April 2024

Arts Council of Northern Ireland – Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland

Perspective Economics

Contents

Executive Summary

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) commissioned Perspective Economics to conduct a comprehensive study on the working and living conditions of artists in Northern Ireland.

The research develops an enhanced evidence base to help understand the key challenges and barriers facing artists, advocate for artists, and consider new ways of supporting the sector. The research builds a detailed, up-to-date estimate of income and working conditions across the entire arts sector, capturing the breadth of artist experiences and the unique challenges they face. It also explores artist views on the availability and impact of existing support and gathers insights on new forms of support they would welcome.

This research will help inform targeted policies and contribute to the Arts Council's Strategic Plan (2024-34), supporting a future where the arts thrive in Northern Ireland.

The study involved participatory research through an online survey, which gathered 481 responses from a diverse range of artists across various demographics, career stages, and artistic disciplines. In 2010 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) commissioned a study into the Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. However, more than a decade has passed since the previous study and within this period there have been a number of challenging factors shaping the arts sector. These factors include a real-term loss of public funding to the arts, the short-term and long-term impact of COVID-19 and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. This study is therefore timely, as it seeks to understand as of 2024 what the income determinants and challenges are for artists in Northern Ireland.

Key Findings

We set out the key findings by section below:

Demographics

- The survey encompasses a diverse sample of artists across Northern Ireland, with 61% of respondents from outside Belfast.
- Most respondents (95%) are of working age (18-64), with a gender distribution of 58% female, 39% male, and 3% identifying as agender, genderfluid, non-binary, or queer.
- A significant portion of artists in Northern Ireland (23%) report having a disability, and 31% identified as neurodiverse.
- The Annual Population Survey (APS) estimate of 7,600 employees in arts occupations serves as a baseline for the "core artist population" working primarily in the arts sector. However, the survey found that only 46% of artists work solely within the arts, while 42% have additional work in other sectors, and 12% are retired/unemployed/voluntary. To account for these additional groups, an uplift of approximately 6,900 individuals (42%) is applied to the baseline of 7,600 to represent the "wider part-time and additional artist population." An estimated 2,000 individuals (12%) are also added for the "wider retired/unemployed/voluntary population."

Therefore, the total estimated artist population in Northern Ireland is approximately **14,500 individuals.**

Income and Employment

- Established artists have the highest average income (£20,800) and the highest percentage of income from arts (75%), while emerging artists have the lowest average income (£15,100) and the lowest percentage of income from arts (34%).
- Artists who spend more than 40 hours per week on arts-related work have the highest average income from arts (£16,600 or 84% of their total income). However, those that work the fewest hours in arts (<10 hours per week) typically have higher incomes overall due to income from other sources. Further, the nature of arts related work can mean that artists may go unpaid or underpaid for their efforts (on an hourly basis). For example, £16,600 from 40 hours per week of arts activity would imply an average income of c. £8 per hour (assuming 40 hours x 52 weeks). This is approximately 30% lower than the National Living Wage (from April 2024) and highlights the challenge among many artists.
- Full-time employees in the arts sector have the highest average income (£30,000) and the highest percentage of income from arts (83%). However, income falls substantially among those self-employed (which have the lowest average income (£16,300).
- Artists aged 45-54 have the highest average income (£23,100) and one of the highest percentages of income from arts (63%), while those aged 18-34 have the lowest average income (£16,300) and a lower percentage of income from arts (50%).
- Male artists have a higher average income (£20,750) compared to female artists (£18,700), although the percentage of income from arts is similar (58% for males and 59% for females).
- Artists with a disability have a lower average income (£17,100) and a lower percentage of income from arts (51%) compared to those without a disability (£20,900 and 60%, respectively). Similarly, artists with neurodiversity have a lower average income (£17,100) and a lower percentage of income from arts (56%) compared to those without.
- Artists with a postgraduate degree have a slightly higher average income (£21,000) compared to those with a bachelor's degree (£19,000) or other education levels (£16,600). However, this does highlight a limited 'salary premium' for higher levels of education in the arts compared with lifetime earnings estimates across other disciplines. Whilst this is a slightly higher income than other education levels, this suggests that net lifetime return of arts education is typically limited or in many instances, negative.
- Artists who attended grammar schools between the ages of 11-16 have a higher average income (£20,000) and a higher percentage of income from arts (60%) compared to those who attended secondary schools (£17,900 and 53%, respectively).
- The quality of official income data relating to artists is mixed, due to differences in definition and approach. However, we find that overall artist incomes could be up to 40% lower than the Northern Ireland average and 30% lower than the median, based on survey data.
- Further, comparing income to the 2010 research survey baseline suggests that artists have faced a real-term reduction in overall income by 11% between 2010 and 2023. The

official statistics (based on SIC classification) also suggest that average artists salaries may have reduced by up to 24% in real terms over the 2010-2023 period (whilst increasing by 1% across the wider economy).

- On average, artists in Northern Ireland generate their income from at least 2.6 different sources. 27% of artists with arts-related income have received at least one public grant in the past, and these artists earn approximately £2,600 more per annum from the arts compared to those who have not received a grant.
- Only 40% of working-age artists regularly contribute to a workplace pension or SIPP. Self-employed, freelance, and business owner artists are less likely to contribute to a pension scheme compared to full-time and part-time employees in the arts.

Education and Skills

- Findings suggest there is high educational attainment, with 78% of artists in Northern Ireland holding a degree - 63% of which have a degree or postgraduate qualification in an arts-related field.
    - This level of educational attainment is significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 32%, suggesting that artists have higher education levels than the general population.
- The findings also emphasise the importance of self-taught skills as 1 in 5 artists do not have a degree or similar qualification in the arts, underscoring the need for early-stage support and resources to help artists launch their careers.
- On average, artists in Northern Ireland possess three additional qualifications, certifications, or professional training beyond their primary education. This illustrates the depth of expertise and commitment to continuous learning within the artist community.
- More than 52% of artists felt that their artistic education or qualifications did not adequately prepare them for the professional arts sector and employment opportunities.
- Artists highlighted the need for more support and resources to bridge the gap between postgraduate education and professional practice or publication. Improved support systems could better prepare artists for navigating the professional landscape and securing employment opportunities in the arts sector.

Northern Ireland as a Place to Work

- Artists in Northern Ireland derive a significant portion (around 40%) of their arts-related income from sources outside of Northern Ireland, emphasising the importance of exporting for artists in the region.
- Over half (53.3%) of the survey participants indicated they have considered or would consider permanently relocating outside of Northern Ireland for better career opportunities in the arts.
- The proportion of artists considering relocation increases to 65.4% for those aged between 18 and 34, suggesting potential issues with retaining young artists due to a lack of career opportunities within Northern Ireland.

- Two-thirds of respondents cited the lack of opportunities within Northern Ireland as a significant factor influencing their decision to pursue arts-related opportunities elsewhere.
    - Artists pointed to the potential for higher income, increased opportunities for personal networking and collaborations as key factors attracting them to pursue careers in the arts outside of Northern Ireland.

Wellbeing and Mental Health

- Artists in Northern Ireland exhibit lower levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and a significantly higher level of anxiety compared to the broader population in the region.
    - On average, artists' life satisfaction scores are 1.7 points below the Northern Ireland average, their sense of doing worthwhile things is 1.1 points lower, and their happiness levels are 1.5 points lower than the wider population.
    - Most strikingly, artists' anxiety levels surpass the Northern Ireland average by 2.2 points, underscoring a critical area of concern regarding their mental well-being.
- 30% of artists perceive mental health issues as personal barriers or challenges that hinder their ability to create, exhibit, sell or perform their work.
    - Over half (50%+) of neurodiverse or disabled artists see mental health as a significant challenge, compared to only 22% of non-neurodiverse artists.
    - Artists' mental health challenges do not significantly vary with their level of experience or employment status, suggesting a pervasive issue across the artist community.
- The prevalence of mental health concerns among artists in Northern Ireland highlights the unique pressures and challenges they face in their daily lives and the need for targeted support and interventions to address their well-being.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The main challenges faced by artists in Northern Ireland are financial barriers (80%), time constraints (60%), job insecurity (59%), and feelings of not being valued (54%).
- While there is some optimism and excitement about the adoption of AI in the arts sector, a large majority of artists are concerned about authenticity and intellectual property issues associated with AI-generated art, and worried about the implications for their livelihoods and job security.
- The top support mechanisms that artists feel is needed to maximise opportunities and create a better arts ecosystem include:
    - More financial grants and funding opportunities
    - Advocacy for artists' rights and fair pay
    - Advocacy for new funding models
    - Improved access to affordable studio or performance spaces
    - Access to affordable art supplies, materials, and equipment

- Other important support needs highlighted by artists include opportunities for mentorship or coaching, improved support for exhibitions and events to showcase their work, and collaborative or interdisciplinary opportunities.

Policy and Programme Implications

Through this research, we identify **five key themes** for policymakers to consider, including:

1. **Targeted support to grow the size of the arts sector in NI:** Within this research, artists have highlighted challenging conditions for generating sustainable income, such as limited access to paid opportunities, or not receiving sufficient income to cover the costs of living and working. Many artists also regularly face unforeseen costs or delays in payments. However, this is also part of a challenging wider arts ecosystem where venues, spaces, and audiences are also coming under increasing financial pressures in relation to their running costs and income. The principle of the 'multiplier effect' applies to the arts sector in Northern Ireland. In short, where investment in the arts is increased, this can result in additional events and commissions, grow, and maintain venues, attract audiences, and help to secure greater income opportunities for all. However, the opposite also holds true. Where investment is reduced or audiences fall, this can lead to reduced income, closures of venues, and an effective 'race to the bottom' for artist pay.
   Arts organisations are increasingly exposed to inflationary pressures, and this has had a direct impact upon programming costs and artist income – as shown in the ACNI Annual Funding Survey. There is a need to restore and reward confidence within the sector, to help support sustainable programming which will increase artist opportunities in turn. It is crucial to recognise the need for sustained investment in the arts to preserve, maintain and grow the sector. Policymakers should set out a clear strategy for measuring and increasing audiences, growing the sector, and recognising the relational and distributional impacts of supporting the whole arts ecosystem on a long-term basis.

2. **Maximising the role of grants and increasing investment:** Whilst there is a recognition that funders operate in challenging conditions, there is a need for policy to consider wider financial levers, for example: advocating for increased public investment in the arts, supporting local artists access wider local, national, and international funding schemes, unlocking additional private investment, streamlining the grants process and accounting for the differences in applying for funding to different types of artists.

3. **Explore novel funding mechanisms:** In this research, artists have highlighted the need for advocacy, both for artists' rights and fair pay, and to explore and test new funding models. This could include the role of an arts champion, exploring a basic income scheme for artists and other alternative funding models.
4. **Increasing access to affordable space:** Within this research, artists frequently cited that access to affordable studio or performance space was a key barrier. This suggests policy interventions to help with providing artists with access to affordable studio or performance space to allow them to create, sell and perform their work and providing artists with support for exhibitions and events to showcase their work.
5. **Developing talent:** The research highlights the need provide artists with opportunities to innovate and risk-take. Policy interventions should aim to create an environment that supports risk-taking and innovation by providing funding, resources, and platforms for

artists to explore new creative avenues. Providing training and learning opportunities to develop artist talent and prepare them for the professional landscape is highly important.

1. Introduction & Context

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) commissioned Perspective Economics to conduct a research project exploring the working and living conditions of artists in Northern Ireland. This research aims to:

- **Develop an enhanced evidence base:** The nature of official statistics such as the Annual Population Survey (APS), Census, and Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) typically cover the number of people working full-time in the arts (as defined by Standard Occupation Codes).
    - This can underestimate and under examine those covering working across the arts in freelance, self-employed, or part-time roles. It can also provide a 'sector' wide estimate for income across categories such as 'Arts, Entertainment and Recreation' but lack detailed granularity about how income and working conditions vary between artists by factors such as art type, location, gender, and wider factors. As such, this research seeks to build a new up-to-date estimate of income and working conditions across the full arts sector in Northern Ireland to provide an enhanced evidence base for targeted support.
- **Understand the key challenges facing artists:** Recent years have been particularly challenging for artists. This has been exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 on events and venues and the rising cost of living. This survey explores the impact of current conditions upon artists such as financial and mental health challenges.
- **Identify barriers to artists:** There are also systemic and wider challenges unique to many artists. There are several costs which can go unnoticed to wider society, such as the increasing costs of studio spaces, equipment, touring, finding time to write, record and perform and ultimately - receiving fair compensation on time for their works. As explored in this survey, artists also have a wide range of backgrounds and lived barriers, that can be driven by socio-economic factors, caring responsibilities, and location. This research aims to capture the breadth of artist experiences.
- **Advocate for artists:** Artists play a vital role in society. They enrich our lives, they help us make sense of the world around us, challenge our assumptions, and inspire us to make Northern Ireland a better place. However, despite these immeasurable contributions, artists face significant challenges that hinder their ability to thrive and create. Artists are also critical to our economy – they provide the key component to growing areas such as tourism, hospitality, and entertainment, whilst also helping create a happier, healthier population. This research aims to quantity the value of the

arts in Northern Ireland; whilst also highlighting the challenges that need to be addressed to maximise this potential. We find that too often artists are expected to work for less than their worth – and it is crucial that artists are treated with respect and dignity they deserve.

- **Consider new ways of supporting artists:** The Arts Council NI supports artists and arts organisations through 'individual' and 'organisational' funding. Several artists have benefited from direct support from the Arts Council in recent years, either through initiatives such as the Artists Emergency Programme (to support individuals facing challenges as a result of COVID-19) or grants to develop their practice via the Support for Individual Artists Programme (SIAP). However, the survey explores artist views on the availability of existing funding, its impact, and asks artists about further or new forms of support they would welcome.

This work will help Arts Council NI to develop targeted policy that helps to address the specific needs of artists in our region. The Arts Council NI published its draft ten-year strategy (2024-2034) in January 2024, which serves a long-term roadmap to promote and grow the arts sector in Northern Ireland. This has been developed through collaboration with artists, arts organisations, government representatives, and stakeholders from the wider public sector. It aims to shape a future where the arts thrive. This research will support the aims of the Strategic Plan (2024-34) and strengthen the underlying evidence base.

Methodology

The methodology used for this research includes the following stages:

Step 1: Project Initiation and Desk Review

The research team met with Arts Council NI to confirm the research objectives and establish a project advisory group. The team also commenced a desk review exercise, reviewing over 30 relevant research reports and datasets exploring artist income and living conditions. This included a similar baseline report conducted at an all-island level in 2010 (*The living and working conditions of artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*).

The research team also reviewed existing data sources (e.g. labour force data) and previous baseline surveys to inform research design.

Step 2: Survey Design

The research team designed an online survey, in collaboration with the research advisory group. This ensured that key stakeholders, including policy-makers and artists had substantive input to the design of the survey. The survey covered demographics, in addition to six key themes: Income & Employment; Education & Training; Mental Health & Wellbeing; Northern Ireland as a location to live and work; Opportunities, Challenges and Barriers; and Access & Inclusion.

Step 3: Survey Rollout

From the 27th of November 2023 to the 5th of January 2024, an online survey was conducted examining the Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland[1].

The survey was made available at an open online link (SurveyMonkey), with the following channels used to promote and share the survey:

- Arts Council NI Mailing List and Grant Recipients: The Arts Council NI works with over a hundred arts organisations and has supported thousands of artists through grants and wider support in recent years. The Arts Council NI shared the survey link to over 4,000 individuals and organisations to encourage them to take part in the online survey.
- Social Media Platforms: It is also important to maximise reach among artists that have not previously engaged with the Arts Council or may interact with content through social media platforms. The survey was shared as a promoted advert via Instagram and Facebook, and also shared by the research team through LinkedIn and Twitter. Arts organisations were also encouraged to share with their members and staff.
- Alternative survey methods: All respondents completed the survey online. However, an option was provided for potential respondents to receive a printed version via post or complete the survey via telephone.

The research team also identified over 700 arts organisations across Northern Ireland, with the links shared and encouraged to reshare among members.

The online survey consisted of 42 questions, covering various aspects of the working and living conditions of artists in Northern Ireland, such as income sources, challenges, training needs, health and well-being, and impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Participation was entirely voluntary, with artists self-selecting whether to take part and providing informed consent before proceeding. Additionally, respondents had the assurance of anonymity, and they retained the right to decline to answer any questions if they preferred.

The response rate provides a snapshot of diverse demographics, finances, well-being, and careers.

Step 4: Data Cleaning

Online responses were cleaned using a series of quality markers and a manual review to remove incomplete and low-quality responses. These quality markers include flags for speeding, IP address (UK-based), gibberish, length and matching email addresses to names provided. The survey provided 481 quality usable responses. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 4% at the 95% confidence interval[2].

Step 5: Survey Analysis and Benchmarking

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[1] During this period, we obtained 481 usable responses, with 95% of respondents providing demographic information. These responses reflect a diverse array of artists spanning various age groups, gender identities, career stages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and artistic disciplines.

[2] This means that if we conducted the same survey 100 times, we would expect the results to be within 4 percentage points (at most) of the true value 95 of those times.

The survey was analysed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation to compare the responses based on key factors such as age, gender, career level and employment status.

The research team held a co-design meeting with the advisory group where the initial findings were presented and could ensure that artist input was received through the analysis and reporting.

The research team uses this survey to gain insight into the working and living conditions of artists at different stages of their career, artists who work in another sector to bring in extra income, artists with disabilities etc. Using this data, we can compare different artist groups against the wider estimates. Further, benchmarking has also been undertaken to compare the survey findings with previous research (e.g. the 2010 baseline survey), and against wider official statistics.

Step 6: Reporting

This report sets out the findings of the analysis. A full SPSS file (anonymised) has also been shared with Arts Council NI to support further analysis of income and working conditions of artists in Northern Ireland.

2. The Arts in Northern Ireland

Introduction

This section explores the size, scale, and contribution of the arts sector in Northern Ireland.

The arts sector covers a wide range of individuals and organisations, and this means that there will be significant variations in how the number of organisations, people, and economic contribution are measured by different official statistics and surveys.

At the broadest level, the wider arts sector is often captured by Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) / Department for Communities (DfC) estimates for the 'Creative Industries'. This captures those working in '*industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual propert*y'.

Based on this definition, the Creative Industries sector measure identifies a list of creative occupations and estimates the proportion of creative roles in each industry to derive a sectoral estimate.

In Northern Ireland[3], it is estimated that the Creative Industries sector (based on the 2022 estimates covering up to 2019 (pre-COVID-19):

- Generates over £1.3bn in Gross Value Added for the NI economy (3.1% of NI GVA)
- The sector grew by 12% (GVA) between 2018 – 2019, outstripping NI GVA growth (2.7%) over four-fold.
- Employs 33,000 people, representing 3.9% of NI employment – increasing by 14% between 2018-19. Digital creative roles are a considerable component of this, with 13,000 roles in IT and software, followed by 4,000 in film, TV, radio and photography, 4,000 in museums and galleries, 4,000 in advertising and marketing, 3,000 in music, performing arts, and visual arts, 3,000 in publishing, 1,000 in architecture, and 1,000 in design and fashion.
- There are c. 3,500 creative businesses in NI (3.8% of all businesses).

The Creative Industries has also been selected as a government priority sector to drive growth to 2030 across the UK[4], in recognition of the potential and the positive spill-over effect across industries.

However, there are some technical challenges associated with the Creative Industries definition, which underpin this research. Further, these measures also struggle to capture the wider derived economic and social impact from arts activities.

Within the Creative Industries definition, this may result in some methodological issues. For example, this may mean that:

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[3] Creative Industries Economic Estimates (2022) NISRA. (Online) Available at: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/dfc-creative-industries-cconomic-estimates-2022.pdf

[4] Creative industries sector vision: a joint plan to drive growth, build talent and develop skills (2023) Department for Culture, Media & Sport (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-sector-vision/creative-industries-sector-vision-a-joint-plan-to-drive-growth-build-talent-and-develop-skills

- Jobs may be included in a Creative Industries sector, regardless of the occupation. For example, human resources in a gallery would be counted as being in the Creative Industries, despite the occupation not being creative.
- Businesses are included where they have a ‘relevant’ Standard Industrial Classification code (a way of classifying a business’ activities). However, this may fail to capture a wide range of arts organisations that fall under other classifications, as well as some charities, social enterprises, and non-profits. It may also fail to capture arts spaces and venues which also classify as bars or halls.
- Typically, official definitions focus upon measures derived from surveys such as the Annual Population Survey or Business Register and Employment Survey. As such, these can underestimate self-employment or freelance roles, or may not sufficiently capture part-time or volunteer roles.
- Further, as definitions such as the Creative Industries may skew towards digital employment in aligned areas – this may suggest that average salaries are higher for ‘creative industries’ than a more focused definition of the arts. This is explored further in Section 4.

It can be argued that the value of the arts has historically been underestimated and undervalued – in direct statistical and wider measures. To some extent, this can be attributed to the nature of how arts organisations and artists are identified within official measures.

In a direct sense, key sectors for the Northern Ireland economy such as tourism and hospitality, creative industries, and digital and professional services are fundamentally underpinned by the arts. For example, research by UK Music indicates that music tourism brought £136 million to Northern Ireland in 2022, attracting an estimated 270,000 music tourists, including 20,000 foreign visitors[5]. This influx of visitors not only contributes to the local economy through spending on tickets, accommodation, dining, and other activities but also creates employment opportunities across various sectors, further amplifying the economic impact of the arts in Northern Ireland.

In a more intrinsic value, the arts provide a vehicle for regeneration, civic engagement, health and education, entertainment, and reflection, and help to make our society a place where people want to live and work. Organisations such as ArtsEkta and Arts Care are two key examples in Northern Ireland of how the arts can yield positive impacts in community and health outcomes.

[5] Music tourism jobs are measured as full-time equivalent jobs sustained by music tourism. Music tourist spend is calculated as the total amount of spend generated by music tourists per region (this includes direct and indirect spend). Music Tourism Data Map (2022) UK Music (Online) Available at: https://www.ukmusic.org/research-reports/uk-map/

Estimating the Number of Artists in Northern Ireland

As reflected within the wider creative industries definition, it is challenging to estimate the number of artists active in Northern Ireland. For example, many artists will be freelance or self-employed, and others may work across multiple jobs or roles and therefore be captured by other sector definitions. The current estimates are varied. For example:

- The Annual Population Survey (September 2023) estimates that of the 922,000 individuals in the workforce in Northern Ireland, 20,000[6] are within 'SIC Division R: Arts, Entertainment and Recreation' (2.2% of workforce jobs). However, this includes wider roles in areas such as sport and leisure.
- The Annual Population Survey also publishes occupational estimates for Northern Ireland at a more granular level[7] using SOC2020 estimates. This suggests that in September 2023, there were:
    - 7,600 individuals[8] working in 'Artistic, Literary and Media' Occupations in Northern Ireland (SOC 341). This includes:
        - c. 1,500 authors, writers, and translators (SOC3412)
        - c. 1,800 actors, entertainers, and presenters (SOC3413)
        - c. 1,200 musicians (SOC3415)
        - c. 1,000 arts officers, producers, and directors (SOC3416)
        - c. 1,700 photographers, audio-visual, and broadcasting equipment operators.
        - An undisclosed (due to low sample size) number of artists (SOC3411) and dancers and choreographers (SOC3414).
    - Of these 7,600 individuals[9]:
        - Only 1,300 (17%) are estimated to be employed in an 'employee job'
        - The remaining 6,100 (80%) are estimated to be self-employed or freelance.
        - The SOC estimates suggest that 57% of the arts workforce are male, and 43% are female. (This is higher than wider Arts Council NI Annual Funding estimates which suggest 50% male, 49% female, and 1% non-binary).
        - The data also suggests that 84% work full-time, (91% male, and 76% female).
- However, this highlights the challenges with the current estimates. For example, the Arts Council NI's most recent Annual Funding Survey highlights how the 95 funded arts organisations across Northern Ireland have a total workforce of c. 6,500 individuals. However, this consists of c. 900 permanent roles, and over 5,500 contractor roles.

Using the Annual Population Survey (APS) estimates of employment by SOC2020 in Northern Ireland provides a useful baseline of 7,600 employees in the arts occupation. It also finds that

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[6] Labour Market Profile - Northern Ireland (2021-23) Office for National Statistics (Online) Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2013265932/report.aspx

[7] Annual Population Survey - Occupation by sex, employment status and full/part-time (2022-23) Office for National Statistics (Online) Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/aps218/reports/employment-by-status-and-occupation?compare=N92000002

[8] Confidence interval of +/- 2,300 individuals

[9] Does not sum due to rounding or disclosure.

80% of this population are self-employed, which is in line with the findings from this survey. (see Section 4)

However, within the survey conducted for this research, we find that in our sample of 481 artists:

- 223 (46%) artists report that they only work solely within the arts. This typically covers individuals with a sole focus on artist activities. It can include full-time, part-time, self-employed, or freelance activities.

- 202 (42%) artists report that they have work or roles in other sectors. This may include individuals that receive income from arts-related activities (e.g. playing in a band) but they have other forms of income or work (e.g. also work in another sector full-time etc).

- 56 (12%) of artists are not currently actively working but undertake some arts-related activities. This may include individuals that are currently retired or unemployed or undertake voluntary activities.

As an assumption, we can view that the Annual Population Survey estimate (c.7,600 individuals) may provide an indication for those artists that work primarily within the arts. These represent 46% of our sample – and typically will consist of experienced artists that earn a full, or partial livelihood from their arts-based activities.

We can also infer that approximately 54% will not be captured by this APS estimate. Focusing on those that may work in other sectors (e.g. part-time musicians) – we apply an uplift (based on the 42% of artists in other sectors).

- Core artist population (codified): 7,600 individuals (~46%)
- Wider part-time and additional artist population: *estimated 6,900 individuals (~42%)*
- Wider retired, unemployed or voluntary population: *estimated 2,000 individuals (~12%)*

Focusing on the prior two categories, we suggest the **artist population** in Northern Ireland (across all levels of experience, with some form of income from the arts, or at an early-stage) may be in the region **of 14,500 individuals.**

However, this highlights the importance of surveying the artist community directly to gather enhanced and more granular evidence regarding incidence, income, and working conditions among artists in Northern Ireland. Further, understanding the challenges faced by artists in Northern Ireland requires a deeper examination beyond surface-level observations.

While existing data provides some insights, it fails to capture the full extent of the challenges encountered by artists. From navigating grant schemes to having sufficient time to complete their arts activities, artists face numerous obstacles that go unnoticed in traditional surveys.

By collecting first-hand evidence, this survey aims to offer a more thorough understanding of the arts sector, informing policymakers and stakeholders about the tailored support needed to address the unique needs of artists in Northern Ireland.

3. Background & Demographics

Introduction & Methodology

From the 27th November 2023 to the 5th January 2024 (six weeks), the research team conducted an online survey examining the Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland[10]. The survey contained 42 questions, and focused on six key themes, summarised below.

- Income and Employment
    - Reported employment status within the arts, and arts form
    - Other forms of income or employment
    - Number of hours spent on artistic activities
    - Total income (overall) and proportion of income from arts-related activities
    - Participation in auto-enrolment or self-invested pension saving; and
    - Artist views on the extent of their income from the arts (e.g. paid on time, fair remuneration, access to opportunities).
- Education & Training
    - Highest level of educational qualification and location of study
    - Wider education in the arts including self-teaching, certifications, or professional training
    - Artist views on how well education and training has supported them in a professional setting, and views on how to better support artists.
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
    - Artist views on life satisfaction, happiness, anxiety, and mental health
    - Artist perceptions on feeling valued, supported, secure in their roles, represented in the arts and on inclusion within the arts sector.
- Location
    - Where artists are currently based
    - The proportion of arts-related income earned from Northern Ireland and other regions, and their perception of Northern Ireland as a place to live and work
- Opportunities & Challenges
    - Understanding the barriers or challenges that artists have encountered
    - Artist views on spaces and costs, income and commercial models, the cost-of living, and emergent trends such as the impact of Artificial Intelligence
    - The resources and support that artists believe are necessary to maximise opportunities in the arts.
- Access & Inclusion
    - Artist gender identity, age, ethnicity, sexuality and religious beliefs
    - Insight into artist socioeconomic backgrounds

[10] 95% of respondents provided demographic information. These responses reflect a diverse array of artists spanning various age groups, gender identities, career stages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and artistic disciplines.

Over the six-week period, artists were contacted through multiple sources including via existing Arts Council NI membership and newsletter lists (covering over 4,000 artists), and through promoted social media channels targeted to those with an interest in the arts.

Participation was entirely voluntary, with artists self-selecting whether to take part and providing informed consent before proceeding. Additionally, respondents had the assurance of anonymity, and they retained the right to decline to answer any questions if they preferred.

While our survey offers valuable insights, it is important to recognise that it represents only a representative sample of Northern Ireland's artist community. However, the survey results provide a snapshot of diverse demographics, finances, well-being, and careers. The following section explores the demographics of our artist sample[11].

Demographics

The survey included twelve questions exploring artist demographics. These include variables such as age, gender identity, ethnicity, disability and neurodiversity, sexual orientation, location, and socio-economic background.

Approximately 90% of artists that completed the survey provided responses to these questions, which enables the research team to understand the background and composition of artists in Northern Ireland, as well as being able to compare key variables (explored later such as income and working conditions) by demographic factors where appropriate.

The data suggests that the survey has obtained responses from a diverse and inclusive range of artists across Northern Ireland from various backgrounds, disciplines, and career stages.

This sub-section explores:

- **Location**: where artists are currently based (in Northern Ireland)
- **Age**: the age bracket of respondents to the survey
- **Gender Identity** & **Sexual Orientation**: how respondents identify, and sexual orientation
- **Ethnicity**: ethnicity of respondents
- **Disability & Neurodiversity** (self-reported): whether respondents consider themselves to be disabled or neurodiverse
- **Socio-Economic Background**: whether respondents have any dependents, the type of school they went to, and profession (where applicable) of their parents or guardians.

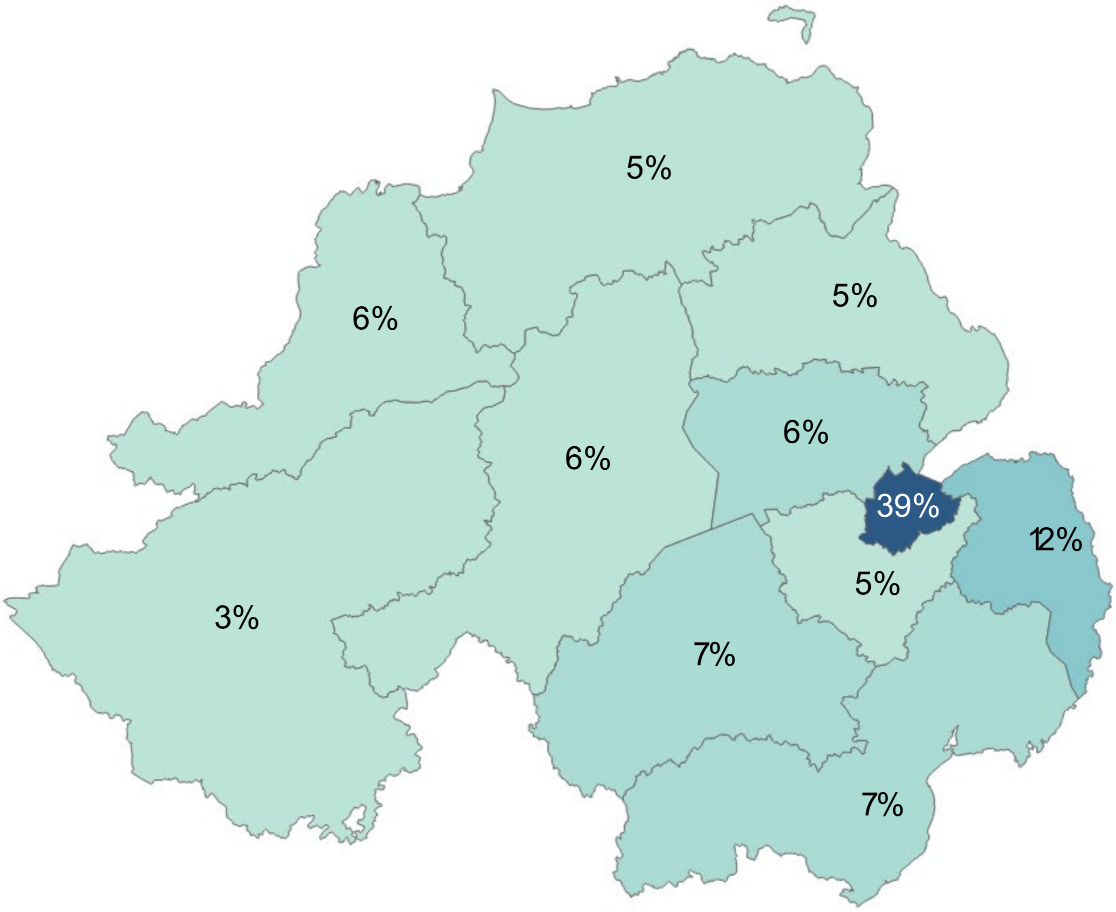
[11] A more detailed methodology is available in the Annex.

Location

As shown in Figure 3.1, the majority of the respondents (61%) reside outside of Greater Belfast. It is estimated that 83% of employee jobs in Northern Ireland are based outside of Belfast, which suggests that artists may be more likely to reside in Greater Belfast (39% of artists in the survey).

However, this aligns with the concentration of arts establishments, such as theatres, music venues, and arts education within the city.

Figure 3.1: Location of Respondents



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 432)

Age

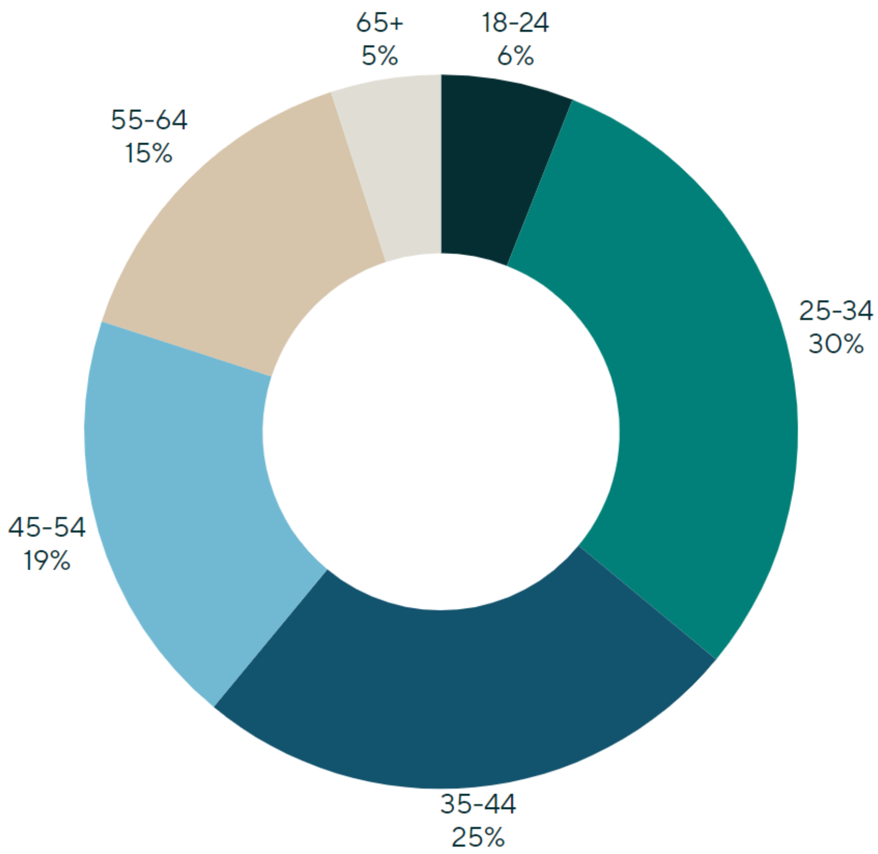
The survey asked artists to the indicate their age from the following ranges:

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Out of those who took part, 95% are within the 18-64 age range, showing a wide age distribution across the working age population. Age is an important variable for understanding artists' income and experience, as both tend to increase with age.

The median age group is 35-44, with the average age being 42 years. As highlighted later, many of these artists are likely at a mid-point in their careers, with a significant level of experience and expertise in their respective art forms.

Figure 3.2: Age of Respondents



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 451)

Gender & Sexual Orientation

The survey asked artists which gender they identify as, and findings suggest that of the 451 respondents who provided a response:

- 58% identify as female.
- 39% identify as male.
- 3% identify as agender, genderfluid, non-binary & queer.

Comparatively, women represent just under half (48%) of the employed population in Northern Ireland, indicating a higher percentage of women in the arts sector than the general workforce[12]. Likewise, within the EU, women make up an estimated 47% of the workforce in cultural and creative sectors[13].

The survey also explored the sexual orientation of the respondents. The results show that 78% of the artists identify as heterosexual or straight. 10% of artists reported as bisexual, while 6% identify as gay or lesbian. An additional 4% describe themselves as queer, and 2% as pansexual[14]. These statistics are comparable with wider sector estimates such as the Help Musicians Survey 2023[15].

Ethnicity

The survey asked about the ethnic background of respondents. The majority of respondents (95%) reported being from a white ethnic background. This is similar to the wider Northern Ireland census data (where 97%) of the population are from this background.

Those from ethnic minority backgrounds constituted 5%, which is slightly higher than levels in the NI Census (3%)[16]. The report further examines the challenges related to inclusivity and the perceptions of diversity within Northern Ireland's arts sector in the ‘Challenges and Opportunities’ section.

Disability & Neurodiversity

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities[17]. Neurodiversity is an umbrella term that refers to the different ways a person’s brain processes

[12] Women in Northern Ireland (2020-2021) Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (Online) Available at: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/women-in-Northern-Ireland-2020-2021.pdf

[13] Women in arts and culture (2021) European Parliament (Online) Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2021/689366/EPRS_ATA(2021)689366_EN.pdf

[14] Of 417 artists who responded to this question.

[15] Help Musicians: Musician’s Census (2023) (Online) Available at: https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/about-us/news/the-first-ever-musicians-census-report-launched

[16] Indian, Filipino, Brazilian, Turkish, Irish Latino, Chinese & Black Caribbean.

[17] Definition of Disability (2007) Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (Online) Available at: https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/DefinitionofDisability07.pdf

information. It can include conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, autism, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)[18].

The survey asked artists the following questions:

- Do you have a disability?
- Do you consider yourself to be neurodiverse?

These responses are self-reported and may include disabilities or neurodivergent conditions such as hearing loss, anxiety disorders, dyslexia, autism, and a range of other disabilities that have the potential to impact artists' ability to work.

Within the survey responses, we find that:

- Almost one in four respondents (23%) reported having a disability[19]. This is similar to Northern Ireland wide estimates (21% for those between 16 – 64 years old)[20].
- Almost a third (31%) consider themselves to be neurodiverse[21], this is higher than the UK population average which sits at 15%[22].

Socioeconomic Background

The survey asked artists several questions related to their socioeconomic background, including whether they have dependents, the type of school they attended, and the occupation of the main income earner in their household.

Regarding dependents, 40% of respondents indicated they have someone who depends on them for care or financial support. Of those with caring responsibilities, 73% highlighted this as a key challenge impacting their ability to create, perform, or sell their artwork.

As for the type of school attended:

- 49% went to grammar schools
- 32% attended secondary schools
- 15% attended schools outside of Northern Ireland
- 4% selected "other"

To understand the socioeconomic background of respondents, we used the following social group classifications based on their parents' occupations:

- Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional occupations (AB group) – 51% of respondents
    - Modern professional occupations

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[18] What is Neurodiversity? NHS (Online) Available at: https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/our-people/neurodiversity-at-cuh/what-is-neurodiversity/

[19] Of 431 respondents who provided an answer to the following: 'Do you have a disability?'

[20] NISRA (2023). Census 2021. Flexible Table Builder https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2021-census/results/flexible-table-builder

[21] Of 351 respondents who provided an answer to the following: 'Do you consider yourself neurodiverse?'

[22] Support for Neurodiversity. EDI page University of Edinburgh. https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/disabled-staff-support/neurodiversity-support#:~:text=However%20it%20is%20estimated%20that,learns%20and%20processes%20information%20differently

    - Senior managers and administrators
    - Traditional professional occupations
- Supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative and professional occupations (C1) – 14% of respondents
    - Clerical and intermediate occupations
    - Middle and junior managers
- Skilled manual occupations (C2) – 22% of respondents
    - Technical and craft occupations
    - Routine manual occupations and services
- Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations; unemployed and lowest grade occupations (DE) – 13% of respondents
    - Semi-routine manual occupations and services
    - Long-term unemployed

Table B.2 in the annex sets out the social mobility of the respondents against the National Lottery Support for Individual Artists Programme (SIAP) and Northern Ireland average.

Primary Artform

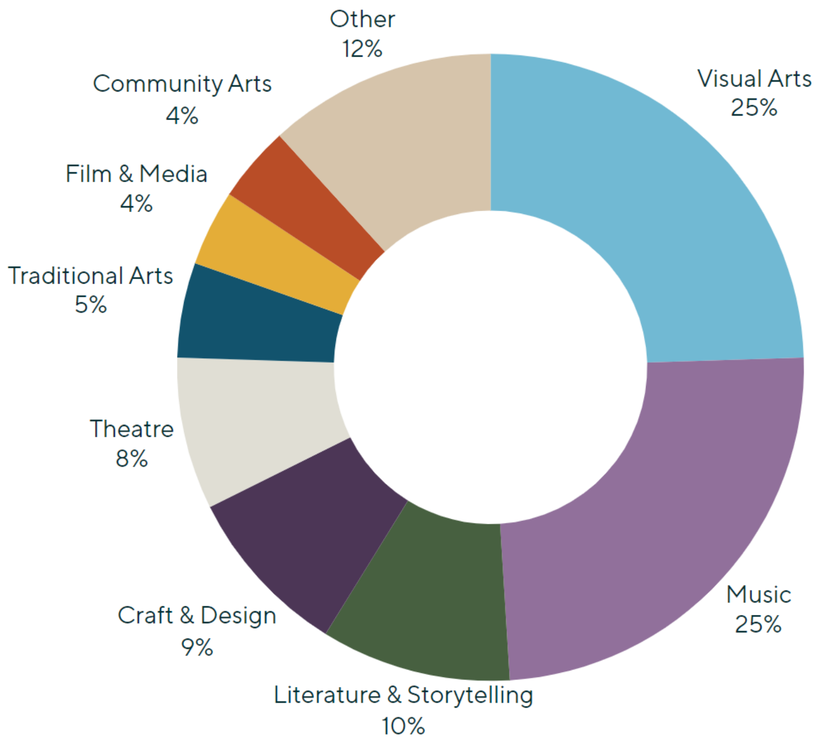
Artists are a diverse group, with a wide array of experience in different artforms. The survey asked respondents to select the primary artform in which they work.

The results show that there is a wide distribution of artists across art forms. More than half (58%) of our artists selected Visual Arts, Music and Theatre as their main art form. This indicates a significant portion of artists in our survey are involved in disciplines that are outward-facing and audience-driven.

Literature and Storytelling was identified as the primary art form of 10% of respondents, underscoring the importance of narrative arts in Northern Ireland, whilst Craft and Design were selected by 9%, indicating the relevance of material arts.

Importantly, this highlights the breadth of artforms across Northern Ireland. The survey was also reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure coverage from a wide range of artforms.

Figure 3.3: Responses by Primary Artform



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)

Experience Level

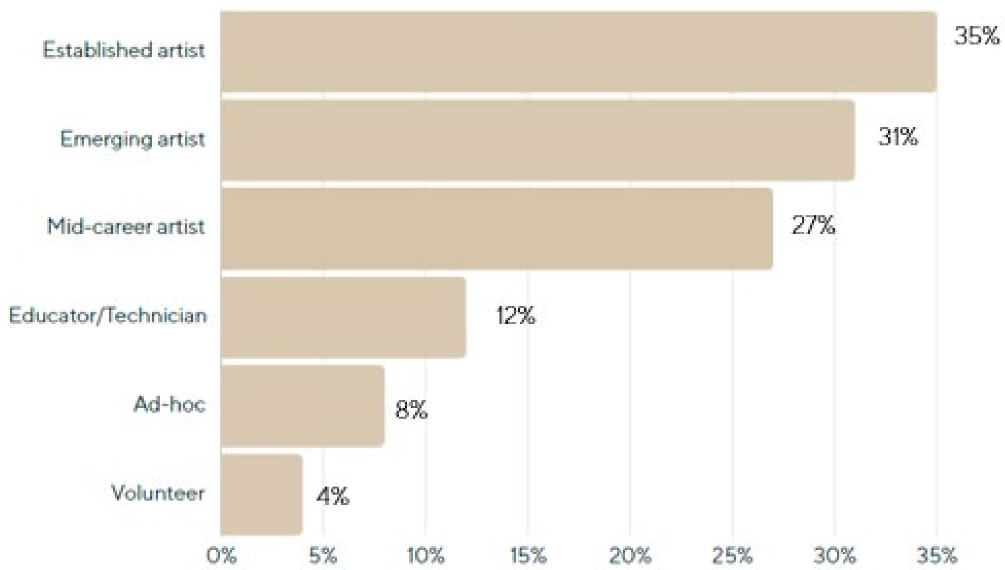
To understand what levels of experience the artists across Northern Ireland have, the survey asked artists which of the following best describes their role within the arts. These align to existing definitions and artforms.

This is a key indicator for understanding experience, exposure, and exploring income levels:

- **Emerging artist** (actively pursuing an arts career, started within the last five years)
- **Mid-career artist** (actively working in the arts for more than five years but not yet established)
- **Established artist** (with a regular and consistent body of work in the arts for more than five years)
- **Participate in the arts on an ad-hoc basis**, sometimes unpaid, or for personal enjoyment
- **Volunteer within the arts** (contribute time and skills to support the arts)
- **Arts-related educator, technician, technical or production administrator**

Respondents also had varying levels of experience, from emerging artists (actively pursuing an arts career, having started within the last five years) to established artists (with a regular and consistent body of work in the arts for more than five years). Respondents could provide more than one answer in Figure 3.4 (e.g. an established artist may also have an educator role). We find similar volumes of emerging, established, and mid-career artists in the sample.

Figure 3.4: Responses by Career Level



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)

The following table sets out the key figures for emerging, established, and mid-career artists[23].

Table 3.1: Key Figures by Career Level

Career Level (Count)	Emerging (141)	Mid-Career Level (123)	Established (160)	All (481)
Age (Median Band)	25-34	35-44	45-54	35-44
Gender	59% Female 31% Male 10% Other	57% Female 39% Male 4% Other	54% Female 44% Male 2% Other	58% Female 39% Male 3% Other
Income (Average)[24]	£15,500	£18,600	£20,800	£18,900
Arts-related Income (Average)	£5,200	£8,300	£15,500	£11,200

[23] The other artist career levels (educator / technician, ad-hoc and volunteer) are not explored through these key figures due to their smaller sample sizes.
[24] Sample size for those that provided income data: Emerging (135), Mid-Career (115), Established (155), All (458)

Sources of Income (Average)	2	3	3	3
Artforms	1 - Visual Artist 2 - Musician 3 - Craft & Design	1 - Visual Artist 2 - Musician 3 - Literature & Storytelling	1 - Visual Artist 2 - Musician 3 - Theatre	1 - Visual Artist 2 - Musician 3 - Literature & Storytelling
Employment Status	1 - Self-employed 2 - Freelancer / Independent Contractor 3 - Part-time employed	1 - Self-employed 2 - Freelancer / Independent Contractor 3 - Part-time employed	1 - Self-employed 2 - Freelancer / Independent Contractor 3 - Full-time employed	1 - Self-employed 2 - Freelancer / Independent Contractor 3 - Part-time employed
Mental Health (% reporting)	32%	33%	28%	30%
Disability (% reporting)	27%	27%	17%	23%
Neurodiverse (% reporting)	42%	30%	19%	29%

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey

4. Artist Income & Employment

Introduction

This section explores the survey data related to artist income and employment.

As highlighted in Section 2, official estimates can be challenging as they will only capture individuals employed in relevant industry or occupational codes. Further, the sample sizes can be limited (as part of wider economic surveys) preventing significant granular analysis across art types. Finally, these may also be skewed towards those in full-time roles, and over-estimate earnings among self-employed or freelance roles.

In Northern Ireland, official estimates suggest that:

- The **mean** income for those working in SOC2020 (34) ('culture, media, and sports occupations') is £23,154 in 2023. Median income is unavailable due to sample size. Using the industry definitions (SIC R) (Arts, Entertainment & Recreation) suggests a mean income of £24,370, and median income of £23,390.
- This compares to mean income of £31,794 (and median income of £27,102) for all employee jobs in Northern Ireland in 2023.
- This suggests that (at the broader level), mean income for artists is between 23% - 27% (~25%) lower than the Northern Ireland mean salary. Median income is at least 14% lower for artists than the NI median.

However, as stated previously, this has significant challenges, as there is insufficient data to delineate income by artist experience, gender, location or working patterns. Further, this may capture non-arts professionals working in administrative or professional roles in the arts sector, which may skew the estimated income levels.

As such, the artist survey for this research aims to understand how much artists earn overall, and how much they earn from arts-related activities. It also explores factors such as employment status, experience, working patterns and income by demographics.

This section also explores artist views on their remuneration (adequacy, fairness, payment on time etc), and whether they are able to budget, save, or enrol within a pension scheme.

Within this survey, we find that, on average (in 2023):

- Artists based in Northern Ireland earn approximately £18,900 from all sources of income. They earn approximately up to £11,200 from arts-related income.

This is lower than the official estimates but reflects the importance of granular research. The following sub-sections explore income and working patterns across a range of variables.

Employment Status & Role in the Arts

Within the survey, we find that a large proportion of artists indicated that they are self-employed or freelancers/independent contractors (47% and 31% respectively), meaning that they are responsible for managing their own work and income. This aligns with the 80% estimate within the Annual Population Survey (2023).

26% of respondents stated they are employed in the arts at full-time (13%) or part-time (13%) level, and 7% said they were business owners.[25] These findings are comparable to wider research. For example, a previous survey into the entertainment industry in the UK found that 60% of entertainment professionals had at least one other job outside of the entertainment industry[26]. Many artists will also have multiple roles across the sector (e.g. they may perform and teach or may provide support to a range of events and festivals throughout the year).

Respondents were also asked whether they worked in any other sectors other than the arts (e.g. other part-time or freelance roles in other industries) to supplement their income. Over 40% of artists stated that they worked in additional roles or sectors. This figure increases to 45% for self-employed artists and 50% for freelancers/independent contractors, underscoring the fact that many artists may not be able to solely depend on their artistic activities for employment and income. We also find one in six artists (16%) rely on the use of previous savings, 13% receive financial support from family and friends, and 11% receive formal income support.

[25] Please note respondents could provide more than one response).
[26] Pay & Opportunities in the Entertainment Industry (2018) (Online) Available at: https://www.mandy.com/uk/pages/mandy-reports

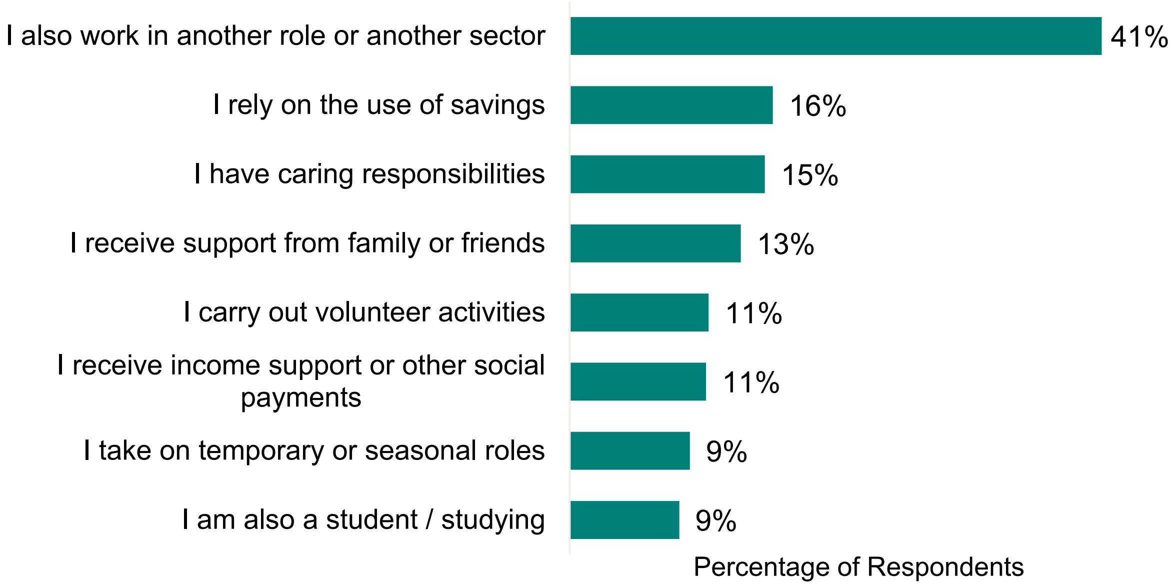


Figure 4.1: Proportion of artists with other forms of income or activities

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)

We explore this further in Section 8, where we find that 61% of the artists highlighted the challenge of juggling multiple jobs and the consequent lack of time for creative work as a significant barrier affecting their capacity to create, exhibit, sell, or perform their art.

Working Patterns

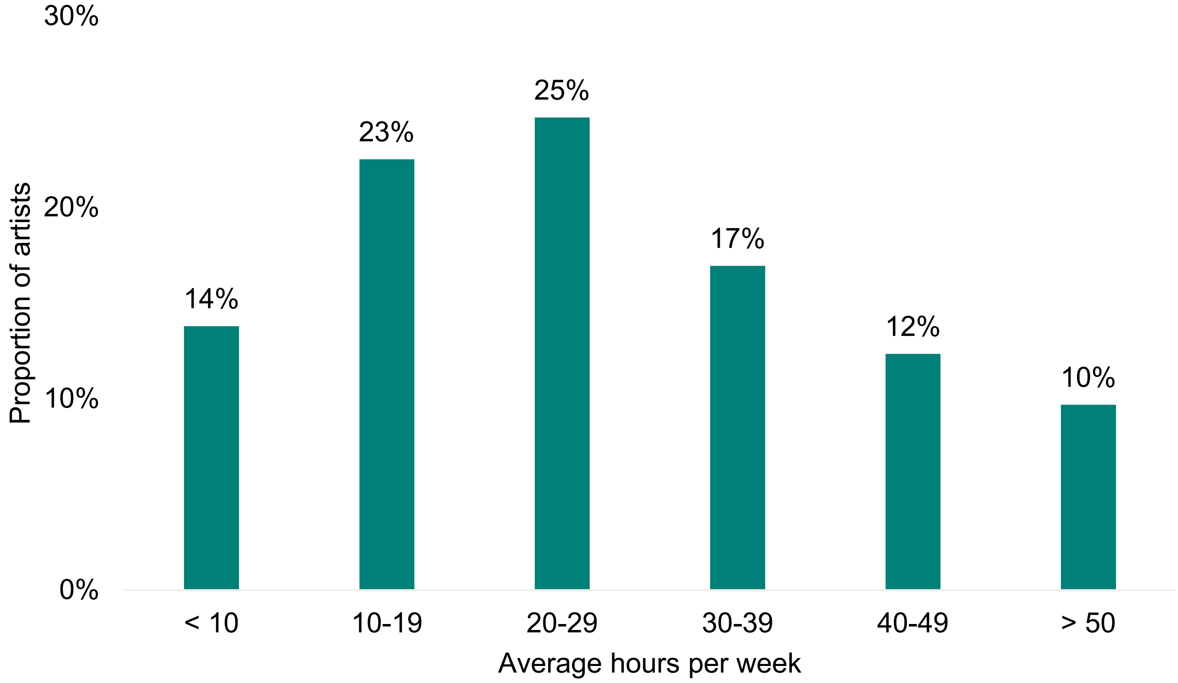
Previous research[27] found that a large number of artists (up to 57% across Northern Ireland and Ireland) were often or always working more than 40 hours per week (across all roles). This was in part due to the fact that artists often rely on a second job to generate sufficient income for their expenses.

Within this survey, we asked respondents how many hours artists spend on their artistic or creative activity (including client work, personal projects, and administrative tasks).

As shown in Figure 4.2, we find that 22% of artists spend more than 40 hours per week on their arts-related activities. Further, for those that earn all or the majority of their income from the arts, this increases to 39% working for over 40 hours per week on arts-related activities.

[27] https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/LWCA_Study_-_Final_2010.pdf

Figure 4.2: Hours spent per week on artistic or creative activities



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 413)

Estimating Artist Income

This sub-section explores artist income (overall), and as a proportion relating to arts-based activities.

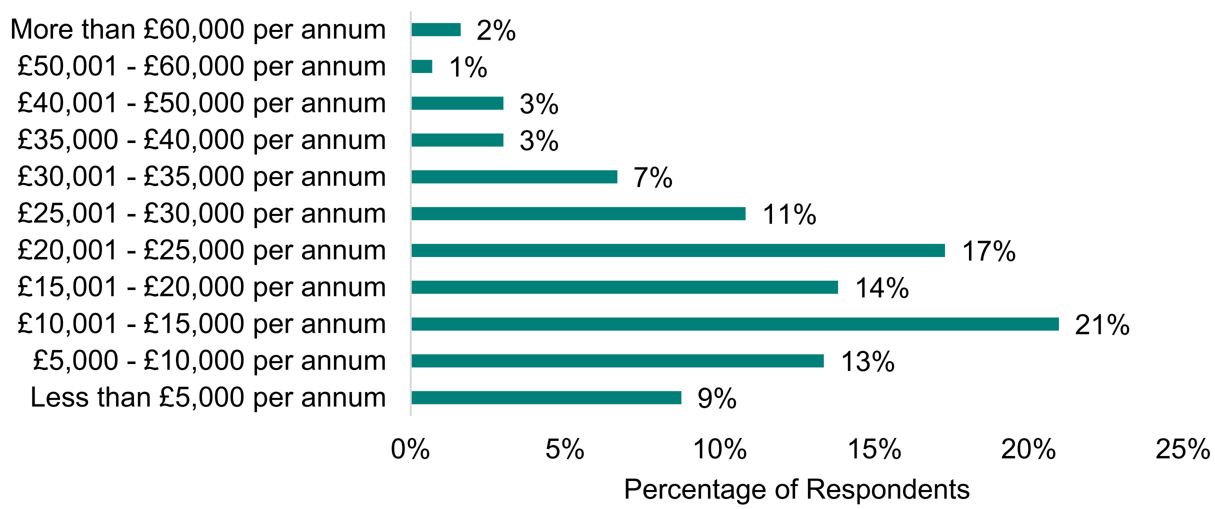
In the survey, artists were asked the following questions:

- **Select the range that best represents your most recent total annual income (from all of your income sources):**
    - Less than £5,000 per annum
    - £5,000 - £10,000 per annum
    - £10,001 - £15,000 per annum
    - £15,001 - £20,000 per annum
    - £20,001 - £25,000 per annum
    - £25,001 - £30,000 per annum
    - £30,001 - £35,000 per annum
    - £35,000 - £40,000 per annum
    - £40,001 - £50,000 per annum
    - £50,001 - £60,000 per annum
    - More than £60,000 per annum
    - Prefer not to say
    - Not sure
- **How much of this income would you estimate comes from your arts-based activity? If all of your income is from the arts, please answer '100%'. If you have other roles, please estimate the proportion of your income that comes from paid arts activity.**
    - None of my income comes from the arts (0%)
    - Very little of my income comes from the arts (1% - 19%)
    - About half of my income comes from the arts (40 - 59%)
    - Most of my income comes from the arts (60% - 79%)
    - Some of my income comes from the arts (20 - 39%)
    - The majority of my income comes from the arts (80% - 99%)
    - All of my income comes from the arts (100%)
    - Prefer not to say
    - Not sure

We asked artists to select the range that best represents their most recent annual income, across all income sources. When analysing the data, we assume the midpoint of each value (to a maximum of £60,000 per annum). The research team uses a ranged response for each question, rather than asking the absolute figure. This is because this is easier for respondents to know intuitively and quickly and should maximise the number of valid responses. Overall, 434 respondents (c. 90%) provided an income response for this question.

Overall, respondents provided the following income brackets (Figure 4.3). This highlights that the median income bracket (from all roles) is approximately £15,000 - £20,000 per annum.

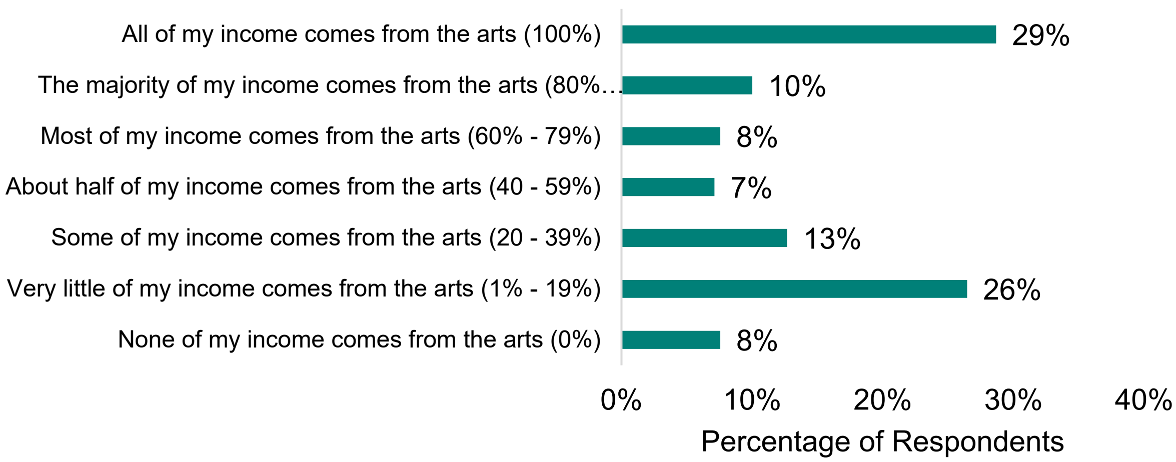
Figure 4.3: Total Annual Income (All Income Sources)



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 458)

Overall, respondents provided the following income brackets (Figure 4.3). This highlights that the median income bracket (from all roles) is approximately £15,000 - £20,000 per annum. **Taking the mid-points for each response bracket, we can estimate that average income for respondents (overall from all sources) in 2023 was approximately £18,946 (c. £18,900) per annum.** Figure 4.4 also explores where artists were asked how much of this income came from arts-related activities.

Figure 4.4: Proportion of Income from Arts Based Activity



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 450)

This data suggests that, based on the responses to this question, the average income from arts-based activity is £10,340 (n=450 responses). Removing those that answered that none of their income comes from the arts (down to 416 responses) **suggests that on average artists earn £11,200 from arts related activity**. For those that earn from the arts, this suggests a total income of £19,200, of which £11,200 is arts-derived (58%) of income. We set out the indicative total and arts-related income (rounded to the nearest £100) across a range of key variables below. We find that:

- Established artists have the highest average income (£20,800) and the highest percentage of income from arts (75%), while emerging artists have the lowest average income (£15,100) and the lowest percentage of income from arts (34%).
- Artists who spend more than 40 hours per week on arts-related work have the highest average income from arts (£16,600 or 84% of their total income). However, those that work the fewest hours in arts (<10 hours per week) typically have higher incomes overall due to income from other sources. Further, the nature of arts related work can mean that artists may go unpaid or underpaid for their efforts (on an hourly basis). For example, £16,600 from 40 hours per week of arts activity would imply an average income of c. £8 per hour (assuming 40 hours x 52 weeks). This is approximately 30% lower than the National Living Wage (from April 2024) and highlights the challenge among many artists.
- Full-time employees in the arts sector have the highest average income (£30,000) and the highest percentage of income from arts (83%). However, income falls substantially among those self-employed (which have the lowest average income (£16,300).
- Artists aged 45-54 have the highest average income (£23,100) and one of the highest percentages of income from arts (63%), while those aged 18-34 have the lowest average income (£16,300) and a lower percentage of income from arts (50%).
- Male artists have a higher average income (£20,750) compared to female artists (£18,700), although the percentage of income from arts is similar (58% for males and 59% for females).
- Artists with a disability have a lower average income (£17,100) and a lower percentage of income from arts (51%) compared to those without a disability (£20,900 and 60%, respectively). Similarly, artists with neurodiversity have a lower average income (£17,100) and percentage of income from arts (56%) compared to those without.
- Artists with a postgraduate degree have a slightly higher average income (£21,000) compared to those with a bachelor's degree (£19,000) or other education levels (£16,600). However, this does highlight a limited 'salary premium' for higher levels of education in the arts compared with lifetime earnings estimates across other disciplines. Whilst this is a slightly higher income than other education levels, this suggests that net lifetime return of arts education is limited or in instances, negative.
- Artists who attended grammar schools between the ages of 11-16 have a higher average income (£20,000) and a higher percentage of income from arts (60%) compared to those who attended secondary schools (£17,900 and 53%, respectively).
- Artists living in Belfast have a higher average income (£19,300) and a higher percentage of income from arts (62%) compared to artists living in other parts of Northern Ireland (£18,800 and 59% respectively). This is set out in Table B.1 in the annex.

Table 4.1: Income Summary

	Sample Size[28]	Income	Arts Related Income	Percentage of Income from Arts	Relative to average (arts income)
All Respondents	458 (450)	£18,900	£10,300	54%	→
…earn from arts	*416*	*£19,200*	*£11,200*	58%	→
Experience:					
Established	152	£20,800	£15,500	75%	↑
Mid-Career	106	£18,600	£8,300	45%	↓
Emerging	105	£15,100	£5,200	34%	↓
Educator Role	55	£20,600	£14,100	68%	↑
Hours spent on arts:					
<10 hours	40	£22,600	£5,825	26%	↓
10 – 19 hours	82	£17,600	£4,700	27%	↓
20 – 29 hours	89	£14,900	£6,000	40%	↓
30 – 39 hours	64	£16,700	£12,200	73%	↑
>40 hours	85	£19,700	£16,600	84%	↑
Arts Form:					
Music	107	£19,900	£11,300	57%	→
Visual Arts	103	£16,500	£8,700	53%	↓
Other (**)	206	£20,300	£12,400	61%	↑
Working Pattern:					
Full Time Employee	51	£30,000	£24,900	83%	↑
Part Time Employee	56	£19,300	£9,400	49%	↓
Self Employed	201	£16,300	£9,800	60%	↓
Freelance	136	£19,000	£11,000	58%	→
Age (65+ not included due to sample size):					
18 – 34	136	£16,300	£8,100	50%	↓
35 – 44	102	£21,200	£13,200	62%	↑
45 – 54	72	£23,100	£14,500	63%	↑
55 – 64	64	£17,900	£10,600	59%	→
Gender Identity* (Non-Binary not included due to sample size):					
Male	150	£20,750	£12,100	58%	↑
Female	228	£18,700	£11,100	59%	→
Disability or Neurodiversity:					
Disability	85	£17,100	£8,800	51%	↓
Neurodiversity	90	£17,100	£9,500	56%	↓
None	242	£20,900	£12,500	60%	↑
Dependents:					
Yes	158	£21,100	£12,700	60%	↑
No	232	£18,500	£10,600	57%	→

[28] Please note margin of error is set out in Annex B, Table B.3

Education Level (Min):

Postgraduate	154	£21,000	£12,000	57%	↑
Degree (Bachelor)	175	£19,000	£11,200	59%	→
Other	87	£16,600	£9,700	58%	

Socio-economic marker (school between 11-16):

Grammar	214	£20,000	£12,000	60%	↑
Secondary	115	£17,900	£9,500	53%	↓
Other / Outside NI	66	£20,200	£13,200	65%	↑

Benchmarking Income

The income statistics are important in understanding the living and working conditions of artists; however, they provide a single point of financial reference. As such, it is important to develop additional context through the survey, and also through wider statistics regarding wider societal income and living expenses.

We explore:

- How income reported in the survey compares with wider secondary statistics;
- How income has changed over time (exploring the change in income reported by artists in the 2010 Arts Council baseline study, and this research – in comparison to how wider incomes have changed in Northern Ireland since 2010); and
- Artist views on the extent, duration, quality, and sources of income generated.

Income Comparison:

In Northern Ireland, official estimates suggest that:

- The **mean** income for those working in SOC2020 (34) ('culture, media, and sports occupations') is £23,154 in 2023. Median income is unavailable due to sample size. Using the industry definitions (SIC R) (Arts, Entertainment & Recreation) suggests a mean income of £24,370, and median income of £23,390.
- This compares to mean income of £31,794 (and median income of £27,102) for all employee jobs in Northern Ireland in 2023.
- The average data within this survey (£18,900 overall) suggests that overall artist incomes could be up to 40% lower than the NI average (and 30% lower than the median).
- However, this will be driven by factors such as part-time employment and freelancing, Using the official measures (SIC R) of mean income for artists suggests a gap of between 23% - 27% (~25%) lower than the Northern Ireland mean salary, and that median income is at least 14% lower for artists than the NI median.
- As such, the best-case scenario is that artists earn 14% less than the Northern Ireland median; but the survey data suggests that this pay gap could be as much as 40% (based on mean responses).

This re-emphasises the important of conducting in-depth surveys with the artist population, to test and explore income levels in more granularity.

Further, it is important to compare income over time. Whilst this involves different sources and methodologies (and should therefore be treated with some caution), it can provide some insight into how living and working conditions are changing over time.

We find that, based upon the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2010 and 2023), and the Arts Council's baseline Living and Working Conditions research (2010) compared to this survey's findings that:

- Overall, pay levels in Northern Ireland have been relatively static since 2010. Whilst mean salaries have increased from c. £21,300 to £31,489 (+£10,200, +48%) in the last thirteen years in nominal terms, adjusting for inflation, real-term earnings have only increased by 1% in this period. This is particularly accelerated by high levels of inflation experienced in 2022.
- For artists, comparing the two Arts Council surveys suggests that artist income (overall, and from arts activities) has flatlined. Artists have faced a real-term reduction in overall income by 11% in this period, reflecting a reduction in living standards. Income from arts has remained constant in real-terms (a small increase of 2% between 2010-23).
- Further, comparing the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) between 2010-23, suggests a more significant reduction in artist earnings in real-terms than any other sector. This suggests that average artist salaries may have reduced by up to 24% in real-terms over this time period, and median salaries by 17%. This is a significant finding and suggests significantly challenging conditions for artists and income generation.
- Within the survey feedback, many artists cited that it is challenging to price work for clients in a way that can keep up with inflation and rising costs – this is borne out within the survey and wider secondary evidence, and suggests the wider cost of living crisis may have a more pronounced impact upon artists than the wider population due to three key factors: lower baseline income, challenge to maintain income in line with inflationary pressures; and rising input costs such as materials, studio space, and venue costs.

'Having to work seven days a week in multiple roles to, essentially, stay still'

Female, Musician 45-54

'I miss out on career opportunities because I am unable to take them unpaid.'

Female, Visual Artist 25-34

Table 4.2: Benchmarking Income over Time, Adjusted for Inflation (2023 prices)

Source	Year: 2010	2010 earnings (adjusted to 2023 prices[29])	Year: 2023	Real Change
Artists (Survey): Overall Income Arts Council Surveys	£14,546[30]	£21,504	£19,200	(£2,304) (- 11% real term reduction)
Income from Arts	£7,419[31]	£10,968	£11,200	+ £232 (2%)
Artists (official classification, all jobs) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Arts)	**Mean:** £21,689 **Median** £19,011	**Mean**: £32,064 **Median**: £28,105	**Mean**: £24,370 **Median**: £23,390	(£7,694) (-24% real term) (£4,715) (-17% real term)
Wider NI population (all employee jobs) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (all NI)	**Mean:** £21,300 **Median**: £18,131	**Mean:** £31,489 **Median:** £26,804	**Mean**: £31,794 **Median**: £27,102	+ £305 (1%) + £298 (1%)

This data highlights a significantly challenging landscape and decade for artists in Northern Ireland with respect to income generation. This may also be exacerbated by factors such as wider standstill funding in public investment in the arts – whereby year-by-year constant funding has led to an effective real-term cut driven by cost pressures.

[29] Prices adjusted using Bank of England estimates: https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator
[30] https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/LWCA_Study_-_Final_2010.pdf - Table 8.6
[31] https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/LWCA_Study_-_Final_2010.pdf - Table 8.6

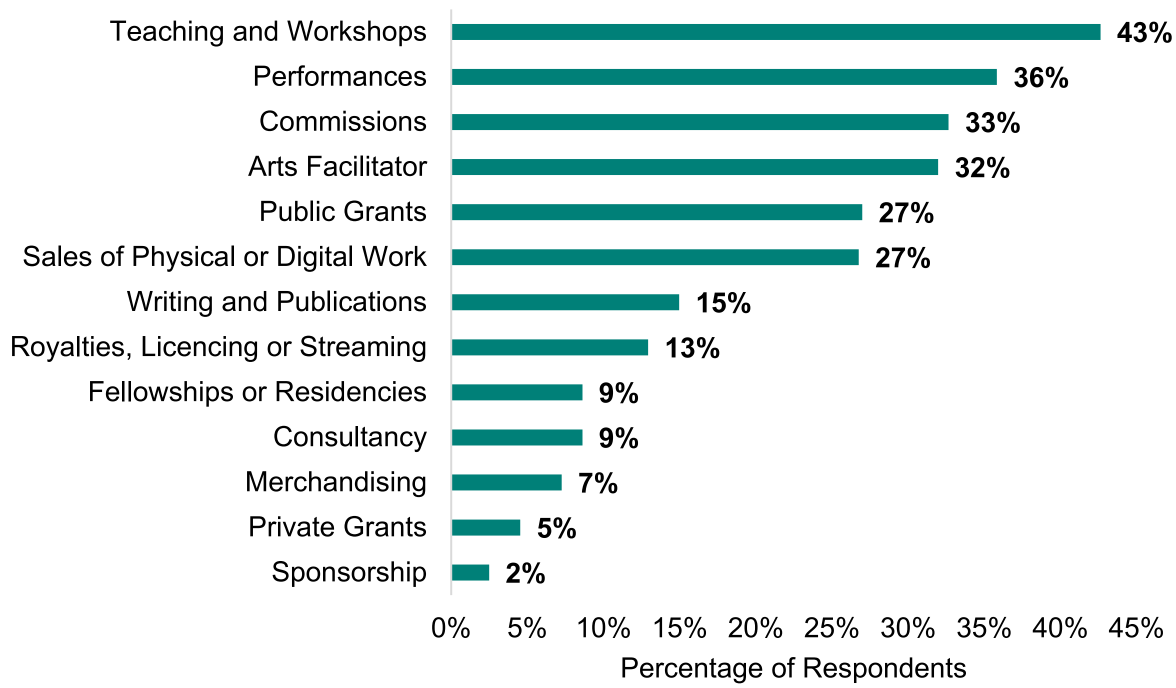
Sources of Artist Income

As set out previously, many artists are reliant upon multiple sources of income. This can include working across different sectors, but it can also include numerous sources of income within the arts more generally. This might include private sources of income (e.g. sales of work, performances, teaching etc.) or public sources such as grants and bursaries. We explore some of the key sources set out by the artist population within the survey below. Artists were asked to select as many of the following income sources that applied to their work:

- Arts Facilitator
- Commissions
- Consultancy
- Sales of Physical or Digital Work
- Public Grants
- Private Grants
- Sponsorship
- Fellowships or Residencies
- Merchandising
- Performances
- Royalties, Licencing or Streaming
- Teaching and Workshops
- Writing and Publications

On average, we find that artists in Northern Ireland generate their income from **at least two (2.6) different sources of income**. Approximately 43% of artists generate income through teaching and workshops, while 36% rely on income from performances and 33% from commissions. Arts facilitation is also a significant area of income generation (32%) followed by public grants (27%) and sales of physical or digital work (27%).

Figure 4.5: Sources of Income (Arts-Related)



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 441)

Public Grants

The Arts Council NI plays a key role in supporting artists, often through individual or organisational grants.

The survey findings suggest that overall:

- 27% of artists (with arts related income) have received at least one public grant in the past. This may include support for creating new material, recording, or touring, or potentially include ad-hoc support throughout COVID-19 and recovery.
- The analysis suggests that artists that have received at least one public grant, on average, earn approximately £20,900 overall (and £13,100 from the arts). Those that have not received a public grant have a lower income (£18,600 overall, and £10,500 from the arts) – essentially earning approximately £2,600 less per annum from the arts. However, this may reflect experience and track record – which can be considerable when securing a grant.
- We find that 1 in 3 mid-career artists, arts educators/technicians and established artists have received public grants.
- This compared to only 1 in 10 of emerging artists have received public grants.

Analysis also indicates that the employment status of artists has minimal impact on their likelihood of receiving public grants. Approximately 30% of individuals across various employment categories—such as business owners, freelancers/independent contractors, self-employed artists, and arts employees—receive public grants.

Moreover, the findings suggest that recipients of public grants tend to have a more diverse portfolio of income sources compared to those who do not receive such grants. On average, public grant recipients receive income **from four different sources, whereas non-recipients typically rely on two sources**. Notably, more than half (55%) of grant recipients have earned income from teaching and workshops – reflecting the potential for those in receipt of public support to nurture and develop the next generation of talent and generate positive long-term returns on capital investment in the arts.

Pension Enrolment

In addition to annual income, artists were also asked whether they *regularly contribute to a workplace pension, self-invested personal pension (SIPP) or other savings for retirement?*

Overall, we found that:

- Only 40% of working age artists regularly contribute to a workplace pension or SIPP.
- 53% reported that they did not regularly contribute to a pension scheme, and 7% were not sure or preferred not to say.
- Only 32% of freelance, self-employed, or business owners in the arts contribute to a pension, compared to 66% of full-time employees (and 57% of part-time employees).
- Further, segmenting the survey responses by age highlights that 35% of those aged 18 – 34 regularly contribute to a pension scheme, compared to only 28% of those aged between 35 – 64. This may be a by-product of younger artists being introduced to auto-enrolment, with older artists outside of pre-existing pension schemes.

- The nature of self-employment, and extent of income from arts may mean that some artists will have varied levels of contributions to National Insurance. This may impact state pension coverage in future.

Across the UK, the introduction of auto-enrolment in 2012 in the UK has increased pension enrolment rates, particularly within the private sector. For employees, pension participation rates have increased overall from 55% to 88% between 2012 – 2022.[32] However, self-employed pension enrolment rates have been consistency low across all sectors in the UK (estimated at just 16%[33]).

The survey results also suggest that artists who earn more of their income from the arts are less likely to make pension contributions overall, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Proportion of income from arts vs pension contributions

How much of your income comes from arts-based activities?	Do you regularly contribute to a pension?
	Yes
None to some (0-39% of total income)	51%
Some to Most (40-79% of total income)	35%
Majority to All (80-100%)	33%

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 448)

[32] Workplace pension participation and savings trends of eligible employees: 2009 to 2022 (2023) Department for Work & Pensions (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/workplace-pension-participation-and-savings-trends-2009-to-2022/workplace-pension-participation-and-savings-trends-of-eligible-employees-2009-to-2022#:~:text=Figure%208%20and%209%3A%20Participation%20by%20earnings%20to%202022&text=In%202022%2C%2092%20per%20cent,the%20introduction%20of%20automatic%20enrolment.
[33] Understanding pension saving among the self-employed (2023) The Institute for Fiscal Studies. (Online) Available at: https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/IFS-R248-Understanding-pension-saving-among-the-self-employed.pdf

Artist Views on Income

We asked artists to indicate their level of agreement which each of the following statements in relation to the quality of their employment in the arts sector.

- My income from the arts sector is consistent and predictable.
- I am compensated fairly for my work in the arts sector.
- I am paid on time for my work or commissions.
- The income I make from my arts activity is sufficient to cover my basic expenses.
-

Table 4.4: Quality of Employment in the Arts Sector

Statement	Sample Size	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree
My income from the arts sector is consistent and predictable.	460	12%	10%	78%
I am compensated fairly for my work in the arts sector.	458	16%	20%	64%
I am paid on time for my work or commissions.	435	45%	23%	32%
The income I make from my arts activity is sufficient to cover my basic expenses.	462	20%	16%	64%

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey

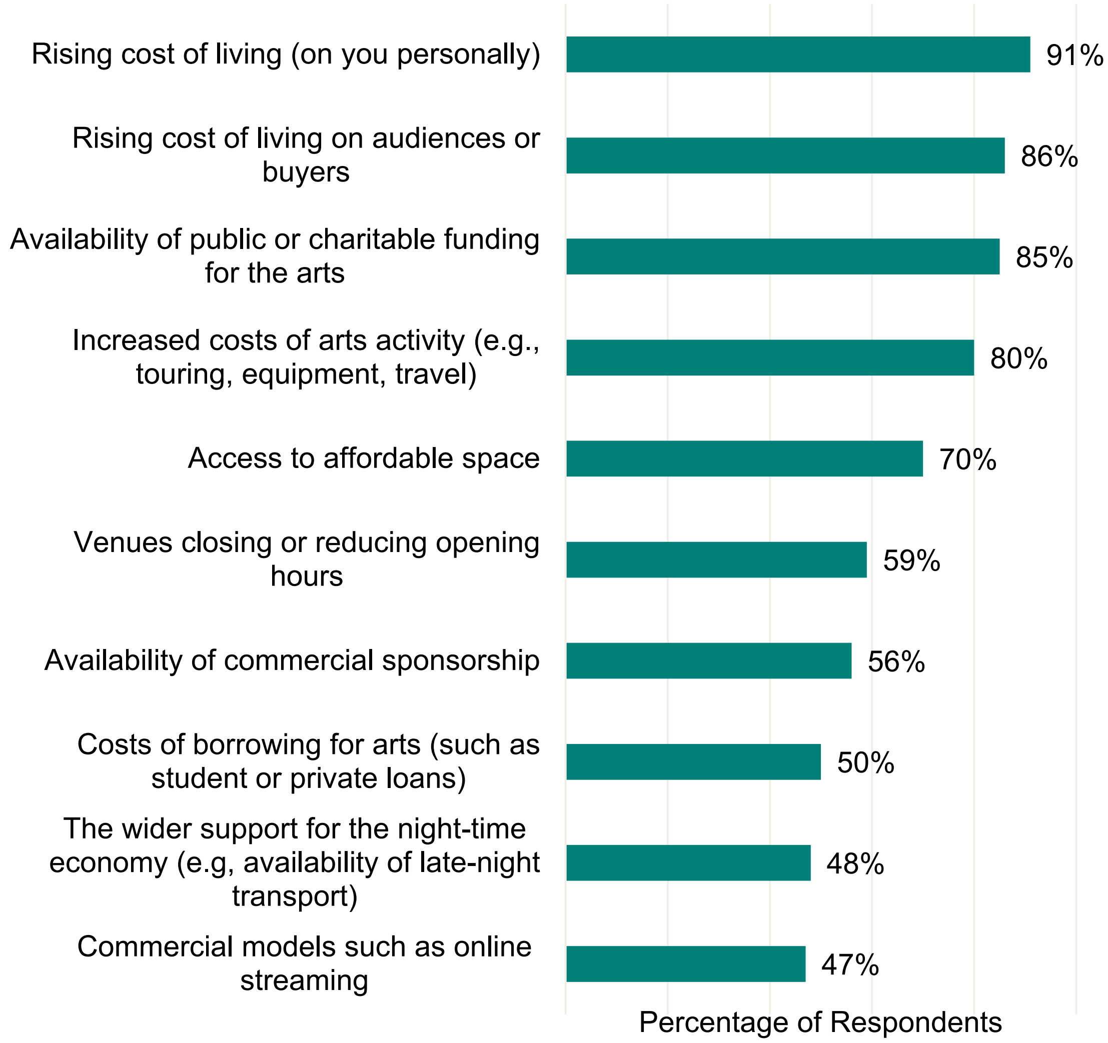
This emphasises the struggle that artists in Northern Ireland are facing, particularly in relation to being able to confidently rely on income from the arts sector that is not only fair compensation for the work they do, but sufficient to cover their basic expenses.

Further, over 70% of artists aged between 18-34 and those over 55 do not make sufficient income from their arts to cover their basic expenses. Over 70% of artists aged between 18-34 and those over 55 do not make sufficient income from their arts to cover their basic expenses. This drops to 55% for those aged 35-54 (this is likely to overlap with those who are established artists).

We asked artists about the key challenges that impact their ability to create, exhibit, sell or perform their work. Financial barriers had the largest impact on artists by a considerable margin, with 80% of respondents highlighting this as a key challenge. Artists were given examples of financial barriers such as lack of funding and high costs of materials and studio space, suggesting that artists are being doubly hit by rising costs and real-term income cuts. The challenges faced by artists are explored in more detail in section 8.

The survey also asked artists their perception of the impact that these factors are having on their arts career in relation to space and costs, and income and commercial Models. The following sets out the proportion of artists that indicated that the factors have a moderate or high impact on their arts career.

Figure 4.6: Moderate to High Impact Factors



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: 481)

Almost all of the artists (91%) perceive the rising cost of living as having a moderate or high impact on their arts career. Furthermore, 86% of artists feel that the rising cost-of-living is having impacting their audiences or buyers, with it limiting the disposable income that people are able to spend on the arts.

Artists were asked in what ways (if at all) has the cost-of-living crisis has affected their ability to pursue their arts career. As a result of the cost-of-living crisis:

- 58% found that their ability to invest in art supplies, equipment, or projects was limited.
- 42% were forced to reduce their engagement / activity within the arts.
- 41% found that their ability to engage in arts-related networking or events was limited.
- 40% struggled to afford studio/creative space.
- 38% were forced to seek additional employment outside the arts to make ends meet.
- 37% found that it restricted their ability to attend relevant workshops or training.
- 31% found that their ability to participate in exhibitions, shows, or performances was hindered.

These findings highlight that artist's financial struggles have been further exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, with artists unable to invest in the necessary supplied for their arts activities given the additional strain on income.

5. Education & Skills

Introduction

Previous research suggests that artists in Northern Ireland have higher levels of formal education than the wider labour force[34]. Our research aims to update findings surrounding the higher education levels of artists in Northern Ireland, any wider arts education they have undertaken and understand if their education or qualifications equipped them for the professional landscape.

Education & Skills

Current position

Our findings underscore the high levels of educational attainment among artists in Northern Ireland. The results indicate that 78% of respondents have a degree (of which 63% hold a degree or postgraduate qualification in an arts-related field, while an additional 15% possess a degree or postgraduate degree in a non-arts discipline). This is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 32%, suggesting that artists in Northern Ireland have higher education levels than the general population[35].

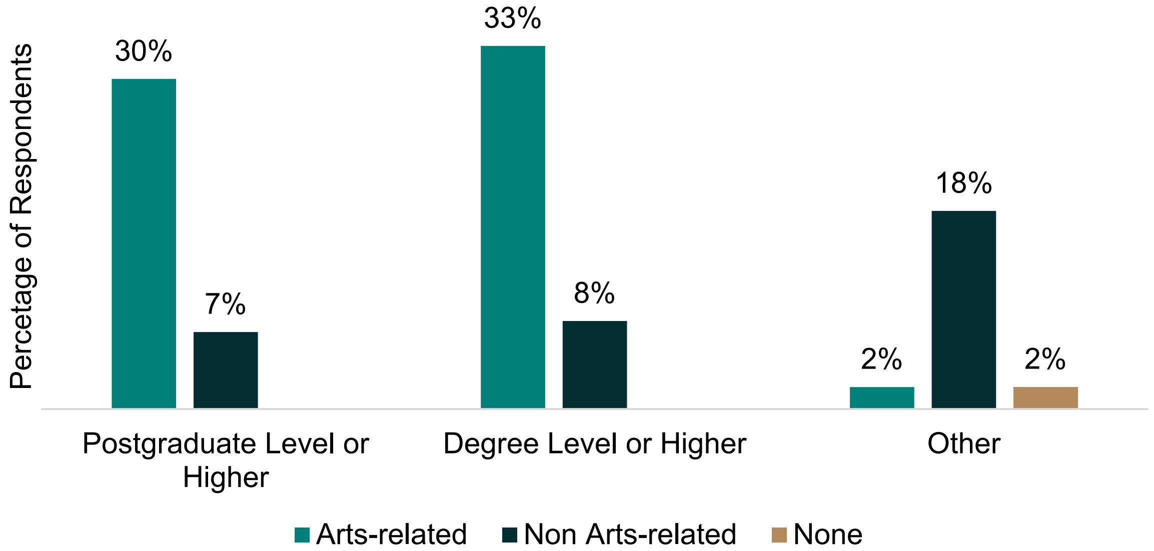


Figure 5.1: Education Level

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)[36]

The results also highlight that 1 in 5 artists don't have a degree or similar in the arts, suggesting that many artists rely on self-taught skills. This emphasises the need for early-stage support

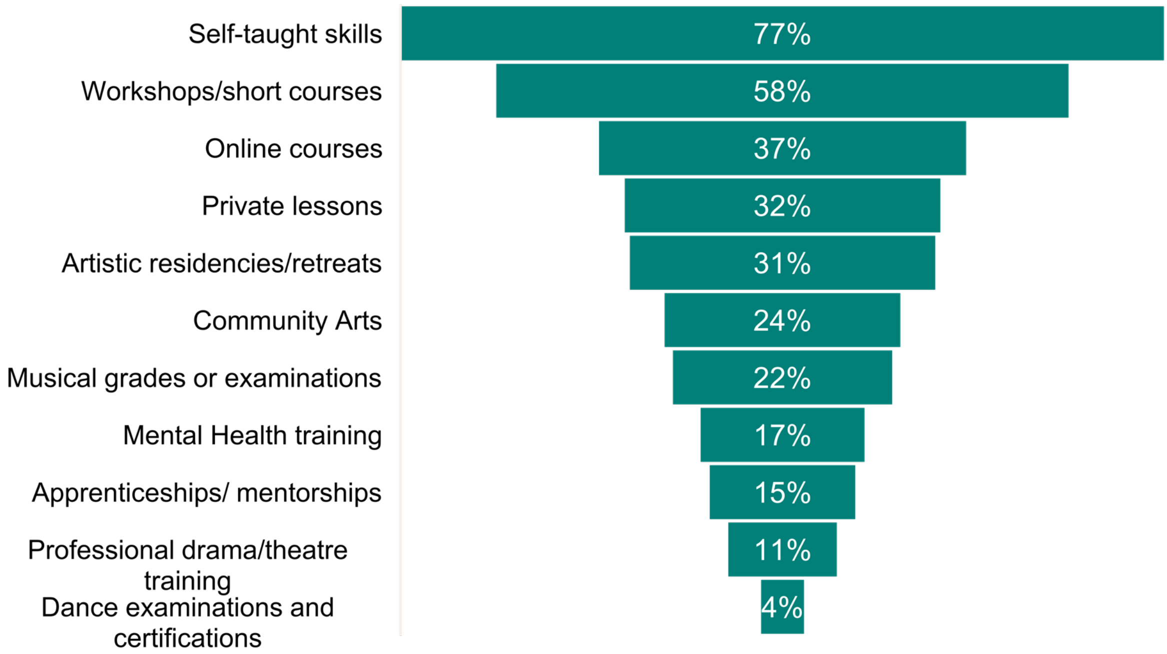
[34] The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (2010) ANI Agency (Online) Available at: https://artscouncil-ni.s3-assets.com/LWCA_Study_NI_Full_Version_with_preface.pdf

[35] Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland (2021) Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (Online) Available at: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/census-2021-main-statistics-for-northern-ireland-phase-3-statistical-bulletin-qualifications.pdf

[36] Other includes Level 2 & 3 Certificates, BTEC awards, GCE A Level & GCSE Equivalent qualifications

for artists, helping them to launch their arts careers. Moreover, when asked about their broader arts education, certifications, or professional training, artists in our survey boasted an average of three additional qualifications. This illustrates the depth of expertise and skill within Northern Ireland's artist community.

Figure 5.2: Proportion of artists with wider arts education, certificates, and professional training



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)[37]

The evidence gathered around employment and education suggest that artists in Northern Ireland are well qualified and self-reliant and yet, may face challenges related to job security and income stability. Additionally, the level of educational achievement is consistent across various factors like age and experience, pointing to a generally well-educated artist workforce.

Research suggests that there is a lifetime increase in earnings of £240k for men and £140k as a result of attending higher education. However, this the survey results suggest that on average the lifetime return of arts education is typically limited or in many instances, negative. This is consistent with findings that creative arts graduates may have a negative return on education; an average of -£7.73k for women and -£103.3 for men[38].

Support for skills

We asked artists whether they felt that their artistic education or qualifications equipped them for the professional landscape, and for employment in the arts sector in Northern Ireland. Of

[37] Note: artists could select as many qualifications as applied.

[38] The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings: Research Report (2020) Department for Education (Online) Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e58d8d6d3bf7f06fc9e0c99/The_impact_of_undergraduate_degrees_on_lifetime_earnings_research_report_ifs_dfe.pdf

the 464 artists who responded, more than 52% felt that their qualifications did not prepare them for the professional arts sector. Only 32% of the artists felt prepared, with the other 16% feeling unsure about whether their education helped them to be ready for entering the arts ecosystem.

When asked what improvements could be made to support and prepare artists for entering the arts sector, some artists highlighted the need more support for arts graduates and for a concrete link between postgraduate education and publication work.

6. Northern Ireland as a place to work

Introduction

Past studies have delved into various aspects of the working environment for artists across the United Kingdom, including strategies to sustain the sector's impact[39], specific examinations of art forms like music and visual arts[40], and broader investigations into artists' working conditions throughout the European Union[41]. While these reports provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by artists, conducting tailored research specifically focusing on Northern Ireland is essential to fully understand the realities of being an artist in this region.

This need is particularly important given that government expenditure per capita on arts and culture in Northern Ireland ranks lowest among UK regions at £5.07 and significantly lags that of the Republic of Ireland[42].

Where artists work

We asked artists what proportion of their arts-related income or activity comes from outside of Northern Ireland. Using our projections for arts-related income, we can estimate income derived from arts-related activities beyond Northern Ireland.

- On average, artists in our study report an estimated arts income of £11,200 from all regions combined.
- Of the 415 artists who have reported income from the arts, 61% stated that they make income from arts-related activities outside of Northern Ireland.
- We estimate that the average arts-related income from sources outside Northern Ireland stands at £4,300.
- This indicates that approximately 40% of their total arts-related income originates from outside Northern Ireland.
- Of the 252 artists who make income from arts-related activities outside of Northern Ireland
    - 70% regularly seek or find art-related work opportunities in Ireland.
    - 57% regularly seek or find art-related work opportunities across the rest of the United Kingdom.
    - 31% regularly seek or find art-related work opportunities in mainland Europe.
    - 19% regularly seek or find art-related work opportunities in North America.
- This emphasises the importance of exporting for artists.

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[39] The arts in the UK: Seeing the big picture - A perspective on how to gauge and sustain the UK arts sector's full impact (2023) (Online) Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/uk/our-insights/the-arts-in-the-uk-seeing-the-big-picture

[40] An inquiry into artists' pay and conditions in the public sector in response to the Artist Leaks data (2023) (Online) Available at: https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Structurally-F%E2%80%93cked.pdf

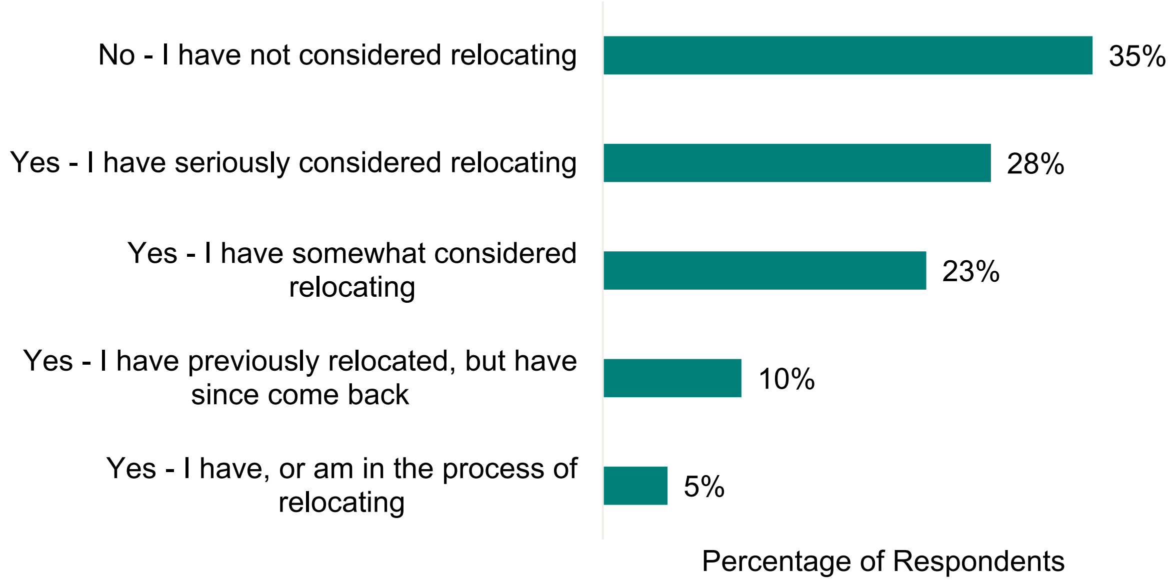
[41] The Status And Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals: EU Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 (2023) (Online) Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/01fafa79-1a13-11ee-806b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[42] Government's lack of investment in the arts is affecting those most in need (2023) ACNI (Online) Available at: https://artscouncil-ni.org/news/governments-lack-of-investment-in-the-arts-is-affecting-those-most-in-need

Artist views on Northern Ireland as a place to work

We asked artists whether they would or have considered permanently relocating to another location outside of Northern Ireland for arts related career opportunities.

Figure 6.1: Would you consider permanently relocating for career opportunities?



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 456)

Over half (55%) of our survey participants indicated they have considered or would consider permanently moving to a different location outside Northern Ireland for career opportunities in the arts. A further 10% of respondents have previously relocated for career opportunities but have since come back to Northern Ireland.

Based on the survey data aggregated against the artist population (15,000 estimate), we can assume that in 2023 approximately 4,000 artists were seriously considering relocating and c. 700 artists were in the process of relocating to outside of Northern Ireland for career opportunities.

The proportion of those considering relocating increases to 65.4% for artists aged between 18 and 34, suggesting that younger artists are frustrated by limited opportunities locally.

The survey also asked artists what influenced their decision to travel outside of Northern Ireland for arts-related opportunities.

- Two-thirds of respondents cited the lack of opportunities within Northern Ireland as a significant factor shaping their decision to pursue arts-related opportunities elsewhere.
- When asked what improvements should be made to support and prepare artists entering the arts sector, one participant emphasised the importance of recognising *'that you will most likely need to get employment outside Northern Ireland and how to manage that'*, shedding light on the scarcity of opportunities within Northern Ireland.
- Artists also pointed out that the potential for higher income and increased opportunities for personal networking and collaborations were key factors influencing their choice to pursue careers in the arts outside of Northern Ireland.

- Participants highlighted issues with accessing funding in Northern Ireland, suggesting that *'there needs to be fundamental changes in how Northern Ireland Arts are funded'* and that artists need *'increased access to funding that supports sustainable development and growth of artistic practice.'*

In Northern Ireland, there are challenging factors facing many artists, driven by limited local opportunities, job insecurity, and financial instability.

To retain talented artists in the region, it is important to offer support and create new opportunities. Helping Northern Ireland's artists expand their reach beyond local borders can also make a big difference, giving them access to wider audiences and markets. This approach can help artists grow while also showcasing Northern Ireland's arts sector to a wider audience.

7. Wellbeing & Mental Health

Introduction

Northern Ireland has the highest rates of poor mental health across the UK, with mental health problems experienced by 1/5 of adults and being the largest cause of ill health and disability in Northern Ireland[43]. The mental health crisis has been particularly exasperated in recent years by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis[44].

There has long been a correlation between poor mental health and the arts sector, with a so-called mental health crisis in the arts impacted by the lack of support available to those who need it most[45]. The Help Musicians census found that 18% of musicians had a mental health condition, and that these conditions often coincide with financial uncertainty and debt[46].

The following explores the wellbeing of artists in Northern Ireland, looking at their struggles with mental health and understanding how this compares to the broader Northern Ireland population.

Artist Wellbeing

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Personal Wellbeing survey is an initiative aimed at assessing individuals' subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Through this survey, the ONS gathers data on happiness, anxiety levels, life satisfaction, and sense of purpose to provide insights into the overall quality of life and mental well-being of the UK population. We asked artists to respond to each question on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”.

The findings underscore a concerning trend: on average, artists exhibit lower levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and significantly higher levels of anxiety compared to the broader population of Northern Ireland.

- Artists' life satisfaction scores are on average 1.7 points below the Northern Ireland average.
- The sense of doing worthwhile things among artists is 1.1 points lower than the average in Northern Ireland.
- Happiness is 1.5 points lower among artists than it is for the wider Northern Ireland population.
- Most strikingly, artists' anxiety levels surpass the Northern Ireland average by 2.2 points, underscoring a critical area of concern.

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[43] Mental Health Foundation (2024) (Online) Available at https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk

[44] Northern Ireland political stalemate is exacerbating mental health crisis (2018). Mental Health Foundation (Online) Available at: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/blogs/northern-ireland-political-stalemate-exacerbating-mental-health-crisis

[45] Wellbeing in the Arts (2024) (Online) Available at: https://www.wellbeinginthearts.org.uk/

[46] Help Musicians: Musician’s Census (2023) (Online) Available at: https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/about-us/news/the-first-ever-musicians-census-report-launched

Table 7.1: Artists Personal Wellbeing

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Personal Wellbeing measure.	Northern Ireland Avg	Artists Survey Avg
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	7.6	5.9
Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	7.9	6.8
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?	7.6	6.1
Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?	2.9	5.1

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)

This highlights the unique challenges and pressures faced by artists in their daily lives and underscores the need for targeted support and interventions to address their well-being and mental health concerns.

Due to prevalent feelings of dissatisfaction and heightened anxiety, artists in Northern Ireland struggle with significant mental health challenges. Our findings indicate that 30% of artists perceive mental health issues as personal barriers or challenges that hinder their ability to create, exhibit, sell or perform their work.

While only 22% of non-neurodiverse people see mental health challenges as a barrier, over half of those who are neurodiverse or disabled see mental health as a significant challenge. The survey indicates that artists' mental health doesn't significantly vary with their level of experience or employment status.

Moreover, artists' mental health directly affects their sense of security and value, seeping into their work. The subsequent section explores the various challenges confronting artists in the region.

8. Challenges & Opportunities

Introduction

This section explores some of the key challenges faced by artists in Northern Ireland, aiming to understand the various issues that affect them on a day-to-day basis. We also use this as an opportunity to highlight the support mechanisms artists are seeking, with a particular emphasis on the necessity for advocacy.

What challenges are artists in Northern Ireland facing?

We asked artists what personal barriers or challenges they have encountered that have impacted their ability to create, exhibit, sell, or perform their work. These were the options:

- Caring responsibilities (e.g., childcare, care for older people, affecting work availability)
- Challenges in self-promotion (e.g., marketing skills, use of social media)
- Financial barriers (e.g., lack of funding, high costs of materials and studio space)
- Health issues (e.g., physical strain, lack of healthcare)
- Insufficient professional development opportunities (e.g., lack of mentorship or workshops)
- Intellectual property concerns (e.g., copyright issues, unauthorised use of work)
- Issues with diversity and inclusion (e.g., discrimination, lack of representative opportunities)
- Lack of cultural and social recognition (e.g., stereotypes, societal undervaluing)
- Limited market access (e.g., difficulty finding galleries, venues or platforms, oversaturated market)
- Mental health challenges (e.g., mental or emotional toll of work)
- Societal barriers (e.g., socioeconomic status, education access, access to opportunities)
- Technological challenges (e.g., adapting to digital tools, competing with digital media)
- Time constraints (e.g., balancing multiple jobs, lack of time for creative work)

We also asked artists whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- I feel valued as an artist
- I feel supported by my peers/employers in the arts
- I feel secure in my current position or role within the arts
- I feel the arts sector is inclusive and values diversity
- I feel adequately represented and heard in the arts

Analysing the responses to these questions allows us to gain a better understanding of the challenges that artists in Northern Ireland are facing.

Figure 8.1: Challenges faced by Artists in Northern Ireland

[The cost-of-living crisis] *'has caused anxiety and stress which has impacted my ability to be creative.'*

Male, Established Artist

59%
don't feel secure in their role.

30%
see mental health as a barrier to their arts.

30%
don't feel supported by their peers/ employers.

54%
don't feel valued.

50%
don't feel represented or heard.

32%
feel that the sector is not inclusive.

80%
see financial barriers as a challenge.

49%
struggle with self-promotion.

60%
struggle with time-constraints.

'The lack of moral support has left me feeling isolated within the sector… It is frustrating, disheartening and not a true reflection of voices in Northern Ireland when we are left disregarded.'

Female, Visual Artist

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)

This highlights that the main challenges faced by artists are:

- Financial barriers – 80% of artists struggle due to the lack of funding, high costs of materials and studio space and other financial pressures.
- Time constraints – 60% of artists struggle to balance the pressures of multiple jobs or lack time for creative work.
- Job security: 59% of artists disagreed with the statement ‘I feel secure in my current position or role within the arts’.
- Feeling valued: 54% of artists disagreed with the statement ‘I feel valued as an artist’.

Views towards Artificial Intelligence

The UK Government has prioritised supporting digital innovation in the creative industries, highlighting the potential enhancements that emerging technologies could bring about. The enhancements of innovative technologies have positive implications for the arts sector, however, there are concerns associated with the use of AI for music, artwork, and filmmaking[47]. While AI can be used to help cultural institutions to understand their audiences, enhance creative practices and connect creators to their audiences, many artists are apprehensive given intellectual property issues and job security[48].

We therefore asked artists which of the following describes their feelings towards the advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential impact upon the arts:

- Optimistic about the potential to enhance and expand creative possibilities
- Excited about the integration of technology in the creative process
- Indifferent to AI advancements in the arts
- Nervous about the impact on traditional art forms
- Worried about the implications for artists' livelihoods and job security
- Concerned about the authenticity and intellectual property issues of AI-generated art
- Uninformed about AI advancements

[47] The impact of digital technology on arts and culture in the UK (2022) UK Parliament. (Online) Available at: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0669/POST-PN-0669.pdf

[48] How can AI augment and be enriched by the arts and how far can data science and the arts help to answer each other’s questions? The Alan Turing Institute (Online) Available at: https://www.turing.ac.uk/research/interest-groups/ai-arts

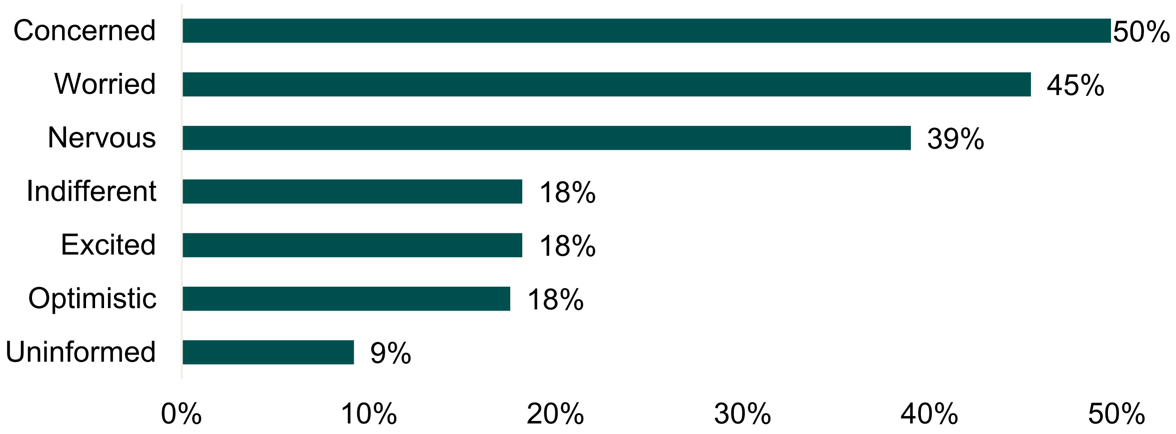


Figure 8.2: Artist feelings on Artificial Intelligence

Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: 467 artists) [49]

While there is some optimism and excitement about the adoption of AI in the arts sector, a large majority of artists are feeling concerned about authenticity and intellectual property issues associated with AI, and worried about the implications that it may have on their livelihoods. Responses were revied by demographics such as age and gender, however this suggests that artists feelings towards AI are relatively uniform across the board.

Opportunities to Support Artists

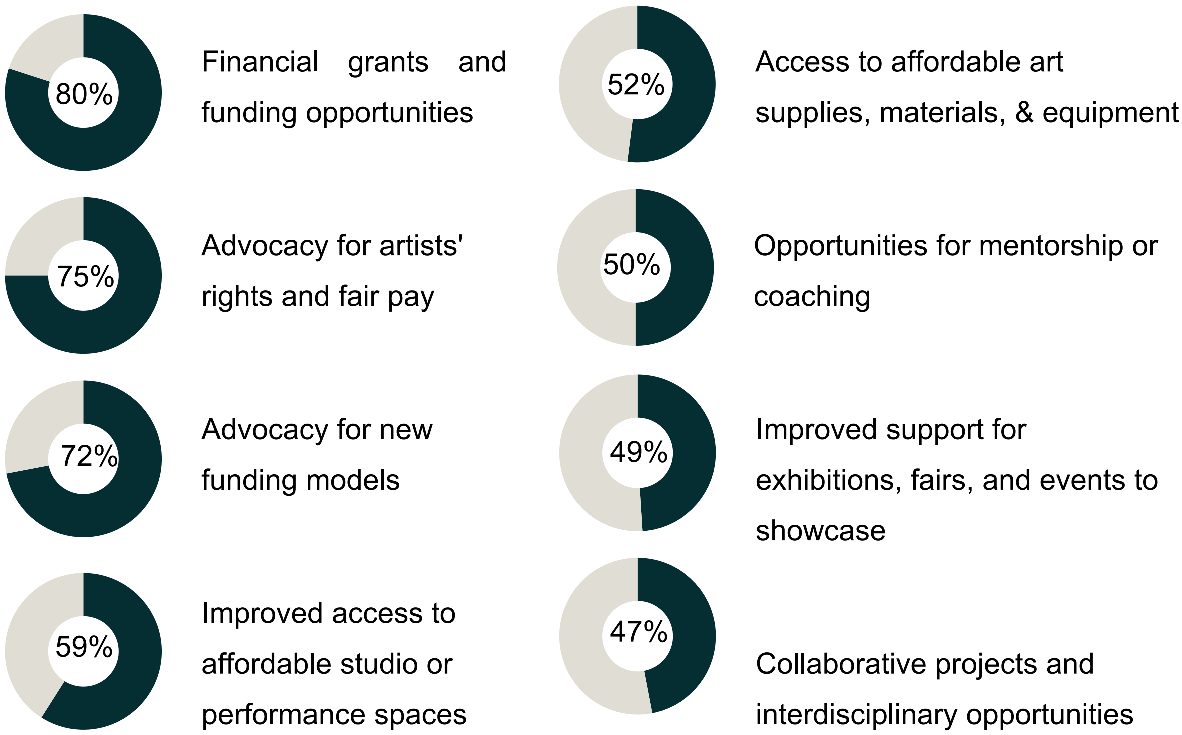
We used the survey to understand the support mechanisms necessary to enhance artists' well-being, address their challenges, and create a greater sense of advocacy within the arts community. Recognising the diverse challenges that artists in Northern Ireland face, we asked artists what resources, support, or changes are necessary to fully maximise opportunities in the arts.

This highlights that the main support mechanisms that artists feel are needed to maximise opportunities and create a better arts ecosystem include:

- More financial grants and funding opportunities
- Advocacy for artists' rights and fair pay
- Advocacy for new funding models

[49] Note: artists could select as many responses as apply, and therefore responses will not sum to 100%.

Figure 8.2: Resources, Support & Changes needed in the Arts



Source: ACNI WLCA Survey (Base: n= 481)

9. Key Findings

Key Findings

We set out the key findings by section below:

Demographics

- The survey encompasses a diverse sample of artists across Northern Ireland, with 61% of respondents from outside Belfast.
- Most respondents (95%) are of working age (18-64), with a gender distribution of 58% female, 39% male, and 3% identifying as agender, genderfluid, non-binary, or queer.
- A significant portion of artists in Northern Ireland (23%) report having a disability, and 31% identified as neurodiverse.
- The Annual Population Survey (APS) estimate of 7,600 employees in arts occupations serves as a baseline for the "core artist population" working primarily in the arts sector. However, the survey found that only 46% of artists work solely within the arts, while 42% have additional work in other sectors, and 12% are retired/unemployed/voluntary. To account for these additional groups, an uplift of approximately 6,900 individuals (42%) is applied to the baseline of 7,600 to represent the "wider part-time and additional artist population." An estimated 2,000 individuals (12%) are also added for the "wider retired/unemployed/voluntary population."
- Therefore, the total estimated artist population in Northern Ireland is approximately **14,500 individuals.**

Income and Employment

- Established artists have the highest average income (£20,800) and the highest percentage of income from arts (75%), while emerging artists have the lowest average income (£15,100) and the lowest percentage of income from arts (34%).
- Artists who spend more than 40 hours per week on arts-related work have the highest average income from arts (£16,600 or 84% of their total income). However, those that work the fewest hours in arts (<10 hours per week) typically have higher incomes overall due to income from other sources. Further, the nature of arts related work can mean that artists may go unpaid or underpaid for their efforts (on an hourly basis). For example, £16,600 from 40 hours per week of arts activity would imply an average income of c. £8 per hour (assuming 40 hours x 52 weeks). This is approximately 30% lower than the National Living Wage (from April 2024) and highlights the challenge among many artists.
- Full-time employees in the arts sector have the highest average income (£30,000) and the highest percentage of income from arts (83%). However, income falls substantially among those self-employed (which have the lowest average income (£16,300).
- Artists aged 45-54 have the highest average income (£23,100) and one of the highest percentages of income from arts (63%), while those aged 18-34 have the lowest average income (£16,300) and a lower percentage of income from arts (50%).

- Male artists have a higher average income (£20,750) compared to female artists (£18,700), although the percentage of income from arts is similar (58% for males and 59% for females).
- Artists with a disability have a lower average income (£17,100) and a lower percentage of income from arts (51%) compared to those without a disability (£20,900 and 60%, respectively). Similarly, artists with neurodiversity have a lower average income (£17,100) and a lower percentage of income from arts (56%) compared to those without.
- Artists with a postgraduate degree have a slightly higher average income (£21,000) compared to those with a bachelor's degree (£19,000) or other education levels (£16,600). However, this does highlight a limited 'salary premium' for higher levels of education in the arts compared with lifetime earnings estimates across other disciplines. Whilst this is a slightly higher income than other education levels, this suggests that net lifetime return of arts education is typically limited or in many instances, negative.
- Artists who attended grammar schools between the ages of 11-16 have a higher average income (£20,000) and a higher percentage of income from arts (60%) compared to those who attended secondary schools (£17,900 and 53%, respectively).
- The quality of official income data relating to artists is mixed, due to differences in definition and approach. However, we find that overall artist incomes could be up to 40% lower than the Northern Ireland average and 30% lower than the median, based on survey data.
- Further, comparing income to the 2010 research survey baseline suggests that artists have faced a real-term reduction in overall income by 11% between 2010 and 2023. The official statistics (based on SIC classification) also suggest that average artists salaries may have reduced by up to 24% in real terms over the 2010-2023 period (whilst increasing by 1% across the wider economy).
- On average, artists in Northern Ireland generate their income from at least 2.6 different sources. 27% of artists with arts-related income have received at least one public grant in the past, and these artists earn approximately £2,600 more per annum from the arts compared to those who have not received a grant.
- Only 40% of working-age artists regularly contribute to a workplace pension or SIPP. Self-employed, freelance, and business owner artists are less likely to contribute to a pension scheme compared to full-time and part-time employees in the arts.

Education and Skills

- Findings suggest there is high educational attainment, with 78% of artists in Northern Ireland holding a degree - 63% of which have a degree or postgraduate qualification in an arts-related field.
- This level of educational attainment is significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 32%, suggesting that artists have higher education levels than the general population.
- The findings also emphasise the importance of self-taught skills as 1 in 5 artists do not have a degree or similar qualification in the arts, underscoring the need for early-stage support and resources to help artists launch their careers.

- On average, artists in Northern Ireland possess three additional qualifications, certifications, or professional training beyond their primary education. This illustrates the depth of expertise and commitment to continuous learning within the artist community.
- More than 52% of artists felt that their artistic education or qualifications did not adequately prepare them for the professional arts sector and employment opportunities.
- Artists highlighted the need for more support and resources to bridge the gap between postgraduate education and professional practice or publication. Improved support systems could better prepare artists for navigating the professional landscape and securing employment opportunities in the arts sector.

Northern Ireland as a Place to Work

- Artists in Northern Ireland derive a significant portion (around 40%) of their arts-related income from sources outside of Northern Ireland, emphasising the importance of exporting for artists in the region.
- Over half (53.3%) of the survey participants indicated they have considered or would consider permanently relocating outside of Northern Ireland for better career opportunities in the arts.
- The proportion of artists considering relocation increases to 65.4% for those aged between 18 and 34, suggesting potential issues with retaining young artists due to a lack of career opportunities within Northern Ireland.
- Two-thirds of respondents cited the lack of opportunities within Northern Ireland as a significant factor influencing their decision to pursue arts-related opportunities elsewhere.
- Artists pointed to the potential for higher income, increased opportunities for personal networking and collaborations as key factors attracting them to pursue careers in the arts outside of Northern Ireland.

Wellbeing and Mental Health

- Artists in Northern Ireland exhibit lower levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and a significantly higher level of anxiety compared to the broader population in the region.
    - On average, artists' life satisfaction scores are 1.7 points below the Northern Ireland average, their sense of doing worthwhile things is 1.1 points lower, and their happiness levels are 1.5 points lower than the wider population.
    - Most strikingly, artists' anxiety levels surpass the Northern Ireland average by 2.2 points, underscoring a critical area of concern regarding their mental well-being.
- 30% of artists perceive mental health issues as personal barriers or challenges that hinder their ability to create, exhibit, sell or perform their work.
    - Over half (50%+) of neurodiverse or disabled artists see mental health as a significant challenge, compared to only 22% of non-neurodiverse artists.
    - Artists' mental health challenges do not significantly vary with their level of experience or employment status, suggesting a pervasive issue across the artist community.

- The prevalence of mental health concerns among artists in Northern Ireland highlights the unique pressures and challenges they face in their daily lives and the need for targeted support and interventions to address their well-being.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The main challenges faced by artists in Northern Ireland are financial barriers (80%), time constraints (60%), job insecurity (59%), and feelings of not being valued (54%).
- While there is some optimism and excitement about the adoption of AI in the arts sector, a large majority of artists are concerned about authenticity and intellectual property issues associated with AI-generated art, and worried about the implications for their livelihoods and job security.
- The top support mechanisms that artists feel is needed to maximise opportunities and create a better arts ecosystem include:
    - More financial grants and funding opportunities
    - Advocacy for artists' rights and fair pay
    - Advocacy for new funding models
    - Improved access to affordable studio or performance spaces
    - Access to affordable art supplies, materials, and equipment
- Other important support needs highlighted by artists include opportunities for mentorship or coaching, improved support for exhibitions and events to showcase their work, and collaborative or interdisciplinary opportunities.

Implications for Policy and Programmes

Within this research, artists and practitioners have provided their views on how artists can best be supported to generate sustainable and fair income and maximise opportunities. Across this feedback, and through this research, we identify **five key themes** for policy to consider. These provide an overview of key themes and align to the Arts Council's proposed ten-year strategy (2024-34).

The research team recognises the overlap between these themes and recommends sustained engagement with a broad collective of artists, to continue to understand unique challenges by particular groups and art forms, as well as track the impact of support in future years.

These themes include:

1. **Growing and Increasing the Reach of the NI Arts Sector:**

Within this research, artists have highlighted challenging conditions for generating sustainable income. This can include limited access to paid opportunities, or not receiving sufficient income to cover the costs of living and working. Many independent artists may also regularly face unforeseen costs or delays in payments. However, this is also part of a challenging wider arts ecosystem where venues, spaces, and audiences are also coming under increasing financial pressures in relation to their running costs and income.

The principle of the 'multiplier effect' applies strongly and visibly to the arts sector in Northern Ireland. In short, where investment in the arts is increased by private or public sources, this can result in additional events and commissions, grow, and maintain venues, attract greater audiences, and help to secure greater income opportunities for workers including artists, hospitality staff, promoters, and venue staff.

However, the opposite also holds true. Where investment is reduced or audience participation falls, this can lead to reduced income, closures of venues and spaces, and a 'race to the bottom' for artists. There is also a need to restore confidence within the sector, to help support sustainable programming which will increase artist opportunities.

For example, the Arts Council NI Annual Funding Survey[50] highlights clearly that, for 95 of Northern Ireland's funded venues and organisations, whilst nominal earned income (from box office, bar sales etc) has increased from £22.8m to £28.6m (+25%) between 2019/20 and 2022/23, core costs (salaries and running costs) have also increased more significantly from £24.4m to £34.8m (+30%) in the same period.

Arts organisations are therefore increasingly exposed to inflationary pressures, and this has had a direct impact upon programming costs. The Annual Funding Survey highlights that organisational spend on artists fell from £17.5m in 2019/20 to £11.2m in 2021/22 and reached £14.9m in 2022/23. Whilst some of this reduction may be due to COVID-19, this does highlight a 15% reduction in artist programming spend between 2019/20 and 2022/23 and may be driven by venues reducing programming costs as a response to increasing overall costs.

[50] Arts Council NI (2023) Annual Funding Survey https://artscouncil-ni.s3-assets.com/acni-annual-funding-survey-findings-2022-23.pdf

There is a risk that arts organisations facing financial pressures may be incentivised to reduce overall spend on artists, which may be seen as a variable cost rather than a fixed cost. However, this may also have a range of wider knock-on impacts on the arts sector locally. For example, it may push earnings further downward, or lead to reduced opportunities for up-and-coming musicians to play paid support slots. It may also reduce the quality and capacity of festivals and promoters to grow (e.g. reduced income and increased costs may restrict the ability to attract a wider array of artists to Northern Ireland), which may reduce audience sizes, and in turn, reduce direct income for venues, hotels, bars, restaurants, and artists.

As such, whilst much of the policy discussion relating to the value of the arts and creative industries recognises the positive multiplier effect of the arts – it is crucial to recognise the need for sustained investment in the arts in order to preserve, maintain and grow the sector. A loss of confidence in the sector will ultimately be more damaging to the progress made to date, and this research highlights the need for sustainable support.

Policymakers should set out a clear strategy for measuring and increasing audiences, growing the sector, and recognising the relational and distributional impacts of supporting the whole arts ecosystem on a long-term basis.

Further, this should be multifaceted and recognise that the arts sector is not homogenous. There will be varying needs, challenges, and demand patterns for different arts forms in locations across Northern Ireland. For example, understanding the behavioural and economic factors that shape demand among audiences will be crucial to plan for future arts interventions e.g. a global artist playing an outdoor venue may attract an audience of 40,000 people paying £100 per ticket (generating £4m in box office income, with significant external artist fees), whereas a visual arts exhibition may attract tens of thousands of visitors over a longer time period (e.g. a few weeks) and may not generate significant private income, but may be a catalyst for local visual artists and provide wider benefits for galleries and civic space. Both should be supported as appropriate, but this recognition of the variation in commercial models – and a flexible strategic and funding approach will be required to maximise opportunities across all art forms.

2. Maximising the role of grants and increasing investment:

Throughout this research, artists have highlighted the positive impact that individual and organisational grants can have upon growing their careers and providing support through challenging times. There is also a recognition that demand is significantly higher than the volume of grants available to artists, and this can be challenging for artists that may seek additional support to record or write new material or commission new pieces of work.

Within this research, we find that just over one in four artists have secured at least one form of public grant in recent years. Further, those that have secured at least one grant typically earn more from the arts (an additional £2,600 per annum) compared to those that have not received a grant (albeit this may reflect experience and track record which can be a considerable factor in grant scoring). However, we also find that only 1 in 10 emerging artists have received public grants, and this may indicate a need to explore routes to further support early-stage artists with smaller grants (e.g. for equipment, recording, or materials) to take the first step in their career.

The research also suggests that artists that have received public grants tend to have a more diverse portfolio of income sources compared to those who do not receive such grants. On average, public grant recipients receive income from four different sources, whereas non-recipients typically rely on two sources.

However, there is a recognition that bodies such as the Arts Council NI may have limited financial capacity to increase grant funding for artist groups, given challenging funding conditions. As such, there is a need for policy to consider, for example:

- **Increasing public investment in the arts:** The Arts Council NI has regularly highlighted that statutory government investment in the arts in Northern Ireland is the lowest per capita in the UK, at just £5.07 per person, less than half of that in Wales and Scotland. There are two policy considerations with respect to this funding; namely, setting out the rationale and benefits of standardising or increasing this funding in line with other devolved administrations via the block grant, and / or setting out how additional funding could be distributed in a way to support the whole arts ecosystem
- **Supporting local artists access wider local, national, and international funding schemes:** Funding through the Arts Council is one mechanism for public funding; however, there are also wider sources potentially available to support artists such as lottery funding or dormant accounts. In addition, there may be opportunities to enhance funding available via varying tiers of governance. For example, local councils in Northern Ireland will often have music and culture officers, and offer some funding for musicians, events, and civic space. Further, supporting the development of grassroots or seed funding for artists to access additional funding may also be required. For example, ensuring Northern Ireland based artists can access initiatives such as the Music Export Growth Scheme.
- **Unlocking additional private investment**: There may be opportunities for engaging with trusts, foundations, and wider businesses to provide further funding or support for grants and bursaries. For example, the Arts and Business NI (supported by Arts Council NI) can provide match-funding where arts organisations and businesses develop a formal partnership, which can include funding to support artists or commissions.
- **Streamlining the funding process and accounting for the differences in applying for funding to different types of artists:** Within this research, many artists had commented on the challenges they face when applying for grants and funding. However, a common challenge is that grants may often have a standardised approach or funding profile and may not recognise variances in experience and arts forms. In practical terms, a small grants scheme may support an emerging musician (e.g. £2,000) may receive a grant to record an EP or supporting touring, whereas this approach may not be suitable or have sufficient coverage for a collective of writers or visual artists. Aligning funding processes and applications to enable strong applications from varying arts forms should ultimately support improved outcomes for the arts sector overall.

3. Explore novel funding mechanisms

Artists highlighted the need for advocacy within the arts, both for artists' rights and fair pay, and to explore new funding models. As previously discussed, the arts sector in Northern Ireland faces significant demand for grants, which consistently exceeds available resources. To address this, it is important to explore novel mechanisms and advocacy for the arts at various levels. This could include:

- **The role of an arts champion as an advocate for the arts:** One potential approach could include exploring the appointment of an 'Arts Champion' in Northern Ireland, similar to roles such as the 'UK Arts Access Champion' or the 'Mental Health Champion in Northern Ireland. At a local level, an Arts Champion could act as a unified voice for the arts community, advocating for artists' rights, fair pay, growing the ecosystem, and raising awareness of the challenges faced by artists.
- **Exploring a basic income scheme for artists:** The survey revealed that many artists struggle to cover their basic expenses, with financial and time constraints placing the most significant burden on their ability to create, sell or perform their art.
  In 2022, the Republic of Ireland introduced a pilot sector-specific support for the arts, in the form of a basic income[51]. This provides payments of €325 per week to 2,000 artists and creative arts workers. Early findings from the Basic Income for the Arts pilot scheme have demonstrated positive results, including more time spent on artistic experimentation and expression, increased life satisfaction, and that recipients were 19% less likely to have difficult in making ends meet compared to the control group.
  Exploring or designing a route towards a similar scheme in Northern Ireland could be impactful for the arts sector. Overall, it has the potential to alleviate immediate financial burden on artists and allow for greater dedicated time on the arts.
- **Alternative funding models:** – There is significant overlap between the role of spaces, venues, and artist opportunities. In March 2024, the UK's Culture, Media, and Sport Committee held a session as part of its inquiry into grassroots venues, which has been facing financial challenges. The Music Venue Trust has stated that in the UK, 125 venues closed last year, and that in 2023, 38% of venues reported a loss.[52] In response, they suggest the introduction of a voluntary levy ("grassroots levy") of £1 per ticket for arenas or larger shows, to help support smaller venues take risks on early-stage programming and give artists more opportunities to tour. This would in turn support a more sustainable pipeline of talent to play larger venues over the coming years and decades and maximise occupancy and viability of arts venues.

[51] Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts pilot scheme launched by Government (2022) Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/27aed-irelands-basic-income-for-the-arts-pilot-scheme-launched-by-government/

[52] Music Week (2024) https://www.musicweek.com/live/read/mps-investigate-grassroots-venue-crisis-could-a-1-levy-on-arena-and-stadium-tickets-be-the-answer/089517

4. **Increasing access to affordable space**

Within this survey research, artists frequently cited that access to affordable studio or performance space was a key barrier. This suggests policy interventions to help with:

- **Providing artists with access to affordable studio or performance space to allow them to create, sell and perform their work:** The survey results and advisory group meetings have highlighted the importance of providing artists with access to affordable studio and performance space. These spaces are crucial for artists to create, sell, and perform their work. Affordable studio space allows artists to focus on their creative process without excessive financial burdens, while accessible performance venues provide opportunities to showcase their work, engage with audiences, and generate income. Investing in the development and maintenance of these spaces will create a supportive environment that encourages artistic innovation.
- **Providing artists with support for exhibitions, fairs, and events to showcase their work:** Nearly half (49%) of the survey respondents emphasised the need for support in showcasing their work through exhibitions, fairs, and events. By providing artists with opportunities to display and promote their work within Northern Ireland, this has support greater public engagement and income for artists.

5. **Developing talent**

Growing the sector and supporting access to commercial opportunities is vital to supporting artists. However, the research also highlights a need for policy to consider how to best provide artists with opportunities to innovate and risk-take. Encouraging artists to push boundaries and experiment with new ideas is essential for the growth and vitality of the arts sector. Policy interventions should aim to create an environment that supports risk-taking and innovation by providing funding, resources, and platforms for artists to explore new creative avenues. This can involve investing in research and development grants, supporting the creation of experimental works, and promoting collaborations between artists and professionals from other disciplines.

Further, providing training and learning opportunities to develop artist talent and prepare them for the professional landscape is also highly important. The survey results reveal that more than 52% of responding artists felt their qualifications did not adequately prepare them for the professional arts sector. These findings underscore the importance of providing diverse training and learning opportunities to develop artist talent and provide them with the tools needed for the professional landscape. By offering a range of educational programs, technical training, workshops, mentorship and opportunities, the arts sector in Northern Ireland can support the growth and development of artists at various stages of their careers, and support retention and growth of talent.

Annex A: Detailed Methodology

The methodology used for this research includes the following stages:

Step 1: Project Initiation and Desk Review

The research team met with Arts Council NI to confirm the research objectives and establish a project advisory group. The team also commenced a desk review exercise, reviewing over 30 relevant research reports and datasets exploring artist income and living conditions. This included a similar baseline report conducted at an all-island level in 2010 (*The living and working conditions of artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*).

The research team also reviewed existing data sources (e.g. labour force data) and previous baseline surveys to inform research design.

Step 2: Survey Design

The research team designed an online survey, in collaboration with the research advisory group. This ensured that key stakeholders, including policy-makers and artists had substantive input to the design of the survey. The survey covered demographics, in addition to six key themes: Income & Employment; Education & Training; Mental Health & Wellbeing; Northern Ireland as a location to live and work; Opportunities, Challenges and Barriers; and Access & Inclusion.

It is challenging to estimate the number of artists active in Northern Ireland. For example, many artists will be freelance or self-employed, and others may work across multiple jobs or roles and therefore be captured by other sector definitions. The current estimates are varied. For example:

- The Annual Population Survey (September 2023) estimates that of the 922,000 individuals in the workforce in Northern Ireland, 20,000[53] are within 'SIC Division R: Arts, Entertainment and Recreation' (2.2% of workforce jobs). However, this includes wider roles in areas such as sport and leisure.
- The Annual Population Survey also publishes occupational estimates for Northern Ireland at a more granular level[54] using SOC2020 estimates. This suggests that in September 2023, there were:
    - 7,600 individuals[55] working in 'Artistic, Literary and Media' Occupations in Northern Ireland (SOC 341). This includes:
        - c. 1,500 authors, writers, and translators (SOC3412)
        - c. 1,800 actors, entertainers, and presenters (SOC3413)
        - c. 1,200 musicians (SOC3415)

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[53] Labour Market Profile - Northern Ireland (2021-23) Office for National Statistics (Online) Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2013265932/report.aspx

[54] Annual Population Survey - Occupation by sex, employment status and full/part-time (2022-23) Office for National Statistics (Online) Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/aps218/reports/employment-by-status-and-occupation?compare=N92000002

[55] Confidence interval of +/- 2,300 individuals

    - c. 1,000 arts officers, producers, and directors (SOC3416)
    - c. 1,700 photographers, audio-visual, and broadcasting equipment operators.
    - An undisclosed (due to low sample size) number of artists (SOC3411) and dancers and choreographers (SOC3414).
  - Of these 7,600 individuals[56]:
    - Only 1,300 (17%) are estimated to be employed in an 'employee job'
    - The remaining 6,100 (80%) are estimated to be self-employed or freelance.
    - The SOC estimates suggest that 57% of the arts workforce are male, and 43% are female. (This is higher than wider Arts Council NI Annual Funding estimates which suggest 50% male, 49% female, and 1% non-binary).
    - The data also suggests that 84% work full-time, (91% male, and 76% female).
- However, this highlights the challenges with the current estimates. For example, the Arts Council NI's most recent Annual Funding Survey highlights how the 95 funded arts organisations across Northern Ireland have a total workforce of c. 6,500 individuals. However, this consists of c. 900 permanent roles, and over 5,500 contractor roles.

Using the Annual Population Survey (APS) estimates of employment by SOC2020 in Northern Ireland provides a useful baseline of 7,600 employees in the arts occupation. It also finds that 80% of this population are self-employed, which is in line with the findings from this survey. (see Section 4)

However, within the survey conducted for this research, we find that in our sample of 481 artists:

- 223 (46%) artists report that they only work solely within the arts. This typically covers individuals with a sole focus on artist activities. It can include full-time, part-time, self-employed, or freelance activities.
- 202 (42%) artists report that they have work or roles in other sectors. This may include individuals that receive income from arts-related activities (e.g. playing in a band) but they have other forms of income or work (e.g. also work in another sector full-time etc).
- 56 (12%) of artists are not currently actively working but undertake some arts-related activities. This may include individuals that are currently retired or unemployed or undertake voluntary activities.

As an assumption, we can view that the Annual Population Survey estimate (c.7,600 individuals) may provide an indication for those artists that work primarily within the arts. These represent 46% of our sample – and typically will consist of experienced artists that earn a full, or partial livelihood from their arts-based activities.

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[56] Does not sum due to rounding or disclosure.

We can also infer that approximately 54% will not be captured by this APS estimate. Focusing on those that may work in other sectors (e.g. part-time musicians) – we apply an uplift (based on the 42% of artists in other sectors).

- Core artist population (codified): 7,600 individuals (~46%)
- Wider part-time and additional artist population: *estimated 6,900 individuals (~42%)*
- Wider retired, unemployed, or voluntary population: *estimated 2,000 individuals (~12%)*

Focusing on the prior two categories, we suggest the **artist population** in Northern Ireland (across all levels of experience, with some form of income from the arts, or at an early-stage) may be in the region **of 14,500 individuals.**

Step 3: Survey Rollout

From the 27th of November 2023 to the 5th of January 2024, an online survey was conducted examining the Working and Living Conditions of Artists in Northern Ireland[57].

The survey was made available at an open online link (SurveyMonkey), with the following channels used to promote and share the survey:

- Arts Council NI Mailing List and Grant Recipients: The Arts Council NI works with over a hundred arts organisations and has supported thousands of artists through grants and wider support in recent years. The Arts Council NI shared the survey link to over 4,000 individuals and organisations to encourage them to take part in the online survey.
- Social Media Platforms: It is also important to maximise reach among artists that have not previously engaged with the Arts Council or may interact with content through social media platforms. The survey was shared as a promoted advert via Instagram and Facebook, and also shared by the research team through LinkedIn and Twitter. Arts organisations were also encouraged to share with their members and staff.
- Alternative survey methods: All respondents completed the survey online. However, an option was provided for potential respondents to receive a printed version via post or complete the survey via telephone.

The research team also identified over 700 arts organisations across Northern Ireland, with the links shared and encouraged to reshare among members.

The online survey consisted of 42 questions, covering various aspects of the working and living conditions of artists in Northern Ireland, such as income sources, challenges, training needs, health and well-being, and impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Participation was entirely voluntary, with artists self-selecting whether to take part and providing informed consent before proceeding. Additionally, respondents had the assurance of anonymity, and they retained the right to decline to answer any questions if they preferred.

[57] During this period, we obtained 481 usable responses, with 95% of respondents providing demographic information. These responses reflect a diverse array of artists spanning various age groups, gender identities, career stages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and artistic disciplines.

The response rate provides a snapshot of diverse demographics, finances, well-being, and careers.

Step 4: Data Cleaning

Online responses were cleaned using a series of quality markers and a manual review to remove incomplete and low-quality responses. These quality markers include flags for speeding, IP address (UK-based), gibberish, length and matching email addresses to names provided. The survey provided 481 quality usable responses. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 4% at the 95% confidence interval[58].

Step 5: Survey Analysis and Benchmarking

The survey was analysed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation to compare the responses based on key factors such as age, gender, career level and employment status.

The research team held a co-design meeting with the advisory group where the initial findings were presented and could ensure that artist input was received through the analysis and reporting.

Step 5a: Estimating Artist Income

In the survey, artists were asked the following questions:

- **Select the range that best represents your most recent total annual income (from all of your income sources):**
  - Less than £5,000 per annum
  - £5,000 - £10,000 per annum
  - £10,001 - £15,000 per annum
  - £15,001 - £20,000 per annum
  - £20,001 - £25,000 per annum
  - £25,001 - £30,000 per annum
  - £30,001 - £35,000 per annum
  - £35,000 - £40,000 per annum
  - £40,001 - £50,000 per annum
  - £50,001 - £60,000 per annum
  - More than £60,000 per annum
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not sure
- **How much of this income would you estimate comes from your arts-based activity? If all of your income is from the arts, please answer '100%'. If you have other roles, please estimate the proportion of your income that comes from paid arts activity.**
  - None of my income comes from the arts (0%)

[58] This means that if we conducted the same survey 100 times, we would expect the results to be within 4 percentage points (at most) of the true value 95 of those times.

- Very little of my income comes from the arts (1% - 19%)
- Some of my income comes from the arts (20 - 39%)
- About half of my income comes from the arts (40 - 59%)
- Most of my income comes from the arts (60% - 79%)
- The majority of my income comes from the arts (80% - 99%)
- All of my income comes from the arts (100%)
- Prefer not to say
- Not sure

We asked artists to select the range that best represents their most recent annual income, across all income sources. The research team uses a ranged response for each question, rather than asking the absolute figure. This is because this is easier for respondents to know intuitively and quickly and should maximise the number of valid responses. Overall, 434 respondents (c. 90%) provided an income response for this question.

When analysing the data, we assume the midpoint of each value (to a maximum of £60,000 per annum). These midpoints are used as estimated annual income. For example,

- Less than £5,000 per annum – midpoint of £2,500 per annum
- £5,000 - £10,000 per annum – midpoint of £7,500 per annum
- £10,001 - £15,000 per annum – midpoint of £12,500 per annum
- £15,001 - £20,000 per annum - midpoint of £17,500 per annum

We also assume the midpoint of proportion of arts-related income, for example:

- Very little of my income comes from the arts (1% - 19%) – 10% of income from arts-related activities
- Most of my income comes from the arts (60% - 79%) – 70% of income from arts-related activities

We then used these percentages to create an estimate of arts-related income (multiplying the percentage of arts-related income by the estimated annual income for each respondent).

Artists were also asked the following question:

- **What proportion of your arts-related income or activity comes from outside of Northern Ireland?**
  - None of my income comes from outside NI (0%)
  - Very little of my income comes from outside NI (10% - 19%)
  - Some of my income comes from outside NI (20% - 39%)
  - About half of my income comes from outside NI (40% - 59%)
  - Most of my income comes from outside NI (60% - 79%)
  - The majority of my income comes from outside NI (80% - 99%)
  - All of my income comes from outside NI (100%)
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not sure

Again, a ranged response has been used as it is easier for respondents when completing the survey and maximises the number of valid responses.

To analyse the data, we have assumed the midpoint of the proportions. To obtain an estimate for arts-related income outside of Northern Ireland, we have applied the midpoints of these percentages to the estimated arts-related income.

The research team uses this survey to gain insight into the working and living conditions of artists at different stages of their career, artists who work in another sector to bring in extra income, artists with disabilities etc. Using this data, we can compare different artist groups against the wider estimates. Further, benchmarking has also been undertaken to compare the survey findings with previous research (e.g. the 2010 baseline survey), and against wider official statistics.

Step 6: Reporting

This report sets out the findings of the analysis. A full SPSS file (anonymised) has also been shared with Arts Council NI to support further analysis of income and working conditions of artists in Northern Ireland.

Annex B: Further Analysis

Table B.1: Average Income by Region (Belfast vs Rest of NI)

Current Postcode Area	Belfast (168)	Other NI Regions (264)
Total Income	£19,300	£18,800
Estimated Arts-Related Income	£12,000	£10,900
Proportion Generating Income Outside NI	57%	53%
Arts-Related Income Outside NI	£3,700	£4,500
Where artists work	Local Area (33%) Rest of NI (47%) Republic of Ireland (54%) Rest of the UK (44%) Mainland Europe (22%) North America (10%) Australia / New Zealand (2%) Asia / Middle East (2%)	Local Area (26%) Rest of NI (49%) Republic of Ireland (43%) Rest of the UK (30%) Mainland Europe (17%) North America (12%) Australia / New Zealand (4%) Asia / Middle East (3%)

Table B.2: Social Mobility SIAP Comparison

Social grouping NISRA	Classification from SIAP survey	SIAP (n=229)	ACNI WCLA (n= 383)	Northern Ireland (Source: NISRA)	SIAP Over/ underrepresentation	ACNI Over/ underrepresentation
Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional occupations (AB group)	1) Modern professional occupations 2) Senior managers and administrators 3) Traditional professional occupations	40.20%	50.65%	20.60%	+19.6 percentage points (overrepresentation)	+30.1 percentage points (overrepresentation)
Supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative, and professional occupations (C1)	1) Clerical and intermediate occupations 2) Middle and junior managers	15.30%	14.36%	29.90%	-14.6 percentage points (underrepresentation)	-15.5 percentage points (underrepresentation)
Skilled manual occupations (C2)	1) Technical and craft occupation 2) Routine manual occupations and services	28.30%	22.45%	23.20%	+5.1 percentage points (overrepresentation)	-0.7 percentage points (underrepresentation)

Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations; unemployed and lowest grade occupations (DE)	1) Semi routine manual occupations and services 2) Long term unemployed	16.20%	12.53%	26.30%	-10.1 percentage points (underrepresentation)	-13.8 percentage points (underrepresentation)

Table B.3: Income Summary and Statistical Significance

	Sample Size	Margin of Error	Income	Arts Related Income	Percentage of Income from Arts
Overall:					
All Respondents	458 (450)	4.51%	£18,900	£10,300	54%
…earn from arts	*416*	4.74%	*£19,200*	*£11,200*	58%
Experience:					
Established	152	7.91%	£20,800	£15,500	75%
Mid-Career	106	9.48%	£18,600	£8,300	45%
Emerging	105	9.53%	£15,100	£5,200	34%
Educator Role	55	13.19%	£20,600	£14,100	68%
Hours spent on arts:					
<10 hours	40	15.47%	£22,600	£5,825	26%
10 – 19 hours	82	10.79%	£17,600	£4,700	27%
20 – 29 hours	89	10.36%	£14,900	£6,000	40%
30 – 39 hours	64	12.22%	£16,700	£12,200	73%
>40 hours	85	10.60%	£19,700	£16,600	84%
Arts Form:					
Music	107	9.44%	£19,900	£11,300	57%
Visual Arts	103	9.62%	£16,500	£8,700	53%
Other (** merged due to sample size)	206	6.78%	£20,300	£12,400	61%
Working Pattern:					
Full Time Employee	51	13.70%	£30,000	£24,900	83%
Part Time Employee	56	13.07%	£19,300	£9,400	49%
Self Employed	201	6.86%	£16,300	£9,800	60%
Freelance	136	8.36%	£19,000	£11,000	58%
Age:					
18 – 34	136	8.36%	£16,300	£8,100	50%
35 – 44	102	9.67%	£21,200	£13,200	62%
45 – 54	72	11.52%	£23,100	£14,500	63%
55 – 64	64	12.22%	£17,900	£10,600	59%
65+ (low sample)					
Gender Identity:					
Male	150	7.96%	£20,750	£12,100	58%
Female	228	6.44%	£18,700	£11,100	59%
Non-Binary (low sample)					
Disability or Neurodiversity:					
Disability	85	10.60%	£17,100	£8,800	51%
Neurodiversity	90	10.30%.	£17,100	£9,500	56%
None	242	6.25%	£20,900	£12,500	60%
Dependents:					

Yes	158	7.75%	£21,100	£12,700	60%
No	232	6.38%	£18,500	£10,600	57%

Education Level (Min):

Postgraduate Degree	154	7.86%	£21,000	£12,000	57%
Degree (Bachelor)	175	7.36%	£19,000	£11,200	59%
Other	87	10.48%	£16,600	£9,700	58%

Socio-economic marker (school between 11-16):

Grammar	214	6.65%	£20,000	£12,000	60%
Secondary	115	9.10%	£17,900	£9,500	53%
Other / Outside NI	66	12.04%	£20,200	£13,200	65%

MoE <= 5%, which means estimates are considered precise

MoE > 5% and <= 10% which means estimates are considered reasonably precise

MoE > 10% and <= 20% which means estimates are considered acceptable and

Annex C: Detailed Survey Overview

Question	Answers
About you	
1. Please select the primary artform in which you work.	• Architecture • Community Arts • Circus, Street Art & Carnival • Craft & Design • Film & Media • Literature & Storytelling • Music • Participatory Arts • Performing Arts • Theatre • Traditional Arts • Visual Arts • Youth Arts
2. Which of the following best describes your role within the arts.	• Established artist (with a regular and consistent body of work in the arts for more than five years) • Emerging artist (actively pursuing an arts career, having started within the last five years) • Mid-career artist (actively working in the arts for more than five years but not yet established) • I work as an arts-related educator, technician, technical or production administrator. • I participate in the arts on an ad-hoc basis, sometimes unpaid, or for personal enjoyment. • I volunteer within the arts (contribute my time and skills to support the arts)
Income & Employment	

3. Which of the following best describes your current employment status within the arts sector?	• Self-employed artist (earning income from selling your art, performances, commissions, etc.) • Freelancer/Independent Contractor in the arts (including multiple engagements) • Part-time employee in the arts (working less than 35 hours per week) • Full-time employee in the arts (working 35 hours or more per week) • Business owner in the arts (owning a business primarily focused on the arts) • Unemployed and actively seeking work in the arts • Retired but actively engaged in the arts (through paid or unpaid activities) • Volunteer (if this is your primary engagement in the arts) • Unable to work in the arts due to disability or caring responsibilities • On a break or sabbatical from the arts (temporarily not working in the arts, e.g., for personal development, travel, etc.)
4. Do any of the following activities or forms of income apply to you, in addition to your arts based activity? (tick as many that apply)	• I also work in another role or another sector • I am also a student / studying • I carry out volunteer activities • I take on temporary or seasonal roles • I have caring responsibilities • I receive income support or other social payments • I rely on the use of savings • I receive support from family or friends • Other additional role
5. You selected that you also work in another role or sector. Please select the field(s) that you also work in. Select as many that apply.	• Accommodation and Food Service Activities • Administrative and Support Service Activities • Advertising and Market Research • Creative Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (outside of your artist role) • Education • Health and Social Work • Information and Communication (Digital Roles) • Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities • Public Administration or Defence

	• Publishing, Film, TV, Sound Recording (outside of your artist role) • Retail • Other Specialised Design Activities • Other field of work
6. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on your artistic or creative activity, including client work, personal projects, and administrative tasks?	• Less than 10 hours • 10-19 hours • 20-29 hours • 30-39 hours • 40-49 hours • 50 or more hours • Prefer not to say • Not sure
7. Please select the range that best represents your most recent total annual income (from all of your income sources)	• Less than £5,000 per annum • £5,000 - £10,000 per annum • £10,001 - £15,000 per annum • £15,001 - £20,000 per annum • £20,001 - £25,000 per annum • £25,001 - £30,000 per annum • £30,001 - £35,000 per annum • £35,000 - £40,000 per annum • £40,001 - £50,000 per annum • £50,001 - £60,000 per annum • More than £60,000 per annum • Prefer not to say • Not sure
8. How much of this income would you estimate comes from your arts based activity? If all of your income is from the arts, please answer '100%'. If you have other roles, please estimate the proportion of your income that comes from paid arts activity.	• None of my income comes from the arts (0%) • Very little of my income comes from the arts (1% - 19%) • About half of my income comes from the arts (40 - 59%) • Most of my income comes from the arts (60% - 79%) • Some of my income comes from the arts (20 - 39%)

	• The majority of my income comes from the arts (80% - 99%) • All of my income comes from the arts (100%) • Prefer not to say • Not sure
9. What sources does your arts income typically come from? Please tick as many that apply.	• Arts Facilitator • Commissions • Consultancy • Sales of Physical or Digital Work • Public Grants • Private Grants • Sponsorship • Fellowships or Residencies • Merchandising • Performances • Royalties, Licencing or Streaming • Teaching and Workshops • Writing and Publications • Other source of income from arts
10. Do you regularly contribute to a workplace pension, self-invested personal pension (SIPP) or other savings for retirement?	• Yes • No • Prefer not to say • Not sure
11. The following questions relate to the quality of your employment in the arts sector. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. – My income from the arts sector is consistent and predictable. – I am compensated fairly for my work in the arts sector. – I am paid on time for my work or commissions. – The income I make from my arts activity is sufficient to cover my basic expenses.	• Strongly Disagree • Disagree • Neither Agree nor Disagree • Agree • Strongly Agree • Prefer not to say • Not sure

Education & Training	
12. What is your highest level of educational qualification you have achieved?	• Art and Design Awards/Certificates at Level 2 and 3 • BTEC Higher National • Degree Level or Higher (arts-related) • Degree Level or Higher (non-arts) • Diplomas in Art and Design • Foundation Degree in Arts (FDA) • GCE A Level or Equivalent • GCSEs or Equivalent • Higher National Diploma/Certificate (HND/HNC) • No formal qualification • Other (please specify) • Postgraduate Level or Higher (e.g. PhD, Masters) (arts-related) • Postgraduate Level or Higher (e.g. PhD, Masters) (non-arts)
13. Where did you undertake your highest level of study? (select as many that apply if you studied multiple courses at this level)	• Northern Ireland • Rest of UK • Ireland • Europe • North America • Rest of World • Online/Distance Learning • NA/ prefer not to say
14. Have you undertaken any wider (including non-formal) arts education, certifications, or professional training? Please select all that apply and specify where necessary.	• Self-taught skills/artistic practice • Private lessons (e.g., music, singing, dance) • Workshops or short courses (e.g., pottery, painting, writing) • Online courses (e.g., digital art, photography) • Musical grades or examinations (e.g., ABRSM, Trinity) • Professional drama/theatre training (e.g., acting workshops) • Dance examinations and certifications (e.g., RAD, ISTD) • Artistic residencies or retreats

	• Apprenticeships or mentorships in the arts • Mental Health training • Community Arts or participation training
15. Do you feel that your artistic education and/or qualifications equipped you for the professional landscape and employment in the arts sector in Northern Ireland?	• Yes • No Don't know • Prefer not to say
16. Which improvements, if any, do you believe could be made to better support and prepare artists for entering the arts sector in Northern Ireland?	• Increased access to affordable training and workshops • More mentorship opportunities for emerging artists • More showcase or launch events for emerging artists • Strengthened networking opportunities within the arts community • Better integration of arts education / promoting arts careers in schools • Improved provision or access to grants and funding • Other Improvements to support & prepare artists for entering the arts sector
Northern Ireland as a place to live and work for artists	
17. Which of the following applies to the location of your arts-related work? (where you create, show or sell your art)	• I only work locally (within 20 miles of my home) • I only work within Northern Ireland • I work within Northern Ireland, but also work outside of Northern Ireland • I mainly work outside Northern Ireland • Prefer not to say
18. Which regions do you regularly seek or find art-related work opportunities in? (tick as many that apply)	• Local area (within 20 miles of your current location) • Across all of Northern Ireland • Republic of Ireland • Rest of the United Kingdom • Mainland Europe • North America • Asia or Middle East • Australia/New Zealand • Rest of the world • Other

19. What proportion of your arts-related income or activity comes from outside of Northern Ireland?	• None of my income comes from outside NI (0%) • Very little of my income comes from outside NI (10% - 19%) • Some of my income comes from outside NI (20% - 39%) • About half of my income comes from outside NI (40% - 59%) • Most of my income comes from outside NI (60% - 79%) • The majority of my income comes from outside NI (80% - 99%) • All of my income comes from outside NI (100%) • Prefer not to say • Not sure
20. What influenced your decision to travel outside of Northern Ireland for art related opportunities? Select all that apply.	• Higher income potential outside NI • Availability of public investment / financial support • Access to specific artistic opportunities (e.g. events, festivals) • Availability of prestigious venues or galleries • More exposure and audience engagement • Lack of opportunities within NI • Personal networking and collaborations • Training and professional development • Diverse experiences and inspiration
21. Would, or have you considered permanently relocating to another location outside of Northern Ireland for arts related career opportunities?	• Yes - I have, or am in the process of relocating • Yes - I have seriously considered relocating • Yes - I have somewhat considered relocating • Yes - I have previously relocated, but have since come back • No - I have not considered relocating • Don't know/ prefer not to say
Artist Wellbeing	
22. For each of the following, please respond on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely". This scale reflects the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Personal Wellbeing measure. – Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	• 0 (Not at all) • 1 • 2 • 3 • 4

– Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? – Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? – Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?	• 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10 (Completely)
23. In order for us to better understand the impact that working and living conditions has on artists in Northern Ireland, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. – I feel valued as an artist – I feel supported by my peers/employers in the arts – I feel secure in my current position or role within the arts – I feel the arts sector is inclusive and values diversity – I feel adequately represented and heard in the arts	• Strongly Disagree • Disagree • Neither Agree nor Disagree • Agree • Strongly Agree
Barriers	
24. As an artist, what personal barriers or challenges have you encountered that have impacted your ability to create, exhibit, sell, or perform your work? Please select all that apply and provide any additional details in the space provided.	• Caring responsibilities (e.g., childcare, care for older people, affecting work availability) • Challenges in self-promotion (e.g., marketing skills, use of social media) • Financial barriers (e.g., lack of funding, high costs of materials and studio space) • Health issues (e.g., physical strain, lack of healthcare) • Insufficient professional development opportunities (e.g., lack of mentorship or workshops) • Intellectual property concerns (e.g., copyright issues, unauthorised use of work) • Issues with diversity and inclusion (e.g., discrimination, lack of representative opportunities) • Lack of cultural and social recognition (e.g., stereotypes, societal undervaluing) • Limited market access (e.g., difficulty finding galleries, venues or platforms, oversaturated market) • Mental health challenges (e.g., mental or emotional toll of work)

	• Societal barriers (e.g., socioeconomic status, education access, access to opportunities) • Technological challenges (e.g., adapting to digital tools, competing with digital media) • Time constraints (e.g., balancing multiple jobs, lack of time for creative work) • Other
Challenges and Opportunities in Northern Ireland	
25. Thinking of the following wider factors, please set out your perception of the impact these are having on your arts career currently. Spaces and Costs: – Venues closing or reducing opening hours – Access to affordable space – Increased costs of arts activity (e.g., touring, equipment, travel) – Costs of borrowing for arts (such as student or private loans) – The wider support for the night-time economy (e.g, availability of late-night transport)	• High impact • Moderate impact • Low impact • No impact • N/A
26. Your perception of the impact these are having on your arts career currently. Income & Commercial Models – Rising cost of living (on you personally) – Rising cost of living on audiences or buyers – Commercial models such as online streaming – Availability of public or charitable funding for the arts – Availability of commercial sponsorship	• High impact • Moderate impact • Low impact • No impact • N/A
27. Which of the following best describes your feelings toward the advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential impact upon the arts?	• Optimistic about the potential to enhance and expand creative possibilities • Excited about the integration of technology in the creative process • Indifferent to AI advancements in the arts • Nervous about the impact on traditional art forms • Worried about the implications for artists' livelihoods and job security • Concerned about the authenticity and intellectual property issues of AI-generated art • Uninformed about AI advancements

	• Other
28. Effect of the cost-of-living crisis?	• Forced me to seek additional employment outside the arts to make ends meet • Forced me to reduce my engagement / activity within the arts • Limited my ability to invest in art supplies, equipment, or projects • Made it challenging to afford studio/creative space • Restricted my ability to attend relevant workshops or training • Hindered my ability to participate in exhibitions, shows, or performances • Limited my ability to engage in arts-related networking or events • Not at all / not relevant • Prefer not to say • Other effects
Supporting Artist Opportunities	
29. What resources, support, or changes do you believe are necessary to fully maximise opportunities in the arts?	• Access to affordable art supplies, materials, and equipment • Advocacy for artists' rights and fair pay • Advocacy for new funding models, such as the use of levies or stipends to support artists • Collaborative projects and interdisciplinary opportunities • Educational workshops and skill development courses • Financial grants and funding opportunities • Improved access to affordable studio or performance spaces • Improved support for exhibitions, fairs, and events to showcase • Legal advice and copyright assistance • More inclusive and diverse representation in the arts sector • Networking events with industry professionals and other artists • Opportunities for mentorship or coaching • Support for international exchanges and cultural programs • Support for marginalised or excluded groups to participate/access the arts • Support for mental health and well-being • Technology training and digital tools for art creation and promotion • Other

Demographics	
30. Gender Identity	• Male • Female • Non-Binary • Agender • Genderfluid • Prefer not to say • Prefer to self-describe
31. Age	• 18-24 • 25-34 • 35-44 • 45-54 • 55-64 • 65+ • Prefer not to say
32. Ethnic background	• White • Irish Traveler • Chinese • Indian • Pakistani • Bangladeshi • Asian – Other (please specify) • Black Caribbean • Black African • Black – Other (please specify) • Arab • Roma • Filipino • Mixed • Prefer not to say

	• Other (please specify)
33. Do you have a disability?	• Yes • No • Prefer not to say • Other (please specify)
34. Do you consider yourself neurodiverse?	• Yes • No • Prefer not to say • Other (please specify)
35. What is your sexual orientation?	• Heterosexual or straight • Bisexual • Gay • Lesbian • Asexual • Pansexual • Queer • Prefer not to say • Other (please specify)
36. What, if any are your religious belief?	• Buddhist • Catholic • • Hindu • Islam/Muslim • Jewish • Protestant • Sikh • Religious faith not listed (please specify) • No religious faith • Prefer not to say • Other (please specify)

37. Unionist, a nationalist, or neither?	• Unionist • Nationalist • Neither • Other (please specify)
Socio-economic background	
38. Do you have any dependents? (e.g. someone who depends on you for care or financial support)	• Yes • No • Prefer not to say
39. School Type	• Grammar • Secondary • Special • Independent • Attended outside of Northern Ireland • Other (please specify)
40. Work the main/ highest income earner in your household did in their main job?	• Clerical and intermediate occupations • Don't know • Long term unemployed • Middle or junior managers • Modern professional occupations • Not applicable • Other • Prefer not to say • Retired • Routine manual and service occupations • Semi-routine manual and service occupations • Senior managers and administrators • Technical and craft occupations • Traditional professional occupations

41. Thinking about where you lived aged 14. What was your postcode area? (e.g. BT1). If you lived outside of the UK, please state the country.	• Written responses
42. Currently, what is your residential postcode area?	• Written responses