



# Visitor Insights - Understanding Audiences for Visual Arts

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During Summer 2011 The Audience Agency, on behalf of Audiences UK was commissioned by Arts Council England to devise and test a standard framework for collecting, sharing and comparing audience data amongst galleries in Turning Point (now CVAN) networks across a number of pilot English regions.

*The Audience Agency is a not-for-profit organisation created out of the merger between All About Audiences and Audiences London Plus in 2012.*



A young woman with dark hair is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She is in an art gallery, with several framed pictures on the wall behind her. The lighting is warm and focused on the art.

# Visual arts audiences

A national pilot study

# Introduction

During Summer 2011 The Audience Agency, on behalf of Audiences UK was commissioned by Arts Council England to devise and test a standard framework for collecting, sharing and comparing audience data amongst galleries in Turning Point (now CVAN) networks across a number of pilot English regions.

The following regional Turning Point networks put themselves forward to take part in the pilot:

- South East
- South West
- East
- East Midlands

Galleries in London were also involved as part of their on-going participation in Snapshot London: Visual Arts, and a similar project ran in parallel in Wales, delivered by Audiences Wales and funded by Arts Council Wales.

# Methodology

- A standard set of research questions was created, including a small set of 'Core' questions, and standardised 'Optional' questions
- Staff trained to administer face to face interviews or use an assisted self-completion methodology.
- Data entry onto a central website.
- Data combined, cleaned and weighted to produce the pilot benchmarks.

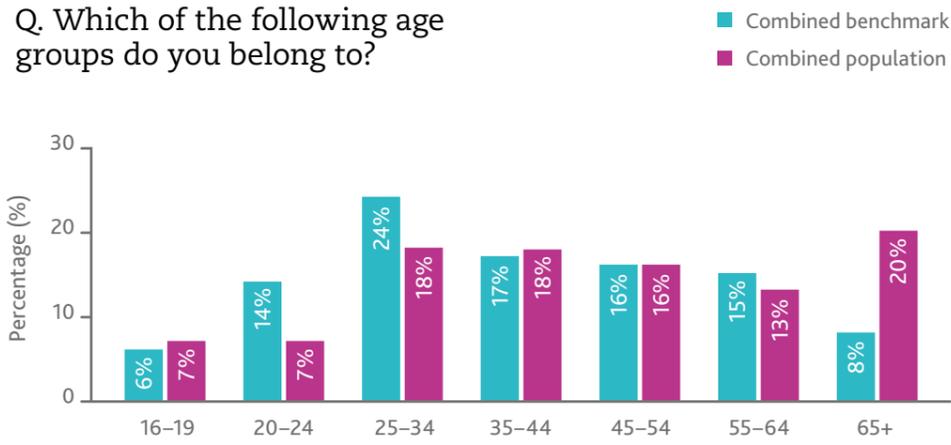
Data was collected between July and September 2011, and a total of 13,445 interviews were conducted, across 61 galleries, giving an overall margin of error of  $\pm 1\%$ . Data was weighted according to the relative number of visitors at each gallery.

Inside is a selection of findings that combine the English and Welsh results.



## 1. Age

Q. Which of the following age groups do you belong to?



The pilot age benchmark shows an over-representation of people aged 20-34 and an under-representation of those aged 65 or older, compared to the population. However the audience is fairly representative of those aged 35-64.

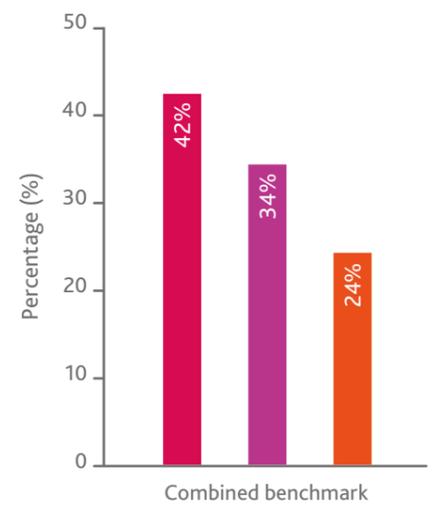
Looking at different regions, London has the youngest age profile with half of visitors aged under 35, the South East the oldest, with half the audience aged 55 or older.

This is a younger age profile than we see for performing arts.

## 2. Local or visitor?

Q. Which of the following apply to you?

- I live or work locally to the gallery
- I am visiting the gallery as part of a day trip from home
- I am visiting the gallery whilst on holiday



Just under half of the visual arts audience are 'locals', one third 'day trippers' and a quarter 'holiday makers'.

Looking at the different regions, the East Midlands has the largest proportion of 'local' visitors; the South East the largest proportion of 'day trippers' and Wales the largest proportion of 'holiday makers'.

This question was not asked at London galleries; however postcode analysis shows that just over half of visitors are from overseas, one quarter from the South East and further quarter from elsewhere in the UK.

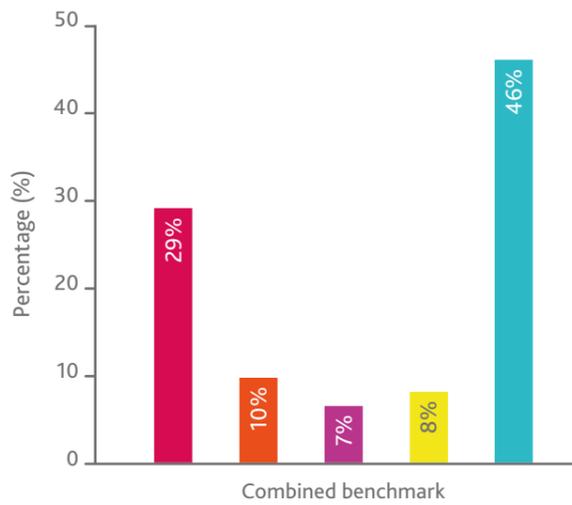
### How does this relate to your visitor profile?

What implications does this have for the different approaches required to reach 'locals', 'day trippers' and 'tourists'?

## 3. Frequency of attendance

Q. Have you visited [gallery] before?

- Yes in the last 12 months
- Yes, between 1-2 years ago
- Yes, between 2-5 years ago
- Yes, but more than 5 years ago
- No, this is my first visit



Almost half of visitors were making their first visit to the gallery ('first time visitors'); a quarter were visiting for the first time in over a year ('infrequent visitors') and just over a quarter had visited on another occasion in the last 12 months ('frequent visitors').

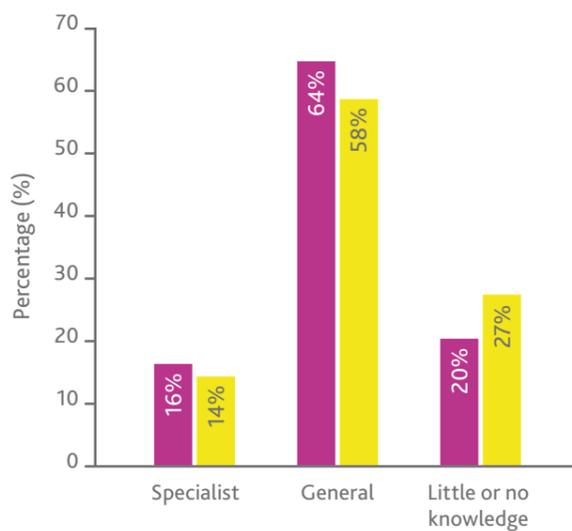
### Almost half of your visitors could be first-timers.

What are you doing to make their visit a positive experience?

## 4. Are your visitors art specialists?

Q. How would you describe your knowledge of art/craft?

- Art
- Craft



Just under two thirds of visitors identified themselves as having a general knowledge of art and about one fifth as being specialists or having little or no knowledge.

this is as much an indicator of the type of galleries that took part in the research in each region as it is of differences between the populations of each region.

Across all regions the majority of visitors considered they had a general knowledge of art/craft, and looking at different regions, the East had the largest proportion of specialists and the smallest proportion of those with little or no knowledge, whilst in Wales, it was the opposite. However, it is likely that

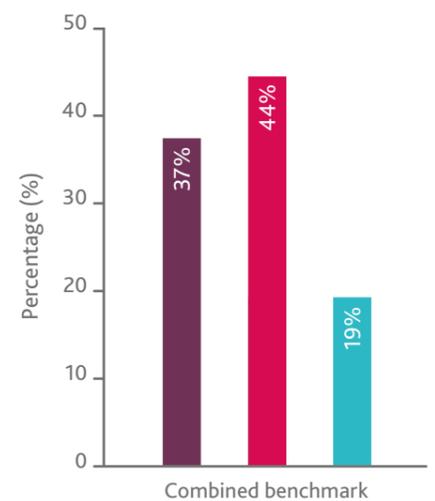
### The majority of your visitors are not art specialists.

What does this mean for your communications, your information and interpretation?

## 5. Purchasing contemporary art

Q. Have you ever bought, or would you consider buying a contemporary work of art?

- Yes, have bought
- Have not bought but would consider
- Would not consider



This question was used to define the potential for selling contemporary art to the existing gallery audience. In each region at least 70% of the audience consider themselves in the market for purchasing contemporary art (having either made a purchase in the past or would consider making one in the future). The East of England had the largest proportion of those in the market, whilst the East Midlands had the largest proportion which did not consider themselves in the market.

### What opportunities could you provide to generate income from art sales?

## Health warning!

Please note that data was collected during a specific and limited time period, and at a selected number of galleries, which may or may not be representative of their regions – therefore these charts do not describe the national audience for visual arts, nor the 'average' audience within the regions that took part.

## Find out more

You can find a sample questionnaire for you to adapt for your own research, as well as the full English report at:  
[www.audienceslondon.org](http://www.audienceslondon.org)

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