MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN MUSIC AND LIVE PERFORMING ARTS SURVEY MAY 2022

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Contents

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project was initiated in response to Support Act's goals of establishing a baseline for the mental health and wellbeing of people working in the music and live performing arts sectors in 2022. The Centre for Social Impact Swinburne was engaged to conduct this research between January and May 2022, through an online survey of 1304 people working in music and live performing arts.

The aim of this research was to:

- Provide an updated picture of the mental health and wellbeing of people working in music and live performing arts in Australia, including the factors that are currently impacting people's work and lives (such as COVID-19); and

- To identify the kinds of supports or services that are making a difference or may be needed.

This research found that:

- A high proportion of people working in music and live performing arts are currently experiencing high or very high levels of distress and are continuing to feel the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their livelihoods and lives.

- People working in music or live performing arts reported a current Anxiety condition at more than twice the prevalence of the general population in Australia, while the proportion of people with Depression was more than two and a half times that of the general population.

- More than half of participants had used alcohol or drugs to help with the stress they had experienced over the last two years, and a quarter had struggled to cut down or stop their substance use.

- Worryingly, participants in this research had higher levels suicidal thoughts, plans or attempts than both the general population, and compared with previous research on people working in entertainment in Australia before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn / Entertainment Assist 2016).

- The main types of negative impacts participants identified from the COVID-19 pandemic included impacts to their social contact and mental health, as well as reduced income, increased financial stress, and disrupted career development or job loss.

- Higher proportions of creatives/performers and production/technical workers reported losing their job/s, reductions in their income or increased financial stress than management/administrative workers, who more commonly had permanent employment.

- More than a fifth of people working within music and live performing arts reported very low incomes, at a level below the poverty-line in Australia (less than $30,000). Having an annual income this low affects both people's ability to afford the everyday necessities of life, and impacts wellbeing (Capic et al. 2017).

- A very low proportion of people in music and live performing arts said they always felt safe at work. Many participants reported experiencing insecure and unsafe and working conditions within music and live performing arts, including exposure to bullying, ageism, racism, unwanted sexual attention or abuse, discrimination based on gender, sexuality, or disability, and other kinds of mistreatment.

- Participants emphasised the need for fair pay and conditions, as well as for work environments that more consistently protect the physical and psychological safety of people working in music and live performing arts.

- Feelings of belonging to the music and live performing arts community were mixed, with some participants expressing a strong feeling of belonging in this world, but many reporting exclusion because of attitudes about their identity, location, role or genre of work.

- Participants said that positive relationships and support from people in their lives; and access to income (through income support payments, work, or Support Act's financial crisis relief services) made the biggest difference to their mental health and wellbeing. Mental health services (through Support Act and other services) were also of noted importance for some.

- The strong focus on social and financial support alongside mental health services reflects the findings of other research on the factors that can help reduce negative mental health impacts in the wake of COVID-19 (Atkinson et al. 2020), or following the loss of work (Brydsten, Hammarström, & San Sebastian, 2018).

- When asked what kinds of supports or services they wanted for the future, participants identified a need for broader systemic change within the music and live performing arts sector - for example, through the creation of a code of conduct that can catalyse real change towards improved working conditions for people working in music and live performing arts, and through continued advocacy to government for support of the sector.

- This research indicates that many of the mental health and work-related issues identified in previous research in Australia continue to impact people in music and live performing arts, with added stressors arising from the pandemic, and other events such as the recent floods significantly affecting some participants.

- With arts and recreation services among the sectors most affected by job loss in the wake of COVID-19 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020a), and associated financial and mental health impacts for people working in music and live performing arts, employment and financial supports continue to be needed alongside other supports for mental health.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a summary of findings from research into the mental health and wellbeing of people working in music and live performing arts in Australia. The report contains content relating to demographics, employment and income, psychological distress, mental health conditions, suicidality, alcohol and other drugs, working conditions, safety and negative experiences related to work. It also discusses what people working in music and live performing arts have found supportive of their mental health and wellbeing, and what changes people would like to see in future to support the mental health and wellbeing of people in music and live performing arts.

This report uses the terms 'psychological distress' and 'mental health condition/s', but not everyone identifies with these terms. The concept of mental health/illness as commonly used in Australia is grounded in western medical tradition, but understandings of distress and wellbeing differ across people and cultures (Knifton, 2012; Westerman, 2004).

While western culture often discusses mental health in terms of a medical condition located within an individual, other cultures and communities may view mental health or social and emotional wellbeing differently, for example, problems with mental health may be viewed as *"distress caused by social and economic factors and life challenges"* (Knifton 2012, p.292).

First Nations perspectives on social and emotional wellbeing may be more holistic, acknowledging that *"a person's wellbeing is determined by a range of inter-related domains: body, mind and emotions, family and kinship, community, culture, Country, and spirituality"* (Dudgeon, Bray, D'Costa, & Walker, 2020, p.316).

While this research draws on the terms and conceptualisations of mental health commonly used in Australia, it also acknowledges that mental health and wellbeing are influenced by social factors (Allen et al. 2014), and may be supported by a range of relationships, connections and supports within people's lives.

Background to this research

Previous research on mental health and wellbeing within music, performing arts and entertainment in Australia has found that people working in this sector experience higher rates of mental health symptoms, drug and alcohol use, and suicidality than the general population (van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn / Entertainment Assist 2016). While these findings already painted a concerning picture of the mental health of people working in music and performing arts, COVID-19 has since taken its own toll. The last two years have been particularly challenging for those who work in the music and live performing arts sectors, with arts and recreation services among the sectors most affected by job loss in the wake of COVID-19 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020a), and flow on impacts including financial insecurity and reported worsening of mental health (Everymind 2021; Rusak, Goh, Barbe, Newman & Blevins 2021).

Loss of work and unemployment are generally associated with negative effects on mental health (Hergenrather et al. 2015), but access to financial and social supports can help to buffer these effects (Brydsten, Hammarström, & San Sebastian, 2018). Australian research into protecting mental health and preventing suicide as we deal with the effects of COVID-19 has found that extending employment/income support programs and increasing community based mental health services were two of the most impactful strategies to reduce risks to mental health, and suicide (Atkinson et al. 2020). Job and income security, and safe, decent working conditions remain important contributors to mental health (Allen 2014; Kaleveld, Bock & Maycock-Sayce 2020).

The aim of this research was to:

- Provide an updated picture of the mental health and wellbeing of people working in music and live performing arts in Australia, including the factors that are currently impacting people's work and lives (such as COVID-19); and

- To identify the kinds of supports or services that are making a difference or may be needed.

The new evidence generated through this research has the potential to inform the sector about mental health risk factors that may need further attention, and to inform changes in service provision to better support the mental health and wellbeing of people working in music and live performing arts in the wake of COVID-19.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research project was initiated in response to Support Act's goals of establishing a baseline for the mental health and wellbeing of people working in the music and live performing arts sectors in 2022.

Support Act is the music industry's charity - providing crisis relief to musicians, mangers, crew and music workers across all genres who are unable to work due to illness, injury, a mental health issue or some other crisis, including the impact of COVID-19 on live music.

Over the course of the pandemic, Support Act has disbursed more than 16,000 Crisis Relief Grants to music and live performing arts workers, valued at over $35 million, thanks to the support of the Australian and NSW Governments. It has also supported the mental health and wellbeing of thousands through extensive prevention, education and training programming, including Mental Health First Aid, Workplace Wellbeing Check-Ins, First Nations-specific programming such as Yarning Strong, and the Wellbeing Helpline.

Support Act is committed to continuous quality improvement and evidence-based programming, and sought to engage a reputable research partner to develop baseline data on the general mental health of people working in music and live performing arts in 2022, and understand the impacts COVID-19 has had to date. The Centre for Social Impact Swinburne was engaged to conduct this research between January and May 2022.

The research involved an online survey targeted to people working in music and live performing arts, including people who have accessed Support Act's services. The survey included questions about:

- Demographics (including gender, age, cultural identity, and professional role)

- Mental health (including level of psychological distress, having a mental health condition, experiencing suicidality, and use of alcohol or other drugs)

- Factors impacting people's mental health (including the impacts of COVID-19, and other factors relating to employment within the music and live performing arts sector)

- Use of programs/services (including the most commonly used Support Act services, as well as other services used by participants)

- What services people would like to see available in future.

Survey design

The survey was co-designed with Support Act, and drew on the findings of previous published research into mental health in music and live performing arts (e.g. van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn / Entertainment Assist 2016; Rusak, Goh, Barbe, Newman & Blevins 2021); and research on mental health in Australia in the wake of COVID-19 (Atkinson et al. 2020; Elmes, Kaleveld, Olekalns & Clark 2021) to identify relevant questions and issues to explore.

Survey distribution

The survey information and link were shared publicly online via Support Act's website, and through communications to:

- Over 36,000 Support Act contacts

- A wide range of organisations and industry bodies in music and live performing arts

- 37,000 followers of Support Act's social media channels across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

The survey information was also shared through networks of the Centre for Social Impact and the research team.

People were invited to participate in the survey if they:

- Work (or usually work) in music or live performing arts in Australia

- Were aged 16 years or older.

Survey respondents

A total of 1568 survey responses were received between March and April 2022. While this is a reasonable sample size, it represents a small proportion of the total number of people that the survey information was distributed to.

Responses were screened for:

- Uniqueness (not being a duplicate response according to survey meta-data checks)

- Validity (not being a fraudulent or spam response according to survey meta-data checks)

- Relevance (working in music or live performing arts in Australia)

- Completeness (progression past the initial screening questions to provide at least some further question responses).

Following screening of survey responses, a total of 264 responses were excluded. Reasons for exclusion are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Survey responses excluded from analysis

Is this response excluded from the final sample, and if so, why?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	1304	83.2	83.2	83.2
	Yes - Not working in Australia	25	1.6	1.6	84.8
	Yes - Not working in Music or Live performing arts	40	2.6	2.6	87.3
	Yes - Duplicate response	89	5.7	5.7	93.0
	Yes - Fraudulent response	4	.3	.3	93.2
	Yes - Incomplete response	90	5.7	5.7	99.0
	Yes - Spam response	16	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	1568	100.0	100.0	

A total of 1304 responses passed all response quality checks and were included in analysis. Of these included responses:

- 1010 (77.5%) were fully completed, and

- 294 (22.5%) were partially completed.

Missing data

Survey respondents were not forced to answer any questions beyond those to determine their eligibility to participate in this research (usually working in music or live performing arts and working in Australia). This means that some findings have missing data from respondents who did not answer the relevant question/s. Missing responses could occur because a question was seen by a respondent, but they chose not to answer it. Missing responses could also occur if the question was not seen – either because the person did not progress to the stage of the survey where this question was asked, or if the question was skipped by the survey logic because it was not relevant to the person based on their previous responses. Each section of the report notes the number of respondents who did and did not answer a question. Proportions are given as a percentage of all 1304 respondents.

Recoded data

Some data was recoded to the relevant response option if a participant selected "Other" but then clearly indicated in their text response that they fit within an existing response option. For example, in cases where respondents stated in their text comments that they worked freelance or as a contractor, their employment status was recoded from "other" to "self-employed/sole-trader or contractor".

Where additional response categories clearly emerged from the "Other" text responses that were submitted, new options were created, and the relevant responses were recoded to these. If a response was ambiguous and didn't clearly belong to a more specific option, it was left as a general "Other" response. If a response was unclear or contradicted other data provided by the respondent, the relevant response/s were recoded as missing data.

Data analysis

For the analysis presented in this summary report, people working in music and live performing arts are grouped together.

Where applicable (for example, where findings differed by role type), data were also analysed by the broad category of respondents' main type of role in music or live performing arts:

- creative / performer

- production / technical, or

- management / administrative.

Percentages are provided to one decimal point. Taken together, total proportions may add up to 0.1% either side of 100%, due to rounding error. Income figures are reported in Australian dollars ($AUD).

Caution required when interpreting the survey findings

This survey did not involve a random sample of people working in music and live performing arts, and participants self-selected into completing the survey. Because the survey respondents self-selected into participating, and the response rate compared to the total number of people who received the survey information is quite low (<5%), it's possible that the people who responded to the survey may differ from those who chose not to participate.

For these reasons, the findings of this research may not be representative of everyone who works in music and live performing arts in Australia and cannot be generalised across this whole population. However, these findings still provide useful insights into the experiences of those who chose to participate in this research, and some of the common issues and challenges affecting the mental health and wellbeing of this group of people working in music and live performing arts.

FINDINGS

This section summarises the findings from our 2022 online survey of people working in music and live performing arts in Australia.

Music and live performing arts respondents

There were 1304 valid responses to the survey, from:

- people working in music (1044 responses), and

- people working in other live performing arts (260 responses).

Main music or live performing arts jobs of participants

Of all 1304 people who responded to the survey:

- 513 (39.3%) were Musicians

- 198 (15.2%) were Crew

- 125 (9.6%) were Music workers

- 118 (9%) were Management/Administrators in another kind of live performing arts

- 114 (8.7%) were Artists or Creatives in another kind of live performing arts.

- 63 (4.8%) were Songwriters/Composers

- 43 (3.3%) were Artist managers/Band managers/Music managers

- 28 (2.1%) were Production/Technical Crew within another kind of live performing arts

- 25 (1.9%) were Sound engineers (working either live or in studio settings)

- 23 (1.8%) were Record Producers, Track Producers or Music Producers

- 19 (1.5%) were Promoters

- 16 (1.2%) were Booking/Talent Agents

- 13 (1%) were Tour Managers, and

- 6 (0.5%) were Music Publicists

Role types

Participants were classified into three main role types – creative/performer, production/technical and management/administrative.

Of all 1304 music and live performing arts workers:

- the majority (54.7%) were creatives/performers.

- 19.2% worked in production or technical roles.

- 26.1% worked in management or administrative roles.

Location

Of the 1304 music and live performing arts respondents, 1236 gave their State/Territory location, and whether they lived in a metropolitan or regional area, while 68 did not answer these questions. Responses are summarised in order of the locations participants most commonly reported, out of all 1304 respondents. The highest proportions of people reported being located in the three most populated States.

- Victoria (36.7%)

- New South Wales (31.6%)

- Queensland (13%)

- Western Australia (7.3%)

- South Australia (3.1%)

- Tasmania (1.6%)

- Australian Capital Territory (0.8%)

- Northern Territory (0.6%)

- 5.2% did not provide their State/Territory location.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 73.9% were located in a metropolitan area.

- 20.9% were located in a regional area.

- 5.2% did not answer this question.

Age

There were 1232 music and live performing arts respondents who gave their age, while 72 did not answer this question.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- The majority (58.1%) were aged between 35 and 64 years.

- Almost one third (30.5%) were younger than 35.

- Just 5.8% were aged 65 or older.

- 5.5% did not answer this question.

Gender

There were 1226 responses from people in music and live performing arts who stated their gender, while 78 did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- Just under half (45.6%) identified as a man or male

- Just under half (44.8%) identified as a woman or female

- 3.7% identified as non-binary or self-described their gender

- 6% did not answer this question.

Disability

There were a total of 1073 people in music and live performing arts who gave information about whether they had a disability or long-term health condition that restricts their everyday activities. 231 people did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 54.7% said they did not have a disability or long-term health condition.

- 17.7% did not answer the question.

- 27.6% said yes, they had a disability or long-term health condition.

   o This is higher than the prevalence of disability reported in the general population (18%) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020a). It's possible that some of this difference may be due to broader criteria within our survey.

- The types of disability or long-term health condition reported by participants (as a proportion of all 1304 survey respondents) were:

   o Physical - e.g. back problems, chronic pain, restriction in physical activities or in doing physical work (18.2%)

   o Mental or behavioural - e.g. a mental health condition such as anxiety, depression, a substance use disorder, bipolar disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or other mental health condition that restricts daily activities (14.1%)

   o Other (8.1%)

      ▪ the most common description type was chronic illness (4.6%), followed by

      ▪ neurological conditions (1.1%) and

      ▪ being neurodivergent (0.7%).

   o Sensory (1.4%)

   o Intellectual (1.4%)

   o Head injury (0.8%)

Country of birth

There were a total of 1231 people in music and live performing arts who gave information about their country of birth, while 73 did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 78% were born in Australia.

- 16.4% were born outside Australia.

- 5.6% did not answer this question.

The proportion of people in music and live performing arts who said they were born overseas (16.4%) was lower than the proportion born overseas within the general Australian population - about 30% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021a).

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander / First Nations participants

There were 1227 people working in music and live performing arts who answered a question about whether they identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while 77 did not answer this question.

- There were 30 people (2.3%) who identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

- Another 28 people (2.1%) preferred not to say.

- 89.6% did not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

- 5.9% did not answer this question.

Employment status

There were 1300 people in music and live performing arts who gave information about their current employment status, while four did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 39.9% said they were working full-time

- 31.1% said they were working part-time

- 10.7% said they were currently unemployed and looking for work, and another 0.3% said they were employed but were seeking more work.

- 7.8% said they were currently out of the workforce due to studying, caring responsibilities, retirement or illness, injury or disability that affected their ability to work.

- The remainder of those who answered described their employment status as being self-employed or running their own business (5.3%), having casual/seasonal work with variable hours (1.8%), having been stood down due to COVID or impacts from the recent floods (1%), working outside of music (0.9%), volunteering or other (1.1%).

- 0.3% did not answer this question.

The proportion of people reporting unemployment (10.7%) was more than twice the rate of unemployment in the general Australian population (4%) in the same period (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022a).

Employment contract type

There were 1067 people who reported what kind of employment contract they had in their main music or live performing arts job, while 237 did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 40.2% said they were self-employed

- Just 17.9% said they were a permanent employee with leave entitlements and no end-date

- 11.1% said they were a casual employee with no leave entitlements

- 5.3% said they were a fixed-term employee, with leave entitlements but with an end-date.

- 4.3% said they were not working in music or live performing arts right now

- 2.9% selected "other"

- 0.2% said they did agency or temp work.

- 18.2% did not answer this question.

Higher proportions of creatives/performers (50.9%) and production/technical workers (31.1%) reported being self-employed compared with people in management or administrative roles (24.4%).

In contrast, a higher proportion of management/administrative workers were permanent employees (49.1%), compared with production/technical workers (16.3%) and creatives/performers (just 3.5%).

Income

There were 1009 people in music and live performing arts who reported their annual income from work in music and live performing arts, while 295 did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- Just over a third (34.6%) earned less than $30,000 of annual income from their work in music and live performing arts. This was categorised as a very low income level.

- Level of income differed by role type, with a much higher proportion of creatives/performers (47.1%) earning a very low income from their work in music and live performing arts, compared with people in production/technical roles (25.1%) or management/administrative roles (15.6%).

Total income for people in music and live performing arts was calculated by either:

- Taking the total income (music/live performing arts income plus any other income) that was entered by participants as their total income, or

- Where participants entered their income from music or live performing arts and said they had no other income sources, this amount was taken to be their total income.

There were 983 people in music and live performing arts for whom total income data was available, and 321 people with missing data for this question. Out of all 1304 respondents

- Over a fifth (21.4%) reported total annual incomes below the poverty line - defined as approximately $30,000 per year (Melbourne Institute 2021), or 60% of the median income (ACOSS & UNSW 2022).

  o In Australia in 2019 - the latest available data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021b), median annual employee earnings were $52,425.

- Total income level differed by role type, with a higher proportion of creatives/performers (27.2%) reporting very low total incomes, compared with production/technical workers (16.7%) or people in management/administrative roles (12.4%).

Psychological distress

There were 1178 people in music and live performing arts who answered a set of questions on feelings of distress over the last four weeks, while 126 did not answer these questions.

For people who did not identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, these questions comprised the standard K10 measure of psychological distress (Kessler et al. 2003), which is commonly used in national surveys of mental health, and clinical mental health practice in Australia.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, a culturally modified Kessler scale (MK-K5) was used instead (Brinckley, Calabria & Walker et al. 2021). The scores from all scales were then converted into one of two categories – low/moderate distress, or high/very high distress.

Out of all 1304 people in music and live performing arts:

- 66.1% had high or very high levels of psychological distress.

    - This is a very high proportion compared with the latest available data on psychological distress levels among the general population in Australia, which found that just 15% of Australians experienced high or very high levels of distress (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021c).

    - The proportion of people with high/very high levels of distress in this research was more than four times that found in the general population in Australia.

- Just 24.2% had low or moderate distress levels.

- 9.7% did not answer the questions on psychological distress.

- A slightly higher proportion of creatives/performers who responded had high/very high distress (69.4%), compared with people in production/technical roles (64.1%) or management/administrative roles (60.6%).

- High/very high psychological distress levels were more common among:

    - Non-binary people (83.3%) and women (72.3%) than men (66.3%)

    - Younger people under 35 (75.4%) than those aged 35-64 (68.3%) or 65+ (57.9%)

    - People with a disability or long-term health condition (81.1%) than those without (68.7%)

    - People with a very low income (80.9%) than those with a high income (61.9%)

    - People who were unemployed (76.8%) than those in full-time (63.5%) or part-time work (66.4%)

    - People who identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (73.3%) than those who did not (69.5%)

- People who were based in a regional area (74.6%) than those in a metropolitan area (68.3%), and

- People who said they did not feel safe at work (95.1%) compared with those who said they felt safe at work all of the time (56.4%).

Mental health condition/s within lifetime

There were 1104 people in music and live performing arts who answered a question about whether they had ever been diagnosed with a mental health condition, while 200 did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 45.6% had been diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lives

For context, this is very similar to the current figure for the proportion of people in the general Australian population who are estimated to have a mental health diagnosis in their lifetime (about 45%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008). Updated population data on this is due out in mid-2022 and may differ from the data from 2007 that this current population statistic is based on.

Reporting a lifetime mental health diagnosis differed slightly by role type, with a slightly higher proportion of creatives/performers (47%) and people in management/administrative roles (46.5%) reporting this compared with people in production/technical roles (40.2%).

The most common mental health conditions reported were:

- Anxiety – reported by 36.5% of all 1304 music and live performing arts survey respondents

  - The proportion of people reporting Anxiety did not differ significantly across role type.

  - Anxiety was very common among those who had a diagnosed mental health condition, with 80.3% reporting that they had Anxiety.

- Depression – reported by 36% of all 1304 music and live performing arts survey respondents

  - The proportion of people reporting Depression did not differ significantly across role type.

  - Depression was very common among those who had a diagnosed mental health condition, with 79.1% reporting that they had Depression.

Other mental health conditions reported included:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (reported by 10.7%)

- Eating Disorder (reported by 5%)

- Substance Use Disorder (reported by 4.4%)

- Bipolar Disorder (reported by 2.5%)

- Personality Disorder (reported by 1.6%)

These numbers cannot capture the whole experience of people experiencing distress. Some participants added comments drawing a clear link between their mental health condition, and 'situational crises' – as illustrated by one participant:

"Can I please say some questions that require numbers only are flawed - as [an] example… how many days in the last 4 weeks I cannot work, well it's 28 due to floods and COVID cancellations, like the last two years, which is sending [me] into a spiral of depression…"

Current mental health condition/s

The 594 people who reported having a lifetime mental health diagnosis were asked whether this diagnosis was current (for example, whether it was either diagnosed, or affecting them within the last 12 months). There were 593 responses from people about whether their mental health condition was current, while 711 responses were missing for this question. The number of missing responses for this question is higher as only those who reported ever having a mental health diagnosis were asked whether their mental health condition was current.

- Out of those who reported a lifetime mental health diagnosis, the majority (76.6%) reported that their mental health condition was current (affecting them in the last 12 months).

Out of all 1304 survey respondents (including missing data)

- The proportion of people reporting a current mental health condition was 34.9%.

  - For context, this is about 1.7 times higher than the proportion of people estimated to have a current mental health condition within the general Australian population (20.1%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022b).

- 29.2% of all 1304 respondents reported having a current Anxiety condition.

  - The proportion of all music and live performing arts respondents reporting a current Anxiety condition was more than twice that of the general population (12.7%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022b).

- 27.3% of all 1304 respondents reported currently having Depression

  - The proportion of all music and live performing arts respondents who reported currently having Depression was more than two and a half times the proportion of people in the general population with Depression (10.1%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022b).

Seeking support for mental health and wellbeing

There were 1104 people in music and live performing arts who answered a question about whether they had ever sought help to support their mental health and wellbeing, while 200 did not answer this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 69.4% said they had sought help to support their mental health and wellbeing.

- 15.3% said they had not sought help to support their mental health and wellbeing.

- 15.3% did not answer this question.

A slightly higher proportion of people in management/administrative roles (76.5%) and creative/performing roles (67.3%) reported seeking help to support their mental health and wellbeing compared with people in production/technical roles (65.7%).

Suicidality

Much higher proportions of people working in music and other live performing arts reported suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts compared with the statistics for the general population in Australia. Of those who reported any suicidal thoughts, plans or attempts, the majority (70.4%) said they had sought support or confided in someone about their suicidality.

Out of all 1304 music and live performing arts respondents:

- 58.6% had ever experienced any suicidal thoughts (39.3% within the last two years)

    o This includes 39.6% who answered yes to all of three questions on suicidal thoughts.

- For context, the proportion of people in the general Australian population experiencing suicidal thoughts is approximately 13% (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020b).

- The proportion of people in the entertainment industry who reported ever having suicidal thoughts in an earlier Australian study was 28.9% (van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn / Entertainment Assist 2016, p.153).

- The proportion of people in this study who having any suicidal thoughts was about four and a half times that of the general population, and 1.3 times that of previous (pre-COVID-19) research on the rates of suicidal thoughts in people working in the Australian entertainment industry.

- Just 25.3% of all respondents did not report any suicidal thoughts

- 16.1% did not answer the questions on suicidal thoughts.

- Suicidal thoughts were common across all role types, but a higher proportion of people in production/technical roles (63.7%) and creative/performing roles (60.9%) reported suicidal thoughts compared with people in management/administrative roles (50%).

Those who reported any suicidal thoughts were asked further questions about whether they had ever planned to take their own life. There were 759 responses for this question, and 545 people with missing data. The high number of missing cases is partly due to those not reporting any current or past suicidal thoughts not being asked this question. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 20.1% had ever planned to take their own life (8.7% within the last two years)

    o For context, the proportion of people in the general Australian population who had made a suicide plan was approximately 4% (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020b).

    o The proportion of people in the entertainment industry who reported ever planning suicide in an earlier Australian study was 17.4% (van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn / Entertainment Assist 2016, p.158).

    o The proportion of people in this study who reported planning suicide was about five times that of the general population, and slightly higher than that of previous (pre-

COVID-19) research on the rates of suicide planning in people working in the Australian entertainment industry.

- 38.1% had never planned to take their own life.

- 41.8% did not answer this question.

- A slightly higher proportion of people in production/technical roles reported ever planning suicide (39%) compared with people in creative/performing roles (33.3%) and management/administrative roles (33.5%), though this difference was not statistically significant.

There were 759 responses to a question about suicide attempts, while 545 responses were missing for this question due to people without any past or present suicidal thoughts not being asked. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 13.3% had ever attempted suicide (3.4% within the last two years).

  - For context, the proportion of people in the general Australian population who had made a suicide attempt was approximately 3.3% (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020b).
  - The proportion of people in the entertainment industry who reported ever attempting suicide in an earlier Australian study was 7.7% (van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn / Entertainment Assist 2016, p.158).
  - The proportion of people in this study who reported a suicide attempt was about four times that of the general population, and more than one and a half times that of previous (pre-COVID-19) research on the rates of suicide attempts in people working in the Australian entertainment industry.

- The proportions of people who had ever attempted suicide did not differ by role type.

- 44.9% reported that they had never attempted suicide

- 41.8% did not answer this question.

Alcohol and other drugs

There were 1078-1080 responses to a series of questions about alcohol and other drug use, with 224-226 people who did not answer these questions.

Out of all 1304 music and live performing arts respondents:

- A total of 15.9% reported drinking alcohol either daily (8.2%) or 5-6 days a week (7.7%).

- 15.2% reported using illicit drugs frequently (e.g. Marijuana/Cannabis, Ecstasy, Meth/amphetamine, Cocaine or any other types of illicit drugs), including:

  - 8.1% daily or 5-6 days a week.

  - 7.1% between 1-4 days a week.

- 5.7% reported weekly non-medical use of prescription pain relief or opioids.

- 4.7% reported weekly non-medical use of tranquillisers or sleeping pills.

Those who reported any use of alcohol or other drugs were asked further questions about this, including:

- Whether they had tried to cut down, control or stop their use of alcohol or other drugs in the last year, but were unsuccessful (950 answered this question, 354 did not)

- Whether they had used drugs or alcohol to cope with the stresses of life over the last two years (951 answered this question, 353 did not).

- Whether their drug or alcohol use impacted their ability to function well in their usual work or other activities (951 answered this question, 353 did not).

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 25% had tried to cut down, control or stop their use of alcohol or other drugs in the last year, but were unsuccessful.

  o 47.9% had not tried unsuccessfully to cut down or stop their substance use.

  o 27.1% did not answer this question.

- 53.7% had used drugs or alcohol to help with the stresses of life over the last two years.

  o 19.2% had not used drugs or alcohol to help with the stresses of life in the last two years

  o 27.1% did not answer this question.

- 16.8% said that their drug or alcohol use impacted their ability to function well in their usual work or other activities.

  o 56.1% said their drug or alcohol use had not impacted their ability to function well in their usual activities.

  o 27.1% did not answer this question.

Based on these responses, more than half of respondents reported using alcohol and drugs to help with stress during the period since the pandemic began, and a quarter were struggling to cut down or stop their use of alcohol or other drugs.

Sleep, eating patterns, and physical activity

There were 1070 people who answered questions about sleep, while 234 did not answer.

Out of all 1304 respondents, the following impacts of sleep problems were reported. These proportions do not total 100% because people could select more than one impact of sleep problems:

- 64.3% reported feeling tired

- 63.2% reported lower energy or mood

- 46.9% reported difficulty concentrating

- 36.6% reported impacts on their work

- 37.4% reported impacts on their social interactions

There were 1070 responses to a question about how healthy people would say their overall diet was, while 234 did not answer.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 30.5% said their overall diet was excellent or very good

- 31.8% said their overall diet was good

- About one fifth (19.7%) said their diet was fair or poor.

There were 1066 people who responded to a question about their usual amount of physical activity, while 238 did not answer. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 33.7% said they got more than 30 minutes a day most days (or more than 2.5 hours a week in total).

    o This amount of physical activity aligns with the Australian guidelines for adults (Australian Government Department of Health 2021).

    o The proportion of music and live performing arts workers reporting this amount of physical activity is lower than that within the general Australian population, where approximately 73.4% of Australian adults reported doing this amount of physical activity in the last week (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022c).

- 7.2% said they usually got no physical activity in a week.

Impacts of COVID-19

1065 out of 1304 music and live performing arts respondents answered questions about the impacts of COVID-19 on their lives, while 239 did not answer.

The main types of negative impacts most commonly reported by participants were impacts to social contact, mental health, income, financial stress, and career development or job loss.

Findings differed for some impacts by role type. The proportions of people who lost their job, reported reduced income or increased financial stress, or reported leaving their work in music or live

performing arts were higher among creatives/performers and production/technical workers than for management/administrative workers.

- 54.8% of creatives/performers and 51.8% of production/technical workers reported losing their job/s, compared with 27.9% of management/administrative workers

- 61.4% of creatives/performers and 67.7% of production/technical workers reported reductions in income, compared with 49.4% of management/administrative workers

- 56.1% of creatives/performers and 59.8% of production/technical workers reported increased financial stress, compared with 50% of management/administrative workers.

- 29.7% of creatives/performers and 26.7% of production/technical workers reported having to leave work in the music and performing arts sector either temporarily or permanently, compared with 16.2% of management/administrative workers.

- These differences in the effects of COVID-19 on people's work, income and financial stress may be related to the relatively low proportions of creatives/performers and production/technical workers with permanent employment contracts, compared with people in management/administrative roles.

The proportion of people reporting that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their mental health and wellbeing did not differ significantly by role type.

Accounting for missing data for 239 people, the proportions reporting each impact of COVID-19 out of all 1304 respondents are given below. People could select more than one option, so these proportions do not total 100%.

- 65.9% said the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced their social interactions

- 63.3% said the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their mental health (e.g. increased feelings of anxiety or depression).

- 60.7% said the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their feeling of being part of a music and live performing arts network or community.

- 59.5% said the COVID-19 pandemic had reduced their income

- 55.8% said the COVID-19 pandemic had increased their feelings of loneliness or social isolation.

- 55.2% said the COVID-19 pandemic had increased their financial stress

- 52.1% said the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their career development

- 47.2% said the COVID-19 pandemic led to the loss of their job or jobs

- 44.4% said the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their relationships.

- 44.2% said the COVID-19 pandemic had increased their need for services and supports.

- 38.8% said the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their physical health.

- 33.1% said the COVID-19 pandemic had increased their use of alcohol or other drugs.

- 27.1% said the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their ability to get support from the people in their life

- 25.6% said the COVID-19 pandemic had caused them to leave work in music or live performing arts temporarily or permanently.

- 25.5% said the COVID-19 pandemic had increased their workload.

Working conditions

There were 1047 people who answered a question about their usual job schedule, while 257 did not answer this question

Out of all 1304 survey respondents:

- 46.9% said they had an unpredictable work schedule – for example, contracting or doing gig work, where they may not know when they're working until the work comes up.

- Only a third 33.4% said they had a regular work pattern from week to week and know their work hours in advance.

- 19.7% did not answer this question.

There were 1054 responses to a question about working nights or weekends, and a question about travelling for work, while 250 did not answer these questions.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 41.6% reported mostly or always working nights and weekends

- 27.9% worked nights or weekends sometimes

- Just 11.3% worked nights or weekends rarely or never.

- 19.2% did not answer this question.

In addition:

- 21.1% reported that they have to travel for work most, or all of the time.

- 32.6% said they have to travel for work sometimes

- 27.1% said they rarely or never have to travel for work.

- 19.2% did not answer this question.

Answers to these questions about working conditions differed by role type.

- A higher proportion of creatives/performers (54.6%) and production/technical workers (59.4%) reported having unpredictable work schedules compared with management/administrative workers (21.8%)

- A higher proportion of production/technical workers (57%) and creatives/performers (42.5%) mostly or always worked nights and weekends compared with management/administrative workers (28.5%).

- A higher proportion of creatives/performers (26.9%) and production/technical workers (20.8%) reported having to travel for work most or all of the time compared with management/administrative workers (9.2%).

There were 1022 people who answered a question about how worried they were about unemployment, while 282 did not answer. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- Almost a third (31.3%) of all music and live performing arts workers were worried to a large, or very large extent about becoming unemployed.

- 19.6% were somewhat worried about being unemployed.

- 27.6% were worried about unemployment to a small or very small extent.

- 21.6% did not answer this question.

Worry about unemployment differed by role type, with 34.2% of creatives/performers, and 35.9% of production/technical workers worrying about unemployment to a large or very large extent, compared with 21.8% of management/administrative workers.

Job insecurity is known to influence how work affects mental health, with higher levels of insecurity and less control at work contributing to relatively worse mental health compared with those in secure work (Butterworth et al. 2011).

Safety at work

People in music and live performing arts were asked: *"Overall, do you feel that working in music and live performance is a safe environment for you to work in (e.g. do you feel physically and emotionally safe at work)?"*

1044 out of 1304 people answered this question, while 260 did not answer.

The proportions out of all 1304 people in music and live performing arts who reported each issue is given below.

- Just 15% out of all 1304 people in music and live performing arts said they felt safe at work all of the time.

- 41.9% said they felt safe most of the time, while 15.3% felt safe only sometimes.

- 7.8% said no, they did not feel safe at work at all.

- 19.9% did not answer this question.

There were 1036 people who answered a question about whether they had been exposed to unsafe working conditions in the last year, while 268 did not answer this question.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 35.2% said they were exposed to unsafe working conditions in the last year (for example, where they worried they would get physically hurt or experience psychological harm).

- 44.2% said they had not been exposed to unsafe working conditions in the last year.

- 20.6% did not answer.

Of those who provided further comments on safety at work, the main themes were:

- Being a contractor or self-employed enables control (n=10)

- Feeling in control of own safety (n=10)

- Good conditions or environment or people (n=6)

- Being able to do what I love or feeling free or finding the work rewarding means benefits outweigh risks (n=5)

- Financial security (n=4)

- Psychological harm (n=4)

- Working from home (n=4)

- Feeling of safety at work varies (n=4)

Several respondents identified that being a contractor or self-employed enabled a sense of control that allowed them to feel safe at work. This included the ability to choose the venues, the companies, or the people that they work with, or the choice to work alone. Being self-employed afforded respondents a sense of agency that they could create the preferred working conditions or 'turn down something' if necessary.

"As a contractor I work with who I want to work with - venues and people who I am not comfortable with don't remain my clients."

"I choose the people I work with and set up the conditions in which we work together. This means I make less money but have much greater control over my environment now."

Feeling in control of one's own safety was identified as a reason that respondents felt safe at work. Participants commented on things such as feeling they had the ability to defend themselves through assertion skills, physical strength or size or 'being aware of the environment'.

"I feel I can handle myself physically if need be."

"Nobody would dare mess with me. I stand up for myself."

These kinds of comments reflected a feeling among some respondents of being responsible for one's own safety rather than necessarily expecting safety to be provided by their work environment.

For others, good conditions, environments or people were identified as enabling feelings of safety at work.

"I work with an incredible team of people."

"There's other likeminded people there. I'm not the only weirdo."

People also highlighted positive feelings about their work related to being able to do what they love, including feeling a sense of freedom or finding the work rewarding.

"Am lucky enough to do what I love."

"Because it enables me to feel free."

Other reasons for feeling safe included having financial security or working remotely.

"Financial security with a known income each week."

"I have a home recording studio, its safe at home."

Conversely, participants identified reasons for not feeling safe at work such as psychological harm or that the conditions for live performances vary to the degree that it is difficult to answer questions about whether they felt safe at work.

"I am physically safe, but in classical music performance there is a high degree of psychological harm from super competitiveness, pressure to be perfect every time all the time on stage, and as a female, to be super thin, super pretty, look young & be voiceless, particularly in the HIP [historically informed performance] & freelance world.

"It depends on so many factors such as venue, what venue staff are working, what people are in attendance etc."

Bullying

There were 1037 people who answered a question about bullying, while 267 did not answer.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- Just over half (51.6%) said they had not been exposed to bullying

- 20.5% did not answer this question.

- 27.8% reported being exposed to bullying – anywhere from a few times (20.4%), to daily, weekly or monthly (7.4%).

  o Of the 363 people who reported exposure to bullying:

    - About half (50.1%) reported that this came from managers or other people in positions of power within their own workplace

    - 38% reported that the bullying came from peers

    - 32.5% reported that the bullying came from people in positions of power in the sector, but outside of their own workplace

    - 22.9% said that the bullying came from members of the public.

Unwanted sexual attention

There were 1036 people who answered a question about unwanted sexual attention, while 268 did not answer.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 64.3% said they had not been exposed to unwanted sexual attention

- 20.6% did not answer this question.

- 15.1% reported exposure to unwanted sexual attention – anywhere from a few times (12.1%), to daily, weekly or monthly (3%).

  - Of the 198 people who reported exposure to unwanted sexual attention:

    - About two thirds (67.2%) said that the unwanted sexual attention came from members of the public.

    - About a third (32.8%) reported that the unwanted sexual attention came from peers

    - 20.2% reported that the unwanted sexual attention came from managers or other people in positions of power within their own workplace

    - 19.7% reported that the unwanted sexual attention came from people in positions of power in the sector, but outside of their own workplace

Racism

There were 1034 people who answered a question about racism, while 270 did not answer.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 65.8% said they had not been exposed to racism

- 20.7% did not answer this question.

- 13.6% reported exposure to racism – anywhere from a few times (10.9%), to daily, weekly or monthly (2.7%)

  - Of the 177 people who reported being exposed to racism:

    - Almost half (47.5%) said that the racism came from members of the public.

    - 43.5% reported that the racism came from peers

    - About a third (32.2%) reported that the racism came from managers or other people in positions of power within their own workplace

    - 30.5% reported that the racism came from people in positions of power in the sector, but outside of their own workplace

Ageism

There were 1034 people who answered a question about ageism, while 270 did not answer.

Out of all 1304 respondents:

- 47% said they had not been exposed to ageism

- 20.7% did not answer this question.

- About a third 32.3% reported exposure to ageism – anywhere from a few times (24.1%) to daily, weekly or monthly (8.2%).

- Of the 421 people who reported being exposed to ageism:

  - Almost half (47%) reported that the ageism came from people in positions of power in the sector, but outside of their own workplace

  - 43% reported that the ageism came from managers or other people in positions of power within their own workplace

  - 37.5% reported that the ageism came from peers

  - 30.9% said that the ageism came from members of the public.

A higher proportion of creatives/performers reported exposure to unwanted sexual attention (17.8%) and ageism (34.5%), compared with people in production/technical or management/administrative roles.

Exposure to bullying and racism did not differ significantly by role type.

Other negative experiences in music and live performing arts work

There were 122 people in music and other live performing arts who chose to add their own comments about other negative experiences they had been exposed to through their work in music or live performing arts.

The main themes arising from these comments were:

- Interpersonal issues at work (n=60)

- Abuse (n=57)

- Discrimination (n=54)

- COVID-19 related (n=38)

- Workload (n=28)

- Finance issues (n=26)

Interpersonal issues at work included difficulties making connections in the music industry due to existing 'tight knit cliques', or issues relating to disrespectful, judgemental or passive aggressive behaviour from colleagues, producers or managers. False accusations, nepotism and dishonesty were also examples of negative experiences relating to interpersonal experiences that respondents had been exposed to at work.

Respondents identified various forms of abuse as negative experiences that they had experienced at work. These included verbal and physical abuse. Verbal abuse included abusive language, threats, bullying and harassment from management, clients, other artists and competitors, gaslighting, misgendering, and online trolling. Physical abuse included acts of violence from intoxicated or drug-affected punters, drink spiking, and sexual abuse, such as assault, harassment, and grooming.

Negative experiences involving discrimination were also identified by respondents, with the main forms of discrimination including sexism and misogyny, discriminatory acts towards members of the LGTBQI+ community, and ableism. Other forms of discrimination included racism and ageism – as noted in the findings above.

"Sexism, still not taken seriously, treated like I don't know what I am doing by people who have little experience comparatively."

"Transphobia, homophobia."

"Direct and indirect disability discrimination, unconscious bias and a disability culturally unsafe environment. Direct refusal to provide my access requirements, derogatory language around my disability, and assumptions of lack of skill when access isn't provided, which hinders future employment opportunity, career development and health and wellbeing."

COVID-19 related issues included the new added pressures such as the decision to get vaccinated, having to perform during restrictions, cancellations of gigs, people reporting unsafe working environments not adhering to COVIDsafe practices, the risk of contracting COVID-19, and having to return to work whilst processing the emotional trauma experienced during the pandemic and the related restrictions in place during this time.

Feeling of belonging in the music and live performing arts community

There were 1026 people who answered a question asking them to rate how satisfied they were with feeling like part of the music or live performing arts community. 278 people did not answer this question.

The rating scale for this question was from zero (completely unsatisfied) to ten (completely satisfied).

- The average score people gave for their sense of belonging in the music or live performing arts community was just 5.5

People were asked about whether there were any reasons they felt excluded from the music or live performing arts community. There were 1016 people who answered this question, while 288 did not answer. People could select more than one option, so proportions do not total 100%. Out of all 1304 respondents:

- Just 30% said they had not felt excluded.

- 23.8% felt excluded because of ageism

- 16.3% felt excluded because of lack or representation

- 13.9% felt excluded because of gender discrimination

- 5.4% felt excluded because of racism

- 5.1% felt excluded because of ableism (discrimination against people with disability)

- 3.8% felt excluded because of homophobia or biphobia

- 1.2% felt excluded because of transphobia

- 14.3% felt excluded for another reason

There were 104 people from music or live performing arts who commented on other reasons they felt excluded. The main themes arising from these comments were:

- COVID-19 related (n=26)

- Cliques (n= 21)

- Location based (n= 12)

- Appearance (n=10)

- Department or role-based tensions (n=10)

- Genre based (n=10)

A small proportion of respondents felt excluded from the music and live performing arts community due to the decision not to get the COVID-19 vaccination. Others reported feeling excluded because of COVID-19 restrictions affecting their ability to network or travel to work in other states, and due to cancellation of events impacting their livelihood.

"Not having the COVID vaccinations. Complete exclusion from the workplaces I would normally frequent, complete exclusion for not being vaccinated causing loss of important working relationships, contracts, and sense of belonging in the arts."

"COVID restrictions have kept me out of work, as I travelled across state borders often."

"Cancellation of gigs due to COVID restrictions."

Some respondents felt that the music industry and live performing arts community was 'cliquey', with many feeling that they were socially excluded by 'in-groups' and that in some cases gate keeping was occurring that prevented them from booking shows in venues or getting work in general.

"It's just a general feeling I get, doesn't compare to genuine discrimination- but I do feel there is a kind of vain, clique mentality in the music community. If your follower count is low, or you're making music that doesn't have a "sexy" image/brand and is more out-of-the-box, other musicians/creatives/managers can be quite sceptical or apprehensive about connecting with you."

"A lot of people just seem to cool or cliquey, it's deeper than that but hard to properly articulate."

"It can be a little cliquey in my regional area, if you're not in the cool gang to get work."

Location was also highlighted as a reason that respondents felt excluded from the music scene or performing arts community. Respondents felt that living regionally or in "undesirable" states made it difficult to connect with others in their industries, through actual distance or stigma attached to location.

"Distance - lack of being able to 'hang with others' causes you to be out of sight out of mind. I was reminded recently when discussing a song option that if I wanted it to be heard, I had to be 'hanging' with everyone else."

"Geography - can be hard to be on the radar when living regionally."

"Location - Perth is very much the butt of the joke in online music communities and we find it hard to branch out without being written off."

Overall, feelings of exclusion within the music and live performing arts community appeared to feature quite prominently among participants.

What supports mental health and wellbeing

People were asked about a range of things that might support their mental health and wellbeing, and (if applicable), how much difference each of these things made to them. Between 1009 and 1112 people answered the series of questions within this survey section. The proportions below are given out of all 1304 music and live performing arts respondents (including missing data). People could select more than one option, so these proportions do not total 100%. The highest proportions of people said that these things made a big difference to their mental health and wellbeing:

- Having positive relationships with people in their life (40.8%)

- Having access to income support payments (e.g. JobKeeper or Centrelink payments) (33.1%)

- Having regular contact with people including family and friends (31.9%)

- Looking after their health through a healthy diet, sleep and exercise (29.8%)

- Having enough income through work (29.6%)

- Being able to get emotional or practical support from the people in their life (26.5%)

- Being able to keep working in the music and performing arts sector (26.4%)

- Having financial help through Support Act (25.8%)

A smaller proportion of people also said that getting support for their mental health made a big difference to their mental health and wellbeing – either through Support Act (7.8%) or another service (17.8%)

Use of supports or services

There were 1020 people who answered a question about whether they had used any Support Act services, and 529 went on to answer further questions about which services they had used. The proportions out of all 1304 respondents (including missing data) who had used Support Act services were:

- Just over a third (36.3%) reported having used any Support Act services in the last two years.

  o Another 4.3% were unsure whether they had used a Support Act service

  o 37.6% had not used a Support Act service in the last two years

  o 21.8% did not answer this question.

- Support Act's financial crisis relief services were the most commonly used service, reported by about a third (32.7%) of all respondents.

- The next most commonly used Support Act services were:

  o Support Act's Wellbeing Helpline (used by 6.6% of all respondents) and

  o Support Act's mental health and wellbeing online resources (also used by 6.6% of all respondents)

There were 980 people who answered questions about whether they had used any other services over the last two years, while 324 did not answer these questions. The services most commonly used by

people are listed below. The proportions given are out of all 1304 respondents (including missing data). Participants could select more than one service, so these proportions do not total 100.

- Income support through Centrelink (33.1% reported using these services)

- Mental health services (31.1% reported using these services)

- General helplines (7.1% reported using these services)

- Foodbanks (5.9% reported using these services)

- 20.9% reported using no other services.

Barriers to getting support

There were 920 people who answered a series of questions about the barriers to getting support, while 384 did not answer these questions. People could select more than one option for this series of questions, so the proportions do not total 100%.

The barriers to getting support or services that were most commonly reported out of all 1304 respondents (including missing data) were:

- I can't afford to pay for services (35.7% reported cost as a barrier)

    o This was also found to be the most common barrier to service access in other recent research into the mental health of performing artists in Western Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rusak et al. 2021).

- Services are hard to access – e.g. hard to get to, far away, long waitlists etc (28.6% reported this as a barrier)

- Shame or stigma (21.7% reported this as a barrier)

- Negative past experiences with services (20.4% reported this as a barrier).

There were 138 people in music and live performing arts who added further comments on other barriers to support or service access. The main themes arising from these responses were:

- Exhaustion or lack of time (n=17)

- Government subsidies not available (n=15)

- Lack of access (n=11)

- Negative previous experiences (n=11)

Respondents identified that exhaustion and being time poor were barriers to accessing services and seeking support.

"Exhaustion makes looking for support and doing the work a big effort."

"I don't have time now that gigs have returned."

"I don't have enough time to access support, working too much."

Another barrier identified by respondents was not meeting the criteria for government subsidies when accessing support services. In some cases, people encountered issues with eligibility as services were only made available to Australian citizens, or they or their partner earned just above the threshold for accessing some types of support.

"Temporary migrants are ineligible for most services and support. Postgraduate students seem to be seen as sources of university and taxation income, not humans in need to support."

"Financially, my family's income affects my ability to get independent support."

"I'm on the level where I can just pay my bills, but I'm still barely getting by. I make enough to not be eligible for financial support, but not enough to live without fear."

Lack of access was identified as an issue to seeking assistance, with respondents identifying long wait lists and a scarcity of support services available as barriers to getting support.

"Lack of availability. Majority of psychologists, counsellors, psychiatrists who are recommended are not accepting new patients, or if they are, waitlist is 9 months or more, and they don't [bulk] bill."

"Waiting lists are very long (months) and cost money even after the government pays a gap."

"Services don't exist, are underfunded or don't help."

Negative or unhelpful previous experiences with support services in the past were also identified as reasons for why respondents would be hesitant to seek assistance.

"Discrimination, dismissal from support services."

"Have been through domestic and family violence as well. Lack of effective and accessible services for women and children - even for someone with a PhD and who is ostensibly English speaking & white and understands service provision. Felt completely alone."

Future supports or services

There were 930 people in music and live performing arts who answered questions about what supports or services they would like to be made available in future, while 374 did not answer these questions. The proportion out of all 1304 survey respondents (including missing data) who said they wanted each kind of service in future is given below. People could select more than one option, so these proportions do not total 100%.

- 42% wanted a music and live performing arts sector code of conduct

- 34.4% wanted wellbeing-focused career coaching and mentoring

- 30.2% wanted financial literacy and wellbeing training

- 25.9% wanted mental health and wellbeing support backstage at festivals and shows

- 24.7% wanted peer to peer and online support groups

- 24.5% wanted resources for their business to create a mentally healthy workplace

- 21.8% wanted suicide prevention programming

- 20.4% wanted alcohol and other drug support and advice

- 9.4% wanted other supports or services.

There were 121 comments from people working in music and live performing arts about the other kinds of supports or services they would like to be made available in future. Of these responses, the main themes were:

- Advocacy or increased government support (n=47)

- More mental health and wellbeing supports available (n=21)

- Training or business and career support and development (n=19)

Respondents identified various avenues for increased advocacy and government support in the sector that they would like to be made available in the future. These included having a union or peak body to advocate for standardised wages and better working conditions; and government support, including financial and housing support services and easily accessible avenues to report wage theft or pay disputes.

"Post pandemic financial assistance for musicians."

"A collective Union or industry body that represent the sector as a whole to lobby government. A superannuation fund that invests solely in the arts and entertainment industry."

"A complete reworking/overhaul of our industry/sector. To fight exploitation and to stop it once and for all. To appoint a minister for Musicians and also the Performing Arts. An individual/s who is/are artist/s and not a bureaucrat."

Mental health and wellbeing initiatives that respondents said they wanted included:

- industry-specific mental health practitioners

- assistance recovering from trauma related to COVID-19

- Sexual abuse support services

- Eating disorder specific initiatives

- Addiction services (including support for people struggling with their social media use)

- Services accessible outside of 'normal working hours' and

- Holistic and transcultural wellbeing initiatives such as meditation and breath work courses.

"Psychologists who specialise in performing arts."

"Mental Health services available outside of 'standard business hours' for workers who cannot commit to the usual deadlines."

"Breath work & Meditation on Tours."

Several respondents identified that they would like support services related to career support and development. This included:

- training or support specific to women, older artists, younger artists, or artists living in regional areas.

- training in business management skills, taxation, cultural competency training, racial literacy education training, mental health training, and anti- discrimination training, and

- training specific to career pathways or returning to the music industry or live performing arts sector post-pandemic.

"Career support and development for artists in regional areas and artists over 35."

"Business support and financial/tax training."

"A centralised place for self-employed musicians that has comprehensive resources for business, management, venues, touring, support, contracts etc. The industry is too fragmented and only focused on large organisations that promote pop and rock."

Overall, respondents emphasised the need for systemic change to support the mental health and wellbeing of people working in music and live performing arts, including:

- advocacy for standardised wages and better working conditions

- a need for more government support, including financial and housing support services, and

- easily accessible avenues to report wage theft or pay disputes.

Participants also emphasised the need for further tailored support to people working in music and live performing arts, both in terms of work-related training, and mental health supports that respond to the specific needs of people working in music and live performing arts.

LIMITATIONS

This research had several limitations, which should be kept in mind when considering the findings.

- This research was conducted in English, which means that people who were not able to take part in a survey in English were unable to participate. While the survey demographics suggest some cultural diversity, it's likely this is limited by the survey being available only in English.

- This research was conducted by online survey, which means that there may be people working in music or live performing arts who could not access the survey online, for example, due to:

  o lack of stable internet access or an internet-connected device

  o not feeling comfortable completing an online survey.

- Part-way through the survey release, the research team was notified of an accessibility issue with the survey not being fully accessible via screen-reader technology. While an alternative option of contacting the researcher was then offered to enable survey participation, it's possible that some people who use a screen-reader may not have been able to access the survey fully, or may have been deterred from participating because of this accessibility issue.

- The people who participated in the research were not randomly selected, which means that the findings may not be representative of the whole population of people who work in music and live performing arts. It is possible that there is some bias in the findings – for example:

  o People with a stronger interest or concern about mental health could have been more likely to take part in this survey than others without a strong mental health interest or concern.

  o As the survey was distributed through Support Act's networks, there may be a higher proportion of people within the survey respondent group who had used Support Act's services, compared with the total population of people working in music and live performing arts.

CONCLUSION

This research found that a high proportion of people working in music and live performing arts are currently experiencing high or very high levels of distress and are continuing to feel the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their livelihoods and lives.

While the proportion of people reporting a mental health diagnosis within their lifetime was similar to the population prevalence for Australia (about 45%), the proportion reporting a current mental health condition was higher.

People working in music or live performing arts reported a current Anxiety condition at more than twice the prevalence of the general population in Australia, while the proportion of people with Depression was more than two and a half times that of the general population.

More than half of participants had used alcohol or drugs to help with the stress they had experienced over the last two years, and a quarter reported struggling to cut down or stop their substance use.

Worryingly, participants in this research also had higher levels suicidal thoughts, plans or attempts than both the general population, and compared with previous research on people working in entertainment in Australia before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (van den Eynde, Fisher & Sonn / Entertainment Assist 2016).

The main types of negative impacts participants identified from the COVID-19 pandemic included impacts to their social contact and mental health, as well as reduced income, increased financial stress, and disrupted career development or job loss.

More than a fifth of people working within music and live performing arts reported very low incomes, at a level below the poverty-line in Australia (less than $30,000). Having an annual income this low affects both people's ability to afford the everyday necessities of life, and impacts wellbeing (Capic et al. 2017).

Higher proportions of creatives/performers and production/technical workers reported losing their job/s, reductions in their income or increased financial stress than management/administrative workers, who more commonly had permanent employment. These findings align with broader research on the impacts of COVID-19, which has found that the negative impacts of COVID-19 on work and mental health are amplified for people with less job security or financial resources available to support them (Rossell et al. 2021; Kaleveld, Bock & Maycock-Sayce 2020).

A very low proportion of people in music and live performing arts said they always felt safe at work. Many participants reported experiencing insecure and unsafe and working conditions within music and live performing arts, including exposure to bullying, ageism, racism, unwanted sexual attention or abuse, discrimination based on gender, sexuality, or disability, and other kinds of mistreatment.

Working conditions are known to impact mental health for better or worse (Allen et al. 2014), and many participants of this research identified that improvements in working conditions are needed. Participants emphasised the need for fair pay and conditions, as well as for work environments that more consistently protect the physical and psychological safety of people working in music and live performing arts.

Feelings of belonging to the music and live performing arts community were mixed, with some participants expressing a strong feeling of belonging in this world, but many reporting that they had experienced exclusion because of attitudes about their identity, location, role or genre of work.

When participants were asked what had made the biggest difference to their mental health and wellbeing during this incredibly challenging time, the two most common threads to come through were positive relationships and support from people in their lives, and access to income (through income support payments, work, or Support Act's financial crisis relief services).

Many also reported that looking after their health (through sleep, diet and exercise), and being able to keep working in music and live performing arts had made a big difference to them. Mental health services (both through Support Act and other services) were also of noted importance for some.

The strong focus on social and financial support alongside mental health services reflects the findings of other research on the factors that can help reduce negative mental health impacts in the wake of COVID-19 (Atkinson et al. 2020), or following the loss of work (Brydsten, Hammarström, & San Sebastian, 2018).

When asked what kinds of supports or services they wanted for the future, participants identified a need for broader systemic change within the music and live performing arts sector - for example, through the creation of a code of conduct that can catalyse real change towards improved working conditions for people working in music and live performing arts, and through continued advocacy to government for support of the sector.

This research indicates that many of the mental health and work-related issues identified in previous research in Australia continue to impact people in music and live performing arts, with added stressors arising from the pandemic, and other events such as the recent floods significantly affecting some participants.

With arts and recreation services among the sectors most affected by job loss in the wake of COVID-19 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020a), and associated impacts to financial insecurity and mental health, employment and financial supports continue to be needed alongside other supports for mental health.

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