

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts

Summary - Survey of Australia's creative and cultural industries and institutions

Background

The Committee undertook a survey as the first stage of its inquiry into Australia's arts and creative industries. The survey launched on 27 August 2020 and consisted of 20 questions.

The survey was also promoted via Facebook and Twitter.

The Survey closed on 22 October 2020 and received 4,871 responses, half of which were received in the first two weeks.

Question 1: What is your age?

Almost three-quarters of all respondents (74%) were aged 35 years or older. The breakdown by age is as follows:

- Under 18 years – 0.29 %
- 18 to 24 years – 5.84 %
- 25 to 34 years – 19.92 %
- 35 to 44 years – 24.49 %
- 45 to 54 years – 25.07 %
- Over 55 years – 24.39 %

Question 2: What State or Territory are you from?

While all States and Territories were represented, two-thirds of all respondents (67.7%) were from NSW or Victoria. The breakdown by state/territory is as follows:

- Victoria – 36.85 %
- NSW – 30.86 %
- Queensland – 12.62 %
- Western Australia – 7.02 %
- South Australia – 6.16 %
- ACT – 3.38 %
- Tasmania – 2.53 %
- Northern Territory – 0.58 %

Question 3: What best describes the area you live in?

Almost three-quarters of all respondents (74.03%) live in a metropolitan area. The breakdown by location is as follows:

- Metropolitan area – 74.03 %
- Regional or rural area – 24.47 %
- Remote area – 0.64 %
- Other (please specify) – 0.87 %

Responses for the 'Other' category could largely be incorporated into either the metropolitan (16 responses) or regional/rural (13 responses) or a combination of both (9 responses). The four remaining responses specified an international location.

Question 4: Do you identify as Aboriginal or as a Torres Strait Islander

- Yes – 1.36 %
- No – 96.86 %
- Prefer not to say – 1.78 %

Question 5: How would you describe your gender?

- Female – 62.89 %
- Male – 33.42 %
- Prefer not to say – 2.12 %
- I prefer to describe myself as... (please provide your preferred gender identity) - 1.57 %

Question 6: How would you define your work within the arts community?

- Paid by an employer – 35.75 %
- Self-employed – 41.04 %
- Volunteer – 9.26 %
- Other (please specify) – 13.95%

Respondents who selected 'Other' largely cited a combination of work styles, including freelancer, employer and employee (often simultaneously).

Question 7: Are you currently paid to work in the arts sector?

- Yes – 56.91 %
- No – 43.09 %

Respondents who answered 'No' to this question skipped Questions 8, 9 and 10.

Question 8: How long have you been paid to work in the arts sector?

This question was responded to by those who answered 'Yes' to question 7 - 2,739 participants.

- Less than one year – 3.21 %
- 1 to 5 years – 19.17 %
- 6 to 10 years – 17.01 %
- 11 years or longer – 60.61 %

Question 9: In the past two years have you been paid to work in the arts sector?

This question was responded to by those who answered 'Yes' to question 7 - 2,736 participants.

- Yes – 98.5 %
- No – 1.5 %

Question 10: How long have you been involved with the arts community?

This question was responded to by those who answered 'Yes' to question 7 - 2,735 participants.

- Less than one year – 0.77 %
- 1 to 5 years – 8.26 %
- 6 to 10 years – 12.36 %
- 11 years or longer – 78.61 %

Question 11: Do you undertake paid work outside of the arts sector?

This question was responded to by 3,768 participants.

- Yes – 49.23 %
- No – 50.77 %

Question 12: If yes [to Question 11], what sector?

This question was responded to by 2,477 participants.

- Education – 23.87 %
- Not applicable – 21.13 %
- Private sector – 16.14 %
- Multiple – 10.91 %
- Other (please specify) – 10.58 %
- Government services – 9.56 %
- Service industry – 7.81 %

More participants responded to this question than to 'Yes' to question 11 (622 responses). These could largely be accounted for in the number of 'Not applicable' responses (517) and those whose response to 'Other (please specify)' indicated unpaid work in the sector.

Question 13: How many paid jobs do you have?

This question was responded to by 3,392 participants.

- 1 – 58.96 %
- 2 – 22.7 %
- 3 – 8.76 %
- 4 – 2.48 %
- 5+ - 7.10 %

Question 14: What area of the arts community are you most engaged with?

This question was responded to by 3,775 participants. Participants could select more than one area.

- Music – 1,362 responses
- Theatre – 1,309 responses
- Live events – 1,089 responses
- Visual arts – 1,041 responses
- Please tell us about any other areas of the arts community you are engaged with – 598 responses
- Literature – 584 responses
- Film and/or television – 575 responses
- Cultural institutions – 562 responses
- Dance – 543 responses
- Comedy – 299 responses
- Circus – 205 responses
- Video games – 90 responses

Of the 598 free text responses in 'other areas', the following words featured prominently:

- Community – featured 83 times, eg 'community arts', 'community cultural development', and 'community engagement'.
- Festival(s) – 69 times.
- Teach(ing), educate & education – 59 times.
- Cultural(ly) and culture(s) – 50 times, eg 'cultural events' and 'culturally diverse arts'
- Opera – 28 times.
- Youth, young and child(ren) – 28 times.

Question 15: How many jobs have you had over the past 12 months?

This question was responded to by 3,555 participants.

- 1 – 43.99 %
- 2 – 21.58 %
- 3 – 10.69 %
- 4 – 5.15 %
- 5+ - 18.59 %

Question 16: What impact has COVID-19 had on your work or engagement with the arts community?

This question was responded to by 3,557 participants.

Understandably, responses focus on the disruption to the arts caused by COVID-19. Featuring heavily were the words 'lost' (used 386 times), 'reduced' (266), 'loss' (215), 'stopped' (167) and 'closed' (165).

The impact on the arts workforce was also a focus. 'Work' was mentioned 1835 times, 'income' 503 times, 'job' 352 times and 'paid' 189 times. 'JobKeeper' was mentioned 153 times.

Another common theme was a call for help, as shown by the use of 'support' (used 227 times), 'funding' (165) and 'Government' (162).

A sample of responses:

- I have lost what was full time work as a stage manager and had to take a much lower paying full time role outside the industry. I have had the opportunity to work casually a few hours a week on some creative developments but nowhere near my previous capacity or wage.
- The government did not see fit to recognise my freelance status as worthy of JobKeeper. I have lived on savings while only having 7 days work in 7 months. I have spent my socially distanced, covid-induced unemployment time engaging with my arts community to better understand my peers in other art forms and [their] issues, likewise my own (performing arts) and advocating to government for sustained, consistent and properly targeted industry support, funding for the arts, for an overseas arts policy in live performance, adequate funding for public broadcasters, and for a reversal of the recent deviating announcement in regard to the weakening of Australian screen content quotas.
- My view is there is no future in the Arts in Australia unless the government step up to the plate and support the industry.
- I primarily perform in small venues independently or part of festivals such as Fringe, Midsummer, MICF. Those festivals have been cancelled and venues are closed. I have done some online performances via zoom but engagement and ability to charge for tickets is a lot lower than live performance
- I lost all work (7 productions) between March and September. This includes 2 shows overseas. Several of these will now never happen.
- Enormous. Almost everyone I know who works in the arts has lost part or all of their work. The scale of the mental health and financial impact is enormous. For dancers and dance teachers, the sudden decrease in physical activity has caused physical health problems as well.
- I am a Visual Art teacher in QLD. I have been lucky to be relatively untouched in my day to day work.
- It's been seven months since the last time my choir has performed live. Some chorus-specific events have moved online, but it isn't the same. The social dynamic, the feeling of being amongst my colleagues isn't there in the same way as it was pre-pandemic and it is heartbreaking that we, among others in the arts industry whom are doing worse than us volunteers, have suffered this devastating blow to what is part of our livelihoods.

- A great impact on Education teaching Visual Arts delivery of programs are most courses are Studio based and Gallery and Museum closures and not being able to view or see work. It's the bread and butter for most Artist[s] not to mention the mental well being for the community. "Art saves Lives" it gives back to community and enriched our culture on many levels, it creates inspiration, builds tourism and feeds the economy.

Question 17: How do you think Australia benefits from the arts?

This question was responded to by 3,764 participants.

- Other (please specify) – 42.59 %
- Building strong communities through removal of cultural, social and economic barriers – 28.11%
- Enhanced creativity and innovation – 21.65 %
- Promotes cultural appreciation – 4.89 %
- Function as an educational tool – 2.76 %

An error in the setup of this question did not allow for multiple selections.

'All of the above' or similar accounted for 1269 responses (33.71% of all responses). These were received in the 'Other (please specify)' category.

A sample of responses:

- We would be a dumber more brutish country without the Arts. The Arts inform and enrich our ways of thinking about life, other people and what we do in the world. Thereby all boats are lifted on a tide of cultural enlightenment. We end up doing everything better (ie jobs, the economy, services etc)
- All of the above, PLUS: the A in 'STEAM' is there for a reason. The ability to think creatively is fundamental to innovation. Imagination and vision are the building blocks of social progress.
- The arts are used and appreciated by every human. We need them. Music heals, dance inspires. Where there is no arts there is nothing. A world or county that does not support art is sad and grey. There is a huge amount of people depressed at the moment because they are doing nothing with their time as the arts has been stripped away.
- There is a huge economic benefit to the arts and I don't think that is recognised. It is a thriving and legitimate business. It also enhances creativity and innovation and builds strong communities and promotes cultural appreciation.
- Benefits are intergenerational and not a one-liner. It opens up discussion, debate and understanding. It educates, builds empathy, brings communities together, engages people of different age groups to come together and experience positivity, beauty or a whole host of emotions. It enables people to feel welcome, encouraged and positive about where they live. Public art (in schools for example) can make people feel valued, instil pride and reciprocity for being respected- you give them a beautiful environment and impression place and they will rise to meet that in response.

Question 18: Do you have suggestions to strengthen Australia's creative and cultural industries?

This question was responded to by 3,161 participants.

A major theme in responses to this question was support. The words 'funding' (used 1,539 times), 'support' (1,143) and 'Government' (790) featured heavily in responses.

A sample of responses:

- We need funding to make events accessible - Auslan, captions etc - for all artists, it shouldn't just be up to disabled people and orgs to do this. Access should be done by everyone. Keep accessible events post Covid Keep easy and quick grants application processes
- Fund more artists and programs beyond competitive grants. Pay artists and arts orgs for making/facilitating work. Protect the viability of organisations that engage the community and assist all to share creativity
- You need to teach music in primary schools, engender and foster a sense of appreciation for music, for the arts, for theatre, for wonder- a society cannot exist on sports alone.
- The Arts needs to be truly valued for all it offers Australia - creative expression, the skills it develops, the impact it has on health and well being, the way it connects diverse people, the way it engages people, and for its economic and employment contributions. A lot more effort and investment could be made to support people working within the arts and arts organisations who facilitate arts opportunities. We need to reduce, and ideally, drastically reduce job insecurity and burn-out in the sector. Instead, Australia should ensure reliable and ongoing funding to arts organisations so they can continue to inspire and support connected, vibrant and prosperous communities in the medium and long term.
- More equitable funding into the arts, more purchasing of work by Australian artists by state and federal cultural institutions, quotas on Australian content on media platforms (including visual arts content), more commissioning of live arts.
- Firstly, we need to be recognised by government as a workforce and industry with the respect we deserve. The arts are more than just a "glorified hobby". We are a major industry bringing billions of dollars to the economy each year. Secondly, we need more financial assistance. The live entertainment sector particularly will be if not the last sector that will be able to open up again, and these workers need the assistance deemed necessary to continue caring for their families and their livelihoods while they are unable to work. Thirdly, we need to diversify the people who run the sector on all layers, so that our story-telling in this country can be an actual representation of who we are as a nation.
- Provide more long term support for artists- Emulate models like Germany or Finland, and pay a living wage for what is largely done for free. Provide pathways for training and early career artists - have Centrelink recognise arts work in all levels and forms. Art is work. Acknowledge that.

Question 19: How have you, or your business, changed because of COVID-19?

This question was responded to by 3,193 participants.

Similar to question 16, many responses detail a loss of work, mental health and income. Others have attempted to adapt to restrictions with varying levels of success.

A sample of responses:

- Adapted my practice online; accepted more online publishing commissions; accepted commissions which engage creatively with the subject of the pandemic. Focalised/streamlined my projects.
- Government pay subsidies has helped immensely. Has been harder to network and engage in the industry.
- We have all changed because of COVID-19. Art is an invitation to learn. Art makes us human.
- All of our overseas tours have been cancelled due to the very strict border closure rules of the Australian government. These are some of the strictest in the world and the extra costs associated with this are making it impossible to tour work nationally and internationally. Also our new Works have been cancelled due to the fact dancers cannot rehearse and theatres have closed. Most of our work has dried up and it's very hard to plan for the future as it is very unknown, especially in Melbourne.
- We have had to go into hibernation given the lockdowns and lack of audience confidence.
- Isolation de-skills you, especially if you are a writer and an introvert already. I have lost social confidence, and feel that as an independent artist I have even less status than I had before, and really worry about making any sort of living in the months ahead. With the lack of arts bailouts, I grieve the damage being done to my sector, and the squandering of a generation of hard work by theatre artists. This is the latest in a long line of arts-bashing, and I must admit I'd tired, semi-defeated, thinking about leaving the profession altogether. Feeling a bit stunned and paralysed.
- My business had an annual turnover of \$4 million and since COVID our turnover is down 96% and we don't know if we will survive
- Much larger emphasis to online although we need to keep these capacities people are keen to reconnect in real life.
- We have had to adapt all work for artists and creative organisations to recognise the huge stress on the community. We have changed the way we work, administer, contract manage and support the arts and artists.
- I'm living now in poverty more than ever before

Question 20: Are there any other comments you would like to share with the Committee on your experience in the arts community?

This question was responded to by 2,284 participants.

A sample of responses:

- I have been a professional writer since I was seventeen, but only after the publication of eight novels have I been able to earn enough to live as an author. My future capacity to continue to live and work full time as a writer is entirely reliant on my future books having commercial success. None of this can be taken for granted. Grants are hard to obtain, taxable, and not able to provide a writer with more than a year at most. Usually just a few months. We desperately need more help to allow Australian writers to deeply immerse themselves in the long, hard craft of writing so that this country can birth writers of international significance. At the moment, Australia has won one Nobel Prize for Literature – Patrick White in 1973.
- The arts have a significant role to play in the imagining of a covid-normal future. It is our sector that will lead this countries covid recovery - building, narrating and capturing the stories of our time and the culture of our future
- It's still extremely difficult to be a young performer in Australia, particularly if you don't fit into one of a few different archetypes/stereotypes. We need more places that performers can play - more than busking, places with a proper audience. Incentivising cafes or restaurants to have live musicians each week, for instance.
- Funding is difficult to access for early career artists. There should be a register of practicing artists. Art sometimes falls between hobby and profession, and is difficult to classify in terms of tax and business.
- Arts and culture are important for the social and economic health of communities. Especially in regional or remote areas. Telling local and Australian stories or promoting such aspects of our society enrich us and also can promote tolerance and at times mental well being in communities.
- The arts connects me to my community, it has helped me with my mental health.
- There needs to be more Indigenous representation and story telling. The industry is white dominated and we have to do more
- There are very few grants available for self employed creatives and the competition for the few grants available are fierce. Art, music, literature and performing arts are important in the everyday life. Can you go a week without interacting with the world without the creative & cultural sectors. Odds are you can't.
- I grew up in a remote community in Western Australia and now live in a regional community. Being able to participate in the arts and tell our own experiences honours us as people with unique experiences and stories to tell. Otherwise we're just people who watch Netflix and consume other cultures.
- The Arts are an essential part of a thriving creative society. They play a significant role in fostering social cohesion, community connection, innovation, improve mental health, employ thousands of people and generate massive economic benefits. The Arts and Creative industries deserve the support and respect of the Government of Australia.

- I feel so devalued. I have been training at tertiary level since I was 16. I have won scholarships, represented my country overseas in global competitions, worked for NFP organisations and run my own commercial company. I am now a 32 year old woman, I have two degrees and am apparently unemployable. Does my contribution to Australia's economy have no worth now?