

## SBWN and [EDI Scotland](#) Publish Literary Sector Survey Results

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Scottish BAME Writers Network](#) and [EDI Scotland](#) publish literary sector [survey results](#) on the perceptions and experiences of Black and PoC\* writers in and from Scotland.

“What are we, as a sector, doing to support and inspire current and future generations of Scottish and Scotland-based Black and PoC\* writers?”

“Actionable change is still needed to address systemic barriers for Black and PoC\* writers in Scotland.”

In March 2021, Scottish BAME Writers Network (SBWN) partnered with EDI Scotland for their second [annual survey](#) on perceptions and experiences of Black and PoC writers in and from Scotland. This survey aimed to assess gaps, absences, and barriers to participation in Scotland’s literary sector; to help SBWN plan inclusive programming in 2021 and beyond; and was a follow up to build on the findings in their [2020 report](#). They also wanted to ask: “What are we, as a sector, doing to support and inspire current and future generations of Scottish and Scotland-based Black and PoC writers?”

The report reveals numerous facets that make Scotland's literary sector vital and meaningful for underrepresented communities. However, the research also exposes challenges around: event and programming access, career development, performing and publishing. These results, collated and presented by EDI Scotland, challenge both SBWN and the wider sector to consider who they are and are not reaching.

Key findings from respondents include:

- 68.3% strongly agreed that SBWN had increased the visibility of writers of colour in Scotland.
- 70.7% strongly agreed that SBWN had exposed them to a greater diversity of writers of colour in Scotland.
- 21.4% had experienced a racist incident at a literary event or activity in the past 12 months.
- 81.8% had experience of mental health problems or mental distress.
- 28.8% identified as disabled, with a further 9.6% of respondents unsure.
- 78.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed that white Scottish audiences were aware of the diversity of writers of colour in Scotland.
- 13.0% had not yet published work.
- 38.9% had not read their work at a public event (venue-based or digital) in the past three years.
- **79.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed that people of colour and white Scottish people have equal opportunities to succeed in Scotland’s literary sector.**

Several respondents commented on the whiteness of cultural events and activities, particularly outside of Edinburgh and Glasgow and an expectation to share racial trauma. Many also requested that SBWN facilitate mentorship opportunities and/or a buddy scheme.

Recommendations for SBWN includes:

- Continue to provide opportunities for publication and performance, particularly for writers at the start of their career.
- Explore ways to provide or facilitate mentorship opportunities and/or a buddy scheme among members.
- Provide opportunities for members to receive informal feedback on their work, this might also include feedback on applications and submissions.

Recommendations for the literary sector includes:

- Develop events and activities for writers of colour outside of Edinburgh and Glasgow, for example, the continuation of online events and activities when in-person events and activities are permitted to restart.
- Facilitate opportunities for writers of colour in Scotland to showcase their work with international audiences outside of Scotland.
- Better engage white Scottish audiences in the work of writers of colour in Scotland, without burdening writers with the responsibility to 'educate others'.
- Challenge views that suggest diversity and quality are incompatible or that writers of colour are invited to participate in literary events and activities to satisfy diversity requirements.
- Increase the representation and visibility of people of colour in senior positions in Scotland's literary sector.

"The results underscore the needs of our community and invigorate SBWN to continue and deepen our intersectional approach to advocacy and professional development for Black and PoC writers. We are committed to improving accessibility, facilitating peer mentoring, diversifying genres covered and being mindful of mental health wellbeing in all our activities." - Jeda Pearl Lewis, Co-Director (Writer Development, Access and Communications)

"We will further develop our successful collaborations and welcome new partnerships with literary organisations within and outwith Scotland who are committed to actionable change that addresses systemic barriers for Black and PoC writers and individuals working in the literary sector." - Dean Atta, Co-Director (Festivals, Partnerships and Editorial)

"Neither Scottish BAME Writers Network, nor this survey, claim to speak on behalf of the entire Black and PoC literary sector in Scotland. We are a network of uniquely diverse and individual writers, performers, editors, readers, publishers, programmers and book lovers. We come from different racial backgrounds, ethnic and cultural groups, faiths, classes, sexualities, genders; some of us are disabled and/or live with chronic illness, some of us are carers." - Mae Diansangu, Programme Manager (Community and Events)

“Some of us were born in Scotland or have spent our whole lives here, while some of us come from around the world and have made our home in Scotland. One of the major experiences we do share, and what both surveys aim to demonstrate, is the experience of having our identities (including our bodies, histories, and narratives) racialised within the environment of the literary sector.” - Titi Farukuoye, Programme Manager (Community and Events)

“While our data set is relatively small (n=57) we hope to continuously receive more survey participants as our community and networks develop. Through our events, publishing, partnerships, advocacy and professional development activities, we have worked directly with over 100 Black and PoC writers and we are especially grateful for each person who took the time to complete this survey and share their experiences.” - Kelly Kanayama, Admin and Media Support

“This report is a guide, to further open up the conversations, programming and opportunities around inclusion and career progression, plus to find and put into action the systemic changes needed to address barriers for Black people and people of colour working in Scotland’s literary world.” - Alycia Pirmohamad, Co-Founder and Advisor

**Read the survey report [as a PDF here](#) or [as a read-only Word document here](#).**

\*PoC stands for ‘People of colour.’ Our aim was to gather responses from people within the Scottish literary sector who are racialised and who identify as Black or a person of colour. We use the term ‘Black and PoC writers’ to include Scottish and Scotland-based people with heritages from African, Caribbean, Latinx, First Nation, South Asian, East Asian, South East Asian and West Asian diasporas including people who identify as ‘mixed-race’ or multiple heritage. Survey respondents who only identified as white were filtered out of these results. As an organisation, while we use the term BAME, we acknowledge the limitations of this terminology. At the core of our network, we address and overcome systemic barriers that our members face directly or indirectly based on their ethnic or national identities, race or perceived racial identities, or the colour of their skin as per the Equality Act of 2010.

**Contacts:**

Jeda Pearl Lewis and Dean Atta, Co-Directors (ScotBAMEWriters@gmail.com)  
Kevin Guyan ([EDIScotland@outlook.com](mailto:EDIScotland@outlook.com))

**About EDI Scotland**

EDI Scotland provides research and data consultancy on issues related to equality, diversity and inclusion in Scotland. Data, research and evidence-based solutions are powerful tools in the fight against injustice and inequality. EDI Scotland promotes robust research with a radical edge and works with organisations (big and small) to make Scotland a fairer place for everyone. EDI Scotland is directed by Dr Kevin Guyan, a mixed methods researcher based in Edinburgh with over a decade of research experience across academia, higher education and the voluntary sector. Find out more: [@EDIScotland](#); <https://kevinguyan.com/EDIScotland/>

### **About Scottish BAME Writers Network (SBWN)**

Scottish BAME Writers Network (SBWN) is an advocacy and professional development group for writers who identify as Black or PoC\* with a connection to Scotland. SBWN was founded in 2018 by Alycia Pirmohamed and Jay G Ying and aims to connect Scottish Black and PoC writers with the wider literary sector in Scotland and beyond. Weaving together collaborative literary partnerships, cross-arts co-creation and an intersectional approach to inclusive and participatory programming, SBWN is a sector change-maker, facilitating necessary conversations around inclusive programming in an effort to address and overcome systemic barriers.

Professional development programming includes publishing and performance opportunities, workshops, masterclasses, curatorial roles, training and seminars, industry panels and partnerships, feedback and mentoring. 2020-21 partners include HarperCollins, Scottish Book Trust, National Library of Scotland, PEN, National Galleries of Scotland, StAnza Poetry Festival, Wigtown Book Festival, Edinburgh International Book Festival, British Council; and key programmes include Writers of Colour writing group and anthology led by Hannah Lavery, the annual Professional Development and Networking Conference, and 'Metaphors for a Black Future' curated by Martha Adonai Williams.

Run by writers of colour for writers of colour, and informed by member surveys, consultation and feedback, SBWN uplifts, validates and provides safer spaces for marginalised voices, nurturing and promoting the current and next generations of Black and POC writers based in Scotland.

Twitter, Facebook and Instagram: @ScotBAMEwriters

Website: <http://scottishbamewritersnetwork.org/>