# sure fire

# 2020

# Introduction

PGC's SureFire is modeled on the American [Kilroys](#) initiative, which provides an annual list of under- or un-produced plays by women, trans, and non-binary creators, thereby providing "a tool for producers committed to ending systemic underrepresentation" for these groups. Our projects, and other like-minded initiatives such as [PLEDGE](#) and [The 49 List](#), were created to address the fact that women are significantly underrepresented on Canada's stages; an exclusion that is particularly magnified for Indigenous women, women of colour, trans people, and gender non-conforming folks. The purpose of SureFire then is to increase the profile of underrepresented playwrights from these groups, and to provide artistic directors, producers, educators, and others with a community-generated resource to help find, and hopefully produce, new works that will encourage greater parity. Thus, SureFire 2020, and PGC's inaugural offering, [SureFire 2018](#), provide a "sure-fire" means for people to discover engaging and lesser-known plays for production by Canadian women, trans creators, and non-binary playwrights.

This time around, for SureFire 2020, PGC reached out across the country to over 300 theatre experts, whose names were obtained through an open call to PGC's Women's Caucus members, the Women's Caucus Committee, National Forum (regional) Reps, and staff members. The chosen "Recommenders" were asked to send in a few of their favourite "passion picks" for un-produced or under-produced plays (meaning one or no professional productions) by Canadian women, trans, and/or non-binary playwrights. In the end, 121 Recommenders responded (a 33% return rate, but with some significant regional variances – see The Recommender Statistics for details) with a total of 416 play suggestions. The play submissions were tabulated to see which works received multiple nominations, and the top twenty-four of those play choices now make up SureFire 2020.

While the release of SureFire was delayed by the pandemic and related factors, at the time of the Recommenders' submissions, all of the plays included on the list met the eligibility criteria, which was just one professional production, or none, excluding Fringe shows, university productions, and community theatre showings. This year, SureFire also includes three honourable mentions; works that were chosen multiple times over by the Recommenders but they had already received second productions, so they were necessarily excluded, but we wanted to give these important plays a shout-out anyway.

SureFire 2020 is arranged in alphabetical order by play title, and most have links to a secondary webpage containing a synopsis of the work and the opportunity to purchase it. Play titles without links have not yet been published, so people should [contact PGC](#) to get in touch with the respective playwright(s) to learn more about the work and/or receive a copy of the script.

And now, without any further ado...

# SureFire 2020

*All the Little Animals I have Eaten* by Karen Hines

*Anywhere but Here* by Carmen Aguirre

*Behaviour* by Darrah Teitel

*Bliss (The Birthday Party Play)* by Jamie Dunsdon

*Controlled Damage* by Andrea Scott

*Fine China* by Julie Phan (潘家雯)

*Four Sisters* by Susanna Fournier

*Guarded Girls* by Charlotte Corbeil-Coleman

*Half-Cracked: The Legend of Sugar Mary* by Mary-Colin Chisholm

*Kamloopa* by Kim Senklip Harvey*

*Ministry of Grace* by Tara Beagan*

*Mortified* by Amy Rutherford

*Okinum* by Émilie Monnet*

*Other Side of the Game* by Amanda Parris*

*Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers, and Little Brothers* by Makambe Simamba

*Pretty Goblins* by Beth Graham

*Skyborn* by Quelemia Sparrow*

*Smoke* by Elena Eli Belyea

*Some Blow Flutes* by Mary Vingoe

*Successions* by Michaela Di Cesare

*The Bridge* by Shauntay Grant

*The Wrong Bashir* by Zahida Rahemtulla

*Women of the Fur Trade* by Frances Koncan

*Yaga* by Kat Sandler

## Honorable Mentions:

*Bug* by Yolanda Bonnell

*Certified* by Jan Derbyshire

*Gertrude and Alice* by Anna Chatterton and Evalyn Parry* with Karin Randoja*

*\*Playwrights with an asterisk following their name are
not members of the Playwrights Guild of Canada (PGC)*

# Recommender Statistics

The Recommenders' names are anonymous, as are their individual play choices, which helps to ensure honest, unbiased, and uninhibited responses. However, knowing that anonymity is problematic for accountability, PGC's Women's Caucus tried to offset some of the secrecy surrounding the identities of the Recommenders by collecting demographic data to increase transparency. We requested information in relation to eight different categories: provincial region, primary job type, gender, sexual attraction, racialization, age, ability, and class. These specifics allow for a more nuanced understanding of the people behind the choices, while simultaneously demonstrating that conscious efforts were made to ensure a variety of responses.

## Notes About Methodology

- All of the Recommenders' responses to these questions were optional and voluntary.
- If a Recommender declined to answer a question or left a field blank, then in all instances, for our purposes here, that answer was assigned the response status of "Prefer Not to Say."
- PGC reached out to 369 theatre experts all across Canada, and 121 responded with play recommendations (a 33% return rate). All combined, they sent in a total of 416 play suggestions, thirteen of which were disqualified for failing to meet the eligibility criteria. The top twenty-four choices make-up SureFire 2020, accompanied by three additional "honourable mention" titles.
- The following percentages for the Recommender statistics have been rounded up or down according to common mathematical practices, so they do not always add up to 100%.
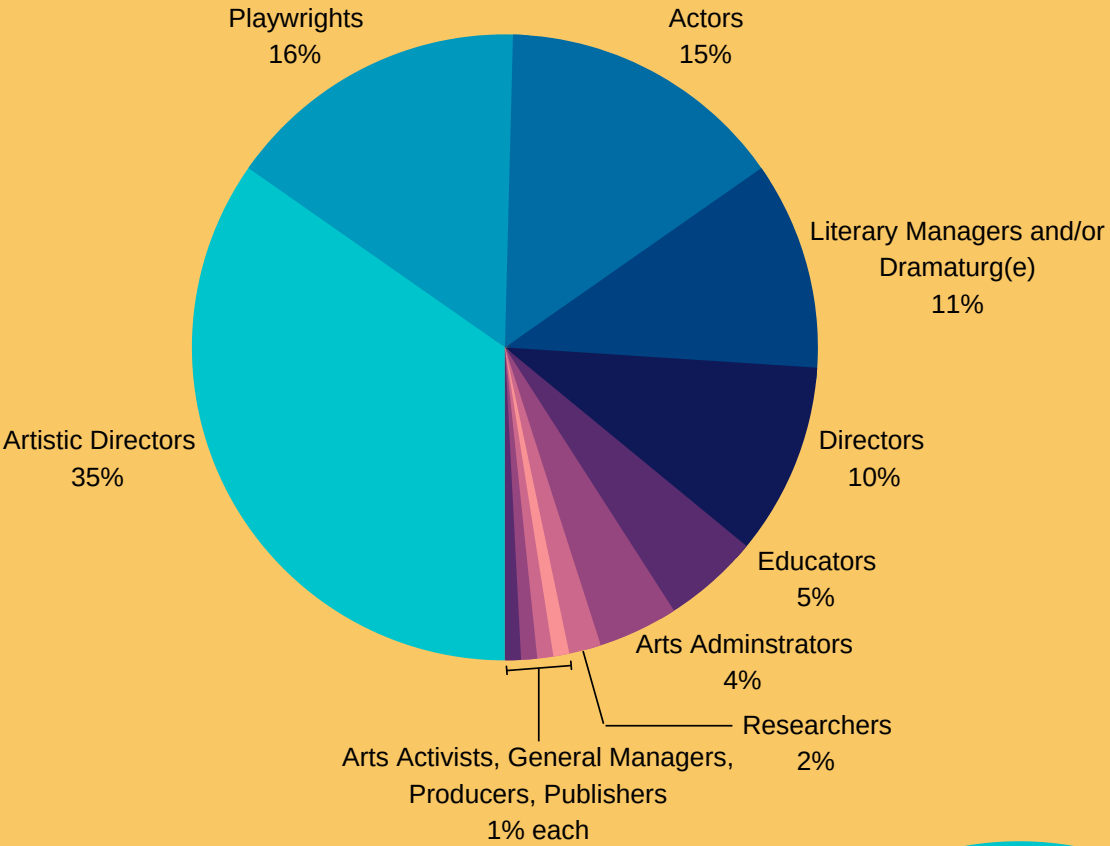
## Response Rates by Region

As the chart below indicates, there were significant regional variances in response rates according to province and territory, spanning from 0% on the low end (NT and NWT), to 29% in the midrange (MB, NB), and 42% on the high end (AB). While a low response rate is understandable for Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, since few Recommenders were approached in the first place, low return rates in other regions, such as Prince Edward Island and the Yukon, are disappointing, particularly as they leave these regions somewhat underrepresented compared to others.
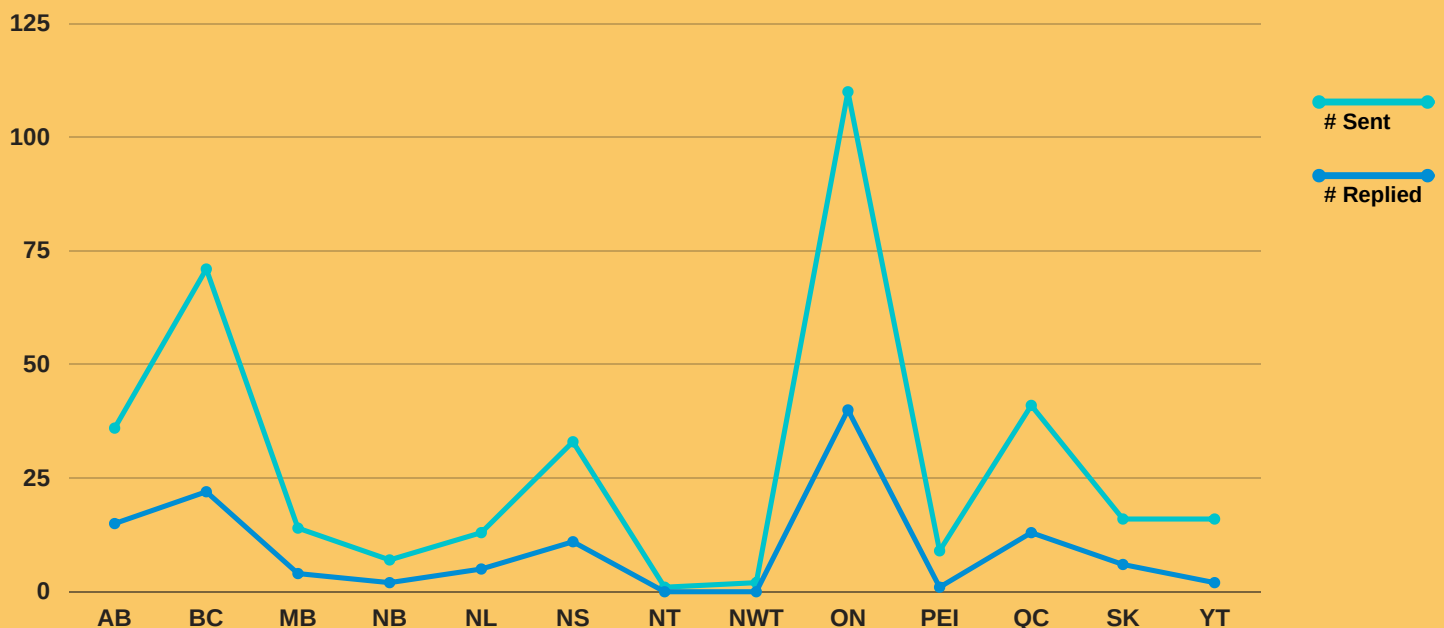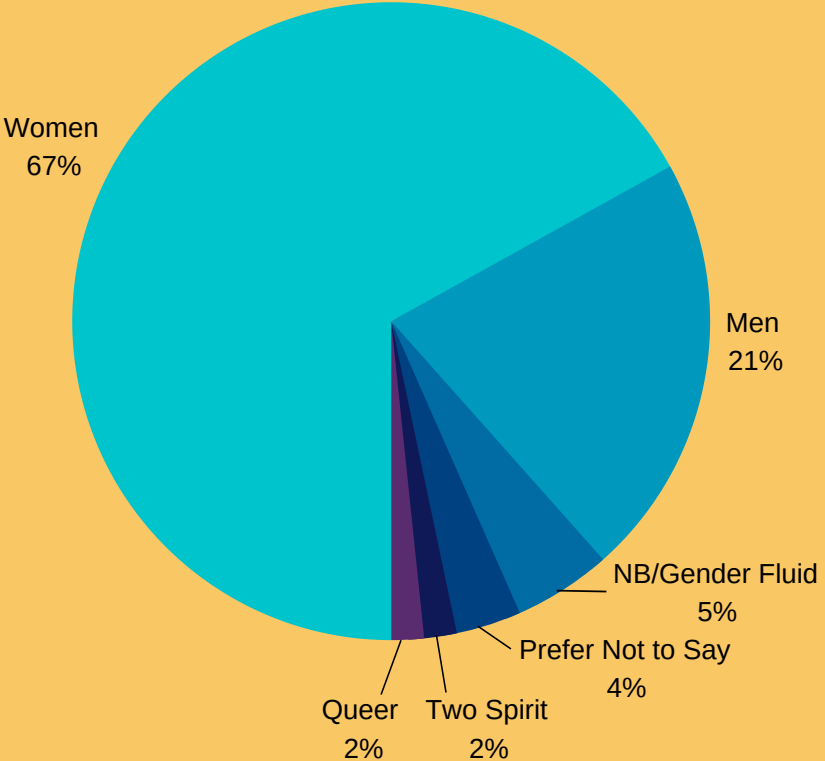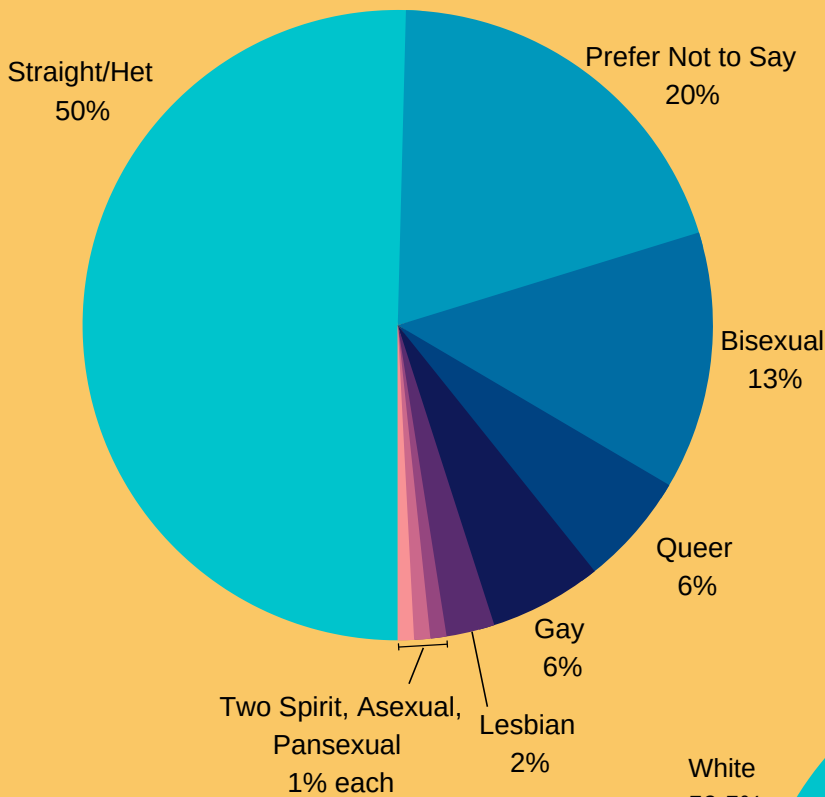
## Recommenders by Primary Job Type

This question proved to be one of the most challenging for people to answer, and it is clear from the responses that most Recommenders wear more than one hat, and so they had a difficult time picking just one occupation. When multiple occupations were chosen instead of just one, as was often the case, the first stated profession was taken as the Primary Job Type. Looking at the data this way, a great many Recommenders work as Artistic Directors (35%), followed in descending order by the roles of Playwright (16%), Actor (15%), Literary Manager and Dramaturg (11%), director (10%), and then a few other positions, such as Arts Administrator, Producer, Publisher, and Educator coming in at 5% or less.

Playwrights
16%

Actors
15%

Literary Managers and/or
Dramaturg(e)
11%

Artistic Directors
35%

Directors
10%

Educators
5%

Arts Adminstrators
4%

Researchers
2%

Arts Activists, General Managers,
Producers, Publishers
1% each

## Recommenders by Gender

Not surprisingly perhaps, far more women (67%) than men (21%) were approached as Recommenders, and a concerted effort was made to include people located beyond the usual gender binary (9%). There were a few people who declined to answer this question (3%).

Women
67%

Men
21%

NB/Gender Fluid
5%

Prefer Not to Say
4%

Queer
2%

Two Spirit
2%

## Pie Chart 1: Sexual Attraction

- Straight/Het 50%
- Prefer Not to Say 20%
- Bisexual 13%
- Queer 6%
- Gay 6%
- Lesbian 2%
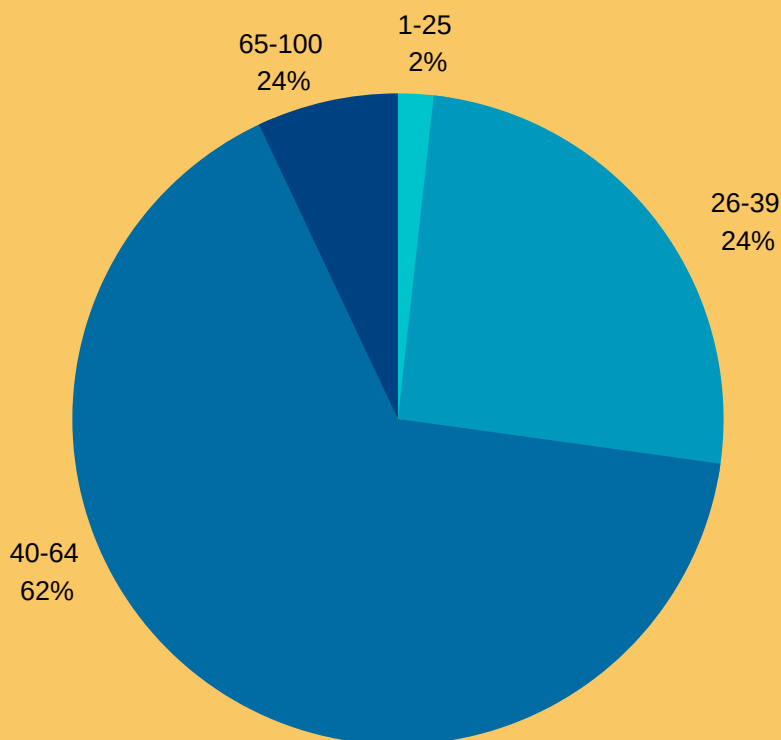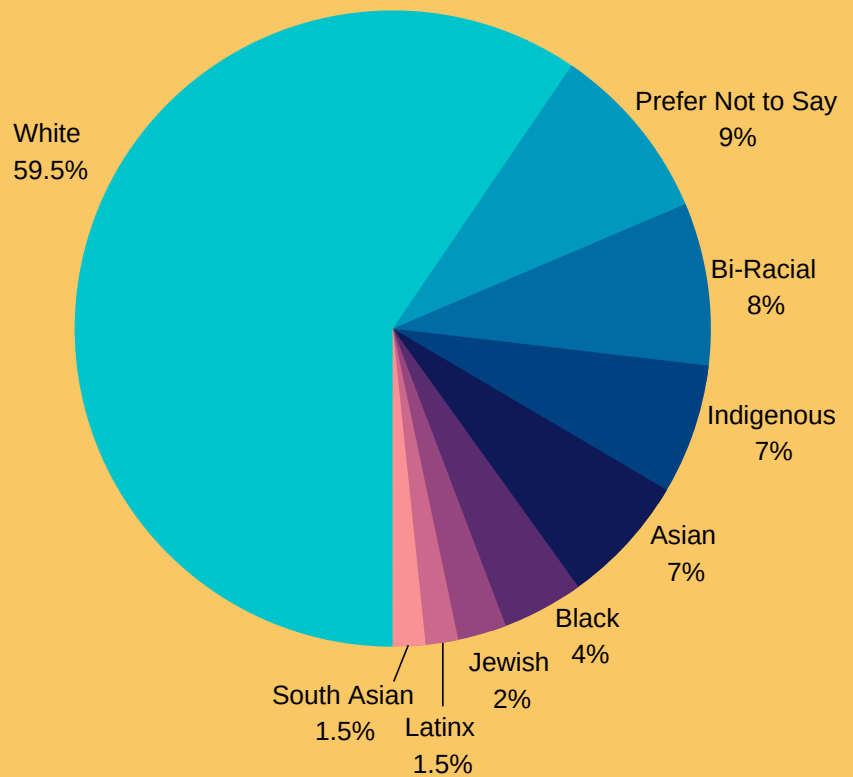- Two Spirit, Asexual, Pansexual 1% each

## Recommenders by Sexual Attraction

The statistics in this area reveal that exactly half of the Recommenders were straight/heterosexual (50%), and that 30% of the Respondents were aligned with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. That left 20% of the Recommenders preferring not to answer this question, making this the most skipped (and, presumably, most uncomfortable) question of all.

## Recommenders by Racialization

While concerted efforts were made to include people and communities of all kinds, in the end, we ended up with 60% of the responses coming from white people, and 31% from Indigenous folks and/or People of Colour, while 9% of the Respondents preferred not to say.

## Pie Chart 2: Racialization

- White 59.5%
- Prefer Not to Say 9%
- Bi-Racial 8%
- Indigenous 7%
- Asian 7%
- Black 4%
- Jewish 2%
- Latinx 1.5%
- South Asian 1.5%

## Pie Chart 3: Age

- 1-25 2%
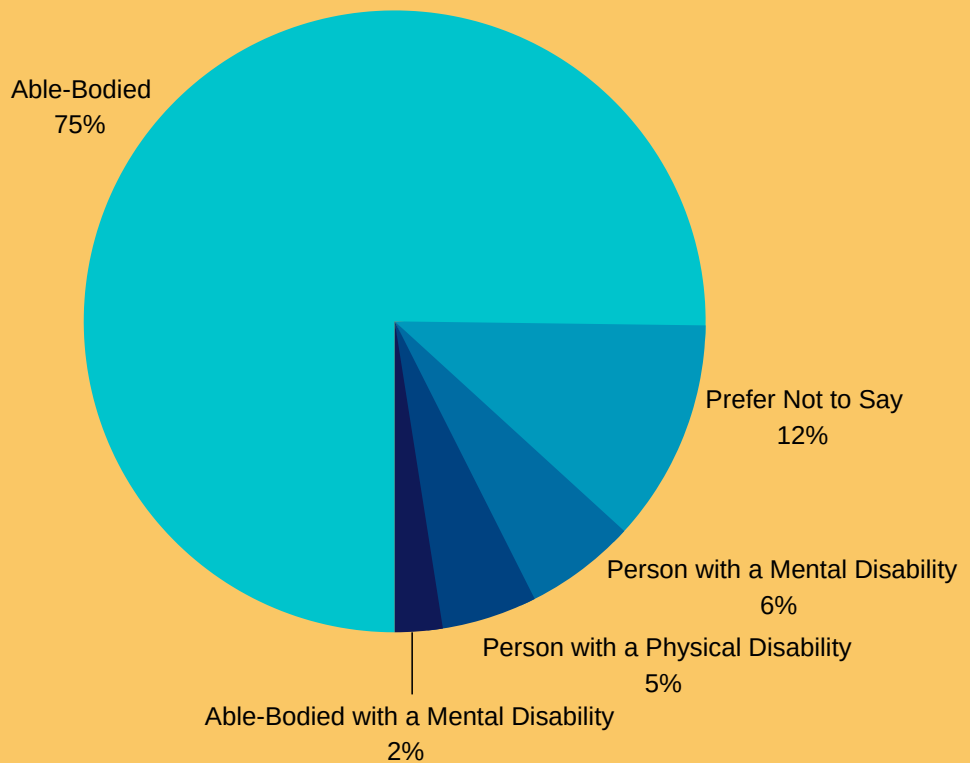- 65-100 24%
- 26-39 24%
- 40-64 62%

## Recommenders by Age

The vast majority of Recommenders fell in the 40 – 65 years of age range (62%), followed in descending order by 26 – 39 year-olds (24%), then people over 65 (7%), and finally those 25 and under (2%), with 6% opting not to answer. Clearly, in the future, there is need for a much greater variation in age ranges, particularly for those under 25 and over 65.

## Recommenders by Ability

While some Recommenders have mental (6%) or physical (5%) disabilities, or both combined (2%), and while there were those who opted not to answer the question (12%), overall, the vast majority of Respondents did not have mental or physical disabilities (75% in all), making this the most homogenous identity factor amongst the Respondents.

Able-Bodied
75%

Prefer Not to Say
12%

Person with a Mental Disability
6%

Person with a Physical Disability
5%

Able-Bodied with a Mental Disability
2%

## Recommenders by Class

The majority of Recommenders were firmly situated in the working class (33%), lower to middle class (2%) and/or middle-class ranges (36%), sitting at 71% overall when combined. A few Respondents self-identified as under-class (5%) and "artist class" (2%), the latter characterized by social mobility and fluctuating income, and a few more chose middle to upper class status (9%), but interestingly, not one single Recommender checked off the upper class option.

Working Class
33%

Middle Class
36%

Prefer Not to Say
13%

Middle to Upper Class
9%

Under Class
5%

Artist Class
2%

Lower to Middle Class
2%
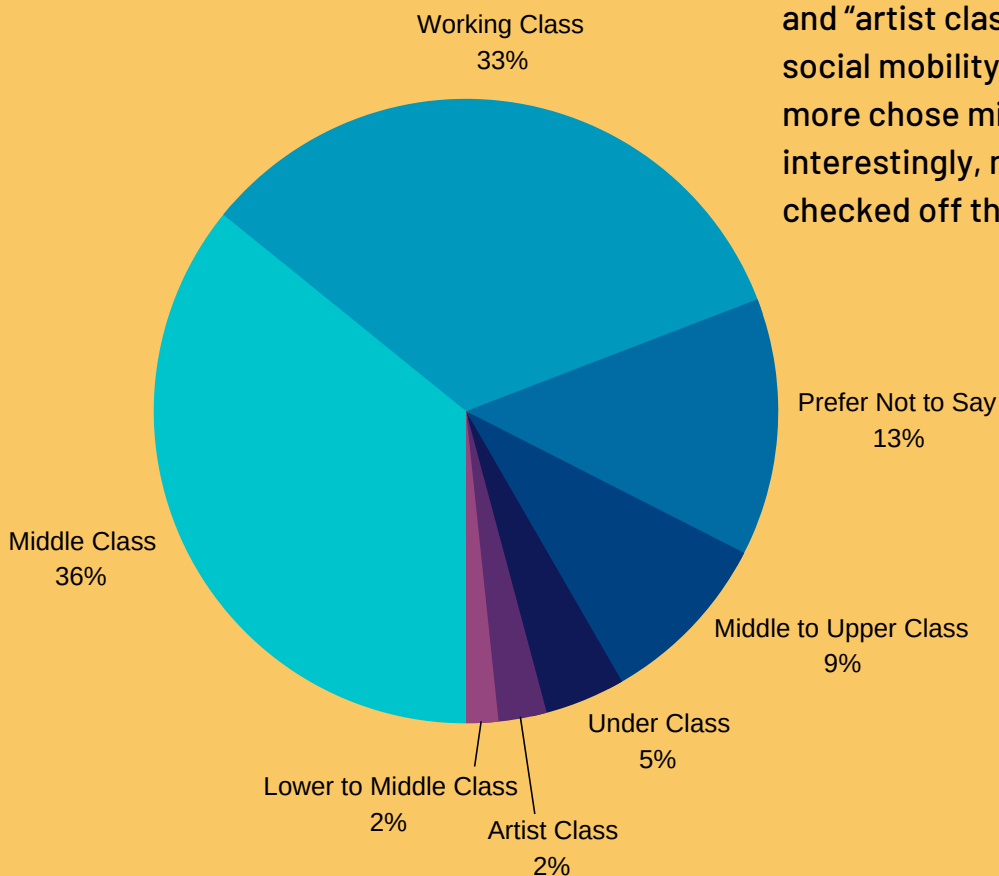
# Summary

The above statistics paint a rough picture of the people who served as Recommenders for SureFire 2020. They are offered up as a methodological compromise to ensure privacy, while at the same time allowing for some transparency and accountability, and they further demonstrate that efforts were made to solicit responses from a myriad of people with different tastes and interests. While there is room for improvement yet, looking at the plays chosen for SureFire 2020, we are pleased to see that we are moving toward ever-greater pluralistic practices. As we continue to refine the selection process, and as committed Recommenders are retained, and more join the effort, SureFire will become an increasingly important tool for leading those with the power to produce to new and exciting, under-produced works. SureFire 2020 represents some of the finest writing in Canada, and we hope to see more of these works on our nation's stages in the very near future.

*Thank you to all the Recommenders who took part, and to all the playwrights who continue to write for the theatre despite increased isolation and multiple barriers. Huge congratulations to all of the nominees, and all the chosen playwrights whose works are included as part of SureFire 2020!*

*Your fire keeps our passion burning strong!*