



# WORDPRESS COMMERCE

INVESTIGATING THE THEME-AND-PLUGIN ECONOMY

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# INTRODUCTION

Since its 2003 launch, WordPress has quickly become one of the most dominant forces on the web. It powers 26% of all sites, and WordPress is the top choice for nearly 60% of sites that rely on a content management system (CMS).

*WordPress users often turn to developer-created premium themes and plugins to customize and enhance their sites. These thriving marketplaces have actually sparked an entirely new economy within the WordPress ecosystem, which offers numerous opportunities for theme and plugin developers around the world.*

This ebook will conduct an in-depth investigation into the rapidly evolving theme-and-plugin economy, which attracts top developer talent from around the globe.

***“We analyzed data from theme and plugin marketplaces to track trends in growth and revenue, rank the growth of various categories, and even map the locations of the top-earning theme and plugin authors.”***



# TOTAL REVENUE: PLUGINS VS. THEMES

# THEMES AND PLUGINS ARE TWO OF THE MOST PROFITABLE BUSINESSES IN THE WORDPRESS WORKSPACE

Plugins and themes are some of the most profitable assets in the WordPress workspace. The industry has experienced a great deal of growth — in fact, the plugin marketplace has grown over 3,000% since 2010.

***Between themes and plugins, over \$300 million has exchanged hands.***

## PROFITABLE MARKET FOR SUCCESSFUL AUTHORS

WordPress.org recommends over 80 different companies that provide themes, which are just the tip of the iceberg. Looking at the average income of authors helps explain why the theme market is so saturated.



***According to ThemeForest, its authors with at least one sale average over \$52,000 annually.***

# PLUGIN REVENUE



## ONE FOR EVERY NEED ...

The beauty of WordPress plugins is that they can be adapted to perform many different functions, from social networking to newsletter subscriptions. Specific plugins are designed for a variety of purposes, such as code that manages website contact forms and programs that provide website data backups.

The internet covers the entire spectrum of the human experience, and developers create and adapt plugins daily to meet the ever-evolving needs of users.

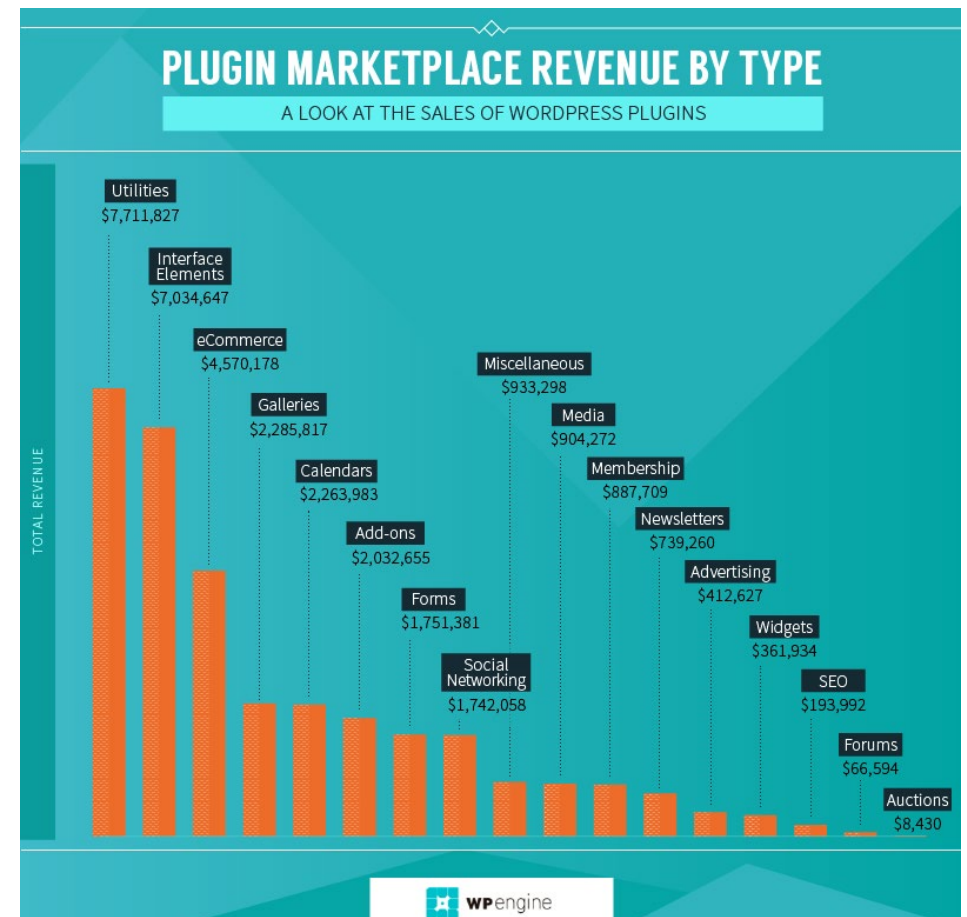
## REVENUE, BY TYPE

Utility plugins and interface elements are the two most profitable plugin types, each bringing in over \$7 million. The No. 1 revenue generator, utility plugins, improve the functionality of WordPress and make it easier to use.

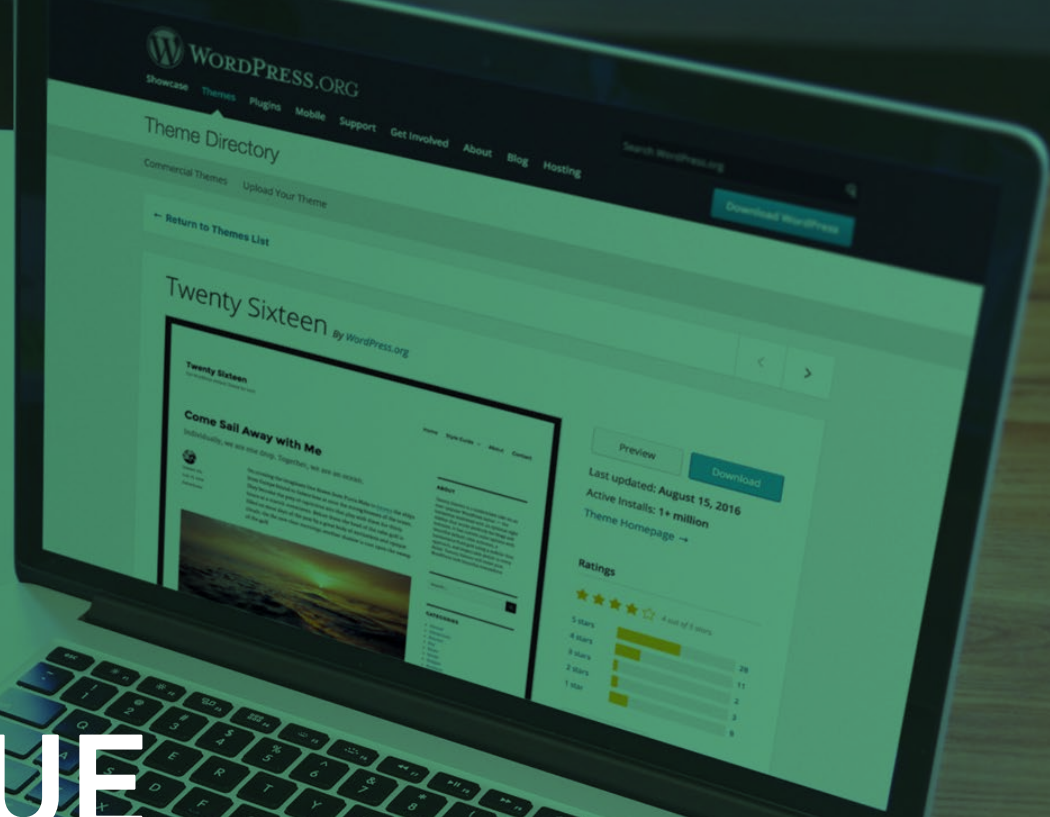
Interface elements plugins are visual add-ons that enable users to feature anything from animated banners to charts and graphs.

The combined \$14 million for the top two categories starkly contrasts with the bottom four revenue types: plugins for widgets, SEO, forums, and auctions. These revenue streams equal less than \$1 million combined. Social networking ranked No. 8 out of 17 types of plugins.

*“There are currently more than 40,000 plugins available on WordPress.org, which have been collectively downloaded more than 1.2 billion times”*



# THEME REVENUE





## STYLE IS A PERSONAL CHOICE ...

There are thousands upon thousands of themes to choose from with WordPress. While plugins are specifically designed to perform particular functions, themes affect the overall look and feel of a site. If a plugin provides functionality, then themes are the personality — and they are as diverse as the global personalities of the authors who create them.

While many of these are available for free download, the more elaborate and skillful premium designs come at a cost.

## REVENUE, BY TYPE

The market for themes is larger than the market for plugins — at least for now. Themes claim over \$232 million in total revenue compared with over \$70 million for plugins.

According to Alexa.com, ThemeForest is one of the most popular 500 websites on the internet worldwide. At the time of this study, the site boasts over 6,300 WordPress themes available for purchase and download.

The theme categories are as varied as the plugins. However, the top two categories, corporate and creative themes, account for over \$125 million in revenue. That's over 50% of the total revenue of themes.

*If plugins and themes were parts of a shoe, then plugins are the functional parts — the sole and laces; while themes are the shiny parts — the color and the leather that holds it all together.*

### THEME MARKETPLACE REVENUE BY SEGMENT

A LOOK AT THE SALES OF WORDPRESS THEMES



A person wearing glasses is shown in profile, working at a computer. The image has a teal overlay. The computer screen displays code, including HTML and CSS snippets. The text on the screen includes: 

```
div {background-image: url('example.jpg'); background-size: 100%; height: 200px; width: 100%;}
```

 and 

```
div {background-color: yellowgreen; color: white; text-align: center;}
```

 The person's hands are visible on a keyboard. 

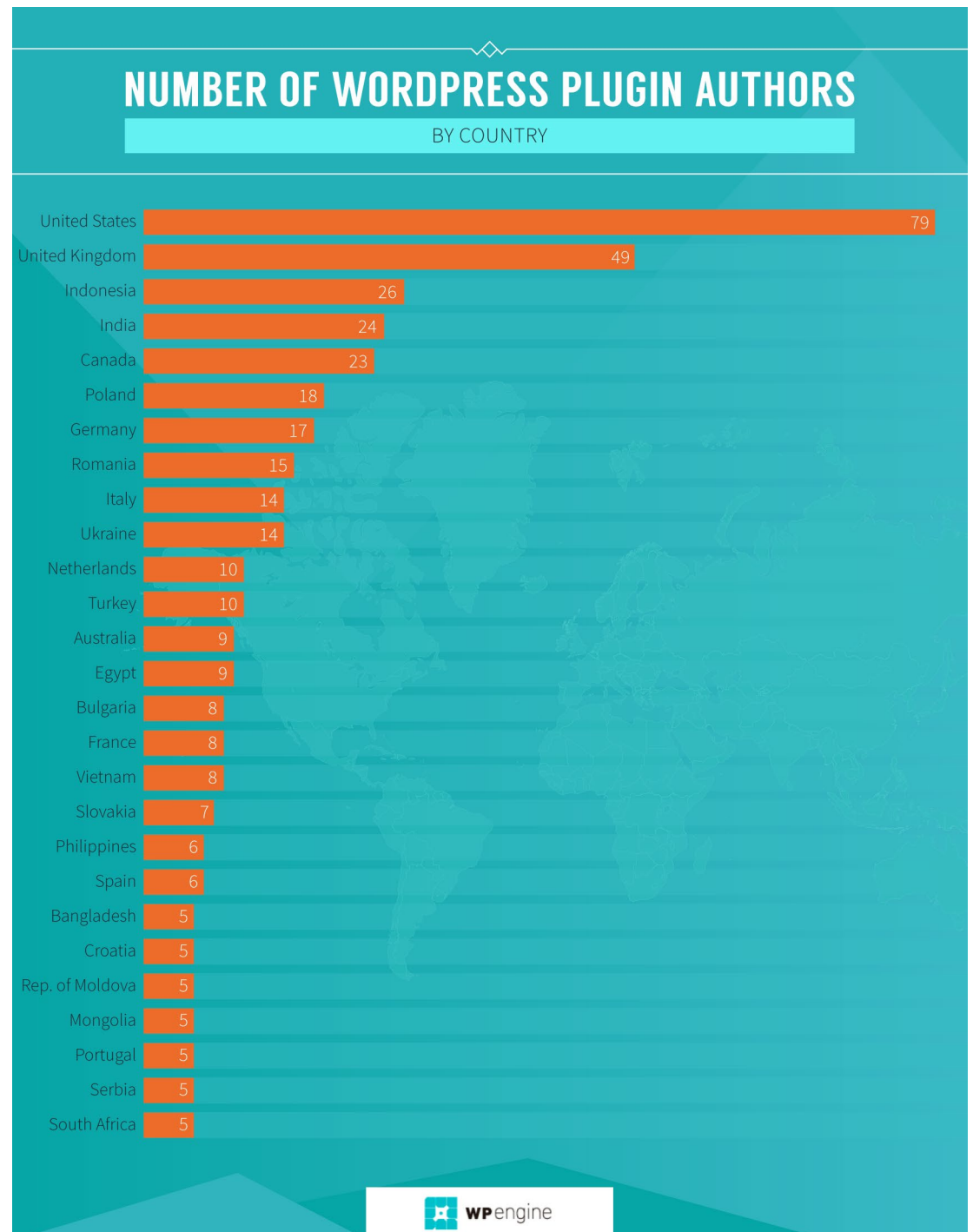
# A GLOBAL BYLINE: THE AUTHORS BEHIND PLUGINS AND THEMES

# PLUGIN AUTHORS

***WordPress is available in over 160 languages around the world; its plugin authors are located around the globe.***

This chart shows the United States tops the list with the most plugin authors. It has more than 45% more authors than the second-place United Kingdom. Third-place Indonesia — with India and Canada close on its heels — trails the U.S. by a difference of about 100%.

The chart represents the truly global author community; more than 25 countries are represented.



# THEME AUTHORS

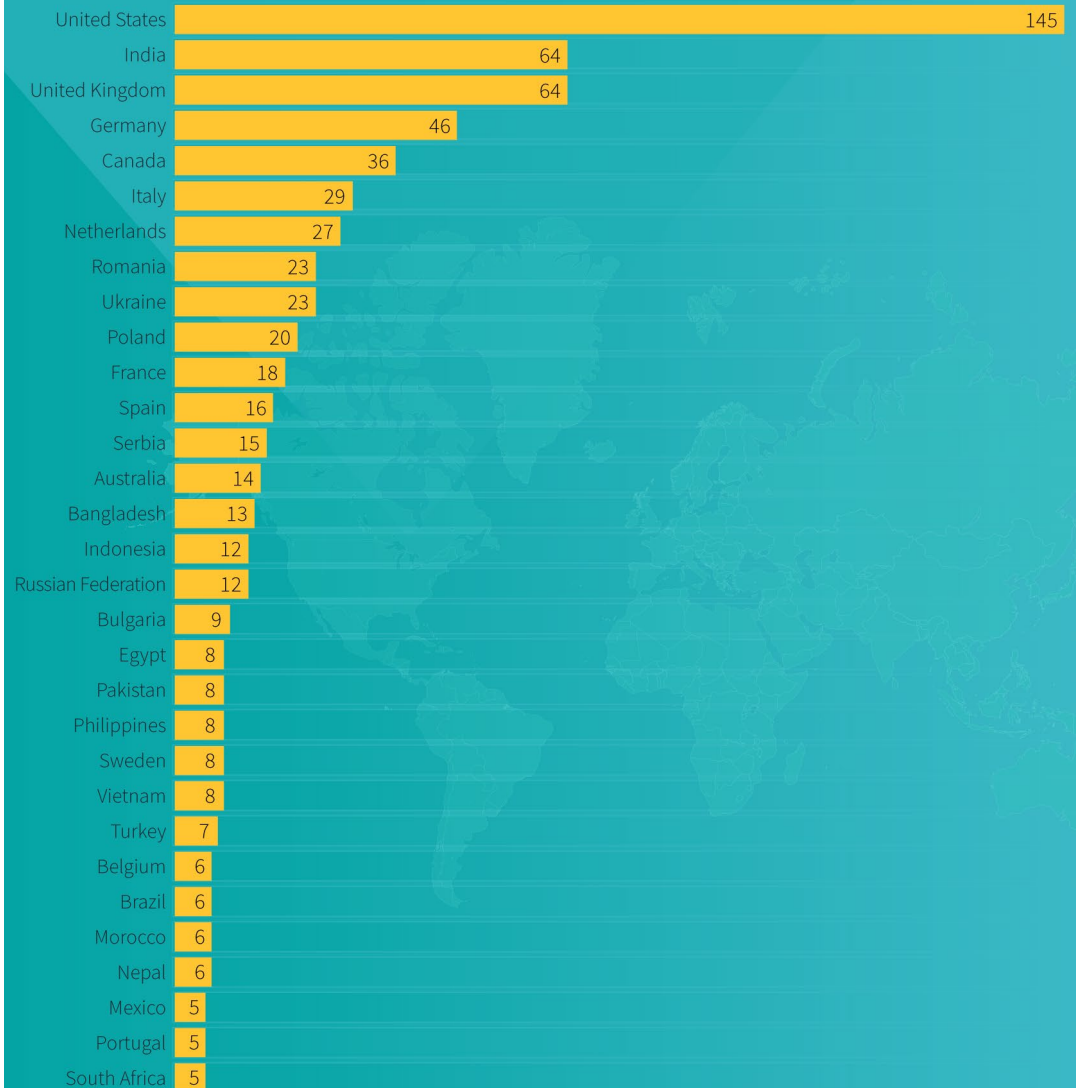
The numbers favor the United States even more when it comes to theme authors. A total of 145 theme marketplace authors are based in the U.S. — that's more than double any other country on the list. The country breakdown of authors is extremely similar to that of the plugin authors, with four of the top five countries making both lists.

Guillaume Marty was a top-selling plugin author in 2013. In an interview with Remi Corson, he noted a few differences between developing an HTML theme template and a web element plugin.

***There's a need to regularly update plugins, which isn't as common for themes. It's possible that these plugin authors enjoy the ability to continually improve a product.***

## NUMBER OF WORDPRESS THEME AUTHORS

BY COUNTRY



## TOP-SELLING PLUGIN AUTHORS

These authors are the representatives of the WordPress economy. While some of the authors on this list are individuals, most are companies, such as WPBakery.

Germany has a commanding lead when it comes to plugin sales: It holds the top two places, which combine for over \$6 million in sales. The German-based WPBakery is the best-selling author in the plugin marketplace, largely due to the popularity of its Visual Composer theme.

## TOP-SELLING THEME AUTHORS

The theme marketplace maintains an edge in revenue as the top-selling author, Kriesi (an Austrian author) made over \$7 million, compared with just over \$4 million by the top plugin author.

Once again, the United States has the most authors represented, but the upper revenue level is a mixed bag from around the world, as the top seven slots comprise seven different countries.

### THE BEST PERFORMERS IN THE WORDPRESS ECONOMY

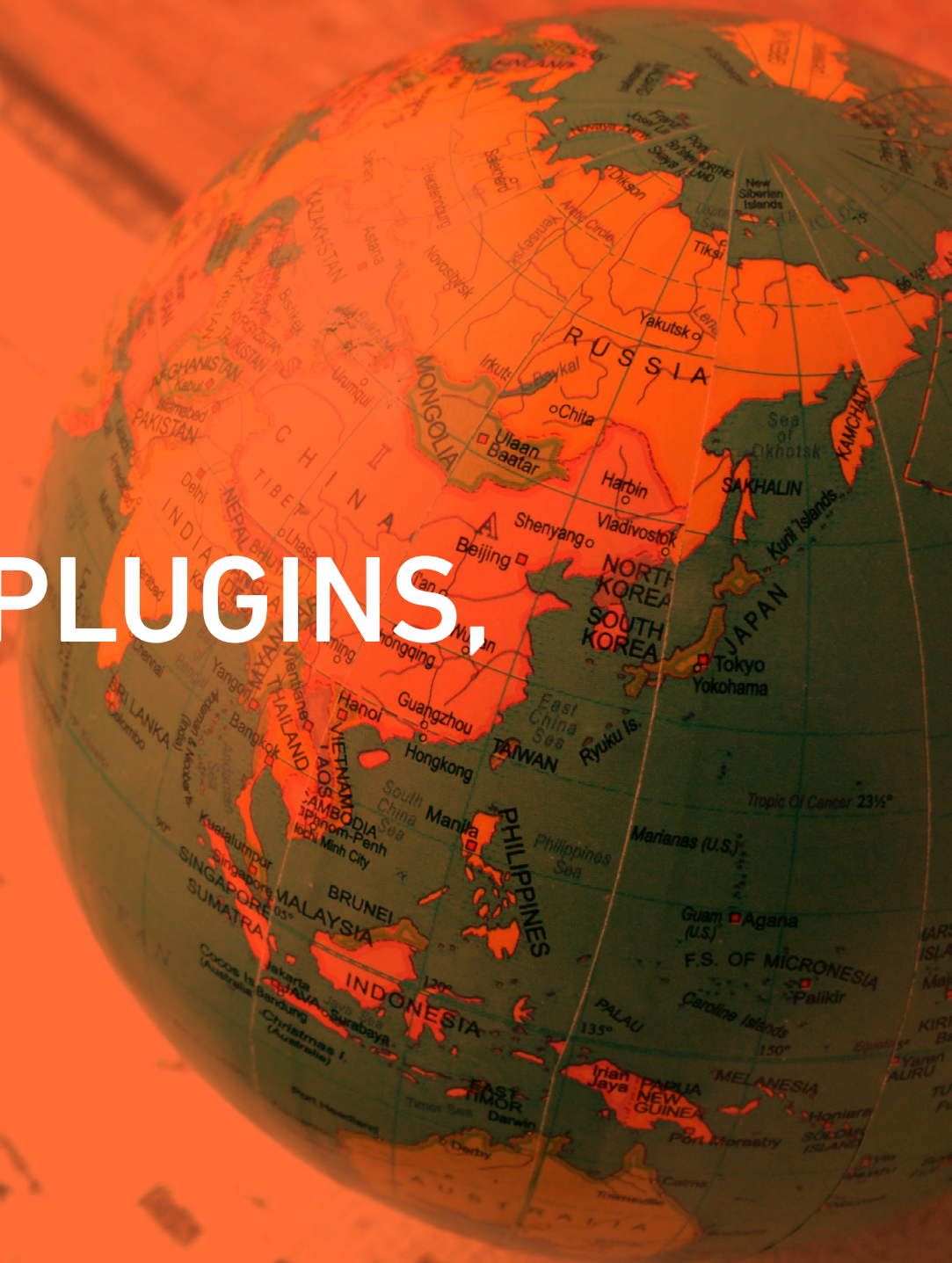
THE TOP AUTHORS BY SALES

PLUGIN MARKETPLACE			THEME MARKETPLACE		
Author	Location	Revenue	Author	Location	Revenue
wpbakery	Germany	\$4,107,558	Kriesi	Austria	\$7,170,836
themepunch	Germany	\$2,183,610	GoodLayers	United States	\$5,537,149
sevenspark	United States	\$1,131,869	ThemeGoods	Thailand	\$3,881,815
kreatura	Hungary	\$758,829	QODE	Serbia	\$3,867,404
Semenov	Ukraine	\$657,936	Dream-Theme	Ukraine	\$3,106,687
DOTonPAPER	Seychelles	\$628,762	muffingroup	Poland	\$2,939,213
RightHere	United States	\$613,534	AndonDesign	Canada	\$2,911,523
ashanjay	United States	\$592,947	ThemeNectar	United States	\$2,605,204
AA-Team	Romania	\$538,956	pexeto	Bulgaria	\$2,448,814
arscode	Poland	\$506,368	artbees	Turkey	\$2,205,479
BrainstormForce	India	\$496,383	Sara_p	Italy	\$2,094,144
ThemeCatcher	United Kingdom	\$491,840	TrueThemes	United States	\$2,089,780
LCweb	Italy	\$470,231	SwiftIdeas	United Kingdom	\$1,808,180
revaxarts	Austria	\$445,464	TieLabs	Egypt	\$1,757,607
DeluxeThemes	United States	\$436,585	stmcan	Turkey	\$1,704,304
radykal	Germany	\$432,210	Select-Themes	United States	\$1,551,515
RightPress	United States	\$410,566	Parallelus	United States	\$1,530,277
designchemical	Thailand	\$378,428	UnitedThemes	Germany	\$1,504,701

WPengine

***The top authors based in the United States – which has the most authors for both plugins and themes – trail Germany for plugins and Austria for themes in terms of sales volume by author.***

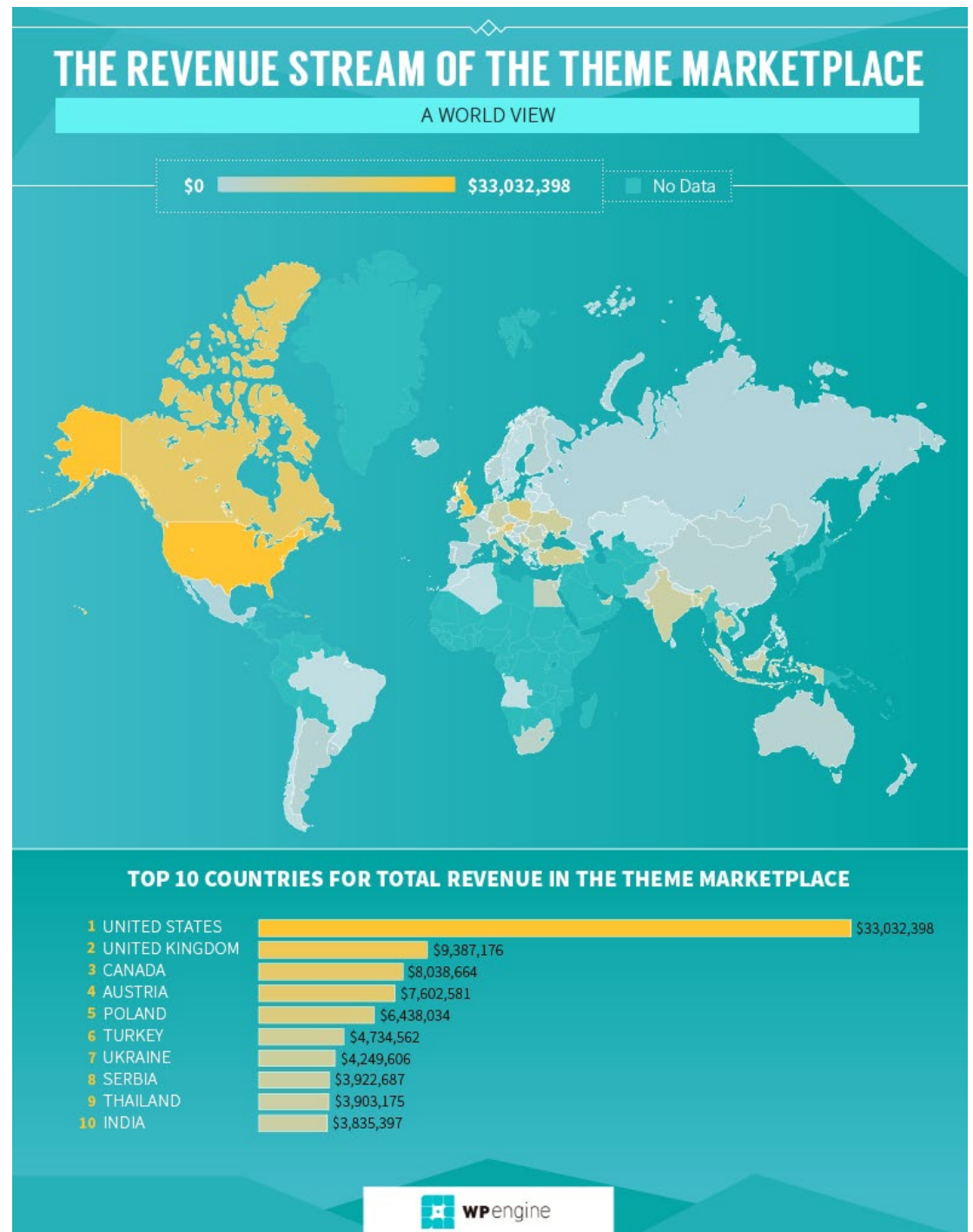
# THEMES AND PLUGINS, BY COUNTRY



## THEMES, BY COUNTRY

***Despite not having the top authors by sales, the United States still dominates for total revenue compared with other countries.***

The next closest country, the United Kingdom, is over \$23 million behind the United States. India, which is in the top five in terms of number of authors for both plugins and themes — falls all the way to 10th in total theme revenue.



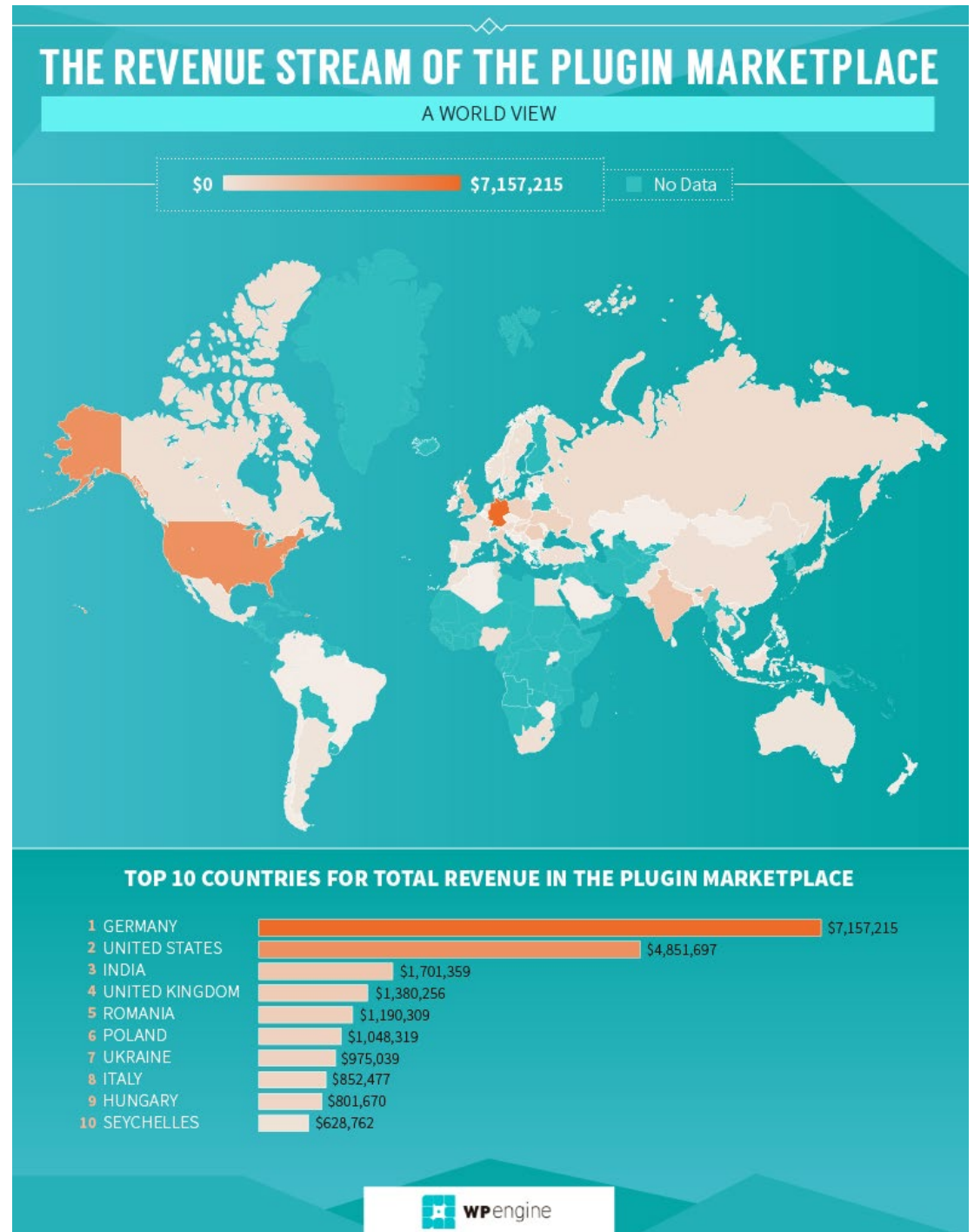
## PLUGINS, BY COUNTRY

Germany is the driving force for plugins in this graphic. In addition to hosting the top two plugin authors, WPBaker and ThemePunch, it also boasts the most total revenue by a substantial margin.

Germany has over 38% more total revenue than second-place United States. Additionally, there is a large disparity among the top 10 countries, 40% of which have less than \$1 million in total revenue each.

***The total revenue by country also illustrates just how dominant themes have been compared with plugins.***

The total revenue for themes in the U.S. alone is more than the revenue of the top 10 countries combined for plugins.





A person wearing a green striped shirt is sitting at a desk, writing in a spiral notebook with a silver pen. Their left hand is resting on the notebook. The scene is dimly lit with a warm, yellowish-orange glow. The word "CONCLUSION" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

# CONCLUSION

## THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR NEW AUTHORS

While both themes and plugins are growing at exponential rates, themes still have an edge over plugins, especially when it comes to total revenue. However, there are some indications that the balance could shift.

According to marketplace host Envato, when WordPress plugins first launched, they sold at only 2% of the volume of WordPress themes.

***Today, plugins are competing at a much higher rate, with nearly one plugin sold for every two WordPress themes.***

There is a heavy concentration of authors from the U.S. and Europe, but the top-selling authors represent global, diverse talent. Even though there are tens of thousands of plugins and themes available for download, users will always welcome new ideas. According to Envato, of the 50 top-selling WordPress themes in 2014, 67% of them were new to the list.

***“At its core, WordPress is all about the democratization of publishing. It gives everyone a voice on the web,” WP Engine CEO Heather Brunner said.***

***If WordPress is the tool that gives publishers a voice, then its themes and plugins are what give that voice a unique pitch. It speaks the global language of the theme-and-plugin economy's varied authors and products.***

## ABOUT WP ENGINE

WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites and applications built on WordPress. The company's premium managed hosting platform provides the performance, reliability and security required by the biggest brands in the world, while remaining affordable and intuitive enough for smaller businesses and individuals. Companies of all sizes rely on WP Engine's award-winning customer service team to quickly solve technical problems and create a world-class customer experience. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, and London, England.

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