

# CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Challenges Survey 2022 Report

## Introduction

The year 2022 saw the greatest number of incidents since this series began. Figure 1 shows the annual responses since 2006. In the introduction to the 2021 Report, it was noted that an emphasis would be placed on better communication with libraries in Quebec and the subsequent discussions with ABPQ (L'Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec) have resulted in a record number of reports from that province. Readers can expect an even greater number in 2023.

There are other notable characteristics of the reports from 2022. This year there were 13 reports of complaints about library services, whereas there was only a single report in 2021. Two policies were objected to.

After setting a record in 2021, Abigail Shrier's *Irreversible Damage* is not among the titles challenged in 2022. *Gender Queer*, however, was challenged twice in 2022 after being challenged three times in 2021.

For the first time in recent years, vandalism has been reported. Displays have been vandalized and individual books defaced.

This year as seen the emergence of concerted activity by conservative organizations influenced by "populist" organizations in the U.S. Attempts to elect members to Canadian school boards in the 2022 elections largely failed, but campaigns around LGBTQ2AS+ issues and events along with sexuality in children's and teen literature appear to be beginning in earnest.

Again, this year Part I of the report presents a statistical overview of the incidents from 2022. New this year is the addition of the previous year's numbers for comparison.

This report does not stand alone but will be linked to the 2022 List of Titles, Services and Programs and to the 2022 Data report. The three documents, and similar documents from previous years can be found on the [CFLA-FCAB website](https://www.cfla-fcab.ca/). Additional accounts are posted on the Freedom to Read website as well. (<https://www.freedomtoread.ca/> )

Part II of the report deals with some observations that reflect on unexpected aspects of the survey responses.

--CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Committee

# CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Challenges Survey

## 2022

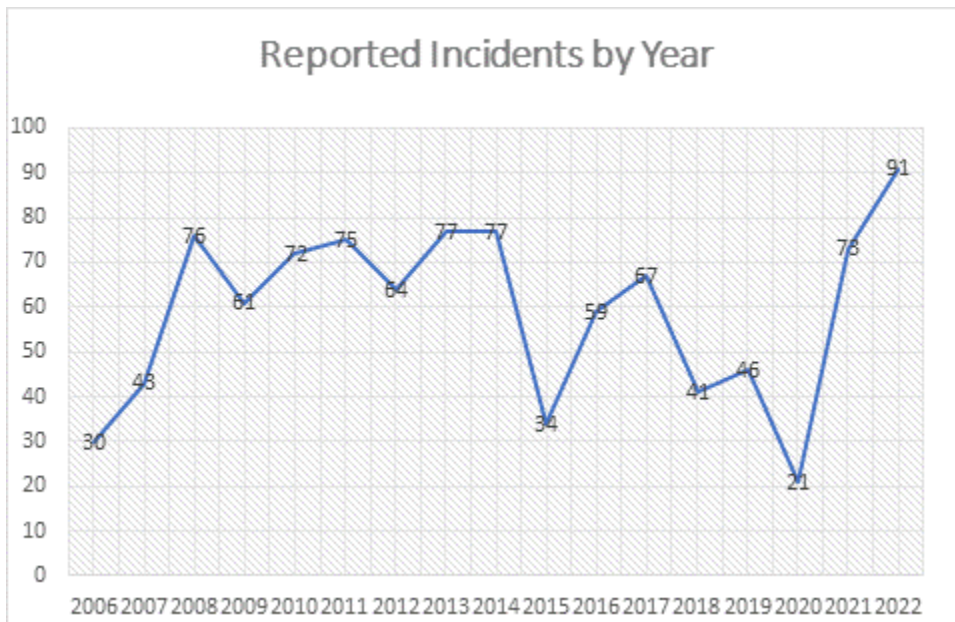
### Preface

This report covers those incidents that took place in 2022 and were reported to the Survey prior to April 8, 2023. Incidents from 2022 reported subsequently will be added to the comprehensive database in January 2024 along with all other reports made in calendar 2023. Reports entered after April 3, 2022, that deal with incidents that took place between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023 will be included in the Freedom to Read Week article for 2024.

### Part I: Overview

With ninety-one incidents reported, 2022 surpassed all previous annual tallies, including the seventy-three incidents reported in 2021. The full descriptions of incidents and the responses of libraries can be found here<sup>1</sup>, while a list of titles to materials challenged can be found here<sup>2</sup>. Ninety of these incidents occurred in public libraries and one in a joint public-school library.

Figure 1: Annual Number of Incidents

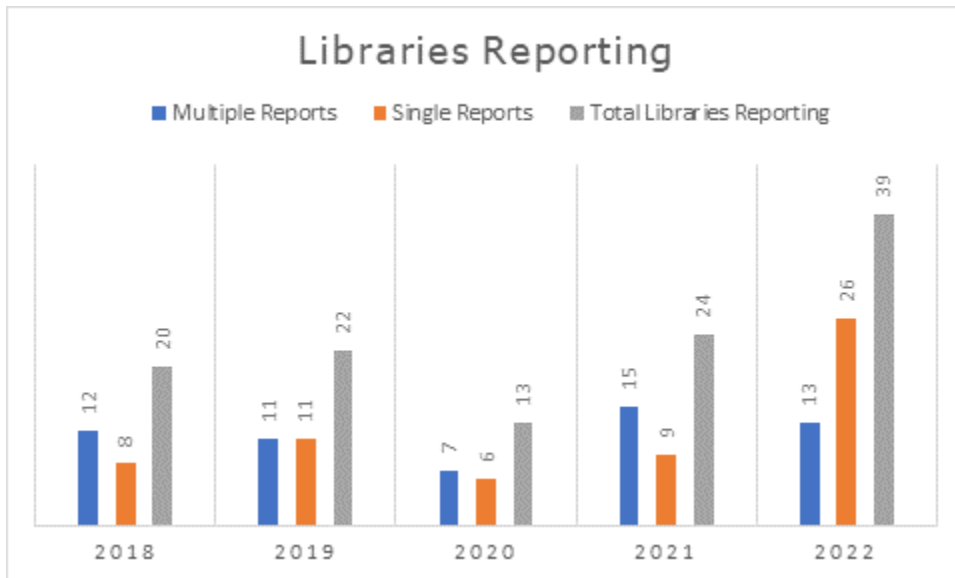


In addition to the number of reports received, the number of libraries reporting also increased as is shown below.

<sup>1</sup> Link to Data file for 2022

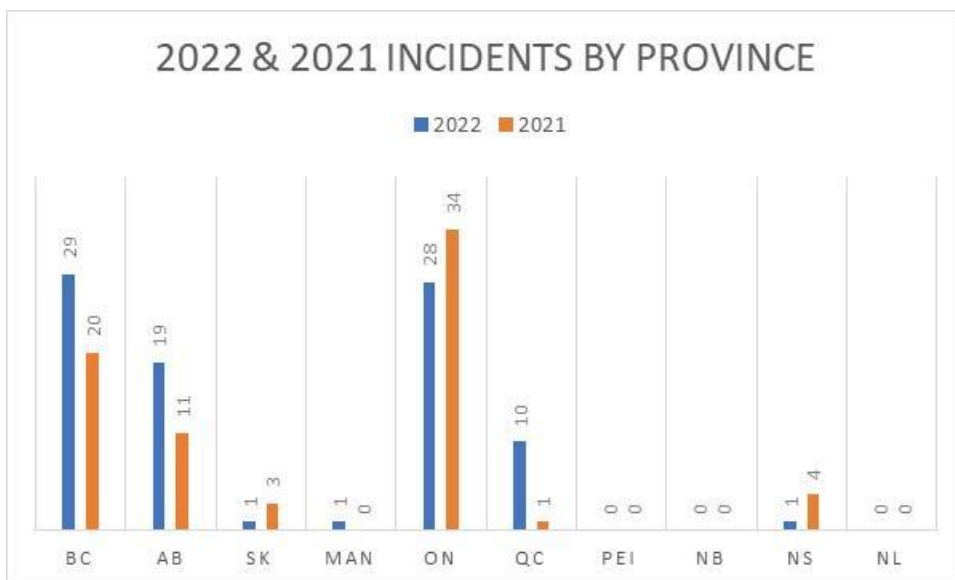
<sup>2</sup> Link to 2022 Titles, Services, Programs List

Figure 2: Reporting Libraries



It is notable that the number of libraries reporting a single event has increased, indicating both the growing distribution of challenges and the increased awareness of the Survey.

Figure 3. Incidents by Location

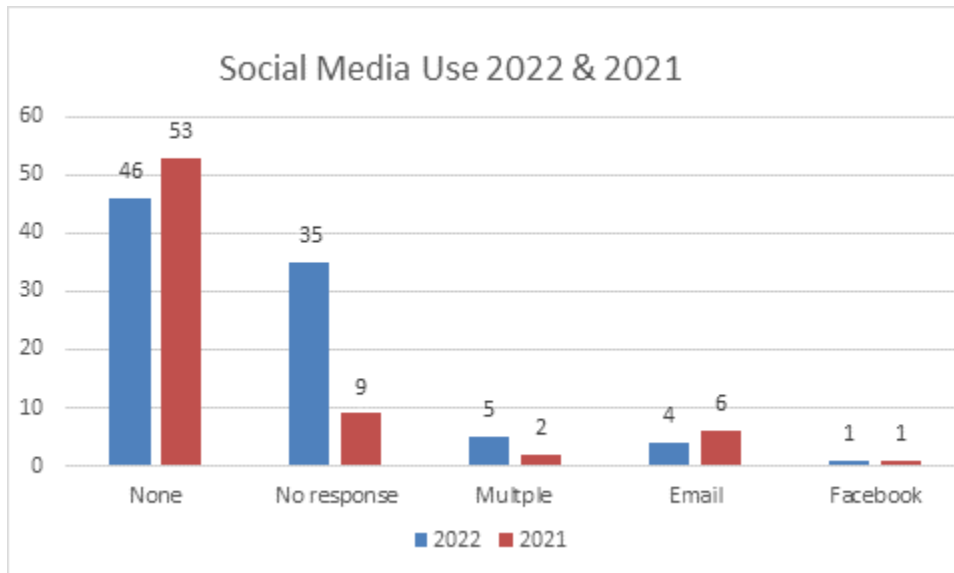


There has been a considerable increase in reports from British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec, while the rest of the Prairie Provinces and the Atlantic Provinces and Territories report very few instances. The increase in incidents reported from Quebec is the result of improved

communications between CFLA-FCAB and ABPQ (L'Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec).

Figure 4: The role of social media

This topic will be examined at greater depth below, but Figure 4 reports the number of social media platforms that participated in the individual incidents, as tagged by the respondents.



In the cases of Email and Facebook, only instances that used no other form of media were counted. Several of the incidents recorded as Multiple included these two formats. There is no obvious explanation for the differences in None and No Response between the two years.

#### Response times

The portion of incidents that were resolved in the same day as they took place increased from 14% of the total in 2021 to 29% in 2022. This change probably represents increased reporting of incidents that did not go beyond an interaction at the public service point.

Excluding those that were resolved on the day of the incident, 31% were resolved within 14 days in 2022 and 44% in 2021. In both years, approximately two thirds of all incidents were resolved within two weeks. For those incidents not resolved within 14 days, the average time to resolution was 43 days in 2022 and 56 days in 2021.

The average time from resolution to entry in the Survey was 92 days in 2022 and 137 days in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The term "resolution" needs to be understood as the last date on which the library contacted the complainant. It is usual that such contacts are not returned, and the matter is considered resolved without a formal acknowledgement from the complainant.

Figure 5: Complainants in 2022 and 2021

The distribution of complainants among the entire body of reports is presented below.

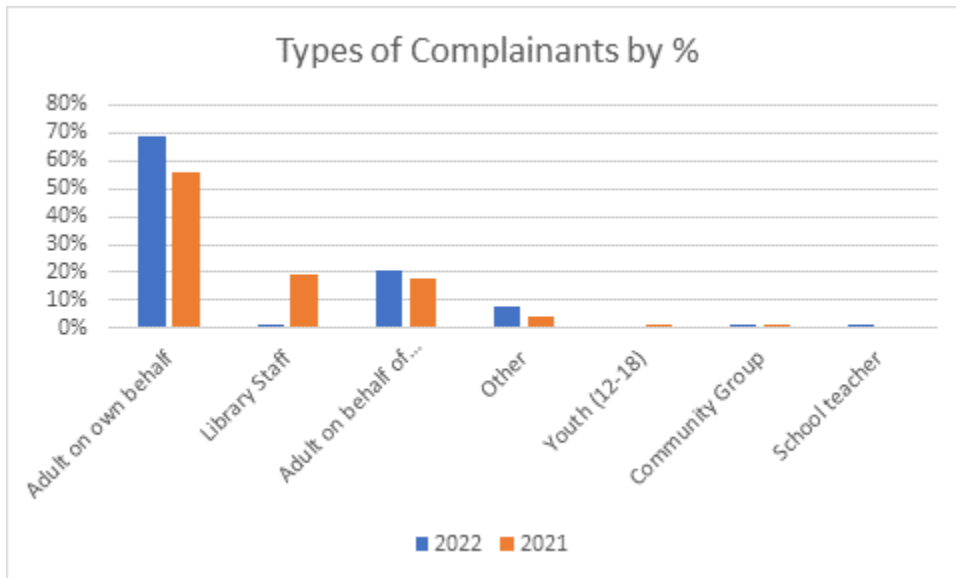
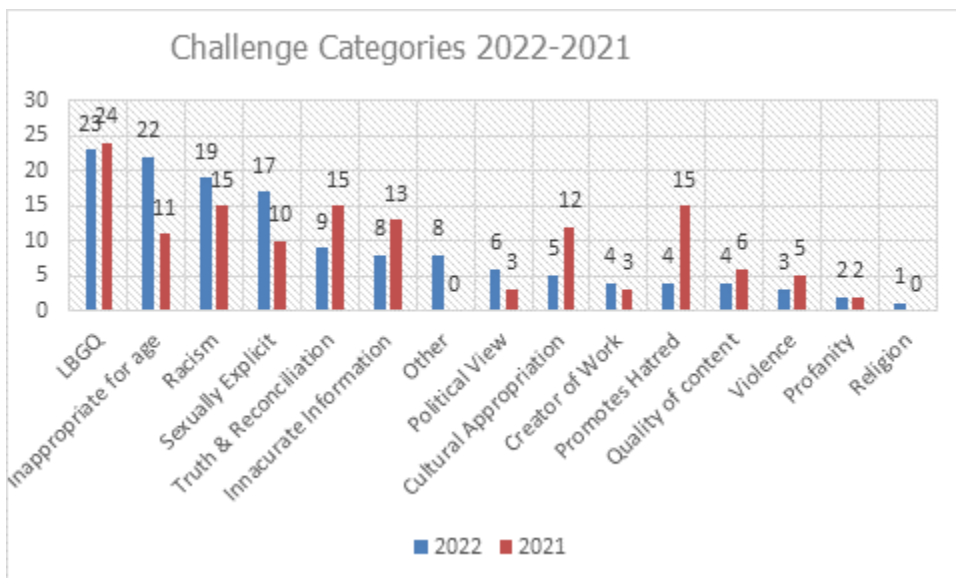
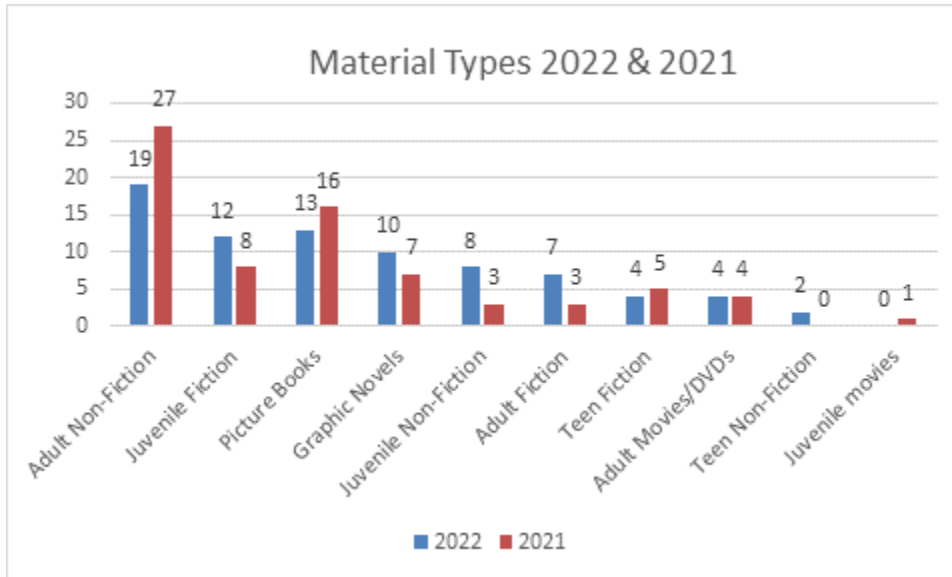


Figure 6: Categories of complaints



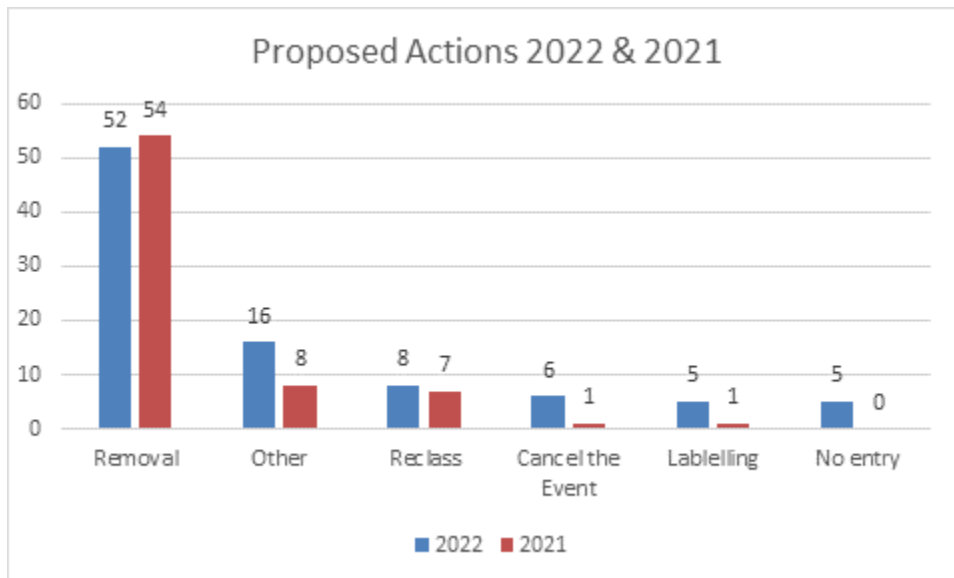
The emergence of "Other" will be dealt with toward the end of this report.

Figure 7: Format of challenged materials.



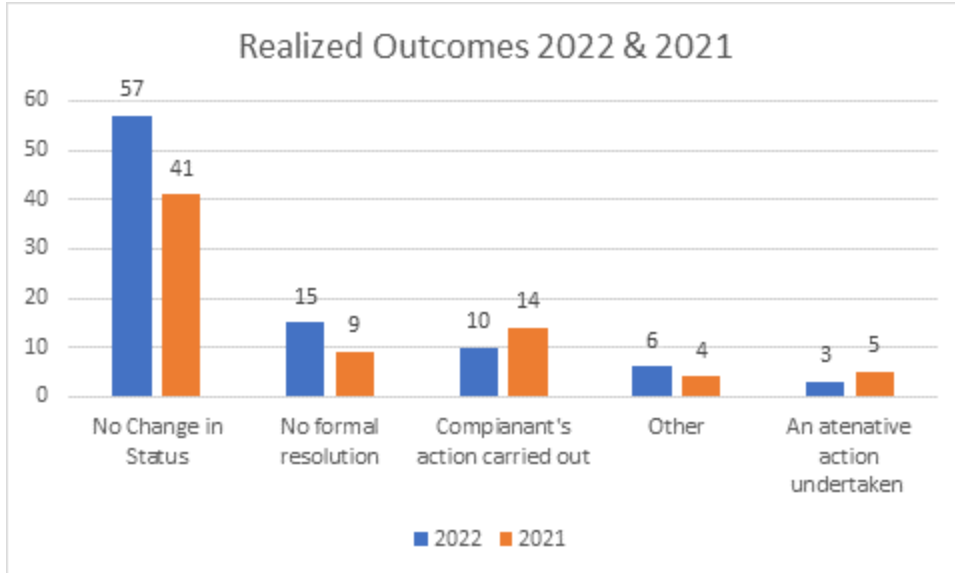
In 2021 the Adult Non-fiction category included eighteen incidents related to Abigail Shrier’s *Irreversible Damage*. In 2022, the category Graphic Novels includes two titles identified as Juvenile Graphic Novels.

Figure 8: Proposed actions:



In 2022, eleven of the 16 Other instances were cases in which the complainant was not recorded to have make a suggested action. The increase in suggestions that the event be cancelled reflects growing objections to Drag Queen Story Hours.

Figure 9: Realized Outcomes



The term “resolution” has been dealt with above.

## Part II: Observations

Issues relating to services and programs do not lend themselves to the sort of charting that the report has used above. These observations deal with some of those issues.

The first notable change in 2022 is the growth of the Library Services portion of the responses. The twenty responses compare with two each in 2021 and 2020. Interestingly, in each of the three years, a library’s decision to publicize the “Read Woke Program” garnered an objection.

In addition to the objection to that program, the 2022 Survey reported nine objections to displays relating to Pride week, six objections to drag story hours, an objection to a Harry Potter reading week on the ground that the author was anti-trans, two objections to different aspects of the library’s collections policy and vandalism against a Black History Month display.

“Vandalism” is not one of the standard categories for classifying incidents and it did not appear in reporting from 2020 or 2021. However, in 2022 five Pride Week displays were vandalized in Canadian libraries as well as one display for Black History Month. The growth of “Other” as noted in Figure 6 is due primarily (6 of 8) to reports of vandalism.

The physical disruption of displays, primarily related to LGBTQ2AS+ issues, marks a change in the culture of library users.