



## FACT SHEET: HOW AUSTRALIAN MUSICIANS DESCRIBE CAREER SUCCESS

The Australian study *Making Music Work: Sustainable Portfolio Careers for Australian Musicians* (2016–2019) explored the conditions and strategies needed for musicians to sustain successful portfolio careers. The project team mapped the creative, social, cultural and economic realities of the portfolio music career and delivered recommendations to address the realities this presents for Australian musicians. The study employed a national survey of 592 musicians and 11 in-depth interviews with a diverse group of musicians. This fact sheet examines how musicians describe their career success.

### How do Australian musicians define career success?

The 594 musicians who responded to our survey were asked to provide their own definition of career success. They were then asked to rate their success based on their given definition.

In their definition of success, the musicians mentioned an average of 1.95 different themes. The four most common of these were:

#### 1. Financial sustainability through music work (26.44% of responses):

- “being able to earn enough money to live on”
- “being able to support my family”
- “regular income”

#### 2. Achieving career goals and outcomes (10.24% of responses):

- “artistic achievement”
- “creative fulfillment”
- “achieving your music goals”

#### 3. Being recognised by peers and audience members (8.38% and 7.64% of the responses)

- “critical recognition, airplay and streaming”
- “being known and respected in the field”
- “mainstream visibility and recognition”
- “peer acceptance, radio airplay, [a] growing audience”

#### 4. Intrinsic satisfaction (7.64% of responses)

- “being happy or excited about the music I’m making”
- “creating the music that you love and making a living from it”

## To what extent do Australian musicians consider themselves to be successful?

Based on their own definition of success, the musicians in this study were asked to rate their success on a Likert-style scale where 1 = not at all successful and 5 = very successful.

On average and based on their own definitions, the musicians considered themselves to be ‘somewhat successful’. More experienced musicians (>10 years in the industry) rated themselves more highly on career success than musicians with less experience.



Self-defined career success ratings, mean (n = 291)

*“Overall, the musicians were more satisfied with their progress in terms of developing new skills, meeting artistic goals, and achieving career goals. They were least satisfied with their progress towards goals relating to income.”*

## How satisfied are musicians with their career progress?

The musicians also indicated how satisfied they were with different aspects of their careers, again using a 1–5 Likert-style scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Overall, the musicians were more satisfied with their progress in terms of developing new skills, meeting artistic goals, and achieving career goals. They were least satisfied with their progress towards goals relating to income.

Career satisfaction items (N=290)	Mean	SD
<i>I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards:</i>		
Meeting my goals for the development of new skills	3.81	0.89
Meeting my artistic goals	3.72	0.95
Meeting my overall career goals	3.61	0.98
Meeting my goals for advancement	3.37	1.01
Achieving a career balance	3.27	1.11
Meeting my goals for income	2.88	1.23

Musicians’ responses were analysed according to the number of years they had practised as a musician: less than 5 years; 5–10 years; 11–20 years; and more than 20 years. There was some variation in the age at which musicians began their practice, but reports of more than 20 years of experience tended to come from musicians aged 40 or more.

Musicians at each career stage reported fairly neutral ratings in relation to *meeting goals for income* (M = 2.88, SD = 1.23). This suggests that there is little change across the career lifespan.

To read more about these findings, you can download the full report, summary brochure, and musician profiles at [www.makingmusicwork.com.au](http://www.makingmusicwork.com.au)

*Making Music Work* was funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant and led by Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre (QCRC), Griffith University, with industry partners, Australia Council for the Arts, Create NSW, Creative Victoria, Western Australian Government – Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), and institutional partner Curtin University. The research team included Professor Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, Professor Dawn Bennett, Professor Ruth Bridgstock, Professor Scott Harrison, Professor Paul Draper, Professor Vanessa Tomlinson and Research Fellow Dr Christina Ballico.