



# Kirjakori 2024

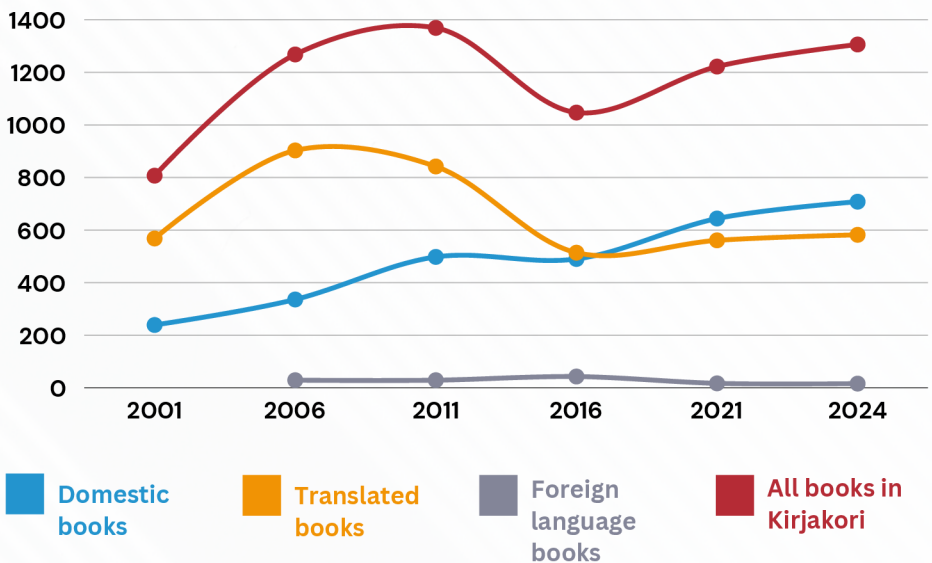
Annual statistics and  
thematic analyses of  
children's and youth literature  
published in Finland  
2020–2024



# KIRJAKORI 2024

There were a total of 1306 books in Kirjakori 2024. The number of print books has stayed roughly the same throughout the years, despite the recent popularity of audiobooks and e-books. It is notable that for the eighth year in a row, there are more domestic books than translations: 55 % of the books are domestic.

BOOKS IN KIRJAKORI 2001-2024



**NB:** Foreign language books have been a separate category since 2005. From 2014 only a selection of translated comics and graphic novels have been included in the collection.

The domestic books include 20 Finland Swedish books written in Swedish, the average being 20-30 titles yearly.

The translations are mostly from English (73 %), Swedish (11 %) and German (6 %). The number of original languages is on decline, while an increasing number of books are translated from English.

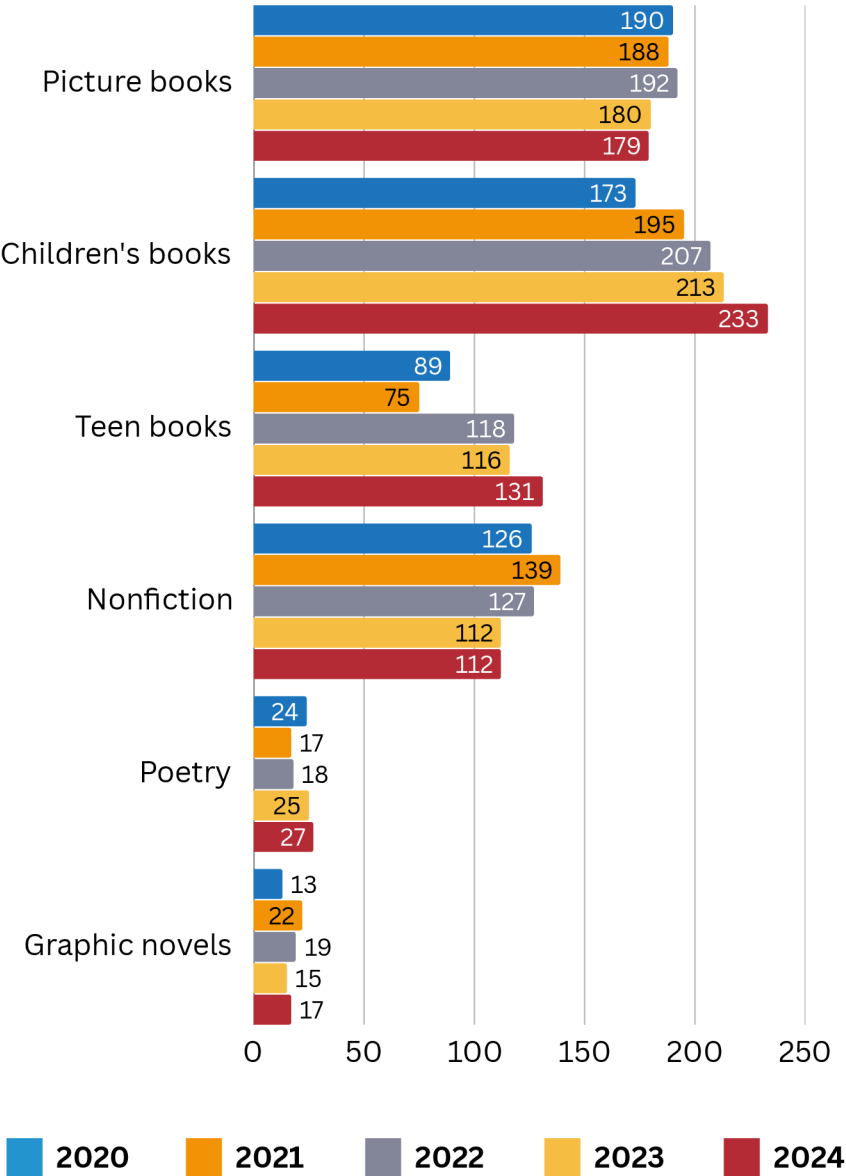
Ten of the largest publishing houses published around 66% of the books in Kirjakori 2024, the total amount of publishers being 123. The publishers range from large general publishing houses to self-publishing.



*Domestic and translated children's books and teen books in Kirjakori 2024.*



DOMESTIC BOOKS BY CATEGORY 2020-2024



# INSIGHT

## CATEGORIES

### Picture books

The largest category in Kirjakori consists of picture books. Besides the picture books, this category includes board books and play books for babies, sound books and sensory books. In Kirjakori 2024 there were a total of 449 books in this category. 179 were domestic and 270 translations. In recent years there have been approximately 30 % more translations than domestic books.

The most recurrent theme in this category is the everyday life of children, with an emphasis on emotional education. The plentiful *Fanni* -series (Kumma 2019–) by Julia Pöyhönen and Heidi Livingston with different illustrators focuses on various aspects of emotional education.

Anna Isoaro and Mira Mallius' (illustrator) *Aamun toiveet* (WSOY 2024) is a story about moving home, refugees and emotions that come with big changes. Sanna Sofia Vuori and Cara Knuutinen's (illustrator) picture book series about a child and her two toys, a badger and a lion, began with the book *Grävling borta* (Teos & Förlaget 2020). Each character has a different personality, and sometimes they clash. However, together they have wonderful small adventures.



## Children's books

The largest domestic category is the children's books. This category contains easy readers, chapter books, middle grade books, fairy tales and story collections for children. The number of children's books has been on the rise since 2018. In Kirjakori 2024 this category reached its all-time high, totalling to 361 titles. 233 of the titles are domestic and 128 translations.

Frequent characteristics in this category are seriality, humour and hobbies. Detective stories and mysteries, as well as fantasy and horror are popular genres. For example, Siri Kolu's *Hereiset* horror series (Otava 2022–2024) is about siblings that fight against monsters every night.

Lena Frölander-Ulf's *Rafsa* series (Teos / Förlaget 2023–2024) was published both in Finnish and Swedish. It is an adventure story set in a marmot society. Maria Kuutti's *Iida* chapter book series (Karisto 2022–) follows Iida, a football playing girl and her two best friend who all play in the same team.

*Domestic children's books in Kirjakori 2024.*

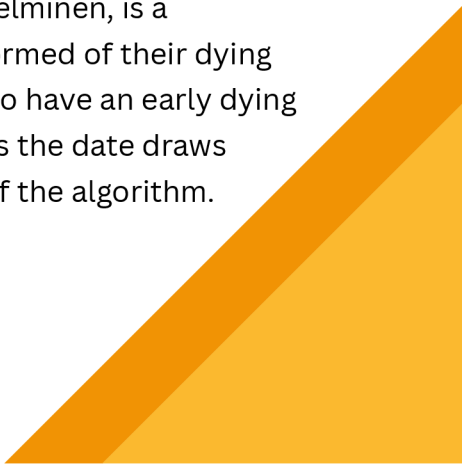


## Teen books

The novels in this category are aimed at readers 13–18 years of age, ranging from early teen books to young adult books and verse novels. Kirjakori 2024 has 203 titles in this category. The number of domestic books is rising, with record-breaking 131 books this year. Translations however are declining, with a total of 72 books. The decline in translations can be attributed to the larger European trend of youth reading books in English.

The popular genres in this category are realistic stories, fantasy and horror. Romantic themes in both traditional and rainbow setting are common, as well as themes of identity and mental health.

For example, Jani Kiiskilä's *Huppu* series (Otava 2023–) is a realistic story about a teen boy trying to navigate infatuations, parental expectations and friendships. In Magdalena Hai's award-winning horror story *Sarvijumala* (Otava 2023), Lauri wakes up in a hospital after a car crash, only to find out that his mother has died, his father is in coma and he himself now sees ghosts. The young adult novel *Kunnes kuolen* (Karisto 2024) by Sini Helminen, is a dystopian story where everyone is informed of their dying date. Aani is one of the unlucky few who have an early dying date – Aani will only live for 17 years. As the date draws closer, Aani questions the infallibility of the algorithm.



## Nonfiction

The nonfiction category contains nonfiction picture books for small children as well as nonfiction for children and teenagers. The vast majority the titles are aimed for children. From the total of 193 books in Kirjakori 2024, 112 are domestic books and 81 translations.

The versatility of topics is notable in this category. The *Tietopalat* series (various authors and illustrators) published by WSOY contains nonfiction for those learning to read. Each book focuses on different topic. For example, in 2024 Miina Mäki and Sini Kuparinen's (illustrator) book *Kiehtovat yöeläimet* about nocturnal animals was published in the series. Salla Savolainen produces building and road work themed nonfiction picture books, such as *Kiveä!* (WSOY 2024) about the usage of stone as building material.



*Nonfiction in Kirjakori 2024.*

## Poetry

Compared to other Nordic countries, poetry is relatively popular in Finland. There is a strong tradition of children's poetry, both in reading and publishing it. In Kirjakori 2024 there are 28 titles, of which 27 are domestic books and one is a translation. The year 2024 marked the 100th anniversary of Kirsi Kunnas (1924–2021), a celebrated and influential children's poet.

The collections are mostly aimed at small children, but some have wider audience. For example, a compilation of Kirsi Kunnas' poems *Yön äänet* (WSOY 2024), illustrated by Jenny Lucander, contains nature-themed poems, while Mirkka Auvinen's collection *Chibu – kun silmäripsetkin putosivat* (Käsite-Kirjat 2024) contains poems about a highschool girl with cancer. A poetry collection from 2021, *Kaupunki kukaties* (WSOY) by Pia Krutsin and Jani Ikonen (illustrator), was directed at school children.



Poetry in Kirjakori 2024.



## Graphic novels

Most comics and graphic novels published in Finland are translations. Only a selection of translated comic books is taken into the institute's collection, which means that the number does not include every translated comic book that was published in Finland for children and youth. Kirjakori 2024 contains 47 titles: 17 domestic and 30 translated titles. In recent years there has been an increasing number of comic books for children, while previously they were mostly for teens or young adults.

Mari Luoma's *Romeo & Hirviöt* (WSOY 2021–2023) is a horror comedy series for children. Young Romeo goes to a private school where the teachers are actual monsters. Anne Muhonen's graphic novels are for teens and young adults. The 2024 book *Tyttö ja korppi* (Hertta) is a gothic fantasy with references to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*.



*Graphic novels and comics in Kirjakori 2024.*

## Easy language books

Easy language is standardised in Finland, and every year 20–30 books are published in Easy Finnish for children and youth. The titles contain both fiction and nonfiction. Some Easy language books are written directly in Easy Language while some are adapted from books originally published in standard language. Few small publishing houses specialize in Easy Language books, and most of the titles are domestic. In Kirjakori 2024 there are 33 Easy language books. 20 of them are written directly in Easy language and 13 are adaptations.

In 2024, Marjatta Kurenniemi's children's classic *Onnelin ja Annelin talo* (Avain) was adapted by Silja Vuorikuru. Titta Kemppainen's road trip story *Rekkoja ja rankkareita* (Oppian 2024) was written directly in plain language and aimed at teen readers.



Two of the Easy Language books in Kirjakori 2024.

# INSIGHT THEMES

Persisting themes such as friends, day-to-day life and coming-of-age stories are published every year, but they all have current themes intertwined in them. Literature for children and youth quickly reacts to societal discourses and current topics. The corona virus and war in Ukraine appeared in children's books not long after they appeared in the world. The themes presented in this section have been re-emerging in books for the past five years.

## **Environmental issues**

A theme that has persisted for several years in literature for children and youth is the environment. In books, like in other media, hot topics have been climate change, loss of biodiversity, nature preservation, sustainability and animal rights. In 2024 several books brought forward the recreational value of nature with stories of hiking and camping.

The stories in picture books revolve around recycling and de-littering, as well as forests or seas as home for many creatures. Linda Bondestam's *Mitt bottenliv* (Förlaget 2020) is a story about a lonely axolotl living at the bottom of a littered pond. The main character in Emilia Efrving's *Kasa* series is a pile of varying natural elements. In the 2021 book *Roskakasa* (Lasten Keskus) the pile has turned into a pile of trash, confusing animals of the forest.

Children's books often have realistic or fantastical stories of kids who solve mysteries crimes around abuse of nature, or they rescue a dear forest from logging. In Johanna Venho and Sanna Pelliccioni's (illustrator) *Metsämuistikirja* (Teos 2022), a girl protests the logging of her nearby forest by attaching small notes on the trees.



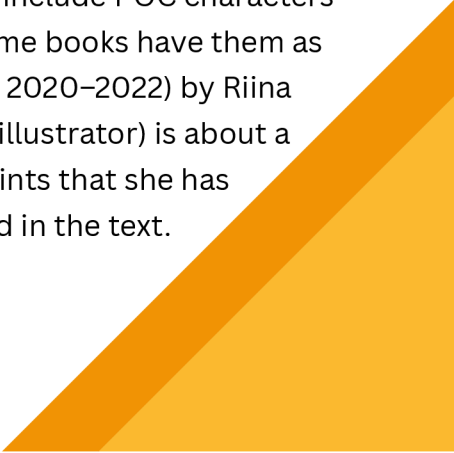
*Books on environmental themes.*

During the past five years dystopias for teens and young adults have focused on imagining oppressive societies rather than time after an apocalypse. However, environmental themes are still present. For example, Anne Maija Aalto's dystopian *Korento* trilogy (Otava 2021–2024) is about individuals struggling to survive under oppressors, while a rebellion is simmering in buildings surrounded by a flooding sea. Siiri Enoranta's utopian *Maailmantyttäret* (WSOY 2022) depicts a future society that has learned from past mistakes and is built on renewable energy and shared resources. A diverse group of girls sets out to solve the mystery of strange robot insect attacks.

## **Diversity**

Depictions of diversity have been common in the past five years. During that time, diversity has shifted from being the focus of the stories to being a natural feature of them. The stories and illustrations portray diverse families, different cultures, gender, neurodiversity and physical challenges, different lifestyles, looks and personalities.

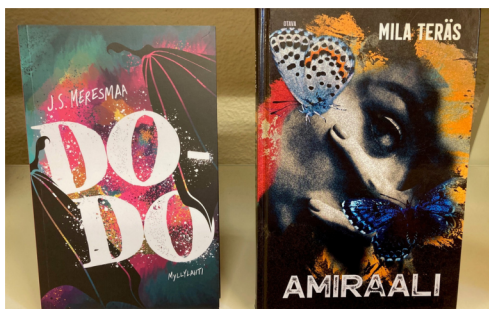
In picture books, the illustrations often include POC characters and characters with disabilities, and some books have them as main characters. *Kielo* series (Enostone 2020–2022) by Riina Katajavuori and Hannamari Ruohonen (illustrator) is about a little girl named Kielo. The illustration hints that she has Down syndrome, but it is not mentioned in the text.



Picture books by Jani Toivola and Saara Obele (illustrator) are about a boy named Roni, who likes to wear a skirt (*Poika ja hame*, Otava 2021), likes another boy (*Poika ja perhostunne*, Otava 2022) and is happy to find a friend who is brown like himself (*Poika ja rohkeusloikka*, Otava 2023).

Children's books tell stories of outcasts and characters who feel they are somehow different. They might find acceptance and confidence through new friendships. Eveliina Talvitie and Jani Ikonen's (illustrator) *Ai niin, minä olen muuten Lee* (Enostone 2024) is about sensitive Lee, who finds it hard to make friends until he meets another special child: a girl who does not speak.

Teen books represent diversity of gender and sexuality. *Amiraali* (Otava 2020) by Mila Teräs is about 17-year-old Niilo, who challenges gender norms in his dressing style. J. S. Meresmaa's verse novel trilogy *Dodo* (Myllylahti) represents a variety of rainbow themes in a polyamorous love story of three young people. The books are divided between the three main characters and their point of view. Iina is bisexual (*Dodo*, 2020), Sara is a lesbian (*Khimaira*, 2021) and Tuukka is asexual (*Kerberos*, 2022).



Young adult novels: *Dodo* by J. S. Meresmaa ja *Amiraali* by Mila Teräs.




## Diverse families

Families have a varying combination of parents. In recent years single fathers and other strong father figures have been well represented, while absent mothers is a reoccurring theme in these books. Tittamari Marttinen and Johanna Ilander's (illustrator) picture book *Bonussisko* (Mäkelä 2021) is about a newly blended family and a bonus sister that comes with it. *Valpuri* series (Tammi 2022–) by Saara Kekäläinen and Reetta Niemensivu (illustrator) portrays everyday life in a family of two: a girl named Valpuri and her father.

## Society and individuals

Societal themes are closely linked to environment and diversity. Power structures and inequality, bullying, money, war, poverty and mental health are issues raised in recent books, both in fiction and nonfiction. Petra Heikkilä and Mirkka Eskonen's picture book *Huolisyyppö* (S&S 2024) is about a preschooler called Nemo, whose mother is too exhausted to organize a birthday party for the child. They also can't afford to buy a present for another birthday kid, so Nemo makes one.



## Folktales and folklore

Finland, other Nordic countries and the Baltics have a rich cultural history of folktales and folklore. Finnish fantasy and historical fiction often draw from the folktale story pool. For example, these books might employ a variety of mythical creatures from the folktales, or position forest as a mythical place, reigned by the forest gods Tapio and Tellervo.

In Finnish children's books, elves are popular characters. Traditionally they are Santa's little helpers or guardians of homes, saunas, sheds and stalls, but in contemporary stories they venture further.

In Helena Immonen's *Maagisten maailmojen mysteerit* chapter book series (Kumma 2022–2024), the protagonist is an elf called Jakov Korina. On occasion, he abandons his station as a household deity and journeys to other worlds to solve mysteries.

The graphic novel series *Myyttiset* by Miila Westin is inspired by Baltic Finnish folklore. The books contain the deity of fertility and growth, Sämpeä Pellervoinen, deities of crop Ägräs and Pellonpekko, water creature Vetehinen and many more. In the first book of the series *Loputon talvi* (S&S 2023), a girl named Eevi meets a group of mythical creatures. Together they embark on a magical journey to bring back summer.

The 19th century compilation of epic poetry, Kalevala, is the source of inspiration for many a book. Katri Kauppinen's young adult novel *Laakson linnut, aavan laulut* (Otava 2022) utilizes the story of Sampo, a magical device that creates prosperity. In both Kalevala and Kauppinen's book, Sampo is also a source of discord, as two groups fight over its ownership.



*Books utilizing folklore:*

*Jakov Korina ja synkiön salaisuus* by Helena Immonen,

*Myyttiset: Loputon talvi* by Miila Westin and

*Laakson linnut, aavan laulut* by Katri Kauppinen.

More information about  
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