



Understanding Author Diversity Report

September 2021

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Introduction

Project brief

This research was commissioned by the Publishers Association (PA) in 2020, with an initial aim of undertaking an industry-wide audit of the books published by authors of colour, in response to growing calls from authors and industry bodies, including the Black Writers' Guild (BWG) and Spread the Word, for more quantitative data in this area.

Following in-depth interviews with representatives from publishing companies of varying sizes, it became clear that very few publishers were yet tracking author output by ethnicity. The focus of the project therefore changed in response to requests from publishers for advice and guidance on best practice for gathering author data relating to protected characteristics. The **project outcomes**, which reflect demand for the development of a sample author survey that publishers could use to monitor diversity and inclusion practices in relation to their authors, were as follows:

- a) **A report** on current author diversity data collection practices across the industry
- b) **A toolkit** for publishers containing a template for author diversity data collection
- c) **Recommendations** for next steps

The research project took place between November 2020 and April 2021.

For information:

1. The BWG Open Letter also called for data on books published by Black authors by submission to acquisition ratio and by median and mode of advances. These two requests have not been covered within this research, primarily because currently publishers do not hold this data.
2. This research project did not investigate the composition of staff across the industry, which is the subject of the PA's annual [Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Survey](#), which is now in its fourth year.
3. It was decided from the outset that the project would focus on adult and children's fiction and non-fiction trade titles. Given the demand from publishers for a timely response, it was felt that extending the scope of the research beyond consumer publishing would make delivery of the report and toolkit unfeasible within the timeframe.

About the research

Research method

A flexible project design was employed as it was unclear, at the outset of the project, what work was being done by publishers to collect author diversity data, and whether there was appetite for companies to collaborate and share findings. The first phase of the project focused on gathering information about diversity auditing practices across the industry, and understanding the needs of publishers as they navigated the complexities of monitoring author output by protected characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and socio-economic class.

An analysis of the data collected in phase one found that only a small number of publishers had developed tools for gathering author diversity data. As such, it was decided that the second phase of the project should involve the development of a toolkit for publishers to enable them to undertake author diversity data collection (rather than aggregating publisher data as originally conceived in the project brief).

Data collection

Information was gathered about work being undertaken by publishers to audit author diversity in two ways. Data gaps were identified using a **rapid review of existing literature**, reviewing publicly available reports, research and company statements. Qualitative data was then collected from respondents to fill those gaps, via a series of **publisher interviews** with representatives from a stratified sample of trade publishing companies. Respondents were chosen from children's and adult fiction and non-fiction publishers, of varying sizes. A total of 22 respondents were interviewed at this stage.

Development of the template survey

Examples of existing author diversity surveys and author questionnaires were requested from publishers who had already developed their own tools. These were then analysed and cross-referenced with the PA template for monitoring workforce diversity data. Best practice questions were also taken from the most recent ONS Census (2021) where applicable.

A sample author survey template was developed and sent to a selection of publishers for review. Feedback on the template was sought from representatives from publishing companies via a series of Zoom meetings, and the template refined in light of comments and suggestions.

A research assistant was employed on the project and mentored by the researcher. The research assistant compiled a literature review, attended publisher feedback interviews and assisted with the development of the final toolkit.

Ethics

The research was conducted according to BSA and BERA guidelines, ensuring that informed consent was obtained from all interviewees. All respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and that all information would be treated as confidential and reported anonymously. Specific permission was sought from respondents quoted directly in the report. The interviews were not recorded. Notes were taken by hand during the interviews and will be disposed of after the submission of the report to the PA.

Data collection timeline

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with publishers over a three-month period between December 2020 and February 2021. An interim progress report was then circulated to members of the PA Consumer Publishers Council in early March 2021. A template survey was developed, in conjunction with the PA, and circulated to a small group of publishers in April 2021. Feedback meetings were held in April 2021 and the final template amended in light of those discussions.

Literature review

Company reviews

A review of the literature found that Bonnier Books UK, Penguin Random House (PRH) UK, Hachette UK and HarperCollins UK had developed plans to undertake their own author diversity surveys.

Penguin Random House has tracked the make-up of its acquisitions since 2017 and reports its findings each year through its Creative Responsibility report. As reported in *The Bookseller*, data are collected on a rolling basis via a voluntary survey sent to authors and illustrators on signing a contract (Cowdrey, 2017). The first data was published in PRH's accelerated inclusivity plan in July 2020 and showed that, based on data from 40% of authors completing a questionnaire, acquisitions from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic authors increased from 16% in 2018 to 23.8% in 2019. PRH's inclusivity plan states that 'our acquisitions will, at a minimum, be representative of UK society, as measured by the 2021 census, by 2023 and at least 5% will come from Black writers.' (PRH 2020: 5). The 40% response rate of PRH's surveys makes this data indicative only.

In 2020 Bonnier engaged The Audience Agency to conduct research into the composition and demographic make-up of its staff and author base, and its first Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan was published in February 2021 (Bonnier, 2021). The company 'reached out to authors and illustrators we've worked with on books in the past year, to offer an [...] anonymous opportunity to share how they self-identify', and found that 9% come from Black, Asian and multi-ethnic groups, 80% are straight/heterosexual and 10% identify as having a disability or impairment. (Due to response rates for the voluntary survey the data published is indicative). Bonnier's action plan cites a commitment to track and measure progress but does not commit to specific targets for author output, instead stating that the company aims to 'celebrate diversity within our teams; among creators; and in the books we publish'.

In November 2020, HarperCollins CEO Charlie Redmayne told the FutureBook conference: "We've conducted an audit of our books to understand the proportion of black and minority ethnic writers, authors and illustrators that we have. I know that it won't be enough, but we need to know where we're starting so we have got something to measure [progress] against" (Chandler, 2020). No data has been made publicly available from this audit.

Hachette UK stated in November 2020 that it was planning an author audit as part of its Changing the Story programme and in response to the Open Letter from the Black Writers' Guild (Chandler, 2021). The project, designed to audit its authors, illustrators, editors and translators in order to 'track the representation of our author base and how that mirrors our readers' was launched in April 2021 (Wood, 2021). As Hachette CEO David Shelley acknowledges in the letter to content creators, 'we cannot change what we do not measure'. Neither Hachette nor HarperCollins have published targets for author representation.

Pan Macmillan published its Diversity and Inclusion Pledge and Associated Action Plan in October 2020. The company states on its website that 'we have completed an exercise to estimate the proportion of our commissions that are by authors and illustrators of colour'. It found that in 2020, authors and illustrators of colour comprise 13% of commissions, 'with black authors and illustrators specifically making up 3%'. The Plan states that the company aims 'to grow the proportion of authors and illustrators of colour we acquire across our lists to 15% by 2023, and we will target at least 5% to be black authors and illustrators by the same point.'

Industry reports and surveys

A review of journal articles, industry reports, unpublished doctoral thesis, newspaper articles, book chapters and surveys revealed that there is little quantitative data currently available relating to authors and their output. Whilst there is now a growing knowledge base about workforce diversity within the publishing industry (Cowdrey, 2020; Publishers Association, 2020), there are no industry-wide data on author diversity, leading many publishers to develop initiatives and policies based on information gathered via informal reviews, estimates and anecdotal evidence.

The full literature review is available in Appendix 1. A list of resources has been included to provide a starting point for further reading in this area.

Summary of rapid review

Findings of the rapid review of literature are summarised below, and formed the basis for discussion in the interviews subsequently held with publishers.

- There is a bias towards qualitative research on the publishing industry, an over-reliance on data gathered via interviews or informal reviews (often undertaken without solid or comprehensive sampling methods), and an over-emphasis of anecdotal information.
- There is some evidence that industry reports, particularly those containing quantitative data, can lead to change within the industry.
- There have been a number of workforce diversity surveys since 2016, with an annual survey now undertaken by the PA (since 2017). There remains a lack of data pertaining to the composition of the author base.
- There is a clear demand from organisations representing authors (BWG, Spread the Word) for more author data to be gathered according to ethnicity and other protected characteristics to allow for regular industry-wide monitoring.
- There is a need for reliable and measurable author data around protected characteristics. With no access to self-defined data on author diversity, publishers and researchers are relying on informal reviews, estimates and anecdotal evidence.

Publisher interviews

Interviews with representatives from twenty publishing companies took place via Zoom and Microsoft Teams between December 2020 and February 2021.

A meeting was held with the PA Consumer Publishers Council (CPC) in November 2020 to introduce the research project and a group discussion was organised with representatives of publishers from the Independent Alliance Diversity & Inclusion group to discuss what auditing initiatives publishers had in place. Individual interviews were then sought with a sample of publishers of varying size and profile, including all of those to whom the BWG had addressed an Open Letter.

Aim of interviews

- To understand what, if anything, publishers have done so far in response to the request raised in the Open Letter from the Black Writers Guild for an audit of work by Black authors.
- To understand what work or internal discussions have taken place within companies regarding the process of undertaking audits by ethnicity (and/or protected characteristics).
- To discuss how to undertake an audit of work by authors by ethnicity across the industry.
- To identify issues of concern for publishers when undertaking work in this area.

Findings (February 2021)

1. Publishers' progress on collecting data to date

- Many companies have **not yet begun diversity auditing**.
- Several companies have **inclusivity working groups**, designated HR people and/or external contractors/advisors looking specifically at these issues. The large publishers to whom the BWG open letter was addressed have had direct contact and/or meetings with the BWG to discuss how to respond to their demands.
- Several larger companies have **diversity action plans** – and in some cases publicly stated acquisition targets for work by authors of colour.
- Several companies have conducted **internal surveys** to assess the number of works by authors of colour being acquired/published. This was generally done **on an informal basis** – i.e. an editor going through their list and trying to assign author ethnicity. The problematic and unreliable nature of undertaking a review in this way was recognised, but it was felt to be the

best solution where there is currently no system in place to ask authors to self-define. Publishers were clear that this data was used only for internal purposes.

- Several publishers are now reviewing this informally gathered data at regular intervals.
- Some companies had begun to informally **analyse data on works by authors of colour** from 2020 onwards, others were doing retrospective surveys/audits. The majority of publishers interviewed did not have the resources to undertake retrospective analysis and questioned the usefulness of historic data given the rapidly changing publishing environment.
- Many publishers felt that projecting forward, **setting future targets**, was more important than analysing historical data; companies are stretched and have limited resources.
- One respondent had tried to informally **analyse marketing spend by ethnicity** (for internal purposes only), although noted that this can be quite difficult. Sometimes individual authors can be part of wider promotions e.g. Black History Month promotions, but these do not always get allocated to the spend by author.

2. Areas of concern

- Several publishers had been reluctant to undertake any kind of audit of author data relating to ethnicity (or sexual orientation), citing nervousness about ‘getting it wrong’, and concerns around GDPR compliance in relation to this.
- Concerns were raised about how authors would or should be asked to participate in surveys, with **anxiety about interference with editorial relationships** for the sake of data collection.
- **Anonymising data** was deemed to be crucial, particularly for small publishers where an author can be easily identified.
- For smaller companies, there was concern that **setting targets can be difficult** as overall statistics can differ radically from year to year with one author or staff change.
- Where publishing houses had already asked authors to provide ethnicity data, whether directly or via anonymised surveys, there was nervousness about approaching the authors again too soon to ask them to provide more data, or data in another format.
- Learnings from publishers that had undertaken audits included: the need for a pilot survey to test the questions among a small group; a better understanding of how to order response categories within questions, and question order overall; an increased awareness that the way in which authors are asked to complete a survey, and who makes the request (i.e. a central body, or a member of staff known to them personally), will impact response rates.

- There was awareness that a **publisher cannot categorise authors by ethnicity, or any other protected characteristic, without consent** – this has led to difficulties producing lists when asked to do so by bookshops in response to Black Lives Matter protests, for example.

3. Summary of publishers' need for guidance

- **GDPR compliance/legal compliance**; there was significant concern from publishers without in-house counsel about 'getting it wrong', or asking questions in the 'wrong' way.
- **How to store personal data** and data destruction policies.
- How **ethnicity is categorised** i.e. which categories to use for audits.
- **Terminology** i.e. guidance on preferred wording for questions and question category.
- Which **protected characteristics** should be monitored.
- **Scope of audits**: i.e. should the audit comprise just UK-based authors? Or all authors contracted out of the UK regardless of where they are based?
- Publishers would like this to be industry led, with several stating that a clear set of guidelines should be issued and agreed before further diversity/ethnicity auditing is undertaken.
- Authors from marginalised groups who deem this work as a priority may be more likely to respond to a survey. How does one deal with **incomplete data and low response rates**?

4. Areas of consensus

- The PA has an important role in dealing with some of these difficult issues; all publishers saw this as an industry issue; collaboration and sharing of best practice was welcomed.
- A PA survey template should use ONS census categories and wording where possible.
- For children's books, illustrators as well as authors should be included in any audit.
- Publishers would appreciate a template/tools – not just guidance.
- A clear set of standards/guidelines is really important.
- The purpose of any data collection must be clear; what is the business reason for gathering this data?

Development of toolkit

Considerations

A template author survey was developed using the following rationale:

1. The survey was kept to under 20 questions and the number of free text fields were limited in order to aid higher response rates and to make cross-industry data aggregation as easy as possible.
2. Question wording and categories were largely based on the UK Publishers Association workforce data survey and Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 census templates. These were cross-referenced with the author diversity surveys developed by publishers. The order of the categories in the question relating to ethnic origin was amended to alphabetical order.
3. The survey follows guidance and wording provided by the charity Stonewall for questions relating to gender, gender identity and sexual orientation.
4. For evaluating the socio-economic/class background of authors, the survey adheres to the four measures set out in the Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion guidance recommended to examine the socio-economic diversity of workforces.
5. Section headings have not been used in order to limit the amount of information on the page, and because in several cases there is only one question in each section, so headings feel superfluous (e.g. Questions 6, 7, and 8 would each have their own heading i.e. Gender, Trans status, Sexual orientation).
6. Questions which were considered but not included:
 - Which region of the UK do you currently live in?
 - Was English your first language?
 - Further questions about mental health problems.
 - Further questions about neurodiversity.
 - Do you identify as an immigrant, refugee or asylum seeker?
 - Do you have any additional feedback or comments?

Feedback interviews

The draft survey was circulated to five publishers and Zoom interviews were held to discuss feedback. The respondents were asked to comment on the clarity of aims, length of survey and ease of understanding. The template was generally agreed to be very much in line with expectations, although there was unease about the relevance of a question relating to an author's caring responsibilities, which was felt to be too vague to be of significance. The ordering of the questions relating to socio-economic background was also discussed, as was the use of inclusive language.

One respondent questioned whether the format of Q18 was exclusionary to an author who had grown up in care, as there was no option for them to give an answer, and suggested that 'I grew up in care' be added to the 'This question does not apply to me' option.

Survey amendments

In light of the feedback above, the following changes were made to the survey template:

1. The ONS ethnic origin categories were re-ordered so that they appear in alphabetical order.
2. A question about caring responsibilities was removed.
3. The four questions about socio-economic background (Q15-18) were re-ordered so that they all appear together, and the longest question was put last.
4. The wording 'Not applicable' was replaced with the more inclusive 'This question does not apply to me'.
5. For Q17 & Q18, the wording 'I grew up in care' was added to the 'This question does not apply to me' response, and this option was moved to the top of the list.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that the PA coordinates an annual author diversity survey, using a similar model to the way in which it currently manages the industry-wide Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Survey. Using this approach, the PA would be responsible for hosting the survey on a third-party platform (whether in-house or outsourced), collecting and aggregating the data.
2. We recommend that the PA publicly publish the results of this survey on an annual basis.
3. For reasons of transparency, we recommend that the author survey template is made publicly available on the PA website. The easier this resource is to access and refer to, the more likely it is that publishers will adopt the recommended template.
4. We recommend that the PA toolkit is proactively shared with other stakeholders.

Appendix 1. Extended literature review

Review of the literature

Danuta Kean edited the first research paper which studied diversity in publishing, [*In Full Colour*](#) (Kean, 2004). A survey conducted for the report concluded that the industry is an ‘overwhelmingly white profession’, with 87% of employees white, but it contained no quantitative data on author diversity make-up. This was followed by the [*Free Verse report*](#) (Kean & Larson, 2005), the first survey into opportunities for Black and Asian poets in the UK, although no detail is given about the range of respondents or the methods used to select them.

In April 2015, Kean edited a second major industry study, [*Writing the Future: Black and Asian Writers and Publishers in the UK Marketplace*](#) (Kean, 2015). The report was compiled over an eight-month period and involved quantitative and qualitative research into the experiences of BAME writers and publishers, as well as the employment and publishing practices in the UK. A survey of 203 UK-based published novelists was backed up with in-depth interviews of 60 published BAME novelists, and the report outlines multiple barriers of ethnicity and class for BAME writers. Ethnic classifications were based on those used by the Office for National Statistics 2011. Kean noted the difficulties encountered when compiling *Writing the Future*:

“Poor data collection at the most basic level in publishing houses offered further evidence of the failure by the industry to adequately own the problem of diversity and to recognise the considerable benefits to having a diverse business. None of the HRs in the biggest publishing houses interviewed for the report had reliable data on diversity at recruitment level or higher, or on the number of writers of colour on their lists.” (Kean, 2019:4)

In 2016, for its ‘[Diversity Issue](#)’,¹ The Bookseller sought to undertake an audit of titles by British non-white authors but found that ‘no publisher [...] holds data on the ethnic background of its authors. Some cited data protection rules as the reason the information was not available’. Where publishers were unable to provide data on the number of books by BAME authors on their 2016 schedules, the Bookseller compiled the statistics ‘using available publisher catalogues and information on authors in the public domain.’ The results showed ‘fewer than 100’ were by British authors of a non-white background, although the total number of titles surveyed was not stated (Shaffi, 2016). This survey was presented in the special issue alongside a range of [first-person accounts](#) written by senior publishing executives from diverse backgrounds (Jerome, 2016).

¹ <https://www.thebookseller.com/diversity-issue>. Published 04/11/21. Retrieved 02/02/21.

The issue of the lack of diversity amongst children's and YA authors is highlighted in research undertaken by Melanie Ramdarshan Bold at UCL, one of the few researchers seeking to provide statistical evidence to support arguments about the lack of authors of colour being published in the UK publishing industry. In [*The Eight Percent Problem: Authors of Colour in the British Young Adult Market \(2006–2016\)*](#) she analyses records of 8593 YA titles published between 2006 and 2016 held on the British Library's British National Bibliography database. The metadata 'did not include information such as author sex/gender identity, ethnicity, and nationality, or the type of publisher (i.e. conglomerate, independent, or self-published)'. This additional information 'was identified through digital and printed paratextual, mostly epitextual, information (e.g. publisher and author websites, author interviews in print and online media, author information on book covers etc.)'.

Further research, [*Inclusive Young Adult Fiction: Authors of Colour in the United Kingdom*](#) (Ramdarshan Bold, 2019a) highlights the experiences of BAME authors who are trying to pilot their way through the 'diversity status quo' and includes analysis of the output of authors of colour. [*Representation of people of colour among children's book authors and illustrators*](#) (2019b) includes an analysis of a dataset of children's books published between 2007–2017, revealing that people of colour are under-represented among children's book creators. Creators were segmented by their (self-identified) sex/gender identity, ethnicity (based on ONS terminology) and nationality.

[*Rethinking 'Diversity' in Publishing*](#) (Saha & van Lente, 2020) is an academic report produced in partnership between Goldsmiths, University of London, Spread the Word and The Bookseller. It focused on the obstacles BAME authors face at all stages of the publishing process and recommended that publishers create long-term partnerships with organisations that will allow them 'to find and develop talented writers of colour, bringing them to publication and to audiences' (2020: 3). The research was based exclusively on qualitative data. A statement from Spread the Word in the introduction to the report states:

"On a macro level, there needs to be more transparency across the industry to benchmark change, with ongoing research being put in place providing data on the adult fiction and non-fiction titles by UK 'BAME' writers being published."

This statement echoed calls made in an [*Open Letter*](#) to the 'big five' publishers from the Black Writers' Guild, which represents over 200 Black authors, published just a week before the release of the Rethinking 'Diversity' report in June 2020. It outlined deep concerns that 'British publishers are raising awareness of racial inequality without significantly addressing their own', as books by black

authors topped the bestseller charts in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests after the murder of George Floyd (Flood, 2020). Amongst their demands, the BWG called for ‘an audit of the books published by black authors. This should include genres, the submission-to-acquisition ratio of black authors in the past five years and the median and mode of the advances of black authors.’ The letter stated that ‘rather than relying on anecdotal information, the data is crucial for us to better understand the current situation and how each area can be resolved for equality.’²

Other reports containing quantitative data on author diversity include [A Room of My Own](#) (RSL, 2019) and [Breaking New Ground: Celebrating British Writers & Illustrators of Colour](#) (Spread the Word, 2019). CLPE’s annual [Reflecting Realities survey](#) measures the extent and quality of ethnic representation and diversity within published children’s works in the UK. The [Common People: Breaking the Glass Ceiling in UK Publishing](#) report highlighted barriers of access into publishing for working class authors, based on a survey of and interviews with writers who had taken part in the Common People project (Shaw, 2020).

Impact

Examples of the impact of research reports examining diversity in the publishing industry include:

- i) In an [article in The Bookseller](#) in March 2005, Danuta Kean reflected on the industry response since the publication of *In Full Colour*, listing examples of progress and stating that ‘there are signs that *In Full Colour* has triggered long-term change through a raft of projects, the fruits of which may be seen in boardrooms in years to come’ (Kean, 2005).
- ii) Kean reflected on the impact of *Writing the Future* [in the Guardian](#) in December 2016, noting increased investment from the mainstream publishers in staff diversity initiatives, and the launch of Penguin’s WriteNow scheme for under-represented writers, after its publication (Kean, 2016).
- iii) The [Common People project website](#) states that the ‘recommendations of the report initiated real action and developments within industry’ and cites examples of three literary agencies which had been established outside London as a direct response to the *Common People* report.
- iv) Whilst there is as yet no detailed appraisal of its impact, the calls to action in the *Rethinking Diversity* report, which was released just a week after the Open Letter from the Black Writers Guild, led publishers to reflect on their own practice. A number of company statements and diversity action

² <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jun/15/black-writers-guild-calls-for-sweeping-change-in-uk-publishing>

plans followed. The Bookseller's special issue of 9 April 2020 ('The Black Issue') provides some evidence of change within the industry.

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Further Reading

Company action plans

Bonnier Books UK: Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (February 2021)

<https://www.bonnierbooks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Bonnier-Books-UK-DI-Action-Plan-FINAL-compressed-wider-format.pdf>

Faber: Diversity Action Plan (June 2020)

<https://www.faber.co.uk/diversity-action-plan>

Pan Macmillan: Diversity and Inclusion Pledge and Associated Action Plan (October 2020)

<https://www.panmacmillan.com/about/diversity-and-inclusion>

Penguin Random House: Inclusivity Action Plan (July 2020)

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/company/creative-responsibility/Inclusion.html>

Penguin Random House: Creative Responsibility Reports

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/company/creative-responsibility/policies---progress.html>

Hachette UK: <https://www.hachette.co.uk/landing-page/hachette/changing-the-story>

HarperCollins UK: <https://corporate.harpercollins.co.uk/diversity-and-inclusion>

Industry reports

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Appendix 2. Publisher Toolkit

Part 1. Guidance on creating and distributing author questionnaire

1. Timing of survey

We are conscious that some publishers who have not yet undertaken any form of diversity data collection are keen to send this survey to their authors as soon as possible. Guidance is therefore provided below as to the best way to carry out this exercise. It is recommended that publishers adhere as closely as possible to the sample wording and template so that industry-wide data may be easily collated in the future.

Once initial data has been gathered via an author survey, it is recommended that new authors are asked to complete this survey as part of their initial paperwork, ideally sending it to authors at the same time as their contract. This information can be stored securely and aggregated once a year for reporting purposes. Following the approach employed by PRH and Hachette, this model reduces the need for a publisher to contact an author more than once.

2. Deployment of survey

i) Publishers who wish to proceed with an author diversity audit can use the approved wording and template as a basis for their own surveys. Individual companies will need to decide whether the surveys are sent to translators and contributors to anthologies, as well as to authors and illustrators. The consensus amongst publishers interviewed was that any author, illustrator or translator that has a contract (and usually a royalty arrangement) with a publisher should be invited to be part of the author survey.

ii) We recommend that the questionnaire be hosted on a third-party platform and that authors are emailed a link inviting them to complete the survey, making it clear that all data gathered will be anonymous and held securely and in line with GDPR legislation. The objective of the survey must be clearly stated, as per the guidance provided in the sample introduction of the template provided.

iii) Each publisher will need to ensure it has the correct practices and systems in place to handle the author responses and ensure confidentiality at all times. Raw data must be held securely and should not be linked in any way to individual authors.

iv) Larger publishing houses may wish to ask authors which company or division they are published by, as long as this does not allow any possibility of individual authors being identified.

v) **Please note that the PA survey template has been developed for use with UK-based authors.** Individual countries have different legislation for the collection of data (e.g. in France, it is illegal for an organisation to ask for data relating to ethnicity or sexual orientation), and the PA can only offer guidance relating to UK law. Therefore, publishers should be extremely cautious if intending to deploy this survey to authors based outside the UK and should seek additional legal guidance.

3. External providers

The PA cannot endorse specific platforms, but examples of those which have been used to host author surveys include Microsoft Forms, which is included within Microsoft Office packages, Survey Monkey, Qualtrics and SNAP, although this is not a complete list.

Further advice can be sought from external **Diversity & Inclusion advisors**. Third party diversity and inclusion specialists with whom publishers have worked to roll out workforce D&I surveys include The Audience Agency (Bonnier Books UK) and EA Inclusion (Publishers Association UK).

4. GDPR compliance

Companies are responsible for ensuring they comply with GDPR legislation when collecting any personal data from staff or authors. Detailed guidance can be found on the website of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), in the [Guide to the UK General Data Protection Regulation](#) (UK GDPR).

Publishers should pay particular attention to the ICO guidance on [special category data](#) and [storage limitation](#). Article 9 of the UK GDPR lists the conditions for processing special category data. For the purposes of this author survey, the processing of an author's personal data has a lawful basis in

[legitimate interests](#) under Article 9 and the [substantial public interest](#)/equality of opportunity or treatment condition under the Data Protection Act 2018.

The data collected will form part of an aggregated data survey and must not be held by a company on an individual level – i.e. a publisher must not keep details of an author's protected characteristics for anything other than the purpose of monitoring and improving equality of opportunity and the diversity of a publisher's output.

A company must not keep personal data for longer than it needs it and the justification for holding the data should be regularly reviewed. All personal data should be deleted once an author's contract has expired or been revoked or the author's work has gone out of print. An author has the right to ask for their personal data to be deleted at any time, and such requests must be executed in a timely manner.

Part 2. Template author diversity questionnaire

PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION **Author diversity audit – template questions**

Welcome

The UK publishing industry is seeking to gather more data about authors to enable us to tackle issues around barriers of access and issues of representation. Bodies such as the Black Writers Guild and Spread the Word have called for more data on authors and their work.

As a company, we are committed to industry initiatives designed to gather more data about the writers [, illustrators and translators - insert if applicable] that we publish.

Some of the questions, which relate to your ethnicity, religion, health, gender identity and sexual orientation, are voluntary and you do not have to answer them. These questions are indicated by *.

How data will be processed

- The data will be processed using this online survey through [INSERT SURVEY PROVIDER]
- The data collected from this survey will be anonymous. Names, email addresses and IP addresses will not be captured or recorded and cannot be traced back to the respondent.
- Once captured, this data will be processed by [INSERT DATA PROCESSOR]
- The data will be aggregated and reported at a company level where sample sizes permit. It may also be combined with data from other companies to give an industry picture.

Why data will be processed

- This data will be processed because we wish to obtain a true reflection of the diversity of the industry in order to be better equipped and informed to ensure we are inclusive and that publishing better reflects the UK population.

Consent

- By completing the survey, you are giving your consent to the data being used in the way described above.

Data retention

- The raw data collected through this survey will be retained until [INSERT DELETION PERIOD], after which it will be deleted.

You are entitled at any time to ask us to stop processing your personal information. For more information about your rights under data protection laws and how we process personal information generally, please see our Privacy Notice [INSERT LINK TO COMPANY TERMS]

This survey contains 18 questions and should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for taking part in this survey.

AUTHOR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION SURVEY

*These questions are voluntary, and you do not have to answer them

1. **What year were you born?**

- Drop down menu with years listed

2. **What is your nationality?**

- Drop down menu with British at top

3. **What is your country of residence?**

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Republic of Ireland
- Elsewhere (drop down menu)

4. **What is your ethnic group? ***

- Asian or Asian British - Indian
- Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British - Chinese

- Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background, write in ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - Caribbean
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - African
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - Any other Black / Black British background, write in ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups - Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background, write in ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD
- White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- White - Irish
- White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- White - Roma
- White - Any other White background, write in ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD
- Other ethnic group - Arab
- Any other ethnic group - Write in ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD
- Prefer not to say

5. **What is your religion? ***

- No religion
- Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion (please specify) ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD

6. Which one of the following best describes your gender? *

- Male
- Female
- In another way
- Prefer not to say
- Non-binary

If you describe your gender with another term, please provide this here ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD

7. Do you consider yourself to be a trans person? *

Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

8. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? *

- Heterosexual / Straight
- Bi / bisexual
- Gay / lesbian
- Prefer not to say
- If you prefer to use another term, please provide this here ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD

9. Do you consider yourself to have a disability or impairment? *

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as follows: a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her/their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long term means it has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months:

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

10. If you consider yourself to have a disability or impairment, please select the relevant definition/s from the list below (please select all that apply): *

- Learning disabilities
- Neurodivergent (e.g. dyspraxia, autism, dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome)
- Co-ordination, dexterity, or mobility impairments
- Chronic pain/fatigue
- Experience seizures
- Hearing impairment
- Long term mental health condition
- Speech impairment
- Visual impairment
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify) ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD

11. Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? *

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- Not at all

12. What is the highest level of education that you have achieved?

- Postgraduate degree
- Undergraduate degree
- Further education — NVQs or professional qualifications
- A-Levels or equivalent
- GCSE/O-Levels or equivalent
- Other (please specify) ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD
- Prefer not to say

13. If you were raised in the UK, where did you spend the majority of your childhood?

- North East England
- North West England
- Yorkshire and The Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East England
- South West England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Prefer not to say
- Hard to say / multiple areas
- I didn't grow up in UK

14. To the best of your knowledge, did your parent/s, carer/s or grandparents work in the creative industries?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say

15. What type of school did you mainly attend between the ages of 11 and 16?

- State-run or state-funded school - selective on academic, faith or other grounds
- State-run or state-funded school - non-selective
- Independent or fee-paying school - bursary
- Independent or fee-paying school - no bursary
- Attended school outside the UK
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify): ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD

16. If you finished school after 1980, were you eligible for Free School Meals at any point during your school years?

Free School Meals are a statutory benefit available to school-aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits and who have been through the relevant registration process. It does not include those who receive meals at school through other means (e.g. boarding school).

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable (finished school before 1980 or went to school overseas)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

17. What is the highest level of qualifications achieved by either of your parent(s) or guardian(s) by the time you were 18?

- This question does not apply to me / I grew up in care
- At least one has a degree level qualification
- Qualifications below degree level
- No formal qualifications
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify): ⇒ FREE TEXT FIELD

18. Thinking back to when you were aged about 14, which best describes the sort of work the main/ highest income earner in your household did in their main job?

- This question does not apply to me / I grew up in care
- Modern professional occupations such as: teacher/lecturer, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, welfare officer, artist, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer, author
- Clerical and intermediate occupations such as: secretary, personal assistant, clerical worker, office clerk, call centre agent, nursing auxiliary, nursery nurse
- Senior managers and administrators usually responsible for planning, organising and co-ordinating work and for finance such as: finance manager, chief executive

- Technical and craft occupations such as: motor mechanic, fitter, inspector, plumber, printer, tool maker, electrician, gardener, train driver
- Semi-routine manual and service occupations such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, receptionist, sales assistant
- Routine manual and service occupations such as: HGV driver, van driver, cleaner, porter, packer, sewing machinist, messenger, labourer, waiter / waitress, bar staff
- Middle or junior managers such as: office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager, publican
- Traditional professional occupations such as: accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil/mechanical engineer
- Long term unemployed (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for more than a year)
- Retired
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY

Authors

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