



# HOW PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC RESPONDED TO THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 :

Analysis of the most important results of the survey

Conducted by Mr. Waleed Ali Salim Al-Badi (Director, Majlis Oman Library)  
from 6<sup>th</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020

# Introduction

The survey was intended for all members of the APLAP; it was sent to the APLAP's mailing list and was published in the APLAP's Facebook account.

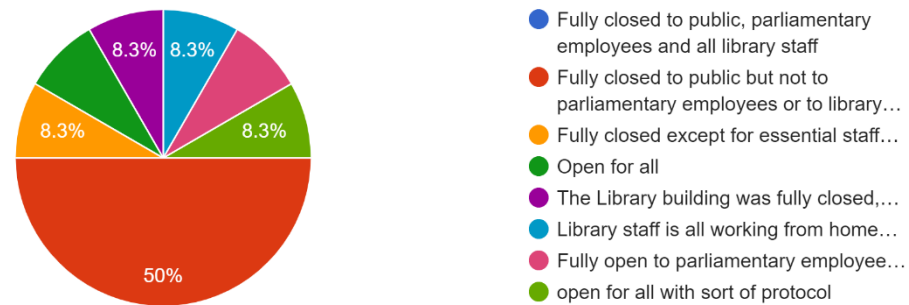
Thirteen responses came from Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Vietnam. These countries were represented in the following parliaments:

- Parliament of Malaysia
- New Zealand Parliament
- Federal Parliament of Nepal
- National Assemble of Vietnam
- The House of Indonesia (DPR RI)
- Federal Parliament Secretariat
- House of Representatives, Congress (Philippines)
- ACT Legislative Assembly (Australia)
- Parliament of The Republic of Fiji
- Bougainville House of Representatives (Papua New Guinea)
- National Diet, Japan

It has been confirmed that all data gathered from this survey will be used for research purposes only.

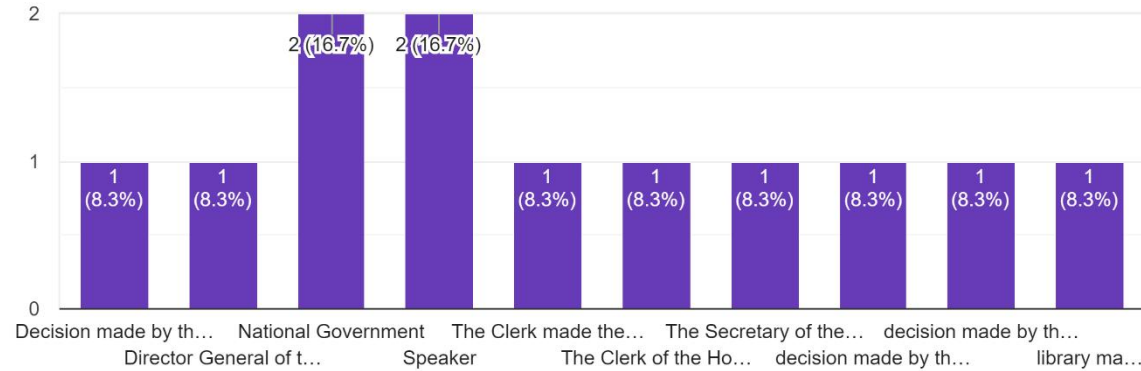
## Building, services and users: Did the libraries close their buildings during COVID – 19 pandemic?

My Library Building  
12 responses



This question aimed to know the state of opening or closing the library during the Covid-19 pandemic, and 50% of the participated libraries confirmed that they were fully closed to public but not to parliamentary employees or to library staff

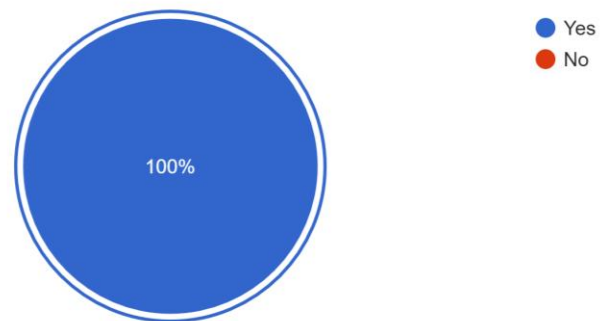
Whoever takes the abovementioned decision (e.g. decision made by the library committee, decision made by the library management, Speaker...ecision made by the National Government, etc.)?  
12 responses



Moreover, when respondents were asked about whoever makes decisions in the closure/limited use of the libraries/government offices (e.g. decision made by the library committee, decision made by the library management, Speaker, Senate President, or decision made by the National Government, etc.), 16.7% of the libraries that participated in the survey clearly indicated that the Speakers or the National Government made the decision.

### The library still provides on-site services

12 responses



In addition, this study revealed that all libraries that participated in the survey still provide their on-site services, but they faced many challenges. The main challenges mentioned are the obvious ones:

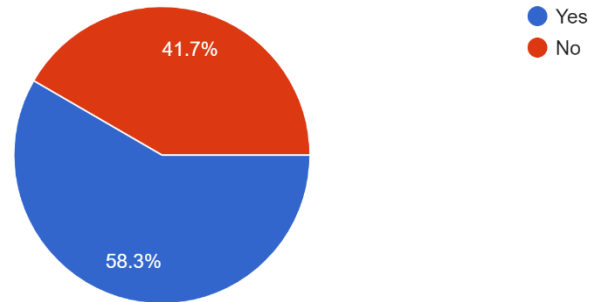
- They need to manage all the services in the “*new normal*” with guidelines provided by the National Library.
- Challenges in practicing social distancing and wearing of mask.
- The reading rooms in the library are small.
- How to protect yourself from this virus especially if you are dealing with asymptomatic users.
- Lack of library staff on site.
- Not all the onsite services can be provided on the parliament's online platform.
- Provide library service procedures according to the health protocol.

In a very few cases it appears that they do not have big challenges because some libraries have a small number of parliamentary employees.

# Did the libraries shift to online and remote services?

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12 responses

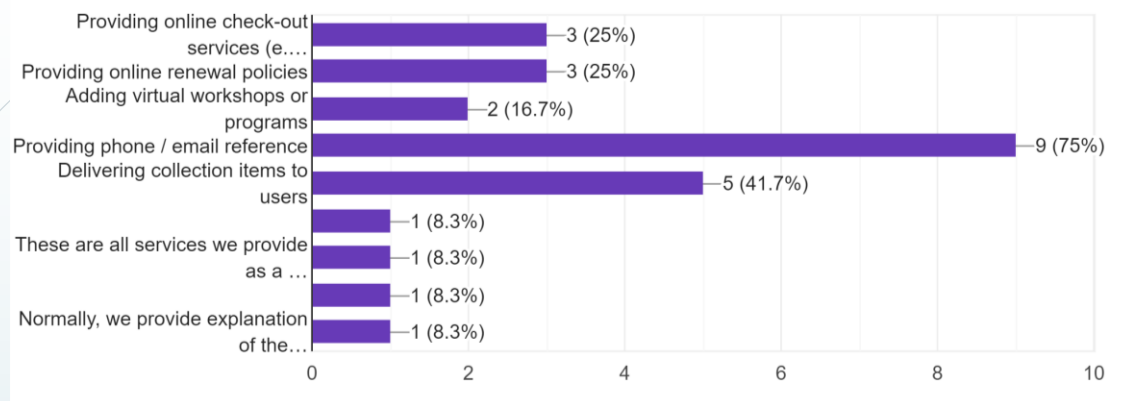


Furthermore, when respondents were asked about shifting to online and remote services, we found that about seven libraries have shifted towards providing their services via Internet, which supports the trend prevailing among many libraries around the world, as those libraries have initiated their services via Internet through their websites or via e-mail. However, libraries during this time faced many challenges, including:

- Technical challenges.
- Setting up a workable space at home and balancing work and family responsibilities.
- Copyright issue for digital books.
- Librarian needs to be more creative and do online promotion.
- Raising the library users' awareness about the electronic services.
- Majority of library users are not aware of services that have been shifted to the online platform.

Check any of the following activities that the library is conducting in response to COVID-19

12 responses

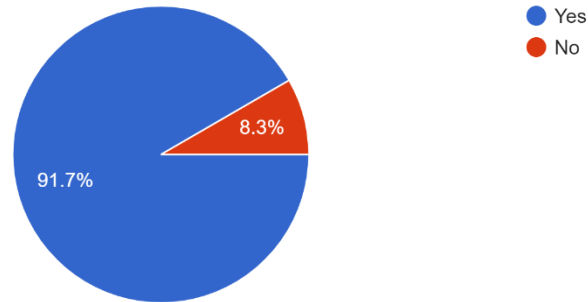


Regarding the activities or services that the library is conducting in response to COVID-19, survey results show that the largest percentage, which is about 75% of the participating libraries provided phone / email reference; whereas, 41.7% of the respondents were delivering collection items to users; and the rest of the services were:

- Providing online checkout services (e.g. eBooks) (25%).
- Providing online renewal policies (25%).
- Adding virtual workshops or programs (16.7%).
- Digital information is emailed to users (8.3%).
- Online reference services (8.3%).

## Did users respond to the change and accept online and remote services?

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12 responses



It is noted from the responses of the participating libraries that most library users (91.7%) have responded and supported the shift of libraries towards electronic services, which indicates the awareness of the library users of the importance of electronic services.

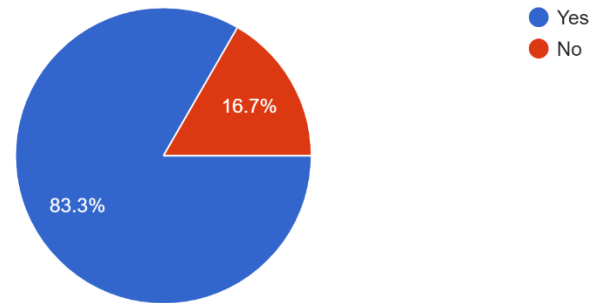
We can explain that because some people still fear about the infection of COVID-19, so using the online / remote services reduces the possibility of meeting many people in the library. Also, most of the people in the parliament are working remotely.



## Do users have access to computers? Are they provided with proper information on how to use the online and remote services?

Do users have access to computers and are they provided with proper information on how to use the online and remote services?

12 responses



When participating libraries were asked about the users and if they are providing any kind of training about using online services, it is found that (83.3%) of the participating libraries stated that their users have access to computers and are provided with proper information on how to use the online and remote services.

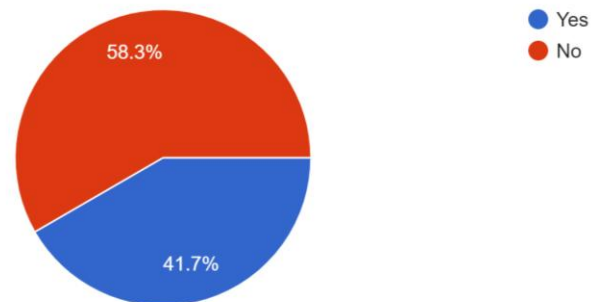
It can justify that:

- Most of the participating libraries offer initial training to all new staff.
- Most of the parliamentary staff had laptops and access to the parliamentary network while in lockdown.
- Some of the participating libraries publish a user guide for online library service for MPs and staffs.
- Some of the participating libraries promote their library services via social media a lot. Video, poster and IG live for promoting the online and remote services.

## Are there any changes in the clients' usage patterns in terms of the use of research methods or topics researched during the pandemic?

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12 responses



When participating libraries were asked if there are any changes in the users' usage patterns in terms of the use of research methods or topics researched during this crisis, 58.3% of the participating libraries reported that there are no changes in the users' interests and topics researched during COVID-19 crisis.

However, 41.7% from participating libraries reported that there are some changes, such as the following:

- Health requests related to COVID-19 increased substantially, and then the focus was on economic impact and recovery.
- Most of the library users are engaging with the topics on "COVID-19", in line with policymaking and guidelines.
- Due to COVID 19 public health measures, users have to refer to the online services.

## What are the most important aspects of the library's financial response to reduce the impact of the pandemic?

According to participating libraries, there are many sectors or activities that are directly affected in times of crisis like COVID-19, such as:

- Planned Hiring
- Future Plans
- Staff Benefits

Also, there are many activities that are partially affected, like:

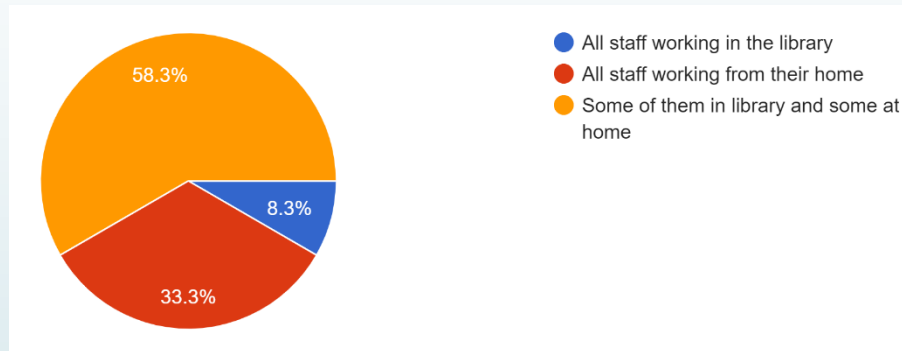
- Programs
- Acquisition Budget

Moreover, there are some activities which were not affected by the repercussions of COVID-19, for example:

- Electronic Resources
- Salaries
- Professional Development Programs

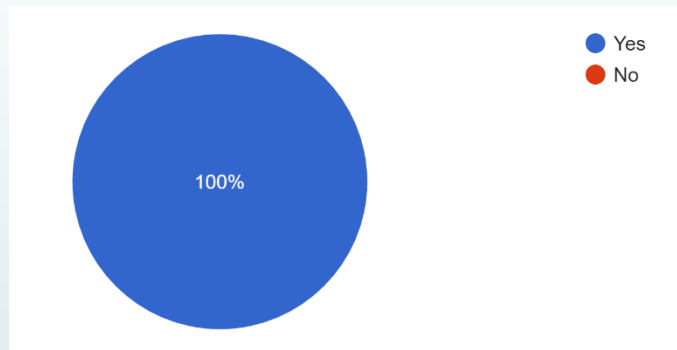
## Library Staff

### Where did the library staff work?



Results of the study show that 58.3% of the participating libraries have some of their staff working from the library and some are working from home. On the other hand, 33.3% of the participating libraries had their staff working at home.

# Have the library staff been educated about the virus and ways to prevent it?



All participating libraries stated that their staff have been educated about the virus and ways to prevent it. Moreover, that was done through the following:

- The staff were educated about the basics of preventing the virus such as handwashing, social distancing, avoiding group gathering, avoiding touching public items, coughing on an elbow among other minor prevention measures.
- The library management have tailored policies & guidelines on how we can minimize or avoid getting this virus in our work place.
- Using government social media accounts / Emails to educate the staff. No separate programs were used.
- All the library staff have been exposed to the new normal in library services with the guidelines provided by National Libraries.

## What challenges have the librarian had from working from their home?

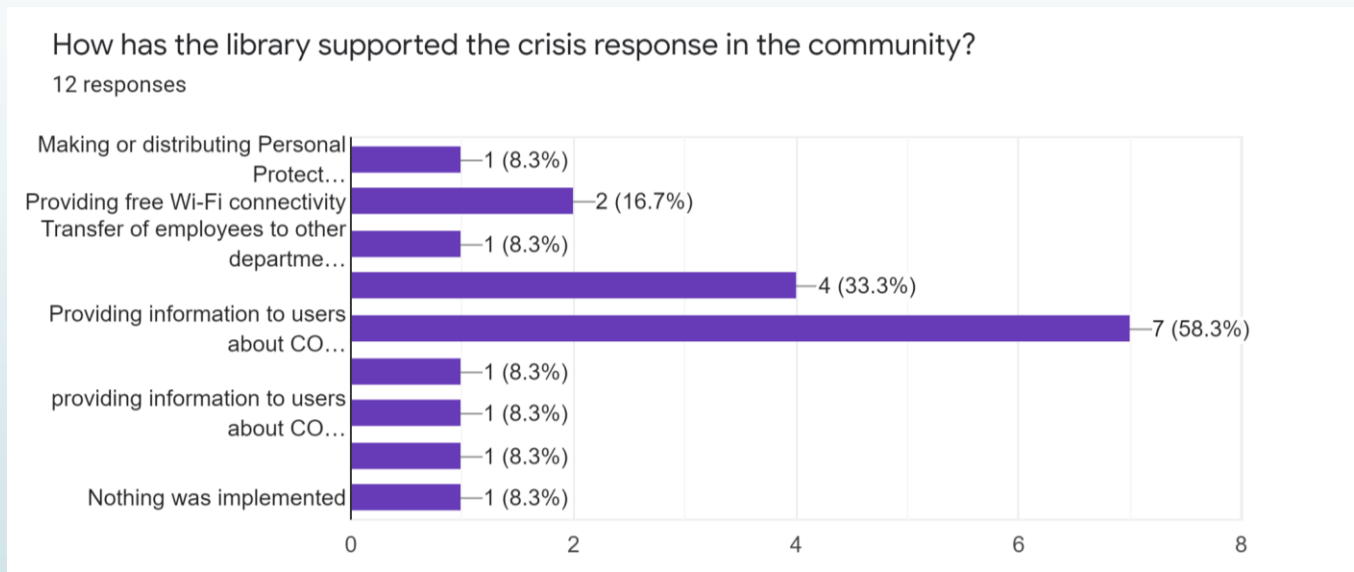
Of course, working from home greatly differs from working within the library, in terms of the availability of resources, the time to focus on getting the work done, and the most important challenges faced by participating librarians were:

- Limited resources like laptops, cell phones, Wi-Fi connection or other equipment.
- The librarians faced some technical challenges.
- Limited access to print resources.
- Most people prefer face-to-face contact in meeting for example.
- Providing some information services is not possible from home.
- Balance between work and life.
- Isolation from library team(s).
- Time.



## The Library and Community

### How has the library supported the crisis response in the community?



All participating libraries have made it clear that the library plays a role in supporting the response efforts of COVID-19 in the community, and that response varied between providing information and statistical information and the provision of some other services such as free Wi-Fi.

Almost 58.3% of the participating libraries indicated that they provided information to users about COVID-19 through the library website, as spreading information awareness about this pandemic is still one of the roles that libraries play around the world.

As for the remaining of the participating libraries, they indicated that they provided statistical information and numbers about the crisis, and these statistical figures undoubtedly helped the health authorities to take many decisions about COVID-19.

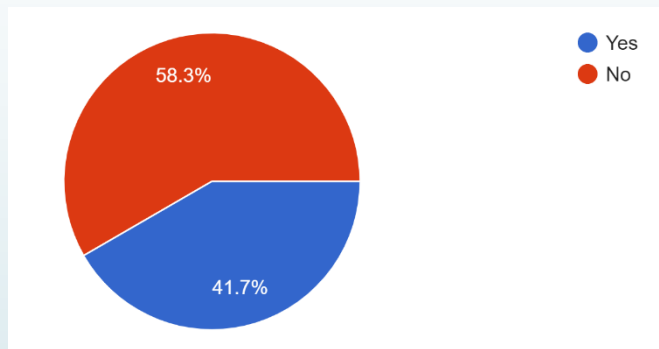
The contribution of the remaining participating libraries varied as follows:

- Providing free Wi-Fi connectivity
- Making or distributing Personal Protective Equipment like face shield, etc.

All of the above indicate that libraries of all kinds play a prominent societal role, as we have noted that libraries have made all their resources available to support the country's efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

## The Pandemic and Future

### Does the library have any advance crisis management plan?



Unfortunately, as shown in the figure above, 58.3% of the participating libraries do not have an advanced crisis management plan, and this can be justified because the whole world did not expect this pandemic, and despite that the libraries showed a good reaction and contributed to efforts to stop this pandemic.

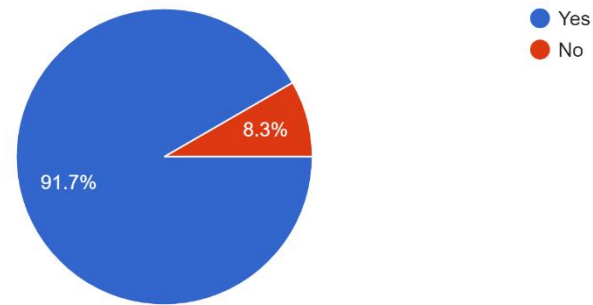
Nevertheless, from a personal point of view, this must change in the future. Libraries should learn the lesson from this pandemic and always prepare for a contingency plan for the future.

On the other hand, the study showed that 41.7% of the participating libraries possessed an advanced crisis management plan. Most of those libraries launched virtual platforms, which contain many information that may be accessed remotely.

## Will this pandemic affect the library's emergency preparedness in the coming years?

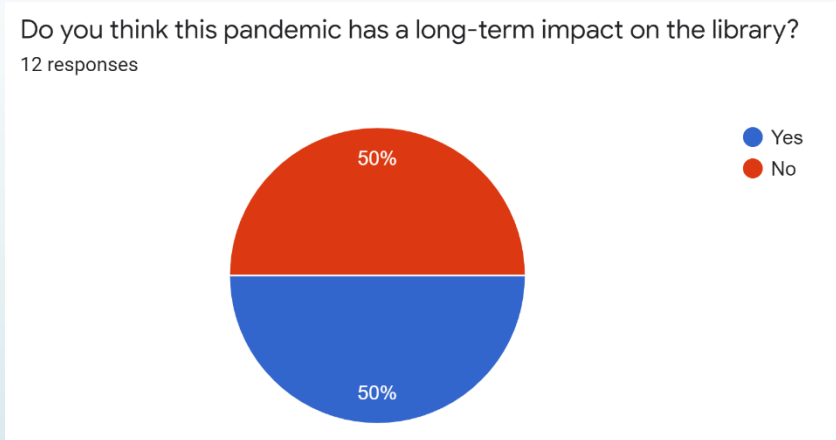
Will this pandemic affect the library's emergency preparedness in the coming years?

12 responses



Almost all the participating libraries (91.7%) clarified that this pandemic affected the library's emergency preparedness in the coming years, as the libraries will make an additional effort in designing an emergency plan to ensure the continuity of the library services in the event of any other disasters in the future. Readiness is one of the most important lessons learned from the COVID- 19 pandemic.

# Do you think this pandemic has a long-term impact on the library?



The results of the survey, show that half of the participating libraries believe that this pandemic has no long-term impact on the library, and the impact of this pandemic only fades with the return of life to normal after the eradication of the epidemic or the creation of a vaccine.

However, the other half believes that this pandemic has consequences that will appear later in the future and will affect the libraries and their work, as these libraries believe that the position of libraries is closely related to the financial conditions of the country, and any impact on the financial situation of the country will definitely affect the libraries as well.

Some libraries have made clear that among the effects of the pandemic is that libraries have proven that they could successfully continue providing all information services even remotely. In addition, this crisis has affected employees' work patterns wherein staff are now well prepared to work from home.

## What are the most important plans and ideas that the library learned from this pandemic?

We are still in the midst of the crisis of this pandemic; a large number of countries are still suffering from its effects. Naturally, some libraries were not prepared enough to deal with this pandemic. However, the most important thing is what we learned from this difficult time, and how we can extract lessons from this pandemic and learn from them to prepare for the future.

Under this question for the participating libraries, most of the answers were about the necessity of library preparedness in providing many online resources and online services, as it became necessary for library users to access the library website and use online services and books remotely.

The answers were as follows:

- Libraries must be ready with more of the online resources/ online services and always prepare with new environment such this pandemic.
- The use of e-library, digital library instead of printed materials and delivering services through internet.
- Libraries need to be flexible to the needs of users.
- Have a future focused agile digital strategy.
- Disseminate digital information to users rather than issuing hard paper/books.



# Conclusion

Through this survey, the status of parliamentary libraries in Asia and the Pacific, the most important effects of the COVID- 19 on libraries, and how libraries dealt with that situation were identified. It also showed the libraries' contribution to supporting efforts to stop this pandemic, whether by providing information about this virus and how to prevent it, or by providing statistical numbers that helped health agencies make their decisions about this pandemic.

In addition, this study revealed the parliamentary libraries' plans to deal with such crises, as well as the important lessons these libraries have learned from this pandemic.