

Oxfordshire Theatre Makers **Covid-19 Survey Report**



Oxford Arts
Consultants

Introduction

This report summarises the findings of a survey commissioned by the Oxford Theatre Makers (OTM) Steering Committee, on behalf of its members, which ran between 1 August and 30 September 2021. It received a total of 16 responses.

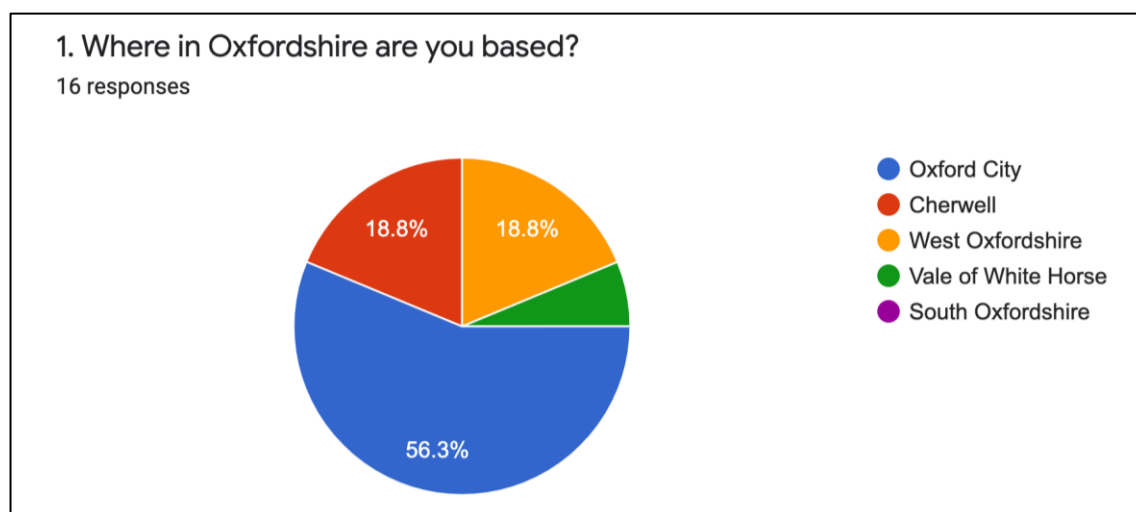
The OTM membership is thought to be somewhere between 100-120, and this response rate is lower than the Steering Committee had hoped. However, it will be used a part of the jigsaw of evidence to build a picture of the OTM member experiences, which include case studies mentioned in section 10 below.

1. Survey aim and methodology

The aim of the survey was to collect quantitative and qualitative data on the experiences of members of OTM during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was designed using Google Forms, with 20 questions agreed by OTM. The survey was then distributed by OTM to its members.

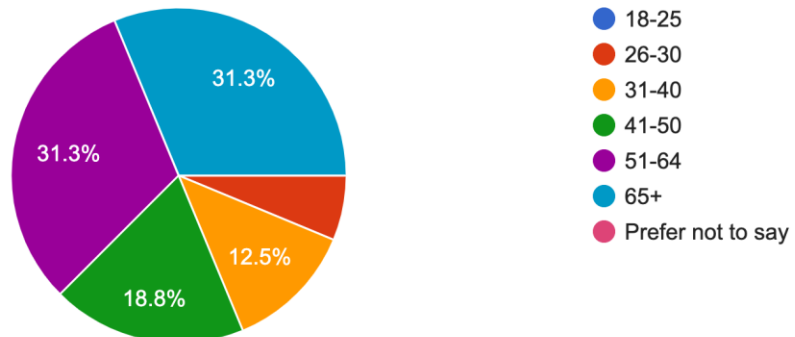
2. Demographics

- 56.3% were based in Oxford City, 18.8% in Cherwell & West Oxfordshire
- All participants were aged 30+ years, 31.3% were 65+ & 51-64
- 62.5% female & 37.5% male
- 93.8% identified their ethnicity as white and 6.2% identified as Black



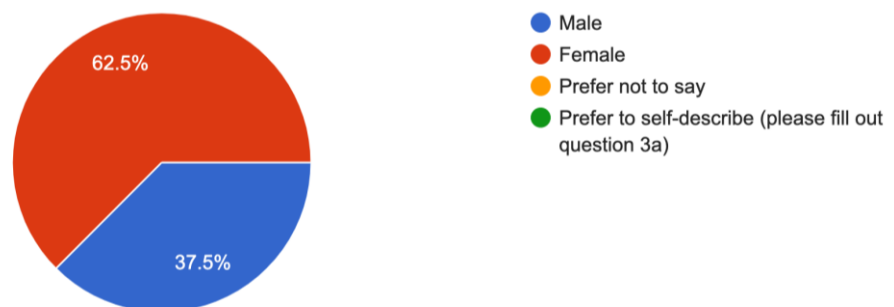
2. Please tell us your age

16 responses



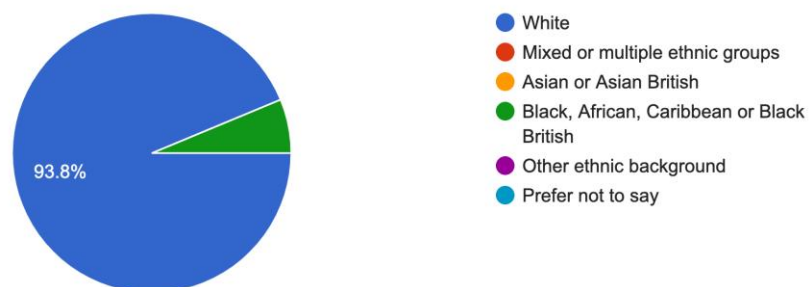
3. How would you best describe your gender?

16 responses



4. How would you best describe your ethnicity?

16 responses

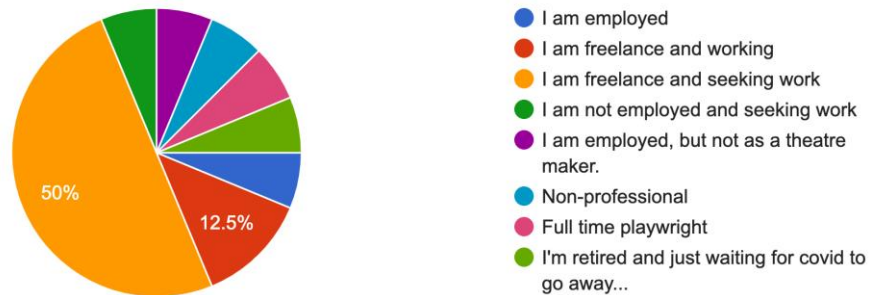


3. Employment Status

- 56.25% were seeking work
- 31.3% had 30+ years & 6-10 years' experience
- 75% of said theatre making was not their primary source of income

5. Are you currently employed in theatre making?

16 responses



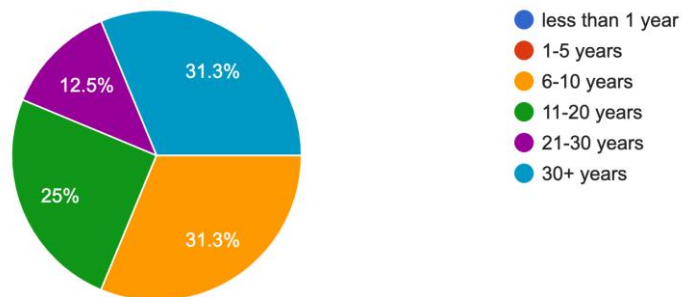
4. Role/s in theatre making

Respondents were asked to describe their roles – 80% of them have more than role.

Actor
Artistic Director
Director
Playwright
Producer
Role-player-facilitator
Voice artist
Writer

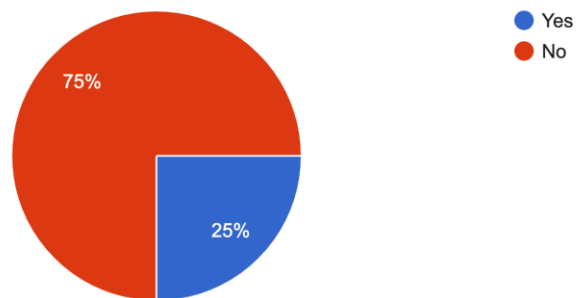
7. How many years of experience do you have in the theatre making profession?

16 responses



8. Is theatre making work your primary source of income?

16 responses

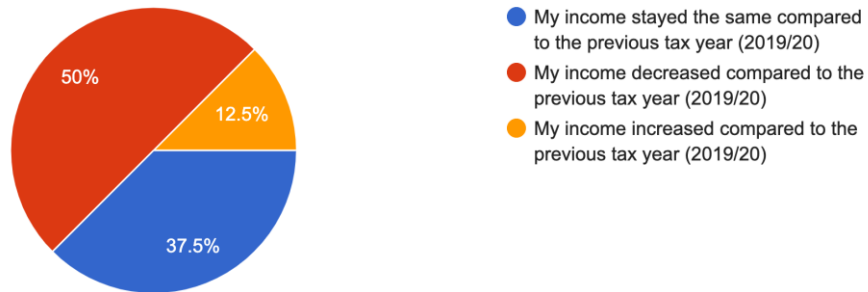


5. Financial impact of COVID-19

- 50% of people's income decreased compared to previous tax year, 37.5% reported no change
- There was a 75% decrease in income for those 50% whose income decreased
- 50% said they had nothing scheduled for their next piece of paid work
- 5 people applied for relief funds, all were successful

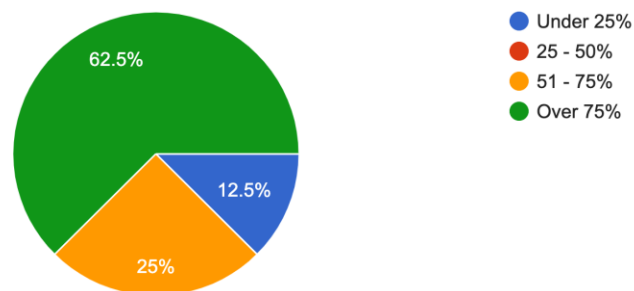
9. In the tax year April 2020 - April 2021 (i.e. during the pandemic), how was your income affected compared to the previous year (April 2019 - April 2020)?

16 responses



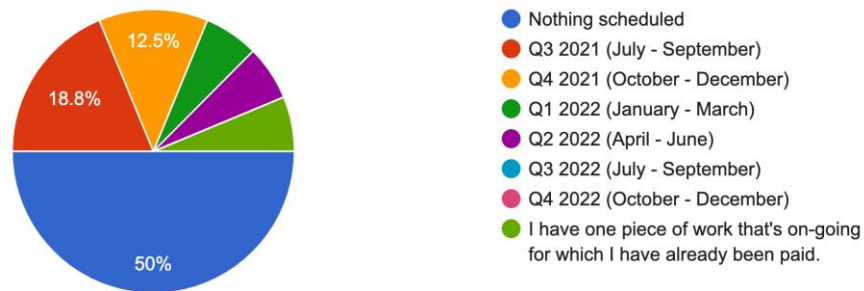
10. If your income decreased compared to April 2019 - April 2020, what percentage did it decrease by?

8 responses



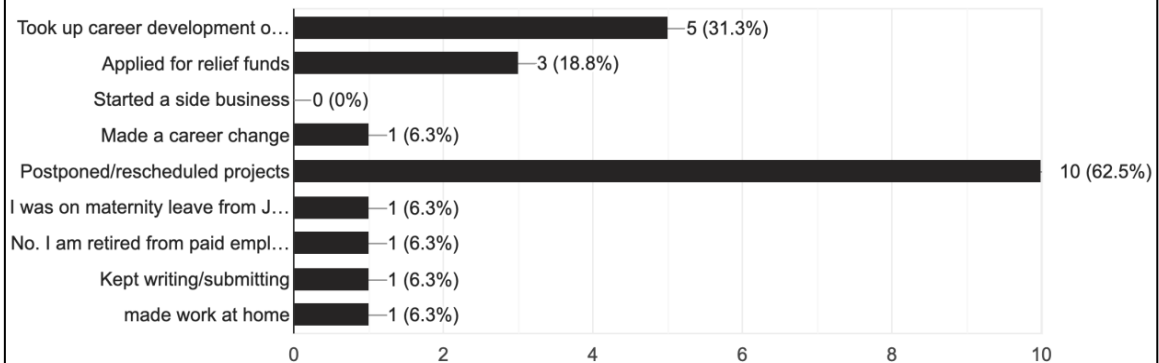
11. When is your next piece of paid work?

16 responses



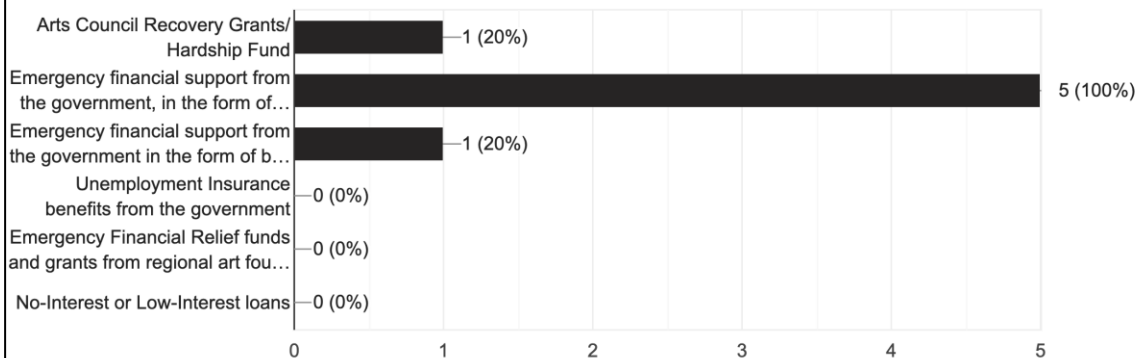
13. Did you make alternative arrangements or plans for theatre making during the pandemic?

16 responses



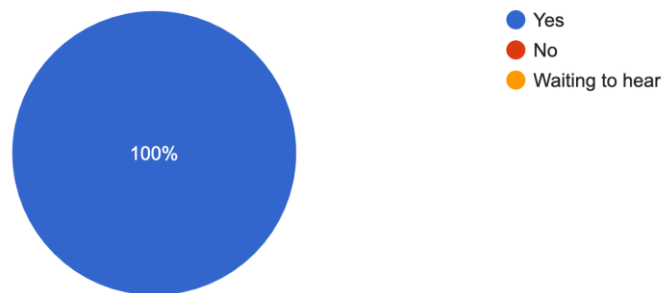
14. If you applied for relief funds, what types of funds did you apply for?

5 responses



15. If you applied for relief funds, were you successful in your applications?

5 responses

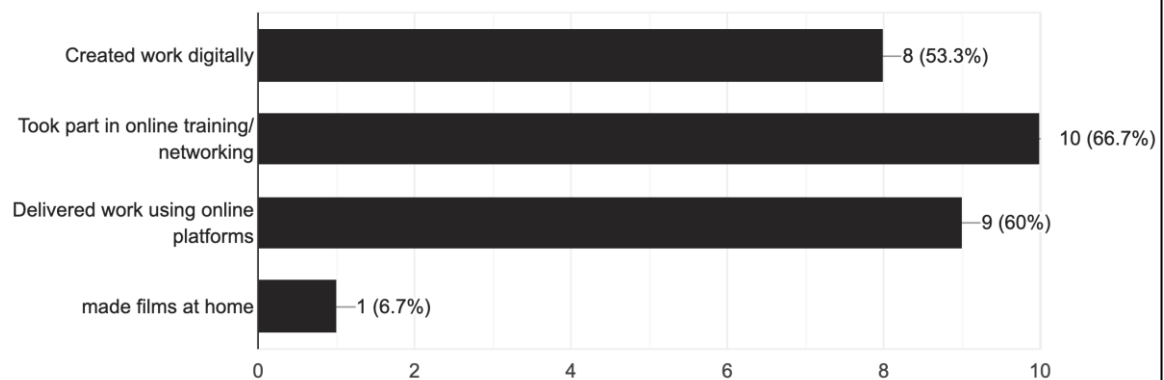


6. Alternative arrangements and use of online platforms

- 62.5% of participants postponed or rescheduled projects
- 50-60% of respondents took part in online activities such as: creating digital work, online training and delivered work using online platforms
- 93.8% of respondents said 'yes' or 'maybe' to continuing to use online platforms when restrictions are lifted.

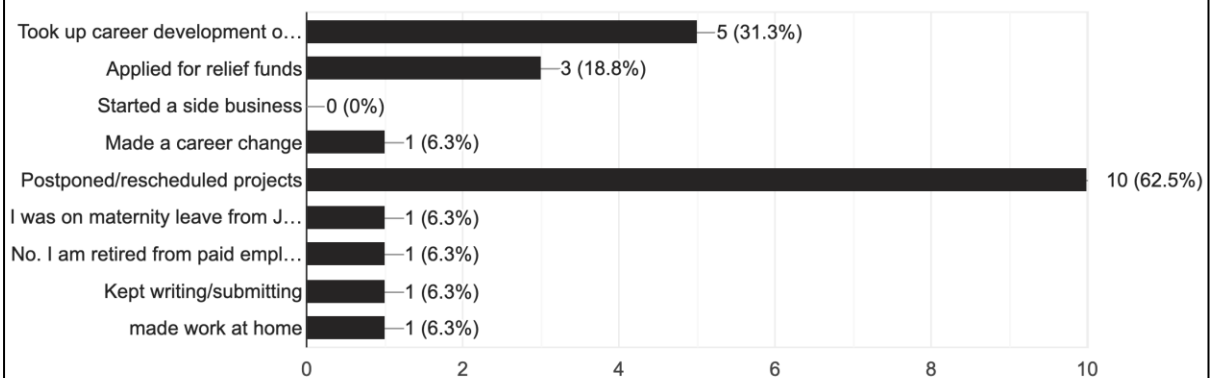
12. Did you engage with online platforms during the pandemic?

15 responses



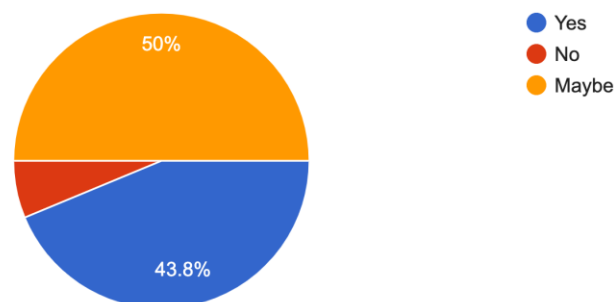
13. Did you make alternative arrangements or plans for theatre making during the pandemic?

16 responses



12a. Do you intend to continue using digital and online platforms, when restrictions are lifted?

16 responses

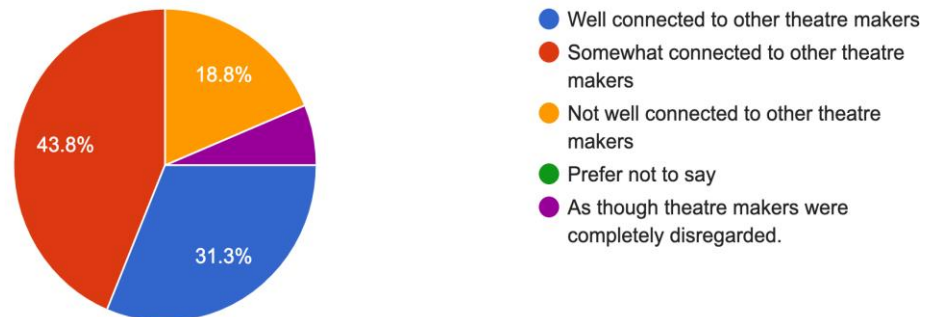


7. Personal Impact of the Pandemic

- 31.3% felt well connected to other theatre makers during the lockdowns
- 43.% of people felt somewhat connected to other theatre makers

16. During the pandemic, I felt..

16 responses



8. Quotes from a positive experience in the pandemic:

Respondents were asked to highlight a positive experience of theatre making work they had during the pandemic.

'We made another podcast series and transformed a play due for touring into a radio drama (remotely)'

'I have written a wide variety of pieces for the theatre, including the "28 plays in 28 days" challenge.'

'Being given the impetus to realise that I could no longer square my love of the craft of acting with the gatekeeping, abuse, and lack of concern for working actors' income that the industry has long considered more important.'

'Became a regular on Extreme Improv XStreamed online interactive comedy shows'

'Discovering what is possible using online platforms, as well as coming to realise its limitations compared to live theatre. And rediscovering the joy of live theatre this summer for theatre makers and audiences alike.'

'Online training'

'I love watching live theatre streamed on my computer. It was comforting. Zooming and sharing writing/critiquing worked well with three different groups.'

'I did a course on writing comedy and now have the pilot of a sit com.'

'We made a film of our play which will be useful collateral going forward to touring'

'One piece of work was given an online presence.'

'I gained work within the performing arts (not just theatre, hence answering no to my income being solely through theatre) to keep me going as well working online a lot. Auditions online have been a great outcome - less time spent commuting to London and much more affordable.'

'Online work has the ability to reach a global audience.'

'Making films at home. Doing role play via Zoom and Office Teams, no travel.'

'Chipping Norton Theatre produced a new short audio script of mine online...'

'A willingness to create solo work'

9. Quotes from a negative experience in the pandemic

Respondents were asked to highlight a negative experience of theatre making work they had during the pandemic.

'Couldn't tour our work which was scheduled and grant applications which had been submitted for core funding and other projects were voided (can't think of the right word?!)'

'No real prospect of plays being put on in Oxford.'

'I couldn't pay my rent for a year and am as a result in five figures worth of debt'

'Lost momentum and desire to rehearse, book tour and perform one woman play more widely'

'One production postponed by a year (but it did happen eventually). Another has been cancelled.'

'The impact of the pandemic has meant my theatre company has been put on hold. Classes and workshops stopped and plans for other events were also cancelled. Not knowing when the company is going to get back on its feet again is depressing.'

'Not physically engaging with others'

'My latest full length got cancelled May, '19 in Los Angeles. :-(Re-scheduled for spring '22)'

'Postponing a London production with very little notice'

'It was more expensive making theatre during the restrictions. We managed to premiere our play but with lots of extra costs. We needed a stage manager for the three not two weeks, many extra hours had to be paid to our producer for risk assessments etc, and although we sold out, the theatre was running at half capacity so earned income was minimal. I was writer and grant holder on the project so had decided to be paid last. There was nothing left. I actually lost money on the production.'

'The regular professional showcases of work that I participate in have not taken place during the pandemic.'

'Postponement of work and feeling unsure when I'll feel safe and able to tour and whether we'd get big enough audience numbers for the shows to be sustainable.'

'Online work was a bit of a novelty at first and not without benefits (see previous answer). I do believe it will continue but it is absolutely no substitute for live theatre. On a positive note I suppose it has given me a greater appreciation for live work.'

'not able to work in person, the most important part of our work is in teams.'

'...and nothing else happened.'

'A disbelief in my own ability to perform/create theatre'

10. Quotes – from other experiences

Respondents were asked to highlight any other experience of theatre making work they had during the pandemic.

'Having my first baby during the pandemic was 'theatre'!!! Plenty of fodder for a topic for a play haha'

'Writing was good in first lockdown, slowed in second, slower in the third. Back in action. Hallelujah! :-)'

'I confess I have found it very de-stabilising and challenging. I've noticed a decline in my personal creativity.'

'I was lucky being locked down with 5 other artists, so we could still work from home making films, without that it would have been a very different picture!'

'I have been impressed by other theatre makers and their tenacity in creating work, keeping networks strong and staying positive in the face of it all.'

11. Case studies

Five participants who were willing to be contacted to provide case studies of their experiences of the pandemic as a theatre maker.

Next steps are to create four case studies to highlight the experiences of individuals and the impact of Covid on their working life.

Angeli Vaid
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