Australian Government

Creative Australia

Towards Equity 2

Creative Australia's diversity data report

Acknowledgement of Country

Creative Australia acknowledges the many Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and honours their Elders past and present.

We respect their deep and enduring connection to their lands, waterways and surrounding clan groups since time immemorial. We cherish the richness of First Nations peoples' artistic and cultural expressions.

We are privileged to gather on this Country and to share knowledge, culture and art, now and with future generations.

Acknowledgements

Creative Australia worked with the following consultants on this study:

- Mandy Whitford, Impact Words Consulting – lead writer, data analysis
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We thank our peers, colleagues and advisors who provided critical feedback and review of the report, in particular, the Arts and Disability Network Australia and Diversity Arts Australia.

Foreword

Australia's arts and cultural sector is evolving rapidly, shaped by the extraordinary diversity of our communities and the world's oldest living cultures. Since the release of our first *Towards Equity* report in 2021, Creative Australia has entered a new chapter – guided by the expanded remit of our agency and the launch in 2023 of the Australian Government's National Cultural Policy *Revive*, a place for every story, a story for every place. These changes have placed diversity, equity and inclusion at the centre of our work, reaffirming our commitment to supporting arts practice that truly reflects contemporary Australia.

Australia's creativity thrives on the richness of its many cultures, languages, lived experiences, and identities. At the heart of this diversity are First Nations peoples – custodians of the world's oldest living continuous cultures – whose enduring connection to Country and culture spans tens of thousands of years. Their foundational role shapes and enriches our national identity and the vibrancy of Australia's arts.

Towards Equity 2 builds on the foundations of our first report, expanding our evidence base and deepening our understanding of representation across Creative Australia's activities and the broader sector. This edition tracks progress for seven communities of focus – First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, d/Deaf and disabled people, women, people in regional and remote areas, young people, and LGBTIQ+ people – drawing on new and expanded data sources, including national surveys and qualitative research.

The findings show areas of progress, as well as continuing areas of under-representation. We have seen improvements in representation among leaders, peer assessors, grant recipients, and staff. We have also seen evidence of initiatives driving progress for First Nations communities, and d/Deaf and disabled artists and creative workers. At the same time, the data highlight where further effort is needed – including a continued focus on disability, regional communities, and children and young people.

Creative Australia is undertaking significant and ongoing work to expand our reach and infrastructure across these areas. We are growing our portfolio of multi-year investment organisations, developing delivery partners to provide services for the sector and for specific communities, and have work in progress on regional and youth engagement. These initiatives are designed to build capacity, foster inclusion, and ensure that our programs and investments reflect the diversity of Australia.

Our commitment to equity is active and ongoing. Since 2021, we have established a self-determined First Nations-led body, renewed our focus on disability as a partner on the Australian Government's *Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan*, launched Creative Workplaces to improve conditions across the sector, and contributed to policy reform through the Multicultural Framework Review. Our strategy, *Creativity Connects Us*, centres diversity and equity in every decision we make.

We recognise that data alone cannot capture the full complexity of lived experience. The terms we use to measure and discuss diversity are evolving, contested, and deeply personal. This report is both a stocktake and a call to action – a tool for transparency and shared learning. It is imperfect and incomplete, but it is a step towards better counting what matters, and ensuring our arts and culture reflect all Australians.

Real change requires bold leadership, collaboration, and a willingness to rethink structures and practices. We cannot make this change alone. I invite our industry, our communities, and all Australians to work with us – to challenge under-representation, champion equity, and help shape a future where creativity connects us all.

Together, let us ensure our arts reflect us.

Adrian Collette AM

Chief Executive Officer
Creative Australia

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About this report

***Towards Equity 2* is the second report from Creative Australia on diversity in the Australian arts and culture sector.** Building on the inaugural report, it sets out key indicators to track representation across Creative Australia activity and investment, alongside broader national indicators.

Supporting arts practice that reflects Australia's diversity is a legislated responsibility of Creative Australia. Through our Strategy and corporate plans, Creative Australia has made commitments to report on diversity in our activity, and build the evidence base for diversity in arts and culture.

Creative Australia also has a legislated responsibility to support First Nations arts practice, and self-determined investment in First Nations arts and culture is a pillar of Creative Australia's Strategy.

This research series helps Creative Australia assess our diversity performance and meet our diversity commitments – building our transparency and accountability while sharing insights to support the sector in its diversity efforts.

***Towards Equity 2* focuses on representation for seven demographic groups:** First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, d/Deaf and disabled people, women, people in regional and remote areas, young people, and LGBTIQ+ people. Contextual data are included to see how indicator results compare to diversity in the Australian community and workforce.

Part A presents findings for indicators on diversity in Creative Australia activity. These look at diversity among recipients of our grants and initiatives – including project investment, government programs, capacity building and strategic initiatives, international opportunities, and leadership programs – based on application data from individuals and organisations. This is in addition to indicators on diversity among leaders of organisations we fund on a multi-year basis, peer panels that assess applications to grants and opportunities, and Creative Australia staff.

Part B presents national indicators beyond Creative Australia activity and investment, focusing on artists, workers, audiences and participants.

The latest findings cover the three years from 2021 to 2023. Where available, results are compared with 2015–2019 findings published in the first report.[1]

In addition to Creative Australia data, the indicators draw on national datasets including the ABS Census and other best available population estimates, the Macquarie University Artist Survey, the National Arts Participation Survey and the Diversity Council Australia (DCA) Inclusive Employer Index. There is no single data source or method to track diversity among artists, workers or the population and each has strengths and limitations.

New in this edition is expanded reporting on a wider range of Creative Australia programs and investment streams. The report also provides 'spotlights' that illuminate findings from qualitative research, including with First Nations and d/Deaf and disabled artists and leaders.

***Towards Equity 2* highlights both achievements and areas of concern** and underscores Creative Australia's long-term commitment to advancing equity across the sector and improving data and reporting. Creative Australia is committed to shaping arts and creativity that enriches the lives of all Australians in an ecology that is thriving, equitable and accessible for all.

1 Data from 2020 has been excluded as it was not a 'business as usual' year due to the COVID-19 lockdowns and their impact on the arts and cultural sector and Creative Australia activity.

Note on terminology and data

Diversity data collection is limited and often lags behind evolving community language and expectations. Some of the terms and definitions used to collect the data shown in this report may be experienced as outdated, overly broad, or deficit based by the communities they describe.[2] This is relevant for categories such as CALD, disability status and gender identity, where preferred terminology and expectations are evolving rapidly.

Where possible, we have used arts sector-preferred terms such as 'd/Deaf and disabled' in this report, with transparency about how metrics were defined provided in the analysis.

We have included contextual population estimates to help assess whether support for the arts broadly reflects Australia's diversity.[3] However, population data are not always directly comparable with the indicators – especially for CALD communities and d/Deaf and disabled people – due to differences in definitions and methods in data collection, and disclosure patterns. We also make comparisons between indicators (for example, comparing diversity in Creative Australia activity with diversity among artists).

For further information about terminology and definitions, see *Key terms and population estimates* and notes on definitions provided throughout the report.

2 For example, disability definitions that describe 'impairments and limitations' can be critiqued as deficit based.
3 Support for Australian arts practice that reflects the diversity of Australia is a function under the *Creative Australia Act 2023*.

Insights

Part A: Creative Australia's diversity performance

Part A presents findings that help Creative Australia assess our diversity performance and meet our commitments to monitor and report diversity among arts leaders, peer assessors, recipients of our investment, and our staff. Results are for 2021–2023 compared to 2015–2019 data reported in the previous study where available. For further information about the data Creative Australia collects from individuals and organisations, see *Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data*.

1. **Leadership of multi-year investment organisations** (senior creative and executive leaders and board members)[4]

- **There have been improvements for each demographic group we looked at for leaders of multi-year investment organisations since the last report.** First Nations and women's representation are strong. First Nations leadership outside of First Nations-led organisations has increased since 2019, with seven in ten MYI organisations now having First Nations representation. CALD representation has also increased - more than eight in ten organisations now have CALD representation. Leaders with identified disability are underrepresented but there is high non-disclosure of disability status. More than half of multi-year investment organisations have no disability representation in leadership roles.

2. **Peer assessment panels** (that assess applications to Creative Australia grants and opportunities)[5]

- **Diverse groups are well represented on Creative Australia peer assessment panels compared to diversity among artists.** Since the last report there have been strong increases in CALD representation, and representation of d/Deaf and disabled peers has more than doubled. Representation of First Nations and women peers has remained strong, and regional and remote representation remains similar to the population estimate.

3. Recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives

3a. **Project investment** (including our core grant programs)[6]

- **Diversity has increased among individual project investment recipients since the last report, including a doubling of disability and CALD representation,** and increases in already strong First Nations, women's and LGBTIQ+ representation. However, d/Deaf and disabled people and those from regional and remote Australia remain underrepresented compared to artists and the Australian population. Organisation recipients' demographics (the primary group an organisation works with) are broadly similar to the previous report, including around one in four recipients reporting regional or remote communities as their demographic.

4 This includes leadership of organisations that receive multi-year investment from Creative Australia through a range of frameworks and investment programs.
5 Panels are formed for each round of Creative Australia *grants and initiatives* assess applications relevant to the peers' areas of expertise as artists, creative workers or industry experts.
6 Includes applications made to Arts Projects for Individuals and Groups and Arts Projects for Organisations (our core grants programs), and other smaller competitive grants and investment initiatives.

3b. Government programs[7]

Note: *Creative Australia is publishing diversity data on the following investment categories for the first time in this report, so no comparison over time is currently available.*

- **Organisations that primarily work with children and young people are well represented among government program recipients,** and individual recipients broadly reflect diversity in the population, except CALD and d/Deaf and disabled people (noting different definitions make data comparisons challenging for these two groups). Disability representation is low, and d/Deaf and disabled individuals, along with people and organisations from regional and remote areas, are experiencing lower success rates and requesting less funding – despite higher access costs and the higher costs of regional and remote work.

3c. Capacity building and strategic initiatives[8]

- **There is strong First Nations and regional and remote representation among capacity building and strategic initiative recipients,** including due to targeted First Nations initiatives. Women's and LGBTIQ+ people's representation is also strong. CALD representation is below population estimates but similar to the proportion of practising artists with non-English speaking backgrounds. Disability representation is below disability representation among artists.

3d. International opportunities[9]

- **First Nations people are well represented among recipients of international opportunities,** which include targeted First Nations initiatives. LGBTIQ+ people and women are also well represented and results for CALD representation are among the highest for Creative Australia investment categories. However, d/Deaf and disabled people and those from regional and remote areas are underrepresented and d/Deaf and disabled applicants are experiencing lower success rates.

3e. Leadership programs[10]

- **First Nations and disability representation are strong in Creative Australia's leadership programs,** which have identified places for First Nations and d/Deaf and disabled artists and creative workers. Disability representation exceeds other indicators, and CALD people are represented at similar levels to among project investment and international opportunity recipients. People from regional or remote areas are underrepresented compared to population estimates, but each state and territory and arts practice area is represented.

4. Creative Australia staff[11]

- **Creative Australia tracks strong representation of First Nations people, cultural and linguistic diversity, women and LGBTQI+ employees** but low and declining representation of both younger and older employees. One in ten Creative Australia staff report disability, in line with the Diversity Council Australia (DCA) national employer benchmark.

7 Creative Australia delivers a range of programs on behalf of the Australian Government, including Playing Australia, the Contemporary Music Touring Program and the Contemporary Touring Initiative.

8 Creative Australia offers a range of industry capacity building and skill-development opportunities and brokered, responsive strategic investments. Programs included in this analysis support audience and market development, climate leadership, digital skills and strategies, governance capability and First Nations fashion and textiles.

9 Includes residencies, exchanges and strategic international projects and programs.

10 Highly competitive professional development opportunities for artists and creative workers.

11 Based on responses to the DCA Inclusive Employer Index survey.

Insights

Part B: The broader national picture

Part B looks beyond Creative Australia activity and investment. These national indicators help Creative Australia see how our investments align with broader trends and are part of our commitment to building the evidence base around equity in arts and culture. Results are based on the Artist Survey 2023 (Indicator 5), and new analysis of the ABS Census 2021 (Indicator 6) and the National Arts Participation Survey 2022 (Indicators 7 and 8).

5. Practising artists[12]

- **There are shifts in diversity among practising artists in Australia but there are areas of inequality and numbers of younger artists are falling – reflecting a concerning long-term trend.** Numbers have also fallen for older artists for the first time since 1988. Since 2016, there has been increased representation of artists from non-English speaking backgrounds, women, and people based outside capital cities, and the proportion of d/Deaf and disabled artists has almost doubled from a low base. Women outnumber men roughly two to one but earn less from their creative work, with a greater gender pay gap than in the Australian workforce.

6. Cultural production sector workers (all employees in music and performing arts, visual arts, writing and publishing, and TV, film and radio)[13]

- **There have been small gains in the diversification of the cultural production sector workforce since 2016, including for First Nations and non-European people, who are underrepresented.** However, progress is slight and there is substantial income inequality. d/Deaf and disabled people who need assistance with core activities[14] are represented at a slightly higher rate in the cultural production sectors than among Australian workers overall but earn half the income of their peers. Young people and regional and remote communities are underrepresented with no progress, and other research has noted barriers to entry and retention for these groups.

7. Arts attendance among diverse groups[15]

- **First Nations people, CALD people and young people are more likely to attend arts events than other Australians,[16] and more young people are attending arts events than in 2019 and more often.** First Nations and d/Deaf and disabled people particularly value health and wellbeing benefits of arts attendance. However, overall attendance rates (the proportion of each group who attend) have decreased since 2019 for First Nations and d/Deaf and disabled people, as well as those from regional areas. d/Deaf and disabled people are also attending fewer live arts events than before the pandemic, as are CALD people and women. Enjoyment, cultural connection and socialising are key drivers. Cost is the main barrier, alongside travel – especially for regional Australians, women and d/Deaf and disabled people.

12 Based on the Macquarie University national Artist Survey 2023, compared to 2016. See Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

13 Includes Australians employed in any role in the following industry sectors as their main job on Census week: music and performing arts, visual arts, writing and publishing, and TV, film and radio. Based on ABS Census 2021, compared to 2016.

14 This Census measure identifies people with more severe forms of disability who need personal support.

15 Population level data on attendance at the broad range of live arts offerings in Australia by diverse groups, based on the National Arts Participation Survey 2022, compared to 2019.

16 Based on the proportion of each group who attended in 2022.

8. Active creative participation among diverse groups[17]

- **First Nations, CALD, d/Deaf and disabled, gender diverse and younger Australians are more likely to create art than other Australians, though participation fell between 2019 and 2022 for First Nations, CALD and d/Deaf and disabled people.**[18] First Nations, CALD and younger Australians are the most likely to recognise the positive impacts of arts and creativity and say there are plenty of opportunities to participate, while d/Deaf and disabled people and those in regional areas are less likely to see such opportunities.

Insights for the demographic groups

The following are key insights for each demographic group of focus, looking across the indicators.

First Nations people

- **First Nations representation and success rates are strong across all Creative Australia activity and investment,** which includes identified positions and targeted initiatives in line with the emphasis on support for First Nations arts and culture in our Strategy. However, First Nations people are underrepresented among workers in the broader cultural production sector and face a significant but decreasing income gap. And while First Nations people are more likely to attend arts events and participate in making art than other groups, both their overall attendance and creative participation[19] have declined since 2019.

CALD people

- **Almost one in two Creative Australia staff have a non-English-speaking cultural background[20] and there have been large increases in CALD representation on Creative Australia peer assessment panels and among project investment recipients.** Across Creative Australia investment, CALD applicants are experiencing similar or higher success rates than other applicants and, while not directly comparable, CALD representation is higher than the proportion of practising artists from non-English speaking backgrounds, who remain underrepresented. CALD Australians are strong engagers in arts and culture but are attending arts events less frequently than before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the proportion who actively participate in making art has also declined.

17 Population level data on art making for different demographic groups based on the National Arts Participation Survey 2022, compared to 2019.
18 Based on the proportion of each group that participated in making art that year.
19 Defined as the proportion of First Nations respondents who attended live arts or actively participated in making art in 2022.
20 Based on identifying with or belonging to one or more cultural/ethnic groups that is not from a mainly English-speaking country. This background may be the same as one's parents, grandparents or heritage, or a country of birth or close ties.

d/Deaf and disabled people

- **Disability representation has doubled on peer assessment panels, and among project investment recipients and practising artists.** However, d/Deaf and disabled people remain underrepresented across Creative Australia grants and initiatives, except in our leadership programs. Disability representation is particularly low among recipients of government programs and international opportunities. Identified disability representation is low among leaders of multi-year investment organisations but has increased since 2019 and may be impacted by high rates of non-disclosure. Overall arts attendance and creative participation rates[21] have declined among d/Deaf and disabled people since before the pandemic.

Women

- **Women's representation in the arts is strong, exceeding men's representation across all indicators.** Women applying for Creative Australia grants and initiatives are experiencing higher success rates than men and gender diverse people. Overall, around two thirds of artists and half of cultural production sector workers are women, but income gaps persist, and some occupations remain male dominated. Women are attending fewer live arts events and festivals than before the pandemic and are more likely than men to want to attend more. Women are also more likely to create art than men, but are less likely than gender diverse people, who have a high rate of creative participation.[22]

Regional and remote

- **Around one in four arts organisation leaders, peer assessors, capacity building and strategic program recipients, and organisations receiving project investment, are from regional or remote Australia.** However regional and remote Australians are underrepresented in Creative Australia's international opportunities, leadership programs, project investment (individuals) and government programs (organisations), and are experiencing lower success rates. Nearly one in three artists are now based outside capital cities, up from one in four in 2016, but regional and remote workers are underrepresented in the broader cultural production sectors. A lower proportion of Australians from regional areas are attending arts events compared to before the pandemic.

21 Defined as the proportion of respondents who attended live arts or actively participated in making art in 2022.
22 Defined as the proportion who actively participated in making art in 2022.

Young people

- **While younger Australians are more likely to create art and recognise positive impacts of arts and creativity, younger people are underrepresented among both artists and cultural production sector workers, with representation trending down.** Other research has highlighted barriers to cultural sector entry and retention for young people.[23] Young people are also underrepresented among Creative Australia staff. However, organisations that work primarily with children and young people are seeing strong success rates in Creative Australia investment and are well represented among government program and international opportunity recipients. One in ten leadership roles in multi-year investment organisations are held by early career leaders aged 35 and under.

LGBTIQ+ people

- **There is strong representation of LGBTIQ+ people among Creative Australia staff and grants and initiative recipients.** However, LGBTIQ+ people are experiencing lower success rates across investment categories except project investment. Data for LGBTIQ+ people is not available for some indicators, including due to privacy considerations.

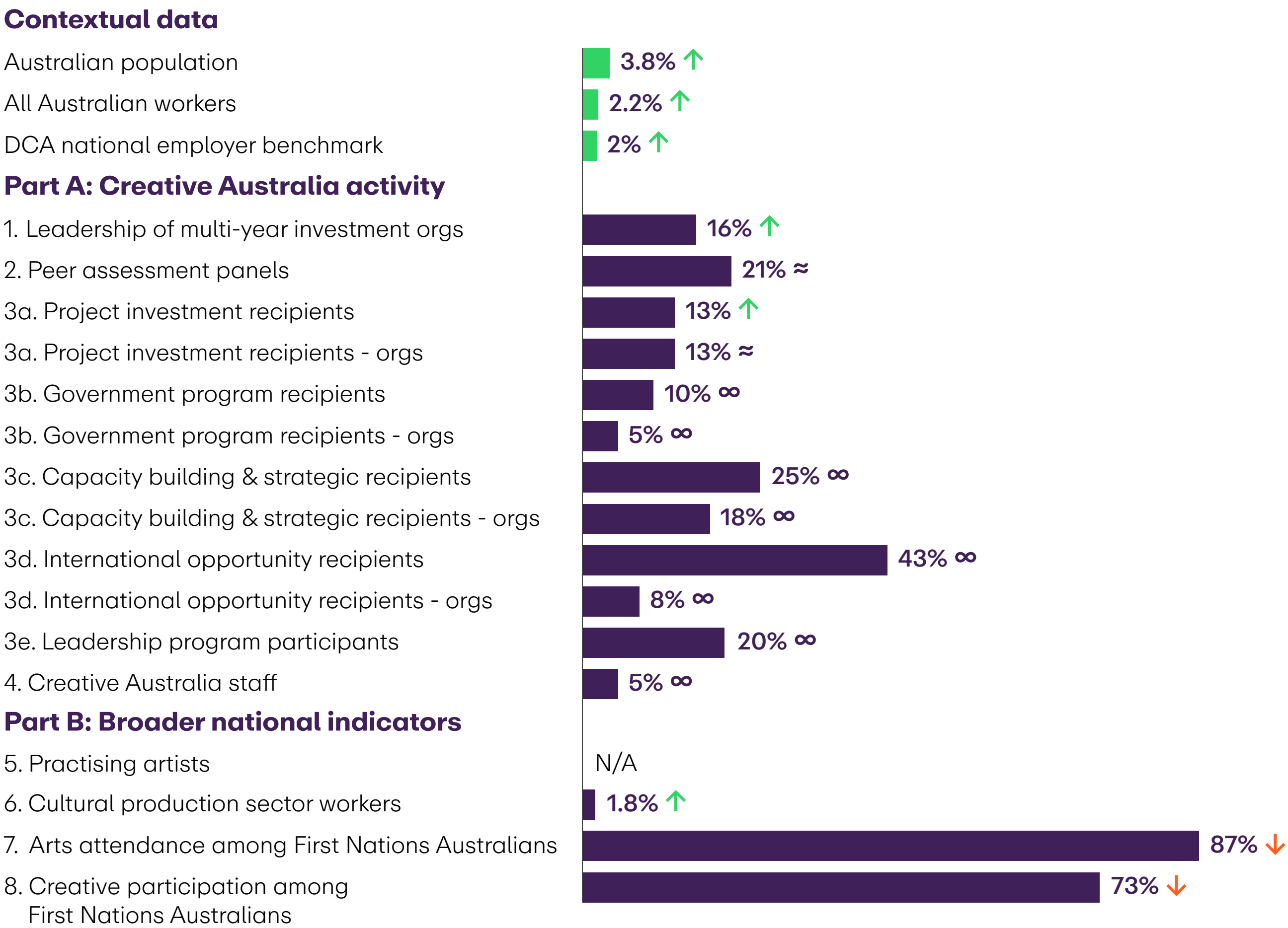
23 Including limited access to education and visible career pathways; inaccessible unpaid pathways; a disconnect between training and employment; and generational shifts in expectations around work. Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers*.

Demographic overviews

The following figures present an overview of indicator findings and contextual data for the demographic groups of focus (Figures 1 to 7). Comparisons between measures should be made with caution due to different definitions, particularly for CALD and d/Deaf and disabled people. See the notes under the figures, ***Key terms and population estimates*** and 'About the data' in the relevant report sections for further information and data sources.

First Nations people

Figure 1: Indicator results for First Nations people, 2021–23



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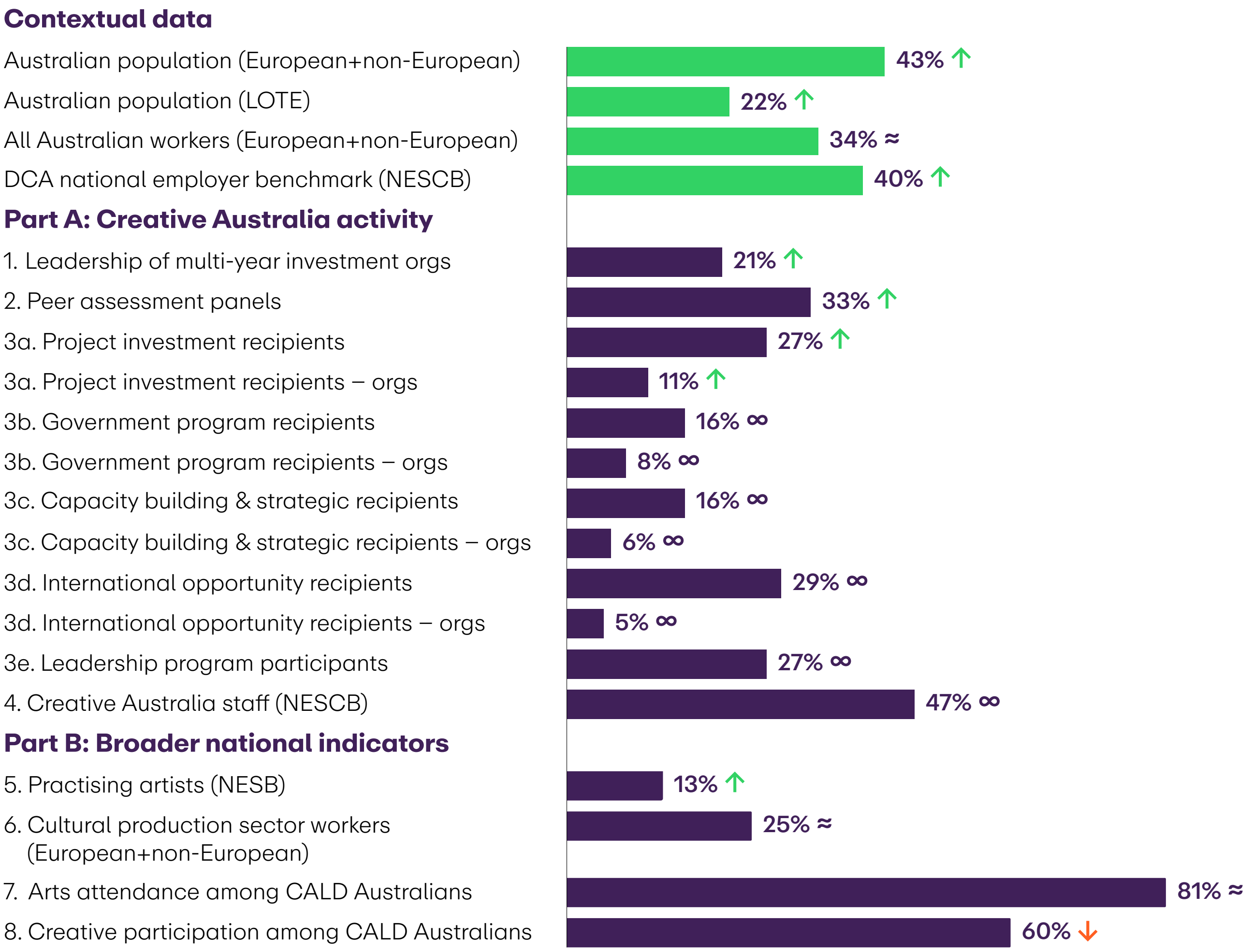
Notes on definitions: All indicators are based on self-identification, but First Nations status is asked in a variety of ways. For example, Creative Australia asks people to self-identify based on the 'three-part definition' that includes descent, identity and community acceptance. Census asks about 'Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin' as well as a person's 'ancestry'. 'Orgs' is based on organisations selecting that they primarily work with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities. Nationally representative data are not available for First Nations practising artists. 'Arts attendance' and 'Creative participation' are the proportion of First Nations respondents who attended or made art in 2022 based on the National Arts Participation Survey. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for further information. 'N/A': data not available/not collected.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people

Figure 2: Indicator results for CALD people, 2021–23



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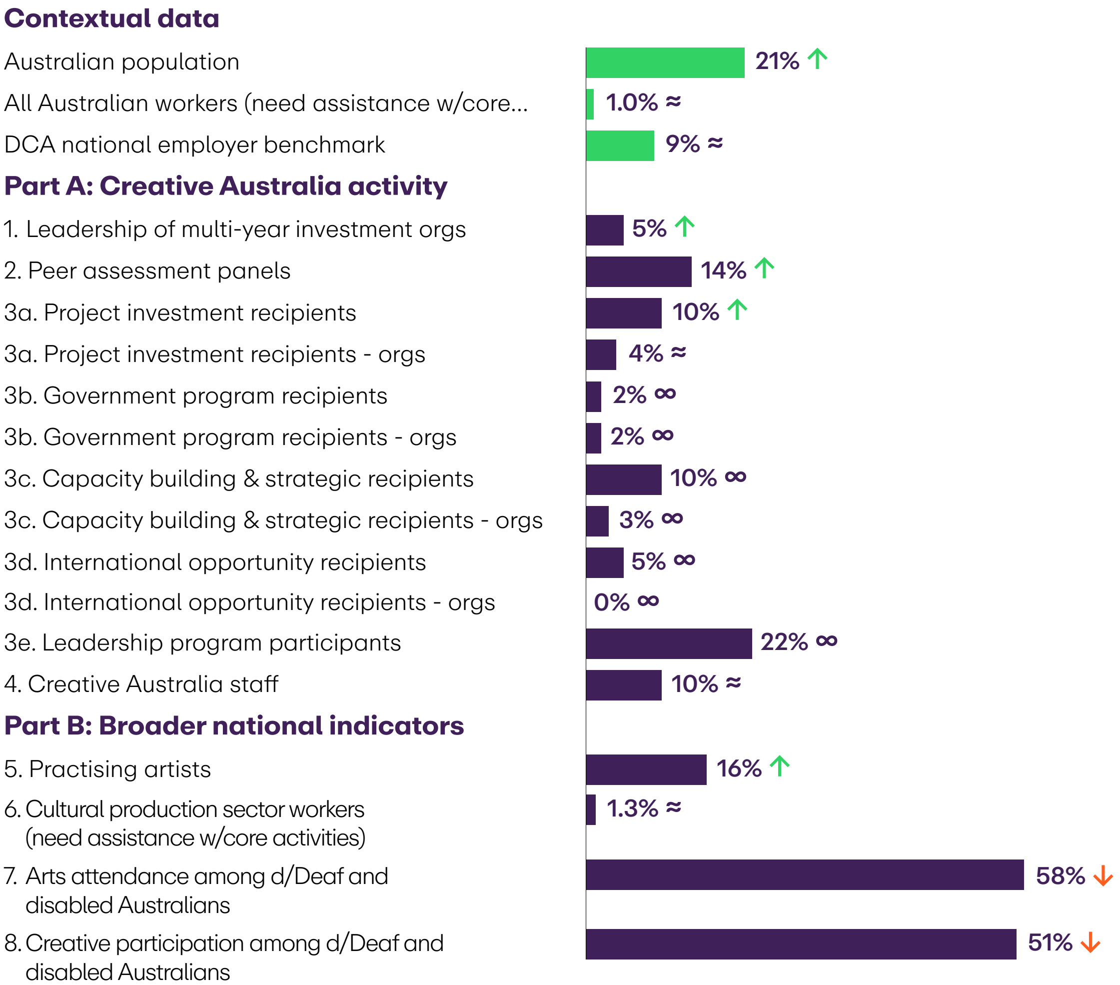
Notes on definitions: Comparisons should be made with caution due to different definitions. Creative Australia data are based on self-selection as CALD, or being born overseas and not speaking English as a first language (self or parent). 'European+non-European' is based on aggregation of the 'European' and 'non-European' ancestry categories in Census 2021 data (excludes the First Nations and Anglo-Celtic groups). 'LOTE' includes Australians who speak a language other than English at home based on Census 2021. 'NESCB' includes people who identify with one or more non-English speaking cultural backgrounds based on 2023 DCA data. 'NESB' includes people with a non-English speaking background based on first language learnt and the Artist Survey 2023. 'Orgs' is based on organisations selecting that they primarily work with CALD people. 'Arts attendance' and 'Creative participation' are based on self-selection and are the proportion of CALD respondents who participated in 2022 based on the National Arts Participation Survey. See *Key terms and population estimates* for further information.

d/Deaf and disabled people

Figure 3: Indicator results for d/Deaf and disabled people, 2021–23



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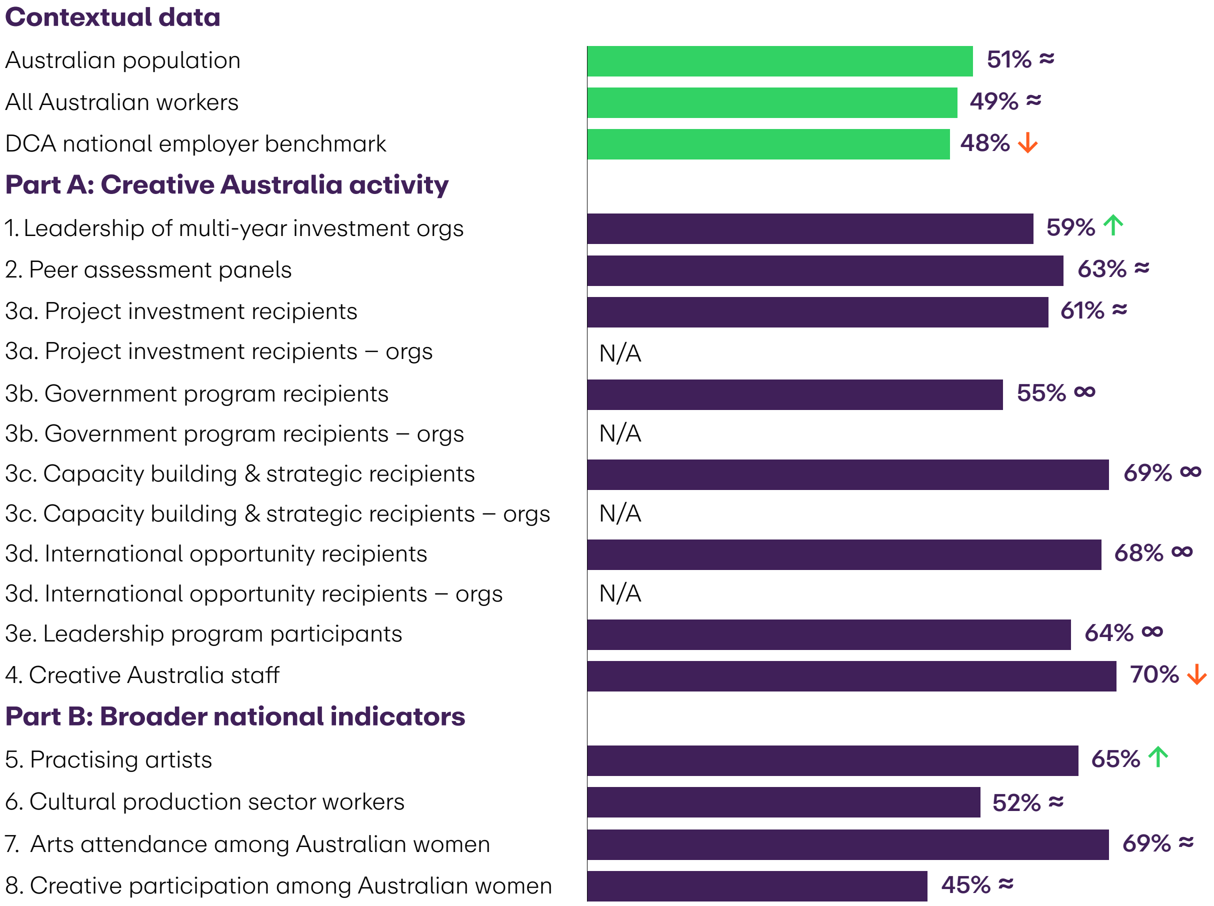
Notes on definitions: Creative Australia data are based on self-identification as a person with disability. 'Australian population', the 'DCA national employer benchmark' and 'Creative Australia staff' include people with an 'impairment or condition' that restricts everyday activities. This is not directly comparable to the indicators based on self-identification, as not all this group identify as disabled/living with disability. The population estimate also includes many elderly people and people who are not in the workforce. 'All Australian workers' and 'Cultural production sector workers' include people who need assistance with core activities which is also not directly comparable to self-identification with disability. 'Orgs' is based on organisations selecting that they primarily work with 'people with disability'. 'Practising artists' is based on self-identification and/or having 'an impairment' that affects activities. 'Arts attendance' and 'Creative participation' are based on self-selection and the proportion of d/Deaf or disabled respondents who attended or made art in 2022 based on the National Arts Participation Survey. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for further information.

Women

Figure 4: Indicator results for women, 2021–23



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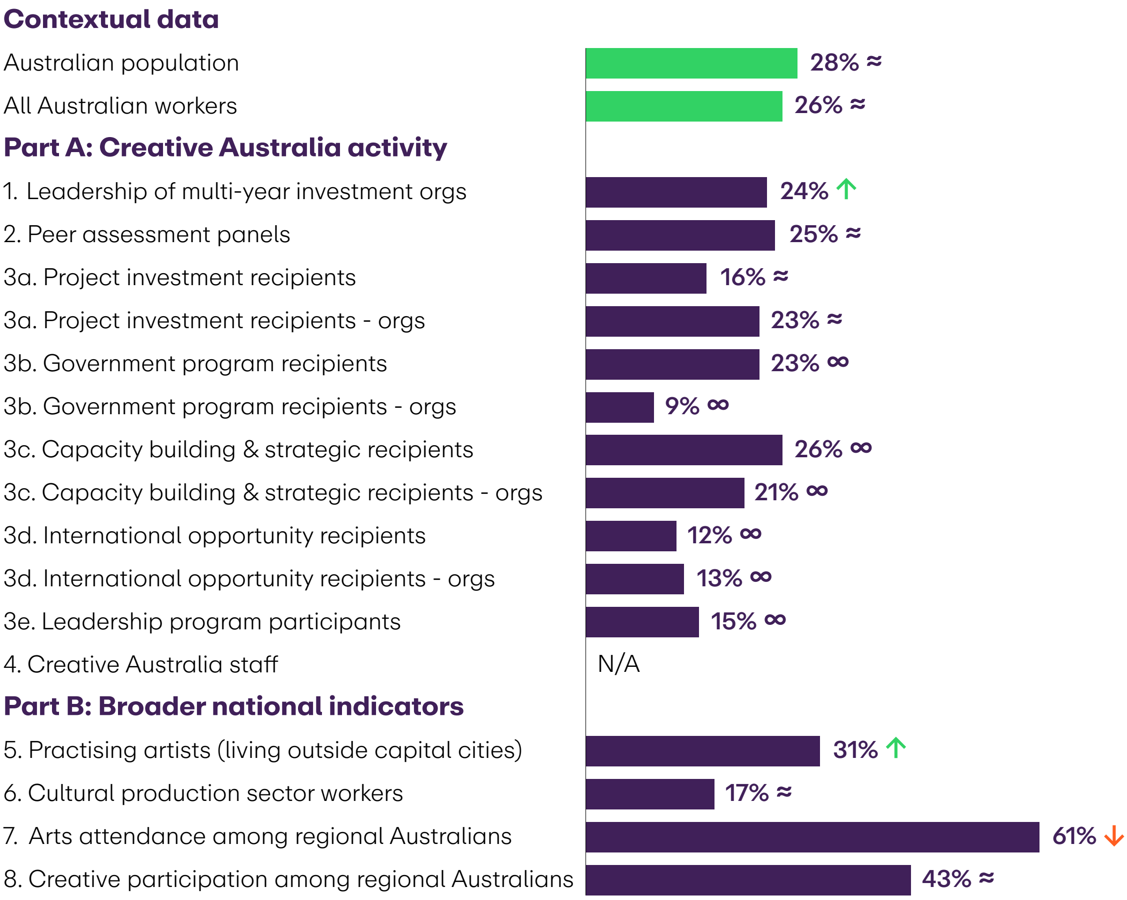
Notes on definitions: 'Australian population', 'All Australian workers' and 'Cultural production sector workers' are based on 'sex' and binary reporting in Census 2021. Other indicators are based on 'gender' self-identification, and the findings account for non-binary and gender diverse people in the total. 'Arts attendance' and 'Creative participation' are based on the proportion of women who attended or made art in 2022 based on the National Arts Participation Survey. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for further information. 'N/A': data not available/not collected.

Regional and remote

Figure 5: Indicator results for people living in regional or remote areas, 2021–23



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Notes on definitions: 'Australian population', 'All Australian workers' and 'Cultural production sector workers' are based on Census 2021 data by ABS remoteness areas (inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote). Creative Australia data are based on self-identification or postcode (individuals) or 'Regional or remote communities' selected as the demographic group the organisation primarily works with (orgs). 'Practising artists' includes artists living outside of capital cities. 'Arts attendance' and 'Creative participation' are the proportion of regional Australians only (not remote) who attended or made art in 2022 based on the National Arts Participation Survey. See *Key terms and population estimates* for further information. 'N/A': data not available/ not collected.

Young people

Figure 6: Indicator results for young people, 2021–23

Contextual data	
Australian population (15-24)	13% ↑
All Australian workers (15-24)	14% ≈
DCA national employer benchmark (under 30)	25% ↑
Part A: Creative Australia activity	
1. Leadership of multi-year investment orgs (15-35)	11% ↑
2. Peer assessment panels	N/A
3a. Project investment recipients	N/A
3a. Project investment recipients - orgs	10% ≈
3b. Government program recipients	N/A
3b. Government program recipients - orgs	14% ∞
3c. Capacity building & strategic recipients	N/A
3c. Capacity building & strategic recipients - orgs	10% ∞
3d. International opportunity recipients - orgs	13% ∞
3e. Leadership program participants	N/A
4. Creative Australia staff (under 30)	4% ↓
Part B: Broader national indicators	
5. Practising artists (18-24)	3% ↓
6. Cultural production sector workers (15-24)	9.4% ≈
7. Arts attendance among young Australians (15-24)	87% ↑
8. Creative participation among young Australians (15-24)	68% ≈

Key: ↑ Up from previous report ↓ Down from previous report ≈ Similar to previous report ∞ New in this report

Notes on definitions: This report uses various age ranges to discuss young people, most commonly 15–24. While we have aimed to provide consistent age ranges, this is not always possible. Leadership of multi-year investment orgs uses an early career age range of 15-35. For leadership comparisons in Figure 8 only, Australian population estimate for 'Young people' is reported as 15–35 to match the age range used in the leadership dataset. All other 'Young people' indicators use 15–24. Creative Australia staff survey uses an age range of under 30. 'Orgs' is based on organisations selecting that they primarily work with children and young people. 'Arts attendance' and 'Creative participation' are the proportion of Australians aged 15–24 who attended or made art in 2022 based on the National Arts Participation Survey. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for further information. 'N/A': data not available/not collected.

LGBTIQ+ people

Figure 7: Indicator results for LGBTIQ+ people, 2021–23

Contextual data	
Australian population	4.5% ∞
DCA national employer benchmark	11% ↑
Part A: Creative Australia activity	
1. Leadership of multi-year investment orgs	N/A
2. Peer assessment panels	N/A
3a. Project investment recipients	25% ↑
3a. Project investment recipients - orgs	N/A
3b. Government program recipients	11% ∞
3b. Government program recipients - orgs	N/A
3c. Capacity building & strategic recipients	19% ∞
3c. Capacity building & strategic recipients - orgs	N/A
3d. International opportunity recipients	19% ∞
3d. International opportunity recipients - orgs	N/A
3e. Leadership program participants	N/A
4. Creative Australia staff	28% ↑
Part B: Broader national indicators	
5. Practising artists (18-24)	N/A
6. Cultural production sector workers (15-24)	N/A
7. Arts attendance among young Australians (15-24)	N/A
8. Creative participation among young Australians (15-24)	N/A

Key: ↑ Up from previous report ↓ Down from previous report ≈ Similar to previous report ∞ New in this report

Notes on definitions: 'Australian population' is a new experimental ABS estimate, based on 2022 data, and should be used with caution. 'Arts attendance' and 'Creative participation' are the proportion of Australians aged 15–24 who attended or made art in 2022 based on the National Arts Participation Survey. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for further information. 'N/A': data not available/not collected.

Introduction

***Towards Equity 2* is the second report from Creative Australia examining diverse representation in Australian arts and culture.** Creative Australia believes that for arts and culture to be its best – and to be relevant to contemporary Australia – Australians of all backgrounds and experiences need to be able to participate as creators, decision-makers, workers and audiences. Equitable representation is not just fair, it drives creativity, innovation and connection across communities.

Creative Australia is committed to reporting on equity and diversity across our investment, activities and the broader sector. The inaugural *Towards Equity* report, released in 2021, brought together published and unpublished data on equity, diversity and representation in Australia's arts and cultural sector for the first time. It captured a moment of major disruption as the COVID-19 pandemic was unfolding.

In 2023, the Australian Government launched *Revive*, a national five-year cultural policy that puts diversity and inclusion at its core, guided by the principle of 'a place for every story, and a story for every place.' Our establishing legislation, the *Creative Australia Act 2023*, requires us to support First Nations arts and arts practice that reflects the diversity of Australia, and we have made commitments to monitoring and reporting on equity and diversity through our Strategy[24] and corporate plans.

Towards Equity 2* builds on these foundations.** It provides a framework to assess Creative Australia's progress in meeting our commitments, and it sets out the key indicators we will continue to track to stay accountable and promote equity and diversity across our work (see ***Indicator overview).

What's in the report

Part A presents findings on diversity within Creative Australia investment and activity. It tracks representation among leaders of organisations receiving multi-year investment from Creative Australia, arts industry peers who assess applications to Creative Australia grants and initiatives, recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives, and Creative Australia staff.

Since the last report, we have expanded our reporting on grants and initiatives. In the previous *Towards Equity* report, we were only able to share insights drawn from our core grants programs. *Towards Equity 2* includes new data on a broader range of Creative Australia's programs and investment streams, including government programs, capacity building and strategic programs, international opportunities and leadership programs.

Part B examines broader national indicators, tracking diversity among practising professional artists and cultural production sector workers, as well as arts attendance and creative participation among diverse groups nationwide. These national indicators help us see how our investments align with broader trends and are part of our commitment to building the evidence base around equity in arts and culture.

In *Towards Equity 2*, results are reported for seven demographic groups where data are available: First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, d/Deaf and disabled people, women, people living in regional or remote areas, young people and LGBTIQ+ people.

Contextual data are included to assess how indicator results compare to diversity in the Australian population and workforce, and we also make comparisons between indicator results. While population estimates and other comparisons offer useful context, they are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD and d/Deaf and disabled people. Different definitions used make comparisons between data sources particularly challenging for these groups. Collecting diversity data is complex, challenging, sensitive and evolving. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for further discussion.

24 Creative Australia 2024, *Our 2024–28 Strategy: Creativity Connects Us*.

***Towards Equity 2* presents findings covering the three years from 2021 to 2023.** This will help Creative Australia assess how effectively we are fulfilling our commitments under *Revive* and the *Creative Australia Act 2023*. Where available, these are compared with findings from 2015 to 2019 published in the first report, or other sources. Data from 2020 has been excluded from the analysis as it was not a 'business as usual' year due to the COVID-19 lockdowns and their impact on the arts and cultural sector and Creative Australia activity.[25]

Areas that we recognise are important but are beyond the scope of this report include creative control within artistic processes; diversity of programming; analysis of disability, inclusion, reconciliation or diversity action plan implementation or performance among arts and cultural organisations; diversity among Creative Australia's leadership (noting privacy constraints); workforce and audience data for organisations receiving multi-year investment from Creative Australia; religious affiliation or belief; and socio-economic background or class.

The report includes 'spotlight' sections to enrich the data with complementary qualitative research, voices and perspectives. These sections highlight findings from research with First Nations and d/Deaf and disabled arts leaders, artists and creatives; and findings from studies on the creative workforce, audience diversification and benefits of the arts for children and young people. There are also spotlight sections on measuring cultural and linguistic diversity, the role of Creative Workplaces and the review of Australia's multicultural framework.

Feedback from qualitative research underscores that barriers to inclusion remain across various parts of the arts and cultural sector. *Towards Equity 2* contributes to ongoing efforts to address these issues by providing critical data, highlighting both the gains achieved and the gaps that persist.

This report plays a vital role in developing shared standards we can collectively work toward and track over time. While we acknowledge continued limitations in data collection, we remain committed to improving systems and frameworks, and to ensuring that our insights are as inclusive, transparent, and actionable as possible.

Importantly, this work is part of a broader, long-term commitment to equity and diversity, one that requires sustained collaboration between Creative Australia, and the sector itself.

25 In 2020, most grants programs were suspended, and investment was consolidated into a series of COVID-19 response packages. The structure and datasets of these activities did not lend themselves to diversity analysis.

What Creative Australia has done since the last report

In addition to monitoring data, Creative Australia has undertaken a range of initiatives to advance equity since the previous report, some driven by *Revive* and others in response to emerging data on gaps, needs and representation. These include:

- **First Nations initiatives:** A self-determined First Nations-led body has been established within Creative Australia to govern arts investment and strategy. Creative Australia has also adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan to support the implementation of First Nations self-determined investment. Further, we have updated First Nations protocols, particularly around the contractual obligations of major organisations, to ensure respectful and self-determined engagement.
- **Disability initiatives:** We have undertaken a needs analysis of the arts and disability ecology in Australia and renewed our approach to investment and service delivery through our contribution to the development of *Equity: the Arts and Disability Associated Plan* in partnership with the Australian Government. (Note that the data in contained in this report was collected prior to the launch of *Equity* and does not include initiatives implemented under the Plan). We have also expanded leadership and capacity-building opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled artists and creatives.
- **Creative workforce initiatives:** The launch of Creative Workplaces marks a vital step towards ensuring fair, safe, and respectful working environments across the sector. In addition, Creative Australia's detailed research into creative workforce needs has provided insights into existing gaps and informed targeted responses, including expanded investment in areas of high need.
- **Policy initiatives:** We have advanced work on wellbeing in the arts, with a national Arts and Wellbeing Framework currently in development. Additionally, we have contributed to policy reform, including the review of Australia's multicultural framework, through collaboration with partners like Diversity Arts Australia, ensuring that equity, inclusion, and cultural diversity remain central to our national arts agenda.

Indicator overview

Part A: Creative Australia activity (2021–23)

1. Diversity within the leadership of multi-year investment organisations
2. Diversity within peer assessment panels
3. Diversity among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives
   3a. Project investment
   3b. Government programs
   3c. Capacity building and strategic programs
   3d. International opportunities
   3e. Leadership programs
4. Diversity within Creative Australia staff

Part B: Broader national indicators

5. Diversity within Australia's pool of practising artists (based on the 2023 Artist Survey)
6. Diversity among Australia's cultural production sector workers (based on Census 2021)
7. Arts attendance among diverse groups in Australia (based on the 2022 National Arts Participation Survey)
8. Creative participation among diverse groups in Australia (based on the 2022 National Arts Participation Survey)

Contextual data used in figures

Australian population estimates (based on Census 2021 or best available data source)

Diversity Council Australia's (DCA's) national employer benchmark (2023) (Indicator 4)

Data on Australian workers (based on Census 2021) (Indicator 6)

Focus demographic groups

First Nations people

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

d/Deaf and disabled people

Women

People living in regional or remote areas

Young people

LGBTIQ+ people

Key terms and population estimates

This section discusses key terms, definitions and population estimates for the focus groups in *Towards Equity 2*. The terms used to measure and discuss diversity are evolving, contested and can be deeply personal. Creative Australia supports self-determination and aims to be respectful as ways of identifying evolve.

Population estimates offer useful context in assessing Creative Australia's support for arts practice that reflects the diversity of Australia.[26] **However, they are not always directly comparable with indicators,** especially for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and d/Deaf and disabled people (see below for discussion of population estimates for each group). The population estimates used in *Towards Equity 2* are based on ABS Census 2021 data, or alternative best available sources of population level estimates.

Definitions of the indicators are provided with the results in Part A and Part B of this report. See 'About the data' in the relevant report sections.

First Nations people

In this report, 'First Nations people' refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. We use the term 'First Nations' in recognition of First Nations peoples' role as the original custodians of this country. We recognise that this term cannot fully reflect the diversity of cultures, languages and identities that exist across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Creative Australia recognises First Nations peoples' right to self-determination, including of First Nations identity and membership. We invite First Nations applicants to self-identify based on the 'three-part definition' that includes descent, identity and community acceptance.

The First Nations population estimate used in this report (3.8%) is based on the ABS Census 2021, adjusted for undercount.[27]

26 Support for Australian arts practice that reflects the diversity of Australia is a function under the *Creative Australia Act 2023*.
27 ABS 2021, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

There is ongoing debate about how to measure and discuss cultural diversity (see *Spotlight on measuring cultural and linguistic diversity*). Australian identities are not singular, and there is no standardised approach for defining cultural diversity in a respectful, accurate and inclusive way.[28] Different definitions and survey questions make it difficult to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

'Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)' is an increasingly contested category and many consider it no longer fit for purpose. Despite this, it continues to be used as a measurement tool in reporting on Australia's cultural makeup as more nuanced approaches are explored.

In this report we have used the term CALD, based on self-identification. For Creative Australia grants and initiatives, it also includes people who were (or who had a parent) born overseas and whose first language was not English. We use the term CALD with respect and recognise its limitations.

When using Census data to discuss cultural diversity in the Australian population, workforce and cultural production sector, this report draws on the four broad ancestry classifications used by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC): First Nations, Anglo-Celtic, European, and non-European.[29] According to the AHRC, these classifications reflect Australia's demographic history by mirroring the key waves of immigration that make up Australian society today.

The population estimate used for the CALD group in figures throughout this report (43%) is based on aggregation of the 'European' and 'non-European' ancestry categories in Census 2021 data. This population estimate should be used with caution as it is likely to include people who do not identify as CALD.

Additional population estimates discussed include the proportion of the Australian population who use a language other than English at home (22%) or were born overseas (28%) based on Census 2021 data.

Other terms used in this report include:

- **Non-English speaking cultural background (NESCB)** (Indicator 4, Creative Australia staff) based on identifying with or belonging to one or more cultural/ethnic groups that is not from a mainly English-speaking country.[30] This background may be the same as one's parents, grandparents or heritage, or a country of birth or close ties.[31]
- **Non-English speaking background (NESB)** (Indicator 5, Practising artists) based on language first learnt.[32] The definition of NESB is not standardised and ranges from having a mother tongue other than English to speaking a language other than English at home.

28 DCA/University of Sydney Business School (D'Almada-Remedios R, Groutsis D, Kaabel A and O'Leary J) 2021, *Counting Culture: Towards a standardised approach to measuring and reporting on workforce cultural diversity in Australia*.

29 Based on ABS 2019, *Standard Australian Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (SACC)*.

30 Based on ABS SACC coded to ABS main English-speaking country categories. The main-English speaking countries include the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and South Africa.

31 See DCA 2025, 'Cultural diversity' in *D&I Data at Work: Diversity questions and response options*.

32 See Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

d/Deaf and disabled people

Creative Australia recognises the social model of disability, which says disability is caused by barriers in society, such as buildings not having a lift or how people communicate or behave. Barriers can be related to disability types that are visible or non-visible and which are sensory, physical, cognitive, intellectual or developmental, or related to a person's mental health or illness or neurodiversity.

There is no single way to capture the diverse experiences of disability. There are also issues around trust and comfort levels in disclosing this personal information. It can therefore be difficult to quantify disability representation, including due to different definitions and data collection questions that make comparisons challenging. Some survey questions ask about an impairment or health condition,[33] or self-identification with disability,[34] or both.[35] We recognise that terminology such as 'impairment' can be experienced as deficit based – this is an example of data collection lagging behind community expectations.

In this report, we have used the term 'd/Deaf and disabled people' on the understanding that many people in the creative sector's disability communities prefer identity-first language.[36] We recognise that some people prefer people-first language ('people with disability'), and that some choose to identify with a specific community. While Creative Australia is moving towards increasing use of the terms 'd/Deaf and disabled', we note that people-first language was used in our data collection, and that not all d/Deaf people identify as disabled. For information on our data collection see *Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data*.

This report also refers to 'd/Deaf and disabled workers who need assistance with core activities' (Indicator 6, cultural production workers) based on ABS Census data that aims to identify people with more severe forms of disability who need personal support. It includes individuals who need assistance with self-care, mobility or communication due to either a long-term health condition, a disability or old age.[37]

The population estimate used for d/Deaf and disabled people (21%) is based on the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2022. In this survey, 'a person is considered to have disability if they have any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for six months or more'.[38]

This population estimate is not directly comparable to data based on self-identification, as not all this group identify as living with disability. It also includes many elderly people and people who are not in the workforce.

33 For example, the DCA survey and ABS surveys.
34 For example, Creative Australia data collection.
35 For example, the Artist Survey.
36 For example, this was expressed by the wide range of d/Deaf and disabled artists who assisted the Australian Government in developing the Australian Government's four-year plan of actions and investments to build the foundations for equity in the arts, released in November 2024: *Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan*.
37 ABS 2022, *Understanding disability statistics in the Census and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers*.
38 ABS 2024, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of findings*.

Women

This report uses the term ‘women’ for people who self-identified their gender as female, including transgender women. ‘Transgender’ describes people whose gender identity is different to what was recorded for them at birth.

Reporting is also included for non-binary and gender diverse people, where data are available and numbers are large enough to ensure anonymity. ‘Non-binary’ and ‘gender diverse’ are umbrella terms describing people who identify with gender identities that are not exclusively male or female.

The population estimate used for women (51%) is based on the ABS Census 2021 finding for female sex. This is not the same as gender, which refers to the way a person identifies or expresses themselves (as opposed to their biological sex characteristics).[39]

In addition, the ABS did not provide detailed visibility of non-binary and gender diverse people in the Census findings. While binary data collection systems do not reflect non-binary gender identities, such data can still be useful for analysing the gendered nature of society and are included in this report.

People living in regional or remote areas

In this report, ‘regional and remote’ refers to people living in regional or remote areas based on self-identification or postcode. There are multiple methods and classifications for defining geographic areas in Australia. For example, the Artist Survey (drawn on for Indicator 5, Practising artists) discusses artists who live outside of capital cities.[40] Creative Australia uses the ABS remoteness areas in the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) (the same categories as for the population estimate).[41]

The population estimate used for people living in regional or remote areas (28%) includes people living in ‘inner regional’, ‘outer regional’, ‘remote’ and ‘very remote’ areas based on ABS Census 2021 and ABS remoteness areas in the ASGS.

39 According to the Australian Human Rights Commission ‘sex’ refers to a person’s biological characteristics, whereas ‘gender’ refers to the way a person identifies or expresses themself. Australian Human Rights Commission 2018, *Terminology*.

40 Including the balance of state/territory, from regional towns through to remote areas based on Greater Capital City Statistical Areas in the ASGS.

41 The ASGS remoteness structure divides Australia into five classes of remoteness based on relative access to services.

Young people

This report uses various age ranges to discuss young people, most commonly 15–24. While we have aimed to provide consistent age ranges, this is not always possible. There are no standard definitions of young people and older people in Australia, so various age ranges are used in data collection and reporting across governments, businesses and organisations.

The population estimate used for young people aged 15–24 (13%) is based on Census 2021 data. Where indicators use a different age range, population estimates have been aligned to the age range using Census 2021 data.

Where leadership results are compared with a youth benchmark (***Figure 8***), we use the Australian population estimate of 15-34 for comparison with the leadership age bands (15-35).

LGBTIQ+ people

In this report, the term 'LGBTIQ+ people' is used to refer to people who are, or identify as, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, trans, gender diverse, queer, asexual or have an intersex variation, and to allow for evolving terminology.

The population estimate used for LGBTIQ+ people (4.5%) is an experimental estimate based on 2022 ABS data.[42]

42 ABS 2024, *Estimates and characteristics of LGBTI+ populations in Australia*

Part A: Creative Australia's diversity performance

Part A presents insights on diversity in Creative Australia activity (2021–2023). It discusses findings and insights on diversity among:

1. **Leaders of Creative Australia's multi-year investment organisations** including senior creative and executive leadership and board members.
2. **Peer assessment panels** that assess applications to Creative Australia grants and initiatives.
3. **Recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives,** including project investment, government programs, capacity building and strategic development programs, international opportunities and leadership programs.
4. **Creative Australia staff.**

1. Leadership in multi-year investment organisations

Through our multi-year investment programs, Creative Australia supports organisations working across a broad range of art forms. We also invest in delivery partners who provide critical services to artists and organisations across the sector, and we work strategically with state and territory arts agencies to co-invest in national priorities.

In 2019, our multi-year investment organisations began collecting and reporting on leadership diversity. This information, reported to Creative Australia annually, helps us understand who is leading and shaping the sector and where further progress is needed to ensure representation and inclusion at all levels. Monitoring diversity data of multi-year investment organisations is a commitment in our Corporate Plan.[43]

While representation data alone cannot capture the full complexity of leadership diversity, it helps track change over time and points to where further investigation is needed.

Main points

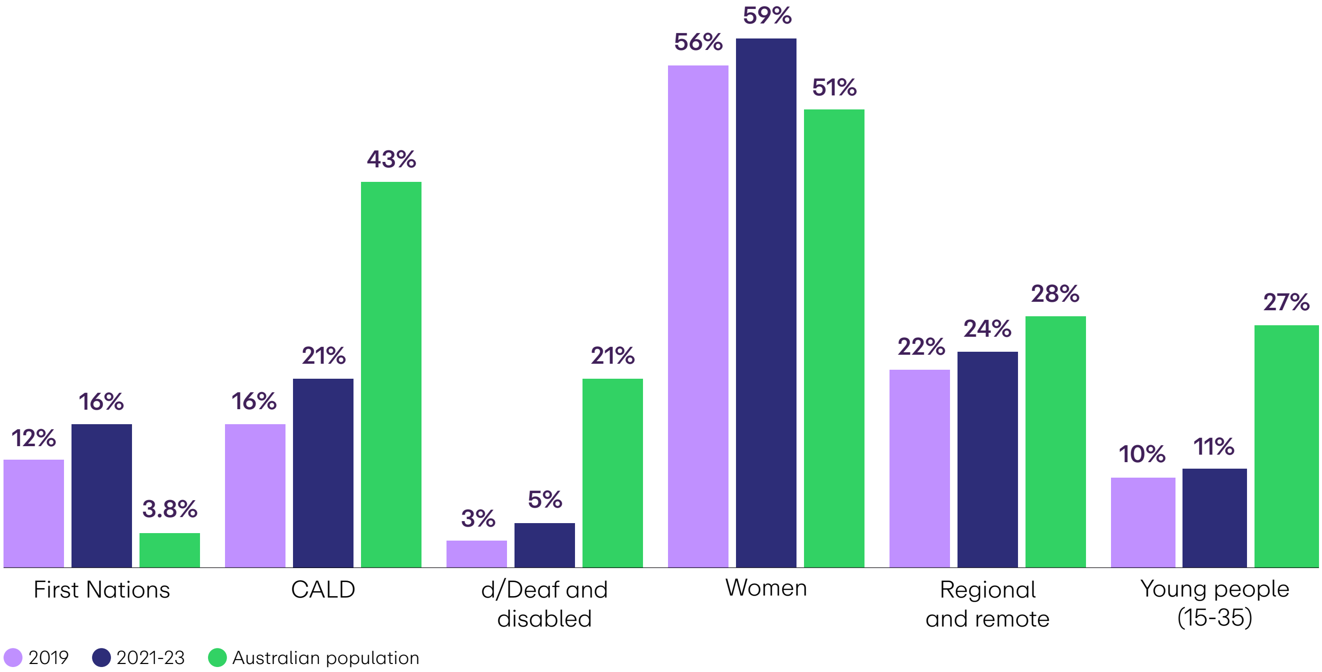
- **Between 2019 and 2021–2023, there were improvements in each demographic measure we looked at for leadership of multi-year investment organisations** (see *Figure 8*). Some change may be due to changes in the group of organisations receiving multi-year investment.[44]
- **First Nations representation is much stronger than population estimates, and First Nations leadership has increased since 2019, including outside of First Nations-led organisations** – seven in ten organisations now have First Nations representation in their leadership and more than eight in ten have CALD representation.
- **Women's representation exceeds men's and the population estimate,** but it is below women's representation among artists.
- **d/Deaf and disabled people remain underrepresented among leaders compared to disability representation among artists, but there are high rates of non-disclosure.** More than half of multi-year investment organisations have no disability representation in leadership roles.[45]

43 See Creative Australia 2024, *Creativity Connects Us: Corporate Plan 2024–28*.

44 Fewer organisations received Four Year investment in the 2021–2024 round but they included strong representation from regional Australia, First Nations-led organisations, and companies producing and touring disability-led and mixed-ability arts practice. They also included companies with a focus on building social cohesion in communities. Creative Australia 2021, *Annual Report 2020–21: Connected by creativity*.

45 Multi-year investment organisations provide data on their workforce to Creative Australia, including those 'living with disability'. Creative Australia does not collect data directly from individuals.

Figure 8: Diversity in leadership of multi-year investment organisations, 2019 and 2021–23



Note: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. The population benchmark for young people has been updated in this chart to match the age range used for leaders of multi-year investment organisations (15–35). Elsewhere in the report, the Australian population benchmark for young people (15–24) is used. **Source:** Data reported by Creative Australia multi-year investment organisations on senior executive, creative leadership, dual creative and executive, and board members. Data was reported for 2,264 leaders at 167 multi-year investment organisations in 2019 and for 2,395 leaders at 190 organisations in 2021–23. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for population data sources and further information.

About the data

Indicator 1: Diversity within the leadership of multi-year investment organisations.

Timeframe: 2021–2023 (average representation rate across years).

Data source: Statistical data reported annually by organisations receiving multi-year investment from Creative Australia. Organisations are required to report data on the diversity of board, creative leadership and senior executive roles.

Additional data in figure: The 2019 result published in the first Towards Equity report and contextual Australian population estimates.[46]

Analysis: The analysis also discusses comparisons with ***Practising artists*** (Indicator 5).

Definitions:

- **Multi-year investment organisations** include organisations that receive multi-year funding from Creative Australia through a range of frameworks, including the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, competitive four-year funding for organisations, the Delivery Partners Program, Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, and the Major Festivals Initiative.
- **Leadership roles** include **senior creative roles** with the most senior responsibility for the creative direction of the organisation (such as artistic director, senior creative producer/programmer, editor or publisher); **senior executive roles** (such as CEO, Chief Financial Officer or General Manager); **dual creative and executive roles** where people work across more than one category; and **board members**.

Analysis

In the leadership of organisations receiving multi-year investment from Creative Australia:

- **Overall, First Nations representation is strong and growing at 16%,** up from 12% in 2015–2019. This is much higher than First Nations representation in the Australian population (3.8%).[47]
- **First Nations leadership has increased since 2019,** including outside of First Nations-led organisations. 'First Nations-led' are organisations supported through Creative Australia's First Nations Board that have 51% or more board positions held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Examples include Bangarra Dance Theatre and Ilbijerri Theatre Company. Self-determined investment in First Nations arts and culture is a pillar of Creative Australia's Strategy and the National Cultural Policy.[48]
- **29% of multi-year investment organisations have no First Nations representation in leadership roles,**[49] **down from 56% in 2019 (or excluding the First Nations companies, 41% in 2021–2023 down from 64% in 2019).** This means that seven in ten organisations funded between 2021–2023 have First Nations leaders or six in ten of the non-First Nations organisations.

46 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD communities and d/Deaf and disabled people. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates*. for further information.

47 Based on ABS Census 2021, adjusted for undercount. ABS 2021, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. No data are available for the proportion of practising artists that are First Nations.

48 See First Nations First in Creative Australia 2024, *Our 2024–2028 Strategy*; and Australian Government 2023, *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place*.

49 Based on aggregated data for organisations that received multi-year funding between 2021–2023 (each organisation counted once despite receiving funding over multiple years).

- **Around one in five leaders are from CALD backgrounds (21%), up from one in six in 2019 (16%).** While not directly comparable, this is higher than the proportion of practising artists from a non-English speaking background (13%) and similar to the proportion of the Australian population that uses a language other than English at home (22%). However, it is below other population estimates on Australia's cultural diversity, including:
  - 43% of the Australian population are from a European or non-European background (used in the figure, based on 18% and 25% respectively)[50]
  - 28% of the Australian population were born overseas.[51]
- **More than eight in ten organisations have CALD representation in their leadership (83%),** and 17% have no CALD leaders.[52]

- **5% of leaders report living with disability, up from 3% in 2019.** However, a further 5% prefer not to say whether they live with disability and data are not available for 22% – much higher rates of data unavailability and non-disclosure than for other groups.
- **Comparative data for disability is challenged by different definitions.** While not directly comparable, disability representation reported among leaders is:
  - much lower than the disability rate across the Australian population (21%, noting this is based on reporting a 'limitation, restriction or impairment' – not all this group identify as disabled/living with disability and many are not in the workforce)[53]
  - much lower than the disability rate among practising artists (16%)[54]
  - on par with identified disability representation in the Australian Public Service (5.1%).[55]
- **More than half of multi-year investment organisations have no disability representation in leadership roles (58%).** Four in ten have disability representation (42%).

- **Women now hold a clear majority of leadership roles – 59%, up from 56% in 2019.** While this exceeds women's representation among the Australian population (51%), it remains just below women's representation among practising artists (65%).

- **Almost one in four leaders live in regional or remote areas (24% up from 22%).** This is just below regional and remote representation in the Australian population (28%) and the proportion of practising artists who live outside capital cities (31%).

- **One in ten leadership roles are held by early career leaders (aged 35 and under)** (11%, just up from 10% in 2019). While this is a small shift upwards, it is well below their share of the Australian population (15-34) (27%) and of workers aged 15-34 employed in the arts and cultural production sectors (35%).

50 Excludes the Anglo-Celtic and First Nations ancestry groups.
51 Based on ABS Census 2021 data.
52 Based on aggregated data for organisations that received multi-year funding between 2021–2023 (each organisation counted once despite receiving funding over multiple years).
53 ABS 2022, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of findings*.
54 The question asked is 'Do you identify as a person with disability and/or do you have an impairment that affects the activities you can do?' Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*. See *d/Deaf and disabled people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
55 Australian Public Service Commission 2023, *APS at a Glance*.

Spotlight on d/Deaf and disabled arts leaders

Understanding leadership diversity and the low presence of d/Deaf and disabled people in leadership roles requires deeper analysis beyond numerical representation. Research with d/Deaf and disabled arts leaders indicated the importance of authentic representation, agency and accountability in arts leadership. Participants highlighted that:

- cultural background and lived experience play an important role in approaches to leadership and decision-making in creative organisations and processes
- diversifying leadership representation is not about individual career pathways – leaders shared the importance of authenticity, collective representation, and responsibility to the communities they are connected to
- intersectional perspectives are vital – some leaders come with multiple identities, and face compound barriers and challenges.[56]

Participants in a 2023 arts and disability needs analysis called for:

- programs to better support disabled leaders at various stages of their careers
- access and inclusion support for arts and cultural organisations, and incentives to improve their accessibility
- new inclusive leadership and operational models that consider issues like burnout, health concerns and sustainability (for example, CEO job share).[57]

'It's not just that there are blocks, also people with disability don't want to take on those roles because it would be bad for their health. We don't have good examples of other leadership models.' – Peak body CEO interview

56 Creative Australia conducted qualitative research with d/Deaf and disabled arts workers in 2023 (unpublished).
57 See Creative Australia 2024, *Building Strong Foundations: Research on arts and disability needs and opportunities*.

2. Peer assessment panels

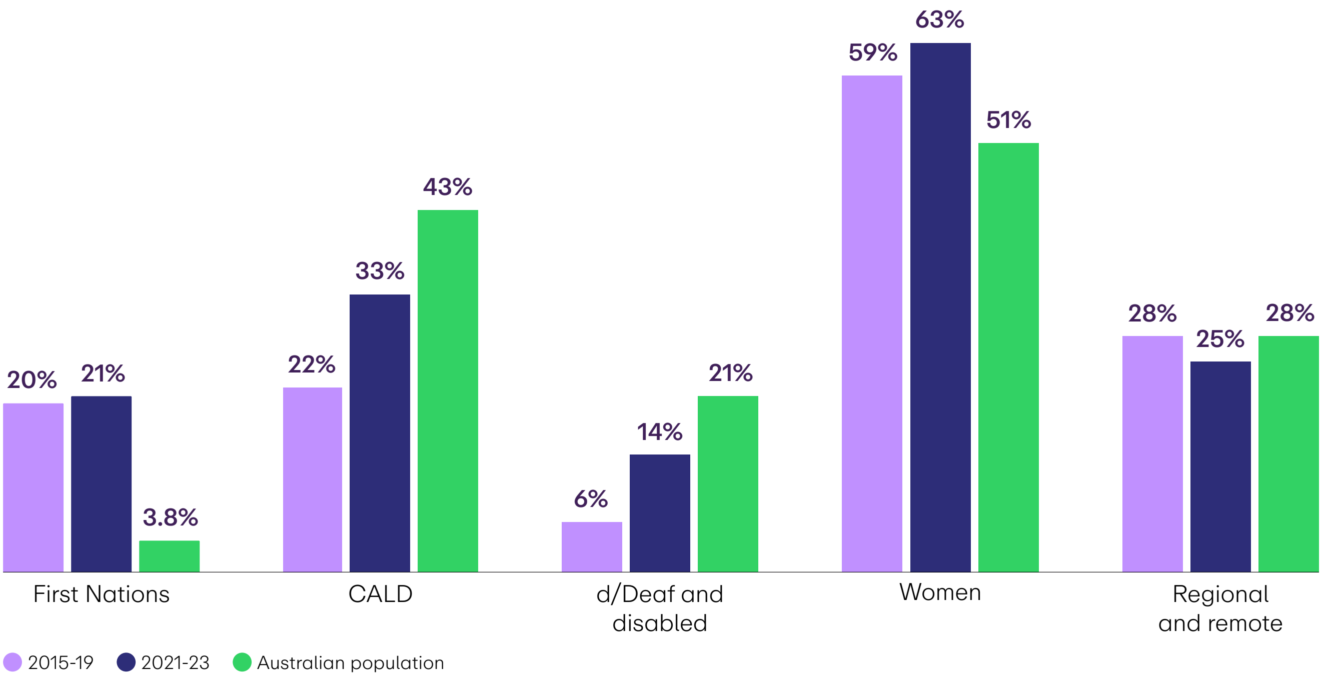
Creative Australia investment opportunities are assessed by panels of peers or reviewed by panels of industry advisors.[58] Peer assessors bring deep expertise, sector knowledge, and independence from the Australian Government to the decision-making process. Peer assessment and arm's-length funding are foundational principles of Creative Australia.

Creative Australia actively collects, monitors and reports data on the diversity of our peer assessment panels. We have maintained a consistent commitment to transparency since we began using peer assessment panels in 2015, and have set diversity targets to help make sure our panels reflect the diversity within our broader pool of registered peers. These targets help guide equitable representation in decision-making processes and strengthen our accountability to the sector.

Main points

- **Between 2015–2019 and 2021–2023, representation of CALD peers on panels increased by 11 percentage points and disability representation more than doubled** (see Figure 9). Disability representation is now similar to among practising artists and is higher than among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives. CALD representation is more than double the proportion of practising artists who are from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- **Representation of First Nations people and women on peer assessment panels has remained strong,** with women's representation in line with the proportion of practising artists in Australia who are women.
- **Regional and remote representation remains similar to the population estimate** and is higher than representation in Creative Australia grants and initiative categories, except capacity building and strategic initiatives.

Figure 9: Diversity within Creative Australia peer assessment panels, 2015–19 and 2021–23



Note: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. **Source:** Data reported by Creative Australia peers who were in assessment panels 2015–19 and 2021–23 (average representation rates across years). In 2015–19 there were 1,322 assessment opportunities, and in 2021–23 there were 574 assessment opportunities. See *Key terms and population estimates* for population data sources.

58 Creative Australia is formalising our tracking of diversity in our industry advisors (a smaller cohort than peer assessors). The current reporting includes peer assessors but not industry advisors.

About the data

Indicator 2: Diversity within peer assessment panels.

Timeframe: 2021–2023 (average representation rate across years).

Data source: Demographic data reported to Creative Australia by individuals when they apply to become a peer assessor (see ***Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data*** for details).

Additional data in figure: The 2015–2019 result published in the first *Towards Equity* report and contextual Australian population estimates.[59]

Analysis: The analysis also discusses comparisons with results for ***Grants and initiatives*** (Indicator 3) and ***Practising artists*** (Indicator 5).

Definitions:

- **A peer assessor** is anyone who has sufficient knowledge or experience of the arts sector to make a fair and informed assessment of applications for funding. They may have developed this knowledge and experience as a practising artist, creative worker or industry expert in one or more art forms.
- **Peer assessment panels** are drawn from Creative Australia's registered pool of peers for each funding round to assess applications relevant to their areas of expertise. Every three years, Creative Australia conducts an open call to establish a new pool of peer assessors. For assessment meetings during 2021–2023 the Council selected from its pool of over 630 peers to form assessment panels. The same peer can be on more than one peer assessment panel.

Analysis

In Creative Australia peer assessment panels:

- **One in five peer assessors are First Nations** (21%, similar to 20% in 2015–2019). This is well above the population estimate (3.8%), reflecting Creative Australia's strategic priorities and strong First Nations representation among grants and initiative recipients.[60]

- **One in three peers are from CALD backgrounds (33%), substantially up from less than one in four in 2015–2019 (22%).** CALD representation among peer assessors is similar to levels of CALD representation among recipients of Creative Australia's project investment (27%) and international opportunities (29%). While not directly comparable, CALD representation among peers is more than double the proportion of practising artists from a non-English speaking background (13%) but is below European and non-European representation in the Australian population (43%).[61]

59 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD communities and d/Deaf and disabled people. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates*. for further information.

60 For example, 25% of capacity building and strategic program recipients are First Nations. See *Grants and initiatives* and *First Nations people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

61 See *Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

- **Disability representation has more than doubled from 6% to 14% since 2015–2019.** This is similar to disability representation among practising artists (16%) and is higher than disability representation among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiative categories, except leadership programs (22%).[62] While it remains below the disability estimate across the Australian population (21%), this is not directly comparable as the population estimate is based on people who have a 'limitation, restriction or impairment' (not all of whom identify as disabled/living with disability), whereas Creative Australia peers self-identify as 'people with disability'.

- **Women's representation among peers is strong at 63%,** similar to 2015–2019 (59%) and to the proportion of practising artists in Australia who are women (65%). This also aligns with women's strong representation among applicants and recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives.[63]

- **One in four peers live in regional or remote areas 25%,** similar to 2015–2019 and regional and remote representation in the Australian population (28% respectively). Following targeted recruitment, regional and remote representation peaked at 31% in 2018–2019 and is now back around levels seen in 2015. While the current rate is just below and the proportion of practising artists who live outside capital cities (31%), it is similar to regional and remote representation among recipients of Creative Australia's capacity building and strategic investment programs (26%) and higher than for recipients of other grants and initiatives.[64]

62 See *Grants and initiatives*, and *d/Deaf and disabled people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
63 See *Women* for an overview of representation across indicators.
64 See *Regional and remote* for an overview of representation across indicators.

Spotlight on First Nations artists and creatives

Participants in Creative Australia's First Nations First community consultation[65] said First Nations investment should be equitable across art forms, regions and the diversity of First Nations peoples. In particular, participants highlighted needs for targeted support in regional and remote areas.

> 'Equitable – the creative needs in regional and remote communities must be prioritised as resources are limited... accessibility is key as these areas are internet and resource deserts.' – First Nations First survey response

> 'We would also encourage that First Nations people are seen in all their diversity and intersectionality ensuring that those who identify as queer, neuro-diverse, differently abled etc are able to participate/see themselves in creative work without having to lose their cultural identity.' – First Nations First submission

Participants said there is a need to address funding barriers, including through:

- application processes that are slower, more accessible and culturally responsive
- grant writing support and outreach.

Suggestions included:

- using simpler language
- meeting language needs, both Indigenous and signed
- providing alternative submission methods
- giving more guidance about how to complete applications
- giving timely application feedback
- more community outreach and support, especially in regional and remote communities
- streamlining reporting
- coordinating funding opportunities.

> 'Funding applications could be less scary particularly for first time applicants. Find ways to better inform or help applicants and communities on how to complete funding applications.' – First Nations First survey response

65 See Creative Australia 2024, *First Nations First – What We Heard*.

3. Grants and initiatives

Central to Creative Australia's diversity performance is representation among recipients of our grants and initiatives. A priority under Creative Australia's Strategy is 'to deliver programs that are accessible and relevant to Australian creative practitioners across all backgrounds, experiences and contexts.' (Pillar 2, A place for every story).[66] Monitoring and reporting on diversity of recipients of our support is a Corporate Plan commitment.[67]

More than 12,900 applications were included in this analysis. Of these, around 2,600 were accepted (20% success rate). Diversity among the 2,600 recipients (successful applicants) is the primary focus. These include both individuals and organisations, who submit different demographic information with their applications (see ***Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data*** for details).

The funding categories we looked at are:

a. **Project investment** – by far the largest category in terms of both applications and funding. Around 9,500 applicants applied for around $72.5 million in funding in 2021–2023.

b. **Government programs** – the next largest funding category but with far fewer applicants, applying for larger grants including for touring. Around 690 applicants applied for around $34.7 million in funding in 2021–2023.

c. **Capacity building and strategic investment** – including skills development programs and brokered opportunities. While representing lower investment – around $2.7 million in 2021–2023 – more than 1,400 applicants applied.

d. **International opportunities** – highly competitive opportunities, with around 1,300 applicants applying in 2021–2023 for investment of approximately $1.2 million.

e. **Leadership programs** – highly competitive professional development programs, with around 740 people applying from 2021–2024.

While the last three categories comprise a small proportion of our investment, we have recognised the need to track and report on our diversity performance in these areas.

66 Creative Australia 2024, *Our 2024–2028 Strategy: Creativity Connects Us*, p.17.
67 See Creative Australia 2023, *Creativity Connects Us: Corporate Plan 2023–27*.

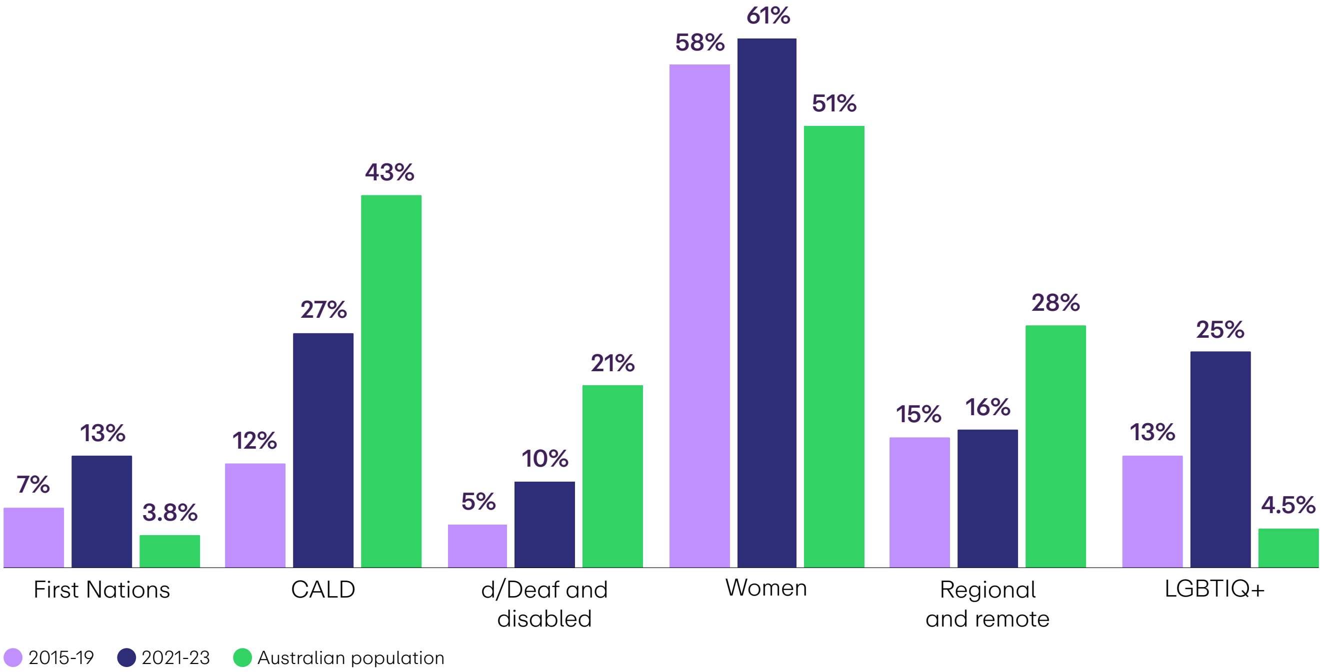
3a. Project investment

Project investment includes applications made to Creative Australia's core competitive grants programs: Arts Projects for Organisations and Arts Projects for Individuals and Groups. It also includes other project applications (not multi-year funding applications) for smaller competitive grants and investment initiatives delivered by Creative Australia to meet specific needs. More individuals apply than organisations (73% compared to 27%).

Main points

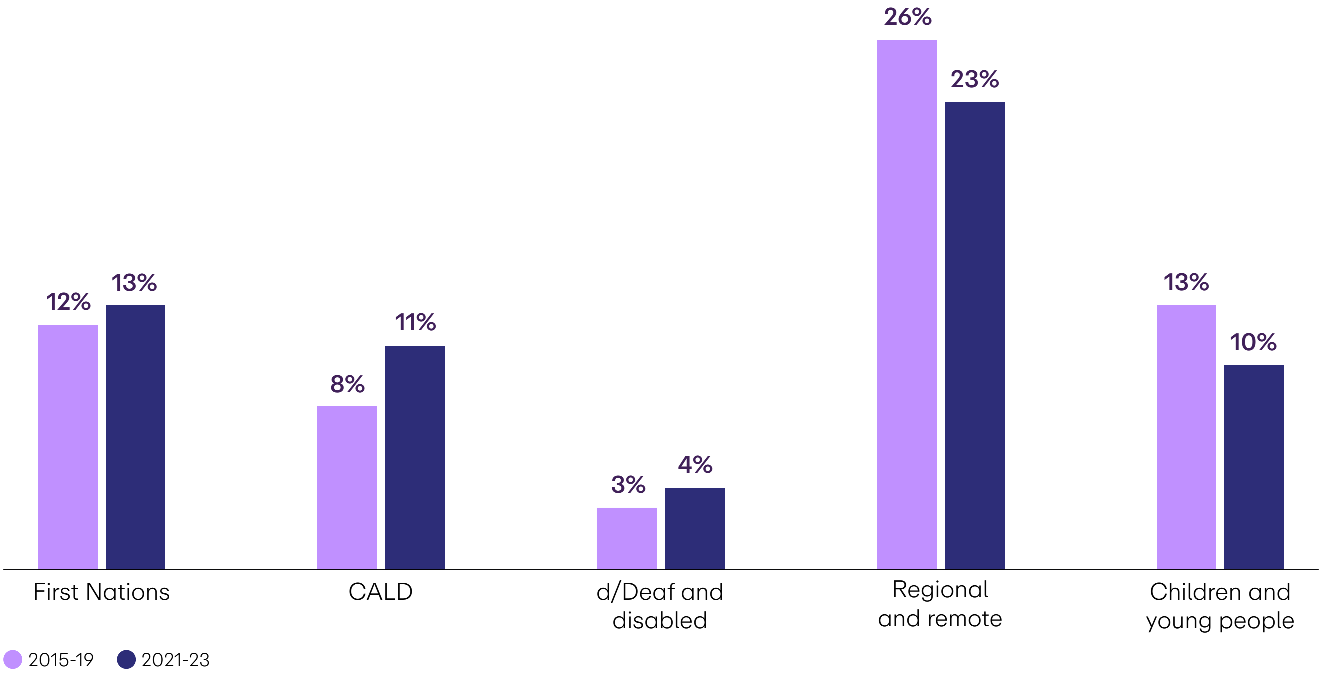
- **We have seen increased diversity among individual project investment recipients** since the last report, with increases in representation rates across demographic groups (see *Figure 10*).
- This includes **a doubling of representation for CALD and d/Deaf and disabled people,** and increases in already strong First Nations, women's and LGBTIQ+ representation.
- However, **d/Deaf and disabled people and people from regional and remote Australia remain underrepresented** among individual recipients compared to population estimates and the pool of Australia's practising artists, and are experiencing lower success rates.
- **There has been less change in the diversity of organisation recipients** based on their organisation demographics (demographic groups organisations primarily work with) (see *Figure 11*). Differences over time are small and unlikely to be meaningful.
- **Around one in four organisation recipients report regional and remote communities as their primary demographic.** Organisations reporting their demographic as CALD people, regional/remote communities or children and young people are experiencing similar success rates to other organisations.

Figure 10: Diversity of individual project investment recipients, 2015–19 and 2021–23



Note: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. **Source:** Data reported by Creative Australia individual applicants for project investment, 2015–19 and 2021–23 (average representation rates across years). In 2015–19 there were 3,706 applications approved and in 2021–23 there were 1,186 applications approved. See ***Key terms and population estimates***. for population data sources.

Figure 11: Organisation demographics of project investment recipients, 2015–19 and 2021–23



Source: Organisation demographics reported by organisation applicants for project investment, 2015–19 and 2021–23 (average representation rates across years). In 2015–19, 2,208 applications were approved. In 2021–23, 513 applications were approved.

About the data

Indicator 3a: Diversity among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives – *project investment.*

Timeframe: 2021–2023 (average representation rate across years).

Data source: Demographic data provided by project investment applicants through Creative Australia's grant management system. Individuals and organisations are asked different demographic questions (see *Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data* for details).

Additional data in figure: 2015–2019 results published in the first Towards Equity report (noting this is not a perfect match in terms of smaller funding initiatives included, see below) and contextual Australian population estimates (for individual recipients).[68]

Analysis: The analysis also discusses comparisons with results for other *Grants and initiatives* categories (Indicator 3) and *Practising artists* (Indicator 5), and relative success rates.

Definitions:

- **Project investment:** In 2021–2023, project investment includes the following funding categories: Arts Projects for Organisations, Arts Projects for Individuals and Groups, Australia Council Fellowships, International Engagement Fund, International Touring and Presentation Fund, VACS Individual grants, Arts and Disability Initiative, Arts and Disability Mentoring Initiative, International Travel Fund, and Authors and Illustrators.
- **This is compared with Australia Council core grants data 2015–2019:** Arts Projects for Organisations, Arts Projects for Individuals, Arts Projects for Individuals and Groups, Development Grants for Individuals and Groups, Fellowships, Residencies, and the Arts and Disability Mentoring Initiative.
- **Individual recipients:** Individuals who successfully applied for Creative Australia grants and initiatives.
- **Organisation demographic:** The demographic group that an organisation reports working primarily with.

68 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD communities and d/Deaf and disabled people. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates*. for further information.

Analysis

For Creative Australia's project investment :

- **13% of individual recipients are First Nations people, up from 7% in 2015–2019.** This is well above the population estimate (3.8%) but below First Nations representation among recipients of capacity building and strategic programs (25%) and international opportunities (43%).[69] First Nations project investment applicants have a higher success rate than non-First Nations applicants, noting that the programs include targeted First Nations initiatives. Investment in First Nations arts and culture is a pillar of Creative Australia's strategy and the National Cultural Policy.[70]
- **13% of organisation recipients are First Nations-led or report First Nations communities as their primary demographic, similar to 2015–2019 (12%).** These organisations have a higher success rate than other organisations (including from targeted First Nations initiatives).

- **Just over one in four individual recipients are CALD (27%), substantially up from 12% in 2015–2019.** While not directly comparable, this remains below the CALD population estimate which groups European and non-European representation in the Australian population (43%), but it is higher than the proportion of practising artists from a non-English speaking background (13%). It is the strongest CALD representation across Creative Australia grants and initiative categories except international opportunities (29%).[71] CALD individual project investment applicants have a higher success rate than non-CALD applicants.
- **11% of organisation recipients report CALD people as their organisation demographic,** marginally up from 8% in 2015–2019. These organisations have a similar success rate to other organisations.

- **One in ten individual recipients are d/Deaf or disabled (10%) up from one in 20 in 2015–2019 (5%).**[72] This is in line with disability representation among capacity building and strategic program recipients (10%) and higher than among government program and international opportunity recipients (2% and 5% respectively).[73] However, it remains well below the population estimate (21%) and the proportion of d/Deaf and disabled practising artists (16%) – both of which have also seen upward trends, including a doubling of artists who report having disability.[74] Sharp increases in disability reported among artists and project investment recipients could be influenced by growing awareness of disability in the sector and increased comfort reporting. In addition, Creative Australia is expanding opportunities available to d/Deaf and disabled artists, including more artists supported through the Arts and Disability Initiative.[75] d/Deaf and disabled project investment applicants have a lower success rate than applicants without disability.
- **4% of organisation recipients report d/Deaf and disabled people as their organisation demographic,** similar to 2015–2019 (3%). These organisations have a marginally higher success rate than other organisations.[76]

69 See *First Nations people* for an overview of representation across indicators. Data are not available for First Nations representation among practising artists.
70 See First Nations First in Creative Australia 2024, *Our 2024–2028 Strategy*; and Australian Government 2023, *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place*.
71 See *Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
72 Includes both targeted disability investment and non-targeted. The measure is based on self-selection of 'people with disability' as a demographic group identified with.
73 See *d/Deaf and disabled people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
74 See *Practising artists*.
75 Creative Australia 2025, *Disability commitments*.
76 Includes both targeted disability investment and non-targeted.

- **61% of individual recipients are women, similar to 2015–2019 (58%).** This is similar to women's representation among practising artists (65%), and lower than among recipients of capacity building and strategic programs (69%) and international opportunities (68%).[77] Women have a slightly higher success rate than men and gender diverse people. The Artist Survey has found that women are more likely to apply for and receive financial assistance from grants, fellowships, prizes or other funding, but men have higher success rates from some sources including non-arts organisations, philanthropy and private foundations.[78]

- **16% of individual recipients are from regional or remote areas, similar to 2015–2019 (15%).** This is below the population estimate (28%), and the proportion of practising artists who live outside major cities (31%), as well as regional representation in other grants and initiative categories except international opportunities (12%).[79] Regional and remote applicants have a slightly lower success rate than metro applicants.
- **Around one in four organisation recipients are based in regional or remote areas or report regional/remote communities as their organisation demographic (23%),** similar to 2015–2019 (26%). These organisations have a similar success rate to metro organisations.

- **One in ten organisation recipients report children and young people as their organisation demographic (10%),** not substantially different from 13% in 2015–2019. These organisations have a similar success rate to other organisations.

- **One in four individual recipients are LGBTIQ+ (25%), up from 13% in 2015–2019.** This is stronger representation than in other Creative Australia grants and initiative categories[80] and well above the population estimate (4.5%). LGBTIQ+ project investment applicants have a slightly higher success rate than non-LGBTIQ+ applicants. LGBTIQ+ people are also well-represented in the Australian screen industry.[81]

77 See *Women* for an overview of representation across indicators.
78 See *Practising artists*, based on Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.
79 See *Regional and remote* for an overview of representation across indicators.
80 See *LGBTIQ+ people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
81 See Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network 2025, *Everyone Counts 2.0: Data on diversity in screen productions from the first three years of The Everyone Project*.

Spotlight on measuring cultural and linguistic diversity

Measuring cultural and linguistic diversity is critical for understanding equity and cultural vitality but is a complex challenge in Australia and internationally. Diversity Council Australia (DCA) research highlights there is no standardised approach for defining, measuring and reporting on cultural diversity.[82]

The ABS uses a range of characteristics captured in the Census including ancestry, country of birth, parents' country of birth, speaking a language other than English at home and proficiency in English.[83]

The term 'culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)' was introduced by Australian governments in the 1990s for statistical analysis and policy development.[84]

While still in common use in policy and reporting, there is wide variation in the definitions used. Advocates and researchers note the term is no longer fit for purpose and highlight the need to change the way we think about and measure diversity to better reflect and give meaning to people's experiences.

The DCA has shifted to offer the alternative term 'culturally and racially marginalised' in recognition of the significance of race and racism in people's lives. The DCA uses the term to refer to people who cannot be racialised as white, who face marginalisation due to their race.[85]

First Nations peoples have long advocated for recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Others have drawn attention to how the term 'First Nations' is used to put many cultural identities, language groups and backgrounds into a single category to differentiate from an unstated dominant cultural makeup of Australia.

There have also been calls for recognition of diversity beyond ethnicity, such as first language speakers of Auslan or another sign language, and religious communities. There is a call to shift focus from people's identities to people's needs and to discuss whether people should be able to self-identify their ethnic or cultural identity.[86] Creative Australia's stakeholders have reported alternative suggestions, and the importance of prioritising action and change.

The harmful impacts of limitations in capturing and reporting diversity were magnified during the pandemic. Research found that a reluctance in Australia to report race and ethnicity data, and a reliance on non-committal cultural groupings, contributes to measurement inconsistencies across government, making it difficult to compare the effectiveness of programs and reduce inequities in health.[87]

The National Cultural Policy, *Revive*, requires sound measures to track progress and impacts for multicultural communities to revitalise the arts in Australia. We recognise the need for clear standards for measuring and reporting cultural diversity, as well as wellbeing and social cohesion, and the impacts of cultural and related policy on multicultural communities.

82 DCA/University of Sydney Business School (D'Almada-Remedios R, Groutsis D, Kaabel A and O'Leary J) 2021, *Counting Culture: Towards a Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia*.

83 ABS 2021, 'Key questions in 2021 Census' in *Cultural Diversity: Census.*

84 Koleth E 2010, *Multiculturalism: A review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and overseas*.

85 DCA 2023, *Words at work: should we use CALD or CARM?* See also Mapedzahama V, Laffernis F, Barhoum A and O'Leary J 2023, *Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action*, DCA.

86 Mousaferiadis P 2023, '*Beyond CALD (part 3): Using technology to free us from labels and focus on needs*', Diversity Atlas, 9 May. Chang C 2023, '*You'll Never Guess Where Louisa is Really From — and she's not alone*', SBS News, 21 January.

87 Renzaho A 2023, '*The Lack of Race and Ethnicity Data in Australia – A threat to achieving health equity*', International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20:8.

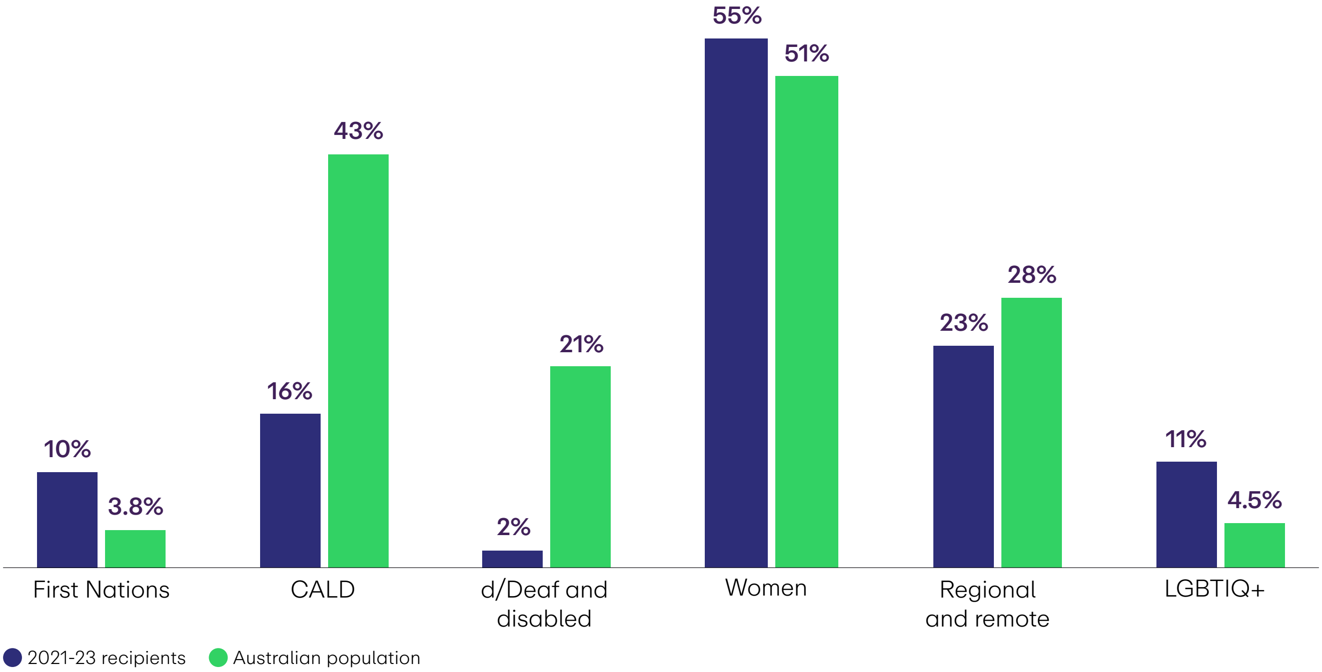
3b. Government programs

Creative Australia delivers a range of funding programs on behalf of the Australian Government, including Playing Australia, the Contemporary Music Touring Program and the Contemporary Touring Initiative. Government programs accounted for a small proportion of the total applications included in this analysis but nearly a third of the total funding approved over the period. Compared to project investment, government programs see fewer applicants applying for larger grants, especially in the case of organisations applying to fund tours. Fewer government program recipients are individuals than organisations (40% compared to 60%), and organisations receive the vast majority of the investment.

Main points

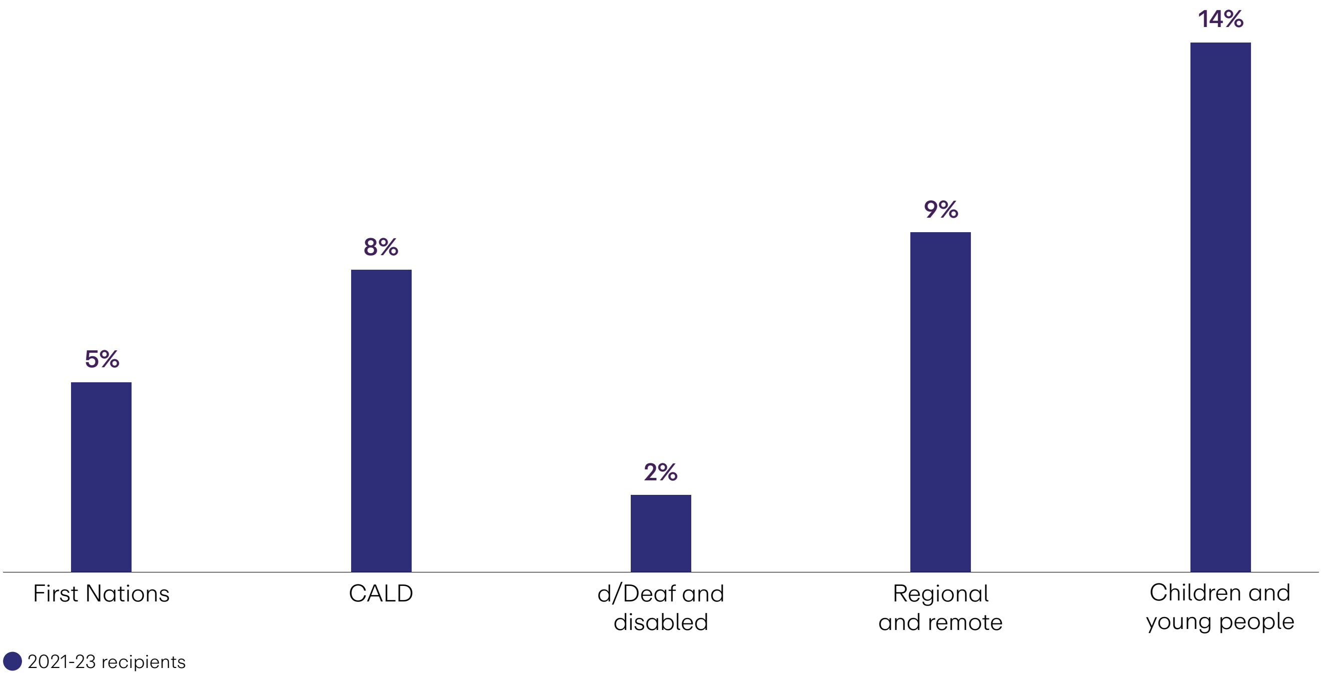
- **First Nations, women's and LGBTIQ+ representation is strong** among government program individual recipients (see *Figure 12*), although LGBTIQ+ representation is lower than for other grants and initiative categories. **Representation of d/Deaf and disabled people is low**.
- **Organisations that primarily work with d/Deaf and disabled people or regional/remote communities** are experiencing lower success rates and are asking for less funding despite access costs and the higher costs of regional and remote work.
- **Organisations that report children and young people as their demographic are well represented among government program recipients** (see *Figure 13*) relative to other grants and initiative categories, and ask for and receive higher amounts on average.

Figure 12: Diversity of individual government program recipients, 2021–23



Note: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. **Source:** Data reported by Creative Australia individual applicants for government programs 2021–23 (average representation rates across years). In 2021–23, 94 applications were approved. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for population data sources.

Figure 13: Organisation demographics of government program recipients, 2021–23



Source: Organisation demographics reported by organisation applicants for government programs, 2021–23 (144 applications approved, average representation rates across years).

About the data

Indicator 3b: Diversity among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives – *government programs.*

Timeframe: 2021–2023 (average representation rate across years).

Data source: Demographic data provided by government program applicants through Creative Australia's grant management system. Individuals and organisations are asked different demographic questions (see *Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data* for details).

Additional data in figure: Contextual Australian population estimates (for individual recipients).[88] No time series is presented as we are publishing diversity data for government programs for the first time in this report for future tracking.

Analysis: The analysis also discusses comparisons with results for other *Grants and initiatives* categories (Indicator 3) and *Practising artists* (Indicator 5), as well as relative success rates and funding (the latter for organisations only).

Definitions:

- **Government programs:** Funding programs delivered on behalf of the Australian Government including Playing Australia, Playing Australia MYI, Contemporary Music Touring Program (CMTP) and the Contemporary Touring Initiative (CTI).
- **Individual recipients:** Individuals who successfully applied for Creative Australia grants and initiatives.
- **Organisation demographic:** A demographic group that an organisation reports working primarily with.

Analysis

For Creative Australia's government programs:

- **One in ten individual recipients are First Nations** (10%, 9 individuals), well above the population estimate (3.8%) but lower than First Nations representation in other individual grants and initiative categories.[89] First Nations applicants have a higher success rate than non-First Nations applicants.
- **5% of organisation recipients are First Nations-led or report First Nations communities as their primary demographic** (7 orgs). These organisations have a higher success rate than other organisations and ask for and receive higher amounts on average.

88 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD communities and d/Deaf and disabled people. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates* for further information.

89 See *First Nations people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

- **16% of individual recipients are CALD** (15 individuals). This is lower than population estimates[90] but similar to the proportion of practising artists with non-English speaking backgrounds (13%). It is lower than CALD representation in other Creative Australia activity except capacity building and strategic programs (also 16%).[91] CALD applicants have a higher success rate than non-CALD applicants.
- **8% of organisation recipients report CALD people as their organisation demographic** (12 orgs). These organisations have a higher success rate than other organisations but ask for and receive lower amounts on average.

- **Just 2% of individual recipients report disability** (2 individuals), the lowest individual disability representation rate across Creative Australia activity.[92] d/Deaf and disabled applicants have a lower success rate than applicants without disability.
- **2% of organisation recipients report d/Deaf and disabled people as their organisation demographic** (3 orgs). No organisations that reported d/Deaf and disabled people as their demographic were unsuccessful in their applications. These organisations asked for and received lower amounts on average.

- **55% of individual recipients are women** (52 individuals). While this is above the population estimate (51%) it is lower representation than women's representation among artists (65%) and other grants and initiative categories.[93] Women government program applicants have a higher success rate than men.

- **23% of individual recipients are from regional or remote areas** (22 individuals). This is below the population estimate (28%) but is higher than regional and remote representation among project investment recipients (16%).[94] Regional or remote government program applicants have a slightly lower success rate than metro applicants.
- **9% of organisation recipients are based in regional or remote areas or report regional/remote communities as their organisation demographic** (13 orgs). Regional/remote organisations have a lower success rate than metro organisations and tend to ask for lower amounts despite the higher costs of regional and remote work.

- **14% of organisation recipients report children and young people as their organisation demographic** (20 orgs). This is the highest representation rate across Creative Australia grant and initiative categories, with results for children and young people organisations ranging from 10% to 14%, highest for government programs.[95] These organisations have a similar success rate to other organisations but request and receive higher amounts on average.

- **11% of individual recipients are LGBTIQ+** (10 individuals). While this is above the population estimate (4.5%), it is lower representation than among other Creative Australi a grants and initiative categories.[96] LGBTIQ+ government program applicants have lower success rates than non-LGBTIQ+ applicants.

90 While not directly comparable, this includes 43% of the population who have a European or non-European background, 22% who use a language other than English at home and 28% who were born overseas. Based on ABS Census 2021.
91 See *Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
92 See *d/Deaf and disabled people* for an overview of representation across indicators. This measure is based on self-selection of 'people with disability' as a demographic group identified with.
93 See *Women* for an overview of representation across indicators.
94 See *Regional and remote* for an overview of representation across indicators.
95 See *Young people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
96 See *LGBTIQ+ people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

3c. Capacity building and strategic programs

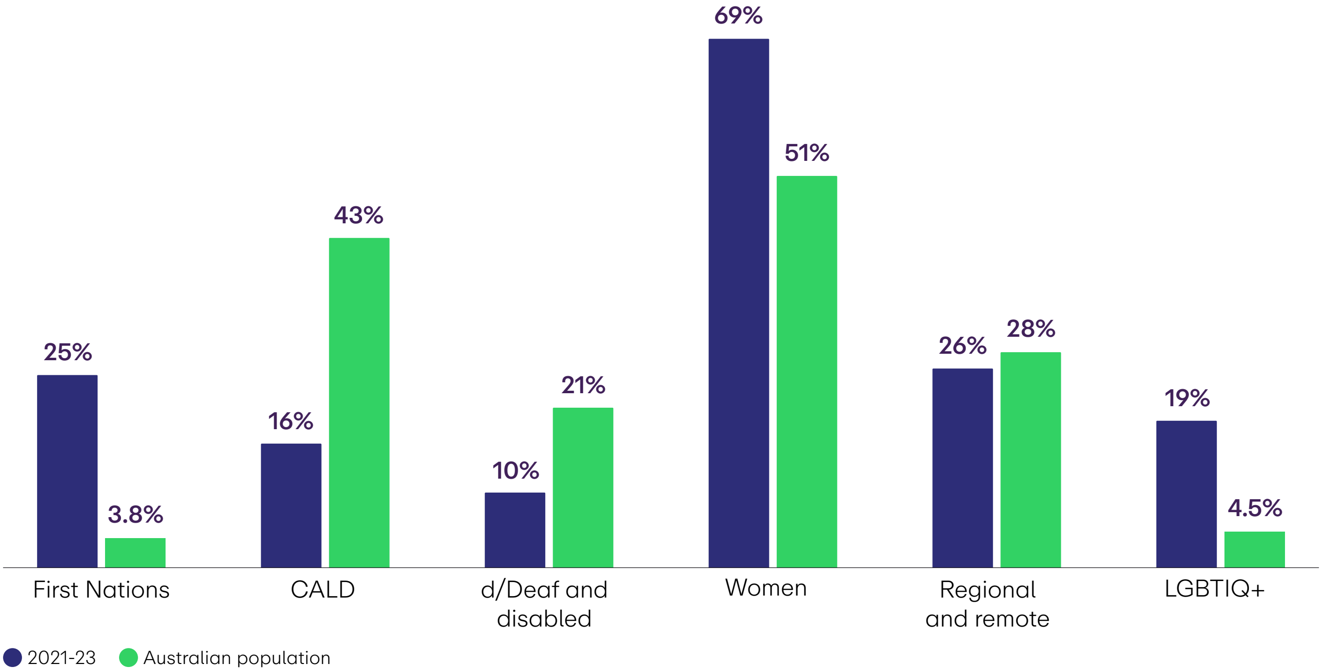
Creative Australia offers a range of industry capacity building and skill-development opportunities and brokered, responsive strategic investments. Programs included in this analysis support audience and market development, climate leadership, digital skills and strategies, governance capability and First Nations fashion and textiles.[97] These programs deliver on Creative Australia's priorities and provide outcomes for artists, creative workers and the sector. As this category includes training programs and opportunities that are brokered and strategic, investment amounts per recipient are much lower than for the project investment and government program categories.

Main points

- **First Nations representation is strong among both individual and organisation recipients** of capacity building and strategic programs (see *Figure 14* and *Figure 15*), including due to targeted First Nations initiatives. **Women's and LGBTIQ+ people's representation is also strong** among individual recipients.
- **CALD representation among individual recipients is relatively low** compared to population estimates and most other Creative Australia indicators, but similar to the proportion of practising artists with non-English speaking backgrounds. **d/Deaf and disabled people are underrepresented** compared to both the population estimate and disability representation among Australia's practising artists.
- **People from regional or remote areas are well represented** among capacity building and strategic program recipients relative to other grants and initiative categories, and both individual and organisation applicants are experiencing strong success rates. **Organisations that report children and young people as their demographic are also experiencing strong success rates.**

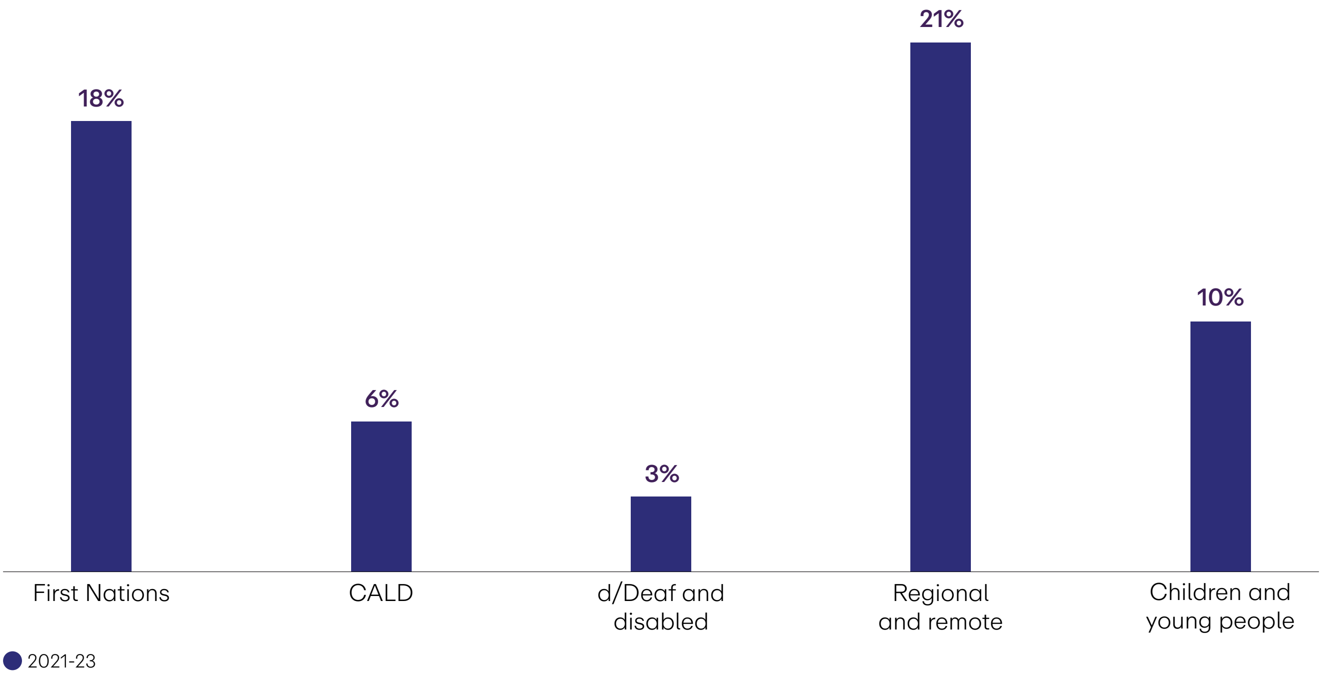
97 Available data for capacity building and strategic programs include Audience & Market Development, Carbon Neutral Pilot, Creative Climate Leadership Program, Createch Digital, Digital Strategist in Residence, Digital Fellowship, APRA AMCOS Digital Future Initiatives, Digital Specialist in Residence, Flourish, First Nations Digital Specialist, and Governance Training.

Figure 14: Diversity of individual capacity building and strategic program recipients, 2021–23



Note: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. **Source:** Data reported by Creative Australia individual applicants for capacity building and strategic programs, 2021–23 (average representation rates across years). In 2021–23, 283 applications were approved. See *Key terms and population estimates* for population data sources.

Figure 15: Organisation demographics of capacity building and strategic program recipients, 2021–23



Source: Organisation demographics reported by organisation applicants Creative Australia capacity building and strategic program recipients, 2021–23 (average representation rates across years). In 2021–23, 239 applications were approved.

About the data

Indicator 3c: Diversity among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives – *capacity building and strategic programs.*

Timeframe: 2021–2023 (average representation rate across years).

Data source: Demographic data provided by capacity building and strategic program applicants through Creative Australia's grant management system. Individuals and organisations are asked different demographic questions (see *Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data* for details).

Additional data in figure: Contextual Australian population estimates (for individual recipients).[98] No time series is presented as we are publishing diversity data for capacity building and strategic programs for the first time in this report for future tracking.

Analysis: The analysis also discusses comparisons with results for other *Grants and initiatives* categories (Indicator 3) and *Practising artists* (Indicator 5), as well as relative success rates.

Definitions:

- **Capacity building and strategic programs:** In 2021–2023 these included Audience & Market Development, Carbon Neutral Pilot, Creative Climate Leadership Program, Createch Digital, Digital Strategist in Residence, Digital Fellowship, APRA AMCOS Digital Future Initiatives, Digital Specialist in Residence, Flourish, First Nations Digital Specialist, and Governance Training.
- **Individual recipients:** Individuals who successfully applied for Creative Australia grants and initiatives.
- **Organisation demographics:** a demographic group that an organisation reports working primarily with.

98 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for *CALD communities* and *d/Deaf and disabled people*. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates* for further information.

Analysis

For Creative Australia's capacity building and strategic programs:

- **One in four individual recipients are First Nations** (25%), the highest First Nations representation among Creative Australia activity after international opportunities (43%),[99] noting that the programs include targeted First Nations initiatives. First Nations applicants have a higher success rate than non-First Nations applicants.[100]
- **18% of organisation recipients are First Nations-led or report First Nations communities as their primary demographic.** These organisations have a higher success rate than other organisations.[101]

- **16% of individual recipients are CALD.** This is lower than population estimates but in line with the proportion of practising artists from a non-English speaking background (13%). It is lower than CALD representation among recipients of other Creative Australia grants and initiative categories except government programs (also 16%).[102] CALD capacity building and strategic program applicants have a similar success rate to non-CALD applicants.
- **6% of organisation recipients report CALD people as their organisation demographic,** (14 orgs). These organisations have a similar success rate to non-CALD applicants.

- **One in ten individual recipients are d/Deaf or disabled[103] (10%),** in line with project investment recipients (10%) but below the population estimate (21%, noting this is not directly comparable) and disability representation among artists (16%).[104] d/Deaf and disabled capacity building and strategic program applicants have the same success rate as applicants with no disability.
- **3% of organisation recipients report d/Deaf and disabled people as their organisation demographic** (6 orgs). These organisations have a slightly higher success rate compared to other organisations.

- **69% of individual recipients are women,** the strongest representation rate in Creative Australia activity alongside international opportunity recipients (68%) and Creative Australia staff (70%).[105] Women capacity building and strategic program applicants have a higher success rate than men and gender diverse people.

99 See *First Nations people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
100 Includes both targeted First Nations investment and non-targeted. Data are not available for First Nations representation among practising artists.
101 Includes both targeted First Nations investment and non-targeted.
102 See *Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
103 Based on self-selection of 'people with disability' as a demographic group identified with.
104 See *d/Deaf and disabled people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
105 See *Women* for an overview of representation across indicators.

- **26% of individual recipients are from regional or remote areas,** similar to the population estimate (28%). This is the highest rate of regional representation across Creative Australia activity.[106] Regional or remote capacity building and strategic program applicants have a slightly higher success rate than metro applicants.
- **21% of organisation recipients are based in regional or remote areas or report regional/remote communities as their organisation demographic,** similar to project investment organisation recipients (23%). Regional and remote capacity building and strategic program organisations have a slightly higher success rate than metro orgs.

- **One in ten organisation recipients report children and young people as their organisation demographic (10%),** the same representation rate as among project investment organisation recipients. Across Creative Australia grant and initiative categories, results for children and young people organisations range from 10% to 14%.[107] Among capacity building and strategic program organisation applicants, these organisations have a higher success rate than other organisations.

- **19% of individual recipients are LGBTIQ+,** the same representation rate as among international opportunity recipients (19%), higher than for government programs (11%) and lower than for project investment (25%).[108] LGBTIQ+ capacity building and strategic program applicants have a marginally lower success rate than non-LGBTIQ+ applicants.

3d. International opportunities

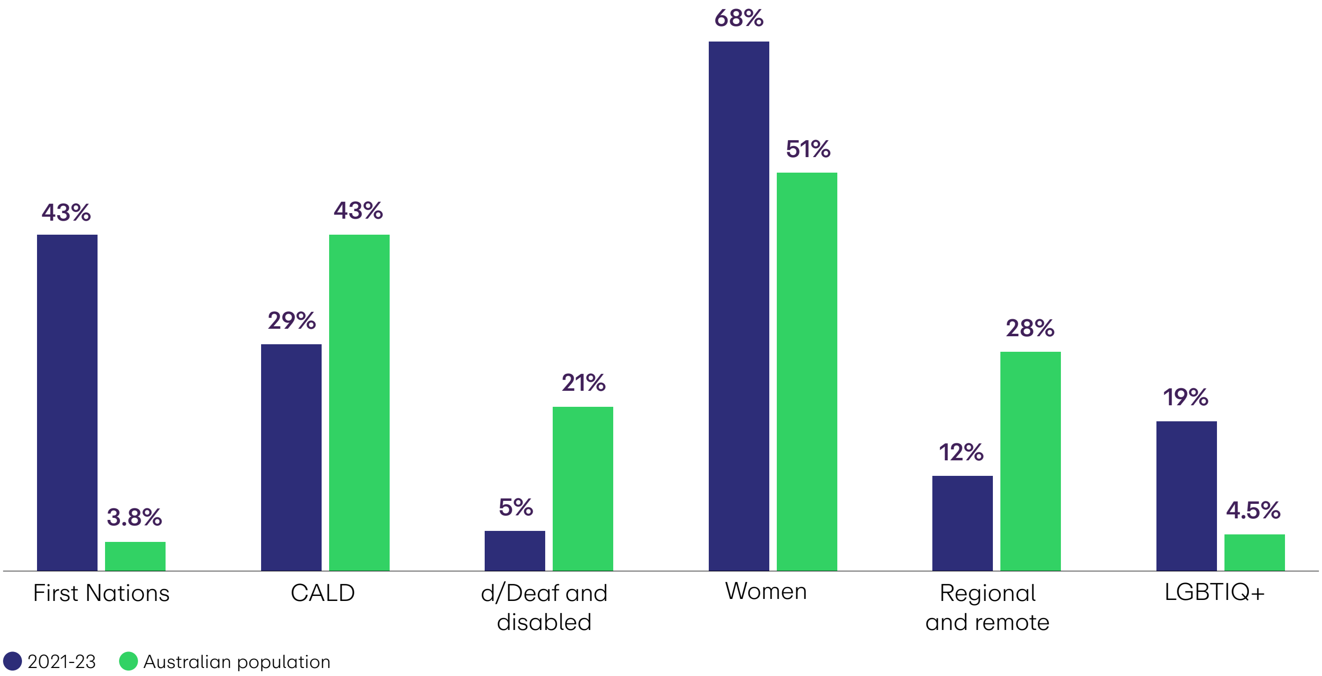
Creative Australia invests in international opportunities for Australian artists, creative workers and organisations, including through residencies, exchanges and strategic international projects and programs. These opportunities build and sustain international connections through physical travel, and online and hybrid activities. As many of these opportunities are brokered and strategic, investment amounts per recipient are much lower than for the project investment and government program categories.

Main points

- **First Nations people are particularly well represented** among international opportunity recipients, noting these include targeted First Nations opportunities (see *Figure 16*).
- **LGBTIQ+ people and women are also well represented** and CALD representation for international opportunity recipients is among the highest CALD results for Creative Australia funding categories.
- **d/Deaf and disabled people are underrepresented and experiencing lower success rates** than other international opportunity applicants, and no organisations reporting d/Deaf and disabled people as their primary organisation demographic applied for international opportunities (see *Figure 17*).
- **Individuals from regional and remote areas are also underrepresented** despite similar success rates to metro applicants.

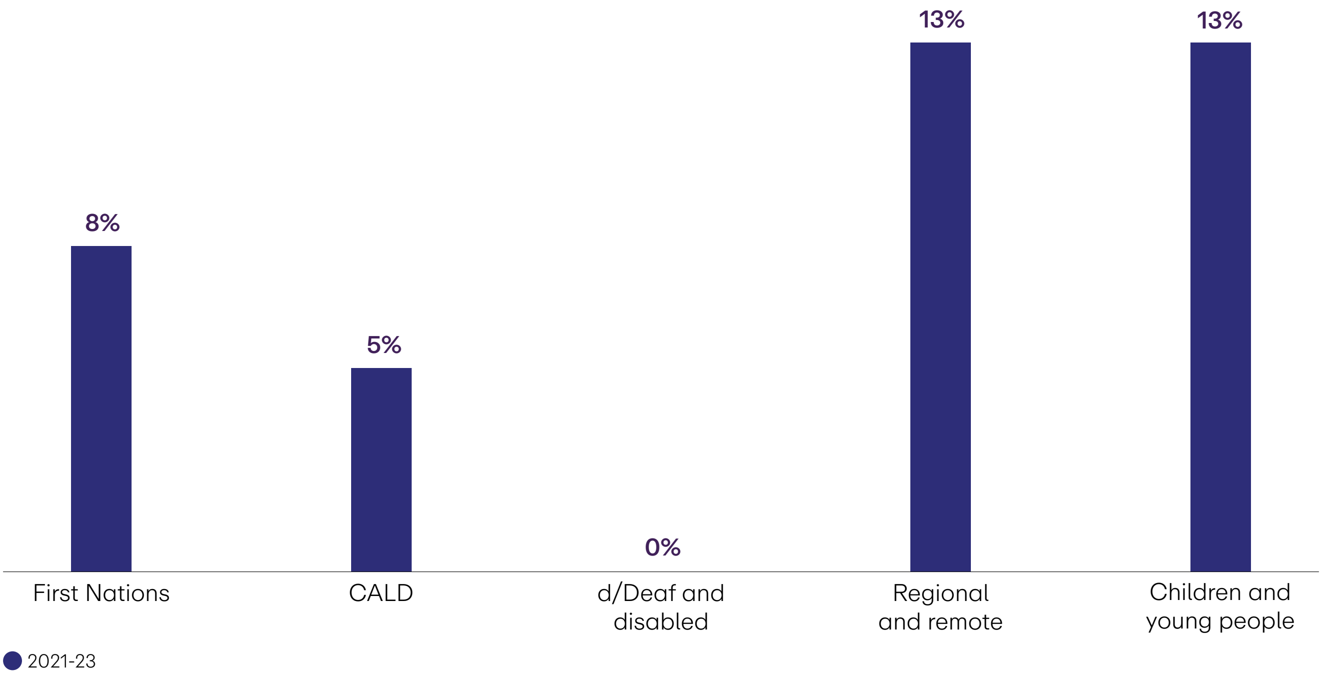
106 See *Regional and remote* for an overview of representation across indicators.
107 See *Young people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
108 See *LGBTIQ+ people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

Figure 16: Diversity of individual international opportunity recipients, 2021–23



Note: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. **Source:** Data reported by Creative Australia individual applicants for international opportunities, 2021–23 (average representation rates across years). In 2021–23, 131 applications were approved. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for population data sources.

Figure 17: Organisation demographics of international opportunity recipients, 2021–23



Source: Organisation demographic data reported by organisation applicants Creative Australia international opportunity recipients, 2021–23 (38 applications approved, average representation rates across years).

About the data

Indicator 3d: Diversity among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives – *international opportunties.*

Timeframe: 2021–2023 (average representation rate across years).

Data source: Demographic data provided by international opportunity applicants through Creative Australia's grant management system. Individuals and organisations are asked different demographic questions (see *Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data* for details).

Additional data in figure: Contextual Australian population estimates (for individual recipients).[109] No time series is presented as we are publishing diversity data for international opportunities for the first time in this report for future tracking.

Analysis: The analysis also discusses comparisons with results for other *Grants and initiatives* categories (Indicator 3) and *Practising artists* (Indicator 5), as well as relative success rates.

Definitions:

- **International opportunities:** Residencies, exchanges and strategic international projects and programs. In 2021–2023 data includes ACME, American Academy in Rome, BR Whiting Studio Residency, Cite International des Arts, HIAP and Keesing Studio, Borderless Sound Collaboration, CINARS, Debra Porch Award Residencies, Interdisciplinary Lab, International Curators program, Singapore Reciprocal Residencies, South and Southeast Asia Strategic Projects, South East Asia Strategic Projects, Tanzmesse, VB22 Sector Engagement, Virtual Exchanges.
- **Individual recipients:** Individuals who successfully applied for Creative Australia grants and initiatives.
- **Organisation demographics:** a demographic group that an organisation reports working primarily with.

Analysis

For Creative Australia's capacity building and strategic programs:

- **43% of individual recipients are First Nations,** the strongest result across Creative Australia activity by far[110] noting that the programs include targeted First Nations initiatives. First Nations applicants experience higher success rates than non-First Nations applicants.[111]
- **8% of organisation recipients are First Nations-led or report First Nations communities as their primary demographic** (3 orgs). Organisation applicants that are First Nations-led or have a First Nations demographic have a lower success rate than other organisations.[112]

109 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD communities and d/Deaf and disabled people. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates* for further information.

110 See *First Nations people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

111 Includes both targeted First Nations investment and non-targeted. Data are not available for First Nations representation among practising artists.

112 Includes both targeted First Nations investment and non-targeted.

- **29% of individual recipients are CALD.** This remains below the CALD population estimate which groups European and non-European representation in the Australian population (43%), but it is higher than the proportion of practising artists from a non-English speaking background (13%) and CALD representation in other grant and initiative categories.[113] CALD applicants have a similar success rate to non-CALD applicants.
- **5% of organisation recipients report CALD people as their organisation demographic,** (2 orgs). No organisations that report CALD as their demographic were unsuccessful in 2021–2023.

- **5% of individual recipients are d/Deaf or disabled**[114] (6 individuals), which is low representation compared to the population estimate (21%), practising artists (16%) and other Creative Australia grants and initiative categories except government programs.[115] d/Deaf and disabled applicants have a lower success rate than applicants with no disability.
- **No organisations that report people with disability as their organisation demographic applied for international opportunities in 2021–2023.**

- **68% of individual recipients are women,** similar to women's representation among artists (65%) and the strongest representation rate in Creative Australia activity just behind capacity building and strategic program recipients (69%) and Creative Australia staff (70%).[116] Women have a slightly higher success rate than men and gender diverse people.

- **12% of individual recipients are from regional or remote areas** (16 individuals), well below the population estimate (28%), the proportion of artists who live outside capital cities (31%) and other grants and initiative categories.[117] However, regional and remote applicants have a similar success rate to metro applicants.
- **13% of organisation recipients are based in regional or remote areas or report regional/remote communities as their organisation demographic** (5 orgs). Regional/remote organisations have a lower success rate than metro organisations.

- **13% of organisation recipients report children and young people as their organisation demographic** (5 orgs). These organisations have a higher success rate than other organisations.

- **19% of individual recipients are LGBTIQ+** (25 individuals), the same representation rate as among capacity building and strategic program recipients (19%), higher than for government programs (11%) and lower than for project investment (25%).[118] LGBTIQ+ applicants have a slightly lower success rate than non-LGBTIQ+ applicants.

113 See *Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
114 Based on self-selection of 'people with disability' as a demographic group identified with.
115 See *d/Deaf and disabled people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
116 See *Women* for an overview of representation across indicators.
117 See *Regional and remote* for an overview of representation across indicators.
118 See *LGBTIQ+ people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

Spotlight on Creative Workplaces

Creative Workplaces is a National Cultural Policy initiative to improve working conditions in the arts and culture sector. Launched in partnership with federal, state, and territory governments, it addresses key challenges in the industry such as unfair pay, poor working conditions, safety concerns, and lack of access to support.

Diversity is not just about who is included – it's also about how they are treated. It's not enough to bring diverse people into a space without considering and supporting their wellbeing.

People from diverse backgrounds often face barriers such as discrimination, harassment, and exclusion. Respectful workplaces are fair, safe and inclusive where diverse voices are welcome and protected, including the voices of First Nations, LGBTIQ+, d/Deaf and disabled and CALD people.

Respectful workplaces foster cultural safety, where individuals feel their identity and experiences are recognised and respected. This builds trust and encourages long-term participation from underrepresented communities.

Creative Workplaces directly addresses long-standing challenges in the arts and cultural sector around pay, unsafe conditions, discrimination and a lack of access to support, by equipping artists, arts workers and organisations with the tools and knowledge they need.

- information and resources on **pay, safety, and respect**
- guidance for understanding **rights and responsibilities**
- support for **artists, arts workers, employers, and organisations** across all art forms and work arrangements (paid/unpaid, large/small).

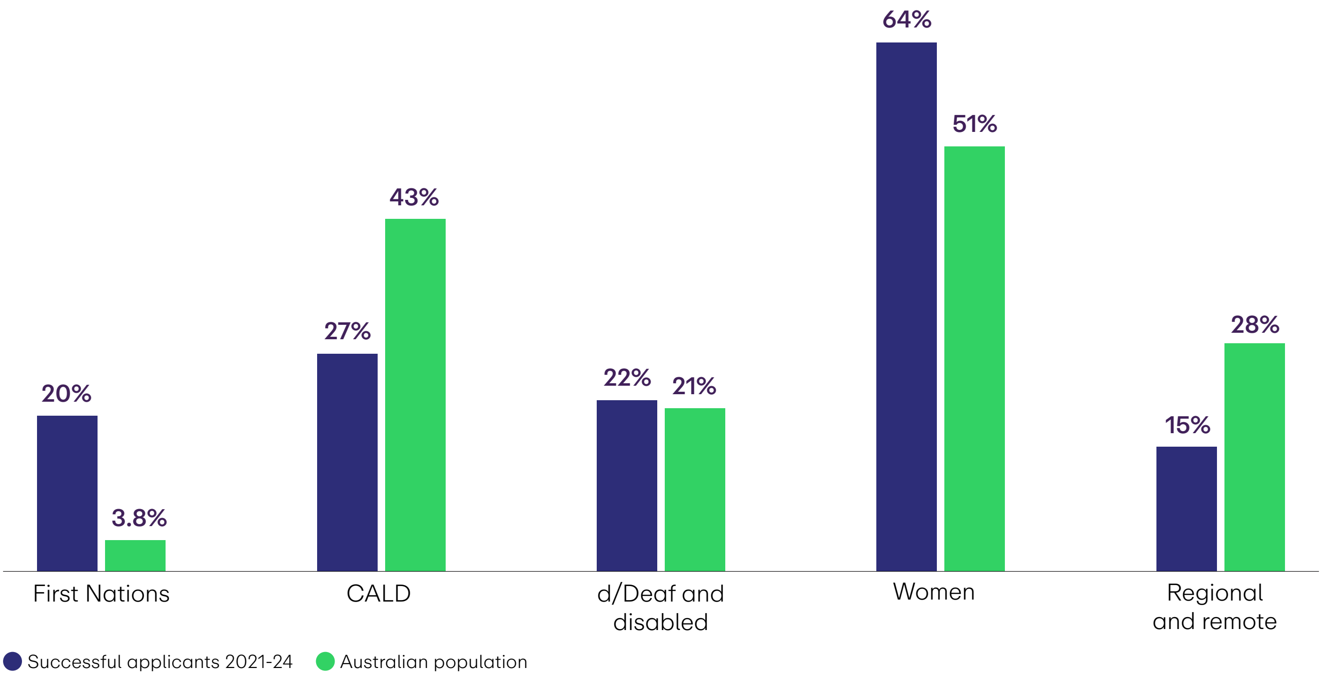
3e. Leadership programs

Creative Australia's leadership programs are highly competitive professional development opportunities for artists and creative workers. Creative Australia seeks to increase the diversity of leadership in our sector and prioritises applications from First Nations people and people who are d/Deaf or disabled. The programs invest in diverse emerging, mid-career and established leaders; build on knowledge and experience across the industry; and foster personal and professional development by connecting people across Australia and internationally.

Main points

- **First Nations and disability representation are strong in the leadership programs** (see *Figure 18*), which have identified places for First Nations and d/Deaf and disabled artists and creative workers. **Disability representation exceeds other Creative Australia and sector indicators,** and CALD people are represented at similar levels to among project investment and international opportunity recipients.
- **People from regional or remote areas are underrepresented compared to population estimates** but each state and territory and arts practice area is represented.

Figure 18: Diversity of successful leadership program applicants, 2021-24



Note: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. **Source:** Data reported by individual applicants for Creative Australia leadership programs, 2021–24 (75 applications approved, average representation rates across years), including Arts Leaders and Future Leaders (delivered in 2022) and Creative Leadership Program (delivered in 2024–25). See *Key terms and population estimates* for population data sources.

About the data

Indicator 3b: Diversity among recipients of Creative Australia grants and initiatives – *leadership programs.*

Timeframe: 2021–2024 applications (average representation rate across years). 2024 data have been included for this indicator which has a much smaller sample size than other indicators.

Data source: Demographic data provided by leadership program applicants through Creative Australia's grant management system (see *Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data* for details).

Additional data in figure: Contextual Australian population estimates.[119] No time series is presented – while we published some data from the 2020 Future Leaders program in the first *Towards Equity* report, we have excluded 2020 data from the current report as 2020 was not business as usual.

Analysis: The analysis also discusses comparisons with results for other *Grants and initiatives* categories (Indicator 3) and *Practising artists* (Indicator 5).

Definitions:

- **Leadership programs:** This indicator combines diversity data from applicants to Creative Australia's leadership programs, including:
  - **Arts Leaders and Future Leaders** programs (applications in 2021, for programs delivered in 2022 with 40 participants)
  - **Creative Leadership Program** (applications in 2024, for programs delivered across 18 months from July 2024 to October 2025 with 35 participants).

Analysis

For Creative Australia's leadership programs:

- **One in five successful applicants are First Nations (20%).** This is well above the population estimate (3.8%) and First Nations representation among government program and project investment recipients (10% and 13% respectively). In recognition of the importance of First Nations knowledge and leadership in Australian culture, the Creative Leadership Program has identified places and targeted outreach for First Nations artists and creative workers to ensure strong representation.

- **27% of successful applicants are CALD,** similar to CALD representation among project investment and international opportunity recipients (27% and 29% respectively). While not directly comparable, this is higher than the proportion of practising artists from a non-English speaking background (13%) but below the population estimate comprised of European and non-European representation in the Australian population (43%).[120]

119 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD communities and *d/Deaf and disabled people*. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates* for further information.

120 See *Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people* for an overview of representation across indicators.

- **22% of successful applicants are d/Deaf or disabled, reflecting the population estimate** (21%, noting the population estimate is based on reporting 'a limitation, restriction or impairment' – not all this group identify as living with disability and many are not in the workforce).[121] Disability representation in the leadership programs exceeds the disability representation rate among practising artists (16%) and is the highest disability representation rate across Creative Australia activity.[122] The Creative Leadership Program has identified places and targeted outreach for d/Deaf or disabled artists and creative workers and received strong application numbers from applicants with disability.

- **64% of successful applicants are women,** similar to women's representation among practising artists (65%).

- **15% of successful applicants are from regional or remote areas.** This is below the population estimate (28%) and the proportion of artists who live outside capital cities (31%). There are successful applicants from each state and territory, arts practice area and career stage.

'The Creative Leadership program is about inviting different groups of people to create their own approaches to leadership... If we only have a monoculture in leadership – people call it "pale stale male" – then you start to see gaps in the decision-making.

We are in a stage where we acknowledge our differences and look at how we can build our arts and cultural infrastructure differently to respond to how people want to operate. At the moment, we've inherited a whole lot of structures that need to change.

Investment in leaders now may not actually bear fruit for another 15 to 20 years, but in that process, it may actually change the very nature of what we're doing.' – Wesley Enoch[123]

121 ABS 2022, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of findings*.
122 See *d/Deaf and disabled people* for an overview of representation across indicators.
123 Cited in Lei C 2024, '*The Creative Leadership program supporting transformative change*,' *ArtsHub*, 26 March 2024.

4. Creative Australia staff

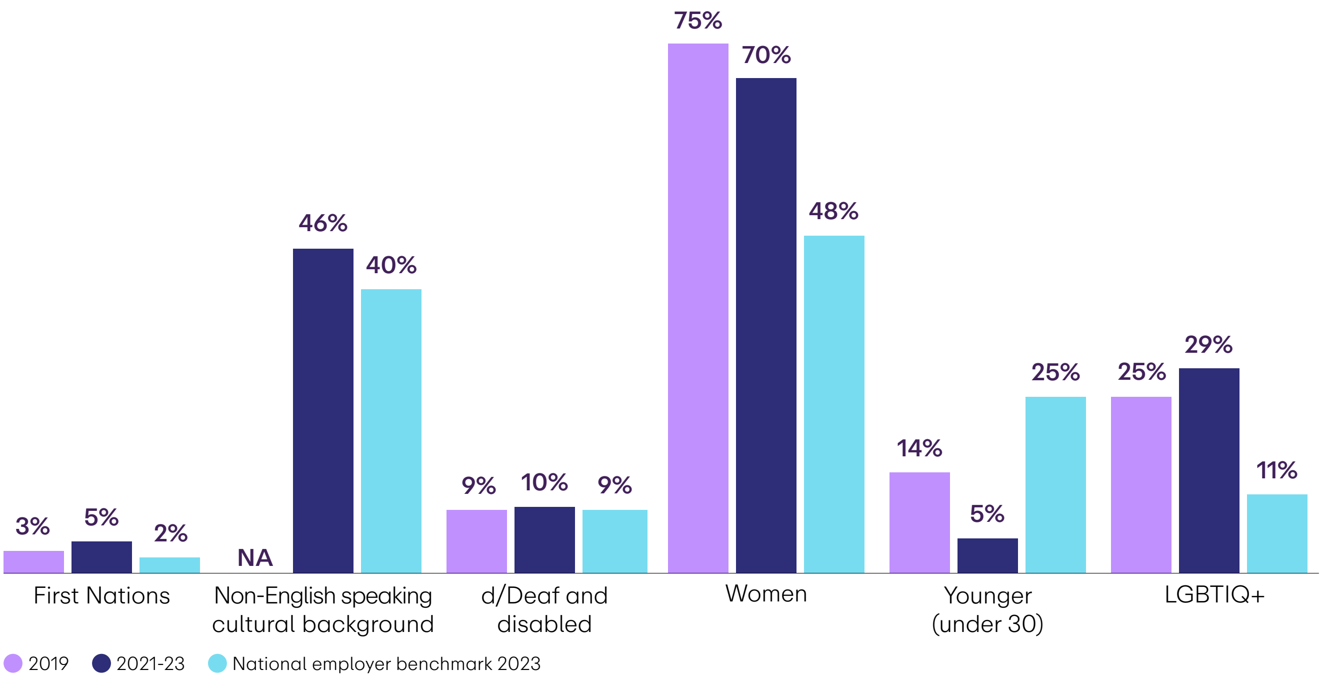
Since 2019, Creative Australia has partnered with Diversity Council Australia (DCA) to assess diversity and inclusion through its Inclusive Employer Index survey. The survey enables us to monitor staff diversity over time and compare against employer benchmarks. Our participation in the survey is part of our Corporate Plan commitment to monitoring and reporting on our diversity.[124]

While Creative Australia is committed to monitoring leadership diversity, there are limitations to what we can publicly report without identifying individuals. Creative Australia is participating in broader, sector-wide efforts to improve diversity measurement and transparency in creative leadership.[125]

Main points

- **Creative Australia tracks strong representation of First Nations people, cultural and linguistic diversity, women and LGBTQI+ employees** but low and declining representation of both younger and older employees.
- **One in ten Creative Australia staff report disability,**[126] in line with the DCA national employer benchmark (see *Figure 19*).

Figure 19: Creative Australia staff diversity, 2019 and 2021–23



Note: Includes the DCA national employer benchmark 2023 for comparison. **Sources:** Data reported by Creative Australia staff to the DCA Inclusive Employer Index survey. 65 responses in 2019 (response rate 59%), 146 in 2021–23 (average representation rates across years, average response rate 63%). The DCA benchmark is derived from a nationally representative survey of 3,000 Australian workers.

124 See Creative Australia 2024, *Creativity Connects Us: Corporate Plan 2024–28*.
125 This includes our partnership with Diversity Arts Australia on Shifting the Balance, a national audit of cultural and racial diversity in leadership across the creative sector.
126 Defined here as an 'impairment or condition' that restricts everyday activities.

About the data

Indicator 4: Diversity within Creative Australia staff.

Timeframe: 2021–2023 (average representation rate from 2021 and 2023 surveys).

Data source: Employee responses to the DCA Inclusive Employer Index survey.

Additional data in figure: The 2019 result published in the first *Towards Equity* report and DCA's 2023 national employer benchmark.

Analysis: The analysis also includes some comparisons with diversity in the Australian Public Service (APS).

Definitions:

- **The Inclusive Employer Index:** Based on an annual survey of employees of hundreds of organisations across Australia,[127] it measures diversity and inclusion and their impact across Australian workplaces.
- **DCA's national employer benchmark:** A benchmark comparison for organisations participating in DCA's Inclusive Employer Index, derived from a nationally representative survey of 3,000 Australian workers.
- **Non-English speaking cultural background (NESCB):** A cultural background that is not from a mainly English-speaking country.[128] This background may be the same as one's parents, grandparents or heritage, or a country of birth or close ties.[129]

127 See DCA 2024, *About DCA's 2025–2026 Inclusive Employer Index*. This is part of DCA's *Inclusive@Work Index*.

128 Based on the ABS Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups coded to ABS main English-speaking country categories. The main-English speaking countries include the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America, and South Africa.

129 See DCA 2025, 'Cultural diversity' in *D&I Data at Work: Diversity questions and response options*.

Analysis

Among Creative Australia staff:

- **First Nations representation has increased to 5%, from 3% in 2019.** This is higher than the national employer benchmark (2%) as well First Nations representation in the Australian Public Service (APS) (3.5%).[130]

- **Almost one in two staff have at least one non-English-speaking cultural background (46%),** which is above the national employer benchmark (40%). In 2021–2023, 54% of staff report English-speaking cultural background(s) only. In 2019, the survey asked about country of birth rather than cultural background, so 2019 findings that 14% of staff were born in a non-main English-speaking background country are not directly comparable.
- While not depicted in the chart, the 2021–2023 findings also included:
    - **44% of staff are multilingual**[131] (above the employer benchmark of 37%)
    - **representation of non-Christian religion**[132] **is the same as the employer benchmark** (12%)
    - **41% of employees have caring responsibilities,**[133] slightly higher than the employer benchmark (39%), down from 57% in 2019.

- **One in ten staff report disability (10%),**[134] which is broadly comparable with the national employer benchmark and with 2019 results (9% respectively). While not directly comparable (as the DCA survey is based on having an 'impairment or condition' rather than an identified disability), 5.1% of APS employees report they have a disability, and 7.7% report that they are neurodivergent with a further 11.5% indicating they're not sure (while neurodivergent conditions such as Autism and ADHD are recognised as disabilities, not all neurodivergent people identify as disabled/living with disability).[135]

- **70% of staff are women, down from 75% in 2019.** This is well above the national employer benchmark of 48% in 2023, and above women's representation in the APS (60%).[136] This strong representation reflects the underlying gender composition of the artist workforce (65% of artists are women) and the high proportion of applicants to Creative Australia grants and initiatives who are women.[137]

130 Australian Public Service Commission 2023, *APS at a Glance*.
131 Refers to those who reported being able to have a conversation about a lot of everyday things in one or more languages other than English.
132 Refers to those who identified as having a religious affiliation that was not a Christian denomination (e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Sikhism). Non-Christian religious background does not include those who indicated they have no religious affiliation.
133 Reported caring for a child, children and/or adult(s) in the two weeks leading up to taking the survey.
134 Defined here as an 'impairment or condition' that restricts everyday activities.
135 Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) 2023, *APS at a Glance*. The 2023 APS Employee Census was the first time data on neurodivergence was captured across the APS. APSC 2023, *Understanding neurodiversity in the APS*.
136 Australian Public Service Commission 2023, *APS at a Glance*.
137 See *Grants and initiatives* (Indicator 3).

- **Just 5% of Creative Australia staff are aged under 30, down from 14% in 2019.** This is well below the national employer benchmark (25% in 2023). While not depicted in the chart, the findings also indicate **low representation of older workers aged 55+ at 12%,** down from 14% in 2019, and well below the employer benchmark (21% in 2023).

- **29% of Creative Australia staff are LGBTIQ+, up from 25% in 2019.** This is well above the national employer benchmark (11% in 2023) and LGBTIQ+ representation among APS employees (8.7%).[138] It reflects strong LGBTIQ+ representation in the arts and cultural sector, including among Creative Australia grants and initiative applicants.[139] LGBTIQ+ people are also well-represented in the Australian screen industry.[140]

138 Australian Public Service Commission 2023, *APS at a Glance*.
139 See *Grants and initiatives* (Indicator 3).
140 See Screen Diversity and Inclusion Network 2025, *Everyone Counts 2.0: Data on diversity in screen productions from the first three years of The Everyone Project*.

Spotlight on the Multicultural Framework Review

The Multicultural Framework Review is 'a generational reform agenda' aiming to 'position Australia to realise its full potential as a nation made up of many cultures, faiths and lived experiences.'[141] The Review, informed by public consultations and submissions from across Australia, makes recommendations on a policy framework to support a cohesive multicultural society.

Creative Australia's sector roundtable[142] heard that there is a need to better support migrant artists and creative workers from culturally diverse backgrounds to access resources, such as arts grants and networking opportunities. Participants spoke of a high number of artists from migrant and refugee communities who face barriers to access in terms of language and navigating new and complex government support systems. There is a need for mechanisms to connect migrants from culturally diverse backgrounds with accessible resources and professional opportunities.[143]

Key recommendations of Creative Australia's submission to the Review[144] were reflected in the recommendations of the Review report, *Towards Fairness*.[145] These included:

- **Targeted funding** to community cultural projects.
- **Targeted funding** for skills and leadership development, networking and professional development for culturally diverse creatives.
- **Piloting a multi-year seed fund** for community-driven creative solutions addressing social challenges.
- **Funding for arts and cultural workers** embedded in multicultural organisations.

The *Towards Fairness* report recognises the unique and powerful role of the arts in fostering belonging, challenging prejudice and building social cohesion and inclusion. It foregrounds investment in community organisations and cultural programs to drive social change through the arts and sport.

> 'There is significant opportunity to harness the power of arts and culture and the talents of culturally diverse practitioners to address divisions in society, promote mutual understanding, support cohesion, inclusion and wellbeing, and build a modern shared Australian identity…' – Towards Fairness: A multicultural Australia for all[146]

141 Australian Government 2024, *Towards Fairness: A multicultural Australia for all*, Report summary.
142 The roundtable was held on 4 September 2023, attended by 25 participants with five speakers.
143 Creative Australia 2023, *Multicultural Framework Review Submission*.
144 Creative Australia 2023, *Multicultural Framework Review Submission*.
145 Australian Government 2024, *Towards Fairness: A multicultural Australia for all*, Recommendations 7–10.
146 Australian Government 2024, *Towards Fairness: A multicultural Australia for all*, p.55.

Part B: The broader national picture

Part B looks beyond Creative Australia's activity to the national picture. As well as providing useful context to Creative Australia's diversity performance, this information helps us understand where further effort is needed to support equity and inclusion in Australian arts and culture. A priority under Creative Australia's Strategy is to 'use insights and engagement to understand and address barriers to access and participation for artists and audiences.' (Pillar 2, A place for every story). We aim to publish meaningful insights to build the evidence base around equity in arts and culture.

This section discusses findings for four national diversity indicators:

- **diversity among practising Australian artists** based on the national Artist Survey
- **diversity among all workers employed in the arts and cultural production sectors** in Census week, including music and performing arts, visual arts, writing and publishing, and TV, film and radio
- **patterns of arts attendance among diverse groups in the population,** giving us insight into arts audiences for the broad range of live arts offerings in Australia, as well as barriers to access
- ***active* creative participation among diverse groups in the population,** giving us insight into Australian's engagement with art making and creativity in their daily lives (as opposed to more passive participation as an audience member) and how this varies across demographic groups.

5. Practising artists

Tracking artists' diversity provides important context to Creative Australia's investment, advocacy and sector development, and to the national evidence-base. Creative Australia has been tracking the population of artists and their working conditions through the national Artist Survey for four decades.[147]

The population of professional artists represented in the Artist Survey is a bigger group than those in receipt of Creative Australia investment – the 2023 survey found grants and funding (from a range of public and private sources) are important to about 70% of artists.[148]

It is becoming increasingly difficult for many artists to make a living from their creative work. This challenge is a key factor influencing the diversity of who can enter the arts and sustain a career within the sector.[149] Our analysis of artist demographics also discusses the impacts of demographic differences on creative careers, and disparities in income artists make from their creative practice.

147 The Artist Survey is carried out independently by Professor Throsby and colleagues at Macquarie University, with support from Creative Australia.

148 Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*.

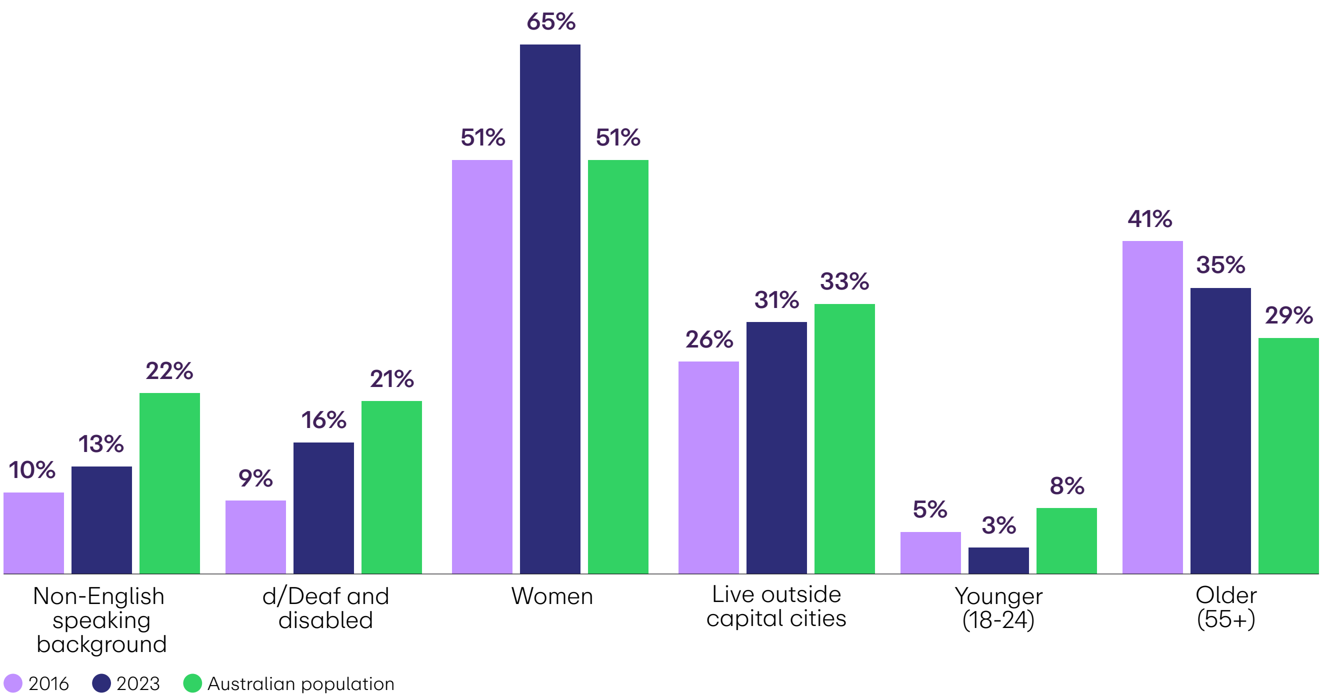
149 See Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*. Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers*.

Main points

Note: *Nationally representative data are not available on First Nations artists for this indicator.*

- **The composition of the pool of practising artists in Australia is changing,** including increased representation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), women, d/Deaf and disabled people, and those based outside capital cities (see ***Figure 20***). However, these groups face challenges in their creative practice and income disparities.
- **While the proportion of NESB artists has gradually increased,** representation remains below the population estimate and an increasing proportion feel their background has a negative impact on their creative practice.
- **The proportion of d/Deaf and disabled artists has almost doubled since 2016.**[150] d/Deaf and disabled artists are more likely to live outside capital cities, and to have experienced unemployment than artists without disability, continuing a long-term trend.
- **Women outnumber men roughly two to one across artistic occupations, except musicians and composers.** Women artists' median creative income is 21% less than men – greater than the Australian workforce pay gap of 12% in 2023[151] but decreasing over time.
- **Numbers of younger artists are falling, reflecting a concerning long-term trend for the future of arts practice in Australia and highlighting the need for accessible pathways into artistic careers.** Numbers have also fallen for older artists in 2023, for the first time since 1988.

Figure 20: Diversity among practising artists, 2016 and 2023



Notes: Includes contextual population estimates, which are not always directly comparable. Nationally representative First Nations data are not available. **Sources:** Based on the national Artist Survey, 2016: n=826 respondents; estimated total artist population ≈ 48,000. 2023: n=637 respondents; estimated total artist population just under 50,000. See ***Key terms and population estimates*** for population data sources.

150 Defined here as those who identify as 'a person with disability' and/or have 'an impairment' that affects activities they can do.
151 As of November 2023. WGEA 2023, *The ABS Data Gender Pay Gap*

About the data

Indicator 5: Diversity within Australia's pool of practising artists.

Timeframe: 2023 survey findings.

Data source: The Artist Survey.[152]

Additional data in figure: 2016 survey findings and contextual Australian population estimates.[153]

Analysis: The analysis also discusses some art form differences in representation; median creative income based on 2021–22; impacts of background, disability or location on creative practice; and long-term trends over the six-yearly study.

Definitions:

- **Practising artists:** Artists who actively work or seek to work in their art form, demonstrate significant commitment, skills or experience, and meet professional standards recognised within their field, even if art is not their main source of income.
- **The Artist Survey:** Part of a landmark study carried out independently over the last four decades by Professor Throsby and colleagues at Macquarie University, with support from Creative Australia. Conducted at roughly six-year intervals, the series tracks the working conditions of artists, providing information about their artistic practice, income, career development and pathways, and their broader working lives. The 2023 findings are based on responses from 637 Australian artists in late 2022 and early 2023. The 2016 survey gathered responses from 826 professional artists during late 2016 and early 2017.[154]
- **Non-English speaking background (NESB):** Based on first language learnt. The definition of NESB is not standardised. The population estimate used for this group is based on Australians who use a language other than English at home and is not directly comparable.

152 See Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*.

153 Population estimates offer useful context but are not always directly comparable, especially for CALD communities and *d/Deaf and disabled people*. We have included additional context and comparisons in the analysis. See *Key terms and population estimates* for further information.

154 See Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2017, *Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*.

Analysis

For Australia's pool of practising artists:

- **Findings are not available for First Nations people,** although some First Nations artists from urban and regional areas were part of the survey. Other studies focus specifically on First Nations artists including a national survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in remote communities being undertaken on a region-by-region basis to build a national picture.[155]

- **The proportion of artists from a non-English speaking background (NESB)[156] has gradually increased to 13% in 2023,** up from 10% in 2016. While not directly comparable, this is well below the proportion of all Australians who use a language other than English at home (22%).[157]
- **Representation of NESB artists is highest among community cultural development artists** (42%) and dancers (22%) and lowest among writers (8%) and craft practioners (9%). Compared to artists from English-speaking backgrounds (ESB), NESB artists likely to be younger and more live in capital cities. While NESB artists earn a higher median creative income ($12,900) than ESB artists ($11,000), NESB artists spend less time on paid work associated with the arts and spend more time in unpaid arts-related jobs.
- **An increasing proportion of NESB artists feel their background has a negative impact on their creative practice** (36% up from 20% in 2016), although the majority of NESB artists believe having learnt a first language other than English has had a positive impact on their creative practice (52%). This indicates that many artists are experiencing barriers and challenges related to their background.

- **The proportion of d/Deaf and disabled artists has almost doubled since 2016** (from 9% to 16%),[158] increasing more sharply than the population estimate (which increased from 18% in 2018 to 21% in 2022).[159] Disability prevalence in the population may be increasing due to factors such as an ageing population, rising incidence of some long-term health conditions and growing awareness of disability in Australia.[160] Sharper increases in disability reported among artists and project investment recipients could be influenced by increased comfort reporting disability in the arts sector alongside increased awareness, advocacy and investment.[161] Among artists, disability representation is lowest among performing artists, particularly dancers (4%) and highest among community cultural development artists (30%).
- **Most d/Deaf and disabled artists say their disability affects their creative practice some of the time** (55%), a further 27% say it affects them most of the time and 10% say all the time. d/Deaf and disabled artists earn two thirds of the median creative income of artists without disability (66%) and three quarters the total income (75%), but tend to earn more from arts-related work (130%).[162] d/Deaf and disabled artists are more likely to live in regional areas than artists without disability; and are more likely to have experienced unemployment, continuing a long-term trend.

155 Six region-specific surveys are being undertaken by the research team at Macquarie University. See Creative Australia 2022, *Art and Cultural Production by First Nations artists in Remote Australia*.

156 Based on the first language learnt.

157 Based on Census 2021. See ABS 2022 (media release), *2021 Census highlights increasing cultural diversity*.

158 The question asked for disability is 'Do you identify as a person with disability and/or do you have an impairment that affects the activities you can do?'

159 In the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), a person is considered to have disability if they have 'any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for six months or more.' ABS 2024, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of findings*.

160 ABS 2024, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of findings.

161 There has been substantial self-determined work to address workforce challenges for d/Deaf and disabled artists and creative workers, including development of the Australian Government's four-year plan of actions and investments to build the foundations for equity in the arts, released in November 2024: *Equity: The Arts and Disability Associated Plan*. See also Creative Australia 2024, *Building Strong Foundations: Research on arts and disability needs and opportunities*.

162 Based on 2021–22, artists with disability median creative income: $8,500, median arts-related income: $3,000, median total income: $35,500.

Two in three artists are women (65%), up from one in two in 2016 (51%). Women tend to exceed other genders in most art forms, except among musicians and composers where there is a higher proportion of men. Women are slightly less likely than men and non-binary artists to live in capital cities (67% compared to 71%). Compared to men, they are also more likely to attribute their career progression to training and less likely to attribute it to talent. Women are more likely to apply for and receive financial assistance from grants, fellowships, prizes or other funding, but men have higher success rates from some sources including non-arts organisations, philanthropy and private foundations.

Women artists continue to earn less than men from their creative practice. Men's median creative income in 2021–22 was $13,600 compared to $10,800 earned by women. This is a pay gap of 21% in median creative income – greater than the Australian workforce pay gap of 12% in 2023.[163] Both arts-related and non-arts related income further accentuate the gender disparity. While the gender pay gap for artists persists, it has been gradually decreasing over the survey years.

Nearly one in three artists are now based outside capital cities (31%), up from one in four in 2016 (26%) and approaching the population estimate (33%).[164] These artists are more likely to be women and older on average than artists living in capital cities.

Artists living outside capital cities earn a lower median creative income ($10,700) than artists who live in capital cities ($11,700), but significantly more from non-arts work. Only a minority of artists across all art forms indicated that their location had no effect on their work (17%). Of those who did see some location impact, a larger proportion judged this to be negative rather than positive (44% vs. 40%).

Young people aged 18–24 now comprise just 3% of professional artists, down from 5% in 2016 and well below the population estimate (8%). Representation rates for older people aged 55+ have also declined (to 35%, down from 41% in 2016) but remain above population and workforce estimates – artists are older on average than the workforce including due to artists often working beyond retirement age.

Overall since the first Artist Survey, there has been a noticeable decrease in the representation of younger artists (under 35), from 35% of all artists in 1988 to 22% in 2023, highlighting the need for accessible pathways into artistic careers to safeguard the sector's future. This downward trend is particularly evident for composers, dancers, and craft practitioners. However, some art forms, such as writers, visual artists, actors/directors, musicians, and composers, have shown recovery or stabilisation in more recent years.

Meanwhile, older artists (55 and over) have had steadily increased representation over time until these latest results, increasing from 17% in 1988 to 41% in 2016. However, this trend has not continued into 2023, with practitioners such as writers, crafts practitioners, actors and musicians seeing a fall in representation for this age group in the latest results.

163 As of November 2023. WGEA 2023, *The ABS Data Gender Pay Gap*.

164 Including the balance of state/territory, from regional towns through to remote areas based on Greater Capital City Statistical Areas in the ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard.

Spotlight on d/Deaf and disabled First Nations artists

Online workshops were held for d/Deaf and disabled First Nations artists as part of the First Nations First consultations. Some of the key insights from focus group discussions included calls to:

- **better recognise, support and make visible** the unique contribution of d/Deaf and disabled First Nations artists and creative workers to organisations, art making and the sector
- **invest in access strategies** that enable participation – including physical access, access to networks and pathways, and sensory and psychosocial supports to participate at all levels
- **increase awareness of disability and accessibility** in the First Nations arts and culture sector
- **ensure safe spaces** for d/Deaf and disabled artists to learn, develop and grow, including spending time on skills development as well as money
- **increase and support representation** of d/Deaf and disabled First Nations people in decision-making.[165]

'Accessibility becomes our shared canvas.

We paint it with considerations: ramps, leading to creativity, sign language woven into boardroom dialogues, and alt-text whispering secrets to screen readers.

We nurture safe spaces where artists learn, grow, and unfurl their wings. Here their work dances – a choreography of resilience and vulnerability.' – d/Deaf and disabled artists workshop summary, First Nations First community consultation

165 See Creative Australia 2024, *First Nations First – What We Heard*.

6. Cultural production sector workers

This indicator looks at diversity among Australians employed in the cultural production sectors of music and performing arts, visual arts, writing and publishing, and TV, film and radio.[166] It covers all roles in these sectors – from artists, creatives and production and technical workers to management and support roles such as marketing, accounting and fundraising.

Cultural production sector workers are a much bigger group than those in receipt of Creative Australia investment and other support, but understanding its diversity is important to the national evidence-base and to our advocacy, collaboration and sector development. Conducting and publishing research on the diversity of creative workers is a Creative Australia Corporate Plan commitment.[167]

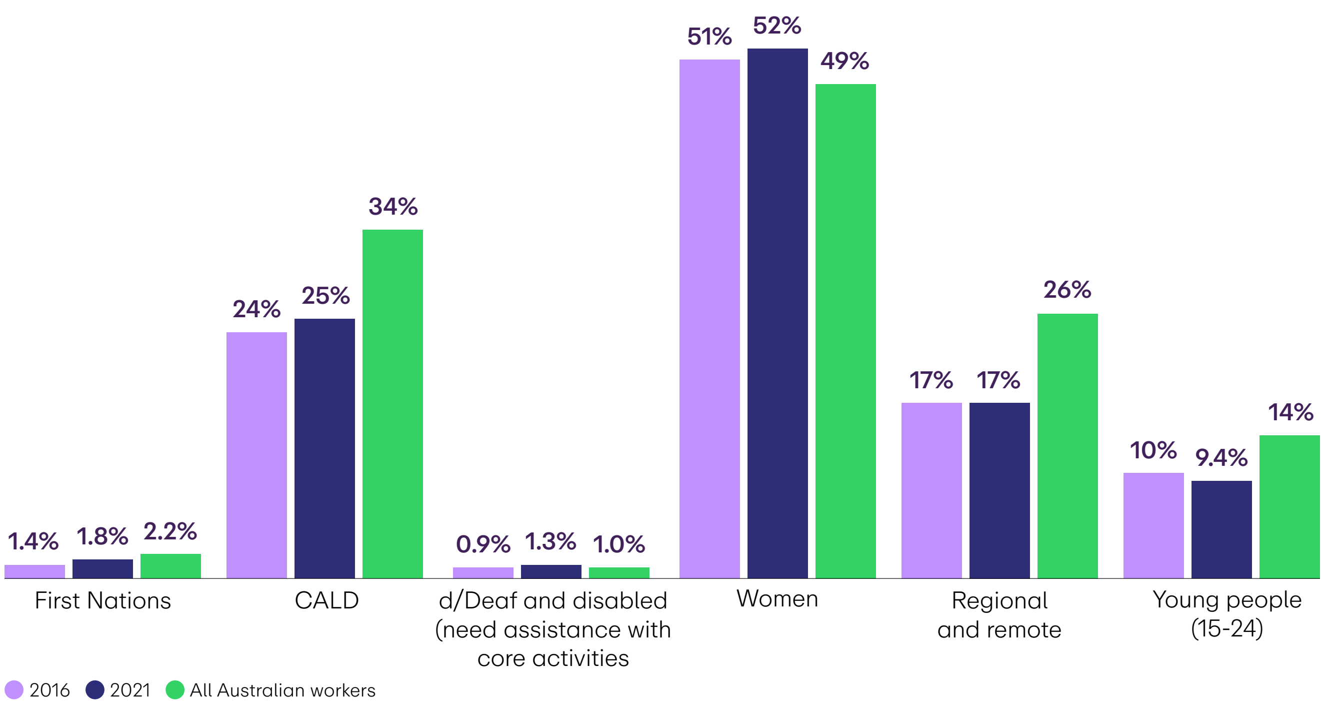
This indicator is based on Census data, which provides regular whole-of-population insights on employment and income in Census week. On its own, Census data does not accurately capture creative work. For example, it misses seasonal, intermittent or 'gig' work not occurring that week.[168] Viewing Census data together with other datasets, such as the Artist Survey, can give us an overall and composite view of creative workers.

Main points

- **There have been small gains in the diversification of the cultural production sector workforce since 2016** (see *Figure 21*), but progress is slight and there is substantial income inequality.
- **First Nations cultural production sector workers are growing in number but remain underrepresented** and face a significant but decreasing income gap. **CALD people are also underrepresented but cultural diversity has improved slightly since 2016,** with more representation of people from non-European backgrounds.
- **d/Deaf and disabled people who need assistance with core activities**[169] **are represented at a slightly higher rate** in the cultural production sectors than among Australian workers overall but earn half the income of other cultural production sector workers.
- **Overall, women's representation is strong and has grown, but gender pay gaps persist** and we know from other research that some roles remain gendered.
- **Young people and regional Australians are underrepresented among cultural production sector workers with no progress.** Other research has noted barriers to entry and retention in creative jobs for these groups.

166 The Census analysis is based on employment in industries categorised under the Australian and New Zealand Statistical Industry Classification 2006 (ANZSIC) for: Film, TV and Radio; Publishing; and Visual and performing arts.
167 See Creative Australia 2023, *Creativity Connects Us: Corporate Plan 2023–27*.
168 See About the data for more information.
169 This Census measure identifies people with more severe forms of disability who need personal support.

Figure 21: Diversity among cultural production sector workers, 2016 and 2021



Notes: Data on all Australian workers is included for comparison based on Census 2021. 'CALD' is based on aggregation of the 'European' and 'non-European' ancestry categories (excludes the First Nations and Anglo-Celtic groups). **Source:** TableBuilder occupation counts for the visual and performing arts, publishing, and film, TV and radio industries, based on ABS Census 2016 and 2021 ('All Australian workers' based on 2021). Base cultural production sector employment: n=134,724 in 2016; n=137,136 in 2021. Base total employment: n=12,049,410 in 2021.

About the data

Indicator 6: Diversity of cultural production sector workers.

Timeframe: 2021.

Data source: Analysis of ABS Census data.

Additional data in figure: Cultural production sector workers in 2016, and Australian workers overall in 2021.

Analysis: The analysis also discusses disparities and growth in total median income (annualised, based on August 2021 income, adjusted for inflation).

Definitions:

- **Cultural production sector workers:** All Australians employed in the cultural production sectors of music and performing arts, visual arts, writing and publishing, and TV, film and radio, based on Census 2021 data.[170] It covers all roles in these sectors – from artists, creatives and production and technical workers to management and support roles such as marketing, accounting and fundraising.
- **All Australian workers:** All Australians who reported they were employed in Census 2021.
- **CALD:** Based on aggregation of the 'European' and 'non-European' ancestry categories for both 'cultural production sector workers' and 'All Australian workers' (excludes the First Nations and Anglo-Celtic groups).
- **d/Deaf and disabled people who need assistance with core activities:** Individuals who need assistance with self-care, mobility or communication due to either 'a long-term health condition, a disability or old age.' This Census disability category 'aims to identify people with more severe forms of disability who need personal support, rather than being a broad measure of people with a disability in the population.[171]

About Census income and employment data: The Census captures main source of income in Census week, so it does not count multiple jobs or seasonal, intermittent or 'gig' work not occurring that week. In addition, many occupations have not been identifiable within the Census occupation classification to date, and the previous Census classification did not specifically identify employment in digital games. Substantial work has been undertaken to improve the occupation classification through a recent ABS review.[172] Census data will now improve over time.

Other national and industry datasets and surveys provide additional context and nuance alongside Census data – there is no single data source or method to track the creative workforce, and each has strengths and limitations.[173]

170 The Census analysis is based on employment in industries categorised under the Australian and New Zealand Statistical Industry Classification (ANZSIC) for: Film, TV and Radio; Publishing; and Visual and performing arts.

171 ABS 2022, *Understanding disability statistics in the Census and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers*.

172 Across 2023 and 2024, the ABS conducted a *comprehensive review* of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) with the updated *Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)* released in December 2024.

173 For example, see Eltham B and O'Connor J 2024, *Australian Cultural Employment: An analysis of the Australian Census and Labour Force Survey Data: Reset Working Paper no. 4, Creative people, products and places (CP3)*. This uses a different method to track cultural employment based on more traditional definitions of cultural industries and occupations developed by the ABS in 2011, and it highlights debates over what is included in 'culture.'

Analysis

Among workers in Australia's cultural production sectors:[174]

- **First Nations representation has increased from 1.4% to 1.8%** but remains below First Nations representation among Australian workers overall (2.2%). The First Nations cultural production sector workforce showed high growth between 2016 and 2021 as more Australians reported having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ancestry in the 2021 Census.
- **The median income for First Nations cultural production sector workers is $46,800.** This is 74% of the median earned by other Australians working in cultural production sectors, an income gap of $16,600 per year. However, average growth in median income for First Nations cultural production sector workers between 2016 and 2021 was stronger than for non-First Nations cultural production sector workers (2.6% compared to 1.8%, adjusted for inflation).
- **The Creative Workforce Scoping Study highlighted a need for fair pay to recognise the unique value of First Nations knowledge and skills,** particularly in roles in galleries and museums where demand is increasing. Participants highlighted that low wages are a major barrier to recruiting and retaining First Nations staff with many organisations struggling to compete with better-paid roles in government and corporate sectors.[175]

- **One in four cultural production sector workers are from CALD (defined here as European or non-European) backgrounds (25%), compared to one in three Australian workers overall (34%),** with the remaining from Anglo-Celtic or First Nations backgrounds. This 'CALD' representation in the cultural production sectors is up just one percentage point from 2016 (from 24%).
- **However, within the CALD group, the share of cultural workers from European and non-European backgrounds has effectively swapped.** In 2016, 13% of cultural production sector workers were from a European background and 12% were from a non-European background. By 2021, these figures had reversed: 12% were from a European background and 13% from a non-European background. This suggests a slight shift towards greater cultural diversity in the cultural production sector workforce, with more representation from non-European communities over time.
- **Cultural production sector workers from non-European backgrounds earned a median income of $61,300 in 2021** – slightly less than their Anglo-Celtic ($64,000) and European ($62,200) peers. However, their income has been rising more quickly, growing at an average rate of 2.0% per year since 2016, compared to 1.8% for both the Anglo-Celtic and European groups.

- **1.3% of cultural production sector workers are d/Deaf or disabled people who need assistance with core activities, a slightly higher rate than among Australian workers overall (1.0%).** This is up from 0.9% in 2016 with the growth in numbers of cultural production sector workers who need assistance (7.7%) much higher than growth in numbers of those who do not (0.4%, compound average annual growth).
- **d/Deaf and disabled cultural production sector workers who need assistance with core activities earned a median income of $32,500 in 2021** – 51% of the median income for workers in cultural production sectors who do not need assistance, representing an income gap of $30,900.

174 Based on main source of income on Census night being in the visual and performing arts, publishing, or film, TV and radio industries.
175 Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers*

Women made up 52% of cultural production sector workers in 2021, up one percentage point from 51% in 2019. This is higher than women's share of the overall workforce, where they held 49% of roles in 2021. Despite this overarching finding, other research has highlighted that some sectors or roles are male-dominated, including some roles in music[176] and screen.[177] While Census data did not capture digital games in 2021,[178] we know from other ABS data that digital games is male dominated.[179]

Women working in cultural production sectors earned a median income of $57,300 in 2021 – 82% of the median income of males, and an income gap of $13,000.

Representation of cultural production sector workers who live in regional and remote areas has held steady at 17% since 2016 – well below representation among Australian workers overall (26%). The Creative Workforce Scoping Study found that geographic isolation and transport costs create barriers to accessing jobs, training and networks. A lack of sustainable work in regional areas also contributes to workforce exits, making it harder to recruit and retain cultural production sector workers locally.[180]

Young people aged 15–24 made up around one in ten cultural production sector workers in 2021 (9.4%), slightly down from 10% in 2016. This is lower than among Australian workers overall, where they represented 14% in 2021. The Creative Workforce Scoping Study highlighted barriers to creative sector entry and retention for young people including limited access to education and visible career pathways; inaccessible unpaid pathways; a disconnect between training and employment; and generational shifts in expectations around work.[181]

176 Including musicians and composers, see *Practising artists* based on Throsby D and Petetskaya K 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

177 For example, camera departments. See Coles A, Ferrer J, Zemaityte V and Banks M 2022, *A Wider Lens: Australian camera workforce development and diversity*, Australian Cinematographers Society.

178 'Digital Game Developer' has been included in the updated national occupation classification *Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)* released in December 2024.

179 73% compared to 27%. ABS 2023, *Film, Television and Digital Games, Australia, 2021-22*.

180 Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers*.

181 Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers*.

Spotlight on the Creative Workforce Scoping Study

The Creative Workforce Scoping Study,[182] **a commitment under *Revive*, confirmed that Australia's creative industries are currently facing critical workforce and skills shortages.** Organisations across the creative industries – including in performing arts, visual arts, craft and design, writing and publishing, digital games, screen, music and First Nations arts and culture – are experiencing supply and retention issues.

The study also highlighted barriers to diversity in the creative workforce, including for First Nations people, d/Deaf and disabled people, people from regional or remote areas, and people with low socio-economic status. Barriers also remain for women in the music, digital games and screen sectors.

Barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion raised by study participants include inaccessible work environments; a lack of flexible work; high costs associated with geography and transport; funding barriers; a lack of exposure to career pathways and roadmaps; insufficient leadership and representation; high costs for creative education and training; unpaid internships; and precarious work.

The employer survey found many creative businesses are making efforts to improve the diversity of their workforce, including recruiting for First Nations identified roles, using diversity targets or other initiatives. However, half the creative organisations surveyed are not recruiting with explicit diversity intentions. Efforts to recruit and develop diverse talent are limited by capacity and knowledge, including limitations in salary and resources to support access, participation, training and mentorship; as well as a perceived lack of applicants with the skills needed. There are needs for resourcing and training to improve cultural safety and accessibility in the sector.

> 'Diversity is really hard, because even if we do support somebody from a diverse background into a workplace role, it's got to be a safe environment for them to go into. And several of them haven't been, and we've had horrible experiences.' – Publishing

The study reinforced that recruitment and retention challenges are exacerbated in regional and remote areas, and that regional and remote cultural production sector workers face professional development barriers. Consultation participants said the lack of consistent work opportunities force many creatives to leave regional areas, creating a skills gap. The study called for targeted support, including investment in regional training pathways, mentoring and accessible education options.

> 'Remote areas face high accommodation and travel costs for staff, which our small budget cannot handle.' – Community arts

Overall, the study calls for scaling up of targeted initiatives to ensure people from diverse backgrounds have equitable opportunities in creative careers. This includes investment in community and youth arts, mentoring, schools outreach, and accessible creative education and training at all levels. It also calls for stronger links between education and industry, more on-the-job learning, and flexible, lifelong learning pathways. It highlights needs for better regional access and improvements to pay and conditions to build a more diverse and sustainable creative workforce.

182 See Creative Australia and Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA) 2025, *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers*.

7. Arts attendance

As a strategic priority, Creative Australia aims to build evidence to support access and address barriers for Australian arts audiences and participants.[183] Arts and creativity inspire and connect us, help us to build our collective identity and make us happier and healthier – over half of Australians say the arts have a 'big' or 'very big' impact on our sense of wellbeing and happiness; our ability to deal with stress, anxiety or depression; and our understanding of other people and cultures.[184]

Based on new analysis of the 2022 National Arts Participation Survey, this indicator presents population level data on attendance at the broad range of live arts offerings in Australia including commercial, professional and community level arts festivals and events across art forms. This is broader than Creative Australia-funded arts – we do not collect individual data on the representation of different groups in audiences for our funded activities.

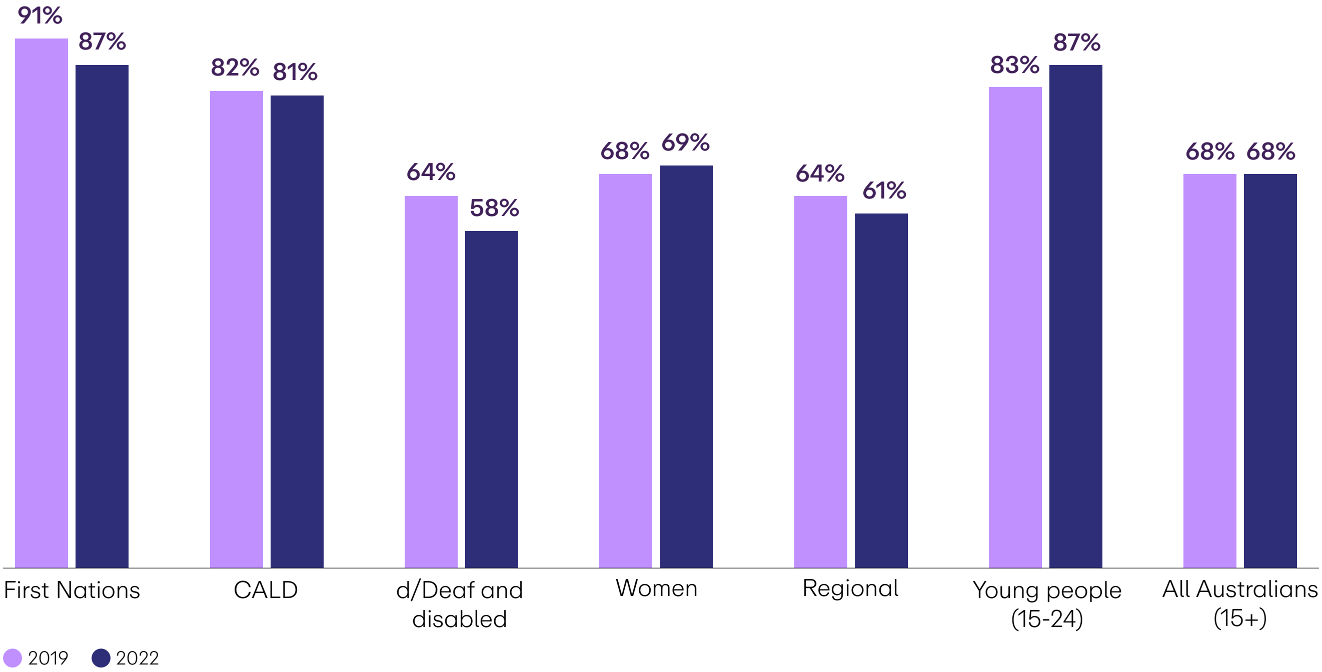
The previous survey was conducted in 2019, prior to the disruptions of COVID-19. It provided a benchmark of Australians' arts engagement before the pandemic. The 2022 results, in comparison, provide an update on arts engagement in its wake.

Main points

- **First Nations, CALD and young people have the highest rates of arts attendance**[185] (see *Figure 22*). The proportion of First Nations people who attend has decreased, but they are attending more often than before the COVID pandemic. More young people aged 15–25 are attending live arts, and more often.
- **Overall attendance rates have decreased for Australians from regional areas and d/Deaf and disabled people.** d/Deaf and disabled people are also attending fewer live arts events than before the pandemic, as are CALD people and women.
- **Across groups, strong motivations for attending** the arts include enjoyment, cultural connection and social experiences. First Nations and CALD people particularly value connecting with their cultural heritage through the arts. Young people and women are more likely to attend for entertainment and social connection and to learn about other cultures. First Nations and d/Deaf and disabled people particularly value health and wellbeing benefits.
- **Cost is the most common barrier for many groups,** with distance and travel also barriers, especially for regional Australians, women and d/Deaf and disabled people. First Nations people often find lack of information to be a barrier.

183 Creative Australia 2024, *Our 2024–2028 Strategy*, Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story.
184 Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.
185 Defined as the proportion of each group who attended in 2022.

Figure 22: Proportion of each group who attend arts festivals and events, 2019 and 2022



Source: Based on National Arts Participation Survey results, Data Table 1.[186] Base: First Nations 2019 n=619, 2022 n=558; CALD 2019 n=1,992, 2022 n=1,741; d/Deaf and disabled 2019 n=1,531, 2022 n=1,330; women 2019 n=4,705, 2022 n=4,901; regional 2019 n=2,723, 2022 n=2,714; young people 2019 n=1,374, 2022 n=1,577; total Australia 2019 n=8,928, 2022 n=9,396.

186 See Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*; and Creative Australia 2020, *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

About the data

Indicator 7: Arts attendance among diverse groups in Australia.

Timeframe: 2022 survey findings.

Data source: The National Arts Participation Survey.[187]

Additional data in figure: 2019 survey findings.

Analysis: The analysis also discusses frequency of attendance, art form differences, the value and benefits provided by attendance, and motivations and barriers to attend. Differences reported between groups and over time are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Definitions:

- **Attendance:** The National Arts Participation Survey asks Australians about attendance at any live arts festivals and events in the reference year. It also asks about frequency of attendance. **Attendance rates** are the proportion of each group who attended at least one event.
- **The National Arts Participation Survey** is a landmark research series exploring Australians' engagement with arts and creativity, with five iterations between 2009 and 2022.[188] The latest survey was conducted in September–October 2022 and the results are based on a nationally representative sample of 9,396 people (aged 15+).

Analysis

Based on the 2022 National Arts Participation Survey findings:

- **Nine in ten First Nations respondents attend arts and cultural events** (87%, down from 91% in 2019). This is a stronger attendance rate than for non-First Nations respondents (68%). First Nations respondents' attendance rates are highest for First Nations arts (78%), festivals (68%), music (63%) and visual arts and crafts (60%).
- **Almost two in three First Nations respondents attend arts events to engage with their own cultural background** (63% compared to 26% of non-First Nations respondents). For First Nations respondents, the value provided by cultural events includes feeling connected to their heritage (62%), spending time with family and friends (56%), getting to know people in the community (52%) and improved health and wellbeing (52%).
- **Over half of First Nations respondents said they are attending more live arts events and festivals than before the pandemic** (53% compared to 28% of non-First Nations respondents). 58% said they would like to attend more. The most commonly reported barriers to attendance are lack of awareness or information (38%) and cost (38%).

187 See Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.
188 See Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

- **Around eight in ten CALD respondents attend arts and cultural events** (81%, not significantly different to 2019). This is a stronger attendance rate than non-CALD respondents (65%). CALD respondents' attendance rates were highest for festivals (61%), music (58%), visual arts and crafts (54%) and theatre (47%).
- **Almost half of CALD respondents attend arts events to engage with their own cultural background** (46% compared to 23% of non-CALD respondents). For CALD respondents, the value provided by cultural events includes feeling connected to their heritage (50%), spending time with family and friends (54%) and getting to know people in the community (43%).
- **57% of CALD respondents are attending fewer live arts events and festivals than before the pandemic** (compared to 53% non-CALD respondents). One in two would like to attend more (52%). Ticket cost and distance were the most commonly reported barriers (reported by 56% and 42% respectively).

- **58% of d/Deaf or disabled respondents attend arts and cultural events, down from 64% in 2019.** d/Deaf and disabled respondents are less likely to attend live events than Australians without disability (58% compared to 70%), with the exceptions of literary events (22% attend, compared to 18% without disability) and First Nations arts (32% attend, compared to 27% without disability). While 45% of d/Deaf or disabled respondents value attending live events to spend time with family and friends, they are less likely to report this than people without disability (57%). Benefits they reported include improved health and wellbeing (38%) and getting to know people in the community (43%).
- **d/Deaf and disabled respondents are less likely to be happy with how often they attend live arts** than respondents without disability (28% compared to 33%) and 48% would like to attend more. They are also less likely than respondents without disability to attend for fun or social connection but more likely to attend to express themselves (16% compared to 13%). Commonly reported barriers to attendance for d/Deaf and disabled respondents include cost (55%), health (45%), distance (41%) and difficulty getting there (34%).

- **Around seven in ten women attend arts and cultural events** (69%), not significantly different to 2019, or to men's or gender diverse people's attendance. Women are less likely than men to attend music (44% compared to 49%), festivals (42% compared to 47%), and First Nations arts (27% compared to 30%), but are more likely to attend visual arts and crafts (41% compared to 37%). Gender diverse respondents are more likely than both men and women to attend music (65%), festivals (63%) and visual arts and crafts (58%). Women's most commonly reported reasons for attending are to have fun or be entertained (74%), to socialise and connect with others (50%) and to understand other perspectives and cultures (39%).
- **Women are more likely than men to be attending fewer live arts events and festivals than before the pandemic** (59% compared to 48% of men). Women are also more likely to want to attend more (55% compared to 43% of men) and to value attending to spend time with family or friends (61% compared to 49% of men). The most commonly reported barriers to attending for women are cost (61%), distance (43%) and difficulty getting there (32%).

- **61% of respondents who live in regional areas attend arts and cultural events.** This is down from 64% in 2019 and is lower than the attendance rate for respondents from major cities (71%). Regional respondents' attendance rates are highest for music (42%), festivals (36%) and visual arts and crafts (33%).
- **47% of regional respondents and 64% of remote respondents would ideally like to attend more.** For regional respondents, the most commonly reported reasons for attending are to have fun or be entertained (66%) and to socialise and connect with others (43%). The most commonly reported barriers to attendance are cost (53%) and distance (51%).

- **87% of young Australians aged 15–24 attended arts and cultural events in 2022, up from 83% in 2019.** Young people are most likely to attend music (71%), festivals (65%), visual arts and crafts (49%) and First Nations arts (44%). The most commonly reported reasons for attending are fun or entertainment (71%), social connection (51%) and to understand other perspectives or cultures (37%).
- **Young Australians are the group most likely to say they are attending more live arts events and festivals than before the pandemic** (51% of Australians aged 15–24 compared to 37% of Australians aged 25–49 and 16% of those 50 and over). One in two would like to attend more (48%).

Spotlight on audience diversification

From 2021–2024, Creative Australia partnered with Deakin university to undertake research on audience diversification.[189]

Results from a survey of more than 1,000 arts workers working across 184 Australian arts organisations showed plenty of work to be done in building better understanding and engagement with audiences.

- 43% of organisations surveyed reported no strategic commitment to audience diversification.
- While all organisations said audience diversity was important to them, nearly half had not identified which diverse audiences were the target.
- Less than half of respondents considered changing their programming to attract new audiences, focusing instead on programming for known audiences and existing stakeholders.
- 41% relied on assumptions about their audience and did not engage in any audience research.
- Almost a third said their connection with their audience was chiefly through the box office, rather than relationships built through multiple connections.

The findings are concerning in light of the persistent lack of diversity in some arts audiences – many arts organisations are either uncertain of, or resist the work needed, to change the social profile of their audience.

The report highlights the need to build the skills and capacity of arts organisations to undertake audience-centric practice.[190]

> ‘More diverse audiences can bring big benefits for arts organisations including the ability to share new and distinct stories, increase the public value of arts, and improve financial sustainability.
>
> Attracting new and diverse audiences will require changes to the practice of arts organisations, and they need to be encouraged or assisted to make these changes.’
>
> – Professor Hilary Glow[191]

189 Deakin University 2023, *Leading Change: Audience diversification in the arts*. ‘Diverse audiences’ included First Nations audiences, d/Deaf and disabled audiences, and audiences from a range of cultural backgrounds, geographic locations, age groups, disabilities and sexuality and gender identities.

190 Deakin University, 2023, *Australia-first survey shows where arts organisations can do better on audience diversity*.

191 Cited in Deakin University 2023 (media release), *Australia-first survey shows where arts organisations can do better on audience diversity*.

8. Creative participation

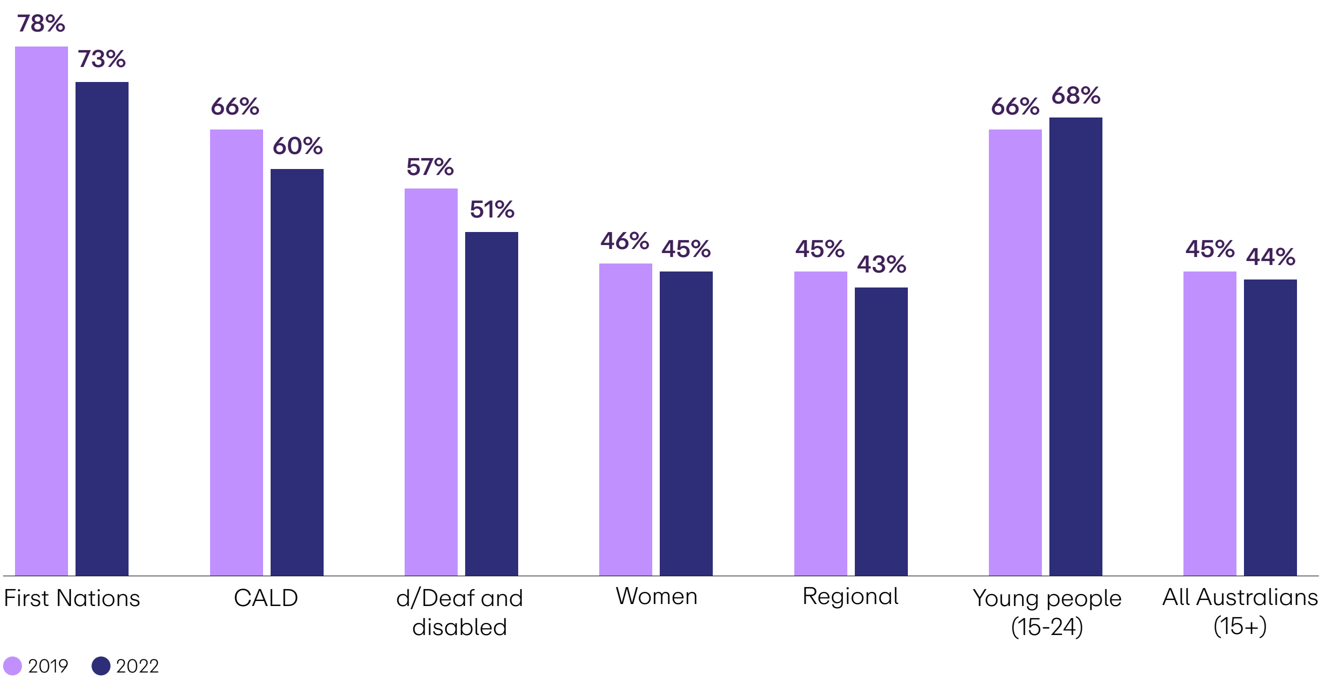
This indicator looks at population-level data on art making for different demographic groups – active creative participation as opposed to more passive participation as an audience member. This can take many forms, from artistic photography to playing an instrument; and from singing in a community choir or taking a community arts class, to more professional forms of arts creation. Findings also discuss the impacts of arts and creativity on Australian's lives, and opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities.

Creative Australia wants all Australians to have opportunities to experience the benefits of being creative in their daily lives. Almost half of Australians recognised the positive benefits of engaging with creative activities on our wellbeing during COVID-19 lockdowns.[192]

Main points

- **First Nations, CALD, d/Deaf and disabled, gender diverse, and younger Australians are more likely to create art than other Australians.** However, there were declines in creative participation rates between 2019 and 2022 for First Nations, CALD and d/Deaf and disabled respondents (see Figure 23).
- **First Nations, CALD and younger Australians are the most likely to recognise positive impacts of arts and creativity** and to say that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities. d/Deaf and disabled people and those from regional areas are less likely to say there are plenty of cultural and creative opportunities.

Figure 23: Proportion of each group who creatively participate in the arts, 2019 and 2022



Source: Based on National Arts Participation Survey results, Data Table 6. Base: First Nations 2019 n=619, 2022 n=558; CALD 2019 n=1,992, 2022 n=1,741; d/Deaf and disabled 2019 n=1,531, 2022 n=1,330; women 2019 n=4,705, 2022 n=4,901; regional 2019 n=2,723, 2022 n=2,714; young people 2019 n=1,374, n=1,577; all Australians 15+ 2019 n=8,929, 2022 n=9,396.

192 Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

About the data

Indicator 8: Creative participation among diverse groups in Australia.

Timeframe: 2022 survey findings.

Data source: The National Arts Participation Survey.[193]

Additional data in figure: 2019 survey findings.[194]

Analysis: The analysis also discusses art form differences, impacts of arts and creativity, and opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities. Differences reported between groups and over time are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Definitions:

- **Creative participation:** Active involvement in creative activities or making art. The National Arts Participation Survey explores the variety of ways Australians make art, including by making visual arts and craft; creating music, theatre and dance; writing creatively; participating in local community arts, such as a choir or theatre; engaging with the arts of one's cultural background; or more professional forms of arts creation. **Participation rates** are the proportion of each demographic group who took part in the previous year.
- **Impacts of arts and creativity:** The National Arts Participation Survey asks about a range of impacts of arts and creativity on Australian's daily lives, including on our wellbeing, ability to express ourselves, cultural awareness and stress resilience.
- **The National Arts Participation Survey** is a landmark research series exploring Australians' engagement with arts and creativity, with five iterations between 2009 and 2022.[195]

Analysis

Based on the 2022 National Arts Participation Survey findings:

- **73% of First Nations respondents creatively participate in arts, down from 78% in 2019.** First Nations respondents have much stronger creative participation rates than non-First Nations respondents (73% compared to 42%), including for visual arts and crafts (40% compared to 23%), music (27% compared to 16%), writing (25% compared to 13%), dance (25% compared to 8%) and theatre (15% compared to 6%).
- **Nine in ten First Nations respondents recognise the overall positive impacts of arts and creativity** (91% compared to 84% of non-First Nations respondents) and 58% report that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities.

193 See Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.
194 See Creative Australia 2020, *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.
195 See Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

- **60% of CALD respondents creatively participate in arts, down from 66% in 2019.** CALD respondents have much stronger creative participation rates than non-CALD respondents (60% compared to 40%), including for visual arts and crafts (33% compared to 21%), music (28% compared to 14%), writing (24% compared to 11%), dance (17% compared to 6%) and theatre (13% compared to 5%).
- **Nine in ten CALD respondents recognise the overall positive impacts of arts and creativity** (91% compared to 83% of non-CALD respondents), and 52% report that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities (compared to 43% of non-CALD respondents).

- **Half of d/Deaf or disabled respondents creatively participate in the arts (51%), down from 57% in 2019.** d/Deaf and disabled respondents have stronger creative participation rates than respondents without disability (51% compared to 42%), including for visual arts and crafts (32% compared to 22%), music (22% compared to 16%), writing (19% compared to 13%), dance (12% compared to 8%) and theatre (10% compared to 6%). However, d/Deaf and disabled respondents are less likely to report that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities (39% compared to 45%).

- **45% of women creatively participate in the arts, not significantly different to 2019.** Overall, women's creative participation rates are slightly higher than men's (42%), but much lower than gender diverse respondents' (84%), who have particularly strong creative participation rates for visual arts and craft (52%), writing (44%) and music (41%). Compared to men, women are more likely to create visual arts and crafts (29% compared to 18%), but they are less likely to create music (14% compared to 19%) or theatre (5% compared to 8%).
- **Women are more likely than men to recognise the overall positive impacts of arts and creativity** (87% compared to 80%). 43% of women report that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities (not significantly different to men or gender diverse respondents).

- **43% of people living in regional areas creatively participate in the arts, not significantly different to 2019.** Overall creative participation rates in regional areas are similar to major cities (44%) but lower than in remote areas (57%). Regional participation rates include 23% for visual arts and crafts, 15% for music, 11% for writing, 6% for dance and 4% for theatre. Respondents from regional areas are less likely to say there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative activities than their major city counterparts (38% compared to 46%).

- **Two in three young people aged 15–24 creatively participate in the arts (68%), not significantly different to 2019.** Young people have high rates of creative participation, including in visual arts and crafts (37%), music (33%), writing (29%), dance (17%) and theatre (13%).
- **Younger Australians are more likely than older Australians to recognise the overall positive impacts of arts and creativity** (90% of Australians aged 15–34 compared to 86% of Australians aged 35–49, 80% of Australians aged 50–64, and 76% of Australians aged 65 and over). More than half report that there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in cultural and creative experiences (52%).

Spotlight on benefits of the arts for children and young people

Next Generation Now brings together findings from research on children and young people's arts engagement.[196] It underscores that arts participation supports mental health, resilience, skills development and cultural citizenship. Key findings include:

- Early arts engagement supports children's creativity and relationship-building.
- Arts programs help young people develop cultural citizenship and resilience, promoting social cohesion by encouraging dialogue, critical thinking, and trust across differences.
- Arts education supports social and economic outcomes, especially for youth from low-resource backgrounds, improving their academic achievement and life skills.
- Arts engagement supports wellbeing and cultural connection, particularly for First Nations youth, and strengthens community cohesion by fostering empathy and social bonds.
- The youth arts sector contributes across all art forms, with strong advocacy for investment in young people's creativity.
- Investing in arts and culture offers exceptional value, providing widespread opportunities for children from all backgrounds at a relatively low cost with significant benefits.

In 2022 Patternmakers and Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) published a review of the research on the benefits of arts participation for young people.[197] Key findings include:

- Youth arts provide a platform for young people to explore important ideas – boosting civic engagement.
- Arts participation provides socio-emotional benefits for young people that can act as protective factors against mental illness.
- Arts participation can be used therapeutically or 'on prescription' to fight depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in young people.
- Arts participation is associated with better educational outcomes for students, including stronger academic performance.
- Arts-rich education improves students' motivation, engagement, attendance and school enjoyment.

196 Andersen J 2025, *Next Generation Now: Benefits of the arts for children and young people*.
197 Patternmakers and Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) 2022, *The Power of Youth Arts: What the research tells us about the benefits of performing arts participation for children and young people*.

Appendix: Creative Australia demographic data

To support methodological transparency, this appendix explains the demographic data Creative Australia collects from peer assessors and applicants to our grants and initiatives. We collect these data when peers and applicants register in our online grants management system to submit a nomination or application. Their de-identified, aggregated responses underpin results for indicators: 2. Peer assessment panels and 3. Grants and initiatives.

Diversity data collection is limited and often lags behind evolving community terminology and expectations. Some of the terms and definitions used to collect the data may be experienced as outdated, overly broad, or deficit based by the communities they describe. This is particularly relevant for categories such as CALD, disability status and gender identity, where preferred terminology and expectations are evolving rapidly. **Creative Australia's data collection is under review and may be updated prior to future reporting.**

First Nations

First Nations individuals

Data are based on individuals who selected the option 'First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander)' or 'Torres Strait Islander only' from a list of ten demographics, with multiple selections possible in response to the question 'Do you identify with any of the following groups'. The rest did not select either of the First Nations options, including those who may have responded 'prefer not to answer' or 'no specific demographic' or did not respond to the question. This information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications.

We invite First Nations applicants to self-identify based on the 'three-part definition' that includes descent, identity and community acceptance.

First Nations organisation demographics

Data are based on organisations that selected 'Aboriginal communities (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders)' or 'Torres Strait Islander communities only' as their organisation demographic. Organisation demographic is defined as 'communities your organisation works primarily with'. One of eight possible demographics may be selected, or 'no specific demographic'. Information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications. Additional organisations may be delivering projects or programs with First Nations communities and audiences.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)

CALD individuals

Data are based on individuals who selected 'at least one parent born overseas whose first language is not English', 'overseas born whose first language is not English' and/or 'culturally and linguistically diverse people' from a list of 10 demographics, with multiple selections possible in response to the question 'Do you identify with any of the following groups'. The rest did not select any of these three options, including those who may have responded 'prefer not to answer' or 'no specific demographic' or did not respond to the question. This information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications.

CALD organisation demographics

Data are based on organisations that selected 'culturally and linguistically diverse people' as their organisation demographic. Organisation demographic is defined as 'communities your organisation works primarily with'. One of eight possible demographics may be selected, or 'no specific demographic'. Information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications. Additional organisations may be delivering projects or programs with CALD people and audiences.

d/Deaf and disabled

d/Deaf and disabled individuals

Data are based on individuals who selected 'people with disability' from a list of ten demographics, with multiple selections possible in response to the question 'Do you identify with any of the following groups'. The rest did not select this option, including those who may have responded 'prefer not to answer' or 'no specific demographic' or did not respond to the question. This information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications.

d/Deaf and disabled organisation demographics

Data are based on organisations that selected 'people with disability' as their organisation demographic. Organisation demographic is defined as 'communities your organisation works primarily with'. One of eight possible demographics may be selected, or 'no specific demographic'. Information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications. Additional organisations may be delivering projects or programs with d/Deaf and disabled people and audiences.

Women

Individual women

Data are based on individuals who selected ‘Female’ from the gender options: ‘Female’, ‘Male’ and ‘Other/Prefer not to answer.’ This information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications.

Regional and remote

Regional and remote individuals

Data are based on two data items collected from individuals registering:

- Postcodes mapped to ABS remoteness areas in the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) (‘inner regional’, ‘outer regional’, ‘remote’ and ‘very remote’).
- Selecting ‘living in a regional or remote area’ from a list of 10 demographics, with multiple selections possible in response to the question ‘Do you identify with any of the following groups’. The rest did not select this option, including those who may have responded ‘prefer not to answer’ or ‘no specific’ demographic or did not respond to the demographic question. This information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications.

Regional and remote organisation demographics

Data are based on two data items collected from organisations registering:

- Postcodes mapped to ABS remoteness areas in the ASGS (‘inner regional’, ‘outer regional’, ‘remote’ and ‘very remote’).
- Selecting ‘remote or regional communities’ as their organisation demographic. Organisation demographic is defined as ‘communities your organisation works primarily with’. One of eight possible demographics may be selected, or ‘no specific demographic’. Information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications. Additional organisations may be delivering projects or programs in regional and remote areas.

Young people

Young individuals

Data are based on people 25 years or under at the closing date related to their application, according to the birth data provided. The rest were aged over 25 years or did not provide a date of birth.

Children and young people organisation demographics

Data are based on organisations that selected 'young people' as their organisation demographic. Organisation demographic is defined as 'communities your organisation works primarily with'. One of eight possible demographics may be selected, or 'no specific demographic'. Information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications. Additional organisations may be delivering projects or programs with or for young people and children.

LGBTIQ+

LGBTIQ+ individuals

Data are based on individuals who selected 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex' from a list of ten demographics, with multiple selections possible in response to the question 'Do you identify with any of the following groups'. The rest did not select this option, including those who may have responded 'prefer not to answer' or 'no specific' demographic or did not respond to the question. This information may be updated when submitting subsequent applications.

Australian Government

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