

CHAPTER 7

Employment and time allocation

It is a well known fact that many practising artists do not or cannot work full-time at their chosen profession. It is also well known that many professional artists, by choice or necessity, undertake work beyond their immediate creative practice. Sometimes additional jobs are closely related to the artist's principal artistic occupation, for example a musician takes on private pupils.

In other cases, artists may find employment within their artform, but undertaking work removed from their immediate art practice, such as a visual artist working in gallery administration. For other artists, work in an arts-related field is either unavailable or not sufficiently remunerative, so they find jobs in non-arts fields. The standard illustration is of the actor driving a taxi or waiting tables in restaurants between acting engagements.

In this chapter we examine patterns among artists who hold multiple jobs and consider in detail how their employment (or unemployment) affects their work.

Holding multiple jobs

To study the working habits of artists we distinguish between three types of jobs:

- the artist's central **PAO** as already defined. This includes all activities related to the creative practice including rehearsals, practice, preparation, research, marketing and career administration
- **arts-related work**, including teaching in the artist's artform, arts administration, community arts development and writing about the arts. This work includes paid employment and unpaid arts-related work such as volunteering in arts work or studying in the arts
- **non-arts work**, including paid work not related to any artistic field and unpaid work such as volunteering or studying outside the arts.

The combination of the first two of these is referred to as 'all arts work'.

As would be expected, for virtually all artists working in one job only, that job is their PAO. A small number of practising professional artists are not currently working in their PAO, for reasons of income or lack of opportunity. As shown in Table 23, of the 37 per cent of artists holding only one job, 2 per cent are working only at arts-related work as defined above and 3 per cent only at non-arts work. Note that this table does not include those artists currently unemployed, ill, studying full-time, undertaking domestic duties or taking time out for other reasons (about 4 per cent of our overall sample).

The majority of artists (63 per cent) work at more than one job. Table 23 documents the job-holding patterns of these artists. A total of 56 per cent hold two jobs and a further 7 per cent hold three jobs. Among artists who choose or are obliged to take on additional work, the majority prefer to work in arts-related rather than non-arts fields. Overall, 43 per cent of artists are engaged in some work in an arts-related field, with 32 per cent undertaking some work in an area not related to the arts.

Table 23 Artists' involvement in arts, arts-related and non-arts work

Proportion of all artists(a) %	
One job:	
PAO only	32
Arts-related work only	2
Non-arts work only	3
<i>Subtotal</i>	37
Two jobs:	
PAO and arts-related work	34
PAO and non-arts work	21
Arts-related and non-arts work	1
<i>Subtotal</i>	56
Three jobs:	
PAO, arts-related and non-arts work	7
Total	100
Artists working full-time or part-time in:	
PAO	94
Arts-related work	43
Non-arts work	32

(a) Proportions are of artists working in one or more jobs during 2000–01.

An alternative way of viewing these figures is provided in Appendix I Table 7.1, which shows details of holding multiple jobs for each PAO. The tendency for holding multiple jobs is more prevalent among dancers, musicians, composers and community artists than in the other artforms. In all of these cases the strong preference for taking on work in an arts-related field is confirmed.

When artists take an arts-related job, what sort of work do they do? Appendix I Table 7.2 shows the types of work that arts-related occupations entail. Three-quarters of artists undertaking arts-related work are involved in teaching. This pattern is uniform across artforms, although the numbers are smaller among writers, where the opportunities to teach are more limited. Work in arts administration is the next most common form of arts-related work, engaged in by one in five of these artists. In addition, a number of artists are involved in arts-related work in a community context.

Employment status

As Table 24 shows, within their principal artistic occupations, only about one-quarter of all artists work as employees, on a permanent or casual basis, and are paid a salary or wages. The remaining three-quarters operate as freelance or self-employed individuals. The table shows the proportions of waged or freelance artists for each artform.

Table 24 Employment status in principal artistic occupation

	Salary or wages %	Freelance or self employed %	Other %	Total %
Writers	15	83	2	100
Visual artists	18	80	2	100
Craft practitioners	14	83	3	100
Actors	39	58	3	100
Dancers	52	48	–	100
Musicians	32	68	–	100
Composers	23	77	–	100
Community cultural development workers	16	84	–	100
All artists	26	73	1	100

– indicates nil response in this sample.

Table 25 shows the breakdown of artists' employment status in their PAO, arts-related and non-arts work. Working for salary or wages is more important in arts-related and non-arts work than it is in an artist's PAO. In the case of non-arts work more than two-thirds of artists are working as employees rather than as freelancers, compared with only a quarter of artists working as employees in their PAO.

Among artists working on a freelance or self-employed basis in their PAO, only 12 per cent are incorporated, with the remaining 61 per cent being individuals working on their own account, with or without contractual arrangements governing their remuneration. Considering that 13 per cent of artists are casually employed in their PAO and 73 per cent are working freelance in their PAO, it can be stated that in Australia today the employment status of the majority of artists working in their PAO is, to say the least, insecure.

Table 25 Employment status of artists

Employment status	In PAO(a) %	In arts-related work(b) %	In non-arts work(c) %
Working for salary or wages:			
Permanent	12	18	36
Casual	13	23	28
Permanent/casual	1	2	6
<i>Subtotal</i>	26	43	70
Working freelance or self employed:			
Not incorporated	61	47	22
Incorporated	12	8	6
<i>Subtotal</i>	73	55	28
Other working arrangement	1	2	2
Total	100	100	100

(a) Proportions are of all artists working within their PAO during 2000–01.
(c) Proportions are of all artists undertaking non-arts work during 2000–01.

(b) Proportions are of all artists undertaking arts-related work during 2000–01.

Further details of artists' employment arrangements across artforms are shown in Appendix I Table 7.3. As expected, employment on salary or wages is more common among performing artists than in other artistic occupations. The great majority of writers, visual artists, craft practitioners and composers pursue their PAO as self-employed individuals.

It is surprising that relatively few visual artists and craft practitioners have incorporated compared to the other occupations. Perhaps this reflects the persistence of traditional modes of professional practice in these artforms, for example visual artists simply operating through a gallery or dealer. Also somewhat surprising is the relatively high proportion of freelance arrangements among community cultural development workers.

Time allocation

Having identified the extent of artists holding multiple jobs, we can now turn to the question of how much of their time is devoted to these various activities. Table 26 shows the proportions of artists' working time allocated to different types of work during 2000–01.

These data suggest that on average artists spend only about half their time on creative work in their own or another artform. Almost 30 per cent of their time on average is devoted to arts-related work as defined earlier, leaving about 20 per cent of working time at non-arts occupations. This pattern does not seem to vary markedly across different artforms.

Table 26 Allocation of artists' working time(a)

	PAO %	Other creative art work(b) %	Paid and unpaid arts-related %	All arts work %	Paid and unpaid non-arts work %	Total %
Writers	46	6	22	74	26	100
Visual artists	49	5	27	81	19	100
Craft practitioners	56	5	21	83	17	100
Actors	44	8	20	72	28	100
Dancers	49	6	33	87	12	100
Musicians	50	3	26	79	21	100
Composers	49	7	29	85	15	100
Community cultural development workers	36	8	39	83	17	100
All artists	47	6	27	81	19	100

(a) Table shows the mean percentages of working time devoted to different activities by artists for the year 2000–01.
(b) Includes creative work at an artform outside the artist's specific PAO.

An alternative way of depicting time allocation is to look at current hours per week. Respondents were asked how many hours they devote to different activities in a typical week at the present time. The results shown in Table 27 are broadly similar to those in the earlier table, though they relate to different time periods. The figures show an average working week of just over 40 hours, half of which is spent on the PAO. All arts work amounts to 35 hours in the week, with a further 8 hours on average spent on non-arts work.

Table 27 Allocation of artist's working time in hours per week(a)

	PAO (hours)	Other creative art work(b) (hours)	Paid and unpaid arts-related work (hours)	All arts work (hours)	Paid and unpaid non-arts work (hours)	Total hours worked per week (hours)
Writers	22	4	6	31	12	43
Visual artists	23	6	8	37	7	44
Craft practitioners	29	4	6	39	6	45
Actors	17	7	5	29	10	39
Dancers	18	4	12	33	6	39
Musicians	18	4	9	31	9	40
Composers	21	6	13	40	7	47
Community cultural development workers	18	7	12	37	8	45
All artists	21	5	9	35	8	43

(a) Table shows the mean number of hours per week devoted to the different activities by artists within each PAO for 2001–02.
(b) Includes creative work in an artform outside the artist's specific PAO.

The demands on artists that constrain the amount of time they can devote to their PAO affect them in varying degrees. Appendix I Tables 7.4 and 7.5 show the proportions of time spent at the PAO and all arts work during 2000–01. On average, only 15 per cent of artists were able to devote 100 per cent of their working time to creative activity in their PAO, although almost 60 per cent were able to devote 100 per cent of their working time to all arts work (creative and arts-related activities combined).

The mean proportion of time that all artists were able to spend on all arts work was just over 80 per cent of their working time. At the other extreme, exactly 60 per cent of artists devoted only half of their working time or less to their PAO, and as many as 38 per cent of artists spent 25 per cent or less of their working time at their creative occupation.

Appendix I Tables 7.6 and 7.7 show the distribution of weekly hours worked at the PAO and all arts work respectively. We can see that half of all artists spend fewer than 20 hours per week at creative work. Performing artists who by and large can only take work when it is available are particularly clustered in the lower ranges of average weekly hours spent on creative work.

Preferred working patterns

If artists had a free choice, unconstrained by financial concerns or other responsibilities, how would they choose to spend their time? Another way of framing this question is to ask: To what extent is genuine creative activity or other productive arts-related work by professional artists curtailed by circumstances over which they have little or no control?

We saw in Appendix I Table 7.5 that 59 per cent of all artists spent all their working time at arts work of some kind. This leaves 41 per cent who spend less than 100 per cent of their working time on the arts; in other words, these are artists who spend some proportion of their working time at non-arts work. Table 28 shows the preferences of these artists for more or less arts work. The great majority of them, almost 80 per cent, would like to spend more time at arts work, and of these, almost two-thirds would prefer to work at the arts full-time. A desire for more arts work is particularly noticeable among actors.

Table 28 Preference for arts work

	Proportion of artists:				
	spending less than 100% of their time at all arts work(a)	who would like to work:			who would like to work full time in the arts(c)
		more time at arts work(b)	the same time at arts work(b)	less time at arts work(b)	
	%	%	%	%	%
Writers	45	76	22	3	61
Visual artists	41	73	24	3	56
Craft practitioners	41	69	26	5	56
Actors	47	88	10	2	69
Dancers	41	75	25	—	70
Musicians	38	83	16	2	60
Composers	38	82	18	—	67
Community cultural development workers	42	74	26	—	85
All artists	41	78	19	2	63

(a) Proportions are of all artists. 'All arts work' includes PAO, other creative work, and paid and unpaid arts-related work.
(b) Proportions are of artists spending less than 100% of their time at all arts work.
(c) Proportions are of artists who would like to spend more time on arts work.

Furthermore, the factors preventing artists from undertaking more arts work also have an effect on the actual creative work that artists can pursue, forcing them to work in activities which, although engaging their creative skills, are not those which would lead to the greatest artistic satisfaction. In fact, only 12 per cent of all artists are spending 100 per cent of their working time at their most desired artistic occupation, as shown in Table 29.

The remaining 88 per cent cannot follow their most desired creative work full-time. These artists include actors working in television who would prefer to be in live theatre; writers who want to write poetry but must turn to more lucrative forms; composers who would prefer to be writing an opera rather than advertising jingles.

As this table shows, there is a significant gap between the proportion of time artists spend on average on their most desired work, and the proportion they would prefer to spend if there were no constraints affecting their working patterns. This gap is a direct indicator of the shortfall in potential creative output from the arts in Australia as a result of external difficulties besetting professional art practice.

Table 29 Time spent at most desired art occupation

	Proportion of artists(a):		Mean proportion of working time spent at most desired art occupation(b)	
	spending 100% of time at most desired art occupation	spending less than 100% of time at most desired art occupation	actual %	preferred %
	%	%		
Writers	12	88	36	67
Visual artists	14	86	46	72
Craft practitioners	25	75	51	75
Actors	9	91	28	73
Dancers	21	79	47	74
Musicians	10	90	40	72
Composers	7	93	43	70
Community cultural development workers	5	95	30	62
All artists	12	88	40	71

(a) Proportions are of all artists.

(b) Mean proportion of working time calculated for artists who spent less than 100% of time at their most desired occupation.

What is the nature of these constraints? As we saw in Chapter 6, when considering the long-term professional development of artists, the problems are overwhelmingly related to the economic circumstances in which artistic occupations are pursued—the lack of availability of work (performing artists), inadequate financial return even when work is available or sales of output can be made (visual artists, craft practitioners and community cultural development workers), and, to a lesser extent, insufficient markets (writers, visual artists, craft practitioners, composers).

Table 30 shows that lack of availability of work and insufficient income from work are by far the most important factors in preventing artists from undertaking more arts work in general, and their most artistically desired work in particular.

Table 30 Factors preventing artists spending more time at arts work

Factors:	Proportion of artists prevented from spending more time at:			
	All arts work(a)		Most desired arts work(b)	
	Factor has some effect(c) %	Factor is most important effect %	Factor has some effect(c) %	Factor is most important effect %
Work in occupation not available	31	24	32	28
Insufficient income from that work	63	55	55	46
Domestic responsibilities or childcare	16	9	12	8
Community or cultural responsibilities	1	1	3	2
Study commitments	3	2	3	2
Age/health issues	3	1	3	1
Work is not at professional standard yet	1	1	2	2
Lack of time	2	1	6	4
Other interests/time out	1	*	4	1
Other	4	6	4	6

(a) Proportions are of artists who would like to spend more time at arts work.

(b) Proportions are of artists who would like to spend more time at most desired art occupation.

(c) Columns do not sum to 100 because multiple responses permitted.

* indicates less than 1%.

Unemployment experience

Finally in this chapter we examine the unemployment experience of artists. The vagaries of employment markets in the arts, the difficulties artists may have in gaining professional recognition for their occupation, the possibility that some artists may use unemployment benefits as a disguised subsidy for

their artistic practice—all these considerations combine to make this a sensitive topic. Our approach is simply to document the reported experience of artists in facing unemployment and in accessing unemployment benefits.

About one-third of all artists experienced some period of unemployment between 1996 and 2001, as shown in Table 31. The average cumulative time out of work was 17 months, or around 3 months per year over this period. For some artists this involved relatively long periods on the dole, with a mean longest continuous period unemployed of 11 months. It appears from our results that visual artists, craft practitioners and community artists have been the occupations with the most extensive experience of unemployment.

Table 31 Artists' unemployment, 1996–2001

	Proportion of artists with some period of unemployment (%)	Mean total period unemployed(a) (months)	Mean longest period unemployed(a) (months)
Writers	21	13	12
Visual artists	34	24	17
Craft practitioners	25	23	17
Actors	56	15	8
Dancers	50	10	6
Musicians	27	15	7
Composers	28	15	9
Community cultural development workers	55	23	8
All artists	34	17	11

(a) Calculated across artists with some period of unemployment between 1996 and 2001.

Not all artists who are unemployed apply for the dole. In fact, as Table 32 shows, 44 per cent of artists who reported some unemployment experience did not seek unemployment benefits during this time. Of the 56 per cent who did apply, virtually all were successful, although one-third of them experienced some difficulty in accessing benefits on account of their occupation. The difficulties encountered revolved mainly around problems of recognition of artistic skills, and, presumably because of this, an expectation that applicants would undertake work that was not related to their skills and experience as an artist.

Some 45 per cent of artists receiving unemployment benefits were able to continue to practice their art as an approved activity (and therefore were not required to meet the activity tests including job applications), although this still leaves a majority of artists who were unable to do so. It is worth noting the relatively high percentage of musicians (71 per cent) able to continue their music careers as an approved activity due to a proactive initiative by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. On the other hand, writers, visual artists and dancers appear to have had difficulty in gaining such recognition.

Table 32 Artists' receipt of unemployment benefits, 1996–2001

	Proportion of artists who:				
	Experienced unemployment at some point in period (%)	Applied for benefits(a) (%)	Received benefits(b) (%)	Experienced difficulty accessing benefits due to occupation(b) (%)	Were able to continue their art practice as an approved activity(c) (%)
Writers	21	46	100	19	31
Visual artists	34	64	100	33	29
Craft practitioners	25	64	94	33	47
Actors	56	55	91	53	43
Dancers	50	69	100	36	27
Musicians	27	53	100	14	71
Composers	28	63	80	60	50
Community cultural development workers	55	51	100	28	53
All artists	34	56	97	33	45

(a) Proportions are of artists experiencing unemployment between 1996 and 2001. (b) Proportions are of artists applying for unemployment benefits between 1996 and 2001. (c) Proportions are of artists receiving unemployment benefits between 1996 and 2001.