



Survey on:

Career Practice and Development
of Members of the Creative Frame
Network - Leitrim



Research Design
and Analytics by M.CO



This works as a good tool to help us as artists to reflect on aspects of our working lives and the areas to focus on. It has been very helpful.'

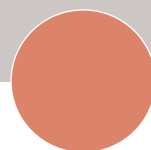
- Creative Frame Member





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About Creative Frame

Creative Frame is a free membership network for creative sector practitioners from Leitrim and the wider region. Its aim is to support any professional or emerging practitioner from any arts or design field based in Leitrim and the wider region who aspires to make a living, or a significant part of their living, from their practice. Currently there are over 400 registered members in the network.

It was established in 2016 by Leitrim County Council's Arts Office and Local Enterprise Office to support the ongoing professional development needs of Leitrim's vibrant creative sector and to ensure that Leitrim continues to be an attractive place to live and a viable place for people in the creative sector to base their career.

Creative Frame coordinates a year-round programme of training, mentoring and meetups while the Creative Frame website also offers a forum for discussion and knowledge exchange and a repository of other development resources.

Summary Analysis on the Experience of Creative Frame

BACKGROUND

Creative Frame is a free membership network that supports the ongoing professional development of creative practitioners in Leitrim and the surrounding areas. It is made up of practitioners from a variety of fields, including, but not limited to, designers, dancers, filmmakers, painters, sculptors and musicians as well as a number of practitioners working in interdisciplinary practice. The objective of the network is two-fold:

- a. **Support practitioners to take an active role in shaping their own career progression; and**
- b. **Grow Leitrim's creative sector.**

The network was developed in 2015 as a partnership between Leitrim County Council Arts Office and Leitrim Local Enterprise Office with the support of the Arts Council. It coordinates a year-round programme of training, mentoring and meet-ups while the Creative Frame website offers a forum for discussion, knowledge exchange and other professional development resources.

In 2019 **M.CO** were commissioned to design a piece of **research that would capture key learnings about practitioners in the network and identify how the network could further deliver on its objectives**. M.CO are a strategic design and project management company with specialist expertise in research methodologies, and in the cultural and creative industries.

NETWORK OF PROFESSIONALS

The practitioners who constitute Creative Frame's **membership are highly educated, committed to continuing professional development and dedicated to advancing their practice** within their home community. The majority also have a clear ambition to grow their practice outside of Ireland.

Network members wish to spend more time on their core practice, but there are anxieties and practical **concerns around day-to-day finances** related to the low-income status of artists.

KEY PERSPECTIVES

The primary benefits experienced by Creative Frame members are:

1. Cost of living
2. Creative / artistic support network
3. Inspiring landscape

The top three challenges faced by members are:

1. Isolation
2. Making A living
3. Networking Opportunities

USER CENTRED SOLUTIONS

Creative Frame takes a user-centred approach to programming which is having a positive impact. Events hosted by Creative Frame are well-attended. Evaluative feedback provided by Creative Frame show that 82% of participants find the content of Creative Frame events to be excellent.

Of the participants who responded to M.CO's research survey:

- **Over 80% of attendees rated one in every three events as being very impactful/helpful;**
- **50% of respondents identified that one in every two events is of significant benefit to their practice.**

Creative Frame should **continue to invest in career/practice development** and support members to **diversify creative income opportunities**. In developing the network, Creative Frame needs to continue to **innovate in encouraging and enabling members to engage**.

KEY INSIGHTS

Working Hours

M.CO's research shows that 22% of respondents spend 30-40 hours per week on their creative practice. Twice as many (44%) spend 15-20 hours per week on their practice with 22% spending less than 10 hours per week on this work. **Two thirds of respondents are engaged in paid work outside their practice.** Half of the cohort engaged in creative work outside their practice spend less than 10 hours every week on such work. A further 35% of this cohort spend between 20 and 30 hours on such work while 15% of this cohort commit over 40 hours a week to such work.

Income

The experience among artists is that there is a lack of available paid work in the arts (63%). Over half of those who responded to the survey said they can only work as an artist because there is another more reliable income contributing to the household. 69% of respondents offer workshops or undertake socially engaged projects and a further 20% aspire to do so. **Of those who undertake workshops less than 20% earn >€1,000 p/a income from this type of work, while a third of practitioners reported earning less than €1,000 p/a and half reported no earnings here.** While contemporary arts practice can often be project-based rather than object-based, direct sales remains a factor for many with **13% earning more than €5,000 p/a**, and a further 61% receiving less than

€5,000 p/a from this income source.

57% state that making a living in non-arts sectors is an important part of supporting them financially. For most of these practitioners, however, income from non-arts sources was less than €5,000 p/a. 56% of respondents were registered for unemployment assistance/benefit for an average of two years over the last three years, with half receiving between €1,000 and €15,000 in unemployment or social protection payments in 2018.

Securing identified opportunities for paid creative work can pose challenges. 50% of those who apply for such opportunities, stated that application/submission processes present challenges. Creative Frame is well-placed to support members in this regard.

Wellbeing

Many respondents reported a positive sense of overall wellbeing (47%), albeit a similar percentage of people reported feeling high levels of stress about their current working arrangements. Artists face significant challenges when it comes to social isolation, networking opportunities and making a living. This is supported by further data from the survey where over half (55%) of practitioners cited anxiety around day-to-day finances, long-term financial security and feeling that the time they invest in their practice is not valued. While most of those who responded to the survey are in good health, **30% have a health limiting conditions¹ and 24% of those people are impacted by it most or all of the time. Only 25% of respondents hold private health insurance, well below the 45% figure for the national population².**

International Practice

Most respondents (62%) see working as an artist outside Ireland as important to their career. Many (66%) note that identifying opportunities to network internationally is a considerable challenge. However, half of those who completed the survey had not attended an event outside Ireland in the last 12 months and 61% have not worked as an artist outside the Republic of Ireland in the last three years.

Barriers to Participation

In line with the make-up of Creative Frame's membership, **64% of research respondents were female, for whom Care Responsibilities (66%), Location (59%) and Time & Date (55%) are the three most significant barriers that prevent them from attending network activities.** For male respondents, Time & Date (40%), Cost (15%) and Forgetting about the event (15%) are the most significant barriers to attendance.

The **time and date** of events are challenges to be addressed for both male and female members. The high rankings of 'Care Responsibilities' and 'Location' **as challenges for female participation are also significant**, given that Creative Frame's membership is 64% female and noting the resonance with barriers to wider female labour force participation³.

FUTURE DIRECTION

Programming

It is evident from M.CO's research that Creative Frame is meeting the objectives and fulfilling the network's role in supporting the career practice development of creative practitioners in Leitrim. It is also evident that the network is asking the right questions, enabling it to respond to member needs with an impactful programme of engagement.

Over half (**58%**) of respondents hold third level or postgraduate degree in their core practice area, with a **quarter of respondents holding a Masters' Degree.** Almost **70% of members** have undertaken some form of **further education in their core practice area over the last 3 years** with 80% of practitioners spending 1-10 hours of their time on these activities every week. These statistics speak to an **appetite for learning that can be supported** through professional development, supports similar to those in other enterprise areas, as well as through peer learning, mentoring and informal collaborations that formal education and training are less likely to meet. This approach builds on the work the network has been undertaking to date and in future, Creative Frame could consider:

- **Addressing barriers to participation (above) by offering a tailored mailing list of events circulated regularly to ensure that members are given appropriate notice - involving members in scheduling;**
- **Proactive efforts to overcome gender differences and care commitments in the career / practice development for members; and**
- **Popular events could be scheduled on a recurring basis in multiple locations to allow more of the membership to avail of popular events that are applicable across art forms.**

Networks & Online Opportunities

Over three quarters of respondents (77%) use technology to network and almost all (95%) use it to access information about the sector. In future, Creative Frame could consider:

1 Findings are in-line with national data; Department of Health – Health in Ireland – Key Trends 2019

2 Health Insurance Authority; <https://www.hia.ie/>

3 Economic and Social Research Institute – Special Article; www.esri.ie/Quarterly_Autumn_2016 (pp.49-98)

- Further investment in the Creative Frame online platform / forum to increase networking opportunities;
- Extending the offering of events and training online, almost two thirds (64%) already attend online events when they are unable to attend in person; and
- Collaborative / online programmes, which link with similar networks or creative bodies elsewhere.

Sustainable Careers

Of the practitioners who responded to the survey, the largest proportion (46%) have been working in their core practice area for up to 10 years. After this point, we see **just 18% of practitioners have been practicing for between 10 and 20 years** while 36% have been working as an artist for over 20 years. Different career-stages have distinct career development needs, but also represents a network which has cultivated a rich diversity of skills and experience as well as valuable local and sectoral knowledge. These figures ask the **question as to why we see a drop off after the ten-year point**. This warrants further research. Creative Frame should explore **whether members are leaving the sector as opposed to moving elsewhere**, and the learnings from this research may be **key in supporting Leitrim to retain creative talent**. In future, Creative Frame could consider:

- **Supports to back career / professional practice development, make applications and submissions and enhance exposure to new opportunities, including international opportunities; and**
- **With 36% of those who responded having over 20 years of experience and many members expressing an interest in mentoring and skills sharing, Creative Frame should also be encouraged in sustaining and expanding its mentoring programme and continuing support for peer learning.**

Sustainable Livelihoods

Only 9% of respondents are earning more than the living wage from their work in the arts, while 62% reported earning less than €5,000 from all arts related income sources. Overall, 82% of artists in Leitrim are currently earning less than the living wage⁴. **Only 9% of respondents are currently making pension contributions**, which is a significant concern for all respondents, but most especially for the 30% of artists in the 55+ age cohort. In future, Creative Frame could consider:

- **Enabling members to identify, seek and secure opportunities for more diversified work and income streams, linked to their creative practice;**
- **Provision of information and training in the area of pensions and financial management, which is likely to benefit a significant proportion of the membership; and**
- **Advocacy to address the low-income status of professional artists vis-à-vis the living wage.**

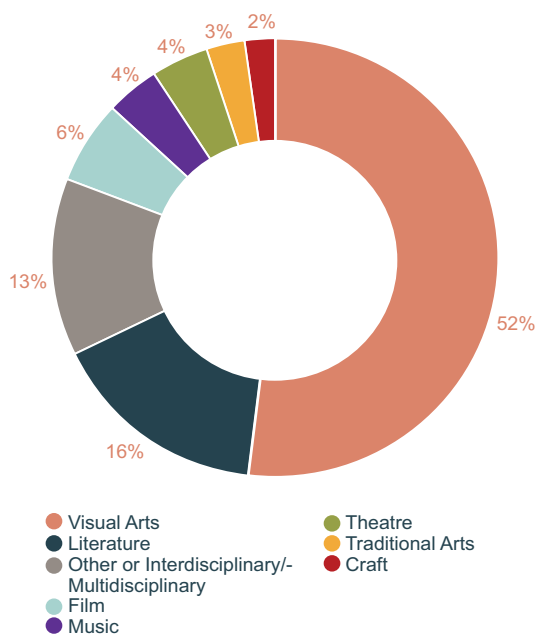
Creative Frame is a great resource and brings like-minded people together who would otherwise be left feeling detached and isolated. The collaborations and possibilities going forward are heartening.

- Survey Respondent

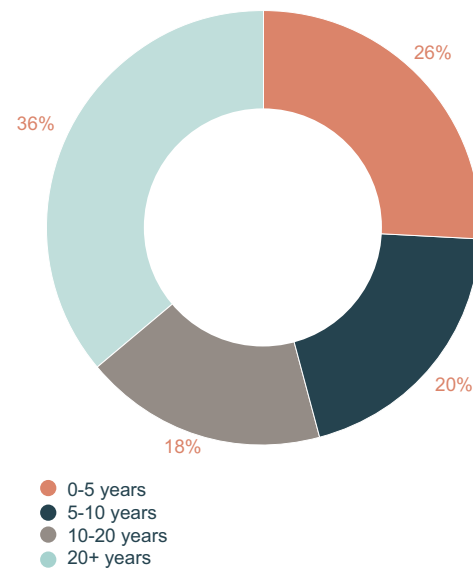


Education, training and career development

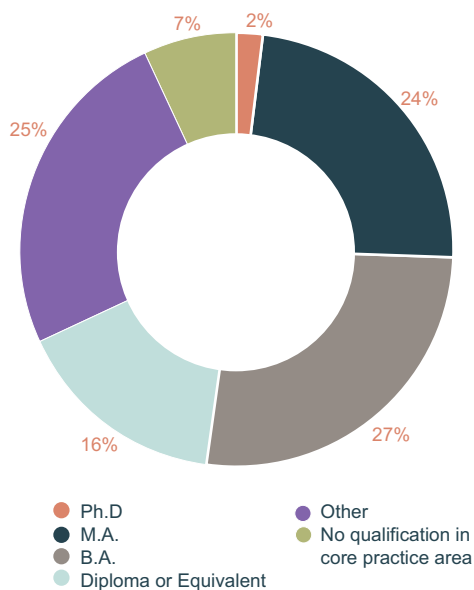
1) Core practice of Creative Frame members



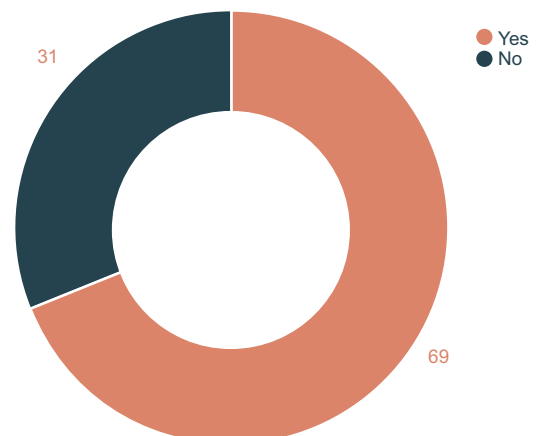
2) Number of years working as a professional practitioner



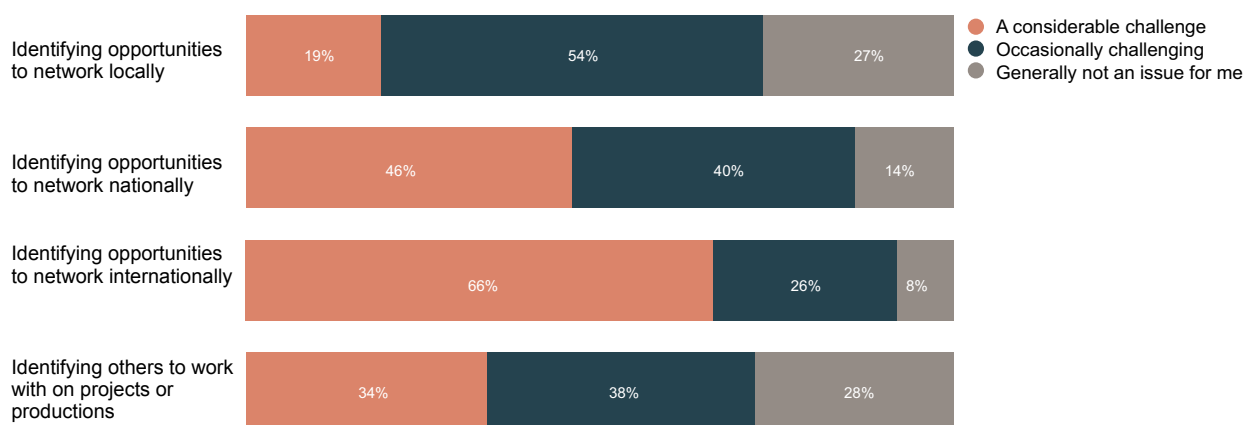
3) Highest qualification held in members' core practice area



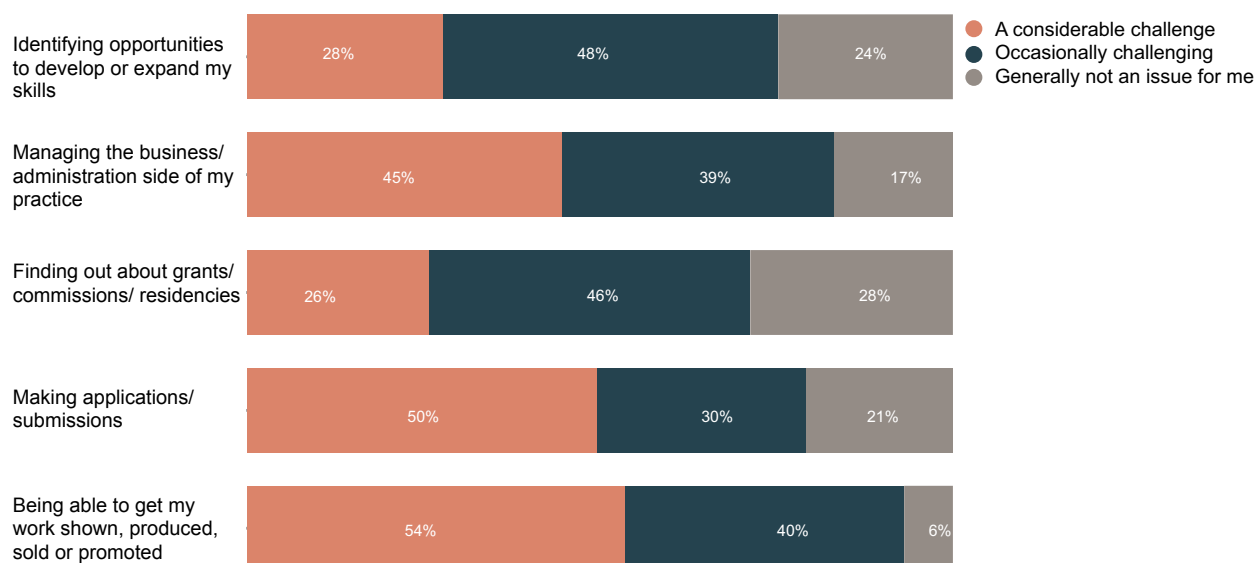
4) Percentage of members having undertaken practice based or administration/management education or training during the last three years



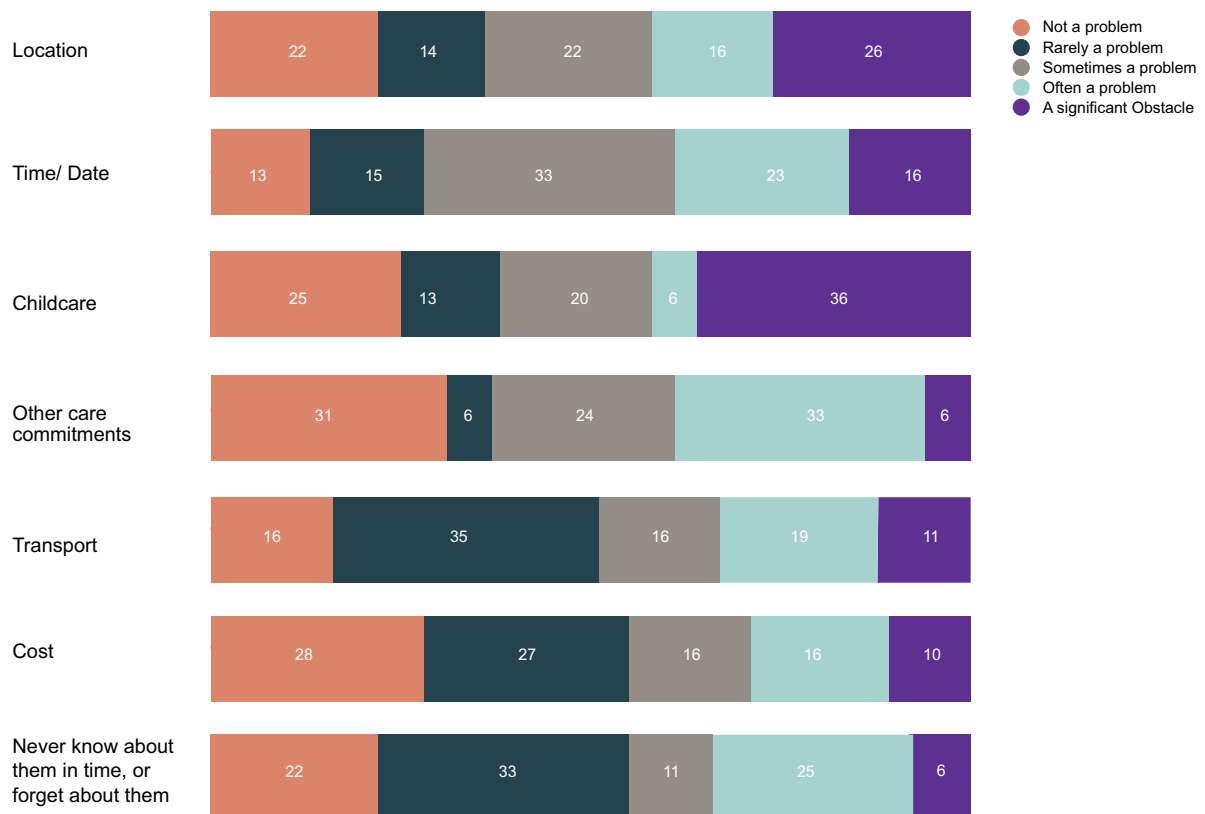
5) Challenges to networking for members



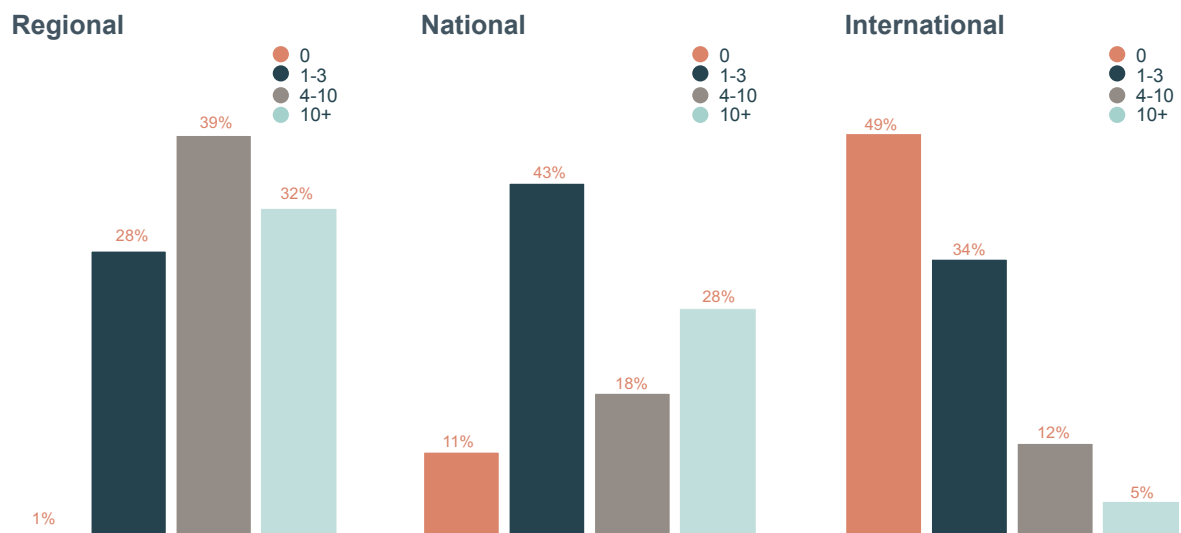
6) Challenges to career management for members



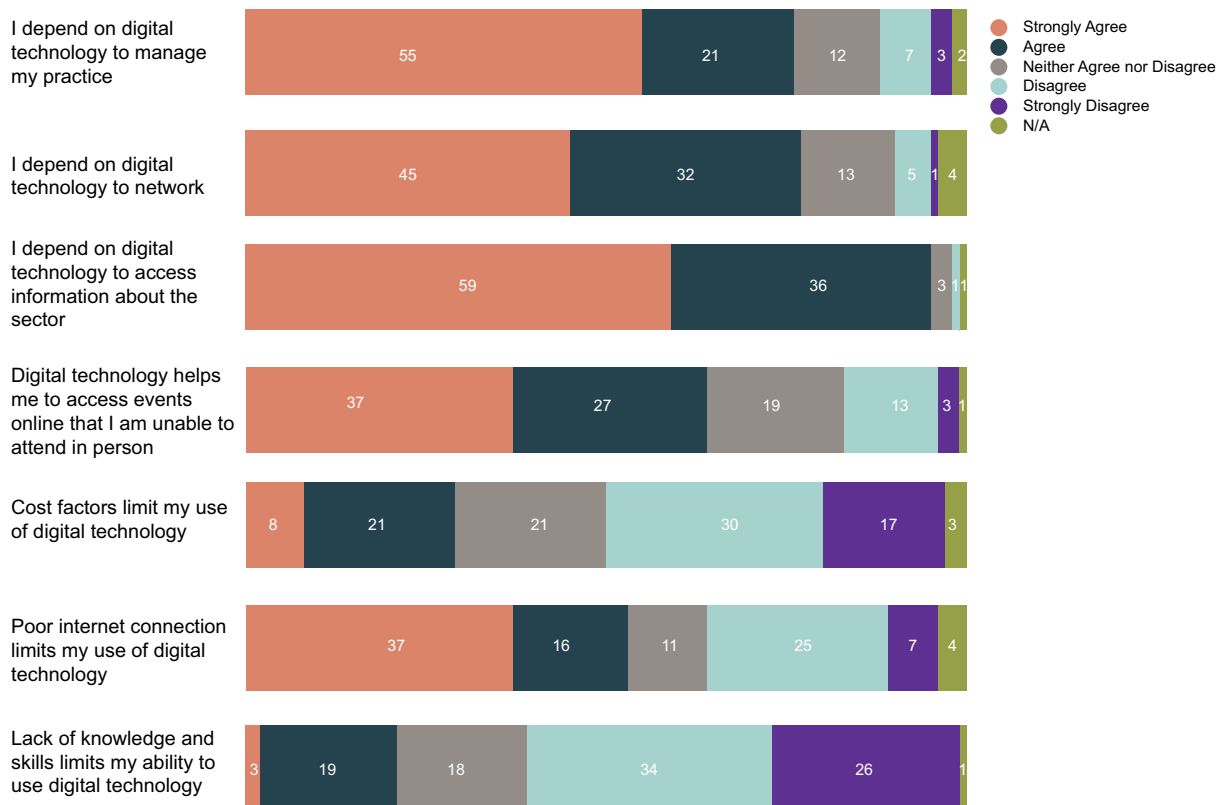
7) Factors preventing members attending events and activities



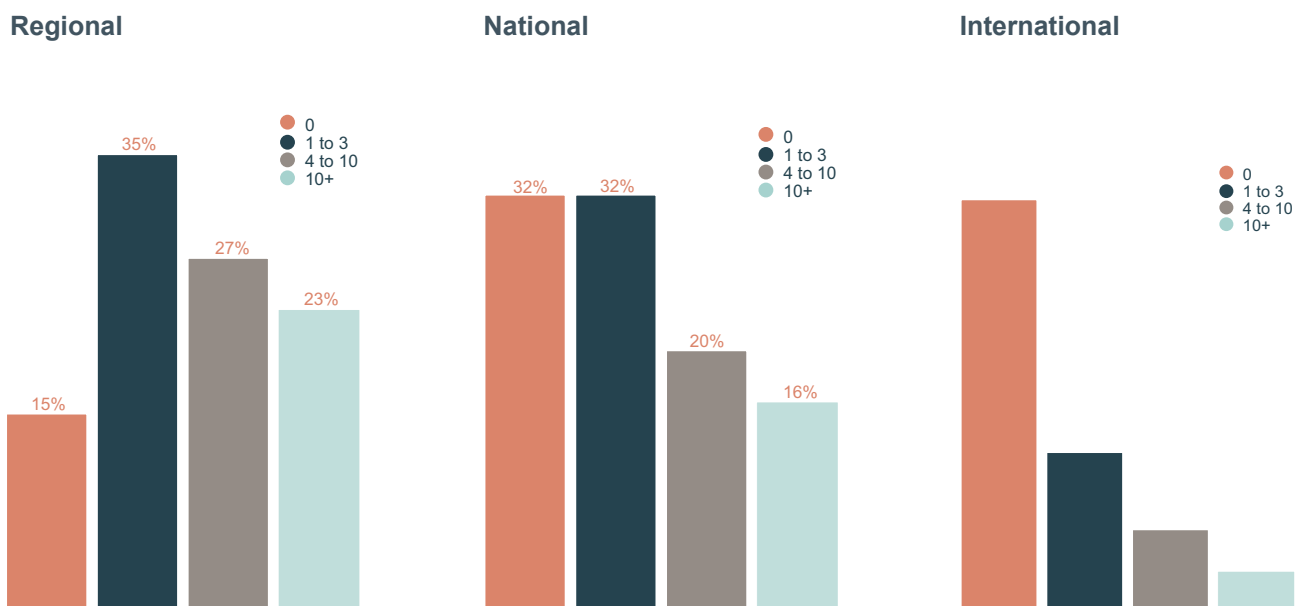
8) Number of arts events attended by members in person in the last 12 months



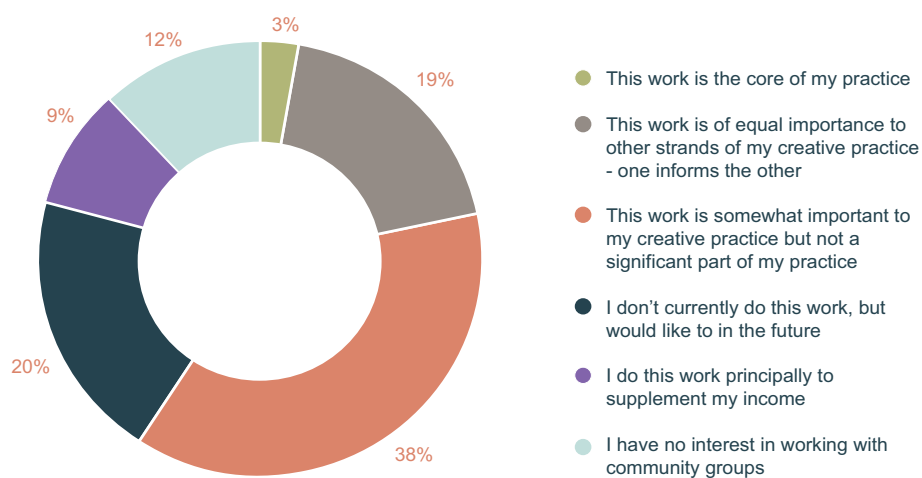
9) Impact of digital technology on members careers in relation to research, networking and administration



10) Number of performances, exhibitions, residencies or projects undertaken by members in the last 3 years

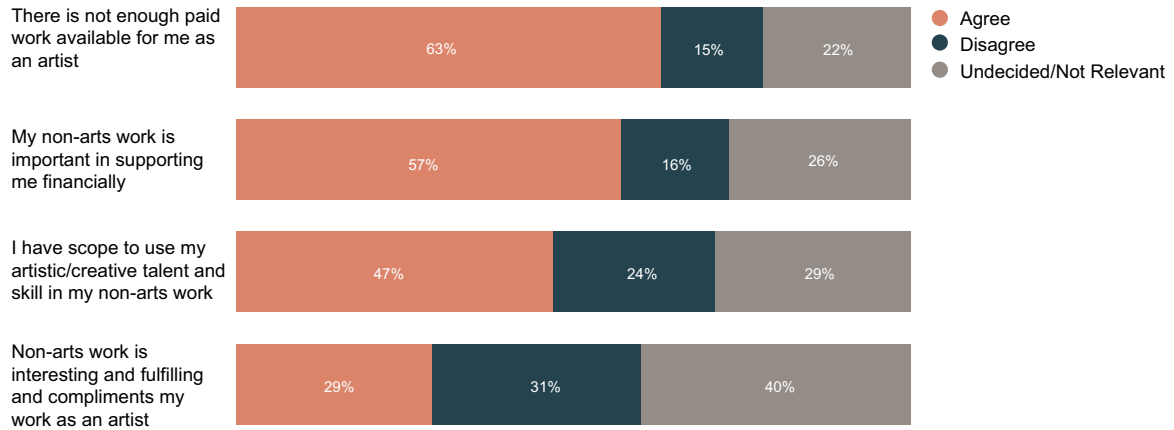


11) Significance to members' practice of socially engaged projects or other work with groups in the community

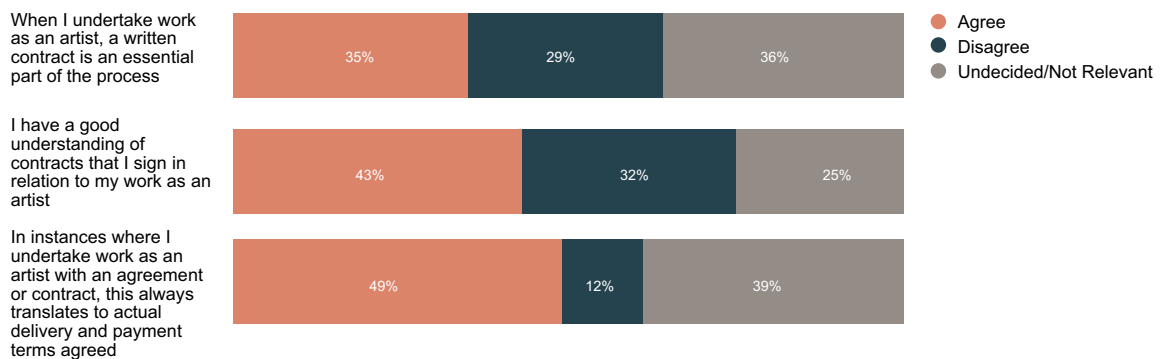


Working and Employment Patterns

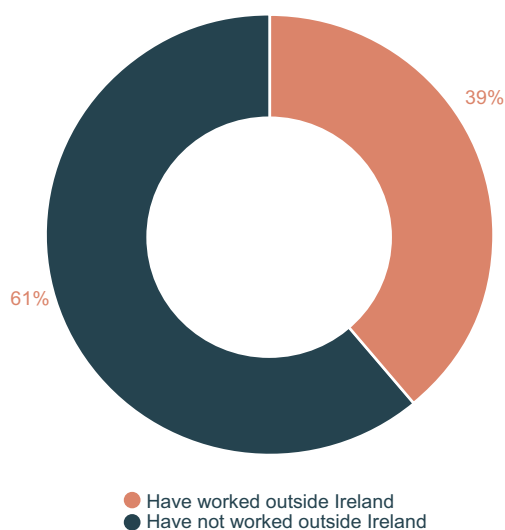
12) The extent to which members agree or disagree with statements relating to employment not connected to their arts practice



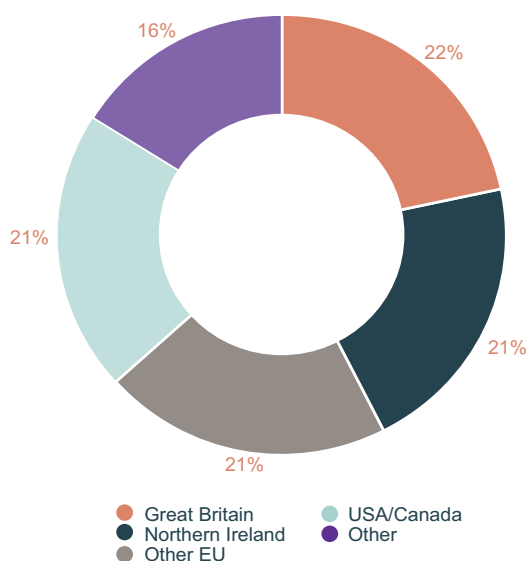
13) Members opinions on artists' contracts



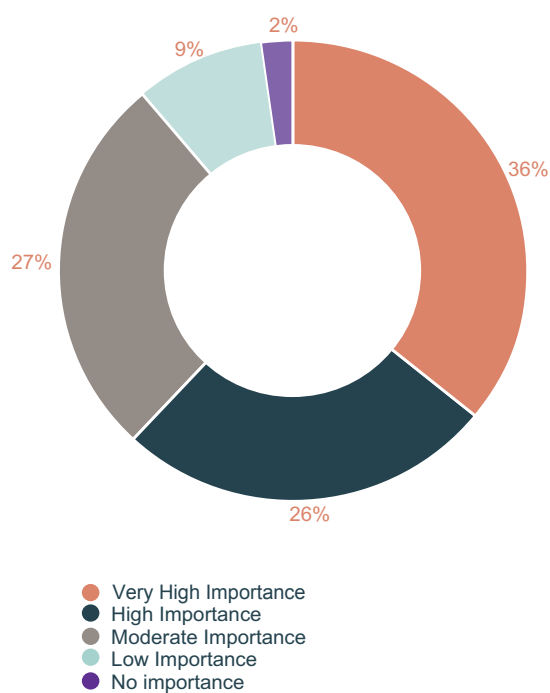
14) The percentage of members who have worked outside the Republic of Ireland during the past three years



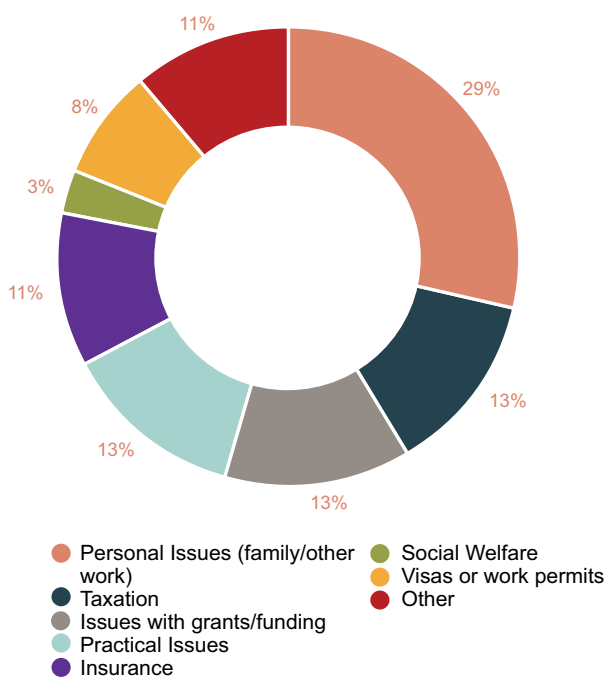
15) Countries outside the Republic of Ireland where members have worked during the last three years.



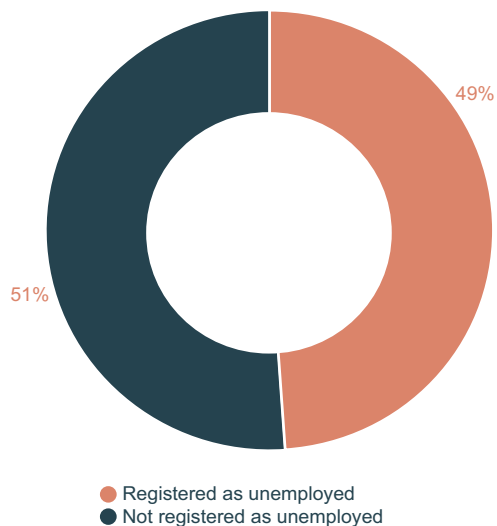
16) Importance placed on working outside of Ireland to members' careers



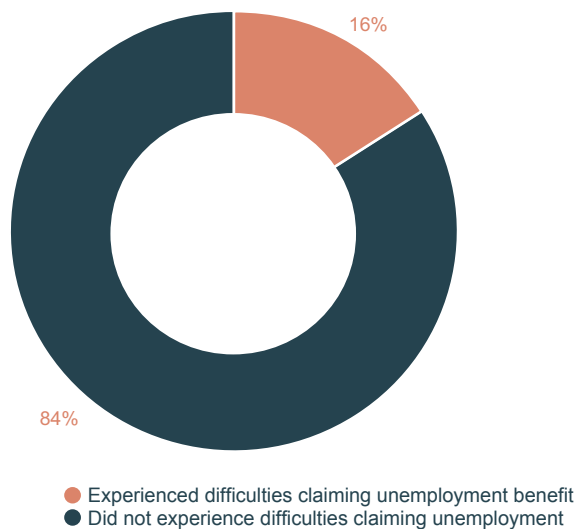
17) Challenges relating to working outside the Republic of Ireland experienced by members over the past three years



18) Percentage of members registered as unemployed at some point over the last three years



19) Percentage of members who experienced difficulties claiming unemployment benefit because of their status as an artist



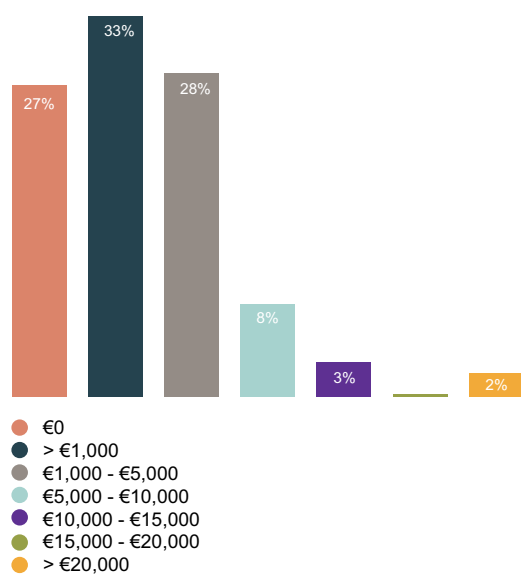
Artists income

20) Aggregated analysis of the income of Creative Frame members

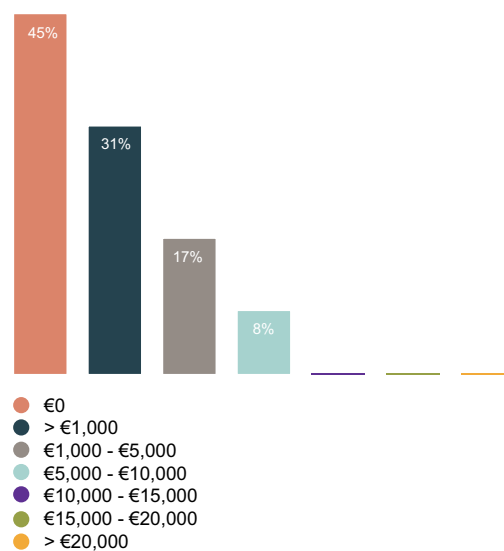
Income Source	Average Annual Income	%of Total Income
Sales and Commissions	€ 4,216	20.80%
Workshops and Social Practice projects	€ 1,730	8.53%
Teaching in the Arts	€ 2,514	12.40%
Other Arts Income	€ 2,635	13.00%
Non Arts Income	€ 5,189	25.60%
Social Protection Payment	€ 3,986	19.67%
	€ 20,270	100%

21) Analysis, by source, of the income of Creative Frame members

Direct income from sales of work as an artist

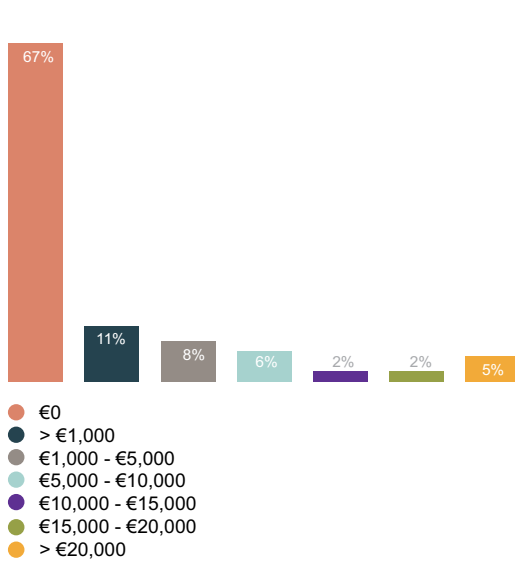


Direct income from workshops and social practice projects within the community

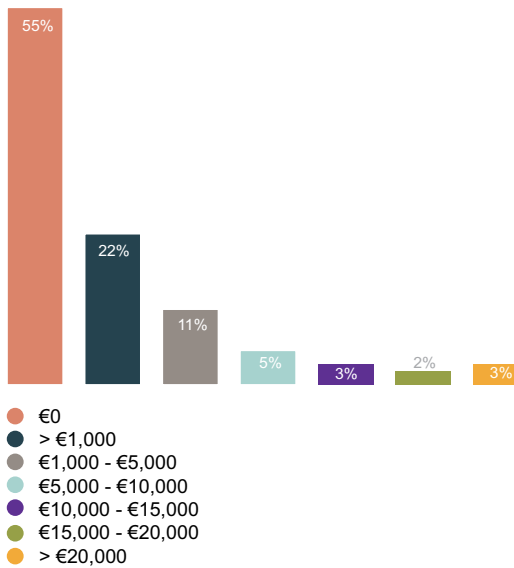


21) contd.

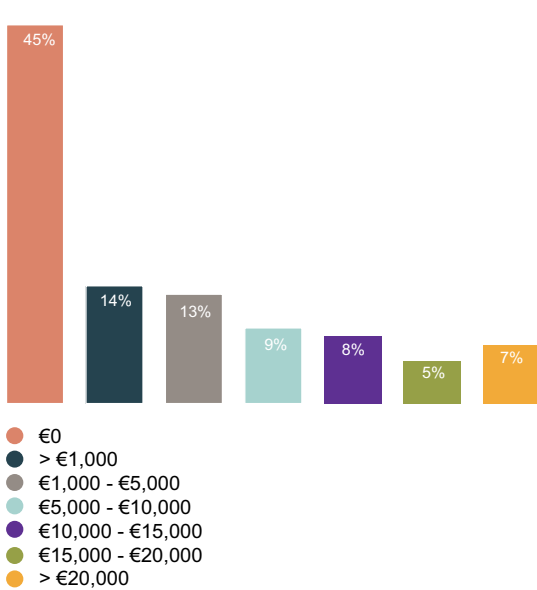
Teaching in the arts



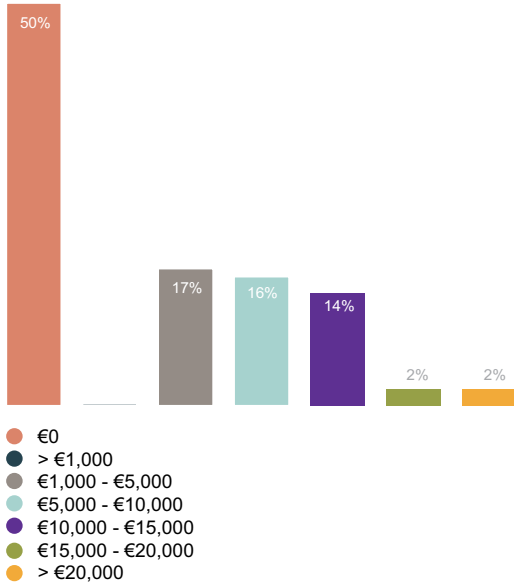
Other arts related income



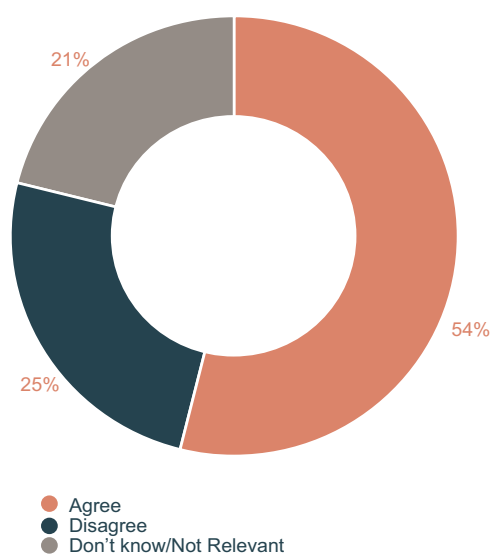
Income from work outside the arts



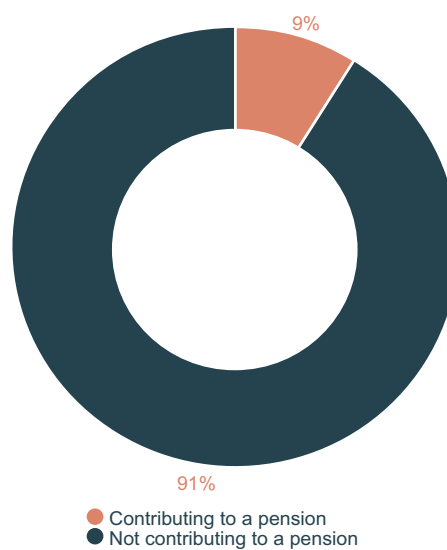
Unemployment benefit or other social protection payment



22) Extent to which members can only work as an artist because there is another more reliable income contributing to the household



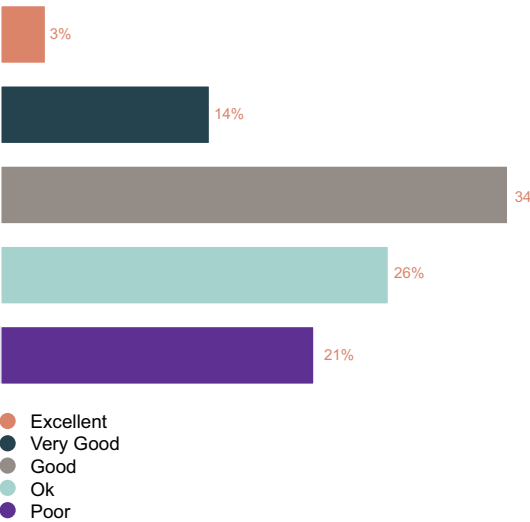
23) Percentage of members contributing to a pension from their income as an artist



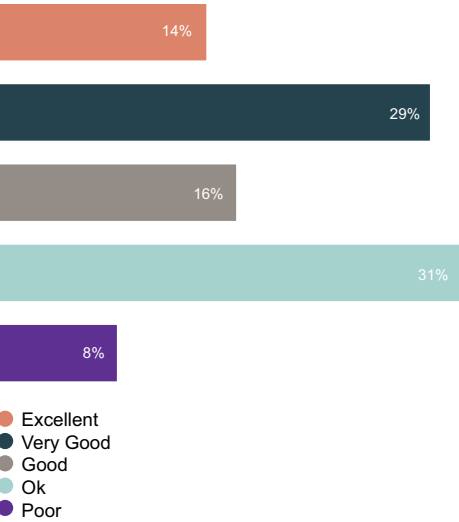
Health & wellbeing

24) Analysis of members' wellbeing

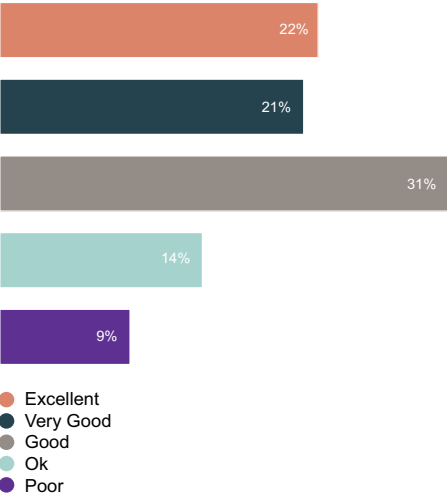
How could you rate your overall wellbeing?



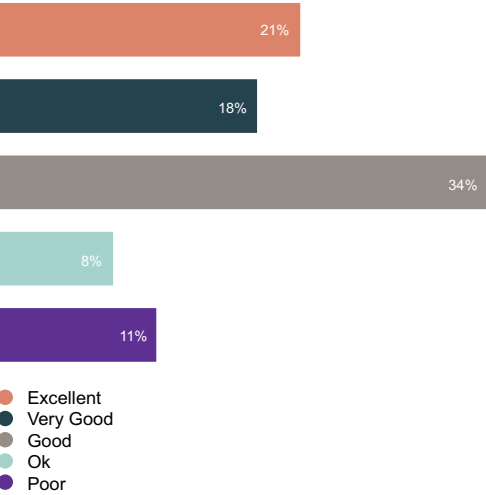
How would you rate your work-life balance?



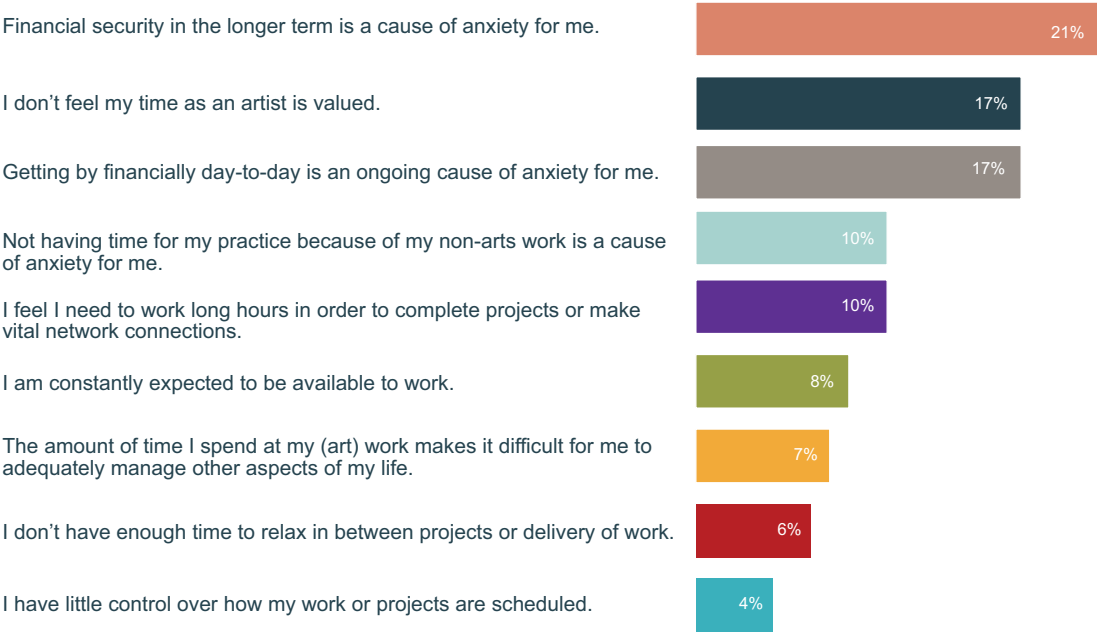
How would you rate your current stress level about the projects you are working on right now?



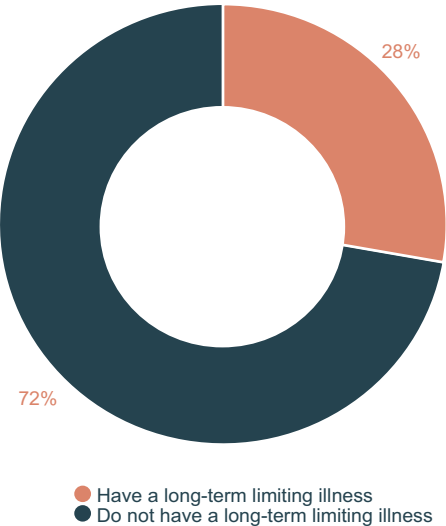
How would you rate your stress level about your career generally?



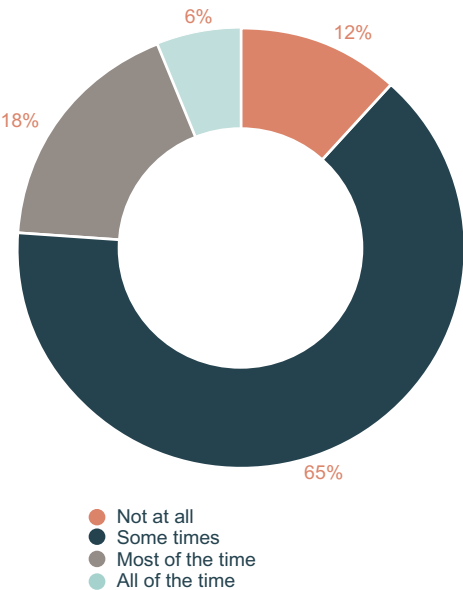
25) Percentage of members who share the following concerns



26) Percentage of members who have a long-term illness, health problem or disability (including those caused by aging) that limits work and daily activities

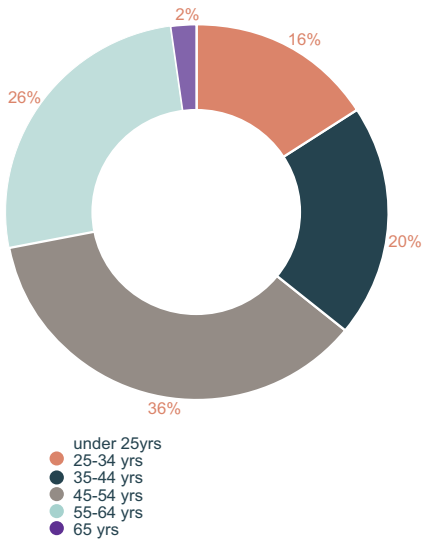


27) Extent to which these health issues adversely affect practice of members

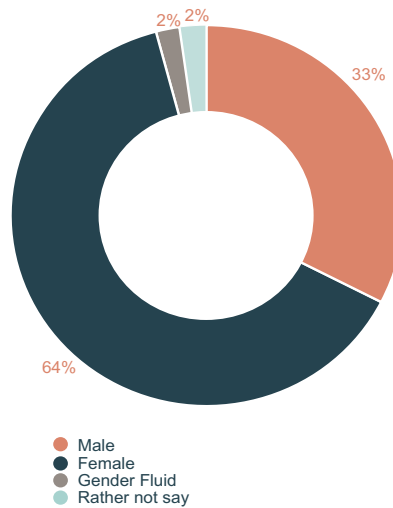


Profile of Creative Frame Membership

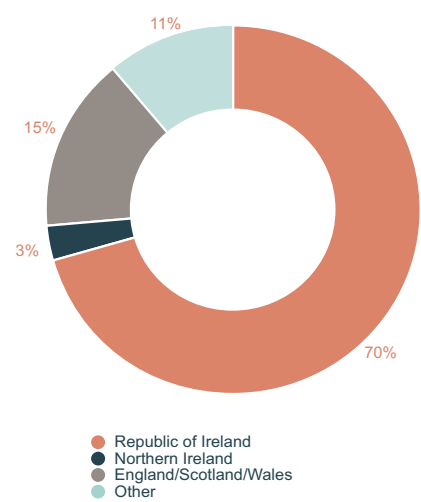
28) Age group



Gender



Place of birth



29) The top three challenges of being an artist in this region

1. Isolation
2. Making A living
3. Networking Opportunities

30) The top three benefits of being an artist in this region

1. Cost of living
2. Artistic support network
3. Inspiring landscape



Appendix

i) Range of qualifications held by Creative Frame Members

B.A in Music St. Patrick's College Drumcondra	M. Litt (Music) NUI Maynooth
B.A. in Fine Art, Painting, NCAD, Dublin	M. Litt., NUI Maynooth
B.Sc in Multimedia, DCU	M.Sc Interactive Digital Media, TCD, Dublin
BA in Fine Art, IT Sligo	MA Art in the Digital World, NCAD, Dublin
BA in Film and Broadcasting, TUD, Dublin	MA Dramatherapy, NUI Maynooth
MA in Screenwriting, NUI, Galway	MA Furniture Design, Aalto University Helsinki, Finland
BA in Fine Art, GMIT, Galway	MFA University of Hertfordshire, UK
BA in Fine Art, LCAD, Limerick	MFA Belfast School of Art, University of Ulster
BA Fine Art Sculpture, NCAD, Dublin	MFA Photography, Belfast School of Art, University of Ulster
BA History of Art and Fine Art Sculpture, NCAD, Dublin	MSc Digital Media, TCD, Dublin
BA in Adult Education and Training, NUI Galway	MSc in Interactive Digital Media, TCD, Dublin
Postgraduate CELTA, NUI Galway	MA Royal College of Art. UK
BA in Performing Arts and Theatre Design, IT Sligo	MFA NCAD Dublin
BA in History of Art and Fine Art Sculpture, NCAD, Dublin	MFA, Northumbria University UK,
BA in Painting and Drawing, Oakland University, Michigan, USA	Art Teachers Diploma, Goldsmiths, London
BDes in Textiles, NCAD, Dublin	MA Ceramics at Cardiff Metropolitan University
BFA Corcoran School of Art, Washington DC, USA	MFA at the University of Ulster, Belfast
BA in Photography, Open College of the Arts, UK	Masters in Visual Arts Practice, IADT, Dun Laoghaire
BFA University of Ulster	MA in Creative Writing, UL, Limerick
BA in Performing Arts, IT Sligo	MFA in Multimedia (KASK School of Arts, Ghent)
Diploma in Communications (Film), DIT, Dublin	MFA Belfast School of Art, University of Ulster
BFA, IADT, Dun Laoghaire	MPHIL, Australia
Design Communication, IADT, Dun Laoghaire	Social Practice in the Creative Environment, LSAD, Limerick
Diploma in Art and Design, West Dean College of Arts and Conservation, UK	Teaching Diploma in Home Economics, St Angelas College, Sligo
Diploma in Creative Textiles, St. Angelas College, Sligo	Certification in Arts Facilitation, NYCI
Diploma in Fine Art LSAD, Limerick	Theatre Design, Wimbledon School of Art, UK
Diploma in Fine Art, IT Sligo	Thomastown Pottery Skills course
Diploma in Music, OPEN University	BA (Wood, Metal, Ceramics and Plastics) Brighton Polytechnic
Doctor of Philosophy University of Arts, Belfast	Various Screen Skills Ireland courses
BFA, Coventry University	
BFA, Glasgow School of Art	
Grennan Mill College, Kilkenny	
Apprenticeships in Holland and Germany	



For further details please contact:

Leslie Ryan

Creative Frame Project Manager,
Leitrim County Council Arts Office,
Áras an Chontae,
Carrick on Shannon,
Co. Leitrim

 **+353 (0)71 96 21694**
 **creativeframeleitrim@gmail.com**
 **creativeframe.eu**

