Libraries Children's PLUS

County Library and Information Service

Lancashire
County Council

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1 Executive Summary

The Children's PLUS survey is a three-yearly survey of children under the age of 16 to find out their usage and perceptions of library services. The information will be used to improve library services according to the needs of the young people who use them.

Questionnaires were sent to all libraries across the county, including mobile libraries. Staff were asked to offer questionnaires to all children under the age of 16 who came into the library. In total 9,808 questionnaires were returned over the seven day survey period from all 96 libraries. Fieldwork began on Monday 8 October and ended on Sunday 14 October.

The main findings were that:

- The children completing the survey had an average age of just less than seven and a half years, though the highest number of replies came from ten year olds.
- Boys (7.2 years) and white (7.1 years) library users tend to be younger than girls (7.7 years) and BME[1] (8.9 years) library users.
- More girls filled in the questionnaire (56%) than boys (44%).
- Children who haven't started school are more likely to visit the library during the week than school age children, and older children are more likely to visit larger libraries.
- Children are most likely to visit with a family member (70%), more family visits happen at the weekend (83%) and for under fives (89%).
- Library services overall (86% good) and core library services are very well thought of by children (81% books are good, 71% computers are good), although less so for homework help (60% good).
- All aspects of the library facilities are rated highly, although less so for opening times.
- Most children came to the library to borrow something (72%) followed by to read (38%). The most reason children borrow books is because they like reading (66%).
- Most children hadn't attended any of the additional activities offered at libraries (44%). The most used though were holiday activities (29%) and under 5s events (28%).
- Children are most likely to use computers at home (73%). Library computers are only used by just over a third of library users, but this does increase for older and children. The main uses children have for library computers are playing games (32%), doing homework (27%) and looking at websites (25%).
- Children use libraries for homework because of the resources and information available there to help them with it (books 36% and computers 28%).

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[1] Black and Minority Ethnicity

- The two most mentioned things that the library had helped them to do were read better (61%) and learn and find things out (56%).

The recommendations from the research are outlined below.

- Publicise these positive results amongst library staff, particularly with services and facilities.
- Investigate further how overall perceptions of libraries can be improved by finding out what affects perceptions of books and why children who don't visit with their family rate the service less well.
- Look into opening times finding out when children would like them to be open (particularly for weekday visitors and those going to smaller and mobile libraries).
- Produce staff advice, or training sessions, on how to help children with their homework.
- Look at the take-up of extra activities, such as holiday clubs, as almost half hadn't attended any. If take-up is low then the way these are communicated to the public could be reviewed.
- Perform the survey again in 3 years, to enable performance to be compared, and the success of any initiatives to be evaluated.
- Suggest changes to the wording of the satisfaction questions, with a 'don't know' answer added as not all children will use all facilities (eg homework help, computers).
- Analyse the open comments respondents made to gather users suggestions for improvements to the library.

2 Introduction

The Children's Public Library User Survey (PLUS) 2007 was commissioned by County Library and Information Service (CLIS) as a key element of their survey strategy. The previous surveys were run in 2002 and 2005 although the surveys are normally run on a three-yearly cycle. All local authorities are required to submit satisfaction figures for children's satisfaction with libraries. The findings are based on survey forms completed in libraries across the county. The questions are set and reviewed by a committee of library professionals and representatives of the Institute of Public Finance (IPF).

3 Research Objectives

Children's PLUS was undertaken to find out children's usage and perceptions of library services so library services can be planned according to the needs of the young people who use them. The survey gives the CLIS the information for the Public Library Service Standard (PLSS8) that requires an overall children's satisfaction rate.

The main objectives of the survey were to find out:

- who children come to the library with;

- what children use the library for and how it has helped them; and

- children's opinions of the different aspects of the service.

4 Methodology

The Children's PLUS survey is an 8-page self-completion questionnaire. In 2002 the survey took place in approximately one third of libraries. In 2005 and 2007 the survey covered the whole service, including mobile libraries. Many of the questions asked in the 2007 questionnaire differed to the previous questionnaire so results aren't comparable. Questionnaires were sent to all libraries in the county (with the exception of three mobile libraries in 2007). Each library was assigned a unique location code so responses from each library could be compared. Front-line staff at libraries were asked to give every child under the age of 16 who visited the library a survey form. If a child refused to complete a form, it was recorded. Most of the survey took place over a seven day period, although some libraries continued fieldwork into a second week in order to have enough completed forms. Fieldwork began on Monday 8 October and ended on Sunday 14 October.

No incentive for respondents to complete the forms was given. In total 9,808 questionnaires were returned over the seven day survey period.

All data are weighted based on the figures returned by the IPF, with figures based on all respondents unless otherwise stated.

5 Limitations

The table below shows the approximate sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of Respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
3000	2%	2%	1%
4500	1%	1%	1%
7500	1%	1%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 7,500 respond with a particular answer, the chance are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 49% and 51% (ie +/- 1%), versus a complete coverage of the entire customer base using the same procedure.

Since the population sampled is a sizeable fraction of the overall population, the actual sampling tolerances will actually be slightly smaller than the figures quoted above.

The following table shows what the percentage differences between two samples on a given statistic must be greater than, to be statistically significant.

Size of Sample A	Size of Sample B	50/50	70/30	90/10
200	200	10%	9%	6%
100	5000	10%	9%	6%
200	1000	8%	7%	5%
1000	6000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2000	3%	3%	2%
3000	4000	2%	2%	1%
4000	4000	2%	2%	1%

(Confidence interval at 95% certainty for a comparison of two samples)

For example, for one sample of 1000 and another of 6000, responses in each at around 50% of responses in each category to be compared, the difference needs to be over 3% to be statistically significant. This is to say that the difference is not due to chance alone.

Some of the samples in the survey are too small to allow for comparisons to be made between different groups, for example in some of the smaller libraries and mobile libraries only a handful of questionnaires were completed.

When looking at the profile of library users bear in mind that we don't know if some of the children that completed the questionnaires were more likely than others to fill one in. So certain types of young library users may have been missed from the profile, given in section 6.2, even though they use the library because they didn't fill in a questionnaire.

6 Main Research Findings

A marked up questionnaire of the survey results can be found in Appendix 1.

6.1 Number of survey responses

All of the libraries were asked to offer a questionnaire to every child under 16 who entered the library over a seven day period running from 8 October to the 14 October. In total during the seven day period 9,808 questionnaires were completed across all libraries (except three mobile libraries).

On the whole, there were more questionnaires completed on Monday (26%), the first day of the survey, and Saturday (19%). There were fewer questionnaires completed on Wednesday (11%) than any other weekday. This is likely to be because many libraries are closed on Wednesday or only open for half a day. The CLIS may wish to compare this profile with actual daily visit statistics although this pattern is similar to that observed in the 2005 survey.

Chart 1 - *Volume of responses per day*

Day	Percentage
Monday	26%
Tuesday	16%
Wednesday	11%
Thursday	12%
Friday	15%
Saturday	19%
Sunday	1%
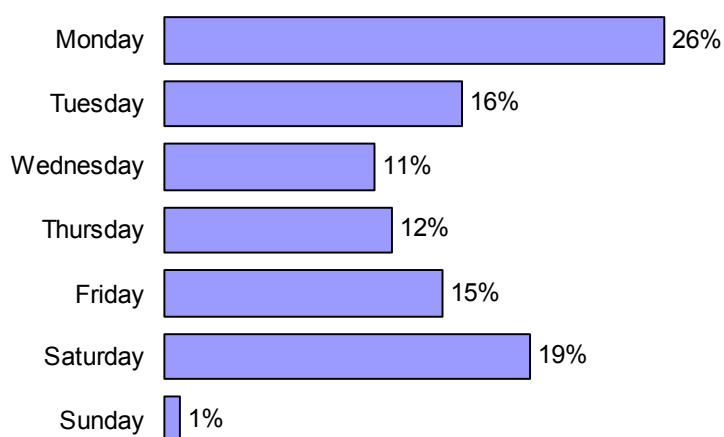
Base: all respondents (9,808)

The libraries with the most completed questionnaires over the survey period are Chorley (398), Lancaster (312), Colne (304), Ormskirk (298), and Burnley (285). There is a full list of number of completed questionnaires by library in appendix 1. The larger libraries, and those based in the central division, also had more questionnaires completed at weekends than the smaller ones (these libraries are most likely to be open at weekends).

Children who haven't started school are more likely to visit the library during the week than school age children (88% of 0 to 4 year olds, 74% of 5 to 9 year olds and 79% of 10 to 15 year olds visit on a weekday). Girls are more likely than boys to visit the library at the weekend (22% and 18% respectively).

6.2   Profile of library users

There were a number of demographic questions in the questionnaire that allows a profile of library users under the age of 16 to be created. These questions included asking them their gender, age and ethnicity. When looking at the results for these questions please bear in mind that it cannot be determined if these are the children who are most likely to use libraries or if they were simply more likely to complete a questionnaire. A comparison of makeup for the survey with the libraries' membership records would be useful to check for any demographic differences.

There were more girls (56%) who filled in a questionnaire than there were boys (44%).

Chart 2 -   *Gender of library users*

Girl	56%
Boy	44%
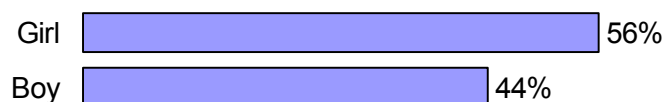
Base: all respondents (2007: 8532, 2005: 7481)

The age distribution of library users has remained consistent from the 2005 survey. Chart 3 shows that within the under-fives category three-year-olds are the highest users of libraries, falling when children get to school age. Usage of libraries steadily increases for children above age five until it peaks at age ten. When children are in high school completion steadily drops until the lowest point is reached at age fifteen.

Chart 3 -   *Distribution in the age of library users*
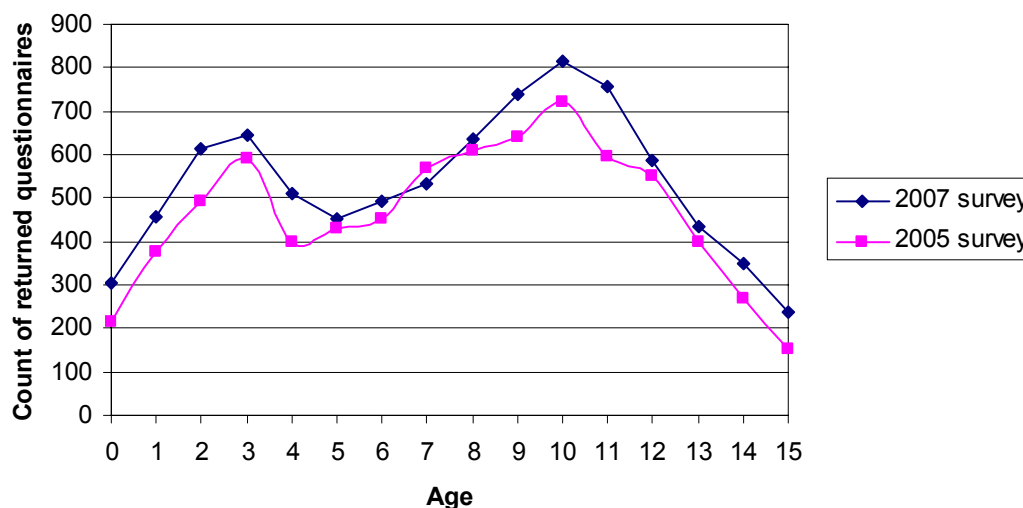
Base: all respondents (2007: 8559, 2005: 7461)

The majority of children who use the library are white (86%). Of the non-white ethnic groups Asian (7%) children completed the most questionnaires, followed by Mixed (4%) and Black (2%).

Chart 4 - *Ethnicity of library users*

White 86% 87%

Asian 7% 8%

Mixed 4% 4%

Black 2% 1%

Other 1%

☐ 2007 survey
☐ 2005 survey
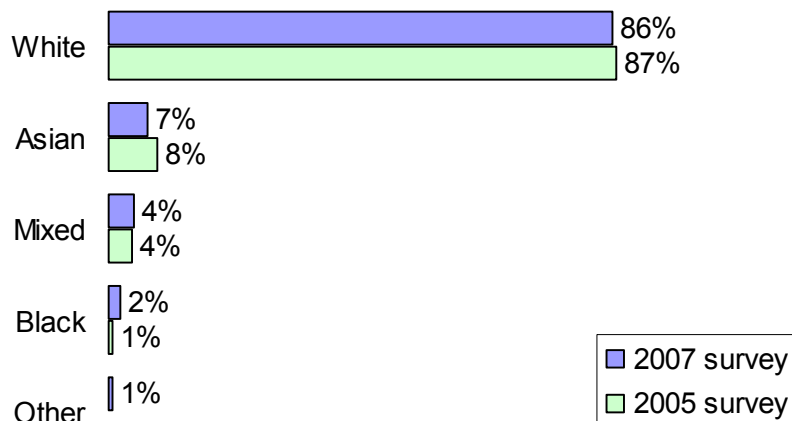
Base: all respondents (7,167)

Library visitors in the under-five age group are more likely to be boys (32%) rather than girls (28%), and be white (33%) rather than BME (15%). In the 10 to 15 age group you are more likely to find girls (39%) rather than boys (34%), and BME children (51%) rather than white children (34%).

Looking at mean ages of these different groups of children:

o BME children (8.9 mean age) completing the survey have an older age make-up than white respondents (7.1 mean age); and
o girls (7.7 mean age) also have an older age make-up than boys (7.2 mean age).

There are also some differences the libraries different children use. Older children (aged 10 to 15) are more likely to visit larger libraries rather than the smallest or mobile libraries. Children aged 5 to 9 are more likely to visit the smaller level 7 and mobile libraries (52% and 61% respectively). The libraries with the highest proportion of black and ethnic minority children completing the survey are Brierfield (91%), Colne Road (85%), Nelson (67%), and the Harris (47%). This is a reflection of the demographic make-up of the surrounding areas.

6.3   Who children visit the library with

The children were asked who they visit the library with. The majority of children visit the library with a member of their family (70%). Only one in seven came with a friend (14%), and fewer still came by themselves (11%).

Chart 5 -   *Who did you come to the library with today?*

Someone from my family	70%
My friends	14%
I came here on my own	11%
My school/nursery/playgroup	8%
Someone else	7%
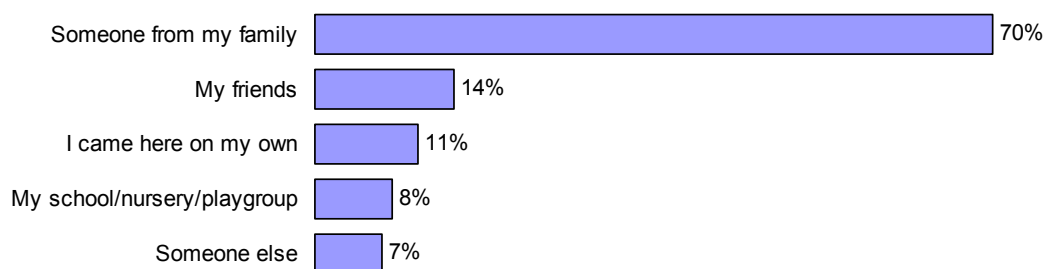
Base: all respondents (8547)

Looking in more detail at the visiting patterns of different children there were some significant differences between different groups. Girls were more likely than boys to visit with friends (16% and 12% respectively). Whereas boys were more likely to visit as part of a school, nursery or playgroup trip than girls (10% and 6% respectively).

Perhaps unsurprisingly older children (those aged 10 to 15), who are more independent, were more likely to come to the library with friends (29%) or on their own (24%)[2]. School, nursery or playgroup visits are more likely for 5 to 9 year olds (11%). And the under fives were more likely to come to the library with a member of their family (89%)[3].

School, nursery or playgroup visits tend to happen during the week (10%) rather than at the weekend (1%). More family visits to the library happen at the weekend (83%) rather than on weekdays (67%).

Visiting patterns also differ by library. The smaller (level 7) and mobile libraries are more likely to have school, nursery and playgroup visits (30% and 51% respectively). This is also the case for libraries in the East division (13%).

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[2] Consequently BME children are more likely to come with friends (21%) or on their own (18%) because on average they are older.
[3] And white children are more likely to come with a family member (72%) compared to BME children (62%).

6.4 Perceptions of libraries

6.4.1 Perceptions of library services

Library services overall are very well thought of by the children that use them (86% good, 13% okay) – interestingly it is the most highly rated characteristic. The core library services are also well regarded: 81% say that overall the books are good, and 71% say that overall the computers are good. The ratings children gave on the help they receive for their homework weren't as good (60% good, 36% okay).

Chart 6 -   *Overall perceptions of…*

Library	86%	13%	0%
Books	81%	19%	1%
Computers	71%	27%	2%
Homework help	60%	36%	3%

□ Good □ OK ■ Bad
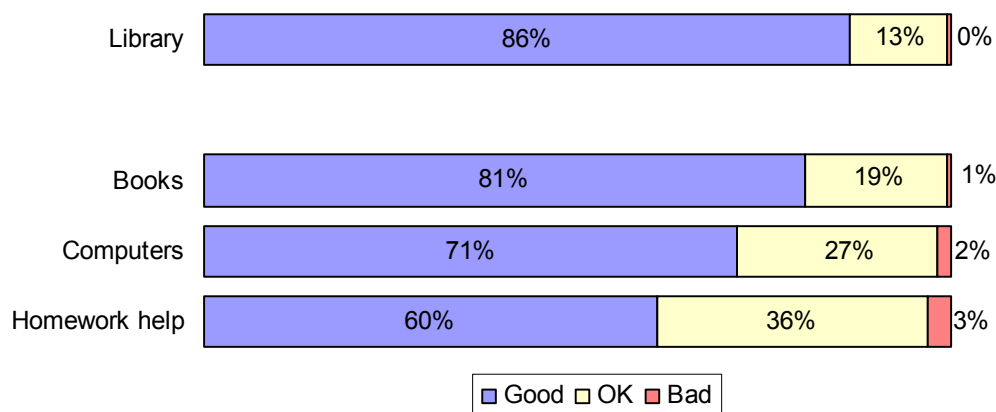
Base: all respondents (8525 to 4421)

Overall perceptions of the library

Looking in more detail at perceptions of the library overall there are a number of significant differences between children's ratings. Girls (88% good) tended to me more satisfied than boys (84% good). Perceptions of the library are linked with who children visit the library with as well as their age (these factors independently affect perceptions). Children coming to the library with a member of their family are always most likely to say the library is good regardless of their age (93% of children under 4 who came with their family rated the library as good). Satisfaction with the library overall decreased the older the children became (0 to 4 year olds 92%, 5 to 9 year olds 88% and 10 to 15 year olds 80% rated the library as good). This rating also ties in with the ethnic background of the children as BME children, who on average tend to be older, were likely to be less satisfied than white children (82% and 87% good respectively).

Users of the Harris (75% good) and mobile libraries (83% good) were generally less likely to be satisfied with the library overall.

Perceptions of the library overall are linked with perceptions of the books and homework help, the lower the children rate these things the worse they tend to rate the library overall. The most strongly correlated is perceptions of the books (18% of the overall perception of libraries is linked to the opinion of the books).

Some key differences in perceptions stand out when looking at each of the attributes of the library service.

Books

The older the children are, the less satisfied they become with the books (0 to 4 year olds 90%, 5 to 9 year olds 85% and 10 to 15 year olds 69% rated the library as good). Again linked with age distribution, BME children (74% good) are less satisfied than white children (82% good). Girls (82% good) also tended to be slightly more satisfied than boys (79% good).

Computers

Here the older children were more likely to be satisfied with the computers (5 to 9 age group 68%, 10 to 15 age group 74% rated computers as good), and consequently BME children (74% good) were more likely to be satisfied.

Also the library children use has an effect on their satisfaction. In north division libraries (67% good) children tend to be less satisfied with the computers compared to most other divisions. Also mobile libraries, which are less likely to have computer facilities, have lower satisfaction with computers (28% good).

Homework help

Girls (62% good) rated the help they received for their homework better than boys (58% good). Also the older age groups didn't rate the homework help as highly (5 to 9 age group 64%, 10 to 15 age group 57% good).

6.4.2 Perceptions of library facilities

The children were asked if they agreed with a series of statements on particular aspects of the library they visited. All attributes are rated highly, the most highly being that the library is a friendly place (99%), a safe place (98%) and a place where children want to come to (97%). The main area children felt could be improved were the opening times (16% didn't think the library was open when they wanted to visit it).

Chart 7 - *Do you think the library is…?*
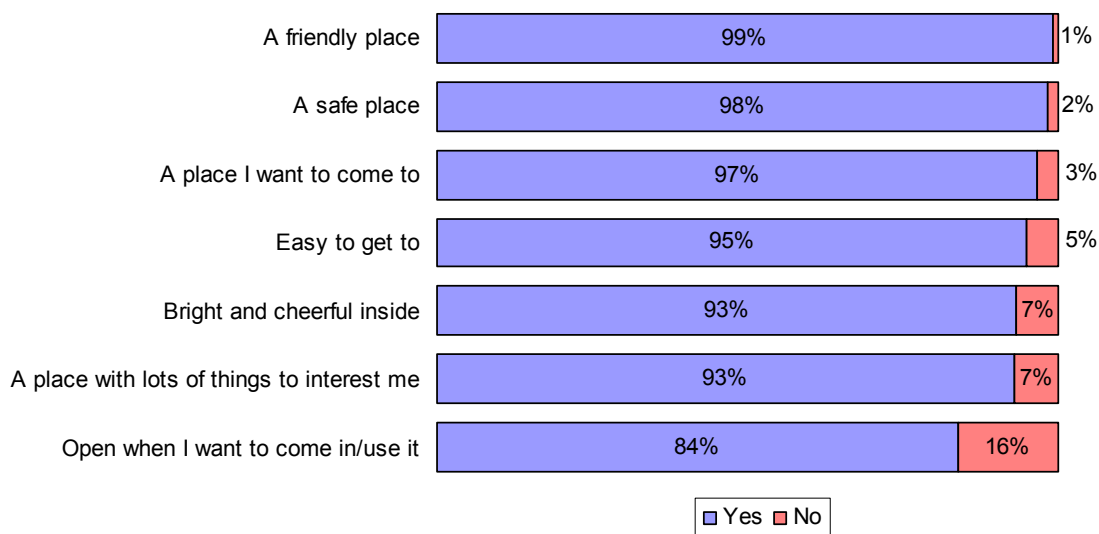
Base: all respondents (8067 to 7046)

The area with the most differences in children's opinions is over library opening times. Children who visit the library during the week were less likely to say the library is open when I want to come in and use it (83%). It also differed around the libraries children were using: children were happier with opening times in central division libraries (87%), and less satisfied with them in the smaller and mobile libraries (level 6 libraries 80%, level 7 libraries 69%, level 8 libraries 45%). Older children (aged 10 to 15) and BME children are also less satisfied with opening times (78% and 79% respectively say libraries are open when I want to come in).

Fewer children found the Harris museum easy to get to (89%). Children who rated the library overall as bad were consistently less likely to agree with all of the statements (a place with lots of things to interest me 27%, bright and cheerful inside 33%, a place I want to come to 36%, friendly place 38%, easy to get to 40%, safe place 62%). This was also the case for most statements for older (10 to 15 years) children (a place with lots of things to interest me 87%, bright and cheerful inside 88%, easy to get to 92%, a place I want to come to 93%). BME children also found libraries more difficult to get to (91% agree).

6.5 Usage of library services

Respondents were asked what they came to do on this visit to the library and if they had attended any specific activities at a library.

The most popular reason for coming to the library was to borrow something like a book or DVD (72%). The next most common uses were to read (38%), look around (31%) and use the computers (30%).

Chart 8 - *Do you come to the library to…?*

Borrow things (eg books, DVDs)	72%
Read	38%
Look around	31%
Use the computers	30%
Do homework	15%
Play with toys	12%
Any other reason	12%
Meet friends	10%
Have somewhere to go	7%
Wait for my parents/family	6%
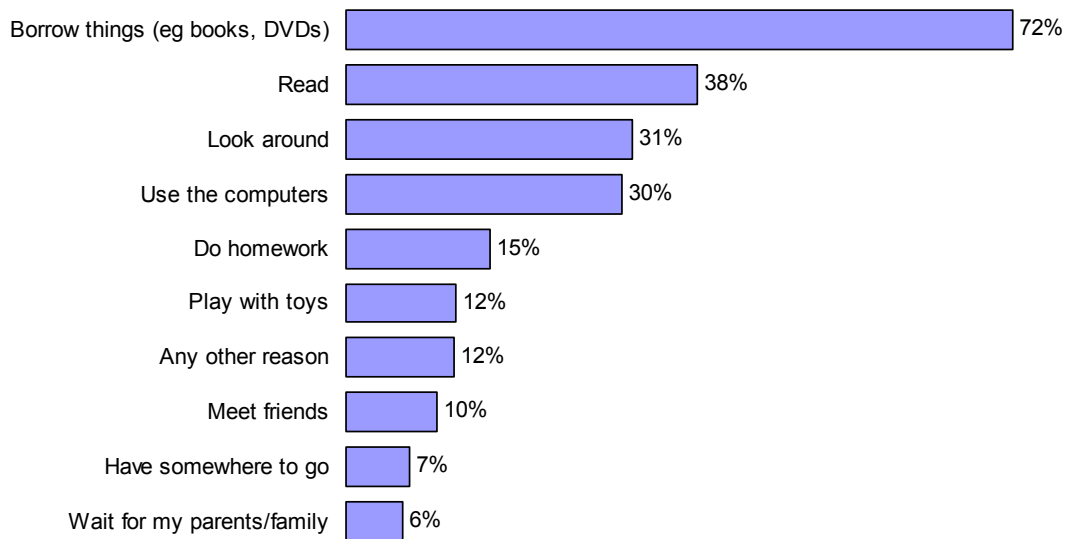
Base: all respondents (8577)

Children's usage of library services differs depending on their age. Younger children (0 to 4 years) are generally just being introduced to libraries so they tend to come to look around or play with toys (39% and 28% respectively). Children aged 5 to 9 are more likely to use the library for borrowing things (80%) and read (46%). Older children (10 to 15) use the library's computers (58%), for doing homework (33%) and to meet friends (13%). These uses also fit with the time of week children visit and their ethnicity:

o Weekday visitors are more likely to come to play with toys[4] (12%) and to meet friends (11%); and weekend visitors are more likely to come to borrow things (78%) and read (41%).
o BME children are more likely to visit the library to use the computer (47%), read (44%), do homework (25%) and meet friends (14%) than white children; while white children were more likely to want to borrow things (75%) or look around (32%) than BME children.

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[4] Younger children are more likely to visit during the week.

Children who used the smaller and mobile libraries were also more likely to come to borrow things (79% and 92% respectively) probably because these libraries have more limited facilities. The Harris library has more children coming to read (54%), use the computer (47%) and do homework (26%) than the other library levels.

Girls' reasons for coming to the library differed from those of boys. Girls were slightly more likely to read 40% and to do homework 17% than boys, whereas boys were more likely to come to look around (33%) than girls.

Those who rate the library as good overall are more likely to come to the library to borrow things (74%) or read (39%), which indicates that the core library services are being provided well. Those children who rate the service less well are more likely to go there to wait for a member of their family (8% okay, 18% bad).

Most children hadn't been to any of the additional activities offered at libraries (44%). The most attended activities were holiday activities (29%) and events for the under fives (28%).

Chart 9 - *Have you been to a library for any of the following?*

Activity	%
None of these	44%
Holiday activity (eg Summer Reading Challenge)	29%
Under 5s event (eg Bookstart, story time)	28%
Book or reading activity (eg author visit, story session)	13%
To take part in a reading group	7%
After school activity (eg computer club or session)	6%
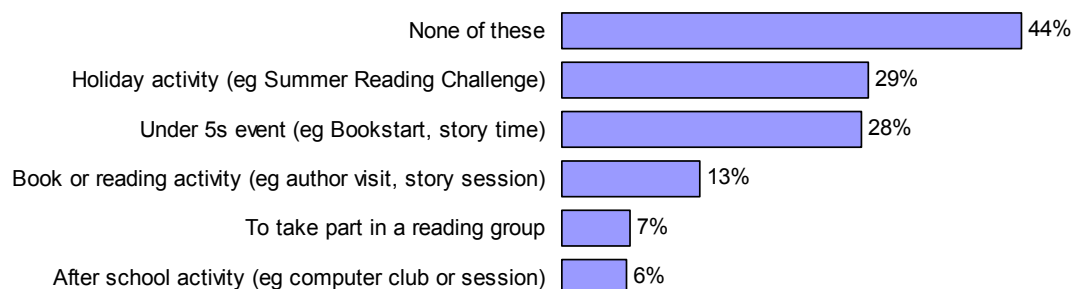
Base: all respondents (7879)

The children who are significantly more likely to have attended:

o *holiday activities* are girls (31%), aged 5 to 9 (44%) and visitors to South division or level 7 libraries (33% and 42% respectively);
o *under 5s event* are under five (66%), boys (31%), white (30%), visited the library during the week (31%) and visited a library other than the Harris (18%);
o *reading group* are aged 10 to 15 and BME (10% both); and
o *after school activities* are aged 10 to 15 and BME (10% both).

Computer usage

When they were asked specifically about their computer usage the library isn't their first choice (36%), because more children use them at home (73%) and at school, nursery or playgroup (57%). This is reiterated in chart nine because almost half said they don't use library computers (48%). Where library computers are used by children they tend to use them for playing games (32%), doing homework (27%) and looking at websites (25%) the most.

Chart 10 -   *Where do you use computers?*

At home	73%
At school/nursery/playgroup	57%
At the library	36%
Somewhere else	9%
Nowhere	9%
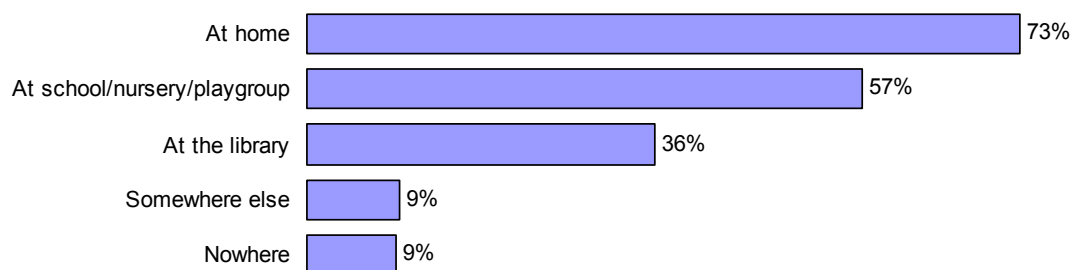
Base: all respondents (8203)

Children who said they didn't use a computer anywhere are more likely to be under five (28%) and consequently visit the library during the week (10%). The children who are more likely to say they use a computer at the different locations are outlined below.

o Children who have access to a *home computer* are more likely to be aged 5 to 9 (82%) and white (74%). They were more likely to visit the library at the weekend (79%) and visit the mobile libraries[5] (81%); and were less likely to visit South-East division libraries (66%).

o Children who use a *computer at school, nursery or playgroup* are more likely to be aged 5 to 9 (74%) and white (58%). They are also more likely to visit level 8 libraries (86%) and visit at the weekend (66%).

Children using library computers are more likely to be older (10-15 years old 63%) and BME (55%). They are more likely to be visiting the Harris library (49%), and less likely to be visiting North and South division libraries (both 31%).

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[5] Children using level 8 libraries are less likely to say they use the computer there (8%) and so not need access to a computer at the library.

Chart 11 - *What do you use computers in this library for?*

I don't use library computers 48%
Playing games 32%
Homework 27%
Looking at websites 25%
Email 15%
Messaging services 15%
Word processing 9%
Any other reason 5%
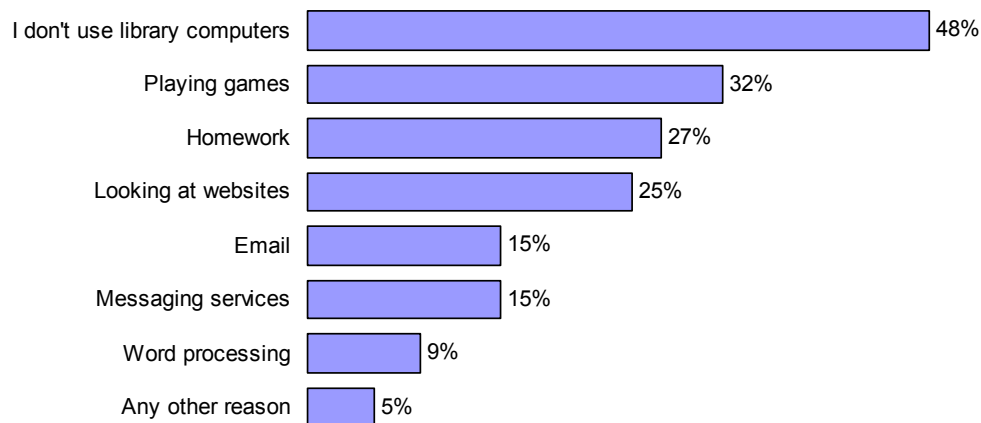
Base: all respondents (7080)

The children who *don't use library computer* are more likely to use level 8 libraries, and North and South division libraries (73%, 54% and 52% respectively). And they are more likely to be under five (79%) and white (52%).

Looking in more detail at what children use computers in libraries for the following differences occur. Children aged 10 to 15 and those from a BME background are more likely to use library computers for all the reasons listed. Other differences include weekday visitors using computers for *messaging* (16%)*,* girls use them more for *doing homework* (29%)*, and* boys use library computers more for *playing games* (36%)*.*

Book usage

Two-thirds of children said they borrowed books from this library because they like reading (66%). Other popular reasons were because the library has good books (44%), they want to get better at reading (36%) and so someone else can read to me (33%). There were very few children that said they don't borrow books (5%).

Chart 12 - *Why do you borrow books from this library?*

Reason	Percentage
I like reading	66%
The library has good books	44%
I want to get better at reading	36%
So someone else can read to me	33%
I want to find things out	25%
So I don't have to buy books	19%
For homework	19%
Library staff say they are good	7%
Any other reason	5%
I don't borrow books	5%
I am in a reading group	3%
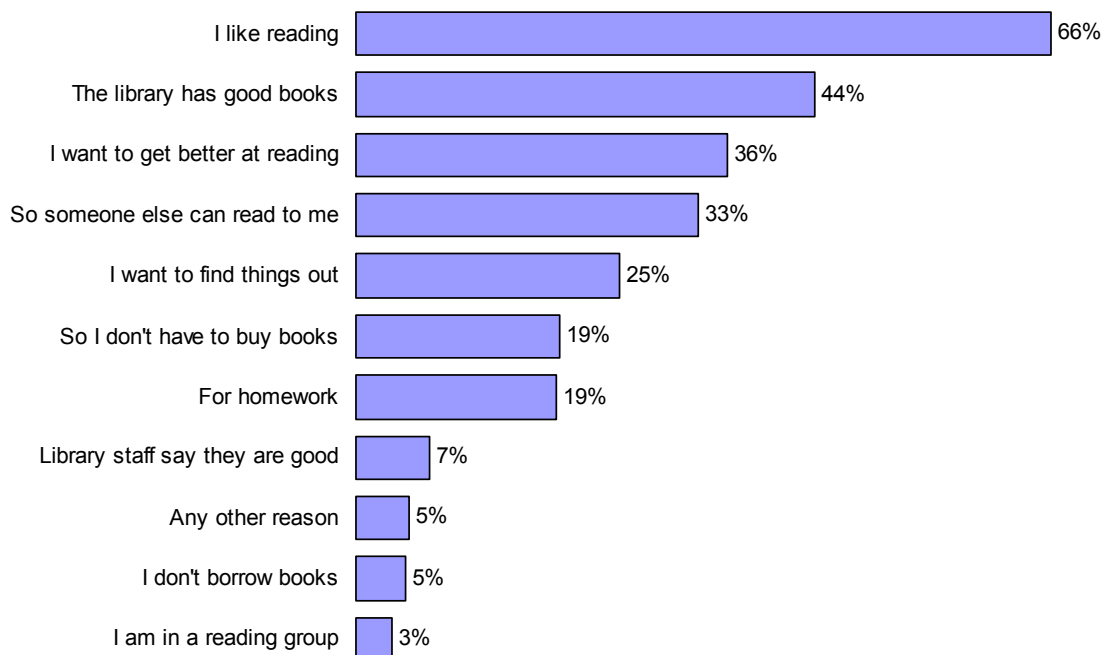
Base: all respondents (8449)

The significant differences between library users' reasons for borrowing books are described below.

o Girls, children who visit at the weekend and those aged 5 to 9 are more likely to borrow books from the library because they *like reading* (71%, 73% and 82% respectively) and because they think the *library has good books* (46%, 49% and 52% respectively).

o The children who are more likely to borrow books to *help them improve their reading* are aged 5 to 9 (57%) and weekend visitors (39%).

o Children under five (77%) were more likely to borrow books so *someone else can read to them.* This was also the case for weekday visitors (34%) and boys, white children and those visiting libraries in the north and south divisions (36% for all). It was less likely to be the reason for borrowing books in the Harris (21%) and mobile libraries (19%).

- Those aged between 5 and 9 and weekend visitors were more likely to *want to find things out* (35% and 28% respectively).

- Borrowing books from the library for *doing homework* was a reason given more by those aged 10 to 15 (37%), (and BME children 27%, weekend visitors 22% and girls 21% who also tend to be older). Visitors to library levels 7 and 8 were less likely to borrow books for homework (13% and 11% respectively).

- The influence of library staff in children's book choices is greater in children aged 5 to 9 and BME children (both 10%).

- Children between 10 and 15 are more likely to say they don't borrow books (8%).

Using the library for homework

Children use libraries for homework because of the resources and information available there to help them with it (books 36% and computers 28%). Although almost three in ten children don't use the library for homework (28%), and a quarter don't have homework (26%).

Chart 13 - *Why do you use libraries to do your homework?*

Reason	Percentage
There are books to help me	36%
There are computers to help me	28%
I do not use the library to do my homework	28%
I do not have homework	26%
It is somewhere quiet to sit and work	23%
There are staff to help me	13%
Any other reason	4%
There is a homework centre/club	4%
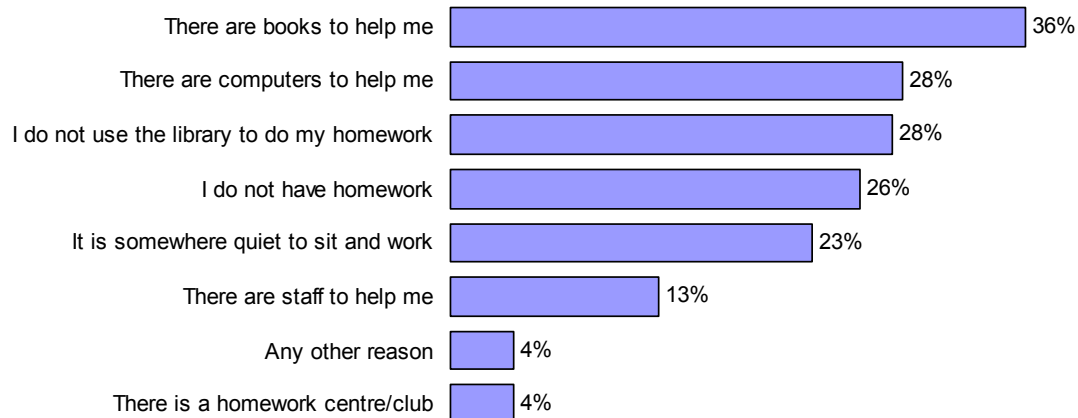
Base: all respondents (7080)

Boys and weekday visitors are more likely to say they don't have homework (29% and 27% respectively) – probably because both of these types of visitor are likely to be younger[6]. Children aged 5 to 9 (45%) and weekend visitors (34%) were more likely to choose not to use the library to do their homework, perhaps because younger children's homework is simpler so they need fewer resources.

Where children do use the library for their homework the reasons they give differ between different groups. Girls are more likely than boys to say there are books (39%) and computers (30%) to help them, and it is somewhere quiet to sit and work (26%). Children over ten and BME children were more likely to have homework to do, and to give all of the reasons for using the library to do it.
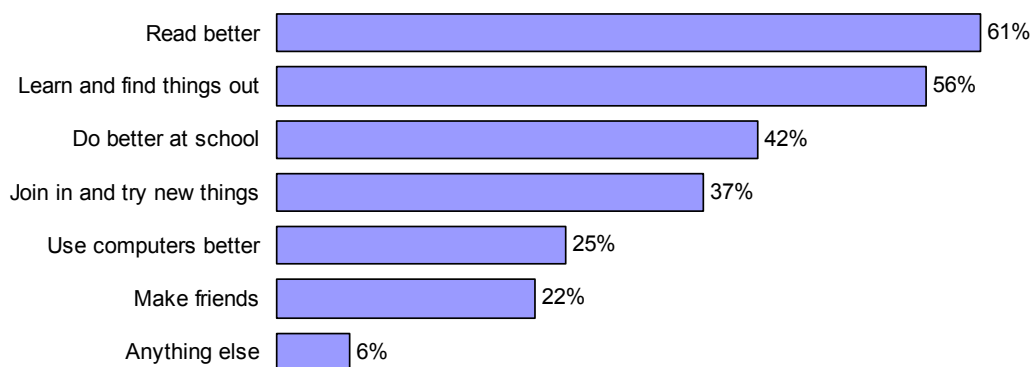
Also libraries in the North and South library divisions are less likely to state most of the reasons for using the library to do homework than the other divisions.

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[6] I do not have homework responses by age: under 5 (81%), 5 to 9 (17%), 10 to 15 (5%)

6.6 Outcomes of their visit to the library

The children responding to the survey were asked how visiting the library had helped them. The two most mentioned ways the library had helped children was to read better (61%) and learn and find out things (56%). These were followed by helping them to do better at school (42%) and to join in and try new things (37%).

Chart 14 - *Using the library has helped me to…*

Read better	61%
Learn and find things out	56%
Do better at school	42%
Join in and try new things	37%
Use computers better	25%
Make friends	22%
Anything else	6%

Base: all respondents (8067 to 7046)

Different children have found the library has helped them more in some respects. The differences are described below.

o *Read better:* the library has helped more for children aged 5 to 9 (83%), and for those who visit libraries at levels 7 and 8 (72% and 77% respectively) and who visit at the weekend (69%).

o *Learn and find things out:* the library has helped more for children under five (64%) and for white children (58%).

o *Do better at school:* children aged between 5 and 9 (58%), BME (50%) and who visit at the weekend (48%) find the library has helped them more.

o *Join in and try new things:* more children under five (42%), BME children (41%), girls (39%) and visitors during the week (38%) found the library had helped them to join in and try new things.

o *Use computers better:* more children between 10 and 15 (46%), BME children (40%) and children using libraries in the south east division (34%) found the library had helped them use computers better. Children using mobile libraries were less likely to say using the library had helped them use computers better (8%).

o *Make friends:* the children who find the library has helped them to make friends the most are under five years old (27%) and BME (28%), and visit on a weekday (24%). They are less likely to have visited mobile libraries (6%).

7 Conclusions and recommendations

A questionnaire for finding out young people's views on libraries was sent to libraries across the county. In total 9,808 questionnaires were returned over the seven day survey period.

The children completing the survey had an average age of just less than seven and a half years, though the highest number of replies came from ten year olds. The age distribution remains consistent from that observed in the 2005 survey. More girls completed a questionnaire (56%) than boys (44%). This could be because more girls use the libraries in general or because girls were more likely to fill in a questionnaire. Boys (7.2 years) and white (7.1 years) library users tend to be younger than girls (7.7 years) and BME (8.9 years) library users.

Children who haven't started school are more likely to visit the library during the week than school age children (88% of 0 to 4 year olds, 74% of 5 to 9 year olds and 79% of 10 to 15 year olds visit on a weekday). Older children are more likely to visit larger libraries, and those aged 5 to 9 are more likely to visit smaller or mobile libraries.

Children are most likely to visit with a family member (70%), although more family visits happen at the weekend (83%) and for the under fives (89%). Older children, who are more independent, were more likely to come to the library with friends (29%) or on their own (24%). School, nursery or playgroup visits are more likely for 5 to 9 year olds (11%).

Library services overall are very well thought of by children (86% good). Core library services are also well regarded (81% books are good, 71% computers are good), although less so for homework help (60% good). Perceptions of the library overall are linked with perceptions of the books and homework help, the lower the children rate these things the worse they tend to rate the library overall. The most strongly correlated is perceptions of the books (18% correlation). Perceptions of the library are also linked with who children visit the library with as well as their age: visits made with a member of their family are more likely to be rated as good, and satisfaction decreased the older the children became.

All aspects of the library facilities are rated highly (the highest is that it's a friendly place), although less so for opening times (particularly for weekday and visits to smaller and mobile libraries).

The most popular reason for coming to the library was to borrow something (72%). Library usage is linked to age: the youngest children come to look around (39%) or play with toys (28%), 5 to 9 year olds to borrow things (80%) or read (46%), and older children to use the computer (58%), do homework (33%) or meet friends (13%). Children visiting level seven and mobile

libraries are more likely to come to borrow things, perhaps due to a lack of other facilities. Most children hadn't attended any of the additional activities offered at libraries (44%), though the most used were holiday activities (29%) and under 5s events (28%).

Children are most likely to use computers at home (73%), although fewer BME children have access to a home computer (67%). Library computers are only used by just over a third of library users, but this does increase for older and children (and consequently BME children). The main uses children have for library computers are playing games (32%), doing homework (27%) and looking at websites (25%).

Most children borrow books because they like reading (66%). The children most likely to borrow books: to get better at reading are aged 5 to 9 (57%), so someone can read to them are under five (77%), and to do homework are ten or over (37%). They use libraries for homework because of the resources and information available there to help them with it (books 36% and computers 28%). The two most mentioned things that the library had helped them to do were read better (61%) and learn and find things out (56%).

The recommendations from the research are outlined below.

- Publicise these positive results amongst library staff, particularly with services and facilities.

- Investigate further how overall perceptions of libraries can be improved by finding out what affects perceptions of books and why children who don't visit with their family rate the service less well.

- Look into opening times finding out when children would like them to be open (particularly for weekday visitors and at smaller/mobile libraries).

- Produce staff advice, or training sessions, on how to help children with their homework.

- Look at the take-up of extra activities, such as holiday clubs, as almost half hadn't attended any. If take-up is low then the way these are communicated to the public could be reviewed.

- Perform the survey again in 3 years, to enable performance to be compared, and the success of any initiatives to be evaluated.

- Suggest changes to the wording of the satisfaction questions, with a 'don't know' answer added as not all children will use all facilities (eg homework help, computers).

- Analyse the open comments respondents made to gather users suggestions for improvements to the library.

8   Appendices: marked up questionnaire

All values are weighted and given in percentages
Base: All respondents (9,808) unless otherwise stated

	Survey day	
	Monday	26%
	Tuesday	16%
	Wednesday	11%
	Thursday	12%
	Friday	15%
	Saturday	19%
	Sunday	1%

	Library	
		Count
	Chorley	398
	Lancaster	312
	Colne	304
	Ormskirk	298
	Burnley	285
	Preston Harris	281
	Nelson	277
	Barnoldswick	249
	Skelmersdale	217
	Poulton	215
	Accrington	215
	Leyland	214
	Clitheroe	206
	Clayton Green	205
	Fulwood	196
	Garstang	191
	Longridge	175
	Tarleton	169
	Longton	165
	Fleetwood	161
	St Annes	160
	Morecambe	159
	Savick	149
	Great Harwood	148
	Rawtenstall	148
	Ingol	141
	Thornton	135
	Haslingden	134
	Coppull	131
	Lostock Hall	129
	Trawden	124
	Ribbleton	121
	Adlington	116
	Kingsfold	115
	Padiham	113
	Parbold	108

	Lytham	106
	Carnforth	100
	Penwortham	100
	Whalley	100
	Colne Road	99
	Coal Clough	93
	Rishton	91
	Euxton	91
	Kirkham	90
	Eccleston	88
	Sharoe Green	87
	Knott End	85
	Ansdell	79
	Chatsworth	75
	Bacup	72
	Clayton-le-Moors	71
	Bolton-le-Sands	69
	Burscough	67
	Oswaldtwistle	66
	Bamber Bridge	63
	Whitworth	62
	Brierfield	61
	Cleveleys	61
	Chatburn	60
	Silverdale	60
	Barbon Street	60
	Heysham	60
	Rose Grove	59
	Halton	56
	Freckleton	51
	Lancaster Mobile 2 NM2	50
	Crawshawbooth	50
	Upholland	50
	Read	49
	West Lancs Trailer	47
	Mellor	46
	Barrowford	42
	Garstang Mobile 2 NM4	40
	West Lancs Mobile 2 SM2	39
	Earby	39
	Garstang Mobile 1 NM3	38
	West Lancs Mobile 1 SM1	34
	Wheatley Lane	32
	Pike Hill	30
	Briercliffe	26
	Brunshaw	21
	Ribble Valley Mobile EM1	16
	Lancaster Mobile 1 NM1	13

Q1	**Are you a**	
	Girl	56%
	Boy	44%

Base: all respondents (8,532)

Q2	**How old are you?**	
	Under 1	4%
	1	5%
	2	7%
	3	8%
	4	6%
	5	5%
	6	6%
	7	6%
	8	7%
	9	9%
	10	9%
	11	9%
	12	7%
	13	5%
	14	4%
	15	3%

Base: all respondents (8,559)

Q3	**Who did you come to the library with today?**	
	Someone from my family	70%
	My friends	14%
	I came here on my own	11%
	My school/nursery/playgroup	8%
	Someone else	7%

Base: all respondents (8,547)

Q4	**Overall do you think this library is…?**	
	Good	86%
	OK	13%
	Bad	0%

Base: all respondents (8,525)

Q5	**Do you come to the library to…?**	
	Borrow things (eg books, DVDs)	72%
	Read	38%
	Look around	31%
	Use the computers	30%
	Do homework	15%
	Play with toys	12%
	Any other reason	12%
	Meet friends	10%
	Have somewhere to go	7%
	Wait for my parents/family	6%

Base: all respondents (8,577)

Q6	**Why do you borrow books from this library?**	
	I like reading	66%
	The library has good books	44%
	I want to get better at reading	36%
	So someone else can read to me	33%
	I want to find things out	25%
	So I don't have to buy books	19%
	For homework	19%
	Library staff say they are good	7%
	Any other reason	5%
	I don't borrow books	5%
	I am in a reading group	3%

Base: all respondents (8,449)

Q7	**Overall do you think the books in this library are…?**	
	Good	81%
	OK	19%
	Bad	1%

Base: all respondents (8,431)

Q8	**Where do you use computers?**	
	At home	73%
	At school/nursery/playgroup	57%
	At the library	36%
	Somewhere else	9%
	Nowhere	9%

Base: all respondents (8,203)

Q9	**What do you use computers in this library for?**	
	I don't use library computers	48%
	Playing games	32%
	Homework	27%
	Looking at websites	25%
	Email	15%
	Messaging services	15%
	Word processing	9%
	Any other reason	5%

Base: all respondents (7,080)

Q10	**Overall do you think the computers in this library are…?**	
	Good	71%
	OK	27%
	Bad	2%

Base: all respondents (5,437)

Q11	**Why do you use libraries to do your homework?**	
	There are books to help me	36%
	There are computers to help me	28%
	I do not use the library to do my homework	28%
	I do not have homework	26%
	It is somewhere quiet to sit and work	23%
	There are staff to help me	13%
	There is a homework centre/club	4%
	Any other reason	4%

Base: all respondents (6,689)

Q12	**Overall do you think the homework help in this library is…?**	
	Good	60%
	OK	36%
	Bad	3%

Base: all respondents (4,421)

Q13	**Have you been to a library for any of the following?**	
	None of these	44%
	Holiday activity (eg Summer Reading Challenge)	29%
	Under 5s event (eg Bookstart, story time)	28%
	Book or reading activity (eg author visit, story session)	13%
	To take part in a reading group	7%
	After school activity (eg computer club or session)	6%

Base: all respondents (6,689)

Q14	**Do you think the library is…?**	Yes	No
	A friendly place	99%	1%
	A safe place	98%	2%
	A place I want to come to	97%	3%
	Easy to get to	95%	5%
	Bright and cheerful inside	93%	7%
	A place with lots of things to interest me	93%	7%
	Open when I want to come in/use it	84%	16%

Base: all respondents (7,046 to 8,067)

Q15	**Using the library has helped me to…**	
	Read better	61%
	Learn and find things out	56%
	Do better at school	42%
	Join in and try new things	37%
	Use computers better	25%
	Make friends	22%
	Anything else	6%

Base: all respondents (8,035)

Q16	**What one word describes you best?**	
	White	86%
	Asian	7%
	Mixed	4%
	Black	2%
	Other	1%

Base: all respondents (8,280)

Q17	**What words describe you best?**	
	British	93%
	Pakistani	4%
	Other	4%
	Indian	2%
	Irish	2%
	Chinese	1%
	Bangladeshi	1%
	Caribbean	1%
	African	1%

Base: all respondents (8,346)