

The logo for Theatre Network Australia is a blue parallelogram tilted to the right. Inside the parallelogram, the words "theatre", "network", and "australia" are stacked vertically in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

theatre  
network  
australia

# THIS IS HOW WE DO IT

WORKING TRENDS OF INDEPENDENT ARTISTS,  
CREATIVES, AND ARTS WORKERS IN AUSTRALIA

THEATRE NETWORK AUSTRALIA  
JANUARY 2018

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'THIS IS HOW WE DO IT', Theatre Network Australia's report on our 2017 survey of working trends and conditions for independent artists, creatives, and arts workers, analyses results from an online survey distributed to the sector. This survey garnered 178 valid responses: establishing working habits, conditions, personal financial management, and individually established 'working rates'. It is the first survey with this focus undertaken by Theatre Network Australia (TNA), although a number of surveys into different aspects of the arts sector in Australia have been undertaken by the organisation; and TNA's work relies heavily on ongoing information gathering from our independent members in order to best serve their needs.

'THIS IS HOW WE DO IT' is an expansive look at the working trends of independent artists and arts workers. The type of work they do, how many projects are balanced, management of paid and unpaid work, non-arts employment, and collegiate relationships all factor in to create a broad picture of how our industry works, and how that shifts as we progress through our careers from 'Emerging', to 'Mid-Career', to 'Established' artists.

The objective of this report is to contribute to the health of the sector by collating and publishing data that reflects the realities of making it as an independent artist or arts worker in Australia. We hope the findings presented here provide solid provocation for discussion, evaluation, and benchmarking.

The survey was open to all arts practitioners who identify as having an independent practice - most respondents balance this practice alongside ongoing employment, both within the arts and other industries. In line with previous TNA surveys, there are more respondents from theatre/performance, and more Victorian respondents, due to the remit and base of the organisation.

54.49% of respondents identified as 'Mid-Career', with an average age of 39, and an average of 14 years of practice. Roughly a quarter identified as 'Emerging', with an average age of 30, and an average of 6 years of practice. Slightly less than 20% identified as 'Established', with averages of 54 years of age and 30 years of practice.

*We have used the self-designated career stages of 'Emerging', 'Mid-Career', and 'Established' as sorting categories for much of the data in the report, for readers to be able to compare their own conditions to those of their peers - and in order to establish a sense of career progression and generational shifts.*

The comparisons have shown some striking differences. 34% of 'Emerging' respondents identified as Culturally &/ Linguistically Diverse, more than twice the 15% of 'Established' respondents. 8.51% identified as an 'Emerging' Person with a Disability; while no 'Established' respondents did, and only 3.3% of 'Mid-Career' respondents. This could indicate a more difficult path for CALD people and people with a disability, leading to attrition from the industry as they age; it could also indicate a generational shift in which a career in the arts now has fewer obstacles for CALD people and people with a disability.

The survey also gathered data on employment not related to respondents' artform/creative practice<sup>1</sup>. This included work in fields of arts administration, education, hospitality, and other fields - and the commitment level (casual, part time, and full time). Perhaps predictably, the data indicated a decreasing need to 'rely' on non-arts work as practitioners grow older - with 34.48% of Established respondents

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<sup>1</sup> There is much more detailed evidence about earnings in the 2017 report "*Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*" by David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya.

earning a living solely from their arts practice work, nearly triple the 11.9% of Emerging respondents who can claim the same. Data was also gathered on the amount of time respondents commit to their work - and while the 22.09% of all respondents who work only within their arts practice have an average working week of 43 hours, the 14.72% of respondents who maintain full time employment in addition have a combined working week of 59 hours (assuming an average of 38 full time hours alongside the 21 hours they commit to their arts work).

*Respondents split this time across an average of close to 8 projects per year - though respondents who do not work outside their arts practice complete an average of 14 projects per year to earn a living wage; an equivalent to commencing a project every 3.5 weeks.*

In an industry where many engagements are tailored to projects and individuals, it is difficult to establish benchmarks for hourly or weekly rates. This survey therefore posed specific common scenarios, such as private tutoring, short masterclasses, panel discussions, and project employment by organisations, funded arts collectives, and unfunded collectives. The estimated fees that respondents would set for these scenarios vary, but the averages may be helpful.

The figures also establish a good sense of career progression, with Established practitioners in some instances charging more than 80% more than their Emerging counterparts; a testament to the worth of 30 average years of practice in the arts. Other scenarios, such as working with funded organisations, see Established artists valuing their time at only 2.86% more than Emerging peers. Taken in combination with comments about uncertainty and limited success in negotiating fees for creative work with organisations, it indicates an industry where the power to financially recognise experience largely lies with organisations - as one respondent noted, *“there is so often someone willing to do it for less. It’s like a race to the bottom...”*. Respondents have contributed a wealth of comments about scenarios in which they have successfully and unsuccessfully negotiated fees - these comments can offer a range of ‘how to’ tips for approaching these types of negotiations.

While the report illustrates a mixed financial reality, it also paints a picture of a vibrant independent sector built on peer exchange, mentorship, and skill-sharing.

*Respondents contributed a significant amount of detail to questions about mentoring and ‘alternative economies’ - in which they exchange pro-bono advice, space-sharing, administrative assistance, and other work on each other’s projects.*

In many cases, trading is informal; other respondents carefully calculate the value of this work. One respondent noted *“1hr of an artists skilled time equals an hour of teaching or mentoring from me. On some projects this is upward of 50hrs of exchange”* - evidencing a careful recognition of the value of time and relationships in the independent sector. Indeed, over 40% of respondents have some form of formal or informal mentorship arrangement in place, and over 39% of other respondents *want* that type of relationship. These contributions illustrate a sector built on interconnectedness, relying on each other for employment, care, skill and information sharing.

Theatre Network Australia welcomes thoughts and feedback to this research, and thanks all survey participants for their time and valuable contribution.

## ABOUT THEATRE NETWORK AUSTRALIA

Theatre Network Australia (TNA) is the leading industry development organisation for the performing arts, prioritising independent artists and small to medium companies. A national organisation with a dedicated Victorian program, TNA strengthens artists and arts organisations, influences cultural policy, facilitates critical debate and networking, and advocates for a robust, interconnected and innovative sector.

Theatre Network Australia was founded by the Victorian theatre sector in early 2009 (as Theatre Network Victoria), and is funded by Creative Victoria and the Australia Council for the Arts.

Our principal goals are

- **STRONGER ARTISTS & COMPANIES:**

Theatre Network Australia strengthens, supports and connects independent performing artists and producers, small to medium organisations and larger performing arts organisations.

- **STRONGER ARTS SECTOR:**

Theatre Network Australia achieves progressive change in the arts industry and impels evidence-based, values driven cultural policy.

- **STRONGER ORGANISATION:**

Theatre Network Australia is recognised for its effective leadership in the performing arts, and galvanises an extensive, broad and diverse membership in Victoria and across Australia.

We run industry forums, including the biennial Australian Theatre Forum and the annual Victorian Theatre Forum; we run workshops on current issues for the sector; we run advocacy campaigns in partnership with other service organisations and the sector; we undertake and promote research and benchmarking; we provide advice to industry, the education sector and government; and we provide information and resources through our popular e-news and the online resource library.

As a national organisation, Theatre Network Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the different lands on which we meet, gather, and work, especially the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nation where our office is based. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

## PART 1 WHO WE ARE

There were 178 valid responses to the survey; 132 of which completed the entire survey.

### Respondents categorised by career stage (self-identified)

	Percentage of Respondents	Age Range	Average Age	Avg Years of Practice	Median Years of Practice
<b>Emerging</b>	26.97%	20-55	30	6	5
<b>Mid-Career</b>	54.49%	29-60	39	14	10
<b>Established</b>	18.54%	36-67	54	30	30
<b>OVERALL</b>		<b>20-67</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

Slightly over half of respondents identified as 'Mid-Career' artists; with an average of 14 years of artistic/creative practice.

Respondents ranged from those with 1 year of practice (4 respondents) to 50 years (1 respondent); with an average of 14 years of practice across all survey respondents.

### By State/Territory

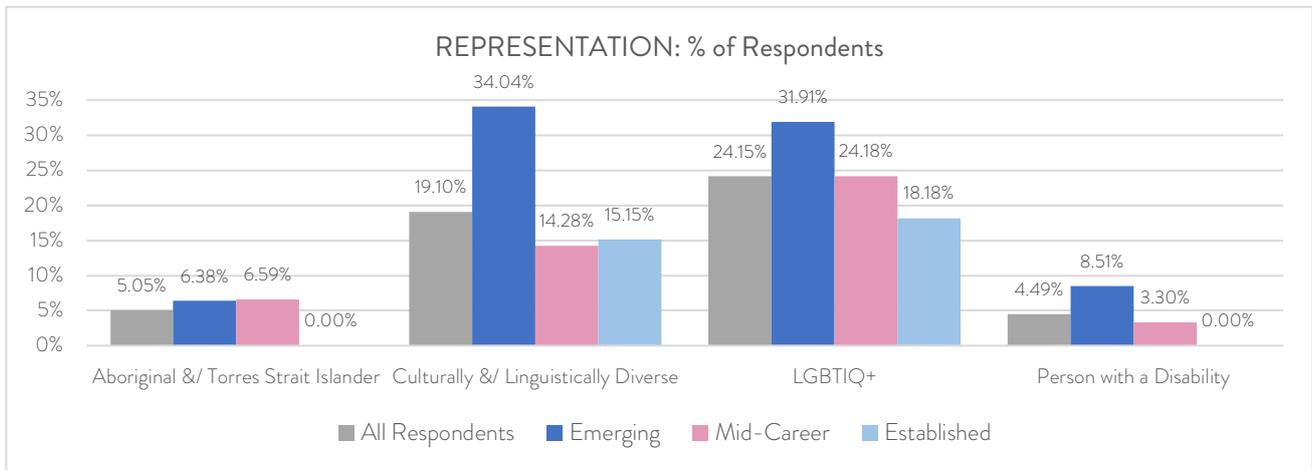
The greatest number of survey respondents was based in Victoria at 55.5%, with responses received from every state/territory in the country except the ACT.

Over 80% of respondents were based in urban centres. 19% of respondents were based regionally, with three-quarters of these in NSW & Victoria. 1 respondent was based remotely, in the Northern Territory.

### Country of origin

78% of respondents were born in Australia; 6.17% were born in the United Kingdom, 2.8% were born in New Zealand. Respondents were also born in El Salvador, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, Tanzania, Vietnam, and the United States of America.

## Representation



5.05% of respondents were Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander; nearly double the 2.8% of the Australian population recorded in the 2016 census.<sup>2</sup>

24.15% of respondents identified as LGBTIQ+.

People with Disabilities (PwD) were represented by 4.49% of respondents; lower than the approximately 8% of the Australian population who are PwD engaged in the labour force (currently employed or actively looking for work).

## Gender Identity

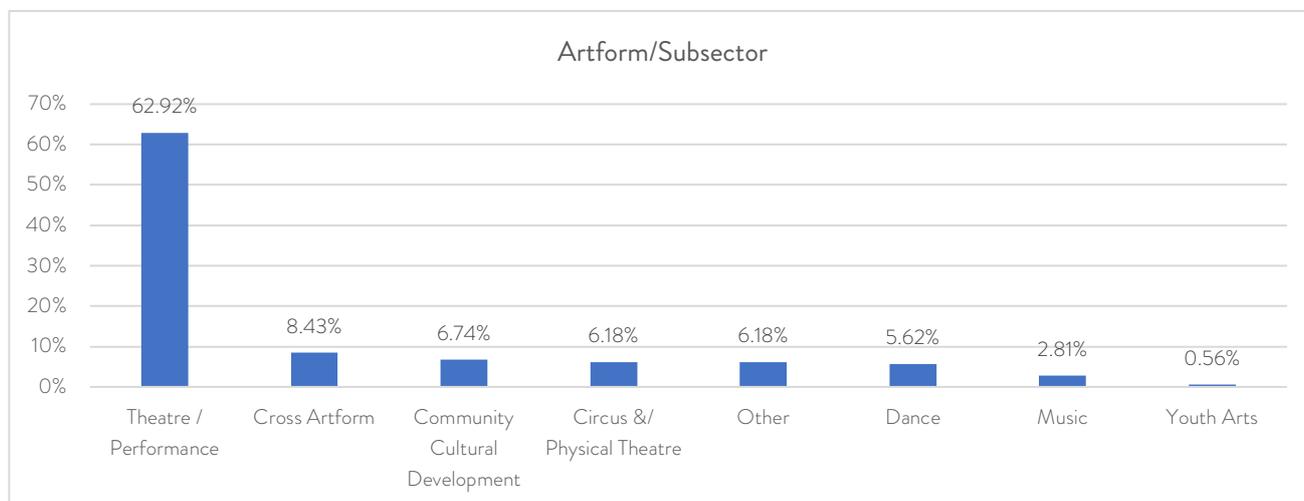
In addition to the above statistics on representation; 70.22% respondents identified as female; 25.84% identified as male; 3.93% identified their gender in another way. This is as compared to 0.016% of the Australian population at the last census who identify in another way.

One third of male respondents identified as Established (approx. one third) compared to one-sixth of female artists.

<sup>2</sup> More information can be found at the Australian Bureau of Statistics: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

## PART 2 WHAT WE DO

### Artform/Subsector



The majority of respondents identify their practice as Theatre or Performance-based, reflecting TNA's membership base and reach. 'Other' respondents detailed work in the areas of Live Art, Participatory/Social Practice, Cabaret, Burlesque, Writing, Comedy, and Experimental Practice.

Across all artforms;

- 55.62% of respondents identified as a 'Lead Creative' (creating/driving their own work)
- 20.22% identified as most often 'Employed on Arts Projects by Organisations/Companies'
- 19.1% identified as a 'Collaborator (Sharing the Risk)'
- 5.06% identified as most often 'Employed on Arts Projects by Other Artists'

## Primary practice

Respondents were asked to identify their primary practice, which for the purposes of this survey is the practice or career path they would consider to be their primary focus, rather than that which makes up the most substantial part of their income.

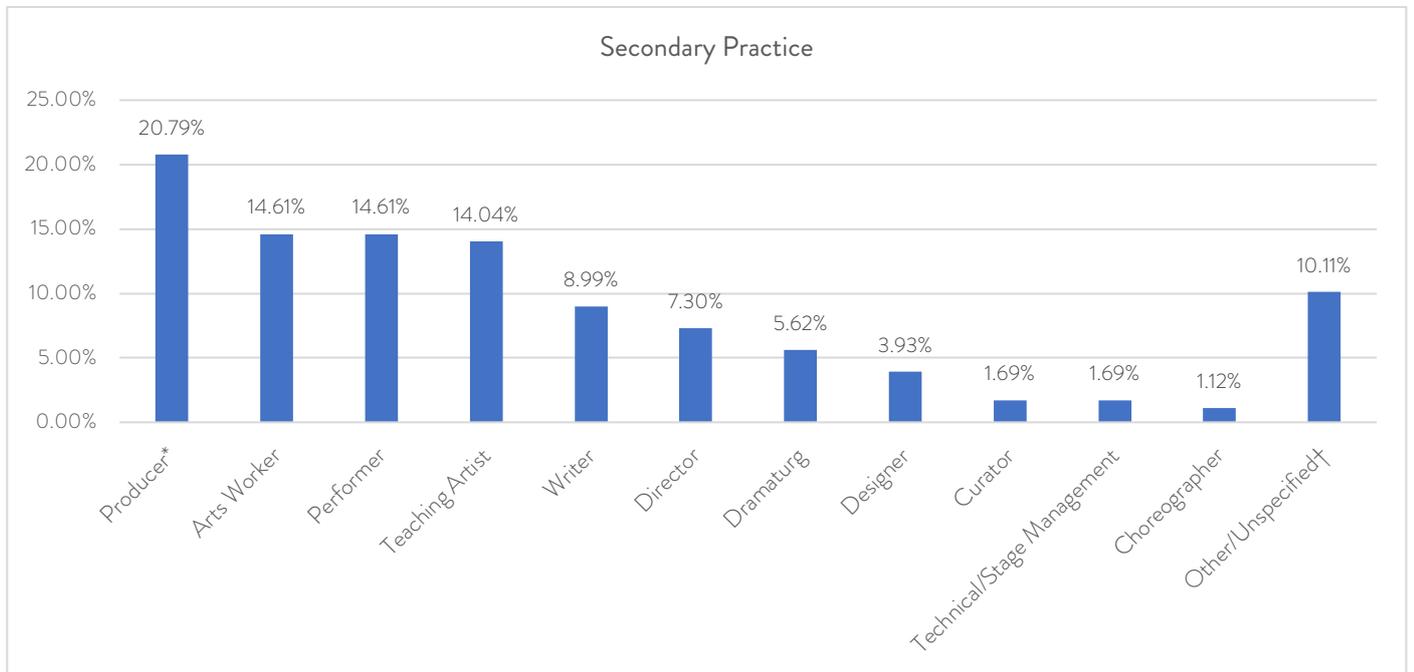
	Percentage of Respondents
<b>Artist/Creative</b>	75.84%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Director</i>	*21.91%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Writer</i>	*16.29%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Theatre/Performance Maker</i>	*15.73%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Performer</i>	*11.23%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Dancer/Choreographer</i>	*3.93%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Circus Performer</i>	*2.25%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Composer/Musician/Sound Artist</i>	*2.25%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Dramaturg</i>	*2.25%
<i>*Artist/Creative: Unspecified/Other†</i>	*11.8%
<b>Producer/Curator</b>	20.22%
<b>Teaching Artist</b>	3.93%

*\*Many Artist/Creatives chose to include specific vocations, which have been detailed above. Total percentage exceeding 100% reflects a number of respondents indicating multiple practices/vocations.*

*†Other practice/vocation details included Researcher, Access & Inclusion Specialist, Poet, Comedian, Illustrator.*

## Secondary practice

Acknowledging that many artists work across multiple vocations and skill set, respondents were also asked to identify their secondary practice, from a list of common arts roles.



*\*75% of Secondary-Practice-Producers listed Writer, Director, Performer, or Performance Maker as their Primary Practice. This aligns with comments indicating that many independent artists see self-producing as their only option and an integral part of their artistic careers.*

*†Other secondary practice/vocation details included Consultant, Manager, DJ, Facilitator, Poet, Researcher, Voice Artist, Prop Maker, Photographer. In addition to these, some respondents listed practice/vocations that would not usually be viewed as an artistic practice; these included Urban Planner, Policy Writer (Non-Arts), Publicity/Marketing, Civil Celebrant, Behavioural & Communications Analyst, Psychotherapist.*

## Other employment by sector, all respondents

The independent arts sector is largely composed of people who maintain paid employment outside of their practices to supplement (and in many cases, subsidise) their art practices.

	Emerging	Mid-Career	Established	Total
<b>Other employment</b>	88.1%	75.58%	65.52%	77.91%
<b>No other employment</b>	11.9%	24.42%	34.48%	22.09%

Note that totals within this section often exceed 100%. This is due to 14.72% of all respondents listing employment in multiple industries and capacities.

Employment Sector	Percentage of Respondents	Terms of employment within that sector
<b>Arts administration</b>	31.21%	40.18% <i>Casual</i>
		48.98% <i>Part Time</i>
		26.53% <i>Full Time</i>
<b>Education</b>	26.11%	68.29% <i>Casual</i>
		31.71% <i>Part Time</i>
		9.76% <i>Full Time</i>
<b>Hospitality</b>	7.64%	83.33% <i>Casual</i>
		8.33% <i>Part Time</i>
		16.67% <i>Full Time</i>
<b>Other industries</b>	27.38%	53.49% <i>Casual</i>
		34.89% <i>Part Time</i>
		18.6% <i>Full Time</i>
<b>Not employed outside their art practice</b>	22.09%	

Note that totals within this section often exceed 100%, due to respondents listing employment in multiple industries and capacities.

In general,

- 38.65% of respondents maintain Casual employment outside of their arts practice
- 26.99% of respondents maintain Part Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 14.72% of respondents maintain Full Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 22.09% of respondents are not employed beyond their arts practice.

## Other employment by sector, Emerging respondents

Emerging - Employment Sector	Percentage of Respondents	Terms of employment within that sector
Arts administration	30.95%	61.5% <i>Casual</i>
		23.08% <i>Part Time</i>
		30.77% <i>Full Time</i>
Education	26.19%	72.72% <i>Casual</i>
		27.27% <i>Part Time</i>
		9.09% <i>Full Time</i>
Hospitality	19.05%	75% <i>Casual</i>
		25% <i>Full Time</i>
Other industries	40.48%	47.06% <i>Casual</i>
		11.76% <i>Part Time</i>
		41.18% <i>Full Time</i>
Not employed outside the arts	11.9%	

Note that totals within this section often exceed 100%, due to respondents listing employment in multiple industries and capacities.

In general,

- 50% of Emerging respondents maintain Casual employment outside of their arts practice
- 16.67% of Emerging respondents maintain Part Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 26.19% of Emerging respondents maintain Full Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 11.9% of Emerging respondents are not employed beyond their arts practice.

## Other employment by sector, Mid-Career respondents

Mid-Career - Employment Sector	Percentage of Respondents	Terms of employment within that sector
Arts administration	34.21%	42.31% <i>Casual</i>
		65.38% <i>Part Time</i>
		15.38% <i>Full Time</i>
Education	25.58%	68.18% <i>Casual</i>
		31.81% <i>Part Time</i>
		13.64% <i>Full Time</i>
Hospitality	2.33%	100% <i>Casual</i>
		50% <i>Part Time</i>
Other industries	26.74%	60.87% <i>Casual</i>
		47.83% <i>Part Time</i>
		4.35% <i>Full Time</i>
Not employed outside the arts	24.42%	

Note that totals within this section often exceed 100%, due to respondents listing employment in multiple industries and capacities.

In general,

- 43.02% of Mid-Career respondents maintain Casual employment outside of their arts practice
- 32.56% of Mid-Career respondents maintain Part Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 9.3% of Mid-Career respondents maintain Full Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 24.42% of Mid-Career respondents are not employed beyond their arts practice.

## Other employment by sector, Established respondents

Established - Employment Sector	Percentage of Respondents	Terms of employment within that sector
<b>Arts administration</b>	34.48%	10% <i>Casual</i>
		40% <i>Part Time</i>
		50% <i>Full Time</i>
<b>Education</b>	27.58%	62.5% <i>Casual</i>
		37.5% <i>Part Time</i>
<b>Hospitality</b>	6.9%	100% <i>Casual</i>
<b>Other industries</b>	10.34%	33.33% <i>Casual</i>
		66.67% <i>Part Time</i>
<b>Not employed outside the arts</b>	34.48%	

Note that totals within this section often exceed 100%, due to respondents listing employment in multiple industries and capacities.

In general,

- 17.24% of Established respondents maintain Casual employment outside of their arts practice
- 31.03% of Established respondents maintain Part Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 17.24% of Established respondents maintain Full Time employment outside of their arts practice
- 34.48% of Established respondents are not employed beyond their arts practice.

## **Creative time**

Respondents were asked, on average, how much time they spent per week, directly related to their artistic practice/s. This could include creating art and/or administrative work – emails, grant-writing, marketing, production meetings.

Overall, respondents committed an average of 31.7 hours per week to their practices. By career stage;

- Emerging respondents committed approx. 31.6 hours per week
- Mid-Career respondents committed approx. 33.75 hours per week
- Established respondents committed approx. 34.5 hours per week.

Breaking that down by primary practice;

- Artist/Creatives committed approx. 31.6 hours per week
- Producer/Curators committed approx. 31.09 hours per week
- Teaching Artists committed approx. 36 hours per week.

In combination with their non-arts employment;

- Respondents also working Casually committed approx. 30 hours per week
- Respondents also working Part Time committed approx. 27 hours per week
- Respondents also working Full Time committed approx. 21 hours per week.

Combining a Full Time working commitment of 38 hours per week with the time committed to arts practice work would indicate that around 18% of survey respondents maintain an average working week of nearly 60 hours.

Respondents who do not also maintain employment outside their artistic practice/s commit approximately 43 hours per week.

## **Average number of projects per year**

Respondents worked an average of 8.13 projects within their artistic practice/s over the 2016-2017 financial year.

- Emerging respondents worked an average of 5.23 projects
- Mid-Career respondents worked an average of 9.36 projects
- Established respondents worked an average of 8.4 projects
  
- Respondents who maintain casual employment worked an average of 6.8 projects
- Respondents who maintain part-time employment worked an average of 6.69 projects
- Respondents who maintain full-time employment worked an average of 5.21 projects

Respondents who do not work outside of their artistic practice – for whom artistic work is their sole income – worked an average of 14.03 projects over the 2016-2017 financial year.

## PART 3 FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

Theatre Network Australia regularly fields requests from Independent Artists and Arts Workers for a standard or benchmark value for their time in a range of employment circumstances. Many of these do not have a recognised industry standard (and may fluctuate based on the particulars of the employer). For that reason, we listed common scenarios in order to establish fee averages for various activity.

Theatre Network Australia advocates for artists to be paid the minimum wage or to standards such as the Live Performance Awards where they apply. We do not endorse the rates listed below, but are highlighting the rates respondents have provided in the survey.

### One-off engagements

In this section, respondents were asked to identify how much they currently charge for the following:

Scenario	Emerging Average	Mid-Career Average	Established Average	Overall Average
1 hour of private tutoring	\$66.04	\$74.89	\$111.05	<b>\$80.72</b>
Planning and facilitating a 2 hour masterclass	\$207.60	\$267.76	\$316.04	<b>\$263.98</b>
1 hour industry panel discussion	\$137.14	\$202.70	\$250	<b>\$195.78</b>
Writing and delivering a formal keynote	\$312.10	\$505.14	\$540	<b>\$459.57</b>

### Hourly and weekly rates

The survey then polled respondents on how much they currently charge for project-based scenarios, in which they may be working with or employed by a company, collective, or other artist for an unspecified amount of time. Respondents were asked to provide separate hourly and weekly rates.

	Working with established organisations	Working with funded artist/collectives	Working with unfunded artist/collectives*
<b>Emerging:</b> Hourly / Weekly	\$46.55 / \$1,262.14	\$33.13 / \$854.41	\$22.76 / \$509.50
<b>Mid-Career:</b> Hourly / Weekly	\$56.96 / \$1,223.77	\$42.77 / \$937.23	\$24.48 / \$529.41
<b>Established:</b> Hourly / Weekly	\$75.20 / \$1,298.26	\$50.73 / \$1,122.17	\$35.83 / \$711.11

\*A significant portion of respondents indicated that they would not charge to work with unfunded artists/collectives – between 14-44% of respondents, dependent on career level, and with some variation between hourly/weekly possibilities. The above table excludes '\$0' responses to calculate an average based on those who *would* charge for their contribution.

## How respondents calculate their rates

Below are comments left by respondents when asked to detail how they calculate their working rates.

- *"I have no idea how to calculate rates! I am only just beginning to look for opportunities to charge for my work."* – Emerging & Regional Writer/Director/Performer
- *"Often the charge is per project as the budget allows, and I try not to calculate the actual hours put in as it is too depressing!"* – Emerging & Urban Director/Dramaturg
- *"I factor in travel time. And if I need to hire space to teach or plan/choreograph prior"* – Emerging & Urban Dancer/Choreographer
- *"I use the 'must pay my rent' measure to determine whether I agree to a project. If it interests me, I will commit to it and am happy to work for free, but only if the time commitment does not preclude my ability to earn enough to pay the rent that week."* – Mid-Career Urban Writer/Performer
- *"I use the Live Performance Award as a guide for regular work engagements, but set my own rate for short term/one-off engagements"* – Mid-Career Regional Performance Maker & Producer
- *"Average hourly rate at main job plus tax, super and insurance and rounded up."* – Mid-Career Urban Producer/Curator

*"Casual rates are well known to be 25% higher than full time hourly rates to compensate for holiday pay, sick leave & other entitlements, [and] 'on costs' are higher again – for 9.5% super, but also payroll tax, long service leave and Work Cover. Thus, an ordinary worker who is invoicing an hourly rate needs to invoice at around 50% higher than the hourly rate of a permanent worker to have some sort of parity. However Casual staff, while paid by the hour, normally have ongoing work - freelancers need to be available to come and do short bursts of intense activity; they need to negotiate and quote for jobs and invoice for them afterwards; they run small businesses with all of the attendant costs of administration and insurance...hourly rates normally reflect the hours of preparation behind each contact hour."*  
– Survey Respondent Janet Watson Kruse: Actor, Connector, Creative: BA(Hons), B Theol (Hons), Dip Ed, Registered Teacher & Roleplayer with over 555 workshop experiences.

## Alternative economies

Theatre Network Australia recognises that many artists trade in ‘alternative economies’ – bartering or providing free of charge goods, services, and creative perspectives. The survey asked respondents to describe any non-financial support/in-kind/benefits they might give, receive or trade in an average year (this may include in-kind space for training/practice, mentoring, technical or design support, etc).

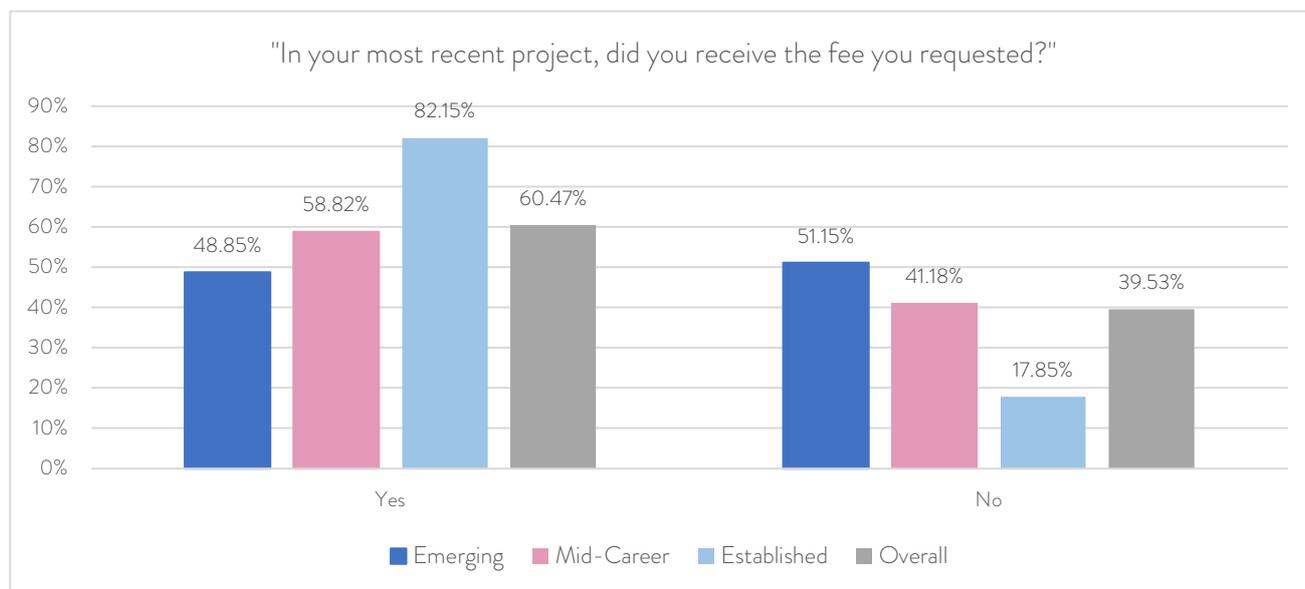
Below are selected comments.

- *“I give mentorship; dramaturgical support; and proofread & give feedback on application”  
– Emerging Urban Director/Dramaturg*
- *“In-kind space, in-kind photography or graphic design, child care support from non-retired family, in-kind from live musician and composer” – Emerging Regional Performance Maker*
- *“Exchanging design services for dramaturgical consultation or mentoring support; exchanging equipment hire for other equipment hire; exchanging design services for access to space or technical resources...” – Emerging Urban Theatre Designer*
- *“Diversity & inclusion advice, casting advice, mentoring emerging artists, dramaturgy, creative development” – Emerging Urban Performer/Producer*
- *“Peer learning circles over dinner parties, mentoring/ advice giving/ receiving, emotional support in this precarious industry, sharing access to theatre tix, sharing contacts, in-kind publicity on community radio, the list is endless!” – Mid-Career Urban Performance Maker/Producer*
- *“Trade freelance communications work for store credit at organic grocer; trade consulting and advice for rent-free accommodation with emerging philanthropist; trade advice and consulting with peer for sewing project.” – Mid-Career Urban Live Artist*
- *“Barter with other artists for teaching, gigs, technical support. Volunteering on arts panels and advocacy for female artists.” – Mid-Career Urban Musician/Composer/Sound Artist*
- *“Hard to accurately measure. Sometimes it is a formal agreed exchange of goods and services but much more often it's a nebulous accounting process where someone helps you so you recognise an obligation to return the favour...at some point...”  
– Established Regional Performance Maker/Director*
- *“I offer exchange economy on most projects. 1hr of an artists skilled time equals an hour of teaching or mentoring from me. On some projects this is upward of 50hrs of exchange.”  
– Established Urban Teaching Artist/Curator*
- *“My corporate goal is to get paid for at least a quarter of what I do (joke but pretty accurate in practice)! Trading mutual non-financial support with collaborators includes space, equipment, creative development/rehearsal, help with e.g. grant applications, letters of support etc etc. A lot of it is TIME ...” – Established Urban Performance Maker*

## PART 4 FOR WHAT YOU'RE GETTING

Given the lack of accepted industry standard for one-off fees, fees are often negotiated between artist and employer (who may also be an artist).

Survey respondents were asked to supply information about recent instances in which they have negotiated fees.



### Successful negotiations

Respondents were invited to include detail about a time in which they had successfully negotiated a fee for themselves. Below is a selection of responses:

- *"On a larger project, longer development period, the split of box office wasn't divided evenly but as a percentage based on the stages of involvement, ie. planning, preproduction, production."* – Emerging Urban Writer/Producer
- *"I was asked to choreograph a piece for/with high school students at a private school with 2.5 hours travel time each way over 5 x 3 hr sessions. I requested \$360 per session (a full day's work plus planning) and they were surprised that I was asking for so much. I negotiated \$10 below that figure and tried to break all the costs down for them. They accepted but said they might have to ask the girls' families for an 'extra contribution' to cover my fee. I frequently feel called upon to defend my asking fees. It's tiring, and the guilt trip of 'asking the families for extra' seemed unnecessary."* – Emerging Urban Dancer/Choreographer
- *"This is a brand-new thing for me to do as a person. I had an experience this year of negotiating for a job for over 6 months with a professional organisation who were unclear in what they were asking for and very hard to get clear answers from. It led me to do a LOT of soul searching, join the MEAA ECS (Entertainment, Crew & Sports) Section and in the end decide that the organisation couldn't provide me with an equitable deal and employment which would have been good for my health."* – Emerging Urban Stage Manager
- *"Often, an organisation will ask how much I charge for a show & I will provide a quote. If they can't afford that amount, then I offer less hours/days. I am a stickler for paying myself and any collaborators for travel, per diems and an extra day for meetings, contract signing, emails etc. As*

*I get more established, I am getting more confident in this. I also sometimes say to presenters "you can't afford us" and remember that my work is high quality and I want to live off it! And we all put so much free time in the development stage, that we need to ensure we get paid appropriately for the performance seasons."*

*– Mid-Career Urban Participatory/Social Practice Artist*

- *"We did a pilot at a loss; when approached for a new version we quoted at base rate of two days and core staff - they said it was too expensive we said no problem they can go elsewhere ... and they found the money four months later."* – Mid-Career Urban Comedian/Producer
- *"I successfully increased the wage for a major project threefold by outlining my experience and how it related to the project brief."* – Mid-Career Regional Producer/Curator
- *"I work with independent artists in a holistic way, that is beyond project budgets. These people have extremely limited funds, so the conversation around value is key. This is most challenging in the early stages of developing a relationship with an artist, where outcomes are fewer and benefits less easy to match against investment. However, in general, I provide examples from my past work with artists to try to build trust and openness. I am very clear early on that I can't work for free, as it is unsustainable."* – Mid-Career Urban Producer/Curator
- *"I have several times negotiated my design fee with major theatre companies where they weren't paying me as much as other designers, or fairly for the work being provided. Most of the time these negotiations don't end with me being paid what I was asking, but a compromise."* – Mid-Career Urban Director/Designer
- *"My agent does this for me, but it is increasingly difficult to negotiate fees that will allow me to continue to live in Sydney."* – Mid-Career Urban Writer/Teaching Artist
- *"Directed a show through a creative development and a work in progress then the season. I received a fee for the season only. When the show toured they engaged a new director and I was able to negotiate my royalty from their offer of 1% of Box office to 3%"* – Mid-Career Regional Writer/Director
- *"A fee was offered - \$1200 with an expectation from this major org, that this would equate to a full week's engagement. I replied letting them know that the offered fee of \$1200 equalled 24 rehearsal hours. As their intention was for me to be in the rehearsal for a full week they increased the fee."* – Established Urban Teaching Artist/Curator
- *"I negotiated a higher fee than originally offered with an educational institution by researching their staff rates and pointing out that a breakdown of the fee offered was equivalent to the minimum for an entry level administration officer."* – Established Urban Director/Writer

## **Unsuccessful negotiations**

Respondents were also invited to share details pertaining to *unsuccessful* fee negotiations. Names of people and organisations have been redacted. Below is a selection of responses:

- *"I was promised a rate of \$100 per hour to run workshops leading to a tertiary teaching production. The money ran out halfway to the production but, not wanting to let the students down, I saw the project through and only invoiced for what the budget allowed."* – Emerging Urban Director/Dramaturg
- *"In one independent project I undertook last year the director promised all actors 'equity minimum wages' and assured us there was funding received for the project. By the time we realised he was lying and we were all going to be paid through a profit-share we felt it was too late to withdraw from the project."* – Emerging Urban Performance Maker/Performer

- “[An Arts Festival] offered us a flat fee to cover flights and artist fees plus all project costs which was not enough to pay artists award rates or per diems. They didn’t budge when we asked for more money.” – Emerging Urban Choreographer
- “A company approached me to produce an entire show for "exposure", I said we charge, and never heard from them again.” – Emerging Urban Producer/Curator
- “A state theatre company wanted to engage me to design some content for a marketing project. They offered \$25/hr. I asked for \$40/hr and they rejected this with a bit of attitude. They were trying to view me as an employee with a rate equivalent to that of a salary, even though I was not working for them at the time and the gig would have only given me about a week's worth of work.” – Emerging Urban Director/Designer
- “[Redacted Festival] always insist on paying me \$100 to perform for 20 mins or so in the city (paid parking) even though I've told them I am a single mother of 2 and would have to pay at least 50 for child care and extra to buy food so that I have time to get ready and be there to perform.” – Emerging Urban Writer/Poet/Musician
- “A writer’s festival...wanted one of our projects. I wanted to go to this festival, and I didn't charge enough for the amount of work we did. I feel guilty that I let that happen, because I know that when I say yes, they get confident in negotiating down on other artists....” – Mid-Career Urban Participatory/Social Practice Artist
- “I had some contract confusion while working on a project with a major theatre company. I believe I was in the right and could have gone to AWG but felt that I would jeopardise my future working potential to take on the company and so gave in and lost probably two thousand dollars.” – Mid-Career Urban Writer/Performer
- “In circus there is so often someone willing to do it for less. It's like a race to the bottom but completely unsustainable.” – Mid-Career Urban Circus Performer
- “Often times, having negotiated reduced scope instead of increased fees with the producer, the director is unaware of those negotiations, and doesn't care about the terms - they just want the best show they can get. This results in me working additional hours, or taking on additional responsibilities I had been told I wouldn't have to do.” – Mid-Career Urban Sound Designer
- “I was surprised when under commission at [Redacted] that I was not paid as the writer on the project to be in the room for a week-long workshop. When I queried this, I was told that it was included in my commissioning fee but this was not in the contract anywhere.” – Mid-Career Urban Writer
- “I was young, and naively signed a very problematic contract. The rights to that work remain exclusively held by the commissioning company, and I've now learnt much from the experience.” – Established Regional Writer
- “I tried to negotiate a bonus for my Producing work contract in 2017-2018. At the time of contract (Feb 2017) I was turned down for a bonus to be written into the contract (no doubt as financial status insecure). Now we are at end of year and we are actually about to make a surplus despite being defunded, the company is actually seriously considering giving me the bonus. I feel like I should have pushed harder at the start!” – Established Urban Director
- “A fee was offered. For the hours ON the project it was acceptable. When the contract arrived, this same fee included the hours on the project, 10hrs of meetings, the debrief and preparation and admin equally up to 10hrs / week. When pressed to offer a higher fee given the degree of expected time / duties, they refused, and I had already started the project - the mistake was not seeing the contract BEFORE BEGINNING the project.” – Established Urban Teaching Artist/Curator

## PART 5 BY THE NUMBERS

### Number of projects paid below industry standard<sup>3</sup>

Respondents were asked to detail how many projects over the past year were paid below industry rates.

On average, 4.7 projects were paid below industry rates.

- Emerging respondents detailed, on average, 5.21 projects were paid below industry rates
- Mid-Career respondents detailed, on average, 4.48 projects were paid below industry rates
- Established respondents detailed, on average, 4.62 projects were paid below industry rates

### Number of projects undertaken without financial remuneration<sup>4</sup>

When asked to detail how many projects over the past year they worked without being paid at all, the overall average response was 2.6.

- Emerging respondents detailed, on average, 2.84
- Mid-Career respondents detailed, on average, 2.68
- Established respondents detailed, on average 2.14.

When asked if unpaid work led to other, paid, employment opportunities or benefits, respondents left the below selected comments.

- *“Not yet. I am prepared to use unpaid work to establish my reputation as a theatre-maker of quality. I am noticing that my name is beginning to be recognised within my local arts community. I have made significant networks and a couple of strong creative partnerships/collaborators from the work I have been doing.” - Emerging Regional Writer/Director/Performer.*
- *“Some were experiences that I wanted for my own education and experience, others were to support friends or artists whose work I think is important and who should have more opportunities.” – Emerging Urban Choreographer*
- *“They barely do and usually people just want to tick a box with my presence or get my perspectives and ideas for free. I get nothing really. I got into an industry event for free once for doing something but even that was downgraded and again I was used as a token, an afterthought and at the event was made uncomfortable coz it was very much just white people and specifically a lot of white men.” – Emerging Urban Musician*
- *“All these opportunities are leading to bigger opportunities. Hopefully with the work I have been generating over the last year will help me apply for paid residencies, grants and generate work with larger and better funded theatres.” – Urban Emerging Director/Producer*
- *“It was for the development of my own art project which I felt strongly about creating. The work will be presented next year at [Redacted Festival] but we are unlikely to receive a reasonable fee due to unsuccessful funding from one of two sources we've applied for.” – Emerging Regional Performance Maker*
- *“No. Nothing. It gave me clarity that I can't really go on like this and I need to think of myself first before others.” – Emerging Urban Producer/Curator*

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<sup>3</sup> The survey cited the Live Performance Agreement (LPA) Award 2010 and the LPA and MEAA Performers Collective Agreement 2017 as reference for respondents in determining industry rates.

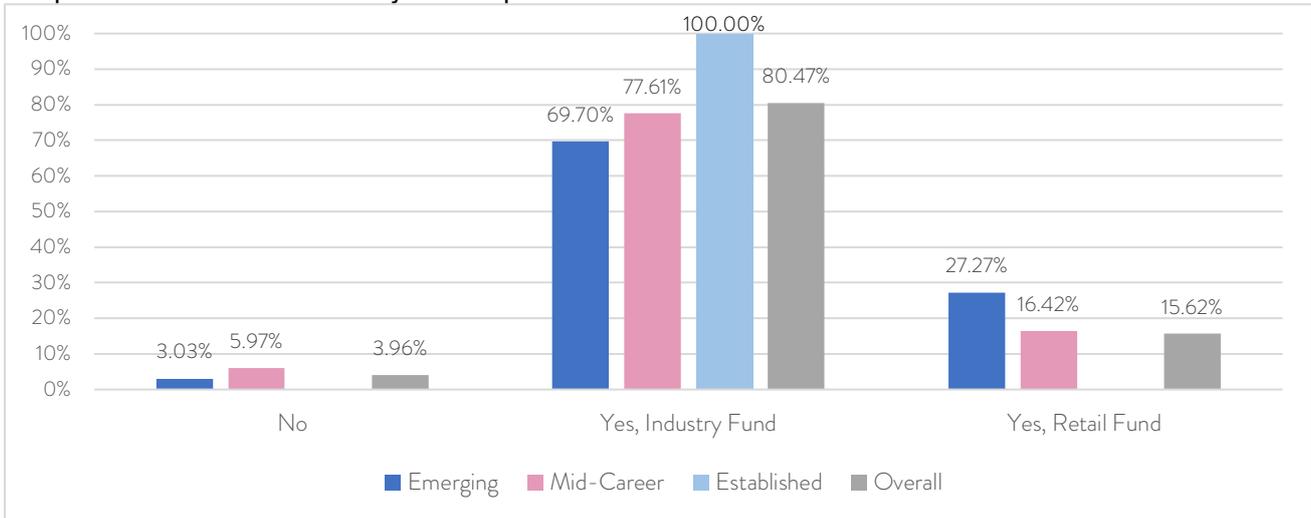
<sup>4</sup> TNA does not condone artists working for free, but this survey notes the reasons artists choose to trade their work without a fee.

- *“I don't do unpaid work anymore. Just recently I refused a gig with an incredible line up because I wouldn't do it for free. I think we have to set standards and when we say yes we justify the expectation we will work for free.” – Mid-Career Urban Writer/Cabaret Performer*
- *“Not yet. What I get out of it is helping other women in the industry get a leg up. Which helps us all.” – Mid-Career Urban Writer/Producer/Performer*
- *“I had a couple of directors & casting agents come & see the show- but the main thing was learning from the director, he was amazing, it was a masterclass in acting and I feel I really developed as an actor. Also, great contacts with other actors” – Mid-Career Urban Performer*
- *“There are always projects that I will work on without getting paid: but they are only my projects - i.e.: I wouldn't work on someone else's project for no money (I'm too old for that). But there is an imperative to keep my own career momentum, so I am always spending time on my own projects unpaid to an extent. This is what we do.” – Established Urban Performance Maker*
- *“The figures above are purely for dramaturgy/mentoring - for nearly all writing I was paid to Guild standards. I was greatly helped through accessing workshops as an emerging writer. So, each year I present a number at schools/community orgs/in marginalised communities as a means of paying it forward. Given the pleasure of my creative life, the debt is still mine to repay I feel.” – Established Regional Writer*

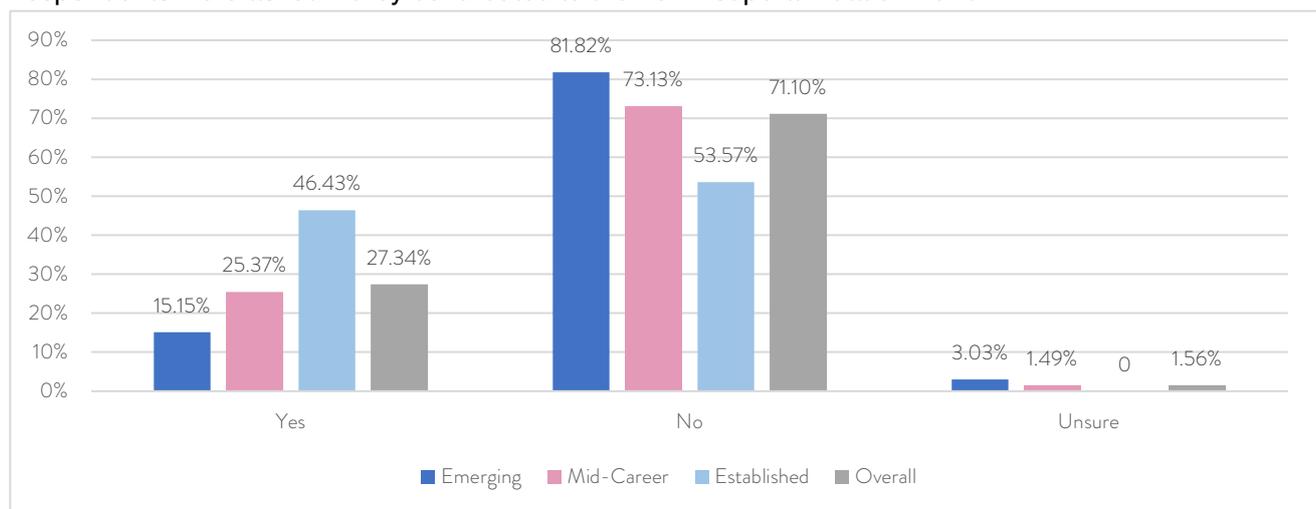
# PART 6 LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

## Superannuation

Respondents were asked if they held superannuation and the detail of those accounts.



Respondents were asked if they contributed to their own superannuation<sup>5</sup> fund:

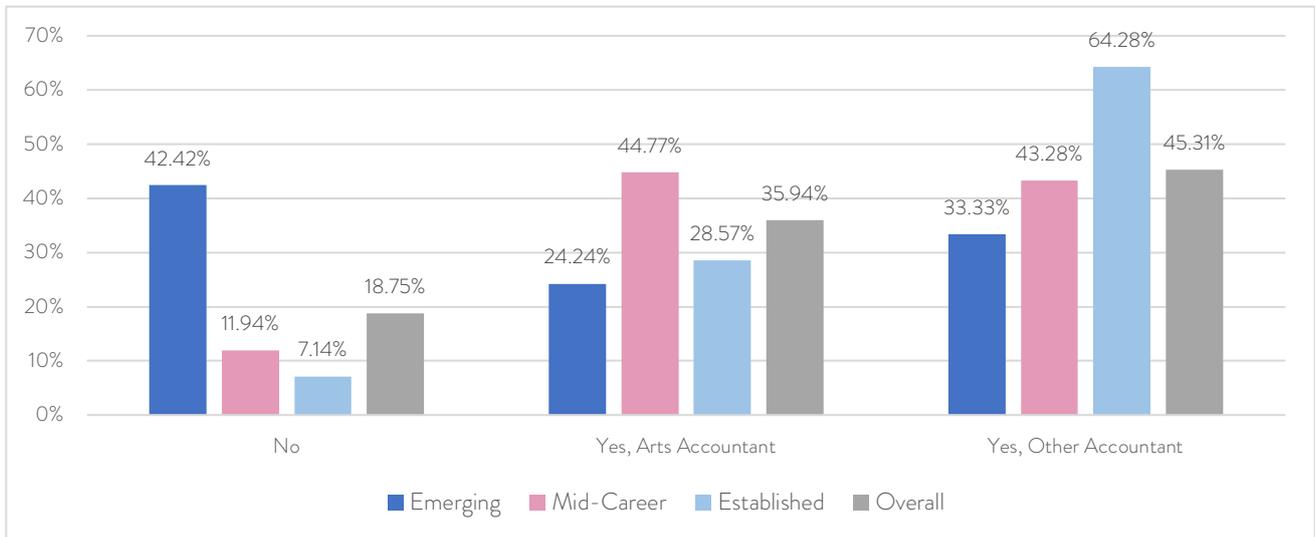


<sup>5</sup> As contractors, many artists are entitled to superannuation being paid by their employer. For artists uncertain as to the status of their superannuation fund, details can be tracked with the Australian Tax Office via <http://mygov.au> - on this website you can also begin the process of consolidating multiple super accounts.

For ease of superannuation payment, Theatre Network Australia recommends that artists include the following information on invoices: *Name; Address; Date of Birth; Tax File Number; Name of Super Fund; Super fund ABN; Super fund USI; Membership number of super fund.*

## Accountants

When asked if they regularly use, or have ever used, the services of an accountant for income tax purposes, respondents answered the following:



## Professional Development and Health & Wellbeing

Survey respondents were asked to provide average yearly estimates for how much they spend on:

- Professional development and research: including conference fees, training, workshops, networking, subscriptions, seeing the work of other artists;
- Health and Wellbeing directly related to their practice: including professional treatments, medical advice.

	Professional Development	Health & Wellbeing
<b>Emerging Respondents</b>	\$3,635	\$1,626
<b>Mid-Career Respondents</b>	\$2,394	\$1,104
<b>Established Respondents</b>	\$4,103	\$1,850
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>\$3,084</b>	<b>\$1,421</b>

## Living arrangements

When asked “what are your living arrangements?” respondents detailed the following:

	Homeowner	Renting alone	Renting with partner/family	Share house	Supported (parents/relatives)
<b>Emerging</b>	6.06%	9.09%	24.24%	36.36%	21.21%
<b>Mid-Career</b>	33.85%	13.85%	35.38%	16.92%	-
<b>Established</b>	75%	3.57%	14.29%	7.14%	-
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>36.52%</b>	<b>10.32%</b>	<b>27.77%</b>	<b>19.84%</b>	<b>5.55%</b>

## Working spaces

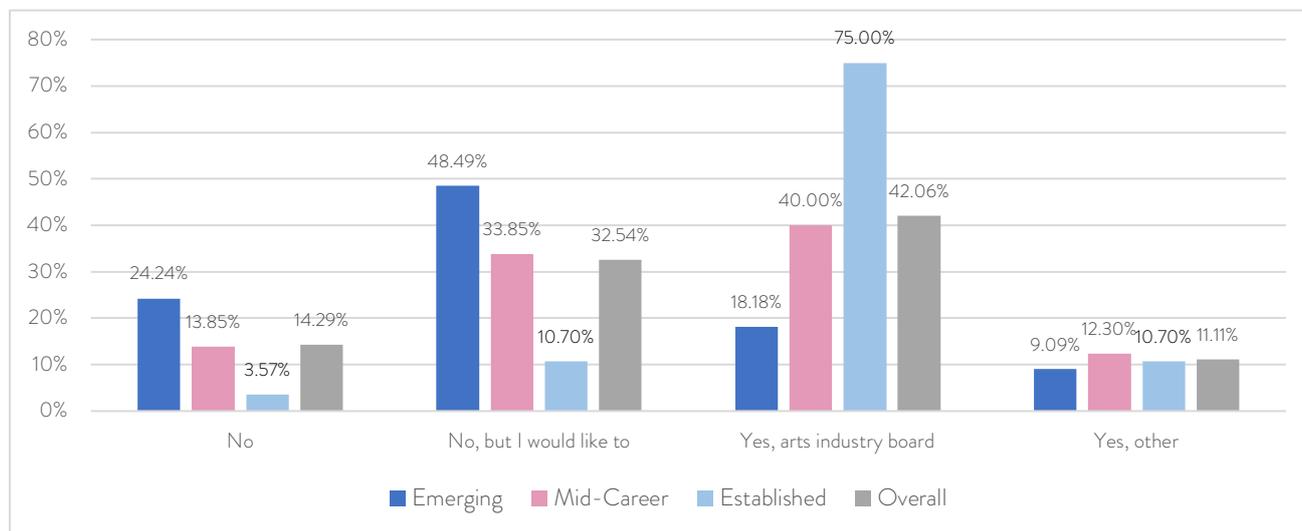
When asked “how do you conduct your work?” respondents detailed the following:

	Home office	From home	Studio space	Co-working space/s	A combination of the above
<b>Emerging</b>	12.12%	63.64%	-	9.09%	15.15%
<b>Mid-Career</b>	10.77%	52.31%	13.85%	3.08%	20%
<b>Established</b>	28.57%	42.86%	-	3.57%	25%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>15.08%</b>	<b>53.17%</b>	<b>7.14%</b>	<b>4.76%</b>	<b>19.84%</b>

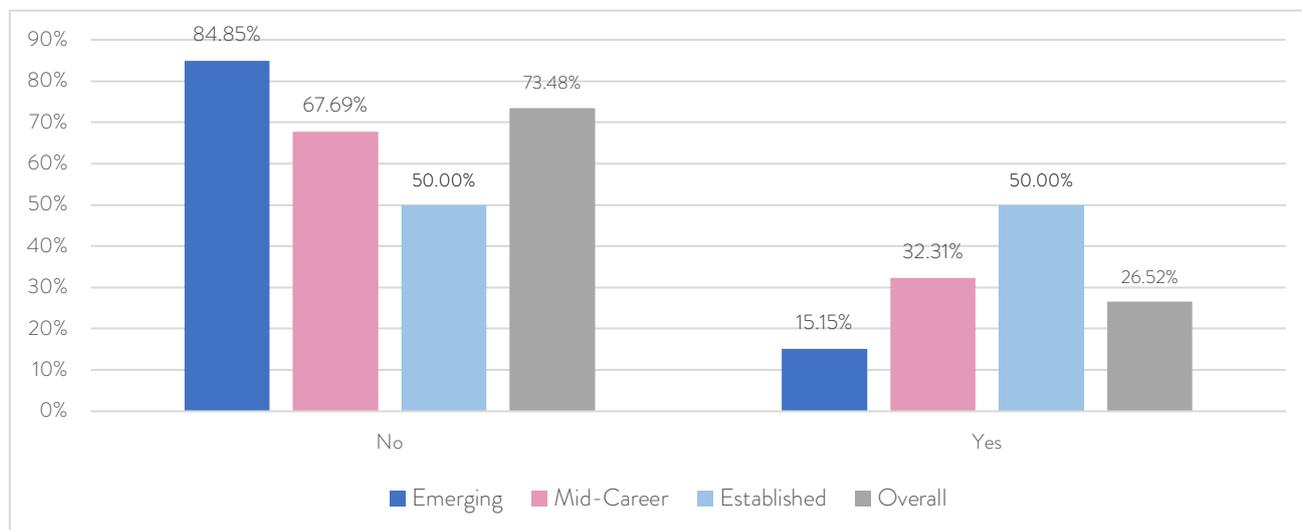
## PART 7 PEOPLE, BUSINESS AND NETWORKS

### Boards and advisory groups

Survey respondents were asked about their experiences with governance – specifically, if they have served on a board.



They were also asked if they have been a part of paid advisory groups/meetings:



## Mentorship

The survey asked respondents to detail if they currently have a mentor, and in what areas they are mentored. Nearly 40% of all respondents do not have a mentor but would like one.

	Creative Mentor (formal)	Creative Mentor (informal)	Business/Strategic Mentor (formal)	Business/Strategic Mentor (informal)	No, but I would like a mentor	I do not have a mentor
<b>Emerging</b>	24.24%	45.45%	9.09%	12.12%	33.33%	9.09%
<b>Mid-Career</b>	5.97%	37.31%	4.48%	16.42%	41.79%	13.43%
<b>Established</b>	10.71%	21.43%	3.57%	14.29%	28.57%	42.86%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>38.33%</b>	<b>5.83%</b>	<b>15.83%</b>	<b>39.17%</b>	<b>20%</b>

## Career planning

Respondents were asked to detail if they have a 3-5 year plan, formal or informal, for their career development.

	Yes, a formal plan	Yes, an informal plan	No
<b>Emerging</b>	15.15%	51.52%	33.33%
<b>Mid-Career</b>	7.46%	50.75%	41.79%
<b>Established</b>	7.14%	53.57%	39.29%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>9.38%</b>	<b>51.56%</b>	<b>39.06%</b>

## Financial Assistance

In response to a question about receiving government or any other form of financial assistance;

- 5.78% of respondents receive Centrelink payments
- 12.72% of respondents receive financial assistance from their family or partner
- 4.05% of respondents receive 'Other' financial assistance; Where detailed, these included
  - o "Family Benefit Part A",
  - o "community support",
  - o "personal savings built up over years of working in non-arts sector",
  - o "Partner is also an artist - so it fluctuates, and we take turns to assist each other at different periods"
  - o "PhD Scholarship"
  - o "Superannuation"

## PART 8 GENERAL COMMENTS

Survey respondents had the following general comments.

- *“My estimates of rates charged are very approximate. Everything depends on the circumstances. I give free workshops or talks as often as - if not more than - I receive payment. I'd rather give people, especially younger generations, the benefit of my expertise and experience than keep it to myself. Sharing experience will only make our industry richer.”*
- *“I have lived under the poverty line all my life as an artist - as a former refugee and single child of a migrant parent - I have no support. The current state of lack of arts funding is the hardest period to date. The amount of artists I see struggling is unreasonably high. I have no faith in any system changing this and I feel that my choice of being a full-time artist directly impacts negatively on my family as I am the sole income earner.”*
- *“Taking my last show as an example, everyone worked it for free initially, and more than 2 years later I was able to back pay them royalties when I sold the show for touring, so everyone got paid then. It's not a great way to do things, but it's a way to keep your head above water in the unsupported independent arts.”*
- *“There is a need [within the industry] to recognise the difference in life costs as each artist ages and their life responsibilities grow. Another ignored gauge is in terms of years of practice. Very often I am offered the same fee on a project as a young emerging artist or early career artist - this is a primary reason why we have so few artists continuing in practice when there is no maturation in fees and regard for life changes.”*
- *“Income is derived from creative projects including playwriting, TV writing, fiction writing, appearance on literary panels, assessment and judging panels, part time work in arts administration, royalties from plays and book, teaching.”*
- *“Cost of housing is a huge issue for artists - I am fortunate enough to owe relatively less on my mortgage than people starting out now, but with that comes a lot of sacrifices (such as not living in inner city Melbourne or having children etc). As someone without a family 'trust fund', I wouldn't be able to afford being an artist otherwise.”*
- *“Over the 40+ years of my working life I was lucky to have enough full and part time positions in arts and education to accumulate super, to the point where I no longer need those 'other' jobs to survive. I am aware that this is unusual. Lack of adequate superannuation is a HUGE issue and casualisation of the industry has made it even harder - if TNA is thinking about getting in to lobbying on this (including investigating co-op and other support for artists of pensionable age) I would be happy to get involved.”*
- *“Without the financial and overall support by my wife I couldn't do any proper artistic work as I know and be used to it from working in the German performing arts industry in the Australian arts industry, at least not the work that I describe as 'artistic work'.”*
- *“My partner and I work together on most projects, I have chosen to work full time in the arts and he has chosen to remain in secure employment outside the industry to ensure we are able to sustain our artistic careers.”*
- *“As I have mentioned. I consider that being an independent dance artist requires being more than a creator/artist - it is more like running a micro business. It would be great to see this work recognised and grants available to support the business of being an independent too.”*

THEATRE NETWORK AUSTRALIA

'THIS IS HOW WE DO IT': Working trends of independents artists, creatives, and arts workers. 2018

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