



Glass Half Full for Creative Women Professionals in New Zealand

As the sun sets on Arts Month NZ celebrating what art means to us in Aotearoa, the glasses raised will be almost half empty for women in the arts.

New research on creative professionals by two key governing bodies, Creative New Zealand and NZ On Air, uncovers a jaw-dropping 45% gender pay gap in the arts and creative industries.

The survey of nearly 1500 creatives aimed to better understand career sustainability in the sector across all art forms (visual arts, craft and object art, performing arts, literature, Pacific arts, Māori arts). Median creative income is less than half the national average for self-employed New Zealanders and, for women in the sector, career sustainability looks like a pipe dream.

Mid-career, men in the arts sector earn nearly twice as much income from creative work as women. Men reach their creative income peak at age 40-49, while women's income on average peaks ten years later, indicating it takes longer to earn more, and even then, it is still significantly less than what male creatives earn.

*The NZ creative sector 45% gender pay gap
far exceeds the national average of 9.3%.*

This also outstrips the expected pay equity corrections, based on equal pay for work of equal value, in female dominated sectors - nurses, midwives, teachers, clerical workers.

Including income from non-art sources, the NZ arts gender pay gap reduces – to 25%, with men earning on average \$59,000 pa. and women earning \$39,700 pa., suggesting women are better off working outside the sector. At 25%, the pay gap is still almost three times above the national average.

Explanations for the sector pay gap cannot easily be attributed to family commitments being a disproportionate burden on women in the sector. The survey found that domestic responsibilities weigh heavily on both genders – approximately one-third of women and men refer to this factor as a barrier to spending more time on their careers.

Lack of qualification is also unlikely to explain the pay gap: women in the sector are more qualified than the men.

*Nearly three-quarters of women surveyed
have formal qualifications compared to
two-thirds of men.*

Answers may lie deeper within a gender analysis of the research, such as the type of art practice and amount of unpaid work. Signalling a growing expectation that artists of all genres will do unpaid work, the survey uncovered a startling 50% of those with five or less years of experience in the sector are working unpaid. Identifying how many women creative professionals work unpaid will be instructive.

Women creatives also work in the lowest paid occupations in the arts, making up 60% of those in the lowest paid fields – dance, craft/object art, and visual arts comprising painting, photography, sculpting, drawing, print-making, typography, web-based/digital art and film-making. In contrast, men are more likely to work in the highest paid creative occupations of video game development and media production, consistent with the national trend of men dominating the higher valued STEM fields.

Explanations for the creative gender pay gap will also lie in a closer examination of the practices of arts institutions and the sector markets. Influencers – government agencies, public institutions, arts funders and patrons, private collectors, and commercial dealers, all play a key role in determining opportunities and economic outcomes.

The Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki recently quantified its gender record, publishing a chart on the wall in the context of the 2019 international Guerrilla Girls exhibition.

*Only 15% of artists in the permanent collection
of the Auckland Art Gallery are female.*

While acknowledging a historic bias towards male artists, the Auckland Art Gallery's recent exhibition programmes still failed to advance gender parity. Since the Gallery's reopening in 2011, male artists are twice as likely to be featured in solo exhibitions as female artists (men 67%; women 33%). Of the group exhibitions held at the city gallery, most were mixed gender (69%) but in those exhibitions only 18% of the artists were women. Exhibitions with all male artists made up another 30% of group shows, while all women artist exhibitions since 2011 are a deafening 1%.

Close scrutiny is needed to identify the gender pinch points in New Zealand arts and creative industries, followed by quick and creative solutions by its governing bodies and funders. Transparency and accountability is needed without delay in this sector which falls under the scope of the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, our Prime Minister and a global champion for diversity and human rights.

Read the Colmar Brunton Report *[A Profile of Creative Professionals 2019](#)*
Creative New Zealand has invited feedback via an [online survey](#) by 31 October

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