

ARTISTS' WORKING SPACES SURVEY

In response to ongoing issues with working spaces (or lack thereof) for artists, the Praxis Artist Working Spaces Group group conducted a survey to better assess the situation.



The Artists' Union of Ireland

Artists' Working Spaces Survey

Suitable working space is necessary for artists of all disciplines to thrive creatively and professionally, however sourcing space to work is an ongoing obstacle for artists in Ireland.

Scarcity and affordability are the major problems concerning Working Spaces for artists and Praxis members in Ireland, with insecure tenure, inaccessibility and poor conditions among the other frequently expressed issues.

In response to these problems the Artist Working Spaces Group was founded by Praxis members to monitor the supply, provision, and conditions of artists working spaces in the country and to advocate for better conditions.

The group conducted a survey to better assess the situation for artist working spaces (or lack thereof) in Ireland. In the following document we discuss some of our key findings.

Who responded?

The poll was shared via the Praxis newsletter and social media accounts, it was open to both Praxis members and non members (73% of respondents are Praxis members), a total of 74 participants completed the survey.

Age:

34% of respondents were aged between 30-40, 31% between 20-30, 18% between 40-50, 16% between 50-60.

Gender:

53% of respondents identified as female, 26% as male, 15% non-binary (4% prefer not to say).

Ethnicity:

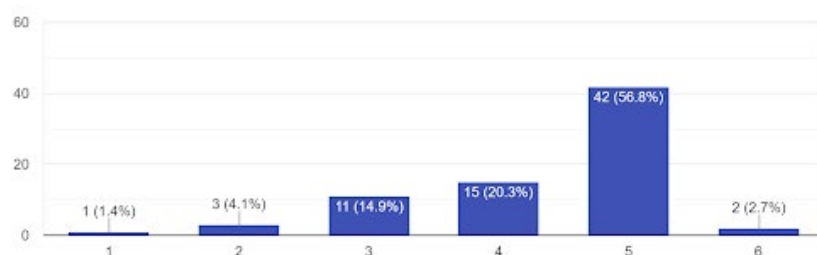
77% of respondents identified as White Irish, 14% any other White background, 4% Black or Black Irish, 3% Asian or Asian Irish.

Location:

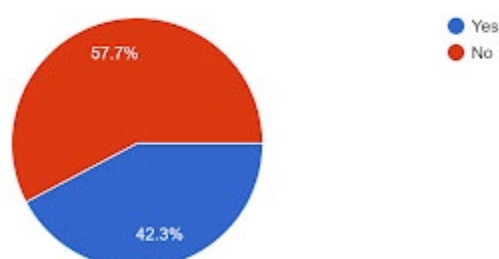
41% of respondents are based in Dublin, 8.5% in Cork, 6% in Galway with the remainder evenly spread around Ireland.

Responses and observations:

How necessary is a studio/workspace for you to produce art?
74 responses

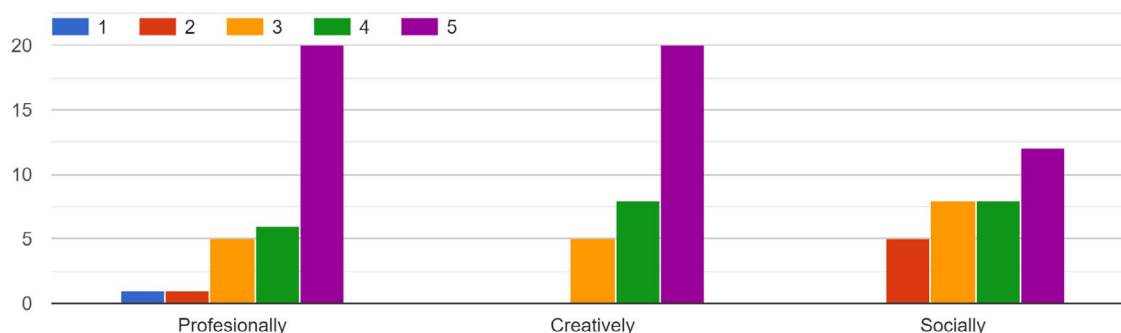


Are you currently renting a studio or workspace?
71 responses



A majority of artists who completed the poll do not currently rent a studio space, while only 1.4% indicated that a studio is 'not at all' necessary for them(option 1 on the scale). Together with the anecdotal responses this points to the fact that not having access to a studio or working space is a barrier for many artists in making work. A majority of those who do currently rent a workspace, on the other hand, responded that it has significantly benefited them professionally, creatively and socially.

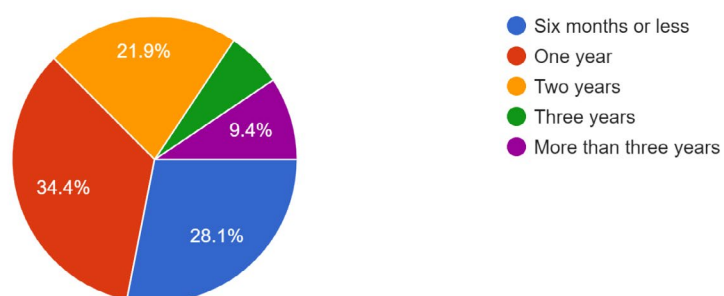
To what degree has having a workspace benefited you in your capacity as an artist?



Less than 10% of respondents who are currently renting a studio space have been in it for more than three years, highlighting the insecurity and lack of long term stability of many artist working spaces. Insecurity of tenure was also an issue raised in anecdotal responses that mentioned only having had access to working space sporadically and on a short term basis through residencies or similar.

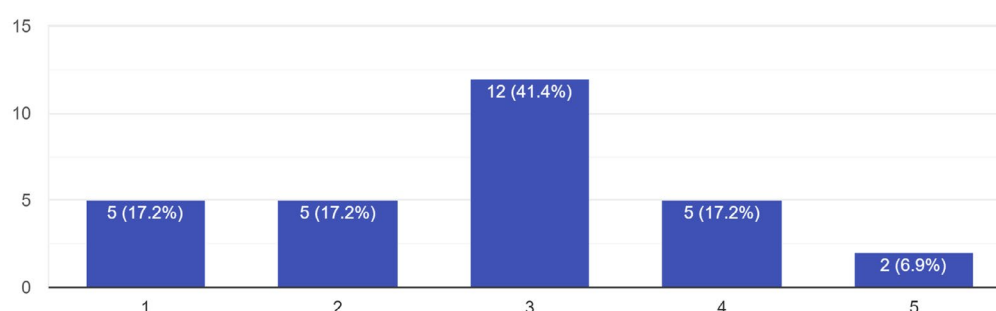
How long have you been in your current workspace?

32 responses



How secure and confident do you feel that you will continue to have access to your work place in the medium to long term

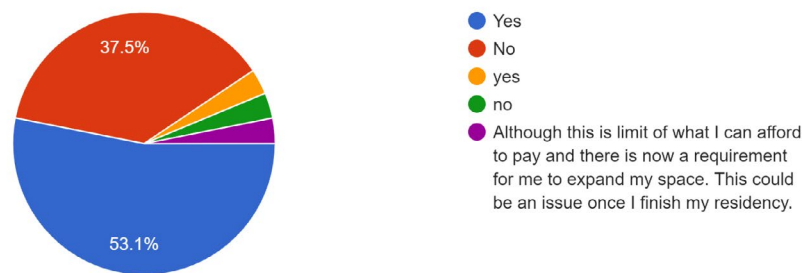
29 responses



Over half of those polled (53.1%) have considered giving up their working space as a result of financial pressure, indicating the disparity between what artists actually earn and what they are required to pay in rent for a space in order to work.

Have you considered giving up your studio as result of financial pressure?

32 responses



Safety & Accessibility

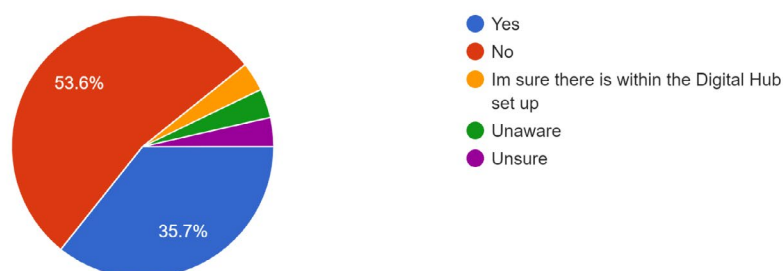
Less than 50% (45.2%) of respondents to a section about conditions agreed that their workspace is well maintained by the landlord, with 22.6% of respondents reporting their spaces as having issues with mould or damp. Just over a quarter were reported as being wheelchair accessible. Only 58.1% responded that their space is sufficiently heated, and 16% of respondents indicated issues with fire safety measures. Only 35% of respondents indicated that there are clear procedures for dealing with harassment in their working space.

"The communal kitchen is located on the 3rd floor and as a disabled artist it is not possible for me to access it. This is not OK as all communal areas should be accessible to all artists"

"Too many artist studios are older, disused buildings that are not only not purpose built for artists, but worryingly close to become a building site, with roofs collapsing, lights and windowsills falling off, and limited running water."

Are there clear procedures for dealing with harassment

28 responses



Diversity of practices and suitability of spaces

The survey respondents work in a range of art forms, including visual art, film, theatre, circus, digital art, literature, performance, storytelling and photography. Many respondents working outside of the visual arts highlighted a lack of dedicated artist working spaces catering to other practices such as music practice or theatre and dance rehearsals, with respondents from multiple counties mentioning that there are very few affordable rehearsal spaces in their county council area. Some respondents also cited the unsuitability of their space as an issue, for example the challenges of

renting space alongside companies.

"I am on the first floor with a software company underneath me. We both rent out the space for the same amount of money, but they demand that I do not make any 'loud' work during 9-5 i.e. hammering, drilling, etc."

"As a musician I could normally work on my practice at home from the hours of 9am to 5pm when most people are at work. Since the pandemic we have seen a huge increase in people working from home which means I am now a major inconvenience and disturbance to them. Everything (to rent) currently is through the private sector and is quite costly."

"As someone who doesn't work in visual arts but equally needs a studio for my creative practice I don't know where or how to find one."

Artists without a place to work

The majority of poll respondents indicated that they do not currently rent a workspace. Of these, the majority (64%) responded that the reason was that they were unable to afford it. 38% said it was because they were unable to find a space suitable for their practice.

Other reasons given were a lack of available work spaces in their area, not being able to find a studio that meets their access needs, and their former studio having closed down. Multiple respondents cited the fact that they do not need studio/rehearsal space all the time, and so would welcome more work spaces with a flexible rental model whereby studio space for example could be rented for shorter periods.

The impact of not having a dedicated workspace:

Respondents indicated that not having access to a dedicated workspace has affected them professionally and creatively. Many also wrote about the negative impact of working from home or ad hoc locations such as cafes, and isolated from artistic community, on their self-esteem, work/life balance, and mental health.

"I work from home, which is do-able but very limiting and lonely. I've been looking for a space for a long time and it's hard to find one that's suitable and affordable. In about 20 years I've only had one studio space for about 18 months. It was brilliant to have, though it was freezing in the winter, had some flooding issues, and also had limited access. Even that was better than nothing."

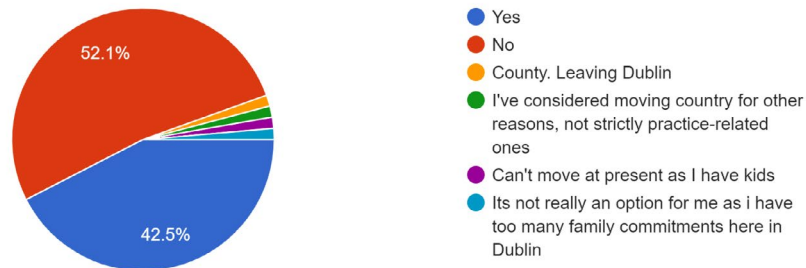
"Periods of time where I've had free office space through industry schemes, residencies, etc have improved the quality of my work. More importantly, having a regular workspace has improved my work/life balance; it's provided structure that I don't otherwise have, allows me to leave my work at my workplace and not take it home with me."

"My living situation isn't conducive to working from home, but I don't think I can justify the cost of a co-working space, so I end up perching in cafes or libraries, and carrying my materials with me. It costs time, can be very frustrating, is susceptible to interruption, and has been bad for self-esteem. I don't need a private studio, just a dedicated desk where I can spread out materials, with wifi and a plug."

Over 40% of respondents have considered leaving Ireland to find more affordable working spaces. This is a worrying figure that highlights the significance of secure and affordable working spaces in maintaining a healthy arts sector in Ireland.

Have you considered moving country to find a more affordable workspace?

73 responses



Conclusion:

The survey has highlighted what is unsurprising to anyone who works as an artist in Ireland. There is a scarcity of working space and much of what is available is unaffordable and unsuitable. As highlighted recently by Pallas cinema in Galway, the property market is hostile to non commercial spaces, local authorities and state bodies can have an active role in protecting existing and fostering new cultural spaces. Steps need to be taken.

Statistics from the CSO and other studies from Theatre Forum and Match in the Dark have shown that workers in the arts and entertainment sector are some of the lowest paid in Ireland. Artists struggle to pay rent on their homes, meaning that the cost of paying an additional rent in the private market is prohibitive for many, excluding them from accessing suitable workspaces in the first place. This reality has negatively affected working conditions for artists and limited them in their professional and creative capacities, therefore negatively impacting the arts as a whole in Ireland. We are advocating for quality and affordable multipurpose artist working spaces.

It is essential that artists are part of the conversation on the planning and management of artist working from early on to ensure that economic and accessibility factors are taken into account and that the diversity of artistic practice present in Ireland can be appropriately supported. As artists we have the necessary experience and expertise to understand what is necessary in our workplaces.

We believe the best way for artists to have influence on our working conditions and our working spaces is through collective organising as a union. Join Praxis to amplify your voice on this and other issues. If your already a Praxis member and have would like to get involved in the Artists Working Space group get in touch at secretary@praxisunion.ie

Resources:

Pay and Conditions in the Music Industry and Performing Arts Sector | Theatre Forum

<https://theatreforum.ie/forum-notice/pay-and-conditions-in-the-music-industry-and-performing-arts-sector/>

Writers pay and conditions, match in the dark:

Writers Pay & Conditions

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/ec8c806d-cb37-49e9-97dc-ae75831ddf51/0%20Writers%20Pay%20and%20Conditions%20Doc.pdf>

<https://ncfa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NCFA-PBS-FINAL-2022-for-web.pdf>

<https://ncfa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NCFA-PBS-FINAL-2022-for-web.pdf>

Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027 - MerrionStreet

https://merrionstreet.ie/en/news-room/news/investing_in_our_culture_language_and_heritage_2018_%E2%80%93_2027.html

*Models in other countries:

Amsterdam:

<https://www.amsterdam.nl/kunst-cultuur/ateliers-broedplaatsen/over-broedplaatsen/broedplaatse-noverzicht/>

Berlin:

<https://www.bbk-kulturwerk.de/atelierfoerderung-berlin>

Brussels (organisations that facilitate affordable meanwhile use of state and private-owned properties by arts and cultural organisations and volunteer-run local projects):

Communa <https://communa.be/en/home/>

Toestand <https://www.toestand.be/en>