

Horizon Research

Writers' Earnings in New Zealand

December 2016



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the results of a survey of New Zealand writers' earnings. Invitations to participate were sent to writers throughout New Zealand via publishers and writers' associations. A nett 380 writers nationwide responded to the survey between 14 and 30 October 2016.

The questions asked in the survey are aligned with those in similar surveys conducted in Australia by Price Waterhouse Coopers and in the United Kingdom by the Authors Licensing & Collecting Society. We acknowledge the sharing of those reports by these organisations.

Writer categories and publishing

55% of the writers who responded to the survey were primarily book authors, the most common categories being fiction and non-fiction.

For 83% of those currently working in fiction, this was their primary writing category. Those currently working in non-fiction were even more likely to have that as their primary category (88%).

A higher percentage of female respondents than male respondents were writing fiction. With all other categories gender balance was largely even, although female writers in the sample were less likely to be academic authors and marginally less likely to be screenwriters.

More respondents had published in each category than were currently working in it. While this differs from category to category, on average over all categories, of those who had published in a category, 80% were currently working in it and half regarded it as their primary category.

During the past year, the most common formats for writers were printed books by a traditional publisher (48%), writing content e.g. for blogs, websites or social media (39%) and publication in a magazine (print or online, genre or general) (30%).

A nett 32% had self-published in some form or other in the past year.

On average, the writers in the survey had been writing for 18 years. 48% of the sample had started writing since the year 2000.

Starting writing

On average, the writers in the survey had been writing for 18 years, with just under half of them beginning to write since the year 2000.

Having a passion or love for reading, writing, literature, books or stories was the most stated reason for starting to write. 13% of writers said that they had always wanted to write, or had always been writing or creating.

Other main reasons for starting to write were:

- Educational influences such as wanting to educate;
- Identifying a lack of educational material/resources;
- Being inspired by others, such as writers, family, poets and teachers; and
- Attending workshops, courses and universities.

Education and development

Almost half of writers in the sample had a postgraduate degree (Master's degree or PhD), while 31% had an undergraduate (Bachelor) degree.

Nearly three-quarters of the writers had undertaken some form of writing development. Of those who indicated they had undertaken some form of training in the past, workshops and courses run by organisations and centres were the main form of education undertaken, followed by mentoring or feedback from more experienced writers and being part of an informal or formal writer's group for peer support and feedback.

Although the main form of writing development undertaken in the past were workshops and courses run by organisations and centres, more writers felt that mentoring or feedback from more experienced writers and being part of an informal or formal writer's group for peer support and feedback were more important in helping them improve their writing.

To underscore that, being part of an informal or formal writer's group for peer support and feedback was the main form of writing development that writers were currently still undertaking.

Time spent writing

The time spent by writers on their creative occupation as a writer mainly ranged from 2 to 40 hours a week with **an average of 17 hours or 23% of their reported time.**

An average of:

- 12 hours a week (17% of reported time) was spent working at another occupation which used their skills as a writer;
- 8 hours a week (11% of reported time) on working on creative work in another creative field not related to their writing;
- 7.5 hours studying or undergoing training (10% of reported time); and
- 5.5 hours doing voluntary or unpaid work.

The largest part of writers' time was in working at another occupation that was unrelated to their writing and unrelated to a creative field; on average, 23 hours per week or 31% of their reported time.

Including their writing activity, respondents reported an average of 73.5 hours per week, with writers of young adult literature, journalists, playwrights and television screenwriters reporting average hours above the overall result.

Overall, the writers responding to the survey had spent largely the same amount of time on the different activities measured as they had spent two years ago.

Writers would like to be able to spend 25 hours a week writing (on average), nearly 50% more than they are currently spending.

The need to work to maintain income, the demands of another job and domestic/household responsibilities were given as the primary barriers to spending more time spent writing.

Insufficient income from writing declined as a barrier once writing time per week exceeded 20 hours per week. Domestic/household responsibilities, demands of another job and other tasks associated with writing were a barrier regardless of time spent writing.

Writers' earnings

On average, writers in the survey earned \$56,900 per annum. Writers' average personal incomes were 56% of their average household incomes.

Writers earned an average of 24% of their personal income, or around \$13,500 per annum, from their writing.

While female writers in the sample had total personal incomes 10% below male writers in the sample, they earned 10% more per annum from their writing (an average of \$13,800 per annum) than male writers (\$12,600 per annum).

Income earned overseas from writing averaged 14% of total writing earnings, around \$2,000 in the past 12 months.

Overall, 27% said their income had increased in the past 12 months, while 32% said it had decreased. 34% said their income had remained the same over the past 12 months.

Royalties were by far the most common sources of writing earnings. Around half of those earning royalties for printed books received them at 10% RRP or 17.5% of publishers net receipts, while nearly 4 out of 10 received less than that.

More than half of the writers in the sample had never received an advance and 27% of those who had said the value of the advances received from publishers had remained the same over the past 5 years.

Half the respondents said that in addition to any income they earned from writing they relied on their partners' income, and nearly two-thirds said they relied on having a job. For nearly half of the writers, the employment they had was unrelated to being an author.

Nearly a third said they relied on National Superannuation; this reflects the age distribution of the respondents, with 32% aged 65 years or over.

Contracts and copyright

More than half of the writers in the sample indicated they always retained copyright in their work when signing contracts and 21% did so most of the time (i.e. in more than 50% of their contracts). 64% indicated that their contracts always included moral rights clauses and 53% of writers indicated that their contracts had in the past contained a reversion clause.

Feature film (32%) and short film (25%) screenwriters were more likely than others to have never signed a contract related to their writing.

19% of writers said the copyright of their creative work infringed in the past.

- More than half of this group described how their work was freely available on pirate websites/free downloads online.
- 19% said their work was being published/used without their permission or given accreditation.
- 16% said poems/illustrations/photographs were being used without permission or payment.
- 10% said work was being photocopied without permission by schools/teachers/individuals.

The future

The biggest challenge writers felt they were facing was the financial difficulties associated with being a writer. Writers talked about how their incomes were decreasing and how they weren't able to earn a living off writing alone.

They also commented that there were fewer publishers available, or that publishers were inaccessible, while other writers felt there was a lack of support from publishers.

When asked what they needed in the future to help them succeed as an author, the most commonly mentioned factor was money/income. Finding the time to write was mentioned again as a key need for writers to be successful, and for 14% this was linked to not having to have other paid employment, which they were currently dependent upon. Respondents also commented that they needed publishers/supportive, passionate publishers/traditional publishers to succeed in the future.

REPORT

This report is of a survey of New Zealand writers. Invitations to participate were sent to writers throughout New Zealand via publishers and writers' associations.

1. Writing categories

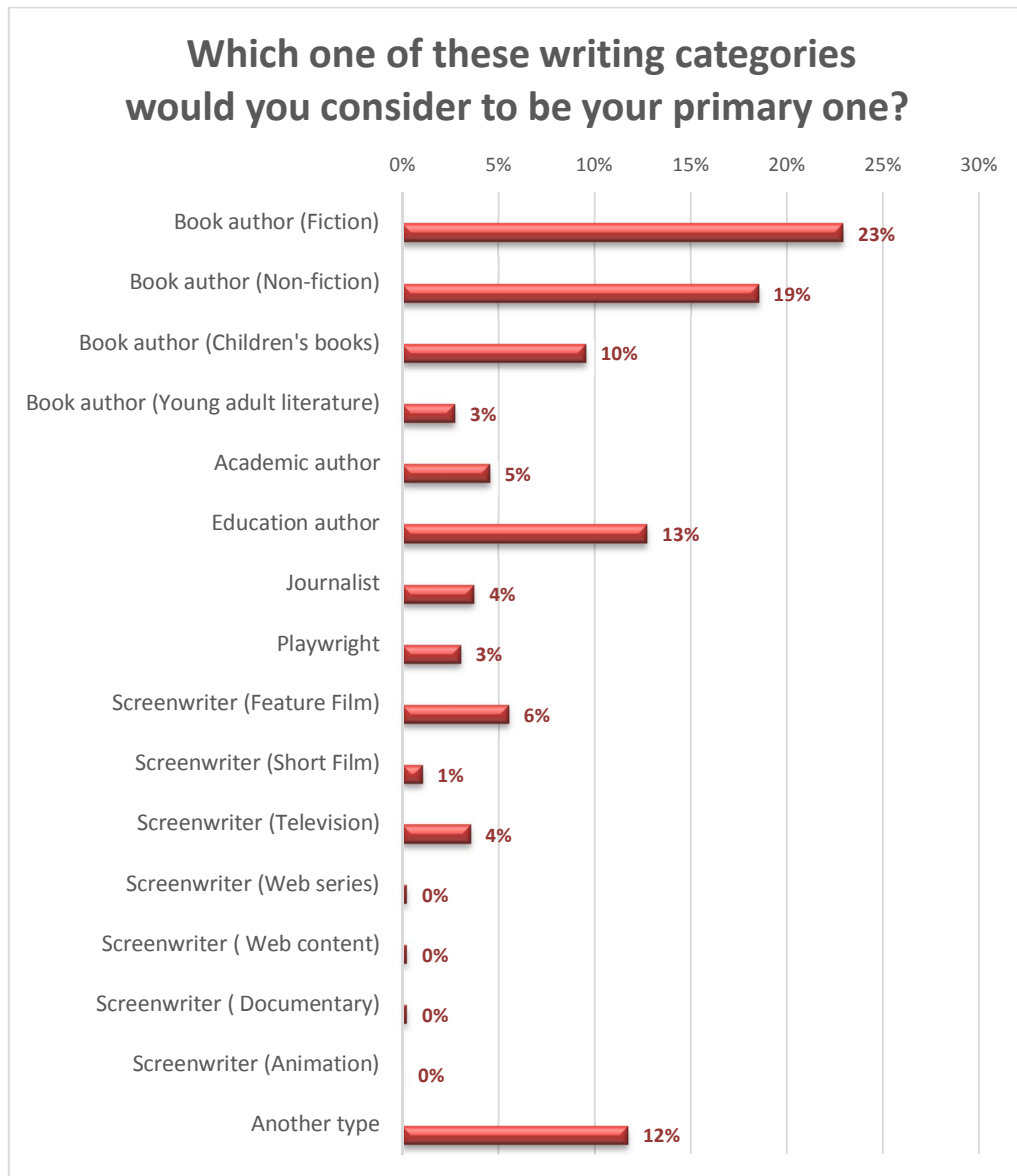
Respondents who had indicated they were currently writing were asked which categories they considered to be their primary one.

As shown in the following chart, the largest groups of writers in the sample were authors of fiction, non-fiction, education books and children's' books: 55% of the writers who responded to the survey were primarily book authors.

For 83% of those currently working in fiction, this was their primary writing category. Those currently working in non-fiction were even more likely to have that as their primary category (88%).

The most common writing categories given as "Another type" were poetry and short stories.

A higher percentage of female respondents than male respondents were writing fiction. With all other categories gender balance was largely even, although female writers in the sample were less likely to be academic authors and marginally less likely to be screenwriters.



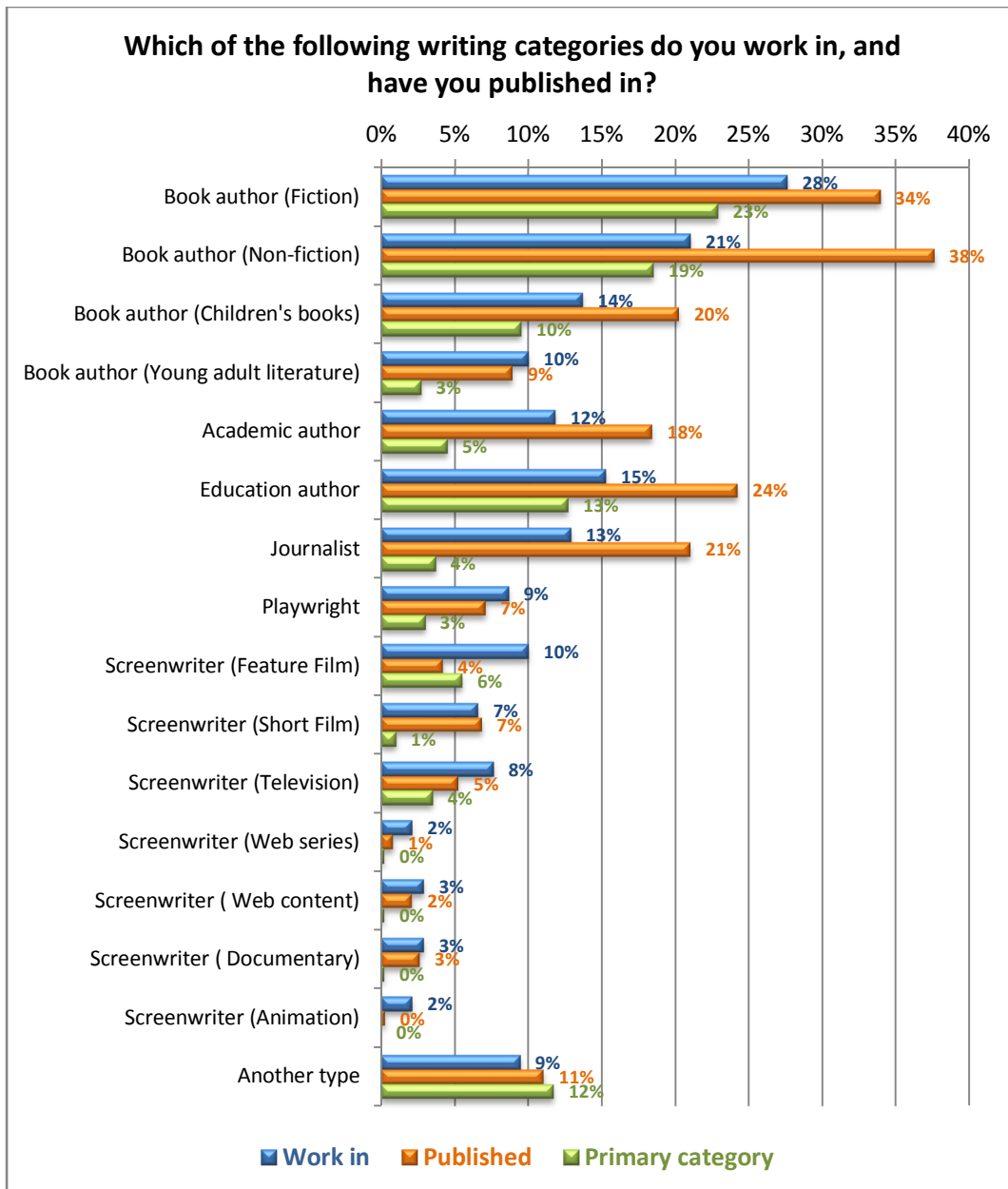
2. Categories worked and published in

More writers had work published in each category than were currently writing in it and more writers were working in each category than regarded it as their primary category. The results are illustrated in the following chart.

Note the high percentage who had published non-fiction in comparison with the percentage who were currently working in that category.

More than 8 out of 10 of those currently working in fiction or education writing said that these were their primary categories and for 9 out of 10 of those working in non-fiction it was their primary category.

For 7 out of 10 of those writing children's books, this was their primary category but only 1 in 4 of those writing young adult literature said that it was their primary category.

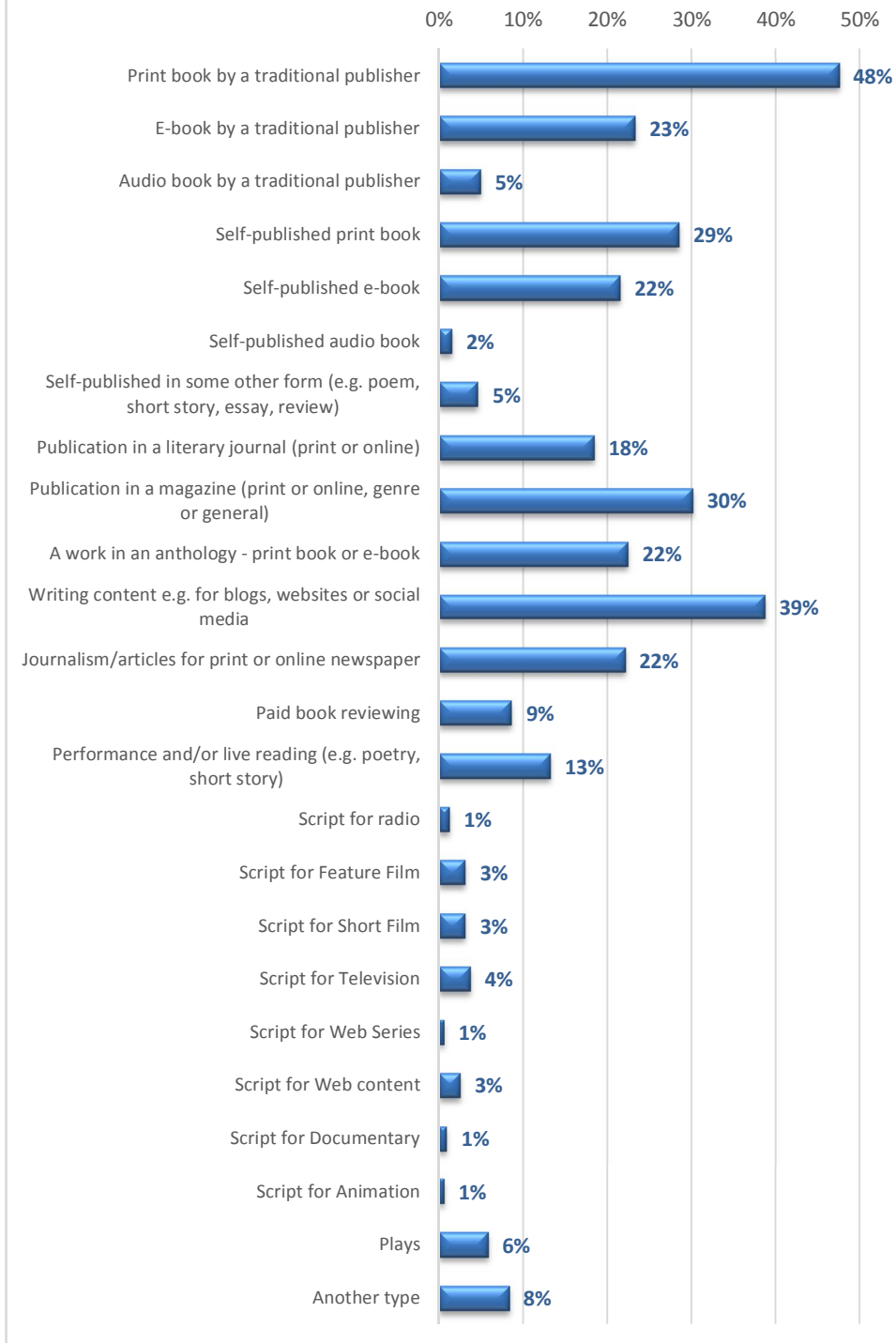


During the past year, the most common formats writers published in were printed books by a traditional publisher (48%), writing content e.g. for blogs, websites or social media (39%) and publication in a magazine (print or online, genre or general) (30%).

Note that:

- **A nett 32% had self-published** in some form or other in the past year. 6 out of 10 of those self-publishing print books had also self-published e-books.
- Nearly half of those who had published in printed book form with a traditional publisher had also published in e-book form with a traditional publisher.
- Writing content ranked second in importance to publishing print books with a traditional publisher.

During the last year, in which of the following formats have you had work published or released?



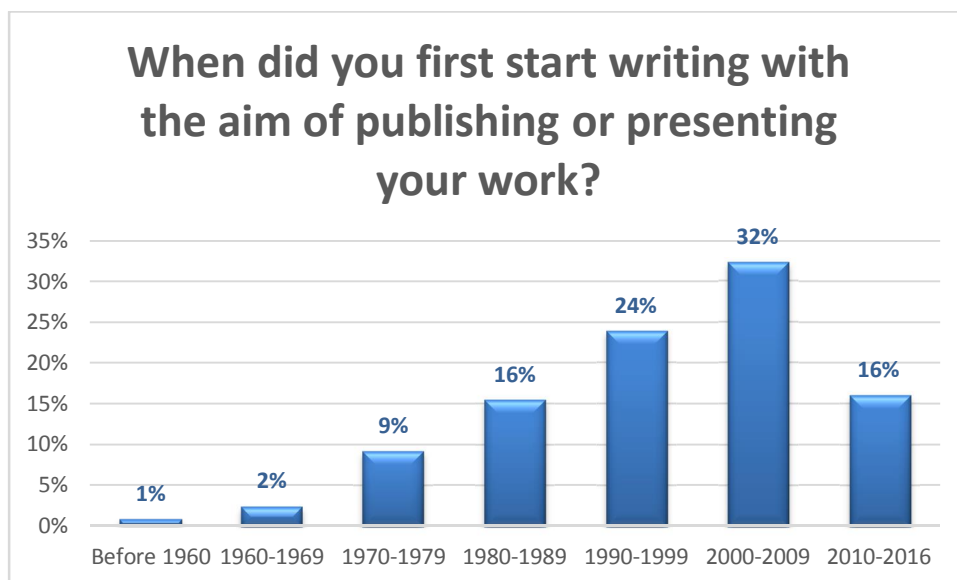
Fiction book authors had published/released work in a wider range of formats than other book authors and were more likely to self-publish e-books and audio books in the past year than any of the other book authors. Young adult literature authors were more likely to self-publish print books than other book authors.

Academic and education authors largely published/released work in print book form with a traditional publisher.

Screen writers had primarily published/released work such as scripts in their fields in the past year; however, 18% of feature film screen writers had published/released work in writing content e.g. for blogs, websites or social media and 21% of television screenwriters had published/released work in journalism/articles for print or online newspaper.

3. Starting writing

On average, the writers in the survey had been writing for 18 years. Note that 48% of the sample had begun to write since the year 2000.

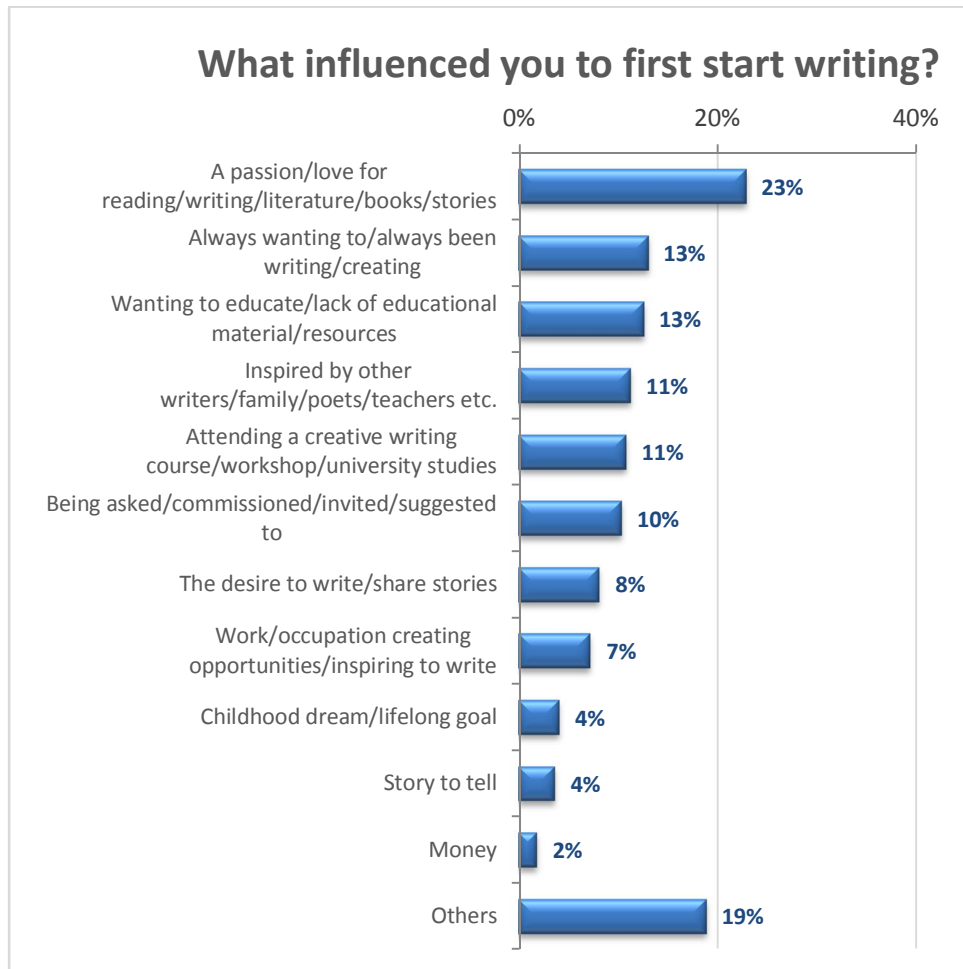


Asked what first influenced them to start writing, writers cited having a passion or love for reading, writing, literature, books or stories most commonly. 13% of writers also said that they had always wanted to write, or always been writing or creating.

Educational influences such as wanting to educate, or identifying a lack of educational material/resources was also one of the main reasons mentioned for starting to write.

Being inspired by others, such as writers, family, poets and teachers, and attending workshops, courses and universities were also prominent reasons for first starting to write.

A very low percentage of writers in the sample were influenced to first start writing for financial reasons.



A selection of comments follows illustrating the main topics:

- **A passion/love for reading/writing/literature/books/stories:**
“A love of language and its ability to evoke imagery, mood, characters, lives.”
“A passion for reading, and writing.”
“Love of language and ideas.”
“Love of reading.”
“My lifelong love of reading.”
- **Always wanting to/always been writing/creating:**
“Always wanted to be a writer.”
“I’ve always written, or performed, or done something creative.”
“I’ve always written.”
“I’ve always written whatever idea came to me...”

"I've always written, ever since I learned how to hold a pen. Before that I made up stories and songs and plays for my brother and cousins."

- **Wanting to educate/lack of educational material/resources:**

"I saw a need in education for the education books I write. I wrote a children's book originally for a child I was trying to encourage to write himself."

"Experience and knowledge of my subject and a desire to educate people."

"Dearth of adequate textbooks and background material for my main teaching subject (Years 12 & 13)."

"As an academic I felt that it was important to share knowledge with a wider audience."

"A great way to educate others in my topic."

- **Inspired by other writers/family/poets/teachers etc.:**

"A keen interest to entertain and educate through meeting so many motivational and interesting writers, poets, screen writers, musicians and literary-a-holics."

"Father read widely, got books from library, there was a respected and used bookcase showcased in the living-room; primary school teacher read fiction aloud, got me to review books; secondary teachers furthered my sense of the power of literature; living author/icon James K Baxter strode the stages of politics/literature; ferment of 60s/70s movements for change for the better."

"Grandmother was a writer and always intrigued with mystery spy thriller genre."

"It was something I had always done as a child. Had a flair for it and loved words. But seeing guest poets or writers at secondary school was very inspiring, as was seeing local theatre."

"My Standard Four Teacher (1977) - who believed in me, taught me to take an interest in English, reading, writing and especially descriptive writing. I am dyslexic."

"My father who was my teacher (sole charge school on the West Coast) used to take our whole school to nearby places (rivers, streams saw mill, etc.) and encourage us to write poetry. He then used to have us publish the poems in our school magazine. I loved the experience. Then I wrote a short story about our remote lifestyle for the NZ Women's Weekly and was published...I was hooked!"

- **Attending a creative writing course/workshop/university studies:**

"I've had a long career as an advertising copywriter. In a subsequent career in decor, I missed the writing so much that I started writing fiction. My husband shouted me a local workshop with romance author Robyn Donald for my birthday maybe ten years ago, and I was hooked."

"Joining a writing workshop group."

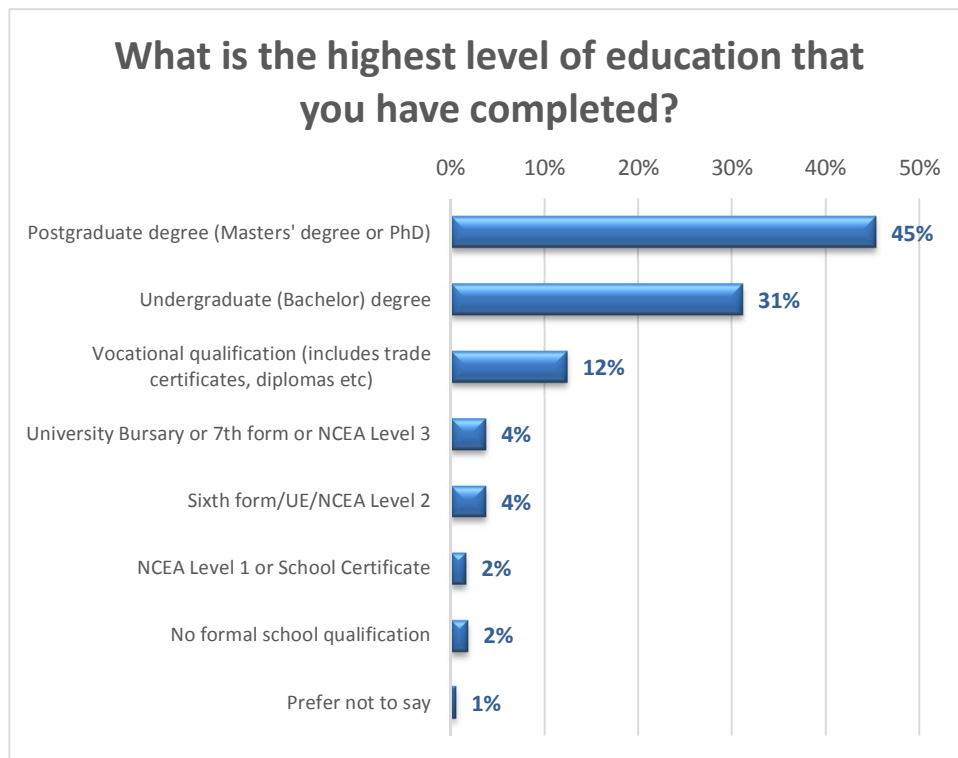
"Film studies at university."

"Creative writing course."

"A poetry workshop run by Auckland University for their summer programme."

4. Education and development as a writer

Almost half of writers in the sample had a postgraduate degree (Master’s degree or PhD), while 31% had an undergraduate (Bachelor) degree.

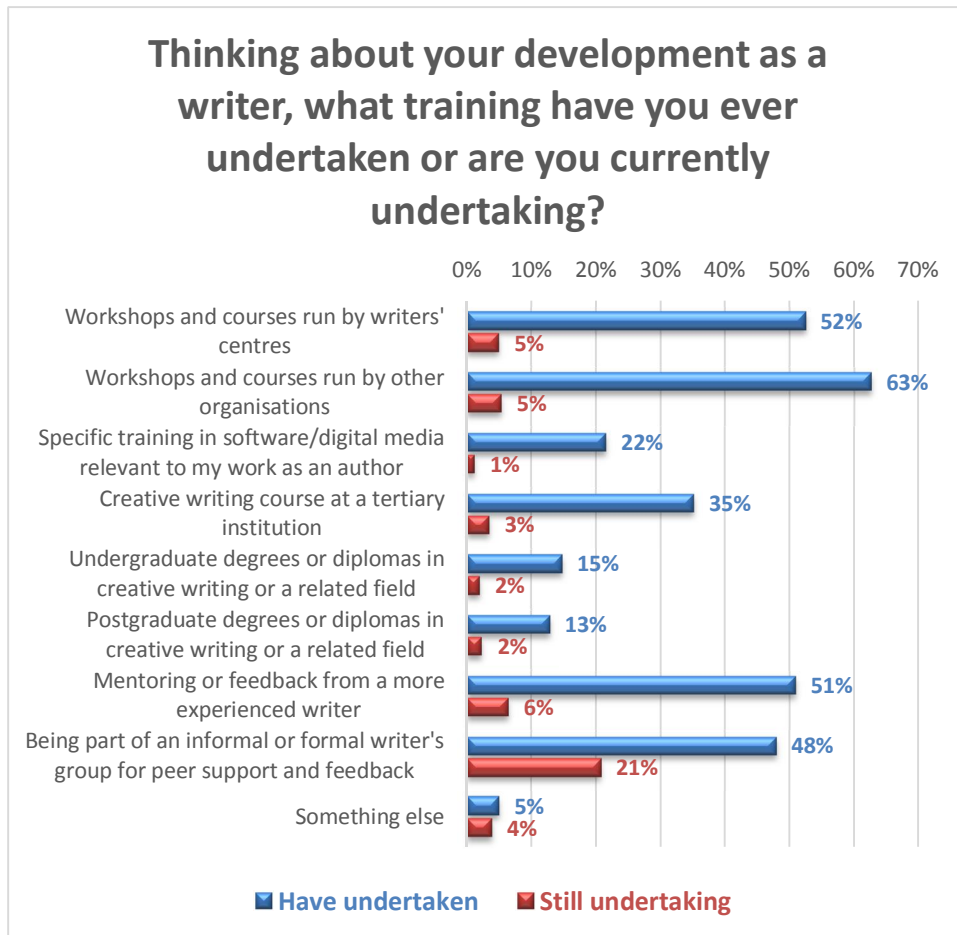


Academic authors (89%), young adult literature book authors (64%) and education authors (51%) were more likely to have a postgraduate degree (Master’s degree or PhD) than fiction (45%), non-fiction (43%) and children’s book authors (34%).

73% of writers in the sample had undertaken some form of training, workshops, courses, diplomas, degrees, or received mentoring/feedback from more experienced writers or had been part of an informal writers support groups to assist with their development as a writer.

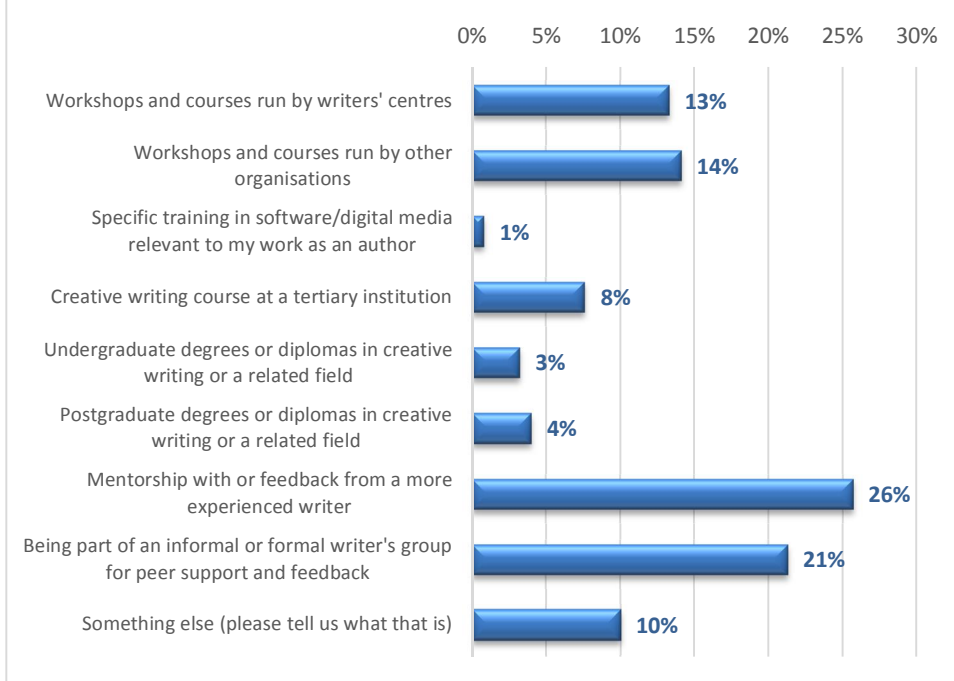
Of those who indicated they had undertaken some form of training in the past, workshops and courses run by organisations and centres were the main form of education undertaken, followed by mentoring or feedback from more experienced writers and being part of an informal or formal writer’s group for peer support and feedback.

Being part of an informal or formal writer’s group for peer support and feedback was the main form of on-going development that writers were still currently undertaking.



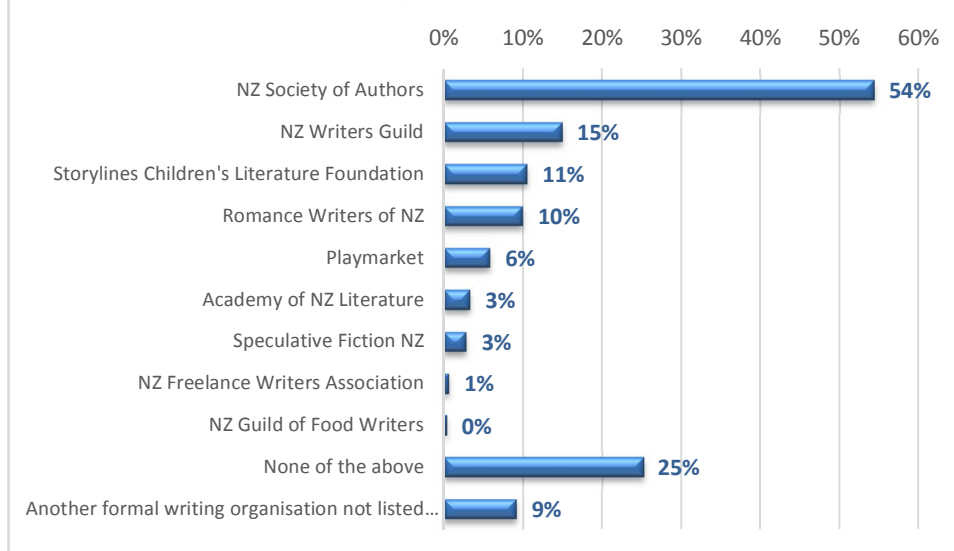
Although the main form of writing development undertaken in the past were workshops and courses run by organisations and centres, more writers in the sample felt that mentoring or feedback from more experienced writers and being part of an informal or formal writer’s group for peer support and feedback were more important in helping them improve their writing.

Which of these types of training or writing development, if any, do you believe was most important in helping to improve your writing?



As indicated in the following chart, more than half of the writers in the sample were members of NZ Society of Authors. 15% were members of NZ Writers guild, 11% members of Storylines Children’s Literature Foundation and 10% members of Romance Writers of NZ.

Are you a member of any of the following organisations?



Overall, book authors were most likely to be members of NZ Society of Authors, with around half of children's book authors and young adult literature book authors also being members of Storylines Children's Literature Foundation.

Generally, academic and education authors were not members of an organisation, while the majority of screenwriters belonged to the NZ Writers Guild.

Playwrights were most likely to be members of Playmarket and NZ Writers Guild.

5. Time spent writing

5.1 Average time spent writing

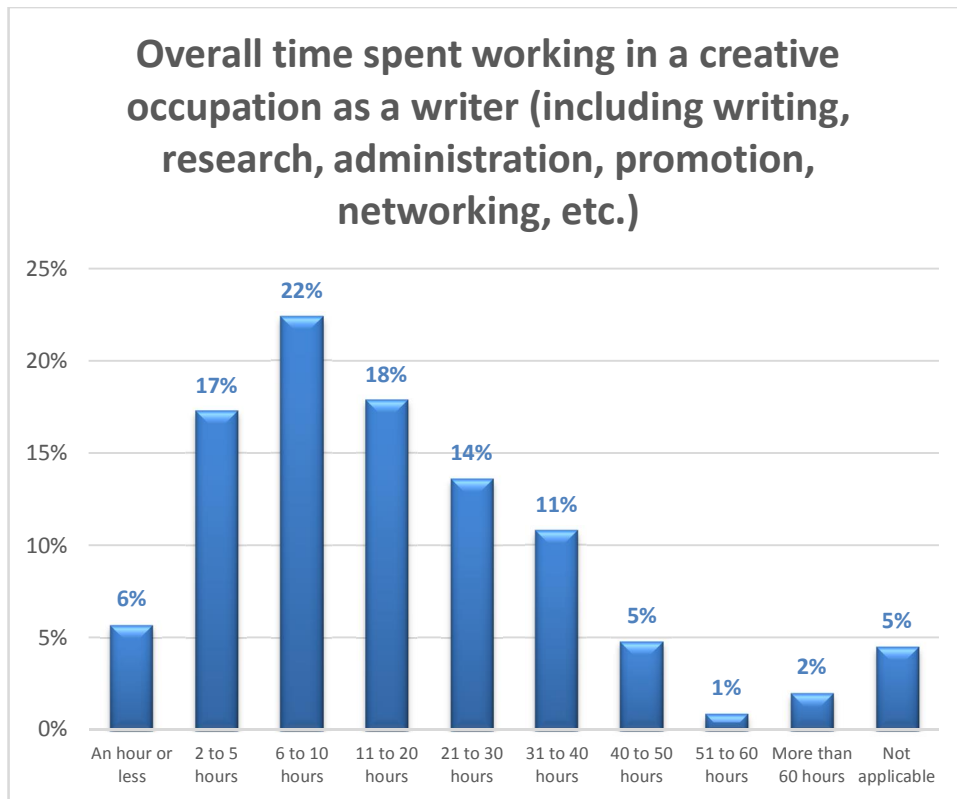
In order to gain an understanding of the allocation of working time by writers to their writing activity, respondents were asked to say how much time each week they spent on average on:

- Working in their creative occupation as a writer (including writing, research, administration, promotion, networking, etc.)
- Working at another occupation which uses your skills as a writer (including editing, teaching creative writing, proofreading, writing advertising copy, journalism, book reviewing, etc.)
- Working on creative work in another creative field not related to your writing
- Working at another occupation that is unrelated to your writing and unrelated to a creative field
- Studying or undergoing training
- Voluntary or unpaid work

Time spent was recorded using hour ranges. Weighted averages gave approximate average times for each activity.

The following chart shows that the time spent on writers' creative occupation as a writer is primarily clustered between 2 and 40 hours a week – a wide range - with an average of 17 hours a week.

Journalists, authors of fiction or children's books and television screenwriters tended to spend more time writing than average; non-fiction and education authors and film screenwriters tended to spend below average time on writing each week.



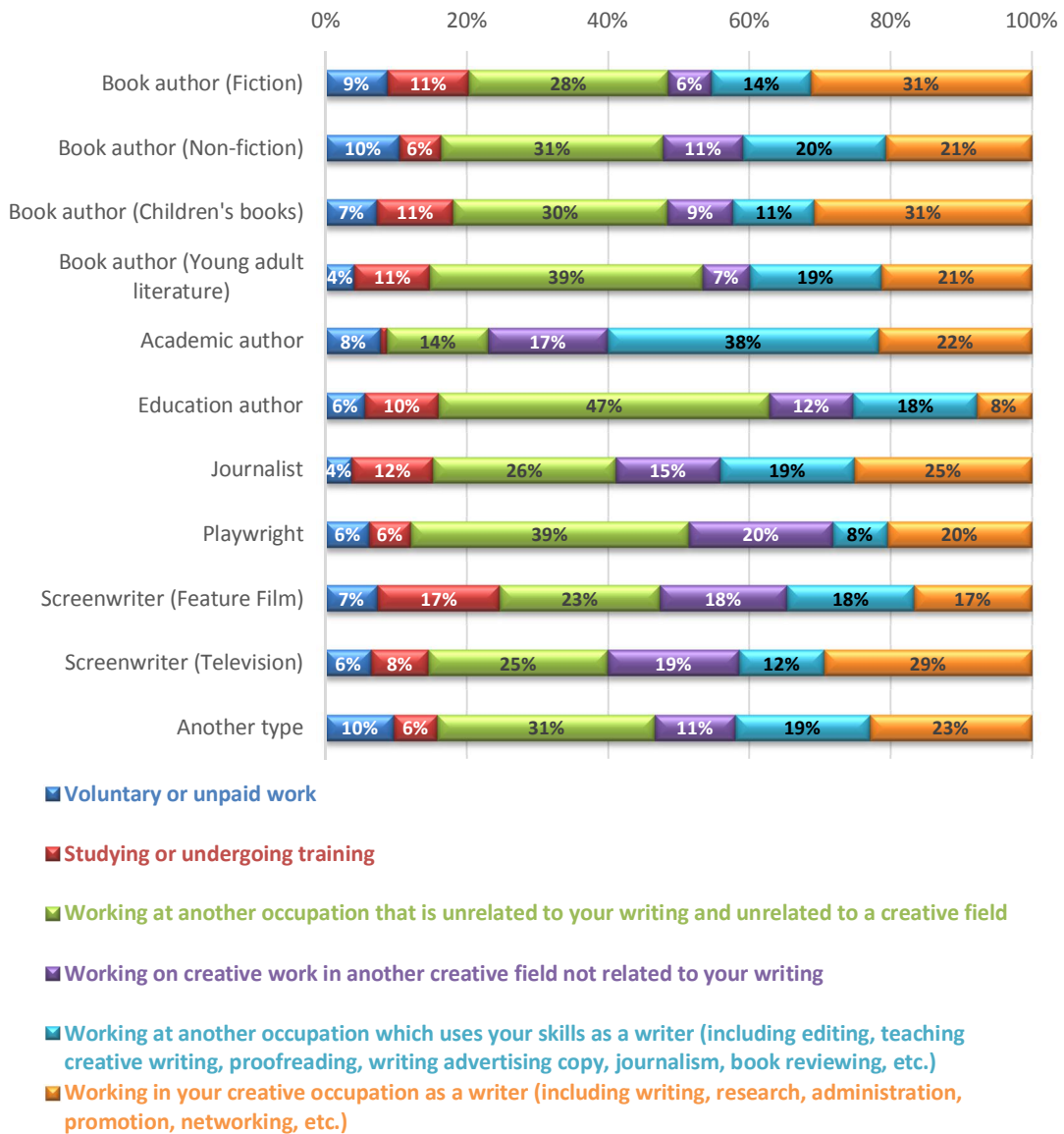
An average of 12 hours a week was spent working at another occupation which used their skills as a writer, 8 hours a week on working on creative work in another creative field not related to their writing, 7.5 hours studying or undergoing training and 5.5 hours doing voluntary or unpaid work.

The largest part of writers' time was in working at another occupation that was unrelated to their writing and unrelated to a creative field; on average, 23 hours per week. Writers of young adult literature, playwrights and education authors tended to spend above average time working in other occupations.

Including their writing activity, respondents reported an average of 73.5 hours per week, with writers of young adult literature, journalists, playwrights and television screenwriters reporting average hours above the overall result.

The average percentage of time spent by primary writing category is shown in the following chart. Screenwriter categories which had only a few respondents are not included in the chart.

**On average, how much time would you currently spend each week on these activities?
- Percentage of total time**

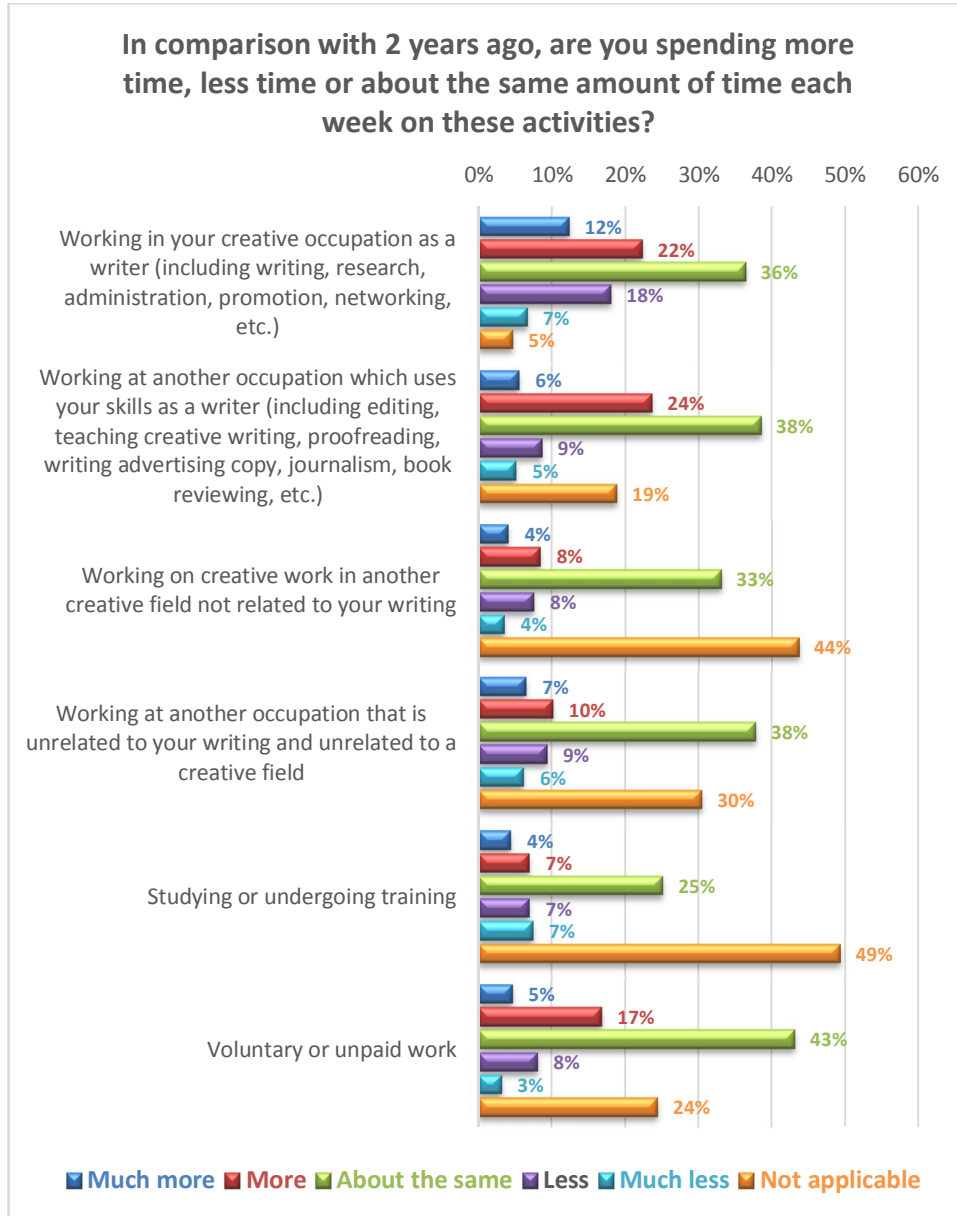


5.2 Change in time spent writing

In addition to asking how much time was spent each week on the various activities, respondents were asked if they were now spending more or less time on those activities than 2 years ago.

Overall, the writers responding to the survey had spent largely the same amount of time on the different activities measured as two years ago. This is demonstrated in the following chart. However, there were differences between the various writing categories:

- Fiction writers were spending more time writing and marginally less time on studying/training and working at another occupation.
- Non-fiction writers were spending slightly less time writing and studying/training.
- Television screenwriters were spending significantly less time writing.



Those who were spending more time writing were now spending 11 hours or more a week doing so. Those who were spending less time were now spending up to 5 hours a week writing.

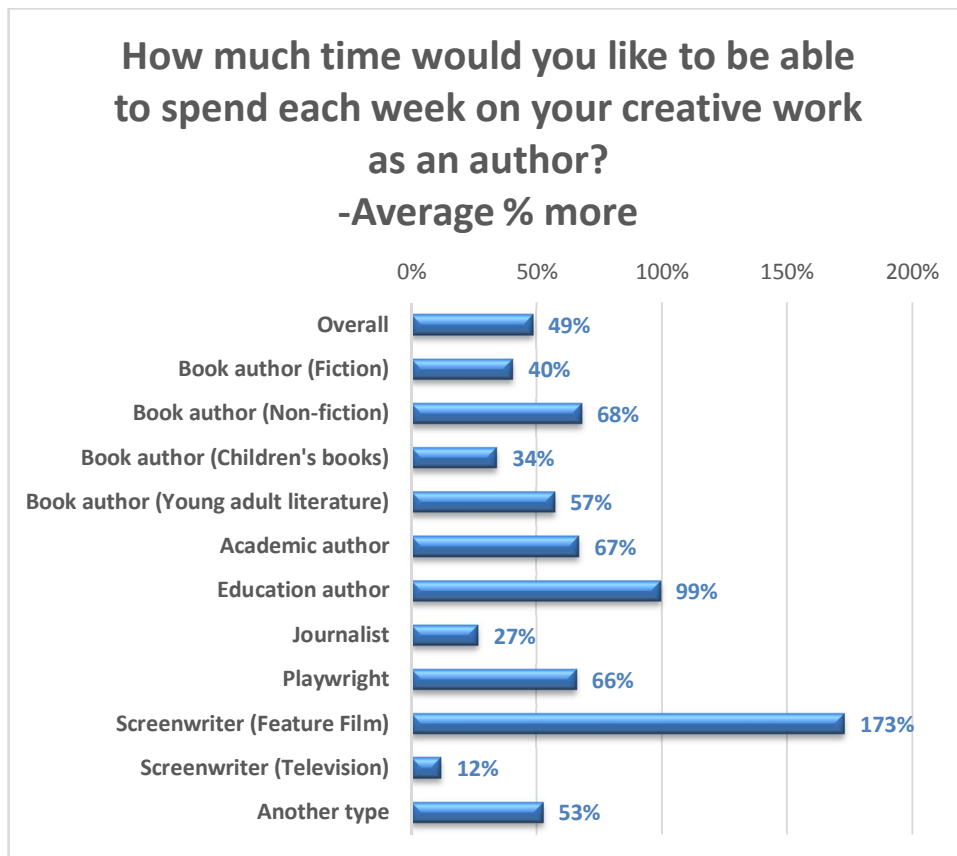
5.3 Preferred time to spend writing

On average, writers would like to be able to spend 25 hours a week writing, nearly 50% more than they are currently spending.

Feature film screenwriters would like to spend more than double the time they are spending now; they were currently spending 12 hours a week, on average – one of the two lowest of the measured writing categories.

Education authors would like to double the time they are spending while Television screenwriters, who are currently spending the highest average time writing each week (28 hours), are only looking for a 12% increase.

The relative percentage increases in time sought by writers in each of the categories is shown in the following chart.

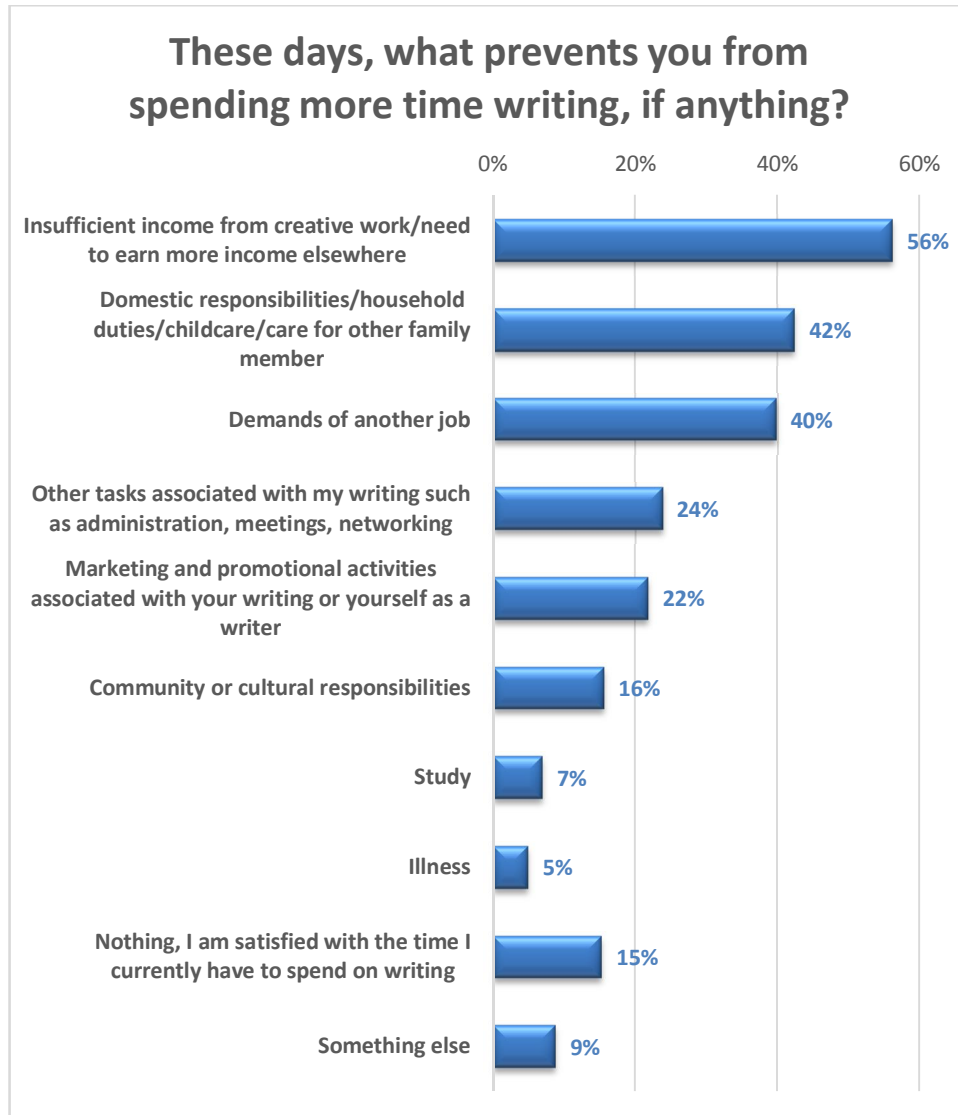


5.4 Barriers to writing time

The need to work to maintain income, the demands of another job and domestic/household responsibilities were given as the primary barriers to spending more time writing.

On average, male writers listed just over two barriers while female writers listed nearly 2.5. Note that domestic responsibilities were a barrier for both, although at a higher level for female writers. Insufficient income was more of a barrier for female writers than male writers.

Female writers were also more likely than male writers to nominate marketing activities, promotional activities and other tasks associated with their writing as barriers to spending more time writing.



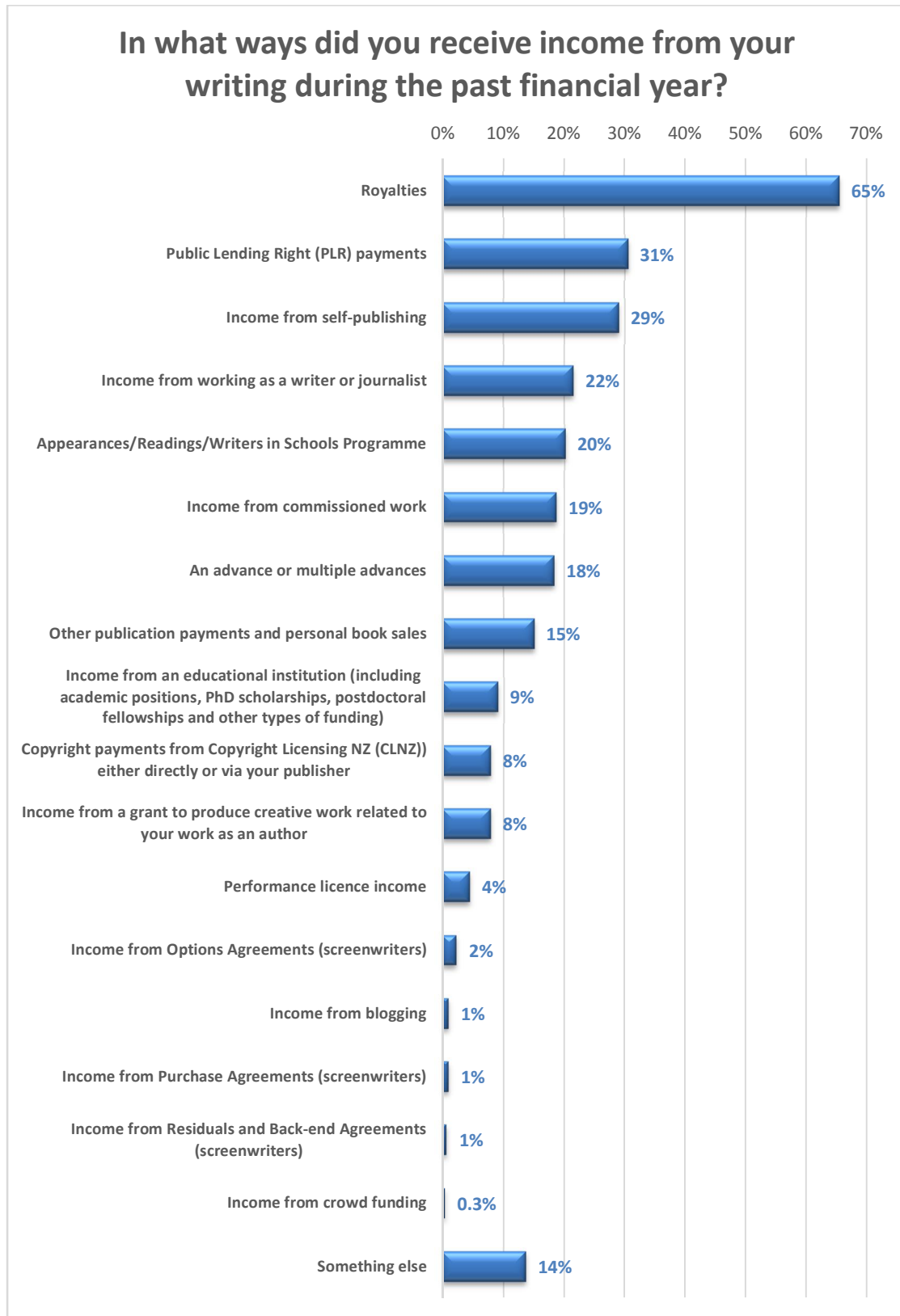
Insufficient income from writing declined as a barrier once writing time per week exceeded 20 hours per week. Domestic/household responsibilities, demands of another job and other tasks associated with writing were a barrier regardless of time spent writing.

6. Writers' income

Using income bands, respondents were asked to give their personal and household incomes. Weighted average figures detailed in this section of the report were calculated using the mid-points of these income bands.

6.1 Source of writing earnings

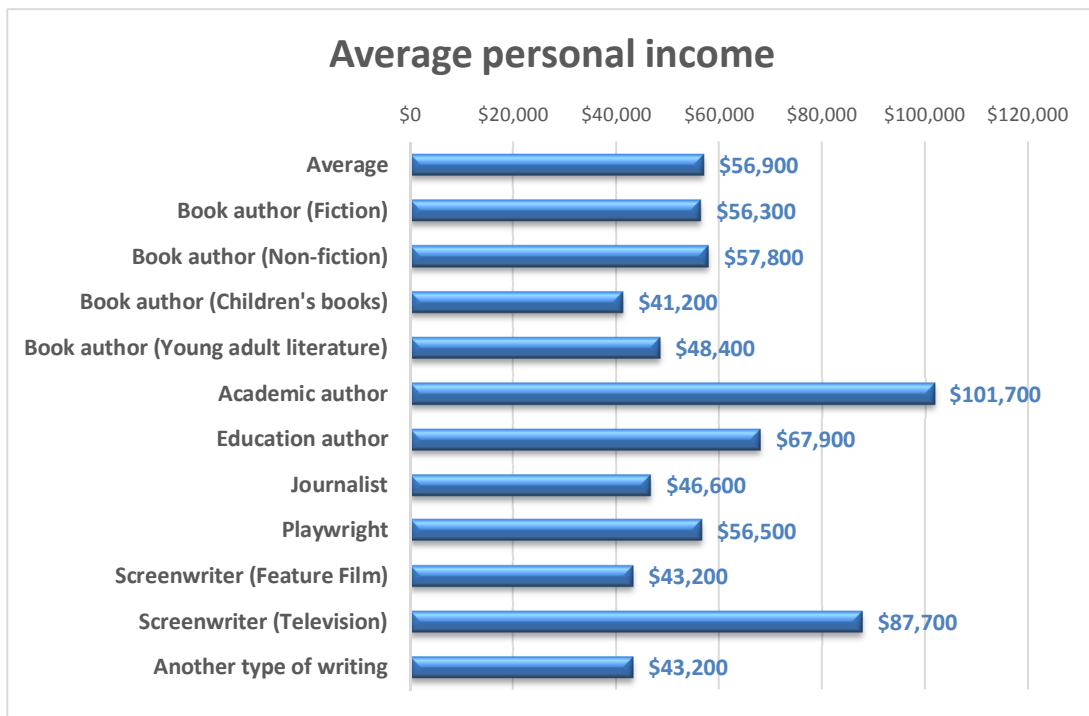
Respondents were asked how they had received income from their writing during the past financial year. Royalties were by far the most common sources of writing earnings.



6.2 Personal and household incomes

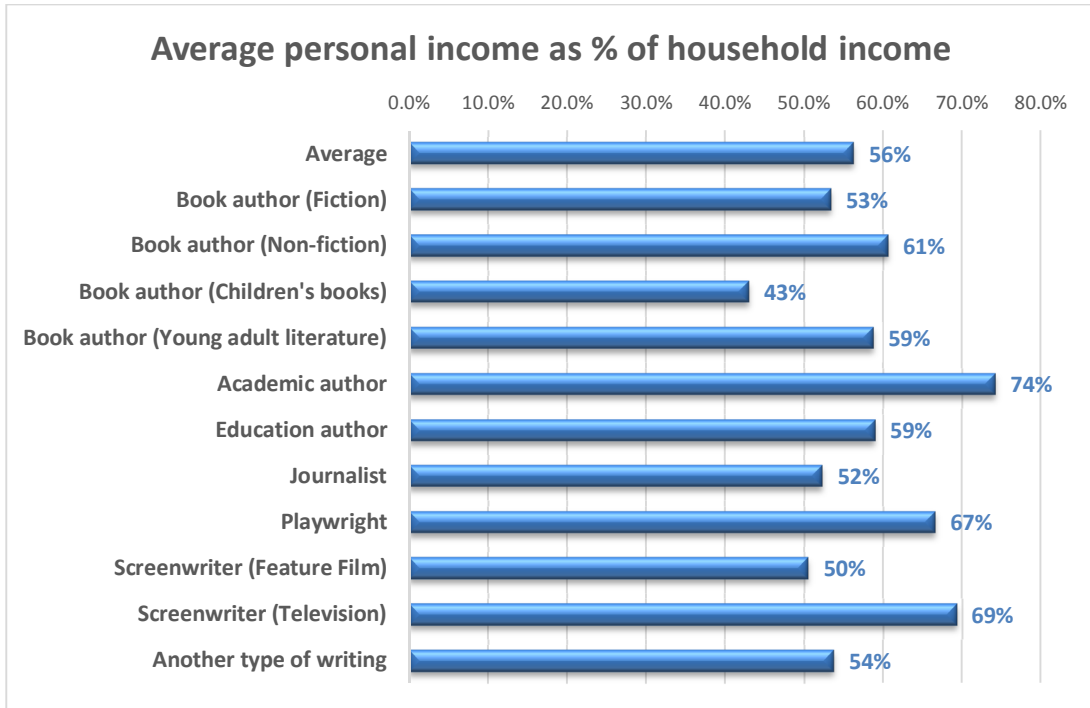
On average, writers in the survey earned \$56,900 per annum. As shown below, academic authors, television scriptwriters and education authors had above average personal incomes.

Female writers in the sample had total personal incomes 10% below male writers in the sample; however, as shown in section 6.3, this does not mean that they were earning less from their writing.



Writers' average personal incomes were 56% of their average household incomes. Male writers' personal incomes were 58% of their household incomes; female writers' incomes 53%.

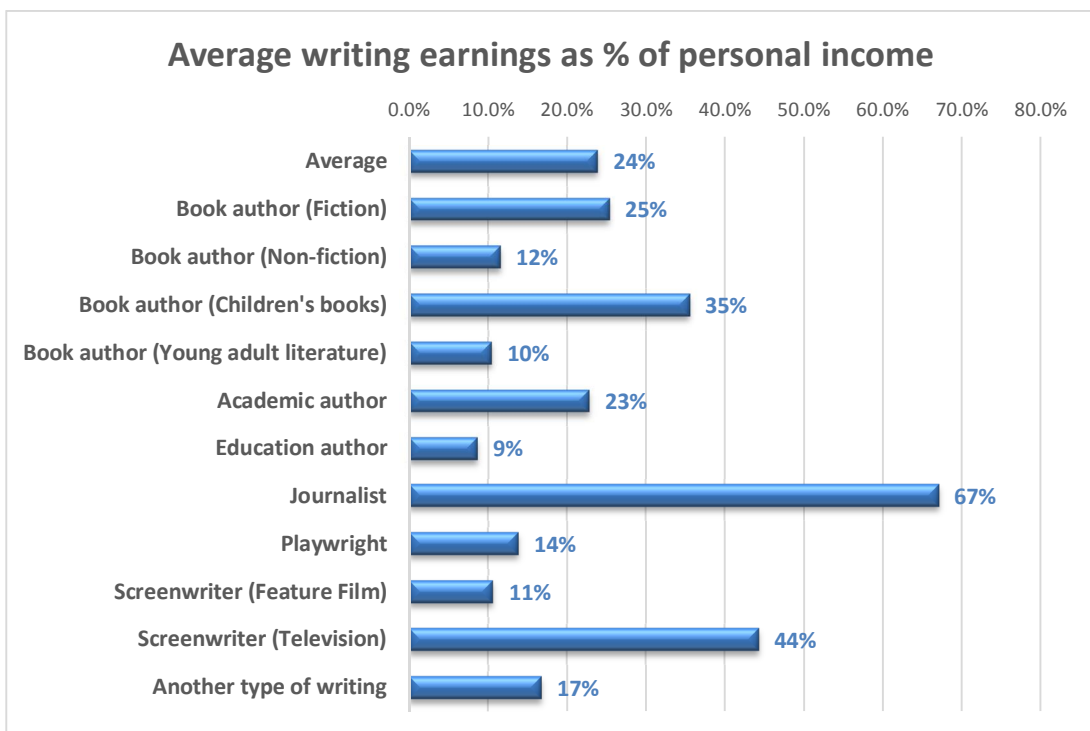
The survey did not ask specifically whether writers were the sole contributors to their household incomes. However, the average percentages shown in the following chart suggest that because the percentage of household income represented by their personal income is higher for academic authors, screenwriters, playwrights and non-fiction authors, there is likely to be a higher proportion of sole contributors to their household incomes among writers in these categories.



6.3 Income from writing

Writers earned an average of 24% of their personal income, or around \$13,500 per annum, from their writing. As shown in the following chart, television scriptwriters, journalists and academic authors earned the most from their writing.

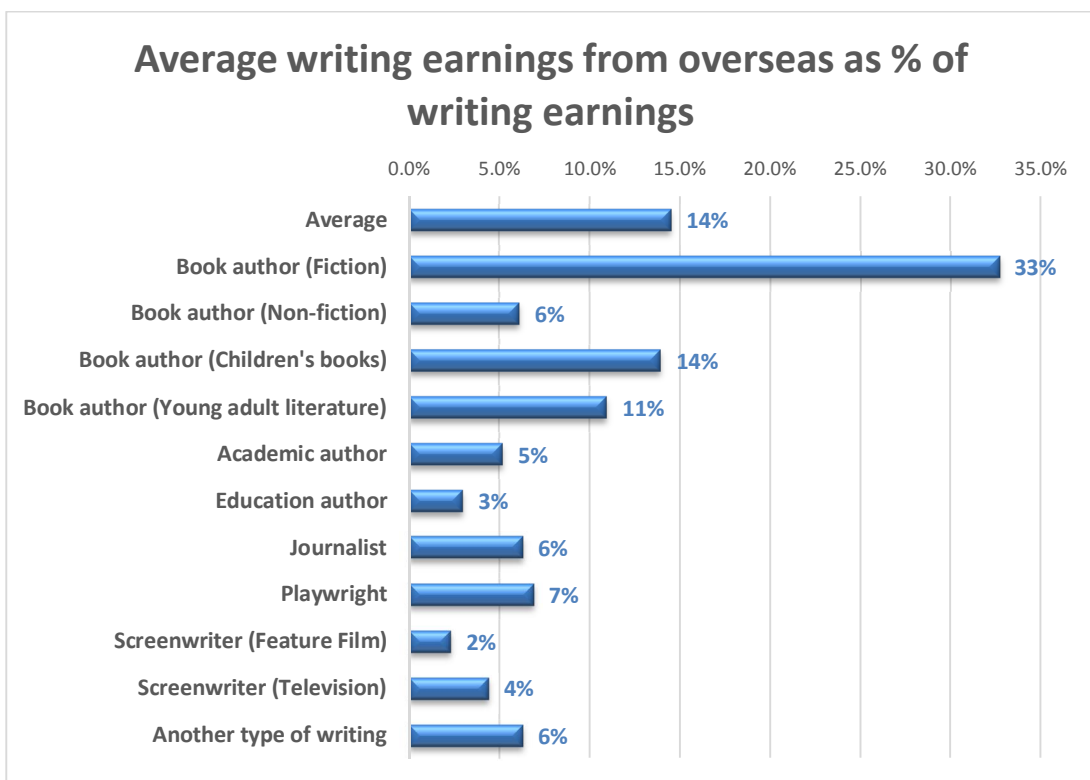
Female writers earned 10% more per annum from their writing (an average of \$13,800 per annum) than male writers (\$12,600 per annum).



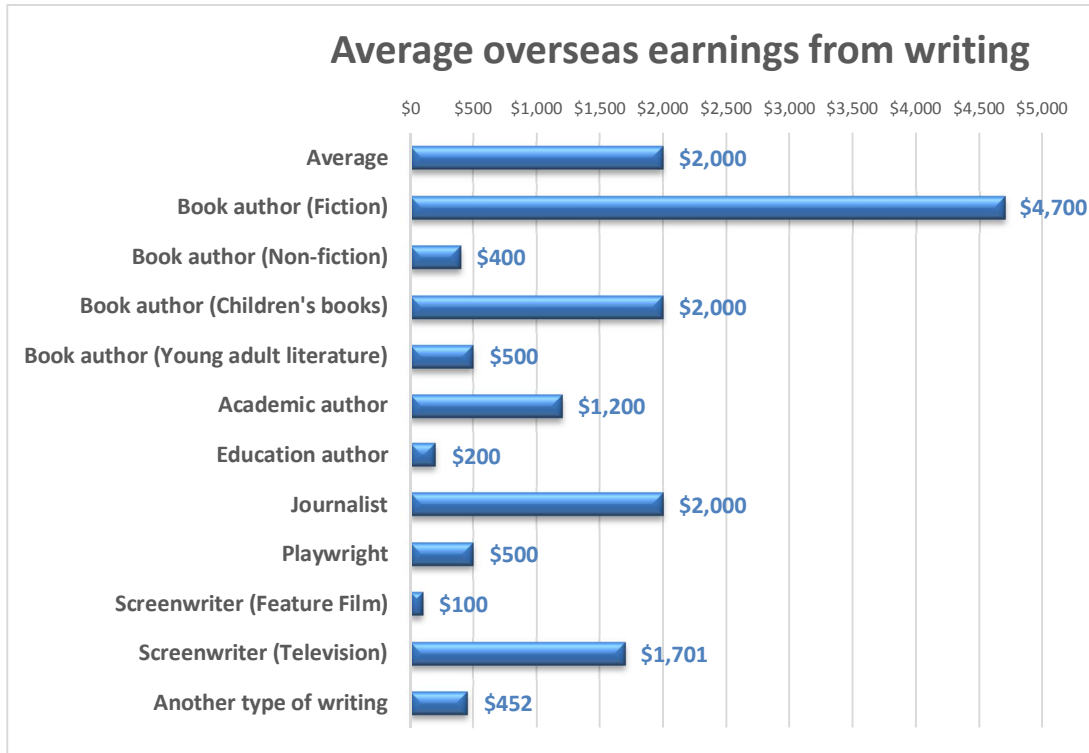


6.4 Overseas income from writing

Income earned overseas from writing average averaged 14% of total writing earnings, although an average of 33% of their writing earnings was earned overseas by fiction writers.



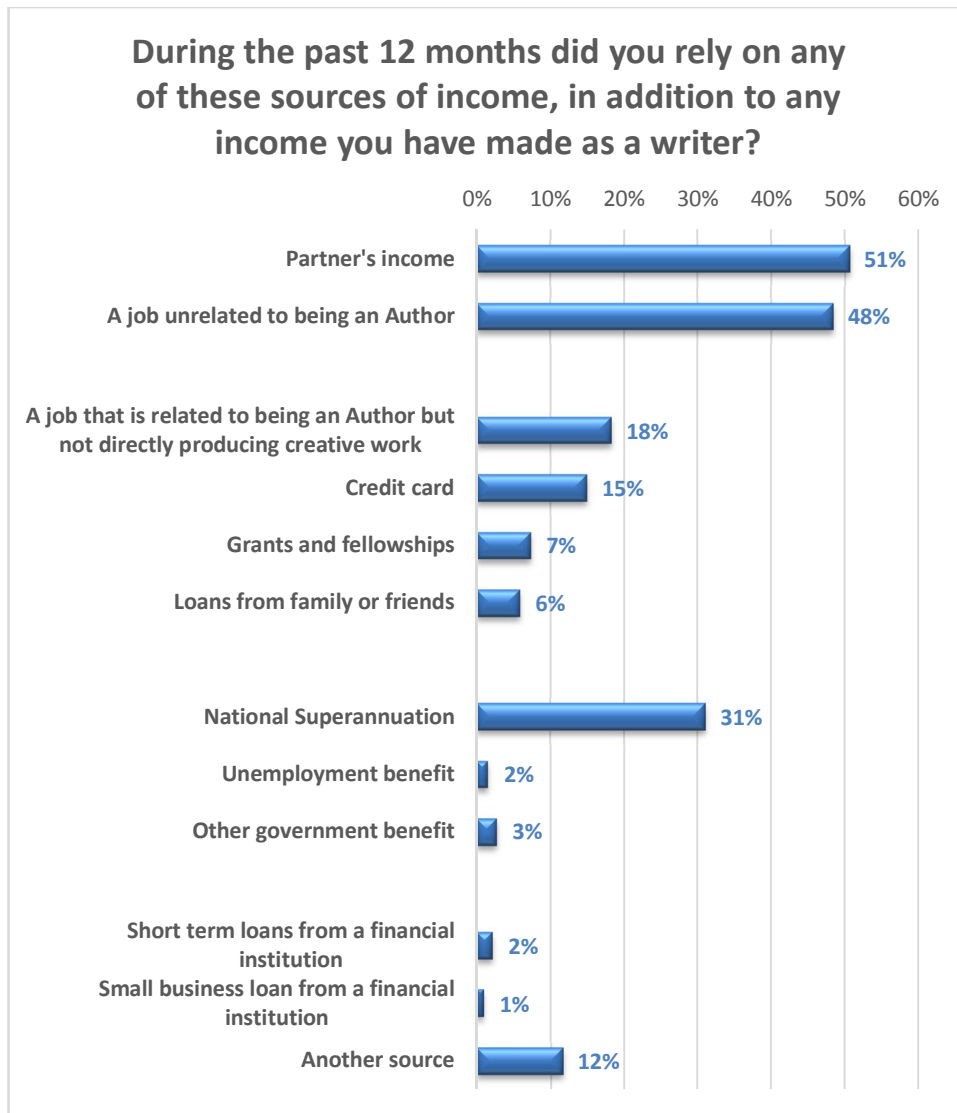
In dollar terms, the average amount earned overseas from writing was \$2,000; fiction writers earned more than double that from overseas.



6.5 Reliance on other sources of income

Half the respondents said they relied on their partners' income, in addition to any income from writing, and nearly two-thirds said they relied on having a job. For nearly half of the writers, the job was unrelated to being an author.

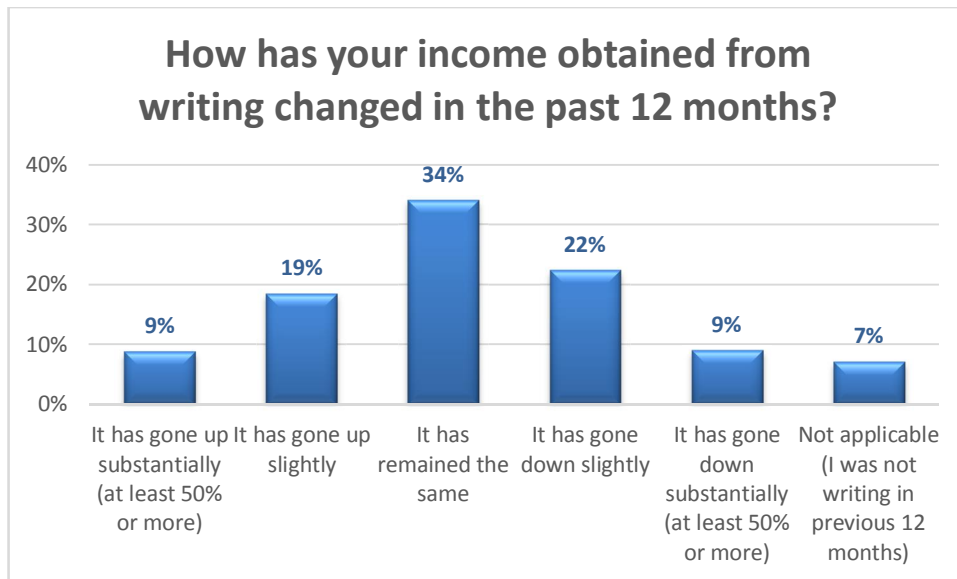
Nearly a third said they relied on National Superannuation; this reflects the age distribution of the respondents, with 32% aged 65 years or over.



6.6 Change in income

Writers were asked whether their income had changed at all in the past 12 months.

It appears that writing incomes may have declined marginally: overall 27% said their income had increased in the past 12 months, while 32% said it had decreased. 34% said their income had remained the same over the past 12 months.

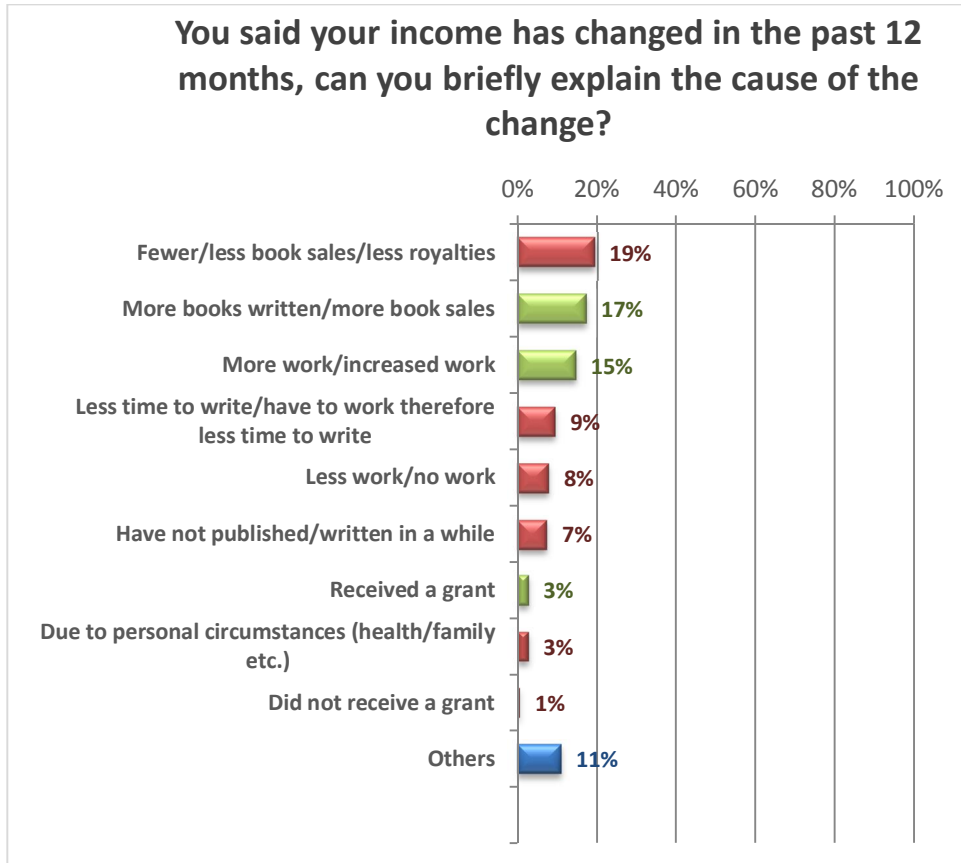


The main reasons mentioned for a **decrease** in income in the past 12 months were:

- Fewer/less book sales/less royalties (19%);
- Less time to write/having to work and therefore less time to write (9%);
- Less work/no work (8%);
- Having not published/written in a while (7%);
- Personal circumstances such as health or family related issues (3%) and;
- Not receiving a grant (1%).

The main reasons mentioned for an **increase** in income in the past 12 months were:

- More books written/more book sales (17%);
- More work/increased work (15%) and;
- Receiving a grant (3%).



A selection of comments under the main topics follow:

Decrease in income

- **Fewer/less book sales/less royalties:**

“Book sold well in first few months after publication - sales slowed after 9 months.”

“Book royalties down.”

“Book sales slowed down.”

“Fewer books sold so received less royalties.”

“My last published book was 2 years ago so royalties for that are falling.”

- **Less time to write/have to work therefore less time to write:**

“Having to work more hours therefore there is less time to write and less time to spend on marketing and advertising activities.”

“I am forced to take on more paid work to cover basic living costs.”

“I have gone back to full time work, have less time to write, and have therefore released fewer books.”

“I have not had time to complete another book this year.”

“I haven’t had a new book published recently as I’m now working part-time and so have less time to write and get new work out.”

- **Less work/no work:**

"2015: Invited to present at three literary festivals overseas. 2016: No literary festivals."

"Fewer contracts available for my writing/communications work."

"Lower royalties from latest book (published 2014), less paid work such as tutoring writing, editing."

"I have no new work published. Income from writing is minimal."

"Not so much contractual work, less payment."

- **Have not published/written in a while:**

"No new publication."

"Unpublished in this period."

"I have not had a book published in recent years so royalty income has dropped."

"I have not had a new book published for three years."

"Have not had a book published since 2011 so royalties have decreased."

Increase in income

- **More books written/more book sales:**

"...My royalties has increased as I have written more books."

"Another book therefore more royalties."

"A few more book sales."

"I published a novel in 2015."

"Increased readership and sales."

- **More work/increased work:**

"An increase in paid school visits and paid workshops, several one off projects and a significant one off royalty payment."

"Employed to write a feature film for a large production company in NZ."

"...I've been getting book review jobs every couple of months, more regularly than before."

"Increase in demand for copywriting services, especially for the web."

"Increased hours in my work as a freelance copywriter."

- **Received a grant:**

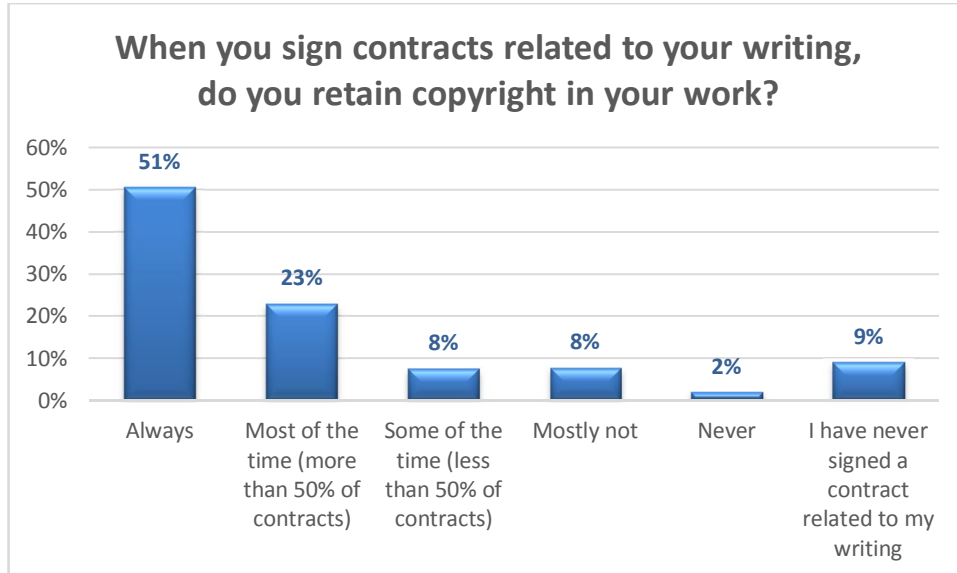
"Successful grant application and increased book sales."

"I applied for more grant money than I have previously."

"A grant boosted my income."

7. Copyrights and contracts

More than half of the writers in the sample indicated they always retained copyright in their work when signing contracts and 21% did so most of the time (i.e. in more than 50% of their contracts).

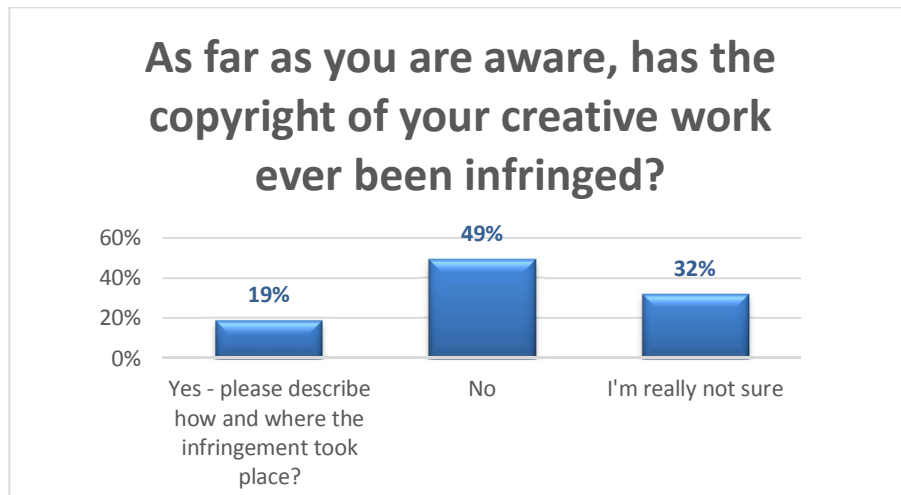


More than half of fiction (52%), non-fiction (53%), children's books (53%) and young adult literature (55%) authors always signed a contract to retain the copyright in their work, while 17% of academic authors mostly did not.

40% of journalists either did so most of the time (less than 50% of contracts) or mostly did not.

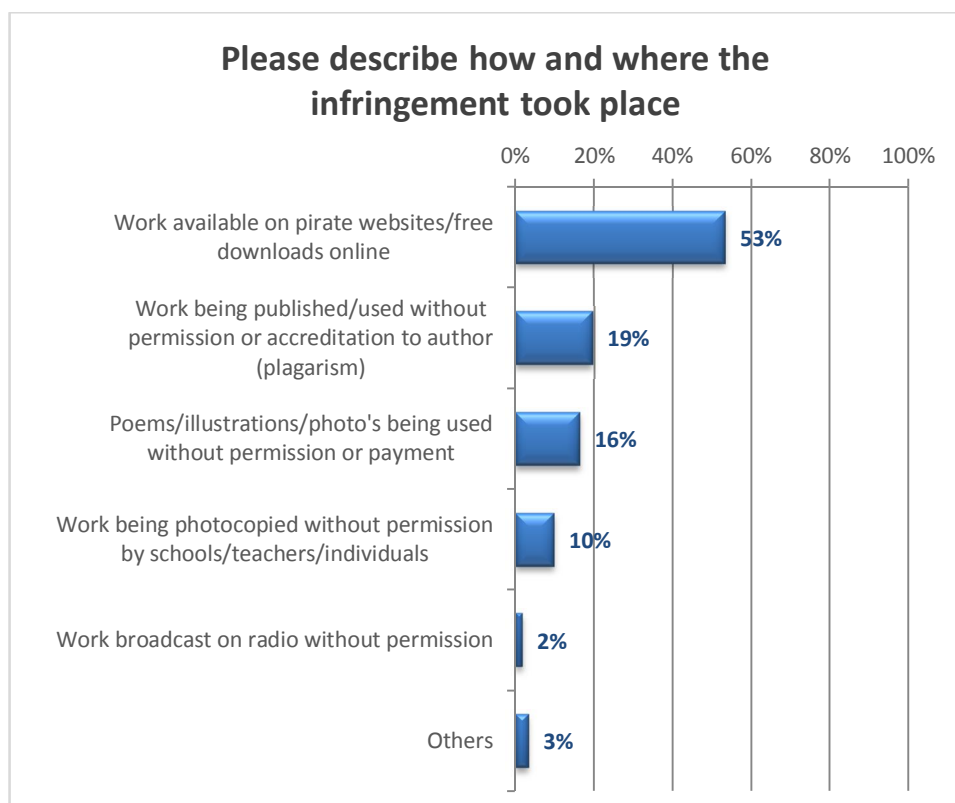
Feature film (32%) and short film (25%) screenwriters were more likely than others to have never signed a contract related to their writing.

Overall, 19% of writers in the sample had the copyright of their creative work infringed in the past.



Those whose work had been infringed in the past were more likely to be journalists (27%), fiction book authors (24%), academic authors (22%) and children’s book authors (21%). 64% of young adult book authors and 51% of education authors were not sure whether the copyright of their creative work had ever been infringed.

Writers who indicated that the copyright of their creative work had been infringed in the past were asked to describe how and where the infringement took place. As indicated in the following chart, more than half of writers described how their work was freely available on pirate websites/free downloads online. 19% also explained how their work was being published/used without their permission or given accreditation.



A selection of comments under the main topics follow:

- **Work available on pirate websites/free downloads online:**

"I see several of my books being downloaded for free. One book got on DISQUS and downloaded 2038 times for free."

"My debut novel appears to be available on a pirate website."

"Pirated copies online."

"Downloading/ torrent sites."

"EBook's pirated."

- **Work being published/used without permission or accreditation to author (plagiarism):**

"Blog posts and articles re-used without being attributed to me."

"My work (in a previous existence as a university academic) has been plagiarised in two PhD theses. Not sure whether I should regard this as a complement or not!"

"I frequently see statements based on published research used without acknowledgement."

"Website copied almost word for word."

"Research in our book used by film maker without acknowledgement or payment."

- **Poems/illustrations/photo's being used without permission or payment:**

"My illustration was blatantly copied by a jigsaw company."

"Poems published on blogs without permission."

"Not writing but my work. A photo of mine was spotted illustrating an American online news story."

"On 2 occasions, composers have used my poetry for choral compositions without me knowing until the works were performed by the choirs, in public."

- **Work being photocopied without permission by schools/teachers/individuals:**

"Schools photocopy my educational resources and plays all the time."

"A school photocopied more than permitted."

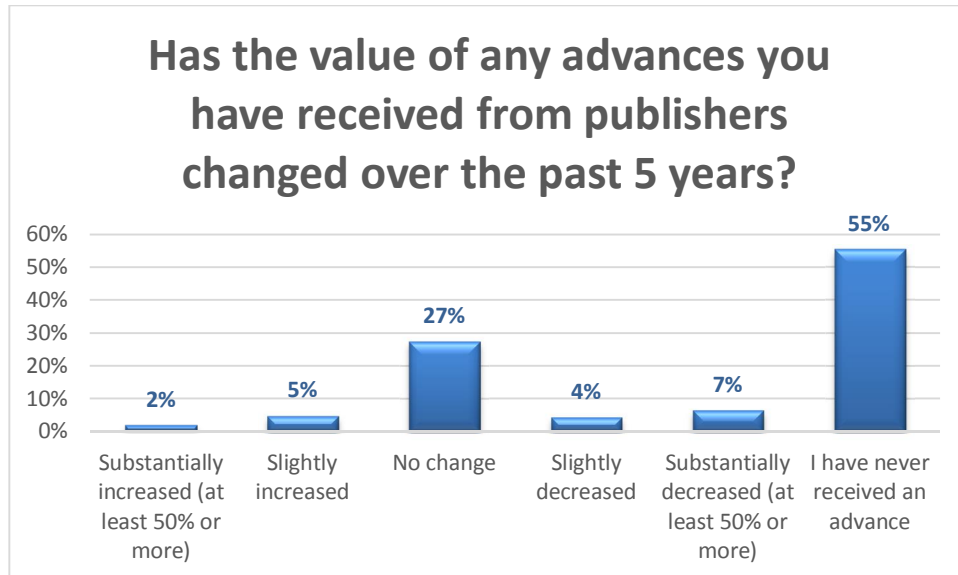
"Teachers photocopying material."

"People photocopied material I wrote."

"Teachers photocopying my books."

8. Advances

More than half of the writers in the sample had never received an advance and 27% of those who had, said the value of the advances received from publishers had remained the same over the past 5 years.



Of the writers who had never received an advance, 68% were feature film screenwriters, 61% were academic authors, 55% were fiction book authors and 53% were journalists.

Of those who said it had substantially decreased in the past 5 years, 11% were children’s book authors and 9% were young adult book authors.

9. Royalty rates

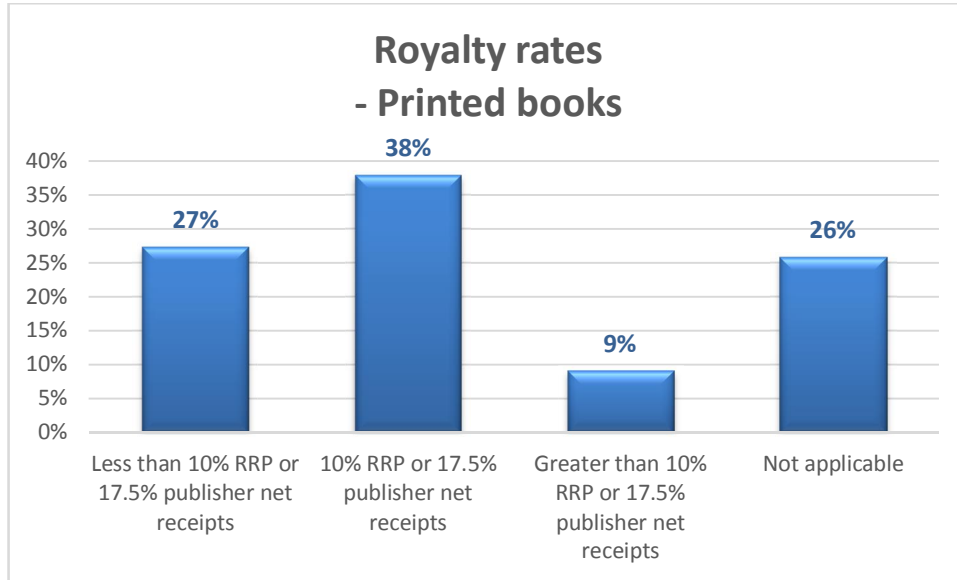
9.1 Fiction, non-fiction, children’s books and young adult literature

Writers whose writing was in fiction, non-fiction, children’s books or in young adult literature, or who had published in these categories, were asked about their usual royalty rates for printed books, e-book/digital publishing sales by their publisher and subsidiary rights including third party digital publishing sales.

26% of these writers said that royalties from printed books was “Not applicable”; i.e. they received no royalties from printed books. Around half of those who were earning royalties for printed books received them at 10% RRP or 17.5% of publishers net receipts, while nearly 4 out of 10 received less than that.

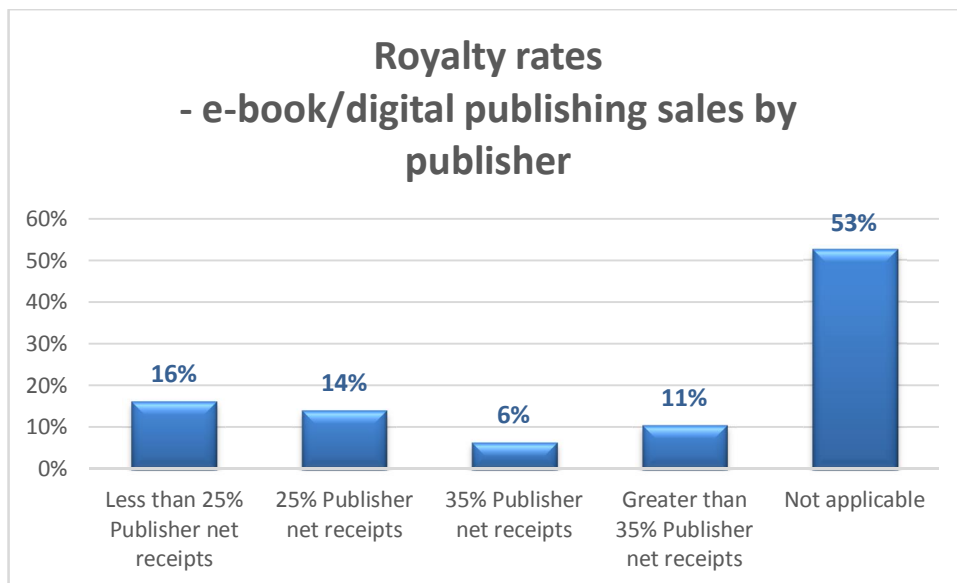
Only 1 in 10 received more than 10% or 17.5% publisher net receipts.

Authors of children’s books were more likely than authors in other categories to be receiving less than 10% RRP or 17.5% net publisher receipts. Although the subsample of writers of young adult literature is small, it appears that they were significantly more likely to be receiving 10% RRP or 17.5% publisher net receipts.



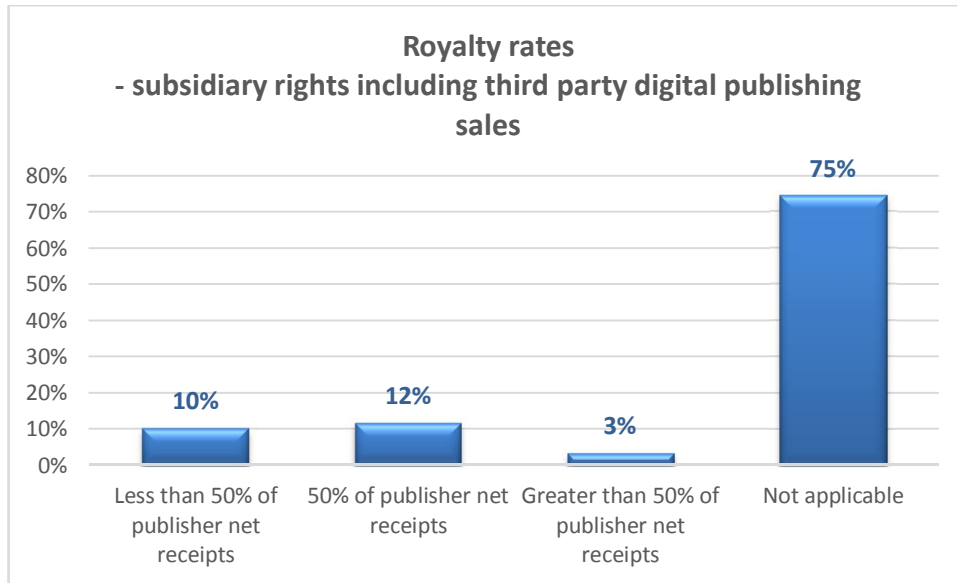
53% of fiction, non-fiction, children’s books or young adult literature writers did not receive royalties from e-book/digital publishing sales by their publisher. Where they did, there was a mixture of rates, with 2 out of 3 receiving 25% of publisher net receipts or less.

Over half of the writers of children’s book were not receiving e-book/digital publishing royalties. No writers of young adult literature reported receiving more than 25% of publisher net receipts.



Among fiction, non-fiction, children’s books or young adult literature writers who received royalties from subsidiary rights including third party digital publishing sales, 4 out of 10 received less than 50% of publisher’s net receipts, and nearly half received 50% of publisher’s net receipts.

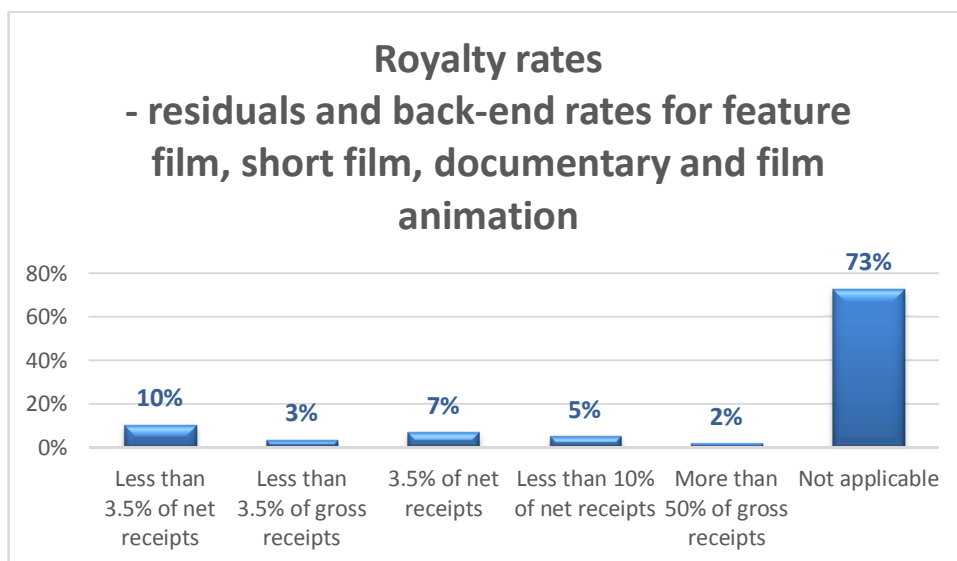
Half of the writers of young adult literature in the survey were receiving 50% of net receipts.



9.2 Feature films, short films, documentaries and film animation

Writers in the feature film, short film, documentary and film animation categories were asked to nominate their usual residuals and back-end rates.

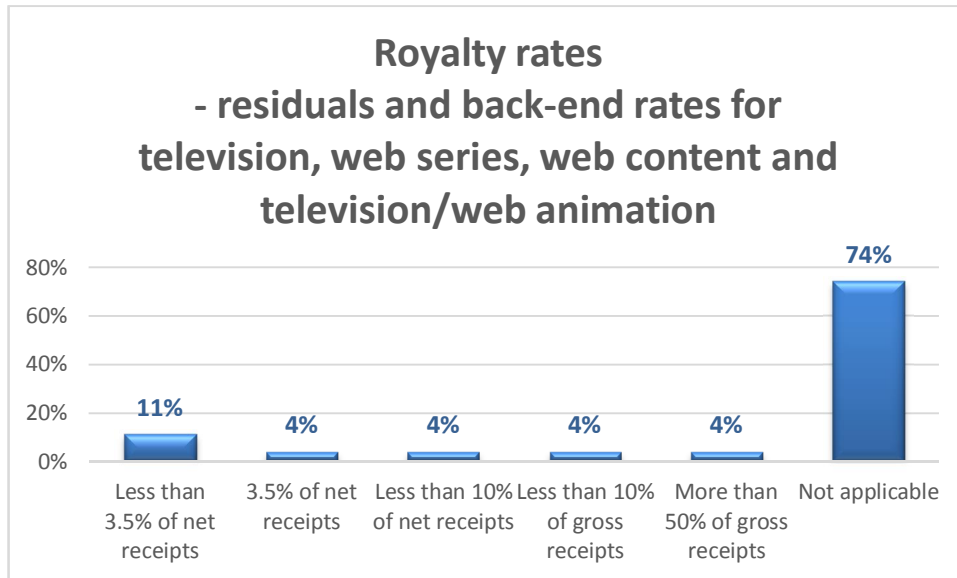
73% chose “Not applicable”. Of the remainder, note that the rates are most likely to be 3.5% or less, either of gross or net receipts.



9.3 Television, web series, web content and television/web animation

Writers in the television, web series, web content and television/web animation categories were also asked about their usual residuals and back-end rates.

98% chose “Not applicable”. The remainder indicated a spread of rates.



10. Moral rights

64% of writers in the sample indicated that their contracts always included moral rights clauses while 19% said theirs sometimes did. 12% however indicated that their contracts never included moral rights clauses.



Writers who indicated their contracts always included moral rights clauses were most likely to be young adult literature authors (91%), children's book authors (61%), academic authors (56%), fictions book authors (55%) and non-fiction book authors (54%).

Of those who said moral rights clauses were never included in their contracts, 20% were journalists, 17% academic authors, 17% playwrights, 14% feature film screenwriters, 12% fiction authors and 12% education authors.

11. Reversion clause

Writers were asked whether any of their contracts had ever included a reversion clause which gave their publishing rights or copyright back to them if their work was out of print or if a defined period of time had elapsed.

53% of writers indicated that their contracts had in the past contained a reversion clause; 47% said theirs had not.

Writers who were primarily education authors (53%), journalists (53%), non-fiction (41%) and fiction (37%) book authors were more likely than others **not** to have a reversion clause included in their contracts.

Young adult literature book authors (73%), children's book authors (63%) and academic authors (61%) were most likely to have a reversion clause in their contracts.

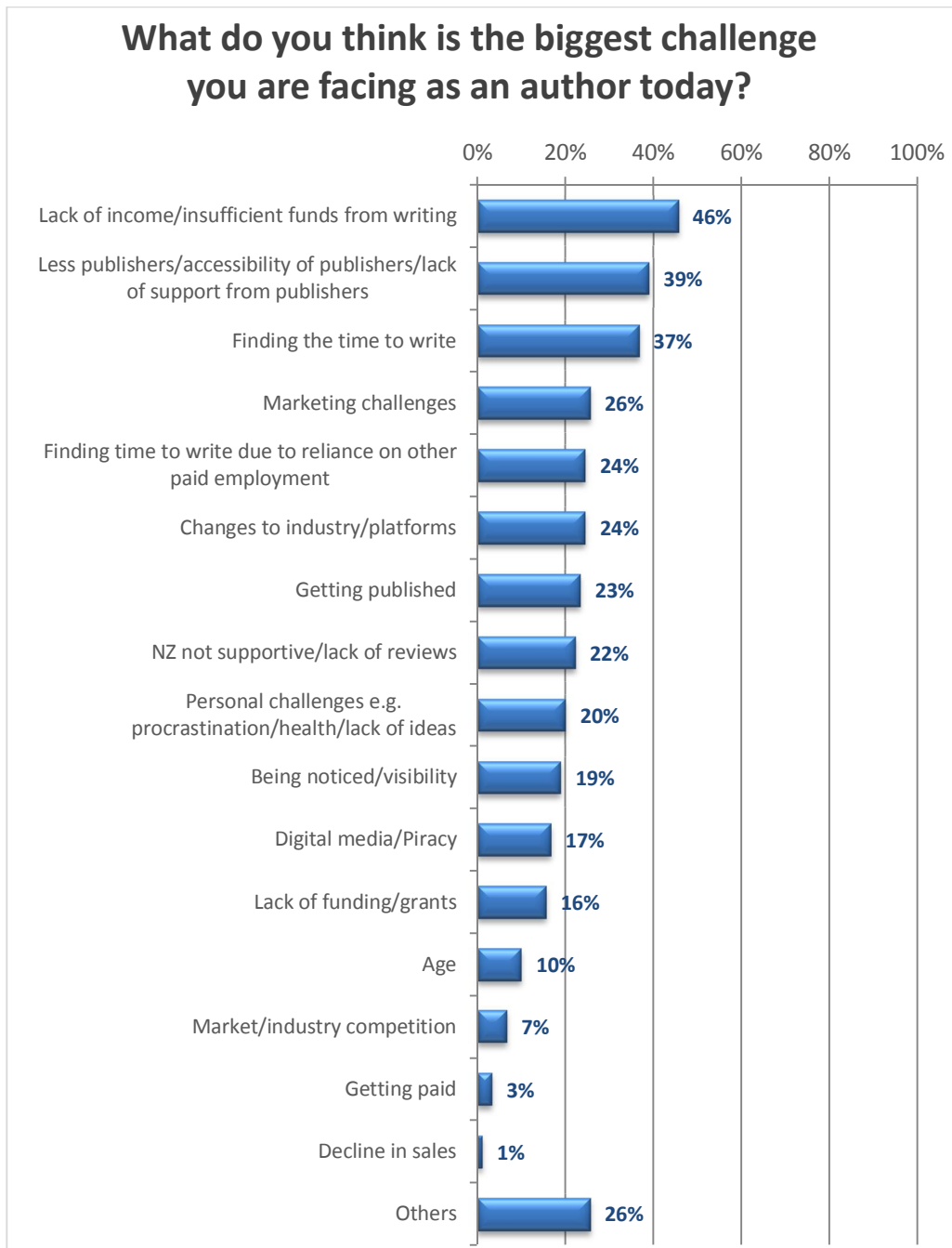
12. Challenges faced by writers

Writers were asked to say in their own words what they thought was the biggest challenge facing as an author today.

The most frequently made comments were about the financial difficulties associated with being a writer. Writers talked about how their incomes were decreasing and how they weren't able to earn a living off writing alone.

They also commented that there were fewer publishers available, or that publishers were inaccessible, while other writers felt there was a lack of support from publishers.

Finding the time to write was also one of the major challenges writers were facing. This was either finding time in general, or finding time to write because their financial reliance on other paid employment meant that time was taken up by their employment.



A selection of comments under the main topics follow:

- **Lack of income/insufficient funds from writing:**

“In New Zealand there is little or no income for most authors. In my case my book received national media attention, an award, was a finalist in another award, and was picked by the Listener as one of the 100 for the year. However most book sales came from my own personal and Kindle sales. NZ Book Retailers (especially the big chains) showed little interest in stocking the book and no interest in promoting the book. After their cut, the wholesalers cut, and the reps cut, I received less than a third of the value of each book. The general comment from the bigger retailers was there is no market for NZ

Fiction, its considered fringe, and without the money given to them from big overseas publishers they weren't interested in promoting a NZ book unless it had international success or a film to back it up."

"Lack of realistic remuneration for time taken to write a work."

"Money. Being able to live. I think about it constantly. And pray. But on the other hand, I love what I do. And love being able to do it. I have worked in the arts all my life. When you work in the arts in NZ, you subsidise it to everyone else."

"Not earning enough from writing to consider it a full time career."

"Earning money being an author is not able to be sustained- so that is a side job that I work on occasionally."

- **Less publishers/accessibility of publishers/lack of support from publishers:**

"An ever decreasing number of publishers - in books, magazines and newspapers."

"There are a very small number of NZ publishers for children's books which is also a hurdle."

"...less accessibility to traditional publishers."

"...fewer publishers, less on-going support from publishers."

"That investment in authors by publishers is no longer a 'thing'..."

"The reduction in the number of major publishers in New Zealand."

- **Finding the time to write:**

"Time."

"Finding sufficient time to write."

"Finding time to be able to write without being disturbed."

"Guarding the time I allocate to my writing."

"Having focussed time to write."

- **Marketing challenges:**

"Accessing/ building a publicity/marketing platform to publicise the work."

"Creating a platform that works at generating sales."

"Needing to spend so much time marketing myself and my work."

"Marketing is always difficult..."

"Marketing and distribution."

- **Finding time to write due to reliance on other paid employment:**

“Having the time to have quiet time and write without having to have a full-time income from other work.”

“Time constraints especially as I am reliant on a full time job.”

“Time to write. Can't afford to give up the day job.”

“Working in my chosen field and being able to afford to live. I work in an administration job 40-45 hours a week to survive and am constantly frustrated I can't spend that time writing.”

“The financial need to earn and therefore having to have paid employment to support my family. This takes away time and energy that I could put into creative writing. I no longer have the freedom to write when I choose.”

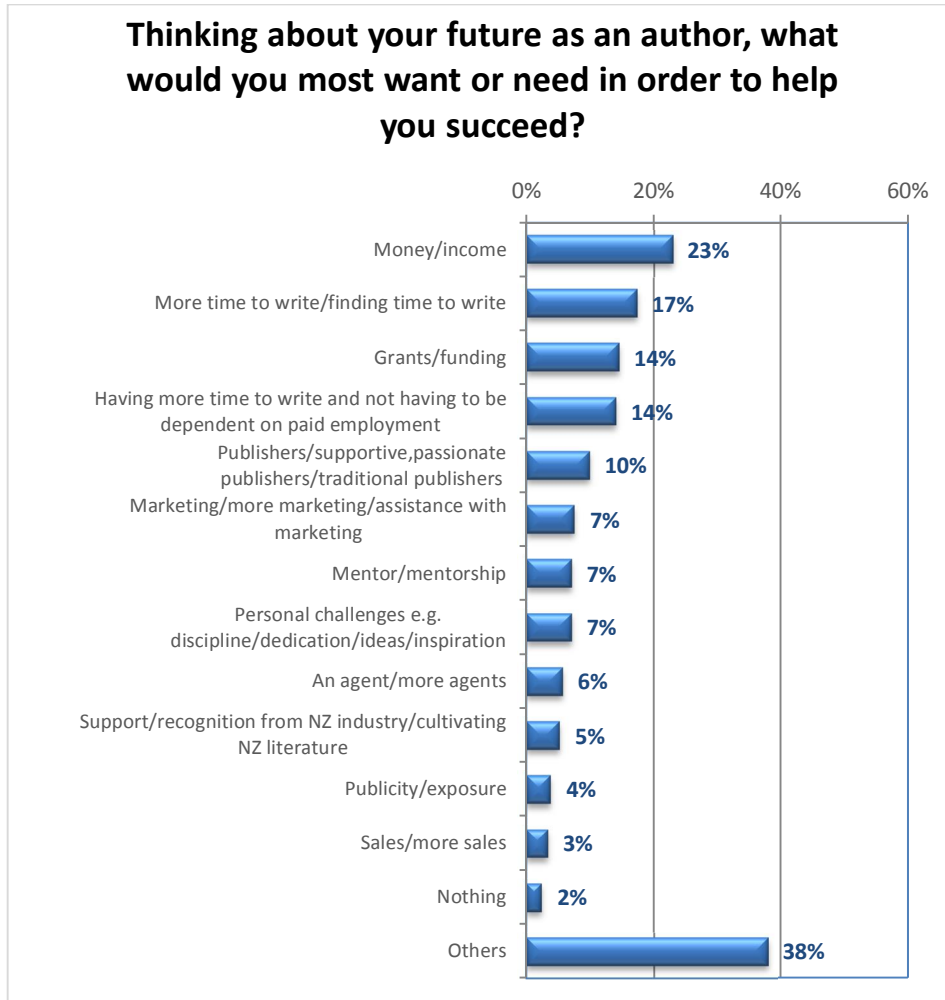
“I've written several award winning non-fiction books but the income I've received from royalties is a pittance. I would love to write more, but I'm obliged by spend most of my time earning a living in a job that doesn't use my writing skills. Like most people, I have a mortgage to pay off!”

13. Future needs to be successful as a writer

When asked what they needed in the future to help them succeed as an author, the most commonly mentioned factor was money/income. 14% of writers also said they needed grants/funding.

Having more time to write in general, as well as having more time because they were not having to be dependent on paid employment, were also raised as future needs for writers.

Respondents also commented that they needed publishers/supportive, passionate publishers/traditional publishers to succeed in the future.



A selection of illustrative comments for the main topics follows:

- **Money/income:**

"...Higher income to avoid living week to week."

"Financial support."

"Income. My advance for my first book (from a very large publisher) was only \$2000. The book took 5 years. The advance is laughable, but I did not feel like I had any power to refuse it. Writers' work needs to be valued more so that writers can keep writing."

"Reliable income stream from writing to ensure time for creative process."

"To be able to survive off income defined from writing."

- **More time to write/finding time to write:**

"I would love to have an uninterrupted eight weeks of writing."

"Time, always time!"

"Time to write."

“More time to think clearly about my writing. I'd love to write more but life tends to get in the way.”

“More time.”

- **Grants/funding:**

“More grants to help children's non-fiction authors. Schools need our work - someone needs to give us grants. More grants to help us do promotional work in New Zealand and overseas.”

“More grants available for entry level writers in particular though there should be more overall. An ideal would be a Government subsidy for writers to use as one uses other forms of assistance. It could be dependent upon verified CV and/or attendance at courses etc.”

“Funding to complete work in progress.”

“More grants to apply for; other types of funding for dedicated authors who have a track record of being able to produce creative works to a high standard.”

“Access to grants to make it worthwhile to write non-fiction and fiction books”

- **Having more time to write and not having to be dependent on paid employment:**

“Time, less need to earn an income from another source.”

“Time and money. To earn enough from my writing to be able to write full-time. I have several series released, but limited time to complete them in a timely manner.”

“Time. This would come from not needing to work a fulltime non-writing job.”

“Freedom from the bills in order to have time to write - the reality is that writing will never provide sufficient income on its own.”

“Time and money to be able to concentrate on my own work, rather than needing to run courses for other people, which are fun, and do help build an audience for my own work, but are crippling to my own creativity.”

“To earn enough from my writing so that it is sustainable and I could therefore reduce my work hours and enjoy writing time.”

- **Publishers/supportive, passionate publishers/traditional publishers:**

“More support from publishers.”

“A loyal publisher who is willing to support experienced authors who know their craft rather than being driven by narrow market requirements.”

“More traditional publishers...”

“Publisher who is interested and supportive.”

“...More publishers to send work to.”

“...Courageous, loyal and innovative publishers.”

APPENDIX 1 – SAMPLE

Sample

424 people started the survey between 14 and 30 October 2016. 30% of the sample said that writing was their primary occupation, while 67% said that while it was not their primary occupation, they did write. 3% said they did not write at all and were excluded from the remaining questions.

51 respondents dropped out of the survey at Question 3, as shown below, leaving a nett of 380.

Source	Started survey	Dropped Out at Q3
NZ Society of Authors	198	23
Publishers Association of NZ	120	17
NZ Writers Guild	63	9
CLNZ	39	1
Playmarket	8	1
NZ Book Council	3	0
Academy of NZ Literature	0	0
Romance Writers of NZ	0	0
Storylines	0	0

The survey has a maximum margin of error, at a 95% confidence level, of $\pm 4.8\%$ overall.

Respondent comments

All comments from respondents are captured as entered by respondents and are available from the Horizon Research system.

Contact

For more information about this survey or additional analysis, please contact:

Grant McInman on 021 076 2040, email gmcinman@horizonresearch.co.nz or Shalaine Jackson on 021 041 6283, email shalaine@horizonresearch.co.nz.