

# Dare to Explore IV: Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure Evaluation

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Dare to Explore IV:

# Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure Evaluation

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## Executive summary

This report describes the results of an evaluation of Dare to Explore IV: Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure. Dare to Explore IV was the fourth iteration of a summer reading programme for children aged 5 to 13 that involved a series of challenges that were designed to embed reading within fun. The iteration of Dare to Explore that is discussed in this report ran from 8 December 2014 until 18 January 2015.

In this report, we aim to answer a number of evaluation questions relating to how children and their families experienced Dare to Explore, including:

- Did Dare to Explore maintain or improve children's literacy?
- Did Dare to Explore encourage learning and discovery among children?
- Did children engage with the digital aspects of the programme?
- Did Dare to Explore encourage family engagement with each other and with the library?

We also seek to understand how Dare to Explore was experienced differently by children and families, such as:

- How was Dare to Explore experienced by those who did not complete the programme?
- How was the experience of Dare to Explore different for children who started the programme with low reading confidence compared to those with high confidence?
- Were the challenges, activities and party seen as age appropriate?

Finally, we provide analysis and suggestions relating to:

- How could Dare to Explore be improved in the future?
- What local library activities do adults and children want to see more of next year?

This evaluation is based on three sources of evidence: registration data for the 9673 children who registered, and two surveys, one of parents/caregivers ( $N = 624$ ) and one of children ( $N = 286$ ) who participated in Dare to Explore. A total of 5.5 per cent of all Auckland children aged five to 13 participated in Dare to Explore. For ages 5-10 – the group that had the highest participation rates – 7.2 per cent of all Auckland children participated in the programme.

Overall, Dare to Explore was very positively evaluated by both children and parents/caregivers. Most children (63.9%) rated it as 'awesome'; a smaller percentage rated it 'good' (28.2%); almost no children rated Dare to Explore 'ok' or 'boring'.

In line with findings from last year's evaluation, Dare to Explore IV was an important activity through which Auckland Libraries attracted new members. At least 1283 children (13% of all participants) who signed up were not previously library members.

A summary of key findings is provided below.

## **Dare to Explore improved children's literacy**

Because Dare to Explore aimed to get children reading, a key indicator of success was whether the programme impacted children's literacy. We found significant evidence that Dare to Explore had a positive impact on children's literacy.

The parents/caregivers' surveys indicated that:

- The majority (61%) felt that their children's reading ability either improved a little or a lot.
- Nearly a third (31%) of parents/caregivers reported an increase in their child's reading confidence.
- The majority (68%) agreed or strongly agreed that Dare to Explore had increased their child's enjoyment of reading. This finding is important given Dare to Explore's focus on embedding reading in fun.
- The majority of parents/caregivers (87%) reported that Dare to Explore encouraged their children to discover and learn new things.

An important finding of the evaluation was that children who started the programme with lower confidence experienced the greatest gains in confidence over the summer, showing that Dare to Explore is an important programme for children who are less confident in their reading.

Almost all children themselves reported that Dare to Explore had helped their reading (39% reporting 'a lot' and 44% reporting 'a little bit').

We also attempted to understand how Dare to Explore led to increases in reading ability. Statistical modelling showed that increased learning and discovery, increased child confidence, increased enjoyment of reading, increased adult confidence and the number of challenges completed were important predictors of increased reading ability.

## **Dare to Explore still met the needs of some children who did not complete the programme**

Children starting but 'dropping out' of a programme such as Dare to Explore can be the result of many different factors, some of which may be able to be addressed through changes to programme content or structure. We therefore sought to better understand the experience of those families who did not complete the programme (i.e. completed three or fewer challenges).

We found that, compared to those who completed four or more challenges, non-completers:

- Did not differ significantly in age
- Had significantly lower reading confidence both before and after Dare to Explore, but did not differ significantly in terms of the degree of change in reading confidence over the summer period
- Experienced lower increases in reading ability
- Experienced less of an increase in enjoyment of reading



- Experienced lower enjoyment of the challenges they did complete
- Experienced lower levels of learning and discovery.

Parents/caregivers of non-completers were also more likely to feel that the challenges were not appropriate for the age of their child.

As in 2013/14, many parents/caregivers were either too busy to fully take part or found that their child's needs were partly or fully met with a lower level of participation in Dare to Explore. In some cases, children continued to read over the holiday period but were not interested in completing programme challenges. Where Dare to Explore did not meet their child's needs, the most commonly reported reason was that the programme was too difficult. Respondents described both the content and the structure as too hard for younger children or those with lower reading confidence.

Collectively, the survey responses indicate that families dropped out of the programme for a number of reasons. For some families, situational factors – such as holiday plans – meant that they were not able to complete as many challenges as they would have liked. For others, disengagement was a result of the programme not meeting their needs. Where children 'dropped out' because of the programme itself, difficulty due to a lack of age appropriate content or a confusing programme structure appear to be the most common reasons.

## **Dare to Explore encouraged family engagement with each other, as well as engagement with the library**

Dare to Explore appeared to play an important role in facilitating positive family interactions, for those families where adults had the time and resources to be able to participate in the programme along with their children. A number of parents/caregivers reported that they liked how Dare to Explore gave them the opportunity to spend time with their children, or that it provided opportunities for their children to work together on tasks. Some children also mentioned enjoying family time together in their responses to open-ended questions. Over half of parents/caregivers (55%) felt that Dare to Explore made them feel more confident about helping their children learn new things, indicating that the impacts of Dare to Explore extended well beyond the children themselves.

An important aim of Dare to Explore was to strengthen the relationship between libraries and families. The survey responses of both adults and children indicated that Dare to Explore was very successful at strengthening the library-family bond. Most children (83%) responded that Dare to Explore made them like going to the library either a lot more or a little more. When asked about how Dare to Explore might have changed how frequently they visit the library, half of all parents/caregivers (52%) felt that because of the programme they and their children were likely to visit the library more often in the future than they have in the past. Positive interactions with librarians were mentioned frequently in responses to questions about what adults and children valued most about Dare to Explore. Several respondents referred to specific librarians by name,

suggesting that families were engaging frequently with their local libraries and are likely to continue doing so after the end of the programme.

## **Dare to Explore encouraged learning and discovery among children**

The majority of parents/caregivers (87%) reported that Dare to Explore encouraged their children to discover and learn new things, the same figure as for 2013/14. Many parents/caregivers mentioned aspects of learning and discovery in their responses to questions about what they liked best about Dare to Explore. Some associated this with the work children carried out in response to programme challenges; some described learning experiences at library events; and some commented on learning and discovery taking place through interaction with online programme content.

## **Families valued library activities and would like to see more next year**

Families enjoyed the activities held at libraries; this was particularly true for children, whose comments about enjoyable activities or parties were the most common responses to the question about what they liked best about Dare to Explore. Parents/caregivers asked for more events that would build a range of skills or abilities, such as reading and writing, information-seeking or social confidence. They valued activities with fun, social, entertaining or hands-on, participatory qualities. When requesting activities about a specific topic, popular topics included reading, science, history and bicultural or multicultural activities.

While many parents/caregivers were happy with the activities provided and asked for more of the same, some requested changes to the timing of activities; more or less frequent activities, or those that took place at a range of times, including weekends. Some commented on the age appropriateness of activities, calling for more activities that suited a particular age range, or those that were flexible enough to suit a range of ages.

## **Children who engaged with the digital aspects of the programme enjoyed them**

The Dare to Explore web pages were used by about a third (37%) of all participants, a decrease from 2013/14 (56%). Of the parents/caregivers who reported that they and their children used the web pages, 92 per cent found the content easy to find. Similarly, 96 per cent of children who used the digital aspects of Dare to Explore liked them a lot (52%) or a little bit (45%).

Parents/caregivers reported liking a range of things about Dare to Explore online. Many people mentioned that they liked how the website was easy to access and navigate. Favourite online components included the combined quiz and story, the space for children to share reviews and receive recommendations, and the online activity calendars. Some families appreciated having access to online content as it held additional appeal for their children, and provided more opportunity for reading albeit in a different format.

Reasons for non-use of the Dare to Explore web pages were varied. Many parents/caregivers did not know about the online aspects of the programme, whereas others forgot about the web pages or were too busy to use them. Other parents/caregivers were satisfied with print resources and face-to-face interactions or made a conscious decision to limit or prevent computer access during the holiday period. Some families faced technical barriers, such as lack of access to Internet or technology. Only a small number mentioned issues with the website itself.

## **Programming for young children could be improved**

Although the majority of parents/caregivers (85%) saw the challenges, activities and party as being appropriate for the age of their child, the need for easier content and a simplified structure for younger children was identified by a number of parents/caregivers in their responses.

Parents/caregivers of younger children – aged five and below – were more likely than parents/caregivers of older children to report that the programme was not age appropriate. Some parents described a process of translating or mediating content so that it became more suitable, particularly for younger children. In some cases, this was seen as an acceptable part of encouraging their child to fully participate. For other families, however, the time and/or confidence required to adapt the programme were problematic, and this became a barrier to taking part. A significant opportunity therefore exists to improve future programmes for younger children.

## **How could Dare to Explore be improved in the future?**

A number of suggestions for improving future summer reading programmes are discussed in Section 13.9:

- Strengthen the family focus of Dare to Explore by enabling greater participation by younger siblings and parents/caregivers, and by providing content for both independent and group activities
- Increase overall promotion of Dare to Explore, particularly through online channels
- Increase promotion aimed at families
- Provide a single set of programme material with greater differentiation between age/ability levels
- Consider offering more activities at times more suitable to working families
- Target Dare to Explore staff training at specific areas of value to customers, including programme structure, interacting with families and children, and planning and delivery of activities
- Simplify the processes for receiving stickers, stamps and certificates
- Ensure parties are inclusive of all participants.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This report describes the results of an evaluation of Dare to Explore: Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure, run between 8 December 2014 and 18 January 2015. Dare to Explore was a summer reading programme run by Auckland Libraries for children aged five to 13 that aimed to get children reading every day by encouraging them to complete a series of fun challenges.

This report aims to answer the following primary evaluation questions:

- Did Dare to Explore maintain or improve children's literacy?
- How was Dare to Explore experienced by those who did not complete the programme?
- Did Dare to Explore encourage family engagement with each other and with the library?
- How could Dare to Explore be improved in the future?

The report also addresses a number of secondary evaluation questions:

- Did Dare to Explore encourage learning and discovery among children?
- How was the experience of Dare to Explore different for children who started the programme with low reading confidence compared to those with high confidence?
- What local library activities do adults and children want to see more of next year?
- Did children engage with the digital aspects of the programme?
- Were the challenges, activities and party seen as age appropriate?

## 1.1 Background

Dare to Explore was born in 2011, when a working group identified and agreed upon the following outcomes for the programme:

- children have fun, enjoy the programme, find it easy and flexible
- children increase their love of books, reading and the library
- children maintain and improve their reading ability and are comfortable and confident library users
- children and their families want to continue their relationship with the library beyond the programme and recommend libraries to others.

The following key points of delivery were agreed upon to achieve these outcomes:

- the number of children who can participate will not be capped
- the programme structure needed to be the same across all 54 libraries, however with enough flexibility for local variation in how the programme was delivered.
- there needs to be strong staff buy-in and commitment to the success of this programme
- there need to be celebratory events
- it was to cater for all ages between 5 and 13
- it was to be as easy as possible for the libraries to manage and deliver
- it had the potential to be used in the future.



## 1.2 Programme content

Dare to Explore was run across 54 Auckland libraries, allowing children to 'check in' at any library in Auckland. This evaluation is of the fourth iteration of Dare to Explore.

On registering for this year's programme, each child received a folder containing:

- a passport that had six challenge sets in English and one challenge set in te reo Māori and was used to record their progress; and
- a calendar that told children about what was happening at their local library over the school holidays.

The passport contained an adventurer's pledge. Children signed this to say they would read every day of the school holidays, and to set a reading goal for the holidays. Parents or caregivers signed below, to pledge their support for the participating child.

There was also a reading trail in the passport. Children could colour in a footprint for every day they read, and keep a record of all the books they read using the reading log in the passport. Children could write a review of their favourite book in the passport.

Figure 1: Adventurer's pledge

THIS IS ME

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

LIBRARY CARD NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

MY FAVOURITE TREASURE (TAONGA) IS: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
Adventurer's name  
agree to read every day of the school holidays.  
My reading goal is \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / caregiver's name  
agree to support this adventurer in the  
Dare to Explore Auckland Libraries Summer Reading Adventure.

<sup>2</sup> AKL<<<0074881489<<<DTE2<NZ<<<<<<<<<<<<000

Figure 2: Reading trail



The theme for Dare to Explore IV was Out of This World. This theme was reflected in the challenge sets:

- Planet Earth
- Space and Beyond
- The Time Portal
- The Lab: Magic and Science
- The Game Zone
- Imaginary Worlds

There were eight challenges within each challenge set and children could also create up to two challenges of their own for each set. All of the challenge sets were in the passport and children could do as many as they liked.

Figure 3: The Time Portal challenge set

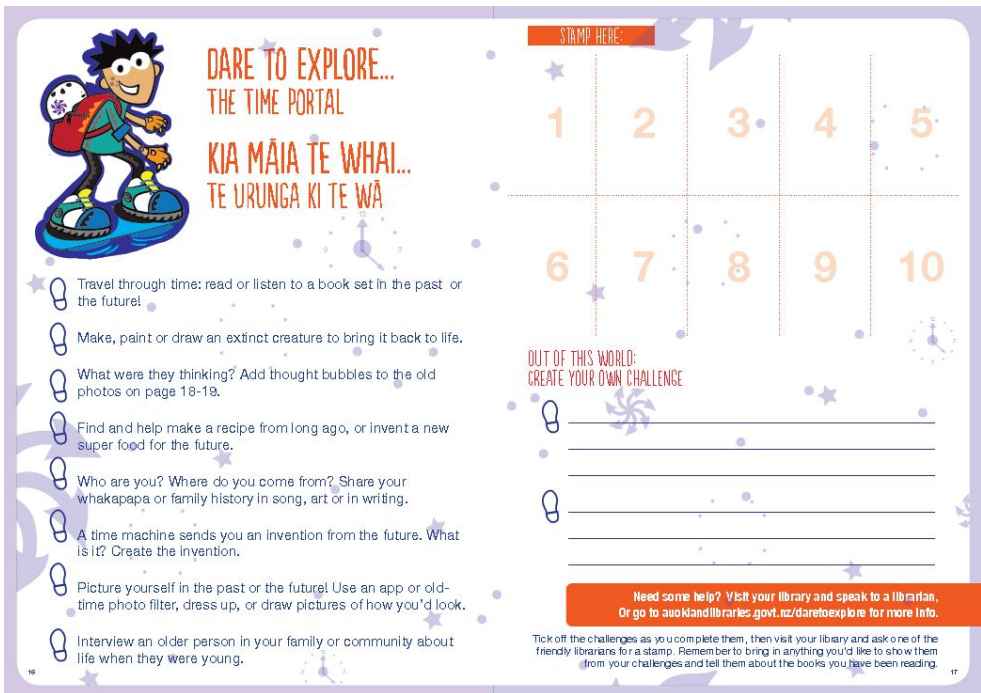
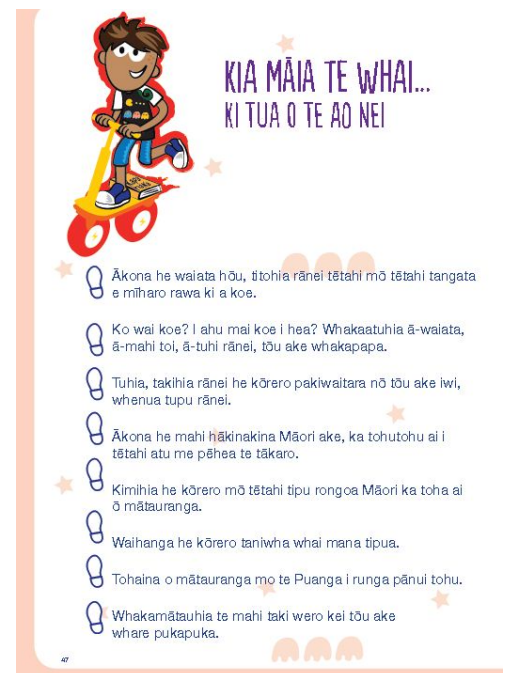


Figure 4: Kia Māia te Whai challenge set

In 2014/15, the passport also contained a reversed section in te reo Māori, using the te reo Māori programme name 'Kia Māia te Whai'. Passport content featured a single challenge set and a selection of supporting pages, including the adventurer's pledge, the reading trail and the book review template.



Children could get a stamp from a librarian in either the English or te reo Māori pages of the passport for each challenge they completed. When they had completed four challenges within a set they could get a sticker from a librarian featuring the character associated with that challenge set.

Once a child had completed their first four challenges (from any challenge set) they were also invited to a local end-of-programme party.

Figure 5: Excerpt from the passport



Events and activities were hosted at the libraries throughout the summer and included arts and crafts sessions, group games, scavenger hunts, scientific experiments and guest entertainers. End-of-programme parties were held for the children at the end of January either at individual libraries or with two or more libraries joining together and having a larger event. Each library or group of libraries planned and ran their own parties, so their format was varied. Some libraries hired entertainers, such as magicians or storytellers. Some planned and ran their own games, sports or crafts activities. Several libraries held their parties away from the library, at venues such as Auckland Museum, the Stardome or Ambury Park. While most of the parties included the handing out of certificates for completing challenges, a small number of libraries emphasized this 'prize giving' aspect, and gave out additional prizes for effort or achievement.

Dare to Explore had an associated website that included:

- calendars of library activities
- links to encourage online exploration of the programme challenges and themes
- a 'space mission' challenge with a story and space-themed quiz
- a facility for children to write and share reviews and receive further reading recommendations from librarians as well as comments from other children, and
- a Wall of Fame where children who had completed all 60 challenges could upload their photos.

The marketing and promotion programme for Dare to Explore IV involved:

- media releases and interviews in English and te reo Māori for suburban newspapers and radio featuring information about the Dare to Explore programme, the importance of children's literacy, the summer reading slump, etc.
- a radio interview in Samoan
- media releases using social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and the Auckland Libraries blogs
- information on the Auckland Libraries website
- emails targeting adult library members who had associated child memberships
- promotion in the Tots to Teens publication
- a story in Auckland Council publications
- posters on buses
- visits to schools, Kohanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori
- promotion of Kia Māia te Whai at the Kapa Haka Auckland regional final in Māngere
- visits to other community groups, e.g. YMCA, Plunket, churches, pre-schools, etc.
- promotion through local businesses, e.g. bank display screen for community events
- information on community notice boards.

### 1.3 The evaluation method

Parents/caregivers and children were asked to give their feedback on Dare to Explore through a questionnaire. Two questionnaires – one for children and one for parents/caregivers – were prepared by the authors of this report. Parents were asked on the registration forms whether they would be happy to be contacted as part of an evaluation of Dare to Explore. A total of 6031 out of 9673 registrants had parents who were happy for them or their children to be contacted. However, because parents/caregivers provided their email details in relation to multiple children, invitations were sent out to a total of 4009 unique email addresses. Emails contained invitations and links to complete both adult and child surveys. In addition to email invitations, hard-copy surveys were sent out to 228 parents/caregivers (who had 290 children between them) who indicated that they were happy to be contacted but did not provide an email address.

Two additional groups of participants were surveyed. In 2013/14, only one survey response was received from the library with the highest number of participants, Māngere Town Centre Library. In order to ensure a greater response from this library, questionnaires were distributed at the end-of-programme party, with the understanding that this approach makes it more likely that respondents are those who were more engaged with the programme. Additionally, library staff offered a bilingual version of the children’s questionnaire to the group of 21 children from Te Kura Kaupapa Māori a Rohe o Māngere who completed Kia Māia te Whai. This was to ensure that feedback was received from some of the children who were completing the programme in te reo Māori.

A total of 624 parents/caregivers and 286 children filled out questionnaires. Almost all were filled out online with only 64 customers completing hard-copy questionnaires. As with all surveys of this nature, participation was voluntary and respondents self-selected to complete the survey. For this reason, it is possible the samples are not fully representative of all Dare to Explore participants. With this in mind, some caution should be taken when generalising the findings of these surveys to all participants.

Responses were analysed using SPSS, a software package used for statistical analysis. A thematic analysis was undertaken on the short answer questions in the surveys ( $N=9$ ). Following the methods outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) there were six phases to analysis:

Phase	Description of the process
1) Familiarising yourself with your data	Reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2) Generating initial codes	From initial ideas, colour codes are established and data is assigned to codes
3) Searching for themes	Codes and initial ideas are clustered into descriptive themes
4) Reviewing themes	Thematic maps are produced to define how themes relate in the data set. Codes are reviewed to ensure a consistent pattern across the data.
5) Defining and naming themes	Themes can be collapsed into larger themes. Themes are named and defined. Final thematic map is produced. Writing up of themes begins.
6) Producing the report	Writing continues. A selection of examples from data is used to evidence discussion of results. Themes are tied back to survey question. Space for comparison between questions, literature, and data from other sources.

While phases were generally undertaken in a linear fashion there was flexibility for phases to be worked upon simultaneously and repeated as required. Analyses were conducted collaboratively between two researchers who were independent of the programme and one library staff member who was involved in the development of the programme. Open-ended survey responses were initially coded by one of the researchers and the library staff member independently and then the two individuals would meet to check for consistency across the themes identified. Any instances of disagreement were discussed until an agreement was reached on the coding scheme to use. This process of validation of results across individual coders ensured that any individual biases were minimised.

## 2.0 Central themes

The authors identified five recurring themes during the analysis of responses to open-ended survey questions. These themes help build links between responses to different questions, and provide focus areas that assist in identifying and understanding a variety of customer experiences of Dare to Explore. In Section 13, these themes form the basis of recommendations to improve the Auckland Libraries summer reading programme.

### 2.1 A family summer reading programme

While acknowledging that this is not always the case, participation in Dare to Explore often involves the wider family as well as children. When asked whether they worked on Dare to Explore alone or with support from family or librarians, over three-quarters of children (76%) said that they completed at least some of the programme with help from family. For many participants, Dare to Explore is a programme for families rather than a programme solely for children. Not only do families benefit from children's increased reading and learning over summer, but completing challenges or attending library activities as a family can help facilitate positive social interactions and the strengthening of relationships. For some family members, the best part of Dare to Explore was spending time together.

Evaluation of Dare to Explore shows a connection between parents' and caregivers' increased confidence in helping their children learn new things, and increased literacy for children (Allpress and Gilbertson, 2013 and 2014). This supports findings both local and international about the importance of family involvement in children's educational success (COMET Auckland, 2015) and in decreasing summer learning loss – the widely studied decrease in literacy of children over the summer holiday months when they are not in school (McNaughton, Jesson, Kolose and Krecher, 2012). A team of researchers studying the three-year impact of a library summer reading programme on students' reading achievement found that families had a positive effect on children's reading abilities, through being engaged and supporting their children's involvement in summer reading (Roman and Fiore 2010). Similarly, research into library-based summer reading clubs found that families were involved in the success of children's summer reading (Justice et al. 2013).

However, as some responses to the evaluation surveys made clear, family involvement in Dare to Explore was not always possible. Some families found that they were not able to give the level of support and engagement that they felt the programme required; some responses show the tension felt by adults around the need to 'translate' or mediate the programme, particularly for younger or less confident readers. Some families found that the commitment of time, energy, money or other resources needed to complete challenges or attend activities was difficult or impossible to provide. Additionally, some respondents expressed interest in a programme that provided more opportunities for children to complete content independently, in order to build children's sense of achievement. Recommendations for improving Dare to Explore need to take into account conflicting needs for a programme that supports family engagement and one that allows children with less capacity for adult support – or a preference for independent activity – to take part.

## 2.2 Age appropriateness

While the majority (85%) of parents and caregivers surveyed felt that Dare to Explore was appropriate for the age of their child, 15 per cent felt that at least one aspect of the programme failed to be appropriate for their child's age group. Additionally, requests for challenges and activities to be better tailored to specific age groups emerged in almost every open-ended question. Children were less likely to refer to their age with regards to dissatisfaction with Dare to Explore; however, a small number reported that challenges were too hard or too easy, which may be an indicator of not being age appropriate.

Parent/caregivers' suggestions were for the programme to be improved for both ends of the age range, with occasional requests to provide additional summer programming for pre-school children or teenagers. Key suggestions included a simplified structure or more accessible content for younger ages, or more challenging content or pathways to completion for older ages. Many respondents suggested having at least two versions of Dare to Explore, aimed at older and younger age groups respectively.

In the 2013/14 evaluation of Dare to Explore (Allpress and Gilbertson, 2014) a key recommendation was to provide improved programming for younger children. Regarding the 2014/15 programme, parents/caregivers of younger children were still more likely than parents/caregivers of older children to comment on the programme failing to be age appropriate.

The theme of age appropriateness has links to other central themes discussed here. Younger children are more likely to depend on adult support to help complete programme activities, and therefore may require more input from families to help them engage successfully with Dare to Explore. This can lead to time pressure for families, over a holiday period that may often include other commitments. When sufficient family support is not possible, younger children may be less likely to participate fully or to gain benefits from participation. See Section 8.3.1 for responses from parents/caregivers of children who did not complete the programme because they found it too difficult.

In terms of local delivery of the programme, another central theme, the ability of library staff to plan and deliver activities that suit a wide range of ages or to cater to different ages at the party are both important. See Section 6.6 for further analysis of the age appropriateness of challenges, activities and parties, and parts of Section 12 for the theme of age appropriateness as related to overall satisfaction with the programme.

## 2.3 Timing

Some families raised issues about either the timing of the programme – the six week duration and the start and end dates – or the timing of specific programme events such as library activities and parties. Requests for changes to timing centred on the libraries running activities more or less frequently or at a wider variety of times; some respondents asked for the programme to run over a different time period or for a longer period of time.

Being too busy was one of the more common reasons cited by adults for not engaging with Dare to Explore. For many parents/caregivers, the programme was just one part of a summer holiday spent outdoors, visiting friends or family, or out of the city altogether. Some were working during the holidays, and some experienced unexpected events such as illness or bereavement. The potential barriers to having enough time to take part suggest that even if the timing was modified it would not be able to improve the engagement of all participants.

As well as adults, some children found themselves short on time to complete the challenges they wanted to or to achieve their own personal goals. Some missed attending library activities due to other commitments. This lack of time then decreased their enjoyment of the programme or their motivation to continue with it. Several mentioned missing activities – particularly their final party – as the thing they liked least about Dare to Explore.

## **2.4 Programme delivery**

Programme delivery encompasses several localised aspects of Dare to Explore, including the way librarians interacted with families and the activities delivered by each library. While the programme structure was the same across all 54 libraries, there was room for local variation in how the programme was delivered. This allowed for each library to tailor some aspects of the programme to best suit their local community.

In their survey responses, families were able to compare their experiences with different activities and librarians at their local library or with a range of experiences across different libraries. Families' feedback was richer and more complex as a result of the combination of their own differing expectations and the variety of local approaches to programme delivery. Positive and negative experiences with librarians and library activities help shape families' perceptions of Dare to Explore and of libraries as a whole. As a result, they have an effect on the willingness of families to continue the relationship with libraries beyond the summer holidays.

The interactions families have with librarians are an important part of the success of the programme. Unsurprisingly, different families required different forms of interaction with libraries to have a positive experience of Dare to Explore – one size did not fit all. As an example, for many children, enthusiastic librarians who took a strong interest in their challenges and encouraged their reading created a positive reinforcement that helped them develop a positive attitude towards reading. For other children, however, interacting with librarians was a daunting prospect and something that discouraged their participation in Dare to Explore. For more on interactions with librarians, see Sections 9 and 12.

Successful events such as library activities and parties are also an important part of providing a positive programme experience, particularly for children. Activities build engagement with Dare to Explore and with libraries, and the party motivates some children to persevere with the programme. Parents and caregivers looking for fun, participatory learning experiences or social opportunities for their children over summer value the activities that meet those needs. Both



positive and negative feedback about activities appeared in the responses to several of the survey questions. For more detail, see Sections 6 and 12.

## **2.5 Measuring and recognising children's success**

Different people measure success differently. For a number of children, receiving an invitation to the party acknowledged their success at Dare to Explore. Other tokens of recognition such as stickers, stamps, certificates and verbal acknowledgement were highly valued by parents/caregivers and children alike. Filling in footsteps to track days where reading occurred, and filling in a log of books read, also served to motivate some children.

Extrinsic motivations such as party invitations, stickers and stamps appeared to be a main motivator for many participants to continue with and complete Dare to Explore. A number of children felt that receiving encouragement and being rewarded with stamps and stickers or the party was one of the best parts of Dare to Explore. Literature suggests that summer reading programmes in the USA that offered extrinsic motivators were not seen as being as important to participants as those using intrinsic motivators (i.e., personal desire to improve reading, personal enjoyment from reading) (Justice et al. 2013) – a result that is not entirely reflected in the family feedback and outcomes from Dare to Explore.

Several parents/caregivers mentioned that they liked seeing their children succeed in the programme in different ways. Some respondents discussed their children receiving rewards, some enjoyed watching their children reading or learning something new, while others spoke positively of observing their children interacting with librarians. This personal enjoyment of children's successes has the potential to encourage parents to support their children reading and even learning more broadly.

## **2.6 Summary**

These five themes were repeated throughout the survey responses of parents/caregivers and children and therefore reoccur throughout this report. The repetition of these themes demonstrates their importance to the families taking part in Dare to Explore, and consequently they form the basis for the authors' recommendations for improving the summer reading programme in future.

## 3.0 Who took part in Dare to Explore?

In this section we investigate who took part in Dare to Explore in 2014/2015. Three sources of data provide an insight into who took part: information from registration forms, information that parents/caregivers offered about their children when filling out their feedback questionnaire, and information that children offered about themselves when filling out their own questionnaire.

### 3.1 Registration data

Every child who participated in Dare to Explore was required to fill out a registration form or have one filled out for them. While only a small amount of information was collected on registration forms, they provide the most complete snapshot of who participated in the programme. The registration forms showed that:

- 9673 children registered, a 16.1 per cent increase from last year
- Of the registrants, 56 per cent were girls and 45 per cent were boys, approximately the same ratio as the last two years
- The age groups with the most participants were 6, 7 and 8 year olds, with 1519, 1551 and 1498 participating children, respectively
- At 51 per cent, the largest percentage of registrants identified themselves as having at least some<sup>1</sup> New Zealand European / Pākehā ethnicity; nine per cent of registrants had at least some Indian ethnicity; 10 per cent Chinese; 10 per cent Māori; nine per cent Samoan; four per cent Tongan; and three per cent Cook Island Māori
- Six libraries had over 300 registrations; Māngere Town Centre Library (665 registrations), Botany Library (339), Highland Park Library (329), Mt Albert Library (316), Papakura Sir Edmund Hillary Library (314), and East Coast Bays Library (312)
- 1283 children who signed up (13% of all participants) were not previously library members before signing up. Although these new library members were on average younger (mean age 7.4 years for new members vs. 7.9 for existing members), a significant portion of new members were older children, indicating that Dare to Explore continues to play an important role in encouraging previously disengaged children to develop a relationship with the library.

#### 3.1.1 Were participants representative of children across Auckland?

The following two sections compare the registration data with Auckland-wide census figures, in terms of age and ethnicity.

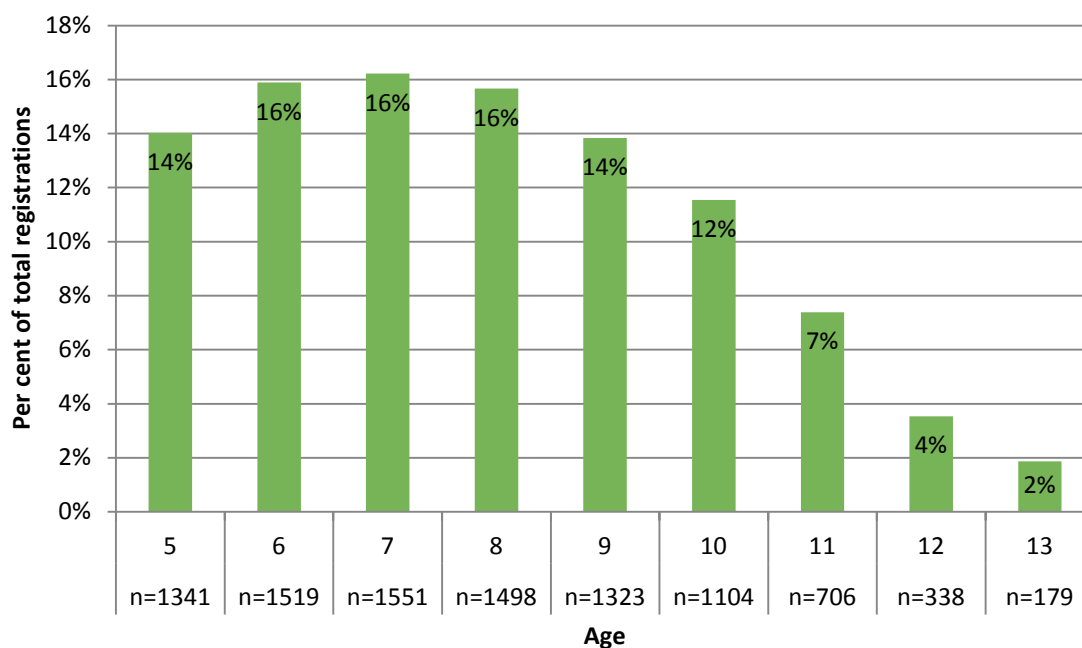
##### 3.1.1.1 Age

Figure 6 shows the distribution of registered children's ages, as recorded on the registration forms. There was a good spread of children who registered aged five through 10; the number of children participating rapidly decreased at older age groups. Note, there were an additional 114 children who selected 'Other' for their age, of whom the majority are likely to have been aged under five.

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<sup>1</sup> People were free to select more than one ethnicity.

Figure 6: Ages of registered children – registration data



The 9559<sup>2</sup> children who provided an age when signing up to Dare to Explore represented approximately 5.5 per cent of all Auckland children aged five to 13. However, because Dare to Explore was more popular with children between five and 10 years of age, the total ‘share’ of all Auckland children was greater for these age groups. Consequently, 7.2 per cent of all Auckland children aged five to 10 participated in Dare to Explore, with progressively lower proportions of Auckland’s children participating at older ages (Table 1). The rate of participation was highest amongst seven year olds, with over eight per cent of all Auckland seven year olds participating in Dare to Explore in 2014/2015.

Table 1: Registration data compared with Auckland population.

Age	# Auckland population (2013 census)	# Dare registrations	% of Auckland population
5	20,823	1341	6.4%
6	19,926	1519	7.6%
7	19,113	1551	8.1%
8	19,050	1498	7.9%
9	18,684	1323	7.1%
10	18,756	1104	5.9%
11	18,687	706	3.8%
12	19,839	338	1.7%
13	19,767	179	0.9%

<sup>2</sup> The discrepancy between this number and the total registration number of 9673 is due to the exclusion of 114 children who selected ‘Other’ for their age.

### **3.1.1.2 Ethnicity**

In terms of children's ethnicity, a comparison with the ethnicity breakdown of five to 14 year olds from the 2013 census shows that the 51 per cent of Dare to Explore participants who identified as New Zealand European/Pākehā was equivalent to the Auckland-wide percentage of 52 per cent.

The percentages of both Indian (9%) and Chinese (10%) children in Dare to Explore were slightly higher than for the Auckland region as a whole (8% Indian, 7% Chinese), with a greater difference observed for Chinese.

As with last year, Māori and Samoan children were underrepresented in Dare to Explore. Although approximately 17 per cent of children aged five to 14 across Auckland identify as Māori, only 10 per cent of Dare to Explore participants were Māori. Similarly, while approximately 12 per cent of all Auckland children identify as Samoan, nine per cent of Dare to Explore participants were Samoan. Cook Island Māori participation was also slightly lower than the Auckland-wide percentage (3% of Dare to Explore children vs 5% across Auckland). The percentage of Tongan children was broadly representative of the overall Auckland population (4% of both Dare to Explore registrations and the Auckland population).

The pattern of participation was overall very similar to last year. The largest change was seen for Samoan children, where the percentage of participating children increased from six per cent to nine per cent, reflecting an increase in the total number participating from 526 in 2013/2014 to 809 this year.

## **3.2 Parents/caregivers' survey data**

Parents and caregivers were asked to indicate the age, gender, and ethnicity of their child,<sup>3</sup> as well as the language that their family speaks at home, how they found out about Dare to Explore, and why they wanted their children to participate in Dare to Explore.

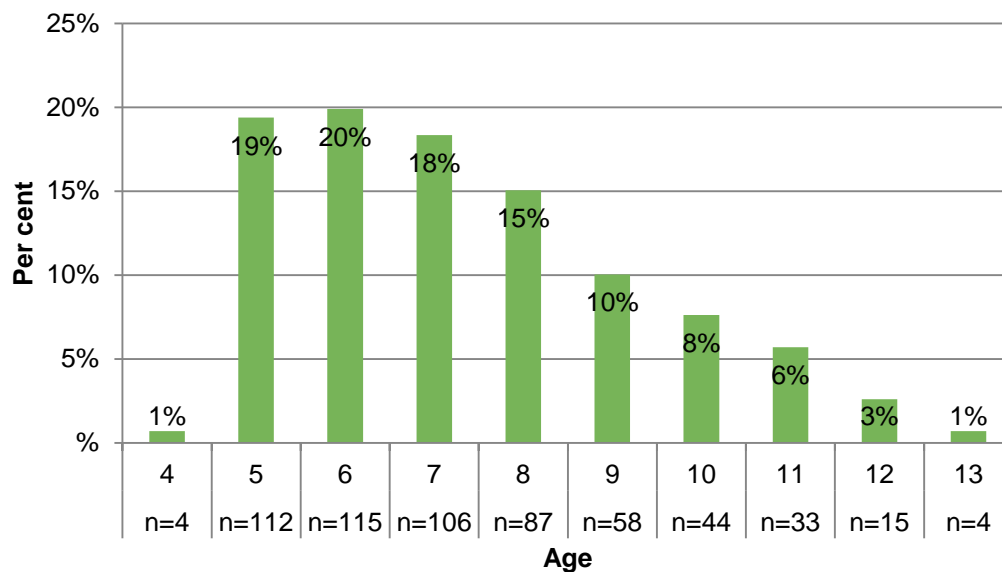
### **3.2.1 Child age**

The distribution of ages reported in the parents/caregivers survey were broadly similar to the ages of registered children, indicating that the adults' responses are therefore likely to be broadly representative (by age) of registered children.

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<sup>3</sup> If parents/caregivers had more than one child participating in Dare to Explore they were asked to provide the details of either their child that participated most in Dare to Explore or their child that participated least. Parents were randomly assigned to one of these two options.

Figure 7: Age of participating children – parent/caregivers’ survey responses.



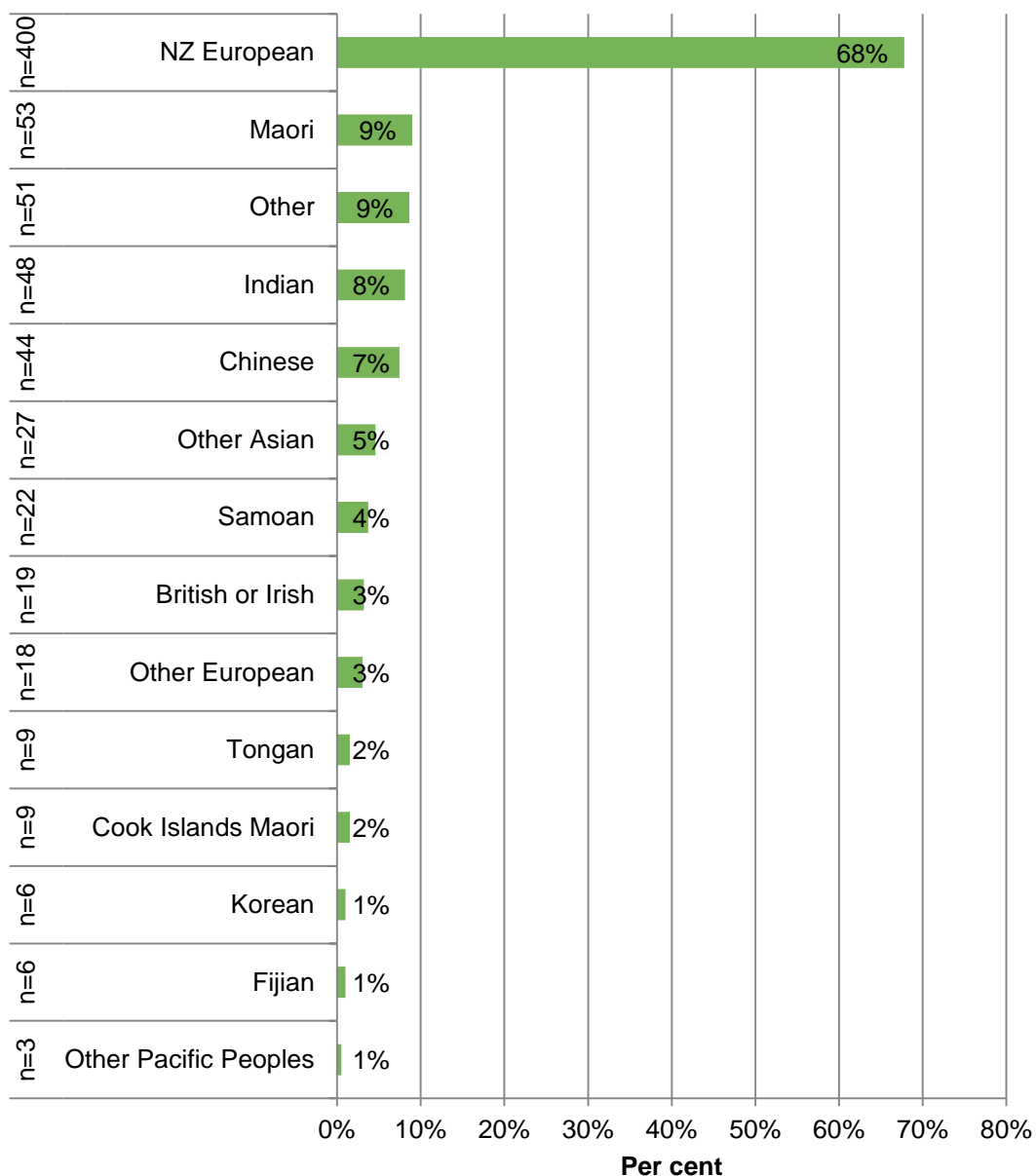
### 3.2.2 Child gender

54 per cent of survey respondents’ children were female. This number was roughly equivalent to the total percentage of girls registered in Dare to Explore (56%), indicating that the responses of adults are likely to be representative in terms of gender.

### 3.2.3 Child ethnicity

Parents/caregivers were asked to indicate the ethnicity of the child who participated in Dare to Explore (or one of their children if more than one participated). As with the registration data, parents/caregivers were able to select and/or write more than one ethnicity. The breakdown of ethnicities can be seen in Figure 8. Numbers were generally broadly similar in comparison to the registration data; however a greater percentage of parents/caregivers indicated that their children were New Zealand European / Pākehā (68% in the survey vs. 51% of registrations). One possible reason for the difference in the percentage of NZ European / Pākehā children is that there was a higher degree of selecting NZ European / Pākehā in addition to other ethnicities by the adults in the survey than in the registration data.

Figure 8: Ethnicity of participating children – parent/caregivers' survey responses.



### 3.2.4 Main language at home

As with last year, the majority (81%) of respondents spoke English as the primary language at home. The remaining 15 per cent was spread fairly evenly across a number of other languages, including northern Chinese, Hindi, Gujarati, Korean, Tamil and Yue. No parents/caregivers reported speaking Māori as the main language at home.

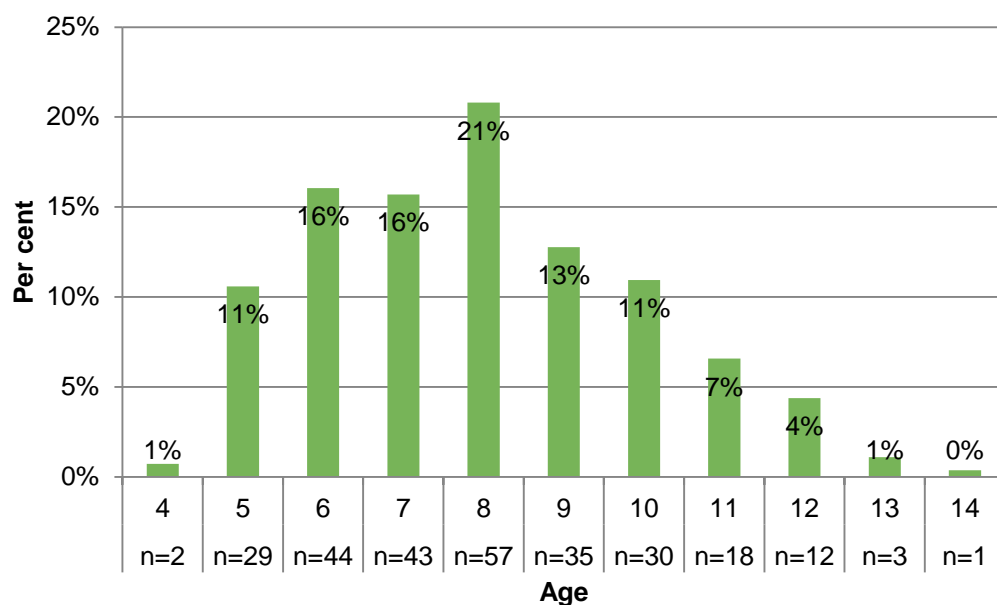
### 3.3 Children's survey data

Children were asked their age and gender.

#### 3.3.1 Age

Surveys were completed by children of a range of ages, with a reasonable percentage of children between five and 10 years of age completing the survey. Consistent with the lower number of registrations at these ages, children aged 4, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were much less likely to complete the survey.

Figure 9: Age of participating children - children's survey



#### 3.3.2 Gender

More girls than boys filled out the children's survey, with girls representing 58 per cent of respondents. This percentage was similar to registration figures for girls (56%).

## 4.0 Why did families take part in Dare to Explore?

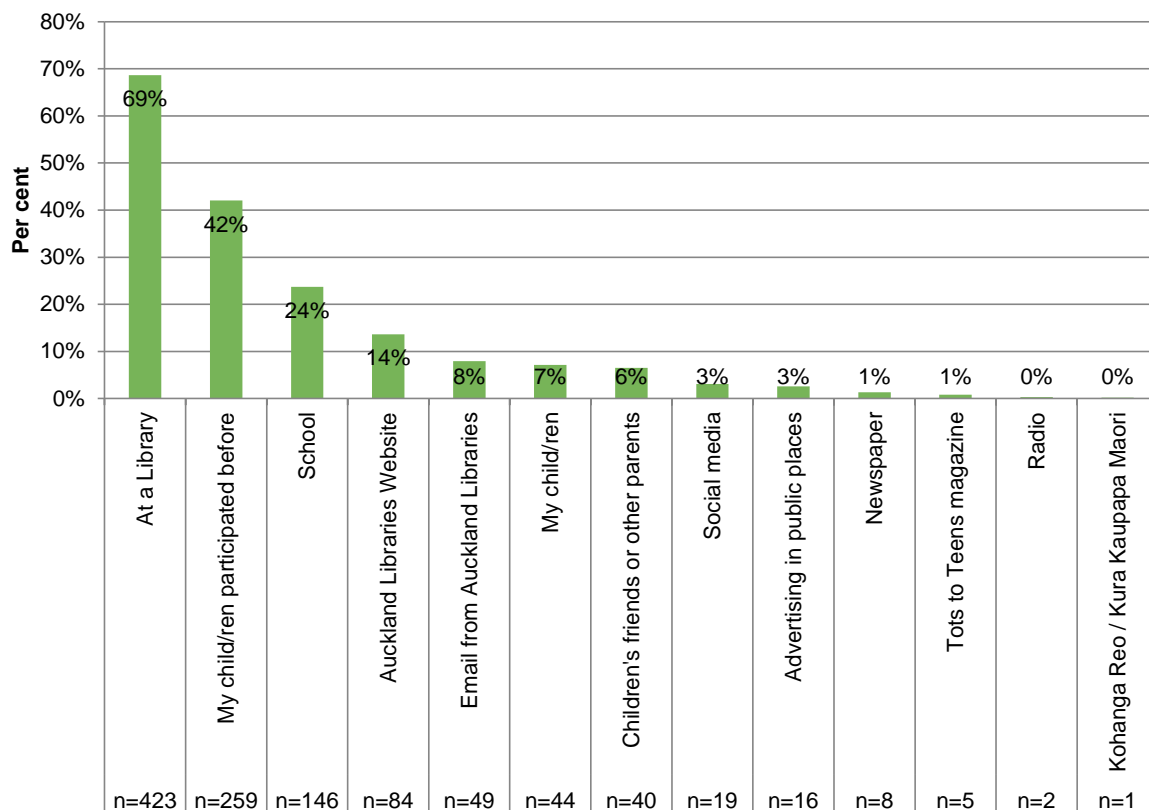
Both parents/caregivers and children were asked how they heard about Dare to Explore, and why they wanted to participate.

### 4.1 How did parents/caregivers hear about Dare to Explore?

The majority of parents/caregivers heard about the programme at a library (69%). A sizable proportion of people also reported hearing about Dare to Explore because their child/ren had participated in previous years (42%), through their child's school (24%), or through the Auckland Libraries website (14%).

There are some key differences with how parents/caregivers heard about Dare to Explore last year. Notably, there was a decrease in the percentage hearing about the programme directly from a library (down from 78% last year), and an increase in the percentage who were made aware of the programme because of participation in a previous year (up from 18%) and through their child's school (up from 20%). The Auckland Libraries website, email and social media also accounted for a larger percentage than previous years. This combined with low percentages for newspaper, a magazine, radio, and advertising in public places, suggest an increasing demand for digital communication.

Figure 10: Where/how did you hear or see information about Dare to Explore?





Parents/caregivers wrote about the need for better promotion of Dare to Explore due to their children signing up late or not feeling as though they had enough notice to become properly involved in the programme.

*More warning. I was only able to sign up in the last week of the programme*

*Notify? Advertise sooner – ensure more time to participate. We only realised about 2-3 weeks before the end*

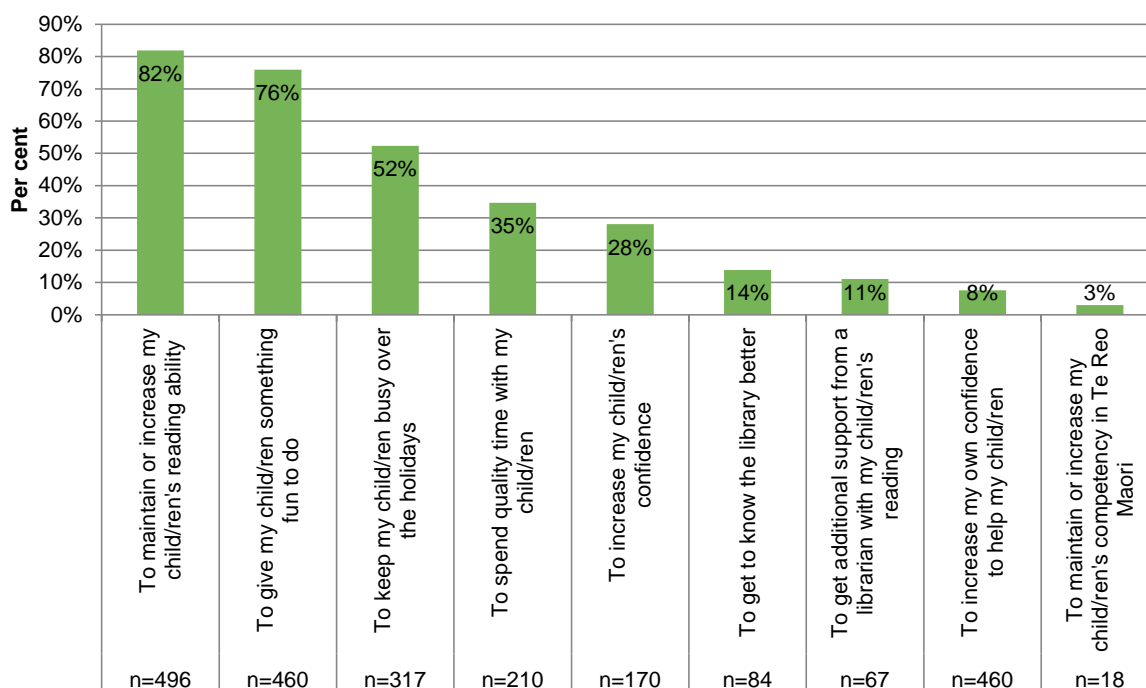
*We got to know about it a little late. Maybe include the Dare to explore in newsletters for parents who borrow books for kids so that interested parents get to know about the programme well ahead.*

*send an email reminder to people who have participated before a month or so before it starts again (we forgot).*

## 4.2 Why did parents/caregivers want their children to participate in Dare to Explore?

Parents/caregivers reported a range of reasons for wanting their children to participate in Dare to Explore. The top three reasons were to increase their child/ren’s reading ability (82%), to give their child/ren something fun to do (76%), and to keep their children busy (52%). Parents/caregivers also reported encouraging their children to participate in order to spend quality time with them (35%), as well as increasing their child/ren’s confidence (28%). The motivations provided by parents were very similar to those reported last year.

Figure 11: Why did you want your child/ren to participate in Dare to Explore?



Motivations for signing children up to Dare to Explore were reflected in parents/caregivers' responses to questions about what they liked and did not like about the programme. Many respondents took the opportunity to comment that they liked how Dare to Explore encouraged reading through the challenges offered, and provided motivation for children to read:

*A great way to get kids reading*

*There are many different activities and my son loves them and that can encourage him to read more*

*Dare to Explore encourages the children to read during the holidays*

As with last year, however, the balance between pure reading and fun reading-related activities did not meet the expectations of a small number of parents/caregivers. These respondents wrote about wanting more reading or a greater focus on reading books than completing challenges:

*I felt some of the questions/tasks were too much like homework and not enough of sitting down and reading a book.*

*My daughter is a very keen reader, I do not profess to be an expert in this field but she was able to achieve most of the requirements of Dare to Explore without reading a book. Perhaps questions could include requirements for children to explain which book they read to find answers.*

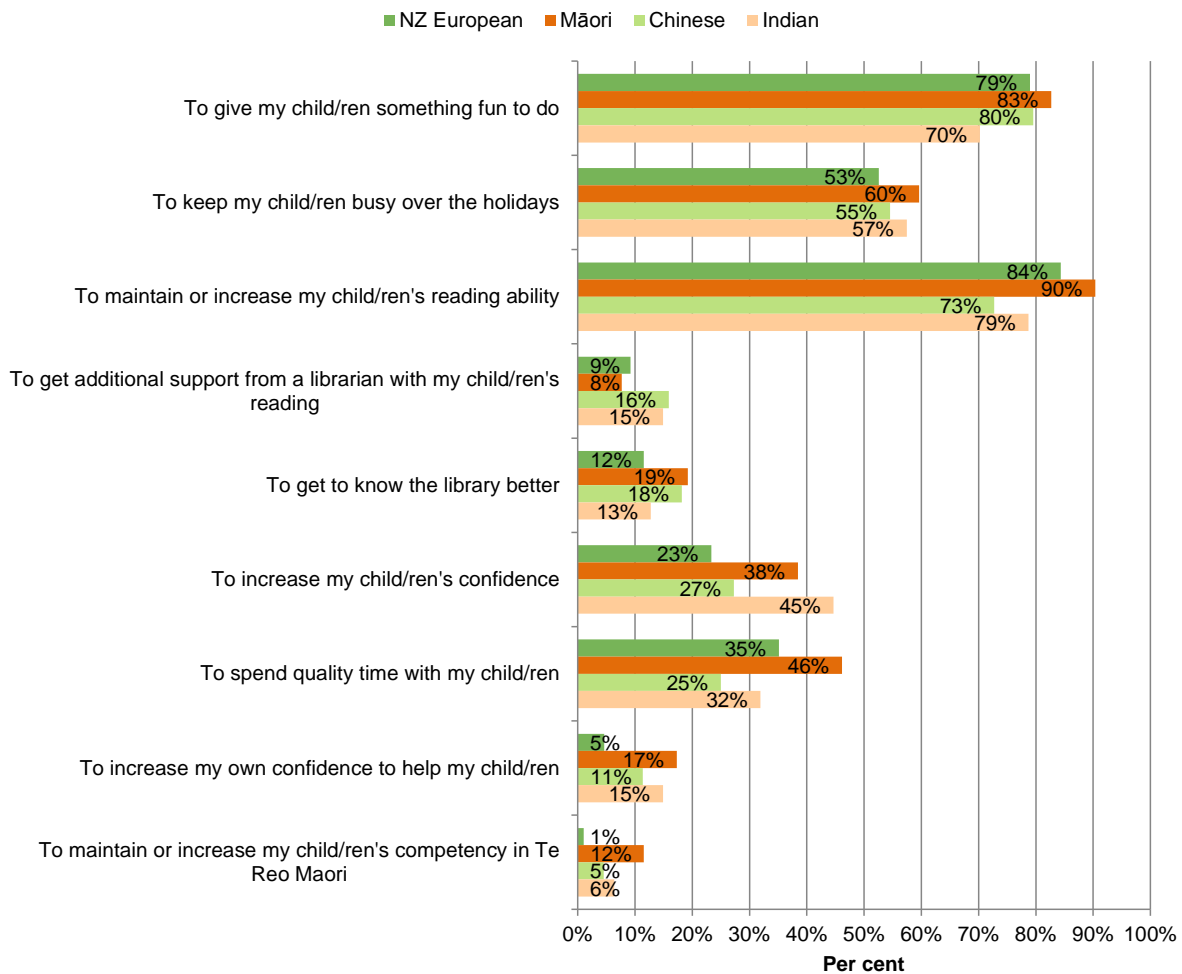
*More tracking reading programme so that children can make sure they read books everyday by themselves.*

Other responses to these questions reflected the expectations of different parents/caregivers for a fun programme, for challenges that kept children busy over the holidays, or for activities that the family could take part in together, for example. For more detail about how families' experiences of Dare to Explore reflected their expectations, see Section 12.

#### **4.2.1 Did parents/caregivers of different ethnicities want their child/ren to participate in Dare to Explore for different reasons?**

We analysed the reasons parents/caregivers gave for wanting their child/ren to participate, for the four most commonly identified child ethnicities. Bearing in mind that parents/caregivers were able to select multiple ethnicities for children, the patterns of motivations are broadly similar across ethnic groups, although with some interesting differences. Relative to other ethnic groups, parents/caregivers of Indian children were less motivated by fun and more motivated by increasing their child/ren's confidence. Parents/caregivers of Māori children reported high levels of motivation to increase their child/ren's reading ability, to increase their child/ren's confidence, to spend quality time with their child/ren, to increase their own confidence, and to increase their child/ren's Te Reo competency. Further differences can be seen in Figure 12.

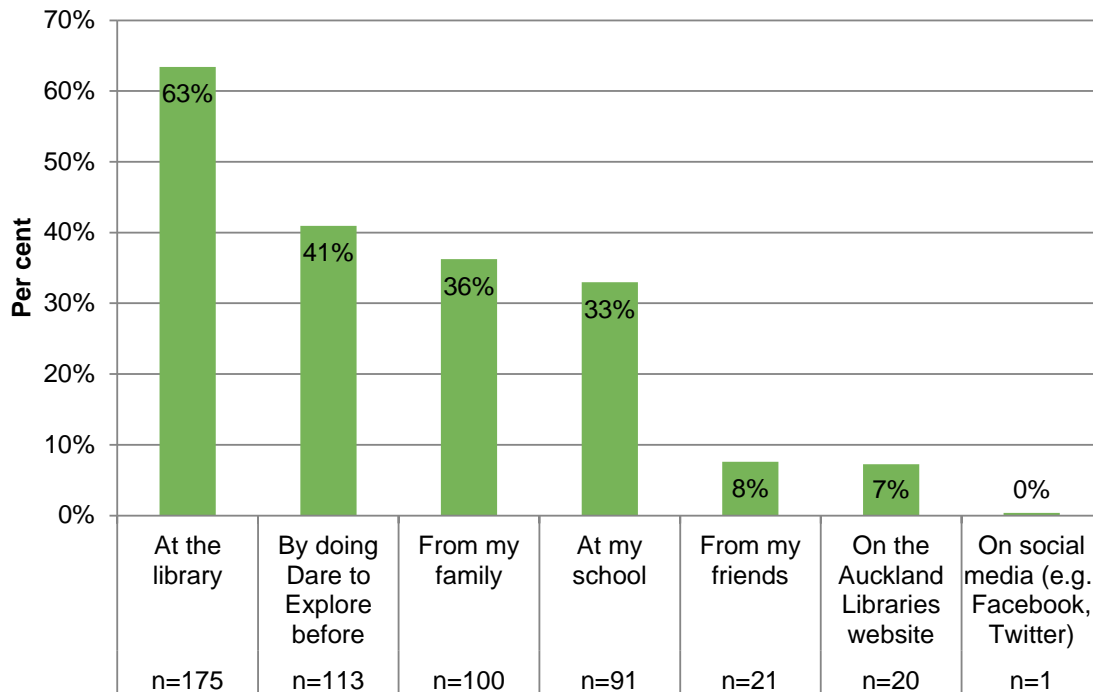
Figure 12: Reasons for participating in Dare to Explore, by ethnicity.



### 4.3 How did children hear about Dare to Explore?

Similarly to the parents/caregivers, the majority of children (63%) heard about Dare to Explore at a library. Forty-one per cent of children were aware of the programme because they had participated previously. This represents a substantial increase from the 28 per cent of children who stated this last year, indicating that Dare to Explore is increasingly building upon successes of previous years. A similar percentage of children reported hearing about Dare to Explore through their school and from their families as last year.

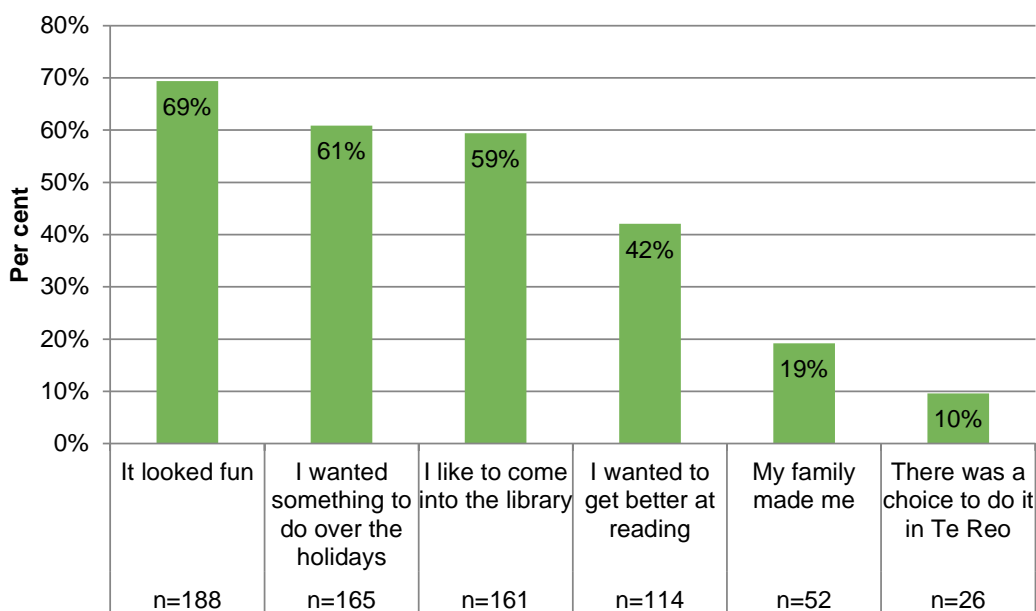
Figure 13: Where did children hear about Dare to Explore?



#### 4.4 Why did children join Dare to Explore?

The majority of children joined Dare to Explore because it looked fun (69%). Many children also joined to give themselves something to do over the holidays (61%) or because they like coming to the library (59%). Forty-two per cent of children wanted to get better at reading; a slightly greater percentage than in 2013/2014 (37%).

Figure 14: Why did children join Dare to Explore?



As with responses from parents/caregivers, children's responses to open-ended survey questions about what they liked and disliked about Dare to Explore reflected their motivations for wanting to sign up. When asked what they thought the best part of Dare to Explore was, the majority said that it was the activities and/or challenges. These activities were often described as being fun or cool when adjectives were used:

*the Challenges were really fun and easy so I could do lots of them.*

*doing the cool activities at libraries*

*was the fun activities [sic] to do at the library*

Responses which mentioned taking part in activities at the library may also have been reflective of children's desire to come to the library and have something fun to do during the holidays. For more detail about how families' experiences of Dare to Explore reflected their expectations, see Section 12.

## 5.0 Where did families participate in Dare to Explore?

### 5.1 What libraries did families use to for Dare to Explore?

Information on the libraries used by Dare to Explore participants is available from two sources – registration data and parents/caregivers’ responses to a survey question about the main library used.

Participants were asked when registering to indicate which library they planned to use most to during Dare to Explore.

Table 2: Registration data – participation by library.

Library	N	%
Mangere Town Centre Library	665	7%
Botany Library	339	4%
Highland Park Library	329	3%
Mt Albert Library	316	3%
Papakura Sir Edmund Hillary Library	314	3%
East Coast Bays Library	312	3%
Howick Library	280	3%
Papatoetoe Library	271	3%
Mt Roskill Library	256	3%
Remuera Library	244	3%
Mangere East Library	239	2%
Titirangi Library	237	2%
Epsom Library	231	2%
Onehunga Library	213	2%
Pakuranga Library	213	2%
Whangaparaoa Library	213	2%
Massey Library	210	2%
Waiheke Library	208	2%
Grey Lynn Library	206	2%
Tupu Youth Library	200	2%
Blockhouse Bay Library	194	2%
Glenfield Library	193	2%
Manurewa Library	183	2%
Pt Chevalier Library	178	2%
St Heliers Library	178	2%
Albany Village Library	176	2%
Panmure Library	174	2%
Ranui Library	163	2%

Waitakere Central Library	161	2%
New Lynn War Memorial Library	159	2%
Te Atatu Peninsula Library	151	2%
Orewa Library	150	2%
Avondale Library	148	2%
Mahurangi East Library	144	1%
Takapuna Library	137	1%
Warkworth Library	133	1%
Mangere Bridge Library	129	1%
Birkenhead Library	110	1%
Leys Institute Library Ponsonby	105	1%
Pukekohe Library	104	1%
Glen Eden Library	102	1%
Kumeu Library	97	1%
Otahuhu Library	97	1%
Northcote Library	96	1%
Wellsford War Memorial Library	89	1%
Clendon Te Matariki Library	87	1%
Central City Library	86	1%
Helensville Library	84	1%
Otara Library	72	1%
Manukau Library	67	1%
Waiuku Library	62	1%
Devonport Library	58	1%
Parnell Library	57	1%
Glen Innes Library	53	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9673</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the survey, parents/caregivers were also asked what the main library was that they and their children used for Dare to Explore. It is important to note that this list should be read primarily as a reflection of which libraries had participants that were most willing to complete the surveys. Some respondents chose 'Other' as their main location, and then specified two or more libraries, while one respondent participated while out of Auckland:

*Pt Chev and Manurewa equally*

*None, went all over. Answers below relate to all.*

Table 3: Main library - parent/caregivers' survey responses.

Library	N	%
Highland Park Library	31	5%
Howick Library	30	5%
East Coast Bays Library	28	4%
Botany Library	27	4%
Massey Library	27	4%
Titirangi Library	24	4%
Mangere Town Centre Library	20	3%
Mt Albert Library	18	3%
Orewa Library	18	3%
Whangaparaoa Library	18	3%
Epsom Library	17	3%
Remuera Library	16	3%
Glenfield Library	15	2%
Ranui Library	15	2%
Waiheke Library	15	2%
Blockhouse Bay Library	14	2%
Albany Village Library	11	2%
Central City Library	11	2%
Mangere Bridge Library	11	2%
Papatoetoe Library	11	2%
St Heliers Library	11	2%
Te Atatu Peninsula Library	11	2%
Glen Eden Library	10	2%
Grey Lynn Library	10	2%
Leys Institute Library Ponsonby	10	2%
Mt Roskill Library	10	2%
New Lynn War Memorial Library	10	2%
Pakuranga Library	10	2%
Birkenhead Library	9	1%
Manurewa Library	9	1%
Pukekohe Library	9	1%
Papakura Sir Edmund Hillary Library	9	1%
Takapuna Library	9	1%
Warkworth Library	9	1%
Wellsford War Memorial Library	9	1%
Panmure Library	8	1%
Parnell Library	8	1%
Pt Chevalier Library	8	1%
Mahurangi East Library	7	1%
Northcote Library	7	1%
Waitakere Central Library	7	1%
Waiuku Library	6	1%
Avondale Library	5	1%
Onehunga Library	5	1%
Mangere East Library	4	1%
Otahuhu Library	4	1%
Devonport Library	3	0%
Glen Innes Library	3	0%
Manukau Library	3	0%
Helensville Library	2	0%
Te Matariki Clendon Library	2	0%
Tupu Youth Library	2	0%
Kumeu Library	1	0%

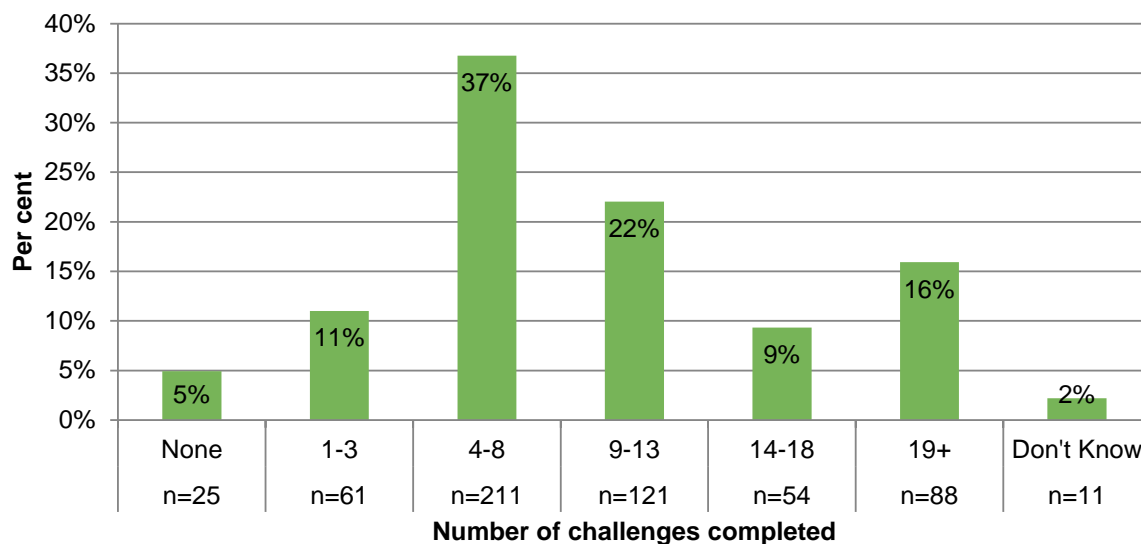
## 6.0 How did children participate in Dare to Explore?

Parents and caregivers were asked questions about their children's engagement with the Dare to Explore challenges and activities<sup>4</sup>. Many responses to open ended questions in both the parents/caregivers' and children's surveys also expanded on experiences with challenges, activities and parties.

### 6.1 How many challenges did children complete?

There was diversity in the number of challenges completed by children. Across all ages the greatest number of children completed four to eight challenges (37% of children). The overall pattern of completed challenges was similar to last year.

Figure 15: How many challenges did your child complete during Dare to Explore?



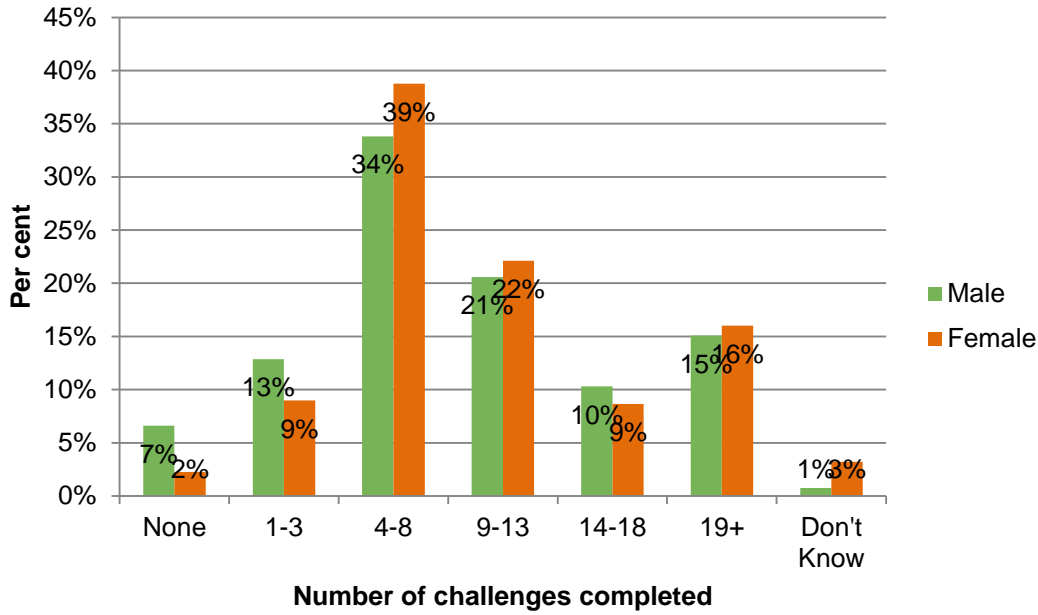
#### 6.1.1 By gender

Overall, the number of challenges completed by boys and girls was similar, although boys were slightly more likely to have completed three or fewer challenges (19% of boys and 11% of girls). The distribution of challenges completed for boys and girls can be seen in Figure 16.

<sup>4</sup> Challenges and activities were mentioned frequently but at times ambiguously in responses to open ended questions, as many commenters did not draw a clear distinction between the challenges in the passport and the related activities provided by libraries.



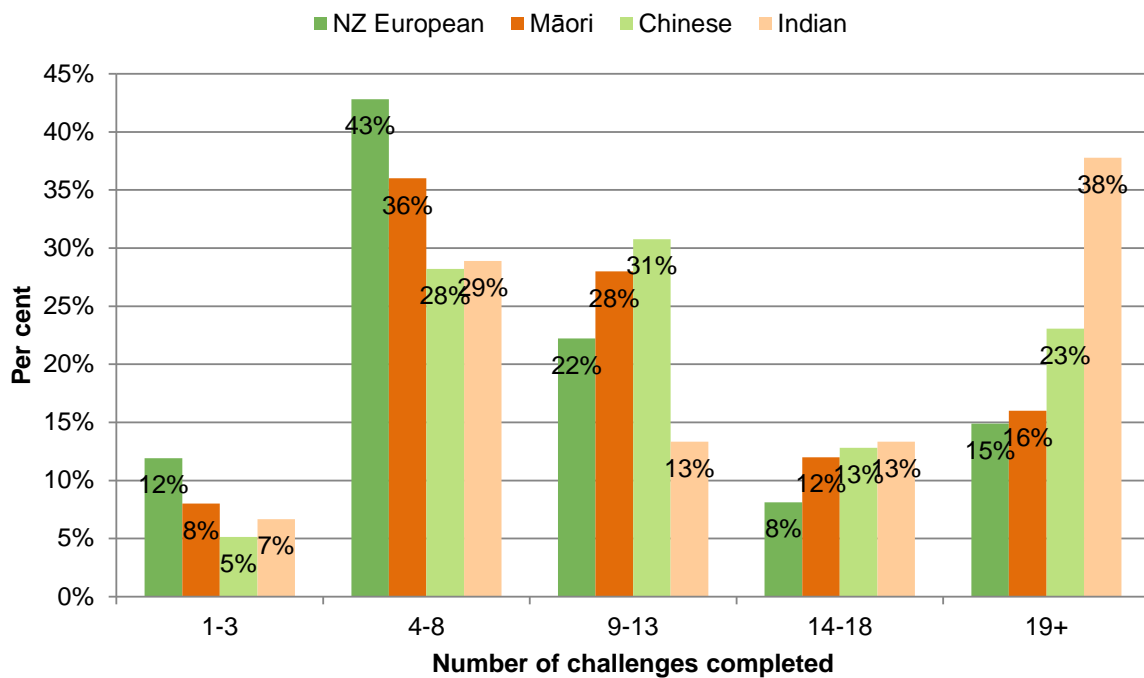
Figure 16: Number of challenges completed, by gender.



### 6.1.2 By ethnicity

There were some differences in the number of challenges completed by children of different ethnic groups. This analysis shows that NZ European / Pākehā children were more likely to have completed eight or fewer challenges, while Indian and Chinese children were more likely to have completed 19+ challenges. The full breakdown can be seen in Figure 17.

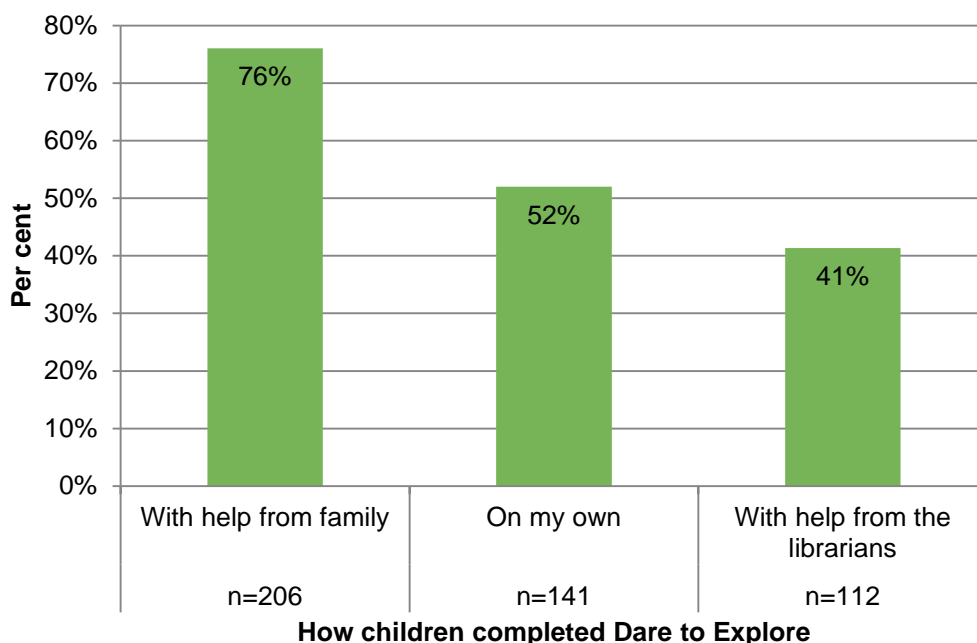
Figure 17: Number of challenges completed, by ethnicity.



## 6.2 How did children complete challenges in Dare to Explore?

Children's ability to complete challenges independently or as part of a family group is a concept that appeared in many open ended responses in the parent/caregiver survey. In the children's survey, we asked how children did Dare to Explore; independently or with help from family or librarians. Respondents were able to select more than one response. The largest proportion of children did Dare to Explore with help from their family (76%). A reasonable percentage of children also reported doing at least some of Dare to Explore 'on my own' (52%) or 'with help from librarians' (41%).

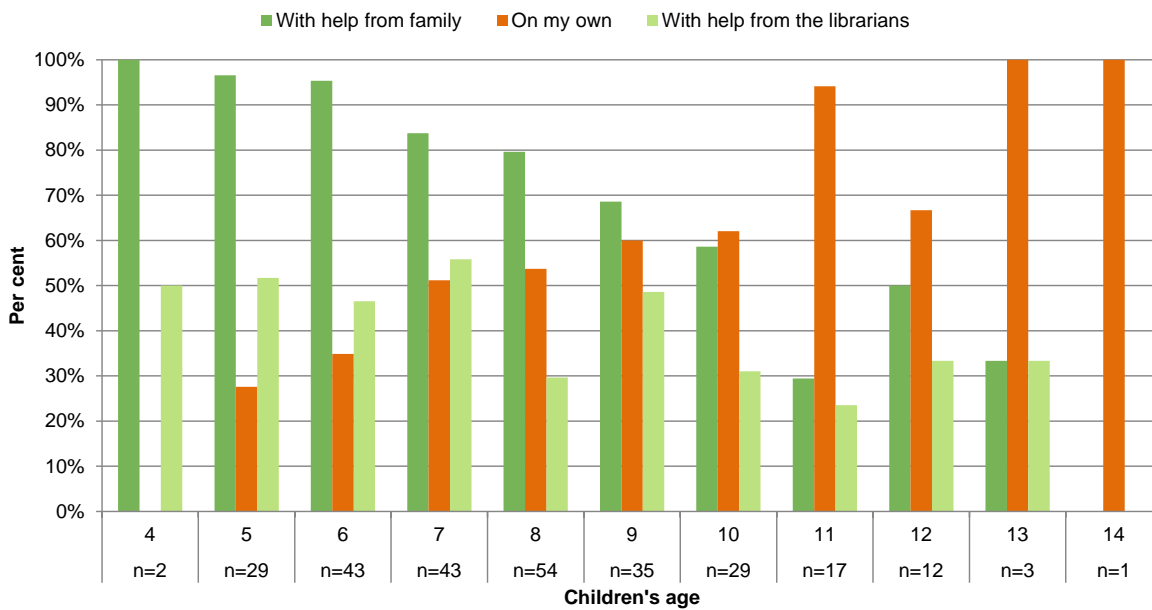
Figure 18: How did children complete challenges?



### 6.2.1 By age

As would be expected, a larger percentage of younger children did Dare to Explore with help from family than older children, who mostly did Dare to Explore on their own. A similar proportion of children did the programme with help from the librarians across the age groups. See Figure 19 for more details.

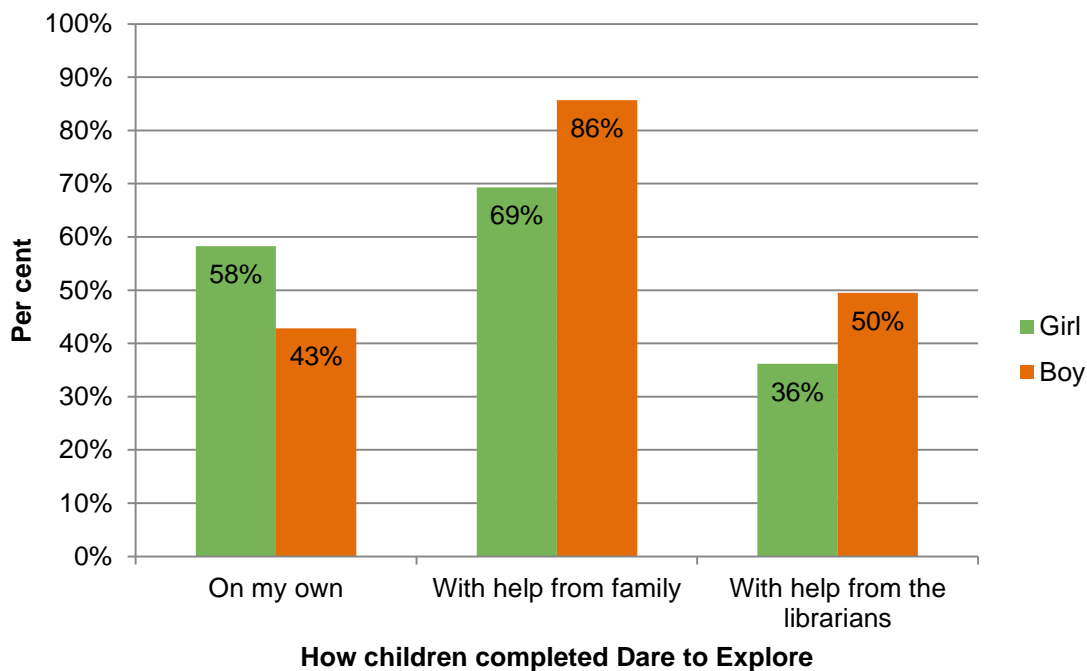
Figure 19: How did children of different ages complete the challenges?



### 6.2.2 By gender

A greater proportion of girls did Dare to Explore on their own (58% of girls) compared to boys (43% of boys), as seen in Figure 20. This trend was seen at every age.

Figure 20: How did boys and girls complete the challenges?

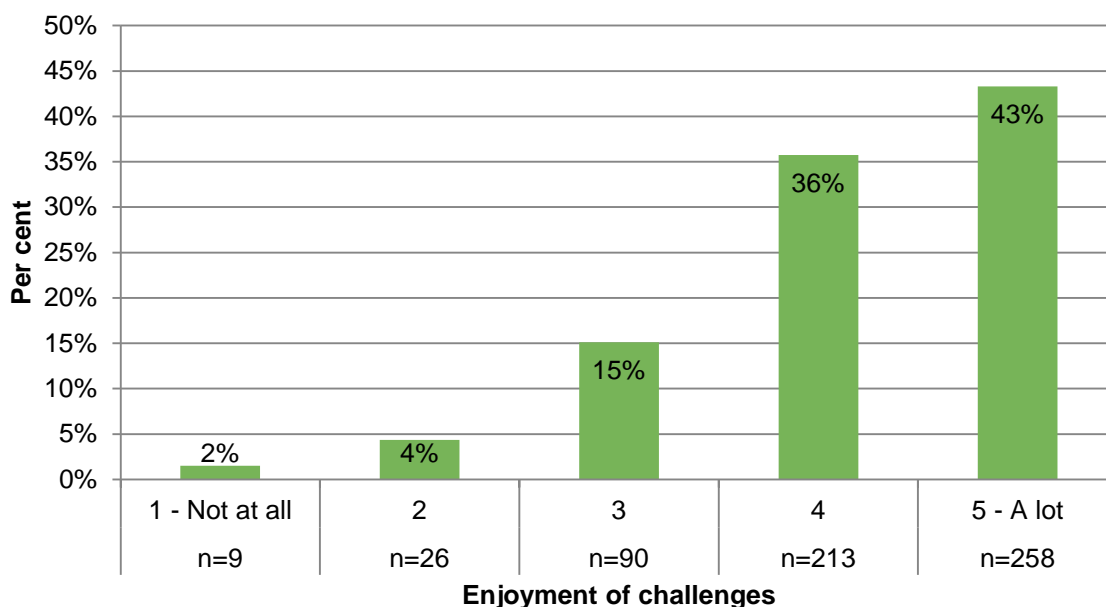


If we consider children who *only* did Dare to Explore on their own (i.e. received no help from librarians or their family), this gender difference is exacerbated with 77 per cent of 'on their own only' participants being girls.

### 6.3 How much did children enjoy the challenges?

The largest number of parents/caregivers said that their child/ren enjoyed the challenges they completed, with 79 per cent of parents/caregivers rating the enjoyment '4' or '5'. Overall, this is similar to last year (with 81% rating enjoyment '4' or '5').

Figure 21: How much did children enjoy the challenges?



### 6.4 Who went to the party?

Seventy-one per cent of children who responded to the survey went to the party.

Of the children who attended the party, the majority liked it 'a lot' (79%). Most of the remaining children liked it 'a little bit' (17%), and only a small number 'didn't like it' (3%).

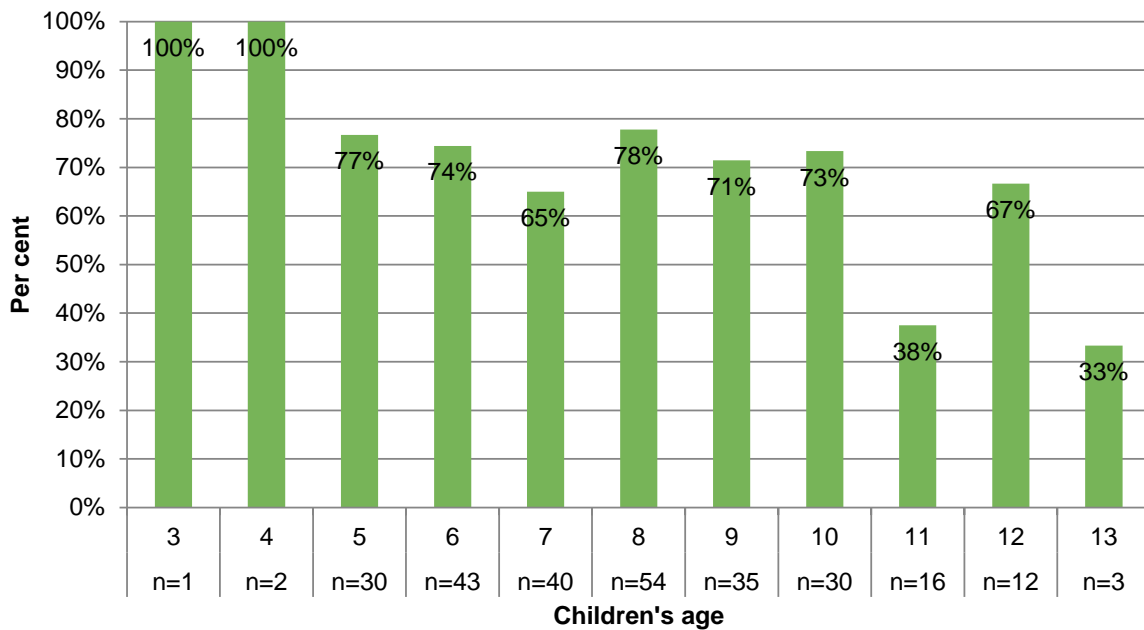
A slightly larger proportion of boys (75%) compared to girls (67%) attended the party. Near equal percentages of boys and girls who attended the party liked it party 'a lot', 'a little bit', and 'didn't like it'.

#### 6.4.1 By age

Due to the age range of those taking part in Dare to Explore, the majority of party attendees (90%) were between the ages of five and 10 years of age. Figure 22 shows the percentage of children

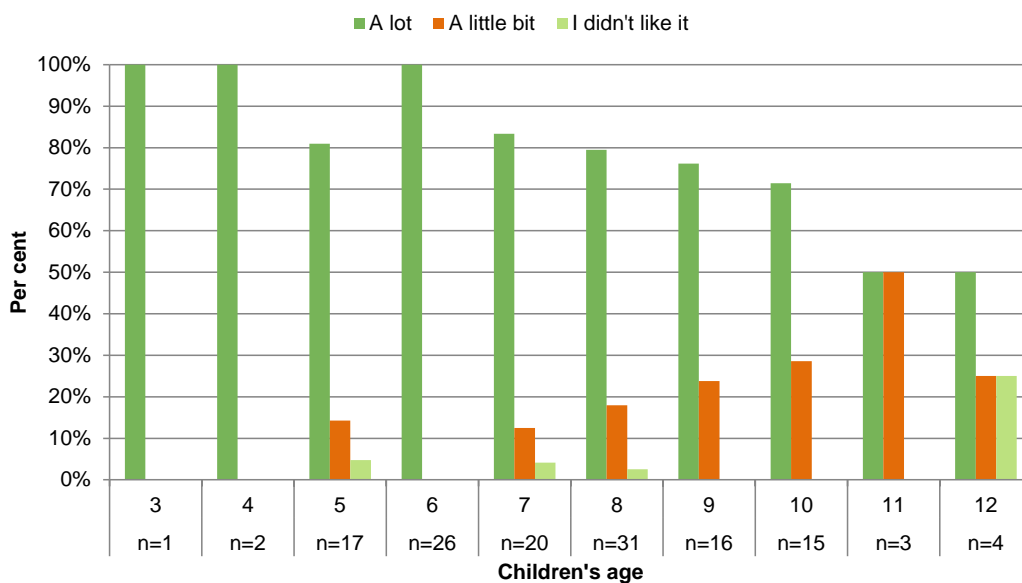
who attended the party within each age group. The percentage of children who attended was stable across the age ranges, with some drop-off from ages 11 and above.

Figure 22: Percentage of children who attended the party within each age group



Few older children stated that they liked the party 'a lot' and a greater percentage of older children relative to younger children said they liked it a 'little bit' or they 'didn't like it'. This reemphasises that some parties cater better for younger children. See Section 6.6 for the experiences of parents/caregivers who felt that challenges, activities or parties were not age appropriate for their child/ren.

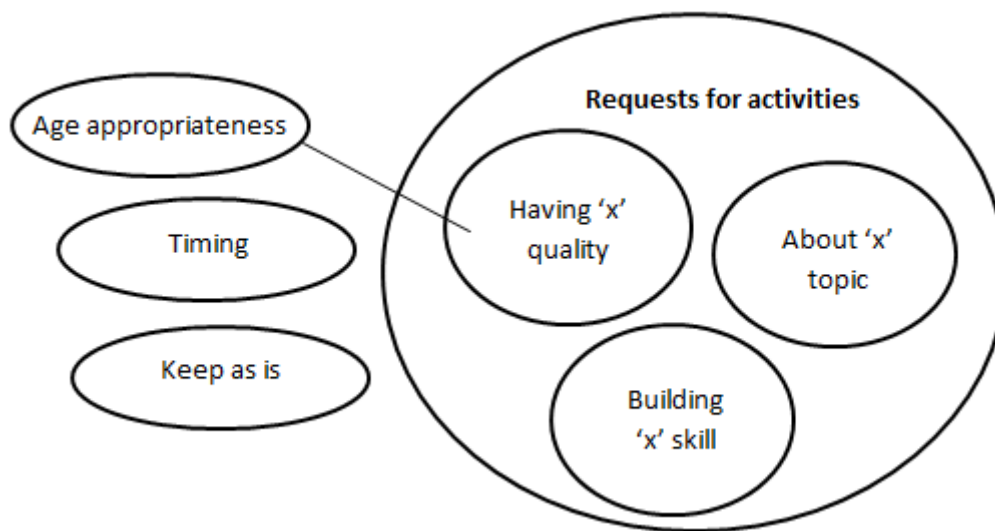
Figure 23: 'Liking' ratings of the party, by age.



## 6.5 What library activities would parents/caregivers like more of?

Responses to this open ended question were analysed by the authors of this report, and grouped according to themes. The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in parents/caregivers' responses. Some respondents mentioned improvements to the age appropriateness and timing of activities in their responses, while some were happy with the current activities on offer and wanted more of the same. Other responses focused on a particular type of activity that parents/caregivers would like to see more of. Each theme is described in turn below.

Figure 24: What library activities would parents/caregivers like more of?



### 6.5.1 Age appropriateness

Age-related feedback about activities included requests for more activities that suit a particular age group; activities that suit a larger range of ages; age-differentiated activities; and activities that support the reading ability of a particular age group.

*Creative activities which 5 and 6 year olds can do at their own level, while older children can do more detailed crafts, using the same materials*

*it would be nice to have a few more activities in-library for the slightly older kids next holidays (10/11 year olds).*

*Competitions that would appeal to older children too, e.g. quizzes*

*I think any activities are great, but especially the ones that the smaller 6-7 year old kids can do on their own, which will give them a sense of achievement, rather than for harassed parents trying to explain it all*

See Section 6.6 for the experiences of parents/caregivers who felt that challenges, activities or parties were not age appropriate for their child/ren.

## 6.5.2 Timing

As well as asking for more or less frequent activities, parents/caregivers requested activities that would take place at more accessible times, such as on weekends, in the morning or in the afternoon. In some cases, this was in order to fit around commitments such as work. Some talked about the special appeal of activities that take place 'after hours', either before the library opens in the morning, or after it closes in the evening.

*Weekend story/activity times (should be something every weekend at local libraries).*

*This is a huge task but the children really enjoy being in the library outside of the usual opening hours for breakfasts and pyjama parties.*

*activities later n [sic] the day to allow those who have other holiday programmes the chance to participate*

## 6.5.3 Keep as is

A large group of respondents were either unsure about suggesting activities, had nothing to suggest or actively wanted to retain the current types of activities:

*I can't think of anything. All the activities in the recent Dare to Explore are just right. We found it an excellent way for kids to improve their reading and writing skills in a fun and enjoyable way with the whole family during summer.*

*More of the same*

*Not sure*

## 6.5.4 Requests for activities

Specific suggestions for activities were given in different forms:

- Activities that have a particular quality, e.g. fun, social, outdoor, hands-on, entertaining, involving games or technology
- Activities that build particular skills, e.g. literacy, creativity, problem-solving, social skills
- Activities based on a specific topic e.g. science, the environment, history, culture, reading, mathematics

### 6.5.4.1 Having 'x' quality

In terms of qualities, parents/caregivers valued activities that were fun or surprising:

*Anything fun for the children.*

*fun, unexpected, non-typical library stuff*

Social activities were popular with some parents/caregivers:

*More group events*

*More group reading activities where children can get together and read/discuss books which they've recently read*

Some asked for more outdoor activities:

*Some group activities at a park, or somewhere outdoor?*

*Maybe some physical, active activities. Outside maybe park or community gardens.*

*explore the local area*

*More water/ park activities. Being able to enjoy the outdoors.*

Many appreciated opportunities for child/ren to design and make things as part of hands-on, participatory activities:

*Lots of hands on activities such as cooking, sewing, craftwork and making artwork.*

*My daughter and I love the creative stuff and making things*

*Maybe read a part of a basic book and act out the part?*

*More art and craft sessions*

*Building blocks like LEGO, MINECRAFT*

One respondent linked participatory activities to a greater engagement with both learning and reading:

*The sessions where kids can actively participate and develop an interest for a subject that then leads to an interest in reading about that subject are the most effective for our child.  
Lots of those would be great.*

In contrast to those asking for participatory, hands-on or physical experiences, some parents/caregivers requested more activities where children could be part of an audience to some kind of performance. The events suggested include storytellers, puppet shows, magic shows, and special guests such as authors and illustrators:



*Having guest speakers for a short session – or maybe someone dressed as the character of a book – or even more exciting the real actor from a movie of a book such as the Hobbit – how cool would that be? :)*

*Visits from authors or illustrators to talk to the children would be great*

*More story tellers in the library*

*story times for younger kids*

*Maybe some reading aloud by a really good storyteller?*

Activities with game-like qualities were popular with some parents/caregivers. Examples given included digital games, board games and gamified activities such as treasure hunts.

*He [...] also enjoyed the more active games based activities*

*Would like the children to learn and play board games*

*It was child friendly and exciting from a clue finder to outdoor games in the park.*

*More game type of activities*

A popular suggestion was a scavenger hunt:

*Perhaps more of a treasure hunt idea – encourage children to read to find a clue that leads them on to the next clue or subject?*

*Perhaps a treasure hunt of sorts to find particular books in the library, so they lean [sic] a bit about the 'filing' system?*

Some of these activities suggested the integration of technologies into the creative process or the use of technology that encouraged interacting with other people, such as playing computer games:

*Maybe booking a day to do an activity like taking photos and showing them how to use ipads to take shots and change colour/contrast.*

*The boys LOVED the Pixel Perfect on 9 January (a how to on game making).*

*making things ipad apps*

*More computer activities*

*Quiz games Will [Wii] games*

In contrast, other respondents preferred their child/ren to be doing “traditional” forms of crafts that are “hands-on”, rather than interacting with technology.

*Ones that involve the outdoors, crafts or hands-on activities – NOT ones that involve a lot more technology*

*I liked the basic tactile /offline activities to remind them that there is fun to be had offline :o)*

See Section 10 for an investigation of parents/caregivers’ conflicting desires about access to technology over the summer holidays.

#### **6.5.4.2 Building ‘x’ skill**

Parents/caregivers valued or suggested activities that helped build their child/ren’s skills in areas such as reading; creativity and problem-solving; and social skills, including empathy.

One strong theme was a demand for activities with a strong focus on reading, and those that use the library as a resource for literacy and learning:

*more crafty things book based*

*More guided reading and help kids to know about the browsing process.*

*Intro to reading on the web in order to gain knowledge*

*Have more challenges that encourage reading.*

*Games like – where would you find a book on water? Etc. Kids could share what books they have read and liked best and why?*

Some saw group activities such as book clubs as one way to keep children engaged with reading. Book clubs were mostly suggested for older children or more confident readers.

*Fun reading groups that include role plays and all sorts of fun mind games.*

*Book club meeting... Where they are able to review books for other children in their age group or reading level*

*Maybe an option to write a book review / have an online book club for the preteens.*

Parents/caregivers also placed value on activities that build creative thinking and develop the imagination or the ability to solve problems:

*Anything that results in creative problem-solving and fun!*

*Capture the childrens [sic] imagination and challenge their problem solving abilities, exercise their brains*

*extending the children imagination type activities. I also like the creativity activiites [sic]*

Some valued activities that build child/ren's social skills, and appreciated the opportunities afforded for fostering friendships amongst children working together in groups. One respondent asked for activities that could help build children's empathy.

*anything that my kids can get involved with with other children*

*make gruop [sic] and so children can make friends more closely.*

*Maybe "kindness" type activities to – do something nice for someone else.*

#### **6.5.4.3 About 'x' topic**

Topics could involve either specific subjects or broader areas of knowledge. The most commonly suggested topic was science, and respondents spoke favourably of science experiments their child/ren participated in at various libraries:

*My husband took our daughter to the City Library and she thoroughly enjoyed the science experiments.*

*Science challenges and science technology challenges*

*Science experiments were great – more of those.*

Some parents/caregivers specified natural science, a focus on the environment or on gardening:

*Science! Natural science, not just space... perhaps insects or volcanoes.*

*Maybe more environmental focused activities*

*more activities to increase knowledge of NZ native flora and fauna*

*Some work shops like garden creations*

Other topics that were mentioned include history and culture, with some respondents specifying a desire for more content reflecting a Māori worldview or incorporating te reo Māori, or for a greater reflection of Auckland's / New Zealand's diverse cultures:

*Study of History. If possible (through activity) encourage children to learn about New Zealand Culture and values.*

*History of NZ/ Auckland, and science.*

*more maori [sic] activities and culture stuff....*

*learning about different countries / cultures*

*May be about the different cultures in New Zealand to bring cultural awareness for young children*

*More activities, lots of cultural or diverse introduction of different culture to the group. More waiatas*

More activities that celebrated books, reading, writing and illustrating were also popular. As well as the book clubs and activities designed to build confidence with reading and library use mentioned above, respondents requested author/illustrator talks, more storytimes and writing challenges:

*Have librarian read to children and then the children go off and create/draw things that represent the book and this could be included as an activity to check off in the passports*

*Book illustrator to demonstrate how they draw their pictures or how their experience of drawing. Book Authors to talk about how and why they write their books.*

*Include writing as an assignment. maybe take help from uni students as volunteers or some other means to get children write a bit as well so that children can improve on their writing in-line with reading. I am sure you guys can make this also an interesting exercise*

Two drew attention to the additional appeal created when activities are inspired by popular books:

*It may be interesting to do some activity related with books that a lot of children likes such as Hurry [sic] potter making magic wand and portions [sic] and creating spells etc.*

*Subject based activities that link to particular books or type of books, eg Geronimo Stilton, Diary of a wimpy kid, etc.*

A small number of parents/caregivers mentioned mathematics as a current gap in activity programming in their responses to this and to other questions. While many libraries have begun to incorporate science and technology into their activities, there is an opportunity to increase mathematical content:

*add some more activities based on mathematics*

*Activities with more maths and science topics.*

## 6.6 Age appropriateness of challenges, activities and the party

Eighty-five per cent of parents/caregivers felt that Dare to Explore was appropriate for the age of their child, while 15 per cent did not. This is a small improvement on the previous year (82% felt that Dare to Explore was age appropriate in 2013/2014).

When asked why they thought the programme was inappropriate for their child's age, respondents were most likely to comment on challenges or activities being too hard, on their child being too young, or a combination of these reasons:

*My son was a bit too young.*

*Some were too hard*

*Not so much the age as the ability level. Little offered for reluctant/struggling readers.*

*Little too difficult for a 5 year old new reader*

Several respondents commented on the need for parental support to help adapt the programme for a younger child. The need to adapt content was problematic for some but not all respondents:

*Activities were all aimed at older children – struggled to find activities that didn't involved [sic] me doing pretty much everything for him!*

*I had to [sic] be creative for a young boy of 5 and moderate*

*She needed a lot of help with the challenges because she couldn't read the instructions herself or complete the tasks herself but that was fine – I wasn't concerned about this as she is only just 5 and only just starting to read.*

Two described how their child wished to work more independently on tasks, which the programme did not support consistently:

*most too difficult ore [sic] requiring considerable parental help. She is very independent & wanted to do it on her own.*

*Many too hard to complete independently and didn't always want to do with mum*

Some felt that the programme's writing or reading requirements were set too high and detracted from the experience, or made it difficult for their child to participate at all:

*All required a fair writing ability, which my son does not yet have*

*Because she is only 5 her writing takes a long time so it was a big effort for her to record and track books*

*He had trouble reading the text in the book – might help if he felt he could read it all...*

*Quite a lot of the activities are writing (which my child does not have the ability to do at age 5, and other activities required too much resource*

A smaller number of parents/caregivers felt that Dare to Explore was not age appropriate for their older child:

*Challenges were a bit young for my daughter*

*As mentioned, some were too easy*

*Some challenges were more suitable for younger kids.*

*She prefers to do teen challenges*

*Even though the signs say '5 to 13', it seems that the activities are more directed to '5 to 8'.*

At least one respondent commented that the party was not age appropriate for an older child, reflecting some similar comments in response to the question about what could be improved about Dare to Explore:

*The Magician's Show seemed aimed at younger Children, but the challenges and activities were at an appropriate level.*

Even though only a small percentage of respondents overall felt that the challenges, activities and parties were not age appropriate, many open ended comments made by parents/caregivers in other areas of the survey focused on the age appropriateness of the programme. This is discussed in more detail in Sections 10 and 12.

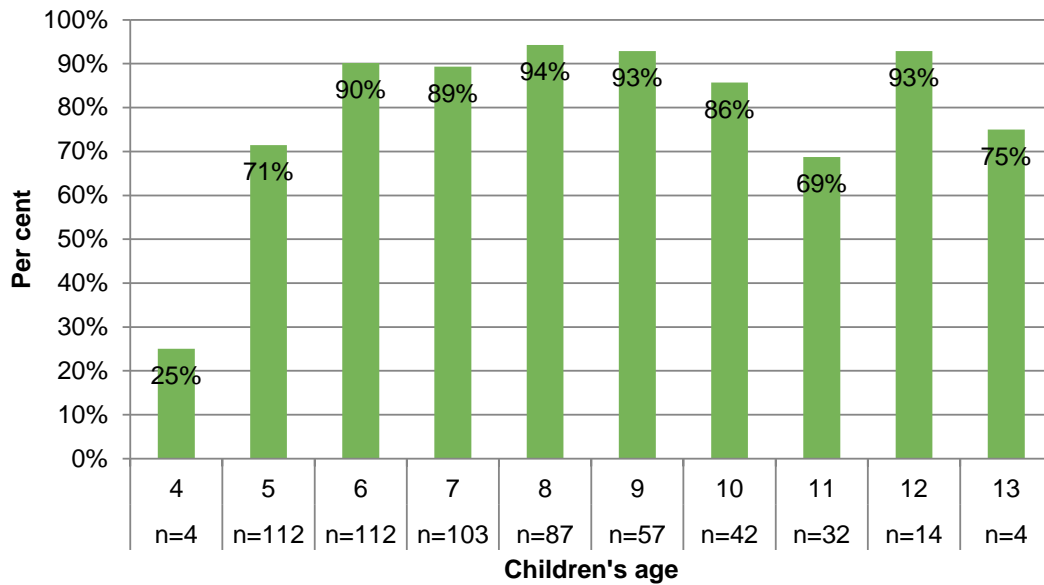
## **6.7 At what age is Dare to Explore “appropriate”?**

A recurring theme from the thematic analysis was the issue of Dare to Explore being age appropriate for some children and not appropriate for others. To understand this issue further, we investigated the relationship between the likelihood that parents/caregivers had stated that Dare to Explore was age appropriate, and the age of their child. It is to be noted that parents/caregivers with more than one child participant only gave the age of one of their children in the questionnaire, but that their feedback about age appropriacy may have related to more than one child's experiences.

More than 90 per cent of parents/caregivers who had children aged six, eight, nine, and 12 years old felt that the programme was age-appropriate. If we are to exclude the 14 parents/caregivers of

12 year old children as a result of small sample size, it becomes clearer that Dare to Explore is most well suited to the needs and interests of children aged between six and nine years.

Figure 25: Percentage of parents/caregivers who felt that Dare to Explore was age appropriate



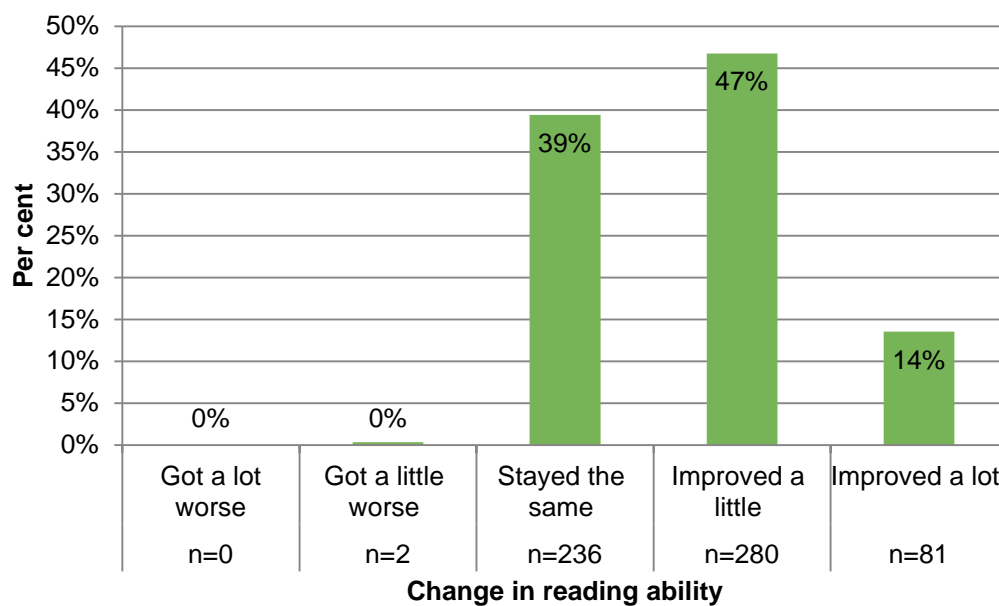
Dare to Explore was seen as least appropriate for children aged five and under. This is consistent with the findings from the last two post-programme evaluations, and suggests continued effort to make the programme more accessible for younger children is warranted.

## 7.0 Did Dare to Explore maintain or improve children's literacy?

### 7.1 Did Dare to Explore improve children's reading ability?

Parents/caregivers were asked how their children's reading ability has changed during their involvement in Dare to Explore. The majority of adults (61%) felt that their child's reading ability improved 'a little' or 'a lot' (the same as last year). Only two respondents (< 1%) felt their child's reading got a little worse.

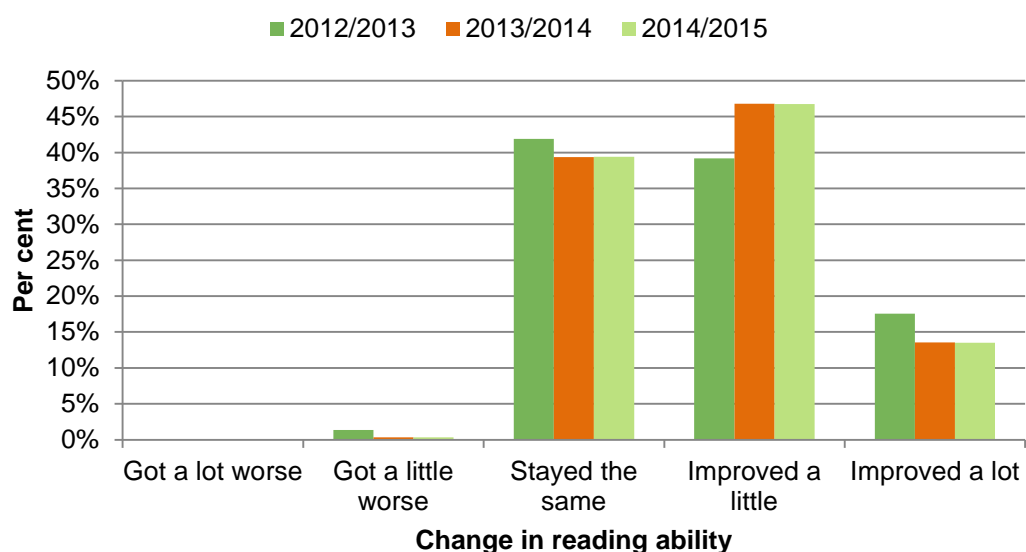
Figure 26: How has your child's reading ability changed during Dare to Explore?



When comparing survey results from the last three years, ratings of reading improvement have been very similar across the last three years (as can be seen in Figure 27).



Figure 27: Parents/caregivers' reported changes in reading ability over the past three years of Dare to Explore



Children were asked if they themselves felt Dare to Explore helped with their reading over the summer. Thirty-nine per cent felt the programme helped them ‘a lot’, 44 per cent of children felt the programme helped them ‘a little bit’, and 16 per cent felt it did not help their reading. Slightly fewer children felt the programme helped their reading this year compared with the 2013/2014 survey responses (with 42% reporting it helped a lot, 47% helped a little bit, 10% did not help).

While these reports from both adults and children are representative of a subjective measure of reading ability they are nevertheless important in light of the summer learning effect. This concept was initially described by Barbara Heyns and others in the early 1970s (Morgan 2012; Roman and Fiore 2010). This effect describes a decrease in literacy capabilities of children over the summer holiday months when they are not in school (Alexander et al. 2007).

The finding in this evaluation that the majority of parents/caregivers perceived that their children’s reading improved – and that almost no responses said that reading got worse – demonstrates an important benefit of the Dare to Explore programme. It suggests that Dare to Explore may be playing an important role in halting or reversing the negative effects of the summer learning effect, which has been found to accumulate over successive summers and becomes substantial once children reach high school (Alexander et al. 2007; Roman and Fiore 2010; Slates et al. 2012).

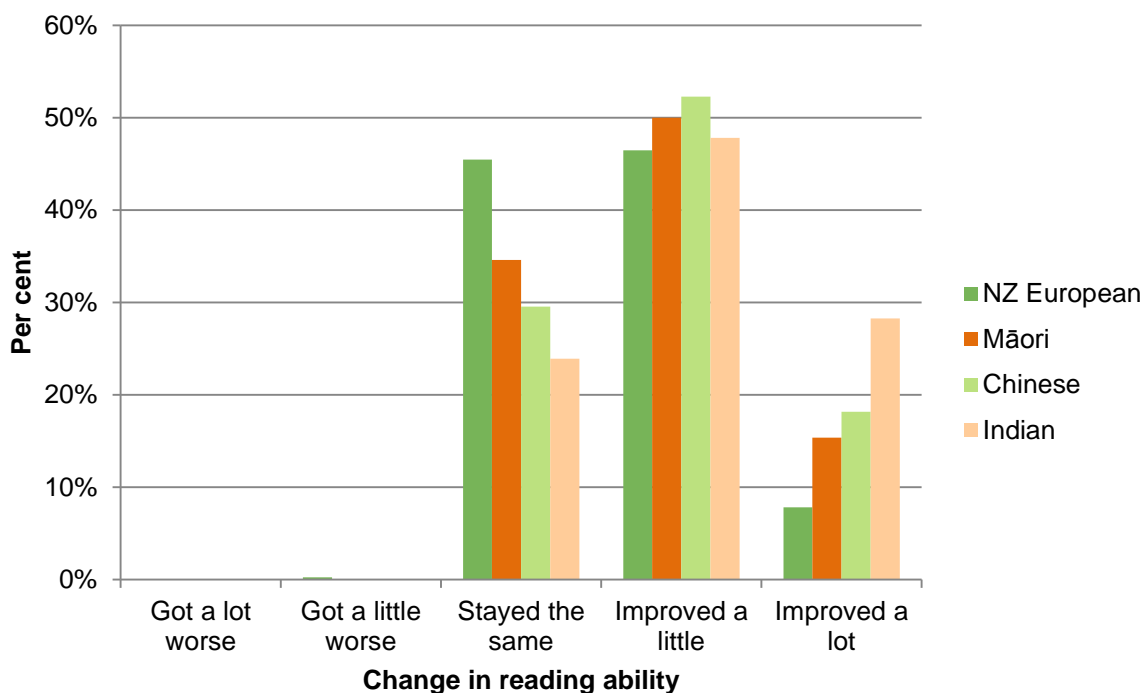
Many studies have been able to quantify this effect and some have compared the extent of the effect over different ethnic (Justice et al. 2013; Kim 2004) and socioeconomic groups<sup>5</sup> (Alexander et al. 2007; Fiore 2007; Roman and Fiore 2010; Slates et al. 2012). The general trends that have

<sup>5</sup>The use of socioeconomic status should be considered with caution. Few articles define “socioeconomic status” and many appear to equate this to financial income bands (focus on economic status and ignore social). In reality the social aspects combined with economic generate socioeconomic status and therefore can be considered the result of access to resources, attitudes, and values.

been found in these studies are that children of either lower socioeconomic groups or ethnic minorities experience a larger summer learning effect.

Encouragingly, for Dare to Explore participants, the opposite pattern was observed, with Indian, Chinese and Māori children experiencing greater reading improvement (in their parents/caregivers' eyes) than NZ European / Pākehā children. The pattern, split for the four most commonly identified ethnic groups, can be seen in Figure 28.

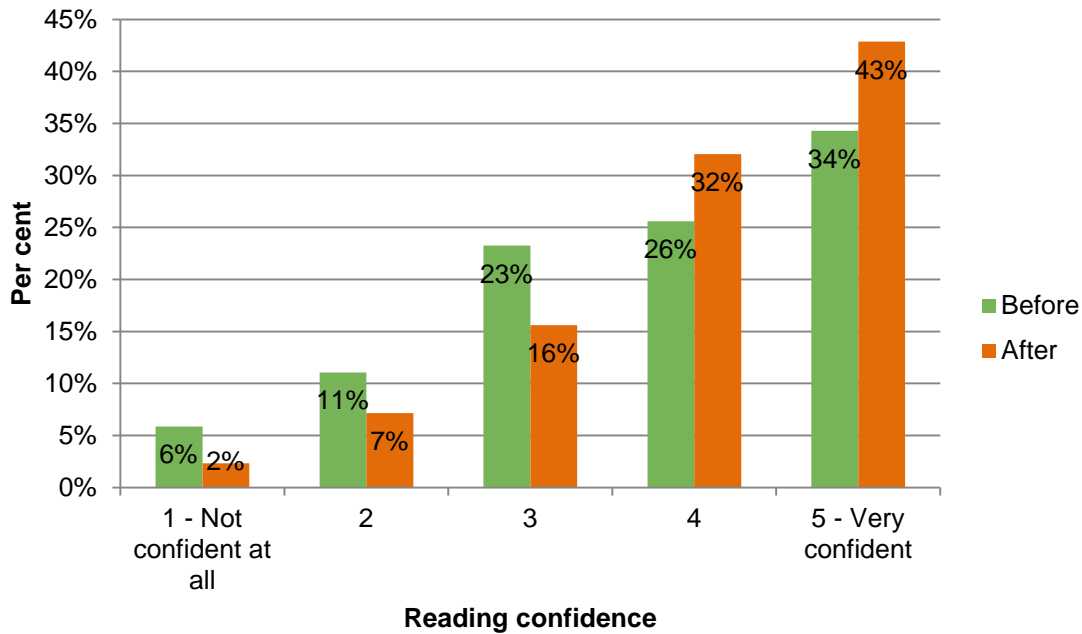
Figure 28: Changes in reading ability, by ethnicity



## 7.2 Did Dare to Explore improve children’s reading confidence?

Parents/caregivers were asked to rate their child’s confidence both before and after participating in Dare to Explore (see Figure 29). Comparing these two ratings, only three parents/caregivers (0.5%) saw a decrease in reading confidence while 31 per cent saw some degree of increase in their children’s reading confidence. The remainder (65%) of parents/caregivers rated the ‘before’ and ‘after’ confidence the same. However, half of the parents/caregivers who reported no change in their child’s confidence, ranked their child’s ‘before’ reading confidence a 5 out of 5 before Dare to Explore, which prevented any measureable increase in the ‘after’ ranking. When excluding parents/caregivers who rated their child’s prior reading confidence as ‘5 – very confident’ – a total of 48 per cent of parents/caregivers (vs 31% of all parents, as noted above) reported witnessing an increase in their child’s reading confidence.

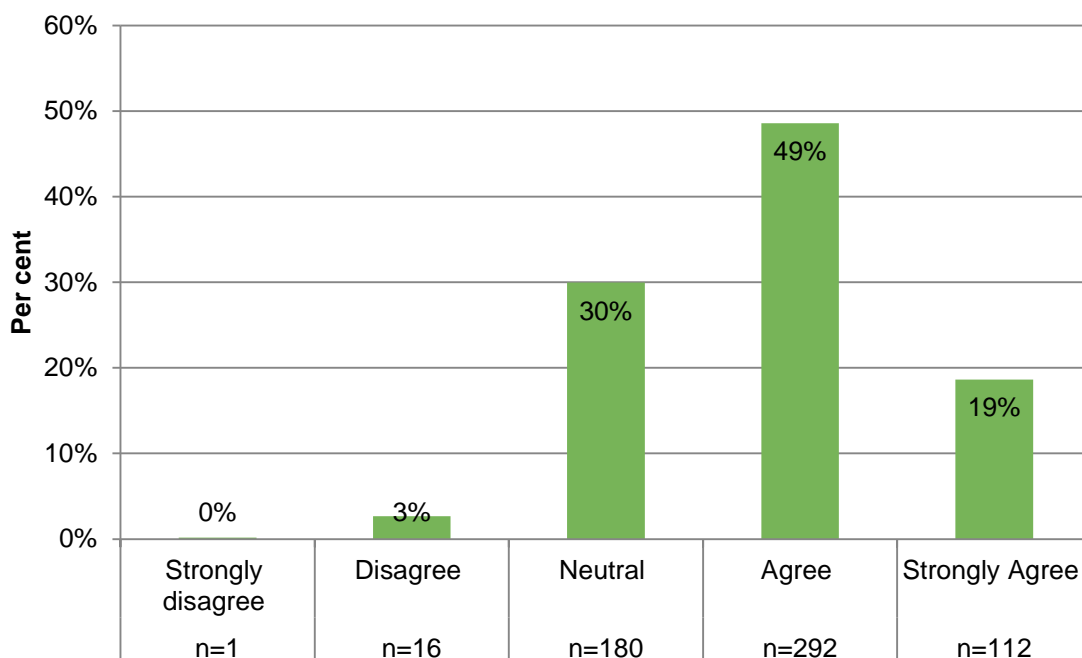
Figure 29: Children's reading confidence before and after Dare to Explore



### 7.3 Did Dare to Explore increase children's enjoyment of reading?

Parents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Dare to Explore increased my child's enjoyment of reading'. The majority (65%) of adults agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, similar to the level of agreement last year (68%). Only 3 per cent of parents/caregivers said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Almost a third of responses were neutral to the statement (29%).

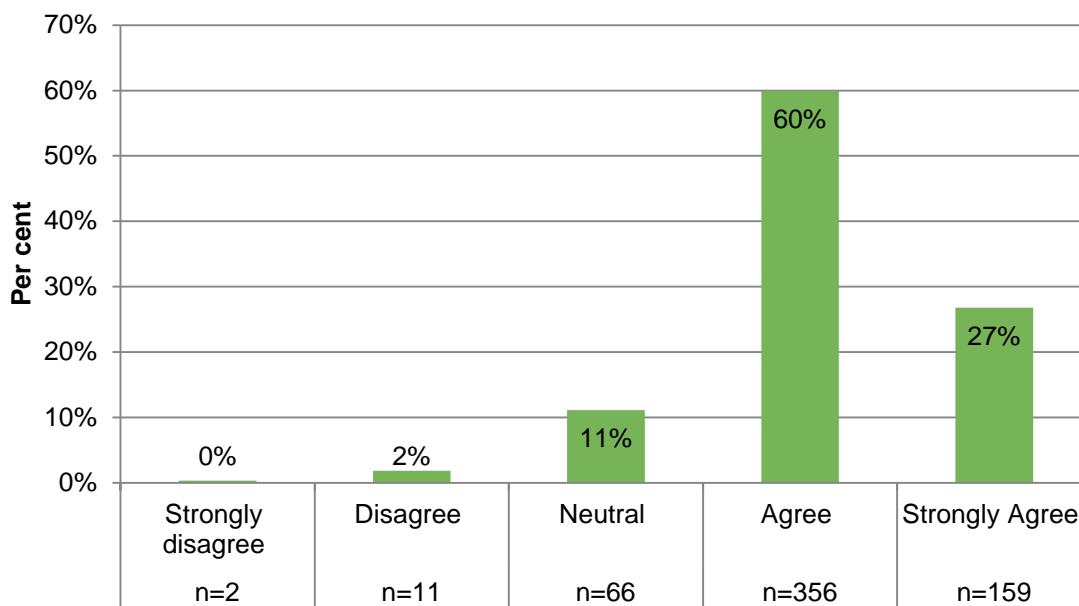
Figure 30: Dare to Explore has increased my child's enjoyment of reading



## 7.4 Did Dare to Explore encourage children to discover and learn new things?

Parents/caregivers were also asked whether they felt Dare to Explore encouraged their child to discover and learn new things. The majority agreed (60%) or strongly agreed (27%) that the programme did encourage their children to learn and discover new things. This is very similar to the level of agreement with the same question last year.

Figure 31: Dare to Explore encouraged my child to discover and learn new things



## 7.5 What factors best predict reading ability?

In both of the previous two years (2012/2013 and 2013/2014), a statistical model was developed and applied to understand how Dare to Explore most strongly impacted reading ability.

Conducting this analysis again shows a similar pattern of results. The one difference between this and previous analyses is that this year the number of challenges completed was found to be significantly related to changes in reading ability. The analysis shows that the significant predictors of increased reading ability were<sup>6</sup>:

- children finding an increased enjoyment in reading
- an increase in parent/caregiver confidence
- children discover and learn new things
- an increase in children's reading confidence; and
- the number of challenges children completed.

<sup>6</sup> The non-significant predictors in the model were: Child age, child gender, whether libraries were friendly and welcoming, whether libraries had time for patrons and were willing to help,

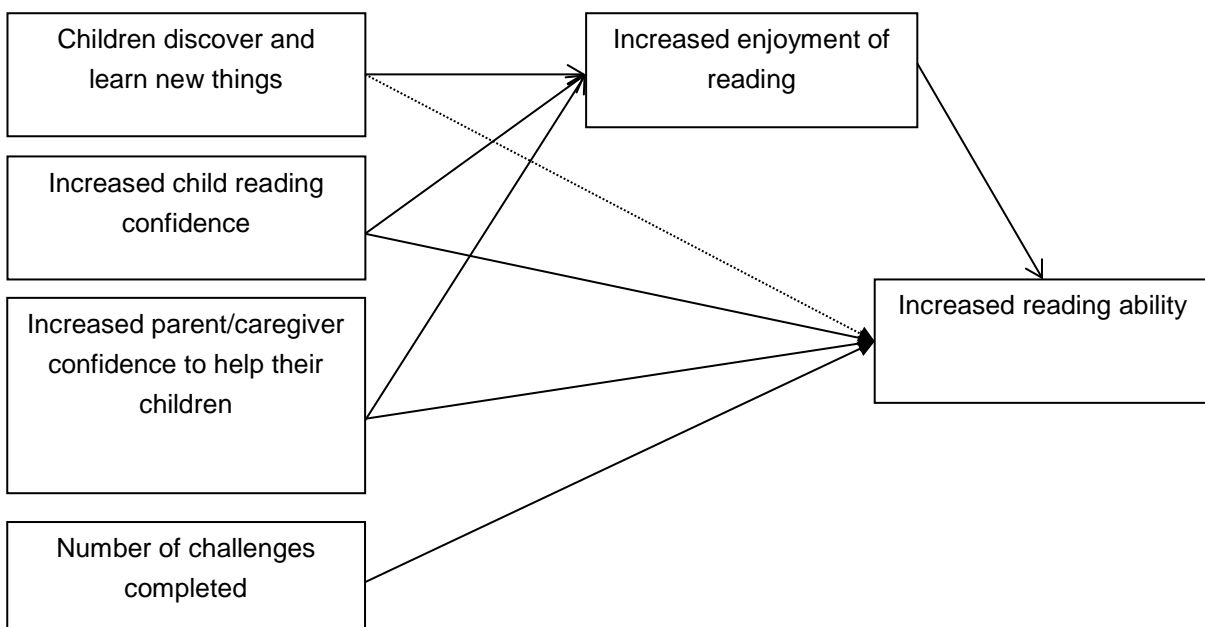
Collectively, the five predictors explained 41 per cent of the variance in reading ability scores ( $R^2 = .411$ ,  $F = 80.320$ ,  $p < 0.001^7$ ).

As with the previous two years, we tested whether increased enjoyment might be explaining, at least in part, *why* the other variables were positively impacting reading ability. The modelling showed that this was the case for parent/caregiver confidence, discovery, and increased children's reading confidence, but not for the number of challenges completed. Increased enjoyment of reading therefore again acted as a significant mediator for the first three predictor variables (all  $p$  values  $< .01$ ).

The model therefore shows that Dare to Explore initiated a chain of impacts with regard to children's reading ability: it encouraged children to discover and learn new things, increased children's reading confidence, and increased parents/caregivers' confidence to help the children. These three impacts then had a flow-on effect on children's enjoyment of reading, which itself had a strong subsequent impact on reading ability.

The consistency of findings across the last three years provides strong evidence that the factors listed above are playing an important role in driving Dare to Explore-related increases in reading ability. Such modelling provides valuable insights not only into how and why Dare to Explore is impacting on children's reading ability, but also into where Auckland Libraries may wish to focus future programme development in order to further enhance the impact of the programme on reading ability.

Figure 32: Factors that contribute to increased reading ability.



<sup>7</sup>  $R^2$  tells us the amount of variance in the outcome variable (reading ability) that is accounted for by the predictors.  $F$  tells us if the model is a good fit. Probability values, or  $p$  values, tells us how likely the relationship seen is due to chance. A value of less than 0.001 tells us there is less than 0.1% chance of the observed relationship occurring by chance.

## 8.0 Experience of children who did not complete the programme

Dare to Explore was designed so that children could choose which and how many challenges to complete; however, in order to be invited to the end-of-programme party, children needed to complete at least four challenges. For this reason, completion of four challenges was implicitly considered by library staff as the threshold that children needed to pass in order to have 'completed' the programme. This section investigates the characteristics and experience of those who did not complete the programme (i.e., who completed 3 or fewer challenges).

### 8.1 Children who did not complete the programme

As seen in Section 6, there was a wide range in the number of challenges completed by children. Parents/caregivers responses indicate that 11 per cent of children completed between one and three challenges and 5 per cent did not complete any challenges.

Comparing children who did and did not complete the programme shows that those who completed three or fewer challenges were more likely to be boys ( $\chi^2 = 7.08, p < .01$ )<sup>8</sup>. There were no significant differences in age between children who did and did not complete Dare to Explore ( $p > .05$ ).

### 8.2 How did children who did not complete the programme find Dare to Explore?

Children who did not complete the programme were compared to those who did with regard to<sup>9</sup>:

- Reading confidence before and after the programme was completed
- Changes in reading ability
- Enjoyment of challenges
- Whether children were encouraged to learn and discover new things
- Whether Dare to Explore increased children's enjoyment of reading, and
- Whether parents considered the challenges to be age appropriate.

Children who did not complete the programme had significantly lower reading confidence both before and after Dare to Explore (with non-completers having 0.27 of a point lower mean confidence before Dare to Explore, and 0.35 lower after Dare to Explore; both  $p$  values  $\leq .05$ ). Although the magnitude of the difference in reading confidence increased slightly over the holiday

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<sup>8</sup> The chi-square test of independence ( $\chi^2$ ) is used to test for relationships between numbers in a two dimensional table.

<sup>9</sup>  $t$ -tests were used to compare children who had completed three or fewer challenges (groups together to represent those who 'did not complete Dare to Explore') with those who have completed four or more challenges ('completed Dare to Explore').

period, the degree of *change* in reading confidence was not significantly different between the two groups of children ( $p = .46$ ).

The two groups differed significantly (all  $p$  values  $< .01$ ) on all remaining comparisons. Children who did not complete Dare to Explore had a lower increase in reading ability (mean increase for those who did not complete the programme = 3.47 vs. mean increase for those who did complete the programme = 3.78), lower enjoyment of challenges (mean of 3.24 vs. 4.31), lower levels of learning and discovery (3.65 vs. 4.19), and lower increases of enjoyment of reading (3.58 vs. 3.87).

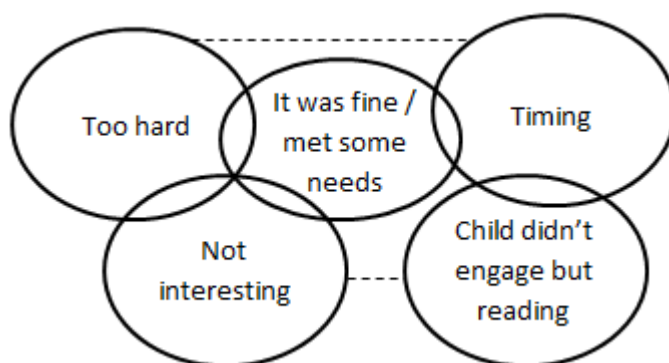
Parents/caregivers of children who did not complete Dare to Explore were also more likely to think the programme was not age appropriate than parents/caregivers of children who did complete the programme. This finding is interesting in the light of the finding that there were no significant differences in age between children who did and did not complete Dare to Explore.

In order to explain further explore the reasons for non-participation, parents/caregivers of children who did not complete the programme were asked an open-ended question about whether the programme met their children's needs.

### 8.3 Did Dare to Explore meet the needs of those who did not complete the programme?

Parents/caregivers of children who completed three or fewer challenges were asked whether Dare to Explore met their child's needs. Responses to this question ( $N=85$ ) were analysed and grouped according to themes. The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in parents/caregivers' responses. These themes overlap in various ways; parents/caregivers whose child's needs were fully or partially met might also have experienced barriers relating to programme timing or difficulty levels, for example, and children already engaged with reading may have found other parts of the programme boring, or may have been too busy to engage with challenges.

Figure 33: Did the programme meet your child's needs?



### 8.3.1 Too hard or not interesting

Several parents/caregivers described the programme as too hard, too complex or too overwhelming, particularly for younger children:

*far too difficult for my 7 yo*

*well... not really they find it boring and hard*

*No. My daughter found it too difficult to do enough challenges to get stamps/stickers & so she gave up.*

Structural complexity and the large number of challenges made it daunting for some families to begin:

*It seemed a bit daunting to my son at first so he didn't want to finish it*

*the set up was quite complicated and we never had a chance to sit down and understand it all. We have found that there were too many challenges*

Previous reading confidence may have an impact on how easy children find it to take part in the programme, and how much they engage with activities and challenges. It appeared that some children who were already successful readers were better able to engage in Dare to Explore independently. Children who were less confident with their reading found it more challenging to work independently and instead required support from family and librarians to complete the challenges:

*Found many/most too difficult for a struggling reader. Needed a lot of coaching/encouragement – and he found it all really stressful.*

*it became more a task parent had to complete than that she could do stand alone or with limited supervision*

*Unfortunately she was probably a bit young for it, she only just turned 5 and didn't have the capability to complete the challenges herself*

*My 5 year old was not as confident and it was a big effort for her to record all the information and although she is a fantastic reader, getting her to fill out the book was quite hard and she wasn't excited about it (it needed a lot of parent involvement which is fine however you may have better results, interest and confidence if the child can work with it more independently if it is something they can understand).*

Occasionally explicitly related to the theme of being 'too hard', some responses stated that the programme was boring or failed to engage their child's interests. This created a lack of motivation for children to fully participate in completing challenges:



*This year's activities didn't excite my child as much as they did the previous year.*

*He found writing out the name and author of each book a drag*

### **8.3.2 It was fine / met some needs**

For many respondents, Dare to Explore met some or all of their children's needs:

*It was ok the kids enjoyed some of the activities, as for some of the other activities were boring.*

*Yes. Just having him want to go to the library and be around learning activities was encouraging.*

*Yes. They grew in confidence over the holidays with their reading and interacting with different adults.*

*My child has special needs. So, we take everything a bit slower, and often go off on tangents. The nice thing about DtoE was that together we could go [sic] just the right amount of stuff we wanted to. And being in the library is awesome ... A place with so much to offer ... At your own individual pace.*

Some parents/caregivers explained that their child did get some benefit from taking part in Dare to Explore, but that there were issues of timing and, in some cases, with the adult support required to complete challenges:

*it was a fun addition to normal reading that he would have done anyway over the holidays, but it was too challenging to get him to participate every day as it would have taken too much parental input and "encouragement" ie he didn't want to do something on it every day.*

*Yes, challenges were varied and captured his interest. Unfortunately just such a busy holidays that we weren't able to do more.*

*The programme was fine however it was not supported by the child's parents and as I am a Grandmother we were not able to complete as many challenges as I would have liked.*

### **8.3.3 Child didn't engage but reading**

Some families made a choice to focus on the reading aspect of the programme, although it was not usually specified as to whether this decision was made by adults or children. For some children who were already engaged with reading, the additional features of Dare to Explore such as the challenges and activities were an unnecessary distraction from reading:

*My child focused more on the reading this time and has really enjoyed that aspect of it more than the challenges.*

*Reading a book everyday which was my child's goal took time and he was not interested in completing any of the challenges.*

*He just like the reading and recording part and finishing all [sic] the book reviews*

*I think my 6 yr old was not so much helped by the content of Dare to Explore but by the attempt at it and therefore the effort to attend the library more than otherwise, and getting books out that he wants to read himself. He was inspired to read his first 'chapter book' over these holidays which he would not otherwise had done*

Some parents/caregivers described barriers to engagement with the non-reading aspects of the programme, such as lack of time to attend activities:

*But also we were unable to get to any activities so he wasn't as motivated perhaps to continue with challenges. However it was still a useful programme for giving him encouragement to keep up independent reading over the holidays and as a result I feel that his reading ability improved overall.*

#### **8.3.4 Timing**

Issues with timing arose through families signing up late to the programme and having a limited time to complete challenges, or from having competing priorities during the summer holidays such as plans to visit family or spend time outdoors. Unexpected issues such as illness or bereavement also affected some families' ability to take part:

*The only reason for completing such few challenges, was bad timing. We didn't have enough time in 1 week to do all the challenges.*

*It was such a sunny and hot summer that this year we spent so much time at the beach and away on holiday which is the only reason why we didn't complete any challenges*

*The idea is definitely appealing but in the summer holidays we have so much else on.*

*Found challenges abit [sic] difficult but big sister helped but got sick so couldnt [sic] finish them.*

As discussed above, another issue related to timing was the requirement for adult time and support to assist children in completing the challenges.

## 9.0 Family engagement with each other and the library

In this section we investigate the impact of Dare to Explore on both the relationships between family members and the relationships families have with the library and librarians. The development of these relationships is important because Dare to Explore aimed not only to strengthen the relationship between libraries and their visitors, but also contribute to the strengthening of relationships within families.

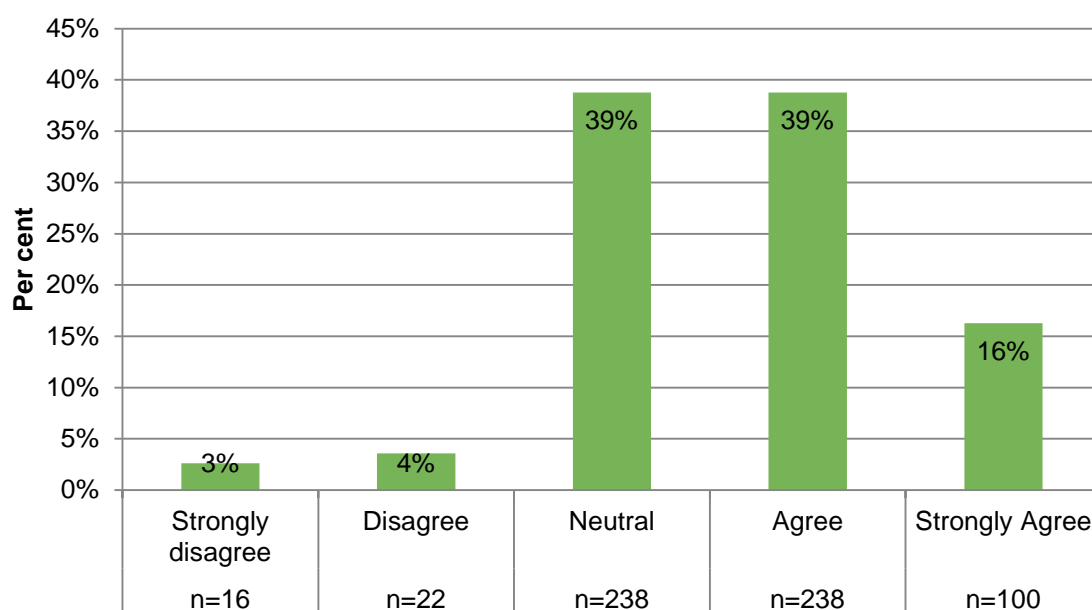
### 9.1 Dare to Explore as a way for family to spend time together

As discussed in Section 2.1, one central theme in responses to open ended questions was that of the summer reading programme as a way for family members to spend time with each other. While we saw that some children did complete some or all of Dare to Explore independently (see Section 6.2), for many families it was a programme that involved the wider family. There was a tension, however, between the experiences of families who commented on the ways that the programme supported family engagement, and the families who wanted or needed the programme to provide more opportunities for children to participate independently. For more detail, see Section 12.

### 9.2 Did parents/caregivers become more confident about helping their children to learn new things?

Over half of parents/caregivers (55%) reported feeling more confident about helping their child/ren to learn new things, as a result of participating in Dare to Explore. A significant percentage (39%) responded neutrally, and a minority actively felt their confidence had not improved (6%). In Section 7.5 we found that changes in parent confidence have a significant impact on children's reading ability.

Figure 34: Did Dare to Explore make parents/caregivers feel more confident about helping their children?



### **9.3 Family engagement with the library and librarians**

As discussed in Section 2.4, the quality of the programme's delivery at local libraries was one of the central themes found in the analysis of open ended survey responses. Many comments, both positive and negative, referred to families' interactions with librarians and their experiences at library activities.

Supportive and skilled librarians who facilitated children's success in Dare to Explore were valued by many families. When discussing what they liked about Dare to Explore, many parents/caregivers mentioned positive engagement with librarians (discussed in Section 12.2). Although positive interactions with librarians significantly outnumbered negative interactions, some library visitors had negative interactions with library staff. Some of these are described below (such as inconsistency of information across libraries), and specific instances are mentioned in Section 12.4.3.

When writing about aspects of Dare to Explore that could be improved, parents/caregivers sometimes spoke about libraries and librarians with a more impersonal tone, indicating that they had not developed any meaningful interpersonal relationship with the library staff. Specific suggestions for improvement covered a broad range of experiences and centred on improving communication between libraries and patrons, and within libraries between staff (discussed in Section 12.4). The focus on communication emerged through discussion about:

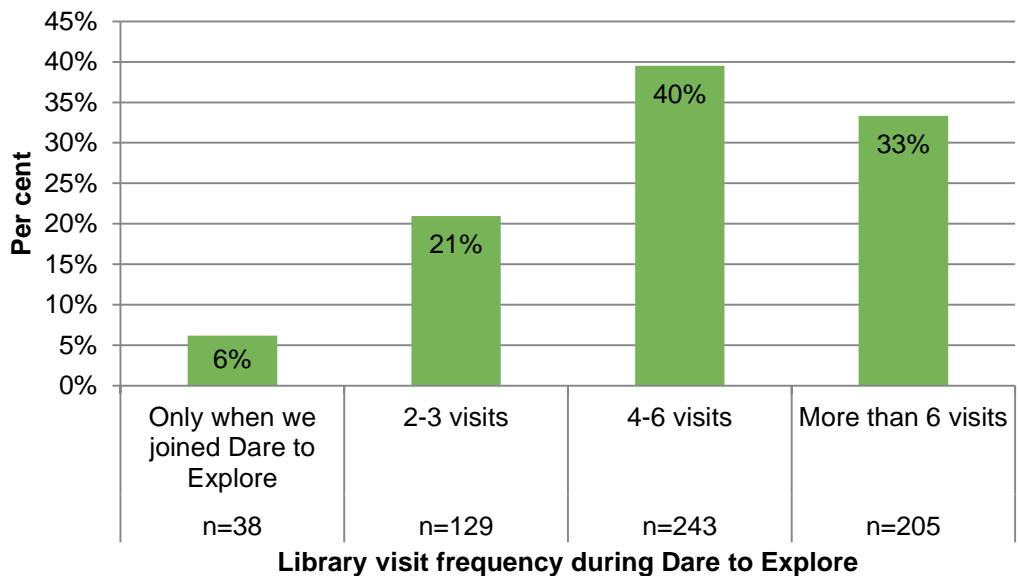
- Inconsistencies between libraries when explaining programme structure
- A need for more staff to support programme activities
- Disorganisation demonstrated by missing stamps/stickers and running out of passports
- Need for more communication about the details for library activities via email, text or website.

The variety of comments illustrates that there is variation in how Dare to Explore is delivered by different libraries, and therefore in how it is experienced by families.

### **9.4 How often did families visit the library during Dare to Explore?**

Close to three quarters (73%) of families visited the library four or more times during Dare to Explore. Twenty-one per cent visited between two and three times and only six per cent visited once (when they signed up to the programme).

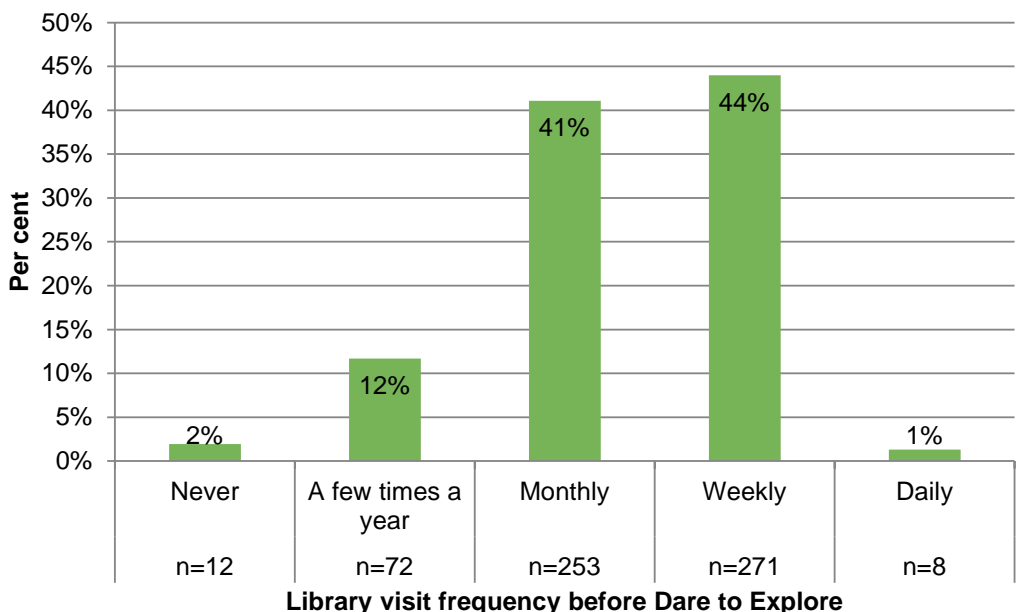
Figure 35: How many visits did families pay during Dare to Explore?



### 9.5 Were families likely to visit the library more often as a result of Dare to Explore?

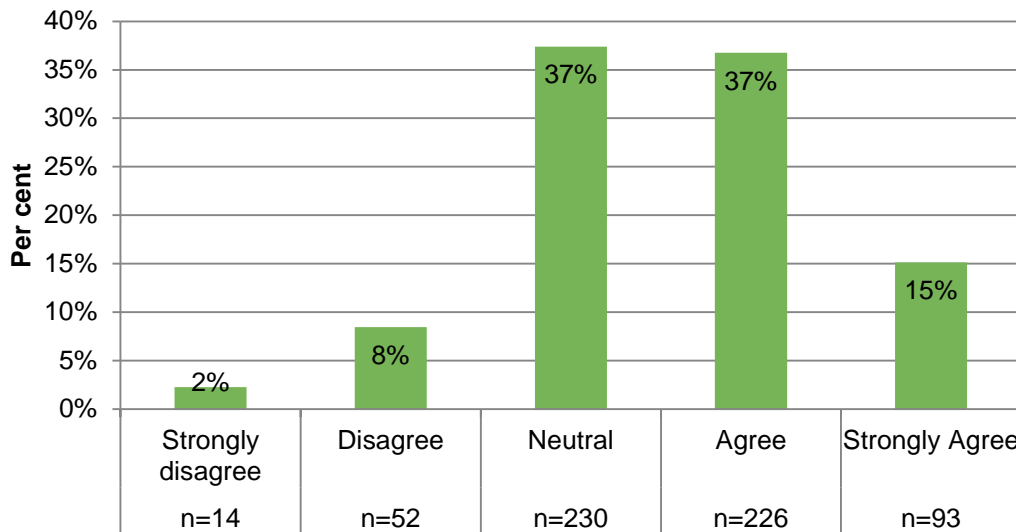
Before Dare to Explore, the majority of families visited the library monthly (41%) or weekly (44%). A smaller percentage visited a few times a year (12%), and only one per cent visited daily. Two per cent of Dare to Explore families had never visited the library before Dare to Explore.

Figure 36: How frequently did families visit the library before Dare to Explore?



We were interested in whether Dare to Explore had encouraged families to visit the library more frequently than they had previously. Over half of parents/caregivers stated that they agreed (37%) or strongly agreed (15%) that Dare to Explore has made them more likely to visit the library more frequently in the future.

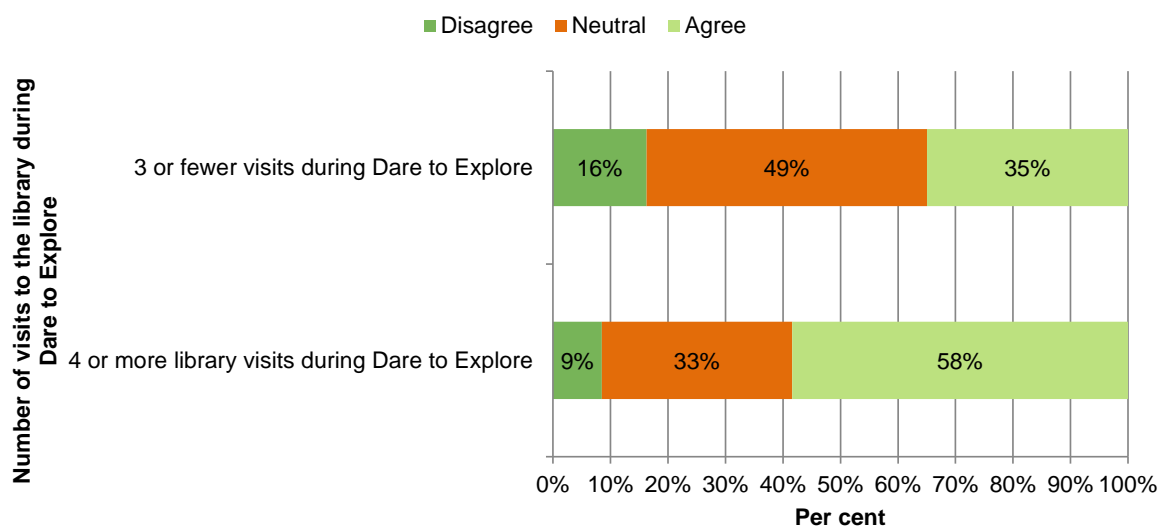
Figure 37: Were families more likely to visit the library more frequently after Dare to Explore?



Because there is a natural ceiling on how frequently one might need to go to the library, it is possible that responses to this question are influenced by how frequently families visited the library prior to Dare to Explore. This did appear to be the case, with families being slightly more likely to increase their visit frequency if they did not already visit the library regularly prior to Dare to Explore (with 59% of those who previously visited monthly or less frequently agreeing that they would visit the library more frequently).

Interestingly, the more frequently that families visited the library during the programme, the more likely they were to agree that Dare to Explore had made them likely to visit the library more often in the future.

Figure 38: Level of agreement with a statement that participants will visit the library more in the future as a result of participating in Dare to Explore, split by the number of times families visited a library during the programme.



## 9.6 Did children like going to the library more as a result of Dare to Explore?

We asked children whether Dare to Explore had made them like going to the library more. Eighty-two per cent of children said yes, they liked going to the library ‘a lot more’ or ‘a little bit more’. Last year, the percentage of children who reported liking going to the library a little or a lot more was 88 per cent.

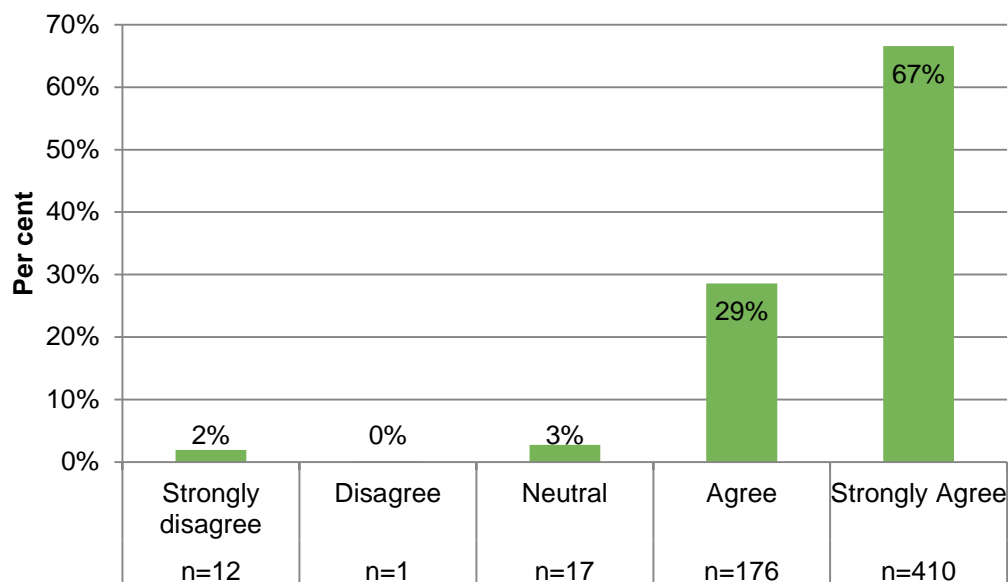
Table 4: Has Dare to Explore made you like going to the library more?

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, a lot more	115	41.7
Yes, a little bit more	112	40.6
No	49	17.8

## 9.7 How friendly and welcoming were the libraries?

Parents/caregivers were asked to state which library they used the most during Dare to Explore, and to answer some questions about the library and librarians. Almost all parents/caregivers (95%) felt that libraries were friendly and welcoming. Three per cent of parents/caregivers offered a neutral response, and two per cent disagreed that their library was friendly and welcoming.

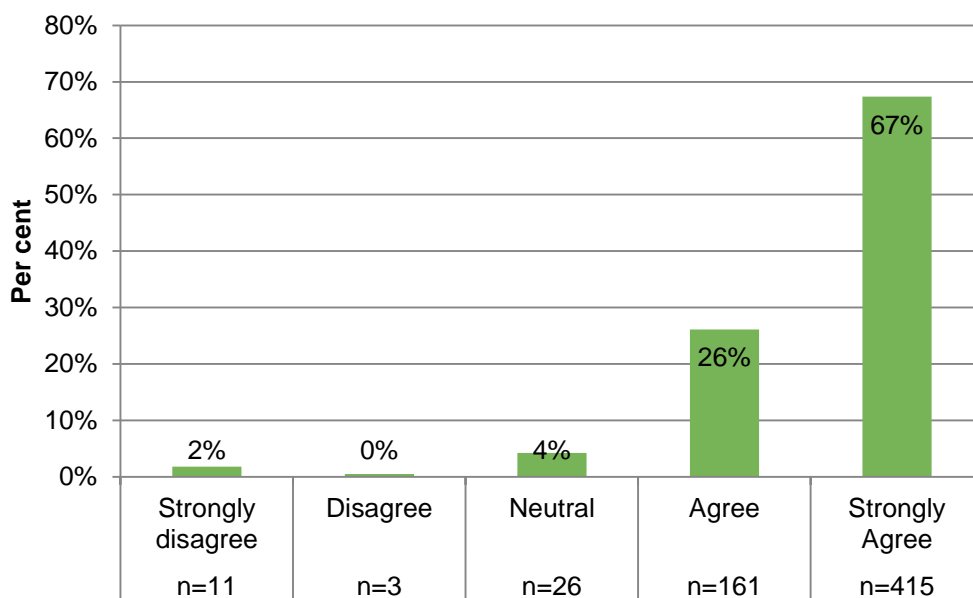
Figure 39: Library is friendly and welcoming



## 9.8 Were librarians seen as having time for families and being willing to help?

Ninety-four per cent of parents/caregivers felt librarians had time for them and were willing to help. Four per cent of parents/caregivers were neutral with regard to this question, and two per cent disagreed with the statement that librarians had time for them and were willing to help.

Figure 40: The librarians at this library had time for us and were willing to help



## 9.9 Do welcoming libraries or helpful librarians encourage families to visit libraries more often?

We were interested in what impact experiences of libraries and librarians had on how often families visited libraries. A multiple linear regression was conducted to evaluate whether a relationship exists between the experience of the library and librarians ('the library is friendly and welcoming', and 'the librarians at this library had time for us and were willing to help') and whether families reported being likely to visit the library more often in the future. The analysis showed that although the general experience of the library as friendly and welcoming was not a significant predictor of increased future visitation ( $\beta = .07, p = .32$ )<sup>10</sup>, whether the librarians had time and were willing to help was a significant predictor ( $\beta = .18, p = .01$ ).

While the low-to-moderate strength of this predictive relationship shows that there are many other factors that impact on whether families reported being likely to visit the library more often, the results nevertheless show that the interactions families had with librarians during Dare to Explore played an important role in determining whether they were likely to strengthen their relationship with the library in the future.

<sup>10</sup> Standardised beta values ( $\beta$ ) indicate the strength of the linear relationship between a predictor and an outcome. Higher numbers reflect a stronger association.



## **10.0 Website**

### **10.1 How many people used the website?**

Parents/caregivers were asked whether they and their child/ren used the Dare to Explore web pages on the Auckland Libraries website. Overall, 37 per cent of parents/caregivers reported that they did use the web pages, and 63 per cent reported that they did not make use of the web pages. This represents a large decrease in the number of parents/caregivers who used the web pages, down from 56 per cent who reported using the web pages in 2013/14.

Those who did use the web pages were asked if the online content was easy to find and what they liked best about Dare to Explore online. Those who did not use the web pages were asked why they and their child/ren did not use them.

Children were also asked whether they used the Dare to Explore web pages, with 45 per cent answering that they did. When children that used the web pages were asked how much they liked them, 52 per cent of children reported liking them a lot, 45 per cent a little bit and only four per cent did not like them.

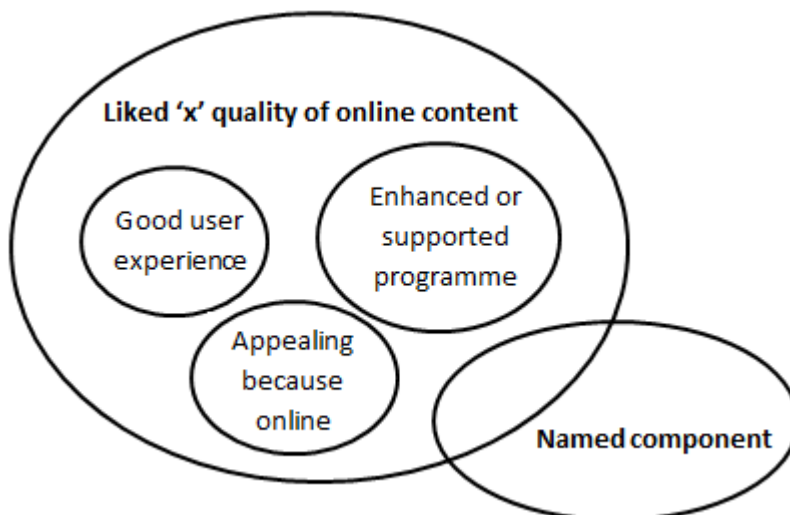
### **10.2 Was the online content easy to find?**

Of those who reported using the Dare to Explore web pages, 92 per cent felt that the online content was easy to find.

### **10.3 What did parents/caregivers like about Dare to Explore online?**

Responses to this open ended question were analysed by the authors of this report, and grouped according to themes. The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in parents/caregivers' responses. Most respondents either described a quality that they liked about the web pages they had used, named a component of the web content that they or their children had enjoyed, or talked about a component in combination with the qualities they appreciated about it.

Figure 41: What did parents/caregivers like best about Dare to Explore online?



### 10.3.1 Liked 'x' quality of online content

#### 10.3.1.1 Good user experience

Parents/caregivers described several aspects of good user experience in their responses. Ninety-two per cent of respondents said that the online content was easy to find, and some mentioned this in their comments as well:

*Easy to find information.*

*Easy to find things.*

Other qualities that respondents mentioned included accessibility, user-friendliness and ease of navigation:

*That everything was handy and easy right at your fingertips.*

*User friendly*

*it was easily accessible*

*That it could be accessed from where ever we were over the summer.*

*Good layout and flow to the pages*

Some mentioned a good user experience for their child/ren:

*My child can navigate through it.*

*It is easy to find the informtion [sic] I want, and my son can do it easily as well.*

Issues of parental support versus independent use appeared in some responses. Some parents/caregivers valued the fact that their children could use the web pages independently:

*easy to use the kids could do by themselves without my help*

*Kids did it themselves with no help from me.*

*I was able to let the kids find what they needed as it was easy to follow and find*

Others made comments that reflected some degree of parental support:

*Easy for children to do themselves with supervision*

*Easy to abbreviate when needed if reading aloud to children.*

See also Section 10.4 for responses from parents/caregivers who felt that the amount of parental involvement needed was a barrier to using the web pages.

Two parents/caregivers associated the web pages with the concept of 'safe' content, which may be associated with ideas of age appropriateness:

*Nice to have safe suitable content*

*Something different that the kids could safely do online*

### **10.3.1.2 Enhanced or supported programme**

Some parents/caregivers described experiences with the web pages that enhanced or supported their engagement with Dare to Explore. Section 12.2 details the aspects of the programme that parents/caregivers valued most, and these were reflected in some of the responses to this question.

These aspects include support and encouragement for reading:

*Discovered new authors in areas of the child's interest*

*Gave the children an opportunity to think of reading not just of books, but the computer also.*

*They had to READ to get the answers!!*

Learning experiences:

*Kids love using this medium to learn and discover so this, married with looking at books, really enhanced the experience.*

*It was good, for them do [sic] do research*

*It was interesting. Full of information for all ages.*

*We all learnt something new*

Fun and interactivity:

*The online activities [sic] provided another layer of interest and fun.*

*Fun backgrounds.*

*Fun, easy and educational for the kids*

Skills and confidence building:

*increased my daughters confidence using a computer*

*She was able to use computer skills as well as reading.*

Support for engagement between family members or with librarians:

*Gave another connection to the library.*

*Enjoyed the online challenge as we could complete it together as a family.*

*I played it through the computer onto the tv so all the kids could do it together.*

*Activities where librarians were involved.*

### **10.3.1.3 Appealing because online**

Some parents/caregivers valued the web pages because online content or activities involving computers were particularly appealing to them or their child/ren:

*That my daughter got to complete a task online rather than with pen and paper for a change*

*Just having an online component was pretty great. Tying in reading to using a computer was like beaven [sic] for our mini nerd*

*Kids love anything online. Its [sic] another tool to keep them interested in learning.*

*Children always get excited about internet and computers.*

*My son enjoyed doing the online tasks as he enjoys using computers.*

*My son liked that some of the activities were 'screen time'*

These responses provide a contrast to those of parents/caregivers who chose not to engage with Dare to Explore online because they did not want their child/ren using computers over the holidays, see Section 10.4.

### 10.3.2 Named component

Many parents/caregivers named one or more specific components of the web pages when asked what they liked best. The most frequently mentioned component was the 'space mission' challenge, a multi-choice space-themed quiz that was set in the context of a story about being on a mission as part of the 'Dare: Explorers of the Universe' team. The illustrations included NASA-sourced space photography and simple animations of the Dare to Explore characters.

*The space exploration program was bright and colourful and interesting to the children and well researched.*

*The space challenge was great*

*The space mission was excellent! I really enjoyed it too.*

*Very informative yet simple enough for the kids to understand. The animations are so cool too.*

Parents/caregivers also mentioned the online activity calendars. Families typically received the printed version of their local library's activity calendar only, as part of their starting pack for Dare to Explore. The online calendars were therefore the primary means by which they were able to find out what other libraries nearby had planned. Some parents/caregivers used this online component to support participation in activities at multiple libraries:

*I could easily see what activities were on at our nearest libraries.*

*We could find out what was happening at other libraries.*

*The ability to check all libraries in Auckland to see what activities were on that we might like to go to.*

*Being able to have a look at what each library was doing and how close they are to us.*

Other named components included the blog where children could submit their reviews and receive reading recommendations from librarians; the registration form; and the Wall of Fame for children who had completed 60 challenges:

*I loved the way there was feedback left after our son entered his on-line book review. That is so neat for someone to reply and share other books that might be suitable and of interest. He got a real buzz that someone had read his review.*

*Interactive site where they could post book reviews for example*

*Being able to register for the programme, it was more convenient to fill up the required details on my own*

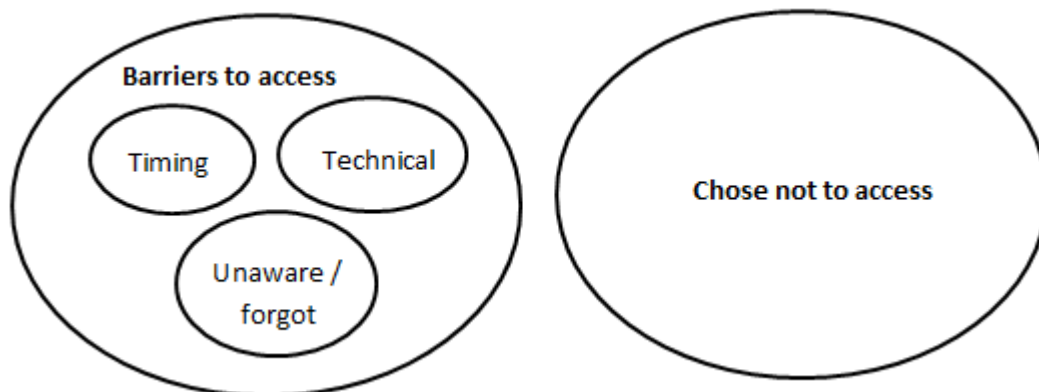
*enrolling online was easy*

*We loved the Dare to Explore website online challenges and best of all the Wall of Fame. My 5 year old is looking forward to joining again and all of the challenges and see herself in the wall one day.*

## 10.4 Why didn't parents/caregivers use the website?

The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in parents/caregivers' responses to this open ended question. These can be categorised into two separate groups; either parents/caregivers experienced a barrier to access, or chose not to access the web pages.

Figure 42: Why did you and your child/ren not use the Dare to Explore web pages?



### 10.4.1 Barriers to access

#### 10.4.1.1 Timing

Responses that focused on not having enough time were a frequent reason for not using web pages:

*just didn't get around to it this holidays as we were busy with other things*

*We got too busy with other activities*

*Busy with other holiday activities rather than spending time on computer/ipad [sic]*

Some made the connection between being short of time to use the web pages, and the need for parental support:

*time was biggest factor and also needing dedicated parent time.*

*5yr old would have needed 1 on 1 support on the web page and with a toddler present this would have been hard to complete and therefore frustrating for Mr5.*

*I prefer he does not engage in too much computer time at this state – though acknowledge that he does need to learn how to find information and use it from the internet in a positive way. It was probably mostly down to my time (not enough of it).*

See Section 10.4.2 for those who chose not to use the web pages because of the parental involvement they felt would be necessary, particularly in supporting younger children.

#### **10.4.1.2 Technical**

Some barriers to access arose due to technological issues, such as lack of Internet availability or lack of computers or devices capable of connecting to the Internet. In some cases, this lack of access was due to families being away on holiday and not having access to technologies they would otherwise have at home:

*We were away a lot during the holidays and not near computers*

*We spent the summer at the campground with non-existent internet access (Awesome)*

*Had no wifi access over the holidays*

Other respondents mentioned lacking access to technology at home:

*We arent [sic] online at home*

*No internet at home and not signed on to use the library computers*

*don't have computer, don't have wifi or internet connection at home.*

#### **10.4.1.3 Unaware/forgot**

Despite links provided in the printed passport, many respondents failed to realise that there was additional content online, including an online challenge. Being unaware of or forgetting about the web pages was a common response to this question:

*Wasn't aware of them*

*I actually forgot about them :(*

*We forgot or perhaps didn't realise there was online content.*

*I didn't know they existed. If I had we [would] have used them*

Two respondents associated the lack of awareness with the librarians' failure to inform or remind them:

*we werent [sic] aware as the librarian didnt [sic] tell us*

*just didn't think of it... maybe an email reminder would have been good.*

#### **10.4.2 Chose not to access**

In many cases, parents/caregivers made the decision to prevent or limit their child/ren's access to the Dare to Explore web pages. These decisions were often part of a wider decision about Internet access over the summer holidays, or about computer use by their child/ren in general. Some parents/caregivers talked about limiting access:

*Was trying to limit screen time in the holidays*

*She wasn't able to do it on her own & I limit screen time they have each day.*

*I try to limit screen time and see what we can leave without it.*

Some respondents chose not to engage in any online programme content:

*The point of it all as I saw it was to get away from screens*

*Didn't want to spend time on computer.*

*Prefer not to do computer based activities*

In some cases, parents/caregivers felt that the web pages – or Internet use in general – were better suited to older children and were not appropriate or accessible enough for younger children:

*My son is a little young for screen time*

*Kid too young. Might end up watching you tube*

*Not age/reading level appropriate.*

*More age appropriate and convenient to work from the book*

Some respondents made a connection between the age of their child/ren and the amount of time required to assist them with web-based content. Through this connection, it can be inferred that to benefit from the Dare to Explore web pages – as with other aspects of the programme – children may need to be able to undertake some activities independently. The ability of older children to



undertake web-based activities independently is assumed from comments made stating that young children were unable to do this:

*He is too young to do it himself*

*Because at the moment she is not older [sic] enough to use independently*

*The web pages probably suit older children better.*

Several parents/caregivers contrasted the use of computers or the Internet with other preferred behaviours, with the implication that the use of online content would not provide the benefits they were seeking from alternative activities. Some contrasted computer use with the desire for their child/ren or the wider family to be social or to interact face-to-face:

*Focused on reading and social face-to-face activities.*

*We found it more exciting to meet our librarian and register face to face*

*I prefer her to have interactions with librarians and children than with computers.*

Some talked about their child/ren taking part in 'hands-on' activities, such as practising handwriting. Some of these responses may indicate a distinction drawn between activities where child/ren can physically participate in person, rather than 'virtual' activities taking place online.

*Really wanted them to do less screen time in the holidays and more writing/drawing/holding a pen time.*

*We prefer to do things manually if possible, kids spend already too much time in front of a screen in our opinion.*

*She enjoyed the hands on activities*

Several made the connection between computer use and time spent indoors, preferring their child/ren to spend more time outdoors over the summer holidays:

*our family goal was to complete as many outdoor challenges and activities as possible and decrease 'screen time'*

*Don't encourage computer use when it's good weather.*

*They don't do much screen time, i prefer them to play outside*

Some valued the reading aspect of the programme and felt that using the web pages would have detracted from their child/ren's reading:

*I was using this as a reading programme to maintain my youngest child's reading. I did not want to distract that by using the web pages.*

*We spend limited time on the computer, my daughter loves reading books and so do I*

*Was more interested in getting out and doing activities and reading print books.*

Some respondents found that the web pages failed to interest their child/ren:

*kids were more interested in doing their own things on the computer.*

*My child showed no interest.*

Finally, some parents/caregivers saw no need to engage with Dare to Explore online and felt that other parts of the programme suited their needs instead:

*No need to use them.*

*Was there a need to use the web page and how would they help??*

*No need to with the booklet we had*

## **10.5 Suggested improvements to the website**

Very few parents/caregivers who used the website reported any issues with using the web pages (N=6). Two mentioned functionality that didn't work properly:

*we found the online stuff together, although the space mission challenge didn't seem to work, this was a little disappointing*

*I had trouble with uploading a book review to the forum.*

Two made requests for additional functionality:

*Able to do some challenges – created variation. But apart from printing off end page – couldn't prove that a child had completed an online challenge. Would be good to have some way of doing this in future.*

*Once you got to the correct Library it was OK, however if you wanted to compare activities across Libraries it was not easy.*

One pointed out an error in the online space mission:

*There was a word missing in one of the paragraphs which made it initially confusing by [sic] on the whole it was excellent.*

One respondent felt that the online content was at odds with the programme content offered at the library, which may be an indicator that some of the online content was viewed as age inappropriate:

*I don't think that the online component was necessary. What we did complete was at a much higher level than the rest of the programme i.e. what was being offered at the library*

Amongst those parents/caregivers who didn't use the web pages, age appropriateness may also have been an issue for some:

*I explored the web site a bit and thought the challenges at the libraries would be more interesting for my young child.*

*just did not get around to it, we did one online quizz, but [my daughter] did not really understand it*

See Section 10.4.2 for more responses on the theme of age appropriateness.

As above, one respondent had trouble accessing the online space mission:

*Our computer couldn't open the space page.*

One respondent found incorrect information online concerning library activities:

*Although i did check the timetables once and the times were actually wrong on the website, so just went off the printed calendar in the folder*

Compared to the previous year, very few parents/caregivers referred to issues of usability, with only one respondent giving the following feedback:

*My wife found it too hard to explore*

When asked what could be done to improve Dare to Explore, similar themes arose amongst those responses that mentioned online components of the programme. There were comments about the functionality of the online calendar:

*1) One online activity per set of challenges 2) a Calender [sic] with all events or that you can select multiple libraries at a time.*

*I do think if the calendar option dates and times were available online it would be accessible anywhere and an exceptional option to consider.*

*Work on the online calendar. There were a few times when what was posted online didn't match what was happening.*

Two respondents made suggestions for additional online content or functionality:

*Email / txt reminders of events & activities, an option to keep a record of achievements digitally instead of in booklet*

*Add a page of instructions or internet link for parents of children under 8 years as programme needs more parents input than was expected*

One respondent found the online content difficult to find:

*Also, it is traditionally very difficult to find the kids' holiday activity info on the library website. Start from the main council library page, pretend you're a new parent, and there are so many different bits to click on and sometimes you never get there. I think a direct link advertised on the main page would be awesome. Then we can see a list of libraries and their holiday activities quickly.*

A few parents/caregivers wanted more of the programme to be available online:

*make it online then paper based and link with their own account*

*Consider having some challenges that can be completed online.*

*Integrate with social media, e-books, audio books,...*

*An online gallery of work? Then the kids could see what others have done.*

*Maybe add more web based activities – we were away for some of the hols*

Two specifically requested a Dare to Explore app:

*Further extend the digital experiences possibly use an app to record projects and books read*

*Create an App of the programme to promote greater interaction between the library and child.*

However, some respondents felt that the programme already included too much online content and their comments are a reminder of the barriers some participants will experience if programme content is only accessible online:

*Less tasks which involve searching online*

*I am guardian for 2 children whom I work with at school, but they will not be able to complete the survey as they do not have a computer at home. Therefore they also could not really participate in the program as so many of the challenges necessitated the use of the internet. I realise that they could use the computer at the library, but to me that is not the reason why I bring them to the library.*

## 11.0 The effect of prior confidence on children's experience of Dare to Explore

In order to understand how prior reading confidence affected the experience of Dare to Explore, we split children into high and low prior confidence groups, as rated by their parents/caregivers. High confidence was defined as having a rating of four or five on the five-point scale used. Low confidence was defined as 1-3 on the same scale.

Low and high confidence children were compared<sup>11</sup> with regard to:

- age
- gender
- reading confidence after the programme
- changes in reading confidence over the summer period
- changes in reading ability over the summer period
- enjoyment of challenges that were completed
- whether children were encouraged to discover and learn new things
- whether Dare to Explore increased children's enjoyment of reading
- the number of challenges completed, and
- whether parents considered the challenges to be age appropriate

Initial analyses showed that prior confidence was significantly associated with both age and gender. Children with low confidence were more likely to be younger (mean age = 6.5 years) than children with high prior confidence (mean age = 8.0 years), and were more likely to be boys than girls.

Because prior confidence was quite strongly related to age, it is possible that subsequent differences between high and low confidence children may be due to the effects of age, rather than confidence, *per se*. To control for this possibility, the impact of age was statistically controlled in all subsequent tests.

The subsequent tests showed that children with low prior confidence differed significantly from children with high confidence on the following factors:

- reading confidence after the programme
- changes in reading confidence over the summer period
- enjoyment of challenges that were completed
- whether parents/caregivers felt the programme encouraged their children to discover and learn new things.

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<sup>11</sup> Using *t*-tests, Chi Square tests of independence, and ANCOVA. Differences are reported as significantly different where  $p < .05$ .

Although low confidence children still had lower overall confidence at the end of Dare to Explore (3.19 vs. 4.63), they did experience a significantly greater increase in confidence over the summer period (0.70 increase vs. 0.10). This indicates that Dare to Explore is particularly valuable for students who might be struggling in terms of their reading confidence.

According to their parents, children with low prior confidence had lower enjoyment of the challenges that they completed (with a mean score of 3.95 vs. 4.28), and were less encouraged to discover and learn new things (4.05 vs. 4.17).

In contrast to the above differences, low confidence children did not differ significantly on the following factors:

- changes in reading ability over the summer period
- whether Dare to Explore increased children's enjoyment of reading
- the number of challenges completed
- whether parents considered the challenges to be age appropriate.

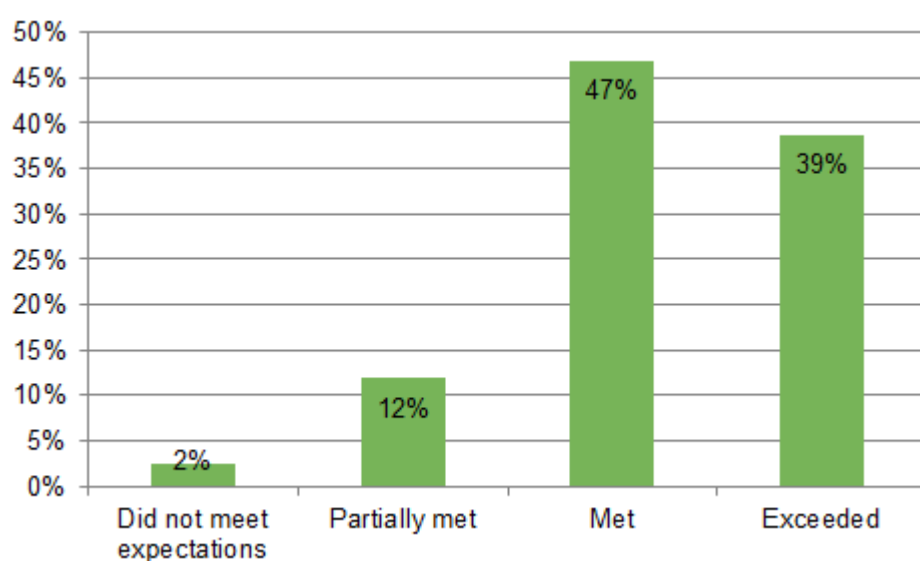
The comparison between high and low confidence children therefore shows that (when controlling for possible effects of age differences in the two groups), low confidence children enjoyed Dare to Explore less and were not as encouraged to discover or learn new things. Their prior confidence did not impact meaningfully on the number of challenges completed, changes in enjoyment of reading, or reading ability. Parents of low confidence children felt that Dare to Explore was equally age appropriate for their children. Encouragingly, children with lower confidence experienced greater increases in confidence over the summer period.

## 12.0 Strengths and areas for improvement

Parents/caregivers were asked whether Dare to Explore met their expectations. The majority felt that Dare to Explore had met (47%) or exceeded (39%) their expectations. Twelve per cent reported that their expectations were partly met, and only two per cent felt that Dare to Explore did not meet their expectations.

While there was a small increase from the previous year in those who felt that the programme did not meet their expectations (from 1% in 2013/14), there was also an increase in those who felt that their expectations had been exceeded (from 35% in 2013/14).

Figure 43. Did Dare to Explore meet expectations - parents/caregivers survey.



### 12.1 Children's overall rating of Dare to Explore

Children were asked how many stars they would give Dare to Explore. Over half (63%) rated it as 'awesome', with a smaller percentage rating it as 'good' (28%); a small number rated it 'ok' (5%); and even fewer children (3%) rated Dare to Explore 'boring'.

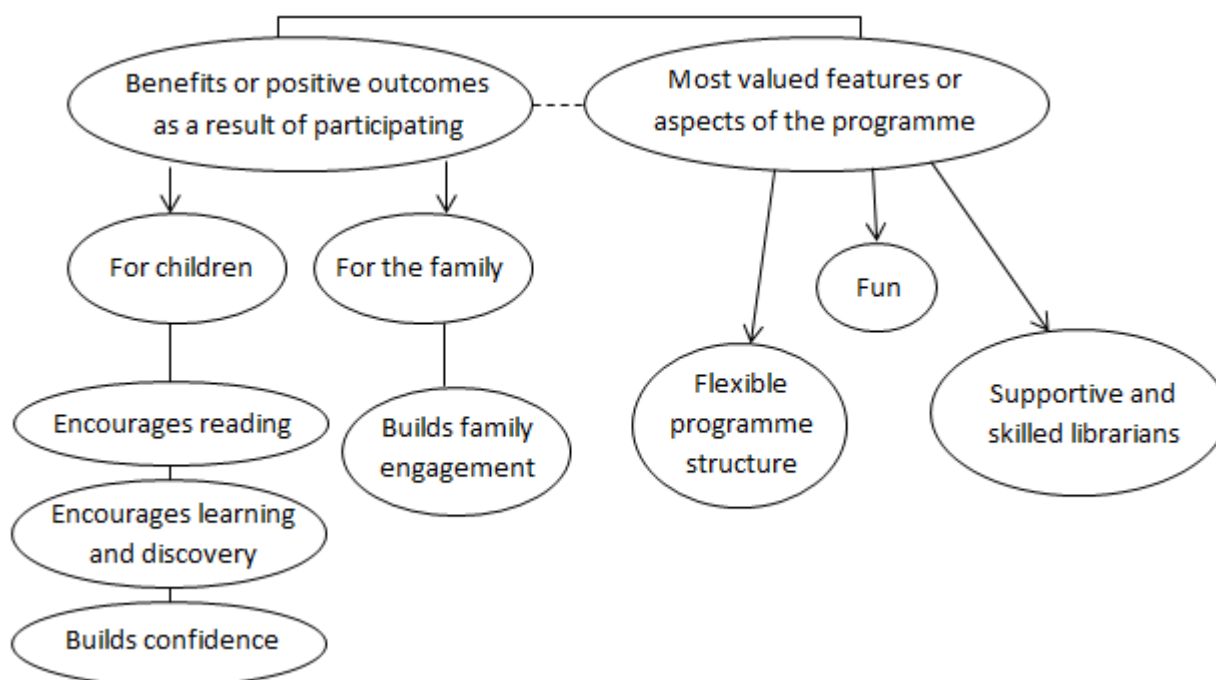
Table 5: How many stars would you give Dare to Explore? – Children's survey.

	N	%
Boring (1 star)	7	2.5
Ok (2 stars)	15	5.4
Good (3 stars)	78	28.2
Awesome (4 stars)	177	63.9

## 12.2 What did parents/caregivers like most about Dare to Explore?

As with other open-ended questions, responses were analysed and grouped according to themes. The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in parents/caregivers' responses. These fall into two main categories; responses that talked about benefits or outcomes received from Dare to Explore, and responses that talked about particular valued features or aspects of Dare to Explore. Many responses shared characteristics of both categories.

Figure 44: What did parents/caregivers like most about Dare to Explore?



Parents and caregivers were asked what they liked most about Dare to Explore. Some mentioned benefits or positive outcomes that they believed their children or families received by participating in Dare to Explore; some named the aspects or features of the programme that they valued the most.

Some respondents chose to focus on one or the other, either by mentioning benefits without offering links to specific aspects of the programme:

*Encourages my son to be independent with his reading.*

*It made my daughter want to read more books and visit the library again. It also helped her practice her writing.*

*make kid to think independent*

Or by naming aspects of the programme without explicitly stating the valued outcomes they associated with those aspects:



*The craft sessions and the activities in the guide book and in the library.*

*Enthusiasm of the librarians*

*The passport which could be marked with achievements.*

Some respondents made links between aspects of the programme and perceived benefits or outcomes:

*There are many different activities and my son loves them and that can encourage him to read more.*

*Fun time at the library, we had lots of fun doing/creating things with other kids.*

*The staff was extremely helpful and cooperative. Children felt happy*

### **12.2.1 Positive outcomes from Dare to Explore**

In Section 4.2 we reported that parents/caregivers' motivations for enrolling children in the programme included aiming to maintain or increase their child's reading ability (82%) or to give them something fun to do (76%). Just over half were looking for something to keep children busy during the holidays (52%). Some of the positive outcomes mentioned by parents/caregivers relate to the fulfilment of these expectations; other benefits mentioned help to build a richer picture of the positive outcomes experienced by both children and families.

Regarding benefits for children, parents/caregivers particularly valued the way Dare to Explore provided:

- opportunities for and encouragement of reading
- learning and discovery experiences
- confidence building.

For the wider family, the programme provided ideas and activities to support family engagement over the holidays.

#### **12.2.1.1 Encourages reading**

The primary motivation for parents/caregivers to sign up their children was to maintain or increase their reading ability. Many respondents mentioned reading in their answer. Parents/caregivers valued the fact that their child/ren were reading over the summer holidays:

*It motivate my child to read over the extended break therefore not forget how to read.*

*Kept my kids reading up over the summer*

*I just like that [it] encourages my kids to keep reading and learning throughout the holidays.*

Some said that their children were encouraged to read greater amounts or to read more widely than usual:

*Reading a range of books/topics that I normally wouldn't be able to encourage my child to read in the holidays.*

*Great initiative to encourage summer reading particularly in new and interesting areas.*

*it did propel them to read much more than they would in a holiday [sic] period.*

Some described gains in their child/ren's reading ability or interest:

*My son liked reading more books and improve a lot ability [sic] on reading*

*Getting my child an opportunity to read more books to develop her reading skills.*

*The librarian's enthusiasm for reading really encouraged an enjoyment of both reading and the library space*

*My oldest realised that reading chapter books meant better stories not just longer reading.*

Some valued their child/ren being encouraged to read every day:

*The commitment made by the kids to read everyday*

*how engaged the boys are with the programme and the incentive to read daily*

There were several features or aspects of the programme that parents/caregivers associated with these gains. Some respondents appreciated the structured approach to building a 'reading habit', and the additional motivation provided by features such as the reading goal and rewards such as the party invite, stickers and stamps:

*The reward system for reading books; it worked perfectly for my son (age 6) who was very keen to maintain his own reading practice over the holidays as a result*

*Helped encourage my child to read a book independently each day so that he could colour in a footprint.*

*The activities kept our reluctant reader interested and the idea of a special celebration at the end got her reading more than she ever has.*

*The reading log was great as she took it as a challenge to fill up all the spaces.*

Some associated the encouragement of librarians with increased reading enjoyment or confidence:

*The fact that my daughter felt empowered and excited to read on holiday. The Librarian that discussed it with her was amazing.*

*The contact with the librarian asking the children about the books which really encouraged my children to keep going.*

*Reading programs and the workers are fun and comfortable to be around. My child gain a lots of confidence in her self and her reading is getting better and better.*

Some cited the amount of variety and personal choice as factors that led to either greater enjoyment of reading in an area of existing interest, or to children reading more widely than before:

*The challenges encouraged them to read books that they would not normally choose.*

*Letting him choose what he prefers to read, also getting him to keep up with his reading skills, to allow him to improve and stay connected to reading on a regular basis.*

#### **12.2.1.2 Encourages learning and discovery**

As well as gains in reading confidence, interest and ability, parents/caregivers appreciated the opportunities the programme provided for their children to learn and discover, and to a lesser extent, express their creativity. Just as some children were motivated to read outside of their usual interest areas, the challenges and activities were seen to support the exploration of new topics and ideas, encouraging children to 'think differently'. Some respondents talked of cognitive skills or behaviours that supported learning which the programme had helped develop, such as the ability to set and meet goals or to be creative:

*Provides children the ability to plan, think and act. It helps them to set goals and achieve them.*

*Heaps of activities, which are helping children to increase their knowledge and creativity.*

*It gave them the opportunity to use their own imagination as well as the reading.*

*it enables creativity in the kids' minds.*

In several cases, the parents/caregivers explicitly linked the learning experienced through Dare to Explore with fun:

*They were fun-filled learning experiences for my children.*

*I love that it encourages so much learning while having fun.*

*Fun and educational activities that help children to learn and explore more of the library resources.*

A small number of parents mentioned particular areas of value where the programme had increased their child's learning, such as with science or computer-related skills:

*There were more (I noticed) IT related activities which we appreciated as I'm trying to improve my son's knowledge of comps. and programmes.*

*A plentiful coverage of knowledge, including astronomy, geography, history, science and amazing peoples.*

*my girls talked about the chemistry experiments for days. It particularly makes my older daughter think about the information she learns in different ways.*

Science and maths-related programme content are mentioned in Section 6.5, 'What would parents/caregivers like more of?', showing that these content areas could be developed more.

Parents/caregivers also valued some programme challenges and activities when compared to other holiday activities, such as watching television or playing on the computer. Dare to Explore activities may have been more highly valued and encouraged by parents/caregivers as they are framed as being educational. Education was seen as encompassing both the acquisition of skills (self-motivation, ability to find new information) and of knowledge (e.g., learning facts about space).

*It gave me some ideas which make my daughter busy and fun without watching TV DVD or GAME*

*The challenge to keep reading and doing activities outside of tv, computer, gaming*

*My child stopped playing on the computer to do the activities.*

### **12.2.1.3 Builds confidence**

While the increase in children's confidence may have been one of the implicit gains in increased reading ability or learning and discovery, a small number of parents mentioned building confidence as one of their most valued aspects of Dare to Explore. They attributed their children's sense of achievement and empowerment to various features of the programme, including the praise and attention of librarians, and the completion of challenges.

*He left there 10 feet tall! Every subsequent time we went back to get things signed off, they were just as good and that really helped his confidence.*

*filling out the passport built up my child's [sic] confidence about how great they are at reading.*

*The interaction has built up my daughter's confidence.*

Some respondents also mentioned the way the programme encouraged their child/ren to undertake independent activity over the holidays. Over half of the respondents to the children's survey said that they completed at least some of the programme on their own (52%). See Section 6.2 for more about children's independent participation. Programme challenges and activities which provide opportunities for children to work independently may also be a factor in building children's confidence:

*Encourages my son to be independent with his reading*

*the challenges in the book were great – lots of variety, lots they could do independently.*

*My children were able to do it independently (although I offered to help) at their own ability level*

See also Section 12.4.2 below for responses from parents and caregivers who found that Dare to Explore did not support their child/ren's independent involvement.

#### **12.2.1.4 Builds family engagement**

Along with benefits for their children, parents/caregivers also appreciated the benefits experienced by the family as a whole. While just over half of the child survey respondents said that they completed at least some of Dare to Explore on their own, over three quarters completed at least some with help from their family (76%). Several features of the programme supported family engagement over the holidays. The passport was seen as a resource that provided ideas for holiday activities families could do together, or enriched existing plans, with the challenges offering opportunities for interactions between family members:

*The booklet gave me some cool ideas to do with my son.*

*We were able to incorporate the challenges / themes into what ever activity we were doing outside of what was on offer at the Library.*

*Sitting down as a family to complete challenges*

*The satisfaction each child got on completing an activity and showing there [sic] father!*

Parental goals such as keeping children busy over the holidays were supported by the programme as well:

*Gave the children something to do when they said they were bored*

*it kept the kids busy for hours.*

*Fun activities , friendly staff and the kids were never bored.*

A few respondents also valued the way the programme enabled them to motivate children to visit the library during the holidays. The implicit understanding is that visiting the library is something that parents/caregivers value, and therefore that the additional motivation for their child/ren to visit is of benefit to parents/caregivers:

*Gives the kids good ideas of things to do with their time and get them keen to visit the library lots.*

*It made my daughter want to read more books and visit the library again.*

### **12.2.2 Valued features or aspects of Dare to Explore**

As well as naming the ways that they and their families had benefited from participating in Dare to Explore, parents and caregivers also identified specific features or aspects of the programme as valuable. The following section explores three key features of the content, structure and delivery of Dare to Explore that were particularly appealing to respondents; it was flexible, it was fun, and it was delivered by skilled and supportive librarians.

#### **12.2.2.1 Flexible programme structure**

Firstly, many respondents placed value on the programme's flexibility of structure, which allowed families some ability to customise their participation in the programme. The most frequently mentioned aspect of this flexibility was the variety of content on offer. Parents/caregivers linked the varied challenges and range of activities<sup>12</sup> with the programme's ability to appeal to diverse ages, abilities, needs and interests:

*Lots of varied topics to suit kids with different interests.*

*The flexibility that even young children who are new entrants and emerging readers can still participate at their own level.*

*Fantastic to have a range of activities to suit all ages, there was something for everyone.*

The variety of activities on offer was surprising to some respondents, in a library context:

*I loved the variety of activities provided by the library. They were activities I would not expect to see in a library and were lead with such enthusiasm.*

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<sup>12</sup> Challenges and activities were mentioned frequently but at times ambiguously, as many commenters did not draw a clear distinction between the challenges in the passport and the related activities provided by libraries.

The range of challenges was sometimes seen as an encouragement for children to branch out in their reading or discovery, as it exposed them to new ideas and topics outside of their usual preferred areas of interest:

*Good prompts to try books in new subject or genre.*

*We probably read a greater variety of books because of the challenges*

Conversely, some mentioned that the variety gave children an opportunity to pursue existing interests or to get pleasure from choosing to read their favourite type of material:

*The variety of choice for each section. It allowed children chose [sic] where their strengths and interests lie*

*Letting him choose what he prefers to read*

That aspect of choice was seen as important by some parents. Children were able to choose from amongst the challenges or activities, to choose to use existing challenges or to create their own, and to choose their own reading material. Exercising choice could potentially be a factor in building confidence and empowering children both within the library space and at home.

Adults also appreciated other aspects of Dare to Explore's flexible structure, which helped make the programme more accessible to them. Flexible aspects that were mentioned included the ability to engage with the programme at multiple libraries:

*There were many opportunities for the kids to take part in activities at a variety of libraries.*

*It also encouraged us to go to new libraries.*

And the lack of constraint on content completed, events attended or reading material selected:

*Having a choice which events you attended. Not compulsory to attend all events.*

*being able to choose a book from different subjects instead of a selected booklists made it easier to cater to my sons interests.*

*You can get as much involved in the programme and events at the libraries as you like / are able to but they are an optional extra.*

*The fact that children could do as much or as little as they could manage.*

Adults also appreciated that no booking was required for most events, and that the programme was free:

*But a big bonus for us struggling parents is that it's FREE!*

### 12.2.2.2 Fun

For many parents and caregivers, fun was a valued attribute of the programme. As noted earlier, 75 per cent of parents/caregivers signed their children up to Dare to Explore because they wanted to give them something fun to do over the summer holidays. Respondents associated different programme features with the experience of having fun, including the challenges in the passport, the attitude of the librarians and, in particular, the activities run by libraries:

*Its great for [my son] to see that books and libraries are fun as well as interesting.*

*Cleverly put together booklet of fun activities for kids.*

*It involved creativity, variety and lots of fun programmes at the libraries.*

*Such amazing, fun and interactive Dare to explore sessions at the library.*

*It was great and fun time, working together with very pleasant and supportive library crew.*

Some respondents linked fun with learning or with encouragement to read, and appreciated that the programme was able to offer both to their child/ren:

*Encouraging fun at the library and reading at home*

*my kid uses her time meaningful and has a bit of fun over a long summer break*

Some saw Dare to Explore as supportive of fun family engagement:

*I really liked the topics and activities – they were engaging and fun, and gave my child and I lots to talk about and investigate.*

*The activity booklet was very exciting and fun to do with the child.*

One respondent also mentioned the way the programme used fun to build engagement between children and the wider community:

*It really encouraged and motivated kids to go to the library, and see it as part of the community, where fun things can happen*

### 12.2.2.3 Supportive and skilled librarians

A third key valued feature of Dare to Explore involved its delivery by library staff. Engagement between families and librarians is also discussed in Section 9.3, and programme delivery is one of the central themes explored in both Sections 2 and 13.

Many parents and caregivers valued the attitude and expertise of the librarians delivering Dare to Explore. The support, praise and attention from librarians were seen by respondents to translate



into motivation for their children to read and enjoy reading. Many parents/caregivers mentioned positive interactions with librarians in their responses, particularly in relation to the effect interactions with librarians had on their children's experiences at the library. Qualities that rated the most mentions included friendliness, enthusiasm, interest in children's progress and helpfulness. In some cases, the experience of interacting with librarians was associated with an increased perception of the library as a welcoming space.

*I was amazed at how much time the librarian's [sic] spent with my grandson. I did not realize this was part of Dare to Explore and was so thrilled at how each librarian encouraged my grandson and went out of their way to help him.*

*The staff have a wonderful rapport with the kids... The interaction has built up my daughter's confidence.*

*The friendly, kind library staff and how they shared their enthusiasm*

Further support was given by librarians through rewards for children completing challenges in the form of stickers, stamps, certificates and verbal encouragement. The final party was mentioned sometimes as a motivation for engagement with the programme, but encouragement from librarians in the form of active listening was more frequently stressed:

*The ability based interaction of the Librarian with my children. She was genuinely interested in my kids and what they had achieved in the time between visits.*

*The ladies at our library were such fun and encouraged the kids throughout the whole programme to be involved in all of the activities and to progress with the challenges in their books.*

The librarians' skills and expertise, particularly relating to the designing and running of fun activities, were also appreciated. The success of some activities was seen to be reflective of the organisation and execution by librarians:

*My children's favourite part was (of course) the party. It was very well run, very entertaining and a real treat for the children.*

*Organised, creative, well thought out, very motivational.*

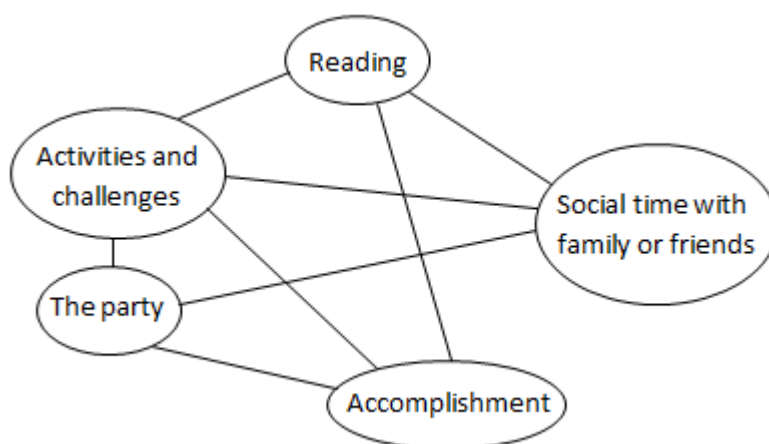
Relationships built with librarians were prized and several respondents referred to specific librarians by name. This suggests that families were engaging frequently with libraries and librarians, and were likely to continue to do so after the end of the programme. Respondents mentioned feeling welcome and comfortable in the library, suggesting that libraries are seen as positive environments:

*When in the library kids feel like "at home" now, that is very good.*

## 12.3 What was the best part of Dare to Explore for children?

As with parents/caregivers' responses, answers to the open ended sentence 'I thought the BEST part about Dare to Explore was...' were analysed by the authors of this report, and grouped according to themes. The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in children's responses. Children named specific programme-related activities such as reading, completing challenges or attending events at the library, as well as less concrete aspects that they valued, such as the social opportunities provided or the sense of accomplishment they'd achieved. The party was prominent in many responses as the most recent programme-related activity they'd enjoyed, as a tangible reward for accomplishment, or as a valued social occasion.

Figure 45: What did children like most about Dare to Explore?



### 12.3.1 Reading

Children were less likely than parents and caregivers to have been motivated by reading when signing up for Dare to Explore. Less than half (41%) said that they joined because they wanted to get better at reading, compared to 81 per cent of parents/caregivers who wanted to maintain or increase their child/ren's reading ability. Reading was also less prominent in children's responses to this survey question, though it was still a favourite component of the programme for some participants.

As with parents/caregivers, some children appreciated the variety and amount of reading on offer. Some mentioned 'new books' in their responses, implying that the programme had introduced them to new topics/genres, authors or titles:

*Finding new books to read.*

*read different kinds of books I wouldn't look at before*

*Going to the library to get more books.*

*Getting to read lots of different books.*

Some children associated their reading with a sense of achievement, learning or progress:

*learning more about reading harder books*

*Doing all the challenges and reading harder*

*Reading challenges as I learnt new things with different books I read.*

A small number valued the ability to track their progress by way of programme mechanics such as the reading footprints in the passport, or by visiting and talking to librarians:

*Stickers in the passport, colouring footprints for reading*

*librarians were so helpful and friendly and encouraging me to read more and welcome me if I need help looking for books like to read and how well im doing reading books.*

### **12.3.2 Activities and challenges**

Children were more likely than their parents/caregivers to name a specific, concrete experience as the best part of the programme. Most cited either the activities in general, or named specific activities or challenges as their favourite aspect of Dare to Explore.

When describing what they valued about the events, activities or challenges, several used variants of 'fun' or 'funny'. This may be reflective of children's primary motivation for joining, 'It looked fun' (68%).

*the party was fun, the clown was cool and funny*

*All the fun activities at the library with the best one being the making and exploding of a volcano, that was really fun and very messy.*

*Being able to use your creativity and come up with new ideas, I learned many new things. It kept me ocupied [sic] and was so much fun!*

Children also mentioned activities or challenges that were not too difficult and were interesting or cool:

*Most challenges were fun, while not too difficult*

*The Challenges were really fun and easy so I could do lots of them.*

*interesting new subjects*

*doing the cool activites [sic] at the library*

Popular topics amongst the named activities or challenges included science experiments, space and aliens, games (including scavenger hunts and console gaming), food-related activities and crafts.

*The science breakfast*

*XBOX 360*

*Doing the science activity at Pt Chev library and doing the Scavenger Hunt at the Botanical Gardens in Manurewa*

*Learning how to make candy sushi*

*fun of making so many crafts work*

While the benefits experienced were not usually expressed, children seemed to enjoy designing and/or making things:

*Being able to create crazy new things.*

*Building a rocket at the library and making a franken toy at the library.*

*making an alien creature for the space zoo and making a fantasy creature*

### **12.3.3 The party**

The end-of-programme party was a particularly successful event for many, and entertainers such as clowns or storytellers were a big hit:

*THE HUGE PARTY!!!!!!*

*Going to the party!*

*The party time with Bingo. He was hilarious!*

*the storyteller at the party*

Food was also a popular feature at the party:

*The giant cake at the celebration party :) (P.S. it was really worth it for the cake)*

*The best part of dare to explore is going to ambury park and having pizza and water melon and ice blocks*

#### 12.3.4 Social time with family and friends

For some children, the best part of Dare to Explore was getting to take part in activities with friends, or making new friends:

*having fun and meeting new friends*

*Meeting my friends!*

*Making new friends at the library events.*

Some also mentioned how much they valued being able to take part in the programme with family members:

*This is my first Dare to Explore I enjoy doing with my parents, my mum take me there and my dad took a day off to be with me at dare to explore and my dad enjoy his day making ufo...*

*going to the libaray [sic] more with Mum and my sister more.*

*Whanau*

*Spending the morning at the library making a spaceship using Lego – there was so much Lego that mum could make a space ship as well with me – that was cool!*

#### 12.3.5 Accomplishment

Another theme that arose in children's responses was the feeling of accomplishment that they got from taking part in Dare to Explore. They linked this to several different features of the programme, including programme mechanics such as the stickers, stamps, party invite or the footprints they could colour in for each day of reading:

*Filling out the booklet and completing challenges so I could get them stamped*

*Earning the stickers for the tasks I completed.*

*I liked colouring in the footprints after each book I read.*

*We make new things at dare to explore that we have never done before and we get stamps.*

Some children linked their feeling of accomplishment to their interaction with the librarians, on receiving their stamps or stickers:

*It was fun visiting the library to show and tell them what we'd done, and getting the stamps and stickers. The librarians were always so interested, positive and encouraging to me.*

*Going to the library and getting my passport stamped and talking to the librarians.*

Some found a sense of accomplishment in creating and sharing or displaying made objects:

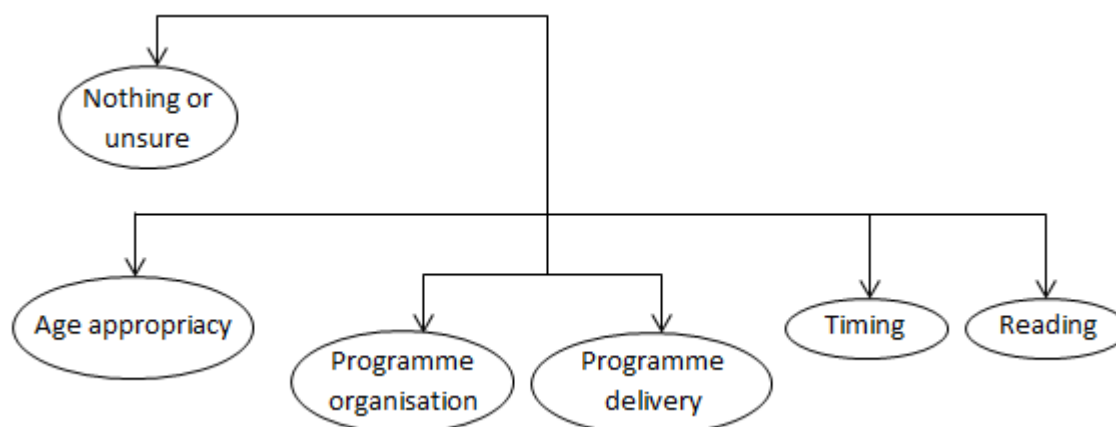
*The part when I made my mobile and spaceship and shared it with the librarian. Also [sic] my pictures and she displayed it on the library wall. That made me feel proud.*

*I also liked making the Christmas decorations as my mum and I kept the ones we made and will be putting them on our tree this year as well.*

## 12.4 What did parents/caregivers think could be improved?

The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in parents' and caregivers' responses when asked what could be done to improve Dare to Explore. One of the more common themes was 'nothing or unsure'. Requests for improvement focused on the need to cater better for children of different ages or abilities, a call to improve organisation or delivery of the programme, and issues concerning the timing of the programme and local activities. Additionally, some parents and caregivers had feedback concerning Dare to Explore's programming and support around reading.

Figure 46: What could we do to improve Dare to Explore?



### 12.4.1 Nothing or unsure

'Nothing or unsure' responses ranged from 'nothing' or noncommittal statements to expressions of mild approval:

*'all ok'*

*'Not sure at the moment'*

*'Nothing comes to mind'*

There were several requests to keep the programme in its current form:

*'Just keep doing what you are doing. As the saying goes – if it aint broke dont fix it.'*

*'Keep it as it is. The kids love it.'*

Some parents and caregivers used their response to this question to talk about what they liked about the programme:

*'i thought it was great, resources were fun and educational, party was great'*

*'Nothing. It had great encouragement for kids and rewards for reading'*

#### **12.4.2 Age appropriateness**

For a more detailed discussion of the age appropriateness of activities, challenges and parties, see Section 6.6. As in past years, providing a more age or ability appropriate programme was a prominent theme in response to this question. Some parents and caregivers felt that the challenges or activities offered were not appropriate for their child/ren, because they were either too hard or too easy:

*Consider more challenging sections for the older children*

*Maybe you could have a section for the younger children to do that's a little easier*

*Some questions I thought were pretty hard for my young girl. This did not motivate her to do the things in her Dare to explore book.*

Two respondents pointed out a discrepancy between the difficulty levels of the challenges, the activities and the party, feeling that each best suited a different age group:

*The activities were too difficult for my son, an easier version for younger children would be good. The difficulty level seemed incongruous, as it seemed the party was aimed at younger children and my ten year old daughter found the party a bit young for her.*

*I found that the challenges catered to my 8 year old son and the events to my 6 year old daughter. I think it would be good to have some better challenges for younger readers and events for older school children.*

Some parents/caregivers described the parental involvement required to make Dare to Explore age-appropriate for their younger child:

*My 5 year old son could do the tasks after I moderated them or invented and created new ones, but that needs to be explained.*

*Some of the challenges were a bit too tricky for a 5 year old, so I modified when I could.*

*My daughter found the passbook activities just a bit above her most of the time. She is five. We did manage to make things work for her but I had to work it out, put a bit of thought into it rather than just taking the ideas straight from the book.*

This investment of adult time and energy was problematic for some respondents, either because it wasn't possible for them to provide the support they felt was needed for their child's successful engagement with the programme, or because they would have preferred Dare to Explore to allow for more independent participation by younger or less confident readers:

*My children are at the younger end of the scale and some of the challenges are difficult for them to complete independently. I love helping them with the challenges, but don't always have the time to help them with all of the more involved challenges.*

*My daughter was just 5, not reading a lot, so maybe more challenges that are appropriate for that age level – things that don't necessarily need a parent to read to them and they can do by themselves.*

Some respondents saw the overall structure of the programme as unnecessarily complicated, making it difficult for younger children or beginner readers, in particular, to follow:

*There was a lot to take in to participate in this. Maybe could have been a wee bit more simple and easy for younger ones to follow.*

*possibly it targets those who are already comfortable and competent at reading as there is a lot to read in the passport book.*

*There was a lot of choice. For a 6 year old maybe just one page of check boxes could of [sic] been better*

Several parents/caregivers suggested a differentiated programme for different levels of ability, rather than trying to suit all ages and abilities with a single passport and set of challenges:

*Have 2 different challenge books. One for 5-8 and one for 9-12.*

*One programme for beginner readers and one for more competent readers.*

*Make it more challenging or make different booklets for different age groups.*

Some respondents felt that their local library's activities and/or party were not age appropriate:

*We attended one of the activities and felt that the talk was not really age-appropriate*

*Perhaps splitting up the age groups and have more age-appropriate activities for each age group.*



*At one library we attended they were lacking in confidence and could not adapt to the different age ranges that attended the activity.*

*Not sure how you could make it still attractive to older kids. My child is 11.5 years and didn't want to go to the party.*

### **12.4.3 Programme organisation and delivery**

Aside from age appropriateness, parents/caregivers mentioned issues they had concerning the organisation of Dare to Explore, or its delivery by library staff. Themes that emerged included:

- complexity of the programme
- poor interactions with library staff
- problems with the running of library activities
- issues with promotion or communication.

#### **12.4.3.1 Complexity of the programme**

Several respondents mentioned the complexity of the programme's structure. As discussed earlier, some described this as being a disincentive for younger children participating, but some simply found it off-putting for themselves, as first-time participants in the programme. Some found the requirements for earning stickers, stamps or a party invite unclear:

*Perhaps it could be clearer on how much the child needs to complete. We were confused about the 4? 4 challenges total or 4 challenges [sic] within each section?*

*As a parent, I found the sticker and character points system a bit complicated.*

While some respondents experienced the variety of challenges and activities on offer as a positive feature of the programme, others found the variety and choice on offer to be unnecessarily complicated or overwhelming:

*I have found the set up a bit too complicated, there was a lot for the parents trying to understand first with too many different challenges. When a librarian tried explaining it, it just got even more confusing, there are challenges, but you don't need to complete them all to pick and choose. The activities that the kids are participating at the library are not a challenge and so on. Can you please make it more simpler [sic] for next year.*

*There are far too many challenges to complete to get stamps/stickers to complete each section. I found the whole stamp/sticker thing very confusing.*

*Less activities. The amount was too daunting.*

### 12.4.3.2 Poor interactions with library staff

When it came to interactions with librarians, some respondents commented on their mixed or negative experiences:

*Some staff were great with the children, would get down to their level, talk to them in their language and other staff, you could tell were not the [sic] interested and couldn't wait to get rid of us.*

*Although the librarian who signed us up was lovely, she was a bit officious about reading a book a day which totally turned my son off the entire project*

Several respondents mentioned that inconsistency of programme knowledge or inconsistent application of rules by staff were an issue:

*It was a bit confusing being told different things by different librarians.*

*There seemed to be inconsistencies between different libraries and librarians*

Some staff seemed disorganised or confused, which respondents sometimes linked to their impression of the overall complexity of the programme's structure:

*even the librarians seemed a bit flummoxed about where to put stamps, stickers etc.*

*not all children's librarians understood the program and the books as well as the other teams. If you didn't hit the right group, you might have been underwhelmed by the program.*

*they were not sure where the stamps and stickers were, and they gave the wrong sticker*

### 12.4.3.3 Issues with the delivery of library activities

Some parents/caregivers talked about problems with the organisation of activities, or with programme-related processes such as collecting a passport or getting stamps or stickers for completed challenges:

*A better system after the activity hour has finished for staff to view the kids booklets and stamps/stickers them. You had to wait for quite a while on a couple of occasions to get the item in the booklet signed/stamped.*

*[The party] had an end but no beginning and with the weather and setting up, as a parent I felt it lacked co-ordination.*

*The party at the end of it was disorganized. The venue was very small and it felt crowded [sic] and no microphone for the magician so we couldn't [sic] hear him.*

Some respondents felt that the party or the end-of-programme certificates were important motivating factors for their child/ren's ongoing engagement with Dare to Explore. As a consequence, negative experiences involving the party or certificates were seen as demotivational:

*My five year old was so disappointed not to get a certificate given out at the party so probably better organisation from the librarians noting down who had achieved, especially as he was well over the required 4 activities*

*I did not like the competitive nature of [the party] and I felt that the prizes issued to 'those who had gone the extra mile' devalued the efforts that all the children put in to do their best and to participate for the fun of it.*

*The kids found the party a bit of a let down when I went to pick them up.*

Programme participation increased 16 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15, with some libraries more than doubling their previous year's number of participants. Increasing attendance at library events led to negative experiences in some cases, leading some respondents to suggest a booking system:

*Perhaps have some kind of enrolment system so you know how many kids are turning up to each activity so kids who want to participate don't miss out.*

*have a way of monitoring or limiting numbers, some activities completely took all library staff by surprise as dozens of children unexpectedly arrived.*

For one respondent, however, a booking system became a barrier to participation:

*We didn't get on all the workshops that had to be booked.*

A few parents/caregivers suggested that having more staff available might lead to more positive programme experiences:

*To have more librarian staffs, so they can give more support and assisting the participants.*

*Perhaps have a few more staff able to assist the kids with having their books etc signed off.*

#### **12.4.3.4 Issues with promotion or communication**

Some respondents mentioned a lack of communication from the library about Dare to Explore, particularly during the time before the programme's start date:

*More warning. I was only able to sign up in the last week of the programme.*

*Notify? Advertise sooner – ensure more time to participate. We only realised about 2-3 weeks before the end*

*send an email reminder to people who have participated before a month or so before it starts again (we forgot).*

Some specified that they would like to receive more promotional information about Dare to Explore through their child/ren's school:

*Promote to ALL schools. the local librarian visited my childrens school however i work at a low-decile primary school and hadnt heard about it*

*Advertise it in schools before the end of the year.*

Some parents/caregivers requested that communication about library activities be more accessible or more accurate:

*Work on the online calendar. There were a few times when what was posted online didn't match what was happening.*

*Email / txt reminders of events & activities*

#### **12.4.4 Timing**

For more on Dare to Explore and timing, see Sections 2 and 13. Many parents/caregivers mentioned timing issues when asked what could be improved about Dare to Explore. Typical timing issues included:

- The timing of the programme (start and end dates)
- Timing of library activities and party
- Time clashes.

Some felt that the programme dates did not work well with term-time and holiday timings, with some requesting a longer programme:

*Continue it throughout all the school holidays. Or even outside school holidays.*

*Run it over a longer time frame – start earlier as a lot of schools finish earlier in December and it would be good to be able to get kids engaged in the programme sooner.*

*Have it cover the school holidays and not just 3 to 4 weeks of it – there is not much point in having a programme that starts 2-3 weeks before they have even broken up from school and ending 2-3 weeks before they go back.*

Several respondents commented on the timing of library activities being an issue, with some requesting events offered at alternative times such as evenings or weekends:

*I would like some of the 'in-library' activities to be after school hours. I work all of the summer holidays and my children can't come to activities that start at 10.30am.*

*activities are only during the working day. Nothing after 3pm or on weekends. Actively excludes kids who are at holidays programmes (i.e. Parent who work).*

*Just if a few activities could be on a Saturday rather than all during week.*

Some parents/caregivers found the frequency of library activities inconvenient:

*Perhaps spread the activities out a bit more. We live about 20 mins drive from our library and I didn't want to drive in every day of each week. Perhaps 2-3 activities per week would be good.*

*Spread the events over the holidays more evenly not just confined to two weeks*

Some found that Dare to Explore clashed with other holiday plans, which limited their ability to participate:

*We were away quite a lot of January so missed out on final party*

*Many of the activities were held on a week we [sic] went away on holiday so could not participate.*

#### **12.4.5 Reading**

While many parents/caregivers commented on the positive effects of Dare to Explore on their child/ren's reading interest and ability, some felt that the programme could be strengthened with regards to reading content and support. Some felt that the challenge-based structure reduced the focus on reading and some asked for more rewards or incentives specifically for reading:

*all I wanted was to encourage them to keep reading over the holidays – more than adding in heaps of extra things to do :)*

*Some of the focus on actual reading seems to have got lost. The other challenges are great, but I would like to see more of the ones that direct them to specific types of reading, or reading in different places.*

*They get a sticker reward if they bring their book back to the library after 7 days of daily reading/ 14 days daily reading etc.*

Some respondents requested more support or guidance with their child/ren's reading, particularly with finding reading material. Recommended reading lists and supporting displays were both mentioned. 2014/15 is the first iteration of Dare to Explore where book lists were not offered, as a response to feedback about the difficulty of obtaining recommended titles or of matching titles to

children's ability and interest. While this has reduced customer frustration in these areas, there is still clearly a need to provide more localised support for families looking for recommended reading.

*To show the books relevant to one topic more obviously on bookshelf. E.g. put labels on science and geography, so that parents and children can easily find them according to different theme.*

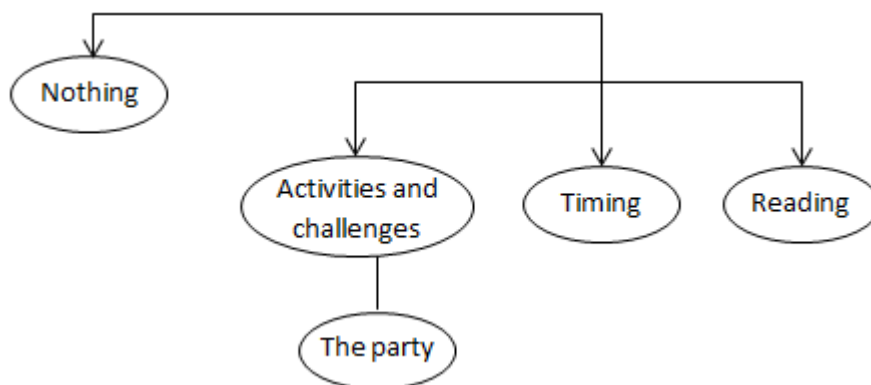
*Maybe some suggested books to read for different age groups?*

## 12.5 What did children not like about Dare to Explore?

The figure below shows a map of the predominant themes appearing in children's responses when asked whether there was anything they did not like about Dare to Explore. Some of the themes were similar to those found in the responses of parents and caregivers. A common theme was 'no or nothing'. For children, issues also included the difficulty level of challenges and activities, tensions around timing of the programme, and a desire for more – or occasionally less – reading content.

When children talked about what they most liked about Dare to Explore, good experiences at library activities or the party featured largely. The same is true of their responses here, where a poor experience at a library activity was likely to be what they disliked most about the programme.

Figure 47: Is there anything you didn't like about Dare to Explore?



### 12.5.1 Nothing

Many children left this question blank and others wrote that there was nothing they did not like; 'No' or 'Nothing' were amongst the most common responses. As with the adults, some children used this space to talk about liking the programme:

*There's absolutely nothing bad about dare to explore*

*no! I liked Everything!*

*Ae, he pai ana nga mea*<sup>13</sup>

### 12.5.2 Activities and challenges

Children made frequent mention of challenges and activities in their responses. Many children said that they did not like some aspect of the challenges and/or library activities:

*I didnt like the activities in my passport from Dare to Explore*

*there were only a few challenges that were fun this year and last year.*

*Not many activities for my age group.it [sic] seemed a little boyish.*

*I thought they could have gone outside for the activities and party*

In some cases, children signalled that challenges or activities were too hard or too easy, which may reflect concerns about age appropriateness. Some found them too hard:

*Some challenges were hard and took ages*

*I did not like anything me nd [sic] my sis find this boring and hard*

*Sometimes I didn't understand*

A smaller number found them too easy:

*some of the challenges were too easy so I did them straight away*

*Nope but if it was a bit more challenging for older kids*

Some specified a particular challenge/activity, or described a specific type of challenge/activity that they disliked:

*I am a bit shy so didn't like the big group activities*

*I didn't like inventing a new balloon sport*

*planets and pyjamas - boring*

*i didnt like the games*

Some children mentioned not being able to attend or being disappointed by the party:

*Remuera party was too early – I was away*

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<sup>13</sup> Yes, the things (activities etc.) were good

*the party because the prizes are so lame*

*The party. Wasn't much fun*

*The celebration party suited younger kids.*

*i missed the party*

The children who were surveyed at Te Kura Kaupapa a Rohe o Māngere after the programme raised two additional issues concerning challenges that related specifically to the passport content in te reo Māori:

*not that many activites [sic] in the passport*

*kore au e pai ana ki nga korero<sup>14</sup>*

The first comment reflects the fact that only eight challenges were offered in the passport in te reo Māori, compared with 48 challenges in English. The second response may refer to the level of language used in the te reo Māori content, which may have been difficult for some readers.

### **12.5.3 Timing**

Several children talked about problems with timing. Some needed more time to complete the challenges; in some cases, children associated the time pressure with the amount of challenges and activities on offer. Some commented that they weren't able to take part fully due to other family commitments, including family illness, parents who were working, or being busy with other holiday activities:

*There wasn't much time to do all the activities.*

*I DID NOT LIKE IT BECAUSE OF TOO MANY ACTIVITIES CRAMMED IN. I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED SLOW PACES READING AT MY OWN PACE AND ENJOY THE READING.*

*some of it was making it but we did not do it because we were busy*

*I couldn't come to many events because my parents had work.*

### **12.5.4 Reading**

A small number of children talked about the reading or writing aspects of Dare to Explore. One comment was ambiguous and may have been either positive or negative. The majority of these comments showed that these children did not enjoy this part of the programme, although two wanted more focus on these aspects:

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<sup>14</sup> *This language/wording wasn't good for me*



*Wasn't enough of reading challenge*

*My Mum made me do heaps of reading*

*When you had to write*

*Yes, doing the reviews/writing*

*Didn't like the reading (I am dyslexic!)*

*It was ALL READING*

## 13.0 Conclusions and recommendations

In this section we summarise the results of this evaluation in relation to the evaluation questions. We also outline our broad recommendations for how to improve future Auckland Libraries summer reading adventures, using the central themes from Section 2 as focus areas.

### 13.1 Did Dare to Explore maintain or improve children's literacy?

As in previous years, a range of different analyses of data collected from children and their parents/caregivers indicate that Dare to Explore had a positive impact on children's literacy.

The responses of parents/caregivers show that:

- The majority (61%) felt that their children's reading ability either improved a little or a lot, while 39 per cent felt that their children's reading ability did not change during Dare to Explore. Only two adults felt that their children's reading ability got a little worse during Dare to Explore. This result is almost identical with that of 2013/14.
- A sizeable percentage of parents/caregivers (31%) felt that their child's reading confidence had increased over the summer period. No parents/caregivers reported that their child had decreased in confidence. When excluding answers from parents/caregivers whose children had very high reading confidence prior to participating in Dare to Explore, 48 per cent of parents reported an increase in confidence in their children.
- The majority (65%) of parents/caregivers agreed or strongly agreed that Dare to Explore had increased their child's enjoyment of reading, while most of the remaining gave a neutral response. Only three per cent of parents/caregivers disagreed that Dare to Explore had increased their child's enjoyment of reading. This finding is important given Dare to Explore's focus on embedding reading in fun.

Statistical modelling showed that increased learning and discovery, increased reading confidence for children, increased adult confidence, increased enjoyment of reading and the number of challenges completed were important predictors of increased reading ability.

The children's survey showed that:

- Almost all children reported that Dare to Explore had improved their reading, with 39 per cent reporting Dare to Explore helped their reading 'a lot' and 44 per cent 'a little bit'.

See Section 7 for more detail.

## **13.2 How was Dare to Explore experienced by those who did not complete the programme?**

Investigation into the experience of children who did not complete the programme (i.e., completed three or fewer challenges) showed that, compared to those who completed four or more challenges, non-completers:

- Did not differ significantly in age
- Had significantly lower reading confidence both before and after Dare to Explore
- Did not differ significantly in terms of degree of change in reading confidence
- Experienced lower increases in reading ability
- Experienced less of an increase in enjoyment of reading
- Experienced lower enjoyment of the challenges they did complete
- Experienced lower levels of learning and discovery.

Parents/caregivers of non-completers were also more likely to feel that the challenges were not appropriate for the age of their child.

Despite this, when parents/caregivers of children who did not complete the programme were asked whether Dare to Explore met their child's needs, more than half answered that the programme had met their child's needs. Many parents went on to say that the small number of challenges completed by their child reflected timing issues, such as the fact that they had gone away or been busy with other things. Where Dare to Explore did not meet their child's needs, the most commonly reported reason was that the programme was too hard for young children.

See Section 8 for more detail.

## **13.3 Did Dare to Explore encourage family engagement with each other and with the library?**

The following factors suggest that Dare to Explore was successful in encouraging family engagement with each other and with the library:

- Many respondents mentioned time spent with other family members as part of their response to questions about what they liked best about Dare to Explore (see 12.3 and 12.4); positive interactions with librarians were also a favourite part of the programme for a number of respondents (see 12.3).
- Over half of parents/caregivers (55%) felt that Dare to Explore had made them feel more confident about helping their children learn new things. Thirty-nine per cent of parents/caregivers felt neutral and only seven per cent disagreed that Dare to Explore helped them in this way.
- Most children (83%) responded that Dare to Explore made them like going to the library either a lot more or a little more.

- Approximately half of all parents/caregivers (52%) felt that because of Dare to Explore they and their children were likely to visit the library more often in the future than they have in the past.
- Most parents/caregivers (94%) either agreed or strongly agreed that librarians had time for them and were willing to help. Further analysis showed that the librarians having time and willingness to help was a significant predictor of whether families were likely to visit the library more often in future.

See Section 9 for more detail.

### **13.4 Did Dare to Explore encourage learning and discovery among children?**

The majority of parents/caregivers (87%) reported that Dare to Explore encouraged their children to discover and learn new things, the same figure as for 2013/14. Eleven per cent of respondents were neutral and only two per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Many parents/caregivers mentioned learning and discovery as part of their responses to questions about what they liked best about Dare to Explore (see 12.3).

### **13.5 How was Dare to Explore experienced by children with low prior reading confidence?**

Investigation into the experience of children who had low confidence with reading prior to participating in Dare to Explore showed that, compared to children with higher confidence, lower-confidence children:

- Were more likely to be younger (the effects of which were controlled in subsequent comparisons)
- Were more likely to be boys
- Got less enjoyment from the challenges that they completed
- Were less encouraged to discover and learn new things
- Experienced a significantly greater increase in confidence over the summer period (although they still had lower overall confidence after Dare to Explore).

In contrast to the above indicators, low confidence children did not differ significantly from high confidence children on the following factors:

- Changes in reading ability over the summer period
- Whether Dare to Explore increased children's enjoyment of reading
- Whether parents considered the challenges to be age appropriate
- Number of challenges completed.

See Section 11 for more detail.

### **13.6 What local library activities do adults and children want to see more of next year?**

There was a wide range of responses to this question. Many parents/caregivers were happy with the activities already on offer, and asked for more of the same.

Some parents/caregivers requested changes to the timing of activities; more or less frequent activities, or those that took place at a range of times, including weekends. Some commented on the age appropriateness of activities, calling for more activities that suited a particular age range, or those that were flexible enough to suit a range of ages.

Specific suggestions for activities were given in different forms:

- Activities that have a particular quality, e.g. fun, social, outdoor, hands-on, entertaining, involving games or technology
- Activities that build particular skills, e.g. literacy, creativity, problem-solving, social skills
- Activities based on a specific topic e.g. science, the environment, history, culture, reading, mathematics.

See Section 6.5 for more detail.

### **13.7 Did children engage with the digital aspects of the programme?**

The Dare to Explore web pages were used by about a third (37%) of all participants, a decrease from 2013/14 (56%). Of the parents/caregivers who reported that they and their children used the web pages, 92 per cent found the content easy to find. Similarly, 97 per cent of children who used the digital aspects of Dare to Explore liked them a lot (52%) or a little bit (45%).

Parents/caregivers reported liking a range of things about Dare to Explore online. Many people mentioned their user experience positively, citing attributes such as usability and ease of navigation. Some felt that the online content enhanced their experience of Dare to Explore, in terms of children's learning experiences, fun or support with reading. Several pointed out that the online content appealed to them or their children simply because it was online.

Parents/caregivers also mentioned specific online components, such as the activity calendars, as features that they appreciated. As in previous years, many comments mentioned the online quiz challenge and story, which took the form of a space mission this year.

Reasons for non-use of the Dare to Explore web pages were varied, and could be understood as falling into two groups; those who experienced barriers to access, and those who deliberately chose not to access the web pages. Many parents/caregivers did not know or forgot about the web aspects of the programme; some failed to find the time to use them; some faced technical barriers,

including lack of access to the Internet. Other parents/caregivers were satisfied with the print resources provided or made a conscious decision to avoid using the computer during the holiday period. Only a small number mentioned specific issues with the website itself.

It is possible that further staff training communicating the availability, breadth and potential benefits of online content could result in wider promotion of online content, and a higher uptake from families.

See Section 10 for more detail.

### **13.8 Were the challenges, activities and party seen as age appropriate?**

The majority of parents/caregivers (85%) saw the challenges, activities and party as being appropriate for the age of their child. Further analysis showed that parents of younger children, aged five and below, were more likely to report that the programme was not age appropriate. Comments from parents supported this analysis, with a number of parents/caregivers who reported that the programme was not age appropriate identifying that the programme was too difficult for their younger children.

For some families, there was a tension between parents/caregivers wanting their children to be able to work on Dare to Explore independently and finding this difficult because children found the programme too challenging. Some parents/caregivers made a connection between the programme being too hard and the programme not being appropriate for the age of their child. However, while one parent/caregiver might comment that Dare to Explore was too hard for their seven year old, another parent/caregiver might comment that it was too easy for their seven year old. This suggests that while age may have some effect on children's ability to engage with and complete Dare to Explore, age is not the only factor that has an impact on children's abilities.

In comparison with those who found that the programme was not appropriate for a younger child, a small number of parents/caregivers indicated that the programme content was better suited for younger children. Fewer older children reported attending the end-of-programme parties, and the percentage of children who stated that they liked the party a lot decreased as their age increased.

Investigation into the experience of children who began the programme with lower reading confidence revealed that though lower-confidence children tended to be younger, their parents/caregivers were not more likely to say that Dare to Explore wasn't appropriate for the age of their child.

Investigation into non-completion of Dare to Explore (i.e., completion of less than 4 challenges) showed that the parents/caregivers of children who did not complete Dare to Explore were more likely to think that the programme was not age appropriate, despite the fact that there were no significant differences in age between children who did and did not complete the programme.

These issues highlight the difficulty of designing content for such a wide range of ages. Although it may never be possible to cater to all ability levels equally, future iterations of the programme may wish to focus on more clearly highlighting the approximate difficulty level of each challenge, to help families select the challenges that are best matched to the ability of their children.

See Sections 2.2, 6.6 and 12.3 for more detail.

## **13.9 How could Dare to Explore be improved in the future?**

A number of suggestions are presented below for improving future summer reading adventures. The suggestions are based on the central themes appearing in the analysis of open ended survey questions (as discussed in Section 2), as well as feedback from children and their parents/caregivers regarding ways that they thought Dare to Explore could be improved.

### **13.9.1 A family summer reading programme**

Dare to Explore is a summer reading programme that can involve whole families. This group effort aimed at children's successful participation in the programme requires families to have enough time and resources to dedicate to the programme, and in some cases, the ability to interpret and tailor content for their children. It also requires a straightforward programme structure, and consistent information from librarians.

#### **13.9.1.1 Strengthen the family focus of Dare to Explore**

Ensure that challenges and library activities are:

- supportive of participation from other family members, including parents/caregivers
- simple and straightforward enough for children to undertake independently when families are stretched for time or resources.

Additionally, library staff should maintain or – where practical – increase levels of support to parents/caregivers who are less confident in helping their children with Dare to Explore. This could include support with finding challenges or reading material appropriate to children's ages and abilities, as well as help learning how to use library resources such as the catalogue or library website in order to complete challenges. As seen in Section 7.5, one predictor of increased reading ability for children is an increase in parents/caregivers' confidence to help them.

#### **13.9.1.2 Increase promotion to families**

To emphasise the family aspect of Dare to Explore, it is recommended that librarians explore more ways to promote the programme to families. This could complement promotion through schools, which tends to depend more on relationships between schools and children, or between schools

and parents/caregivers. The focus of promotional messages would then be towards engaging whole families and not just children.

### **13.9.2 Age appropriateness**

While only 15 per cent of parents/caregivers described challenges, activities or the party as not age appropriate for their child, concern over the age appropriateness of Dare to Explore was found throughout the responses to open ended questions.

One suggestion from parents/caregivers is to have two versions of Dare to Explore through two passports; one for younger children and one for older children. While this improvement may benefit many children it could also further complicate the programme and restrict the participation of families that already found it too complex. It would also have implications for the consistency of local delivery, as librarians would be required to communicate two separate programmes and to make difficult decisions about which programme best suited a child. While age is strongly related to prior reading confidence, it is not the only criteria for selecting appropriate programme content.

Few of the overall responses to the survey question about age appropriateness were focused on the programme being challenging to understand. Being too hard (too complicated and too many challenges), however, was a frequent response to other questions, particularly from parents/caregivers whose children completed three or fewer challenges. For Dare to Explore to benefit children who are struggling with reading it needs to be extremely simple in its organisation.

#### **13.9.2.1 Provide one set of programme material but differentiate content for different ages/abilities**

To improve the simplicity of Dare to Explore while simultaneously making it appropriate for a wide range of ages and abilities, we recommend forming a passport with challenges that are scaled. That is, at the beginning of the passport provide easier challenges and as children work through the passport, challenges become more difficult. We would not recommend labelling challenges for particular ages as it could act to deter children who find challenges for their age too hard from continuing to participate. It could also preclude children who are keen to stretch themselves from trying challenges outside of their age range. To achieve this scaled content we suggest exploring ways to differentiate the content of challenges for different abilities, based on a combination of age, reading ability, and reading confidence.

### **13.9.3 Timing**

Some parents/caregivers found the timing of Dare to Explore challenging. This issue resulted from a range of factors including:

- Conflict between programme dates and the term dates of their child's school
- Signing up to the programme late due to lack of promotion
- Being busy with other holiday activities during the period of Dare to Explore, and



- Being unable to find a balance between parents/caregivers' working hours and attending library activities or visiting a library during opening hours.

To improve Dare to Explore in all these dimensions would involve the extension of the programme in many directions and require an increased resource input. Putting on more activities, more frequently, at a range of times – particularly outside of working hours – and continuing this for a larger portion of the holidays could be an expensive exercise. While undertaking this expansion could benefit some families, increasing the scope of the programme would also risk increasing the programme's complexity and deter the participation of families already finding it complicated and confusing. Therefore, making major changes to the timing of Dare to Explore is not recommended.

### **13.9.3.1 Increase overall promotion of Dare to Explore**

As we found in Section 4.1, the majority of parents/caregivers heard about the programme at a library. Increasing advertising through the channels where parents/caregivers were less likely to hear about Dare to Explore could be one starting point for improved promotion. There was an increase in the percentages of people who heard about Dare to Explore through digital media such as websites and social media compared with 2013/2014 (from 13% in 2013/14 to 25% in 2014/15), and suggestions from several parents/caregivers to communicate more via electronic media, so increasing advertising through these channels could be effective.

While school-based awareness of Dare to Explore was higher this year (from 20% in 2013/14 to 24% in 2014/15), significant potential still remains for increased promotion through schools, as signalled by parents/caregivers' requests for greater communication from this source. Library staff already utilise a variety of approaches when promoting Dare to Explore through schools; these approaches have differing levels of resources required from libraries. It is recommended that library staff actively evaluate the effectiveness of a selection of different means of engaging schools for the next summer reading programme.

### **13.9.3.2 Consider offering more activities at times convenient to working families**

To help families with parents/caregivers working during the summer holidays, more library activities could be run on weekends, or libraries could have special activities on after hours such as in the evenings. If resources don't allow for additional activities, perhaps librarians could plan for some of their regular activities to take place at these times. Consulting with customers could help determine local levels of demand for this.

### **13.9.4 Programme delivery**

Key issues involving aspects of local delivery of Dare to Explore were:

- poor interactions with library staff, particularly around programme processes
- issues with the way library activities were delivered
- issues with promotion or communication.

Conflicting programme information received from different librarians or different libraries has highlighted room for improvement. Consider developing training and communication within and between libraries/librarians to ensure that (a) all staff know what Dare to Explore is and (b) there is always at least one librarian at all times who knows the details of the programme to assist in signing children up and to give out stamps and stickers.

Different libraries and librarians appeared to have different perspectives about the aim of Dare to Explore, which translated into confusing messages for families. Librarians who focused on the need to read every day were seen by some children as off-putting; particularly those children who found reading challenging. Conversely, supportive librarians who praised children's efforts and were enthusiastic about talking with children about the challenges they had achieved were seen positively by most families.

#### **13.9.4.1 Target Dare to Explore staff training at particular areas of value to customers**

To enhance these areas of staff knowledge may require increased training of librarians about Dare to Explore, as well as simplifying the terminology used (i.e. stamps, stickers, challenges, activities, events, etc.). Further to this, building staff skills and understandings around value in interactions for customers would be beneficial. This training could focus on recommending age appropriate material, active listening, and programme structure familiarity. Given the value placed on activities by children and families, increased training about planning and running activities, particularly those that are adaptable to suit a range of ages, could also be beneficial.

#### **13.9.5 Measuring and recognising children's success**

While to librarians success at and "completion" of Dare to Explore require the completion of at least four challenges, children understand success in a wide range of ways. Success in Dare to Explore can also include aspects measured on the parent/caregivers' survey such as increased reading ability, increased reading confidence, or increased reading enjoyment. In addition to these aspects, unmeasured elements can also be considered to make children's experience of Dare to Explore successful; such as building a relationship with a library, finding enjoyment in completing challenges, spending time with family, or making new friends. These successes, while not always measured by stamp and sticker rewards, could be working to form intrinsic motivation for children to read and participate in Dare to Explore again. Acknowledging these successes through verbal encouragement from librarians and family members is as important as recognising the completion of four challenges.

##### **13.9.5.1 Simplify the processes for receiving stickers, stamps and certificates**

A small number of parents/caregivers had concerns about how their children's success was being recognised. Some children had missed out on receiving a certificate at school due to miscommunication or disorganisation between librarians and the school. Ensuring that children receive these forms of reinforcement for their efforts is important encouragement for them to continue learning to read.

To improve this area we suggest simplifying the processes that are required for these rewards to be received. This may mean increasing librarian training, letting children choose a sticker rather than have a particular sticker for a particular section, and streamlining the process through which children receive their certificates.

#### **13.9.5.2 Ensure parties are inclusive of all participants**

The party is the final experience of Dare to Explore for many children and families, and leaves a lasting impression about both the programme and about libraries. Older children are less likely to attend parties, and less likely to be satisfied by the experience. Additionally, some parents/caregivers had issues with how the party acted as a reward to acknowledge their child's success. There were mixed feelings about parties that were run more like a prize giving ceremony in which children who had completed the most challenges or made the most reading progress received prizes.

Providing experiences that are less likely to appeal to older children, or singling out particular children with prizes and excluding others are reported by some children and their parents/caregivers as lowering enjoyment of the party, and in some cases leading to feelings of exclusion.

It is recommended to take steps towards building staff confidence and skills around party planning and delivery, with a focus on delivering parties that reward all children equally with fun activities they can enjoy with their families, other children, and librarians who worked with them to complete Dare to Explore .

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# Appendix A Questionnaire for parents/caregivers



## Parent/Caregiver Feedback

Thank you for your time and participation in Dare to Explore. In this survey we're keen to learn more about your experience of Dare to Explore.

Your comments will contribute to the continued improvement of the Auckland Libraries' Summer Reading Adventure programmes we offer.

With your permission, your survey will go in the draw to win a pile of books to suit your child's reading interests.

1. Where/how did you hear or see information about Dare to Explore? *(please tick all that apply)*

- My child/ren participated in Dare to Explore before
- At a Library
- School
- Kōhanga Reo / Kura Kaupapa
- Auckland Libraries website
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)
- Email from Auckland Libraries
- My child/ren
- Children's friends or other parents
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Advertising in public places (e.g., buses, trains)
- Tots to Teens magazine
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why did you want your child/ren to participate in Dare to Explore? *(please tick all that apply)*

- To give my child/ren something fun to do
- To keep my child/ren busy over the holidays
- To maintain or increase my child/ren's reading ability
- To get additional support from a librarian with my child/ren's reading
- To maintain or increase my child/ren's competency in Te Reo Māori
- To get to know the library better
- To increase my child/ren's confidence
- To spend quality time with my child/ren
- To increase my own confidence to help my child/ren
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. How much did Dare to Explore meet your expectations?

- Exceeded     
  Met     
  Partially met     
  Did not meet expectations

4. What did you like most about Dare to Explore?

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5. What could we do to improve Dare to Explore?

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6. What activities would you like your local library to do more of for next year's Dare to Explore?

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*Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement:*

7. As a result of participating in Dare to Explore, I feel more confident about helping my child/ren to learn new things.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Your library**

8. Which library did you and your child/ren visit most often for Dare to Explore?

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*Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:*

9. This library was friendly and welcoming.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. The librarians at this library had time for us and were willing to help.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. **Before** this year's Dare to Explore, how frequently did you visit the library?

- Never     
  A few times a year     
  Monthly     
  Weekly     
  Daily

12. Including your visit to sign up, how many times did you visit the library during Dare to Explore?

- Only when we joined Dare to Explore    2-3 visits    4-6 visits    More than 6 visits

13. Because of Dare to Explore, my child/ren and I are likely to visit the library more often than we have in the past.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Your child**

**If you had more than one child participating in Dare to Explore, please answer questions 13 to 21 for the child who completed the **MOST/LEAST** challenges.**

14. Please tell us the following information about your child:

Age                      Gender                      Ethnicity                      Main language at home

\_\_\_\_\_

15. How confident with reading was your child **before** Dare to Explore?  
Please circle the number that applies.

Not confident at all                      1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      Very confident

16. How confident with reading is your child now, **after** Dare to Explore?

Not confident at all                      1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      Very confident

17. How has your child's reading ability changed during Dare to Explore?

Got a lot worse	Got a little worse	Stayed the same	Improved a little	Improved a lot
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. How much did your child enjoy the challenges that they completed?

Not at all                      1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      A lot

19. Do you think the challenges, activities and party were appropriate for the age of your child?

- Yes  
 No → If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. Dare to Explore encouraged my child to discover and learn new things.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. Dare to Explore increased my child's enjoyment of reading.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. How many challenges did your child complete?

- None                       1-3                       4-8                       9-13                       14-18                       19+
- 



We are really interested in understanding how children who completed three or fewer challenges found Dare to Explore. Did the programme meet your child's needs?

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23. Did you and your child/ren use the Dare to Explore web pages on the Auckland Libraries website?

Yes

No

Was the online content easy to find?

Yes

No

What did you like best about Dare to Explore online?

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Why did you and your child/ren not use the Dare to Explore web pages?

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**Thank you for taking to time to tell us how you found Dare to Explore!**

**Turn to the next page if you would like to enter the prize draw...**



## Prize draw

Please provide your contact details below if you would like to enter the prize draw for a pile of books for your child/ren.

The information you provide will not be used for any other purpose and will be kept separately from your questionnaire responses.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Contact phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!

Please return this survey in the pre-paid envelope provided, or post to:

Private Bag 92300

Auckland 1142

Attn: Danielle Carter

## Appendix B Questionnaire for children



### Children's Feedback (two pages)

1. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old

2. I am ...  
 A boy     A girl

3. My school in 2014 was \_\_\_\_\_

4. I heard about Dare to Explore ... *(tick as many as you like)*

- At the library
- At my school
- From my friends
- From my family
- By doing Dare to Explore before
- On the Auckland Libraries' website
- On social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)

5. I joined Dare to Explore because ... *(tick as many as you like)*

- I wanted something to do over the holidays
- I wanted to get better at reading
- I like to come into the library
- It looked fun
- There was a choice to do it in Te Reo
- My family made me
- Some other reason – please write this here: \_\_\_\_\_

6. I did Dare to Explore ... *(tick as many as you like)*

- On my own
- With help from family
- With help from the librarians

7. I thought the BEST part of Dare to Explore was... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How many stars would you give Dare to Explore? (*circle one answer*)

- \* 1 star is boring
- \* \* 2 stars means it's okay
- \* \* \* 3 stars is good
- \* \* \* \* 4 stars is awesome

9. Is there anything you DIDN'T like about Dare to Explore? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What was the main library you used for Dare to Explore? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Has Dare to Explore made you like going to the library more? (*circle one answer*)

- Yes, a lot more**      OR      **Yes, a little bit more**      OR      **No**

12. Do you think Dare to Explore helped with your reading over the summer? (*circle one answer*)

- Yes, a lot**      OR      **Yes, a little bit**      OR      **No**

13. Did you use the Dare to Explore web pages?

- Yes       No      **If yes, how much did you like the web pages? (*circle one answer*)**  
**A lot**      OR      **A little bit**      OR      **I didn't like them**

14. Did you go to the party at the end of Dare to Explore?

- Yes       No      **If yes, how much did you like the party? (*circle one answer*)**  
**A lot**      OR      **A little bit**      OR      **I didn't like it**

Thank you!

When you have finished, please post your survey back in the pre-paid envelope provided, return it to a librarian at your local library, or post to: Private Bag 92300, Auckland 1142, Attn: Danielle Carter



## Appendix C Bilingual questionnaire for children



Children's Feedback (two pages)

**Te reo tatauranga mā ngā Tamariki (e rua ngā whārangi)**

1. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old  
\_\_\_\_\_ **ōku tau.**

2. I am ...  
 A boy     A girl  
**He**  **tama**     **kōtiro**    **ahau.**

3. My school in 2014 was \_\_\_\_\_  
**I te tau 2014, ko** \_\_\_\_\_ **tōku kura**

4. I heard about Dare to Explore ... *(tick as many as you like)*  
**I rangona e au 'Kia Maia te Whai'... (tohungia i ngā mea e hiahia ana e koe)**

- At the library
- mā Te Whare Pātaka Kōrero**
- At my school
- mā tōku kura**
- From my friends
- mā ōku hoa**
- From my family
- mā tōku whānau**
- By doing Dare to Explore before
- i te mea i mahia kētia 'Kia Maia te Whai' i mua rā**
- On the Auckland Libraries' website
- mā runga i te Ipurangi mō Ngā Whare Pātaka Kōrero o Tāmaki Makaurau**
- On social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)
- mā te pae pāpāho pāpori (arā, Matapuka, Tiwita/ Paetihau)**

5. I joined Dare to Explore because ... *(tick as many as you like)*  
**I tonu atu ahau ki 'Kia Maia te Whai' nā ... (tohungia i ngā mea e hiahia ana e koe)**

- I wanted something to do over the holidays
- tōku hiahia ki te mahi tētahi mahi i waenga i ngā hārarei.**
- I wanted to get better at reading
- tōku hiahia ki te whakapai ake ōku pukenga pānui**
- I like to come into the library

- tōku whakapai ki te uru atu ki roto i te Whare Pātaka Kōrero**
- It looked fun
- tōku kitea atu he pārekareka.**
- There was a choice to do it in Te Reo
- te mea, i taea te whakamahia i roto i Te Reo**
- My family made me
- runga i te reo tohutohu o tōku whānau**
- Some other reason – please write this here: \_\_\_\_\_
- tētahi atu take – tuhia mai ki kōnei** \_\_\_\_\_

6. I did Dare to Explore ... *(tick as many as you like)*

**I mahia te 'Kia Maia te Whai' i runga i...*(tohungia i ngā mea e hiahia ana e koe)***

- On my own
- tōku kōtahi**
- With help from family
- te āwhina o tōku whānau**
- With help from the librarians
- te āwhina o ngā Kai mahi Pātaka Kōrero**

7. I thought the BEST part of Dare to Explore was... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Ko te mea PAPA! rawa mō 'Kia Maia te Whai' ki ahau nei ko ...** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How many stars would you give Dare to Explore? *(circle one answer)*

**E hia ngā whetū ka tātaingia e koe mō 'Kia Maia te Whai'? *(Porohitangia tētahi noa whakautu)***

- \* 1 star is boring / **Ko 1 te whetū: Hōhā**
- \* \* 2 stars means it's okay / **E 2 ngā whetū: He āhua pai**
- \* \* \* 3 stars is good / **E 3 ngā whetū: He pai**
- \* \* \* \* 4 stars is awesome / **E 4 ngā whetū: TAU KĒ!**

9. Is there anything you DIDN'T like about Dare to Explore? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**He mea KORE PAI ki ā koe mō 'Kia Maia te Whai'?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What was the main library you used for Dare to Explore? \_\_\_\_\_

**Ko tēhea te Whare Pātaka Kōrero matua i mahia e koe mō 'Kia Maia te Whai'?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Has Dare to Explore made you like going to the library more? *(circle one answer)*

**Mā 'Kia Maia te Whai' koe i whakanuia tō hiahia ki te haere ki Ngā Whare Pātaka Kōrero?**  
***(Porohitangia tētahi noa whakautu)***

Yes, a lot more                      OR              Yes, a little bit more                      OR              No  
**Ae, nui rawa**    **Ae, āhua nui**    **Kāhore**

12. Do you think Dare to Explore helped with your reading over the summer? *(circle one answer)*

**Ki ōu whakaaro, mā 'Kia Maia te Whai' koe i āwhina ki te pānui i waenga i te raumati?  
 (Porohitangia tētahi noa whakautu)**

Yes, a lot                      OR              Yes, a little bit                      OR              No  
**Ae, tino**    **Ae, iti noa**    **Kāhore**

13. Did you use the Dare to Explore web pages?

**I mahia koe 'Kia Maia te Whai' mā runga i te whārangi ipurangi?**

Yes                      **→** *If yes, how much did you like the web pages? (circle one answer)*  
 No                      **A lot**    OR    **A little bit**                      OR    **I didn't like them**

**Ae**                      **→** **Ki te ae mai, he pai ki ā koe aua whārangi?**  
 **Kāhore**                      **(Porohitangia tētahi noa whakautu)**  
**Tino pai**    **Āhua pai**    **Kore pai**

14. Did you go to the party at the end of Dare to Explore?

**I haere koe ki te pātī i te mutunga o 'Kia Maia te Whai'?**

Yes                      **→** *If yes, how much did you like the party? (circle one answer)*  
 No                      **A lot**    OR    **A little bit**                      OR    **I didn't like it**

**Ae**                      **→** **Ki te ae mai, he pai ki ā koe te pātī?**  
 **Kāhore**                      **(Porohitangia tētahi noa whakautu)**  
**Tino pai**    **Āhua pai**    **Kore pai**

Thank you! **Ngā Mihi!**

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 Auckland 1142,  
 Attn: Danielle Carter



**Na, ka mutu koe te tauranga nei, whakauru ki roto i te kōpaki kua tāpiri mai ā, me whakahoki atu ki tōu Whare Pātaka Kōrero, me tuku rānei mā te poutāpeta ki:**

Private Bag 92300,  
 Auckland 1142,  
 Attn: Danielle Carter



► Find out more: phone 09 301 0101  
email [rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) or  
visit [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

