

# Staff in Australia's *Schools* Report

What the Staff in Australia's Schools surveys tell us about teachers working in school libraries

Paul R Weldon

January 2016

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# What the Staff in Australia's Schools surveys tell us about teachers working in school libraries

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## Executive Summary

The *Staff in Australia's Schools* (SiAS) survey is a sample survey of primary and secondary teachers, and primary and secondary leaders, undertaken nationally in Australia. Commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education (and its predecessors), SiAS has run three times to date, in 2007, 2010 and 2013.

This report to analyse the profiles of primary and secondary teachers working in a library role was commissioned by a coalition of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), ALIA Schools, Australian School Library Association, Queensland School Library Association, School Library Association of New South Wales, School Library Association of South Australia, School Library Association of Victoria and the Western Australian School Library Association.

Over the period 2007-2013 about four to five per cent of primary teachers are seen to be working in a library role, and about two to three per cent of secondary teachers. There is evidence of a slight decline in teachers in a library role at the primary level over this period.

Teachers working in school libraries are evenly distributed geographically and, at primary level, are also evenly distributed by sector. At secondary level there appear to be more teachers in a library role within the government sector.

Between 2010 and 2013 there is evidence of a greater number of teachers in library roles in high socio-economic (SES) schools and correspondingly fewer in low SES schools.

Over 80 per cent of teachers in a library role are female. Primary teachers in a library role are two to three years older on average than the primary teacher population and secondary teachers in a library role are six to seven years older on average. There is evidence that the population of teachers in a library role is aging.

About six to eight per cent of primary teachers have undertaken some tertiary study in library studies and three to four per cent have undertaken three years or more of study. At secondary level, three to four per cent of teachers have undertaken some study and about two per cent have undertaken three years of study or more.

Primary teachers currently in a library role have about eight to nine years of experience in that role, on average, while secondary teachers have 10 to 13 years of experience on average. There is evidence of a slight fall in the average years of experience, which may be a result of the retirement of older teachers in the role.

In 2010 the proportion of early career primary teachers in a library role was about the same as that of the general primary teacher population (25%). At secondary level, about 10 per cent of teachers in a library role were early career, about half of the average (20%).

In 2013 the proportion of early career teachers in library roles had dropped at both primary (13%) and secondary (5%), suggesting fewer early career teachers are entering library roles in schools.

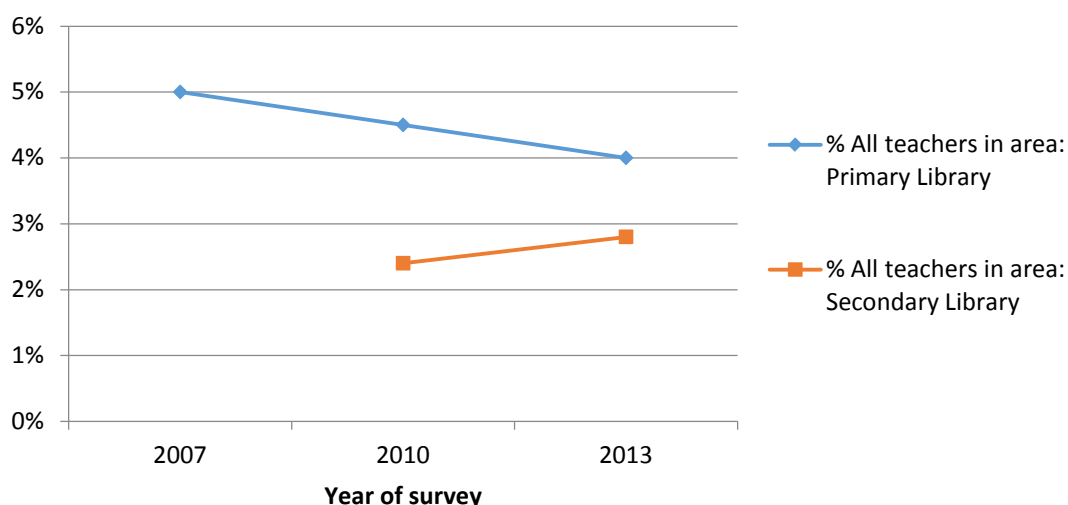
About one-third of primary teachers in a library role are part-time compared to about one-quarter of the general primary teacher population. At secondary level about one-quarter of teachers in a library role are part-time compared to 18 per cent in the general teacher population. Female teachers are more likely to be part-time than male teachers so the higher proportion of teachers in a library role working part-time may be related to the higher proportion of females in this role rather than the role itself.

In this report, teachers currently in a library role are considered to be out-of-field if they have not undertaken any tertiary study in the field. In 2013 over one-third of primary teachers and one-quarter of secondary teachers in a library role were out-of-field.

About 80 per cent of primary teachers in a library role intend to stay in teaching, which is the same as the proportion of primary teachers in the general population. At secondary level teachers in a library role were somewhat more likely to indicate that they intend to stay than the general population, by about six percentage points (86% of teachers in a library role compared to 80% of all teachers in 2013). A higher proportion of both primary and secondary teachers in a library role indicated that they were not planning to leave prior to retirement.

Teachers in a library role were slightly less satisfied than the general population of teachers, although at both primary and secondary, over 80 per cent of teachers in a library role indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current job.

Chart 1 Trends in total teachers in library 2007-2013



## Introduction

The *Staff in Australia's Schools* (SiAS) surveys have been commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education and its predecessors. They commenced in 2006. In all there have been three: the first was undertaken in 2006-07, the second in 2010 and the most recent in 2013.

SiAS surveys four distinct groups: primary teachers, secondary teachers, primary leaders and secondary leaders. This report analyses data from the teacher surveys. School staff without a teaching qualification were not included in the teacher surveys.

The SiAS survey collects reliable data from a representative sample of teachers and school leaders nationally. That is, primary and secondary schools are sampled to be representative of schools in each State and Territory and within each sector nationally, taking into account school location geographically, and school size. Teachers within schools are then weighted to represent similar schools and account for non-response. Detailed information on questionnaire design, sampling, response rates and weighting are available in the main reports published for each survey.<sup>1</sup> Copies of the survey questions are also provided as appendices to the main reports.

This survey method allows us to make estimates about the teacher population as a whole, allowing for a margin of error based on the sample. This kind of survey provides considerably more certainty than a simple opt-in, or self-selection survey. Opt-in surveys do not attempt to ensure a representative sample of any given population and as such cannot be considered to represent that population.

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<sup>1</sup> McKenzie et al. (2008); McKenzie et al. (2011); McKenzie et al. (2014).

## SiAS questions about library role

In each SiAS questionnaire the term 'Library' is used in the same way that subject areas such as English or Chemistry are used. That is, in 2007 and 2010 teachers were asked to indicate if they had undertaken tertiary study in 'Library' and primary teachers were asked if they specialised as a teacher in 'Library' (alongside areas such as literacy, music and visual arts).

In SiAS 2007, only primary teachers were asked about a library role – whether they had studied at tertiary level, whether they had more than five years' experience and whether they had undertaken professional learning in the area within the past 12 months.<sup>2</sup> No data were collected on teachers working in library roles at secondary level in 2007.

In 2010, secondary teachers were also asked if they were 'currently teaching' in specialist roles which included Library as well as Special Needs, Learning Support, Behaviour Management, Career Education and Vocational Education and Training.

In the 2013 questionnaire, specialist roles were separated from subject areas into their own section. The same questions were asked, except for the question on teaching methods, which was disregarded as not being relevant.

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<sup>2</sup> McKenzie, et al. (2008), Appendix 2: The Teacher Questionnaire, pp. 126, 130.



Based on the questions asked, it is important to be aware of the limitations of the SiAS dataset. Given the use of the term 'Library' it is not possible to be specific about the content of tertiary courses undertaken by teachers who have indicated study in this area, although it is reasonable to assume that respondents have undertaken courses with library-specific content. It can be assumed that all respondents are teachers and that those who have responded to the appropriate questions have performed a library-based role. It is not possible to specify exactly how teachers have perceived that role or to assume that the majority of respondents are teacher-librarians.

## The number of teachers working in a library role

Table 1 provides an indication of the proportion of primary and secondary teachers currently working in a library role. The results presented here are comparable across the surveys conducted in 2007, 2010 and 2013. About four to five per cent of primary teachers indicated that they were currently working in a library role at least some of the time (not necessarily as a specialist) and just under three per cent of secondary teachers were working in a primary role.

The actual (unweighted) number of survey respondents is also provided in Table 1.

*Table 1 Proportions of primary and secondary teachers in the library role*

	Proportion of all teachers currently working in area (weighted)			N (Survey respondents: unweighted)		
	2013	2010	2007	2013	2010	2007
Primary Library	4.0	4.5	5	192	208	307
Secondary Library	2.8	2.4	--	264	248	--

These numbers are quite low and indicate that care is needed in interpreting the primary data from 2013 particularly in this report.

Statistics computed on the SiAS teacher sample provide accurate accounts of the sample to which they refer. But they can only provide estimates of what the summary statistics would be if we had data from the complete population. Standard errors are not reported here however where errors are large cautions are provided within the text.

## School location

To provide a context for the information provided in the following sections, this section summarises the distribution of teachers who have a role in library work in comparison with the distribution of all teachers in the 2010 and 2013 surveys, in the areas of geographic location and sector.

Tables 2 and 3 show the distribution of primary and secondary teachers respectively, according to whether their school was in a metropolitan, provincial, or remote location, for the 2010 and 2013 surveys. The proportions of teachers involved in library work show a very similar distribution to that of teachers in the sample overall.

Table 2 Distribution of primary teachers by school location

Year		Primary		
		Metropolitan	Provincial	Remote
2010	Library	73.0	23.1	3.8
	All teachers	71.6	25.6	2.7
2013	Library	69.9	28.5	1.6
	All teachers	73.4	23.5	3.1

Table 3 Distribution of secondary teachers by school location

Year		Secondary		
		Metropolitan	Provincial	Remote
2010	Library	71.5	26.5	2.0
	All teachers	70.4	27.6	2.0
2013	Library	74.1	25.5	0.4
	All teachers	71.2	27.3	1.5

## School sector

School sector is another important defining characteristic of the teacher workforce in Australia. At primary level, government school teachers comprised a higher proportion (70.2% in 2013) of the final weighted SiAS sample than at secondary school level (58.5 in 2013) which reflects the distribution of student enrolments across the two levels. Tables 4 and 5 examine the distribution of primary and secondary teachers working in library roles respectively, for the 2010 and 2013 surveys. The results reported in this table should be treated with caution due to large standard errors.

The proportions of primary teachers involved in library work show a very similar distribution to that of teachers in the sample overall.

The proportion of secondary teachers in library roles is much higher in the government sector and correspondingly lower in the Catholic and independent sectors. This difference remains unchanged across the 2010 and 2013 surveys, suggesting that a higher proportion of secondary teachers in a library role are located in the government sector.

Table 4 Distribution of primary teachers by sector

Year		Primary		
		Government	Catholic	Independent
2010	Library	69.5	17.3	13.2
	All teachers	70.6	17.2	12.2
2013	Library	73.0	14.3	12.7
	All teachers	70.2	17.3	12.5

Table 5 Distribution of secondary teachers by sector

Year		Secondary		
		Government	Catholic	Independent
2010	Library	70.8	15.2	14.0
	All teachers	59.7	20.3	20.0
2013	Library	73.6	12.7	13.6
	All teachers	58.5	20.9	20.6

## Socio-economic composition

The school postcode was used to develop an index of the socio-economic status (SES) of the area in which the school was located. This involved linking the postcode to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) Socio-Economic indices of Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation and allocating each school the SES decile associated with the postcode. For the purposes of analysis the schools were grouped into three broad SES groups – Low, Medium and High.

Tables 6 and 7 examine the distribution by school SES group of primary and secondary teachers respectively, for the 2010 and 2013 surveys.

At the primary level, the distribution of teachers with a library role was similar to that of all teachers in 2010. In 2013 the distribution had changed so that a greater proportion of teachers in a library role were in High SES schools and fewer were in Low SES schools. These figures should be treated with caution given high standard errors. However, a similar movement appears to be indicated at the secondary level, though the proportions are lower. If the data are indicative they suggest that a decline in teachers in a library role is more likely to affect schools in lower socio-economic areas.

Table 6 Distribution of primary teachers by SES

Year		Primary		
		High	Medium	Low
2010	Library	33.2	32.8	34.0
	All teachers	32.6	36.5	30.8
2013	Library	46.7	35.4	17.9
	All teachers	33.0	42.3	24.7

Table 7 Distribution of secondary teachers by SES

Year		Secondary		
		High	Medium	Low
2010	Library	31.0	39.1	29.9
	All teachers	33.9	39.4	26.7
2013	Library	40.5	36.8	22.7
	All teachers	36.9	36.5	26.6

Chart 2 Change in distribution of primary teachers in library by SESs of school 2010-2013

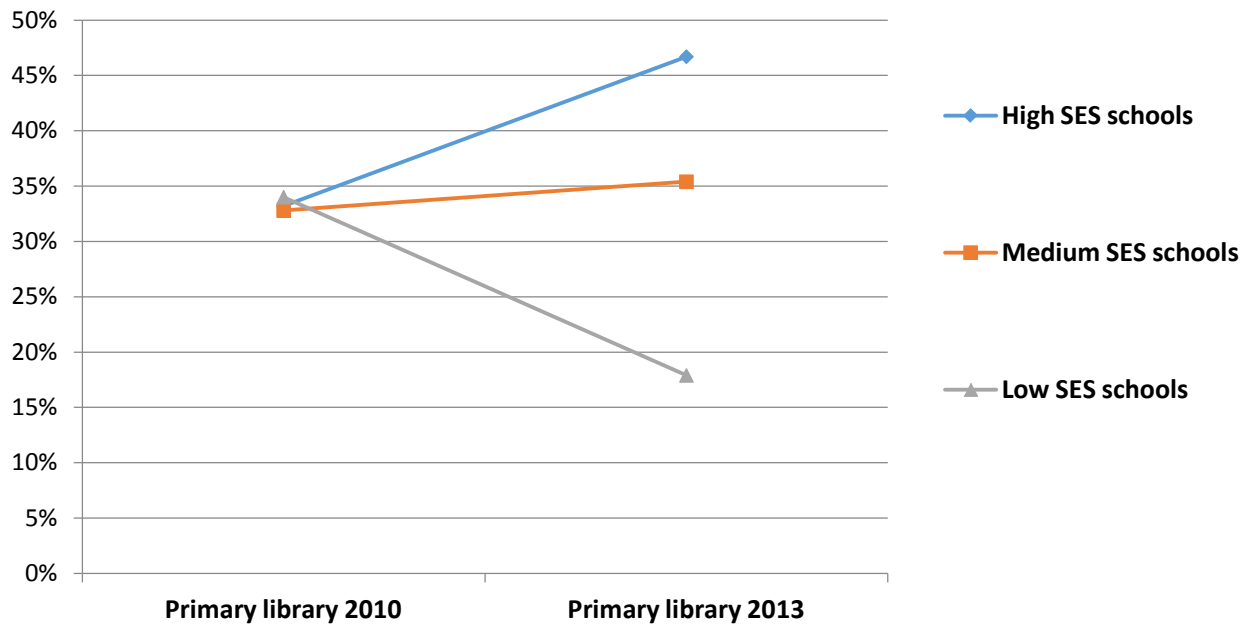
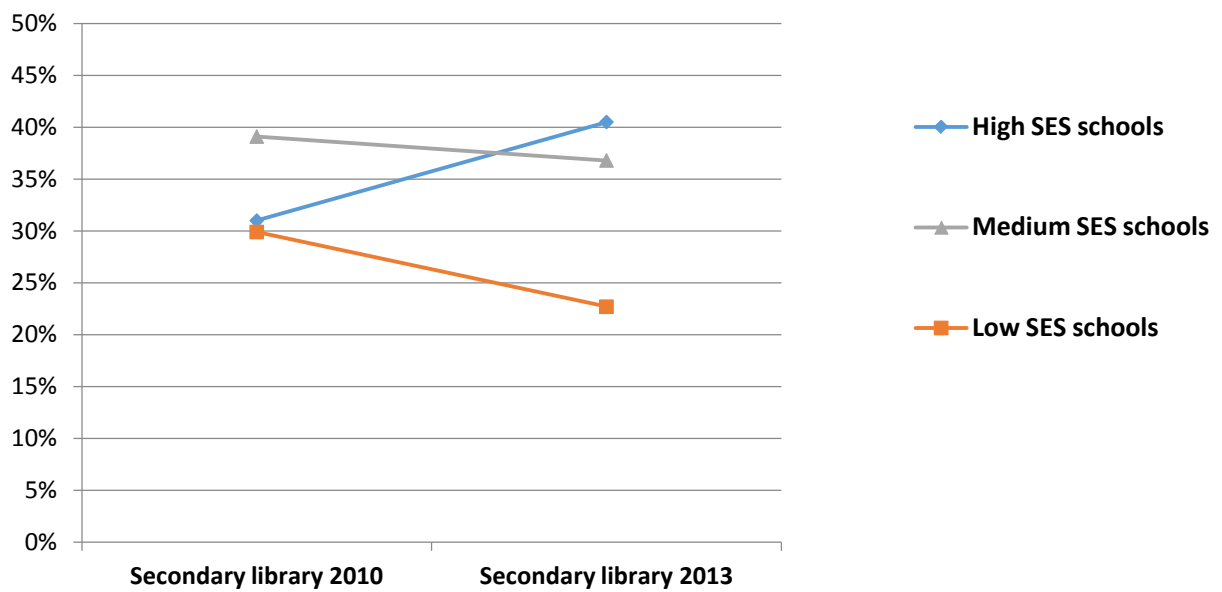


Chart 3 Change in distribution of secondary teachers in library by SES 2010-2013



## Average age

Table 8 shows the average age of primary and secondary teachers currently involved in library work in comparison to all primary and secondary teachers, in the 2010 and 2013 surveys. The 2013 primary average for teachers involved in library work should be treated with caution as the standard error is large. The data indicate that teachers involved with library work at primary level are likely to be slightly older than the average. At secondary level, teachers involved in library work are about 6 years older on average than the general teacher population. The overall trend is a slight increase in age over time, in line with the general teacher population.

Table 8 Average age of teachers

Year	Primary		Secondary	
	Library	All teachers	Library	All teachers
2010	45.2	42.0	51.1	44.5
2013	48.3	43.8	52.1	45.0

Chart 4 Average age of primary teachers 2010-2013

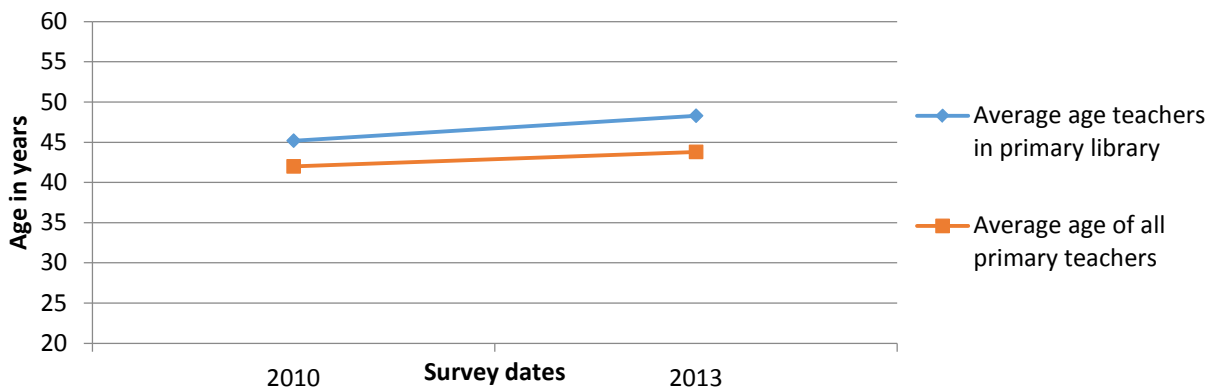
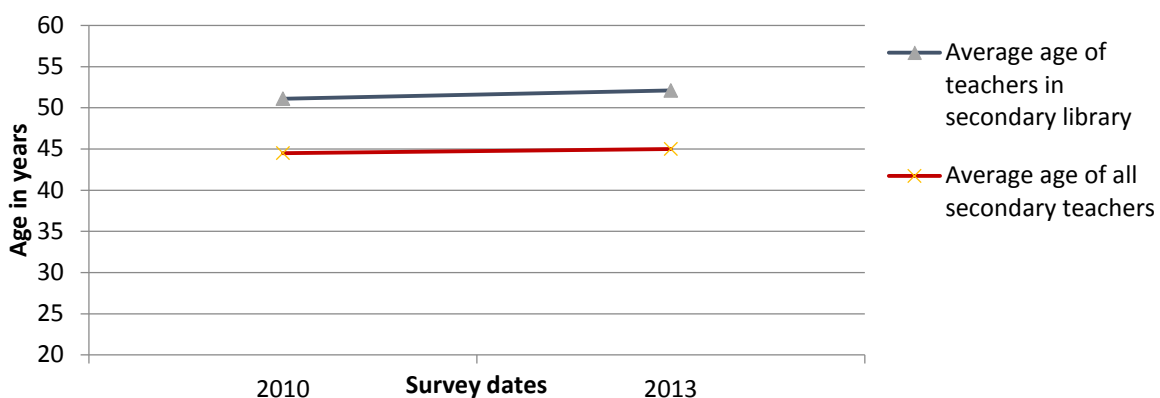


Chart 5 Average age of secondary teachers 2010-2013



## Gender

Table 9 shows the proportion of male and female primary teachers involved in library work in comparison to all primary teachers, in the 2010 and 2013 surveys. The 2013 proportions for primary teachers involved in library work should be treated with caution as the standard error is large.

Table 10 shows the proportion of male and female secondary teachers involved in library work in comparison to all secondary teachers. The data indicate that women are more likely to be involved in library work than men at both primary and secondary levels. Over 80 per cent of teachers involved in library work are female.

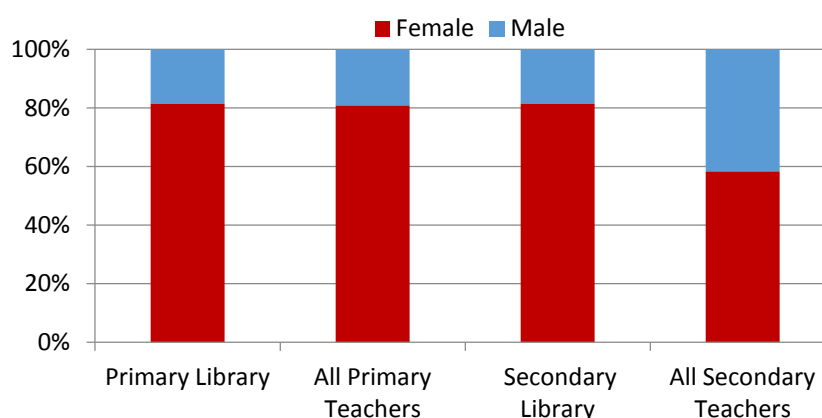
*Table 9 Proportions of male and female primary teachers*

Year	Primary			
	Library		All teachers	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
2010	12.3	87.7	19.2	80.8
2013	18.4	81.6	19.1	80.9

*Table 10 Proportion of male and female secondary teachers*

Year	Secondary			
	Library		All teachers	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
2010	16.9	83.1	42.7	57.3
2013	18.4	81.6	41.6	58.4

*Chart 6 Gender of teachers in a library role compared to all teachers in 2013*



## Tertiary study

Table 11 shows the proportion of primary teachers who indicated that they have completed some tertiary study in library studies, in 2007, 2010 and 2013. The tertiary studies question could be answered by teachers whether or not they were currently working in the area. About six to eight per cent of the primary teacher population have undertaken some tertiary study in this area. About three per cent have completed three years or more in library studies.

Table 12 shows that lower proportions of secondary teachers have undertaken tertiary study in library studies with about three to four per cent of secondary teachers undertaking some study in the area and about two per cent undertaking three years or more in library studies. Data were not collected for secondary teachers in the 2007 survey.

*Table 11 Tertiary studies completed in library studies by primary teachers*

Year	Highest year level of tertiary study completed – Library, Primary teachers			Total with some tertiary study
	1 year %	2 years %	3+ years %	%
2007	2	1	3	6
2010	3.3	1.3	3.7	8.3
2013	2.1	1.1	2.7	5.9

*Table 12 Tertiary studies completed in library studies by secondary teachers*

Year	Highest year level of tertiary study completed – Library, Secondary teachers			Total with some tertiary study
	1 year %	2 years %	3+ years %	%
2007	--	--	--	--
2010	1.1	0.5	1.9	3.6
2013	1.1	0.6	1.6	3.2

## Teachers working in school libraries

Table 13 provides details about the proportion of primary teachers currently performing a role in the library. The figures suggest a slight drop over time although the figures are indicative only due to large standard errors at this level of disaggregation. For primary teachers, the proportions currently performing in the role include teachers who are also working as generalist teachers. The figure of one per cent in brackets for the 2013 data represents the proportion of teachers whose specialist role is in the library and who do not also work as a generalist teacher. The data suggest that most primary teachers working in libraries are doing so as part of wider duties rather than as a specialist.

The data on teachers with five or more years' experience is a proportion of those teachers currently in the role. The figures indicate that the majority of teachers currently working in the library have five years or more experience in the role. The 2013 survey also asked teachers to indicate if they had previously undertaken library work and an additional seven per cent had worked in the area.

About half of primary teachers currently working in the library have undertaken professional learning in the area in the past 12 months and a further three per cent of teachers in 2013 indicated that they had undertaken professional development although they are not currently working in the role.

*Table 13 Proportion of primary teachers currently and previously performing library role, experience, and PD*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total currently performing role %</b>	<b>5 or more years' experience %</b>	<b>Previously performed in role %</b>	<b>Study/PD but not performed %</b>	<b>Professional learning in past 12 months %</b>
2007	5	5	--	--	3
2010	4.5	2.5	--	--	2.1
2013	4.0 (1.0)	3.4	6.9	2.7	2.0

*Table 14 Proportion of secondary teachers currently and previously performing library role, experience, and PD*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total currently performing role %</b>	<b>5 or more years' experience %</b>	<b>Previously performed in role %</b>	<b>Study/PD but not performed %</b>	<b>Professional learning in past 12 months %</b>
2007	--	--	--	--	--
2010	2.4	1.8	--	--	1.7
2013	2.8	2.1	2.7	0.6	2.0



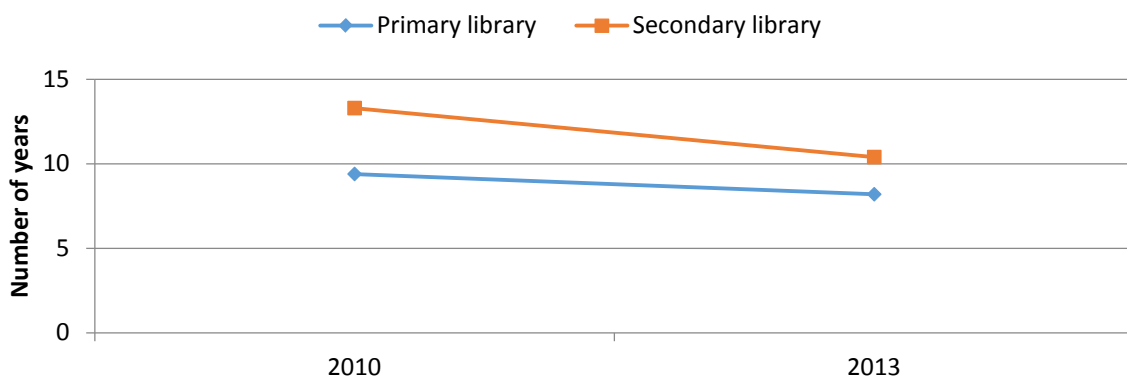
Table 14 above shows the proportion of secondary teachers currently performing a role in the library. These data were not collected in 2007. There is a lower proportion of teachers working in the library at secondary level than at primary level at under three per cent of the secondary teacher population. Seventy five per cent of teachers currently performing the role have five years or more experience. This indicates about the same proportion have previously worked in the role as are currently working in it. About three quarters of teachers currently in the role have undertaken professional development of some kind during the past 12 months.

Table 15 shows that primary teachers have about eight to nine years of experience in the library role, on average. Secondary teachers have slightly more experience on average. There is a drop in the average between 2010 and 2013 for secondary teachers. This may be the result of sample bias. If it is indicative, it may be due to an influx of younger teachers in the role or, as seems more likely given the higher average age of teachers in a library role (Table 7), the retirement of older teachers.

*Table 15 Average years' experience of teachers currently in library role*

Year	Average years' experience of teachers currently in library role	
	Primary	Secondary
2010	9.4	13.3
2013	8.2	10.4

*Chart 7 Average years' experience of teachers currently in library role*



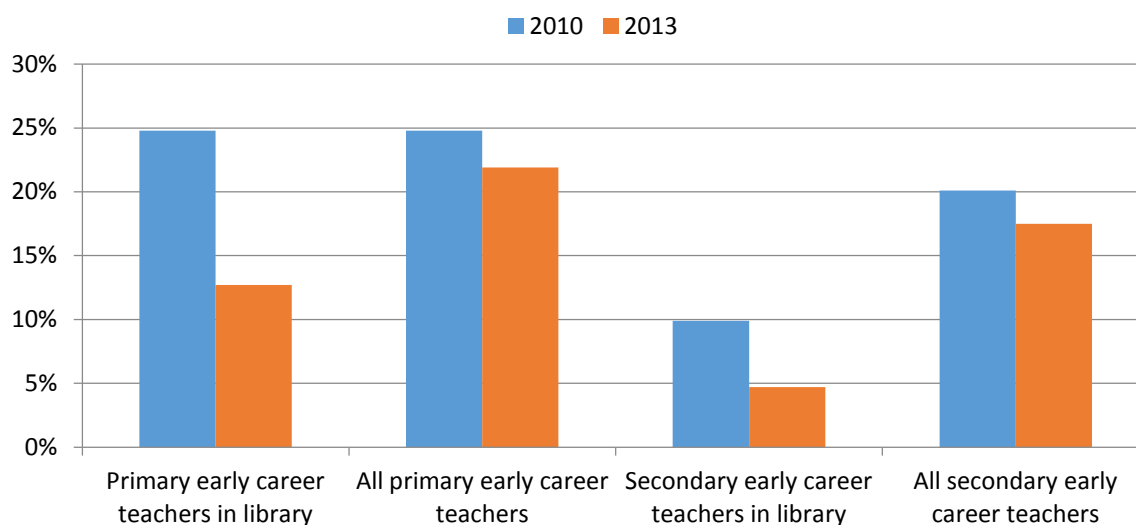
## Early career teachers in libraries

Another way of looking at experience is to consider the proportion of teachers in a library role who are early career teachers. In SiAS, early career teachers are defined as those with five years or less experience. Table 16 shows a trend towards fewer early career teachers in a library role. This is particularly the case at the secondary level where the proportion of early career teachers in a library role was half that of the proportion of early career teachers in the general teacher population, and this had dropped to one third of the proportion in the general teacher population in 2013.

*Table 16 Proportion of early career teachers currently in library role*

	Primary ECTs		Secondary ECTs	
	Library %	All teachers %	Library %	All teachers %
2010	24.8	24.8	9.9	20.1
2013	12.7	21.9	4.7	17.5

*Chart 8 Proportion of early career teachers currently in library role*



## Basis of employment

Table 17 shows the proportions of primary and secondary teachers working part-time and full-time in a library role, in the 2010 and 2013 surveys, in comparison with the wider teacher population. About one-third of primary teachers in a library role are part-time compared to about one quarter of the general primary teacher population.

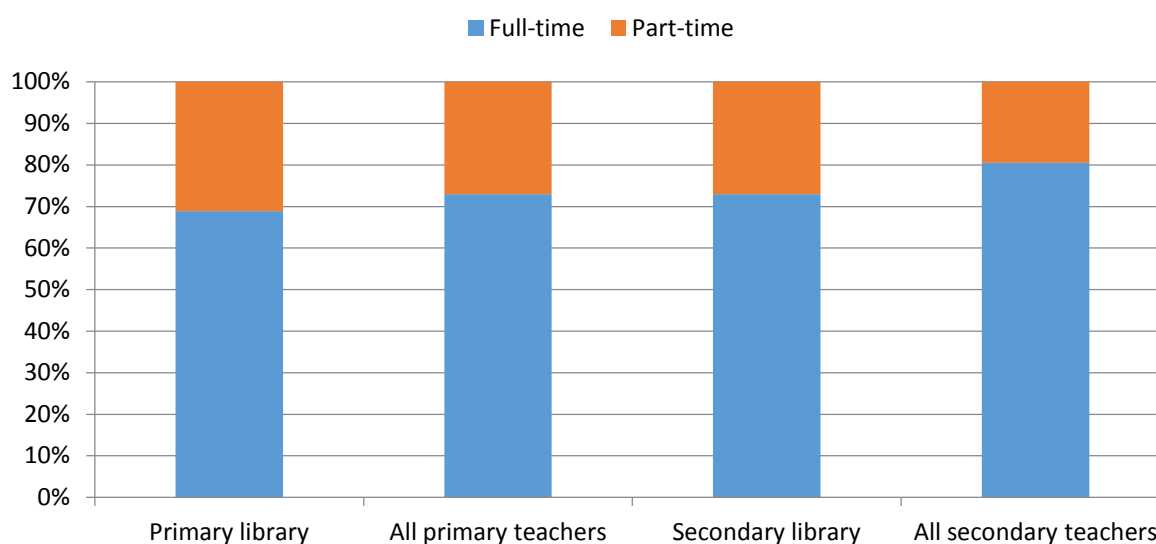
At secondary level about one-quarter of teachers in a library role are part-time. This is slightly higher than for the general

population. The 2013 main SiAS report noted that in both primary and secondary schools females are much more likely to be employed part-time than are male teachers. Given the high proportion of female teachers in library roles at secondary level, the higher proportion of part-timers may be explained by gender rather than by role. This is less likely to be the case in primary schools however, as the gender difference between those in the library role and the general population is fairly minimal.

*Table 17 Proportion of primary and secondary teachers employed full-time and part-time*

Year	Primary				Secondary			
	Library		All teachers		Library		All teachers	
	Full time %	Part time %	Full time %	Part time %	Full time %	Part time %	Full time %	Part time %
2010	66.5	33.5	77.1	22.9	78.5	21.5	82.4	17.6
2013	68.9	31.1	73.0	27.0	73.0	27.0	80.5	19.5

*Chart 9 Proportion of primary and secondary teachers employed full-time and part-time*



## Library work by out-of-field teachers

In previous SiAS analyses, teachers are assumed to be notionally qualified in an area if they have studied the area for at least one semester at (at least) second year tertiary or have trained at tertiary level in teaching methodology in the area concerned.<sup>3</sup> In the case of library work, teachers are not teaching library as a subject so teaching methodology is not in scope in this case.

For this report, teachers are assumed to have some knowledge of the library area if they have undertaken some tertiary study in the area, including in their first year of tertiary study.

Using this definition, Table 18 shows a high proportion of teachers currently in a library role have had no tertiary training in the area.

*Table 18 Primary and secondary teachers in a library role with no library studies at tertiary level*

	Teachers currently in a library role with no tertiary study	
	Primary %	Secondary %
2010	63.2	31.5
2013	40.7	26.9

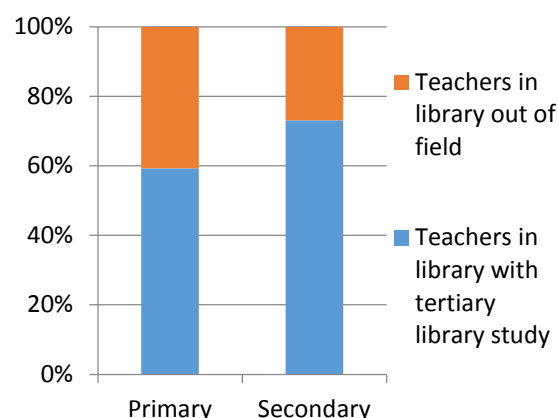
The 2010 figures are higher, particularly at the primary level. This was the case across many subject areas, including at secondary level and it is unclear why this was the case. The survey questions were broadly the same, although asked at different points within the 2010 and 2013 surveys. As such, the surveys indicate that

<sup>3</sup> Further details on the SiAS definition of 'notionally qualified' and out-of-field teaching are available in the 2013 Profiles of teachers in selected curriculum areas: Weldon et al. 2014, p.25.

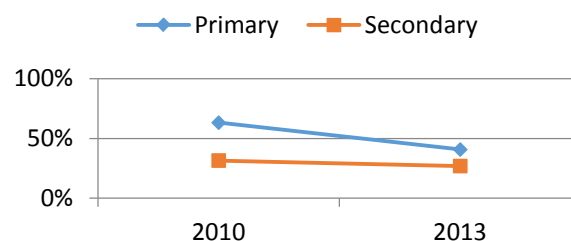
the extent of out-of-field teaching may have dropped somewhat between 2010 and 2013. That said, the figures for teachers in a library role are still high, with about 40 per cent of primary teachers and 27 per cent of secondary teachers in the role having had no tertiary education in the library field.

It is possible that such teachers may have had professional learning opportunities in the role over time: this is not canvassed in SiAS as the survey only asks if teachers have had professional learning in the area within the last 12 months.

*Chart 10 Proportion of primary and secondary teacher in library teaching out of field*



*Chart 11 Change in teachers in library with no library studies 2010-2013*



## Satisfaction and future

Teachers were asked two questions concerning their future in teaching. Tables 19 and 20 show teachers' responses to the question: 'At this stage, how do you see your future in the teaching profession?' This question was asked in both the 2010 and 2013 surveys.

At the primary level, Table 19 shows that there is no difference between teachers in a library role and all teachers: over 80 per cent intend to stay in teaching and this proportion increased slightly in 2013.

At the secondary level, Table 20 shows that teachers in a library role were somewhat more likely to indicate that they intended to stay in teaching than the general population of teachers. This may reflect the older average age indicated in Table 8. Fewer teachers in a library role were thinking about alternatives, although the proportion of those who indicated that they were actively seeking alternative careers was slightly higher than the general population in both 2010 and 2013.

*Table 19 Primary teachers' views on their future in the teaching profession*

	Primary 2010		Primary 2013	
	Library %	All teachers %	Library %	All teachers %
Lifetime career	52.7	52.7	61.7	57.1
Unlikely to leave	28.2	28.5	22.9	25.7
<i>Intend to stay in teaching</i>	<i>80.9</i>	<i>81.2</i>	<i>84.6</i>	<i>82.8</i>
Thinking about alternative	17.4	17.0	11.9	15.9
Actively seeking alternative	1.7	1.7	3.5	1.3
	100	100	100	100

*Table 20 Secondary teachers' views on their future in the teaching profession*

	Secondary 2010		Secondary 2013	
	Library %	All teachers %	Library %	All teachers %
Lifetime career	59.6	48.5	63.1	52.8
Unlikely to leave	23.0	28.6	23.2	27.2
<i>Intend to stay in teaching</i>	<i>82.6</i>	<i>77.1</i>	<i>86.3</i>	<i>80.0</i>
Thinking about alternative	12.7	19.5	9.9	17.6
Actively seeking alternative	4.7	3.4	3.8	2.3
	100	100	100	100

The 2010 and 2013 surveys also asked teachers whether they were planning to leave teaching prior to retirement. The results shown in tables 21 and 22 are similar to those in tables 19 and 20. A higher proportion of teachers in library roles indicated that they do not plan to leave prior to retirement. These proportions are large at secondary level with over 65 per cent of teachers in a library role in 2010 and 2013 indicating that they intend to stay in teaching, compared to 40-45 per cent in the general population of teachers

Teachers were also asked to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with their current job on a four point scale: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied. Results for those who were satisfied or very satisfied are presented in Table 23.

In 2010, primary teachers in a library role were slightly more satisfied than the general primary teacher population, while in 2013 they were slightly less satisfied. Secondary teachers in a library role were slightly less satisfied than the general population of secondary teachers.

*Table 21 Primary teachers planning to leave teaching prior to retirement*

	Primary 2010		Primary 2013	
	Library %	All teachers %	Library %	All teachers %
Yes	5.5	9.0	4.9	6.7
No	61.6	55.0	69.9	53.4
Unsure	32.9	35.9	25.2	39.9
	100	100	100	100

*Table 22 Secondary teachers planning to leave teaching prior to retirement*

	Secondary 2010		Secondary 2013	
	Library %	All teachers %	Library %	All teachers %
Yes	6.7	13.4	6.4	10.5
No	66.1	39.7	69.1	46.1
Unsure	27.2	46.9	24.5	43.4
	100	100	100	100

*Table 23 Teachers' overall satisfaction*

Satisfied/Very satisfied	Primary		Secondary	
	Library %	All teachers %	Library %	All teachers %
2010	95.7	87.8	83.4	85.6
2013	83.4	89.2	81.4	85.2

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