

Fact Sheet

The longitudinal study of early career artists: The career development of early career artists

December 2013

Key Findings

- Recipients of Australia Council grants were more artistically fulfilled and confident about their future career as an artist than non-recipients
- In 2012, they were also more likely to have met or exceeded their career expectations in the last 12 months
- Grant recipients reported experiencing a larger expansion in their contacts and networks, than non-recipients, after receiving the grant
- They were more likely to be collaborating creatively with other artists, conducting interstate work, and paying other creative professionals to work with them than non-recipients

The Australia Council longitudinal study of early career artists¹ is the first of its kind. We surveyed early career artists that had applied for a grant in 2008–10, and followed them for a further two years (2011 and 2012).

We wanted to better understand the impact of receiving an Australia Council grant, while controlling for the influence of broader social and economic changes. The research explores changes over time and the differences between applicants who received a grant and those who didn't. Artists need to meet set criteria to be successful for a grant. Successful applicants may differ from unsuccessful applicants in important ways. Hence any differences over time will reflect both the impact of the grant and any pre-existing differences.

This factsheet is about the perceptions artists have of their artistic careers, how they have developed their careers through planning and networking and what they have achieved.

'It's an evolving process. It goes in waves, sometimes I get really frustrated because there are so many artists out there and we are all trying to be seen and noticed. Even though I have done fairly well I still think and question it but at the end of the day I am lucky to do something I really love.'

Career perceptions

Recipients of Australia Council grants were more artistically fulfilled and confident about their future career as an artist than non-recipients.

These differences existed throughout the study, suggesting that successful applicants were more confident and fulfilled to begin with, possibly as result of being successful in their application. A number of artists reported that receiving Australia Council funding actually made them more confident because it was external support for their art and validation that their art is good.

Most early career artists were reasonably confident about their future career as an artist – and overall confidence remained relatively steady over the years of the study. Overall, artists felt slightly less artistically fulfilled than they were confident in their career. However, there were some differences in career perceptions between grant recipients and non-recipients.

¹ We define an early career artist as someone in the early stages of their professional career as an artist, usually within the first five years of professional practice.

Figure 1
Confidence in career and Artistic fulfilment for recipients and non-recipients of Australia Council grants in 2012

	Total (n=310)	Grant recipients (n=187)	Non-recipients of grants (n=115)
Confidence in career	%	%	%
Rating 0–5	26	23	32
Rating 6–7	32	35	25
Rating 8–10	42	43	43
Mean Score (out of 10)	6.7	6.9	6.4
Artistic fulfilment		%	%
Rating 0–5	32	25	41
Rating 6–7	31	32	27
Rating 8–10	37	41	33
Mean Score (out of 10)	6.4	6.7	6.0

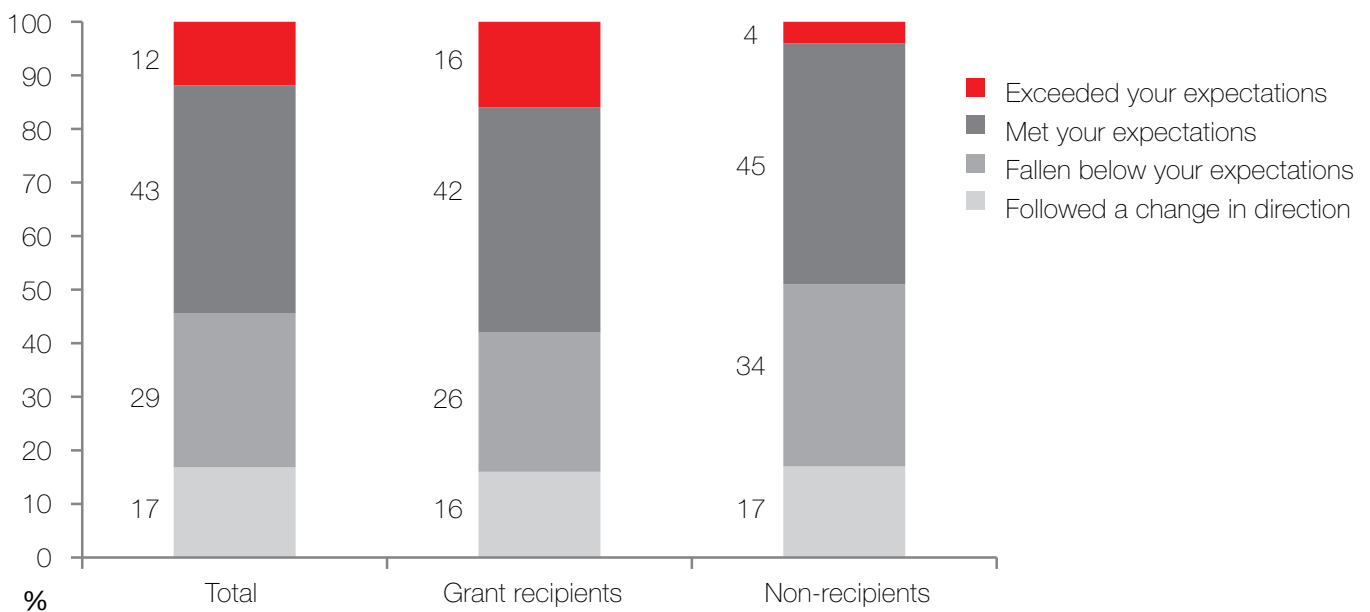
‘Just getting the grant gave me a lot more confidence, thinking that someone thought what I was doing was valuable.’

Career Achievements

The early career artists surveyed were asked to outline what they hoped to be doing in their creative practice in the next year. In the next survey they were presented with their response and asked whether they had met their expectations.

Just over half of the early career artists studied felt that they had met or exceeded their expectations (55 percent). Recipients of Australia Council grants were more likely to say they had met or exceeded their expectations (58 percent) than non-recipients (49 percent).

Figure 2
How well artists’ have met their career expectations over the past 12 months (2012)



‘In this year I was included in Primavera currently showing in the MCA and an exhibition at GOMA in Brisbane.... Even though I have been working at my practice for years, in the last few years I’ve only begun to be included in large group shows and offered residencies.’

Career Planning

The early career artists in our research were likely to have a career plan in place – 81 percent of artists had a plan in place in 2010 and 77 percent had a plan in place in 2012.

Networking Activities

The importance of establishing networks within the arts community was identified as a key success factor. The early career artists in the research continued to expand their networks throughout the study.

Recipients of Australia Council grants were more likely to have experienced substantial expansion of their networks over 2009-10 than non recipients (52% compared to 35% of non-recipients).

The artists surveyed undertook a number of networking activities in the 12 months prior to their survey in 2012. Australia Council grant recipients were more likely to be engaged in collaborating creatively with other artists, conducting interstate work, and paying other creative professionals to work with them than non-recipients.

Figure 3
Networking activities undertaken in 2011-12 by recipients and non-recipients of Australia Council grants

	Total (n=310)	Recipients (n=188)	Non-recipients (n=115)
Networking Activities	%	%	%
Connected with someone well respected in your field	79	82	76
Collaborated creatively with other artists	74	78	67
Attended any conferences/seminars	63	63	63
Been involved in any interstate work	55	61	44
Been involved with any new companies or venues	53	53	50
Been involved in any Artist Run Initiatives	36	34	38
Paid other creative professionals to work with you	42	45	37
Been involved in any international work	46	48	42

'The connections I made have been sustained and these have put me in to contact with other artists.'

This Fact Sheet has been produced by the Australia Council for the Arts as part of its research project: The longitudinal study of early career artists.
The research was conducted by Urbis, an independent interdisciplinary consulting firm.

For more information on the research and to view other fact sheets and resources, visit our australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/subjects/artists/the-longitudinal-study-of-early-career-artists