

The Norwegian Association of Curators: Members' Working Conditions and Potential Employers

Published on 22 November 2017 by Agderforskning

Cecilie Andersen and Kirsti M. Hjemdahl

This translated document is an abridged version of the survey and report published in Norwegian. It was published in July 2018.

PREFACE	3
INTRODUCTION	4
The survey	5
PART 1: THE MEMBERS OF THE NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF CURATORS	6
Gender	6
Age	6
Curatorial experience	7
Education	7
Working Conditions	11
Freelance curators	12
Curators in permanent employment	13
Assignments	14
International projects	15
Creative Control and Artistic Freedom	15
Income	17
Unpaid curatorial work	19
Job offers/new curatorial projects	22
The ideal working conditions for the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators	23
The ideal institution	23
Curatorial projects within Norway or internationally?	24
Working grants/stipends and subsidy schemes	24
Areas for the Norwegian Association of Curators to focus on in the future	25
PART 2: INSTITUTIONS' EMPLOYMENT OF FREELANCE CURATORS	26
Institutions' current employment of freelance curators	26
Changes in the institutions' employment of freelance curators	27
The freelance curators' assignments within the institution	28
Experiences within the institution when employing freelance curators.	28
Employing freelance curators in the future	30
Remuneration for freelance curators within institutions	31
A closer look at the institutions that prefer to hire curator in permanent positions	32
SUMMARY / CONCLUSION	33

PREFACE

The survey *The Norwegian Association of Curators: Members' Working Conditions and Potential Employers* was commissioned by The Norwegian Association of Curators and carried out by Agderforskning. It was made possible with support from the Arts Council Norway. The survey is modelled on topics that the Norwegian Association of Curators wished to further explore and includes the points of view of both members of the Association and institutions which would potentially employ members of the Association. The main focus of the survey are the working conditions of the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators and the nature of the different tasks they perform. The project team for the survey has consisted of Cecilie Andersen and Kirsti M. Hjemdahl at Agderforskning. They would like to thank The Norwegian Association of Curators for the commission with special thanks to Norwegian Association of Curators board members Martin Braathen and Silja Leifsdottir.

A total of 91 respondents have participated in the survey.

INTRODUCTION

The Norwegian Association of Curators is an independent association whose main focus is to enhance the understanding of curatorial practice in Norway and to promote the legal and economic conditions of its members vis-à-vis public policymakers and cultural institutions. The objective of this survey will be to map the working conditions of curators currently working in Norway. We will begin by giving a brief account of The Norwegian Association of Curators, the survey itself, choice of method, and the structure of the report.

The Norwegian Association of Curators

The Norwegian Association of Curators was founded in 2011 as an independent organization whose main work is to further the knowledge on curatorial practices in Norway and members rights by:

- Initiating forums to raise public awareness on current curatorial practices, its history, and the current discussions within the curatorial field.
- Establishing and communicating the foundation and history of curatorial practice.
- Contribute to stronger peer relations within the curatorial field and a broader understanding of the impact of the curatorial field in the public realm.
- Professionalize the curatorial field in relation to governing bodies and cultural institutions.
- Improve the economic conditions for the curatorial field.
- Collaborate with other national and international organizations within the field.
- Develop a set of professional tools pertaining to the curatorial profession.

The Norwegian Association of Curators is based in Oslo, and had 78 members as of August 2017.

Aims of the survey

The curatorial field is a profession in rapid growth but lacking in any extensive survey of the current curatorial field and the professionals who work in it. The Norwegian Association of Curators wish to provide insight into who actually constitutes the member group of the Association, and this survey will be an invaluable resource both for the Association and the art field. Such a survey will provide insight into one of the most recent professions within the field of art and map the need of stipends, subsidy schemes, and financial incentives. Furthermore, a survey such as this enables The Norwegian Association of Curators to formulate a set of actions directed at the actual needs and desires of its members. Finally, the goal of the survey is to make publicly visible the activity and working conditions of professional curators.

The survey

The survey is divided into two sections.

Part 1: Surveying the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators

The Norwegian Association of Curators have assembled some key points of inquiry:

- Who refers to themselves and works under the title of “curator” in Norway?
- What kind of education do they have, and from what fields of study?
- What is the relative importance of a higher degree in Curatorial Practice?
- What is the level of income, the general income growth, and the working conditions of curators working in Norway?
- How many hours do they work annually?
- Who would work full-time as a curator, given the chance through a stipend or permanent employment?
- How many are members of a union or organized through a similar association?
- Which assignments and tasks are most common in curatorial projects?
- What differentiates a curator in a permanent position from a freelance curator, and how do these differences make themselves evident through income, degrees of creative control, and the types of assignments they are given?

Part 2: Institutions’ employment of freelance curators

The purpose of this part of the survey is to map the extent to which freelance curators are employed in different art institutions, and what experiences, both positive and negative, these curators have had during such projects: What type of projects are freelance curators employed for? Which tasks were they asked to perform? How were they compensated financially?

The survey’s strength and weaknesses

Both strengths and weaknesses were discovered during the course of this survey. One of the strengths we wish to highlight was that a total of 83 % of the members responded to the questionnaire, which provides validity for the survey as a whole. Another strong point of the survey is that both curators and institutions that employ curators were asked to give their insight into the role of the curator and the curatorial field as a whole, which in turn provides unique insight into the practice of contemporary curators from two different points of view. One weakness we found interesting and would like to highlight is that the term for the role and occupation of “curator” was not readily defined before the survey. How do we define what a curator is? Are there workers who perform similar tasks to a curator under a different title? What is a freelance curator – is it someone who solely takes on freelance assignments or someone who takes on freelance projects if they are offered? When the respondents were asked to name their current occupation, it became evident that the role that curators currently hold are a combination of freelance projects, temporary contracts, project positions and full-time employment, under different terms. This affects the survey when the respondents have to choose a position or occupation that best describes their current working situation, as it does not take into account that the respondent might have multiple forms of employment and run several projects simultaneously at any time during their professional career.

PART 1: THE MEMBERS OF THE NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF CURATORS

Introduction

The Norwegian Association of Curators has 78 members, of whom 65 participated in the survey (83%). What follows are the members' assessment of their own working conditions. In the survey we pay special attention to who the members are, their professional experience, education, working situation, the most common tasks they are presented with when employed as curators, and the curators' ideal working conditions. The survey also examines the income and the income growth of professional curators, stipends and other forms of subsidy schemes available for curators, and whether curators are unionized.

Who are the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators?

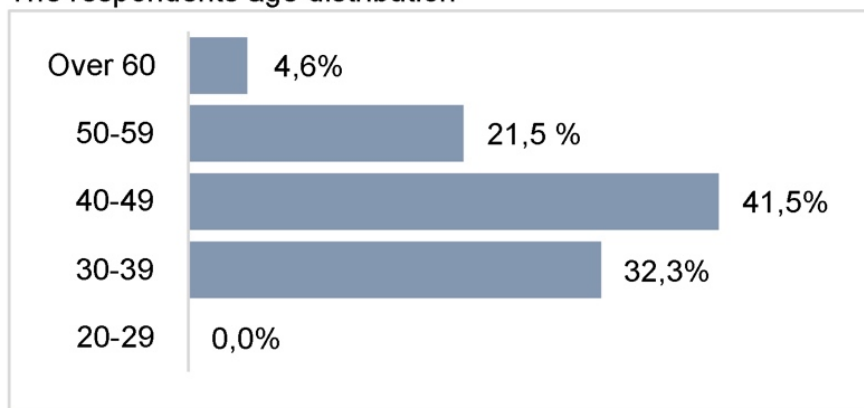
Gender

The survey showed that the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators is made up of 78.5 % women and 21.5% men. 82 % of the women and 94 % of the men responded to the questionnaire.

Age

The majority of the members who responded to the questionnaire are in the age group 30-49. None of the respondents were under the age of 30.

The respondents age distribution

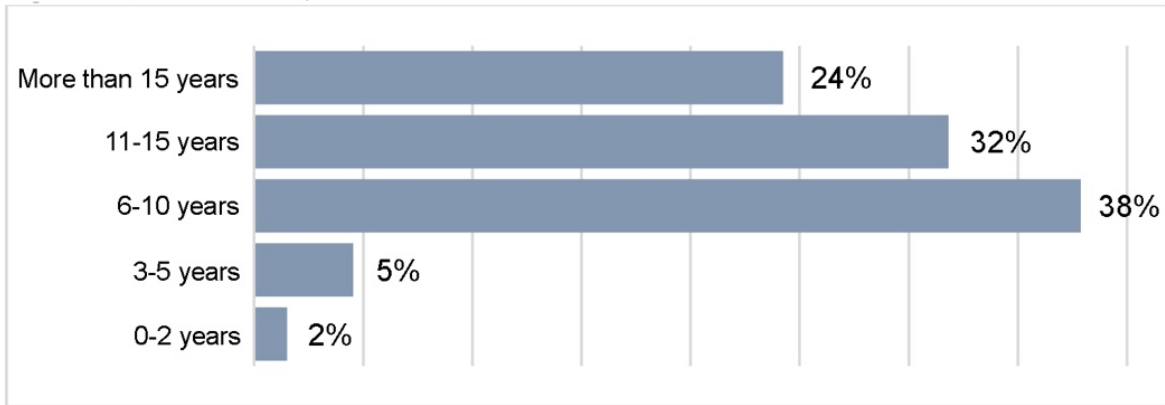


N=65.

Curatorial experience

94% of the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators have more than five years of professional experience as curators, and 56% have more than 10 years' experience. In other words, the majority within The Norwegian Association of Curators have extensive experience as professional curators.

Profesional curatorial experience

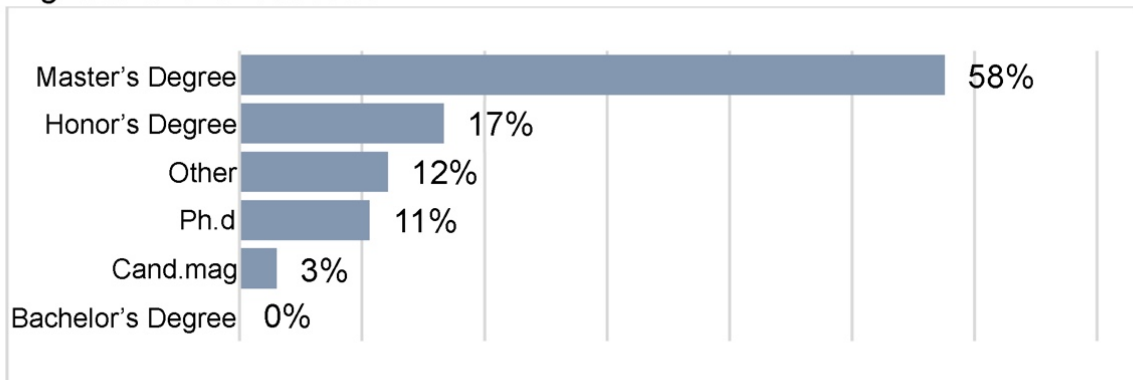


N=66.

Education

In the survey, the respondents were asked to state their highest level of education: 58% of the members hold a Master Degree and within those percentages three members note that they are currently working towards their PhD. 11% of the members hold a PhD and 17% hold an Honorary Degree.

Highest level of education



N=66.

Viewed collectively, the level of higher education within The Norwegian Association of Curators is very high.

Institutions of higher education

15 of the respondents completed their degrees at the former Art Academy of Bergen, now University of Bergen, The Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design. A significantly high number of members also have their degrees from the University of Bergen and the University of Oslo.

The curatorial discipline

Art History and various Curatorial Studies programmes make up the bulk of areas of study for the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators. The disciplines are divided among the members as follows:

Disciplines	Number of respondents who have studied within the respective disciplines
Art History	19
Curatorial Programmes	19
Studio Art/Fine Art	6
Assorted Fine Art Studies	5
Cultural Studies	4
Philosophy	3
Theatre/Dramaturgy	2
Exhibition Studies	2
Photography	2
Literary Science	2
«Kunstvitenskap»	2
Other	7

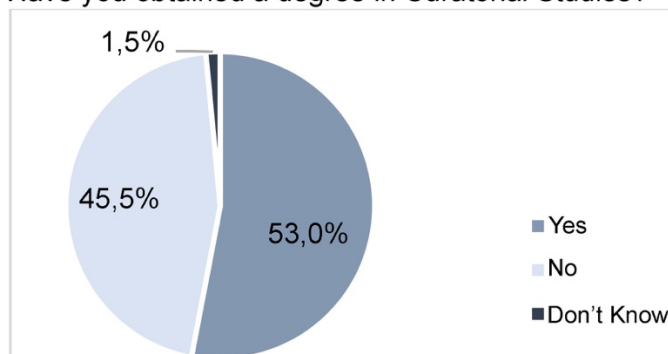
N=66. The respondent could make several responses to this question

“Other” includes the fields of Architecture, Film and Media Studies, Media Theory, Philosophy of History, and Administration. Several of the respondents situated themselves within several disciplines.

Degrees in Curatorial Studies

53% (35 members) of the respondents hold a degree in Curatorial Studies

Have you obtained a degree in Curatorial Studies?



N= 66.

54% of the respondents who have a higher degree in Curatorial Practice obtained their degree from the MA in Curatorial Practice at the former Art Academy of Bergen, now University of Bergen, The Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design. 8,6% of the respondents hold a degree in *Kuratorarbeid utstilling og formidling* (“Curatorial work: exhibition and mediation”) from The University College of South East Norway in collaboration with The Norwegian Association of Art Societies and The Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design. The members of The Norwegian Association of Curators have obtained their degree through the following programs and institutions:

Curatorial Programs and Institutions of higher education that offer a degree in Curatorial Studies

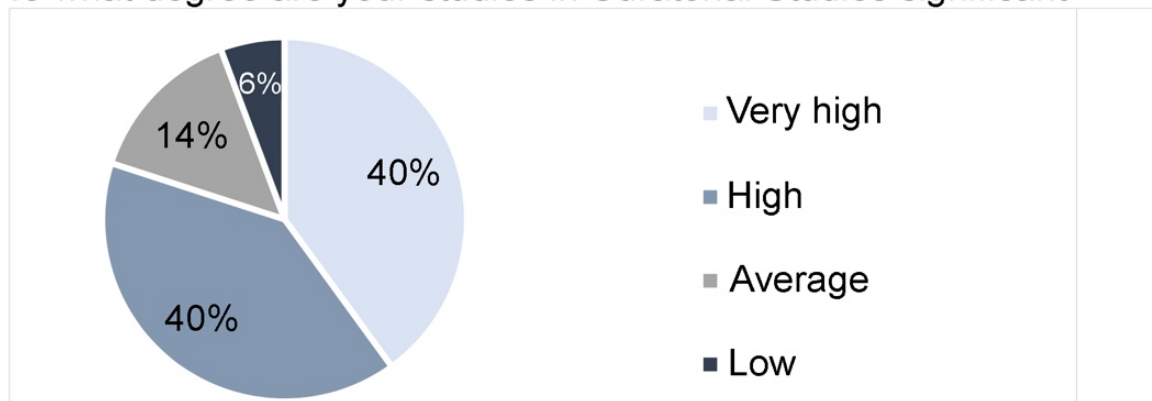
Institutions of higher education	Programs	Times stated
Former Art Academy of Bergen, now University of Bergen, The Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design	MA in Curatorial Practice	19
Konstfack, University of Arts, Craft and Design	Curatorlab	4
The University College of South East Norway in collaboration with The Norwegian Association of Art Societies and The Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design	Curatorial Studies	3
Whitney Independent Study Program, Whitney Museum, New York	Whitney Independent Study Program - Curatorial Studies	2
Konstfack, University of Arts, Craft and Design	MFA in Critical Writing & Curatorial Practice	1
Node Center for Curatorial Studies, Berlin	Curatorial Residency Programme	1
Bard College	Curatorial Studies	1
Università Iuav di Venezia / University of Reading, Great Britain / University of Zurich, Switzerland	Exhibition studies (Visual Arts' Planning and Production) + Doctorate studies	1
Stockholm University	International MA in Curating including Law	1
Royal College of Art	MA Curating Contemporary Art	1
Goldsmiths College of Art, University of London	Master of Creative Curating	1

N=35.

The impact of obtaining a higher degree in Curatorial Studies

80 % of the respondents, who obtained a degree in Curatorial Studies, state that the degree is of high or very high significance, whereas only 6 % states that it has had a low significance.

To what degree are your studies in Curatorial Studies significant



N= 35.

The respondents highlighted several areas where the Curatorial Studies programmes have elevated their professional practice through, among other things, gaining competencies, professional networks, job offers, and practical experience. Following this, we will look further into each of these areas.

Gaining competencies

Several different manners of gaining competence was highlighted by twenty of the respondents (57%) in the survey, including:

Professional network

14 members (40%) emphasize a larger network as one of the important effects both during and after obtaining a degree in Curatorial Studies on a national and international level.

Practical experience

6 members (17,1%) state that their degree in Curatorial Studies have provided them with a set of professional tools through practical experience during their studies.

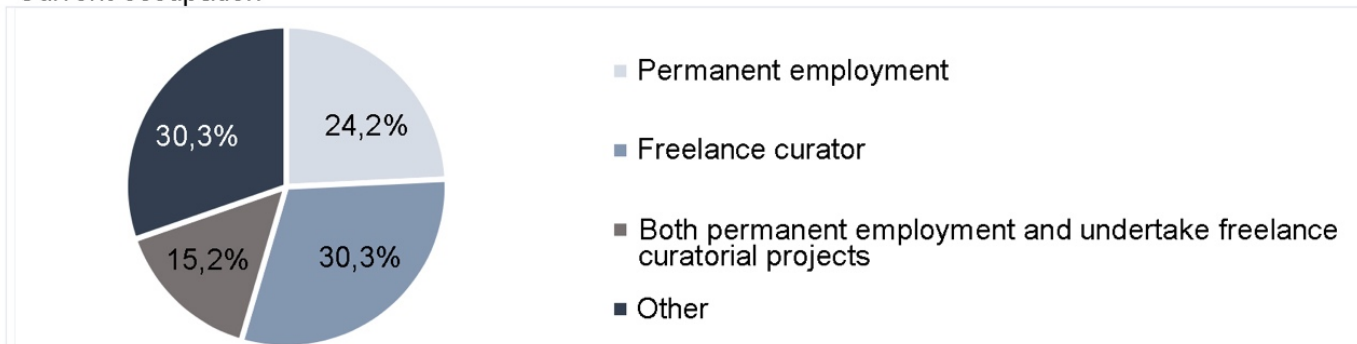
Increase in job and project offers

5 members (14,3 %) emphasized an increase in the amount of project and job offers they received as a positive effect of obtaining a degree in Curatorial Studies.

Working Conditions

Due to the multitude of different positions that the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators hold, it becomes challenging for the members to clearly define their occupation or position. Only 24% hold a permanent position as curator and about 30% report that they are primarily employed as freelance curators. Among the members who report their position as freelance curators, five are hired in temporary positions, in addition to freelancing (fixed-term employees are not viewed as temporary). About 15% of the members say that they have a combination of permanent employment as a curator, in addition to being employed through freelance projects.

Current occupation



N= 66.

“Other” refers to:

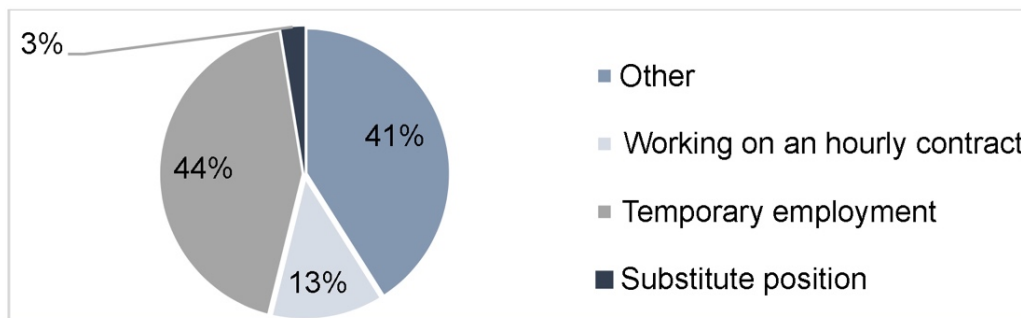
“Other” specified	Number of respondents
Fixed-term position + freelance curatorial	4
Fixed-term position	4
Other permanent employment (not as curator) + freelance curatorial projects	7
Other permanent employment (not as curator)	3
Applying for work	1
Runs their own gallery	1

N=19

Freelance curators

In the survey 21 respondents stated their occupation as “freelance curator” and another 21 respondents stated their occupation as a combination of freelance curator and another type of position. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to describe their occupation and/or the position they held in 2016: 44 % (17 members) were hired as short-term employees, 13 % (five members) were contracted under an hourly contract, 41 % (16 members) were under a different kind of contract, and 2 % (one member) had a substitute position.

Positions held by freelance curators in 2016



N= 39. Includes the respondents who work freelance, but excludes those who hold a full time position as curators.

“Other” specified:

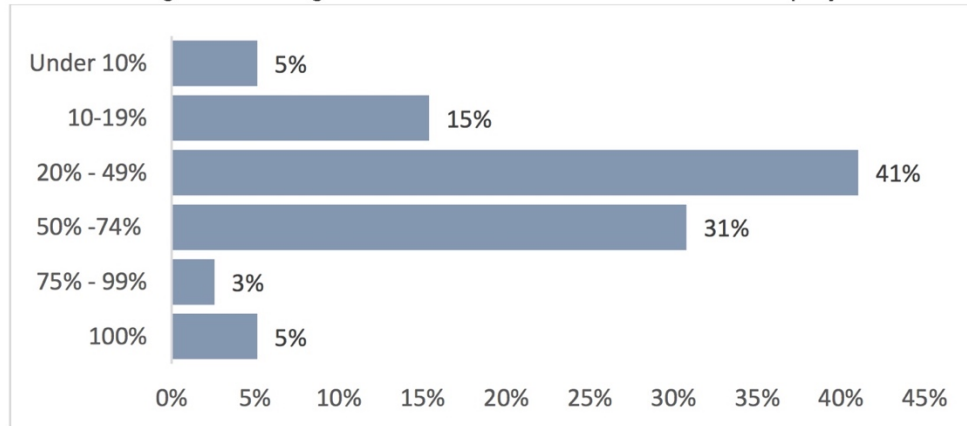
- Project-based positions.
- Various projects of which some were paid, others not.
- Involved in two projects in 2016 as an unpaid collaborator.
- Mostly projects initiated by oneself in different project spaces and artist-run spaces.
- Alternating between short-term engagements and short-term employment.
- Artist and curator, project-based.
- Projects compensated through honorariums.
- Hourly contract and fixed fee-based assignments.
- Fixed-term employee.

Some of the respondents in the category “other” have not been involved or worked in a position as curator in 2016. One of the respondents explains this based on the lack of income-generating assignments as follows: “I prioritize writing over curating”. Others respondents stated that they had other income-generating projects. As one respondent states: “As a curator/artist I have almost no income, but as a consultant I do.”

Time devoted to freelance curatorial projects

The respondents were asked to state how much of their time was devoted to freelance curatorial projects.

Portion of regular working hours devoted to freelance curatorial projects



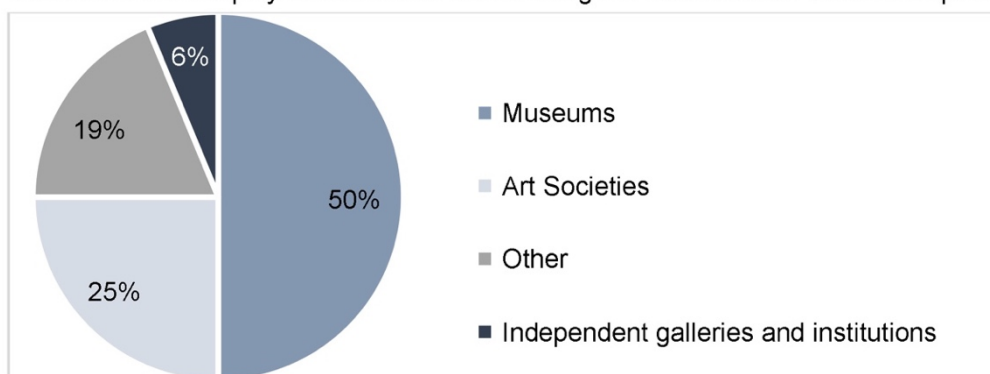
N= 21

Most of the respondents spent between 20 and 50% of their available time on freelance curating. Very few respondents, who were employed as freelance curators, were employed more than 75%.

Curators in permanent employment

24% (16 respondents) reported that they were in permanent employment, which were all reported as full-time positions. Approximately 50% were employed by museums, closely followed by art societies (*kunstforening*), smaller independent institutions, and «Other» which includes: Public Art Norway (KORO) and project spaces that receive public funding.

Institutions that employ curators from The Norwegian Association of Curators in permanent positions



N=19.

Assignments

It will be of interest to map which assignments the curators do and the percentage of each assignment measures out to compared to the project as a whole based on their last three projects. Concept development and following-up the artist, writing, mounting, PR, and accounting were assignments that most of the respondents have performed during their last three projects. It was also reported that most of the projects consisted of several tasks where each task averaged at about 12% during the last three projects. In nine cases one task accounted for more than 40% of the whole project. The following table shows the different tasks the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators most commonly performed in their last three projects.

Assignments executed by both curators in permanent employment and freelance curators on their last three projects.

Assignment	Curators in permanent employment		Freelance curators	
	Percentage of projects the task was included in	Average extent of the assignment in each individual project	Percentage of projects the task was included in	Average extent of the assignment in each individual project
Developing concept/idea	96 %	19 %	85 %	27 %
PR	80 %	9 %	70 %	7 %
Writing (texts for catalogs etc.)	76 %	13 %	81 %	17 %
Follow-up of the artist	72 %	20 %	81 %	14 %
Mounting	68 %	12 %	67 %	13 %
Accounting	68 %	11 %	67 %	10 %
Administrative work	68 %	12 %	70 %	18 %
Reporting	56 %	6 %	59 %	11 %
Studio visits	56 %	10 %	63 %	13 %
Audience oriented assignments	40 %	6 %	41 %	8 %
Editorial tasks	36 %	13 %	41 %	7 %
Human Resources management	32 %	8 %	11 %	10 %
Guided Tours	32 %	6 %	22 %	7 %
Production of new work	24 %	8 %	52 %	11 %
Attending in juries	20 %	16 %	15 %	56 %
Other	12 %	5 %	7 %	10 %
Consulting	0 %	0 %	11 %	25 %

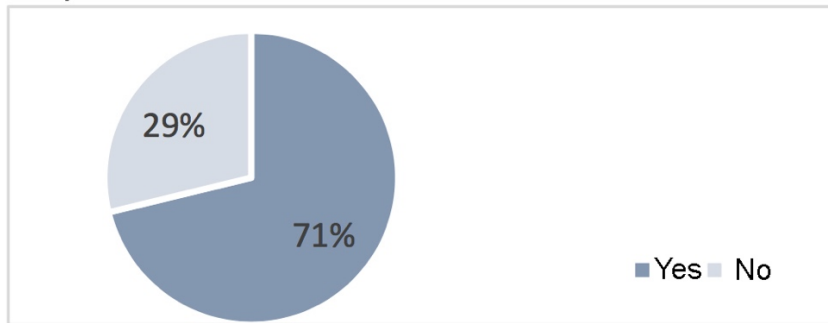
N: 25 projects were reported by curators in permanent employment and 27 by freelance curators. Only the respondents who reported a percentage adding up to a full-time position are included in the table.

If we compare curators who are permanently employed to freelance curators the main task of curators in a permanent position included “developing concept/idea”, “PR”, “writing”, “following-up the artists”, “mounting”, “accounting”, and “administrating” during their last three projects. In comparison, the freelance curators performed tasks such as “developing concept/idea”, “writing”, “following-up artists”, and “administration”. It should be noted that the selection of data is less than ideal.

International projects

71% of the respondents have completed an international project outside of Norway in the last five years.

Have you completed a curatorial project outside of Norway in the last five years?

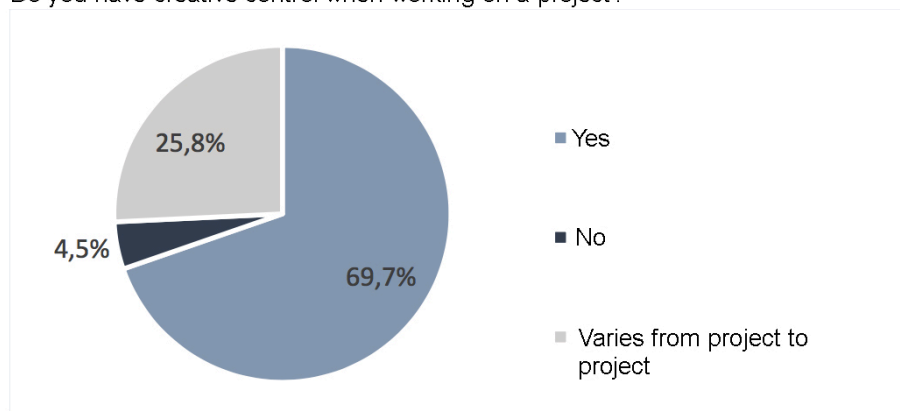


N=66.

Creative Control and Artistic Freedom

Close to 70% of the respondents experience artistic freedom over their project, where in contrast only 4,5% (three respondents) state that they do not have creative control over their projects and 26% states that it varies from project to project. There is no recorded distinction in creative control based on the curator's gender.

Do you have creative control when working on a project?



N=66.

Even though most of the respondents report that they have creative control in their project, about 30% report that they either do not or that they have some creative control to varying degrees according to each project. There are different factors that can affect the curator's relative creative control when involved in different projects, and we will view some reasons provided by the respondents, taking into account only those who reported that they do not feel that they have creative control in their projects or that they do, but to a varying degree:

The impact of the financial situation on creative freedom

53% state that the financial situation has an impact on their creative freedom, where responses included:

Financing and budgetary restraint unfortunately has a great impact on the creative freedom of curatorial practice.

The financial framework and the gallery's limitations can reduce artistic freedom.

It is repeatedly the case that one cannot procure total financing for a project; this is part of the logic and reality of the field. Projects are, therefore, frequently pragmatically redefined and reshaped in accordance with the funds available. This does not mean that artistic freedom disappears, but to use a metaphor: It creates a certain framework for the lines one must draw within, and ideally artistic freedom should involve the ability to occasionally draw outside the lines.

Lack of professional experience on the part of the employees

29% state that the lack of professional experience and competence on the part of collaborating parties affect the amount of creative control the curator has within a project. Some respondents state, for example:

On rare occasions, artists or commissioners curtail curatorial freedom by having entrenched ideas of how the art should be presented.

It is first and foremost when I work with commissioning art in public space that I experience curtailment of my curatorial freedom. It is especially hard to work inside the local authority sector due to the lack of professional competency within the field.

Some gallerists interfere.

Agreements previously entered into curtail curatorial freedom

18% (three respondents) mention agreements previously entered into as curtailing their curatorial freedom. Responses include:

A larger institution may have a number of commitments, as well as existing agreements that have to be fulfilled. In such cases, as [...] one only has total creative freedom in exceptional circumstances.

There may be contracts that the institution has entered into previously, which restricts how the collection may be shown.

Two respondents invoke funders' demands as a restriction of curatorial freedom. As one of them states: "Funders may insist on certain factors being weighted differently, for example, where the artist's nationality is seen as more important than artistic quality."

Other factors that limit curatorial freedom

Other factors that restrict curatorial freedom, according to the respondents, include lack of time, a busy working day, adapting to different audiences and site-specific projects.

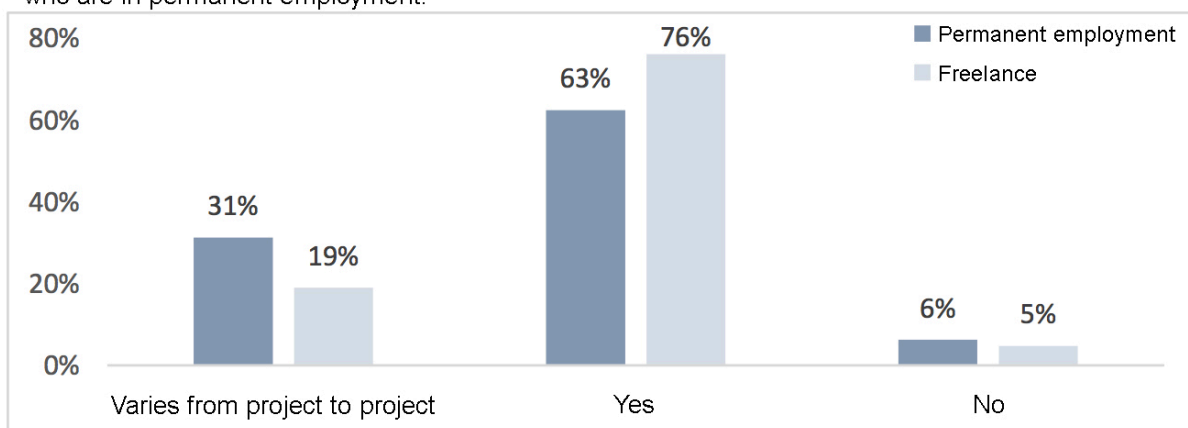
The institutional structure

29% state that the structure of the institution and/or their strategies can be in conflict with the curatorial project. One respondent cites "the institution's social mission" as curtailing creative freedom, whereas another points to the "organisational structure" as a hindrance.

Degrees of creative control in relation to employment

Freelance curators experience a somewhat greater degree of creative control than curators in permanent positions:

Do you experience creative control when working on a project? Freelance curators as opposed to curators who are in permanent employment.



N= 37.

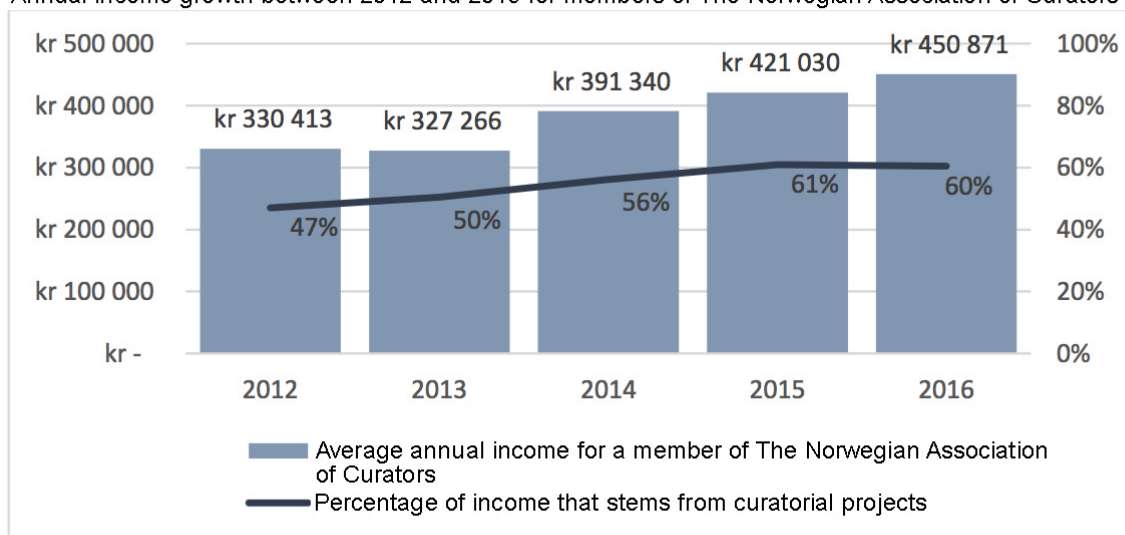
Income

It is necessary to map the current income levels of the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators, and we have retrieved information on past income levels from 2012 up to today in order to see the development of income-generating projects and the general level of income.

Income growth/development

The annual income for a member of The Norwegian Association of Curators has increased by 35%. In 2012, the average annual income was 330.413 NOK compared to an average of 450.871 NOK in 2016. The lowest reported income was 30.000 NOK and the highest reported income was 800.000 NOK. The percentage of income that stems from curatorial work has increased from 47% in 2012 to 60% in 2016.

Annual income growth between 2012 and 2016 for members of The Norwegian Association of Curators

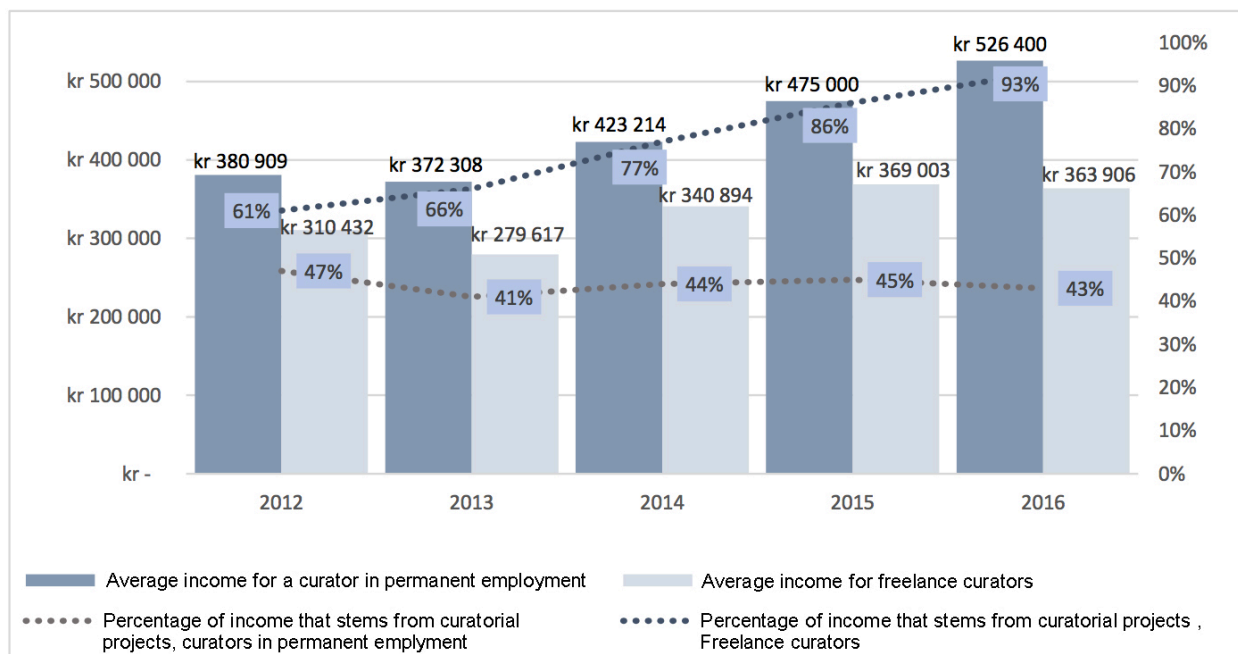


N: 2012=54, 2013=58, 2014=61, 2015=59, 2016=61.

Income according to type of employment

If one compares the incomes level of curators who are in permanent employment to freelance curators, the survey shows that curators in permanent positions have a substantially higher income growth than freelance curators. Curators who held permanent positions in 2016 had an average of 45% higher income than freelance curators.

Average income of freelance curators versus curators who hold a permanent employment, modeled after reported employment in 2016.



Number of Curators in a permanent position that reported their income: 2012:11; 2013:13; 2014:14; 2015:14; 2016:15.
 Number of Freelance Curators that reported their income: 2012:16; 2013:16; 2014:16; 2015:17; 2016:16

Correlation between income and gender

The average annual income for male curators in 2016 was 524.600 NOK compared to female curators' average annual income of 426.900 NOK. Female curators only made 81% of what male curators reported as their income in 2016, and the average annual income for a female curator increased at a lower rate than that of a male curator between 2012 and 2016. In 2012, a female curator earned 91% of a male curator's salary. In 2016, the range of the annual income for female curators was 90.000 NOK to 700.000 NOK, as opposed to that of male curators, which ranged from 220.000 NOK to 800.000 NOK.

Development in average income for a female curator versus average income for a male curator between 2012 and 2016

Gender	Average annual income 2012	Average annual income 2016
Female members	kr 321 850	kr 426 904
Male members	kr 354 545	kr 524 615
Difference between female versus male annual income	kr -32 696	kr -97 712
Percentage of female annual income versus male income	91 %	81 %

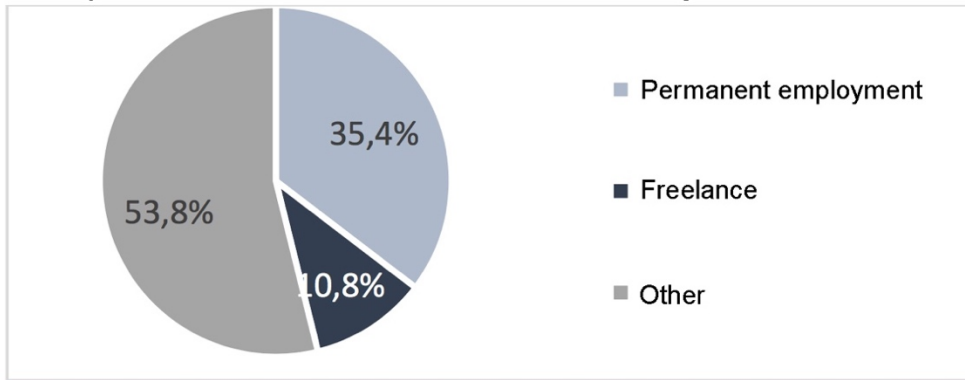
13 men and 40 women reported their annual income in 2016. 12 men and 31 women reported their annual income in 2012.

Primary sources of income

Less than half of the respondents state that their primary source of income stems from permanent employment as a curator or as a freelance curator. 35,4% of the members report that their primary income is from a permanent position and 10,8% state that freelance projects are their primary source of income. 54% of the respondent have reported that they have "another source of primary income", which includes: "permanent employment within another discipline", "fixed-term position", "other temporary positions", "job-seeker", "writer", or "self-employed". The data

collected for the primary source of income does not correlate exactly to the data from “type of position”, and the reason for this might be the complex structure of many curatorial positions and the lack of a formal definition for the position of curator.

Primary source of income for the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators

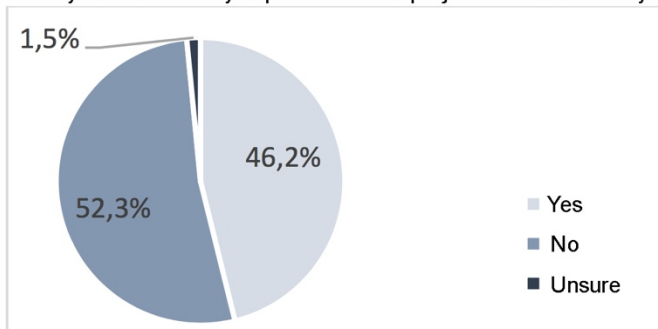


N=65.

Unpaid curatorial work

45% (30 respondents) report that they have undertaken unpaid curatorial work in the last five years, whereas 52% state that they have not taken on any unpaid curatorial work the last five years.

Have you taken on any unpaid curatorial projects in the last five years?



N= 65.

There are no reported differences in the nature of unpaid curatorial work between curators who hold a permanent position and freelance curators. In fact, both groups take on the same amount of unpaid projects. The data shows that male curators have taken on more unpaid projects than female curators. 63% of the male respondents state that they have taken on unpaid curatorial work, as opposed to 41% of the female respondents.

A closer look at the respondents who have taken on unpaid projects in the last five years.

There are a multitude of reasons so many members of The Norwegian Association of Curators have taken on unpaid projects during the last five years. Here are some of the reasons the respondents have given:

Making a contribution

“Wanting to contribute despite the lack of funding” is mentioned as a reason by 30% (nine respondents) of the members who reported to have taken on unpaid projects. Specific responses include:

There weren't any funds, and I wanted to do it.

Enthusiasm and interest, and I knew the institution did not have the funds.

Professional interest, love, enthusiasm, and joy – also where there is no money.

Because I wanted to complete the project, and I wanted the artist to get paid.

I do this regularly for artists with little money.

I willingly work for free for institutions or places with small budgets, especially if my fee would reduce the artists' fee or production budgets. My logic is that I am currently employed permanently elsewhere.

Desire to contribute and a small budget.

I believed in the project and they didn't have much funding.

Because this was a project that had to be done.

Professional interest

26% (eight respondents) cite “interest or professional relevance” as one of the reasons for taking on unpaid curatorial work. Specific responses include:

This is rewarding work as an art professional.

Commitment and interest in a particular artist's practice.

Professionally exciting.

Because I find the assignment interesting.

Interest in the project.

A project that hold great interest to me.

Fun, it gives me energy and pleasure.

As a favour since it was professionally interesting.

Expanding a professional network

27% (eight respondents) stated that the potential of expand their professional network, add to their CV, and gain experience were their main reasons for taking on unpaid curatorial work. Specific responses include:

This is about doing a job for a gallery or similar – they don't have any money, but you know it looks good on your CV.

To gain experience.

In order to expand my network.

Because it was a project at an internationally renowned institution. In other words, adding to a list of merits.

One takes on unpaid curatorial work for strategic reasons in relation to advancing one's career, getting other jobs, etc. Even if it shouldn't be this way.

Potential for future paid work.

Cultural capital, in order to open up for future possibilities; because it could not be paid.

Test out concepts, gain experience and expand network.

External expectations

10% of the respondents believe that unpaid work is a result of external expectations, as some of them state:

The last three years I have undertaken a lot of unpaid overtime, and I regard this as unpaid curatorial labour.

Because I am employed in an institution and there is an expectation that external curatorial work is part of your work, where external expectations are that curators who are employed elsewhere do not need to be remunerated.

Because in my position one works 250% rather than the 100% one is employed for.

Self-Initiated projects

"Self-initiated projects" also account for some of the unpaid curatorial work according to 10% of the respondents. Specific responses include:

I ran an artist-run space on a pro bono basis, and we had an exhibition and opening every third weekend. I did it because it was an inspiring period of my life in which I learnt a lot and had the opportunity to take on this work, in addition to another paid job.

I started a project space where the projects were self-initiated. The project space is run with public funding, which is rarely enough to deliver the projects and remunerate those involved. We prioritized paying the artists we invited in over paying ourselves.

Self-initiated projects where I couldn't pay myself a fee. In these cases, it was not possible to include for a curatorial fee when applying for project support, and there was no other way of procuring funding for fees.

Uncertain financial conditions

Two respondents state that they have performed unpaid curatorial work, especially in the initial phases of projects where there was uncertainty with regards to the financial conditions for the duration of the project. The examples given include:

As freelance curators we initiate projects, and then we begin applying for funding, because of this there is a lot of unpaid work in the beginning of each new project.

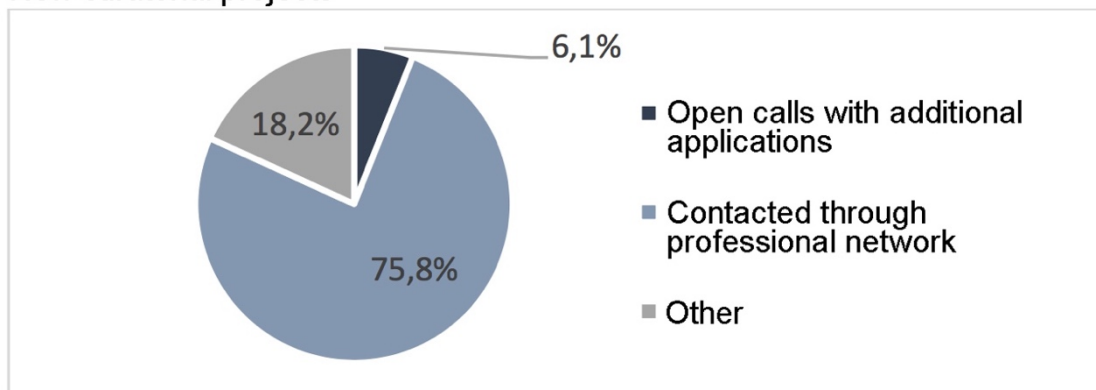
I am co-curator of [...] where we have to apply for funding from the Arts Council Norway, Oslo City Council etc. The curatorial labour and planning begins before we are notified of how much funding will be available for the project. Under such uncertain conditions a project ends up with a small, symbolic fee for the curatorial work. This is a scenario that plays out in most freelance curatorial projects, regardless of how well the budget has been planned. One applies for support, and it is only at the end of the project that one can take into account one's own salary.

It is evident from the data collected that the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators frequently take on unpaid projects. The reasons for this include “professional interest”, “wanting to contribute”, “external expectations”, or “lack of funds within the institution”. Some of the respondents also state that it is more important to them that the artists are compensated for their work, which indicates that these are curators who are motivated by professional interest, and initiate projects in which they are not compensated for the work they perform.

Job offers/new curatorial projects

Close to 76% of the respondents report that they are primarily offered new projects through their network, whereas only 6% say that they receive offers through open calls. This emphasizes how important a professional network is for the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators in acquiring new projects.

New curatorial projects



N=66.

The ideal working conditions for the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators

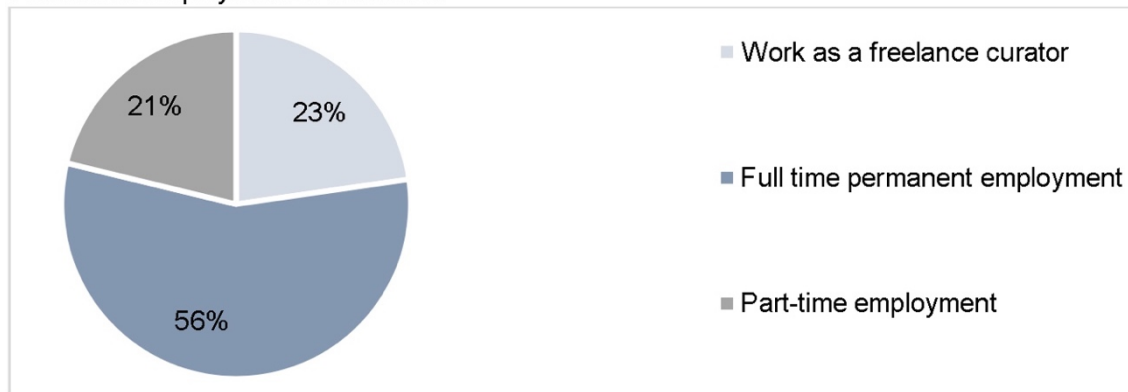
We asked the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators about their ideal working conditions. We looked at three aspects related to this:

- 1) Do they prefer to be permanently employed or work as freelancers?
- 2) What kind of institutions represent their ideal workplace?
- 3) Do they prefer to work on projects within Norway or international projects?

Permanent employment or freelance?

56% would prefer permanent, full time employment, 21% would prefer part-time employment, and the remaining 23% would prefer to work on a freelance basis.

Permanent employment or freelance?

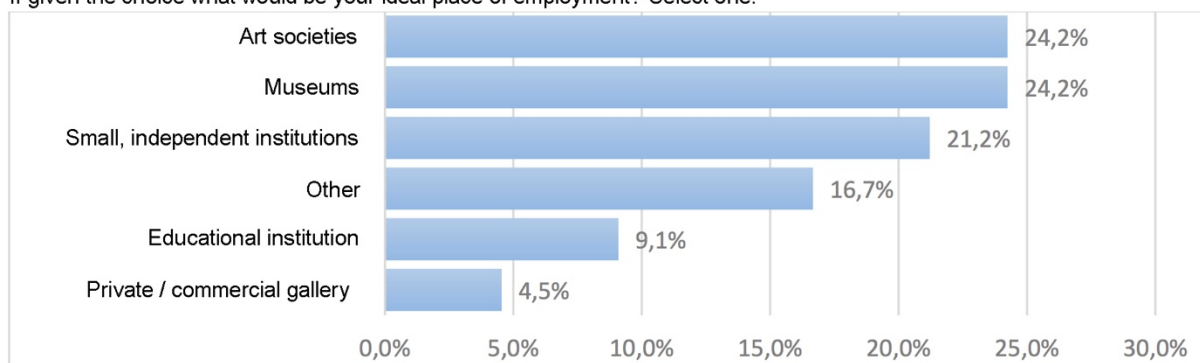


N= 66.

The ideal institution

The members were asked which kind of institution they would prefer to work at given the choice. Art societies (*Kunstforeninger*), museums, and smaller independent institutions were the members' preferred place of employment.

If given the choice what would be your ideal place of employment? Select one.



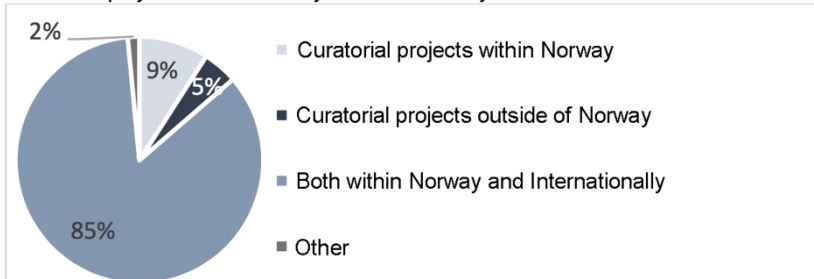
N= 66.

Close to 17% of the respondents stated that they would prefer to be employed within a different kind of institution, including: art societies/smaller independent institutions; professional institutions, preferably one with more experimental programming, not too big; Public Art Norway; their own independent space; a combination of gallery and research; theatre programming or institutional theatre; festival; public, independent Institution; a mixture of their own research and administration/curatorial projects.

Curatorial projects within Norway or internationally?

85% of the members would prefer a combination of curatorial projects within Norway and internationally, while 5% wished to only work outside of Norway, and 9% wished to only work within Norway.

Curatorial projects within Norway or internationally?

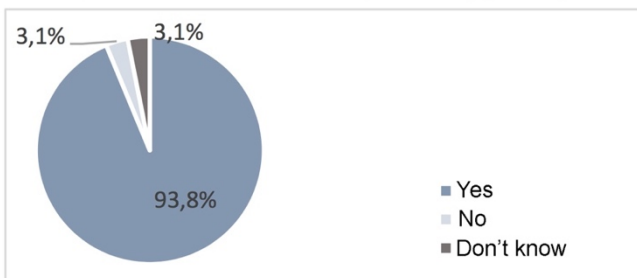


N= 66.

Working grants/stipends and subsidy schemes

All of 93,8% (30 respondents) say that they would be interested in a working grant if given the opportunity. The question was only directed to the respondents who reported that they were working as freelance curators or a mixture of permanent employment and freelancing.

Would you be interested in receiving a working grant if given the opportunity?



N=32. Reported only by respondents working as freelance curators

Proportion of members who have received stipends/grants

36% of the respondents stated that they have been granted some form of stipend in their curatorial practice, whereas 64% report that they have not received any stipends. The proportion of recipients is larger among those who hold a degree in Curatorial Studies: 75% of the respondents who hold a degree in Curatorial Studies have received stipend as opposed to 25% of the respondents who do not. The respondents name the following stipends among those received through their professional practice.

Account of received stipends by the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators

Stipend	Number of respondents who have received the stipend
OCA (international support)	14
Arts Council Norway (project support, working grant)	9
Municipality of Bergen (project support, work grant)	4
Municipality of Stavanger Curatorial Grant	3
The Freedom of Expression Foundation	3
Government Grants for Artists	3
Other stipends	18

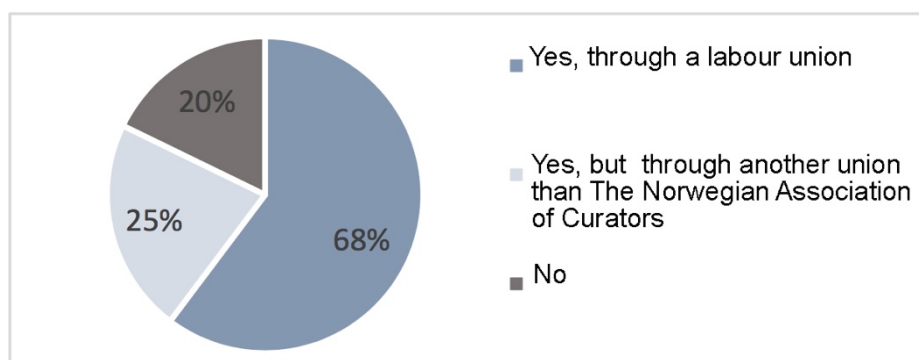
Other grants and stipends mentioned include: Österlindska stipendstiftelse; the Veneto region scholarship; UiO – travel grants for research; production support for publications; Norsk faglitterær- og oversetterforening – three-month working grant; Nordisk Kulturkontakt; Nordisk

Kulturfond; Mobility Support from Kulturkontakt Nord; The Arts Council Canada; Kritikerlaget's travel grants; three-year working grant; ISCP residency New York; Forfatterstipend from Norsk faglitterær forfatter- og oversetterforening; Forart stipend; Competence building and research grant, Dia Art Center & PS1 MoMA; Austrian Federal Chancellery; Research and residency grants - Goethe Institut; Dansk Kunstfonds research/travel grant; American-Scandinavian Foundation; Professional Development Award for curatorial education; Kommunale- og Fylkeskommunale stipend.

Union membership

68% of the members in The Norwegian Association of Curators belong to a union or another membership organisation, whereas 20% are not organised in any kind of union or other membership organisation. 25% of the respondents are organised through another organisation than The Norwegian Association of Curators, and 12% (8 respondents) are organised both in a labour union and an organisation other than The Norwegian Association of Curators.

Are you organized through some kind of union?



N= 65.

Areas for the Norwegian Association of Curators to focus on in the future

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked which areas they regarded as most important for The Norwegian Association of Curators to focus on in the future. They were asked to rank the following areas of interest:

- Copyright and crediting of curators
- Working grants
- Developing a set standard for curatorial fees
- Establishing a national archive of curatorial practice

The respondents ranked “working grants” and “developing a set standard for curatorial fees” as the areas of the highest importance for The Norwegian Association of Curators. These were followed by “developing a set standard for curatorial fees” and “establishing a national archive of curatorial practice”. From this data we can recommend that the most important areas for The Norwegian Association of Curators to focus on are “working grants” and “developing a set standard for curatorial fees”

PART 2: INSTITUTIONS' EMPLOYMENT OF FREELANCE CURATORS

Introduction

The survey was presented to 30 Norwegian art institutions, suggested by the Board of The Norwegian Association of Curators, of which 25 of the institutions (83%) responded to the survey. In this part of the survey, the main focus is the institutions' employment of freelance curators and their experiences, both positive and negative; how they compensated the curator financially; and which assignments and tasks the freelance curator was asked to perform. The survey was sent out to a broad range of institutions, including artist-run spaces, museums, art societies and smaller institutions.

Institutions with full-time curators as permanent employees

Five institutions had no permanent curator on their staff; the other 20 institutions had one or several curators as part of their staff. Institutions that have less than ten employees in general have a 75% permanent position for a curator. Institutions with more than 80 full-time employees had an average of 6,5 curators in permanent positions.

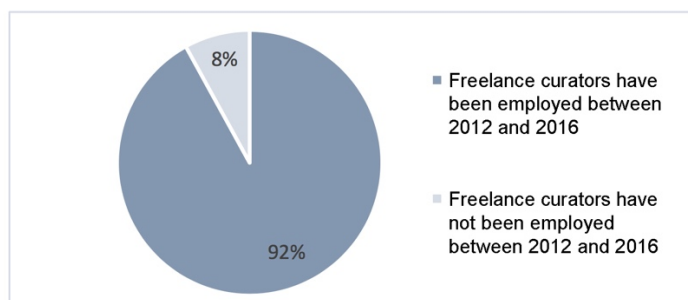
Number of employees	Average number of curators in permanent position	Average percentage of curators in permanent position in relation to the total number of staff
Less than 10 employees (17 institutions)	0,75	32%
10-30 employees (5 Institutions)	2,4	16%
More than 80 employees (2 institutions)	6,5	6%

N=23. It should be noted that there were very few respondents within this category and the result only reflects those who answered this part of the survey.

Institutions' current employment of freelance curators

The Norwegian Association of Curators wishes to map to which extent the institutions in the survey employ freelance curators in their institution. 92% (23 institutions) hired freelance curators in the period between 2012 and 2016, and 8% (2 institutions) responded that they did not hire any freelance curators during the same period.

Institutions employment of freelance curators between 2012 and 2016



N=25.

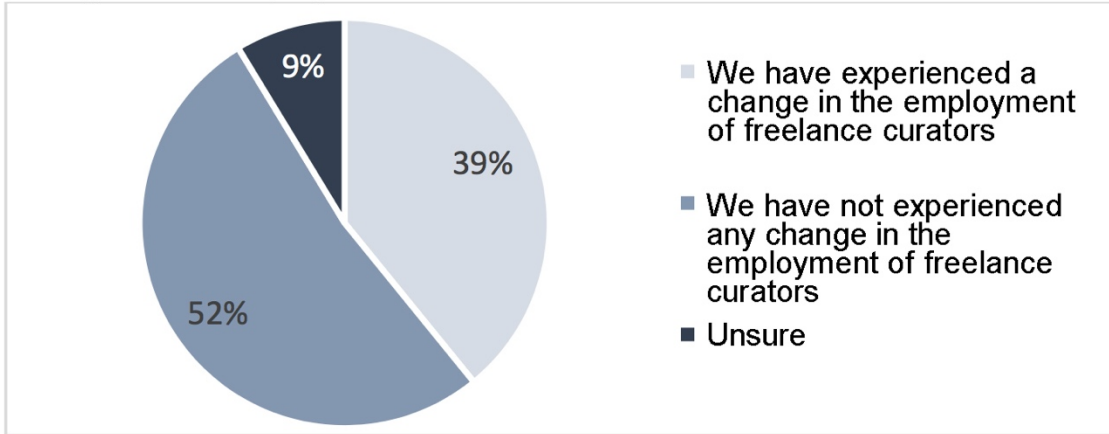
“Lack of funds” and “newly opened institution” were the reported reasons why the institutions did not employ any freelance curators in this period.

Changes in the institutions' employment of freelance curators

39% state that there has been a change in their use of freelance curators in the last five years.

52% state that they have not noticed any change.

Changes in the employment of freelance curators



N=23.

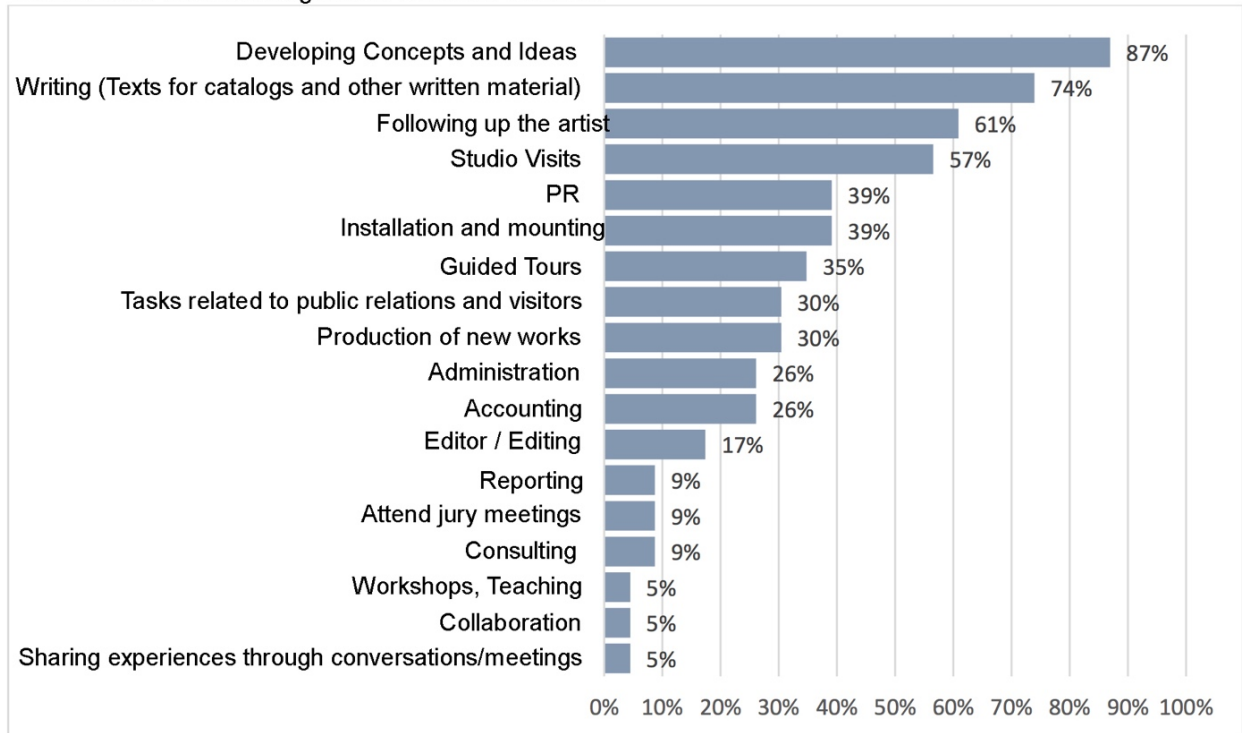
Among the group that had experienced a change in their employment of freelance curators, 44,5% reported a distinct increase in the number of times they employed a freelance curator, while the remaining 55% had experienced a notable increase in their employment of freelance curators. None of the institutions reported that they had a decrease in the employment of freelance curators. The distinct increase for some of the institutions was explained as follows:

- We required comprehensive and specialized knowledge for specific projects.
- External curators were used to further develop the institutions' goals and area of interest.
- More innovative command of the institution.
- Better financial situation, which made it possible to increase the employment of freelance curators.
- More curators are available with interesting insights into the discipline.
- Expand the employee's networks.
- Professional development among the employees.
- Limited capacity at their own institution.

The freelance curators' assignments within the institution

The tasks the freelance curator was most commonly assigned by the institutions that responded to the survey were: “developing concepts and ideas”, “writing”, “following up of the artists”, “studio visits”, “PR”, and “mounting/installing”.

The freelance curators assignments within the institution



N=23. Only three institutions named one task/assignments; the others named two or more

Experiences within the institution when employing freelance curators.

The respondents reported both positive and negative experiences when employing freelance curators, and we will go into some of the experiences the institutions have reported.

What positive experiences did you gain through the employment of a freelance curator?

A higher degree of professional competence was highlighted by 43%

“The freelance curator brings with them a different set of skills/ideas/energy, and sometimes becomes a driving force at an institution struggling with insufficient funds. A freelance curator also brings a different and specific skillset that we don't have at the institution.”

New ideas and impulses

43% of the respondents mentioned “new ideas and impulses” as a positive experience when employing a freelance curator, making this just as important as the “increase in professional competence”.

Expanding an existing network

Expanding an existing network through employing freelance curators was mentioned by 17% of the respondents. One respondent noted: “International freelance curators are an important factor

in keeping us in touch with an international art world and expanding our network to countries outside Norway.”

Increased flexibility and work capacity

13% of the respondents mentioned an increase in flexibility and the added work capacity as a positive factor. This factor was particularly relevant at the smaller institutions. One respondent notes: “In a best-case scenario, the curator functions almost as an additional artist, with a fully articulated project and set of arguments that can be further discussed.”

Ambassadors/marketing managers

According to some of the respondents, a freelance curator can be an excellent ambassador and/or marketing manager for both the project and the institution. One respondent notes: “The freelance curator we employed in 2015 was highly engaged in the project and has been a prominent ambassador for the exhibition after the employment ended.” Another of the respondents stated: “The externally curated projects have been a great success, evident in the number of visitors and the general attention it has received.”

Other positive experiences of employing a freelance curator

Three of the respondents highlight a positive and fruitful collaboration as a positive experience when employing a freelance curator.

One institution remarked on the dispersion of power which employing a freelance curator involves, stating: “it contributes to a greater dispersion of power across the art world”.

What negative experiences did you have through the employment of a freelance curator?

Three of the respondents stated that they had no negative experiences of employing a freelance curator, while five of the respondents left this question blank. 17 of the respondents shared some negative experiences of employing a freelance curator, including:

Lack of insight and understanding of the organisation/institution they were collaborating with

Ten respondents mentioned “lack of insight and understanding of the organisation/institution they were collaborating with” as a negative experience of employing freelance curators. Specific responses included:

The freelance curator can exhibit little understanding towards how an institution is run, especially when it comes to the question of available funds and the commitments of the institution, which can be more long-term than, for example, the next biennial. In collaborating with a freelance curator, it becomes important to differentiate and clarify the long-term interest of the institution and the freelance curator’s wishes.

The freelance curator is often trapped between the role of artist and administrator, where the different roles and understanding of these can cause some problems. It can also be very challenging for someone who performs remarkable work but is not familiar with the inner workings and day-to-day running of an institution.

Negative experiences related to finances when employing freelance curators

Negative aspects relating to finance and budgeting are mentioned four times in the survey, where the respondents state that:

Unrealistic expectations and hopes, which raises the expense level but cannot be met within a tight budget and limited staff resources can cause organisational challenges between the staff, artist and curator. Making demands that requires the institution to change or adapt established practices, when the financial situation does not allow for that, can cause disagreements and confrontations.

The curators are very often highly ambitious and wish to realize projects that greatly exceeds our resources and budget constraints.

Increase in workload

Some of the respondents highlight “an increase in workload” as a negative effect of employing a freelance curator. For example, one respondent noted:

Most times, an external curator means an increase in workload, which can be challenging at a smaller institution.

Conflicts between staff and freelance curators

Conflicts between the staff at an institution and the freelance curator can occur, as noted by some respondents.

Other negative experiences when employing a freelance curator

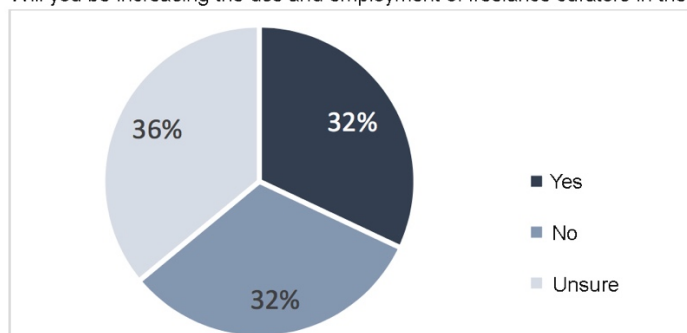
Other negative experiences that were mentioned when employing a freelance curator was as follows:

It seems that most curators are still fond of placing both the exhibition and artists in a theoretic framework when communicating and writing about the project, presenting it in a language that is far from an easy read for a general audience.

Employing freelance curators in the future

32% (eight institutions) wish to increase the use of freelance curators in the future, 32% (eight institutions) will not increase their use of freelance curators, and 36% (nine institutions) are uncertain of the extent to which they will employ freelance curators in the future.

Will you be increasing the use and employment of freelance curators in the future?

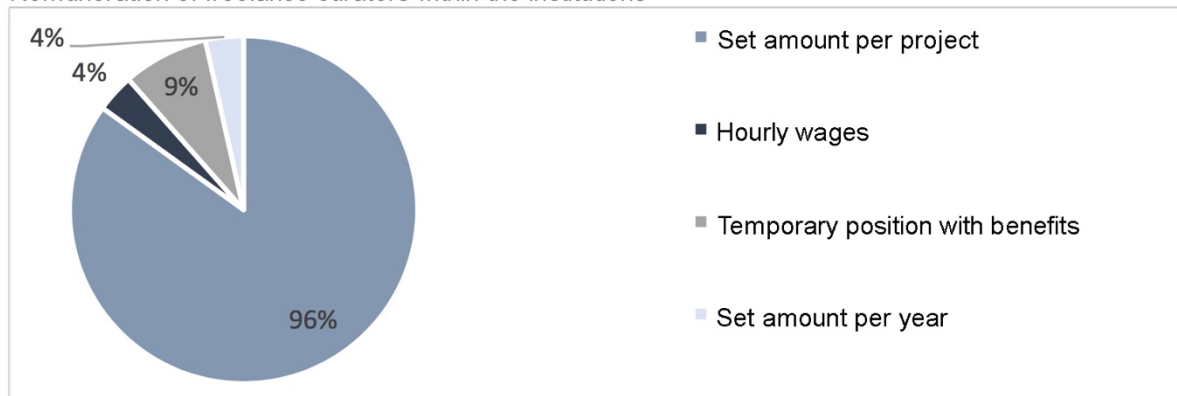


N= 25.

Remuneration for freelance curators within institutions

6% of the respondents report that they operate with a set fee for projects when they employ a freelance. Only one respondent reported that they paid an hourly wage, while another reported that they paid a set annual fee. Two respondents (9%) employed freelance curators in temporary positions.

Remuneration of freelance curators within the institutions

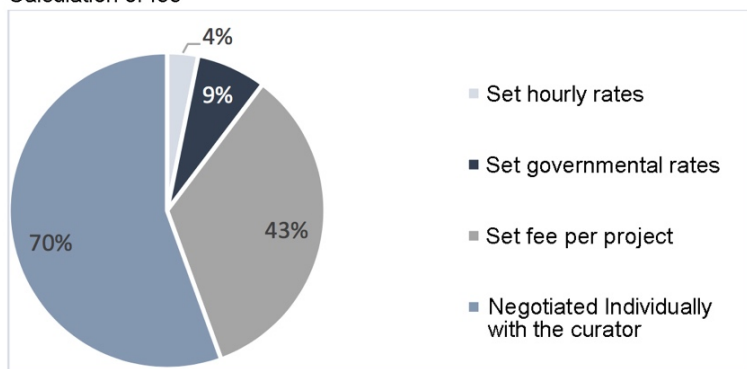


N=23. It was possible to respond with multiple answer on this part of the survey where three institutions took advantage of this and reported multiple answers

How the institutions calculate freelance curators' fees

70% (16 institutions) calculate the fees for freelance curators through individual negotiations with each curator, while 39% (nine institutions) have set a fixed fee for each project. Five institutions (22%) said that both individual negotiations and fixed fees were used.

Calculation of fee



N=23. It was possible to respond with multiple answer on this part of the survey where six institutions took advantage of this and reported multiple answers.

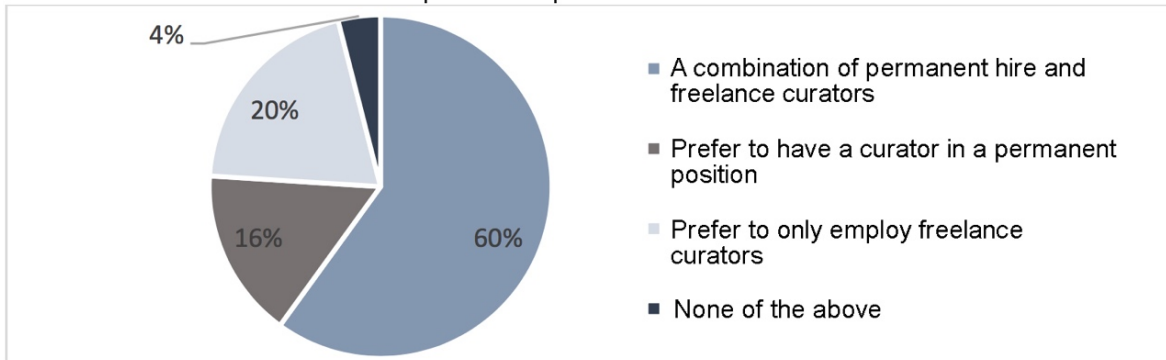
Amount institutions spend on freelance curators

The responding institutions spent a total of 3.225.120 NOK on freelance curatorial projects in 2016, divided between 44 projects. One institution was responsible for 18 of these projects. The fees ranged from 10.000 NOK to 220.000 for each project. The average fee paid to freelance curators was 73 298 NOK. Only 15 institutions responded to this question.

Do the institutions prefer to employ curators as freelancers or in permanent positions?

- 60% of the responding institutions reported that they prefer a combination of permanent positions and freelance curators.
- 20% prefer only to employ freelance curators.
- 16% would prefer to have a curator in a permanent position.

Curators hired as freelancers or in a permanent position?



N=25.

A closer look at the institutions that prefer to hire curator in permanent positions

The reasons institutions that prefer to hire a curator in a permanent position provide include: “establishing skills and expertise” and “improving working conditions for all employees”. One respondent noted:

It makes it easier to gather and retain the experiences and the professional network gathered over the course of projects within the institution, which is vital for the development of the institution. Despite our preference for a curator in a permanent position, who could oversee all the activities, we are unable to do so due to budgetary constraints.

The institutions that stated that they prefer to employ freelance curators reported that this is mainly due to “financial constraints”, “organizational model”, “projects of a periodic nature”, and “network”. Specific responses included:

The institution has a set budget limit that does not allow for any additional employees in permanent positions than the ones we have today. Hiring a curator in a permanent position is financially too risky right now. Moreover, we find it useful to have some flexibility for each project, sometimes this involves a freelance curator, other times someone from a different discipline.

Through freelance curators we are able to meet and make contact with several new artists, and a different freelance curator contributes to renewing the institution each time.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

The Norwegian Association of Curators' primary task is to increase the knowledge and understanding of the curatorial field in Norway. This survey maps the working conditions of curators who are based in Norway, and is composed of two separate questionnaires. One questionnaire addressed the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators and the other questionnaire was addressed to institutions that were likely to employ freelance curators. By dividing the survey between these two groups, the curator and the curatorial field could be observed from the point of view of members from The Norwegian Association of Curators and the institutions that employ freelance curators.

Data from the survey shows that the members of The Norwegian Association of Curators have significant professional experience as curators. As curators they work within a combination of many different positions and forms of employment, ranging from a permanent position as curators to exclusively being employed as freelancers. Many of the respondents also combine freelancing with a temporary position or a fixed-term position. Most of the members hold a higher degree within the discipline, and 53 % hold a higher degree in Curatorial Studies (or the equivalent). A high percentage of the members work solely project basis, without a steady income. Curators who hold permanent positions have a higher yearly income than curators who work freelance. 56% of the respondents would want to hold a permanent position. Male curators have on average a higher annual income than female curators.

50% of the respondents have taken on unpaid curatorial projects, and the reported reasons for this is wanting to contribute, to take on interesting and challenging projects, to expand their professional network, and as a result of perceived external expectations. The members are internationally oriented with a high percentage of curators who completed projects outside of Norway, and 85% wish to combine projects in Norway and internationally. Developing ideas and concepts, following up artists, mounting/installing, PR, and writing were the most common tasks they performed in their projects, but most of the time the projects included several additional tasks. Most of the respondents found that they had creative control within their projects, but several factors that can and do affect their creative control such as: limited budgets, the institution they are collaborating with, earlier agreements, and being overridden by external funding institutions.

Nearly 94% of the respondents would be interested in receiving a working grant if it were available. 36% have received some kind of stipend during their curatorial work, and these have disproportionally been awarded to curators who hold a degree Curatorial Studies. The members best source of new projects is their own professional network, but funding bodies are also highly important, among them the Art Council Norway, OCA, and the Freedom of Expression Foundation. The members of The Norwegian Association of Curators view "working grants" and "a set standard for fees" as the two most important matters for the Board to focus on in the future.

92% of the surveyed institutions employed freelance curators and 60% preferred a combination of freelance curators and curators in permanent positions. Several reasons for employing freelance curators were given, including the need for specialized knowledge for specific projects, innovation within the institution, professional development among the employees and expanding their networks, and limited capacity at their own institution. Freelance curators most often perform

tasks such as developing ideas and concepts, following up artists, taking meetings, mounting/installation, PR, and writing. The respondents' answers to this part of the survey corresponds to the curators' own responses. The surveyed institutions experienced a number of positive effects of employing a freelance curator, such as increased expertise, new ideas and impulses, expanded networks, and increased flexibility and working capacity. Negative experiences included curators' lack of understanding and knowledge of the institution, financial challenges, increased workload on other employees, and internal conflicts with either the institution or its employees. 32% reported that they would increase their use of freelance curators in the future. A set fee per project is most commonly used form of remuneration, and the amount is negotiated individually with the curator in question.