

Poetry Foundation DEIB Assessment & Strategic Roadmap

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Disclaimer

The findings produced in this report were developed at the end of 2020 by Ethos, a full-service diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) transformation firm. All findings are representative of the period of time when data was collected. Ethos fully acknowledges that both quantitative and qualitative may have changed since data was originally collected.

This equity audit was conducted in parallel with the organization's work to fulfill the existing commitments first named in the [Open Letter of Commitment to Our Community](#), and most recently updated in the [One-Year Commitment Update Towards Racial Justice, Equity and Inclusion](#). Some of the language is similar to denote the connection between these efforts.

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Research Methodology

How Ethos collected and analyzed data for The Poetry Foundation

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By the Numbers

- **21** Total Survey Responses
- **116** Pages of Survey Results
- **33** Research Interviews
- **16** Internal Documents, Handbooks, HR Master Files, and Materials
- **41** Employee Salary Histories and Over 100 Salary Reports
- **203** Issues of POETRY Magazine
- **3** Caucused Healing Sessions
- **1,081** Pages of Material Reviewed

Data Collection & Analysis

- Quantitative
 - Magazine Audit
 - Commitments Audit
 - DEIB Survey
- Qualitative
 - Culture Interviews
 - Feedback Collection

Quantitative

- **Magazine Audit:** An audit of past *Poetry* editions to identify diversity of authors published.
- **Commitments Audit:** A detailed assessment of the organization's Open Letter of Commitment to Our Community to identify what actions have been taken so far and what is left to be done as well as an audit across all groups on compensation.
- **DEIB Survey:** This 40+ question survey collected data across culture, DEIB readiness, representation, recruiting, retention, promotion, and protection. We received 21 responses when the survey was conducted in October and November of 2020, which amounted to 66% of Poetry Foundation employees.

Data Collection & Analysis

- Quantitative
 - Magazine Audit
 - Compensation Audit
 - DEIB Survey
- Qualitative
 - Policies & Procedures Audit
 - Research Interviews
 - Healing Sessions

Qualitative

- **Policies and Procedures Audit:** Ethos reviewed 16 internal documents, handbooks, HR master files, and materials that gave us a look into what policies and practices currently impact Poetry Foundation employees.
- **Research Interviews:** Ethos conducted interviews with individuals in the poetry community, Poetry Foundation employees, and Board members to gauge current perceptions of the Poetry Foundation and identify strengths and weaknesses that helped guide our recommendations.

DEIB Assessment

How The Poetry Foundation currently serves diversity, equity, and inclusion goals across its communities

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Magazine Audit

Magazine Audit Methodology

To conduct the magazine audit, a team of five researchers from the Ethos team:

- Read all issues of POETRY over the last 17 years (since 2003)
- Developed a complete list of published poets
- Individually researched each poet to find self-identification in bios, writings, and interviews for their racial/ethnic and gender identities
 - Poets who did not name their identities in their works were noted as “Undisclosed”
 - Since the magazine has never asked for self-identification information from poets, the team followed strict guidelines around representing *exactly* how poets named themselves in their biography materials, leading to dozens of categories that were then grouped together for ease of data visualization
- Organized, cross-referenced, and reviewed the data, putting the most up-to-date data set through Python to create a statistical analysis

General Findings

1. **3,904** poets were published in POETRY between 2003 and 2020:
 - a. **74.51%** were White
 - b. **53.5%** were Men
 - c. **41.88%** were White Men
 - d. **31.97%** were White Women
 - e. **8.20%** were Black
 - f. **3.92%** were Black Men
 - g. **3.82%** were Black Women
 - h. **0.36%** were Black Non-binary poets.

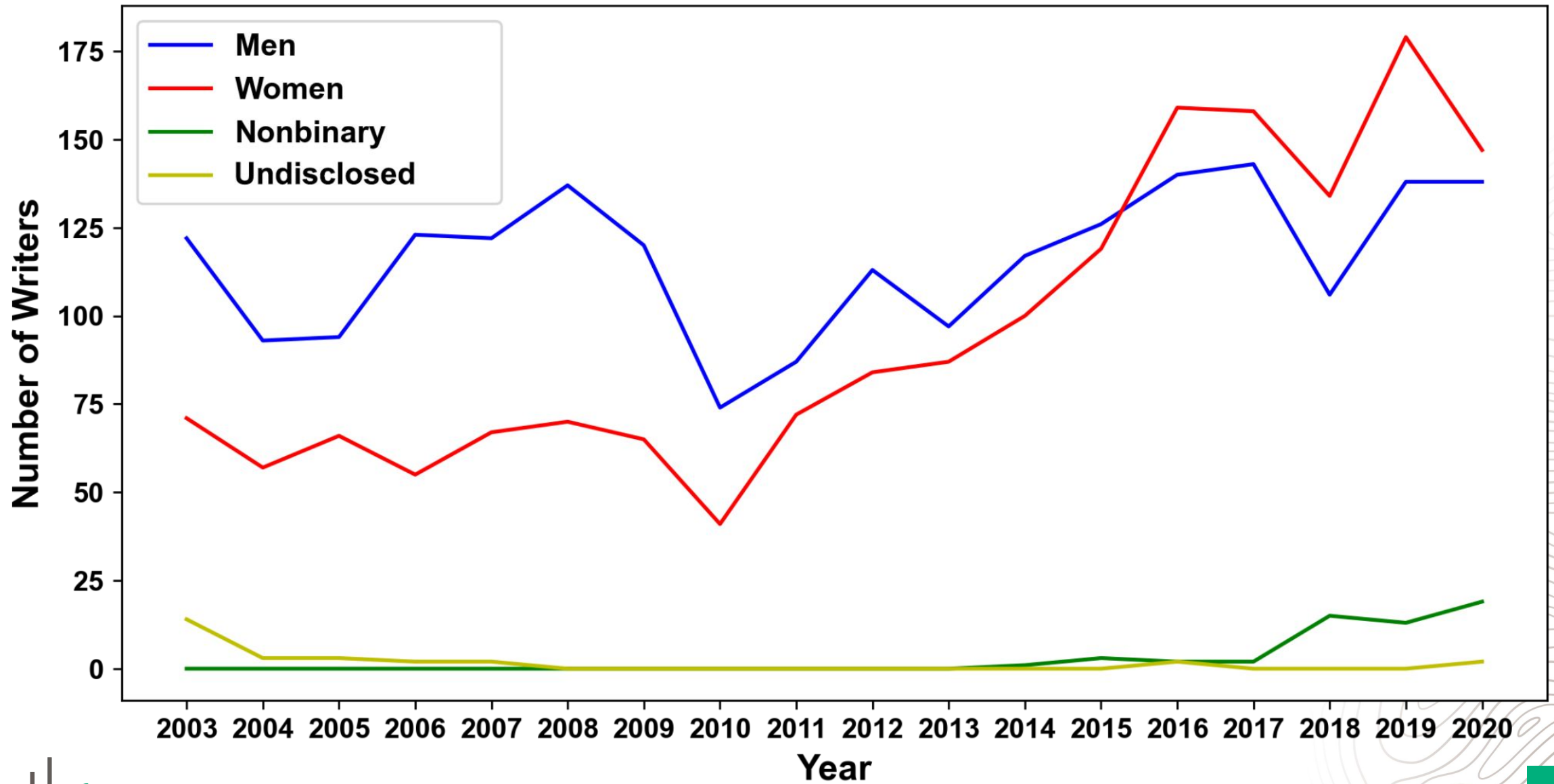
General Findings (Cont.)

1. Of all of the underrepresented racial/ethnic identities we analyzed, we found that Black poets were most represented (**8.20%**), followed by:
 - a. Asian poets (**5.71%**)
 - b. Latinx poets (**3.59%**)
 - c. Indigenous poets (**1.13%**)
 - d. Pacific Islander poets (**0.64%**)
2. Diversity has been incrementally increasing across these social identity categories over time, with [2018 representing the biggest increases.](#)

Gender Identity (of poets published in POETRY since 2003)

Poets	Men	Women	Non-binary	Undisclosed
Total	2090	1731	55	28
Representation	53.53%	44.34%	1.41%	0.72%

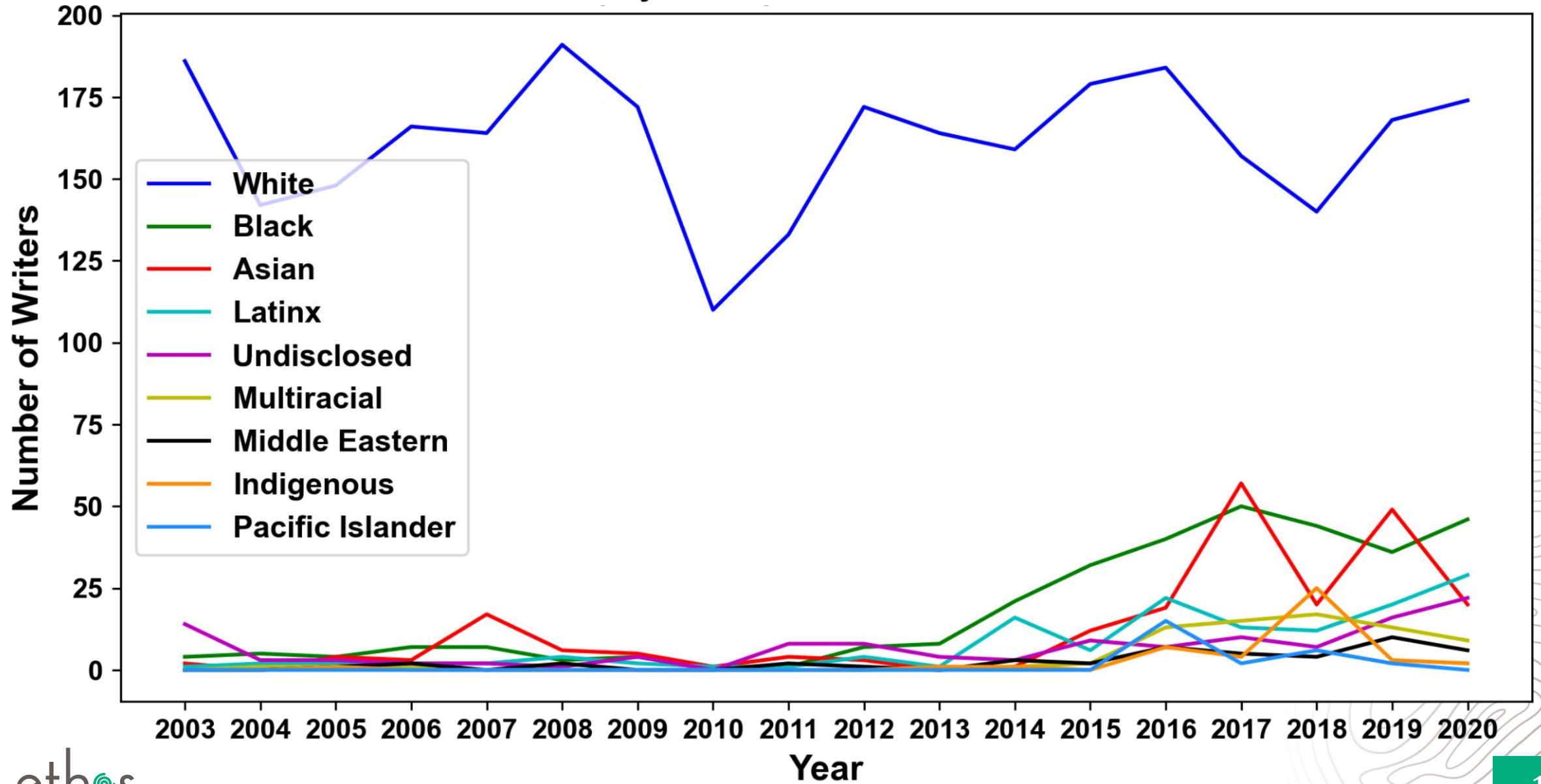
Gender Diversity of POETRY Contributors Since 2003



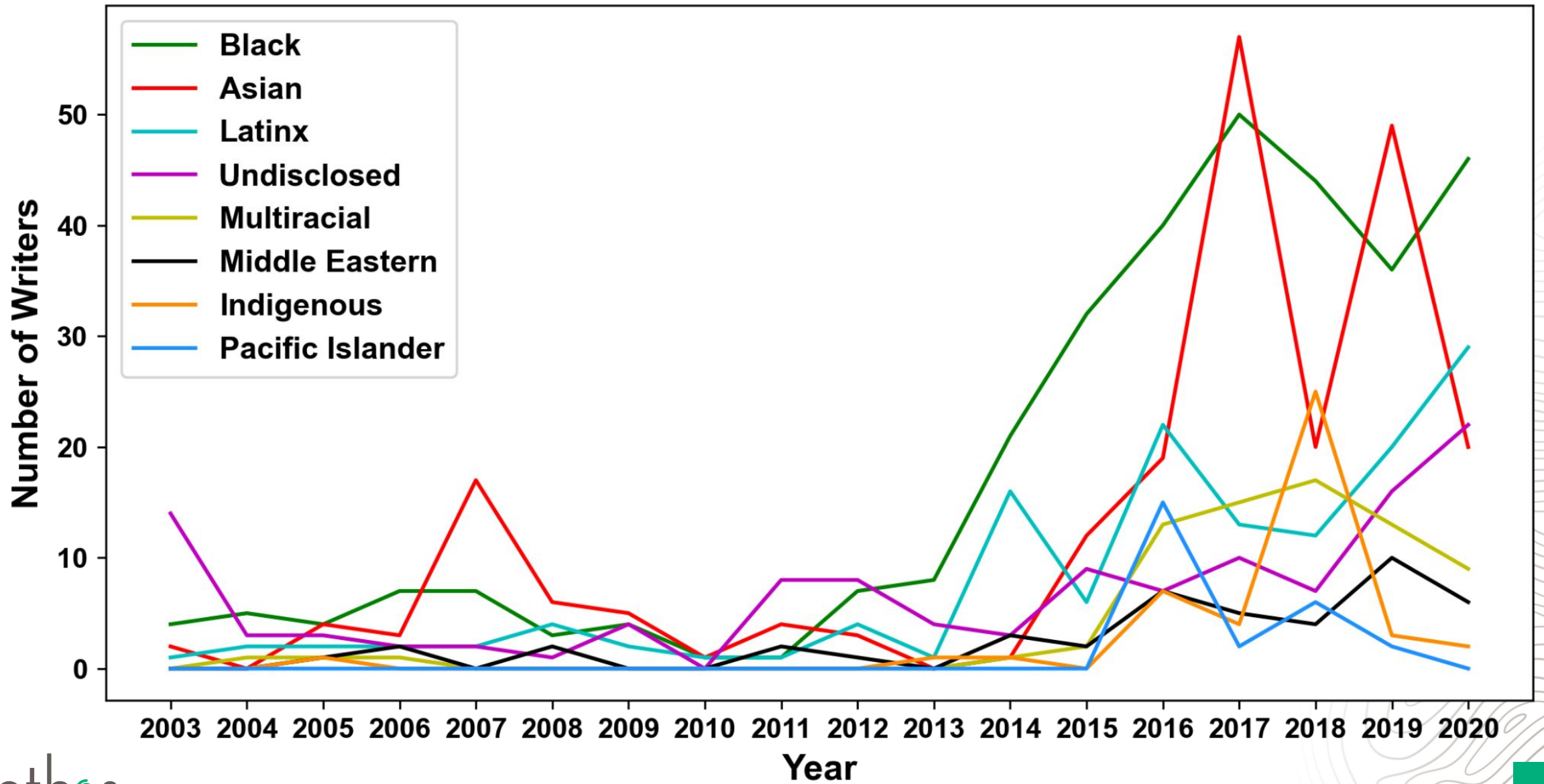
Racial/Ethnic Identity (of poets published in POETRY since 2003)

	White	Black	Asian	Latinx	Undisclosed	Multiracial	Middle Eastern	Indigenous	Pacific Islander
Total	2909	320	223	140	123	73	45	44	25
Representation	74.51%	8.20%	5.71%	3.59%	3.15%	1.87%	1.15%	1.13%	0.64%

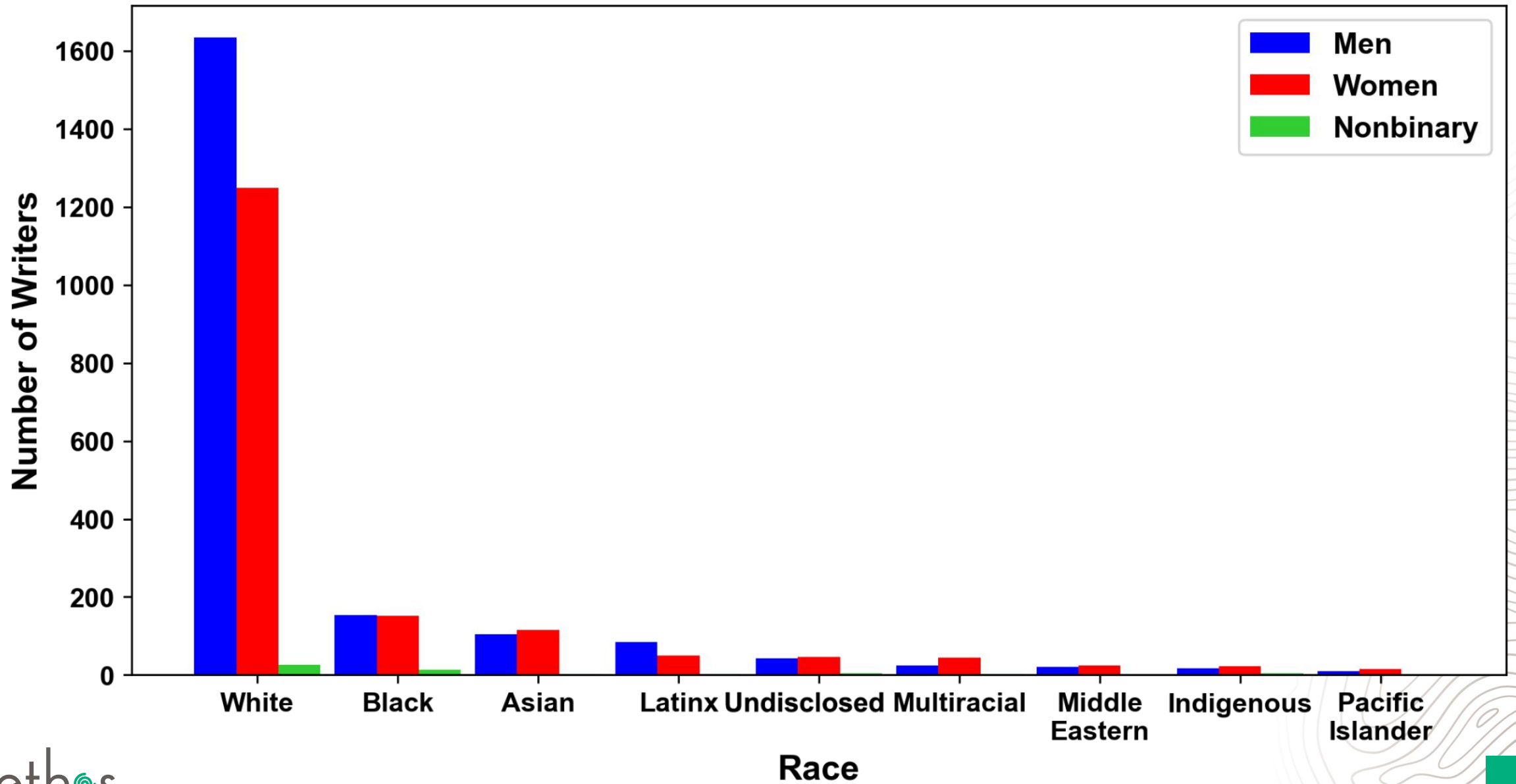
Racial Profile/Identity of POETRY Contributors Per Year Since 2003



POETRY Contributors of Color Per Year Since 2003



All Past POETRY Contributors by Race and Gender Since 2003



**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and
Belonging Survey of
Poetry Foundation Employees**

Overview

Between October and November of 2020, Ethos surveyed Poetry Foundation employees on their experience of DEIB at the organization. 21 out of 32 employees participated.

The results demonstrated all employees who took the survey believe in and are committed to DEIB. A majority also responded that they felt they were part of a team and knew how their work tied to the goals of the organization. Respondents named a need to investigate compensation measures, improve hiring practices to open opportunities to more diverse groups of people, and engage in more open communication with leadership.

Based on these findings, Ethos made several recommendations for internal improvement, which are represented in a [document outlining them available now](#).

Poetry Foundation Internal Self-Identified Representation

Representation Note

Poetry Foundation numbers were calculated with the 21 employees who responded to the self-identification survey out of 32 employees at the time of this survey in October and November 2020. The benchmark was set around national population because only leadership metrics were available about nonprofits at the time research was conducted.

Racial/Ethnic Identity

Race/Ethnicity	Poetry Foundation	% of Poetry Foundation Respondents	% of Chicago Population	% of National Population
White (Not Hispanic/ Latinx)	15	71.43%	33.3%	76.3%
Hispanic/ Latinx	1	4.76%	28.8%	18.5%
African American/ Black	0	0.00%	29.6%	13.4%
Multiple Ethnicities/Other	3	14.29%	2.8%	2.8%
Declined to Disclose	2	9.52%	N/A	N/A

*Poetry Foundation numbers were calculated with the 21 employees who responded to the self-identification survey out of 32 employees at the time of this survey in October and November 2020. The benchmark was set around national population because only leadership metrics were available about nonprofits at the time research was conducted.

Gender Identity

Gender Identity	Poetry Foundation	% of Poetry Foundation Respondents	% of Chicago Population	% of National Population
Woman	15	71.43%	51.4%	50.8%
Man	3	14.29%	48.6%	49.2%
Non-binary	2	9.52%	Data Unknown	Data Unknown
Other	1	4.76%	Data Unknown	Data Unknown

*Poetry Foundation numbers were calculated with the 21 employees who responded to the self-identification survey out of 32 employees at the time of this survey in October and November 2020. The benchmark was set around national population because only leadership metrics were available about nonprofits at the time research was conducted.

Sexual Orientation

Orientation	Poetry Foundation	% of Poetry Foundation Respondents	% of Chicago Population	% of National Population
Straight/ Heterosexual	10	47.62%	92.5%	95.5%
Gay/Queer	9	42.85%	7.5%	4.5%
Declined to Disclose	2	9.52%	N/A	N/A

*Poetry Foundation numbers were calculated with the 21 employees who responded to the self-identification survey out of 32 employees at the time of this survey in October and November 2020. The benchmark was set around national population because only leadership metrics were available about nonprofits at the time research was conducted.

Age

Cohort	Poetry Foundation	% of Poetry Foundation Respondents	% of Chicago Population	% of National Population
25 - 34	12	57.14%	19.99%	14.2%
35 - 44	9	42.86%	13.8%	16.0%

*Poetry Foundation numbers were calculated with the 21 employees who responded to the self-identification survey out of 32 employees at the time of this survey in October and November 2020. The benchmark was set around national population because only leadership metrics were available about nonprofits at the time research was conducted.

Ability

Ability	Poetry Foundation	% of Poetry Foundation Respondents	% of Chicago Population	% of National Population
With a Disability	5	23.81%	10%	26%
Without a Disability	12	57.14%	90%	74%
Decline to Disclose	4	19.05%	N/A	N/A

*Poetry Foundation numbers were calculated with the 21 employees who responded to the self-identification survey out of 32 employees at the time of this survey in October and November 2020. The benchmark was set around national population because only leadership metrics were available about nonprofits at the time research was conducted.

Research Interviews

Research Interview Participants

Ethos interviewed three different groups of people in September through December of 2020. The themes discussed in the following pages reflect sentiment during that period of time.

- **Employee:** 18 directly conducted
- **Board:** 4 directly conducted
- **Community:** 7 directly conducted by Ethos; 4 additional summaries from Flowers Communications Group

Themes - Community

General: (Neutral)

- The previous President ran the Board and created its structures, which minimized members' engagement and ability to take action.

Strengths:

- People work with and partner with the Poetry Foundation because the work itself is enjoyable and meaningful.
- Some community members saw the commitments in the June letter as a signal for positive change and hoped that it was ushering in a new era of the organization.

Themes - Community (*Cont.*)

Areas to Improve:

- Community members perceive the Foundation as having the means to fairly compensate and fund its internal and external communities, but it chooses not to.
- Community members and their organizations are struggling financially and don't see aid coming from the Poetry Foundation.
- Community members feel disconnected from the Board. They want to engage more with the Board, and they want to see more poets and underrepresented groups represented within it.
- The organization is perceived as gatekeeping when it comes to the community, with an unwillingness to listen to and engage with its various stakeholders.
- Some community members identified the letter as a performative gesture and expressed whether change at this organization was possible.

Themes - Employees

Three major themes emerged from conversations with employees.

Employees stated that the organizational culture was in flux. They perceived this as providing opportunities to decenter problematic power structures and also noted that it created frustration, ambiguity, and pressure on internal team members.

Employees overwhelmingly named DEIB as a priority for them. They provided recommendations to improve existing DEIB efforts and introduce new ones.

Employees also reported that for a relatively small organization, departments were siloed and under former leadership, competition was encouraged. They wanted to engage more with each other, and they wanted to see more people from underrepresented groups represented within leadership and the Board.

Policies and Procedures Audit

Audit Materials

The Ethos team reviewed written material to understand the policies, procedures, and practices that guide the Poetry Foundation.

Among those we reviewed were the: Employee Handbook, PTO policy, benefits packages and documentation, compensation data, Open Letter of Commitment and related updates, the Vision, Values, and Mission, job descriptions and roles and responsibilities, existing levels, and performance reviews and goal-setting documents.

Based on our findings, we made several recommendations that directly and indirectly impact these materials to provide greater equity to the organization's extended community.

Compensation Audit

Compensation Audit

Ethos reviewed 41 staff salaries, which Ethos benchmarked against dozens of comparable salary reports (for Foundations, nonprofits, cultural institutions, publishers, among others) through our compensation analysis software tool, which is built on a data set of tens of thousands of reports. We created a custom compensation scope set to nonprofit, Midwest region, 25 - 50 employees to apply to the roles. Ethos also reviewed similar roles to ensure parity and correct discrepancy.

Based on Ethos's findings, most roles were in the median range in comparison to similar roles, even so, in a commitment to ensure compensation aligns with or exceeds industry standards, compensation was immediately adjusted across the organization at all levels where it did not meet or exceed these standards; there will also be an upcoming leveling process, and a commitment to ongoing assessment and review.

2021 Strategic Roadmap

Strategies for achieving The Poetry Foundation's DEIB goals across the short-term, mid-term, and long-term

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Guiding Principles of Ethos

Based on what Ethos learned, there are a few guiding principles that helped the Ethos team make our recommendations for new initiatives:

- Introduce more structure across the organization, including in how it relates to its employees, stakeholders, partners, and community members
- Equip People Managers with the tools to support their employees more concretely and through systems, as well as introduce formal leadership that helps create clarity and safety
- Invite and involve the community in all facets of Poetry Foundation work in order to better serve and represent its constituents

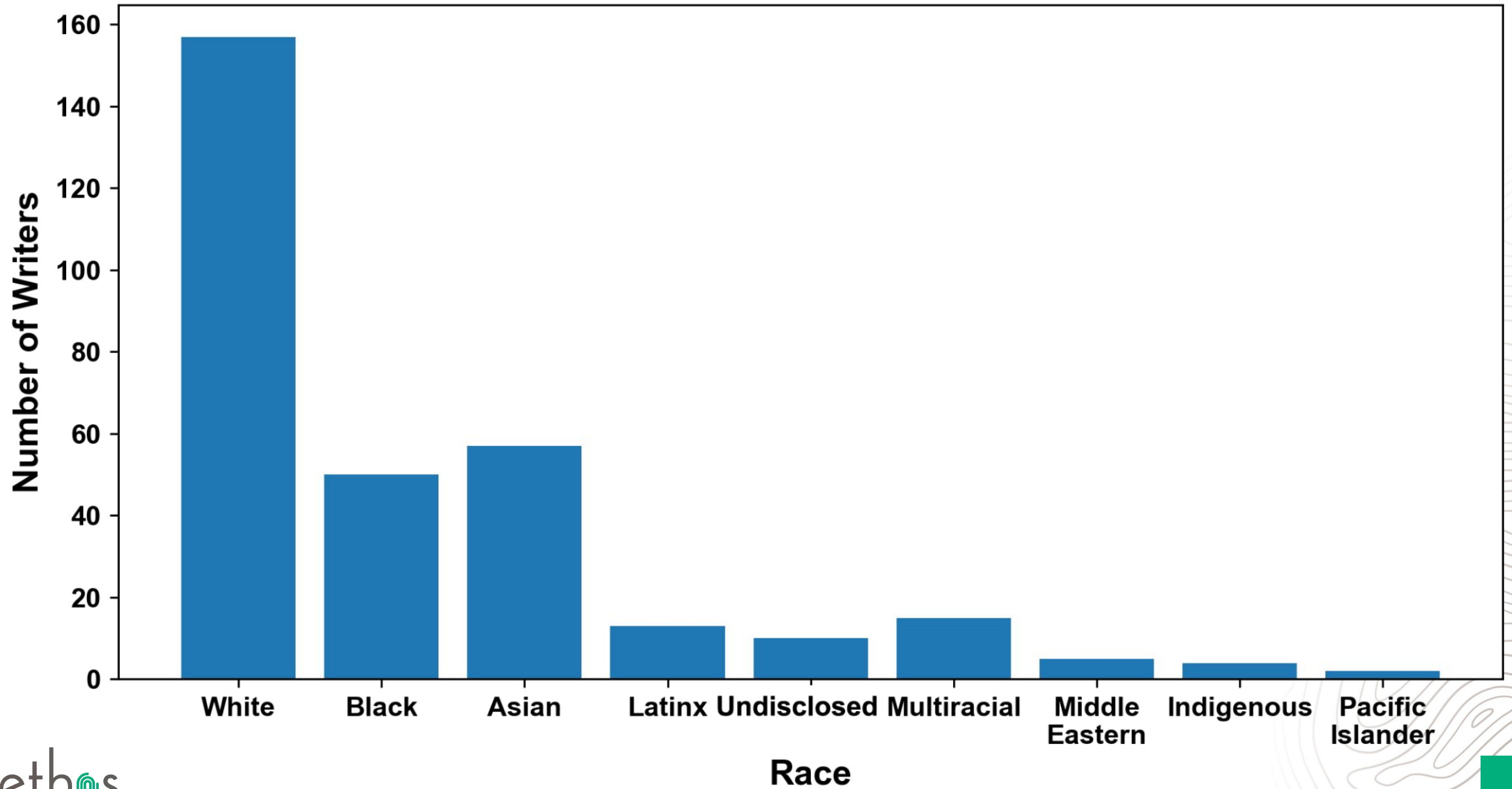
Strategic Recommendations

Our Strategic Recommendations and Roadmap have been captured in a separate document, which you can access via the link below.

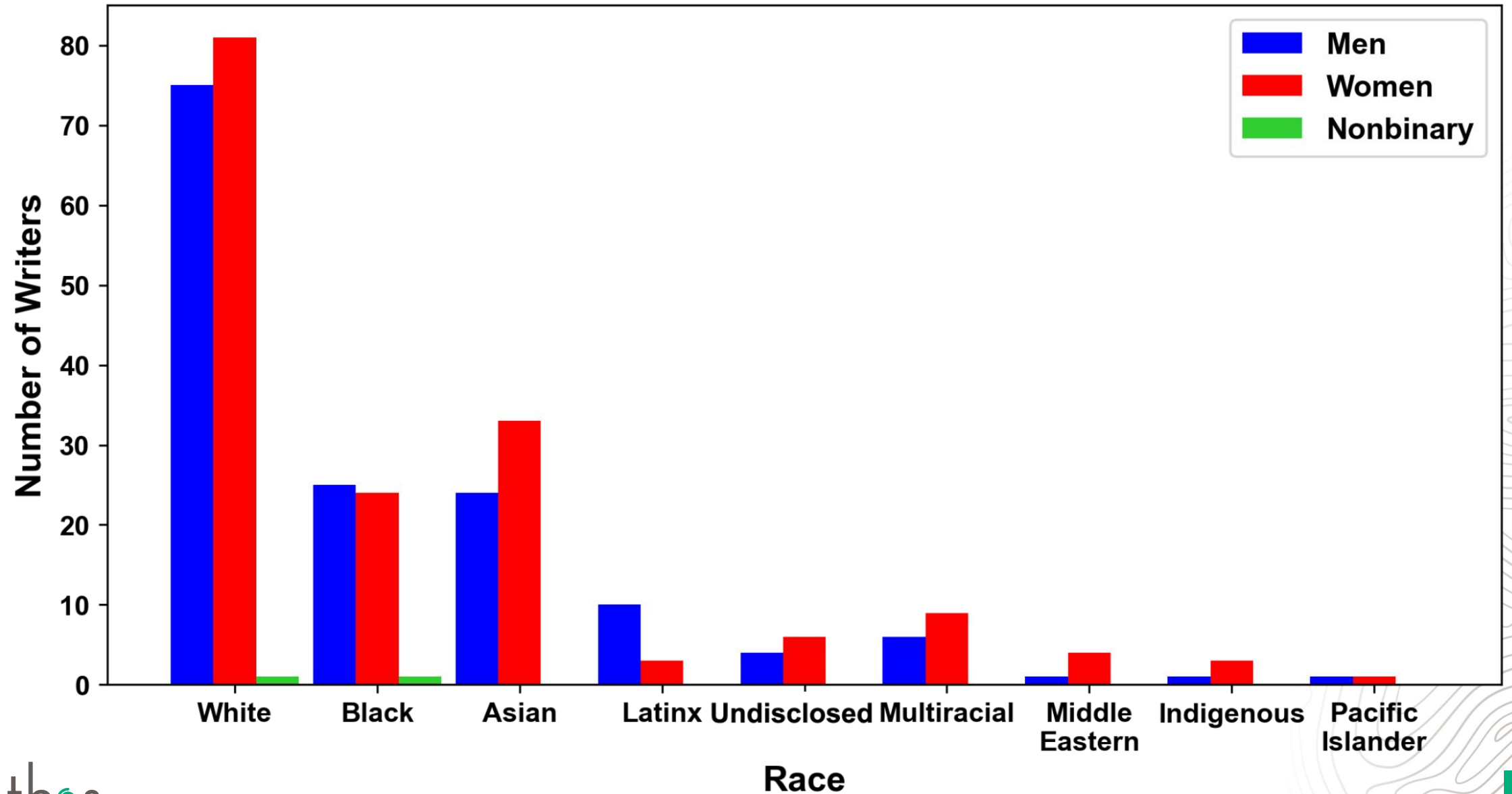
[DEIB Actions](#)

Appendix

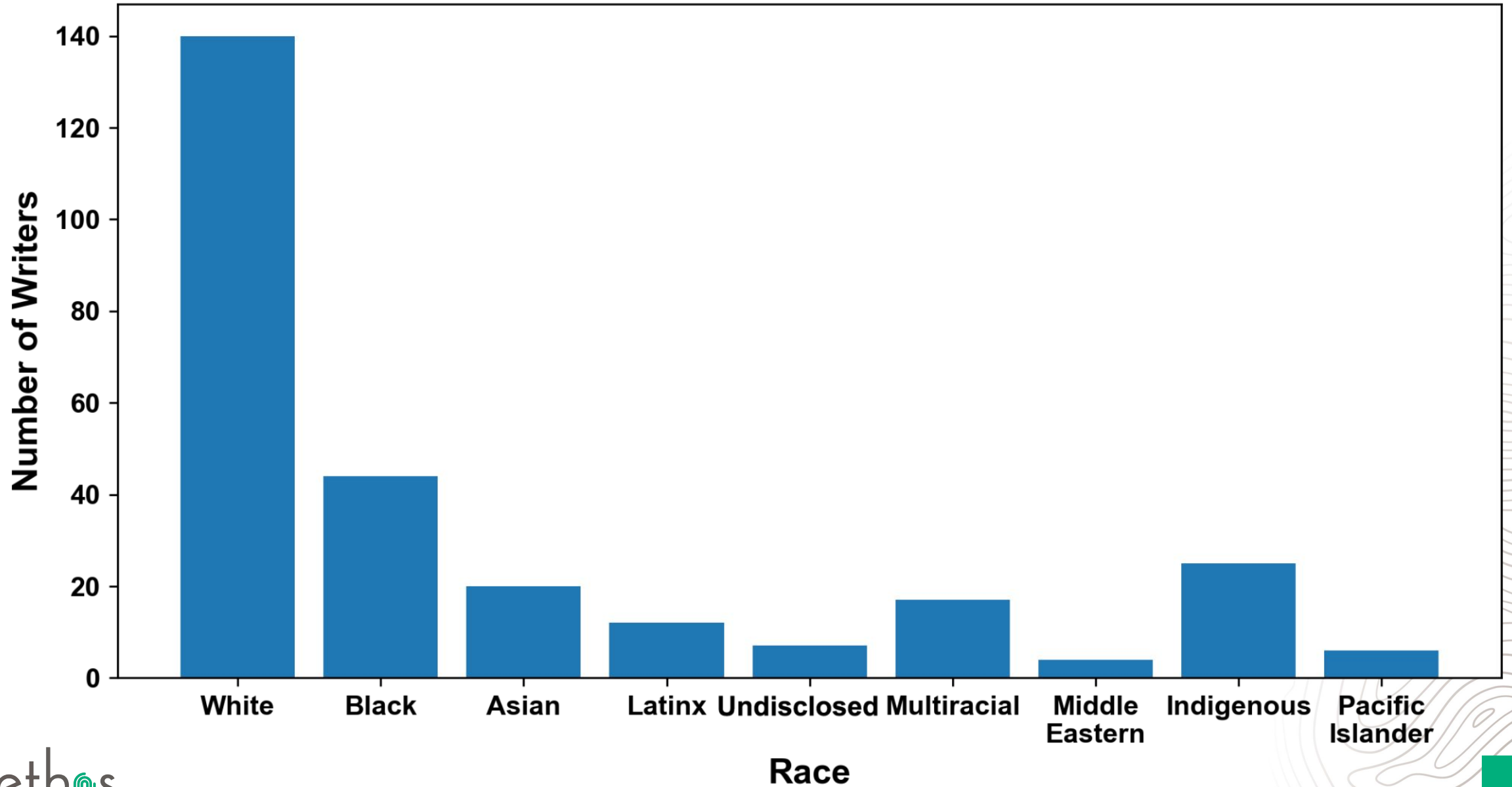
2017 POETRY Contributors by Race



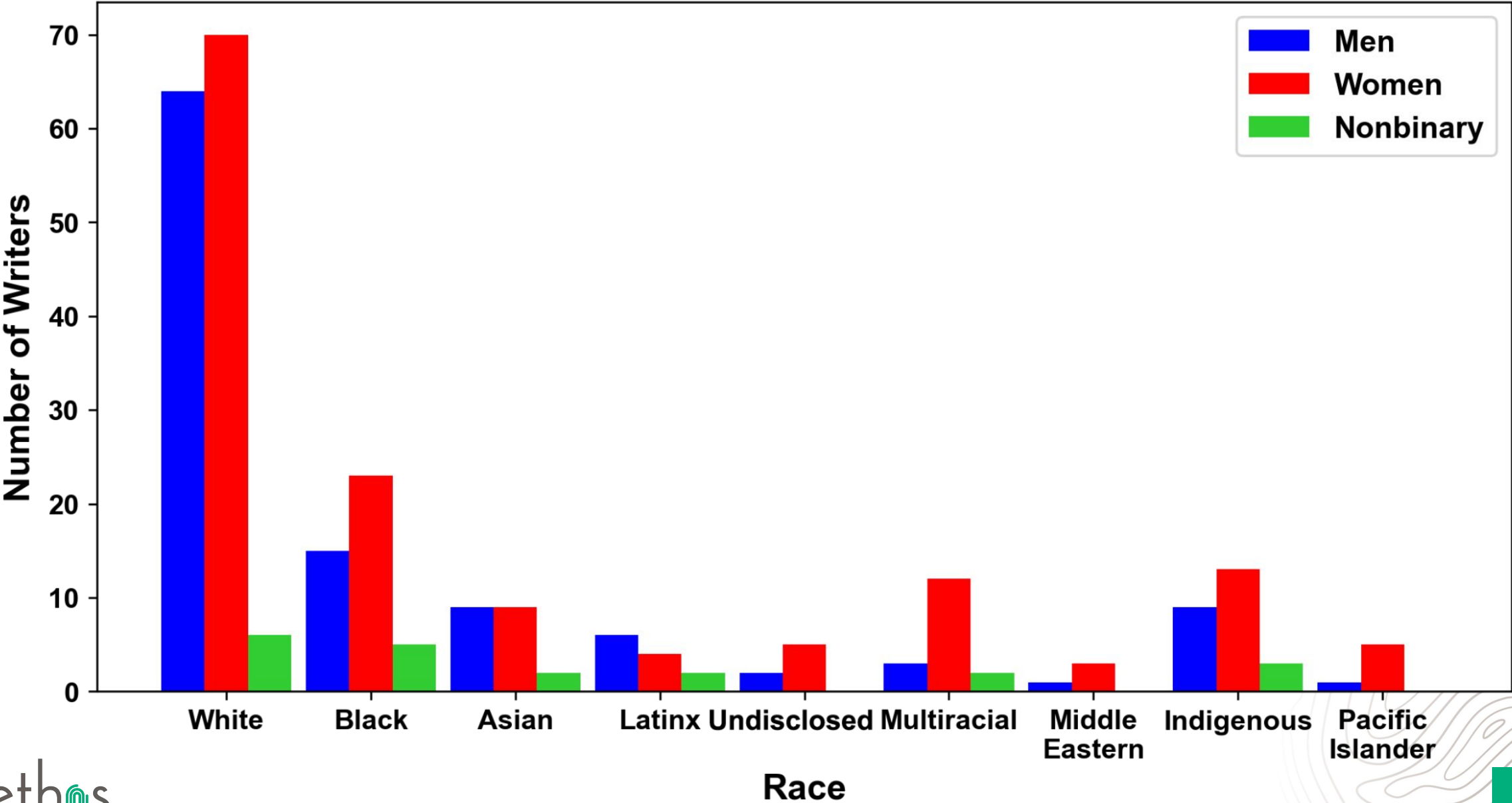
2017 POETRY Contributors by Race and Gender



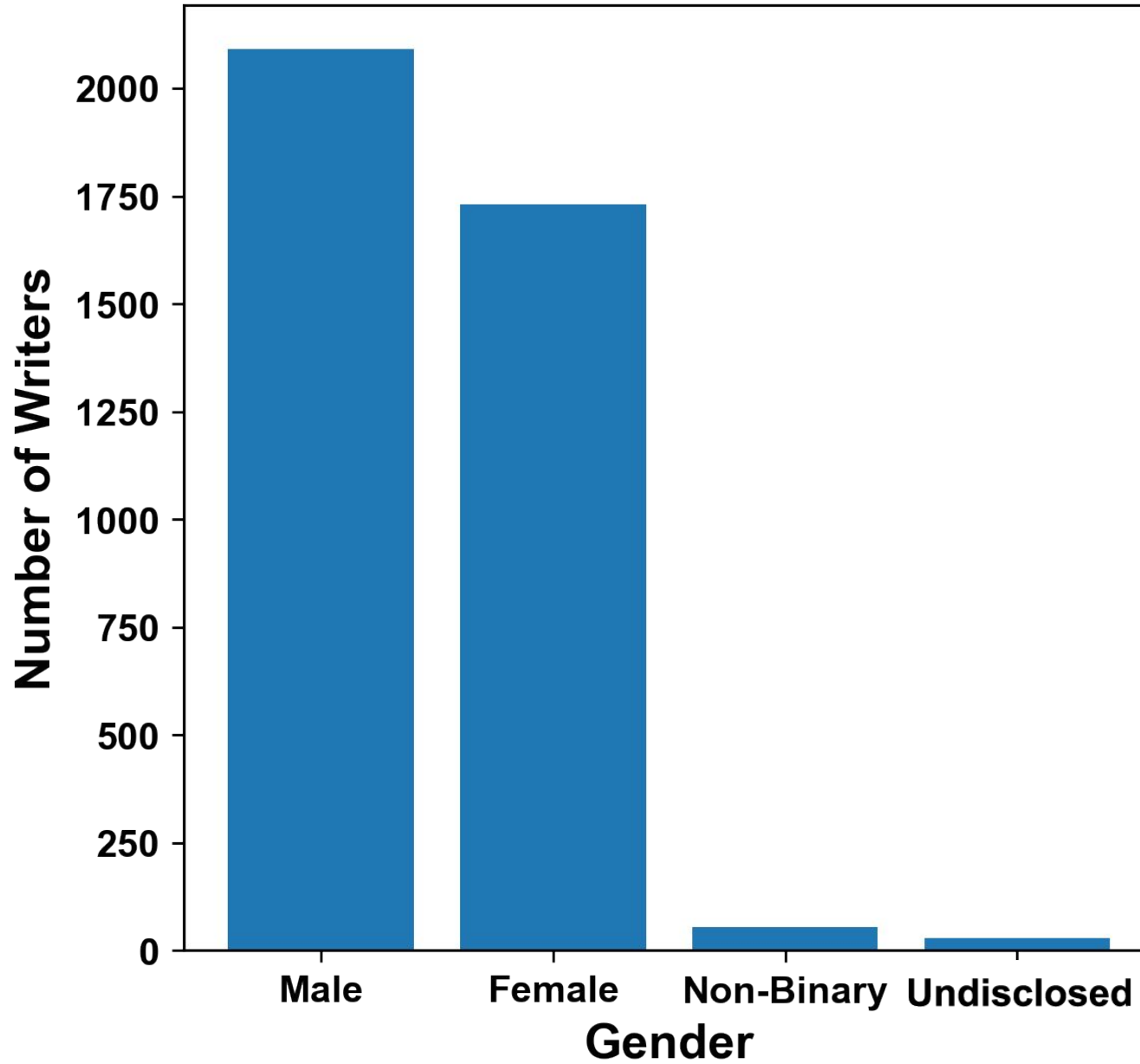
2018 POETRY Contributors by Race



2018 POETRY Contributors by Race and Gender



All Past POETRY Writers by Gender Since 2003



All Past POETRY Contributors by Race Since 2003

