

Livelihoods of Visual Artists: Qualitative Evidence Report





economic research &
business intelligence



Livelihoods of Visual Artists: Qualitative Evidence Report

Prepared by TBR's Creative & Cultural Team

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- Association for Cultural Advancement through Visual Art (Acava)
- The Art House
- Artists Interaction and Representation (Air)
- Artists' Union England
- Artquest
- Axisweb
- Crafts Council
- Contemporary Visual Arts Network
- DACS
- DASH
- Engage
- East Street Arts
- Live Art Development Agency
- National Society for Education in Arts and Design (NSEAD)
- Shape Arts
- SPACE Studios
- Voluntary Arts Network

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1. Executive Summary

This research study was undertaken in order to address important information and evidence gaps in relation to the visual arts. A large-scale national study of the livelihoods, careers and needs of visual artists in England had not been carried out in the previous decade, therefore this study aimed to refresh knowledge and understanding of visual artists in England. The research study aims to inform the future work of the wider visual arts sector including Arts Council England and the Project Partners.

The findings reported here are based on in-depth discussions from five focus groups held across the English regions in March and April 2016. The aim of the focus groups was to capture rich, qualitative information from artists to complement quantitative data gathered from a national online survey exploring artists' livelihoods, which was launched earlier in the year.

The study is designed to address four key research aims, as follows:

1. To understand the challenges and barriers faced by visual artists that prevents them from realising their full potential.
2. To understand how social, cultural and environmental factors such as employment status, education, age and gender, affect the career and talent development of visual artists, and the implications of this for workforce diversity.
3. To understand where artists are located and the factors which affect the movement and retention of artists between the regions, London and internationally.
4. To understand the variation between different sub-art forms within the visual arts and visual artists relationships with the Creative Industries.

The evidence collected in the focus groups predominantly revolves around aims 1 and 2, which were the topics of the research most easily engaged with by artists, and where in-depth discussions drawing on artists' experience were most relevant. However, aims 3 and 4 were also covered in the discussions.

Common themes emerged during the focus groups, with the headlines being:

- On the whole artists report that they are motivated by the creative process and the personal well-being they get from art, rather than being driven by financial reward.
- Artists do state the importance of income as a means of being able to afford to spend time on their art, and value some sources of arts-related income more than others.
- Recognition from others is a key motivator for artists, who also felt that peer support (including mentoring) is central to maintaining a successful career.
- Artists perceive a class and gender imbalance in the workforce.
- Artists indicate that they feel that university education is becoming increasingly prohibitive for aspiring artists.
- Access to professional development opportunities is important to the artists.
- The ability to access affordable facilities, spaces and equipment is vital to the success of the careers of the artists.

1.1 Factors influencing artists' careers

During the focus groups the low incomes artists face was a major topic of discussion with the artists. Some artists describe how they felt underpaid and undervalued, and express their frustration at the persistence of low fees, that they would sometimes be expected to work for little payment, or in some cases, for free.

Across the focus groups artists report valuing some sources of income over others – they reveal how they value income from private artistic practice above all other sources of artform-related income, and/or funded work. Some artists also place a high value on local authority (LA) funded work, as it tends to be very rewarding, for example by bringing communities together through art. Commissions from galleries and residencies are other income sources valued by artists.

Low income from their art practice is one of the reasons nearly all artists in our focus groups have additional jobs, although not the only factor. Focus group participants feel that when having to have additional jobs for financial reasons, this significantly reduced the time they can dedicate to their arts practice. In some instances artists say that they feel forced to relegate art to their spare time.

"I have two contracted jobs for stability as well as my arts practice but I do not have enough time to spend on my art." (Newcastle focus group)

Some artists whose additional jobs were not necessarily stable or permanent, or who could sustain themselves without an additional job, reported relying on other income sources such as tax credits, benefits or their partners' income.

"When starting out, you have no options but to rely on partners' income. We are all doing portfolio work. It's very precarious and difficult to plan ahead." (Birmingham focus group)

Artists within the focus groups view professional development opportunities as important for developing their skills and practice, and in turn, their careers. The nature of the visual arts sector, featuring many freelancers and contract type work, prevents easy access to training provision. In particular, artists identify the need to understand basic business skills in order to set up their own creative business or practice, or to maintain their existing practice. Marketing skills are also in high demand.

"I would like local access to CPD courses...I'd especially like to address the skills I need to be a successful and professional artist such as assertiveness, business skills, marketing." (Cambridge focus group)

Artists report that working as a practicing artist requires people to regularly spend money on the necessary materials, equipment, resources and space to work in. As self-employed practitioners, many also need to spend money on marketing or promoting themselves.

"Artists incur a lot of costs...we travel for all sorts of reasons...exhibitions, projects, conferences, funding competitions, accommodation, have to pay for space and stalls at trade shows and we have to make sales to cover this." (Bristol focus group)

Artists feel that support from other artists, both formally and informally, through networks and peer support, is important in supporting a successful career as an artist. Artists describe access to peer support and networks as key to sustaining their practice and maintaining motivation. Artists consider mentoring, both formal and informal, to be an increasingly important component of peer support.

1.2 The motivations and barriers artists experience

Artists in the focus groups are motivated by the creative process and the achievement of creating a body of work. Most artists refer to the deep-seated passion they have for creating art.

This is seen as a central motivator for artists in pursuing a career in the arts and continuing to work as artists. Artists describe creating art as fulfilling in itself. By making art, artists report that they generate personal, private satisfaction. It is often not financial remuneration that drives them, although artists highlight that being paid fairly for their work in order to pay bills is also important.

"If we were in the arts just for the money, we wouldn't do it!" (Cambridge focus group)

Recognition from others is also a key motivator highlighted by artists who took part in the research. Seeing people connect with art can also be satisfying and fulfilling. Several artists who deliver community work describe the satisfaction they feel from getting people involved in art. As well as sharing artwork with the public, collaborating and networking with peers and other artists is considered to be a motivating factor for artists.

In the research, artists perceive there to be an over-representation of women in art degree cohorts but not in the art workforce, suggesting that female art graduates struggle to maintain their practice.

"Because of the high leakage of women due to family [responsibilities]...we need to support women in careers as artists. There are so few women high up in art. Many women drop out due to family and [therefore] don't have the body of work. We should support them to progress, lobby for better representation." (Cambridge focus group)

Ultimately, artists describe the precarious nature of their profession as the biggest barrier to being able to have a long and established career. This was especially noted by artists in the focus groups who have children or a family to support, who talk about the difficulties of portfolio working as an artist, and describe this as being particularly unsustainable.

"It's the precarious nature of being artists that makes people leave...it's so difficult to sustain practice." (Birmingham focus group)

1.3 Location and mobility of artists

London has traditionally been England's hub of artistic activity and communities. Several artists recall that they had moved to London from elsewhere to access the arts community and find opportunities.

"I moved from North England to London to access the artist community. There weren't opportunities for me in my region." (London focus group)

However, the prohibitive costs of living and working in London means some of the artists have either moved out to other regions or are thinking about doing so.

*"I graduated in London...I couldn't afford to stay, so headed back home."
(Cambridge focus group)*

A small number of artists perceive that to a certain extent they can be victims of their own success, moving into affordable areas, inadvertently increasing demand for property and contributing to rising prices.

"Studio spaces become available in an area, the area becomes a cultural hub...artists have inadvertently made the area feel trendy... people start to move into and live in the area, then artists are forced out..." (London focus group)

In our focus groups, artists' experience is that work opportunities advertised outside of an artist's own region often require temporary relocation. Several artists mention that in the first few years after graduation they led nomadic lives, travelling to access work in different regions or even different countries.

However, artists report that such a lifestyle is not sustainable and as artists have got older and perhaps started families or gained other responsibilities or employment in other jobs they are no longer mobile and are restricted to local work.

"Yes there are opportunities for work elsewhere but these can be limiting...If you look at some of the adverts, artists need to be able to transport their own work, and that can be expensive and a challenge logistically." (London focus group)

"With a family, I can't take up opportunities that aren't local." (Cambridge focus group)

1.4 Visual artists work relationships with the Creative Industries

Although the main driver to taking additional jobs is financial, artists consider that there can be benefits of finding additional jobs which are related to the arts or Creative Industries. These benefits were identified in the focus groups as being opportunities to use and develop arts and creative skills, but for others they were a distraction from their practice.

*"[A non-artform job] takes you out of your creative zone, stifles creativity"
(Newcastle focus group)*

It was felt by artists in the focus groups that such jobs can also assist artists in career development through building their professional network and gaining insight and experience in the art world. Fierce competition for these roles, however, means these types of opportunities can be difficult to find.

"I work two days a week in a gallery, project managing curatorial projects but I've seen an influx of incoming curators. I used to know lots of artists who also had additional jobs in curating but younger people are coming through as curators and taking PM/administrative posts from artists." (London focus group)

2. Introduction

This research study was undertaken in order to address important information and evidence gaps in relation to the visual arts. A large-scale national study of the livelihoods, careers and needs of visual artists in England had not been carried out in the previous decade, therefore this study aimed to refresh knowledge and understanding of visual artists in England. The research study aims to inform the future work of the wider visual arts sector including Arts Council England and the Project.

The study is designed to address four key research aims, as follows;

1. To understand the challenges and barriers faced by visual artists that prevents them from realising their full potential.
2. To understand how social, cultural and environmental factors such as employment status, education, age and gender, affect the career and talent development of visual artists, and the implications of this for workforce diversity.
3. To understand where artists are located and the factors which affect the movement and retention of artists between the regions, London and internationally.
4. To understand the variation between different sub-art forms within the visual arts and visual artists relationships with the Creative Industries.

This qualitative evidence report represents one of the key written outputs of this study. It aims to present the evidence gathered from the qualitative research stage which formed part of the methodology to deliver the study.

Methodology

The findings reported here are based on in-depth discussions from five focus groups held across the English regions in March and April 2016. The aim of the focus groups was to capture rich, qualitative information from artists to complement quantitative data gathered from a national online survey exploring artists' livelihoods, which was launched earlier in the year.

Thirty-nine visual artists were selected to participate in these focus groups, which were held in regional centres in the North (Newcastle), the West Midlands (Birmingham), the South West (Bristol), the East (Cambridge) and in London. The participating visual artists were identified via the online survey. Those artists interested in attending the focus groups registered their interest and opted to provide their contact details.

In selecting visual artists to attend the focus groups, a purposive sampling technique was adopted. This ensured a strategic selection of participants who differed from each other in terms of key characteristics (e.g. demographics, art form practiced and career stage). In the appendix, an anonymised overview of the participating visual artists is provided.

This report makes extensive use of actual quotations from the visual artists participating in the focus groups. These quotations are used to reinforce the commentary running throughout the report. In the focus groups, artists were asked to share their personal stories, and as such, the artists will 'speak for themselves' through this report. In this way, the findings will speak the language of artists, have a more authentic, real-life quality to them and bring the report to life. It is hoped that other artists will be able to see their own experiences reflected in these case studies.

3. Factors influencing artists' careers

This section presents the findings from the focus group discussions covering the factors which influence artists' careers.

3.1 The nature of artists' incomes

Most artists feel that they could not earn enough from their art practice alone to live on with the majority making up their income through other means. Primarily this includes from additional jobs as part of a portfolio career, support from partners and drawing on state benefits.

Below, these quotes capture how many of the artists in the focus groups feel. They describe their art income as being unstable and sporadic. Artists report feeling underpaid and undervalued. They express frustration at the persistence of low fees, and the expectation that they would work for little payment, or in some cases, for free:

"I'm lucky to have a contract for the rest of this year." **Newcastle**

"All income for artists is precarious." **Birmingham**

"I work hand to mouth." **Newcastle**

"The life of an artist can be very circuitous. Sometimes you will rely on grants then your type of work or project goes out of favour. There are peaks and troughs." **London**

"I have very little security. If I get no work next year, I will be homeless." **Newcastle**

"It's been a struggle, having to accept benefits or low income." **Bristol**

"A couple of years ago, I reached the point of running out of money." **Newcastle**

"Artists are often undervalued and underpaid." **Birmingham**

"I'm always snuffling around trying to find income." **Newcastle**

Across the whole sample in the national survey, the mean annual income from art practice is £6,023. However, the median income from practice is just £2,000, indicating that practice incomes are skewed, with the majority of artists earning less than the mean.

Artists who participated in the focus groups consider some sources of their arts-related income more important than others. A perception amongst the focus groups was that they valued income from private artistic practice above all other sources of arts-related income and/or funded work, although naturally this more readily achieved in some artforms than others. Evidence from the survey indicates that the most important sources of arts practice income are private sales, private commissions and fees from participatory/education projects. Almost half of artists (47%) say that they earned at least some of their income from private sales. Added to this, 33% say they earned some of their income from private commissions.

"There is a hierarchy. Most artists would prefer and value income from private sources."
London

Artists value local authority (LA) funded work, as it tends to be very rewarding, for example by bringing communities together through art,.

"I work for a LA and do a lot of facilitation work through my arts practice. LA funding does bring communities together and I find that very exciting." **London**

Funding from LAs has provided reliable income for some artists over the last decade. However, some artists in the focus groups are concerned that recent cuts to LA budgets means there may be less money available for artists from this source in the future.

"Local authorities are increasingly unsustainable as sources of income, certainly from the culture side of things." **London**

"Local authorities are being squeezed. It's probably a dying source of income for us."
Cambridge

Commissions from galleries and residencies are additional income sources valued by artists within the focus groups.

"Reputation in the art world ultimately depends on which galleries and venues you exhibit and showcase your work in. Some galleries are viewed more favourably than others and this might affect your career in the long run. There is a knock-on effect. The more reputable the venues the more likely you are to get work in the future and secure the next job." **London**

However, artists state that commissions and residencies are competitive and often do not provide great financial reward, with some exhibitions charging artists a submission fee to apply for a place.

The national survey data found that the gap in average annual income between men and women is significant for both art practice earnings, as well as the total income. For art practice earnings, the mean male artist earning was £7,774, compared with £5,370 for female artists.

Income inequality was not evidenced during the focus groups however artists describe how they feel a gender imbalance in relation to arts students. They report how in the art school environment art is more popular with female students, and that this could be potentially linked to the perception of art being a 'soft' subject.

"Students choosing art as a GCSE option are mainly female...boys think art is a soft option."
Cambridge

The focus group attendees perceive that women are over-represented in art degree cohorts, but not in the artists' workforce. They suggest that female art graduates struggle to maintain their practice, alongside family commitments.

"Because of the high leakage of women due to family [responsibilities]...we need to support women in careers as artists. There are so few women high up in art. Many women drop out due to family and don't have the body of work. We should support them to progress, lobby for better representation." **Cambridge**

"Artists leave the profession because of lack of finance, life choices, family" **London**

3.2 Artists typically have additional jobs to supplement their arts practice

Data from our national survey showed that 69% of artists have additional jobs, and that 57% have non-artform related additional jobs. Artists in the focus groups feel frustrated at having to take on additional, non-artform work, feeling that it significantly reduced the time for their arts practice.

Some artists describe how they felt that they could not spend as much time on their practice as they would have liked. This was due to having to supplement their arts practice with the income from another job, away from their art. Artists undertaking additional, non-artform jobs express their frustration that their non-artform employment significantly reduces the time available for their arts practice. Artists feel forced to relegate art to their spare time, and that having to operate in a non-artform role can stifle creativity and/or take them away from their real passion.

"When you are not being paid for artwork and you have to concentrate on other, non-art work, the non-art work starts to take over your creative time and space." **London**

"I have two contracted jobs (for stability) as well as my arts practice but I do not have enough time to spend on my art." **Newcastle**

"The 'day job' [non-art] takes you out of your creative zone and stifles creativity. It takes days to switch off from 'day job' mode and to get stuck into the creative process again." **London**

"I was working a lot in non-art related jobs and wasn't creating any work. It took me a year to realise just how much creating meant to me." **Birmingham**

Some artists in the focus groups would welcome more options for flexible working, to allow them to find sufficient time for their arts practice alongside working.

"It would be great to have more flexible working but employers increasingly are not allowing that flexibility for artists to find time for their practice." **Birmingham**

3.3 Artists rely on other sources of non-artform income

Nearly all artists in our focus groups report how they are reliant on other sources of income. These are most often additional jobs, and also included tax credits, benefits or their partners' income.

"I'd say artists are very heavily reliant on other forms of income." **London**

"When starting out, you have no options but to rely on partners' income. We are all doing portfolio work. It's very precarious and difficult to plan ahead." **Birmingham**

"Relying on these other sources restricts your ambitions as an artist." **Birmingham**

"I don't need tax credits now as I have my own business but in the early years, I needed them or I'd never have been able to work on my art. I'd be stuck working full-time and paying for my children to go to nursery." **London**

However, focus group participants foresee some income sources such as tax credits becoming increasingly difficult for artists as a result of government reforms to the tax credit system.

"I predict problems with the new changes to tax credits...artists are really worried, especially those working on portfolios...You will need to prove that you are doing some regular work in order to access tax credits but artists cannot always easily prove this." **Birmingham**

3.4 The effect of education on artists' career and development

Other artists report how they pursued higher qualifications because they viewed the institution where they gained their art degree as having an important bearing on shaping their identity as an artist. They feel that some art schools or colleges are influential for life after graduation:

"There's kudos about where you studied." **Birmingham**

"A college with a good reputation can sometimes follow you. When you are not known, the name of your college is something you can use to trade off and promote yourself." **London**

"Some colleges open doors...take the Royal Academy." **Bristol**

On the whole, artists feel that there is an expectation that they should go to university and gain higher qualifications in order to be taken seriously. University is seen as the usual route for aspiring artists to follow. Many artists report that they were told that they needed a BA or MA to succeed, with some feeling pushed towards going to university by teachers and parents.

"Parents often think that if their child wants to be an artist, then they at least need to get a degree." **Newcastle**

"I was told that doing an MA was the way forward but didn't know why." **Birmingham**

In the focus groups, several artists suggest that the high proportion of artists with degrees reflects the traditional composition of the white middle class, suggesting that most artists traditionally come from middle class, educated family backgrounds, for whom going to university is the expected path. Establishing the class or background of artists is difficult – as an indication, survey respondents were asked whether their parents had been to university. More than half of artists (61%) report that neither parent had been to university, suggesting that the composition of artists is less middle class and educated than perhaps artists perceive it to be.

"The background of people who go into the arts...tend to be middle class, educated families, mostly from white backgrounds...probably hasn't changed much." **Newcastle**

"Historically it's been a job for middle/upper classes...those people tend to go to university."
Birmingham

The findings of the national online survey, supported the finding from the literature that more artists are qualified to degree level or above than the general population, finding that 87% of artists are qualified to at least degree level.

"We're a highly qualified sector but we're not seen as such." **Cambridge**

Artists in the focus group report being motivated to pursue higher-level qualifications because without them they feel their employment prospects are limited. There is also a feeling that without a higher level of education, artists are not able to compete in the sector on equal terms.

"MAs are needed in order to provide more employment potential in arts related jobs." **Bristol**

"Higher qualifications are important. I have a BA and an MA. Without these qualifications, I wouldn't have had a clue about how to do 'practice'. 'Practice' was an alien word. If you haven't been immersed in that world it's hard to speak the same language [as other artists]." **London**

"Without higher qualifications, you don't have the vocabulary and you can't join the conversation." **London**

Some artists discuss how they undertook an art degree in their pursuit for validation. They feel that an art degree has helped to boost their confidence in describing themselves as being an artist, and demonstrated how they have dedicated themselves to learning their craft.

"One reason we're highly qualified is our search for legitimacy. I wouldn't feel confident describing myself as an artist if I didn't have an art degree." **Cambridge**

"BAs and MAs provide recognition that artists have put time into learning their craft and provide young artists with confidence." **Birmingham**

Data from our national survey found that only 18% found their education to be among the top three most important factors in developing, continuing and sustaining their art practice.

In our research, artists express concern that the school education system does not prioritise the arts and does not sufficiently equip young people with the creative skills and thinking needed to become artists.

"We need to think about where the arts fit into education overall - at schools, for example. Arts and creativity have been brushed into a cupboard somewhere." **Birmingham**

"I think arts and creativity are less prominent in education now as the government doesn't seem to want highly critical and creative thinkers." **Birmingham**

Artists in the focus groups describe how it appears that art is not valued as highly as other GCSEs, such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, and this is often linked to a perception that art is a soft option.

"Art is seen as a soft option but it's really hard work and academically challenging. The soft option image starts at secondary school if you're not good at STEM." **Cambridge**

Thus, focus group participants feel that the education system prioritises STEM subjects and this approach does not recognise the value of creative skills. More experienced artists feel that young people are not given as much time and opportunity to nurture and develop their artistic talents, compared to when they were students and starting their careers

"School students aren't given the time to spend on their art." **Newcastle**

Artists feel that creativity is not recognised as a valuable intellectual asset and artistic skills as practical career tools. This has much to do with societal and parental perceptions of art not being a legitimate job.

"The arts are not seen as a viable career choice... you hear people saying all the time that we should 'go and get a proper job!" **Birmingham**

"It's a struggle for the family and for parents to accept art as a viable career. There are different attitudes in the UK compared to Europe." **London**

Notwithstanding this, artists in the focus groups with current or recent experience of studying describe how they feel an art education has equipped them with the skills and competencies that they have required in order to become successful artists. Studying at university provided them with the opportunity to learn and experiment with different art forms, techniques and styles. Importantly, these artists value the time and space that studying for a degree provided them with, so that could then develop their practice, with access to facilities and equipment, and sufficient time to dedicate to their art.

"One reason for doing a degree is to develop our own practice. We need the time and space to learn and develop. Some use this [time and space] better than others." **Newcastle**

In talking about university, they reflect on the opportunities that it had provided them with. This included showing and exhibiting their work to others, and in some cases this was for the first time. They also highlight how they felt that work placements were useful for them and had helped them to then build their skills.

"[Art education] provided me with experience to experiment and exhibit." **Bristol**

"For me the most useful thing about university was doing a placement in my second year. I did a lot of site-specific work, setting up my own space and exhibition, and meeting the public and other artists." **London**

Some artists feel that their university education has not prepared them for life as a self-employed artist (e.g. applying for funding, tax returns, business skills). These artists feel that art degrees need to produce well-rounded individuals who not only learn their craft but also learn about how to market and sell their work. These artists feel that art students need to be equipped with skills on how to survive on a practical level.

"My first degree provided no information on how to survive as an artist." **Newcastle**

"I don't think education does prepare young artists for the world outside university. The quality of my course was amazing...but there was no module on how to be an artist. Once you leave education, you are flung in the deep end." **Birmingham**

"Art college was good at [helping me] promote myself as an artist but not for what you do outside of the university bubble." **Bristol**

"My BA did not prepare me for the life of an artist...or how to apply for funding or do my CV." **Bristol**

"Degrees should include how to fill in tax returns. Many university teachers don't know these [business] skills because they haven't worked as artists." **Newcastle**

"Most art students leave with maybe one or two seminars about how to survive after college, but for most it's like falling off a cliff. Maybe that's why there's such a big drop-off after the first year or two post-college." **Birmingham**

"When the [BA] course is over, transitioning from academic life into the real world is very hard for many students...The higher qualified you are, the harder it is in the real world." **Cambridge**

Not all artists in the focus groups value the practical support and business skills they were offered as part of their degrees, and feel it makes little difference to the chances of success.

"University taught me how to set up a portfolio and how to market myself...this was very formulaic and not very useful. I needed other things. Luckily, I had the confidence to be demanding...and to demand input, support and critical feedback from my teachers and tutors."

Reality is that you need confidence to keep working as an artist...that's more important than your portfolio and marketing." **London**

"I was offered to do a business module but did not want to give up the more art-practice modules. I didn't want to sacrifice the creative elements of the course for the modules addressing the practical realities of being an artist." **Birmingham**

"There are no rules or formulas for being an artist and how to carve a career as one. Every situation is so different to the next. All artists are unique." **London**

In addition to learning their craft and developing practical skills to survive (or not, as the case may be), artists report that university education has other benefits. University is important socially and allows individuals to meet other artists, to form networks and to make connections. Typically, many of the artists in the focus groups feel that peer support was particularly important to them.

"University gives you access to like-minded people. Artists tend to be dispersed so the attraction to university is to meet other artists." **London**

"Building and establishing a network at university and within education...this is not a separate thing, this should feed into the wider arts scene and help produce a stronger infrastructure for artists." **Birmingham**

"For me, university is a supportive space to have a dialogue with other artists." **London**

Artists report that university allows access to facilities, which they may not be able to afford or access otherwise.

"Reduced costs of studio space are another attraction for university. University offers access to facilities. In the real world, accessing certain equipment is expensive and prohibitive such as bronze-casting facilities." **London**

Artists in the focus groups also felt that art degrees can build transferable skills.

"[My degree] was very rewarding and enabling through developing transferable skills. My [art education] prepared me for other careers too." **Cambridge**

"You get a rounded set of skills through an arts education. You become more resourceful." **Cambridge**

"A fine art degree helps people to think differently. You could go on to have a career in a totally different field, say advertising, but the fine art degree underpins that success [in that other career]." **London**

"Art degrees develop transferability of skills. Artists may utilise skills [gained through art degrees] in curatorial roles or in other arts organisations." **London**

"Fine art degrees are part of your personal development. Some people move on to other professions but they need the creative thinking [from the art degree] in those other roles." **London**

Many of the artists involved in the focus groups report that they did their degree and/or MA for free. This is no longer the case and it is possible that the prevalence of degree educated artists diminishes in future as current and future generations of aspiring artists are put off university by the high cost and debts incurred. The cost of post-graduate education is increasingly restrictive for graduates, due to the lack of grants and bursaries now available. This is a concern to the majority of artists.

"I have struggled with education. Low grade qualifications have not led to job openings and when I went back to do a degree, it added debt." **Bristol**

"The reality is different for today's generation. When we were in education, you could do your BA and MA for free." **London**

"How will it ever be viable to have a career in the arts in the future with student debts of over £27,000?" **Birmingham**

"I don't have an MA as I'm not in a position to afford it...Doing an MA now means building up a huge debt. I live cheaply but I do worry how students will pay for their arts education."

London

"Universities are businesses, selling courses...students are accruing huge debts because universities are telling us we need BAs/MAs to be taken seriously." **Cambridge**

Of the artists that took part in the focus groups, very few of them did not have a formal art related qualification (this connects to our findings from the literature review and survey). The few artists that did not have degrees did not feel that this hindered them. Instead they learnt on-the-job and drew on life experience. Other artists, however, highlight alternative approaches to education that are becoming increasingly popular and viable to artists.

"I didn't do a recognised MA. I attended the School of the Damned post-graduate course...the course is run by the students in the year above and these students transfer their skills to the next cohort." **Birmingham**

"There are lots of alternative education routes now [for artists]. Lots of 'old school' art schools popping up and lots of anti-university schemes." **London**

On-the-job learning, through apprenticeships or informally, can be a good way to learn skills, but some artists can be reluctant to teach someone how to produce similar work.

"I worked as arts assistant but was not allowed to use the skills I learnt in my own work and had to sign an agreement that I wouldn't use the methods I'd learnt." **Newcastle**

"Apprenticeships [offer artists] good practical experience...though personally I feel apprenticeships can be exploitative." **Birmingham**

A clear finding from the focus groups was the value of gaining work experience in the early stages of their career. Similarly, the artists view professional development opportunities as important for developing their skills, practice, and their careers. However, artists who are freelancers or rely on contract work feel that access to training provision was not easy. Thus, despite the benefits it can bring, some artists feel that it is often difficult for them to find timely and affordable professional development opportunities.

The type of professional development needs discussed in the focus groups included basic business skills in order to set up their own creative business or practice, or to maintain their existing practice. Some artists feel that given the context of low pay and low incomes artists need to be more entrepreneurial, and need assistance in spotting and exploiting opportunities and developing new markets. Marketing skills are also in high demand.

"I would like local access to CPD courses...I'd especially like to address the skills I need to be a successful and professional artist such as assertiveness, business skills, marketing."

Cambridge

"I received funding from the Princes Trust a few years ago... I learnt about different business models, which has helped develop my business skills." **Birmingham**

"Entrepreneurship is important – how to spot a gap [in the market] and identify potential sources of work, how to build markets and relationships, and tap into opportunities."

Newcastle

"The amount of time we have to spend on admin, website, marketing. We need support in this area." **Cambridge**

3.5 Enabling factors

Artists in the focus groups report that support from other artists, both formally and informally, through networks and peer support, is important in supporting a successful career as an artist. Artists describe access to peer support and networks as key to sustaining their practice/motivation.

"Peer support is key – you choose your peers as they add something to your life." **London**

"Young artists today are really on the ball. There is no lack of good ideas. But they need the networks to get on and to make a living." **Birmingham**

"We support other artists and pass on our hard-earned experience constantly. That's a great thing to give to people who are less experienced. If they can learn by your mistakes it saves them time and gives them the confidence to take risks." **Birmingham**

"I joined a big studio group after graduation. I learnt from doing and from other older artists. Peer discussions really help you to progress, boost you to continue to push yourself, and [other artists] act as a sounding board." **Newcastle**

"Through networks, you are able to locate where the collaboration, support, institutions, networks and equipment is." **Bristol**

"It's important to have friends' support, people who believe in you." **Bristol**

Artists consider mentoring, again both formally and informally, to be an increasingly important component of peer support. Artists emphasise the value of having a mentor, someone who offers practical criticism, support and encouragement.

"I was lucky when I was younger. I had access to an experienced mentor. I stayed at his place and had conversations about how to make a living and how to get on in the sector." **Birmingham**

"I associate with people who can mentor me. We work as a collective of artists and offer one another informal mentoring, which is really useful." **Newcastle**

"I remember a 'pairing' scheme aimed at giving artists the opportunity to gain invaluable advice, support and feedback from established artists working in their specific art form." **Birmingham**

Data from our national survey found that 48% reported that an important factor in developing, continuing and sustaining an artist's practice was having the opportunity to exhibit, perform or publish at a critical time. They considered this to be an important milestone in advancing their career.

The focus group participants feel that exhibitions provide artists with recognition and visibility, and allow them to engage with the public and to build up their reputation.

"Exhibiting at a major show is an enabler. To get a response from people (any response) means your work is having an effect." **London**

"Art students want to get involved in shows...it boosts confidence...and provides validation and visibility." **Cambridge**

"Your reputation in the art world ultimately depends on which galleries and venues you decide to exhibit and showcase your work." **London**

"There's a market in exhibiting. Galleries have different criteria and it's important to apply to galleries to have your work shown...exhibiting is an enabler of success." **Birmingham**

"It's all about your body of work. It would be great if a gallery came along and gave young artists that opportunity to shine." **London**

"Getting an exhibition shows that people are interested in your work...it provides validation, someone wants to work with you." **Cambridge**

"I recently exhibited at a reputable arts festival. It lasted over 2 days...I made no sales but you still need to show at these places." **Birmingham**

"All artists want is to be appreciated and to show and exhibit their work." **London**

3.6 Career development

Artists in the focus group feel that being able to spend the majority of their time on artistic work was a very important factor in them being able to feel like an established artist. Otherwise, artists felt that they were simply trying to fit their arts practice in and around other work commitments and life responsibilities. Our survey results found that 'being able to spend majority of time on artistic work' and 'first big professional engagement/show/exhibition as an individual' were key factors that make artists feel established.

Many focus group participants agree that being able to spend the majority of their time on artistic work is very important to feeling like a professional artist – rather than trying to fit it in around other work, and feeling that it is more of a hobby. Some mention that earning money from their art contributes to feeling established.

For some artists, longevity of career better illustrates being established. A long career suggests both a certain level of commitment and achievement

"Longevity [of career] is an important indicator of being established." **Bristol**

Several artists associate being established with recognition and validation such as being recognised by peers, having people want to work with them, or having work exhibited.

"Recognition [is a sign of being established]. Getting an exhibition shows that people are interested in your work, validation that someone wants to work with you." **Newcastle**

"For some artists I know, being established is about being shown in a commercial gallery or securing prizes." **London**

"Being established is about critical recognition – it's about your place in the art world." **London**

3.7 Demotivation

Artists in the focus groups suggest a number of factors that they feel contribute to artists becoming demotivated and potentially leaving the arts sector. Despite these demotivating and frustrating factors, only 0.5% of our survey respondents said they were likely to stop working as an artist.

Focus group participants highlight how low incomes can be demotivating, not because artists are motivated by financial gain but, because it signifies that art is not valued.

"I'm not demotivated from not having income from art. External things, life, demotivate me." **Cambridge**

"Bad pay in itself isn't demotivating but it signifies the lack of value of our art. Especially when we put our heart and soul into it." **Cambridge**

"Money factors can be a demotivation...but then seeing what I have achieved through art is positive." **Bristol**

The difficulties of the precarious, portfolio nature of working as an artist are considered particularly unsustainable by focus group participants when artists have children/family to support. People's interests and priorities alter with time.

"It's the precarious nature of being artists that makes people leave...it's so difficult to sustain practice." **Birmingham**

"It's the work-life balance. I nearly burnt out trying to balance everything." **Birmingham**

"Artists leave the profession because they feel 'burnt out'...losing studio spaces...debts...long periods of not making money and feeling demotivated...I was really demotivated for a while"

then won a residency, and I felt the creative spark again. I had to discover the taste for it again." **Birmingham**

While peer support and partnerships with other artists are seen as motivating, for some artists it can be difficult to find such support. The focus groups report that the artists' environment can occasionally be experienced as competitive and unsupportive.

"The environment can be a bit toxic. There can be a lot of gossiping, competing. I'm now curating but still end up going back to making art. I just rant instead of actually leaving but I do feel there is a lack of support. More peer-to-peer support is needed. Finding a [supportive] community can really help." **Birmingham**

"Being in competition as artists means we're not supportive of each other." **Cambridge**

Artists also report that constant rejection and having to deal with regular disappointment can be a contributing factor to demotivation and wanting to leave the profession.

"Rejection can get me down." **Bristol**

"Huge commitment and wrestling with failure – some people can't deal with that. Capacity to deal with disappointment is so important for succeeding." **London**

"As an artist, you constantly need to hold a mirror up to yourself – this can be challenging." **London**

Some artists consider that leakage from the sector can be a good thing, since it means that only those who are good and dedicated enough continue. There is not enough work for all art graduates/aspiring artists.

"Maybe the work of artists who leave wasn't good enough in the first place." **London**

"Artists leave because of lack of real commitment to their work. If you really believe in what you're doing, nothing will stop you. It's probably just as well the others stopped [making art]." **Birmingham**

"I did leave but I came back!" **Birmingham**

"I've had fleeting thoughts about it...but if you are serious, you won't leave as ultimately art keeps you happy." **Birmingham**

4. The motivation and barriers – artists' experience

This section presents the findings from the focus group discussions covering the things that motivate artists to practice, and the barriers they face when doing so.

4.1 What motivates artists

Many artists in the focus groups refer to the deep-rooted need to create, to 'scratch the itch', to get ideas out of their head, and to go through the creative process as being main motivations to pursuing art as career. One even describes themselves as 'addicted' to creating art. Self-expression is clearly important to artists.

"For me, it's always been about some element of self-expression, through various forms. Having the opportunity to get in contact with ideas inside my head and get ideas out, and give them an identity or existence out there." **Cambridge**

"Creative methods can challenge and change other peoples' ways of working and thinking. Artists can bring a different way of working to collaborations." **Bristol**

"Fulfilment happens when a line of research develops...ideas emerge...coincidences start to happen... the process is very exciting." **London**

"Fulfilment for me is having ideas and making them happen." **Cambridge**

"For me, it's not the finished product that fulfils me but the thought process, the creative process that I now find that more motivating. That is what gives me satisfaction...few of us have original ideas but we feed off one another...the cross-overs are exciting." **Birmingham**

"I need to scratch the itch, I need to create." **Bristol**

The focus group artists also associate fulfilment and motivation with completing a piece of work and developing a body of work.

"Fulfilment means my body of work and being able to do my artistic work." **London**

"Finishing off my work or project and feeling on a high." **London**

"It is satisfying when after a lot of effort and slog a piece of work gets to the stage where you wanted it to be." **Bristol**

"Having the time and space to see something to completion..." **Cambridge**

Our survey found that key motivating factors across visual artists generally are: artistic fulfilment (70%); personal wellbeing or enjoyment (38%); and financial remuneration (36%). The factor considered to be the most important motivation for continuing to pursue a career as an artist was artistic fulfilment. This was the case across all ages, genders, disabled and not disabled artists.

Defining the concept of 'fulfilment' and 'full potential' has been a topic of discussion during focus groups and Steering Group meetings throughout the project. Although a contentious phrase at times, broadly speaking when telling us how they interpret fulfilling their potential, artists feel it means being able to devote time to their work, maintain their practice and to have sufficient time and resources to create.

"I'm fulfilled when a piece of work is completed." **Cambridge**

"It's not the finished product that fulfils me but the creative process." **Cambridge**

Seeing people connect with art is satisfying and fulfilling for artists in the focus groups. Several artists who deliver community work express the satisfaction they feel from encouraging involvement in art.

Artists express the opinion that they want to be paid for their work, and paid fairly, in order to survive and pay their bills, but it is not money that primarily motivates them. Artists describe creating art as

fulfilling in itself. By making art, artists receive private satisfaction. It is not financial remuneration that drives them.

"If we were in the arts just for the money, we wouldn't do it!" **Cambridge**

"We want to be paid, we want to have the time and space to create and research, but financial remuneration does not always motivate us." **Birmingham**

"I have never been motivated by money but it's hard when you haven't got any!" **Cambridge**

"We just want to do our job to the best of our ability... that's how many of us get 'fulfilment' in our lives, within and outside the arts." **Birmingham**

"We all do art because we are fulfilled by it." **Newcastle**

However, artists in the focus groups suggest that the intrinsic drive they have to create art, and the accompanying feeling of personal fulfilment, can be often used to exploit them or pressure them into doing work for free.

"We need to have a serious professional practice where we get paid for work that we do...we need to earn money as well as being fulfilled." **Newcastle**

"[Our personal satisfaction from art] can be used as an excuse for not paying us." **Newcastle**

"Art is much more fulfilling when we get paid." **Newcastle**

"We don't want people to know that we do it for the love it – we need to also be paid." **Cambridge**

Data from our national survey found that 29% said that recognition by peers was important in developing, continuing and sustaining art practice. Added to this, 35% said that receiving industry/peer or public recognition was important to feeling established as an artist.

On the one hand, artists suggest that their motivation for making art comes from a very private sense of fulfilment or recognition.

"Fulfilment does come from the self. It doesn't come from outside." **London**

"Recognition should come from me." **London**

On the other hand, artists appear to be motivated and/or fulfilled by sharing their artwork with others.

"Recognition from other people [motivates me]." **London**

"What I do is important to me and others." **Newcastle**

"I can't help it that if someone else likes my work - I will feel better about my work as well." **London**

"[Fulfilment comes from] selling, having a person liking my work enough to part with cash is very satisfying." **Cambridge**

"Fulfilment comes from individual satisfaction but it's also fulfilling when other people 'get' my work." **London**

The focus groups suggest that seeing people connect with art can also be satisfying and fulfilling. Several artists who deliver community work describe the satisfaction they feel from getting people involved in art.

"I do a lot of community stuff. Getting people who don't draw to draw for first time is fantastic and gives enormous fulfilment. Passing on the delight of art to others is great." **Cambridge**

"Seeing other people connect with art is very satisfying such as working with a community group - seeing people get a buzz from art. That is what I get satisfaction from." **Cambridge**

The positives of collaborating and networking with peers and other artists feature throughout the focus groups, and as well as providing support artists considered these to be motivations.

"Peer group feedback and recognition is crucial, but often missing or short-term. It's especially hard in this region as we're very spread out and sparse, hard to communicate with other artists." **Cambridge**

"I have developed a close-knit group of peers – part of my motivation is being part of this group... this contributes to my enjoyment and wellbeing." **Birmingham**

"I'm motivated by support from other artists and peers." **Bristol**

"Fulfilment comes from having a peer group who critique and support each other." **Cambridge**

"I worked with 30 artists on a project and found that very rewarding and enriching. Working with a like-minded community...having support...important to have someone help generate ideas and share issues." **Birmingham**

"Support networks and collaboration are really important for nurturing, developing and motivating artists." **Cambridge**

"Networking is so important for motivation. Visiting and going to see exhibitions together...someone signposting you to resources and helping you apply for funding. Other artists help inspire you. They fire you up." **Birmingham**

"Other artists introduce you to other artists and open up opportunities." **Birmingham**

"A lot of projects are collaborative. I get a kick from seeing a project go in different directions as a result of collaboration." **Cambridge**

4.2 Barriers faced by artists

The survey revealed that the biggest challenges to artists are reported to be a lack of financial return (80%), and a lack of time to practice their art (62%). More than half of artists also reported lack of access to funding or financial support as a barrier.

There was discussion about the importance (and difficulty) of artists articulating their worth and insisting on fair payment. Self-doubt and lack of confidence can be a barrier to career development and fair payment.

"With time my confidence in valuing my work has increased." **Cambridge**

Most artists report how they have to work in other jobs to earn income to supplement their art practice. Some mention the benefits of non-artform jobs, e.g. they bring income that helps sustainability, and frees you to take risks and develop your practice. However, most who have additional non-artform jobs feel some frustration: the jobs can take more of their time leaving little for art practice; the jobs relegate art practice to 'spare time'; and having to operate in a non-artform role can stifle creativity.

A few artists raise how the low income they receive can impact on their life in other ways. As well as having to make sacrifices or choices that those who are well paid do not, artists express concern that living in poor conditions as a result of low pay can lead to ill health – either directly causing physical illness or contributing to worry or stress about money.

"As a result of damp in my accommodation I suffered from pneumonia. Which then meant that I could not work, worsening the situation." **Birmingham**

On the flip side of challenges posed by incomes, artists highlight how expenses can make it difficult to sustain their practice, whether spending money on the necessary materials, equipment, resources and space to work in, or on marketing or promoting themselves.

The survey findings show that most artists (80%) regularly spend money on materials and consumables for their practice, spending an average of £30 per month. In addition, 59% of artists regularly pay for travel/accommodation, 58% for subscriptions/memberships and 54% for research resources.

"Artists incur a lot of costs...we travel for all sorts of reasons...exhibitions, projects, conferences, funding competitions, accommodation, have to pay for space and stalls at trade shows and we have to make sales to cover this...cost of materials can impact on the creative process and the art form choices especially with the cost of travelling to work with collaborators or to move projects or exhibitions." **Bristol**

"It's harder here in London with the massive rents and expensive studio space." **London**

The research and focus groups indicate that access to work space is very important for artists. 44% of artists surveyed reported paying rent for studio or workspace, paying on average £57 per month. Affordability is a deciding factor in artists' workspace provision, often prioritised over long-term security and quality of space.

"My local studio is low cost and caters for artists at different stages of career. Sometimes there are pressures for artists to use studios on a voluntary basis – that is, helping out with the cleaning and maintenance to make the space more affordable. This has the opposite effect of taking time away from concentrating on your practice." **London**

"Access to space is so important...there are so many empty buildings across the UK...it would be good if more empty buildings across the country could be used as community or creative spaces that artists could afford." **Birmingham**

"There's excellent studio provision in Newcastle – the use of empty buildings leads to reduced rates and fantastic studio spaces. This is good for artists and cities." **Newcastle**

A small number of artists perceive that to a certain extent they can be victims of their own success, moving into affordable areas, inadvertently increasing demand for property and contributing to rising prices.

"Studio spaces become available in an area, the area becomes a cultural hub...artists have inadvertently made the area feel trendy... people start to move into and live in the area, then artists are forced out..." **London**

As well as finding affordable premises, the focus groups highlight that being able to access quality equipment is also a key factor in assisting artists in their careers.

"I can afford to pay for equipment now that I have a full-time job but accessing quality equipment was a barrier before and still is for other artists." **Bristol**

"Accessing certain equipment is expensive and prohibitive (e.g. bronze-casting facilities)." **London**

Lack of access to funding was reported as a barrier by more than half (56%) of surveyed artists. In addition, focus group participants consider that the criteria to apply for funding can be a barrier. Many artists report that grants or funding tends to support projects rather than help artists sustain their day-to-day practice.

"Funding seems to support community-led projects or collaboration projects...or is aimed at recent graduates." **Birmingham**

"I can see that artists who work in a project based way would be more likely to apply for funding (i.e. more organised)... need to support certain categories of art or these will die out." **London**

"Some artists work in project based ways – these people need funding or their work wouldn't happen." **London**

Artists in the focus groups recognise that age is not a barrier to creativity and making art, however it can be a barrier in applying for grants or funding. Restrictions on who can apply for grants is seen as a barrier which is unique to the art sector. Artists would like to see support widened and not focussed on artists at an early stage of their careers.

"I think emerging artists should be given some support, but not too much, they should find their own feet. We don't need thousands of kids who go to art school every year all becoming full-time artists. Most of them aren't good enough. There needs to be a certain amount of weeding out at the early stages or we're just wasting resources. There should be far more support for those at mid-career who have shown commitment and need help to break through that glass ceiling of becoming established." **Birmingham**

"We need a separate funding stream, supporting artists' professional development...emphasis on supporting longevity...longer-term focus on artists rather than one-off projects." **Birmingham**

"Artists are struggling at all stages of their career – all careers stages need to be addressed." **Birmingham**

"A lot of funding is weighted towards aspiring artists. Feels as if funding is always aimed at the younger artists and I feel a bit out on a limb. I've come back to the sector after a break and there is very little support available for me." **Birmingham**

"A separate funding line for artists would be brilliant if it is continued. Funding early work is fine but then if this isn't followed up artists will drop off as their funded practice becomes unsustainable." **Bristol**

Funding is often seen to come with strings/conditions which dictate the work/outcomes – several artists consider that to be successful in getting funding their proposed work had to tick certain boxes. Artists view this both as restrictive and as providing direction and giving artists the responsibility to think about how their work fits into the outside world.

Artists report in focus groups that funding applications can be long and difficult to fill out.

"The amount of bureaucracy and admin linked to funding is very off-putting." **Birmingham**

"Applying for funding is difficult, stressful and daunting." **Bristol**

"It's so difficult to get funding, to fill out the forms." **London**

"Applications are bane of artists' lives." **Bristol**

"I wouldn't feel comfortable applying for ACE funding [because of the application forms]." **Newcastle**

Applying for funding is a skill, which some artists are good at. Some artists in the focus groups feel they are at a disadvantage when it comes to completing application forms. Other artists might be better at completing applications, either because they are good writers, have previous experience in the funding arena or they have attached themselves to a larger arts organisation.

"We're not taught how to apply [for funding]. Artists don't have that skillset. Individual artists have little chance of securing funding." **Birmingham**

"Artists may be skilled at producing great art work but they don't know how to fill in the forms and make a compelling case." **Birmingham**

"I know an artists' collective who always get funding and are always travelling around the world funded by ACE because they are good at writing." **Bristol**

"The people who are good at getting funding are not the same as people who are good at art."
Cambridge

"Experience [with funding] plays a part in knowing how to get funding." **Newcastle**

"Bigger organisations do better with funding. Individual artists who secure funding are very rare and even then it's usually a very specific type of award or related to specific art forms."
Birmingham

In the focus groups, artists highlight the length of funding guidelines as a particular challenge. Artists perceive there to be too much jargon and have difficulty in digesting what is required of them.

"All the information artists need are there in the guidelines and printed on the website. But the guidelines are challenging. They are very long, difficult to read and hard to access." **London**

"Funding jargon, people don't speak it... Guidelines need to speak the language of artists in order for it to be comprehensible." **London**

"Artists find it difficult to work with the funding guidelines and applications – there's too much jargon, monitoring, and requirements." **Birmingham**

Despite these barriers making it difficult for artists to earn a living from their practice alone, they are not deterred, and 94% plan to continue working as an artist.

5. Location and mobility of artists

This section presents the findings from the focus group discussions covering how easily artists can find opportunities and forge a career in their region and beyond.

5.1 Relocation and mobility of artists

London has traditionally been England's hub of artistic activity and communities. Several artists recall that they had moved to London from elsewhere to access the arts community and find opportunities.

"I moved from North England to London to access the artist community. There weren't opportunities for me in my region." **London**

"I grew up in the South West but I wouldn't have access there to the contemporary art scene I am interested in. I had to move to London to access this particular community and to have dialogue with like-minded artists." **London**

"Artists might move to somewhere they see as an opportunity such as London or a regional equivalent. Sometimes they'll go where they see a vibrant arts scene." **Birmingham**

"Over the last 10 years, it is interesting to see how many European artists are attracted to London. London is considered the 'scene' to get a career in the arts." **Birmingham**

However, the prohibitive costs of living and working in London means artists have either moved out to other regions or are thinking about doing so.

"Living in London is not going to be sustainable...I feel impending doom, it's distressing to think about the next stage of my life. London has been my home for 15 years but I can't live here forever." **Artist, London**

"I graduated in London...I couldn't afford to stay, so headed back home." **Cambridge**

"I tried to stay in London after graduating [from a reputable arts school]...I was working a lot in non-art related jobs and wasn't creating any work...I'm the only one of my peers now practicing now that I live here." **Birmingham**

"Affordable workspace is being promoted in Zone 1 but won't be affordable for artists. It's harder here in London with the massive rents and expensive studio space." **London**

Work opportunities advertised outside of an artist's own region often require temporary relocation. Several artists report that in the first few years after graduation they led nomadic lives, travelling to access work in different regions or even different countries. However, such a lifestyle is not sustainable and as artists have got older and perhaps started families or gained other responsibilities or employment in other jobs they are no longer mobile and are restricted to local work. Artists who are parents or have caring responsibilities are unable to access opportunities that are not local.

"Being mobile to access work – that's my nightmare. I can't do jobs outside my region, as I'm a single mother. These other regional opportunities are for short amounts of time, and I can't uproot my children's life. I'm missing work opportunities as I'm also juggling child caring responsibilities." **London**

"With a family, I can't take up opportunities that aren't local." **Cambridge**

The focus groups highlight that opportunities outside an artist's own region can be restrictive for other reasons.

"Yes there are opportunities for work elsewhere but these can be limiting...If you look at some of the adverts, artists need to be able to transport their own work, and that can be expensive and a challenge logistically." **London**

"You look at a lot of regional opportunities and there are a lot of strings attached. There are lots of targets and requirements, which is very off-putting. Sometimes you even have to pay to access an opportunity." **London**

Many artists in the focus groups do not think about accessing work opportunities in other regions as they have developed a sustainable, local practice.

"I have always chosen to stay here in the Midlands as it's quite central and this enables me to be mobile...to gain work across a number of cities ...I live in a nice place and still get by...I wouldn't want this to change..." **Birmingham**

"I don't show my art outside my local area. There are lots of local opportunities, and I don't incur any hideous accommodation and travel costs showcasing my work in other regions." **London**

"Personally, I can't stand spending time in London, so I developed a practice that is locally and internationally focused...it is possible to 'leapfrog' London." **Birmingham**

Artists report that they increasingly operate in a global market and are finding work opportunities in Europe and beyond. In some cases, international work can be financially lucrative and has helped widen opportunities. However, for some artists this becomes unsustainable as they gain other responsibilities such as families.

"I'm six years out of art school. The first few years have been deeply nomadic, working in the US, Copenhagen and Japan...I'm moving to Denmark next year." **Cambridge**

"We're working in a global market now. Art doesn't know boundaries." **Cambridge**

"I have spent time abroad – in Spain and Cyprus. It's a more global world now – this is good for artists." **London**

"What's on offer internationally is financially better. Usually the fee for spending time in a different UK city is too low." **Cambridge**

"America seems to have more opportunities. Could ACE learn from other countries?" **Cambridge**

"I have to go abroad to Europe for some work. Being seen to be going further afield opens more opportunities, is seen positively, I'm taken more seriously." **Cambridge**

5.2 Regional enablers and barriers

Whilst the barriers described directly above, and in Section 4.2 are experienced by artists around England, the focus groups did reveal some more unique regional specific issues. These are discussed below:

East of England

- Artists suggest that studio space and living costs are cheaper in the East of England than in London.
- Some artists perceive that Cambridge is marketed as a centre for life science and technology. As such, there are few regional arts organisations and those that do exist are struggling or have had funding cuts.
- Artists from around the region who live in remote areas feel it can be expensive and time-consuming for artists to network with one another on a regular basis.

Midlands

- Artists feel a strong pressure to exhibit in London and find it a challenge to find local opportunities.

North

- Artists feel there is a perceived difference in funding available in the North compared to South – that the North does not receive a comparable amount of funding per capita.

- Artists refer to the decision to move a world-famous photography collection in Bradford to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. They believe this illustrates London-centric tendencies in the cultural sector.

London

- Artists here feel property prices are an issue, and that there is a cycle of artists using affordable spaces in run-down areas, inadvertently making the area more desirable, leading to people moving into the area and artists being forced out.
- Focus group participants report there are fewer and fewer opportunities for affordable studio space.
- Whilst London has always provided opportunities, some artists feel the capital is at saturation point in terms of cultural engagement and audiences. It has become very competitive and this is a challenge for artists' livelihoods.

South West

- Artists experience is that the region is facing rising studio costs, and the trend of property price rises seen in London is happening in Bristol, for example.
- Being a large and in many parts rural and dispersed region, some in the focus group who had travelled feel the transport system can make it a challenge for artists to travel to the main hubs, so artists have fewer opportunities to network with their peers, leading to isolation.

6. Visual artists relationships with the Creative Industries

Existing research into artists in developed economies showed that multiple job-holding is the norm for artists. It is clear from our survey data that many artists work in the wider culture and Creative Industries as well as their own arts practice. Almost 7 out of 10 artists have additional jobs and just under half have two or more additional jobs.

Our survey investigated the types of additional jobs artists have by looking at their job titles and areas of work. What the survey did not explore was the industrial sector in which these additional jobs are based. Thus, whilst we can start to see what types of other jobs artists have, we cannot analyse how many of these fall within the culture and Creative Industries sector. To further explore this area, more targeted primary data collection from artists with additional jobs would be needed to assess the number of:

- Arts-related jobs in creative and cultural industries – an indicative example in our survey being the job of ‘gallerist’ in an art gallery.
- Non-artform related jobs in creative and cultural industries – an indicative example in our survey being the job of ‘customer services assistant’ in a museum.
- Creative jobs in non-cultural industries – for example this could be a web-designer in a non-creative and non-cultural company. Without industry sector information our survey data cannot explore this.

Focussing on the additional jobs of artists, the survey asked the artists who stated they have artform related other jobs to select from a long list occupations and job titles. This allows us to begin to understand what creative and cultural jobs artists have, although we cannot say what sector all of these jobs are in.

Our survey findings show that 43% of artists have artform-related jobs, 34% have non-artform related jobs and 23% have both artform and non-artform related jobs.

Of the 57% of artists who have non-artform related jobs, the job descriptions given by artists lead us to estimate that almost one in five (19%) work within the culture and Creative Industries. This includes jobs in museums, libraries, design, TV/radio and media.

With so many artists needing additional jobs, there was some speculation of the benefits of finding additional jobs which are related to culture or Creative Industries.

“[A non-artform job] takes you out of your creative zone, stifles creativity” **Newcastle**

Such jobs can also assist artists in career development through building their professional network and gaining insight and experience in the art world. Fierce competition for these roles, however, means these types of opportunities can be difficult to find.

“I work two days a week in a gallery, project managing curatorial projects but I’ve seen an influx of incoming curators. I used to know lots of artists who also had additional jobs in curating but younger people are coming through as curators and taking PM/administrative posts from artists. This is one source of income that is diminishing for artists.” **London**

“When I first moved to London, people teaching art did tend to be practicing art too. I think many people who call themselves established artists have to teach in order to maintain income levels.” **London**

Many artists value the income and experience they receive through working with schools, universities and the education sector more widely. Many artists teach art to supplement their income and consider teaching an extension of their arts practice.

“For me, as a freelance educator, education seems the most sustainable source of income.” **Cambridge**

7. Appendix

The table below provides an anonymised overview of the visual artists who participated in the focus groups.

No.	Primary art form (self-defined)	Gender	Ethnicity	Disabled	Career stage
1	Sculpture	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Established
2	New Media	Male	BLACK or BLACK BRITISH Caribbean	Not disabled	Mid career
3	Graphic Art	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
4	Photographic	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Disabled	Established
5	Visual Arts	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
6	Fine Art Painting	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
7	Crafts	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Established
8	Fine Art	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
9	Printmaking	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
10	Painting	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
11	Participatory Art	Female	WHITE other background	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
12	Fine Art	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
13	Visual Art	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
14	Live Art	Female	MIXED Other	Not disabled	Mid career
15	Textile Art	Female	BLACK or BLACK BRITISH Caribbean	Disabled	Emerging / early career
16	Visual Arts	Female	WHITE other background	Disabled	Emerging / early career
17	Painting	Female	MIXED White and Asian	Not disabled	Mid career
18	Painting	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Prefer not to say	Emerging / early career
19	Fine Art	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Established
20	Painting	Female	WHITE other background	Not disabled	Currently a student

No.	Primary art form (self-defined)	Gender	Ethnicity	Disabled	Career stage
21	Painting	Male	MIXED White and Asian	Not disabled	Mid career
22	Fine Art	Female	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	Emerging / early career
23	Fine Art	Female	MIXED White and Black Africa	Disabled	Mid career
24	Visual Arts	Female	MIXED White and Asian	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
25	Visual Arts	Female	MIXED Other	Not disabled	Established
26	Painting Sculpture Installation	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Disabled	Currently a student
27	Sculpture	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Disabled	Emerging / early career
29	Sculpture and Carving	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Established
30	Visual	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Mid career
31	Film	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Established
32	Painting in oils	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
33	Participatory art	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
34	Textile Art - Woven Tapestry	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Mid career
35	Public Workshops	Male	MIXED Other	Not disabled	Mid career
36	Fine Art	Male	WHITE Irish	Not disabled	Mid career
37	Print Making	Male	WHITE other background	Not disabled	Emerging / early career
38	Sound	Male	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Between emerging / early and mid career
39	Painting	Female	WHITE British/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/Welsh	Not disabled	Emerging / early career

Project partners

