



NZ print freelancers: who they are, what they earn, where and what they publish

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Introduction

- Freelancers – self-employed journalists who sell their work to clients in the journalism industry
- A statistical picture of print freelancers, the largest freelance sector.
- Census data, compared to employed print journalists
- Content analysis
- Conclusions



Rising profile

- The second annual freelancers' conference held in Auckland in 2007, 200 delegates and corporate sponsorship.
- *Freelance Market* (www.freelancemarket.co.nz), began publishing two regular newsletters in February 2006, and together now have about 850 subscribers.
- Freelance representative now sits on JTO Council.
- New Zealand Freelance Writers' Association has existed for more than 25 years to support all freelance writers (www.nzfreelancewriters.org.nz).



Rising profile

- "We all of us are dependent to a greater or lesser extent on freelancers," Sarah Sandley, chair of the Magazine Publishers' Association.
- Freelancers lobbying the industry for higher rates of reimbursement, arguing that freelancers are under-valued.
- Yet little known about the nature of the sector. Literature has little to say on the topic.



Census data

- Special request for detailed data from 2006 Census
- Most journalists (86%) worked in print.
- Most journalists (81%) were employed, virtually all the rest were self-employed.
- Not surprisingly, then, most freelancers were print journalists - of the 420 freelancers in the census, 85% worked in print.
- The rest of this analysis is therefore confined to a comparison of employed and freelance print journalists.



Gender, age and ethnicity

- Proportionately more print freelancers were female: 49% of employed print journalists were female, 55% of print freelancers were female.
- Older: 38% of employed print journalists were aged under 35, but only 10% of freelancers were in that age group. 16% of employed print journalists were aged 55 and over, 37% of freelancers.
- Generally same ethnic mix as employed print journalists



Hours worked

- Many print freelancers work part-time.
- 10% of employed print journalists worked fewer than 30 hours a week, but 46% of freelancers worked these hours.
- 41% of employed print journalists worked 40 hours a week, but only 11% of freelancers did likewise.
- But at the top end of the scale 24% of freelancers worked 45 hours or more a week. This is less than the figure for employed journalists (36%), but is a relatively high percentage nonetheless.

Income

- The annual income freelancers earned was in line with the hours worked.
- Although only about 20% of employed print journalists earned \$30,000 or less, 40% of freelancers earned in that range.
- At the other end of the scale, 47% of employed print journalists earned more than \$50,000, whereas only 33% of freelancers earned likewise.
- Print freelancers' average income was relatively low: Average annual income of print freelancers was \$42,900, against the employed journalists' \$50,900.



Income, hours and gender

- Females made up the bulk of the lower-income, lower-hours proportion of the freelance workforce.
- A third of all freelancers were women less than 30 hours a week, men working the same hours comprised 13% of the total freelance workforce.
- Female freelancers' average income was \$35,400, male freelancers' average income was \$52,100.
- Outside the scope of the present study to discuss why such a gender difference exists, but this is clearly an area that merits further study.





Content analysis

- Content analysis of:
 - major dailies and weeklies (Sundays & business papers)
 - major magazines (30,000 or more circulation)
- Nearly 20% of the copy at the daily newspapers and over a third at the weeklies was produced by freelancers.
- 60% of the copy published in the magazines was produced by freelancers.

Content analysis - dailies

- Freelancers' largest single contribution was in the supply of lifestyle copy, accounting for 6% of the total daily copy from all sources, 40% of total lifestyle copy and about 30% of total freelance copy.
- Freelancers also made a major contribution in the supply of both business and opinion copy.
- However, freelancers only contributed the majority of copy in one section: opinion pieces (63%).





Content analysis - weeklies

- Freelancers largest single contribution was business copy, representing 15% of total weekly copy (41% of all freelance copy). At the two business papers, freelance copy accounted for 43% of all business copy.
- Freelancers also made a significant contribution to the lifestyle, opinion and other pages.
- Indeed, freelancers produced the majority of lifestyle copy (68 per cent), opinion copy (57 per cent), and other copy (51 per cent).



Few freelancers do most work

- 77 freelancers (17%) accounted for half the total freelance output.
- About 40% of freelancers accounted for 75% of the total freelance output.
- Very few freelancers published in multiple publications.



Conclusions

- Freelancers' profile is deserved: Make significant contribution, especially in specialist areas (business, lifestyle, opinion).
- Although some earn excellent incomes, sector is characterised by a relatively female, poorly paid workforce, working few hours and producing little copy.
- Further research could consider freelancers' views on this and strategies to raise freelancers' average income.