

# Australian public libraries statistical report 2023-24

## HIGHLIGHTS

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 statistics



**1,717**  
library service points

with  
more  
than



**55 million**  
digital loans



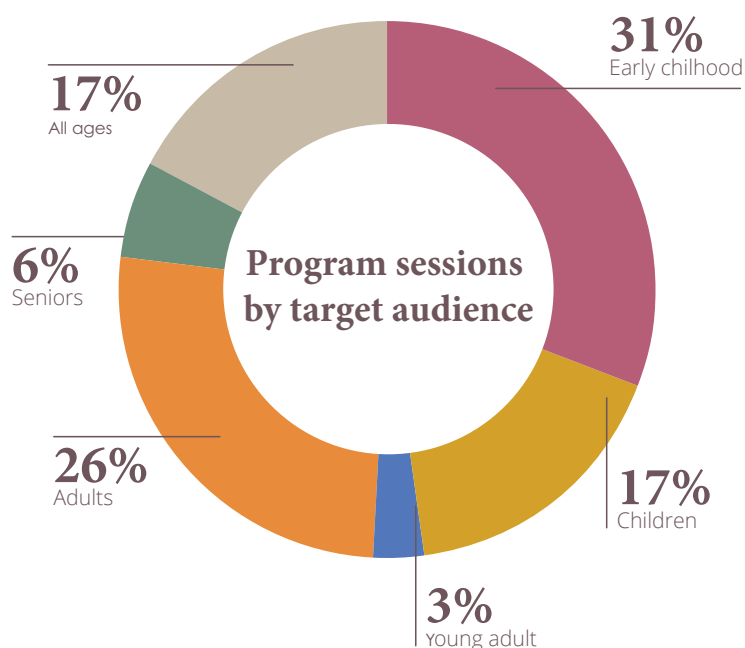
**7 million**  
program participants, online  
and in-person



**174 million**  
instances of collection usage

## The story in numbers

- 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).
- 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.



# Key trends

48  
*million*



collection items  
available for loan

14  
*million*



hours of wifi use  
across branches

750  
*thousand*



hours used in bookable  
meeting spaces

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



National and  
State Libraries  
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