



Study of the Socio-Economic Conditions of Theatre Practitioners in Ireland

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Preface

Preface

The Arts Council is committed to ensuring that its support for the arts is based on policies informed by the best available information.

This report on the Socio Economic Conditions of Theatre Practitioners in Ireland marks this commitment by providing us with an essential understanding of the conditions in which theatre professionals live and work.

It represents a vital contribution to public recognition and understanding of the unique working lives of some of our most visible artists. Equally, we hope that the theatre community may find within it a clearer picture of itself and its own practice in the support of the people who are the instruments of its art.

We wish to acknowledge with thanks the work of Hibernian Consultants and also to express our thanks to the many anonymous men and women of the Irish theatre community who gave their time and information so generously to this very important study.

Mary Cloake
Director, Arts Council

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

This study was commissioned by the Arts Council at the end of 2004 and undertaken by Hibernian Consulting between February and September 2005. The centrepiece of the study was a survey of Irish theatre practitioners carried out between April and July 2005. Its aim was to assemble an evidence base on the economic and social conditions of Irish theatre practitioners and to do so in a way that would provide baseline data to allow future comparative studies to be undertaken. This is the first such study undertaken in Ireland.

This Executive Summary presents key findings of the study. Further findings, details on the survey methodology and references are available in the full study report.

DEFINITION OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

For the purposes of the study, the Arts Council defined theatre practitioners as coming from the following occupational areas:

1. Performing artists:
 - Actors
 - Dancers/choreographers in theatre productions
2. Production artists:
 - Playwrights
 - Directors
 - Designers (lighting/set/sound/costume)
3. Technical and managerial practitioners:
 - Technicians
 - Stage managers and production managers
 - Producers

As well as belonging to these occupational areas, the practitioners surveyed were people who:

- Had been active in their specialist area of activity in 2004;
- Had worked in theatre for at least two years, i.e. were established as theatre practitioners;
- Saw working in theatre as their main profession or career;
- Operated as freelance practitioners, which is the norm for over 80% of Irish theatre practitioners.

STUDY METHOD

The study began with a review of international and Irish literature relating to the socio-economic conditions of artists. This both informed the design of the survey questionnaire and provided a context to interpret the survey results.

Design of the survey questionnaire was also informed by discussion with the Arts Council Theatre Specialist and the Information and Research Officer, and with the following organisations:

- Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland (APDI);
- Associated Theatre Artists (ATA);
- Irish Actors Equity;
- Irish Playwrights' and Screenwriters' Guild;
- Theatre Forum;
- Theatre Shop.

The support of these organisations allowed for estimates to be built of the total population of theatre practitioners. It was estimated that there are approximately 900 Irish practitioners who meet the criteria set out above. Interviews were undertaken with 195 of these practitioners. The targeting of these interviews was decided upon in light of the

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were undertaken with 195 of these practitioners. The targeting of these interviews was decided upon in light of the population estimates reached for the sub-groups of practitioners.

Draft findings of the study were reviewed with the Arts Council Theatre Specialist and the Information and Research Officer, as well as with the Arts Council’s Artists’ Services Manager (responsible for programmes to support individual artists) and the Dance Specialist.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONER POPULATION

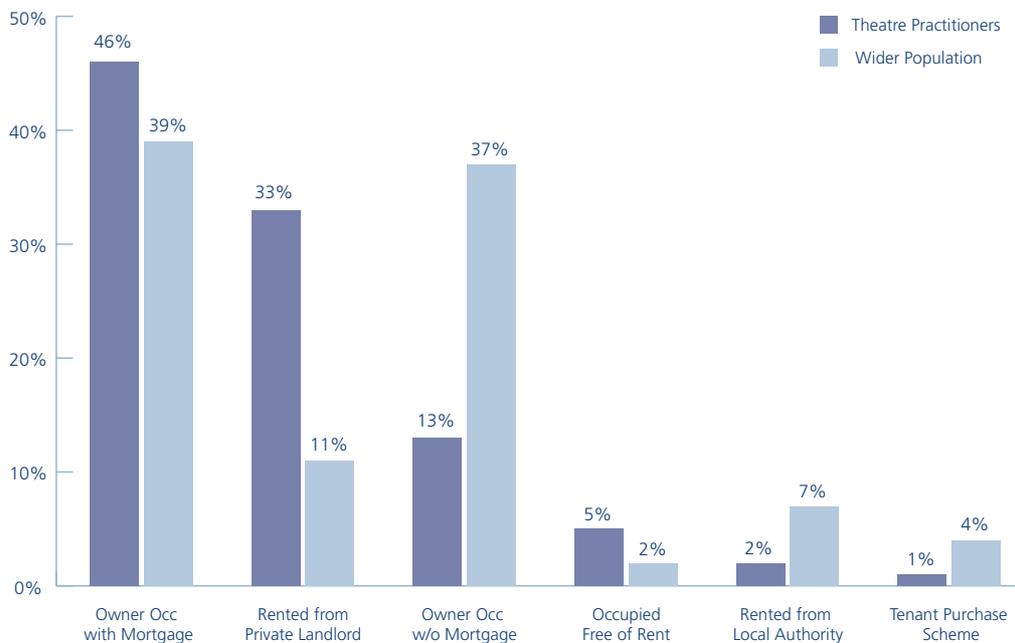
Based on the survey respondents, the age profile of theatre practitioners was found to be similar to that of the wider labour force, with approximately one-third of practitioners aged under 34; one-third aged 35-44 and one-third aged over 45. The gender profile was also similar to the wider labour force:

- 56% of theatre practitioners surveyed were male and 44% female;
- 58% of the wider labour market is male and 42% female.

The survey indicated a fall-off in the number of female practitioners after the age of 40. The theatre/dance resource organisations said that this may reflect a lack of character roles for female actors aged over 40, as well as family commitments.

Data on the nature of occupancy of accommodation indicates that 59% of theatre practitioners live in owner-occupied houses (with or without a mortgage). However, theatre practitioners are less likely to own their home and more likely to be renting compared to the population as a whole. Figure 1 shows that 33% of theatre practitioners said they were renting from a private landlord, whereas the figure for 2002 for the population as a whole was 11%¹

FIGURE 1: NATURE OF OCCUPANCY: THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND WIDER POPULATION



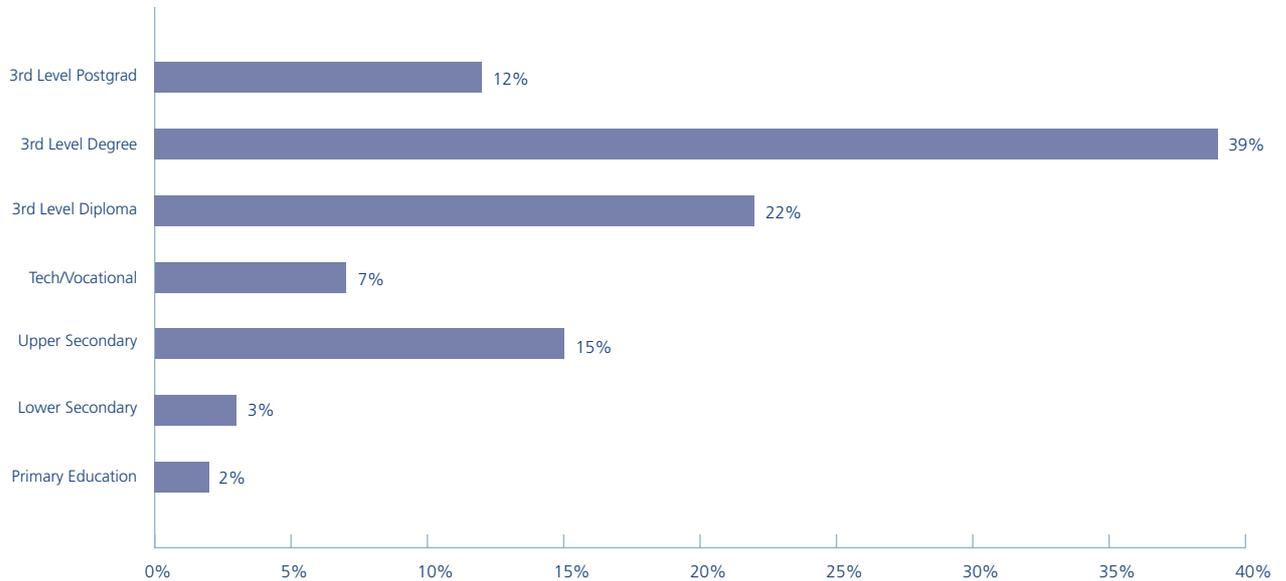
Based on 195 Respondents

¹These two figures do not directly compare like with like as the figure for the population as a whole (from the Census) incorporates more older people, who are more likely to own their own home.

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Figure 2 shows a breakdown of practitioners by highest level of education attained.

FIGURE 2: HIGHEST COMPLETED EDUCATION OF THEATRE PRACTITIONER



Based on 192 Respondents

Figure 2 shows that 73% of practitioners have a third level qualification. This compares to 28% of the wider labour force. Theatre practitioners therefore constitute a relatively well-educated segment of the Irish labour force.

The formal education of theatre practitioners is supplemented by private classes, on-the-job learning and other ongoing training:

- Some 83% of practitioners consider ongoing training as “important” or “very important” to career development.
- 37% had engaged in relevant training in 2004. This suggests a gap between the amount of continuous training that people would like and the amount they undertake.
- Some 78% of practitioners believed there are insufficient opportunities available for continuing training and professional development.

WORK PATTERN OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

To get an indication of the proportion of theatre practitioners working in theatre at a given time, respondents were asked if they had worked in any role in theatre in the week prior to the survey interview:

- One-third of practitioners had worked in theatre for the whole of the week;
- One-fifth had worked in theatre for part of the previous week;
- The remainder (47%) had not worked in theatre at all in the previous week.

There was considerable variation between practitioner types (using the groupings set out earlier):

- Some 64% of technical and managerial practitioners worked for the whole of the previous week in theatre;
- The equivalent figure for production artists was 47%;

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- Only 23% for performing artists worked for the whole of the previous week in theatre, and 63% did not work at all in theatre in the week prior to the survey.

Practitioners were asked to break down their activity for 2004. Table 1 shows this breakdown, measured in weeks, for six types of activity – work in a practitioner's main specialist area; theatre work outside their main specialist area; arts work outside theatre; work outside the arts; periods of unemployment and other activities (e.g. maternity leave, illness or holidays).

TABLE 1: AVERAGE BREAKDOWN OF ACTIVITY FOR 2004 YEAR - FOR ALL THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND FOR PRACTITIONER SUB-GROUPS (WEEKS)				
	Performing Artists	Production Artists	Technical and Managerial	Overall Average
Main Specialist Area	16	24	33	20
Other Theatre	3	9.5	3	5
Other Arts Work	8.5	6	5.5	8
Work Not Related to Arts	8	3	3.5	6
Unemployed	11	4.5	3.5	8
Non-work Activities	5.5	5	3.5	5
Total	52	52	52	52

NOTE: *Performing Artists* include actors and dancers/choreographers in theatre productions; *Production Artists* include playwrights, directors and designers; *Technical and Managerial Practitioners* include technicians; stage managers and production managers; and producers

The final column of Table 1 indicates that, in 2004, the average theatre practitioner:

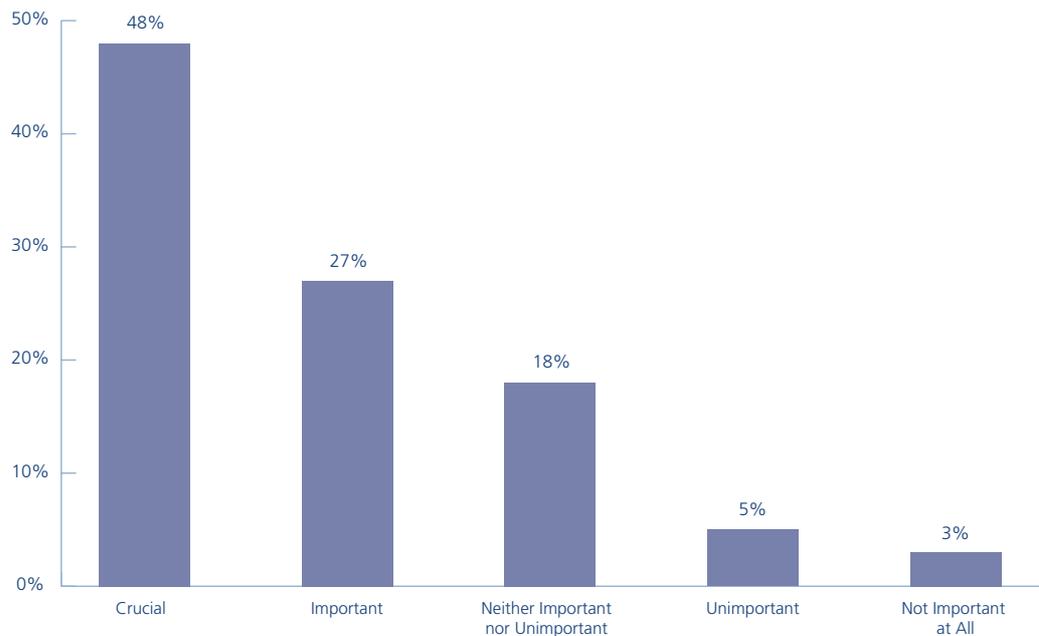
- Worked for 20 weeks in their main specialist area of theatre activity;
- Supplemented this with almost 5 weeks of other work in theatre, meaning that almost half of the year was spent in theatre work;
- Spent about 14 weeks in other employment, giving a total number of weeks worked of 38;
- Experienced an average of 8 weeks of unemployment;
- Spent 5 weeks engaged in non-work activities.

Table 1 shows significant variation as between the three sub-groups of practitioners. The survey indicates that the average performing artist obtains less work in theatre and spends more time out of work than other theatre practitioners. Analysis of the data also shows considerable variation by individual. For example, 5% of practitioners had no work in their main specialist area of theatre in 2004.

Theatre practitioners were asked about work in areas that link to their theatre work. Some 76% of respondents said they work in either film, TV or radio drama, and 54% do other commercial or media work. Figure 3 shows the importance of this work to practitioners.

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FIGURE 3: EXTENT OF IMPORTANCE OF OTHER RELATED MEDIA WORK TO THEATRE PRACTITIONERS



Based on 151 Responses

Figure 3 shows that 75% of respondents consider such work as important or crucial to support their career in theatre. Performing artists (actors and dancers) are most likely to rate such work as critical to their theatre career.

Other data on the work pattern of theatre practitioners showed:

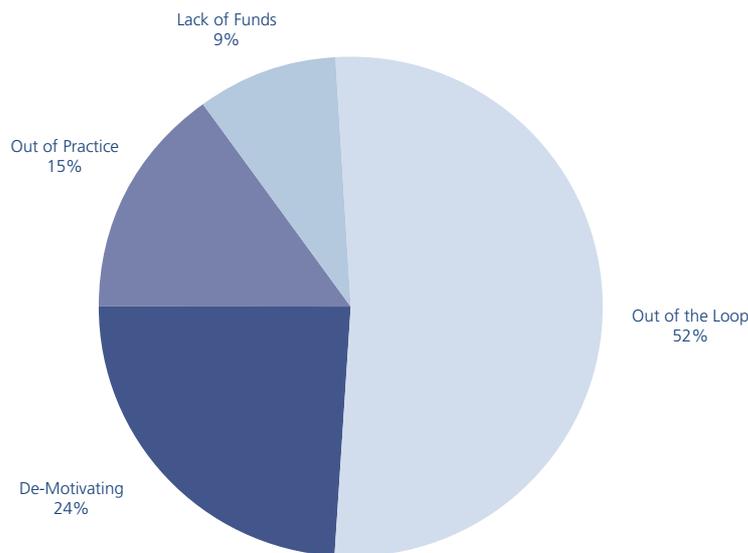
- There is a large variation in the number of hours worked – 31% had worked over 45 hours in the last week in which they had worked in their main specialist area;
- One-third of practitioners undertook unpaid work in their last week working in their main specialist area – given the prevalence of fixed fee contracts, this may understate the unpaid work undertaken;
- Just under one-third of practitioners worked abroad in 2004.

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UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Table 1 indicated that unemployment is a normal part of a theatre practitioner's working life. Some two-thirds of practitioners said that being unemployed had held back their career development, and the reasons for this are shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4: HOW BEING UNEMPLOYED MOST HINDERS CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Based on 65 Responses.

The main reason unemployment damages career development is "being out of the loop". Several practitioners commented that "work generates work", partly because work generates critical reviews and raises a practitioner's profile.

Practitioners were asked about three specific problems that had been mentioned by the theatre sector stakeholder organisations as arising from time-to-time:

- 31% were aware of variations in treatment of theatre practitioners by different Social Welfare offices;
- 24% had been required to re-train or to apply for alternative jobs during periods of unemployment;
- 19% had been threatened by removal of their benefits at one point or another.

These answers indicate that the problems cited by the resource organisations do exist, although for a minority of practitioners.

INCOME OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

The survey asked theatre practitioners about their incomes in 2004. Information was sought in relation to:

- Practitioners' income from their core specialist area of activity;
- Income from all work in theatre;
- Total personal income from all sources, i.e. including income from all work, social welfare and any other sources;
- Total household income, where different to the above.

The median income figures (the level below which 50% of the population is estimated to fall), for all theatre practitioners and for the three sub-groups, are shown in Table 2.

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	Overall	Performing Artists	Production Artists	Technical and Managerial
Income from Main Specialist Area	€7,200	€5,500	€10,500	€19,675
Income from all Theatre Work	€10,000	€7,000	€18,000	€20,400
Total Personal Income from all Sources	€22,000	€20,000	€25,800	€29,750
Household Income	€30,000	€26,900	€40,000	€38,000

NOTE: *Performing Artists* include actors and dancers/choreographers in theatre productions; *Production Artists* include playwrights, directors and designers; *Technical and Managerial Practitioners* include technicians; stage managers and production managers; and producers

Table 2 indicates that, for 2004, it is estimated that 50% of theatre practitioners earned less than €7,200 from work in their main specialist area. When all sources of income were included, it is estimated that 50% of practitioners earned under €22,000. The figures are lowest for performing artists (actors and dancers).

In the context of the data on levels of household income, one-third of practitioners said that they had another income coming into their household which was “steady” in nature. Just under half of this cohort (15% of all practitioners) said that they could not continue to stay in theatre without this financial support.

When the income of a theatre practitioner and the weeks worked by a practitioner (both for their main specialist area) are compared, this allows figures for average weekly wages to be calculated². The survey data suggests an average weekly wage for all theatre practitioners (for their main specialist area) in 2004 of €513:

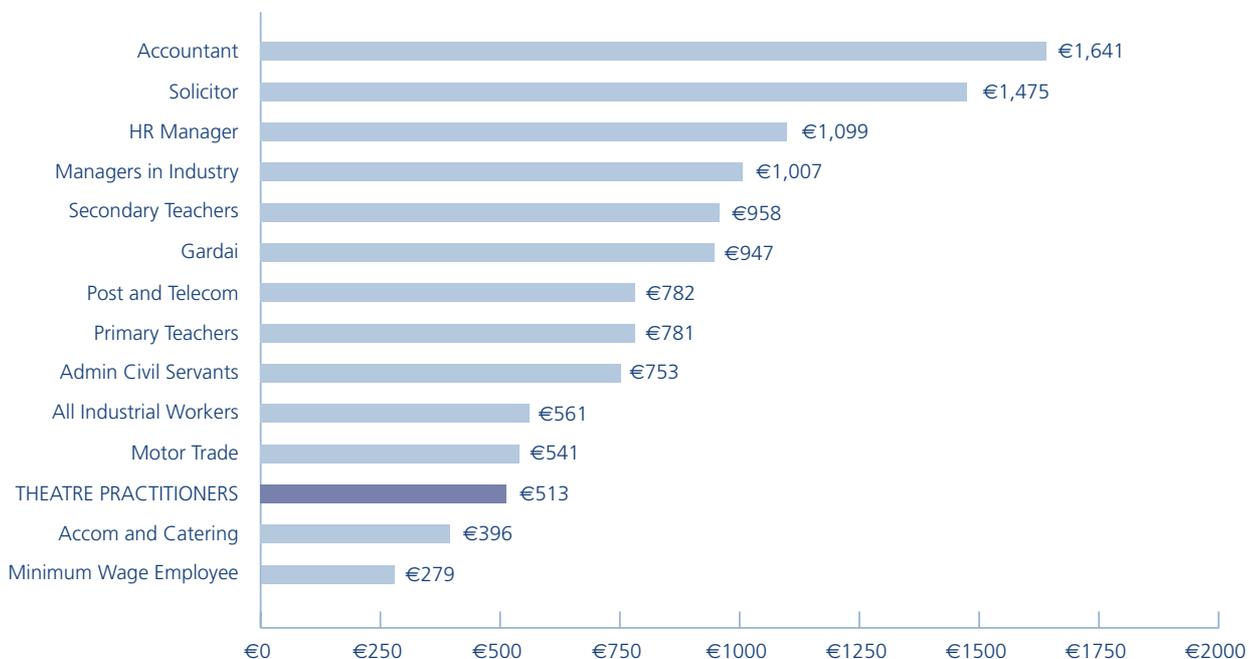
- Average weekly wage for a performing artist in 2004: €456;
- Average weekly wage for a production artist in 2004: €546;
- Average weekly wage for a technical/managerial practitioner in 2004: €713.

The average weekly wage figure for all theatre practitioners of €513 in 2004 is compared to average weekly wages for workers in a number of other economic sectors in Figure 5.

²This calculation was undertaken using mean income data – see Chapter 8 of the main report

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FIGURE 5: COMPARISON OF THEATRE PRACTITIONER AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE (WORK IN MAIN AREA) WITH OTHER WORKERS IN THE ECONOMY, 2004



NOTE: Figure for accountant is the average for an accountant in the Leinster area who qualified between 1995 and 1999 and is working in industry and commerce. Figure for solicitor is the average for a solicitor working in practice in Dublin with seven years post-qualification experience

Figure 5 shows that the estimated average weekly wage for theatre practitioners in 2004, at €513, was 9% lower than the average industrial wage (at €561) and was lower than the wages earned in many other sectors of the economy.

OTHER MEASURES OF STANDARD OF LIVING

Practitioners were asked a number of other questions about their standard of living:

- 43% did not take a *holiday* away from home in 2004 (not including staying in the home of a relative). This compares to 23% for the wider population;
- 53% of practitioners said their household has some level of difficulty "*making ends meet*", with 19% finding this "difficult" or "very difficult";
- 56% of practitioners said that they *save regularly*;
- 29% of practitioners had *been in arrears* on a household bill (e.g. rent, mortgage, electricity or gas) in the past year;
- 29% of theatre practitioners had a *personal pension* – this compares to a figure of 52% for the general population.

Given their atypical and uncertain work and income patterns, and the low levels of income earned, 45% of practitioners had experienced problems in getting a mortgage or a bank loan due to their status as a theatre practitioner. A slightly lower figure (37%) had had difficulty obtaining car insurance.

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THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND THE TAX SYSTEM

Tax issues arise for freelance theatre practitioners from the uncertain nature of their work and income, and from their varying employment status. Practitioners may pay tax as they go, if production companies pay them on a PAYE basis, or they may pay tax due on their income in the following year, accompanied by a tax return, or they may combine these options. The breakdown of tax status by age, is shown below.

Age of Practitioners	PAYE	Self-Employed	Combination	Total
Under 34	40	32	28	100
35-44	25	33	42	100
Aged over 45	12	42	46	100
Total	26	35	39	100

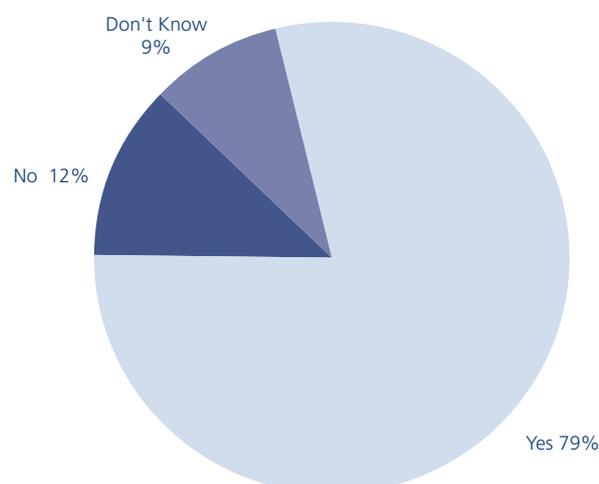
Table 3 shows that the older a theatre practitioner is, the more likely they are to have a tax status allowing them to work *both* as PAYE workers and on a self-employed basis ("Schedule D" status). The younger a practitioner is, the more likely they are to have PAYE status. This fits with the view of the theatre/dance sector resource organisations that the Revenue Commissioners prefer practitioners to work on a PAYE basis, and discourage younger practitioners from working on a Schedule D basis.

Some 20% or so of respondents had experienced other problems with the Revenue Commissioners (e.g. they said they did not find them to be understanding or had difficulties registering as self-employed).

THEATRE PRACTITIONER VIEWS ON THEIR CAREERS

The survey ended with general questions about practitioners' careers. Responses to the question: "Looking at the positives and negatives in your career, if you were starting over again, would you choose to work in theatre?" are shown in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6: WOULD THEATRE PRACTITIONERS CHOOSE TO WORK IN THEATRE IF STARTING OVER?



Based on 195 Responses

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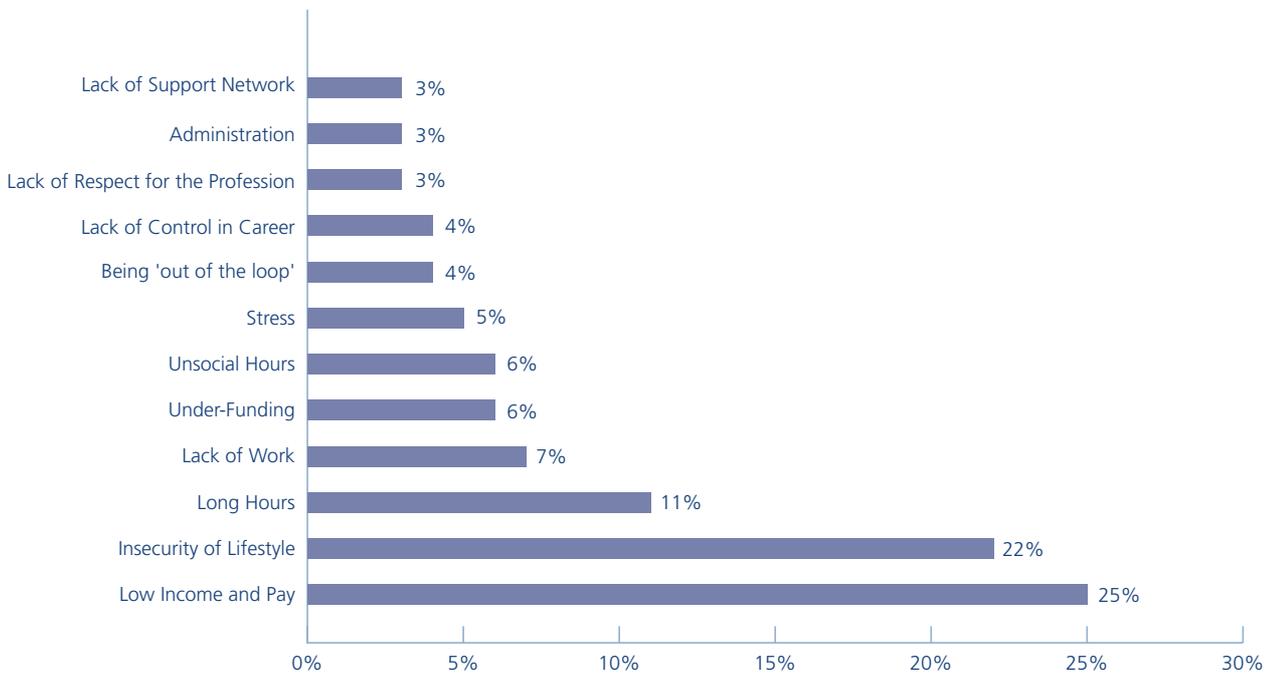
Figure 6 shows that, despite the challenges and difficulties associated with a career in theatre, eight out of ten respondents would choose to work in theatre if starting over, and another one out of ten might do so again. For the majority who would do it again, the recurring view was that theatre is what they love doing, it is a “vocation” and they could not see themselves doing anything else.

Despite these responses, when asked about the stress levels of theatre practitioners:

- 62% thought the stress levels of theatre practitioners were high or very high;
- Only 10% thought stress levels were low or very low.

Practitioners were asked to identify what they felt were the three hardest factors linked to working in theatre. Figure 7 shows the most common responses, and the proportion of respondents who cited them.

FIGURE 7: PERCEIVED HARDEST FACTORS ABOUT WORKING IN THEATRE



Based on 194 Responses

The top two reasons cited in Figure 7 are supported by the survey data.

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COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of this survey are generally consistent with the international research findings on the working lives of performing artists. The following are a number of the general findings from the international literature that hold for most categories of performing artist (including theatre practitioners):

- Performing artists tend to have higher levels of formal education than the population as a whole, with higher proportions, for example, educated to degree level;
- Artists tend to have a different pattern of employment status compared to workers as a whole, with an estimated 30% of European cultural workers self-employed. This generates issues around taxation and benefits for self-employed people, with benefits often being lower than for people classified as employees (perhaps on the assumption that self-employed people tend to be better off than employees, an assumption that does not hold for artists);
- A high proportion of artists have second (and even third) jobs, e.g. 56% of Australian artists have two jobs as do 64% of American actors. Alper and Wassall (2000) found that performing artists rank among the highest of all workers who engage in "moonlighting" of multiple job holding. Research by Throsby (1996) showed that artists tend to do non-artistic work to reach a certain minimum income, after which they switch their time to creative or other arts-related work;
- The short period for which many performances run, and the freelance status of theatre practitioners, make periods of unemployment a feature of most theatre workers' lives. A 2004 US study showed a rate of unemployment for actors at a given time to be 35%, compared to 6% for the wider workforce. Studies show a much higher proportion of performing artists experience some period of unemployment in an average year;
- Artists earn less than other workers with equivalent qualifications, e.g. at an estimated level of 68% of equivalent professionals in Australia (including non-arts income). An exception is Finland, where many actors are employed full-time by the state, and actors do earn equivalent incomes to similarly qualified other workers, although they tend to work more hours for this income.

Innovative measures have been taken in a number of countries to try to support people working in theatre, and other artists. For example, mechanisms for income smoothing, and schemes allowing practitioners to claim unemployment benefit without needing to look for non-theatre work, exist in several EU Member States.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This first comprehensive study of the socio-economic conditions of Irish theatre practitioners therefore indicates the following:

- Theatre practitioners are well educated compared to the wider labour force;
- They are less likely than the wider population to own their own home and more likely to rent;
- Their work pattern is variable and uncertain. Practitioners must manage different jobs, and different types of jobs, as well as periods of unemployment, in a typical year;
- Income levels are low relative to other equivalent professional occupations;
- Theatre practitioners are less likely to take a holiday as compared to the population as a whole;
- There is a lower level of pension provision in this cohort of workers than in the wider labour force, and practitioners can encounter difficulties getting mortgages and car insurance;
- A minority of practitioners encounters difficulties in interacting with the social welfare and taxation systems. These difficulties appear to arise, at least in part, from a lack of appreciation by these systems of the atypical work patterns of theatre practitioners;

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- Despite these issues and socio-economic characteristics, most practitioners would not choose to work at another career, due to a sense of “vocation” about their work in theatre.

The survey demonstrates that, while Irish theatre is subsidised through public funding, the sector is also subsidised by its practitioners, for example, through:

- The levels of unpaid work in the sector;
- The fact that many practitioners work in other jobs to continue in theatre, with management of such a portfolio of jobs likely to impact both on their personal incomes and on the levels of pressure under which they work and live;
- Evidence of support by spouses and other family members, and the proportion of practitioners who say such support is critical to their remaining in theatre;
- A lack of pension provision, which means that the subsidisation of theatre by the practitioners can be argued to continue even after they stop working directly in theatre, i.e. they are sacrificing future income in order to continue working in theatre today.

The evidence of an ongoing subsidy to Irish theatre by Irish theatre practitioners confirms the belief of practitioners that such a subsidy exists, as expressed previously in a 1995 study on Irish theatre by Clancy et al.

A 1966 study by two US economists, Baumol and Bowen, *Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma*, is considered the pioneering study on the socio-economic circumstances of artists. This study drew the following conclusion (using the male pronoun to refer to all artists):

“In many ways, the working conditions of the performer fall below what might be considered reasonable standards. His exhausting tours, high professional expenses, frequent unemployment with its accompanying uncertainty, the rarity of paid vacations and the frequent lack of provision for retirement, all add up to what most of us would consider a nightmare world were we suddenly plunged into it ... Most performing artists are unlikely to starve, but society has not been overly generous in the compensation it has provided the artist in exchange for his contribution to the living arts. We have relied heavily on the willingness of the performer to perform, no matter what it costs him...”.

Commenting on the Baumol and Bowen study in 1996, the Australian cultural economist, David Throsby remarked:

“Looking at the economic circumstances of the performing artist thirty years after Baumol and Bowen may prompt the observation: *plus ca change*. The relative incomes of artists may not have deteriorated markedly in the intervening period, but they have hardly improved either, and remain chronically low in comparison with other similar occupations”.

Based on the findings of this 2005 study on the socio-economic conditions of Irish theatre practitioners, the observation of *plus ca change* in relation to the conclusion of Baumol and Bowen continues to be valid.

Chapter 1

Introduction

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1.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

This study was commissioned by the Arts Council in December 2004. The background to the study is set out in the following extract from the study Terms of Reference, which begins by quoting a previous (1995) Arts Council study:

“That working conditions are a major concern throughout the sector is indicated by the results of the survey which show that 82% of the respondents rank the issues of ‘Employment conditions including wages to theatre practitioners’ as most important and all respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the statement that ‘Irish theatre is heavily dependent on the existence of a hidden subsidy’ (i.e. theatre practitioners working for long hours for very little money)’ – quotation from Views of Theatre in Ireland (1995) Report of the Arts Council Theatre Review, Conditions of Work - the Hidden Subsidy, p 97.

The socio-economic context, in which the above was written in 1995, was the early years of the boom economy. Throughout that period and into the current downturn, theatre practitioners have told the Arts Council that they are not feeling the effect of the increased support for theatre by the Arts Council (which has nearly doubled in the ensuing years) or the changes in global economy.

... There is anecdotal evidence that managers, performers, designers and technicians continue to subsidise their own work through accepting reduced pay; in-kind contributions of goods and services; or working above and beyond regulations set by the Working Time Agreement.

National cultural policy aims at promoting an economic environment conducive to the creative efforts of the Irish theatre community ... To establish such interventions, policy-makers increasingly require a supporting evidence base.

To foster and maintain support for the theatre practitioner, and ensure effective interventions on their behalf, an understanding of the conditions of professional practice is essential. To this end, the Arts Council wishes to assemble the evidence base on the economic and social conditions of the theatre practitioner, and examine the wider regulatory environment.”

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

The specific objectives of this study report are to:

- Present baseline data on the socio-economic conditions of theatre practitioners in Ireland;
- Present a framework which will support the ongoing statistical analysis of the conditions of theatre practitioners;
- Contextualise the data obtained from the survey by presenting the findings of previous international and Irish socio-economic studies on theatre practitioners (or similar artists), and comparisons of the survey findings for theatre practitioners with the characteristics of the wider Irish population.

Anecdotal information on the socio-economic conditions of theatre practitioners would have been known to the Arts Council prior to this study. The study supplements this through the presentation of comprehensive data, collected in a rigorous, objective, independent manner, on these socio-economic conditions.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study relates to people who make a living from working in theatre in Ireland, and a number of criteria in this regard were set out in choosing people for the study.

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Firstly, the Arts Council specified that an individual belong to one of three broad categories (comprising eight sub-groups) of theatre practitioners, namely:

- Performing artists:
 - actors
 - dancers/choreographers in theatre productions³
- Production artists:
 - Playwrights
 - Directors
 - Designers
- Technical and Managerial theatre practitioners:
 - Technicians
 - Stage managers and Production managers
 - Producers

The above list does not cover all theatre workers, e.g. people working in box office or administration are not included. Given the envisaged size of the survey (approximately 200 interviews), it was decided to focus on these occupations.

As well as having to belong to one of the above occupations, the other Arts Council criteria were that the study cover people who:

- Were active in their occupational area (for practical purposes, this meant people who had worked in the area during 2004, the full calendar year before the survey was undertaken);
- Had been working in theatre for at least two years - the aim being to ensure that the survey reflected the circumstances of established practitioners (i.e. did not include emerging practitioners or those who might enter theatre for a brief period, and then move into other employment);
- Saw working in theatre as their main profession and career, i.e. not people who largely work outside theatre but do perhaps one performance per year.

The study focuses on freelance theatre practitioners for two reasons:

- There are more than four times as many freelance practitioners (including practitioners who work on a contract basis from one production to the next, either as self-employed practitioners or on a PAYE basis) as people who have full-time jobs in the identified occupational areas. Working on a freelance basis is the norm for theatre practitioners and there are some 900 freelance practitioners compared to some 200 in full-time employment;
- Different issues in relation to work patterns, unemployment, second jobs, tax status etc. are likely to arise for freelance and full-time workers. Given the number of survey interviews, it was perceived as most useful to focus these to build data on the larger number of freelance theatre practitioners. This reflects the ideas mentioned in the extract from the study Terms of Reference in Section 1.1.

These different criteria taken together therefore mean that the study focuses on established, active, professional freelance theatre practitioners in Ireland. Some information on theatre practitioners in full-time employment is presented in Chapters 2 and 4.

1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

Research for the survey involved four main phases of work.

The first part of the research involved *a review of international and Irish literature* relating to the socio-economic conditions of theatre practitioners. A number of other studies relating to a wider cohort of artists were also reviewed to identify relevant learning. This phase of work also involved understanding the relevant Irish tax and social welfare policy situations for theatre practitioners, and the current system of awards and bursaries for artists available from the Arts Council.

³While dance choreographers in theatre technically fall under the Production Artist heading (as the creator/director equivalent), those interviewed (two) also work as dancers and so were included as Performing Artists

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The second part of the research involved *meeting a number of key informants*. To assist in designing the survey for this study, and to gain insights into the issues facing Irish theatre practitioners, Hibernian Consulting met a number of theatre/dance sector resource organisations and other experts:

- Arts Council Theatre Specialist;
- Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland (APDI);
- Associated Theatre Artists (ATA);
- Irish Actors Equity;
- Irish Playwrights' and Screenwriters' Guild;
- Theatre Forum;
- Theatre Shop.
- Managing Director of the Abbey Theatre;
- Dance Specialist in the Arts Council;
- Artists' Services Manager in the Arts Council, responsible for programmes to support individual artists.

These meetings were supplemented by regular discussions with the Arts Council's Theatre Specialist and Information and Research Officer during the research process. The survey was therefore informed by consultations with a range of stakeholders in the Irish theatre sector.

These meetings allowed for the development and piloting of the survey questionnaire and for the building of lists of theatre practitioners. This facilitated the third element of the research process, the *telephone survey of theatre practitioners*. Undertaken between 25 April and 5 July 2005, interviews were undertaken with 195 theatre practitioners meeting the criteria set out in Section 1.3. These interviews were preceded by a short screening interview to ensure participants met the survey criteria – if they did, a copy of the questionnaire was sent to them to enable them to prepare for the telephone interview.

Having undertaken the interviews, data from the questionnaires was coded, entered and analysed. A number of meetings were held with the Arts Council to review and discuss the *draft survey findings* and to identify further specific areas for data analysis. A draft version of the report was circulated to the Arts Council before this final version was prepared in October 2005. A data set (in SPSS and Excel) containing the data from the closed questions in the survey questionnaire was provided to the Arts Council with this report.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The structure of the remainder of the report is as follows:

- Chapters 2 and 3 present the key findings of the literature review;
- Chapter 4 presents estimates of the populations of the different sub-groups of theatre practitioners, which is both an output of the study and which facilitated the decision on how many practitioners to interview from each sub- group;
- Chapters 5-11 present the results of the survey;
- Chapter 12 contains some brief concluding remarks.

Two annexes are attached to the report – a note on the survey methodology (Annex 1) and a copy of the survey questionnaire (Annex 2).

Chapter 2

International Studies on Theatre Practitioners

2.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

International research has been undertaken on various aspects of artists' lives. Relatively few studies look specifically at the socio-economic conditions of theatre practitioners - however many studies have included performing artists and other theatre practitioners as part of their wider research. For the purposes of this study, 12 relevant international studies, listed in Table 2.1, were identified and reviewed.

TABLE 2.1: INTERNATIONAL ARTS RESEARCH STUDIES REVIEWED

Author(s)	Research Focus	Artists	Geographic Coverage
Alper et al. (1996)	Employment and earnings analysis and survey	All (and study of performing artists)	US
Alper and Wassall (2000)	Study of multiple job holding by artists	All	US
Baumol, Jeffri and Throsby (2004)	Career development of dancers	Dancers	International
Creative New Zealand (2003)	Socioeconomic study – incl. employment, earnings etc.	All	New Zealand
Davies and Lindley (2003)	Employment, earnings and other statistical analyses	All	UK
Galloway et al (2002)	Problems in artists employment, tax and benefits	All	UK
Hill Strategies Research (2004)	Employment, earnings and other statistical analyses	All	Canada
Mc Andrew (2002)	Artist tax and benefits structures	All	International
Netzer and Parker (1993)	Socioeconomic study – incl. employment, earnings etc.	Choreographers	US
Rensujeff and Krahnun (2002)	Employment and situation of artists in the labour market	All (and study of performing artists)	Finland
Staines (2004)	Artists' employment, tax and benefit frameworks	Self-employed performing artists	International
Throsby and Hollister, (2003)	Socioeconomic study – incl. employment, earnings etc.	All	Australia

Table 2.1 shows that the research reviewed provides a good geographic spread, with a range of topics relating to the socio-economic conditions of artists being covered. Most of the research either provides analysis on artists based on available Census or labour market data or (as in this study) undertakes a survey of artists or a specific group of artists. As stated, a number of the studies have a broader scope than just theatre practitioners and, in relation to studies on dancers and choreographers, refer largely to practitioners in dance-only contexts rather than in theatre productions.

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A common challenge facing the international research studies is to define 'artist', i.e. to decide who should be covered by the research? The studies in Table 2.1 vary in their definition of the artists under review, using definitions based on tax/benefits criteria, on membership of specific organisations, on artistic output, on amount of time spent on artistic activity, on amount of artistic income earned, and on opinions, either those of the individual artists or those of an expert body in the field.⁴

Despite these different definitions, a number of recurring themes emerge that appear to be common to the working lives of artists, including theatre practitioners. Section 2.2 presents these findings in relation to education and training; employment status; multiple job-holding; unemployment and income levels. Section 2.3 describes a number of policy interventions in other countries to support artists. Section 2.4 presents three concepts from the theoretical cultural economics literature which may be useful in interpreting the socio-economic conditions of theatre practitioners and Section 2.5 draws some brief conclusions from the review of international literature.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL FINDINGS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

2.2.1 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Although many artists' markets have relatively low entry barriers in terms of formal qualifications, a widespread finding in the international research is that artists, in general, are a highly skilled and educated group, compared to the general labour force. In the UK, for example, over 50% of artists have a first or higher degree versus 25% in the general population (Davies and Lindley, 2003). Creative New Zealand (2003) report a similar incidence of formal qualifications for artists as a whole, but found that, in certain art forms, the proportion is even higher, e.g. 75% of dancers had formal degrees.

For performing artists, formal qualifications are often reinforced by continuing education and training in their specialty area. In many of the studies, actors and dancers cite frequent attendance at specialist workshops, courses, and coaching sessions well into their professional years. Throsby and Hollister (2003) found that three quarters of the Australian artists they surveyed had formal training, and a further 40% also had private training - identified as particularly important for performing artists. Around two-thirds of artists in the study over the age of 35 were engaged in training and all recognized the importance of life long learning in their careers. Combining all forms of training, they report that dancers spend the most time in professional education, averaging nearly six years (compared, for example, to three years for writers).

Baumol, Jeffri and Throsby (2004) in their international survey of dancers comment that this art form requires high commitment and extensive training despite a relatively short career lifecycle. They report that, in the US, the majority of dancers have formal dance qualifications and are better educated and qualified than the general labour force, with three-quarters having post-secondary qualifications versus half the general population. Despite their high skills and education, many were found to make poor transitions into other careers when they stop dancing.

In most professions, educational attainment is rewarded with a greater chance of employment and higher incomes, but this is not necessarily the case for artists. A study of Canadian artists revealed that the economic returns to education are much lower for artists: 41% had a university degree (double the rate of the general labour force) but they earned on average half the income of other similarly qualified workers (Hill Strategies Research, 2004).

Rensujeff (2003) found that 72% of Finnish artists have professional arts training and that their level of education and vocational training was significantly higher than that of the overall labour force. However, this high level of education did not appear to reduce the chances of unemployment for artists.

The findings of Netzer and Parker (1993) on choreographers are similar. They found high education levels relative to the wider labour force, but this did not translate into economic status. Choreographers in the US were not only more highly educated than US professionals in general, but also than many other artists, but college education did not act

⁴IFACCA (2002) reviews the substantial literature that has developed on defining the artist.

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as an economic asset. Indeed, average incomes for those choreographers with degrees in their survey were lower than for those without degrees.

2.2.2 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Non-standard patterns of employment are commonplace in the arts with a high level of flexibility required. The employment status of theatre practitioners can fall into a number of categories, each with advantages and drawbacks in terms of conditions of employment, incomes, and treatment under tax and benefit schemes (Mc Andrew, 2002).

The most common employment status for artists is self-employment. In an overview by Staines (2004) of the performing arts market in Europe, it is estimated that nearly 30% of European cultural workers are self-employed compared with 14% of the total working population. There are even higher rates in certain countries such as New Zealand where Creative New Zealand (2003) found that nearly 80% of artists are self-employed (versus 13% of total workers), or Canada, where Hill Strategies Research (2004) put the rate at 44%, over five times higher than the proportion in the overall labour force. There are a number of problems common to self-employed workers as, once classified as self employed, workers tend to receive reduced social protection and reduced protection under employment legislation.

Galloway et al (2002) report that, in the UK, some 60% of performing artists are self-employed. They explain that the nature of the work is such that the working lives of many performing artists are based around uncertainty and insecurity. They cite common features of the working lives of performing artists as including:

- variable length and terms of contracts and commissions;
- short notice of engagements and commissions;
- delays in the start of productions;
- concurrent projects and contracts;
- sequential stop/start patterns of employment;
- the need to be available at all hours for work offers;
- seasonal employment;
- unsocial hours of work;
- unpredictable locations;
- unpredictability of work offers and variable income; and
- vulnerability to changes in fashion, cultural trends, and market preferences.

In this context, Galloway et al say that performing artists use self employment to cope with this insecurity and, despite its disadvantages, the status is valued by many artists as it allows flexibility and control over their artistic pursuits.

While self-employed status is the most common for artists overall, employee status (fixed term or permanent) is common for some theatre practitioners. In Finland, for example, 41% of theatre practitioners worked as employees in 2001 (versus 29% of artists in general) although this was reported as being gradually phased out in favour of freelance and contract work (Rensujeff, 2003).

The international research has also found evidence of workers in the performing arts in borderline employment situations between self employment and temporary, contract, session or seasonal labour. These patterns have developed in response to employer demands for a flexible responsive workforce. Consumers and employers can benefit from this flexibility, but potentially at the expense of increased unemployment and under-employment for performing artists, as well as poor incomes.

McAndrew (2002) found that the ways artists work do not conform well to existing national regulatory and social support systems regarding employment. The ambiguity of employment status for many artists, who may be simultaneously employed and self-employed, makes it difficult for them to fit with tax and security legislation. While elements of this are true for other self-employed people, there is often less of an element of choice as regards employment status in the arts.

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2.2.3 MULTIPLE JOBHOLDING

Another recurring issue for artists is that many cannot work full-time in their principal artistic occupation. When hours and employment opportunities are limited, many are driven to find additional employment to meet their basic financial needs. Alper and Wassall's (2000) comprehensive study of 'moonlighting' or multiple job holding by US artists reports that artists rank amongst the highest of all workers with secondary jobs. They note that performing artists are amongst the most likely of artists to engage in this practice, with a rate of multiple job holding more than double that for the general labour force. The necessity to change jobs frequently leads to gaps in employment and high unemployment. Second jobs, in arts or unrelated fields, can fill these gaps.

Galloway et al (2002) found that performing artists have the highest degree of under-employment and non-permanent employment in the UK cultural sector: 11% were looking for additional work, and 16% wanted to work more hours. Multiple job holding was highest amongst self-employed artists and was used to guarantee a minimum level of financial return and 'shore up' creative practice. Throsby and Hollister (2003) report that 56% of the Australian artists they surveyed had two jobs and 7% had three jobs. They found some differences between artists, e.g. actors were just as likely to be doing arts-related work as non-arts, but dancers were nearly exclusively in arts-related second jobs. For those artists engaged in other arts-related work, around three-quarters of the total were in arts teaching, with the second most common additional work being in administration.

Alper et al (1996) reported that 64% of actors and 37% dancers in the US held jobs outside the performing arts, versus a rate of multiple job holding of 6% in the overall labour force. The main reasons cited for holding second jobs were insufficient work and income in their art form: 50% of actors and 23% of dancers received less than half their income from performing arts work. These artists also tend to choose second jobs with flexibility to let them pursue their first job, which often entailed low pay and benefits. Only 15% of performing artists had 'professional' supplementary jobs.

2.2.4 UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is a serious and persistent problem for performing artists, based both on short or limited seasons and the freelance nature of working arrangements.

Many theatre practitioners have no long-term professional commitments, work as their services are requested and become unemployed once a show or a play closes. A half-year of regular employment in theatre (across two or three productions) may be 'a good year'. Artists can be argued to be effectively subsidizing the productions by accepting low incomes and intermittent work. Nichols (2004) reports that while the general US unemployment rate was around 6%, rates in performing arts were often double or triple this figure, with actors experiencing up to 35% unemployment at a given time.

In performing arts, in nearly all countries where it has been examined, more performers are seeking work than there is work available, and this is a fundamental reason both for unemployment and for low returns. In Finland, Rensujeff and Krahunen (2002) found that the rate of unemployment for the theatre sector, at 20%, was double that of the general population, with the rate for dancers at 34%. Jeffri's (2004) study found that artists in the San Francisco Bay Area were twice as likely to be unemployed as other professional workers. Alper et al (1996), focusing on US performing artists, found that 69% of actors and 77% of dancers experienced unemployment during the period of the study, versus 18% of the overall labour force. These artists also had a tendency to move between unemployment and employment with many having multiple periods of unemployment in a given year.

Throsby and Hollister (2003) reported that one-third of artists in their Australian study experienced some unemployment in 1996-2001, for an average of three months per year. Actors and dancers were most likely to experience periods of unemployment although their total period of unemployment was generally shorter at 10-15 months (over five years) versus, for example, visual artists whose average unemployment duration was 24 months over

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the period. They found that 44% of artists that were unemployed in the period did not apply for unemployment assistance.

Mc Andrew (2002) notes that artists are often unemployed or underemployed, perhaps for extended periods, yet may not meet the conditions for minimum income support or state unemployment benefits. For example, a self-employed artist may not be able to claim unemployment benefits despite earning less than the minimum income threshold. Also, artists often wish to devote periods of unpaid time to artistic research and this can mean they are not recognized as 'job-less', even though they are 'income-less'. As such, they often cannot claim unemployment and associated benefits during such periods.

2.2.5 INCOME LEVELS

The international research studies indicate that, apart from a relatively small number of successful exceptions, artists' incomes are low, in an absolute sense and relative to other occupations. The study of Canadian artists by Hill Strategies Research (2004) found that the average earnings of artists were less than 75% of the level of those of the overall labour force, with artists in the lowest income quarter of professional groups despite higher than average levels of education.

Throsby and Hollister (2003) found that professional artists' incomes are often not enough to allow them to survive financially, so time allocation between artistic work and other activities is impacted by financial considerations. When compared with other occupations that also spend 4-6 years training, incomes of Australian artists are poor, with purely creative work providing less than a third of the income of other professionals and all work (including non-arts income) bringing earnings up to 68% of the level of equivalent professionals. This study found that only one fifth of artists surveyed felt they could meet their income needs from creative work alone (rising to 36% when they included their income from other arts-related work).

Rensujeff and Karnhunen (2002) found that Finnish artists on average earn less than other comparable professions, yet work the same hours or more. The proportion of artistic income in the total taxable income of an artist is around 50%, but this varies by art form. As many theatre practitioners in Finland are employees, the proportion of their incomes accounted for by artistic work is greater than that of the average artist (at 64%), linked to the stability of their labour market status. The figure for dancers is lower, at 36%. Dancers are predominantly found in the lowest income groupings, a finding common in all countries.

Performers such as actors and dancers are reported in many studies to have the lowest returns, with playwright and directors faring somewhat better, if often still inferior to other professional groups with similar levels of training and qualifications. Throsby (1996) notes that income pressures on theatre can lead to less expenditure on labour as costs on venues and administration are essentially fixed. The pressure to reduce costs can also hit the artistic programme, e.g. through smaller casts, simpler sets, more mainstream repertoires and older works (to reduce copyright fees).

Many performers accept "settlement packages" which may include some benefits but they may forgo increased wages to work over a longer season. The international research shows that incomes of theatre practitioners and other artists may not be poor on a per-hour or per-performance basis, but sporadic employment means earnings vary greatly over time. Mc Andrew (2002) notes that these fluctuations can lead to inadequate levels of social insurance and difficulty in distributing the tax burden between tax periods.

A fact compounding low incomes is the often high cost of an artist's professional practice, which can include training, materials and equipment, travel, work space, union membership, professional fees and agent commissions. Netzer and Parker (1993) report that, on average, the choreographers in their study ran at a loss once professional expenses were deducted. While other artists incur high expenses, many will cover costs or make some surplus. Most of the choreographers in their study did not earn a living purely from choreography, and spent twice the time in non-dance

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jobs as on choreography to supplement income. More experienced choreographers were less likely to have outside jobs and more likely to use the additional time to make new works, but this did not imply higher incomes. Making more work was associated with higher costs, despite higher gross incomes.

Montgomery and Robinson (2000) studied the career development of graduate dancers and found that, while income from dance was low, graduates reported relatively high incomes at the level of their household, with incomes from \$72,000 to \$100,000. Performers' partners frequently contribute a large share of total household income, a finding which one can argue shows that the arts are, in part, subsidized by the partners of performers. However, Galloway et al (2002) recall a comment from a focus group of directors and producers that they feel represents the common view in the performing arts:

"...The greatest subsidy in the arts is not the money that comes from the government. It's the people that do things on either low wages or nothing..." (Galloway et al, 2002: 106)

2.3 MEASURES IN OTHER COUNTRIES TO SUPPORT THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

2.3.1 INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT ARTISTS

The previous section shows that artists internationally tend to share a number of characteristics such as poor or variable incomes, sporadic employment, and challenges arising from an unpredictable market place. The position of artists with regard to social security and tax is defined by their employment status and their flow of income. Both of these can be problematic; irregular work patterns can cause artists to be defined differently under different employment laws, e.g. as self-employed and/or as employees, and fluctuations in income can lead to unsatisfactory levels of pension provision or sick leave compensation.

Evidence on the complex employment position of many theatre practitioners and other artists has existed since studies undertaken in the 1960s. The introduction of measures to support artists has, however, been slow. From the international literature, the following examples to support to theatre practitioners were identified as particularly relevant to this study.⁵

2.3.2 INCOME SMOOTHING

Income averaging or smoothing mechanisms exist in the UK, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands. These allow artists to stabilise their economic situation by spreading income over several years for the purpose of taxation in recognition of the intermittent nature of artistic activity.

In Australia, the income smoothing scheme is designed to prevent artists from being pushed into higher tax brackets when income from their professional work in one year fluctuates above their average income. To be eligible for income averaging, an artist must be defined as in a specific tax situation (i.e. recognised as a creative or interpretive artist), should be an Australian resident and should have a professional taxable income over a predetermined minimal amount. Once an artist's income exceeds this amount in a given year, he/she is eligible for averaging in later years when it falls below this level. In Germany, self-employed artists are allowed to spread or average their income over a three-year period for tax purposes. This enables them to spread income from a large occasional piece of work over a longer period where income may be lower.

Income smoothing is particularly beneficial to artists such as visual artists or writers who may require a period of time to produce a work or body of work, which is then followed by a period with a high level of income when this work is published/sold. However, income smoothing can assist all artists who experience sporadic work and variable incomes.

⁵These draw particularly on Mc Andrew (2002), Staines (2004) and Benhamou (2003).
The sub-section is not comprehensive – see these studies for further examples of interventions.

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2.3.3 SPECIAL UNEMPLOYMENT SCHEMES

The WIK - Netherlands

The Netherlands has a scheme called 'The WIK' or 'Wet Inkomensvoorziening Kunstenaars' designed to support artists in launching their careers. Unemployed artists who use it are not obliged to apply for jobs and need not accept positions deemed to be inappropriate. They are allowed to keep up their artistic work after an initial six-month period in return for 70% of the regular benefit. Under the normal social welfare system, an unemployed person must take a job after six months, but artists were granted an exemption under the WIK. They are also allowed to supplement income by up to 125% of the benefit. Expenses related to artistic production can be deducted from supplementary earnings before these are set off against the benefit and they are allowed to use the WIK income provision for up to four years (over a period of ten years). There are criteria to prevent abuse of the system, such as assessments to prove applicants are 'professional artists'.

Intermittency Status - France

French freelance performing artists and technicians can avail of a scheme that compensates those who have worked a minimum number of hours per year during periods of unemployment. The unemployment insurance scheme is for workers employed sporadically on fixed-term contracts in cinema, stage and broadcasting and is called "*intermittents du spectacle*". The scheme aims to compensate for the precarious characteristics of artistic life arising from short contracts and different employers, and to help artists to build their careers. It has been in place for the theatre since 1969. In 2003, it was estimated that 93% of performing artists in France were employed under this scheme (Staines, 2003), with Sauvait (2003) reporting that 100,000 artists were benefiting under the scheme.

For entitlement to one year's worth of unemployment benefits, the artist is required to have undertaken 507 hours of work or 43 'fees' (each one counted as 8 hours) in the previous 11 months. The scheme is renegotiated every three years by social partners and has been challenged by employer organisations. In 2003, stricter entitlement criteria were introduced alongside a reduction in the benefit payment period. The revisions also cut the range of jobs and professions covered by the scheme, and provided for reinforced monitoring and controls. However, the new accord allows 'intermittents' to take complimentary work, such as teaching, while keeping their compensation.

KSK - Germany

In 1983, Germany developed a partially publicly funded social insurance scheme for self-employed artists known as 'Kunstler Sozialkasse' (KSK), to enable independent artists to enjoy the same social protection as employees. It covers health insurance and old age pensions but not unemployment benefits. To be accepted into the KSK, artists must be self-employed and earn a set minimum income per year. Professional newcomers such as graduates are exempt from the minimum income criterion but must have freelance status.

The scheme was developed for self-employed artists as they were ineligible for normal employer contribution schemes covering health pensions and other benefits, and because of their often poor incomes. Under the KSK, the state and those enterprises using self-employed artists' works (such as art dealers, galleries, theatres, broadcasters and others) contribute to health insurance and pension schemes for living artists. Contributions to the KSK are shared between the individual artist (50%), enterprises regularly using artists' work (30%) and the state (20%).

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2.4 THREE CONCEPTS FROM CULTURAL ECONOMICS

2.4.1 CULTURAL ECONOMICS

A branch of economics has developed which seeks to understand markets and goods with an artistic or creative element. As such, it covers both tangible objects such as works of art and intangible services such as theatrical performances. In economic terms, these goods and services tend to have distinct features.⁶ Cultural economics addresses issues arising from these features – and a number of insights arising from cultural economics were identified as potentially useful in interpreting the socio-economic conditions of theatre practitioners in Ireland.

2.4.2 PRODUCTIVITY LAG IN PERFORMING ARTS

Baumol and Bowen (1966), in their book 'Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma', argue that performance arts sectors, such as theatre, face an inescapable rise in unit costs, arising from what they call a 'productivity lag'.

Productivity is the amount of output per work hour and tends to increase continually in industry, e.g. due to improved technology, increased capital per worker or increased skill or education of workers. In live performing arts, however, machinery and technology play a small role in 'producing' the output, and change little over time: As Baumol and Bowen state: "...the work of the performer is an end in itself, not a means of production of the good". Therefore, while the amount of labour needed to produce a manufactured product declines over time, the time needed to perform a play stays the same.

However, wage levels in theatre will rise as wages in the wider society rise (even if at a slower pace). As live performing arts are labour intensive and as increases in productivity are negligible, unit costs in the performing arts tend to rise continuously relative to costs in the economy as a whole.

This *productivity lag* suggests that theatre organisations work with a built-in financial strain as structural factors create constant financial pressure on theatre organisations.⁷

2.4.3 LABOUR MARKET BEHAVIOUR OF ARTISTS

Section 2.2 showed that many studies on artists' work situations have found low levels of income and a lack of work opportunities, with these conditions meaning the artist must take other jobs to make ends meet. In relation to artist work patterns, Throsby (1992 and 1996a) developed a 'Work Preference' model of multiple job holding, breaking the available work options into:

1. Creative work;
2. Other arts-related work (e.g. teaching or arts management);
3. Non-arts related work.

Standard economic theory suggests that, in most cases, people supply more hours of labour as wages rise. At a certain point, if sufficient income has been earned, an individual may respond to further wage increases by supplying less labour and taking more leisure time.

In relation to the different work options available, an artist may prefer to exclusively pursue his or her art, but will need a minimum level of income to survive. Due to insufficient financial rewards from their art, and the erratic nature of work, many artists take non-arts related jobs. However, in deciding how to split their time between arts-related and non-arts-related work, artists have a marked preference for arts work, so will only spend enough time in non-arts work to support themselves and their artistic production. According to Throsby's empirical research, "non-arts work is undertaken by artists essentially as a means of satisfying fixed minimum consumption requirements" (Throsby, 1996). Beyond that, artists forsake more money for more hours in arts work.

⁶See O' Hagan and Duffy (1987)

⁷Throsby (1996a) and Heilbrun (2003) re-visit aspects of Baumol's arguments

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Like most workers, artists therefore respond to economic incentives, but they also respond to other considerations (e.g. private satisfaction, recognition, autonomy and status) and creative and aesthetic goals. Abbing (2002) estimates that the “income penalty” from working in the arts, instead of in a comparable profession (given artists’ level of qualifications), is between 30% and 100%. The importance of non-monetary considerations, and the perception of their artistic work as a kind of ‘vocation’ means artists effectively accept a reduced price for their labour.

2.4.4 MISINTERPRETATION OF INCOME LEVELS BY NEW ENTRANTS TO FIELD

An adjacent issue relates to the distribution of artist earnings. In many sectors in which artists work, a small number of people earn high incomes, while most are less successful. There can, moreover, be a large gap between the incomes of the top performers and the many ‘others’, compared to the gap in talent (this tends to be more the case in music and film than in theatre). Rosen (1986) explains this phenomenon in his “winner-take-all” theory, where rewards are concentrated in the hands of top performers with small differences in talent or effort giving rise to enormous differences in incomes. As there is not seen to be a substitute for a *particular talent*, these people can push up their wages without a decrease in demand. The majority, on the other hand, earn comparatively poor incomes

Certain performing arts jobs markets are therefore seen as “lotteries” offering a small chance to become wealthy and famous. These can attract people into these job markets prepared to take a risk due to the potential for high rewards. An oversupply of entrants can therefore emerge as people overestimate their chances of fame, and workers at the low end can become marginalised by low incomes and/or sporadic employment. This is exacerbated if, as discussed above, people see their work as having elements of a ‘vocation’, and are reluctant to leave the occupation even if they are earning a low income.

This theory may be less relevant to theatre in Ireland if the sector is narrowly defined as relating to Irish stage drama, as even the top earners do not earn high earnings in comparison to top earners in other professions. However, if the sector is seen as overlapping with television or film (especially for actors), then aspects of this theory may apply.

2.5 SUMMARY OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

International research on the working lives of performing artists indicates a set of general findings that appear to hold across most countries, and for most categories of performing artist (including theatre practitioners):

- Performing artists tend to have higher levels of formal education than the population as a whole, with higher proportions, for example, educated to degree level;
- Artists tend to have a different pattern of employment status compared to workers as a whole, with an estimated 30% of European cultural workers self-employed. This generates a set of issues around taxation and benefits for self employed people, with benefits often being lower than for people classified as employees (perhaps on the assumption that self-employed people tend to be better off than employees, an assumption that does not hold for artists);
- A high proportion of artists have second (and even third) jobs, e.g. 56% of Australian artists have two jobs as do 64% of American actors. Research by Throsby (1996) has shown that artists tend to do non-artistic work to reach a certain minimum income, after which they switch their time to creative or other arts-related work;
- The short period for which many performances run, and the employment status of theatre practitioners, make periods of unemployment a feature of most theatre workers’ lives. A 2004 US study showed a rate of unemployment for actors at a given time to be 35%, compared to 6% for the wider workforce. Studies show a much higher proportion would experience some period of unemployment in an average year;
- Artists earn less than other workers with equivalent qualifications, e.g. estimated at 68% in Australia (including non-arts income). An exception is Finland, where many actors are employed full-time by the state, where actors do earn equivalent incomes to similarly qualified other workers, although they tend to work more hours for this income;

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- On a few measures, dancers appear to come off poorly, with incomes generally the lowest of all performers, a short span of years for potential employment and highly uncertain employment and working conditions. Dancers also have the challenge of making a new career in their mid-30s;
- Analysis of other countries shows that some innovative measures have been taken to try to support people working in theatre, and other artists. In particular, mechanisms for income smoothing and unemployment schemes allowing theatre practitioners to claim unemployment benefit without needing to look for non-theatre work exist in several EU Member States..

Baumol and Bowen pioneering 1966 survey drew the following conclusion:

“In many ways, the working conditions of the performer fall below what might be considered reasonable standards. His exhausting tours, high professional expenses, frequent unemployment with its accompanying uncertainty, the rarity of paid vacations and the frequent lack of provision for retirement, all add up to what most of us would consider a nightmare world were we suddenly plunged into it ... Most performing artists are unlikely to starve, but society has not been overly generous in the compensation it has provided the artist in exchange for his contribution to the living arts. We have relied heavily on the willingness of the performer to perform, no matter what it costs him...” (Baumol and Bowen, 1966: 134)

Since 1966, there have been attempts in certain countries to support artists in the labour market. However, the review of international studies in this chapter suggests that the conclusion of the 1966 study continues to be valid. Commenting on the Baumol and Bowen study in 1996, Throsby states:

“Looking at the economic circumstances of the performing artist thirty years after Baumol and Bowen may prompt the observation: plus ça change. The relative incomes of artists may not have deteriorated markedly in the intervening period, but they have hardly improved either, and remain chronically low in comparison with other similar occupations”. (Throsby, 1996: 236)

Chapter 3

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3.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

This is the first study to compile a picture of the living and working conditions of theatre practitioners in Ireland. There have been a number of previous studies on issues relating to theatre, but not on the socio-economic conditions of theatre practitioners. There is also no specific data available on theatre from government agencies such as the Revenue Commissioners or FÁS, or from the Census. As such, there was a lack of previous data on Irish theatre practitioners.

Section 3.2 presents contextual information on the socio-economic circumstances of Irish theatre practitioners, broadly following the same headings used with the international literature. Section 3.2 draws mainly on three sources:

- Previous relevant empirical studies;
- A set of in-depth qualitative interviews undertaken with theatre practitioners, as recorded in a book by Chambers et al (2001);
- Information supplied by the theatre/dance sector resource organisations to Hibernian Consulting as part of the research for this study.

Two studies cited in Chapter 2, namely Mc Andrew (2002) and Staines (2004) undertook international comparative studies which included information on the tax/ benefits systems and employment structures for self-employed artists in Ireland. Other specific studies that fed into Chapter 3 are listed in Table 3.1. As seen, one study dates from 1980 and one from 1995 so these reports' findings may now be somewhat dated.

TABLE 3.1: IRISH ARTS RESEARCH STUDIES REVIEWED

Author(s)	Research Focus	Artists
Annabel Jackson Associates (2000)	Research into support for the individual artist	Creative and interpretive Irish artists (all-island)
Arts Council (1980)	Survey of living and working conditions of artists	Creative and interpretive Irish artists
Clancy et al (1995)	Research into structure of theatre sector, resources, funding and other issues	Performing artists/ theatre
Fitzpatrick Associates (2004) for Theatre Forum	Analysis of economic impact of performing arts (incomes, expenditure and employment)	Performing arts organizations and artists

Having presented the context for the socio-economic issues in Section 3.2, Section 3.3 presents information on aspects of the tax, social welfare and grants/awards systems relevant to theatre practitioners, i.e. some background information to aid the interpretation of the survey results presented in subsequent chapters. Section 3.4 summarises key points arising from Chapter 3.

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3.2 EVIDENCE AND DATA ON THEATRE PRACTITIONERS IN IRELAND

3.2.1 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In 2004, a Theatre Forum report asked a sample of theatre production companies about the educational qualifications of those staff members they employed on a PAYE basis. The results are shown in Table 3.2.

	Artistic Personnel	Technical Personnel
Specific formal qualifications relevant to work	61%	30%
Other formal qualifications prior to employment	26%	35%
On-the-job training	13%	30%
Neither formal nor on-the-job training	0%	5%
Note: Formal qualifications are defined as any vocational, further or third-level education qualification		
Source: Fitzpatrick Associates (2004)		

Table 3.2 indicates a relatively high level of education for PAYE employees in the sector, especially for artistic personnel.

Clancy et al (1995) reported that, despite that many theatre practitioners being highly qualified, experience and on the job training were seen as more crucial by theatre companies. They reported that 77% of production companies required experience/on the job training for actor positions, compared to 22% requiring formal qualifications for such positions.

The resource organisations said that they believed that theatre practitioners tend to have high levels qualifications relative to the population as a whole, and that they need to retain a commitment to ongoing training and learning in their artistic careers. Irish Actors Equity and ATA said that, while historically, most actors were trained within companies, this has changed significantly in recent decades, and now nearly all actors entering the profession undertake higher education training in drama. An implication of this is that the population of actors, directors etc. entering the profession tends to reflect the social class composition of third level colleges in general, i.e. it tends to be skewed towards people from middle class backgrounds.

The APDI, a resource organisation for professional dancers and choreographers, said that there is no state provision of professional dance education in Ireland, so many dancers go abroad for formal training. Some then stay in the UK or US post-qualification, partly to avail of the greater work opportunities for dancers abroad.

3.2.2 EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND MULTIPLE JOBHOLDING

Self-employment is a common feature of Irish artists' employment. Staines (2004) estimated that, in 2002, 28% of cultural workers were either self-employed or employers, more than double the percentage for all workers. Many artists registered as self-employed also spend time as employees, as the tax system allows them to interchange their employment status depending on the work they are involved in.

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The Fitzpatrick Associates (2004) report for Theatre Forum found a high level of part-time employment by performing arts organisations and venues. It stated: "The figures show that the industry is very much one of part-time employment, with two-thirds of all PAYE employees being part-time. This compares with 20% of part-time employment in the economy as a whole. This reflects the distinct nature of the industry, with a lot of artistic performers and staff moving between productions and venues".

As with their international counterparts, available evidence suggested that Irish theatre practitioners are likely to also work outside their principal artistic occupation. The 1980 Arts Council study on the 'Living and Working Conditions of Artists' revealed that 75% of creative artists and 50% of interpretive artists had other jobs in addition to their artistic occupation. While many artists were working in teaching and other areas related to their art, almost one third had second jobs unconnected to their artistic occupation.

The necessity for artists to work outside their artistic occupations has been commented on in more recent reports. For example, Annabel Jackson Associates (2000) found that the main issue artists viewed as a barrier to career development was the necessity to work outside their profession. Very few artists were able to survive exclusively from their art and over one-quarter of the sample had to take a second job outside the arts to get by. Annabel Jackson Associates reported: "The employment status of artists in our survey is complicated. The norm here is for artists to combine more than one of the employment possibilities which we listed for them, namely: self-employment, full or part-time employment, unemployment, training or retirement, and for them to mix work in their art with work in arts-related fields or non-arts. This leads to a complex pattern of artistic and economic activity".

The resource organisations said that the proportion of artists working in theatre in Ireland that is officially "self-employed" for tax purposes is likely to be declining over time. This does not mean that people have the opportunity to take full-time positions but rather tend to vary between periods of being PAYE employees (during a particular production), other work, and being unemployed. The organisations said that the Revenue Commissioners encourage theatre practitioners to work as much as possible as PAYE employees. This ensures tax is collected at source and reduces the problem of people not having the funds to pay when the tax falls due at a later date. However, some actors, directors, producers and others continue to have either self-employed tax status or tax status allowing periods of both self-employment and PAYE employment.

The Irish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild said that playwrights in the theatre are self-employed as this allows them to retain copyright and avail of the artists' tax exemption. Apart from a top tier of writers, however, most playwrights earn the majority of their income outside theatre, e.g. in teaching drama or related subjects or in writing for other media.

Theatre Forum, an umbrella organisation for theatre companies, venues and related groups, said that employment in most theatre production companies involves a small number of people with employee status, with freelance practitioners then being brought in by production. Their experience with, and support for, these practitioners indicated that such workers face difficulties regarding matters such as expenses allowed, tax returns, and invoicing.

ATA noted that the decline of the permanent theatre company has increased the uncertainty arising in the life of an actor. The chance, formerly, to get perhaps a one-year contract allowed financial stability as well as a chance to develop artistically.

3.2.4 EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

There is no available data on employment and unemployment in the theatre sector in Ireland. Irish Census data, as reported by the CSO (2003), indicates that the number of "actors, musicians, entertainers, stage managers, producers and directors" increased nearly 18% from 4,898 in 1996 to 5,759 in 2002. There is no breakdown as regards theatre practitioners.

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A consistent theme in the literature on artists in Ireland is the problem of insufficient employment opportunities, leading to recurrent periods of unemployment. The Arts Council (1980) survey of actors, for example, found that 90% had been unemployed, and that this unemployment on average was around one month per year, but could be for up to seven months. Annabel Jackson Associates (2000) reported that 5% of artists in its sample considered being unemployed as their “main employment category”.

From interviews of theatre practitioners, Clancy et al (1995) report that the overriding concern in the sector was the relatively small amount of work available and consequent lack of opportunities to gain experience and employment, particularly for performing artists and playwrights.

This situation is likely to lead to periods of unemployment, and potential interaction with the social welfare system. An ongoing issue has been whether theatre practitioners should be required to retrain or apply for alternative jobs when they receive benefits. In an article on the social welfare system in Irish Theatre Magazine in 2000, actor Andrew Bennett was quoted as follows:

“...I don’t know a single actor afraid of a hard day’s work, but to be an actor you can’t do those jobs...we do so much unpaid work already, we even do plays unpaid in the hope of being seen...and we’re so badly paid anyway... I think it’s reasonable that we should be able to avail of benefit. Especially if the state wants to have the theatre sector ..., then it must support actors. I’ve been signing on regularly between jobs for the past ten years and without it I couldn’t be an actor.” (Phelan, 2000:36).

The resource organisations reported that sporadic employment, unemployment, job insecurity and multiple job-holding were generally part of working in theatre. For dancers and actors, for example, a year in which 24 weeks theatre work was obtained (assuming three productions at eight weeks each, including rehearsals) would be seen as a good year. During their down-time, some return to other jobs, such as teaching, but many claim social welfare support as it is difficult to maintain a second job while on tour or while working for a production.

Because of these work practices, many performing artists spend time unemployed, and interact with the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Despite auditions being officially accepted as valid work interviews, APDI, Irish Actors Equity and ATA reported periodic problems for actors and dancers on this issue at certain social welfare offices. They also had stories of individual theatre practitioners who had been pressured into looking for jobs not related to theatre when unemployed although they said this was not common. Such problems were seen to stem from a lack of understanding of the pattern of work of theatre artists, who must be available to take up work as it comes up.

3.2.5 LEVELS OF INCOME

A common feature of the artist’s working life is that their irregular pattern of artistic earnings can lead to a high degree of income instability. The Arts Council (1980) reported that the majority of artists regarded their artistic incomes as fairly or very unstable. One of the findings by Annabel Jackson Associates (2000) is that the incomes of artists are low and unpredictable, with ‘uncertainty regarding the amount’ being described as more problematic than its inadequacy. This study also found that much of an artist’s total income does not come from their artistic pursuits, with the average breakdown being 45% from non-art sources and 36% from art-sources, with the remainder from Arts Council or other supports.

“...The main certainty for most artists is that, whatever the fluctuations, their overall income will still be very low...” (Annabel Jackson Associates, 1998: 46).

Theatre Forum (2004) gathered information on the pay-scales of practitioners (not including performers) from 15 production companies, emphasising that the results were not scientific or statistically valid. The pay scale information was for three groups:

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- Production Staff hired on fees;
- Production Staff hired on weekly wages;
- Core personnel.

Examples of the pay scales found are shown in Table 3.3. The figures shown are averages and Theatre Forum reported considerable variation around these.

TABLE 3.3: INDICATIVE SALARIES FOR CERTAIN THEATRE PRACTITIONER CATEGORIES, 2004

Production Staff on Fees (8 Week Fee)	Production Staff on Weekly Wage (Average Weekly Wage over 8 weeks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director - €5,175 • Production Manager - €4,230 • Set Designer - €2,961 • Choreographer - €2,875 • Assistant Director - €2,540 • Sound Designer - €2,500 • Costume Designer - €2,192 • Props Maker - €2,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage Director - €490 • Stage Manager - €479 • Assistant Stage Manager - €383 <p>Core Personnel (Annual Salary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artistic Director - €36,733 • General Manager - €34,325 • Company Administrator - 25,268
Theatre Forum (2004)	

In the case of the first two of these groups, the fees are based on an assumption of an eight-week production, covering four weeks rehearsal and four weeks performance. In a good year, the theatre/dance resource organisations said that a practitioner might have three such productions. Table 3.3 also provides some indicative information on what full-time theatre personnel might expect to earn.

An article on theatre incomes for the Irish Theatre Magazine, quotes theatre company manager Eamon Quinn on Irish theatre wages as follows:

"... a disgrace, especially when you consider that no graduate would work for the same wage and actors undergo the same level and amount of training as university graduates..." (Phelan, 2001:11)

Ben Hennessy, Artistic Director of Red Kettle Theatre Company, agrees that wages are poor:

"I think the biggest thing in Ireland at the moment is poor wages - primarily for actors...to get a mortgage is impossible. No fixed employment, no security once you've finished your job, and the rates of pay don't really compensate. Even well-known actors are poorly paid..." (Chambers et al, 2001:179).

Lynne Parker, Artistic Director of Rough Magic Theatre Company, has commented as follows:

"...There is no shortage of people entering the industry now, but they have to work much harder in order to survive ... Dublin is a much more expensive city to live in now than when we started- when you could survive on the dole and produce plays all the time. People now have to have two or three jobs in order to remain in the theatre, and the danger is that the theatre work will become marginalized..." (Chambers et al, 2001:407)

Garry Hynes, Artistic Director of Druid Theatre Company, has discussed rewards for Irish theatre practitioners in the context of Irish economic growth after the mid-1990s:

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“... Theatre continues to be incredibly under funded. Culture has unquestionably been one of the driving energies of prosperity in this town (Galway)...and in Ireland generally...And then we actually reward those people so badly. It is an absolute disgrace. So you have actors, directors, people who've made an extraordinary contribution, and who are living hand-to-mouth...It's so wrong. We should be insisting on some kind of pension process, and some way of looking after the people who have helped to create this wealth...” (Chambers et al, 2001:209)

Irish Actors Equity said that its recommended minimum rate from early-2005 was €386 per 42 hour week. This covers up to eight shows per week. Many productions would pay above this rate but there would be companies that would pay less than the minimum, e.g. because they are doing experimental work or because they lack funds themselves.

The resource organisations said that, when professional expenses such as training, an accountant, travel to auditions/rehearsals, work-related medical expenses and phone bills are taken into account, many performing artists in Irish theatre struggle to make ends meet.

For playwrights, there is a small group of perhaps 5-8 playwrights who make a good living from their work. The Irish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild said that these people might earn over €100,000 per year in a good year, but this would not be the case every year. There is then perhaps a further 20 playwrights who might have one new play commissioned or produced in a year. These might earn €10,000 or less in a year but this is unstable and these playwrights must have other sources of income to survive. Playwrights gain income not only from commissioning but normally take a portion of box office income during the performance (around 10%); and get subsequent royalties if the play is performed by another theatre company or in another medium such as film or television.

Regarding pensions, Irish Actors Equity said that most PRSA schemes require monthly payments, which does not suit actors. In general, it felt that Irish actors have poor pension provision. The resource organisations also said that, for designers, production managers or directors, a problem is that the small companies in Ireland give little scope for career development over time. Many workers in these areas, and in technical areas, reach the top of their pay scale early in their career – the only way to earn a higher salary is to move to a freelance basis, with its associated instability.

A further issue raised by the resource organisations was the balance between funding for administration and direct funding for productions. Those representing performers understandably want the maximum proportion possible spent on end productions and going to the people creating those productions. However, while organisations that represent people working in theatre in an administrative capacity accepted that there may be scope for sharing administrative capacity between companies, they pointed out that administrators in theatre also tend to be poorly paid.

There was general agreement among the resource organisations that theatre in Ireland functions through the provision of a large “hidden subsidy” by those working in the area. For example, in small production companies, practitioners may be unpaid, paid on a profit-sharing basis, or paid for performances but not for rehearsals. Due to ongoing under-employment in the sector, many practitioners will accept low wages and their desire to work in theatre will mean they organise the rest of their working lives around their theatre work. A belief in a “hidden subsidy” of theatre by theatre practitioners was expressed in the survey conducted by Clancy et al (1995), which found: “all respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the statement that ‘Irish theatre is heavily dependent on the existence of a hidden subsidy’ (i.e. theatre practitioners working for long hours for very little money)”.

The actor Alan King mentions both advantages and the poor income associated with working in theatre in a 2005 interview for the book *One – Healing with theatre (Quinn, 2005)*:

“My friend often says, you're still doing what you really want to do, and you've got like, freedom, and you've got like ... But there's times I'm going, yeah but I'm down the back of the sofa looking for coins to buy food and stuff, you know?”

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3.3 TAX, SOCIAL WELFARE AND FUNDING FOR THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

3.3.1 GENERAL SYSTEM OF INCOME TAXATION FOR THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

The position of artists on taxation (and social welfare) is defined by their employment status and by their flows and sources of income. The common features of the working lives of theatre practitioners, such as sporadic employment and unpredictable income levels, can cause problems in fitting into the tax and benefit systems.

Employed artists in Ireland are taxed under similar rules to other employees. PAYE (Pay as You Earn) employees pay tax through their employer and a certain amount of earnings are tax free, depending on the individual's tax credits.

Self-employed artists register for tax under the self-assessment system and receive broadly similar tax credits to PAYE workers. When registered as self-employed, artists must file tax returns in October of the year following the year for which they are filing (as well as making a preliminary payment for the current year). This entails keeping records of expenditures and incomes over time which can be complex given the likely multiple income sources and outlays. It may also require money to be put aside to pay the tax bill in October of the following year which can be difficult given the unstable nature of their work.

Income tax is calculated on "taxable income", i.e. after legitimate expenses linked to the work of a theatre practitioner are deducted from total gross income.

Unlike in some countries (see Chapter 2), Irish theatre practitioners are not permitted to average their incomes over a number of years when filing a return to take account of the intermittent nature of much of their work. This can cause practical difficulty if a good year is followed by a bad year, with tax being calculated for the good year at the top marginal tax rate and falling due in October of the year in which income may be much lower. If the incomes of theatre practitioners in Ireland are low, however, income smoothing might not make a significant impact on their tax liability.⁸

Ireland offers tax-exempt status to self-employed "creative artists", i.e. composers, writers and visual artists, who qualify for residency as defined by the Revenue Commissioners. The Revenue Commissioners are empowered to make a determination that certain artistic works are original and creative works, having artistic merit. Earnings from sales or copyright fees from such works are exempt from income tax from the year in which the claim is made. PRSI is still paid at a rate of 3% (with a minimum payment in 2005 of €253). The exemption is extended to Arts Council bursaries, payments from the arts body Aosdána (see below) and payments from sale of work abroad. Other income is taxed in the normal way. Given the criteria involved, the vast majority of theatre practitioners in Ireland are not eligible either for the Tax Exemption or for membership of Aosdána.

The categories of works accepted for the exemption are books, plays, musical compositions, paintings or like pictures, or sculptures. In 2001, a total of 1,323 artists (of all kinds) claimed the exemption.⁹

3.3.2 SOCIAL WELFARE, MORTGAGE AND CAR INSURANCE SYSTEMS

Theatre practitioners registered as self-employed can apply for Unemployment Assistance if their income falls below the current level of the social welfare benefit. Unemployment Assistance is subject to a means test.

PAYE workers who become unemployed can claim Unemployment Benefit for a period of time, if a certain level of PRSI contributions has been met, before moving to Unemployment Assistance. Unemployment Benefit is not means tested.

Claimants of social welfare in relation to unemployment must show they are available for and seeking work. People receiving social welfare in relation to unemployment for six to nine months are covered by a scheme developed across the EU in recent years and implemented in Ireland by FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

⁸In 2005, a single person with no dependents could earn up to €29,400 before their marginal income tax rate increases from 20% to 42%

⁹Information supplied by the Minister for Finance, Mr. Brian Cowen TD, in response to a Dáil question from Mr. Ciaran Cuffe TD, 23rd November 2004

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The unemployed person meets a FÁS Placement Officer who develops a personal action plan, including training, to help the claimant find a job. If a claimant is reluctant to follow the plan or puts restrictions on their availability for work by refusing to attend certain interviews, unemployment payments can be withdrawn.

In relation to pensions, both self-employed workers and PAYE employees are entitled to a contributory state pension if they have paid sufficient PRSI contributions. All employers should provide employees with access to a private pension facility known as a Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA). A small number of theatre artists who are members of Aosdána have a defined benefit pension scheme.

In relation to mortgages, for self-employed artists, lenders look for consistency of income. If a self-employed person can provide two to three years accounts that show consistency of income, mortgage companies say they should be able to get a mortgage. Similarly they say that ongoing contracts of employment along with one year's accounts should facilitate getting a mortgage. However, the resource organisations said it is difficult for many theatre practitioners to get a mortgage.

As regards car insurance, the Equal Status Act of 2000 prohibits discrimination in the provision of services, including insurance, based on nine grounds including gender, age and marital status. However, certain professions can be weighted to pay higher premiums if statistics show their work is more likely to give rise to accidents. This can affect theatre practitioners as insurance companies may classify some practitioners as using their vehicles for work purposes (e.g. for moving equipment) or may increase premiums as practitioners are more likely to drive regularly at night.

3.3.3 SPECIFIC SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

The primary source of public funding for individual theatre practitioners in Ireland is the Arts Council. Of a total Arts Council budget of approximately €60m in 2005, between €5m and €6m was earmarked for schemes for individual artists (of all kinds).

Artist bursaries are aimed at individual artists, in all disciplines, to aid development of their art practice. They are designed to allow artists the time, space and freedom to concentrate on a particular piece of work. An individual can apply for funding for living costs, materials, equipment, facilities or hiring services needed to help to produce or disseminate their art. Awards in 2005 ranged from €1,000 to €12,000, with specific bursaries also offered for continuing professional development and training, and for travel for up to six months out of Ireland. Travel grants are not available to performing artists attending auditions abroad or for regular trips to attend schools or universities. They are designed to facilitate attendance at short courses, workshops, coaching sessions and conferences or to develop networking opportunities abroad.

Artists may also apply for funding for a particular project. Awards of up to €25,000 are available in the research and development phase of a project, or for production and implementation, or both. These awards aim to assist artists or organisations in devising, exploring and implementing creative ideas in any art form and a 2005 budget of €1m was available in this regard.

Funding can also be obtained whereby a person or entity commissions an artist to create a new piece of work or dynamic repertoire renewal, where the creative results are controlled by the commissioned artist. To receive the awards of up to €10,000, the commission must be undertaken over a given period, and lead to a public performance or publication or other dissemination of the work, one of which must be in Ireland. Various public sector agencies, arts organisations or even artists themselves can commission works, and they must cover administrative and production costs.

Members of the creative artists' organisation, Aosdána, who are resident in Ireland are eligible to apply for an annuity, called a *Cnuas* valued in 2005 at €12,180. The *Cnuas* is means tested and awarded for a term of five years. The Arts

Chapter 3

Irish Context for Study

Council established Aosdána in 1981 to honour artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the arts in Ireland, and to encourage and assist members in devoting their energies to their art. Membership of Aosdána, which is by peer nomination and election, is limited to 250 living artists who have produced a distinguished body of work. "Creative artists" (e.g. playwrights as well as visual artists and composers working in theatre) are eligible for membership, but "interpretative artists" (e.g. actors, dancers, directors and producers) are not. As stated earlier, the vast majority of theatre practitioners do not meet the criteria either for membership of Aosdána or for the Tax Exemption for creative artists.

Theatre practitioners are also eligible for Arts Council funding under artists' schemes, which are run in partnership with other agencies and supported by Arts Council funding. Examples include the Arts and Disability Awards Ireland or *Scéim Forbartha Na nEalaíon* for arts projects in Irish language speaking regions.

The Arts Council said that, while most support schemes for individual artists are open to all artists, including theatre practitioners, people working in theatre tend to apply less for support than do artists from other areas. This was explained as being perhaps due to historical bars that may have existed for theatre practitioners in relation to certain types of bursaries or awards perhaps supplemented by poor information dissemination within the sector.

3.4 SUMMARY OF IRISH CONTEXT FOR STUDY

Chapter 3 presents information from a number of sources that existed prior to this survey of Irish theatre practitioners. It shows that, insofar as previous data existed on theatre practitioners, it tended to support the findings of international arts research. The international findings also appear to have been supported by the views of theatre practitioners as recorded in interviews over the years. Specifically:

- There was some evidence that people working in theatre tended to be well educated compared to the population as a whole, especially those in artistic roles;
- Irish artists tend to move between periods of employment, of self-employment and of unemployment, with their employment status reflecting this.
- Such evidence as existed suggested that many artists needed non-arts related work to continue with their arts work.
- Social welfare benefits are important but there were suggestions of issues relating to inconsistent treatment of artists from different social welfare offices, as well as some resistance to people being required to retrain or apply for non-theatre related work.
- The limited information that existed on incomes suggested that incomes are low by the standards of the wider economy (especially as many practitioners work a limited number of weeks per year). This was reinforced by comments by theatre practitioners in various qualitative interviews.
- Apart from the tax exemption on income for "creative artists" deriving from specified works (which does not apply to the vast majority of theatre practitioners), theatre practitioners are treated the same as other workers by the tax and social welfare systems. However, their unusual and atypical work patterns can lead to particular issues arising in practice.
- Support for theatre practitioners (and other artists) is available from the Arts Council – theatre practitioners tend to apply less for such funding than other groups of artists.

Chapter 4

Estimated Population of Theatre Practitioners

4.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

Chapter 1 indicated that the survey focuses on a range of occupations of active, established theatre practitioners. In undertaking the survey, a preliminary task was to estimate the number of practitioners in the different sub-groups. This facilitated a decision on how many people to interview from each sub-group.

As there are no official sources of data on theatre practitioners, estimates of the population of theatre practitioner sub-groups were mainly built through discussions with the theatre/dance resource organisations, as listed in Chapter 1, and with the Arts Council. The Irish Theatre Handbook, compiled by Theatre Shop (2004), was a further valuable source of information¹⁰.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the focus of the survey was freelance professional theatre practitioners. However, in providing information on how the populations of the different sub-groups of theatre practitioners were estimated, Chapter 4 provides estimates of the population of full-time as well as freelance practitioners in each category.

4.2 POPULATION OF ESTABLISHED, ACTIVE THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

4.2.1 ESTIMATES FOR ESTABLISHED, ACTIVE PERFORMING ARTISTS

Performing artists are the largest category of professional theatre practitioners. In total the number of performing theatre artists in Ireland meeting the criteria for this survey was estimated to be a little over 500, of which over 95% were actors and the remainder dancers or choreographers who work in theatre.

Actors

Irish Actors Equity is the trade union for actors, directors, designers, and stage managers. It had a total membership in Spring 2005 of some 1,500 people, of which some 1,100 were actors. This includes actors in film, TV and theatre in Ireland and people who mainly or exclusively work abroad. Excluding actors who do not work in theatre, or who largely work abroad, but including an estimated figure for theatre actors who are not Equity members, gave an estimated figure of some 1,000 theatre actors. To establish how many of these would see theatre as their main career, three experienced theatre practitioners, from Equity and ATA, went through the lists of names. They estimated that just approximately 550 people were established and active theatre actors, who would see working in theatre as their main career.

Dancers/Choreographers

The Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland (APDI) is a key umbrella resource organisation for the professional dance community. It had 135 members in Spring 2005, consisting of professional, contemporary and classical dancers; choreographers; teachers; and dance students. For the purposes of this study, the students were excluded – this left just over 50 professional and established dancers. From this number, the APDI determined that there were around 20 dancers and choreographers working in theatre productions in Ireland. This study focused on dancers/ choreographers working in theatre productions, i.e. with a theatre director or a choreographer and theatre director, and where the outcome of the work is considered a theatre/drama performance. The APDI said that the choreographers were, in fact, either also currently working as dancers or were ex-dancers.

Given that there are far more actors than dancers/choreographers in theatre productions, the numbers interviewed for the survey reflected this. As such, while the results for Performance Artists reflect the inclusion of some dancers/choreographers in theatre productions, a separate study on the socio-economic conditions of dancers would be needed to explore their specific circumstances.

Besides two actors employed full-time by the Abbey Theatre¹¹, the actors and dancers/ choreographers identified for this survey all work on a freelance basis.

¹⁰ In addition to providing estimates of numbers of practitioners, the resource and service organisations, and the Irish Theatre Handbook, provided lists of names of people from which those actually interviewed could be chosen.

¹¹ This situation arises as a legacy of the dissolution of the Abbey company of actors – once these actors retire, there will be no actors in full-time employment in theatre in Ireland.

Chapter 4

Estimated Population of Theatre Practitioners

4.2.2 ESTIMATES FOR ESTABLISHED, ACTIVE PRODUCTION ARTISTS

'Production artists' is used in this study to encompass playwrights, directors and designers. Almost all playwrights and designers work as freelance practitioners, whereas directors may either work freelance or be attached to a theatre company in a full-time capacity. There is an estimated 300 established and active production artists working in theatre in Ireland, who see theatre as their main career.

Playwrights

The Irish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild is the representative body for writers in Ireland for stage and screen. Membership of the Guild is open to any such writer who has contracted to write for payment in Ireland, including for radio and the new media. There were 125 members in the Guild in Spring 2005, most of whom work in film. The Guild estimated that around 50 work occasionally in theatre but a core of 25 could be considered as the population of playwrights regularly working in Irish theatre. These people work as freelance practitioners.

From an income perspective, the Guild thought that these 25 people would fall into:

- i A group of perhaps 5-7 successful playwrights would be likely to have a relatively high income (say over €100,000) in some years, although they might not achieve such an income every year;
- ii The remaining 18-20 or so people who see their main occupation as writing for theatre would earn considerably less, perhaps averaging an income of €10,000 per year or less from this work.

Directors

Directors working in Irish theatre can be roughly divided into three groupings; freelance directors, directors who work as artistic directors of subsidized theatre companies, and artistic directors of non-subsidized theatre companies. There is a degree of overlap between these three groups¹².

The population of directors was estimated primarily from the Irish Theatre Handbook. The Handbook lists some 60 freelance theatre directors who work on short term contracts for theatre companies or venues. Of these, there were some 20 directors listed as both freelance directors and as artistic directors of established theatre companies. Names appearing on more than one list were included only once.

The Handbook lists 48 subsidized theatre companies, i.e. companies or production houses in receipt of €30,000 or more in funding from The Arts Council in 2004. These normally have a full-time artistic director.

In addition, there are a further 87 non- or partially subsidized theatre companies. Some of these are smaller and do not have a permanent director. With the assistance of the Arts Council, it was possible to identify almost 30 such companies with established directors who work regularly in theatre.

Based on the Handbook, and the assistance of the Arts Council, a total population of approximately 125 directors was estimated, of whom approximately 60 work on a freelance basis.

Designers

Designers in theatre work mainly in lighting, sound, sets and costumes. Most work as freelance practitioners, with their main work often being prior to a performance beginning. The design work is implemented by theatre technicians, although there is overlap between the two areas.

The Irish Theatre Handbook lists 39 lighting designers, 46 costume designers, 28 sound designers, and 39 set designers. There was a considerable crossover between costume and set designers with names also in common in lighting, sound and set design. After cross-referencing, some 135 freelance designers were identified. As a small number of designers are not included in the Handbook, this gave an estimated population of freelance designers of 140. There are also around 5-10 designers in full-time theatre employment.

¹² Not all Artistic Directors are Directors – e.g. they may be writers, actors etc.

Chapter 4

Estimated Population of Theatre Practitioners

4.2.3 ESTIMATES FOR ESTABLISHED, ACTIVE TECHNICAL AND MANAGERIAL THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

The final category of theatre practitioners covers professional technical and production staff. Within this category, the large venue-based theatre companies, in particular The National Theatre (Abbey and Peacock) and The Gate, tend to have full-time employees in these roles. However, most practitioners in this category work on a freelance basis, employed by venues or theatre companies as required.

In total there are estimated to be 250-300 theatre practitioners in the technical and production areas, including freelance practitioners and full-time employees.

Technicians

Technicians work in the operation of lighting and sound equipment, and special effects, or the making, sourcing and fitting of various aspects of costumes, props, sets and as stage hands.

The Irish Theatre Handbook lists 11 freelance costume and 15 freelance props technicians (or 'makers'). Of the listed costume makers, some were also listed as costume designers (included earlier) and some prop makers were listed as set and costume designers.

The Handbook does not list lighting and sound technicians, and many of these work between theatre and other areas of live performance such as music concerts. To compile a list of these technicians, a number of established production managers (who hire freelance technicians) provided lists of technicians with whom they work. Information was also provided by Theatre Forum.

The Abbey and the Gate theatres together employ around 30 full-time technicians. The total for both freelance and employed technicians working in theatre in Ireland is estimated to be approximately 110.

Production Managers, Producers and Stage Managers

Production managers are responsible for the technical preparations for a production and form a link between the production staff and the management. There is some inconsistency in the titles given to 'production managers' between theatres, e.g. the terms 'technical manager' and production manager are often interchangeable. These people manage the technical, design, crew, rehearsal and performance space issues, as well as managing the budget for these aspects of the project. Freelance production managers are listed in the Irish Theatre Handbook of which there were 22 in total (excluding two also listed as designers). Theatre Forum supplemented this with a list of mainly full-time production managers from its database. From the different sources, some 25 established and active freelance production managers and 60 non-freelance managers were identified.

The producer has overall responsibility for the financial and contractual side of a production. Tasks may include hiring the facilities; employing the technical crew, front of house and publicity staff, director and cast; contract negotiations with actors; touring venues; employee relations; supervision of press, marketing and graphic design issues; and managing the overall budget. In smaller theatre companies, there may be one general manager that combines the roles of producer and production manager. Some 30 producers can be identified from the Irish Theatre Handbook in subsidised theatre companies, and up to 10 for the non-or-partially subsidised companies. There were estimated to be 55 established and active producers in total.

The role of the stage manager is based around managing the communication between actors, technical staff and support crew - essentially anything that happens 'backstage'. In larger theatre companies the stage manager may have a support team. Depending on the needs of the production, there may be stagehands employed, generally casual or temporary employees, hired on an *ad hoc* basis.

Chapter 4

Estimated Population of Theatre Practitioners

There are 29 freelance stage managers in the Irish Theatre Handbook, three of whom are also listed as production managers and one as a designer leaving 25. Consultations indicated an estimated 20 further stage managers work as full-time employees.

In summary, having reviewed the different types of theatre practitioner identified for the study, and having applied criteria to try to ensure the people involved are established theatre practitioners, who continue to work in theatre, and who see theatre as their main career, the estimates shown in Table 4.1 were reached.

TABLE 4.1: ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF ESTABLISHED, ACTIVE IRISH THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

Theatre Practitioner Group	Total Population	Freelance Population	Full-time Employees
Actors	552	550	2
Dancers/Choreographers in theatre	20	20	0
Playwrights	25	25	0
Directors	125	60	65
Designers	150	140	10
Technicians	110	50	60
Stage Managers	45	25	20
Production Managers	85	25	60
Producers	55	15	40
TOTAL	1167	910	257

Table 4.1 shows an estimated total of almost 1,200 established and active theatre practitioners in these occupational areas, of whom an estimated 910 (78%) are freelance, with the remaining 250 or so people having full-time jobs¹³

4.3 SAMPLE COMPOSITION

The survey interviews were spread across the three broad categories of occupations, i.e. Performing Artists; Production Artists; and Technical/Managerial Theatre Practitioners, to allow the overall survey data to be supplemented by results for each sub-group. In building the sub-groups, practitioners were chosen from the different occupational areas. Interviews were allocated to 'over-interview' people from sub-groups with smaller populations¹⁴. A breakdown of the interviews undertaken, across the different occupational groups, is shown below.

TABLE 4.2: ESTIMATED POPULATION OF ESTABLISHED AND ACTIVE THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND ACTUAL NUMBER OF SURVEY INTERVIEWS UNDERTAKEN

Theatre Practitioner Group	Freelance Population	Completed Survey Interviews
Performing Artists	570	84
Production Artists	225	66
Technical and Managerial Theatre Practitioners	115	45
TOTAL	910	195

Information on how the numbers of completed survey interviews were used as a basis to compile the survey results (through weighting) is provided in Annex 1.

¹³ The main employer of full-time people is the National Theatre, which had about 90 full-time employees in 2005 (60 permanent and 30 on contracts). The Gate Theatre would be the second largest employer, with people also employed full-time by Arts Council subsidised companies, and by venues. Employees of the National Theatre have salaries linked to public sector salaries, and receive public sector pay awards, holiday entitlements, pension arrangements etc.

¹⁴ This increases the accuracy of the results for the three sub-groups while results for the total population are obtained through a weighting of the survey results – see Annex 2.

Chapter 5

Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

5.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

Chapter 5 moves to presenting the results arising from the survey and, based on the 195 interviews undertaken, presents findings in relation to the demographic characteristics of theatre practitioners¹⁵. Where possible, these are compared to the characteristics of the wider Irish labour force and population.

5.2 AGE AND YEARS IN THEATRE

Table 5.1 shows the breakdown of theatre practitioners by age group. The single largest cohort was between 35-44 years (36%), with two-thirds aged 25-44.

Age Range	Proportion of Theatre Practitioners
Under 25	3%
25 to 34	30%
35 to 44	36%
45 to 54	19%
55 to 64	9%
65 or over	3%
TOTAL	100%

Based on 195 responses

It is likely the 'under 25' group is under-represented at 3%, due to the survey criterion that respondents were working in theatre for 2-3 years prior to the survey.

This age breakdown is broadly similar to that in the wider labour force¹⁶. For example, some 31% of respondents are aged 45 or over, and this is also true for the wider labour force.

The structure of the wider labour force is influenced by a large number of labour market entrants in the past two decades. As the wider labour force gets older, the age structure of theatre practitioners may become younger than that of the wider labour force. This is because of structural factors suggested by the theatre sector stakeholder organisations. Firstly, they believe there is a reduction in roles for actors after the age of about 40. Secondly, and this is reflected in comments made by respondents to this survey (see Chapter 11), it is difficult to start a family and continue to work in theatre.

The average number of years worked in the theatre is around 15, varying from 2-50 years. A breakdown of practitioners by years worked is shown in Figure 5.1.

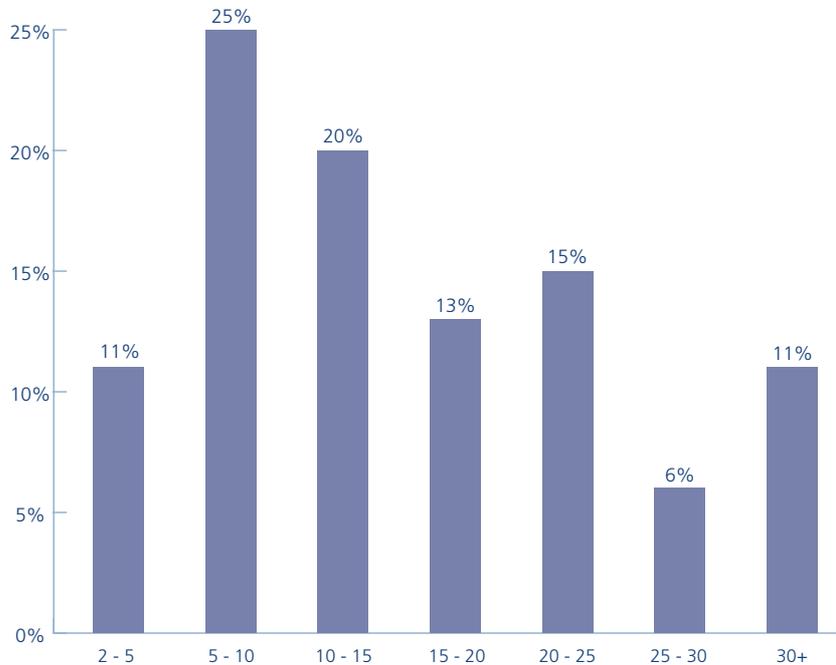
¹⁵ Findings throughout the report have been rounded to the nearest percentage

¹⁶ CSO (2005)

Chapter 5

Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

FIGURE 5.1: NUMBER OF YEARS IN PROFESSIONAL THEATRE WORK



Based on 193 Respondents

The largest proportion, one-quarter of practitioners, had spent 5-10 years working in theatre. Approximately 45% had worked 5-15 years. On the other hand, some 17% had worked in theatre for over 25 years, indicating that the sample reflects people at all stages of their careers.

Given the age profile of the sample population, the data suggests that some practitioners started working in theatre at a relatively early age. Comments from the theatre sector stakeholder organisations suggests that this is the case, and was particularly true in the past, when people were more likely to enter theatre without going through a third-level course.

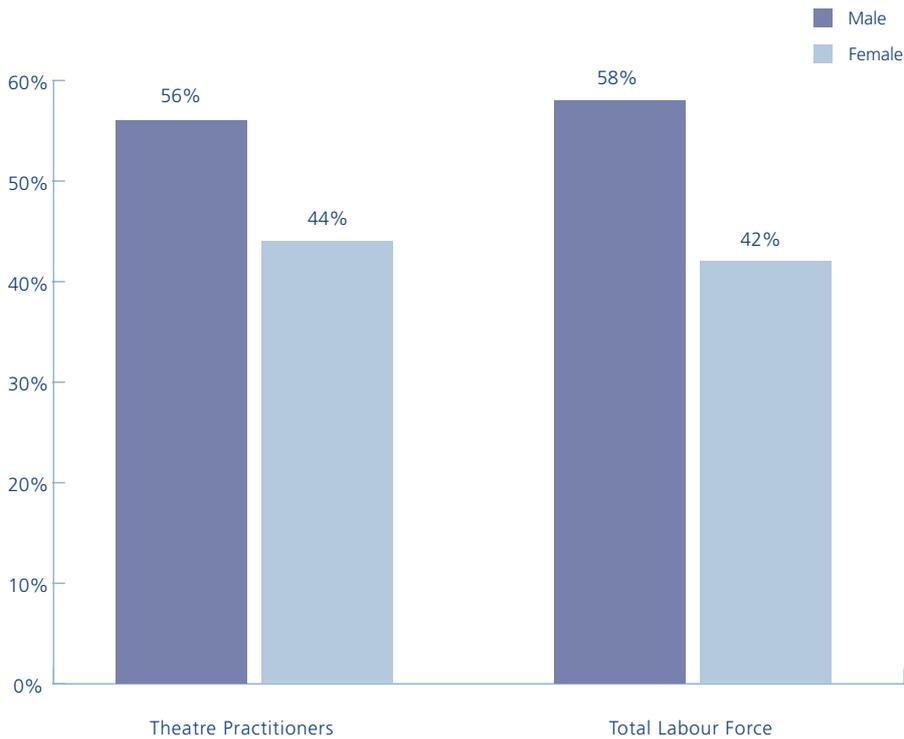
Chapter 5

Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

5.3 GENDER OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

The survey indicates that theatre practitioners are 56% male and 44% female. This is similar to the breakdown in the general labour force¹⁷, as Figure 5.2 shows.

FIGURE 5.2: GENDER BREAKDOWN OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND TOTAL LABOUR FORCE



Based on 195 Respondents, and CSO (2005a)

The gender breakdown in the three sample sub-groups (performing artists; production artists; other practitioners) groups is fairly consistent, with slightly more men in the third group (which includes technical and managerial jobs), at 64%.

The proportion of male workers increases with age, with 75% of theatre practitioners aged over 45 being male. This compares to a figure of 62% for the wider labour force, indicating that women working in theatre are more likely to leave this work as they get older, compared to women in the labour force as a whole. The theatre sector stakeholder organisations said they believed the hypothesis of a lack of roles for actors aged over 40 particularly holds true for women. The challenge of combining a theatre career and having a family may also create particular pressures for women.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, figure for wider labour force is for the September-November 2004 quarter

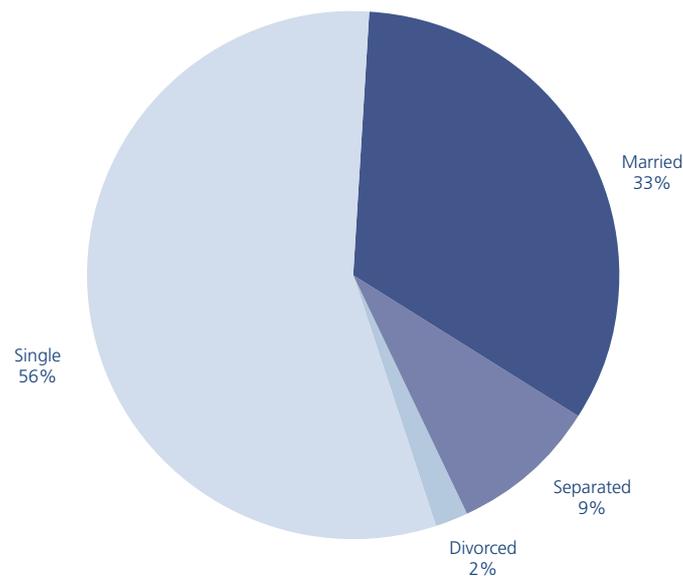
Chapter 5

Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

5.4 MARITAL STATUS AND COHABITATION

A breakdown of the marital status of theatre practitioners is shown in Figure 5.3. The categories shown reflect the categories used in the Census.

FIGURE 5.3: MARITAL STATUS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS



Based on 195 Respondents

Figure 5.3 shows that a majority of theatre practitioners are single.

While the above categories allow for comparison with the wider labour force (see below), they do not capture those people living together who are not married. The survey indicates that, while one-third of theatre practitioners are married, about 60% share a household with other people (where household is defined as a situation where the parties come together to share bills). Indeed, of those who were single, and not living alone, some 72% were living with one other adult person. This suggests both a combination of people (not married) in cohabiting relationships and other situations (e.g. people living with elderly dependents; separated people living with their children; or practitioners living with their parents). A number of theatre practitioners surveyed made the point that people in the sector tend to be less likely than the wider population to get married and are more likely to cohabit.

Around 50 respondents, representing just over one quarter of the sample, were living with children under 15 years of age.

The pattern of marital status of theatre practitioners differs to that of the overall labour force¹⁸ with a greater number of single people, at 56% (45% in overall labour force). Some 49% of the wider total labour force is married, compared to 33% of theatre practitioners. The proportion of theatre practitioners that is divorced or separated (at 11%) compares to 5% for the wider labour force.

¹⁸ Data for wider labour force from 2002 Census – CSO (2003a)

Chapter 5

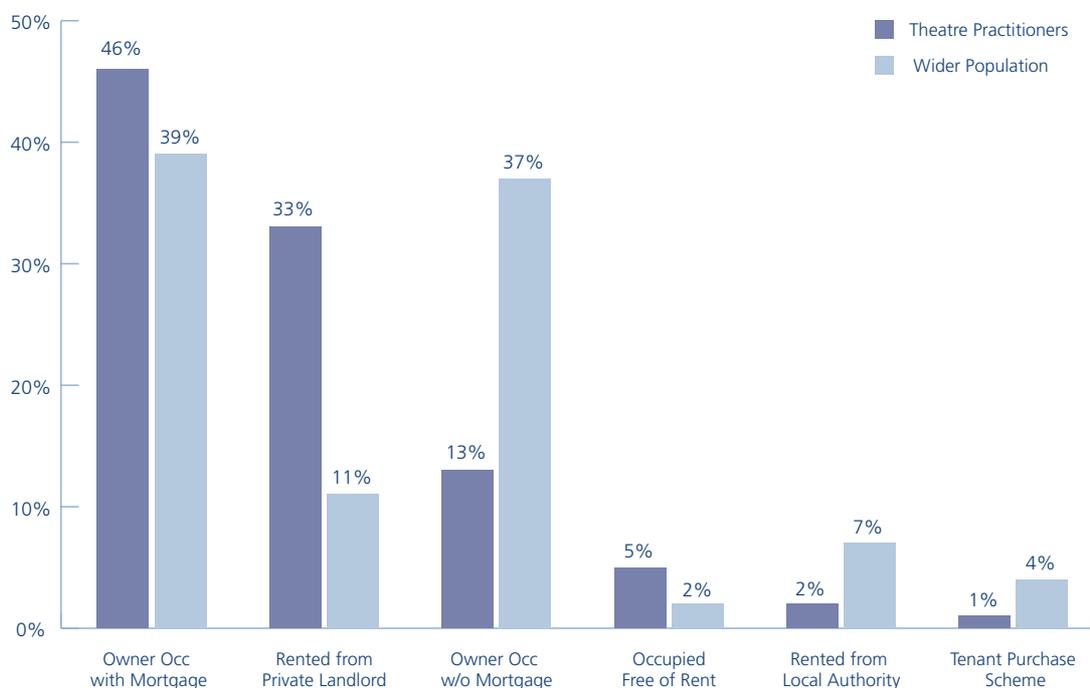
Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

5.5 HOUSING – STATUS OF OCCUPANCY

The most common status of occupancy of people in Ireland vis-à-vis their accommodation is that they live in an owner-occupied home. Some 74% of the population lives in homes they own (either with or without a mortgage)¹⁹. The survey indicates that the equivalent figure for theatre practitioners is 59%.

Figures on nature of occupancy of accommodation are shown in Figure 5.4. Figures for theatre practitioners are shown by the blocks and for the wider population by the line. Data on nature of occupancy for the wider population is for all households, not just those with people in the labour force. As such, the wider figure includes a proportion of older and retired people, who may be more likely to own their homes.

FIGURE 5.4: NATURE OF OCCUPANCY, THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND WIDER POPULATION



Based on 195 Respondents

Figure 5.4 shows that 59% of theatre practitioners are owner occupiers, with almost four-fifths of these people having a mortgage. Some 33% of theatre practitioners surveyed live in privately rented accommodation, which is three times higher than the equivalent population of the total population. Analysis of the data shows that younger theatre practitioners are more likely to be renting. Figure 5.4 indicates that theatre practitioners are somewhat less likely than the wider population to rent from a local authority.

Compared to the population as a whole, theatre practitioners are therefore less likely to be home owners and more likely to live in rented accommodation.

¹⁹ CSO (2004a)

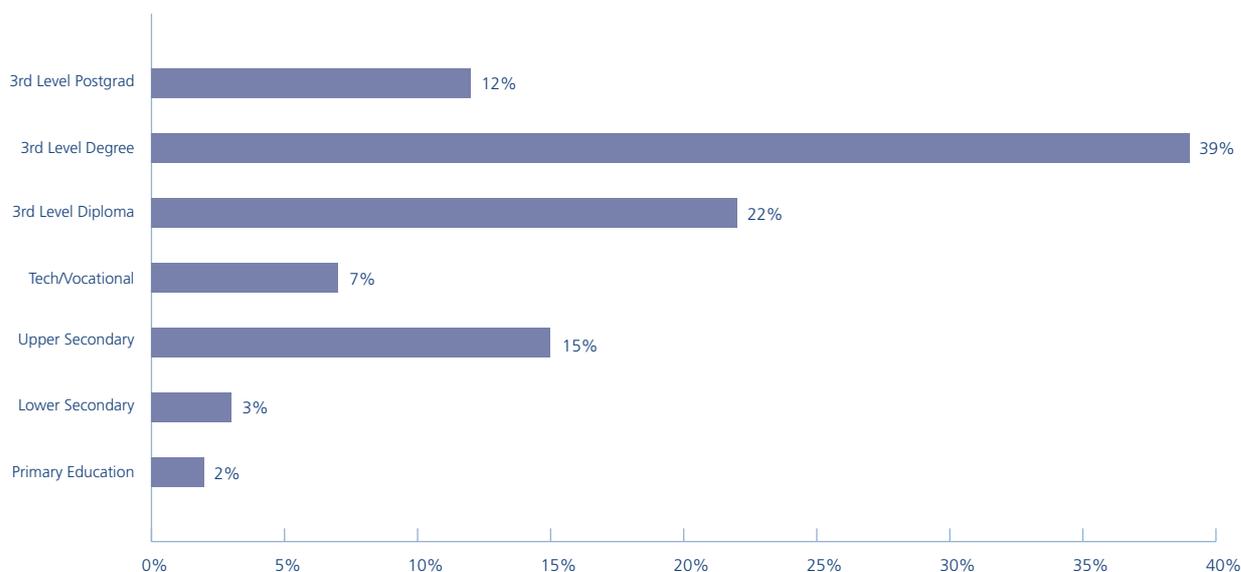
Chapter 5

Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

5.6 LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The survey indicates that theatre practitioners tend to have a high level of education and training. Figure 5.5 shows a breakdown of theatre practitioners by the highest level of education attained.

FIGURE 5.5: HIGHEST COMPLETED EDUCATION OF THEATRE PRACTITIONER



Based on 192 Respondents

Figure 5.5 shows that 73% of theatre practitioners have obtained a third level qualification. This compares to 28% of the wider labour force²⁰. Theatre practitioners therefore constitute a relatively well-educated segment of the Irish labour force.

The high level of general education of people in theatre work in Ireland reflects the findings of international arts studies, as reported in Section 2.2.1. These show that, in countries such as the US, the UK, Finland, New Zealand and Australia, the tendency is for artists to be better qualified than the labour force as a whole. This pattern is repeated in the case of Irish theatre practitioners²¹.

²⁰ Figure for wider labour force from CSO (2004b). This wider figure relates to people with a third level qualification attained after two or more years of study

²¹ The finding also provides evidence to support previous indications that this was the case in Ireland – see Section 3.2.1

Chapter 5

Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

Theatre practitioners were also asked about specific *theatre-related* education or training completed and the results are shown in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2: SPECIFIC THEATRE RELATED EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

	Type of Education or Training	% Practitioners
ACADEMIC	Third level diploma	21%
	Third level degree	12%
	Third level postgraduate	3%
	Technical education	3%
	Specific school or Conservatorium	25%
	Academic Other	2%
PRIVATE	Tuition from private teacher / practising professional	27%
	Mentorship	11%
OTHER	Self-taught	36%
	Learning on the job	61%
	Apprenticeship	14%
	Adult education courses	7%
	Workshops/short courses/summer schools	47%
	Exchange programmes	1%
	Other Training	2%

Based on 195 Responses. Percentages add to more than 100% as people could choose multiple options.

Table 5.2 shows that the theatre practitioners surveyed had undertaken specific theatre related training from a wide range of sources. In relation to academic training related to theatre, one-quarter of practitioners attended a specific school or conservatorium, while 21% had completed a third level diploma course. With regard to private training, 27% had received private tuition, and 11% had been mentored by a professional in their field. Informal and short-term training are also important, with almost half having attended a workshop, short course or summer school.

Table 5.2 shows the importance to theatre practitioners of “learning their trade” while engaged in theatre work, even if they have a theatre-related qualification. Some 36% said they were at least partly self-taught with 61% having learned “on the job”. These figures are very close to the figures found by Throsby and Hollister (2003), who found figures of 41% and 61% for Australian actors.

The variety of modes of education and training undertaken also reflects the inherent need for skills and training to work in the theatre sector.

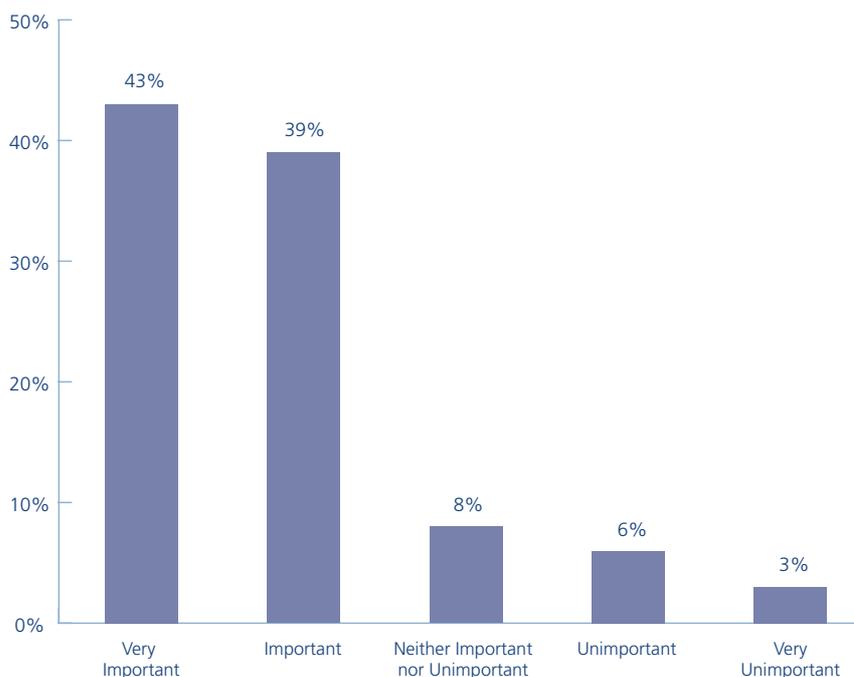
Chapter 5

Characteristics of Theatre Practitioner Population

5.7 CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING DURING CAREER

Despite high basic levels of education and training, Irish theatre practitioners consider ongoing training as important to their career development, as shown in Figure 5.6.

FIGURE 5.6: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF ONGOING TRAINING TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Based on 195 Respondents

Figure 5.6 shows that 82% of Irish theatre practitioners consider ongoing training as “important” or “very important” to career development. However, in response to a follow-up question, only 37% had engaged in any relevant training in 2004. This suggests a gap in the sector between the amount of continuous training that people would like and the amount in which they actually partake. The figure of 37% is similar to the finding of Throsby and Hollister (2003) that 31% of Australian artists were continuing to engage in some form of ongoing training.

While the number of dancers in theatre productions surveyed was too small to draw separate conclusions, a different training regime exists for such dancers. Daily training and consistent professional development are needed to facilitate dancers in being available and sufficiently fit to take on professional performance work.

Ongoing training was most common for performing artists, with 56% involved in some form of training, compared to one-third of production artists and 16% of technical/managerial practitioners. The share of the total population aged 25-64 engaged in some form of continued education and training is estimated as 22%, indicating that theatre practitioners are more likely than the wider workforce to engage in ongoing training²².

Some 78% of theatre practitioners said they felt there were insufficient opportunities to engage in continuing training and professional development.

²² OECD (2004)

Chapter 6

Work Pattern of Theatre Practitioners

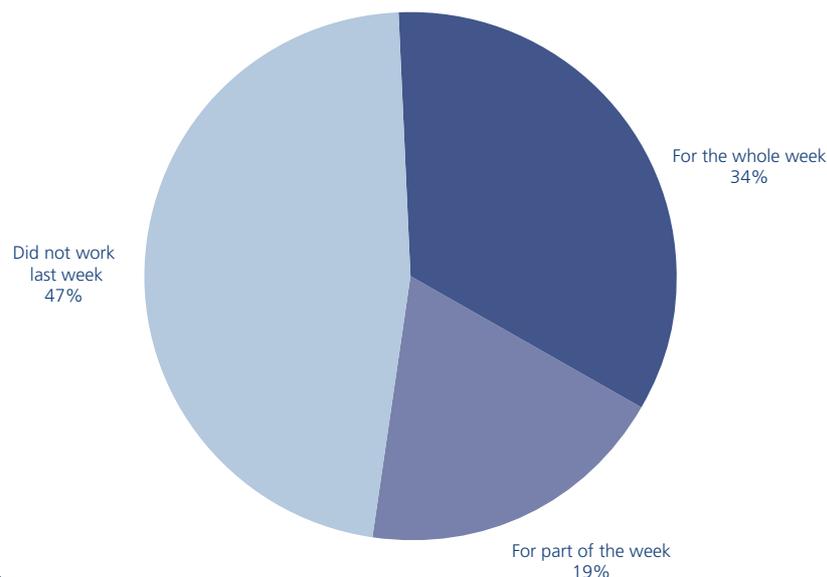
6.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

The review of international studies in Chapter 2 indicated a common theme that theatre practitioners and other artists find it hard to work full-time at their chosen profession and often have to work at other jobs also. The consultations with the Irish theatre sector stakeholder organisations indicated that this was also likely to be the case for Irish practitioners, and that non-standard hours and patterns of work are common. Chapter 6 examines the work patterns of Irish theatre practitioners, the extent to which they rely on non-theatre work (especially in film, TV and the media), issues relating to hours worked and other work practices and why it is hard for a practitioner to get more work in his or her specialist area.

6.2 WORK PATTERNS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

To get an indication of the proportion of theatre practitioners working in theatre at a given time, respondents were asked if they had worked in any role in theatre in the week prior to the survey interview. Figure 6.1 shows that only one-third of practitioners had worked in theatre for the whole of the previous week, with almost one-half having not worked in theatre at all.

FIGURE 6.1: THEATRE PRACTITIONERS THAT WORKED IN THE THEATRE LAST WEEK



Based on 195 responses

There was considerable variation between practitioner types. While 64% of technical and managerial practitioners worked for the whole of the previous week in theatre, this figure dropped to 47% for production artists and 23% (i.e. under one-quarter) for performing artists. As only 14% of performing artists had worked for part of the previous week in theatre, this meant that 63% of performing artists had not worked at all in theatre in the week prior to the survey.

The practitioners were then asked to break down their work pattern for 2004 (i.e. the calendar year previous to the survey). Six options were provided:

- Work in the main specialist area of the practitioner, i.e. if they were an actor, the number of weeks of acting work they undertook etc.
- Other work in theatre, for example if an actor worked as a director, a director worked as a producer etc.
- Other work in the arts world but outside theatre, such as teaching their art form, arts administration, writing about the arts or other arts work.
- Employment that was not related to the arts.

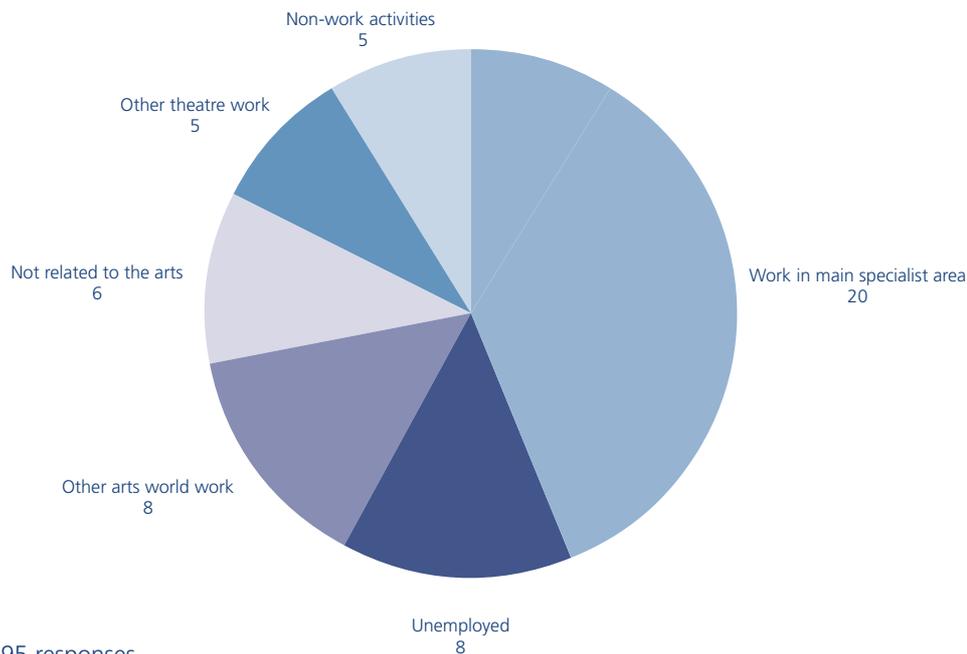
Chapter 6

Work Pattern of Theatre Practitioners

- Time spent unemployed.
- Time spent on non-work activities, e.g. holidays or illness.

Figure 6.2 indicates that, in 2004, the average theatre practitioner worked 20 weeks in their main specialist area. This was supplemented by almost five weeks in other work in theatre, meaning that almost half of the year was spent in theatre work. Between 13 and 14 further weeks were spent in other employment, giving a total number of weeks worked of 38. There was an average of eight weeks of unemployment and just over five weeks engaged in non-work activities.

FIGURE 6.2: AVERAGE PRACTITIONER – BREAKDOWN OF WORK PATTERN FOR 2004 (WEEKS)



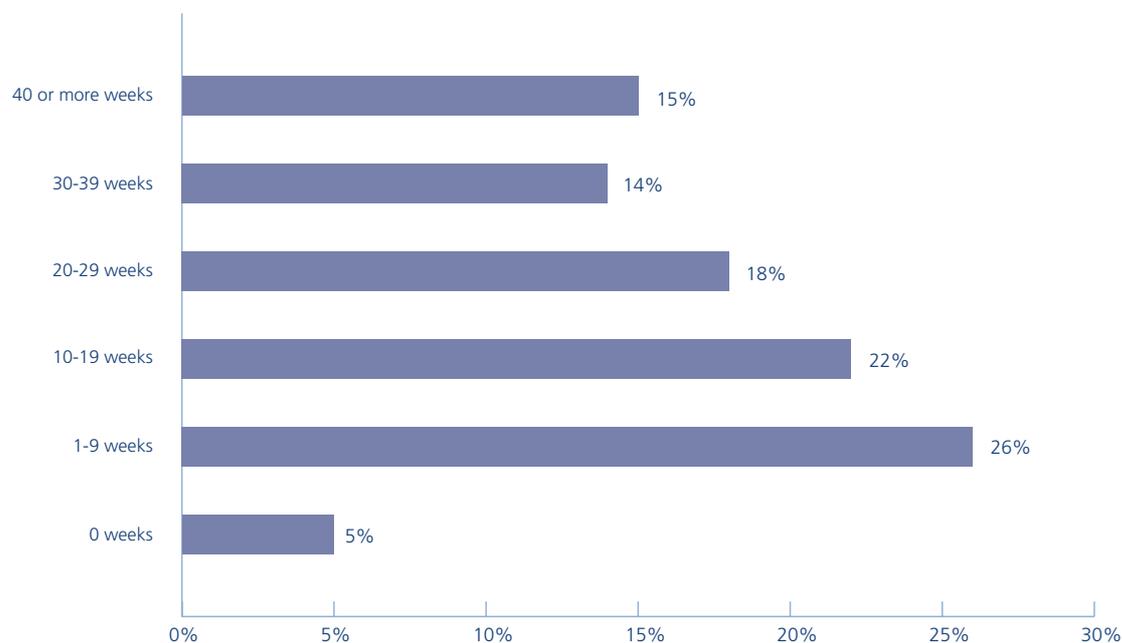
Based on 195 responses.

While Figure 6.2 provides an average figure for all theatre practitioners in the survey, individual theatre practitioner work patterns could vary significantly. Figure 6.3 shows, for example, that while the average practitioner worked for 20 weeks in his/her main specialist area in 2004, 54% worked fewer than 20 weeks, including 5% of practitioners who reported that they had no work in their main theatre occupation in 2004. In contrast, some 15% of respondents worked for over 40 weeks in their main specialist area in 2004.

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FIGURE 6.3: WEEKS WORKED IN 2004 BY PRACTITIONERS IN MAIN SPECIALIST AREA



Based on 195 Responses

Figure 6.3 shows that the amount of work obtained by individual theatre practitioners in their main specialist area varies significantly. However, analysis of the data suggests distinct patterns for the three sub-groups of theatre practitioners, as shown in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1: AVERAGE BREAKDOWN OF 2004 YEAR FOR ALL THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND FOR PRACTITIONER SUB-GROUPS (WEEKS)

	Performing Artists	Production Artists	Technical and Managerial	Overall Average
Main Specialist Area	16	24	33	20
Other Theatre	3	9.5	3	5
Other Arts Work	8.5	6	5.5	8
Not related to arts	8	3	3.5	6
Unemployed	11	4.5	3.5	8
Non-work Activities	5.5	5	3.5	5
TOTAL	52	52	52	52

Table 6.1 shows that performing artists spent the least time working in their main specialist area in 2004, the most time working in jobs not related to the arts and the most time unemployed (at 11 weeks, considerably longer than the other two groups). This is consistent with the findings of international studies cited in Chapter 2, such as Alper et al (1996), Galloway (2002) and Throsby and Hollister (2003), which identified under-employment and multiple job holding (“moonlighting”) as characteristics of performing artists in the US, the UK and Australia.

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The figure of 16 weeks worked in main specialist area is identical to the figure found by Pace (2004) for US Equity members in 2003-4 (US Equity mean figure: 16.4 weeks; US Equity median figure: 11.6 weeks)

While the other two groups spent more time working in theatre in 2004 (between 33 and 36 weeks in all theatre work), their work pattern is also characterised by a need to manage theatre-related and non-theatre related jobs over a year. These work pattern findings are consistent with previous international studies²³ with a picture emerging of theatre practitioners who manage a portfolio of jobs within theatre, in the arts generally and in unrelated fields. A point made by the theatre sector stakeholder organisations in the consultations around this survey related to the large amount of ongoing effort, time and stress that were related to developing and managing this kind of work pattern.

Across the three groups, work not related to the arts accounted for an average of six weeks in 2004. For theatre practitioners who work outside the arts, other jobs are varied. The single most common work cited was teaching (21% of those working outside the arts), followed by office work (12%) driving a taxi (8%), writing (7%) and bar/restaurant work (5%). The remaining people worked in disparate jobs, and included a web designer, an electrician, two postal sorters, a video editor, three physical trainers, an accountant, a farm worker and four who were willing to “work at anything”.

6.3 RELIANCE ON FILM, TV AND MEDIA WORK

Theatre practitioners were asked about the extent of their work in areas that link to their theatre work. Some 76% of respondents said they work in either film, TV or in radio drama, and 54% do other forms of commercial or media work.

Work in these “hinterland” areas is much more common for the performing artists (actors and dancers) than for the other two occupational sub-groups, as Table 6.2 shows.

TABLE 6.2: PROPORTION OF THREE SUB-GROUPS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS UNDERTAKING FILM, TV AND MEDIA WORK

	Film, TV, Radio	Commercial, Media
Performing Artists	93%	68%
Production Artists	52%	26%
Technical and Managerial	42%	36%
<i>All Theatre Practitioners (Weighted)</i>	76%	54%

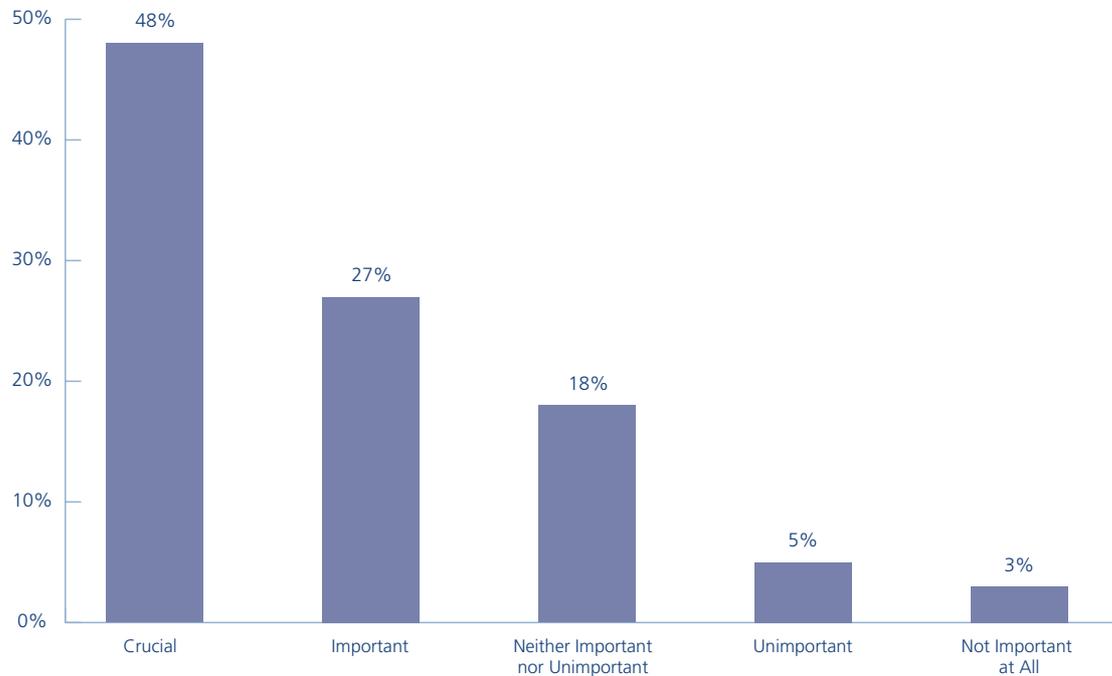
The survey followed up these questions by asking to what extent this film, TV, radio and media work is important in supporting the practitioner’s career in theatre. The responses are shown in Figure 6.4.

²³ See for example the review of ‘moonlighting’ by US artists in Alper and Wassall (2000)

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FIGURE 6.4: EXTENT OF IMPORTANCE OF OTHER MEDIA WORK TO THEATRE PRACTITIONERS



Based on 151 responses

Figure 6.4 shows that 75% of respondents consider such work as important or crucial in supporting their career in theatre. Fewer than 10% consider such work unimportant to their theatre career. Perhaps as expected, the significance attached to this work by group of practitioners is correlated to their likelihood to engage in such work, with performing artists most likely to rate such work as critical to their theatre career.

Table 6.2 and Figure 6.4 support the view that film, TV, radio and commercial work provide an indirect subsidy to theatre in Ireland through the wages they pay to theatre practitioners. Some practitioners noted in the survey interviews that such work can also provide training and status to theatre artists, and film and TV work give practitioners “a crack at the big time”. Therefore, as well as the financial support provided by television, radio and commercial/media work, such work also brings non-pecuniary gains.

One theatre sector stakeholder organisation noted that the relationship between the theatre sector and these other linked sectors is a two-way one, with elements of mutual interdependence between them. This organisation said that the links are complex and would benefit from further research in themselves.

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Work Pattern of Theatre Practitioners

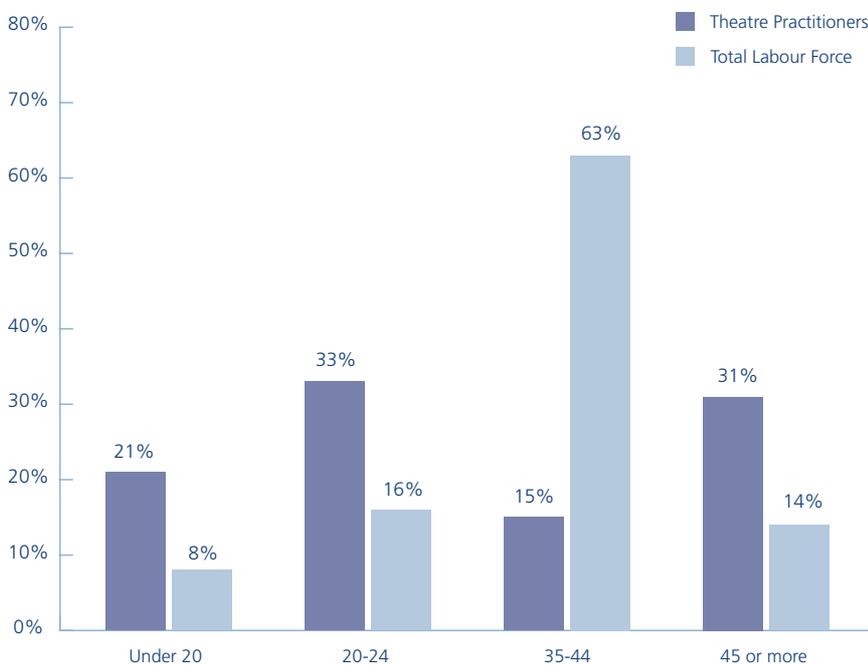
6.4 OTHER ASPECTS OF WORK PRACTICES

6.4.1 HOURS WORKED

For the most recent week in which they had worked in their specialist theatre area, practitioners were asked how many hours they had worked. The average number of hours worked was 36 hours.

As an average, this figure is just below the national average of 37 hours for workers in Ireland in early-2005. However, the average theatre practitioner figure of 36 hours is subject to much more variability than the national average, as Figure 6.5 shows.

FIGURE 6.5: HOURS WORKED BY THEATRE PRACTITIONERS VERSUS TOTAL LABOUR FORCE



Based on 195 responses

Source: National data from CSO (2005a)

Figure 6.5 shows that, for the wider workforce, almost two-thirds of workers have a typical working week of between 35 and 44 hours. However, for theatre practitioners, there is no such typical week, with significant proportions of practitioners working both under 20 hours in their last week in their main specialist area, and over 45 hours. This partly reflects the cycle of productions, with hours varying from the pre-production/ rehearsal phase to the hours when a show is performing to the period after a production finishes (and waiting for the next piece of work to commence).

The 1993 EU Working Time Directive (since amended) fixes an "average maximum working week" (calculated over a four-month period) for EU workers of 48 hours per week. This survey shows that, in the last week in which they worked in their main specialist area, 25% of Irish theatre practitioners worked for over 48 hours²⁴.

For the last week worked in their main specialist area, the average number of hours worked was highest for technical and managerial practitioners, at 50 hours. Production artists had an average of 46 hours and performing artists worked

²⁴While theatre is not exempt from the Directive in Ireland, this does not imply a breach of the Directive as, over a period of four months, the proportion working on average more than 48 hours would be lower. Furthermore, the Directive provides for "opt-outs" from the 48 hour limit under certain circumstances, subject to employee consent.

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an average of 29 hours (suggesting that their hours vary more during the cycle of a production). As Table 6.1 shows that technical and managerial practitioners also tend to work more weeks in theatre than the other sub-groups, they would appear to be the group for which the EU Working Time Directive has the most implications.

Practitioners were asked the times of the day and the days of the week on which they had worked in their most recent week in their main specialist area. The most common time period worked by practitioners was 12-6pm and 6-11pm, with over three-quarters of respondents having worked during these times. Around 63% had worked before noon, and 14% had worked after 11pm. Almost all respondents had worked Monday to Friday (in the last week they worked in their main specialist area), with 64% having worked Saturday and 27% having worked Sunday.

The general picture therefore is of a high degree of variability in the number of hours worked in a week, with further variability introduced by possible weekend work and work in evenings and perhaps even at night. This supplements the variability already inherent in the typical annual work patterns.

6.4.2 UNPAID WORK

In relation to the last week in which they had worked in their main specialist area (which was used to get a “snapshot” of work practices), theatre practitioners were asked if they had worked any hours for which they had not been paid.

Just under one-third of respondents said that they had done unpaid work. For this cohort of practitioners, the average amount of unpaid hours had been 13 hours in the given week, with about 10% of all practitioners saying they had worked more than 20 unpaid hours in their last week’s work in their main specialist area. For those who had worked unpaid hours, the average number of unpaid hours was reported as higher by production artists (playwrights, directors and designers) at 16 hours compared to 12 hours for performing artists and technical/managerial practitioners.

In comments to an open survey question, practitioners who worked unpaid hours said this work included extra unpaid hours on their core work tasks, preparation and research work for auditions and performances, promotional work, and ‘helping out’ in setting up or running or a production.

It is possible that the one-third of respondents who said they did unpaid work is an understatement of the amount of unpaid work. This is because another survey question (see Section 8.5.3) shows 80-90% of freelance practitioners are paid on a fixed fee basis. For this reason, practitioners may perceive any hours they work on a production as covered by the fixed fee, even if the number of hours is higher than they originally envisaged, or than would be normal in other occupations.

6.4.3 WORKING ABROAD

In 2004, over two-thirds of practitioners did not work abroad, with 31% having worked abroad (in their main specialist area). Technical/managerial practitioners were less likely to have worked abroad than the other two groups.

For theatre practitioners who worked abroad, the average time spent on this work was 5-6 weeks. However, this was skewed upwards by five of the 195 respondents, who had worked 90 or more days abroad. In fact, half of those people working abroad did so for 18 days or less. This implies that most of those who worked abroad are likely to have done so for one production.

6.5 ATTITUDES TO AMOUNT OF WORK AVAILABLE

Table 6.1 shows that the average theatre practitioner spent 20 weeks in 2004 working in their main specialist theatre area, with the figure lowest for performing artists.

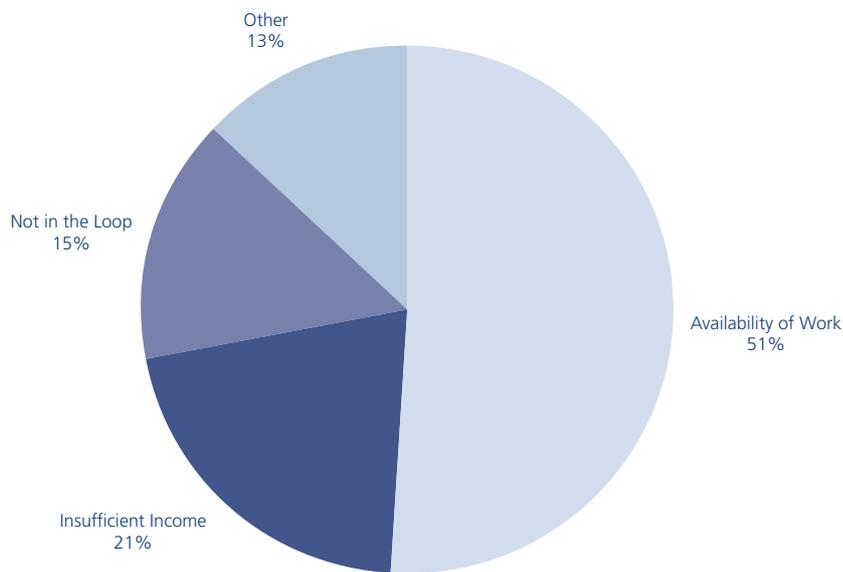
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The survey asked respondents if they would like to spend more time working in their main specialist area. Around 80% of respondents said that they would like to do so, with 20% saying that they would not. Perhaps not surprisingly, the desire for more work in their specialist area was highest amongst performing artists, with 94% saying they would like more acting/dancing work.

Practitioners were asked to identify the biggest factor preventing them from obtaining more work in their specialist area – the answers are shown in Figure 6.6.

FIGURE 6.6: FACTORS PREVENTING PRACTITIONERS WORKING MORE IN MAIN AREA



Based on 148 responses.

Figure 6.6 shows that the reason cited most as preventing practitioners from obtaining more work in their specialist area was a belief that there is simply not enough available theatre work in Ireland. The second reason cited was the low level of income possible from theatre, i.e. this meant people had to take other work to support themselves, which prevented them gaining more theatre work. Being “out of the loop” was cited by one-sixth of practitioners and other reasons mentioned included domestic responsibilities (3%) and being located outside of Dublin (2%).

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Unemployment and Social Welfare

7.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

Chapter 6 showed that, in 2004, the average theatre practitioner experienced approximately 8 weeks of unemployment (although this varied considerably by individual and by practitioner sub-group). Chapter 7 presents further findings on theatre practitioners, unemployment (i.e. not just from theatre work but from all work), and interaction with the social welfare system.

7.2 EXPERIENCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

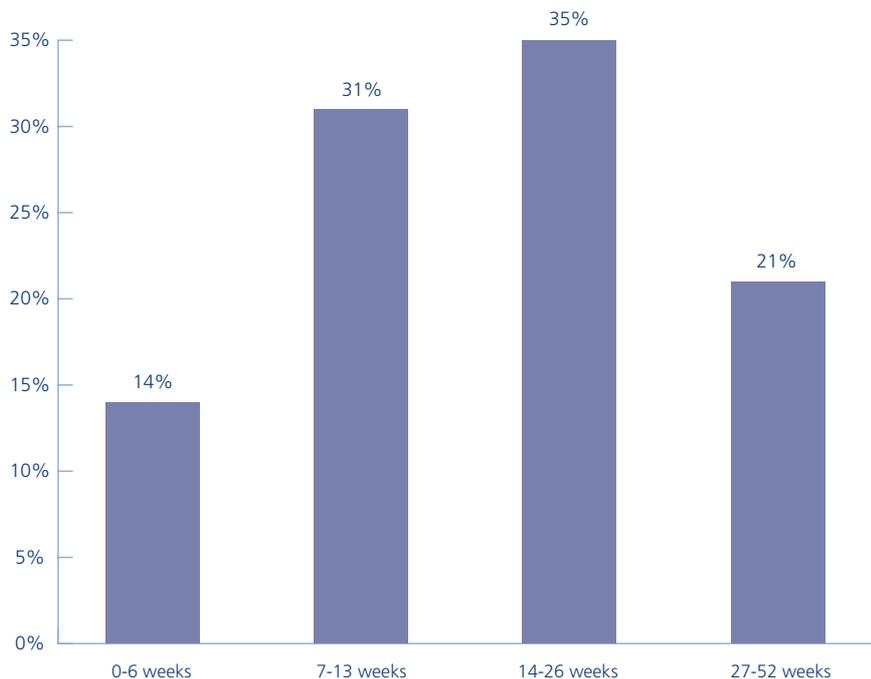
7.2.1 UNEMPLOYMENT BY SUB-GROUP AND DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Some 55% of theatre practitioners said they experienced some unemployment in 2004. The figure varied across the sub-groups of practitioners:

- 64% of performing artists had experienced unemployment in 2004;
- 35% of production artists had experienced unemployment;
- 46% of technical and managerial had experienced unemployment.

For theatre practitioners who experienced unemployment, the average period for which they were unemployed varied considerably, as Figure 7.1 shows.

FIGURE 7.1: DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR PRACTITIONERS WHO EXPERIENCED UNEMPLOYMENT IN 2004



Based on 100 responses

Figure 7.1 shows that, of the practitioners who experienced unemployment in 2004, 56% (equating to 31% of all practitioners) were unemployed for over one-quarter of the year, with 21% (equating to 12% of all practitioners) unemployed for at least half of the year.

Not only was the chance of experiencing unemployment higher for performing artists but the average length of unemployment (for those who experienced unemployment) was also longer, at 19 weeks, compared to 16 weeks for

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production artists and 9 weeks for technical and managerial practitioners. Analysis of the data indicated that the level of education of practitioners did not appear to influence either the likelihood or the average length of unemployment.

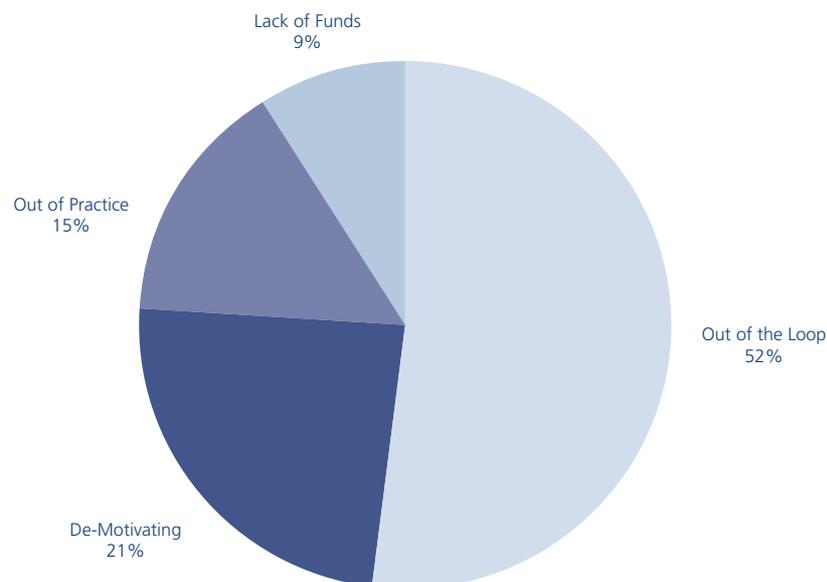
The figure of 55% for practitioners who had experienced unemployment in 2004 is much higher than the national unemployment rate, which the CSO (2005a) records as having varied between 4.3% and 4.7% over the four quarters of 2004. While the proportion of people from the wider labour force which was unemployed at some point in 2004 would have been higher than this, it would have been much less than 55%. The higher experience of unemployment among theatre practitioners is consistent with the international findings of studies by Nichols (2004), Rensujeff and Krahnun (2002) and others cited in Section 2.2.

7.2.2 Unemployment and Career Development

Given the nature of freelance theatre work, the pattern of work will vary over time. Practitioners were asked if they felt the unemployment they experienced had held back the development of their careers. A majority (65%) believed that it had. Performing artists in particular felt this to be the case.

Specific reasons given as to how theatre practitioners feel unemployment most damages their career development are shown in Figure 7.2.

FIGURE 7.2: HOW BEING UNEMPLOYED MOST HINDERS CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Based on 65 responses.

Figure 7.2 shows that the main reason unemployment damages career development (cited by 52% of respondents) is "being out of the loop". Several practitioners commented that "work generates work", partly because work generates critical reviews and raises a practitioner's profile. One explained: "Work breeds work and not working generates no work. You leave the circle of attention." Unemployment reduces visibility and networking opportunities, and the chance of getting new work.

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The next most common reason for how unemployment impacts adversely on career development is its impact on levels of motivation. Spells of unemployment make it harder to motivate oneself, which can affect performances and auditions. One respondent said: "It is self-perpetuating. You don't practice in the same way. You are not on the radar ... it hits your self-confidence. You think - will I ever work again?"

A further two reasons were cited less often. The first was the impact of unemployment on the retention of skills (i.e. skills are honed and improved through regular practice). A further 9% said the main impact of unemployment had been through the associated lack of income. This impacted directly through a lack of money for expenses and career development, and indirectly through the need to take other work, and the consequent lack of time for theatre work.

7.3 INTERACTION WITH SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

7.3.1 UNEMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Of the practitioners who experienced unemployment in 2004, exactly half said that they had applied for unemployment benefit or assistance from the Department of Social and Family Affairs²⁵.

The cohort of people who had experienced unemployment but who had not claimed benefit was asked why they had not done so. Reasons given broke into two groups:

- Almost half of respondents in this cohort said they either knew that they were not eligible for the relevant benefit or they thought that they were not eligible. Some were in receipt of other benefits, and others had partners with regular, steady incomes.
- In the second group, there were two related answers, with practitioners citing a too-high level of bureaucracy in the process of signing on, and saying the length of the periods of unemployment they experience mean it is not worthwhile to apply. These are related and, indeed, a number of practitioners spoke of signing on as being "too much hassle" for short periods.

Linked to the eligibility point above, the data shows that around 70% of married practitioners who were unemployed did not apply for benefits, compared to 42% of non-married practitioners.

7.3.2 PROBLEMS WITH THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

Practitioners were asked if they had had difficulty claiming unemployment benefit because of their status as theatre practitioners. Some 26% of respondents said that they had experienced problems in recent years.

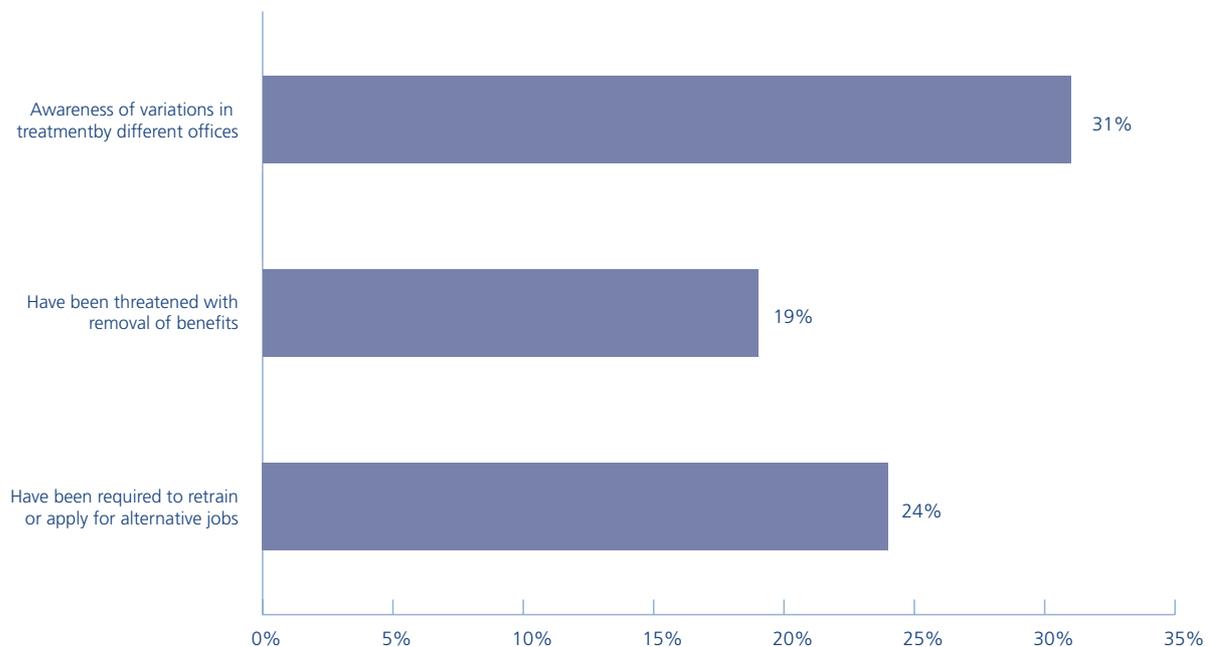
Practitioners were asked about three specific problems that had been mentioned by the theatre sector stakeholder organisations as arising from time-to-time. The extent to which practitioners have experienced these problems in recent years is shown in Figure 7.3.

²⁵This proportion is similar to the 44% of Australian artists that Throsby and Hollister (2003) found did not apply for unemployment assistance when they were unemployed. It also reflects points on eligibility made by McAndrew (2002).

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FIGURE 7.3: EXPERIENCE OF SPECIFIC PROBLEMS WITH SOCIAL WELFARE



Based on 187 responses. Positive responses to three separate questions represented.

Figure 7.3 indicates that the three problems cited by the resource organisations do exist, although in all cases, under one-third of practitioners had encountered these problems in recent years.

7.3.3 SUGGESTIONS ON THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

Based on over 100 responses to an open question inviting suggestions on the social welfare system, nearly 60% felt that the system, and the Department of Social and Family Affairs, do not understand the nature of work in a theatre career. Specifically, they felt the system is not geared towards people who experience multiple periods of unemployment in a year, and are likely to do so every year. One practitioner commented:

“They need a greater understanding of the nature of theatre work. The hours are not straightforward: officially it can be 2-3 hours a night, but lots of preparation is needed. Also, all work you are offered is not necessarily the right work and you might refuse a job because you want to be available for another job in the near future - you’re looking at the bigger picture.”

The level of understanding of the practical challenges of working in theatre is perceived to vary by social welfare office. As such, there was a feeling that more training in relation to the way that theatre practitioners have to work would be useful. Some kind of central unit for the arts at national level (even if only 2-3 people) was also suggested.

On specific issues, around 25% wanted the process of signing on and off to be easier. One person who has to go through a process of being means tested for unemployment benefit said that, by the time the benefits come through, she normally has moved on to her next job. Some 16% believed that, if they are experiencing a period of unemployment, they should not be moved towards non-theatre work and training. One actor said that he was told to

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“get a real job” instead of pursuing work in the theatre. Analysis of the data by sub-group indicated that performing artists complained more on this issue than the other two sub-groups of practitioners.

Several respondents cited the French system of social welfare (see Chapter 2) as a model suited to the work patterns of theatre practitioners. In particular, these practitioners cited the ways they felt this system better recognises the intermittent nature of work in the theatre, and how it allows practitioners to engage in career-related training without a loss of benefits.

It should be noted that there were many respondents who did not have problems with the social welfare system. A number also praised specific aspects of the social welfare system, e.g. two practitioners said that they had had good experiences of the Back to Work Allowance Scheme²⁶.

While the above paragraphs summarise the key points arising from this open question, Table 7.1 lists a number of comments to give a flavour of the responses, and to note other ideas offered by theatre practitioners.

²⁶For details of this scheme, see the website of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, at www.welfare.ie

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TABLE 7.1: SELECTION OF SUGGESTIONS MADE BY THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AS REGARDS POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS IN SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

"The system should help us to find work in linked areas when we are unemployed, e.g. in the community arts"

"It is important that we remain in the loop to get work. So we should not be sent off for a job in a fast food restaurant just to get any kind of work"

"The lack of understanding of our work reflects a wider lack of understanding by the state and by the public of the arts in general. The Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism should take a bigger role in this regard"

"The PRSI system and its implications are difficult to understand and could be explained better"

"There is a lack of relevant FÁS courses to develop skills relevant to theatre work"

"There should be a dedicated officer in each social welfare office who has been trained in the specific issues likely to arise for theatre practitioners"

"There should be a central unit in the social welfare system that deals with theatre work and other artists"

"Officers should be less suspicious of our short-term contract status"

"What I do needs to be recognised as a proper job"

"Just because I appear on TV does not mean I am rich!"

"Don't put pressure on actors – part of the work of an actor is about finding the next job, and we need space to do this"

"Is there some way in which the government could recognise me as an artist, and make the registration process much easier each time?"

"The system can be embarrassing, especially if you are reasonably well-known. Could consultations be more private?"

"Not all theatre practitioners are actors and that needs to be remembered"

"Compared to the 1980s, there is now much more pressure when you are unemployed to take another job due to labour shortages in the economy"

"There is too much duplication and unnecessary information when you claim regularly"

"Social welfare should link more with the Revenue Commissioners – this would help to build understanding of how we work"

Note: Some comments have been edited for clarity and to take out details relating to individual circumstances

Chapter 8

Income of Theatre Practitioners

8.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

Chapter 8 presents the survey findings on the incomes of Irish theatre practitioners. Information was sought from practitioners for the calendar year 2004 on four figures:

- Income from the practitioner's main specialist area of work (Section 9.2) – this is the main source of income from theatre.
- Income earned from all work in the theatre (Section 9.3) – this picks up the fact that some practitioners work in multiple areas in theatre.
- Total personal income, which includes all theatre income, plus other arts or non-arts related income (Section 9.4).
- Level of household income. If a practitioner is living as part of a family unit/couple, this is the total income of the unit. (If a practitioner is simply sharing a residence with others, then the 'household' income figure remains that of the theatre practitioner). (Section 9.6)

Section 8.5 compares the 2004 income data collected with the information collected on work patterns and calculates estimated weekly theatre wages earned by practitioners. It also compares the total personal incomes of theatre practitioners with incomes earned by workers in other sectors of the economy.

Gathering income data can be difficult in socio-economic surveys as people can be reluctant to give income data. Perhaps because of the publicity given to this survey by the Arts Council and by the theatre/dance resource organisations, or the guarantees of confidentiality provided, or the nature of the people in the sector, the response rates to these questions were very high, with 191 out of 195 survey respondents providing income information.

Chapter 8 presents "mean income" and "median income" data for practitioners:

- The "mean income" is what is normally considered as the "average" figure, i.e. it adds together the income of all the theatre practitioners and divides that figure by the total number of practitioners;
- The "median income" level is the point where 50% of theatre practitioners earned less than this figure (say, in 2004) and 50% of practitioners earned more than this figure.

The two figures differ for practitioners as the distribution of theatre incomes is not evenly spread around the mean (as is shown below). In fact, the survey indicates that the mean is "pulled upwards" by a proportion of theatre practitioners who earn relatively high salaries. The median figures are less than the mean figures, i.e. more than 50% of practitioners in fact earn less than the mean income figures.

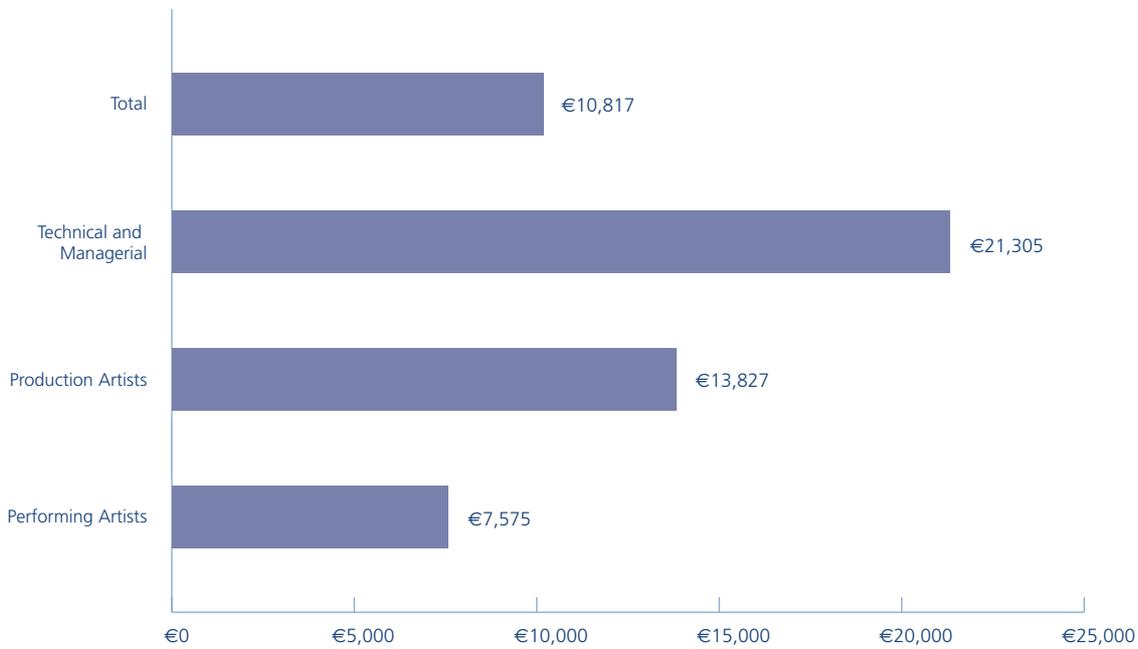
8.2 INCOME FROM MAIN SPECIALIST AREA IN THEATRE

The average income of a theatre practitioner from their main specialist area in 2004 was €10,817. Average income levels by sub-group of practitioner are shown below.

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Income of Theatre Practitioners

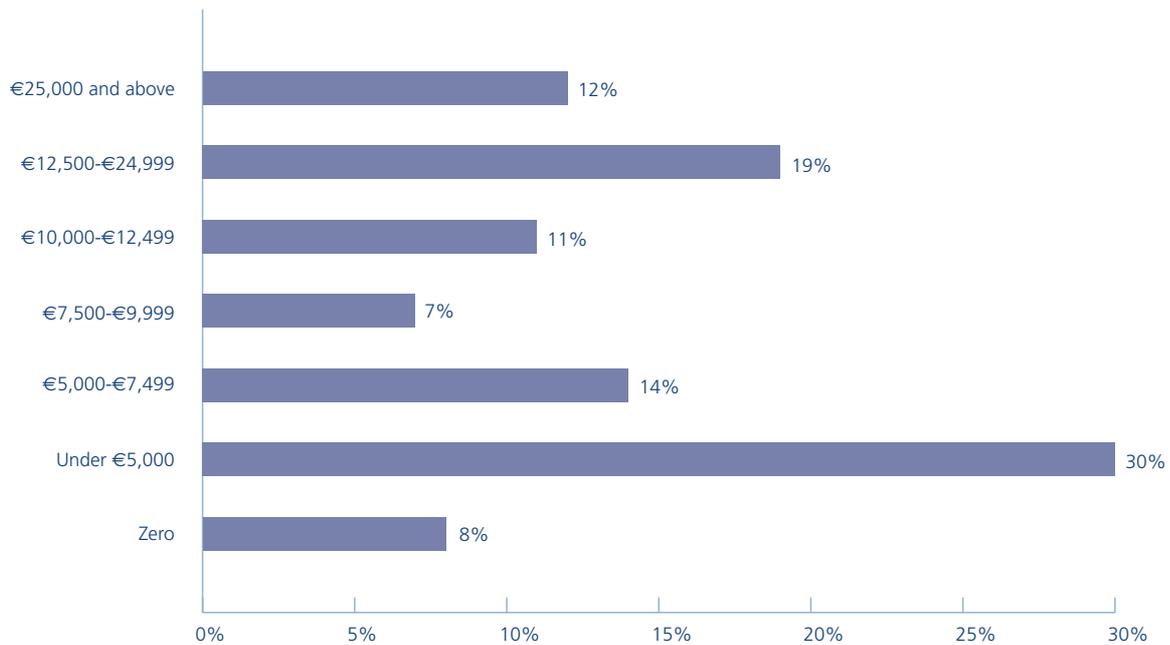
FIGURE 8.1: GROSS INCOMES OF PRACTITIONERS - MAIN SPECIALIST AREA (2004)



Based on 191 responses

While the average figure for all theatre practitioners was €10,817, Figure 8.2 shows that this varied considerably by individual practitioner, and 52% of practitioners actually earned under €7,500 from their main specialist area in 2004.

FIGURE 8.2: DISTRIBUTION OF GROSS INCOMES OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS FROM MAIN SPECIALIST AREA (2004)



Based on 191 responses

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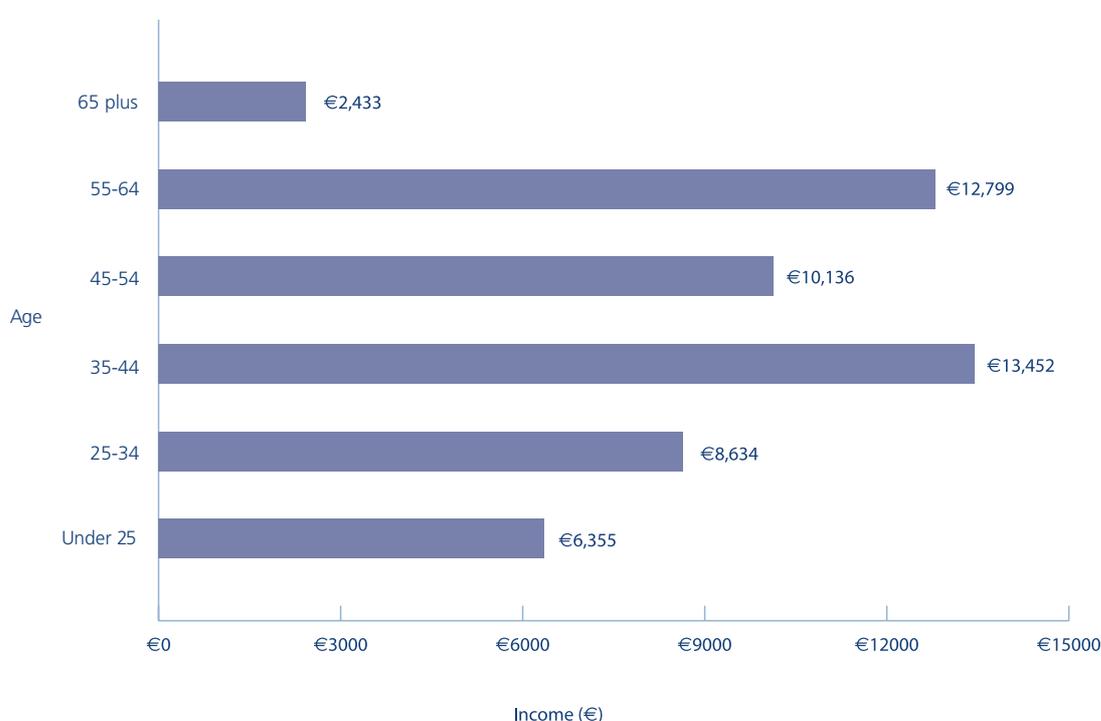
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Figure 8.2 shows that 8% of practitioners earned no income from their main specialist area in 2004, and a further 30% earned below €5,000 in their main specialist area. On the other hand, one in eight practitioners (12%) earned over €25,000 from their main specialist area in 2004.

The maximum income from main specialist area reported in the survey was €70,000 and four practitioners had an income at or above €45,000. These higher incomes increased the average income, and analysis of the data shows that 50% of all practitioners earned less than €7,200. This includes those people at the lowest levels of income, with 25 of the 191 respondents reporting 2004 incomes from their main specialist area of under €1,000.

Figure 8.3 shows that the practitioners reported that earnings are highest between ages 35-44, tend to fall somewhat from 45-54 and then increase again from 55-64. This may link to a lack of available roles for people in their 40s and 50s, and/or varying work patterns as people have families.

Figure 8.3: Income from Main Specialist Area (2004) and Age of Theatre Practitioners



Based on 191 Responses

Analysis of income from main specialist area by gender showed that the average male income reported was €12,117, and the average female income reported was €9,160. This puts female incomes 76% of male incomes. This compares to a ratio of 83% reported by the CSO (2004c) for female to male earnings in the wider economy²⁷.

Analysis of theatre practitioner income from main specialist area by level of education did not show a relationship between level of education and average earnings. Indeed, practitioners having only a secondary education were showing as somewhat higher in terms of income. This is interpreted as their being more likely to be older and more experienced practitioners (see below) and also their being perhaps more likely to work in technical areas. The data shows a relationship between experience in theatre and income, as shown in Figure 8.4.

²⁷ The wider labour force figure is adjusted to take account of the different hours worked by men and women. This survey did not indicate a difference in the number of weeks worked by males and females in their main specialist area, but did not gather data on total hours worked in 2004.

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Income of Theatre Practitioners

FIGURE 8.4: INCOME FROM MAIN SPECIALIST AREA (2004) AND YEARS WORKED IN THEATRE



Based on 189 Respondents

Income levels tend to increase over time, with the highest levels between 15-19 years and between 25-29 years, reflecting the analysis in relation to income and age above. There is a fall after a practitioner has spent over 30 years in theatre - this may reflect decisions by some practitioners to work less after a certain age.

8.3 INCOME FROM ALL WORK IN THEATRE

8.3.1 INCOME FROM ALL THEATRE WORK IN 2004

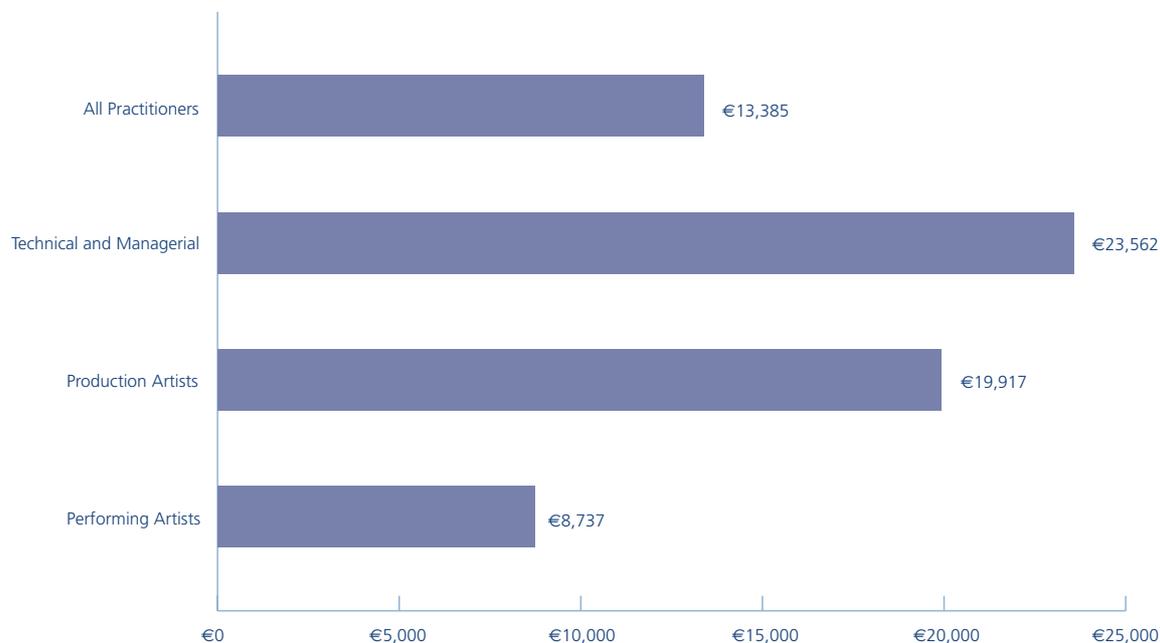
As seen in Chapter 7, in 2004, the average theatre practitioner worked for 20 weeks in his/her main specialist area, and a further five weeks in other theatre work. However, the figure for "other theatre work" rose to 9.5 weeks for one sub-group, namely production artists.

Including income gained from other theatre work, i.e. estimating figures for income from all work in theatre, shows that the average income figure rises by €2,568 to €13,385. Performing artists remain the lowest earners of the three groups.

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Income of Theatre Practitioners

FIGURE 8.5: GROSS INCOME FROM ALL WORK IN THEATRE (2004)



Based on 193 responses

The main difference between Figures 8.1 and 8.5 is that the gap closes between the production artists and the technical/managerial practitioners.

8.3.2 COMPARISON OF INCOME FROM ALL THEATRE WORK IN 2004 WITH 2002/3

As theatre income is subject to volatility, practitioners were asked to recall their income levels from all theatre work for the two previous years, i.e. 2003 and 2002. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 show the mean data and median data for income from all work in theatre for the years 2002-2004.

Table 8.1 shows that while mean salary levels increased over the period for production artists and technical and managerial practitioners, earnings of performing artists stayed at around the same level, increasing from 2002 to 2003 but appearing to fall back to below the 2002 level in 2004.

TABLE 8.1: GROSS THEATRE INCOME (MEAN DATA) FOR ALL THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND BY SUB-GROUP, 2002-2004

	Performing Artists	Production Artists	Technical and Managerial	Total
2004	€8,737	€19,917	€23,562	€13,385
2003	€9,528	€17,079	€21,052	€12,953
2002	€9,150	€16,302	€18,043	€12,066

Table 8.1 shows that average salaries increased year-on-year over the period, perhaps reflecting general wage inflation in the economy and some increased funding of the sector over the period, especially in 2004.

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Income of Theatre Practitioners

The figures in Table 8.2 for median data are somewhat lower than the mean data in Table 8.1. While the mean income for all theatre practitioners in 2004 was €13,385, the distribution of this income was such that 50% of respondents are estimated to have earned under €10,000 in 2004.

TABLE 8.2: GROSS THEATRE INCOME (MEDIAN DATA) FOR ALL THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AND BY SUB-GROUP, 2002-2004

	Performing Artists	Production Artists	Technical and Managerial	Total
2004	€7,000	€18,000	€20,400	€10,000
2003	€8,650	€16,800	€17,500	€10,000
2002	€7,955	€13,900	€17,500	€9,071

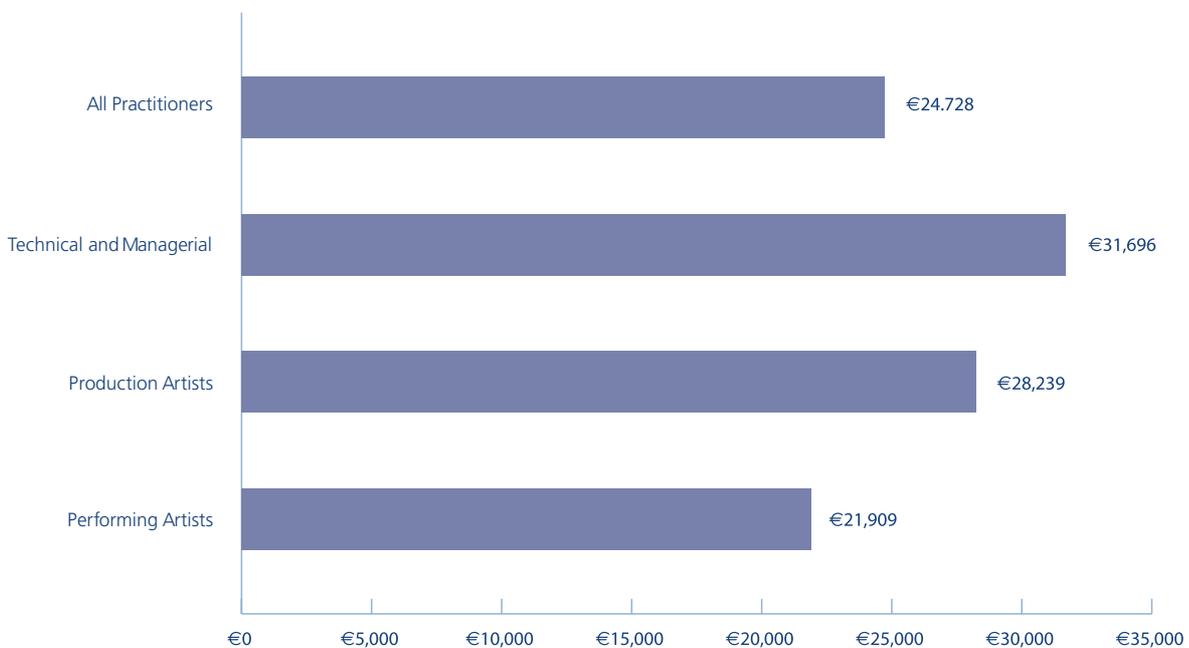
Table 8.2 shows the same general trend as Table 8.1, with a drift upwards in the median income levels for production artists and technical/managerial practitioners between 2002 and 2004, but with performing artists not experiencing an increase and actually reporting a lower figure for 2004 than for 2002.

8.4 TOTAL PERSONAL INCOME LEVELS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

Given that many theatre practitioners have non-theatre jobs, or receive social welfare benefits, for part of the year, theatre practitioners were asked about their total personal incomes from all sources, within and outside theatre.

Taking into account all sources of personal income, the mean income for theatre practitioners for 2004 rises from €13,385 (mean income from theatre) to €24,728 (mean income from all sources), as shown in Figure 8.6.

FIGURE 8.6: MEAN LEVELS OF GROSS PERSONAL INCOME OF THEATRE PROFESSIONALS



Based on 189 responses

Chapter 8

Income of Theatre Practitioners

Figure 8.6 shows the importance of sources of income from outside theatre to all Irish theatre practitioners. For all sub-groups, there is a sizeable step up from the figures for total theatre income to total personal incomes. This is especially the case for the performing artists who have the biggest increase when non-theatre income is included, both in absolute terms and in percentage terms.

To some extent, the above reflects the data from Chapter 6 in relation to work patterns. This data showed that performance artists are more likely than the other two sub-groups to work in “Arts outside theatre” and in “Non-arts related work”. They were also more likely to be unemployed (and social welfare income was also included in the question on total personal income). It confirms that while, on average, people in the production artist and technical/managerial groups have work from theatre as their main source of work and income, but supplement this through other work, for performing artists (actors and dancers), less than half of their work and income (for the average practitioner) comes from theatre, with a strong reliance on non-theatre work and income.

The last point also reflects the data from Chapter 6 on the importance of film, TV, radio and media/commercial work to performing artists.

8.5 WEEKLY WAGES, COMPARISON TO OTHER SECTORS AND PAYMENT METHODS

8.5.1 WEEKLY WAGE LEVELS FOR THEATRE WORK

From the mean income data gathered from respondents, it was possible to estimate an average weekly wage for work undertaken in the sector in 2004. This was done by comparing the average income gained from the practitioner’s main specialist area with the average number of weeks worked in the practitioner’s main specialist area (discussed in Chapter 6). The figures are therefore built up from two estimates made by the practitioner, at least one being from memory, so the figures should be taken as indicative of the actual figures involved. The figures also do not take account of the fact that the number of hours worked in an average week’s work may vary across the three groups.

When undertaken at an overall level, the data suggests an average weekly wage from a theatre practitioner’s main specialist area in 2004 of €513. The analysis estimates, for work in their main specialist area:

- Average weekly wage for a performing artist in 2004: €456
- Average weekly wage for a production artist in 2004: €546
- Average weekly wage for a technical/managerial practitioner in 2004: €713.

The *minimum* weekly wage for theatre recommended by Irish Actors Equity in 2004 was €381.

An average personal weekly (mean) income for theatre practitioners from all sources of income for 2004 could also be calculated. This divides the total figures for personal income shown in Figure 8.6 by 52.1. This figure includes income from social welfare, as well as covering weeks in the year when the practitioner received no income. As such, it shows *average income per week*, rather than a wage for employment.

For theatre practitioners, the average personal weekly income in 2004 was €475. For the sub-groups, the average weekly income, covering all sources of income, was:

- Average weekly income for a performing artist in 2004: €421
- Average weekly income for a production artist in 2004: €542
- Average weekly income for a technical/managerial practitioner in 2004: €608

8.5.2 COMPARISON WITH WAGE LEVELS IN OTHER SECTORS

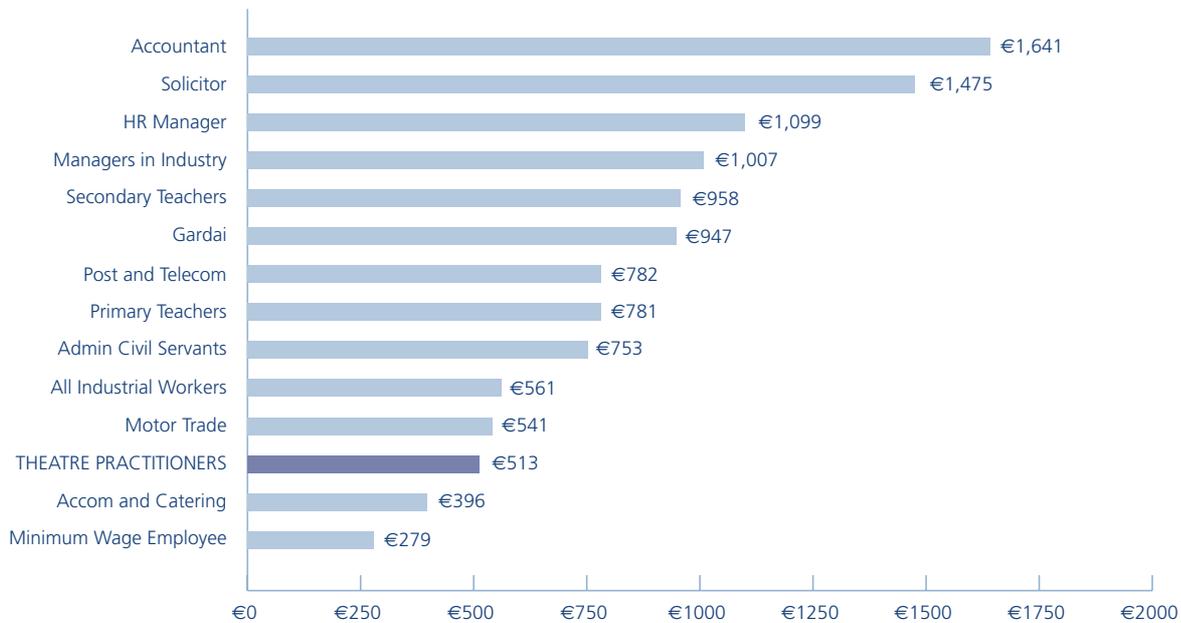
In comparing with other sectors, the figures used are those for the work undertaken by a practitioner in his/her main specialist area. As CSO figures for incomes in different sectors are calculated by week, the figures for weekly wages are used.

Chapter 8

Income of Theatre Practitioners

Figure 8.7 shows the average weekly wage for theatre practitioners, and for a range of other workers in the economy.

FIGURE 8.7: COMPARISON OF THEATRE PRACTITIONER AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE (WORK IN MAIN AREA) WITH OTHER WORKERS IN THE ECONOMY, 2004



Note: Figure for accountant is the average for an accountant in the Leinster area who qualified between 1995 and 1999 and is working in industry and commerce. Figure for solicitor is the average for a solicitor working in practice in Dublin with seven years post-qualification experience

Source: Leinster Society of Chartered Accountants (2004); HRM Recruitment Group (2004); CIPD/Premier Group (2004); CSO (2005b); CSO (2005c); CSO (2005d); CSO (2005e)

Figure 8.7 shows that the average weekly wage for theatre practitioners in 2004, at €513, was 9% lower than the average industrial wage, at €561. It also shows that the average wage for a theatre practitioner, working in his/her main specialist area, is lower than the wages earned in many other sectors of the economy.

Chapter 5 discussed the levels of education and training of Irish theatre practitioners. Figure 5.5 showed that 73% have obtained a third level qualification compared to 25% of the overall population. Figure 8.7 suggests that these levels of education do not lead to the kind of returns that workers in other sectors receive.

The figure of €513 used in Figure 8.7 for theatre practitioners relates to the average mean income gained from work in a practitioner's main specialist area. Chapter 6 has shown that this accounts for only part of the year for the average theatre practitioner and data in the previous section shows that the average weekly income over a year from all sources for a theatre practitioner is less than the average gained from his/her main specialist area. The gap between the weekly wages of theatre practitioners and other workers, as shown in Figure 8.7, may therefore understate the gap in average income between theatre practitioners and other workers.

Figure 8.7 shows the average figure for all theatre practitioners. As performing artists earn a lower average weekly wage than the other two sub-groups, and work for fewer weeks of the year, Figure 8.7 may doubly understate the gap between performing artists and other workers.

Chapter 8

Income of Theatre Practitioners

The data in Figure 8.7 relates to the mean income figures. As was seen earlier in this chapter, the median income figure for theatre practitioners is lower than the mean figure – therefore, using the median income figure, the gap with other workers is wider than that indicated in Figure 8.7.

The findings presented above reflect those of previous international studies, as cited in Chapter 2. For example, a study of Canadian artists by Hill Strategies Research (2004) found that average earnings of artists were under 75% of the level of those in the overall labour force and were in the lowest quartile of professional earnings, despite higher than average levels of education.

8.5.3 METHODS OF PAYMENT FOR THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

Theatre practitioners were asked how they received payment for their work, when they work in their main specialist area. This was asked in relation to the last week for which they had worked in their main specialist area.

The vast majority (86%) of respondents were paid an agreed fixed fee. All other payment options were minor compared to this²⁸:

- 10% received a share of the profits;
- 2% received royalties;
- 8-9% received payments in kind or other forms of payment;
- One person received a share of the box office take.

As mentioned in Chapter 7, the prevalence of fixed fee arrangements may be a factor leading to practitioners undertaking extra unpaid work on productions.

8.6 LEVELS OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

8.6.1 LEVELS OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

An issue that arises from the international literature is the role of the income of an artist's partner or family in allowing an artist to maintain his or her career. For example, Throsby and Hollister (2003) found that over half of the artists in their Australian survey that lived with a partner regarded that person's income as quite or very important in sustaining their creative work.

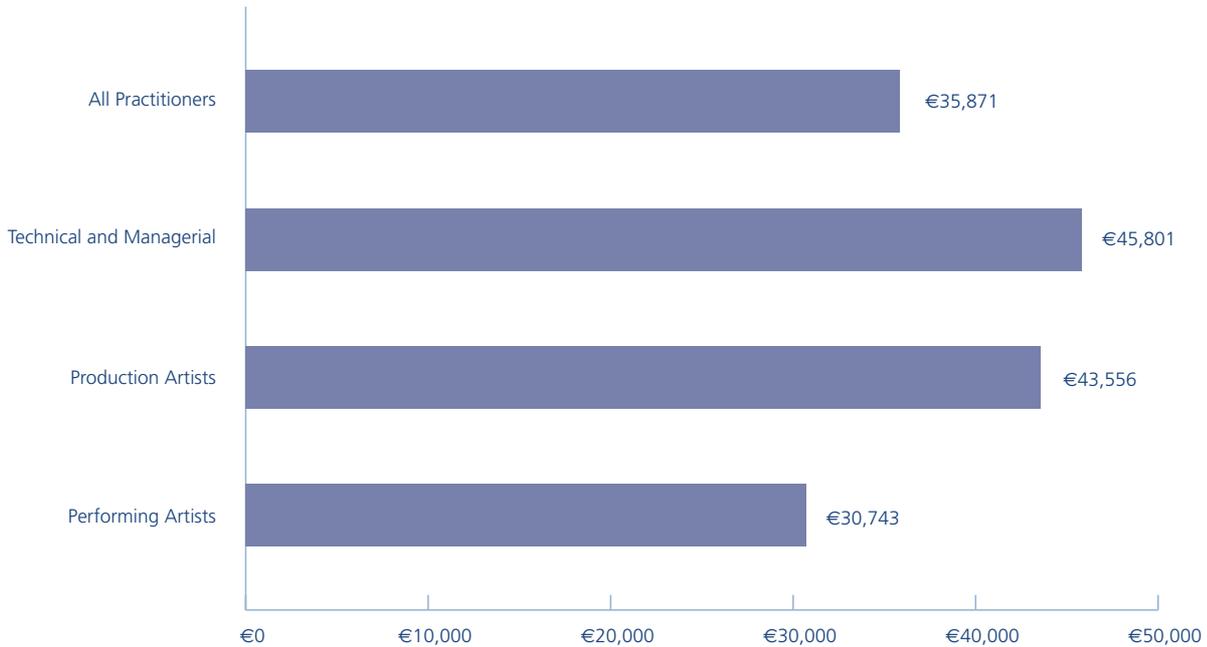
Figure 8.8 shows that the average level of household income for a theatre practitioner in Ireland in 2004 was just under €35,900.

²⁸ Answers total to more than 100% as practitioners could receive more than one form of payment

Chapter 8

Income of Theatre Practitioners

FIGURE 8.8: MEAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS



Based on 191 responses

Some 48% of respondents were the sole earners in their households. Of the 52% who had another earner or earners in their household, just under two-thirds (65%) said the other earner(s) provided the household with a steady or stable income. These figures combined mean that 34% of theatre practitioners have another steady income coming into the household.

Of the 34% of practitioners with another steady income coming into the household, just under half (15%) said that they could not survive in their career as a theatre practitioner without this second steady income. This suggests that one in seven Irish theatre practitioners could not stay in theatre without financial help from the incomes of their partners and families. This represents a subsidy by the partners and families of these theatre practitioners to support their ongoing theatre work.

The reliance on partners/family was most evident for the sub-groups of performing artists and production artists.

8.6.2 NATIONAL COMPARISON OF LEVELS OF HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Based on the data in Figure 8.8, the average household weekly income for theatre practitioners is 689 (€35,871 divided by 52.1 weeks).

It is possible to compare the gross household income of theatre practitioners to that of the overall Irish population using the EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Data from that survey for 2003 (data therefore not directly comparable to the 2004 data for theatre practitioner households) shows that average household gross income in Ireland during 2003 was €883 per week (CSO, 2005f). Even given the one year difference, this indicates that the average household gross income for the wider population was 28% higher than the average theatre practitioner household income²⁹.

²⁹ These different figures do not adjust for the different number of household members.

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Income of Theatre Practitioners

8.7 SUMMARY OF KEY DATA ON THEATRE PRACTITIONER INCOMES

Chapter 8 has presented a number of figures on income for theatre practitioners. A summary of the mean income figures for 2004, for all theatre practitioners and for the three sub-groups, is provided in Table 8.3.

TABLE 8.3: MEAN INCOME LEVELS OF IRISH THEATRE PRACTITIONERS IN 2004

	Overall	Performing Artists	Production Artists	Technical and Managerial
Income from Main Specialist Area	€10,817	€7,575	€13,827	€21,305
Income from all Theatre Work	€13,385	€8,737	€19,917	€23,562
Total Personal Income from all Sources	€24,728	€21,909	€28,239	€31,696
Household Income	€35,871	€30,743	€43,556	€45,801

Due to the distribution of the income data for theatre practitioners, the mean income data differs from the median income data (the level below which 50% of the population is estimated to fall). The median data for 2004 is shown in Table 8.4.

TABLE 8.4: MEDIAN INCOME LEVELS OF IRISH THEATRE PRACTITIONERS IN 2004

	Overall	Performing Artists	Production Artists	Technical and Managerial
Income from Main Specialist Area	€7,200	€5,500	€10,500	€19,675
Income from all Theatre Work	€10,000	€7,000	€18,000	€20,400
Total Personal Income from all Sources	€22,000	€20,000	€25,800	€29,750
Household Income	€30,000	€26,900	€40,000	€38,000

Table 8.3 shows that the mean income gained by all theatre practitioners in their main specialist area in 2004 was €10,800. Table 8.4 indicates that, in 2004, 50% of all theatre practitioners are estimated to have earned less than €7,200 from work in their main specialist area.

Chapter 9

Other Measures of Standard of Living

9.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

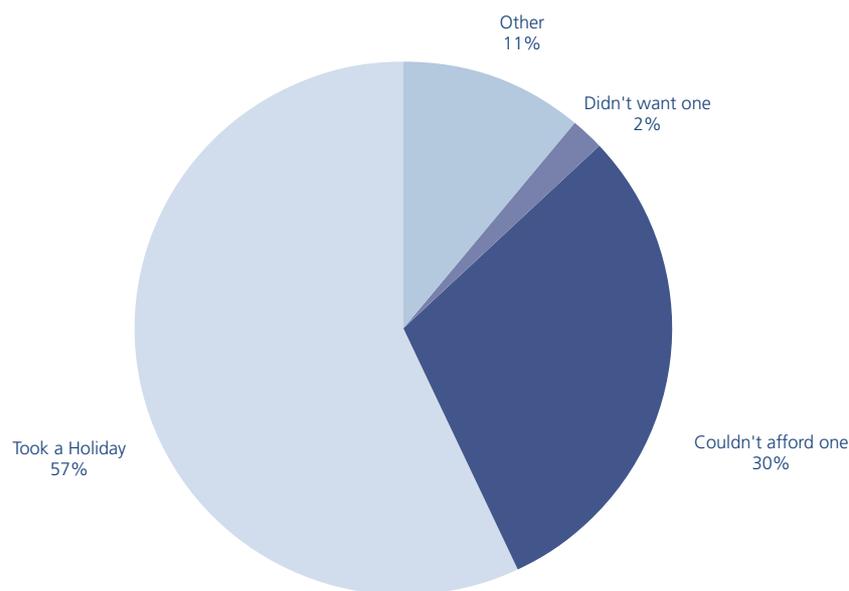
Chapter 9 presents data on a number of further indicators of the standard of living of theatre practitioners. These supplement the income data in Chapter 8.

Chapter 9 draws on questions used in the *Living in Ireland Survey*, which is part of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP). This EU-wide project deals with the social situation, financial circumstances and living standards of individuals and households. Use of these questions allowed for comparison of the answers of theatre practitioners with the equivalent answers from the national population.

9.2 TAKING OF HOLIDAYS

Theatre practitioners were asked if they took a holiday away from home in 2004 (not including holidays staying in the home of a relative). Figure 9.1 shows that 57% of respondents indicated that they took such a holiday in 2004.

FIGURE 9.1: HOLIDAYS FOR THEATRE PRACTITIONERS IN 2004



Bases on 195 responses

Over 40% of theatre practitioners did not take a holiday, with the main reason being that they could not afford one³⁰. (The main reason under "Other" was lack of time.) This figure of 40% compares to 23% of the general population who didn't take a holiday according to the last equivalent data.³¹

³⁰ This links to the earlier data presented on work patterns and also the fact that many Irish theatre production companies are not "Equity companies" and have no commitment to provide holiday pay.

³¹ Whelan et al (2003).

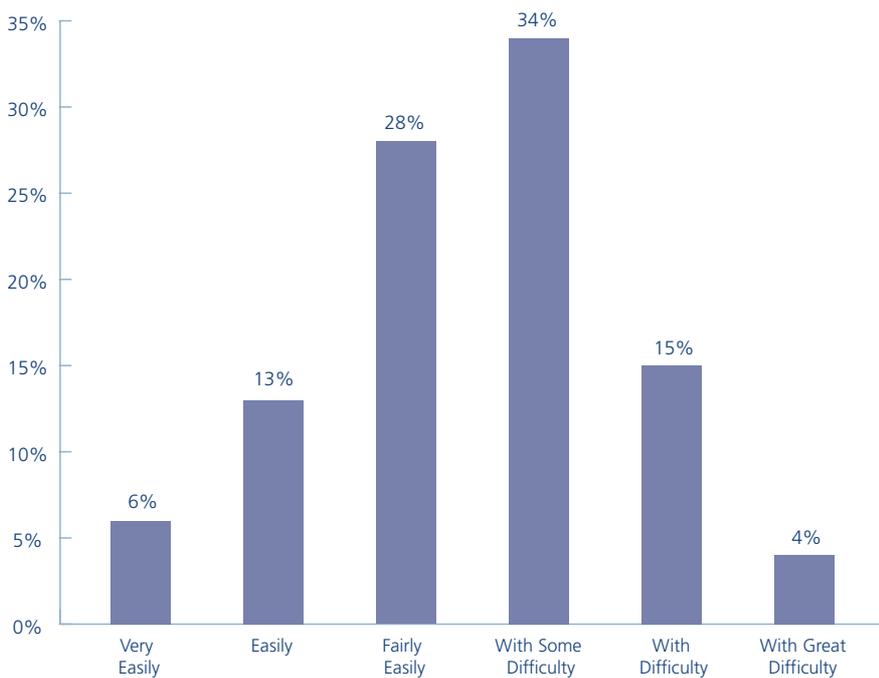
Chapter 9

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9.3 FINANCIAL WELL-BEING OF HOUSEHOLD

Practitioners were asked several questions about their household's "financial well-being". They were asked whether, in relation to their household's total monthly income, the household finds it easy or difficult to "make ends meet". The answers to this subjective question are shown below.

FIGURE 9.2: PERCEIVED EASE OR DIFFICULTY FOR HOUSEHOLD IN MAKING ENDS MEET



Based on 195 respondents

Figure 9.2 indicates that just over half of the respondents' households felt they had some level of difficulty 'making ends meet' each month. This was fairly consistent across the three groups of practitioners.

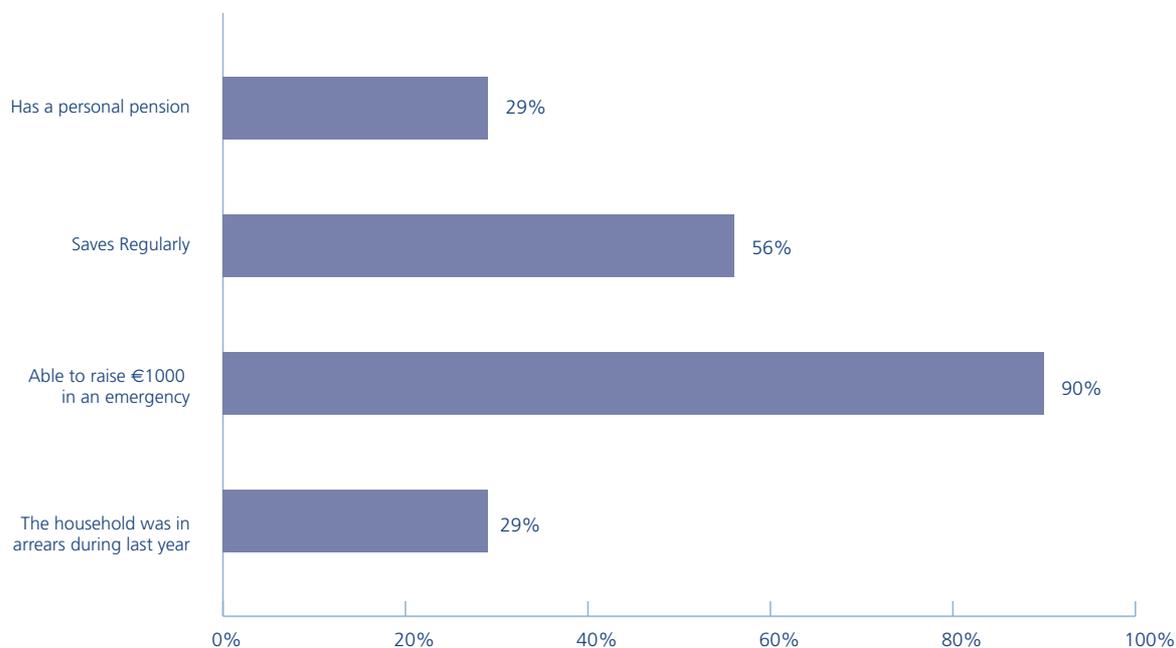
Practitioners were asked four further specific questions:

- "Do you have a personal pension plan?"
- "Do you regularly save so that you have funds available for rainy days or emergencies?"
- "If an emergency occurred and you needed to raise 1,000, could you do so?"
- "Has your household been in arrears at any time during the last year, i.e. unable to pay rent/mortgage/electricity/gas?"

Chapter 9

Other Measures of Standard of Living

FIGURE 9.3: INDICATORS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONER HOUSEHOLDS' STANDARD OF LIVING



Based on 195 responses

Over half of respondents say they *save regularly*, perhaps explained by the fact that practitioners need to be prepared for income fluctuations throughout the year. Some 90% could raise €1,000 in an emergency (including through borrowing it), although this implies that 10% of practitioners have limited resources to fall back on. And the 29% who *had been in arrears* in the past year on a household bill compares to a figure of 6% for the wider population.

Figure 9.3 indicates that 29% of respondents had a *personal pension plan*. The figures for the three sub-groups of practitioners were between 27% and 32% indicating a lack of pension provision by all of the sub-groups of practitioners. This may relate to the low levels of income generated by theatre practitioners (relative to many other workers) or to the fluctuating and unpredictable nature of this income, which may make planning for regular contributions difficult. It may also be due to a lack of focus on the issue by theatre practitioners.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs (2005) estimated that, in the first quarter of 2004, 52% of the population had a private or occupational pension plan.

As a further indication of standard of living, theatre practitioners were asked if they individually had, or if they shared, a *Special Savings Incentive Scheme (SSIA)*³².

The responses indicated that 51% of respondents either had their own, or shared, an SSIA account, with 49% not having an SSIA account.

There were approximately 1.1m SSIA accounts in Ireland at end-2004³³. As this figure would cover both households and individuals who have SSIA's, it is not possible to directly compare the proportion of theatre practitioners with SSIA accounts with the proportion in the wider population.

³² SSIA's were introduced as a once-off measure by the Irish government in 2001 and reward savers with a 25% bonus on monthly savings, provided savings are not withdrawn for a period of five years. Once an account has been opened, monthly amounts saved can vary from €0 to €254.

³³ Data on SSIA's at national level supplied by Department of Finance (2005)

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Other Measures of Standard of Living

For those practitioners who had an SSIA account (98 responses):

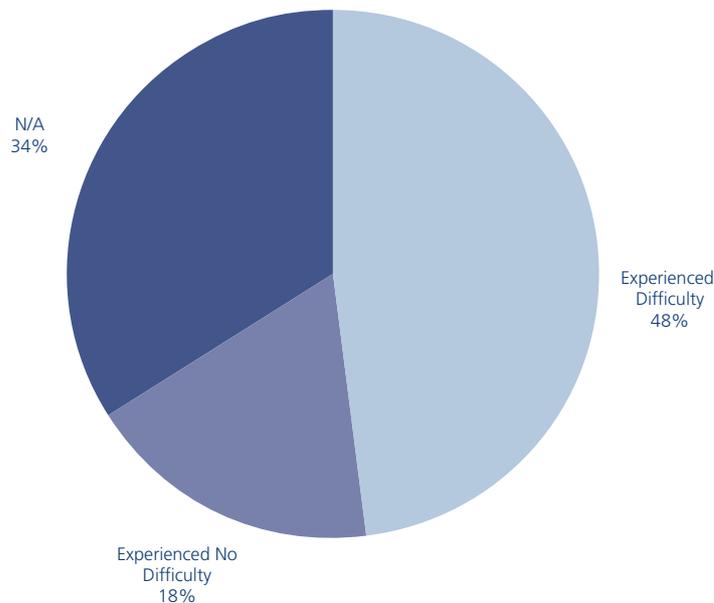
- 39% saved between €0 and €99 per month;
- 19% saved between €100 and €253 per month;
- 40% saved the maximum monthly amount of €254;
- 2% were unsure how much they saved monthly.

9.3 MORTGAGES AND CAR INSURANCE

9.3.1 BANK LOANS AND MORTGAGES

Due to their unstable incomes and irregular work patterns, the theatre sector stakeholder organisations suggested that practitioners can find it difficult to meet the criteria of a bank or building society to get a loan or mortgage. The survey asked practitioners if they had experienced such difficulties.

FIGURE 9.4: THEATRE PRACTITIONER EXPERIENCE OF OBTAINING BANK LOAN/MORTGAGE



Based on 195 responses

In elaborating on the problems faced, many practitioners cited the problems caused by the inherent theatre practitioner characteristics of unstable income and freelance status. One practitioner noted: "As employment is not constant, even though you may have had a good year this year, the previous year may not have been good and lending criteria look back over a few years." Many practitioners said they used their non-arts employment as their stated primary job to get the loan and did not mention their work in theatre, with some having stopped work in the theatre for a period to gain a mortgage. Others relied on career information supplied by their spouse or partner. One person reported that even getting a mortgage as part of a local authority affordable housing scheme had been difficult.

The Irish Mortgage Council said that, as far as it is aware, lenders do not take into account a person's occupation in providing a mortgage but look at each individual application on its merits. However, it is standard to ask an applicant if he or she is in full-time or part-time employment, and whether this employment is permanent or temporary. It is also common to seek documentation such as pay slips for several months, and perhaps a letter from a person's employer

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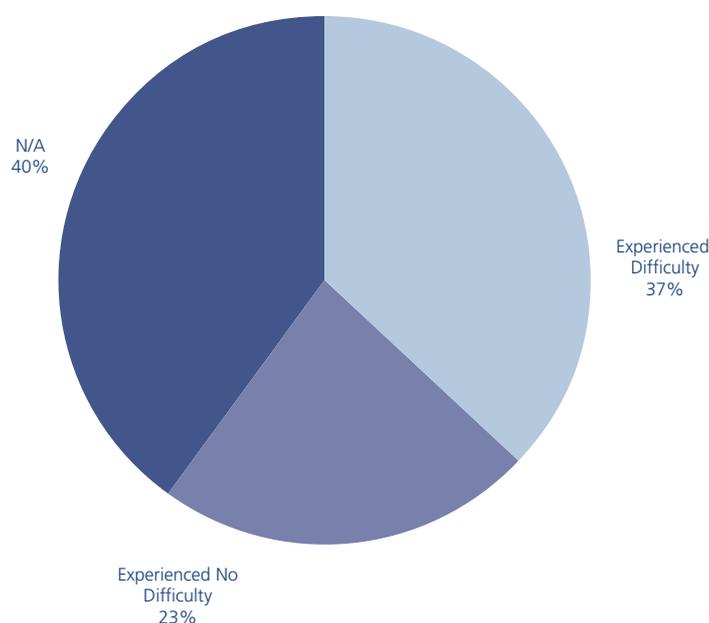
Other Measures of Standard of Living

on their employment status. The Irish Mortgage Council pointed out that lending institutions are themselves guided by prudential standards set down by the Central Bank, the aim being to avoid giving mortgages to people who are likely to have trouble repaying them.

9.3.2 CAR INSURANCE

Another issue suggested by the theatre/dance sector resource organisations relates to difficulties that can be experienced in relation to obtaining car insurance and practitioners were also asked about difficulty in this regard.

FIGURE 9.5: THEATRE PRACTITIONER EXPERIENCE OF OBTAINING CAR INSURANCE



Based on 194 responses

The reasons reported in the survey by theatre practitioners for having problems included the inherent job requirement of being on the road at night, with insurance companies believing there is an increased likelihood that a practitioner is tired, or has been drinking, or would meet other people on the road who have been drinking. Some companies also said that the carrying of equipment, or use of the car for touring, led to an increased premium. As with the mortgage situation, many practitioners said that they used their other work (e.g. as teachers) to obtain a lower premium, although this is not an option for all practitioners.

According to the Irish Insurance Federation, car insurance companies can offer higher premiums on the basis of occupation if this is backed up by statistics showing that some occupations are more likely to have accidents. If a car is used to carry work equipment (e.g. plumbers, electricians or perhaps theatre producers or technicians), then this moves an applicant's car from "Class 1" use (social/domestic/pleasure) to a "Class 2" use (for the purpose of one's business)³⁴ and will increase the premium. Also, some insurance companies will increase a premium for workers who drive late at night, such as bar or hotel workers, or theatre practitioners. There is considerable discretion at the level of the individual insurance company on such issues. However, as car insurance is compulsory, the Irish Insurance Federation is there to help anybody having difficulty getting insurance. They will also take individual cases up with insurance companies although they advise people firstly to query the issue directly with the insurance company involved.

³⁴ "Class 3" use covers commercial travellers

Chapter 10

Theatre Practitioners and the Tax System

10.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

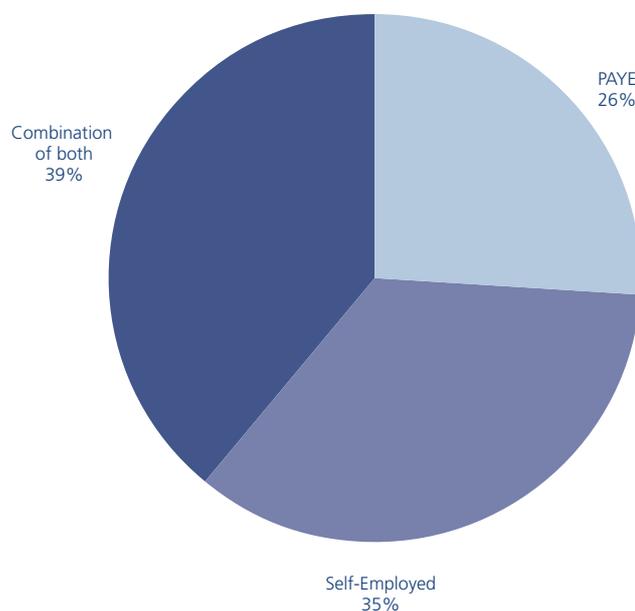
Chapter 2 showed that issues arising from the interaction of the artist with the tax system have been discussed in several international studies³⁵. Issues arising result, for example, from the often erratic nature of artists' work and income, both in a given year and between different years, and from the varying types of employment status of theatre practitioners, which may then change over time. In Ireland, "income smoothing", the spreading of income over several years for the purposes of taxation, is not part of the tax system for theatre practitioners. Freelance practitioners may pay tax as they go, if production companies pay them on a PAYE basis, or they may pay any tax due on their income in the following year, accompanied by a completed tax return, or some combination of these options. While a preliminary tax payment may have been made, payment the following year can create issues if the money for this tax liability needs to be put aside, given the uncertain nature of theatre work.

In this context, Chapter 10 presents responses to a number of questions relating to theatre practitioners, taxation and interaction with the Revenue Commissioners.

10.2 TAX STATUS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

The theatre practitioners were first asked about how they are registered for tax, and the responses are shown in Figure 10.1.

FIGURE 10.1: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS FOR TAX PURPOSES



Based on 194 responses

Figure 10.1 shows that 26% of practitioners surveyed were registered under the PAYE (Pay as You Earn) system of taxation, with some 35% self-employed. A larger group (39%) were registered for tax purposes as a combination of employee and self-employed ('Schedule D' workers in the tax system). The dual status practitioners exist as people will work as a PAYE employee for a particular production, but then proceed to other freelance work where they are effectively self-employed (i.e. their tax responsibilities are their own).

³⁵ See for example the international review of the tax and benefits systems by Mc Andrew (2002).

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Theatre Practitioners and the Tax System

Looking across the three sub-groups of practitioners, performing artists were somewhat more likely to be dual status, with nearly half of the group in this category. For production artists, 55% were registered as self-employed, with the remainder split fairly evenly between employees or dual status. Some 40% of technical and managerial practitioners were self-employed, with 36% as PAYE employees.

Analysis of tax status by age reveals a distinct pattern as Table 10.1 shows.

Age of Practitioners	PAYE	Self-Employed	Combination	Total
Under 34	40	32	28	100
35-44	25	33	42	100
Over 45	12	42	46	100
TOTAL	26	35	39	100

Table 10.1 shows that the older a theatre practitioner is, the more likely they are to have a tax status allowing them to work both as PAYE workers and as self-employed practitioners (the "Schedule D" status). The younger a practitioner is, the more likely they are to work on a PAYE basis. This fits with the view of the theatre/dance sector resource organisations that the Revenue Commissioners have a policy of having younger practitioners working on a PAYE basis, and make it difficult for younger practitioners to work on a Schedule D basis.

10.3 EXPENSES AND TAX RETURNS

Legitimate professional expenses can be offset against gross income before "taxable income" is calculated. Theatre practitioners were asked about the expenses they incur (on things like costumes, make-up, travel and subsistence, equipment, agent commissions and union dues) and as to whether they were able to write any of these expenses off against their tax bills.

Some 90% of theatre practitioners surveyed said that they incur expenses as part of working in theatre.

For the year 2004, the mean level of expenses incurred by practitioners was €1,838 per year. This amounts to approximately 14% of average (mean) income from theatre work. Due to a small number of people with a high level of expenses (a number of production managers in particular), the median level of expenses was lower, at just over €1,000 per practitioner, i.e. 50% of practitioners had estimated expenses of under €1,042 in 2004. Expenses were highest for production artists, as Table 10.2 shows.

	Mean Expenses	Median Expenses
Performing Artists	€1,723	€1,000
Production Artists	€2,109	€1,500
Technical/Managerial Practitioners	€1,847	€1,000
All Theatre Practitioners	€1,838	€1,042
Based on 167 Responses		

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Of those practitioners who incurred expenses, 70% said they were able to write off some or all of these expenses against tax. Given the nature of the expenses involved, this seems somewhat low and it may suggest that there is a proportion of theatre practitioners who are not claiming all legitimate expenses (and who therefore overstate their taxable income, and their tax liability).

In relation to tax returns, theatre practitioners were asked three specific questions, and their answers were as follows:

- 50% of respondents complete their own tax return each year;
- 50% use a professional (e.g. an accountant) to complete their tax return;
- 8% of respondents are registered for VAT.

From the comments to a later open question (see below), it was clear that many of those practitioners who do not use an accountant find the process of completing their tax return confusing and complicated. However, several noted that the level of income from theatre makes it hard to employ a professional for this task.

10.4 INTERACTION WITH THE REVENUE COMMISSIONERS

In order to gain some insight into the experience of theatre practitioners with the Revenue Commissioners, practitioners were asked three specific questions. These are shown in Table 10.3, together with the answers from respondents.

TABLE 10.3: INTERACTION OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS WITH THE REVENUE COMMISSIONERS

In your recent interaction with the Revenue Commissioners, have you ...	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Found them to be Understanding?	45%	22%	32%
Had difficulties registering as self-employed?	15%	45%	41%
Had any other difficulties?	22%	50%	28%

Table 10.3 shows that, for many theatre practitioners, interaction with the Revenue Commissioners does not lead to problems. However, there is a minority (around 20% of respondents) who do experience problems with the Revenue Commissioners.

Comments on what "other difficulties" arose were linked by practitioners to suggestions for potential improvements in the taxation system for theatre practitioners, and a selection of comments (chosen to highlight recurring issues or policy issues) is shown in Table 10.4.

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Theatre Practitioners and the Tax System

TABLE 10.4: SELECTION OF SUGGESTIONS MADE BY THEATRE PRACTITIONERS AS REGARDS POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS IN TAXATION SYSTEM

"It can be hard to get information on the status of combining PAYE and self-employed status for tax purposes. It can also then be hard to register for this status, even though it is convenient for many theatre practitioners."

"I have to get an exemption order (from PAYE) for every job I do – this creates unwarranted delays and has resulted in my paying emergency tax. Can this be done annually?"

"More understanding is needed of the specific characteristics of work in the theatre sector."

"Because theatres cannot claim VAT back, they will choose freelance practitioners who do not have to charge VAT. This can mean they go for less successful freelance people, and I have had to absorb the VAT myself on some occasions in order to win contracts."

"Theatres should be zero-rated for VAT, not VAT exempt – this would allow them to claim back VAT charged to them. I can charge VAT in working for TV but not for a theatre. This is a particular issue for small theatre companies."

"Some employers want to keep us registered for work, e.g. an ongoing show or a TV series, as they may want to use us in the future. This can cause confusion with the Revenue Commissioners."

"Why are some groups of workers (some types of farmers cited – if they have a bad year due to bad weather) allowed to spread their income over several years for tax purposes when theatre people are not?"

"The distinction in the tax system between 'creative' and 'interpretative' artists is artificial, i.e. actors, directors etc. are engaged in creative work all the time."

"You can get different advice from different Revenue Commissioners' tax offices."

"I am unsure of what expenses can be claimed against tax – can an updated list be produced for theatre workers, e.g. by one of the theatre resource organisations?"

"Social welfare should link more with the Revenue Commissioners – this would help to build understanding of how we work" (suggestion made in relation to social welfare system by practitioner – repeated here)

Note: Some comments have been edited for clarity and to take out any details relating to individual circumstances

A number of Irish theatre practitioners who had worked abroad cited the facility for income smoothing in the UK and other tax systems and said that these tax system were more tailored to the work pattern of theatre practitioners.

Chapter 11

Theatre Practitioner Views on Their Careers

11.1 PURPOSE OF CHAPTER

The survey interviews ended with some questions on the overall views of theatre practitioners towards working in theatre. This section of the questionnaire allowed practitioners space to provide opinions and suggestions.

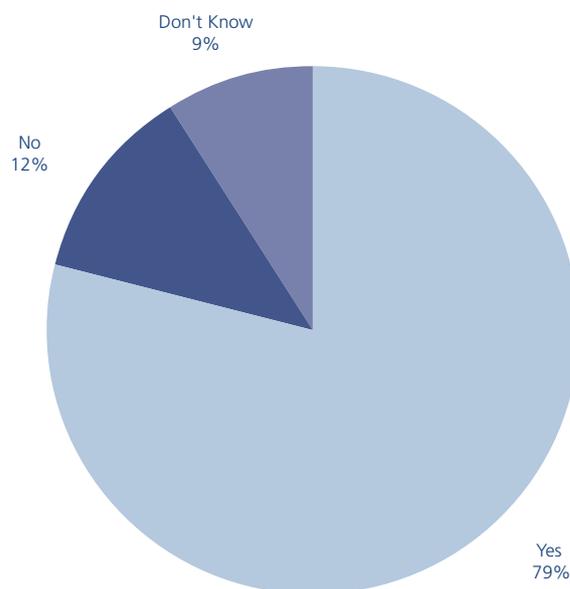
11.2 OVERALL VIEWS ON WORKING IN THEATRE

Chapters 5-10 provide information on a number of characteristics of theatre practitioners and of work in theatre:

- This cohort of workers tends to be well qualified;
- Theatre practitioners are less likely to own their home and more likely to rent;
- The work pattern is variable and practitioners must manage different jobs, and different types of jobs, each year;
- Income levels are low relative to other professional occupations;
- Hours worked and income earned are variable;
- There tends to be a lower level of pension provision in this cohort of workers than in the wider labour force, and practitioners can encounter difficulties getting mortgages and car insurance.

While there has not previously been hard data on these issues in an Irish context, some of these issues were suggested by the theatre stakeholder organisations as being likely to be found by the research. In this context, the survey asked practitioners the following: "Looking at the positives and negatives in your career, if you were starting over again, would you choose to work in theatre?"

FIGURE 11.1: WOULD THEATRE PRACTITIONERS WORK IN THEATRE IF STARTING OVER?



Based on 195 responses

Figure 11.1 shows that, despite the challenges and difficulties associated with a career in theatre, eight out of ten respondents would choose to work in theatre if starting over, and another one out of ten might choose to do so again.

Despite the fact that they earn the least from theatre work, the proportion of performing artists who would choose to work in theatre if starting over (at 82%) was slightly higher than the equivalent proportions in the other two sub-groups.

Chapter 11

Theatre Practitioner Views on Their Careers

For the majority who would do it all again, the recurring view was that theatre is what they love doing, it is a vocation and they could not see themselves doing anything else. A selection of the comments is shown in Table 11.1.

TABLE 11.1: SELECTION OF COMMENTS AS TO WHY, IF STARTING OVER AGAIN, RESPONDENTS WOULD CHOOSE TO WORK IN THEATRE

"It's a vocation."

"I love it, but I would have gotten a trade also."

"It is challenging but very inspiring when it goes well."

"It is a poor but happy preference."

"It's what I do best and that motivates me to do it."

"I would do it again, but would do an apprenticeship also."

"Theatre adds depth to our lives and adds to our culture. I feel part of an international community."

"I have tried different careers, including teaching, but I feel most comfortable with theatre and always come back to it."

"I like the challenges and the self discovery you make as an individual. Also, the arts are important to society."

"I like the exhilaration of theatre at the high points, the creative excitement and the sociability."

"It is related to my artistic identity."

"Theatre is an important forum for the arts and I enjoy my work immensely."

"I have an impulse to work artistically regardless of the circumstances."

"It's the best life you can choose. The quality of the struggle makes you a better person."

"I don't do it for economic reasons – it's a vocation."

"Nothing seems to lessen the magic."

"There is nothing else like it. The multinationals and the conglomerates are not in control yet. You can express yourself freely."

"I would do it again, but not in Ireland"

"I love theatre, but it is a hard career when you have children."

"I do it because of a burning passion for the theatre."

Note: Some comments have been edited for clarity and to take out details relating to individual circumstances

Chapter 11

Theatre Practitioner Views on Their Careers

Figure 11.1 showed that about one in ten practitioners would not choose to work in theatre if starting over. A selection of comments from this smaller group is shown in Table 11.2.

TABLE 11.2: SELECTION OF COMMENTS AS TO WHY, IF STARTING OVER AGAIN, RESPONDENTS WOULD CHOOSE *NOT* TO WORK IN THEATRE

"You are paid too little. Some companies refuse to even pay the Equity minimum."

"When children arrive, it is not affordable to work in theatre."

"There is no security. You have to be on top of your game at all times to get work."

"You are very reliant on work and there is no upward mobility."

"Your income stays the same throughout your lifetime in Ireland."

"It gets harder as you get older."

"There is more money in film."

"It is impossible to live on the earnings."

"It is too unreliable and difficult. You must have your nose to the grindstone when working."

"The career is too erratic for family life."

"It is difficult for a woman in Irish theatre. Also, it is difficult to plan a holiday or maintain a normal life."

Note: Some comments have been edited for clarity and to take out details relating to individual circumstances

Practitioners were asked about the views on the future: "Looking forward, do you think you will still be a theatre practitioner in five years time?" The responses given were broadly similar to those for the previous question:

- 77% said they would be working as theatre practitioners in five years time;
- 8% said that they would not;
- 15% said that they did not know.

Almost eight out of ten practitioners therefore said they would be working in theatre in five years time. For the 8% who felt they would not be working in theatre in five years time, the reasons given covered some of the reasons given in Table 11.2, as well as a number who plan to retrain or concentrate on other artistic careers.

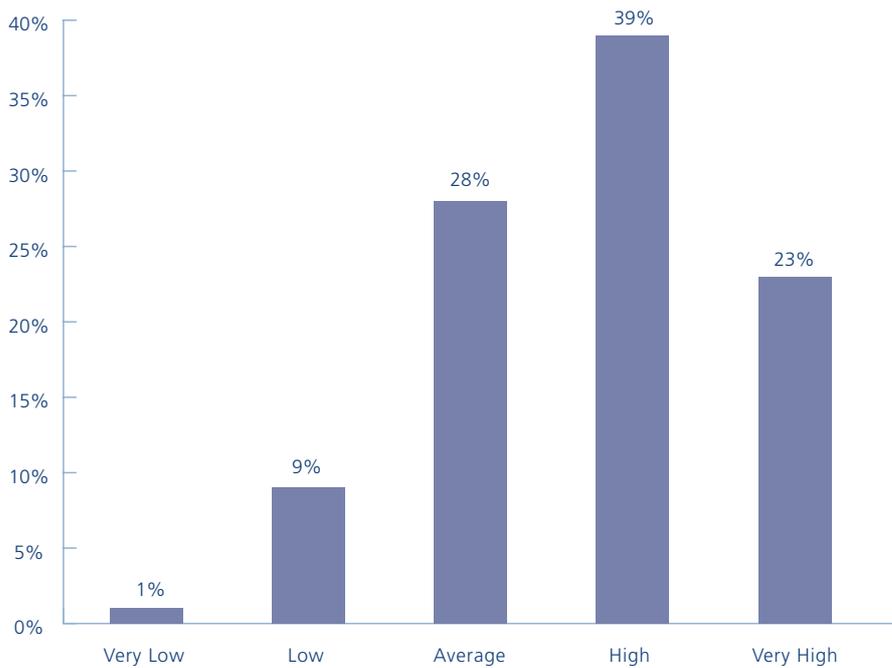
Chapter 11

Theatre Practitioner Views on Their Careers

11.3 STRESS AND CHALLENGES OF THEATRE WORK

Practitioners were asked to rate the levels of stress and demands on them due to their career in theatre, using a scale from very low to very high. Their (subjective) responses are shown in Figure 11.2.

FIGURE 11.2: STRESS LEVELS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS



Based on 195 responses

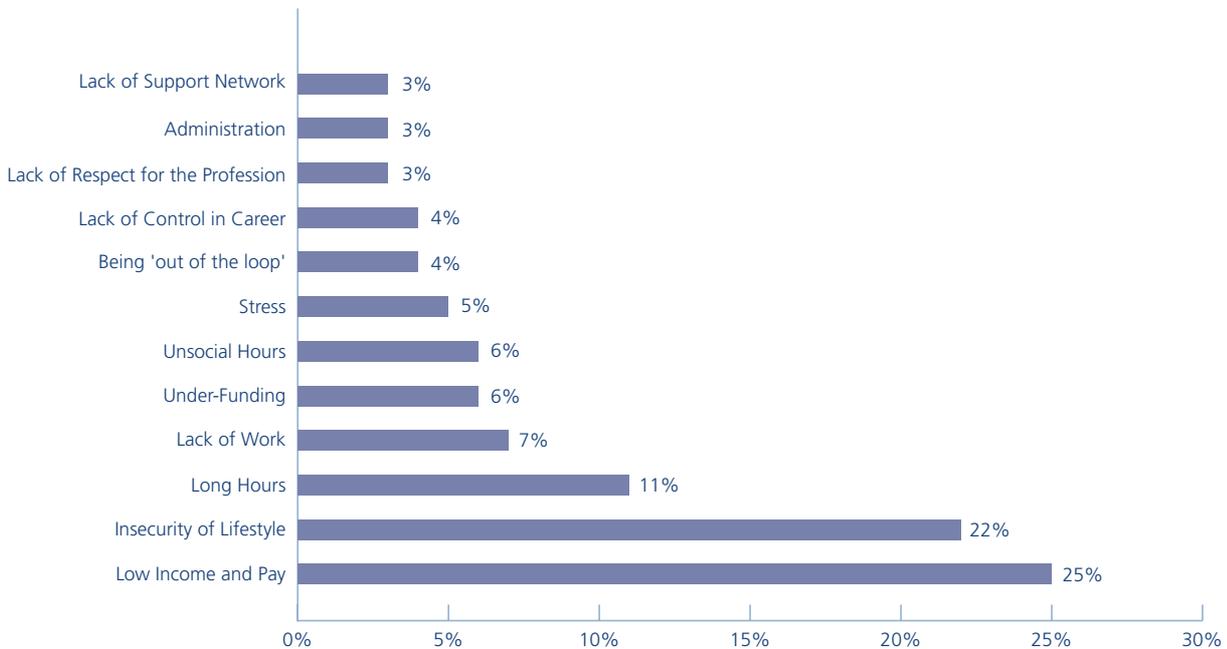
Figure 11.2 shows that 62% of practitioners believe that their theatre career (with its associated low level of income, uncertain work pattern etc.) leads to levels of stress that are high or very high. Despite general content with having chosen a career in theatre, only 10% of practitioners report low stress levels.

Practitioners were then asked to identify what they felt were the three hardest factors linked to working in theatre. Figure 11.3 shows the 12 most common responses, and the proportion of respondents who cited them.

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Theatre Practitioner Views on Their Careers

FIGURE 11.3: HARDEST FACTORS ABOUT WORKING IN THEATRE



Based on 194 responses

The top two reasons cited in Figure 11.3 are confirmed by the data in earlier chapters. As well as the 12 factors cited, eight further factors were cited by at least five people each. These were: Working conditions; Lack of a career path; Working with difficult or poor quality people; Being away from home; Physical demands of theatre; Strain of theatre on relationships; Lack of training in Ireland; and the Dublin-centric nature of theatre in Ireland.

11.4 OTHER COMMENTS FROM THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

A final survey question asked practitioners if they had any further comments or suggestions on their socio-economic circumstances.

Chapter 11

Theatre Practitioner Views on Their Careers

TABLE 11.3: SELECTION OF FINAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS BY THEATRE PRACTITIONERS

"Health and safety issues are not addressed properly in theatre in Ireland. There is an accident waiting to happen." (Note: This was stated by three practitioners.)

"Practitioners need support in long-term planning."

"Theatres should have crèches to support practitioners who are parents."

"If you don't have an agent in Irish theatre, you won't get overtime."

"Too much funding goes on administration and not enough to artists" (stated by several practitioners)

"Theatre awards should be broadened to include sound/music."

"Actors outside Dublin need specific supports."

"Theatre Forum represents an opportunity for the sector, especially in relation to training and promoting professional development."

"A campaign is needed around pensions in the sector."

"Lack of funding for theatre means the whole country suffers."

"Production companies should advertise when they want people, as in other countries. There is too much word of mouth in Ireland."

"Can the Arts Council organise a way to give advice to people, e.g. on tax etc., perhaps via a website?"

"Can a centralised administration be established for small production companies?"

"There should be more actors on boards and involved with funding decisions for theatre."

"Community arts are not well recognised in Ireland despite the number of people they reach."

"There are elements that Ireland can copy from other countries." (Various other countries cited by practitioners including UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Italy.)

"*Per diem* rates for touring do not cover the expenses involved – practitioners end up subsidising the tours."

"Actors are only paid after all other expenses have been paid."

"A support network for theatre practitioners is needed – a professional body for training and support."

"Theatre in Ireland is no longer a profession. Anyone can call themselves an actor. Can there be some way to say who is a genuine actor?"

"Theatre in Ireland is undervalued. People don't see how much the sector contributes through teaching and wider activities. A PR campaign is needed."

"Public and government agencies have misconceptions about theatre practitioners. We don't want special treatment – we just want the specific circumstances of our profession to be understood."

Note: Some comments have been edited for clarity and to take out details relating to individual circumstances

As seen, Table 11.3 both adds further comments on issues raised previously and suggests further a number of further issues for discussion.

Chapter 12

Concluding Remarks

The key findings of the survey are presented in the Executive Summary – this section does not replicate this but makes a few concluding observations.

The survey results presented in Chapters 5-11 generally confirm the ex-ante hypotheses of the Irish theatre sector stakeholder organisations. They also show that the socio-economic conditions of Irish theatre practitioners are similar in many ways to the conditions of artists internationally.

For the majority of theatre practitioners, the fact that they consider their choice of career to be a kind of “vocation” (in the sense that they feel strongly drawn to this career and often do not see the work as being only a way to earn a living) keeps them in the sector, despite levels of income, job patterns and other characteristics that would not be accepted in the long-term by workers with the same levels of education and training in other occupations. In other sectors, especially in the context of a strong economy such as exists in Ireland in 2005, workers would leave such careers for careers in more financially rewarding occupations.

Irish theatre is subsidised through public funding. The survey findings provide a range of evidence that the Irish theatre sector is also subsidised by its practitioners. This can be seen, for example, through:

- The levels of unpaid work in the sector (Chapter 6);
- The fact that many practitioners work in other jobs to continue in theatre, with the management of such a portfolio of jobs likely to impact both on their personal incomes and on the levels of pressure under which they work and live (Chapter 6);
- The evidence of support by spouses and other family members, and the proportion of practitioners who say such support is critical to their remaining in theatre (Chapter 7);
- The lack of pension provision, which means that the subsidisation of theatre by the practitioners can be argued to continue even after they stop working directly in theatre, i.e. they are sacrificing future income to continue working in theatre today (Chapter 8).

The aim of this survey was to assemble an evidence base on the economic and social conditions of Irish theatre practitioners. As well as the findings presented in this report, the quantitative data set provided to the Arts Council provides a basis for further research and analysis.

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Annex 1

Survey Methodology

ANNEX 1: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 discussed the survey population and the process through which this was estimated, and the composition of the sample across the sub-groups of theatre practitioners. This annex supplements Chapter 4 and provides information on:

- The development of the survey questionnaire (attached as Annex 2);
- The process of contacting the practitioners and undertaking the interviews;
- The data entry and data analysis work.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

(i) Design

Identifying the questions to be asked in the survey involved a process of consultation with a range of interested stakeholders. A number of discussions were held with the Arts Council to understand the Council's reasons for commissioning the survey and to clarify the information that they were interesting in collecting. Discussions were held on issues relating to the working lives and socio-economic conditions of people working in theatre with the following resource organisations:

- The Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland (APDI);
- Associated Theatre Artists (ATA);
- Irish Actors Equity;
- Irish Playwrights' and Screenwriters' Guild;
- Theatre Forum;
- Theatre Shop.

Following these discussions, 83 questions were developed. As can be seen from the questionnaire, most are closed questions. A number of open questions were included to obtain the views of theatre practitioners on issues such as the social welfare and taxation systems, the difficult factors relating to working in theatre etc. The questionnaire was designed to be administered by telephone by the Hibernian Consulting project team.

Where possible, questions were taken from established survey instruments such as the 2002 Census of Population, the European Community Household Panel Survey and the Living in Ireland Survey. This helped to allow the survey results to be compared to equivalent data for the wider population. Previous surveys of artists and theatre practitioners also provided inputs, especially Throsby and Hollister's 2003 Australian survey, Creative New Zealand (2003) and the US study of Alper et al (1996). As this is the first such survey in Ireland, and given the specific nature of the sector, a number of new questions were also designed for the questionnaire.

(ii) Questionnaire Content

The questionnaire divides into eight parts labelled A to H. These sections roughly correspond to Chapters 5 to 12 of this report and were entitled:

- Section A: Education and Training (Chapter 5)
- Section B: Work (Chapter 6)
- Section C: Unemployment and Social Welfare (Chapter 7)
- Section D: Standard of Living (Chapter 8)
- Section E: Income (Chapter 9)
- Section F: Taxation (Chapter 10)
- Section G: Information Describing Yourself (Chapter 5)
- Section H: Final Questions (Chapter 11)

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Survey Methodology

(iii) Pre-testing

To assess the appropriateness of the questionnaire for data collection, Hibernian Consulting engaged in two stages of pre-testing. These involved six face-to-face interviews and six telephone interviews. These were arranged in co-operation with the resource organisations from the sector and were spread across practitioners from the different sub-groups of theatre practitioners identified. A number of modifications and clarifications were made to the questionnaire following the pre-testing process.

DATA COLLECTION

(i) Identifying Individual Theatre Practitioners

There is no central store of names for theatre practitioners in Ireland and, as such, lists of names had to be built up before the survey could be undertaken. The resource organisations listed earlier were very helpful in this regard, as were a number of individuals working in the sector. The Irish Theatre Handbook (Third Edition) was a further very useful source of names. For certain sub-groups, such as technicians, there was no direct representative organisation and names had to be compiled from available secondary sources and through contacting Production Managers and people in venues around the country to obtain names of technicians with whom they work.

(ii) Contact with Practitioners prior to Telephone Interview

As set out in Chapter 4, theatre practitioners were grouped into three broad categories (Performing Artists, Production Artists and Technical and Managerial). Based on the estimated total populations for each group, the number of interviews to be undertaken in each group was decided.

From the lists of practitioners compiled, individuals were randomly selected. The selected practitioners were contacted by telephone and asked if they were willing to participate in the survey. Those who agreed were asked a number of questions to determine if they met the required criteria for the survey (see Chapter 1). If they did, then a convenient time and date were identified when the individual could undertake the telephone survey interview. Subsequently, a letter was posted to these theatre practitioners reminding them of the agreed time and providing them with a contact telephone number in case they had queries about any matter relating to the survey (information on the project was also posted on the Hibernian Consulting website). The letters to those undertaking the survey included a hard copy of the questionnaire so that respondents could look over it in advance and respondents were encouraged to have ready the information required by the survey, e.g. on details of income.

In general, individuals contacted who met the survey criteria were happy to participate. In those cases where individuals did not wish to take part, did not meet the survey criteria, or could not be contacted, a random replacement was drawn from the remaining names in the population list.

(iii) Confidentiality

As the survey collected information on personal matters, including on income, taxation and the person's household, it was important to provide a strong guarantee of confidentiality to participants. This fact that all information provided would be completely confidential was emphasised to respondents at each point in the process. In the data entry process, the names of those taking part were not recorded and a guarantee was given that personal information on any respondent would not be disclosed to the Arts Council or to any other third party.

(iv) Undertaking the Interviews

The survey was conducted between 25th April and 5th July 2005. Theatre practitioners were contacted by telephone and interviews ranged from 25 to 90 minutes with the vast majority taking under 35 minutes. In about 10% of cases, individuals were unable to participate or were not contactable. In these cases a random replacement was drawn from the remaining names in the population list and they were then contacted to ensure they met the survey criteria and, if they did, were interviewed.

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Survey Methodology

DATA ENTRY AND ANALYSIS

(i) Data Entry

In total 195 interviews were completed. The quantitative data was coded and entered into SPSS to facilitate statistical analysis. The qualitative data was recorded in a Microsoft Word file with each comment associated with its corresponding survey number. A copy of the quantitative survey data was provided to the Arts Council as a basis for possible future research and analysis by the Council.

(ii) Sampling and Weighting of Results

Chapter 4 showed that the proportion of interviews chosen for each of the three categories of theatre practitioner was different to the estimated proportions of the populations of the three groups. This was principally because of a desire to “over-sample” the two smaller groups (Production Artists and Technical & Managerial) and consequently under-sample the larger group (Performing Artists), to improve the overall statistical reliability of the results.

As a consequence of the breakdown of interviews chosen, it was necessary to “re-weight” the results obtained so they reflected the relative total populations of the three groups. The sample and population proportions and the consequent weight that needed to be used for each of the three categories are shown below.

	Sample proportions	Population proportions	Weights
Performing Artists	43.08%	62.64%	1.45408
Production Artists	33.85%	24.73%	0.73052
Technical and Managerial	23.08%	12.64%	0.54762

Data in the report that refers to theatre practitioners in general is weighted to ensure it reflects the characteristics of the wider theatre practitioner population.

(iii) Confidence Intervals

The survey data provides estimates of the various characteristics of the theatre practitioner population. Confidence intervals (at the 95% level) were calculated to indicate the precision of these results. Instead of producing just one figure for each population characteristic, an interval estimate was calculated providing a range of possible values for the population characteristic of interest.

For questions in the survey with two possible answers (e.g. gender of practitioner, or whether a practitioner worked abroad in 2004), and which all 195 interviewed practitioners answered, the confidence interval can be calculated as sample estimate plus or minus approx. 7%. This width of this interval (e.g. 7%) will vary by question and will rise if the number of answer categories rises, or if the number of respondents falls. As the number of answer categories rises, or the number of respondents falls, the survey data should therefore be seen more as indicative of the population characteristic.

(iv) Cross-Tabulations of Data

Following the data entry process, a number of discussions were held between Hibernian Consulting and the Arts Council to discuss the survey results. These identified areas where data “cross-tabulations” might help to interpret certain results or provide further insights on the socio-economic characteristics of theatre practitioners. These involve comparing the raw data gathered from two or more questions (e.g. gender and income; work pattern by practitioner group etc.). Where cross-tabulations are used, the number of respondents in each “cell” will fall and the statistical confidence in a finding is therefore lower. Over 50 such cross-tabulations were identified and run on the data and, where these aid the interpretation of the results, appropriate comments are made in Chapters 5-11.

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ANNEX 2: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THEATRE PRACTITIONERS IN IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

(Before taking the practitioner through the survey questionnaire, the interviewer re-introduced himself or herself, reminded the practitioner of the purpose of the survey and its complete confidentiality, asked if the practitioner had the questionnaire to hand and explained a number of terms used in the questionnaire.)

SECTION A. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The first section of the survey is about your education and training. First, a question about the number of years you have been a theatre practitioner and then questions on your general education and your training to be a theatre practitioner.

Q1. For roughly how many years have you been professionally working in the theatre?

_____ years

Q2. What is the highest level of education (full-time or part-time) which you have completed to date? (*only one*)

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Primary Education | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) |
| Lower Secondary (Junior/Inter/Group Cert) | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) |
| Upper Secondary (Leaving Cert) | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) |
| Technical/Vocational qualification (<i>including apprenticeships</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) |
| Third Level Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> (5) |
| Third Level Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> (6) |
| Third Level Postgraduate | <input type="checkbox"/> (7) |

Q3. What practical training have you completed to be a theatre practitioner?
(*all that apply*)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Academic | |
| Third level diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Q4 |
| Third level degree | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Q4 |
| Third level postgraduate | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Q4 |
| Technical education | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) |
| Specific school or Conservatorium | <input type="checkbox"/> (5) |
| Other (please state) _____ | (6) |

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Private

- Tuition from private teacher / practising professional (7)
Mentorship (8)
Other (please state)_____ (9)

Other

- Self-taught (10)
Learning on the job (11)
Apprenticeship (12)
Adult education courses (13)
Workshops/ short courses/ summer schools (14)
Exchange programmes (15)
Other (please state)_____ (16)

Q4. What third level course did you complete?

Q5. Looking back over the year 2004, did you do any training relevant to your career? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2)

Q6. If yes, for how long in total?

_____ days _____ weeks

Q7. How important is it for you to undertake ongoing training and professional development in your field? Would you say it is...(*only one*)

Very unimportant Unimportant Neither unimportant nor important Important Very important
 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Q8. Are there sufficient opportunities for you to engage in ongoing training and professional development? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2)

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SECTION B. WORK

The next section concentrates on your work and work pattern.

Q9. First, a question on your employment status last week.
Did you work in any role in the theatre last week? (*only one*)

- yes, for the whole week (1)
 yes, for part of the week (2)
 no (3)

Q10. If yes, as part of this work did you work in your main specialist area? (*only one*)

- yes, for the whole week (1)
 yes, for part of the week (2)
 no (3)

Q11. Looking back over the year 2004, can you give me a rough breakdown of your work pattern during that year? You can divide up the year between six categories, either in weeks or months. So, how much time did you spend...

	weeks	months
working in main specialist area in the theatre	_____	_____
in other theatre work	_____	_____
in other work in the arts world	_____	_____
doing work not related to arts	_____	_____
being unemployed	_____	_____
in non-work activities (such as holidays, illness and family responsibilities)	_____	_____
TOTAL	52 weeks	12 months

For those who do not spend 100% of their time in their main specialist area go to Q12, otherwise go to Q16.

Q12. Would you like to spend more time working in your main specialist area? (*only one*)

- Yes (1) No (2)

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Q13. If yes, which of the following is the single most important thing that prevents you from spending more time working in your main specialist area? (*only one*)

- Work in my specialist area is not available (1)
- There is insufficient income from arts work / I need to earn more by working elsewhere (2)
- Domestic responsibilities such as children/ caring/ household duties (3)
- "Not in the loop" (4)
- Physical location (5)
- Other (please state) _____ (6)
- Don't know (7)

Q14. What type of work do you normally do when you are undertaking 'work not related to arts'?

- Please state _____
- Don't do work outside main specialist area (1)
 - Don't know (2)

Q15. Do you do any work in the following areas?

- (a) film, TV or radio drama Yes No
- (b) other commercial/media work Yes No

Q16. If yes (to either), how important is this work to supporting your career in the theatre? (*only one*)

- not at all important to my working in theatre (1)
- unimportant (2)
- neither unimportant nor important (3)
- important (4)
- crucial – I could not stay in theatre without it (5)

The next set of questions examines the duration and structure of the time you spend working in your main specialist area.

Q17. Just looking at the most recent week you spent working in your main specialist area, approximately how many hours did you work that week?

_____ hours

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Q18. What times of the day did this work occur? *(all that apply)*

- up to 12 noon (1)
- 12 noon – 6pm (2)
- 6pm – 11pm (3)
- after 11pm (4)

Q19. What days of the week did this work occur? *(all that apply)*

- Monday (1)
- Tuesday (2)
- Wednesday (3)
- Thursday (4)
- Friday (5)
- Saturday (6)
- Sunday (7)

Q20. During that week, did you work any hours for which you were not paid? *(only one)*

- Yes (1) No (2) Don't know (3)

Q21. If yes, how many hours? _____

Q22. And what type of work was this? _____

Now, I want to ask you some questions about your work in your main specialist area in the theatre during the last three full years, that is 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Q23. If you compare the amount of work you did in 2003 with 2004, was it? *(only one)*

- much less than 2004 (1)
- less than 2004 (2)
- the same as 2004 (3)
- more than 2004 (4)
- much more than 2004 (5)
- don't know (6)
- not applicable (7)

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Q24. If you compare the amount of work you did in 2002 with 2003, was it? (*only one*)

- much less than 2003 (1)
- less than 2003 (2)
- the same as 2003 (3)
- more than 2003 (4)
- much more than 2003 (5)
- don't know (6)
- not applicable (7)

Q25. In which of these three years did you work the most in your main specialist area? (*only one*)

- 2002 (1) 2003 (2) 2004 (3)

Q26. In which of these three years did you work the least in your main specialist area? (*only one*)

- 2002 (1) 2003 (2) 2004 (3)

Q27. Looking back over the last three years, what is the single longest period during which you did not work in your main specialist area in the theatre? Please answer in numbers of weeks.

- _____ weeks _____ months not applicable (1)

Q28. Looking back over the last three years, what is the single longest period during which you did not work in the theatre? Please answer in numbers of weeks.

- _____ weeks _____ months not applicable (1)

Q29. During 2004, did you work abroad in your main specialist area? (*only one*)

- Yes (1) No (2)

Q30. If yes, for how many days or weeks? _____ days _____ weeks

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Survey Questionnaire

SECTION C. UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The third section of the survey looks at issues surrounding unemployment and social welfare. When I use the term 'unemployment' I use it in its officially defined sense, that it that you were without work and looking for work. So,...

Q31. Were you unemployed at any time during 2004? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2)

Q32. If yes, for roughly how many weeks? _____ weeks

Q33. And what was the longest single period of continued unemployment you experienced during 2004? _____ weeks

Q34. Did you apply for unemployment benefit or assistance while you were unemployed? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2)

Q35. If no, why not? (please state) _____

Q36. In recent years have you ever had difficulties claiming unemployment payments specifically because of your status as a theatre practitioner? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2) Not applicable (3)

Q37. In recent years, if you have had dealings with the Social Welfare system, have you ever: (*either Yes, No or N/A for each part of this question*)

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) been required to retrain or apply for alternative jobs | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) been threatened with the removal of your benefits | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) become aware, from your experience, that there are variations in the way that different social welfare offices treat unemployed theatre practitioners | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q38. Looking back over the past few years, do you feel that being unemployed held back the development of your career? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2) Not applicable (3)

Q39. If yes, please say how? _____

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Q40 Finally in this section, do you have any suggestions as to how Social Welfare could better deal with people like you working in theatre?

(Please state) _____

SECTION D. STANDARD OF LIVING

Now we move on to a section of the survey that looks at the standard of living you have. Our questions here include ones that are used all over Europe to find out the standard of living people have. So, to start this section:

Q41. In 2004, did you have a holiday away from home, not including holidays where you go to stay in the home of relatives? *(only one)*

Yes (1) No (2)

Q42. Is that because you do not want it or you cannot afford it? *(only one)*

don't want a holiday (1)
 cannot afford a holiday (2)
 other (3)

The next few questions talk about your household and household income. As I mentioned earlier, by this I mean the income receiving unit that you live in. So, if you are part of a family or couple living together, this is the total income of the household members. If you share your accommodation with a group of unrelated people then it is just your own income. If you live alone, then it is just your own income.

Q43. Thinking of your household's total monthly income, is your household able to make ends meet? Does it do so... (read all options)

(only one)

Very Easily	Easily	Fairly Easily	With Some Difficulty	With Difficulty	With Great Difficulty
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)

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Q44. And now four further questions on your household's standard of living. You can answer yes or no to each of these questions.

(either Yes or No for each part of this question)

- (a) Has your household been in arrears at any time during the last year, that is, unable to pay: rent/mortgage/electricity/gas? Yes No
- (b) If an emergency occurred and you needed to raise €1000, could you do so? Yes No
- (c) Do you regularly save so that you have funds available for rainy days or emergencies? Yes No
- (d) Do you have a personal pension plan? Yes No

Q45. Has your status as a theatre practitioner ever caused you difficulty when applying for a bank loan or a mortgage? *(only one)*

Yes (1) No (2) Not applicable (3)

Q46. If yes, why? (please state) _____

Q47. Has your status as a theatre practitioner ever caused you difficulty when applying for car insurance? *(only one)*

Yes (1) No (2) Not applicable (3)

Q48. If yes, why? (please state) _____

Q49. And finally for this section. The government and financial institutions currently have a savings scheme running where savers are rewarded with a 25% bonus on their monthly savings. These are called Special Savings Incentive Accounts or SSIA's. Do you have, or share, an SSIA account? *(only one)*

Yes (1) No (2) Don't know (3)

Q50. Approximately how much are you currently saving each month? Is it *(only one)*

- zero (1)
- less than €50 (2)
- between €50-€99 (3)
- between €100-€149 (4)
- between €150-€199 (5)
- between €200-€253 (6)
- the maximum amount of €254 (7)
- don't know (8)

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Q56. Approximately how much more/less did you earn from working in the theatre?
You can answer in €1000s

Difference: €_____ Total if given (or adjusted from above): €_____ Don't know (1)

Q57. We are also interested in establishing the total amount of gross income you received from all sources in 2004. This will include the earnings we just discussed plus any other earnings: in the arts; from non-arts employment; and from social welfare. Approximately how much did this total last year?

€_____

Don't know (1)

Q58. Building on the last question, we are also interested in establishing a figure for your household's income during 2004. As I mentioned earlier, your household is considered to be the income receiving unit that you live in. So, in total approximately how much was your households gross (before tax) income last year?

same as above (1)

€ _____

Don't know (2)

Q59. Do you personally incur theatre practitioner related expenses as part of doing your job? These might included expenses such as costumes, makeup, travel and subsistence, equipment, agents commissions and union dues or professional association fees. (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2) Don't know (3)

Q60. Approximately how much did these expenses cost during the last year, 2004?

ideally €_____

or can give % of income _____%

Don't know (1)

Q61. Were you able to write-off some or all of these expenses against your tax bill? (*only one*)

Yes, all (1) Yes, some (2) No (3)

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Q62. Once again, looking at the most recent week you spent working in your main specialist area, in what way were you paid? You can indicate it was one or a combination of the following. Was it ...
(read all and all relevant)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| an agreed fixed fee | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) |
| a share of the profits | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) |
| royalties | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) |
| a % of the box office takings | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) |
| payments in-kind | <input type="checkbox"/> (5) |
| other (please state) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> (6) |
| don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> (7) |

Q63. And the final question on income, are you the only earner in your household? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2)

Q64. If no, is the other earner (or earners) in your household providing a stable or steady income? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2)

Q65. If yes, do you feel that you could survive in your career as a theatre practitioner without this regular income? (*only one*)

Yes (1) No (2) Don't know (3)

SECTION F. TAXATION

Now, some issues on taxation and on your interaction, if any, with the Revenue Commissioners.

Q66. For tax purposes, are you registered as a PAYE earner, self-employed or a combination of both? (*only one*)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| PAYE employee | <input type="checkbox"/> (1) |
| Self-employed | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) |
| Combination of both | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) |

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Q67. The next three questions are about making tax returns.
Please answer yes, no or don't know to each of the questions:

(either Yes or No for each part of this question)

- (a) Do you complete your own tax return each year? Yes No Don't know
- (b) Do you use a professional (for example: an accountant) to complete your tax return? Yes No Don't know
- (c) Are you registered for VAT? Yes No Don't know

Q68. In your recent dealings with the Revenue Commissioners, have you:
(either Yes or No for each part of this question)

- (a) found them to be understanding of your work and income patterns as someone who works in the theatre sector? Yes No Don't know
- (b) had difficulties registering as self-employed? Yes No Don't know
- (c) had any other difficulties Yes No Don't know

Q69. What other difficulties were these? *(please state)*

Q70. Do you have any suggestions as to how the Revenue Commissioners could better deal with people working in the theatre in Ireland? *(please state)*

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SECTION G: INFORMATION DESCRIBING YOURSELF

Next, the second last section of the survey. This collects basic information about you such as age, marital status and the number of people in your household. So to start...

Q71. What is your age group? (*only one*)

- under 25 yrs (1)
 25-34 yrs (2)
 35-44 yrs (3)
 45-54 yrs (4)
 55-64 yrs (5)
 65 yrs + (6)

Q72. What is your current marital status? (*only one*)

- Single (never married) (1)
 Married (2)
 Separated (3)
 Divorced (4)
 Widowed (5)

Q73. Apart from yourself, how many other people are in your household? Remember, we defined household earlier as the income receiving unit that you live in. Please include your spouse, any children and dependents. (*only one*)

- None 4 8
 1 5 9
 2 6 10
 3 7 More than 10 (please state): _____

Q74. If one or more in Q72, of these other household members how many are: (*all that apply*)

- adults aged more than 15 1 2 3 4 5 More than 5 ____
 children aged less than 15 1 2 3 4 5 More than 5 ____

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Q75. Is the accommodation that you live in: *(only one)*

- Owner Occupied with Mortgage (1)
- Owner Occupied without Mortgage (2)
- Being Purchases from a local authority
in a Tenant Purchase Scheme (3)
- Rented from Local Authority (4)
- Rented from private landlord (5)
- Occupied free of rent (6)
- Other (7)
- Don't know (8)

SECTION H: FINAL QUESTIONS

And now the last section, where we want to gather some extra comments and information from you about your life as a theatre practitioner. First ...

Q76. Looking at the positives and negatives in your career, if you were starting over again, would you choose to work in theatre? *(only one)*

- Yes (1) No (2) Don't know (3)

Q77. If yes, why: _____

Q78. If no, why not: _____

Q79. Looking forward, do you think that you will still be a theatre practitioner in five years time? *(only one)*

- Yes (1) No (2) Don't know (3)

Q80. If no, why not: _____

Q81. Using a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate your career in the theatre in terms of the levels of stress and the demands made on you? *(only one)*

- | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Lowest | | | | | Highest | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Don't know | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) | <input type="checkbox"/> (5) | <input type="checkbox"/> (6) | |

