

Research Paper No.4

Representation of Female Artists in Britain in 2017



The following report was commissioned by the Freelands Foundation. The intention of the report is to provide the latest data on the representation of women artists, in order to encourage critical awareness of gender parity in the art world.

Research compiled by
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Contents

Introduction	6–9
Summary	10–11
Evidence	12–67
Endnotes	68–71
Research	72

Are female artists still under-represented in Britain?

Introduction

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Introduction

This is the latest edition in a series of reports published annually by the Freelands Foundation providing objective data about the representation of female artists in the UK. In this report we reveal that in 2017 female students studying creative arts and design continued to outnumber men, while men outnumbered women in the majority of activities that signify the development of an artist's career, such as having a solo exhibition at a national gallery in London, or having commercial gallery representation.

In response to the findings of the first report for 2014–15, the Foundation established the annual Freelands Award to enable a regional arts organisation to present an exhibition that would include significant new work by a mid-career female artist, who may not yet have received the acclaim or public recognition that her work deserves. These reports have become important as a reliable, public source of evidence for the arts community to highlight the issue of representation and promote its significance within discussions about cultural programming and production.

This 2017 report includes new areas of data not previously analysed. This reflects our ambition to be agile and rigorous in our approach in order to present the most current situation for women artists in the art world. This year we have added data to reflect academic teaching in art colleges, the steps artists take to achieve success after graduation and the commissioning of new art for the most prominent UK art festivals, such as Liverpool Biennial.

This report shows some progress since the previous reports for 2015 and 2016. However, it also reveals some significant areas of decline, most notably in the number of solo shows by women artists presented by the major public art institutions of London. By contrast, representation of women by non-commercial galleries outside London has significantly improved, and this is encouraging to see. Since our last report for 2016, representation of women in the commercial gallery sector has reached a new low, with

Are female artists still under-represented in Britain?

Introduction

even fewer women represented or exhibited by major commercial galleries.

This is all within the context of women working hard to achieve success. In this report, we present new data that shows that 66% of students studying postgraduate art courses are women. 62% of applicants for New Contemporaries⁽¹⁾, the leading organisation supporting emergent art practice from UK art schools, are women. 57% of grants awarded to artists by the Arts Council of England (ACE) are women. Women are striving for achievement but this is not currently reflected in the number of artists represented in the exhibition programmes of our major London galleries, in the commercial gallery sector, or in contemporary art sales at Sotheby's.

We present new data that reveals a distinct gender pay gap among academic staff teaching art and design in the UK. 59% of the highest paid academic staff are men and 61% of the lowest paid part-time academic staff are women. This is in distinct contrast to the 63% of women studying as undergraduates and 66% of women studying at postgraduate level in creative arts and design.

Our research to date has revealed inequity in the number of women artists represented by major commercial galleries in London. In this 2017 report we look more closely at the data to gain deeper insight into what might be driving this tendency. We therefore analysed the number of deceased artists represented by major commercial galleries in the UK and found that 2% of artists were deceased women, in comparison to the 10% of male artists. This might indicate that the 2017 art market reflects that historically there were fewer women achieving professional success. If the number of women achieving professional success has increased in recent decades we should therefore see a larger number of deceased women

Are female artists still under-represented in Britain?

Introduction

artists represented by commercial galleries in future years. In addition, this data might indicate a gender bias that reflects the tastes and demographic characteristics of art collectors.

The Freelands Foundation will continue its efforts to take action against gender imbalance through the Freelands Award, and to promote awareness of gender parity issues in the art world through the publication of this data.

1. New Contemporaries is the leading organisation supporting emergent art practice from UK art schools. Since 1949 New Contemporaries has provided an open submission selection process and a critical platform for recent fine art graduates to exhibit their work to national audiences.

Are female artists still under-represented in Britain?

Summary

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Summary

Female artists are still under-represented in the art world in 2017 despite outnumbering men studying in art school. Women academics in our art schools are most likely to be the lowest paid. In line with the 2016 audit, London's major institutions and commercial galleries remain the least likely to hold solo shows by female artists. In 2017 just 22% of solo shows presented by major London non-commercial galleries were by women artists. Shockingly, this figure has decreased since 2016.

It is clear that women are striving to achieve the usual indicators of success by entering art competitions, applying for funding and embarking on postgraduate education.

This appears to pay off in certain areas. Most notably the percentage of women representing Britain at the Venice Biennale and winning the Turner Prize over the last ten years has improved. 50% of artists selected for New Contemporaries were female and 47% of artists commissioned for the latest editions of Liverpool Biennial, Folkestone Triennial and Glasgow International were women.

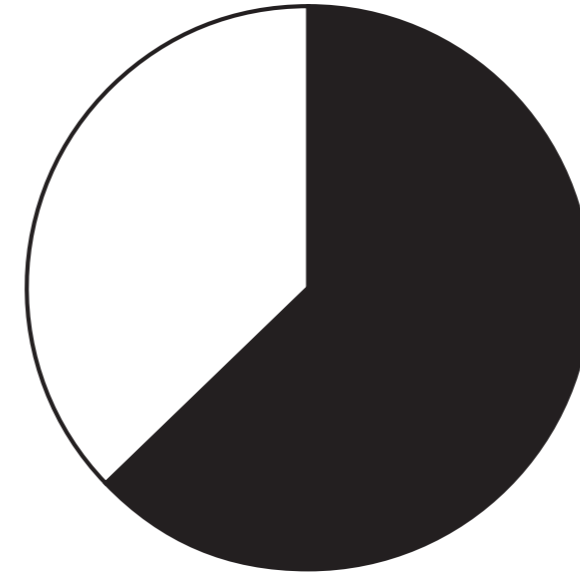
However, this report reveals inequality in the commercial sector. 28% of artists represented by London's major commercial galleries in 2017 were women, representing a fall since 2016. Only 3% of auction lots in the top ten highest-grossing sales of each of the Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales in 2017 were by women artists. These grim statistics indicate that women continue to be excluded from the mainstream commercial art market despite their best efforts to participate.

Evidence 1

Undergraduates studying creative arts and design in 2017

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Undergraduates studying creative arts and design in 2017

According to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS), 63% of undergraduates studying creative arts and design in 2017 were female.



Undergraduates studying creative arts and design in 2017
Female 63% Male 37%

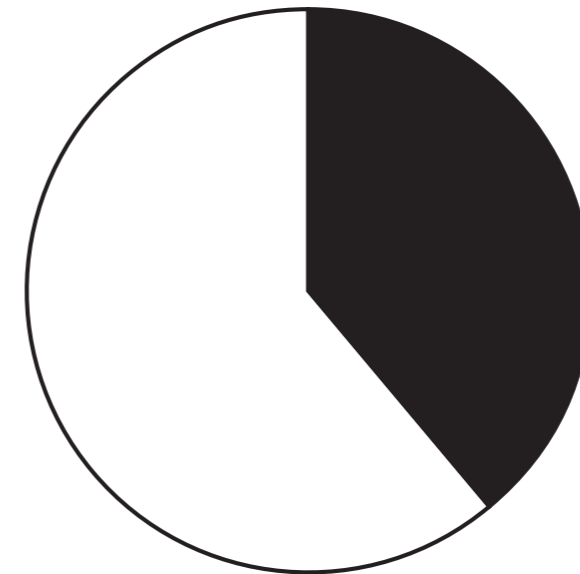
Evidence 2

Solo shows in non-commercial galleries in London

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Solo shows in non-commercial galleries in London

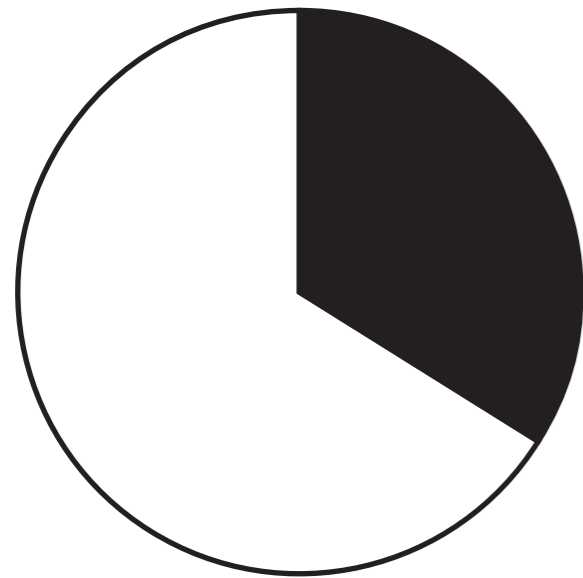
We conducted an audit of solo shows featured in the exhibition programme of 40 non-commercial galleries in London in 2017 and found that:

39% of these shows were by female artists.



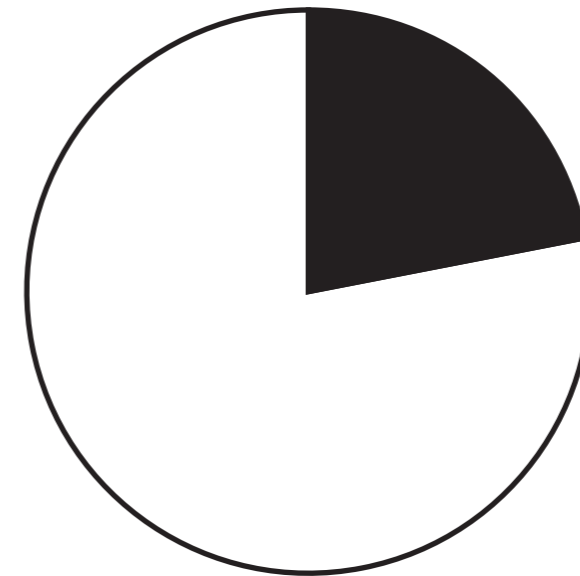
Female 39% Male 61%

34% of solo shows at National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) funded organisations were by female artists. This total has dropped by 4% since 2016.



Female 34% Male 66%

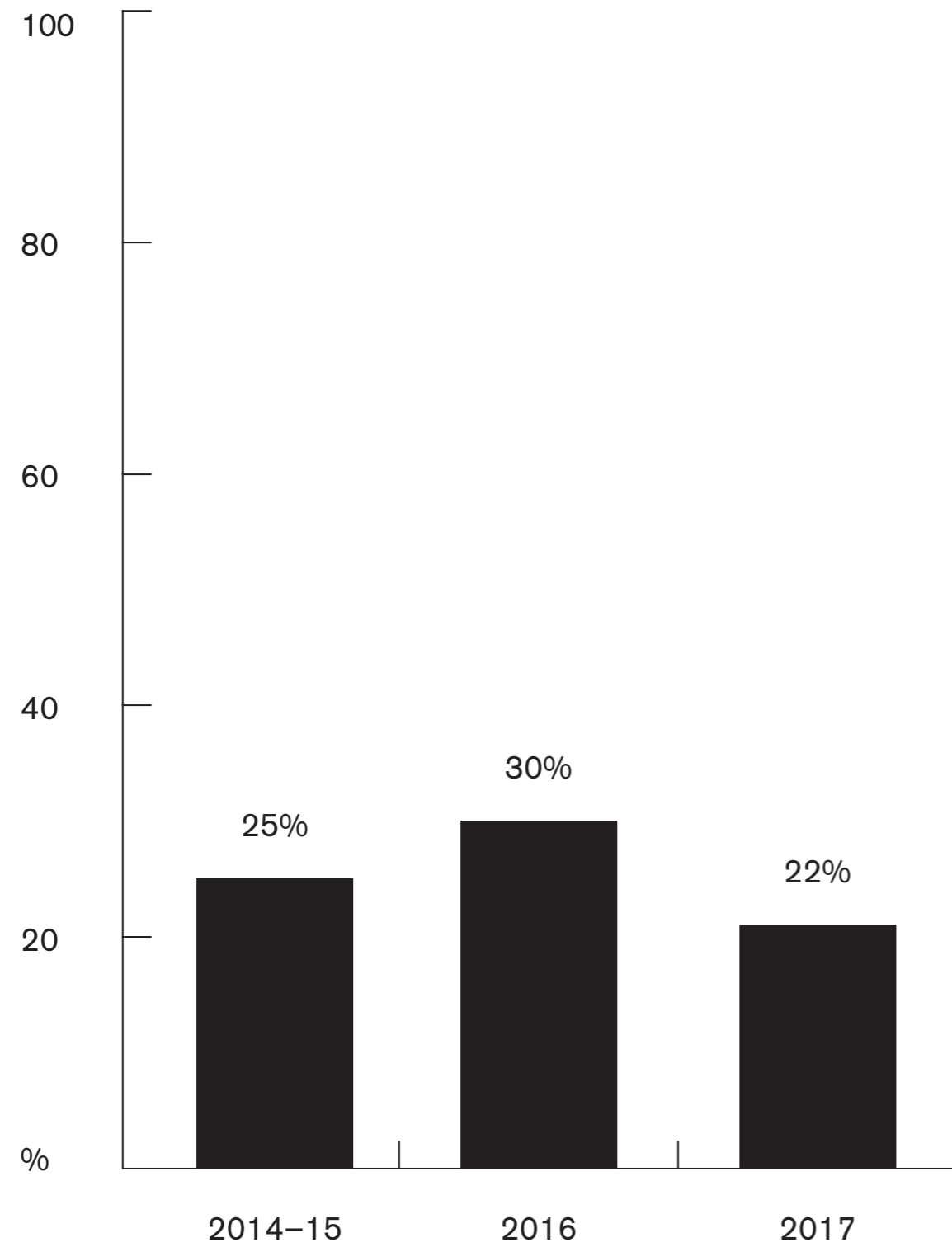
Our 2017 audit showed that 22% of solo shows at London's major institutions were by female artists. This total has fallen by 8% since 2016 and by 3% since 2014–15.



Solo shows in London's major non-commercial art institutions
Female 22% Male 78%

Evidence 2

Solo shows in non-commercial galleries in London



Percentage of solo shows in London's major non-commercial art institutions from 2014-15 to 2017 by female artists

Evidence 3

Solo shows in non-commercial galleries outside London

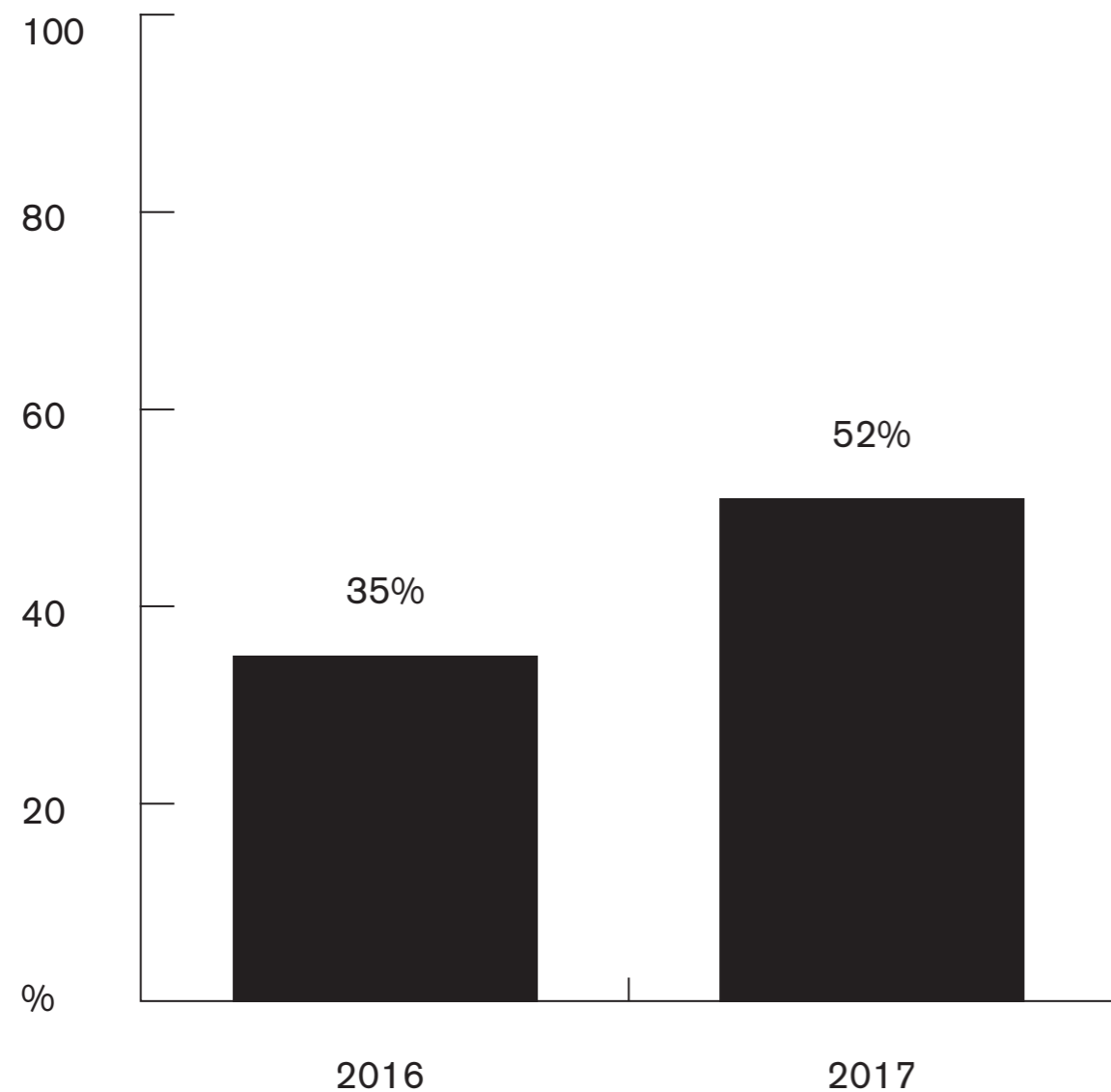
Evidence 3

Percentage of solo shows in non-commercial galleries outside London by female artists.

We conducted an audit of solo shows featured in the exhibition programme of 33 non-commercial galleries outside London and found that:

Representation of women artists in non-commercial galleries outside London has significantly improved in 2017, with the number of solo shows held by female artists in major institutions rising by 17% since 2016.

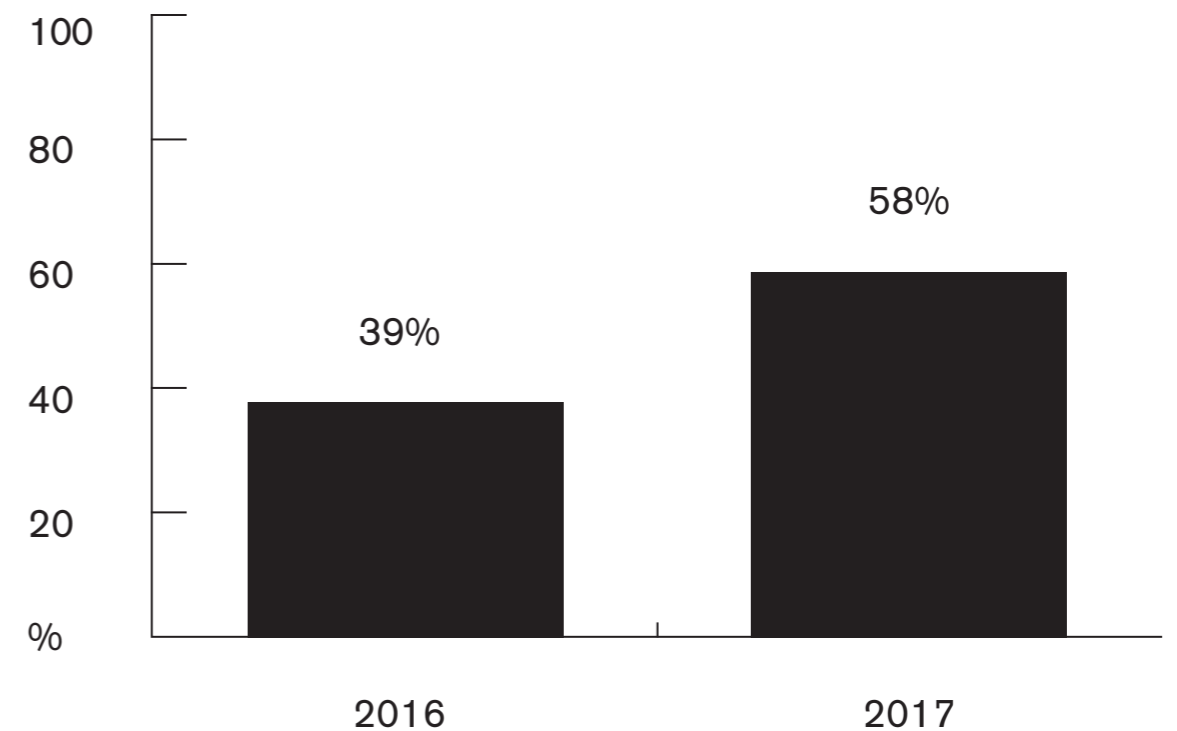
52% of these shows were by female artists. This has increased by 17% since last year.



Percentage of solo shows in non-commercial galleries outside London by female artists

58% of solo shows at NPOs and DCMS funded organisations outside London were by female artists.

This has increased by 19% since last year.



Percentage of solo shows at NPOs and DCMS funded organisations outside London by female artists

Evidence 3

Solo shows in non-commercial galleries outside London

59% of solo shows at major institutions outside London were by female artists.

This has risen since 2016 by 17%.

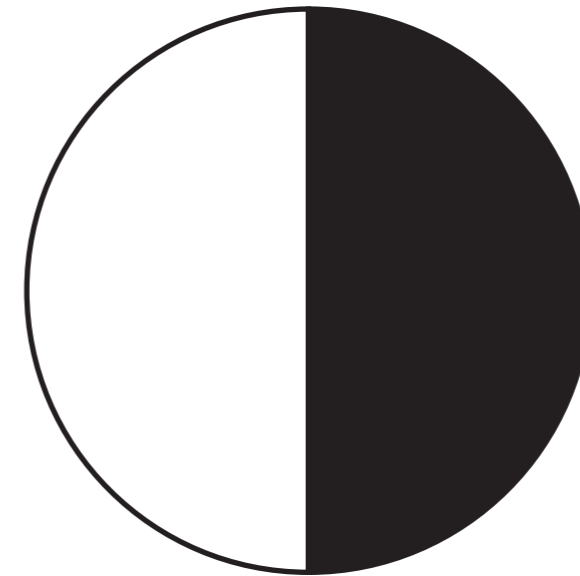
Evidence 4

Artists representing Britain at the Venice Biennale

Evidence 4

Artists representing Britain at the Venice Biennale

Our audit of artists selected to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale over the past 10 years found that 50% of selected artists were female.



Female 50% Male 50%

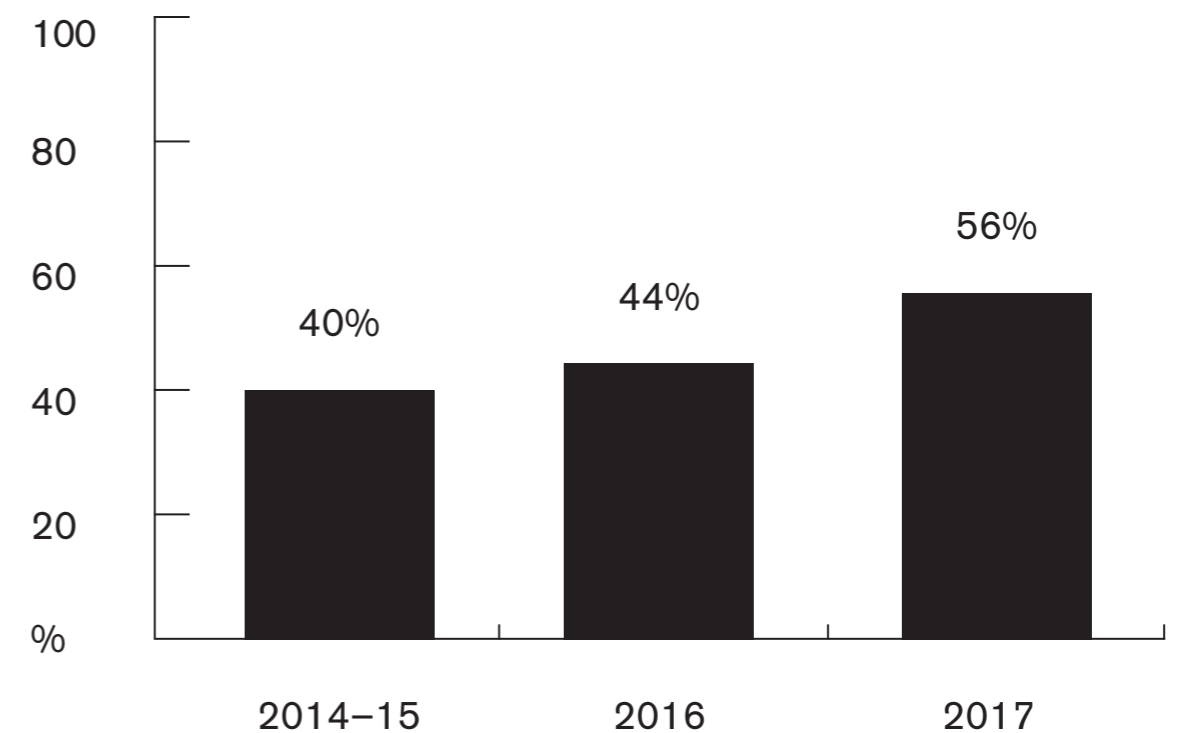
Evidence 5

Turner Prize winners

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Turner Prize winners

Our audit of the Turner Prize winners over the last ten years found that 56% were female artists.

This figure represents a 12% improvement since 2016.



Percentage of female Turner Prize winners from 2014-15 to 2017

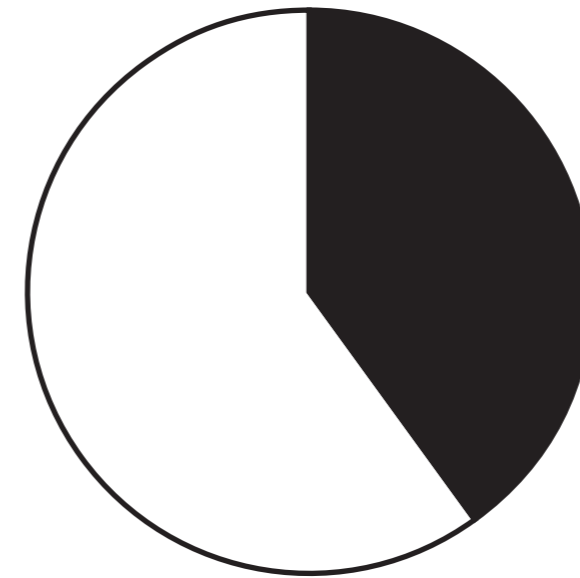
Evidence 6

The *ArtReview* Power 100

Evidence 6
The *ArtReview* Power 100

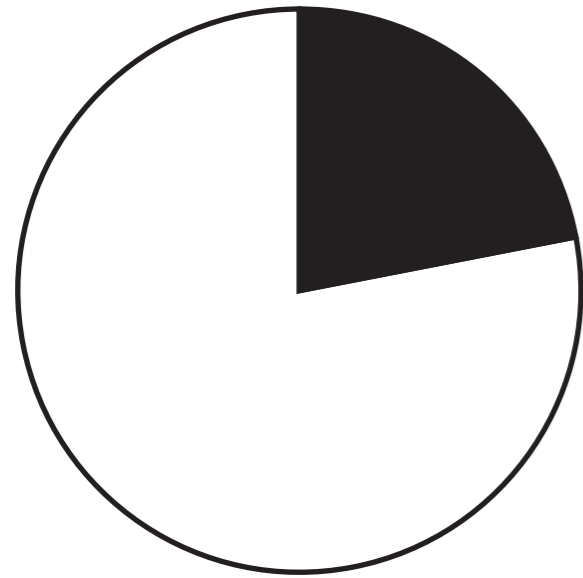
We analysed the *ArtReview*
Power 100 and found that:

40% of entries on the list were
women. This has increased by
8% since 2016.



The *ArtReview* Power 100
Female 40% Male 60%

22% of artists included in the list were women. This has remained unchanged since 2016.



Female 22% Male 78%

Evidence 7

Artists represented by London's major commercial galleries

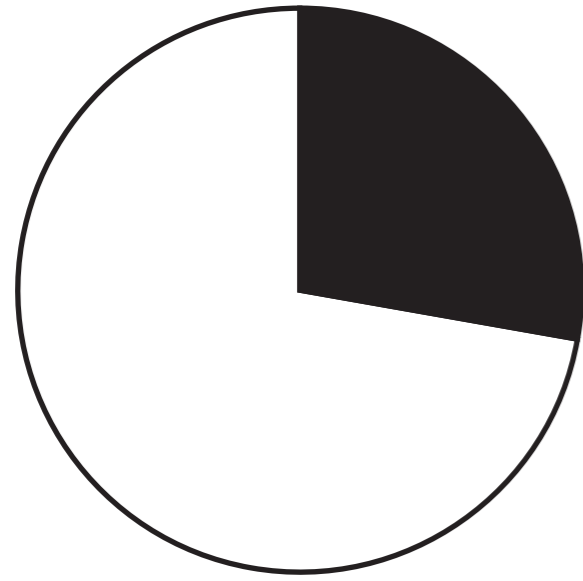
Evidence 7

Artists represented by London's major commercial galleries

Representation by a commercial gallery is widely perceived to be an indicator of professional success for artists. We conducted an audit of artists represented by London's major commercial galleries in 2017 and found that 28% of artists represented by London's major commercial galleries were women.

This figure has fallen from 29% in 2016.

Evidence 7
Artists represented by London's major commercial galleries



Female 28% Male 72%

Evidence 8

Deceased artists represented by London's major commercial galleries

Evidence 8

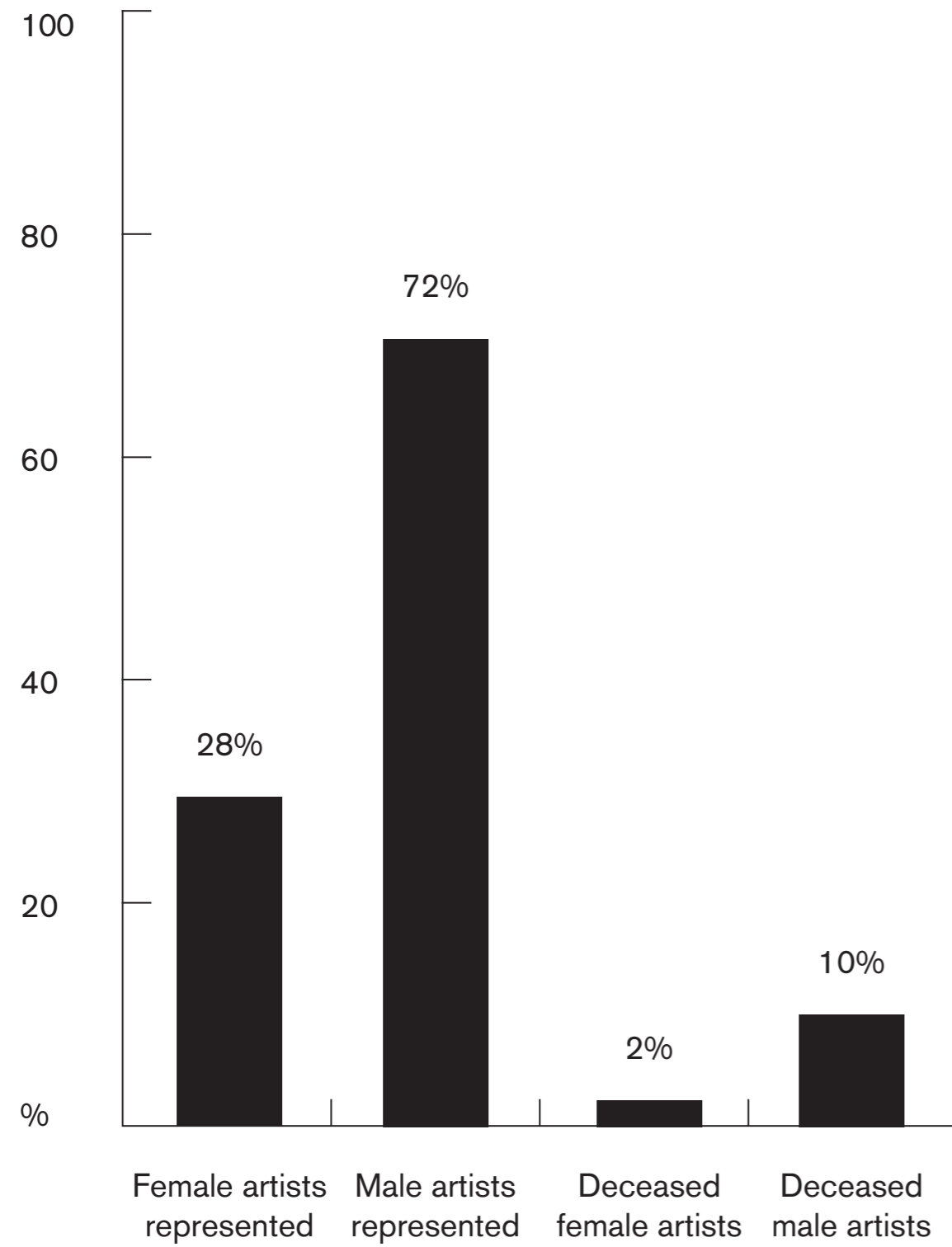
Deceased artists represented by London's major commercial galleries

We conducted an audit of artists represented by London's major commercial galleries in 2017 and found that 2% of all artists were deceased women and 10% of all artists were deceased men.

This data could indicate that the 2017 art market reflects that historically there were fewer women achieving professional success. Alternately it could indicate a bias that reflects the tastes of art collectors.

Evidence 8

Deceased artists represented by London's major commercial galleries



Deceased artists represented by London's major commercial galleries

Evidence 9

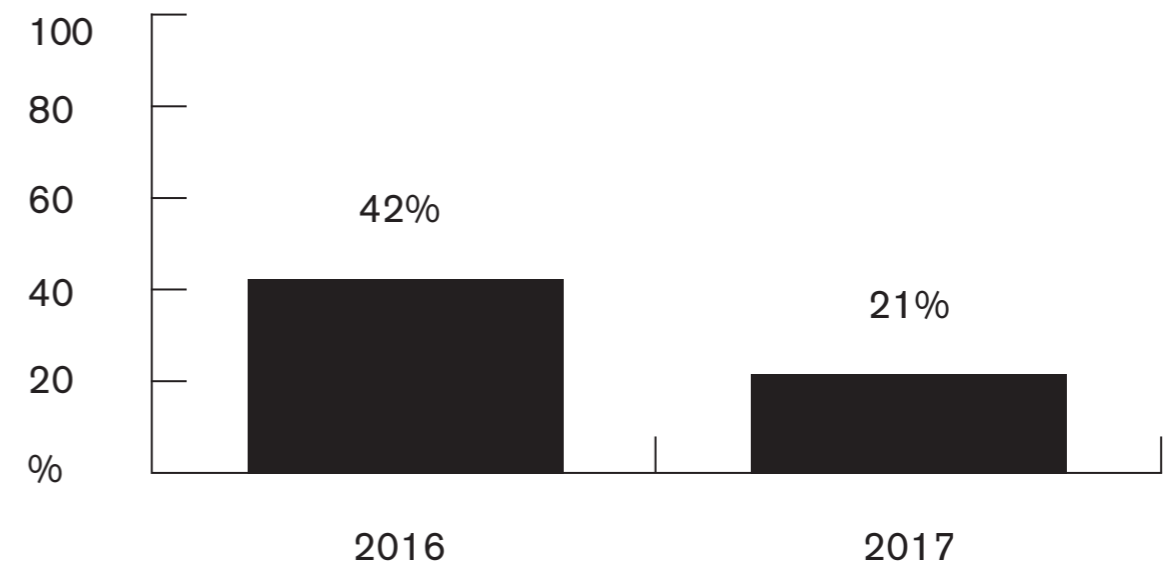
Solo shows at London's major commercial galleries during Frieze week

Evidence 9

Solo shows at London's major commercial galleries during Frieze week

Our audit of solo shows at London's major commercial galleries during Frieze Week 2017 found that 21% of these shows were by women artists.

It is worrying to see that this number has halved from 42% in 2016.



Solo shows at London's major commercial galleries during Frieze week. 2016 Female 42%, 2017 Female 21%

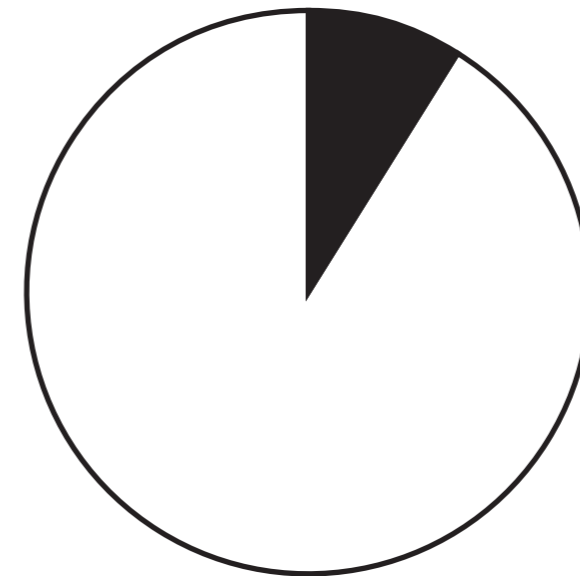
Evidence 10

Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales

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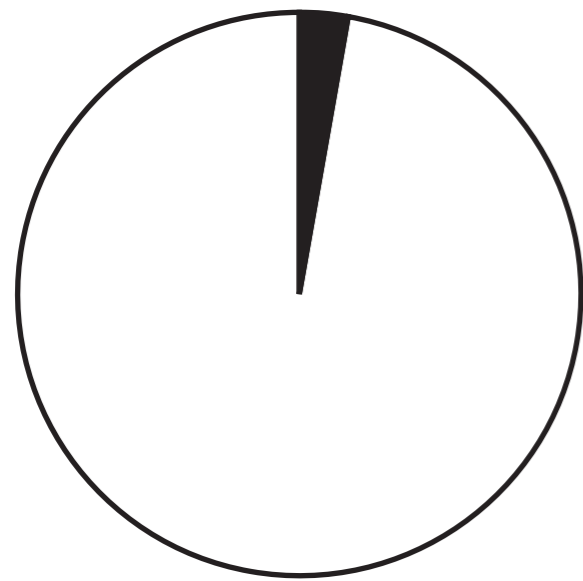
We audited lots up for auction at all Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales in 2017 and found that:

9% of these lots were by female artists.



Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales
Female 9% Male 91%

3% of the top highest grossing sales in each of the Contemporary Art Evening Sales were by women artists.



Female 3% Male 97%

These statistics continue to be disappointing and have remained unchanged since 2016.

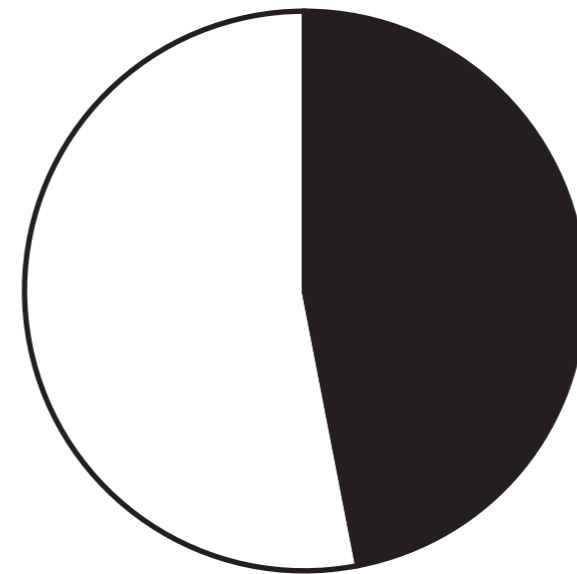
Evidence 11

Artists selected to make new work for the most recent editions of Liverpool Biennial, Folkestone Triennial and Glasgow International

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Artists selected to make new work for the most recent editions of Liverpool Biennial, Folkestone Triennial and Glasgow International

Our audit of artists selected to make new work for the most recent editions of Liverpool Biennial, Folkestone Triennial and Glasgow International found that 47% of these artists were women.



Female 47% Male 53%

Evidence 12

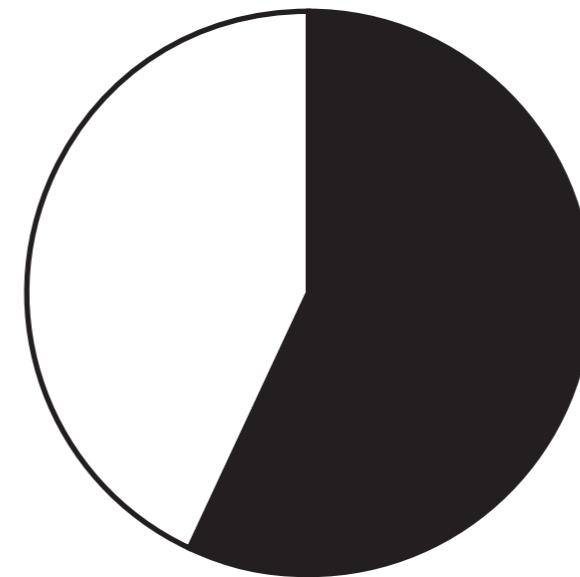
Artists awarded Grants for the Arts by the Arts Council England

Evidence 12

Artists awarded Grants for the Arts by the Arts Council England

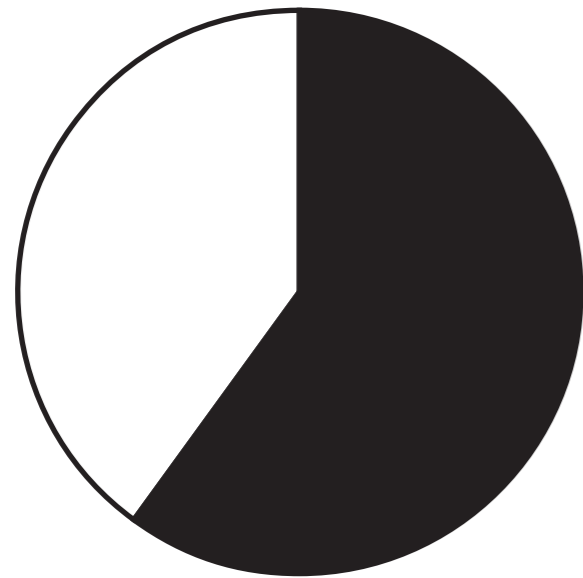
Our audit of artists awarded Grants for the Arts by the Arts Council of England in 2017 showed that:

57% of grants awarded to individual artists were female.



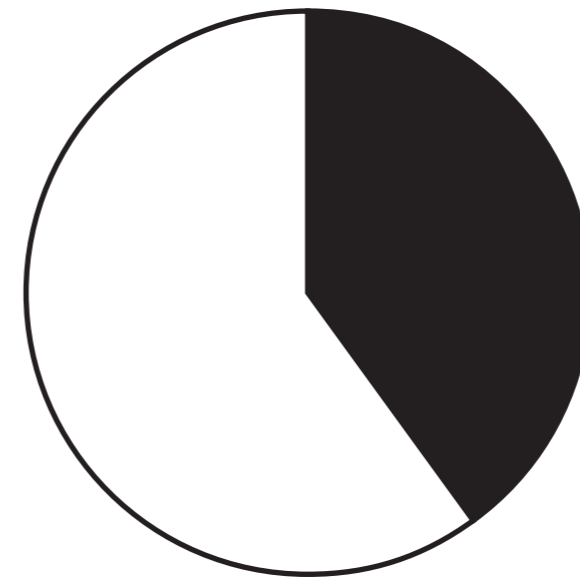
Female 57% Male 43%

60% of the 50 smallest grants made to individual artists were awarded to female artists.



Female 60% Male 40%

60% of the 50 largest grants made to individual artists were awarded to male artists.



Female 40% Male 60%

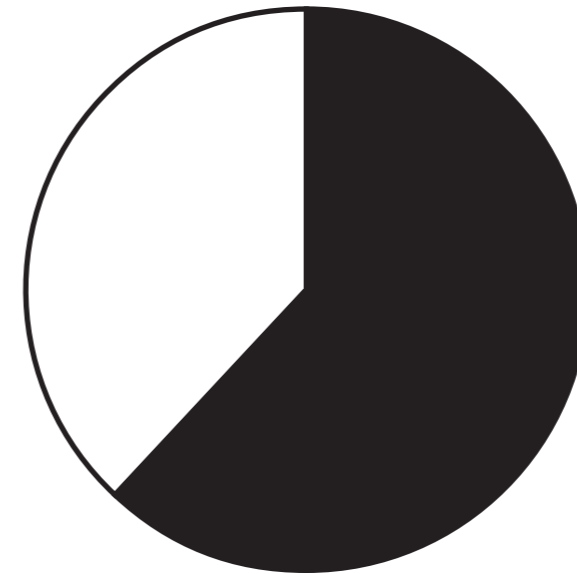
Evidence 13

New Contemporaries

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New Contemporaries

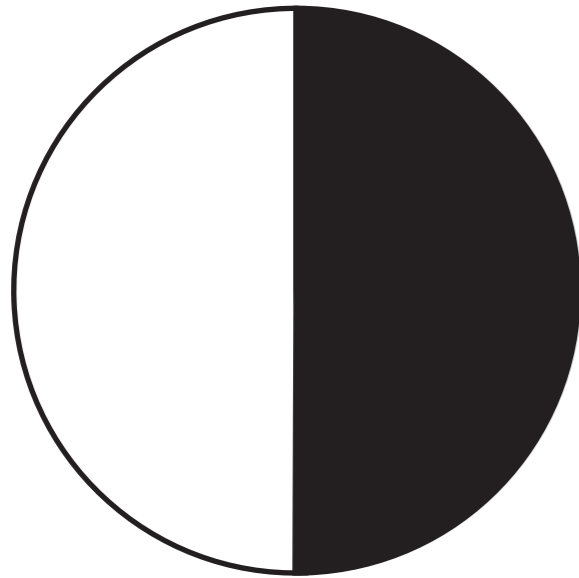
Our audit of artists applying for selection to New Contemporaries since 2010 showed:

On average 62% of applicants are women.



Female 62% Male 38%

On average 50% of
artists selected for New
Contemporaries were female.



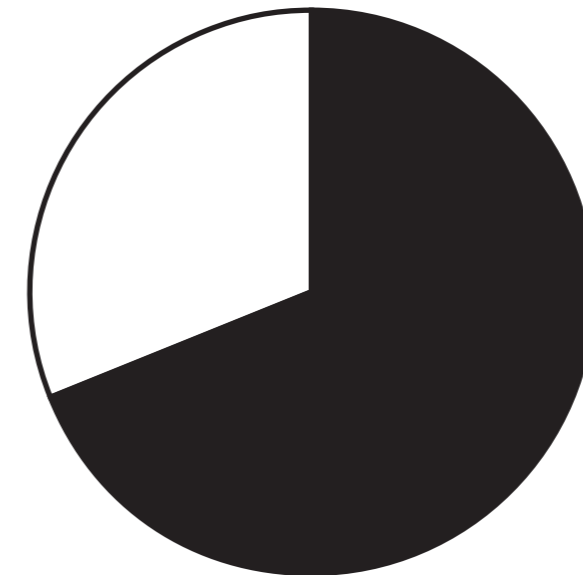
Female 50% Male 50%

Evidence 14

Applications for postgraduate study in creative arts and design

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Applications for postgraduate study in creative arts and design

Our audit of graduates applying for postgraduate study in creative arts and design in 2017 showed that 69% of applicants were female.



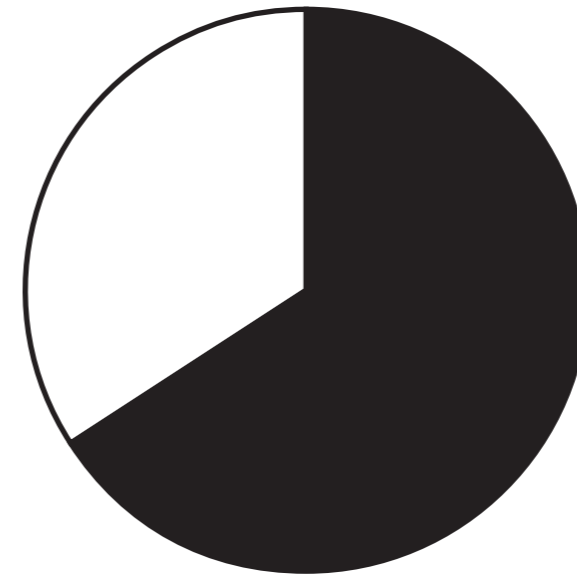
Female 69% Male 31%

Evidence 15

Students studying postgraduate creative arts and design

Evidence 15
Students studying postgraduate creative arts and design

Our audit of graduates studying postgraduate courses in 2017 in creative arts and design showed that 66% were female.



Female 66% Male 34%

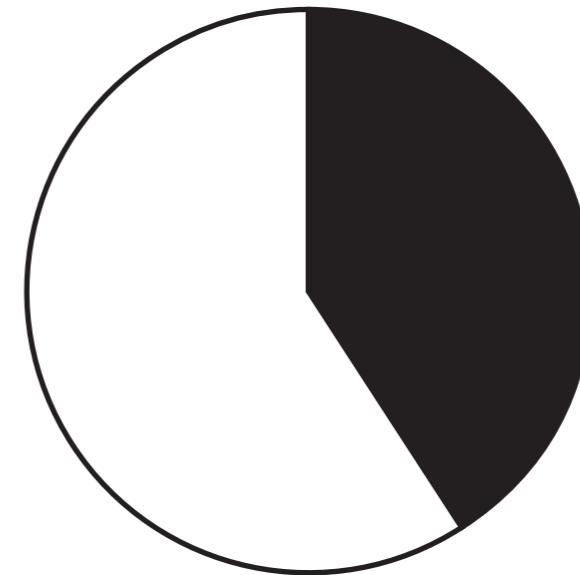
Evidence 16

Academic staff teaching art in UK universities in 2017

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Academic staff teaching art in UK universities in 2017

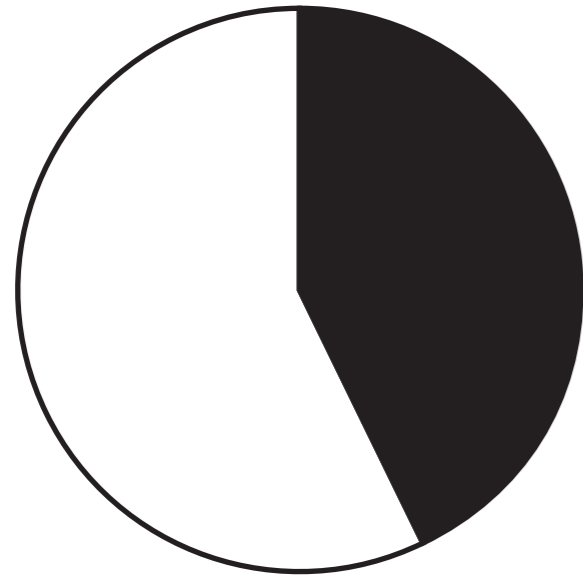
We analysed data on academic staff teaching art in UK universities in 2017 and identified a gender pay gap.

59% of the highest paid academic staff (more than £59,400) are men.



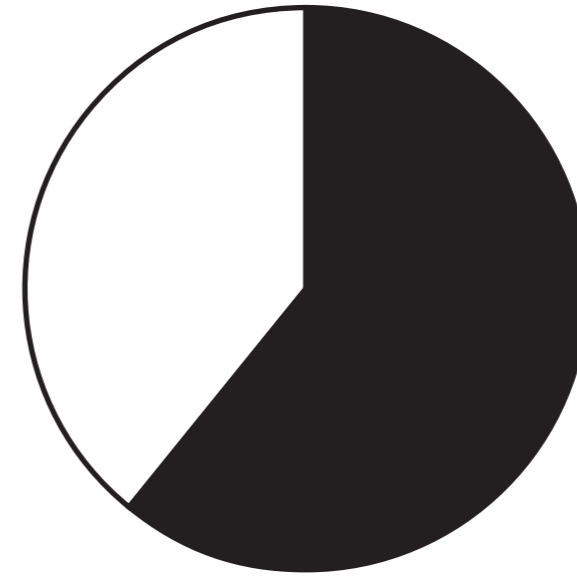
Female 41% Male 59%

43% of academic staff working full-time in art and design are women.



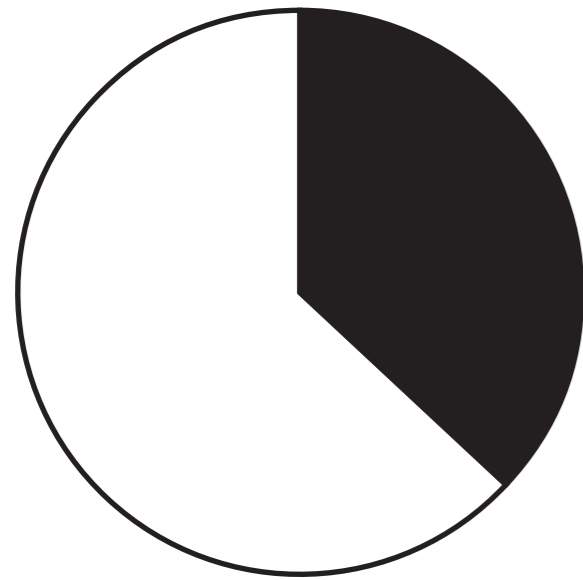
Female 43% Male 57%

61% of the lowest paid part-time academic staff (less than £18,412) are women.



Female 61% Male 39%

63% of the highest paid part-time academic staff (more than £59,400) are men.



Female 37% Male 63%

Endnotes

Notes on the methodology

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Notes on the methodology

1. Audit of solo shows in the exhibition programme of 40 non-commercial galleries in London – based on the New Exhibitions of Contemporary Art (NECA) listings, this report audited solo shows in the exhibition programme of 40 non-commercial galleries in London in the period January 2017 – December 2017. In total, 132 solo shows were examined. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender. From those 40 organisations, the research identified which institutions were NPOs⁽²⁾ (in 2017) or DCMS grant-in-aid organisations, and how much money they received (in 2017). Of the 40 organisations that were initially audited, 19 were NPOs or DCMS funded, and 70 solo shows were examined.

2. In this report, 'major institutions' are defined as organisations in receipt of over £1 million ACE/DCMS funding.

3. Audit of solo shows in the exhibition programme of 33 non-commercial galleries outside London – also based on the NECA listings, this report audited solo shows in the exhibition programme of 33 non-commercial galleries outside London, in the period January 2017 – December 2017. In total, 145 solo shows were examined. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender. From those 33 organisations, the research identified which institutions were NPOs (in 2017), and how much money they received (in 2017). Of the 33 organisations that were initially audited, 20 were NPOs, and 67 solo shows were examined.

4. *ArtReview's* Power 100 – based on the list published by the magazine in 2017. We analysed all 100 entries to identify the number of women on the list. Then, we applied the filter 'artists' to identify the number of female artists on the list. Mixed-sex entrants were excluded, while same-sex, two-person entrants were counted towards the relevant gender. Entries constituting more than two people were excluded.

5. In this report, we defined 'major commercial galleries' as galleries that were selected to participate in the main section of Frieze London 2017.
6. Artists represented by London's major commercial galleries – based on galleries selected to participate in the main section of Frieze Art Fair in 2017. In total, 38 galleries and 1380 artists were analysed. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender.
7. Solo shows at London's major galleries during Frieze Week 2017 – based on galleries selected to participate in the main section of Frieze 2017. We then analysed the solo shows that were being held in those galleries during the week of the Fair. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender.
8. Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales – based on auction events in London in March, June and October 2017.
9. Artists commissioned to make new work or exhibit in the Folkestone Triennial, Glasgow International and Liverpool Biennial were selected on the basis that they were part of the main curated programme. In total 87 artists were analysed. Mixed-sex collaborations were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender.
10. Grants for the Arts was the funding programme created by the Arts Council England. It offered awards from £1,000 to £100,000 to support a wide variety of arts-related activities. From March 2018 it was replaced by the new funding strand Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants. We analysed the 868 grants awarded for the visual arts in the financial year 2016–17. Grant applications from organisations, groups of more than two people and mixed-sex pairs

- were excluded, while same-sex, two-person collaborations were counted towards the relevant gender. Having made these exclusions, we analysed the 50 largest and 50 smallest grants awarded.
11. Our data on the percentages of male and female artists applying for New Contemporaries from 2010–17 was provided directly by New Contemporaries. The number of male and female artists chosen was analysed from the 347 artists selected by New Contemporaries during 2010–17.
 12. Our audit of staff teaching art and design in UK universities relied on data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency from the report Staff in Higher Education 2016–17. We extracted data relating specifically to art and design subjects.
 13. Our audit of graduate applications for postgraduate study in creative arts and design analysed data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in 2017.
 14. Our audit of students studying postgraduate creative arts and design analysed data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency on What Do HE Students Study? 2016/17.

2. National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) are the organisations regularly funded by Arts Council England (ACE). Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) funded organisations are organisations that receive grant-in-aid directly from the DCMS.

Marijke Steedman is the researcher and writer of this report. The report is one of a series of studies undertaken for the Freelands Foundation to investigate issues in the arts sector.

Marijke is a published author, curator and consultant.

