

Alliance of
Independent
Authors

The Big Indie Author Data Drop 2024



Self-Publishing's Growing Pride

The most noticeable trend emerging this year from the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi)'s annual accrued report of self-publishing data, the Big Indie Author Data Drop, is the growing pride emerging across the indie author community.

This report, which ALLi gathers from a variety of sources across author, publishing, and self-publishing organizations, is important--and not just because it greatly aids our advocacy efforts on behalf of independent authors. By pooling our findings from different parts of our sector and industry, we shine light on data and events that might seem to be disconnected.

We see self-published authors earning more, like for like, than authors with third-party publishers. We see the diversity of the indie author community, with a reverse gender gap, and stellar booksales by niche authors traditionally overlooked, e.g. LGBTQIA+ authors. We see an academic world that once shunned self-publishing now producing multiple PhDs on the topic (including a most interesting attitudinal study from ALLi's blog manager, Holly Greenland). We see universities joining with ALLi as academic partners, so their creative writing and publishing students can learn from, and contribute to, our association and our resources. We see the London Book Fair for the first time introducing a Self-Publishing Zone and Nielsen, the world leader in audience insights, data and analytics, knowing they must find ways to include author

book sales in their data-gathering mechanisms.

Most of all, we see self-publishing authors' outstanding creative and commercial achievements.

We know there are still hidden pockets of data. As more and more authors sell direct through their own websites, for example, we need to find ways to measure that activity, so we can keep shining light on those achievements--and on the challenges and supports authors need to attain their goals. We are still a long way off any author who wants to publish being able to do so.

But, as this report shows, we have come far and in such a short time. Little wonder that one of the surveys reports that self-publishing is no longer seen as an author's Plan B option but, particularly for authors under 45, the first choice (Authors' Guild, 2023). What we measure, we can see, and what we see, we must acknowledge.

By shining a light on the endeavors of self-publishing authors through the Big Indie Author Data Drop 2024, we hope to illuminate the independent pathway for all writers, as each finding casts a guiding light for another author to follow.

Orna

Orna Ross

Founder and Director of the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi)

The Big Indie Author Data Drop 2024



In Spring 2023, the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) commissioned a research survey into self-publishing author income: the Indie Author Income Survey 2023, which will be repeated every two years.

At the same time, ALLi also reached out to key indie organizations across the self-publishing sector for such data as they could provide. This became the Big Indie Author Data Drop and is updated annually.

It offers extracts from larger reports, so that the reader can explore some highlights and follow up in more detail as needed.

See: AllianceIndependentAuthors.org/facts to stay up to date.

Why We Need Data

No industry should be without data. It helps the people working in that industry make informed decisions and people outside it understand what's going on.

For too long self-publishing has had only anecdotal evidence shared amongst peers. Now, through the Big Indie Author Data Drop the Alliance of Independent Authors is pooling the verifiable data we do have and sharing

it within and beyond the self-publishing sector.

For those involved in self-publishing, we believe this report will give you valuable insights and confidence as to whether you are making the best choices for yourself, as a writer and publisher.

For those who are outside the self-publishing sector, we hope it will showcase indie author achievements and demonstrate the growth and power of this increasingly viable route to readers.

Staying Current

The Big Indie Author Data Drop is updated every spring and shared as widely as possible. Please share it to your own contacts.

www.allianceindependentauthors.org/facts

Our goal is to make sure that anyone interested in self-publishing has access to a wide range of meaningful data and insights.

The importance of consistently gathering data is that we can observe patterns and trends build over time.



Our Contributors

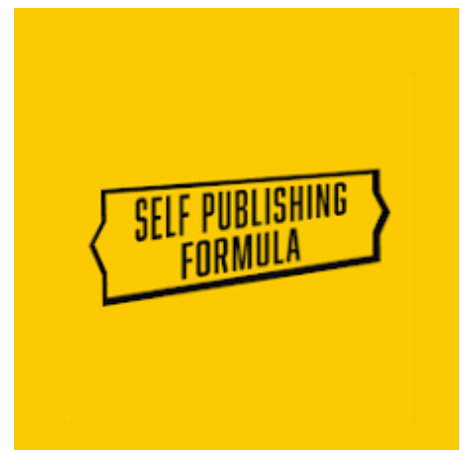
ALLi is grateful to everyone who helped to collate and compile the Big Indie Author Data Drop.

The organizations below contributed the most significant data and support but many additional organizations and individuals also assisted.

Thank you to all.



**Kingston
University
London**



**Kingston
School
of Art**



Written Word MEDIA



DRAFT 2 DIGITAL



Highlights

- 1** ALLi's spring 2023 income survey showed self-published authors earn more than those traditionally published and was backed up by new data from the autumn 2023 **Author's Guild** income survey.
- 2** Gen Z are reading a lot (in paperback), they also love library spaces and they want to read diverse stories. **Wattpad 2023, Nielsen 2024**
- 3** 93% of indie authors asked were somewhat or extremely positive in relation to their perception of self-publishing. **Kingston University, 2024**
- 4** AI: authors are growing interested in artificial intelligence as a range of marketing tools but remain wary of it for creative output. **Written Word Media, 2023**
- 5** Selling direct is still an underused opportunity for indies, though more authors are now developing their platforms to sell direct. **Written Word Media, 2023**
- 6** Younger authors are making self-publishing their first choice: 'Less than half of authors under 45 years old would prefer to have their next book traditionally published.' **Author's Guild, 2023**
- 7** Black authors need encouragement and support to enter the otherwise diverse self-publishing space. **ALLi 2024**
- 8** Library revenue grows by 45% **Draft2Digital 2024**
- 9** Self-published authors make up over 50% of Kindle's Top 400 Books for 2023 **K-Lytics, 2024**
- 10** Selling direct works... if you have lots of books and subscribers. **Kindlepreneur, 2024**

The Indie Author Income Survey

There have been many author income surveys (UK, US, Canada, Australia). They mostly show author income declining over time, and currently resting somewhere in the region of US\$5,000–8,000 (median), with Australia (with over 1/3 of the authors in the survey being self-published) doing better at US\$12,000.

BUT

The data is almost always focused on author earnings from the traditional publishing model or mixes self-publishing and third-party published authors together. This is confusing and indies have often found questions irrelevant / hard to answer.

Therefore ALLi commissioned an independent, global survey of over 2000 self-published authors to get an accurate comparison. They were selected for spending over 50% of their working time on writing and publishing. This was partly so that the study would eliminate people publishing a one-off book for friends and family and partly to match to the ALCS UK survey (who used the same criteria) to ensure an accurate comparison. Here we have added the very latest 2023 Author's Guild data as well, to update the table.

2023: US: Author's Guild

US\$5,000 down 17% from 2018 (\$6,080 in 2018, \$8,000 in 2014, \$10,500 in 2009)

2022: UK: Authors Licensing & Collecting Society (ALCS)

US\$8,600 (£7,000) down 38% in real terms since 2018

2018: Canada: Writers' Union of Canada

US\$6990 (C\$9,380) down 27% since 2015

2022: Australia: National Survey of Australian Book Authors (1/3 self-published authors)

US\$12,120 (A\$18,200), up 3% per year over 7 years

2023: Global: Indie Author Income Survey Alliance of Independent Authors

US\$12,749, up 53% on 2022

2023 Author's Guild survey agreed with ALLi's data, putting indie income at \$12,800

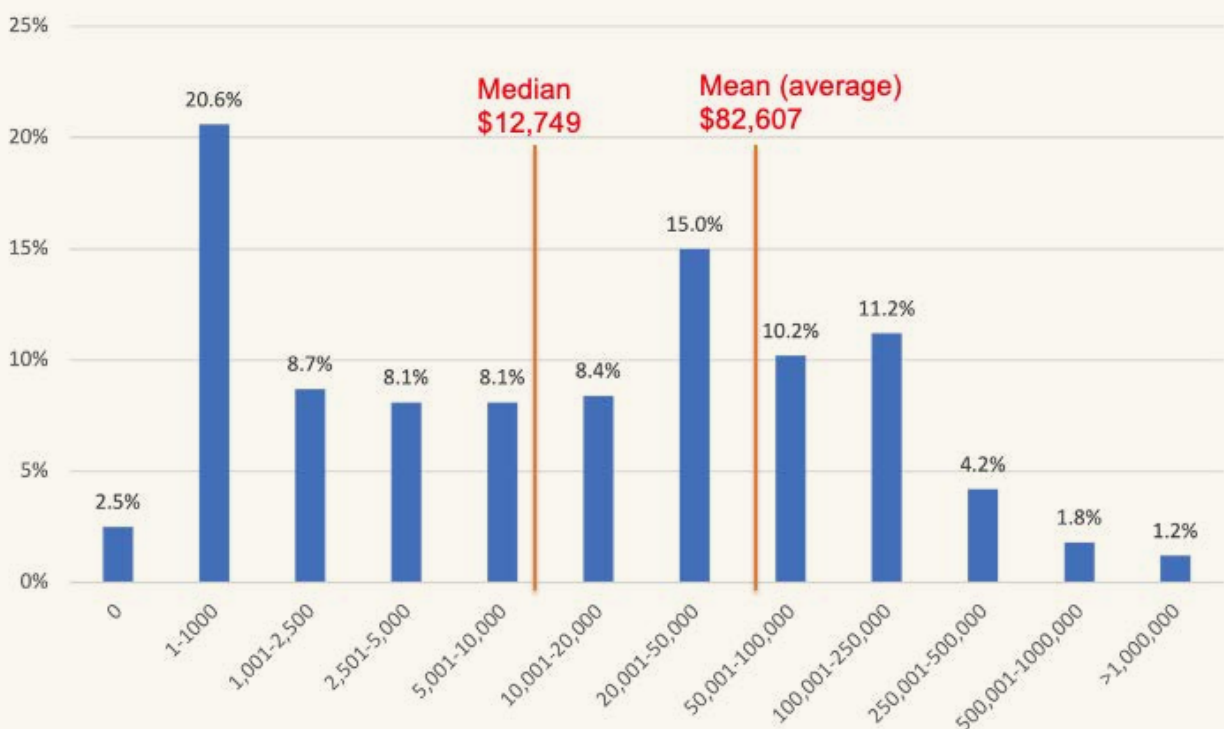
Median: middle of a sorted number line where outliers might skew data.

Self-published authors earn more

The most important fact that emerged from the Indie Author Income Survey was that self-published authors were earning more than traditionally published authors and that their gross revenue was increasing 53% on the previous year, compared to (previous page) a range of \$5–8,000 and falling across the US, UK and Canada.

The median writing and self-publishing-related income in 2022 of all self-publishers responding was \$12,749, a 53% increase over the previous year. Average (mean) incomes skewed much higher: \$82,607 in 2022, a 34% increase.

The results were reported on with interest by trade publications Publishers Weekly (US) and TheBookseller (UK).

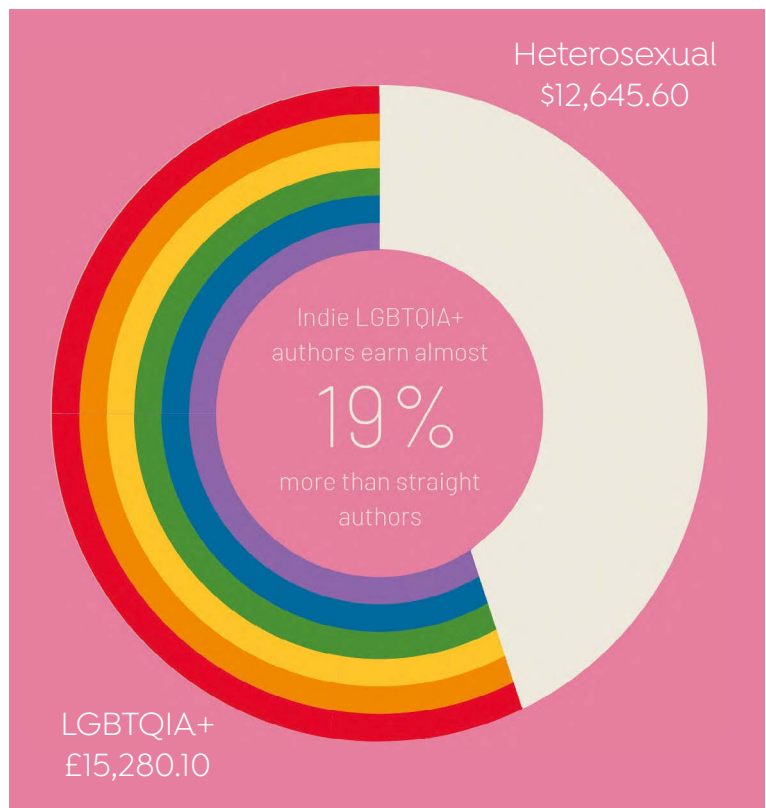
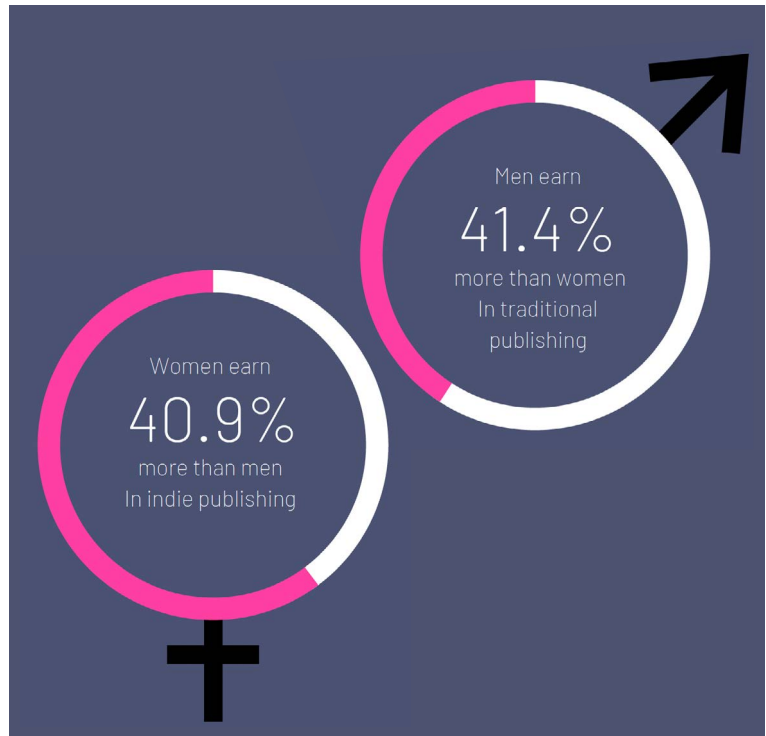


Diversity does better in self-publishing

Women, LGBTQIA+ and neurodivergent authors are doing well in self-publishing, suggesting that groups who may have been sidelined by traditional publishing can find their voice and audiences as indie authors.

There is also an indication that younger authors with pre-existing disabilities are actively joining the market - 10% of indie authors joining self-publishing since 2014 have disabilities, whereas only 7% of the previous group do, so perhaps self-publishing is seen as a more diverse community and better suited to diverse needs.

SPF and ALLi, 2024



How the Indie Author Income Survey was carried out

The original survey was commissioned by ALLi and completed by two analysts:

Thad McIlroy is a digital publishing analyst and author, and president of The Future of Publishing, based in San Francisco. He is a contributing editor to Publishers Weekly, covering digital innovation and publishing startups.

thad@thefutureofpublishing.com

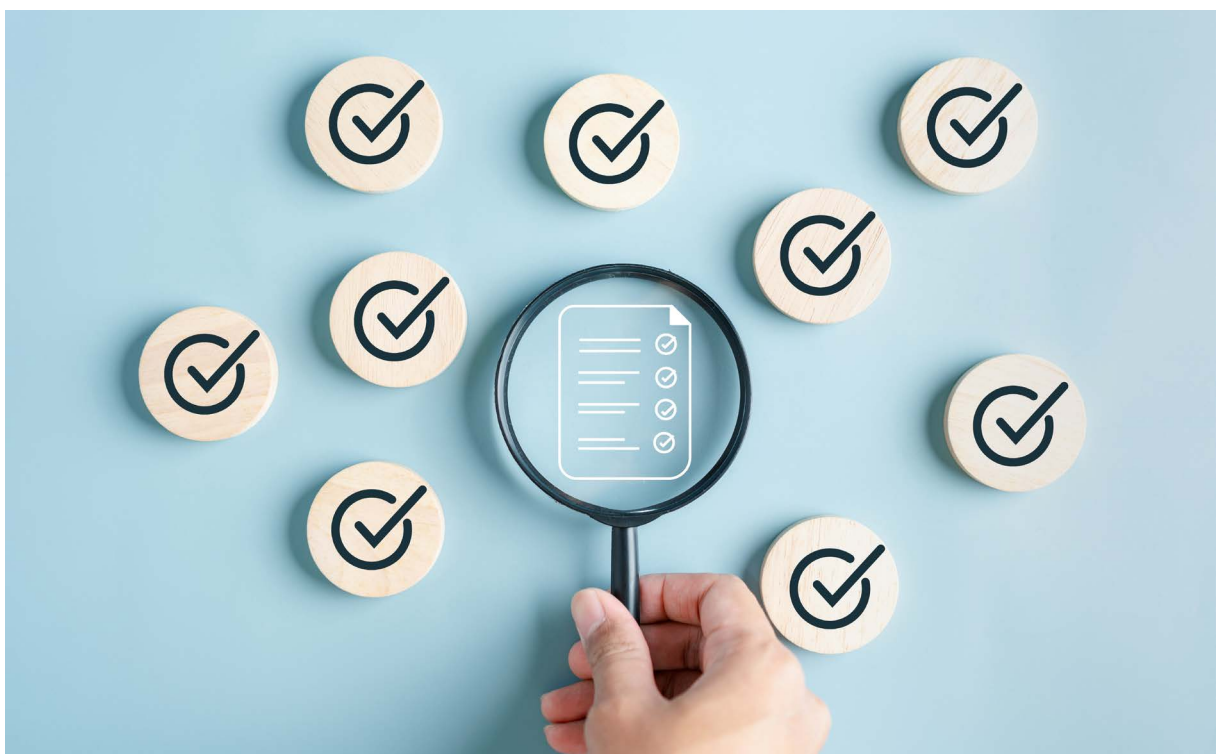
Steve Sieck is an accomplished strategy consulting and market research professional with a strong specialty in business, professional, and academic markets for publishing and information services. His analyst consultancy is

[SKSAdvisors](http://SKSAdvisors.com). steve@sksadvisors.com

The second round of cross-category analysis was sponsored by the **Self-Publishing Formula** and carried out by CREATE (the University of Glasgow), who had previously carried out the ALCS author income survey.

A third and final round was completed in 2024 to look at more qualitative elements, again carried out by **CREATE**.

Over 2000 authors from around the world took part in the survey.



Gen Z are reading a lot... and they like physical books

Gen Z maintains strong and regular reading habits with nearly **40%** reading daily or a few days each week, and **55%** still reading once a week or more.

79% say they are looking for better diversity in the stories they read. 'More than **four out of five (83%)** Gen Z readers (aged 18 - 25) (are) turning to online sources like webnovels, e-books, and webcomics for diverse stories.' **Wattpad, 2023**

'Research from Nielsen BookData highlights that it is print books that Gen Z favour, accounting for 80% of purchases from November 2021 to 2022. Libraries are also reporting an uptick in Gen Z users who favour their quiet over noisy coffee shops. In the UK in-person visits are up 71%.' **Guardian, 9th Feb 2024**

(Gen Z are defined as being born 1997 - 2012, so in 2024 they are 12 - 27 years old.)



Steady Writing and Marketing = Success

Written Word Media's annual survey of more than 2000 authors has consistently shown that successful indie authors use professional cover designers and editors, and also that they write a lot of books. In December 2023 their survey showed that the median number of books was 8 ('median' removes outliers such as those with 300+ books and gives the number an author is most likely to have). It also asked questions around direct book sales, with a growing but still minority of authors engaging in direct sales and the tools they most frequently used to do so.

Author Writing Trends

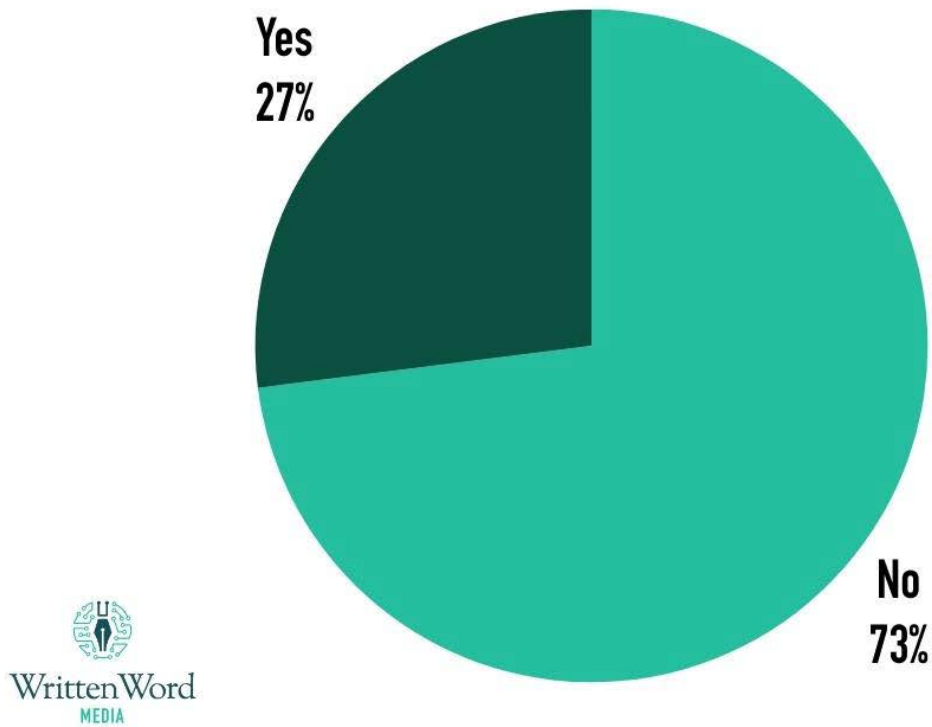
8

Median number of books
published

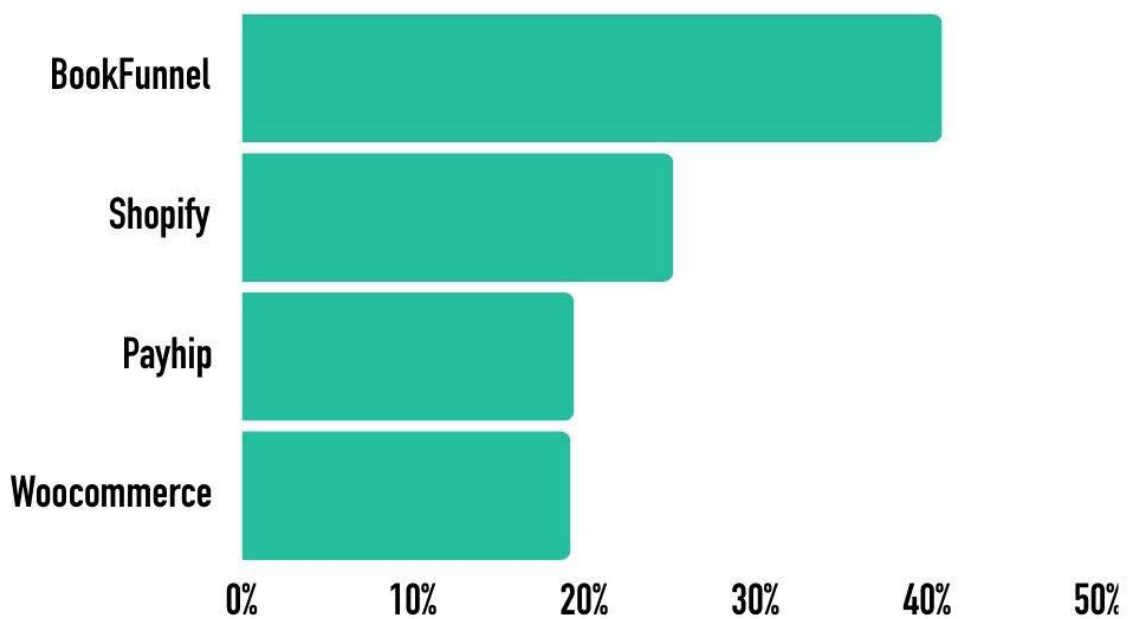
15

Median hours spent per
week writing

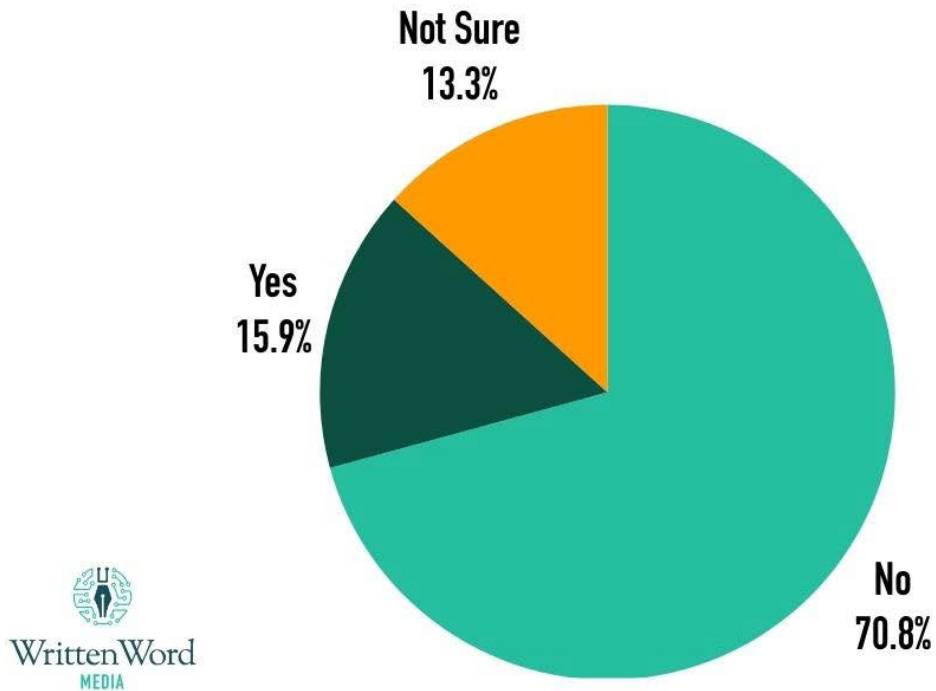
Do you sell books directly to readers from your website?



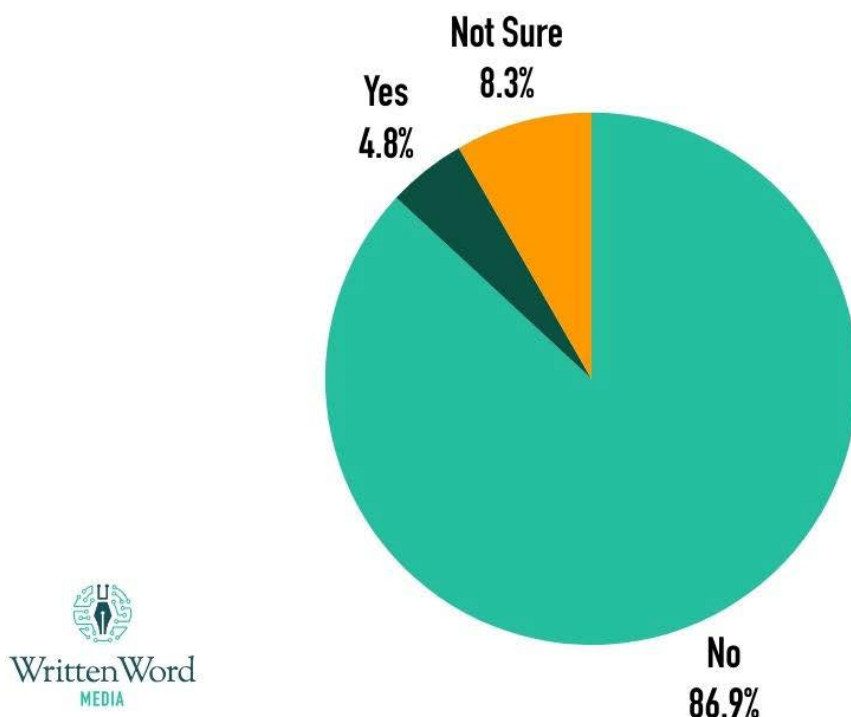
What tools do authors use for Direct Sales?



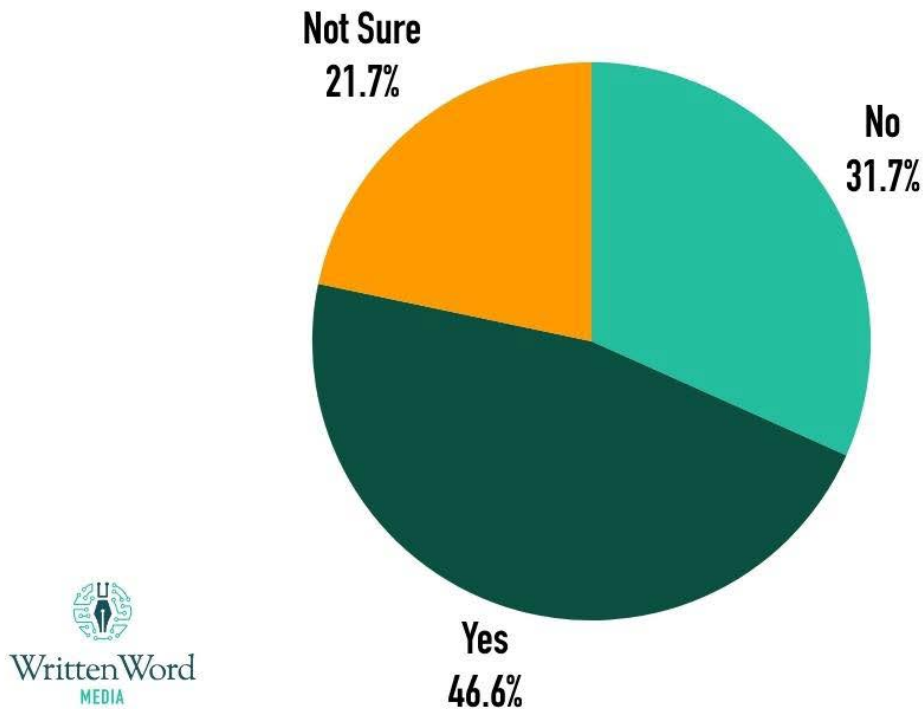
Would you ever use AI to write a book without using the exact text generated by the AI?



Would you ever use AI to write text in one of your books?



Would you ever use AI to help create marketing assets?



‘The skepticism around AI in the author community is real. Legal and ethical issues abound in addition to the fact that many authors love writing more than any other part of being an author. Why use AI to write when it would lessen your enjoyment?’

‘Marketing, on the other hand, is most authors’ least favorite part of being an author (more on that later), so we can see that our survey respondents are much more willing to use or consider using AI to help there.’

Written Word Media, Dec 2023

<https://www.writtenwordmedia.com/survey-results-the-state-of-indie-authorship/>

Be More Human

AI is a topic in constant movement, in constant contention and we can see from Written Word Media's data on this topic that authors are unsure about its many different uses. What *is* true is that authors need to be *more human* as consumers come to value experiences and connections above mere products. Luckily of course, books are already an experience, but it is worth all indie authors considering how to make their connections with readers even more meaningful. Mintel's Global Consumer Trends 2024 lists 'Being Human' as one of its 5 core messages: 'Being Human: In a world increasingly dominated by algorithms, we will need human skills and emotion to make the most of this technological revolution.'

<https://www.mintel.com/insights/consumer-research/global-consumer-trends/>



Kingston University Study: Profiling the Self-Published Author

Researcher: Holly Greenland

Supervisors: Professor Alison
Baverstock, Dr Smirti Kutaula, Clare
Somerville

The Kingston University study surveyed over 800 authors to explore the current perception of self-publishing, analyse the characteristics and actions of successful indie authors and investigate the wider impact of self-publishing on the sector. Final results will be released later in the spring, but a selection of findings have been shared with ALLi in relation to the perception of self-publishing amongst the community.

What is the perception of the self-publishing model?

Authors were asked to complete the sentence 'My perception of self-publishing today is...' by selecting from a scale starting at 'Extremely Negative' and rising to 'Extremely Positive'. The results demonstrated a strong sense of positivity for the model within the community, with just two of those responding selecting 'extremely negative' equating to less than one percent of the responses. 93% of those asked were somewhat or extremely positive in relation to their perception of self-publishing.

Would authors recommend self-publishing to others?

Self-published authors were also asked if they would recommend self-publishing to others, with 86% selected 'yes', 14% selecting maybe, and under 1% selecting No, equating to just one response from all those collected.

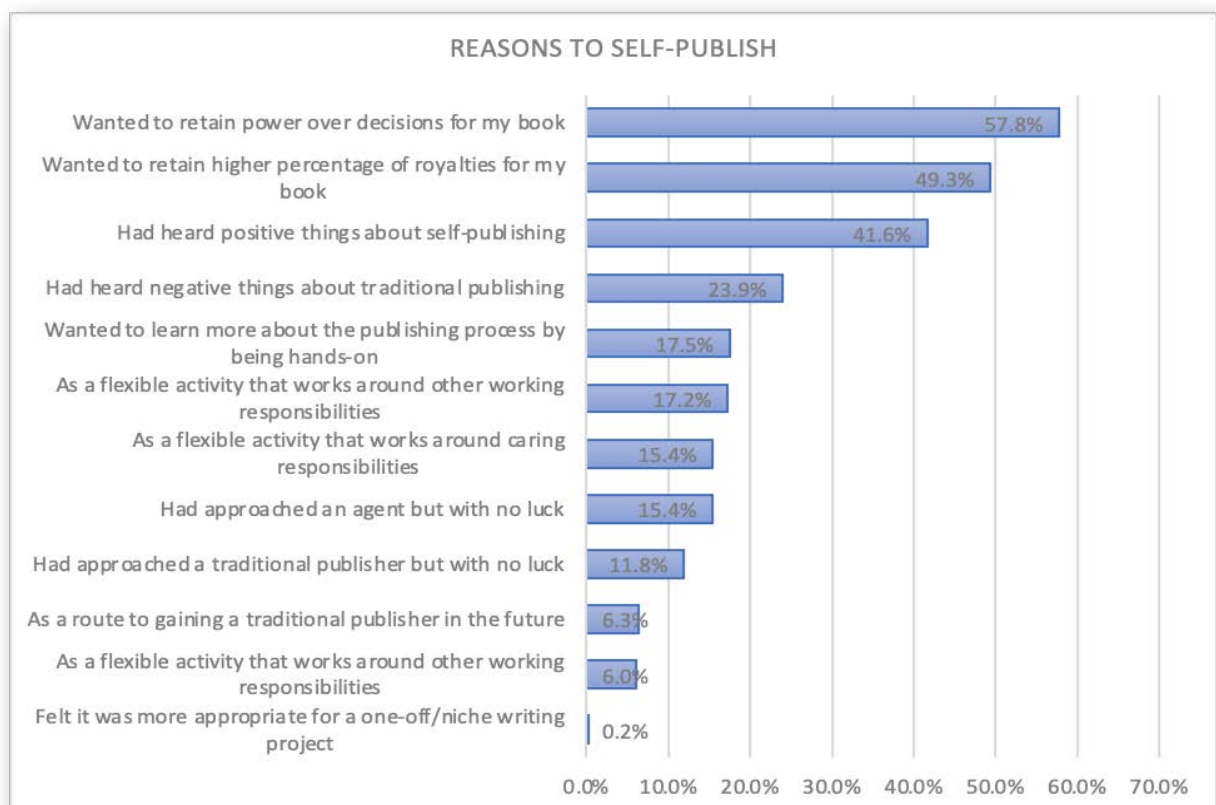
Did authors approach an agent or publisher before self-publishing?

Over half of those surveyed – 52% – did not approach an agent or publisher directly before choosing to self-publish their work, suggesting a rise in those authors who are proactively selecting self-publishing as a model. This finding runs counterintuitive to the often-quoted concept of self-publishing as the ‘last resort’ option for authors.

In addition, when asked why they chose to self-publish over other publishing models, 15%, a fairly modest figure in comparison to other choices, selected approaching an agent with no luck as a reason for choosing to self-publish.

Why did authors choose the self-publishing model?

Far more important to those choosing the model was the opportunity to retain power over decisions for their book, the opportunity to retain a higher percentage of royalties, and the positive stories they had heard about self-publishing. Note that for this question authors could select ‘all that apply’ from the choices available and had the option of a free text ‘other’.



Authors Guild's 2023 Author Income Study

Working with 36 writing-related organisations, the Authors Guild surveyed over 5,000 authors and published their findings in autumn 2023.

Self-Published Authors on the Rise

'Full-time self-published authors who had been publishing since at least 2018 reported a mean income of \$24,000 compared to \$13,700 in 2018, a 76 percent increase. The median author income for traditionally published full-time authors from their books was \$10,000, and their total median earnings from their book and other author-related income combined was \$20,000.'

'Interestingly, most self-published authors derived the majority of their author-related income from their books, with very little coming from other writing-related sources. This is in contrast to traditionally published authors, who earned only 40 percent of their income from their books.'

Black authors are excluded from traditional publishing

'White authors were 36 percent more likely to be traditionally published than Black authors (38 percent vs. 28 percent).'

<https://authorsguild.org/news/key-takeaways-from-2023-author-income-survey/>



Young authors are making self-publishing their first choice

‘Younger authors seem to be observing and grasping how the industry is changing. According to the survey, **the younger the author, the more likely they are to prefer self-publishing for their next book.** In fact, less than half of authors under 45 years old would prefer to have their next book traditionally published.’

Authors’ Guild, 2023



KU, or not KU: that is the question...

Alex Newton of K-Lytics has analysed data from the Kindle Unlimited subscription programme over several years to offer valuable insights into how it has changed over time.

‘To reach readers through Amazon’s Kindle Unlimited subscription programme, you must enrol your book in KDP Select. By doing so, you grant Amazon exclusivity to the digital format of the title for at least one 90-day (auto-renewing) enrolment period. The question of whether to do so or not is as old as Amazon’s introduction of the program in 2014.

Each author’s decision for KU or non-KU

or the appropriate mix of them across your portfolio of books is individual and case-by-case. In weighing the opportunities and risks, including some facts and figures in the decision-making is always beneficial.

Kindle Unlimited page reads have grown by another 18% in 2023, reaching 138 billion pages. That is the equivalent of more than 550 million 250-page books if they were fully read.

On the flip side, Amazon’s page-read royalty payments to KU authors and publishers have grown by only some 12%: the Kindle Select Global Fund was \$584 million in 2023.

This means authors have participated less in the growth than Amazon itself. Many indie authors noticed the trend by seeing their pay rate for page-reads



drop by 5.5% to an average of \$US4.22 per 1000 pages in 2023.

Thus, you can argue the glass is half-full (KU is a vast and still growing distribution channel) or half-empty (declining pay rates, all-eggs-in-one-basket problem).

In many popular genres and sub-markets, Kindle Unlimited has become the single-most dominant channel to reach readers. In some genres we track, the KU share in the Top 100 titles and beyond is over 80%. K-lytics recently analysed the 400 most-sold Kindle books on Amazon.com for the last 17 years. These titles of the Kindle store represent a considerable market share and provide important indicators for trends. The share of Kindle Unlimited titles in that pool of books has grown to 80% in 2023 (see chart). The trend itself has been observable for several years, but what came as a surprise is the absolute size of the KU-share achieved across Amazon's annual and current bestseller lists.'

Amazon does not define 'most sold'. Amazon ranks the books in bestseller lists. Both unit sales and KU borrows drive sales rank. But even if borrows are counted in those numbers, the overall

conclusion does not change: books enrolled in KDP Select are consumed the most by readers of ebooks on Amazon.' **Alex Newton, K-Lytics**

Romance dominates Amazon's Top 400

K-lytics reports that 58% of the most sold Kindle titles in the ranking were Romance. The next largest genre is Mystery Thriller Suspense with 16% (see chart)

Children's ebooks came as a surprise with 11% for 2023. Being the third largest genre is a very positive showing after the digital kids' books market initially lost ground post-Covid.

Nonfiction and Sci-Fi & Fantasy did not perform well within this analysis, with only five books respectively making it into the Top 400 of 2023.

Indie Authors Rock!

Self-published authors make up over 50% of Kindle's Top 400 Books for 2023

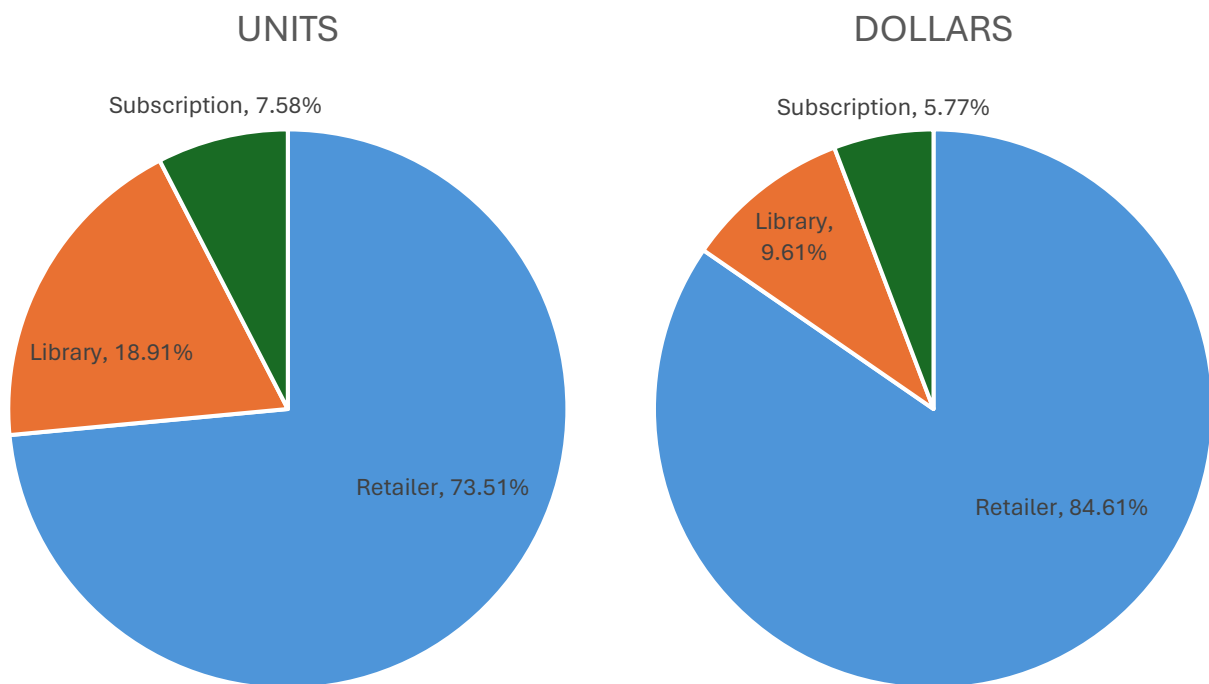
For more information, visit [k-lytics.com](https://www.k-lytics.com)



Draft2Digital's 2023 Analytics

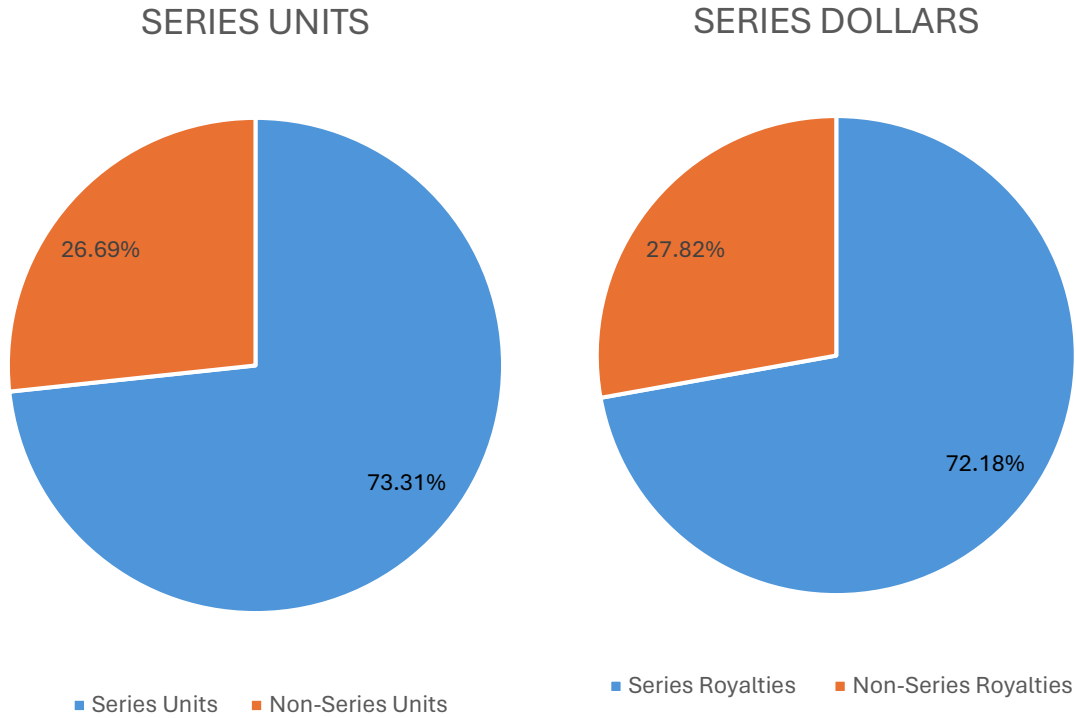
Mark Leslie Lefebvre
Director of Business Development

Channels

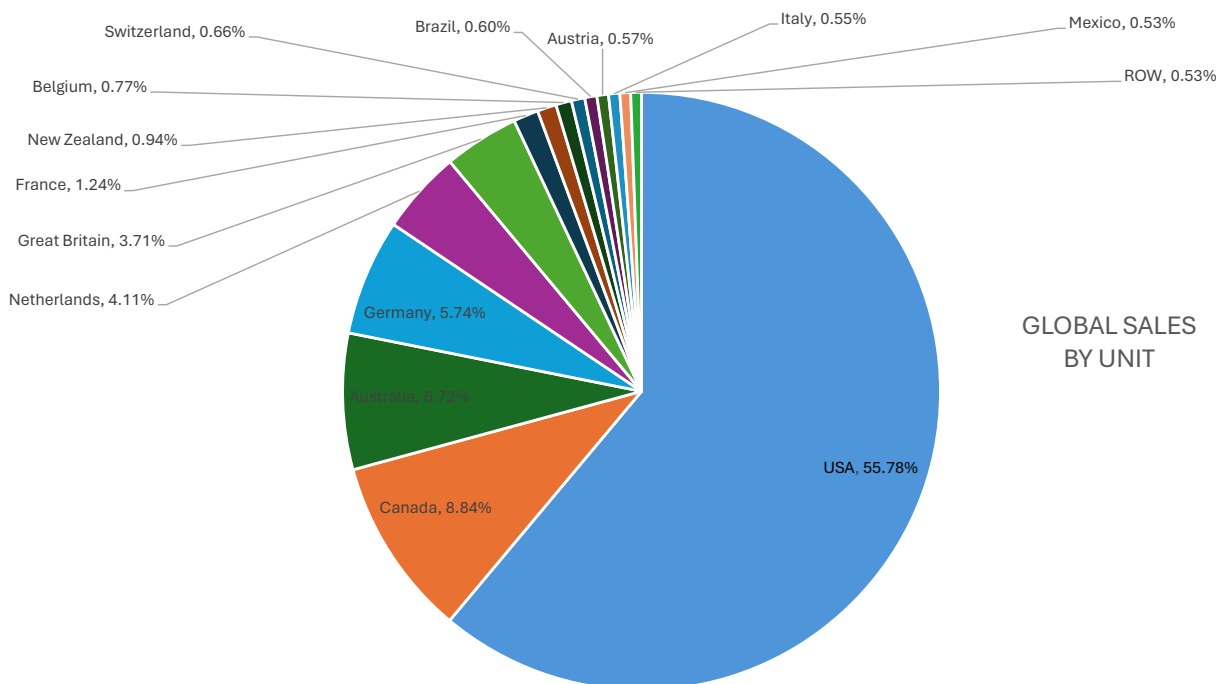


- Consistent YoY growth in Library sales
- Library Units increased by 62% YoY
- Library Revenue increased by 45% YoY
- 2022 Retail Units (81.74%), Library (11.64%), Subscription (6.80%)
- 2022 Retail Dollars (89.04%), Library (6.42%), Subscription (4.54%)

Series sales continue to dominate in both units and dollars



Global sales by unit



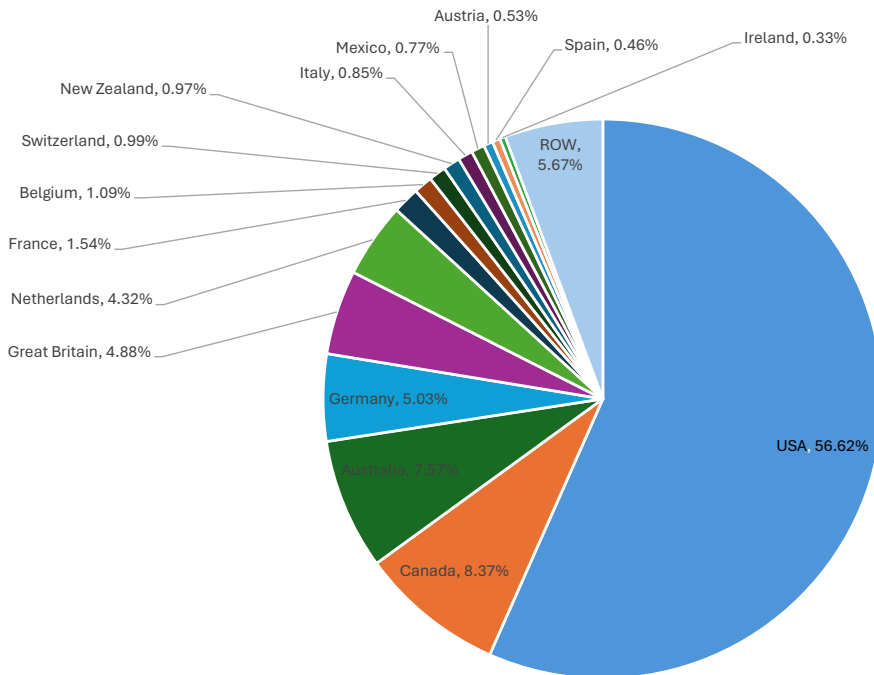
Global sales by growth

YOY GROWTH IN

- UK, DE, NE, NZ, MX, IT, IR, SP, AI

SLIGHT DECLINE IN

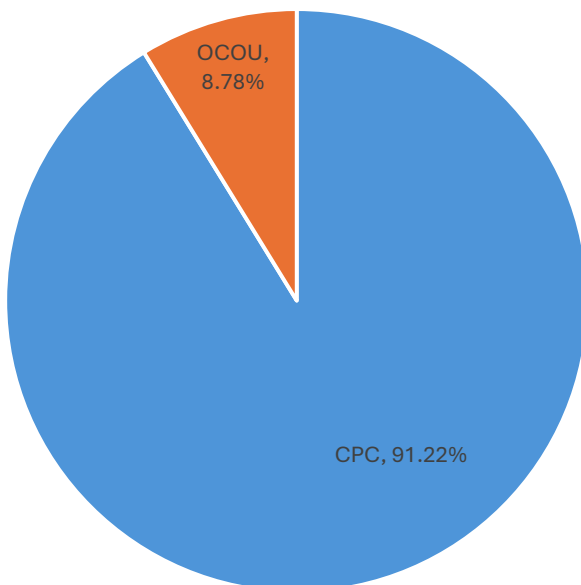
- US, CA, AU, FR, BE, CH



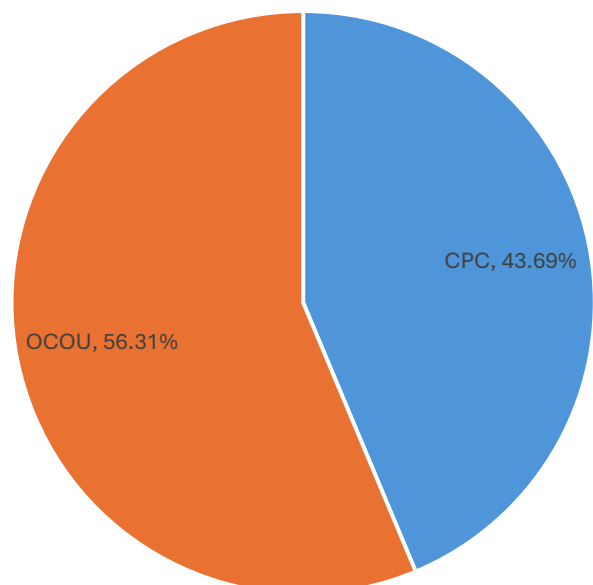
GLOBAL SALES BY REVENUE

Library sales

Library Units



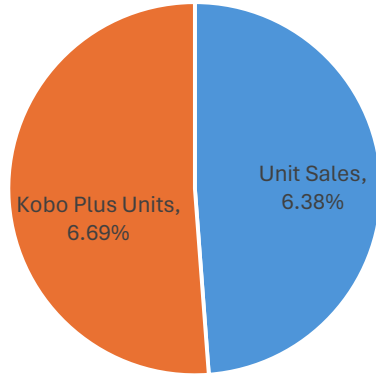
Library Revenue



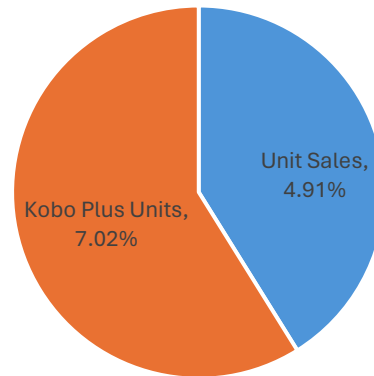
- CPC saw growth YoY (6.08% Units and 36.79% Revenue)

Kobo a la carte vs Kobo plus

2022 - KOBO A La Carte Sales VS Kobo Plus



2023 - KOBO A La Carte Sales VS Kobo Plus



- Between 2022 and 2023 Kobo Units dropped by 23.11% and Kobo Royalties dropped by 14.58%
- Between 2022 and 2023 Kobo Plus Units grew by 4.95% and Kobo Plus Royalties grew by 22.12%

D2D print sales growth

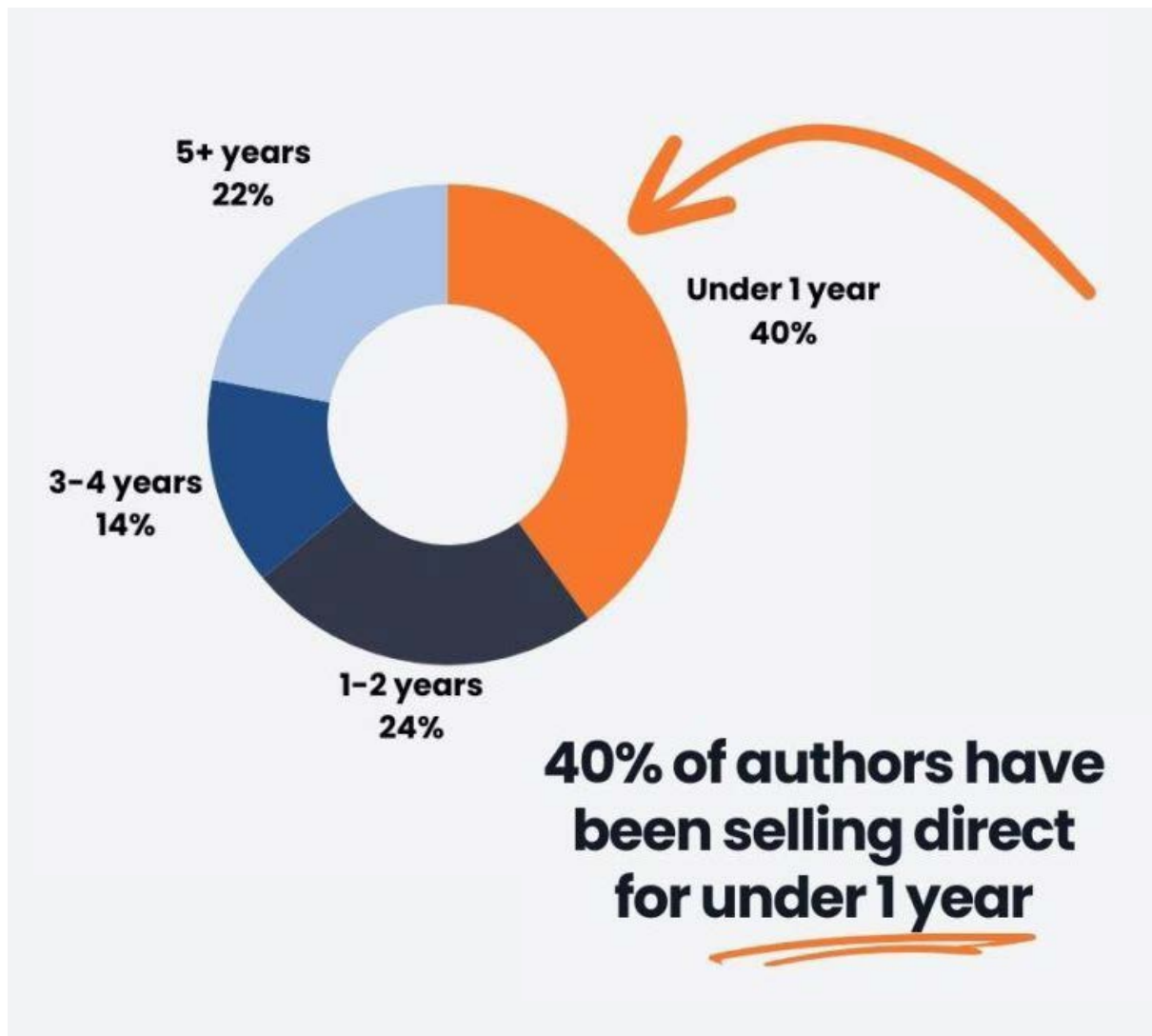
Year-on-year growth in D2D Print:

- 65.37% UNIT SALES GROWTH
- 101.18% DOLLARS SALES GROWTH



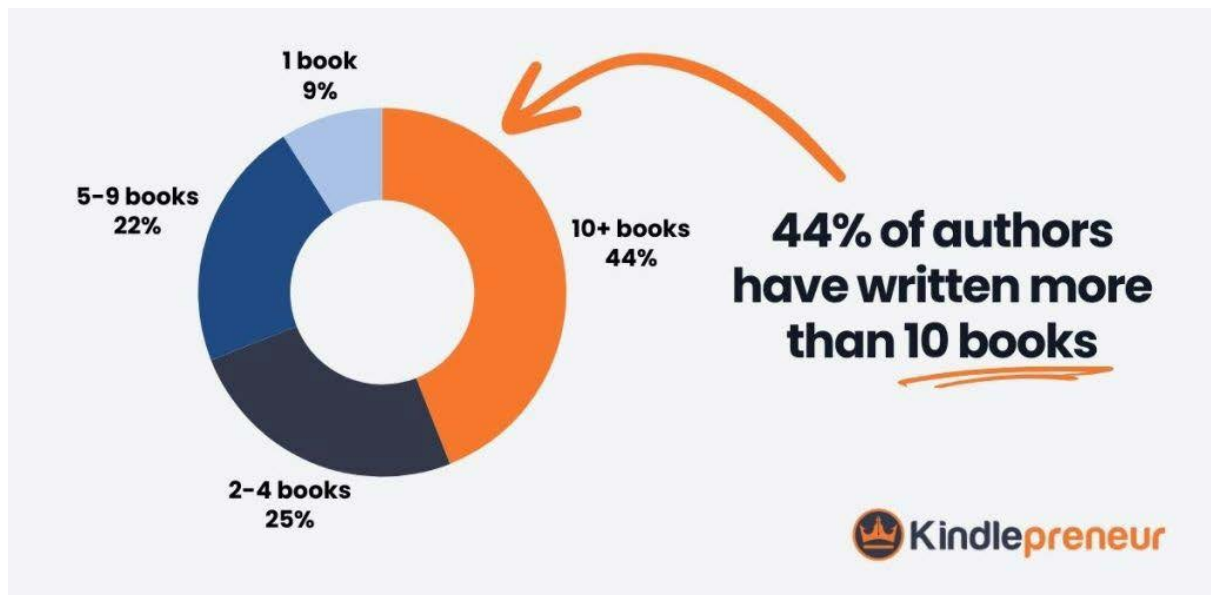
Selling Direct: Kindlepreneur explores what it takes to be successful

Kindlepreneur surveyed 876 authors who were selling direct and found that 40% had only been doing so for under a year, reflecting the other data in this report which shows this approach is still underutilised by many authors, but showing growth.



Two important factors emerged for success in selling direct

The first was the number of books that the authors had. 44% of the authors selling direct had more than 10 books in their catalogue, allowing them to maximise their sales by offering a significant number of products for sale.



The second factor for successful direct sales was the size of the author's mailing list. 'There was a clear, positive correlation between email list size and monthly direct sales income. Having a large, engaged mailing list provides a direct line to readers and a captive audience of fans. This allows authors to effectively market new releases, promote special offers, and drive sales conversions. For authors relying heavily on direct sales, building and nurturing an email list is not just a marketing tool – it's an indispensable asset for sustainability.' **Dave Chesson, Kindlepreneur**



You can read the full report, including insights on author motivations, genres, formats, the best platforms for selling direct and more at:

<https://kindlepreneur.com/the-truth-on-selling-books-direct-insights-from-authors/>

Kindle Unlimited

Written Word Media estimates there are over 4 million active readers in Kindle Unlimited and points out that Romance does very well in the programme. ‘63% of KU subscribers surveyed say that they ‘somewhat often’ or ‘very often’ purchase books not enrolled in Kindle Unlimited. Only 6% of KU surveyed said they ‘never’ buy books not enrolled in KU. This means that if an author has a reader following in KU, then chooses to remove their books from KU, they are not alienating their KU readers. There is a high chance that those readers will continue to read and pay for their books.’

Written Word Media, 2023

<https://www.writtenwordmedia.com/kindle-unlimited-subscribers/>

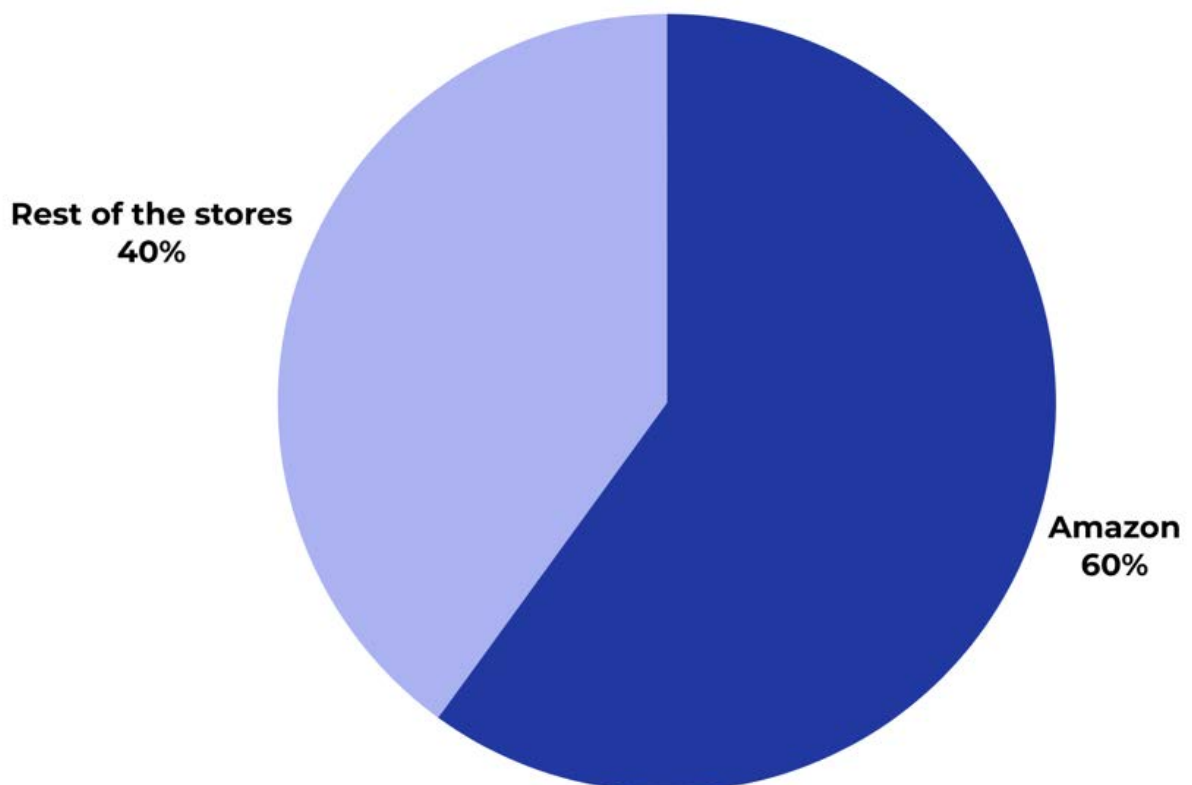




PublishDrive reports on three key trends seen from their platform

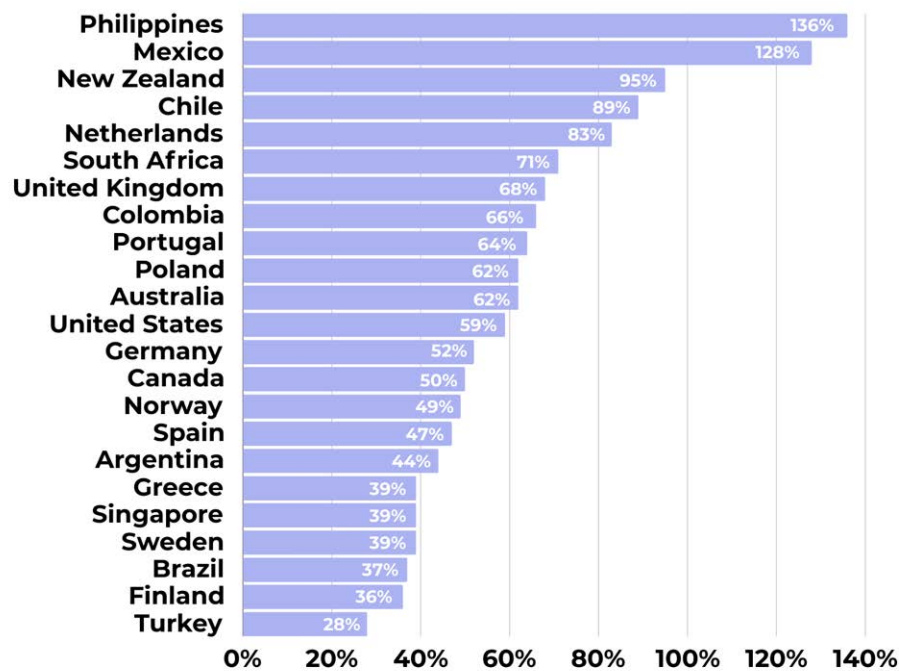
‘Boost your sales with diversification: This report emphasizes the importance of diversifying distribution channels for boosting your sales. With 40% of sales originating from platforms other than Amazon, expanding your reach is vital. This approach reduces reliance on a single retailer, adapts to market changes, and increases global visibility while avoiding exclusivity pitfalls.’

Books Sold in PublishDrive Stores



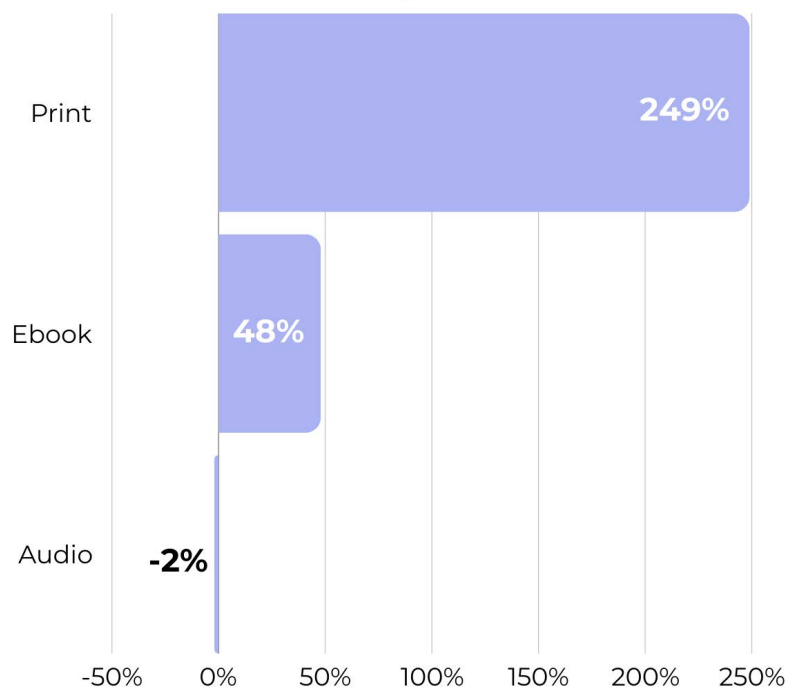
‘Global sales on the rise: Significant sales surges are seen across various countries, with standout performances in the Philippines (136%) and Mexico (128%). Expanding into non-English markets could yield an additional 18% in sales, offering lucrative international opportunities for authors.’

Sales Growth by Countries



‘Dynamic platform trends: While traditional giants like Amazon remain strong, newer platforms like Kobo Plus and Dreame, plus digital libraries such as OverDrive, are gaining momentum. Additionally, there’s a remarkable 249% growth in print format sales, showcasing PublishDrive’s adaptability across digital, audio, and physical book formats.’

Sales Growth by Book Format



For the full report, please visit:

<https://publishdrive.com/book-sales-statistics-and-market-report>

2023 Highlights

Key highlights from the data gathered as part of the BIADD.

- 1** Median self-published author income stands at \$12,759 and is growing by 53% (compared to traditionally published authors at \$6-8,000 and falling). **ALLi 2023**
- 2** Self-publishing has a reverse gender pay gap and LGBTQIA+ authors earn more than heterosexuals. **ALLi 2023**
- 3** 75% of book sales (fiction and non fiction) were part of a series, by both unit and \$. **Draft2Digital 2023**
- 4** Financially successful authors do three core things: they use professional editors, professional cover designers and they keep writing more books. **Written Word Media, 2019-2022**
- 5** The number of self-published authors making no money at all is dropping over time, testament to a generous community who share advice and knowledge. **20Booksto50K, 2022**
- 6** More than 2,000 self-published authors have surpassed \$100,000 in royalties. **Amazon, 2022**
- 7** Not only are 39% of Kindle royalties going to indie authors, but their books are being rated by the readers as equal in quality. **K-Lytics, 2022**
- 8** Successful self-published authors don't have 'agreeable' personalities! **Kingston University, 2023**

www.allianceindependentauthors.org/facts



Want to join in?

If your organization has self-publishing data you can share with us, or wants to be part of our next Big Indie Author Data Drop, please get in touch.

Campaigns@AllianceIndependentAuthors.org