

# FEDERAL LIBRARY REOPENING PLANS

**FEDLINK** LIBRARY  
OF CONGRESS



## Introduction

As early as April 2020, members of the FEDLINK Library Leadership Working Group began compiling anecdotal reports of federal library reopening plans. As plans began to form by May, the working group made a call to its 75 agency representatives to share information about their federal library plans to reopen. At the same time, the National Science Foundation's (NSF) library program manager, a member of the FEDLINK Leadership Working Group, was developing an instrument for a broader survey of academic, federal, and public libraries. After discussions of survey questions and distribution efforts, FEDLINK and the NSF Library agreed to combine their questions to collaborate on a standalone federal library survey and produce independent reports.

The FEDLINK survey asked federal libraries to share their planning and insights on responding to challenge of offering library services while mitigating the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This federal library survey report highlights the results of how colleagues, across a range of government agencies, planned to reopen their federal libraries in response to the COVID-19 public health challenge.

The following individuals contributed to the survey design, data analysis, and final report:

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U.S. Department of State  
Chair of the FEDLINK Leadership Working Group

### **Christine Baker**

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### **Laurie Neider**

FEDLINK Executive Director

### **Bebbie Rhodes**

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Library of Congress

## About FEDLINK

The Federal Library and Information Network (FEDLINK) is an organization of federal agencies working together to achieve optimum use of the resources and facilities of federal libraries and information centers by promoting common services, coordinating and sharing available resources, and providing continuing professional education for federal library and information staff. FEOLINK serves as a forum for discussion of the policies, programs, procedures and technologies that affect federal libraries and the information services they provide to their agencies, to the Congress, the federal courts and the American people. For more information, visit the FEDLINK website at [www.loc.gov/flicc](http://www.loc.gov/flicc).

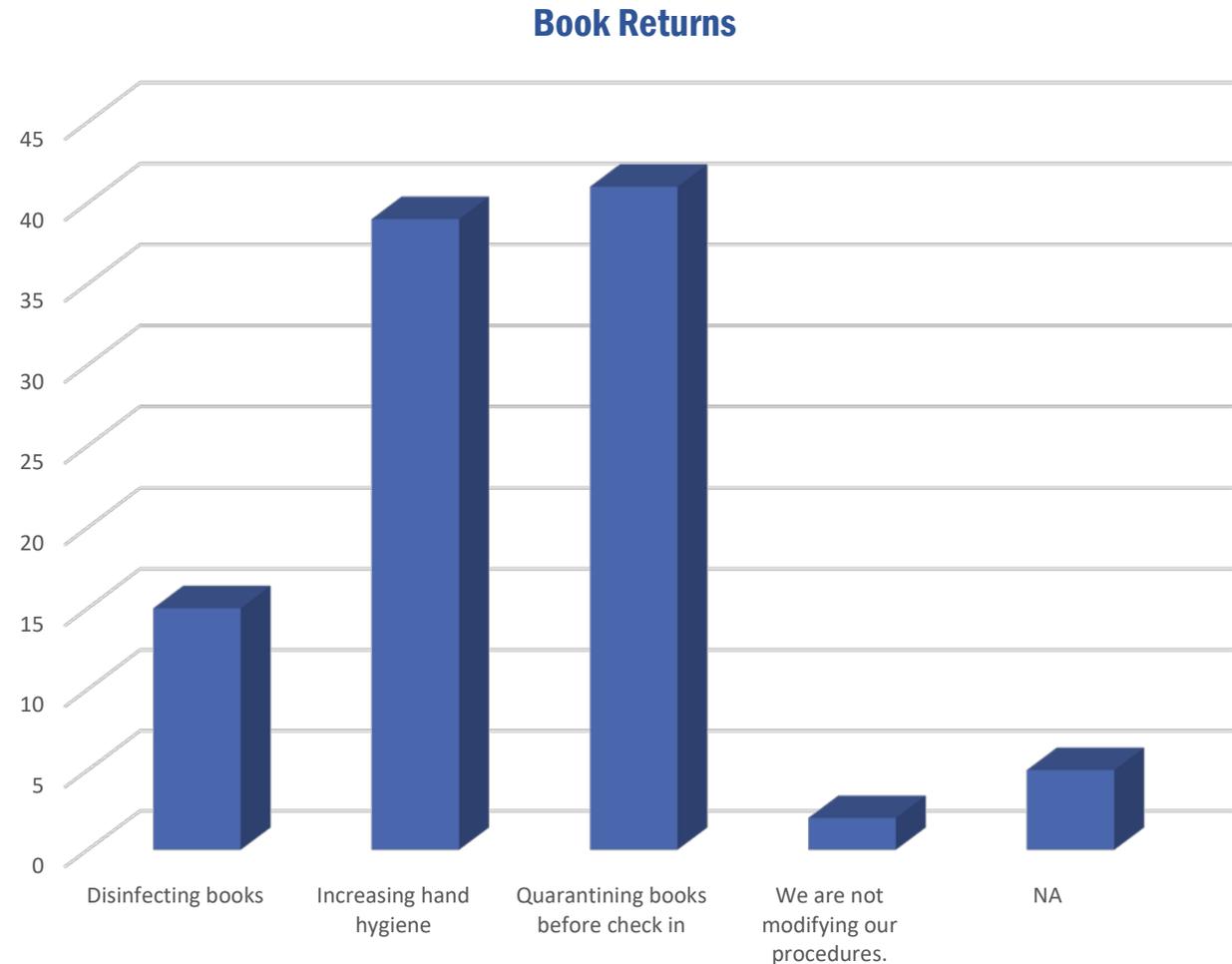
# Are you modifying the procedure for receiving book returns from your library's patrons?

62 Responses

- Disinfecting books: 15
- Increasing hand hygiene: 39
- Quarantining books before check in: 41
- We are not modifying our procedures: 2
- NA: 5

## Selected Comments

- Using gloves while handling books.
- I was informed the latest CDC guidance was that the COVID19 virus wasn't spread via surfaces.
- Only through outside drop chute, not on library counter
- Our stacks and collections are closed and will remain so indefinitely. Rare materials must be quarantined by staff wearing protective gear after patron use.
- We are currently teleworking so all books received for us by other agency personnel are quarantined by coincidence.



# If you are quarantining books before check in, how long will they be quarantined?

61 Responses

- 24 Hours: 7
- 48 Hours: 21
- 72 Hours: 14
- NA: 15
- Other: 4

## Selected Comments

- Not yet settled, but right now at least a week goes between return and check in.
- We are unsure at this point.
- We do not know yet. Awaiting further guidance from IMLS.



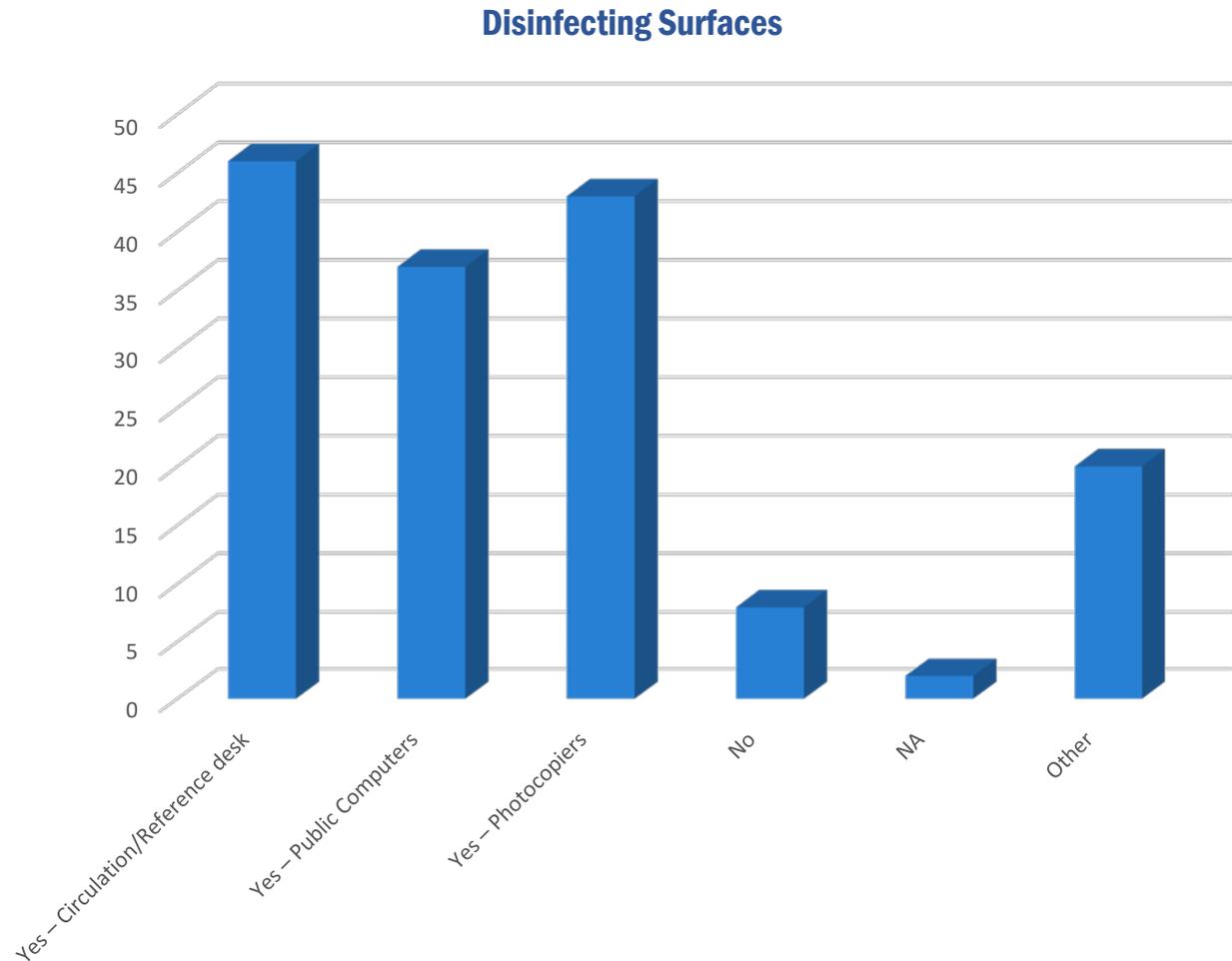
# Do you anticipate library staff will regularly disinfect surfaces?

62 Responses

- Yes – disinfecting the circulation/reference desk: 46
- Yes – disinfecting public computer terminal keyboards and mice: 37
- Yes – disinfecting photocopiers: 43
- No - we do not anticipate library staff will disinfect surfaces: 8
- NA: 2
- Other: 20

## Selected Comments

- All high touch surfaces including door handles, tables, and study carrels.
- We made a list of everything that is touched by more than one person. Everything on the list will be disinfected regularly.



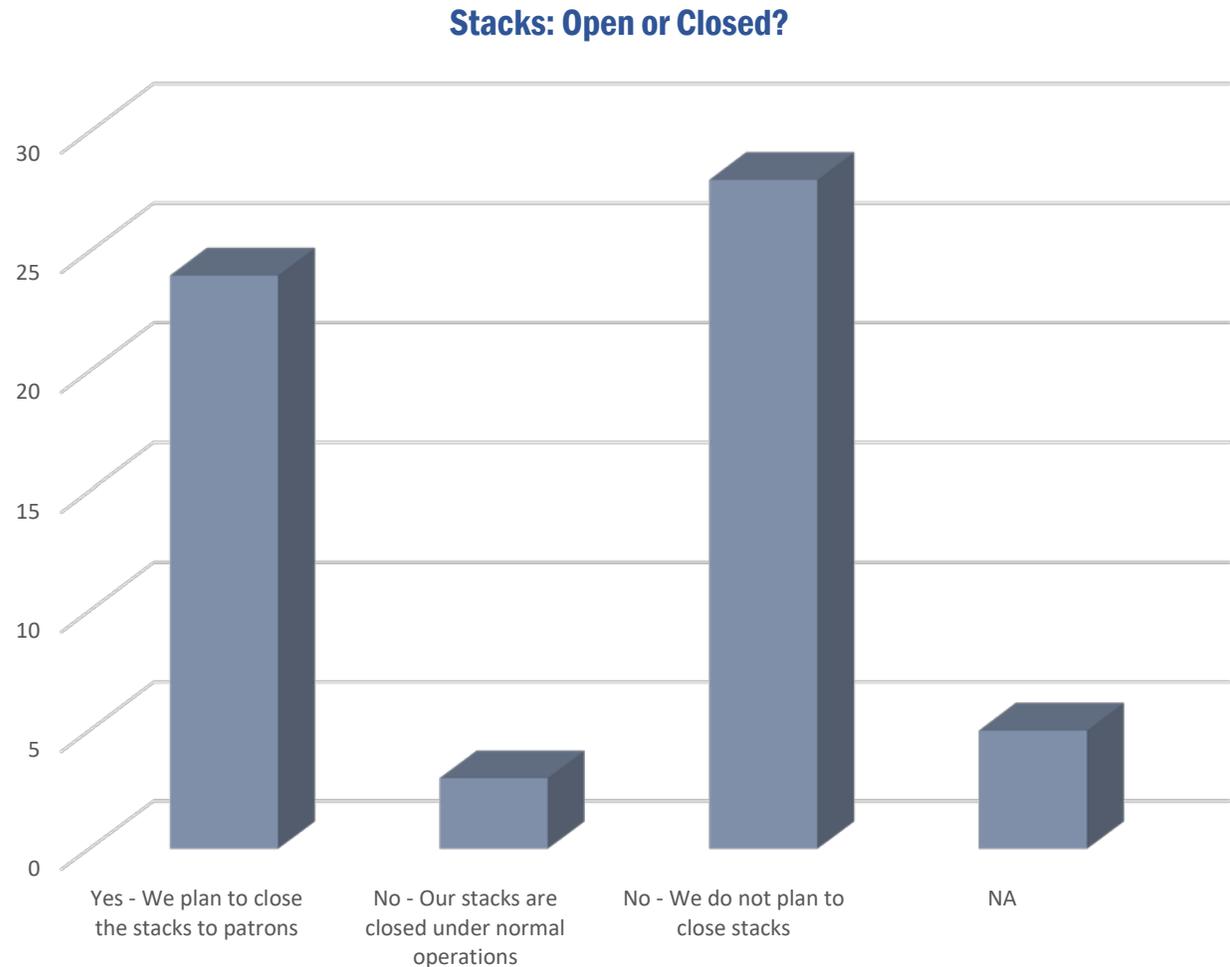
# Do you plan to close the stacks to patrons and have library staff retrieve books instead?

60 Responses

- Yes - We plan to close the stacks to patrons: 24
- No - Our stacks are closed under normal operations: 3
- No - We do not plan to close stacks: 28
- NA: 5

## Selected Comments

- Stacks will be closed during the first 3 phases of reopening. The stacks will reopen in the 4th phase.
- We do not plan to re-open our facility to "walk in" patrons for the foreseeable future.



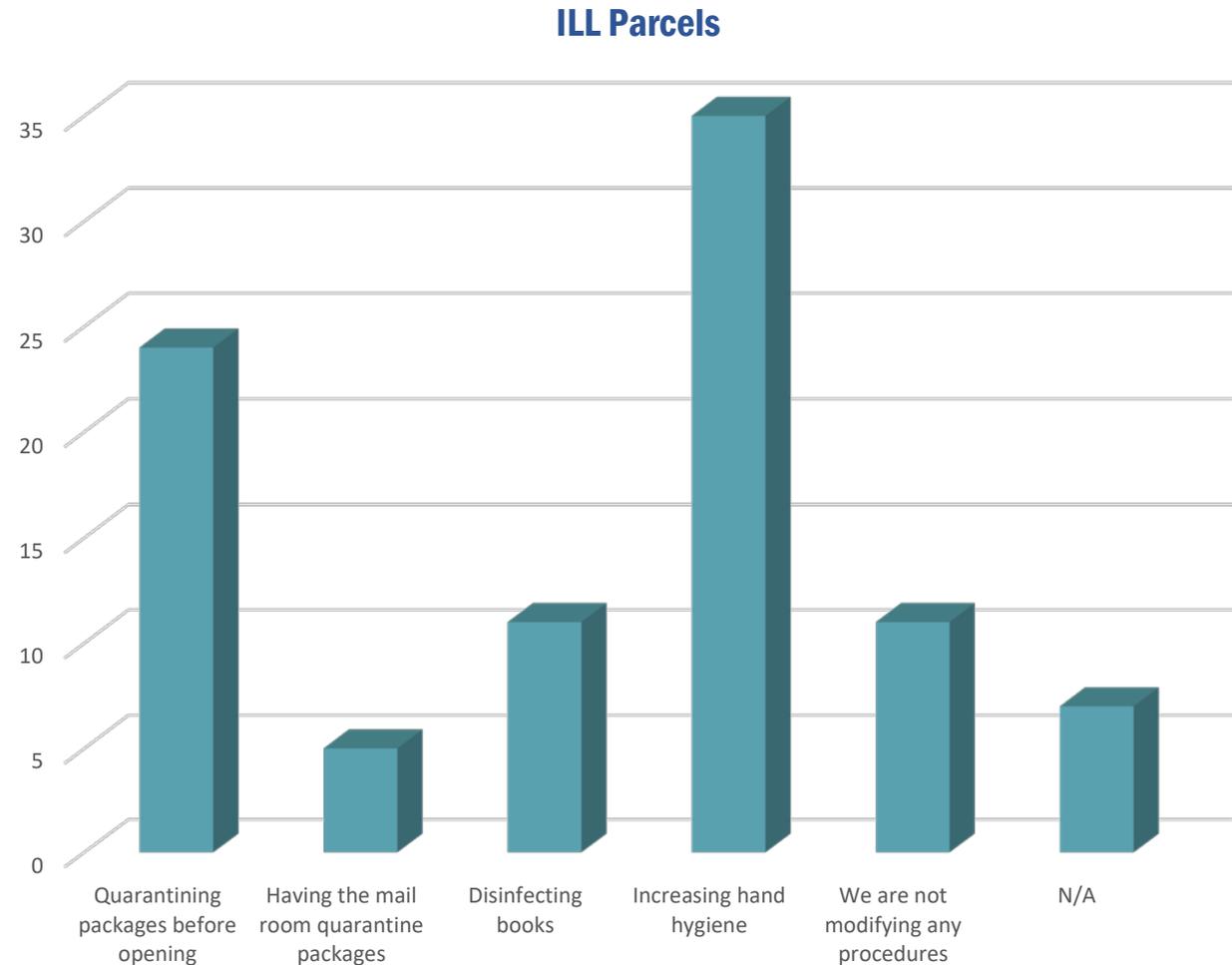
# Are you modifying procedures for receiving parcels for interlibrary loan?

62 Responses

- Quarantining packages before opening: 24
- Having the mail room quarantine packages: 5
- Disinfecting books: 11
- Increasing hand hygiene: 35
- We are not modifying any procedures: 11
- N/A: 7

## Selected comments

- Handling ILL packages and materials with disposable gloves.
- No ILLs for several months.



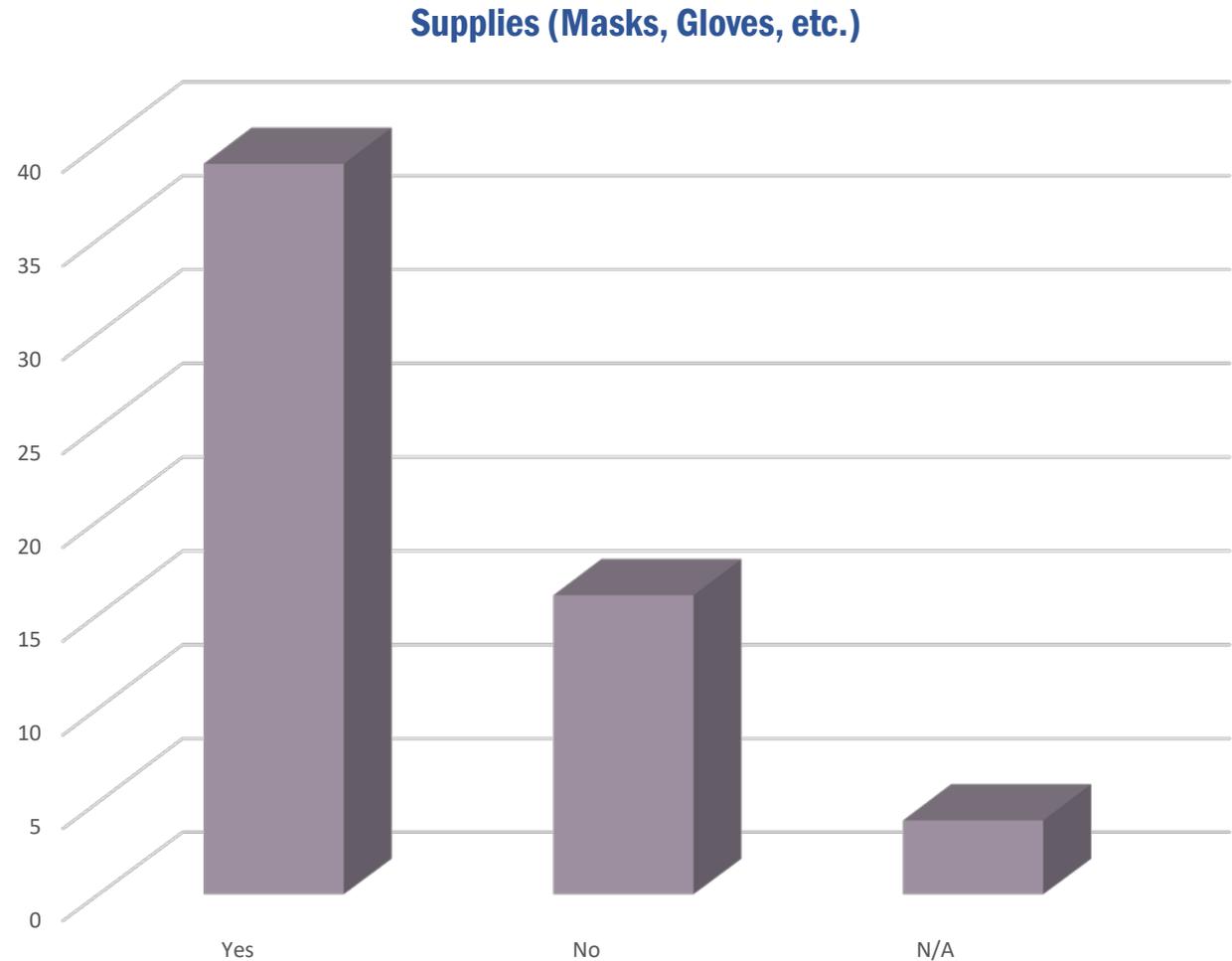
# Are you providing supplies to employees, patrons, and/or visitors?

59 Responses

- Yes: 39
- No: 16
- N/A: 4

## Selected Comments

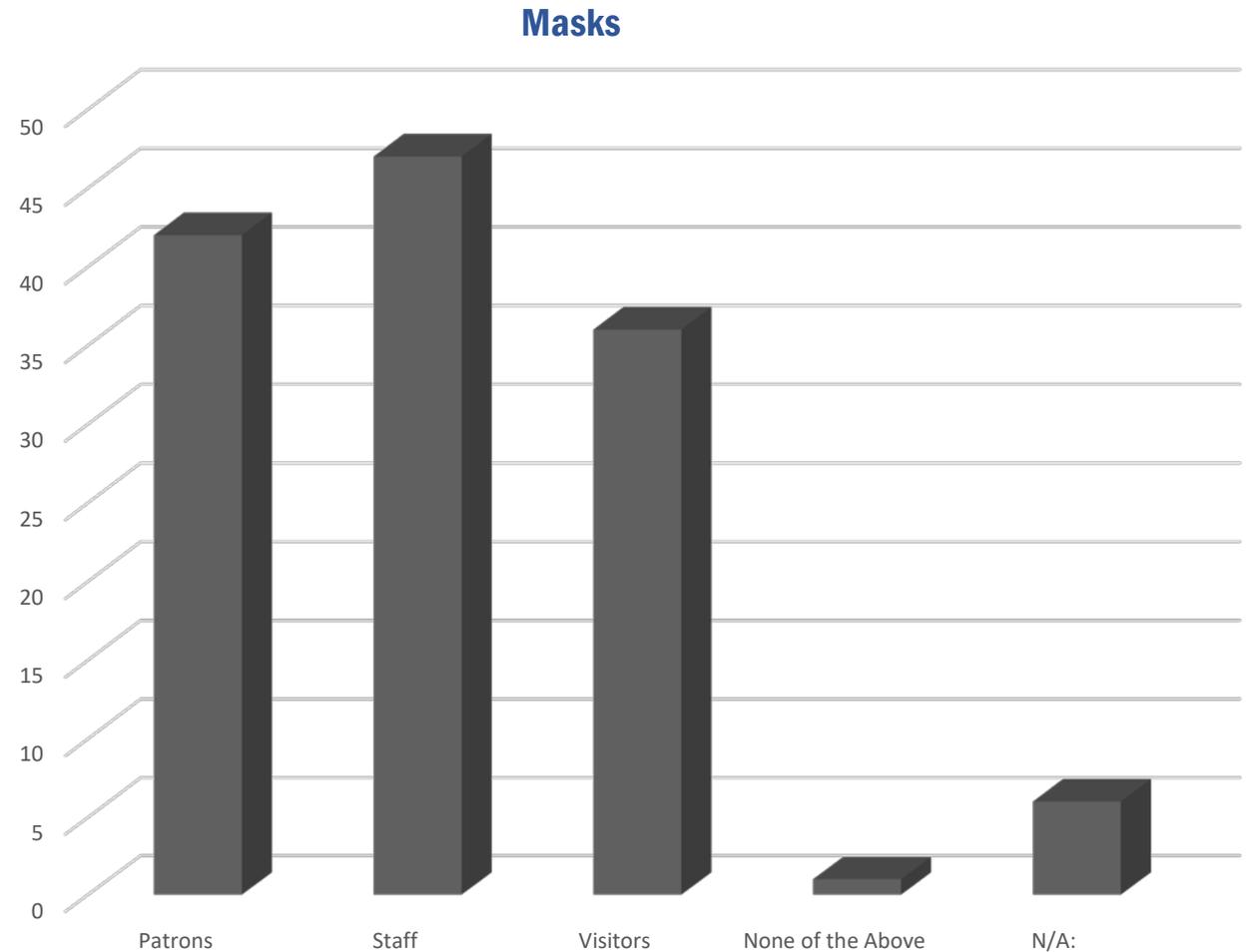
- Just to employees.
- Just wipes for the keyboards
- Library staff and browsing patrons. The workplace is not admitting visitors.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be set up around the library.



# Do you plan to require masks for either patrons, library staff, or visitors?

62 Responses

- Patrons: 42
- Staff: 47
- Visitors: 36
- None of the Above: 1
- N/A: 6

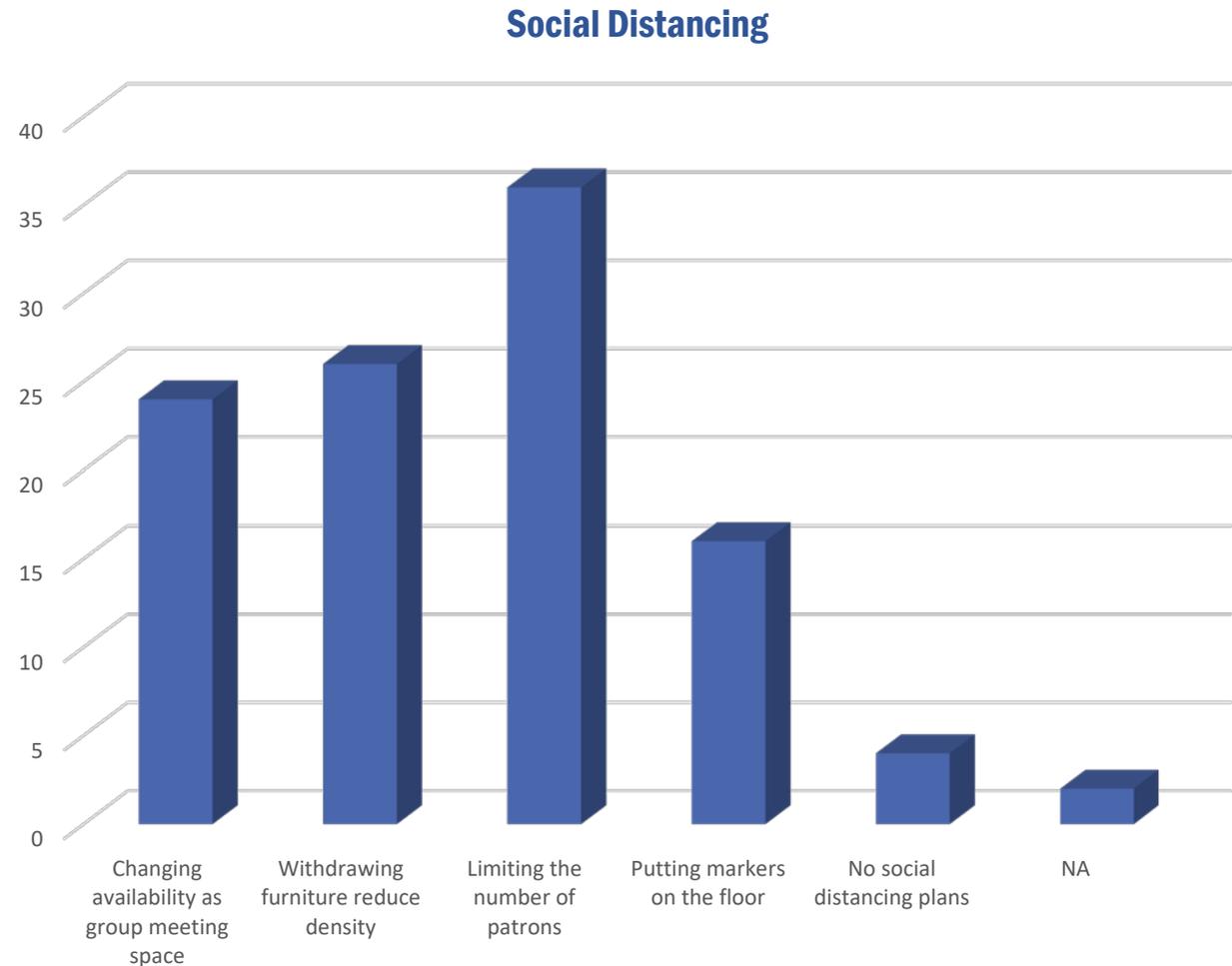


# Do you anticipate initiating social distancing for patrons within your library?

55 Responses

- Changing the library's availability as a public meeting space for groups: 24
- Withdrawing furniture (e.g., tables or chairs) from the library space to reduce density: 26
- Limiting the number of patrons in the space at one time: 36
- Putting markers on the floor to indicate social distancing space in the stacks: 16
- We do not have any social distancing plans: 4
- NA: 2

Comments: See next page.



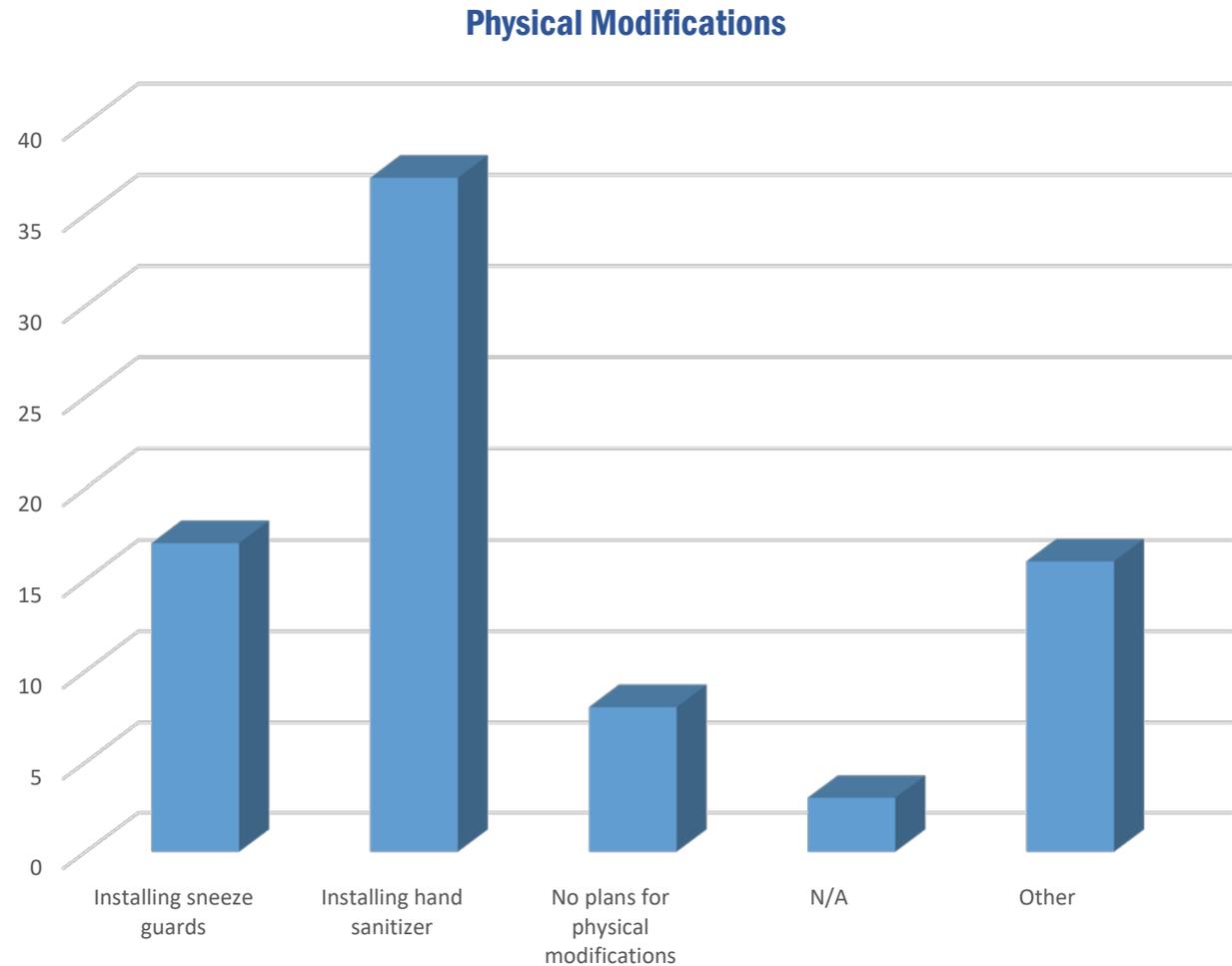
# Do you anticipate initiating social distancing for patrons within your library?

- Visits to library will be by appointment only. / Appointments for using computers, and spacing them out. / We are limiting access to one patron at a time, in a very small library space
- Building access protocols (TBD) will be followed. / To be determined based on agency policies. It will depend on the agency's decisions on all the above factors.
- Only 25 in library at any given time./ We will limit meetings to less than 10 people, and they must social distance.
- Our library is currently closed to the public. We will determine our social distancing policy closer to when we plan to reopen. / Building remains closed. / We will not be opening the library to patrons until phase 3 at the earliest. We are not planning on allowing walk-in's at this time.
- Phase III conditions based re-opening should not require any physical markers. All visitors know to social distance and clean their hands.
- Reopening in multiple phases will allow us to be very restrictive at the beginning. As the library hours and access to spaces increase, additional social distancing within the open spaces will occur. This will be in accordance with command guidance.
- Signage reminders / We will encourage our patrons to use social distancing while visiting the space.
- Spreading study carrels with workstations out so that they are at least 6 feet apart and turning them to face windows instead of walking areas.
- We will be going back to work in phases. Our library gets traffic, but most of it is electronic. / We will limit how many library staff are on site working at the same day/time. Others will continue to telework.
- We will be putting up signage around the library encouraging social distancing, taping off every other chair at our reading room tables and closing every other patron computer workstation. / We have temporary sneeze guards in place at our service points.

# What modifications do your plan to make to the physical environment?

55 Responses

- Installing plexiglass sneeze guards around the reference/circulation desks: 17
- Installing hand sanitizer and/or disinfectant wipe stations: 37
- We do not plan any physical modifications to the space: 8
- N/A: 3
- Other: 16 (See next page.)



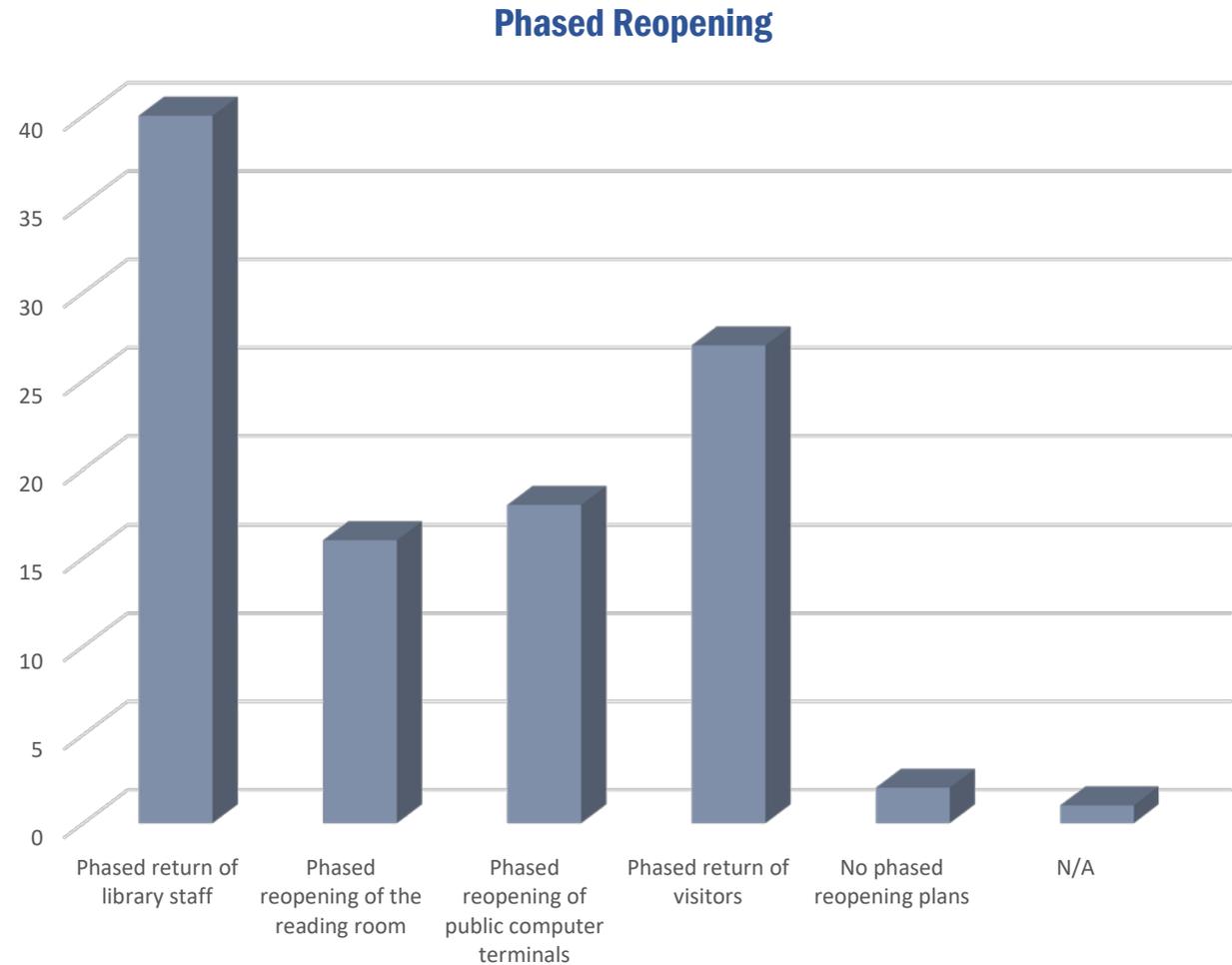
# What modifications do your plan to make to the physical environment?

- 6 feet gap in Computer Work Stations and 6 feet gap in the sitting area.
- Hand sanitizer is provided by the base we work on. / Already have hand sanitizer dispensers at entrances.
- As a first step, we may keep the doors locked and open the space to customers on a by-appointment-only basis. This will ensure low occupancy and physical distancing.
- breakroom limitations not final at this time
- Good signage, tape on floor, etc.
- In conjunction with Senior Staff our Office of Support Services & Security has the lead on all building safety including virus risk mitigation.
- Moving self-check closer to door and encouraging that over using circ desk.
- New practices for social distancing will arise I'm sure, such as not entering peoples immediate work space, and designated exchange spots to hand off physical items.
- Moving furniture to allow for better social distancing. / Removing furniture / Rearranging furniture - tables and chairs - to ensure social distancing. / We replaced older furniture and moved some furniture out. All patron computer workstations have been cleaned and disinfected.
- The agency may install some Plexiglas guards in the Library, but that is not decided now.
- To be determined. / To be determined based on agency policies.

# Will you institute any of the following phased reopening plans with two or more phases of varying levels of mitigation measures?

55 Responses

- Phased return of library staff: 40
- Phased reopening of the reading room: 16
- Phased reopening of public computer terminals: 18
- Phased return of visitors: 27
- We do not plan for a phased reopening: 2
- N/A: 1  
Comments: See next page.



## Will you institute any of the following phased re-opening plans with two or more phases of varying levels of mitigation measures?

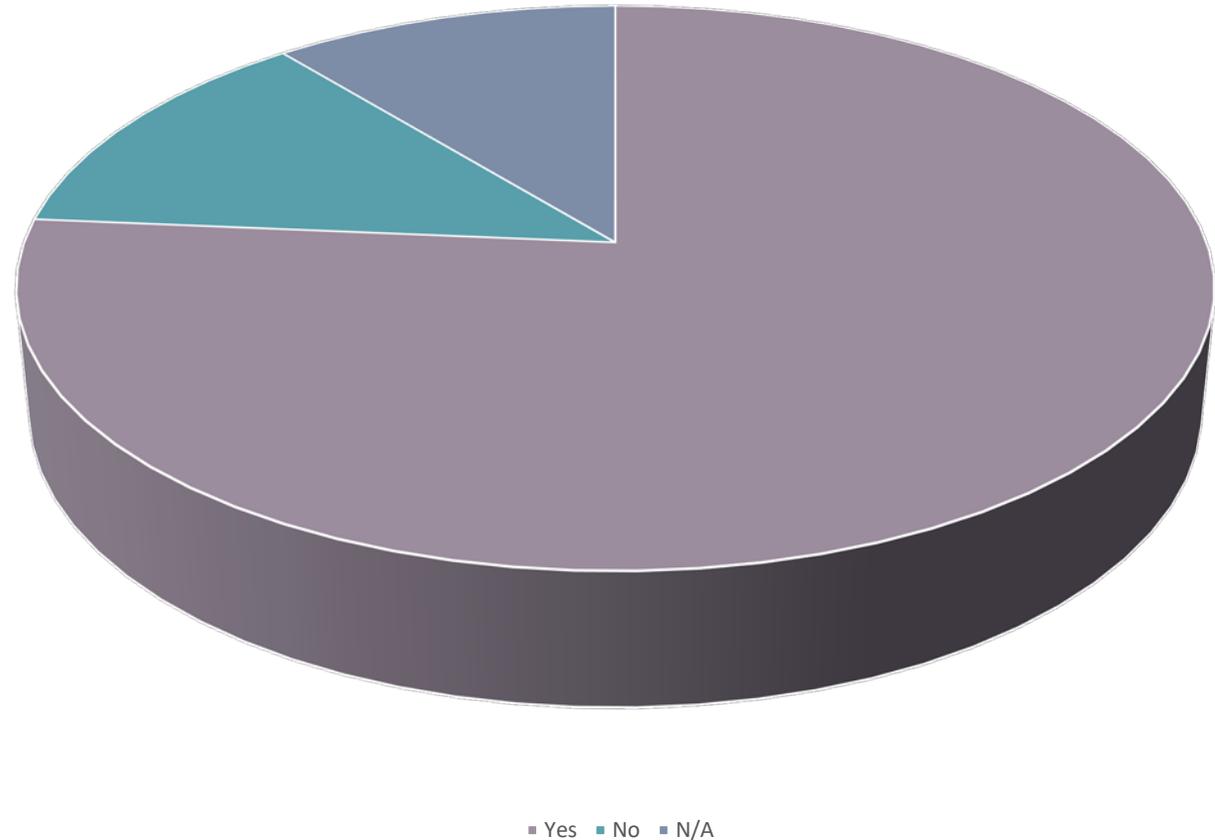
- Until we receive the okay from workplace leadership, only staff are allowed in the workplace.
- We plan to continue telework for staff supporting distance customers.
- Each library staffer works one day per week in library, other four days on telework. One person in library every day.
- Currently staff are in 2 days a week. When the organization directs return to fully operational, we will go back to 5 days a week.
- We will open to hospital staff first. Currently visitors are not allowed in the hospital. Not sure when we will open the library to visitors--it may be when the hospital allows visitors or it may be later.
- The phased reopening will be driven by organization leadership.
- To be determined - depends on the agency's decision and plans. / Still unknown. / To be determined based on agency policy.
- Building access protocols, maximum teleworking, and staggered/on call/necessary physical presence requirements will mean far fewer people will be in the building. There will be limited on-site services from solo librarian who falls into higher risk category.
- Initial reopening may be by appointment only for customers.

# Do you plan to institute alternate work schedules and /or encourage telework to minimize the number of staff in the library concurrently?

55 Responses

- Yes: 42
- No: 7
- N/A: 6

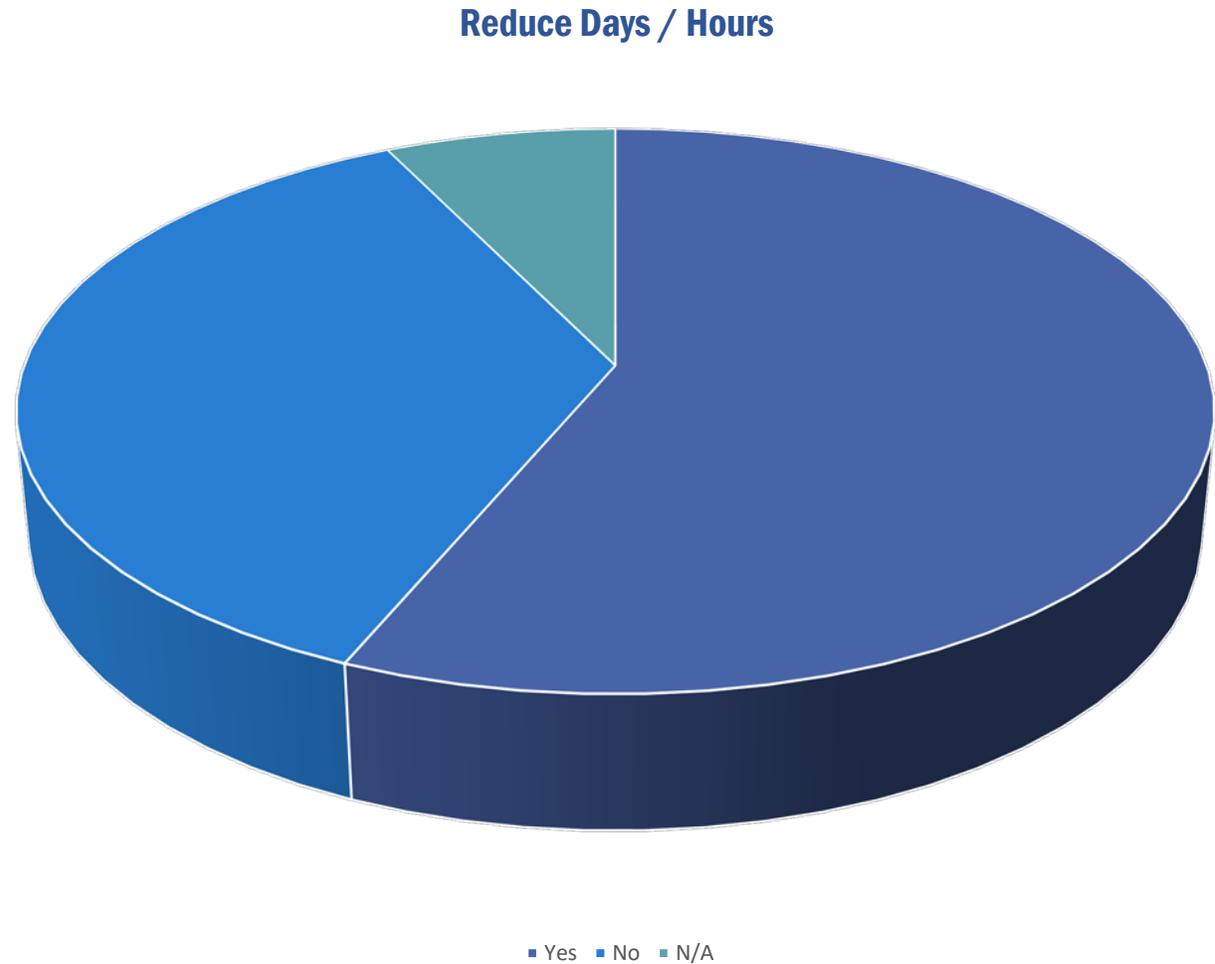
Alternate Work Schedules / Telework



# Do you plan to reduce the hours or days the library is open to patrons?

55 Responses

- Yes: 31
- No: 20
- N/A: 4

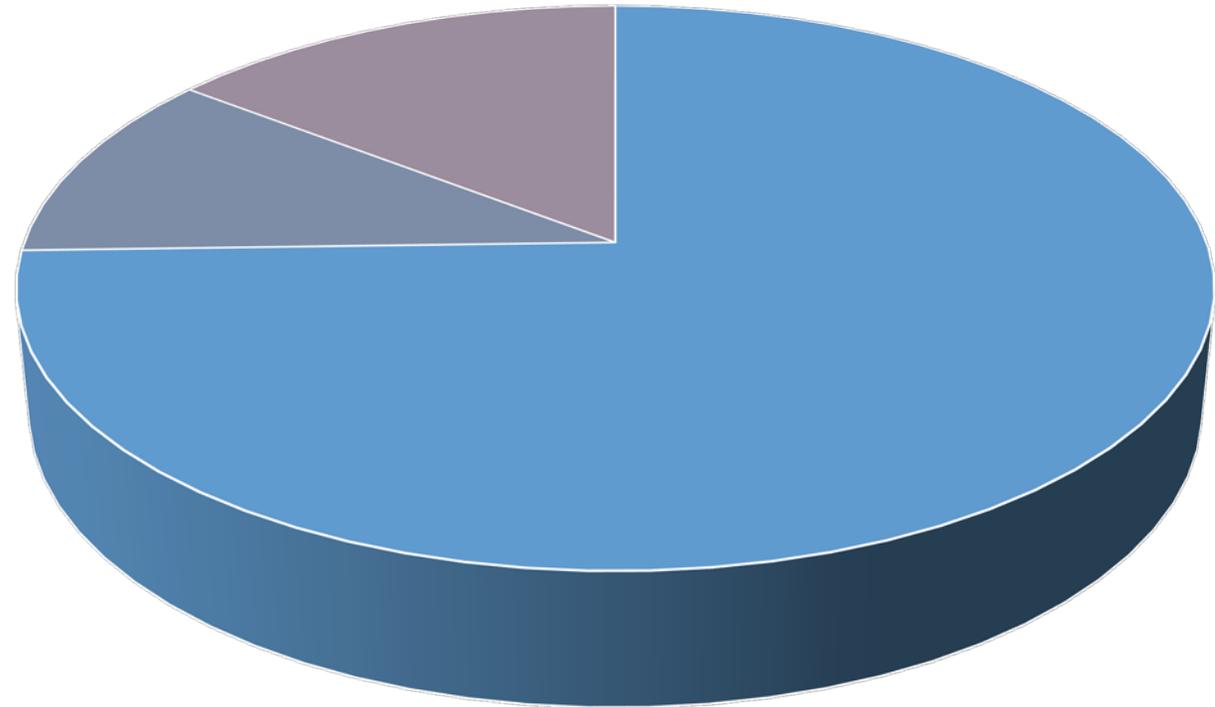


## Has staff been invited to express their concerns about returning?

55 Responses

- Yes: 41
- No: 6
- N/A: 8

Staff Invited to Express Concerns?



■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A

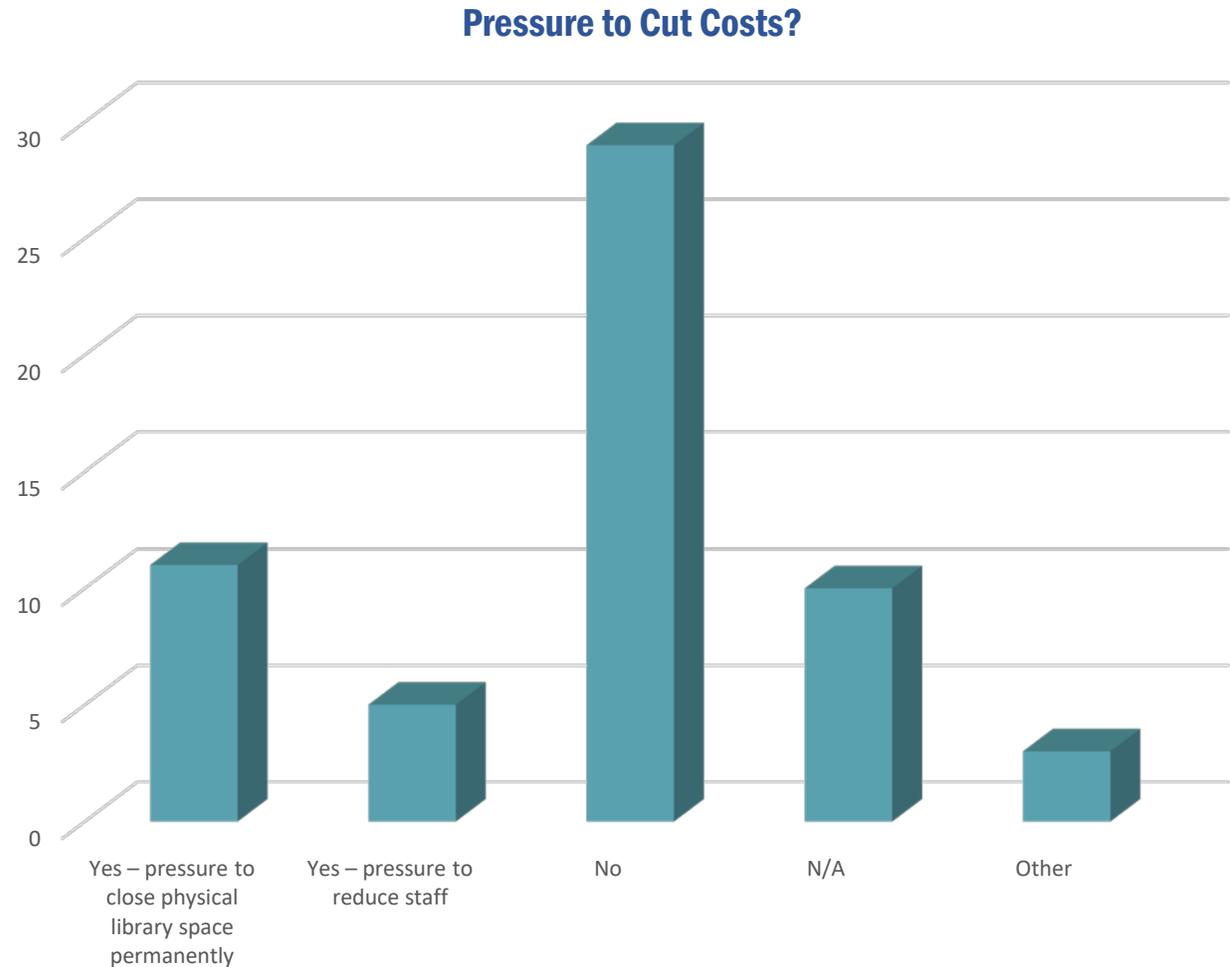
# Because your library has been successfully performing operations virtually, is there a chance of increased pressure to cut costs?

54 Responses

- Yes – pressure to close the physical library space permanently: 11
- Yes – pressure to reduce staff: 5
- No: 29
- N/A: 10
- Other: 3

## Selected Comments

- I hope not, but I suppose it's possible.
- I hope not.
- We have not been able to perform normal operations. We are only moderately successful in providing materials virtually. Cannot reduce staff more in any case unless I leave or retire. How many times do we as Librarians have to say this: So many valuable and important materials are NOT online.



# After providing services virtually, do you anticipate your agency to require more online resources or virtual?

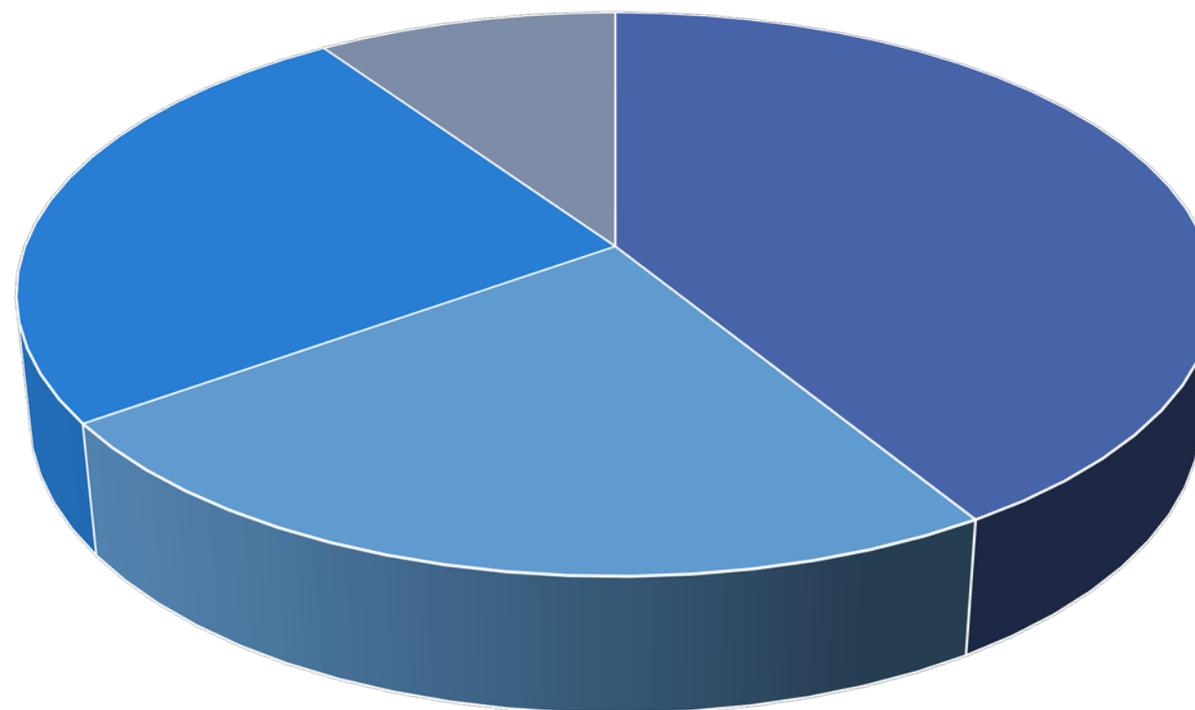
53 Responses

- We expect to increase our requirements for electronic resources: 26
- We anticipate requests for more agency digitization efforts: 15
- No -- We expect our current mix of print and electronic resources to remain the same: 16
- N/A: 6

## Selected Comments

- No idea where this may lead.
- We are already a full service virtual library. • We already have a full library e-services model in place.

Possible Increase in Online Resources



- Expect to increase electronic resources
- Anticipate requests digitization
- No -- We expect our current mix to remain the same
- N/A

## Please share any additional mitigation actions you are taking.

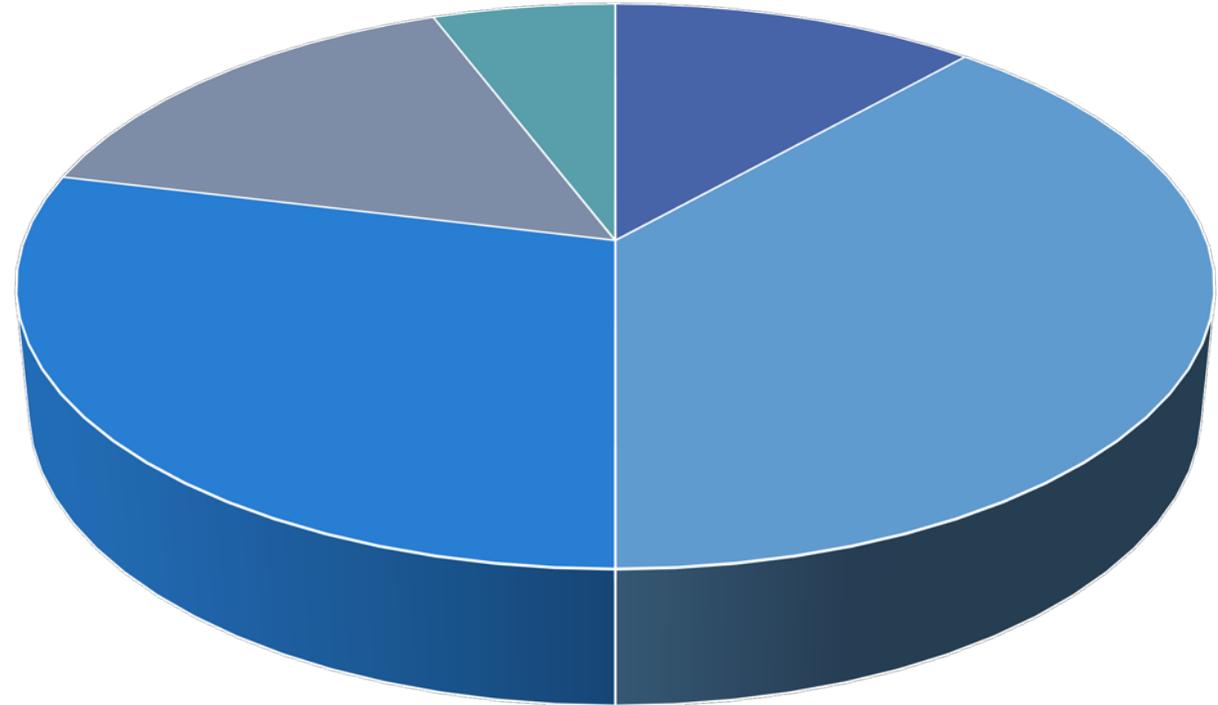
- Rare materials and special collections require in-person services. Increased digitization and remote access is useful for some patrons, but not others.
- Removing brochures, flyers, handouts when first opening. Not renewing newspaper subscription, at least for now.
- Sign up sheets / appointments for location use. Not opening our coffee bar!
- Stacks may move to high density only, self service, traditional model, conference room, reading areas, open aisles, etc. may go by the wayside - last nail in the coffin as we go full digital and virtual with certain work around and other print accommodations.
- The cost will be agency to agency. Some agencies were just better prepared to provide the cleaning services needed for adequate public health. Other agencies had other goals besides maintaining a spotless environment. Now their goals have changed, so budget dollars are going to be shifted for the new goals.
- We have been able to successful operate at a distance during this time and expect some of these changes to our operation to be permanent. The staff welcomes this increased flexibility (we are a small office of 5).
- We have suspended story time and any other type of gatherings. We require patrons and staff to sanitize their hands, etc.
- We will be requiring members of the public to make an appointment. We have not made a final decision about having open stacks or librarians retrieve books.
- We will make mistakes and learn from them.
- When we reopen with minimal onsite staffing, we may initially have two teams of staff who work together on alternating days. In the event someone becomes sick, only one team would need to quarantine.

# My library is currently open or prepared to reopen in a manner that ensures patron and employee safety.

52 Responses

Strongly Agree: 6  
Agree: 20  
Neither Agree or Disagree: 15  
Disagree: 8  
Strongly Disagree: 3

Open or Prepared to Reopen Safely



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither Agree or Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

# I have the knowledge and tools to implement practices to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus and protect patrons and employees.

52 Responses

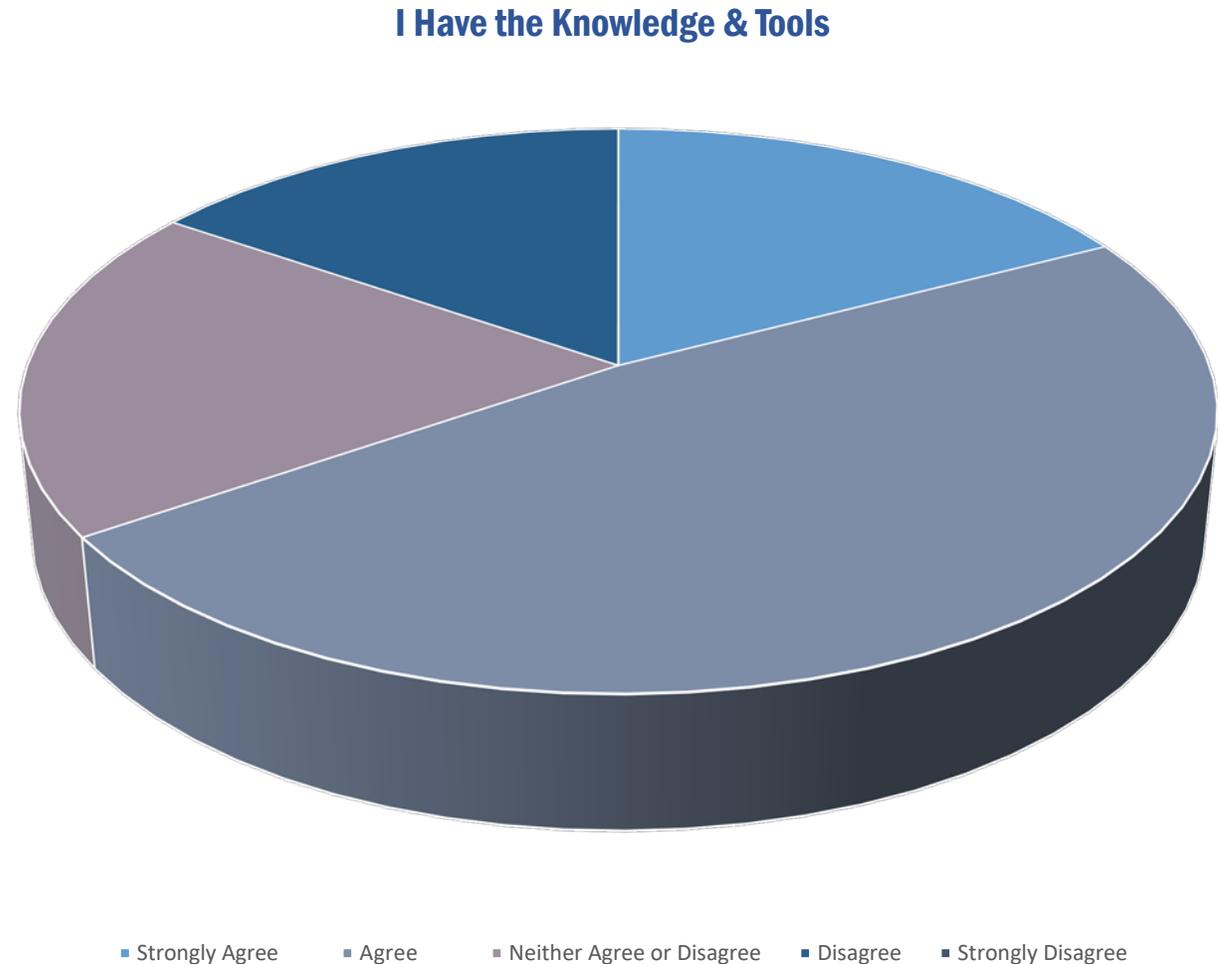
Strongly Agree: 9

Agree: 25

Neither Agree or Disagree: 10

Disagree: 8

Strongly Disagree: 0



# Current operating status of your library:

50 Responses

Open as normal: 1  
Closed - virtual operations only: 30  
Hybrid: 19  
Hybrid Categories  
Contactless / Curbside: 4  
Telework / Virtual: 8  
Closed / Reduced Hours: 4  
By Appointment: 3

