



Image credit: the Designers in Residence 2018, by Felix Speller for the Design Museum

Percentage of women in design workforce has remained virtually unchanged in over a decade

05 November 2018
the Design Museum

Women make up only 22% of design workforce

This represents an increase of only 4% since 2004

As it marks the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage, London's Design Museum today reveals shocking gender imbalance in the design industry

New analysis by the Design Museum reveals that women are underrepresented in the UK design workforce. ONS figures show that as of March 2018 only 22% of those working in occupations associated with design were women. This represents an increase of only 4% since 2004, when only 18% of those employed in the design industry were women.

At A-Level, girls currently make up almost 70% of entrants for design-heavy subjects but this uptake does not feed through to the design workforce where women continue to remain underrepresented.

Design-related jobs where women are underrepresented include architects, civil engineers, town planners, software designers fashion and product designers and more.

The Design Museum's first high profile event to address gender representation in design takes place on the 7th and 8th December. 'Women Design' is a two-day programme of talks hosted by curator Libby Sellers featuring leading architects **Farshid Moussavi** and **Odile Decq**, graphic designers **Marina Willer** and **Frith Kerr**, a keynote from leading urban sociologist **Saskia Sassen**, and a pre-recorded lecture by **Denise Scott Brown** commissioned by the Sir John Soane's Museum, and many more.

This weekend also marks 100 years since the first UK general election in which women were permitted to vote. The Women Design talks are intended to stimulate debate about the lack of gender diversity in the sector, and guests will hear from emerging designers taking part in the Designers in Residence project, which for the first year has an exclusively female line up.

The Designers in Residence programme at the Design Museum is a core part of the museum's activity, supporting new designers, from any discipline, with time and space away from their regular environment to reflect, research and consider new ways of developing their practice.

The new analysis has been undertaken as part of the Design Museum's Design in Britain campaign, which aims to demonstrate why British design must be at the centre of our economic future.

Commenting, **Co-Director of the Design Museum Alice Black** said:

"As we mark 100 years since the first UK general election in which a percentage of women were permitted to vote, these figures show just how far we have to go - in many spheres - in order to reach equality.

"The fact that the percentage of women working in the design workforce has remained virtually unchanged since 2004 shows a real failure to draw on all the talents out there, and promote inclusiveness in our industry.

"We must take this moment to commit to work together to improve gender diversity in all sectors of the workforce. In the design industry, this means encouraging girls who take design-related subjects in schools to become product designers and civil engineers.

At the museum we are committed to finding new ways to make women more visible in the design industry and inspire change, and I am delighted that we have a cohort of talented women designers in the Designers in Residence project this year."

Commenting, **Design Curator, Writer and Consultant Libby Sellers** said:

"While we might think that women's voices are echoing around the world right now through the Time's Up and #MeToo movements, in design publications, conferences, judging panels and other public realms, women designers tend to be outnumbered by their male counterparts. Whatever the

rationale behind the gender bias, it has already eliminated or repressed an overwhelming majority of talent in the industry. To continue without championing a balance, would only encourage an impoverished future for design as a result. Perhaps, as we will do through Women Design, by highlighting some of the historical injustices and also seeking out and celebrating role models we might be able to create a discernible difference”

Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries Margot James said:

"We are a global-leader in design and tech, with new statistics released last week showing a record-breaking year for the UK's creative industries. Making sure our workforce reflects the diversity of society is not only the right thing to do but it also makes good business sense. We launched the Tech Talent Charter last year and 270 firms have since signed a pledge to improve the gender diversity of their tech workforce. We are also developing a new apprenticeship in architecture and boosting diversity is an important pillar of the new institute of coding."

END -

Notes to Editors

About the Design Museum

The Design Museum is the world's leading design museum and European Museum of the Year for 2018

The Design Museum is the place in the UK where the design industry, education and the public come together to change the way people think about themselves and the future

The Design Museum is a registered charity founded in 1989

The Design Museum relocated to a spectacular modern landmark in Kensington in 2016

Women Design

The Design Museum is hosting 'Women Design' on Friday 7 December and Saturday 8 December to mark 100 years since the first general election in which a percentage of women voted for the first time in the UK. In commemoration of the suffragettes' ultimate victory, and as a stark reminder of the need to improve gender inequality in the industry, Libby Sellers and the Design Museum host a two-day series of talks on women in design.

Libby Sellers is a Design curator, consultant and writer of 'Women Design: Pioneers in Architecture, Industrial, Graphic and Digital Design from the Twentieth Century to the Present Day'

[Please click here to find out more about Women Design at the Design Museum.](#)

Design in Residence (DiR)

An annual project hosted by the Design Museum in partnership with Arts Council England, which for the first time ever has an all-female line up. This year the Design Museum has invited designers and architects to respond to the theme 'dwelling' More than ever before, our preconceptions of the home are being challenged. In the UK, the rising cost of housing has priced younger generations out of property markets and new technologies are expanding ideas of domesticity. How can design respond to these challenges and how are our changing perceptions of the home influenced by design?

Official Media Partner for Designers in Residence

BLUEPRINT

Designers in Residence Projects 2018

Designer: Hester Buck

Project Name: Growing Common Land

One-line description: A five-point manifesto which celebrates the green spaces of post-war housing estates in London

Description: Hester has created an archive of community gardening projects within inner-city high and mid-rise tower blocks. The project celebrates their value and highlights the social infrastructure present in these estates that many claim they lack. The archive demonstrates the value of green spaces and provides evidence to support the creation of new gardens. For the showcase, a trail of plants around the museum will create a living example of each of the five points of her manifesto.

Designer: Helga Schmid

Project Name: Circadian Dreams

One-line description: An installation exploring the body's circadian cycle

Description: Helga investigates how we live with and within time, and how this can relate to our future dwelling. Often contemporary life is dictated by established forms of time – with modern technology fragmenting our sense of time. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines design, biology and sociology Helga imagines a utopia of time – or Uchronia. The installation invites visitors to enter the 'Uchronia' by relaxing in bed and feeling the influence of sound and whispering voices, encouraging them to listen to their body rhythm.

Designer: Ella Bulley

Project Name: inter-Patria

One-line description: A project exploring how Ghanaian expats and repats make objects into collectible memories

Description: Advances in travel and technology have resulted in an increased movement of people, ideas and experiences. Ella's project explores the connections between expats and repats from the Ghanaian community through a series of design objects that have helped them to adapt to new dwelling places, questioning the way that the geographical movement of people influences how objects are designed for the home. The labels for this installation have been translated into Twi, a dialect of the Akan language spoken in southern and central Ghana by several million

people. Objects include ceramic scent vessels, jesmonite tiles and a travellers trunk.

Designer: Legrand Jäger

Project Name: The Internet of Ears

One-line description: A performance that questions how technologies that listen can influence our lives.

Description: Design collective Legrand Jäger's project focuses on voice-controlled smart home devices to explore how our understanding of the home and its barriers are shifting, which brings with it massive societal and ethical implications. By applying the learning process used by the devices to a neutral network, and training it to study political speeches concerning Brexit, they have developed a performance that speculates on how policy makers might use the sound of our dwellings in decision making.

Design in Britain

This November, the Design Museum launched its campaign: Design in Britain, powering a new industrial age. The campaign aims to demonstrate why British design must be at the centre of Britain's economic future. Britain is a nation of creators and inventors, builders and makers. As we stand on the cusp of a new industrial age, with technology transforming the way we live, work and communicate, it is new design and innovation that is going to sustain Britain in the rest of the world; it is design that can create growth and jobs; and it is design that propels research and innovation.

Design Council

Traditional design occupations as defined by the [Design Council in Design Economy 2017 report](#) include: mechanical engineers, design engineers, graphic designers, fashion designers, dressmakers, creative directors, product designers, game designers, software designers, ceramic designers, glassmakers, civil engineers, architects, town planners.

ONS Data

Figures taken from ONS data with design jobs identified using Standard Occupied Classification (SOC) codes provided by the Design Council in the report [Design Economy 2018 report](#).

Design workforce by gender, 2004/05-2017/18

	<u>04-05</u>	<u>05-06</u>	<u>06-07</u>	<u>07-08</u>	<u>08-09</u>	<u>09-10</u>	<u>10-11</u>	<u>11-12</u>	<u>12-13</u>	<u>13-14</u>	<u>14-15</u>	<u>15-16</u>	<u>16-17</u>	<u>17-18</u>
Total	1,170	1,186	1,227	1,256	1,264	1,227	1,282	1,217	1,310	1,355	1,405	1,433	1,521	1,525
Men	963	979	1,006	1,029	1,032	999	1,049	995	1,060	1,073	1,119	1,136	1,178	1,190

Women	208	207	220	228	233	228	233	222	250	282	286	296	342	335
Men %	82.3 %	82.5 %	82.0 %	81.9 %	81.6 %	81.5 %	81.8 %	81.8 %	80.9 %	79.2 %	79.6 %	79.3 %	77.5 %	78.0 %
Women %	17.7 %	17.5 %	18.0 %	18.1 %	18.4 %	18.5 %	18.2 %	18.2 %	19.1 %	20.8 %	20.4 %	20.7 %	22.5 %	22.0 %

Figures given in thousands (000).

2009/10

2016/17

	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
Design and Technology	6,715	8,529	15,244	4,171	6,417	10,588
Art and Design	30,929	11,855	42,784	30,326	9,759	40,085
Total	37,644	20,384	58,028	34,497	16,176	50,673

% females

64.9%

68.1%

A Level entries in England, 2009/10 and 2016/17 by gender: