Taking Part 2016/17: LIBRARIES
This report provides an overview of adult engagement with public library services in England.

Data is taken from the Taking Part Survey 2016/17 and makes comparisons with earlier years.

All statistically significant differences are noted in the text and on the charts:
- a statistically significant difference is a difference which is probably true and not due to chance
- a non statistically significant difference is probably not a true difference and is likely to be due to chance

indicates a statistically significant difference between 2016/17 and the earliest survey year shown.

indicates the period in which statistical significance has been tested. In this report, significance testing has been applied between 2010/11 and 2016/17.

More information about the Taking Part Survey can be found in Appendix A. A Technical Note on the survey is in Appendix B.
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Key findings

• Overall, around 1 in 3 adults in England (34.0 per cent) adults in England had used a public library service in 2016/17 – a significant decrease in proportion since 2010/11 (fig 1).

• Between 2010/11 and 2016/17, the frequency in which adults used public libraries decreased significantly (fig 2).

• Adult engagement had decreased across gender, socioeconomic group, working status, and urban or rural location (fig 4, 8, 9, 10 respectively).

• Regionally, adult engagement with libraries had significantly decreased in all regions other than the West Midlands and London between 2010/11 and 2016/17 (fig 11a).

• In 2016/17, adults in London were significantly more likely to have uses a public library service. Adults in the North East and Yorkshire were significantly less likely to have use a library (fig 11b).

• Compared with the average adult in England 2016/17, adults that had used library services while growing up (fig 12), or had children in their household (fig 13) were significantly more likely to have visited a library.

• In 2016/17, half (52.3 per cent) of adults who had used a public library service had walked or cycled there (fig 14).

• Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 library satisfaction was consistently high, at 91.8 per cent satisfaction in 2016/17 (fig 17).
Adult use of libraries

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17, the proportion of adults in England had used a public library service in the last year decreased significantly – from 39.7 per cent to 34.0 per cent respectively. In 2016/17, 76.7 per cent of adults who had not recently used a public library service had done so within the previous year.

*Figure 1 – Adults that had used a public library service in the past 12 months*
Figure 2 outlines the frequency of adult use of public libraries over time. Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of more frequent library users – those that had used a library service ‘3-4 times a year’ or ‘at least once a week or month’. 

*Figure 2 – Frequency of visits to museums and galleries*

![Chart showing frequency of visits to museums and galleries over time, with a significant decrease in the proportion of more frequent users between 2010/11 and 2016/17.]

During this period, the proportion of less frequent library users (using the library ‘1-2 times a year’) was similar.
Digital engagement with libraries

In 2016/17, 12.8 per cent of adults had visited a library website, a significant decrease in proportion from 2010/11 (15.6 per cent).

Figure 3 outlines how adults in England engaged with public libraries; whether through attendance of public library services and events in person, by visiting websites and using digital services of libraries, or both.

*Figure 3 – Digital and place based engagement with public library services*

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease across all types of placed based and digital engagement. There was also an increase the proportion of adults that had no engagement with public libraries.
Engagement with libraries by gender

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease in both the proportion of men and women that had used a public library service in the past year. During this period, women were consistently more likely to use libraries than men.

Figure 4 – Engagement with libraries by gender
Engagement with libraries by age group

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease in engagement with public library services for the 25 – 74 year age groups.

Figure 5 – Engagement with libraries by age group

There proportion of adults using public library services from the youngest (16-24 year) and oldest (75+ year) age groups however remained stable during this period.
Engagement with libraries by disability

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of adults with no disability that had used a public library service in the past 12 months. However the proportion of adults with a disability who had used a public library service in the past year remained stable.

*Figure 6 – Engagement with libraries by disability*
Engagement with libraries by ethnic group

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of adults from the white ethnic group that had used a public library service in the past year. Engagement among adults in the other ethnic group however remained stable.

*Figure 7 – Engagement with libraries by ethnic group
Engagement with libraries by socio-economic group

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of adults had engaged with public libraries across socio-economic groups.

Figure 8 – Engagement with libraries by socio-economic group
Engagement with libraries by working status

Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 there was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of adults had engaged with public library services regardless of working status.

*Figure 9 – Engagement with libraries by working status*
Engagement with libraries by urban/rural

Engagement with public library services significantly decreased in proportion across adults living in both urban and rural areas between 2010/11 and 2016/17.

*Figure 10 – Engagement with libraries by urban or rural location*
**Engagement with libraries by region**

Figure 11a provides an overview of library engagement by region. Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 adult engagement with public libraries significantly decreased in all regions but the West Midlands and London.

*Figure 11a – Engagement with libraries by region*
In 2016/17, 34.0 per cent of adults in England had engaged with libraries.

Regions where engagement was **significantly higher** than the national average:

- London – 39.9 per cent

Regions where engagement was **significantly lower** than the national average:

- North East – 27.1 per cent
- Yorkshire and Humberside – 27.4 per cent

All other regions were statistically similar to the national average.

*Figure 11b – Engagement with libraries by region (2016/17 only)*

Map image created using [Datawrapper](https://datawrapper.de/).
Influence of childhood and children

Visiting libraries during childhood

Using libraries while growing up significantly impacted on adult engagement. Adults that had used libraries during childhood were more likely to continue as an adult, and adults that did not were less likely to have used a library in the past year.

In 2016/17, adults with children were significantly more likely to have used a public library service in the past 12 months.
Visting libraries and number of children

Adults who had children in their household were significantly more likely to have used a public library service in the past 12 months. Adults without children in their household were significantly less likely to have used a library service.

*Figure 13 – Engagement with libraries by number of children in an adult’s household in 2016/17*

Regardless of how many children were in an adult’s household, adults with children were significantly more likely to have used a public library service in 2016/17.
Visiting the library

In 2016/17, around 9 in 10 (92.7 per cent) of adults could reach their local library within 30 minutes using their usual form of transport.

Figure 14 – Of all adults who used a public library service in 2016/17, how would they usually travel to the library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk or bicycle</td>
<td>52.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car, motorbike or other own transport</td>
<td>35.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus, train, tube, tram or other public transport</td>
<td>35.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi or private hire</td>
<td>0.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over half of adults who had used a public library service in the past year walked (50.3 per cent) or used a bicycle (2.1 per cent) to get to their destination.
Use of resources

Use of library resources – in person

As discussed in figure 3, adults engage with libraries in a variety of means. In 2016/17, 24.2 per cent of adults that engaged with libraries in the last year did so in person. A further 9.9 per cent of adults engaged with libraries in person and online.

*Figure 15 – Of all adults who used a public library service in person in 2016/17, what resources did they use? (top five)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrow or browse books</td>
<td>77.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the computer or printing facilities</td>
<td>27.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow or browse other physical resources (including newspapers, music cds, dvds, audiobooks)</td>
<td>20.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access online resources</td>
<td>18.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the free WiFi</td>
<td>15.3 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of library resources – digitally

*Figure 16 – Of all adults who used a public library service digitally in 2016/17, what resources did they use? (top five)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessed a library service via the internet, telephone, fax or letter (for example ordering or renewing books)</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed a library catalogue or database online (without visiting the library)</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed library website for information relating to location of and/or opening hours of libraries</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed an electronic resource without visiting the library (for example e-books, e-audio, e-magazines, or e-journals)</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used personal library log in details to access other online services (eg journals or publications)</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2016/17, 12.8 per cent of adults had visited a library website. Of these library website users, 9.9 per cent of adults also visited a library in person during the same year.
Between 2010/11 and 2016/17, around nine in 10 adults were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with their library experience. A minority of adults were ‘slightly’ or ‘very’ dissatisfied with their library visit during the same period.
Dissatisfaction of last library use

*Figure 18 – reasons for library dissatisfaction in 2016/17 (top five)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Range of physical resources available</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff assistance (unfriendly, unhelpful)</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer facilities</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening hours of the library</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of physical resources</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A minority (3.2 per cent) of library users were dissatisfied with their last library engagement in 2016/17. Around eight in 10 (76.6 per cent) attributed their dissatisfaction to resources – the range of physical resources available (45.6 per cent) and staff assistance (31.1 per cent).
Recommendation of last visit

In 2016/17, 67.2 per cent of adults recommended the last library that they had visited to family or friends. This was a significant increase in the proportion compared to adults that said the same in 2010/11 (62.8 per cent).

Figure 19 – Enjoyment of last library engagement and whether the respondent recommended the library to a friend or family member, 2016/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied with their last public library use</th>
<th>Recommended the public library service to friends or family</th>
<th>Satisfied with last library use and recommended it to friends or family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67.2 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>↑80.8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2016/17, there was a strong relationship between library satisfaction and recommendation. Compared to the average adult that recommended their library to friends or family (67.2 per cent), adults that were satisfied with their last library engagement were significantly more likely to pass on their recommendations – 80.8 per cent.
Donations to libraries

Donations to public library services were similar between 2010/11 and 2016/17. Likewise, there was no significant variation by region during this period.
Appendix A - About the Taking Part survey

Taking Part is a major, continuous survey of cultural and sport participation in England, commissioned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in partnership with Arts Council England, Sport England and Historic England.

Every year it collects detailed information from adults (aged 16 and over) in England about their attendance at a wide variety of arts events, museums, galleries, libraries and heritage sites, and about their participation in creative activities and sport in the last 12 months. The survey has been conducted since July 2005 and since 2008 there has also been a child survey.

Findings from Taking Part, including national trends and some regional analysis, are released twice a year by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. An annual report summarises trends over the financial year. All these reports can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-culture-media-sport/series/taking-part

In March 2016 DCMS published a strategy outlining proposed developments to the Taking Part survey over the next five years: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taking-part-a-strategy-for-the-next-five-years
Appendix B - Technical note

Data conventions

The figures in this report are rounded to the nearest decimal place – therefore the totals may not always add up to 100 per cent.

Statistically significant differences on the charts:

* indicates a statistically significant difference between 2016/17 and the earliest survey year shown.

- - - - indicates the period in which statistical significance has been tested. In this report, significance testing has been applied between 2010/11 and 2016/17.

Statistical significance

Significance testing has been used to identify where differences are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level and not due to chance. Only where the differences are significant are they noted in the text and on the charts. A significant increase or decrease at the 95 per cent level means that there is less than a 5 per cent (1 in 20) chance that the difference observed within the sampled respondents is not representative of the population as a whole.

Weighting

The data are weighted to ensure the representativeness of the Taking Part sample. Weighting is based on mid-2016 population estimates from the Office for National Statistics.