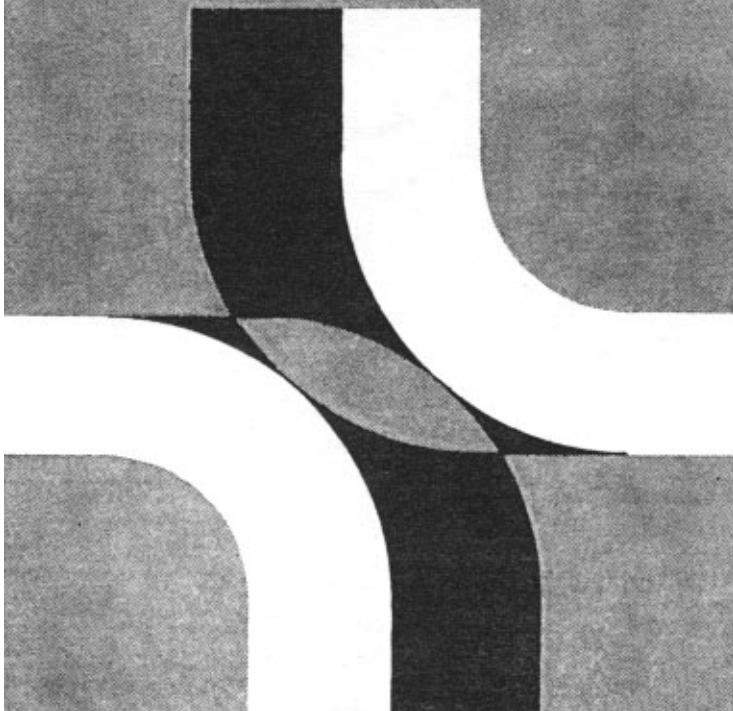


THE ARTS COUNCIL

Living and
Working
Conditions of
Artists

A summary of the main
results of a survey of
Irish artists



A SURVEY OF THE LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF ARTISTS IN IRELAND

The need for detailed, accurate and objective information about the living and working conditions of artists is self-evident. In the context of restricted finance the need for the Arts Council to use its money in the most efficient way possible can best be assisted by having accurate information readily available.

In October 1978 Irish Marketing Surveys Ltd. began a series of interviews with artists who had been selected on a random sampling basis from lists provided by the Arts Council. The assistance of Irish Actors Equity and the Federation of Musicians was important in assembling these lists.

The full report, in three volumes, was given to the Council by I.M.S. in November 1979.

This leaflet, published in April, 1980, is a brief summary of the main findings of the report.

INTRODUCTION

The results of the survey show a very worrying, though not unexpected, situation.

Most artists, both "interpretive" and "creative" rely, for the majority of their income, on money earned at activities other than their art. Their confused and varied income precludes many of them from access to social welfare. The instability of their incomes makes planning difficult and most have no plans for pensions. Those "interpretive" artists who cannot practise their art unless they are employed to do so are often unemployed, sometimes for long periods. The majority of artists believe the Irish public to be disinterested in the arts and blame the education system. Most artists believe the Arts Council to be successful in its work to some degree although there were criticisms of the bursary scheme and of the lack of funding for the Council. Artists' hopes for the future are modest – more work and ownership of a house or studio being the most commonly quoted aspirations.

DEPENDENCE ON NON-ARTISTIC EARNINGS

75% of creative and 50% of interpretive artists have jobs in addition to their artistic work. Some have jobs, such as teaching, which are related to their artistic work but many (28% of creative artists and one third of interpretive artists) have jobs, ranging from company director to waiter, entirely unconnected with their artistic occupation.

Some artists (10% of interpretive artists and 26% of creative artists) have more than one other job and it seems fair to imply from the pattern of unemployment for interpretive artists that they change jobs quite frequently. There is also evidence of substantial dependence on earnings of other family members.

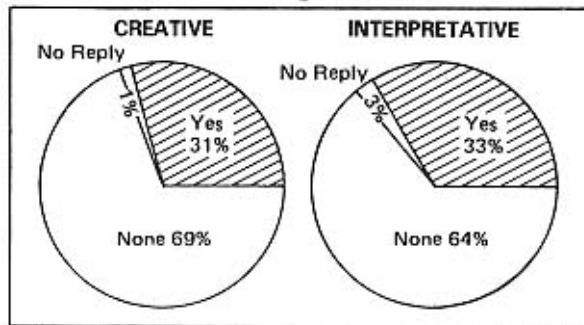
Creative Artists – Number of Different Occupations

	Main Artistic Occupation			
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Literature</u>	<u>Visual Arts</u>	<u>Composer</u>
BASE:	105	41	61	3
	%	%	%	%
One	23	22	21	-
Two	51	37	59	33
Three	19	29	16	-
Four	6	12	3	33
Five	1	-	-	33
Six	-	-	-	-

ACCESS TO SOCIAL SECURITY

Earnings from such a wide variety of sources of different kinds and the instability of income which results have the further effect of making planning of finances difficult if not impossible. An example of this is in the area of pension provision where % of artists have made no provision for pensions. Those who have are most likely to have done so in the context of their non-artistic employment.

Incidence of Making Pension Provision



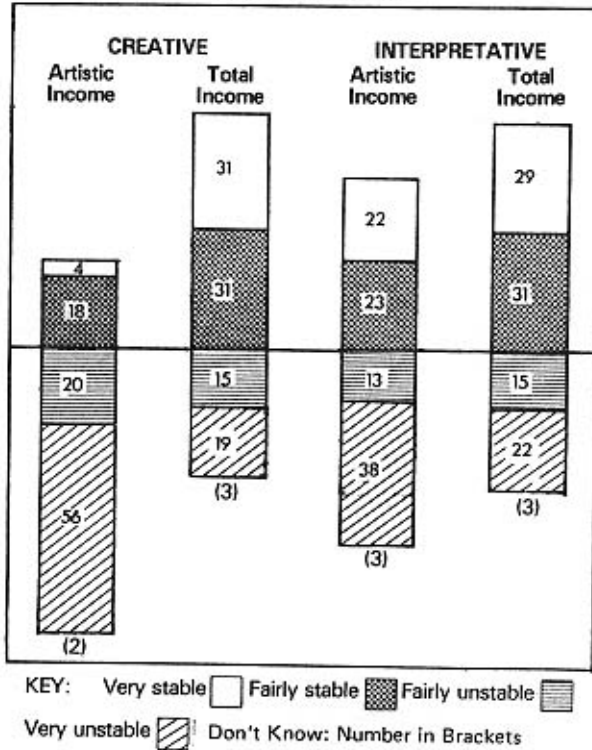
The confused nature of artists income also effects their ability to participate in Social Welfare schemes. More than half of all artists claimed not to be stamping a card in any of their employments (this rose to 69% among creative artists).

Access to unemployment payments – either assistance or benefit – is also affected. Actors are most likely to have availed of employment benefit with less than 50% of them claiming never to have done so. On the other hand about ¼ of creative artists claim never to have availed of either benefit or assistance.

INSTABILITY OF INCOME

This situation, taken in conjunction with the necessarily irregular pattern of artistic earnings for creative artists, leads to a high degree of instability of income. Both creative (76%) and interpretive (51%) artists regard their artistic income as fairly or very unstable and 34% of creative and 37% of interpretive artists regard their total income from all sources as fairly or very unstable. What stability of income there is largely provided by earnings from sources other than artistic earnings. It would appear that at least 23% of creative artists have no earnings from artistic work for at least one month of the year.

Artists Impression of the Stability of their Income

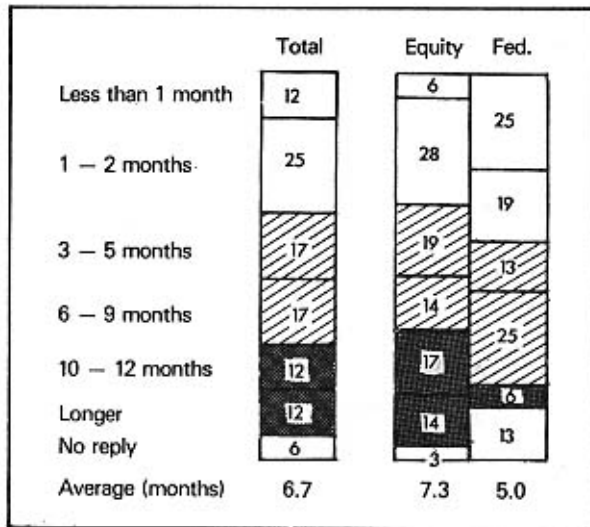


UNEMPLOYMENT

Questions about unemployment were put only to those not self-employed in their artistic occupation which meant that only musicians and actors were questioned. They were asked about unemployment in their artistic work and in their other jobs.

90% of actors and 30% of musicians have been unemployed in their artistic occupations. 54% of actors and 29% of musicians have been unemployed in their artistic occupation more than seven times. The average longest period of unemployment from artistic work is 6 - 7 months. The figures suggest that the average artist in this category is unemployed in his or her artistic work for one month in every year.

Longest Period of Unemployment from Artistic Work



44% of these artists when unemployed from their artistic work, take up other jobs – most commonly serving in bars but also as teachers, bouncers, labourers and so on.

This same group of artists (those not self-employed in their artistic profession) were asked about periods of total unemployment from all jobs. 37% of this group have been totally unemployed. Over half of those who have been totally unemployed have been so more than seven times. This is more likely to be the case with actors than with musicians.

DISTRIBUTION OF ARTISTIC INCOME AMONG ARTISTS

In looking at income from artistic work the distribution of that income among artists was examined. 50% of creative artists earn between them only 10% of the total artistic income. On the other hand 50% of the total monies earned by creative artists go to the top earning 18% of artists.

A similar, but not quite so dramatic figure, applies to interpretive artists where 50% of interpretive artists earn less than 20% of the total artistic earnings within this sector, whilst 50% of this artistic "wealth" is earned by the top 25% of interpretive artists.

These huge discrepancies in earning power are largely ironed out when total income (including other jobs, spouses income, etc.) is examined. The distribution of total income seems to be no worse (perhaps even better) than that of the population as a whole.

BREAKDOWN OF INCOME

INTERPRETIVE			
Mean Income (£) from...			
Artistic Work	Other Work	Other Sources	Total Non-Artistic
2546	950	960	1910

CREATIVE			
Mean Income (£) from ...			
Artistic Work	Other Work	Other Sources	Total Non-Artistic
1474	2009	1332	3341

Asked to specify their income over the past year, artists gave figures as outlined in the chart above. These figures are for the year ending October 1978. The trend among creative artists is for a very wide variance in their artistic earnings. The gap between the high-earners and low earners is narrowed by income from other sources and other jobs. Interpretive artists are more likely to give up their other jobs when they reach a certain level of earnings from their artistic work.

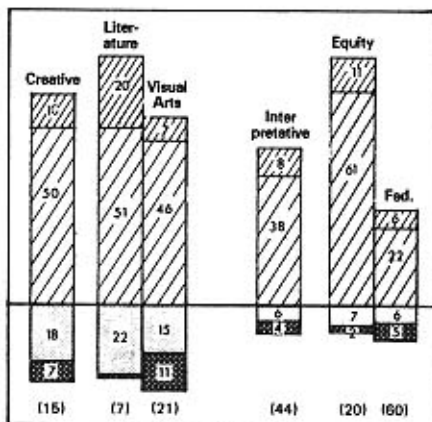
ARTISTS ATTITUDES TO THE PUBLIC AND THE ARTS COUNCIL

Artists in all categories were asked about their attitudes to government and public interest in the arts and their attitudes to the Arts Council. Most creative artists saw money through the Arts Council as the main involvement of government while interpretive artists mentioned grants and subsidies. Three quarters of creative and two thirds of interpretive artists would favour much more government involvement in the arts.

About two thirds of all artists feel that the public are quite or very disinterested in the arts. The inadequacies of the education system is seen as the principle reason for this.

There was a very high level of recognition of the Arts Council and understanding of it's role. In assessing the success of the Arts Council however, a majority (60%) of Musicians Federation members were unable to make any judgement. The majority of those artists who did make a judgement felt that the Council was successful in varying degrees.

Perceived Success of Arts Council in Helping Artists



KEY: Very successful Quite successful Quite unsuccessful Very unsuccessful
 Numbers in brackets = Don't know/not sure

Asked why they thought the Council successful, its grants to individuals were cited as the main reason and its improvement in recent years as the second. Lack of success was ascribed to lack of funds and neglect of particular categories of artist. In apparent contradiction to this the majority of artists are not satisfied with the Council's system of grants and

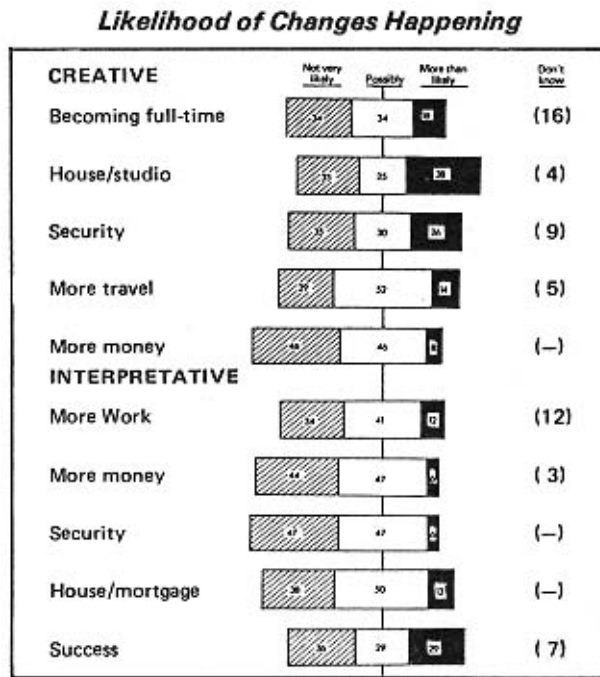
bursaries (which is how the Council make awards to individuals). The system is thought to be too competitive, with too few awards and not enough money.

MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS OR PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS

All artists were asked about membership of trade unions or professional associations. 50% of creative artists stated that they are not members of professional bodies and 62% that they are not members of trade unions. The corresponding figures for interpretative artists are 18% who say they are not members of professional organisations and 22% not members of trade unions. There was a degree of confusion, among musicians in particular, as to whether organisations were professional organisations or trade unions.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

All artists were asked about their aspirations and hopes for the future. In order of importance artists hoped for more (preferably full-time) work, getting a house or studio and paying off a mortgage, security and a steady income, more holidays and more money. Asked how likely they thought these changes would be they were generally pessimistic.



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