

RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TOOL

COMPREHENSIVE VERSION



Racial Equity
& Social Justice Initiative



Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative

RESJ Tool: Comprehensive Version



INSTRUCTIONS

Use this tool as early as possible in the development of City policies, plans, programs and budgets.

For issues on a short timeline or with a narrow impact, you may use the RESJ Tool – Fast Track Version.

This analysis should be completed by people with different racial and socioeconomic perspectives. When possible, involve those directly impacted by the issue. Include and document multiple voices in this process.

The order of questions may be re-arranged to suit your situation.

Mission of the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Initiative: To establish racial equity and social justice as core principles in all decisions, policies and functions of the City of Madison.

Equity is just and fair inclusion into a society in which all, including all racial and ethnic groups, can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equity gives all people a just and fair shot in life despite historic patterns of racial and economic exclusion (www.policylink.org).

Purpose of this Tool: To facilitate conscious consideration of equity and examine how communities of color and low-income populations will be affected by a proposed action/decision of the City.

The “*What, Who, Why, and How*” questions of this tool are designed to lead to strategies to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts and unintended consequences on marginalized populations.

BEGIN ANALYSIS

Title of policy, plan or proposal:

Analysis of Use of Madison Public Library’s Consequences Chart on Youth

Main contact name(s) and contact information for this analysis:

Robin Amado: Teen Librarian at Lakeview
Binta Ceesay: Assistant Librarian at Meadowridge
Rachel Davidson: Assistant Librarian at Sequoya
Kelly Grandon: Teen Librarian at Meadowridge
Carl Mickelson: Assistant Librarian and Security Monitor Coordinator at Central
Christa Parmentier: Assistant Librarian at Goodman South Madison
Nasra Said: Multisite Assistant Librarian

Names and affiliations of others participating in the analysis:

All Madison Public Library employees were invited to take a survey (Serving Teens @ MPL) about youth behavior in the library; 51 responded.

1. WHAT

a. What is the policy, plan or proposal being analyzed, and what does it seek to accomplish?

We seek to analyze organizational responses to teens across the nine locations within Madison Public Library (MPL), examining the use of MPL's current Consequences Chart in order to introduce a more equitable Youth Behavior Response Chart.

Under the current system, the library has one Consequences Chart that gives guidelines for the consequences of undesirable behaviors, based on how severe the behavior is and how often and how recently the same person has repeated the behavior. The standards are based on the behaviors of adults. The current chart does not adequately address the specific needs of developing youth. The proposal is to introduce a new system of behavior consequences that will be tailored to library users between the ages of seven and eighteen (under MPL policy, children younger than seven must be accompanied by a caregiver). MPL's Teen Team has created a Youth Behavior Response Chart, specific to this age group.

The Consequences Chart as it currently exists applies to patrons of all ages, and the consequences of behaviors not allowed are the same whether a patron is eight or forty-eight. Additionally, an analysis of the Consequences Chart has never been done to determine if consequences are being delivered evenly, equitably, or justly. We have the opportunity and duty to first determine how the existing Consequences Chart has been implemented across our locations.

b. What factors (including existing policies and structures) associated with this issue might be affecting communities of color and/or low-income populations differently?

Library locations enforce behavior policies and track behavior incidents differently, and because of Madison's extreme racial and socio-economic segregation, locations serve neighborhoods and communities that are demographically very distinct from each other.

Staffing levels are low at some locations, particularly Goodman South Madison, and this is exacerbated by the City's hiring freeze. This understaffing leads to a low ratio of staff to teen patrons at the locations that have the most teen behavior issues. Currently, Goodman South Madison has neither a teen librarian nor a security monitor, which are the two positions most likely to be able to foster positive relationships with youth.

MPL staff members are predominantly white. The demographics of staff do not reflect the demographics of the community at many library locations. Unconscious/implicit bias and other prejudices, lack of cultural competency, or even racist beliefs, may cause some staff to judge a situation or person more harshly or escalate an interaction that would not otherwise be problematic.

Library staff members are currently not given training on working with youth or on Trauma Informed Care. Kids and teens who have experienced or are experiencing trauma have needs that don't fit into the existing chart.

The current consequences chart gives few options for responding to undesired behaviors other than banning. When we ban people who are living in poverty, the impact is much greater than when we ban someone who is not living in poverty. We are potentially taking away much more than just a place to pick up books and access the Internet. Furthermore, it is assumed that any patron can leave the library at any time. However, this is not necessarily the case for youth. Some have been instructed by their parents not to leave until a certain time, while others have homes that are locked until parents are home from work.

c. What do available data tell you about this issue? (See page 5 for guidance on data resources.)

We found that Black youth are vastly disproportionately affected by our current Consequences Chart, staff practices, and MPL's Behavior Policy. See pages 10-21 for data charts.

MPL staff perceptions, responses, and ideas related to teen interactions were gathered in the "Serving Teens @ MPL" survey from April 2020. See page 21-22 for trends and responses.

d. What data are unavailable or missing?

Staff members' input of incidents, including banning lengths and patron descriptions, is inconsistent.

Available data in incident reports do not indicate how and whether staff members attempted to de-escalate situations.

e. Which focus area(s) will the policy, plan or proposal primarily impact?

Please add any comments regarding the specific impacts on each area:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community/Civic Engagement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criminal Justice <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Access & Affordability <input type="checkbox"/> Government Practices <input type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Planning & Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Equity <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe) Access to Internet Access to a warm/cool free location Early Adolescence	
Comments:	

2. WHO

a. Who (individuals or groups) could be impacted by the issues related to this policy, plan or proposal? Who would benefit?

Teens and youth over seven who come to any MPL location will be impacted by a change in the Consequences Chart, because if there is conflict, the new Youth Behavior Response Chart will affect the resolution of those interactions. Teens will benefit from staff who are comprehensively trained in best practices for interacting with youth.

Frontline library staff will also be impacted. They would need to learn a new system of working with children and teens, and would need to put it into practice. Frontline staff will benefit from a more clearly defined policy and the training that would accompany it, because they would gain more confidence and comfort when dealing with challenging situations.

Everyone who visits the library is potentially affected by the behavior of youth patrons. When youth are disruptive, it makes the library a less welcoming environment for adults, seniors, and families with small children.

If a new Behavior Response Chart and staff training to support its implementation improves the relationships between libraries and their youth patrons, all of the above-listed groups would benefit.

Who would be burdened?

For a new chart and behavior system to be properly implemented, staff will need new training, and they will probably need to take more time on each interaction with youth. Library staff members already have little work time that is not taken up by other work duties.

The Teen Team and the Safety and Security Team have been/will be obligated to create, vet, and probably train all other staff members on the new approach to working with youth. These teams and managers will likely have to deal with at least some pushback from staff who disagree with the changes, as they are substantial.

Are there potential disproportionate impacts on communities of color or low-income communities?

The explicit intention of this plan is to alleviate the disproportionate impact of our current Consequences Chart on youth of color and/or patrons who visit the library locations in low-income neighborhoods.

- b. Have stakeholders from different racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups—especially those most affected, been informed, involved and represented in the development of this proposal or plan? Who is missing and how can they be engaged? (See page 6 for guidance on community engagement.)

Input has been gathered from library staff members through a staff-wide survey and by gathering feedback from members of the Racial Equity Change Team and the Safety and Security Team.

We recognize the necessity and importance of community involvement in creating improved policies around youth in our libraries. However, because of the conditions of the current pandemic, we have not gathered input on our behavior policy from the community. We would like to be able to get input from library patrons in general, but also particularly from youth and parents.

- c. What input have you received from those who would be impacted and how did you gather this information? Specify sources of comments and other input.

A survey was sent out to all library staff about their interactions with teens and ideas for improving those interactions. There are specific questions about the use of the current consequences chart, and about the disproportionate banning of youth of color.

In surveying the staff, we found that:

- 62% of staff respondents do not have strategies for preparing for after school youth.
- Staff inconsistently enforce rules. For example, four staff respondents at one library location described handling a situation with teens in four different ways.
- 76% of staff respondents feel conflicted about using the library's current Consequences Chart for teens, or wish they didn't have to use it, or don't even use it when handling youth misbehavior.

After sharing data that shows that teens of color are banned disproportionately more often than white teens, staff suggested MPL should: increase staff training (38%), create opportunities to build positive relationships with teens (25%), create more consistent interpretations and staff responses to rule enforcement (17%), and create more programming for teens in the library (17%).

As for receiving information from the community, we have brainstormed some possible ways to get input from community members during the pandemic (keeping in mind that low-income families, who have most at stake in regards to library usage, will have less access to digital resources):

Hold open virtual meetings. Advertise the meeting by 1) using social media (Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor) 2) fliers in curbside pickup holds 3) reaching out to community partners such as Urban League, Freedom Inc., Urban Triage, Madison365 to communicate through their channels 4) reach out to our regulars directly (pending permission from library management) through phone or by mail 5) neighborhood association newsletters 6) posters outside library buildings and neighborhood 7) Distribute flyers at Metro Bus Transfer points 8) Snail/Direct mail

Send out a survey aimed at teens and families. This could be through email, publicized through the same channels.

Create a video aimed at the public explaining what we're hoping to achieve to accompany our marketing.

Any plan we come up with will need to be approved by the Community Engagement Team.

3. WHY

a. What are the root causes or factors creating any racial or social inequities associated with this issue? (Examples: Bias in process; Lack of access or barriers; Lack of inclusive engagement)

- A “one-size-fits-all” tool (the Consequences Chart) that is currently used for all patrons to match a behavior with a consequence.
- Staff lack of knowledge of teen brain development or experience with youth in the absence of targeted training
- Inconsistent policies or rules for youth conduct in the library across the system
- Racism, or at the very least, white fragility and implicit bias, are already firmly embedded in our current consequences chart. It imposes middle class values on all classes.
- Staff have been trained in a patchwork manner on racial equity and how that affects practice.
- Lack of knowledge of culturally responsive practices and communication among majority-white staff members.
- Lack of a teen librarian/teen focused librarian in some locations.
- Racial segregation in Madison, meaning that youth of color are concentrated at a few library locations
- Physical layouts of library spaces do not necessarily suit the needs of the particular community.

b. What are potential unintended consequences? What benefits or burdens may result? (Specifically consider social, economic, health and environmental impacts.)

The unintended consequences and burdens of using the Consequences Chart aimed at adults on teen behavior are:

- Longer bans are given to youth than are appropriate for their brain development.
- Ill-tailored behavior policies make youth feel unwelcome in library spaces.
- Uneven enforcement and a lack of communication about consequences leave youth unsure about which behaviors are acceptable.
- Bans create one fewer space for youth to go, when there is already a distinct lack of safe places for them after school.
- White staff members giving out punishments to tweens and teens of color reinforces institutional racism. This leads to a continuing lack of trust in the library as an institution.
- Lack of clarity for staff members on how they should respond to youth behaviors. Lack of clarity creates an undue burden of stress on staff members to improvise if they want to be fair to teen patrons. This drives staff to make their own rules that may not be shared across the system or even different shifts at the same location.

c. What identified community needs are being met or ignored in this **issue** or decision?

Met:

- There do need to be consequences for disruptive behavior, up to and including banning, because the community needs the library to be a safe and welcoming place for all patrons -- teens, adults, seniors, children, and families.
- There needs to be a written system for matching consequences/responses to disruptive behaviors so that staff members can be consistent. If staff can be consistent, then community members of all demographics can more easily trust library staff, and they can feel more comfortable going to different library locations.

Ignored:

- The current behavior chart does not take into consideration the brain development of youth.
- There is not, at this time, training for staff on responding to disruptive behaviors or on using the written system that does exist. If staff were better trained, they could serve the community more equitably.
- The community needs more spaces that are welcoming for teens, and tailoring our behavior responses to tweens and teens will help us to build relationships and serve that need appropriately.
- The community was not consulted in creating the current rules, meaning there is no community buy-in for them.
- There is no consistent public posting of rules, so community members in the library don't necessarily know what each library's behavior expectations are.

4. WHERE

a. Are there impacts on geographic areas? (Select all that apply.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x All Madison neighborhoods x Allied Drive x Balsam/Russet x Brentwood/Northport Corridor x Darbo/Worthington x Hammersley/Theresa x Leopold/Arbor Hills x Owl Creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Park Edge/Park Ridge x Southside x East Madison (general) x North Madison (general) x West Madison (general) x Downtown/Campus <input type="checkbox"/> Dane County (outside Madison) <input type="checkbox"/> Outside Dane County
<p>Comments:</p>	
<p>Although not every specific neighborhood has a library within walking distance, all Madison libraries are available for public use. Our behavior policies only directly affect the library locations within the City of Madison, not other libraries in the county.</p>	

5. HOW: RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION

a. Describe recommended strategies to address adverse impacts, prevent unintended negative consequences and advance racial equity (program, policy, partnership and/or budget/fiscal strategies):

These recommendations below are from the library staff members conducting this analysis. The recommendations are based on our analysis of the current system and in consultation with various individuals and groups within the library. **However, we recognize the need for community involvement in decision-making and implementation. With robust input from community members, this list could be amended and/or expanded.**

-- Create a new Youth Behavior Response Chart.

- Train staff on how to use the new Youth Behavior Response Chart in collaboration with frontline staff and managers.
- Create a series of trainings for staff around deescalation, brain development, Trauma Informed Care, building relationships and having positive interactions with youth and teens, restorative justice, and using the Youth Behavior Response Chart. Designate funding to pay community organizations already engaged in this work to facilitate trainings.
- Create a set of common rules and language that is shared among all library locations for youth and teens. This should include clearly worded public signage and adaptable scripts for staff to use.
- Designate library funding for gathering community input on these recommendations and about the library's youth behavior response system in general.
- Create a system of regular check-ins with stakeholders - staff, youth, patrons - to assess the changes made and to suggest future improvements.
- Reassess what it means for a library space to be teen-friendly, and evaluate existing teen spaces in each library location to ensure that the spaces are appropriate for teens.
- Prioritize teen programming in library spaces other than just the "teen area," such as meeting rooms, at locations where teens make up a large percentage of visiting patrons.
- Share programming resources for teens among library locations.
- Strengthen existing relationships and develop new connections to other groups that work well with youth, including Urban League, Urban Triage, Freedom Inc., Black Girl Magic/MMSD, and neighborhood centers in order to increase our options to respond to youth behaviors.
- Push to reinstate the budget for a Teen Librarian at Goodman South Madison. Also, investigate the possibility of hiring security monitors at locations that need them, including Goodman South Madison.
- Consider renaming and reframing Security Monitor roles at MPL
- In interviewing, hiring, training, and ongoing professional development for Security Monitors, focus on empathy-driven enforcement and relationship-building.
- Look into the possibility of hiring social workers for locations that youth frequent and where many incidents occur during after-school hours.
- As much as possible, concentrate the work hours for Teen (and, to a lesser extent, Children's) Librarians later in the day, to provide more staff coverage for after-school hours and other prime times for youth activities.
- Encourage mentoring relationships between Youth Services Librarians and other staff members.
- Strengthen communication between the Teen Team and the rest of staff (Specific examples: feature the Teen Team at MPL Town Hall, keep minutes and other documentation on an easy-to-find page on MPLnet).
- Reevaluate the incident report procedures.
- MPL needs to better demonstrate - beyond the formal written appeals process - a willingness to repair relationships with youth patrons who have been banned. Trauma Informed Care practices and restorative justice options should be explored.
- Assign a team of MPL staff to explore alternatives to calling the police, which includes Rapid Response Teams and community liaisons. Alternatively, assign staff to the city-wide discussion through the Common Council to address these issues.

b. Is the proposal or plan:

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Realistic? <input type="checkbox"/> Adequately funded? <input type="checkbox"/> Adequately resourced with personnel? <input type="checkbox"/> Adequately resourced with mechanisms (policy, systems) to ensure successful implementation and enforcement? <input type="checkbox"/> Adequately resourced with provisions to ensure ongoing data collection, public reporting, stakeholder participation and public accountability?
	<u>If you answered "no" to any of the above, what resources or actions are needed?</u>

We will need funding for staff-wide professional development on serving tweens and teens.

The potential loss of a Teen Librarian at Goodman South Madison would be a true disservice to staff and patrons at that location. We would need staffing to meet that need.

We need better practices and systems for dealing with youth, particularly a dedicated behavior response chart, which will require staff training (both initial training sessions and ongoing support) to competently implement it.

We do not have adequate access to data collection, because we are also understaffed with regard to our computer and information systems. We still need to work with the Community Engagement Team to establish systems for public reporting, stakeholder participation, and public accountability.

c. Who is accountable for this decision?

Since staff positions are involved, accountable parties include the City of Madison (including the Mayor and Common Council), the Library Board, and the Library Management Team. Accountability for other recommendations may fall to location supervisors, the Community Engagement Team, the Youth Services Supervisor, and the Teen Team.

d. How will impacts be documented and evaluated? What are the success indicators and progress benchmarks?

Impacts will be documented and evaluated by analyzing incident reports, and by gathering staff and community feedback one year after the hoped-for establishment of the Youth Behavior Response Chart.

Success will be measured by:

- Seeing whether incident reports decrease in number and/or severity/length-of-ban
- Tracking whether there are fewer youth patrons who have repeated incidents leading to banning
- Surveying staff to see if their satisfaction has increased with the system of responding to disruptive behaviors by youth in their locations
- Reconvening community members to see if their satisfaction has increased, and if their trust in the library and its employees has improved

e. How will those impacted by this issue be informed of progress and impacts over time?

This answer will depend on the answer to question 2C, because our initial gathering of community input will greatly inform the way we report back to the community.

DATA

Our Data Set

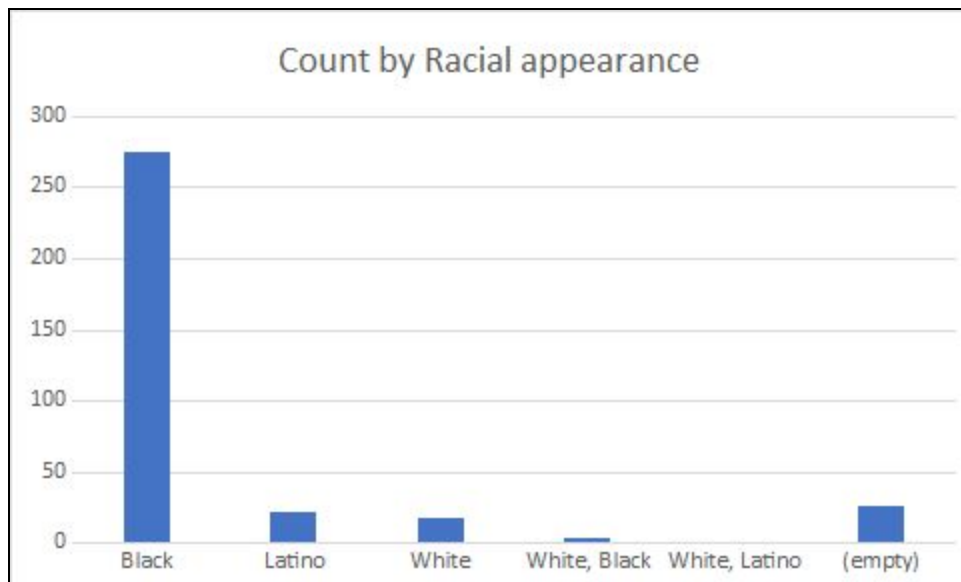
Our data is compiled from Madison Public Library's "incident reports." MPL began using this particular form in January of 2016. There are older incidents in the data, but some locations retroactively added their old incidents and some did not, so the pre-2016 entries are not as reliable. Since all MPL locations closed their doors to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 17, 2020, we decided that an even four years of data made the most sense. All data here therefore refers to incidents involving patrons under the age of 18 that were documented from March 17, 2016, to March 16, 2020.

This data is subject to human error. Incident reports are not always filled out uniformly, and relevant details are sometimes missing. There is also bias in their creation--it is up to individual staff members whether particular events rise to the level of being written up. However, in the aggregate, these reports are very valuable ways to tell how staff respond to undesirable behaviors in the library.

Each "incident" may involve more than one person. We have decided to use the word "instance" to describe each time a patron appears in an incident report. An incident that involved three people would therefore count as three instances.

Race

The children and teens who appear in library incident reports are overwhelmingly listed as "Black" in their racial appearance.

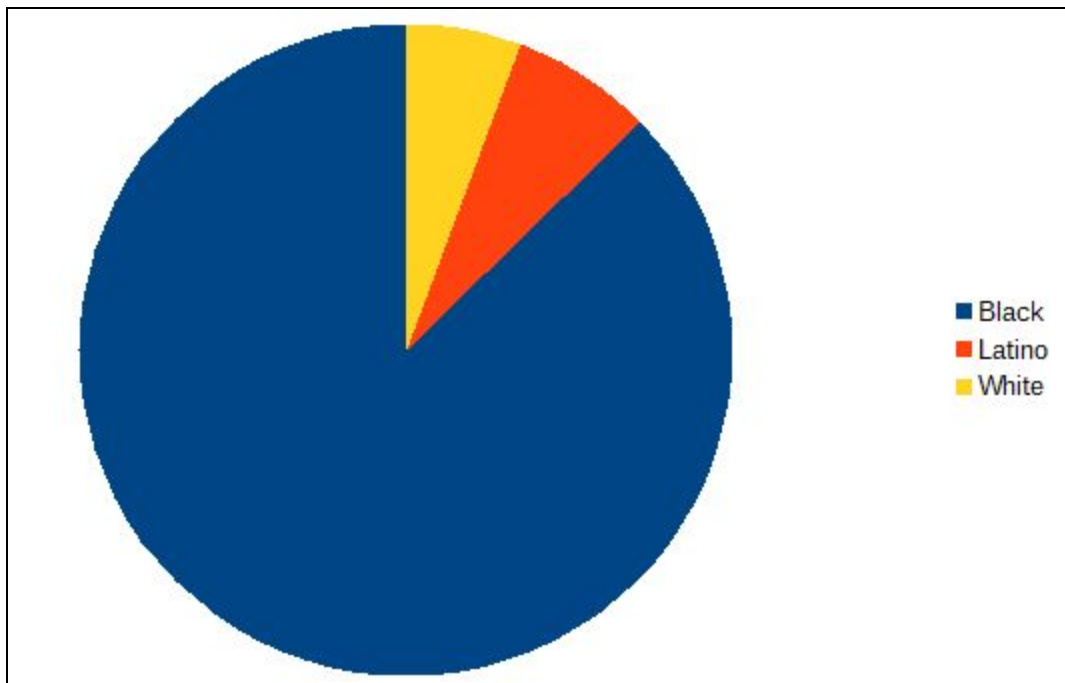


Racial appearance	Number of instances
Black	274
Latino	22
White	18

White, Black	4
White, Latino	1
(empty)	26

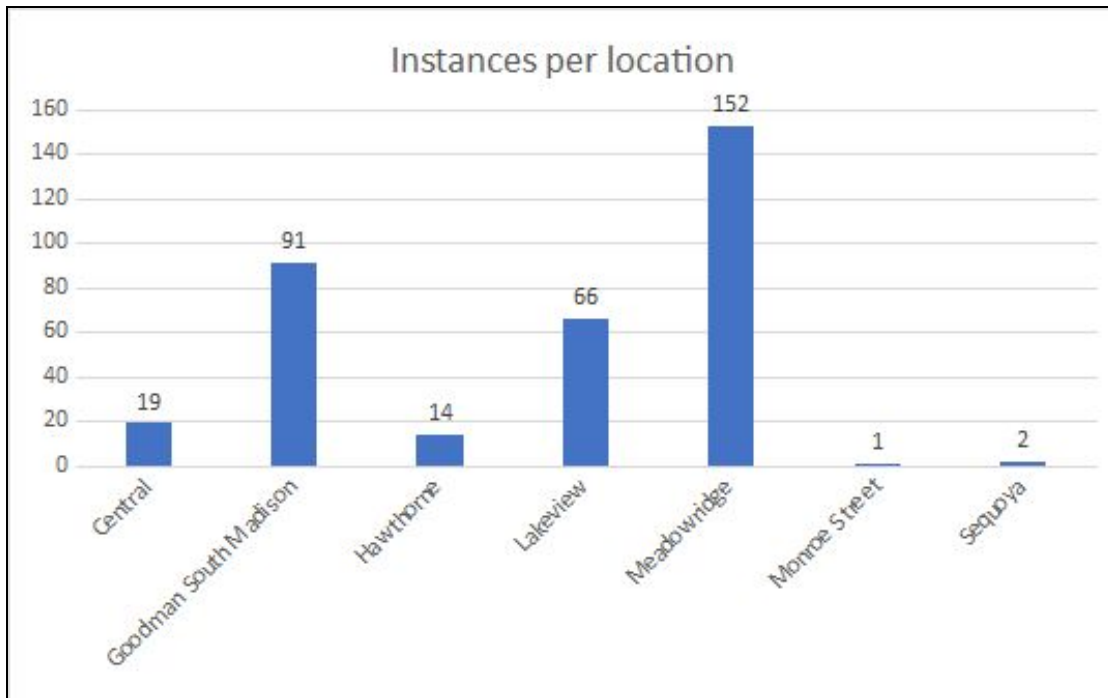
(There are also choices in the patron report form for “American Indian,” “Asian,” and “Middle Eastern,” but no minors with those descriptions appear in our data set.)

If we take only the instances where one racial appearance was assigned to the subject, 87% of the youth involved in incidents were Black, while 7% were Latinx and 6% were white.



Library location

Most behavior incidents involving teens and children occur at the Meadowridge and Goodman South Madison libraries.

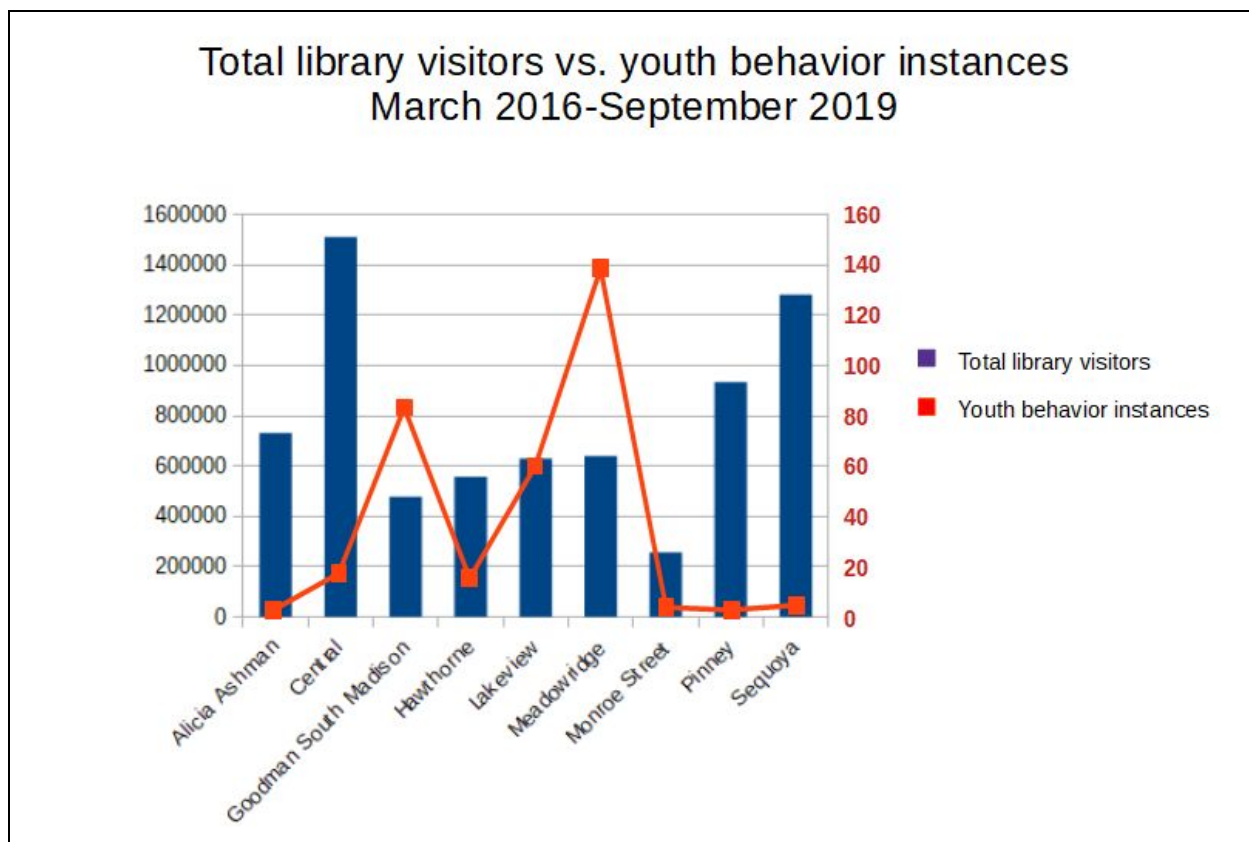


Almost half of all instances of teens and children being written up in incident reports occur at Meadowridge; another quarter happen at Goodman South Madison.

Location	Number of instances	Percentage of total
Meadowridge	152	44.06%
Goodman South Madison	91	26.38%
Lakeview	66	19.13%
Central	19	5.51%
Hawthorne	14	4.06%
Sequoia	2	0.58%
Monroe Street	1	0.29%

Please note that two Madison Public Library locations, Alicia Ashman and Pinney, do not appear on this list at all, having had zero documented incidents involving youth in the last four years.

The number of youth behavior instances does not correlate with the total number of people who visit different library locations.



*September 2019 is the most recent date for which data on total library visitors was available.

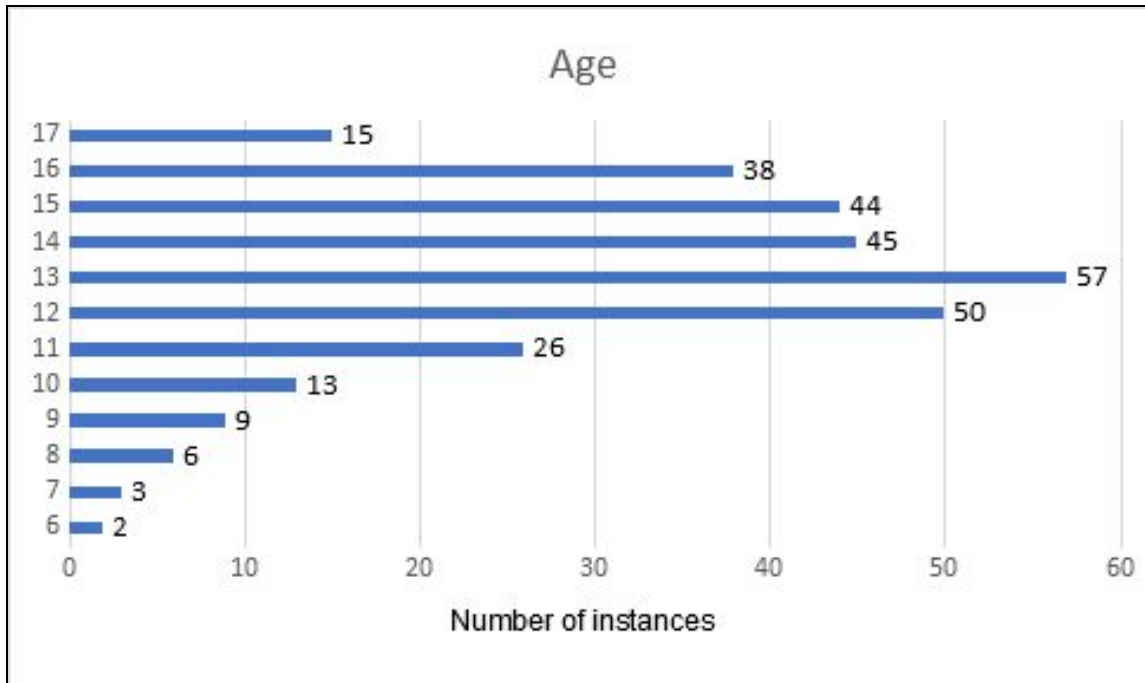
For example, Alicia Ashman, Lakeview, and Meadowridge all received roughly the same number of visits in the time period covered by this analysis, but they had widely divergent numbers of behavior instances.

There are many demographic differences among MPL's nine locations. This is an abbreviated chart of some of those demographics, with color codes to show highs and lows across the libraries' service areas.

	Ashman	Central	Goodman	Hawthorne	Lakeview	Meadowridge	Monroe	Pinney	Sequoya
Total population	37780	54422	27863	24250	24160	32622	22839	42264	36446
Population under 18	7199	2403	7020	3740	5185	7985	2114	8406	6597
Percentage under 18	19.06%	4.42%	25.19%	15.42%	21.5%	24.5%	9.3%	19.89%	18.10%
People living in poverty	2547	17062	6534	3508	4211	4395	9138	3880	5266
Percentage in poverty	6.78%	37.56%	23.49%	14.57%	17.76%	13.60%	41.61%	9.27%	14.76%
White population	29356	46003	16837	20575	18215	23327	19035	36420	29242
White percentage	77.70%	84.53%	60.43%	84.85%	75.39%	71.51%	83.34%	86.17%	80.23%
Black population	1776	1877	3939	1633	2966	3502	804	2629	922
Black percentage	4.70%	3.45%	14.14%	6.73%	12.28%	10.74%	3.52%	6.22%	2.53%
Hispanic population	1873	2741	6066	1540	1963	4593	1241	2644	1921
Hispanic percentage	4.96%	5.04%	21.77%	6.35%	8.13%	14.08%	5.4%	6.26%	5.27%
Households w/o internet	1500	3571	2494	1843	1865	2258	1163	2204	2052
Percentage w/o internet	8.55%	16.05%	20.43%	15.06%	17.35%	16.29%	13.3%	12.55%	12.79%

This information is taken from the MPL report "2019 Service Area Demographics."

Age



Our data indicates that the youth who get written up for their behavior in the library are often young teens or tweens. The most common age among reported instances is thirteen, followed closely by twelve.

However, this graph combines information in two different fields in incident reports: “approximate age” and “date of birth.” In cases where the person is a known library patron with a library card, library staff can tell the person’s exact age because of the date of birth listed on their account. (For the purposes of this data, we took the difference between the date of birth and the date of the incident to find the person’s exact age at the time of the incident.) In cases without this information, library staff members guess the subject’s age.

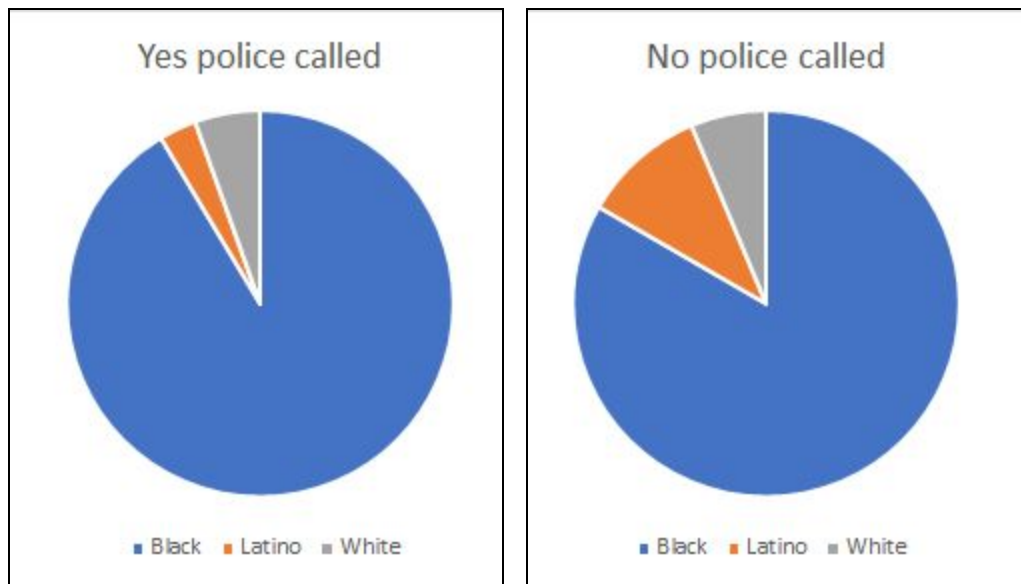
We found that the average recorded age when the staff member knows the person’s date of birth is over a year younger than the average age when the staff member estimates. When broken down by racial appearance, the average estimated age of white and Latino youth is actually slightly younger than the average exact age; the average estimated age for Black youth is almost a year and half older than the average exact age.

Racial appearance	Average of approximate age	Average of exact age	Difference
<i>All</i>	14.5	13.3	1.2
Black	14.4	13.1	1.4
Latino	14.2	14.8	(0.6)
White	15.1	15.5	(0.4)

Police involvement

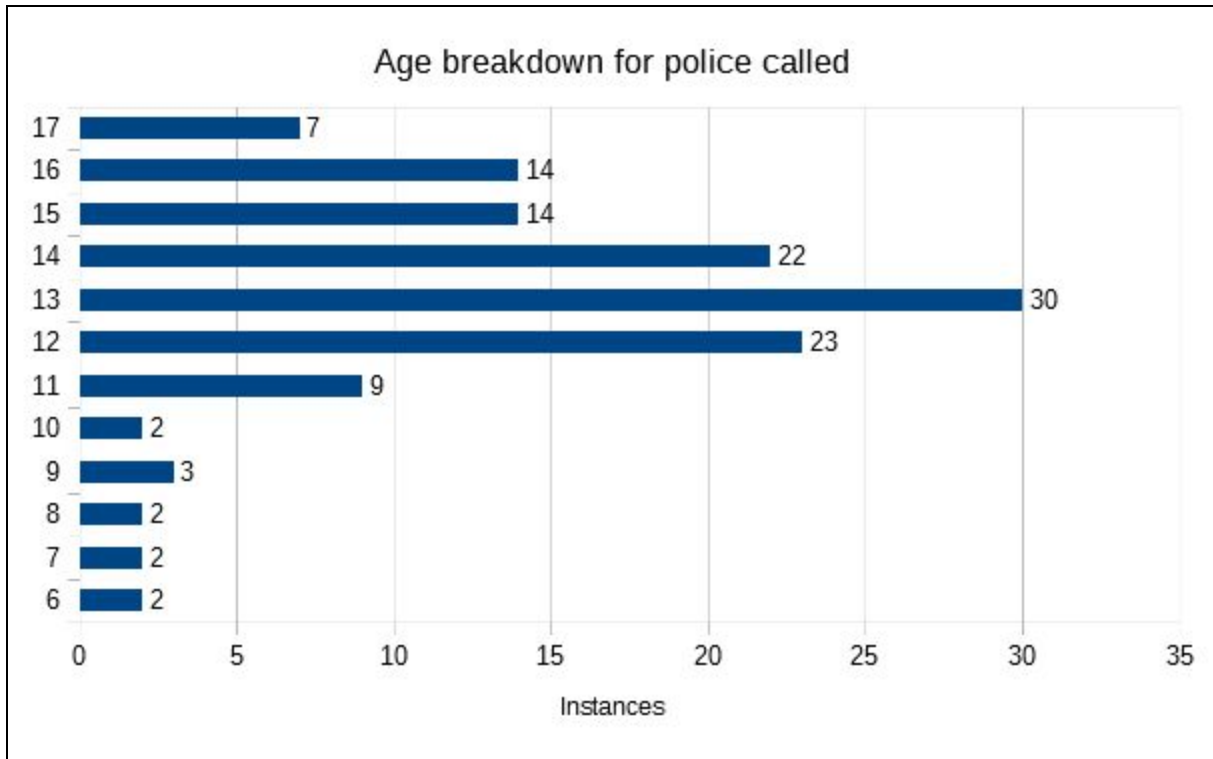
Police were more likely to be called to the library in instances that involved Black teens and children.

Racial appearance	Yes police called	No police called	Percentage police called
All	145	200	42%
Black	117	145	45%
Latino	4	18	18%
White	7	11	39%



The percentage of instances in which police have been called correlates loosely with how many instances a location has. (It may be worth noting that while Central Library has fewer incidents involving teens than other locations, their overall number of incidents is much higher.)

Location	All instances	Yes police called	No police called	% police called
Meadowridge	152	75	77	49%
Goodman South Madison	91	43	48	47%
Lakeview	66	15	51	23%
Central	19	6	13	32%
Hawthorne	14	4	10	29%

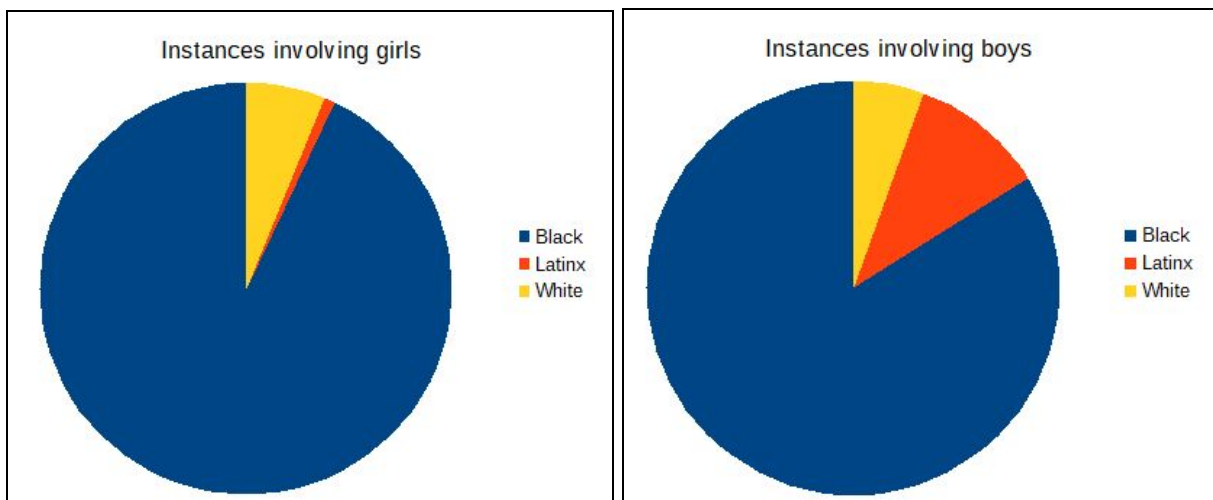


As with overall incidents, incidents where police are called are most likely to involve children of the ages of 13, 12, and 14.

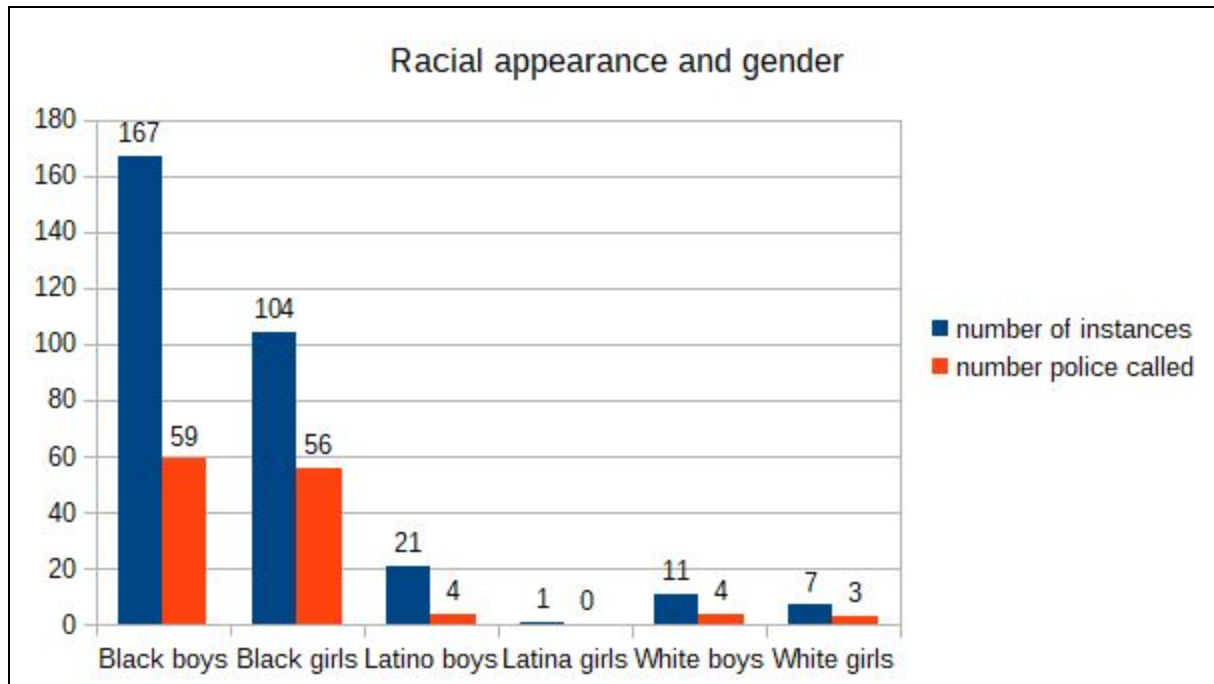
(The instances where police were called on six- and seven-year-olds were the same children, a year apart, acting as part of a larger group.)

Gender

Girls are written up in incident reports less than boys across all races, but race disparities remain stark across gender.



However, proportionally, police are more likely to be called on incidents involving girls.



Ban lengths

When behavior incidents result in bans, Black youth are banned an average of one week longer than white youth, and a week and a half longer than Latinx youth.

Racial appearance	Average ban length in days	Average ban length in weeks
Black	65.1	9.3
Latinx	54.2	7.7
White	58	8.3

Incident types

In library incident reports, there are different “types” of incidents. A staff member writing up an incident must choose at least one type, but multiple types can be chosen. When the incident report form was first put into use, there were six types of incident:

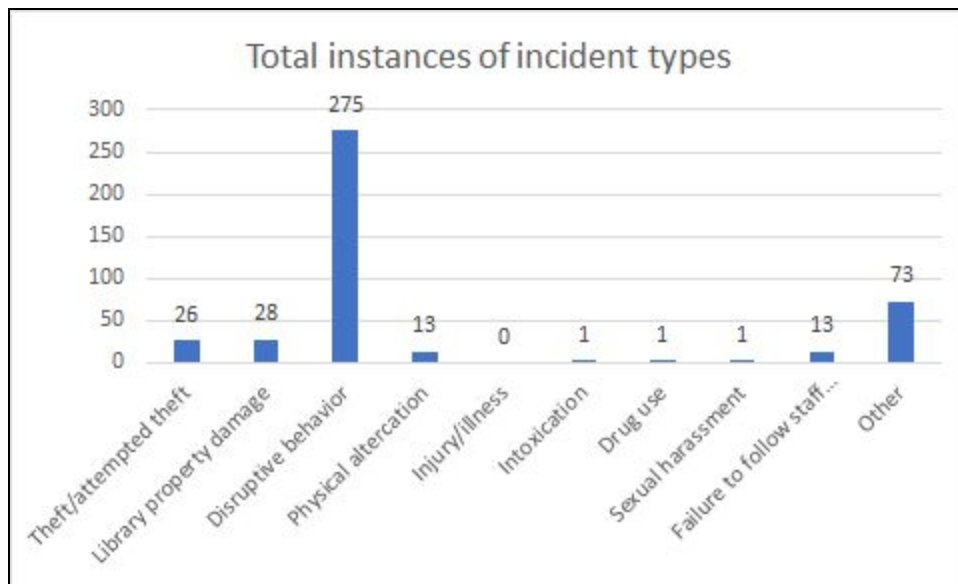
- theft
- property damage
- disruptive behavior
- injury/illness
- intoxication

- other

In March of 2019, more types were added to allow for more specificity. Since then, there have been ten types:

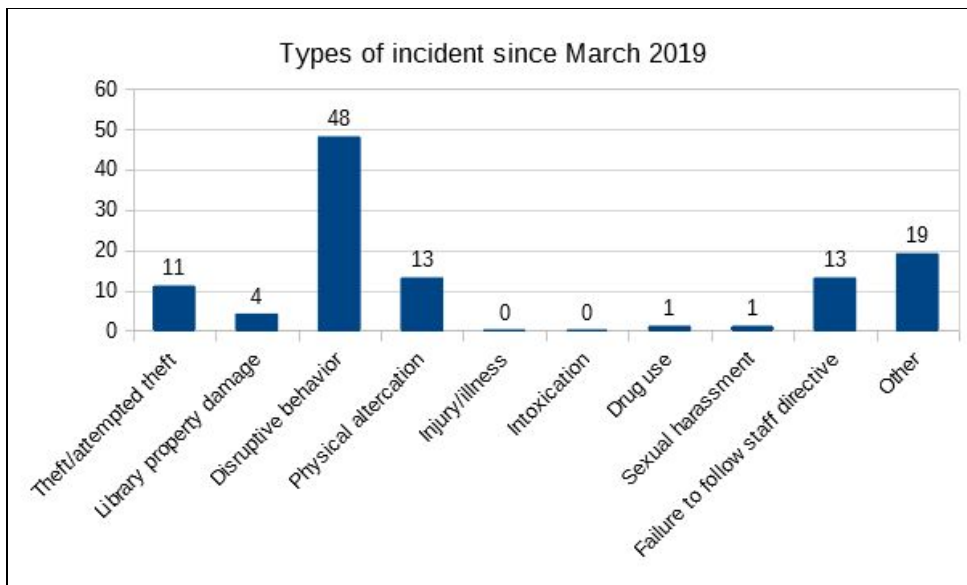
- Theft/attempted theft
- Library property damage
- Disruptive behavior
- Physical altercation
- Injury/illness
- Intoxication
- Drug use
- Sexual harassment
- Failure to follow staff directive
- Other

Before we began our analysis, we were most interested in incident reports classified as “other,” since it would seem to offer the opportunity to classify an incident that might not meet a high standard for banning. However, once we started analysing, we realized that “disruptive behavior” is by far the most common type chosen for instances involving teens and children, and those are the incidents that should be examined most closely when we or library management look for staff members who are banning youth when other interventions would be more appropriate.



(The total of all of these types put together is higher than the total number of incidents recorded, since an incident can be classified under multiple types.)

Even with the increase in categories as of March 2019, “Disruptive behavior” is still listed for the majority of incidents (48 out of 80).



The behaviors that are classified as “disruptive” are varied: often fighting/arguing (whether with staff or other youth), making messes on purpose, refusing to leave when asked, or being disrespectful to staff members.

Meanwhile, most incidents classified only as “other” and no other type do seem to defy further categorization, for example: “inappropriate iPad use,” “urinating in trash can,” and “leeches in toilet.”

Examples/Anecdotes

There are many specific examples within these incident reports that show 1) the need for a more specific, more equitable behavior response chart 2) the need for comprehensive staff training on the library’s behavior response system 3) the need for staff training on working effectively with teens and tweens and 4) the need for a resource other than the police for escalated situations.

1. (<https://www.mplnet.org/patron/186>) A seventeen-year-old Black boy stole a pair of headphones at Central Library and, under the Consequences Chart, was banned for one year. (He had previously served a one-year ban for assault.) His ban length was extended several times because he kept coming back to the library. Commentary from staff members indicates he may have been confused about a ban at one library (Central) meaning he was banned at all libraries (including Hawthorne, where he also went). He may or may not have also gotten contradictory information from different staff members about whether and when he was welcomed back in the library. All together, he was banned from the library for over fifteen months for theft of an item that probably cost less than \$15.

2. (<https://www.mplnet.org/incident/517762>) A Black boy estimated to be sixteen, along with three friends unknown to library staff, took a library donor plaque off of a pillar. They did not take the sign; they left it in the library behind some books. When the plaque was found three days later, staff decided to give the boy known to them (who was also the first to remove a screw, according to video footage) a six-month ban. This decision was harsher than what is prescribed in the Consequences Chart—the maximum ban lengths for “common sense violation” and “minor library property damage” are each one month. There are provisions for escalating ban lengths based on repeated behaviors, but the boy’s previous ban had been almost two years earlier. Also, the next step up in “graduated consequence” from a one-month ban would

have been a three-month ban. When the boy later re-entered the library on a bicycle, his six month ban was restarted, so his ban lasted almost seven months.

3. (<https://www.mplnet.org/incident/535490>) A thirteen-year-old Black girl was at the library when there was a program rewarding youth who had read for an hour with pizza and soda. The girl asked for pizza but had not read for the required amount of time, so the staff member “waved [their] hand in a gesture to suggest ‘no’,” instead of talking to the girl. After being dismissed, the girl spoke “disrespectfully” to the staff member. In the incident report, the staff member said, “*She threatened to ‘tell my Boss, so that I could get fired!’ This is the third time that she has been disrespectful, not wanting to obey the rules, and challenging my authority.*” In the banning letter addressed to the girl, she was told “*The reported behavior could have resulted in a 3 month ban. A two-week ban was implemented for the reported infraction*”, although the ban was actually issued for 18 days. Without further context, it seems likely that opportunities for de-escalation with the girl were missed.

4. (<https://www.mplnet.org/incident/509599>) An incident at Lakeview Library on March 11, 2019 illustrates many of the key challenges in how we accommodate youth and handle challenging behaviors in our libraries. On this day, several groups of kids, totaling more than 20, were in various spaces in Lakeview. One group was participating in a “Maker Monday” program, another was working on a project with Arree Macon, the Northside Planning Council Youth Navigator, and the last were allowed to use a space normally reserved for “quiet reading”. The group in the “quiet reading” room were loud, play-fighting and using curse words. Staff gave them several “warnings” to quiet down, etc., eventually telling two kids, and subsequently the whole group, that they all had to leave for the day. They refused to leave, even when staff said they would call the police to remove them from the library. Staff called 911, and five MPD officers responded. The arrival of the police drew the rest of the youth into the center of the library space and, although officers attempted to engage in a dialogue with the kids, the situation quickly escalated and became out of control. Five more officers arrived at the library, at least two kids were forcibly subdued by police, and ultimately five kids were issued citations “for infractions like disorderly conduct, trespass after notification, and resisting.”

This incident, captured in part on video by youth with phones, [garnered widespread media attention](#), even nationally, and brought community scrutiny to MPL’s practices around calls to the police.

5. Focusing on one teen patron’s incident reports as a whole, as a case study of our young patrons who get banned repeatedly, we can see the totality of how just often they were banned over their teen years. Beginning in March 2016, to match our data set, and ending in August 2020, to include the patron’s current ban end date, this patron has been banned 64% of their teen years (they were 13 in March 2016 and are now 18). A visual is below. If we break it down by year, the patron was banned: 29% of 2016, 47% of 2017, 78% of 2018, 88% of 2019, and 76% of 2020 (so far). If one of the goals of banning is to deter future negative behavior, that did not happen.

However, if we look at this information from a Trauma Informed Care perspective instead, the repeated bannings tell a different story. This is a patron that staff know well, and with whom some staff have built relationships. If we use Trauma Informed Care thinking to reframe questions such as, “What is wrong with you?” to “What have you gone through?” and “What were you thinking?” to “What were you feeling?” and see attention- or trouble-seeking behaviors instead as connection- or bond-seeking behaviors, we then see these repeated incidents as a teen who repeatedly went to their neighborhood library when they were going through something or feeling something, and was looking to connect with the adults they knew and trusted. Instead of seeing their behavior as a signal to tune in and say, “How can we help?”, we likely added to the trauma they were already dealing with by banning them, repeatedly, for 64% of their teen years.

2016											
Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2017											
Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2018											
Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019											
Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020											
Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

(Red highlight = patron banned)

SELECT STAFF RESPONSES FROM THE TEEN SURVEY “SERVING TEENS @ MPL”

There are challenges...

I am uncomfortable being an old white lady telling young black teens what to do. I don't really understand what I should do. What are appropriate expectations? I don't want to say you have to assimilate to my behavior standards, yet I've also been told that having different expectations is racist. There are so many issues here all at once - normal teen behavior and testing of limits, racism, and the expectations of other library patrons.

Good luck. Some teens don't want to be served. I've passed the point of no return with some of the teens I see.

Balancing the desire and goal to create a space where teens feel welcome, safe, and that they belong and can be who they are, while acknowledging that other patrons and staff find their behavior and presence disruptive (and the spaces aren't always set up in the best way to facilitate this).

The demanding needs of desk interactions and other off desk tasks create a barrier, this tends to make our only interaction with teen at a time when we are trying to correct behavior and do not foment building relationships

Lack of uniform approach, professional development or intentionality on a daily or weekly operational basis. Staff will respond with differing attitudes that send mixed messages: engage, avoid, contain, crack down.

Groups of older black teens seem intimidating at times. They all arrive together and don't utilize the materials, just use the space.

Teens are still children and we shouldn't hold them to the same behavioral standards that we do adults. There needs to be room for teens just being teens

It feels like the chart doesn't address root causes of these problems or help to build my relationship with teens

...and opportunities.

If we want to do this well, it needs to be made a priority - and there needs to be more shared information, more whole-staff discussions, more role-playing/scenarios at staff meetings, more teen-created programming and art within the library, and more connections to community partners who support teens in our greater community.

Staff needs support to process and move forward after negative interactions with teen patrons, so that they're not approaching new interactions with teens from a place of fear or anxiety. I don't know how to achieve that fresh start, but training could help.

Most of our Page staff are ill-equipped to work with teen patrons yet interact with them most frequently as they are front-line staff. We need additional skills and activities which will engage teens in a positive way and foster strong associative relationships with teens. We need a diverse staff to provide relatable staff for all teens. Pages need to be trained in the behavior consequences chart even though they need to transfer behavior escalations to permanent staff, especially now that there is a hiring freeze and there will be very thin staffing at times, particularly when teens would come to the library.