Community Needs Assessment

Danielle Janney

School of Information, College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida

LIS 6511: Collection Development

Dr. Natalie Taylor

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Author Note

QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Flushing Community Needs
Assessment 2024

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Summary of Needs Assessment

The Queens Public Library (QPL) of Queens County, New York City, New York, services a diverse population of 2,278,029 residents, with 81,523 living within the roughly 1.33 square miles of Flushing proper and an additional 126,919 residents in Flushing affiliated zip codes. Queens holds the record for being the most ethnically diverse urban community in the world, with at least 138 languages spoken throughout the borough; Flushing neighborhood libraries represent 14 languages, including English (see Appendix A). Between 2010 and 2018, the population of the Flushing neighborhood area increased by 13.2% and is likely to keep rising. The QPL supports the Flushing neighborhood area with eight branches, five proper (Flushing, East Flushing, Queensboro Hill, Mitchell-Linden, and McGoldrick) and three affiliated by zip code (Auburndale, Pomonok, and Hillcrest). To maintain community expectations and value, the following needs assessment will help determine how the library can continue to best accommodate its current citizens within Flushing proper libraries while also considering nearby neighborhood demographics (see Appendix B).
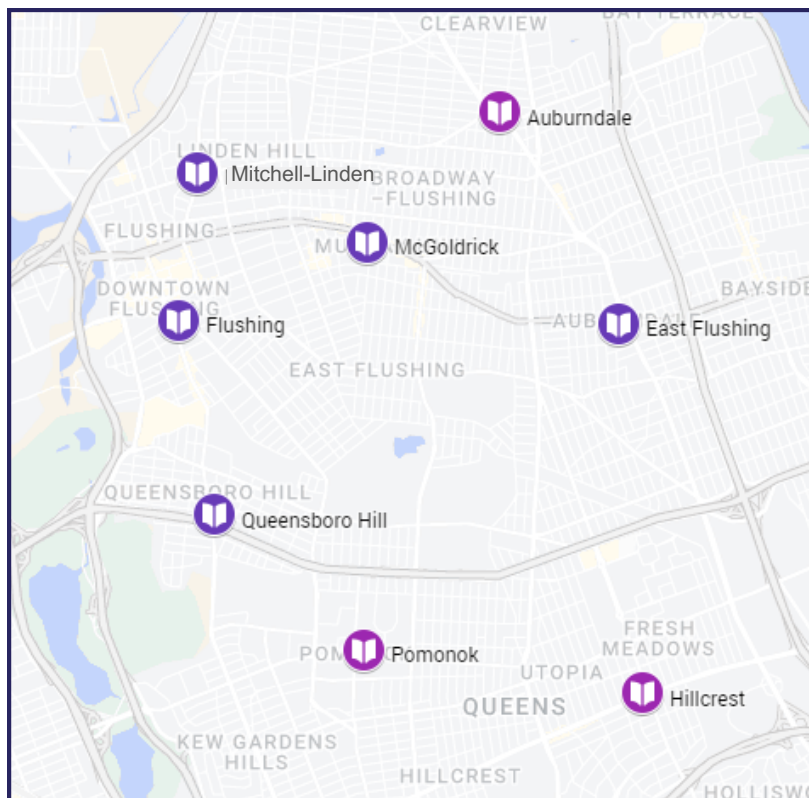
Methodology

A team of librarians within the Flushing neighborhood libraries have gathered data and feedback from Flushing residents, Flushing library staff, and New York State Assembly members by way of surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The breakdown of information collection is as follows:

- Surveys (see Appendix C) were made available to Flushing residents by either:
  - Prepaid mail - sent out to 500 households of the Flushing area zip codes (11354, 11355, 11358, 11365)
    - The mailed survey will be in English and Chinese, but a QR code option will direct other language speakers to the digital survey where they can choose to fill out the survey in their language of choice
  - Digital survey - QR code access at Flushing libraries
    - Has the option to fill out survey in multiple languages
  - Paper survey - offered at Flushing libraries
    - English and Chinese options available
- Focus groups of Flushing library staff members convened and were prompted with three questions (see Appendix D) to discuss firsthand experiences with community members and express personal opinions for improvement
- Interviews with New York State Assembly members of the 40th and 25th districts (Ron Kim and Nily Rozic), who represent the Flushing neighborhood, were conducted via e-mail

Demographic statistics collected by the U.S. Census Bureau will be considered in tandem with the data collected from surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

The results of the Flushing Neighborhood Needs Assessment will be forwarded to the Queens Public Library Foundation for their consideration of raising and dispersing funds for proposed actions.
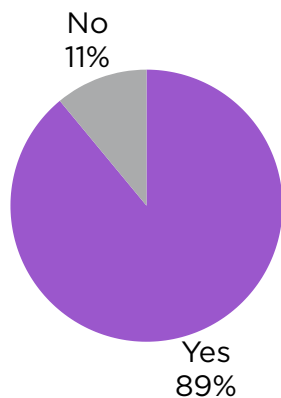
Resident Survey Results

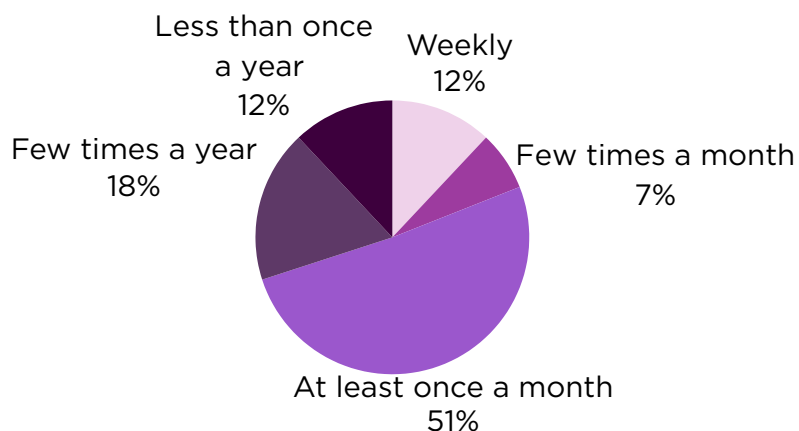| Mailed	Digital	Paper	**Total**
396	3,413	479	**4,288**

The resident survey received 4,288 responses over a two-month period. According to the survey, the following was noted with significance:

- Ethnic demographics of the surveyed roughly matched the current U.S. Census data
- Of the 472 respondents who are not members of the library:
  - 421 primarily use public computers and study areas, would like to see more of those things, and visit multiple libraries
- Library members who only visit the Flushing library had the least amount of requests for the library to improve and felt they were represented
- Of the 343 respondents that do not feel represented:
  - 275 were non-English speakers (197 Chinese, 42 Spanish, 28 Russian, 5 German, 3 Armenian)
    - 165 of these do not attend programs or classes
  - 25 speak a language not represented in the library (Armenian and German)
- Things library members would like to see more of: newly released Chinese literature/novels, Chinese and Hindi drama TV series, "side-by-side" bilingual books, digital audiobooks in Chinese, and an after hours option to pick up held materials

1. Are you a member of the Queens Public Library?

No
11%

Yes
89%

2. How often do you visit your local library?

Less than once a year
12%

Weekly
12%

Few times a year
18%

Few times a month
7%

At least once a month
51%

3. Which libraries do you visit?

Responses

4000

3000

2000

1000

0

Flushing
East Flushing
Queensboro Hill
Mitchell-Linden
McGoldrick
Pomonok
Hillcrest
Auburndale
Other

4. What do you use from the library?

Books/ebooks/audiobooks
DVDs/BluRays/CDs
Magazines/periodicals
Board/video Games
Tools
Computer/WiFi/hotspots
Study/meeting rooms

0   1000   2000   3000   4000   5000
Responses

5. Do you attend programs/events at the library?

No
36%

Yes
64%

6. Do you feel the library represents you?

No
8%

Yes
92%

7. What would you like to see more of in the library?

Category	Responses (approx)
Books/ebooks/audiobooks	~1800
DVDs/BluRays/CDs	~2250
Magazines/periodicals	~50
Board/video Games	~350
Tools	~100
Computer/WiFi/hotspots	~450
Study/meeting rooms	~3000
Other	~1000
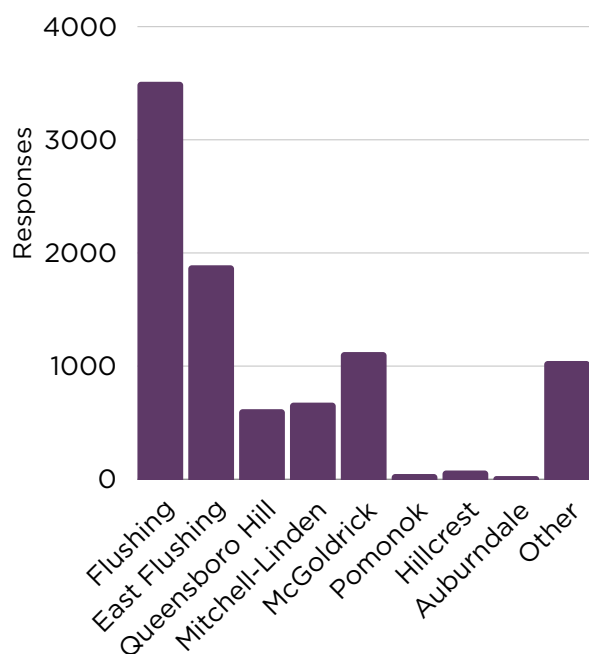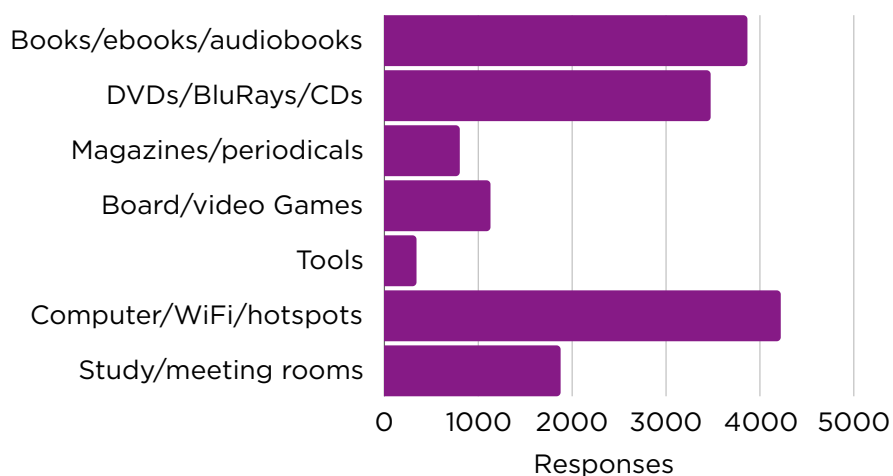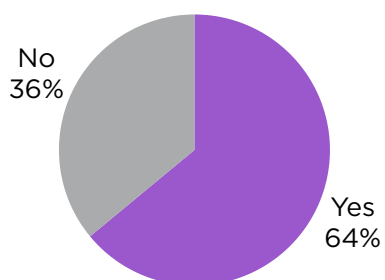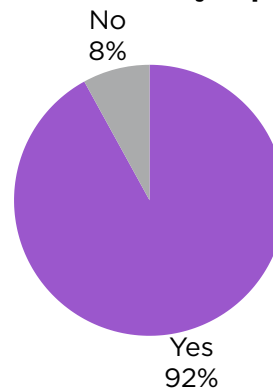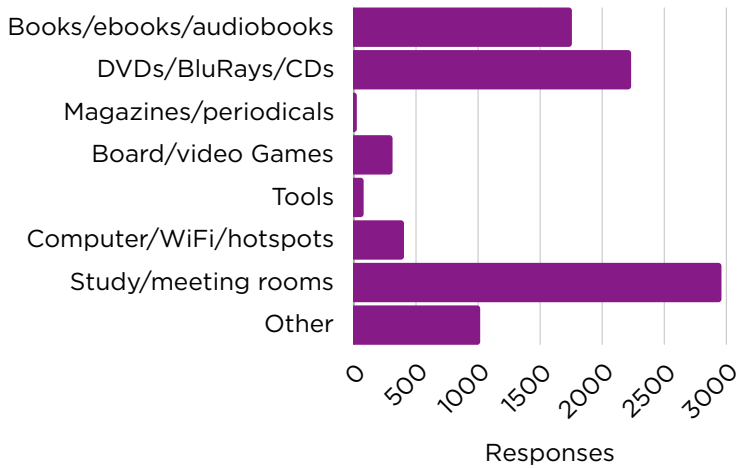
Responses

8. What language(s) do you speak regularly?

	Responses
Bengali	**12**
Chinese	3495
English	**3813**
Greek	9
Gujarati	**21**
Hebrew	6
Hindi	**71**
Italian	29
Korean	**89**
Russian	42
Spanish	**438**
Urdu	4
Other	**33**

8. What language(s) do you speak regularly?

475
Non-English only

3,792 English & 1 other

21
English only

9. What is your race/ethnicity?

- 2 or more races 1%
- Hispanic 13%
- Other 1%
- White 7%
- Black 3%
- Asian 75%

10. How old are you?

- 65+ 5%
- 0-14 1%
- 15-21 3%
- 22-34 27%
- 35-49 32%
- 50-64 32%
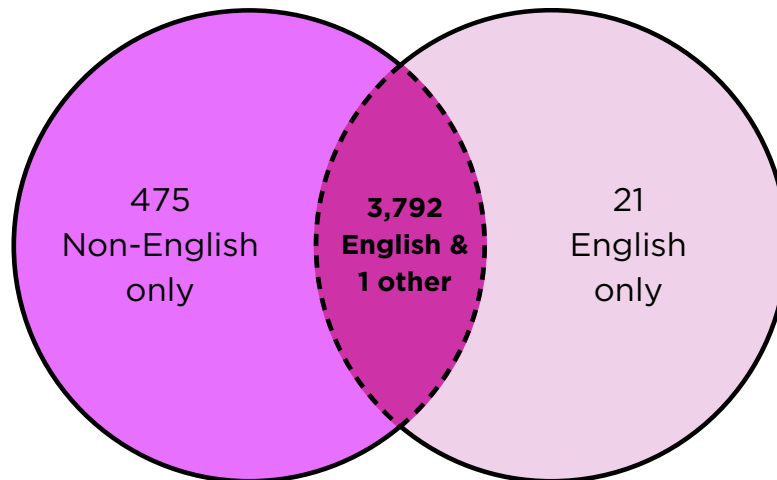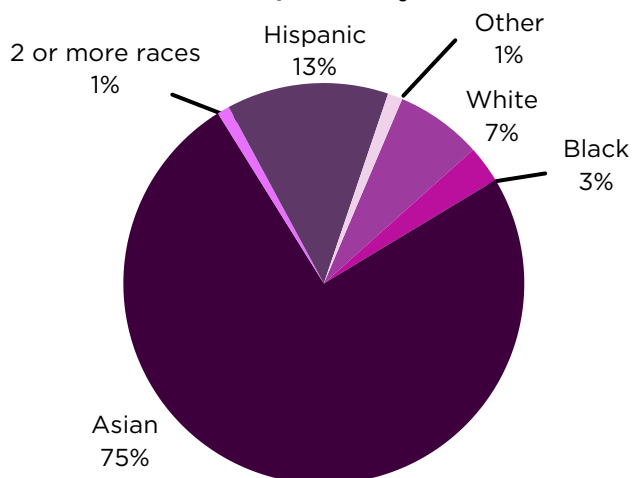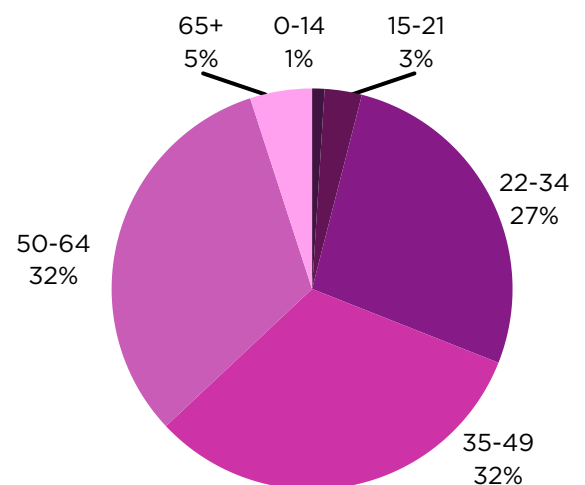
Flushing Library Staff Focus Group Conclusions

The five Flushing proper libraries held librarian-led focus groups with support staff to gather personal observations and opinions of the current community climate.

In response to communication with the public, a total of sixteen staff members said they had difficulty with translation--specifically, no staff in the library was fluent or familiar with the language of the library users in question. This prompted discussion for a better method of exchange, such as a tablet that acts only as a translator. This suggestion was made in three of the focus groups with unanimous agreement.

When addressing complaints and comments of library users, public computer access was the greatest complaint. Multiple staff members have had interactions with parents who were unable to attend scheduled ESL classes during current adult learning center hours and expressed their want of night classes. Purchase requests are made on a daily basis for books and films; while this appeases library users in the moment, they can become irate if too much time has passed with no material to show for it. Silent study areas do not currently meet the public demand, so offering earplugs was suggested.

Other suggested services or materials for the library to acquire or increase included: language-inclusive signage, "new visitor" touchscreen kiosks, after-hours library vending machine, classic and contemporary foreign film and literature, adult manga and graphic novels (Chinese and Korean), inkstick kits, software programming manuals (Chinese), and seeds for herb gardens.

E-mail Interview with Ron Kim,
District 40 Assembly Member

How do you perceive the libraries of your district help the community?

As an assemblyman who embraces diversity, I perceive the libraries of our district as invaluable community pillars that serve as inclusive spaces for all residents, regardless of background or circumstance. These libraries play a multifaceted role in enriching our community by providing access to a diverse range of resources, from literature representing various cultures to educational programs that celebrate our differences and promote understanding. Moreover, they serve as gathering points where people from all walks of life can come together to exchange ideas, engage in dialogue, and foster a sense of unity amidst our rich tapestry of cultures. By offering services tailored to the unique needs of our diverse population and actively promoting inclusivity and equity, our district libraries not only empower individuals but also strengthen the fabric of our community as a whole.

What do you think the libraries of your district could do to better support the community?

To better support our community, our libraries could embark on initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background or ability, feel welcomed and valued within library spaces. Ensuring that library patrons receive what they desire is paramount to fostering a thriving and inclusive community space. By listening attentively to their needs and preferences, libraries can tailor their collections, programs, and services to better serve the diverse interests of their users. As the Assembly Member for New York District 40, I promise to guarantee funding for such endeavors that are essential for sustaining this commitment. This pledge not only demonstrates a dedication to meeting the evolving demands of the community but also underscores the enduring value of libraries as vital hubs for learning, exploration, and cultural enrichment.

E-mail Interview with Nily Rozic,
District 25 Assembly Member

How do you perceive the libraries of your district help the community?

I am committed to embracing language access, I perceive the libraries in our district as vital community hubs. These libraries transcend boundaries, enriching the lives of our diverse population. They serve as safe havens for children and adults alike, especially those who may not feel comfortable in other parts of our community. Beyond being repositories of knowledge, they are third places—spaces where people gather for story hours, research, continuing education, and community meetings. In the wake of the pandemic, our libraries have adapted, connecting people to virtual learning and combating misinformation. By supporting youth-based initiatives and community development programs, our libraries become beacons, fostering cohesion and empowerment for all.

What do you think the libraries of your district could do to better support the community?

To better support our diverse residents, we must take strategic steps to champion language inclusivity, expand our collections, and host bilingual events.

Let's expand our library's offerings by curating a rich array of multilingual books and resources. Mandarin, Spanish, Korean, Urdu—every language deserves representation on our shelves. By embracing linguistic diversity, we empower individuals to explore literature, history, and ideas in their native tongues. I propose investing in increased language classes, both in person and online. From English as a Second Language courses to conversational groups, these initiatives foster cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Children are our future, and early exposure to diverse languages is invaluable. Let's introduce engaging bilingual story hours, both in our physical libraries and virtually. These sessions not only nurture language skills but also instill cultural pride and a sense of belonging. Our libraries shall be true sanctuaries, where every voice resonates and enriches lives for generations to come.

Proposed Actions

The Queens Public Library strives to provide exceptional experiences to the diverse population it serves. In the wake of recent growth in the Flushing neighborhood, with the support of district assembly members, the following services and materials have been compiled to uphold library values.

Services
- Install a touchscreen visitor kiosk in each library
    - Allows selection of language
    - Introduces new or interested visitors to library services and collections
- Install a library vending machine for after-hours use only at one neighborhood location, McGoldrick is suggested
- Increase public computers by two in the Flushing, East Flushing, and Queensboro Hill locations
- Install a locker system for hold pick-up after hours
- Purchase a tablet for each library to use at public-facing desks for translation needs
- Add a virtual night session to the roster of ESL classes
- Start recording storytimes, of all relevant languages, for video upload
- Offer earplugs in all neighborhood libraries in lieu of creating more quiet spaces

Materials
- Increase collections of new, popular, and classic fiction in Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Hindi, and Russian
- Increase film and TV series collections in all languages
- Start Armenian and German collections
    - Collaborate with Brooklyn Public Library and New York Public Library librarians for recommendations
- Purchase inkstick kits for checkout
- Expand QPL seed library to an additional Flushing neighborhood location

With the support of our district assembly members, we think the Queens Public Library Foundation will agree to assist in enhancing the Flushing neighborhood libraries with innovative growth of services and collection materials.

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Appendix A
Language Collections at Flushing Neighborhood Libraries

	Flushing	East Flushing	Queensboro Hill	Mitchell-Linden	McGoldrick	Pomonok	Hillcrest	Auburndale
Bengali	■							
Chinese	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Greek		■						
Gujarati	■							
Hebrew							■	
Hindi	■							
Italian								■
Korean	■	■		■	■			■
Pashto						■		
Persian (Dari)						■		
Russian	■						■	
Spanish	■				■			
Urdu	■							

Additional language collections within the Queens Public Library include: Albanian, Arabic, Croatian, French, Haitian Creole, Hungarian, Japanese, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Serbian, Tagalog, Tibetan, and Turkish.
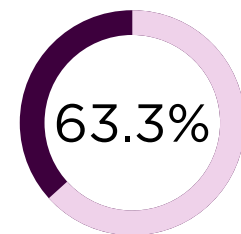
Appendix B
Flushing Neighborhood Demographics

Race and Ethnicity

■ White ■ Black/African American ■ Asian
■ Two or more races ■ Hispanic ■ Other

Other
1%

Hispanic
17%

White
16%

Black/African American
4%

Two or more races
2%

Asian
60%

The outer circle represents the larger Flushing area; the inner circle represents the Flushing neighborhood proper

Citizenship

63.3%
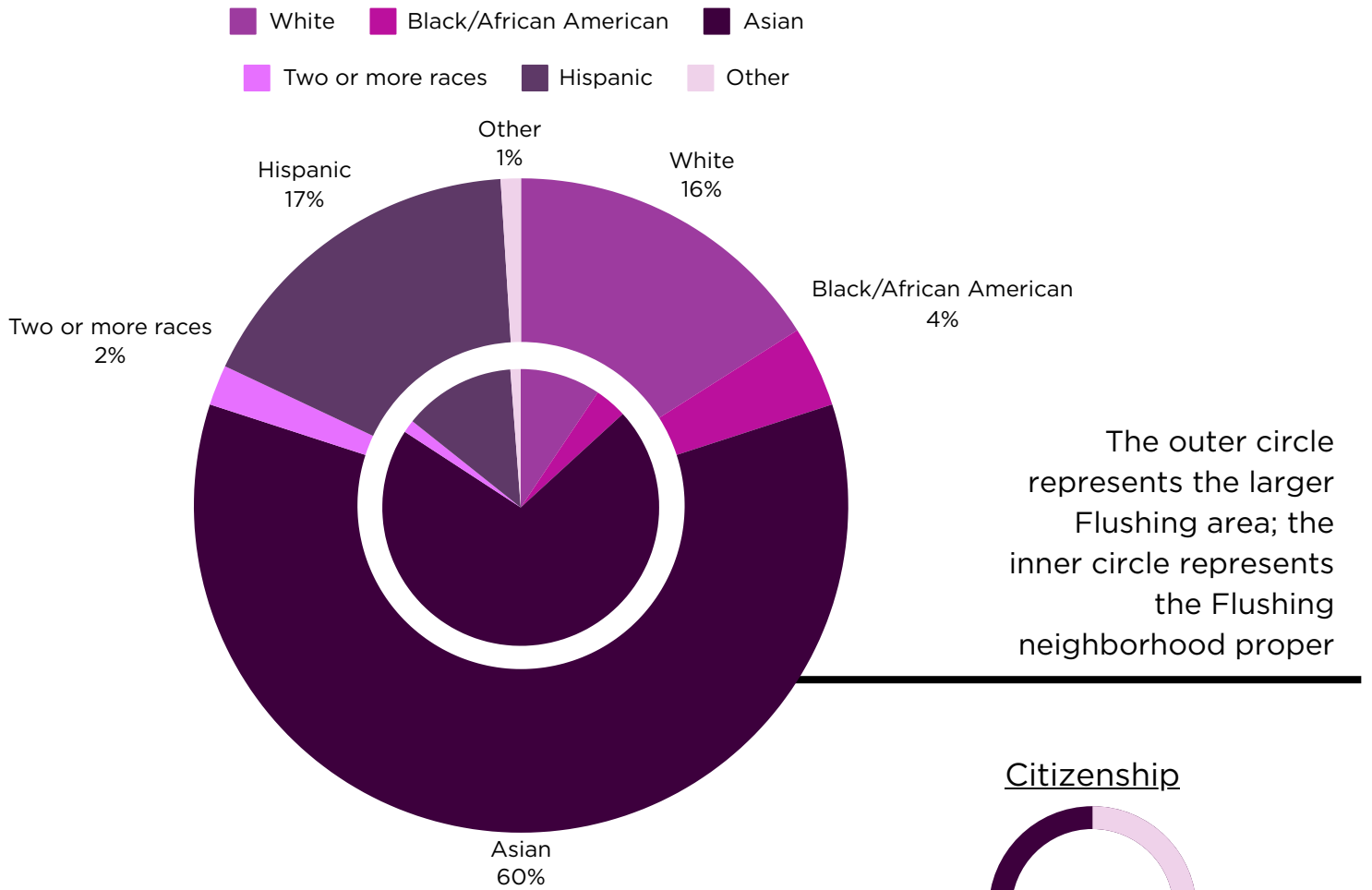
Country of Birth (Foreign-born)

China
India
Taiwan
Korea
Columbia
Hong Kong
Malaysia
Phillipines
Bangladesh
Dominican Republic

0   10   20   30   40   50   60
Percentage

Age Groups

0-14
15-21
22-34
35-49
50-64
65+

0.0   5.0   10.0   15.0   20.0   25.0
Percentage
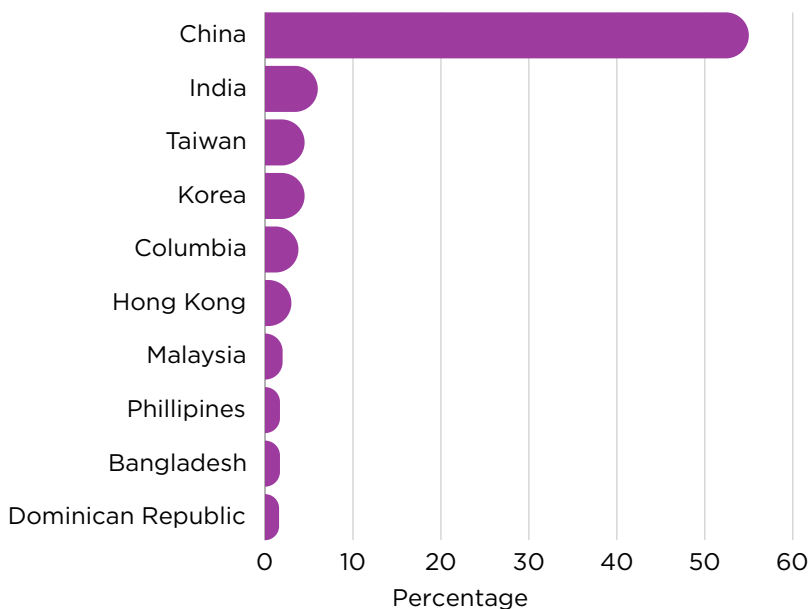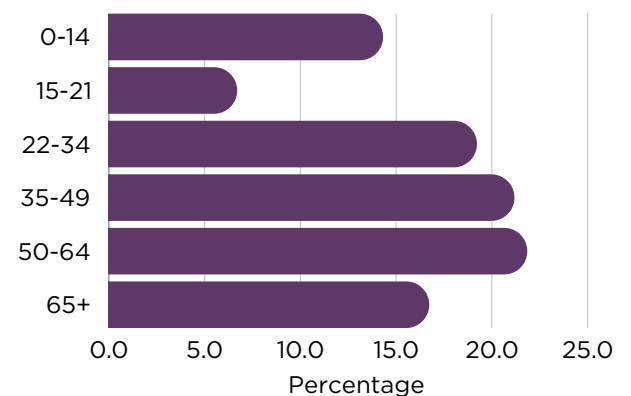
Appendix C
Flushing Resident Survey

As a valued member of our community, we invite you to give feedback on your local libraries. Your responses will help us understand how our libraries can better serve the Flushing neighborhood.

1. Are you a member of the Queens Public Library?
   __Yes   __No

2. How often do you visit your local library? (select best answer)
   __Weekly   __A few times a month   __At least once a month
   __A few times a year   __Less than once a year

3. Which libraries do you visit? (select all that apply)
   __Flushing   __East Flushing   __Queensboro Hill   __Mitchell-Linden
   __McGoldrick   __Pomonok   __Hillcrest   __Auburndale   __Other
   If Other, please specify: _____

4. What do you use from the library? (select all that apply)
   __Books/ebooks/audiobooks   __DVDs/BluRays/CDs   __Magazines/newspapers
   __Board games/video games   __Tools   __Computer/WiFi/hotspots
   __Study rooms/meeting rooms

5. Do you attend programs/events at the library?
   __Yes   __No
   If Yes, which ones? _____
   _____

6. Do you feel the library represents you?
   __Yes   __No
   Please explain your answer: _____
   _____

7. What would you like to see more of in the library? (select all that apply)
   __Books/eBooks/Audiobooks   __DVDs/BluRays/CDs   __Magazines/Newspapers
   __Board games/Video games   __Tools   __Computer/Wifi/Hotspots
   __Other: _____
   _____
   Explain choices: _____
   _____
   _____

8. What language(s) do you speak regularly?
   __Bengali   __Chinese   __English   __Greek   __Gujarati   __Hebrew   __Hindi
   __Italian   __Korean   __Russian   __Spanish   __Urdu
   __Other: _____

9. What is your race/ethnicity?
   __Asian   __Black   __Hispanic/Latino   __Native American   __White   __Other

10. How old are you?
   __0-14   __15-21   __22-34   __35-49   __50-64   __65+

Appendix D
Flushing Library Staff Focus Group Questions

1. Regarding communication with library users, have there been new or escalating challenges?

2. What are some common complaints or comments from library users you have recognized as room for the library to improve?

3. Are there any services or materials you think the library should acquire or increase to better serve our community?

Appendix E
Assembly Member Interview (E-mail)

Dear [Assemblyman/Assemblywoman] [Name],

The Flushing neighborhood libraries are conducting a community needs assessment and would greatly value your feedback on the following questions:

How do you perceive the libraries of your district help the community?

What do you think the libraries of your district could do to better to support the community?

Thank you for taking the time to respond, we appreciate all the work you accomplish to make our neighborhood a better place to live.