



AOI Covid-19 Illustrators Survey

In May 2020 the AOI asked members to complete a survey about the impact of Covid-19 on membership. Questions were the same or similar to other creator organizations, allowing a sharing of anonymized data.

Who responded?

132 respondents, which is about 5% of membership. It reflects a spread of illustrators at various stages of their career - from starting out to being well established. The majority (65%) have illustration as the main source of their income.

Impact on Finances

73% respondent's income has decreased since the start of the pandemic.

While the picture is not clear on the longer term impact, 21% think their income will decrease by up to 50% and a further 18% consider that up to 75%.

The majority of respondents see their losses so far as between £1k - £3K, some cited losses of under £500, and other of over £15K. The survey indicated that respondents had lost around £300K in the first two months of Covid-19. If these figures are extrapolated our membership has lost six million pounds as a result of Covid-19 to date.

97% of respondents are in some way concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on their household finances. 46% are either highly or extremely concerned.

Impact on Job Opportunities

The majority of respondents cited a total or significant decrease in commissions. Publishing, Editorial seem worst hit along with areas affected by the pandemic - hospitality, retail and music.

There is a significant impact on the loss of teaching (formal and informal) jobs, and a decrease in sales from online shops.

89% are in some way concerned about their ability to continue to work due to Covid-19.

Impact on Wellbeing

43% are highly or extremely concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on their wellbeing, and 91% are in some way concerned.

Overwhelmingly the impact on mental health was noted in a final open question. Stress came from the financial impact, but also the uncertainty, challenging home environments and the juggle of work and childcare.

Support accessed through Covid-19

71% have not applied for a grant (4% were successful, and 9% were still waiting to hear. 14% thought they would apply in the future)

42% do not think they are eligible for the Government's income support measures, with a further 27% not yet sure if they are.

62% do not think they will benefit from Universal Credit or the benefits system, with a further 27% not knowing if they are eligible.

60% do not feel the government is doing enough to support self-employed workers and the organisations they work with. Only 7% think they are doing enough.

The main concern of the Government support cited was for those who are not eligible for SEISS as at the start of their careers. This was echoed by a despondency from those that do get financial support but are aware that others don't.

The next most common complaint was the slowness of the scheme and the delay in payment being made.

There was concern about ltd companies and a general feeling of being second class citizens - despite paying taxes.

Long Term Impact

There was significant concern about the long-term impact of Covid-19 on the illustration industry. This can be seen in two ways;

1. Creative paralysis. Many spoke of being creatively paralyzed due to the situation. Others articulated how the lack of commissions, or cancelled opportunities was stalling their careers, stopping them from taking the next step in their professional growth.
2. Self-employed lag. It will take self-employed creatives longer than PAYE staff to rebuild their work and their resources. Support must stay in place to support this rebuilding, but also proactively stimulate commissions being re-started.