



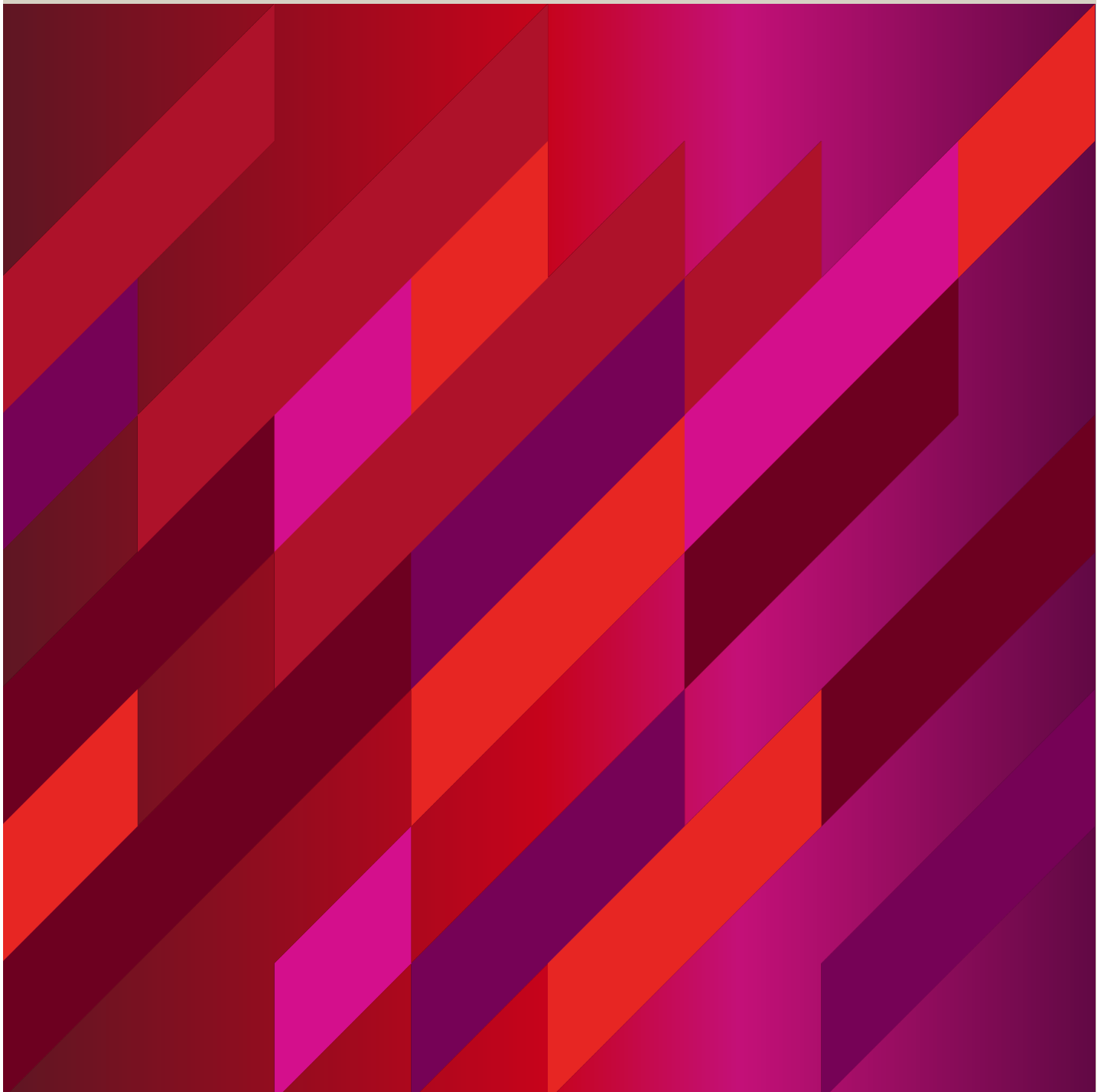
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# 2022 National Survey of Australian Book Authors

## Industry Brief No. 5: Authors' Allocation of Time

November 2022

Jan Zwar, Paul Crosby and David Throsby



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*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*

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## TIME SPENT ON WORK IN A TYPICAL WORKING WEEK

Table 1 shows a breakdown of time spent by authors in a typical working week. Trade authors spend approximately two-fifths of their working week on their creative occupation as a writer, and this estimate includes administration, promotion, and networking, etc., as well as research and writing. Genre fiction authors, on average, can 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.

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

	Literary Fiction	Genre Fiction	Children's	Creative Non-fiction	Other Non-fiction	Poetry	Subtotal (trade)	Education	Scholarly	Total (All authors)
<b>Working in your creative occupation as a writer</b>	18.0	23.0	20.1	19.4	17.4	19.9	19.6	11.5	13.8	17.9
<b>Working at another occupation which utilises your skills as a writer</b>	12.7	7.0	7.8	8.6	9.1	12.6	9.6	14.8	13.4	10.8
<b>Working on creative work in another field not related to your writing</b>	3.2	2.5	3.9	3.2	2.7	2.0	2.9	3.1	0.8	2.7
<b>Working at another occupation that is unrelated to your writing.</b>	7.3	9.3	6.3	7.7	9.0	9.8	8.2	6.8	8.1	8.0
<b>Studying or undergoing training</b>	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.1	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.7	0.9	1.4
<b>Voluntary or unpaid work</b>	4.2	4.3	3.4	5.2	5.2	6.0	4.7	4.9	5.6	4.9
<b>Homeschooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic</b>	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2
<b>Other commitments directly due to the COVID-19 pandemic</b>	0.5	0.6	1.4	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.1	0.9	0.6
<b>Total</b>	47.8	48.5	44.3	45.5	45.8	53.3	47.5	42.9	43.5	46.5
<b><i>n</i></b>	156	409	155	133	161	67	1081	39	32	1152

### Changes since the 2015 survey

The most striking change since the 2015 survey is that for all trade authors, the total hours worked each week expanded so that the total hours worked each week is, on average between four to fourteen hours extra per week in 2022 compared to 2015. It appears that trade authors spent roughly the same average number of hours per week on their creative work as an author as in 2015 (and slightly more, in the case of poets and other non-fiction writers), by increasing the total hours worked per week.

Below is an extract from Table 1 of the comparable findings in 2015. In general, the majority of the increased hours per week in 2022 – apart from for children’s authors – is due to additional hours spent working at another writing-related occupation, volunteering or unpaid work, homeschooling and other commitments directly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The average hours worked per week for education authors also increased. While the average hours worked by scholarly authors per week increased the least, scholarly authors were the only group to record a reduction in the time allocated to working in a creative occupation as a writer (down from 17.4 hours per week in 2015 to 13.8 hours in the latest survey). One possible explanation for the reduction in time that scholarly authors (academics) had to reallocate their time at the expense of their own creative projects due to the additional time involved in moving to large-scale online teaching during the pandemic.

**Table 2 - Total hours worked each week in the 2015 survey, plus additional average weekly hours in the 2022 findings**

	Literary Fiction	Genre Fiction	Children's	Creative Non-fiction	Other Non-fiction	Poetry	Sub-total (trade)	Education	Scholarly	Total (All authors)
<b>Total (2015)</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
<b>Additional average weekly hours in 2022</b>	5.7	4.2	4.6	6.3	7.8	14.7	6.3	9.9	1.9	6.3

### 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 3. Only 6% of authors reported that there are no competing demands for their writing time.

Domestic responsibilities affect approximately two-thirds of trade authors, particularly children’s authors (72.3%), poets and literary fiction authors (69.9%). Over half of scholarly authors (56.3%) and over one-third of education authors (38.5%) are affected.

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, and between one-quarter and one-fifth of other trade authors are affected. It is not a significant factor for education and scholarly 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, with children’s authors (45.8%), poets (43.4%) and genre fiction authors (39.6%) most affected.

Overall, just under one-third of authors are prevented from spending more time writing by the demands of another job. Other non-fiction authors (37.9%), poets (35.8%) and literary authors (33.3%) are the most affected, but this is a factor in at least one-fifth of authors in each genre.

Some additional answer options were introduced to this question in the 2022 survey, and approximately one-sixth (14.3%) of authors report that disillusionment with writing as a profession is a factor that prevents them from writing, with one-fifth of literary authors (21.8%) affected.

*Changes since the 2015 survey*

Overall, the proportion of authors in each genre who are prevented from spending more time writing by insufficient income, while high, is roughly consistent with the 2015 survey. The proportion of creative non-fiction authors has increased (from 44.8% in 2015 to 50.4% in 2022) and education authors are also increasingly affected (up from 42.7% to 53.8%).

The overall proportion of authors who are prevented from spending more time writing by marketing and promotion tasks has increased from 23.1% in 2015 to 31.9% in 2022. Children’s authors (up from 28.9% in 2015 to 41.9% in 2022), poets (up from 9.8% in 2015 to 20.9% in 2022), other non-fiction authors (up from 18.7% in 2015 to 25.5%) and literary fiction authors (up from 19.3% to 25.6%) are particularly affected.

**Table 3 - 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>	71.2	55.5	58.1	50.4	57.8	59.7	58.1	53.8	28.1	57.1
<b>Marketing and promotion</b>	25.6	44.7	41.9	15.8	25.5	20.9	33.7	5.1	3.1	31.9
<b>Other tasks associated with my writing</b>	33.3	39.6	45.8	23.3	29.8	43.3	36.4	12.8	28.1	35.3
<b>Domestic responsibilities</b>	69.9	61.4	72.3	53.4	50.3	70.1	62.1	38.5	56.3	61.1
<b>Demands on my time due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic</b>	14.1	16.9	11.0	11.3	14.3	23.9	15.0	17.9	18.8	15.2
<b>Community or cultural responsibilities</b>	11.5	11.2	7.1	13.5	11.8	25.4	11.9	17.9	28.1	12.6
<b>Volunteering within the book industry</b>	3.8	8.3	18.1	3.0	3.1	7.5	7.6	5.1	6.3	7.5

<b>Volunteering outside the book industry</b>	9.0	10.8	11.6	14.3	18.0	11.9	12.2	23.1	21.9	12.8
<b>Illness</b>	12.2	12.7	10.3	15.8	12.4	20.9	13.1	12.8	6.3	12.9
<b>Study</b>	3.2	6.6	5.2	4.5	10.6	7.5	6.3	7.7	3.1	6.3
<b>Demands of another job</b>	33.3	28.6	23.9	29.3	37.9	35.8	30.5	23.1	21.9	30.0
<b>Disillusion with writing as a profession</b>	21.8	15.6	16.8	12.0	8.7	9.0	14.8	5.1	9.4	14.3
<b>Lack of motivation</b>	15.4	12.7	13.5	9.8	12.4	13.4	12.9	20.5	18.8	13.3
<b>Lack of self-belief</b>	16.0	16.9	16.1	13.5	16.8	14.9	16.1	10.3	18.8	16.0
<b>Other</b>	11.5	7.3	10.3	13.5	14.3	3.0	9.9	12.8	28.1	10.5
<b>There are no competing demands for my writing time</b>	3.8	4.9	3.9	12.8	8.1	1.5	5.8	10.3	6.3	6.0
<i>n</i>	156	409	155	133	161	67	1081	39	32	1152

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

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, in 2021 authors 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 worked weekly by authors 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.