



2025 Books & Business Insights:

**How Creators Are Earning
Money with Their Books**



Introduction

The ways we create, market, and share content have undergone drastic changes over the last 20 years. The Internet, affordable publishing, print-on-demand, and now AI are all reshaping the creator economy and book publishing industry. To better understand how successful authors and creators are growing in the current environment, we surveyed 2,065 creators, authors, and business owners.

Countless agencies and organizations offer insights about how the evolving world of content creation and entrepreneurship impacts creators. Still, few look specifically at how the business of selling books is changing.

That's why we decided to poll authors, creators, publishers, and business owners from a variety of publishing backgrounds to learn how they are creating and selling books today.





Overview of the 2025 Creator Research Report

- **Creators Self-Publish:** Nearly three out of every four respondents (72%) said that their book is the primary type of content they create. Of those who sell books, 94% prefer self-publishing versus pursuing traditional publishing options.
- **Creative Control:** Authors agree that publishing is the right way to grow their audience, share vital knowledge, and make money. Self-publishing offers them the flexibility, affordability, and creative control they need.
- **Real Income:** 92% of creators earn up to \$40,000 annually from book sales, using their books as part of a broader income strategy.
- **Revenue Diversity:** Authors use books as an additional revenue stream in conjunction with other products and services like courses, workshops, consulting, and speaking engagements.
- **Marketing Challenges:** Content discoverability and book marketing were cited as the top challenges by most respondents.
- **Audience Size:** The most successful authors (those making more than \$40,000 a year from book sales) all have at least 1,000 email subscribers and/or social media followers.

Author Revenue Groups

To better understand how respondents are approaching the publishing process and using their books to make money, we've sorted them into three revenue groups based on their annual income from book sales.

The Author, Creator, and Business Landscape

Of the 2,065 authors, creators, publishers, and business owners who agreed to share their journey with us, we discovered that the vast majority of respondents identify as authors (80%). Most of these authors also work full-time (45%) while creating and selling their content.

92% of respondents surveyed self-published their books and earn up to \$40,000 a year from book sales.

80%

Identify as an 'Author'

34%

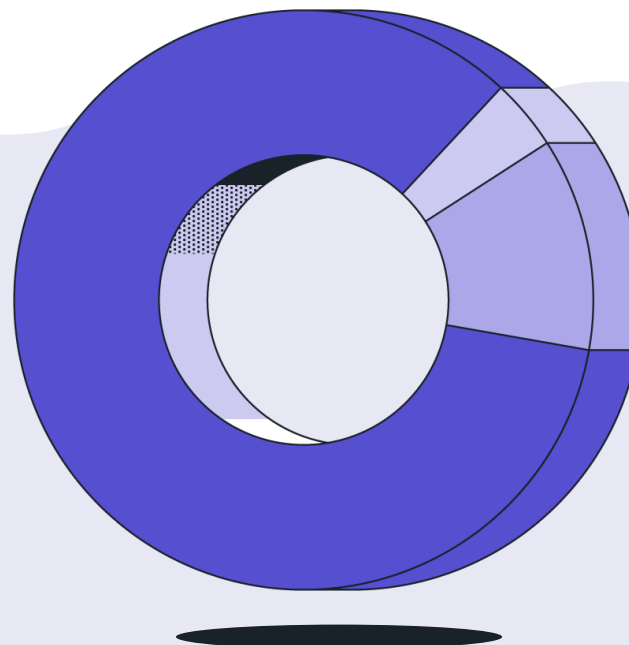
Earn between \$1,000 - \$40,000 annually from book sales

92%

Self-publish their books

5%

Earn more than \$40,000 annually from book sales



- **Low Income**
Authors earning up to \$9,999
- **Middle Income**
Authors earning between \$10,000 and \$99,999
- **High Income**
Authors earning more than \$100,000



How Creators Identify

Books are a key component of the way creators identify. Most creators have published at least one book and consider themselves to be authors.

What Do You Consider Yourself?

	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
Author	77%	64%	56%
Business Owner	6%	17%	29%
Entrepreneur	6%	8%	11%
Content Creator	6%	3%	0%

Employment Status

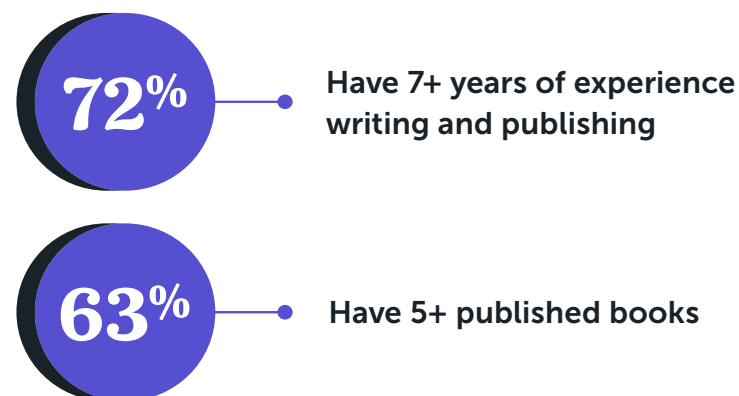
	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
Full-Time	28%	14%	20%
Self Employed	27%	53%	37%
Retired	28%	7%	7%
Business Owner	6%	17%	34%
Part-Time	9%	4%	3%
Not Employed	6%	4%	0%

80% of respondents identified as Authors, and 92% have published a book, magazine, or workbook. Books play a significant role in the creator economy, generating revenue and establishing authority for various types of creators. That so many professionals identify as authors shows how important and relevant this distinction is.

"The book has shaken loose quite a few people at the very top of the market. What I mean by this is businesses that are doing millions of dollars in revenue, and they're doing \$100,000+ per month on sponsorships. I've had conversations with some of these businesses who now look to me as the expert, because I'm the guy with the book. So I am now reimagining what my offer ladder looks like to serve much, much higher-end businesses who are looking to me for support."

— Justin Moore, Author of *Sponsor Magnet*

While most see themselves as authors, it's not nearly that simple anymore. Even serial fiction authors who focus on creating have to think like entrepreneurs to stay ahead of the competition and sell their book.



Looking at how respondents across different income levels answered, we see most high earners identifying as self-employed authors or business owners. Very few are unemployed (0%) or retired (7%).



Breakdown in Publishing Methods

Among authors, 94% reported that they self-publish their books. This indicates a widespread use of accessible publishing channels and control over their monetization models, reducing barriers to entry.

It is notable that many respondents also selected Hybrid or Traditional, indicating they tried a variety of publishing routes to find the one that best suited their needs.

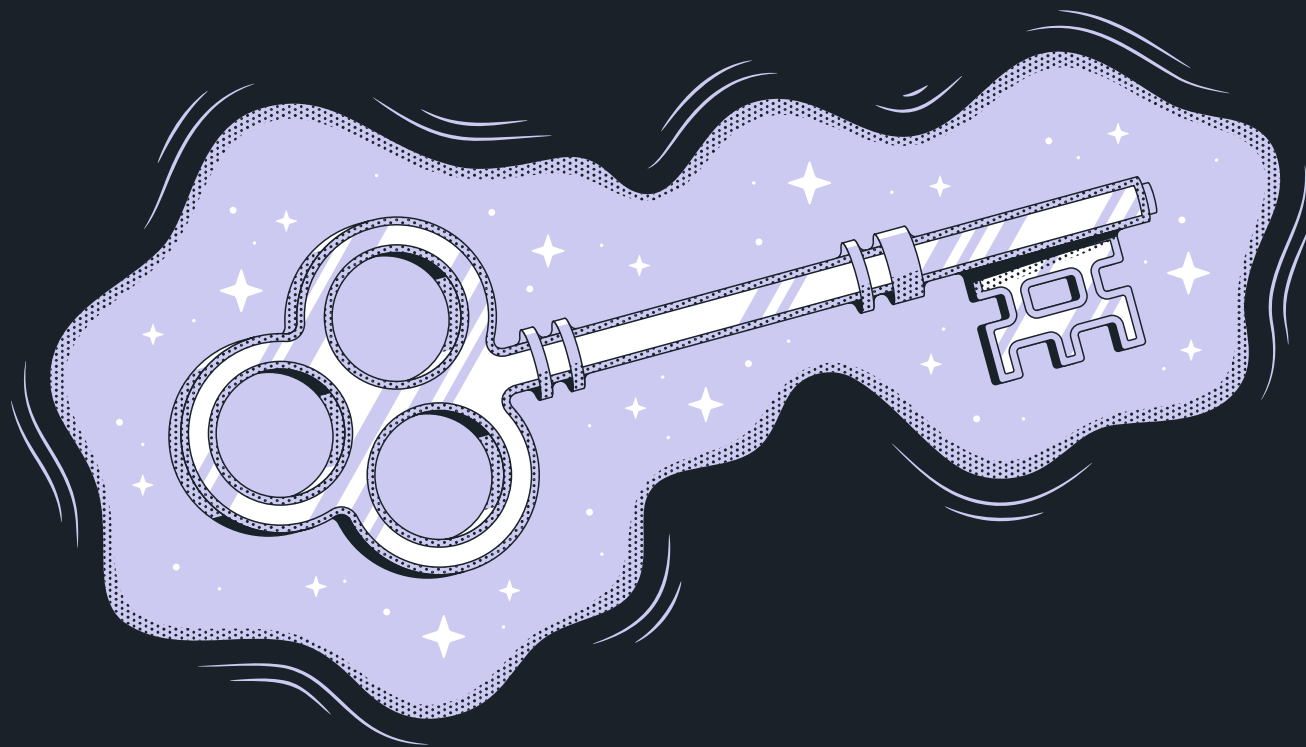
Publishing Model	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
Self-Published	96%	90%	83%
Hybrid Publisher	8%	12%	23%
Traditional Publisher	17%	28%	29%





Key Takeaways

Content creators at all income levels see themselves as authors but also view their work as a business. The majority choose to self-publish, have many years of content creation and publishing experience, and are often still employed full-time while creating and selling content.





Creators Are Playing the Long Game

Content creators we surveyed indicated that most of them (68%) intend to continue creating and selling their books. These creators are not looking to scale into a larger business or sell their follower lists. Instead, they aim to continue growing their audience and profiting from the content they create.

These same creators have been at it for a long time, with most (72%) having 7+ years in their content business or working for a business that involves creating content.

Goals	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
I plan to continue publishing and selling books.	70%	67%	0%
I plan to remain a solopreneur while growing my business.	14%	14%	91%
I plan to grow a small creator business.	6%	0%	2%
I plan to build a business that supports many creators.	5%	0%	1%
Other	3%	0%	1%

Creators making less than \$100,000 per year see themselves as authors (69%) and aim to continue publishing and selling books. Those making more than \$100,000 see their content as a business (91%). Regardless of how these creators view their business, the sentiment remains; they intend to keep building their content catalog and selling it to their fans.

Most Respondents Design, Edit, and Format Themselves

With 94% of survey respondents identifying as authors choosing to self-publish, it's important to understand how much they invest in their books.

We asked authors how much they spend in total on designing, editing, and formatting their book and cover.

	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
Nothing - I do all of the designing, editing, and formatting myself	62%	45%	36%
Nothing - I work with friends or peers who do the designing, editing, and formatting	8%	6%	3%
\$1 - \$499 per book	16%	21%	25%
\$500 - \$1,999 per book:	11%	23%	25%
\$2,000 - \$4,999 per book	4%	5%	14%
\$5,000 - \$9,999 per book	1%	2%	0%
\$10,000 or more per book	1%	2%	0%

Nearly 60% of all authors don't spend anything on design, editing, or formatting. These creators save on purchasing services by investing their time and relying on their own skills to create book files. But, as the author's income rises, they are more likely to allocate budget for the design process.



When comparing how much authors spend making their books and their average annual income from books, we see that creators who invest in their projects often see higher income from book sales.

Spend \$1 - \$499 per book	Spend \$500–\$1,999 per book	Spend \$2,000+ per book
49% earn up to \$999/year from book sales	45% earn less than \$999/year from book sales	8% earn over \$100,000/year from book sales
10% earn \$10,000–\$39,999	13.2% earn \$10,000–\$39,000/year from book sales	3.3% earn over \$150,000

How Creators Capitalize on Books

Of the respondents who sell books, 89% intend to keep publishing while growing their audience and revenue. The majority are focused on building a sustainable, solo business around their content.

Creators point to a variety of retail and sales channels, with the most popular being Amazon, Lulu’s Bookstore, and their own website. This shows that authors at all levels understand the importance of diversifying retail channels and making their books available for sale wherever their readers are present.

How Creators Sell Their Products

Among creators who sell their books (both print and ebook), Amazon remains the most popular option. This includes selling print and ebook editions.

Platforms Creators Are Selling Books On	Combined %
Amazon	45%
Lulu Bookstore	34%
My Website	33%
Apple	13%
Other	13%

Nearly one out of every three creators surveyed sells their books on their website. These creators also showed higher earnings from their books compared to others.





Respondents Rely on Diverse Sources of Income

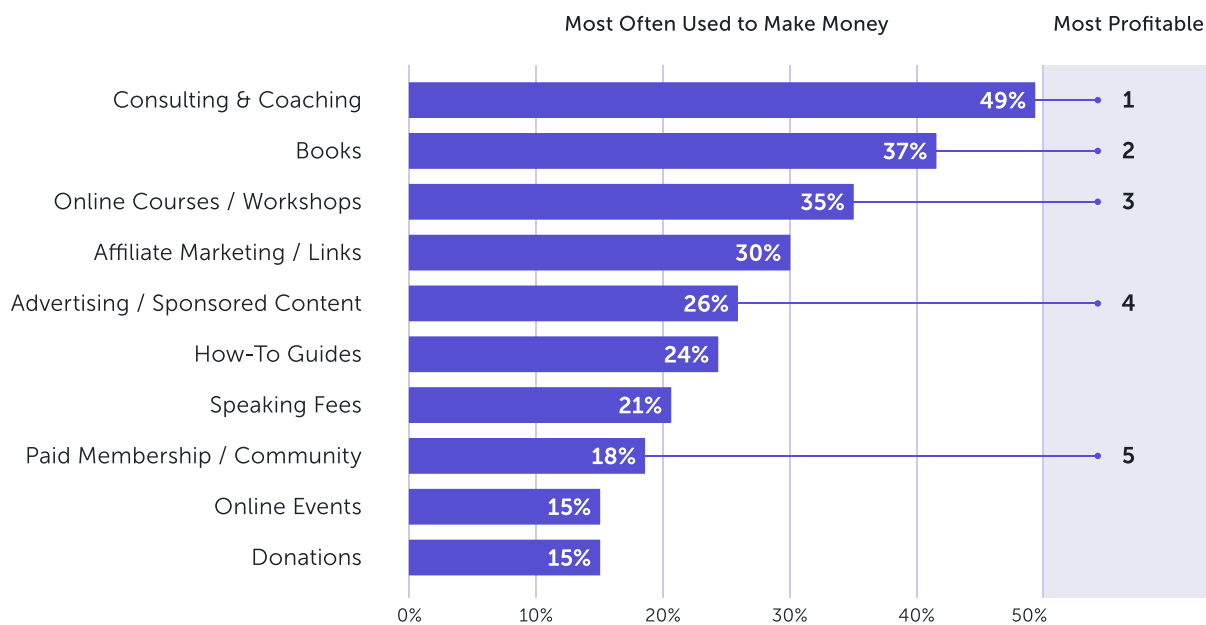
While 25% of creators exclusively sell books, most offer additional products or services to generate regular income from their content.

Additional Income Stream Category	Percentage
Speaking	20%
Consulting	20%
Courses	18%

From research we conducted in 2023, we learned that these are the same methods (along with book sales) that creators have long relied on.

Monetization Tactics

Consulting and coaching are top tactics for expertise-driven creators.

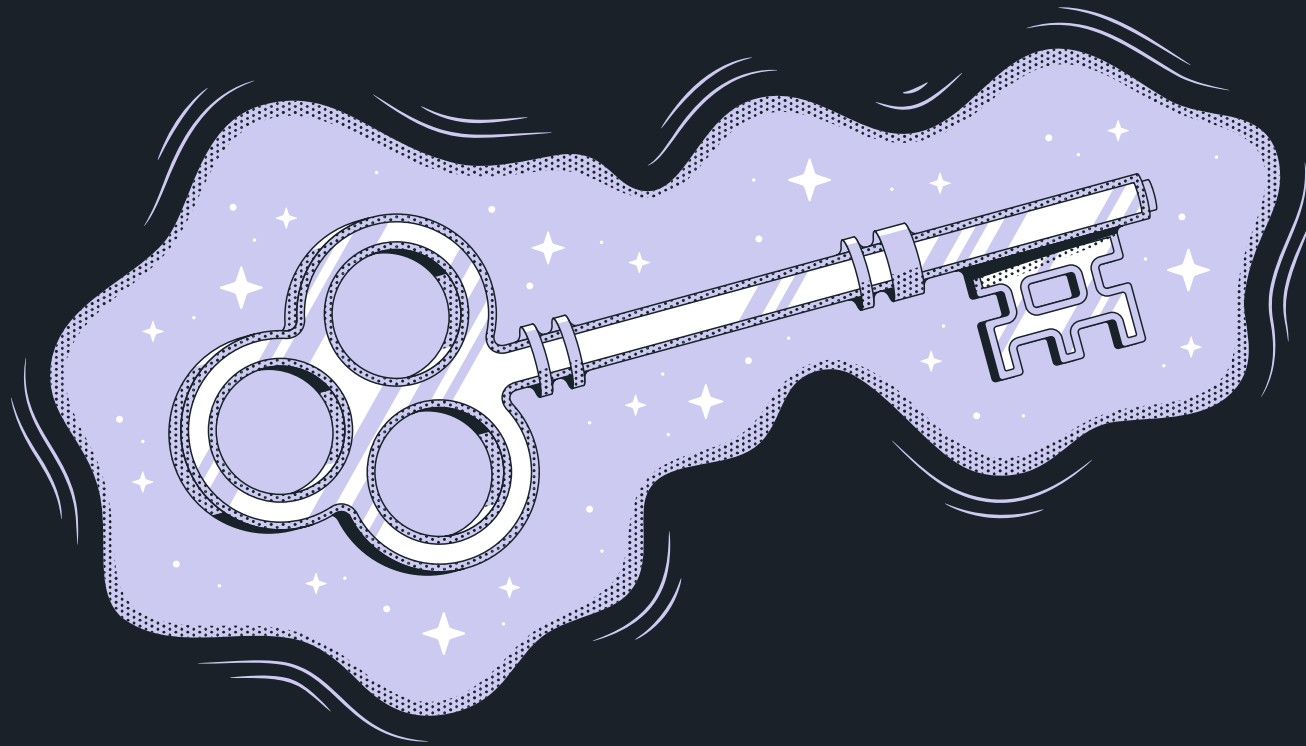




Key Takeaways

Most creators spend little to nothing designing, editing, and publishing their books, but those who do invest in design tend to earn more. And while it is unsurprising that Amazon is the dominant sales channel, creators who sell on their own website universally reported higher earnings.

The top methods creators use to monetize their content are 'books' and 'consulting & coaching.'





How Creators Design Their Books

The majority of creators design their own cover (57%), do the editing themselves (68%), and design the interior pages (83%) themselves. These are multi-skilled creators who take on each step of the process because they want control over the content and the costs.

It is notable that authors who earn the most from their books tend to be the ones hiring professionals to do their covers and edit their book. No matter the earnings, the overwhelming majority do their own interior file design.

Cover Design

Response	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income	Overall
I design them myself	62%	45%	36%	60%
I work with a professional designer	8%	6%	3%	38%
I buy stock images for my cover	16%	21%	25%	20%
I use Lulu's cover creator	11%	23%	25%	21%
I create or purchase AI-generated covers	4%	5%	14%	10%
I work with a friend/family member designer	1%	2%	0%	10%
I work with my employer's in-house designer	1%	2%	0%	3%

Editing

Response	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income	Overall
I do it myself	62%	45%	36%	68%
I hire a professional editor	8%	6%	3%	36%
A friend or family member edits for me	16%	21%	25%	28%
I use AI editing software	11%	23%	25%	18%
I crowdsource editing among my fellow authors or peers	4%	5%	14%	16%
Other	1%	2%	0%	7%





Formatting

Response	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income	Overall
I format my books myself	85%	86%	83%	84%
I hire a professional designer	10%	15%	14%	11%
A friend or family member formats them for me	8%	6%	5%	8%
I work with my employer's in-house graphic designer	3%	5%	5%	3%
Other	10%	7%	18%	10%

Creators tend to use tried-and-true software for their interior print files, with more than half using Microsoft Word to format. Despite Word still being the standard for page layout, many creators use specialized tools like InDesign, Atticus, Affinity Publisher, and Vellum to build their files

Here's the breakdown of software used by creators who format their own books:

Page Layout Software	
Microsoft Word	50%
Adobe InDesign	17%
Vellum	13%
Atticus	12%
Affinity Publisher	5%

Of the users who created their own book covers, they used:

Cover Design Software	
Adobe Products	50%
Microsoft Tools	17%
GIMP and Free Software	13%
DIY Artistic Methods	12%
Affinity Suite	5%
Canva (Free/Paid)	10%
Lulu's Cover Creator	10%

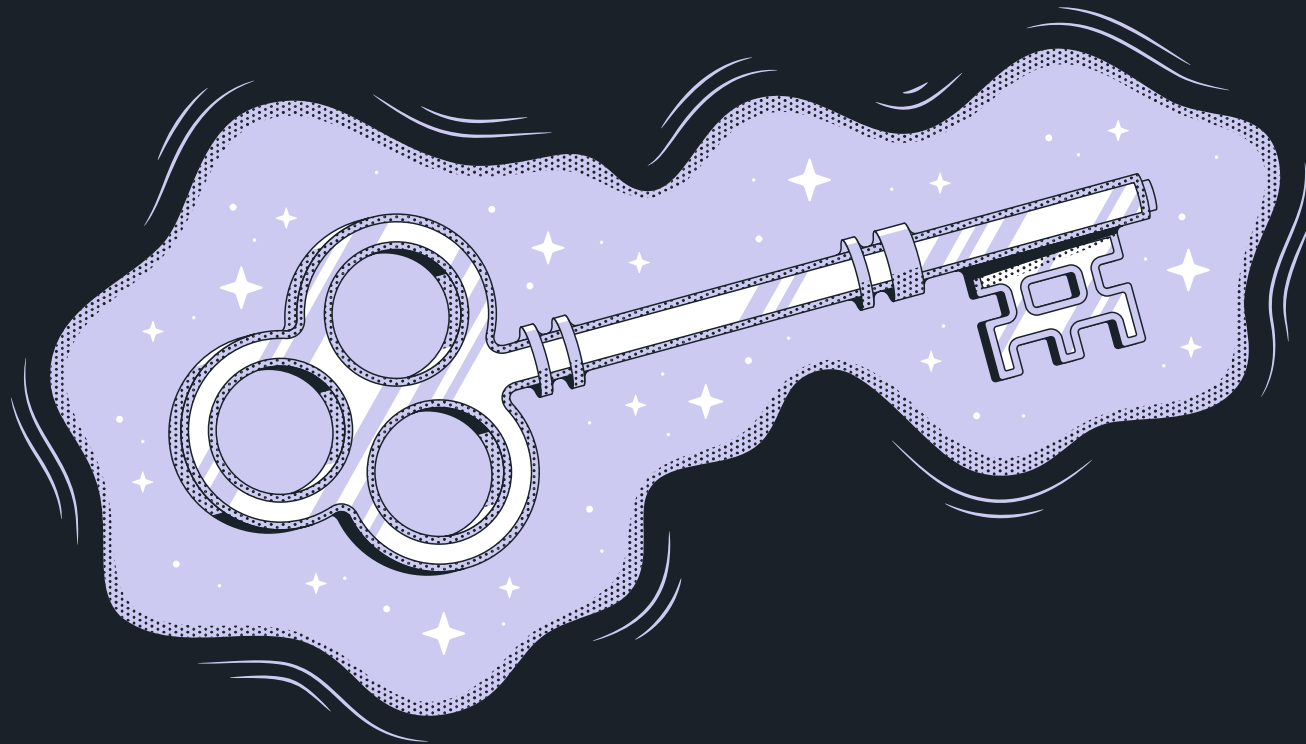




Key Takeaways

Creators have many years of experience creating, designing, publishing, and selling their books. They rely on a variety of software options to prepare and sell their content, but generally stick to proven tools like Microsoft Word and Adobe InDesign.

Among authors who published multiple books, the trend of doing all the work themselves continues, showing that creators who learn every step of the book-making process are successfully making money.





Marketing Tools and Platforms

Follower counts are critical for successfully selling anything as an individual creator or entrepreneur. Authors rely on social media followers and email subscribers as the primary source for their audience growth.

The most successful authors tend to have between 1,000 and 10,000 followers and email subscribers, though it is important to note that the highest earners have more than 1,000 followers on their email lists. This makes sense, as email is often the most profitable way to market books.

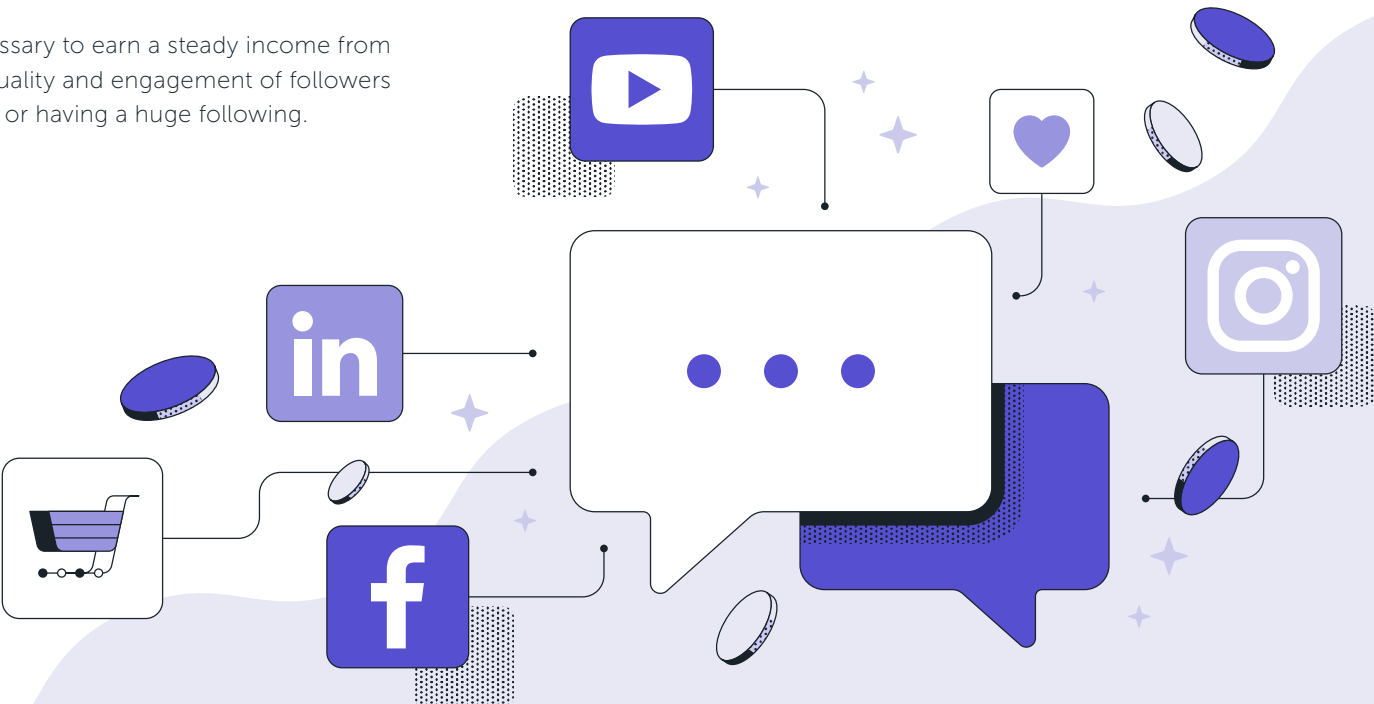
Creators who do not publish typically have smaller follower counts and email subscribers, with nearly 90% of the group having fewer than 1,000 of each.

Social Media

Creators rely on small, dedicated audiences to build their content business. Most creators (67%) have fewer than 1,000 total followers. Despite that, Facebook and Instagram are two of the most profitable marketing channels for creators. Even with relatively small followings, content creators and authors are still earning revenue.

That’s because a big following isn’t necessary to earn a steady income from book sales or any kind of content—the quality and engagement of followers are much more valuable than being viral or having a huge following.

Follower Count	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income	Non-Publishers
1 - 100	26%	11%	3%	3%
101 - 499	17%	7%	11%	4%
500 - 999	13%	10%	6%	88%
1,000 - 9,999	37%	55%	47%	4%
10,000 - 49,000	5%	12%	18%	1%
50,000 - 99,999	2%	3%	11%	1%
100,000 or more	1%	4%	6%	1%
I don't have social followers	3%	2%	3%	0%





Email

More than 65% of creators surveyed have fewer than 1,000 email subscribers. Based on their income from book sales, creators with larger email lists also earn more. Among creators with 100 or fewer subscribers, only 5% earned more than \$10,000 a year. But 42% of the creators with 1,000 or more subscribers are earning over \$10,000.

Subscriber Count	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income	Non-Publishers
1 - 100	52%	18%	8%	7%
101 - 499	19%	15%	8%	4%
500 - 999	9%	9%	8%	89%
1,000 - 9,999	13%	50%	40%	2%
10,000 - 49,000	1%	6%	25%	1%
50,000 - 99,999	0%	1%	8%	0%
100,000 or more	0%	0%	3%	0%
I don't have email subscribers	9%	4%	3%	1%

Email Platforms

There are hundreds of email marketing platforms to choose from, and creators know that. When presented with a list of the 10 most popular and used platforms, 38% noted they used something different.

Among the most used by content creators are MailerLite, Mailchimp, and Substack. All of these offer free and low-cost options to get started, make creating emails very simple, and offer built-in analytics.

Of the more than 300 creators who selected 'Other' for their email marketing platform, popular choices include Squarespace, Wix, and

WordPress, using built-in newsletter tools or plugins, and Brevo, a smaller but full-featured email provider.

Platform	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
Other:	55%	38%	26%
MailerLite	15%	27%	31%
Mailchimp	14%	15%	10%
Substack	5%	3%	3%
Kit	4%	3%	8%
Active Campaign	2%	6%	3%
Shopify Email	2%	1%	0%
Flodesk	1%	3%	3%
Klaviyo	1%	2%	10%
Aweber	1%	1%	8%
Beehiiv	1%	1%	0%



Website Hosting

Just like most of the world, respondents tend to use WordPress to manage their websites. Despite that, several other platforms like Wix, Squarespace, and Shopify are popular among a limited number of creators.

Hosting Platform	Percentage
Wordpress	46%
I don't have a website	17%
Wix	9%
Self-Hosted Custom Website	8%
Squarespace	6%
Shopify	3%
Other	13%

Marketing Channels for Audience Building

Facebook, Instagram, and Email are the most effective channels for building an audience. But a large variety of other methods, from blogging to online communities to search optimization, were all common tactics.

Using a range of platforms and methods to build their audience shows that successful creators are adaptive. Too much focus on a single channel puts creators at risk of losing out when a new channel draws their audience's attention. Overly relying on a single channel also means you are at the mercy of that channel and any changes it might make.

The one exception to this is Facebook, which has remained an effective channel for audience building.

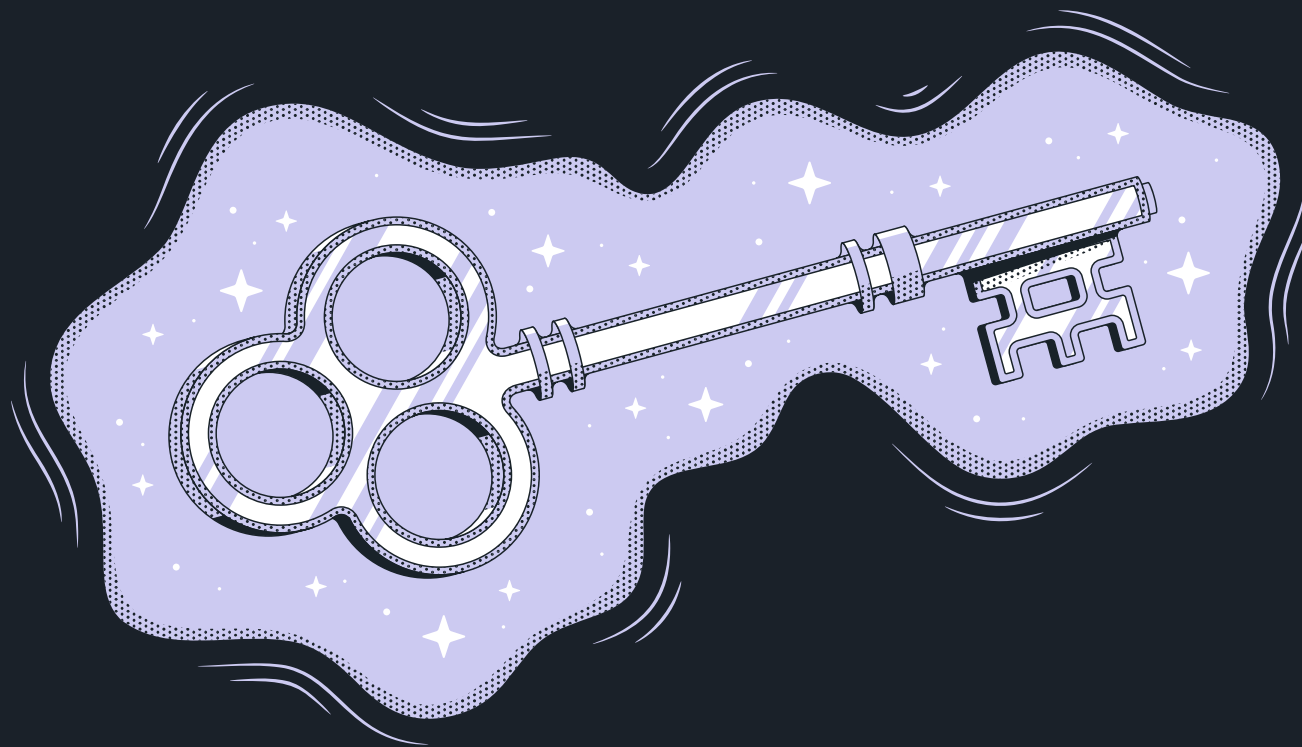
It's also notable that the highest earners rely on paid advertising far more than authors earning less.

Marketing Channel	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
Email	14%	19%	25%
Facebook	21%	20%	22%
Instagram	11%	9%	9%
Blog	7%	5%	3%
Paid Advertising	5%	12%	20%
Communités or Private Groups	9%	7%	5%
LinkedIn	3%	3%	0%
Search	3%	3%	1%
Substack	2%	2%	1%
TikTok	4%	4%	6%
X	2%	3%	0%
YouTube	6%	6%	5%
Other	12%	7%	3%



Key Takeaways

Email and social media are the most important and valuable marketing channels. Respondents with high income from book sales tended to have larger email lists and social followings. The highest earners are also more likely to use paid advertising to reach new audiences.





Weekly Hours Spent Building a Content Business

Most respondents (45%) indicated they are employed full-time, leading to the majority (79%) spending less than 20 hours per week on writing, editing, designing, and publishing their content.

When we look at hours worked and revenue, it is clear that putting in more than 20 hours per week leads to higher revenue. 45% of creators working 20+ hours earned over \$1,000 from book sales, while only 20% of creators working 5 or fewer hours could meet that threshold.

Looking at respondents earning more, we see the trend continue, with the most profitable authors (78%) spending more than 20 hours per week creating, marketing, and selling their content.

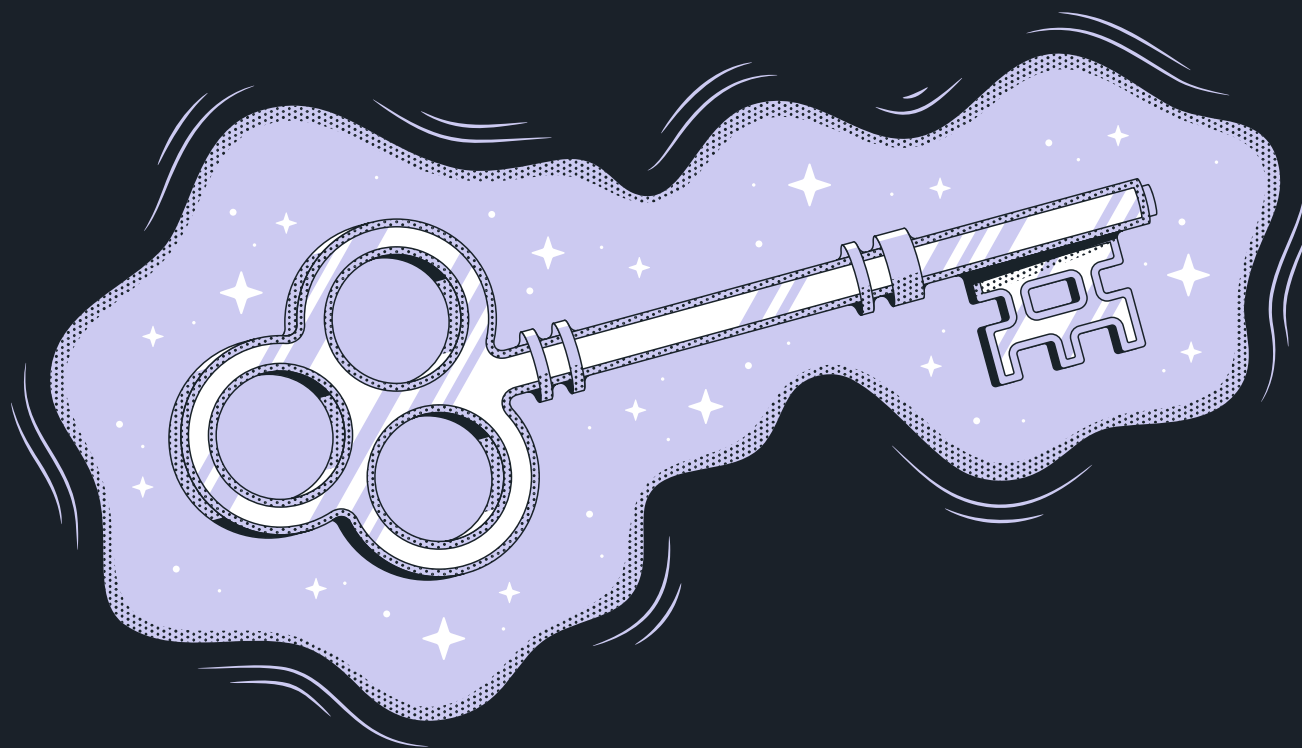
Hours	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
< 10 hours	59%	20%	1%
11 -20 hours	21%	25%	19%
21 + hours	20%	55%	8%





Key Takeaways

The more time you spend creating, the more likely you are to earn higher revenue from your products. Creators who publish find the most success when they can dedicate 20 or more hours a week. Creators who don't publish generally spend less than 5 hours on their content and business activities.



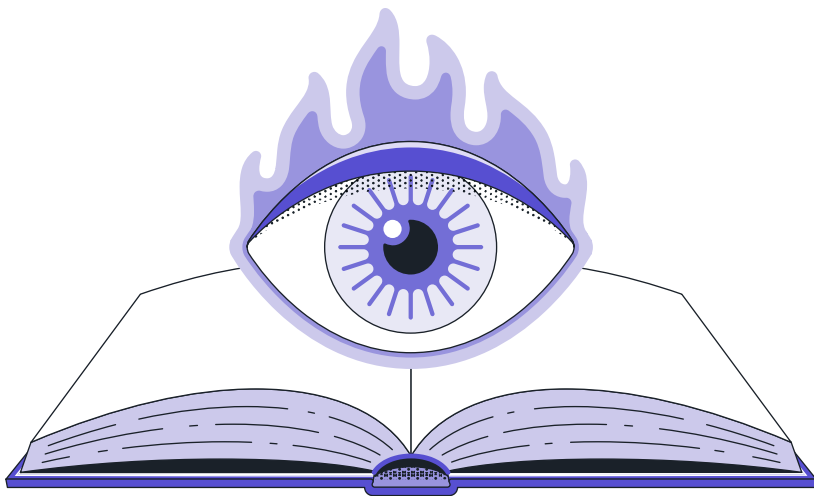


Creator Challenges

We asked what challenges creators, authors, and entrepreneurs are most concerned about. Regardless of income level, time invested, and content created, creators face the same challenges: Discovery (29%) and Marketing (28%).

Creator Challenge	Percentage
Making Sure My Content Gets Found	29%
Marketing My Business or Books	27%
Finding My Niche / Audience	19%
Building & Maintaining a Website	10%
Handling Business Operations	10%

All of these challenges are common to creators and small to medium businesses based around creating content.



Creators Who Do Not Publish Books

Nearly 10% of respondents indicated they do not publish books as part of their content business. This includes individual creators and small- to medium-sized content businesses. Of the creators who do not sell books, the income spread is fairly even, with some earning little and others making over \$100,000 per year from their business.

Annual Revenue	
Less than \$999	18%
\$1,000 - \$9,999	17%
\$10,000 - \$39,999	17%
\$40,000 - \$99,000	16%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	15%
\$150,000 or more	15%
I prefer not to say	2%

The majority (89%) of creators who do not sell books are self-employed, creating and selling content full-time.

Employment	
I am self-employed and create content full-time.	89%
I own a business and creates content to supplement my business	4%
I create marketing or operational content for my employer	1%
Other	6%



While these respondents don't sell books, they do utilize many of the same products as authors. This includes consulting, speaking, memberships, and courses. Despite not publishing books, these creators do create content that often lends itself to a book.

Consulting or Coaching Services	18%
Speaking Engagements	18%
Memberships or Subscriptions	17%
Affiliate Marketing	14%
Merchandise (like custom-branded products)	14%
Online Courses	13%
Workshops and Webinars	13%

These creators face many of the same challenges as authors, such as finding an audience, ensuring their content gets found online, burnout, and marketing. Respondents who do not publish also noted that monetization is a challenge—one that creators who do publish often solve by selling their books.



What Sets Authors Apart

The group of creators who do not publish books displayed one very noticeable difference from the author respondents. They spend significantly less time creating and managing their content business.

Hours	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income	Non-Publishers
< 10 hours	59%	20%	1%	92%
11 -20 hours	21%	25%	19%	3%
21 + hours	20%	55%	8%	5%

It is also notable that these creators view time constraints as the biggest barrier to publishing a book. Among this group, most of the creators who chose 'other' indicated they were working on a book, but had not published it yet.

But most (88%) don't publish because of the time commitment.

Reasons for Not Publishing	
It takes too long to write and publish.	88%
I'm happy with the products/services I sell and don't need to add more	3%
I don't have content that would make sense as a book	3%

Other	6%
-------	----



Methodology

The data referenced in this report comes entirely from our own 2025 research data. The only other source referenced is the previously conducted research from 2023, which is available for download.

We surveyed 2,065 Lulu users and other content creators to collect this data. Respondents answered unique questions based on the kinds of content they sell and their annual income from content.

Thank You to Our Partners

We asked a few of our favorite organizations, creators, and newsletters to help us get perspectives from beyond Lulu. Without their help, we would not have been able to take a nuanced, high-level look at how creators just like you are turning ideas, stories, and knowledge into a business.

