

Culture and Arts

Culture is an inseparable part of our lives. We create it and are affected by it. It is a source of development, creativity and innovation in our lives and plays an important role in framing our values and shaping our worldviews. It also creates actual social change and changes in perception.

Examining culture and art through a gender lens teaches us that in Israel, like in many other countries, gender inequality still exists in creation and in representation. In terms of students, there is an equal number of women and men, and even a majority of women, among the graduates of fine arts at the different institutions of higher learning. Thus, for example, in the Faculty of Arts at Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts, women accounted 100% of the graduates in 2019 and 2020 (Dekel, unpublished). However, in the world of work and creative endeavors following their studies, women creators are still a minority – on the music charts, in filmmaking, in writing and directing plays, in showing works at exhibitions, etc. Additionally, like in other fields, women are underrepresented in decision-making positions in the art and culture sectors. The small number of women also affects the content that is ultimately consumed by the audience because, according to research on the subject, there is a close correlation between the institutional environment responsible for creating the content and the content it creates and promotes.

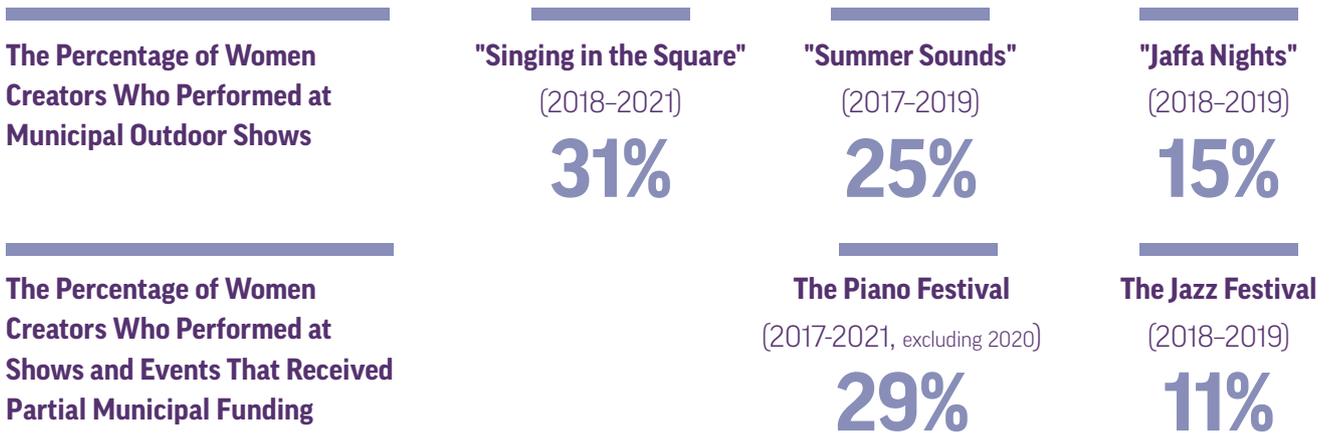


Tel Aviv-Yafo is a magnet and beacon for creative endeavors and the arts. Most of the large theaters and museums in the country are located in the city, and the outdoor shows and cultural events that take place here draw audiences from both Israel and overseas. This chapter, led by the Culture and Arts Division at the Community, and the Resilience and Social Equality Authority, examines the current situation in Tel Aviv-Yafo through a gender lens. It also reviews the literature dealing with barriers to equality and provides examples from the world that have led to change. These have shown, among other things, the importance of top-down policy for advancing equality in these areas. Based on all of the above, the chapter suggests action items designed to encourage more diversity in the creative arts and open the door to women creators in the city in the different disciplines.

Mapping the Current Situation in Tel Aviv-Yafo

Outdoor shows

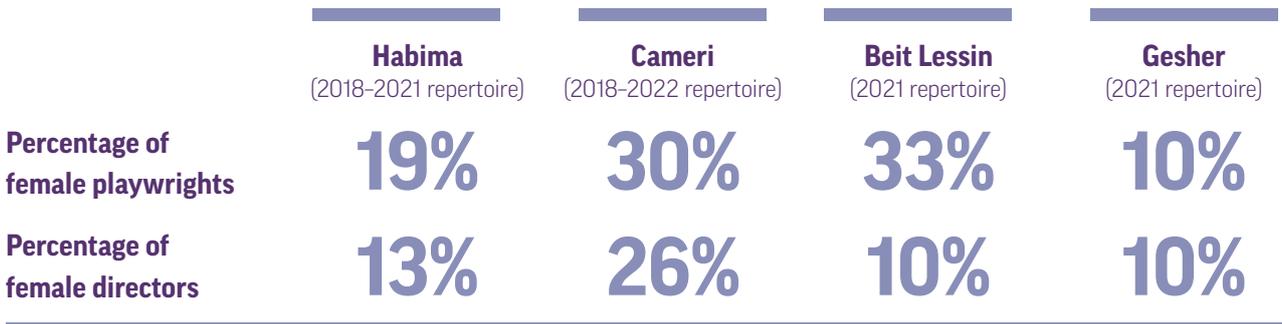
Outdoor shows in Tel Aviv-Yafo have the most visibility in the city and are budgeted by the Municipality. There are also events and shows held in the city which are not sponsored by the Municipality but receive partial municipal funding. Significant differences exist between the percentage of women and men creators who perform at the shows.*



*Based on an analysis of data obtained from the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality and relevant municipally-owned corporations.

Theater

Tel Aviv-Yafo is a theater superpower - the vast majority of the repertory theaters in Israel work in the city and the plays they produce are staged throughout the country. At the large theaters in the city, there are significant disparities between the number of female and male playwrights and directors. The low representation of female playwrights and directors also affects their subsequent career paths. For the most part, this can be attributed to the threshold requirements for becoming an artistic director, which include experience in a large number of productions, working with large budgets, and putting on plays on important stages.



Unlike the large repertory theaters, a higher or even equal or close to equal number of female playwrights and directors can be found at the small theaters, which are categorized as fringe or children's theaters (such as Hasimta Theater, Tmuna, Tzavta, and the Orna Porat Theater for Children and Youth).

An analysis of the existing situation highlights another interesting fact: at most of the theaters, women mainly directed plays that were written by women except in isolated cases, and men hardly ever directed plays that were written by women. In other words, quite often the theatrical content put on at the different institutions does not provide a stage to the voices and stories of women, which underscores the correlation between the content creation mechanisms and the content that is created.

Museums

Two of the largest three museums in Israel are located in the city – the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and MUSA Eretz Israel Museum (both of which are municipally-owned corporations).

➤ According to 2018-2019 data, most of the exhibition curators at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and at MUSA Eretz Israel Museum were women.

Among the exhibiting artists at the museums, despite the positive trend, full equality has not yet been achieved: women accounted for 37% of the exhibiting artists at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and 41% at MUSA Eretz Israel Museum.

At both museums, there were fewer solo exhibitions of female artists than of male artists: 33% at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and 37.5% at MUSA Eretz Israel Museum.



Libraries

There are 22 libraries in Tel Aviv-Yafo, the largest of which is Beit Ariela. Every year, hundreds of cultural activities are held at the libraries across the city.

➤ Women account for the majority of library cardholders (63%) and the majority of readers (2018-2020 data). Furthermore, it is mostly women who deliver the variety of activities held at the libraries, with the exception of lectures and story hours (2020 data).

Municipal budgetary support

The Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality supports different nonprofit organizations dedicated to cultural enrichment. The support is based on criteria that are in line with the criteria defined by the Israeli Ministry of Culture. To encourage creative endeavors and the display of works of art throughout the city, the Municipality also offers grants to independent artists engaged in a variety of disciplines.

➤ 2021 data regarding the support provided by the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality to nonprofit organizations dedicated to cultural enrichment (in accordance with the criteria stipulated in national legislation) indicate that most of the supported nonprofits have a majority of men on their executive boards (56%), but around 43% are managed by women CEOs.

➤ 2018-2020 data regarding municipal support extended to independent artists indicate that more women applied for support than men, and women are also the majority of the municipal support recipients (63% compared to 37%). These numbers highlight the importance of a municipal investment in advancing women in culture and the arts.

Prizes and commemoration

Every year the Municipality awards municipal prizes to encourage and acknowledge creators engaged in the different areas of culture and the arts. Additionally, the "In This House" ("BeBait Ze") project has been in operation in the city since the year 2000. Its purpose is to commemorate artists who lived, created and worked in Tel Aviv-Yafo by hanging commemorative plaques on the facades of their homes. The project has commemorated 61 women compared to 211 men (22.4% women). To advance gender equality in the project, in 2019 a section was added to its regulations, according to which "the commemoration of women will be considered to the extent possible."

In 2017, of 12 municipal prizes awarded by the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality to creators, only 2 prizes were given to women (16%).

THIS GENDER DISPARITY LED TO A REVISION OF THE PROCEDURES GOVERNING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRIZES,

designed to ensure adequate representation on the awards committees and highlight the importance of the matter to the members of the committees. The revised procedures also called for reaching out to communities and forums of women and encouraging applications for the prizes.



In 2021, of the 14 prizes, **8 WERE AWARDED TO WOMEN (57%).**

Barriers to Gender Equality in Culture and the Arts

Similar to other places in Israel and around the world, the review of the current situation in Tel Aviv-Yafo indicates the existence of gender differences in the participation of women and men in culture and the arts – both in terms of works that gain recognition as well as representation in decision-making positions.

Why is this the case? A review of the literature dealing with gender inequality in the arts indicates that, similar to other sectors of the labor market, women face barriers to participation and advancement after completing their studies. Among other things, this can be attributed to a work environment that makes it

difficult to combine work with care obligations (which women bear more) and to the lack of role models and networking options. Exposure to sexual harassment is also a factor.

In recent years, a growing number of testimonies have been reported about sexual harassment and assaults that women experienced while working in theaters – whether as actresses or as creators. Numerous research studies suggest that this is one of the main barriers and also the most difficult one to resolve.

Additionally, in the culture and art worlds there are content 'gatekeepers' (such as reviewers, artistic directors, art critics, etc.), who for the most part praise experiences and stories of men which are perceived as being universal, whereas those of women are perceived as being marginal. Women researchers have repeatedly shown how the greatest barrier faced by women artists is the perception of male artists as representing the art world (accordingly, there is one definition of an 'artist' – and another one for a 'woman artist'; there is fine art which is identified with men, and there is craft which is more inferior and identified with women). This perception ultimately leads to the underrepresentation of women artists.



What did we learn from other parts of the world?



In **Vienna, Austria**, an event checklist is used to help the organizers consider gender equality aspects in advance, through questions such as: What is the composition of the executive board or the artistic advisory board in charge of the event? How many female and male speakers will there be at the event? How many female and male participants will be in attendance, and will they receive equal visibility? How is the event being promoted? Is it suitable for women and men alike in terms of the time and place? – and more.

In **London**, the National Theatre announced a gender vision in July 2020, according to which by March 2022 50% of the playwrights will be women and 50% of the plays will be directed by women. As of 2021, progress had been made in each of the focus areas announced by the National Theatre.



In the **European Union**, the She-Culture project was in operation until 2015. It examined the representation of women artists at museums in Europe, worked to raise awareness about the visibility of women artists, and created networking between museums across Europe.



Action Items for Advancing Gender Equality in Culture and the Arts in Tel Aviv-Yafo

For Implementation Within Five Years

- Advancing municipal policy
- Introducing binding municipal gender equality directives (50%-50%): at municipally-run shows (starting in January 2023), at the repertory theaters (starting in the 2025-2026 season), and at museums (starting in the 2027 season)
 - Incentivizing nonprofit organizations that receive support from the Municipality in order to advance women and gender equality 
 - Creating a special position to promote gender equality issues at the Culture and Arts Division at the Municipality

- Collecting data and creating a body of knowledge
- Broadening the knowledge about the characteristics, needs and barriers unique to woman creators in culture and the arts in the city (surveys, focus groups, roundtables, etc.) 
 - Gathering and conducting a gender analysis of information regarding content creators, activities and creative outcomes (the shows, the plays, the exhibitions, etc.) 

- Holding gender equality trainings in the city
- Holding special gender mainstreaming trainings for the management and staff of municipal cultural and art institutions
 - Expanding the trainings on the prevention of sexual harassment at cultural institutions and municipally-owned corporations

- Increasing the representation of female content creators
- Extending municipal assistance in marketing and advertising cultural and art events of women creators
 - Advancing women in culture and the arts in the city by means of special art and culture festivals, professional panels dealing with gender equality and women's representation, workshops for creators, networking and mentoring events, and more. 

- Advancing policy at the national level
- Advancing policy together with the Ministry of Culture in the matter of granting incentives to nonprofit organizations dedicated to cultural enrichment, for the purpose of advancing adequate representation and gender equality, preventing sexual harassment, and gathering and conducting gender analysis of the data
 - Conducting a survey about the prevalence of sexual harassment in culture and the arts together with the Ministry of Culture and the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, whose findings will be used to develop and implement solutions and ways to address the problem



*Already in progress

[Click here to read the introduction and the other chapters of the plan >>](#)

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