

DIMINISHING RETURNS

CREATIVE CULTURE AT RISK



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WRITERS' INCOMES TODAY

Following up on the 1998 and 2014 surveys of writers' incomes conducted by The Writers' Union of Canada, along with recent surveys of authors' earnings in the U.K. and U.S., the Union undertook an income survey of its members and other writers in the spring of 2018.

The survey was circulated to Union members and other writers through their organizations and social media. Writers were asked to answer questions based on their income in 2017.

The conclusions are deeply discouraging and worrisome:

- Taking inflation into account, writers are making 78% less than they were making in 1998. In fact, writers are making significantly less from their writing than they did just three years ago: \$9,380 in 2017 vs. \$12,879 in 2014. That's a 27% drop over a short period — the same period that has seen a massive increase in uncompensated educational copying. At the same time, 30% of writers say they must do more to earn a living than they did three years ago.
- The work of writers fuels an almost \$2 billion book industry in Canada, and yet more than 85% of writers earn an income from their writing that is below the poverty line.

These results indicate that it is increasingly difficult for writers to earn a living wage. Writers create the content that is foundational to our culture. **Without a professional class of writers, our culture is at risk.**

Overreach on educational copying (since 2012's *Copyright Act* changes) has cost Canadian writers tens of millions of dollars. This survey shows how individual writers are paying for the explosion of uncompensated copying in the education sector. Legislative and regulatory changes are required immediately to ensure that writers are compensated for the use of their work by the education sector.

WHO ARE OUR WRITERS?

1499 PARTICIPANTS



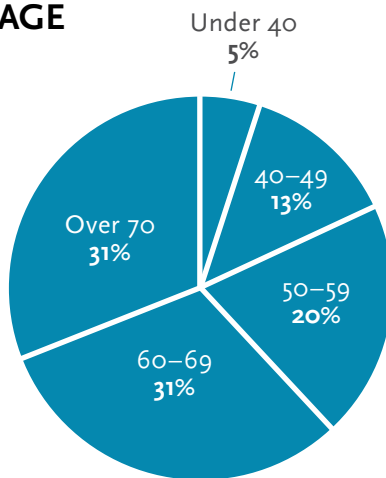
GENDER

Women 58%

Men 41%

— Other gender identities 1%

AGE



EDUCATION

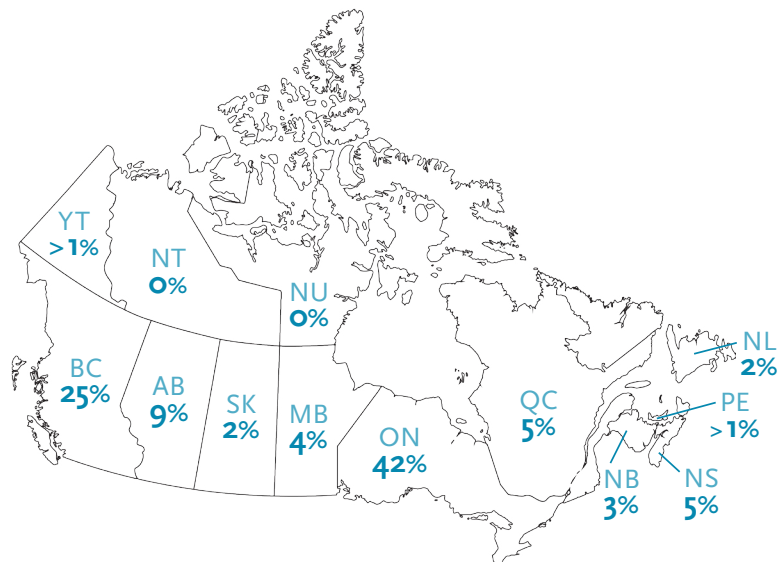


88% have an undergraduate degree



53% have a master's or doctorate degree

WHERE THEY LIVE

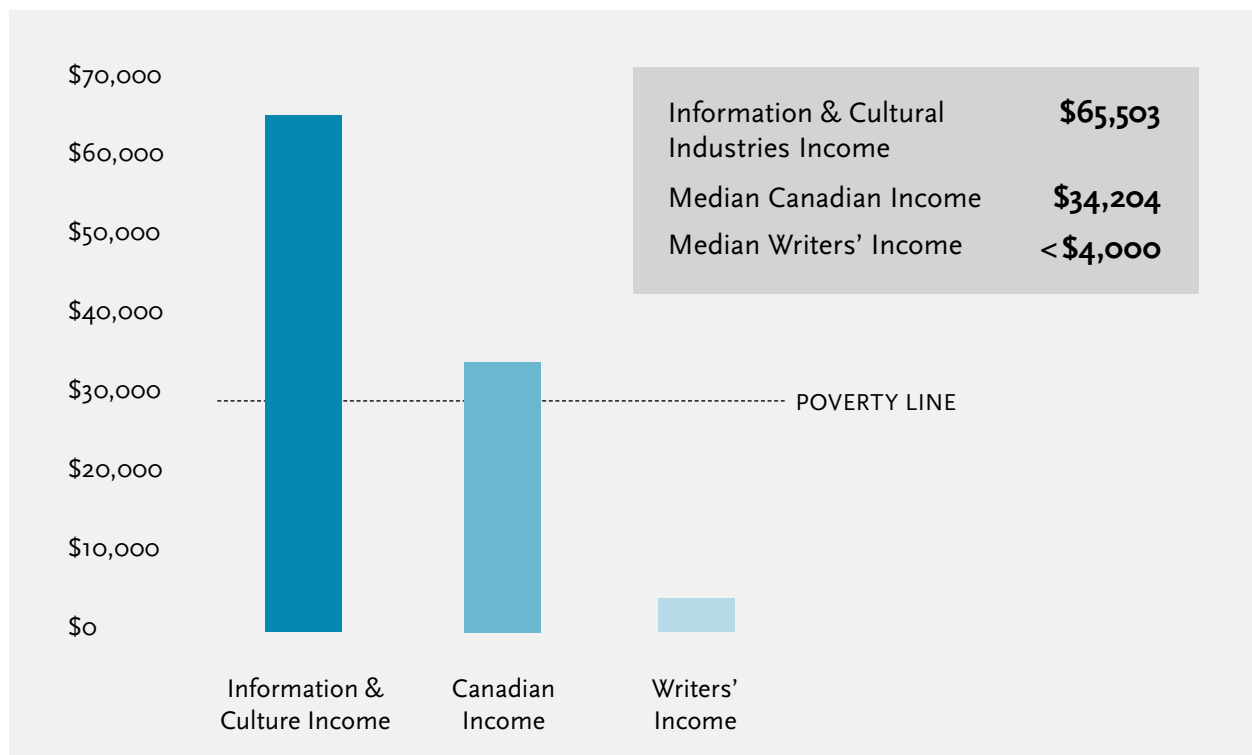


DECLINING INCOMES

The Union's 2018 income survey clearly illustrates the declining incomes of Canadian writers:

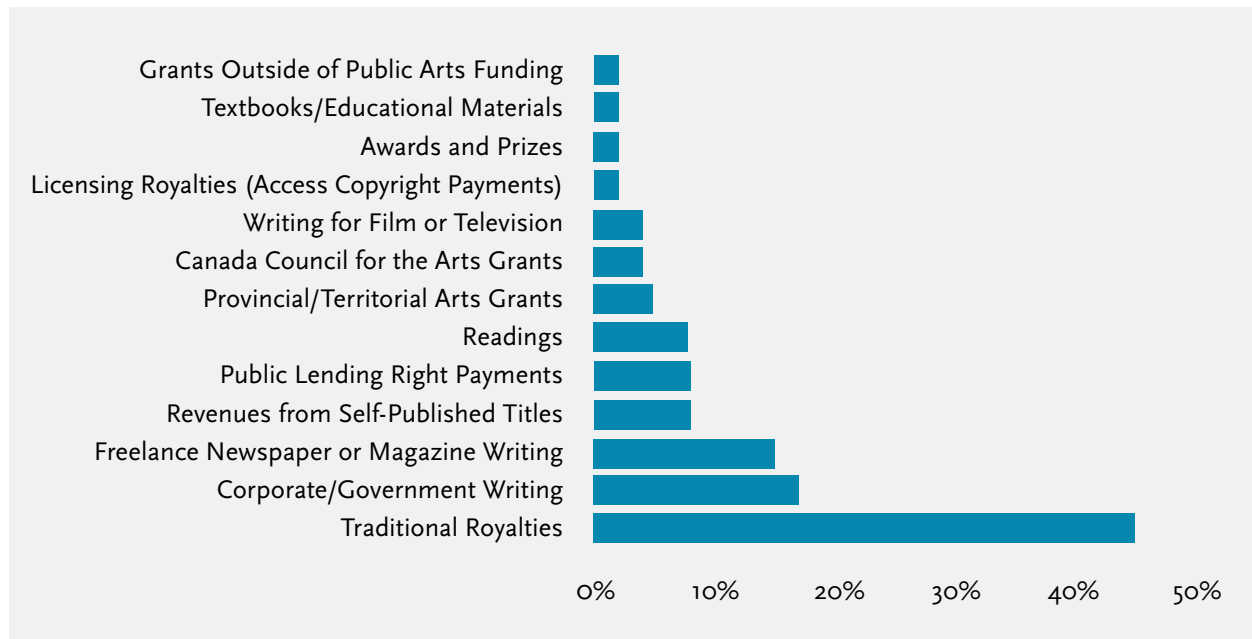
- The average net income from writing was \$9,380, while the median net income was less than \$4,000.
- Accounting for inflation, **writers are making 78% less than they were making in 1998 from their writing.**
- For more than 85% of respondents, their writing income falls below the poverty line.¹
- Writers' incomes from writing are significantly below the median Canadian income of \$34,204.²
- Writers' writing incomes are far behind the average salary in the information and cultural industries (\$65,503), a sector built upon the work of creators.³

CANADIAN INCOME COMPARISON



WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

SOURCES OF WRITING INCOME



Royalties from publishers continue to be the main source of writing revenue for writers (45%). Income from corporate/government writing and freelance writing also continues to be a significant source of revenue (32% combined). Growth in self-publishing is reflected in the study with revenue from self-published titles noted as the fourth largest source of revenue from writing (8%).

Public Lending Right, public arts grants, and Access Copyright continue to provide essential income for writers (19% combined). **However, the recent changes to the *Copyright Act*, broadly misinterpreted as an education exemption, have had a negative impact on writers' incomes.** Respondents noted their income from Access Copyright has decreased in the last three years, with an average decrease of 42%.

REVERSING THE TREND

The Writers' Union of Canada works tirelessly to address this devastating downward trend in income from writing. The Union will continue to:

- Advocate for legislative changes to ensure that writers are compensated fairly for the use of their work.
- Advocate for strong and adequately funded programs that:
 - > compensate authors for the use of their work (Public Lending Right, Access Copyright), and
 - > support authors' ongoing creativity (public arts grants).
- Advocate for fair contract terms that properly value writers' creativity.

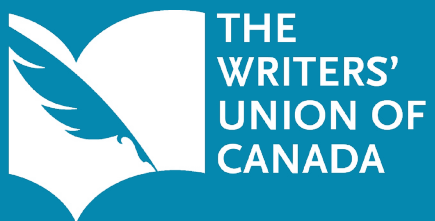
Studies in both the U.S. and U.K. indicate similar negative trending, but Canada's results are by far the worst. Not coincidentally, Canada is also an outlier in the world with regards to the vast amounts of uncompensated copying that occurs in educational settings.

The Writers' Union of Canada works closely with international partners through the International Authors Forum (which the Union has chaired since 2014) to address market pressures, author rights' protections, royalty rates, and fair contract terms.

The Writers' Union of Canada aims to close the widening value gap between the work that is created and the income it returns to those who create it.

ENDNOTES

1. www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-5482-instruction-fill-financial-evaluation-form-1283.html
2. www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/census-2016-statscan-income/article36242392
3. www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410020401&pickMembers%5Bo%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.1&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.2



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