



Impact of COVID-19 on UK artists mental wellness and finances 2020:

Research produced for Stuart Semple

January 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

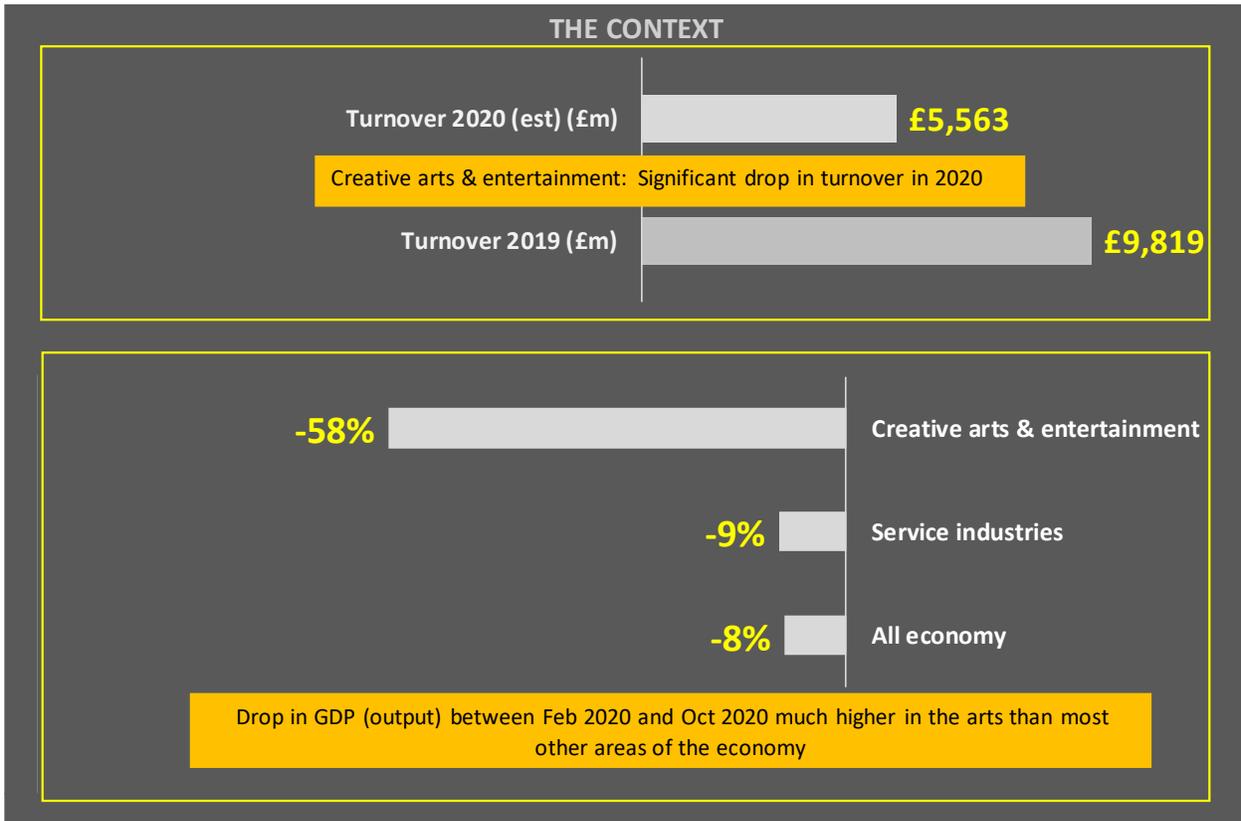
COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on the economic, social and cultural life of the UK: apart from the two World Wars no other event has been so dramatic. While all sectors of the UK economy have been affected, the Arts, and the visual arts in particular, have received a hammer blow. Not only have artists faced a major drop in their artistic income from the closure of museums, galleries and cultural exhibitions and the cancelling or postponement of exhibitions, the pandemic has led to a significant deterioration in the mental and physical health of artists, with many finding it harder to be creative. Also, almost half of artists have also witnessed a decline in their non-art income. Moreover, while the Government is predicted to spend almost £300 billion on the pandemic and has introduced support measures for businesses, much of this support has bypassed the visual arts, where many artists operate on a self employed basis and relatively few employ assistants. The furlough scheme and business support grants are largely irrelevant to the visual artist population.

The overall financial impact on the arts and entertainment sector, compared to virtually all other service sectors is stark: between January and October 2020, revenue in the arts and entertainment sector dropped dramatically by 44% yet the revenue decline in the services sector overall was just 15%.

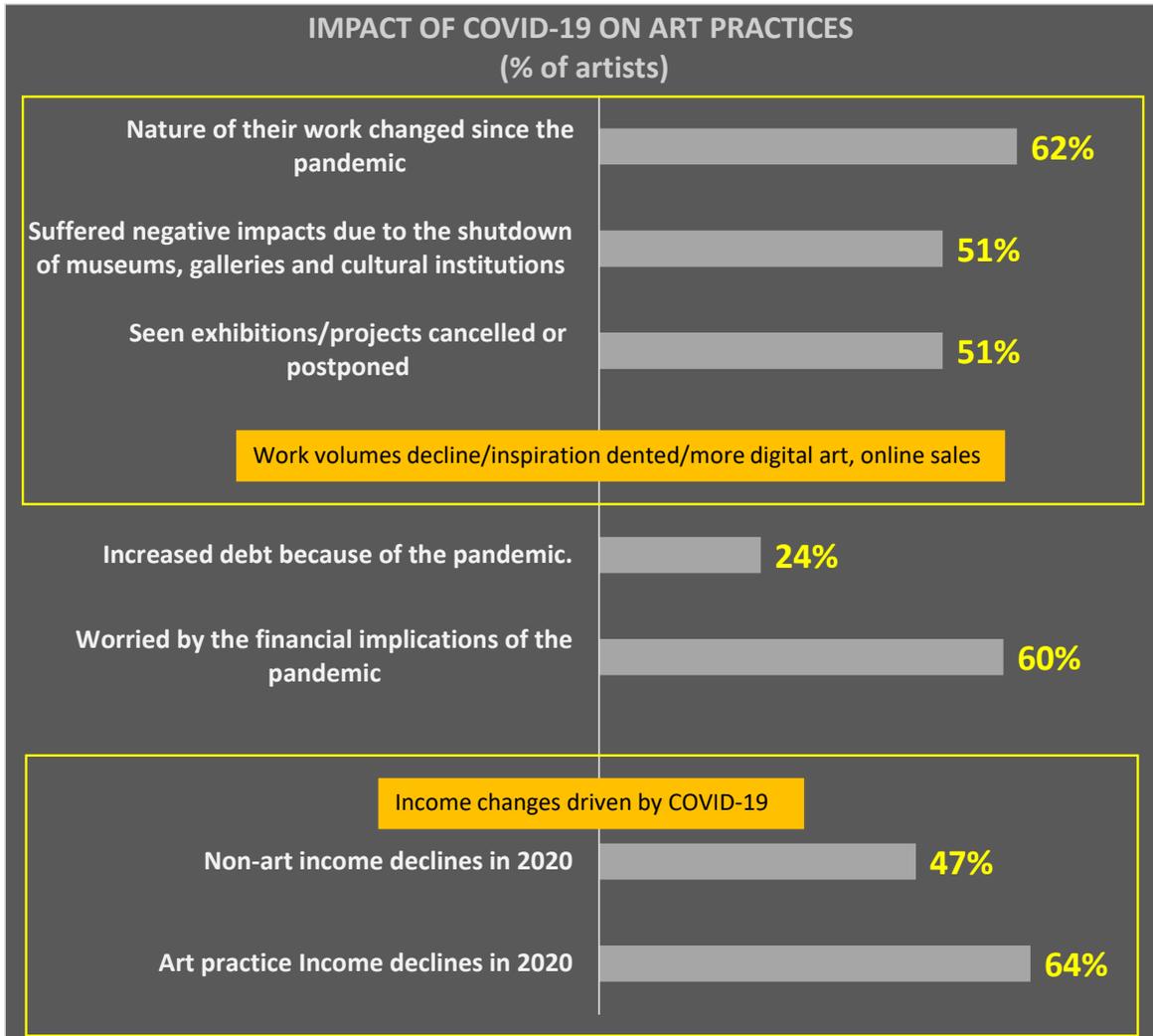
However, artists are nothing if not resilient. As a response to the hardships they have faced, many have tried to exploit digital technologies to sell and create their art, many have abandoned their workshops in favour of working from home and some have tried to use the pandemic as a creative influence and moved into new forms of art.

Despite these efforts, the pandemic has had an overall numbing effect on the visual arts, and artists in particular, from both a financial and creative standpoint as the survey results clearly show.

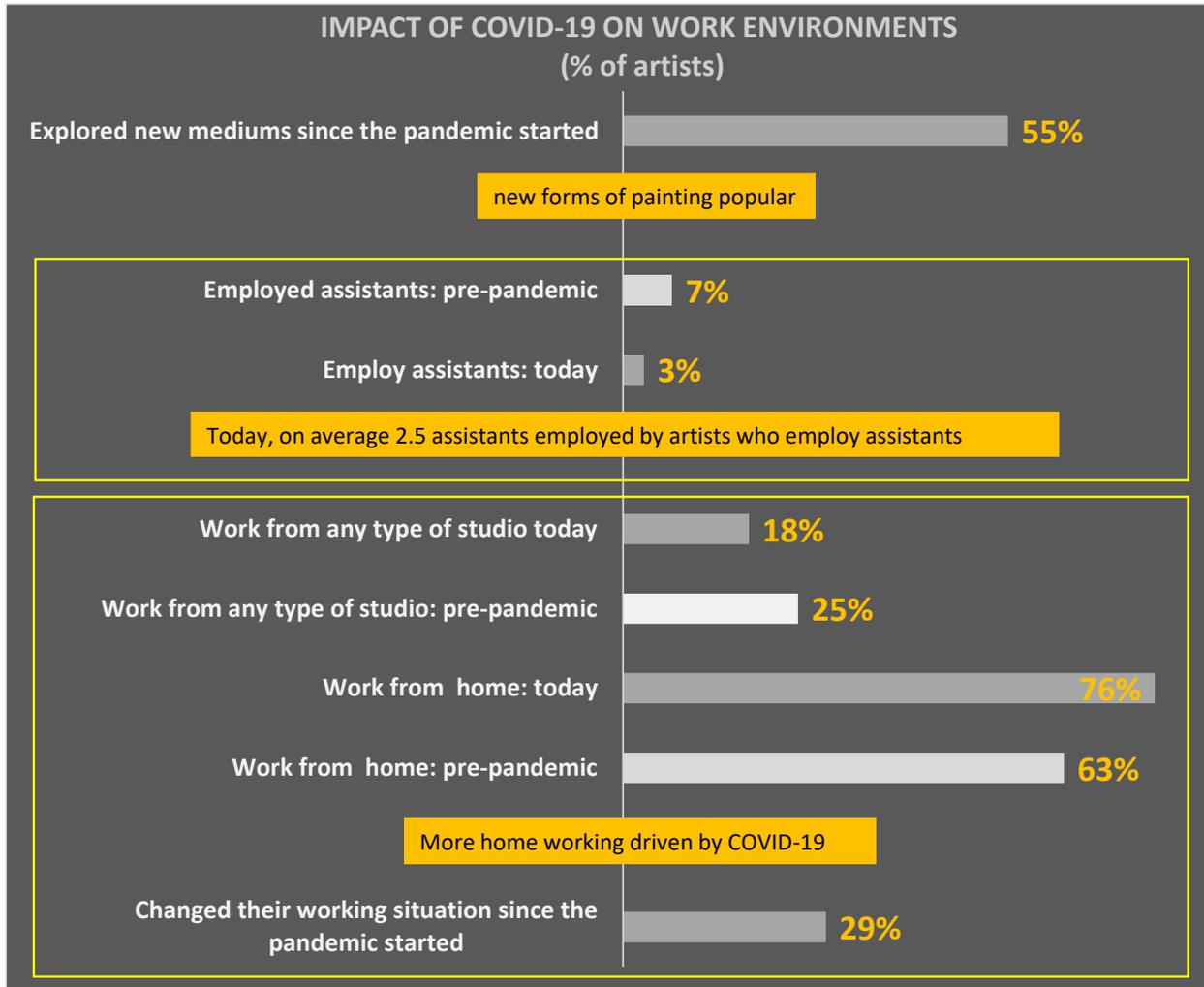
The Context



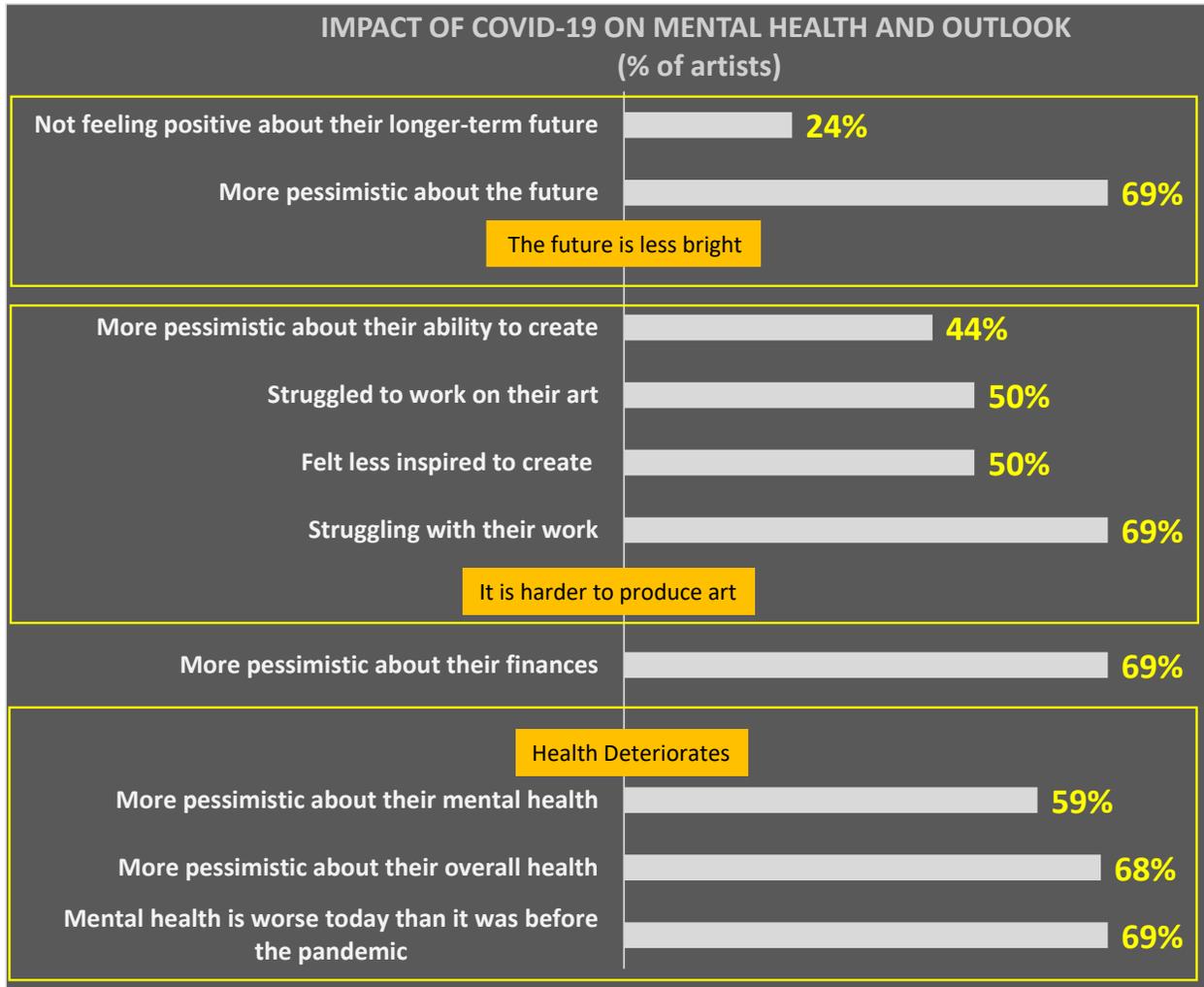
COVID-19 Impact on Art Practices



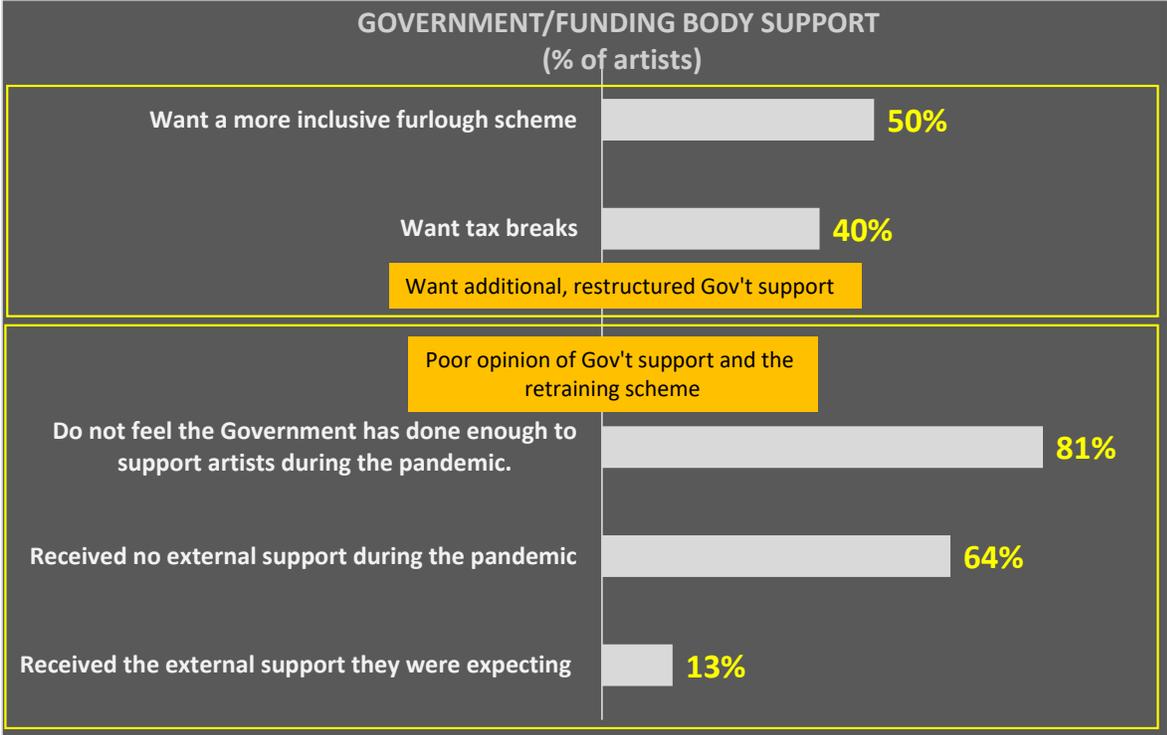
COVID-19 and Work Environments



COVID-19 and Mental Processes



Government/Funding Body Support



INTRODUCTION

IRN Research was commissioned by the multidisciplinary artist Stuart Semple to interview UK artists in order to provide a deep insight into the impact of the current pandemic upon professional visual artists in the UK.

IRN Research produced in association with Stuart Semple an online survey. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent by Stuart Semple. A total of 730 responses were received in November/December 2020.

In January 2021, two online focus groups were held with 11 participants. The groups explored some of the issues raised in the online survey in more depth.

THE CONTEXT

COVID-19 and UK Economic Sectors

The coronavirus pandemic has created a seismic shock to the UK economy leading to unprecedented falls in national income, driven large increases in public deficits and, now that we are in our third lockdown, there is still real uncertainty about the UK's economic future. When the first lockdown started in March 2020, the UK lockdown began later and lasted longer than some other European countries. In November 2020, in its latest economic forecast, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) stated that *"A resurgence of infections is now in progress across Europe and North America, prompting the tightening of public health restrictions and reimposition of national lockdowns and taking the wind out of an already flagging recovery. That includes the UK, where GDP is set to fall by 11 per cent this year – the largest drop in annual output since the Great Frost of 1709"*.

Source: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-november-2020/>

The Creative, Arts, Entertainment Economy

Virtually all service sectors in the UK have faced major difficulties from COVID-19 but the creative, arts and entertainment sector has been negatively impacted more than most as official figures show. Unlike some sectors of the service economy, the arts find it harder to generate income under COVID-19 restrictions. There is no arts equivalent to a takeaway service for restaurants and the arts find it harder to generate sales online compared with, for example, the retail sector, although as we will see later in this report artists have tried.

Figures for the services sector from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in October 2020 (the latest available) on the output of various services sectors show that only travel agents and operators and the air transport sectors have fared worse than the creative, arts and entertainment sector between February 2020 and October 2020: in the latter sector, output fell by 58.4% and this was one of just 4 sectors out of 51 service sectors where output fell by more than 50%. The others were all travel sectors: travel agents and operators (-89.9%), air transport (-83.5%), rail transport (-51.4%).

Source: [Coronavirus and the impact on output in the UK economy - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/coronavirus-and-the-impact-on-output-in-the-uk-economy)

The OBR also states that *"The shock to the economy has been unusual not only in its speed and severity but also in its differential impact across sectors"*. The OBR notes that sectors most reliant on face-to-face interactions like hospitality, transport, and arts & entertainment, saw the biggest falls in activity as they were most directly affected by public health restrictions and the difficulties in implementing social distancing. It adds that sectors that were largely able to continue to operate while adhering to social distancing rules, such as financial services, energy, and agriculture, have avoided the worst economic consequences of the pandemic.

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Creative, Arts, Entertainment Revenue

In each of the years 2018 and 2019, the creative, arts and entertainment sector generated annual revenue of around £10 billion (£10.26 billion in 2018, £9.81 billion in 2019). However, official figures for revenues across various UK services sectors show that from January 2020 to October 2020 (latest data available), sales in creative, arts and entertainment were just £4,620.9 million, a dramatic decrease from £8,266.2 million in the same period in 2019. This represents a 44.1% decrease in revenues. This compares with a much smaller decline in revenues in the services sector overall of 15.4%.

In a related sector – libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities – revenues slipped to £1,284.7 million, a decrease of 38.7% from revenue of £2,096.1 million in the same period in 2019.

Source:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/datasets/monthlybusinesssurveybmbsturnoverofservicesindustries>

COVID-19 Related Funding

Virtually all of the artists in our survey are self-employed workers, and the funding measures put in place by the Government do not really address the financial issues faced by most artists, and specific financial measures aimed at artists are extremely limited. Over six out of 10 respondents to this survey have not benefitted from the government's financial initiatives and over 80% said that the government's financial support was inadequate.

For example, many artists balance self-employed income from their art with other non-art work and this mix of work means that they do not qualify for self-employed support packages or the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. The nature of an artist's work means that, after a commission, payment occurs in stages with the majority being paid at the end of a project. In the meantime, there may be notable production costs for the artist. It is a double whammy for an artist and some arts bodies have lobbied the government to support artists by allowing them to recoup costs incurred in the production of cancelled projects. Artists may still be paying studio costs as well.

In July 2020, a £1.57 billion rescue package for the cultural and arts sector was announced by the government but this is aimed at organisations rather than individual artists. The Arts Councils in the UK have set up a number of emergency funds to support artists but the funds are limited and usually accessed through a competitive process rather than given automatically. For example, in December 2020, ACE announced that they had re-opened *Developing Your Creative Practice* and increased the budget from £3.6 million to £18 million. Round 9 opened for applications in December 2020. ACE also announced an investment of an extra £2 million in funds that support freelance artists. ACE and local councils are also offering some hardship

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grants for artists but, again, the funds are limited and hardly anyone in the survey has obtained funds through these channels.

Research on the Impact of COVID-19 on Artists

Despite the fact that the arts sector has been a sector deeply scarred financially by COVID-19, creating not only financial uncertainty for many artists, but other concerns such as physical and mental stress, until recently there has been no detailed research on the specific impact of the pandemic on UK artists. As well as the research reported here, DACS, a not-for-profit visual artists' rights management organisation, is also expected to publish some research findings later in 2021.

At the start of the first lockdown in March 2020, a-n The Artists Information Company and BOP Consulting did carry out a survey to understand how the virus outbreak was starting to impact on artists and arts managers across the UK and what support they needed. It focused on the financial expectations of artists and arts managers, plus obtained feedback on the early Government funding initiatives. The survey was open for five days, from Thursday 19 March to Tuesday 24 March 2020 and 4,070 responses were received with the results published in *COVID-19 Impact Study* (<https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Covid-19-impact-survey-2020.pdf>). Even at this early stage in the pandemic, the vast majority already had work, events and exhibitions cancelled. Some key findings from the research were:

- Around 60% of those surveyed anticipated a reduction in income of over 50% in 2020. Those working in craft and applied arts and performance, as well as those based in rural locations, predict the greatest reduction.
- 65% of respondents felt that the government was not doing enough to support artists and the arts to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19. At the early stages of the pandemic, 33% could not give an answer.
- Artists still want to connect, but social distancing and the more recent complete lockdown, has made face to face networking impossible. The research reports noted that there is a role for sector support organisations to provide opportunities for virtual connection and support.
- 96% of respondents indicated income reduction as a significant immediate impact of COVID-19. The majority indicated an impact on the key mechanisms through which artists earn a living such as exhibitions, selling work and employment (which is often supplementary to their practice).
- Unsurprisingly, there was a great deal of uncertainty, even about the near future. This was particularly the case for grants and awards where 22% indicated that the immediate impact of COVID-19 was not yet known. Clear communication from funders and those making awards may help to reduce uncertainty.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

We are now almost 12 months on since the start of the pandemic and the research reported here offers clear insights into the actual impact on the work of individual artists, the financial and health impacts on artists, and views on government funding for artists.

CURRENT SITUATION

Painting the main type of visual art

Background

Artists were asked “Which type of visual art work do you pursue in the art field? Please select all that apply”

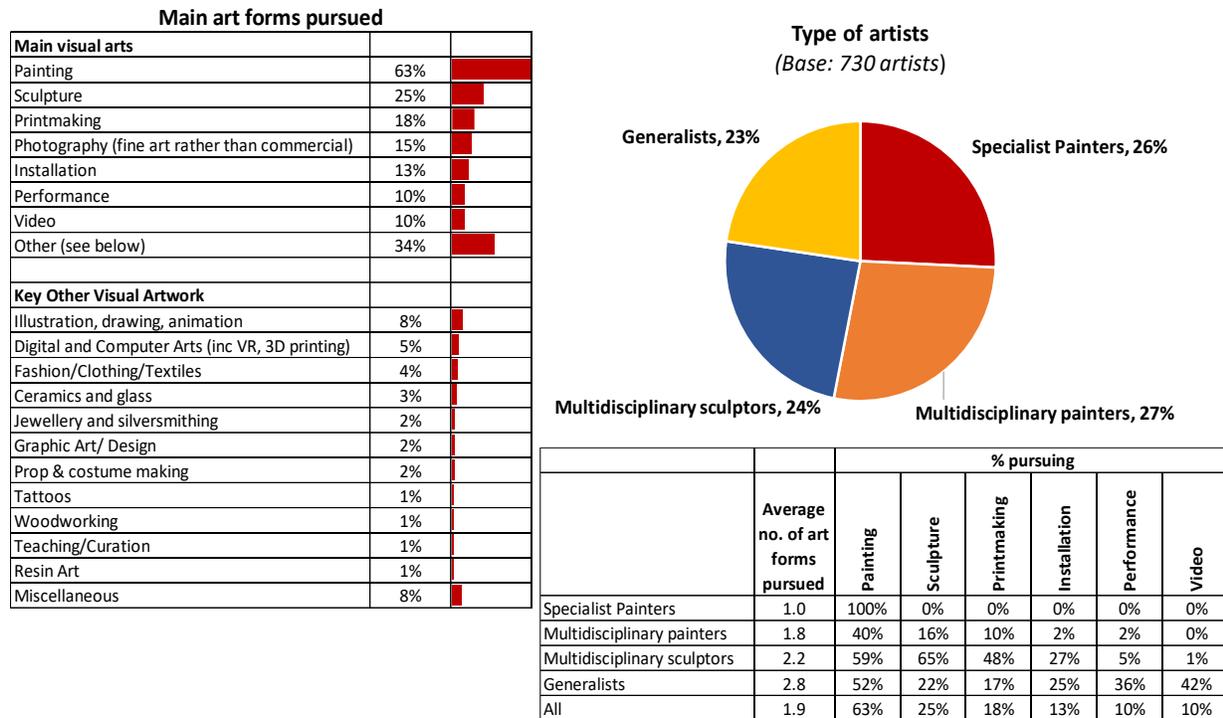
Key findings

- Painting was the dominant type of visual art work, pursued by 63% of artists followed by sculpture (25%).
- Many artists engaged in painting also participate in illustration and drawing. Collectively, painting, illustration, drawing and animation represent 66% of the artists that participated in the survey.
- The artists in the survey fall into one of four groups:
 - Specialist painters (artists who almost exclusively engage in painting and no other form of art)
 - Multidisciplinary painters (artists who tend to engage in two art forms, primarily painting and one other)
 - Multidisciplinary sculptures (artists who tend to engage in more than two art forms, primarily sculpture, painting and possibly one other)
 - Generalists (artists who work widely across art forms).

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 1 The main type of visual art of survey respondents



Source: IRN Research

Art generates 40% of income

Background

Artists were asked how important their art was as a source of income. They were then asked what percentage of their income normally comes from their art and how much they earned from their art and non-art work last year.

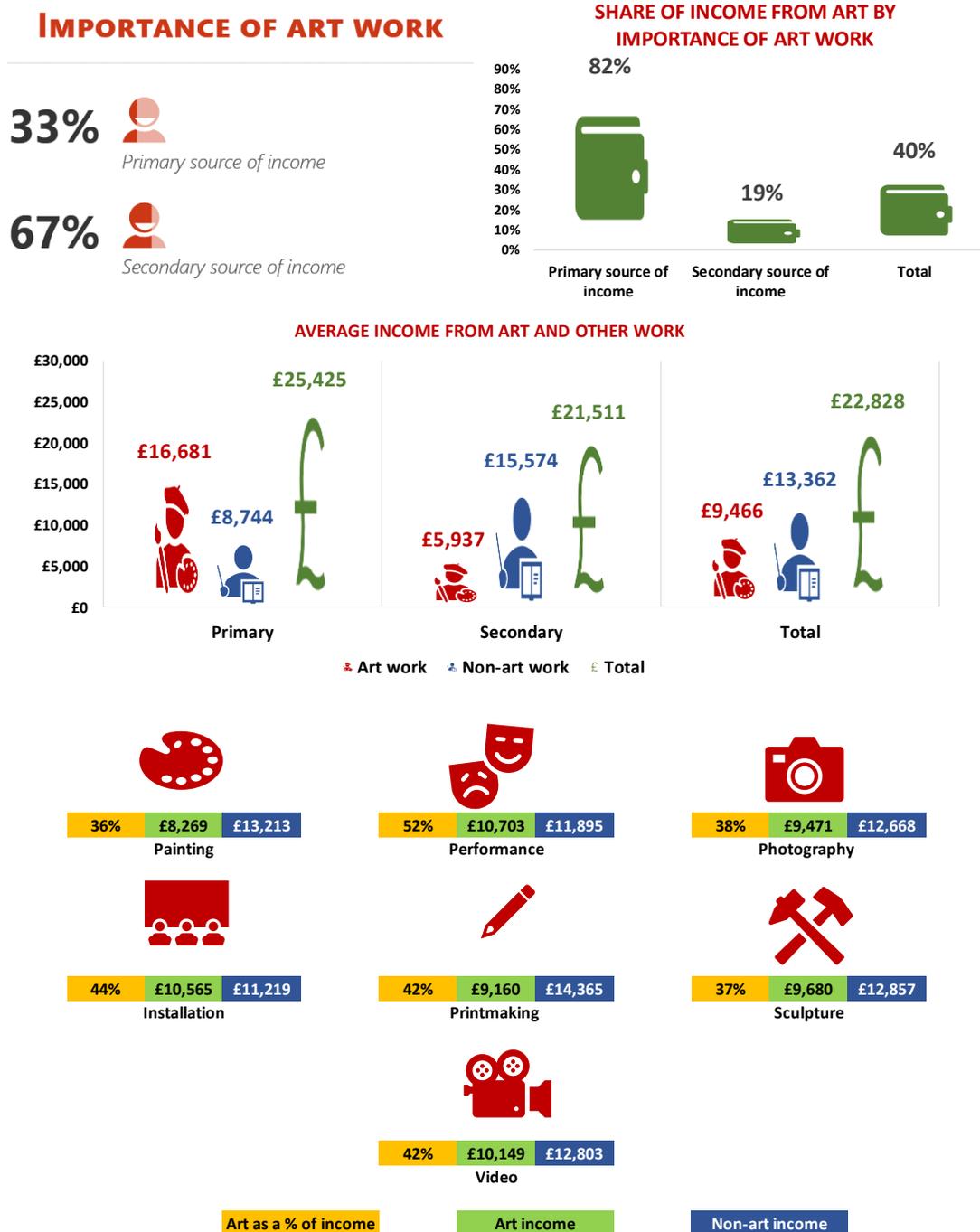
Key findings

- One-third of artists consider their art as their main source of income. On average, art work generates 40% of artists income, rising to 82% for artists whose art is their main source of income.
- The average income of artists last year was £22,828, of which £9,466 came from art work. For artists whose art is their main source of income, on average, art generated £16,681 in income.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Figure 2 The financial importance of art work to artists

Base: 730 artists



See the Appendix for the underlying data and the respondent bases

Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ART PRACTICES

The following section considers how the Coronavirus Pandemic has impacted on artist's art practices.

Six-in-ten artists impacted by COVID-19

Background

Artists were asked *Since the COVID-19 pandemic, has the nature of your work changed?* The artists indicating that their work has changed were asked the open-ended question *How has your work changed and what kinds of work are you producing now?*

Key findings

- 62% of artists said the nature of their work had changed since the pandemic.
- The art forms most sensitive to the pandemic are video and installation art. In contrast, painting is the type of art least changed since the pandemic, although around six-in-ten painters have been affected.
- 431 artists provided comments on how their work had changed and the kind of work they are producing now. Key themes from the responses into how work has changed are loss of work, loss of opportunities and closure of workshops/galleries, even the closure of professional businesses. In terms of changes to the kind of work pursued, there has been a move towards digital/online art, digital sales opportunities and online working, e.g.
 - *Teaching is a big part of my practice and income, so that's moved online. Gallery sales have been hit, so have tried to move that online too. Art trails etc hit, tried to move online.*
 - *My work has changed towards digital art and online.*
 - *Closed the business. Only painting as a hobby now.*
 - *I've done more online - workshops, webinars, retreats. More time & energy has gone into simply connecting and surviving with other artists.*
 - *My UK online gallery, provided by "SALT OF THE EARTH" (SOTE GALLERY) just shut... Nothing has changed for me, I'm a lifelong artist, and I'll do whatever it takes to earn some dosh.*

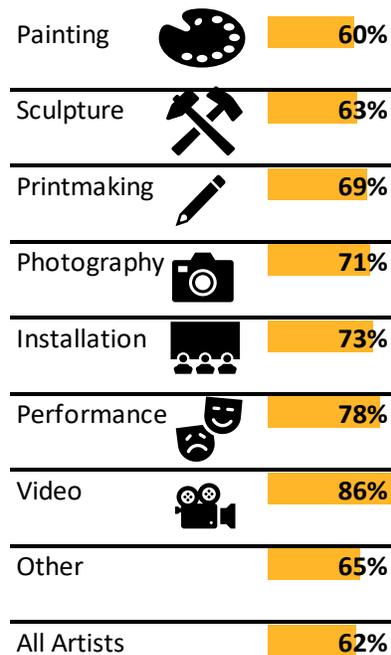
Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

- *A lack of shows has meant relying on online sales.*
- *All performances and workshops cancelled. Now do a little online and streaming work.*
- *Because film and video are group projects really, we haven't been able to finish the shorts we started or begin new shoots.*
- But for a small number of artists, COVID-19 has created new opportunities
 - *Had the time and opportunity to try new things and produce more. Generally, more creative.*
 - *Had time to explore different mediums and moved to oil painting.*
 - *Happier more joyous uplifting work and painting more for my emotional well-being.*

The Data

Figure 3 The percentage of artists whose work has changed because of COVID-19 by art form

Base: 730 artists



Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

For most artists income has declined this year, primarily because of COVID

Background

In order to understand the impact of COVID-19 on artist income, they were asked

Compared with last year, how has your income from your art practice changed this year?

Artists who indicated that their income had declined or increased were then asked

Do you feel the change in your art income is related to the pandemic?

And

What is your income expectation this year from your art?

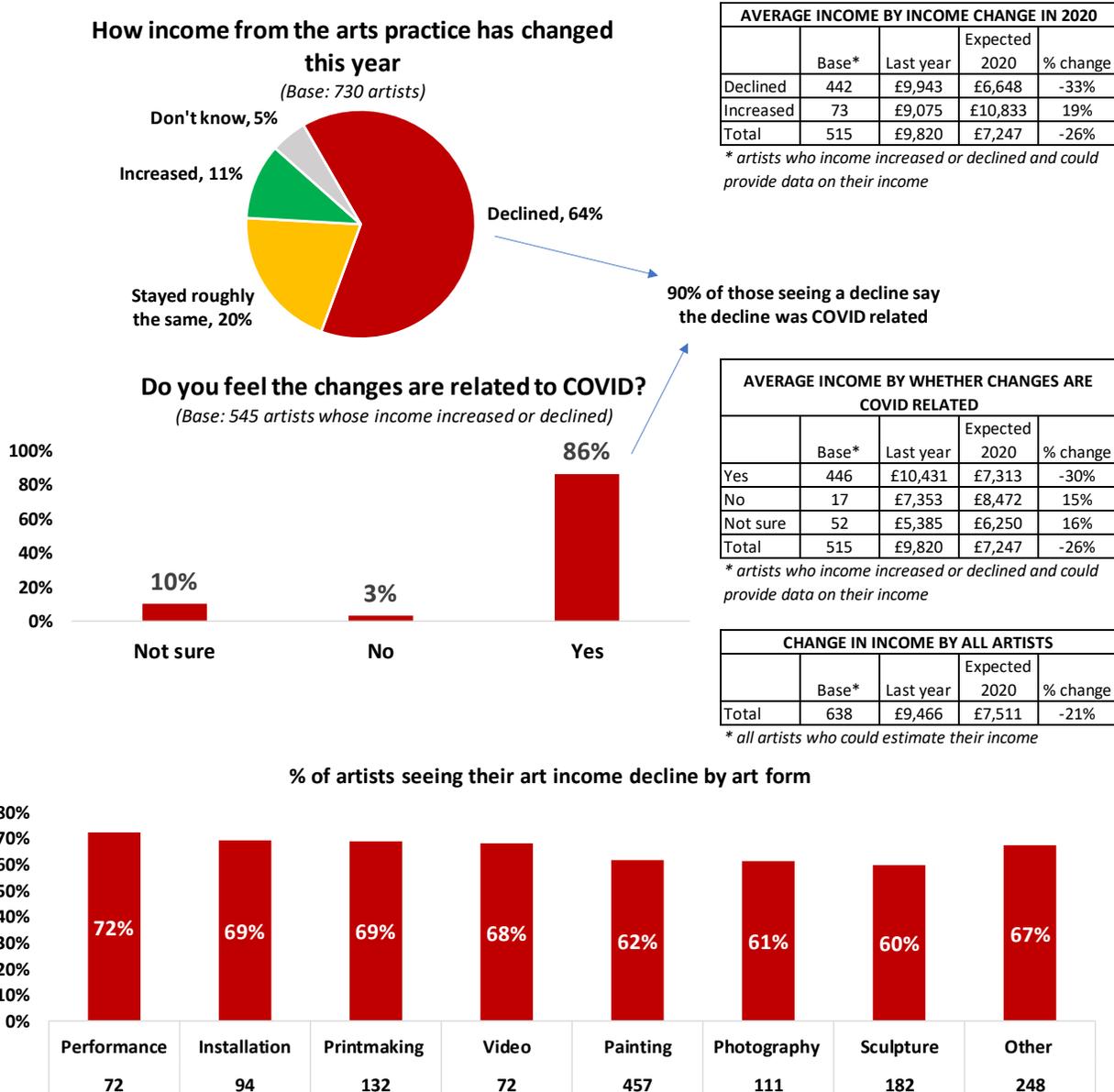
Key findings

- 64% of artists feel their income has declined in 2020, while only 11% have seen income rise. 17% of artists have seen their arts income drop by 50% or more in 2020 compared with 2019.
- Of artists seeing their income change in 2020 (increase or decline), 84% feel the changes were inspired by COVID-19.
- 90% of artists who feel their income has declined in 2020, say the decline was driven by COVID-19.
- COVID-19 appears to have caused, on average, a 30% reduction in artists income for artists impacted by the pandemic.
- Among all artists, including those who saw their income rise or remain unchanged in 2020 and those who were and were not impacted by COVID-19, income in 2020 is set to decline by 21%.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 4 How artists income from their art practices have changed in 2020



Source: IRN Research

Almost half of artists have seen their non-art income decline, most because of COVID

Background

In order to understand how artist income from their non-art work has changed they were asked

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Compared with last year, how has your income from your other sources of income changed this year?

Artists who indicated that their income had declined or increased were then asked three questions

Do you feel the change in your other income is related to the pandemic?

What is your income expectation from other jobs?

How has the change in income from these other sources impacted your ability to create your art?

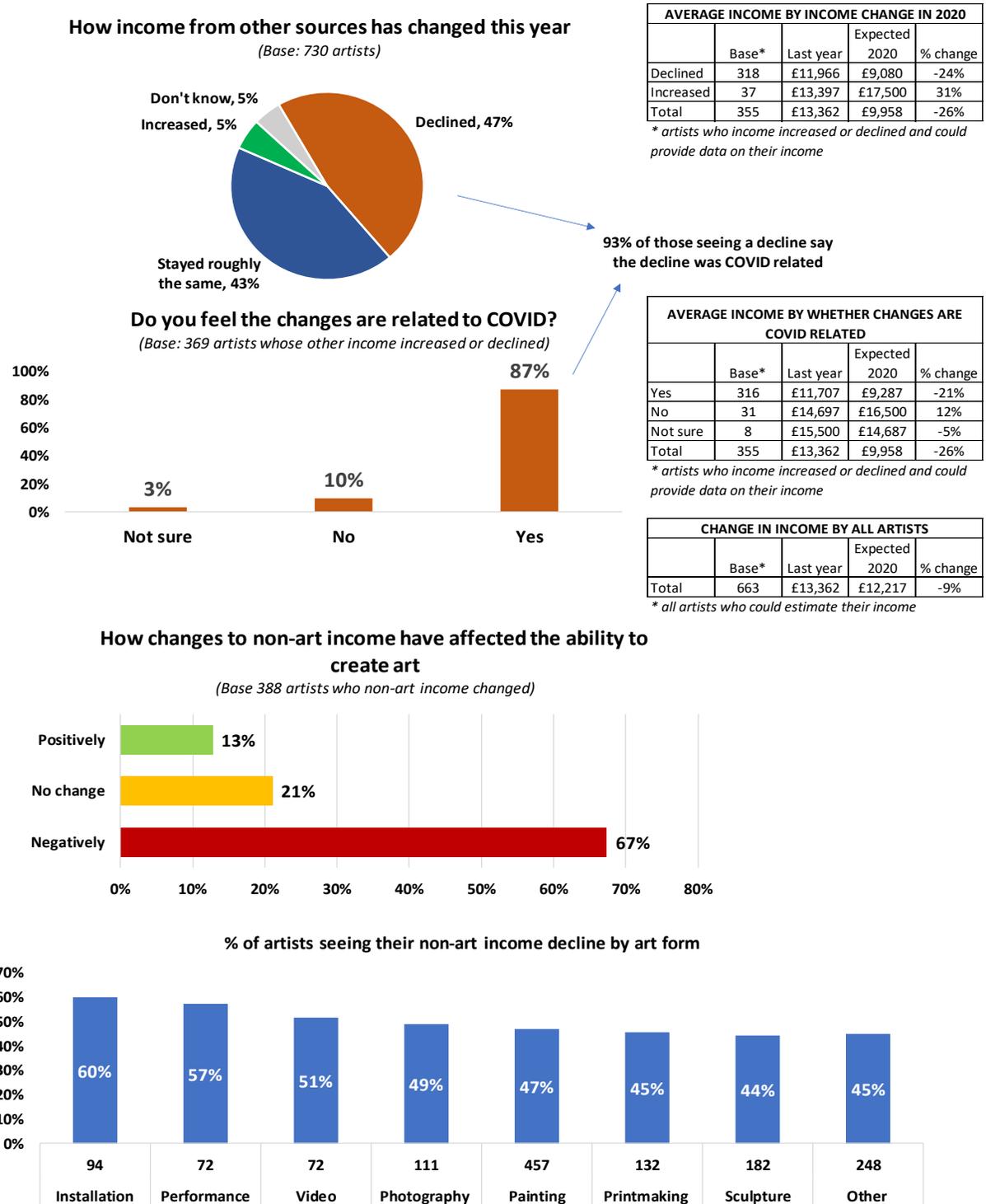
Key findings

- 47% of artists have seen their non-art income decline in 2020. 16% of artists have seen their total income (from their art and from other sources) decline by 50% or more in 2020 compared with 2019.
- Of artists seeing their income change in 2020 (increase or decline), 87% feel the changes were inspired by COVID-19.
- 93% of artists who feel their non-art income has declined in 2020, say the decline was driven by COVID-19.
- COVID-19 appears to have caused, on average, a 21% reduction in artists non-art income for artists impacted by the pandemic.
- Among all artists, including those who saw their income rise or remain unchanged in 2020 and those who were and were not impacted by COVID-19, income from other sources in 2020 is set to decline by 9%.
- Almost seven-in-ten artists (67%) who experienced a change in income from non-art work said the change in income was having a detrimental effect on their ability to create art.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 5 How income from non-art activities has changed in 2020



Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Financial implication of the pandemic weighing heavily on artists

Background

In order to understand how the above financial changes are weighing on the minds of artists, they were asked *Are you worried about the financial implications of the pandemic on your art practice?*

The artists who said they were worried were asked

What is it that worries you about the financial implications of the pandemic on your art practice?

Key findings

- 60% of artists are worried by the financial implications of the pandemic, with only 20% not worried, with a further 20% not sure.
- The art forms where the financial impacts of the pandemic are most felt are installation, performance and video. However, across all art forms more than 50% of artists express worry about the financial effects of the pandemic.
- Specific worries about the pandemic fall into the following categories:
 - **Concerns about the immediate and longer-term impacts on an artist's personal financial position**
 - *I may lose my house. I may lose future projects.*
 - *Sales of original work are down, and I worry that with recession and Brexit, they will decline further. I am working extremely hard to maintain my income and I can't work harder!*
 - *My business will be bankrupt within a year if something doesn't change or I take on second job to supplement*
 - *My art sales have dried up. And I don't see that reversing. Recession is inevitable and people are buying necessities instead.*
 - *I don't have enough money to buy food and worry where my next meal is coming from, as any money I do get goes towards trying to keep a roof over my head*
 - **Concerns about the immediate and long-term ability of an artist to create**

- *I worry that it will be such a long time until I can run events again or perform that the audience will not be there, but worse really is that as I dance I am not performance ready, and my fitness has been effected by the lockdown also that my confidence has diminished.*
- *It is difficult to create with no money.*
- *Not being able to afford to make art. Having to use my time to beef up my employability skills which means less time to make art. Lower paid commissions which means I can't do them within budget.*
- *Being able to afford materials*
- *Can't afford a studio space and can't work from home due to son having breathing issues. Can't see how I can work - Instagram or zoom aren't viable time based places of work for my practice*
- **Immediate concerns about an art form or The Arts in general, i.e. can they survive**
 - *Galleries shutting. Nowhere to exhibit*
 - *Cancellation of exhibitions, closure of venues, pressures leading to less risk taking on part of galleries and institutions*
 - *Other people and businesses having less disposable income. Art events being cancelled.*
- **Future concerns about an art form or The Arts in general, i.e. can they recover**
 - *I worry that in the longer term people will find themselves short of disposable income and therefore have less money to spend on luxury items like art.*
 - *My worry is more about other people having spare cash to purchase art - in recessions it's always the first thing to pushed (sic) aside.*
 - *People are spending less, because they have less money so less likely to buy art in the future. Especially as the economic impact is not yet clear. This will have an impact for years to come.*
 - *Funding will be stretched even thinner as more artists are in need of it. Potential buyers also have less money, or are uncertain about the future, so hang onto it.*

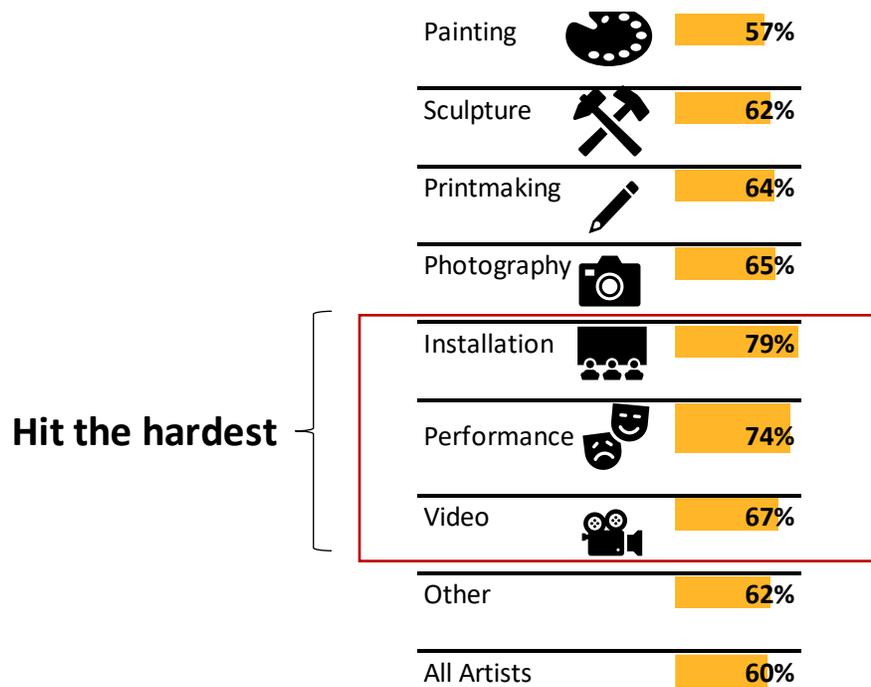
Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

- Will it go back to normal? Fear it'll never go back to normal and therefore will never have the same amount of work

The Data

Figure 6 The percentage of artists worried by the financial implications of the pandemic by art form

Base: 730 artists



Source: IRN Research

Four in ten artists are in debt and most of these have increased their debt recently

Background

To understand the degree to which artists have taken on debt to survive the pandemic, they were asked *Are you currently in debt?* Then the artists who are in debt were asked *How has the amount of money you owe changed during the pandemic?*

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Key findings

- 39% of artists are in debt and of those that are in debt, 62% said the amount of debt they had increased during the pandemic.
- This means that 24% of all artists have increased the amount of debt they have because of the pandemic. In contrast, only 2% of all artists say the amount of debt they have declined during the pandemic.

Eight-in-ten artists create artwork for sale and most have experienced falling sales

Background

In order to probe how the pandemic has hit the commercial sales of artwork, artists were asked *Do you create artworks for sale?* Then artists who do create artwork for sale were asked two supplementary questions

How has the pandemic affected sales?

Are you represented by a gallery or dealer?

Artists represented by a gallery or dealer were then asked *Have the galleries or dealers supported your practice during the lockdown? And In what ways have the galleries or dealers supported your practice?*

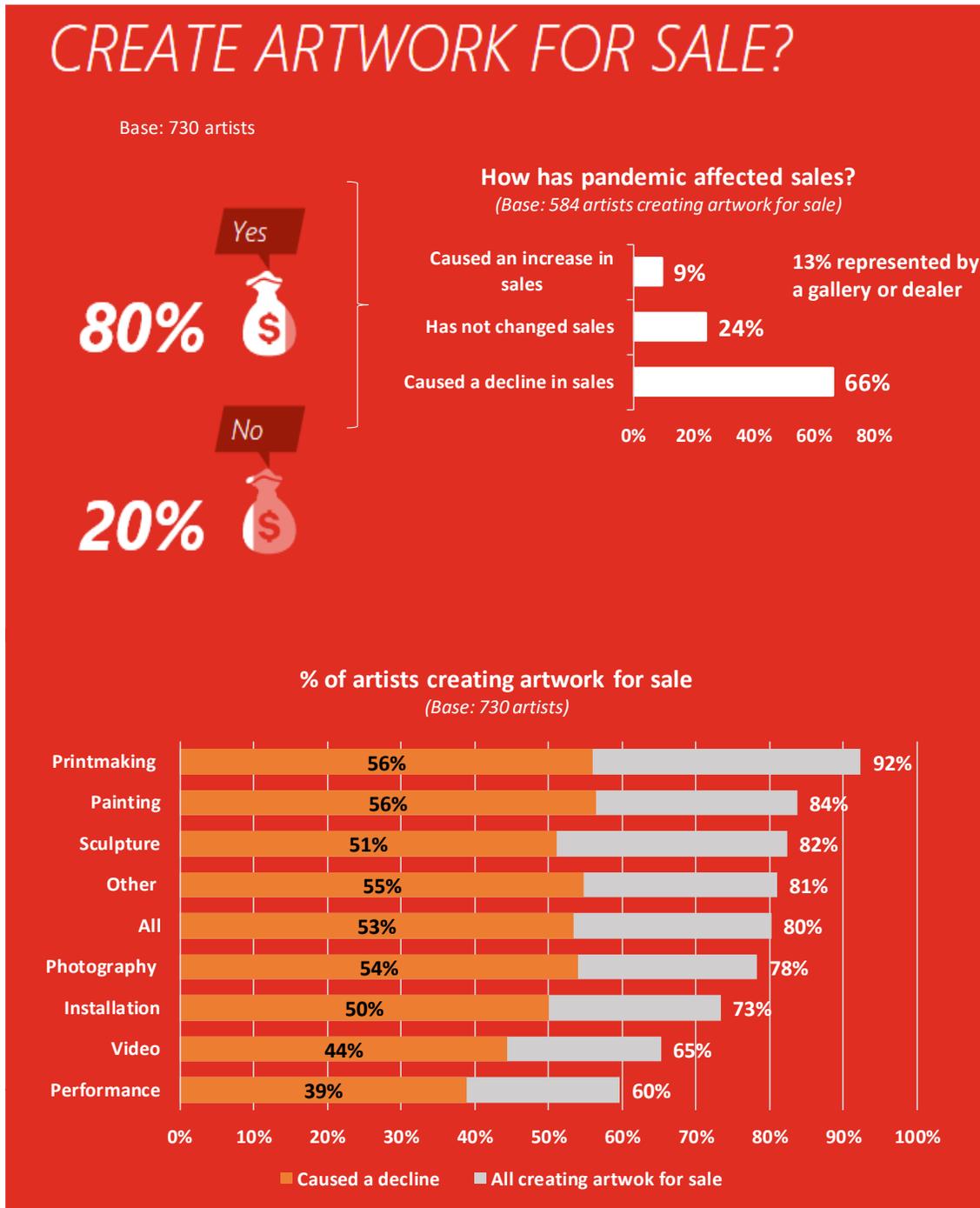
Key findings

- 80% of artists create artwork for sale.
- Of the artists creating artwork for sale, 66% say that the pandemic has caused sales to decline. In other words, 53% of all artists both create artwork for sale and have seen their sales decline because of the pandemic.
- The negative impacts of the pandemic on sales of artwork have been felt the hardest by artists active in the printmaking, painting and sculpture art forms.
- 13% of artists creating artwork for sale are represented by a gallery or dealer.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 7 Impact of the pandemic on artwork for sale



Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Galleries and dealers provide most help to artists active in installation, sculpture and video

Background

The Figure below shows the percentage of artists in each art form that are represented by galleries or dealers and the percentage that are both represented and have been supported during the pandemic by their galleries/dealers.

Key findings

- 13% of artists creating artwork for sale are represented by a gallery or dealer.
- Just over half of these artists (53%) have been supported by their galleries/dealers during the pandemic, equivalent to 7% of all artists that create artwork for sale.
- Representation by a gallery or dealer is highest for artists active in the video, printmaking, installation and sculpture art forms.
- Gallery or dealer support is most likely for artists active in the video, installation and sculpture art forms.

When artists who have been supported by their gallery/dealer were asked what type of support they received, the prime response was moving to online/virtual shows and sales, e.g.

- *Aimed for online sales.*
- *By promoting my work on Instagram and Facebook.*
- *By publicising me more and getting online sales more, usually my work sells in physical galleries.*
- *Continued supplying client's images online.*
- *Email marketing, some web sales.*
- *Going online, staying in regular contact.*
- *I have continued to make and use social media platforms to showcase new pieces. I have been approached by galleries via Instagram. They are also aware that online sales are now very important and have also been showcasing online exhibitions.*
- *I work with several online galleries. I have sold more than ever during lockdown. Other physical galleries have put the exhibitions online.*
- *Improving their online presence and shopping platform.*
- *Kept open for as long as possible and promoted their artists on social media when closed.*
- *Maintaining limited public access and online sales.*
- *Most have included my work in online selling.*
- *Put on virtual group shows.*

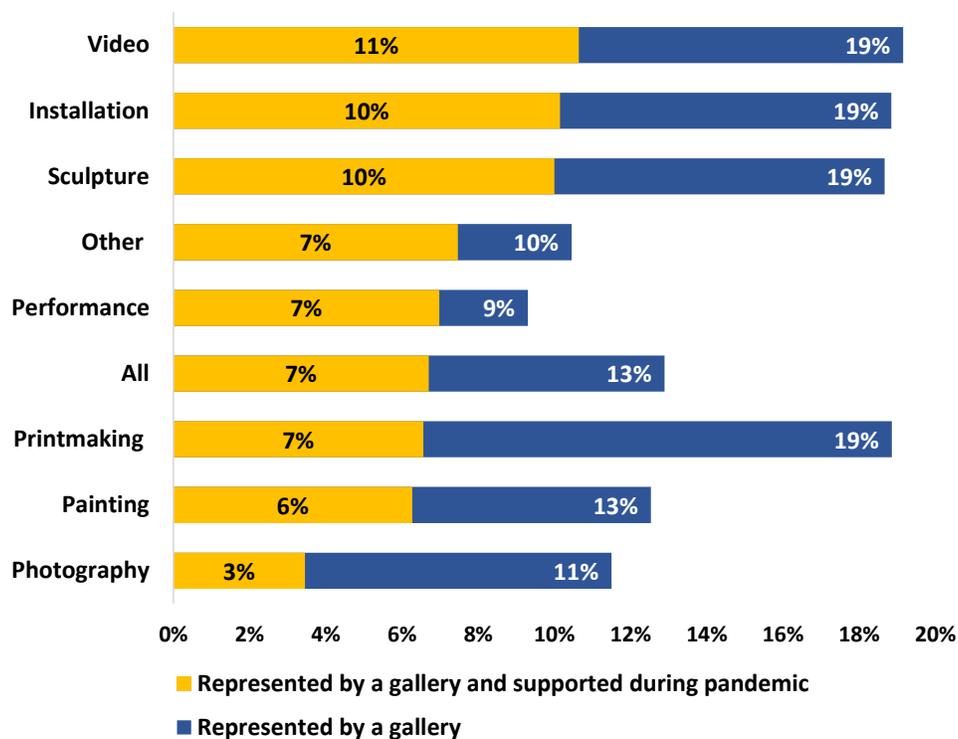
Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

- Some have developed online routes to market.
- Switched to sharing work online is social media.
- The gallery has funded my online teaching.
- They have given more prominence to online methods of promoting and selling work.
- They have promoted my work online.
- They moved exhibitions online, and used social media to promote and support. So, I've still sold things just smaller things.
- Tried to promote my work online.

The Data

Figure 8 The percentage of artists represented by a gallery/dealer and the percentage supported

Base: 584 artists creating artwork for sale



Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Just over half of artists have had upcoming exhibitions/projects postponed or cancelled

Background

To understand how the current economic situation has impacted on projects and exhibitions, artists were asked two questions

Were you working on any upcoming exhibitions or projects that have been postponed or cancelled?

Has the shutdown of museums, galleries and cultural institutions had a negative impact on your projects?

If artists had suffered postponements or cancellations, they were then asked how many exhibitions/projects had been cancelled and whether new dates had been organised for the exhibitions or projects that have been postponed or cancelled.

If artists were negatively impacted by the shutdown of museums, galleries etc. they were asked how this had negatively impacted their projects.

Key findings

- Just over half of artists (51%) have seen exhibitions/projects cancelled or postponed, with on average 3.6 exhibitions/projects affected.
- Most of the exhibitions/projects cancelled or postponed have not had new dates arranged. As a result, 30% of all artists have experienced both cancellations and postponements with no new dates arranged.
- The art forms most impacted by postponement and cancellations and a failure to have new dates arranged, are performance and installation.
- 51% of artists have suffered negative impacts due to the shutdown of museums, galleries and cultural institutions, with artists active in installations, printmaking, video and performance art forms the most likely to suffer negative impacts.
- When artists were asked to state how shutdowns had negatively impacted on them, two key themes emerged:
 - **Negative impact on their art:** i.e. negative impacts on their inspiration, creativity, motivation and research.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

- **Negative impact on their business:** i.e. the impact of the shutdown on cancelling/postponing exhibitions/projects and cutting sales opportunities.
- Of the 341 comments received, 152 highlighted negative impacts to inspiration, creatively motivation and research, e.g.
 - *I have had to rethink where I get inspiration from and adapt - lots more research and time spent online. I also miss being immersed in culture and drawing inspiration from those institutions.*
 - *All artists utilise cultural institutions for inspiration even if not represented or part of a gallery etc. Without access to these an artist feels very isolated and "starved".*
 - *Art galleries, museums are a fantastic resource for inspiration & meeting friends. Julia Cameron who wrote the book The Artists Way calls these "Art Dates".*
 - *Art research and inspiration. Education & art community.*
 - *As a form of community engagement & inspiration, without it has had far reaching impacts in my work and wellbeing.*
 - *Because I use them for inspiration.*
 - *Both as sources of research and inspiration and as possible spaces for work*
 - *I feel stilted, uninspired. The lack of control I feel over my life has led maybe indirectly to artist's block; I feel a bit depressed.*
 - *I find myself less inspired because I cannot go out and physically view artwork and experience the gallery atmosphere. It has also affected me because I am unable to network & meet like-minded artists to bounce off of.*
 - *I gather huge info from galleries. My source of stimulation. I'm a visual learner I haven't been to a gallery since February. Thank goodness they have been brilliant with their online education a visual exhibition.*
 - *I had no exhibitions myself, and could not visit any, either. Artists need visual inputs to be inspired and for wellbeing (as many other people). I usually meet up with artist friends on a regular basis to learn and find new ideas.*
 - *I have missed the opportunities to look at others work and be inspired.*
 - *I haven't been able to research current projects as most archives are shut and travel unwise, nor have I been able to catch the usual number of shows I would like to in a month.*
 - *I haven't been able to see exhibitions that would help inform my work or use their libraries for reference.*
 - *I need to see and be involved in art.*
- 157 comments mentioned the shutdowns causing projects/exhibitions being cancelled or postponed and/or causing a loss of business or business opportunities.
 - *I've had to take my residency virtually, meaning I've lost out on making professional relationships and a studio space. My first solo exhibition has been*

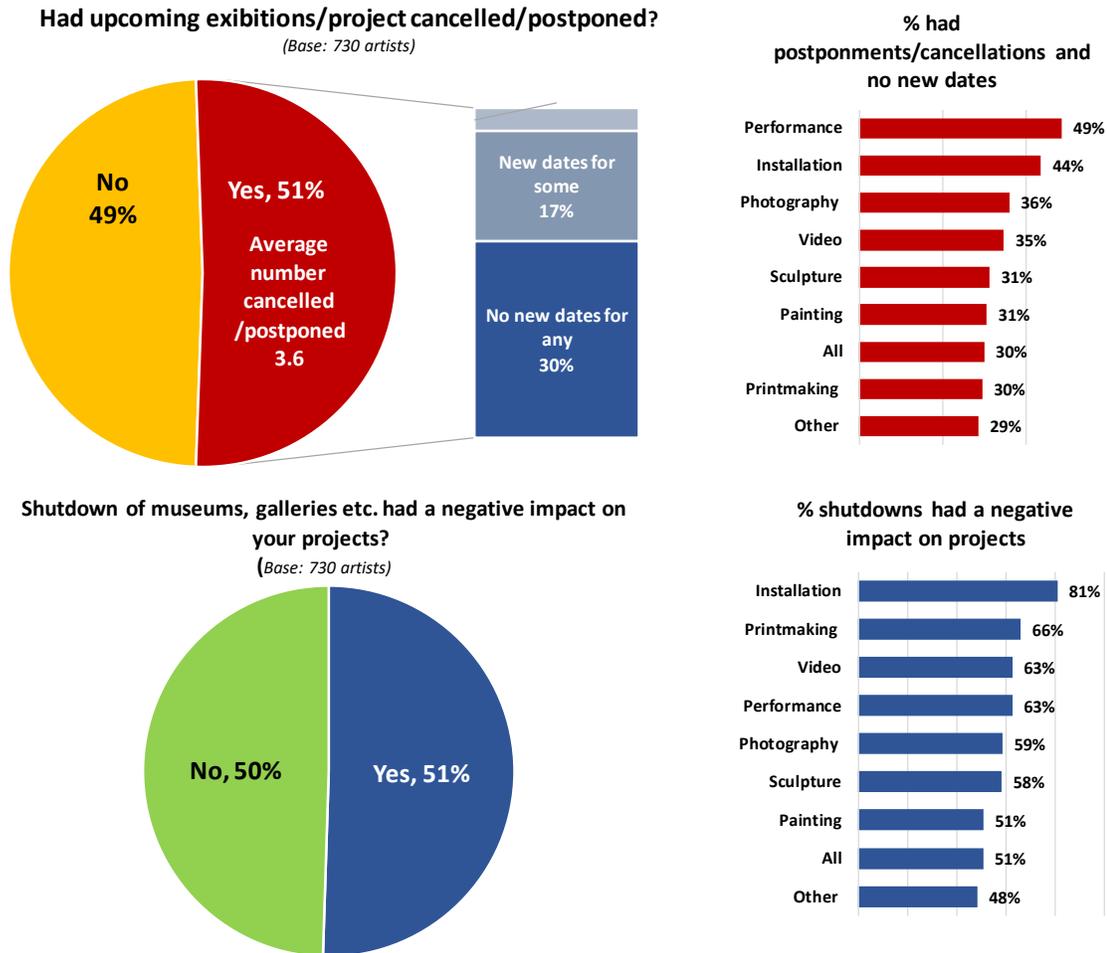
cancelled because of the shut down and I've had another joint exhibition cancelled.

- *A couple of group shows cancelled or postponed.*
- *All my exhibitions have been cancelled.*
- *All workshops and talks I had in the diary have been cancelled.*
- *Events and art markets cancelled, social events to meet other artists also not the same online.*
- *Events such as book fairs, exhibitions and visits that would have been beneficial for sales have been cancelled.*
- *Exhibitions and projects run by galleries/art societies cancelled.*
- *Exhibitions and workshops cancelled.*
- *Exhibitions cancelled.*
- *Shows have been postponed and cancelled, trips to network totally stopped, research opportunities gone, because I cannot visit archives which are key to my work.*
- *Shows long in the preparation have been indefinitely cancelled; others occurred in scaled back form. Loss of trips with opportunity to network and get payment in kind.*
- *My work was about to go into a gallery before the recent lockdown. I was also about to exhibit some of my work in a joint artist exhibition at the same gallery. I'm afraid that after the lock down the gallery will close indefinitely because of lost income. If it stays open, I won't be able to afford the wall space and the exhibition will likely cost more to take part in.*
- *No exhibition of work, no promotion of our collective (which has collapsed due to being unable to use shared premises).*
- *No exhibitions.*
- *no gallery = no sales, people furloughed = no money to spend, people have lost their jobs = no money to spend, galleries opened=social distancing= fewer people = no sales...*
- *No one is viewing it.*

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 9 Artists suffering from cancellations etc. of exhibitions/projects and shutdown of venues



Source: IRN Research

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WORK ENVIRONMENTS

This section considers how artists work and how this has changed during the pandemic.

Significant movement towards working from home

Background

In order to understand the physical space where artists work, they were asked a series of questions about where they worked, i.e.

Thinking about your working environment before the pandemic, which best describes where you worked? Please select only one.

Since the pandemic, has your studio situation changed?

If an artist's studio situation had changed, they were asked *Which best describes where you work now? Please select only one*

From these questions we can assess the working situation of artists pre and during the pandemic.

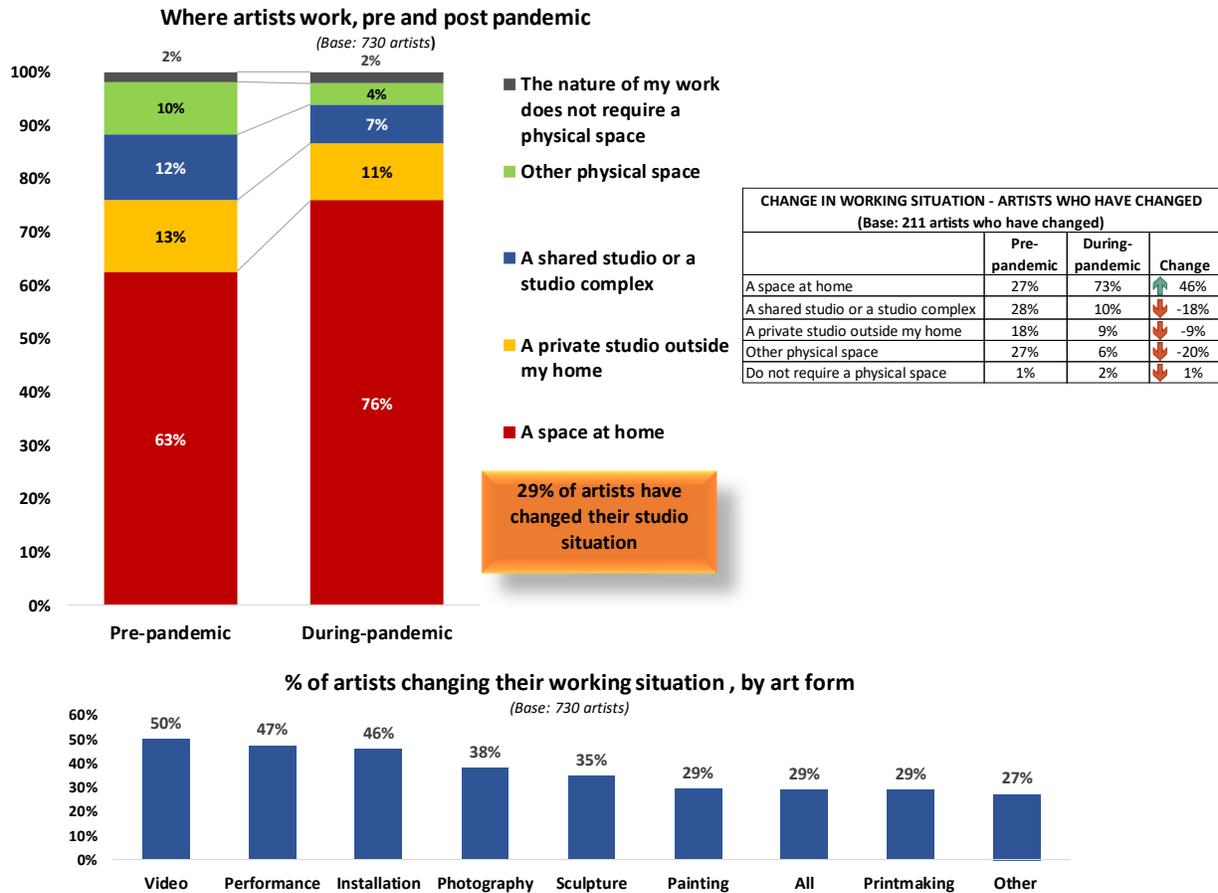
Key findings

- Both before and during the pandemic most artists worked from home. The pandemic, however, has caused a significant shift towards home working.
- Working in a shared studio or other physical space have been the working situations which have declined the most during the pandemic.
- Working in a private studio has also declined but by a lesser extent.
- Just under one-third of artists (29%) have changed their working situation since the pandemic started. Artists working in video, performance, installation and photography were the most likely to have changed their working situation.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 10 How the working environment of artists has changed



Source: IRN Research

Decline in the number of assistants employed

Background

In order to understand whether artists employed assistants before the pandemic and how employment has changed in 2020, artists were asked three questions

Before the pandemic, did you work with at least one assistant that you employ?

Has the pandemic caused you to cut the number of assistants you use?

How many assistants do you currently employ?

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Artists who said they had cut their number of assistants were then asked how many they had cut.

Artists whose working situation has changed in 2020 where then asked

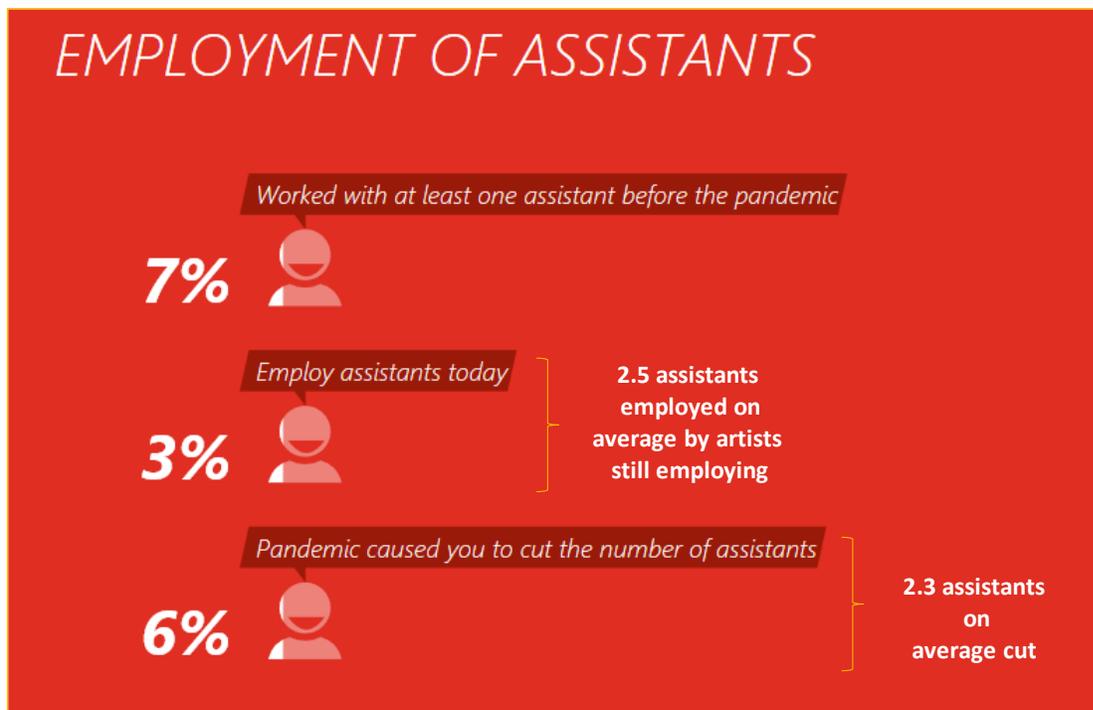
Do you currently work with at least one assistant that you employ?

Key findings

- 7% of artists employed at least one assistant before the pandemic.
- 6% of artists say the pandemic has cut the number of assistants they employ.
- As a result, only 3% of artists say they employ at least one assistant today, with artists who do employ assistants on average employing 2.5.

The Data

Figure 11 *The employment of assistants*



Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Just over half of artists have explored new mediums

Background

In order to assess any artistic changes caused by the pandemic, artists were asked

Have you explored any new mediums since the pandemic began?

Then those that said they had explored new mediums were asked

Can you give examples of the new mediums you have explored?

Key findings

- 55% of artists have explored new mediums during the pandemic.
- Exploring new mediums is most common among artists engaged in video, performance, photography and print making.
- In terms of the new mediums being explored, these were very wide ranging. 391 responses were received, with the most common being painting related, such as oil painting (72 comments) painting in general (44), watercolours (30) and acrylics (19). Other key new media were:
 - Digital/online (55)
 - Clay (27)
 - Sculpture (23)
 - 3D (modelling, printing etc). (20)
 - Video (20)
 - Printmaking (11)

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

Key findings

- The dominant responses from artists were to make comments about their work or working.
- In total, comments were received from 657 artists. The words most frequently used in these comments provides a good guide to how artists feel about the pandemic. Key words were
 - Work/working (appeared in 271 comments)
 - Time (65)
 - Art (40)
 - Home (38)
- The words work/working were often associated with negative words/terms such as “stalled”, “lack”, “loss”, “negative”, “unable”, “standstill” and “negatively”. For example,
 - *Inability to access workspace during lockdown, unable to travel to customers, unable to commit to possible work, and customers stopping orders before payment outside of the normal contract conditions have left my career at a standstill, unable to make new work, unable to sell commissioned work already completed, and unable to travel to display work.*
 - *My work has come to a creative standstill due to lack of time, exhaustion from the hours I’m working and keeping up with housework during my waking hours before I have to go to work.*
 - *I have to share my creative space with my husband who now works from home. Also, as childcare is unreliable now, I can rarely work on art during the day so can only work at night, in silence, trying not to damage my husband's work.*
 - *Because everyone has been in the house my capability to work undisturbed has been very difficult, so I’ve been working through the night instead of sleeping. I also do most of my work on recycled or reclaimed materials acquired from collecting what I find in gardens, charity shops or on selling sites so I have struggled to find materials to paint on and have had to decline some commissions due to lack of materials.*

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 13 *Word cloud of key words used regarding the biggest changes to their career since COVID-19*



Source: IRN Research

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL PROCESSES

This section considers how COVID-19 has changed the mental outlook and approaches of artists.

Pandemic damages artists mental health

Background

In order to assess the overall mental health of artists, they were asked two questions

How would you describe your mental health before the pandemic?

Compared with how you felt before the pandemic, how do you feel about your mental health today?

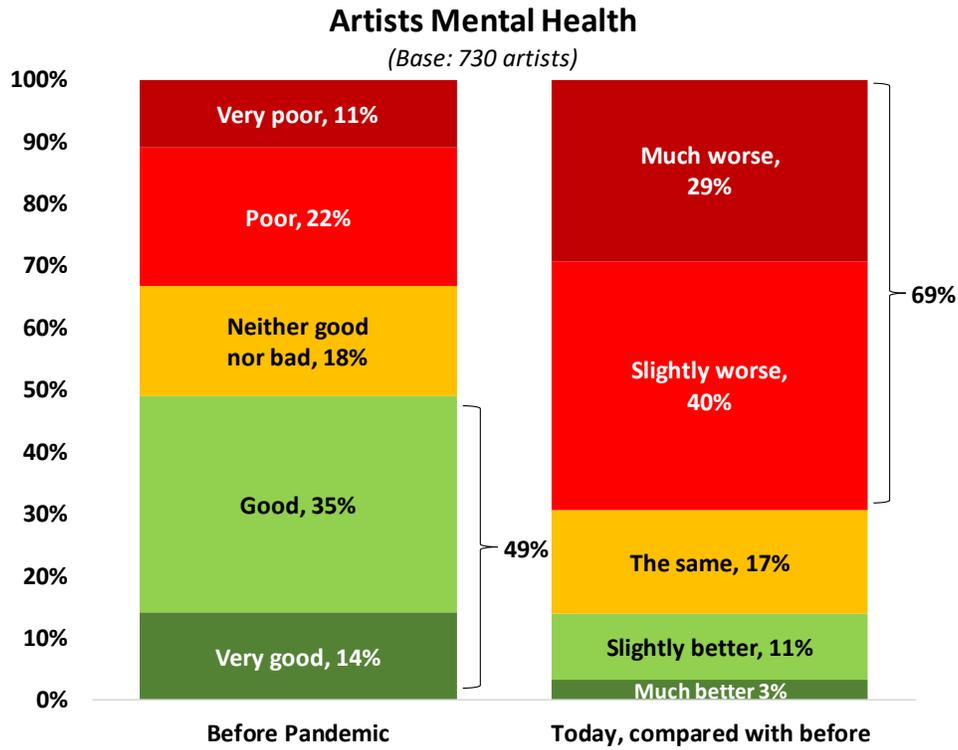
Key findings

- Before the pandemic 49% of artists described their mental health as good or very good, while one-third described it as poor or very poor.
- The pandemic has led to a significant worsening of mental health for most artists, with 69% of artists stating their mental health is worse today than it was before the pandemic.
- The pandemic has hit hardest at those artists whose mental health was good/very good before the pandemic. Ironically, artists whose mental health was “very poor” before the pandemic appear to be the only group for which mental health has improved.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 14 Artists mental health pre-pandemic and today



	How would you describe your mental health before the pandemic					
	Very good	Good	The same	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Base: artists	103	255	129	163	80	730
Today, compared with before						
Much better	1%	0%	2%	4%	15%	3%
Slightly better	2%	4%	8%	18%	33%	11%
The same	19%	9%	20%	21%	24%	17%
Slightly worse	44%	48%	42%	35%	18%	40%
Much worse	34%	38%	29%	22%	11%	29%
Net worse*	-75%	-81%	-61%	-35%	19%	-55%

* % much/slightly better less % slight or much worse

Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The pandemic saps optimism from the artistic community

Background

In order to probe more deeply into how the pandemic has impacted on artists mental thinking, they were asked if they felt more or less optimistic about a series of topics. They were then asked

While things might be difficult in the short-term, do you feel positive about your longer-term future?

And

Which, if any of the following do you think has been most impacted by the pandemic?

Key findings

- The pandemic has severely damaged the optimism felt by artists across the board, negatively impacting on how optimistic they are about the future in general, their work/art, their finances and their health.
- They are especially more pessimistic about their finances, their mental health, their work rights and the future in general.
- Their creativity has also been negatively impacted but to a lesser degree compared with the above.
- Around four-in-ten artists feel their mental health, their creativity (i.e. inspiration) and finances have all been equally impacted by the pandemic. Of those that selected a specific aspect of their life that has been most impacted by the pandemic, more select their mental health than their finances or inspiration.
- The pandemic could also have long-term negative effects on a significant minority of artists, with only one-third (33%) answering “Yes” to the statement *While things might be difficult in the short-term, do you feel positive about your longer-term future?* Almost one quarter of artists (24%) answered “No” to the question and 42% could only state “Not sure”, indicating the degree to which artists are uncertain about the future.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 15 Artist optimism about the future, their finances, their work and their health

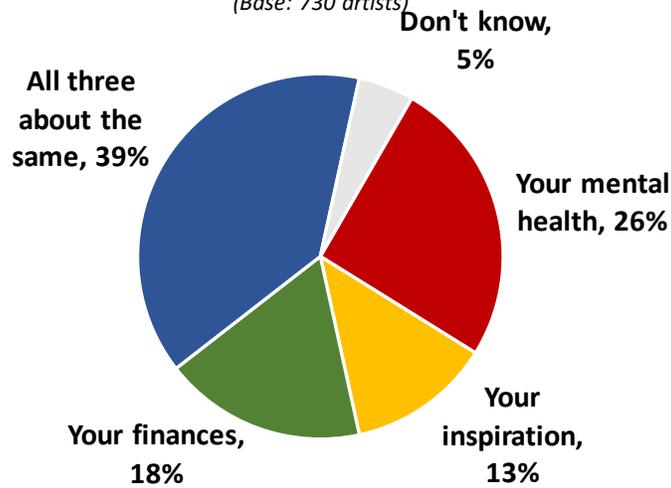
Base: 730 artists

	Much more optimistic	Slightly more optimistic	The same	Slightly more pessimistic	Much more pessimistic	Net more optimistic*
Future in general	3%	12%	15%	42%	27%	↓ -53%
Work and art						
Your work rights	2%	3%	35%	29%	31%	↓ -56%
Your ability to make your work	9%	17%	24%	32%	18%	↓ -24%
Your art to create	11%	20%	26%	28%	16%	↓ -14%
Your art	10%	22%	23%	29%	16%	↓ -13%
Your finances						
Your finances	2%	6%	23%	32%	37%	↓ -62%
Health						
Your mental health	3%	7%	22%	40%	28%	↓ -58%
Your overall health	3%	7%	31%	37%	22%	↓ -50%

* % much more or slightly more optimistic less % slightly more or much more pessimistic

Which of the following do you think has been most impacted by the pandemic?

(Base: 730 artists)



Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The pandemic has generally dampened creativity but also inspired some

Background

To probe how artistic creativity has been impacted by the pandemic, artists were asked a series of questions about how the pandemic had or had not impacted on their abilities to be creative. They were asked

Do you agree with the statement "I'm struggling to make my work and I worry that I won't be able to continue"?

How has your inspiration to create artwork been affected by the pandemic?

Which, if any, of the following statements expresses your feeling about your creative process during COVID-19?

Have you noticed your art change at all throughout the pandemic?

Key findings

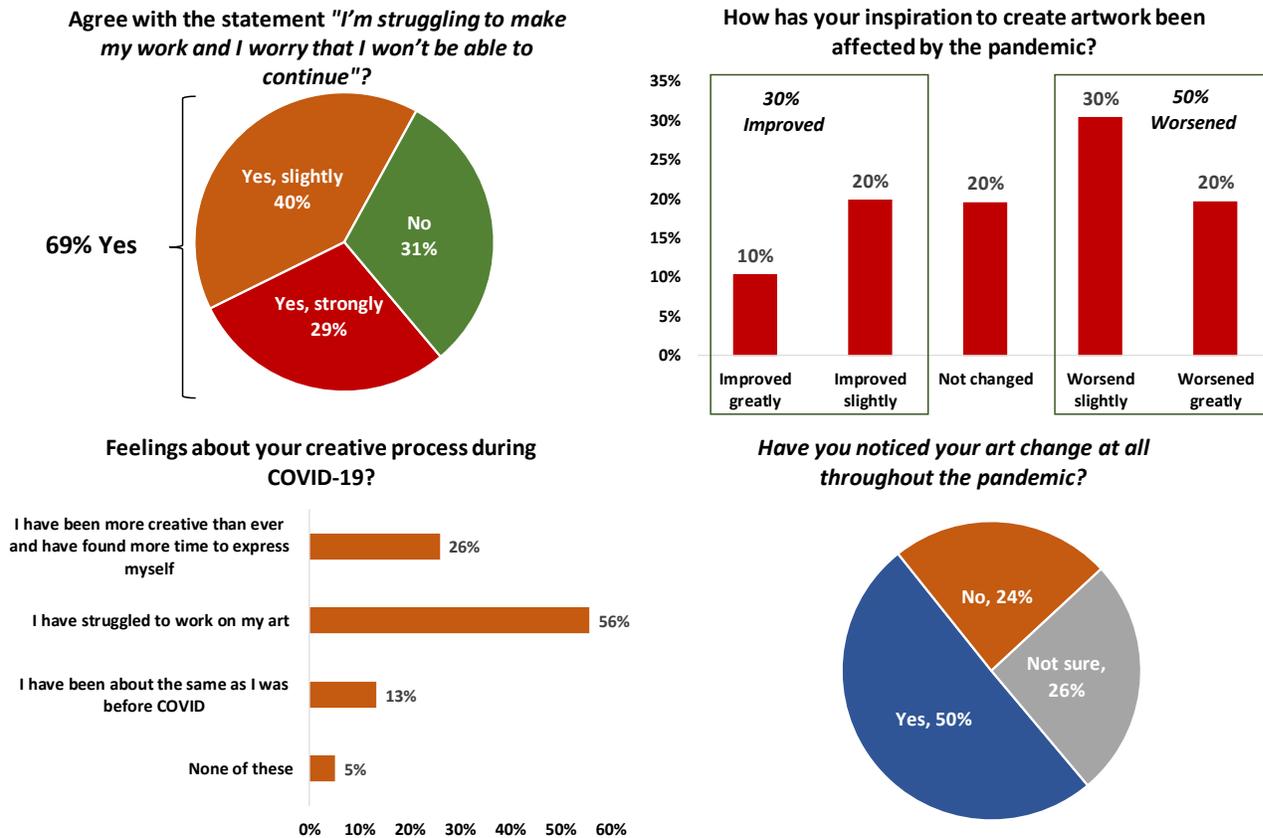
- For most artists, the pandemic has had a negative impact on their creativity and ability to make their art, reflecting the findings above. As a result, 69% of artists are struggling with their work, 50% have felt less inspired to create and 50% have struggled to work on their art. Not surprisingly, given this, around half of artists feel their art has changed during the pandemic.
- However, for a minority of artists and a not insignificant minority, the pandemic has been seen as an opportunity to create. Hence, 31% are not struggling to make their art, 26% feel they have become more creative than ever and 30% have become more inspired.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 16 The impact of the pandemic on artists creativity, inspiration and ability to work

Base: 730 artists



Source: IRN Research

The Motivated vs. the Demotivated

Background

In order to assess the overall impact of the pandemic on creativity, IRN ran a cluster analysis on the above four questions.

Key findings

- Based on the impact of the pandemic on their creativity and ability to create art, artists can be segmented into two groups
 - Motivated (44%): artists who have been inspired to create more and whose work has not been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

- Demotivated (56%): artists who have experienced worsening creativity because of the pandemic and who have struggled to work.
- Only one art form, printmaking, has seen more artists motivated by the pandemic than artists demotivated. The demotivating impact of the pandemic has been felt the strongest by artists active in Performance art.
- For artists who felt demotivated by the pandemic, some common themes as to how their art has changed are:
 - It has become darker.
 - It has become more abstract.
 - For some, it has made their art simpler and for others more complex and detailed.
 - *A lot less colours, darker shades.*
 - *Anything I manage to create is lower effort or more simplistic.*
 - *Definitely darker & more abstract.*
 - *It has got darker with less humour. I suppose I have made more abstract art as well.*
 - *As I worry about the disease and the way people are dealing with it in the world, it makes me have a more pessimistic and darker feel to my heart as I view people's different views on the virus and how bad people can be.*
 - *As my thought process is now darker the ideas for creating work is darker elements.*
 - *As my thoughts spiral down into the void my artwork has taken a darker turn.*
 - *As said, it took a turn for horror and became 3D. Themes tend towards mental health and struggles with sexuality. I stopped publicly posting a lot of it.*
 - *At times I've been able to make myself feel better with bright colour (abstract acrylics) but on the whole it has become darker.*
- Among artists in the motivated group, some also felt their art had become darker (but were clearly inspired by this) while others felt their art had become more escapist and the pandemic gave them more time to create. Examples of comments include
 - *Darker.*
 - *A complete change of process.*
 - *A new way of looking at things.*
 - *A lot of Covid themed art.*
 - *As I've had more time, I feel like I've improved. I do feel like it has gone darker, focusing on my mental state a bit more.*
 - *Avoided darker subjects, more escapism.*

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

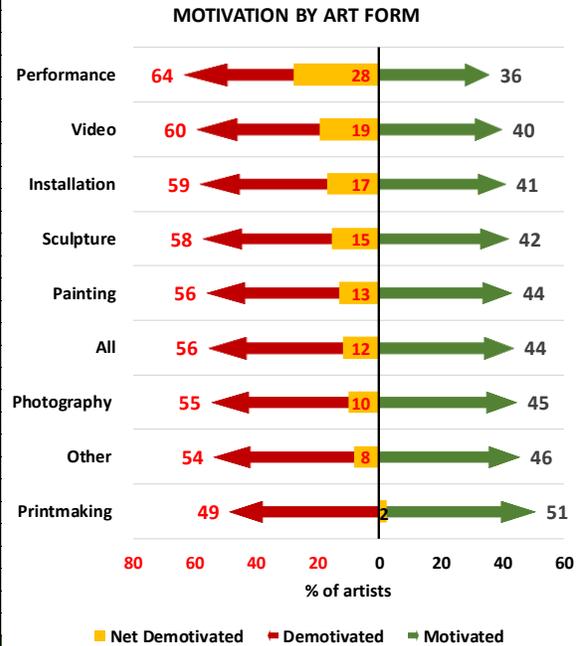
- *Because I have had time, I have been brave and tried new things. Also, I'm painting more so I have improved because I've been doing more.*
 - *I have created more personal work, more detailed with calmer colours. Without deadlines I have been able to spend much longer on each piece and used the images as a world to escape into as a break from the doom and gloom of the world.*
 - *I have finally discovered some of the more advanced painting techniques I've been trying to decode for years.*
 - *I have focused more on dreams, escape and rescue.*
 - *I have found a style and strength in my illustration style that has led to new unplanned projects due to having more time to create.*
 - *I have had some time to do stuff that's off brand for my own development. The stuff that I sell has not changed, but nor have had access to the tools that would have allowed it to develop as much as I might have expected this year.*
 - *I have had the time to experiment with pleasing results.*
 - *I have had the time to make it better and have sometimes enjoyed the process more because it's not on a deadline but on the flipside, I sometimes feel it has no purpose.*
 - *I have had time to think during isolation and be more creative.*
- Overall comments were received from 355 artists. Apart from the word “work” among these comments the words darker/dark/darkness/darkened collectively were the most frequently used, appearing in 95 comments followed by the word “time” (47 comments) and then abstract (40 comments).

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 17 The characteristics of the motivation groups

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC BY MOTIVATION GROUP			
	Motivated	Demotivated	Total
Base: artists	322	407	730
Feel they are struggling to make art?			
Yes, strongly	9%	45%	29%
Yes, slightly	31%	48%	40%
No	60%	8%	31%
Net strugglings (% Yes less % No)	-20%	85%	38%
Inspiration to create artwork been affected			
Improved greatly	23%		10%
Improved slightly	39%	5%	20%
Not changed	31%	11%	20%
Worsened slightly	7%	49%	31%
Worsened greatly	0%	35%	20%
Net improved (% improved less % worsened)	54%	-79%	-20%
Feelings about the creative process			
More creative than ever etc.	58%	0%	26%
I have struggled to work on my art	6%	95%	56%
I have been about the same as I was before COVID	27%	3%	13%
None of these	9%	2%	5%
Net more creative (% more creative less % struggled)	53%	-95%	-30%
Art changed?			
Yes	56%	46%	50%
No	24%	24%	24%
Not sure	20%	31%	26%
Net changed (% Yes less % No)	32%	22%	26%



Source: IRN Research

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

GOVERNMENT/FUNDING BODY SUPPORT

This section looks at artists use of and attitudes towards external funding.

Just over one-third of artists have received external support

Background

In order to gauge the degree to which artists have received official and private support during the pandemic, they were asked

In regard to the support the government/external funding bodies have offered during the pandemic, which of the following statements applies to you? Please tick all that apply

Key findings

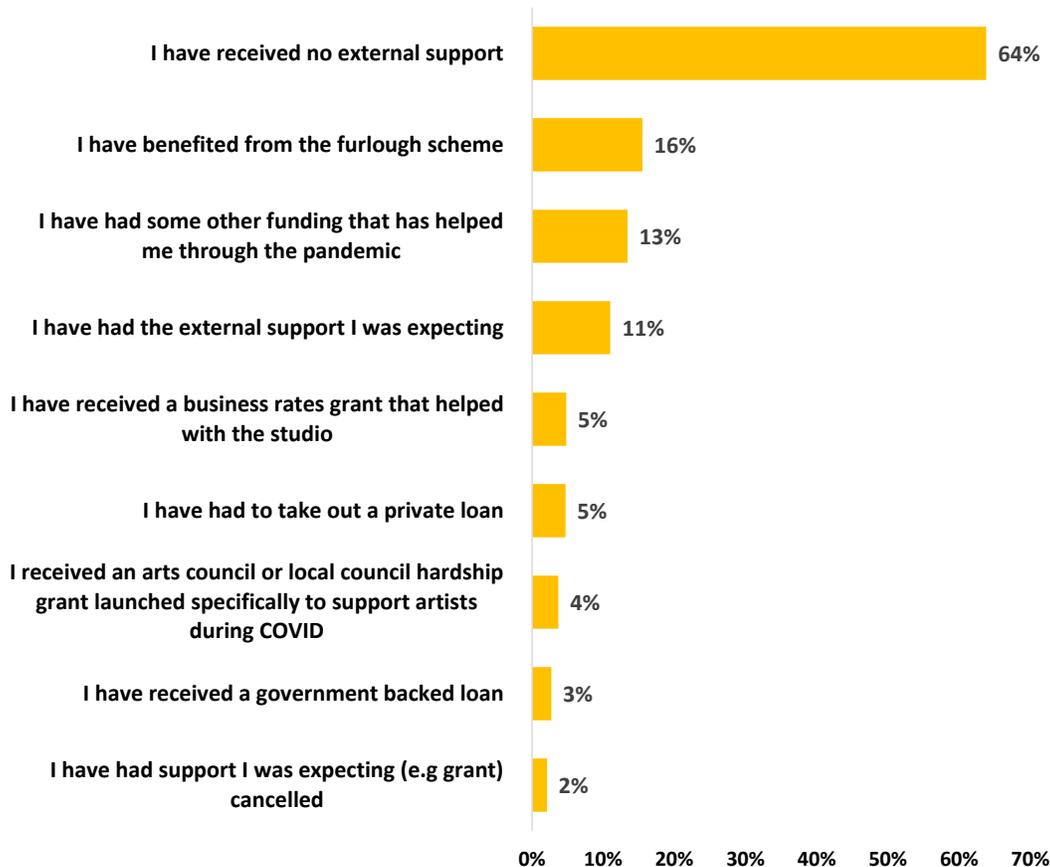
- 64% of artists said they received no external support during the pandemic, although some of these did say they used the furlough scheme.
- Only 13% of artists felt that they had the external support they were expecting.
- If an external source of funding was used, it was primarily the furlough scheme.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 18 The use of Government/external funding during the pandemic

Base: 730 artists



Source: IRN Research

Over eight-in-ten artists feel the Government has not done enough

Background

To assess how well artists feel the Government has supported them during the pandemic, they were asked

Do you think the Government has done enough to support artists during this time?

What do you think the Government should have done differently?

They were then asked

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Which, if any, of the following support do you feel you would benefit from going forward?

Key findings

- 81% of artists do not feel the Government has done enough to support artists during the pandemic.
- In terms of doing things differently, 597 artists gave their opinion. Wanting more support (of various kinds) was the most common response, featured in 196 (33%) of responses. Examples include:
 - *Way more financial support*
 - *We should have had a better system put in place in the first lockdown. We should have supported people who fell through the gaps.*
 - *Where do I begin? The arts seem to be of no importance whatsoever to this government. The arts is an industry entitled to as much support as any other*
 - *A lot of artists fell through the gaps of the support schemes.*
 - *Actually give support to the arts, listen to people, and not encourage us to retrain.*
 - *Actually, offer thorough support instead of telling the creative voice of the country to retrain.*
- Other key responses were giving support to the self-employed and/or treating artists as small businesses, so they could access schemes like the furlough scheme, grants etc. 89 responses featured the terms self-employed or small business, for example:
 - *A focus on more funding for self- employed and support for creative workers.*
 - *Acknowledge that 80% furlough for employees on part time hours is not enough money to live on and give self-employed financial support to those whose art is less than 50% of their income.*
 - *Acknowledge that artists are predominantly self-employed and without income from their art have had to use savings: a one off grant unrelated to previous income would have been welcome: tax rebates/refund on previous income could have helped this.*
 - *Cover the gaps in the self-employment scheme. I taught in an art school on a permanent contract but left my position in Jan so wasn't covered by the self-employed scheme.*
 - *Support the small businesses rather than chains that feed into their back pocket. Help the 'little people' because the people at the top are FINE!*
- In terms of specific support, 39 comments mentioned grants, 37 the furlough scheme, 31 tax, 5 loans and 4 rates. 21 comments also called for Universal Basic Income.

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

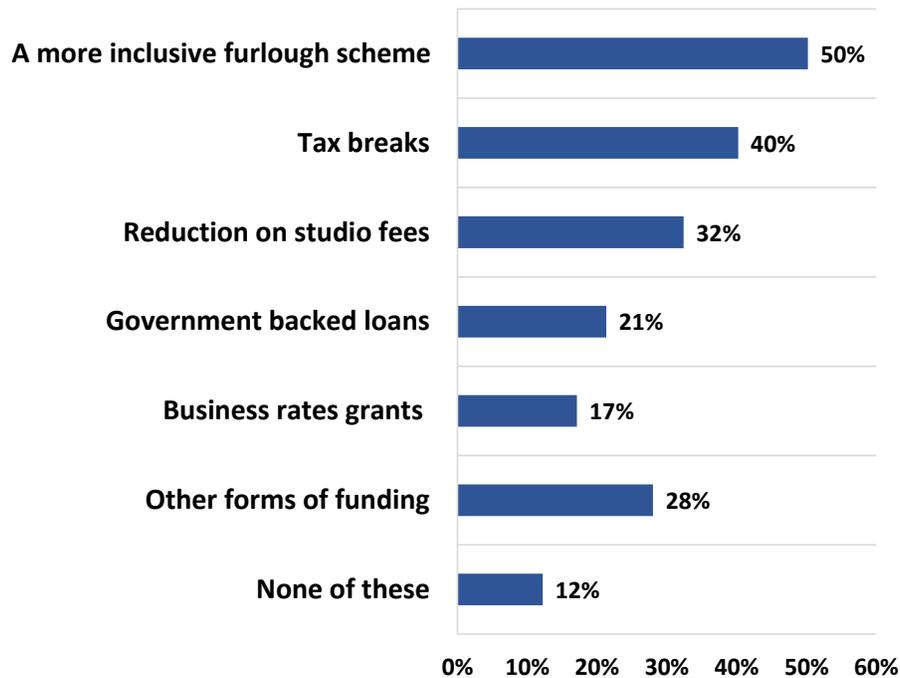
- When asked explicitly the type of help they wanted, artists would like to see a more inclusive furlough scheme and tax breaks.
- In terms of non-official help, a reduction in studio fees would be most popular.
- When artists who selected none of the options were asked what help they would like, of the 162 comments 90 indicated they wanted Government grants of various types. For example:
 - *Small grants for freelance artists.*
 - *Small grants/loans from local Council or Arts Council. Or low cost loans from banks.*
 - *Grants and support for teaching art in schools and other groups especially those mentally affected during the pandemic.*
 - *Grants and zero interest loans.*
 - *Grants for artists to get established. Many years ago, there was an 'Enterprise Allowance Scheme', it encouraged and help people to establish themselves in self-employment. I'm not sure if anything like that still exists.*
 - *Grants for lone artists.*
 - *Grants for young and new artist trying to get on their feet.*
 - *Grants to artists, to pay for studio at least. Gov should support the self-employed better.*
 - *Grants to help restart business.*
 - *Grants to kickstart small independent art and design focused business.*
 - *Grants to replace fees lost (especially where contracts have been broken by clients).*
 - *Grants towards adapting studio practice.*

Impact of COVID-19 on UK Artists

The Data

Figure 19 *The support artists would benefit from*

Base: 730 artists



Source: IRN Research

Artists hold extremely poor views of the Government’s Retraining Scheme

Background

In order to judge how artists feel about the Government’s Retraining scheme, they were asked

What are your opinions on the Government Retraining Scheme?

Key findings

- It is an under statement to say artists are not happy with the retraining scheme. Many derogatory words and swear words were used to express their opinions.
- 607 comments were received in total of which around 80 comments indicated no opinion because of a lack of knowledge. Of the 527 comments from those with knowledge, it is hard to find many that expressed a positive view. Some of the words used to describe the scheme and the number of comments they feature in include:

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- Insulting/insult 74
- F**k/f***king 29
- Bulls***t/S**t 26
- B*****ks 22
- Disgusting 18
- Rubbish 14
- Offensive 14
- Patronising 11
- Disrespectful 8
- Stupid 7
- Disgrace 6
- Ludicrous 6
- Pointless 6

In contrast, only 11 comments featured the word “good” when used in a positive context.

Examples of comments include

- *Demoralizing, devaluing, shaming, sad.*
- *Despicable, the arts are always the first to go but the ones that everyone has consumed. It shouldn't have even been a thought.*
- *Detrimental to art and artists.*
- *Foolish really, as artist we are driven people, it's not something I do because I couldn't make it in another field, I create because it is who I am not what I am, maybe teaching is the only other thing I could be inspired by.*
- *I am disgusted by this - to suggest that creatives train to get a "proper job". I have no words, actually I have a lot, but it won't fit in this box.*
- *I think it is completely out of touch and unhelpful. Retraining doesn't change the fact that so many people are being made redundant in many industries and that there is a general unemployment crisis currently. But what can you expect from people who've probably never worked a regular job?*
- *I think it is insulting. The art world and the entertainment and fashion industry which I am part of needs more support. There are new ways of working and I believe that we should be retraining in our own fields.*
- *I think it is shocking and deplorable. This is a difficult time for everyone, but telling those who provide the country with art, without which we are not human, to join the army instead is an offence to everything that makes this country what it is.*
- *Insulting. And enough to make every artist want to move to a country that actually values artists.*
- *Insulting. Everyone in the arts is years deep into their training, education, apprenticeships, skills development and progression. To suggest we all just throw it away to start something as specific as "cyber", which requires a specific mindset and thought process, requires years of training to earn a living from, and is a lot harder than*

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just running for election, which requires no formal experience or qualifications is short sighted, close minded, and patronising.

Final reviews reflect the views already given

Background

In a final question, artists were asked

Do you have any other final thoughts about the impact of COVID-19 on the creative industries?

Findings

- The comments received reflect the tone of the whole survey. Artists were generally negative about the impact of COVID-19 on the creative industries, with negative comments about the Government's response and lack of support.
- There remains a concern about whether the creative industries can recover and if they do what shape they will be in in the future.
- A few comments were positive, in the sense that the pandemic has made people aware of the importance of the creative industries and has made people focus on people who are less fortunate.

FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY

In January 2021, two virtual focus groups were held to explore some of the themes emerging from the online survey in more detail. There were 11 individuals participating across the two groups and all these had completed the online survey. The groups discussed the financial implications of COVID-19, the impact on health, government funding, and thoughts on the future for themselves as artists and the arts sector. The detailed feedback from the participants echoed the quantitative results from the online survey.

All but one was trying to work from home and just one was renting a studio to go to. Before COVID-19, three individuals worked as artists in physical locations away from home but now were forced to stay at home.

Finances: no money from art for most but all still determined to be artists

Nearly everyone has had no income from their art work since March 2020. For one or two this has been OK as their partners have been working but for most it has been a real problem. However, all are trying to get through this and most have no intention of stopping working as artists. Just one said that she had given up on being an artist full-time - and would look for another job but keep art work as a hobby. Another one was considering art as a pastime.

Financial concerns are really impacting on their work as artists, plus their mental health in most cases – one has a home studio she has not even been in for months, another mentioned staring at a blank page with no incentive to draw, one had just got a gallery to show her work after the second lockdown but then the third lockdown came and still not opened, another had found a job teaching art in schools but this was also on hold. Just one person had had a couple of commissions later in 2020 which had given her some encouragement but the general feedback in both groups was that creativity had at best been put on hold and in some cases destroyed.

Selected quotes

There is no way that I am stopping being creative although I don't know how I will survive on it financially. I tried to get some government funding but got nothing – I was one that fell through the cracks. I am thinking of getting some sort of job but that would only then fund the art.

This year I have had to fund my art making myself from my pension and what that means is I don't have quite enough to live on. But nothing in this world is going to make me stop. I have been doing it for 30 years so no way. The only thing that would stop me if I drop dead now!

Right now, I am working as an admin person in a school but I don't want this for ever. I am a glass artist – and as soon as you get off the treadmill of being a self-employed artist it is difficult to get back on. I do lots of trade shows and exhibitions and it will be hard to get back into those

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even if they still exist. I have a home studio, and I make glass, so at least it will all still be in the studio when I get back to it and I will get back to it.

Government funding just not enough, most don't qualify, and paid too late

It was a unanimous view in both groups that the government was not doing enough and, where funds had been available such as self-employed money and universal credit, payments came far too late. Just one or two had some furlough money but most didn't qualify.

Most didn't work in the way that allowed them to get government money, i.e. not companies, not enough self-employed records etc. One or two have tried to get grants from other sources like the Arts Council, local government, other bursaries but with limited success and a few others had tried but had given up as it was competitive funding and too difficult to apply.

Selected quotes

I didn't get anything for ages as well and now I get half my rent and £300 a month to live on. I have not been self employed long enough and there is nothing I can get. Standard universal credit payment is as they put it for "preparing for work". But I want to work as an artist, nothing else. Government is working towards getting people to retrain which was possibly the most heart-breaking thing I was asked to do. Being told by my government to stop doing the thing that keeps me alive and gives me some purpose was a kick in the teeth. Asking me to do that on top of the funding issues really made me angry.

Essentially I have no government funding. Personally I have had to apply for loads of grants from external sources. Arts Council and things like that. I am a member of Bectu, the union for film and theatre workers, and it seems to do far more work than the government. I have been able to get some financial help by Bectu showing me what I can apply for and helping me to prepare my applications. Because I am recently graduated I haven't had enough work to be treated as a self-employment worker. I have been working on relatively low level work on rolling contracts and there are a lot of people in my position. They are working as trainees and assistants and applying for Arts Council grants, or Culture Recovery grants.

They should definitely be looking at funding artists. Culture is the third biggest economy. It also has benefits for many many people on health and wellbeing, it helps those in isolation and breaking isolation, and big benefits for the community. Arts have been incredibly devalued and the impact it has has been completely forgotten. There is the feeling that anyone who does art is just a hobbyist. No, we contribute to the community and health and this contribution is often unseen. Maybe that's our fault. Culture is one of the biggest sectors yet what have we been talking about for months – fishing!

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Mental health issues for nearly everyone

All but two have seen their mental health decline and their art hasn't really helped as most have stopped doing it because of their mental health issues. For two participants, there was some good news – they had spent more time with family and children which had actually been good, another was able to be OK because of her partner's income but still felt guilty: she had felt guilty because she was OK financially while her other friends in the art world were not – and this guilt had stopped her working as an artist.

Selected quotes

Right now – I don't feel good I don't want to be creative. Then I worry that not wanting to do any art is an arty waffly thing to say – but I don't need the money and I just can't be creative..... My therapy has been supporting other artists –I have been buying other work from others. Getting parcels through the post of fantastic ceramic things is good and something to look forward to.

Despite everything I am pretty level headed but even I have had periods of depression and I need to know that someone wants my art and without that it's hard to be motivated. I haven't done any art for a few months now and I feel I should tell myself to sort myself out as others have it much harder.

It comes in waves. I didn't do anything for 6 weeks than suddenly I filled pages and pages of sketchbooks. In the first lockdown I was feeling quite anxious and I was processing those anxious feelings frenetically into creating art. Not now though.

Arts not seen as important, little optimism for the long-term future of the sector

There is a general consensus that the arts are not seen as an important sector, or artists as a “real” job, by government and this colours government's strategy. For example, the suggestions to think about retraining were seen as insulting by many participants as most just want to work as artists.

The move to digital – this is not seen as realistic by most and of little point if you can't have the physical interaction.

There are concerns from some that in the short-term most will get back to being artists but the long-term impact could be serious: once schools get back to somewhere near normal, the curriculum will be squeezed and arts will suffer as it is not seen as priority so fewer children doing arts and fewer studying arts in colleges and universities. So, longer term, the base of artists and some skills will be dramatically reduced. Also physical spaces for arts, especially

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smaller ones for upcoming artists, will have disappeared.

The general view is that big venues and physical spaces will survive as they have some funding but many smaller spaces, venues will go and are unlikely to ever come back so opportunities for many artists will not be there. Not only opportunities for artists but the ability of art and artists to reach a broader audience: a number of participants mentioned that those that spent money on arts before COVID-19 will do so again but these are mainly higher income groups patronising the bigger venues, but local smaller venues are often free or have lower prices and these reach new audiences and those with limited incomes.

Selected comments

I like to be optimistic and like to think in a year's time people will be desperate to get out again and see something live. But then there is possibly a group of people that may not be comfortable in a physical situation again. Any kind of resemblance back to normal in a year I think is optimistic. I think we will see physical venues rise again but I don't think this will trickle down to smaller venues. People will still want to go to the Tate and big venues. Plus I think many will look at how they have been treated and especially how university students have been treated. I think we will see a wave of people not going into the arts as a career, and not studying art at universities or art colleges. This just means that there will be a lot less workforce in the arts in a year or so time.

Yea, what I have noticed is there are less opportunities. I don't think I am going to stop creating art anytime soon. But it's the time it takes to apply for bursaries which is time I would have spent previously on making real money from my art. I am a trained healthcare professional and I think: should I spend my weekend applying for bursaries which takes my time or going back and helping the NHS? I will always make art in my house but there are now real problems of funding so I am not sure it is sustainable. The longer they go on the pessimistic part of my brain says this is not the last lockdown and I can see the funding dwindling.

It seems to me that big galleries like the National they will still be there. But my friend's little gallery – who is paying their rent? Big ones don't pull in a wide community but an elite gang and the small ones that will often appeal to a much broader community will go.

APPENDIX

Figure 20 Financial Importance of Art Work to Artists

INCOME LAST YEAR						
	Art work			Non-art work		
	Primary	Secondary	Total	Primary	Secondary	Total
Base: artists	243	485	728	239	485	724
Under £10 000	39%	86%	71%	71%	39%	50%
Between £10 000 – £14 999	20%	5%	10%	11%	18%	16%
Between £15 000 – £19 999	9%	2%	4%	3%	11%	8%
Between £20 000 – £24 999	6%	1%	2%	2%	9%	7%
Between £25 000 – £29 999	5%	0%	2%	0%	5%	4%
Between £30 000 – £34 999	2%	0%	1%	0%	3%	2%
Between £35 000 – £39 999	3%	0%	1%	0%	4%	3%
Between £40 000 – £44 999	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Between £45 000 – £49 999	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Between £50 000 – £54 999	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Between £55 000 – £59 999	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
£60 000 and more	6%		2%	2%	2%	2%
Prefer not to say	8%	6%	7%	9%	7%	8%
Mean Average	£16,681	£5,937	£9,466	£8,744	£15,574	£13,362

ARTWORK AS A % OF INCOME IN NORMAL YEAR			
	Primary	Secondary	Total
Base: artists	242	486	728
0%-10%	0%	39%	26%
11%-20%	1%	20%	14%
21%-30%	1%	16%	11%
31%-40%	2%	10%	8%
41%-50%	5%	5%	5%
51%-60%	4%	2%	3%
61%-70%	10%	1%	4%
71%-80%	9%	0%	3%
81%-90%	10%	0%	4%
91%-100%	54%	1%	18%
Prefer not to say	5%	6%	6%
Mean Average	82%	19%	40%

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Type of artists	Base	Artwork as % of income	Mean income last year	
			From Art	From Other Sources
Specialist Painters	173	35%	£8,107	£12,372
Multidisciplinary painters	195	43%	£9,735	£14,011
Multidisciplinary sculptors	165	40%	£9,614	£13,758
Generalists	155	42%	£10,500	£13,317
Total	688	40%	£9,466	£13,362
Installation	87	44%	£10,565	£11,219
Performance	64	52%	£10,703	£11,895
Painting	425	36%	£8,269	£13,213
Printmaking	125	42%	£9,160	£14,365
Sculpture	172	37%	£9,680	£12,857
Video	66	42%	£10,149	£12,803
Photography (fine art rather than commercial)	105	38%	£9,471	£12,668
Other (please specify)	241	43%	£9,202	£13,755