

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 18 March 2021

When a picture tells a thousand words – why cartoonists and comics-makers are in increasing demand in industries ranging from health to education

New research shows how the skills of cartoonists, illustrators and comics-makers are being applied to communicate ideas across a diverse range of industries such as health and education.

[Graphic Storytellers at Work: Cross-industry opportunities for cartoonists, illustrators and comics-makers](#) was commissioned by the Australia Council and shows demand for graphic storytellers is growing, with 41% of those surveyed reporting increasing demand for their skills.

Graphic storytellers make complex ideas easy to understand. Their technical and interpretive skills help to illustrate abstract concepts and transcend language barriers. Artists surveyed described using their skills to communicate important health information to culturally diverse communities, translate complex legal documents, or create tools and resources for psychologists and surgeons.

“Cultural and creative industries, and their role in transforming other sectors, are a major source of the skills, innovation and jobs we need for the future. They are already helping us shape and adapt to the rapid transformation of traditional industries and to new forms of productivity,” said Australia Council’s Executive Director of Advocacy and Development, Dr Wendy Were.

“Graphic Storytellers at Work is just one example of how creative skills are already being applied with great success across a range of industries. Our cultural and creative industries and workforce are central to ensuring a brighter future for all Australians.”

The research was led by comics-makers and comics researchers Dr Pat Grant (Lecturer, School of Design, UTS) and Gabriel Clark (Lecturer, School of Design, UTS), along with Dr Elizabeth MacFarlane (University of Melbourne), Dr Ronnie Scott (RMIT University). All four are active within the Australian graphic storytelling community and are based in either Melbourne or Sydney.

Key insights:

- Demand for graphic storytellers is growing – 41% of those surveyed reported increasing demand for their skills.

- Health – Graphic storytellers have the ability to help people understand complicated medical ideas. 15% of artists surveyed had used their skills in health contexts including medicine, health and wellbeing and safety.
- Education – 28% of survey participants describe their skills as being useful in an educational setting, from internal organisational training to public-facing education programs.
- **Product design** – graphic storytellers can become indispensable as part of the design of new products and services, particularly services that may exist in as-yet unrealised futures, or within services that require complicated user interaction.
- Making a living as a graphic storyteller can be challenging – half of the artists surveyed support themselves with work that is non-creative (50%). Almost half list ‘lack of financial return on their practice’ as one of the top two challenges for their practice (47%).
- One in four surveyed artists make 100% of their income from creative work – Of this group, 43% are high income earners, making over \$100,000 per year.
- The combination of technical and interpretive skills is a large part of the graphic **storyteller’s value**. New opportunities are emerging for the use of visual language in internal communications, storytelling, mapping, strategic thinking and visual problem-solving.
- **The face of graphic storytelling in Australia is changing** – Older artists are more likely to be male (85% of artists over 60 years), and younger artists are more likely to be female (54% of artists between 18–29), non-binary or transgender (19% of artists between 18–29).

Read more about the research on the Australia Council [website](#).

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