



Hackney Libraries: Consultation on Opening Hours

Report Date: July 2026

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Introduction

Hackney's eight libraries serve as vital hubs within Hackney's neighbourhoods and had over 750,000 visitors in 2024. They offer diverse services and have high usage, especially among young people, families and increasing numbers of older people. However, due to severe budget pressures affecting all Council services, the Council needed to look at ways to reduce library operating costs, necessitating a review of opening hours. We welcomed feedback from all library users and non-library users, businesses and organisations on our proposal and options. In early 2026, following the close of the consultation, the then Cabinet agreed to halt the review of opening hours.

Background

Hackney Council faces significant budget challenges and all Council departments are having to make savings, including libraries.

The Libraries Service was asked to meet a 15% (£773,000) reduction in the libraries budget over the next two years, required from April 2026. The options in the proposals impacted opening hours across most library sites, but no site closures were proposed. This was intended to ensure all eight Council-managed libraries in Hackney could remain open and every resident continued to have access to a good, modern library close to where they live.

The savings would have been made by adjusting opening hours, deleting vacant posts, reducing costs for service development and book purchasing, and reducing security costs.

In February 2026, following the close of the consultation, the Mayor asked the Cabinet to halt proposed reductions to library opening hours, due to increased government funding. Please see below for further details.

Consultation & Engagement Approach

The consultation booklet and survey form were available online via Citizen Space and in all libraries in Hackney and in the Hackney Service Centre. Three supporting documents were also made available on Citizen Space and as reference copies in libraries: a full proposal and data document, the strategic needs assessment and the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

The consultation was promoted via different channels including:

- Love Hackney magazine
- Council-wide and Libraries' social media (Facebook, Instagram)
- Council-wide and Libraries' digital newsletters
- At libraries:
 - A1 poster boards of information
 - Digital noticeboards
 - Leaflets

Responses were accepted via Citizen Space (the online response platform), in hard copy forms and letters (including via postboxes in libraries) and as email (via the Council's Consultation email inbox)



In addition to the online and paper surveys, 6 drop-in sessions were held at affected libraries (Shoreditch, Dalston CLR James, Clapton, Homerton and Stamford Hill) and a session was held online. These sessions focused on targeting users underrepresented in the survey data, including older people, young people, males and non-white library users.

Response rate

1366 respondents took part in the consultation between October 2025 and January 2026. 13 weeks were allowed to account for the week over Christmas.

1153 took part online, and 213 took part via a paper survey. Email responses were also received into the Consultation and Engagement Team inbox.

This number of respondents provides a data accuracy of **+/-2.6%** at 95% confidence, based on 2024 footfall statistics. This means that we can be between 92.4% and 97.6% confident that the feedback from respondents is representative of the views of the wider population.

Feedback received via email and during the in-person engagement was analysed separately from the survey results reported below. Please see Appendices A and B for a summary of this feedback.

Decision to halt the consultation

On 6 February 2026, a press release was issued stating that Hackney Council's Cabinet has been asked by Mayor Caroline Woodley to stop the review aimed at cutting library opening hours.

This request came after the borough received a better-than-anticipated funding allocation following the confirmation of the Local Government Finance Settlement and the outcome of the Fair Funding Review.

The confirmed extra central government funding improved the Council's financial outlook for the coming year. Consequently, the Mayor proposed that Cabinet used this additional funding to prevent the proposed library schedule changes from going ahead.

As a result of this decision, in April 2026, budgets associated with maintaining the opening hours of the library service (staffing, security and book stock) were restored.

"I know how much our libraries mean to our residents. They are safe havens, study spaces for young people, and vital hubs for digital access and community support.

"We had to consider changing library opening hours in the face of the financial pressure we faced. However, I have always said that if our financial situation changed, I would act.

"Thanks to a fairer funding agreement from central government we now have the breathing space to reconsider. That is why I am asking the Cabinet to halt the review into reducing library hours.

"We are listening to residents, and we are acting to protect the services that make Hackney a fair and inclusive place to live."

Mayor of Hackney, Caroline Woodley

The proposal was formally presented to Cabinet at its next meeting, where the decision to halt the consultation on reducing hours was approved.

"This is fantastic news for our library staff and the thousands of residents who visit our branches every week. We know our libraries are a lifeline for many people in many different ways.

"We are proud to have kept all of Hackney's libraries open during years of austerity, and we are committed to keeping them at the heart of our communities. This settlement allows us to do just that for the years ahead."

Cllr Chris Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care, Voluntary Sector and Culture

Executive summary

This report summarises the public response to the consultation on proposed adjustments to opening hours across six of the borough's eight libraries. The proposals were intended to deliver a reduction of £773,000 (15%) in the Hackney Libraries budget over the next two years.

Key Findings & Sentiment

The consultation received a high level of public response, with **1366 respondents** participating. The overall sentiment towards all three proposed options was overwhelmingly negative and characterised by deep concern and opposition to any reduction in opening hours.

- **Rejection of Options:** A widespread feeling of **distrust** was recorded, with many respondents refusing to select a 'preferred' option, arguing the survey forced agreement to cuts.
- **Most Opposed Option: Option 2 (Weekend-Focused Closures)** was the most strongly criticised proposal, with users arguing that Saturday closures would effectively prevent people with 9 to 5 jobs from accessing libraries.
- **Least Worst Option: Option 1 (Targeted Full and Half-Day Closures)** was pragmatically viewed by some as the "least worst" choice, but full-day closures were still heavily opposed.
- **Evening Closures: Option 3 (Evening and Specific Day Closures)** was heavily criticised, with respondents stating that 6:00 PM closures would prevent commuters, students, and adult learners from using the facilities after the workday.

This is the overall sentiment of what respondents were saying about the proposal.

- The overriding sentiment is one of **resignation, deep frustration, and sadness**. Respondents felt they were being forced to endorse a "least worst" scenario that actively harms their own community. Many expressed anger that community hubs that they felt were vital were being targeted for relatively small municipal savings, fearing this is the start of a "slippery slope" towards permanent closures.
- **Rationale:** The responses suggested that they reflected for "damage limitation." Respondents calculated that Option 1 preserved the highest number of total hours and, crucially, maintained evening access for students, community groups (like reading clubs), and working adults.

Geographical

- **Homerton Library:** Highly beloved for its community feel, helpful staff, and upstairs study room. Respondents fiercely defended its weekend hours (especially Saturday, as it is already closed Sunday) and its evening hours, noting it hosts a reading group on Mondays that has been running for 20 years, Hackney U3A groups, and serves a highly deprived residential area (including Hackney Wick).
- **Dalston CLR James:** Recognised as the busiest, most central, and most accessible library. There was widespread outrage over the proposal to close it on Sundays. Families use it for the children's area, students use it for studying.
- **Clapton Library:** Consultation responses indicated strong opposition to proposals closing Clapton for 2 to 3 days a week. Respondents frequently described the branch as heavily utilised by local schoolchildren for homework and highlighted its ground-floor accessibility as a key benefit for adult users.
- **Shoreditch Library:** Valued as a safe haven in a busy commercial area, particularly for local college students and children doing homework. Because it is already closed on Sundays and opens later (10:00 AM), respondents strongly opposed any Saturday or evening closures.
- **Stamford Hill Library:** Recognised as vital for the Orthodox Jewish community. Many agreed that closing on Saturday (Shabbat) makes logistical sense for that specific demographic, but non-Jewish residents, families, and students commented that Saturday is their only day to visit. Users also mentioned the building is somewhat rundown (leaking roof) but heavily relied upon.
- **Stoke Newington Library:** Commenters expressed significant frustration that the library has been closed for long-term refurbishment (with respondents noting a lack of visible building work), locals felt it was highly unfair that it was "protected" from cuts in the proposals while opening hours at smaller, operational libraries were identified for reductions.

- **Hackney Central:** Acknowledged as a major hub, though currently undergoing refurbishment. Users were relieved it was mostly protected but questioned why the burden of cuts wasn't shared more equally with it.
- **Woodberry Down:** Mentioned infrequently due to being unaffected by the reduction of hours.

Sentiment

- **Protecting small libraries:** Respondents strongly believe small libraries (like Clapton and Homerton) are the heart of their local communities. They argued against the logic of cutting hours based purely on footfall, noting that small libraries serve communities that cannot afford the bus fare or time to travel to Dalston or Hackney Central.
- **Protecting big libraries:** Large libraries (like Dalston) are seen as essential weekend anchors. Users argued that a borough as large as Hackney must have at least one major, fully equipped library open 7 days a week, especially on Sundays.
- **Weekends:** Seen as absolutely untouchable. Weekends are identified as the *only* time working parents can bring children to develop literacy skills, and the only time 9-to-5 workers can borrow books or use printers. For many families, the library is the only free indoor weekend activity available.
- **Evenings:** Defended fiercely by students, freelancers, and commuters. Closing at 6:00 PM was deemed "draconian," as it prevents teenagers from having a safe place to finish homework and stops community groups from meeting.
- **Security:** Viewed as essential for the safety of staff and vulnerable users (especially in managing incidents or anti-social behaviour). However, a few respondents felt security was often insufficient or ineffective and suggested reducing security presence during quiet hours as a cost-saving alternative to cutting opening hours.

Uses

- **Accessing the council through libraries:** Libraries are seen as vital for digital inclusion as residents rely on PCs and staff help to access Universal Credit, housing advice, print CVs, and navigate council services that have moved online.
- **Study space:** Frequently cited as the most important function for teenagers and young adults. Many Hackney residents live in cramped, noisy, or overcrowded housing and rely entirely on library desks to study for GCSEs, A-Levels, and university exams.
- **PCs and wifi:** Crucial for those experiencing digital poverty. Used by job seekers, freelancers who cannot afford cafes, and people without home internet.

- **Reading:** Traditional book borrowing remains highly valued, particularly the ability to order specific books across the network. A few users noted the stock in some branches needs updating.
- **Homework, learning and literacy:** Libraries are seen as a safe after-school haven. Parents and teachers stressed that cutting hours during a national literacy crisis (and ahead of the 2026 Year of Reading) is counter-productive.
- **Wellbeing and libraries:** Respondents frequently described the libraries as essential “warm spaces” and “warm hubs”, providing a crucial, heated environment for residents unable to afford home heating during the winter.
- **Loneliness and libraries:** A lifeline for the elderly, solo parents, and those with mental health challenges. The simple act of sitting in a warm room with "background community chatter" was cited as a major combatant against urban isolation.
- **Libraries and equalities:** A few respondents criticised the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for failing to adequately consider those with protected characteristics. and raised concerns that the proposed cuts unfairly target deprived areas compared to more affluent postcodes.

Opinions of different ages/groups

- **Young people:** Highlighted the library as their only safe "third space" outside of school and home. They rely heavily on the study spaces, PCs, and the safety of the environment after school hours.
- **Older people:** Value the library for social connection, warmth, reading groups, U3A classes, and access to physical media (CDs/large print books). Ground-floor accessibility (e.g., at Clapton) is highly prized.
- **Orthodox Jewish people:** Heavy users of Stamford Hill. They rely on the library for physical books (as many do not use the internet at home). Weekday and Sunday access is critical, while Saturday (Shabbat) closures do not affect them.
- **Different ethnicity:** Mentioned in the context of Hackney's diversity. Clapton was specifically highlighted as a multicultural hub where children of global majority backgrounds rely on the space for educational advancement.
- **Disabled people:** Neurodivergent users (ADHD, Autism) praised the library for providing a calm, quiet environment necessary for focus. Those with physical mobility issues stressed the need for local libraries to prevent difficult public transport journeys.
- **Working people:** Deeply frustrated by the proposals. They feel entirely excluded by weekend and 6:00 PM closures, noting they pay council tax but are being blocked from using the services their taxes fund.
- **Families:** Solo mothers, parents of toddlers, and working parents rely on the library as a free, educational weekend destination. They view it as essential for child development and parental mental health during the winter months.

Opinions of partners

Institutional partners and community groups pleaded with the council to maintain hours, noting that their own service delivery relies entirely on the physical infrastructure of the libraries. They view libraries as a preventative health and social care measure.

Health: Mental health professionals explicitly stated that libraries act as a community integration tool. They provide a calm, low-pressure environment for psychiatric patients recovering and transitioning back into society, helping prevent future NHS costs.

Literacy: Adult literacy partners highlighted that they require safe, neutral, and reliable spaces to conduct 1:1 reading coaching for adults. Cutting hours - especially evenings - directly reduces their capacity to teach.

Education: Teachers and educators noted that libraries are the "great equaliser." They compensate for the lack of school libraries and quiet home environments, directly supporting the educational attainment of Hackney's poorest students.

Which partners responded?

Based on the text provided, the following specific partners, organisations, and groups submitted feedback:

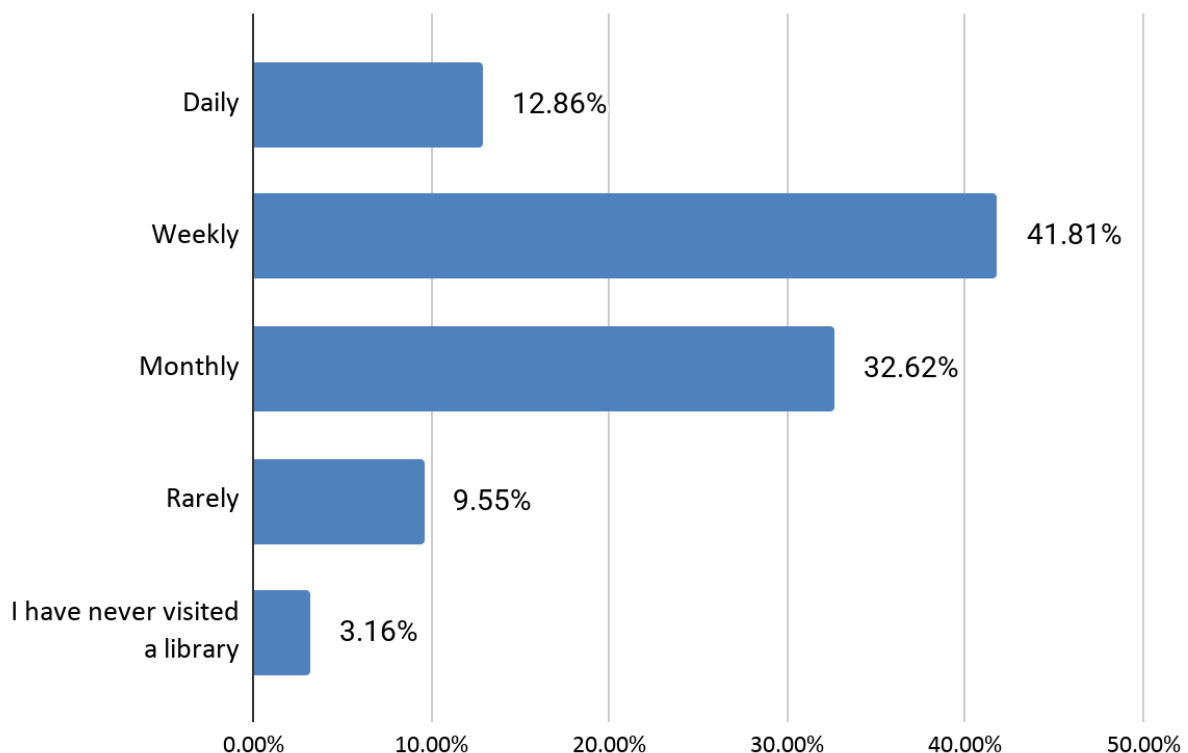
- **NHS East London Foundation Trust (ELFT):** Arts therapists running 'The Community Theatre' for adult mental health service users.
- **John Howard Centre (Mental Health Facility):** Patients and staff utilising Homerton library for community integration and internet access.
- **ReadEasy Hackney:** A charity providing 1:1 adult literacy coaching.
- **Hackney U3A (University of the Third Age):** Operating multiple weekly groups (art history, folk dancing, monthly meetings) for older residents.
- **Local Artists/Freelancers:** Individuals who rent out studios/workspace within the library buildings (specifically Stamford Hill).
- **Green Party / Local Councillors:** Mentioned via leafleting campaigns and holding monthly surgeries inside the libraries.

Overview of results

Notes on the data

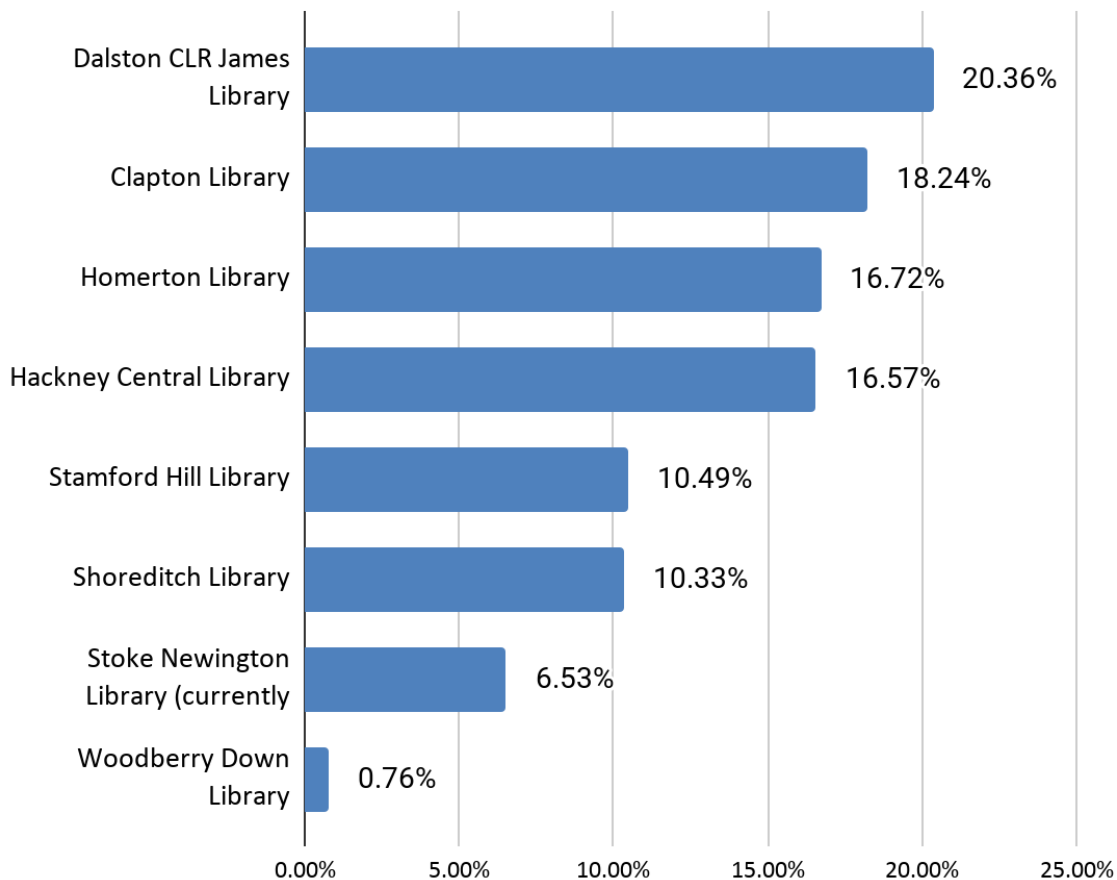
Hackney Central Library and Stoke Newington Libraries were closed for refurbishment at the time of the consultation making it harder to reach as broad a demographic of customers in face to face meetings and surveys at other sites. Respondents were encouraged to attend focus groups at other libraries and register their views online.

How often do you visit the library? (Base 1361)



The chart above shows that most respondents visit a library weekly (569), followed by monthly (444). All others account for a smaller percentage of responses in comparison.

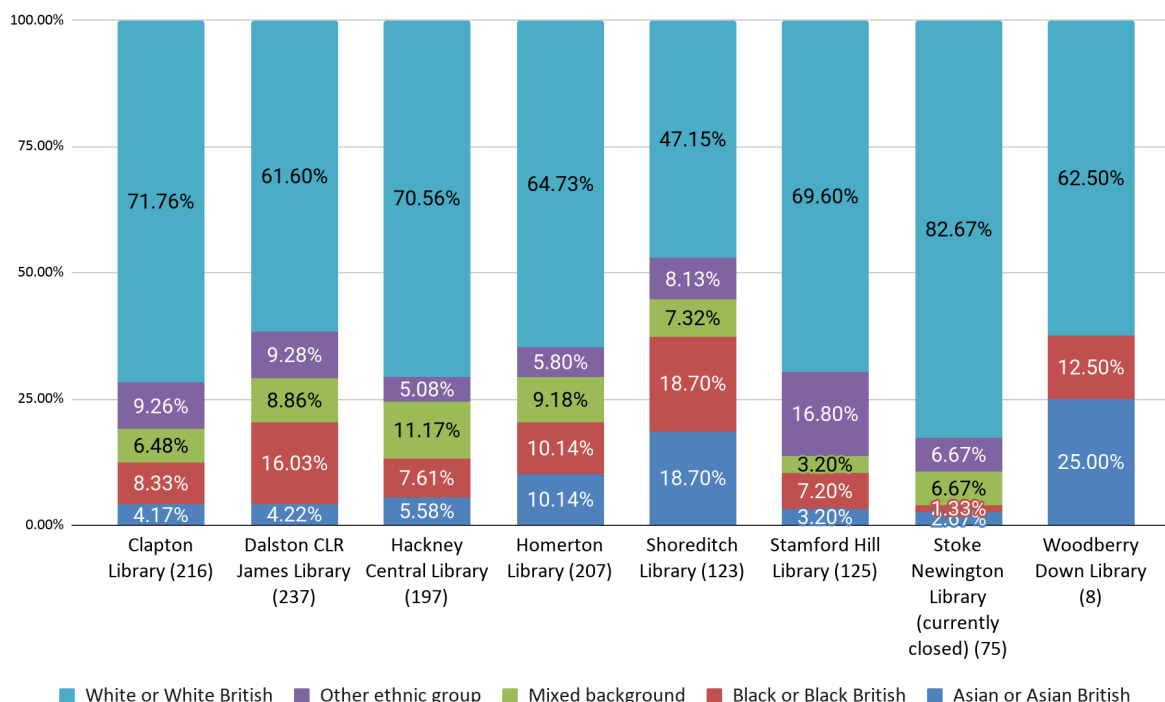
Which of the following libraries do you use the most frequently? (Base 1316)



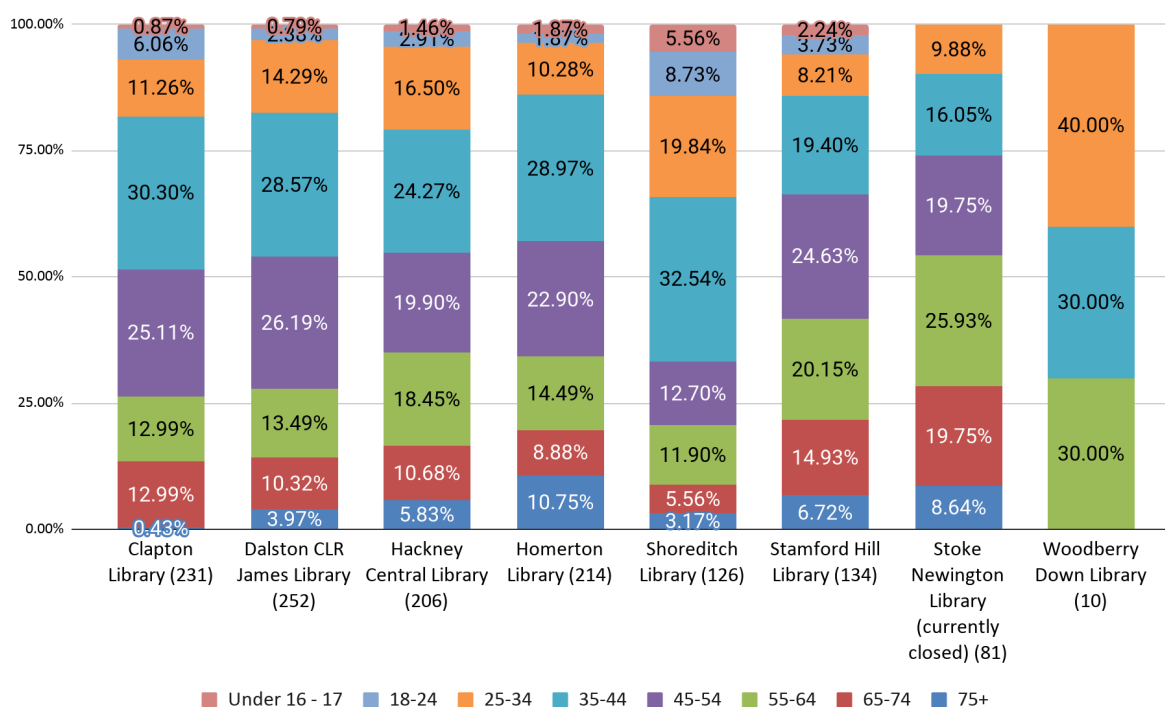
Dalston CLR James was the library most frequently visited (286), followed by Clapton (240), Homerton (220), Hackney Central (218), Stamford Hill (138), Shoreditch (136), Stoke Newington (86) and Woodberry Down (10).

The two charts on the following page are a cross-analysis of which libraries are used most frequently broken down by ethnicity and age group.

Cross-analysis - Which of the following libraries do you use the most frequently? By Ethnicity

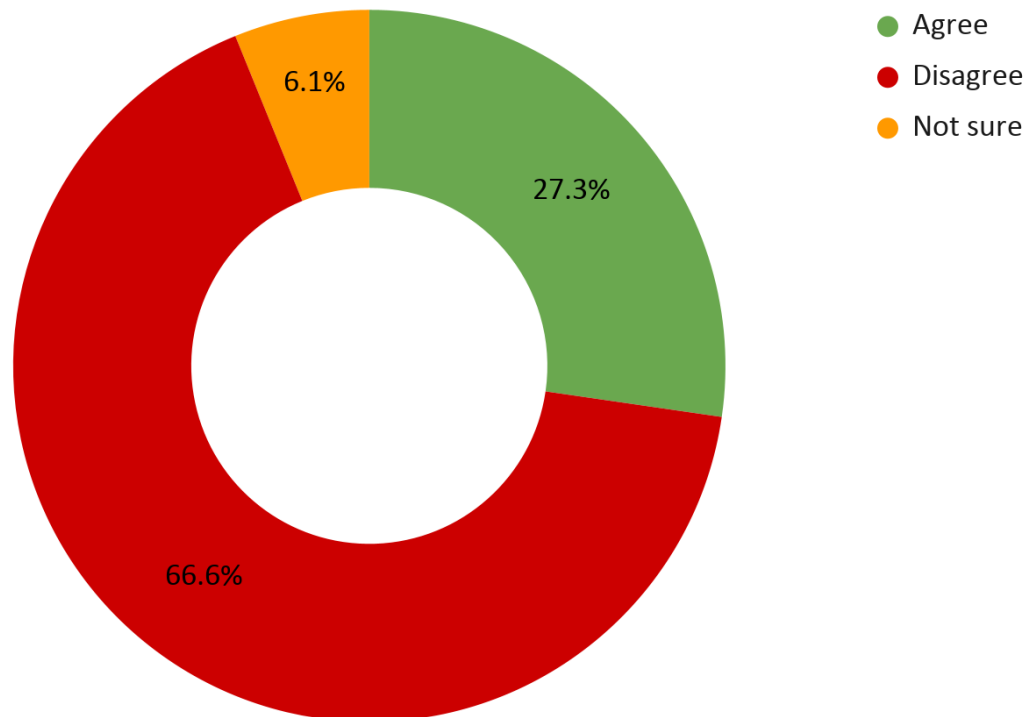


Cross-analysis - Which of the following libraries do you use the most frequently? By Age Group



Option 1: Targeted Full and Half-Day Closures

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
(Base 1319)



The majority of respondents, at two thirds, stated that they disagree with the option 1 proposal (878). Just over a quarter stated that they agree (360), with a small percentage stating not sure (81).

Respondents were then asked to give any comments on this proposal, with a breakdown of comments below (850 comments):

1. Service Hours & Accessibility

- **Description:** Comments focusing on the practicalities of the proposed schedule changes, specifically the strong preference for maintaining weekend access and evening hours to accommodate working schedules. Option 1 is viewed as the "least worst" choice.
- **Count of related comments:** 360
- **General Sentiment:** Highly reluctant but pragmatic. Full-day closures are heavily opposed.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"Would it be possible to avoid full day closures by creating more half days. It seems imperative to offer a daily service of some sort."*

- *"Weekends are one of the few times that working people... are able to actually go to libraries."*
- *"Why not close at 6pm on weekdays instead rather than staying open until 8?"*
- *"I think this is the best of three sad options. Think it's a bad idea to shut libraries altogether on weekends."*

2. Impact on Specific User Groups

- **Description:** Observations on how reduced hours could disproportionately affect specific demographics, such as school children, students, solo parents, and neurodivergent individuals.
- **Count of related comments:** 160
- **General Sentiment:** Empathetic and deeply protective of vulnerable residents who lack alternative resources.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"As a Solo Mum, I have 100% relied on Dalston CLR James library being open on Sundays."*
 - *"Dalston library is a favourite for our son who is autistic."*
 - *"Dalston CLR James library is extensively used by students as a place to study."*
 - *"I am frail and elderly and live near Clapton library. It is a lifeline for me."*

3. Social Value & Community Impact

- **Description:** Feedback highlighting the library as a vital "third space" beyond book borrowing, acting as a free, warm, and safe hub during the cost-of-living crisis.
- **Count of related comments:** 130
- **General Sentiment:** Deeply appreciative and passionate. Libraries are viewed as fundamental pillars of society.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"On a rainy Sunday in Hackney, there is very little else available that is free."*
 - *"When we have a cost of living crisis... you are proposing taking hours away from people finding an escape from the cold."*
 - *"As the days get shorter and colder, Dalston library is an important warm hub where we can go for a family outing on Sunday afternoon."*

4. Geographic Equity & Site Distribution

- **Description:** Concerns regarding the spatial fairness of the closures, such as leaving the south of the borough without Sunday provision and impacts on Clapton and Homerton.
- **Count of related comments:** 80

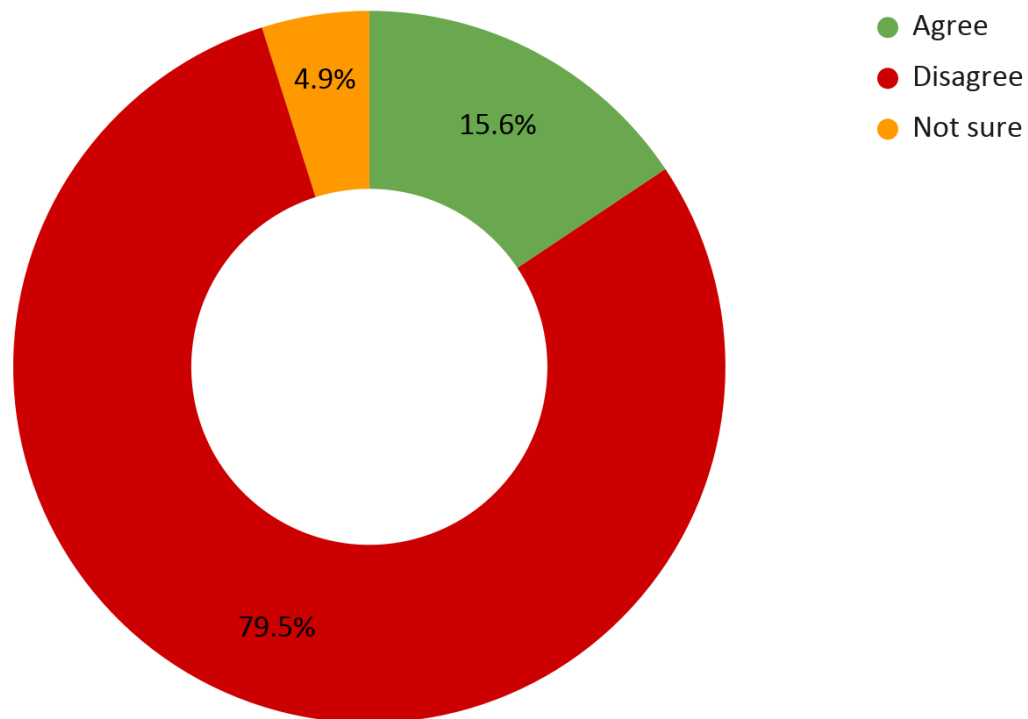
- **General Sentiment:** Frustrated by perceived unfairness between different postcodes and socioeconomic areas.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"It's wrong in principle to retain Sunday opening in two adjacent, north Hackney libraries but to remove it elsewhere."*
 - *"Unfair for places like Clapton which have almost as much study area as places like Dalston..."*
 - *"It means both large libraries in Dalston and Hackney Central are closed on a Sunday, and leaves no library open on a Sunday in the southern part of Hackney."*

Other sentiment about Option 1 (with fewer than 80 comments)

Feedback criticised council financial management and wasteful spending. The consensus is that library services should not bear the brunt of broader fiscal deficits.	60
Residents proposed various entrepreneurial and cost-saving measures, including commercialising library spaces, engaging volunteers, and generating revenue through local sponsorships or levies, to ensure financial sustainability without reducing service hours.	25
Critiques of the consultation reveal deep public distrust and reputational risk. Respondents called the survey "manipulative" or a "sham" due to a forced-choice design lacking a "keep current hours" option.	20
Residents expressed concern over staff welfare and job security, debated the use of volunteers versus professional librarians, and held divided opinions on whether security guards are essential for safety or an unnecessary expense.	10
Mentions of the reliance on library PCs and printing services for those without access at home and concerns about digital poverty resulting from loss of access to library facilities.	7

Option 2: Weekend-Focused Closures with Some Evenings

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
(Base 1312)



The majority of respondents, at just under 80%, stated that they disagree with the option 2 proposal (1043). Just over 15% stated that they agree (205), with a small percentage stating not sure (64).

Respondents were then asked to give any comments on this proposal, with a breakdown of comments below (680 comments):

1. Service Hours & Accessibility

- **Description:** The complete rejection of Saturday closures, which users argue entirely prevents those who work during the day from using libraries.
- **Count of related comments:** 310
- **General Sentiment:** Strongly opposed and feelings of alienating some sections of the community. Option 2 was heavily criticised for impacts on those who work during the day.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - "Absolutely the worst of the proposals - I work full time and am often unable to go to the library... on any day other than a Saturday."
 - "This virtually eliminates weekend opening."

- *"Please consider earlier closing in the evening instead. The library is an amazing place for kids to come after school."*

2. Impact on Specific User Groups

- **Description:** Focus on the impacts of the proposals for working parents, the Orthodox Jewish community (regarding Shabbat closures), and families living in temporary accommodation.
- **Count of related comments:** 130
- **General Sentiment:** Empathetic and concerned about exclusion. Respondents noted that eliminating weekend access creates significant barriers for those working standard weekday hours and removes a vital resource for children and vulnerable families who lack quiet spaces or internet access at home.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"Uncomfortable with Stamford Hill Library Saturday closure as could be divisive between the non-shabbat observant residents and Shabbat observant Hasidic community."*
 - *"Working families with children will be unlikely to access libraries in their communities under this proposal."*
 - *"There are many families in the borough living in hotels and temporary accommodation without computer access for children."*

3. Social Value & Community Impact

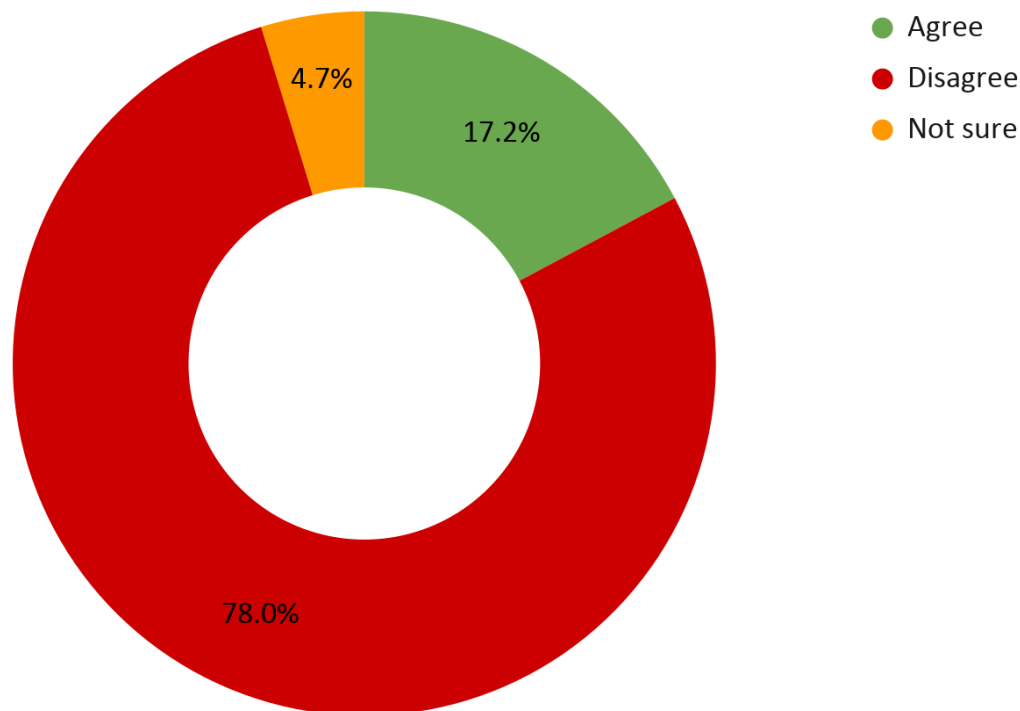
- **Description:** Highlighting libraries as an active preventative measure for public health, youth safety, and community cohesion.
- **Count of related comments:** 90
- **General Sentiment:** Viewing the library as an irreplaceable anchor for community safety.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"Libraries are an investment in children's future; without them you'll increase the risk of children being recruited by gangs."*
 - *"Try to work with the DWP and Dept of Health to encourage going out and visiting the library to promote better Public Health outcomes."*
 - *"The weekends are often the most difficult times for people to fill and the library there is a great sanctuary."*

Other sentiment about Option 2 (with fewer than 80 comments)

Concerns that smaller, diverse communities, particularly those served by Clapton and Homerton libraries, are bearing a disproportionate burden of the proposed service cuts.	60
Suggestions to generate income by renting out spaces to community groups and the council being more commercially creative.	40
Requests for transparent usage and footfall data to justify the Saturday closures presented in this option.	25
Critique of the proposed library budget cuts, arguing that the council should instead address administrative bloat and reduce senior management costs to find savings.	15
Praise for specific staff members keeping the spaces safe and functioning	12

Option 3: Evening and Specific Day Closures

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
(Base 1307)



The majority of respondents, at just over three quarters, stated that they disagree with the option 3 proposal (1020). Just over 17% stated that they agree (225), with a small percentage stating not sure (62).

Respondents were then asked to give any comments on this proposal, with a breakdown of comments below (639 comments):

1. Service Hours & Accessibility

- **Description:** Criticism of the proposed 6:00 PM closures as leaving no buffer time for commuters to return from work or for students to do homework.
- **Count of related comments:** 290
- **General Sentiment:** Extremely negative; viewing this option as the worst of the three for anyone who needs library facilities in the evening.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"As an office worker who works 9-6 every weekday, closing Homerton library both weekday evenings and weekends would mean I could functionally never use my local library."*
 - *"6pm being the latest opening of Clapton library is far too early."*
 - *"Taking away evening hours closes the library on that day to people working during the day."*

2. Impact on Specific User Groups

- **Description:** Heavy emphasis on the potential disruption to secondary school students studying for exams (GCSE/A-Levels) and adult learners.
- **Count of related comments:** 140
- **General Sentiment:** Alarmed that youth education and literacy would be impacted.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"Teenagers studying without safe spaces at home depend on libraries. These are poor proposals."*
 - *"I do not know any friends (I am 27) that finish work before 6PM... Less browsing and more people won't be able to use it."*
 - *"Where do you expect the kids to go after school?"*

3. Social Value & Community Impact

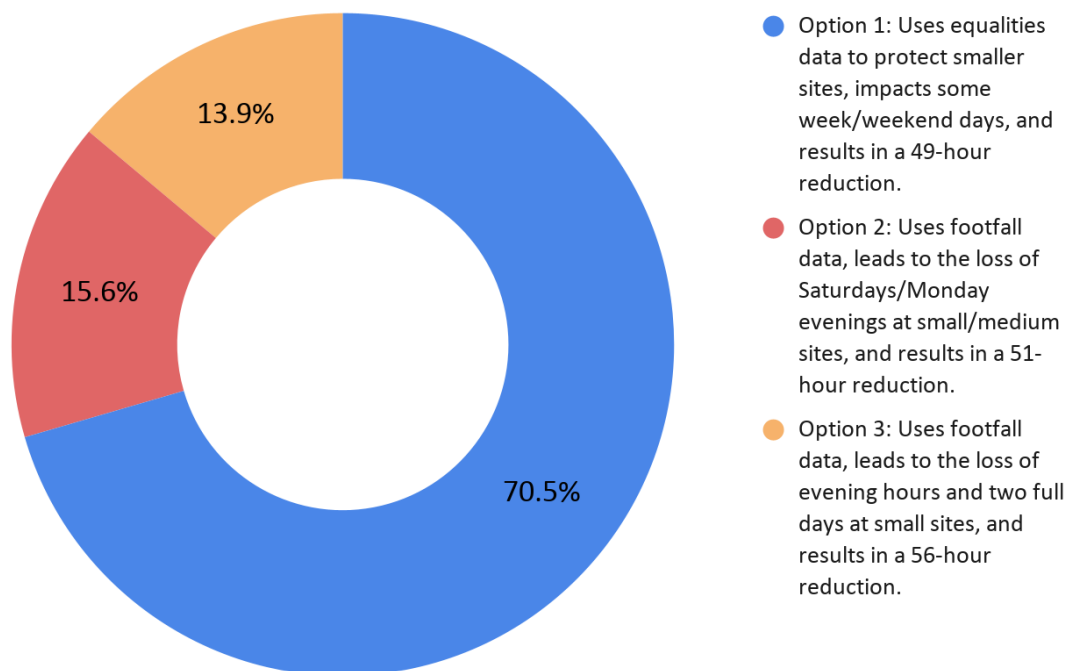
- **Description:** Focus on the potential disruption of long-standing community groups that meet in the evenings, and loss of "third spaces."
- **Count of related comments:** 80
- **General Sentiment:** Concerned about the loss of community cohesion.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"The reading group has run on Mondays at 6.30-7.30pm for over 20 years... It would be a real shame to have that continuity lost."*
 - *"Where can people in Hackney go to study, meet, work in the evening? A pub buying a £8 beer?"*
 - *"These closures would make the library no longer a hub for the community."*

Other sentiment about Option 3 (with fewer than 80 comments)

Concerns that closing Clapton and Homerton on the same day (Wednesdays) removes library service provision in East Hackney.	55
Critique of survey design, forced-choice format, lack of data transparency, and thoroughness of the Equality Impact Assessment.	45
Call for the council to protect frontline services by using financial reserves, lobbying for increased funding, and addressing wealth inequality instead of making cuts.	35
Concern that reducing evening and weekend library hours disproportionately excludes working adults who rely on out-of-hours access to digital services, such as PCs, printers, and Wi-Fi, for personal tasks and education.	15
Concerns regarding potential job losses for library staff due to reduced hours.	6

Preferred Option

Thanks for sharing your thoughts on each option. If you had to select just one, which would be your preferred option? (Base 986)



The vast majority of respondents, over two thirds, preferred Option 1 (695). Option 2 and 3 both had a similar number of responses (154 and 137 respectively).

Respondents were then asked to share their views on the proposals overall, on specific libraries, or alternative proposals, with a breakdown of comments below (675 comments):

1. Consultation Feedback & Sentiment

- **Description:** Widespread refusal to select an option, feeling the survey was a "trick" that forced users to agree to cuts.
- **Count of related comments:** 180
- **General Sentiment:** Highly distrustful and questioning the fairness of the consultation.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - "I will not be forced to choose any of your options as I strongly disagree with all of them!!!"
 - "This is a trick survey with no real choice for the community."

- *"The format of this consultation is very leading, and will not help you to get a sense of residents' actual views."*

2. Financial & Strategic Management

- **Description:** Strong suggestions to source funding from wealth in the borough (taxing developers, landlords, film crews) rather than cutting public services.
- **Count of related comments:** 140
- **General Sentiment:** Critical of budget priorities and wealth inequality. Respondents opposed the reduction of public services, suggesting the council should instead address internal management costs and find ways to generate revenue from the borough's wealthiest residents and developers.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"Tax the uber wealthy of Hackney a special Libraries tax and they can pay."*
 - *"I would support a levy on crews filming in Hackney - to be invested in local culture i.e. libraries."*
 - *"Collect the £800,000 debt from property developers and leave our services be."*

3. Service Hours & Accessibility

- **Description:** Demands to keep hours exactly as they are without any changes.
- **Count of related comments:** 120
- **General Sentiment:** Unwilling to accept reductions in library services.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"I oppose all three options in the library cuts consultation."*
 - *"I would like these libraries to stay open as widely as possible."*

4. Social Value & Community Impact

- **Description:** Framing the library as critical, life-saving infrastructure for those struggling with isolation and the cost of living.
- **Count of related comments:** 90
- **General Sentiment:** Defense of the library as a vital local provision.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"The library is a physical, free space for people of all ages... in this unprecedented period in history where mental health is at its peak crisis."*
 - *"Libraries are a lifeline for the most vulnerable in our community."*
 - *"As a disabled person and a neurodivergent person, it is critical for me to have a space I can access."*
 - *"Libraries are an absolutely essential resource for Solo Mums like me. We do so much of the parenting of our children on our own."*

Other sentiment about Preferred Option (with fewer than 80 comments)

Focus on impacts of the proposed changes on neurodivergent individuals, solo mothers, and charities operating inside the libraries.	70
Concerns that this was the 'least worst' with regard to the unequal spatial distribution of the proposed cuts across the borough.	45
Divided views on whether to address funding gaps by using volunteers or maintaining a professional, paid library staff.	20
Various alternative strategies to avoid service cuts, including generating commercial income, utilising volunteers, improving operational efficiencies, securing bespoke funding, and implementing unstaffed swipe access systems.	12

Other Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to make any other comments that they would like to share (401 comments):

1. Consultation Feedback & Sentiment

- **Description:** Feedback on how people found the survey
- **Count of related comments:** 130
- **General Sentiment:** Feeling the council tried to hide the consultation, relying on grassroots groups to spread the word.
- **Relevant Quotes:**
 - *"The format of this consultation is very leading, and will not help you to get a sense of residents' actual views - you have provided three options, but there is barely any difference between them. Surely residents could be consulted in a wider and more open way? This feels very much like it has been done for show, rather than actually wanting to hear what we think."*
 - *"The Council has made much more, but vague noise about the fact of this supposed consultation than it has offered information about exactly how and where people can comment."*

2. Social Value & Community Impact

- **Description:** Viewing libraries as preventative health measures that ultimately save the NHS and local authority money.
- **Count of related comments:** 80
- **General Sentiment:** Pragmatic; viewing libraries as a long-term investment.
- **Relevant Quotes:**

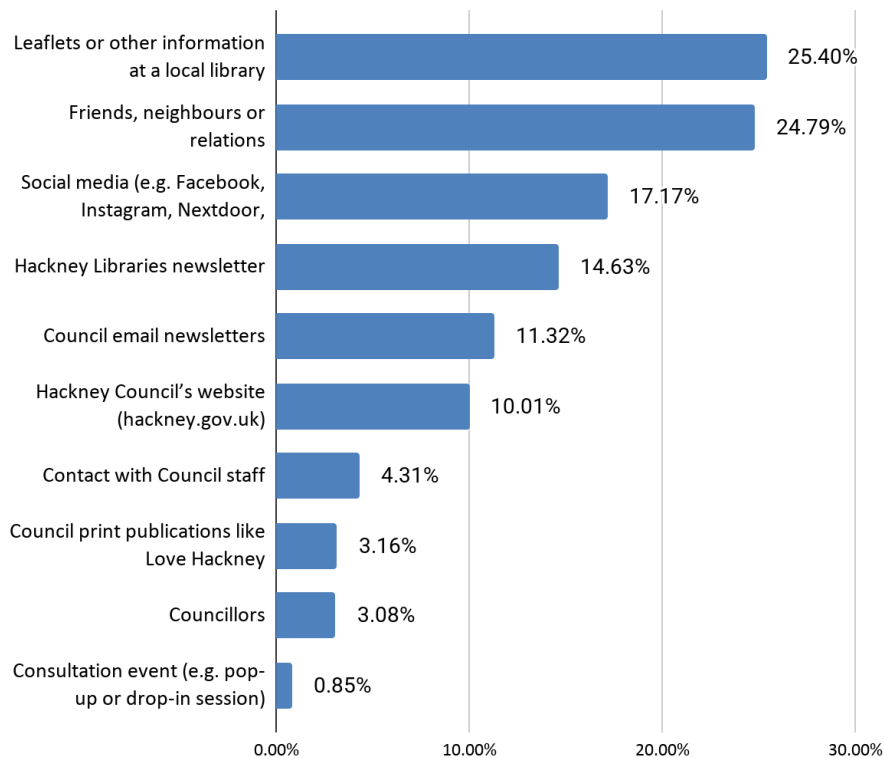
- *"The impact of cutting Libraries will cost more in terms of people developing higher support needs."*
- *"Keeps people active who might other wise be more of a cost to NHS."*
- *"Mack it easyer to people to manage there mental health."*

Other sentiments shared in 'Other Comments' (with fewer than 80 comments)

Raising impacts for specific user groups, with formal feedback from institutional partners (NHS, charities) about marginalised patients using the library for community integration.	60
Rejection of proposed cuts to hours and access, with suggestions for automated out-of-hours access.	50
Comments expressing frustration over perceptions about council spending on road schemes (LTNs) and external consultants instead of community services.	40
Critiques of the "small" vs "large" classification of libraries, arguing it ignores local population density and deprivation metrics.	20
Identifying libraries as an essential public provision, identifying the importance of internet access for Universal Credit and job applications for the digitally excluded.	15
Proposing alternative operational models, with suggestions to create "climate hubs" or integrating other council services into the library building to share costs.	6

How respondents heard about the consultation

How did you hear about this consultation? (Tick all that apply)
(Base 1299)

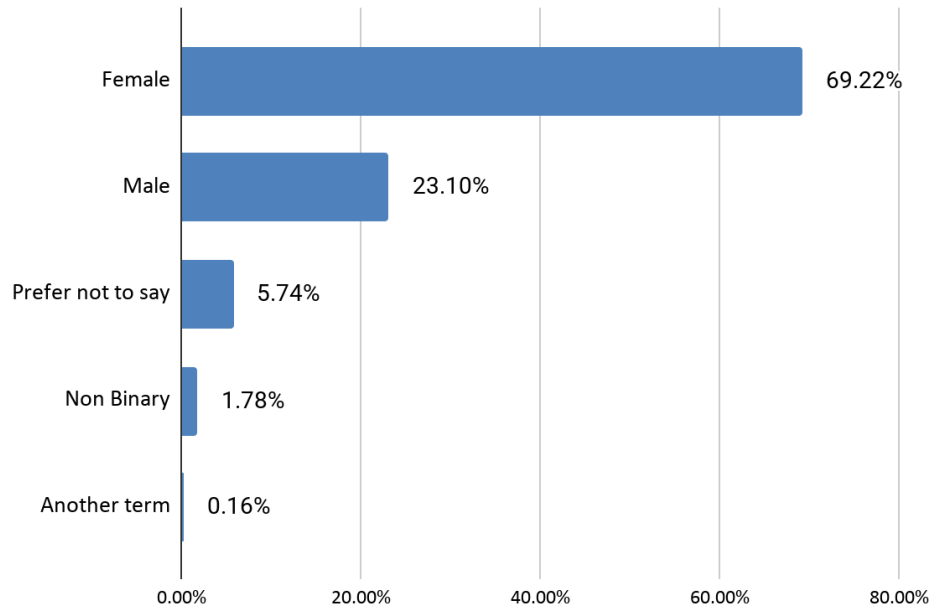


The majority of respondents, at just over 50%, stated that they heard about the consultation via leaflets or other information at a local library, or through word of mouth such as friends, neighbours or relations (330 and 322 respectively).

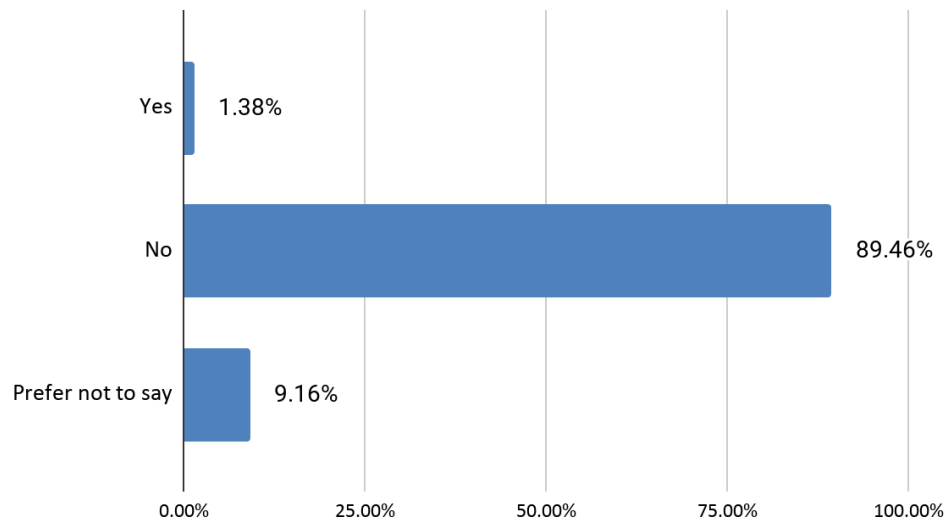
Social media accounted for 17% of respondents (223), with the Hackney Libraries and Council email newsletters accounting for a quarter of respondents at just over 25% (190 and 147 respectively).

About you

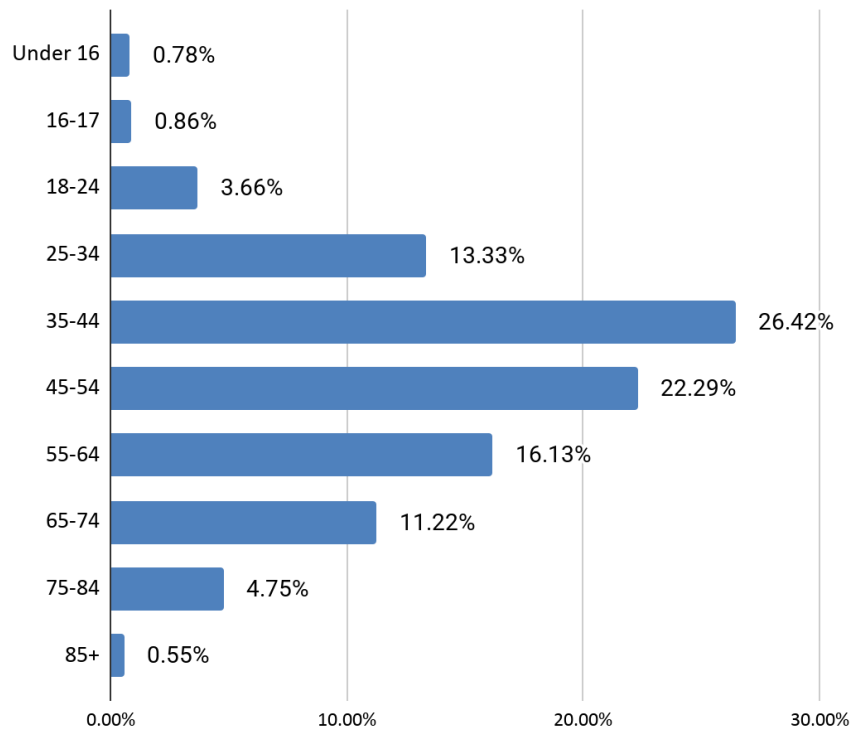
Gender: Are you... (Base 1290)



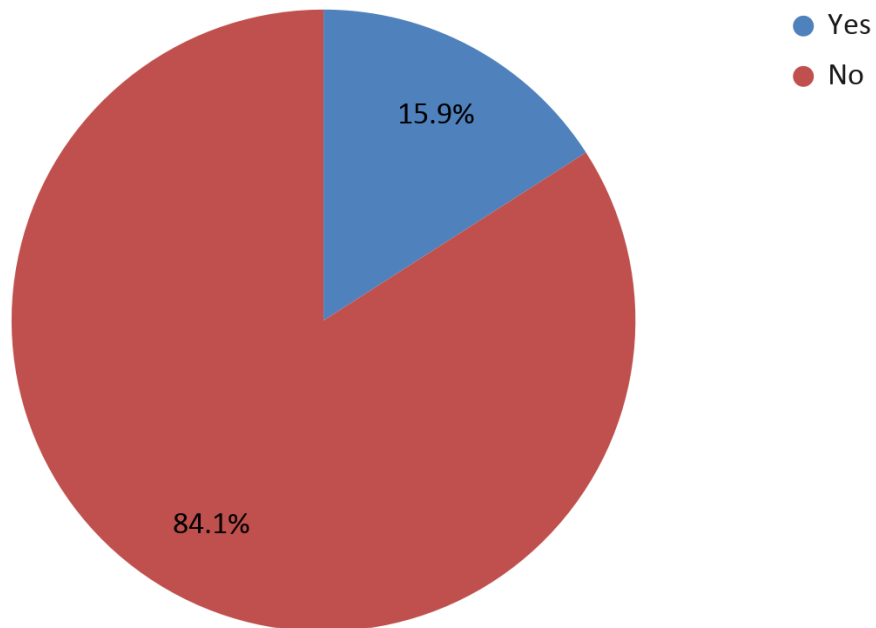
Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender? (Base 1233)



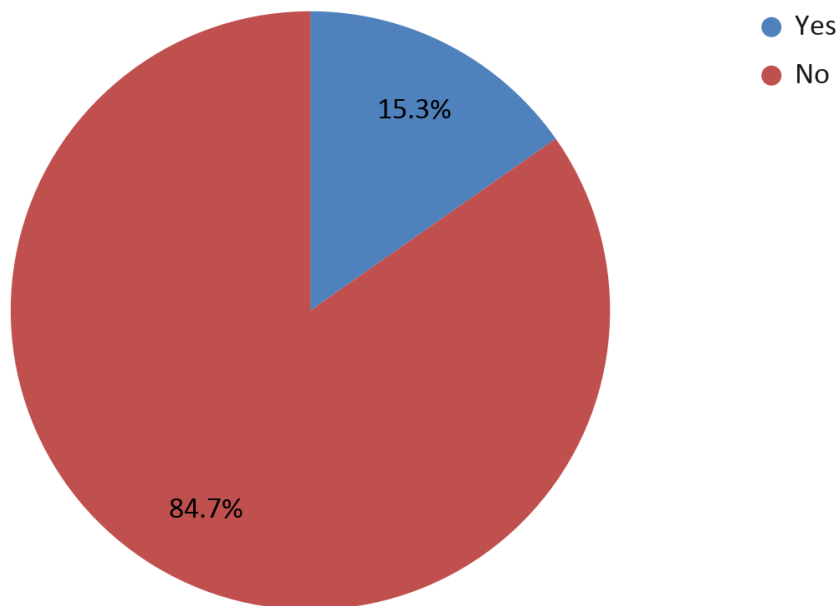
Age: what is your age group? (Base 1283)



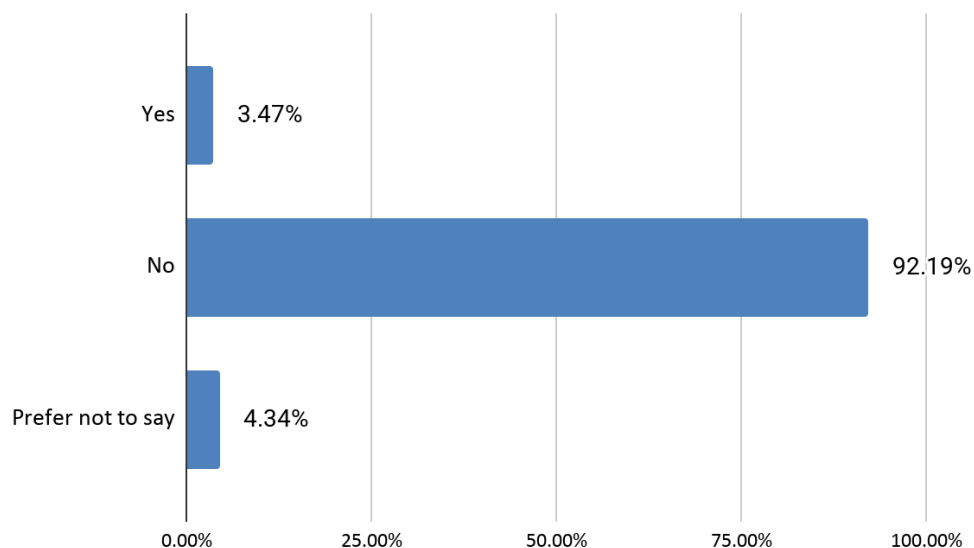
Do you consider yourself to be disabled? (Base 1263)



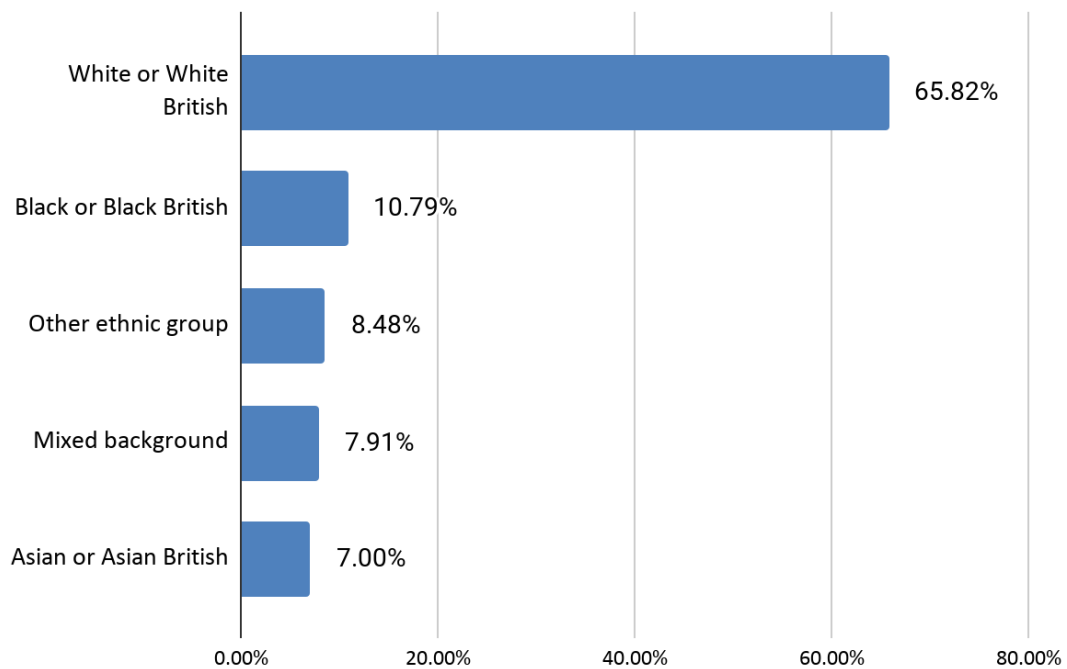
**Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?
(Base 1251)**



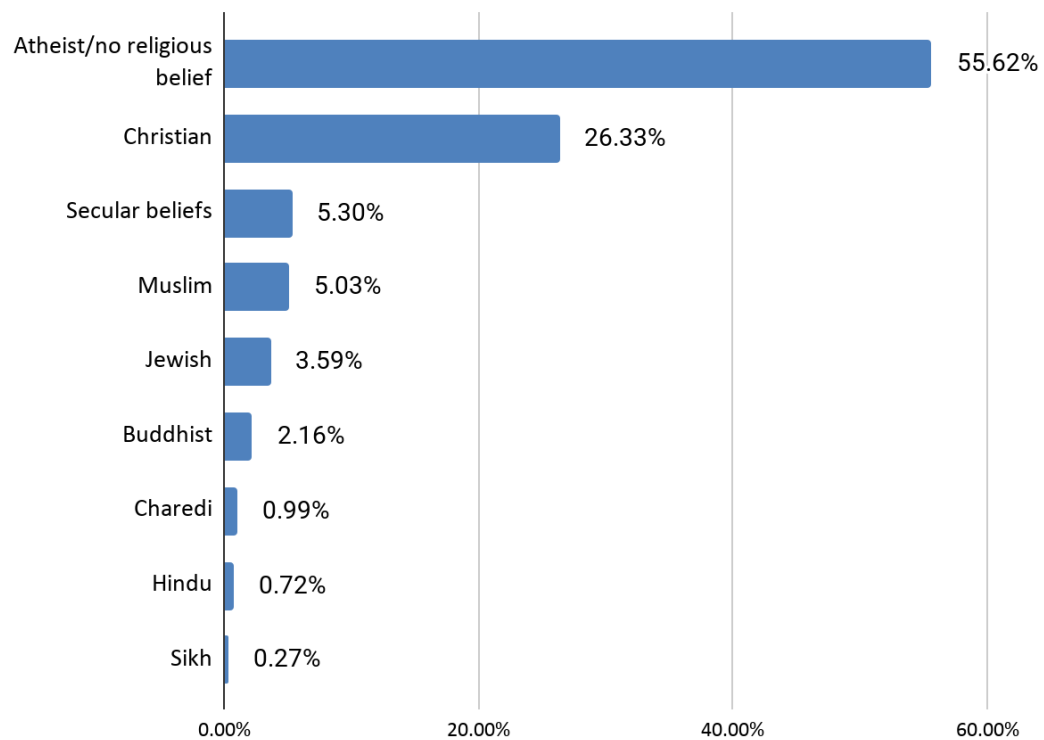
Are you currently pregnant or on maternity leave? (Base 1267)



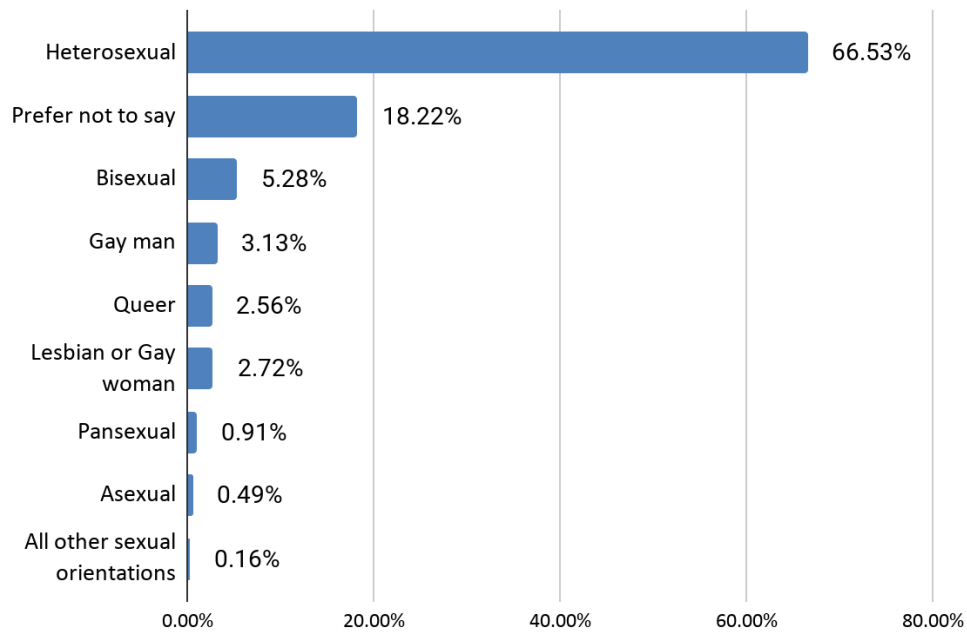
Ethnicity: Are you... (Base 1214)



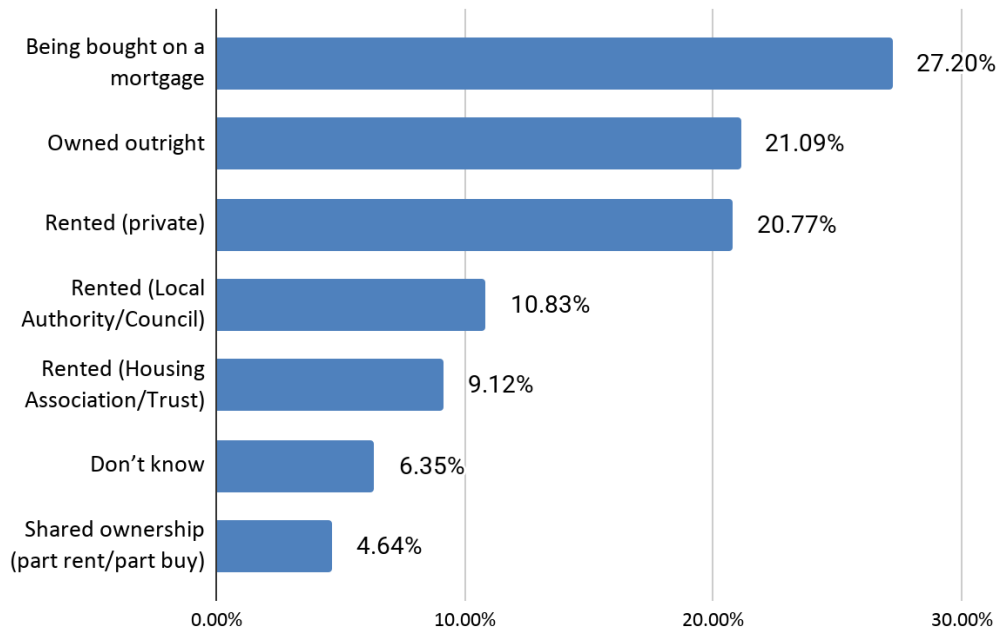
Religion or belief: Are you or do you have... (Base 1113)



Sexual orientation: Are you... (Base 1213)



Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home? (Base 1228)



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Summary of Emails

In addition to the survey, 14 emails containing residents' separate views were received. These email responses have been analysed separately from the survey results reported above.

The overwhelming majority of the emails express **strong objection** to the proposals to reduce library opening hours and make cuts to the service.

Key Reasons for Objection

The emails emphasise the vital, multifaceted role of libraries in the community beyond just borrowing books:

- **Essential Community Hubs and Safe Spaces:** Libraries are described as essential warm, safe, and welcoming spaces, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised people, including the elderly, younger residents, those in lower socio-economic groups, and individuals who are neurodivergent.
- **Support for Specific Groups:**
 - They are crucial workplaces and study spaces for students, residents, and parents.
 - They provide a "lifeline" for lonely people and those in overcrowded or temporary accommodation.
 - One response highlights a project run by NHS arts therapists in partnership with libraries, supporting marginalised service users with confidence and community integration.
 - A local charity, Read Easy Hackney, relies heavily on libraries as venues for their reading pairs.
- **Wider Function:** They provide essential access to the internet, council services, and serve as designated Warm Spaces during severe weather. Reducing hours is seen as undermining this critical function.

Criticism of the Proposals

Several emails directly challenge the methodology and impact of the proposals:

- **Flawed Classification:** One detailed response rejects all three options, arguing they are based on a flawed classification of libraries by building size and existing services rather than the size and needs of the local communities.
- **Disproportionate Impact:** There is concern that the eastern part of Hackney (specifically Homerton and Clapton) will be disproportionately impacted, despite serving very large residential communities, while the more affluent Stoke Newington library remains largely unaffected and open every day.

- **Wasted Investment:** Multiple respondents point out the perceived absurdity and wastefulness of cutting hours after significant capital investment and refurbishment of libraries like Hackney Central and Stoke Newington.

Specific Suggestions and Preferences

While most object to the cuts, a few specific ideas and preferences were mentioned:

- **Preference for Option One:** 'Read Easy Hackney' agreed that proposal 1 would be the best for their Reading Pairs. Another respondent felt proposal 1 would suit their area better for students and work people, but noted the Saturday closure of Stamford Hill under that option as not ideal.
- **Weekend Access:** Several emails stress the importance of maintaining library provision on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays), as this is the only time some residents can use them.
- **Alternative Ideas:** Suggestions included:
 - Opening libraries on as many days as possible, even if for shorter periods.
 - Adjusting Homerton Library's hours to 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM daily.
 - Considering increased use of voluntary staffing to prevent service deterioration.
 - Seeking savings in other areas, such as reducing staff time in some libraries (e.g., Shoreditch) or making disproportionately large cuts to larger, closer libraries (Dalston or Central) for geographical balance.

Appendix B: Summary of In-Person Engagement

In addition to the survey, 6 drop-in sessions were held at affected libraries (Shoreditch, Dalston, Clapton, Homerton and Stamford Hill) and a session was held online.

- 7 people attended the drop-in sessions intentionally and a further 162 users were engaged during the sessions.
- During drop-in sessions groups underrepresented in the survey data were targeted, including older people, young people, males and non-white library users.
- A focus group with Hackney Pensioners' Convention was attended by 14 older people.

Views shared at these sessions were documented. These responses have been analysed separately from the survey results reported above.

Key Takeaways from Demographic Analysis

The analysis of in-person engagement highlights a clear split in the primary use of library services between age groups, alongside specific findings for gender and ethnicity.

- **Age-Specific Library Use:**
 - **Youth - Ages 11-24** (39 participants) focus primarily on academic use, with "Group study" and "Study in pairs" being the overwhelming majority of their activity. They rely on the library as a quiet alternative to home for school and homework and require access after 6 PM and when college is closed.
 - **Older Adults - Ages 70+** (19 participants) focus on community and access, primarily through "Pensioners" groups, expressing political concern over service reductions and inconvenience due to difficulties travelling to other libraries.
- **Gender-Specific Library Use:** Of the 59 participants who provided gender data, there was a slightly higher number of Male participants (33) than Female (26).
 - **Critical Need for Extended Hours and Access:** There is a high demand for the library to be open more often and for longer periods. Male participants repeatedly stressed the necessity of evening (until "10 or 11pm") and "6 or 7 days a week" access.
 - **Essential Study and Work Environment:** The library is viewed as a vital space for focused work and concentration, often because home environments are too noisy.
 - **Valued Resources:** Access to "computers," "printing," and "books" (including self-help and building books) is a key reason for their visits.
- **Ethnicity-Specific Library Use:**
 - **Black / Black British** (40 participants), whose activities were highly focused on academic and collaborative study (Group study: 40.0%, Study in pairs: 20.0%).
 - **Orthodox Jewish** (6 participants) showed a distinct usage pattern centered on specific resources and community programmes, such as using adult PCs (50.0%) and collecting recycling bags (33.3%).