



CREATIVE
ACCESS

On The Verge

**The impact of coronavirus on
underrepresented communities
within the creative industries**

June 2020

Key Findings

Creative Access is a social enterprise, unrivalled in diverse recruitment and inclusion. We work with candidates and organisations across the whole creative industries, including in television, film, radio, publishing, journalism, museums, galleries, talent, music, advertising, marketing and PR. Creative Access is largely funded by our employer partners who are committed to improving diversity and inclusion within their organisations. We take a wholehearted approach to diversity, that covers recruitment, candidate support and bespoke employer training. All profits go back into growing, training and supporting our community.

This survey was conducted to help understand the impact of coronavirus on emerging creatives and what resources we should be providing in order to best support our community.

40% said they have run out of money already or are about to do so

67% said their mental health is suffering due to coronavirus

40% had been furloughed, made redundant or had work cancelled or postponed

18% of those in work, said they had work cancelled or postponed because of coronavirus

18% of those in work said they had been furloughed

44% said their primary source of income has changed since coronavirus

80% said their priority is to find a new job or freelance work

81% wanted support via mentoring and access to training

Overview

There remains much work to be done in terms of supporting people from underrepresented communities to secure sustainable careers in the creative industries; for young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups...

The coronavirus pandemic has profoundly changed the way people live their lives and its devastating impact is likely to be felt globally for years to come. It's against this backdrop that African American George Floyd was brutally murdered by police officers in the US sparking protests around the world.

The death of George Floyd has further exposed longstanding systematic and structural inequality in both the US and the UK.

The Creative Access community are dealing with immense challenges and we felt it was important to gain further insight into their experiences in order to best support going forwards. An earlier poll of our current community found

85% of current trainees are either not being kept on post their internship or are unsure if they will be.

This compares with a pre-COVID19 rate of over 90% of trainees moving on to full time work at the end of their internships.

The Centre for London suggests that the creative industries have been particularly badly affected by the pandemic and predicts 'a lack of support in times of crisis will be a big turnoff for those considering a career in the arts, and damage recent efforts to make the cultural industries more diverse.'

There remains much work to be done in terms of supporting people from underrepresented communities to secure sustainable careers in the creative industries; for young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, lower-socioeconomic backgrounds or those with disabilities to thrive in inclusive work environments where they are nurtured to reach their full potential and fully embraced.

This document summarises who took part in the research, key findings and recommendations in line with our long-standing vision of a day when Britain's society is truly reflected in our creative industries.

Resources

Nesta (2020) There will be no 'back to normal'
<https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/there-will-be-no-back-normal/>

Centre for London (2020) Coronavirus will irreparably damage London's creative heart without proper support for freelancers
<https://www.centreforlondon.org/blog/coronavirus-creative-industries/>

Who took part?

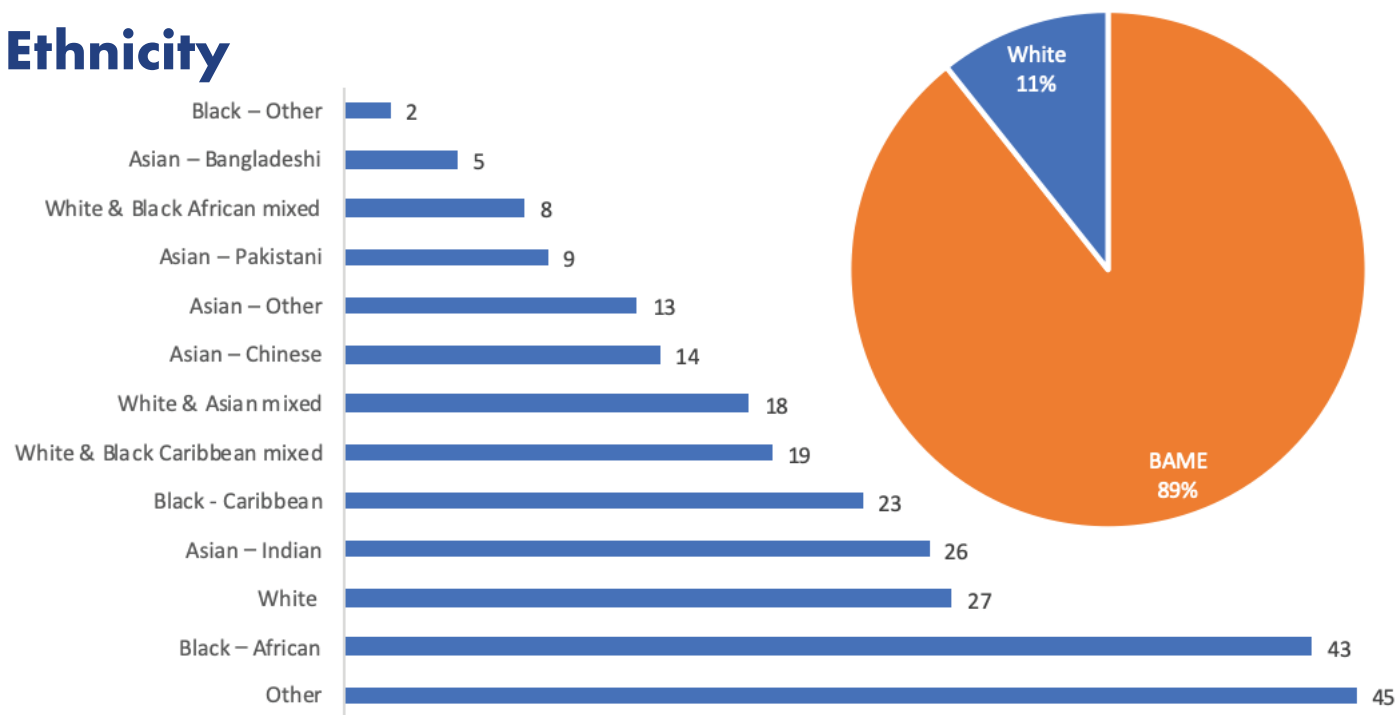
89% respondents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds

19% of respondents identified as having a disability

252 survey respondents in total, over half of people (56%) had under 2 years of experience in the creative industries and the majority of people (86%) were aged 21 – 30 years.

Survey respondents were from a range of ethnicities, the largest proportion of whom selected 'other' (18%) with many choosing to self-describe (such as: Arab, Black Arab, Half Maltese and Half Turkish, Indo-Caribbean, Mixed, Mixed - European and Asian, Mixed - Filipino and White, Mixed Arabic and Mexican, White and Arab, White and Asian Caribbean mixed, White and Asian-African mixed).

Ethnicity



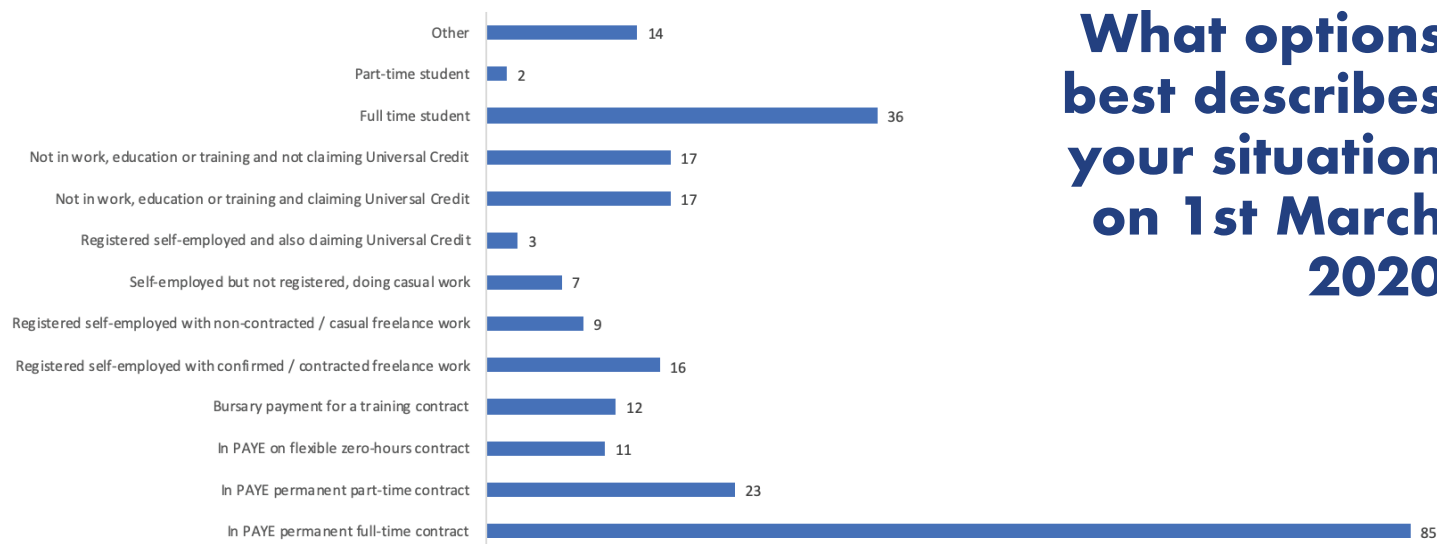
Nearly a fifth of people (19%) considered themselves to have a disability

85% of the people were female

Most people (67%) had a degree, and a much smaller proportion (19%) had a higher degree as their highest formal qualification

Our findings

In the next year, 80% people are prioritising paid work (to get a permanent job, secure freelance work or secure a paid internship/traineeship). **Improving mental well-being was also high on the agenda.** Returning to education was considered least important. **40% of those in work are looking to get a promotion/ pay rise at work.**



**What options
best describes
your situation
on 1st March
2020**

Working in Television was the most popular sector in terms of people currently working in the sector or would like to, followed by Film and then Book Publishing. Although, this may have been skewed by recent Television and Film themed programming activity. **Working in Music and Radio was considered least popular.**

44% people said their primary source of income has changed in lockdown. Out of those who had found that their primary source of income had changed, the majority (69%) had under 5 years of experience in the creative industries suggesting that **aspiring and early creative career professionals have been most adversely affected.**

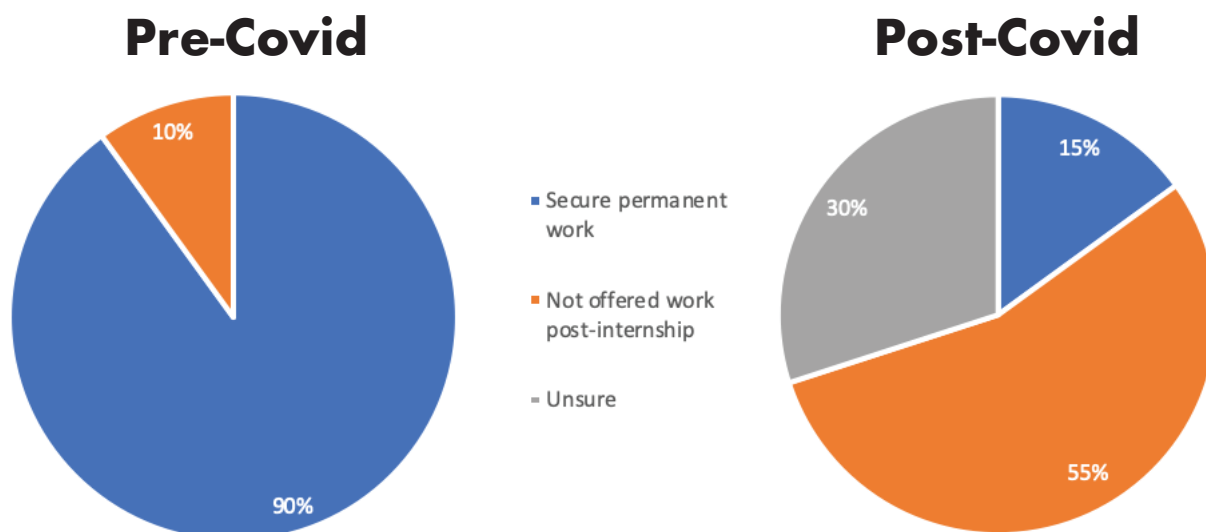
The majority of survey responses (65%) were based in London, followed by South East (10%). Over 1 in 10 people (15%) have already had to relocate due to COVID-19 – we imagine this is likely to increase with financial instability.

On the 1st March 2020 and pre-pandemic, **a third of people (34%) were on a PAYE permanent full-time contract,** whereas at the point of completing the survey (late May – early June) **those formerly on PAYE employment dropped to under a quarter of people (23%)** who were still being paid to do the same job. **Nearly a fifth of people (18%) had been furloughed.**

Our findings

Interns offered work

Coronavirus has had a huge impact on the likelihood of current Creative Access trainees being kept on post-internship:



Over a third of people (35%) said they are running out of money and becoming financially unstable, a small number of people (4%) said they are already financially unstable and need immediate assistance – which is very concerning as this is likely to increase.

The majority of people found that COVID-19 had mostly affected their social life, closely followed by mental wellbeing and then job security. With their education and ability to save money least affected. Here's a small selection of responses when asked to describe how these aspects had been affected:

Our findings

"I lost the majority of my freelance work at the beginning of lockdown, but have been extremely lucky enough to secure a new long-term contract elsewhere. However, since lockdown, I've been all over the place feeling unmotivated, anxious and depressed, which has been affecting my work and wellbeing."

"Since I don't have regular income I have had to severely limit my spending. Previously I was able to support my family financially but now I am not able to do so. I am depending on my student finance maintenance loan to carry me through... My mental wellbeing has been somewhat affected by the lockdown. Mostly it has caused me a constant high level of anxiety which has impacted my energy levels and therefore my capability to put in work towards my studies and towards my hobbies."

"All are worse off really... Furlough has had a massive impact - finances, job security, mental health, prospects... Lack of access to creative and sports activities has also had a massive impact... Also, because of shielding, it's difficult to substitute any of these... I have tried to make use of the available time to pursue creative projects, but the stress and need to seek other work make this difficult"

"My work was my hobby... I built my work with my friends and made my income doing something that I was very passionate about. Since lockdown, I have not only lost my income, but the work that I have been putting my all into"

"I didn't have access to resources at university to complete my final projects or portfolio pieces, and am now trying to enter the workforce with little to no assistance available."

"I lost most of my freelance work so I'm not really getting income. Good thing is I'm not spending as much as I used to. Working in the theatre industry has made things very uncertain"

Short term recommendations for the creative industries

In light of the above findings, there are some immediate opportunities that were identified as a result of the survey which will be implemented as early as possible.

The most popular services that people would find helpful included the following, in order of preference:

1. Online training courses for **industry specific skills development**
2. Alerts about **internships, jobs and freelance opportunities** in the creative industries
3. Remote **mentoring** by experienced industry professionals

In terms of other suggestions raised, there were three emerging themes:

Maximising opportunities - people wanted support with making the most of opportunities presented to them i.e. 'explanations on how to take maximum advantage of services being offered because some of us are happy to receive some good support but have never done it before... for example, when getting mentored for the first time you need advice on how to communicate...'

Building a national offer - people wanted to expand training and employment opportunities across the UK. For example, 'posting more internships or jobs available in Birmingham would be great as currently they are quite London-based' or 'can the meetings with Creative Access offer an online option. Because I don't live in London, it costs a lot to travel...'

Fostering community - people acknowledged peer-peer support between those with similar lived experiences can be invaluable and combat feelings of isolation: 'By providing a community. Things like the book club where like-minded people can connect and discuss.'

It is evident that young people from under-represented communities are disproportionately impacted by recent events; more likely to be furloughed, have work cancelled or postponed; more likely to be affected by the COVID virus itself and more likely to be impacted by the longstanding structural inequality within the creative industries. Now more than ever there is a need for diverse voices to be heard and amplified. As a sector which aims to represent society, the creative industries have a responsibility to address this issue. It will take more than words.

Long term recommendations for the creative industries

These recommendations are the culmination of research and many years of working in collaboration with both young people and our employer partners across the creative industries.

1. **Re-assess your company brand values:** If you're serious about becoming a diverse workplace is this explicitly stated in your core values? Diversity is not an add-on, it is at the heart of your brand culture.
2. **Evaluate where you are at:** Look at your data; can you attract, recruit, develop and retain underrepresented workers? Watch out for micro inequities in existing teams. Are there patterns to who is included and who's being left behind? Where there are weaknesses, figure out why and what you can do to solve this.
3. **Ask every person at your company how they feel you are doing:** Conduct regular anonymous surveys, determine where your short comings are and respond to feedback. Gaining insight on how to improve your workplace from employees is a crucial step towards diversity.
4. **Create a diversity and inclusion steering group:** Discuss the challenges and solutions, hold your company accountable to your targets and ensure momentum is maintained over time.
5. **Set diversity targets and goals:** Be transparent about what change you want to achieve, over what period of time and how you will be accountable. Book in regular review meetings.
6. **Positively recruit from under-represented groups:** Change your hiring process so you are actively recruiting from under-represented communities. Avoid hiring by word of mouth. Advertise opportunities across a range of platforms to enable a broader range of candidates to find your role and apply.
7. **Look at your materials:** Review your website, job descriptions, imagery and language used to make sure you're as welcoming to all. Mix up who you follow on social media and which places you post to.
8. **Progress existing staff from under-represented communities:** Invest in your team; support their retention and progression. Encourage staff forums and offer support structures and opportunities for sponsorship and mentoring. Ensure reasonable adjustments to make sure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, aren't substantially disadvantaged when applying for roles and doing their jobs.
9. **Train your staff:** Help people to understand the benefits of a diverse workforce, identify and overcome their unconscious biases and become allies. Become a role model and take personal responsibility for leading change. Invite external speakers and set up industry related networking opportunities to hear new perspectives which challenge your thinking.
10. **Become culturally aware:** Workers from all backgrounds should feel comfortable in their workplace. Recognise and celebrate special days in the calendar to make every team member feel seen and included.



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@_creativeaccess

info@creativeaccess.org.uk
www.creativeaccess.org.uk