

ALCS

2018

AUTHORS' EARNINGS

A survey of UK writers



WHAT ARE YOUR WORDS WORTH?

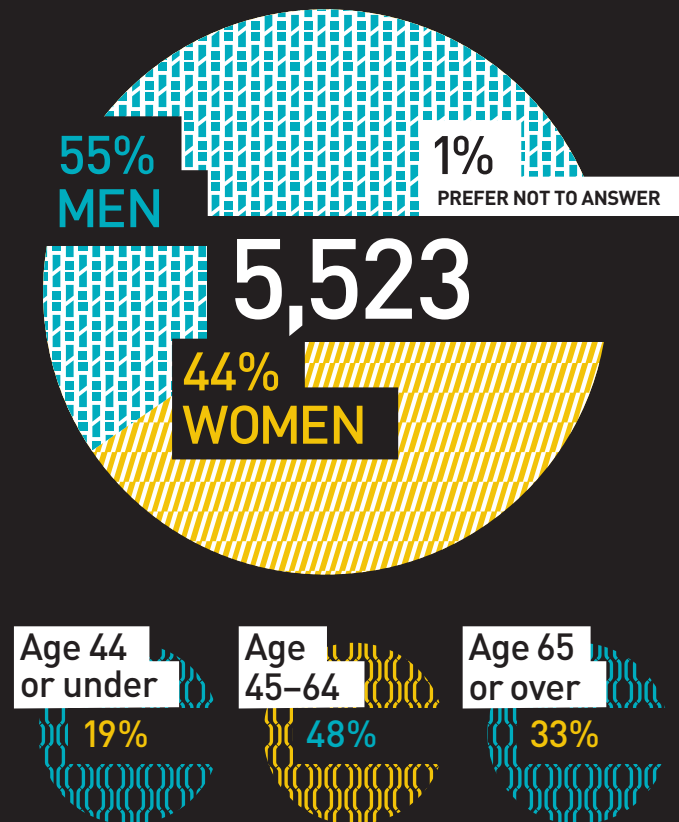
In 2017 ALCS commissioned CREATE to conduct some independent research into authors' earnings in the UK, to follow up on previous research carried out in 2005 and 2013.

There are many types of writers, so we asked them to complete this survey and help paint an accurate picture of how authors really earn their money from writing today. This booklet summarises the key findings from the research carried out by CREATE.

A full copy of the research will be published later in 2018.

PARTICIPANTS

All types of writers* were invited to take part.



* Types of writers

'Professional writers' — people that dedicate over half their time to writing.

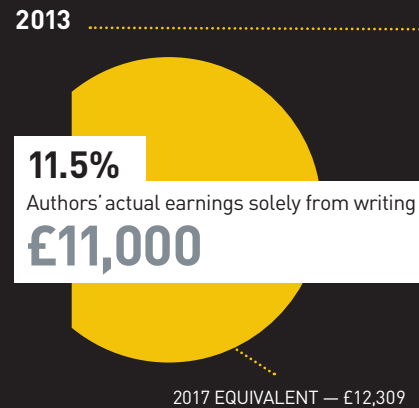
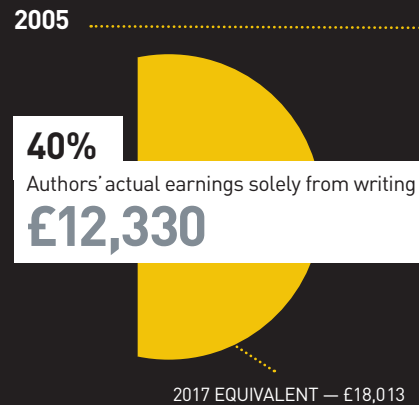
'All writers' — a wider group of writers including occasional or part-time writers.

BEING A PROFESSIONAL AUTHOR IN 2017

Full-time writers are still very much the exception rather than the norm and we are still seeing that writers need to develop 'portfolio' careers in order to make ends meet. The number of authors earning their income solely from writing appears to have stabilised and is fairly consistent with the 2013 figures, but is still depressingly low at 13.7% and is still only a third of the number of full-time professional authors recorded in 2005.

The research showed that, on average, income from publishing makes up the largest proportion of the professional writers' income, but that this is supplemented by other areas such as lecturing, self-publishing and teaching as well as income streams such as PLR, grants and bursaries, income from ALCS, prizes and fellowships.

The highest earning age-group of professional writers are those in the 'middle' of their careers, aged between 35 and 44, though a higher number of professional writers overall are aged between 55 and 64.



TYPICAL (MEDIAN) INCOMES OF PROFESSIONAL AUTHORS

The median earnings of professional authors have continued to drop since 2005. There has been a fall in writing income in real terms of 42% since 2005, and 15% since 2013.

The median income of a professional author is now at under £10,500 a year.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation Minimum Income Standard (MIS), which is the income level considered to be a socially acceptable standard of living for a single person, was £17,900 in 2017.

The current minimum wage in the UK for those over 25 is £7.83. For a standard 35-hour week this would mean that professional writers are earning just £5.73 an hour.



THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



While writers' incomes continue to drop, the creative industries, now valued at **£92bn**, are growing at twice the rate of the UK economy.

Good news for the overall economy, but it's not the individuals creating the content who are reaping the rewards.

EARNINGS OF 'ALL WRITERS'

For the most part this group do not dedicate all their time to writing (they clearly can't afford to) but the figures show that the amounts being earned by this wider group are, overall, on the decline.

The typical (median) earnings of 'all writers'

2005	2013	2017
£4,000	£4,000	£3,000
2017 EQUIVALENT — £5,844	2017 EQUIVALENT — £4,476	

MIND THE (GENDER) GAP. IT'S GETTING BIGGER

The popular view may be that the tide is turning, and that equality between the sexes is finally achievable, but the responses to this survey show that while a higher proportion of women than men are professional authors (52% of this particular group were women), the average earnings of female professional authors currently fall substantially below those of their male counterparts.

The average earnings of female authors are typically around 75% of the average male earnings. This is lower even than the 2005 figure, which was 78%.



| 1st Floor, Barnard's Inn
86 Fetter Lane
London EC4A 1EN

✂ +44 (0)20 7264 5700
alcs@alcs.co.uk

alcs.co.uk



RESEARCHERS

Dr Sukhpreet Singh
Professor Martin Kretschmer
Andres Azqueta Gavaldon

CREATe, University of Glasgow

