

UK Visual Artists (2024)

A survey of earnings and contracts



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Executive summary

This report was developed by CREATE, who were commissioned by Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS) to conduct independent research into the earnings and contracts of UK-based visual artists. This report is situated amid other empirical research which details declining earnings for primary creators in multiple creative industries.

This report presents the findings of a survey of mostly UK-based visual artists, totalling 1,241 respondents (8.9% response rate). This research included information on visual artists' earnings, including factors that affect earnings, such as contracts and visual artists' rights.

Demographics

- The data indicates that respondents to this survey come from a less diverse range of demographics compared to the overall UK labour force. For example, the proportion of respondents with a disability was 14.0%, compared to 24.4% in the UK population. Similarly, Asian and Black visual artists in this survey are represented at less than half of their proportion in the broader UK workforce. Women make up 45.7% of respondents, compared to 51.7% of the general UK population, with this number decreasing further to 43.5% among those whose only occupation is visual artistry. This suggests potential barriers to entering or sustaining a career in the visual arts sector or that other factors, such as the survey structure and accessibility, may have influenced participation.
- While there is a nearly equal number of men and women in this survey, this data reveals large gender disparities within specific fields: 75.7% of photographers are men, while 60.8% of illustrators are women. Additionally, the proportion of individuals identifying as non-binary or other genders is higher among visual artists than in the general UK population, suggesting that the industry may be more welcoming and inclusive for these individuals.
- Visual arts are a privileged profession, with more than half of respondents coming from a socio-economic background associated with the highest levels of privilege (53.3%) – this is more than double than in the general workforce in the UK.

Earnings

- Primary Occupation visual artists[1] earn a typical median income of £12,500 per annum [2] in respect of their self-employed earnings as visual artists. This is 64.2% lower than the typical income for individual UK workers (£34,963 in 2023)[3] and 47.5% lower than the income of full-time minimum wage workers (£23,795 assuming a 40-hour work-week).
- For Primary Occupation visual artists, and in regard to individual median earnings, 81.0% earned below the national median wage (£34,963) and 64.9% below the minimum wage (£23,795).
- Over 80% of visual artists surveyed report that their sources of earnings are unstable, or very unstable. Due to low earning trajectories and instability of earnings month to month, many visual artists are subsidised by earnings from other members of their household (e.g., spouse).
- Visual artists' earnings make up a large part of their household income, with individual earnings accounting for approximately 46.7% of the total. However, when focusing solely on self-employed earnings, this contribution drops to 33.3%. This indicates that visual artists often need to supplement their income from other sources, with 41.5% of them turning to non-creative work.
- Demographic variables have an important impact on earning potential. There is a clear gender pay gap, with women typically earning 40% less (£7,500) compared to men (£12,500) from their self-employed earnings as a visual artist. Even more drastically is the 70% pay gap between disabled and non-disabled visual artists, with disabled artists earning just £3,750 annually, while their non-disabled counterparts earn £12,500. Additionally, visual artists from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds face a 40% disparity, earning £7,500 compared to £12,500 earned by those from more privileged backgrounds.

[1] Artists who spend at least half of their working time as a visual artist

[2] The median, i.e. middle values of the distribution (of earnings in this case), implies that half of the respondents report a value higher than the median, and half of them lower.

[3] Office for National Statistics, [Employee earnings in the UK: 2023](#)

[4] See [Copyright Contracts and Earnings of Visual Creators: A Survey of 5,800 British Designers, Fine Artists, Illustrators and Photographers](#).

- Compared to our 2011 report[4], the data reveals a substantial decline in both median and mean earnings from 2010 to 2023. In real terms, between 2010 and 2023, individual median income dropped by 48.8%, while median self-employed earnings experienced a decrease of 47.5%.
- The survey highlights income disparities among the three main categories of visual artists. Photographers and illustrators reported median earnings of £12,500, while painters earned a median of £7,500. The range of median earnings in 2023 (£5,000) is slightly narrower than in 2011 (£5,720), indicating that income inequalities among these categories have reduced slightly over this period. However, this narrowing is primarily due to a general decline in earnings rather than significant income growth for any particular category.

Professional context

- Most visual artists have not attempted to negotiate contracts related to work or commissions in the past five years (almost 70%). However, among those who do negotiate, the success rate is high, with 79.4% reporting successful changes to the disputed terms. Despite this, nearly half (42.5%) of visual artists express little to no confidence that they are receiving all fees, royalties, and residuals owed to them under these contracts.
- Social media platforms play an increasingly important role for visual artists, with the majority of visual artists being active on Instagram (80.5%). For those engaged on social media, 19.4% of their income is generated through various channels such as platform monetisation tools, brand partnerships, fan donations, and more. However, 13% of visual artists have faced restrictions or penalties from these platforms often due to artistic content containing nudity, which could potentially limit their earning opportunities.
- More than half of visual artists surveyed have noticed changes in the demand for their services in the UK or EU post-Brexit (56.5%) and that this change was negative in virtually all cases (97.7%). More than a quarter of visual artists have found their post-Brexit experiences of working abroad 'very challenging' (26.5%), primarily due to increasing expenses (53.5%) and Visa/Work Permit Requirements (39.1%).

Research context

This research, on the earnings and contracts of UK-based visual artists, is situated amid the broader context of research on creators' earnings and the factors which affect them. Initiatives to research creators' earnings is a global effort, with notable studies in Australia, Canada, Europe and the US.[5]

However, this research is more closely associated with the UK-based research by the CREATE centre, of which this report forms part, including a series of surveys of authors and freelance journalists.[6] The impetus for this series of surveys is to document the economic position of individual creators through a standardised design. This data is often not adequately accounted for in official ONS income accounts of creative industries in the UK.[7] ONS figures are based in a percentage calculation of HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) records, which do not capture self-employed earnings - and these earnings constitute an important source of income for creative works, of whom 49% work as freelancers.[8] Therefore, while visual artists are included within the scope of ONS data collection, the picture of their typical earnings are likely to be distorted until self-employed earnings are accounted for.

In particular, this report is a successor to the earlier 2011 report by Kretschmer et al., also commissioned as independent academic research by DACS.[9] That report was contextualised by occupational changes which could reduce earning potential for artists at the outset of digitisation, namely: widespread uptake amateur photography through accessible, affordable and high-quality mobile technology; increasing development and use of digital picture libraries, and; a decline in traditional print-based media, like magazines.

[5] See also series of research by [David Throsby](#): The Author's Interest project by [Rebecca Giblin](#); The Writers' Union of Canada (2015); Europe Economics, Guibault and Salamanca (2016); The Authors Guild (2019)

[6] See Thomas, Battisti and Kretschmer (2022; 2024); Ehlinger, Luca, and Thomas (2024).

[7] See Towse (2023).

[8] Creator remuneration, [Fifth Report of Session 2023-24](#)

[9] Kretschmer et al. (2011).



Indeed, the 2011 report confirmed low earning trajectories for visual artists, with typical earnings well below the (then) national median wage. This was so despite a 'a much more equivocal picture' than anticipated where contractual negotiations were concerned. Whilst key gatekeepers to the artist' market were (anecdotally) expected to tend towards a 'rights grab' that would curtail earning potential, that report found that artists' bargaining power, and willingness to dispute and litigate, was better than expected.

The scope of visual artists included in this earlier report,[10] and its UK-wide scale,[11] has yet to be replicated.[12] The need for updated research is anticipated through the rapidly changing policy context, which presents new challenges (and potential) for visual artists' earnings. Since 2011, there are even more new digital marketplaces for artistic works, and new revenue streams for their monetisation, including patron systems which were not widely in place at that time. However, other disruptions - most notably Brexit and the advent of generative AI - also have the potential to displace, or dramatically reduce, artistic labour, risking its sustainability and diversity.

This report serves as a follow-up to the 2011 report, which was published at the onset of digitisation - a transformation that continues to shape the work and livelihoods of visual artists today.



The different occupations of the members of DACS offers a wider window to visual artists for the purposes of empirical analysis than comparative representative societies in the UK, e.g., PICSEL (which represents visual artists who create 2D images only).

[11] See [Livelihoods of Visual Artists: 2016 Data Report](#) in England and Wales.

As far as can be ascertained, there are no standardised reports on earnings of members offered by other artists' representative groups, such as ACS or PICSEL. However, there is some evidence of community-sourced evidence gathering from e.g., [illustrators](#).

Methodology

Research design

This research was conducted adapting a standardised model used in previous longitudinal surveys of creators (authors, performers) who, as part of a publication-based cultural market, share similar characteristics to visual artists. In adopting this standardised model, the report tracks trends over time and makes comparisons between different populations across other creative industries. The standardised model was lightly adapted where appropriate to take account of market specificities such as sources of earnings, and a more detailed demographic profile was implemented in line with metrics employed in national statistics. Starting from a common set of questions across surveys makes it possible to compare respondents of the different surveys.

The survey was divided into five sections:

1. Professional Profile
2. Earnings
3. Copyrights & Contracts
4. Work Dynamics
5. Demographics

The survey contained 59 questions, a copy of which is included in Appendix A, alongside the explanation which was received to potential recipients to encourage participation. Income data (in GBP) were collected and organised across three different variables:

- Total Household Earnings: the respondent's report of combined earnings of all earners in the household.
- Total Individual Earnings: all earnings of the respondents, including earnings as a visual artist and income from any other activities.
- Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist: income solely from visual arts, not including any salaried employment.

Data collection – survey

The survey was implemented on an online survey management tool, Qualtrics, which is among the most used types of software for surveys of this type. Respondents were offered an incentive to complete the survey, with a randomised cash award of £500 distributed to one respondent. Whilst email addresses were gathered to identify awardees, for all other purposes, respondents remain anonymous.

On February 29, 2024, the survey was distributed to the artists members of DACS. DACS is a visual arts collecting society representing around 14,000 artists in the UK through three main rights management services: payback (royalties from revenue generated through collective licensing schemes), artist's resale right (the right to receive a royalty based on the price of any resale of an original work of art), and copyright licensing (where someone seeks to use an art work either as a one-off or on a continuous basis, e.g., in an advertisement). Out of the 14,000 members artists represented by DACS, the survey email was sent to 13,961 members. Additionally, the survey was promoted through DACS' social media channels and shared by 10 of DACS' partner organisations.[13]

The choice to initially distribute the survey to a defined population of visual artists belonging to DACS, as a professional body, allows for the widest population of interest, whilst also adding controls for assumed characteristics of 'serious' visual artists who are most relevant to policy. [14] DACS represents artists and the estates of artists who hold copyright in their artistic works, with this being the sole criterion for membership. First, by limiting the analysis to those visual artists who are members of a professional body in the UK, the report introduces a proxy for a visual artist's career trajectory and earning potential. Second, as detailed below, further focussing on those visual artists who allocate at least half of their working time to their profession means that the survey captures people who have the ambition to sustain life as a creator.

[13] a-n The Artists Information Company; AxisWeb; Artquest; UAL; Association of Photographers; Association of Illustrators; New Contemporaries; Artist Union England; Scottish Artist Union; CVAN

[14] See further discussion in [this article](#).

Data analysis – survey

The survey closed on April 7, 2024, with a total of 1,241 responses. This represents 8.89% of the sent emails. As the survey was designed so that participants could skip irrelevant or uncomfortable questions, partial responses are also included as valid observations within this total. Therefore, some of the findings presented in this report therefore may not account for 100% of all 1,241 responses. Throughout this report, in brackets next to each category, the numbers represent the 'observations' in each category, that is the number of respondents to that specific question.

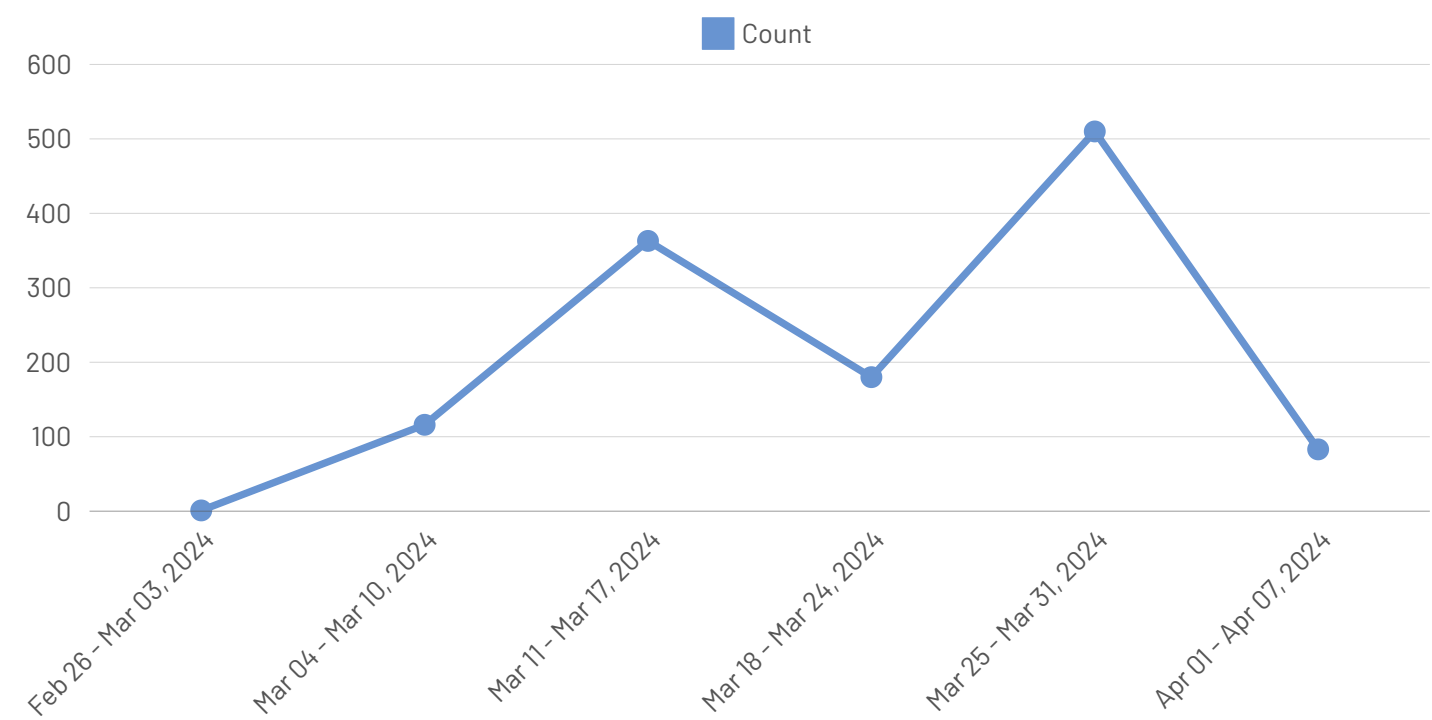


Figure 1: Survey response rates over time

All quantitative data, including earnings data, were analysed using Stata. Upon receipt of responses, no attempt was made to correct or amend any data, except for clearly erroneous answers, which were mostly in relation to freeform fields.

In a context like this, the average value (i.e., mean) is likely to be strongly affected by a few outliers reporting very large values (e.g., ‘superstar’ artists, and potentially of course errors in responses). To account for the skewness in the earnings profile, the income analysis in this report is based on median (typical) amounts, which are much less affected by the presence of outliers

The median (the value of the respondent that leaves half of the distribution above and half of the distribution below them) is often considered a more reliable statistic where data is highly skewed by nonrepresentative answers (outliers) which differ from the majority of respondents. Medians are calculated using income variables for which respondents picked ranges (down to £500 wide at lower levels, wider at higher levels). The mid-point for each range was selected, and £5,000,000 is used as the baseline for earnings of "£5,000,000 and above". The incomes reported below are before tax in the 2022/2023 tax year.

Despite efforts to control the population of potential respondents, due to the online format and shareability of the link, there is an inherent uncertainty as to who has access to the survey. No statistical weights were applied to make the survey more representative of the total population of visual artists, because the characteristics of the population are not known. The report focuses on the subsample of visual artists whose visual arts is their 'Primary Occupation' who are defined (across previous studies) as those who allocate at least 50% of their time to the profession under survey.



The survey closed on April 7, 2024,
with a total of 1,241 responses

When calculating the percentages presented in this report, all respondents to each question were included in the total count, even if they chose "prefer not to say". However, for clarity and focus, the tables only display the responses of those who provided specific answers. This approach ensures that the overall response rates are accurately reflected in the percentages, while the tables remain streamlined and easy to interpret. As a result, some questions may not round to exactly 100%.

Where appropriate, the report makes comparative reference to findings from other surveys of creators' earnings in this series which employ the same methodology allowing for transferability of findings. The report also offers, where appropriate, contextualisation of the findings alongside data on the UK labour market, specifically considering the employed population aged 16 and over in the same year that the survey was conducted. Where data is not available for the UK labour market, the report applies data from the entire UK population aged 16 and over, regardless of employment status.

Sample

Overview

The report distinguishes between 3 different samples:

- Full sample: the sample of all respondents with non-missing values for the variable examined. There are 1,241 respondents in this sample.
- Primary occupation sample: the sample of respondents who answered “Yes” to the following question: “Is working as a visual artist your primary occupation? (For the purpose of this survey, this means: do you spend at least half of your working time as a visual artist?)”. There are 960 observations in this sample.
- Only occupation sample: the sample of respondents who answered “Yes” to the following question: “Do you spend ALL your working time as a visual artist?”. There are 601 observations in this sample.

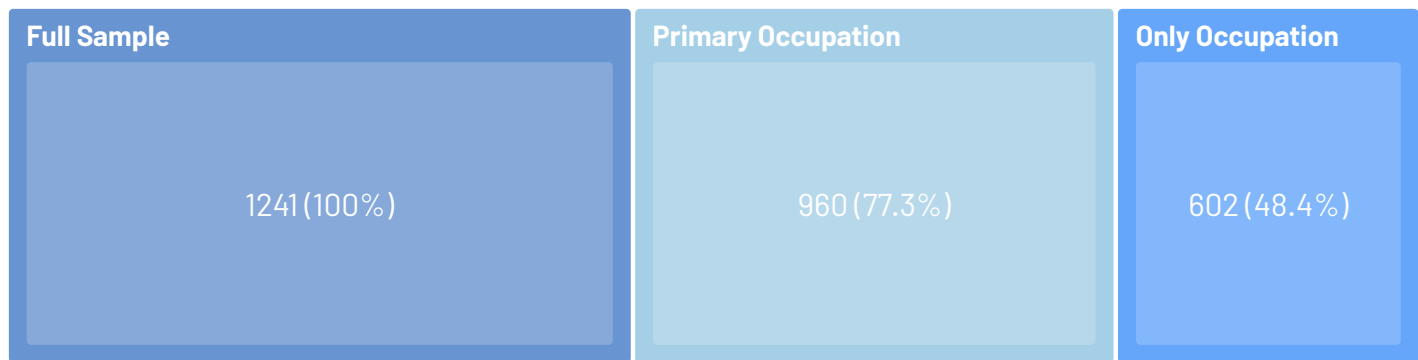


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents across samples



Main occupations

Based on the 960 responses to the survey regarding primary occupation, most visual artists are photographers (22.9%), followed by painters (18.5%) and illustrators (15.1%).

Occupation	%	Occupation	%
Photographer	22.9% (217)	Printmaker	2.5% (24)
Painter	4.5% (175)	Socially Engaged Artist	2.5% (24)
Illustrator	15.1% (143)	Cartoonist	2.0% (19)
Other	14.3% (136)	Video Artist / Filmmaker	2.0% (19)
Multi-media Artist	6.2% (59)	Digital Artist	1.5% (14)
Sculptor	5.5% (52)	Graphic Designer	1.5% (14)
Craftsperson/Maker	4.0% (38)	Installation Artist	1.5% (13)

Figure 3: Table showing distribution of main occupations of primary occupation visual artists

The data reveals that visual artists who do not devote all their time to visual arts (Full Sample and Primary Occupation) frequently engage in non-creative work, with 46.1% of the Full Sample involved in such activities. Additionally, 37.0% of the Full Sample participates in other creative work. For those whose Primary Occupation is visual arts, the engagement in non-creative work drops slightly to 41.5%, and involvement in other creative work is 37.8%. Furthermore, 34.0% of the Full Sample is involved in other work related to visual arts, compared to a higher 41.3% of those for whom visual arts is their Primary Occupation.

This suggests that non-creative work remains an important source of income for many visual artists, regardless of the time they dedicated to their artistic career given that it's not their Only Occupation. However, those whose Primary Occupation is visual arts tend to concentrate more on their main field, as indicated by their higher involvement in work related to visual arts and slightly lower participation in non-creative work.

	Other work related to visual arts	Other creative work	Non-creative work
Full Sample	34.0% (198)	37.0% (216)	46.1% (269)
Primary Occupation	41.3% (144)	37.8% (132)	41.5% (145)

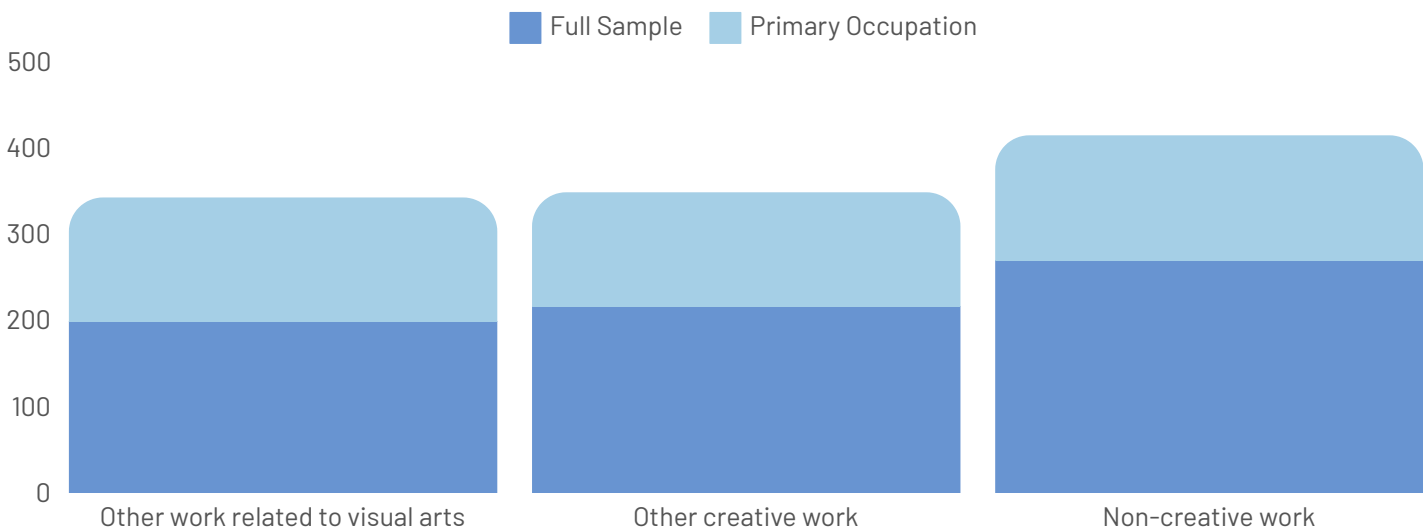


Figure 4: Table and chart showing types of work undertaken when not working as a visual artist

Due to the low-income trajectory associated with visual arts, many artists often need to take on additional work to sustain their overall income.



Demographics

Age

The surveyed population is predominantly middle-aged to older adults, with fewer younger respondents. A large portion (25.2%) of respondents are aged 65 and over. This skew is similar to findings from other reports in this series, and may indicate a bias in participation towards older age groups. However, this trend may also be because many visual artists need to continue working later in life due to a lack of the social safety nets typically available to traditional employees.

	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85 and over
Full Sample	1.0% (10)	7.3% (72)	14.3% (141)	24.3% (240)	27.1% (268)	16.9% (167)	7.4% (73)	0.6% (6)
Primary Occupation	0.6% (5)	7.2% (58)	14.5% (116)	24.1% (193)	27.0% (216)	17.5% (140)	7.1% (57)	0.6% (5)
Only Occupation	0.4% (2)	7.4% (37)	14.9% (75)	22.7% (114)	27.6% (139)	17.9% (90)	7.4% (37)	0.4% (2)
Photographers	0.0% (0)	0.5% (1)	11.1% (21)	23.2% (44)	28.4% (54)	25.8% (49)	9.5% (18)	1.1% (2)
Painters	0.7% (1)	2.7% (4)	8.8% (13)	14.9% (22)	29.1% (43)	29.1% (43)	17.0% (17)	1.4% (2)
Illustrators	0.8% (1)	16.8% (20)	27.7% (33)	26.9% (32)	16.8% (20)	6.7% (8)	0.8% (1)	0.0% (0)

	Under 25	25-34	35-49	50-64	65 and over
UK Labour Force [15]	11.96%	22.70%	33.56%	28.30%	4.45%

Figure 5: Table showing age of respondents

[15] Office for National Statistics, [A05 SA: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by age group \(seasonally adjusted\)](#)

The chart below displays the number of respondents who began to earn as professional visual artists each year from 1950 to 2024. The data shows a gradual increase in the number of professionals entering the field from the 1950s through the 2010s, with noticeable peaks in the years 1990 and 2000.

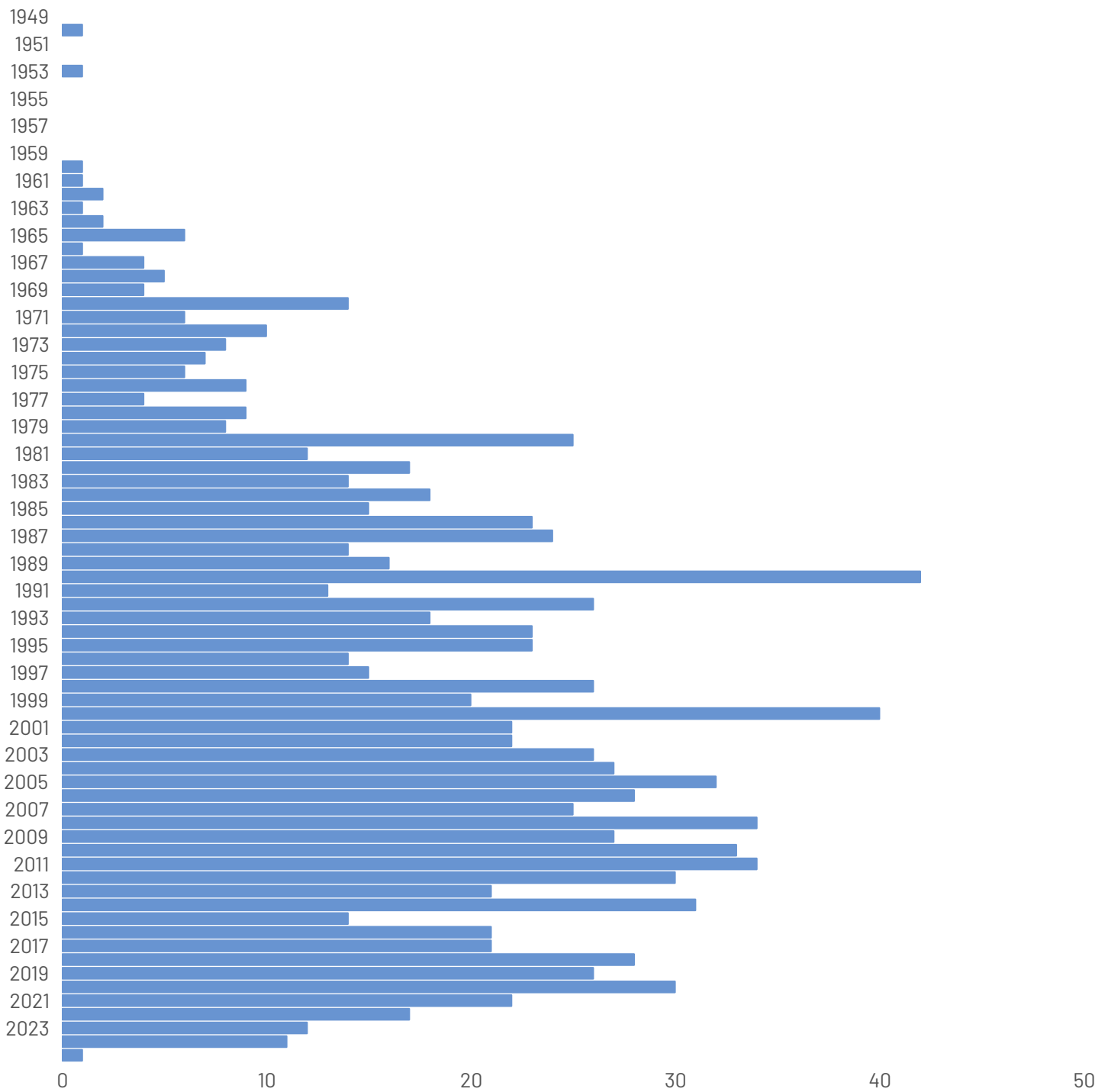


Figure 6: Chart showing starting earning year for Primary Occupation visual artists

Disability

The proportion of individuals with disabilities is lower among visual artists compared to the general UK labour force. In the Primary Occupation sample, only 14.0% reported having a disability, which drops further to 12.0% for those whose Only Occupation is visual arts. By contrast, 24.4% of the UK labour force reports having a disability. This disparity suggests that visual artists with disabilities face additional barriers to entry, or to sustain a career in this field.

	Non-Disability %	Disability %
Full Sample	79.5% (783)	14.3% (141)
Primary Occupation	79.8% (638)	14.0% (112)
Only Occupation	83.2% (417)	12.0% (60)
Photographers	86.8 (164)	8.5% (16)
Painters	81.8% (121)	12.8% (19)
Illustrators	86.6% (103)	7.6% (9)
UK Labour Force [16]	65.6%	24.4%

Figure 7: Table showing disability status of visual artists

Office for National Statistics, [A08: Labour market status of disabled people](#)
[16] Note: This survey asks broadly whether a visual artist ‘considers themselves to be disabled’ and does not use the same qualifications as the Labour Force Survey (which is limited to physical or mental health conditions or illnesses expected to last 12 months or more).

Education

The data on education levels reveals diverse educational backgrounds among visual artists. Notably, 75.4% of the population surveyed hold a degree (43.5%) or above.

	Primary schooling	Secondary schooling	University entry	Diploma	Degree	Masters	PhD	Other
Full Sample	0.3% (3)	5.3% (52)	5.1% (50)	9.3% (92)	42.2% (417)	28.7% (284)	4.5% (44)	3.5% (35)
Primary Occupation	0.1% (1)	5.0% (40)	5.0% (40)	10.0% (80)	42.1% (337)	28.8% (231)	4.5% (36)	3.2% (26)
Only Occupation	0.2% (1)	6.0% (30)	4.8% (24)	11.5% (58)	43.5% (219)	24.7% (124)	3.8% (19)	3.8% (19)
Photographers	0.0% (0)	9.5% (18)	10.6% (20)	19.6% (37)	37.0% (70)	15.9% (30)	3.2% (6)	3.7% (7)
Painters	0.0% (0)	2.0% (3)	7.4% (11)	6.8% (10)	38.5% (57)	29.7% (44)	6.8% (10)	7.4% (11)
Illustrators	0.0% (0)	2.5% (3)	1.7% (2)	7.5% (9)	50.8% (61)	32.5% (39)	2.5% (3)	0.8% (1)
	No qualification [17]	Level 1	Level 2	Apprenticeship	Level 3	Level 4+ [18]	Other	
UK Labour Force [19]	8.94%	9.06%	13.59%	4.65%	19.72%	42.01%	2.03%	

Figure 8: Table showing visual artists' highest level of education attained

[17] See Appendix B for more details.

[18] This includes Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree and postgraduate qualifications, including PhDs.

[19] Office for National Statistics, Workforce qualification levels across England and Wales data: Census 2021

Ethnicity

There are very few Asian (2.2%) and Black (1.6%) visual artists in the sample when compared to their presence in the UK Labour Force at 7.8% and 3.5% respectively. This disparity warrants further investigation into potential barriers or challenges faced by these demographic groups in the visual arts sector. At 85.4%, the representation of White visual artists closely aligns with the UK Labour Force figure of 85.0%, suggesting proportional representation in the sector. At 1.7%, the representation of other ethnic groups among visual artists is comparable to the 2.1% in the general workforce. Visual artists from mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds show notably higher representation (4.2%) compared to the general workforce (1.6%). This could indicate that the visual arts sector provides more opportunities or is particularly attractive to individuals of mixed heritage.

	Asian or Asian British	Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	White	Other ethnic group
Full Sample	2.2% (22)	1.4% (14)	4.1% (41)	86.2% (852)	1.7% (17)
Primary Occupation	2.2% (18)	1.6% (13)	4.2% (34)	85.4% (684)	1.7% (14)
Only Occupation	1.6% (8)	1.2% (6)	4.4% (22)	86.7% (436)	2.0% (10)
Photographers	0.0% (0)	1.1% (2)	3.7% (7)	91.1% (173)	1.6% (3)
Painters	2.0% (3)	1.4% (2)	4.8% (7)	83.7% (123)	2.0% (3)
Illustrators	2.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	3.3% (4)	86.7% (104)	0.8% (1)
UK Labour Force [20]	7.8%	3.5%	1.6%	85.0%	2.1%

Figure 10: Table showing ethnicity of visual artists

[20] Gov.uk, [Ethnicity facts and figures: Employment](#)

Formal training

The majority of respondents across all categories reported having formal training related to their activity as visual artists. Specifically, 76.9% of those for whom it is a Primary Occupation, have received formal training. This mirrors the results of the previous table and suggests that formal training is a common and possibly essential aspect of professional development in this field.

	Yes	No
Full Sample	72.4% (715)	27.6% (272)
Primary Occupation	76.9% (615)	23.1% (185)
Only Occupation	74.8% (376)	25.2% (127)
Photographers	80.7% (96)	19.3% (23)
Painters	83.1% (123)	16.9% (25)
Illustrators	57.1% (108)	42.9% (81)

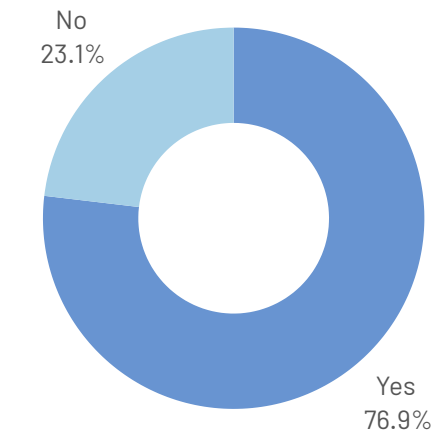


Figure 9: Chart (Primary Occupation only) and table showing visual artists who have undertaken formal training



The majority of respondents have formal training, indicating its importance in professional development.

Household Background

This demographic category follows the Social Mobility Commission’s recommendations for measuring socio-economic backgrounds (also known as ‘class’) which broadly correlate with more or less social and economic privilege. These categorisations are based on the occupation of the respondent’s main household earner when they were aged approximately 14.

More than half of Primary Occupation visual artists come from a professional background, typically associated with the highest levels of social and economic privilege (53.3% - comprising 36.1% from modern professional backgrounds, and 17.2% from senior, middle managerial backgrounds). In comparison to the general UK population, of which only 23.3% come from this background, this indicates that visual arts is a ‘privileged’ profession. This is likewise reflected in lower numbers of visual artists from intermediate backgrounds than in the general population (14.0% of visual artists compared with 54.1% in the general population), but is relatively stable for visual artists from backgrounds with low levels of privilege (25.8% of visual artists compared with 22.6% in the general population).[21]

	Modern and traditional professional	Managers or administrators	Clerical	Technical and craft	Routine, semi-routine manual and service	Long-term unemployed	Small business owners	Other
Full Sample	36.0% (351)	16.5% (161)	6.6% (64)	11.8% (115)	12.1% (118)	2.7% (26)	7.9% (77)	3.7% (36)
Primary Occupation	36.1% (285)	17.2% (136)	6.0% (47)	11.7% (92)	11.4% (90)	2.7% (21)	8.0% (63)	3.9% (31)
Only Occupation	36.6% (181)	18.0% (89)	5.3% (26)	11.9% (59)	9.1% (45)	3.0% (15)	8.5% (42)	4.0% (20)
Photographers	29.6% (56)	23.8% (45)	3.7% (7)	14.8% (28)	14.3% (27)	0.5% (1)	7.4% (14)	2.6% (5)
Painters	39.9% (57)	14.7% (21)	5.6% (8)	8.4% (12)	10.5% (15)	2.8% (4)	11.9% (17)	4.2% (6)
Illustrators	37.6% (44)	17.1% (20)	6.8% (8)	9.4% (11)	9.4% (11)	4.3% (5)	7.7% (9)	2.6% (3)

Figure 11: Table showing household background of visual artists

[21] Data is only available for England and Wales, noting also that census data groups the categories used above in broader terms (professional, intermediate and lower) for reporting purposes.

Despite the finding that visual art is a ‘privileged’ profession, the majority of respondents do not have parents or extended family members in the industry. Specifically, 79.7% of those for whom visual arts their Primary Occupation report not having family connections in the industry. This suggests that the (privileged) socio-economic background of a visual artist can act as a ‘safety net’ to allow entry into, and sustainability of, their career, without necessarily being a nepotistic profession per se.

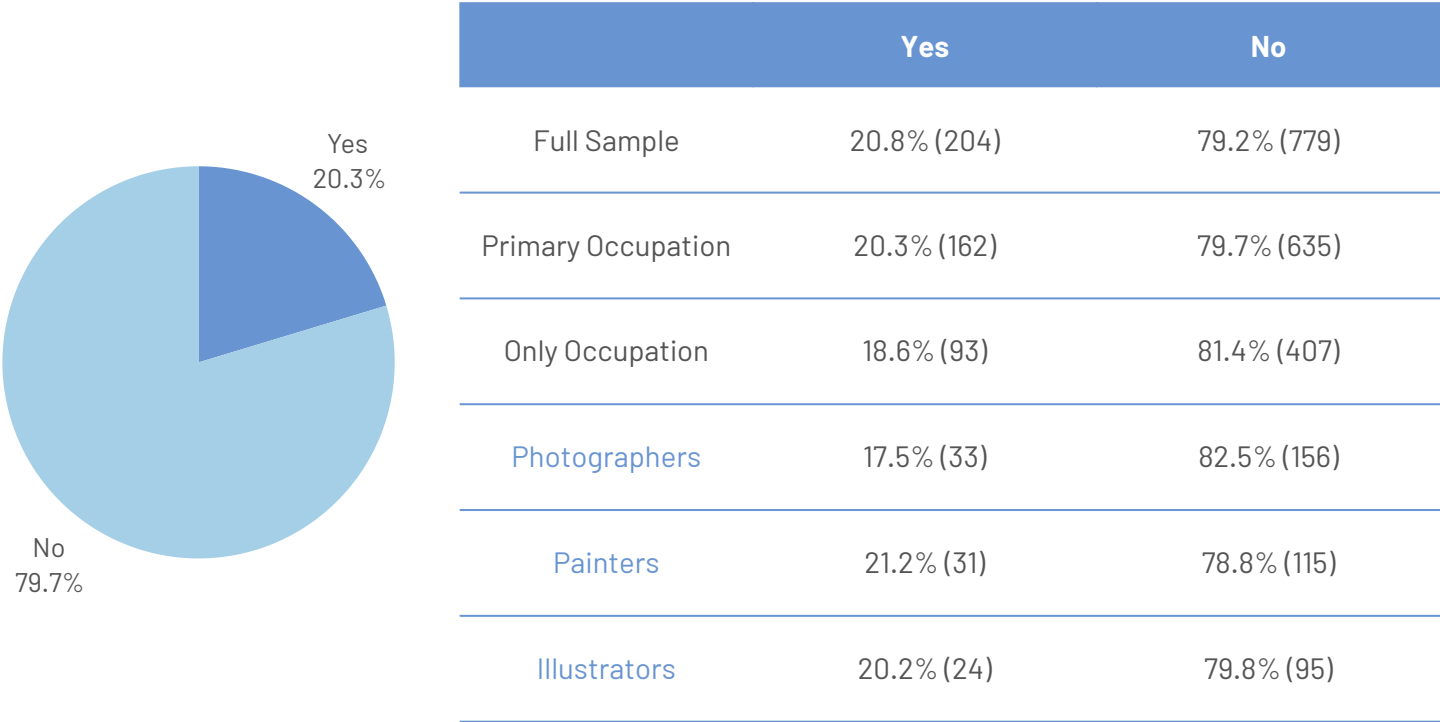


Figure 13: Chart (Primary Occupation only) and table showing visual artists with extended family members in the industry

While visual artists from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds may have an economic edge in sustaining a career in the field, the profession itself is not inherently nepotistic.



Gender

There are no large disparities in the presence of men and women in the visual arts sector for the Primary Occupation sample. However, for visual artists in the Only Occupation sample, the presence of men increases to 50.9% as opposed to 43.5% of women. Visual artists who neither identify as men nor women have a higher representation (2.4% in the Primary Occupation sample) than their share in the UK population (0.5%). Notably, 75.7% of Photographers are men while 60.8% of Illustrators are women.

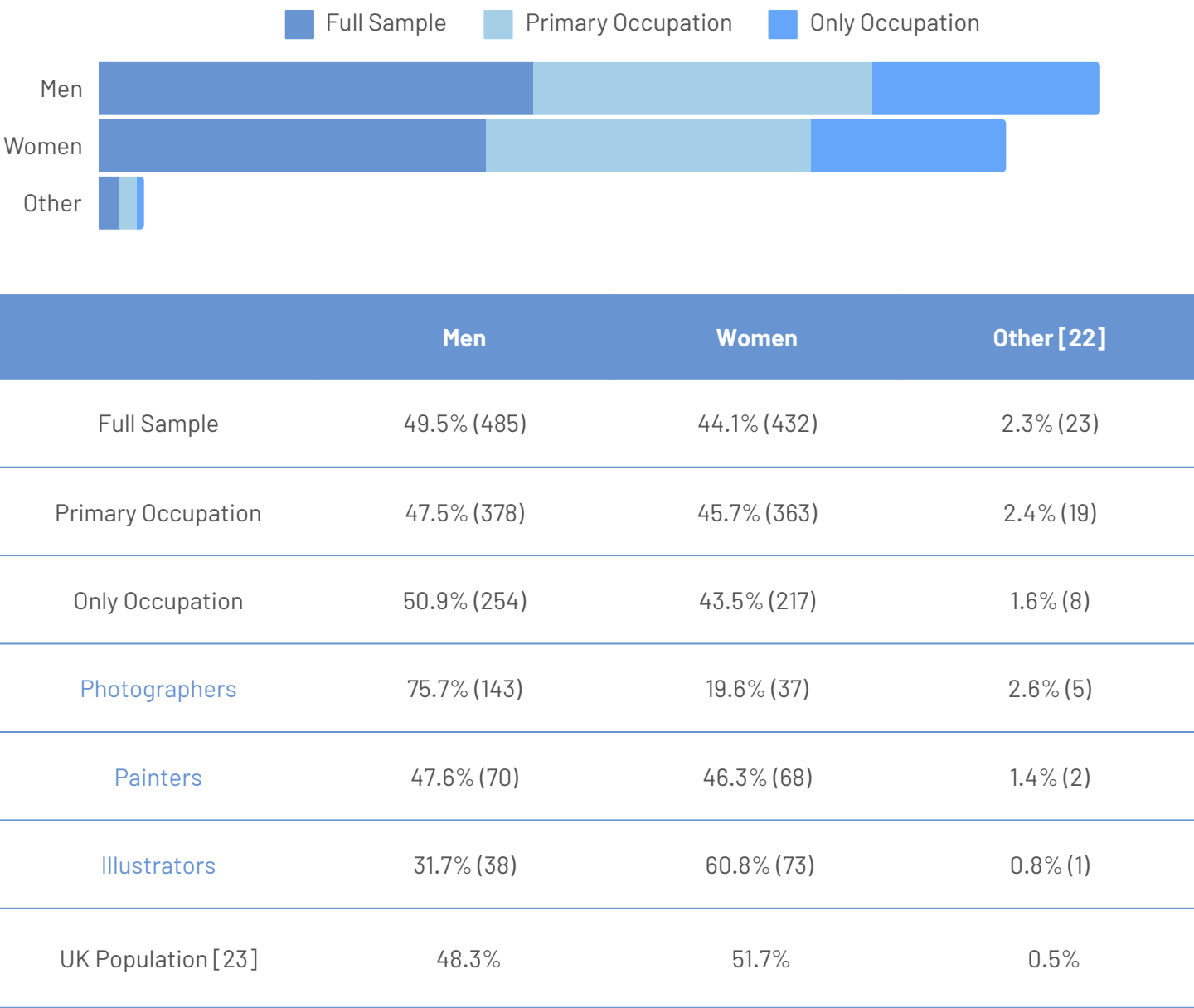


Figure 14: Chart and table showing visual artists' gender

[22] Due to very low numbers of respondents in other gender categories, including trans* and non-binary visual artists, these categories were aggregated under a single heading for the purposes of statistical analysis.

[23] Office for National Statistics, [Gender identity \(four categories\) by sex, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Location

Visual artists are concentrated in London, with 22.3% of respondents being based in the UK capital, exceeding London's 17.79% share of the UK Labour Force. South East and South West count 16.3% and 11.3% respectively, also noticeably exceeding their share of the UK Labour Force. This highlights a centralised industry, with London and the South of England serving as the dominant hub, as anticipated in a creative and cultural sector. As a result, most regions outside London show various degrees of underrepresentation compared to their share of the UK Labour Force. The regional distribution patterns remain largely consistent whether considering all visual artists, those who view it as their Primary Occupation, or those for whom it is their Only Occupation.



Figure 15: Map showing distribution of Primary Occupation visual artists by location

	England								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire and The Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East	London	South East	South West
Full Sample	4.0% (39)	5.1% (50)	5.0% (49)	4.1% (40)	5.1% (50)	5.5% (54)	21.3% (209)	15.0% (147)	10.8% (106)
Primary Occupation	3.7% (29)	4.5% (36)	4.8% (38)	3.9% (31)	4.7% (37)	5.3% (42)	22.3% (177)	16.3% (129)	11.3% (90)
Only Occupation	2.4% (12)	4.4% (22)	4.4% (22)	3.8% (19)	6.0% (30)	5.2% (26)	21.3% (106)	17.3% (86)	11.9% (59)
Photographers	3.2% (6)	5.9% (11)	4.8% (9)	4.3% (8)	3.2% (6)	6.4% (12)	20.3% (38)	15.0% (28)	10.7% (20)
Painters	2.7% (4)	2.7% (4)	2.1% (3)	2.1% (3)	4.1% (6)	4.1% (6)	19.9% (29)	17.1% (25)	13.0% (19)
Illustrators	3.4% (4)	5.0% (6)	7.6% (9)	5.0% (6)	3.4% (4)	5.9% (7)	16.8% (20)	21.0% (25)	14.3% (17)
UK Labour Force	3.31%	10.54%	7.70%	6.76%	8.29%	8.69%	17.79%	13.90%	8.48%
	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Outside of UK	Figure 16: Table showing distribution of visual artists by location				
Full Sample	4.4% (43)	9.8% (96)	1.5% (15)	8.4% (82)					
Primary Occupation	4.8% (38)	9.1% (72)	1.1% (9)	8.2% (65)					
Only Occupation	4.2% (21)	8.9% (44)	1.0% (5)	9.1% (45)					
Photographers	6.4% (12)	5.9% (11)	0.5% (1)	13.4% (25)					
Painters	2.1% (3)	19.9% (29)	2.1% (3)	8.2% (12)					
Illustrators	4.2% (5)	5.0% (6)	0.8% (1)	7.6% (9)					
UK Labour Force [24]	4.14%	7.85%	2.53%	N/A	[24] Office for National Statistics, Labour market overview, UK: June 2024				

Sexual orientation

There are notable differences in sexual orientation among visual artists compared to the general UK population. While heterosexual individuals form the majority (77.5%) of visual artists in the Primary Occupation sample, this is lower than their representation in the UK population (89.4%). A higher LGBT+ representation in the visual arts sector is evident when compared to the general UK population. Specifically, 4.8% of visual artists identify as gay or lesbian, compared to 1.5% in the UK population; 5.9% identify as bisexual, versus 1.3% in the general population; 2.5% of visual artists identify with other sexual orientations, compared to 0.3% in the UK population. These higher representations may suggest that the visual arts sector is more accessible for LGBT+ individuals or that these communities are particularly drawn to this sector.

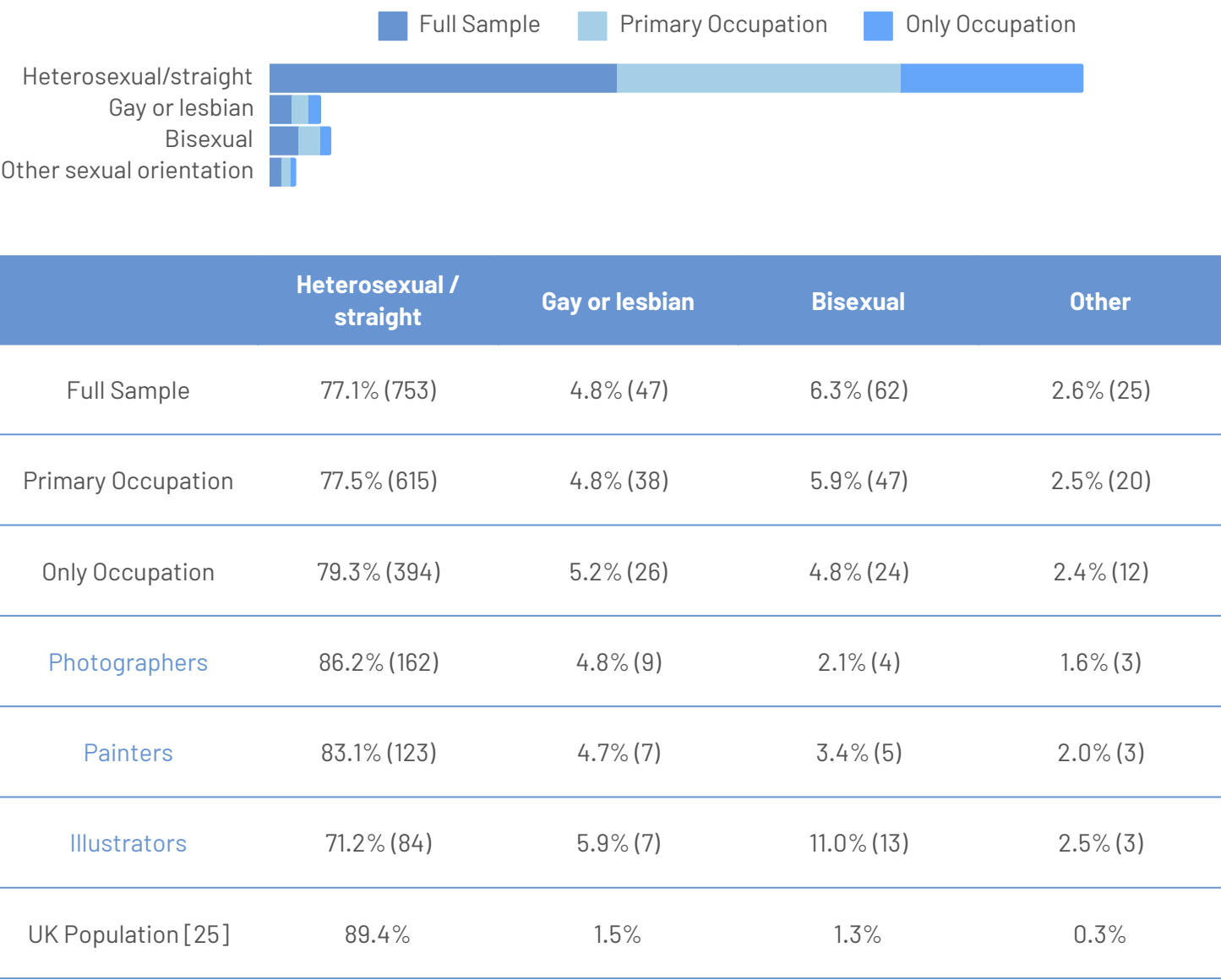


Figure 17: Chart and table showing distribution of visual artists by sexual orientation

[25] Office for National Statistics, [Sexual orientation, further personal characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

Income

Overview

In respect of their self-employed earnings as a visual artist, the Primary Occupation and the Only Occupation samples report median earnings of £12,500 per annum before tax. This indicates that income from visual arts alone, even where this constitutes 50% or more of a visual artist working time, cannot sustain an income commensurate with a typical median wage in the UK (£34,963 in 2023), nor indeed a minimum wage (assuming a 40 hour work-week - £23,795). For Primary Occupation visual artists, and in regard to individual median earnings, 81.0% earned below the national median wage (£34,963) and 64.9% below the minimum wage (£23,795).

Due to this low income trajectory, earnings from visual arts are supplemented by earnings from other non-creative works, bringing the median individual income to £17,500, with a more substantial supplement in income from other members of the household (median household income across all samples is £37,500).

When compared with our 2011 report, the data shows a large decline in both median and mean earnings from 2011 to 2023. In real terms, between 2010 and 2023, individual median income dropped by 48.8%, while median self-employed earnings experienced a decrease of 47.5% (23.9% and 39.9% unadjusted for inflation). However, the income distribution in 2022/2023 is less skewed, meaning that income disparity among visual artists was reduced.

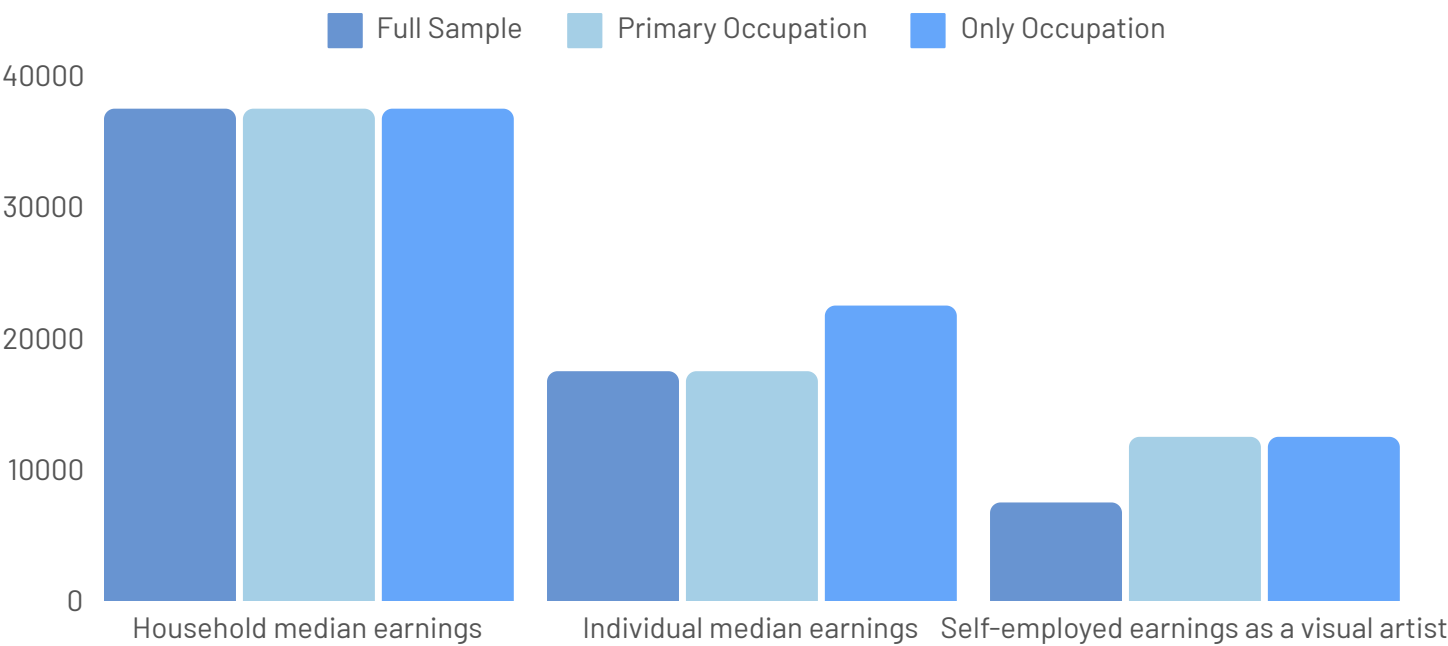


Figure 18: Typical (median) earnings of visual artists across all samples

	Household Median Earnings	Household Mean Earnings	Observations	Gini coefficient [26]
Full Sample	37,500	44,357	987	0.42
Primary Occupation	37,500	44,103	789	0.41
Only Occupation	37,500	47,014	494	0.41
Photographers	32,500	41,527	185	0.39
Painters	37,500	45,576	139	0.43
Illustrators	45,000	49,333	120	0.37

	Individual Median Earnings	Individual Mean Earnings	Observations	Gini Coefficient
Full Sample	17,500	24,336	985	0.46
Primary Occupation	17,500	23,612	797	0.45
Photographers	17,500	23,715	184	0.44
Painters	17,500	26,430	143	0.51
Illustrators	17,500	21,833	124	0.43

	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist	Mean Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist	Observations	Gini Coefficient
Full Sample	7,500	15,001	965	0.61
Primary Occupation	12,500	16,800	781	0.55
Only Occupation	12,500	20,501	490	0.51
Photographers	12,500	18,727	181	0.51
Painters	7,500	17,893	140	0.61
Illustrators	12,500	19,639	119	0.49

Figure 19: Overview of income across all samples

The Gini coefficient measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate higher inequality. A value of 0 indicates perfect equality: everyone has the same income. A value of 1 indicates perfect inequality, where one person receives all the income, and everyone else receives nothing.

2011	Household Median Earnings	Household Mean Earnings	Gini coefficient
Full Sample	34,000	57,554	0.56
Primary Occupation[27]	35,000	61,112	0.57
Main-Income Artist[28]	35,000	47,903	0.40
Photographers	35,000	77,244	-
Painters	32,000	43,315	-
Illustrators	33,540	43,608	-
2011	Individual Median Earnings	Individual Mean Earnings	Gini Coefficient
Full Sample	22,000	36,932	0.54
Primary Occupation	23,000	39,268	0.55
Photographers	25,000	42,655	-
Painters	18,006	36,067	-
Illustrators	22,420	30,537	-
2011	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist	Mean Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist	Gini Coefficient
Full Sample	12,000	22,994	0.59
Primary Occupation	16,000	26,066	0.55
Main-Income Artist	20,000	28,710	0.43
Photographers	15,000	25,931	-
Painters	10,000	19,987	-
Illustrators	15,723	21,280	-

Figure 20: Overview of income across all samples in the 2011 report

[27] Called 'Professional artist' in the 2011 report, with the same definition of 50% or more of their time allocated to being a visual creator.

[28] In the 2011 report, the term 'Main-income artist' was used rather than 'Only occupation'. Main income was defined as those who earn 50% or more of their total individual income from visual creation. This is a different measure.

Income distribution

As anticipated, the visual artists market is 'winner-takes-all', with a highly unequal distribution of income between superstar earners, who account for a disproportionately larger 'slice' of the overall earnings 'pie' (net worth), versus the majority of 'typical' earning visual artists, who earn far lower. Earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists have a Gini coefficient of 0.55, rising to 0.61 in the Full Sample. This is a far higher coefficient than in the general UK population, at 0.35, indicating a highly skewed distribution of income in the visual art sector.[29] This is not an unexpected finding as this distribution is typical of cultural markets, where network effects mean that established names command more interest, and resultantly, more income.

The Lorenz curves on the following page visualise the distribution of wealth across visual artists where the x axis represents the share of visual artists, ordered from lowest to highest income, and the y axis represents the cumulative share of income earned. When comparing the Lorenz curves between visual artists' earning sources and the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS), the difference in income distribution becomes noticeably apparent. The LFS Lorenz curve lies much closer to the line of equality, reflecting a more equitable distribution of income across the UK population. In contrast, the median household, individual and visual artists' earnings deviate more markedly from the line of equality, particularly the earnings as visual artists show a substantial concentration of income among a smaller proportion of the population. Even the Lorenz curve of the household earnings demonstrates greater inequality than the LFS curve, although it is closer in comparison.

While the visual arts market continues to exhibit a "winner-takes-all" dynamic, the income disparity among visual artists has decreased since our 2011 report.



[29] Office for National Statistics, [Quarterly Labour Force Survey, January - March, 2023](#).

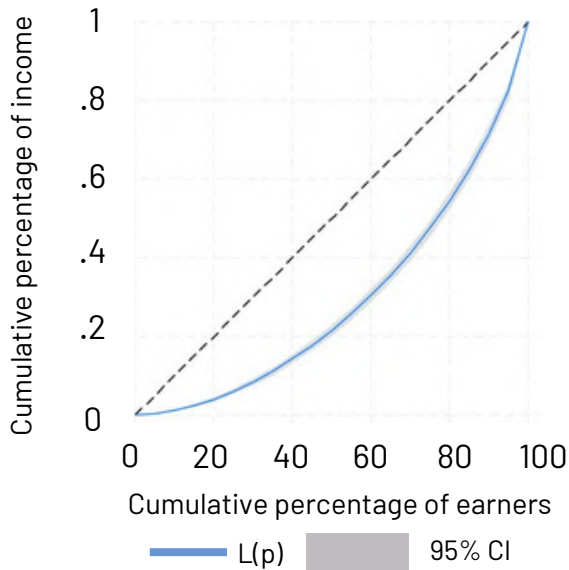


Figure 21: Lorenz curve showing distribution of income for Household earnings

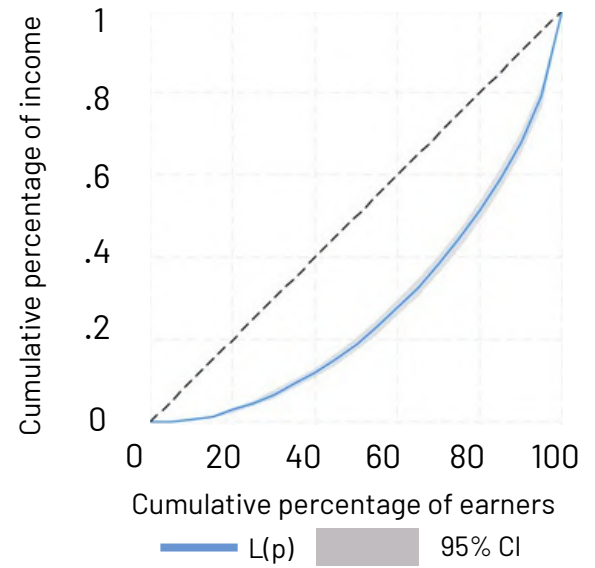


Figure 22: Lorenz curve showing distribution of income for Individual median earnings

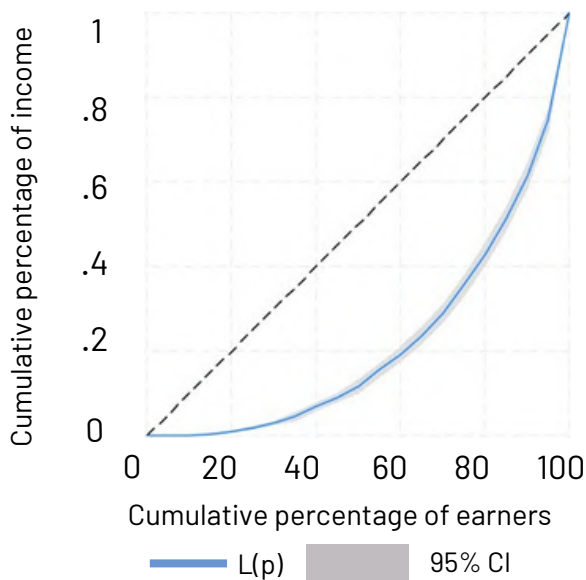


Figure 23: Lorenz curve showing distribution of income for earnings as a visual artist

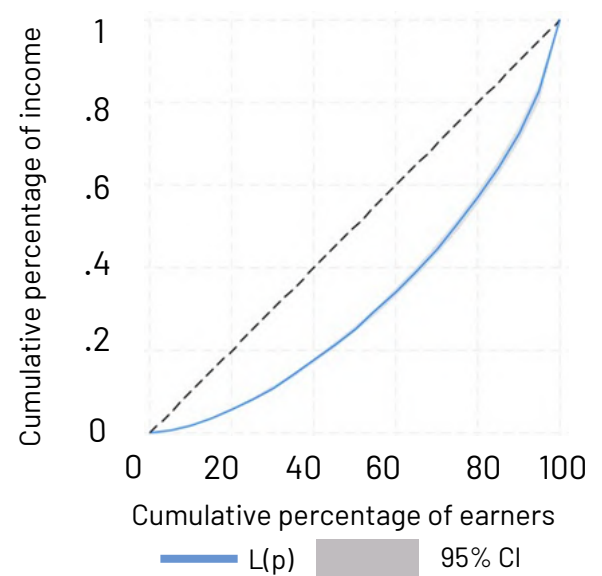


Figure 24: Lorenz curve showing distribution of income for UK labour force median earnings [30]

This Lorenz curve has been depicted from the dataset of the Labour Force Survey (Data set: 9097 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, [30] April - June, 2023) using the Gross weekly pay variable for all the employed population. The sample contains 6,664 observations which reports a median gross weekly pay 558.

Sources of earnings

Categories of work/sales channels

Across all samples, private orders are considered the most important source of earnings for visual artists. This is followed by print and online publications, and traditional art markets. As anticipated, there are differences in perceptions of importance at occupational levels: for example, photographers’ most important source of income is image banks, whereas for illustrators, print and online publications are considered more important. The ‘other’ category includes: social media, teaching related to visual arts, and funded projects.

Categories of work	Full Sample	Primary Occupation	Only Occupation	Photographers	Painters	Illustrators
Private Orders	539	455	295	123	115	79
Traditional Art Markets	385	337	211	30	126	35
Print and Online Publications	408	324	209	153	26	112
Personal Website/Membership Platforms	288	253	168	49	63	39
Licensing	282	238	168	110	4	2
Publicly Funded Museums, Galleries or Organisations	288	238	135	44	27	23
Image Banks and Picture Libraries	267	207	137	186	15	12
Live Events	209	174	110	59	18	27
Other	203	172	120	36	26	28
Merchandise/Shops	179	156	91	30	20	42
Online Marketplace	182	151	92	36	26	49
Film, TV and Interactive Media	144	115	81	57	12	25

Figure 25: Table showing categories of work rated most important to visual artists based on earnings

Most visual artists determine the price of their works based on the cost of their materials/labour. This varies at occupational level, with photographers and illustrators being more dependent on the client’s budget, and painters being more dependent on pricing set by others.

	Cost of materials / labour	Client or organisational budget	Approved rates (according to industry rates)	Pricing set by others	Other
Full Sample	44.3% (438)	37.9% (375)	25.5% (252)	35.1% (347)	17.8% (176)
Primary Occupation	45.22% (365)	39.7% (321)	5.9% (47)	33.4% (270)	18.6% (150)
Only Occupation	42.4% (214)	39.0% (199)	24.7% (126)	35.5% (171)	18.6% (95)
Photographers	36.3% (69)	45.3% (86)	22.1% (42)	37.9% (72)	8.4% (16)
Painters	36.5% (54)	12.2% (18)	10.1% (15)	41.9% (62)	32.4% (48)
Illustrators	37.9% (47)	64.5% (80)	31.5% (39)	29.8% (37)	16.9% (21)

Figure 26: “How do you determine the pricing for your artwork?”

Social media platforms

Instagram is the most popular platform for visual artists, with 80.5% of respondents using it, followed by Facebook (50.5%) and LinkedIn (42.2%). X (formerly Twitter) is used by 25.9%, while YouTube and Pinterest have lower engagement at 17.2% and 11.9%, respectively. Behance (6.4%) and TikTok (4.4%) are the least used. Notably, 11.3% of respondents do not use any social media platforms, indicating a large portion of artists who may rely on other forms of networking and promotion.

Social Media Usage	Instagram	Facebook	LinkedIn	X (Twitter)	YouTube
Full Sample	76.4% (753)	48.1% (474)	40.2% (396)	24.9% (245)	16.6% (164)
Primary Occupation	80.5% (642)	50.5% (403)	42.2% (337)	25.9% (207)	17.2% (137)
Only Occupation	81.8% (410)	52.3% (262)	45.1% (226)	27.7% (139)	17.6% (88)
Photographers	71.8% (135)	50.0% (94)	48.4% (91)	28.7% (54)	13.8% (26)
Painters	81.8% (121)	57.4% (85)	36.5% (54)	16.2% (24)	21.6% (32)
Illustrators	85.8% (103)	42.5% (51)	46.7% (56)	38.3% (46)	11.7% (14)
	Pinterest	Behance	TikTok	Other	None
Full Sample	10.7% (105)	5.8% (57)	4.0% (39)	6.3% (62)	13.7% (135)
Primary Occupation	11.9% (95)	6.4% (51)	4.4% (35)	6.3% (50)	11.3% (50)
Only Occupation	11.8% (59)	7.8% (39)	4.8% (24)	6.8% (34)	10.2% (51)
Photographers	8.0% (15)	5.9% (11)	2.7% (5)	4.8% (9)	16.0% (30)
Painters	10.1% (15)	3.4% (5)	6.8% (10)	3.4% (5)	8.8% (13)
Illustrators	26.7% (32)	22.5% (27)	7.5% (9)	15.8% (19)	10.8% (13)

Figure 27: "Which social media platforms do you use as part of your professional practice?"

Respondents who use social media platforms generate 19.4% of their income from these sources. This income comes from direct monetisation tools, brand partnerships, fan donations or subscriptions, private client orders made through social media, among others.

Income from social media	%
Full Sample	19.03% (578)
Primary Occupation	19.40% (499)
Only Occupation	18.97% (329)
Photographers	15.18% (137)
Painters	17.93% (116)
Illustrators	21.12% (98)

Figure 28: “Approximately, what portion of your income comes through social media?”

Restriction from digital platform	Yes	No
Full Sample	12.4% (121)	87.6% (857)
Primary Occupation	13.0% (103)	87.0% (691)
Only Occupation	13.8% (69)	86.2% (430)
Photographers	13.2% (25)	86.8% (164)
Painters	14.3% (21)	85.7% (126)
Illustrators	11.7% (14)	88.3% (106)

Figure 29: “Have you ever faced restrictions or penalties from a digital platform for sharing your artwork?”

Furthermore, the vast majority of visual artists - 87% of the Primary Occupation sample - have not faced restrictions or penalties from digital platforms when sharing their artwork. This trend is consistent across different subgroups, with only a small percentage, ranging from 11.7% to 14.3%, reporting any issues. Nonetheless, this suggests that a - not inappreciable - minority of visual artists are curtailed from monetisation potential through regulation of their artistic content.

Income from secondary use/re-licensing

For the Primary Occupation sample, 24.9% of respondents received money from secondary use or re-licensing in the last year. Photographers (41.0%) and illustrators (40.8%) are the most likely to receive income from secondary use.

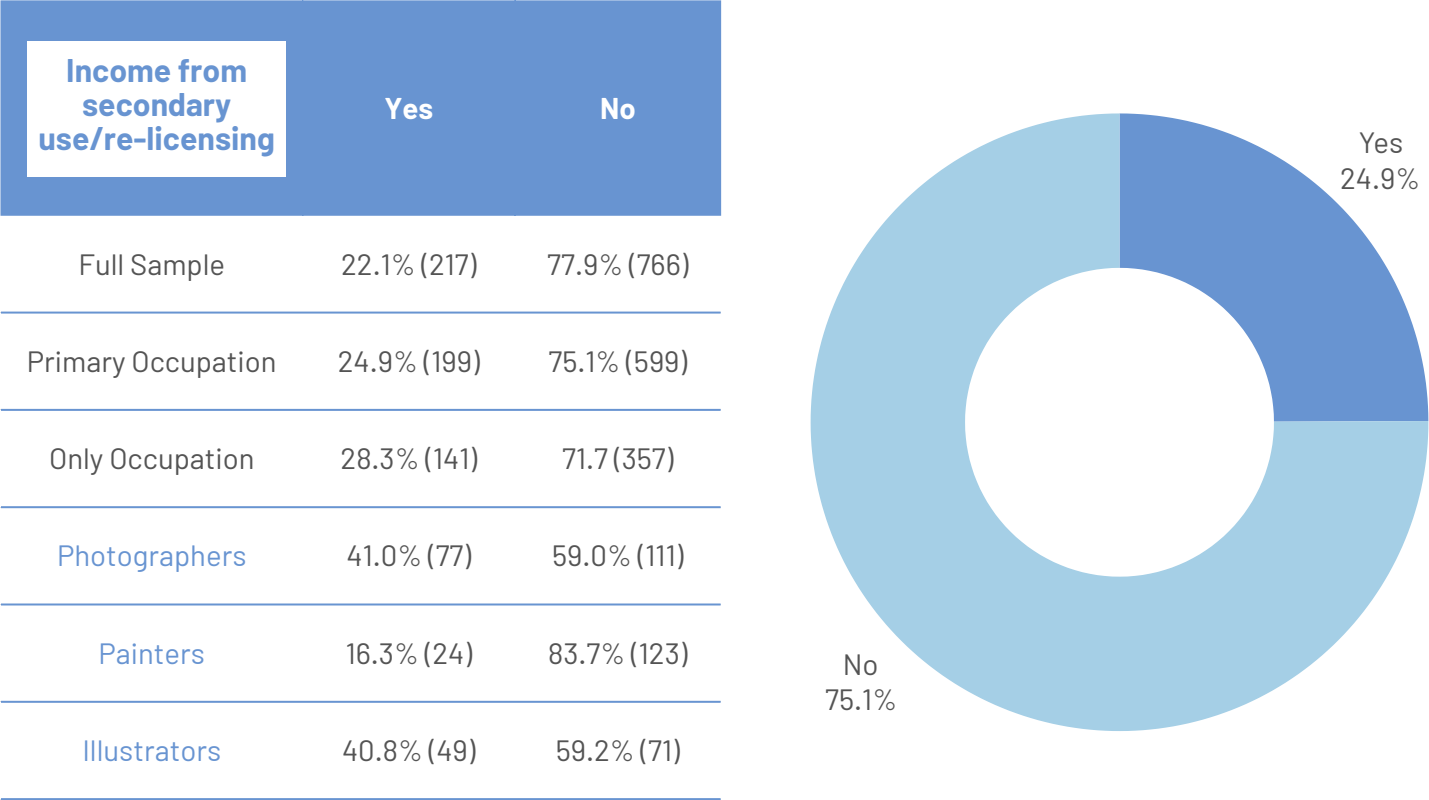


Figure 30: Chart (Primary Occupation only) and table showing answers to the question: “During the last year, did you receive money from secondary use/re-licensing?”



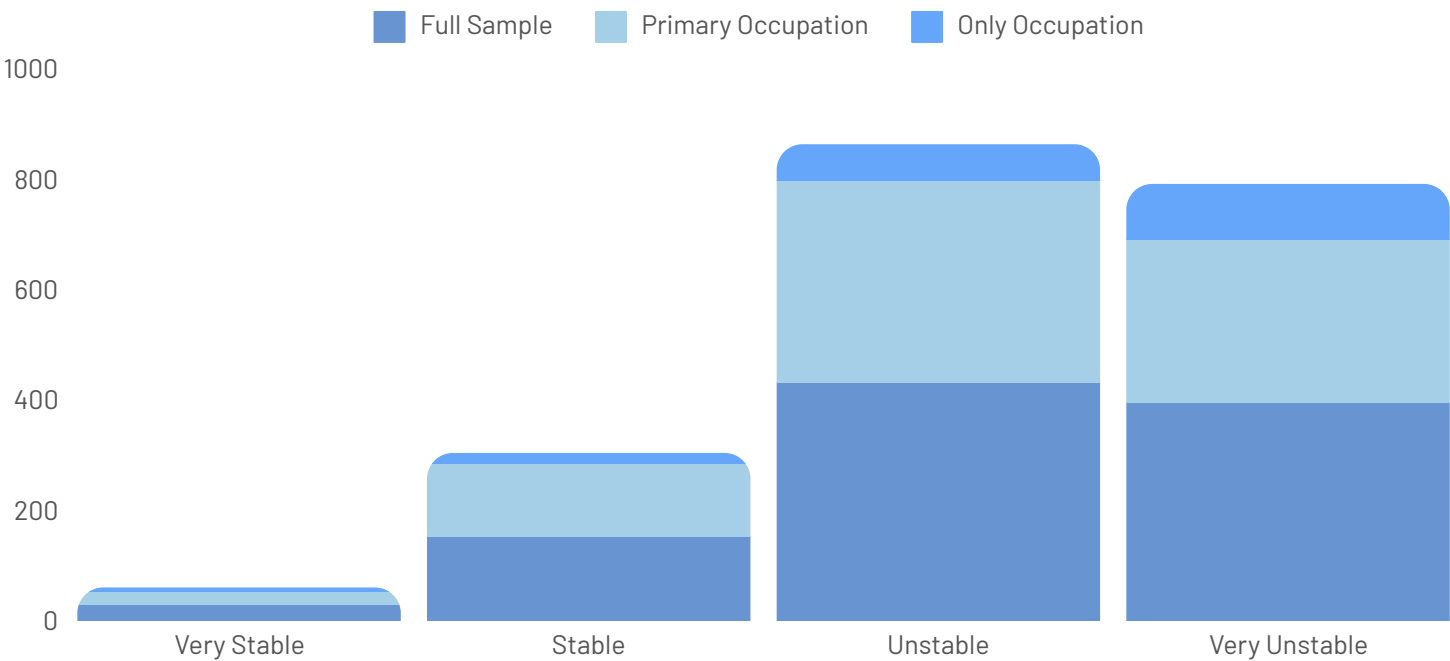
Over 80% of respondents use social media as part of their professional practice, generating approximately 20% of their income from these platforms.

Stability of Earnings as a Visual Artist

For the Primary Occupation sample, 44.9% of respondents report their earnings as "Unstable," and 36.1% as "Very Unstable," indicating that over 80% experience heightened income instability. Only 2.8% describe their earnings as "Very Stable," with 16.3% reporting "Stable" income. Illustrators have the highest percentage of "Stable" income (22.6%).

Stability of earnings	Very Stable	Stable	Unstable	Very Unstable
Full Sample	3.0% (30)	15.0% (152)	42.8% (432)	39.2 (396)
Primary Occupation	2.8% (23)	16.3% (133)	44.9% (367)	36.1% (295)
Only Occupation	3.6% (7)	9.9% (19)	33.9% (65)	52.6 (101)
Photographers	1.6% (3)	18.1% (35)	59.1% (114)	21.2% (41)
Painters	2.7% (4)	10.7% (16)	41.6% (62)	45.0% (67)
Illustrators	3.2% (4)	22.6% (28)	46.0% (57)	28.2% (35)

Figure 31: Chart and Table "How stable are your earnings as a visual artist from month to month?"



Factors affecting earnings

Median earnings by demographic characteristics

In respect of their self-employed earnings, men earn a median income of £12,500, which is 40% more than the £7,500 earned by women and visual artists who identify neither as men or women. Those who preferred not to disclose their gender reported median earnings of £10,000, which is 20% less than men's earnings but higher than women's.

Gender	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
Men	22,500 (363)	12,500 (358)
Women	17,500 (350)	7,500 (346)
Other	17,500 (19)	7,500 (19)
Prefer not to say [31]	15,000 (16)	10,000 (16)

Figure 32: Table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by gender

There is a clear gender pay gap, with women and other genders typically earning 40% less (£7,500) compared to men (£12,500) from their self-employed earnings as a visual artist.



[31] As norms and recognition of changing gender identities continue to develop respondents who selected "prefer not to say" are included for this demographic variable, ensuring that their responses are represented alongside those of other gender groups.

Heterosexual/Straight artists have the highest median self-employed earnings at £12,500. Gay or Lesbian artists earn 20% less, with a median of £10,000. Both Bisexual artists and those of "Other Sexual Orientation" earn £7,500, which is 40% less than Heterosexual/Straight artists.

Sexual Orientation	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
Bisexual	17,500 (46)	7,500 (45)
Gay or lesbian	17,500 (38)	10,000 (36)
Heterosexual/straight	17,500 (592)	12,500 (586)
Other sexual orientation	12,500 (19)	7,500 (19)

Figure 33: Table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by sexual orientation

Artists without disabilities have median self-employed earnings of £12,500, which is far higher compared to the £3,750 earned by artists with disabilities (70% less). This stark difference highlights the financial challenges that artists with disabilities face within the visual arts sector.

Disability Status	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
Non-Disabled	22,500 (613)	12,500 (609)
Disabled	12,500 (107)	3,750 (101)

Figure 34: Table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by disability status

There are notable earning disparities among visual artists from different ethnic backgrounds. White artists and those from Other ethnic groups have the highest median self-employed earnings, both at £12,500. In contrast, Asian or Asian British artists report the lowest self-employed earnings at £5,625, despite having the highest individual median earnings overall. Artists from Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African backgrounds, as well as those from Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, both have median self-employed earnings of £7,500.

Ethnicity	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
Asian or Asian British	20,000 (18)	5,625 (16)
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	12,500 (13)	7,500 (12)
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	17,500 (33)	7,500 (33)
White	17,500 (13)	12,500 (13)
Other ethnic group	17,500 (655)	12,500 (652)

Figure 35: Table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by ethnicity



There are notable earning disparities among visual artists from different ethnic backgrounds.

Artists aged 35-54 earn the highest median self-employed income of £12,500. By contrast, younger artists under 25 have the lowest median earnings at £1,750, highlighting the challenges they may face in establishing themselves in the industry. Interestingly, older artists (75-84) also report relatively higher earnings of £12,500, suggesting that experience and reputation might play a role in maintaining income levels later in life. However, earnings drop for those 85 and over.

Age Group	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
Under 25	7,500 (5)	1,750 (5)
25-34	17,500 (57)	12,500 (54)
35-44	22,500 (112)	12,500 (111)
45-54	22,500 (187)	12,500 (187)
55-64	17,500 (205)	7,500 (204)
65-74	17,500 (135)	7,500 (131)
75-84	17,500 (47)	12,500 (48)
85 and over	22,500 (5)	1,250 (4)

Figure 36: Table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by age



Whilst the majority of visual artists have a degree level qualification or higher, earnings are not improved by having qualifications higher than this (visual artists with masters degrees or PhD's typically earn less at £7,500 per annum). This is a different trajectory from other findings from previous surveys of other creators' markets, where PhDs tend to be associated with the highest levels of income.

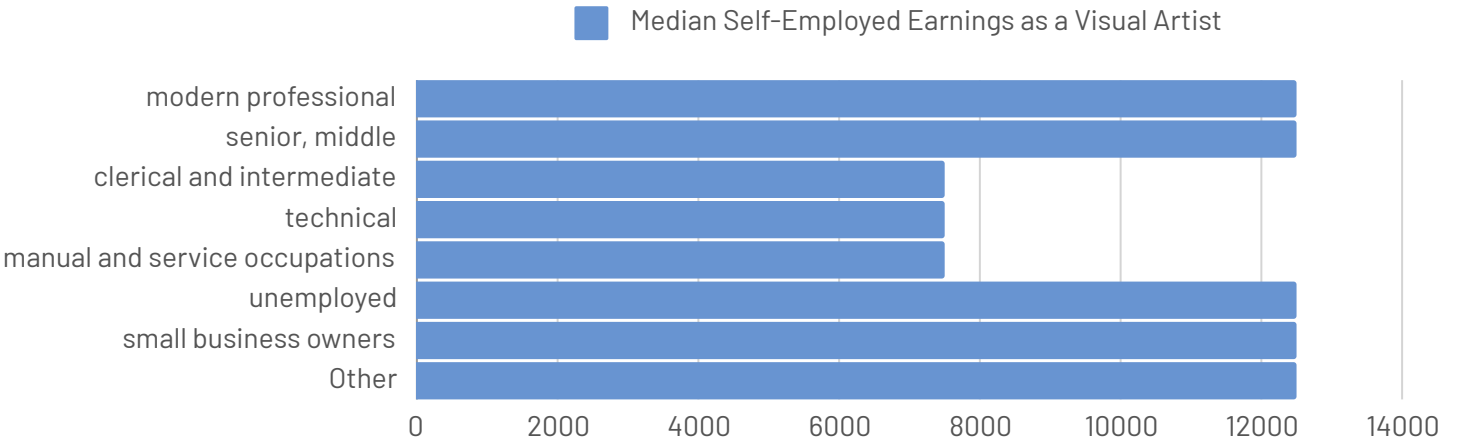
Education Level	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
Primary schooling	27,500 (1)	27,500 (1)
Secondary schooling	22,500 (39)	17,500 (37)
University entry	17,500 (37)	3,750 (37)
Diploma	17,500 (74)	12,500 (73)
Degree	17,500 (321)	12,500 (317)
Masters	17,500 (220)	7,500 (220)
PhD	17,500 (34)	7,500 (34)
Other	17,500 (25)	12,500 (24)

Figure 37: Table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by highest level of education attained

Whilst the majority of visual artists have a degree level qualification or higher, earnings are not improved by having qualifications higher.



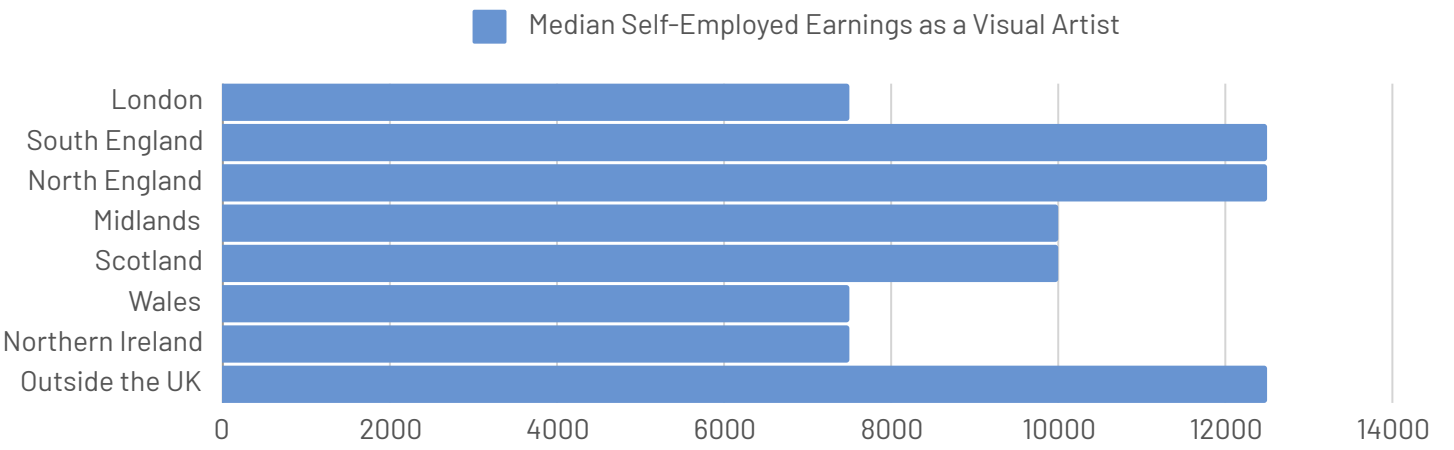
Visual artists from privileged socio-economic backgrounds earn almost double that of less privileged visual artists in respect of their self-employed earnings (typically £12,500 from backgrounds with higher privilege, versus £7,500 for less privileged backgrounds).



Household Background	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
modern professional	17,500 (276)	12,500 (273)
senior, middle or junior managers	22,500 (129)	12,500 (127)
clerical and intermediate	17,500 (46)	7,500 (47)
technical	17,500 (87)	7,500 (86)
manual and service occupations	12,500 (86)	7,500 (83)
unemployed	17,500 (21)	7,500 (20)
small business owners	22,500 (57)	12,500 (57)
Other	17,500 (29)	12,500 (28)

Figure 38: Chart and table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by household background

Despite the concentration of visual artists in London, this is not the category associated with the highest levels of self-employed earnings for visual artists - rather, it is the lowest of all geographic areas surveyed (typically £7,500 per year). Instead, visual artists in the South of England, North of England, and outside of the UK earn the highest overall, at £12,500 per annum.



Location	Individual Median Earnings	Median Self-Employed Earnings as a Visual Artist
London	22,500 (164)	7,500 (165)
South England	17,500 (212)	12,500 (209)
North England	17,500 (63)	12,500 (64)
Midlands	17,500 (136)	10,000 (132)
Scotland	12,500 (69)	10,000 (68)
Wales	12,500 (38)	7,500 (37)
Northern Ireland	12,500 (9)	7,500 (9)
Outside the UK	17,500 (62)	12,500 (60)

Figure 39: Chart and table showing earnings of Primary Occupation visual artists by location

Professional context

Advice and representation

Most Primary Occupation visual artists (63.9%) do not have a representative. This rate increases for photographers (79.5%) but decreases for illustrators (48.8%) and painters (42.2%), suggesting that photographers tend to work more independently.

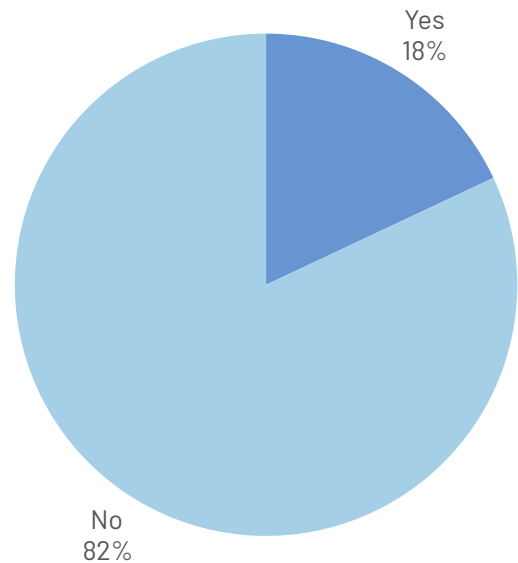
"Have you had a representative in the last 5 years?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	31.0% (312)	69.0% (693)
Primary Occupation	36.1% (293)	63.9% (519)
Only Occupation	40.6% (208)	59.4% (304)
Photographers	20.5% (39)	79.5% (151)
Painters	57.8% (85)	42.2% (62)
Illustrators	51.2% (63)	48.8% (60)

Figure 40: Table showing responses to the question: "Have you had an agent in the last 5 years?"

Most Primary Occupation visual artists have not taken legal or professional advice before signing a contract (82%). There is a notable difference for illustrators, as only 35.5% of them have taken legal or professional advice before signing a contract in the last five years.

"In the last 5 years, did you take legal/professional advice before signing a contract?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	16.3% (163)	83.7% (840)
Primary Occupation	18.0% (146)	82.0% (665)
Only Occupation	20.9% (107)	79.1% (404)
Photographers	12.0% (23)	88.0% (168)
Painters	11.0% (16)	89.0% (130)
Illustrators	35.5% (44)	64.5% (80)

Figure 41: Table and pie (Primary Occupation) showing responses to the question: "In the last 5 years, did you take legal/professional advice before signing a contract?"

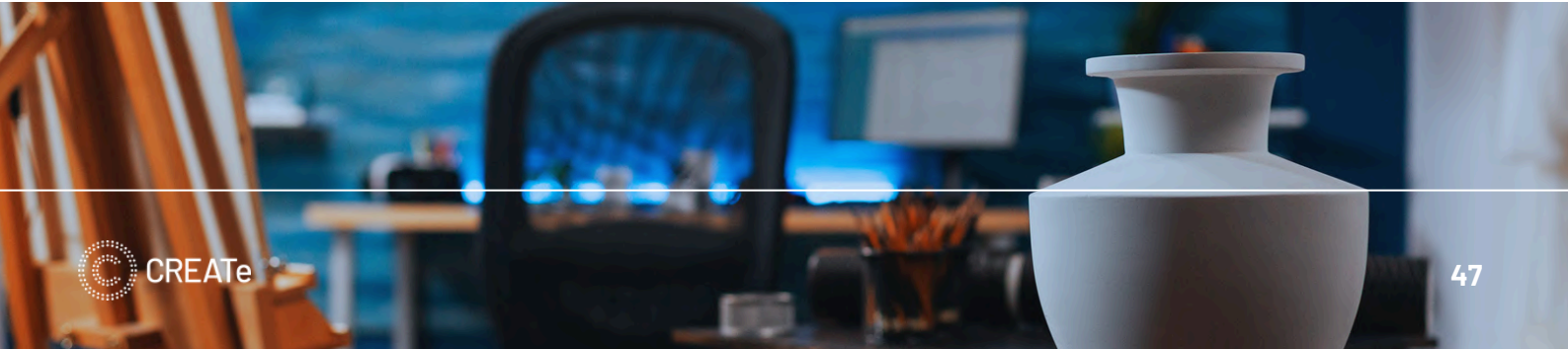


Most visual artists do not take legal or professional advice before signing contracts.

For those who did receive legal or professional advice, the most common source of legal/professional advice is a professional body or union (43.8%), followed by lawyers (39.7%). Photographers rely more heavily on lawyers (60.9%) compared to painters and illustrators. Painters show a relatively balanced distribution of advice sources, while illustrators rely mostly on professional bodies/unions (54.5%) and less on lawyers (15.9%).

'From whom have you taken legal/professional advice?'	Lawyer	Work Colleagues	Representative	Friends	Professional Body / Union	Other
Full Sample	38.7% (63)	22.7% (37)	19.0% (31)	17.8% (29)	43.6% (71)	16.0% (26)
Primary Occupation	39.7% (58)	21.9% (32)	19.9% (25)	17.1% (25)	43.8% (64)	15.8% (23)
Only Occupation	40.2% (43)	19.6% (21)	16.8% (18)	13.1% (14)	43.9% (47)	15.0% (16)
Photographers	60.9% (14)	21.7% (5)	0.0% (0)	21.7% (5)	39.1% (9)	8.7% (2)
Painters	43.8% (7)	12.5% (2)	12.5% (2)	12.5% (2)	25.0% (4)	18.8% (3)
Illustrators	15.9% (7)	11.4% (5)	38.6% (17)	13.6% (6)	54.5% (24)	20.5% (9)

Figure 42: Table showing responses to the question: "From whom have you taken legal/professional advice?"



Contracts

Negotiations

Less than 31.2% of Primary Occupation visual artists have attempted to negotiate a contract in the past 5 years. Among specific groups, illustrators are the most likely to have attempted contract changes (54.5%), followed by photographers (34.6%), while painters are the least likely (13.8%). This suggests that illustrators may be more proactive, or face more situations requiring contract renegotiations compared to photographers and painters.

"During the last 5 years, did you or your representative attempt to change the terms of a contract you were offered?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	29.0% (285)	71.0% (699)
Primary Occupation	31.2% (249)	68.8% (549)
Only Occupation	33.8% (170)	66.2% (333)
Photographers	34.6% (64)	65.4% (121)
Painters	13.8% (20)	86.2% (125)
Illustrators	54.5% (67)	45.5% (56)

Figure 43: Table showing responses to the question: "During the last 5 years, did you or your agent attempt to change the terms of a contract you were offered?"

Of those that did attempt to change a contract term, 79.4% were successful. This is consistent for photographers and painters. It increases to 92.5% for illustrators which suggests that this group has more leverage.

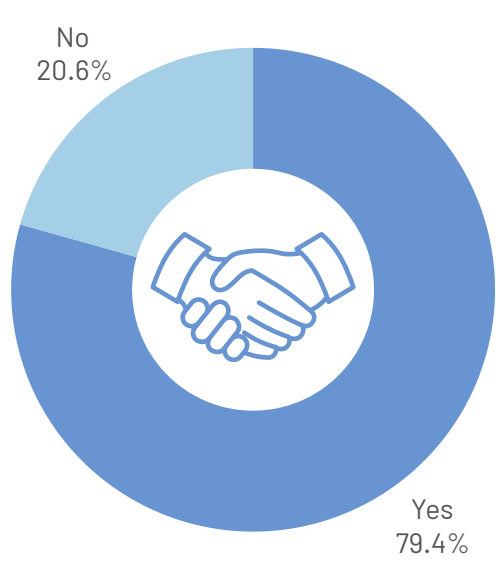


Figure 44: Chart and table showing responses to the question: “Have you succeeded in changing the terms of a contract you were offered?”

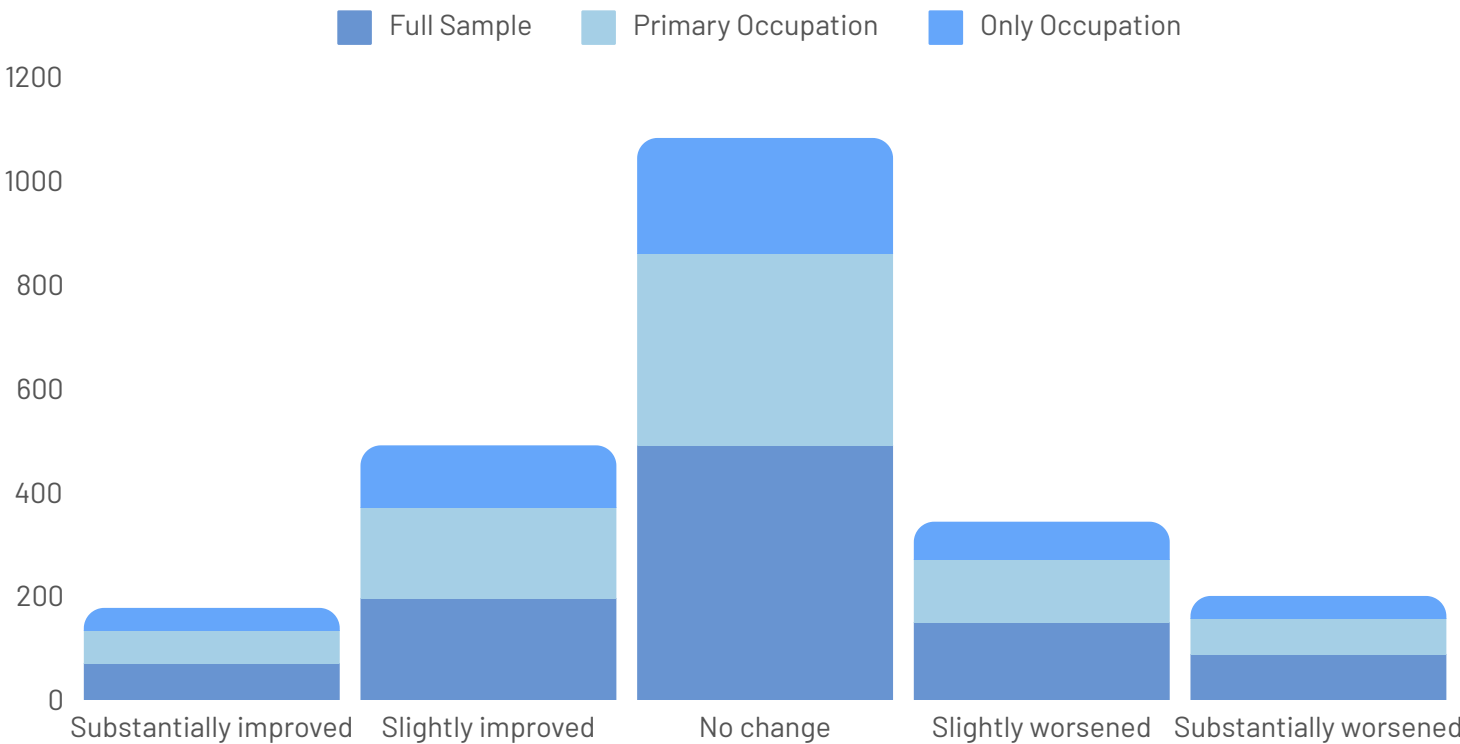
“Have you succeeded in changing the terms of a contract?”	Yes	No
Full Sample	76.7% (217)	23.3% (66)
Primary Occupation	79.4% (196)	20.6% (51)
Only Occupation	79.2% (133)	20.8% (35)
Photographers	70.3% (45)	29.7% (19)
Painters	73.7% (14)	26.3% (5)
Illustrators	92.5% (62)	7.5% (5)

The most commonly negotiated items are the ‘Rights/Scope of License’ (i.e., the terms of what the commissioner/producer can or cannot do with the work and for how long and over what mediums) (74.1%) and the ‘Initial fee’ (i.e., the initial payment for the work upon commission) (68.6%).

“What did you attempt to negotiate?”	Initial fee	Royalty rate	Residuals	Rights/uses granted to the producer	Clauses related to AI
Full Sample	67.4% (184)	72.2% (197)	27.1% (74)	18.7% (51)	23.8% (65)
Primary Occupation	68.6% (164)	74.1% (177)	28.9% (69)	18.4% (44)	23.8% (57)
Only Occupation	68.7% (112)	77.9% (127)	30.1% (49)	20.9% (34)	26.4% (43)
Photographers	60.0% (36)	88.3% (53)	30.0% (18)	15.0% (9)	33.3% (20)
Painters	82.4% (14)	41.2% (7)	11.8% (2)	5.9% (1)	11.8% (2)
Illustrators	88.1% (59)	86.6% (58)	29.9% (20)	22.4% (15)	22.4% (15)

Figure 45: Table showing responses to the question: “Please indicate what you attempted to negotiate.”

Nearly half of visual artists feel that their negotiation position has not changed in the past 5 years (46.2%), or has slightly improved (21.9%). Indeed, this is supported by the higher levels of attempts and success in changing contract terms. Notably, 43.6% of illustrators indicated that their negotiation position has improved.



"Has your negotiation position changed?"	Substantially improved	Slightly improved	No change	Slightly worsened	Substantially worsened
Full Sample	6.9% (68)	19.7% (194)	49.6% (489)	14.9% (147)	8.8% (87)
Primary Occupation	8.0% (64)	21.9% (175)	46.2% (369)	15.4% (123)	8.5% (68)
Only Occupation	8.7% (44)	23.9% (120)	44.3% (223)	14.3% (72)	8.7% (44)
Photographers	3.7% (7)	16.0% (30)	41.0% (77)	21.3% (40)	18.1% (34)
Painters	8.9% (13)	20.5% (30)	54.8% (80)	11.6% (17)	4.1% (6)
Illustrators	11.6% (14)	32.2% (39)	33.9% (41)	18.2% (22)	4.1% (5)

Figure 46: Line chart and table showing responses to the question: "As a visual artist, has your negotiation position changed over the last 5 years?"

Contract forms

The majority of visual artists (69.3%) have not signed a buy-out contract in the last five years. Photographers are the most likely to have signed such contracts (31.2%), followed by illustrators at a much higher rate (52.0%). Painters are the least likely, with only 9.5% having signed a "buy-out" contract. This indicates that illustrators, and to a lesser extent photographers, do not usually retain control over the work over time. Conversely, painters do.

Buy out contracts	Yes	No	Don't know
Full Sample	23.5% (233)	70.5% (698)	6.0% (59)
Primary Occupation	24.6% (198)	69.3% (557)	6.1% (49)
Only Occupation	27.2% (138)	68.0% (345)	4.7% (24)
Photographers	31.2% (59)	62.4% (118)	6.3% (12)
Painters	9.5% (14)	82.3% (121)	8.2% (12)
Illustrators	52.0% (64)	46.3% (57)	1.6% (2)

Table 47. Table showing responses to the question: "In the last 5 years have you signed a "buy-out" type contract?"

Among those who have signed a buy-out contract in the last five years, 13.3% report always doing so systematically.

"Are all your contracts buy-out contracts?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	14.3% (33)	85.7% (198)
Primary Occupation	13.3% (26)	86.7% (170)
Only Occupation	14.7% (20)	85.3% (116)
Photographers	5.2% (5)	94.8% (55)
Painters	15.4% (2)	84.6% (11)
Illustrators	9.4% (6)	90.6% (58)

Table 48. Table showing responses to the question: "Are all your contracts buy-out contracts?"

More than half of the population surveyed (56.9%) never waive the moral rights (the right to be attributed and to object to derogatory use of an artwork) in their works.

"Do you ever waive the moral rights in your work?"	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Full Sample	1.3% (13)	3.4% (34)	10.3% (102)	15.7% (156)	56.7% (564)
Primary Occupation	1.5% (12)	3.0% (24)	10.8% (87)	15.8% (128)	56.9% (460)
Only Occupation	1.8% (9)	3.9% (20)	10.2% (52)	16.9% (86)	56.5% (287)
Photographers	1.1% (2)	7.4% (14)	14.7% (28)	20.0% (38)	50.5% (96)
Painters	2.0% (3)	2.0% (3)	6.8% (10)	8.8% (13)	62.6% (92)
Illustrators	0.8% (1)	0.8% (1)	16.5% (20)	27.3% (33)	48.8% (59)

Figure 48: Table showing responses to the question: "Do you ever waive the moral rights in your works?"

Most visual artists (79.3%) have never had a dispute over moral rights as part of a professional agreement. This rate is consistent for Photographers and Illustrators, and increases to 85.1% for Painters.

"Have you ever had a dispute over moral rights?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	20.5% (204)	79.5% (790)
Primary Occupation	20.7% (167)	79.3% (639)
Only Occupation	21.7% (110)	78.3% (396)
Photographers	24.3% (46)	75.7% (143)
Painters	14.9% (22)	85.1% (126)
Illustrators	23.1% (28)	76.9% (93)

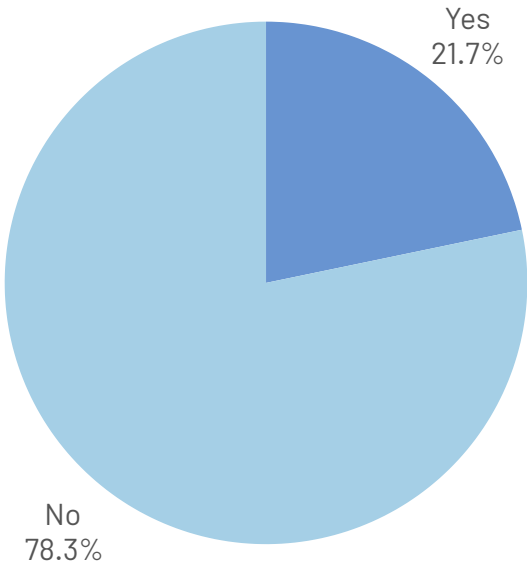


Figure 49. Chart and table, "Have you ever had a dispute over moral rights with an entity that engaged or contracted you for work?"

For those who had a dispute about moral rights, in 56% of cases, it pertained to both attribution and integrity.

"What were the grounds of the dispute?"	Attribution	Integrity	Both attribution and integrity
Full Sample	20.5% (40)	24.6% (48)	54.9% (107)
Primary Occupation	19.5% (31)	24.5% (39)	56.0% (89)
Only Occupation	16.2% (17)	27.6% (29)	56.2% (59)
Photographers	26.7% (12)	24.4% (11)	48.9% (22)
Painters	20.0% (4)	25.0% (5)	55.0% (11)
Illustrators	14.8% (4)	29.6% (8)	55.6% (15)

Figure 50: Table showing responses to the question: "What were the grounds of the dispute?"



Confidence in contracts

Many visual artists are not confident that they receive all fees, royalties and residuals due to them under their contracts: 19.7% of respondents have "Very Little Confidence," and 22.8% have "Less Confidence." However, 46.8% are "Somewhat Confident" (25.3%) or "Very Confident" (21.5%). This indicates a division in perceptions of how confident visual artists feel their work is managed under licence. Illustrators show the highest confidence among the subgroups, with 63.5% reporting "Somewhat Confident" or "Very Confident." Only 13.1% have "Very Little Confidence," indicating that illustrators are more assured about the licensed use of their work.

Confidence in contracts	Very little confidence	Less confident	Neutral	Somewhat confident	Very confident
Full Sample	20.6% (151)	22.4% (166)	10.0% (74)	26.2% (193)	20.8% (156)
Primary Occupation	19.7% (118)	22.8% (137)	10.6% (64)	25.3% (152)	21.5% (134)
Only Occupation	18.5% (151)	22.3% (165)	10.0% (74)	26.1% (193)	23.0% (174)
Photographers	19.6% (15)	26.5% (43)	10.4% (17)	23.9% (39)	19.6% (31)
Painters	19.6% (20)	17.6% (18)	13.7% (14)	23.5% (24)	25.5% (26)
Illustrators	13.1% (13)	15.3% (15)	8.1% (8)	33.4% (33)	30.1% (30)

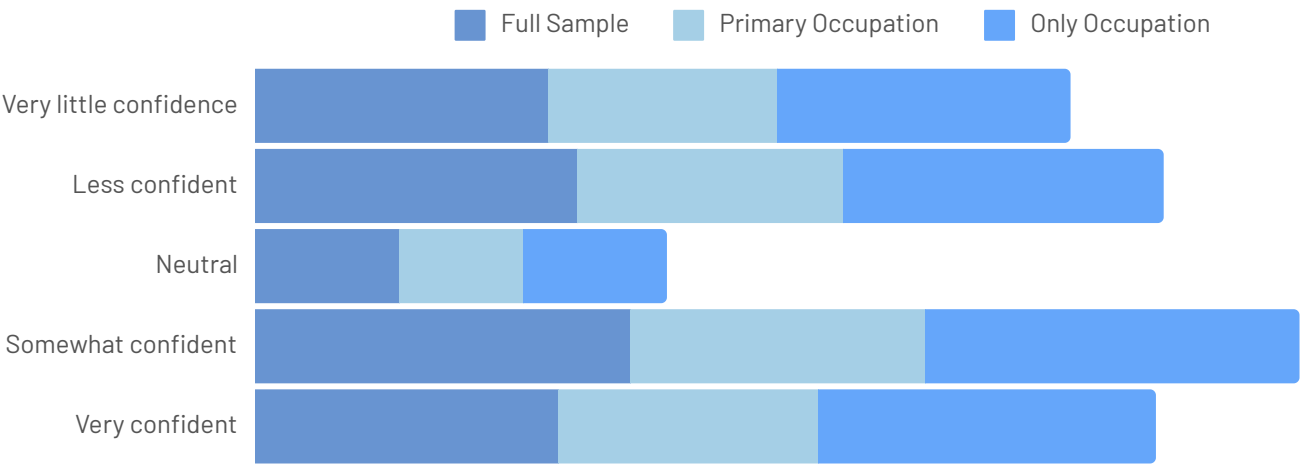


Figure 51: Table and chart showing responses to the question: "How confident are you that your work is used adequately under licence?"

In regards to their knowledge of copyright, this survey indicates a generally high level of confidence among respondents, with more than 70% of the Primary Occupation sample expressing some level of confidence (either somewhat or very confident). This percentage rises to 75.4% for the Only Occupation sample. Photographers exhibit the highest level of confidence, with 58.2% reporting as "Very Confident" and 25.7% as "Somewhat Confident." This makes them the most confident group overall. Painters show a more balanced distribution, with 39.2% (49) "Very Confident" and 27.2% (34) "Somewhat Confident." However, they also have a higher proportion of respondents with "Less Confidence" (18.4%) and "Very Little Confidence" (9.6%). Illustrators fall somewhere between photographers and painters.

"How confident are you in your knowledge of copyright?"	Very little confidence	Less confident	Neutral	Somewhat confident	Very confident
Full Sample	9.8% (88)	15.8% (141)	4.9% (44)	29.4% (262)	40.2% (358)
Primary Occupation	9.3% (68)	15.0% (109)	4.7% (34)	29.4% (213)	41.4% (300)
Only Occupation	7.8% (35)	14.0% (64)	2.9% (13)	28.7% (131)	46.7% (213)
Photographers	3.9% (7)	8.0% (14)	4.0% (7)	25.7% (45)	58.2% (102)
Painters	9.6% (12)	18.4% (23)	5.6% (7)	27.2% (34)	39.2% (49)
Illustrators	2.7% (3)	9.9% (11)	3.6% (4)	35.7% (40)	48.2% (54)

Figure 52: Table showing responses to the question: "In relation to your activity as a visual artist, how confident are you in your knowledge of copyright?"

9.8% of Primary Occupation visual artists have used an open licence when publishing or distributing their work. Of the occupational sub-categories, illustrators use an open licence (10.8%), when compared with photographers (8.4%) and painters (6.2%).

"Have you ever used an open license?"	Yes	No	Unsure
Full Sample	9.9% (98)	79.5% (784)	10.5% (104)
Primary Occupation	9.8% (78)	80.1% (640)	10.1% (81)
Only Occupation	6.6% (33)	83.2% (417)	10.2% (51)
Photographers	8.4% (16)	84.7% (161)	6.8% (13)
Painters	6.2% (9)	86.3% (126)	7.5% (11)
Illustrators	10.8% (13)	75.8% (91)	13.3% (16)

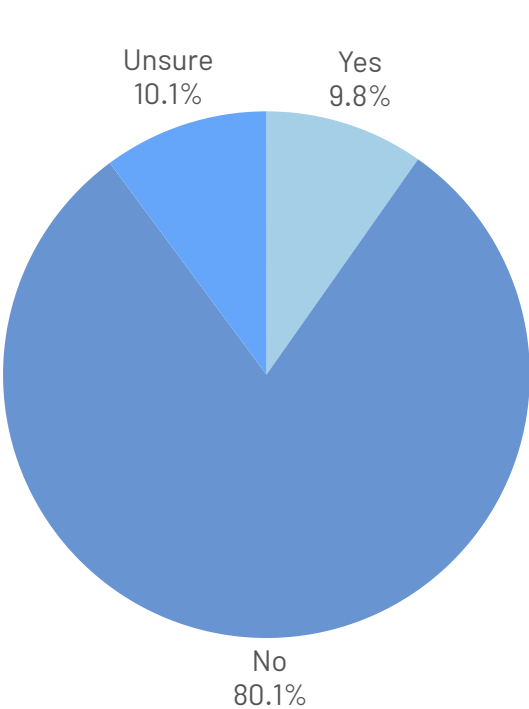


Figure 53: Table and chart showing responses to the question: "Have you ever used an open license such as Creative Commons when publishing or distributing your work?"

This survey reveals a generally high level of confidence among respondents regarding their knowledge of copyright.

Brexit

This survey captured data related to Brexit and its impact on visual artists’ international working opportunities. This survey, as the first of its kind conducted after Brexit, provided an opportunity to gather and analyse data specifically about visual artists, offering insights into how Brexit has impacted them. The table shows that a majority of visual artists (61%) report that Brexit has affected their opportunities or decisions to work in the UK or the EU. This is consistent across all samples and the three main subgroups.

"Has Brexit affected your opportunities?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	57.8% (563)	42.2% (411)
Primary Occupation	61.0% (481)	39.0% (307)
Only Occupation	62.2% (309)	37.8% (188)
Photographers	53.2% (99)	46.8% (87)
Painters	60.1% (86)	39.9% (57)
Illustrators	57.5% (69)	42.5% (51)

Figure 54: Table showing answers to the question: "Has Brexit affected your opportunities or decisions to work in the UK or the EU?"

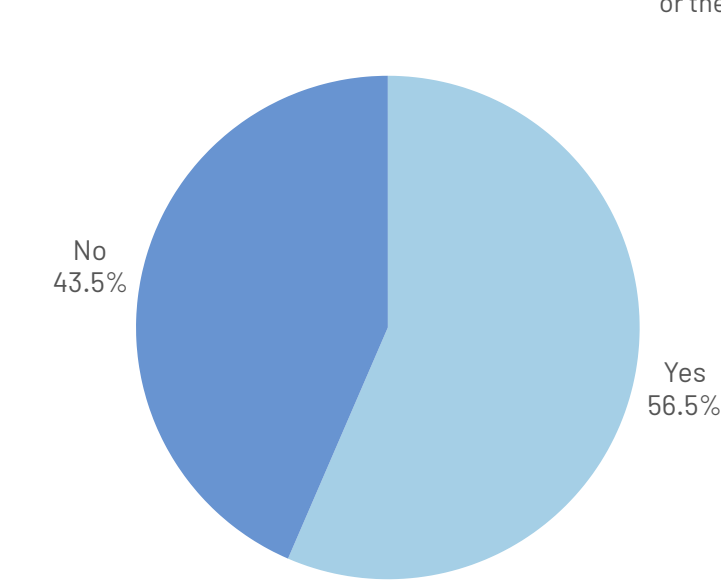


Figure 55: Pie chart showing responses to the question: "Has Brexit affected your opportunities or decisions to work in the UK or the EU?"

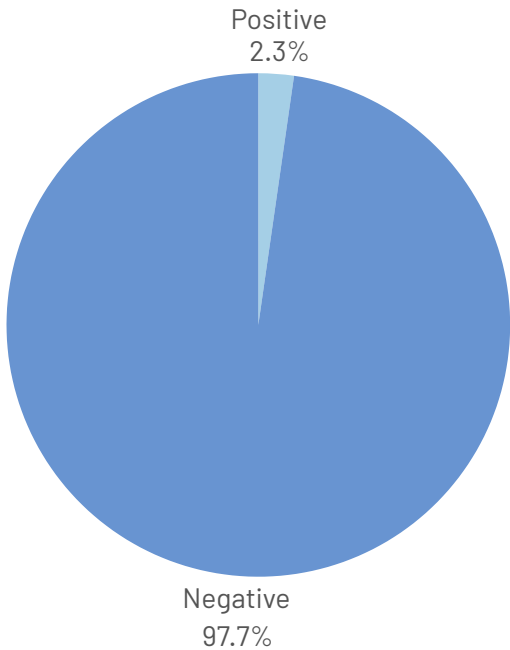


Figure 56: Pie chart showing responses to the question: "Was this change: [...]"

More than half of the respondents (56.5%) reported noticing changes in the demand for their services in the UK or in the EU post-Brexit and that this change was negative in virtually all cases (97.7%). This is consistent across the three main subgroups.

"Have you noticed any changes in the demand for your service post Brexit?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	51.5% (501)	48.5% (471)
Primary Occupation	56.5% (444)	43.5% (342)
Only Occupation	57.4% (286)	42.6% (212)
Photographers	53.2% (99)	46.8% (87)
Painters	51.4% (74)	48.6% (70)
Illustrators	53.8% (640)	46.2% (55)

Figure 57: Table showing answers to the question: "Have you noticed any changes in the demand for your services as a visual artist in the UK or the EU post-Brexit?"

"Was this change:"	Positive	Negative
Full Sample	2.4% (12)	97.6% (486)
Primary Occupation	2.3% (10)	97.7% (431)
Only Occupation	2.1% (6)	97.9% (278)
Photographers	2.0% (2)	98.0% (97)
Painters	1.4% (1)	98.6% (73)
Illustrators	0.0% (0)	100% (63)

Figure 58: Table showing the answers to the question: "Was this change: [...]"

In the primary occupation sample, 29.7% of respondents undertook projects that required them to work abroad in the past three years. Photographers (39.7%) are the most likely to work abroad, followed by painters (25.9%), with illustrators being the least likely (6.7%). This reflects the nature of these professions, where photographers may be required to travel for shoots, while illustrators can often complete work remotely.

"In the past 3 years, have you undertaken any projects that required you to work abroad?"	Yes	No
Full Sample	26.6% (262)	73.4% (723)
Primary Occupation	29.7% (237)	70.3% (560)
Only Occupation	31.1% (156)	68.9% (345)
Photographers	39.7% (75)	60.3% (114)
Painters	25.9% (38)	74.1% (109)
Illustrators	6.7% (8)	93.3% (112)

Figure 59: Table showing answers to the question: "In the past 3 years, have you undertaken any projects that required you to work abroad?"

For those visual artists who worked abroad, 66% reported positive experiences, while 26.5% found it challenging. This trend is consistent across the three main subgroups of visual artists. These findings suggest that although Brexit may have made it more difficult to secure professional opportunities, the actual process of working abroad remains relatively manageable for those who do find opportunities.

In the Primary Occupation sample, the most important factors influencing the decision to accept or decline international work opportunities are expenses (53.5%), family/personal reasons (36.4%), visa/work permit requirements (39.1%), and payment terms (33.8%). These are also the primary concerns across the three subgroups.

"Rate your experience of working abroad"	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Neutral	Somewhat Challenging	Very Challenging
Full Sample	35.8% (80)	29.6% (66)	8.0% (18)	15.7% (35)	10.9% (24)
Primary Occupation	37.0% (74)	29.0% (58)	7.5% (15)	16.0% (32)	10.5% (21)
Only Occupation	39.0% (51)	28.5% (37)	8.5% (11)	13.2% (17)	10.7% (14)
Photographers	36.4% (24)	33.4% (22)	9.1% (6)	15.1% (10)	6.0% (4)
Painters	39.3% (11)	32.2% (9)	3.6% (1)	14.2% (4)	10.7% (3)
Illustrators	40.0% (2)	20.0% (1)	20.0% (1)	20.0% (1)	0.0% (0)

Figure 60: Table showing responses to the statement: "Please, rate your experience of working abroad"

Factors affecting decision to work abroad	Cultural Differences	Ecological Concerns	Expenses	Family/ Personal Reasons
Full Sample	4.6% (44)	11.7% (112)	53.9% (516)	37.9% (363)
Primary Occupation	4.5% (35)	11.6% (90)	53.5% (416)	36.4% (283)
Only Occupation	4.7% (23)	10.0% (49)	51.6% (252)	33.6% (164)
Photographers	3.8% (70)	10.4% (19)	51.9% (95)	29.0% (53)
Painters	5.5% (8)	5.5% (8)	53.8% (78)	35.2% (51)
Illustrators	8.0% (9)	11.5% (13)	43.4% (49)	38.9% (44)

	Payment Terms	Time	Visa/ Work Permit Requirements	Other
Full Sample	33.9% (324)	26.0% (249)	38.8% (371)	11.4% (109)
Primary Occupation	33.8% (263)	24.8% (193)	39.1% (304)	12.0% (93)
Only Occupation	36.3% (177)	21.9% (107)	41.8% (204)	12.5% (61)
Photographers	35.0% (640)	18.6% (34)	41.5% (76)	7.7% (14)
Painters	26.9% (39)	24.1% (35)	39.3% (57)	10.3% (15)
Illustrators	41.6% (47)	32.7% (37)	38.1% (43)	9.7% (11)

Figure 61: Table showing responses to the question: "What factor is the most likely to impact your decision to accept or decline international working opportunities?"

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Appendix A

A copy of the survey can be found [here](#).

Appendix B

Workforce qualification levels across England and Wales data: Census 2021

- no qualifications: no formal qualifications
- Level 1: one to four GCSEs passes (for example grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, or equivalent qualifications
- Level 2: five or more GCSE passes (for example grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) or equivalent qualifications
- apprenticeships
- Level 3: two or more A levels or equivalent qualifications
- Level 4 or above: Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or postgraduate qualifications
- other qualifications, of unknown level

Appendix C

Payments received from DACS (survey responses and actual DACS distribution)

	Median	Mean	25th percentile	75th percentile	Gini Coefficient
Survey	£100-149	£750-999	£0-24	£250-499	0.85
DACS	£100-149	£750-999	£25-49	£250-499	0.89

Figure 62: Table comparing the money reported by survey respondents as received from DACS (Survey) with the actual distribution of payments made by DACS to their members (DACS)

DACS Number of payees (2022/23): 6,642
DACS Total payment (2022/23): £6,160,142

In order to place the sample of respondents to the survey into the context of the population of all visual artists receiving payments from DACS, we asked DACS to calculate their payment distribution in an anonymised format, standardised by revenue band. This acts as a control for the representativeness of the survey.

For ease of reference, we provide median, mean, lower and upper quartiles and Gini coefficients, allowing comparison with other income data. We used the DACS distribution data available, nearest to the data collection points of the survey conducted.

This survey was conducted between February and April 2024 and report incomes before tax in the 2022/2023 tax year. The DACS numbers reported in the table payments are for the tax year 2022/2023.



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