

Art Collecting 2021:

In 2021, every art collector
is an online art collector.

An Artsy Report

ARTSY

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Henni Alftan, detail of *Augenblick*, 2019. Courtesy of Galerie Claire Gastaud.

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Foreword

In 2019, Artsy produced “The Online Art Collector Report,” which examined the behaviors of collectors who bought art online as a subset of the broader community of art collectors. At the time, online sales accounted for just 9% of the entire art market. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, most in-person art world events transitioned to digital-only affairs, and purchasing work online became the only way for many collectors to support artists and their galleries, participate in auctions, or attend fairs. Online art sales more than doubled in value year over year to make

up a quarter of the art market in 2020. Now, in 2021, every art collector is an online art collector.

Supporting artists and their galleries, participating in auctions, and attending art fairs means, by definition, using digital tools to discover, research, acquire, and sell artworks. This was especially true over the past year, when health and safety measures brought on by COVID-19 forced most of the art market’s tentpole in-person events, like major auctions and fairs, to happen exclusively online. Artists kept contact

with their audiences and reached new ones through social media and other channels. Galleries, forced to close their brick-and-mortar spaces, redoubled their digital efforts or, in some cases, moved online for the first time—holding virtual exhibitions, building online viewing rooms, investing in programming on online marketplaces, and more. These activities are now integral parts of the art world.

2,290
Surveyed

To better understand how collectors are navigating the art market online, Artsy surveyed thousands of art collectors about their online habits, preferences, pet peeves, and more. For the purposes of this report, we defined “collectors” as the respondents who said they had purchased art multiple times and who had spent at least \$10,000 on art in 2019 or 2020, or expect to do so in 2021. This cohort included 765 of the survey’s 2,290 respondents, was predominantly (72.3%) male, and more than half of them (51%) reported a net worth of

\$1 million or more. Within this pool of collectors, we also looked more closely at the collecting behaviors of people who started collecting in the last four years, whom we call “Next-Gen Collectors.” This cohort includes 139 respondents, representing about one-fifth of the overall collector group.

One thing is clear from the responses: Collectors see their online activities as inseparable from and essential to their experience of the art market.

765
Collectors

139
Next-generation
art collectors

The online art market has doubled in value year over year—making up 25% of the overall art market in 2020.

- Over 83% of respondents said they have purchased art online at least once, a significant jump from the 64% who reported doing so in 2019.
- The internet also became an increasingly important channel for driving offline purchases. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) said they'd made in-person purchases of works they'd first discovered online.
- More than half of respondents (57%) said online art marketplaces allowed them to discover new artists or works that they eventually bought (whether

online or offline). By comparison, less than half (40%) said social media had been an essential tool for discovering new art and artists.

Despite the art world's widespread shift online over the past year, many long-held habits in the art industry continue to restrain the market's expansion, most notably the lack of price visibility. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) said the lack of visible pricing was one of the most important factors preventing them from buying art online. Such information imbalances, whereby

a small number of industry gatekeepers control price data and have the power to decide who does and doesn't get the opportunity to purchase works, were standard practice in the art industry for the last few decades and kept the market confined to elite groups, putting a ceiling on its growth. But these practices are increasingly out of step with buyers' needs and expectations. On Artsy, the number of works uploaded with ecommerce functionality, which requires a visible price, increased 120% year over year in 2020. And we've seen that works

on the platform listed with visible prices are five times more likely to be acquired than those without.

According to Clare McAndrew's "The Art Market 2021" report, the online art market more than doubled in value year over year, from \$6 billion in 2019 to \$12.4 billion in 2020. Opening up historic barriers to entry and understanding the expectations of Next-Gen Collectors will be essential to accelerating the growth of the art market as a whole and to providing greater support to artists and gallerists.

Key Findings



Jordan Kasey, detail of *Hands with Black Mountains*, 2013. Courtesy of Coleccion SOLO.

1

Every collector is an online collector

Among respondents, 83% said they had purchased art online, up from 64% of collectors in our 2019 survey. Online art market participation was even higher among Next-Gen Collectors, 91% of whom said they bought art online.

2

Collectors are buying more artworks now than before

More than two-thirds of collectors (68%) said they bought as many or more works of art in the previous 12 months than in a normal year. Among Next-Gen Collectors, 56% said they'd bought more works in the past year.

3

New collectors are buying as frequently as seasoned collectors

Among Next-Gen Collectors, about 44% said they'd purchased fewer than 5 works of art in the previous 12 months; 31% said they'd purchased 5 to 9 works in that time; 16% had purchased 10 to 25 pieces; and 9% purchased more than 25 artworks. These numbers barely differed from the buying patterns of the wider respondent base over the same period, of whom 40% purchased fewer than 5 works of art; 30% purchased 5 to 9; 17% purchased 10 to 25; and 9% purchased over 25.

4

Collectors embraced the online marketplace

More than half of collectors surveyed (58%) said they had used an online marketplace such as Artsy to purchase art, up from 41% in 2019.

5

Online marketplaces facilitated discovery

Online art marketplaces were the most popular place to discover art and artists online, just ahead of auction houses and gallery websites or viewing rooms, and well ahead of Instagram.

6

New collectors browse and buy on their phones

Among Next-Gen Collectors, 64% said that they preferred to find new artists on their phones. Next-Gen Collectors were also more likely to purchase art from their mobile devices: 56% said they prefer to buy via an app or mobile website on their phones.

7

Collectors expect visible prices on artworks

Nearly two-thirds (62%) of respondents said the lack of visible prices was a hindrance to buying art online. This was even more pronounced among Next-Gen Collectors, 71% of whom said it was a roadblock to purchasing art online.

8

Collectors sell their art where they are—online

More than a quarter of collectors surveyed (27%) said they had sold or consigned works online, and another 34% said they plan to. Among Next-Gen Collectors, only 18% of respondents said they'd sold or consigned works from their collections online, but a larger share (43%) said they plan to.

9

Despite the hype, NFTs remain niche

Only 5% of survey respondents said they'd purchased an NFT, while another 9% said they plan to. Next-Gen Collectors are somewhat more engaged with NFTs, with 9% saying they had bought an NFT, while an additional 10% said they plan to do so.

10

There is no single reason to collect

More than two-thirds of collectors (67%) said one of their main reasons for buying art was to build a collection; 58% said it was to decorate their space; 47% said supporting artists was a principal motivator; and 46% said they collect to be inspired. Another 42% said investment was one of the main reasons they collect art.

Next-Gen Collectors



Coady Brown, *Aint the way you found me*, 2020. Courtesy of Harper's.

Next-Gen Collectors began collecting within the last four years and spent \$10,000 or more on art in at least one of those years.

Gallerists consistently say that creating and nurturing relationships with new collectors is essential for their businesses to thrive. Our survey shows that collectors who are just starting out have different needs, priorities, and preferences from those who've been in the market for many years.

For this report, we defined these Next-Gen Collectors as people who began buying art within the last four years, and who have spent \$10,000 or more on art in at least one year during that period. Roughly 140 of the 2,290

respondents to our survey fell into this category. Nearly two-thirds of them (65%) were between 18 and 44 years of age, making them significantly younger than the overall cohort, 69% of whom were 45 or older. Below, we'll look at these collectors' art budgets, favored methods for making purchases, buying habits, and motivations.

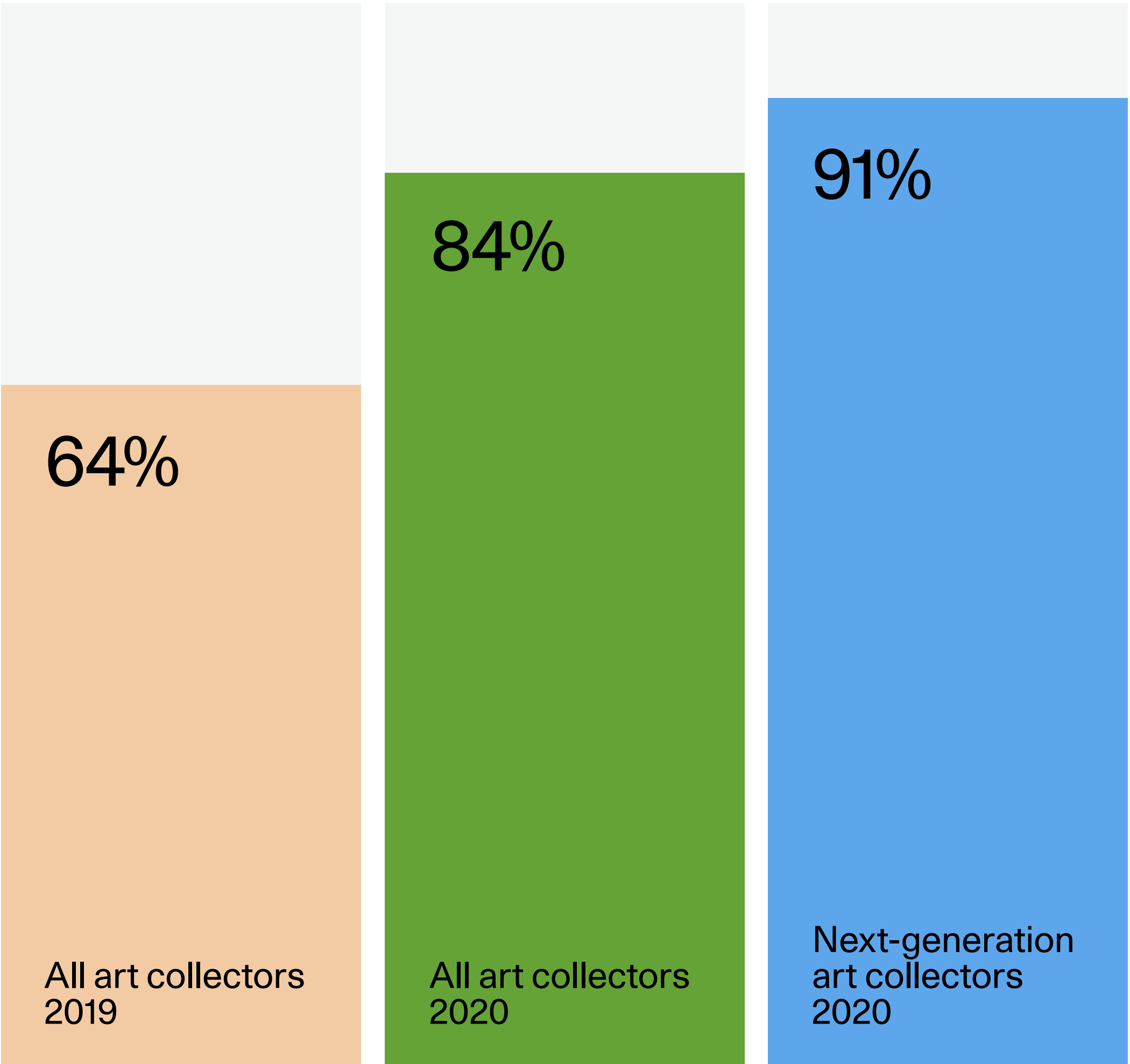
Among Next-Gen Collectors, almost one-third said the average price point of works they purchased was \$10,000 or more, dispelling a myth that collectors who are new to the art

market only purchase at lower price points. More than half of the Next-Gen Collectors said they purchased more artworks in the previous 12 months (April 2020 to April 2021) than they had in typical years prior. This suggests that while the pandemic has not changed whether collectors buy art, it has changed how they buy art and accelerated shifts in their behavior.

The most obvious behavioral differences between Next-Gen Collectors and the entire cohort of collectors surveyed are how they discover and buy artworks. Next-Gen Collectors were slightly more likely to consult an online art marketplace before purchasing a work of art compared to the entire collector cohort, and nearly twice as likely to use social media to inform their collecting. This growing adoption of online discovery and collecting in the art market may partly have been spurred by the pandemic,

but it also echoes shifts underway long before COVID-19. In our 2019 survey, 57% of collectors who'd started buying in the previous year said they intended to buy more work online. And according to art economist Clare McAndrew's report "The Art Market 2021," millennials became the art market's biggest spenders for the first time in 2020, putting a generation that came of age with the internet in the driver's seat.

Collectors who buy art online



Next-Gen Collectors are more likely to conduct their own research online than to rely on traditional art market gatekeepers.

Over 90% of Next-Gen Collectors said they have purchased art online—nearly 10% more than all collectors. More than half of the remaining Next-Gen Collectors who hadn't yet bought online said that they plan to. Unlike respondents who have been collecting for longer and who were more likely to tap gallerists, art advisors, and auction house specialists for counsel, Next-Gen Collectors are more likely to conduct their own research online. Their two preferred sources of information to consult before making a purchase were auction results

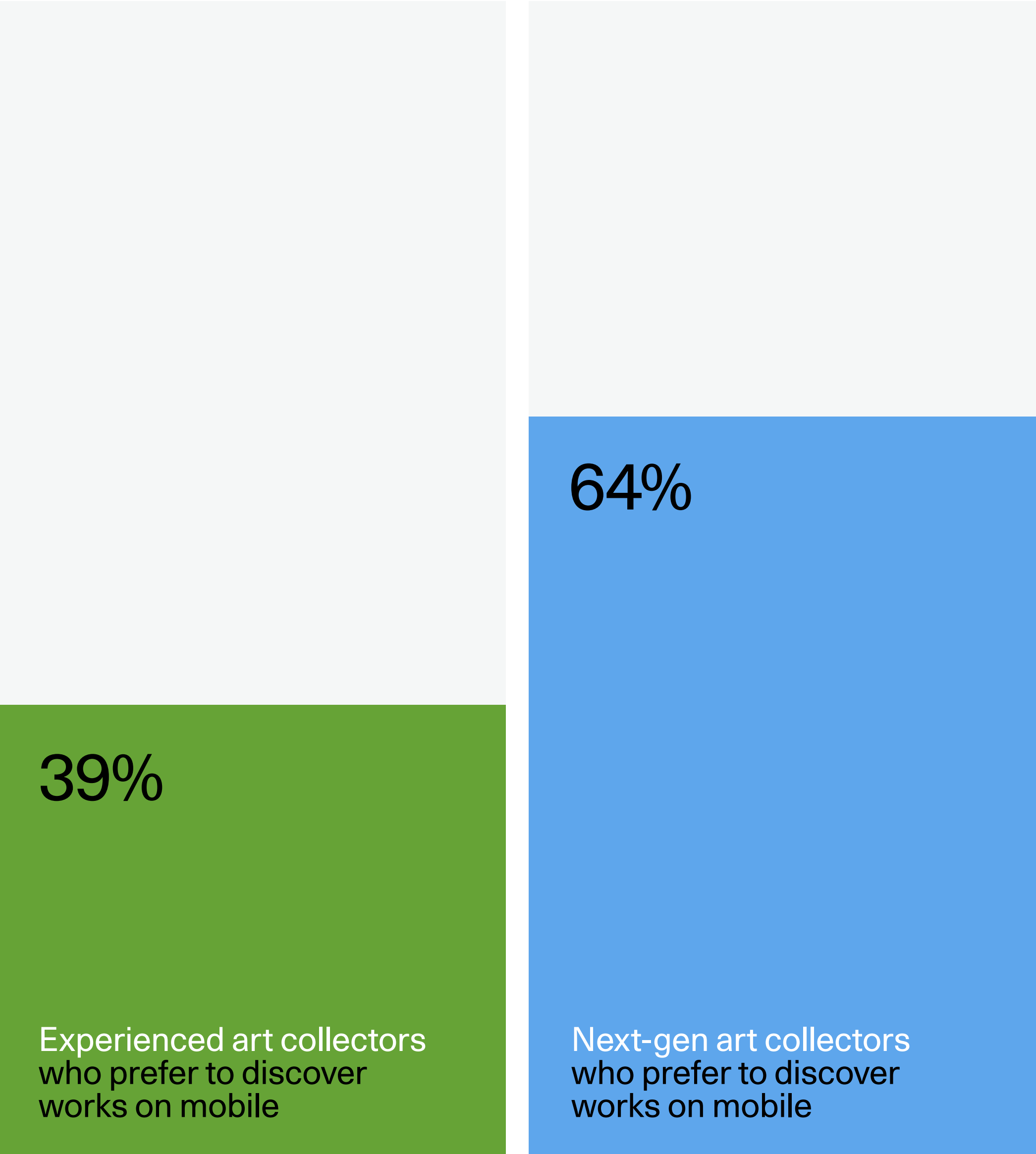
(47%) and online art marketplaces (46%). A potential upshot of Next-Gen Collectors' preference for conducting their own research to guide their collecting is that they may be more likely to develop unique tastes or discover truly off-the-radar artists than collectors relying on traditional market gatekeepers.

Among respondents who have been collecting for 10 years or more, the two most popular pre-purchase resources to consult were auction results and art world professionals

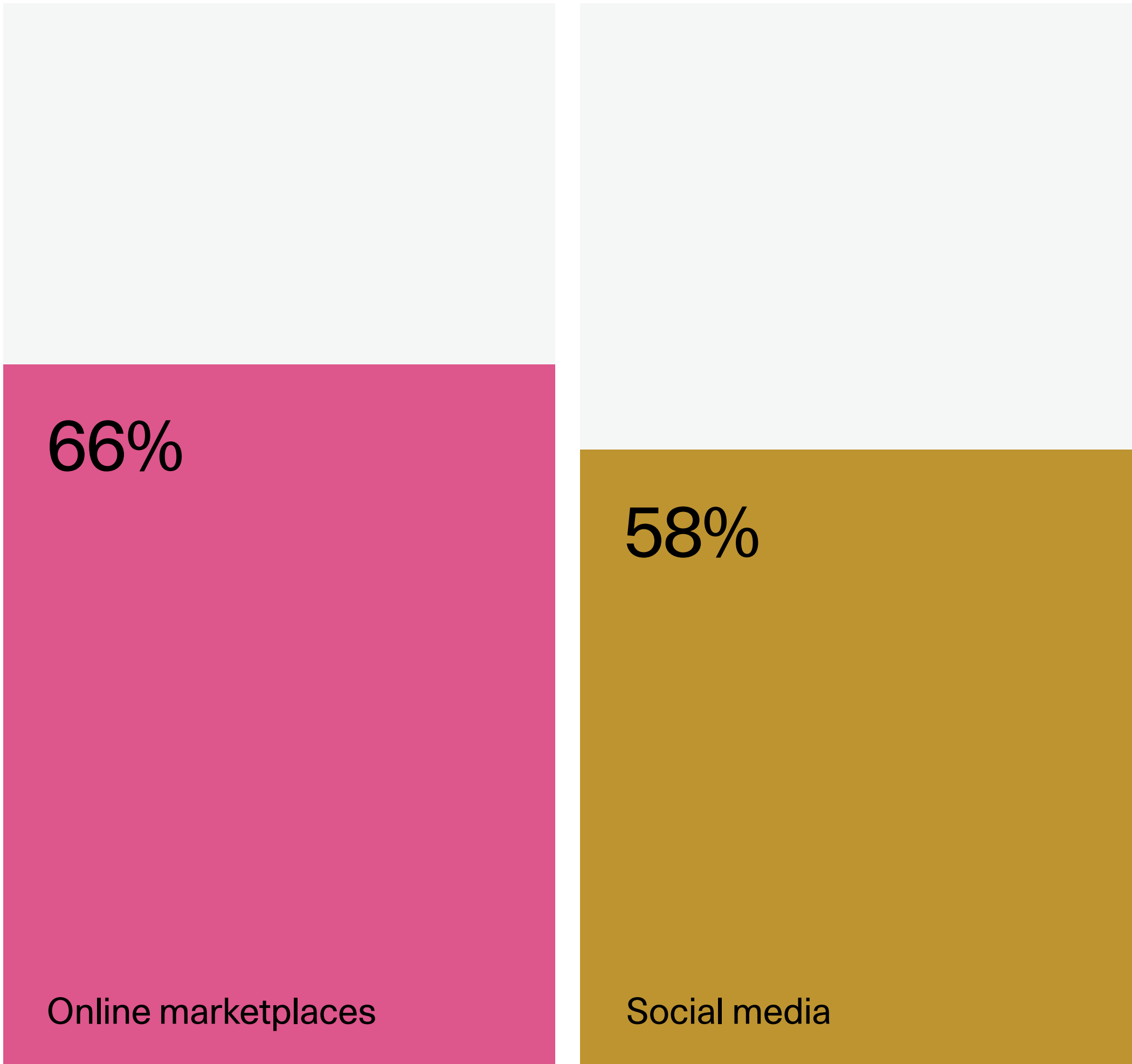
(dealers, gallery employees, and auction house specialists). However, even that older set of collectors is doing independent research online: Online art marketplaces were the third-most popular type of pre-purchase consultation among all collectors surveyed, favored by 42% of respondents. Among respondents who have been collecting for a decade or more, 37% said they consult art marketplaces before purchasing.

Mobile phones are Next-Gen Collectors’ preferred site of discovery and purchase, compared to desktop computers.

Meanwhile, art critics or publications and friends and family ranked as the fourth- and fifth-most frequent resources to consult, respectively, among both Next-Gen Collectors and the entire cohort surveyed. In addition to favoring independent research, Next-Gen Collectors are more likely to conduct the bulk of their art-buying activities from their phones. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Next-Gen Collectors prefer to use their mobile phones (as opposed to a desktop computer) when browsing online to discover new art, compared



How collectors discover artists and works that they eventually buy



to only 39% of those who have been collecting for a decade or more; 55% of Next-Gen Collectors prefer to use their phones to make the actual purchase when buying art online. And though there is a widely held perception that younger collectors prefer to find and buy through Instagram and other social media platforms, Next-Gen Collectors said they prefer using online art marketplaces: 56% said they had purchased art through an online marketplace, double the percentage who have bought via social media; and about two-thirds (66%) said they typically discover artists and works

they eventually buy through online marketplaces, compared to 58% who made discoveries on social media. Next-Gen Collectors were nearly twice as likely to say they value having work by up-and-coming artists in their collections, compared to blue-chip artists. They could more easily focus their time and budgets on acquiring relatively affordable prints and editions by blue-chip artists, but they would rather know about and support artists who may not yet be household names. This desire to champion emerging artists may explain why more than half of respondents who've been

Visible pricing and the ability to purchase with a credit card are among collectors' top concerns for a secure and frictionless experience.

collecting for four years or less said that collecting art is one of their greatest passions. Harnessing collectors' passion requires making the art-buying process as secure and frictionless as possible. One component of this is visible pricing, the lack of which was the most common pain point among all respondents. Nearly as many respondents also said that being able to purchase art with a credit card was important. Today, a majority of Artsy's nearly 3,400 gallery partners accept credit card payments for works.

That type of streamlined buying experience can be key to ushering new collectors into the art market. Among buyers who used a credit card to transact on Artsy in 2020, for instance, 80% were new buyers to the platform. Overall, works that are quickly purchasable with a credit card on Artsy are four times more likely to sell than those that aren't. Meeting the needs of this next generation of collectors could unlock enormous growth for the art market, allowing it to support more artists and galleries.

How Collectors Discover, Buy, and Sell Art



Sasha Gordon, detail of *Untitled*, 2021. Courtesy of Matthew Brown Gallery.

Two-thirds of the collectors surveyed for this report said they'd spent 75% or more of their art budget online in 2020.

In 2019, 64% of collectors surveyed by Artsy said they had purchased art online. Today, that figure is 84%, and among Next-Gen Collectors it is higher still, at 91%. Over the past two years, collecting art online has gone from a novel activity to the norm. Among collectors surveyed for this report, over 42% said they spent 75% or more of their art budget online in 2020.

To be sure, some of the widespread adoption of digital channels we've seen in the past year was precipitated by the pandemic. As COVID-19 shut

down much of the world, art fairs sprinted to launch new websites; auction houses turned their darkened salesrooms into soundstages for livestreamed sales; and galleries big and small launched or accelerated programming through online viewing rooms.

"The Art Market 2021," found that even as the overall art market contracted by 22% in 2020, the online art market grew 107%.

Collectors who bought the same or more works in the past year



Survey respondents’ buying behavior since the onset of the pandemic echoed those figures: Less than a third of collectors said they bought fewer works in the past year, while 68% said they bought the same number of works or more. This buying pattern was significantly more pronounced among Next-Gen Collectors, more than half of whom (56%) said they bought more works in the past 12 months than in a typical year, and just 22% saying they bought fewer.

It was a bellwether year for the adoption of digital tools in every sector of the art market—changes that appear to be here to stay. According to the second part of Hiscox’s “Online Art Trade Report 2020,” more than half of responding collectors (56%) said they expect the art market’s shift online to be permanent, while only a quarter believed it would be temporary. This can be seen in the increasingly central roles that digital platforms play for galleries, auction houses, and fairs even as in-person art world events resume.

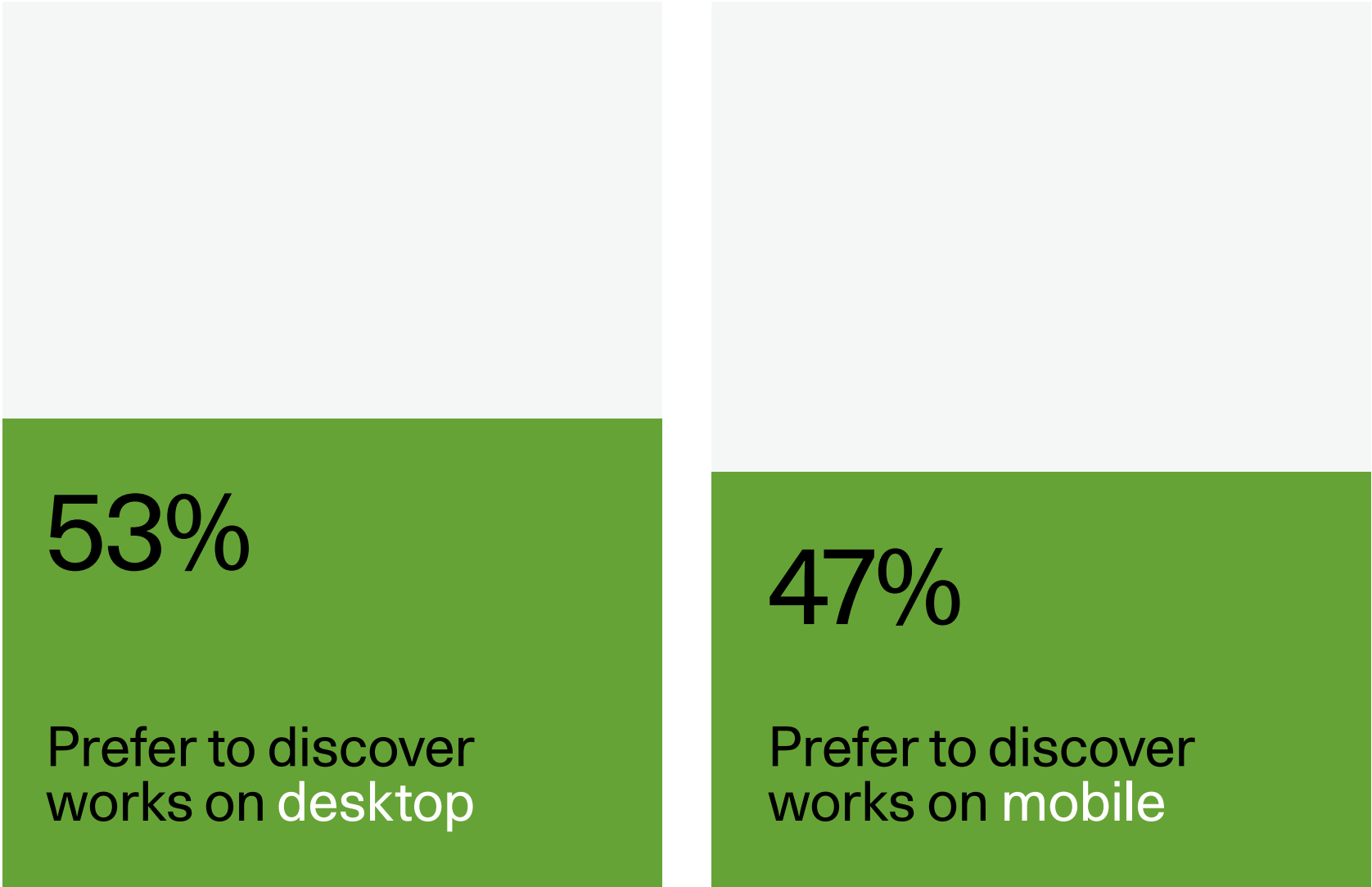
“Whenever I come across an artist that catches my attention at a fair or a gallery, I immediately look them up on Artsy.”

— Jeongho Nam, art collector

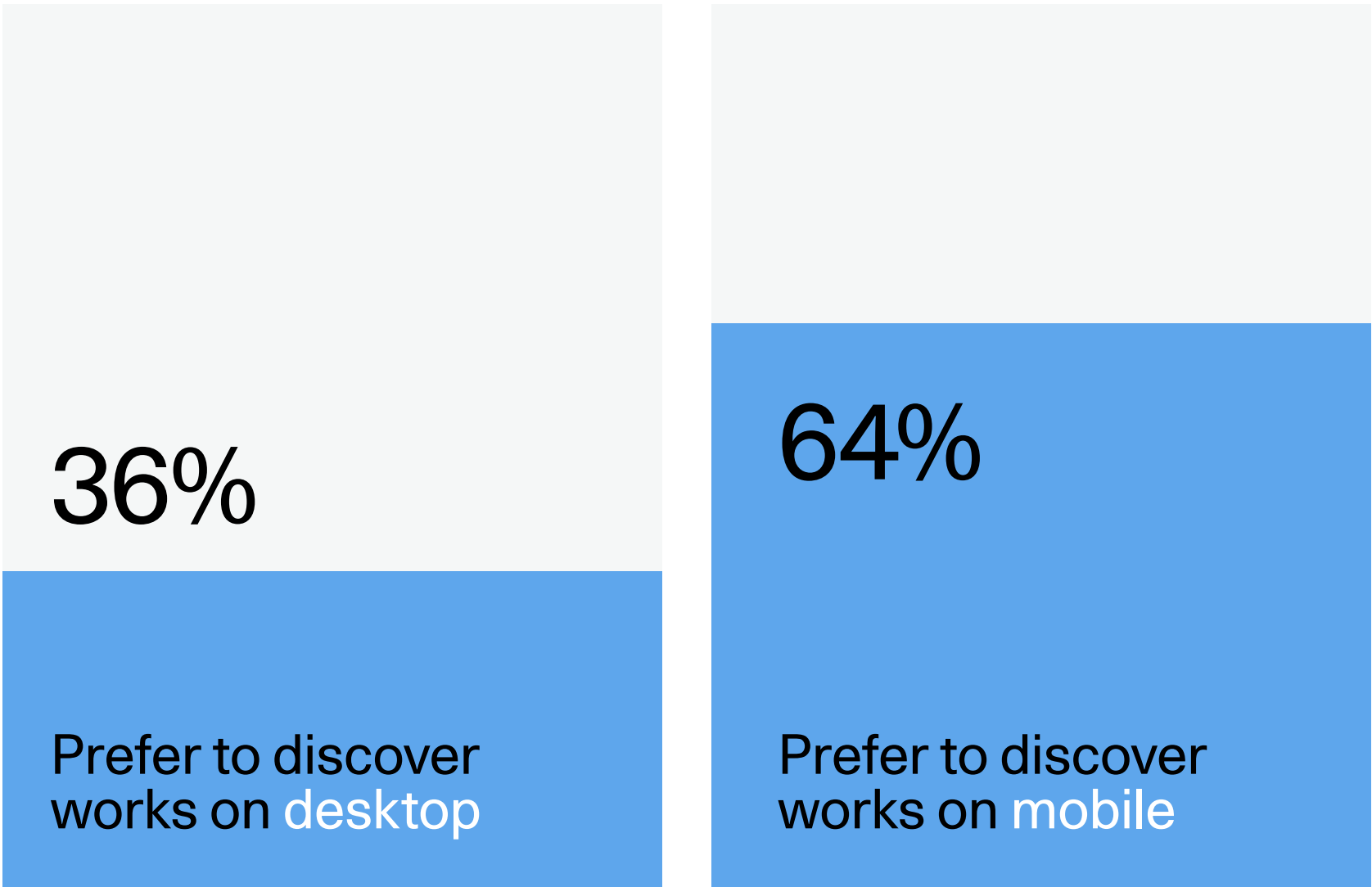
It’s also evident in the growing importance of online art marketplaces, which bring together many art market players from the gallery and auction sectors, but also offer streamlined and secure functionality. In our 2019 survey, 41% of respondents said they used an online marketplace like Artsy to purchase art; in 2021, 57% of respondents said they had.

Online art marketplaces serve as invaluable sites for collectors to discover art and artists. Among survey respondents, over 25% said that online art marketplaces were their preferred place to discover artists and their work.

All art collectors



Next-gen art collectors



The next most popular channels were auction houses and gallery websites or viewing rooms (both 23%), followed by Instagram (16%).

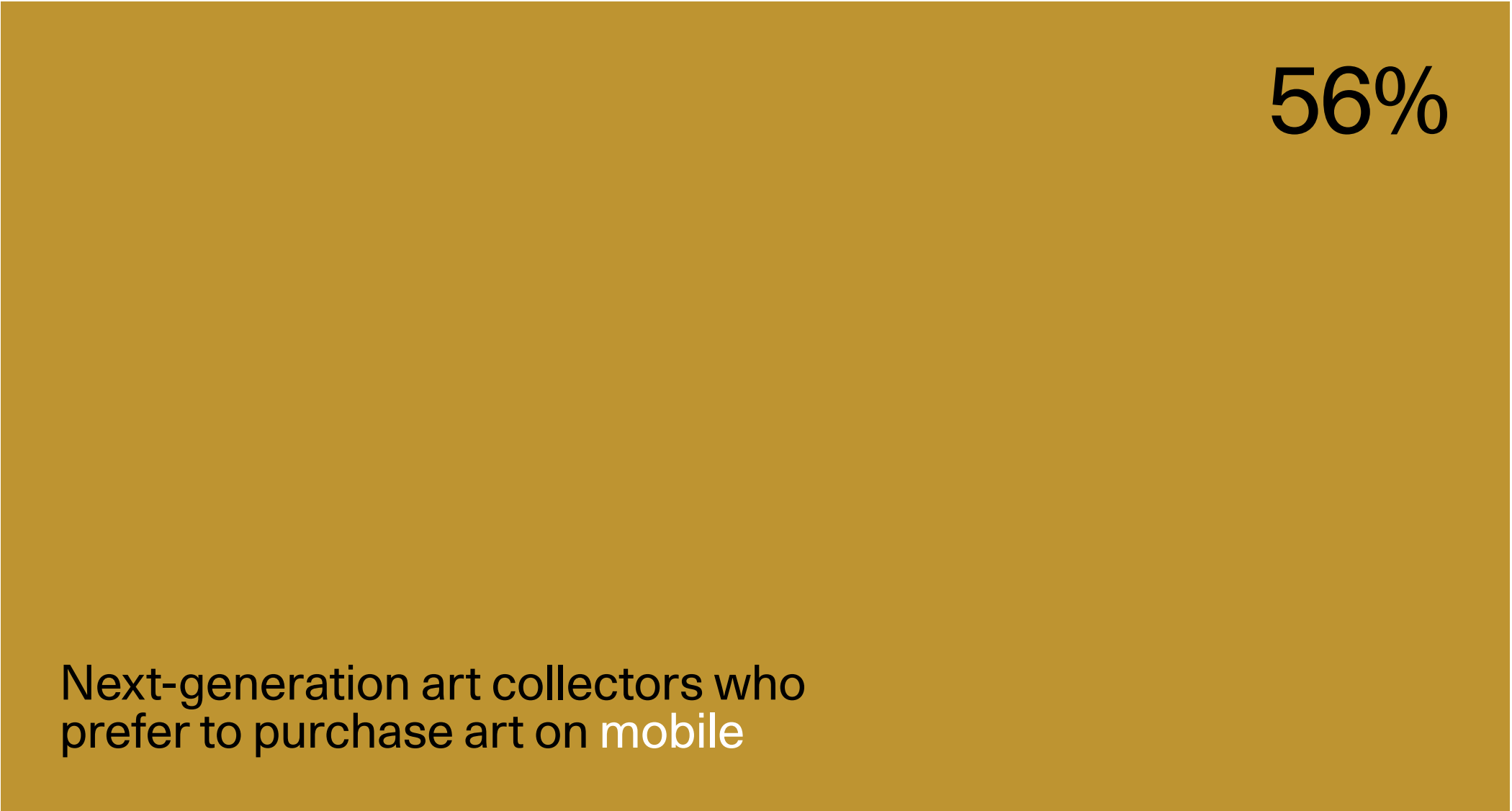
Online art marketplaces and social media may be especially well adapted to serving collectors’ desire to discover artworks, in part because they’re optimized for mobile use: Nearly half of respondents (47%) said they prefer to browse and find works on their phones via an app or mobile website, with the other 53% preferring to do so on desktop.

Mobile optimization is key to serving collectors’ desires, with the majority of Next-Gen Collectors preferring to find and buy new artworks on their phones.

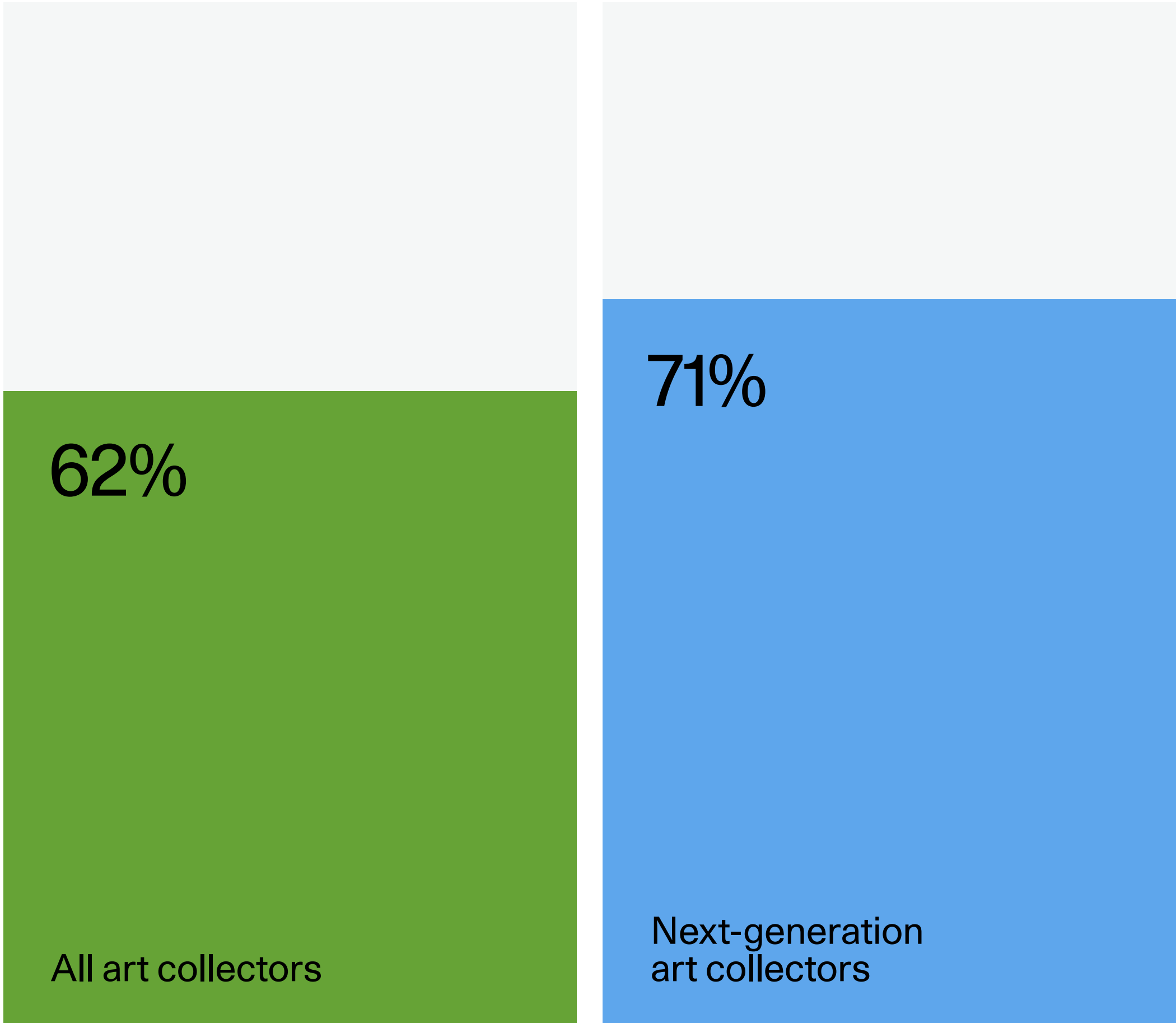
This preference was even more pronounced among Next-Gen Collectors, 64% of whom said they prefer to find new artists on their phones. Next-Gen Collectors were also more likely to purchase art from their mobile devices, with 56% expressing a preference for buying via an app or mobile website on their phones, while 44% prefer to make their acquisitions on desktop.

Despite collectors’ growing comfort with using digital platforms to discover and research artists, a consistent

sticking point when it comes to actually purchasing artworks online is visible pricing. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) said the lack of visible prices kept them from buying art online. This was even more pronounced among Next-Gen Collectors, 71% of whom said a lack of price visibility kept them from buying works online. Those numbers resonate with buyer behavior on Artsy, where works listed on the platform with visible pricing are five times more likely to sell than those without.



Collectors who believe a lack of visible pricing is a hindrance to buying art online

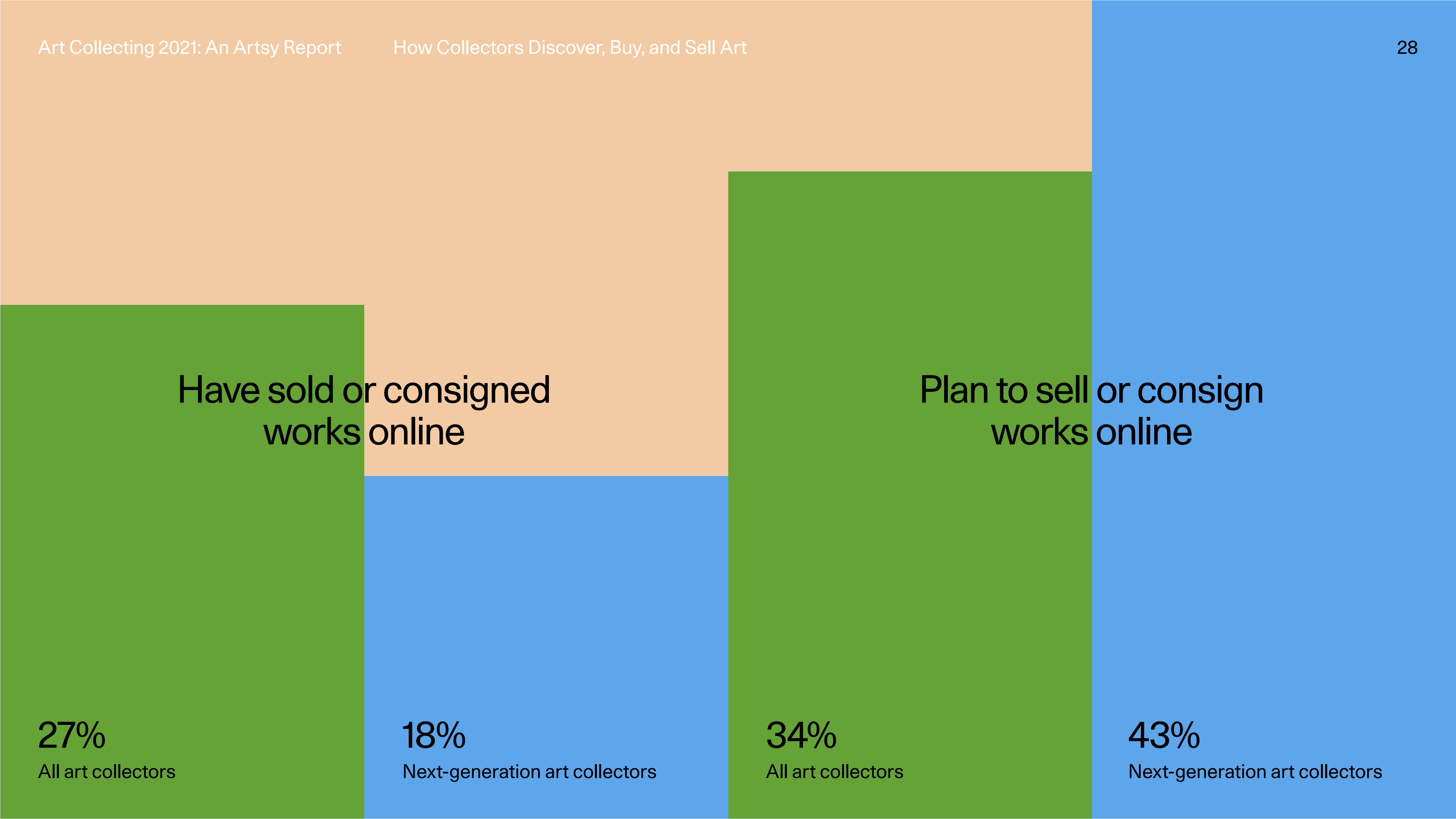


Survey respondents expressed a growing comfort with the idea of selling works from their collections online. More than a quarter (27%) said they had sold or consigned works from their holdings for sale online, and another 34% said they plan to. Among Next-Gen Collectors, only 18% of respondents said they’d sold or consigned works from their collections online, but a larger share (43%) said they plan to. Those figures suggest that collectors may have been more cautious about reselling works amid the uncertainties of 2020, but remain optimistic about the art market’s future.

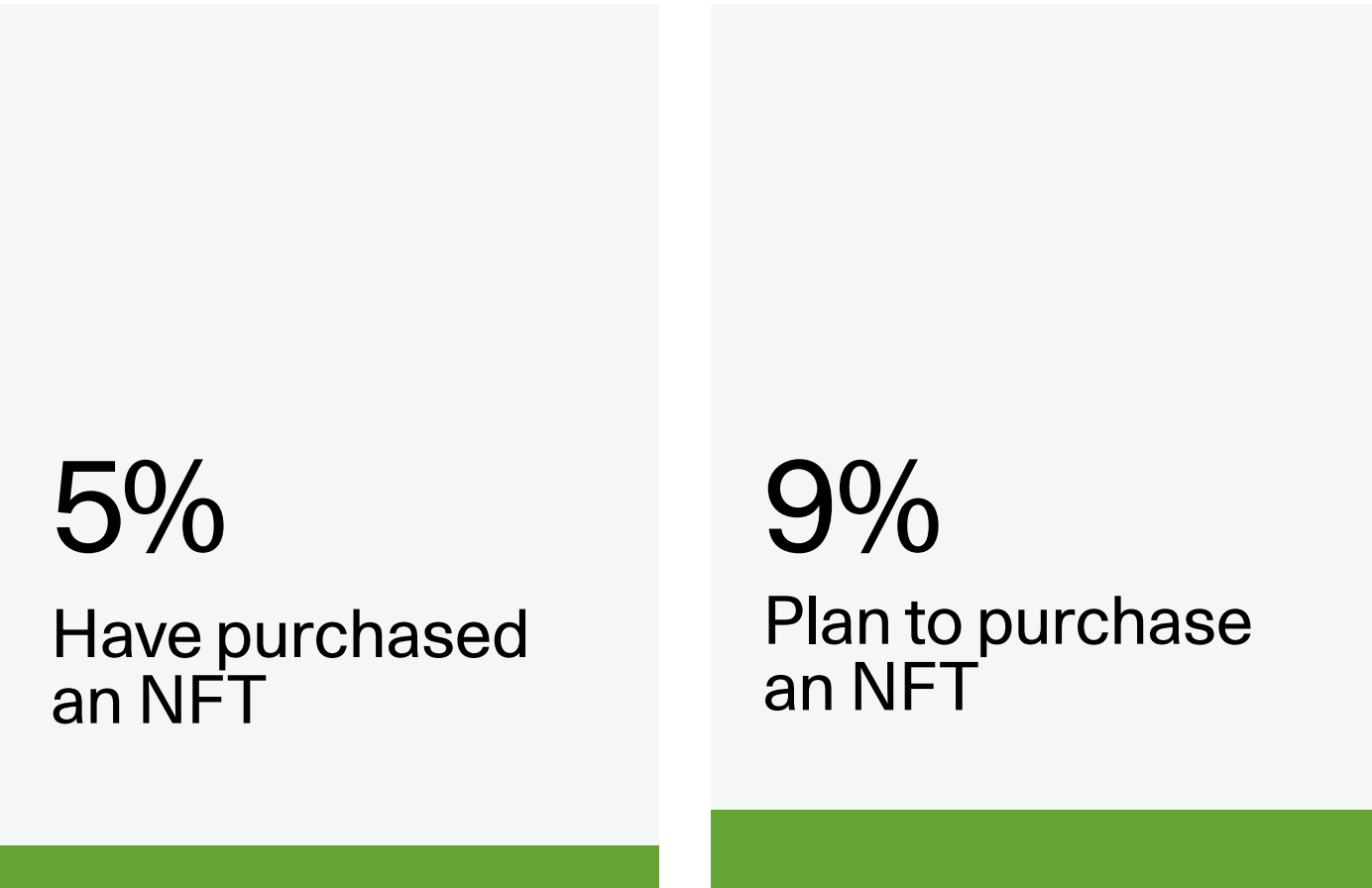
In contrast, among collectors surveyed for economist Clare McAndrew’s “The Art Market 2021” report, 63% said they had resold works in 2020 (whether online or not), and just 35% said they were planning to do so in 2021. This gap between findings may reflect a more cautious attitude among collectors surveyed by McAndrew, who rely on both in-person and digital mechanisms for reselling works, and growing confidence among those surveyed by Artsy in the digital valuation and consignment tools that online art marketplaces and auction houses have developed.

Survey respondents expressed a growing comfort with the idea of selling works from their collections online.

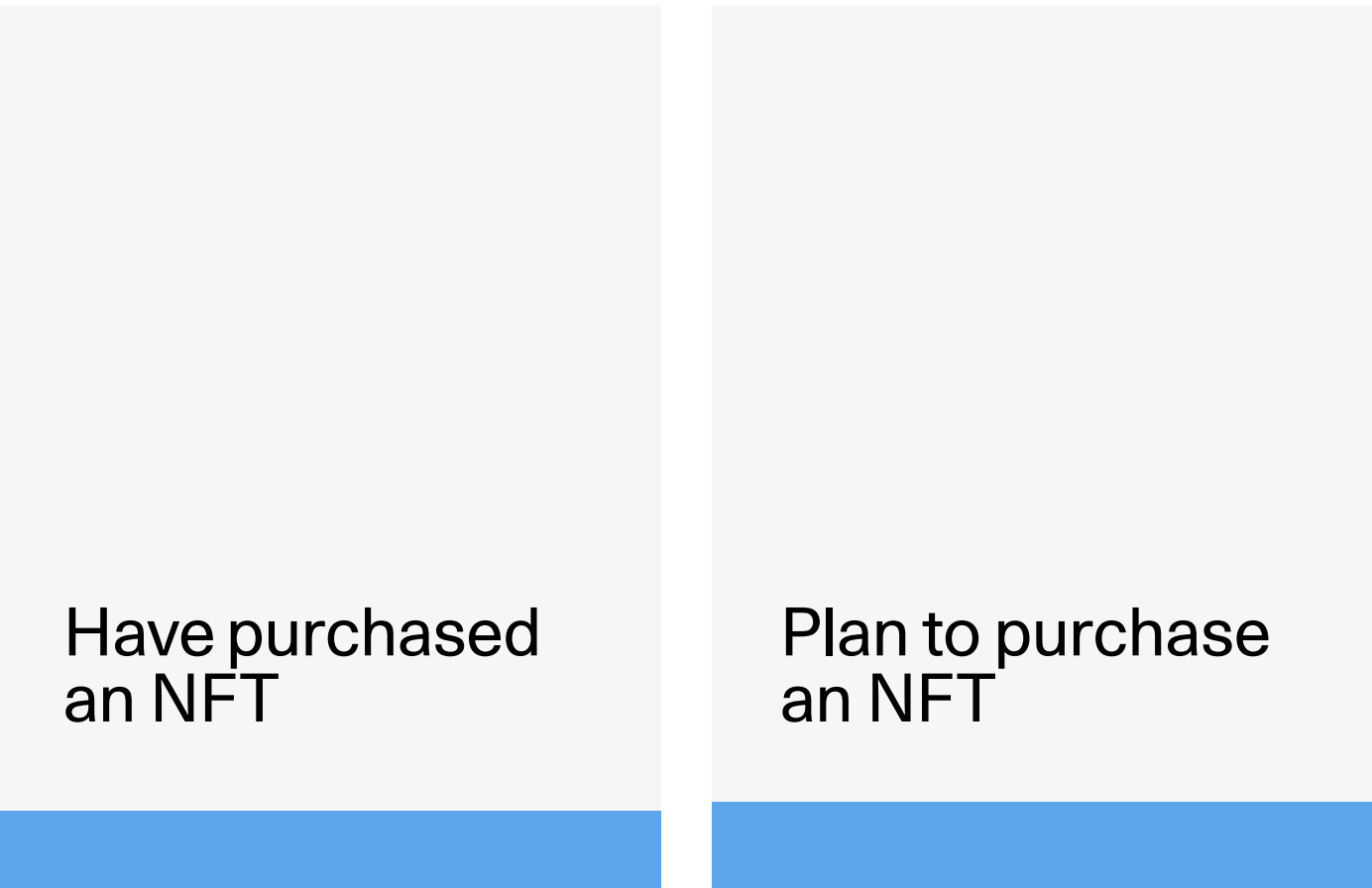
One emerging area of the art market that, by design, has embraced price transparency and frictionless resale is non-fungible tokens (or NFTs), where each transaction and its price is registered publicly on the blockchain. For all the appeal and viral ubiquity of NFTs, only 5% of survey respondents said they'd purchased one, while another 9% said they plan to. The digital art form was significantly more popular with Next-Gen Collectors, even if still only collected by a small minority of the cohort: 9% said they had bought an NFT, while an additional 10% said they plan to do so.



All art
collectors



Next-gen
art collectors



Irrespective of their stances on trending technology, collectors by and large are buying art with long-term stewardship and patronage in mind. Asked for their main reasons for collecting, more than two-thirds (67%) said it was to build a collection; 47% said supporting artists was a principal motivator; and 46% said they collect to be inspired. That’s not to say pragmatic purposes weren’t also in play: 58% said decorating their space was one of their main reasons for

collecting, and 42% said investment was a main reason for their collecting. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) said collecting art is one of their greatest passions.

Why Collectors Buy Art



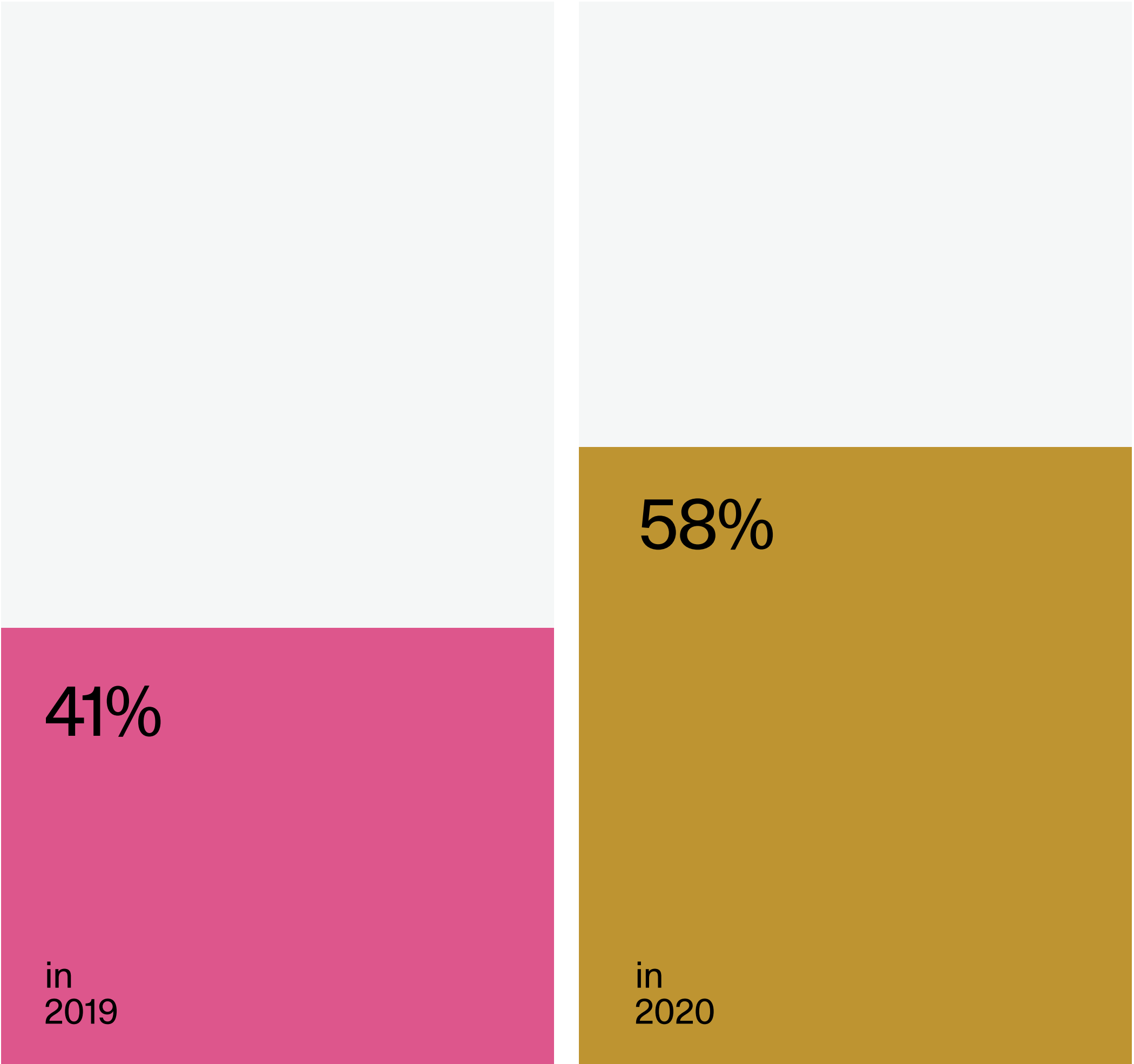
Eun Jeong Kim, detail of *Haedong Yonggungsa*, 2021. Courtesy of Hakgojae Gallery.

Online art marketplaces were the most preferred place to discover new art.

Among all collectors surveyed, 83% said they have purchased art online at some point, and 75% have purchased art online within the past year. In 2019, less than two-thirds (64%) of respondents reported that they had ever purchased art online, marking a 30% increase between 2019 and 2021. Among newer collectors, these numbers were even higher, with 90% having purchased art online at some point, and 85% having done so within the past year.

When it comes to finding new art and artists, online art marketplaces are the preferred place to browse and discover art among the largest share of all survey respondents (25%), followed by auction houses and gallery-hosted websites or viewing rooms, both of which were favored by roughly 23% of collectors. Among Next-Gen Collectors, online marketplaces and Instagram were virtually tied as the preferred platforms for discovering newart online, followed by auctionhouses and gallery-hosted websites or viewing rooms.

Collectors who used an online marketplace to buy art



Where collectors prefer to discover art

25%
Online art marketplace

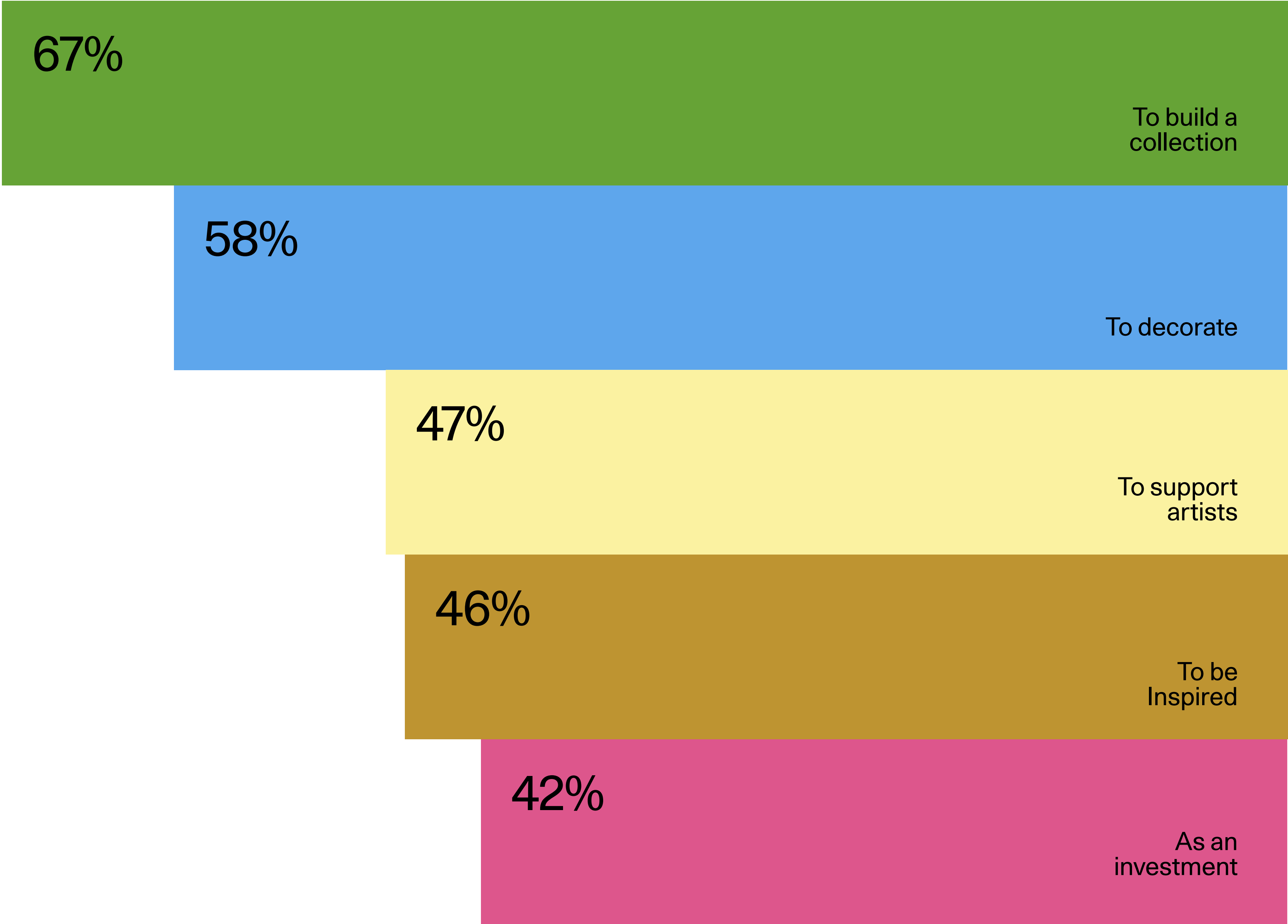
23%
Gallery website or viewing room

16%
Instagram

Why collectors buy art

Motivation

Two-thirds of collectors said they were driven by a desire to build a collection (67%). Decorating their spaces (58%), supporting artists (47%), and inspiration (46%) were also leading motivators. A smaller share (42%) expressed a desire to make sound investments with their acquisitions. Investment was a much more important driver among Next-Gen Collectors, 58% of whom said it was one of their top reasons for collecting. Overall, the joy of collecting was a major motivator for survey respondents: 64% said they consider collecting art to be one of their greatest passions.



Works on Artsy with listed prices are five times as likely to sell than those without.

Consideration

Though most research paints purchasing art online and purchasing art in person as two concretely separate modes of business, the reality is less clean-cut. In all, 64% of surveyed collectors said they have discovered an artwork online and later purchased it in person, and this number remained fairly consistent regardless of how long the buyer had been active in the art market. This suggests a need for sellers to better understand the relationship between online and in-person purchases, and the ways in which online efforts positively impact physical sales and vice versa.

Purchasing

In 2019, 41% of all surveyed art collectors had used an online art marketplace to purchase art. Among collectors surveyed in 2021, that number was 57%. Purchasing art at auction also grew in that time period; while 58% of collectors in 2019 said they'd purchased artworks at auction, that number was up to 71% in 2021. This may be due in part to the proliferation of online auctions spurred by the pandemic.

We believe that the most important action sellers can take to attract new collectors is making the price of art

transparent and allowing buyers to pay by credit card. The number of artworks uploaded to Artsy in 2020 that could be purchased with a credit card increased 120% year over year, and works on Artsy with listed prices are five times as likely to sell than those without.



Caleb Hahne, detail of *A Place To Rest*, 2018. Courtesy of pt.2 gallery.

The Art That Collectors Care about Today

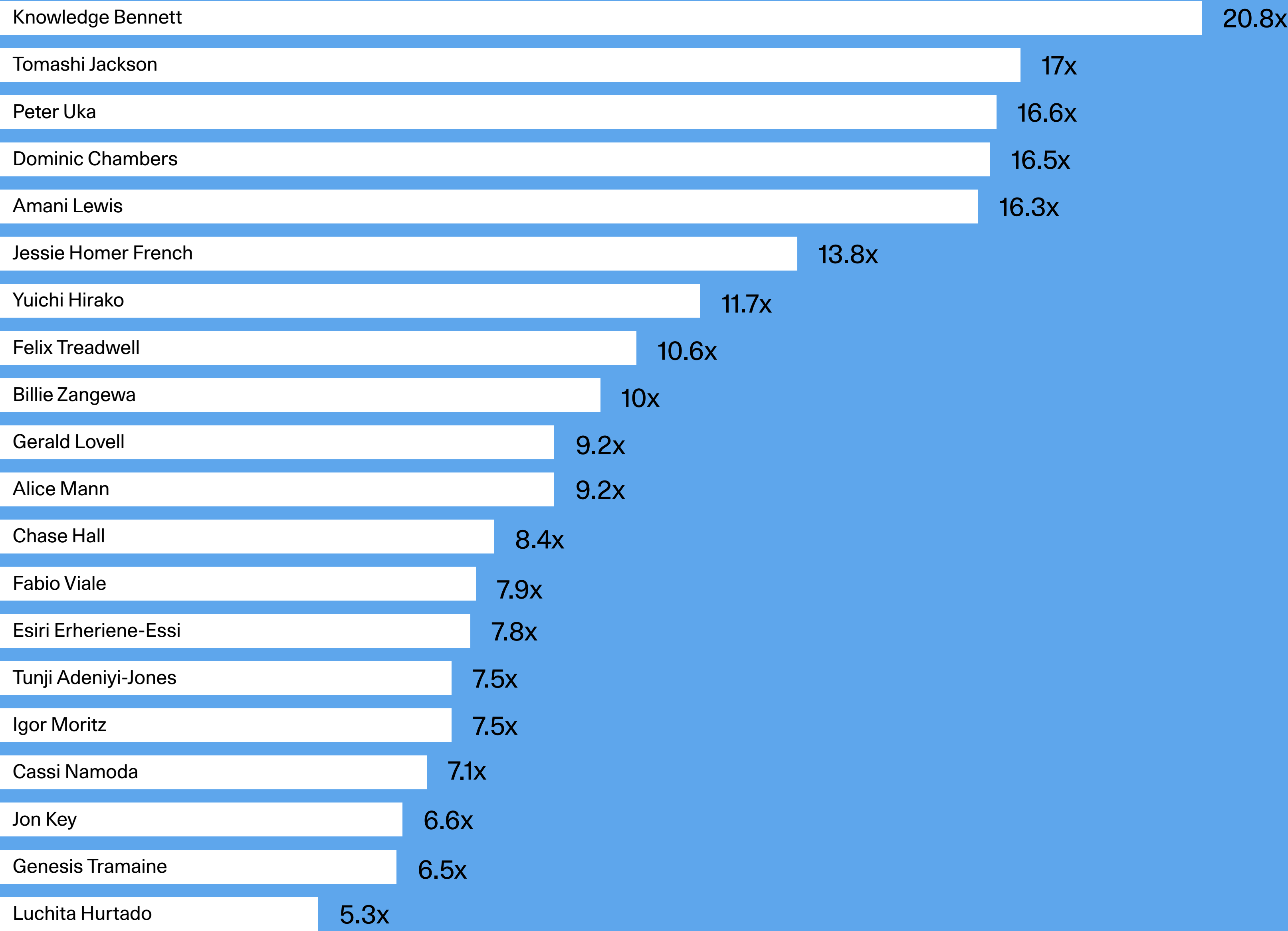
Percentage of collectors who prefer to buy works by emerging artists

In addition to asking collectors how they discover, buy, and sell art, and what motivates those decisions, we also wanted to know what art they actually collect—what work inspires, moves, and motivates them.

Among all respondents, 60% said they prefer to purchase works by emerging artists. This preference was even more pronounced among Next-Gen Collectors, 63% of whom said they prefer to collect works by emerging artists. These findings mirror collector behavior on Artsy’s marketplace, where works by emerging artists are among the most sought after.



Multiples of Increase



Artists with the greatest
surge in demand
2020

The artists who saw the greatest surge in demand on Artsy in 2020 were emerging artists of racially diverse backgrounds.

The artists who saw the biggest leaps in demand on the platform in 2020 were a racially diverse cohort of predominantly emerging artists. Among the 20 artists who had the biggest increase in demand over the last year on Artsy, 15 were artists of color. Among that group, there was also a near-balance across male and female genders, with women artists accounting for 9 of the top 20. And, beyond a handful of more established figures like Luchita Hurtado and Tomashi Jackson, the list skewed young and emerging, including fast-rising figurative painters like Gerald Lovell,

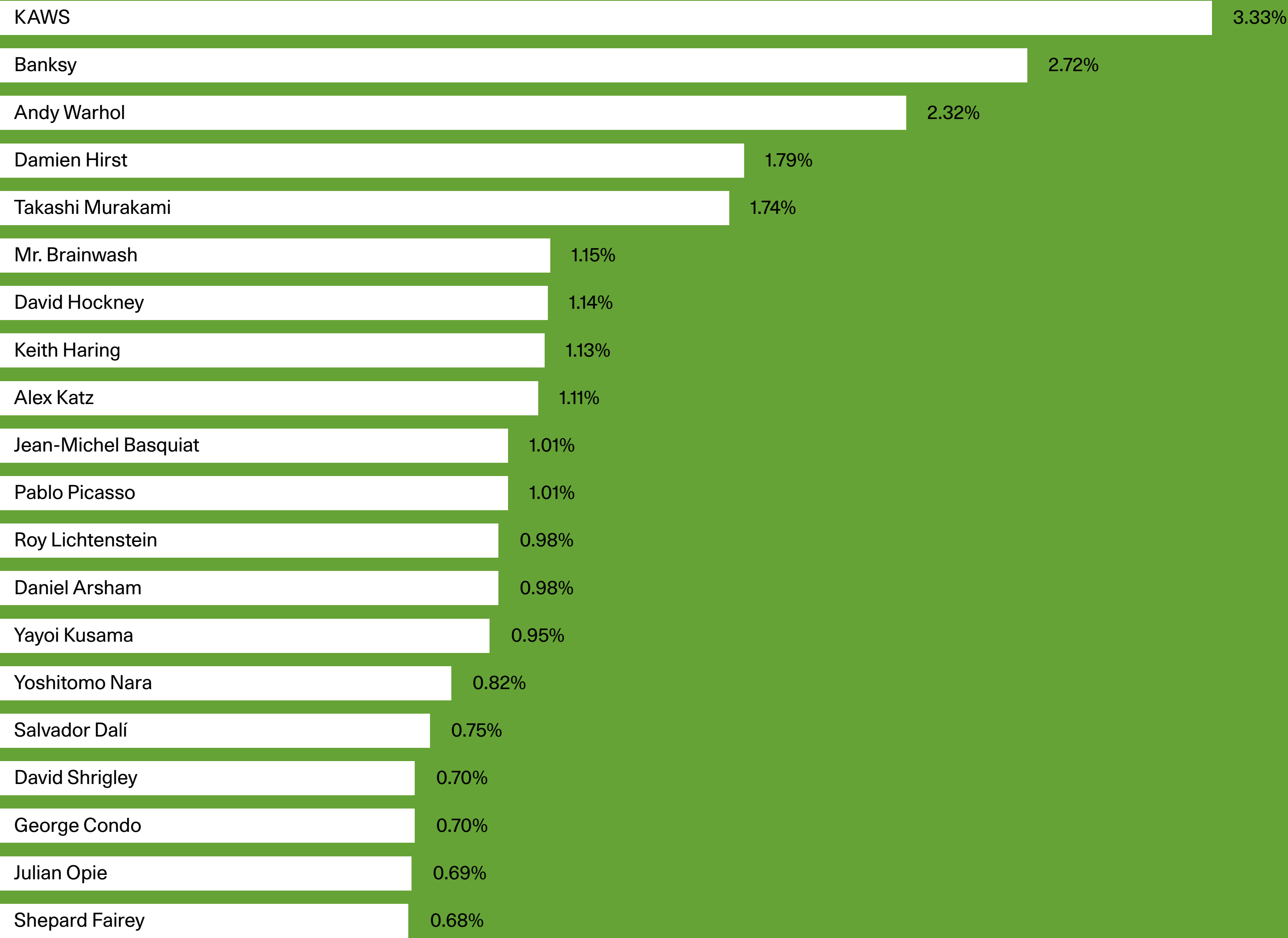
Cassi Namoda, Tunji Adeniyi-Jones, Jon Key, Esiri Erheriene-Essi, and Genesis Tramaine.

Roughly a quarter of collectors surveyed said that collecting works by minority artists was important to them. These collecting priorities align with the art world's growing awareness that the artistic canon historically excluded women and BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color) artists, as well as a desire among curators, gallerists, acquisition committees, and others to champion a more diverse and inclusive range of voices.

Overall, 45% of collectors surveyed expressed a preference for collecting works by established artists.

Marketplace activity on Artsy bears this out: The artists with the most demand in 2020 included blue-chip artists like Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Yayoi Kusama, and Takashi Murakami, and well-known figures associated with street art such as KAWS, Banksy, and Keith Haring. Another 37% of collectors said they prioritize collecting works by established artists who have secondary markets, suggesting an interest in reselling works in the future.

Percent of all Inquirers



Artists with the
most demand overall
2020

Methodology

Conducted in May 2021, Artsy’s survey generated responses from a wide range of art buyers. In order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to be subscribed to Artsy’s emails and have an active Artsy account.

We received a total of 2,290 complete responses from users. The final sample used for this report included 765 of those respondents who reported buying art at least twice, and having spent at least \$10,000 on art in 2019 or 2020, or who expected to spend that much in 2021.

From among that cohort of 765 collectors, we defined a subset of Next-Gen Collectors as those who started collecting in the last four years. This group totaled 139 respondents.

This report was prepared by members of Artsy’s B2B Marketing, Growth and Lifecycle, and Editorial teams, with additional contributions from Wallace Ludel.

For media requests related to this report and other Artsy initiatives, please contact press@artsy.net.

Methodology

Demographics

This survey represents responses from art collectors in 60 countries. However, almost half of responses (45%) came from United States-based collectors. The collectors broke down across the following demographic groups:

Gender

72.5%	male
26.0%	female
0.7%	non-binary
0.8%	prefer to self-describe

Age

0.8%	18–24
8.4%	25–34
20.7%	35–44
26.1%	45–54
22.6%	55–64
20.4%	65+

Net worth

11.73%	\$10 million+
10.5%	\$5 million–\$9.99 million
28.8%	\$1 million–\$4.99 million
9.1%	\$500,000–\$999,999
6.0%	\$100,000–\$499,999
3.4%	<\$100,000
31.6%	prefer not to answer

Report by Benjamin Sutton, Artsy’s Lead
Editor, Art Market and News. Additional
reporting by Wallace Ludel.