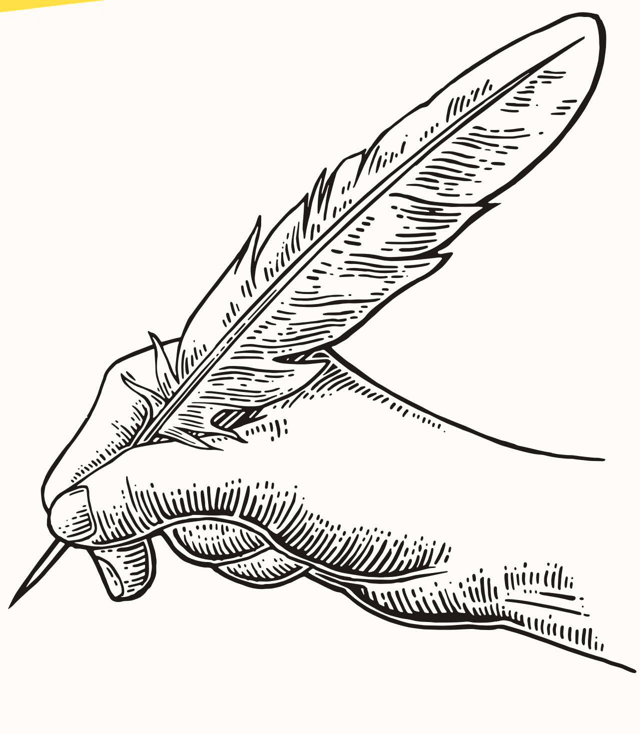
CREATe

UK AUTHORS' EARNINGS and CONTRACTS 2022

A survey of 60,000 WRITERS



Researchers

Amy Thomas, Lecturer in Intellectual Property and Information Law
Michele Battisti, Senior Lecturer in Economics
Martin Kretschmer, Professor of Intellectual Property Law

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CREATe Centre (www.create.ac.uk), School of Law and Advanced Research Centre (ARC), University of Glasgow, 10 The Square, Glasgow G12 8QQ, United Kingdom

Licence

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ALCS (the UK Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society) has funded a series of surveys on authors' earnings and contracts since 2006. The research was independently designed and has been conducted to independent academic standards. The commissioner does not control the analysis.

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GLOSSARY

AUTHOR	A person whose whole, or partial, income is derived from the profession of writing.
FULL INCOME AUTHOR	Authors who receive all of their individual income from the profession of writing.
GINI COEFFICIENT	A measurement of inequality designed to reflect the difference in net worth between individuals. Where the coefficient is close to 1 (or 100% inequality) it means one person possesses all the net worth among that group of individuals. Where the coefficient is closer to 0 (or 0% inequality) it means that the net worth is equally dispersed amongst that group of individuals.
MAIN INCOME AUTHOR	Authors who earn 50% or more of their total individual income from writing.
MEAN	A measurement of average generated by adding the sum of all numbers (in this report, usually earnings) divided by the number of values in the set (in this report, usually the number of authors).
MEDIAN	A measurement of the middle value in a sorted list of values, which can be more descriptive of a series of data in the presence of outliers.
OUTLIER	An observation that is abnormal (for example, several standard deviations away from the mean) when compared with other values in a data set.
POPULATION	The complete set of people (or any collection of items) under consideration (in this report, usually referring to the complete number of authors).
PRIMARY OCCUPATION AUTHOR	Authors who spent at least 50% of their working time writing.
SAMPLE	A sub-set of the population that is selected for research.

EXECUTIVE *Summary*

ALCS (the UK Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society) commissioned CREATe (the UK Copyright & Creative Economy Research Centre based at the University of Glasgow) to conduct independent research into authors' earnings in the UK. The survey builds on previous, longitudinal and comparative research enabling us to track trends in earnings and working conditions over 16 years. We issued the survey to members of the ALCS on 1 February 2022, asking for information for the tax years 2019/20 (pre-Covid) and 2020/21 (Covid affected). This report is situated amidst an arguably global trend towards the devaluing of creative labour. The survey also took place in the aftermath of two hugely disruptive events for UK authors: the Covid-19 pandemic (the first UK lockdown started on 23 March 2020), and Brexit (the transition period ended on 1 January 2021). We find that, despite being sometimes heralded as great equalisers, these events had significant and disproportionate effects on certain groups of authors. While some of their effects may have not fully materialised, neither Covid-19 nor Brexit appear to have fundamentally changed the creative labour markets; rather, they have accelerated existing trends. In line with previous surveys, we focus on the group of primary occupation authors for comparison over time. Primary occupation authors are those who allocate at least 50% of their working time to writing. We chart a decline in median (typical) earnings from self-employed writing among primary occupation authors of 38.2% (in real terms) since the last survey in 2018 (i.e., from £11,329 to £7,000). Even more dramatically, we see a sustained downward trend over the past two decades that seems to be associated with changes to creative labour markets in the digital environment.

PRIMARY OCCUPATION AUTHORS	2006	2006	2018	2022
MEDIAN EARNINGS FROM SELF-EMPLOYED WRITING (AS REPORTED IN RESPECTIVE SURVEYS)	£12,330	£11,000	£10,497	£7,000
MEDIAN EARNINGS FROM SELF-EMPLOYED WRITING – REAL TERMS (I.E. CONTROLLING FOR INFLATION)	£17,608	£12,455	£11,329	£7,000

Following this decline in earnings, there are serious questions over the future of writing as a profession. Authors always had to rely on a portfolio of earnings to make a living, but this dependency is increasing.
We find that, consistent with previous reports, the number of authors who report that writing is their primary occupation stagnates at around 50% of the total writing population. However, we chart a noticeable decline in the number of authors who earn all of their income from writing, decreasing from 40% of the total sample of primary occupation authors in 2006, to 28% in 2018, and now 19% as of 2022. As with many cultural markets, the profession of writing is characterised by winner-takes-all dynamics and extremely high levels of earnings inequality. We find that the top 10% of authors earn about 47% of the total income of the population. Many authors appear to rely on other members of their household who typically earn well (with a median household income of £50,000 per annum across all respondents). In compiling a detailed demographic profile of the authors surveyed, we find that certain characteristics make it harder for an author to earn a living. Women, black and mixed-race authors, the very young, and very old, all earn less than their respective counterparts. They also are less likely to have access to a household subsidy. This has implications for the diversity of creative production.

Contracts appear to be changing the authors' earnings landscape with implications for long-term earning potential. Advances are becoming rarer, with almost half of all authors never having received any such payment. Buy-out contracts, by contrast, are becoming increasingly common, increasing in frequency from 25% in the 2018 survey to 32% in 2021.

Copyright continues to be little understood and under-utilised by authors. Whilst over half of the authors we surveyed feel moderately confident in their knowledge of copyright, we find evidence of misconceptions which potentially curtail an author's earning potential through the realisation of their rights. Authors report that the increasing use of boilerplate publishing contracts is creating a culture of apathy in respect of moral rights; authors must either agree to waive their right to be acknowledged for their work, or leave potentially lucrative publishing deals.
In a detailed qualitative analysis of the effects of Covid-19 on authors' earnings and working lives, we find that the pandemic had a negative effect on the majority of authors. Whilst some changes in lifestyle suggest moderate improvements to an author's financial situation (e.g., saving on commuting costs), substantial improvements appear reserved to recipients of large, one-off grants and advances. We also find a distinct gendered element to experiences of Covid, with men more frequently reporting a positive or neutral experience of the pandemic than women. This may be explained by the existence of another form of household subsidy in the form of emotive and physical household labour, with women's career routes and sources of incomes more readily destabilised by changing working conditions
.
We also conducted investigations into a group of authors who are very exposed to digital trends, authors in the audio-visual sector. Despite a booming industry, the value of audio-visual streaming does not seem to be filtering through to authors. We chart the conditions of audio-visual authors to give explanatory value to this, documenting the changing contractual landscape for authors, and the bottleneck of payments in the industry.

HOW MUCH IS *creative* LABOUR WORTH?

CONTEXT FOR THE AUTHORS' EARNINGS LANDSCAPE

Often, creative labour is perceived as an endlessly replenishable resource not tied to economic reward; creativity is assumed to happen regardless of economic circumstances, driven by the passion of the creator. Such 'intrinsic motivation' may be linked to the devaluing of creative labour, and perhaps untenable market conditions.

UK policymakers have recently turned their eyes to the music industry, and particularly the disruptive effects of the music streaming market in generating viable income streams for musicians (see CMA [1], DCMS [2], IPO [3]; academic studies [4] [5]). Evidence on how creators in other creative industry sectors earn their money is sparse. Recently, we see important research for voice-over actors [6], designers and illustrators [7], and audio-visual authors [8] which similarly confirm a downward trend in earnings across all creative labour markets studied.

Whilst the UK is centrally important for the context of this report, the trajectory is not isolated: it appears to be a global trend, documented in Australia ([9], [10]), Canada ([11]), the EU ([12]) and the US ([13]). This is indicative of the potential to draw writing markets to the UK by setting competitive working conditions for authors which may not be available elsewhere, in line with other policy initiatives set to retain and attract creative talent (e.g., Innovation UK [14]).

Situated in this context, this report presents evidence on the lived experience of being an author in the UK. Throughout, we find that the profession of writing is under strain, with disorganised and patchy routes to earnings. Throughout our analysis of the responses to this survey, it is evident that creativity is not an unperishable resource; financial incentives to create are real.

In composing this report, we focus not only on earnings, but also on two legal factors which we know can affect earnings: copyright and contract. Copyright is the primary legal mechanism through which a creator can achieve and take ownership of their rights, in theory offering them a mechanism to finance their work; contracts are essential for setting the terms and conditions on realising those rights, and how and when income will be generated ([15], [16], [17]).

Whilst part of a longstanding series of (standardised) surveys supported by ALCS, this report is nonetheless temporally unique. It captures the lived experience in the context of a hugely significant and disruptive event for UK authors: the Covid-19 pandemic. The lens of the pandemic is an important accelerant to investigate the crisis of authors' earnings. Perhaps more so during the pandemic than any other time, authors have been centrally important to wellbeing as the public relied on them to provide education and entertainment at home. Is this increasing demand reflected in rewards to the suppliers of the creative labour? To investigate this, we specifically set out to measure what happens when an author's access to key economic actors, networks, and gatekeepers are disrupted (WIPO [18]). We document this both as an acute event as well as an ongoing source of income loss and wellbeing in one's professional life [19].

This report is also significant as the first post-Brexit study of authors' earnings in the UK context. Whilst we did not attempt to specifically measure, nor prompt authors to detail the effect of Brexit on their lives, it is still omnipresent throughout the data we received. Authors are becoming more mobile to adapt to changing conditions of access to, and opportunities in, foreign markets. This represents both a risk and an opportunity for UK cultural markets.
The course of documenting these findings has revealed how the life of an author is fundamentally a subjective experience. As such, throughout, we wanted to capture the valuable sentiments in authors' responses so that they may, in their own words, narrate the lived experience of their professional lives over these past two years.**

****Quotes have been lightly edited for typographical errors.**

[1] Competition and Markets Authority (2022) Music and streaming market study: update paper (Gov.uk, 26 July 2022) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-and-streaming-market-study-update-paper> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[2] Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (2021) Economics of music streaming (Gov.uk, 15 July 2021) <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/646/economics-of-music-streaming/publications/> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[3] Intellectual Property Office (2021) Music creators' earnings in the digital era (Gov.uk, 23 September 2021) < https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-creators-earnings-in-the-digital-era> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[4] Buccafusco and Garcia (2021) Pay-to-Playlist: The Commerce of Music Streaming. UC Irvine Law Review, 12(3)
[5] Towse (2020) Dealing with Digital: Economic Organisation of Streamed Music. CIPPM/Jean Monnet Working Papers, 1/2020
[6] Pavis, Tulti and Pye (2019) Fair Pay/Play in the UK Voice-Over Industries: A Survey of 200+ voice-overs (Zenodo, 17 July 2019) <https://zenodo.org/record/3340920#.Y3ZOnILP2vA> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[7] Kretschmer, Bently, Singh and Cooper (2011) Copyright Contracts and Earnings of Visual Creators: A Survey of 5,800 British Designers, Fine Artists, Illustrators and Photographers. CIPPM Project Report
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[9] Australia Council for the Arts (2017) Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia <Australia Council, 2017) <https://australiacouncil.gov.au/advocacy-and-research/making-art-work/> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[10] Giblin (n.d.) The Author's Interest (The Author's Interest, n.d.) <https://authorsinterest.org/> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[11] The Writers' Union of Canada (2015) Devaluing Creators, Endangering Creativity. The Writers' Union of Canada Project Report
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[14] UK Research and Innovation (n.d.) Innovate UK (Innovate UK, n.d.) <https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[15] Yuvaraj, Giblin, Russo-Batterham and Grant (2021) US Copyright Termination Notices 1977-2020: Introducing New Datasets. Journal of Empirical Legal Studies, 19(1)
[16] Garcia (2020) Contracts and Copyright: Contemporary Musician Income Streams in O'Connor (ed) The Oxford Handbook of Music Law and Policy, Oxford University Press
[17] Yuvaraj and Giblin (2019) Are contracts enough? An empirical study of author rights in Australian publishing agreements. Melbourne University Law Review, 44(1)
[18] Cuntz and Sahli (2021) Covid-19 Impact on Artistic Income. WIPO Economic Research Working Paper, 65
[19] Society of Authors (2022) Authors in the Health Crisis survey (ALCS, 3 March 2022) <https://www.alcs.co.uk/news/pandemic-has-ongoing-impact-on-authors-wellbeing-reveals-society-of-authors-survey> (accessed: 17 November 2022)

METHODOLOGY

This survey builds on longitudinal, comparative data from previous surveys of authors' earnings, beginning in 2006.

Kretschmer & Hardwick (2007) - The '2006' survey
Authors' Earnings from Copyright and Non-Copyright Sources: A Survey of 25,000 British and German Writers

Gibson, Johnson and Dimita (2015) - The '2014' survey
The Business of Being an Author: A Survey of Author's Earnings and Contracts

Kretschmer, Gavaldon, Miettinen and Singh (2019) - The '2018' survey
UK Authors' Earnings and Contracts 2018: A Survey of 50,000 Writers

To ensure backwards compatibility, and the ability to track trends in authors' working conditions over time, we preserved the structure of the survey from the most recent 2018 study, which in turn followed the design from 2006, repeated in 2014. We added new questions to account for the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on authors earnings and professional lives. Notably, we also captured two years of earnings data where applicable, for tax years 2019/20 (in effect pre-Covid) and 2020/21 (post-Covid). In this latest survey, we also capture more detailed, granular data on authors' demographic profiles than in previous additions. A copy of the survey is available as Appendix 1.

The survey was implemented on an online survey tool, Qualtrics. Respondents were offered an incentive to complete survey, with a randomised award of £500 upon receipt of their email address, which was immediately deleted after the prize draw and decoupled from participants' data. For all other purposes, respondents remain anonymous.

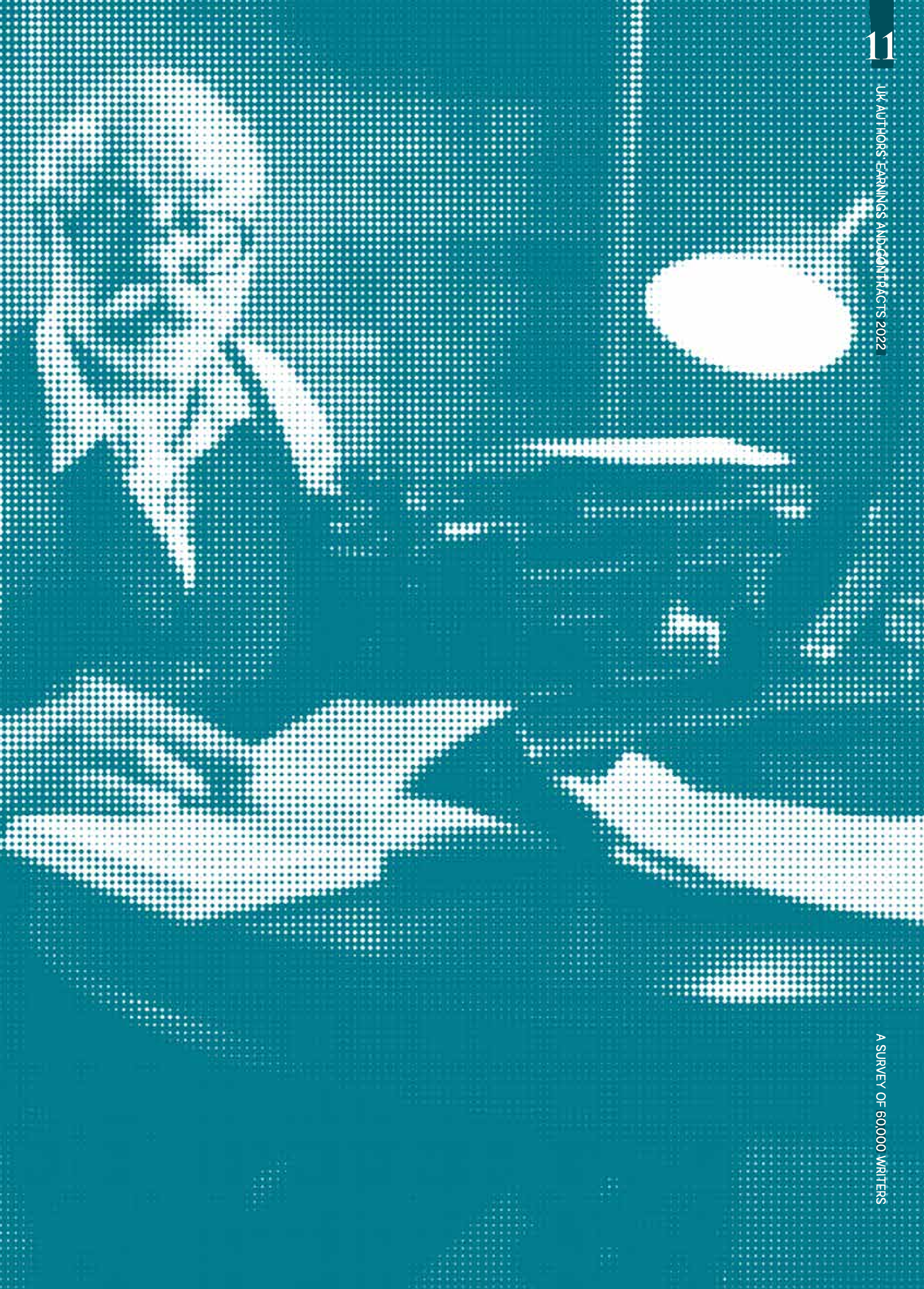
We issued the survey to 58,260 members of the ALCS on 1 February 2022, closing on 12 April 2022. The survey was publicised by ALCS on their website on 27 January 2022 [1] and a reminder was sent via newsletter on 23 February 2022. The survey was also circulated by mailing lists to members of the Society of Authors and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, and was publicised on The Bookseller website on 1 February [2]. In sum, we estimate that that the survey was sent to a population of approximately 60,000 authors.

Upon receipt of the responses, we did not attempt to correct or amend any data, except for clearly erroneous answers. Corrections of substance were mostly in response to earnings data where the respondent had answered in thousands of GBP rather than GBP (a matter which could be confirmed otherwise by the context of the response). Respondents were given the option to skip questions if they were irrelevant to them, or if they were uncomfortable to answer. As the ability to skip questions is by design, we did not dismiss partial responses and instead factor all submitted responses in our analysis.

Quantitative data, including earnings data, was analysed using Stata. Qualitative data, generated from answers where respondents could use free-form text, was analysed using Nvivo.

The analysis that follows focusses on three groups of authors: (1) all respondents to the survey, (2) authors who write as their primary occupation, and (3) authors who report that writing is their main source of income. By stratifying author 'types' in this way, and particularly by focussing on primary occupation and main income authors, we focus on specific groups within the larger the population of authors. This makes it more meaningful to make comparisons over time between different survey waves. Such comparisons would be strongly affected by changes in the pool of respondents if we were to compare the full sample only. In addition, given that authors differ a lot in terms of how important that occupation is in their overall earnings, from a policy perspective 'primary occupation authors' and those who write as their primary source of income, are the groups of more direct interest.

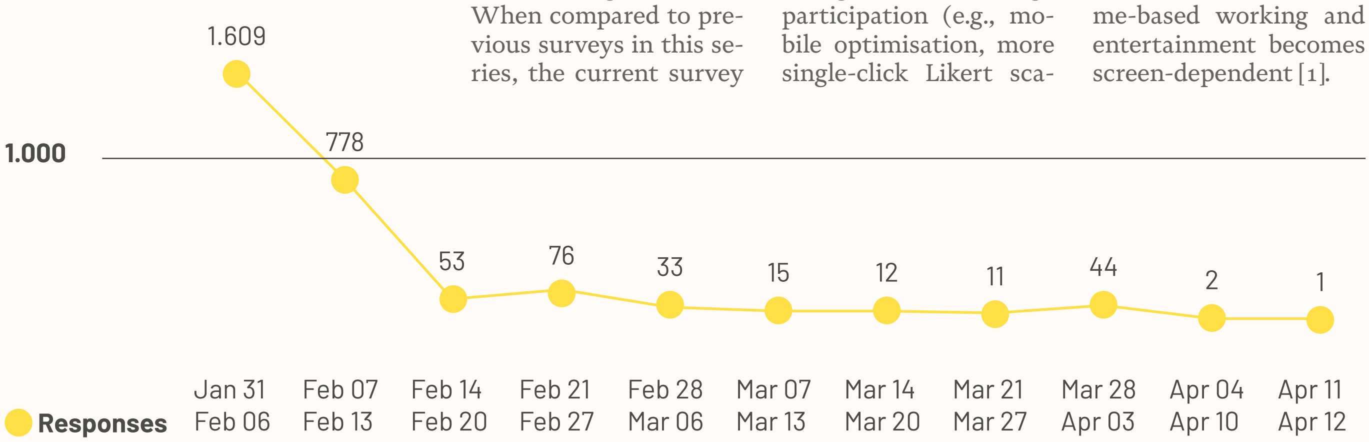
[1] ALCS (2022) We love what you do and we want you to be paid fairly for it. Fill in our survey. (Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, 27 January 2022) <https://www.alcs.co.uk/news/what-are-your-words-worth-tell-us-in-our-survey-coming-on-1-february> (accessed: 17 November 2022)
[2] Bayley (2022) ALCS commissions new survey on writers' earnings (The Bookseller, 1 February 2022) <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/alcs-commissions-new-survey-on-writers-earnings> (accessed: 17 November 2022)



POPULATION *and* RESPONSE RATES

In total, 2,759 responses to the survey were received. We accepted partial responses as valid observations. The numbers presented in this report therefore may not account for 100% of these 2,759 responses. As with previous surveys, due to the online format there is an inherent uncertainty as to who these respondents are (e.g., who has access to the link). As such, these response rates should be treated with caution when extrapolating to the broader population of authors. Further, due to the lack of a stable definition of an 'author', we did not apply any statistical weights to make the survey more representative for the total writing population.

We mitigate these limitations by focussing the analysis on policy relevant sub-samples: primary occupation authors (defined as those who allocate 50% or more of their time to writing) and main-income authors (defined as those who earn 50% or more of their total individual income from writing). These stratifications allow us to compare authors with professional aspirations and standing over time. When compared to previous surveys in this series, the current survey had a lower response rate; the 2018 survey received 5,521 partial responses and 2,696 completed responses from the then 50,000 members of ALCS. The response rate in the current survey is sufficient for statistical analysis and does not appear to be caused by features of the survey method, for example that it was perceived as too long or cumbersome; indeed, we introduced some changes to encourage participation (e.g., mobile optimisation, more single-click Likert scales and drag and drop options, conditional logic displays). For those respondents who did click into the survey, they usually went on to complete it – only 79 responses were 'in progress' come the closing date of the survey - but fewer started it overall. Whilst it is difficult to assess the reasons behind this lower response rate, it may be associated with so-called 'survey fatigue', which has increased as home-based working and entertainment becomes screen-dependent [1].



Differences in the population of ALCS members and response rates means that comparisons across previous reports (2006, 2014 and 2018) need to be qualified. Caution is always advised for non-panel surveys, unless respondents are limited and traceable (therefore replicable) over time. Samples will always vary, and thus have limited transferability between them. By contrast, intra-comparison between the tax years captured within this survey (2019/20 and 20/2021) reflects the same cohort of authors. We articulate relevant limitations throughout the report. We also note that our more detailed demographic profile in this survey means that we may not be able to trace changes and developments for new demographic categories. Likewise, the numbers of authors who identify in particular demographic groups may be very small for these new categories, particularly gender, as movement and identification between groups becomes more nuanced and developed. Whilst much of this demographic data should be treated with caution (and will be flagged as such), we nonetheless include it both for the sake of transparency, and to capture important categorical information about authors' identification.

[1] de Koning et al. (2021) Survey Fatigue During the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Analysis of Neurosurgery Survey Response Rates

DEMOGRAPHIC *profile*

Gender

As a profession, writing is (marginally) more male. Across the full sample, 51% of the total authors surveyed identify as men, compared with 45% identifying as women. This is the first survey in the series where we have attempted to account for other gender identification. Cumulatively however, other genders make for a small proportion of the overall writing population (less than 5%)

Table 1: Gender of authors

	MEN	NON-BINARY	OTHER/PREFER NOT TO SAY	TRANS*	WOMEN
Full sample (1,225)	629 (51%)	15 (1%)	31 (3%)	2 (<1%)	548 (45%)
Primary occupation (556)	254 (46%)	7 (1%)	13 (2%)	2 (<1%)	280 (50%)

For primary occupation authors, we see that the gender difference is reversed, with 50% identifying as women and 46% as men.

Ethnicity

Writing is a predominantly white profession for both the total writing sample and sub-sample of primary occupation authors. White authors make up a 91% of both the total writing sample and primary occupation authors. This contrasts with the 2019 census [1], according to which 84.8% of England and Wales' population identified their ethnicity as white.

Table 2: Ethnicity of authors

	ASIAN	BLACK	MIXED	OTHER	WHITE
Total Sample (1,205)	23 (2%)	30 (2%)	28 (2%)	30 (2%)	1,094 (91%)
Primary Occupation (544)	9 (2%)	11 (2%)	14 (3%)	16 (3%)	494 (91%)

[1] Office for National Statistics (2019) Population estimates by ethnic group and religion, England and Wales: 2019 (Office for National Statistics, 16 December 2021) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/populationestimatesbyethnicgroupandreligionenglandandwales/2019> (accessed: 17 November 2021)

Age

Among our respondents, the most common age group is 55-64, making up 25% of the total sample and 26% of primary occupation authors. Comparatively, we see very few individual respondents aged below 25 (<1%), and also relatively few aged 25-34 (5%).

Table 3: Age of authors

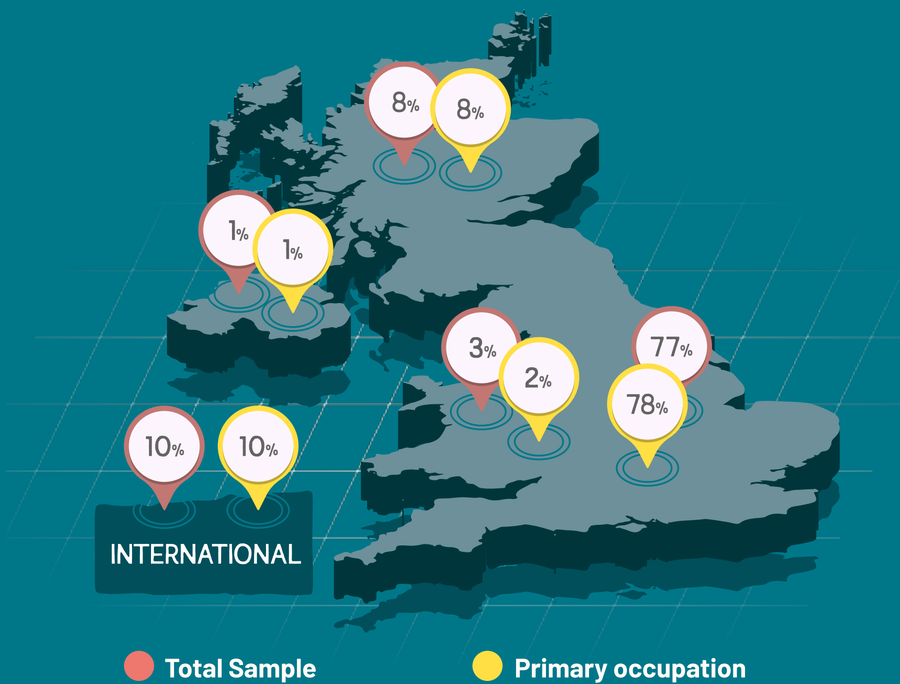
	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85 >
Total sample (1,222)	4 (<1%)	58 (5%)	172 (14%)	232 (19%)	305 (30%)	284 (23%)	152 (12%)	15 (1%)
Primary occupation (630)	1 (<1%)	30 (5%)	102 (16%)	136 (22%)	164 (26%)	126 (20%)	63 (10%)	8 (1%)

Location

Over two-thirds of respondents in the total sample live in England (77%). For primary occupation authors, this follows a similar pattern, with 78% living in England.

Table 4: Location of authors

	England	International	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Total sample (1,218)	943 (77%)	122 (10%)	14 (1%)	98 (8%)	41 (3%)
Primary occupation (627)	491 (78%)	65 (10%)	8 (1%)	50 (8%)	13 (2%)



Using more granular location data, we found distinct clusters of authors within our largest geographic sub-sample in England. Most authors hail from the South of England, with 16% from London, 16% from South East England and 12% from South West England. By comparison, the part with the fewest authors is North East England with only 3% of the total writing population. Similar distributions are evident with primary occupation authors, with a slightly higher 20% hailing from London, 15% South East England, 14% South West England and 1% North East England. Broadly, this snapshot is in keeping with our expectations of geographic distribution of authors to cluster around access to cultural markets in the UK capital.

With 10% of both total sample and primary occupation authors living outwith the UK, this is not an inconsiderable population. Indeed, it is possible that authors will become more mobile due to changing access to cultural markets post-Brexit, and changing expectations of remote work post-Covid-19. Mostly, we found that authors living outwith the UK clustered in English-language countries including the US, Ireland, and Australia. Following these, authors appear to favour France, Ghana, Italy, and Spain.

Household

On average (mean), more than half of all authors live with at least one other person for a total household population of two. Most commonly, authors live with one other person only, with 54% of authors in the total sample, and 50% in the primary occupation sample. By comparison, busy households with four (9% of total sample, 11% of primary occupation), or five or more people (3% of total sample, 4% of primary occupation), are relatively rare.

	1 (single person household)	2	3	4	5 or more
Total sample (1,191)	234 (20%)	642 (54%)	165 (14%)	110 (9%)	40 (3%)
Primary occupation (619)	1 (<1%)	30 (5%)	102 (16%)	136 (22%)	164 (26%)

PROFESSIONAL *profile*

1,288 (47%) of respondents identified as primary occupation authors, and 658 (24%) of respondents said that all their working time was spent on writing. This means that almost half of the authors we surveyed work at least part-time in other employment, whether for flexibility or to supplement their writing income.

Main Occupations

In the total sample, most respondents identify their occupation, broadly, as 'author' (45%). This is followed by 'academic' (19%), and 'other' (8%). For primary occupation authors, academics overtake as the primary occupation (21%), followed by author (18%) and other (8%).

	TOTAL SAMPLE (2,426)	PRIMARY OCCUPATION (1,115)
Author	1,100 (45%)	497 (18%)
Author/illustrator	55 (2%)	23 (2%)
Editor	65 (3%)	35 (3%)
Teacher	52 (2%)	23 (2%)
Academic	470 (19%)	232 (21%)
Journalist	152 (6%)	69 (6%)
Playwright	23 (1%)	10 (1%)
Scriptwriter	100 (4%)	39 (3%)
Poet	53 (2%)	27 (2%)
Translator	32 (1%)	16 (1%)
Comedian	6 (<1%)	3 (<1%)
No longer writing (retired)	120 (5%)	47 (4%)
Other	198 (8%)	94 (8%)

Table 6: 'How would you describe your main writing occupation?'

Relative importance of work type to earnings

In terms of writing activities, we find that writing books is the most important type of work relative to an author's earnings (for 65% of the total sample, and 50% of the primary occupation authors).

The 'other' category (included for both most and least important sources of work relative to income) included responses relating to consultancy, copywriting, teaching, advertising, and translation.

Table 7: 'How would you describe your main writing occupation?'

MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES	BOOKS	NEWS PAPERS	MAGAZINES/ PERIODICALS	THEATRE	AUDIO/ AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTIONS	DIGITAL PUBLISHING	OTHER
Total Sample (2,044)	1,330 (65%)	50 (2%)	242 (12%)	19 (1%)	106 (5%)	177 (9%)	120 (6%)
Primary Occupation (1,101)	656 (50%)	36 (3%)	111 (10%)	13 (1%)	88 (8%)	128 (12%)	69 (6%)

LEAST IMPORTANT SOURCES	BOOKS	NEWS PAPERS	MAGAZINES/ PERIODICALS	THEATRE	AUDIO/ AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTIONS	DIGITAL PUBLISHING	OTHER
Total Sample (810)	2 (<1%)	15 (2%)	3 (<1%)	103 (13%)	61 (8%)	43 (5%)	583 (72%)
Primary Occupation (463)	1 (<1%)	12 (3%)	1 (<1%)	68 (15%)	42 (9%)	25 (5%)	314 (68%)

More specifically, for the total sample of authors, academic writing is the most important genre relative to earnings (for 27%), followed by fiction (24%). For primary occupation authors, fiction overtakes as the most important genre (32%), followed by nonfiction popular (24%). Overwhelmingly, for both the total sample and primary occupation authors, writing for games, VFX and web is the least important genre relative to income (for 83% of the total sample, and 80% of primary occupation authors).

Table 8: 'Please rank the following genres by earnings'

MOST IMPORTANT GENRES	TOTAL SAMPLE (1,938)	PRIMARY OCCUPATION (1,002)
Fiction	464 (24%)	319 (32%)
Travel	51 (3%)	38 (4%)
Nonfiction popular	392 (20%)	240 (24%)
Academic	528 (27%)	151 (15%)
Professional/Technical	176 (9%)	65 (6%)
Children's Fiction	143 (7%)	104 (10%)
Children's Nonfiction	26 (1%)	22 (2%)
Educational/teaching	142 (7%)	51 (5%)
Writing for games	16 (1%)	12 (1%)

LEAST IMPORTANT GENRES	TOTAL SAMPLE (754)	PRIMARY OCCUPATION (404)
Fiction	12 (2%)	6 (1%)
Travel	28 (4%)	19 (5%)
Nonfiction popular	2 (<1%)	1 (<1%)
Academic	12 (27%)	7 (2%)
Professional/Technical	6 (1%)	6 (1%)
Children's Fiction	8 (1%)	5 (1%)
Children's Nonfiction	16 (2%)	8 (2%)
Educational/teaching	41 (5%)	27 (7%)
Writing for games	629 (83%)	325 (80%)

For audio-visual productions, the total sample of authors favour film (20% rating as most important), followed by non-fiction radio (including podcasts) (20% rating as most important) and TV dramas (16% rating as most important) for sources of income. Primary occupation authors favour film (19%), non-fiction radio (19%), and TV dramas (19%) equally. Least important sources of income have relatively low responses, but suggest that for both, non-fiction radio is the least important source of income for the majority of authors (48% of the total sample and 35% of primary occupation authors.

Table 9: 'Please rank the following types of writing works in audio/visual production by earnings'

MOST IMPORTANT	TOTAL SAMPLE (440)	PRIMARY OCCUPATION (316)
Film	88 (20%)	60 (19%)
Film Documentary	35 (8%)	20 (6%)
TV drama	71 (16%)	60 (19%)
TV documentary	54 (12%)	28 (9%)
Children's TV	35 (8%)	31 (10%)
TV Comedy	8 (2%)	7 (2%)
TV Soap	11 (3%)	9 (3%)
Radio (fiction)	49 (11%)	42 (13%)
Radio (nonfiction)	89 (20%)	59 (19%)

LEAST IMPORTANT	TOTAL SAMPLE (33)	PRIMARY OCCUPATION (23)
Film	1 (3%)	1 (4%)
Film Documentary	1 (3%)	1 (4%)
TV drama	1 (3%)	1 (4%)
TV documentary	1 (3%)	1 (4%)
Children's TV	4 (12%)	3 (13%)
TV Comedy	2 (6%)	1 (4%)
TV Soap	3 (9%)	3 (13%)
Radio (fiction)	4 (12%)	4 (17%)
Radio (nonfiction)	16 (48%)	8 (35%)

For authors whose work is incorporated into radio or audio-visual works, overwhelmingly, broadcasting is rated as the most important source of income for both the total sample (74% rating most important) and primary occupation authors (77% rating as most important). Whilst again we see fewer respondents for ratings of least important sources of income, both the total sample (67%) and primary occupation authors (74%) rate earnings from rentals as least important.

For authors whose work is incorporated into radio or audio-visual works, overwhelmingly, broadcasting is rated as the most important source of income for both the total sample (74% rating most important) and primary occupation authors (77% rating as most important). Whilst again we see fewer respondents for ratings of least important sources of income, both the total sample (67%) and primary occupation authors (74%) rate earnings from rentals as least important.

Table 10: 'In relation to your earnings from writings which are incorporated in radio/audio-visual works, please rank the following by earnings'

MOST IMPORTANT	BROADCASTING	DOWNLOADING	STREAMING	RENTAL
Total sample (366)	270 (74%)	19 (5%)	55 (15%)	22 (6%)
Primary occupation (260)	201 (77%)	15 (6%)	35 (13%)	9 (3%)

MOST IMPORTANT	BROADCASTING	DOWNLOADING	STREAMING	RENTAL
Total sample (46)	5 (11%)	5 (11%)	5 (11%)	31 (67%)
Primary Occupation (34)	2 (6%)	4 (12%)	3 (9%)	25 (74%)

Years in the writing profession

Most of the authors in our sample began their careers in the profession between 2010-2014 and 2015-2019 year bands. The typical (median) year to start writing is 2005 for both the total sample primary occupation authors.

Whilst as a general trend the survey unsurprisingly captures more recent authors, it is notable that for both primary occupation and main income authors, their numbers start to decline after 2010. Or, to put this another way, it seems that fewer authors are able to sustain their careers as primary occupation and main income authors as time goes on.

Membership of professional organisations

The primary population targeted by the survey is the membership of ALCS, although other professional bodies such as the Society of Authors, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB, representing screen writers) and the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi, representing self-publishing authors) also promoted the call. As ALCS collects and distributes income from secondary use (outside publishing contracts), almost all professional authors in the UK are members both of ALCS as the collecting society, and many are also members of a second professional body.

Table 11: 'If you can remember it, please select all the memberships of professional organisations and add the year in which you joined'

	ALCS	SOCIETY OF AUTHORS	WGGB	NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS	ALLi	OTHER
Total Sample (3,731)	2,210	698	98	115	64	546
Primary Occupation (2,194)	1,171	481	87	95	43	317

In the 'other' category, we see frequent membership to sector or genre specific bodies, including The Crime Writers' Association, Romantic Novelist Association, The Guild of Food Writers, or professional guilds and bodies (e.g., the Law Society, Chartered Institute of Archaeologists).

Education and formal training

In the total population of authors, most authors have a degree level education or higher (84%), with a proportionately highest PhD (33%). This is in keeping with the, relatively large number of self-reported academics in this survey, which tends to be an occupation requiring a PhD. For primary occupation authors, those with a degree level education and higher make up a marginally smaller percentage of the population (81%), with fewer PhDs (22%) and more undergraduate degrees (29%) and masters (30%).

Table 12: Highest levels of education of authors

	Secondary School	University entry	Diploma	Degree	Masters	PhD	Other
Total Sample (1,223)	36 (3%)	45 (4%)	47 (4%)	283 (23%)	345 (28%)	399 (33%)	68 (6%)
Primary Occupation (629)	26 (4%)	32 (5%)	25 (4%)	184 (29%)	189 (30%)	137 (22%)	36 (6%)

In the process of this education, only the minority of authors have engaged in formal writing training (21% of total sample and 26% of primary occupation authors).

	NO	YES
Total Sample (1,217)	958 (79%)	259 (21%)
Primary Occupation (627)	466 (74%)	161 (26%)

EARNINGS

‘Writing feels, now more than ever, a luxury that I can’t afford. My books earn a pitifully small amount of annual revenue for me and so whilst it’s my passion, I’m having to think of putting it aside for the moment so I can afford my home.’

We stratify the analysis on earnings around a multi-layered concept of an author’s income: (1) self-employed writing income, (2) individual income, and (3) household income. Cumulatively, these make for the ‘total’ of an author’s income.

As in previous reports, we use the median as a more accurate unit of measurement of average earnings due to the presence of outliers in the data. We also use real measurements of growth to adjust for inflation.

Earnings of primary and main income authors

‘Remaining in the industry has become untenable. The trend to increasing predation is only going to get worse and worse. I’ve been in publishing since 1993. I have written more than a hundred books for traditional publication, and edited three hundred more. Next week, I am taking a job in insurance, thanks to a friend. It’s heart-breaking.’

In total, 1,104 authors provided earnings data from the (most recent) 2020/21 tax year, with 946 also reporting earnings for the (pre-Covid) 2019/20 tax year. Primary occupation authors earn a median income of £7,000 in 2022 in respect of their self-employed writing activities (e.g., freelance work, commissioned work).

Assuming a maximum 48-hour working week at the £9.50 hourly rate (UK national minimum wage as of 1 April 2022) would produce a total income of approx. £21,888 per annum before taxes) [1]. Writing in itself cannot sustain an income that is consistent with a minimum wage.

Table 14: Self-employed writing earnings of primary occupation authors

	2006	2014	2018	2022
Median earnings from self-employed writing (£)	12,330	11,000	10,497	7,000
Real median incomes (adjusting for inflation and using 2021 as the base year) (£)	17,608	12,455	11,329	7,000

Self-employed writing income is earned from a range of sources. Most primary occupation authors receive income from ALCS (95%) and publishers (87%). Self-publishing (52%) and lectures (56%) are less common sources of income for the majority of authors, whilst crowdfunding (7%) and fellowships (8%) are very rare.

Table 15: Sources of self-employed writing earnings for primary occupation authors

SOURCES OF SELF-EMPLOYED WRITING INCOME	PERCENTAGE OF PRIMARY OCCUPATION AUTHORS WHO HAVE RECEIVED EARNINGS
Publishers	87%
Self-Publishers	52%
Public Lending	69%
ALCS	95%
Awards	19%
Grants	31%
Fellowship	8%
Teaching	31%
Lectures	56%
Crowdfunding	7%

Importantly, authors rarely earn all of their individual income from writing alone (such authors account for less than 20% of all primary occupation authors, as considered in more detail below). Rather, individual income is often supplemented through other, usually salaried, employment. Nonetheless, even when considering these supplementary sources of income, we continue to observe a downward trend in median total individual earnings within the period for both primary occupation and main income authors.

Table 16: Authors' individual income, from writing and non-writing sources

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Total Sample	Observations	1,116	971	2,582
	Median (nominal) (£)	28,000	27,000	30,000
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	28,000	27,699	32,377
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-14%	-14%	-
	Growth in real median incomes (compared preceding tax year)	-1%	-14%	-
Primary Occupation	Observations	582	514	1,192
	Median (nominal) (£)	21,479	23,708	25,000
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	21,479	24,321	26,981
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-20.4%	-9.8%	-
	Growth in real median incomes (compared preceding tax year)	-11.7%	-9.8%	-
Main Income	Observations	309	271	574
	Median (nominal) (£)	21,000	22,243	26,500
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	21,000	22,819	28,599
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-26.6%	-20.2%	-
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to previous wave)	-8.0%	-20.2%	-

The reduction in earnings is more pronounced between tax years 2019/20 and 2020/21, with primary occupation authors now typically earning £21,479 (median) per annum (a drop in real terms of 11.7% between years), and main income authors earning slightly less for atypical income of £21,000 (median) per annum (a drop in real terms of 8% between years).

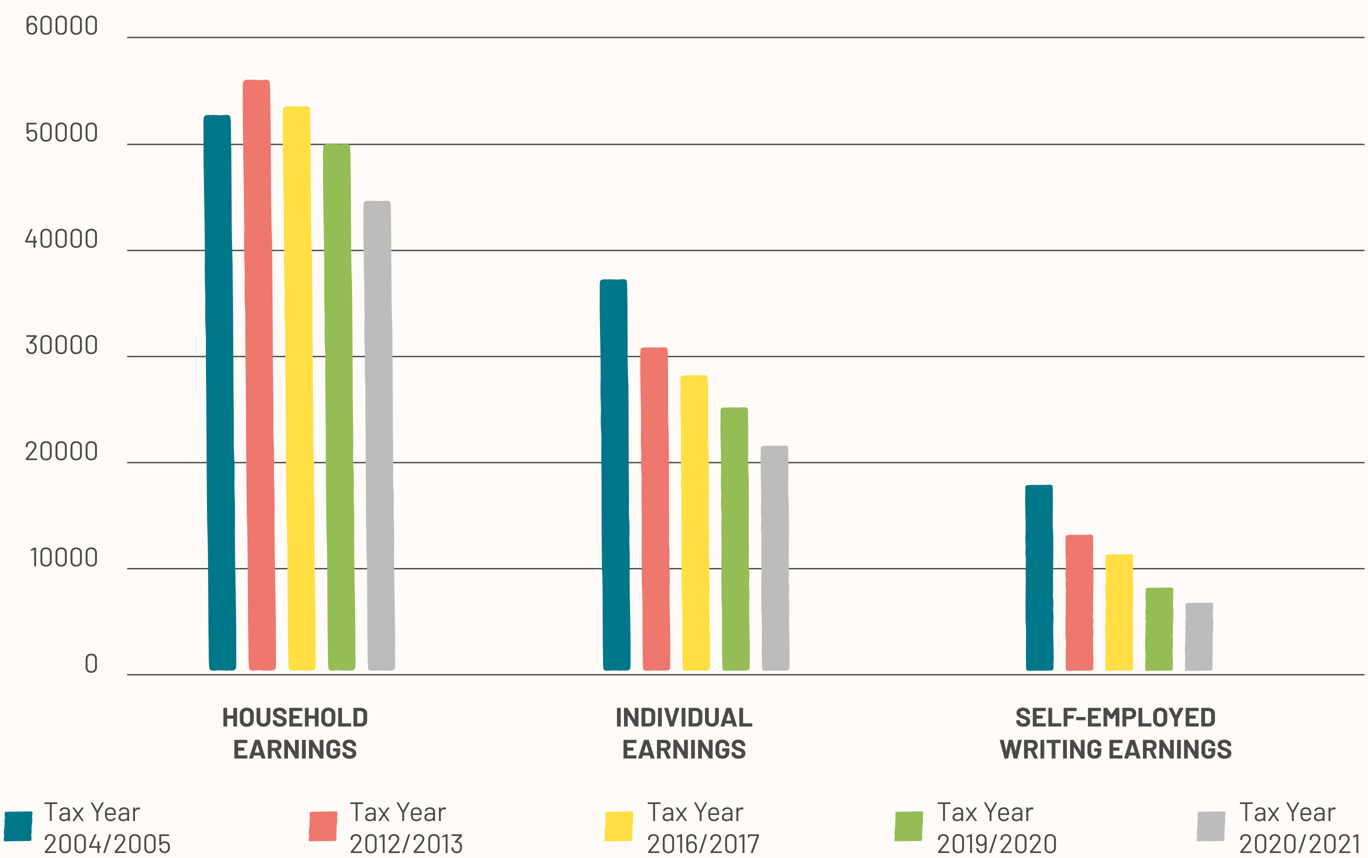
For both, this may not result in an affluent lifestyle, but when supplemented through other sources, this brings an author's income closer to a living wage. Authors in the total sample, where writing is supplemented with other forms of income, fare slightly better with a typical income of £28,000 (median) per annum, with less drastic drops in real terms (1% between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021).

In the case of primary occupation authors, it is possible to go back to earlier surveys, as the definition of the subsample is consistent by reported allocation of time. The downward trend in typical income from this 2022 survey follows a trajectory that continues from previous reports in this series. In the 2018 survey, the median earning for the total sample of authors was £30,000; for primary occupation authors £25,000, and; for main income authors £26,500. The current typical incomes represent a drop in real terms of 14%, 20.4%, and 26.6% respectively since then.

Table 17: Individual income of primary occupation authors, 2006 - 2022

PRIMARY OCCUPATION ONLY	TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017	TAX YEAR 2012/2013	TAX YEAR 2004/2005
Median (nominal) (£)	21,479	23,708	25,000	27,000	25,337
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds)	21,479	24,321	26,981	30,570	36,183
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2004/2005 tax year)	-11.7%	-9.9%	-11.7%	6.5%	-
Growth in real median incomes compared to previous wave	-40.6%	-32.8%	-25.4%	-15.5%	-

PRIMARY OCCUPATION



[1] Low Pay Commission (2022) Minimum wage for different types of work (Gov.uk, 1 April 2022) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-national-minimum-wage-in-2022>

The household subsidy

'Looking at my earnings compared to my husband's certainly made me feel embarrassed. Copywriting seems to be the only profitable angle.'

In the 2018 report, we found that households mitigate risks for authors by supplementing a very low self-employed writing or individual income (the 'household subsidy'). Once this subsidy is applied, the value of an author's work is revealed to be rather diluted. We find that for self-employed writing earnings in the total sample, authors typically earn £2,000 (median) per annum. As with their primary occupation counterparts considered above, this amount is, of course, well below even minimum wage or the minimum award of state benefits. This also represents a further decline from the, already unliveable, average income of £3,000 in 2018. Whilst these results are striking, we stress that the authors in this particular sample are likely to only work occasionally on their writing projects, rather than as a dedicated profession (as is the case with more granular sub-samples e.g., primary income or main income authors); these figures are informative, but not necessarily helpful for the formation of cultural policies.

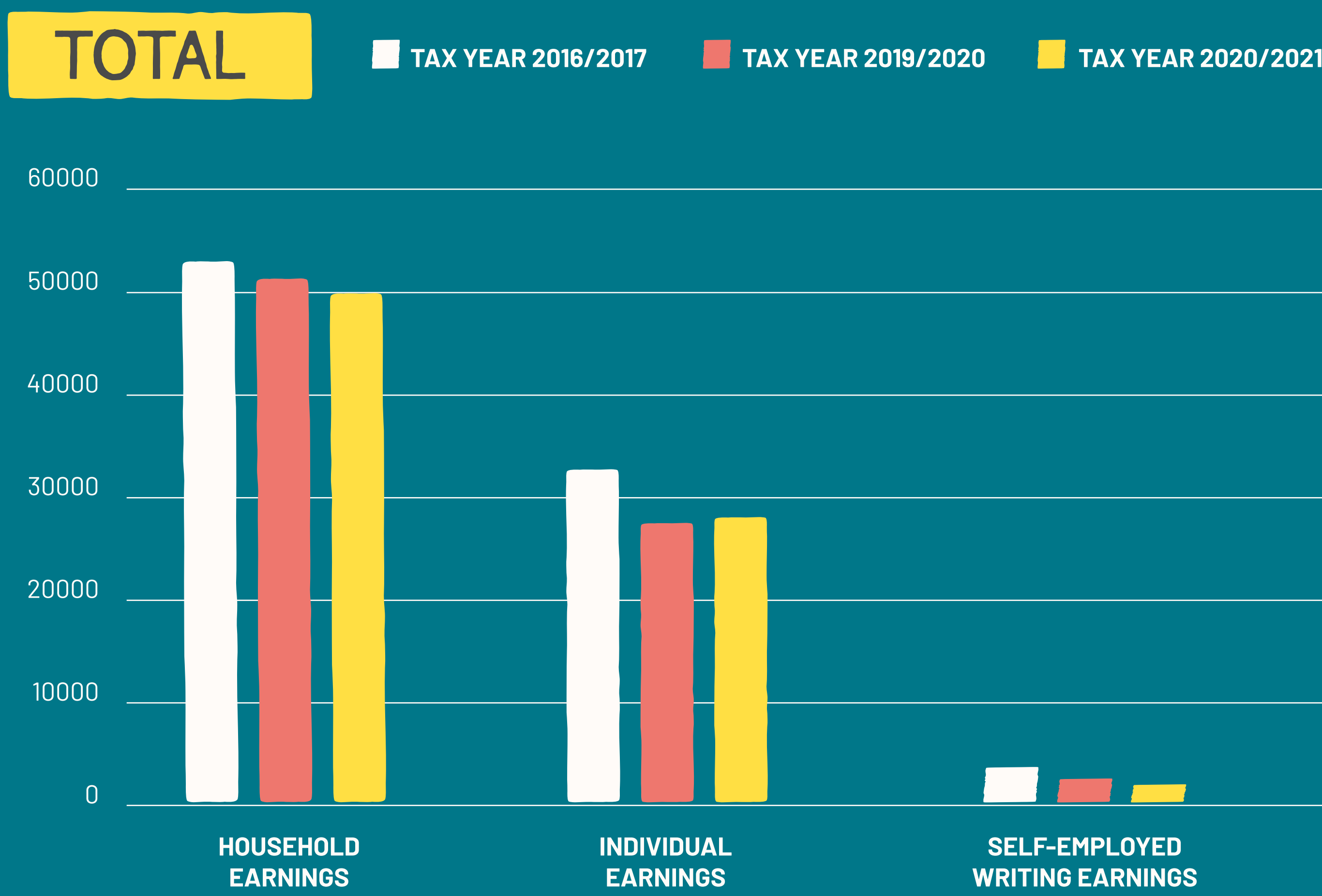
Table 18: Self-employed writing income of authors in the total sample

	2006	2014	2018	2022
Median earnings from self-employed writing (£)	4,000	4,000	3,000	2,000
Real median incomes from self-employed writing (£)	5,712	4,529	3,238	2,000

However, these self-employed earnings are usually absorbed into the bigger context of an income which is supplemented by other sources of individual income (average £28,000), which is then almost doubled by additional household income (average £50,000).

Table 19: Earnings of authors from the total sample across self-employed writing, individual earnings, and household earnings

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Self-employed writing earnings	Observations	1,104	947	2,728
	Median (nominal) (£)	2,000	2,500	3,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	2,000	2,565	3,238
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-38%	-21%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-22%	-21%	N/A
Individual earnings	Observations	1,116	971	2,582
	Median (nominal) (£)	28,000	27,000	30,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	28,000	27,699	32,377
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-14%	-14%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	1%	-14%	N/A
Household earnings	Observations	1,113	961	2,730
	Median (nominal) (£)	50,000	50,000	50,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	50,000	51,294	53,962
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to the 2016/2017)	-7%	-5%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-3%	-5%	N/A

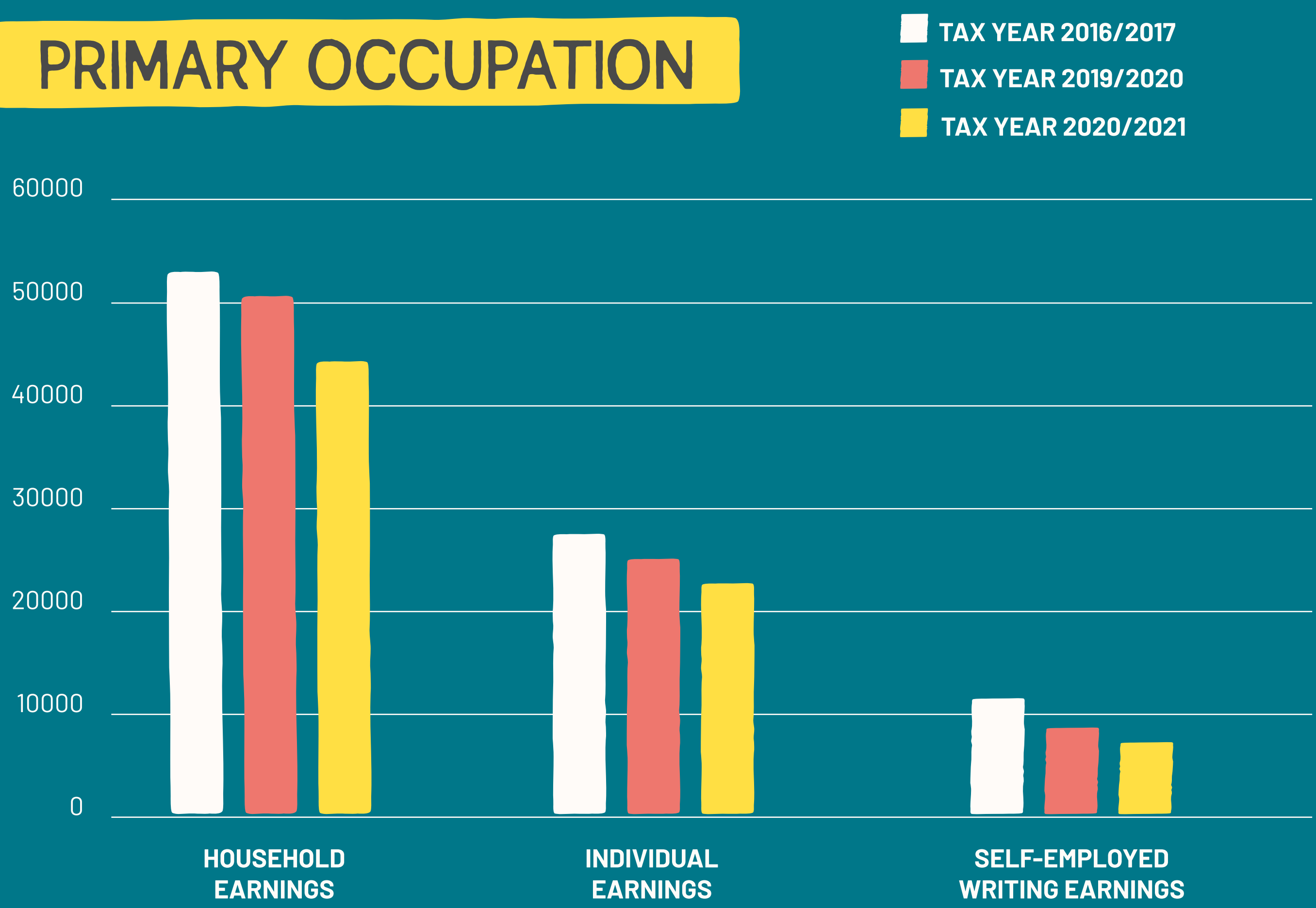


A similar trajectory of subsidisation by the household is evident for primary occupation authors. Whilst the typical primary occupation authors earn more than double on average (median income) in respect of their self-employed writing earnings (£7,000 compared to £2,000 for the total population), this is nonetheless dwarfed by the typical (median) earnings of the primary occupation author's household (£45,000). In sum, the individual income of primary occupation authors contributes to around 48% of their overall household income, whilst their self-employed writing earnings contribute only 16%.

Table 20: Earnings of primary occupation authors from the total sample across self-employed writing, individual earnings, and household earnings

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Self-employed writing earnings	Observations	588	516	1,034
	Median (nominal) (£)	7,000	8,000	10,497
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	7,000	8,207	11,329
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-38%	-28%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-15%	-28%	N/A
Individual earnings	Observations	582	514	1192
	Median (nominal) (£)	21,750	23,950	25,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	21,750	24,570	26,981
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-19%	-9%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-11%	-9%	N/A
Household earnings	Observations	597	526	1287
	Median (nominal) (£)	45,000	48,900	50,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	45,000	50,166	53,962
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to the 2016/2017)	-17%	-7%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-10%	-7%	N/A

PRIMARY OCCUPATION

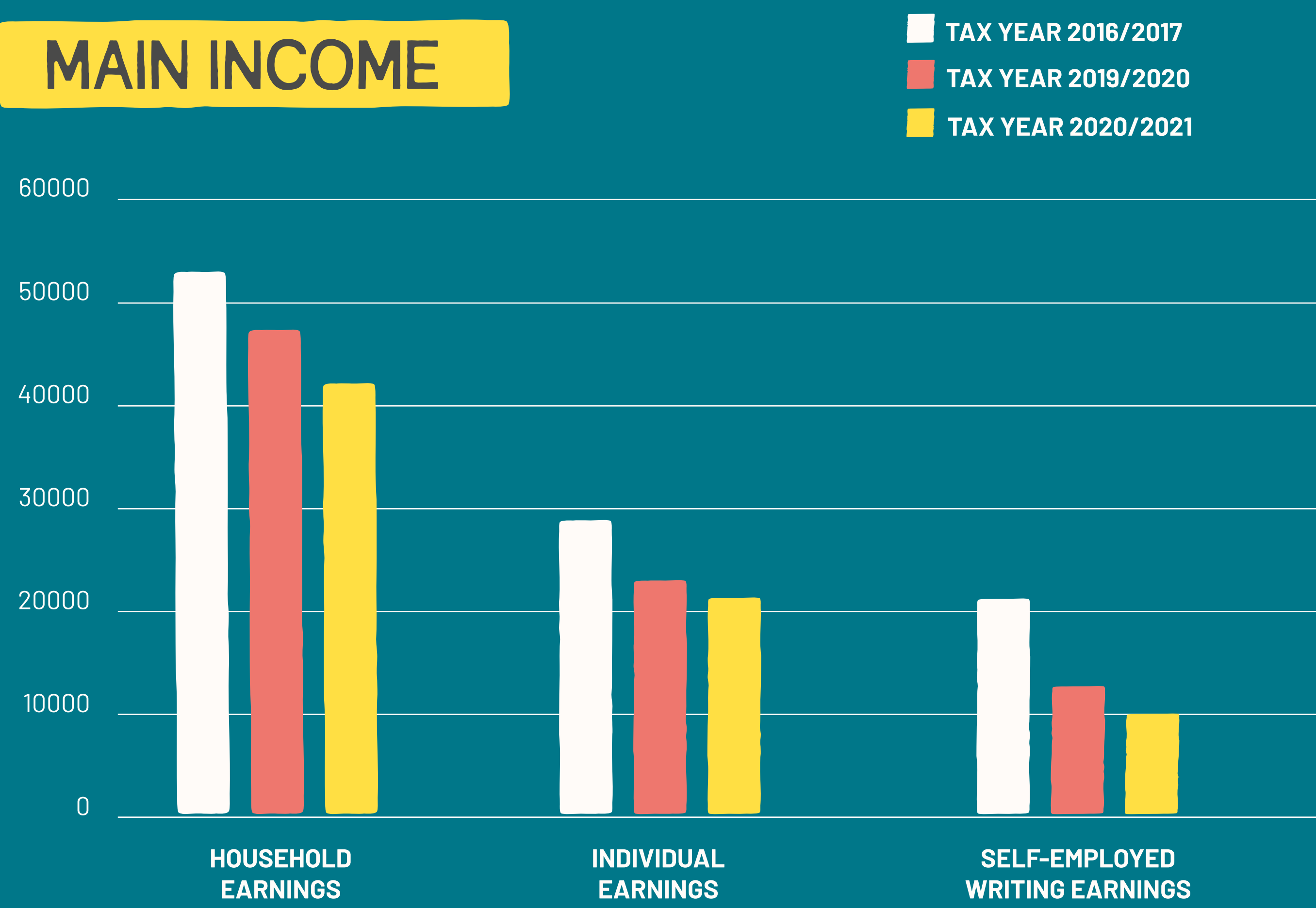


For main income authors, the household subsidy is not so steep as their total and primary occupation counterparts (typically a median income of £10,081per annum for self-employed writing income versus £42,000 for household income), but is still considerable, bringing an author's total income for the year to a liveable wage.

Table 21: Earnings of main income authors from the total sample across self-employed writing, individual earnings, and household earnings

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Self-employed writing earnings	Observations	320	278	661
	Median (nominal) (£)	10,081	12,000	19,722
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	10,081	12,311	21,285
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-53%	-42%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-18%	-42%	N/A
Individual earnings	Observations	309	271	574
	Median (nominal) (£)	21,000	22,337	26,500
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	21,000	22,915	28,600
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-27%	-20%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-8%	-20%	N/A
Household earnings	Observations	327	293	654
	Median (nominal) (£)	42,000	45,500	50,000
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	42,000	46,678	53,962
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to the 2016/2017)	-22%	-13%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-10%	-13%	N/A

MAIN INCOME



Distribution of earnings

'Halving a small amount has had no impact.'

The writing profession is characterised by winner-takes-all dynamics typical of cultural markets.Established names and superstar authors receive a disproportionately bigger slice of the total available earnings 'pie' (net worth) compared to the less established, but much more commonly, lived experience of the typical author. To measure this unequal distribution of earnings, we examined the average earnings of the total sample of authors in the 80th and 20th percentile. We find a highly unequal overall distribution of authors' earnings, characterised by the presence of very high and very low earners (outliers). We find that, already established and successful, authors in the 80th percentile earn a typical median income of £50,000 per annum (a real growth rate of 2% since 2019/2020) compared with £4,000 for authors in the 20th percentile (a drop in real growth of 16%). Cumulatively, the top 10% of authors earn 47% of total individual earnings.

	TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Median earnings of 20th percentile (nominal) (£)	4,000	4,630	9,200
Real median earnings of 20th percentile (in 2021 pounds) (£)	4,000	4,750	9,929
Growth in real median 20th percentile incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-60%	-52%	N/A
Growth in real median 20th percentile incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-16%	-52%	N/A
Median earnings of 80th percentile (nominal) (£)	50,000	48,000	52,000
Real median earnings of 80th percentile (in 2021 pounds) (£)	50,000	49,242	56,120
Growth in real 80th percentile incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-11%	-12%	N/A
Growth in real median 80th percentile incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	2%	-12%	N/A

Table 22: Distribution of authors' earnings across the total sample

As another means of measuring inequality of distribution, we use the Gini coefficient measurement. This is a measurement of statistical inequality designed to reflect the difference in net worth between individuals. Where the coefficient is close to 1 (or 100% inequality) it means one author possesses all the net worth among our sample of authors. Where the coefficient is closer to 0 (or 0% inequality) it means that the net worth is equally dispersed amongst the whole sample of authors. In brief, using this measurement, we can examine the difference in income distributions between successful authors, and the rest.For the total sample of authors, we see a small reduction in inequality when using this measurement. In respect of their total income, primary occupation authors have a Gini coefficient of 0.77 in 2020/2021; a marginal change from the 2018 figure of 0.79. Likewise, earnings from self-employed writing for primary income authors have a Gini coefficient of 0.52 compared with 0.67 in 2018, and individual earnings 0.59 compared with 0.69.

Table 23: Income and Gini co-efficient measurements of authors' earnings across the total sample

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Self-employed writing earnings	Observations	1,104	947	2,728
	Median (nominal) (£)	2,000	2,500	3,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	2,000	2,565	3,238
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-38%	-21%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-22%	-21%	N/A
	Gini	0.52	0.50	0.67
Individual earnings	Observations	1,116	971	2,582
	Median (nominal) (£)	28,000	27,000	30,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	28,000	27,699	32,377
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-14%	-14%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	1%	-14%	N/A
	Gini	0.59	0.54	0.69
Household earnings	Observations	1,113	961	2730
	Median (nominal) (£)	50,000	50,000	50,000
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	50,000	51,294	53,962
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-7%	-5%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-3%	-5%	N/A
	Gini	0.77	0.78	0.79

For primary occupation authors, distribution of self-employed writing earnings is mostly stabilised around the 0.7 mark. Increasingly unequal distribution of income is evident, marginally, at individual (an increase from 0.61 to 0.68 between tax years observed in this study) and household earning levels (likewise increasing from 0.57 to 0.58 between tax years).

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017	TAX YEAR 2012/2013	TAX YEAR 2004/2005
Self-employed writing earnings	Observations	588	516	1,034	630	525
	Median (nominal)	7,000	8,000	10,497	11,000	12,330
	Real Median Incomes (in 2021 pounds)	7,000	8,207	11,329	12,455	17,608
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-60%	-53%	-36%	-29%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-15%	-28%	-9%	-29%	N/A
	Gini	0.70	0.72	0.71	0.69	0.63
Individual earnings	Observations	582	514	1192	932	514
	Median (nominal) (£)	21,479	23,950	25,000	27,000	25,337
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	21,479	24,570	26,981	30,571	36,183
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2004/2005)	-41%	-32%	-25%	-16%	N/A

Household earnings	Observations	597	526	1287	851	501
	Median (nominal) (£)	45,000	48,900	50,000	50,000	37,000
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	45,000	50,166	53,962	56,613	52,839
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to the 2004-2005)	-15%	-5%	2%	7%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-10%	-7%	-5%	7%	N/A
	Gini	0.58	0.57	0.53	0.55	0.47

Table 24: Income and Gini co-efficient measurements of primary occupation author earnings, for whom we can compare results with the 2006 survey

Distribution of earnings for main income authors have more pronounced disparity at individual earning level (increasing from 0.61 to 0.74 in the tax years we examine in this report) and household earning level (likewise increasing from 0.54 to 0.67).

This is in line with our expectations of winner-takes-all dynamics of the writing market, where those authors who can support themselves by writing as their main source income will necessarily also be the group with the largest income disparity, encompassing more narrowly the 'superstar' main income authors, and limiting the capture of those subsidised through other occupations or sources of income.

Table 25: Income and Gini co-efficient measurements of main income author earnings

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Self-employed writing earnings	Observations	320	278	661
	Median (nominal) (£)	10,081	12,000	19,722
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	10,081	12,311	21,285
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-53%	-42%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-18%	-42%	N/A
	Gini	0.67	0.7	0.65
Individual earnings	Observations	309	271	574
	Median (nominal) (£)	21,000	22,337	26,500
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	21,000	22,915	28,600
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-27%	-20%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-8%	-20%	N/A
	Gini	0.74	0.61	0.7
Household earnings	Observations	327	293	654
	Median (nominal) (£)	42,000	45,500	50,000
	Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	42,000	46,678	53,962
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to the 2016/2017)	-22%	-13%	N/A
	Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-10%	-13%	N/A
	Gini	0.67	0.54	0.53

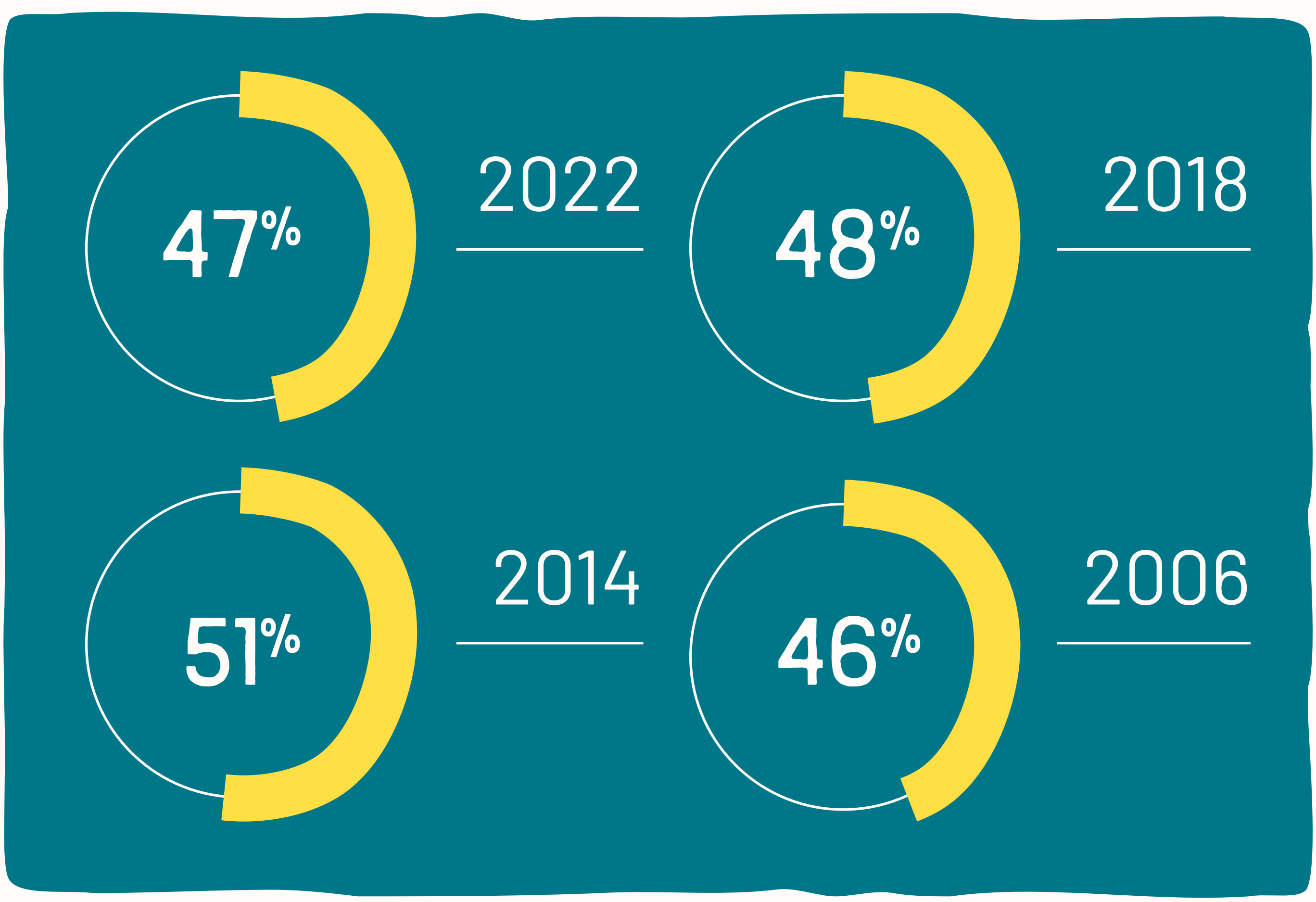
How sustainable is the writing profession?

'At this stage, I'm considering going back to full time work as this just doesn't feel sustainable anymore.'

As illustrated by our analysis of the downward trend in authors' earning, the lived reality for many is that the income generated from writing alone is not liveable and certainly not affluent. In theory, this should also mean that the profession of writing itself is not desirable nor sustainable, as authors leave the profession to seek other avenues of income; the number of primary occupation authors should then, it is supposed, decline.

To measure this, we compare longitudinal data across previous surveys to chart the percentage of primary occupation authors over the years. Whilst we expect to see a steep decline in the numbers of primary occupation authors, instead, it seems that, at least proportionately, the numbers of primary occupation authors are stagnating between 46-51% of the total writing population.

PERCENTAGE OF 'PRIMARY OCCUPATION AUTHORS' IN THE TOTAL SAMPLE OF RESPONDENTS ACROSS REPORTS 2006 - 2022



On the one hand, these numbers suggest there is both oversupply of authors, and overconfidence at one's likelihood of success; presumably, an author would not base their primary occupation on something they did not expect to have a relatively comfortable lifestyle from. However, based on our analysis of distribution of earnings, the likelihood is that the average author will earn an income that is only marginally better than someone working for minimum wage in any other industry.

However, we also know from our respondents that fewer primary occupation authors are beginning earning from their writing careers as time goes on. In combination, this would suggest that fewer authors are beginning their careers with the intention of being primary occupation authors, but there is capacity to move between categories (e.g., for better established authors who begin their careers earlier to move from writing as a supplementary occupation, to writing as a primary occupation).

When we consider primary occupation authors who earn their total individual income from writing alone, a sharper decline is evident. As of 2022, only 19% of primary occupation authors earn their total individual income from writing alone. This represents a sizeable decrease since 2018 (28%) and 2006 (40%). When we consider these decreases in the number of authors in this sub-sample alongside their median income, this is consistent with a decline in liveable wages. In both 2006 and 2018, an author who earned their entire income from writing could expect to earn a median income of around £28,000; this is in excess of a living wage which would not require additional supplementation from other salaried employment. However, as of 2022, the typical (median) income for authors who earn all their income from writing is £16,000 – below a living wage. Inevitably, such a low income can only be sustainable for the very few authors who can either be supplemented by their household, or other non-working sources of income.

Table 27: Percentage of time spent on writing for primary occupation authors and their earnings

PRIMARY OCCUPATION WRITERS FOR WHOM WRITING CONTRIBUTES:	(2022) % OF WRITERS	MEAN WRITING INCOME	MEDIAN WRITING INCOME	(2018) % OF WRITERS	MEAN WRITING INCOME	MEDIAN WRITING INCOME	(2006) % OF WRITERS	MEAN WRITING INCOME	MEDIAN WRITING INCOME
More than 50% of total individual income in £	34.88%	29,881	16,000	64.95%	41,344 (44,620)	20,000 (21,585)	59.60%	41,186 (57,479)	23,000 (32,099)
More than 75% of total individual income in £	27.96%	32,341	18,600	52.43%	46,208 (49,869)	22,000 (23,743)	48.40%	48,101 (67,129)	26,500 (36,983)
More than 90% of total individual income in £	24.9%	31,737	15,350	44.63%	47,360 (51,113)	24,000 (25,902)	42.80%	50,090 (69,905)	27,696 (38,652)
100% of total individual income in £	19.27%	31,818	16,000	28.45%	52,712 (56,889)	28,000 (30,219)	40.00%	49,542 (69,140)	27,500 (38,379)

WHAT FACTORS *affect* EARNINGS?

'My fear is that only people from wealthy backgrounds will now be able to get a foothold in the profession: someone from my background would find it hard to get established now.'

Sector

'I earn very little from my novel writing. Journalism keeps me afloat, but novel writing takes more time.'

We accounted for differences for earnings of authors across different occupations as certain sub-sectors or genres may produce higher or lower incomes. We find that, despite both documenting steady declines over the years, for primary occupation authors, scriptwriters (forming part of the broader category of audio-visual authors) earn the highest mean income (£42,000), compared with playwrights earning the least (£1,250). Academics, poets, and those in the 'other' category have reported improved earnings between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. All other occupations see drops in income between these years, with more pronounced reductions in earnings for journalists, editors, and authors (broadly conceived).

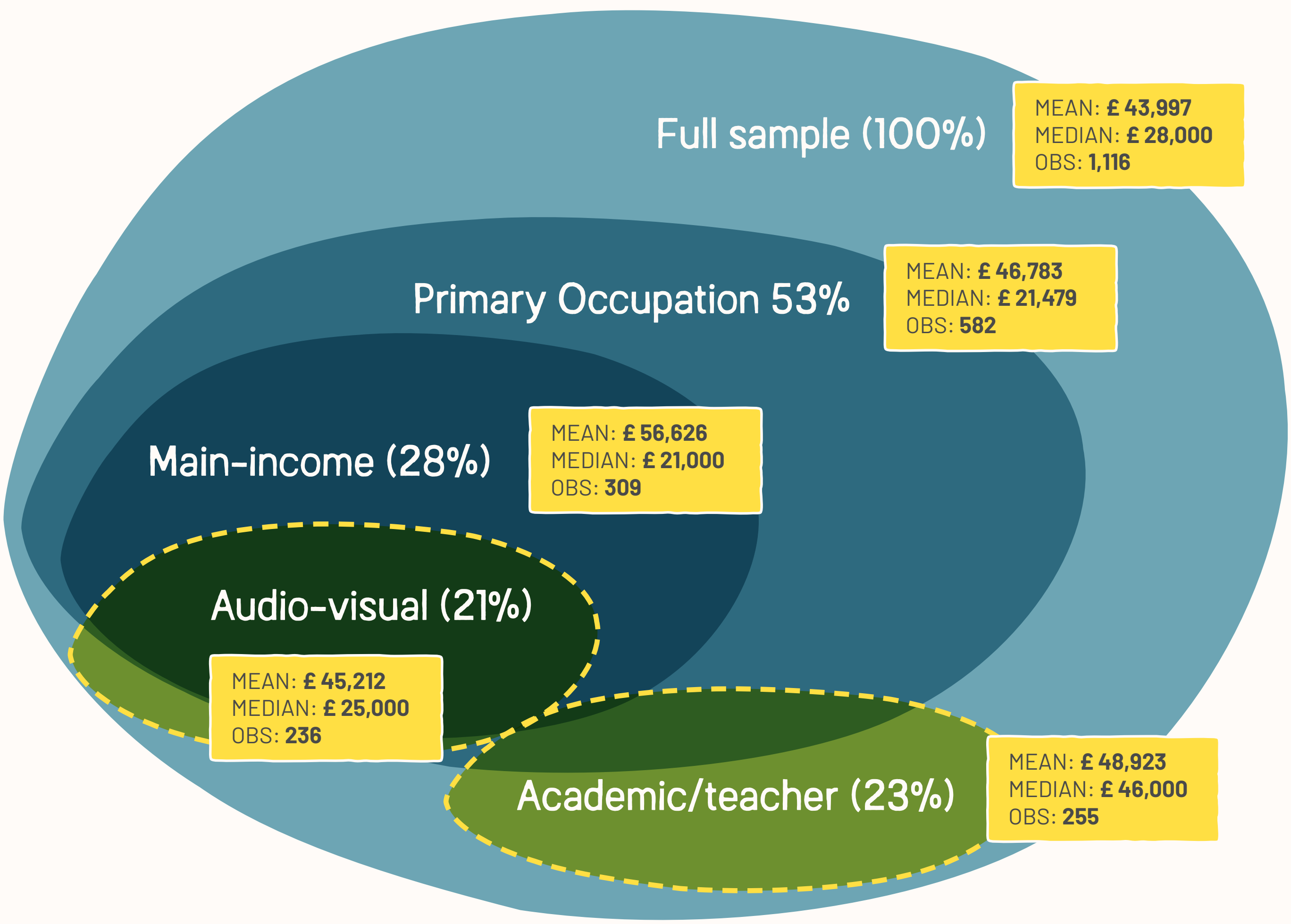


Table 28: Median total individual earnings of primary occupation authors differentiated by their main profession

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
AUTHOR	Observations	497	439	1130
	Median earnings (£)	24,000	24,500	25,000
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR	Observations	23	20	55
	Median earnings (£)	17,711	19,500	16,000
EDITOR	Observations	35	33	68
	Median earnings (£)	16,224	20,000	25,500
TEACHER	Observations	23	19	90
	Median earnings (£)	24,000	25,000	36,000
ACADEMIC	Observations	232	191	617
	Median earnings (£)	47,196	45,000	49,000
JOURNALIST	Observations	69	60	136
	Median earnings (£)	23,654	26,000	32,000
PLAYWRIGHT	Observations	10	8	25
	Median earnings (£)	1,250	12,500	21,000
SCRIPTWRITER	Observations	39	35	103
	Median earnings (£)	42,000	42,000	38,000
POET	Observations	27	22	41
	Median earnings (£)	18,000	15,770	12,000
TRANSLATOR	Observations	16	16	34
	Median earnings (£)	23,654	24,500	25,500
COMEDIAN	Observations	3	2	2
	Median earnings (£)	12,000	12,000	182,500
NO LONGER WRITING (RETIRED)	Observations	47	44	106
	Median earnings (£)	25,000	29,250	25,000
OTHER	Observations	94	81	175
	Median earnings (£)	24,273	23,000	28,000

On closer examination, academia remains one of the most stable, writing-adjacent, professions that is usually tied to a salaried position. Overall, earnings for academics are higher compared with the broader sample of authors (a difference of 77% better-off compared with the individual income of the total sample of authors), and have not experienced so dramatic a drop in real growth when compared with the broader primary occupation author population (drop in real terms of 7% compared to the average individual income for the total sample of authors of 14%).

Table 28: Median total individual earnings of primary occupation authors differentiated by their main profession	TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Observations	255	210	707
Median (nominal) (£)	46,000	45,000	45,999
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	46,000	46,165	49,644
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-7%	-7%	N/A
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	0%	-7%	N/A

We also conducted a closer examination of the earnings of journalists, both amidst increasing inquiries into the sustainability of the profession [1] and due to the particularly disruptive effect of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on journalistic access. In 2022, journalists earned a median income of £25,000, which places them marginally above the typical (median) income for the total population of authors (£23,617). Nonetheless, this represents a drop of income in real terms of 23%, when compared with journalistic earnings in 2017. In qualitative answers, we are able to confirm some temporal effect as the result of the pandemic in reducing potential income routes. Journalists with niche expertise in pandemic-related topics, such as e.g., disease outbreak specialists or (home) technology reviewers, reported that their income over the past two years had either improved or remained unchanged. Other journalists, particularly those who reviewed cultural events (e.g., music or theatre) or were travel-based (particularly if they were placed abroad during the pandemic, or were dependent on access to EU countries post-Brexit) report more negative experiences and considered changing their occupation.

Table 30: Earnings from authors who identify their primary occupation as 'journalist'

JOURNALIST EARNINGS	TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Observations	59	52	111
Median (nominal) (£)	25,000	27,900	30,000
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	25,000	28,622	32,377
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-23%	-12%	N/A
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-13%	-12%	N/A

[1] DCMS Committee (2022) Sustainability of local journalism (Parliament.uk, 31 March 2022) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-national-minimum-wage-in-2022> (accessed: 17 November 2022)

Gender

'There are tides in the lives of all creative artists; long periods of being out of favour, especially for older women. This is part of the wider picture of who gets paid for what and why.'

Among our respondents, authors who identify as women see a larger drop in individual earnings (21% in real terms between 2017 and 2020, against 10% for men), resulting in a gender pay gap between men and women of 41.4%. This contributes to an increased gender pay gap between authors, which was already substantial at 33% in 2016/2017.

Table 31: Incomes of primary occupation authors by gender

		MEN	NON-BINARY	OTHER/PREFER NOT TO SAY	TRANS*	WOMEN
Observations	Tax year 2020/2021	254	7	13	2	280
	Tax year 2019/2020	232	7	11	1	248
	Tax year 2016/2017	521	N/A	32	N/A	557
Median (nominal) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	29,000	20,000	33,000	22,081	17,000
	Tax year 2019/2020	28,600	32,800	33,424	4,500	17,976
	Tax year 2016/2017	30,000	N/A	2,000	N/A	20,000
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	29,000	20,000	33,000	22,081	17,000
	Tax year 2019/2020	29,340	33,649	33,854	4,616	18,441
	Tax year 2016/2017	32,377	N/A	21,584	N/A	21,585
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	Tax year 2020/2021	-10%	-41%	53%	378%	-21%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-9%	N/A	57%	N/A	-15%
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	Tax year 2020/2021	-1%	-41%	-3%	378%	-8%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-9%	N/A	57%	N/A	-15%

While on the face of it, trans* and non-binary genders also fare better than women overall, typically earning £22,801 and £20,000 (median) per annum respectively, the number of respondents is too low for statistical analysis.

Ethnicity

'I receive more work due to being an ethnically diverse writer in the wake of an industry trying to be more inclusive and authentic in their projects and who makes them.'

Whilst we observe that all ethnicities experience reductions in earnings, white authors, and authors who identify as 'other' ethnicities, appear relatively sheltered from the worst of the decreases (typically earning a median income of £21,750 and £32,500 per annum, making for a reduction by 12% and 6% in real terms respectively). By contrast, black and mixed-race authors receive disproportionately less income, and experience steeper losses year-to-year (typically earning a median income of £9,000 and £13,900 per annum, making for a reduction by 51% and 41% in real terms respectively) but as with other data on minorities, these trends are based on low numbers of observations.

Table 32: Incomes of primary occupation authors by ethnicity

		ASIAN	BLACK	MIXED	OTHER	WHITE
Observations	Tax year 2020/2021	9	11	14	16	494
	Tax year 2019/2020	9	9	11	13	449
	Tax year 2016/2017	7	22	18	30	1,011
Median (nominal) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	17,400	9,000	13,900	32,500	21,750
	Tax year 2019/2020	24,000	18,000	23,000	30,000	24,000
	Tax year 2016/2017	7,700	21,250	46,000	31,500	25,000
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	17,400	9,000	13,900	32,500	21,750
	Tax year 2019/2020	24,621	18,466	23,595	30,776	24,621
	Tax year 2016/2017	26,981	49,645	8,310	22,934	33,996
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	Tax year 2020/2021	-19%	-72%	109%	-61%	-4%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-9%	-52%	196%	-19%	-9%
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	Tax year 2020/2021	-12%	-41%	-29%	-51%	6%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-9%	-52%	196%	-19%	-9%

In the qualitative data, authors very rarely discussed their race in relation to the profession of writing. Of the, two pieces, of qualitative information we found, they appear to support the quantitative data presented here. The first is the quote at the introduction to this section, which suggests that work for non-white authors has increased as productions look to diversify their staff; this does indeed seem to be reflected in higher earnings for authors of non-white ethnicities. The second states simply that it 'it's difficult for black writers', which is similarly substantiated with the, disproportionately, overall lower earnings compared to earnings from authors of other races. Resultingly, we suggest that the benefits of the diversification of writing staff do not seem to be steered towards black authors.

Age

'There seems to be an assumption that this is a young person's game, but newspapers and magazines don't seem to be looking to bring writers on staff to develop.'

Age as a factor effecting income is an important variable to assess, as age can often be a proxy for establishment; as with our findings of the unequal distribution of income and characteristics of winner-takes-all cultural markets, more established authors are usually more resilient to disruptive market effects, as they can build on existing networks and relationships and thus are more likely to have a better, stable income.
Overall, total individual earnings are particularly reduced for the very young (<25) and very old (<85) authors, earning a median income of £7,500 and £4,892 per annum, respectively. However, this interpretation should be treated with caution due to small sample sizes (e.g., only one primary occupation author being in the <25 category).

By contrast, post-retirement ages (65-74 and 75-84) seem to be more resilient, typically earning £25,000 (median) per annum (with less extreme reductions in real terms compared to the preceding tax year – 10% and 16% respectively).

Table 33: Incomes of primary occupation authors by age

		<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	<85
Observations	Tax year 2020/2021	1	29	93	123	147	107	49	6
	Tax year 2019/2020	1	25	83	107	134	98	45	5
	Tax year 2016/2017	1	46	182	275	291	228	59	6
Median (nominal) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	7,500	27,000	24,000	23,000	16,000	25,000	25,000	4,892
	Tax year 2019/2020	5,000	22,000	26,650	24,000	18,500	27,175	21,000	10,000
	Tax year 2016/2017	20,000	30,000	30,000	26,000	21,000	26,070	24,000	10,750
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	7,500	27,000	24,000	23,000	16,000	25,000	25,000	4,892
	Tax year 2019/2020	5,129	22,569	27,340	24,621	18,979	27,878	21,544	10,259
	Tax year 2016/2017	21,585	32,377	32,377	28,060	22,664	28,136	25,902	11,602
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	Tax year 2020/2021	-65%	-17%	-26%	-18%	-29%	-11%	-3%	-58%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-76%	-30%	-16%	-12%	-16%	-1%	-17%	-12%
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	Tax year 2020/2021	46%	20%	-12%	-7%	-16%	-10%	16%	-52%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-76%	-30%	-16%	-12%	-16%	-1%	-17%	-12%

Location

'I have lost work as a proof-reader for European academics as it's easier and cheaper for many to work with English speakers in the US now.'

In the UK, authors in Scotland appear to fare better than their English, Welsh and Northern Irish counterparts, reporting typical earnings of £44,905 (median) per annum, and as the only group to experience a consistent increase in real terms of 119% when compared with the preceding tax year. By contrast, Northern Irish authors have the lowest overall typical earnings in the UK at £8,644 (median) per annum, representing a loss in real terms of 47% when compared with the preceding tax year. English authors, despite making up a disproportionately large amount of the overall sample of authors, reveal a more moderate picture, typically earning £23,367 (median) per annum, with a more modest reduction in real terms of 6% when compared with the preceding tax year.

Table 34: Incomes of primary occupation authors by location

		ENGLAND	INTERNATIONAL	NORTHERN IRELAND	SCOTLAND	WALES
Observations	Tax year 2020/2021	510	50	8	52	16
	Tax year 2019/2020	452	41	6	41	15
	Tax year 2016/2017	850	118	13	71	36
Median (nominal) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	23,367	22,500	8,644	44,905	20,000
	Tax year 2019/2020	24,300	20,000	15,750	20,000	24,800
	Tax year 2016/2017	24,750	35,000	30,000	18,000	29,000
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	23,367	22,500	8,644	44,905	20,000
	Tax year 2019/2020	24,929	20,518	16,158	20,518	25,442
	Tax year 2016/2017	26,711	37,773	32,377	19,426	31,298
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	Tax year 2020/2021	-13%	-40%	-73%	131%	-36%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-7%	-46%	-50%	6%	-19%
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	Tax year 2020/2021	-6%	10%	-47%	119%	-21%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-7%	-46%	-50%	6%	-19%

Between the combined effects of Brexit and Covid, we anticipated movement of authors between countries to adapt to changing market conditions. In qualitative responses, authors discuss their decisions to emigrate from the UK both as a positive result of increased mobility in the profession, and as stimulated by their concerns for access to foreign markets should they remain in the UK.

Education

'My earnings have increased substantially as I finished my PhD and got my first full-time permanent job in academia.'

As a general pattern, higher levels of education are consistent with higher earnings for authors. Given that we have already established that academics fare comparatively better than the broader writing population as a matter of sectorial difference, it is perhaps unsurprising that authors with PhDs tend to fare better overall when accounting for differences in earnings by education level (earning a typical median income of £30,000 per annum) and experience less drastic drops in real growth (a 3% reduction compared with the preceding tax year). By contrast, those with lower levels of education, secondary schooling level education and 'other' types of education, typically earn less (with median incomes of £13,600 and £12,000 per annum respectively).

Table 35: Incomes of primary occupation authors by level of education

		SECONDARY SCHOOLING*	UNIVERSITY ENTRY **	DIPLOMA	DEGREE	MASTERS	PHD	OTHER
Observations	Tax year 2020/2021	20	25	19	169	165	124	31
	Tax year 2019/2020	18	23	18	153	151	107	28
	Tax year 2016/2017	46	57	44	366	304	222	49
Median (nominal) (£)	Tax year 2020/2021	13,600	17,711	23,000	26,500	17,950	30,000	12,000
	Tax year 2019/2020	10,150	13,110	12,500	28,000	20,000	30,000	12,000
	Tax year 2016/2017	19,500	19,722	18,500	24,000	25,000	35,000	16,000
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds)(£)	Tax year 2020/2021	13,600	17,711	23,000	26,500	17,950	30,000	12,000
	Tax year 2019/2020	10,413	13,449	12,824	28,725	20,518	30,776	12,311
	Tax year 2016/2017	21,045	21,285	19,966	25,902	26,981	37,773	17,268
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	Tax year 2020/2021	-35%	-17%	15%	2%	-33%	-21%	-31%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-51%	-37%	-36%	11%	-24%	-19%	-29%
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	Tax year 2020/2021	31%	32%	79%	-8%	-13%	-3%	-3%
	Tax year 2019/2020	-51%	-37%	-36%	11%	-24%	-19%	-29%

** (e.g. GCSE, O-levels) / ** (e.g. A-levels)*

A curious observation, which bucks the general trend of higher levels of education associated with higher earnings, is that at masters levels we see a sharper decrease in median earnings (reduction of 33% in real terms) than even those who pursue a degree, diploma, or university-level education at a lower level (typically earning a median income of £17,950 compared with e.g., authors with degrees at £26,500). Whilst we do not find any further detail on this point in the qualitative responses from authors, several explanations are possible. First, earnings for authors with masters may be reduced because undergraduate degrees tend to be more vocational with a secure career path tied to a salaried position (e.g., law, medicine, engineering), whereas masters tend to be specialist or passion-led subjects. Secondly, masters degrees also tend to be pursued at a later time in life, which may disrupt career progression and earning ability (perhaps temporarily). In the 2018 report, we also explore explanations for differences in education levels across sector-specific factors, e.g., where masters level education is essential, or desirable in certain industries [1].

[1] Kretschmer, Gavaldon, Miettinen and Singh (2019) UK Authors' Earnings and Contracts 2018: A Survey of 50,000 Writers, CREATe

THE ROLE of COVID-19

'Even though writing is a solitary occupation, the sense of being cut off from people and from ordinary life has been profound.'

'Being able to spend over a year in mostly solitude with less social interaction, fewer demands and less noise was very helpful for recovery from autistic burnout and starting to write again.'

We anticipated that the Covid-19 pandemic would have both an acute and ongoing effect on the professional lives and earnings of authors.

The survey asked authors about the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on: (a) their income and (b) their professional lives. We distinguished between these two aspects because question (b) gives a more holistic appreciation of an author's lived experience of the pandemic rather than reductively looking at income. And whilst in any case we could confirm the exact reporting of income through quantitative measures, the qualitative self-perception of these factors gives more detailed explanation as to why an author's income has changed, for better or worse. For both questions, authors were first asked to rate on a Likert scale whether the Covid-19 pandemic had a mostly positive, negative, or neutral effect on their income and lives. Both scaled questions were followed by a respective open question that allowed authors to give details on why they answered the way they did in the previous question. In combination, this design allows for a qualitative assessment of how authors believe they were impacted by the pandemic, stratified across a scale of worse to better experiences.

For the qualitative data, we identified the top 100 frequent words used in response to each of the open questions. We removed stop words (which give no substantive meaning in the response, such as: if, and, but) and words that could be considered descriptive in the context of the question (e.g., for the question on earnings, words like earn, pay, income; for professional life, lives, impact, were largely reiterating the context of the question without offering additional interpretative information).

Covid-19 and earnings

'My debut book came out during national lockdown. No celebration, no book launch, no marketing opportunities. My editor was home-schooling her kids and had no time for messages about marketing help.'

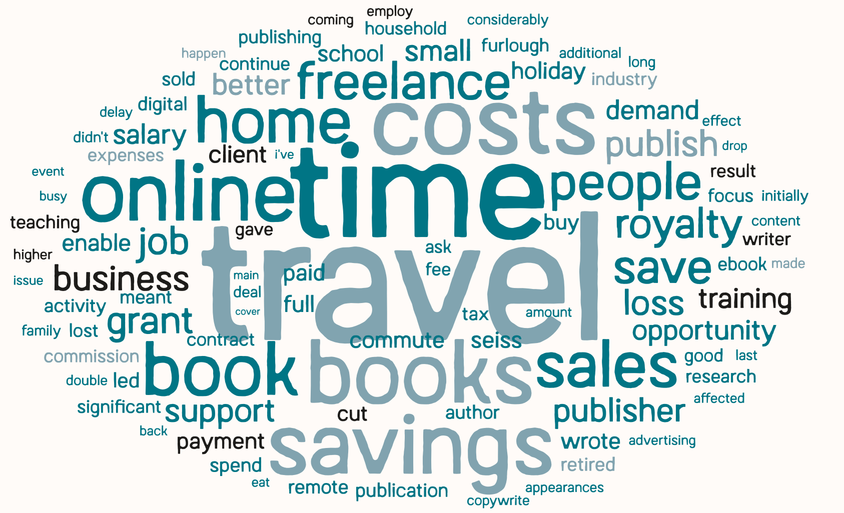
Overall, authors in the full sample report that Covid-19 had a negative or neutral impact on their earnings.

Decreased substantially	Decreased moderately	Stayed the same	Increased moderately
8.9%	25.0%	62.5%	3.6%

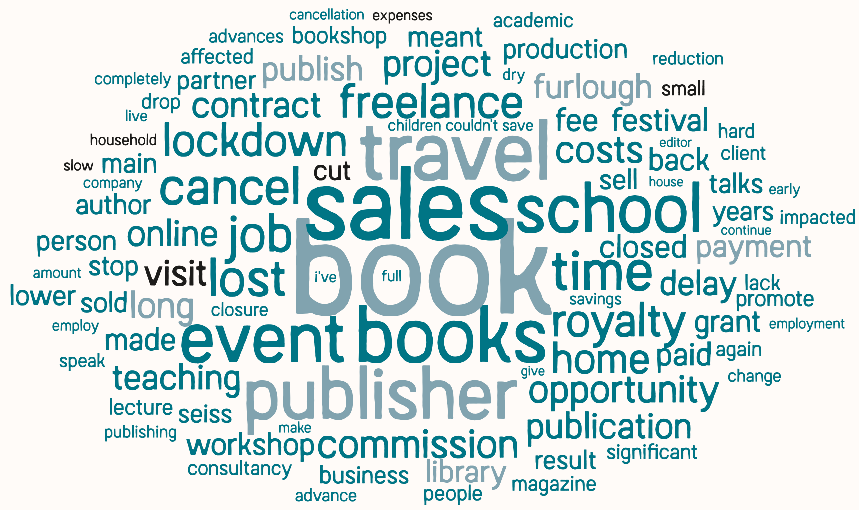
873 AUTHORS GAVE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR EARNINGS.

[1] de Koning et al. (2021) Survey Fatigue During the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Analysis of Neurosurgery Survey Response Rates

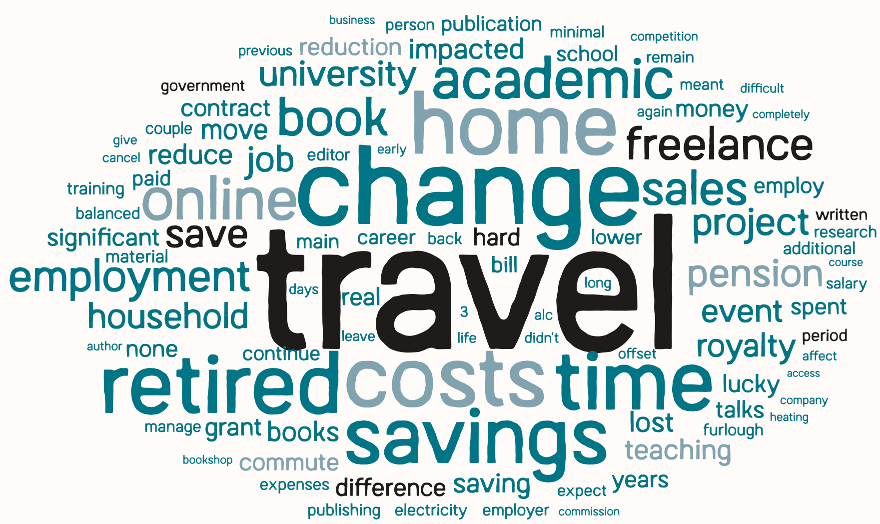
Authors who report a mostly positive impact (either moderately or substantially) on their earnings say:



Authors who report a mostly negative impact (either moderately or substantially) on their earnings say:



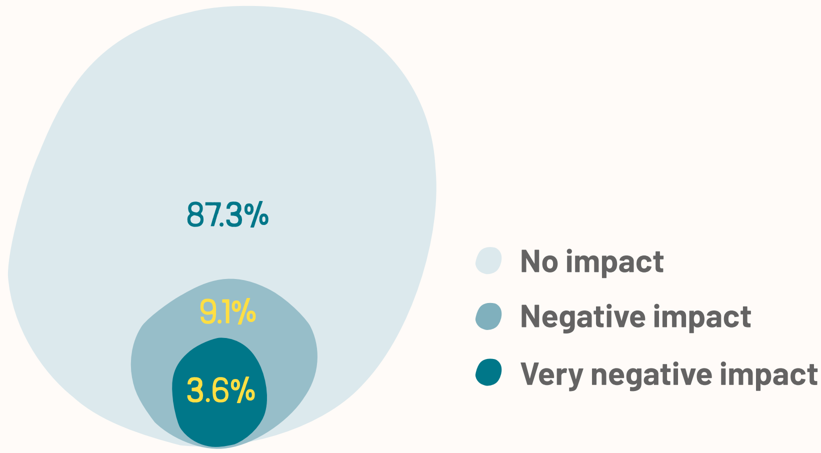
Authors who report a neutral impact on their earnings say:



From this analysis, we find first that there are benefits stemming from reduced costs associated with remote working and changes to physical working spaces. For authors, savings on outgoings for commuting and travel, savings on childcare, expenses are important in creating moderate improvements to one's overall financial situation, if not from improved earnings per se. However, whilst these benefits may cumulatively result in marginally reduced outgoings, they do not appear to induce a substantial improvement to an author's economic position. Authors who self-report substantial improvements to their financial position tend to mention major grants, publications or advances that create immediate, one-off, cash injections. These disorganised points of income create an artificial impression of inflated earnings.

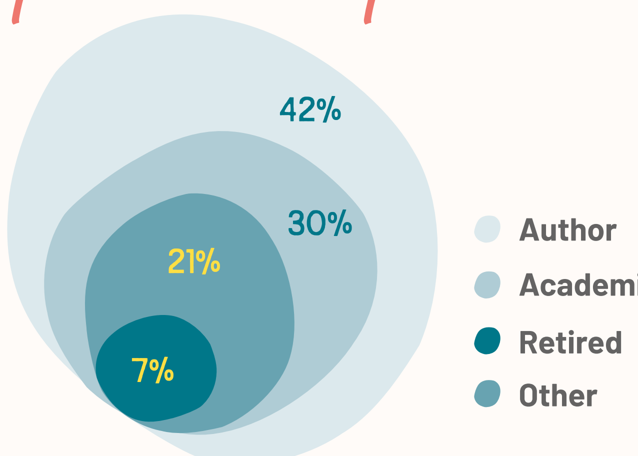
Covid Impact of Retired Writers

Second, those authors who report a neutral effect on their income tend to discuss their positions of economic stability. Predominantly, these concepts relate to one's ability not to work to earn an income, such as: retirement, pensions, or savings. Indeed, we see the overwhelming majority of retired authors report 'no impact' on their earnings due to Covid-19.



Non-impact of COVID-19 in earnings per occupations

This would suggest that authors who feel the pandemic had a 'nil' effect on their income would have experienced the same financial situation regardless of changes to working conditions during this time. Others in the neutral category discuss more steady forms of salaried employment with institutions that were not postponed during the pandemic, such as universities and academics.



Third, access to gatekeepers and physical networking events remain an important source of mediating an author's income. Reduced availability of these gatekeepers and events, or advice stemming from them, appears to have been influential in determining an author's income during the pandemic. Authors self-reporting substantial decreases mention, for example, that publishers advised them to postpone projects because of the uncertain conditions of the pandemic. This suggests that the emancipatory promise of the 'digital switch' to alternative business models, such as self-publishing or freelancing, was not enough to mitigate the effects of lack of access to traditional gatekeepers and markets.

We also see indications of specific sub-sectors where Covid-19 played a role in accelerating or decelerating the desirability, and thus availability, of certain markets (ergo earnings):

Positive effect

- Gardening books
- Well-being books
- Children's books
- Medical journals
- Writing for online courses
- Copyediting for Covid-effected industries (e.g., rebranding of travel)

Negative effect

- Travel-related journalism
- Writing for in-person ceremonies
- Emotional, dark, futuristic, or upsetting fiction
- Textbooks
- Research-based, non-fictional books dependent on archival or museum research
- Alternative health books (e.g., herbalism, naturopathy)

In sub-sectors where authors report positive effects of the demands of the pandemic markets, we can perhaps expect market saturation in the next few years; by contrast, those sub-sectors where demand has been reduced or postponed, may be found wanting.

Covid-19 and professional lives

'The process of pitching ideas, getting projects finished and publicised/marketed/ distributed has been very, very slow, inefficient and extremely frustrating as all the parties involved were separated and working from home.'

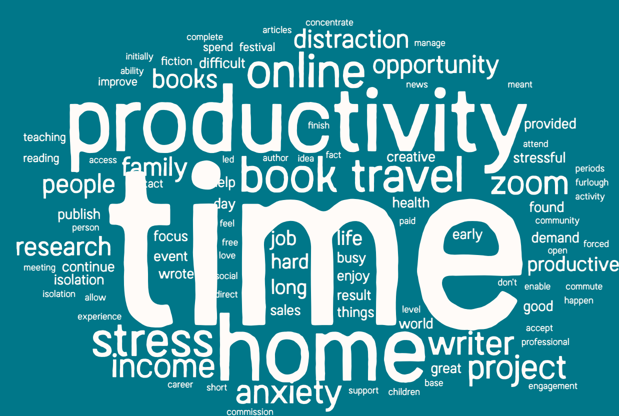
OVERALL, MOST AUTHORS REPORT THAT COVID-19 HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIVES.

Table 37: 'In your view, how has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your professional life as a writer?'

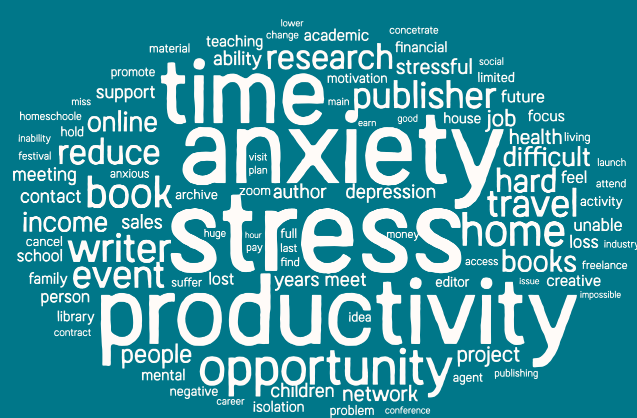
Very negative impact	Moderately negative impact	No effect	Moderately positive impact	Very positive impact
112	429	484	187	42

886 authors gave additional information about the effect of Covid-19 on their professional lives.

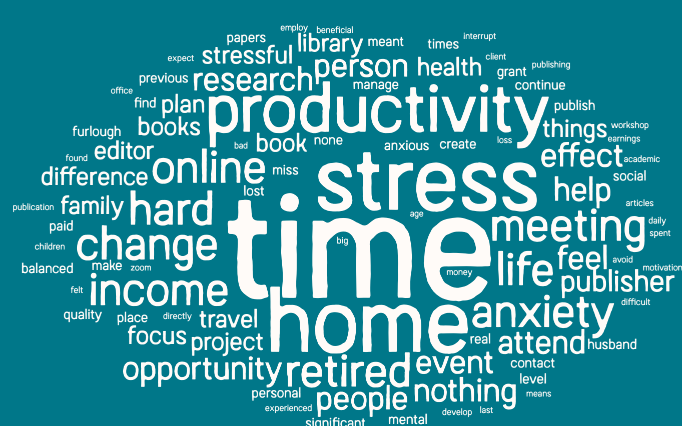
Authors who report a mostly positive impact (either very or moderately) on their professional lives say:



Authors who report a mostly negative impact (either very or moderately) on their professional lives say:



Authors who report a neutral impact on their professional lives say:



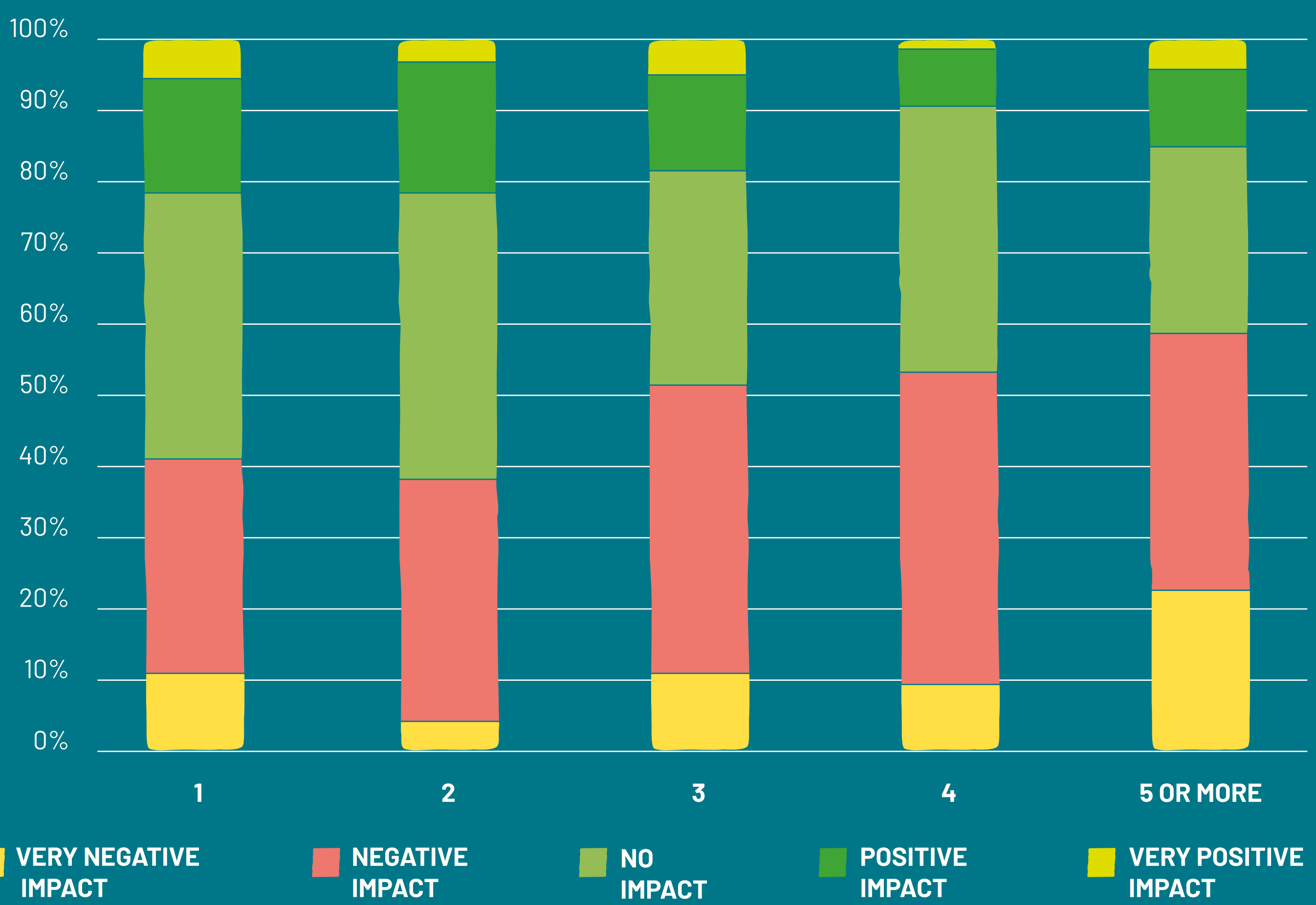
First, it is curious that, even when accounting for the question on impact of Covid-19 on earnings separately per the survey design, the effect of income on one's professional life when considered holistically is still disproportionately important even when compared to other factors completely Covid specific, such as the cancellation of events. Or to put it another way, authors are talking about income affecting them even when they are not being asked about income. This suggests that perceived betterment or worsening of one's professional life cannot be divorced from economic factors.

Second, we observe that intrinsic factors are most important to authors with negative experiences of Covid-19, which refutes the assumption that authors are a lone species. Indeed, whilst authors with negative experiences mention income most frequently when considered as a whole concept, intrinsic terms are spoken about by those with negative experiences more frequently overall: stress, anxiety and productivity all feature prominently in answers from these respondents. Authors with more positive experiences still mention these intrinsic factors but their meaning tends to be reversed: for those who have thrived in this environment, they report feeling more productive because of lack of distractions, and have less stress and anxiety from e.g., a simplified work schedule and more time with family. In this respect, the pandemic has been a highly subjective experience, with one author's meat being another's poison.

Third, authors who self-report negative experiences talk more about changes in the household than authors with positive or neutral experiences. Authors with negative experiences mentioned increased childcare and home-schooling responsibilities, or caring duties for immediate and extended members of the family. The household factor is not absent for authors with mostly positive or neutral experiences, but where they are mentioned, it is usually not in the context of changes that have created extra labour duties for them in the household, such as with schooling or home-schooling. Instead, authors with positive experience about household concepts such as increased time with family, 'havens', 'peace', and the countryside. This difference in perception of the changing home environment suggests that authors with negative experiences of Covid-19 may have been disproportionately burdened with additional household labour, both physical and emotive. By contrast, those with positive experiences appear to have a household subsidy in terms of the emotive and labour workload in the home.

Indeed, we find that those authors with five or more members in their household report most frequently that Covid-19 had a 'very negative' impact on their professional lives. Likewise, higher rates of 'negative impact' reports cluster around larger household sizes of three and four. Whilst we do not specifically measure for dependents in our demographic information and while differences are relatively small, this data is suggestive of a busier household burden.

Covid impact over Household size



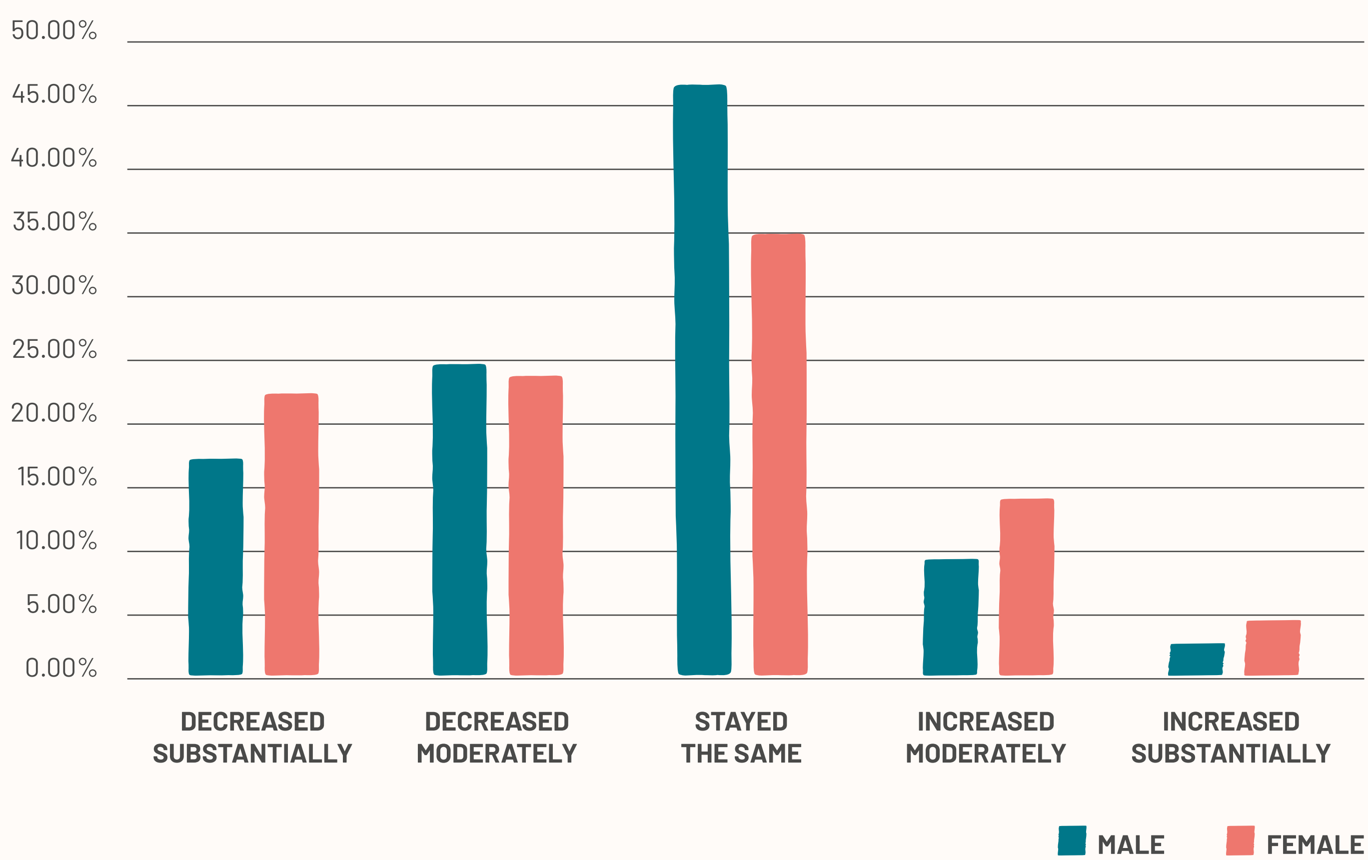
Fourth, and perhaps most surprisingly, an unexpectedly high number of authors have self-described 'no effect' or neutral experiences of the pandemic on their professional lives. Authors offer two explanations for this. The first is that their economic stability is a neutralising factor on their professional lives: if an author has retired, or has been able to live off savings, then they have been relatively unaffected by the pandemic, as also confirmed in the first of the Covid-19 specific questions. As responses to the second question suggest that income is a disproportionately important concept when evaluating one's professional life, there is likely a reciprocal relationship here: if an author perceives their financial situation as relatively unchanged, then so too is their holistic assessment of their professional lives. Other authors rate their experience as 'neutral' because of a weighing of pros and cons; for example, they will discuss their experiences as being 'offset' or 'balanced' due to, e.g., more time to write at home, but less inspiration on what to write because of lack of access to events. Thus, it is not the case that the pandemic has been 'neutral' per se, but rather positive and negative changes have effectively weighed out to create, in the minds of the authors in this group, no effect.

Covid-19 and gender

'I'm hoping that I can increase my income this year but like many women who had childcare or caring obligations during the pandemic, I feel like my career has derailed and won't progress like it should have had we not had the pandemic.'

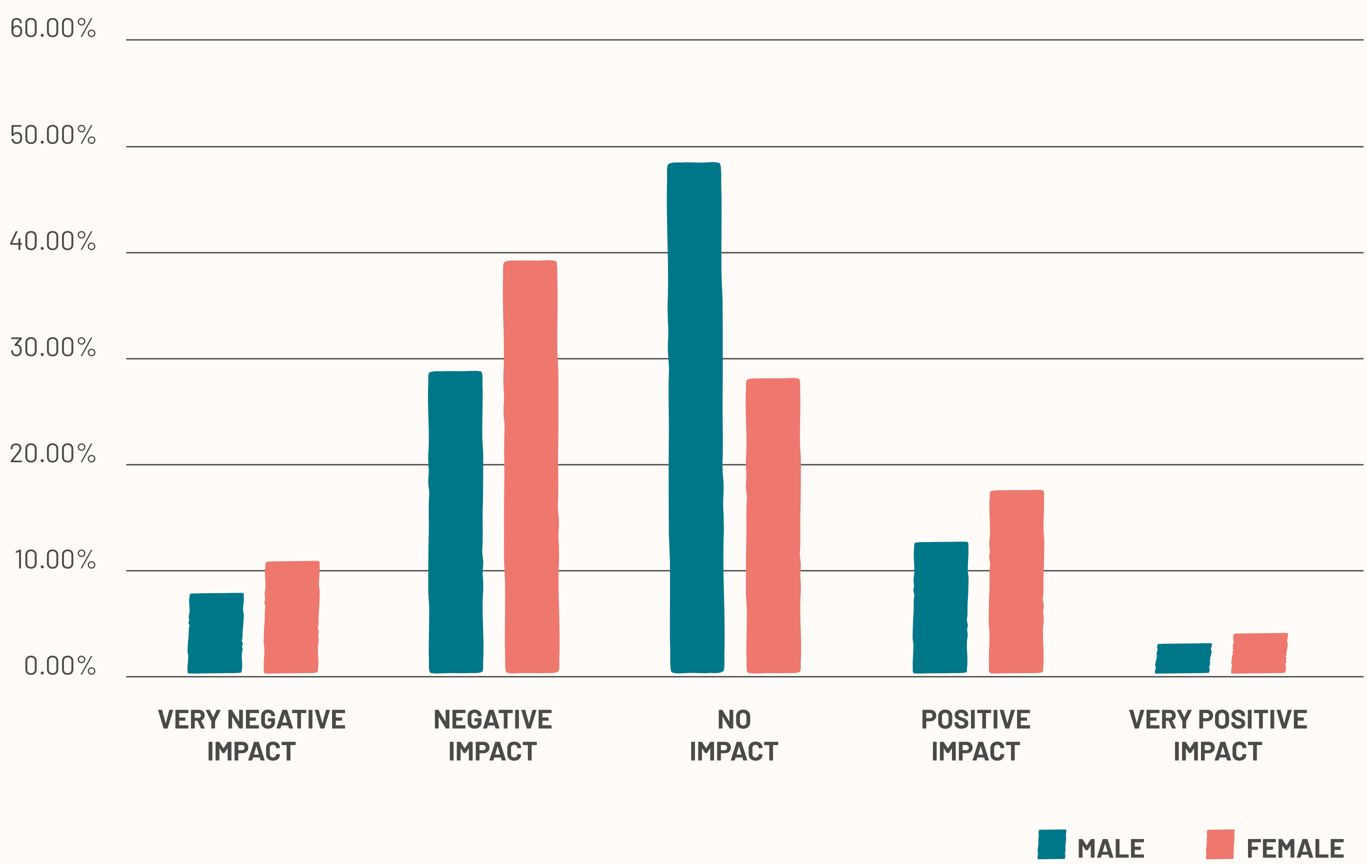
There is a distinct gendered dimension to experiences of Covid. Note that, due to the noisiness introduced by small sample sizes of other genders, we have limited our analysis for this section to authors that identify as either men or women. Women are more likely to report one of the extreme experiences of Covid-19; either substantial decreases in earnings (over 22%), or substantial increases (almost 5%). Men, by contrast, are more likely to report that their earnings have stayed the same throughout the pandemic (almost 50%).

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OVERALL EARNINGS BY GENDER



> ***We see similar patterns in gender differentials for the effect on the writing profession and Covid-19. More women experience the very negative (over 10%) and very positive impacts (almost 2%), whereas men more frequently report no impact (almost 50%).***

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PROFESSIONAL LIVES BY GENDER



As noted above, much as with the existence of a household subsidy in respect of authors' earnings, there appears to be a household subsidy in terms of emotive labour in a broader context, which appears to be carried mostly by authors who identify as women. Likewise, sources of women's earnings become more tenuous and easier to destabilise because of this anticipated subsidy. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are often presented as a great equaliser, as rules and restrictions applied equally to people of all demographic profiles. This has an acute effect, but the ongoing effects of this disruption are more likely to derail the writing careers of women in particular. In this respect, Covid-19 is a useful lens to analyse what we already know from the longitudinal data in this series of surveys: the success of an author is dependent on access to the right people, at the right time, and even then this may not be enough to substitute for systematic, entrenched factors of discrimination.

COPYRIGHT

'I hate waiving moral rights and signing away copyright but if I don't do it, the work doesn't go ahead.'

Confidence and use

'Issues around copyright really need examining.'

As with previous surveys in this series, we asked authors about their relationship with copyright law. Copyright allows an author to claim ownership and exploitation rights over their creations. In theory, copyright should give authors a route to financial recompense for the exploitation of their works through the award of a bundle of economic and moral rights.

We asked authors about their level of confidence in their knowledge of copyright law; whether they have concerns about copyright at the outset of a project; and whether they know when they can make use of an existing work (e.g., a third-party image) without seeking permission from the author.

The majority of authors across the full sample feel moderately confident about their knowledge of copyright (56%). The same pattern is repeated for primary occupation authors (56%). Both patterns follow a similar trajectory to the findings of the 2018 survey.

Table 38: 'What is your level of confidence in your knowledge of copyright?'

	VERY CONFIDENT	MODERATELY CONFIDENT	LESS CONFIDENT	NO CONFIDENCE
Total sample (1,259)	148 (12%)	708 (56%)	313 (25%)	90 (7%)
Primary occupation (653)	76 (12%)	365 (56%)	166 (25%)	46 (7%)

If we assume that primary occupation authors spend more time dealing day-to-day with copyright matters, then this, very apparent, non-difference in proportionate levels of confidence in knowledge suggests that increased, transactional exposure to copyright issues does not necessarily improve an author's understanding of it. Instead, it is possible that the quality of an author's copyright education is more important than the quantity of exposure.

This moderate level of confidence seems to translate to low levels of concerns about copyright at the outset of a work project. 74% of authors in the total sample report no concerns about copyright at the outset of starting a project, compared with 72% of primary occupation authors.

Table 39: 'Do you have concerns about copyright when beginning a new work of writing?'

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Total sample (1,254)	192 (15%)	928 (74%)	134 (11%)
Primary occupation (650)	113 (17%)	465 (72%)	72 (11%)

In qualitative responses about the nature of these copyright concerns, authors mainly discuss uncertainties about using quotations or images in their works and locating other owners of copyrighted works, rather than uncertainties about copyright in the author's own work. Indeed, the same levels of confidence in copyright generally do not seem to translate to more specific knowledge of when authors can use other third-party copyrighted materials (e.g., images) in their works. When asked if authors are aware of when they can make use of these existing works, in both samples, almost half of all authors admitted they did not have such knowledge (41% across the full sample, and 44% of primary occupation authors).

Table 40: 'Do you have an understanding of when you can make use of existing copyright works without seeking permission?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (1,194)	703 (59%)	491 (41%)
Primary occupation (618)	349 (56%)	269 (44%)

Those authors who responded 'yes' to this question evidence a mix of correct information, and several misconceptions. Authors are mainly correct in their assumptions about freely using public domain works and certain works licensed under Creative Commons licences. The extent to which an author can use a quotation remains a source of mystery, and even those who report they are confident about using third party materials operate with very limited knowledge; most believe quotations are dependent on a fixed, quantitative measure of words, particularly 'up to a paragraph'. For those authors who responded 'no' to this question, there are mainly uncertainties around copyright duration and the use of orphan works. One author reports that they draw their own versions of film-stills in order to 're-use' this third-party material in their own work.

For both categories of response, we see concerns about the need to ask permission from a rightsholder to use their work; this is treated as a panacea to all uncertainties. By contrast, there is only one mention of knowledge of fair dealing exceptions (broadly conceived).

Moral rights

'I fear other, less experienced, authors may have been exploited for it in a way that I refused to be.'

Moral rights are included with the award of a copyright in the UK and relate to the personal relationship an author has with their work. These can be important for how the work is presented and marketed. Moral rights in the UK include attribution (the right to be acknowledged as the author of a work) and integrity (the right to object to derogatory treatment of a work). Both moral rights can also have an economic dimension if the author is associated with a work that jeopardises their reputation or earning ability (e.g., if an author's name is not appropriately associated with their work, identification and subsequent award from consumers is difficult).

We asked authors whether they waive moral rights in their works (e.g., give them away), and if so in what percentage of their contracts.

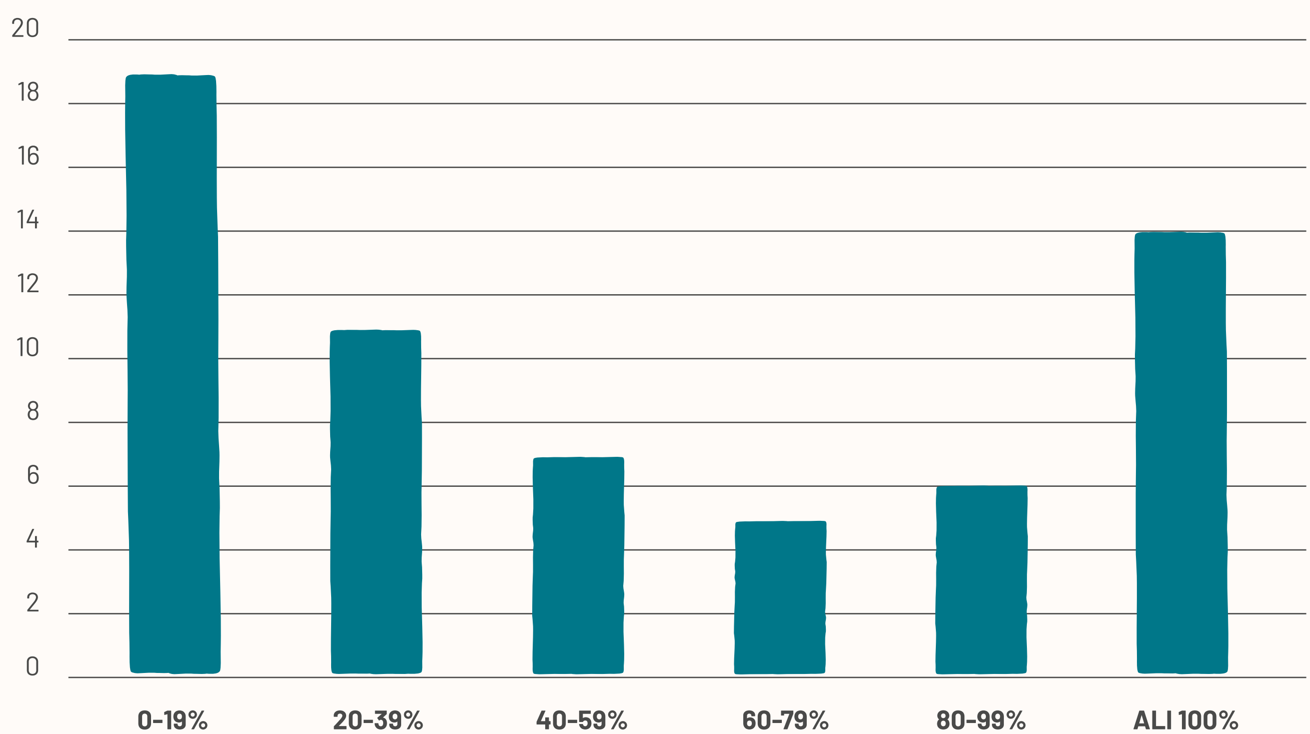
Across the full sample, most authors say they do not waive their moral rights (77%). A similar pattern is evident for primary occupation authors (76%), with only a slight increase in the amount of times they waive their moral rights (10% in primary occupation authors as opposed to 7% for the full sample). Both follow a similar trajectory to the 2018 survey, where 75% of authors reported never waiving their moral rights.

Table 41: 'Do you ever waive the moral rights in your works?' *Table 41: 'Do you ever waive the moral rights in your works?'*

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Total sample (1,173)	86 (7%)	903 (77%)	184 (16%)
Primary occupation (601)	59 (10%)	458 (76%)	84 (14%)

Typically, authors in the full sample estimate that they waive their moral rights in almost half of their contracts (for a median figure of 43%). For primary occupation authors, there is only a slight increase in this estimation (50%). However, when we consider proportions with more granularity, we see that the majority of authors waive their rights in only up to 19% of their works. 23% of authors systematically waive rights in all their works.

PERCENTAGE OF MORAL RIGHTS WAIVED



We also asked authors whether they had ever had a dispute with a publisher about moral rights. If so, we asked them on what grounds (e.g., attribution, integrity, or both) and to give us some optional, additional information about the dispute.

Only the minority of authors have ever had a dispute about their moral rights (5% of authors in the full sample and 6% of primary occupation authors).

Table 42: 'Have you ever had a dispute with a publisher/producer over moral rights?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (1,209)	57 (5%)	1,152 (95%)
Primary occupation (623)	39 (6%)	584 (94%)

The low rate of moral rights disputes is consistent with the findings of the 2018 survey, which similarly evidenced a low uptake for primary occupation authors (6%). This represents a reduction by almost half when compared with the findings reported from the 2006 survey (11%). The trend may require further exploration.

In qualitative responses from authors, we find that the declining inclination to dispute is consistent with a 'take it or leave it' attitude from publishers where moral rights are concerned. Authors describe standard form (boilerplate) publishing contracts which include mandatory, and comprehensive ('to the fullest extent') waivers of moral rights. Often, such responses are only captured in our assessment of reported problematic clauses rather than disputed clauses, as authors increasingly report feelings of apathy which result in no challenge: ultimately, whilst unhappy with the waiver, authors report 'giving in rather than losing the work'.

Table 43: Percentage of primary occupation authors who waive moral rights in their works from 2006 – 2022

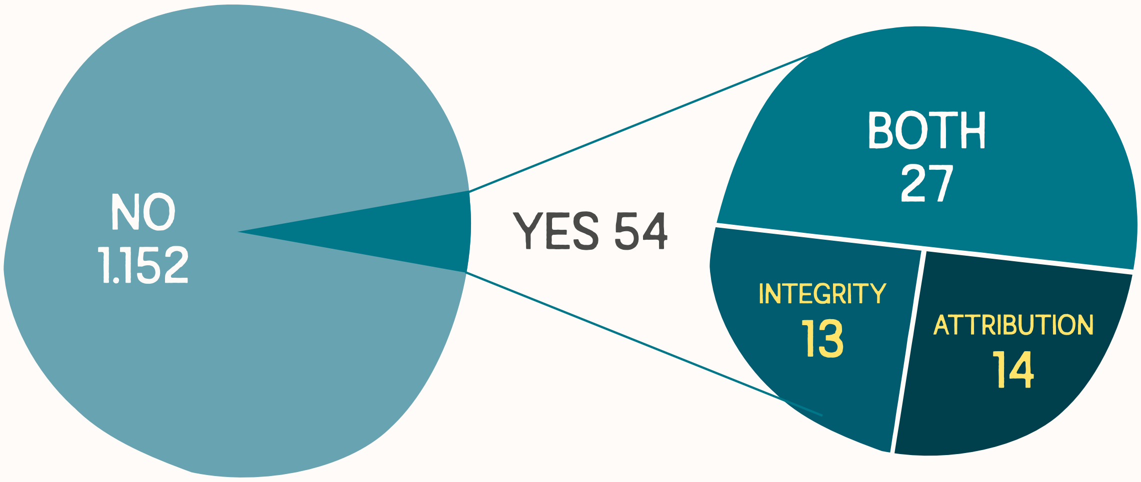
	2006	2018	2022
Yes	51 (11%)	62 (6%)	39 (6%)
No	397 (89%)	968 (94%)	584 (94%)

Of those disputes, most concerned a combined attribution and integrity dispute (50% of the full sample and 45% of primary occupation authors). The remaining proportions are comprised of attribution and integrity disputes almost equally in isolation (26% and 24% respectively across the full sample, and 22% and 24% of primary occupation authors). Whilst only hinted on in the quantitative figures (a slightly higher ratio of challenge where attribution is concerned), in qualitative responses, authors report that waivers of their integrity rights tend to be less negotiable than the attribution right. Usually, they report that this is because publishers often (erroneously) interpret the retention of an integrity right by the author to mean that they can no longer edit the work. One author notes that this relationship can interplay, resulting in a 'win for integrity in a twisted sort of way'; if publishers insist on waiving an author's integrity right and subsequently 'mangle' a book, the author can still retain their right to withdraw their name from appearing on the book (in this case, effectively suspending its publication).

Table 44: 'What were the grounds of the moral rights dispute?'

	ATTRIBUTION	INTEGRITY	BOTH
Total sample (54)	14 (26%)	13 (24%)	27 (50%)
Primary occupation (37)	8 (22%)	9 (24%)	20 (45%)

MORAL RIGHTS DISPUTES



Examples of attribution disputes:

- Author's name missing from books and publicity materials
- Competing or disputed claims to authorship from co-authors
- Contesting attribution for partial translations

Examples of integrity disputes:

- Publisher editing text, or adding imagery, without the author's consent
- Unfaithful adaptations
- Use of work as a non-fungible token (NFT)

Importantly, we found that in some of the qualitative responses, authors are confused about what 'integrity', in the legal sense, entails. Some authors talk about integrity issues in the broader sense of, e.g., low payment as being demeaning, or confuse integrity with attribution (e.g., if an author's name is inadequately associated with a work then that does not respect their integrity to be recognised as an author). Whilst, as discussed above, most authors report feeling moderately confident about how copyright works, there is still a good degree of misinformation about its actual operation.

Reversion

'Electronic editions make out of print reversion clauses irrelevant.'

Reversion clauses may give an author the opportunity to renegotiate the contractual terms between them and a publisher after a set amount of time from the initial agreement (e.g., 15 years). When rights revert back to an author, this can create new avenues for them to determine how a work is distributed, by whom, and for how much.

Whilst there was a legal provision for statutory reversion rights in the UK under the 1911 Copyright Act, these now only apply to transfers before the entry into force of the 1956 Copyright Act (which abolished reversion rights prospectively). The EU introduced a mandatory revocation right with Article 22 of the 2019 Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive but the UK decided not to implement the Directive during the Brexit process. Thus UK authors must rely on private contractual arrangements over reversionary terms between parties.

We asked authors whether they had ever signed a reversion clause; whether they had ever relied on it; and whether, when rights reverted to them, they earned subsequent money from new distribution avenues.

Across the full sample, 39% of authors have signed a contract with a reversion clause. For primary occupation authors, this figure increases rather considerably to 47%.

It is nonetheless worth noting that, due to this complex area of law, there is still a good degree of uncertainty as to what this clause means operationally, and whether it has ever been signed: a relatively high proportion of both full sample and primary occupation authors are unsure about this matter (for the former, 30%, and the latter, 28%).

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Total sample (1,242)	484 (39%)	381 (31%)	377 (30%)
Primary occupation (645)	303 (47%)	164 (25%)	178 (28%)

Table 45: 'Have any of your contracts ever included a reversion clause which gives you publishing rights or copyright back if the publisher is no longer exploiting your work?'

In a diversion from approaches of precious surveys, this survey included the 'don't know' option, which makes it difficult to meaningfully compare differences with previous surveys (and noting that such a question did not appear in the 2006 survey). Nonetheless, the 2022 results suggest a decline in the number of reversion clauses present in publishing contracts, reducing from 57% to 47% of contracts.

Table 46:Percentage of primary occupation authors who have signed a contract with a reversion clause, from 2014 - 2022

	2014	2018	2022
No	648 (43%)	751 (43%)	342 (53%)
Yes	869 (57%)	1007 (57%)	303 (47%)

However, most authors have not actually relied on their reversion rights in practice; only 29% of authors across the full sample say they have actioned a reversion clause in the past five years, compared with marginally more primary occupation authors at 31%.

Table 47: 'Have you used or relied upon such a reversion clause, in the past 5 years?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (483)	138 (29%)	345 (71%)
Primary occupation (303)	94 (31%)	209 (69%)

As with the reduction in the presence of a reversion clause in a contract, the 2022 results also suggest a decline in the amount of times such primary occupation authors rely on such a clause, albeit on small numbers that should be explored further (a decrease from 38% in 2014, to 33% in 2018, and finally 31% in 2022).

Table 48: Percentage of primary occupation authors who have used a reversion clause, from 2014 - 2022

	2014	2018	2022
No	527 (62%)	670 (67%)	209 (69%)
Yes	329 (38%)	329 (33%)	94 (31%)

Across the full sample, those authors that have previously utilised their reversion rights, 37% received further earnings from subsequent exploitation. For primary occupation authors, we see a slight increase in the numbers of authors reporting further earnings, at 42%.

Table 49: 'After the rights reverted to you, did you receive any further earnings from that work either from a new publisher or through self-publishing?'

	FURTHER EARNINGS	NO FURTHER EARNINGS
Total sample	37%	63%
Primary Occupation (212)	89 (42%)	123 (58%)

With primary occupation authors more frequently signing, enacting and earning from their reverted works, this suggests that, when aware and able to act on it, those authors are often the better keepers of their work than the previous publishers.

We find some evidence in the qualitative answers which might explain modest uptake of the reversion right, despite the relatively good chance of making further earnings from reverted works. First, reversion clauses are often unworkable as a matter of principle; examples include where the reversion clause for an eBook is tied to 'print', or adequate exploitation in a broad range of non-useful formats (e.g., if a book is available only as an audiobook then this could be deemed as 'adequate'). Second, authors have difficulty ascertaining how their work is being used by a publisher to measure for themselves whether this is adequate exploitation per the reversion clause. This discovery burden is often borne by the author, with reports that 'the only ways I know in which my work has been used is by searching the internet.' The need for workable sales thresholds, and transparency of publisher sales data, is often discussed in these qualitative responses.

Advice

'My publishers are only starting to work back in their offices next week. It has been almost impossible to get work and ideas approved due to nerves about the market and lack of face-to-face meetings.'

Routes for authors' earnings are disorganised and complex. Access to legal and professional advice can assist authors in making sound financial decisions. However, access to this advice is often behind a steep paywall.

We asked authors whether they have an agent or received legal or professional advice, and if so from whom.

Across the full sample, most authors have not taken legal advice in the last year (79%). Likewise, for primary occupation authors, the majority (70%) have not taken legal advice. This follows a downward trajectory evident from the 2018 survey, where 59% of primary occupation authors reported that they never took advice before starting a work.

Table 50: 'In the past year, did you take legal/professional advice before signing a publishing/production contract?'

	NEVER	YES, AS A MATTER OF COURSE	YES, SOMETIMES
Total sample (1,267)	1,012 (79%)	141 (12%)	114 (9%)
Primary occupation (638)	448 (70%)	113 (18%)	77 (12%)

In terms of the source of legal and professional advice, most authors rely on their agents (39% in the full sample and 45% of primary occupation authors) and other professional bodies or unions (33% in the full sample and 30% of primary occupation authors).

Table 51: 'From whom have you taken legal/professional advice?'

	LAWYER	WORK COLLEAGUES	AGENT	FRIENDS	PROFESSIONAL BODIES	OTHER
Total sample (254)	20 (8%)	10 (4%)	98 (39%)	8 (3%)	85 (33%)	33 (13%)
Primary occupation (190)	8 (4%)	7 (4%)	85 (45%)	6 (3%)	57 (30%)	27 (14%)

Whilst agents are also an important source of advice, most authors have not had an agent in the past year (78%). Primary occupation authors are only slightly more likely to have an agent (33% as opposed to 22% in the full sample).

Table 52: 'Have you had an agent in the past year?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (1,262)	277 (22%)	985 (78%)
Primary occupation (655)	219 (33%)	436 (67%)

Whilst the majority of authors do not take legal advice or employ an agent, we suspected that having access to these routes would improve one's financial standing through the availability of better advice. As such, we analysed whether having access to this professional support improves an author's earnings. We find that, taking legal or professional advice is not associated with a higher level of income at self-employed or individual level of income. At individual levels, income actually seems to improve for those authors who never take advice (typically earning a median income of £28,000 on average per annum for those answering 'never' as opposed to e.g., £26,500 for those who systematically take advice). However, we caution that individual income also includes income which is gained from salaried employment, where legal advice may be less relevant, or bundled into an employment package; by contrast, legal advice in respect of self-employed income is more illuminating, as this relates directly to advice about e.g., an ad hoc freelance contract. This finding is in contrast to the, slightly clearer (and perhaps more intuitive), relationship of legal or professional advice improving financial outcomes for authors evidenced in 2016/2017, where earnings tend to improve for those who occasionally, or systematically take advice. As we detail in the Covid-19 section of our report, it is possible that this is a temporary 'Covid effect' on the writing market, as uncertainty about market conditions was present at all levels of the supply chain, possibly worsening the quality or quantity of advice on offer. Often, qualitative reports in this section explain how many professionals advised authors to suspend publications or projects in face of these market uncertainties, necessarily limiting one's income, but perhaps temporarily.

Table 53: Income of primary occupation authors and how often they take legal advice

		Never	Yes, sometimes	Yes, as a matter of course
Individual earnings (median)	Tax year 2020/2021 (£)	28,000	25,000	26,500
	Tax year 2019/2020 (£)	1,846	4,602	10,000
	Tax year 2016/2017 (£)	30,000	27,000	27,284
Self-employed earnings (median)	Tax year 2020/2021	28,000	24,000	26,500
	Tax year 2019/2020	1,800	3,061	8,000
	Tax year 2016/2017	1,875	8,000	11,250

The relationship between earnings and an agent seems to be clearer; both individual and self-employed levels of income, authors with agents are better off than those without. This effect is particularly pronounced for self-employed writing earnings of primary occupation authors, accelerating typical incomes from £1,500 (median) for those without an agent, to £10,000 (median) to those with.

Table 54: Income of primary occupation authors and whether they work with an agent

		With agent	Without agent
Individual earnings	Tax year 2020/2021	30,000	26,000
	Tax year 2019/2020	30,000	26,000
	Tax year 2016/2017	30,000	30,000
Self-employed earnings	Tax year 2020/2021	10,000	1,500
	Tax year 2019/2020	10,000	1,500
	Tax year 2016/2017	15,000	1,500

We caution that for both of these relationships, earnings and access to advice and agents are possibly cyclical: those with access to these professionals are also likely to be the people with a track record of success (who can afford to pay for these services).

CONTRACTS

'Every year, the contracts get more hostile, more punitive and more unreasonable.'

Advances

'I have never had an advance in my entire career, but I used to at least hear of friends and colleagues getting them. That doesn't seem to be the case anymore.'

Advances are a lump-sum initial cash payment offered by a publisher to an author in anticipation of completion of a work. Advances (once recovered) are usually supplemented in future by other payments, such as royalties (discussed below). They can be an important up-front source of income for authors who often operate with uncertain, disorganised and delayed sources of income.

We asked authors whether they had ever received an advance, and if so whether they noticed any difference in the amount of advance that was being offered by publishers in the past five years. Across the full sample, nearly half of the authors surveyed have never received an advance (47%). This number decreases marginally for primary occupation authors (40%).

Table 55: 'Have you ever received an advance ahead of creating a work?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (1,247)	661 (53%)	586 (47%)
Primary occupation (650)	393 (60%)	257 (40%)

The 2022 findings follow a downward trajectory evidenced since 2006 (82%), 2014 (76%) and 2018 (69%).

Table 56: Percentage of primary occupation authors who have been offered an advance, 2006-2022

	2014	2014	2018	2022
No	104 (18%)	24%	380 (31%)	257 (40%)
Yes	464 (82%)	76%	845 (69%)	393 (60%)

Of those authors that did receive an advance, most report no change to the amount offered in the last five years (44% in the full sample and 37% of primary occupation authors). Very few authors report substantial increases (3% in both the full sample and primary occupation author sample), and instead report more substantial decreases (28% in the full sample, 30% of primary occupation authors).

Table 57: 'Has the value of advances from publishers changed over the last 5 years?'

	SUBSTANTIAL DECREASE	SLIGHT DECREASE	STAYED THE SAME	SLIGHT INCREASE	SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE
Total sample (590)	163 (28%)	84 (14%)	262 (44%)	65 (11%)	16 (3%)
Primary occupation (353)	105 (30%)	53 (15%)	131 (37%)	52 (15%)	12 (3%)

In the qualitative responses, authors discuss changing approaches to the points of payment for an advance from publishers. Based on this data, it seems that advances are now more frequently paid upon submission or substantive first edit of a work, rather than acceptance of a work (a traditional model). As such, points of payment for authors' income streams are becoming increasingly delayed.

Royalties

'Royalties remain as unpredictable as ever.'

In return for the ongoing use of an author's work, publishers often pay the author a recurring payment in the form of royalties. Royalties are usually calculated as a percentage payment based on the sales of the work, or the gross or net revenue earned. We asked authors about how much they receive in royalties, both for traditional publications and eBooks.

For traditional publications, royalties calculated on a percentage of net receipts are the norm for both full sample authors (47%) and primary occupation authors (44%), followed by a percentage payment of the retail or publisher's price (32% and 33% respectively). Likewise for eBooks, royalty payments based on a percentage of net receipts are marginally more popular (50% of full sample authors and 51% of primary occupation authors). Whilst we did not receive many qualitative explanations of what constitutes 'other' forms of royalty payments, those who responded in this category indicated that 'royalty' payments were effectively received in the form of free, or discounted, copies of the author's work.

Table 58: How authors' royalty rates are paid in respect of traditional publications

TRADITIONAL PUBLICATIONS	PERCENTAGE OF RETAIL/ PUBLISHER'S PRICE	PERCENTAGE OF NET RECEIPTS	OTHER
Total sample (1,138)	367 (32%)	530 (47%)	241 (21%)
Primary occupation (586)	191 (33%)	260 (44%)	135 (23%)

Table 59: How authors' royalty rates are paid in respect of eBooks

TRADITIONAL PUBLICATIONS	PERCENTAGE OF RETAIL/ PUBLISHER'S PRICE	PERCENTAGE OF NET RECEIPTS	OTHER
Total sample (864)	260 (30%)	429 (50%)	175 (20%)
Primary occupation (467)	146 (31%)	238 (51%)	83 (18%)

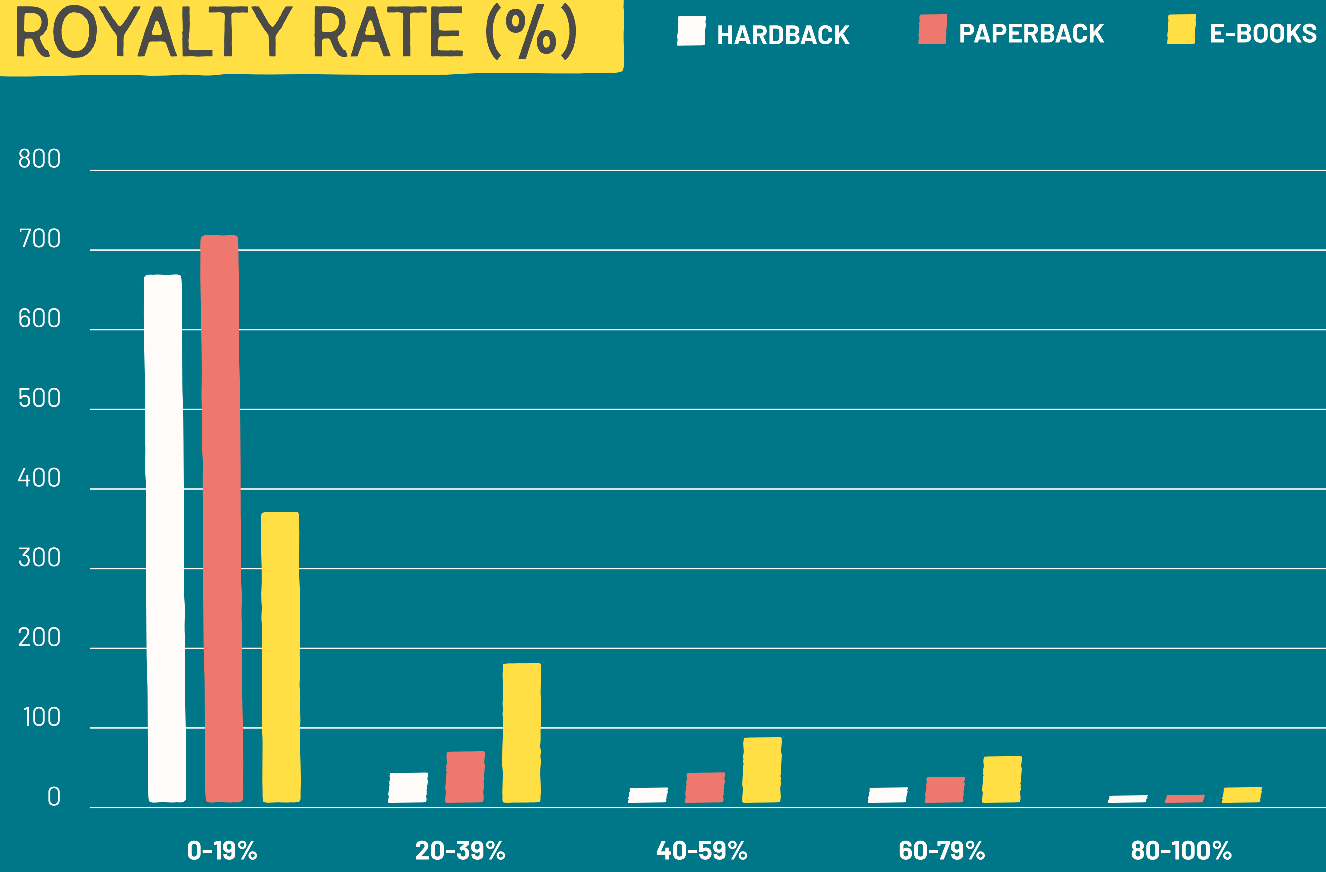
As a percentage, on average, primary occupation authors earn marginally more in royalties compared with the full sample of authors. Royalty rates for both samples are highest for eBooks, followed by paperbacks and hardbacks.

Table 60: Average (mean) percentages of royalties earned by primary occupation authors in respect of their publications

	HARDBACKS	PAPERBACKS	EBOOKS
Total sample (2,316)	11.28%	14.76%	23.79%
Primary occupation (1,319)	11.73%	15.77%	27.36%

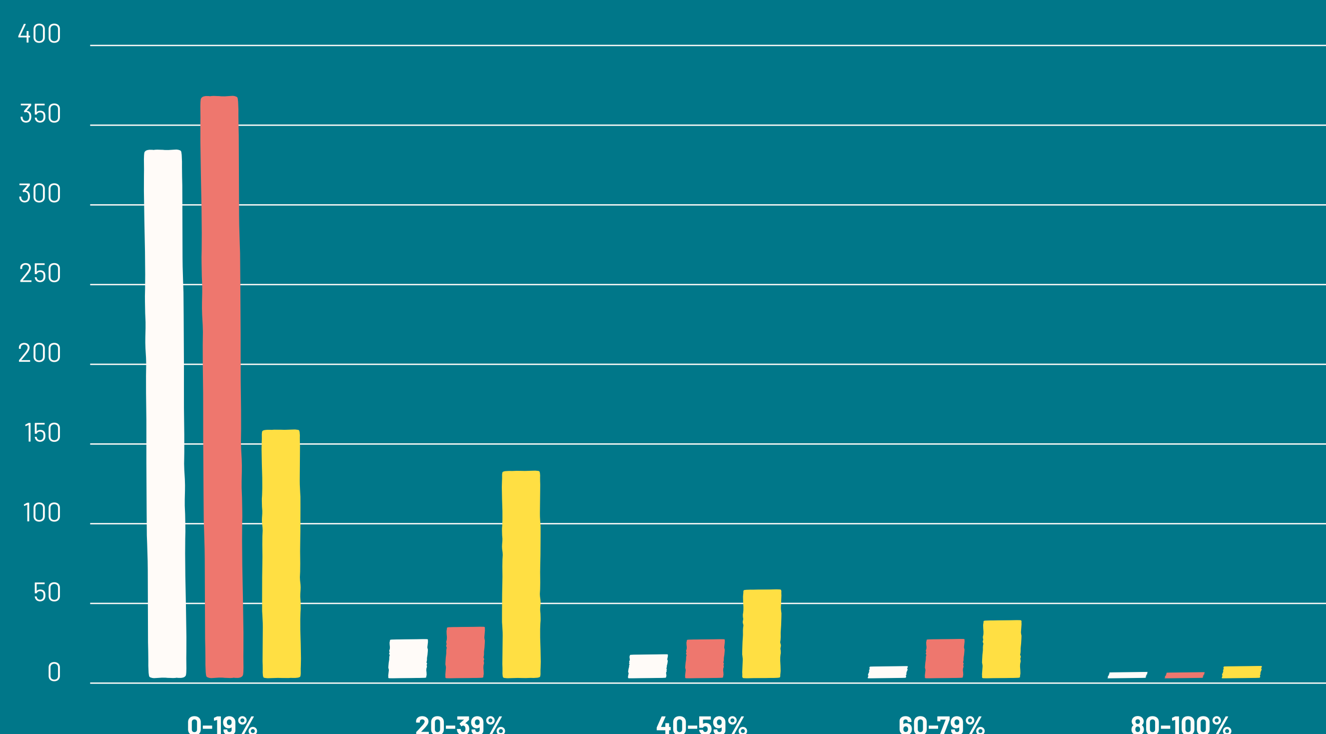
Across the total sample, royalty rates cluster around the 0-19% band, particularly for hardbacks and paperbacks. The proportion of eBook royalties is respectively higher for every royalty increment thereafter (peaking at 20-39%).

ROYALTY RATE (%)

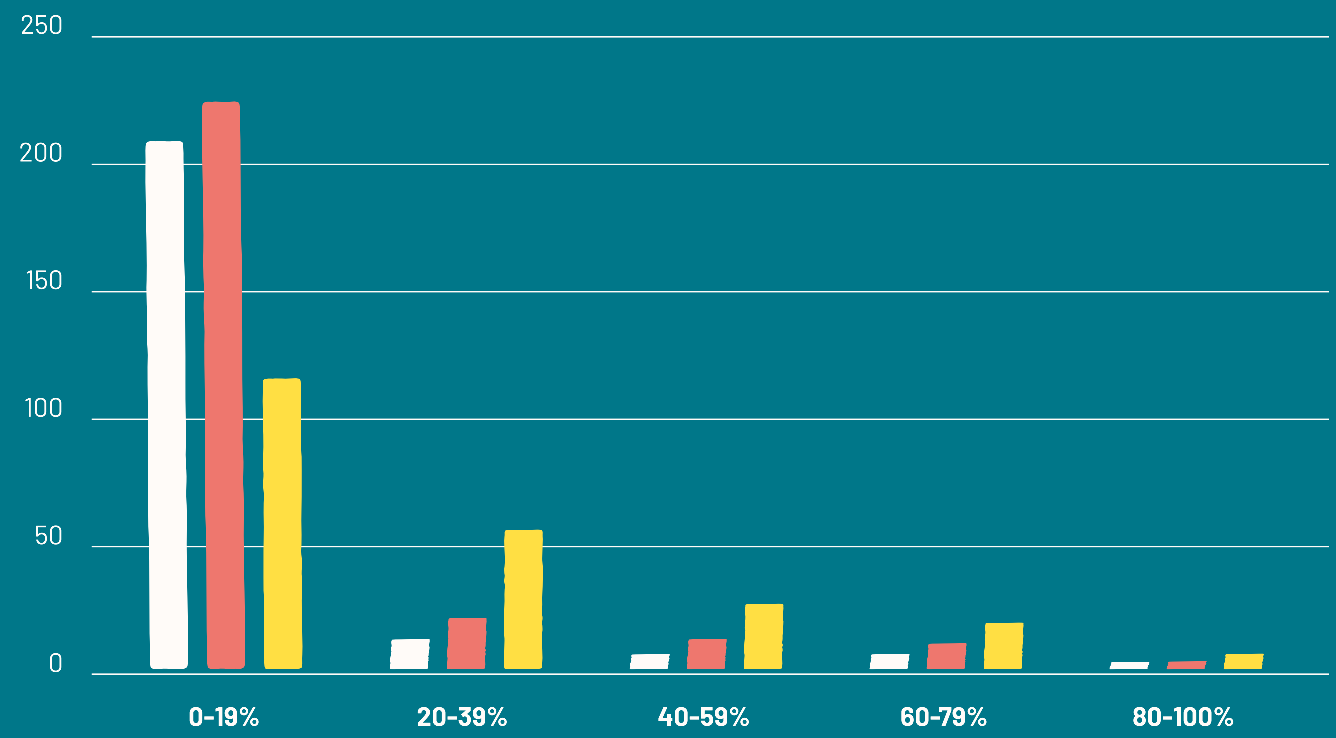


We observe a similar trajectory for primary occupation and main income authors. Proportionately, slightly more authors achieve the higher royalty band of 20-39%, whilst 0-19% remains the most prevalent. For those very high bands (40% and above), the proportion of author's receiving these is very similar across all sub-samples.

ROYALTY RATE (%) – PRIMARY OCCUPATION



ROYALTY RATE (%) – MAIN INCOME



In respect of eBooks, authors find that royalty rates have stayed the same over the last five years (80% of the full sample and 77% of primary occupation authors). In the qualitative data, the fact that royalties have stayed the same is not described as a neutral fact of life for authors. Rather, authors say that royalties have always been low and unpredictable, which is a situation that has remained unchanged.

	DECREASED SUBSTANTIALLY	DECREASED	STAYED THE SAME	INCREASED	INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY
Total sample (807)	27 (3%)	64 (8%)	649 (80%)	52 (6%)	15 (2%)
Primary occupation (431)	13 (3%)	33 (8%)	331 (77%)	38 (9%)	16 (4%)

Buy-outs

'There seems to be something of a move from payment by royalty to payment by flat fee.'

Buy-outs are a contractual arrangement where an author transfers all of their copyright interest in their work to a publisher. In such a scenario, there are usually no recurring royalties to be paid post-conclusion of the contract, and instead a set amount is paid to the author in a lump sum. In principle, a buy-out contract shifts the risk to the publisher, who has made an up-front investment based on the speculative value of a work. However, if the author accepts a buy-out figure that is too low compared to the actual exploitation of the work, then author is deprived of long-term benefits of ongoing income streams through e.g., royalties.

We asked authors: whether they had ever signed a buy-out contract; if so in how many of their contracts; and whether that percentage has changed over the last 10 years.

Across the full sample, 32% of authors have signed buy-out contracts, a figure which increases marginally to 38% for primary occupation authors.

Table 62: 'Have you ever signed a buy-out type contract?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (1,252)	395 (32%)	857 (68%)
Primary occupation (650)	249 (38%)	401 (62%)

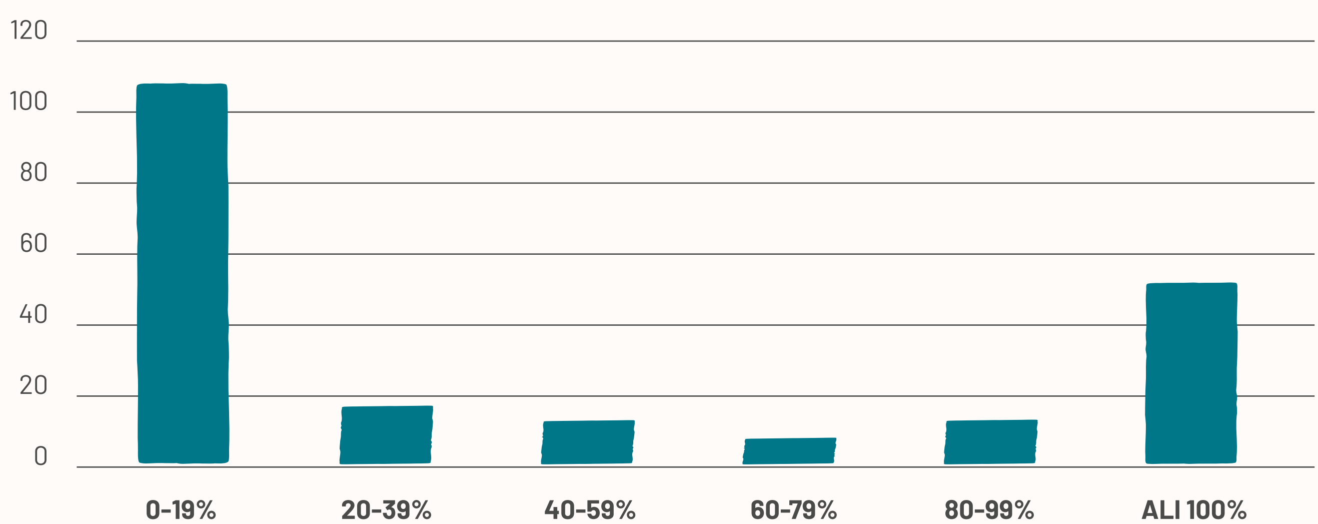
The latter figure represents a noticeable increase compared to 2018, when only 31% of primary occupation authors signed buy-out contracts.

Table 63: Percentage of primary-occupation authors (professional authors in 2006) who signed a buy-out contract (2018 and 2006)

	YES	NO
2018 (1,885)	383 (31%)	852 (69%)
2006 (722)	254 (35%)	468 (65%)

Whilst on average, authors in the full sample sign buy-out contacts in 42% (mean) or 21% (median) of their contracts, and primary occupation authors 44% (mean) or 22% (median), taking a more categorical approach, we see that most authors cluster in the 0-19% band of buy-out contracts signed. It is also clear that, for a considerable proportion of authors (25%), buy-outs are systematically signed in all of an author's contracts. Whilst sample sizes are too small to infer, it is possible that these represent a sector-specific arrangement in a particular industry.

PERCENTAGE OF BUY-OUT CONTRACTS



In the full sample, most authors said that the amount of buy-out contracts have stayed the same in the past ten years (61%). The pattern remains the same for primary occupation authors (59%).

Table 64: 'Has the percentage of buy-out contracts you have signed changed over the past 10 years?'

	DECREASE	STAYED THE SAME	INCREASE
Total sample (320)	62 (19%)	194 (61%)	64 (20%)
Primary occupation (203)	36 (18%)	120 (59%)	47 (23%)

Buy-out contracts are often criticised as being exploitative in curtailing the long-term earning potential of an author of a successful work. As such, we tested the relationship between earnings and whether an author had ever signed a buy-out contract. We find that the median earnings of authors in the total sample who do sign buy-out contracts is only marginally higher than those who do not (£28,800 for those who sign, £27,664 who do not). This is consistent with findings from the previous 2018 survey, where there was difference in median earnings for those who signed buy-out contracts and those who do not.

Table 65: Incomes of authors who sign or do not sign buy-out contracts across the total sample, comparing 2018 and 2022

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021		TAX YEAR 2016/2017	
		Buy-out contracts	No buy-out	Buy-out contracts	No buy-out
TOTAL SAMPLE	Observations	395	857	660	1976
	Percentage (%)	32%	68%	25%	75%
	Median (£)	28,800	27,664	30,000	30,000

When we examined the relationship between income and buy-outs longitudinally across surveys, the value of saying 'yes' or 'no' to such a contract waxes and wanes. For authors in 2006, those in the total sample, main income authors, and authors who earn all of their income from writing, were better off (higher median earnings) if they did sign a buy-out contract. This trend reversed in 2018, where those same categories of author earned more than their respective counterparts if they did not sign a buy-out contract. In 2022, the differences between earnings for those authors who did sign a buy-out contract and those who did not is less pronounced for authors in the total sample and those who earn their main income from writing. However, for full income authors the difference in earnings is significant: those who have signed a buy-out contract earn a median income of £25,623, compared with £15,850 for those who did not. These findings suggest that the benefits or drawbacks of signing a buy-out have a more temporal element than we previously anticipated. Here, the category of author (i.e., whether one is wholly dependent on writing as a source of income or not) is apparently less important than the time in which the buy-out was signed in determining earnings; the waxing and waning of broader market conditions seems to be more determinative of when there is the 'right time' to buy-out for an author.

Table 66: Incomes of different author types who sign or do not sign buy-out contracts

BUY-OUT CONTRACTS	TOTAL SAMPLE	MAIN INCOME	FULL INCOME
Mean 2018 (£)	16,929	35,627	39,829
Median (£)	5,000	20,000	25,099
Mean 2022 (£)	40,234	40,024	43,804
Median (£)	28,800	25,000	25,623
NO BUY-OUT	**TOTAL SAMPLE**	**MAIN INCOME**	**FULL INCOME**
Mean 2018 (£)	24,917	46,734	53,048
Median (£)	8,000	29,000	36,110
Mean 2022 (£)	46,586	52,276	66,206
Median (£)	27,664	20,000	15,850

Whilst, on the face of it, accepting a buy-out contract may marginally improve an author's economic circumstances from these findings, we caution that the nature of a buy-out is to receive an instant and measurable cash injection. Depending on when the buy-out is received might give the impression that the author is, at that point in time, better off. Put another way, the same question asked during a different year could produce very different results if no buy-out had been signed that year.

Negotiations

'As an academic I have been told to be grateful for book deals and not negotiate as they can be difficult to come by.'

Contractual negotiations are essential to securing a fair and balanced financial outcome for authors. Often, however, an author's bargaining position is not as strong as the publisher who, as a gatekeeper to the essential market, in effect 'holds all of the cards'. Alternatively, and as we see increasingly in the qualitative data for this report, publishing contracts are becoming increasingly boilerplate and non-negotiable.
We asked authors whether they ever attempted to negotiate and change in contractual clauses in the past year, whether they were successful, and what the nature of the dispute was about. Across the full sample, most authors have not attempted to change a contractual clause in the past year (76%). Of those who did attempt to change a contract term, very few succeeded (20%). Primary occupation authors challenge terms more frequently (32%) and are also more often successful in their negotiations (28%).

Table 67: 'During the past year, did you attempt to change the terms of a contract you were offered? Did you succeed?'

	ATTEMPTED	NO ATTEMPT	SUCCESS	FAILURE
Full sample (1,241; 1,166)	292 (24%)	949 (76%)	237 (20%)	929 (80%)
Primary occupation (647; 608)	210 (32%)	437 (68%)	169 (28%)	439 (72%)

In previous surveys, we did not account for the nuance between those who attempted to a change a contract term, and those who succeeded. As such, we only track longitudinal trends in those who succeeded in changing a contract term. Broadly, we see a downward trend in the number of primary occupation authors who are successful in negotiating a contract change, with rates of success dropping from 43% in 2006, to 36% in 2018, and now 28% in 2022.

Table 68: Percentage of primary occupation authors who succeeded in changing the terms of a contract, 2006-2022

	2006	2018	2022
Succeed	202 (43%)	462 (36%)	169 (28%)
Failure	267 (57%)	823 (64%)	479 (72%)

In terms of the most negotiated items, we find that fees are the topic of most concern for 22% of authors in the full sample, and 24% of primary occupation authors. This is followed by royalty rates (18% and 17% respectively) and negotiations about the scope of the licence being offered to a publisher (17% for both full sample and primary occupation authors).

Table 69: 'Please indicate what you attempted to negotiate'

	FULL SAMPLE (569)	PRIMARY OCCUPATION (412)
Fee	127 (22%)	99 (24%)
Royalty rate	101 (18%)	70 (17%)
Rights/scope of licence	98 (17%)	71 (17%)
Moral rights (attribution)	42 (7%)	31 (8%)
Moral rights (integrity)	17 (3%)	12 (3%)
Warranties/indemnity	34 (6%)	26 (6%)
Reversion of rights	59 (10%)	45 (11%)
Others	91 (16%)	58 (14%)

IN THE QUALITATIVE DATA, WE FOUND EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC CONTRACTUAL PRACTICES WHICH WERE CONSIDERED PROBLEMATIC AND NEGOTIABLE IN THE 'OTHER' CATEGORY:

- *Author expected to bear the costs and responsibilities for clearance of third-party materials, e.g., of images used in books.*
- *Moral rights waivers of e.g., attribution.*
- *Warranty/indemnity clauses in favour of the publisher.*
- *Lack of transparency clauses on e.g., how a work is being used and where.*
- *Non-compete clauses, preventing authors from approaching other publishers.*
- *'First look/refusal' clauses for future works, even where unrelated to the work under consideration, or in formats that are not produced by the publisher (e.g., audiobooks).*
- *Broad claims to formatting rights, e.g., ('all formats now and yet to be invented throughout the universe').*
- *The 'point of no return', where a publisher retains the ability to edit a work post-acceptance, without the author's approval.*
- *Unworkable reversion clauses, e.g., to apply to 'out-of-print' eBooks.*
- *Where the author's behaviour is contrary to public morality, the publisher can oblige an advance to be returned.*

We also asked author's generally about their perspective of their negotiation position and the changes they perceive in contractual practices over the past 5 years, including examples of any problematic clauses they had come across. Across the full sample, most authors say that they have experienced no change to their negotiation position in the past five years (65%). Primary occupation authors are a less moderate picture with more reportioning weakening (25%) or improvement (21%) of their negotiation position.

Across the full sample, most authors say that they have experienced no change to their negotiation position in the past five years (65%). Primary occupation authors are a less moderate picture with more reportioning weakening (25%) or improvement (21%) of their negotiation position.

Table 70: 'In your view, has your negotiation position as a writer changed over the last 2 years?'

	WEAKENED	STAYED THE SAME	IMPROVEMENT
Full sample (1,141)	242 (21%)	736 (65%)	163 (14%)
Primary occupation (602)	155 (35%)	323 (54%)	124 (21%)

Much as with access to professional advice, negotiating contentious or unfair terms may be beneficial to an author by improving the terms of their repayment. Upon testing the relationship between negotiations and earnings, we found that those who have succeed in changing the terms earn a typical income of £79,867 (median) per annum, whereas those who were unsuccessful earn less than half: £35,458. This would seemingly be powerful evidence that it pays to negotiate, but as above, we caution that it is possible there is a cyclical relationship between those authors with better bargaining positions, and those with higher earnings associated with success.

Self-publishing

'Self-publishing is a labour of love.'

Self-publishing allows authors to publish their works without using a traditional, established publisher. Often, this means that traditional gatekeepers can be bypassed, and authors are granted direct control over how their work is used and exploited. The most common self-publishing platform cited in the qualitative data is Amazon's Kindle store. We asked authors whether they had self-published anything within the last year; what types of works were self-published (traditional or electronic); whether they paid anything towards it; and offered space for any other explanatory comments regarding the experience of self-publishing. Across the full sample of authors, we found that only a small number of authors self-published a work in the past year (18%). Primary occupation authors self-publish more frequently (21%).

Table 71: 'During the past year, have you self-published a work?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (1,260)	224 (18%)	1,036 (82%)
Primary occupation (652)	136 (21%)	516 (79%)

In qualitative responses, we find that, overwhelmingly, the face of self-publishing for authors is distinctly Amazon Books (Kindle). Perhaps unsurprisingly, electronic publications make up over half of all self-published materials as opposed to traditional or other publications (53% in respect of the full sample, and 211 of primary occupation authors).

Table 72: 'Have you self-published a traditional (I.e., physical) work and/or as an electronic publication?'

	TRADITIONAL PUBLICATION	ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS	OTHER
Total sample (338)	135 (40%)	178 (53%)	25 (7%)
Primary occupation (211)	81 (38%)	111 (52%)	19 (9%)

Almost half of all authors have paid towards self-publishing (48% of the full sample and 45% of primary occupation authors). Authors list an array of different costs associated with equipment (office supplies, accessories etc.) design, hosting, and clearances for third-party materials. On average, authors spend approximately £1,575 when self-publishing a book, which may be in respect of several titles.

Table 73: 'During the past year, have you paid towards self-publishing?'

	YES	NO
Total sample (221)	107 (48%)	114 (52%)
Primary occupation (135)	61 (45%)	74 (55%)

The few authors that do self-publish speak positively of the flexibility and independence that self-publishing promotes: 'I like the fact that the final product is mine and mine only. I don't have to abide by any publisher's input. I suppose I enjoy the creative freedom of it.' However, self-publishing is not without its demerits. Often, authors report that any real costs saved, or additional income earned, by self-publishing is quickly eaten up by marketing and advertising costs for promotion, described as a 'killer' both in terms of both labour time and cost. 'Labour of love' is thus an accurate way to understand the process of self-publishing. Indeed, those authors who self-published their work typically earned a median income of £26,323 per annum; those who didn't earned higher at £37,159. As we also found evidence in the qualitative data that self-published authors re-published titles that had reverted to them from a traditional publisher, or titles that had been considered commercially unviable, we tested whether there was a close association between those authors who self-published and those who had enacted a reversion clause. However, we found that only 8% of those authors who self-published their work also used a reversion clause. Whilst this is not an insignificant number, it suggests that the motivations behind self-publishing are more diversified than titles simply being available to do so.

CASE STUDY: AUDIO-VISUAL Authors

'Projects being pitched to TV companies were immediately dropped as broadcasters, understandably, had to rethink how they spent money during the pandemic. It felt like there was a certain (and again, understandable) reluctance to commit to larger projects as the year went on.'

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for home-based entertainment meant there were more people watching audio-visual content than perhaps ever, with streaming platforms becoming a hallmark of the lockdown experience [1]. Globally, the video streaming market is estimated to be worth over 60 billion GBP in revenue in 2022, with an annual growth rate of nearly 10% [2]. With this industry booming, we expected that authors, mainly screenwriters, in this sector would likewise receive proportionate gains.

However, the data we have gathered does not support this. As explored above, scriptwriters, as a narrower sub-set of the broader audio-visual category, appear to be faring comparatively better than most other sectors, typically earning £75,705 (median) per annum. However, in this case study, we consider audio-visual authors more broadly to include those who answered positively to having received any earnings from film, film documentary, TV dramas, TV documentaries, children's TV, TV comedies, TV soaps, or radio; this may include, for example, those authors who work as consultants or translators for such productions.

We find that the authors in this broader category of audio-visual productions fare only marginally better than primary occupation authors (earning a typical income of £25,000 per annum as opposed to the full sample median of £21,479). The typical earnings for audio-visual authors also represent a loss in real terms of 13% since 2018 despite growth in the broader industry. The decline between the pre- and post-Covid years is far steeper, indicating that the pandemic years in fact worsened the earning position of audio-visual authors.

Table 74: Incomes of audio-visual authors, 2018 - 2022

	TAX YEAR 2020/2021	TAX YEAR 2019/2020	TAX YEAR 2016/2017
Observations	236	199	531
Median (nominal) (£)	25,000	28,000	30,000
Real median incomes (in 2021 pounds) (£)	25,000	28,724	32,377
Growth in real median incomes (compared to 2016/2017)	-22.8%	-11.3%	N/A
Growth in real median incomes (compared to preceding tax year)	-13.0%	-11.3%	N/A

We explore in the following analysis why, in the context of a booming industry, so little of the value accrued is being returned to authors.

We found support in the data to suggest that the audio-visual sector was particularly vulnerable to the effects of lockdowns, travel restrictions and social distancing rules. The suspension of in-person productions necessarily meant losses of earning opportunities for authors who would work in furtherance of these productions, in e.g., consultations or adaptations.

'The pandemic brought about a lot of uncertainty for screenwriters - we had no idea when production wold start up again and if we would have a job when it did. This gave most writers, including myself major anxiety which made it difficult to focus or be productive. When production did start up, due to COVID restrictions writers were asked for more rewrites (which were usually unpaid), had to accept extremely difficult deadlines for last-minute changes and were expected to just get on with it and be grateful for the work. Face to face meeting with producers and production companies came to a halt and while meetings and story conferences could take place on Zoom, it wasn't the same and left all parties exhausted and with no real sense of connection. These type of meetings are vital to a writer's career as they the prime source of networking and can ensure the next job. Without them or having less of them means less work and also leaves writers, who already work in a very isolated profession, feeling even more alone and on the outside of the film and TV industry.'

From our analysis, we also found that the contractual position of audio-visual authors is an important explanatory factor as to why they see so little of the overall slice of the industry's increased value. More specifically, changes to the points in payments to audio-visual authors is becoming more stratified, rather than representing long-term or steady earning potential. Much as we have illustrated the changing nature of the advance payment, most audio-visual authors are paid upon execution of a work, not completion of it. Where, as a result of lockdown restrictions, the First Day of Principal Photography was cancelled for programmes, so too was the trigger point for additional payments to the author. In this respect, much of the work for audio-visual authors is discussed as a sunk-labour cost; the work, from the author's point of view, is completed, but never (or in a very delayed manner) manifested.

Audio-visual authors also increasingly discuss their relationship with large streaming platforms (by name, in responses to this survey, Netflix, Disney+ and Britbox) who influence the nature of the operation of contracts in this industry. In the qualitative data, authors report that there is a trend in these industries to opt for complete buy-outs in audio-visual writings, rather than long-term earnings through repeat fees. Indeed, this is confirmed in the above analysis of relative importance of audio-visual fees relative to earnings, with streaming and downloading ranked far lower than e.g., broadcasting.

This trend towards a system of buy-out is verifiable in the quantitative data: in two of our main author samples, we find that audio-visual authors are the group with the highest percentage of buy-out contracts (40%), compared with 32% for the total sample of authors.

Table 75: Comparison of income between total sample authors and audio-visual authors

		TAX YEAR 2020/2021		TAX YEAR 2016/2017	
		Buy-out contracts	**No buy-out**	**Buy-out contracts**	**No buy-out**
TOTAL SAMPLE	Observations	395	857	660	1976
	Percentage (%)	32%	68%	25%	75%
	Median (£)	28,800	27,664	30,000	30,000
AUDIO - VISUALS	Observations	99	147	176	347
	Percentage (%)	40%	60%	34%	66%
	Median (£)	32,000	17,000	30,000	30,000

Resultingly, it is possible that what we are witnessing in the earnings of audio-visual authors is a bottleneck; audio-visual authors' earnings have become increasingly disorganised due to the disruptive, long production process and stratified contractual payment system. As such, we may anticipate that the relatively low earnings illustrated here will improve in the coming years when these points of payment are realised [3].
In the context of the recent litigation between Netflix and screenwriters in the US, the negotiation of residual payments for subsequent streaming adaptations could become a particularly important reference point for audio-visual authors in their negotiations with streaming platforms [4].

[1] BBC (2020) ***TV watching and online streaming surge during lockdown***

[2] Statista (2022) ***Video Streaming (SVoD) Worldwide***

[3] Parkinson (2020) ***Coronavirus: Writers 'face weird boom time' after crisis***

[4] Fingas (2022) ***Netflix to pay $42 million in dispute over screenwriter compensation***

RESOURCES

THE AUTHOR'S INTEREST

An Australian Research Council Future Fellowship project which investigates the relationship between authors, copyright, and their earnings.

THE AUTHORS' LICENSING AND COLLECTING SOCIETY

A British Collective Management Organisation (CMO) that works to ensure writers are fairly compensated for any of their works that are copied, broadcast or recorded.

COPYRIGHT EVIDENCE

An online resource which helps policy makers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics and the general public engage with the growing body of empirical work on copyright law.

COPYRIGHT USER

An online resource aimed at making UK copyright law accessible to creators, media professionals, entrepreneurs, students, and members of the public.

THE SOCIETY OF AUTHORS

Trade union in the UK.

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

ALCS works hard to support, champion and fight for all types of writer. We want you to be treated and paid fairly for your work. We want to protect your rights as a creator and a professional.

That's why we need a few minutes of your time. We need you to complete a survey that helps us understand the trend of writers' earnings, and the impact that emerging technologies and markets are having on your working life. Writers have never been more central to society than during the pandemic, when we have relied more than ever on education and entertainment. That's why it's so crucial that we capture this snapshot in time. Whether you're a fledgling screenwriter, an academic with six textbooks under your belt or a longtime journalist, we'd love to see how you're being remunerated, so that we can build a comprehensive picture of what's happening to authors' earnings across the board. This research will update findings of surveys undertaken in 2006, 2013 and 2018.

The survey is anonymous and will take 20-30 minutes to complete. It refers to your earnings in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 tax years, so have this paperwork to hand. Please enter as much information as you can, even partial responses are useful.

You'll be eligible to enter a prize draw to win a cash prize of £500 at the end of the survey.

The research will be conducted by a team at the CREATe Research Centre, University of Glasgow. They can be reached via email: contact@create.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time,

Owen Atkinson

ALCS Chief Executive

Please read the participation information sheet for more information about the project.
Please read the privacy notice for this project.

I agree that the researchers may process my information in accordance with these terms (please confirm below):

- ☐ Yes (9)
- ☐ No, so I will not continue this survey (12)

Skip To: End of Survey If ALCS works hard to support, champion and fight for all types of wr... = No, so I will not continue this survey

End of Block: Help Us Supporting Writers

Start of Block: Professional Profile

1 Is writing your primary occupation?
(For the purpose of this survey, this means: do you spend at least half of your working time as a writer?)

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

2 Do you spend ALL your working time as a writer?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

3 Is3 How would you describe your main writing occupation?

- ☐ Author (1)
- ☐ Author/illustrator (2)
- ☐ Editor (3)
- ☐ Teacher (4)
- ☐ Academic (5)
- ☐ Journalist (6)
- ☐ Playwright (7)
- ☐ Scriptwriter (8)
- ☐ Poet (9)
- ☐ Translator (10)
- ☐ Comedian (11)
- ☐ No longer writing (retired) (12)
- ☐ Other (such as copywriter, blogger, vlogger, games writer). Please specify: (13)

4 Memberships of professional organisations. If you can remember it, please select all that apply and add year in which you joined (e.g. 2009).

- ☐ ALCS (1) ____
- ☐ Society of Authors [includes subsidiary groups
  (e.g. academic, broadcasting, children, educational, medical, translators)] (2) ____
- ☐ Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) (3) ____
- ☐ National Union of Journalists (4) ____
- ☐ ALLi (Alliance of Independent Authors) - writers who self-publish (5) ____
- ☐ Other (please enter the name of the institution here) (6) ____
- ☐ Other (please enter the year in which you joined the institution mentioned above): (7) ____

5 In which year did you start earning as a professional writer? Please type in the YYYY format, e.g. 2009.

6 Relative importance of each type of work: Please rank the following categories of work in order of magnitude based on earnings (1 is the highest), adding a digit to the left of each entry. You do not need to rank each category, please leave the irrelevant ones blank.

_____ Books (1)
_____ Newspapers (2)
_____ Magazines/Periodicals (3)
_____ Theatre (playwright) (4)
_____ Audio/Audiovisual Productions (e.g. films and radio/TV programmes) (5)
_____ Digital Publishing (e-books, e-magazines, websites, blogs, others) (6)
_____ Other (please specify: e.g. advertising copy/video game story board/consultancy materials) (7)

7 Books and articles: Please rank the following genres by earnings (1 is the highest). You do not need to rank each category, please leave the irrelevant ones blank.

____ Fiction (other than children's and Young Adult) (1)
____ Travel (2)
____ Nonfiction popular (excluding travel) (3)
____ Academic (4)
____ Professional/technical (5)
____ Children's (and YA) fiction (6)
____ Nonfiction for children (excluding educational) (7)
____ Educational/teaching (school age) (8)
____ Writing for games, VFX, web (9)

8 Audio/Audiovisual Productions: Please rank the following types of writing works in audio/visual production by earnings (1 is the highest). You do not need to rank each category, please leave the irrelevant ones blank.

____ Film (1)
____ Film documentary (2)
____ TV drama (3)
____ TV documentary (4)
____ Children's TV (5)
____ TV comedy (6)
____ TV soap (7)
____ Radio (fiction) (8)
____ Radio (nonfiction) (9)

9 In relation to your earnings from writings which are incorporated in radio/audiovisual works, please rank the following by earnings (1 is highest). You do not need to rank each category, please leave the irrelevant ones blank.

____ Broadcasting (including radio, cable and satellite) (1)
____ Downloading of film and radio/TV programmes (2)
____ Online streaming of film/television/radio (3)
____ Rental (physical and/or online) (4)

End of Block: Professional Profile

Start of Block: Earnings from being a Writer

Earnings The following earnings questions are of importance for making comparisons with other survey data.
Estimated figures are sufficient.
All information you provide will be treated anonymously and in total confidence.

10 2020/2021 TAX YEAR (MOST RECENT COMPLETED TAX YEAR)

Please indicate the approximate earnings as per following headings based on the 2020/2021 tax year (6 April 2020 to 5 April 2021, i.e. the most recent completed tax year). All figures should be based on earnings BEFORE tax and should exclude any agent's fees. Enter amount in GBP without any symbols or commas, e.g. 10000 for ten thousand pounds in a year.

- ☐ HOUSEHOLD earnings (the combined earnings of all earners in your household) (1) ____________________
- ☐ INDIVIDUAL earnings (including self-employed earnings plus income from any other non-writing activity, such as salaried employment) (2) ____________________
- ☐ SELF-EMPLOYED WRITING EARNINGS (not including any salary as a writer) (3) ____________________

11 2020/2021 TAX YEAR (MOST RECENT COMPLETED TAX YEAR)

In relation to self-employed writing earnings, please indicate the approximate amount (if any) you personally received from the following sources based on the 2020/2021 tax year (6 April 2020 to 5 April 2021). Enter amount in GBP without any symbols or commas.

- ☐ Publishers (royalties and other income) (4) ____________________
- ☐ Self-Publication (5) ____________________
- ☐ Public Lending Right (6) ____________________
- ☐ ALCS (7) ____________________
- ☐ Awards and Prizes (8) ____________________
- ☐ Crowdfunding (e.g. Patreon) (13) ____________________
- ☐ Grants and Bursaries (9) ____________________
- ☐ Fellowships / Writers-in-Residence (10) ____________________
- ☐ Teaching creative writing (11) ____________________
- ☐ Lectures / Appearances / School visits (12) ____________________

12 2020/2021 TAX YEAR (MOST RECENT COMPLETED TAX YEAR)

Please indicate your total earnings as an employee from the following based on the 2020/2021 tax year (6 April 2020 to 5 April 2021) (before tax and deductions). Enter amount in GBP without any symbols or commas.

- ☐ Journalist (including editorial roles) (13) ____________________
- ☐ Commercial Researcher (14) ____________________
- ☐ Copywriter (15) ____________________
- ☐ Book Editing (16) ____________________
- ☐ Academic (17) ____________________
- ☐ Translation (18) ____________________
- ☐ Any Other (19) ____________________

13 **TAX YEAR 2019/2020 (NOT THE MOST RECENT TAX YEAR)Please indicate the approximate earnings as per following headings based on the 2019/2020 tax year (6th April 2019 to 5 April 2020, please note that this is not the most recent tax year). All figures should be based on earnings BEFORE tax and should exclude any agent's fees. Enter amount in GBP without any decimals, symbols or commas, e.g. 10000 for ten thousand pounds in a year.**

- ☐ HOUSEHOLD earnings (the combined earnings of all earners in your household) (1) ________________________________
- ☐ INDIVIDUAL earnings (including self-employed earnings plus income from any other non-writing activity, such as salaried employment) (2) ________________________________
- ☐ SELF-EMPLOYED WRITING EARNINGS (not including any salary as a writer) (3) ________________________________

14 **In your view, how has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your earnings?**

- ☐ They have decreased substantially (6)
- ☐ The have decreased moderately (12)
- ☐ They have stayed the same (9)
- ☐ They have increased moderately (10)
- ☐ They have increased substantially (11)

15 **Please provide additional information as to how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your earnings (e.g., loss of household earnings through furlough or redundancy, savings on travel costs etc.).**

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14 **In your view, how has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your professional life as a writer?**

- ☐ Very negative impact (4)
- ☐ Negative impact (5)
- ☐ No impact (6)
- ☐ Positive impact (7)
- ☐ Very positive impact (8)

17 **Please provide additional information as to how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your professional life (e.g., decreased or increased productivity, anxiety or stress).**

____
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End of Block: Professional Profile

Start of Block: Copyright and contracts

Copyright All information you provide will be treated anonymously and in total confidence.

18 **Have you had an agent in the last year? If YES, you may feel that you do not have sufficient information to answer some of the questions that follow; but please give responses wherever possible.**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

19 **In the past year, did you take legal/professional advice before signing a publishing/production contract?**

- ☐ Never (4)
- ☐ Yes, sometimes (5)
- ☐ Yes, as a matter of course (6)

Display This Question:
If In the past year, did you take legal/professional advice before signing a publishing/production c... = Yes, sometimes
Or In the past year, did you take legal/professional advice before signing a publishing/production c... = Yes, as a matter of course

20 **From whom have you taken legal / professional advice? Indicate all that apply.ess).**

- ☐ Lawyer (4)
- ☐ Work colleagues (5)
- ☐ Agent (6)
- ☐ Friends (7)
- ☐ Professional body/union (8)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (9) ________________________________

21 **What is your level of confidence in your knowledge of copyright?**

- ☐ Very confident (4)
- ☐ Moderately confident (5)
- ☐ Less confident (6)
- ☐ No confidence (7)

22 **In your view, how has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your earnings?**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

23 **In your view, how has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your professional life as a writer?**

- ☐ Don't know (1)
- ☐ No (4)
- ☐ Yes (please specify) (5) ____

24 **Do you have an understanding of when you can make use of existing copyright works without seeking permission??**

- ☐ Yes: please provide example(s) (2) ________________________________
- ☐ No: please describe uncertainty (4) ________________________________

25 **During the past year, did you attempt to change the terms of a contract you were offered?**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

26 **During the past year, have you succeeded in changing the terms of a contract you were offered?**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:
If During the past year, did you attempt to change the terms of a contract you were offered? = Yes
Or During the past year, have you succeeded in changing the terms of a contract you were offered? = Yes

27 **With regard to what particular aspects/specific clause(s)? Did negotiations refer to advice or a model contract (e.g. "minimum terms") recommended by a professional body?**

____

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Display This Question:
If During the past year, did you attempt to change the terms of a contract you were offered? = Yes
Or During the past year, have you succeeded in changing the terms of a contract you were offered? = Yes

28 **Please indicate what you attempted to negotiate.**

- ☐ Fee (4)
- ☐ Royalty rate (7)
- ☐ Rights/scope of licence (8)
- ☐ Moral rights (attribution) (9)
- ☐ Moral rights (integrity) (10)
- ☐ Warranties/indemnity (11)
- ☐ Reversion of rights (12)
- ☐ Others (please specify) (13) ____

29 **During the past year, have you self-published a work?**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:
If During the past year, have you self-published a work? = Yes

30 **Have you self-published a traditional (i.e. physical) work and/or as an electronic publication?**

- ☐ Traditional publication (1)
- ☐ Electronic publication (4)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (5) ____

Display This Question:
If During the past year, have you self-published a work? = Yes

31 **Would you like to add any explanatory comments on your experience of self-publishing (costs incurred, unpaid time spent marketing, etc.)?**

____
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Display This Question:
If During the past year, have you self-published a work? = Yes

32 **During the past year, have you paid towards self-publishing?**

- ☐ No (1)
- ☐ Yes (please indicate in £s the estimated costs incurred) (4) ________________________________

33 **Buy-out: Have you ever signed a "buy-out" type contract, i.e., a contract where there is a single payment for use of the work without royalties?**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:
If Buy-out: Have you ever signed a "buy-out" type contract, i.e., a contract where there is a single... = Yes

34 **Buy-out: During the past year, I assigned (i.e. transferred) copyright in the following percentage of my contracts?**

Percentage

☐ 0 ☐ 10 ☐ 20 ☐ 30 ☐ 40 ☐ 50 ☐ 60 ☐ 70 ☐ 80 ☐ 90 ☐ 100

Display This Question:
If Buy-out: Have you ever signed a "buy-out" type contract, i.e., a contract where there is a single... = Yes

35 Buy-out: Has the percentage changed over the last 10 years?

- ☐ Increased (1)
- ☐ Decreased (4)
- ☐ Stayed the same (5)

36 Reversion Clause: Have any of your contracts ever included a reversion clause which gives you publishing rights or copyright back if the publisher is no longer exploiting your work?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (4)
- ☐ Don't know (5)

Display This Question:
If Reversion Clause: Have any of your contracts ever included a reversion clause which gives you pub... = Yes

37 Reversion Clause: Have you used or relied upon such a reversion clause, in the past 5 years?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:
If Reversion Clause: Have any of your contracts ever included a reversion clause which gives you pub... = Yes

38 Reversion Clause: After the rights reverted to you, did you receive any further earnings from that work either from a new publisher or through self-publishing?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

39 Advances: Have you ever received an advance ahead of creating a work?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:
If Advances: Have you ever received an advance ahead of creating a work? = Yes

40 Advances: Has the value of advances from publishers changed over the last 5 years?

- ☐ Substantially increased (1)
- ☐ Slightly increased (4)
- ☐ No change (5)
- ☐ Slightly decreased (6)
- ☐ Substantially decreased (7)

41 Royalties: Is your royalty rate paid as?

- ☐ Percentage of retail/publisher's price (1)
- ☐ Percentage of net receipts (4)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (5) ____

42 Royalties: Is your royalty rate paid as?

Hardback (%)

☐ 0 ☐ 10 ☐ 20 ☐ 30 ☐ 40 ☐ 50 ☐ 60 ☐ 70 ☐ 80 ☐ 90 ☐ 100

Paperback (%)

☐ 0 ☐ 10 ☐ 20 ☐ 30 ☐ 40 ☐ 50 ☐ 60 ☐ 70 ☐ 80 ☐ 90 ☐ 100

Ebooks

☐ 0 ☐ 10 ☐ 20 ☐ 30 ☐ 40 ☐ 50 ☐ 60 ☐ 70 ☐ 80 ☐ 90 ☐ 100

43 Royalties: Is your e-book royalty rate paid as?

- ☐ Percentage of retail/publisher's price (1)
- ☐ Percentage of net receipts (4)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (5) ____

44 Royalties: Have your royalty rates for e-books changed in the last 5 years?

- ☐ They have gone up substantially (1)
- ☐ They have gone up (4)
- ☐ They have stayed the same (5)
- ☐ They have gone down (6)
- ☐ They have gone down substantially (7)

45 **Moral Rights: Do you ever waive the moral rights in your works? [Moral rights include (i) the right to be named as author (attribution right), (ii) the right to protect the work against derogatory treatment (integrity right)]**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (4)
- ☐ Don't know (5)

Display This Question:
If Moral Rights: Do you ever waive the moral rights in your works? [Moral rights include (i) the rig... = Yes

46 **Royalties: Is your royalty rate paid as?**

Percentage (approximate)

☐ 0 ☐ 10 ☐ 20 ☐ 30 ☐ 40 ☐ 50 ☐ 60 ☐ 70 ☐ 80 ☐ 90 ☐ 100

47 **Moral Rights: Have you ever had a dispute with a publisher / producer over moral rights?**

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Display This Question:
If Moral Rights: Have you ever had a dispute with a publisher / producer over moral rights? = Yes

48 **What were the grounds of the dispute?**

- ☐ Attribution (1)
- ☐ Integrity (4)
- ☐ Both attribution and integrity (5)

Display This Question:
If Moral Rights: Have you ever had a dispute with a publisher / producer over moral rights? = Yes

49 **Additional information about the dispute:**

____

____

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50 **In the past year or so, what changes in contractual practices (with regards to professional writing) have you experienced?**

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51 **In the past year or so, are there any clauses you have signed in a contract which you think were problematic? If so, please explain.**

____
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52 **In your view, has your negotiation position as a writer changed over the last 2 years?**

- ☐ Improved (1)
- ☐ Not changed (4)
- ☐ Weakened (5)

End of Block: Professional Profile

Start of Block: Copyright and contracts

53 **Gender:.**

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (4)
- ☐ Trans-gender (5)
- ☐ Non-binary (6)
- ☐ Other (7) ____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (8)

54 Age group:

- ☐ Under 25 (1)
- ☐ 25-34 (4)
- ☐ 35-44 (5)
- ☐ 45-54 (6)
- ☐ 55-64 (7)
- ☐ 65-74 (8)
- ☐ 75-84 (9)
- ☐ 85 and over (10)

55 What is your ethnic group (based on Office of National Statistics groups)?

- ☐ White (including English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British/ Irish/ Gypsy or Irish Traveller/ Other White background) (1)
- ☐ Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups (including White and Black Caribbean/ White and Black African/ White and Asian/ Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background) (4)
- ☐ Asian/ Asian British (including Indian/ Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/ Chinese/ Other Asian background) (5)
- ☐ Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British (including African, Caribbean, any other Other Black/ African/ Caribbean background) (6)
- ☐ Other ethnic group (including Arab, any other ethnic group) (7) ____

56 Number of people living in your household?

____

57 What is your highest educational qualification?

- ☐ Secondary schooling (e.g. GCSE, O-levels) (1)
- ☐ University entry (e.g. A-levels) (4)
- ☐ Diploma (5)
- ☐ Degree (6)
- ☐ Masters (7)
- ☐ PhD (8)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (9) ____

58 As part of your education, have you had any formal writing training?

- ☐ No (1)
- ☐ Yes (please give number of years of formal writing training): enter a whole number only (4) ______________________ __________________

59 Where do you currently live?

- ☐ Scotland (1)
- ☐ North West England (4)
- ☐ North East England (5)
- ☐ Yorkshire and the Humber (6)
- ☐ Wales (7)
- ☐ West Midlands (8)
- ☐ East Midlands (9)
- ☐ East of England (10)
- ☐ London (11)
- ☐ South East England (12)
- ☐ South West England (13)
- ☐ Outside of the UK (14)

Display This Question:
If Where do you currently live? != Outside of the UK

60 What are the first digits of your postal code (between 2 and 4 numbers and letters, those that come before the space)? For example, if your postal code was 'M90 1QX', please enter 'M90' below. This is for UK-based respondents only. As for all other questions, you may skip this question if you prefer not to answer.

____

Display This Question:
If Where do you currently live? = Outside of the UK

61 In which country do you currently live?

- **Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)**

End of Block: Professional Profile

Start of Block: Thank you for your time

62 Have you got any comments on the issues raised in this survey?

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____

63 Which of the earlier writers' earnings survey have you completed in the recent past?

- ☐ 2006 ALCS - CIPPM Bournemouth (What are words worth?) (1)
- ☐ 2013 ALCS - Queen Mary University of London (The Business of Being an Author) (4)
- ☐ 2018 ALCS – University of Glasgow (Authors' Earnings and Contracts) (5)
- ☐ Any others (please provide details) (6) ________________________________

64 Would you like to enter the prize draw? If YES, please submit your email address in the box below (Your email will NOT be linked back to this questionnaire survey):

- ☐ No (1)
- ☐ Yes (email address) (4) ________________________________

End of Block: Thank you for your time

CREATe

Thomas, A., Battisti, M., Kretschmer, M. (2022)

UK Authors' Earnings and Contracts 2022: A Survey of 60,000 Writers.

CREATe, University of Glasgow. (doi: 10.5281/zenodo.7373314).

University of Glasgow

Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society

UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council

Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre
Led by nesta