



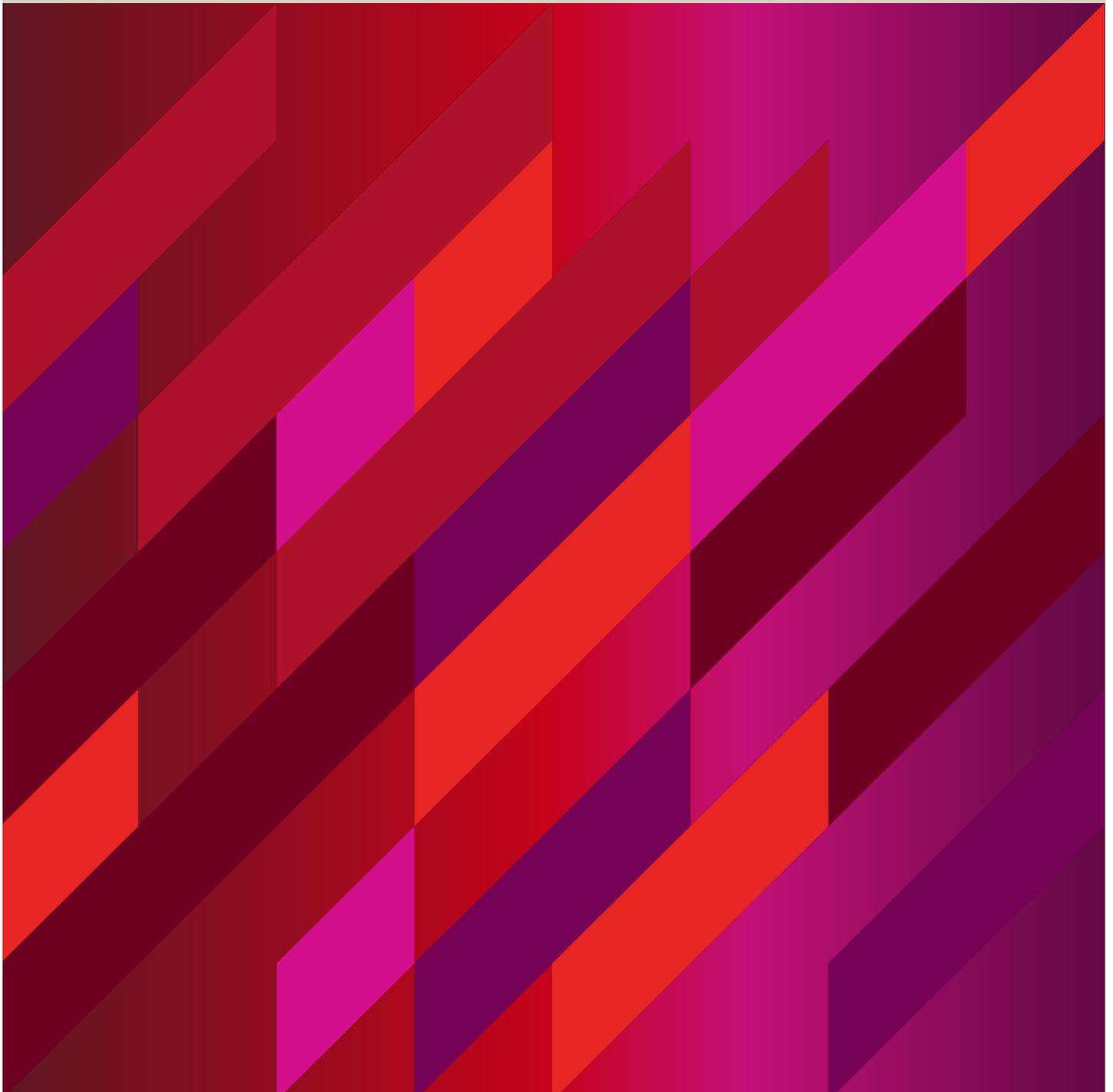
**MACQUARIE**  
University

# **2022 National Survey of Australian Book Authors**

## **Industry Brief No. 1: Key Findings**

November 2022

Jan Zwar, Paul Crosby and David Throsby



The survey on which this industry brief is based was supported by funding from the Australia Council for the Arts and the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

© Jan Zwar, Paul Crosby, David Throsby 2022

2022 National Survey of Australian Book Authors  
Industry Brief No. 1: Key Findings

Published by Macquarie University  
Wallumattagal Campus  
Macquarie Park NSW 2109  
Australia  
[www.mq.edu.au](http://www.mq.edu.au)

Suggested citation: Zwar J, Crosby P, and Throsby D. 2022 National Survey of Australian Book Authors. Industry Brief No. 1: Key Findings. Sydney: Macquarie University. <https://doi.org/10.25949/GAJJ-JT47>

*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 [2022 National Survey of Australian Book Authors](#) conducted by Jan Zwar, Paul Crosby and David Throsby.*

*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*
3. *Authors' Income*
4. *Impact of COVID-19*
5. *Authors' Allocation of Time*
6. *Authors and Publishers*
7. *Rights Sales, Translations and Piracy*
8. *Promotion*

For further information, please contact the authors:

Dr Jan Zwar  
Tel: +61 2 9850 4496, email: [jan.zwar@mq.edu.au](mailto:jan.zwar@mq.edu.au)

Dr Paul Crosby  
Tel: +61 2 9850 9469, email: [paul.crosby@mq.edu.au](mailto:paul.crosby@mq.edu.au)

Professor David Throsby  
Tel: +61 2 9850 8588, email: [david.thosby@mq.edu.au](mailto:david.thosby@mq.edu.au)

## BACKGROUND

This national survey of Australian book authors was conducted in 2022, following on from a previous survey in 2015. Over 1,000 book authors responded to the surveys in 2015 and 2022. The 2022 survey continued the lines of inquiry with two main changes. Questions about digital disruption and authors' changing professional practices were discontinued as they were no longer new and contemporary, and questions about authors' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic were added. It's important to note that the 2015 and 2022 respondents are two distinct groups of authors, although there may be some overlap between the two samples. Comparisons between the two sets of findings reflect on changes to book authors' experiences as a whole in the two periods studied, rather than being a longitudinal study of individual authors over time.

We used the same criteria to determine eligibility for the survey. Survey participants were required to have met the following criterion: they had authored one or more published books including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, short stories, educational books and scholarly works, in formats which included traditional print publishing, e-publishing, self-publishing, multi-platform works or other equivalent book-length publications (including other digital platforms and related performance works). Ineligible activities included marketing-based activities on websites, blogs or social media, online games, TV programs or films.

Further detail about the survey methodology, including the survey questionnaire, is available in the report: *2022 National Survey of Australian Book Authors*. Section 8 of the paper utilises the 2016 ABS Census and a 2017 survey of practicing professional artists to confirm that the sample generated for the present survey is sufficiently representative of the population of Australian book authors.

We asked authors detailed questions about the genres in which they have published work, and the main genre that is most important to their writing now. We recognise that many authors publish in a number of genres, and that the boundaries between genres are blurred in practice. However, feedback indicated that most authors could identify the main genre in which they publish. We then grouped genre responses as follows:

### (1) Trade books

- Fiction
  - Literary fiction
  - Genre fiction
  - Children's fiction
- Non-fiction
  - Creative non-fiction<sup>1</sup>
  - Other non-fiction (including illustrated books for adults)
- Poetry

### (2) Educational books/textbooks

### (3) Scholarly books/research monographs

Much of the analysis in these briefs is organised according to these categories. Young Adult (YA) was grouped under 'genre fiction' in recognition that many readers of YA are adults. 'Other non-fiction' includes instructional guides (including recipe books and gardening books), reference works for adults

---

<sup>1</sup> Also known as narrative non-fiction; examples include biography, autobiography, history, politics, true crime, travel and sporting accounts, long-form journalism, memoirs and essays.

and children, 'coffee table' books such as art, photography and architecture, and travel guides. In the 2022 survey we received particularly strong participation from trade authors, and this provided a sample size which enabled us to analyse the trade responses in more detail in the industry briefs.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2022 survey revealed many points of continuity with the 2015 findings, with some changes. The findings about the diversity of book authors' backgrounds were consistent, with the majority being born in Australia or other anglophone countries. However, future surveys may adopt additional measures to capture industry initiatives to promote and publish diverse voices, including First Nations authors.

While the most common form of publishing model is with a traditional publisher, other models are common too, including publishing with small, non-traditional start-up publishers and indie publishing (self-publishing). Levels of indie publishing are higher than in the 2015 survey, especially for some genre fiction authors for whom it is a good fit and a more profitable publishing model. However, authors' comments about their satisfaction or otherwise with their main publisher reveal that authors take into account many factors when opting for a publishing model. Editing, promotion and access to distribution networks including bookstores (and discount department stores) remain particularly valued roles of publishers for many authors. Encouragement and moral support, and other less tangible forms of support, are highly valued.

A striking finding was authors' higher satisfaction levels with their publishers than in the 2015 survey, discussed below. Given the challenges experienced by publishers during the pandemic and the impact on authors, this suggests that the working relationship between many authors and their publishers remains positive overall even in difficult circumstances. Interestingly, this finding includes indie publishers (approximately one-third are very satisfied with the two models of indie publishing in the survey, and between one-fifth and one-third are neutral about their satisfaction levels). One traditionally-published author who is very satisfied commented on the publisher being "a good fit". Authors have a variety of needs and expectations from their publisher/s, this notion of "a good fit" sums up that rather than one standard offering by publishers in the marketplace, there is a variety of publishers with different strengths and offerings for authors.

Another key change was the increased role of readers in promotion. Word of mouth has always been a valued form of promotion, and online platforms and social media have elevated the role of reader recommendations.

Books continue to be published in a variety of formats. Audiobooks are becoming a more common part of the mix of formats for many trade authors.

Authors' capacity to earn an income from their creative practice remains challenging. Many authors rely on multiple sources of income including two-fifths who had other paid work unrelated to being an author, and two-fifths depending on income from their partner too.

In a related finding, many authors find it difficult to maintain time to work on their writing. Only five percent of authors do not have competing demands for their writing time.

During the pandemic, the average hours worked by authors increased, and the average hours allocated to their writing practice remained consistent with the 2015 findings. One interpretation is that, like many Australians, authors increased their working hours to accommodate the additional demands brought about by the pandemic (such as home-schooling and carer responsibilities).

However, one-quarter of authors experienced a reduction in their writing time due to the pandemic, suggesting that other authors gained time for the average to remain consistent.

The pandemic affected book authors just as it affected virtually all Australians in various ways. While one-tenth of authors found it had been beneficial overall for their career as an author, four times as many authors found it had been negative overall. Approximately one-third of authors reported a large or modest increase in levels of financial stress. Opportunities for promoting new books were reduced, with the cancellation of school, library and bookstore appearances, writers festivals and the closure of bookstores.

Piracy remains an issue, with the proportion of authors affected roughly consistent with the 2015 survey. However, the methods of piracy and copyright infringement have expanded.

A theme that emerges through different parts of the survey findings is that authors value recognition and respect for their work. Income is one measure, and there are others: respect from and connection with their peers, treatment by their publisher/s, connection with their readers, and prizes and reviews. Comments by authors conveyed that live events at schools, libraries, festivals and bookstores are important for reinforcing the value that authors contribute to society. Respect and recognition by the government are valued by authors.

In the next sections, we draw out key findings from the industry briefs and main report. Readers are encouraged to refer to these other documents for further details.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

The profession of book author in Australia is predominantly female. Overall, women make up two thirds of book authors. Children's authors are predominantly female (81.3%) followed by genre fiction (75.3%), other non-fiction (69.6%) and literary fiction (70.5%) authors. Scholarly and education authors are the closest to an even distribution. The introduction of additional categories identified non-binary / gender-diverse authors, with poetry having the highest percentage (3%).

Approximately one-third of authors nominate an area of genre fiction as their main genre (35.5%), and roughly one-sixth of authors nominate other non-fiction (14%), followed by literary fiction (13.5%), children's (13.5%), creative non-fiction (11.5%) and poetry (5.8%). (See Table 1 in the main report.)

One quarter of authors see themselves as full-time professionals and nearly one third as part-time professional writers. The highest proportion of full-time professional authors is among children's (34.2%), followed by genre fiction (30.6%) and literary fiction (26.9%).

As a group, Australian book authors are more highly educated than the general population. More than 80% of authors have attended university and almost half of authors have completed a postgraduate degree, with postgraduate education common across all the different genres. The proportion of authors with a creative doctorate has increased (from just under 6% in 2015 to 9.1%). However, as discussed below, high levels of formal education are not broadly matched by high levels of income.

Approximately two-fifths of authors describe themselves as emerging or developing (42.4%). A similar amount (39.4%) identify as being an established author, an increase from 2015 (up from 31.6%).

The majority of authors live in New South Wales (29%) and Victoria (28.1%). The proportion of authors living in NSW has decreased slightly since 2015 (down from 35% of authors) and is now roughly equal to Victoria. Over 60% of book authors live in a capital city, with an additional 20% located in a regional

city or town. Half of all writers who live outside a capital city find that this has an impact on their practice as an author, with half of these assessing it as negative and nearly one third as positive.

Three-quarters of Australian book authors were born in Australia. This includes Australian First Nations authors, who are represented in the survey findings. Australian book authors are very likely to have been born in Australia or another anglophone country. The vast majority of Australian book authors speak English as a first language (96.2%).

The highest proportion of book authors who do not speak English as a first language are creative non-fiction authors (up from 2.1% in the 2015 survey to 8.3%), followed by scholarly and education authors. The survey data do not enable us to examine in detail important new developments in Australian publishing: the role of First Nations writers and publishing industry initiatives to promote opportunities for authors from diverse backgrounds. Future surveys may be able to address these changes over time.

## **AUTHORS' INCOME**

The average total annual income for authors, including all sources of income, is \$64,900. Approximately one-third of authors earned the average annual income for the Australian workforce (which was \$70,000 in 2020-21 FY), down from approximately 43% in 2013-14 FY. This includes half or more education and scholarly authors, and one-third of trade authors. Approximately one-quarter of authors work full-time as an author, with many others working in additional paid roles. Roughly two-thirds of all trade authors earned less than the average annual income for this period, taking into account all sources of income.

The average income derived from practising as an author is \$18,200 with a very broad spread across the different genre groups. Education authors earned the highest average income from their practice as an author (\$27,300) followed by children's (\$26,800) and genre fiction (\$23,300) authors. Literary authors have a substantially lower average income from their practice as an author (\$14,500), followed by other non-fiction (\$12,100), creative non-fiction authors (\$9,800) and poets (\$5,700).

To compare results in the 2015 and 2022 surveys, we adjusted the 2015 figures for inflation using the standard consumer price index. The average author earnings from their practice as an author has increased from \$14,630 in 2013-14 FY adjusted for inflation, to \$18,200 in 2021 but it has gone *down* for literary fiction and creative non-fiction authors. The largest increases are for children's (however, the average total income for children's authors was the lowest for all the genre groups) and the next largest increase in income from authors' creative practice is by genre fiction authors. This is followed by slight increases for other non-fiction authors and poets (poets still receive by far the lowest average earnings from their creative practice, at \$5,700).

Roughly two-fifths of authors rely on the income of their partner, and two-fifths rely on a job that is related to being an author but does not directly lead to the production of a creative work. Approximately one-sixth of authors rely on unemployment benefits or other government benefits, and one-tenth nominated credit card debt.

These findings reflect the diverse circumstances of Australian authors. Authors' income must be considered in the broader context of whether they work full-time or part-time in their profession as an author or in combination with another occupation, how established they are in their career as an author, and the market characteristics of the genres in which they are published.

Overall, authors' income from their creative work remains low, particularly compared to similarly educated professionals in other occupations. For the majority of authors, it appears that multiple

sources of income from their profession as an author and other sources of income are necessary. Earning a total income comparable to the average annual Australian income remains challenging.

## **IMPACT OF COVID-19**

The range of responses reveals the diverse experiences of authors during the pandemic. Approximately one tenth of authors judged the impact of the pandemic to have been positive overall for their career, while two-fifths of authors found it had been negative overall. One-quarter of all authors assessed the impact of the pandemic to be a mix of positive and negative on their careers (25.5%), and nearly one-fifth found it had had no impact (17%).

The proportion of authors who found the pandemic has been *very positive* for their career as an author was very small - approximately one-twentieth (4%), while one-fifth of authors reported the impact of COVID-19 has been *very negative* (21.2%).

Of those authors for whom the overall impact of COVID-19 was *very positive*, the largest group was other non-fiction authors (8.1%), followed by education (5.1%), genre fiction (4.2%), creative non-fiction (3.8%) and children's authors (3.9%).

Approximately one-quarter of children's (28.4%), genre fiction (24.9%) and literary fiction (22.4%) and nearly one-fifth (18.8%) of creative non-fiction authors reported a *very negative* impact on their career from the pandemic.

We asked authors to identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on a range of career outcomes that are related to being an author. Over sixty-one percent of authors (61.8%) experienced a large or modest reduction in opportunities to connect with peers. Over half of authors (55.2%) experienced a large or modest reduction in promotional opportunities for their next book. Approximately one third (34.8%) of authors experienced a large reduction in opportunities for income as a speaker at events as a book author. Approximately one-third of authors reported a large or modest decrease in their income as an author (35.5%). Approximately one-third of authors reported a large or modest increase in levels of financial stress (31.5%). Approximately one-quarter of authors reported a large or modest decrease increase in time to work on their writing (26%), with home-schooling and primary carer responsibilities noted in authors' comments.

Other comments by some authors on the negative impact of the pandemic on their careers included delays in contracts and publication schedules and lower advances.

On the positive side, approximately one-third of authors reported a large or modest increase in time to work on their writing (35.6%).

We asked authors whether the pandemic affected their motivation for their career as a book author. Slightly less than one sixth of authors have had a large or moderate increase in motivation. One third of authors reported no change in their motivation (32.9%) and one-third reported a modest or substantial decrease (33.8%). Authors whose income decreased were twice as likely to report a decrease in motivation, but apart from this, the responses were broadly distributed.

Less than one-third of authors had accessed government payments related to the pandemic, with the highest response rate from children's authors (36.8%) and poets (31.3%).

We asked authors what factors sustained their motivation as a book author during the pandemic. Four fifths of authors reported their own commitment to being a book author (81.9%), with this being a particularly important factor across trade authors. Approximately half of authors reported that encouragement from their readers (51.6%), other authors (51.5%) and family and friends (50.1%) was

important. Financial income was an important motivator for approximately one third of authors, particularly education (46.2%), children's (43.9%) and genre fiction authors (42.1%).

Encouragement from their agent/publisher was a factor for slightly under one-third of authors (bearing in mind that not all authors have an agent/publisher, see Table 1.4 in the appendix of the main report). It was particularly important for children's (41.3%) and literary fiction (39.7%) authors. It was important for one-quarter of trade authors. Over one-quarter of trade authors indicated a positive review/s by a serious critic was an important factor, especially one-third of literary fiction authors (36.5%), poets (35.8%) and creative non-fiction authors (33.8%). Winning an award or awards was important for nearly one-fifth of trade authors, particularly children's authors, poets and literary fiction authors.

We asked authors whose careers were negatively affected how long they estimate it will take for their career to reach the stage it was prior to the start of the pandemic. In somewhat good news, approximately one-fifth of authors thought it would take less than one year and another fifth estimated it will take one year. However, one third of authors estimated it will take two years, and nearly one fifth estimated it will take three to five years, indicating substantial setbacks and ground to be regained. Approximately one-twentieth of authors estimated that their careers wouldn't recover from the pandemic.

## **AUTHORS' ALLOCATION OF TIME**

Most book authors face significant challenges in allocating time for this professional role. In addition to domestic responsibilities, insufficient income from writing, time spent on marketing and promotion and other tasks associated with writing, since 2020 authors have faced additional pressures on their time for writing due to COVID-19. The survey shows that while, overall, the average time authors spent working on a creative occupation as a writer remained approximately consistent with 2015 (17.8 hours per week in 2015 and 17.9 hours in 2022), the average number of total hours in a typical working week expanded from 40.2 in 2015 to 46.5 in 2022. The most common reasons for the increased hours were working at another writing-related occupation, volunteering or unpaid work, homeschooling and other commitments directly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trade authors spend approximately two-fifths of their working week on their creative occupation as a writer, and this includes administration, promotion, and networking, etc., as well as research and writing. Genre fiction authors, on average, spend slightly more time per week on their writing than other trade authors. Scholarly and education authors spend the least proportion of their time on their creative work as an author.

Trade authors also spend, on average, over a day each week on another occupation which utilises their skills as a writer, with literary fiction authors and poets spending close to two days. Creative non-fiction and other non-fiction authors spend, on average, close to one and a half days per week in this way. Education and scholarly authors spend close to two days per week on this.

We asked authors what prevents them from spending more time writing. Only approximately one in twenty authors reported that there are no competing demands for their writing time. Domestic responsibilities affect approximately two-thirds of trade authors, over half of scholarly authors and over one third of education authors.

Insufficient income is a factor for over half of all trade and education authors, with well over two-thirds of literary fiction authors affected (71.2%), followed by poets (59.7%). Approximately one-third of trade authors are limited from writing by responsibilities associated with marketing and promotion

activities. This is markedly higher among genre fiction (44.7%) and children's (41.9%) authors. Approximately one-third of all authors are affected by other tasks associated with an author's writing work such as administration, meetings, and networking, and just under one-third of authors are prevented from spending more time writing by the demands of another job.

## **AUTHORS AND PUBLISHERS**

Three-quarters (75.9%) of authors have published work with a traditional publisher and over one-quarter of authors have indie published (self-published) a work where the author organises and manages the whole process (26.9%) and 8.8% via a 'services company', noting that there may be overlap between these two models specified in the questionnaire.

Nearly one-third of poets have published with small, non-traditional start-up publishers (31.3%).

Indie publishing where the author organises and manages the whole process is most evident among genre fiction authors. Over one-third of genre fiction authors have indie published using this model (39.6%). This indie publishing model has also been used by one-third of other non-fiction authors (32.9%) and one-quarter (22.6%) of creative non-fiction authors.

Approximately one-tenth of creative non-fiction (11.3%), genre fiction (11%), poets (9%) and other non-fiction authors (8.7%) have indie published with a book production 'services' company that delivers print or digital file copies for a fee.

We asked authors about the number of publishers they are currently working with, other than indie publishing. The largest proportion of authors are working with one publisher, particularly trade authors (41.4%). Approximately one-third of authors are working with two or more publishers (notably education and scholarly authors).

One-quarter of authors are not currently working with a publisher (other than indie publishing). This proportion therefore includes indie publishers, authors who are between projects, and authors who are working on a project without a publisher attached at this stage.

One finding is the increasing diversity of publishing models and formats, including more trade authors reporting their work has been published as an audiobook in the previous year. The most common format is a print book by a traditional publisher (not quite half of authors), followed by an ebook by a traditional publisher (nearly one-third of authors). Approximately one-fifth of authors have indie published a print or ebook (or both) in the past year. Audiobooks published by a traditional publisher are also a common format (14.1% of all authors), including roughly one-fifth of genre fiction and literary fiction authors.

We asked authors how satisfied they were with their current relationship with their main publisher. A striking finding from this survey is the increase in the proportion of authors since the survey in 2015 who are very satisfied or satisfied with their main publisher. Nearly one-third of authors are very satisfied with their publisher, and approximately one-third are satisfied. One-fifth of authors are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and approximately 15% of authors are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their main publisher.

Authors had the option of providing comments about their publishers, and an overview of selected comments by authors who are very satisfied or satisfied with their main publisher is provided in an appendix in *Industry Brief No. 6: Authors and Publishers*.

At least one-third of authors have indie published a book during their career, and one-fifth of authors indie published in the past year. We asked indie publishers about their motives for choosing this

method of publication (noting that authors could choose more than one option). The most widespread reason is to have creative and financial control of their work. One-quarter of trade authors responded that it is common to self-publish in their genre, especially creative non-fiction, poetry and genre-fiction authors. One-quarter of trade authors thought of it as a strategy to increase their income, especially children's, genre fiction and other non-fiction authors. Nearly one-quarter of trade authors thought of indie publishing as a strategy to increase their readership, especially literary fiction authors.

## **RIGHTS SALES, TRANSLATIONS AND PIRACY**

Australian books circulate internationally in many other ways in addition to those outlined in this survey. For example, in addition to rights sales, Australian authors also sell current and/or backlisted titles from digital platforms and their own websites to reach large numbers of overseas readers. In addition to commercial transactions, Australian books and authors circulate through cultural channels which are not captured in this brief, and which are a significant dimension of the international reach of Australian books. Therefore, the findings should be considered in a much broader context which extends beyond the scope of this project.

Nearly one quarter of authors have licensed rights to their work overseas beyond Australian and New Zealand territory.<sup>2</sup> Children's authors are prominent (41.9%) followed by genre fiction (27.6%) and scholarly book authors (25%).<sup>3</sup>

We asked authors whether their work has been translated into other languages. Over one-third (34.3%) of authors have had their work translated. Children's authors (57.4%), scholarly authors (46.9%), poets (44.8%) and education authors (38.5%) are most likely to have had their work translated, followed by literary fiction (34.6%) and genre fiction authors (31.3%).

The proportion of authors who have had their work translated into another language remains roughly constant although it has trended upwards slightly (up from 30.2% in 2015 to 34.3% in 2022).

German, French and Chinese (Mandarin and/or Cantonese) remain the most frequently nominated languages, in that order.<sup>4</sup> While German is the most popular language for genre fiction, literary fiction and other non-fiction translations, followed by French, Chinese (Mandarin and/or Cantonese) is the most popular language for poetry, children's, education and scholarly books. French is the most popular language for creative non-fiction books.

Already translated authors may be more likely to have their work translated into more languages than previously. This points to the development of a sophisticated network of rights sales activity in the Australian book industry. Further information about the growth of Australia's rights sales from 2008-2018 is available in Crosby et al. (2021).

---

<sup>2</sup> Rights to an author's work are licenced, but short-hand in the industry is to use the term "rights sales" (Crosby et al. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> The wording in the survey question was changed in 2022 from the 2015 survey to recognise the significance of Australia and New Zealand as a significant combined sales territory. The 2015 survey asked authors about rights sales in countries other than Australia only, so responses to the two surveys cannot be directly compared.

<sup>4</sup> In a comprehensive analysis of international rights sales of Australian-authored books between 2008–2018, Crosby et al. (2021) found German, French and Chinese (Mandarin and/or Cantonese) to be among the top-five non-English language deals. However, differences in survey methodology prevent a direct comparison of the results between the two projects.

Next, we consider a less desirable aspect of internationalisation, the greater ease of piracy and copyright infringement. Over one quarter of authors have had their work pirated in Australia or overseas and nearly one quarter are unsure.

Over one third of genre fiction and education authors are affected by piracy, closely followed by scholarly authors. Over one fifth of children's, other non-fiction, literary fiction and creative non-fiction authors are also affected. The level of copyright infringement and piracy also remain constant compared to the 2015 survey but there is greater diversity in how this is occurring. Over half of authors (54.5%) specify file-sharing sites, and then social media (13.8%). Nearly one third of authors specify other methods. These include reading books on YouTube, recording audiobooks without permission, printing and photocopying works without permission, translating books without permission and sharing links to illegal file-sharing sites. There are many other methods specified by authors.

## PROMOTION

The 2015 survey found that over half of trade authors and one quarter of education and scholarly authors were spending more time promoting their work than five years earlier. This trend continues in 2022: half of all authors report spending more time promoting their work than five years ago. This applies to over half of poets (64.2%), children's (58.1%), genre fiction (54.3%) and literary fiction (52.6%) authors. Over one-third of creative non-fiction, other non-fiction and nearly one-third of scholarly writers are also spending more time promoting their work.

The overall proportion of authors spending more time promoting their work than five years ago remains roughly constant since the 2015 survey. However, two genres show an increase (from 45.2% of poets in 2015 to 64.2% in 2022, and from 24.5% of scholarly authors in 2015 to 31.3% in 2022).

Other genres have stayed roughly constant (children's) or the proportion of authors who have experienced an *increase* in time promoting their work has decreased. This does not mean that authors are spending less time on promotion. Rather, it suggests that after an earlier period of change in which many authors spent more time on promotion, the rate of change has plateaued or slowed for genre fiction, literary fiction, creative non-fiction and education. There is a limit to which authors overall can increase their time on promotion and meet their other responsibilities and commitments, including researching and writing books.

We asked authors who plays the most important role in promoting their work. Two-fifths of authors consider that they themselves play the most important role, especially poets and other trade authors. Nearly one-third of trade authors nominated their publisher (30.1%). In practice, there is often a combination of people responsible for promoting a new book title and authors' comments about their reduced opportunities for promotion during the COVID-19 pandemic referred to the importance of live events at schools, libraries, festivals and bookshops, and the valued role of bookstores in 'hand-selling' (through personal recommendations) the work of new Australian authors and other Australian titles.

We asked authors about the importance of 'serious' reviews, general reader reviews and winning prizes for sales of authors' work. Two-thirds of all authors consider traditional reviews important for sales of their work, particularly literary fiction, creative non-fiction, children's, scholarly and other non-fiction authors. Although genre fiction authors ranked traditional reviews as slightly less important than other trade authors, over half of genre fiction authors rated them as being important for sales. Education writers were least likely to rate serious reviews as important for sales (curricula requirements may be a more influential factor) but at 40%, the role of traditional reviews is still significant.

A notable finding of the 2022 survey is the continuing and increased importance of general reader reviews for sales of authors' work (up from 63.6% in 2015 to 75.7% in 2022). This includes three-quarters of trade authors (77.2%) and half or more of scholarly and education authors. Nearly nine out of ten of genre fiction authors consider general reader reviews to be important for sales of their work (87.5%).

We asked authors whether winning a well-regarded prize relevant to their genre has an impact on sales of their work. The question was not relevant or not applicable to over one-third of authors, with another tenth responding that they didn't know or had no opinion. Of the remaining authors, winning such a prize is the most important for children's authors (55.5%) and poets (55.2%), followed by literary fiction authors (48.1%). It is also important for broadly one-third of creative non-fiction (31.6%), other non-fiction (34.8%) and genre fiction authors (27.1%).

We asked authors about the activities that they found the most useful in promoting their work. (See *Industry Brief No. 8: Promotion* for detailed discussion.) The findings underline the continuing importance of promotion using social media and websites, which are the most frequently nominated activities by all authors (equalled by the role of school visits for children's authors). However, the various combinations of online and in-person promotional activities across genres were severely disrupted during the pandemic. Lockdowns and supply chain disruptions were other additional factors outside the direct scope of this survey that added to the challenging situation for authors.

In the 2015 survey authors commented that the increase in online and social media promotional opportunities had not decreased the usefulness of in-person appearances at schools, libraries and writers' festivals for promoting their work. Authors commented that in some ways raising their profile through social media and other digital media may contribute to increasing their public appeal at in-person events. This positive dynamic was substantially reduced during the pandemic and it remains to be seen how promotional activities for books will change further in the coming years, and whether a resumption of in-person events will take place, restoring lost promotional opportunities for Australian books and contributing to authors' income.

## REFERENCES

Crosby, P., Zwar, J., Lawson, A., & Shin, S. Y. (2021). *Success story - international rights sales of Australian-authored books*. Macquarie University.