Together, Creative New Zealand and NZ On Air asked research agency Colmar Brunton to survey a range of creative professionals, to better understand career sustainability in the arts and creative industries.

The research found that New Zealanders employed in creative professions juggle jobs, and rely on safety nets to ensure they can put food on the table. But even that doesn’t break their passion for their creative work.

Creative New Zealand and NZ On Air will work with our sectors to drill into this research. In the meantime, we’ve summarised key findings and agreed three joint priorities for future action:

**1 Fair reward**

How much are creative professionals earning?

Four in ten creative professionals surveyed (43%) earn a total income (including non-creative income) of $30,000 or less annually.

Compared to a median total income of $35,800, median creative income is $15,000. This is because just over half the creative professionals surveyed (55%) supplement their income by also working outside the creative sector.

Sixty-three percent of creative professionals surveyed feel their remuneration is unfair. The ‘tipping point’, from which professionals feel it is a fair reward, is $26 per hour.

The research indicated a gender pay gap but was inconclusive as to why, so this is an area for further exploration.

**2 Sustainability**

Are there enough opportunities to sustain a creative career?

More than half of those surveyed disagree with the statement ‘there are sufficient opportunities for you to sustain a career in New Zealand’.

Some groups of creative professionals are more likely to disagree with this statement than others, including:
- 88% of those who also said they are dissatisfied with their career
- 81% of those who also said they are finding it very difficult on present income
- 70% of those who also said they are not committed to the creative sector.

The expectation to do unpaid work at the start of creative careers appears to be increasing.

**3 Emerging creative professionals**

What’s life like for those starting their creative careers?

The majority of creative professionals enter the creative sector between the ages of 18 and 24 (58%).

The average time spent unpaid when first entering the creative sector is one year, five months.

Younger creative professionals appear to be receiving more encouragement and support at the start of their careers than older professionals did, perhaps reflecting a change in perceptions of creative careers.

Younger people are also more likely to view going overseas as a necessity to further their career (65% of people under 40 compared to 47% of people aged 60 plus).

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**Research summary**

A PROFILE OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

How do creative professionals feel about their present income?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding it difficult</th>
<th>Getting by on present income</th>
<th>Using comfortably</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There’s also a link between how well creative professionals are ‘getting by’ and their overall life satisfaction.

Those who rate their life satisfaction highest are earning more, are more likely to be living comfortably or ‘getting by’, are older, established in their career and working in the creative sector only.

For creative professionals, career satisfaction is driven by a passion and love for the work they’re doing.

- It’s a fulfilling and inspiring career: I get to explore my own creativity, collaborate with other like-minded people and share it nationally and internationally.
- I love my work and feel very privileged that I can work at something I love and believe in, even if the rewards are predominantly not monetary.
- I love what I do and I enjoy being inspired by my surroundings, culture and people I work with. I am challenged constantly by my own need to succeed in my area of expertise.
- I’m really passionate about the work I do, and I feel very fortunate to do that work.

Some comments from survey respondents
Total personal income for creative professionals is lower than the median for all salary and wage-earning New Zealanders, but comparable to what self-employed New Zealanders earn. Median creative income is $15,000, which is lower than total income because 55% of creative professionals supplement their income by also working outside the creative sector. 

NOTE: All income information is before tax and after expenses.

Median Creative Income for creative professionals (including non-creative income) $35,800
Median TOTAL INCOME for creative professionals $51,800
Median income for New Zealanders earning a wage or salary $37,900
Median income for self-employed New Zealanders $35,800

Total incomes vary by artform/practice

- Video game development $61,500
- Dance $77,500
- Acting and theatre production $32,400
- Ngā Toi Taketake* $45,500
- Craft/object arts $27,000
- Music and Sound $46,500
- Media production $47,700
- Visual arts $25,500
- Pacific Heritage arts* $34,500
- Writing/literary arts $32,500
- Dance $77,500
- Acting and theatre production $32,400

2/3 of creative professionals don't feel their remuneration is fair

- 20% AGREE
- 17% NEUTRAL
- 63% DISAGREE

$26 per hour is the level from which creative professionals start to feel their remuneration is fair.

On average creative professionals work 43 hours a week... but they spend an average of 31 hours on their creative work.

59% Insufficient income to make a living
49% Other work in non-creative roles
47% Continuous work not available
33% Domestic responsibilities

Creative professionals are less satisfied in their career than the general New Zealand population

66%
53%
52%
58%
12%
15%
5%
4%

Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied

All working New Zealanders
Creative professionals

Online surveys 1,477 completed with creative professionals.
Fieldwork conducted 23 Nov – 10 Dec 2018

You can read the full research report at www.creativenz.govt.nz/research or www.nzonair.govt.nz/research

Note: Small base size for Ngā Toi Taketake, and Pacific Heritage arts; interpret with caution.