

Devaluing Creators, Endangering Creativity.

DOING MORE AND MAKING LESS:
WRITERS' INCOMES TODAY.



Following up on the 1998 survey of writers' incomes conducted by The Writers' Union of Canada (TWUC) and *Quill and Quire*, along with recent surveys of authors' earnings in the UK and US, The Writers' Union of Canada undertook an income survey of its members and other writers in the spring of 2015.

The survey was circulated to Union members and other writers through their organizations and social media.

The conclusions are discouraging:

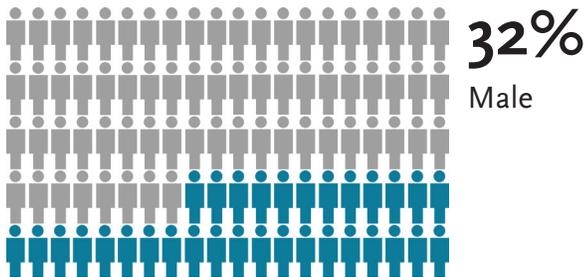
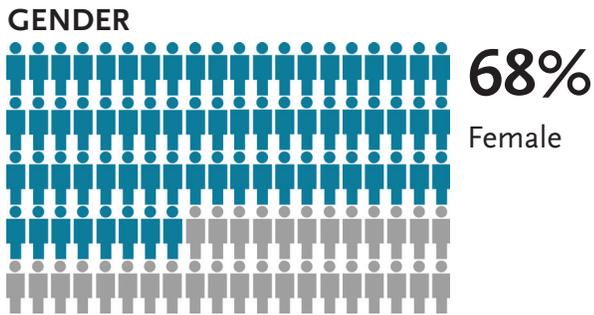
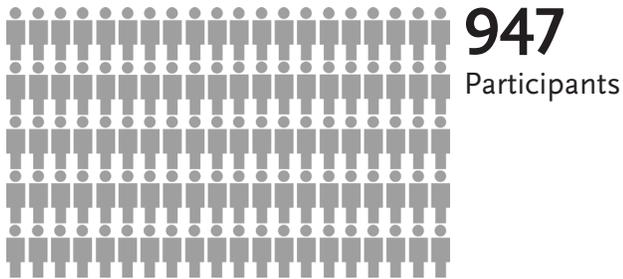
- **Today's writer does more to earn less.** Taking inflation into account, writers are making 27% less than they were making in 1998 from their writing, while 45% of writers say they must do more to earn a living now.
- **The work of writers fuels an almost 2 billion dollar industry, and yet more than 80% earn an income from their writing that is below the poverty line.¹**
- **Women, who represent the majority in the industry, earn 55% of the income male writers do.**

These results represent a cultural emergency for Canadians. If we want a strong and diverse publishing and cultural industry, it is essential that creators are reasonably and fairly compensated.

“Making a living as a writer has become tenuous and precarious.”

— Silver Donald Cameron,
award-winning author, journalist,
playwright, and broadcaster.

WHO ARE OUR WRITERS?



AGE
10%
Under the
age of 40



13%
Age 40–49



25%
Age 50–59

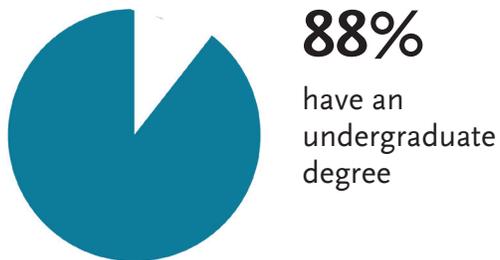


32%
Age 60–69

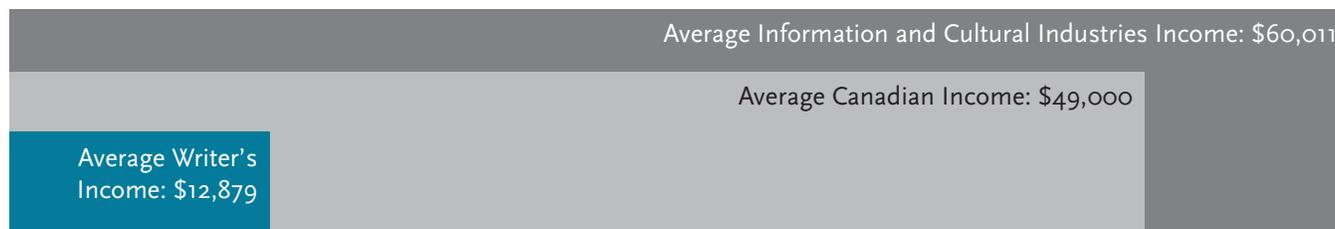


20%
Over the
age of 70

EDUCATION

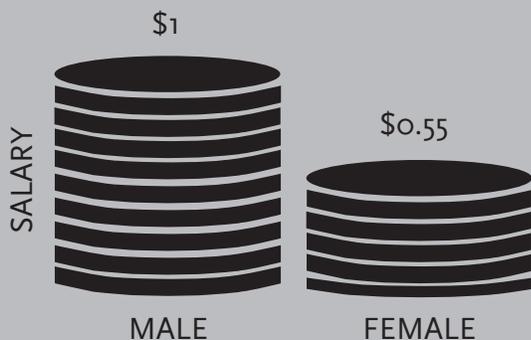


DECLINING INCOMES



- The median net income from writing was less than \$5,000, while the average income from writing was \$12,879.
- Taking inflation into account writers are making 27% less than they were making in 1998 from their writing.
- For 81% of respondents, their writing income falls below the poverty line.
- Writers' incomes from writing are significantly below the average Canadian income of \$49,000.²
- Writers' writing incomes are far behind the average salary in the information and cultural industries (\$60,011), a sector built upon the work of creators.³

THE GENDER GAP

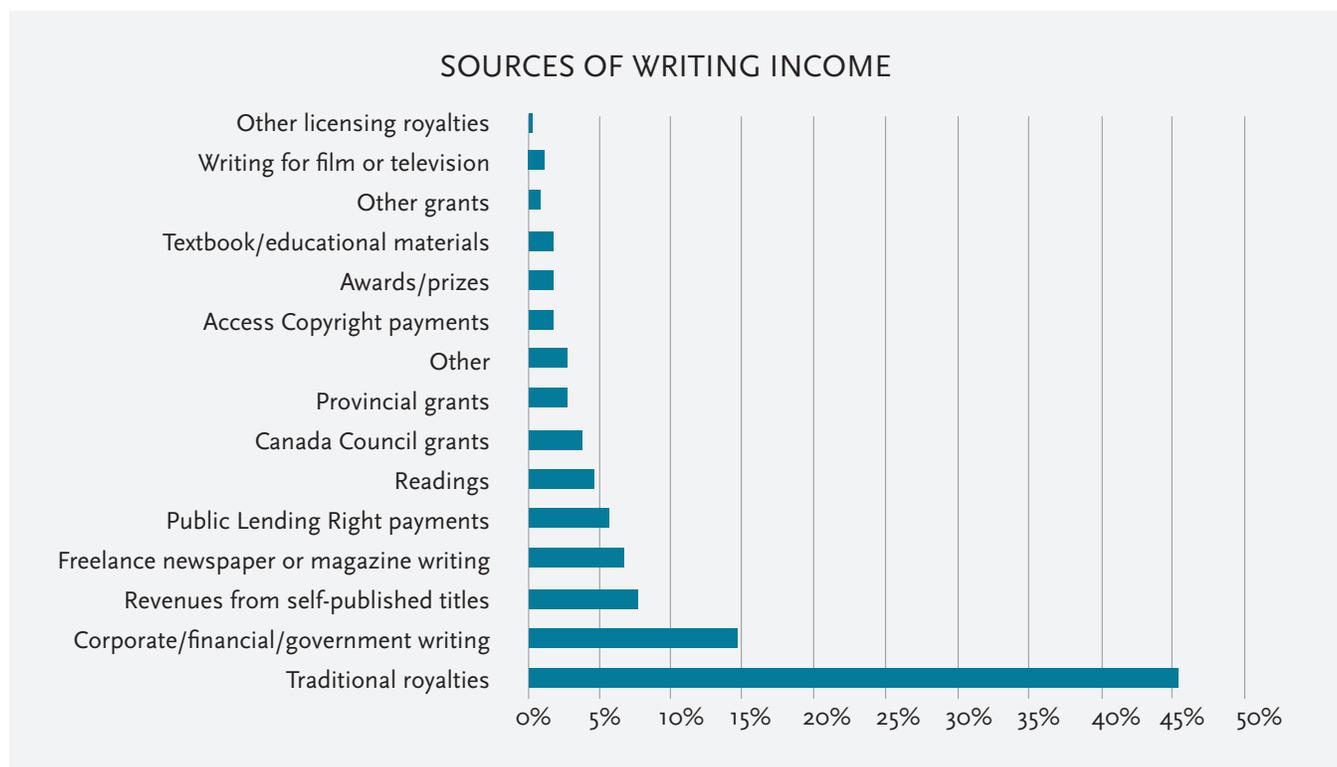


There is a significant income gap between genders, **with women earning just 55% of that earned by their male counterparts.** The gap is even wider when looking at those writers who indicated that writing is their primary occupation. In this case the gap grows to an even more embarrassing 49%. In 2011, Canadian women aged 17 to 64, employed full-time, had average hourly wages that were 87% of those of men.⁵

If writers continue to be compensated for their work at these low rates it will inevitably become impossible for professionals in the field to earn a living. With revenues from writing that fall below the poverty line, writers will increasingly abandon the sector for other employment.

A decline in the number of writers will affect the quality and depth of materials available to Canadians as well as to the \$1.9 billion book publishing industry⁴ which relies entirely on the work of writers.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?



Royalties from traditional publishers (46%) continue to be the main source of writing revenue for writers while income from corporate and government writing continues to be an important source of revenue. Interestingly, revenue from self-published titles is the third largest source of revenue from writing (8%).

Public Lending Right, Government Grants and Access Copyright continue to provide essential income for writers (15% combined). However, recent changes to the Copyright Act, broadly misinterpreted as an education exemption, has had an impact on writers' incomes. **Half of respondents noted their income from Access Copyright has decreased and the average decrease was 25%.**

**Nearly half of those surveyed (45%)
noted that they do more to earn a
living today than in 2011.**

REVERSING THE TREND

The Writers' Union of Canada will continue to work to reverse the distressing trends outlined in these results. TWUC's goal is to ensure:

- all writers are fairly compensated for their work
- that the contracts they sign properly represent the value of their creativity, and
- that the programs providing essential ongoing support (PLR, Access Copyright, public arts grants) to writers are properly protected and funded at appropriate levels.

These results are in line with a worldwide trend for creative incomes, especially for writers. TWUC is working closely with international partners through the International Authors Forum (TWUC has chaired the IAF since 2014) to address market pressures, author rights' protections, royalty rates, and fair contract terms.

To see some of the Union's proposals for regaining ground, read our [2015 Federal Budget submission](#).



ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/poverty-in-ontario/status-of-poverty-in-ontario/>
2. <http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/how-much-money-are-we-earning-the-average-canadian-wages-right-now/>
3. <http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/how-much-money-are-we-earning-the-average-canadian-wages-right-now/>
4. http://www.omdc.on.ca/collaboration/research_and_industry_information/industry_profiles/Book_Industry_Profile.htm
5. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11foo19m/11foo19m2013347-eng.pdf>