



The
STELLA
C O U N T
2013



stella.org.au/count →

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ABOUT THE COUNT

The 2013 Stella Count statistics compiled by the Stella Prize in conjunction with *Books+Publishing* show the ratio of books by men and women reviewed in major Australian newspapers and literary review publications. This year, the Stella Count also indicates the genders of literary reviewers, and provides information on whether books by male or female writers are reviewed by male or female reviewers.

The 2013 Stella Count reveals that there is still much room for improvement in Australian reviewing when it comes to gender parity. Small gains have been made by some publications since the 2012 Count, with others sliding further into male-dominated literary coverage. The majority of book reviews in Australian publications are still of books by male writers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

2013 Stella Count coordinators:
Fay Helfenbaum and Veronica Sullivan

Results

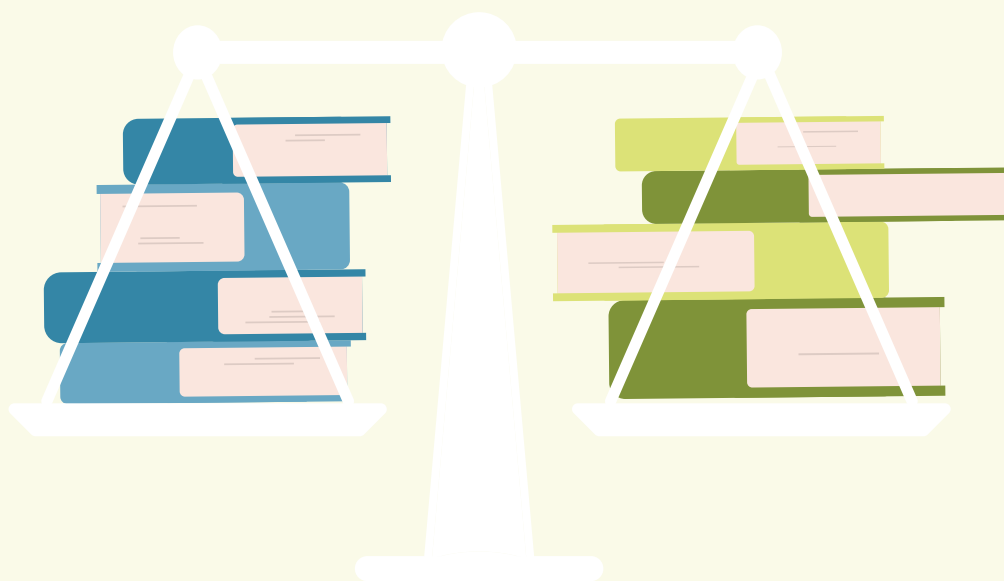
As in previous years of the Stella Count, most state newspapers reviewed more books by male writers than female writers. These included the *Courier-Mail* (59%), *Age* (58%), *Sydney Morning Herald* (57%) and *Daily Telegraph* (54%).

The most marked gender disparities in books reviewed were found in the two major national newspapers. 85% of the *Australian Financial Review's* literary reviews were of books by male writers, an increase from its results in 2011 (79%) and 2012 (80%). The *Weekend Australian* recorded an improvement on previous years, but still 65% of books reviewed were by male writers (compared to 70% in both 2011 and 2012).

Of the magazines surveyed, 59% of *The Monthly's* reviews were of books by men, while 53% of writers reviewed in the *Australian Book Review* were male. Both were substantial improvements on the previous year's results (67% male in 2012 for *The Monthly*; 59% male in 2012 for the *Australian Book Review*).

Newspapers that reviewed nearly equal ratios of male to female writers were the *Advertiser* (51% male, 49% female), the *Sunday Age* (51% male, 49% female) and the *Sunday Tasmanian* (51% male, 49% female). Popular review magazine *Good Reading* reviewed 51% male and 49% female authors.

Only two publications reviewed more books by women in 2013. The *West Australian* was the only major newspaper to review a majority of female writers; 58% of its reviews were of books by women. Of books reviewed in *Books+Publishing*, the publishing industry's primary trade magazine, 61% were by female writers (a slight decrease from 63% in 2012, but an overall increase from 55% in 2011).



Gender of reviewers

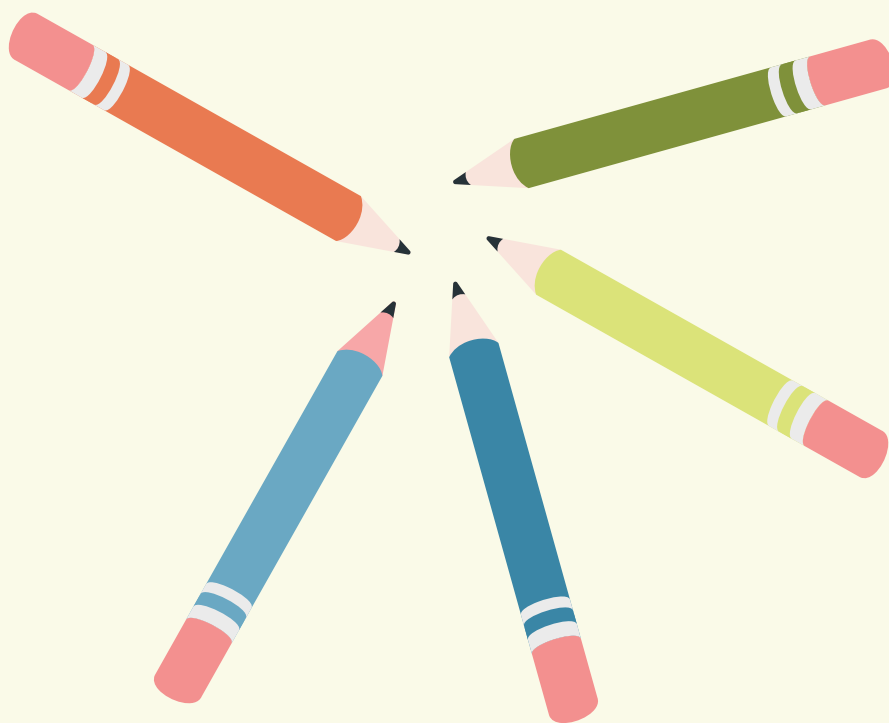
For the first time, this year's count assessed the gender of reviewers, as well as those of the authors they reviewed. The gender of reviewers fluctuated broadly across the publications, and in many cases they were either fairly evenly matched or had slightly higher percentages of female reviewers.

Newspapers that primarily reviewed male writers often had similarly high ratios of male reviewers. These included the *Australian Financial Review* (78% male reviewers) and the *Weekend Australian* (71% male reviewers).

Across the majority of surveyed publications, male writers generally reviewed books by men. This remained the case even when there was a far higher proportion of female reviewers, and

was perhaps one of the most significant trends to emerge from the inclusion of the new reviewer data. For example, 41% of the *Courier-Mail's* reviewers were male, but they reviewed books by men 83% of the time. Similar figures were found at the *Daily Telegraph* (39% of their reviews were written by men, 78% of which were of books by male writers) and *Good Reading* (23% reviews by men, 74% of which were of books by male writers).

The reviewer data also shows that female reviewers were more likely to review books by female writers. Overall, however, this data was generally more balanced than the gender ratios of books reviewed by men.



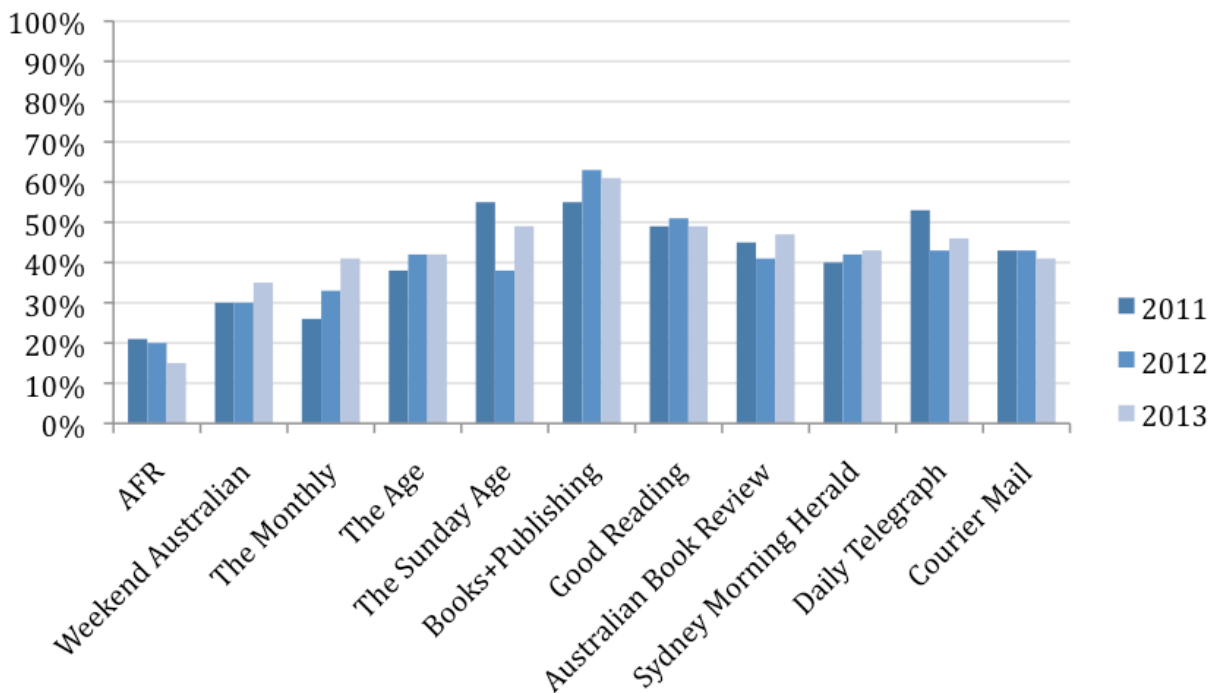
Changes over time

Over the three years that Australian data on gender in book reviews has been collected, some patterns have emerged across the board and in specific publications. The majority of the publications surveyed have remained roughly steady since 2012, with some slight increases or decreases. Many publications show gradual improvement, among them the *Weekend Australian*, *Age*, *Australian Book Review*, and *Sydney Morning Herald*. It will take several more years of the Stella Count to determine whether these newspapers' slight variations from year to year are an indication of progress towards gender parity in reviewing, or an anomaly in the continuing dominance of the review pages by books written by male authors.

The Monthly has made slow but steady improvement in the three years since the Count began, going from 26% reviews of books by women in 2011, to 33% in 2012, to 41% in 2013.

The *Australian Financial Review* is worth noting as the only publication whose attention to books by women has markedly decreased each year, from its already poor ratio (21% books by women in 2011; 20% in 2012) to just 15% in 2013.

The Stella Count: Proportion of reviews, books by women



Reviewing patterns

Though the Stella Count data accurately presents a wide range of quantitative information about gender disparity in reviews, some other important gender-based disparities were observed during the Count but could not be recorded numerically.

Book-oriented publications *Good Reading* and *Books+Publishing* both had more equal gender ratios in books reviewed, and this coincided with a broader and more exhaustive approach to reviewing books. These publications covered larger quantities of books, and reviewed more genres, including romance, speculative fiction, fantasy and crime novels, as well as more children's books.

These publications both had a dominant percentage of female reviewers, as did some state newspapers. These tended to be papers that published shorter reviews and reviewed commercial books and popular fiction more frequently.

In all publications surveyed, children's books were more frequently authored by women, and were almost exclusively reviewed by females, increasing the numbers of female authors and reviewers overall.



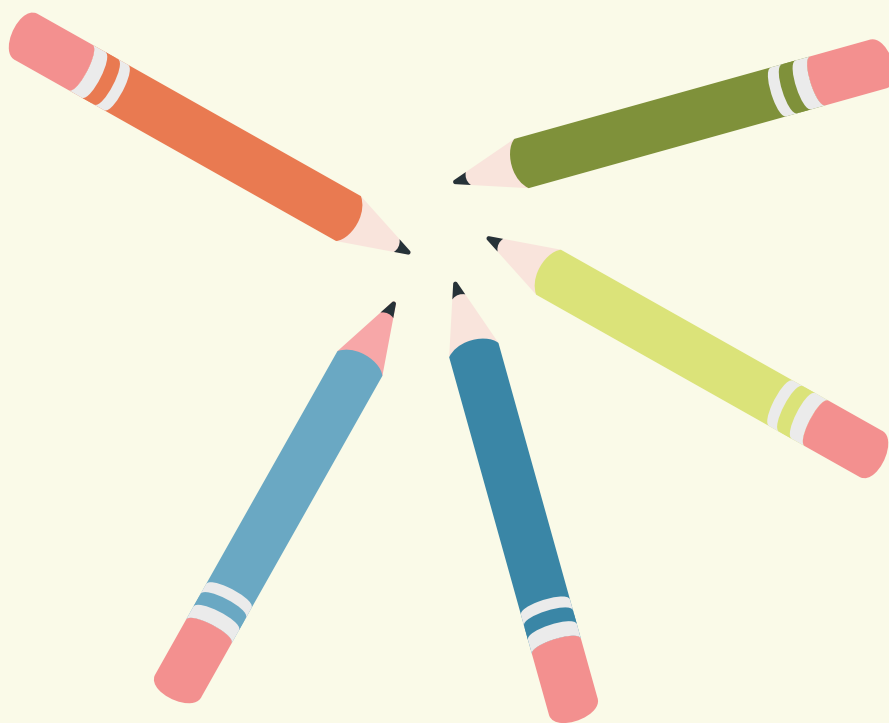
Observations and speculations

Even when a publication reviewed an equal number of books by both genders, books by male writers tended to be given larger reviews and these were generally positioned more prominently in newspapers' review sections. Devoting more space and more prominence to the work of male authors created a gender imbalance in critical coverage, even when the quantity of reviews was equally matched. This disparity was particularly conspicuous in the treatment of debut or relatively unknown writers. Emerging and first-time female authors were less likely to receive lengthy profiles or lead features than their male counterparts.

The dominant pattern of male reviewers reviewing male authors suggests either that male reviewers self-select to review books by men, or literary editors seek them out to do so. That female reviewers

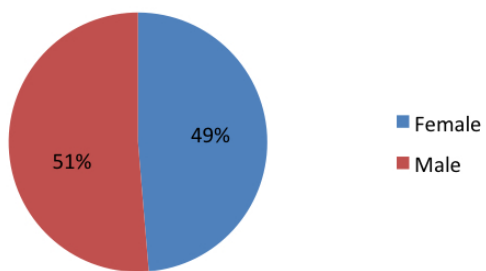
reviewed a more balanced mixture of books by both genders indicates that either their behaviour and reviewing inclinations, or their treatment by literary editors, differ from those of male reviewers. Reviews of books by male authors are also given greater prominence, which results in male reviewers writing larger, more conspicuous reviews.

These patterns in Australian reviewing combine to reinforce the perception that books by men are for everyone, while books by women are of interest only to women, and that men's writing is more deserving of reflection, recognition and review than that of women.

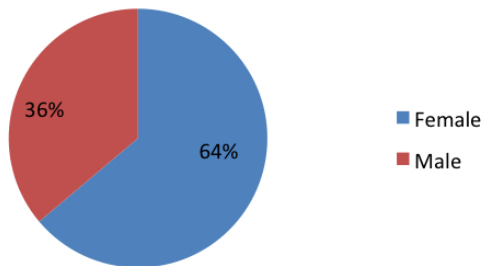


The Advertiser

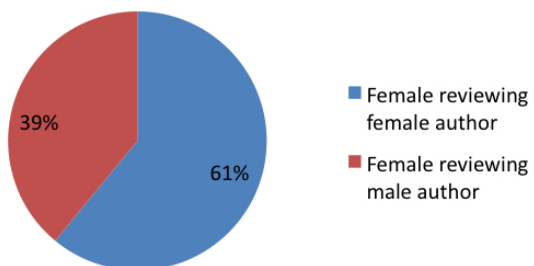
The Advertiser: authors reviewed



The Advertiser: reviewers

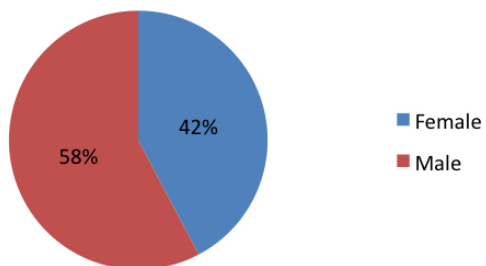


The Advertiser: what women reviewed

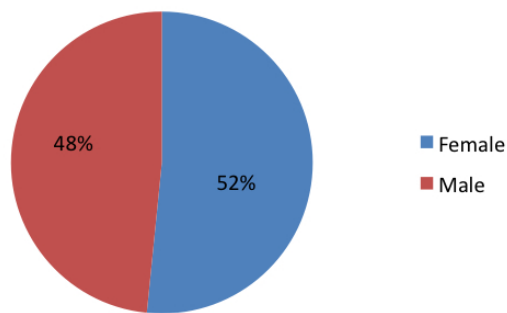


The Age

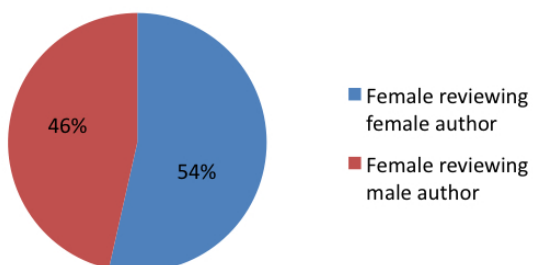
The Age: authors reviewed



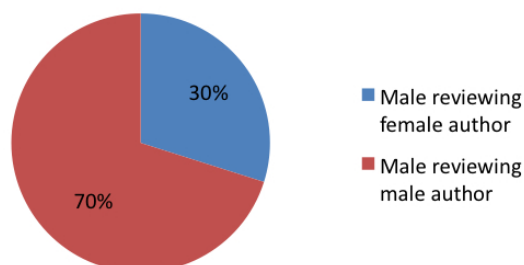
The Age: reviewers



The Age: what women reviewed

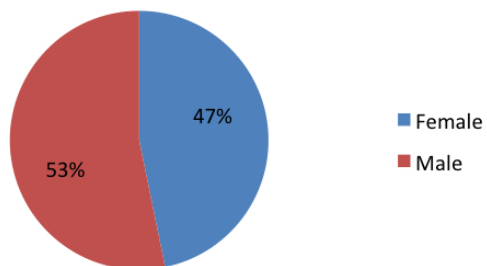


The Age: what men reviewed

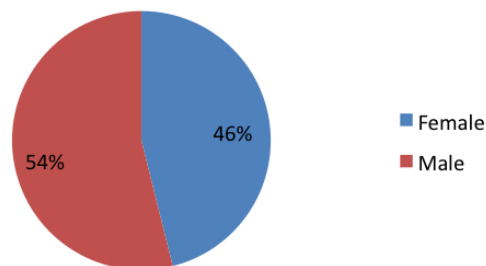


Australian Book Review

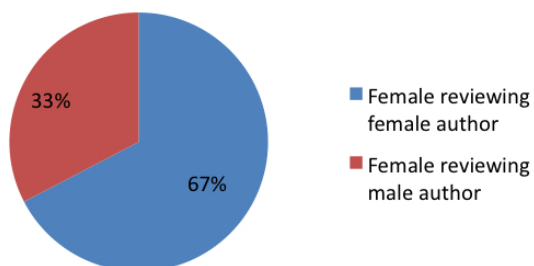
Australian Book Review: authors reviewed



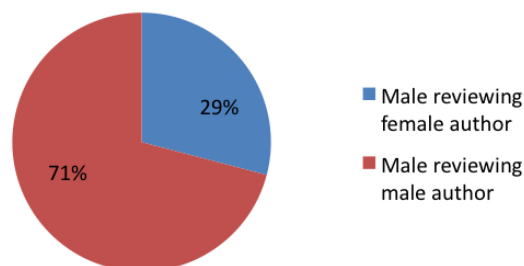
Australian Book Review: reviewers



Australian Book Review: what women reviewed

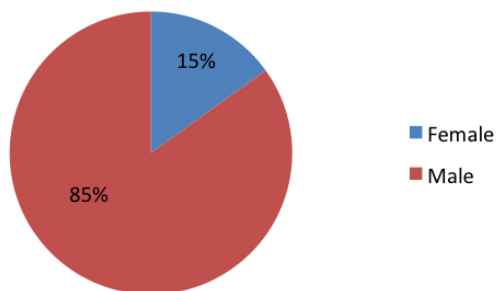


Australian Book Review: what men reviewed

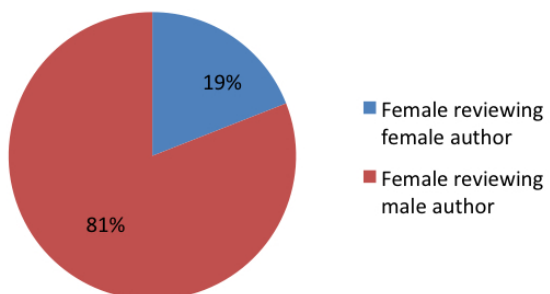


Australian Financial Review

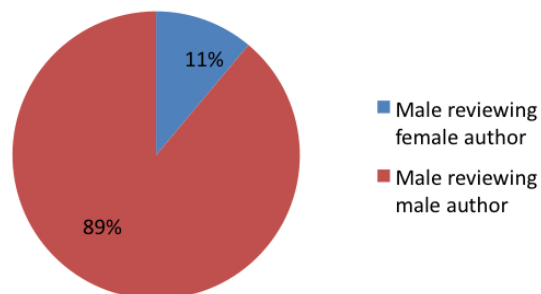
**The Australian Financial Review:
authors reviewed**



**The Australian Financial Review:
what women reviewed**

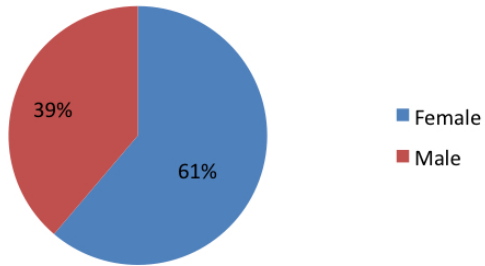


**The Australian Financial Review:
what men reviewed**

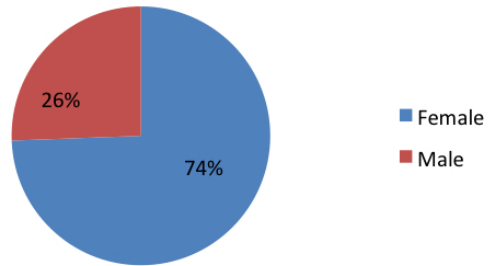


Books+Publishing

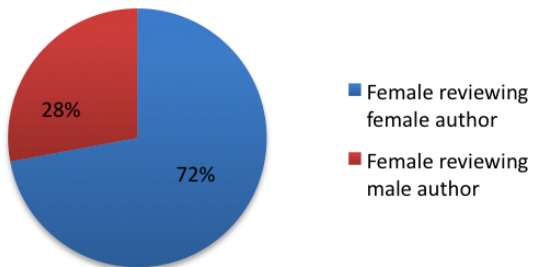
Books+Publishing: authors reviewed



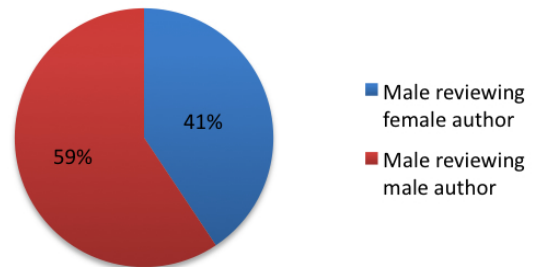
Books+Publishing: reviewers



Books+Publishing: what women reviewed

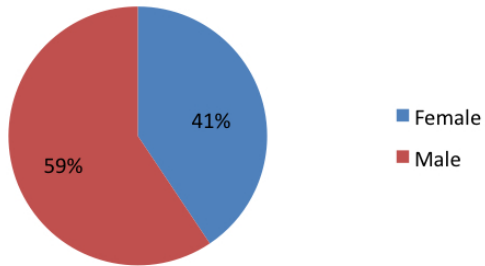


Books+Publishing: what men reviewed

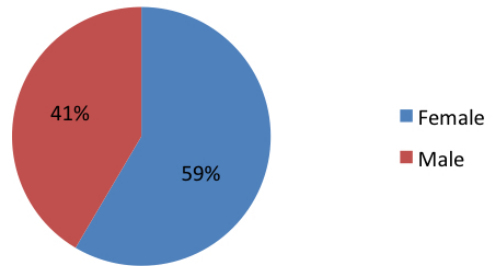


Courier-Mail

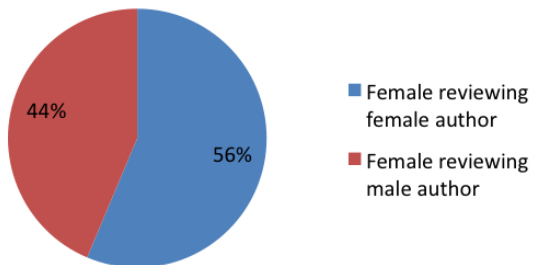
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authors reviewed**



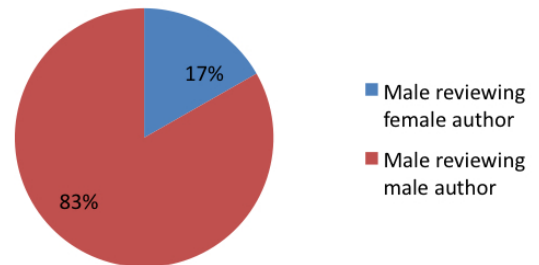
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**The Courier-Mail:
what women reviewed**

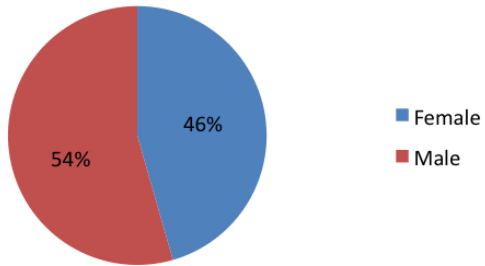


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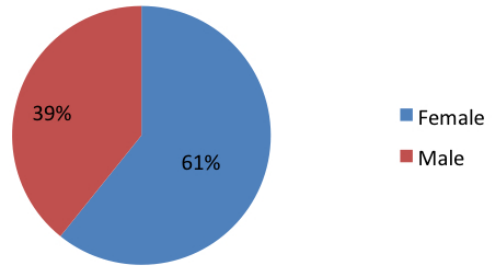


Daily Telegraph

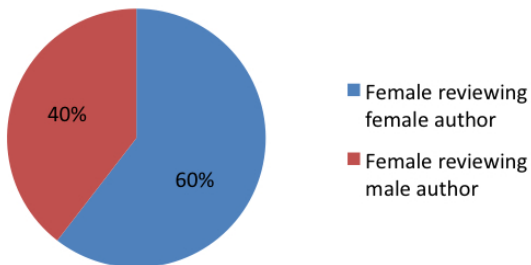
**The Daily Telegraph:
authors reviewed**



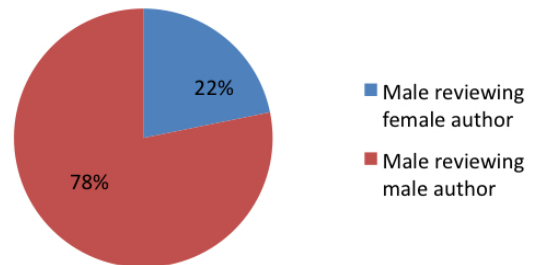
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reviewers**



**The Daily Telegraph:
what women reviewed**

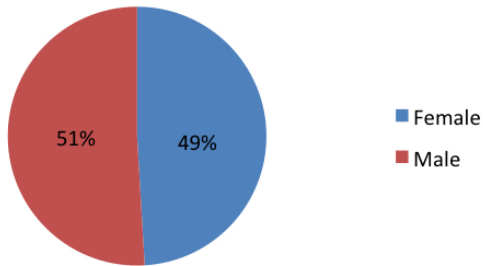


**The Daily Telegraph:
what men reviewed**

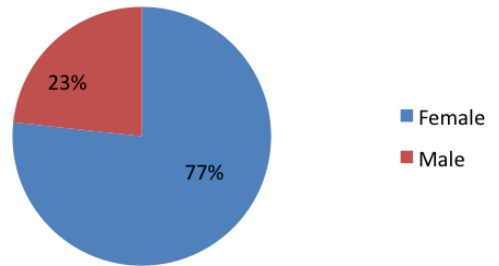


Good Reading

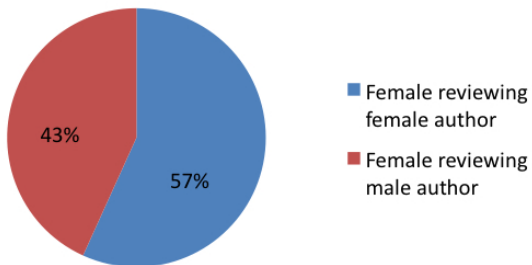
Good Reading: authors reviewed



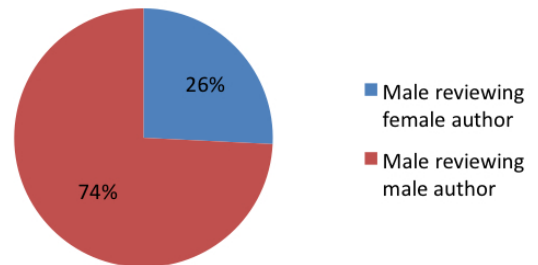
Good Reading: reviewers



Good Reading: what women reviewed

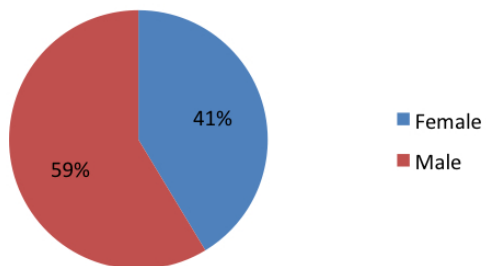


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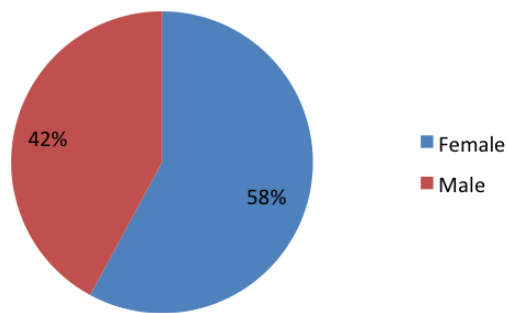


The Monthly

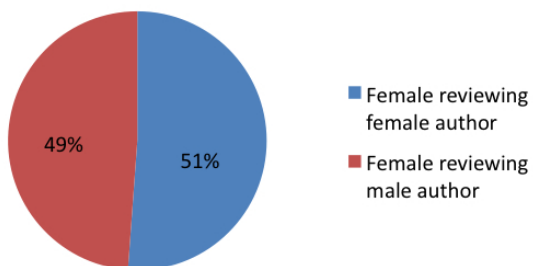
The Monthly: authors reviewed



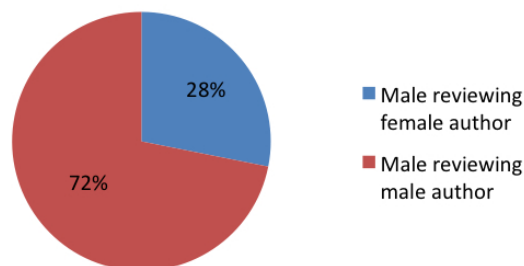
The Monthly: reviewers



The Monthly: what women reviewed

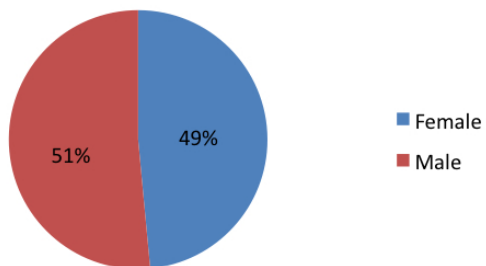


The Monthly: what men reviewed

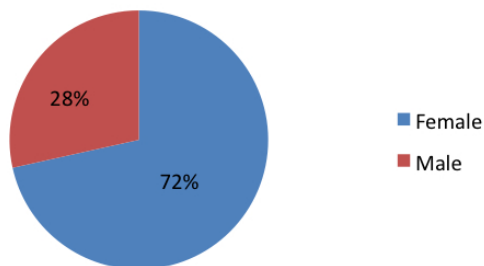


The Sunday Age

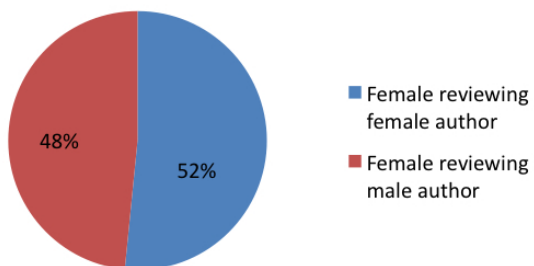
The Sunday Age: authors reviewed



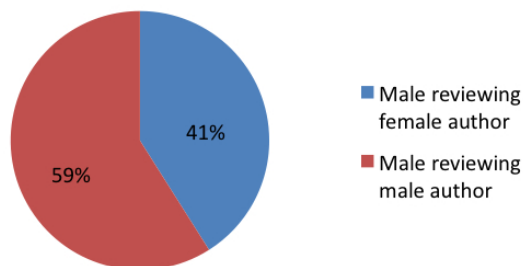
The Sunday Age: reviewers



The Sunday Age: what women reviewed

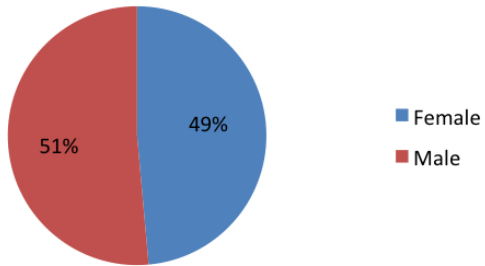


The Sunday Age: what men reviewed

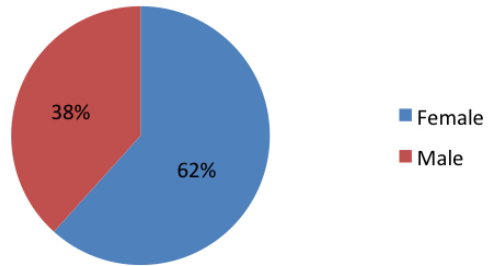


Sunday Tasmanian

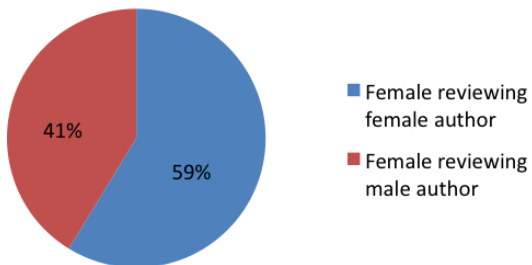
Sunday Tasmanian: authors reviewed



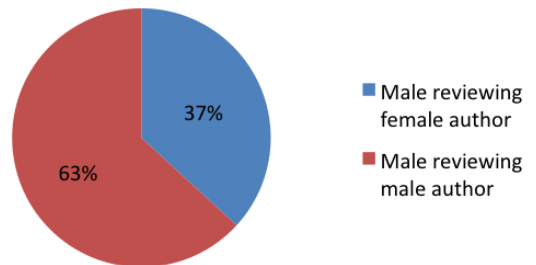
Sunday Tasmanian: reviewers



Sunday Tasmanian: what women reviewed

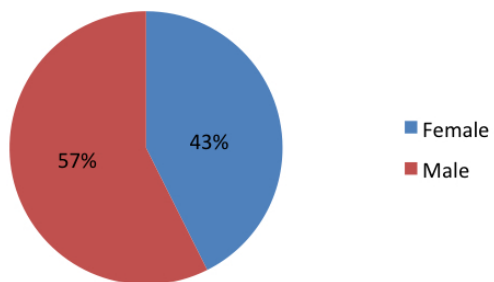


Sunday Tasmanian: what men reviewed

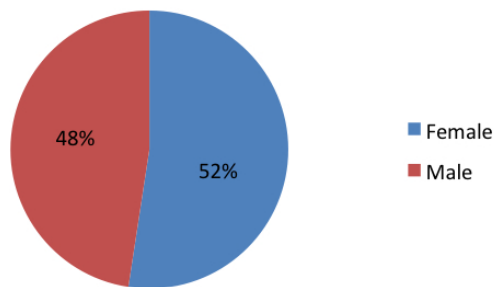


The Sydney Morning Herald

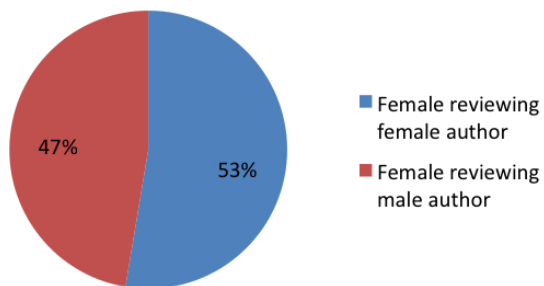
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authors reviewed**



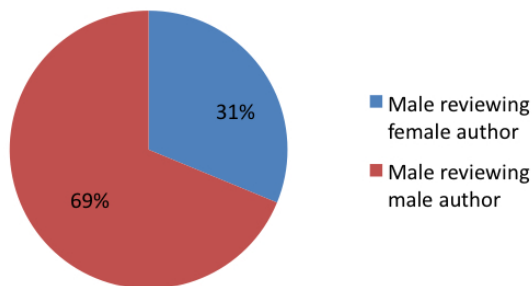
**The Sydney Morning Herald:
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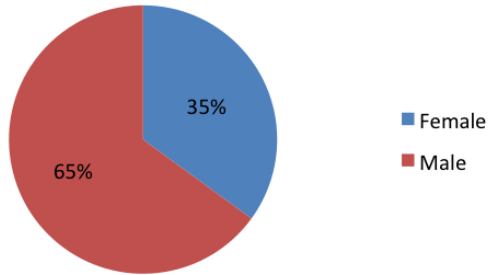


**The Sydney Morning Herald:
what men reviewed**

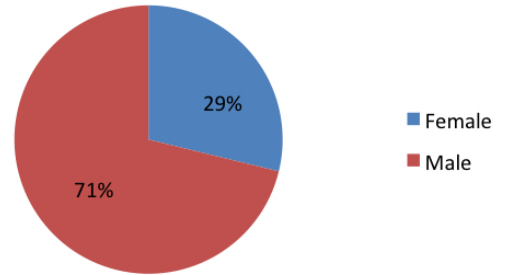


Weekend Australian

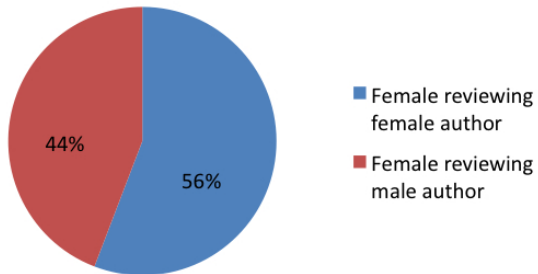
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authors reviewed**



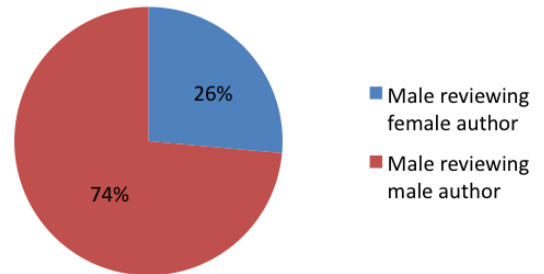
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**The Weekend Australian:
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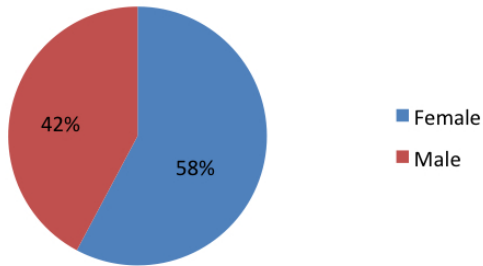


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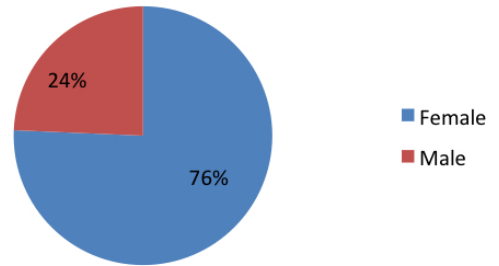


West Australian

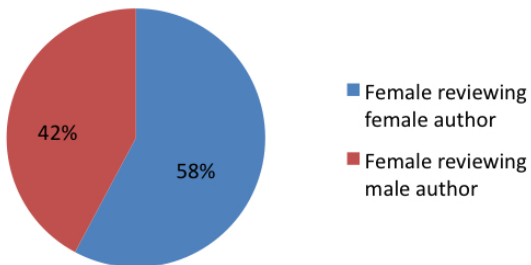
**The West Australian:
authors reviewed**



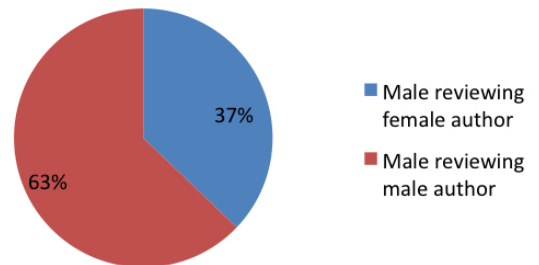
**The West Australian:
reviewers**



**The West Australian:
what women reviewed**



**The West Australian:
what men reviewed**



Addenda

Notes on the data

Anthologies and other books with both male and female authors were excluded from this Count. 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. This Count surveyed print publications only. We welcome corrections or comment via info@stella.org.au

