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Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists

A summary by the Australia Council for the Arts

December 2022

Acknowledgements

The Australia Council for the Arts proudly acknowledges all First Nations peoples and their rich culture of the country we now call Australia. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge First Nations peoples as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to Australian life, and how this continuation of 75,000 years of unbroken storytelling enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards ensuring an equal voice and the equality of outcomes in all aspects of our society.

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Language, data collection and an evolving research agenda

Research into demographics, and their relationships to lived experiences and socio-cultural phenomena, is complex and evolving. Current data have many limitations.

The term Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) has been used in Australia as a measurement of diversity across many policy areas. However, some have identified that the term is no longer fit for purpose, naming people in a negative relationship to Anglophone culture and so failing to report on cultural diversity in a respectful and inclusive way. It is also only one of a range of factors that might be used to attempt to describe or measure cultural diversity.

Binary definitions of gender are also increasingly out of date, and many contemporary research participants will understandably expect options beyond 'male' and 'female' for sex or gender identification.

The data in this report are bound by the terms under which they were collected.

In this summary, where possible, we have attempted to use language that describes people in a positive way, avoiding acronyms and definitions that are based on the idea of lack (eg Non-English speaking). The results of these efforts remain imperfect. However, they represent a commitment to respond to changing expectations and social dynamics.

Work is in progress by key national industry bodies to determine appropriate, consistent and self-determined ways to understand and represent diversity in data and reporting. This work is occurring in dialogue with communities and their representative organisations. The Australia Council is part of this national conversation.

Further information on future research and activities in this area is at the end of this summary.

What is the gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap measures the difference between the average earnings of women and men in the workforce – it’s a measure of women’s overall position in the paid workforce and does not compare like roles.¹

The gender pay gap is influenced by several factors such as:

- discrimination and bias in hiring and pay decisions
- women and men working in different industries and jobs, with female-dominated industries and jobs attracting lower wages
- women’s disproportionate share of unpaid caring and domestic work
- lack of workplace flexibility to accommodate caring and other responsibilities
- women’s greater time out of the workforce impacting on career progression and opportunities.

The gender pay gap is usually calculated as the difference between women’s and men’s average full-time equivalent earnings, expressed as a percentage of men’s earnings:

$$\text{GPG} = 100\% \times \frac{\text{Male Average Earnings} - \text{Female Average Earnings}}{\text{Male Average Earnings}}$$

The gender pay gap in the Australian workforce indicates a significant income disadvantage for female workers compared to males across virtually all industries. The current national Australian gender pay gap is 14.1% (based on full time average weekly earnings, as at May 2022).

The gender pay gap for Arts and Recreation Services (the broader category within which practising artists sit) is reported as 7.2% (as at May 2022).

The overall gender pay gap for the Australian workforce has narrowed somewhat over time, down from nearly 18% in 2011, but has not closed completely.

Separate analysis of the hourly gender pay gap found that, between 2017–2020, the gap remained unchanged in real terms; and although the gap did not worsen in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, ‘progress on closing the gap has stalled’.²

For more information see the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency](#).

1 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender Pay Gap Data*, viewed November 2022. <https://www.wgea.gov.au/pay-and-gender/gender-pay-gap-data>.

2 KPMG, Diversity Council, Australia and Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2022, *She’s Price(d)less: The economics of the gender pay gap*.

About this report

This report is the Australia Council's summary of *Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists* which was prepared for the Australia Council by David Throsby, Katya Petetskaya and Sunny Y. Shin, Department of Economics, Macquarie Business School, Macquarie University.³

The findings are based on analysis of two distinct datasets arising from research projects carried out over recent years by David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya.

The first covers responses from 826 Australian professional artists surveyed during 2016 (see *Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*).⁴ The second dataset is for First Nations artists working in remote communities, compiled from data collected in three separate regional surveys as part of the ongoing National Survey of Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists. These surveys were carried out in three regions: Arnhem Land (NT); Central Desert (NT)/APY Lands (SA); and North-West Northern Territory/Tiwi Islands (NT).⁵

For full results, see *Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists*.

Context

Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists sits within the Australia Council's wider program of research that provides information on the demographics of the arts and cultural sector, and which seeks to identify whether parts of Australian society are experiencing inequality of opportunity to engage with the arts.

Recent work in this program includes *Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector* (June 2021), which considered the diversity of the sector with attention to: First Nations people, cultural and linguistic diversity, people with disability, gender, LGBTIQ+ people, Australians living in regional and remote locations, children and young people, and older people. An upcoming report will investigate the socioeconomic determinants of arts participation.

3 Throsby D, Petetskaya K and Shin SY 2022, *Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists*.

4 Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2017, *Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

5 The results of these three surveys were published in: Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2019, *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory*; Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2018, *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in the Central Desert (NT) and the APY Lands (SA)*; Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2019b, *Integrating Art Production and Economic Development in North West NT and the Tiwi Islands*, respectively.

What do we know already about the gender pay gap for Australian artists?

In November 2020, in association with David Throsby, Katya Petetskaya and Sunny Y. Shin, the Australia Council published *The Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists: Some preliminary findings*. This report drew from the same two datasets that underpin *Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists* and represents an earlier, exploratory stage of this work.

The findings of this preliminary study indicated:

- As artists, Australian women living in metropolitan, regional and rural areas continue to earn less than their male counterparts.
- In 2016–17, the total incomes of female artists residing in these areas were 25% less on average than for males, and women earned 30% less from their creative work. These differentials were greater than the workforce gender pay gap of 16% at that time.
- After allowing for a range of differences between men and women artists – such as education and training, experience, creative work hours and socio-demographics – the gender pay gap in these contexts remained virtually unchanged. This would suggest that women artists are subject to forms of gender-related disadvantage that reflect discriminatory problems affecting women in society at large, and which may be more serious in the arts than in other areas.
- As artists, First Nations women living in remote communities in the Central Desert (NT) and APY Lands (SA), and Arnhem Land (NT) experience only minor differences in income on average compared with their male counterparts. The gender gap that affects incomes of most female artists in Australia does not appear to be evident in these remote First Nations contexts. It should be noted, however, that average incomes for artists working in remote First Nations communities are significantly less than those of artists working in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

These results highlighted the particularity of the social, cultural and economic conditions likely to affect the gender pay gap. Further research was needed to identify the sources of gender disadvantage within different contexts, and the impacts of such disadvantage on the careers and working circumstances of professional women artists.

What does this research add?

Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists adds to this previous work by considering the impact of cultural background on the relative incomes of male and female artists, and the different income relationships for First Nations artists living in different cultural communities around Australia.

Headline findings

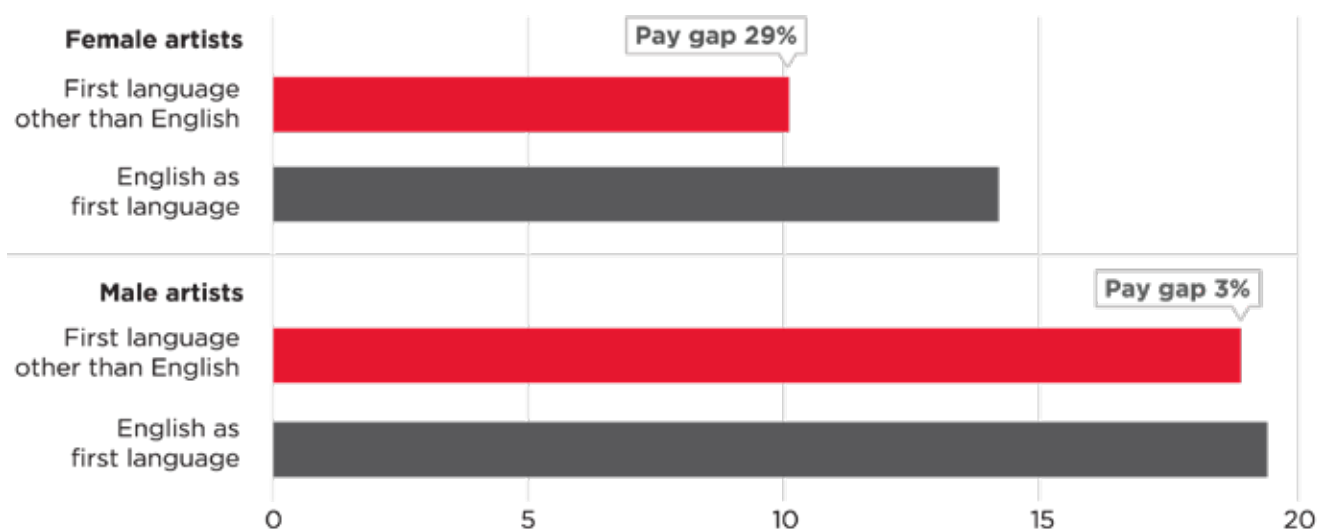
- Women with a first language other than English appear to **experience a triple income penalty** – from being artists, being from non-English speaking backgrounds, and being female.
- Female artists with a first language other than English **experience a greater income disadvantage** than women artists from an English-speaking background.
- Having a first language other than English carries an **income penalty only for women artists**, not men artists.
- While First Nations artists in remote communities earn less than other artists overall, **the gender pay gap does not appear to be evident** in those communities.

Artists from diverse backgrounds practising in metropolitan, regional and rural areas

Results from the Australian professional artists survey were explored to determine whether having a first language other than English, as a potential marker of cultural difference and an immigrant status,⁶ is connected to the gender pay gap.

- 10% of the surveyed practising professional artists identified as having a first language other than English in 2016, much lower than the 18% seen in the Australian labour force at that time.
- Having a first language other than English does not have an impact on income when looking at male and female artists as one group. However, the researchers calculated a predicted income for artists in each group and found **there is an impact for female artists with a first language other than English – reducing creative income by 29% compared to female artists who have English as their first language.**
- **For men, on the other hand, the difference in predicted creative income between those artists with a first language other than English and those with English as their first language creates a pay gap of just 3%,** as shown in Figure 1 below.

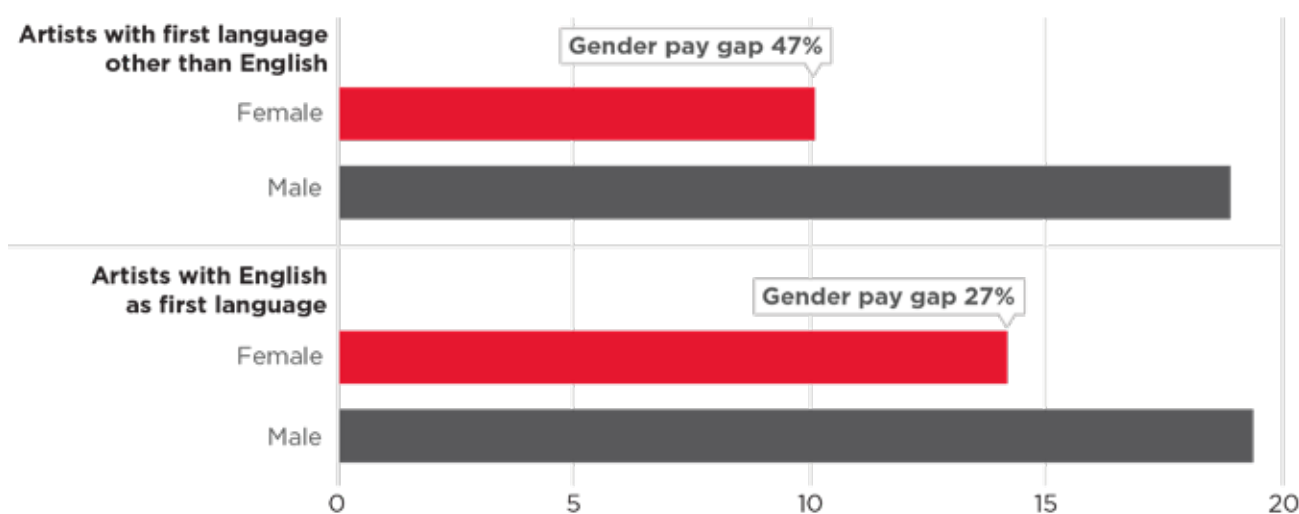
Figure 1: Predicted creative incomes for female and male artists (\$'000 p.a.)



⁶ On the assumption of a rough correlation of immigrant status and having a first language other than English.

- Although male and female incomes were broadly similar within the group of artists whose first language is other than English, **female artists in this group spend considerably more time on their artistic practice each week than their male counterparts:** an average of 32 hours compared to 21 hours. This creates a significantly lower return for each hour of creative practice.
- The predicted incomes calculated by the researchers also suggest that **within those artists who have a first language other than English, females earn 53% of what their male counterparts do, creating a gender pay gap of 47%.**
- By contrast, **for artists with English as their first language, the predicted creative income for female artists is 73% of that for male, creating a gender pay gap of 27%,** as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Predicted creative incomes for artists with a first language other than English and those with English as a first language (\$'000 p.a.)



- The researchers conclude that **women with a first language other than English may experience a triple income penalty, from being artists,⁷ being from non-English speaking backgrounds, and being female.**
- Despite the income disadvantages noted above, three in five women artists who identified as having a first language other than English thought their background had a positive impact on their artistic practice (63%) with only 16% thinking it had a negative impact.
- However, when asked specifically about whether being from non-English speaking background was a restricting factor in their professional development as artists, 17% of women artists with a first language other than English answered ‘yes’, compared to only 5% of men artists from non-English speaking background. About a quarter of all female artists (from both language backgrounds) saw their gender as a restricting factor in their professional development.

⁷ Average annual incomes for Australian artists are 21% lower than the average for the Australian workforce, and even lower than those of similarly qualified practitioners in other industries: 41% lower than ‘professionals’ and 47% lower than ‘managers’. Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2017, *Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

To sum up, the research finds that **female artists with a first language other than English experience a greater income disadvantage than women artists from an English-speaking background**, other things being equal. In addition, these women experience a greater income penalty than male artists with a first language other than English.

In total, the evidence suggests that **female artists with a first language other than English may suffer a triple income penalty imposed on them relative to the rest of the working population**; the penalty arises because they are (1) artists, (2) from a non-English speaking background, and (3) female.

The research suggests that female artists with a first language other than English may be affected, along with the workforce in general, by some socio-demographic differences in explaining their relative disadvantage compared both to men and to wider elements in Australian society. If any of these negative effects are associated with discrimination based on cultural background, they should be the subject of further research.

First Nations artists practising in remote areas

Results from the survey of First Nations artists working in remote areas were explored to determine whether the gender pay gap exists in this social, economic and cultural context.

- The male and female First Nations artists included in this research have broadly similar creative incomes and hours worked at their creative practice.
- There are gender-based differences in art form, with a larger proportion of performing artists (mostly musicians) among men, and a larger proportion of visual artists among women.
- There are also differences in overall income levels for the three different areas in which the artists are based, with incomes highest in the Central Desert/APY region and lowest in Tiwi Islands/NW NT. The researchers suggest this is most likely due to the market opportunities in each area.
- Within each area, there is little difference in incomes or hours worked at creative practice between male and female artists.
- The researchers find that **the gender pay gap seen in incomes of artists practising in metropolitan, regional and rural areas is not present for First Nations artists in remote communities for the three areas as a whole and individually.**
- **The gendered division of art forms contributes to the more positive position of female artists in remote First Nations communities.** More female artists are visual artists, and visual artists in remote communities have more opportunity to access markets through arts centres and selling their work online and to tourists. More male artists are musicians and performers and have less access to markets for their work.
- The research suggests **other reasons for the lack of a systemic gender-based discrimination may relate to the cultural differences between the norms, values and inherited traditions of remote first Nations' communities** compared to non-remote areas.
- It should be noted that average incomes for artists working in remote First Nations communities are significantly less than those of artists working in metropolitan, regional and rural areas. While this is not the focus of this study, it is an important contextual factor in any consideration of the unevenness of artist incomes across Australia.

To sum up, when it comes to creative incomes, these results show that **First Nations women artists practising in remote areas of Australia do not suffer from the same sorts of income disadvantage that is evident among artists working in metropolitan, regional or rural Australia.**

The distinctive role of women within First Nations society, together with a recognition in the marketplace of the importance of these artists' work, probably underlies the general equality in creative incomes earned by First Nations men and women artists in remote areas. This equality could perhaps be explained by the existence of more equal incentives and opportunities for male and female artists in remote First Nations communities.

Future work on gender and cultural background in the Australian arts and cultural sector

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, there is a need to rethink many of the methods through which we collect demographic data. Understanding cultural diversity requires a range of indicators, rather than only one (eg language). Gender, and the economic experiences of gender, can no longer be understood with binary categories of male or female, but require a range of survey options if we are to comprehend contemporary social conditions.

The Australia Council and its partners will be operating with these evolving methods of data collection in forthcoming work.

Upcoming research projects include:

- An update of the data on Australian professional artists that underpins the first part of this gender pay gap research, with a new report due in 2023. Artists' first language will continue to be tracked in this work, along with a range of other factors that give insight to cultural background and social experience.
- An update of the data in the Australia Council's 2021 report, *Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector.*
- Creating Art Part 2, which will provide quantitative data on the First Nations performing arts sector, complementing *Creating Art Part 1.*
- The Australia Council will also continue ongoing monitoring of its programs, tracking demographic trends and statistics on who is receiving investment from the Australia Council.

Further work is clearly required to close the gender pay gap for women artists in metropolitan, regional and rural Australia. This is particularly the case for those who do not speak English as a first language, and who apparently experience a triple income penalty for being artists, female and speaking a first language other than English.

This work will need to address the cultural factors and apparent gender-based discrimination that underlies the gender pay gap observable outside remote, First Nations communities.

Strategies to address gender-based discrimination in other sectors include increased transparency and reporting on gender pay gaps, and addressing discrimination in work practices such as hiring, promotion and access to training.⁸ In the arts and cultural sector, strategies have also included programs to recognise and celebrate the value of women artists' work, such as the Know My Name initiative which was hosted by the National Gallery of Australia across 2020–21.⁹

Further research is clearly needed to provide a deeper understanding of the systemic drivers of the gender pay gap among Australian artists. We hope that this report takes an important step in this process.

8 KPMG, Diversity Council, Australia and Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2022, *She's Price(d)less: The economics of the gender pay gap*.

9 The Australia Council was a partner in the Know My Name initiative, and launched the first report from this research – *Culture and the Gender Pay Gap for Australian Artists*, by David Throsby, Katya Petetskaya and Sunny Y. Shin – with Macquarie University at the Know My Name conference in November 2020.