

# Data Note

Subject Artists' workspaces  
Project London's Cultural Spaces: 2018-2022  
Date 20.12.2023

## Artists' workspaces

Definition: Sites with buildings which provide workspace either solely for artists or a mixture of artists and other creative industries tenants. Artistic activity is defined as a fine artist whose visual output and medium involves the production of original works of research, exploration or artistic expression, either one-of-a-kind or in a limited number of copies. Activity in this context is not driven by commercial gain (although they are by no means prohibited from having this). The approach to the production of art is driven by the artist, not the client. Sites may also provide for a mix of creative tenants as well as artists.

## Overview

The number of mapped artists' workspace sites in London increased slightly between 2018 and 2022, from 264 to 270. In total, 48 sites closed (18%) and 54 new sites opened. This means that roughly 1 in 5 artists' workspaces in London opened in the last 4 years. 3 sites (1%) have relocated within London. This slight increase in artists' workspace sites corresponds to a wider trend in open workspace provision and contrasts with other types of cultural and creative production infrastructure.

A significant proportion of artist workspaces that closed were in Inner London, in particular the London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets. Nevertheless, inner London boroughs such as Hackney, Southwark and Tower Hamlets also saw new sites open and continue to be where most artists' workspaces in London are. The boroughs with the highest number of new sites are Lewisham (7) and Waltham Forest (6), showing the movement of new infrastructure eastwards on both sides of the river.

The sites that closed recently include both sites managed by multi-site providers and a number of independent spaces. On the contrary, many of the new sites are operated by multi-site providers such as Arbeit (8 new site openings), Bow Arts (8 new sites), and SET (5 new sites), suggesting the growing importance of these organisations in the provision of artists' workspace. Since a large proportion of the newly opened spaces are meanwhile uses, the recent changes in artists' workspace provision in London have led to a decrease in tenure security. The survey of cultural space providers revealed that the managing organisations own the freehold on only 6.2% of the sites that provide artists' workspaces in London. The 2014 Artists' Workspace Study showed that 17% of reported sites were owned by freehold. The number reported in the 2018 Artists' Workspace Annual Data Note was 13%.

## Rising cost of artists' workspace

The 2018 Artist's Workspace Data Note showed an increase in the rent paid by artists' workspace users. This is a continuing trend, and information from 80 artists' workspace sites across London collected in May 2022 suggests that the average charge to workspace occupiers increased by 22% since the previous data capture. During this period, the number of sites that charge on average less than £11 per sq. ft per annum dropped by 66% and the number of sites that charge on average more than £19 doubled, suggesting that the rising cost affected the whole spectrum of artists' workspaces.

However, these figures understate the actual increase in the cost of artists' workspace between 2017 and 2022. The timing of the study means that the data captured do not fully reflect the inflationary pressures of 2022, including the dramatic increase in utility prices. Some providers increased their charges shortly before the data was collected, and more providers might have done so since. In addition, the reported numbers to a different extent include or exclude utility payments. As a consequence, the dramatic increase in energy prices in 2022 complicates any over-time comparison.