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**Representation of
Female Artists in
Britain During 2018**

Dr Kate McMillan



**Freelands
Foundation**

Representation of Female Artists in Britain During 2018

This report, commissioned annually by the Freelands Foundation, evidences the fourth consecutive year of data on the representation of female artists in the UK. This year it includes five additional evidences which help to further understand the role that gender plays in the career outcomes for artists.



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Introduction

Mapping 21 evidences across the UK, this report presents data across the visual arts and seeks to identify in what ways the role of gender is changing (or not) the career pathways for artists. Each year the report looks to extend and build on previous years' and for 2018, we have added five new evidences. These include reviews of the five main national newspapers, the gender of commercial and non-commercial gallery and museum directors in London and across the country, and public art commissions.

Like most sectors in the cultural industries, the visual arts reflects a broader trend whereby gender plays a significant role in career success. This year's report comes at a time when there is an increasing focus in galleries and museums to address the gap in representation. The data for 2018 does therefore show, particularly in the public sector, incremental improvements. Yet increased opportunities for female artists are changing slowly, and this slow pace mirrors what is happening in other sectors across the world. 'The Global Gender Gap Report 2018' by the World Economic Forum, states that it will take 108 years to achieve gender parity at current rates of change.¹ The UK, ranked 15th in the same report, shows that the gender pay gap is still 77% and in 2018 only closed by 0.03%. In recent compulsory reporting of gender pay gaps for companies with more than 250 employees, the UK reported that 80% of companies paid women less than men and not one industry had achieved gender parity.² In 2016, in research asking whether the creative industries are meritocratic, it was found that 'female employees

have average earnings of £239/week or over £12,000/year less than men (with similar class backgrounds) in the CCIs (Culture and Creative Industries) as a whole'.³ Far from creating a liberal and inclusive environment, the CCIs, and within that, the visual arts, are a microcosm of wider social values whereby women's labour is less valued.

In evidence 14 on enrolments in the university sector, 2018 data shows that 66% of applications to postgraduate study in the creative arts and design sector were by women. Over a ten-year period this has increased by 4%. This seemingly positive picture also mirrors local and global data on gender parity in education, which highlights a small 1% gap in educational attainment for women. It begs the question – what happens between graduation and mid-career when this percentage is almost reversed in the commercial gallery sector? Evidence 7 shows that 68% of the artists represented at top London commercial galleries are men. Despite the high number of female university graduates, this year's report shows that 63% of the most senior staff at art and design institutions were male, an almost inverse ratio to students, and up from 59% in the previous year. The quantitative data may then beg larger research questions about how the relationship between higher levels of senior male staff impact on women aspiring to be artists. For example, do informal networks provided by male staff or support for particular research interests benefit the careers of male students?

At the other end of the career trajectory, 8% of the artists represented by commercial galleries were

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- 1 'The Global Gender Gap Report 2018'. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2018>.
 - 2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-and-valuation-office-agency-gender-pay-gap-report-and-data-2018/hm-revenue-and-customs-gender-pay-gap-report-2018>.
 - 3 Dave O'Brien, Daniel Laurison, Andrew Miles, Sam Friedman. (2016) Are the creative industries meritocratic? An analysis of the 2014 British Labour Force Survey. *Cultural Trends* 25:2, pp.116–131.



deceased men, four times the number of deceased women (evidence 8). Similarly, the secondary market remains the worst area in the sector regarding gender disparity. 88% of sales were by male artists (a modest 3% increase since the previous year) and only 3% of highest grossing sales were by women artists, which has remained the same three years in a row. This continues to reflect anecdotal attitudes in the sector that female artists make poorer investments. Again, this data prompts questions about why might women artists seem like lower performing investments, and what might the sector do to bolster against these biases? Much more needs to be done to educate collectors, and to impress on the auction houses their significant role in achieving comprehensive gender equality in the sector. It is not acceptable to simply allow the market to determine the legacy of female artists.

However, significant changes in the museum and not-for-profit sectors may, in time, affect the results in the commercial and secondary market. Evidence 2 shows that 55% of solo shows in Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) or Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (ACE NPOs) were by women. Outside London (evidence 3), it was also high at 50%. Some might argue that artists are being instrumentalised to meet parity quotas, and that staffing within the sector continues to lack equality. However, new data collected in this report for the first time, shows there are positive moves with almost 53% of museum and gallery directors in the not-for-profit sector identifying as women, and outside London this figure is 55%. However, when these figures are further analysed, in UK organisations receiving more than £500K in funding, only 23% of the directors are women. In London, this is also the case: organisations receiving more than £1 million in funding are headed up by significantly more men, 75% in

fact. Therefore, while the drop-off experienced by women artists may be significantly worse over the course of a career, gender continues to be an obstacle for all those participating in the sector.

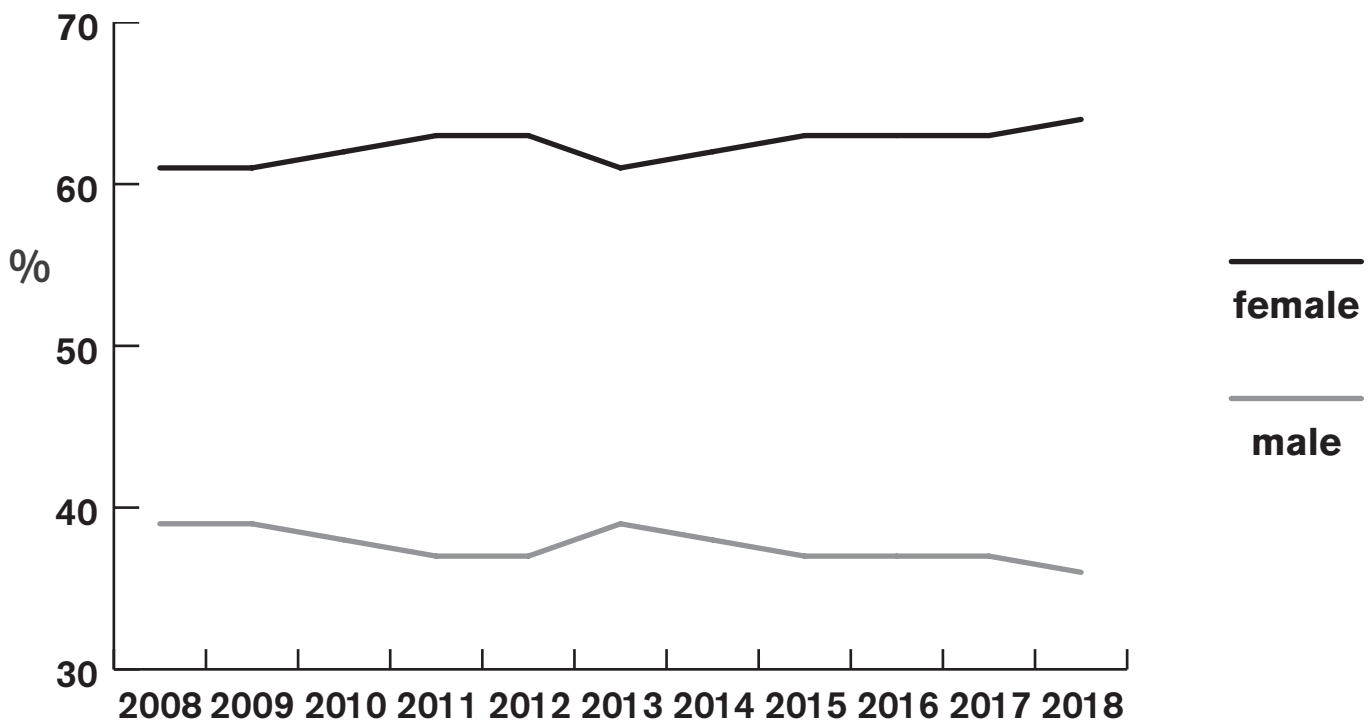
Yet appointing women to senior positions does not always have a trickle-down effect. As demonstrated in evidence 17, 48% of the top London commercial gallery directors are women, despite only 32% of their artists being women. In my own research, which compares data in 2016 and 2019 across 120 London commercial gallery directors, only 25 show 50% or more women artists, and some of the worst performing galleries are run by female directors. Statistics between that three-year period also shows a 1% decrease in female artists being represented despite an increase of more than 250 artists.⁴

The visual arts is a complex ecosystem where the intersection between the commercial and non-commercial worlds is increasingly harder to define. The influence of commercial decision-making on the not-for-profit and public sectors is also increasing, as organisations struggle to top-up or replace government funding. Notable initiatives, despite these pressures, include a decision by Tate Britain to rehang its collection by all women artists in April 2019 to celebrate 60 years of female art at Tate, and previously by Tate Modern Director Frances Morris to apply gender quotas to the new Natalie Bell Building, with 50% of rooms dedicated to solo presentations of women artists' work. Though criticised by many for undermining the role of 'great art' in selection processes, it does seem that perhaps these direct measures do overcome the painfully slow rate of change in the wider sector. Surely to propose that gender quotas (and not even at the 64/36 ratio of graduating students), may result in poorer quality work is simply to suggest work by female artists is of a lesser standard?

4 Kate McMillan. (2019) *Gender and Precarity in Contemporary Art* (undergoing peer review).



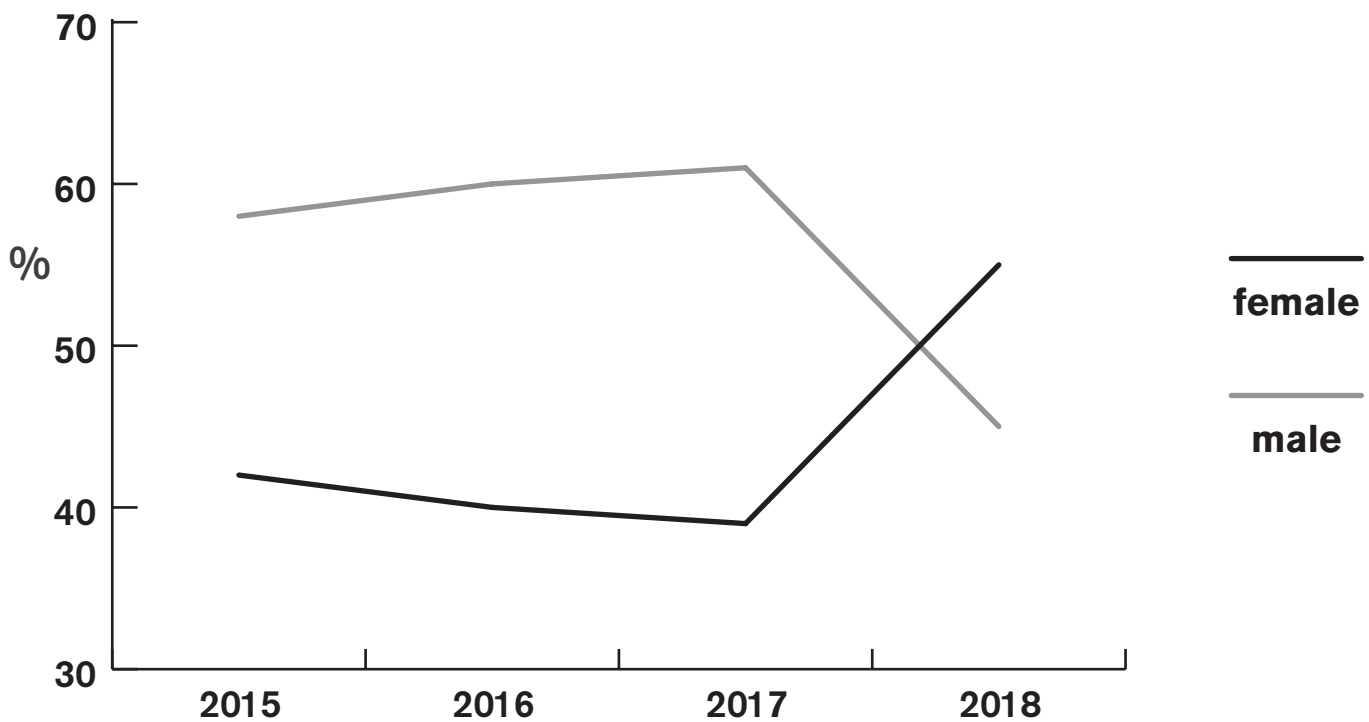
Evidence 1 Undergraduates Studying Creative Arts and Design in 2018



This first evidence explores what percentage of undergraduate students in the UK studied creative arts and design courses in the UK during 2018. At 64%, this statistic has slowly increased from 61% in 2008.



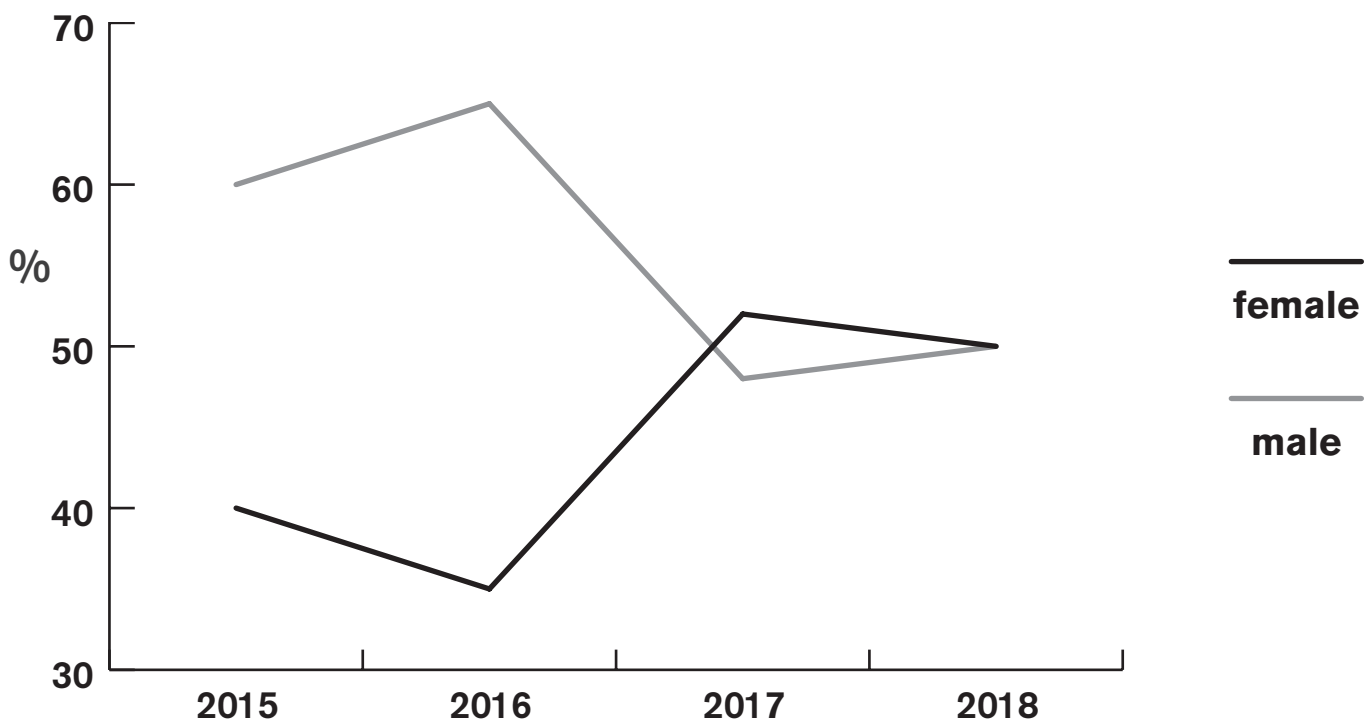
Evidence 2 Solo Shows in Non-Commercial Galleries in London



Evidence 2 maps how many solo exhibitions were by women artists in non-commercial galleries in London. 152 exhibitions across 40 galleries and museums were analysed. Overall, 55% of exhibitions were by women. This increased to 62% when only the four major London institutions were considered, and was above 50% in all NPO categories ranked according to funding levels. This is a significant increase since 2017 when a mere 39% of solo shows were by women artists.



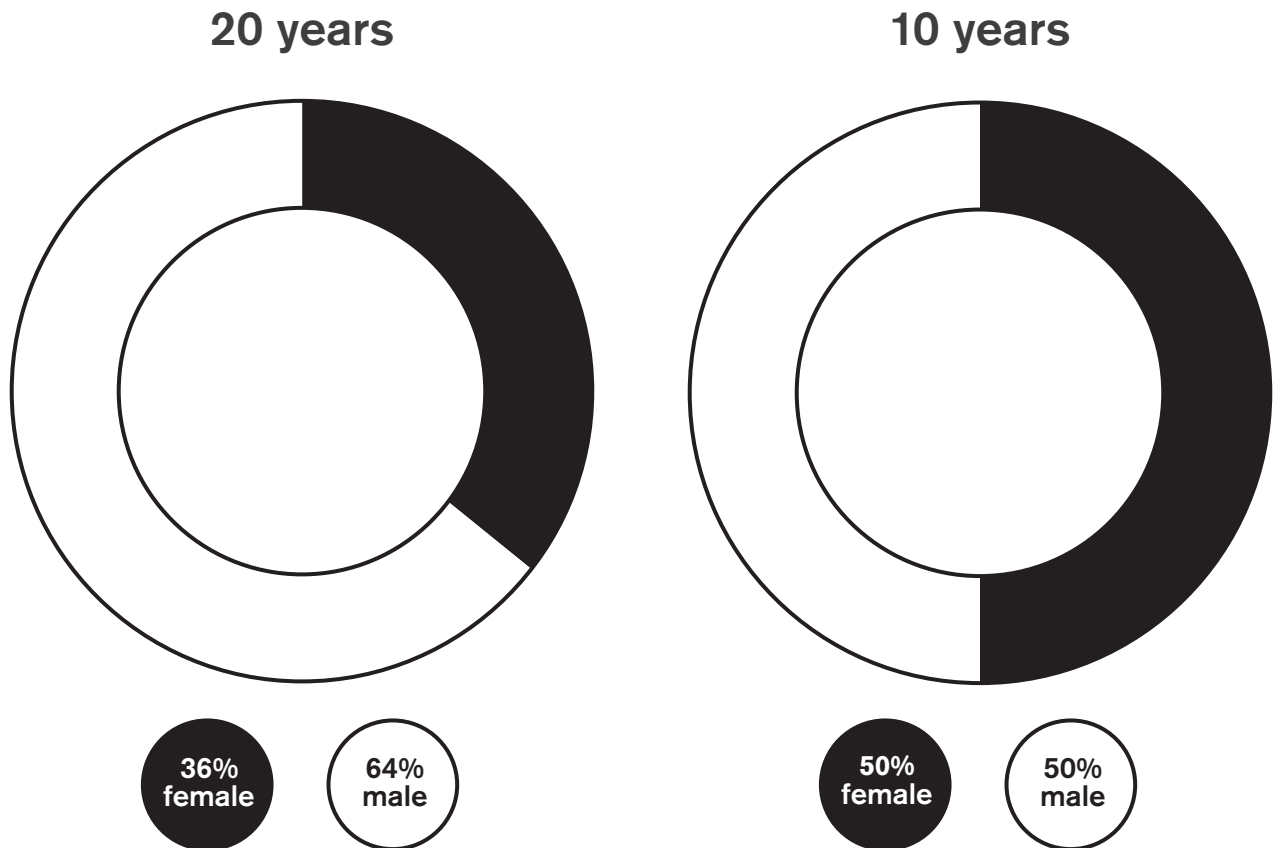
Evidence 3 Solo Shows in Non-Commercial Galleries Outside London



33 not-for-profit organisations across the UK were analysed according to how many solo presentations they supported in 2018. 177 solo exhibitions were included in the data which found that almost 50% (49.71%) were by women. This was down from 2017 when 52% of solo shows were by women. NPOs that received less than £500K fared the best at 65% of solo exhibitions by women whereas organisations receiving between £500K–1 million only supported 41% of solo shows by female artists.



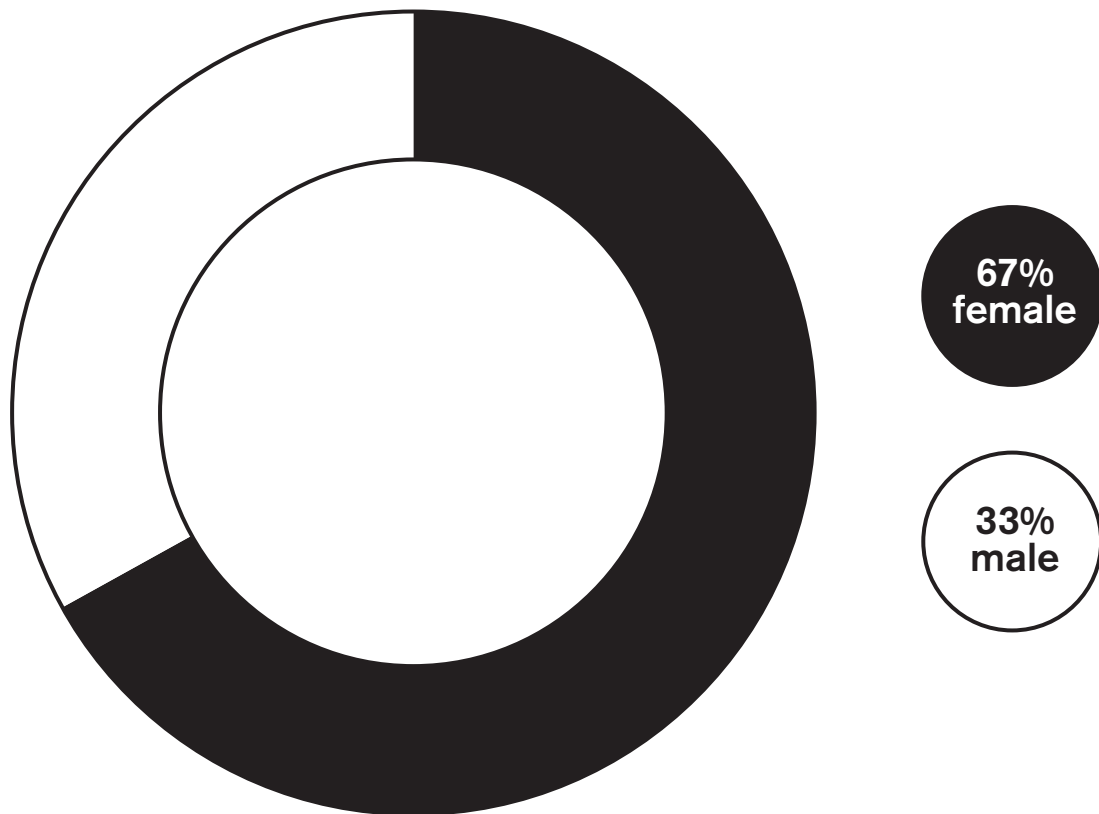
Evidence 4 Artists Representing Britain at the Venice Biennale



This evidence considers artists selected for the British Pavilion in the Venice Biennale. Over a 20-year period the figure is only 36%, but in the last ten years this has risen to 50%.



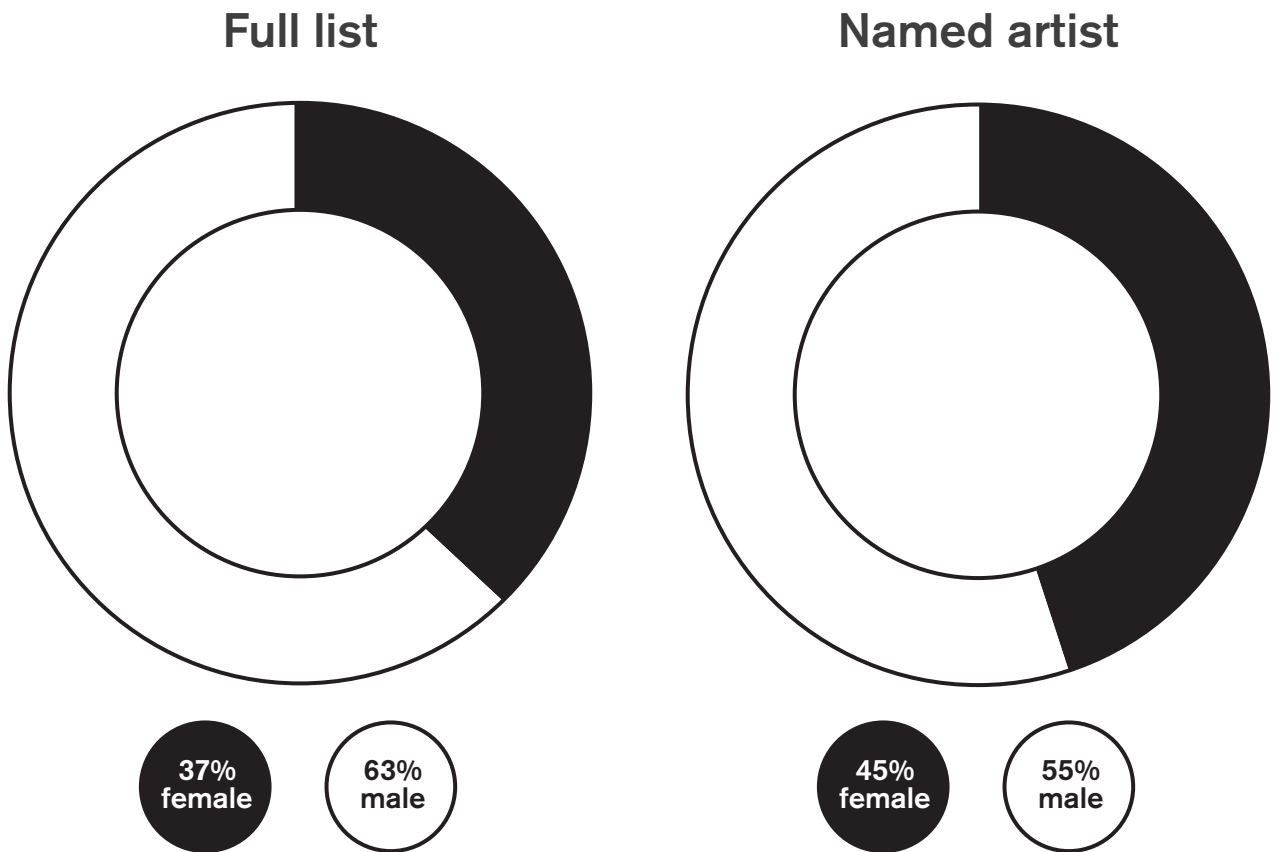
Evidence 5 Turner Prize Winners



Winners of the prestigious Turner Prize over the last ten years have, due to the last three winners being female, improved significantly. 66% of winners since 2009 have been women.



Evidence 6 The ArtReview Power 100

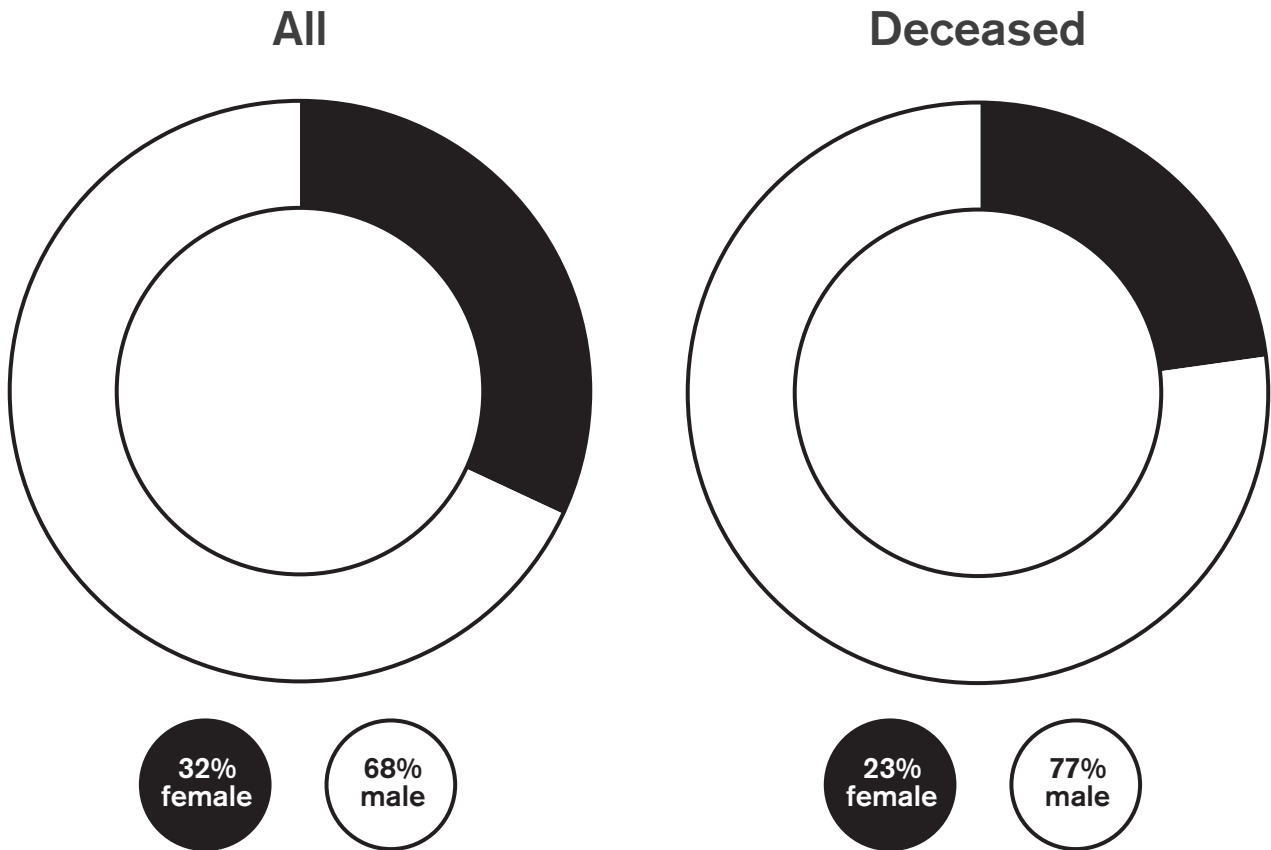


The number of women in the 2018 *ArtReview* Power 100 has decreased by 3% from 2017 to just 37% of the entries. However, of the named artists on the list, 45% were women which has increased by 23% since 2017.



Evidences 7 and 8

Artists Represented by London's Major Commercial Galleries and Deceased Artists Represented by London's Major Commercial Galleries

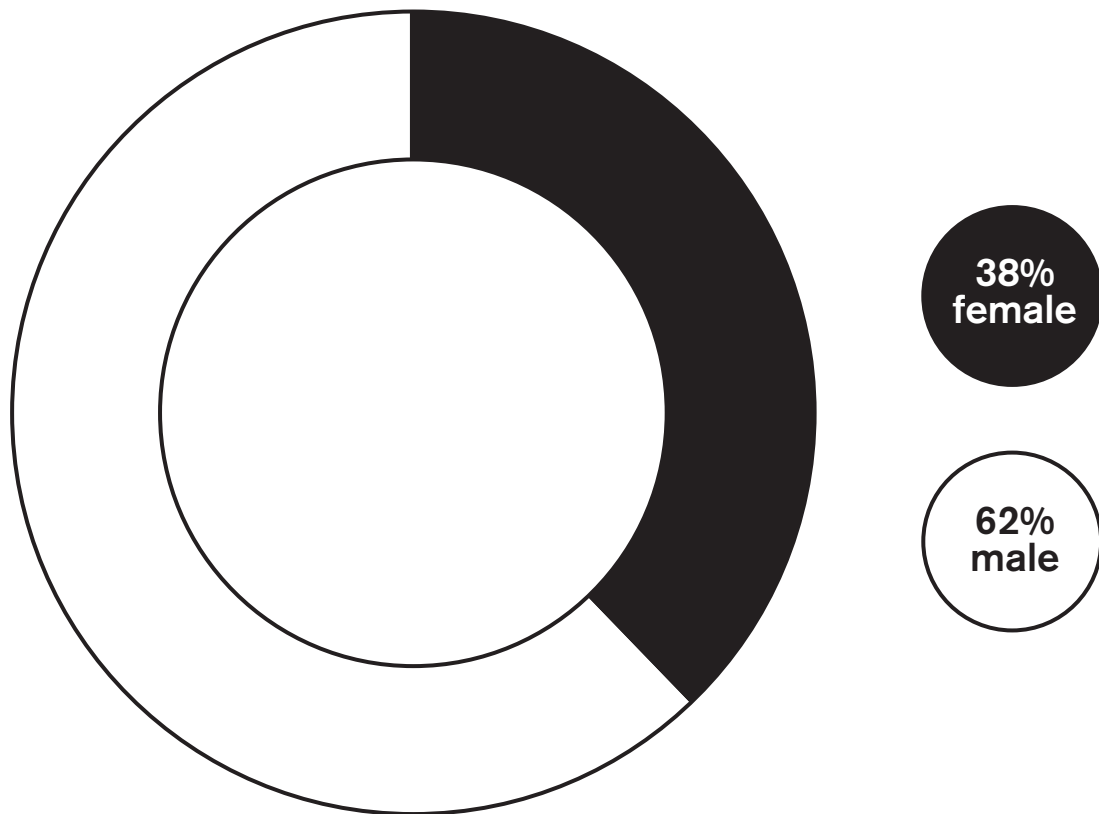


28 of the major London commercial galleries showing in the main section of Frieze London were analysed. 32% of their artists were women, which has increased by 4% from 2017. In 2016 it was 29%, demonstrating that change is not linear and advances must not result in complacency.

10% of represented artists were deceased, only 2% of which were female, meaning that four times the number of deceased estates managed by London commercial galleries were of male artists. The number of deceased estates and the percentage of which were women artists remains unchanged from 2017.



Evidence 9 Solo Shows at London's Major Galleries During Frieze Week 2018

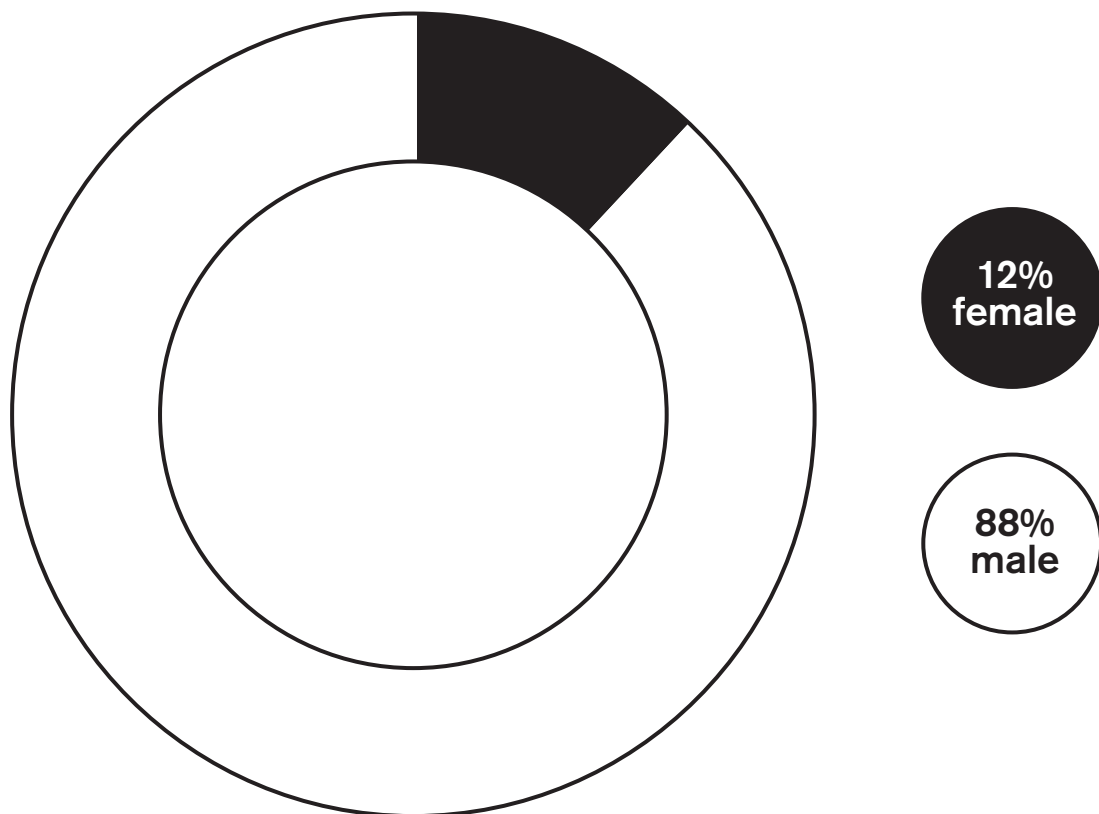


During Frieze London, the same 28 galleries showed 38% female solo exhibitions on their Frieze booth and across all their London galleries. This has improved since 2017 where it was 21% but decreased from 2016 when it was 42%.



Evidence 10

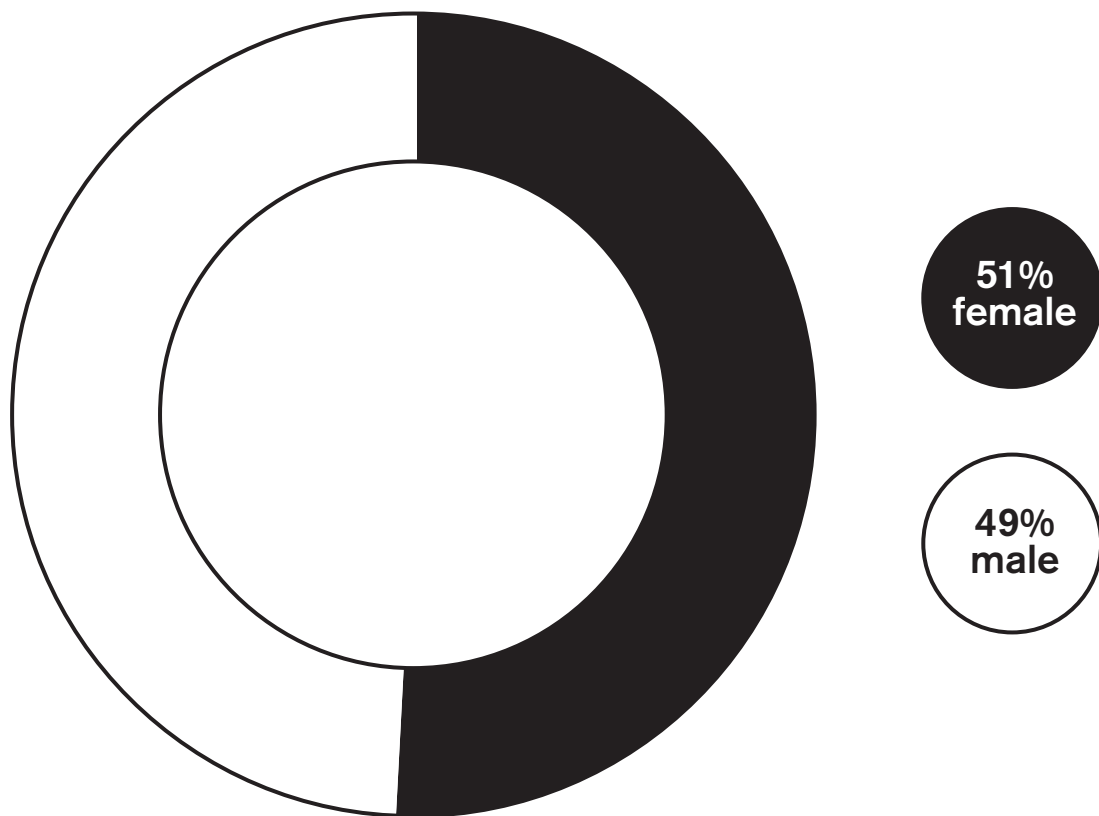
Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Sales – based on auction events in London in March, June and October 2018



The three contemporary art evening sales from Sotheby's were analysed and the data from 2018 shows no evidence of change from either 2017 or 2016. Only 3% of auction lots in the top ten highest grossing sales were by women. However, overall there was a small increase of 3% overall of female artists from 9% to 12%. That 88% of sales were by male artists is very concerning. The collectors and investors buying on the secondary market affect decisions made by commercial galleries, which in turn is reflected in programming decisions in the not-for-profit sector.



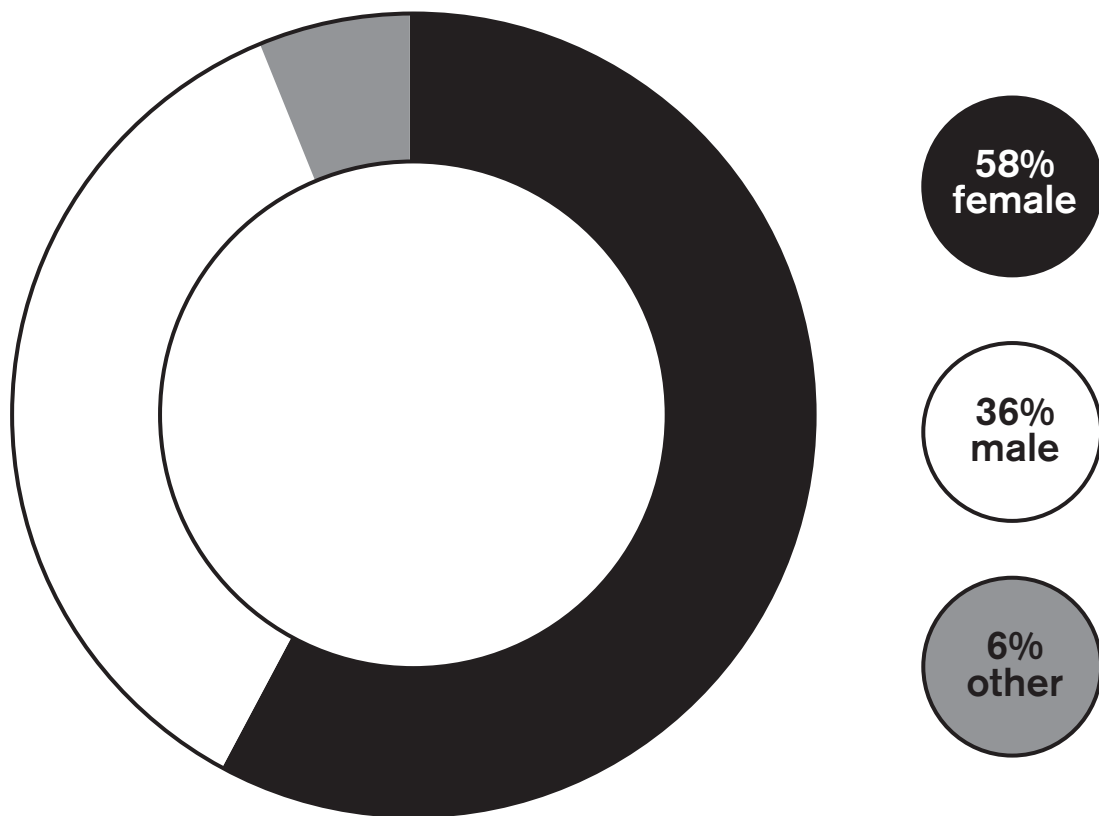
Evidence 11 Artists Selected to Make New Work for UK Triennials and Biennials



This evidence considers new commissions for work in the Folkestone Triennial, Liverpool Biennial and Glasgow International. As the Folkestone Triennial did not occur in 2018, data from the 2017 event was used. Of the three, Folkestone had the poorest record, selecting only six women from 17 (35%). Overall, the figure was 51% women with Liverpool Biennial achieving the highest at 54%.



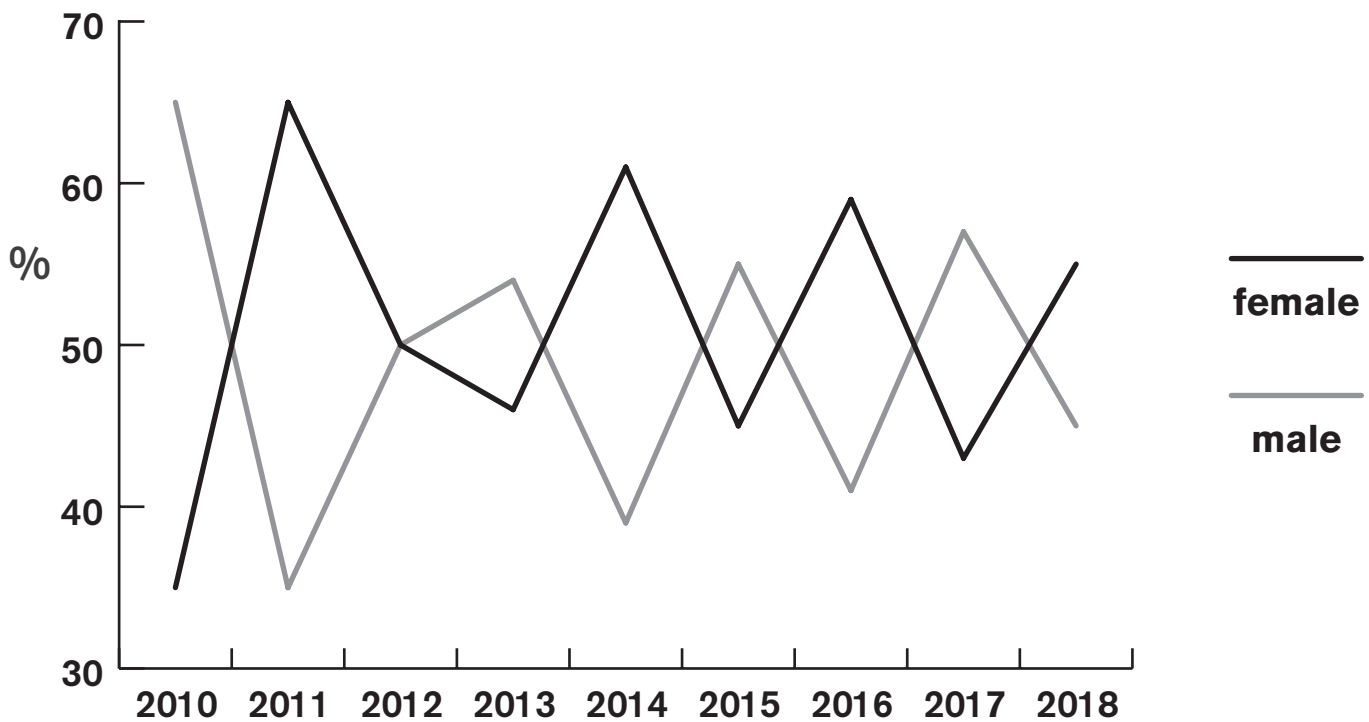
Evidence 12 Artists Awarded Grants for the Arts by Arts Council England



In 2018, 404 individual artist grants were awarded by Arts Council England, totalling £7,553,562. Of these 147 (36%) were to male artists (£2,904,713) and 233 (58%) were to women artists (£4,320,236). The remaining 6% were to artists that were either non-binary or preferred not to say. This was an increase of grants to female artists of 1% from the previous year, and a decline of male artist recipients of 5%.



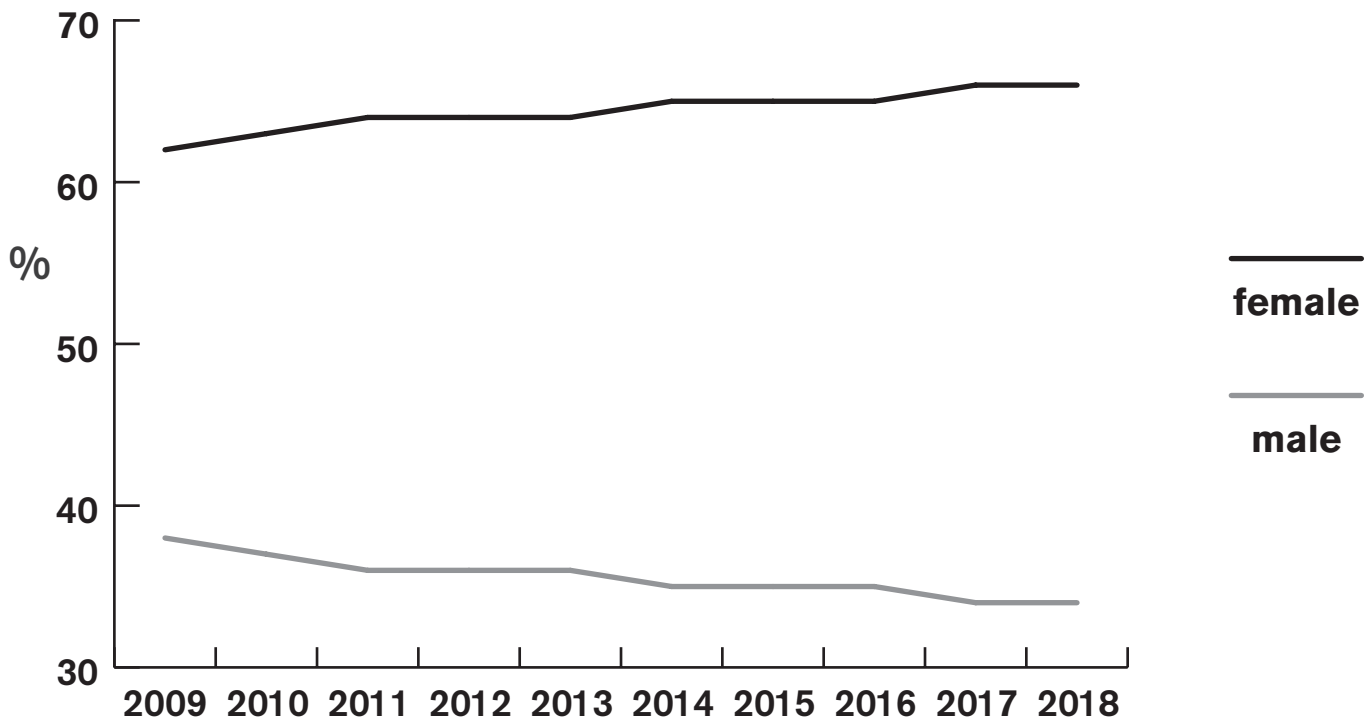
Evidence 13 Artists Selected for New Contemporaries



Since 2010, 51% of artists selected for New Contemporaries have been women. In 2018, this figure was the fourth highest (2011 was the highest at 65%, followed by 61% in 2014 and 59% in 2016). These figures largely reflect the number of undergraduate and postgraduate women. In this sense, the data reinforces the idea that gender disparity happens over time and is not clear at the outset of artists careers.



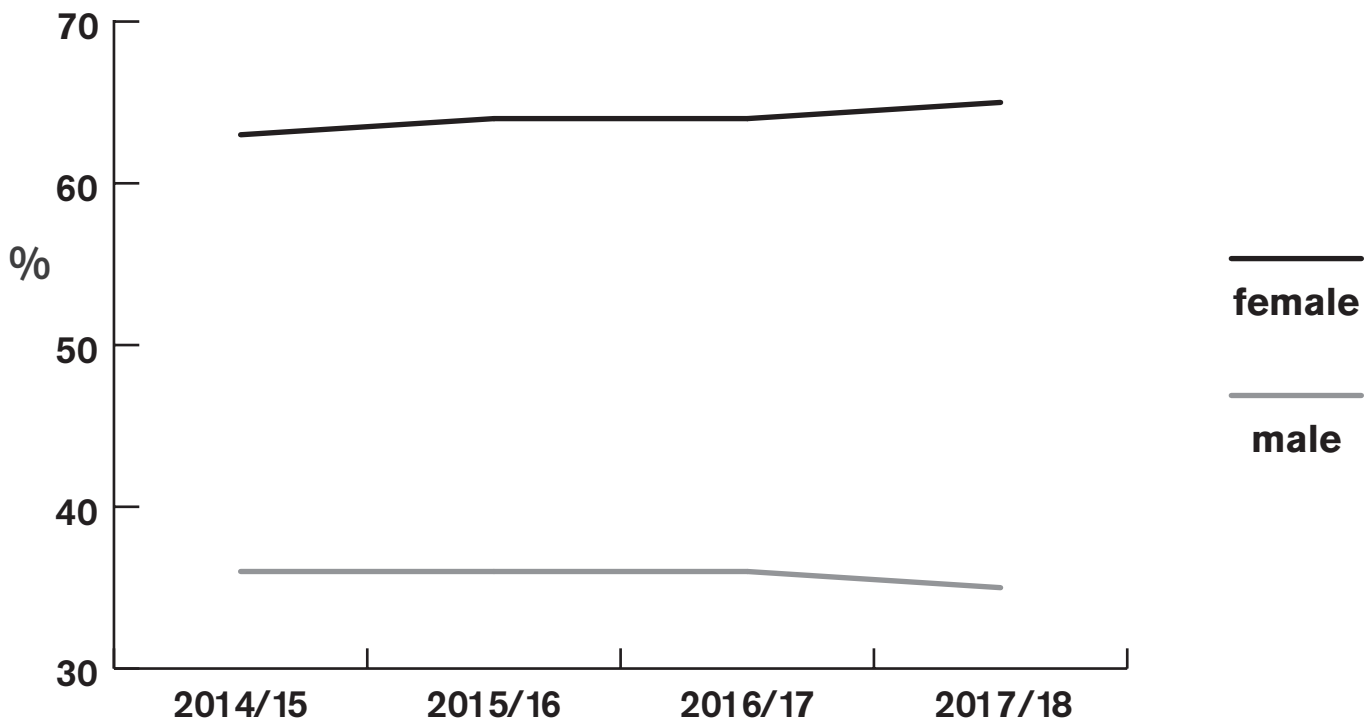
Evidence 14 Applications for Postgraduate Study in Creative Arts and Design in 2018



In 2018 66% of applications to postgraduate study in Art & Design were women. This has steadily increased annually from 2009 when the figure was 62%.



Evidence 15 Graduates Studying Postgraduate Courses in Creative Arts and Design in 2018

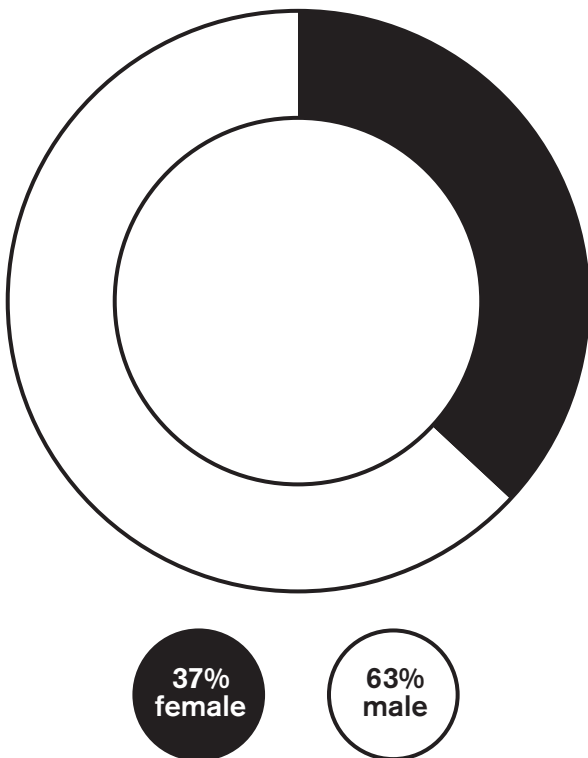


In the 2017–18 academic year the highest number of students over the last five years were women at 65%. In the 2014–15 academic year the number was 63%.

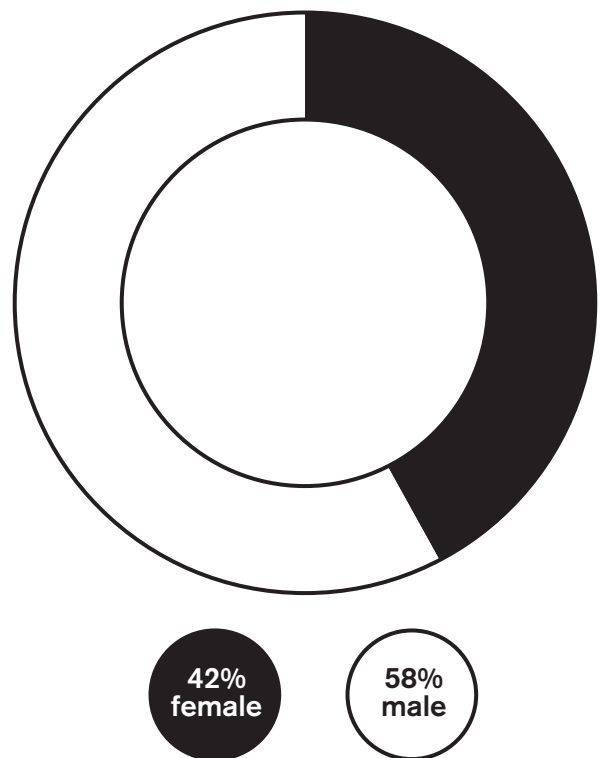


Evidence 16 Academic Staff Teaching Creative Arts & Design in UK Universities in 2018

Highest paid academic
staff (more than £60,410)



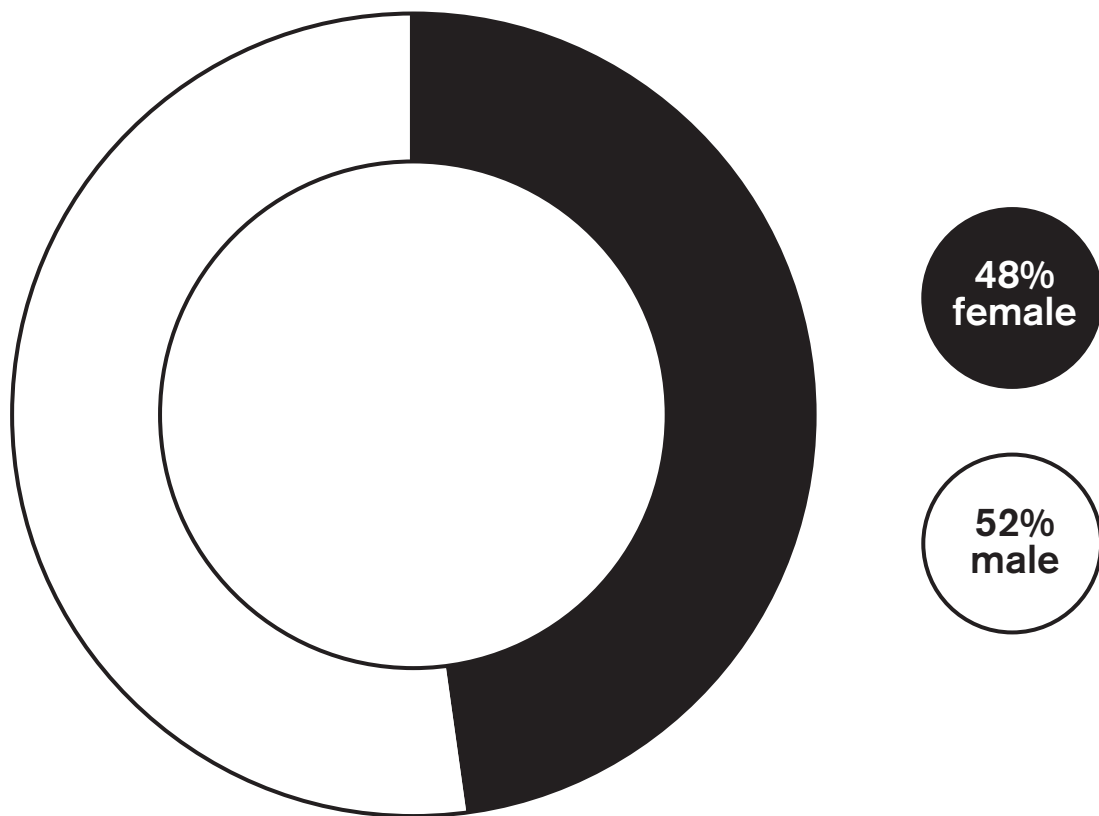
Lowest paid academic
staff (up to £24,983)



There has been a substantial shift in senior staff teaching and researching in art and design schools in 2018. In 2017 59% of the highest paid staff were men, which rose to 63% in 2018. This is now an almost inverse relationship to the gender of students. At all of the five pay scales, men rose more quickly, and even on the lowest pay scale men were more represented at 58%. This is an area that needs more research. For example, do students' research interests feel less supported, and do informal networks facilitated through teaching staff more positively favour male students?



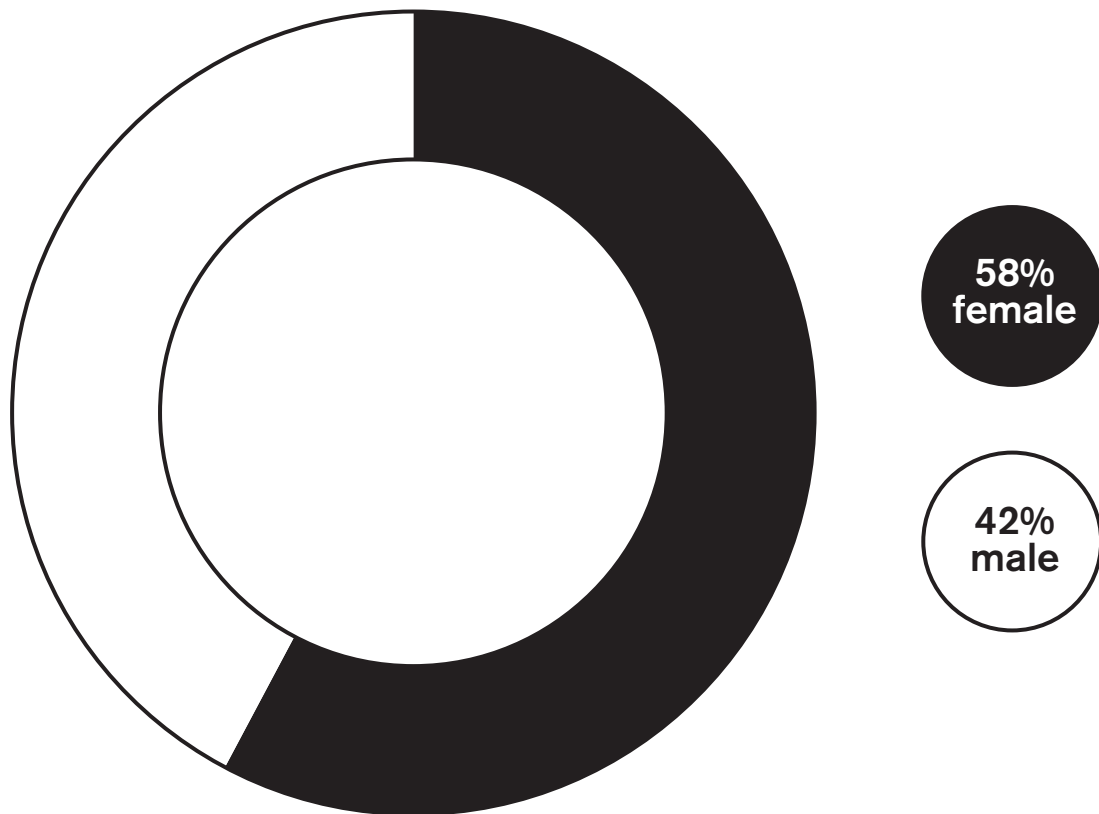
Evidence 17 Gender of Commercial Gallery Directors, London



This new evidence records the gender of the 28 gallery directors explored in previous evidences. Overall 48% of the top galleries are run/owned by women. Recording this data allows insight into the links (if any) between the number of artists represented. While there is sometimes a link between female directors and higher number of female artists (Pilar Corrias, Danielle Arnaud, Hollybush Gardens), the reverse is also true with galleries such as Sadie Coles, Maureen Paley and Marian Goodman showing comparatively low numbers of female artists. The link is more obviously between higher earning galleries and the higher number of male artists, rather than gender of directors. The adage that equality trickles down is not evident.



Evidence 18 Gender of Non-Commercial Gallery Directors in London



Of the 23 non-commercial galleries in London, 42% are run by female directors. Of the 11 major institutions (receiving more than £1 million in DCMS or ACE funding), a mere 25% are run by women.



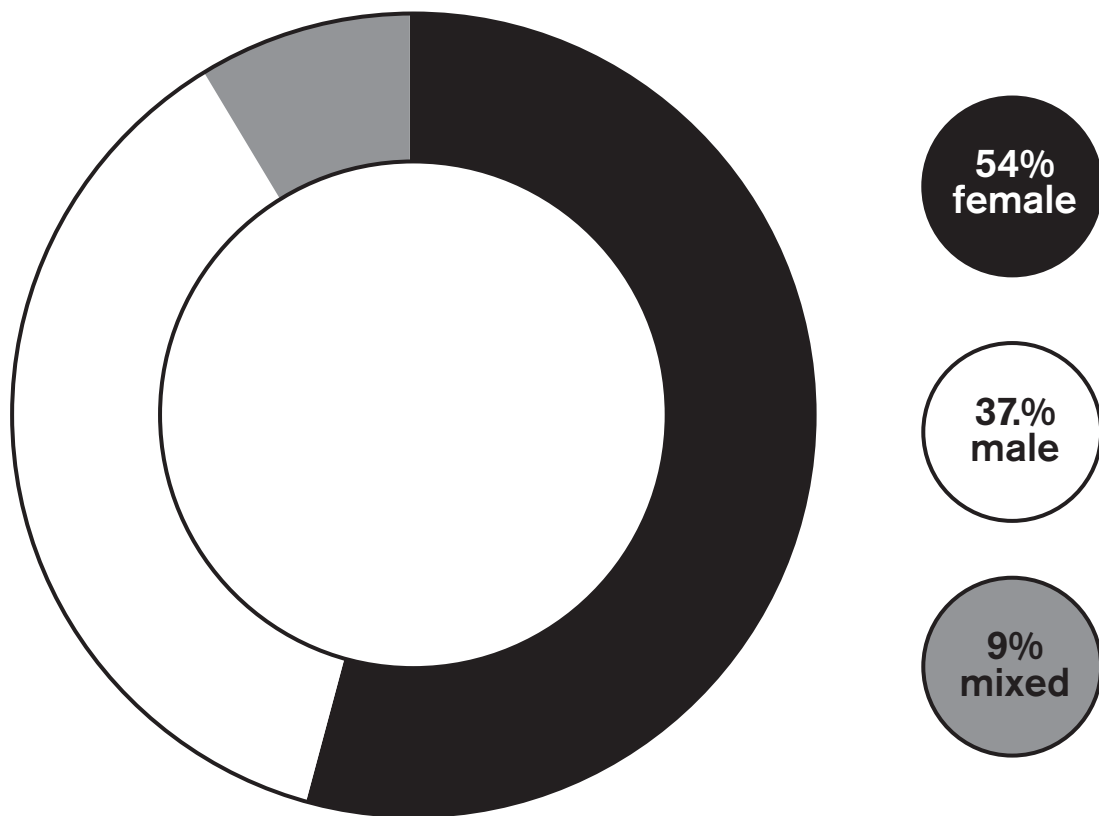
Evidence 19 Gender of Non-Commercial Gallery Directors Outside London



33 galleries and institutions outside London were included, 55% of which were run by women. However, of the 13 major institutions earning more than £500K in grant income from DCMS or ACE, only 23% were run by women.



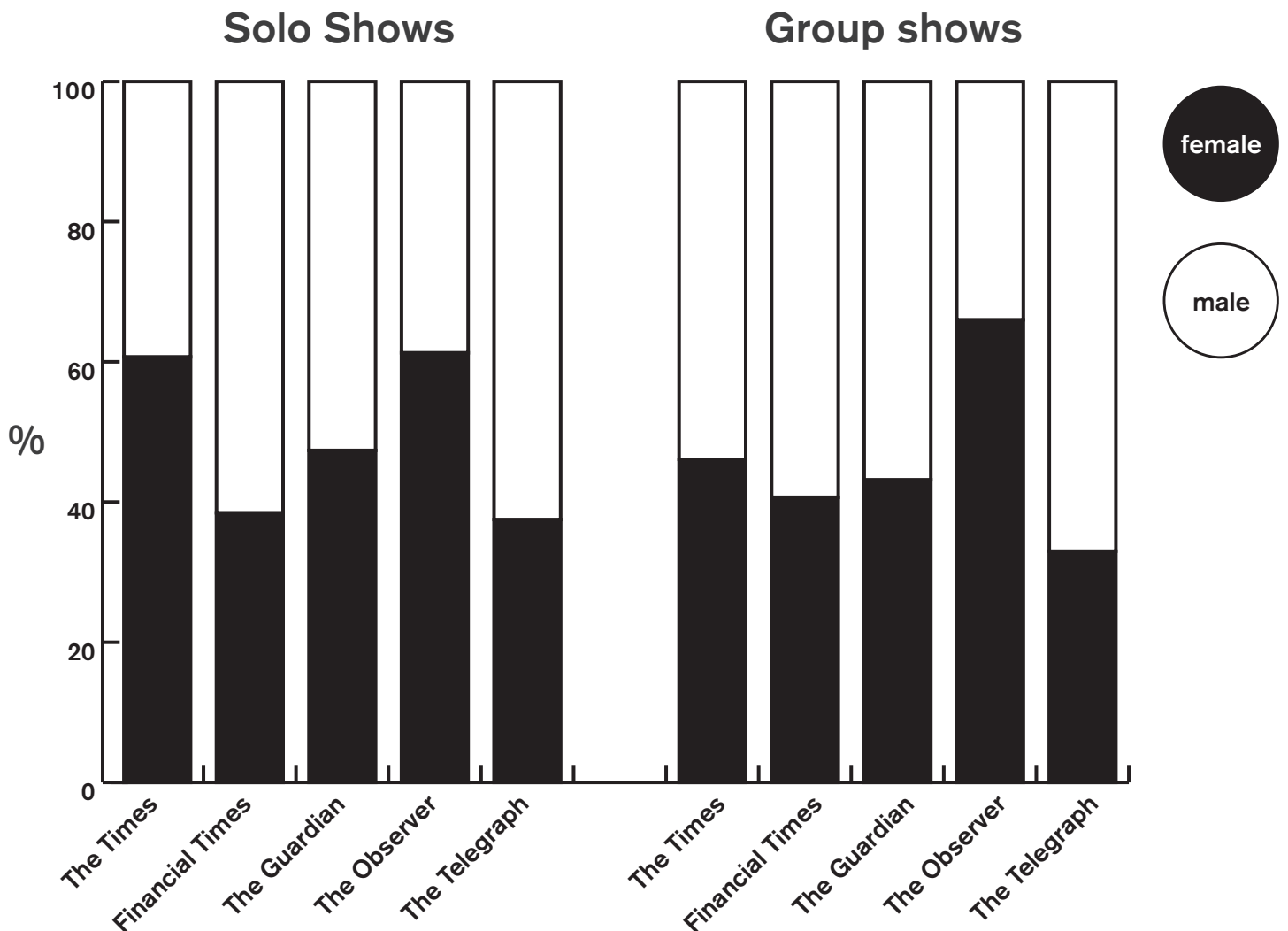
Evidence 20 Gender of Artists Involved in Public Art Projects in 2018



36 public art commissioning bodies were analysed by the number of commissioned and completed projects during 2018. Of those, 15 were either commissioned and/or completed public art works. 54% of commissioned projects were awarded to women, and 69% of completed projects were by female artists.



Evidence 21 Gender of Artists Reviewed in National Newspapers



This new evidence maps exhibition reviews in five main UK newspapers during 2018. These included *The Times*, the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Telegraph*. We looked at individual named artists in group shows (51% female); solo show reviews (49% female) and single gender group shows (68% female). However, there was quite a bit of variation between newspapers. For example, only 34% of named artists in group shows

reviewed in *The Telegraph* were female artists, in *The Observer* the figure was 67%. This is mirrored in data on solo exhibitions with only 37% in *The Telegraph*, but 61% female solo exhibitions reviewed in *The Observer*. The *Financial Times* reviews of solo exhibitions only comprised 38% by women artists. Given the limited number of high profile art journals and magazines published in the UK, coverage by the popular press is particularly important.



This research was undertaken by Dr Kate McMillan, artist and academic in the Department for Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King's College, London. Research assistants included Lauren England and Clara de Massol, PhD students in CMCI.

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