



Impact Survey:

Covid-19 and UK Youth Circus

Report 3

18th December 2020

Compiled and Edited by Leah Carroll



LOTTERY FUNDED



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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If you are short on time, we recommend prioritising the 'Key Findings' (p.47) and 'Future Activity' (p.50) sections of the report, for an overview of salient points.

Introduction

Background

This is the third Impact Survey we have undertaken this year, to investigate the effects of the on-going Covid-19 crisis on the UK youth circus sector.

Some of the key questions we set out to answer in this survey include:

- How the situation has changed in the five months since our previous survey;
- What financial support youth circuses have received since June 2020;
- What further support is needed, for youth circuses to survive this crisis and resume normal trading;

Our most important function as an organisation is to support the youth circus sector, so the ideas youth circuses have shared in this survey will be used to shape our actions going forward. The final section of this report – *Future Activity*, p.50 – details how we intend to respond to issues raised by this survey in the coming year (2021).

Process

Participation

24 youth circuses from across the UK participated in this survey; their names are included in the 'Thanks To' section of this report.

Analysis and Comparison

In some sections of this report, we compare data from this survey to our second Impact Survey from June 2020, to understand how the situation has changed in that time. There are issues with comparing these two surveys: in some cases we are comparing data from different youth circuses, and less youth circuses contributed to this impact survey than Impact Survey 2.

Timescale

Our online survey was launched on November 16th, 2020. This report contains responses we received in 9 days; the last submission was collected on 25th November, 2020

Editing

Some written responses from the survey have been altered in this report in order to protect anonymity, to correct spelling and grammar, and for clarity.

Questions are presented in the same wording as they were in the survey. Some charts present information from multiple questions.

For some questions, youth circuses could select multiple responses. Charts that present data from these questions are marked as 'multi-option'.

"Quotes from written responses to the survey are included throughout the report in bold."

Thanks To

Many thanks to the 24 youth circus across the UK who took the time to fill in this survey.

Aim to Fly UK

Airhedz Youth Circus (Airhedz Aerial Training)

All Bars Flying Trapeze Club

And Circus

Isle of Wight Youth Circus

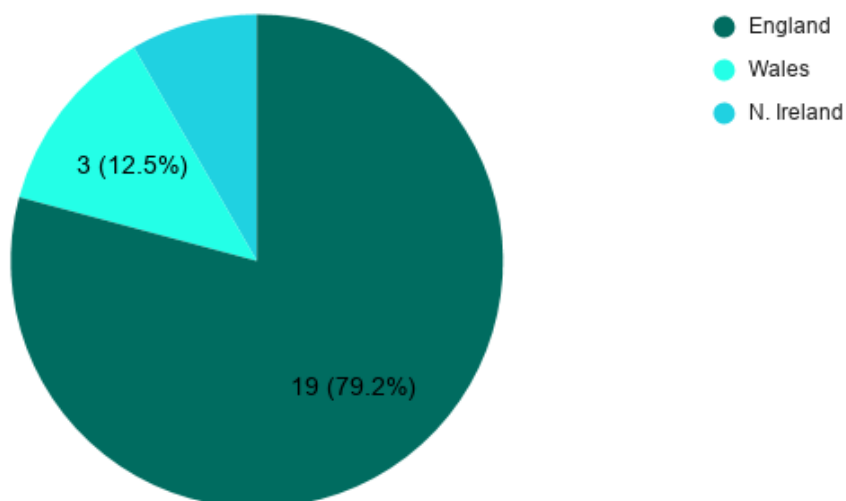
Mimbire Youth Programme (Mimbire)

NoFit State Youth Circus

Organised Kaos

"Where is your youth circus based?"

Number of Responses: 24



Belfast

Community Circus School

Circomedia Youth Circus (Circomedia)

Circus Eruption

Circus Stars Frome

CircusMASH

Engage (Artspace Cinderford)

Euphoric Circus CIO

In Your Space Circus

Showtime Circus

Sweet Circus Youth Group (Sweet Circus CIC)

Take Flight (Scarabeus Aerial Theatre)

Temple Cloud Circus

The Circus House Youth Circus (The Circus House)

The Oak Circus Centre

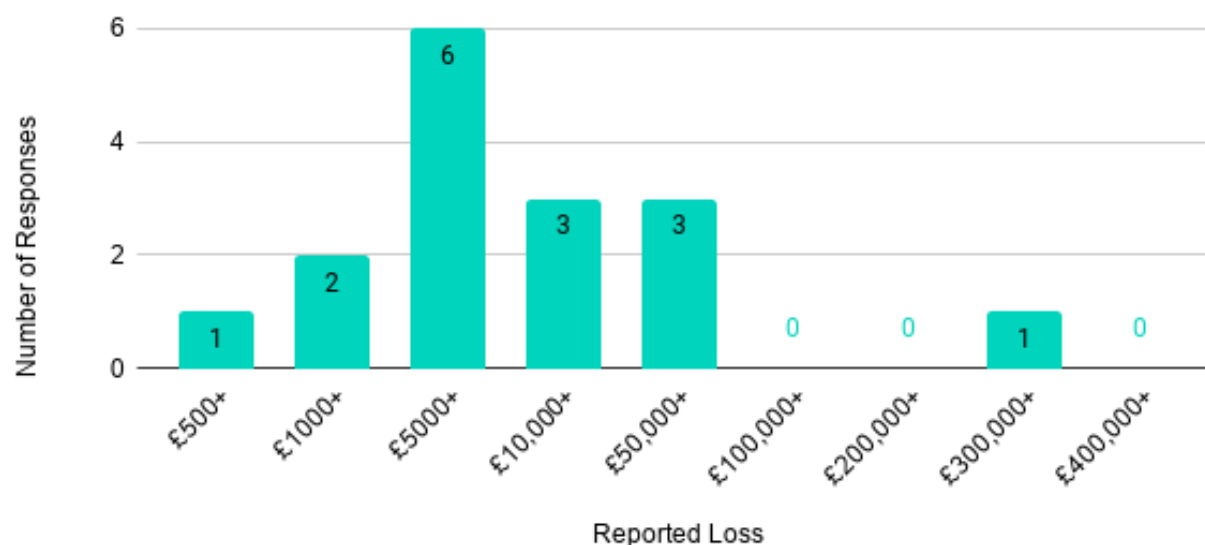
Tuyo Circus Arts

Walthamstow Youth Circus

Financial Impact

"Please estimate the financial impact that this crisis has had so far on your youth circus (£):"

Number of Responses: 19 total, 16 included in this chart



"No income."

According to their own estimates, the 16 youth circuses whose answers are included in the above chart have lost a total of **£625,444** due to the Covid-19 crisis. On average, they have therefore lost a total of **£39,090.25** each, up £21,713.25 from the reported average loss of **£17,377** each from our second impact survey in June.

"We were almost entirely reliant on class fees prior to Covid. Since covid hit we have received significant emergency and project funding and are now closer to 70% funding."

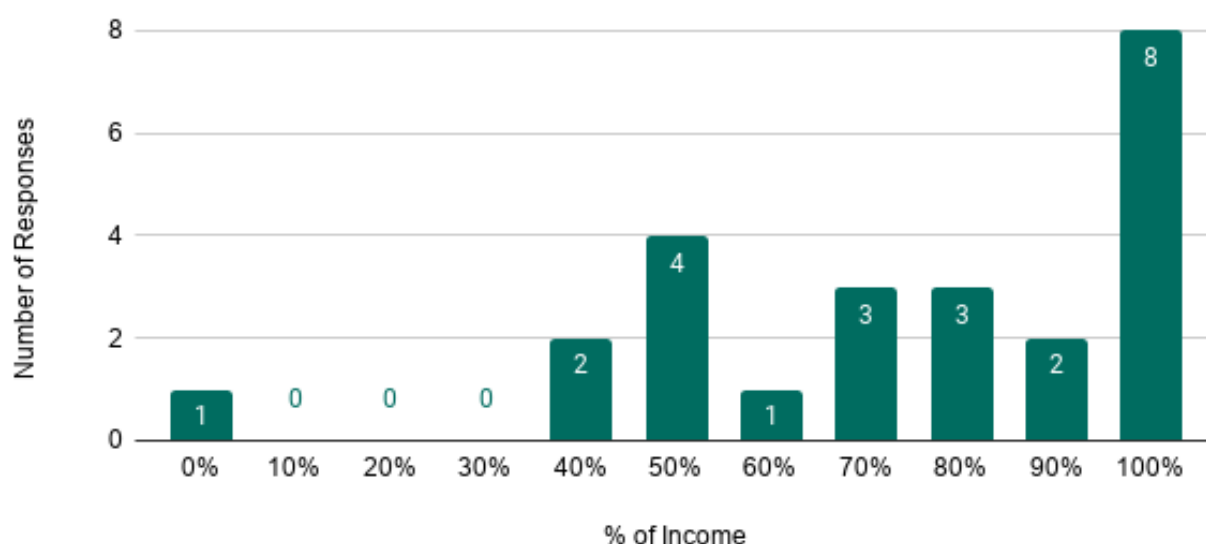
Of the 24 youth circuses that participated in this survey, 19 answered this question on financial impact. 16 of these answers are included in the previous chart - the other 3 answers were more complex, and are included in this section as quotes.

"Very Little. Our [name redacted] programme is funded by The Mayor of London and we have managed on the back of that to raise additional funds to cover our excess expenditure."

Percentage of Income Lost

"What percentage of your youth circus income has gone due to Covid-19?"

Number of Responses: 24



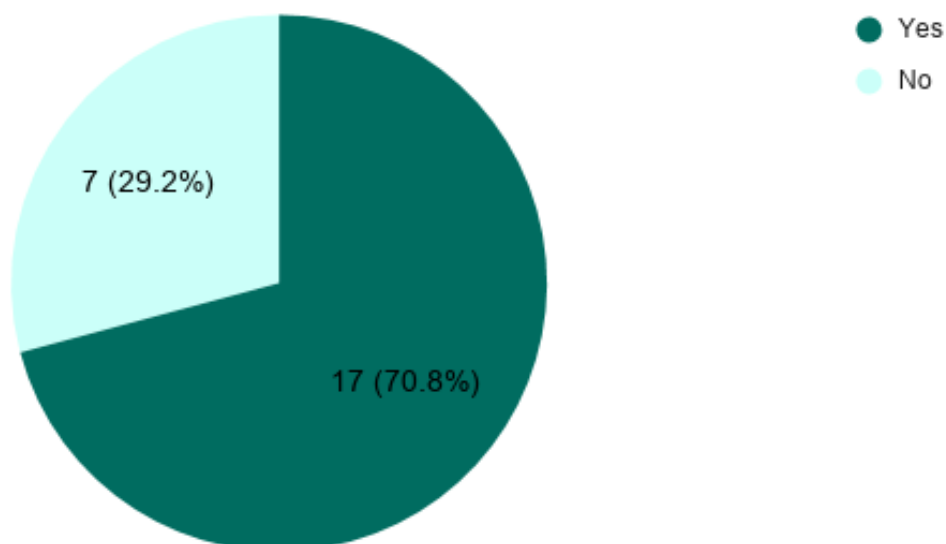
33% of youth circuses report that 100% of their income has gone due to Covid-19. While a high amount, this represents a significant improvement since our last impact survey, in which 62% of youth circuses reported that 100% of their income had gone.

87.5% of youth circuses report that 50% or more of their income has gone due to Covid-19. This is only a slight improvement since our last survey, in which 89% reported that 50%+ of their income was lost.

Outgoings

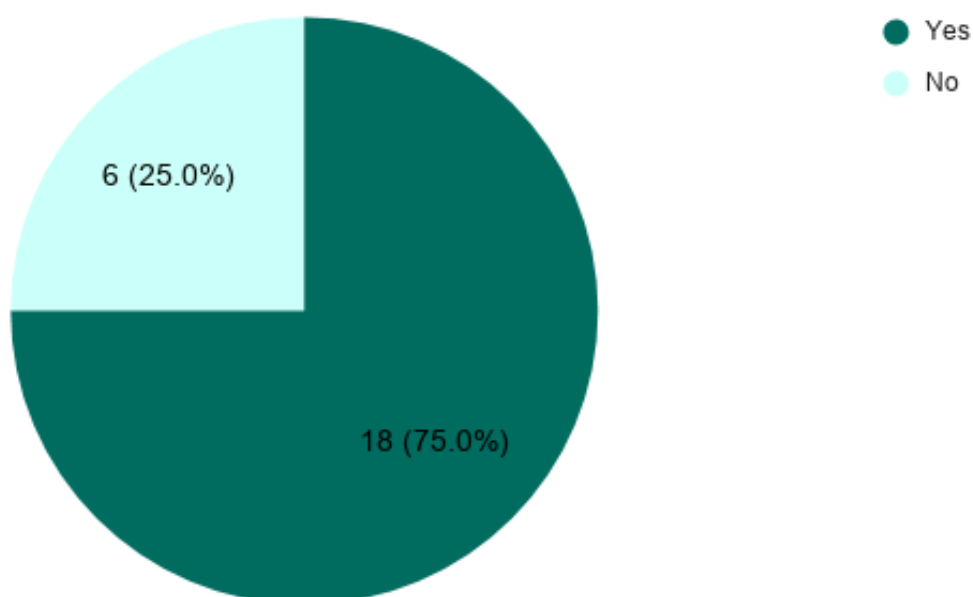
"Does your youth circus have any on-going outgoings during this time (e.g. rent on premises)?"

Number of Responses: 24



"Is your youth circus currently able to cover its outgoings?"

Number of Responses: 24



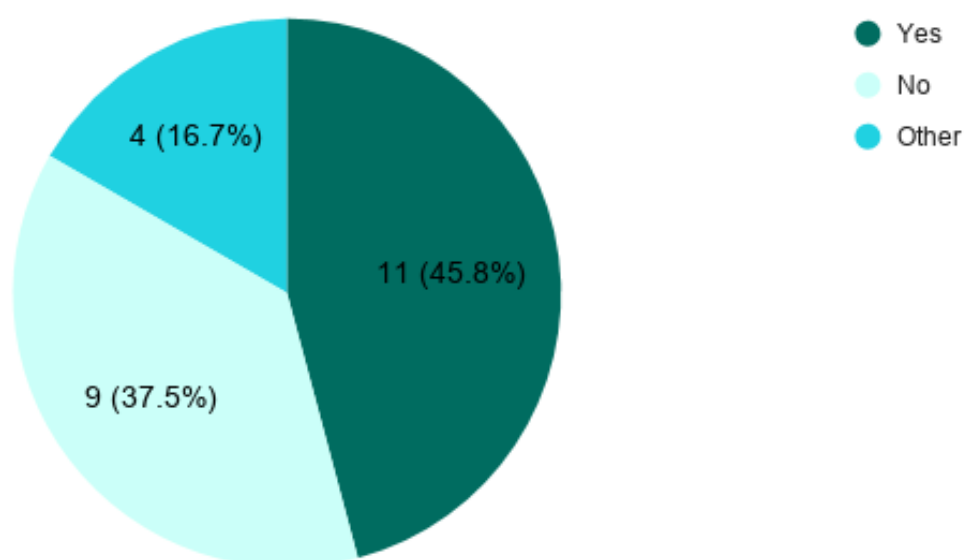
As the above chart shows, 25% of youth circuses report that they cannot cover their outgoings at this time. That represents a significant **increase** since our last report, in

which 11% could not cover outgoings. The majority of youth circuses (70.8%) have on-going outgoings at this time.

Financial Support

"Has your youth circus received any financial support from the government or funding bodies since the beginning of the Covid-19

Number of Responses: 24



A note on this chart: the only possible answers to the question that this chart relates to were yes or no. The 4 youth circuses that are categorised as 'Other' all reported that they had **not** received any financial support since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, however: in later questions, two of these youth circuses reported that they have received a government Bounce Back loan, while the other two reported receiving grants from Arts Council England and elsewhere.

This apparent contradiction raises important considerations: many smaller youth circuses are run by sole traders, who also work in other related professions (e.g., as professional circus performers). Larger youth circuses, meanwhile, are often part of a larger circus organisation, that fulfils other roles, such as running adult classes or curating professional shows. Youth circuses might therefore answer 'No' to the above question - as their youth circus has not received any specific funding - but later mention funding that has gone to them as an individual sole trader, or that has benefitted the wider organisation.



Even when discounting these 4 youth circuses, 37.5% of youth circuses have received no financial support since the beginning of this crisis. This is a significant number, considering that 87.5% of youth circuses report that more than half of their income has been lost due to the crisis.¹

¹ See 'Percentage of Income Lost', p.7

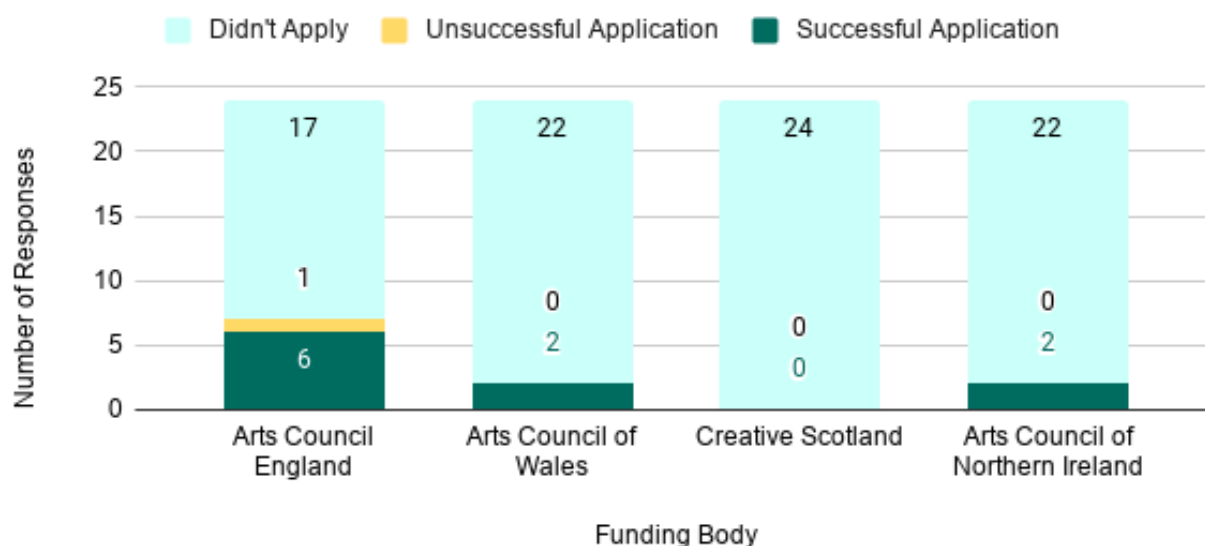
Income Since June 2020

This section is specifically concerned with income youth circuses have received since June 2020. Our last Impact Survey was published on June 10th, 2020, and we wish to identify the support that youth circuses have received since then.

Arts Council Grants

"Since the beginning of June 2020, has your youth circus received a grant from any of the following funding bodies:"

Number of Responses: 24



10 of the 24 youth circuses that responded to these questions applied for funding from one or more Arts Councils. This means that 15 (62.5%) did not make an application to any Arts Council.

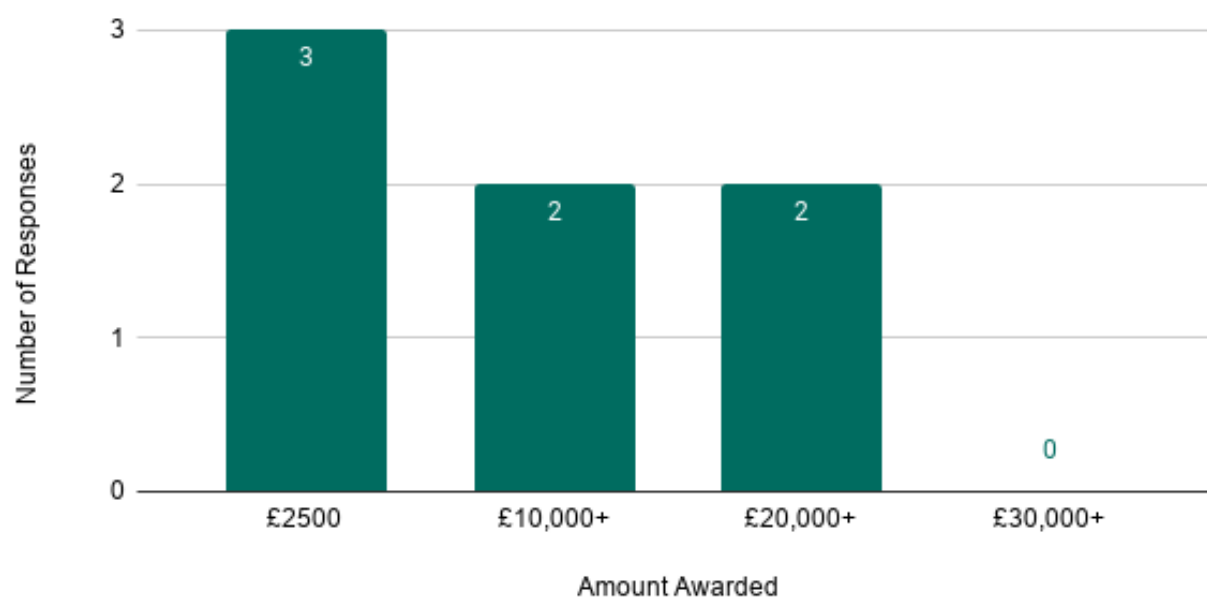
Of the 11 applications made, only 1 was unsuccessful.² There was therefore a 90.9% success rate for applications reported here.

² 10 youth circuses applied for arts council funding, however there were 11 applications made in total: one youth circus applied for funding from two different arts councils.

It is important to note that the majority of youth circuses that participated in this survey are based in England, and that none of the youth circuses surveyed are based in Scotland.

"Amount Awarded [Arts Council Grants] (£):"

Number of Responses: 7



The 7 youth circuses that responded to this question report being granted a total of £89,800 since June 2020, averaging £12,828.57 each.

As noted in a previous section, it can be complicated to identify what funding has gone towards youth circuses, as they are often either part of a larger organisation, or run by a sole trader with other income streams.³ Much of the funding detailed here, therefore, may not have gone solely towards youth circus activity, but rather supported the wider organisations or individuals that facilitate them. This can be seen in the quotes below:

"...only 25% of that was towards our [youth circus] programme."

"...this was towards total organisational activities, primarily for keeping the building open and covid prep and business

³ See 'Financial Support', p.9

adaptation for all activities. However since covid youth circus has taken a greater part of our activities."

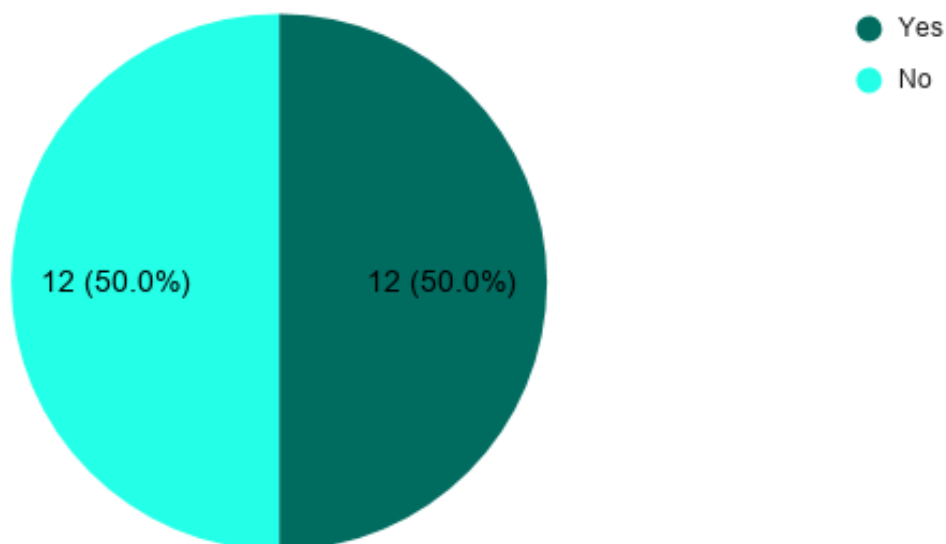
"Our coordinator received individuals funding to support artists."

"[This] was for my individual work as an artist and I received £2500. I used a portion of it to do back office work and start to deliver online activity."

UK Government Support

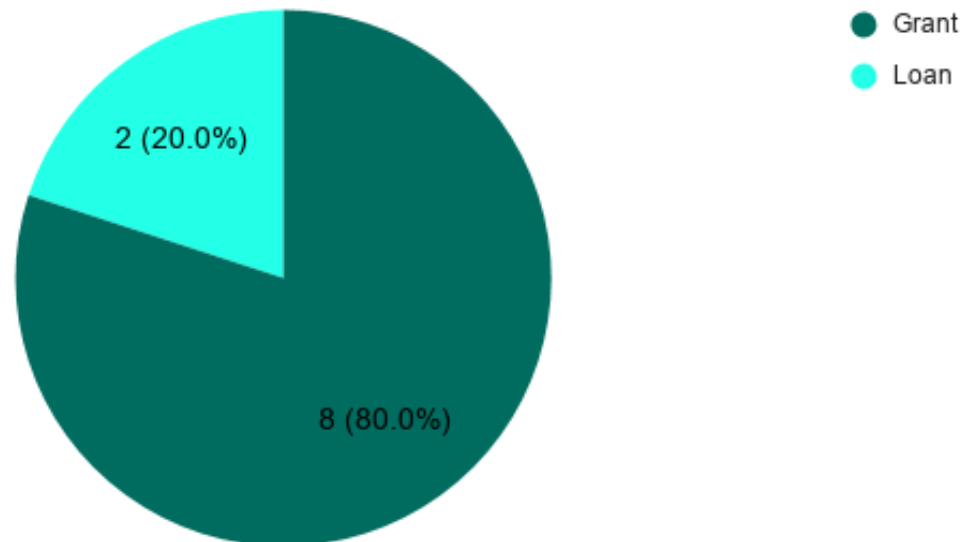
"Since the beginning of June 2020, has your youth circus received any financial support from the UK government?"

Number of Responses: 24



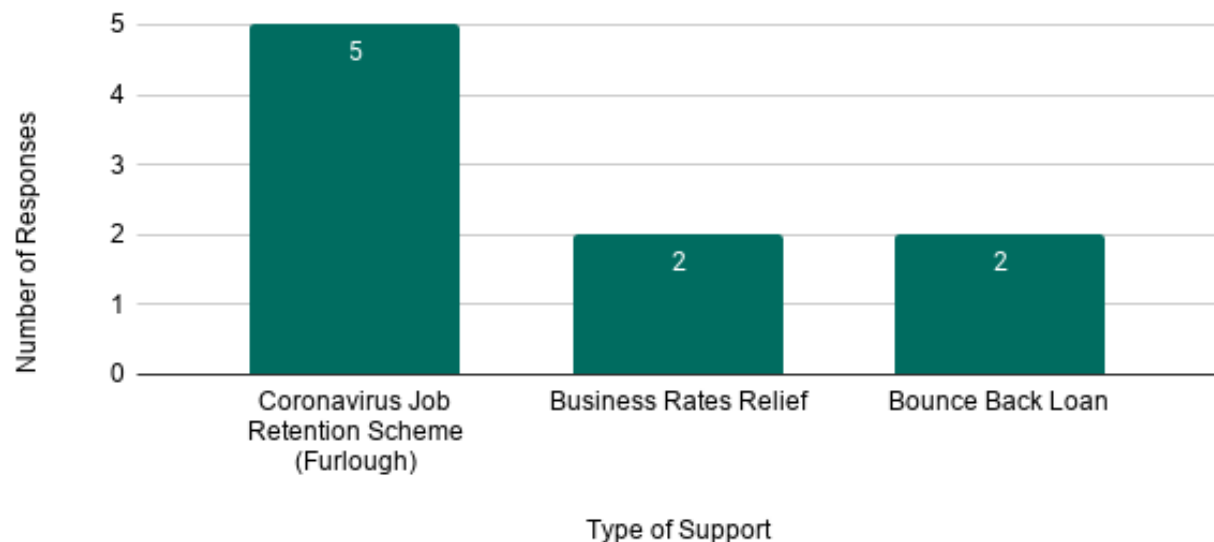
"If you answered yes: what form of support have you received?"

Number of Responses: 10



"Please specify the form(s) of support you have received from the UK government."

Number of Responses: 12 total, 9 included in this chart



Half of youth circuses that responded to this survey report that they have received some form of government support since June 2020; predominantly in the form of the Coronavirus Job Retention (or Furlough) Scheme.

Three youth circuses included additional financial details in their answers. These answers have been included here:

"Our youth circus has overall been supported by both an ERF grant via ACE and the CRF DCMS/ACE however these pots of money were to support the whole organisation, primarily the retention of freelancers so they could remain available to support our work and were not specifically allocated to our youth circus as a particular budget strand."

"As my youth circus is not a stand alone entity these questions are not applicable to us. No money in and no money out. I have [had to] hibernate the whole business due to covid."

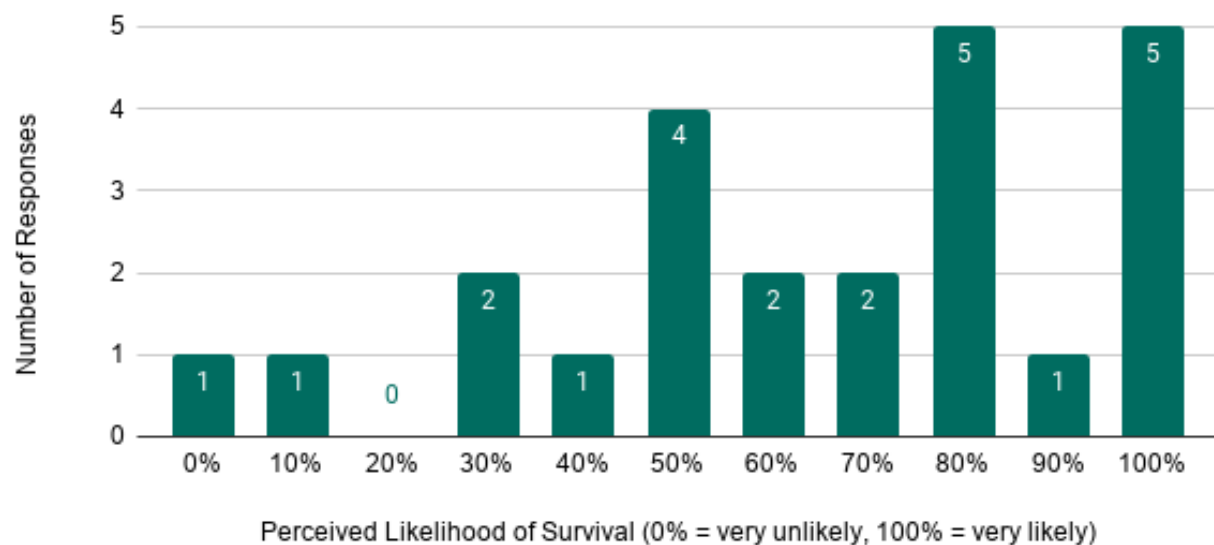
"We received funding for ongoing delivery from Active Cumbria connected to Cumbria County Council."

The Future

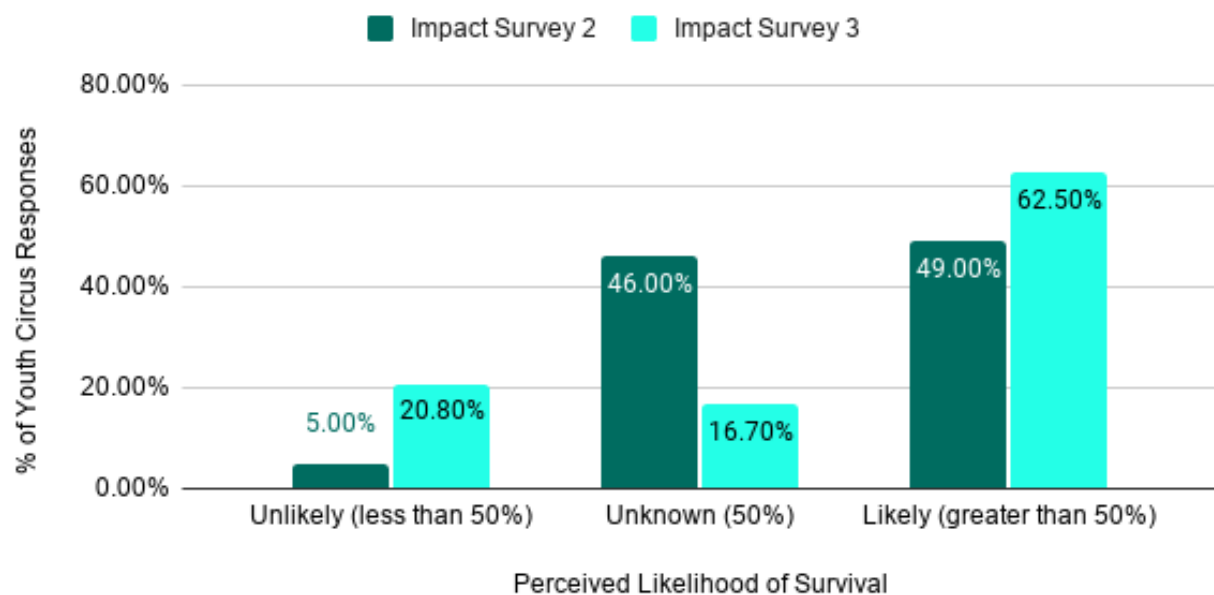
Likelihood of Survival

"With your current level of income and financial support, how likely is it that your youth circus will survive this crisis?"

Number of Responses: 24



Comparison: Perceived Likelihood of Survival, Impact Surveys 1 and 2

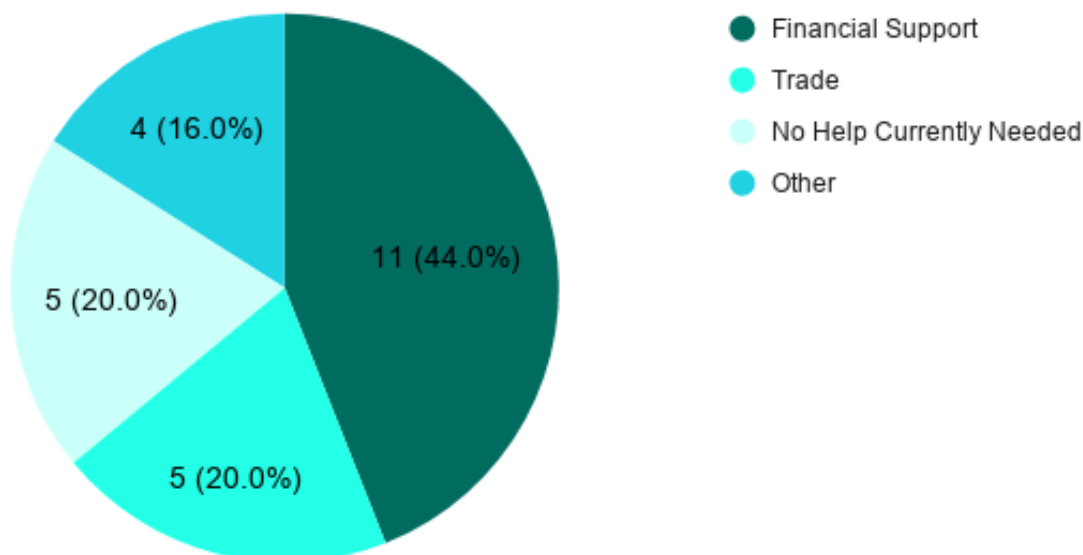


As can be seen in the comparison chart above, a greater percentage of youth circuses believe they have less than a 50% chance of surviving this crisis than recorded in our last Impact Survey. At the same time, a greater percentage of youth circuses believe their chances of survival are more than 50%. Overall, there is a greater sense of certainty among youth circuses about their chances of surviving this crisis - whether likely or unlikely - as less youth circuses rate their chances at 'Unknown'/50%.

Support Needed

"What further support do you require, from central government or elsewhere, if your organisation is to survive for the next six months?"

Number of Responses: 20. Summary of Word Answers



The above chart is a summary of written answers to this question. Further details about the categories in this chart are included below. 20 youth circuses responded to this question, however those that gave multiple answers have been included in multiple categories (e.g. if a youth circus wrote that they require funding and a new venue, for example, they have been included under both 'Financial Support' and 'Other').

Financial Support

"Support for Limited Company owners and a lump sum if your business is FORCED to close by guidelines."

Nearly half of respondents to this question specified that they required some form of financial support. While many simply wrote 'Funding', others wrote specifically about the help they require.

"For classes to be allowed to run, or for the furlough scheme to be extended past March, and more funding made available to start covering the loss of over heads such as rent, and core staff."

Trade

"Schools staying open as at the moment that is the only source of income."

'Trade' covers the need for commercial work, such as running classes and workshops, as well as being permitted to do said work by government guidelines. A number of youth circuses have reported that in order to survive for the next six months they need to be allowed to run classes, for example.

"It will all depend on whether venues accept us back; if I have staff willing to teach; if kids want to return; and if I have energy to begin all over again."

"We have received the Cultural Recovery Fund so are ok for the next 6 months as long as we are able to operate some classes for the majority of this period."

"We need our funders to continue being understanding. We need new sources of funding or trading - and we need our circus workshop trading to come back."

No Help Currently Needed

These answers include youth circuses that have specified that their income is secure for a specific period of time (e.g. until March), as well as those that simply wrote "None".

Other

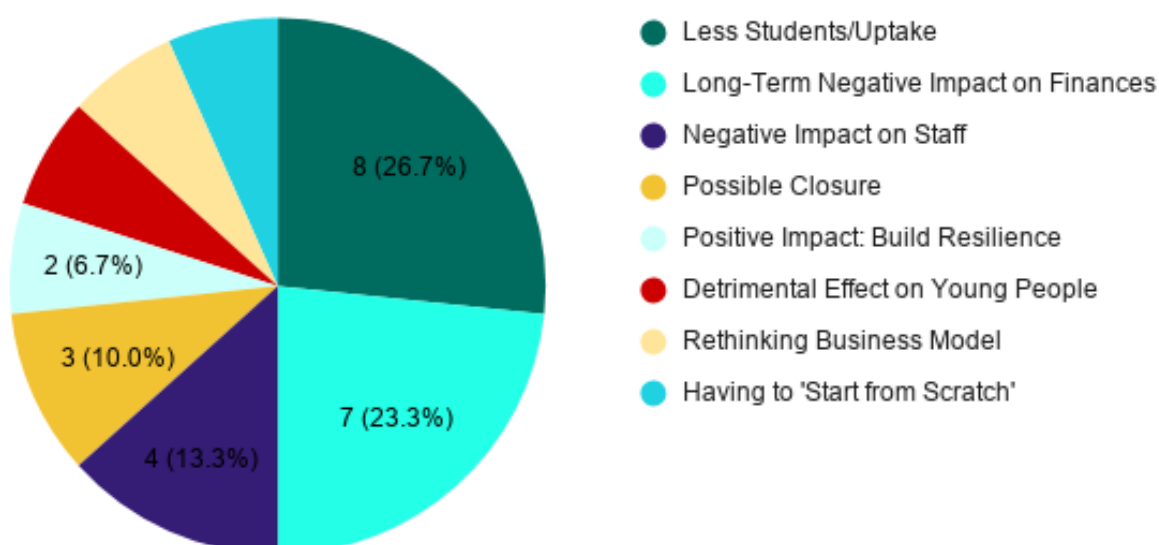
Other forms of support needed include:

- Instructor training/new instructors;
- New venue/storage space;
- Project development planning;
- Online communication with members;
- New equipment;
- A vehicle.

Long-Term Impact

"What long-term impact, financial or otherwise, do you expect this situation to have on your youth circus?"

Number of Responses: 23. Summary of Word Answers



As in the previous section, the above chart summarises common themes in written word responses to this question. Some full responses are included below.

"Financial - We expect earned income to continue to decrease significantly, or at least to remain decreased to the level of this year in future years. As such, we feel it's the coming two years that will be harder for us. This year we have secured quite a lot of other funding/support from other sources, which will get us through. Other - We are concerned about the negative impact on our fabulous freelance team. Before Covid-19 we were able to offer them a good level of income and job security. We are no longer able to do that."

"At the moment I am looking to cease trading."

"A loss of experienced teachers. Several of our regular tutors had to find different work or have moved away because they could not financially afford to stay and wait for classes (and their other performance work) to return. When we restarted in September we saw that our students had remained, and were eager to be back. However the cancellation for November - December classes has now made the future look more uncertain as no one wants to commit to course that is constantly stopping and starting."

"It has given me time as a business owner to learn more about businesses, funding and planning so I feel I will come out stronger as a business but weaker financially."

"We'll survive, but having been unable to hold sessions in our usual hall for months we'll have lost a lot of our longstanding participants - particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds or otherwise disadvantaged. At this point it may take years to build things up to where we were before. We're very worried about our community."

"We have been lucky in that we have worked in the funded sector in other areas of our activities so understand how to work within this world, so have improved our chances of survival. We know that it has had a massive impact on other local circus, gymnastics and other youth activities. If we can pull through I think we will be able to offer our services to a wider range of youth, partly as a result of the changing landscape and partly as we have had to do a lot of work on our business to survive this far. I think it will have a very big impact on the physical and mental health of our youth however, particularly those most vulnerable."

"We think that we will lose some participants at the upper end of our youth circus age range. This does ultimately have a long term knock on effect on the youth circus as a whole as it means that we lose young people who act as role models for the younger members."

"We were a young but rapidly growing organisation at the start of this, for the first time our lead instructor/manager/director was going to be able to take a wage. Now we are back to square one and starting from scratch. Our lead instructor has had to take other work for financial reasons as have others. I am not certain we will be able to build ourselves back up to where we were with the current deficit."

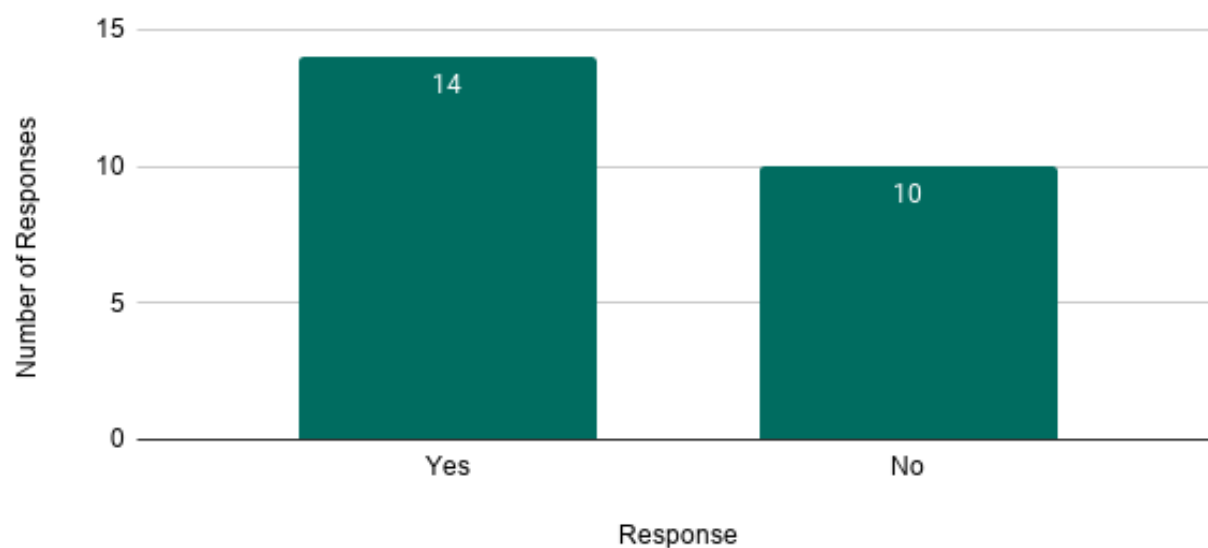
"It will adapt. It may at times be less activity but it at some point will grow again. The team will not allow this Crisis to stop activity all together. Money or not. It will happen."

CircusWorks

Engagement

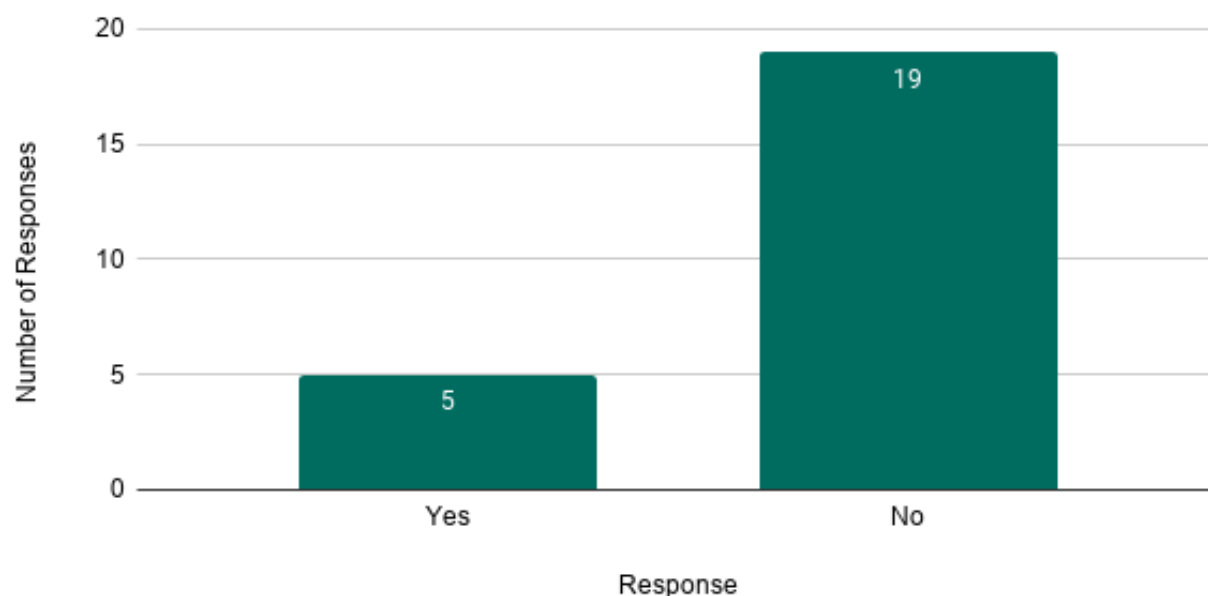
"Since they began in June 2020, have you attended any of the CircusWorks Unconferences?"

Number of Responses: 24



"Did you apply for the CircusWorks #saveyouthcircus Grant?"

Number of Responses: 24

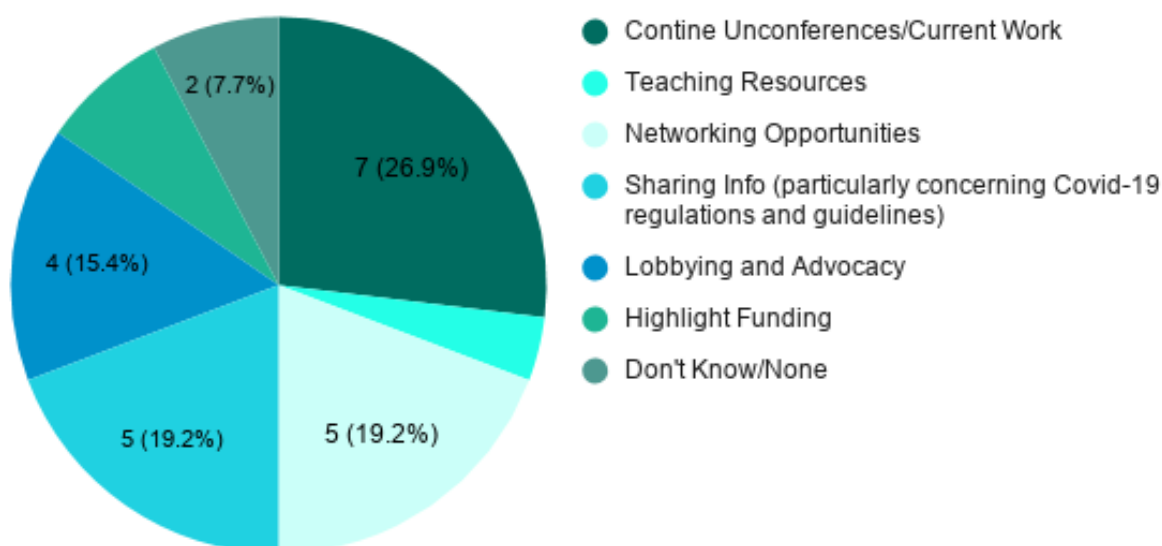


More than half (58%) of youth circuses surveyed have attended the CircusWorks Un-Conference, and we know from written comments that a greater number wish to attend, but have not been able to due to other commitments. The #saveyouthcircus grant has had a lower level of engagement, which may in part be due to eligibility (the grant was targeted at smaller youth circuses, in desperate need of economic support).

Future Support

"How can CircusWorks best support your youth circus during this crisis?"

Number of Responses: 22. Summary of Word Answers



This chart summarises some of the key ways CircusWorks can support youth circus, according to youth circuses themselves. Some of the ways we intend to engage with these requests in the new year are covered in the *Future Activity* section of this report, p.50. Responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive about the work CircusWorks is already doing. A selection of responses are quoted below.

"You're doing it already. Un-Conference has been a great at offering our teachers support and boosting their confidence in their ability to adapt their teaching skills to this new strange context."

"Supporting the fact that grass roots circus needs subsidy to survive. So much of what we do day to day is reliant on

leaders volunteering time and donating from other income streams: it must be recognised that ongoing that leads to burnout, so would be good to lobby for proper support of grassroots circus recognising that overheads for activities like aerial make it very difficult to sustain."

"Keep us connecting with each other and sharing learning, lessons and challenges. Encourage those who work freelance in the sector to remain in the sector: we're concerned we're going to lose many of our brilliant team due to the instability, uncertainty and financial hardship as they are not able to secure sufficient work through us."

"CircusWorks have helped us stay in the loop in regards to restrictions, funding and advice. Please don't stop. Although we have not attended the Un-Conference we really appreciate the advice and updates."

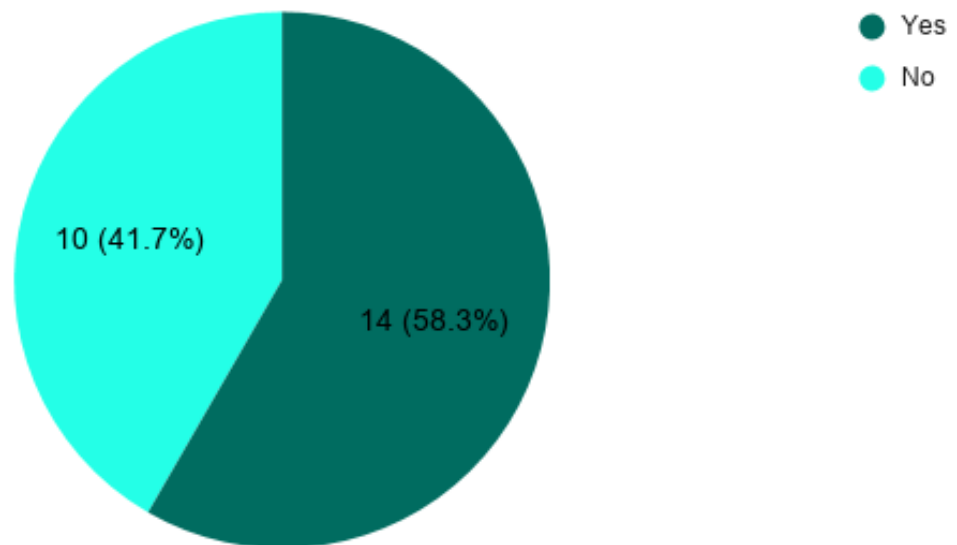
"Highlight potential funding opportunities, keep us up to date with the current guidance and how that applies to our work, negotiate with the sports council to have circus recognised. Provide resources and ideas for games & activities that can be done over zoom and/socially distanced. (I know you have done some of this in the unconferences but I have been unable to attend on a Thursday!)"

"You are already doing a great job. We feel very well represented and are grateful that you are speaking for us (having asked us what we need!). Thank you. You can best support us by keeping going! How can we help you do that?!"

Remote Activity

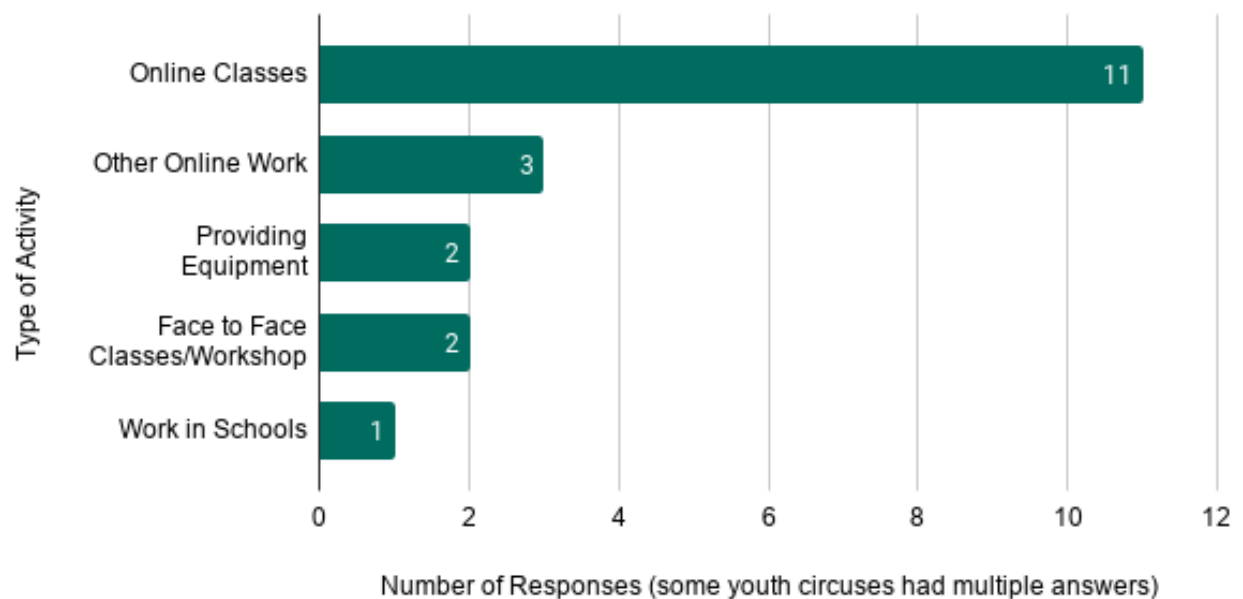
"Is your youth circus currently providing any remote or online activities?"

Number of Responses: 24



"If so, please provide details:"

Number of Responses: 15. Summary of Word Answers



The chart above collates information from word answers about the remote/online activities youth circuses are organising. Just over half (58%) of youth circuses surveyed are carrying out remote activities, mainly online on platforms such as Zoom. Some word answers are quoted below:

"We run couple of ground based in-house sessions that have moved to zoom for the duration of the firebreak. We are running diverse circus sessions for children and young people with ASD. These are currently done face to face. We are delivering a 6 week circus programme in Welsh to two schools that, due to their remote location, would't be able to access circus otherwise. We are also delivering online sessions in partnership with organisations such as [names redacted] and local community hubs. We are running a face to face project at the [name redacted] Primary."

"Weekly online workshops for the young people who were already part of our circus workshops."

"Youth Circus Home Edition. We continued making and releasing online tutorial videos for circus activities, skills, and tricks to try safely at home. For lockdown 2, we have changed our format to create more focused, shorter, videos that highlight specific tricks. This is because students are also still in school and do not have as much time at home as the first lockdown."

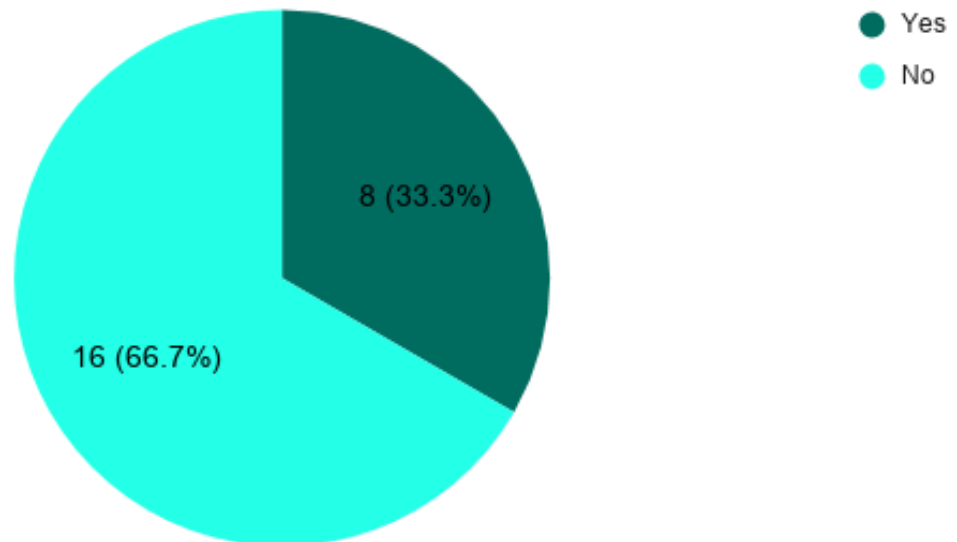
"Possibly free of charge hula hooping to access ACE funds for a film project."

"Youth Group has 2 sessions a week, we have loaned out all our juggling equipment to provide one learn to juggle session plus one conditioning session. WE also have a family learn to juggle zoom session for younger children. HOWEVER only about 30% of our students attend - it is not the same as coming to class and most of them prefer aerial."

Income from Remote Activity

"Does your youth circus currently have any income from remote or online activities?"

Number of Responses: 24



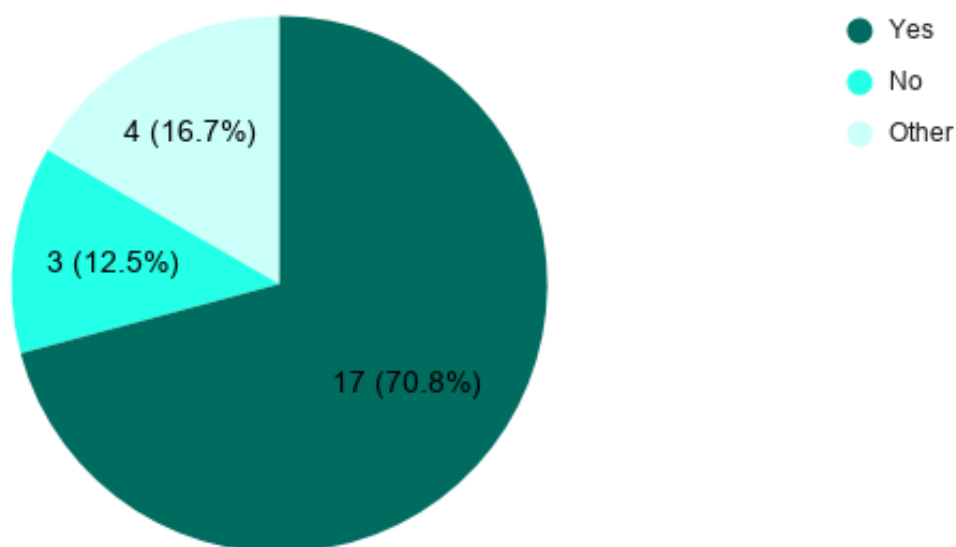
While 58% of youth circuses are currently providing remote/online activity, only 33% of those youth circuses are earning income from these activities. 25% of youth circuses who are providing online activity, are providing it without generating any income from it. It is also worth bearing in mind that those youth circuses that are receiving income from online or remote activity may not be earning as much as they would from normal activity.

Reopening

Reopening: June to November 2020

"Did your youth circus resume in-person activities between June and November 2020?"

Number of Responses: 24



'Other' responses can be counted under 'Yes': they generally described youth circuses that had reopened, but for a limited time or capacity. 87.5% of youth circuses have therefore physically reopened in some capacity during this period.

It is unclear whether the 12.5% that have not reopened chose to refrain due to ongoing concerns regarding the Covid-19 crisis, or because they were unable to.

Reopening: Future Plans

"If you are not currently running physical classes: What are your plans to reopen?"

NUMBER OF RESPONSES: 19

"Probably going to wait until the summer. I had to take on a new full-time job as I lost all my circus income. I'll have to see what the situation is like then, both for me and the wider culture to decide what to do. I'm still betwixt and between."

"Have said January, but don't think it will happen."

"Government willing, we will continue our classes from January 2021. All current covid measures in place will remain, and can be increased or reduced as needed."

"Probably not until next year, and then it will depend on the guidance and restrictions."

"We have a new hall lined up (our previous hall seems unlikely to open soon), and we will resume classes as soon as we can."

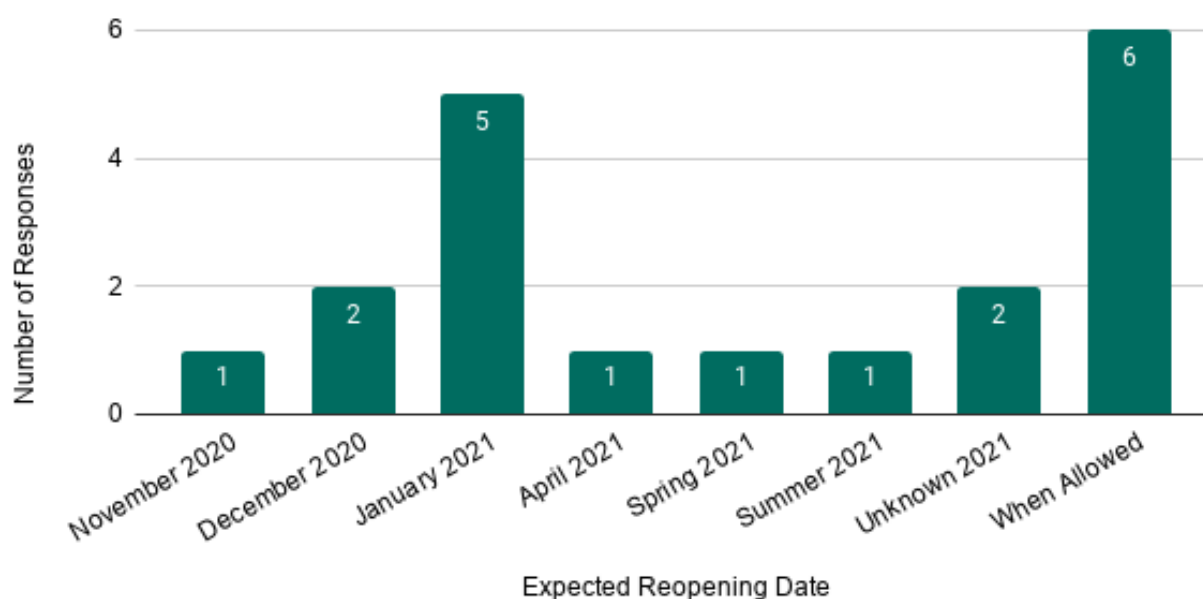
"We are closing tomorrow until sometime in 2021. We're not sure when this will be as yet."

"Hopefully reopening on 3rd December. Opening in a new, permanent space in Jan so hoping there isn't another lockdown."

Most of the responses to this question consisted of expected reopening dates, which are detailed in the chart below. Answers with additional information are quoted above.

Expected Reopening Dates

Number of Responses: 19. Extracted from Word Answers



26% expect to reopen in January 2021, while the greatest percentage (32%) are waiting to reopen whenever permitted by government guidelines.

Reopening: Additional Comments

"Any further comments on restarting:"

NUMBER OF RESPONSES: 12

"At the moment we are just doing a few in-school workshops and hope to restart weekly fee paying classes in Jan, but will be planning for another lockdown in the Spring as well."

"We need a bigger space to run classes in, we need to instil confidence that our young people are safe. We need to offer face to face [classes] as soon as possible."

"The benefit of bringing young people back into the space was clear from the moment the first class ran... We are very concerned about the impact of C-19 on the mental health and well being of our young members and feel that the ongoing closures and uncertainty are having a huge and otherwise unnoticed impact on the young people and their families. This was brought home through a very tragic incident in our community over the past month."

"We wish we had more funds to work on development but we are too scared to spend our unrestricted funds on this because of the uncertain times."

"Having taken on a permanent space I feel that the effect will be MUCH more catastrophic if we cannot reopen in January."

"In the gap between lockdowns we halved our class sizes and they were all full, we were looking for venues to open further classes. Which is great, however the income generated from such small classes is not enough to maintain us long term. With a lack of funds to train more staff and equip new venues I am unsure how we will progress until the restrictions are lifted."

"We want to start back as soon as we can (with Covid-19 mitigating protocols in place). We're very worried about the long-term effect this crisis will have on the physical and mental health of young people."

"Hope to find that lots of people are keen to gather outdoors again and buy our workshops!!"

"Waiting for gov advice."

"We've never stopped really, just done things differently in terms of youth circus, which for us is grant funded. Our trading element will be needed from the spring. We are thinking of different client groups and might have to work hard to rebuild this element."

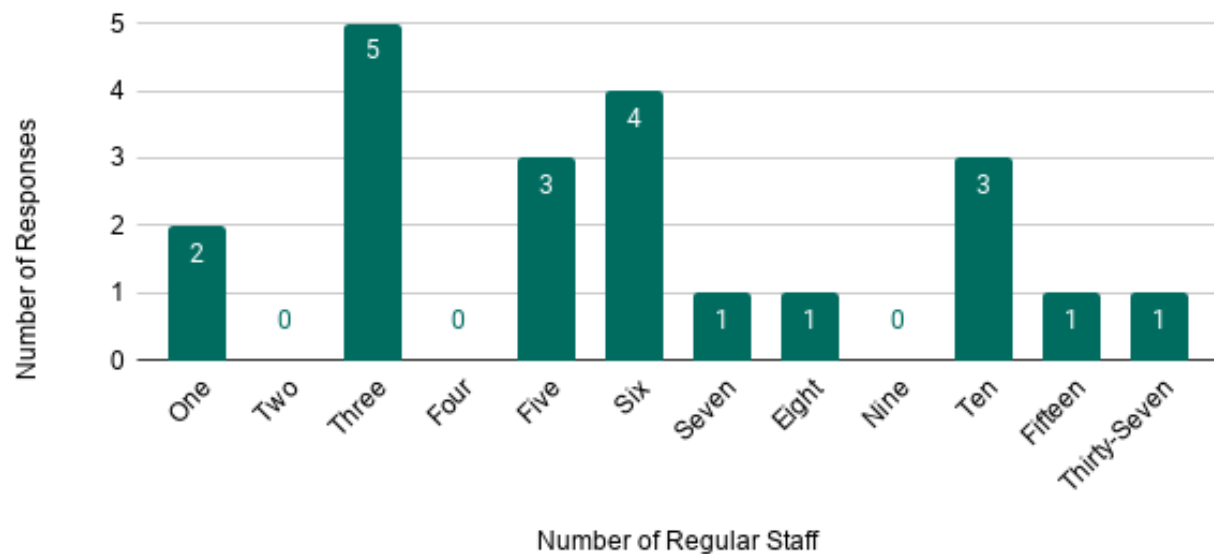
"It will be great to restart but will also be hard to sustain without additional subsidy, we hope that we will find other income streams and sponsorship."

"We cannot wait!"

Staff

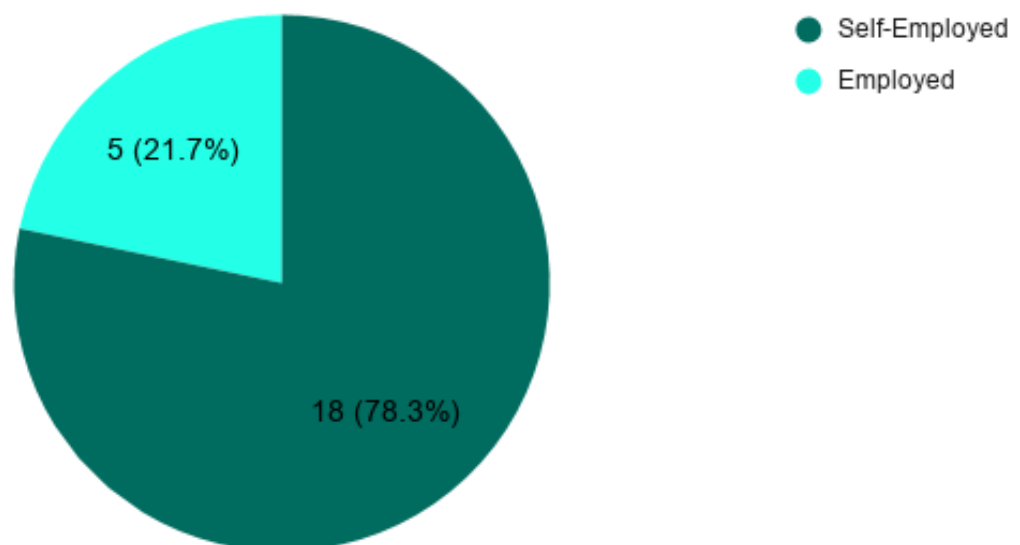
"How many people does your youth circus regularly employ (including administrative staff, riggers, and self-employed teachers)?"

Number of Responses: 24 total, 23 included in this chart



"How are the majority of your staff (including teachers) employed?"

Number of Responses: 23



The youth circuses that responded to this survey regularly hire **153** members of staff. This number includes staff that are employed, self-employed, part- and full-time employed, but does **not** include unpaid volunteers. **78% of youth circuses report that the majority of their staff are self-employed.**

Impact of Covid-19 on Staff

"What impact has this crisis had on your employed staff?
(Check all that apply)"

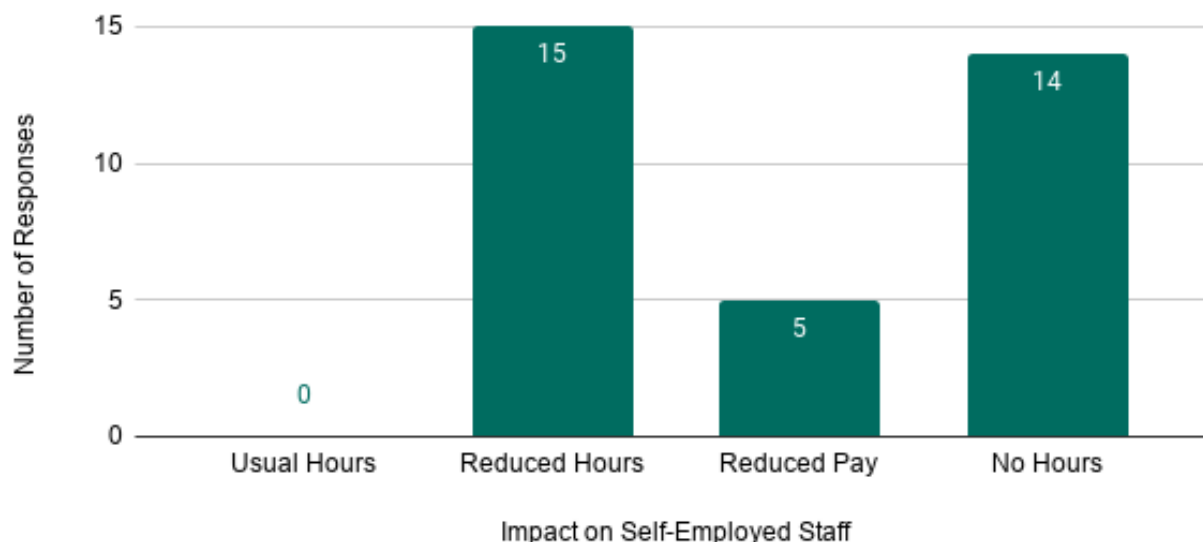
Number of Responses: 10



Overall, employed staff seem to be less detrimentally effected by the Covid-19 crisis than self-employed staff. 79% of employed staff are employed as usual or furloughed, while 14% are on reduced hours or reduced pay. Only one youth circus (7%) has reported the need for redundancies for employed staff.

"What impact has this crisis had on your self-employed staff? (Check all that apply)"

Number of Responses: 22



Meanwhile, no self-employed staff are employed to do their usual number of hours. Nearly half (41%) have no hours whatsoever, while 59% are on reduced hours or reduced pay. As already noted, self-employed workers make up the majority of staff in the youth circus sector.

Further Comments

"Any further comments on the impact on staff:"

NUMBER OF RESPONSES: 13

Many of the responses to this question concern a few key issues, namely:

- Staff, particularly teachers, having to take other work, leave the area etc. - indicating the possibility of a deficit in teachers and other skilled workers after the Covid crisis has passed;
- Concerns about the mental health impact this crisis is having on staff;
- Concerns about the economic impact this crisis is having on staff;
- Youth circus heads being unable to pay themselves, as well as being ineligible for help from the government.

A selection of written answers to this question are quoted below:

"Mental health impacts have been prevalent; staff are looking towards other careers."

"No help whatsoever from the government for myself as I am the Director of a Limited Company and was unable to furlough."

"We have all had to find other work to support us during this time, it is possible they will not all be able to come back."

"We managed through funding to provide some pay to our staff and they are now back on the same level as before Covid. We have also provided free Mental Health First Aid training for 10 of our regular staff. We have also been able to offer free training space for our regular as well as other practitioners."

"One of my regulars have moved out of the UK as he had no work here and could find work as a mainstream teacher back in his home country, one has found a full time job as a carer in a SEN college so cannot work for us at the moment and the others have all now applied for benefits."

"Even with financial support via ERF/CRF it has been difficult for our freelancers to manage financially and many have had to start working additional jobs."

"I can only pay freelancers when the classes are running. This is not a stable situation for them, also they usually use teaching as a top up to performing, so many tutors are now not available because they have had to look elsewhere. My insurance requires tutors with at least 3 years experience in circus. You can't just get a tutor from anywhere, they are highly specialist workers."

"We've managed to shield employed staff from any economic impact at all - we are so lucky - and have used freelancers online where we can to support the sector, but it's not been much unfortunately. The impact on staff and volunteers of not being able to teach circus, gather and do that, has been huge, so where we've created ways to do that outdoors it's been important not only for the young people but also a knock-on wellbeing impact on staff and volunteers, definitely. We do what we do for a reason - we know it makes a difference to the young people AND we love it - so not being able to do it is tough on everyone. The finance is absolutely the sharp end for so many but there's more to it than that."

"Staff have been forced to turn their skills to other work which affects development of the group."

"We have sadly seen that several staff members (experienced teachers) have moved away because of the crisis. Since June, 4 of our regular teaching team have moved away because there is no work for them in [the local area]. They have either left for work elsewhere, or moved away to stay with family or friends."

"We have actually been lucky to have young people who were members of the youth circus who had started a professional

career come back and teach for us as they have no work, which was good for us but no so good for them to lose performing work."

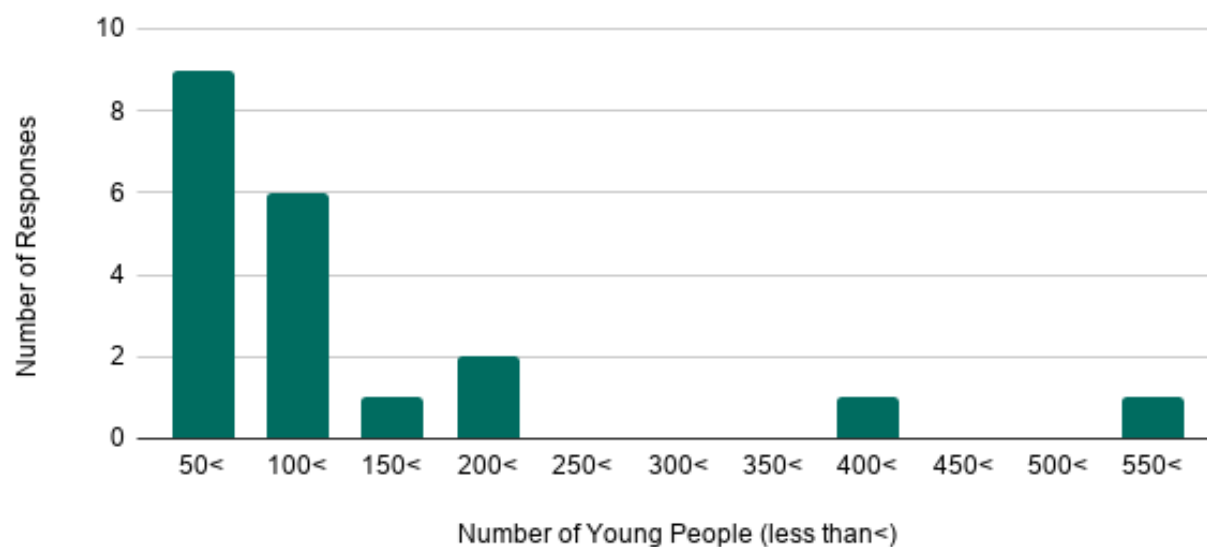
"I managed to employ 2 members of staff for our one-off sessions."

Young People

Engagement Prior to Covid-19 Crisis

"Prior to this crisis, how many young people did you regularly teach in your youth circus (e.g. on a weekly basis)?"

Number of Responses: 21 total, 20 counted



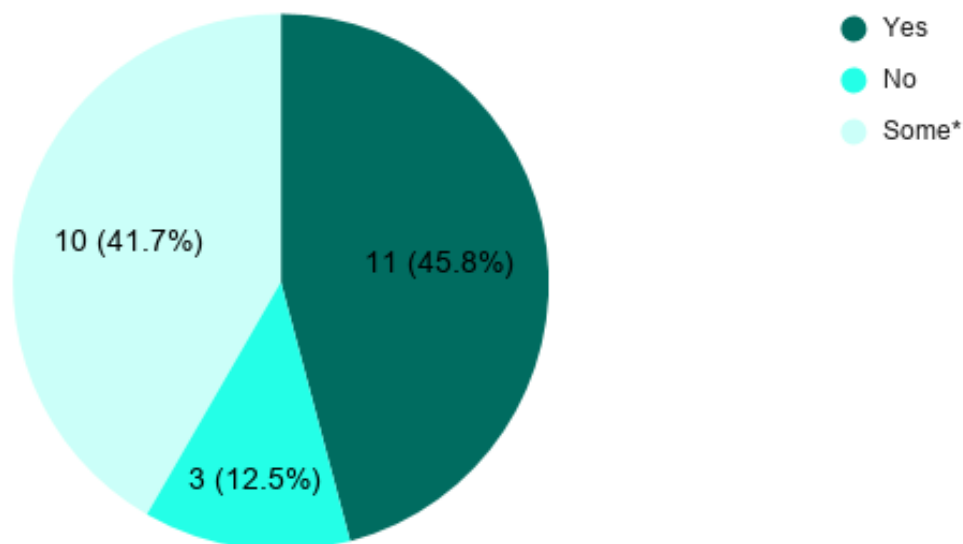
The 20 youth circuses whose responses to this question were counted taught a total of approximately **2029** young people on a regular (e.g. weekly) basis, prior to the Covid-19 crisis.⁴ Most of the youth circuses surveyed are small: 75% teach less than 100 young people per week.

⁴ 21 youth circuses responded to this question, however one response was not counted, as it did not contain usable data.

Ongoing Engagement During Covid-19 Crisis

"Is your youth circus still in regular contact with these young people?"

Number of Responses: 24



*This question had three options: Yes, No, and Other (with the option of adding a written response). The 'Other' responses all expressed that youth circuses were continuing to engage with some, but not all, of the young people that attended classes prior to the crisis.

Answers that went into greater detail are quoted below:

"We were able to involve 20 young people in classes when we reopened. We keep in touch with other parents through our mailing list."

"Some very much so, others not. There has been quite a big change over of youth from before to post-covid. We had several new people and many who no longer come."

"More so in the beginning but the engagement of the regular students has dropped off, although we have had established contact with new members through online yoga circus and the outdoor sessions."

Further Comments

"Any further comments about young people in this crisis:"

NUMBER OF RESPONSES: 10 TOTAL, 9 COUNTED

The written responses to this question describe youth circuses working hard to continue engaging young people throughout this crisis. Many are seriously concerned about the effect the crisis is having on their young people. Reoccurring concerns include:

- The impact of the crisis on the wellbeing and mental health of young people (this came up numerous times, and included many different specific concerns);
- Young people have lost physical capabilities due to being unable to train, and need to rebuild their fitness. In some cases frustration from this has caused young people to give up youth circus altogether;
- Youth circuses report young people losing confidence, motivation, and becoming increasingly disengaged;
- Young people miss the social aspects of youth circus.

Conversely, some youth circuses report that their young people seem to be coping well with the crisis.

Responses are quoted below:

"As I am sure is often the case many of our young people face disadvantage and or social/confidence difficulties. For many of them engaging online is even more challenging. I have noticed them all losing motivation, even the ones attending online are low on energy. I wonder if they will all return now that they are out of the habit and will have to go through those first class anxieties again. In terms of Aerial, in the gap, they were all so very disappointed and frustrated at the strength and conditioning they had lost, a couple have left due to this."

"Depending on how long this lasts for the impact on them long-term in terms of their confidence, ability to work with others, sense of well-being could be really affected."

"The training we give and conversation we have with our youth depend on the needs of them as they adapt. Lots of it is conversations and creative thinking around the themes we are all experiencing right now and that seems to help them."

"We've kept in touch but we learned new things about how tough it's been for some when we met them in person. We are continuing that on an ad hoc basis (only outside)."

"It is sad that we are unable to meet for the young people. We hope we can keep them interested because there is a dire need for healthy activities and more for the social aspect."

"We have worked very hard to keep in contact with as many as possible making sure they knew they would be able to return to regular training and classes at some point. The majority seem to have coped well."

"Many of the young people we have worked with are suffering from mental health problems, those with disabling barriers have suffered, their confidence has gone and their mobility."

"It is hugely impacting their mental health as some really struggle to connect via zoom."

"For some young people, circus is the best part of their week. We have someone who is struggling with behaviour and school, yet with us she is one of our best students and we are training her as an assistant with the younger classes. Circus is the only time in the week she engages with something she excels at and we have never seen any behaviour issues, she is exemplary as a student and assistant tutor."

"We do not anticipate being able to involve any new young people in our classes until we can stop quarantining equipment and until we can offer hands on support."

"Many young people are struggling with the loss of their weekly circus training, the physical exercise, mental challenge and the sense of belonging and being part of a team that it gave them, they have become more withdrawn disengaging from activity in general, losing fitness, confidence and physical literacy."

"It's good to know that the schools are open but [I] have heard from some parents that physical activities have been reduced in schools and that our fee paying participants don't have as much social interaction outside of their class bubble or home life."

"We found that most younger students were very eager to get back to their classes, but there was a good proportion of teenagers who were not so keen to return because of covid fears."

Further Comments

"Any further comments:"

NUMBER OF RESPONSES: 9

All additional comments are quoted here:

"We have been able to restructure classes and continue to work with our advanced students who require minimal hands on spotting. We have had to raise prices for these students and as redundancies start to rise among parents, several have become unable to afford the classes. We are applying for grants to hopefully be able to subsidise those young people. We anticipate that the situation in this region will become worse next year with the combination of Covid and Brexit. We have been unable to restart our general youth sessions which was the majority of both our provision and income. This is due to both having to quarantine equipment for 72 hours between sessions and the inability to offer constant hands on supporting which compromises safety especially for our disabled participants. We ran two full afternoons during the October half term holiday for young people but to [do] this we had to cancel every other class (adults) that week so lost money and as an unfunded organisation this isn't something we will be able to repeat. We have 3 students on the CAT programme."

"We chose not to run any indoor classes over winter."

"We have been in a very privileged position by being in receipt of funding, otherwise we would not have been able to continue our youth programme."

"Although [name redacted] is not in a desperate situation and still has some in-school work coming in, it is going to be very tight for at least the next 6 months. As a small business with very little overheads it can survive for a while in a full lockdown, myself and the self-employed staff on the other hand have struggled with finding income in the full lockdown. In the short- to mid-term we will have to reduce the number of classes as well as the number of participants in the classes (COVID safe) so will not have as many hours of work to offer as before, and [this] will mean that the freelance staff will need to find other paid employment, so reducing the pool of workers we can call upon for work in the future and impacting on the quality of workshops we can offer. As I said we are planning that the knock-on effects of this will last for a long time."

"Gymnastics, dance and other sports had clear guidance and support through a governing body. The support CircusWorks gave was great, but they couldn't tell us exactly what Covid rules to follow - how many children should share equipment etc because they were not mandated to do so. We were left to write our own risk assessments and hope for the best. Gym and dance had specific guidelines. We need to create a governing body to lobby and support professional work, or come under the wing of another governing body."

"Thanks to CircusWorks we have been able to keep up to date with current changes. Biggest thanks to 'the Carrolls', Lynn and the team."

"We have been fortunate enough to have Children in Need funding, including a booster fund to help with the crisis. Which has meant we have been able to offer something, but

not our usual offer. We have run a summer school and been able to buy equipment for home learning."

"Thank you for all you do..."

"I think CircusWorks is a fantastic organisation that recognises the importance and value of grassroots circus activity."

Key Findings

Financial Impact

The financial impact of this crisis on the youth circus sector is growing. On average, youth circuses have lost around £39,090 each since the beginning of this crisis - up £21,713 since our last impact survey in June. While fewer youth circuses report that 100% of their income is gone - presumably as they find new sources of income - close to 90% are still reporting that more than half of their income has disappeared due to the crisis. 37.5% have not received any financial support since the beginning of the crisis, and a quarter of those surveyed cannot currently cover their outgoings.

Income Since June 2020

We dedicated a section of this survey specifically to income since June 2020, as we wanted to track what support youth circuses have received since the initial round of emergency funding that was rolled out in response to the first UK lockdown. It is concerning to note the number of youth circuses that are not applying for funding, despite reporting financial hardship. Among youth circuses that did apply for arts council funding, there is a surprisingly high success rate of 90.9%, however 62.5% of youth circuses surveyed did not apply for funding from any arts council. Additionally, half of the youth circuses surveyed had not received any financial support from the UK government.

The Future

Overall, there seems to be a greater sense of certainty among youth circuses about their future after this crisis - for good or ill. In comparison to our previous survey, a larger percentage believe they have a greater than 50% likelihood of surviving this crisis, while simultaneously a larger percentage believe they have a less than 50% likelihood of survival. Far fewer youth circuses are rating their chances of survival at the 50% or 'Unknown' mark.

While a few youth circuses believe that this crisis will improve the resilience of their businesses in the long-run, many are troubled about the future post-Covid-19. Once normal trading is resumed, many youth circuses believe that there will be lower levels of engagement from young people. There are concerns that there will be a long-term, negative impact on the finances of youth circus organisations, with some reporting that they will have to rethink their business model, restart from scratch, or are looking at possible closure. When asked what help they need to survive this crisis, the two most

common answers were financial support, and permission to resume trading as soon as possible.

CircusWorks

A summary of these findings will be included in the 'Future Activity' section of this report (p.50).

Remote Activity

Just over half (58%) of youth circuses surveyed are carrying out remote activities, mainly online on platforms such as Zoom. Only 33% are earning any income from remote activities, however, meaning that a quarter of youth circuses are providing online or remote activity without generating any income from it.

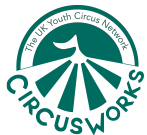
Reopening

The majority of youth circuses (87.5%) reopened in some capacity in the period between June and November 2020. While some youth circuses have a clear idea of when they hope to reopen (26% expect to resume physical classes in January 2021, for example), 53% cannot give a specific date, and are waiting for government guidance.⁵

Staff

As corroborated by our previous surveys, this survey showed that the majority of staff in the youth circus sector are self-employed. A relatively small number of employed youth circus staff have been detrimentally effected by this crisis (14% of youth circuses report that employed staff have reduced hours or pay, while only one organisation surveyed has had to make employed staff redundant). Conversely, 41% of youth circuses report that they are unable to give their self-employed staff any work whatsoever, while the remaining 59% report that their self-employed staff are on reduced hours or pay. No youth circuses surveyed have been able to employ self-employed staff at pre-Covid-19 levels, leading to many skilled workers seeking work elsewhere or even leaving the country. Due to this, youth circuses are concerned that there will be a deficit of skilled workers once this crisis has passed.

⁵ These include youth circuses that responded with vague answers such as 'Summer 2021' or 'Sometime in 2021', as well as those whose only comment was that they are waiting for government advice.



It must also be noted that some youth circus heads have been unable to pay themselves, have not received financial support, and so are facing personal financial issues.

Young People

While youth circuses are working hard to continue engaging young people, many write that young people are becoming increasingly disengaged and unmotivated as the crisis wears on. When asked whether they are still in regular contact with the young people who attended classes before Covid-19, youth circus responses were split fairly evenly between yes and no. As evidenced in our previous impact surveys, youth circuses continue to be concerned about the detrimental impact this crisis is having on the mental, social, and physical wellbeing of the young people they teach.

Future Activity

As part of the survey, youth circuses identified the 6 best ways CircusWorks can support them during this crisis. These suggestions are used as headings below, followed by a short description of how we intend to engage with these requests in 2021.

1. Continue Current Work, Particularly the Un-Conference

Funding permitting, we intend to continue our Un-Conference in the new year. This is an online monthly event for youth circus practitioners, that includes workshops, discussions and lectures with top circus academics, specialists and funding bodies. The response we've had this year to the Un-Conference has been overwhelmingly positive, and we hope to continue the event as a source of training, networking and support in the new year, for as long as this crisis continues.

2. Teaching Resources

We are in the process of developing our new website, which is due to be launched in January 2021. This will contain numerous resource pages, including specialised teaching resources. In the new year we are also planning on creating two working groups to develop ideas and strategies about Digital Learning and Circus in Schools. We will also be building on our partnership with Greentop Community Circus to create new circus resources for teaching in schools, as part of their Creative and Active Project.

3. Networking Opportunities

As well as our ongoing Un-Conferences, which have been an incredible opportunity for youth circus practitioners to network with specialists from around the world, our new website will be a platform for youth circuses and circus practitioners to connect and exchange ideas. Youth circuses will be advertised throughout the site, and will be able to post jobs, events, opportunities and news. With further funding, we hope to also develop forums for networking, advice and discussion.

4. Sharing Information - Particularly Concerning Covid-19

Our current website has a section of Covid-19 resources, which we hope to expand once the new website is up and running. Additionally, our monthly Un-Conference usually has at least one session dedicated to Covid-19 rules, resources, reopening or other issues relating to the current crisis.

5. Lobbying and Advocacy

We will continue to lobby for greater support and recognition for the youth circus sector in the coming year. The three impact surveys we have undertaken this year were created, in part, to increase awareness of issues facing the sector, within funding bodies and the general public. Once this third impact survey is released, we intend to create a short infographic highlighting key findings across the three surveys, to further this awareness.

6. Highlight Funding Opportunities

There will be pages on our new website dedicated to funding opportunities, resources and advice. Furthermore, we have had numerous sessions dedicated to funding at our Un-Conference, with representatives from Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Wales, Equity, and expert fundraisers - and we hope to have more of these sessions in Un-Conferences in the new year.

Once again, we would like to thank the 24 youth circuses that engaged with this survey, as well as everyone working under such difficult circumstances in the UK youth circus sector at this time. You inspire us to do what we do.

Thank you for reading this report.