increase, and around 880,000 more participants, reflecting a 14% increase. These measures have been growing for three consecutive reporting periods.

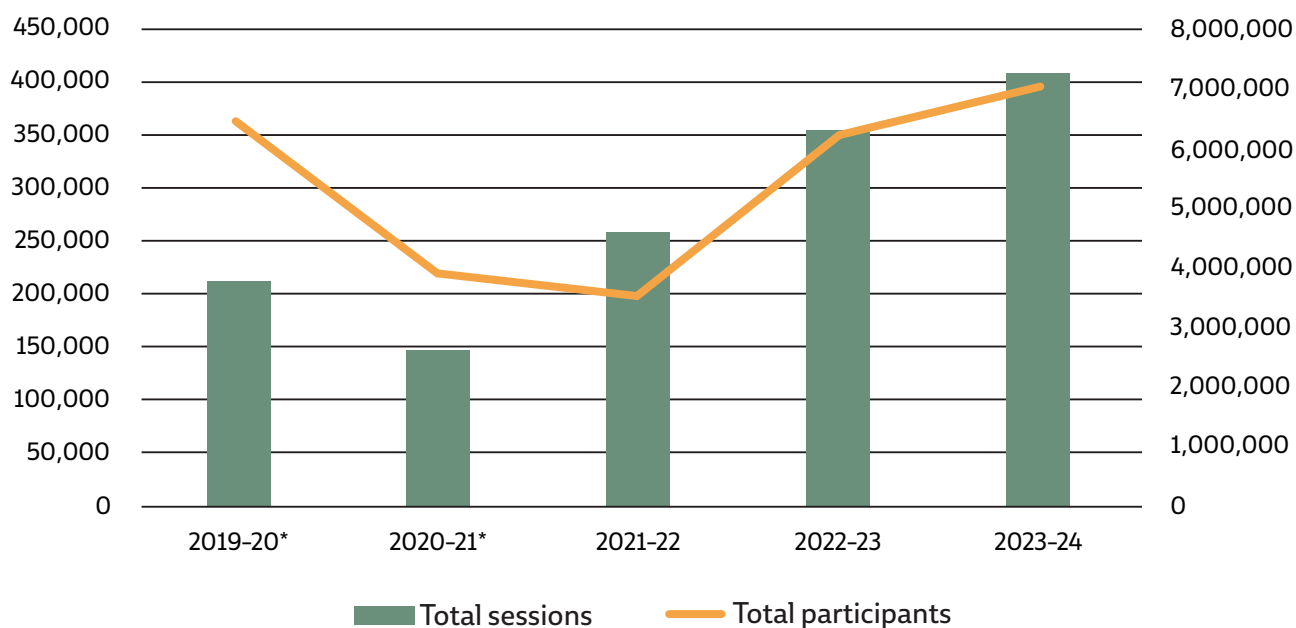
2.5.1 Programs sessions by target audience

Programs created for particular audiences indicate libraries' responsiveness to community needs and expectations for programming aimed at particular life stages and demographics. The high number of sessions aimed at early childhood audiences reflects the important role libraries continue to play supporting young families, especially around literacy and learning.

Target audiences are grouped slightly differently across states and territories and between reporting periods. There are, for example, shifts related to tagging in library management software, which don't always neatly align with NSLA categories, as well as other fluctuations that make target audience reporting narrower or broader from year to year.

SESSION	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Early childhood	1,304	33,738	1,132	31,187	9,694	1,849	33,290	15,193	127,387
Children	547	17,422	1,795	10,320	12,290	799	20,077	7,239	70,489
Young adult	49	3,637	269	1,442	868	481	3,690	1,320	11,756
Adults	742	23,171	819	8,261	20,834	1,367	33,339	16,638	105,171
Seniors	297	8,583	256	2,317	3,112	310	6,083	4,311	25,269
All ages	423	12,184	381	25,767	17,208	622	5,908	6,879	69,372
TOTAL	3,362	98,735	4,652	79,294	64,006	5,428	102,387	51,580	409,444

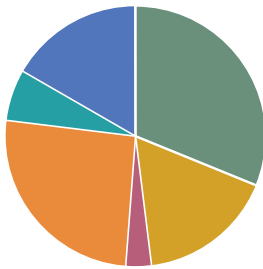
Programs and attendance



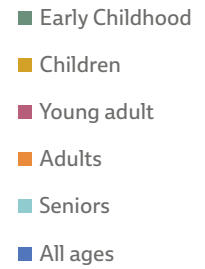
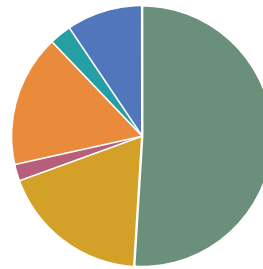
2.5.2 Program participants by target audience

SESSION	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Early childhood	40,474	778,752	27,266	897,522	278,571	47,553	1,098,978	409,612	3,578,728
Children	3,902	295,275	20,219	251,651	278,571	14,008	413,694	150,695	1,304,230
Young adult	247	41,807	3,715	21,209	8,221	6,003	41,412	13,898	136,312
Adults	5,430	265,868	3,439	337,276	108,164	9,506	279,484	145,704	1,154,871
Seniors	1,828	75,482	1,133	13,102	16,837	1,691	46,788	25,261	182,122
All ages	1,000	226,985	6,897	134,905	125,919	7,646	131,073	39,765	647,190
TOTAL	52,881	1,684,169	62,669	1,655,465	694,498	86,407	2,011,429	784,935	7,030,453

Programs by target audience 2023-24



Participation by target audience 2023-24



As indicated in the graphs above, early childhood programs are particularly well attended, making up around half of total participant numbers.

2.5.3 Programs by outcome area

These measures illustrate programs and program participation in line with the six outcome areas related to the *ALIA-APLA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*:⁸

- **Literacy and lifelong learning** - Programs whose primary purpose relates to literacy and/or educational learning, e.g. storytime, English conversation, homework help, reading-related programs, programs supporting development of learning habits and skills.
- **Informed and connected citizens** - Programs whose primary purpose is community connection and/or build community capacity to participate in community discussions, access government services and participate in political processes, e.g. eGov sessions, new residents morning teas.
- **Digital inclusion** - Programs whose primary purpose is to increase participants' confidence using digital technology, e.g. Tech Savvy Seniors, PC skills, internet skills, coding.
- **Personal development and wellbeing** - Programs whose primary purpose is social inclusion or personal development, e.g. hobby clubs, author talks, health-related programs.
- **Stronger and more creative communities** - Programs whose primary purpose is to support expressions of culture, identity and community pride, e.g. cultural celebrations, multilingual programming, local history events, writing workshops.
- **Economic and workforce development** - Programs whose primary purpose is to improve employment and productivity outcomes, e.g. programs for jobseekers, programs for micro/small business owners, vocational programs.

For the last three reporting periods, literacy and lifelong learning programs have been the most numerous and the best-attended programs, demonstrating the ongoing trust and established role played by libraries in this area.

Similarly to target audiences being classified slightly differently from one jurisdiction to the next, classifying programs by outcome area can be a matter of judgment and there are some differences across jurisdictions.

SESSIONS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Literacy & lifelong learning	1,546	46,936	2,290	41,941	17,289	3,172	52,691	18,367	184,232
Informed & connected citizens	810	5,452	89	1,663	5,684	63	4,668	1,682	20,111
Digital inclusion	25	9,877	725	17,389	23,421	616	16,556	11,118	79,727
Personal development & wellbeing	634	14,527	830	16,478	10,741	1,137	18,359	8,578	71,284
Stronger & more creative communities	345	9,632	219	1,189	5,888	78	8,878	5,183	31,412
Economic & workforce development	2	935	499	634	634	377	1,235	330	4,646

⁸ ALIA (2021) *ALIA-APLA Standards and Guidelines for Australian Public Libraries*. <https://read.alia.org.au/apla-alia-standards-and-guidelines-australian-public-libraries-may-2021>

There was a strong growth in attendance of personal development and wellbeing programs in 2023-24, and an increase in numbers per session from an average of 10.2 people per session to 15.4 per session.

PARTICIPANTS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Literacy & lifelong learning	40,869	988,065	38,632	1,082,642	377,992	66,841	1,454,540	432,431	4,482,012
Informed & connected citizens	9,010	86,038	38,632	34,856	80,763	1,833	69,274	22,742	305,477
Digital inclusion	62	46,031	6,177	114,631	41,095	2,742	77,399	28,999	317,136
Personal development & wellbeing	2,792	202,640	10,806	394,672	126,173	12,861	254,406	96,621	1,100,971
Stronger & more creative communities	68	156,766	4,402	25,995	60,126	891	150,589	79,743	478,580
Economic & workforce development	80	10,990	1,691	2,669	1,157	1,239	5,220	2,229	25,275
TOTAL	52,881	1,490,530	62,669	1,655,465	687,306	86,407	2,011,428	662,765	6,709,451

2.5.4 Programs by delivery mode

This measure reflects libraries' efforts to meet community needs by delivering programs in diverse modes, depending on the audience, context or content. They are:

- library onsite: at the library, delivered/arranged by the library
- partner onsite: delivered by a partner organisation at the library; use of facilities only, not private hire
- community location: offsite and outreach
- online: livestreamed, pre-recorded, posted on social media

The notable trend here is that in-person onsite participation increased across the board, apart from a small reduction in the Northern Territory, which is in line with overall in-person library visitation trends. Likewise, online delivery and participation in programs was down in all states and territories, apart from a small increase in Tasmania.

SESSIONS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Library onsite	3,096	108,749	3,610	65,372	59,769	4,652	86,926	41,217	373,391
Partner onsite	191	11,065	414	7,984	1,601	463	6,749	4,469	32,936
Community location	48	3,532	604	5,277	2,452	247	7,975	2,027	22,162
Online	27	745	24	661	230	81	736	165	2,669

PARTICIPANTS	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	Tas.	Vic.	WA	Aust.
Library onsite	48,488	1,462,242	47,909	1,324,541	n/a	72,083	1,685,505	628,872	5,269,640
Partner onsite	3,053	130,521	5,248	n/a	n/a	7,273	110,943	60,793	317,831
Community location	1,187	93,956	8,092	287,790	n/a	5,741	199,434	56,773	652,973
Online views ⁹	153	93,953	1,420	43,134	3,878	1,310	15,548	8,508	167,904
TOTALS	52,881	1,780,672	15,667	1,655,465	3,878	86,407	2,011,430	754,946	6,408,348

⁹ Including livestreamed or pre-recorded sessions shared via social media or library websites.

3. Data sources



The data used to prepare this report was made available from each individual State or Territory authority. It should be noted that the data may vary from that published separately by individual States and Territories.

For further information on the data please contact:

Australian Capital Territory

Libraries ACT
PO Box 158
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

New South Wales

State Library of New South Wales
Public Library Services
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Northern Territory

Library & Archives NT
Library Sector Services
Department of People, Sport and Culture
GPO Box 42
DARWIN NT 0801

Queensland

State Library of Queensland
PO Box 3488
SOUTH BRISBANE QLD 4101

South Australia

State Library of South Australia
Public Library Services
GPO BOX 1971
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Tasmania

Libraries Tasmania
91 Murray Street
HOBART TAS 7000

Victoria

Public Libraries Victoria
C/- Chief Executive Officer
Level 12/60 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Western Australia

State Library of Western Australia
25 Francis Street, Perth Cultural Centre
PERTH WA 600



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