

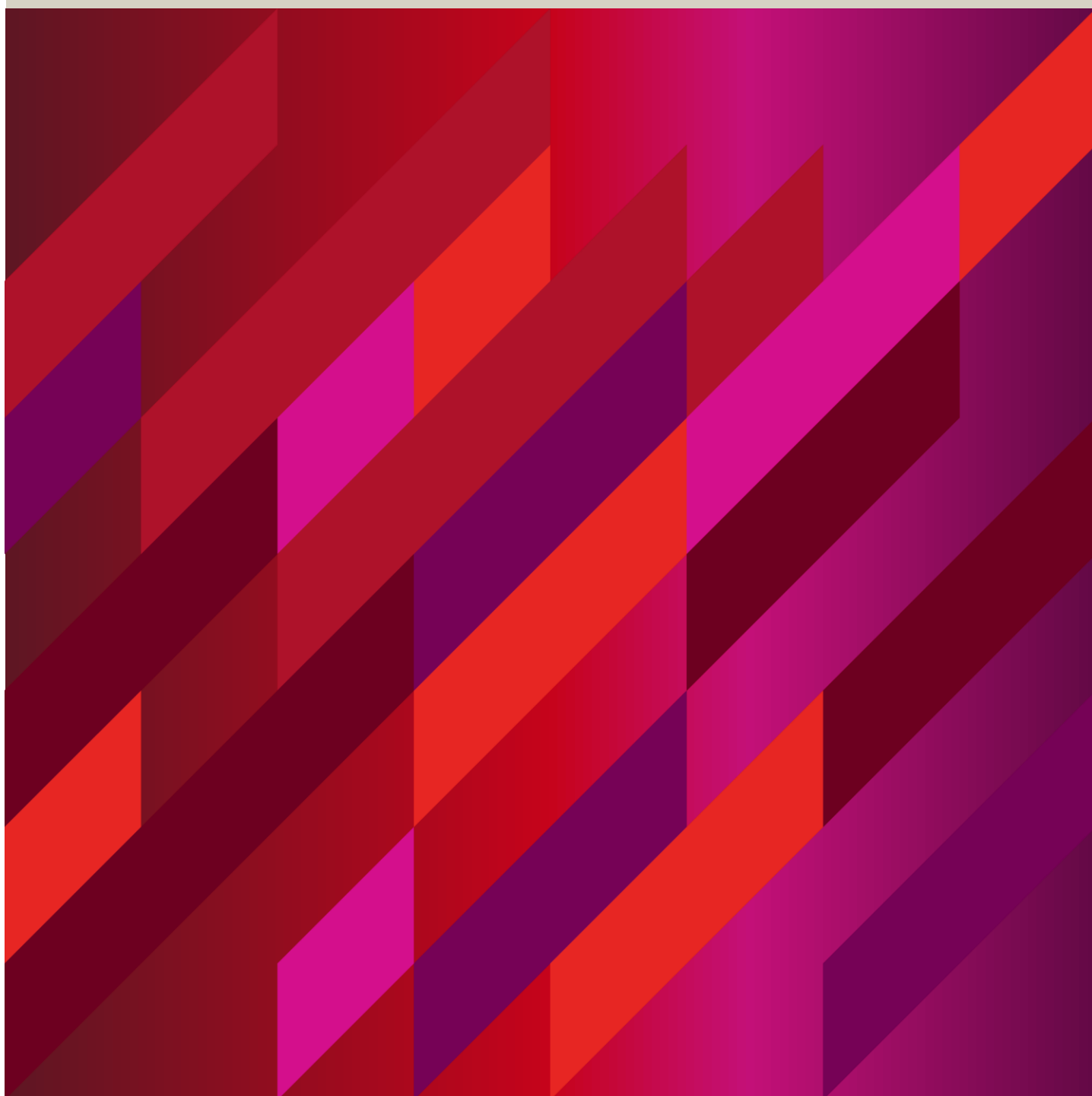


# Australian authors

## INDUSTRY BRIEF NO. 6: AUTHORS' ALLOCATION OF TIME

The Australian book industry: Authors, publishers and readers in a time of change

October 2015



The Australian Book Industry: Authors, publishers and readers in a time of change' is a three-year research project led by Prof. David Throsby, funded by the Australian Research Council under Discovery Project grant DP 140101479 and Macquarie University. In February 2015 the researchers conducted an online survey of over 1,000 Australian book authors.

## **SPENT ON WORK IN A TYPICAL WORKING WEEK**

Table 1 demonstrates that authors spend on average less than half of their working week (43%) on their creative occupation as a writer, and this estimate includes administration, promotion, and networking, etc, as well as research and writing. Overall, trade writers spend a slightly higher proportion of their time on these writing-related tasks and the least time spent on these tasks, on average, is by education writers.

Writers, on average, spend an additional fifth of their time working at another writing-related occupation which uses their skills as a writer including editing, teaching creative writing, proofreading, writing advertising copy, etc and another fifth of their time working at another occupation that is unrelated to their writing.

## **FACTORS PREVENTING AUTHORS FROM SPENDING MORE TIME WRITING**

We asked authors what prevents them from spending more time writing. The results are shown in Table 2. More than half of authors are affected by "Domestic responsibilities / household duties / childcare for another family member", with the responses spread fairly evenly across all genres, although these factors are relatively less significant for scholarly authors.

"Insufficient income from creative work and/or the need to earn more income elsewhere" is a factor for over half of authors. Those most affected are literary fiction authors followed by other non-fiction, children's, poetry and genre fiction authors. The least affected are scholarly authors, reflecting the fact that a large number of scholarly authors are employed in universities.

The demands of another job prevent over one third of authors from spending more time writing, particularly education, other creative non-fiction, scholarly and genre fiction authors.

The other tasks associated with an author's writing work such as administration, meetings, and networking are a limiting factor for 28% of authors, with those most affected including genre fiction authors and scholarly authors.

Nearly one quarter of authors are limited from writing by responsibilities associated with marketing and promotion activities. This is markedly higher among genre fiction authors (nearly half), and notably low among education and scholarly authors.

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**Table 1 – Time spent on work in a typical working week: average percent and hours per week**

	Literary Fiction	Genre Fiction	Children's	Creative Non-fiction	Other Non-fiction	Poetry	Sub-total (trade)	Education	Scholarly	Total (All authors)
<b>Percent</b>										
<b>Working in a creative occupation as a writer</b>	45.9	50.5	47.7	47.6	35.1	41.5	46.2	29.0	38.1	43.1
<b>Working at another writing-related occupation</b>	25.4	12.8	20.2	15.4	22.0	22.4	17.9	24.6	29.8	20.0
<b>Creative work in another field not related to writing</b>	2.3	4.8	7.6	3.8	5.1	4.9	4.8	8.4	2.6	5.0
<b>Working at another occupation unrelated to writing</b>	15.1	23.8	12.5	17.1	23.2	16.8	19.6	26.1	17.1	20.2
<b>Studying and training</b>	3.5	2.4	5.6	2.3	5.2	5.3	3.6	2.3	4.4	3.5
<b>Voluntary or unpaid work</b>	7.7	5.7	6.4	13.8	9.5	9.1	7.9	9.5	8.0	8.2
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>n</i>	90	283	99	97	98	85	752	144	98	994
<b>Hours per week</b>										
<b>Working in a creative occupation as a writer</b>	19.3	23.1	19.1	19.3	13.2	15.5	19.5	9.2	17.4	17.8
<b>Working at another writing-related occupation</b>	10.1	5.2	7.1	5.3	6.8	9.7	6.8	8.3	10.6	7.4
<b>Creative work in another field not related to writing</b>	1.2	2.0	1.7	2.5	2.6	1.7	2.0	1.6	1.3	1.9
<b>Working at another occupation unrelated to writing</b>	7.6	10.5	7.1	6.5	10.3	7.0	8.8	8.7	7.0	8.6
<b>Studying and training</b>	1.0	1.0	1.6	1.2	2.3	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.4
<b>Voluntary or unpaid work</b>	2.8	2.5	3.3	4.6	2.9	3.5	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.2
<b>Total</b>	42.0	44.3	39.9	39.3	38.0	38.5	41.3	33.0	41.6	40.2
<i>n</i>	90	282	98	96	96	84	746	139	97	982

**Table 2 – Factors preventing authors from spending more time writing: percent of authors within each genre**

	Literary Fiction	Genre Fiction	Children's	Creative Non-fiction	Other Non-fiction	Poetry	Sub-total (trade)	Education	Scholarly	Total (All authors)
<b>Insufficient income</b>	70.5	57.5	59.8	44.8	60.4	58.5	58.2	42.7	29.3	53.0
<b>Marketing and promotion</b>	19.3	46.8	28.9	16.7	18.7	9.8	29.6	4.2	2.0	23.1
<b>Other tasks associated with writing</b>	26.1	35.4	37.1	22.9	23.1	23.2	30.0	14.0	33.3	28.0
<b>Domestic responsibilities</b>	58.0	63.9	63.9	47.9	53.8	54.9	58.9	45.5	39.4	54.9
<b>Community or cultural responsibilities</b>	13.6	12.1	12.4	26.0	20.9	8.5	14.9	13.3	15.2	14.7
<b>Illness</b>	14.8	10.0	11.3	10.4	13.2	12.2	11.4	9.1	5.1	10.5
<b>Study</b>	5.7	8.2	8.2	3.1	9.9	4.9	7.1	8.4	8.1	7.4
<b>Demands of another job</b>	34.1	39.6	23.7	25.0	41.8	36.6	34.9	47.6	41.4	37.4
<b>Other</b>	4.5	11.1	10.3	18.8	14.3	15.9	12.1	20.3	22.2	14.3
<i>n</i>	88	280	97	96	91	82	734	143	99	976

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Many authors face significant challenges in allocating time for this professional role. Over half of all authors are limited from spending more time on their writing by domestic responsibilities and/or the requirement to earn income by means other than their own creative work. The portrait which emerges is one where the majority of authors are not able to work full time at their writing practice, and are obliged to take on other work. Further, the time allocated to their own career as an author includes tasks such as research, administration, meetings, networking and promotion. In addition, like many other members of the Australian workforce, authors are managing domestic responsibilities and a smaller proportion are dealing with illness or the demands of study.

*This industry brief is part of a series prepared for Australian book authors and other members of the Australian book industry to highlight key findings of the 2015 survey.*

*Thank you to all the authors who gave generously of their time and expertise by participating.*

The complete series of industry briefs about this survey is:

1. Key Findings
2. Demographics of Australian Book Authors
3. Authors' Income
4. Changes in the Financial Position of Australian Book Authors
5. Authors' Changing Professional Practices
6. Authors' Allocation of Time

7. Rights Sales, Translations and Piracy

8. Promotion

9. Authors and Publishers

See also the Department of Economics Working Paper, 'Book Authors and their Changing Circumstances: Survey Method and Results'.

These can be downloaded at:

<http://goto.mq.edu.au/book-industry>

