



**AMPLIFY**  
*writers*

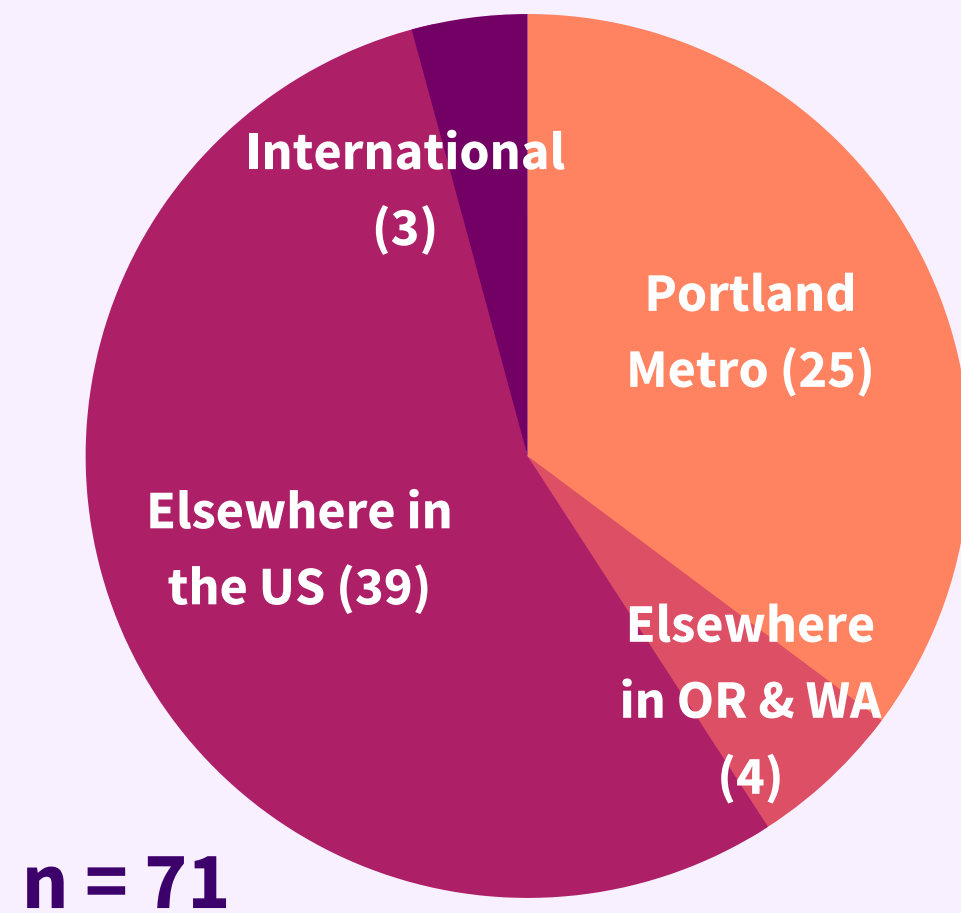
# Community Survey Results

August, 2022

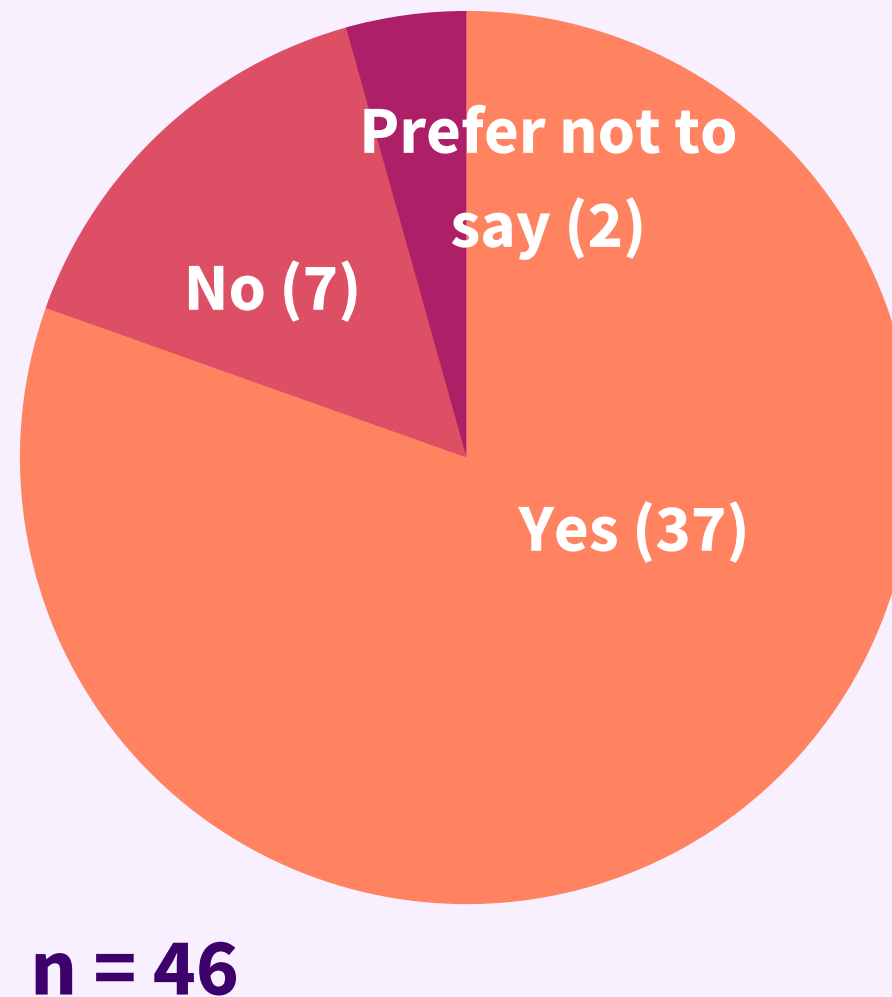
During May and June, 2022, Amplify Writers conducted a survey in order to better understand the types of career support writers in our community need, the barriers to access they've experienced, and their preferred formats for receiving support.

# About Our Respondents

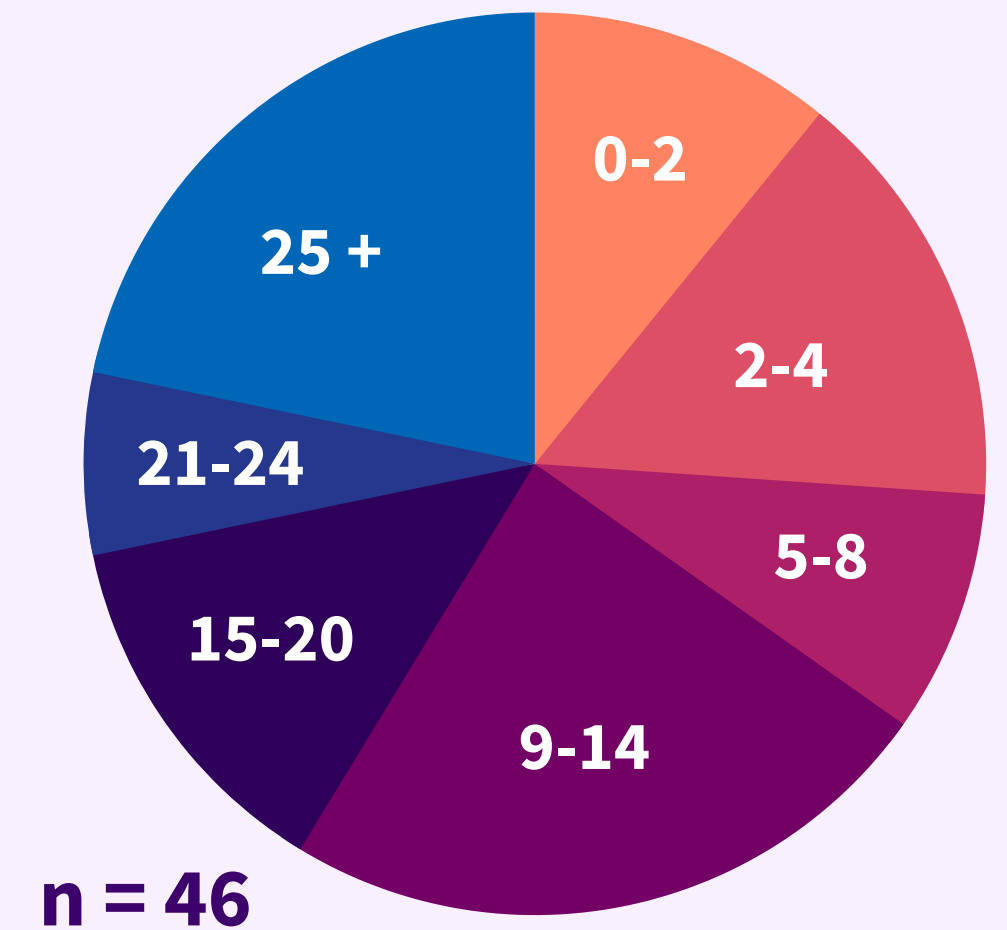
**Geographic Location**



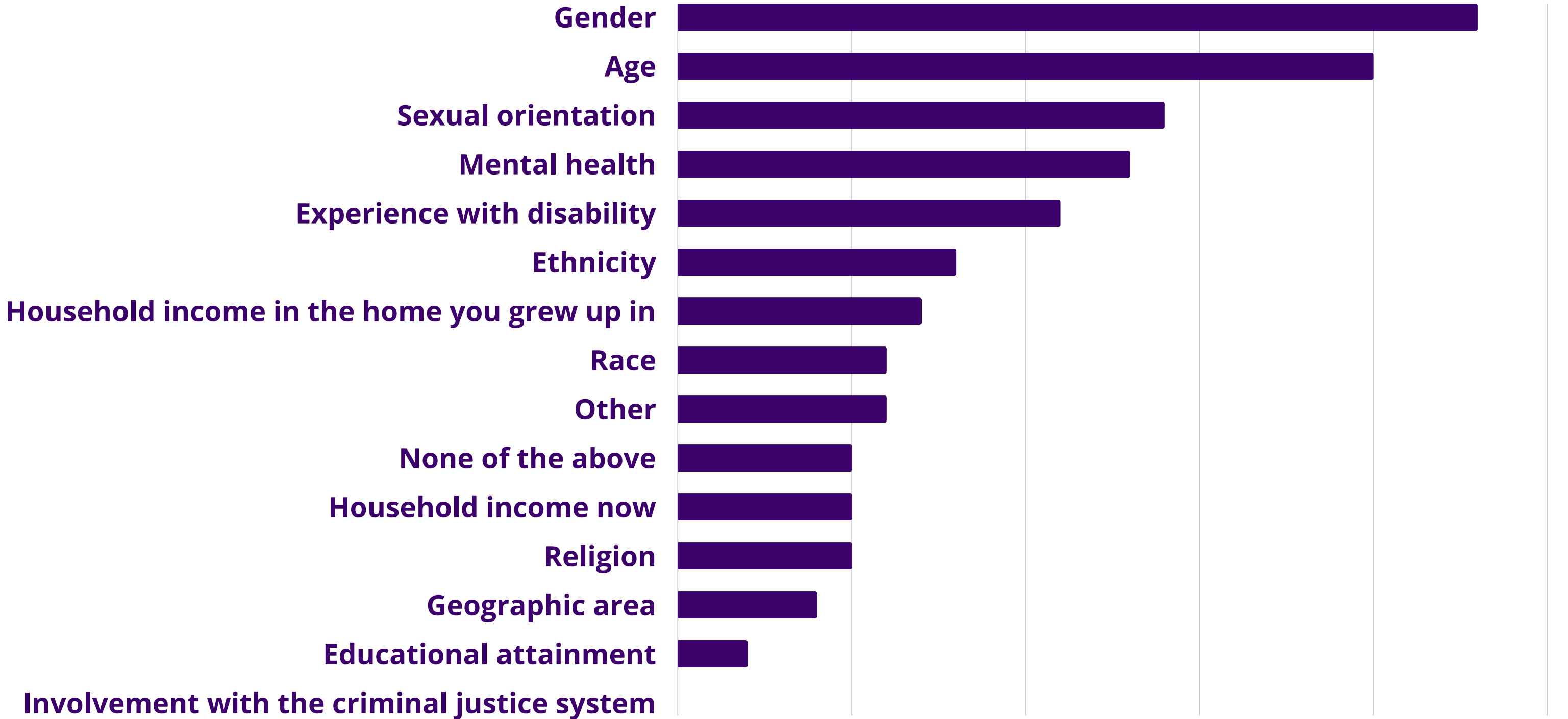
**Do you identify with a group or community you feel is marginalized and/or underrepresented in publishing?**



**Number of Years Pursuing Writing**



# Which of the following aspects of your background, identity, or experience contribute to your experience as a marginalized writer?



n = 46

# Will you tell us more about your identity, experience, or background in relation to how you identify?

I am a 77 year-old, queer, liberal, Jewish (with Sicilian & Scandinavian heritage) woman who grew up with financial difficulties & barriers to formal higher education. A woman who has been trying to tear down patriarchy ever since she read “The Second Sex” when she was 12. **I feel that the world hasn’t heard enough from old women like me.** I feel the current definition of what an old woman is & can be, what she can fight & what she can write limits female writers. This is—very slowly—changing. I desire to speed up this change.

I am a Gullah Black/Taínx, Borikén Puerto Rican non-binary human earthling who came up from the Bronx projects, living with CPTSD/anxiety disorder as a result of domestic violence and ongoing racism, and I have chronic back pain as well as frequent migraines.

I'm a white, lower-middle-class raised, lesbian with no kids, no pets, and currently no partner. I've also crossed the 60 age threshold, so I'm considered "old" now.

Autistic rural-living female

Jewish woman

Bisexual woman with PTSD

As a woman over 50, it seems **most of the fellowships choose younger participants.**

The same with literary agents.

Genderqueer, pan-romantic demisexual, ADHD and depression

I'm a nonbinary asexual queer pagan who struggles with anxiety and ADHD.

African American, bi, male

Lesbian over 50

# Will you tell us more about your identity, experience, or background in relation to how you identify?

I'll never be on a 40 under 40 list. I am a first generation college grad and often feel like there are cultural/social flags I miss. **I don't always know what questions** to ask when I'm given the chance.

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Employers see a walker and cane and think liability and cost of insurance coverage. **Online they cannot "see" me so that does not happen.** Remote freelance work is what I do and excel at now. Better that way than being discouraged every time I apply in person anywhere.

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Look, I have so much privilege. I'm a white woman married to a physician who largely supports our family with his sizeable income. But at 54 years old, **it does feel like there's some age discrimination going on.**

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I don't have an MFA and lack that kind of support. However, I am a serious published writer and am having trouble finding a conference at my level and age.

I'm a white middle aged female. I'm also dyslexic. I'm pretty privileged, but women as a group are underrepresented.

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I am a sixty one year old white lesbian who is physically disabled. (My first book was published two years ago!)

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BIPOC woman (Korean American)

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Middle Eastern, bisexual cis female.

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Super gay

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I'm 65 and a woman. There aren't very many role models.

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Black woman

# Will you tell us more about your identity, experience, or background in relation to how you identify?

**I grew up in a poor rural semi farm situation**, and while I had a lot more opportunities than I could have, there were still a lot of experiences I missed out on in terms of building networks and professionalism and things. I have a lot of chronic pain and fatigue and things that lead to lower stamina and inability to maintain full time work. I still have the support of my parents, but our combined income does not meet our current needs and runs a monthly deficit. I have some mental health issues that stemmed from my chronic physical conditions, some that stem from chronic financial situations, and some that are sprinkled in for fun apparently, which make it harder to maintain energy and momentum in trudging onward and expending energy toward creative work and future building work. I am queer, bisexual, and working on figuring out gender things, I'm pretty privileged in those identities because I've been in fairly sheltered and protected accepting environments, but I'm very aware of the fine line between living normally and being targeted in a larger world of publishing or social media. I also have a lot of outside pressure on me because my parents are aging and in ill health and I am their sole caretaker. Which is further stress on financial situations.

I am concerned that my age and rather shy, unglamorous presentation will bias agents and editors from considering my work. **I'm not young and charismatic.** I have no panache, but my work is outstanding.

I am a 25-year-old queer poet from NYC who suffers from C-PTSD. As such, I am considered disabled by the government and **receive SSI Disability as my primary source of income.**

Jewish female with chronic illness. Also I'd like to mention Jewishness is more ethnicity than religion for me, but some non-Jewish people only see it as a religion, which is incorrect. **Mentioning Jewishness in writing can come with some baggage / barriers.** I guess now that I'm 40, opportunities for young writers no longer apply.

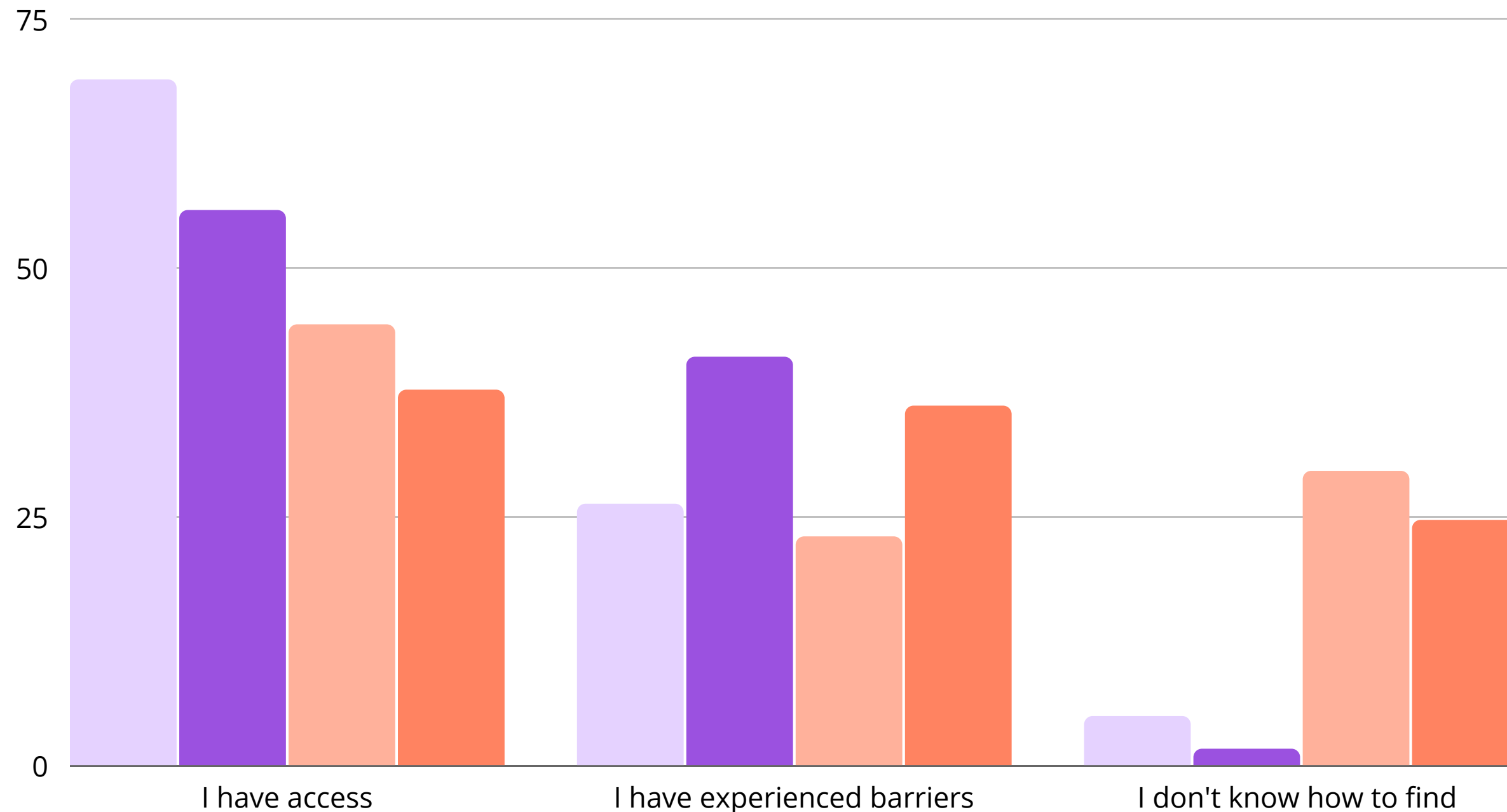


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# Access & Barriers

*We asked survey respondents about their ability to access programs that support their writing career development and the barriers to access they've experienced.*

# Access to Support



Unstructured supports to improve the quality of your writing

Structured supports to improve the quality of your writing

Unstructured supports to increase your understanding of the publishing industry

Structured supports to increase your understanding of the publishing industry

**n = 61**

*Examples of unstructured supports include social media, professional networks, or individually organized writing groups. Structured supports include conferences, classes, or workshops.*



Is there anything else you want to share with us about your ability in the past to access structured or unstructured supports for your writing career?

Although I've done many public readings of my work, and I've done storytelling & acting before live audiences—and these things don't frighten me at all—**the matter of understanding the publishing industry and joining professional networks frightens me.** I don't understand why I'm afraid, and I don't know what to do about this fear that stops me in my tracks. (And...I didn't know I felt this way until I started answering these questions.)

**My autism manifests in feeling unsafe and outcast in many gatherings whether large or small.** When I have been fortunate enough to be selected as a mentee in a program, I have struggled to connect when I ask too many questions as I try to navigate the relationship. I struggle to understand what questions are really looking for or to understand how my answers will be interpreted. I have sat on several advisory panels to gain a better sense of evaluation. I have been startled at the unwillingness of others to read answers differing from their own. Oftentimes from applicants who clearly stated they are neurodivergent or I suggested it was probably the case based on my own experience. Differences exist beneath the surface too.

Thanks! I'm a writer who has a full time job (non writing) and two kids with disabilities. It's hard but writing is my passion!

As a queer writer, I've found that a lot of existing support institutions and resources do not account for intersectional barriers.

While I've been fortunate enough to have access to both formal and informal supports for my writing career, **more often than not these experiences are very racist, privileged, ableist,** and I've had to go through the stress of filing formal complaints and/or cases.

Is there anything else you want to share with us about your ability in the past to access structured or unstructured supports for your writing career?

**It's difficult to find spaces that are accepting and inclusive of nonbinary folks in a meaningful way.** Even resources that are supposed to be inclusive invite and support transphobes, don't offer gender-neutral bathrooms and don't educate speakers on how to ensure that their talks aren't leaving people behind, or that their feedback isn't completely useless because they get too caught up in pronoun use or similar. I have too often had to excuse myself from participating in spaces because of these issues

I'm a 54 year old woman who stayed at home for years with three kids. I started my career as a journalist, though I always dreamed of writing fiction. When I finally got started, when my kids were young, I found it difficult to find time due to tending to their needs. Now that they are grown, I fear that no one is much interested in what a woman my age has to say. It's a bit scary. I've had some success with applying to workshops and residencies, but not much. Perhaps I'm not a good enough writer, or perhaps time has passed me by. Not sure.

Even after going to an MFA in creative writing, I entered the workforce unprepared because these **graduate programs resist business education for artists.**

I have several writing mentors, including a poet with an MFA who has lent me the benefits of his schooling and decades of experience, as well as a prominent fiction writer who I had the pleasure of taking a course with and with whom I keep in touch at least a few times a year.

**It's hard to tell what offerings really will help,** and which ones exist mainly to make money off of aspiring writers.

Is there anything else you want to share with us about your ability in the past to access structured or unstructured supports for your writing career?

Have also found wonderful help by contacting other writers / publishers in the industry but even this has access barriers to it.

Free workshops that offer freebies from speakers have been the best support I've found alongside the writing group I am in.

Yes! The vast majority of working writers are also teachers. This has certainly been the case for me. But while it provides a meal ticket, it has majorly cut into my writing life.

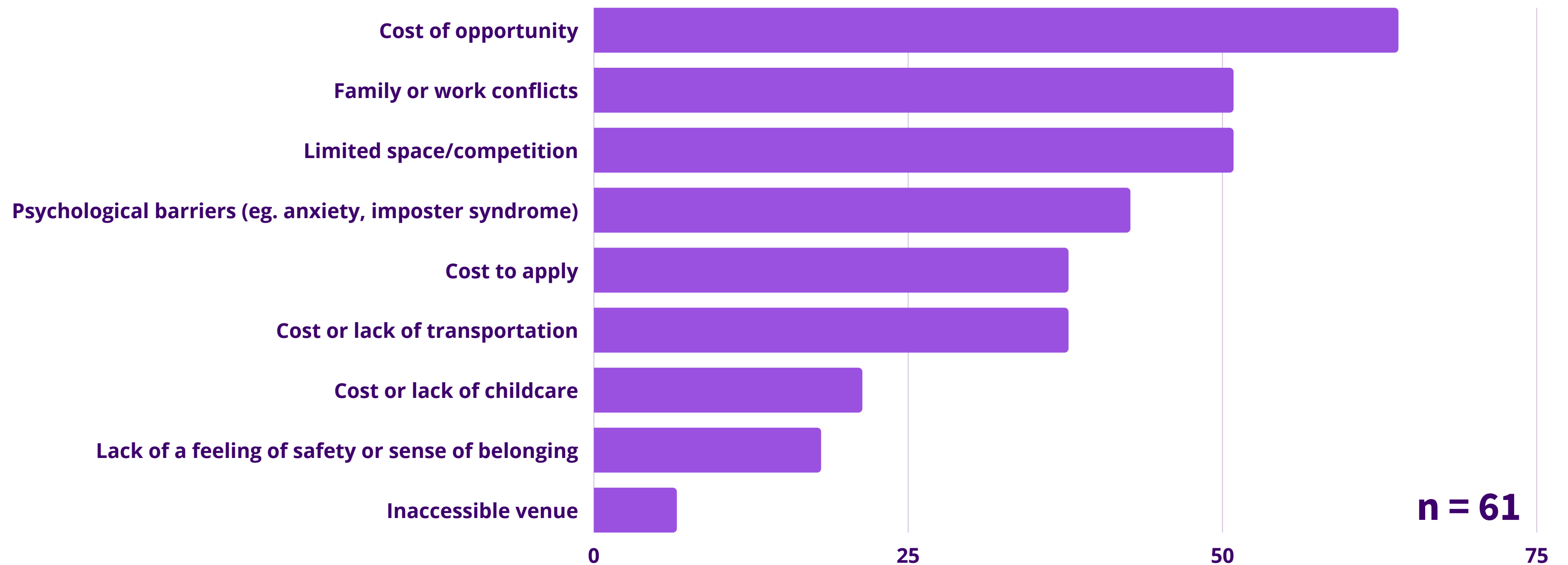
**I live in a rural area and many of these opportunities are a long drive away.** When many of these opportunities switch to an online format, it made things much more accessible to me.

An anxiety I have about certain opportunities like Bread Loaf, which offers both formal and informal support, is that they create an anointed network only available to those who attend and know how to connect with other attendees. I would also like to better understand opportunities for which there is no application. It seems like that requires a very high level of networking, on top of producing writing that is at a very high level.

Cost and value are not always the same. While I have the means to access fee-based workshops, etc, I've not always found they yield value justifying the expense. I've taken classes that didn't live up to the descriptions—readings not discussed, promised outcomes (you will come away with a draft of an essay) unfulfilled. There's no accountability and for writers who are trying to build networks, there's a reluctance to call out writers who don't deliver.

# Barriers to Access

*In total, 92% of respondents experienced at least one of these barriers to accessing support to develop their writing careers.*



# Barriers to Access

*Respondents offered this additional information about the barriers to accessing career supports.*

**I have found that I have to create these kinds of events myself.**

**A lack of understanding for autism creates barriers in applications, settings, etc**

**Racism and ableism**

**Physical disability (not related to mobility)**

**Need for letters of recommendation**

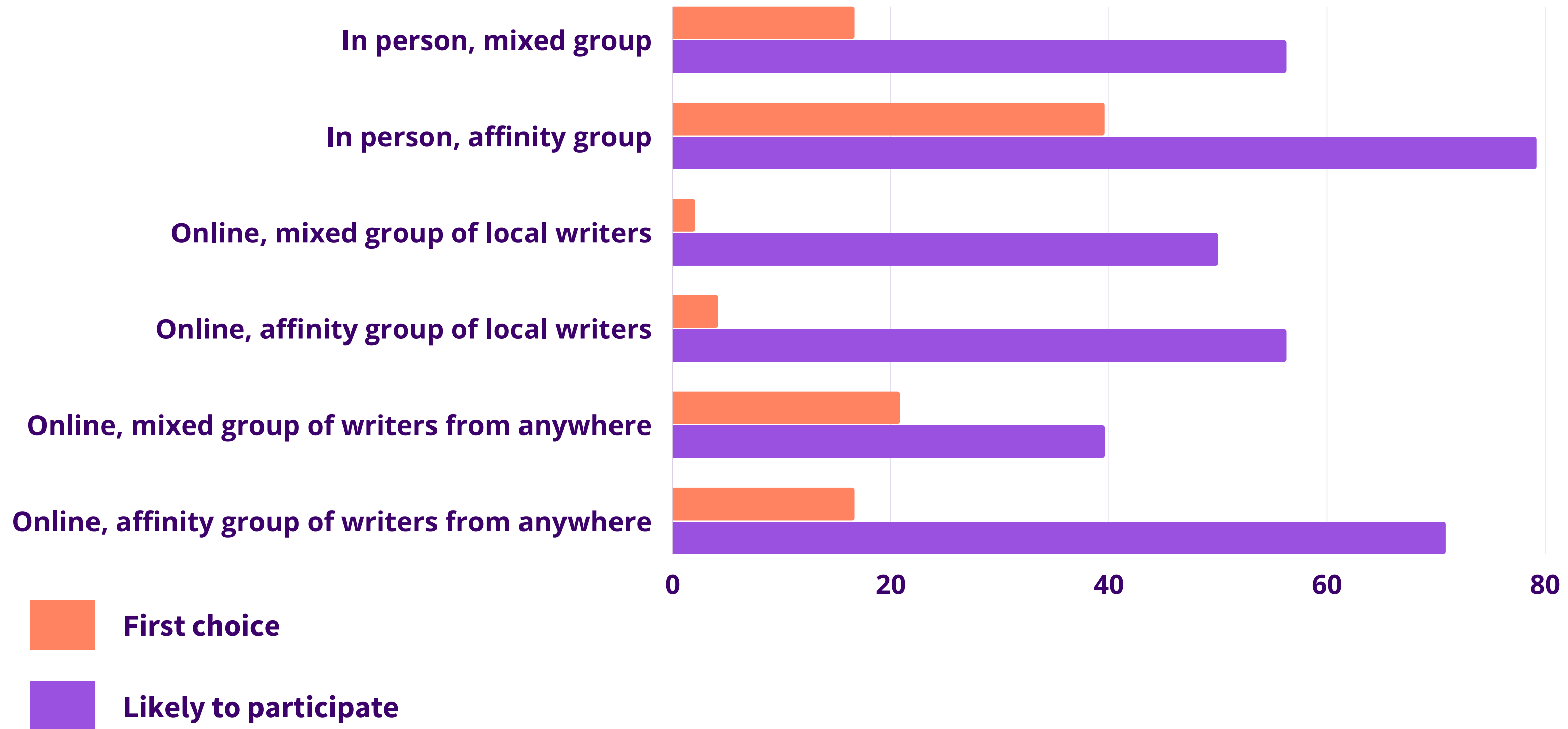


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# Program Delivery

*Respondents shared their preferences for accessing programs and the types of groups they'd like to engage with.*

# How do you prefer to access support?



# How do you prefer to access support?

Online is easier for me because it is less draining. There are fewer social cues to navigate and everyone is in a situation where they have to put more thought into listening and connecting. I feel on more equal footing.

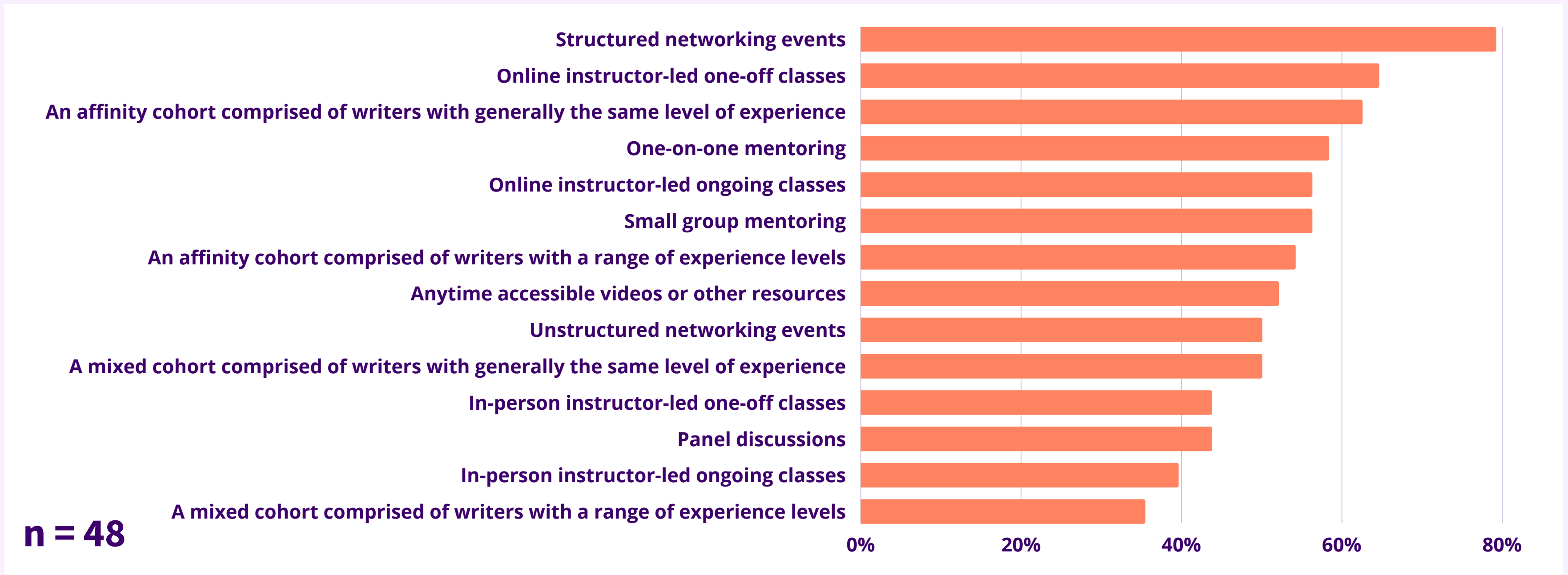
I might consider in-person options if the venue is outdoors

I'm not sure I understand what is meant here by "affinity group." When I checked these boxes, I was thinking about like-minded writers like the Corporeal Writing people.

**1:1 mentoring**



# Which of the following approaches to career support are you interested in accessing?



I appreciate the distinction of structured. I have to have that or a flail in a social setting. I will melt from anxiety.

# Are there any other approaches to offering career support that you would like us to consider?

How to advocate for yourself once you are established in your chosen writing career position

I'd like to see mixed online and in-person support groups e.g. a group that meets up regularly but also has a slack group for discussion between meetups.

I would like a class/workshop in which published writing (essays, short stories, memoir, novels) are critiqued/analyzed/discussed in terms of content, craft, and why it was successful in getting published.

The number one thing I have discovered marginalized/LGBTQ writers need is critiquing, mentoring, and editing. Otherwise, a lot of the output (which is easy to publish online) is substandard.

When sharing opportunities, it is very helpful to know if there is a submission fee (and how much) and if it is a paid opportunity (and how much).

One on one mentorship or consultation.

# Is there anything else you'd like to share about how you've sought or received career support in the past?

I have gone about applying to various scholarships and grants for workshops, and have won quite a number.

**I've never before dared to think in terms of making money**—or actually making a career—from/of this thing called “writing” which I love. Writing. Yes that practice without which I'm not fully alive.

**I really want to work with people at my experience and commitment level.** If I work with beginners, I want to do it in a mentor role.

**It's generally been solitary, googling and such.** I've been to many conferences but found that I quickly moved past the basic info usually offered in the programming.

I have sought career support in the past through small critique groups, larger local groups, one-on-one mentorships, and writing conferences.

Being in an inaugural class of something is a good way "in"; the first person to win a fellowship or award, for example. For writers who are hesitant to seek opportunities, it might also be encouraging to know that one formal occasion (like a writing conference) can lead to many informal and/or formal supports.

Artists residencies, binders on Facebook, friends

In the absence of available resources during my 25 year career, I have to make it up from scratch. By teaching others and making opportunities available for others, I have learned a lot.



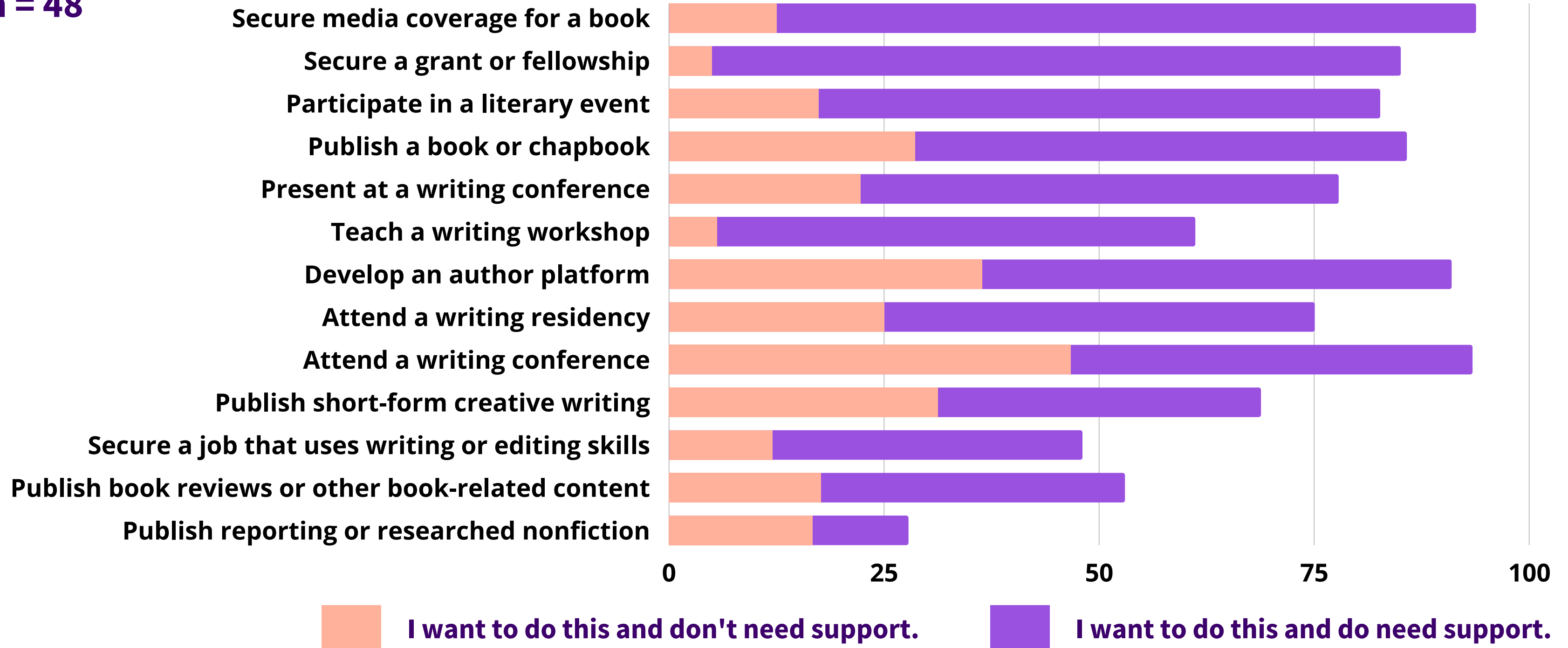
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# Career Goals & Topics

*Survey respondents shared their career goals and identified topics around which they would like to receive support.*

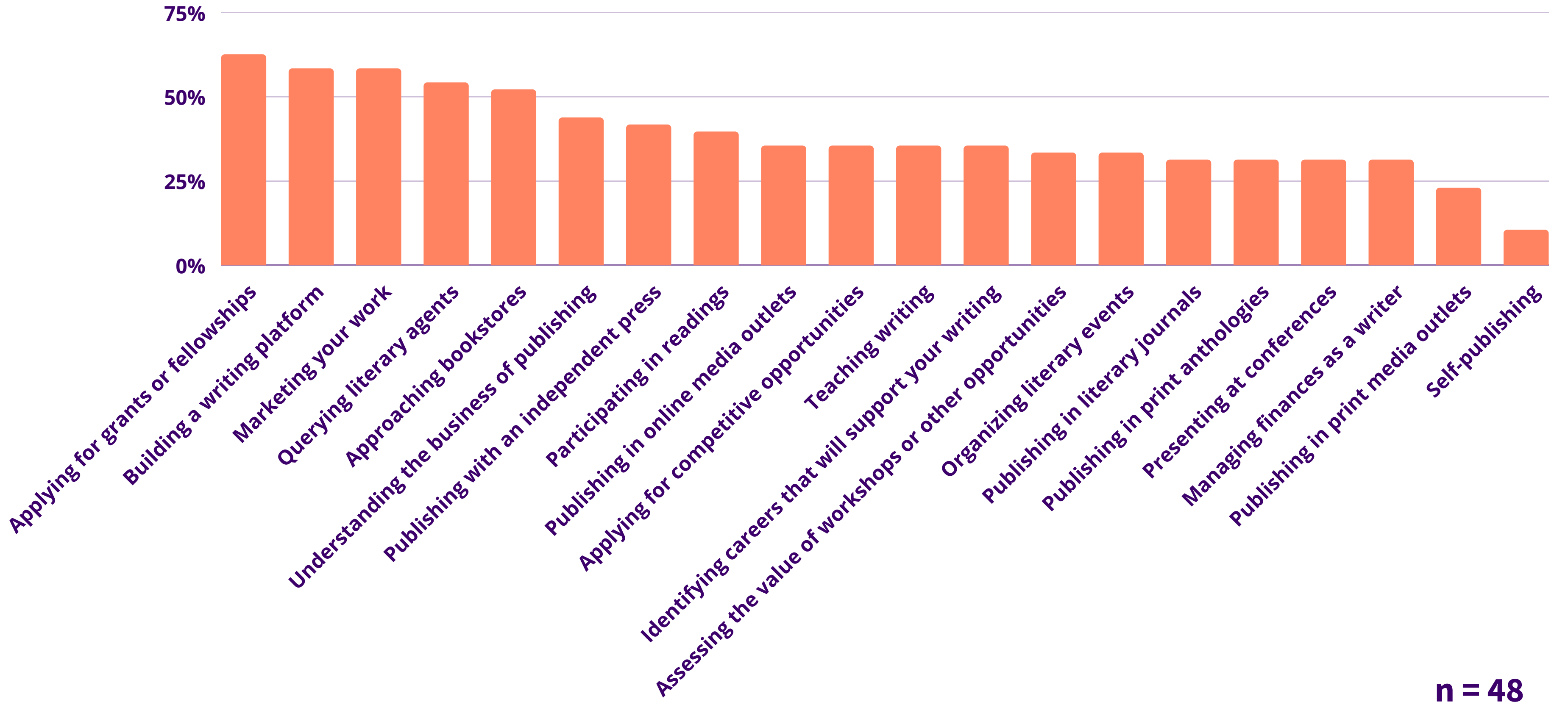
# Please identify your career goals and areas where you need support.

n = 48



*In the middle of the survey, we were made aware of technical issues with the set up of this question that prevented some respondents from choosing more than one goal. This data therefore may not reflect the full range of respondents' goals.*

# Which topics are you interested in learning more about?



**n = 48**

# Is there anything else about your career goals over the next couple of years that you'd like to share?

Things noted as "don't need support" are more like... I wouldn't turn down support if it came to me, but also I feel like I have sufficient support in those areas right now. My 5 year goals include presenting at additional conferences and publishing at least one more book, as well as putting together an application for and applying to an MFA program that meets my needs. Also I feel like "Publishing one-off poems" is kind of a... I don't know if it should be one of my career goals. I have a bunch of poetry that I want to publish as a collection, but should I publish as one-offs first?

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I'm writing and rehearsing a one-woman show that will be performed in July of 2023. It will be on Zoom first. Then it will be on stage. **Any connection with fellow writer/actors in my community would be grand.** And then, I want to publish my memoir in 2025. I need help in understanding more about getting it published. And then...I must do all of this soon. I'm 77. My life will end soon. And now, it's just beginning.

I think there was a tech issue in question 12. My actual answer is that I would want support in every area listed.

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Hoping to get a literary agent

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I want to unionize the book publishing industry

---

I need help navigating finding the right agent to work with.

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More visibility for myself as a writer and publisher, and marketing assistance.

# Is there anything else about your career goals over the next couple of years that you'd like to share?

The interface for this survey isn't allowing me to select more than one item for each column, so I'll write here that I so work a full-time writing job, which was one of my big goals, but I still have the goal of gaining regular editing work with a publisher on a part-time and eventually full-time basis, and I have the goals of publishing fiction and non-fiction books, publishing culture reviews more regularly and eventually doing that full-time, presenting at a writing conference, and securing a residency or fellowship that would allow me to work full-time on a book.

I'd like to get a chapbook published, as well as continue to be published in literary journals, magazines, and anthologies for poetry. I also hope to break into the short story market.

Definitely want support in finding inclusive, low-residency MFA programs that have a focus on or are accepting of genre fiction without being prohibitively expensive, or a Catholic university.

I would like to sign with an agent. I have one novel out and another forthcoming, both from a small press, but I am once again querying agents. My goal is to secure one and sell my third novel, my short story collection, and/or my essay collection in the next couple of years.

Really interested in learning more about author branding.

I want to secure an agent, but **my imposter syndrome dooms me from the start.**

I have difficulty managing the hustle culture that's required of a lot of creative fields and would love support on how to balance writing and business of writing, and self-sustenance, or how to optimize a slower creative process as best as possible in current times.





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