

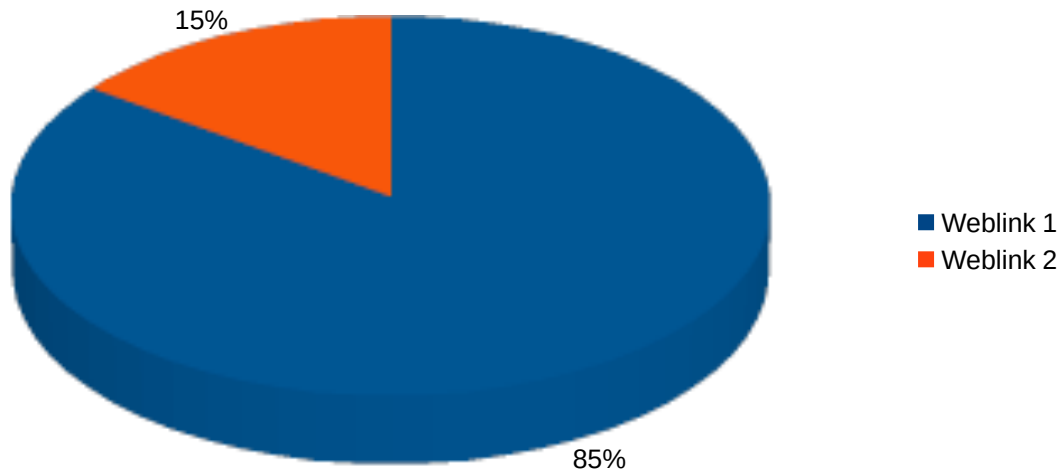
# 2016 INDIE AUTHOR SURVEY REPORT

## Table of Contents

WEBLINKS.....	2
INDIE AUTHOR CATEGORY.....	2
INDIE AUTHOR OCCUPATION.....	3
INDIE AUTHOR INCOME SUPPORT.....	4
INDIE AUTHOR – BEST YEAR.....	4
INDIE AUTHOR – BEST YEAR CONCLUSION.....	8
TOTAL PUBLISHED WORKS.....	10
INDIE-PUBLISHED WORKS.....	10
LENGTH OF PUBLISHED WORKS.....	11
INDIE BOOK PRICING.....	12
INDIE BOOK SERIES/SINGLE TITLES.....	12
INDIE BOOK FORMATS.....	13
REVENUE PER FORMAT.....	14
REVENUE PER MONTH.....	15
REVENUE PER MONTH – OTHER.....	16
REVENUE CHANGE PER NEW RELEASE.....	17
MARKETING/PROMOTION BUDGET.....	18
REVENUE IMPACT PER PROMOTIONS.....	19
MOST EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR INDIE CAREER GROWTH.....	23
OTHER EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES.....	25
INDIE AUTHOR CAREER GOAL.....	26
INDIE AUTHOR RETAIL SITES.....	27
REVENUE SINCE KINDLE UNLIMITED.....	27
KINDLE UNLIMITED PAGE READS (DAILY).....	28
MOST NEW GROWTH (2015).....	28
MOST IMPORTANT MARKETING TOOL.....	30
GREATEST FRUSTRATION.....	33
PRIMARY REASON TO GO INDIE.....	35
BIGGEST ASSET/BENEFIT OF GOING INDIE.....	37
INDIE REGARDS TOWARD TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING.....	39
FIVE YEAR PLAN.....	42
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS.....	44
SURVEY DESIGN FEEDBACK.....	49
INDIE AUTHORS WILLING TO BE INTERVIEWED.....	50
DEMOGRAPHICS – GENDER BY AUTHOR CATEGORY.....	51
DEMOGRAPHICS – AGE BY AUTHOR CATEGORY.....	52
DEMOGRAPHICS – GENRES.....	53
DEMOGRAPHICS – NUMBER OF YEARS IN INDIE PUBLISHING.....	56
DEMOGRAPHICS – NUMBER OF YEARS AS AN AUTHOR.....	57

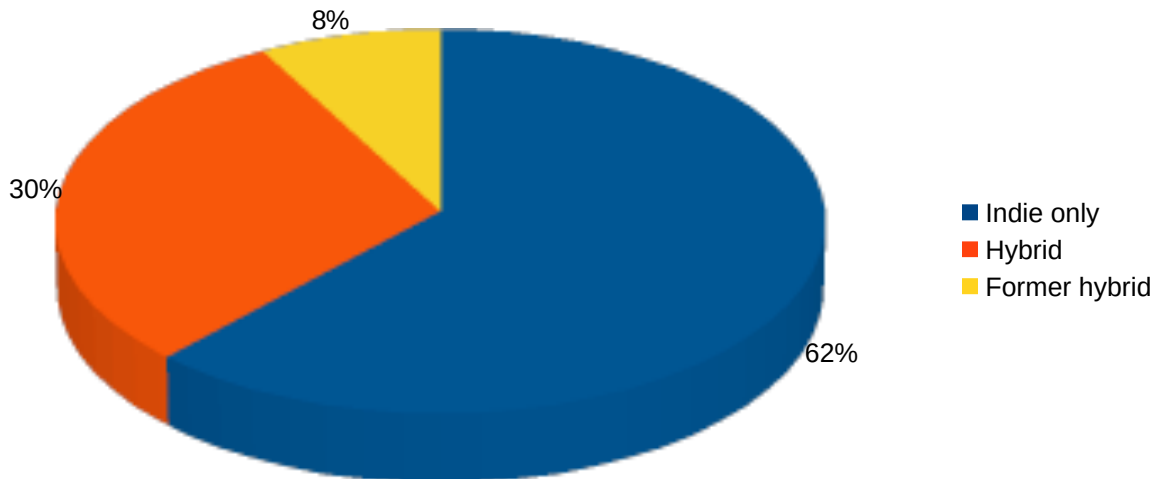
## WEBLINKS

A total of 1973 participants took this survey by clicking one of two weblinks.



## INDIE AUTHOR CATEGORY

The 1973 (100%) authors self-selected as currently:



Of the 586 hybrid authors currently, 27 (4.61%) specified other comments. Of these 27 comments:

- about 20% (5) included history in e-publishing
- over a quarter (7) being small press-published
- over a quarter (7) had traditionally published titles in varying stages of reversion (none, some, all)
- nearly 30% (8) plan to go 100% indie or only sell specific rights (e.g., print, short fiction) to traditional publishers

Of the 1225 indie published only authors currently, 24 (1.96%) specified other comments.

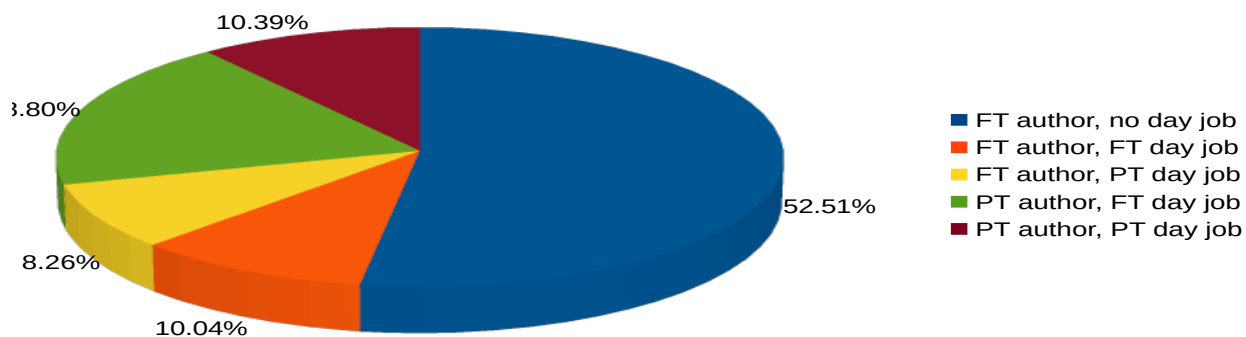
- 1/6th (4) are not yet published
- 2/6ths (8) were small press-published
- 1/4th (6) have been published in select venues (e.g., e-published, print magazines, German/foreign/print/short fiction sold to traditional publishers)
- 1/4th (6) have traditionally published titles in varying stages of reversion (none, some, all)

Of the 162 former hybrid authors currently, 8 (4.94%) specified other comments. Of these 8 comments:

- only a quarter are actively seeking a traditional contract
- three-quarters are opting to stay 100% indie with traditionally published titles in varying stages of reversion (none, some, all)

## INDIE AUTHOR OCCUPATION

The 1973 (100%) authors identified as the following occupation(s) at this time:

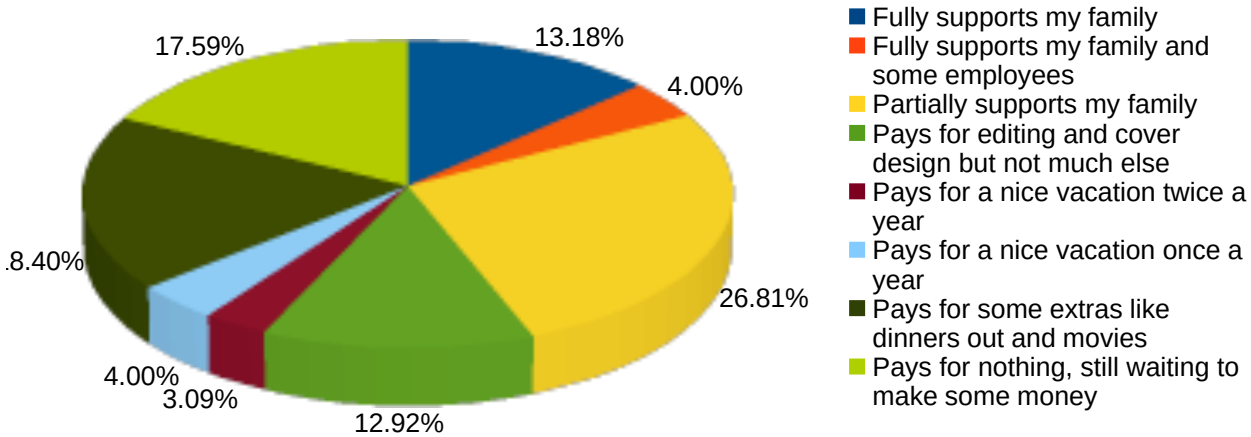


Of the 1973 (100%) authors who answered this question, 128 further specified:

- 37 (28.91%) are FT authors on one or more PT income support(s) (e.g., book sales, cash aid, disability, freelance/self-employment, student loans, maternity leave, pension, unemployment)
- 16 (11.72%) are FT authors on retirement, 1 whom loves freelance work too much to quit
- 14 (10.94%) are FT authors while being stay-at-home mothers
- 5 (3.9%) are PT authors only and have no other job
- 27 (21.09%) are PT authors with 1 or more PT jobs and/or FT jobs (including freelance/self-employment, semi-retired), 1 whom is also a FT student
- 13 (10.16%) are PT authors on income support (e.g., disability, student loans, retirement)
- 16 (12.5%) are PT authors who are stay-at-home caregivers/mothers/educators of elderly/spouses/children (includes trauma recovery and special needs)

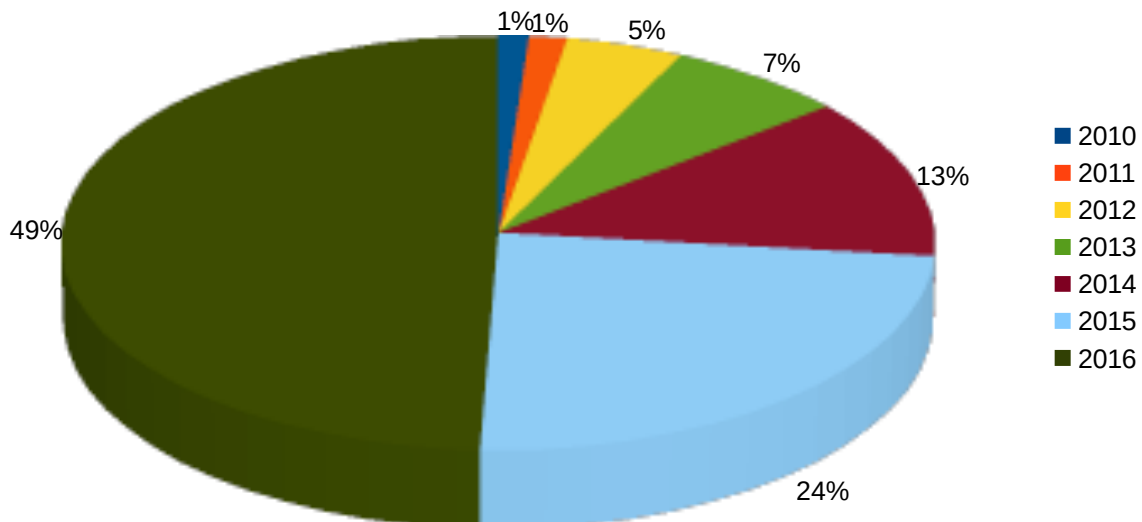
## INDIE AUTHOR INCOME SUPPORT

1973 (100%) authors specified that their income:



## INDIE AUTHOR – BEST YEAR

1973 (100%) authors indicated that the best year for being an indie author was/is:



When asked to specify what element(s) made that year the best year as an indie author, all 1973 (100%) authors specified other comments. The data below is drawn from a random representative sample, when applicable, of 550 out of 1973 (27.88%) comments. 100% representation of comments were aggregated for years 2010 and 2011 while latter years' comments were aggregated from 25% to 30% representation.

23 (1.17%) authors attributed **2010** to be the best year for being an indie author because of:

- **intrinsic values**, such as a sense of completion (first/last book out), going indie, “fun” reader interaction, ability to become a FT author, have time to write, and winning writing awards
- **book sales** (most sales, hot genre, pre-KU, pre-Amazon imprints, pre-trolls, pre-Amazon algorithms)
- **frequency of releases** (rapid release of reverted titles, new work)
- **marketing/promotion** (Bookbub, pre-market saturation, increased discoverability, 99 cents books had mileage, book rankings stayed high when price returned to paid after a Kindle Select Free day)
- **“luck”** (includes those who “don’t know” and are trying to figure out how to reproduce the outcome; includes one author who mentioned her best year was prior to 2010)

Data is derived from 23 out of 23 (100%) respondents who are currently: 6 (26%) indie only, 15 (65%) hybrid published, 2 (8%) former hybrid.

29 (1.47%) authors attributed **2011** to be the best year for being an indie author because of:

- **intrinsic values**, such as a sense of completion (first book out), going indie, winning writing awards, improved craft, time/ability to write, landing a Manga deal
- **backlist** (reverted titles published)
- **book sales** (most sales/royalties, hitting bestseller lists, novelty of ebooks [“ebook gold rush”], pre-market saturation, pre-trolls [great reviews])
- **camaraderie** (networking with other indie authors, cross promotion)
- **marketing/promotion** (higher ROI from giveaways/contests, discoverability [Kindle free days], freebies had higher rankings on Amazon after reverting to paid pricing, time to market/promote, free publicity, hand selling)
- **“luck”**

Data is derived from 29 out of 29 (100%) respondents who are currently: are currently: 10 (35%) indie only, 15 (52%) hybrid published, 4 (14%) former hybrid.

90 (4.56%) authors attributed **2012** to be the best year for being an indie author because of:

- **intrinsic values**, such as a sense of completion (first book out), going indie, reader interaction/social media/online presence, fan feedback
- **back list** (reverted titles published)
- **book sales** (Amazon Also Boughts, pre-KU, novelty of ebooks [“ebook gold rush”], most royalties/sales, pre-market saturation [fewer authors, less 99 cents book pricing])
- **frequency of releases** (more releases, new work)
- **marketing/promotion** (discoverability/visibility [Kindle Daily Deal], Bookbubs, freebies had higher rankings on Amazon after reverting to paid pricing, time to market/promote)
- **“luck”**

Data is derived randomly from 25 out of 90 (27.78%) respondents who are currently: 46 (51%) indie only, 36 (40%) hybrid published, 8 (9%) former hybrid.

137 (6.94%) authors attributed **2013** to be the best year for being an indie author because of:

- **back list** (reverted titles published)
- **book sales** (hitting bestseller lists, pre-KU, wide distribution, novelty of ebooks [“ebook gold rush”], most royalties/sales, pre-market saturation [fewer authors], less Amazon instability)
- **camaraderie** (networking with other authors, collaborative projects, cross promotion)
- **frequency of releases** (regular releases, more releases, new work)
- **marketing/promotion** (boxed sets, limited free promotions, discoverability/visibility, Bookbubs, better Amazon/Facebook algorithms [freebies had higher rankings on Amazon after reverting to paid pricing, no need to boost posts on Facebook, no need to use Bookbub], first book in series permafrees, cross-marketing between indie and trad releases, great reviews, appearances/events/signings)
- **writing to market**
- **“luck”**

Data is derived randomly from 41 out of 137 (29.93%) respondents who are currently: 76 (56%) indie only, 44 (32%) hybrid published, 17 (12%) former hybrid.

249 (12.62%) authors attributed **2014** to be the best year for being an indie author because of:

- **intrinsic values**, such as a sense of completion (first book out, last book in series out, first spinoff out), going indie, winning writing awards
- **back list** (reverted titles published)
- **book sales** (hitting bestseller lists, pre-KU, pre-Amazon policy updates, wide distribution, foreign markets, most royalties/sales, pre-market saturation [fewer authors/more readers, pre-99 cents price drops], pre-PR companies collecting data)
- **camaraderie** (networking with other authors, collaborative projects, cross promotion)
- **frequency of releases** (regular releases, more releases, new work)
- **marketing/promotion** (Amazon Encore program, anthologies/boxed sets, strategic marketing [a series book in anthology then published as a standalone], discoverability/visibility/publicity, Bookbubs, fan base, first book in series permafrees, Kindle First promotion, KU1 [high rates, high reads, discoverability], appearances/events/signings)
- **writing to market**
- **“luck”**

Data is derived randomly from 63 out of 249 (25.3%) respondents who are currently: 140 (56%) indie only, 92 (37%) hybrid published, 17 (7%) former hybrid. An interesting note about the aggregate responses in this particular data set is that KU1 debuted in July 2014. Respondents cited both the nonexistence of KU1 and the existence of KU1 as reasons for their high income. This data set suggests that some authors benefit from being exclusive in KU while others benefit from being non-exclusive.

471 (23.87%) authors attributed **2015** to be the best year for being an indie author because of:

- **intrinsic values**, such as “freedom,” going indie, going FT indie, first book out, improved craft, ability to become a FT author, award nomination
- **back list** (annual inventory increase)
- **book sales** (hitting bestseller lists, imprints, KU1 “gold rush”/All Stars, no pulled reviews, wide distribution, foreign markets, most royalties/sales, pre-market saturation [fewer authors/more readers], popular series finale)
- **camaraderie** (networking with other authors, collaborative projects, cross promotion)
- **frequency of releases** (regular releases, more releases, new work, quick releases)
- **marketing/promotion** (Bookbubs, anthologies/box sets, discoverability/visibility, fan base/beta readers/ARC team/reader interaction, first book in series permafrost, going wide/rep support, Kindle free days, KU1 [high rates, high reads, discoverability], newsletter, pre-prudish ad blocks/removals [Facebook], Facebook author events, appearances/events/signings)
- **writing to market** (changing genres, writing in hot genres, longer novellas, catchy titles, serials)
- **“luck”**

Data is derived randomly from 125 out of 471 (26.54%) respondents who are currently: 295 (62.6%) indie only, 135 (28.7%) hybrid published, 41 (8.7%) former hybrid. An interesting note about this data set is that while “fan base” was noted in 2014, 2015 is when the newsletter became of increasing significance in the face of changing markets and algorithms (Amazon/Facebook).

974 (49.37%) authors attributed **2016** to be the best year for being an indie author because of:

- **intrinsic values**, such as confidence, family and friend support, first indie book out, focus, going indie, going FT indie, improved craft, important milestones (breaking even, writing income exceed income from FT day job, ability to become a FT author, forming an LLC), increased knowledge of industry, going to RWA, perseverance
- **back list** (reverted titles published, annual inventory increase, “critical mass”)
- **book sales** (going direct when wide, hitting bestseller lists, KU, advance from traditional publisher, popular series finale, reviews)
- **camaraderie** (networking with other authors, collaborative projects [anthologies/box sets/series], cross promotion)
- **frequency of releases** (regular releases, more releases, new work, quick releases, momentum, multiple releases, publishing plan/strategy, re-edits re-released)
- **marketing/promotion** (book tours/coaching, Bookbubs/Freebooksy/Bargain Booksy/eReaderNewsToday, Kobo, Facebook ads, discoverability/visibility, first book in series permafrost, KU bundles, newsletter, Instafreebie/Facebook ads as funnel to newsletter, notable reviews (USA Today), fan base, appearances/events/signings, online book parties, strategic marketing, Story Bundle, Thunderclap, PR company [covers, teasers, takeovers])
- **writing to market** (changing genres, writing in series/new series, standalones/full-length books, hot pen name, long novels, intriguing stories, selling to magazines)
- **“luck”**

Data is derived randomly from 244 out of 974 (25.05%) respondents who are currently: 652 (66.94%) indie only, 249 (25.56%) hybrid published, 73 (7.49%) former hybrid. Of particular note is the amount of market knowledge and advertising/marketing/promotion strategies that have increased since 2010.

## INDIE AUTHOR – BEST YEAR CONCLUSION

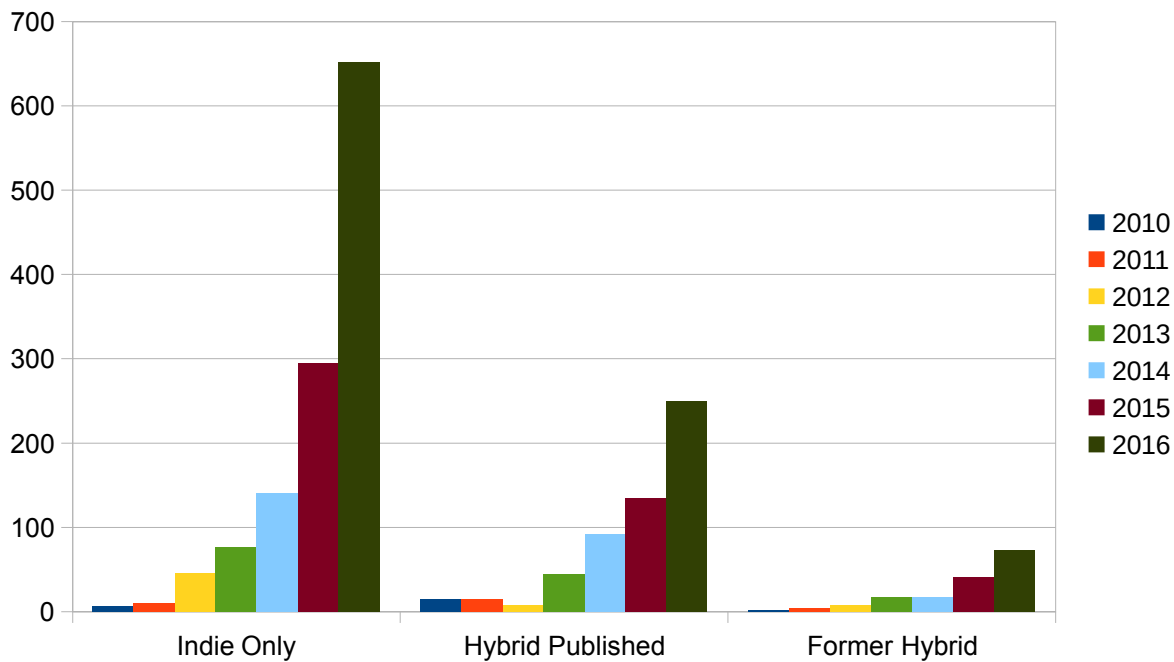
When we combine the data from the open-ended comments and rank them side by side, we start to see more reasons why the best year is the most recent year that they have been published.

<b>What makes it the “best” year?</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Intrinsic value	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Backlist		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Book sales	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Camaraderie		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Frequency of releases	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marketing/ Promotion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing to Market				✓	✓	✓	✓
Luck	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

When we check each line item in the above table and refer back to the open-ended notes for each year in the preceding pages, we see a lot more data about what people found helpful in making the year the best year in their indie career.

With each successive year, we see the line item notes increasing. 2016 has the most comments. This implies that with each successive year, authors employ a lot more strategies than what were employed in 2010. The data implies that in today’s market, existing indie authors need to learn and try new strategies. Furthermore, the data implies that new authors entering the industry would need to work harder to gain visibility in today’s market.





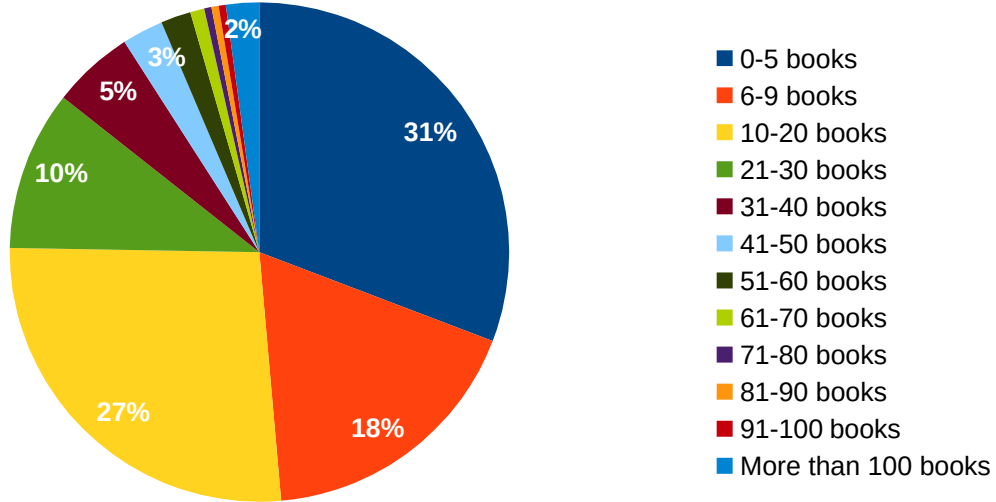
Overall, in every category of authors (Indie Only, Hybrid Published, and Former Hybrid), we see a trend where more authors are citing that their best year is the most recent year that they have been published.

This trend can be attributed to increase in skills (e.g., improved craft, marketing, technical). With each passing year, authors also put out more books and increase inventory. Sales of backlist and front list items accumulate year upon year.

The data suggests that, with market knowledge and strategic planning in publishing and marketing, 2017 will most likely be another great year for all categories of authors and that this is still a good time to enter the market.

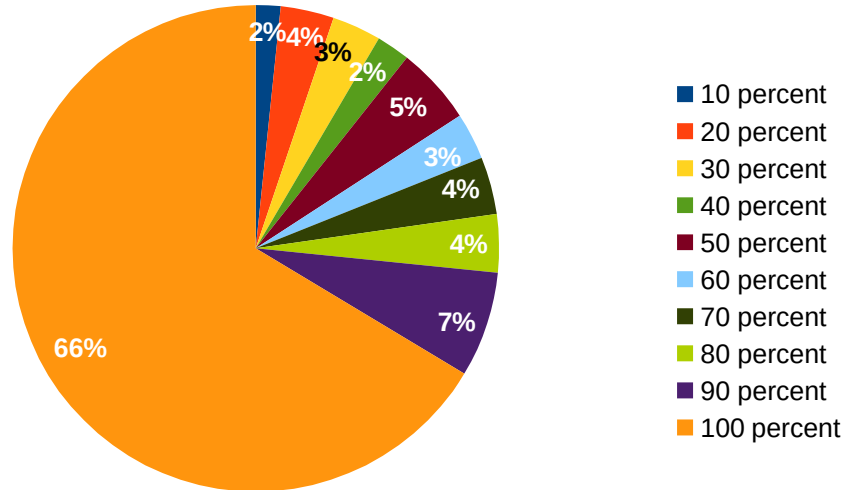
## TOTAL PUBLISHED WORKS

1948 out of 1973 (98.73%) authors have published:



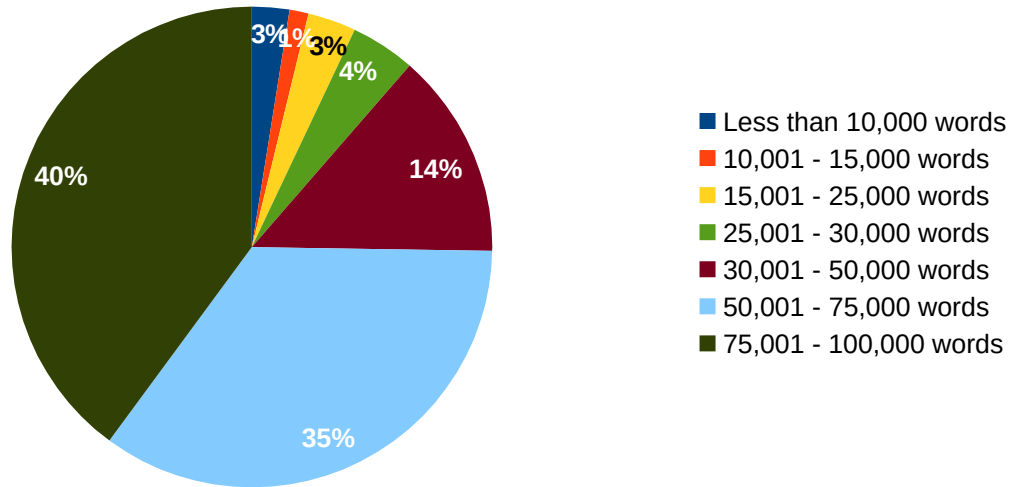
## INDIE-PUBLISHED WORKS

1895 out of 1973 (96.05%) authors have the following percentage of books indie-published:



## LENGTH OF PUBLISHED WORKS

1948 out of 1973 (98.73%) authors have the majority of their books in the following word count:

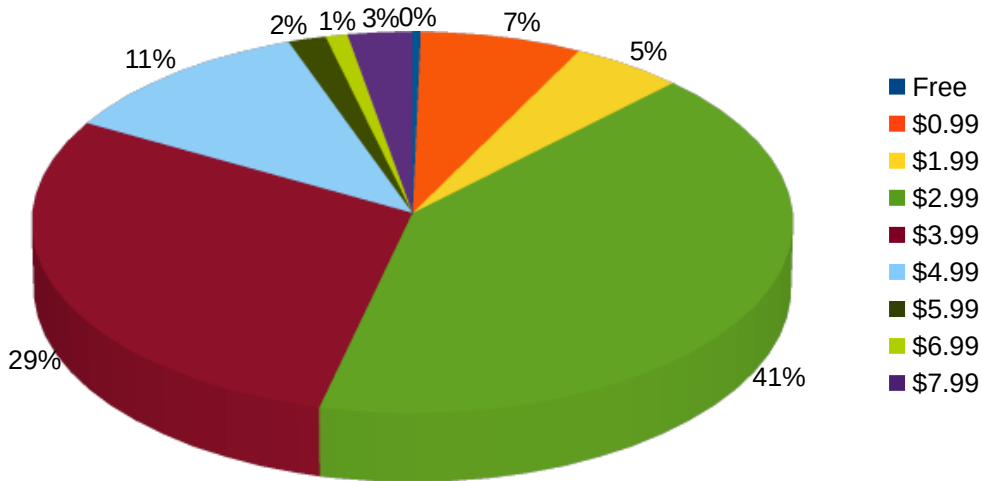


197 of the 1948 (10.11%) authors who answered the word count question further specified other comments.

- 111 of the 197 (56.34%) authors write full-length works that exceed 100,000 words
- 7 of the 197 (3.55%) authors write full-length works that exceed 200,000 words
- 2 of the 197 (1.01%) authors write **serialized** works that combine to exceed 100,000 words
- 47 of the 197 (23.86%) authors write variable length works based on genre, trad/indie
- 30 of the 197 (15.23%) authors write short works (anthologies, novellas, novelettes, novels, picture books, serials, short fiction, short smut)

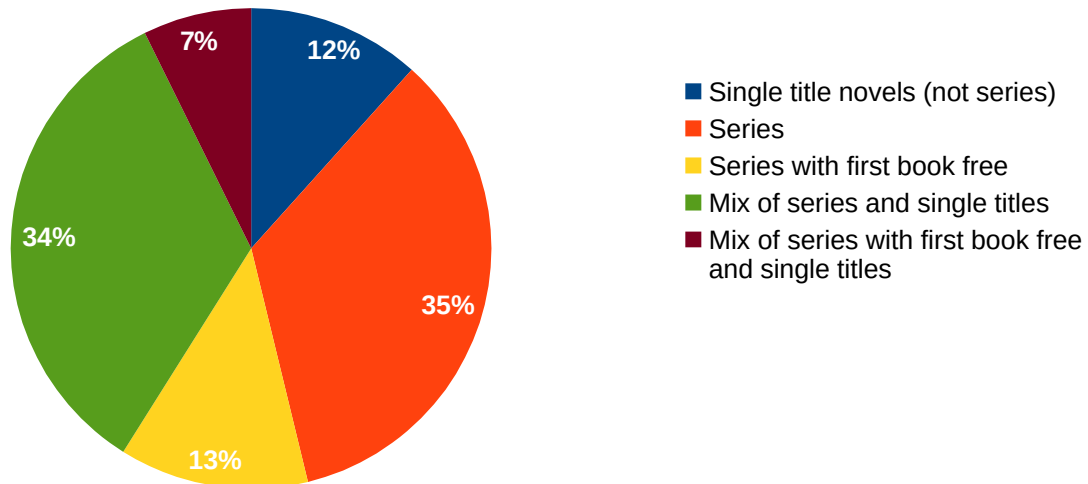
## INDIE BOOK PRICING

1948 out of 1973 (98.73%) authors list the average price of their indie books to be:



## INDIE BOOK SERIES/SINGLE TITLES

1948 out of 1973 (98.73%) authors write primarily:



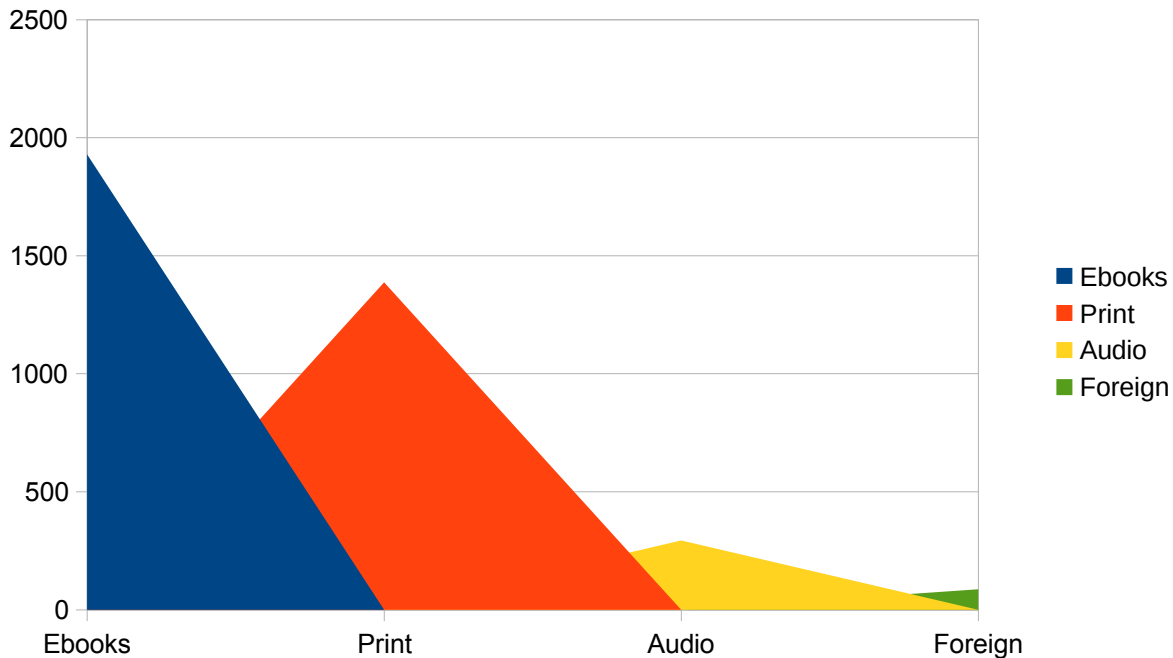
126 of the 1948 (6.47%) authors who answered the series/single title question further specified other comments.

- 47 of the 126 (37.3%) use first book or novella prequel free/discount/limited time free/regular free/funnel into newsletter/permafree only in one or some series/permafree after series completion)
- All other comments pertained to other kinds of primary works (anthologies, essays, Kindle World, lyrics, nonfiction, novellas, picture books, plays, serials, short fiction, short stories, etc.)
- Only one comment pertained to full pricing for all primary works

## INDIE BOOK FORMATS

Authors published their indie books in the following formats:

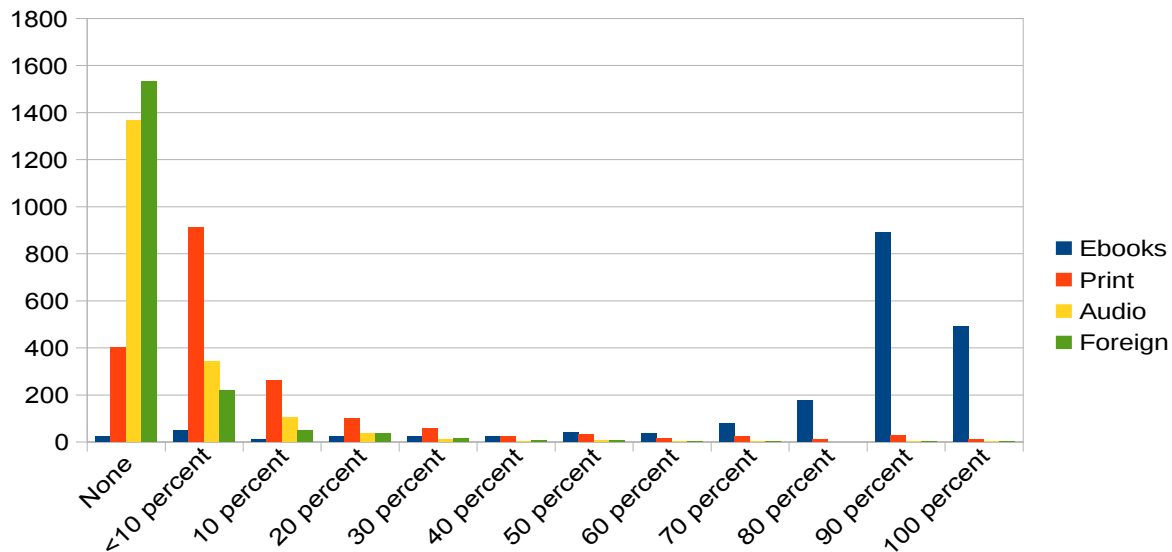
- Ebooks (1929 out of 1973 respondents) – 97.77%
- Print (1387 out of 1973 respondents) – 70.3%
- Audio (293 out of 1973 respondents) – 14.85%
- Foreign (87 out of 1973 respondents) – 4.41%
- Other (60 out of 1973 respondents) – 3.04%



When asked to specify the other formats for their indie books:

- 27 out of 60 (45%) authors have one/few/half of their selections of indie books in audio, including debut audio titles in production.
- 7 out of 60 (11.67%) authors have one/few/half of their selections of indie books in print or large print
- 9 out of 60 (15%) authors have one/few/half of their indie books in English-to-foreign markets, 1 of whom has foreign-to-English indie books
- 1 noted that audio and foreign rights were sold to a traditional publisher
- 12 out of 60 (20%) of authors note the limitation to ebook and print formats, 3 out of 12 (25%) of whom cite the limitation due to being a non-US author who has no access to ACX
- The remaining 4 comments pertain to querying the audio/foreign market, ebook only, and a reverted title

## REVENUE PER FORMAT



1872 of the 1973 (94.88%) authors identified their format-based revenue. When we total up the revenue past 70% in each format, the numbers total to:

- 1639 out of 1872 authors (87.55%) earn 70% or more from ebooks.
- 71 out of 1872 authors (3.79%) earn 70% or more from print.
- 4 out of 1872 authors (0.21%) earn 70% or more from audiobooks.
- 4 out of 1872 authors (0.21%) earn 70% or more from foreign editions.

In the undisputed lead are ebooks, followed by print, then audio, and finally foreign editions. Interestingly, the cost to produce each subsequent format increases in time and expenses.

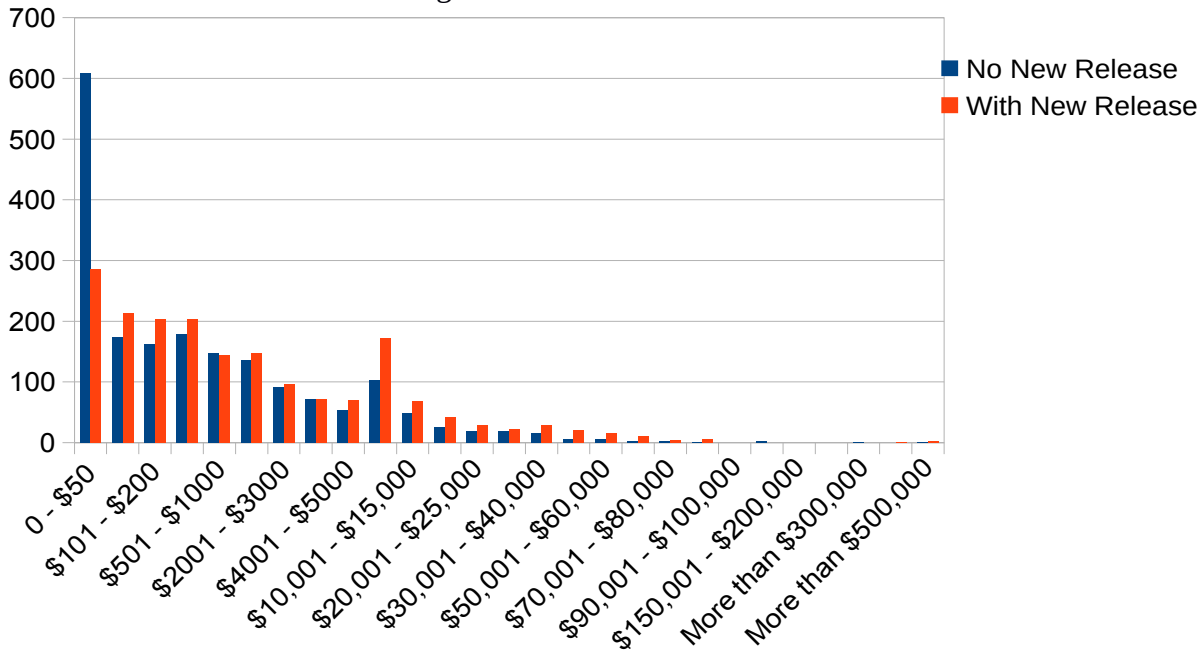
A closer look at the bar graph to assess percent of sales indicates that to have passing revenue of 70% or more from each format:

- 1639 out of 1872 (87.55%) of authors make 70% or more of their revenue from ebooks
- 71 out of 1872 (3.79%) of authors make 70% or more of their revenue from print
- 4 out of 1872 (0.21%) of authors make 70% or more of their revenue from audio
- 4 out of 1872 (0.21%) of authors make 70% or more of their revenue from foreign editions

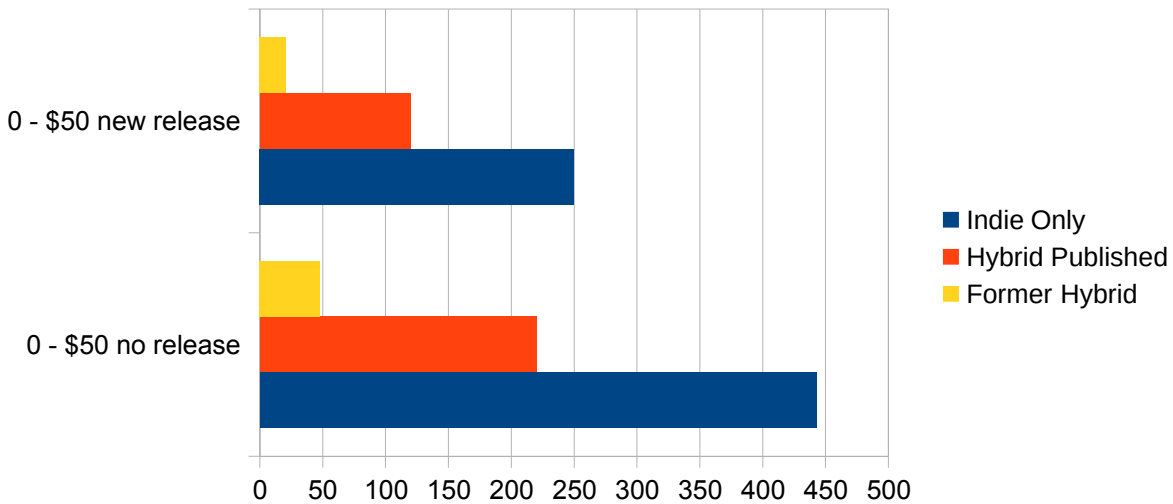
## REVENUE PER MONTH

1872 out of 1973 (94.88%) authors report the following revenue on an average month for no new release. **Blue bar** indicates an average month WITH NO NEW RELEASES.

1856 out of 1973 (94.07%) authors report the following revenue on an average month with a new release. **Red bar** indicates an average month WITH A NEW RELEASE.



Overall, authors earn more on months with a new release. We can safely conclude that new releases translate to more revenue. The glaring exception, at first glance, is the \$0 - \$50 revenue bracket.



The trend is similar for all category authors.

Closer examination of the survey data examining the \$0 - \$50 average monthly revenue bracket yielded these numbers:

- 331 of the 608 (54.44%) authors who regularly earn \$0 - \$50 in an average month WITHOUT a new release actually move to a higher revenue bracket (ranging from \$51 to \$15,000) in a month WITH a new release.
- 277 of the 608 (45.56%) authors stay in the same \$0 - \$50 revenue bracket, WITH or WITHOUT a new release.

Therefore, in general, months in which authors have a NEW RELEASE can expect to make more revenue than during months WITH NO NEW RELEASES.

## REVENUE PER MONTH – OTHER

The jump in income from \$0 - \$50 during NO-RELEASE months to \$51 - \$15,000 during NEW-RELEASE months can seem quite a big leap. Consider these other comments.

33 out of 1872 (1.76%) of authors with NO NEW RELEASES specified other comments.

- 9 out of 33 (27.27%) authors mentioned they had new releases every month
- 7 out of 33 (21.21%) authors cited being too new and/or have no data
- The remaining comments cited variable data dependent upon book bundles, Bookbub “tails,” boxed set sales, KU, newsletter drip campaigns, sale promotions, and steady post-KU decline.

51 out of 1856 (2.75%) of authors WITH A NEW RELEASE specified other comments.

- 12 out of 51 (23.53%) authors cited no data or need to check data
- 10 out of 51 (19.61%) authors cited no data due to no recent indie releases
- 10 out of 51 (19.61%) authors cited no data due to being new to indie
- The remaining comments cited variable data dependent upon appearances/events/signings, Bookbub tails, genre, KU/All Star bonuses, month of release, reverted titles published, and steady post-KU decline.

With the exception of authors who have little to no data, the other comments mentioned involves:

- appearances/events/signings (small investment for local events to big investment for domestic events)
- KU algorithms (All Star bonuses, post-KU decline)
- networking/cross promotion with book bundle or box set authors (time, money for editing/covers, etc.)
- promotions (Bookbub tails, sale promotions, drip campaigns to newsletter subscribers)
- reverted titles published/in print again
- timing (month of release)

Discoverability/visibility of author works play a large part in revenue. The natural corollary question is: how much authors set aside for marketing/promotion.



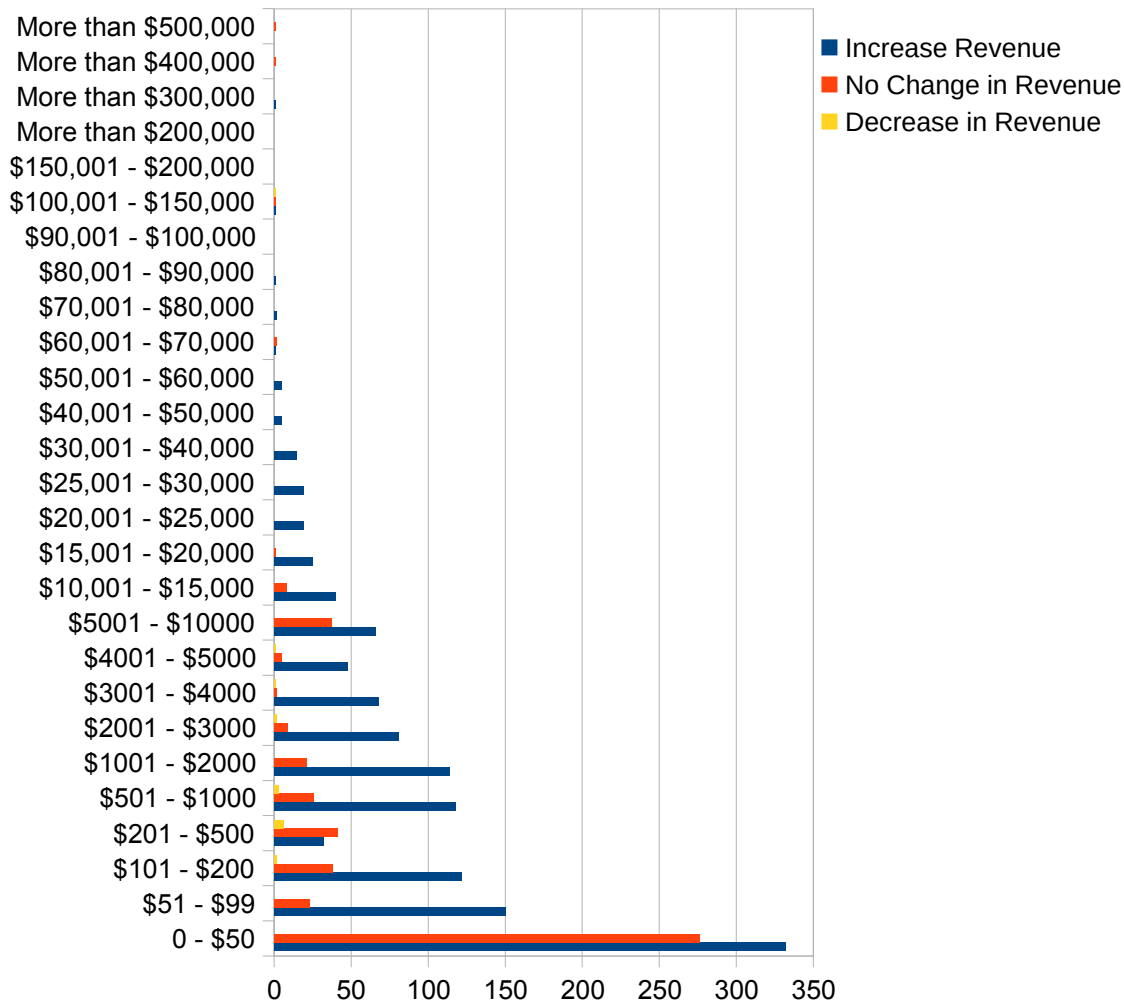
## REVENUE CHANGE PER NEW RELEASE

Authors earning revenue in months WITHOUT A NEW RELEASE are compared to their respective revenues in months WITH A NEW RELEASE to determine how many stay in the same revenue bracket. 1856 out of 1973 (94.07%) authors answered both questions.

- 1365 out of 1856 (73.54%) authors experienced an increase in revenue
- 492 out of 1856 (26.51%) authors experienced no change in revenue
- 15 out of 1856 (0.81%) authors experienced a decline in revenue

Of the 15 authors who actually reported that they had revenue decline in months with a new release, data checks and examination of “other” specified comments revealed that these revenue declines were largely due to:

- (1) authors who did not know their data or needed to check their data;
- (2) the survey design, which did not allow authors to proceed without checking a box;
- (3) no relevant baseline data (e.g., debuted in author bundle before releasing as a standalone; too new to indie to have sell-through products)
- (4) no new indie releases in awhile, yet survey design required them to check a box.
- (5) most of authors’ revenue coming from multi-author boxed sets, not authors’ standalone releases.



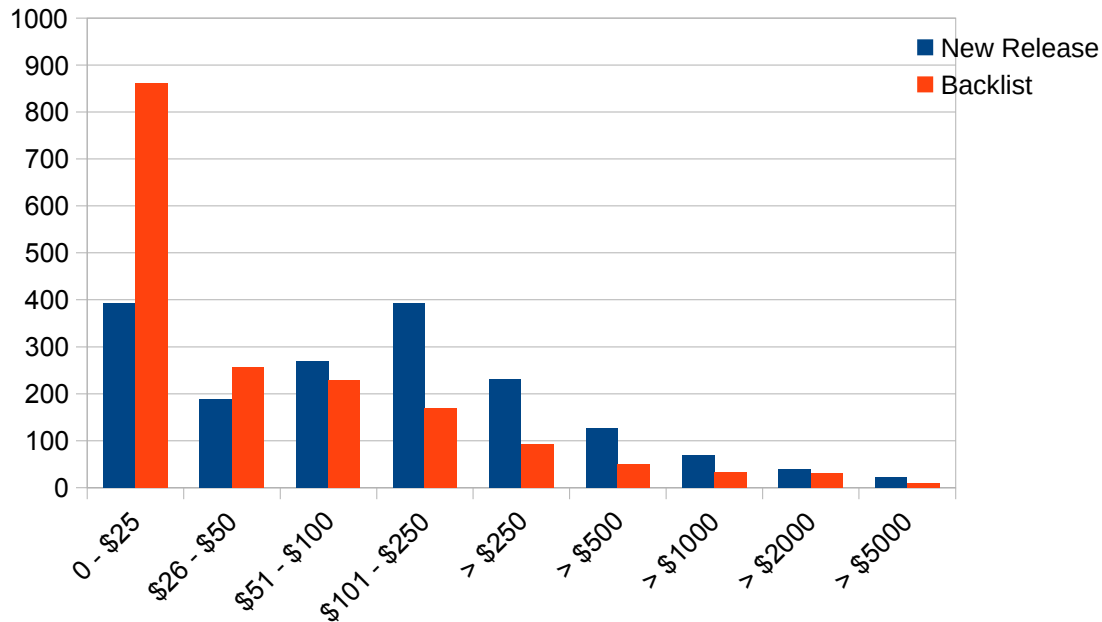
## MARKETING/PROMOTION BUDGET

1733 out of 1973 (87.84%) authors report spending money to promote NEW RELEASES.

**Blue bar** indicates money spent on NEW RELEASE promotions.

1733 out of 1973 (87.84%) authors report spending money to promote BACKLIST.

**Red bar** indicates spent on BACKLIST promotions.



The overall trend is to spend more than \$50 promoting new releases. Only a majority of people who spent up to \$50 on promotions advertised their backlist rather than advertised their new releases.

## REVENUE IMPACT PER PROMOTIONS

1365 out of 1856 (73.55%) authors reported **increase in revenue** in months WITH A NEW RELEASE. 97 out of 1365 (7.11%) authors left the question about promotional dollars blank. Thus, 1268 authors answered the question.

- 222 out of 1268 (17.51%) authors spend \$0 - \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS.
- 1046 out of 1268 (82.49%) authors spend \$26 or more on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS.
- 554 out of 1268 (43.69%) authors spend \$0 - \$25 on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases..
- 714 out of 1268 (56.31%) authors spend \$26 or more on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases.

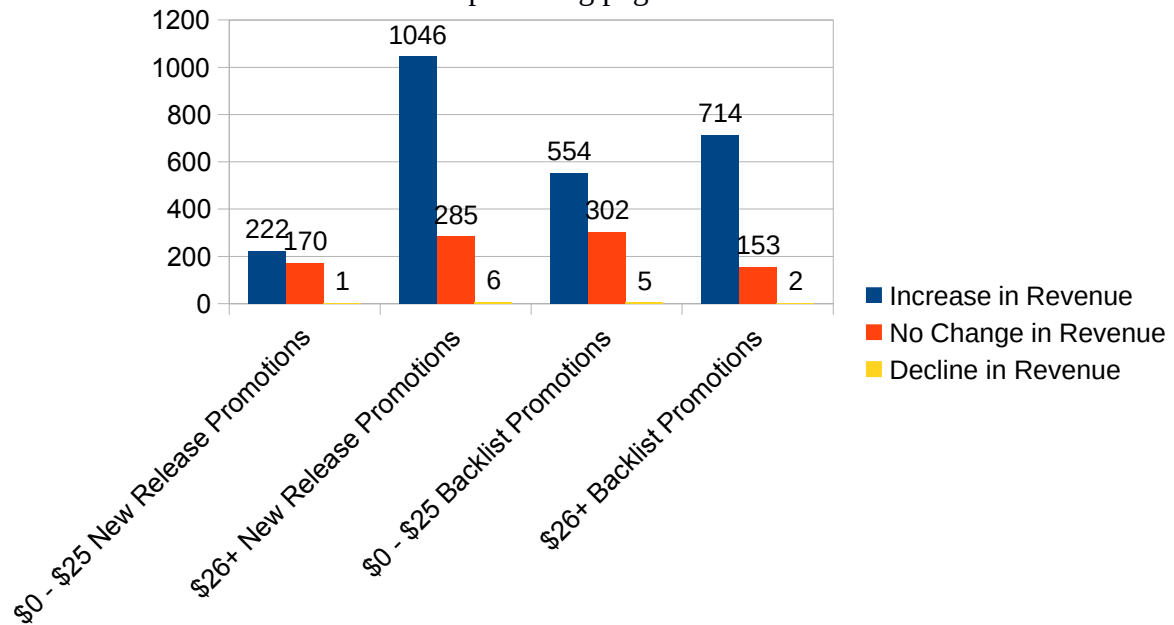
492 out of 1856 (26.51%) authors reported **no change in revenue** in months WITH A NEW RELEASE. 37 out of 492 (28.05%) authors left the question about NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS blank. Thus, 455 authors answered the question.

- 170 out of 455 (37.36%) authors spend \$0 - \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS.
- 285 out of 455 (62.64%) authors spend \$26 or more on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS.
- 302 out of 455 (66.37%) authors spend \$0 - \$25 on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases.
- 153 out of 455 (33.63%) authors spend \$26 or more on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases.

11 out of 15 authors who experienced a **decline in revenues** from months WITH A NEW RELEASE actually reported spending money on promoting new releases. 4 out of 11 (36.36%) authors left the question blank. Thus, 7 authors answered the question.

- 1 out of 7 (14.29%) authors spend \$0 - \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS.
- 6 out of 7 (85.71%) authors spend \$26 or more on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS.
- 5 out of 7 (71.43%) authors spend \$0 - \$25 on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases.
- 2 out of 7 (28.57%) authors spend \$26 or more on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases

This chart summarizes the data in the preceding page.



#### \$26+ PROMOTIONS GROUP

The data in the above chart suggests that most authors who spend \$26 or more on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS tend to experience INCREASE IN REVENUE in months WITH A NEW RELEASE.

The data also suggests that authors who spend \$26 or more on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases also tend to experience an INCREASE IN REVENUE in months WITH A NEW RELEASE.

One may conclude that the NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS tend to generate increase in revenue due to the author's built-in following and ability to attract new readers due to increase of discoverability/visibility from new release promotions, unlike authors who experience no change in revenue and who may have spent the same amount on new release promotions. Thus, the difference in sales must be due to an increase in readership and a built-in following of readers who are interested in reading the next book by the author.

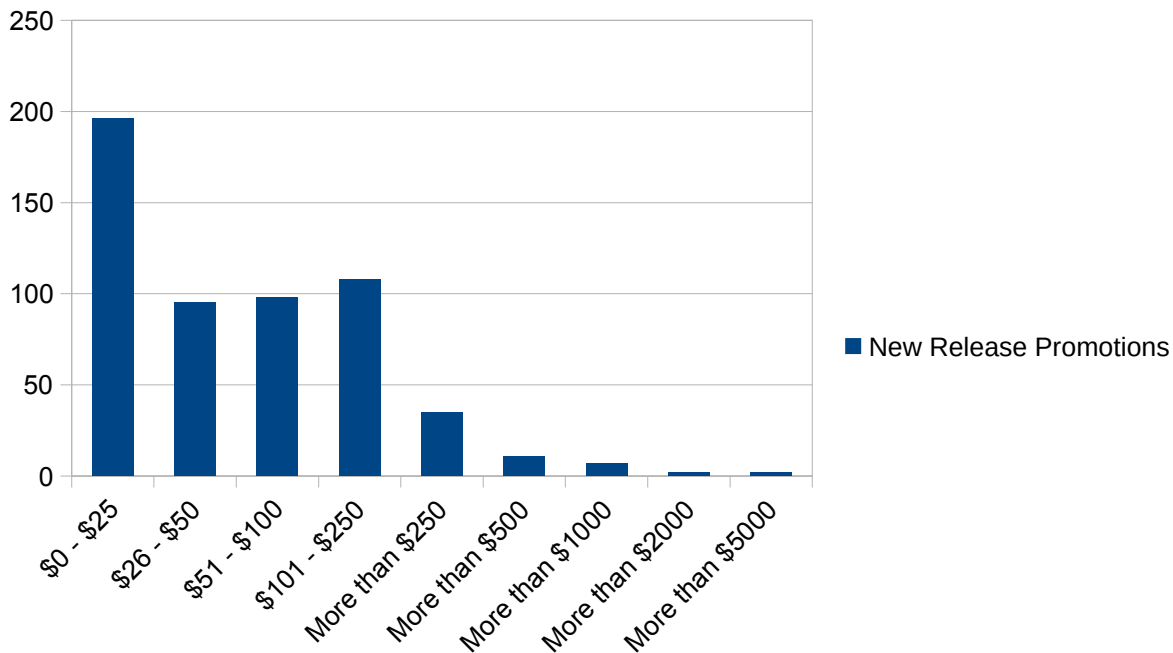
Less authors experience increase in income from BACKLIST PROMOTIONS each month between new releases because these authors most likely have a built-in following that have already read these backlist books and thus these authors are most likely gaining new readers due to increase of discoverability/visibility of authors' books from backlist promotions.

## \$0 - \$25 PROMOTIONS GROUP

Only about a 50-author difference exists between authors who experience an INCREASE IN REVENUE in new-release months from spending \$0 - \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS and the authors who experience NO CHANGE IN REVENUE in new-release months from spending \$0 - \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS. The data suggests that spending up to \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS only has a slight impact on revenue in new-release months.

Many more authors who experience an INCREASE IN REVENUE during new-release months actually spend \$0 - \$25 for BACKLIST PROMOTIONS each month between new releases. The data may lead one to naturally conclude that if one only has up to \$25 to spend on promotions, then one ought to spend those dollars on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS. This strategy is likely most productive when one's backlist book(s) are somehow associated with the new release (e.g., backlist is first in the series while new release is next in the series).

A different curiosity arises upon closer examination of the data on authors who spend \$0 - \$25 BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases and also experience an INCREASE IN REVENUE in new-release months. The chart below shows how this population of authors allocate their budgets for NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS.



Among the authors who spent \$0 - \$25 on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS, the number of authors who spent \$0 - \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS outnumbers authors who spent promotions in other promotional budget categories.

Of particular interest are the authors who spend \$0 - \$25 on NEW RELEASE PROMOTIONS, \$0 - \$25 on BACKLIST PROMOTIONS per month between new releases, and still earn \$2,000 - \$30,000 in an average month WITH NO NEW RELEASE and can earn from \$3,000-\$60,000 in an average month WITH A NEW RELEASE.

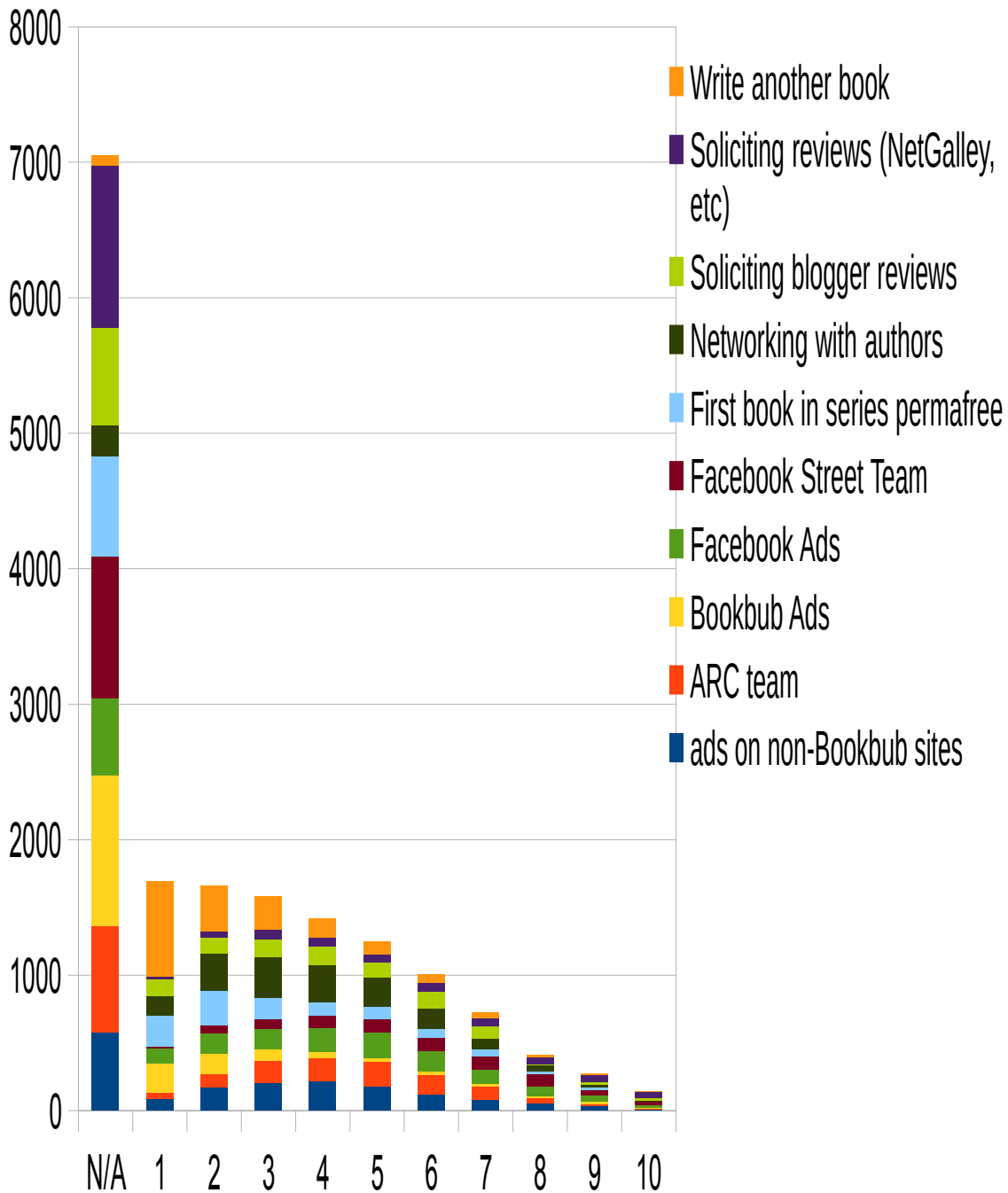
A look into this specific population of 39 authors (\$0 - \$25 on new release promotions, \$0 - \$25 on backlist promotions) and their strategies to grow their indie career, the number 1 strategy for most (26 out of 39 = 66.67%) of these authors is: Write the next book.

Since the survey design only allowed authors to select \$0 - \$25 spent on new release promotions as well as backlist promotions per month between releases, one can venture that the 39 authors most likely have spent \$0 on promotions – neither on new releases nor on backlist promotions – and their revenue stems from readers hungry for the next book.

Future survey design can eliminate this guesswork by creating a \$0 per release or \$0 per month between new releases promotion category as well as a \$1 - \$25 per release or \$1 - \$25 per month between new releases promotion category.

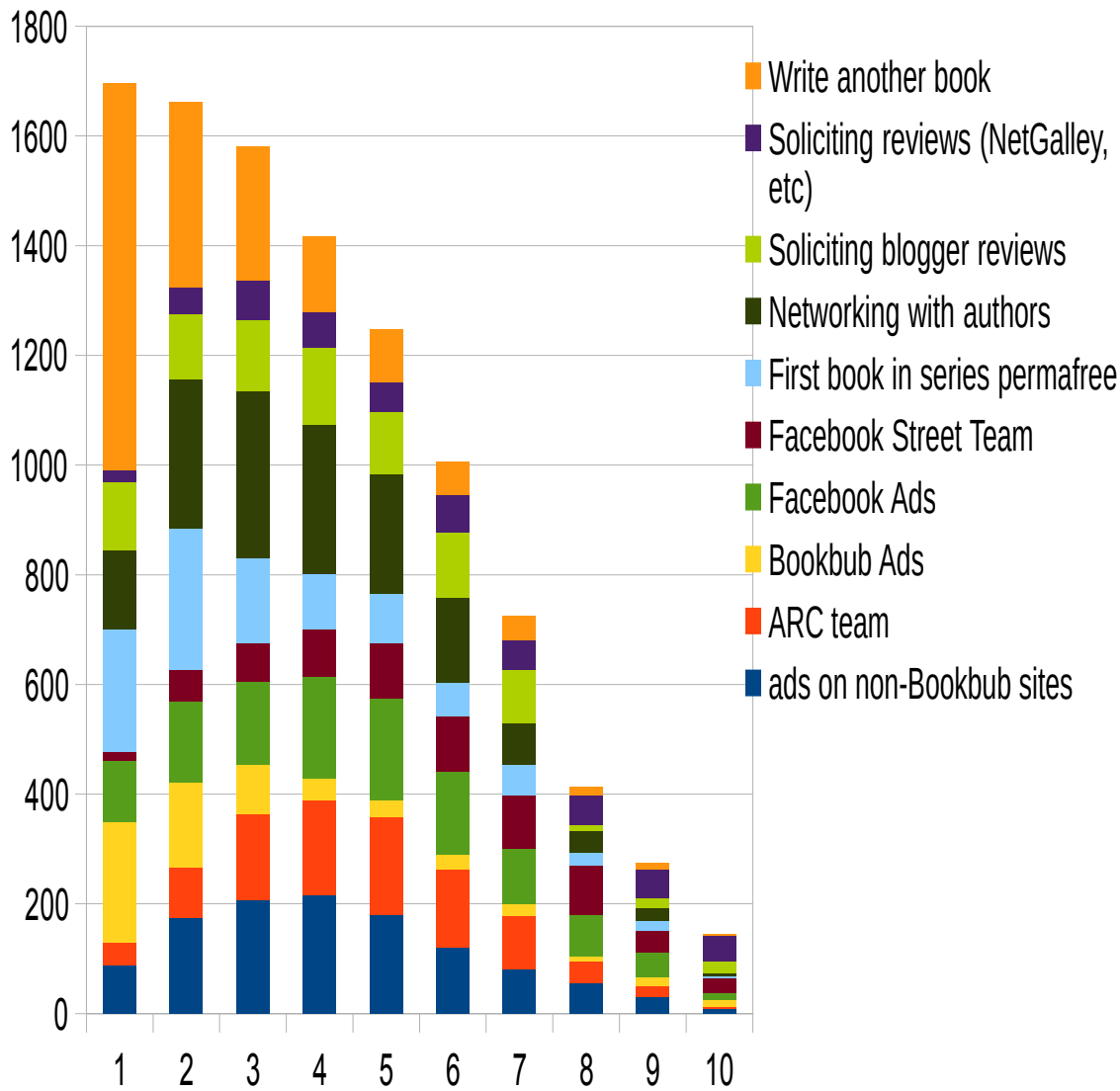
## MOST EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR INDIE CAREER GROWTH

1733 out of 1973 (87.84%) authors ranked the following strategies according to their effectiveness, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least effective.



The ranking of N/A had the highest votes, which implies authors are not willing to use these strategies, are not eligible for using these strategies (e.g., minimal reviews-based ad sites), may not have resources (e.g, budget, time, interest, technical skill) to use or manage such resources (e.g., blogger review outreach, street team), may not have enough books to qualify for such strategies (e.g., first book in series permafrees), or are new to the indie author industry/business/learning curve (e.g., writing their first book, so never mind about writing the next book).

N/A ranking aside, several trends are highly illuminating...



Taking a look at the column representing the 1 ranking (most effective strategy), we can safely conclude that the foremost strategy to further one’s indie career is to write another book (705 out of 1733 is 40.68%). Second is to complete enough books in a series to make the first book permafrees (223 out of 1733 is 12.87%). Third strategy is to apply and qualify for a Bookbub ad (220 out of 1773 is 12.69%).



The data suggests that applying the following three steps in order is the **most time efficient, cost-effective, strategic route to indie authorship**.

- Step 1: Write another book (40.68%)
- Step 2: First book in a series permafrees (12.87%)
- Step 3: Bookbub ad (12.69%)

Alternate strategies: networking with other authors (144 out of 1733 is 8.31%), soliciting blogger reviews (124 out of 1733 is 7.16%)

The first two strategies (writing the next book and making the first book in a series permafrees) are largely within an author's control. Bookbub is not – if rejected, authors need to reapply after 4 weeks; if accepted, authors cannot feature the same book within six months and can reapply for a different book after 30 days.

Scratching Bookbub, the third strategy that is more or less within an author's control in the 1 ranking is networking with authors (144 out of 1733 is 8.31%). No need to wait for a Bookbub. As seen in other previous comments, authors collaborate for anthologies, book bundles, box sets. Cross-promotion boosts everyone up.

Understandably, we see that networking is among the top three strategies in the bar designated for the 2 ranking (second most effective strategies):

- Step 1: Write another book (338 out of 1733 is 19.5%)
- Step 2: Networking with authors (273 out of 1733 is 15.75%)
- Step 3: First book in a series permafrees (257 out of 1733 is 14.83%)

Alternate strategies: ads on non-Bookbub sites (174 out of 1733 is 10.04%), Bookbub ads (154 out of 1733 is 8.89%)

## OTHER EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

774 out of the 1733 (44.66%) authors opted to specify other strategies that they found successful in advancing their indie career.

- 122 of 774 (15.76%) noted that their newsletter is a strategy they use to market/promote
- 90 of 774 (11.63%) appear in public at workshops, conferences, conventions, local events, signings
- 50 of 774 (6.46%) use Facebook for book blasts (video/trailer), events/parties/takeovers, funnels to newsletter/website, genre groups, giveaways, new release blitz, reader engagement, posts (unpaid), teasers
- 35 of 774 (4.52%) use anthologies box sets, book bundles, cross-promotion with other authors

Other strategies include various social media: Twitter, Pinterest, reader/review/genre groups in Goodreads, Wattpad, Bookfunnel/Instafreebie as funnel to newsletter, and retail vendor-specific ads (Amazon, Kobo, etc.)

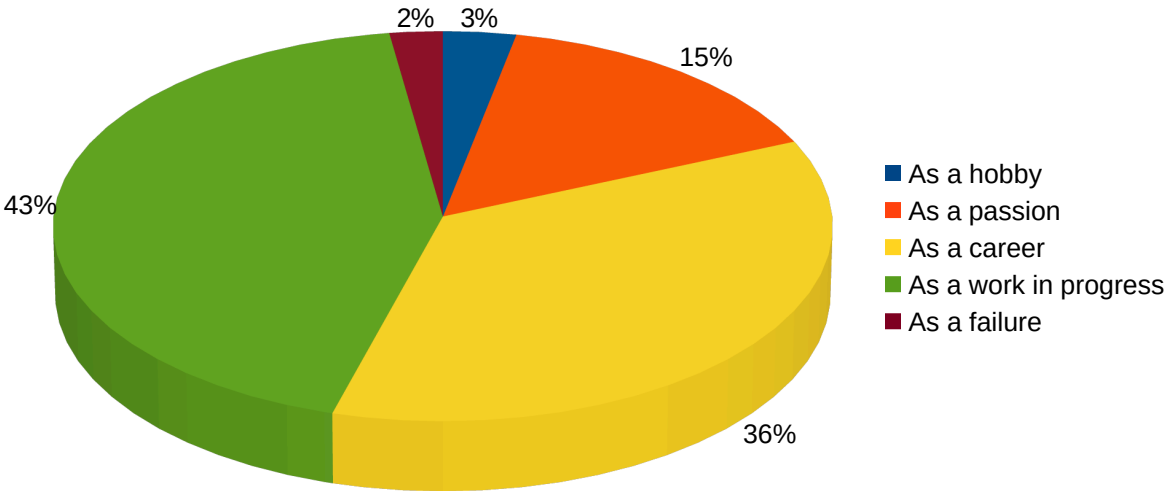
Many authors cite particular strategies that appear 1 out of 774 times (0.13%). These include ad stacking before or after a Bookbub ad; add books to reader sites (What to Read After xyz); add new categories to print and ebook listings (discoverability); audiobook narration/weekly chapters on podcasts (boosts Amazon/iTunes sales); corporate partnerships, schools, monthly talks, complementary

outlets, interactive facebook page (nonfiction); cross-sales from a genre TV show; entering national competitions (award/discoverability/visiblity); exclusive content for newsletter retention; freemium on Radish app; hand selling (children’s books); Kboards; Patreon; PR firm; Publishers Weekly/Kirkus reviews; sampler booklets; sneak peaks (Instafreebie); vendor reps.

A majority of the comments (190 out of 774 is 24.55%) were no, none, N/A, not yet.

### INDIE AUTHOR CAREER GOAL

1733 out of 1973 (87.84%) authors describe their indie author endeavor as:

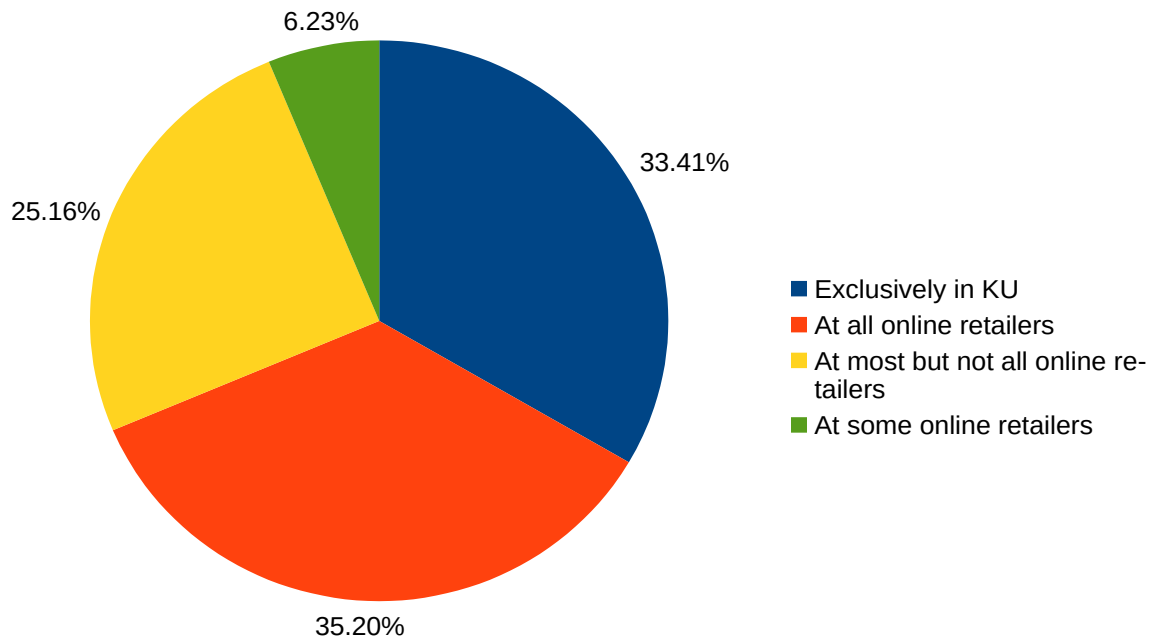


96 out of the 1733 (5.54%) authors specified other:

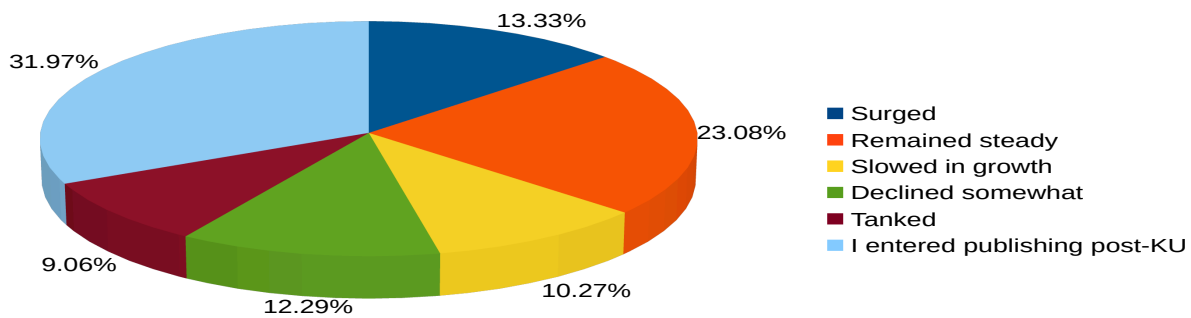
- 35 out of 96 (36.46%) described their indie author endeavor as a career in the making
- 25 out of 96 (26.04%) described their indie author endeavor as a passionate career in the making
- 15 out of 96 (15.63%) described their indie endeavor as a passion and a career
- 7 out of 96 (7.3%) described their indie endeavor as a business/diversification
- 5 out of 96 (5.21%) further noted the revenue loss.
- The remaining comments described it as: more fun pre-KU, a “roller coaster,” a passion turned career.

## INDIE AUTHOR RETAIL SITES

1733 out of 1973 (87.84%) authors publish indie works:



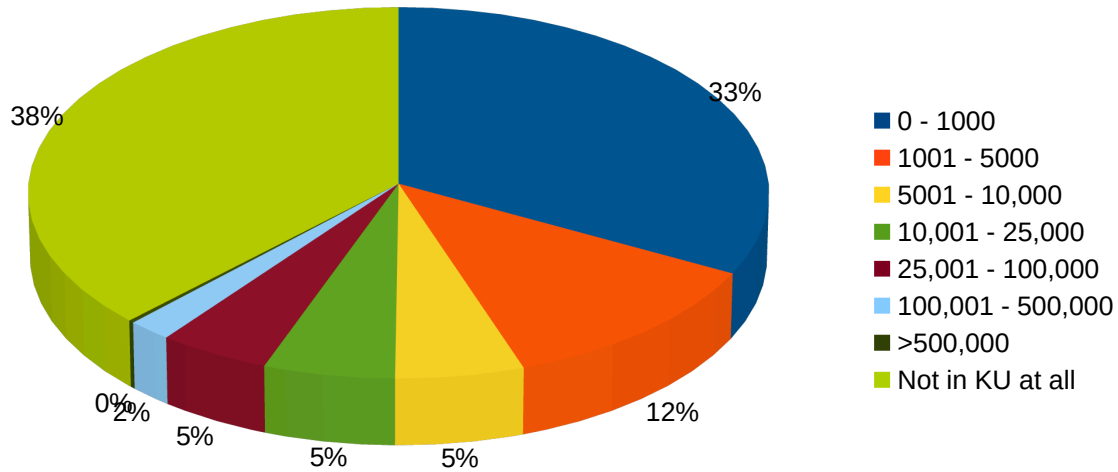
## REVENUE SINCE KINDLE UNLIMITED



1733 out of 1973 authors (87.84%) report these revenue trends since Kindle Unlimited:

## KINDLE UNLIMITED PAGE READS (DAILY)

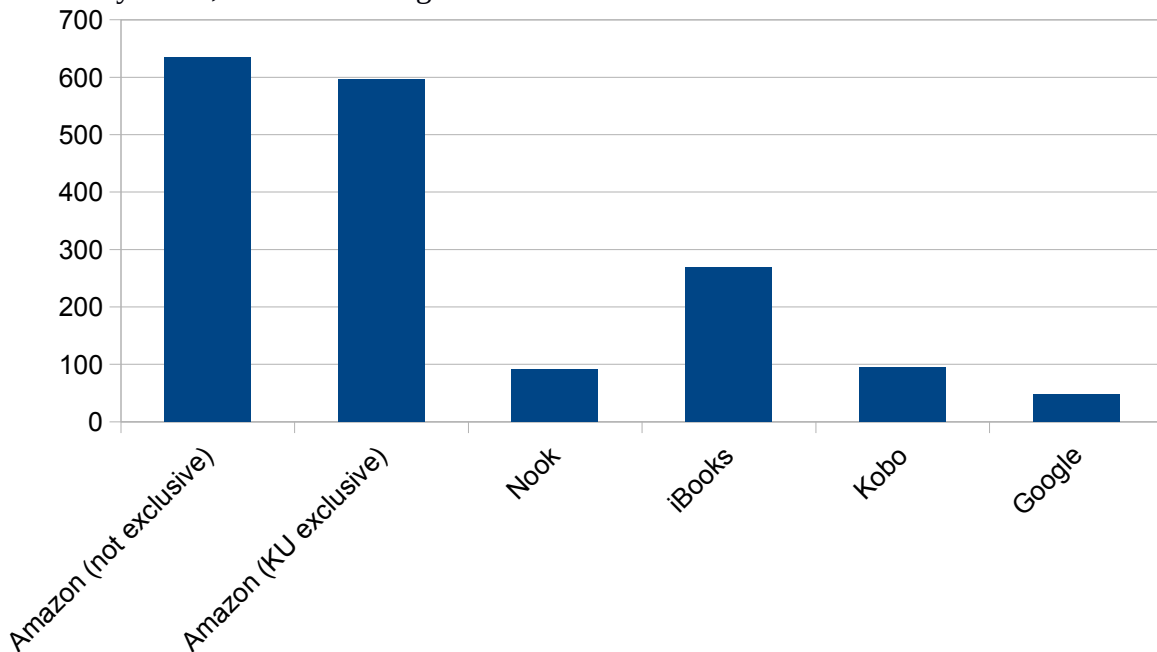
1733 out of 1973 authors (87.84%) reported the following daily page reads in Kindle Unlimited:



1081 out of 1733 (62.38%) authors who answered this question are in KU.

## MOST NEW GROWTH (2015)

1733 out of 1973 authors (87.84%) cited the most new growth on Amazon. iBooks is a far second, followed by Kobo, Nook and Google.

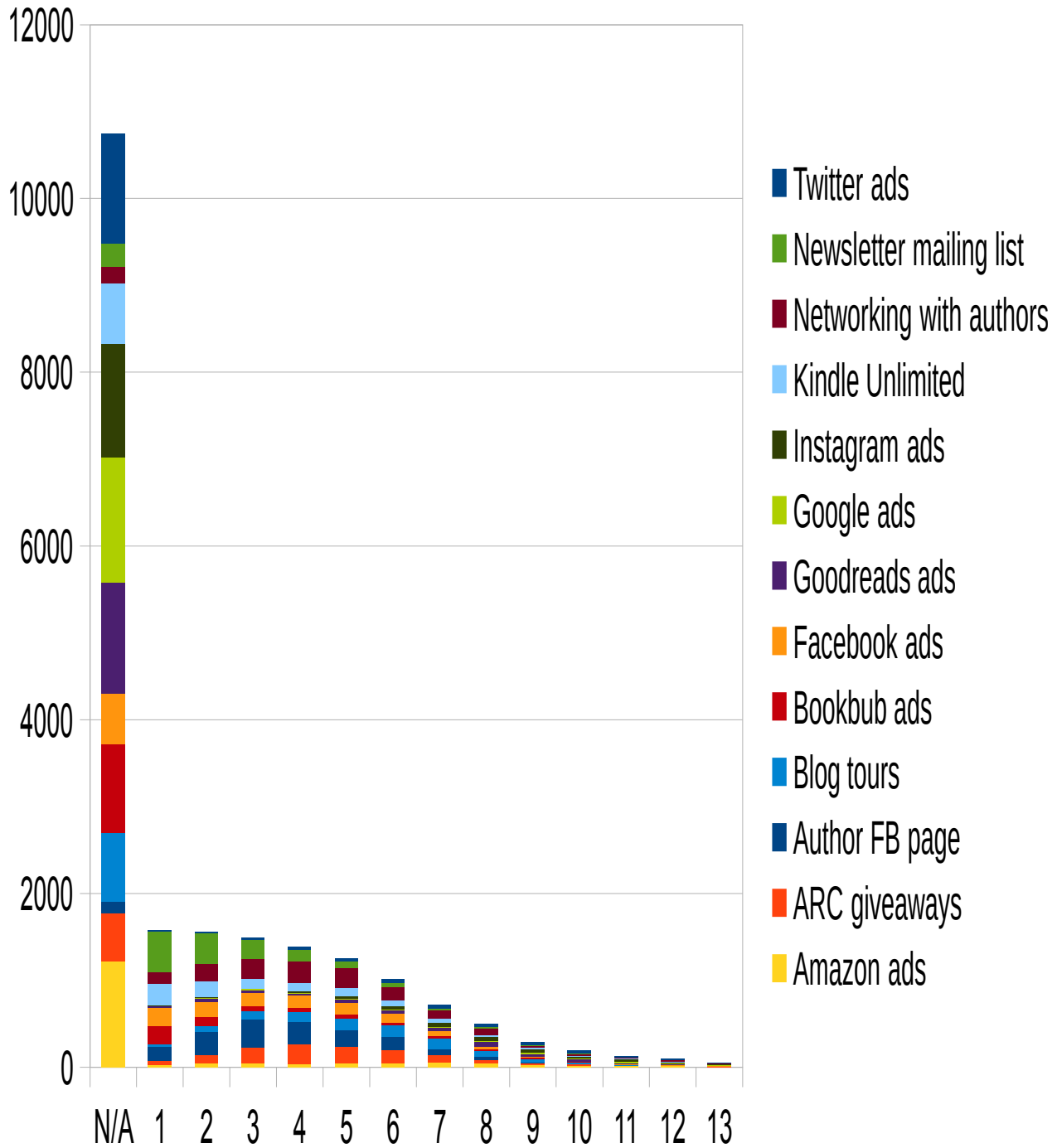


155 of the 1733 authors (8.94%) specified other comments regarding most new growth.

- 30 of 155 authors (19.35%) mentioned little to no new growth at all.
- 13 of 155 authors (8.28%) do not know, do not track, or find the question N/A.
- 14 of 155 authors (9.03%) noticed new growth at All Romance eBooks
- 12 of 155 authors (7.74%) witnessed income loss.
- 6 of 155 authors (3.82%) noticed new growth at Smashwords
- 4 of 155 authors (2.58%) saw increases in Audible sales
- The rest of the comments are one- to three-hitters: Amazon Kindle World, author website sales, bookshops/brick and mortar stores, Bookstrand, Createspace, D2D, Free-ebooks.net, iTunes, Kobo Canada, KU foreign sales, Leanpub, Lulu, Radish freemium app, Storybundle, Facebook ad funnel to KU title promo combo, new growth from new titles only
- One comment mentioned that the authors has some books in KU, some books out of KU and is not all in or all out.

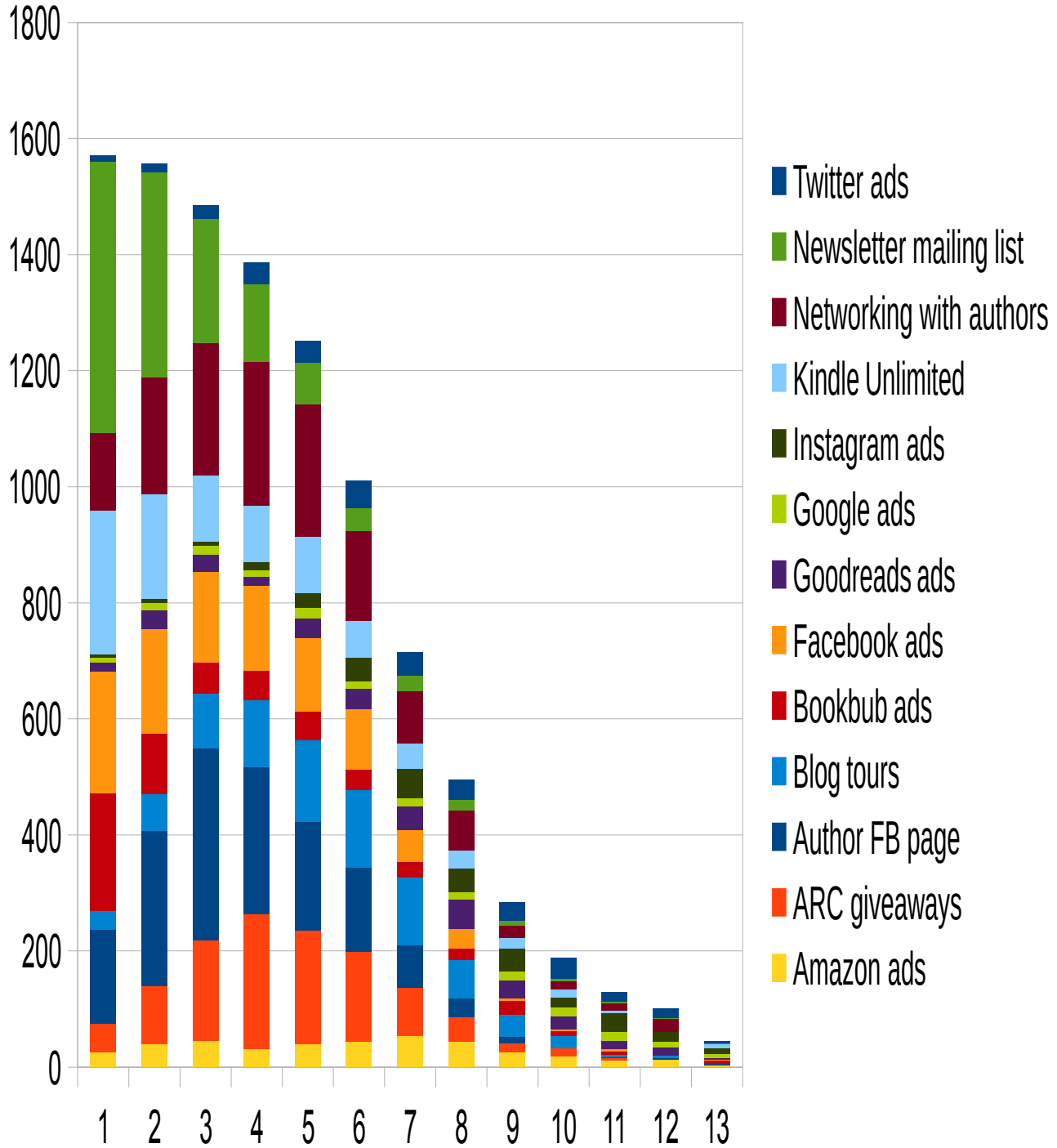
## MOST IMPORTANT MARKETING TOOL

1612 of 1973 authors (81.7%) ranked the following marketing tools in importance, 1 being the most important and 13 as the least important.



The ranking of N/A had the highest votes, which implies authors are not willing to use these strategies, are not eligible for using these strategies (e.g., minimal reviews-based ad sites), may not have resources (e.g., budget, time, interest) to use or manage such resources (e.g., blog tours), may not qualify for such strategies (e.g., Bookbub ads), or are new to the indie author industry/business/learning curve.

N/A ranking aside, several tools seem to be important.



The top three tools that indie authors ranked as important (vote, rank; vote, rank; vote, rank):

- **Newsletter mailing list.** (468, 1; 352, 2; 214, 3) means 468+352+214 (1034) authors out of 1612 (64.14%) find this to be the most important tool.
- **Author Facebook page.** (162, 1; 268, 2; 330, 3) means 760 of 1612 authors (47.15%) find this to be important.

Three-way race for third place importance are:

- **Networking with other authors.** (133, 1; 203, 2; 227, 3) means 563 (34.93%) of 1612 authors
- **Facebook ads.** (211, 1; 181, 2; 157, 3) means 549 (34.06%) of 1612 authors
- **Kindle Unlimited.** (248, 1; 179, 2; 115, 3) means 542 (33.62%) of 1612 authors

Ranked behind these tools are:

- Bookbub ads. (203, 1; 103, 2; 54, 3) means 360 (23.33%) of 1612 authors
- ARC giveaways. (48, 1; 99, 2; 174, 3) means 321 (19.91%) of 1612 authors
- Blog tours. (32, 1; 64, 2; 94, 3) means 190 (11.79%) of 1612 authors

If we look at the bar that represents **Rank 1 alone**, then the top tools are:

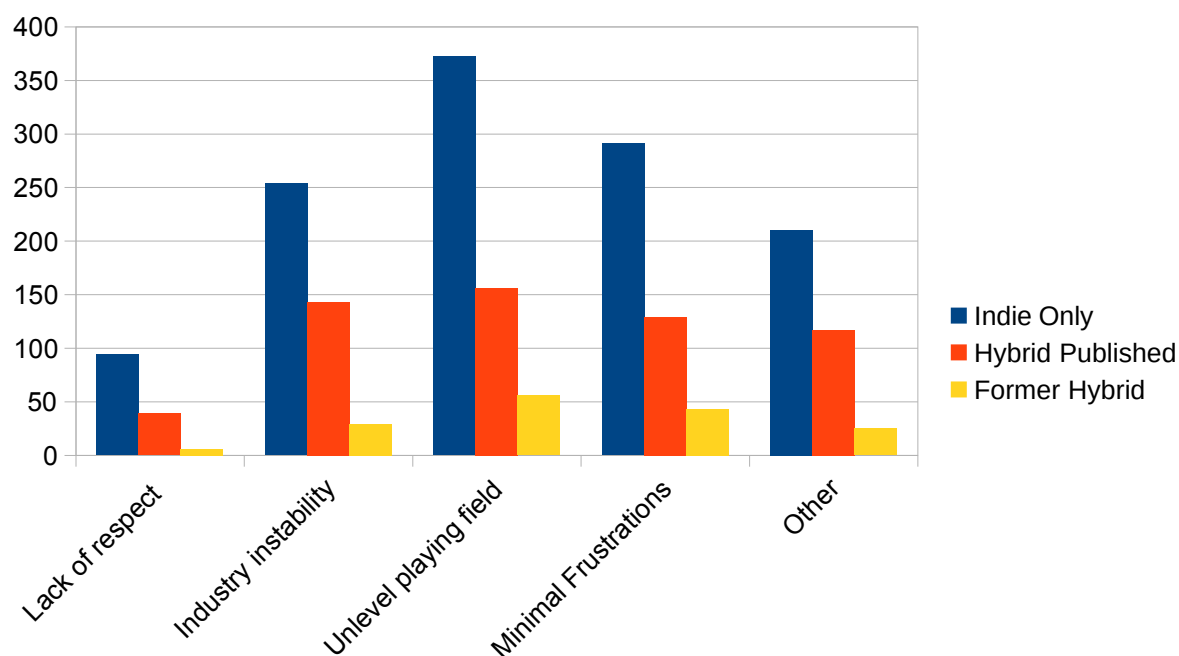
- **Newsletter mailing list.** (468 out of 1612 authors is 29.03%)
- **Kindle Unlimited.** (248 out of 1612 authors is 15.38%)
- **Facebook ads.** (211 out of 1612 authors is 13.09%)
- **Bookbub ads.** (203 out of 1612 authors is 12.59%)
- **Author Facebook page.** (162 out of 1612 authors is 10.05%)
- **Networking with other authors.** (133 out of 1612 authors is 8.25%)

507 of these 1612 authors (31.45%) specified other comments.

- 188 out of 507 authors (37.08%) noticed no other effective tools; 1 stated “advertising is flushing money.”
- 47 out of 507 authors (9.27%) find appearances/events/signings (local and domestic), including Comic Con and Renaissance Faire, to be effective.
- 41 out of 507 authors (8.09%) found other strategies not applicable.
- 39 out of 507 authors (7.69%) found ads in digital/print effective. Digital examples include All Romance eBooks, Audiobook Boom, AwesomeGang, Bargain Booksy, Bknights (Fiverr), Book Barbarian, Book Goodies, BookGorilla, BookGrow, BooksGoSocial, Booksends, Choosy Bookworm, eReader News Today, Freebooksy, Fussy Librarian, Genre Pulse, HiddenGemsRomance.com, MRR, Pretty-Hot, Read Cheaply, ReadFreely.com, Robin Reads, Romance Devoured, ShamelessBookClub, TNL, WantonReads. Only 2 authors mentioned print ads/excerpts in magazines and book/literary magazines.
- 19 out of 507 authors (3.75%) employ their Facebook fan page as a tool.
- 16 out of 507 authors (3.2%) collaborate in multi-author anthologies as a strategic tool.
- 16 out of 507 authors (3.2%) use tools to build their newsletter mailing list. Half use Instafreebie. Writerspace contests and Narelle Todd from Get Your Book Out There each had one mention.
- 14 out of 507 authors (2.76%) hold contests/giveaways. Half specify Goodreads.
- 14 out of 507 authors (2.76%) use blog interviews as a strategy.
- 9 out of 507 authors (1.78%) use word of mouth.
- Quite a number of strategies fall below 1% mention by authors, meaning that 1 to 5 out of 507 authors found the strategies effective.



## GREATEST FRUSTRATION



1612 out of 1793 (81.7%) authors answered the question about their greatest frustration as an indie author.

- 129 out of 1612 (8.62%) authors experience a lack of respect
- 426 out of 1612 (26.43%) authors experience industry instability
- 584 out of 1612 (36.23%) authors experience lack of a level playing field on the retail platforms
- 463 out of 1612 (28.72%) authors are indie because the frustrations are minimal

The breakdown of these answers have been divided into the three author categories for more information.

352 out of these 1612 (21.84%) authors also specified other comments that increase their frustration as an indie author.

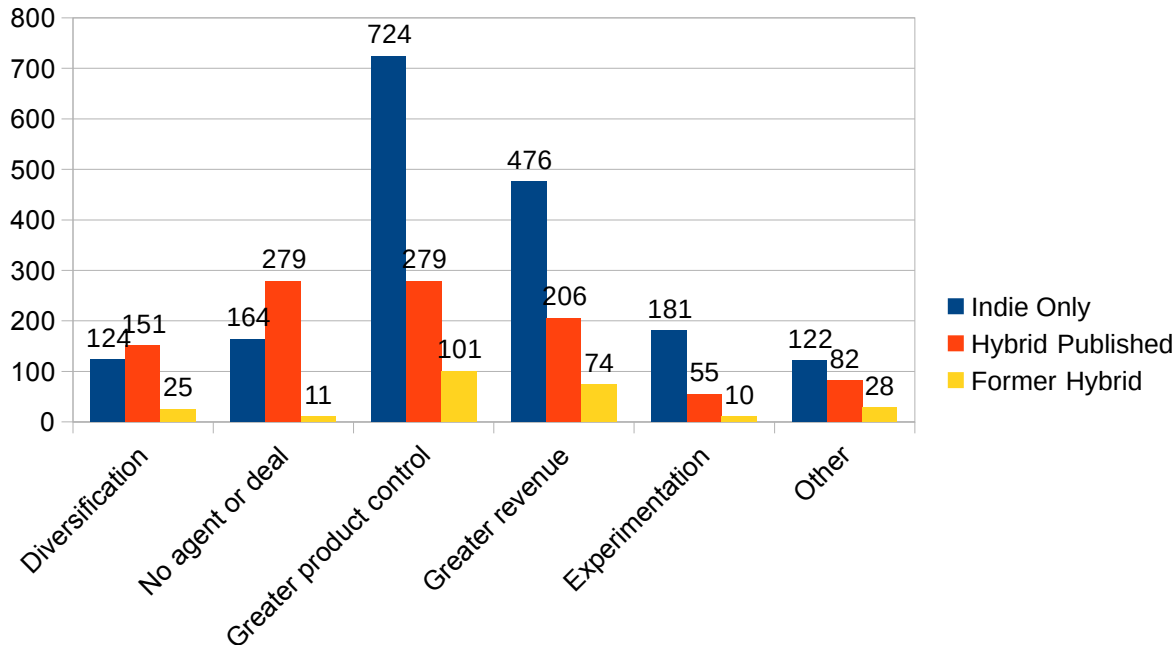
- 119 out of 352 (33.81%) authors point to the difficulty in gaining discoverability/visibility due to market saturation.
- 34 out of 352 (9.66%) authors experience difficulty with lack of Amazon/KU transparency, algorithms, ever-changing rules, antitrust violations, etc.
- 32 out of 352 (9.09%) authors find difficulty in carving out time to write, market, collaborate, etc.
- 23 out of 352 (6.53%) authors point to the huge learning curve in going indie, particularly the marketing and technical aspects.
- 17 out of 352 (4.83%) authors are not frustrated with being indie at all.
- 15 out of 352 (4.26%) authors feel a sense of alienation when managing their business solo. 4 mention they need hired help. 1 feels a lack of guidance/mentorship. 1 mentioned author cliques.
- 14 out of 352 (3.98%) authors cite lack of advertising options (ineligible for Bookbub/Kindle Daily Deals, Bookbub rejections) or lack of a budget for marketing.
- 9 out of 352 (2.56%) authors cite ever-changing trends

- 8 out of 352 (2.27%) authors are disgusted that their indie books are lumped with subpar books.
- 8 out of 352 (2.27%) authors find marketing frustrating.
- 8 out of 352 (2.27%) authors find it difficult to build a platform of responsive readers.
- 8 out of 352 (2.27%) authors have trouble finding quality, influential reviewers (e.g., big bloggers, media outlets).
- 6 out of 352 (1.7%) authors find it frustrating to have so few sales.

All other comments about indie author frustrations fall under 1% representation, meaning that the frustration is only mentioned by 1 to 3 out of 352.

- a couple authors mentioned “all of the above,” referring to frustrations listed on the multiple choice portion of the question.
- piracy, trolls, unscrupulous competitors (e.g., buying reviews, gaming algorithms)
- limited business acumen, limited money to grow their business, no profits
- lack of access to print/brick and mortar stores
- proliferation of 99 cents books for a full novel
- coordinating indie release schedules around hybrid/traditional releases
- lack of access to audio and foreign rights (non-US authorship)
- authors ignorant of the industry
- authors’ income inflation
- “flaky” authors/collaborators and vendors (e.g., web designers, cover designers)
- competition instead of collaboration
- debut authors who break out with first novels (from a veteran author’s perspective)
- editing/rewriting
- “Facebook bubble” – same readers, authors, etc.
- frequent releases in addition to day job, FT work in PT hours
- genre filtering on vendor sites
- lack of diversity in romance
- lack of data
- lack of level playing field at conferences
- lack of reader interaction
- losing reviews when switching platforms
- maintaining visibility
- nothing works
- poor distribution
- unedited books
- variable income
- inaccurate pricing on retail sites
- where I am and where I want to be
- where I am and where others are

## PRIMARY REASON TO GO INDIE



1612 out of 1793 (81.7%) authors checked off 2800 boxes in this multiple checkbox responses, including the option to specify other comments, was received from all three categories of authors when asked about their primary reason for going indie. Excluding the “Other” comments, which will be specified later:

- Greater product control is in the lead with 1104 votes (68.49%).
- Greater revenue is in second place with 756 votes (46.9%).
- Risk management through diversification got 300 votes (18.61%).
- “I couldn’t get an agent or a traditional deal” came in second to last with 227 votes (14.08%).
- “Not sure yet, this is an experiment for me” came in last at 181 votes (11.23%).

232 out of 1612 (14.39%) authors specified other comments.

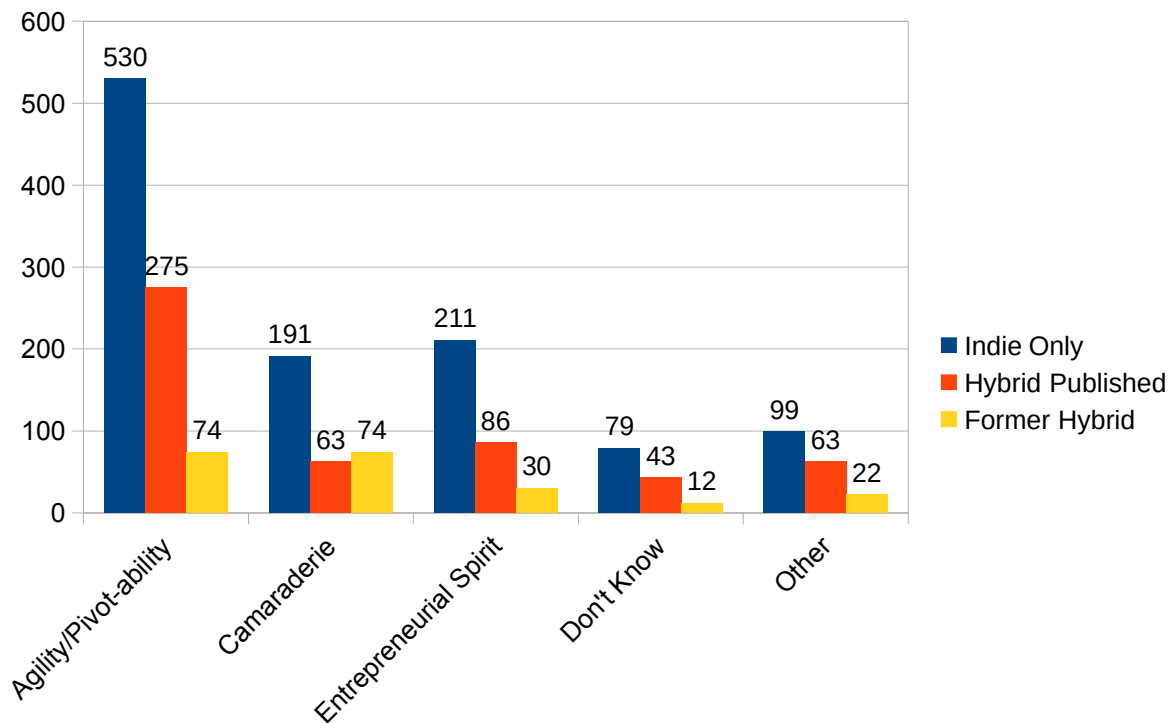
- 48 out of 232 (20.69%) authors love the editorial freedom of indie, including writing at any length and publishing books that are deemed “impossible” to publish.
- 34 out of 232 (14.66%) authors prefer the ability write and/or release at their own pace.
- 23 out of 232 (9.91%) authors are indie to avoid unscrupulous publishers/agents/industry.
- 22 out of 232 (9.48%) authors are indie for fun or better career management. 1 mentions stress reduction.
- 22 out of 232 (9.48%) authors are indie authors who have never tried traditional publishing
- 20 out of 232 (8.62%) authors are indie because of the state of today’s traditional publishing contracts.
- 14 out of 232 (6.03%) authors are indie because of the immediacy of publishing, which is a much more productive use of their time than submitting/revisions and waiting for their work to be reviewed/released by a traditional publisher.

- 11 out of 232 (4.74%) authors are indie to build a platform. 2 mentioned how their publishers dropped the ball on marketing their books.

All other comments generated less than 3% representation (up to 6 votes). These comments are listed in descending order, from the greatest number of votes (6) to the least amount of votes (1).

- going hybrid
- greater revenue potential/full cut of sales
- owning my copyright
- experimental
- pricing/promotional freedom
- traditional publishing hassles
- gratitude for rejections from traditional publishers
- going indie on the advice from an agent
- all of the above (referring to the non-other reasons why the author pursued indie publishing)
- books or backlist books held up by publishers
- diversification
- fear of rejections
- greater product control
- high turnover/few sales with publishers
- rewriting/reselling reverted titles
- inability to sell another deal to a publisher
- visibility between traditional deals

## BIGGEST ASSET/BENEFIT OF GOING INDIE



1612 out of 1973 (81.7%) authors responded to this question.

- According to 879 out of 1612 (54.53%) authors, the leading asset of being an indie author is agility and being able to pivot when needed. Nearly every category of author enjoyed this benefit of being able to switch things up when needed. Agility/pivot-ability tied with camaraderie (defined as “the support of other authors and the flow of information”) for first place among Former Hybrid authors.
- Second leading asset, according to 327 out of 1612 (20.29%) authors, is being an indie author is the entrepreneurial spirit of being indie. This is true among all three categories of authors.
- Third leading asset, according to 272 out of 1612 (16.87%) authors (with the exception of Former Hybrid authors and excluding the Other comments by Former Hybrid authors), is the support of other authors and the flow of information. This third asset is true for Indie Only and Hybrid Published authors.

134 out of 1612 (8.31%) authors chose this multiple choice response: “I don’t know. Being an indie isn’t working so well for me.”

184 out of 1612 (11.41%) authors cited a combination of all or a couple of the three leading assets and/or some other benefits.

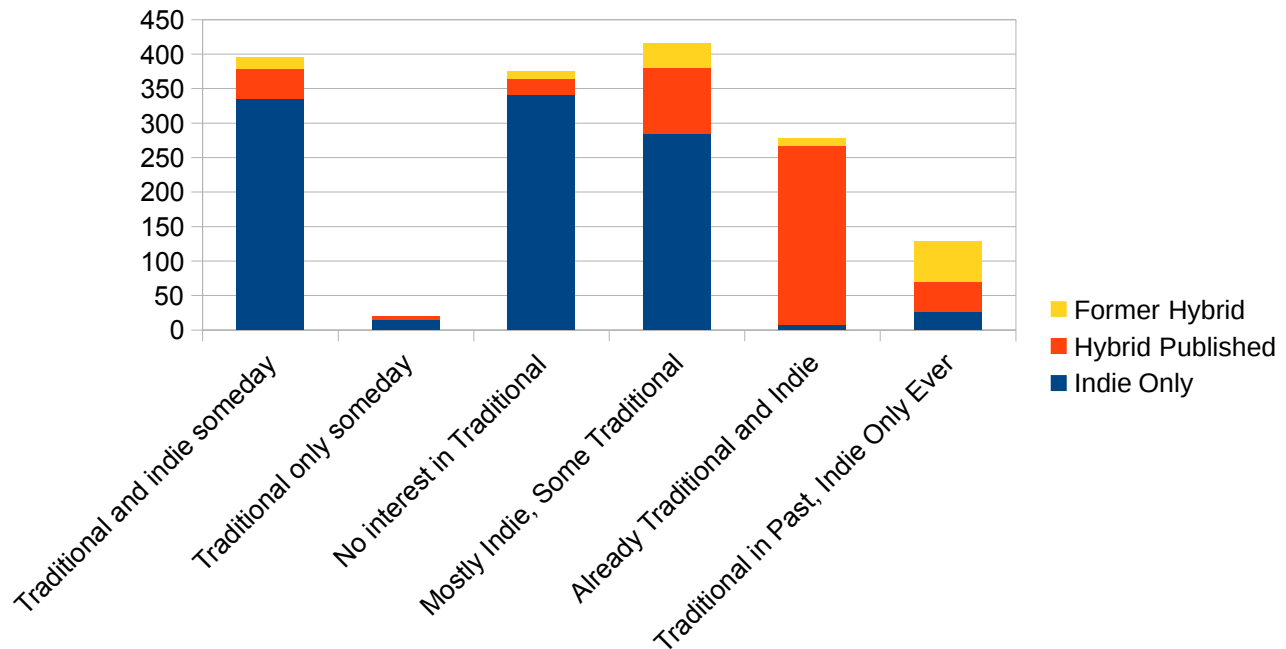
- 41 out of 184 (22.28%) authors mentioned artistic freedom
- 29 out of 184 (15.76%) authors cited what 1 called “absolute freedom,” which means freedom in every aspect of indie publishing.
- 25 out of 184 (13.04%) authors enjoy the work-life flexibility, the self-paced writing/release/marketing schedule.

- 23 out of 184 (12.5%) authors favor the greater revenue potential in indie publishing.
- 21 out of 184 (11.41%) authors enjoy the editorial freedom in indie.
- 12 out of 184 (6.52%) authors prefer being able to manage their business/career better.
- 10 out of 184 (5.43%) authors mentioned the ability to price and promote their products at will.

The rest of the other comments generated up to 4% representation from 71 out of 1612 (4.4%) respondents, ranging from 7 votes (3.8%) to 1 vote (0.54%) in descending order.

- all three assets (agility/pivot-ability, camaraderie, entrepreneurial spirit)
- camaraderie as secondary asset to the main one selected
- too new to indie to assess favorite asset/benefit of indie publishing
- better product management
- entrepreneurial/self-employment as secondary asset to the main one selected
- productive use of time, including the speed to publication
- owning the copyright
- branding
- agility and camaraderie as secondary assets/benefits to main one selected
- build a platform
- indie has its own problems
- reduced stress
- accessibility
- diversification
- transitioning to indie, learning curve
- indie all the way
- other
- reader interaction
- sales data accessibility
- selling backlist
- time to write
- visibility between traditional releases

## INDIE REGARDS TOWARD TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING



1612 out of 1973 (81.7%) authors expressed their views toward traditional publishing.

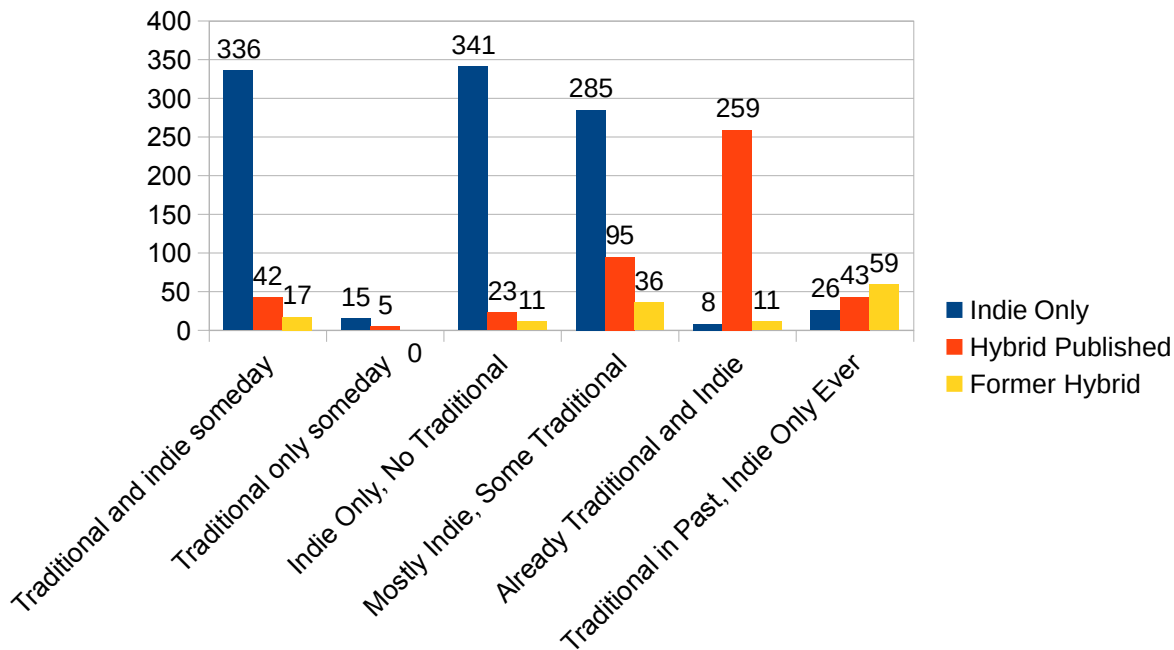
- 1011 of the 1225 (82.53%) Indie Only authors answered this question.
- 467 of the 586 (79.69%) Hybrid Published authors answered this question.
- 134 of the 162 (82.72%) Former Hybrid authors answered this question.

Roughly speaking, we have nearly equal representation from all three categories of authors in that about 80% of each category expressed their views toward traditional publishing.

As a whole, all three categories of authors favor these occupations in the following descending order:

- 416 out of 1612 (25.81%) favor remaining mostly indie with an occasional traditional project.
- 395 out of 1612 (24.5%) would like to someday be traditionally published in addition to indie published.
- 375 out of 1612 (23.26%) have no interest in traditional publishing.
- 278 out of 1612 (17.25%) are already traditionally published in addition to their indie books.
- 128 out of 1612 (7.94%) were already traditionally published and have no interest in going back.
- 20 out of 1612 (1.24%) would like to someday be exclusively traditionally published.

A majority of people favor remaining OR becoming traditionally published and indie-published. (416+395+278 = 1089) So 1089 out of 1612 (67.56%) authors favor having a foot in both worlds. This is followed by nearly a quarter (23.26%) of the authors who plan to stay indie only and have no interest in traditional publishing. Far behind are those who have been traditionally published (7.94%) who don't plan to go back and the near 1% who would like to someday be traditionally published only.



Indie Only Contingent – 1011 respondents (82.53% of 1225 Indie Only survey participants)

- 341 out of 1011 (33.73%) Indie Only authors desire to remain indie only.
- 336 out of 1011 (33.23%) Indie Only authors would like to someday be traditionally published in addition to indie published.
- 285 out of 1011 (28.19%) Indie Only authors desire to remain mostly indie with occasional traditional projects.
- 26 out of 1011 (2.57%) Indie Only authors were traditionally published and have no interest in going back.
- 15 out of 1011 (1.48%) Indie Only authors would like to someday be exclusively traditionally published.
- 8 out of 1011 (0.79%) Indie Only authors are already traditionally published in addition to indie books.

Hybrid Published Contingent – 467 respondents (79.69% of 586 Hybrid Published survey participants)

- 259 out of 467 (55.46%) Hybrid Published authors are already traditionally published in addition to indie books.
- 95 out of 467 (20.34%) Hybrid Published authors plan to remain mostly indie with an occasional traditional project.
- 43 out of 467 (9.21%) Hybrid Published authors were traditionally published and have no interest in going back.
- 42 out of 467 (8.99%) Hybrid Published authors would like to someday be traditionally published in addition to indie published.
- 23 out of 467 (4.93%) Hybrid Published authors have no interest in being traditionally published.
- 5 out of 467 (1.07%) Hybrid Published authors would like to someday be exclusively traditionally published.



Former Hybrid Contingent – 134 respondents (82.72% of 162 Former Hybrid survey participants)

- 59 out of 134 (44.03%) Former Hybrid authors were traditionally published and have no interest in going back.
- 36 out of 134 (26.87%) Former Hybrid authors plan to remain mostly indie with an occasional traditional project.
- 17 out of 134 (12.69%) Former Hybrid authors would like to someday be traditionally published in addition to indie published.
- 11 out of 134 (8.21%) Former Hybrid authors are already traditionally published in addition to indie books.
- 11 out of 467 (8.21%) Former Hybrid authors have no interest in being traditionally published.
- None would like to someday be exclusively traditionally published.

## FIVE YEAR PLAN

1612 out of 1973 (81.7%) authors answered the open-ended question: Where do you see yourself in five years as an author?

- 1011 of the 1225 (82.53%) Indie Only authors answered this question.
- 467 of the 586 (79.69%) Hybrid Published authors answered this question.
- 134 of the 162 (82.72%) Former Hybrid authors answered this question.

355 out of the 1612 (22.02%) open-ended comments were randomly selected to represent the perspectives of each category of authors.

- 215 of the 1011 (21.27% of the 1011 Indie Only respondents to this question) Indie Only perspectives were randomly selected to represent all 1225 Indie Only authors.
- 108 of the 467 (23.13% of the 467 Hybrid Published respondents to this question) Hybrid Published perspectives were randomly selected to represent all 586 Hybrid Published authors.
- 32 out of 134 (23.88% of the 134 Former Hybrid respondents to this question) Former Hybrid perspectives were randomly selected to represent all 162 Former Hybrid authors.

Roughly speaking, we have nearly equal representation (21-24%) of perspectives from all three categories of authors. The data turned out to be similar across the board, no matter what kind of author one was – unless otherwise specified in the comments (e.g., such as the goal of “going wide” that only pertains to KU-exclusive authors).

The following five-year plans are ranked from highest frequency in the open-ended comments to the least frequency.

- 179 out of 353 (50.71%) authors aim to receive more decent income, 12 of whom mentioned financial security, 1 of whom mentioned retirement
- 98 out of 353 (27.76%) authors expect to put out more books.
- 82 out of 353 (23.23%) authors expect to be FT authors.
- 44 out of 353 (12.46%) authors would like more recognition, which includes winning awards, public speaking, and hitting a bestsellers list not as part of a boxed set or bundle.
- 33 out of 353 (9.35%) authors would have increased their fan base.
- 28 out of 353 (7.93%) authors expect to have advanced their career in virtually every aspect of their business.
- 27 out of 353 (7.65%) authors expect to be traditionally as well as indie published, including working with a larger press.
- 25 out of 353 (7.08%) authors expect to be indie only.
- 11 out of 353 (3.12%) authors would have improved their craft.

All other comments were represented by less than 3% of the 353 respondents (up to 9 occurrences in the comments) and are listed below in descending order from the greatest number of occurrences to the least.

- **Artistic Freedom/Expansion** – ability to write as one wishes or expand into other genres/retailers/entertainment channels
- **Market expansion/diversification** – audiobooks, translations, movie deals, traditional publishing deals, becoming a publisher, mass paperbacks, going wide, selling backlist, a cartoon deal, articles in magazines, exploiting subsidiary rights, hardback, offering courses
- **Better business/career management** – including breaking even and ability to manage the indie-traditional balance
- **Happiness/Leisure** – as happy five years from now, slow down to enjoy life/success, become PT author, larger home, mentoring newbies, trusting own judgement, having more time to write, being able to stay at home or downgrade to a PT job.
- **Broke/Burned out/Failed/Still Alive/Dead** (the “dead” comment came from our older authors)

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

717 out of 1793 (39.99%) authors supplied further comments when asked this question: “Is there anything you’d like to add about indie publishing, your career, the highs, the lows, the lessons learned?”

- 449 of the 1225 (36.65%) Indie Only authors answered this question.
- 206 of the 586 (35.15%) Hybrid Published authors answered this question.
- 62 of the 162 (38.27%) Former Hybrid authors answered this question.

444 out of 717 (61.51%) open-ended comments were randomly selected to represent all authors.

- 268 of the 449 Indie Only perspectives (59.69% of the 449 Indie Only respondents to this question) were randomly selected to represent all 1225 Indie Only authors.
- 130 of the 206 Hybrid Published perspectives (63.11% of the 206 Hybrid Published respondents to this question) were randomly selected to represent all 586 Hybrid Published authors.
- 46 of the 62 Former Hybrid perspectives (74.19% of the 62 Former Hybrid respondents to this question) were randomly selected to represent all 162 Former Hybrid authors.

The data was highly variable in the highs, lows, lessons learned department across the board. However, there were enough commonalities to point out certain trends.

### Highs

- 39 out of 444 comments (8.78%) like the control over their destiny/products/business
- 23 out of 444 comments (5.18%) describe indie publishing as the “best thing ever.”
- 19 out of 444 comments (4.28%) appreciate the camaraderie among authors, including the flow of information.
- 15 out of 444 comments (3.38%) like the self-paced writing/release schedule in indie.
- 13 out of 444 comments (2.93%) are happy or upbeat about the future of indie.
- 7 out of 444 comments (1.58%) love the great revenue potential in indie. You get 100% of the cut from retailers.
- 6 out of 444 comments (1.35%) enjoy the artistic freedom of going indie.

### Lows

- 29 out of 444 comments (6.53%) point out the lack of transparency or monopoly or instability of Amazon/KU.
- 18 out of 444 comments (4.05%) point to the lack of discoverability.
- 8 out of 444 comments (1.8%) point out the author cliques and the lack of camaraderie in the industry.

### Lessons Learned

- 33 out of 444 comments (7.43%) advise newbies to the indie publishing industry to keep learning
- 29 out of 444 comments (6.53%) report that being an indie author means being in business. Craft a strategy. Have a plan, a business plan, a marketing plan. Be professional. Develop a thick skin. Have a FT author transition plan/strategy.
- 25 out of 444 comments (5.63%) advise new indie authors to work hard or work harder.

- 25 out of 444 comments (5.63%) tell new indies to write the next book.
- 18 out of 444 comments (4.05%) tell newcomers to be persistent, patient, never give up, despite the learning curve and the slow process. Persevere.
- 16 out of 444 comments (3.38%) suggest new authors ought to experiment in all aspects of their business – the product, the marketing, appearances/events/signings, etc.
- 15 out of 444 comments (3.38%) suggest new authors to write what excites you, the author.
- 12 out of 444 comments (2.7%) advise consistent releases.
- 12 out of 444 comments (2.7%) point to the huge learning curve in indie, including learning the marketing side of the business.
- 9 out of 444 comments (2.03%) advise new authors to be flexible and adjust expectations.
- 9 out of 444 comments (2.03%) suggest interacting with readers, build your fan base.
- 9 out of 444 comments (2.03%) tell new authors to get a good editor, go permafrees after three books in the series.
- 9 out of 444 comments (2.03%) suggest newbies build their newsletter, including having author websites funnel to their newsletters.
- 9 out of 444 comments (2.03%) suggest newbies stay true to themselves, their art, and put that into action. Believe in yourself.
- 8 out of 444 comments (1.8%) suggest authors ought to diversify and go wide with their books.
- 6 out of 444 comments (1.35%) advise newbies to be wary of bad or dated advice.
- 6 out of 444 comments (1.35%) mention taking time to regroup and recommit.
- 6 out of 444 comments (1.35%) advise authors to go indie earlier rather than later.
- 6 out of 444 comments (1.35%) mention the startup capital required to go indie.
- 5 out of 444 comments (1.13%) mention the importance of networking.
- 5 out of 444 comments (1.13%) advise outsourcing when financially able to do so, especially for managing portfolio/promotions or things that you can't do. If you don't outsource, 1 comment suggested going with traditional publishing.
- 5 out of 444 comments (1.13%) advise marketing wisely. Know your market.

All other comments fell below 1% representation, which meant that mentions appeared up to 4 times and as little as 1 time.

### Lows

- Lack of access to brick and mortar stores.
- Lack of time to write/market.
- Inability to expand into audiobooks and translations.
- Magic bullet wanted
- Market expansion question
- Analysis paralysis is real
- If one genre isn't working, experiment in another.
- Instead of competing to outdo other authors, move to a niche genre instead.
- Great indie books still lumped with subpar books.
- Unable to generate ad ROI
- Have a plan B.
- Not interested in social media.
- Feeling stuck with Amazon/KU

- Seeking to go hybrid.
- Seeking a traditional deal.
- Rights to traditional titles were never reverted.

### Lessons Learned

- Learn to write faster.
- Write reader-tailored content.
- Have a budget for marketing.
- Your mileage may vary. For example, investment in each indie release does not guarantee sales.
- Going indie means immediate real-time access to sales data.
- Be polite, avoid mean people.
- Cut the drama.
- Cross promote with author you know personally, not those you have met on Facebook or through other authors.
- Trends often change.
- Focus on what's going right.
- Having a good/reliable production team reduces stress.
- Hybrid is "sweet."
- Improve.
- Join an authors forum.
- Success is precarious.
- Amazon/KU is an opportunity. Use it strategically.
- Be proactive
- Build/rebuild platform.
- Find reviews to qualify for certain ads, stack your ads for free days, have an ARC team.
- Focus
- Indie publishing is losing its stigma. Fast cash crowd is leaving.
- Indie is a risky venture.
- Seek author mentors, go to NINC. Join author groups with professional experience. Distinguish between vanity press and indie publishing.
- Writing is easy, marketing is hard.
- Strike a balance between writing and marketing.
- Be selective with marketing.
- Be in a better place.
- Audiobooks and Patreon surpass ebook revenues.
- Beware of scam artists, competitive authors; heed the authors who are generous and kind.
- Beware of PR firms, promo companies.
- Beware of trolls, piracy, plagiarism.
- Turn blocked book into publicity and sales.
- Bookbub is no better than traditional publishers.
- Bookbub tail is temporary.
- Brand well.
- Cause-oriented books increase awareness of social issues.
- Consider traditional only when price is right and terms allow control over intellectual property.
- Control over covers is overrated.

- Cut out the middle man in traditional publishing.
- Cut your losses/debts/poor ROI.
- Have direct contact with readers, store owners, stakeholders.
- Diversify formats (ebooks, print).
- Don't compare yourself with others.
- Don't hire friends for editing.
- Don't panic.
- Enjoy the editorial freedom of indie publishing.
- Facebook ads did not work for one author.
- Fellow authors' sales prove that your books can sell.
- Few readers cross genres; you will need to establish a new fan base.
- Free indie books and traditional books boost discoverability.
- Ghostwriting is lucrative.
- High point is when your series takes off.
- Ingram Spark is great for POD.
- Invest beyond small ads.
- Keep forums as a safe space to learn.
- KU boosts visibility as a new author.
- KU first 90 days as a strategy before going wide afterward.
- Learn about your industry, then yourself and your niche
- Low sales do not equate to poor writing. Talent does not equate to sales.
- Luck plays a part in success.
- Master one strategy, then learn another.
- Measure success on your own terms.
- More people making money out of indies than indies making money.
- Newfound respect toward marketers.
- No regrets.
- Offer courses to new indie authors.
- Organize your files into different computer folders (e.g., cover blurbs, bios, covers).
- Own your work.
- Pay for great covers.
- Pay it forward.
- Plan for downturn in sales.
- Poor ROI on blog tours.
- Produce professional products – indies are competing with traditional publishers.
- Publishers can be unscrupulous.
- Put successful indie authors' steps into action.
- Research editors/cover designers.
- Secure financial start-up funds before ordering books.
- Seek guidance from other authors.
- Short fiction sales boost novel sales.
- Short stories sold to magazines as promotion tool for books.
- Skip the small presses.
- Skip going with traditional publishing.
- Small press only.

- Stop making excuses.
- Success is from the inside.
- Track data and sales.
- Traditional publishing has greater resources for release day promotions.
- True indies are staying.
- Try blog/Wattpad to increase visibility/discoverability.
- Try Facebook ads sooner. Perfect your Facebook ads.
- Tweak your applications (Bookbub).
- It's an uphill climb to success.
- Visibility/sales is not a given.
- Who you know, who will give you a start-up boost.
- Write good books.
- Write fast and well.
- Write-publish-repeat.



## SURVEY DESIGN FEEDBACK

A few authors commented on current survey and/or design of future surveys:

- Separate income and who that income supports
- Have “None” or “Decline” in question regarding platform growth.
- Nonbinary indie author – please include an Other category for Gender.
- Survey results wanted.

## INDIE AUTHORS WILLING TO BE INTERVIEWED

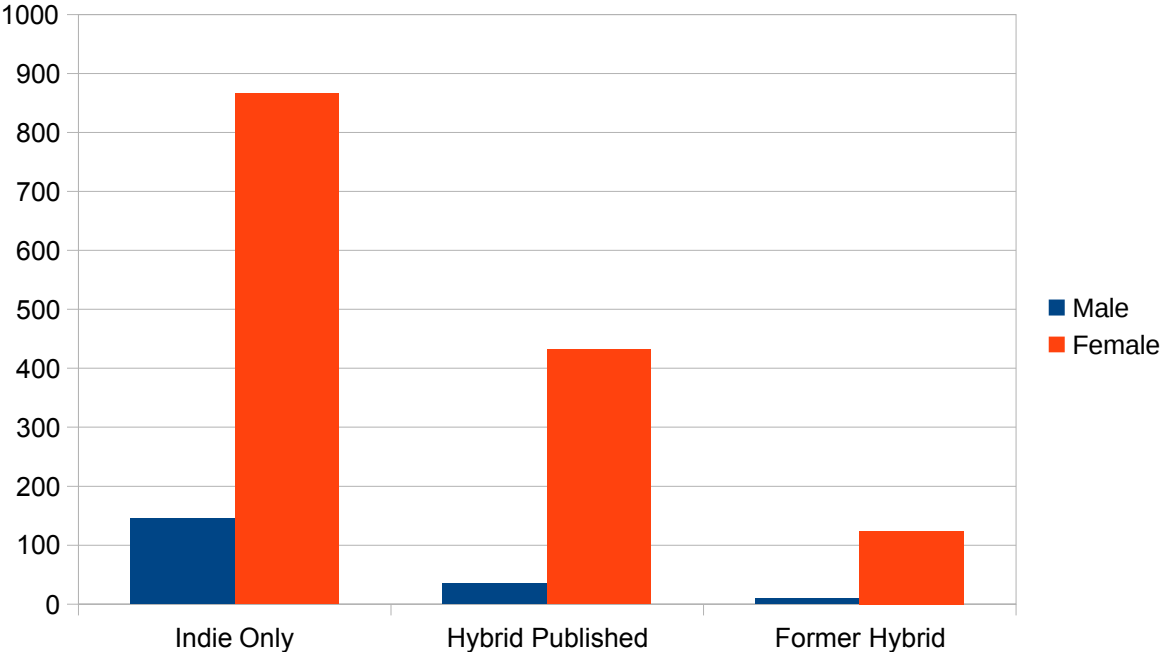
664 out of 1973 authors (33.65%) were willing to be interviewed.

- 661 of these 664 authors (99.55%) supplied a contact email in the field requesting an email address for follow-up contact.
- 475 of these 664 authors (71.54%) supplied a note in the “perspective you might add” field.

475 perspectives broken down into three author categories:

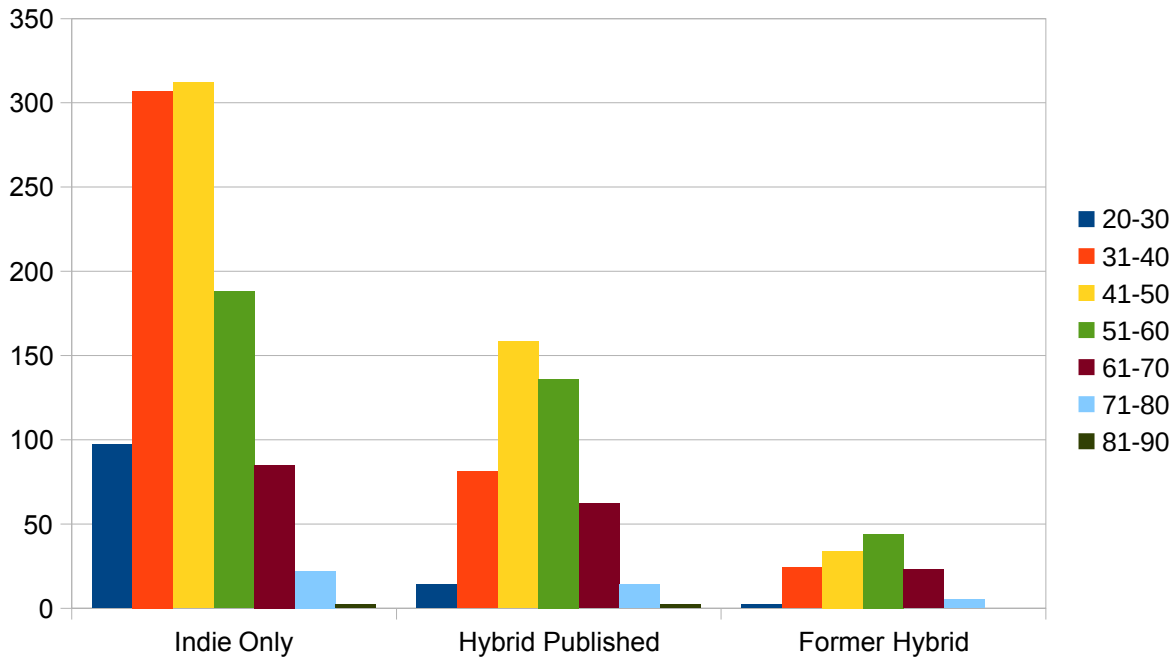
- Indie Only accounted for 319 of these 475 perspectives (67.16%)
- Hybrid Published accounted for 120 of these 475 perspectives (25.26%)
- Former Hybrid accounted for 36 of these 475 perspectives (7.58%)

# DEMOGRAPHICS – GENDER BY AUTHOR CATEGORY



1612 out of 1793 authors (81.7%) answered this question. The women outnumber the men in every category of indie author.

## DEMOGRAPHICS – AGE BY AUTHOR CATEGORY

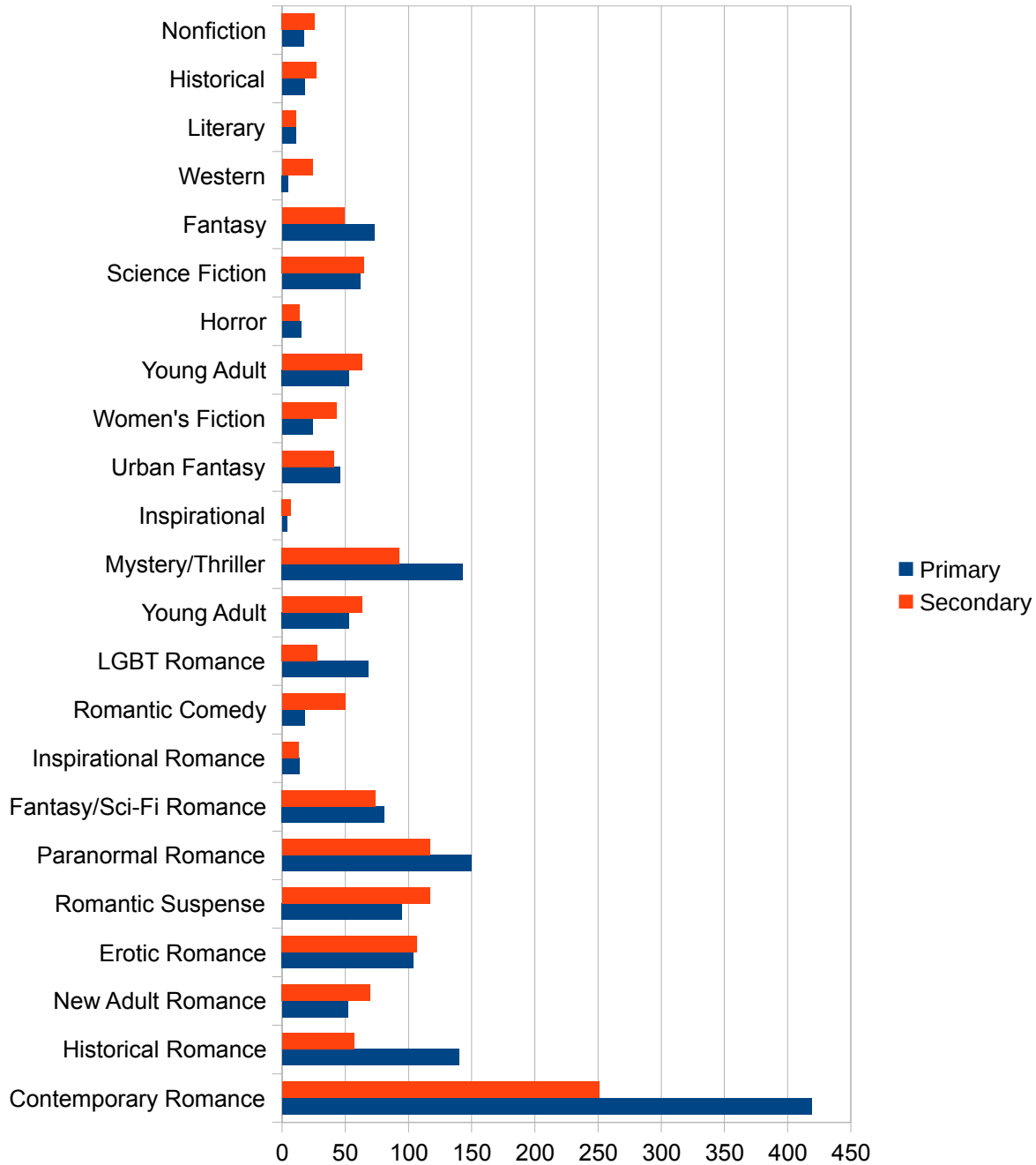


1612 out of 1973 authors (81.7%) answered this question. Quite interesting trend to see is that the younger the author, the more likely he or she seems to choose the Indie Only route.

## DEMOGRAPHICS – GENRES

1792 out of 1973 authors (90.83%) answered the question about Primary Genre, 127 of 1792 authors (7.09%) specified Other comments.

1503 out of 1973 authors (76.18%) answered the question about Secondary Genre, 93 of 1503 authors (6.19%) specified Other comments.



Specified comments in “other” primary genres ranged from:

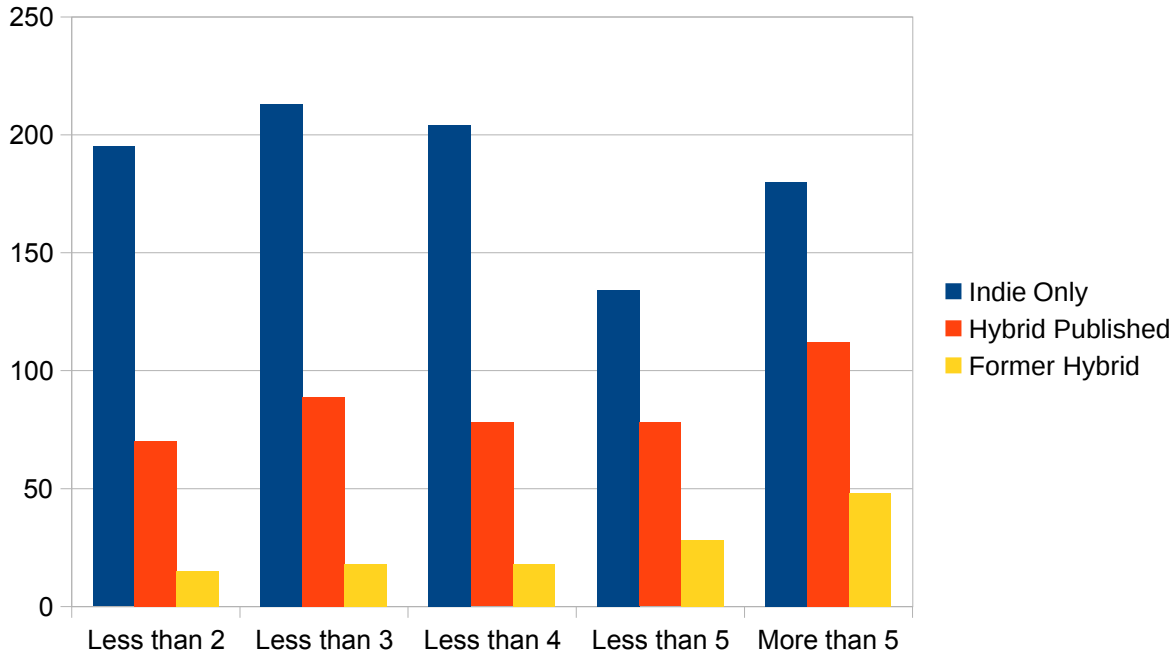
- Action / adventure
- action adventure comedies
- apocalyptic fiction
- Bible-era fiction
- biographical fiction
- children’s books (ages 3-10)
- children’s books (chapter books)
- children’s books (middle grade)
- children’s books (nonfiction)
- children’s books (picture, novels)
- Christian contemporary
- Christian genres
- comedy
- commercial fiction
- contemporary PNR
- contemporary M/M
- contemporary menage
- cozy mystery
- cozy sweet PNR
- crime/police procedural
- dark erotic romance
- dark historical romance
- dark romance
- eclectic, steampunk, sci-fi, political
- engineering
- epic fantasy
- erotic fantasy
- erotic historical
- erotic non-contemporary
- erotic PNR
- erotica
- erotica shorts
- everything
- gothic romance
- historical fantasy
- historical romantic suspense
- historical western
- humor
- humor (life stories)
- humorous cozy romantic mysteries
- hybrid romance
- indie-published reverted titles
- interracial romance (across genres)
- legal thrillers
- LGBT fiction
- LGBT mystery/thriller
- literary fiction
- MC romance
- medical
- metaphysical
- most of the above
- multiple genres and heat levels
- mystery/suspense
- mystery/thriller shorts
- N/A
- new adult SF romance
- new adult/YA inspirational romance
- New Zealand romantic suspense
- nonfiction writing guides
- paranormal
- paranormal thrillers
- PNR/urban fantasy
- poetry
- post-apocalyptic, alternate living
- psychological suspense
- rock star
- rom/com/contemporary romance
- romantic elements
- romantic fantasy
- romantic suspense
- romantic suspense (paranormal elements)
- science fiction and fantasy
- short stories
- spiritual romance
- sports
- sports (hockey)
- sports romance
- steampunk
- supernatural thriller
- sweet contemporary
- sweet wholesome contemporary
- time travel
- time travel historical romance
- traditional Regency
- travel
- vampire PNR
- YA SFF, urban fantasy
- Zompoc

Specified comments in “other” secondary genres ranged from:

- action/adventure
- autobiography
- biography/memoir
- business nonfiction/humor
- chick lit
- children’s books
- children’s books (9-12)
- children’s books (adventure)
- children’s books (middle grade)
- children’s books (picture, chapter)
- children’s nonfiction
- coloring books for special needs kids
- comedy
- coming of age romance
- contemporary country veterinary fiction
- contemporary YA
- cookbooks
- cozy mystery
- creative nonfiction
- crime fiction
- dark romance
- dystopian
- epic and urban fantasy
- erotica
- fantasy
- fiction
- futuristic
- genre fiction
- ghost stories
- gothic romance
- historical paranormal lite
- historical western
- historical western romance
- holiday novellas
- how-to books
- how-to books (writers)
- inspirational/Christian fantasy
- interracial/multicultural
- LGBT mystery
- LGBT paranormal
- LGBTQ
- M/M romance
- memoir
- military romance
- mothers in fairytale retellings
- multiple genres
- new adult
- new adult and college
- paranormal
- paranormal fantasy
- paranormal mystery
- poetry
- post-apocalyptic
- psychological suspense
- romantic mystery/thrillers
- romantic thrillers
- satire/humor
- science fiction and fantasy
- science fiction romance
- sports
- sports romance
- supernatural elements
- supernatural suspense (ghosts)
- supernatural thriller
- sweet, clean, wholesome romance
- sweet contemporary
- sweet contemporary romance
- traditional
- weird western
- women’s fiction
- writing/publishing nonfiction
- YA
- YA fantasy

## DEMOGRAPHICS – NUMBER OF YEARS IN INDIE PUBLISHING

1612 out of 1973 authors answered the question: “Number of years pursuing a career as an indie author”

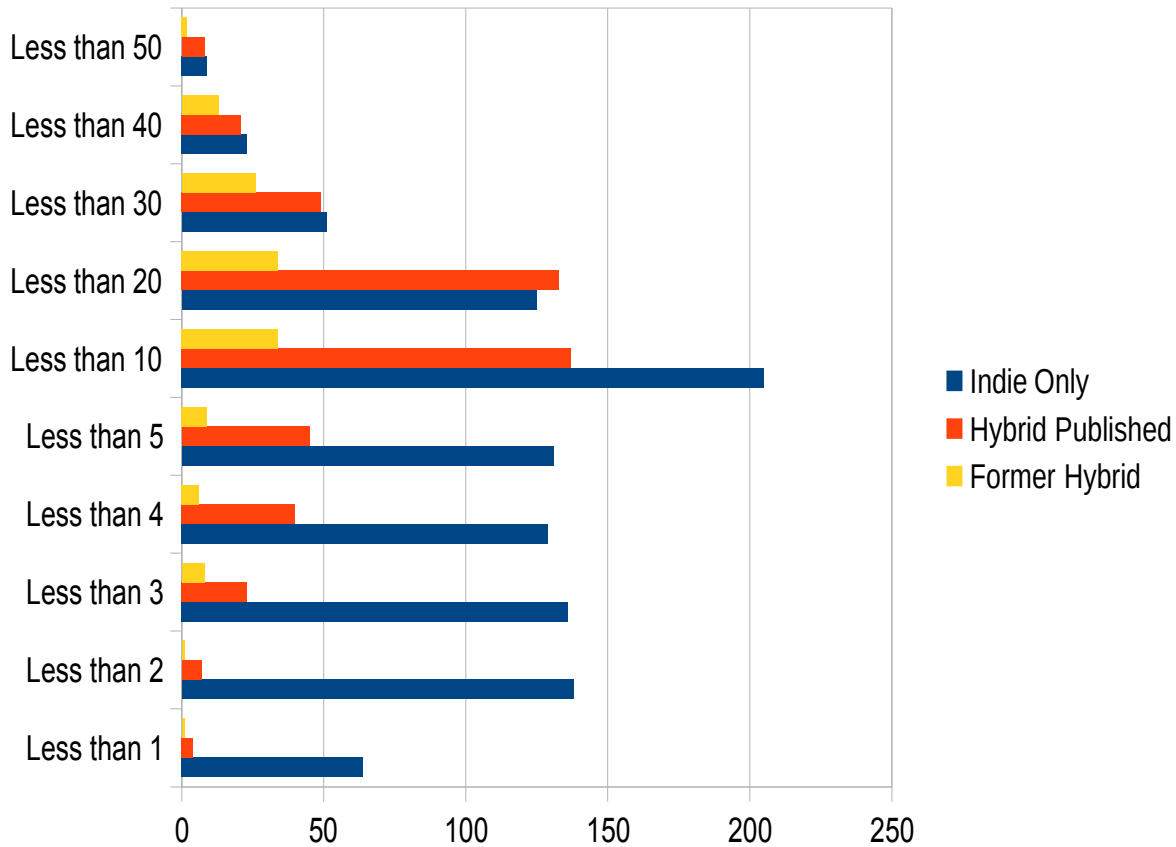


The data suggests that the number of authors in each category of authors have increased at fairly the same rate year upon year.



## DEMOGRAPHICS – NUMBER OF YEARS AS AN AUTHOR

1774 out of 1973 authors (89.91%) answered this question: “Number of years pursuing a career as an author.”



Entry into the indie publishing industry was at a peak within the past 10 years. Less people are Hybrid Published in the last 5 years. Even less are Former Hybrid in the past 5 years.