

The Impact of COVID-19 on Artists in Centre Wellington

A REPORT OF FINDINGS FROM AN ONLINE SURVEY
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020



Survey Methodology

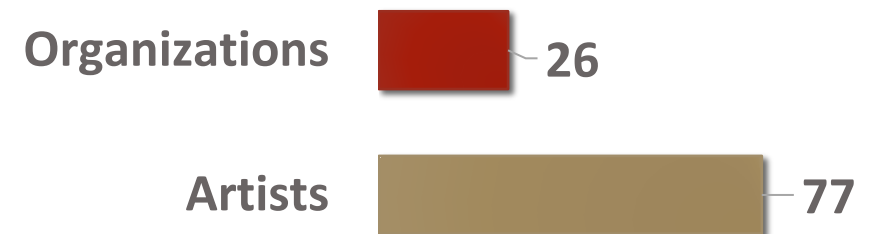
In the fall of 2020 the Elora Fergus Arts Council surveyed artists, arts organizations and arts related businesses to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Township of Centre Wellington.

Responses were collected through an anonymous online questionnaire from November 1 to December 31, 2020.

The arts community was informed of the survey by email, social media, newspaper, radio and word of mouth.

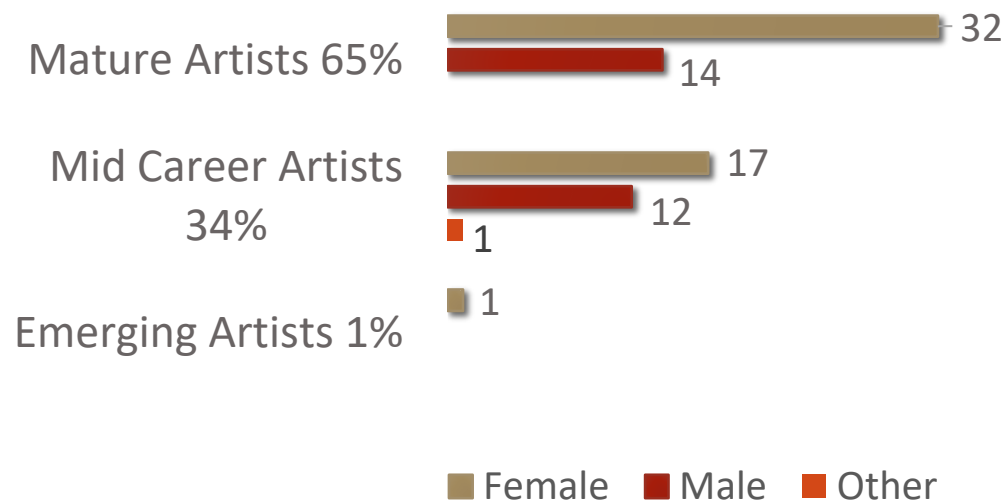
This report provides results from the 77 artists who responded. Two separate reports give results from the arts organizations and arts related businesses that responded.

RESPONDENTS

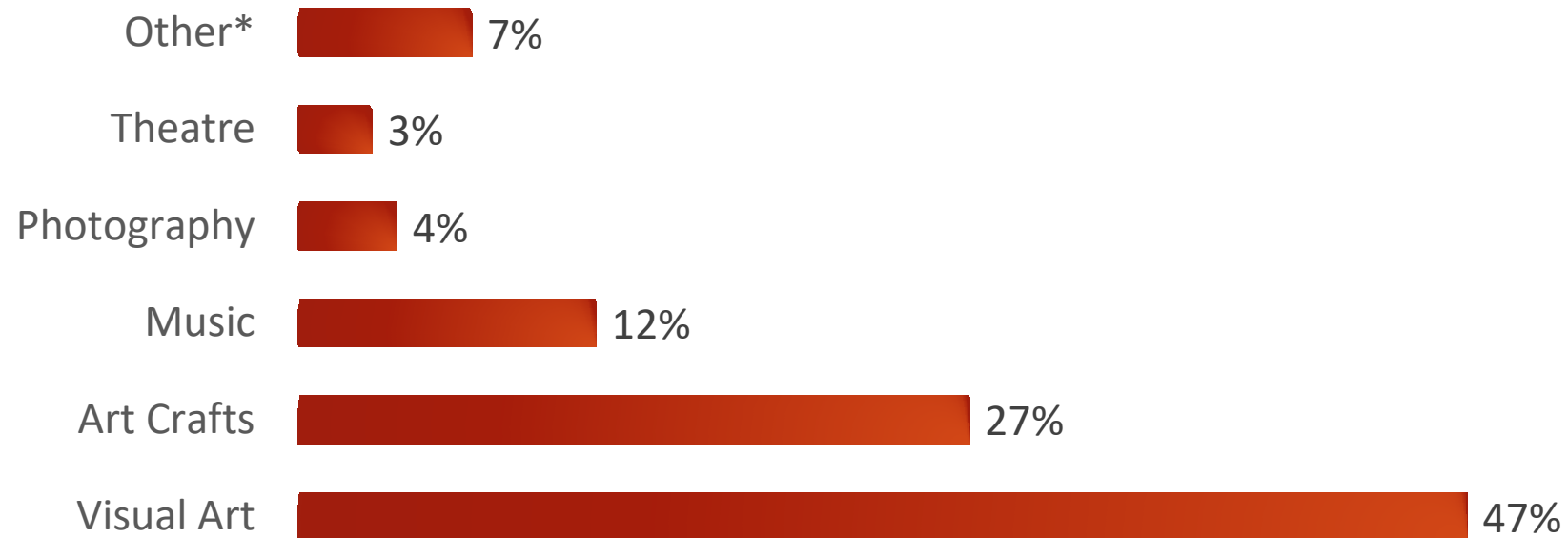


Artist Demographics

- ^ 65% of the artist respondents were over the age of 60
- ^ Slightly more than 1/3 of the respondents were in their mid-career, between the ages of 36 and 59.
- ^ 2/3 of the respondents were women.
- ^ 1/4 of the respondents earned more than half of their income from their art practice.
- ^ Approximately 66% earned less than 25% of their income from art.



Most Frequently Reported Artistic Disciplines



* Other includes Dance, Film, Literary Arts, Performance, Electronic Art, and Costume, Map and Prop Making.

Impact on Artists' Creative Life

The impact on the creative life of the artist respondents was varied. Some found new inspiration and energy, while others ceased creating altogether. Still others took the opportunity to move in new directions.

Creative Output

- ^ Over 25% experienced increased productivity
- ^ 44% decreased artistic activities
- ^ Many took an opportunity to learn, shift, pivot

Volunteer Commitment

- ^ 39% decreased
- ^ 24% stayed the same
- ^ 9% increased

Artist Comments

- *I have taken the time to follow on-line courses and to head in new directions in my subject matter and techniques.*
- *I'm doing more personal practicing (music) to prepare for when things open up again, and I can play professional gigs again*
- *Teach(ing) my students via Skype*
- *I have taken a break from creating but would like to get back to it*
- *My creative endeavors have basically dried up completely.*
- *The pandemic has doubled my sales for 2020. I am not as optimistic for 2021*
- *As a singer songwriter, I have done several FB live performances and been compensated by SOCAN*
- *My work has responded to Black Lives Matter and other events of these days*

Impact on Art Practice

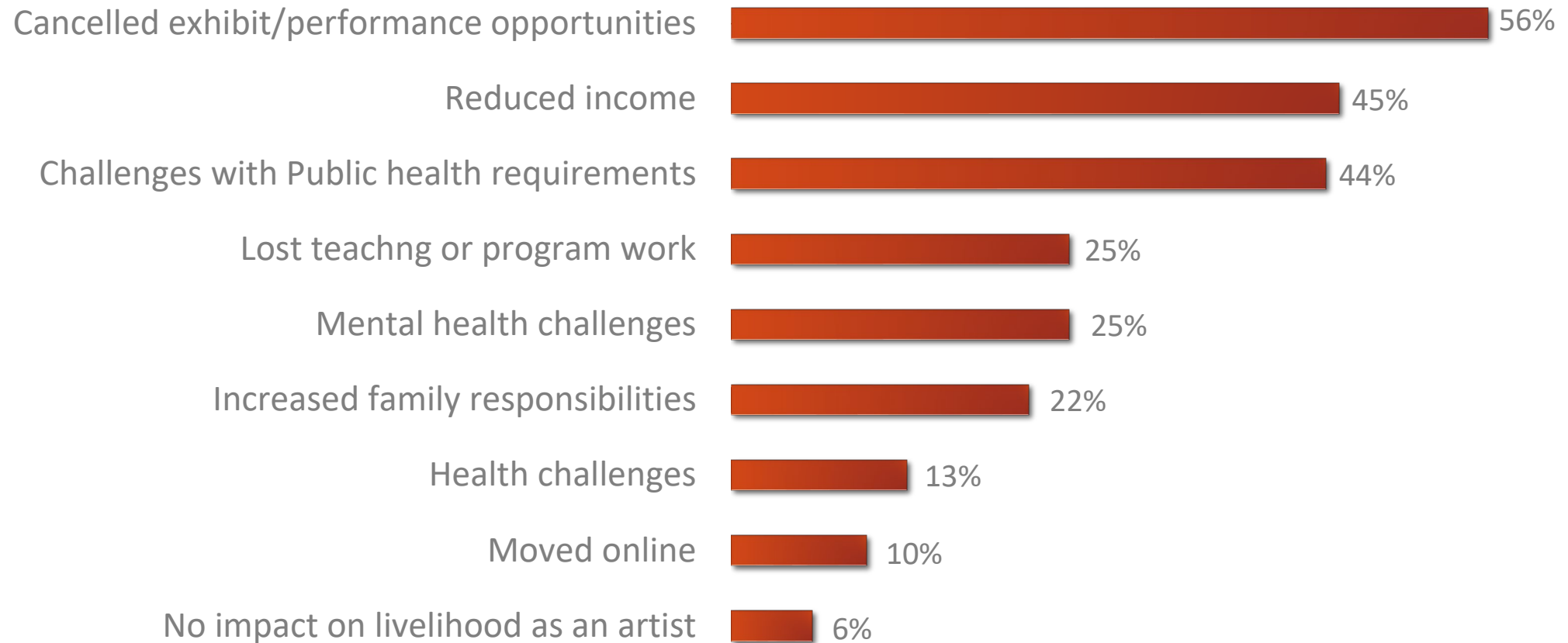
The pandemic had considerable impact on the practice of artists. Only 6% indicated that they were experiencing no impact on their livelihood as an artist.

Reduced opportunities to practice or exhibit their art, lost teaching opportunities, increased family responsibilities all resulted in reduced income.

Only 10% reported moving online. The challenges of learning new technologies and the lack of tech support may have contributed to this low number.

Anxiety from all this uncertainty is sometimes debilitating. As a self employed artist, my income always fluctuates, but this is way beyond that. All the structures, (shows, business associations, customer interactions) disappear without anything to fill that void. It shakes you. – An Artist

Impact on Art Practice



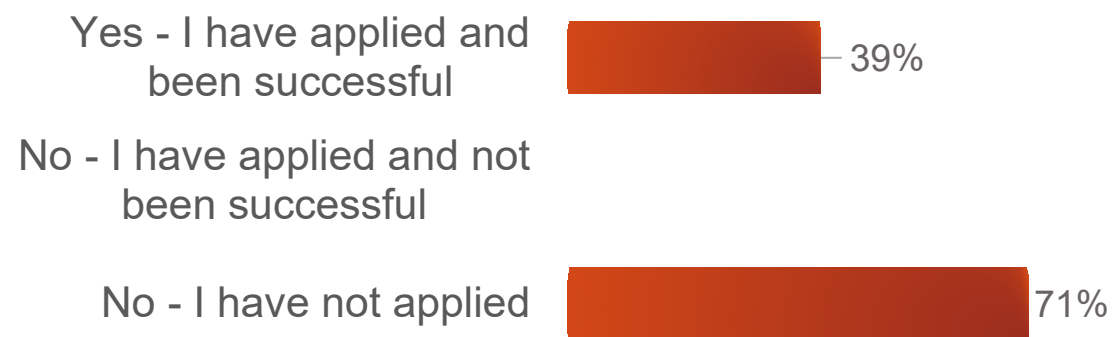
Impact on Income

There was a significant impact on the financial well-being of a large number of artists. The majority maintained confidence in spite of loss of income and uncertainty. Not all were so optimistic.

- ^ 64% felt confident they could meet financial obligations for the foreseeable future.
- ^ 36% expected they would be unable to meet financial obligations by the end of June 2021, or before.
- ^ 7% stated they were unable to do so when they completed the survey.

Government Support Programs

39% of respondents had been able to access government support programs. Many stated they did not qualify for CERB. However, none of the respondents who applied were denied access to support programs. Overall, recipients were pleased with the support they were able to receive.



Impact on Mental Health

Many artists responding to the survey indicated challenges regarding mental health (25%) and access to services (9%). While many artists spend a considerable amount of their time working alone, the pandemic-imposed isolation had a concerning impact on artists.

Artist Comments

feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed

no access to a community of artists

no interaction with other artists, being part of art events.

Loneliness...seeing a long winter approaching with no close friends being able to visit. Stress and distraction causing low creativity... Sadness and lots of sighing.

Cannot create , as my art involves more than one person whom some are not in my "bubble" for social distancing

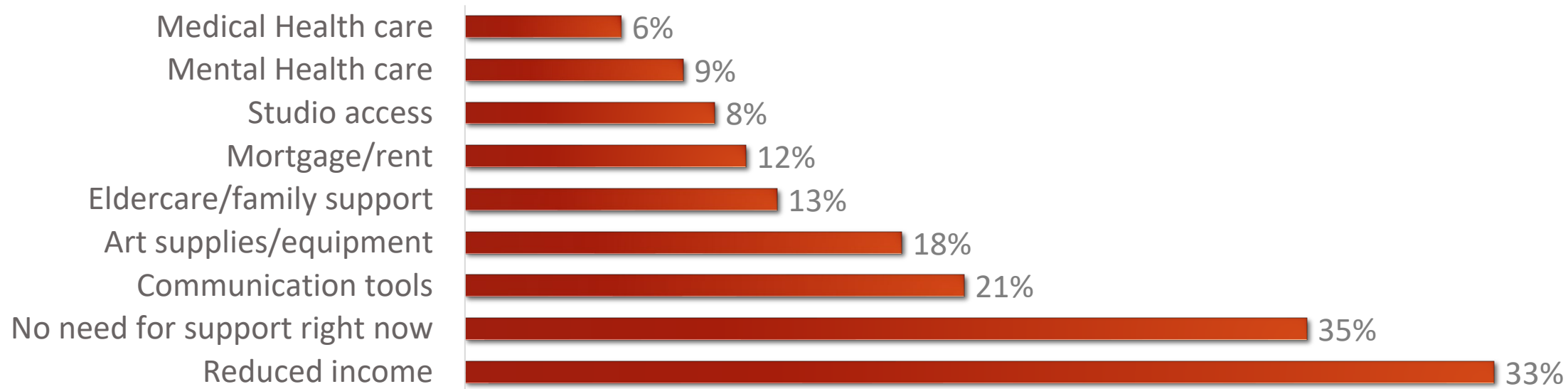
Stressful with social distancing

Issues for Artists

The demographic profile of the respondents indicated that many were of retirement age and did not depend exclusively on their art practice for income. However, they felt significant impact from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ^ 33% reported they were negatively impacted by reduced income
- ^ 21% needed help with communication tools
- ^ Other issues were acquiring art supplies and equipment and accessing studio space
- ^ 9% reported difficulty accessing support for mental health care
- ^ 6% had difficulty accessing medical care
- ^ 35% reported no need for support

Issues for Artists



Other issues included cleaning resources, transportation, child care, personal protective equipment, anxiety, isolation, lack of motivation and no exhibition space.

Major Themes Identified

Many artists were optimistic in spite of the challenges of the past year.

- ^ 71% of artists thought they would be able to weather the pandemic
- ^ However, 25% of the artists reported mental health challenges
- ^ Most artists were creating less because of cancelled programs, events and activities.

Mental health issues are a concern for the arts community as they are for all in Centre Wellington. Having a creative outlet did not make artists immune to the stress of the pandemic.

Artists experienced significant economic impact and many were feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. Up to 1/3 of artists indicated some level of uncertainty about their ability to meet their financial obligations. However 35% artists said they had no need of assistance.

Some artists successfully embraced digital programming, but not everyone was able to master the technical requirements. Other artists took the opportunity to take on-line courses or learn new techniques.



The online survey was conducted by the Elora Fergus Arts Council, a non-profit organization committed to the encouragement and promotion of the arts in Centre Wellington.

The objectives of the EFAC are:

- ^ to advance the understanding and expansion of arts in the community
- ^ to support artists, both amateur and professional
- ^ to work with other organizations to provide information, funding and promotion opportunities for the arts.

We believe that the arts are essential to human development and well-being of society, and that artistic expression is a powerful transformative element in the community, building identity, cohesion and prosperity.

In support of these objectives the EFAC applies for funding from municipal, provincial and private sources and is in part supported by membership fees and fundraising activities.

For more information on these arts programs and more visit elorafergusartscouncil.ca