

STRATFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY: DEI AUDIT REPORT



2025

In the spring of 2025, Stratford Public Library undertook a project to examine the diversity represented in its collection. This report presents the findings from that review, along with recommended actions.



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PURPOSE



Providing inclusive and equitable services for all members of the community is a vital part of Stratford Public Library's mission. This is put into practice across many areas of the library, one of those areas - a particularly visible area - is the books and materials on the shelves.

Rudine Sims Bishop, a scholar and advocate of multicultural children's literature, came up with an analogy in the 1990's that is still often mentioned today in discussions about the importance of diverse library collections. In her metaphor, books can serve as both mirrors that reflect a reader's own experiences and as windows that allow a reader a view into a new experience. In this way, books serve the dual purpose of being self-affirming for readers who can identify with the characters and themes, and enlightening for readers who are unfamiliar with the books' topics. Ideally, a library should be able to provide its readers with both experiences, and this is one of the reasons why a diverse collection is so important.

Stratford Public Library strives to provide a diverse collection of materials that highlight a broad range of experiences. Although every effort is taken to fulfill this goal, without concrete data, it can be difficult to have an accurate picture of the current state of the collection. The purpose of conducting this audit was to provide an in-depth, point-in-time assessment of the diversity of SPL's collection. This provides the opportunity to identify the collection's strengths and to pinpoint gaps where more diverse representation may be needed.

DATA COLLECTION

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the collection, data for this report was collected through several methods. Library staff were surveyed, library patrons were surveyed, and random samples of books from two collections - Adult Fiction and Junior Fiction - were audited. This data was collected between May and August of 2025.



12

library staff surveyed



112

library patrons surveyed



500

Adult Fiction
books reviewed



375

Junior Fiction
books reviewed

SURVEY RESULTS

Library staff and library patrons were invited to share their viewpoints on the collection through two separate surveys. It is, of course, unreasonable to expect any individual to be familiar with every item in the collection. The goal of asking these questions was to discover how the collection is perceived as a whole.



It is worth noting that no voluntary survey is ever truly representative of a population at large. Because participation is optional, participants are self-selected instead of randomly chosen, and as a result, bias can be introduced. Participants, for example, might choose to take part in a survey because they feel particularly strongly about a topic, meaning that the people who are less passionate are not represented. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that these responses reflect the views of all library staff, all library patrons, or the community at large. That does not mean that these responses are not valuable, however. Surveys can be a useful tool for identifying potential issues or highlighting areas that require further investigation. These survey responses provide additional insight to complement the more objective data collected in other parts of the study.

Staff Insights

Early in the process, all staff members were invited to share their perspectives through an online survey form. Staff bring a uniquely informed viewpoint through their knowledge of the library's operations, their training, and their regular interactions with library patrons and therefore their input is very valuable. The questions that were asked to staff were different than the questions that were later asked to the public, partly because the smaller number of participants allowed for more open-ended questions, and partly because staff input helped to shape the public survey questions. 12 SPL staff members chose to participate.

All participants strongly and unanimously agreed that a diverse library collection that reflects a wide variety of voices, perspectives, and experiences is very important. The majority believed that SPL's collection is quite diverse, however, this response was less emphatic and slightly divided. When asked whether they believed SPL's collection does a good job of reflecting Stratford's community, the majority believed it did, however, some remained neutral and a few disagreed. In general, respondents felt very positively about the idea of diversifying SPL's collection and all respondents, whether or not they felt positively about the current state of SPL's collection, were able to identify areas of the collection that they felt could be improved.



When asked if there were any voices that were overrepresented in the collection, participants' responses were mixed. Some believed the collection to be well-rounded, others were unsure, while some believed that Caucasian voices, in particular, were most prominent on the shelves. Conversely, most respondents were able to identify voices that they felt could be better represented in the collection. These included Indigenous, Black, African, South Asian, South American, and neurodivergent voices.

One respondent pointed out that the majority of the library's physical materials are intended for those without visual or hearing impairments and called attention to some way that materials that could be made more **accessible**. They mentioned that digital audiobooks were in high demand and wait times were quite long, which means that access to them is limited.



The availability of **multilingual materials**, especially in the children's section, was identified as something that could be improved. Arabic, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish were mentioned in particular. When asked if they believed SPL's adult and children's multilingual materials adequately served the needs of the community, some expressed uncertainty, but the majority believed they were insufficient or only partially sufficient. SPL provides access to LOTE4Kids, an online database of multilingual digital children's books, and several respondents positively acknowledged this as a good resource for filling this gap, at least in the children's department. It was pointed out by one respondent, however, that these digital books could not provide a substitute for physical books, as families highly value physical books as a part of their children's literary experience.

With the exception of the need for more multilingual materials, no other weak spots were noted in the **Children's Fiction** or **Non-Fiction** collections. In fact, the children's section was repeatedly praised as being particularly diverse, as was the **Young Adult** collection. Staff recognized that these collections had been intentionally cultivated to include a wide variety of voices, with diversity reflected in topics, characters, and authorship. The **Graphic Novel** collection was also mentioned by more than one staff member as a good example of a diverse collection. Staff noted a lack of diversity in **DVDs** and **Magazines**. Opinions regarding **Adult Fiction** and **Adult Non-Fiction** were varied, with some respondents believing these collections to be diverse, and others feeling that they could use improvement. Several respondents highlighted topics they would like to more of in the adult section. In Non-Fiction, these included abolitionist and anti-capitalist theory, Black voices in music history, Indigenous local history, and de-stigmatized examinations of intimacy, sex, and relationships. In Fiction, staff members wanted to see more Indigenous stories, Black voices in speculative fiction, and more multicultural fiction in general. Additionally, there was a noted need for more diverse religious and spiritual representation outside of Christianity, in both Fiction and Non-Fiction, with one respondent pointing out that it is difficult to find holiday fiction that is not Christmas themed.

Several staff reported receiving frequent requests for ESL learning materials, and the need for an **Adult Literacy Collection** was emphasized. Although SPL owns English instruction books - which one respondent mentioned are often requested by patrons - several staff members highlighted the need for high interest/low vocabulary books for adults who are looking to practice their English in a more contextual way.

While identifying these areas for improvement, staff also recognized that the library faces some constraints. A **shortage of physical space** was the most prominent limitation and was mentioned several times. As previously stated, many staff wished for a larger multilingual collection, for both children and adults, but some acknowledged that a lack of space was a major limiting factor in growing these collections. Some staff talked about the necessity of weeding materials in order to create more space on the shelves, which inevitably alters the makeup of the collection. So, although there may be areas where the diversity of SPL's collection can be improved, it also must be acknowledged that library staff must work within certain limitations.

Summary of Staff Survey Results

Overall, library staff provided an insightful look into the current state of the collection and their responses demonstrated their commitment to promoting inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in the library. Respondents appreciated the work that had already been put into diversifying the collection, while also recognizing the need for this process to be ongoing. Participating staff were honest and enthusiastic in their answers, and their insights are greatly appreciated. Their observations were instrumental in developing the questions that were asked later in the public survey.



Staff were able to identify some strengths and weaknesses of the current collection, as well as some limitations that make diversifying the collection more difficult.

Strengths

- Staff felt that the Children's collection, Young Adult collection, and Graphic Novel collection presented a wide variety of voices and perspectives.

Limitations

- Staff acknowledged that a lack of physical space was a limiting factor for the library.

Opportunities for improvement

- Staff pointed out some identities they thought could be better represented on the shelves, especially in Adult Fiction and Adult Non Fiction.
- Several staff saw a need for more Multilingual materials and more Adult ESL learning materials.

Patron insights

The public survey was designed with a few specific goals in mind:

- To investigate whether library users perceived the collection as diverse and inclusive.
- To examine whether individuals belonging to equity-deserving groups perceived the library's collection any differently than those who are not a part of these groups.
- To explore whether the library's accessible materials, English language learning materials, and multilingual materials are meeting library users' needs.

The survey ran for one month between mid-June and mid-July. Survey participants had the option to either complete the survey online or to fill out a paper version of the survey, which was made available at the library. 112 library users participated in the survey.

All survey participants were invited to share demographic information but were assured these questions were entirely optional. 50 respondents chose to answer these questions.

Of the responses received:

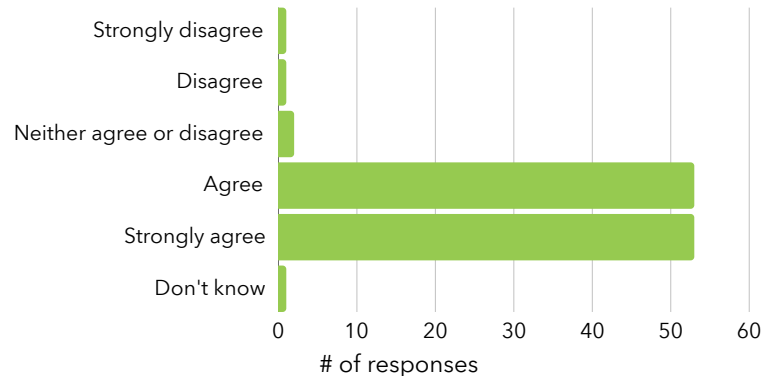
- Age was fairly well distributed, with one exception: very few participants were under the age of 19.
- The vast majority of participants identified as female. Participants identifying as male and non-binary were represented equally, though both groups comprised a small minority.
- About one third of participants identified as 2SLGBTQI+.
- About one third of respondents identified as neurodivergent.
- About 15% of respondents identified as disabled.
- Very few participants identified themselves as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour); most who provided information about their ethnicity identified as Caucasian.
- About 72% of participants said they were born in Canada and their parents were born in Canada. 18% said they were born in Canada and one of both of their parents were born outside of Canada. 10% were born outside of Canada.

It is important to keep in mind that these demographics only represent the 50 participants who elected to answer these questions, and the demographics of over half of survey participants remains unknown.

Diversity and Inclusion in the Library

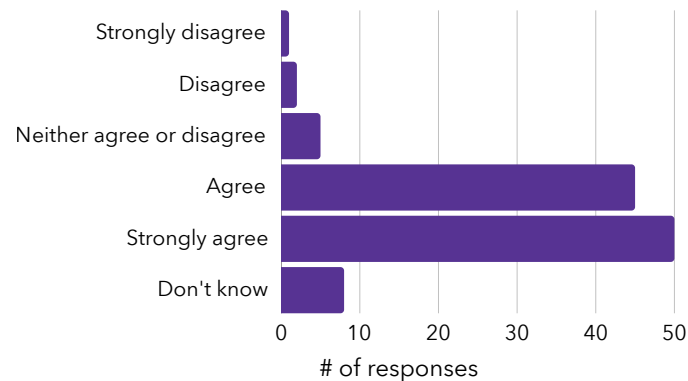
One of the primary objectives of conducting the survey was to find out whether library patrons perceived SPL’s collection to be diverse and whether they felt the library is making an effort to support diversity in its materials. The responses were exceedingly positive in both regards. When participants were asked to respond to statements including “SPL makes an effort to ensure its materials reflect a wide variety of voices, perspectives, and experiences” and “SPL’s materials offer something for everyone, regardless of their background”, the vast majority agreed. This is a very good sign and demonstrates that SPL’s efforts up until now in promoting diversity and inclusion have been noticed.

SPL makes an effort to ensure its materials reflect a wide variety of voices, perspectives, and experiences.



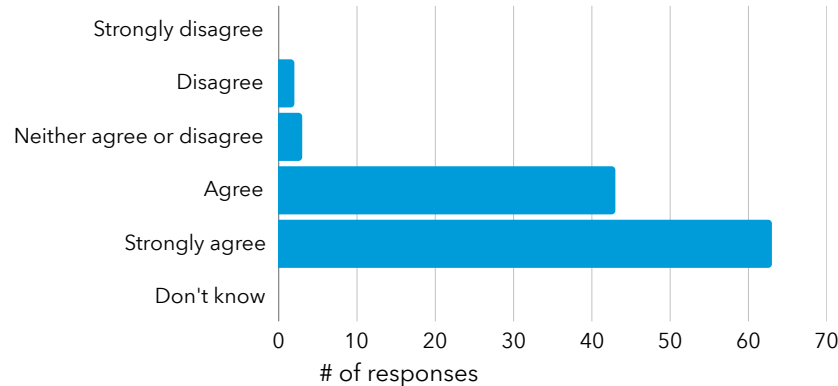
Participants were asked to rate their agreement with the statement “I feel included when I browse the library’s materials.” Again, this response was overwhelmingly positive. Although there were a few neutral or negative responses, they made up a very small minority.

SPL's materials offer something for everyone, regardless of their background.



Responses to this question were cross-referenced with responses to the demographic questions (when provided), and responses were grouped by age, gender identity, racial background, immigrant status and generation status, identity as 2SLGBTQI+, neurodivergent, or disabled, and whether participants spoke a second language. If any patterns were to emerged in the responses by different demographic groups, this could possibly be an indicator of a problem. No immediate red flags were raised. One potential trend did appear; the responses from those who had identified as BIPOC and immigrants were slightly less emphatic. These individuals were more likely than their counterparts to respond to this question neutrally or with “agree”, instead of “strongly agree”. Although the majority of their responses were still positive, this suggests that BIPOC individuals and immigrants may feel somewhat less included when browsing library materials. It is difficult to determine this fact with certainty, however, because the number of respondents who identified as being part of these subgroups was so small.

I feel included when I browse the library’s materials.



Participants were then asked separate questions about whether they felt the library’s materials reflected different aspects of diversity including race, gender, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, disability, and immigration status. Again, responses to these questions were quite positive. Disability representation was the type of representation that participants seemed to be the most uncertain of; this question had a high degree of “don’t know” responses. Responses were then cross-referenced with participants’ self-reported identities (when provided) to see whether responses differed among groups. For example, responses to the statement, “The library’s materials reflect a diverse range of neurodiverse experiences and perspectives” were analyzed separately for participants who self-identified as neurodivergent and those who did not. For each statement, responses were analyzed based on the participant identities that were relevant to that statement. This process did not reveal any major concerns, which is a positive outcome, although again, some of these subgroups were quite small, making it difficult to generalize these results.

Next, participants were asked if they felt there were any topics, communities, or perspectives that were underrepresented in the library’s materials. This question was open-ended, allowing participants to enter their own answers. 43 participants chose to write in a response. Roughly a third of these responses indicated that participants did not perceive any underrepresentation or felt that the library’s materials were already quite diverse in representation. A few responses expressed uncertainty. Among participants who did identify areas where they felt representation was lacking, the responses were quite varied. If many participants pointed out the same gap, this would be an indicator of an area of concern, so the fact that the responses were quite disparate is a positive sign.

The topic that was mentioned the most often was religious perspectives – some wanted to see more religious diversity, while others wanted higher representation of specific religions, including Christianity and Judaism. Several respondents mentioned a need for more multilingual materials. Other requests that were mentioned more than once included more multicultural or international perspectives, more immigrant and refugee voices, more farming and agricultural related content, more 2SLGBTQI+ fiction and non-fiction, more Indigenous content, and more topics related to disability and neurodivergence, including non-fiction on sexuality and disability, and greater general representation of both autism and disability in the adult section. Many more topics were mentioned by participants, and while it is not possible list every suggestion in this report, all responses have been passed along to library staff.



It is important to keep in mind that there could be a variety of reasons participants feel these topics are underrepresented. It's possible that SPL does not own many books on these topics, it's also possible that these books do exist in the library and they are just not very visible - maybe they are not often featured in books displays and promotional materials, or maybe they are difficult to search in the catalogue or hard to find on the shelves. This is not a question this survey is capable of answering, but it is important to take into consideration.

Lastly, participants were asked to consider the types of library materials used by themselves and members of their household. For each collection they were familiar with, they were asked to rate how much they agreed with the following statement: "This collection reflects a wide variety of voices, perspectives, and experiences". The collections included Adult Fiction, Adult Non-Fiction, Movies, Music CDs, Children's Materials, Young Adult Materials, Graphic Novels, Large Print Books, Newspapers and Magazines, Digital Materials, Adult Multilingual Materials, and Children's Multilingual Materials. Each collection received predominantly positive feedback. Some collections received higher percentages of positive responses than others, but these tended to be larger collections - in which case a wide range of diverse voices and perspectives can be presented more easily - and collections that respondents were more familiar with, which meant the number of responses were higher. Collections that were less familiar to participants meant the sample size was smaller, and as a result, even a few negative responses appear more significant when presented as a percentage. Overall, responses to this question were quite positive and indicate that participants saw diversity reflected in many collections across the library. These results suggest that some collections, such as Adult Multilingual Materials, Children's Multilingual Materials, Newspapers and Magazines, and Music CDs could benefit from some extra attention, but they do not point to any major issues.

English Language Learning Materials

A section of the survey was designed to assess how well the library's ESL learning materials were meeting users' needs. This section was created in direct response to staff feedback highlighting a need for more of these materials. These questions were designed as follow-up questions for participants who indicated they were not fluent in English or they regularly borrowed materials for someone in their household who was not fluent in English. This was not the case for any of the survey participants and therefore, no responses were submitted for these questions. The lack of responses reflects limitations in the survey's design and should not be interpreted as a meaningful finding. Due to practical limitations, the survey was only made available and marketed in English. Microsoft Forms (the platform that was used to deliver the online survey) does offer a translation option in a variety of languages, but its accuracy is unknown, and so this option was available, but not was promoted to survey respondents. This limitation of the survey is likely the reason the survey did not receive any responses from non-fluent English speakers. Several staff indicated that there was a need for more ESL learning materials, and even though the survey was unsuccessful in probing deeper into this topic, this matter still should be given attention.

Multilingual Materials

26 participants indicated they spoke another language other than English or regularly borrowed materials for someone who spoke another language. These participants were prompted to answer a few follow-up questions about the library's multilingual materials. 18 different languages were spoken, with French being by far the most common; over half of the 26 respondents reported they spoke French. Other languages known included Spanish, Tamil, Japanese, Dutch, Punjabi, Hindi, German, Uyghur, Mandarin, Latin, Esperanto, Italian, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, Danish, and Ukrainian. Several respondents spoke multiple languages in addition to English. Participants were given a list of statements and were asked to check all that applied to their experience with adult multilingual materials at SPL.

Most respondents' answers fell into one of two fairly equally represented categories: they were able to find materials in their language(s) at the library or they had never checked whether the library had materials in their language(s). A small minority of respondents reported being unable to find materials in their language(s) at the library. In these cases, the languages spoken by these respondents were not ones in which SPL currently provides materials, indicating that the issue was not with locating items but rather that no materials in those languages were available. An even smaller minority reported they would not be interested in using materials in this language.

The number of respondents who indicated they had never looked for multilingual materials, combined with several respondents who reported they would use these materials if they knew more about what was available, suggests that perhaps some library patrons are not aware SPL has multilingual materials.

Of the respondents who were able to find materials in their language, several thought the library offered a wide variety of materials in their language. More often though, respondents identified ways in which the multilingual collection could be improved, with the most common response being a desire for a greater quantity and larger variety of materials in their language.

These respondents were then asked the follow up question: "Are there children in your household who speak this language?" to which 12 respondents answered "Yes". These results were examined; however, it is important to keep in mind that this subgroup is quite small, making it difficult to draw significant conclusions.

Over half of these respondents were able to find children's materials in their language. Of those, some were happy with the variety of materials available (all of these respondents spoke French) while a few wished for more variety or newer materials. Roughly a quarter of respondents were unable to find children's materials in their language, and again, materials in these languages were not available, indicating that locating materials is not the issue. A few reported that they were not interested or their child was not interested in using materials in this language. Zero respondents reported that they had never looked for children's materials in this language.

Interestingly, not one respondent reported using digital multilingual materials, for either adults or kids. The reason for this response is unclear. SPL provides access to a large amount of digital children's books in a variety of languages through the LOTE4Kids database and digital materials, mostly magazines, are available in a number of languages for adults. It is unclear whether these participants were uninterested in these materials, or if they were unaware these materials existed. It is also possible this response is a result of the survey's design; this item was fairly far down in the list of options and perhaps participants missed it.

When asked for general feedback about SPL's multilingual materials for both children and adults, respondents suggested expanding the range of languages represented to include languages such as Dutch and Tamil, increasing the availability of adult and young adult materials in French, adding more French-language audiobooks for adults, and providing more children's books in Arabic.

In summary, these results indicate a desire for an increased number of multilingual materials that cover a wider range of languages.

Accessible Formats

50 survey participants indicated that they either used accessible formats, used accessible formats sometimes, or regularly borrowed materials for someone in their household who used accessible formats to read, watch, or listen to library materials. When participants were asked what types of accessible formats they used, large print books were the most common response, followed by audiobooks, then movies with closed captions, eBooks, and digital audiobooks. Many respondents indicated they used more than one accessible format. The vast majority of these participants said they were able to find materials at the library that fit their accessibility needs. Although some said they had never looked for accessible materials at SPL, not one participant indicated that they had tried and were unable to find library materials that fit their accessibility needs, which is quite a positive result. Also positive is the fact that the majority of respondents felt the library offered a good variety of materials that met their accessibility needs. Some respondents saw room for improvement; several desired greater quantity and wider variety of accessible materials (most of these responses came from large print users, and a few came from audiobook users), a few said the accessible materials available did not fit their interests (these responses mostly came from large print users), and a couple thought the materials were outdated (mostly audiobook users).

When asked for open-ended feedback, several individuals commented that they were quite happy with the accessible materials available at SPL. Several desired more variety in the Large Print collection, and a request was made to include large print copies in book club kits. Some respondents were eager to see more materials added to the audiobook collection. A few participants mentioned a desire for more digital materials, and one comment pointed out that wait times for digital materials were quite long, echoing a similar statement made by a staff member.

Overall, it appears that most respondents were aware that SPL offers materials in accessible formats and were able to find materials that suited their needs. Many respondents were quite happy with the variety of materials that were available to them. The feedback was largely positive, the main suggestions for improvement were simply requests for more materials in these collections.

Additional Feedback

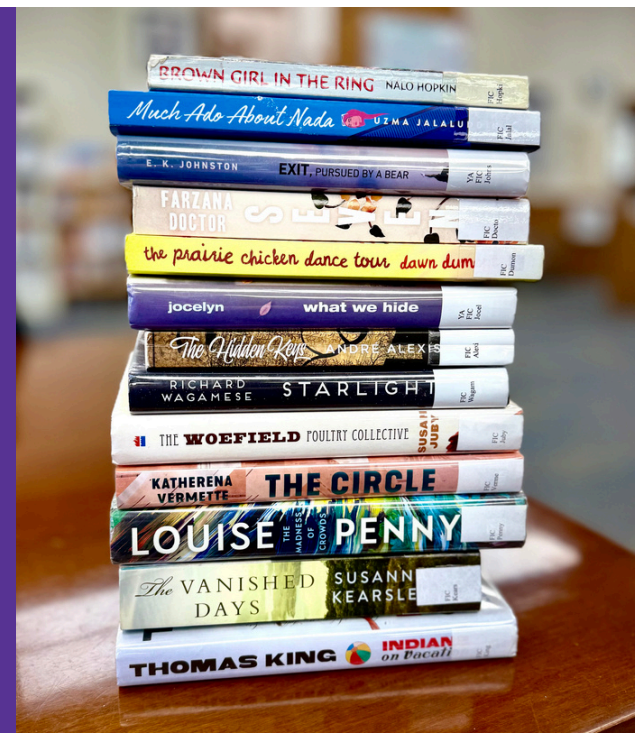
In the final section of the survey, participants were asked if there was anything else the library could do to make sure its materials include everyone or if they had any additional comments or feedback. Many respondents took the opportunity to share their appreciation for the library and its staff. In addition, several comments expressed gratitude for the survey itself and enthusiasm for SPL's ongoing DEI initiatives.

A few respondents expressed a desire to see more works from emerging authors and from smaller or independent publishers. Others offered suggestions related to the building, including ideas for new spaces and ways to improve accessibility. This feedback has been shared with library staff. Some respondents also acknowledged the library's practical constraints, noting that factors such as limited physical space, budget considerations, and the availability of certain kinds of books presented challenges in expanding the collection.

Summary of Patron Survey Results

Overall, the survey results reflect a strong sense of goodwill toward the library, and many respondents shared their appreciation for SPL's materials, services, and staff. Quite a few respondents were enthusiastic about the survey itself, with many grateful for the chance to share their perspectives and others noting the importance of this project.

While the survey revealed some areas of the collection that could be improved, no major red flags were raised, which is quite a positive outcome. For the most part, participants perceived SPL's collection to be diverse and inclusive.



Library users were able to identify some strengths and weaknesses of the current collection.

Strengths

- The vast majority of survey participants viewed the collection as a whole to be diverse and felt included when they browsed materials.

Opportunities for improvement

- Some survey participants saw a need for more multilingual materials - both in the quantity of materials available and in the diversity of languages offered.
- Most participants that required accessible formats were able to find materials that fit their needs; but some wished a greater variety of materials were available in accessible formats.

AUDIT RESULTS

Methodology

SPL already has a system in place to audit its book displays for diversity. This helps library staff to ensure that these highly visible materials exhibit a wide variety of voices. Materials that are featured in SPL's displays are examined using the methodology established by librarian Karen Jensen. Using this method, the auditor investigates individual books and tracks the identities that are represented in each book. The methodology for this audit was built from this existing framework. Two collections were audited: Adult Fiction and Junior Fiction.

The Adult Fiction collection was actually two collections combined: Adult Fiction and Adult Fiction Paperbacks, totaling roughly 16450 titles. (In this report, these two combined collections are simply referred to as Adult Fiction.) In many cases, SPL owned multiple copies of a title across both collections but each title was only included in the audit once. A sample of 500 books was randomly selected from this collection.

The Junior Fiction collection consists of 6050 titles. A random sample of 375 titles was selected from this collection.

These are fairly representative samples, with a 95% confidence rate and a 5% margin of error. In other words, it can be said with 95% certainty that the statistics found in the samples are representative of the larger collection plus or minus 5%. However, it should be noted that many of the data points collected in this audit are quite small. A 5% margin of error means that these small statistics that are below 5% are especially unreliable and are more likely to be closer to zero.

The audit considered the identities of both the author and the main character (or main characters if there was more than one). Secondary characters were not included as this representation is less meaningful and could be considered tokenism or "diversity for the sake of checking a box". There are many different aspects to identity. The identities that were examined in this audit included gender identity, race, sexuality, ability, neurodiversity, and immigration status. There are, of course, many more aspects of identity that could be added, such as age or religion, but for practical reasons, it was only feasible to examine a limited number of categories.

Each book and author that appeared in the sample was researched thoroughly. Research techniques included conducting internet searches, skimming through the pages, reading book summaries, book reviews, author biographies, and author interviews. Databases such as NoveList, Goodreads, and Kirkus Reviews were quite helpful resources.

Limitations

This system is not perfect. It is difficult – and often uncomfortable – to take something as nuanced and complex as a person’s identity and break it down into categories. Further complicating the matter is the fact that the creator of the work is not able to speak for themselves and their characters and instead the categorizations rely on the auditor’s discretion. This can introduce personal biases. In order to minimize bias as much as possible, an author’s identity was only accounted for when the author had self-identified. No assumptions were made based on an author’s name or photograph. Similarly, characters’ identities were based only on what had been explicitly stated in the book or had been stated by the author, no assumptions were made based on fan theories.

This of course means that this information is limited to what is made publicly available. Many authors may wish to keep their personal information private, which is entirely understandable, it simply means this information cannot be accounted for.

It is also important to acknowledge that this audit only measured whether or not these identities were represented – not the quality of the representation. There were instances where some reviewers took issue with how characters were portrayed, saying that certain depictions were harmful or relied on stereotypes; there were also instances where reviewers had differing opinions. Rating the quality of representation is quite difficult to do objectively, and was outside the scope of this survey.

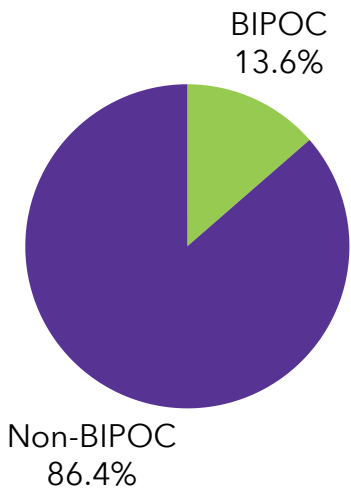
Lastly, it must be noted that in the absence of information, some assumptions must be made. For example, if a character is not described as disabled in a book, the average reader would likely assume the character is not disabled. Of course, a reader can interpret a character anyway they like, however, it must be acknowledged that there exists a “default” that is assumed in society. Characters, therefore, who have been classified in the audit as “persons without a disability” could also be considered “persons who are assumed not to have a disability”, however, the former term will be used in this audit for the sake of simplicity.

Similarly, it was noticed that many BIPOC authors will disclose their heritage in their author bios or on their websites, while most Caucasian authors will not self-identify as white, although this information is sometimes available on NoveList. Likewise, it is common for books to use racial identifiers when describing characters of colour but not when describing white characters. Kirkus Reviews will often use terms like “assumed white” when describing characters whose racial identity is not explicitly stated. (In the last several years, Kirkus Reviews has begun including descriptions of character’s identities in all of their reviews of children’s and teen’s books in an attempt to draw attention to diverse representation.) In this audit, characters and authors have been divided into two categories: BIPOC or non-BIPOC. The non-BIPOC category includes both individuals who were identified as white and individuals whose racial background was not was identified, but in many cases when an individual’s racial background was not identified, it is likely they are white, or assumed to be white.

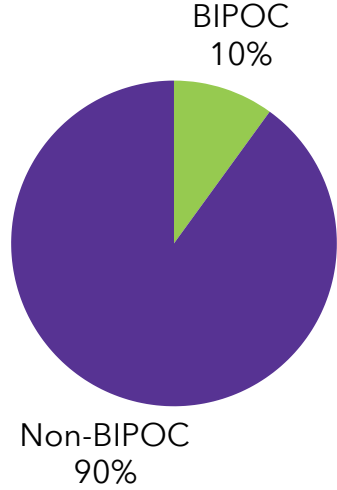
Ethnic and Racial Representation:

ADULT FICTION

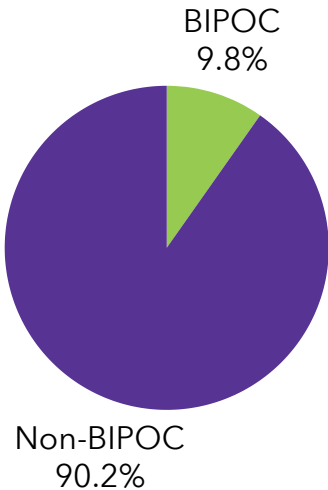
Character representation



Author representation



Community representation



68 books featured at least one BIPOC main character (13.6%) and 50 books were written by at least one BIPOC author (10%). BIPOC individuals make up 9.8% of the Stratford community, according to the 2021 Statistics Canada census. Using these demographics as a benchmark, the amount of BIPOC representation on the shelves is satisfactory. It is important to keep in mind, however, that according to these statistics, an overwhelming majority of characters and authors are Caucasian, or at least, can be assumed to be Caucasian, and there is still plenty of opportunity to continue to diversify this collection.

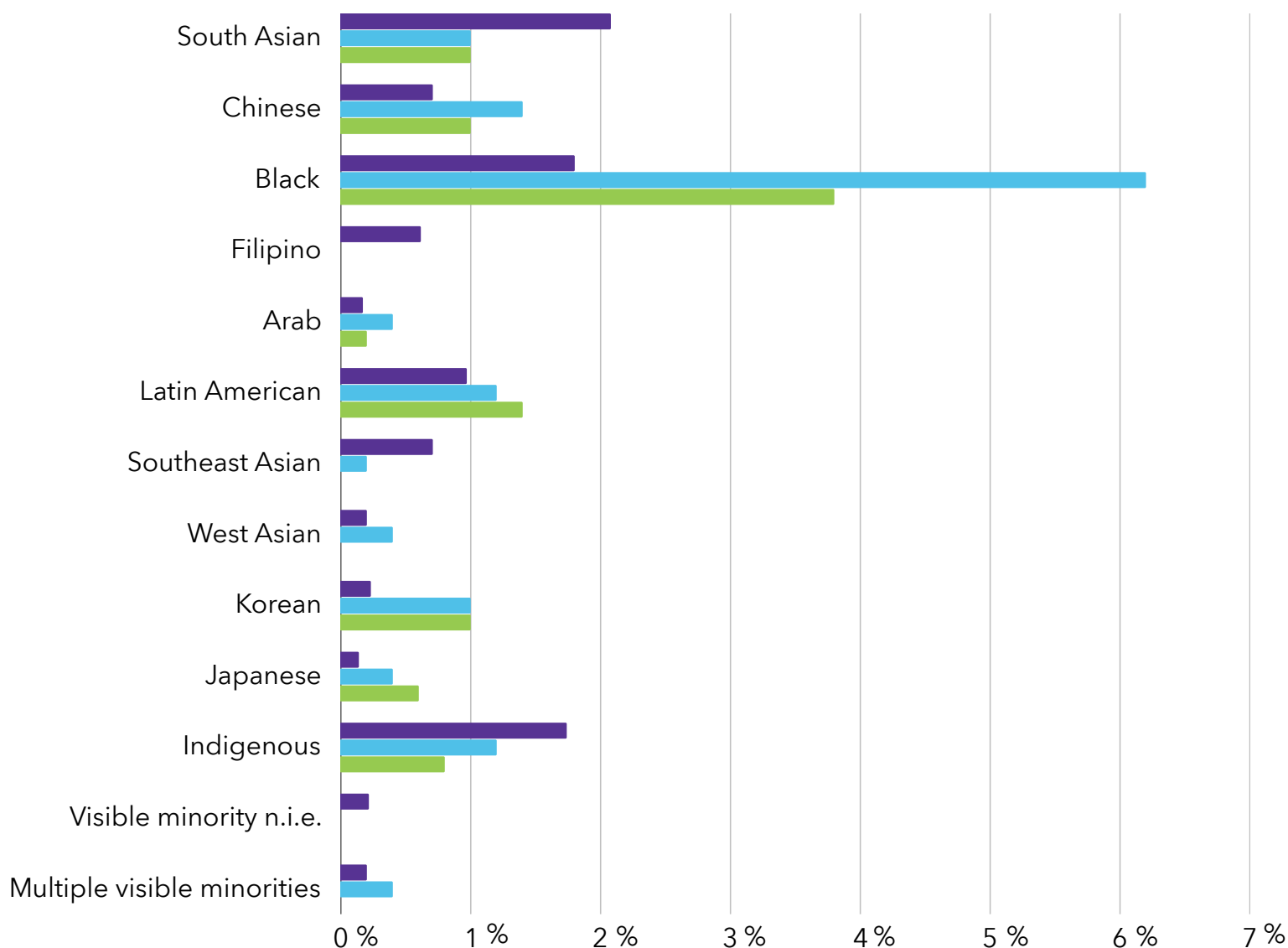
The graph on the following page displays the distribution among different racialized minority groups. (It is important to keep in mind that this graph is a close-up; although it is detailed, everything on this graph still represents a very small portion of the overall sample.) The purple bars on the graph represent the census demographics for each racial group, while the blue and green bars represent the characters and authors.

Any instance where the purple bar surpasses the blue or green bars signifies that the group was not adequately represented in the sample. From this data, it is clear that more Filipino, South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian, and Indigenous representation is needed in Adult Fiction. There is also a need for more representation of individuals who would be considered “multiple visible minority” and “visible minority n.i.e” by the Canadian Census.

Note: The racial identities referenced in this analysis are taken from the Canadian census.

In the Canadian census, “multiple visible minorities” refers to multiracial individuals belonging to more than one racialized minority group, and “visible minority n.i.e.” (not included elsewhere) includes individuals that “cannot be classified under specific minority categories, such as Guyanese, Pacific Islander, Tibetan, and West Indian.”

● Population in Stratford ● Characters ● Authors



Any instance in which the purple bar surpasses the blue or green bars suggests that the group is underrepresented in the collection relative to community statistics.

👉 Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

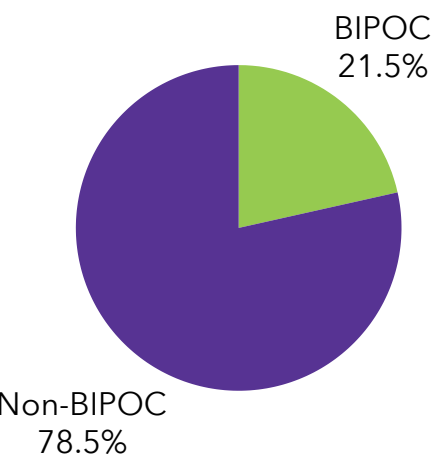
While BIPOC representation as a whole surpassed the benchmark, a more detailed breakdown of the data reveals that certain racial identities remain underrepresented. More **Filipino, South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian, and Indigenous** representation is needed, as well as representation of individuals who belong to **multiple visible minorities**, and those who would be considered “**visible minority not included elsewhere**”, such as Guyanese, Pacific Islander, Tibetan, and West Indian.

SPL should continue to expand BIPOC representation in the Adult Fiction collection, with a focus on prioritizing these underrepresented racial groups.

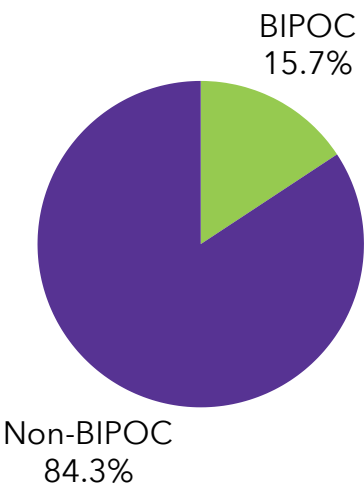
Ethnic and Racial Representation:

JUNIOR FICTION

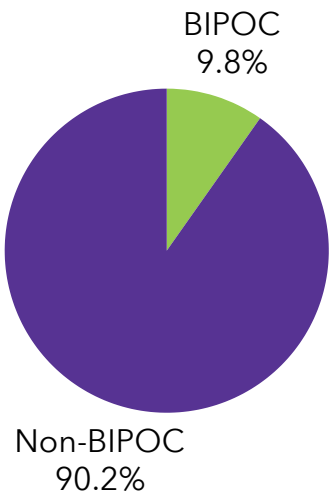
Character representation
(human characters only)



Author representation



Community representation

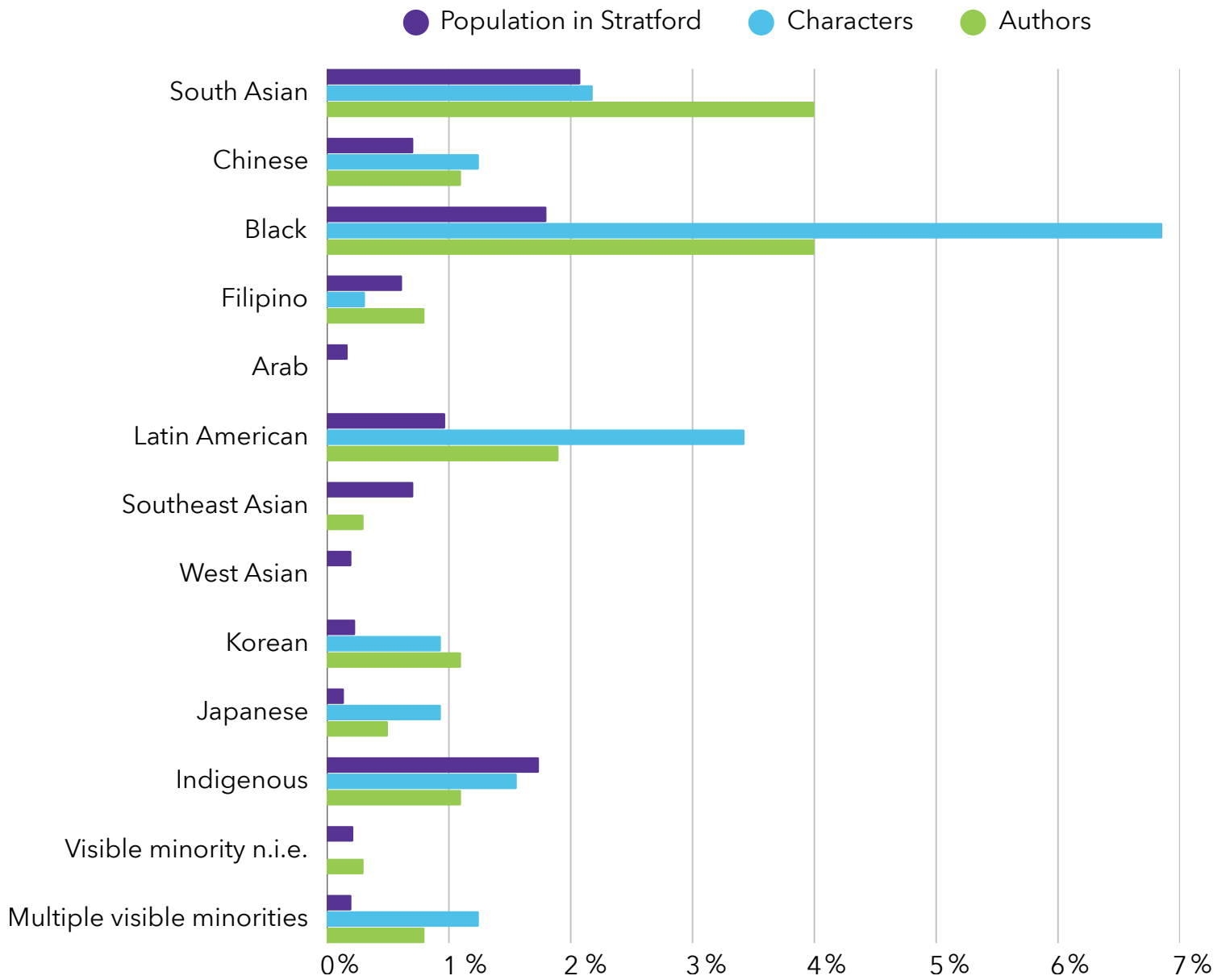


54 books in the Junior Fiction sample did not have human protagonists and instead featured animals, robots, aliens, or other creatures. Racial identity was not relevant to these characters, and therefore these 54 books were excluded when accounting for racial representation. (Note that this was the only aspect of the analysis these characters were excluded from. Other identities, for example gender, were still relevant.)

69 of the 321 books that featured human characters had at least one BIPOC protagonist (21.5%). 59 books out of 375 were written by a least one BIPOC author (15.7%). This amount of representation is considerable and exceeds the community demographic benchmark.

Many Junior Fiction books included illustrations of characters, and this introduced an additional consideration that did not factor into the examination of Adult Fiction. In several cases, characters were depicted as people of colour in the illustration(s), even though their racial identity was not explicitly stated in the text. Since these visual cues influence how readers interpret the character, a decision was made to include these instances as BIPOC representation. However, it would be inappropriate to make a guess as to the character’s intended heritage based on an illustration, and therefore, these characters were not categorized into a specific racial group. Consequently, these characters are accounted for in the first graph, but not the second.

Again, the distribution has been displayed in a bar graph, beside data from the Canadian census for Stratford. It is clear that Filipino, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Indigenous, and visible minority n.i.e. identities are underrepresented when compared to the demographics of the community.



Any instance in which the purple bar surpasses the blue or green bars suggests that the group is underrepresented in the collection relative to community statistics.

Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

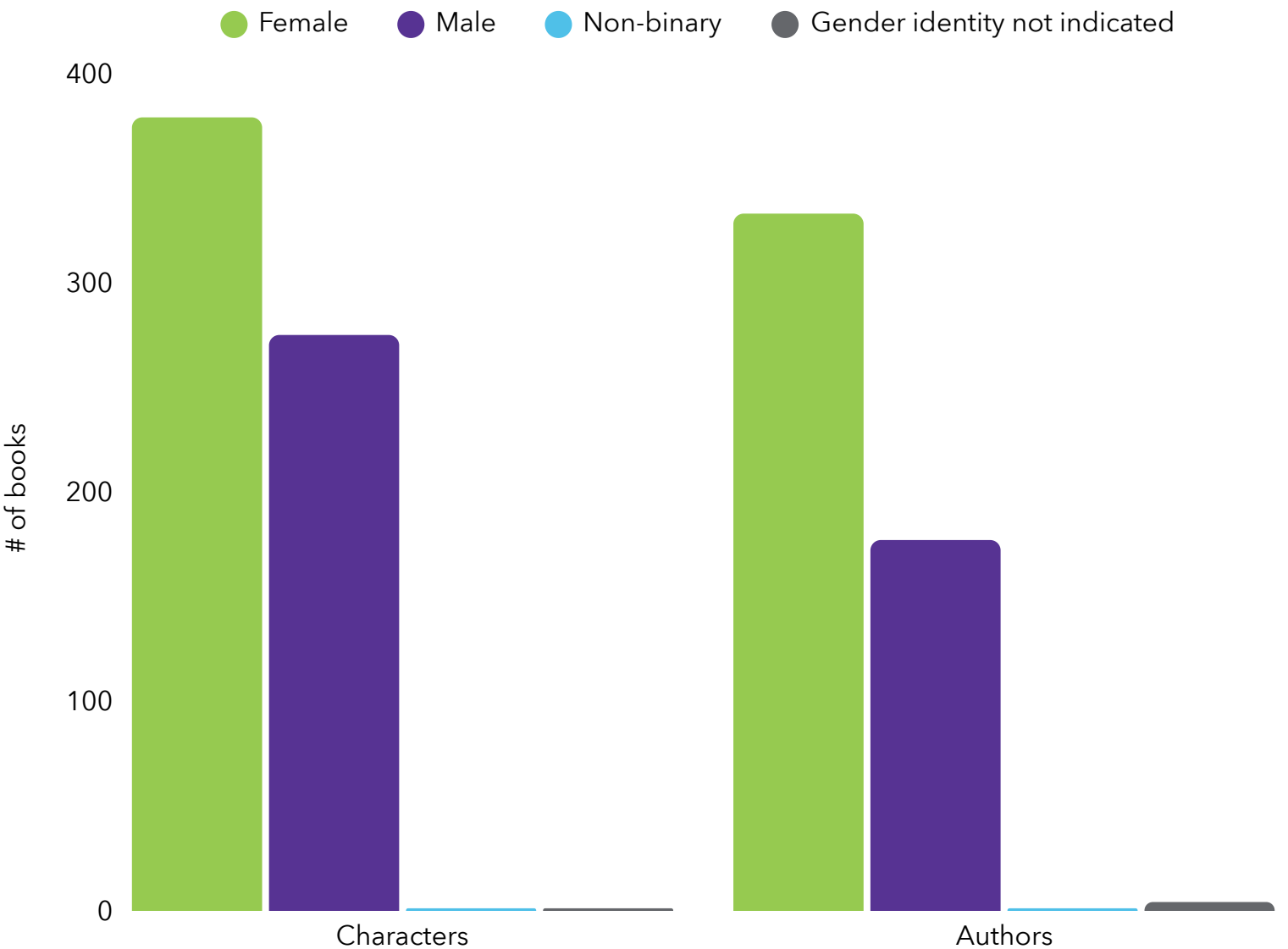
While BIPOC representation as a whole was well above the benchmark, a more detailed breakdown of the data shows that certain racial identities remain underrepresented. More **Filipino, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, and Indigenous** representation is needed, as well as representation of individuals who would be considered “**visible minority not included elsewhere**”, such as Guyanese, Pacific Islander, Tibetan, and West Indian.

While the Junior Fiction collection includes a substantial amount of BIPOC representation, efforts should be made to fill existing gaps in representation where possible.

Gender Representation: ADULT FICTION

Out of the 500 books in the sample, 379 books featured at least one female-identifying character (75.8%), 275 featured at least one male-identifying character (55%), and 1 featured a non-binary character (0.2%). 1 book included a main character whose gender was never indicated (0.2%). (Note that many books featured more than one main character, and therefore these numbers exceed the total number of books.)

333 books were written by at least one female-identifying author (66.6%), 177 were written by at least one male-identifying author (35.4%), and 1 was written by a non-binary author (0.2%). In the case of one author - whose books appeared in the sample 4 times - no definitive information could be found about their gender identity and therefore it is assumed the author would prefer to keep this information private (0.8%). (Note that some books were co-authored, and therefore these numbers exceed the total number of books.)





This data shows a gender imbalance with a strong leaning towards female characters and especially female authors. Although the female population in Stratford is slightly larger than the male population (51.7% female to 48.3% male) according to data from the census, this gap is not nearly as prominent in the community as it is on the shelves. More books featuring male characters and especially books by male authors are needed in order to create more balance in this collection.

Non-binary and gender non-conforming identities were represented in 0.2% of the sample. Although the 2021 Canadian Census did not provide this information at the city level, national-level data show that 0.14% of Canadians aged 15 and older identified as non-binary. Using this percentage as a baseline, the representation found in the sample is adequate. However, as previously noted, the margin of error makes it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from percentages that are so small. Only one non-binary character and one non-binary author were represented, both in the same book. While it is possible that roughly 1 in every 500 books contains non-binary representation, it is also very possible that this ratio is even smaller, and this book only appeared in the random sample by happenstance.

As an additional exercise, the auditor made an attempt to find as many Adult Fiction books as possible in the library's catalogue that featured a non-binary, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming character. This process involved keyword searching, subject heading searching, and searching online for booklists. Out of roughly 16450 Adult Fiction titles owned by Stratford Public Library in physical format, the auditor was able to find 6 additional books that fit these criteria. Although it is very likely more books exist and were missed, this exercise demonstrates that such titles are quite uncommon and difficult to find. More non-binary and gender non-conforming representation is needed in the Adult Fiction collection.



Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

Female authors and characters were represented far more often than male characters and male authors. More **male** representation is needed in order to create balance.

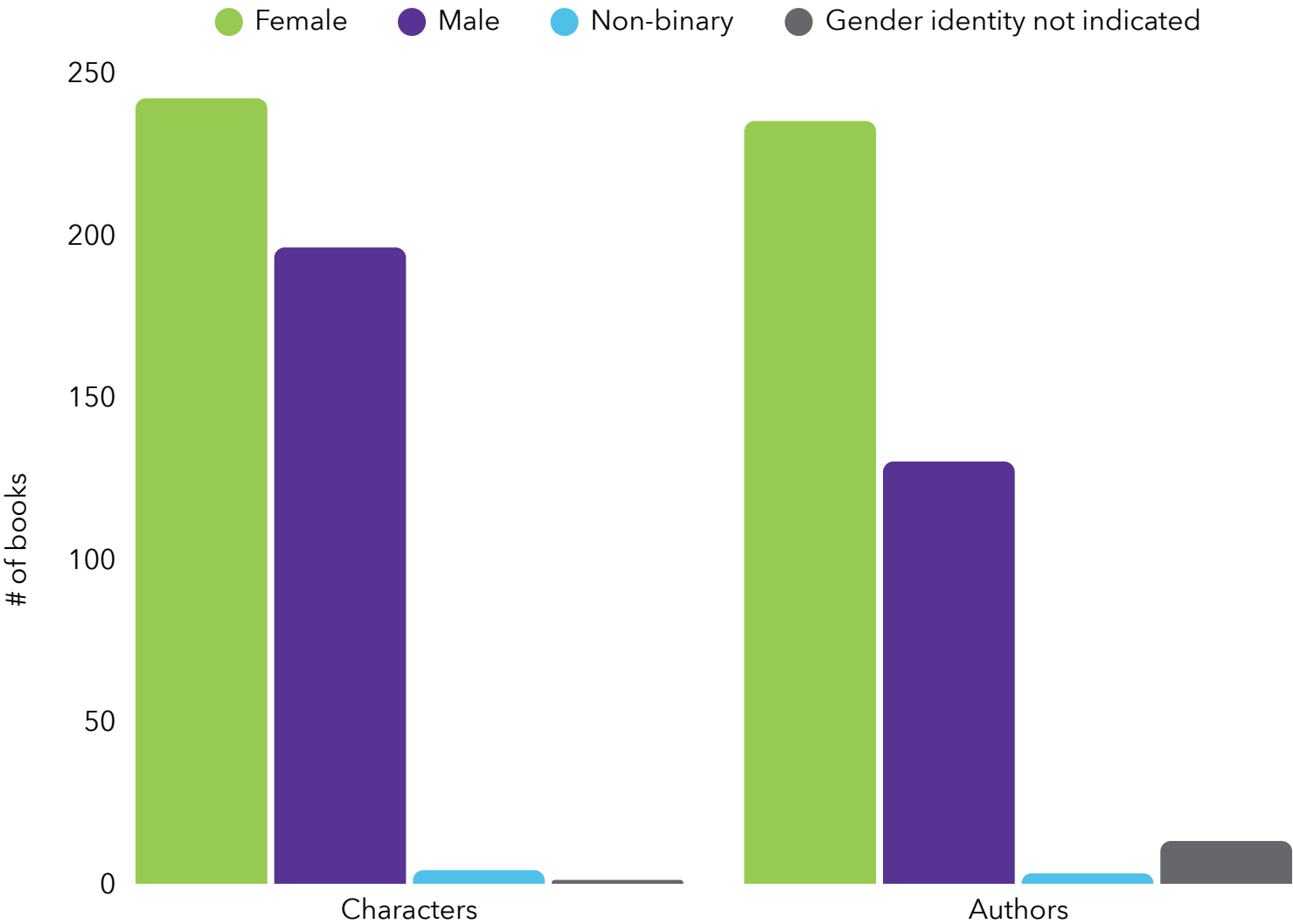
Only one book in the sample of 500 contained non-binary representation, or 0.2%. While this percentage technically exceeds the benchmark, this small statistic is not reliable due to the margin of error, and is likely to be closer to 0%. More **gender non-conforming** representation is needed.

Gender Representation: JUNIOR FICTION

In the sample of 375 Junior Fiction books, 242 books featured at least one female-identifying character (64.5%), 196 featured at least one male-identifying character (52.3%), and 4 featured a non-binary character or a character that used they/they pronouns (1.1%). 1 book used second person narration and therefore no gender identity was indicated (0.3%). (Again, many books featured more than one main character, and because of this, these numbers exceed the total number of books.)

235 books were written by at least one female-identifying author (62.7%), 130 books were written by at least one male-identifying author (34.7%), and 3 books were written by at least one non-binary author (0.8%). No gender information was found for 13 authors (4.5%). In Junior Fiction, some authors had very limited publicly available biographical information and others wrote under pseudonyms, and as a result, the number of authors whose gender identity could not be ascertained was higher in Junior Fiction than in Adult Fiction. (Note that some of these books were co-authored, and therefore these numbers exceed the total number of books.)

Much like in Adult Fiction, an imbalance between male and female representation exists in Junior Fiction, although it is less extreme. Again, more male representation is needed to achieve gender parity, both in characters and authorship.



Non-binary and gender non-conforming representation was more significant in Junior Fiction than it was in Adult Fiction, accounting for 1.1% of characters and 0.8% of authors. Again, this surpasses the benchmark, but it is still within the margin of error and is therefore not entirely reliable. When the auditor repeated the search exercise, over 20 books were identified with non-binary or gender non-conforming main characters in Junior Fiction. It is likely more representation exists in this collection of roughly 6050 titles, but the auditor decided to conclude the search at this point. This exercise demonstrates that, even though books with non-binary or gender non-conforming characters make up a small percentage of the collection, these books are much easier to find in Junior Fiction than in Adult Fiction. There could be two reasons for this. The first is perhaps these books are easier to locate in Junior Fiction. However, given that multiple search techniques were used, it is more likely that these books are simply more numerous in Junior Fiction than they are in Adult Fiction.

The amount of non-binary and gender non-conforming representation that currently exists in the Junior Fiction collection is commendable. However, it would still be beneficial to continue expanding this representation given that, first of all, this is an equity-deserving group, and second of all, the current representation makes up a very small percentage, making it an unreliable statistic.



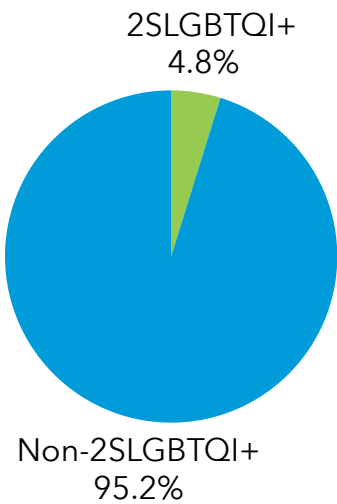
Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

Again female authors and characters outnumbered male characters and male authors. More **male** representation is needed in order to create balance.

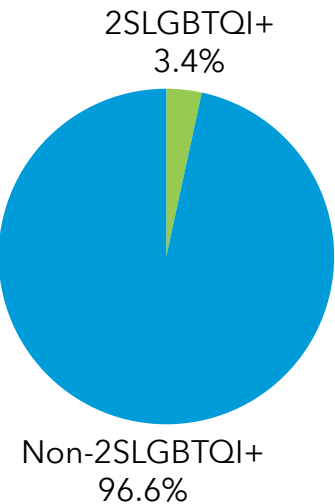
The amount of **gender non-conforming** representation that currently exists in the Junior Fiction collection is commendable, especially when compared to Adult Fiction. However, it would still be beneficial to continue increasing this representation.

2SLGBTQI+ Representation: ADULT FICTION

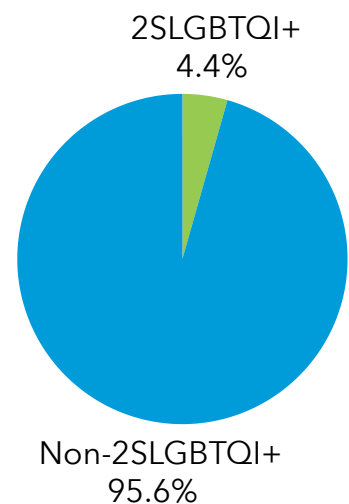
Character representation



Author representation



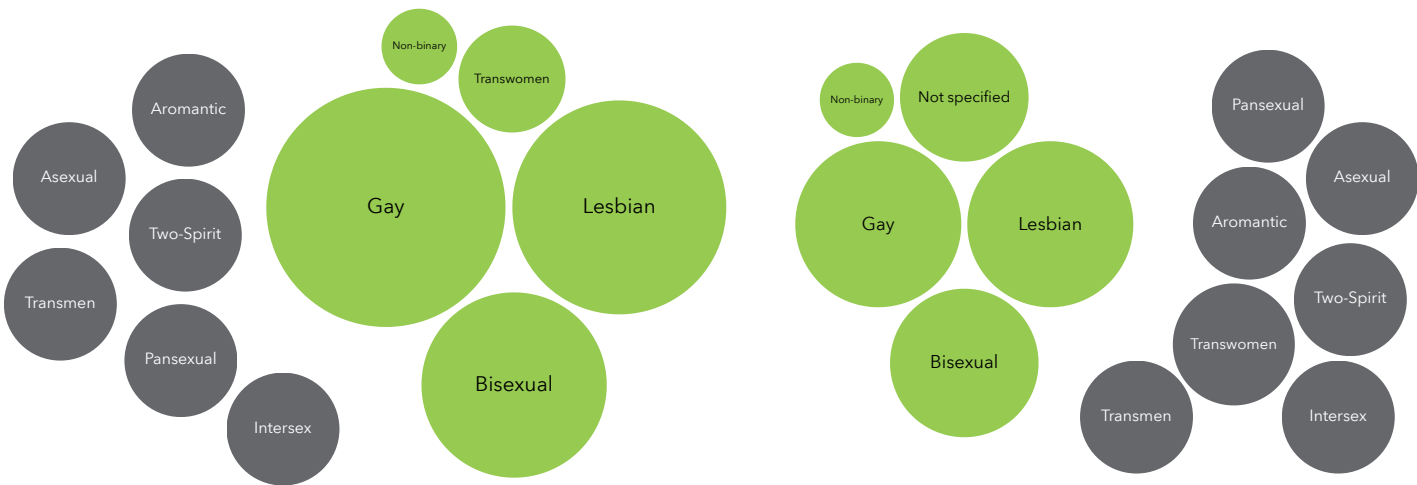
Community representation



24 out of the 500 books featured 2SLGBTQI+ characters (4.8%). (Note that even though non-binary identities have already been discussed, they fall under the 2SLGBTQI+ umbrella and are included in this total.) The most common 2SLGBTQI+ representation was gay men, who were featured as main characters in 10 books, then lesbian characters, in 8 books, followed by bisexual characters in 6 books. Transgender and non-binary characters were less common, with transgender characters only featuring in two books, and a non-binary character only featured in 1, as previously discussed. Notably, all transgender characters were transwomen - transmen were not represented at all - although the total number of transgender main characters is so small, it is too difficult to draw meaningful information from this. (Note that these identities are not mutually exclusive and some books featured more than one main character, therefore these numbers exceed the total number of books.)

Character representation

Author representation



These green bubbles represent the 2SLGBTQI+ identities present in the sample; the size of the bubble corresponds to the amount of representation. The gray bubbles represent some of the identities that are missing from the sample.

17 books were written by 2SLGBTQI+ authors (3.4%). 5 authors identified as gay, 5 identified as lesbian, 4 as bisexual, and 1 as non-binary. Additionally, 3 authors identified as 2SLGBTQI+, but more detailed information was not available, and so a new, non-specific 2SLGBTQI+ category was created. (Note that these identities are not mutually exclusive and some books were coauthored, therefore these numbers exceed the total number of books.)

While SPL's 2SLGBTQI+ representation in Adult Fiction is decent, there is certainly room for improvement. According to data from the 2019 to 2021 Canadian Community Health Survey, 4.4% of Canadians aged 15 and older identify as 2SLGBTQI+. 2SLGBTQI+ character representation in Adult Fiction just meets this minimum, whereas author representation falls short.

Additionally, there were a few 2SLGBTQI+ identities that were conspicuously missing from the sample entirely, including intersex,

Two-Spirit, asexual, aromantic, and pansexual identities. Two transwomen characters were present, but transmen did not feature as main characters in any of the 500 books. Transgender authors were absent entirely. The auditor conducted the search exercise in order to intentionally seek out books that featured characters belonging to these underrepresented 2SLGBTQI+ identities. Very few books were found. This demonstrates a need for more diverse representation within the 2SLGBTQI+ umbrella.



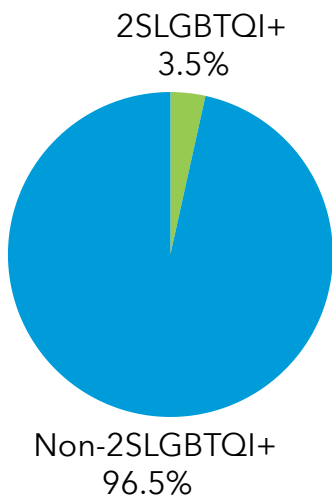
Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

2SLGBTQI+ character representation in Adult Fiction exceeded the benchmark by a very small margin, while author representation fell short. SPL should aim to continue building up 2SLGBTQI+ representation in Adult Fiction, with a particular focus on **authorship**.

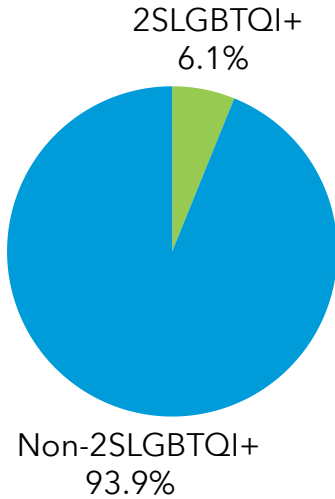
Particular attention should be given to increasing representation of the 2SLGBTQI+ identities that are currently underrepresented, including **transgender** (especially **transmen**), **intersex**, **Two-Spirit**, **asexual**, **aromantic**, and **pansexual identities**.

2SLGBTQI+ Representation: JUNIOR FICTION

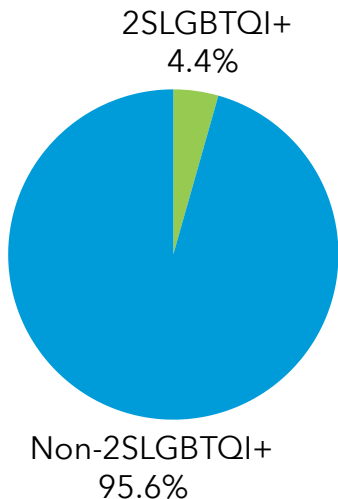
Character representation



Author representation



Community representation



2SLGBTQI+ themes were also represented in Junior Fiction, although they were presented differently than they were in Adult Fiction. Most protagonists in children’s literature are young, and it is not uncommon to see themes exploring identity and self-discovery. While some characters in these stories used terms such as gay or non-binary to describe themselves, others were experiencing a same-sex crush for the first time, or beginning to explore different forms of gender expression. For this reason, a decision was made to account for 2SLGBTQI+ representation in Junior Fiction main characters and to record a short note, but not to confine these characters to specific labels.

2SLGBTQI+ characters featured in 13 of the 375 books (3.5%). The representation within these 13 books was diverse and included different forms of orientation as well as gender expression.

It is difficult to draw a direct comparison to 2SLGBTQI+ representation in Adult Fiction, as these two types of books feature very different topics and themes. However, this type of representation is just as important in Junior Fiction, as it allows children to become familiar with different types of gender expressions and sexual orientations and can be validating for children who might be questioning their own identities. SPL’s Junior Fiction section has diverse 2SLGBTQI+ representation but the quantity of books is limited and does not meet the benchmark. This is a great start, but SPL should continue to increase this representation.





Author 2SLGBTQI+ representation was accounted for in the same way as Adult Fiction, as the authors were all adults. 23 books out of 375 were written by at least one author who identified as 2SLGBTQI+ (6.1%). 10 books were written by authors who identified as 2SLGBTQI+ or queer, 6 books were written by authors who identified as gay, 4 identified as bisexual (all women), 3 identified as non-binary, 2 identified as lesbian, and one identified as transgender. (Note that these identities are not mutually exclusive and some books were coauthored, and therefore, these numbers exceed the total number of books.) As in Adult Fiction, some 2SLGBTQI+ identities are missing including intersex, Two-Spirit, asexual, aromantic, and pansexual identities, and transgender identities are quite underrepresented.

The amount of author 2SLGBTQI+ representation in Junior Fiction exceeds the 4.4% guideline, which is admirable. As SPL continues to acquire new Junior Fiction books by 2SLGBTQI+ authors, the library should continue its efforts to ensure that these voices reflect the diverse experiences within the 2SLGBTQI+ community and to fill in some of these gaps in representation, where possible.

Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

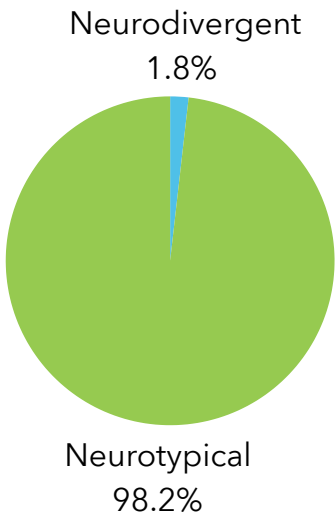
2SLGBTQI+ character representation is - understandably - portrayed differently in Junior Fiction than in Adult Fiction and was therefore accounted for differently in the audit. Rather than examining individual identities, the auditor simply noted whether characters fell under the 2SLGBTQI+ umbrella and then examined the diversity within that representation.

While the representation was diverse, the **quantity** of 2SLGBTQI+ character representation as a whole fell short of the benchmark. SPL should continue to expand this representation.

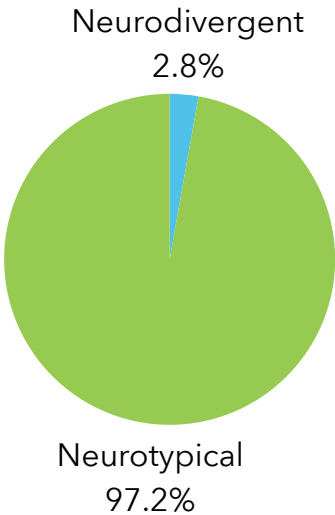
The amount of author 2SLGBTQI+ representation was considerably higher and did exceed the benchmark, which is commendable. There were, however, a few author identities that were underrepresented or absent, including **transgender, intersex, Two-Spirit, asexual, aromantic, and pansexual** identities. As SPL continues to acquire new Junior Fiction books by 2SLGBTQI+ authors, the library should try to fill in some of these gaps.

Neurodiverse Representation: ADULT FICTION

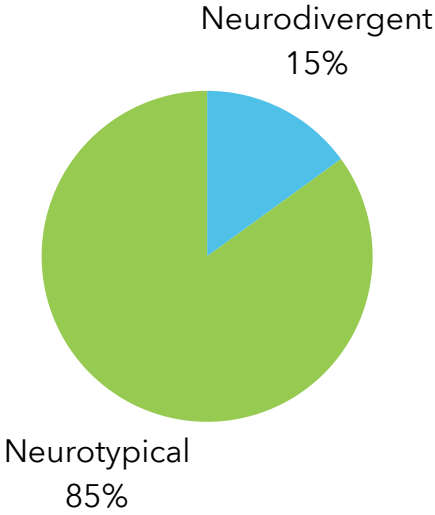
Character representation



Author representation



Community representation



9 books out of 500 featured a neurodivergent protagonist (1.8%). Dyslexia was the most common type of neurodivergence and was represented 4 times, while ADHD, Asperger's, synesthesia, and prosopagnosia (face blindness), were each represented once. Additionally, one character was described as neurodivergent but no specifics were given.

14 books were written by a neurodivergent author (2.8%). ADHD and dyslexia were the most prevalent, each represented 3 times, and autism, dyscalculia, synesthesia, aphantasia, Asperger's, OCD, and Tourette's were each represented once.

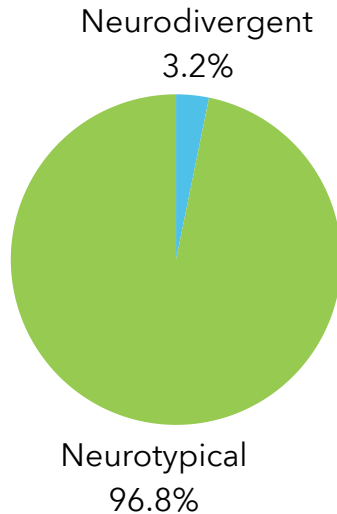
While there are no Canadian demographic statistics available, a 2020 study by Nancy Doyle estimated that around 15-20% of the general population is neurodivergent. Using this statistic as a benchmark, neurodiverse representation in Adult Fiction is notably lacking. It should be acknowledged however, that this target is significantly higher than the current representation, and purchasing options are limited by the availability of published works featuring neurodivergent representation. Therefore, 15-20% may be too ambitious of a goal, however, SPL should try to increase neurodiverse representation nonetheless. There is already considerable diversity in the types of neurodivergence represented, so efforts should be maintained to continue this variety.

Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

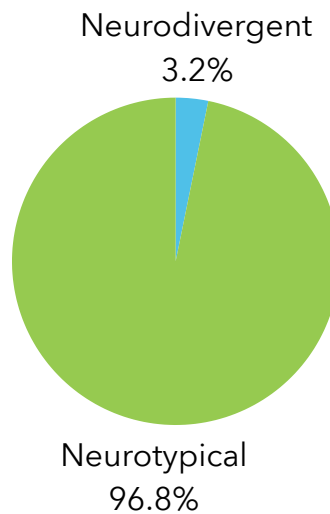
A variety of types of neurodivergence were represented, for both characters and authors. The **quantity** of neurodivergent representation needs improvement. The benchmark may be an **unattainable target**, at least in the short-term, because the current level of representation is far below it. In addition, the availability of these books could be a limiting factor in reaching it. Instead of focusing on the benchmark, SPL should simply focus on building up neurodivergent representation in the collection as much as possible.

Neurodiverse Representation: JUNIOR FICTION

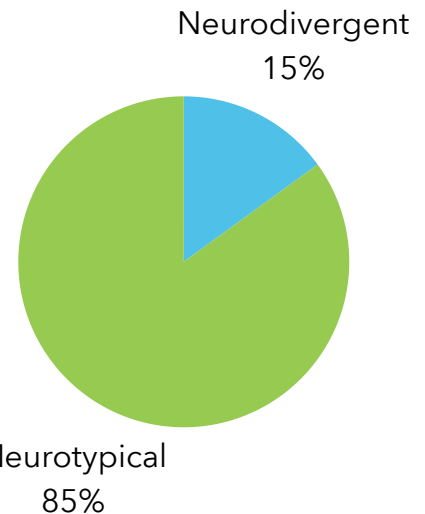
Character representation



Author representation



Community representation



12 books in Junior Fiction featured a neurodivergent protagonist (3.2%). ADHD was the most common representation of neurodivergence, appearing 4 times, followed by autism and dyslexia, each 3 times, and then sensory processing disorder 1 time. 2 characters were neurodivergent but the type of neurodivergence was not specified.

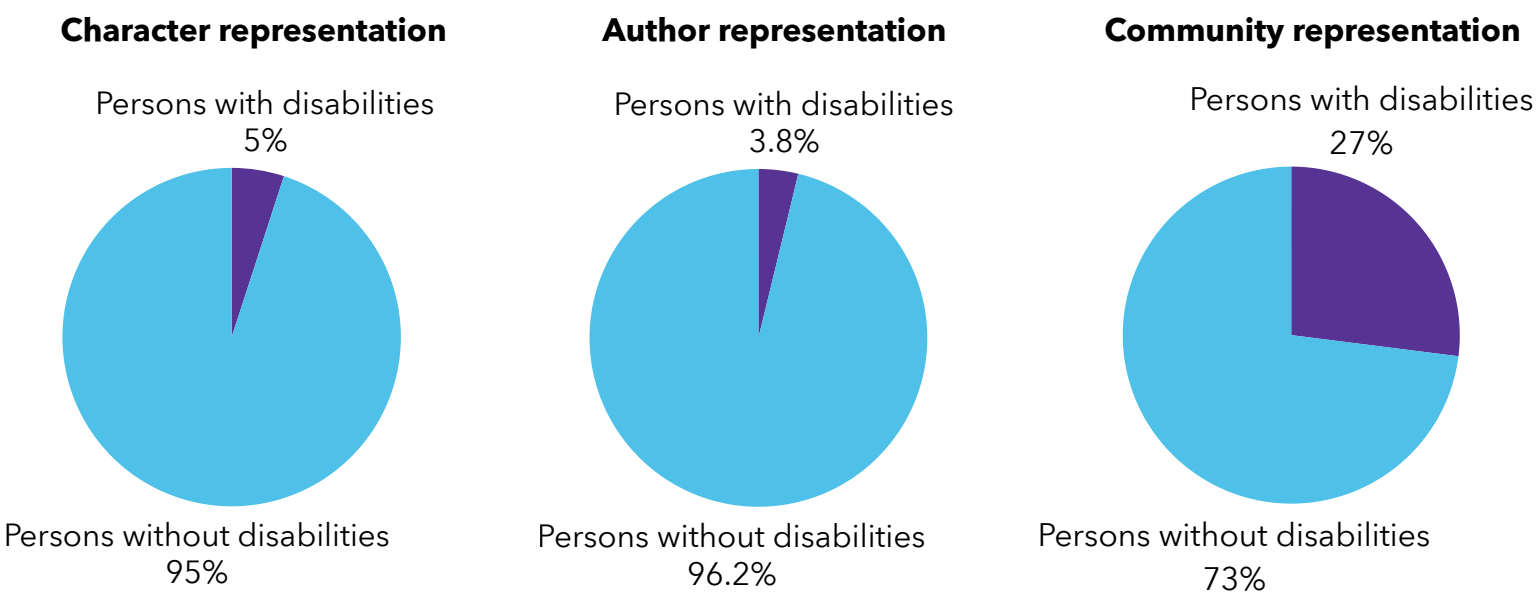
12 books were written by neurodivergent authors (3.2%). Here, dyslexia was the most prevalent, and was represented 5 times, followed by autism and ADHD, each represented 4 times, and dysgraphia, represented 1 time.

This level of representation is a strong starting point, but there remains significant room for growth. As with Adult Fiction, SPL should continue working to increase neurodivergent representation in Junior Fiction, and continue to reflect a broad range of neurodiverse experiences.

Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

A variety of neurodivergence experiences were represented. Much like Adult Fiction, the **quantity** of neurodivergent representation can be improved. Again, the benchmark may be an unattainable target, at least in the short-term, because the current level of representation is far below it. In addition, the availability of these books could be a limiting factor in reaching it. Instead of focusing on the benchmark, SPL should simply focus on building up neurodivergent representation in the collection as much as possible.

Disability Representation: ADULT FICTION



25 out of the 500 books featured characters with disabilities (5%). It is important to note that some forms of neurodivergence are considered disabilities, and in these cases, they were counted in both categories. A variety of kinds of disabilities were represented on-page, including mobility, flexibility, and dexterity disabilities (8 characters), learning disabilities (5 characters), mental health disabilities (4 characters), memory disabilities (3 characters), developmental disabilities (1 character). 4 characters had disabilities that did not fit into these categories. There were no characters with hearing disabilities, vision disabilities, or pain-related disabilities.

Note: It is quite a common theme in literature for characters to be struggling with traumatic experiences from their pasts. Some of these characters experience what could be considered symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as flashbacks or nightmares, even though the term “PTSD” might not be mentioned on-page. It is important to note that PTSD is considered a disability. For the purposes of this audit, however, it is inappropriate for the auditor to determine whether or not a character would be diagnosed with PTSD. Since this situation occurred repeatedly, a decision was made to not include characters who struggled with trauma, PTSD, or potential symptoms of PTSD as disabled characters. If these characters were included, PTSD would be the most commonly represented disability, and the total percentage of disabled characters would be significantly higher.

19 books were written by authors with disabilities (3.8%). The types of disabilities represented included learning disabilities (7 authors), developmental disabilities (3 authors), pain-related disabilities (2 authors), mobility, flexibility, and dexterity disabilities (2 authors), vision disabilities (2 authors), mental health disabilities (1 author), and memory disabilities (1 author). There were no authors with hearing disabilities.

The disability categories used in this analysis are based on the classifications outlined by the Government of Canada in its guidance on key concepts related to accessibility.



Statistics from the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability show that 27% of Canadians, aged 15 and older have a disability. The amount of disability representation in the sample is far below this benchmark, however, as previously noted, PTSD was not included as a disability in the audit, while it is included in national statistics. As a result these numbers are not directly comparable. Even so, it demonstrates that disability representation needs to be significantly increased in order to be representative of the community. Such a large increase in representation is likely quite unrealistic, especially given the limitations of what is available in publishing. Nonetheless, SPL should make an effort to increase its disability representation in Adult Fiction as much as possible, with a focus on continuing to reflect a wide range of disabilities. There were a few types of disabilities that were not represented at all in the sample, for example, there were no stories featuring characters with hearing disabilities, vision disabilities, or pain-related disabilities, so filling in some of these gaps might be an early priority.

Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

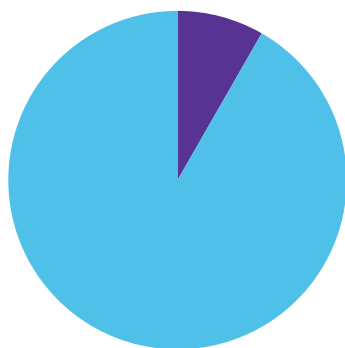
A variety of disabled experiences were represented, although there were no books that featured characters with **hearing disabilities**, **vision disabilities**, or **pain-related disabilities**. SPL should attempt to fill some of these gaps.

The amount of disability representation in the collection falls far below the population statistic, although it is acknowledged that these two numbers are not directly comparable and even so, this benchmark may not be entirely realistic. Still, the large gap between these statistics demonstrates a need for **more disability representation**.

Disability Representation: JUNIOR FICTION

Character representation

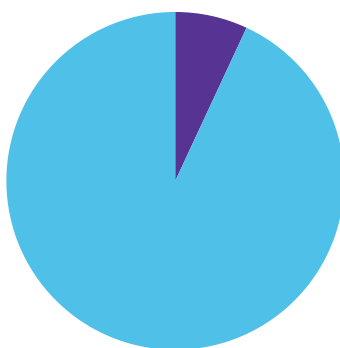
Persons with disabilities
8.3%



Persons without disabilities
91.7%

Author representation

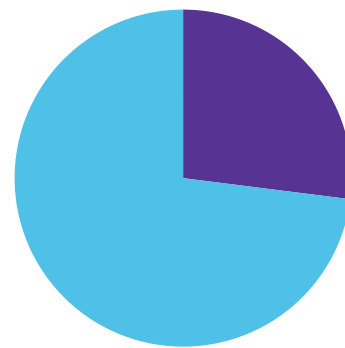
Persons with disabilities
6.9%



Persons without disabilities
93.1%

Community representation

Persons with disabilities
27%



Persons without disabilities
73%

31 books out of 375 featured characters with disabilities in Junior Fiction (8.3%). Again, a variety of disabilities were represented including mobility, flexibility, and dexterity disabilities (9 characters), learning disabilities (7 characters), developmental disabilities (4 characters), mental health disabilities (4 characters), pain-related disabilities (2 characters), vision disabilities (1 character), and hearing disabilities (1 character). 4 characters had disabilities that did not fit into these categories. There were no characters with memory disabilities. An internet search revealed that finding middle-grade novels featuring a main character with a memory disability is quite challenging, so this gap may be difficult to fill.

26 books Junior Fiction books were written by authors with disabilities (6.9%). The types of disabilities represented included learning disabilities (8 authors), mobility, flexibility, and dexterity disabilities (5 authors), developmental disabilities (4 authors), mental health disabilities (2 authors), and hearing disabilities (1 author). 6 authors had disabilities that did not fit into these categories. There were no authors with pain-related disabilities, vision disabilities, or memory disabilities.



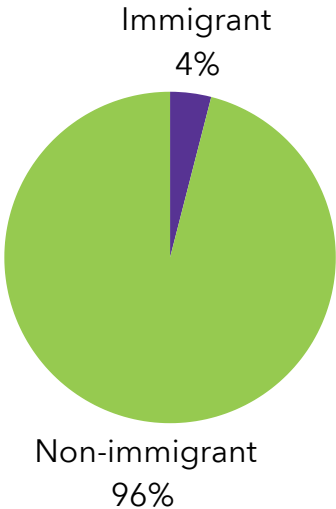
Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

Junior Fiction presents a considerable level of disability representation, and there is diversity in the types of disabilities that are represented. Similar to Adult Fiction, the amount of disability representation in the collection falls far below the population statistic, although it is acknowledged that these two numbers are not directly comparable and even so, this benchmark may not be entirely realistic. SPL's goal instead should simply be to continue to steadily **increase disability representation** as much as possible.

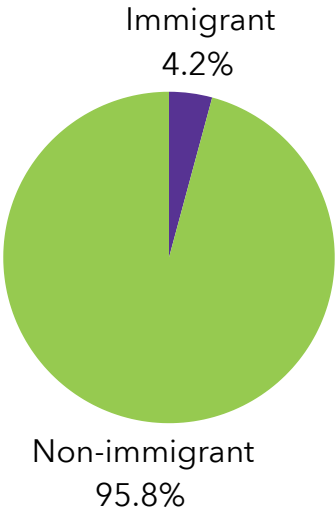
An attempt should be made to add books that feature characters with **memory disabilities**, although this may prove to be a challenge, as such books are difficult to find.

Immigrant Representation: ADULT FICTION

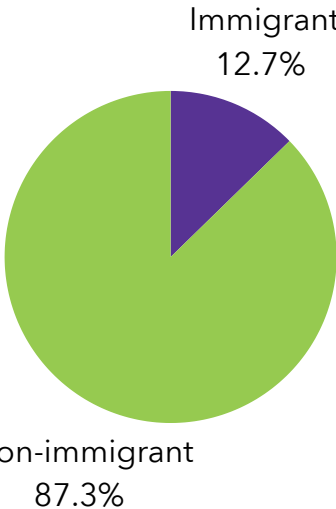
Character representation



Author representation



Community representation

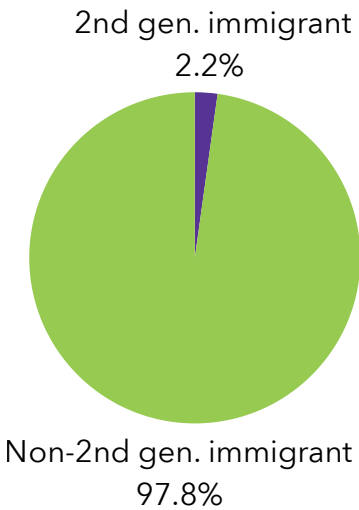


Of the 500 books in the sample, 20 featured an immigrant main character (4%). An interesting observation is that these stories were almost exclusively in the genres of historical fiction or literary fiction. Of the 20 books focusing on immigrant characters, those of European origin accounted for nearly half, the largest share by far, which aligns with Stratford census statistics showing that nearly half of the immigrant population is of European origin. 11 books had main characters who were second generation immigrants (2.2%), meaning one or both of their parents were immigrants.

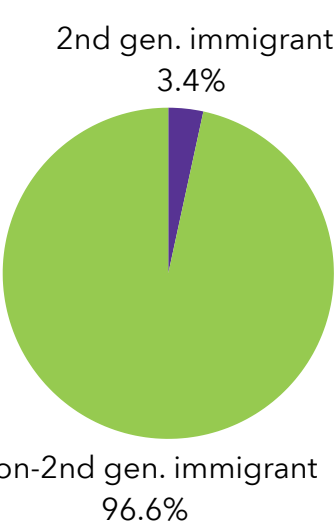
Note that authors or characters who had moved between countries with quite similar cultures, such as the United States and Canada, were not counted as immigrants for the purpose of this study unless their immigrant status was a major plot point in a story, so as not to inflate these numbers. This was more often the case for authors than it was for characters.



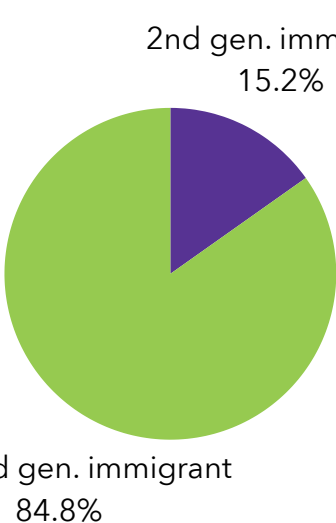
Character representation



Author representation



Community representation



21 books were written by immigrant authors (4.2%) and 17 were written by second generation authors (3.4%).

12.7% of Stratford's population is made up of immigrants, and second generation immigrants make up 15.2%, according to the 2021 census. It is difficult to compare these statistics directly to representation in books, as the census enumerates immigrants to Canada, while the books represent characters and authors from all over the world. In addition, as previously noted, some immigrants were excluded from the audit. Although a direct comparison to census data is not possible, the large gap between the representation on the shelves and in the community likely suggests that more immigrant representation is needed. In addition, it would be nice to see immigrant characters represented in other genres besides historical fiction and literary fiction.



Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

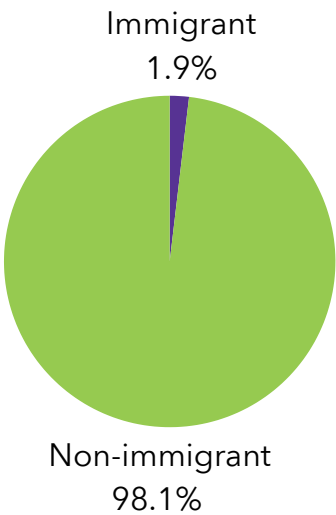
It is difficult to use Stratford statistics as a point of reference because the Canadian census only includes immigrants to Canada, while books portray people from all over the world. Still, the large gap between the representation of immigrants on the shelves and in the representation of immigrants in the community suggests that **more immigrant representation is needed**, in both **characters and authorship**. The same is true of **second generation immigrant** representation.

Nearly half of immigrant characters were of European origin, which aligns with local statistics in Stratford. However, as SPL works to increase immigrant representation, care should be taken to include immigrant voices from **all over the world**.

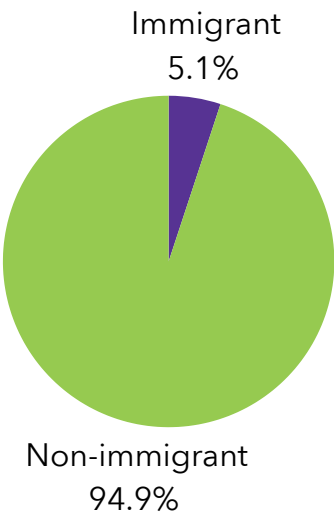
The majority of stories that featured immigrant characters were in the **genres** of historical fiction or literary fiction. SPL should try to include immigrants voices in other genres as well, wherever possible.

Immigrant Representation: JUNIOR FICTION

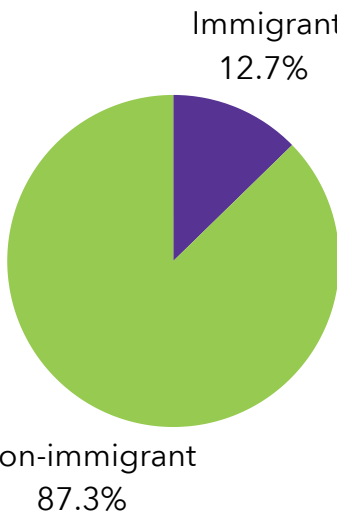
Character representation



Author representation

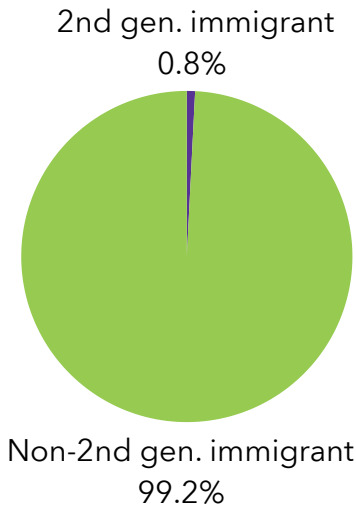


Community representation

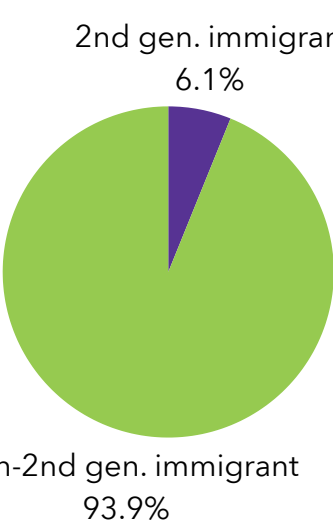


Immigrant main characters were only featured in 7 of the 375 Junior Fiction books (1.9%). Representation of second generation immigrant characters was even slimmer; only 3 books featured second generation characters (0.8%). 19 Junior Fiction books were written by immigrant authors (5.1%) and 23 books were written by second generation immigrant authors (6.1%). This data demonstrates that more immigrant representation is needed in Junior Fiction as well, especially when it comes to characters.

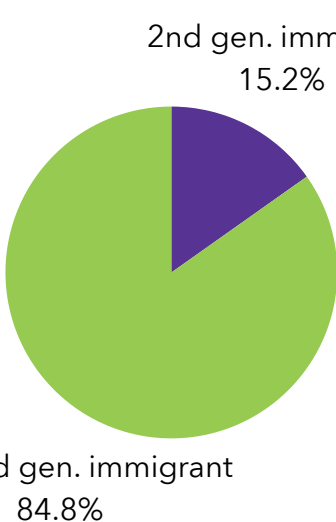
Character representation



Author representation



Community representation



Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

More immigrant and second generation immigrant representation is needed in Junior Fiction, especially **character** representation.

Intersecting Identities

While examining how different forms of identity are represented in Adult Fiction and Junior Fiction, it is also important to consider how these identities intersect. This helps to provide a fuller picture of how diversity is represented in the collection. After analyzing each of the identities listed above, an examination was conducted of how these identities overlap. Many instances of intersectionality were observed; however, a few gaps were identified, which are outlined below.

In the Adult Fiction sample, it was observed that most Latin American, Chinese, and Korean characters were female, and all Korean authors were women. This is not surprising, considering that female characters and authors were in the majority, but it draws attention to the fact that gender diversity also needs to be considered when expanding BIPOC representation. Almost all neurodivergent and disabled characters and authors were Caucasian, signifying a need for more BIPOC representation within these groups. Additionally, there was very little overlap between characters and authors who were immigrants and those who were also disabled, neurodivergent, or 2SLGBTQI+.

More intersectionality was noticed in Junior Fiction; however, some gaps still existed. A gender imbalance was noted within representations of specific racial identities, with South Asian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese characters, and Latin American, Filipino, South Asian, Korean, Japanese, and Indigenous authors being predominately female. Most immigrant characters were female as well. There was very little overlap between characters and authors who were immigrants and were disabled, neurodivergent, or 2SLGBTQI+.

Again, the library is limited by what types of books are available, and filling all of these could be a challenge. The purpose of this examination was simply to highlight that identity is multifaceted, and the diversity of experiences within any given identity is important. Whenever possible, these varied experiences should be represented.



Key Takeaways and Proposed Actions:

As SPL works to increase representation of equity-deserving groups, it is also important to ensure that there is diversity reflected within this representation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

English Language Learning Materials

Several staff members saw a strong need for more ESL learning materials, highlighting in particular that many adult patrons had requested high interest/low vocabulary books to help them practice their English skills.

An attempt was made to examine this topic further in the public survey. Unfortunately, this was unsuccessful; the survey did not receive any responses from library users who were not fluent in English. This is likely due to limitations in the survey's design; for practical reasons, the survey was only offered in English.



This is a topic that warrants further examination.

In the future, SPL might want to consider the addition of an **Adult Literacy Collection**.

Accessibility

The combined results from the staff survey and public survey did not reveal any major areas of concern in regards to the availability of accessible materials, although there were some suggestions made about how the collections could be improved.

Many library patrons reported through the public survey that they use accessible formats to read, watch or listen to library materials, most commonly large print books and Audiobooks. The majority of these participants said they were able to find materials that fit their accessibility needs. Many library patrons seemed happy with the accessible materials that were available at SPL.



There were some suggestions made by both library staff and patrons about how accessibility could be improved. Although some items may be infeasible from a cost perspective, they are included here for consideration:

- The long wait times for digital materials were mentioned by both a staff member and a library patron.
- Some patrons expressed a desire for a greater variety of materials to be available in accessible formats; they especially wanted to see more variety in the Large Print and Audiobook collections.
- A few patrons made some suggestions that had to do with accessibility of the physical building. Although this report is focused on the library's collections, these comments have been noted and shared with library staff.

Multilingual Materials

The combined results of the staff survey and public surveys revealed that there is desire in the community for multilingual materials - both in the quantity of materials available and in the diversity of languages offered. There was an interest in both children's and adult's multilingual materials.

Community statistics from the 2021 census revealed that the most commonly known languages in Stratford, other than English, are French, Spanish, German, Italian, Hindi, **Dutch**, **Punjabi**, **Tagalog**, Gujarati, **Lao**, and Polish. A number of library users indicated they were multilingual through the public survey. The languages known included French, Spanish, **Tamil**, **Japanese**, **Dutch**, **Punjabi**, Hindi, German, **Uyghur**, Mandarin, **Latin**, **Esperanto**, Italian, Arabic, **Portuguese**, Russian, **Danish**, and Ukrainian. A local Settlement Worker shared some of the languages they commonly encounter through their work in Immigrant Services, including **Tigrigna**, Ukrainian, Arabic, Chinese and Spanish. The languages that have been highlighted in purple are the languages in which SPL does not currently offer any physical (not digital) materials for adults. This has been presented simply to demonstrate that there are languages spoken in the community that are currently not being served.

Expanding the multilingual collections presents a few challenges. Not only does cost need to be considered, a shortage of physical space in the library is a major limiting factor. In addition, the selection and cataloguing of these materials needs to be outsourced, as the process requires fluency in many languages.



Expanding the multilingual collection might be considered a longer-term goal for SPL. It is perhaps something to consider as the library takes steps to move into a larger space.

In the meantime, SPL may want to focus on promoting the digital multilingual materials that are already available, such as LOTE4Kids.



Diverse Representation

SPL's Adult Fiction and Junior Fiction collections presented many different stories from a wide variety of voices. The library should continue its efforts to further diversify these collections.

It is especially important to ensure equity-deserving groups are well represented on the library's shelves. The audit was able to identify some gaps where certain identities could be better represented. As SPL continues to develop its collection, special attention should be given to filling in these gaps.



Adult Fiction

- SPL should continue to expand BIPOC representation, with a focus on increasing the presence of racial groups that are currently underrepresented in the collection. More Filipino, South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian, and Indigenous representation is needed, as well as representation of individuals who belong to multiple visible minorities, and those who would be considered "visible minority not included elsewhere", such as Guyanese, Pacific Islander, Tibetan, and West Indian.
- More male representation is needed to balance the current predominance of female voices.
- SPL should aim to continue building up 2SLGBTQI+ representation, with a particular focus on authorship. Particular attention should be given to increasing representation of the 2SLGBTQI+ identities that are currently underrepresented, including non-binary and gender non-conforming, transgender (especially transmen), intersex, Two-Spirit, asexual, aromantic, and pansexual identities.
- More neurodivergent representation is needed.
- More disability representation is needed.
- More immigrant and second generation immigrant representation is needed.



Junior Fiction

- SPL should continue to expand BIPOC representation, with a focus on increasing the presence of racial groups that are currently underrepresented in the collection. More Filipino, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, and Indigenous representation is needed, as well as representation of individuals who would be considered "visible minority not included elsewhere", such as Guyanese, Pacific Islander, Tibetan, and West Indian.
- More male representation is needed to balance the current predominance of female voices.
- SPL should continue to expand 2SLGBTQI+ representation in Junior Fiction.
- More neurodivergent representation is needed.
- More disability representation is needed.
- More immigrant and second generation immigrant representation is needed.

TERMINOLOGY

Racial and ethnic categories used in this audit were based on the Visible Minority groups defined by the Canadian census. Descriptions from Statistics Canada are provided below.

South Asian

The 'South Asian' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'South Asian' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'South Asian' only, such as 'Bangladeshi', 'Indian (India)', 'Pakistani', 'Punjabi' or 'Sri Lankan'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'South Asian' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'South Asian' and a write-in response of 'Pakistani'.
- 4) Mark-in responses of both 'South Asian' and 'White' only.
- 5) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with both 'South Asian' and 'White' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'South Asian' and a write-in response of 'Swedish'.

Chinese

The 'Chinese' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Chinese' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Chinese' only, such as 'Chinese' or 'Han'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Chinese' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Chinese' and a write-in response of 'Han'.
- 4) Mark-in responses of both 'Chinese' and 'White' only.
- 5) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with both 'Chinese' and 'White' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'White' and a write-in response of 'Chinese'.

Black

The 'Black' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Black' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Black' only, such as 'African American', 'Congolese', 'Haitian' or 'Nigerian'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Black' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Black' and a write-in response of 'Nigerian'.
- 4) Mark-in responses of both 'Black' and 'White' only.
- 5) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with both 'Black' and 'White' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Black' and a write-in response of 'Swedish'.

Filipino

The 'Filipino' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Filipino' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Filipino' only, such as 'Filipino', 'Igorot' or 'Ilocano'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Filipino' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Filipino' and a write-in response of 'Igorot'.
- 4) Mark-in responses of both 'Filipino' and 'White' only.
- 5) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with both 'Filipino' and 'White' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'White' and a write-in response of 'Filipino'.

Arab

The 'Arab' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Arab' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Arab' only, such as 'Egyptian', 'Jordanian', 'Palestinian' or 'Saudi Arabian'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Arab' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Arab' and a write-in response of 'Egyptian'.

Latin American

The 'Latin American' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Latin American' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Latin American' only, such as 'Costa Rican', 'Colombian' or 'Chilean'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Latin American' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Latin American' and a write-in response of 'Costa Rican'.

Southeast Asian

The 'Southeast Asian' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Southeast Asian' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Southeast Asian' only, such as 'Cambodian', 'Laotian', 'Thai' or 'Vietnamese'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Southeast Asian' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Southeast Asian' and a write-in response of 'Cambodian'.
- 4) Mark-in responses of both 'Southeast Asian' and 'White' only.
- 5) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with both 'Southeast Asian' and 'White' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Southeast Asian' and a write-in response of 'Swedish'.

West Asian

The 'West Asian' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'West Asian' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'West Asian' only, such as 'Afghan', 'Azerbaijani', 'Iranian' or 'Uzbek'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'West Asian' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'West Asian' and a write-in response of 'Iranian'.

Korean

The 'Korean' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Korean' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Korean' only, such as 'Korean' or 'South Korean'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Korean' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Korean' and a write-in response of 'South Korean'.
- 4) Mark-in responses of both 'Korean' and 'White' only.
- 5) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with both 'Korean' and 'White' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'White' and a write-in response of 'Korean'.

Japanese

The 'Japanese' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A mark-in response of 'Japanese' only.
- 2) A write-in response associated with 'Japanese' only, such as 'Japanese' or 'Ainu'.
- 3) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with 'Japanese' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Japanese' and a write-in response of 'Ainu'.
- 4) Mark-in responses of both 'Japanese' and 'White' only.
- 5) A combination of mark-in and write-in responses associated with both 'Japanese' and 'White' only. For example, a mark-in response of 'Japanese' and a write-in response of 'Swedish'.

Visible Minority Not Included Elsewhere

The 'Visible minority, n.i.e.' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) A write-in response that is classified as visible minority, but that cannot be classified with a specific visible minority group, such as 'Guyanese', 'Pacific Islander', 'Polynesian', 'Tibetan', or 'West Indian'.
- 2) A combination of such write-in responses with a mark-in response of 'White' only.

Multiple Visible Minorities

The 'Multiple visible minorities' category includes persons who provided the following responses to the population group question:

- 1) Mark-in responses associated with two or more groups designated as visible minorities. For example, mark-in responses of both 'South Asian' and 'Black'.
- 2) A combination of mark-in and/or write-in responses associated with two or more groups designated as visible minorities. For example, a mark-in of 'South Asian' and a write-in of 'Nigerian'.

The following descriptions also come from the Canadian census, although these categories fall outside of the Visible Minority groups defined by the census.

Indigenous Peoples

This category includes persons who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit). These are the three groups defined as the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in the Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35 (2).

Immigrant

Refers to people who were born outside Canada.

Second Generation Immigrant

Includes individuals who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada.

The following terminology comes from the Government of Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Terminology Glossary.

2SLGBTQI+

It is the acronym used by the Government of Canada to refer to the Canadian community. 2S: at the front, recognizes Two-Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities; L: Lesbian; G: Gay; B: Bisexual; T: Transgender; Q: Queer; I: Intersex, considers sex characteristics beyond sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression; +: is inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities, who use additional terminologies.

Aromantic

A person who lacks romantic attraction or interest in romantic expression. An aromantic person's sexual and romantic orientations may differ (e.g. aromantic lesbian), and they may have romantic and/or sexual partners.

Asexual

A person who lacks sexual attraction or interest in sexual expression. An asexual person's sexual and romantic orientations may differ (e.g. biromantic asexual), and they may have sexual and/or romantic partners.

Bisexual/Biromantic

A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to two or more genders.

Gay

A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of their same sex or gender identity. Traditionally this identity was reserved for men, but it has been adopted by people of all gender identities.

Gender-fluid

A person whose gender identity varies over time and may include male, female and non-binary gender identities.

Gender Identity

Internal and deeply felt sense of being a man or woman, both or neither. A person's gender identity may or may not align with the gender typically associated with their sex. It may change over the course of one's lifetime.

Intersex

An umbrella term to capture various types of biological sex differentiation. Intersex people have variations in their sex characteristics, such as sex chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, genitalia, and/or secondary sex characteristics (e.g. muscle mass, breasts) that fall outside of what is typically categorized as male or female.

Lesbian

Typically a woman who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other women.

Non-Binary (also 'genderqueer')

Referring to a person whose gender identity does not align with a binary understanding of gender such as man or woman. It is a gender identity which may include man and woman, androgynous, fluid, multiple, no gender, or a different gender outside of the "woman-man" spectrum.

Pansexual

A person whose choice of sexual or romantic partner is not limited by the other person's sex, gender identity or gender expression.

Queer

Historically a derogatory term used as a slur against 2SLGBTQI+ people, this term has been reclaimed by many 2SLGBTQI+ people as a positive way to describe themselves, and as a way to include the many diverse identities not covered by common 2SLGBTQI+ acronym.

Sexual Orientation

Romantic and sexual attraction for people of the same or another sex or gender.

Transgender (also 'trans')

A person whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Two-Spirit (also Two Spirit or Two-Spirited)

An English term used to broadly capture concepts traditional to many Indigenous cultures. It is a culturally-specific identity used by some Indigenous people to indicate a person whose gender identity, spiritual identity and/or sexual orientation comprises both male and female spirits.

The following definitions are provided by the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Neurodivergence/neurodivergent

Having a style of neurocognitive functioning that is significantly different from what is considered “typical” by societal standards. That is, thinking, behaving, or learning differently than these standards. For example, some people may need to do some kind of repetitive movement (often called “stimming”) in order to pay attention in class. Neurodivergence generally includes people with autism, ADHD, OCD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or Tourette's, but others may also identify with the term.

Neurodiverse

A group of people with varying styles of neurocognitive functioning. It is important to note that “neurodiverse” and “neurodiversity” refer to groups. When referring to individuals, the correct term is neurodivergent. Neurodiversity includes people who are neurotypical.

Neurotypical

Having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within what is considered “typical” by societal standards. That is, thinking, behaving, or learning in ways that are in line with these standards.

This definition of disability is taken from Section 10 (1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Disability

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

“Disability” should be interpreted in broad terms. It includes both present and past conditions, as well as a subjective component based on perception of disability. Although sections 10(a) to (e) set out various types of conditions, it is clear that they are merely illustrative and not exhaustive.

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