



*The*  
**STELLA**  
C O U N T  
2016



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Prize.



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## ABOUT THE COUNT

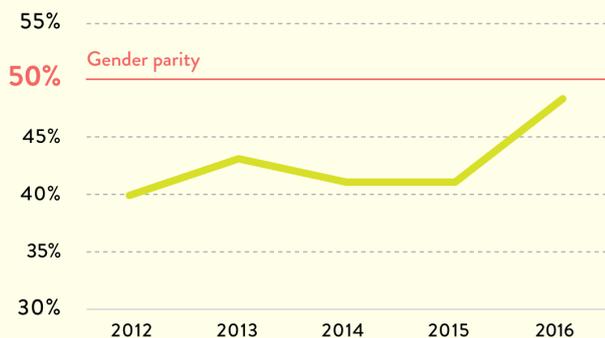
The 2016 Stella Count surveys twelve publications – including national, metropolitan and regional newspapers, journals and magazines – in print and online. The Count assesses the extent of gender biases in the field of book reviewing in Australia. In order to do this, it records the authors, book titles and book genres reviewed, as well as the gender of reviewers, and number and size of reviews published.

For the first time, the 2016 Stella Count also surveyed non-review literary coverage, broadcast reviews on radio and television programs, and cover-to-cover bylines in leading magazines and journals.

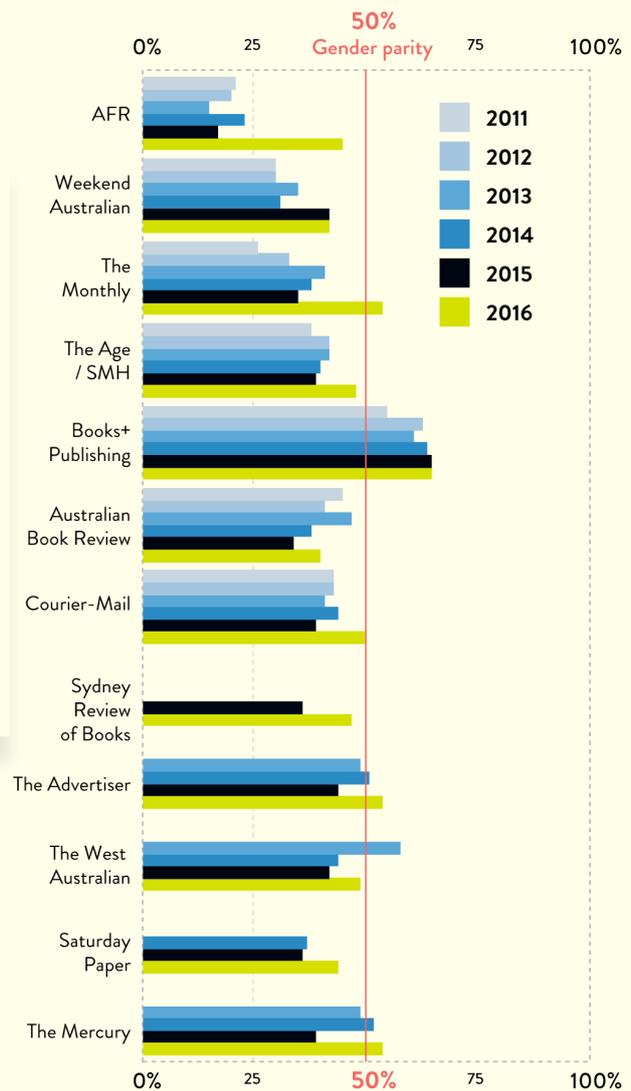
Read on for an analysis of notable points of interest from the results.

# Top-level Findings

Overall representation of women authors in Australian review pages, 2012 – 2016



Representation of women authors in Australian review pages, 2011 – 2016



## Authors

### KEY FINDING

In a first, all twelve of the publications surveyed in the 2016 Count either increased or maintained the percentage of women authors they reviewed compared to the previous year.

Stella has now been collecting review data annually for five years, and the 2016 Stella Count is the first in which women authors have achieved near-parity in the reviews pages. In the inaugural Stella Count of 2012, 40% of books reviewed in all publications surveyed were written by women. Since then, the figure has hovered between 41% (in 2014 and 2015) and 43% (in 2013). In 2016's Count, the percentage increased to 48%. Some publications have significantly improved the representation of books by women authors in their reviews over the five years of the Count: the *Weekend Australian* (from 30% in 2012 to 42% in 2016), *Australian Financial Review* (from 20% to 45%), and *The Monthly* (from 33% to 54%).

In another first, all twelve of the publications surveyed in the 2016 Count either increased or maintained the percentage of women authors they reviewed compared to the previous year. Individual publications showed much improvement in the percentage of women authors reviewed, compared to their 2015 results: up 28% at the *Australian Financial Review*, 19% at *The Monthly*, 15% at the *Mercury*, 11% at the *Courier-Mail* and the *Sydney Review of Books*, and 10% at the *Advertiser*. This would appear to constitute a clear shift in the book-reviewing landscape. In 2015, only one publication, *Books + Publishing*, reviewed more books by women than books by men. In 2016, four publications did so (*The Monthly*, *Mercury*, *Advertiser* and *Books + Publishing*) and a further three were either at or near parity (*Age/Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>1</sup>, *West Australian*, *Courier-Mail*).

The chart above shows the total percentage of books written by women that have been reviewed across twelve publications, tracked over the past five years.

Seven of the twelve publications surveyed in 2016 continued to favour male authors in their review coverage: *Australian Book Review* (60% men, 40% women), the *Weekend Australian* (58% men, 42% women), *The Saturday Paper* (56% men, 44% women), the *Australian Financial Review* (55% men, 45% women), the *Sydney Review of Books* (53% men, 47% women), the *Age/SMH* (52% men, 48% women), and the *West Australian* (51% men, 49% women). One publication – the *Courier-Mail* – has achieved exact parity.

*Australian Book Review*, which increased its representation of women authors by 6% since 2015, still had the most marked gender disparity in terms of authors reviewed in 2016. The *Australian Book Review* is also one of only two publications – the other is the *West Australian* – where things have gone backwards in terms of the gender parity of authors reviewed over the five years of the Stella Count.

Despite significant improvements towards gender parity, questions of scale and reach do need to be taken into consideration. The three publications that published the highest volume of reviews in 2016 (i.e. more than half of all 2889 books reviewed in the Count) were the *Age/SMH* (699), the *Weekend Australian* (584) and *Australian Book Review* (346), and they all reviewed more books by men than by women. Two of these three publications, arguably, have the furthest reach and largest circulations and readerships: the *Weekend Australian* is a national publication, and the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* are published in Australia's two largest metropolitan markets, with their review sections syndicated across Fairfax's rural, regional and local papers.

<sup>1</sup>: The *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* were counted as a single publication because their reviews are syndicated across both publications.

## Reviewers

### KEY FINDING

Across all publications in 2016, books by men were more likely to be reviewed by men, and books by women more likely to be reviewed by women.

Across all publications that were counted in 2016, 52% of book reviews were written by women, which is the same ratio as in 2015. Women reviewed more books than men in eight of the twelve publications. The exceptions to this were the *Weekend Australian* (32% of book reviews were written by women), *Australian Book Review* (38%), the *Age/SMH* (46%) and the *Sydney Review of Books* (44%). (It should be noted that these four publications hold 59% of the total reviewing field.) Moreover, of the seventeen reviewers who reviewed ten or more books at the *Weekend Australian* in 2016, only four (or 24%) were women.

Across all publications in 2016, books by men were more likely to be reviewed by men, and books by women more likely to be reviewed by women. Author gender matched reviewer gender for 66% of all books reviewed in 2016. This differs from what

was observed in the 2014 and 2015 Stella Counts, in which men's books were reviewed by both men and women, and women's books were reviewed mostly by women. In 2016, men reviewed significantly more books by women than in previous years. In 2015, men were reviewing between 4–15% of books by women across most publications; in 2016 the range was between 5% (*Advertiser*) and 22% (*Australian*). This shift at the upper end of the spectrum is, in part, an effect of the increase in the number of books by women reviewed across the publications, though the gender of reviewers has stayed largely the same. Nonetheless, the pairing of books with reviewers in Australia continues to be strongly split along gender lines.

## Length

### KEY FINDING

Gains in the reviewing of books by women have been made mainly in relation to small- and medium-length reviews.

While we saw real improvement in the reviewing of women's books in the 2016 Stella Count, there remains a significant disparity when it comes to the size of reviews. With large reviews (i.e. a review of more than 1000 words), men still dominated as both authors and reviewers. Of all the large reviews published in 2016, 59% were of books by men and 65% were by male reviewers. While with regard to medium-length review coverage (i.e. reviews between 300–1000 words), books by women and men were reviewed almost equally (53% men, 47% women), male reviewers wrote the bulk of those reviews (74%). These statistics are significant given the increasing number of books by women being reviewed, and the continuing dominance of female reviewers across the board. While small reviews (i.e. reviews under 300 words) were accorded evenly to male and female authors, 61% were written by women reviewers. Gains in the reviewing of books by women, therefore, have been made mainly in relation to small- and medium-length reviews.

As with all of the Stella Count statistics, the gender disparities regarding length varied from publication to publication. It was at its most severe in the pages of *Australian Book Review* and the *Weekend Australian*. *Australian Book Review* published nearly twice as many long reviews of men's books as it did of women's books in 2016: 23% of its total number of reviews were long reviews of male-authored books while just 12% were long reviews of female-authored books. At the *Weekend Australian*, 33% of the total number of reviews were long reviews of books by men and 23% were long reviews of books by women.

## KEY FINDING

Of all the titles reviewed in 2016, nonfiction books by men were reviewed more often than any other gender/genre combination – at 28% of the total reviews.

As in the previous two years of the Stella Count, when it came to genre the 2016 Count showed a stark divide between gender of both author and reviewer. Nonfiction still seems to be a male domain, and fiction a female one.

Of all the titles reviewed in 2016, nonfiction books by men were reviewed more often than any other gender/genre combination – at 28% of the total reviews. In addition, 63% of reviews of nonfiction books were written by male reviewers. Men dominated nonfiction in every publication except the *Mercury*, which was exactly at parity. The publications skewed most heavily towards nonfiction reviews were *Australian Book Review*, the *Australian Financial Review* and the *Weekend Australian*. In *Australian Book Review*, 42% of all books reviewed were works of nonfiction by men. At the *Australian Financial Review* this figure was 39%, and at the *Weekend Australian* it was 33%. In all three of these publications nonfiction books by men were reviewed twice as much as nonfiction books by women.

While male authors dominated the nonfiction reviews, female authors dominated the fiction reviews in every publication surveyed. Across the board, an average of 58% of fiction books reviewed were by women. Again, there were exceptions: the *Weekend Australian*, *Australian Book Review* and *The Saturday Paper*'s fiction reviewing was split fairly evenly between books by men and women authors.

The disparity in relation to genre is just as marked when it comes to the gender of reviewers. Across the publications, women mostly reviewed fiction (61% of all fiction was reviewed by women) and men mostly reviewed nonfiction (60% of all nonfiction was reviewed by men). Women reviewed more fiction than men in every publication except the *Weekend Australian*, where only 29% of fiction was reviewed by women, and the *Sydney Review of Books*, which was near parity. Men reviewed more nonfiction than women in all publications except the *Australian Financial Review*, in which all 2016 reviews were written by one female reviewer, and at the *Advertiser*, where 43% of the nonfiction was reviewed by men.

## Other literary coverage

### KEY FINDING

*The Monthly's* book-related essays were dominated by coverage of male authors (75%).

For the first time, the Stella Count has tracked the gender balance of the contemporary Australian literary field more broadly. For publications that publish regular non-review literary content, it separately counted general reporting on books, including feature articles, author profiles, columns and interviews. While over the five years of the Stella Count a steady decline in the overall number of reviews published each year has been observed, there has been an upturn in book-related coverage such as feature articles, author profiles and interviews in some publications. In the pages of newspapers and journals surveyed in 2016, there were almost as many pieces of book-related coverage as there were books reviewed.

Male authors received more non-review coverage on average across the publications: 54% of book-related pieces discussed male authors, while 46% discussed female authors. The metropolitan newspapers published a higher percentage of book-related pieces on female authors than male authors: the *West Australian* (62% women; 38% men), the *Mercury* (62% women; 38% men), the *Courier-Mail* (61% women; 39% men) and the *Advertiser* (54% women; 46% men). The *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* published more book-related coverage than any other publication, representing 39% of the field, and was almost at parity in terms of the gender of authors discussed (52% men; 48% women).

The story is different at *The Monthly* and the *Weekend Australian*. *The Monthly's* book-related essays were dominated by coverage of male authors (75%). More specifically, 68% of *The Monthly's* coverage focused on the work of male international authors. At the *Weekend Australian*, 63% of book-related coverage was about male authors and 61% of the longer pieces were devoted to them. While women produced 46% of the book-related coverage across the publications surveyed, they produced only 16% of these pieces at the *Weekend Australian*. For every two pieces of book-related coverage published by a man about a male author in these pages, there was only one piece published by a man about a woman author. This is significant because the *Weekend Australian* represents 35% of the total field of book-related discussion.

## Bylines in Australian magazines

### KEY FINDING

*The Saturday Paper* and *Weekend Australian* magazine had the most acute disparity, with women writers accounting for only 35% and 37% of these publications' total number of bylines respectively.

For the first time, the 2016 Stella Count surveyed writer bylines cover-to-cover for six leading magazines and journals, tracking not only book-related content but all articles published. The publications included in this aspect of the Count were: *Good Weekend*, *Meanjin*, *The Monthly*, *Overland*, *The Saturday Paper* and the *Weekend Australian* magazine. The results show what is now a very familiar breakdown, averaging 61% male and 39% female writers across the surveyed publications.

*The Saturday Paper* and the *Weekend Australian* magazine had the most acute disparity, with women writers accounting for only 35% and 37% of these publications' total number of bylines respectively. The situation was even more extreme when length was taken into account: large articles by men constituted 44% of articles published in *The Saturday Paper*, while large articles by women made up only 25% of the whole. Over at the *Weekend Australian* magazine the divergence for medium-length articles was even greater: medium-length articles by male writers accounted for 40% of the total bylines compared with 23% for women writers. At *Meanjin*, 58% of writer bylines belonged to men and 42% belonged to women. At *Overland*, the figures were 45% male and 55% female.

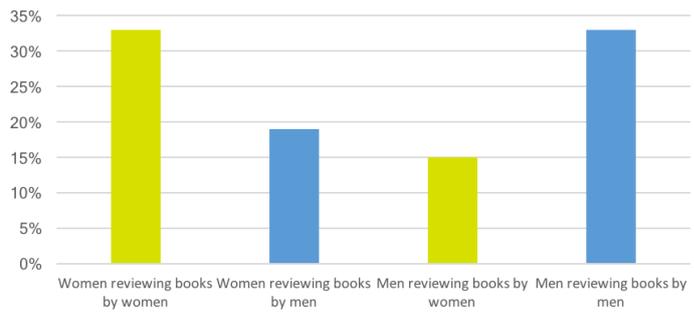
## FINDINGS

# Book reviewing in the broadcast media

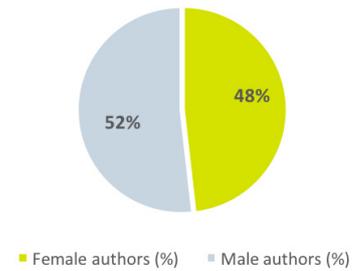
The 2016 Stella Count also expanded to record instances of book reviewing and discussion in Australian broadcast media. This data had a very small sample size but, of the three programs counted, all reviewed more books by men than by women: 56% of reviews at ABC Melbourne's 'Reading with Raf' were of books by men; 64% at ABC TV's 'The Book Club', and 73% on Radio National's 'African Book Club'.

# All Publications

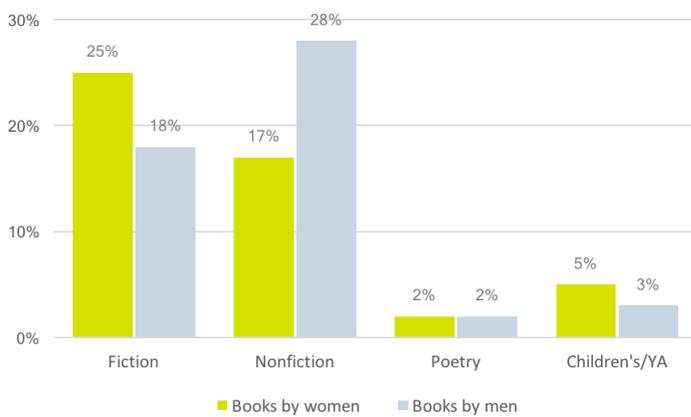
**All publications**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



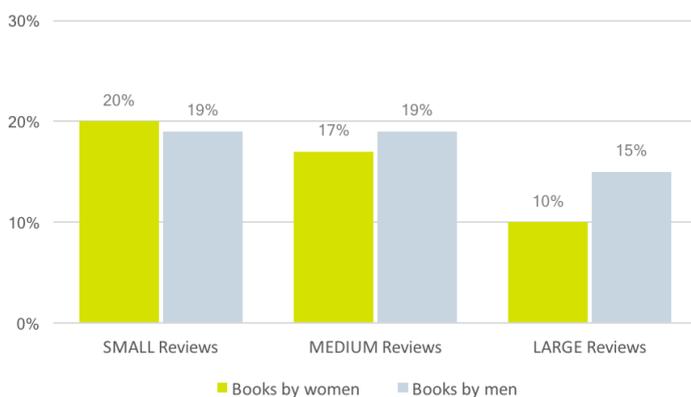
**All publications**  
Authors reviewed



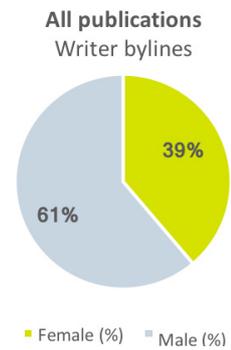
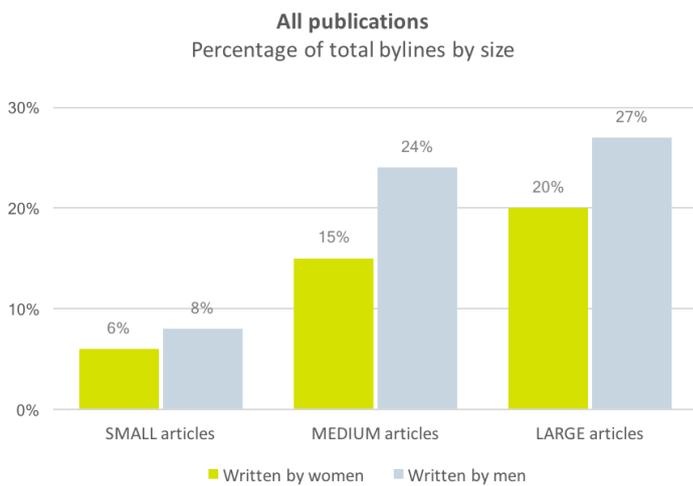
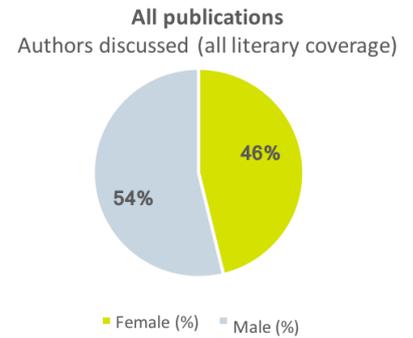
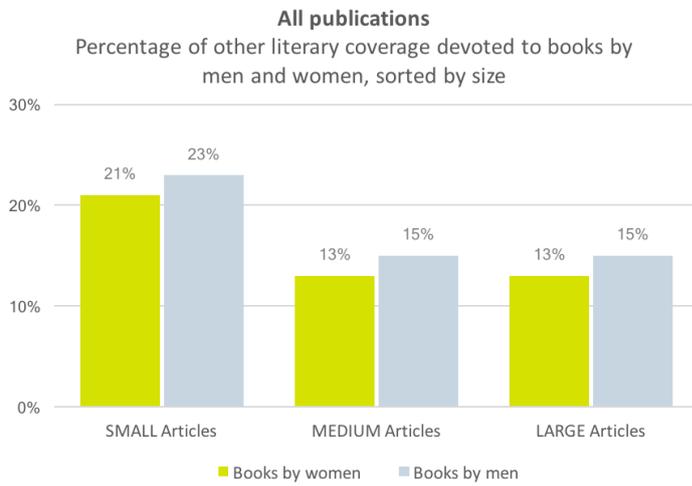
**All publications**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



**All publications**  
Percentage of total reviews by size

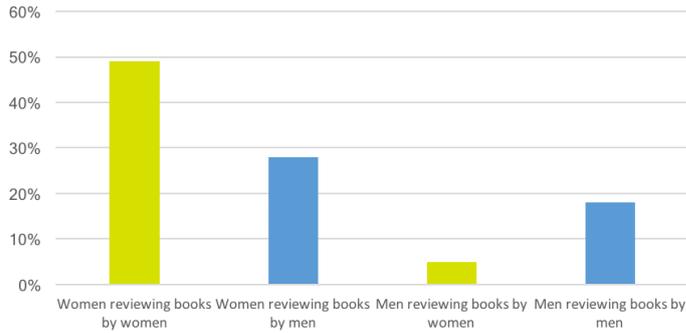


# All Publications

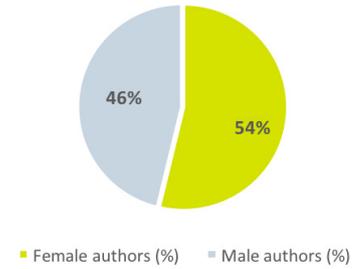


# The Advertiser

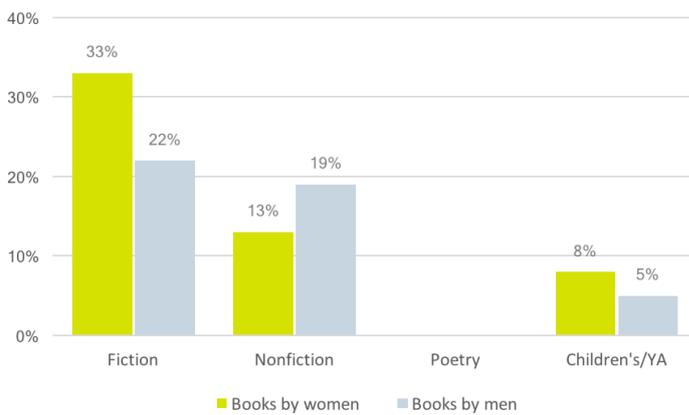
**The Advertiser**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



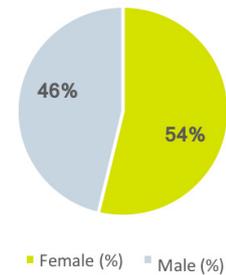
**The Advertiser**  
Authors reviewed



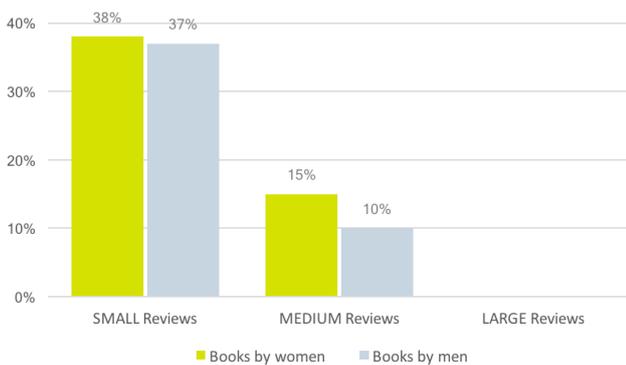
**The Advertiser**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



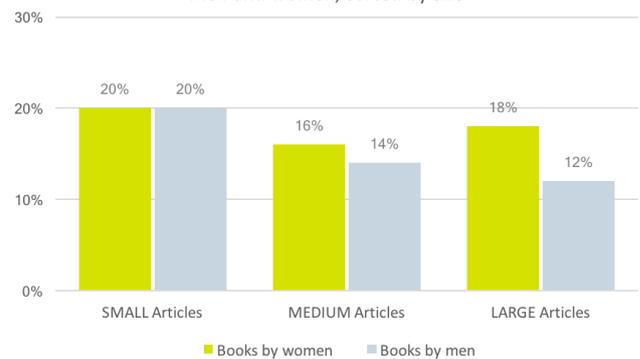
**The Advertiser**  
Authors discussed (other literary coverage)



**The Advertiser**  
Percentage of total reviews by size



**The Advertiser**  
Percentage of other literary coverage devoted to books by men and women, sorted by size

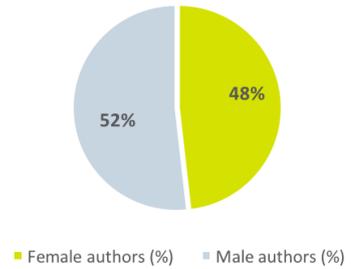


# The Age/Sydney Morning Herald

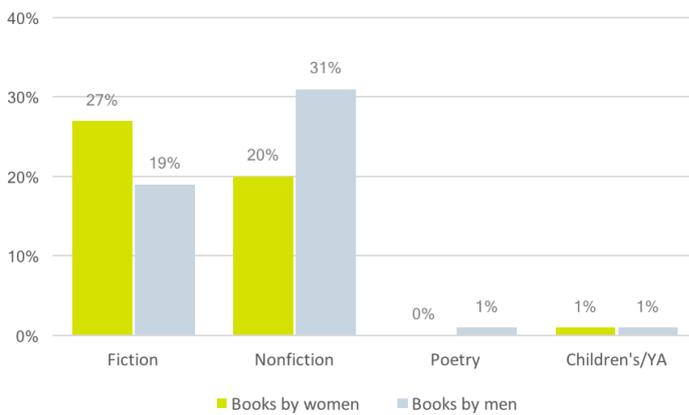
**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



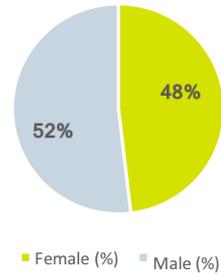
**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Authors reviewed



**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Authors discussed (other literary coverage)



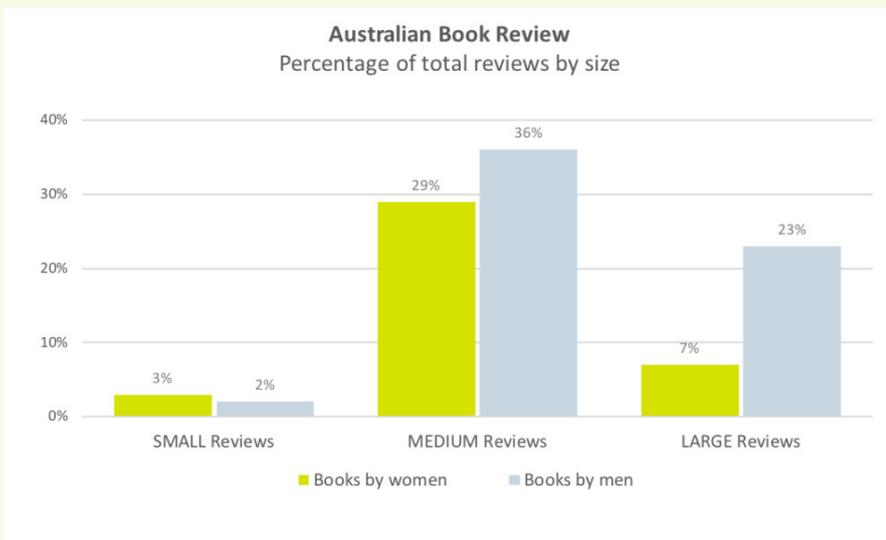
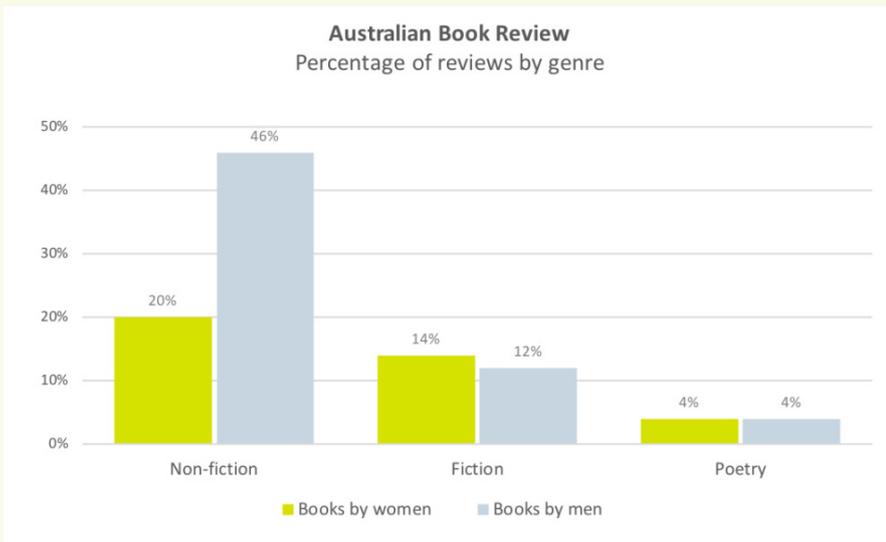
**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Percentage of total reviews by size



**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Percentage of other literary coverage devoted to books by men and women, sorted by size

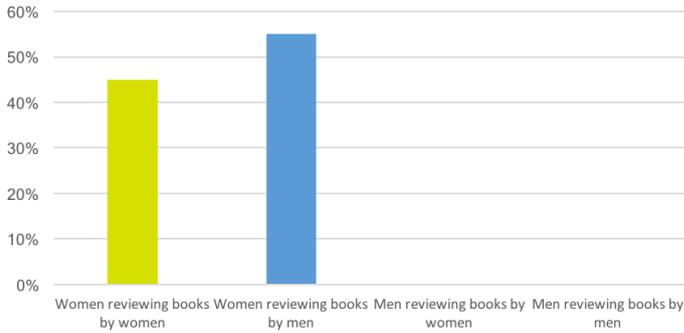


# Australian Book Review

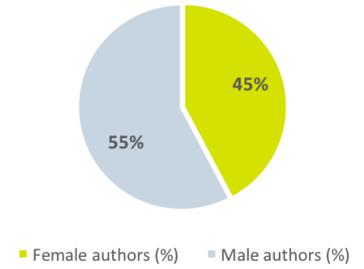


# Australian Financial Review Magazine

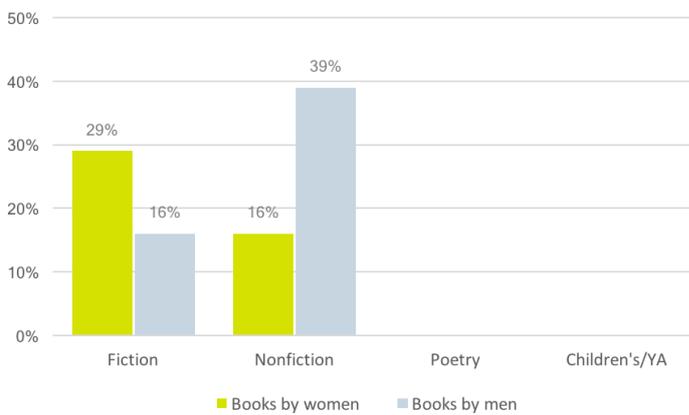
**Australian Financial Review magazine**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



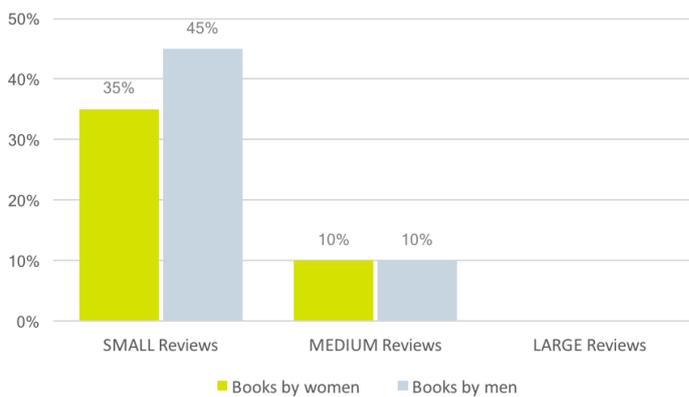
**Australian Financial Review magazine**  
Authors reviewed



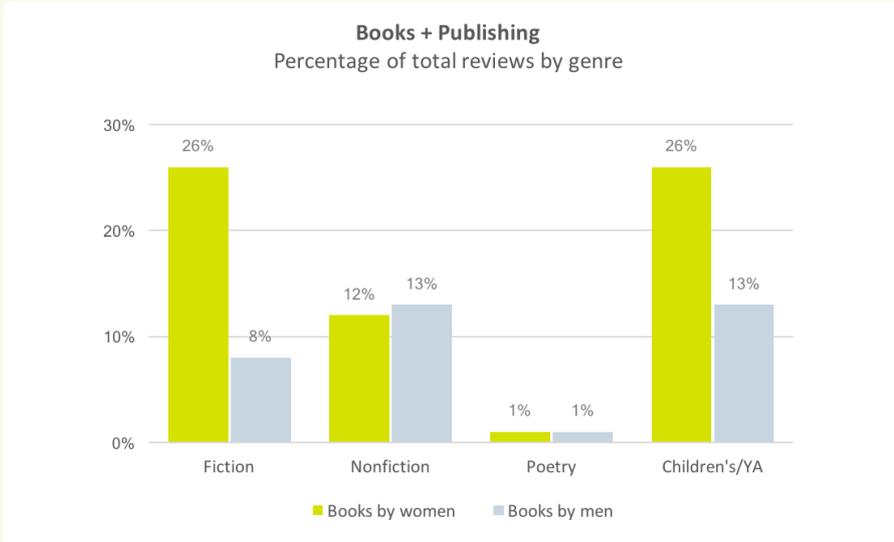
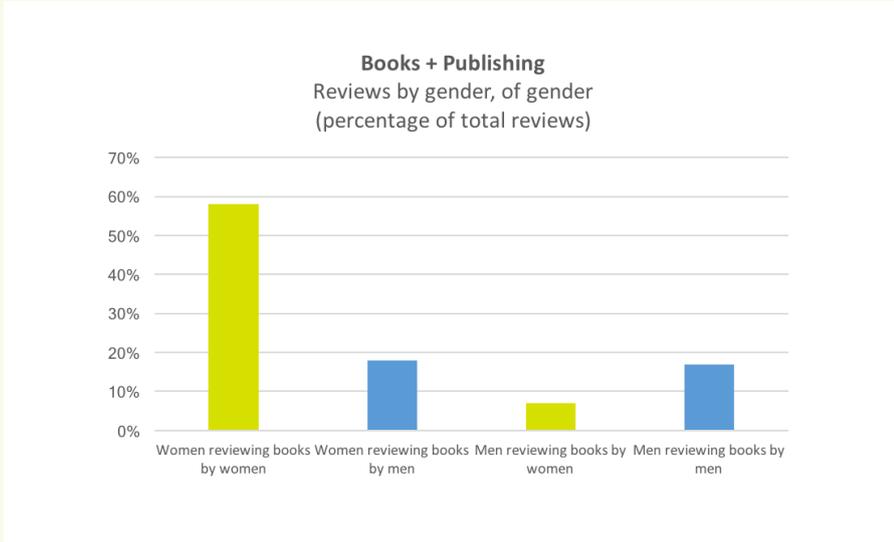
**Australian Financial Review magazine**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



**Australian Financial Review magazine**  
Percentage of total reviews by size



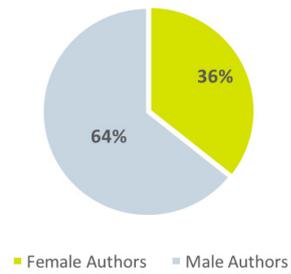
# Books+Publishing



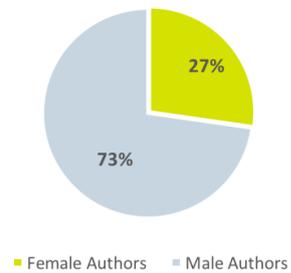
All reviews published by Books+Publishing are classified as 'small', so no chart has been produced to track the size of the publication's reviews.

# Broadcast Media

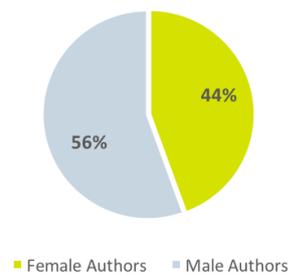
**ABC TV: The Book Club**  
Authors reviewed



**Radio National Books & Arts: African Book Club**  
Authors reviewed

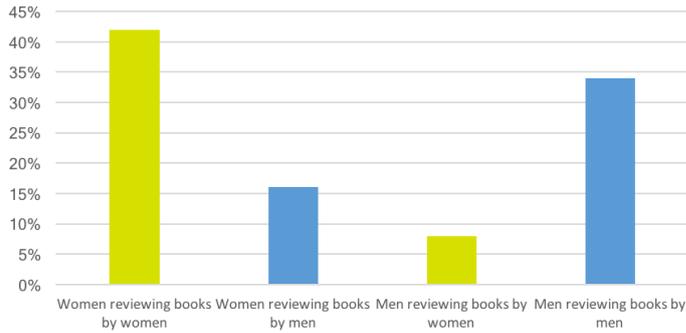


**ABC Radio Melbourne: Reading with Raf**  
Authors reviewed

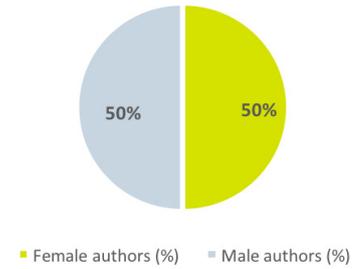


# Courier Mail

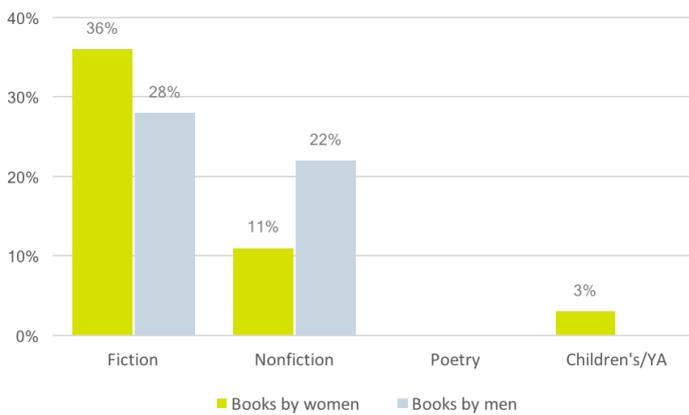
**Courier-Mail**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



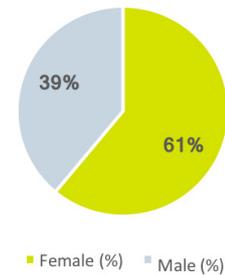
**Courier-Mail**  
Authors reviewed



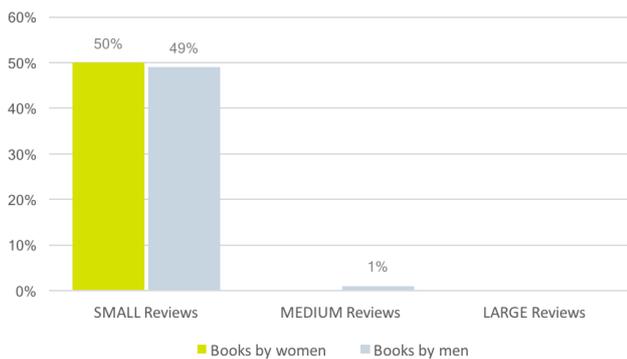
**Courier-Mail**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



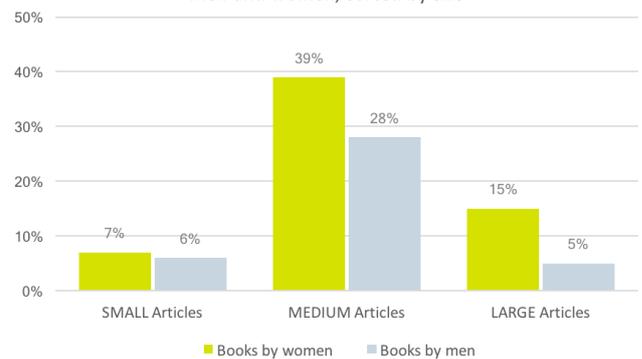
**Courier-Mail**  
Authors discussed (other literary coverage)



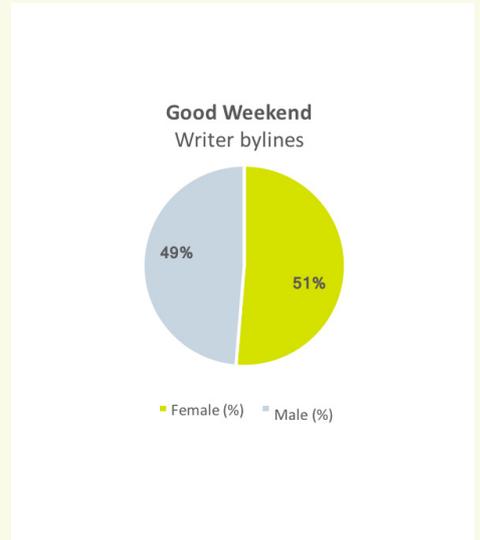
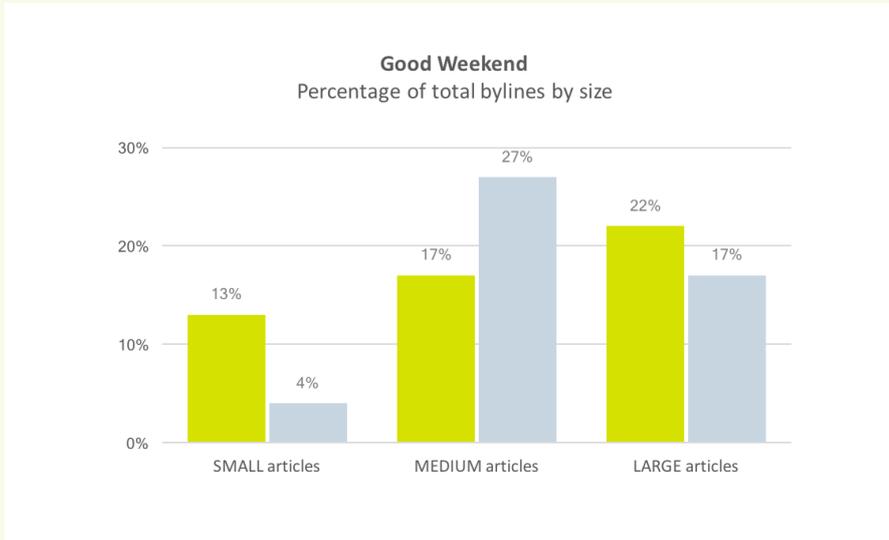
**Courier-Mail**  
Percentage of total reviews by size



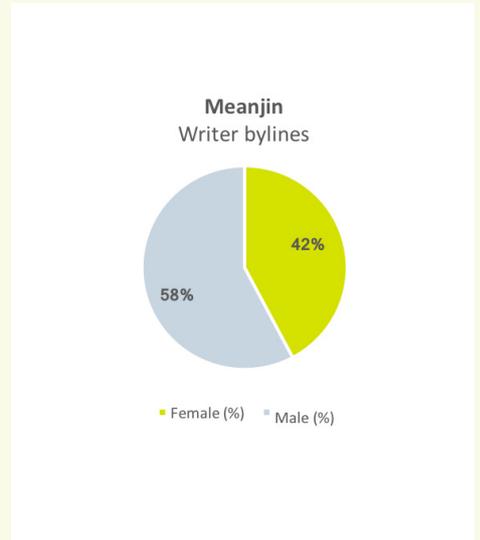
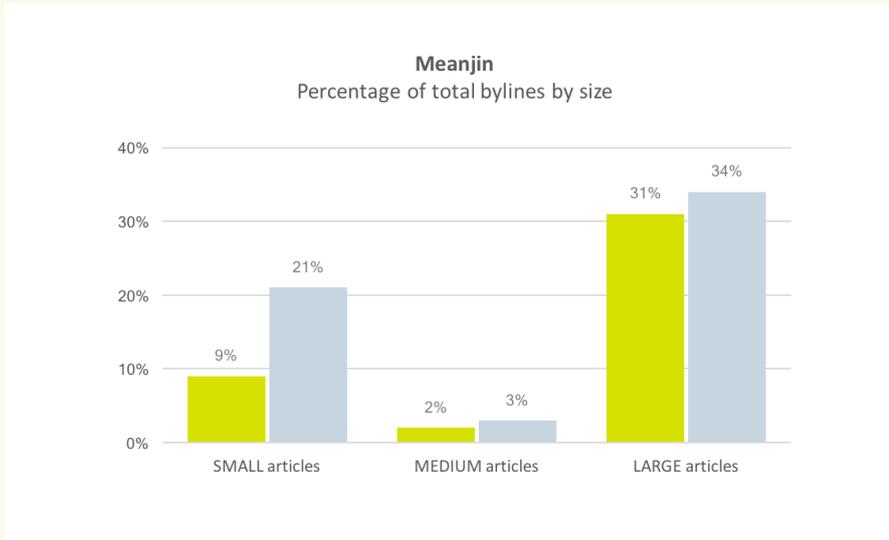
**Courier-Mail**  
Percentage of other literary coverage devoted to books by men and women, sorted by size



# Good Weekend

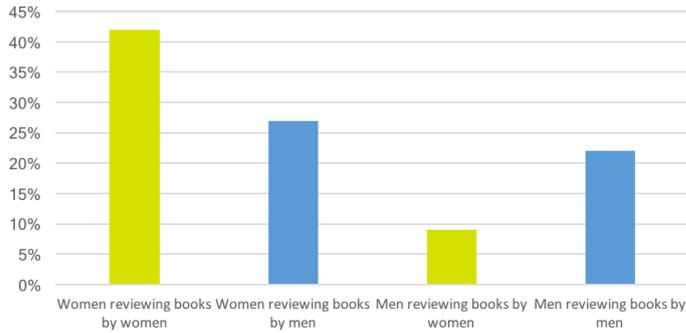


# Meanjin

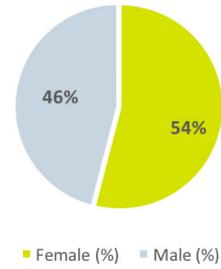


# The Mercury

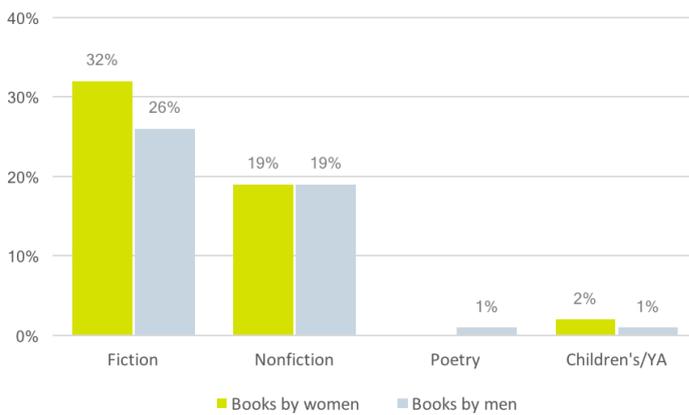
**The Mercury**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



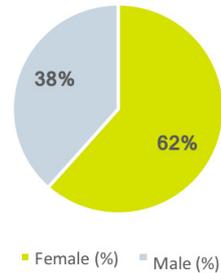
**The Mercury**  
Author gender



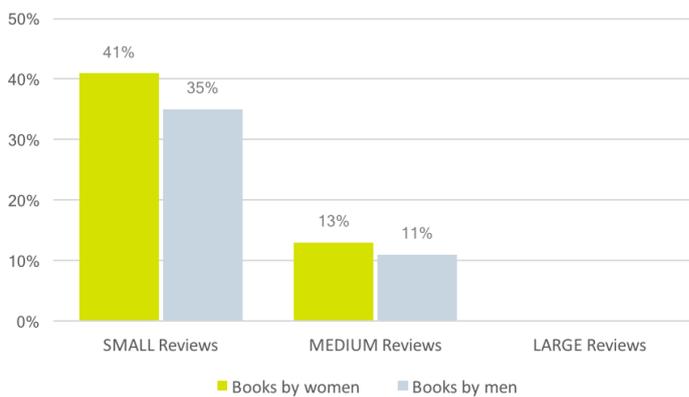
**The Mercury**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



**The Mercury**  
Authors discussed (other literary coverage)

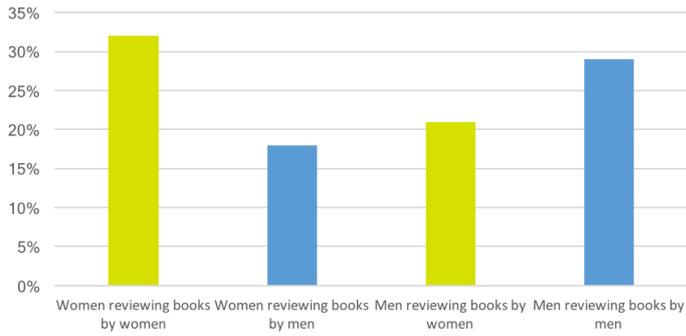


**The Mercury**  
Percentage of total reviews by size

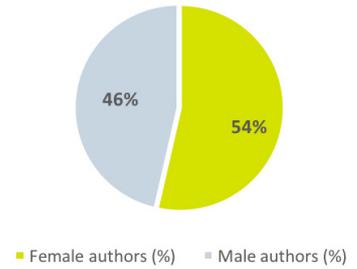


# The Monthly

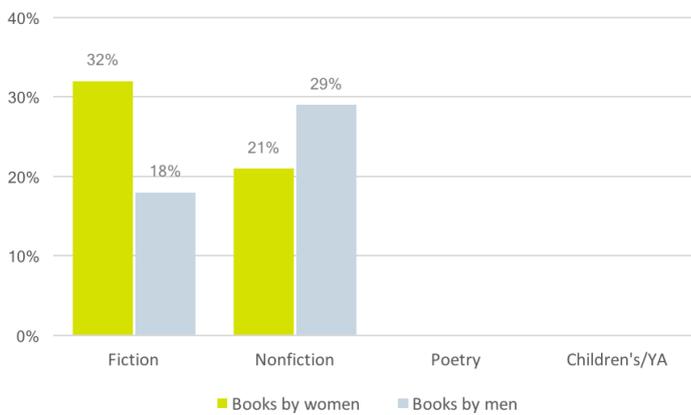
**The Monthly**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



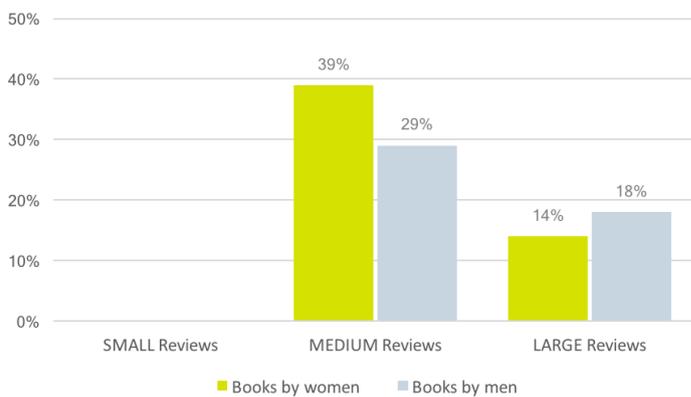
**The Monthly**  
Authors reviewed



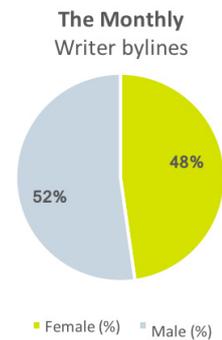
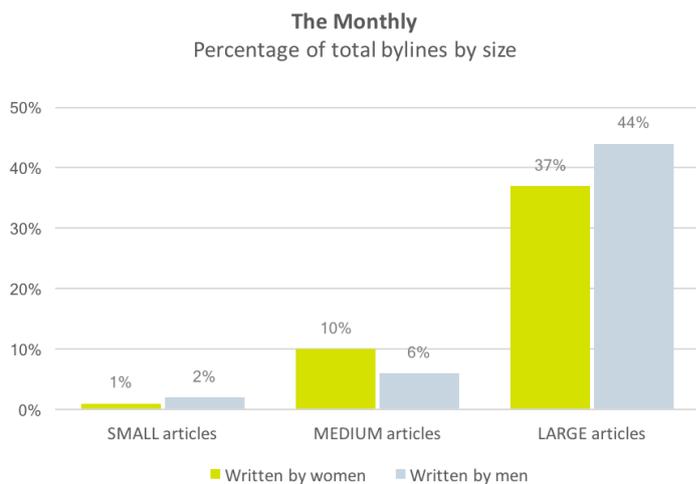
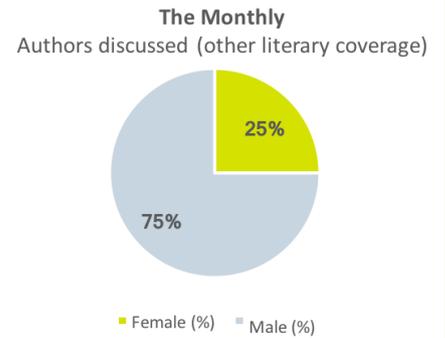
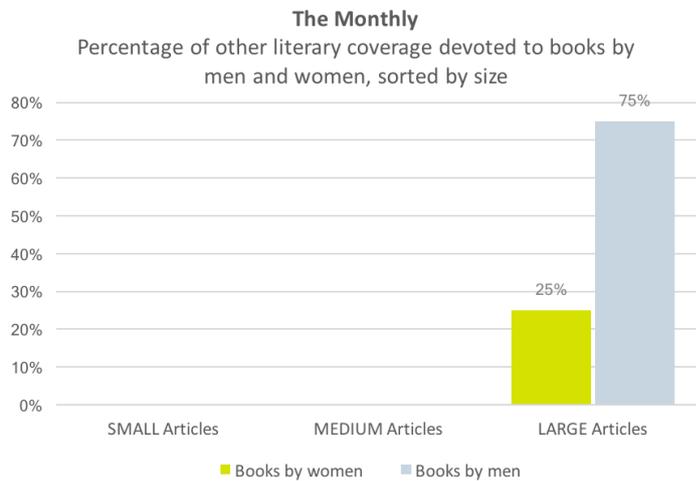
**The Monthly**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



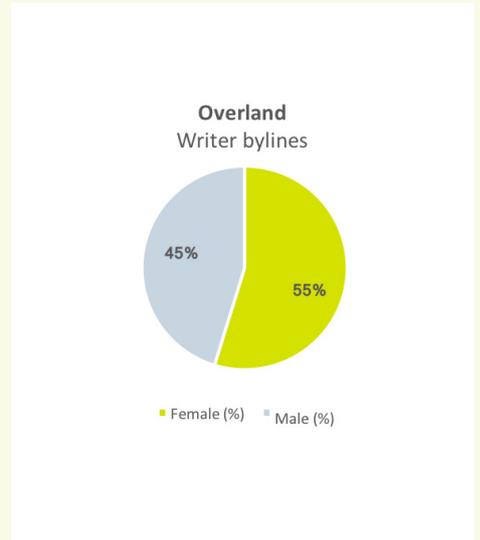
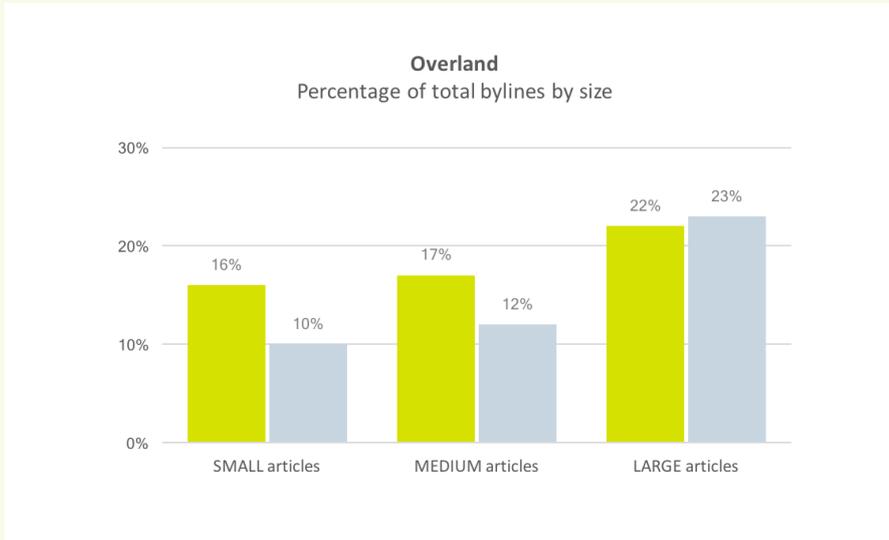
**The Monthly**  
Percentage of total reviews by size



# The Monthly



# Overland

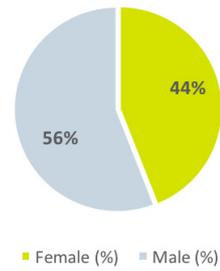


# The Saturday Paper

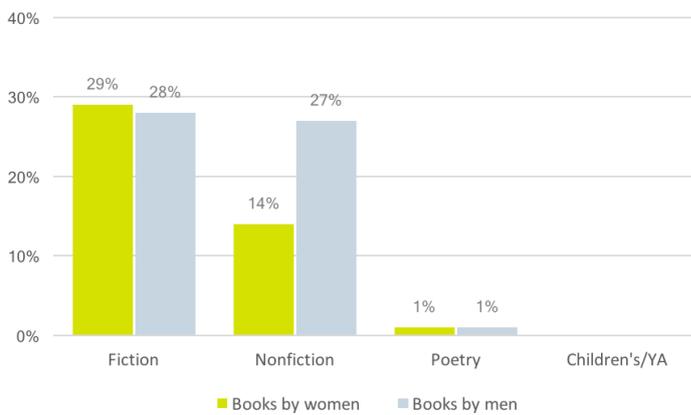
**The Saturday Paper**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



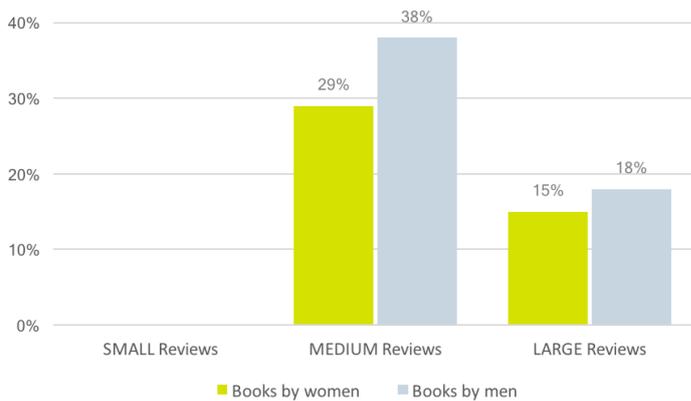
**The Saturday Paper**  
Author gender



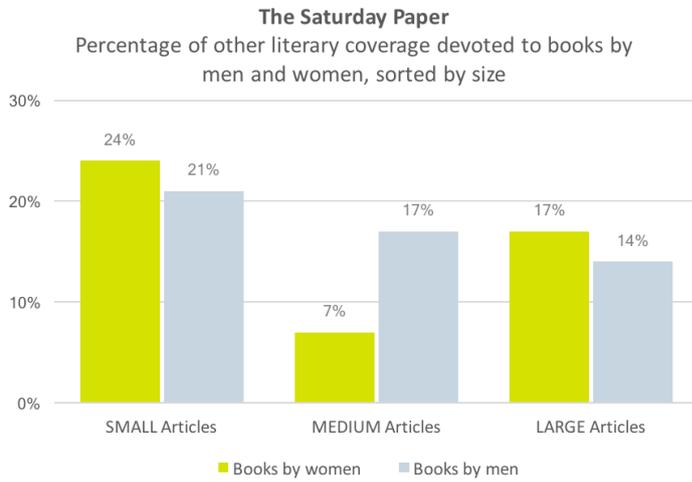
**The Saturday Paper**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



**The Saturday Paper**  
Percentage of total reviews by size

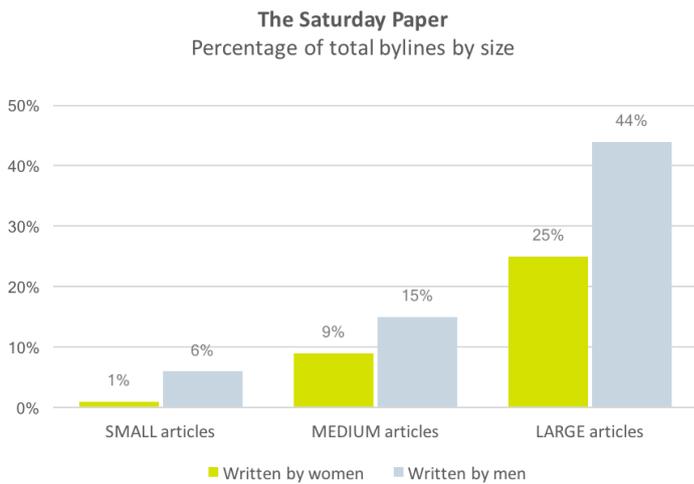
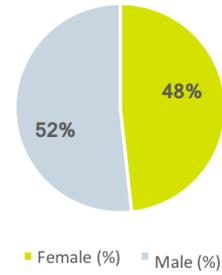


# The Saturday Paper



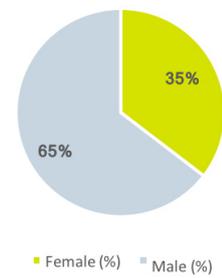
### The Saturday Paper

Authors discussed (other literary coverage)

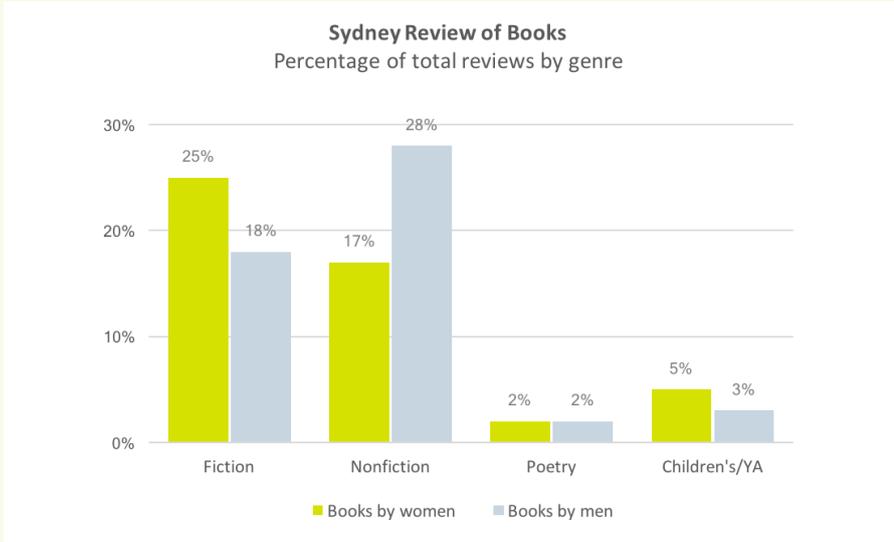
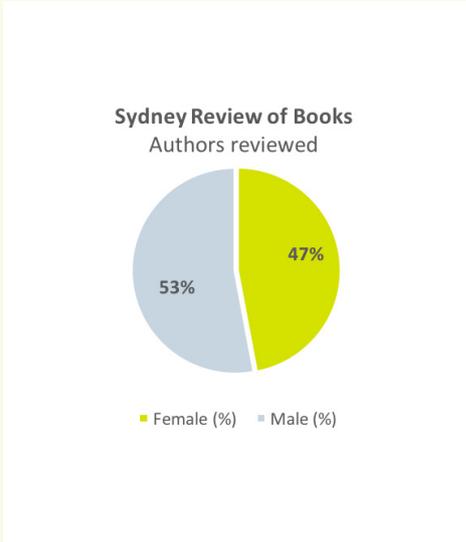
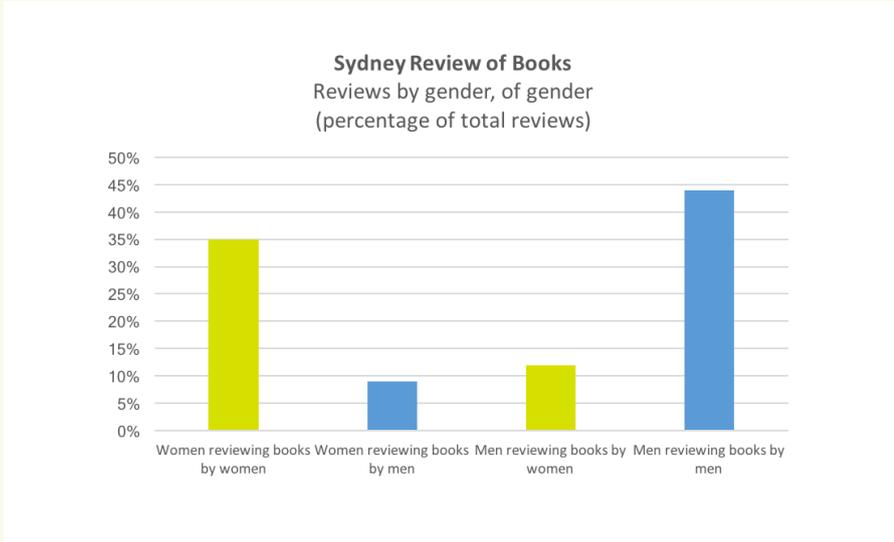


### The Saturday Paper

Writer bylines



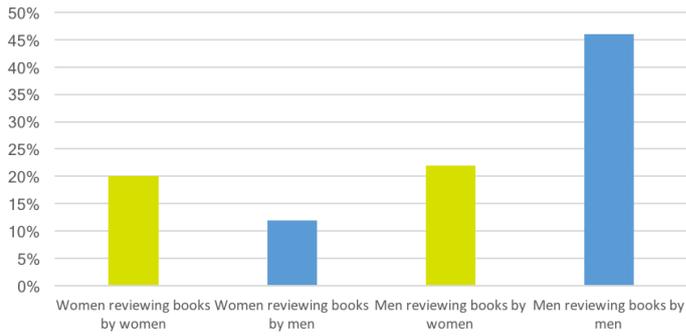
# Sydney Review of Books



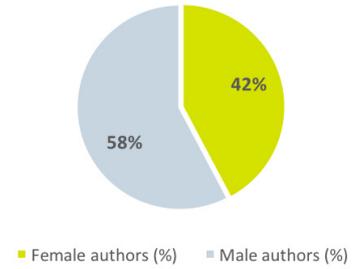
All reviews published by the Sydney Review of Books are classified as 'large', so no chart has been produced to track the size of the publication's reviews.

# Weekend Australian

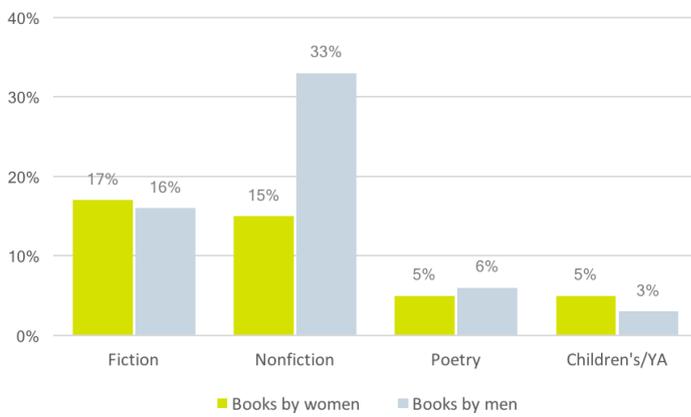
**Weekend Australian**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



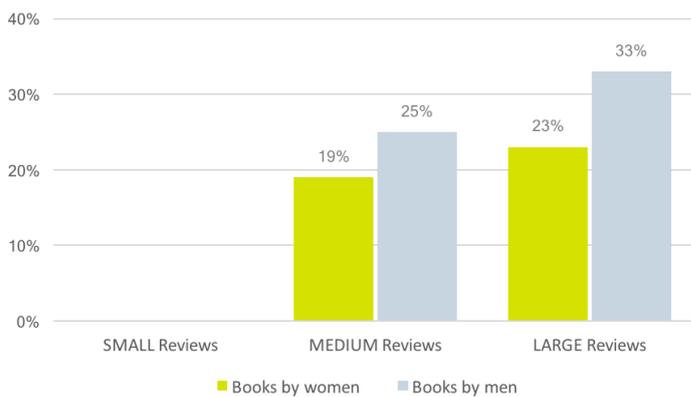
**The Weekend Australian**  
Authors reviewed



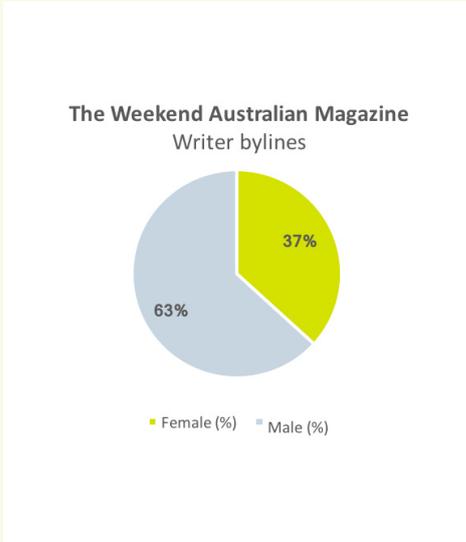
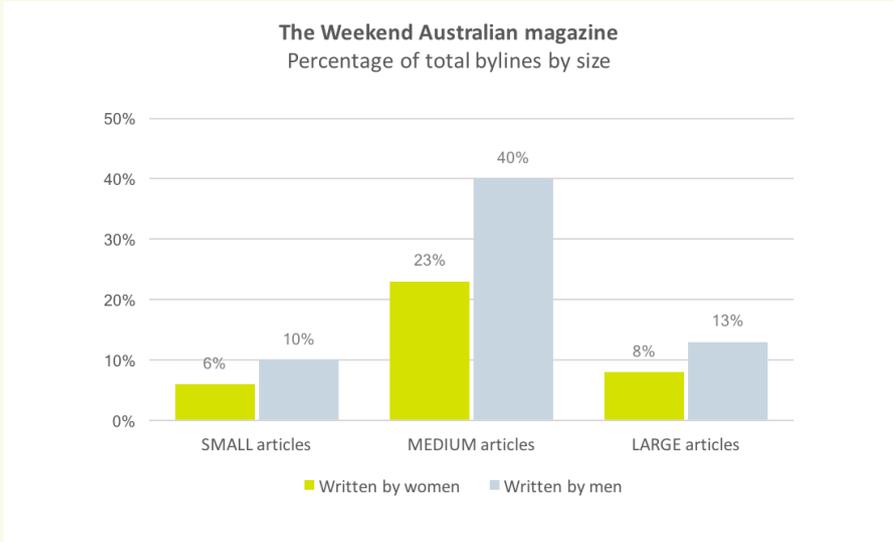
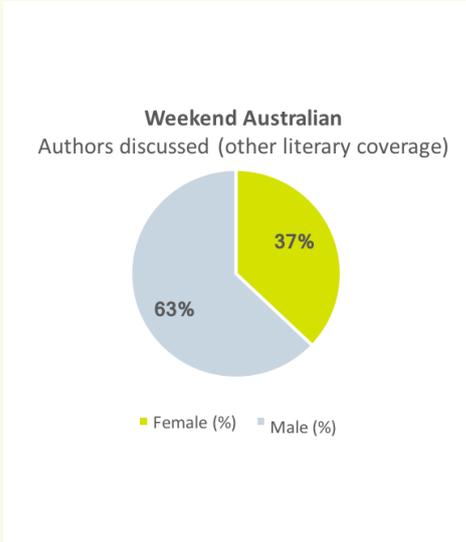
**The Weekend Australian**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



**Weekend Australian**  
Percentage of total reviews by size



# Weekend Australian

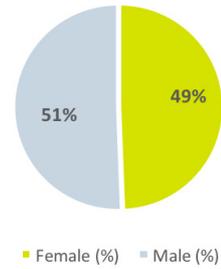


# West Australian

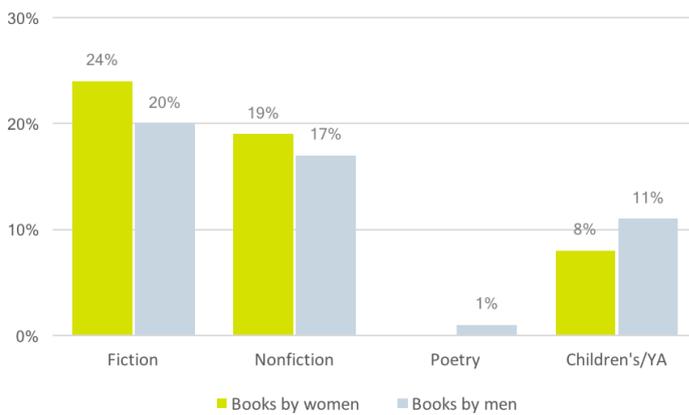
**The West Australian**  
Reviews by gender, of gender  
(percentage of total reviews)



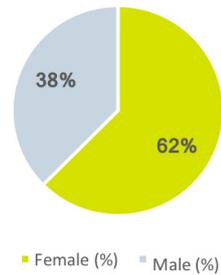
**The West Australian**  
Authors reviewed



**The West Australian**  
Percentage of total reviews by genre



**The West Australian**  
Authors discussed (other literary coverage)



**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Percentage of total reviews by size



**The Age/Sydney Morning Herald**  
Percentage of other literary coverage devoted to books by men and women, sorted by size



## Addenda

### Notes on the data

Books with two or more authors or authors and illustrators of the same gender were included in this Count and logged under their shared gender. Anthologies and other books with both male and female authors or more than two authors were excluded from this Count. In all cases they made up less than 1% of the total data.

Every effort has been made to ensure these statistics are accurate, and any publication for which we were unable to obtain sufficient or reliable data has been excluded from the Count.

We welcome corrections or comment from publications, editors or reviewers. Individuals and organisations who wish to view the raw data of this Count can arrange to do so by emailing [info@stella.org.au](mailto:info@stella.org.au)

