



What's the story?

Museum Freelance survey 2020

An exploratory research report about freelancers working with museums, libraries, archives, galleries and heritage sites in the UK.

#MFsurvey2020

Foreword

Welcome to our first Museum Freelance survey on freelancers and consultants working with museums, galleries, heritage, libraries and archives in the UK.

Our sector has lacked robust data on the self-employed workforce, making it harder for freelancers and consultants to thrive and be recognised as the integral part of the sector's ecosystems that they are. The Character Matters report* in 2016 outlined that 4.8% of the museums workforce is freelance, but that's likely to be a higher figure now, as opportunities are increasingly shifting to part-time and short-term project posts and freelancing contracts.

From conversations and observations over the past few years, we've had anecdotal feedback on who freelancers are, their attitudes, motivations and challenges. But we felt an extensive piece of research was necessary to explore these issues more robustly.

We've carried out this research, analysis and dissemination in a voluntary capacity as it's something we believe strongly in.

We hope that the results will:

- provide a robust and representative picture of the freelance community within these sectors for the very first time
- provide valuable insights for freelancers
- enable the sector to have a better understanding of who freelancers are and their needs and challenges
- allow us to lobby more effectively for freelancers, especially with Sector Support Organisations and client organisations
- create an accurate overview of current market day rates and freelance pricing
- provide a picture of freelancers' contributions – paid and unpaid – to the sector.

A huge thank you to all the freelancers who took the time to respond and share their thoughts so honestly and generously, and those who piloted early versions of the survey or fed back on our draft findings report.



*See Character Matters: Attitudes, behaviours and skills in the UK Museum Workforce. Full Report by BOP Consulting with The Museum Consultancy, 2016 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Character_Matters_UK_Museum_Workforce_full_report.pdf

Foreword

Months in the planning, the research ended up being carried out as the Covid-19 pandemic was escalating, and straddled the announcement of lockdown. This should be taken into consideration as you digest the findings.

Throughout this report 'museum freelance community' will be used as a shortcut to describe freelancers and consultants working with our core target groups of museums, galleries, heritage sites, libraries, archives.

We hope that the findings will be valuable to freelancers, sector organisations, clients and funders. We want the insights to be a catalyst for positive change in the sector. Please do share with colleagues and use #MFsurvey2020 if you're commenting about it on social media.

Christina Lister and Marge Ainsley

Museum Freelance

www.museumfreelance.org

Museum Freelance supports and champions freelancers and consultants working with museums, galleries, heritage sites, archives and libraries.

October 2020

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Summary

Respondents at a glance



314

survey responses were analysed and provide the insight for this report (*see pages 69-71*)



83%

identified as female (*see pages 16-17*)



16%

said their day-to-day activities were limited a little/a lot because of a health problem or disability (*see page 18*)



94%

described their ethnicity as White (*see page 19*)

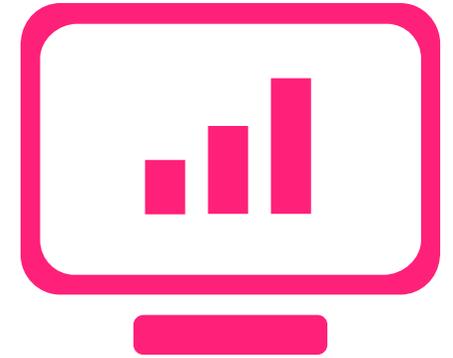


50%

work part-time, either exclusively freelancing, or freelancing alongside study or employment (*see page 23*)

Respondents at a glance

- Freelancers with varying levels of experience responded to the survey (*see page 12*)
- Respondents had predominantly worked with museums but all Museum Freelance community areas of museums, libraries, galleries, heritage sites and archives are represented (*see page 13*)
- The Museum Freelance community is indicatively older than the museum PAYE workforce (*see page 15*)
- The findings suggest that those identifying as female make up a greater proportion of the Museum Freelance community than they do in the PAYE museum workforce (*see pages 16 - 17*)
- The Museum Freelance community includes a greater proportion of people with health problems or disabilities than those in the PAYE museum workforce (*see page 18*)
- Our sample included freelancers from the UK's four nations including each region of England, with nearly a quarter of respondents based in London (*see page 20*)



Findings at a glance



89%

of respondents strongly agree or agree they enjoy freelancing within the cultural sector (*see page 46*)



56%

charge day rates of £201-£400, whilst 31% charge £200 or less (*see page 30*)



12%

strongly agree or agree that sector organisations support freelancers (*see page 57*)



19%

started freelancing because they were unable to find employed work and 16% because they had been made redundant (*see page 21*)

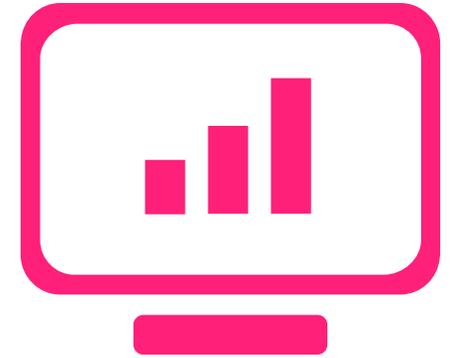


57%

are not currently making pension contributions (*see page 40*)

Findings at a glance

- Flexibility and freedom, work-life balance and being your own boss are the top three motivations for taking the leap into freelancing (*see page 21*)
- Freelancers juggle a range of other responsibilities, including 44% who volunteer or do charitable work (*see page 24*)
- Nearly half of freelancers strongly agree or agree that freelancers are valued and recognised for the work that they do (*see page 54*)
- Freelancers support organisations across all main strategic and operational delivery areas (*see page 25*)
- 60% strongly agree or agree that you can make a successful career from freelancing in the cultural sector (*see page 51*)
- 36% of freelancers undertake unpaid, pro bono client work e.g. supporting funding bids (*see page 27*)
- Just over a fifth of respondents do not feel they are paid an appropriate day rate (*see page 34*).



Findings at a glance

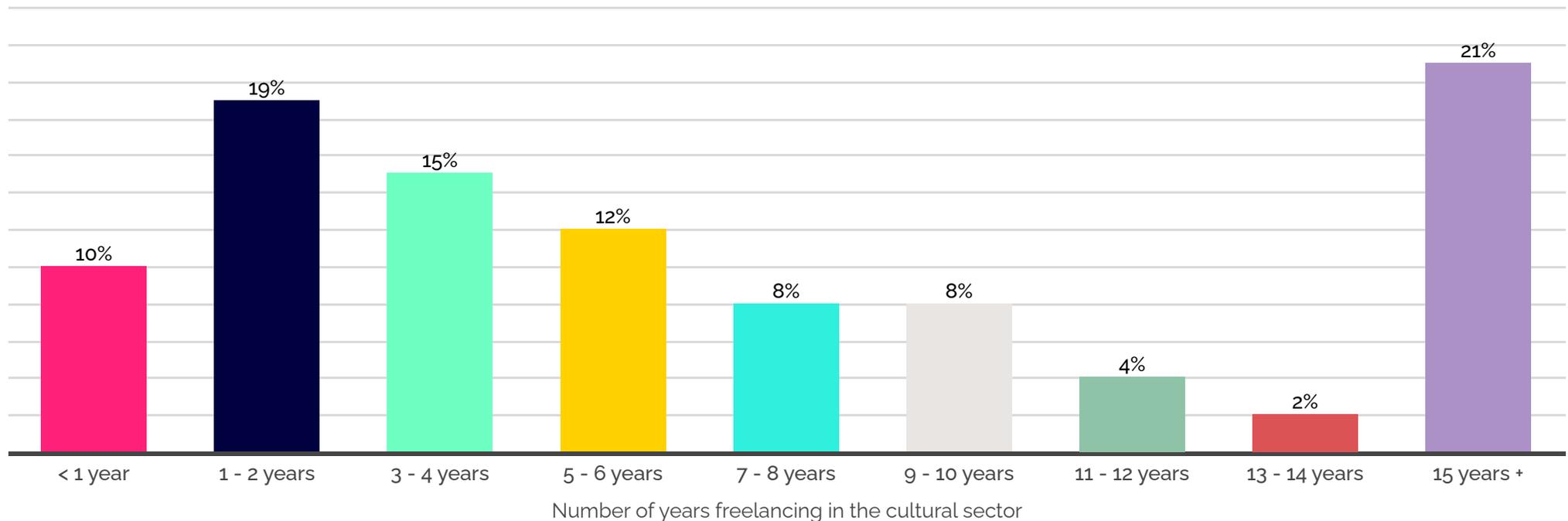
- There are several commonly suggested challenges and concerns that urgently need addressing in relation to fees (*see page 39*). These include:
 - regular over-servicing by freelancers
 - a lack of understanding by some freelancers and organisations about how a day rate is calculated
 - suggested rates in client briefs and published rates by some Sector Support Organisations and funders as being too low
 - freelancers charging less than they ordinarily would because they empathise with organisations, or want to get a foot in the door
 - a perception that sector organisations perceive freelancers charge too much, and are therefore reluctant to respond to/advertise appropriate fees
- Covid-19 is likely to have negatively impacted on freelancers' propensity to be freelancing this time next year, despite the majority of respondents being optimistic that they will still be doing so (*see pages 41-45*)
- Imposter syndrome, inappropriate day rates and dealing with poor client briefs are the top freelancer challenges (*see page 48*)
- Less than half of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that freelancers are valued/recognised for the work they do in the cultural sector (*see page 54*)
- The top 5 things that freelancers would change about freelancing in the sector at the moment are poor rates or rate-related issues; procurement; recognition; equality of support with PAYE; and greater visibility of opportunities (*see pages 60-61*).

Key findings

Who responded?

Freelancers with varying levels of experience responded to the survey

The sample of respondents includes those more experienced (with just over a fifth having freelanced 15 years +) through to those in the early stages of their freelance careers (with nearly a fifth freelancing 1 - 2 years).

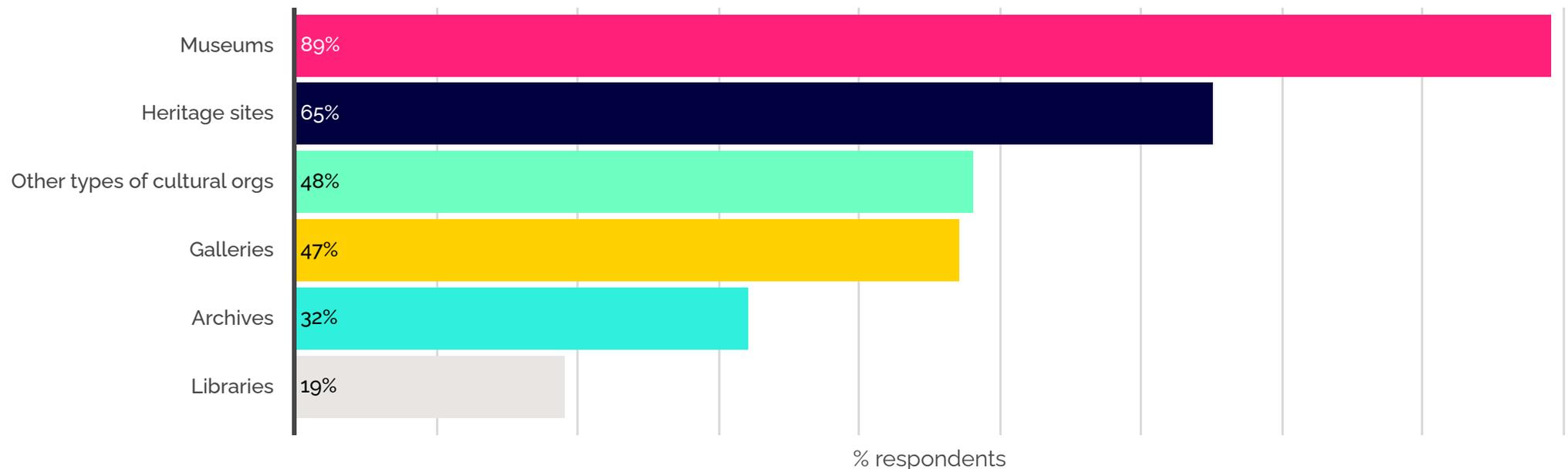


The above graph represents 314 respondents answering 'How long have you freelanced with museums, galleries, libraries, archives or heritage site clients?': < 1 year (n=31), 1 - 2 years (n=60), 3 - 4 years (n=48), 5 - 6 years (n=39), 7 - 8 years (n=26), 9-10 years (n=25), 11 - 12 years (n=12), 13 - 14 years (n=7), 15 years+ (n=66).

Who responded?

Respondents had predominantly worked with museums but all Museum Freelance community areas (museums, libraries, galleries, heritage sites and archives) are represented

The sample includes freelancers with experience working across the defined Museum Freelance community areas of museums, heritage sites, galleries, libraries and archives. Nearly half of respondents had also worked for other types of cultural organisation outside of our core remit, including performing arts, cinema, music, university arts, festivals, literature, community arts, cemeteries, parks, historic ships, science centres, and sector support organisations (SSOs).



The above graph represents 314 respondents answering the question 'And which of the following types of organisations have you freelanced for? (Tick all that apply)' and is represented by the following individuals: Museums (n=278), Heritage sites (n=203), Archives (n=100), Libraries (n=60), Galleries (n=149). Other types of cultural organisations (n=150).

Who responded?



5%

had worked in the sector under a year before going freelance



16%

hadn't worked in the cultural sector before going freelance



29%

had worked in the cultural sector for 15 years + before taking the leap into freelancing



37%

have freelanced for clients outside the cultural sector in other industries (such as housing, finance etc) within the last 12 months

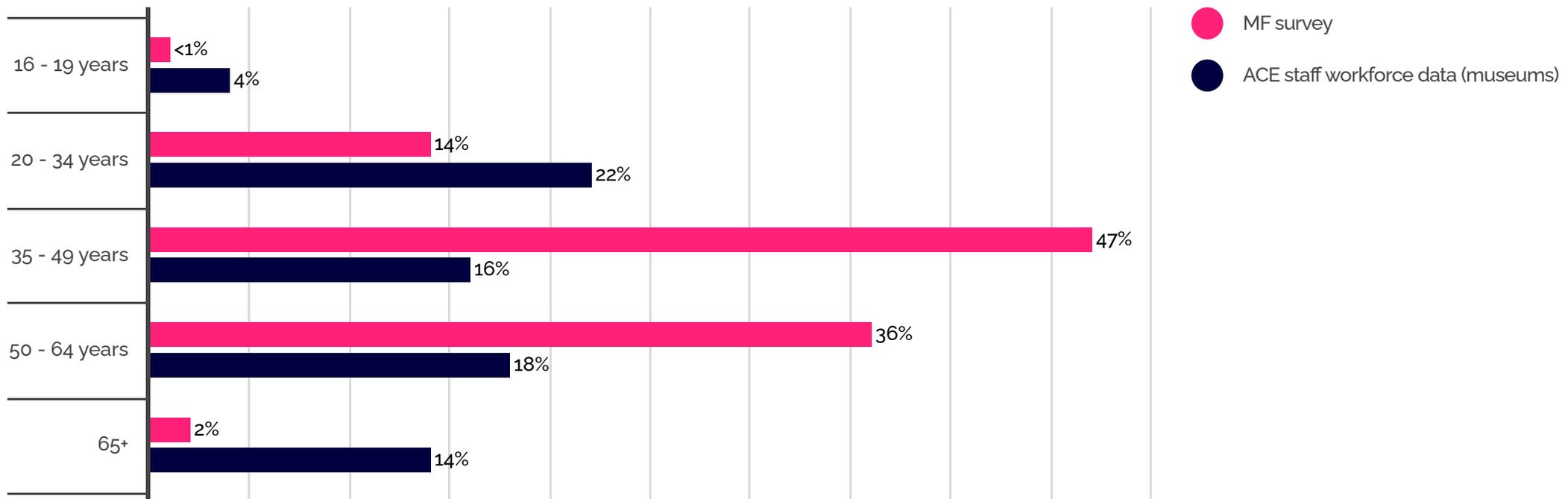


The above data is based on a total of 314 responses across two question types and is represented by the following data: 5% had worked in the sector under a year before going freelance (n=15), 16% hadn't worked in the cultural sector before going freelance (n=51), 29% had worked in the cultural sector for 15 years+ before taking the leap (n=91), 37% have freelanced for clients outside the cultural sector (n=116).

Who responded?

Museum Freelance community workforce is indicatively older than the museum PAYE workforce

Whilst recognising freelancers completing the survey are from different specialisms and live across the UK, we've used Arts Council England's NPO museum workforce data (February 2020) as a comparison and assumed this provides an indicative estimate of the cultural sector workforce overall*. It suggests that the Museum Freelance community includes a greater proportion of 35 - 49 year olds and 50 - 64 year olds than those in museum PAYE roles. This could reflect that people are more likely to freelance when they've gained greater experience and that most freelance contracts require a certain level of expertise. The lower percentages of those aged 34 years and below could also indicate that there are fewer entry-level freelancer roles.



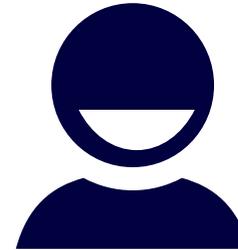
The above data is based on 291 MF survey respondents represented by the following individual data: 16 - 19 years (n=1), 20-34 years (n=40), 35-49 years (n=136), 50-64 years (n=106), 65+ (n=7), prefer not to say and excluded from above (n=1). The data for comparison is taken from the NPO museum workforce data statistics in Arts Council England's Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case report published February 2020 at https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_DiversityReport_Final_03032020_0.pdf. (see page 14) *The age % for other artform area PAYE roles e.g. in libraries, visual arts etc does differ to the museum staff PAYE data used above, but not substantially so. Data on these for comparison can be viewed on the PDF link referenced above.

Who responded?

Those identifying as female indicatively make up a greater proportion of the Museum Freelance community than they do in the PAYE museum workforce

83% of respondents to our survey identified as female. Given the overall sample size of the survey and its potential reach through various channels and social networks, as well as our experience from previous events, we're as confident as we can be that this is fairly representative of the Museum Freelance community.

So why is this figure higher than the Arts Council England NPO museum workforce data? The qualitative feedback collected elsewhere in our survey* indicates that it could be attributed to the flexibility that freelancing can provide for people with caring responsibilities; the incompatibility of some employed positions with caring responsibilities, forcing women out of such positions; and the limited career progression opportunities for senior women in the sector.**

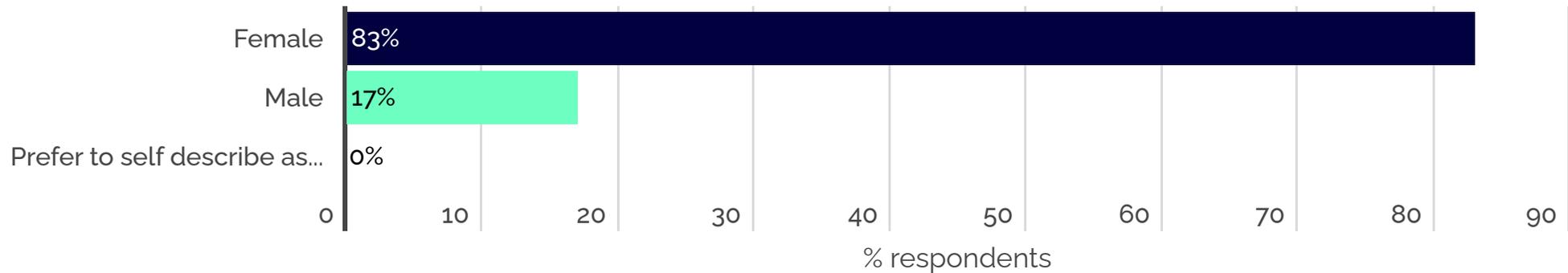


The data for comparison is taken from Arts Council England's Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case report published February 2020 at https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_DiversityReport_Final_03032020_0.pdf. *See motivation data below.

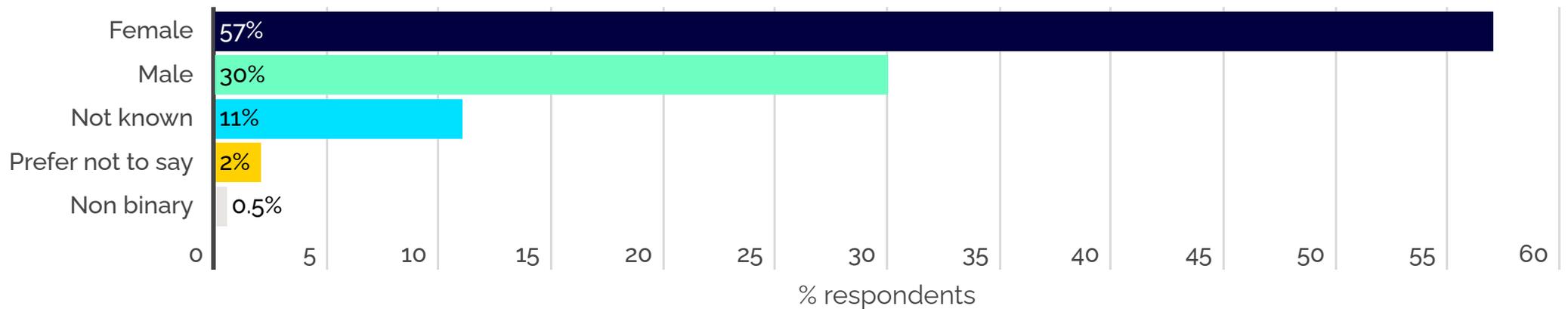
** For example <https://mspaceinvaders.com/space-invaders-manifesto-for-change/>

Who responded?

83% identified as female (Museum Freelance survey respondents)



57% identified as female (Arts Council England museum workforce data)



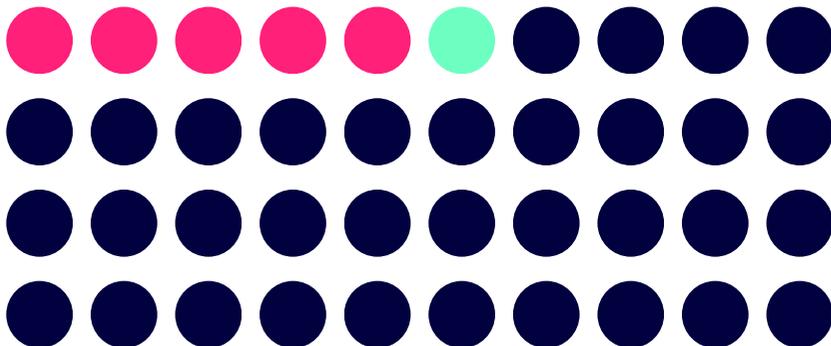
The above data is based on 292 MF survey respondents represented by the following individual data: Female (n=243), Male (n=49), Prefer to self describe as...(n=0), Prefer not to say (n=0). The data for comparison is taken from page 15 of Arts Council England's Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case published February 2020 at https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_DiversityReport_Final_03032020_o.pdf.

Who responded?

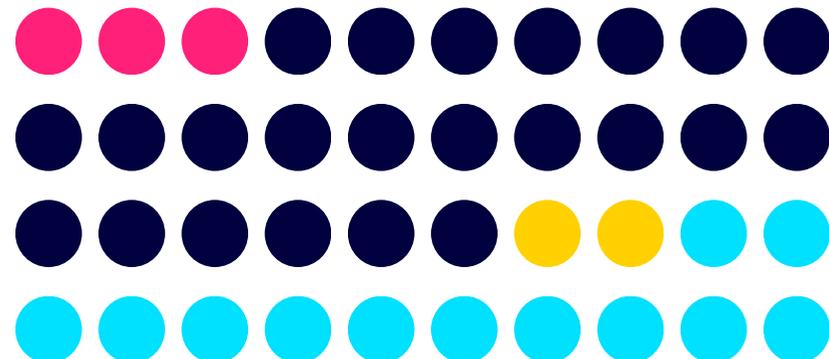
The Museum Freelance community indicatively includes a greater proportion of those with health problems or disabilities than in the PAYE museum workforce

We asked survey respondents whether their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. 16% identified as being limited a little/a lot with their activities (13% and 3% respectively). Although it's important to note that Arts Council England's data is reported differently, we can draw on their data for comparison (where 7% of the museum workforce identify as 'disabled'). As with gender, our survey's qualitative feedback includes several comments which describe how freelancing can be a positive and accessible option for those needing greater flexibility or home working to manage health problems or disabilities.

16% of respondents day to day activities are limited a little/a lot because of a health problem or disability (MF survey)



7% workforce identifying as 'disabled' (Arts Council England museum workforce data)



● Yes, limited a little ● Yes, limited a lot ● Not limited

● Disabled ● Non-disabled ● Prefer not to say ● Not known

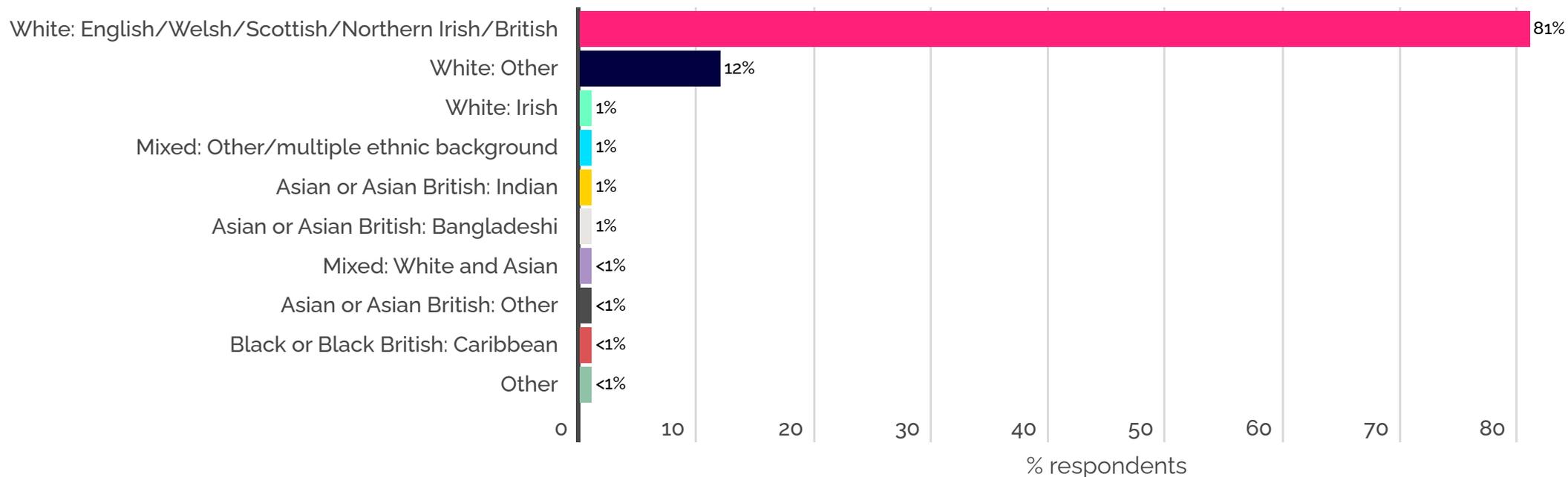


The above data is based on 292 MF survey respondents represented by the following individual data: Yes, limited a lot (n=8), Yes, limited a little (n=39), No (n=245), Prefer not to say (n=0). The data for comparison is taken from page 15 of Arts Council England's Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case published February 2020 at https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_DiversityReport_Final_03032020_0.pdf which reports Disabled (7%), Non-Disabled (58%), Prefer not to say (6%) and Not Known (29%).

Who responded?

Those identifying as White account for the majority of the Museum Freelance workforce

Given that the majority of freelance respondents have previously worked in the sector, it's unsurprising that the below findings reflect the same lack of staff diversity that we find in the museum PAYE workforce (as demonstrated by data such as that from Arts Council England* and raised by organisations such as Museum Detox** who champion fair representation and the inclusion of cultural, intellectual, and creative contributions from people of colour). The results suggest that routes into freelancing in the sector for people of colour - as well as support to progress, stay and thrive - are required, and echoes similar needs in the overall workforce.

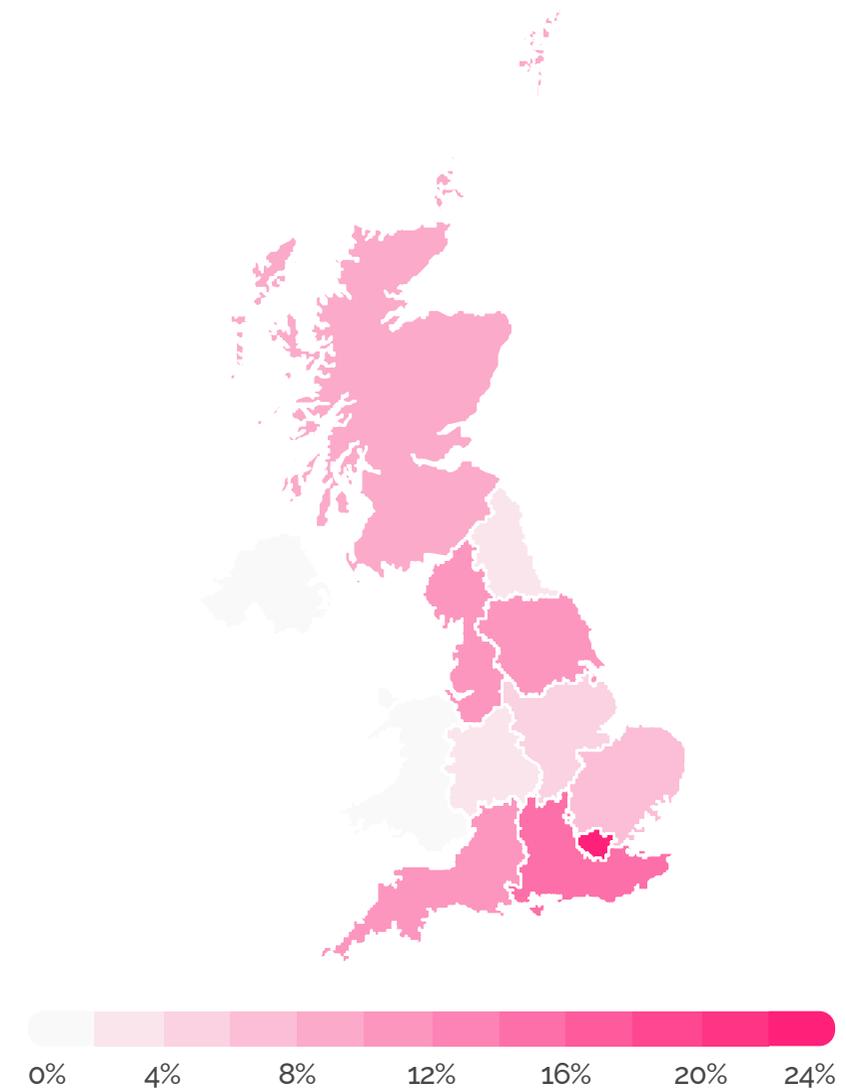


The above data is based on 292 MF survey respondents represented by the following individual data: White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British (n=236), White: Other (n=36), White Irish (n=3), Mixed: Other/multiple ethnic background (n=2), Asian or Asian British: Indian (n=2), Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (n=2), Mixed: White and Asian (n=1), Asian or Asian British (Other): n=1, Black or Black British: Caribbean (n=1), Other (n=1). Note that the survey question included other categories but those shown above are the only ones that were selected, with n=5 choosing prefer not to say. *The data for comparison is taken from Arts Council England's Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case report published February 2020 at https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_DiversityReport_Final_03032020_0.pdf. According to the Arts Council England (ACE) workforce data for NPO museums, 6% are described in the ACE data as 'BME', compared with 53% 'White' and 5% 'White Other' (with the remainder 'prefer not to say' and 'not known'). **<https://www.museumdetox.org/>

Who responded?

Our sample includes freelancers from the UK's four nations including each region of England, with nearly a quarter of respondents based in London

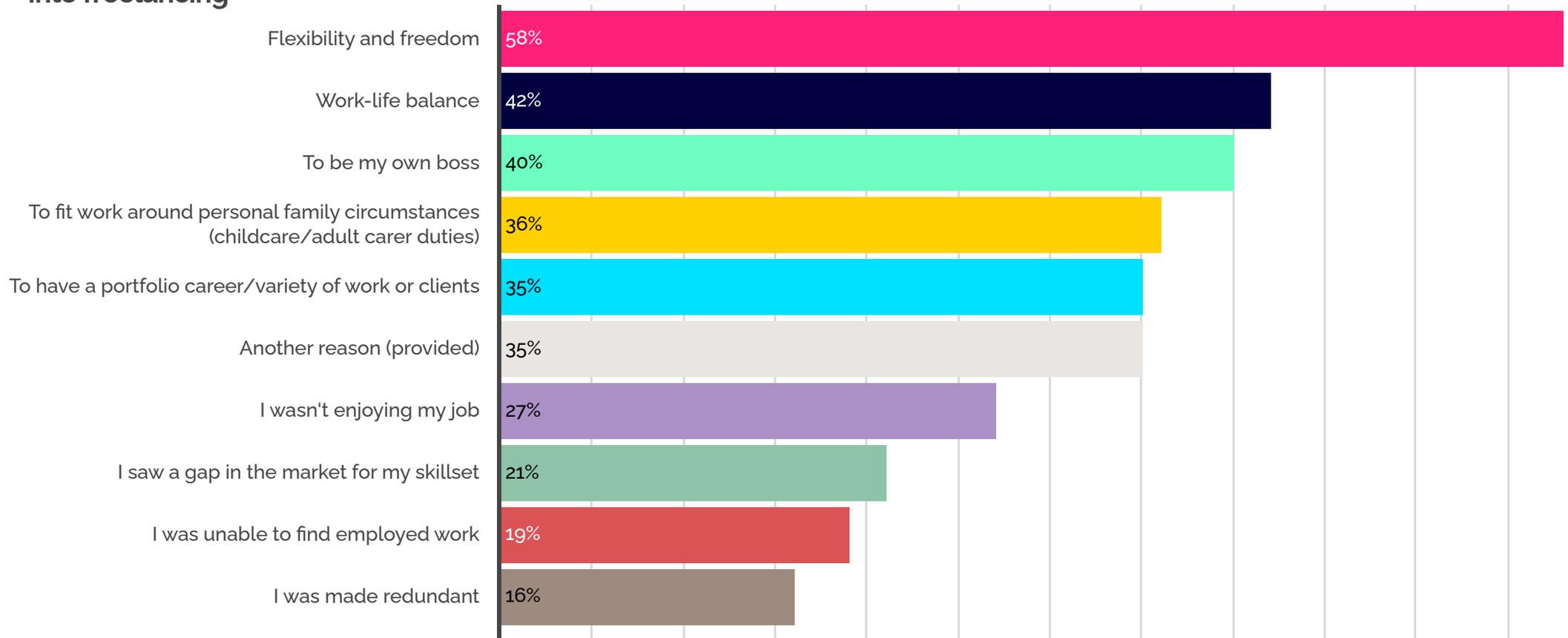
Location	%	n
England - London	24%	71
England - South East	15%	43
England - South West	11%	32
England - North West	10%	30
England - Yorkshire & Humber	10%	29
Scotland	8%	24
England - East Anglia	6%	17
England - East Midlands	5%	15
England - West Midlands	3%	10
England - North East	2%	7
Wales	1%	4
N Ireland	1%	2
Outside the UK but primarily work with UK clients	1%	3



 The above data represents 292 MF survey respondents answering this question. The above graph excludes those who chose 'prefer not to say.'

Motivations for going freelance

Flexibility and freedom, work-life balance and being your own boss are the top three motivations for taking the leap into freelancing



The above data is based on 313 MF survey respondents answering the question 'Why did you decide to go freelance (tick all that apply)?' and is represented by the following individual data: flexibility and freedom (n=181), work-life balance (n=133), to be my own boss (n=124), to fit around personal family circumstances (n=114), to have a portfolio career (n=109), another reason (n=109), I wasn't enjoying my job (n=85), I saw a gap in the market for my skillset (n=65), I was unable to find employed work (n=60), I was made redundant (n=49). 109 respondents chose 'another reason' and gave their own suggestions which commonly fell into 29 different themes. These included: to seek a better income, to combine interests, to reduce commute, to get back control, specific family circumstances, 'simply fell into it', to fit it around education, got headhunted, to increase knowledge/skills, lack of progression in PAYE role, lack of opportunities in local area, to better manage health and wellbeing, to pursue own projects/side hustles, it was the only option (due to role/hours on offer), to supplement part-time work, to publish, relocation, to do more remote working, to freelance during retirement/due to age, freelancing as being something that they've always done, to support a range of organisations, to use skills, to move away from specific office/work challenges e.g. bullying, redundancy likely. Some of the comments related to 'another reason' are included on page 22.

Motivations for going freelance



"To keep learning and develop new skills."

"I was only able to find a part-time temporary job in museums and had to find alternative ways of increasing my income."

"There weren't really alternative roles available at the time and with new family responsibilities I felt I was more likely to find a better balance and interesting work with reasonable remuneration for my skills working on a freelance basis."

"Like many women I got to 45+ and got squeezed out. It's a pattern. Research shows that women get to mid senior positions and leave. It's gendered ageism."

"I experienced a dramatic burn out and had to leave my in-house role. Initially I freelanced to make ends meet and because I didn't feel up to working in-house again."

"For someone over 50 with 20+ years experience, freelance work turned out to be easier to get."

"Only option for being paid for what I do at the museum. Being on payroll wasn't an option."

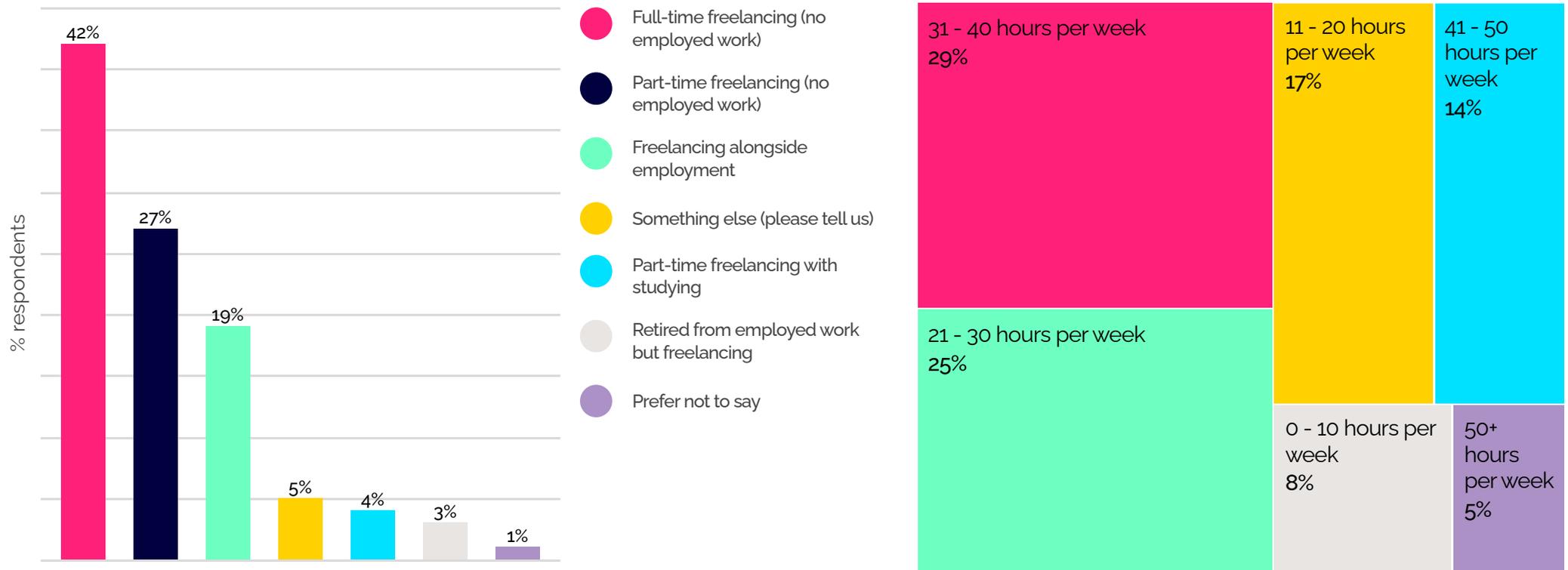
"To manage my health conditions and neuro diversity. Unable to work full time or for regular hours."

"Potential threat of redundancy. I wasn't going to hang around and wait."

Freelance hours

Half of respondents freelance part-time alongside other commitments such as PAYE work or study

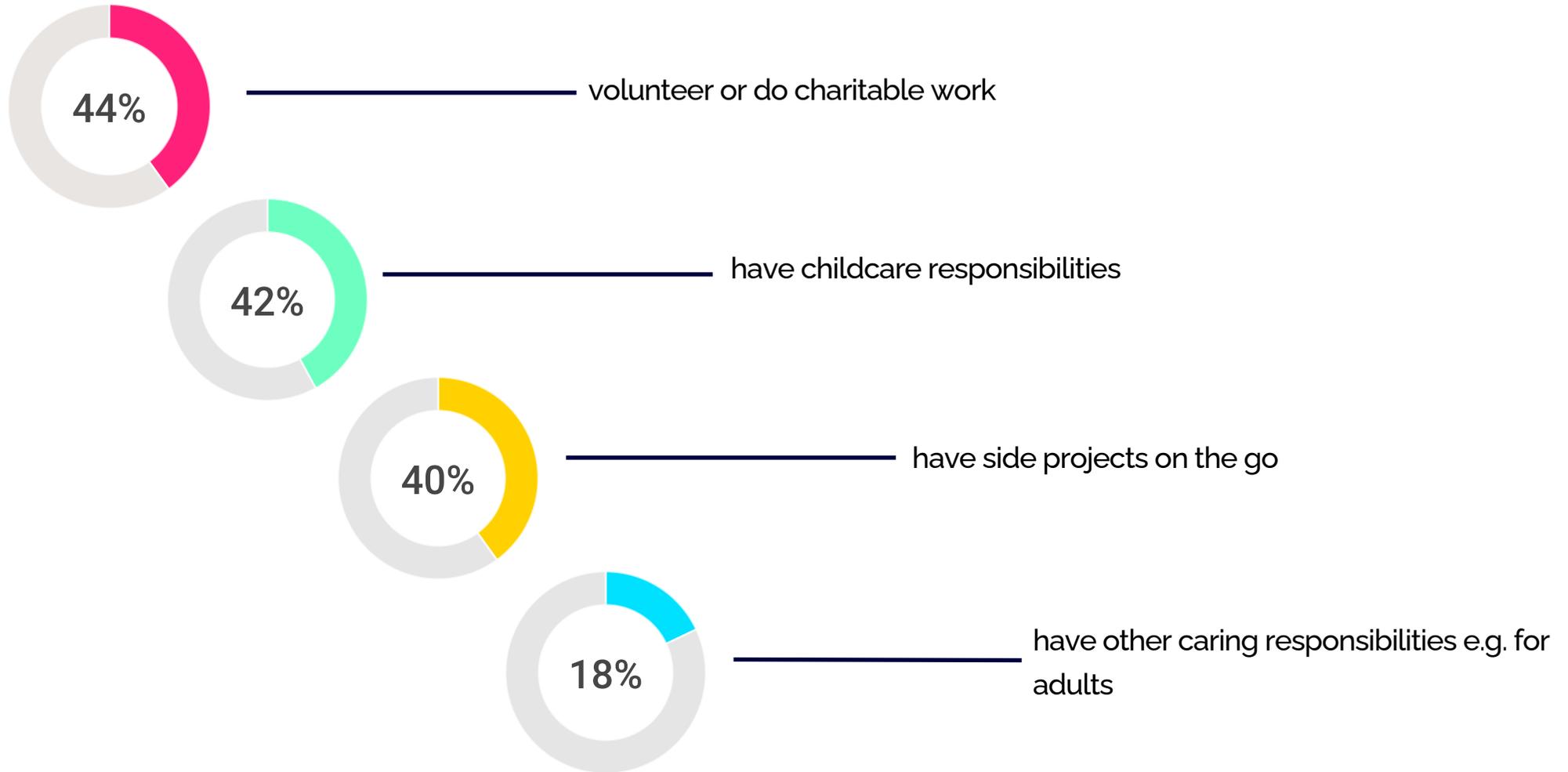
A total of 50% of respondents freelance part-time (either without any employed work, or alongside study) or freelance alongside employment. It suggests that freelancing is a popular (and/or necessary) option for those looking to supplement income or to work reduced hours to fit around other commitments in their lives*. Overall, 54% of respondents work between 21 - 40 hours per week.



The above data is based on 294 MF survey responses to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be...?' represented by the following individual data: full-time freelancing (no employed work) n=122, part-time freelancing (no employed work) n=80, freelancing alongside employment n=55, part-time freelancing with studying n=12, retired from employed work but freelancing n=8, something else n=15, prefer not to say n=2. Responses for 'something else' included combinations of the prescribed options, and circumstances where respondents were part-time temporarily (e.g. due to ill health) but were normally 'full time', or were 'employed' as a contractor by their organisation but were described as a freelancer. The above overall hours data is based on 292 MF survey responses, represented by the following individual data: 0 - 10 hours (n=24), 11 - 20 hours (n=49), 21 - 30 hours (n=73), 31 - 40 hours (n=84), 41 - 50 hours (n=41), 50 hours+ (n=16), prefer not to say (n=5). *See more on the rise in short-term contracts in the sector at https://ma-production.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/app/uploads/2020/06/18145318/ACE_Museums_Workforce_ABS_BOP_Final_Report.pdf

Freelance commitments

Freelancers juggle a range of other responsibilities, including 44% who volunteer or do charitable work

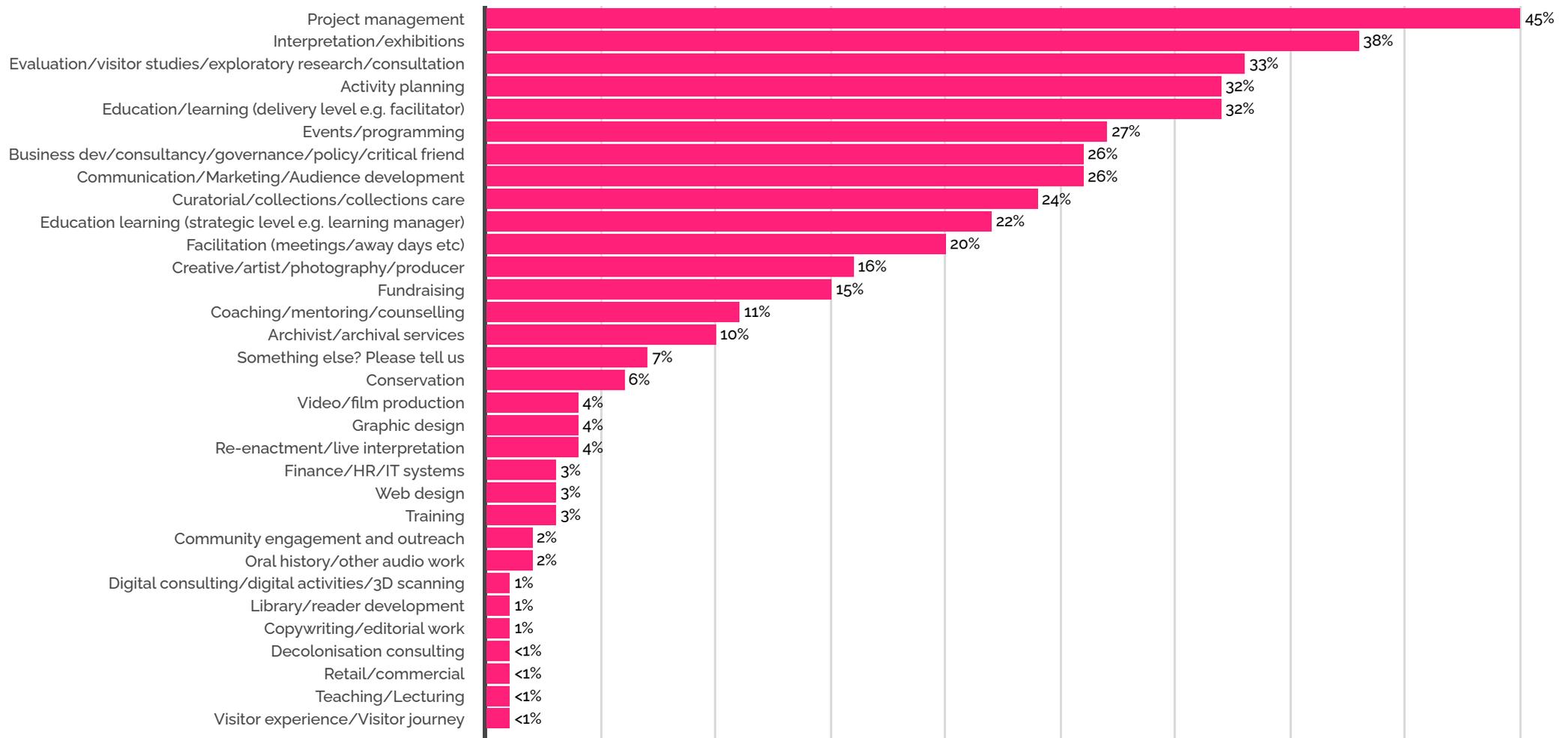


The above data is based on 255 MF survey responses to the question 'Do you have any of the following responsibilities to manage in addition to your freelance workload?' and is represented by the following individual data: volunteer or do charitable work (n=113), childcare responsibilities (n=108), side projects (n=101), other caring responsibilities e.g. for adults (n=47).

Freelance roles

Freelancers support organisations across all main strategic and operational delivery areas

From project management through to graphic design, freelancers are providing services in the fields below. This indicates the wide-ranging contribution that freelancers make across the sector and for organisations.



The above data is based on 300 MF survey respondents answering the question 'Which of the following types of freelance work do you offer (tick all that apply)?'. Those selecting 'something else' represent 21 respondents and includes services such as: archaeological assessment and recording, translation, renovation, historical research, volunteer adviser, local history/family research, setting up peer networks, report writing, administration.

Top 5 main freelance roles



1. Education/learning (13%)

at a delivery level e.g. facilitator



2. Interpretation/exhibitions (10%)

including design and advisory levels



3. Evaluation/visitor studies/audience consultation (10%)

including exploratory research



4. Project management (8%)



5. Communication/marketing/audience development (7%)

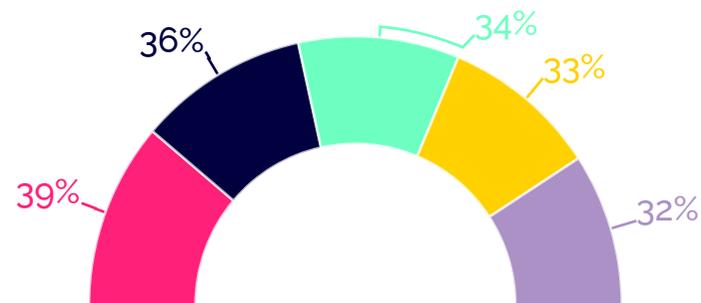


The above data is based on 300 MF survey responses to the question 'and which is the MAIN type of freelance work you do?' It is represented by the following individual data: education/learning (n=39), interpretation/exhibitions (n=30), evaluation/visitor studies/audience consultation (n=29), project management (n=24), communication/marketing/audience development (n=21).

Freelancers' additional contributions

36% of freelancers undertake unpaid, pro bono client work in the sector (e.g. supporting funding bids)

The findings demonstrate the value that freelancers add to the sector at no cost. For example, 39% share their knowledge for free in online fora; 34% speak at conferences or events; 32% mentor staff members at no charge; and a third are part of strategic teams such as trustee boards. Other free contributions mentioned included: answering questions from members of the workforce thinking about going freelance; volunteering at events; supporting work experience programmes, internships or career events; and running other groups such as collectives/networks. It is difficult to estimate the value of this unpaid support without knowing more about the total hours spent on each type of contribution made.



● Sharing advice/knowledge in online fora or social media (e.g. #MuseumHour)

● Pro bono client work in sector (e.g. over-servicing, support funding bids) ● Speaking at conferences/events (unpaid)

● Trustee/Board/Committee membership ● Mentoring (unpaid)

 The above data is based on 298 MF survey responses to the question 'Do you contribute any unpaid/voluntary time to the sector in any of the following ways (please tick all that apply)?' It is represented by the following individual data: sharing advice/knowledge in online fora or social media (n=117), pro bono client work in sector e.g. over-servicing (n=108), speaking at conferences/events (unpaid) (n=100), Trustee/Board/Committee membership (n=99), mentoring (n=95). Not shown above but also within the data set: writing articles/contributing thought pieces (n=72), another way (n=56). 16% (n=48) stated they do not contribute any unpaid/voluntary time to the sector and n=2 stated they preferred not to say.

Freelancers' additional contributions



"I'm a volunteer conservator for an organisation that can't afford one."

"I run a major museum event for free."

"I often end up doing voluntary hours in other areas for the organisations I'm working with."

"Social media page for a network."

"Keeping projects going voluntarily in between funding."

"A lot of work I do requires me to answer emails, have phone call meetings in my own time."

"Helping with volunteer-led events."

"I have done informal mentoring on community engagement, fundraising, and organisational change which has been running alongside specific paid tasks."

Freelance day rates

The survey asked respondents to provide their average day rate/day rate equivalent: it's therefore important to be cautious when reviewing the below results, because although freelancers may officially charge a particular day rate, our qualitative findings indicate that freelancers have a tendency to overservice. This means their actual day rate would - in reality - be much lower than that reported.

Given the numerous recent reports on the gender pay gap* we had wanted to explore whether there is any disparity in day rates within the museum freelance community. However, when we look at the responses of those identifying as male with their day rates, the sample size is too low to draw any robust conclusions.**

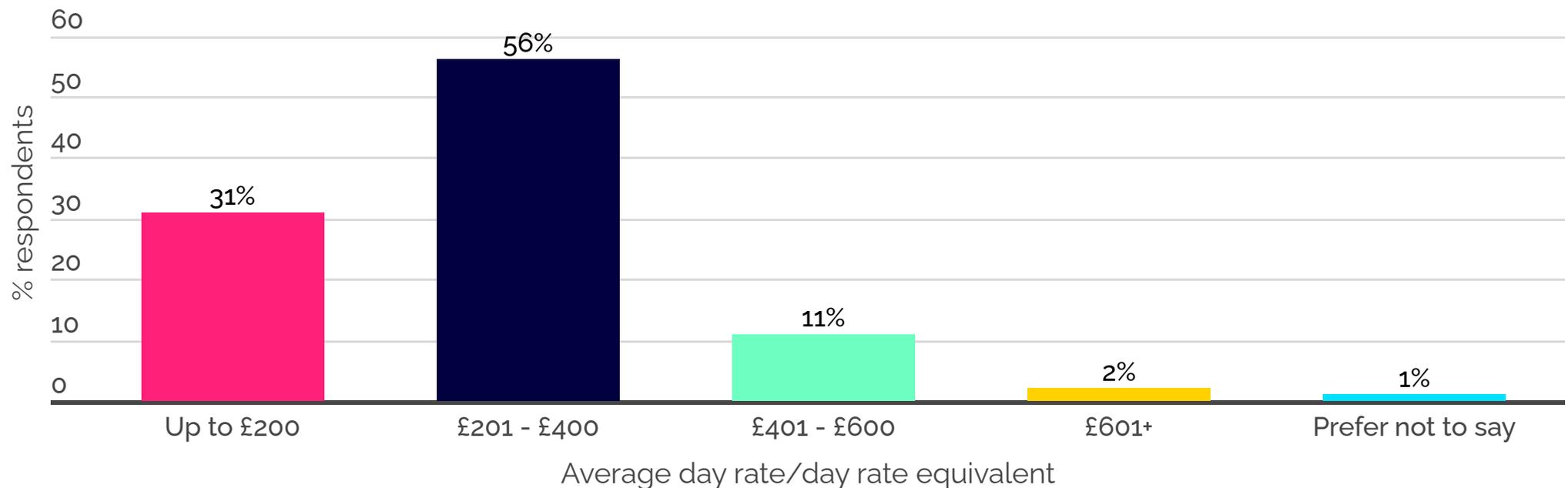


*For example, see https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Character_Matters_UK_Museum_Workforce_full_report.pdf and <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06838/>.
**Notwithstanding this caveat, the findings suggest that a higher proportion of those identifying as female charging lower day rates than those identifying as male. 34% (n=83) of respondents identifying as female charge up to £200 per day (compared with 10% or n=5 of respondents identifying as male). And 53% (n=126) of respondents identifying as female charge £201-£400 (compared with 73% or n=36 of respondents identifying as male). Indicatively, this greater proportion could be explained in the variation between freelance role types, or conversely indicates a gender pay gap like those reflected in some of the annual pay reports submitted to the UK government by cultural organisations.

Freelance day rates

56% of freelancers charge £201 - £400 per day for their time

Overall the survey findings indicate that freelancers are charging a wide range of rates, with 31% charging up to £200, 56% charging £201 - £400, 11% charging £401 - £600 and 2% charging more than £601. This data is interesting but it's only useful to a point - we need to examine fees by freelance role which are shown on page 32. Although caution must be given due to the small numbers per role, data suggests that freelancers doing the same roles are charging a range of different fees. It is unclear whether this variation is due to freelancers using different pricing models, variable client or funder pressure, a lack of standardised rates for particular roles, or a lack of understanding about how to set an appropriate day rate.



The above data is based on 299 MF survey responses to the question 'Thinking back over the last 12 months, what is the average day rate/day rate equivalent you charge for your main type of work? We appreciate that your fee may vary depending on a variety of factors and may differ between projects.' It is represented by the following individual data: Up to £200 (n=91), £201 - £400 (n=165), £401 - £600 (n=33), £601+ (n=7), prefer not to say (n=3).

Freelance day rates by role

Type/day rate (presented by number of respondents)	Under £100	£100-£150	£151-£200	£201-£250	£251-£300	£301-£350	£351-£400	£401-£450	£451-£500	£501-£550	£551-£600	£601-£650	£650+	Prefer not to say
Activity planning	0	0	0	1	0	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Archivist/archival services	0	3	2	4	0	2	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Business development/consultancy/governance/policy/critical friend	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	2	4	2	1	2	0	0
Communication/marketing/audience development	1	2	0	6	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	0	1	0
Community engagement and outreach	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conservation	0	0	1	3	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Copywriting/editorial work	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Creative/artist/photography/producer	1	4	4	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Curatorial including interdisciplinary curation/collections/collections care/exhibitions (including practical & advisory)	1	2	2	6	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Decolonisation consulting	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Digital consulting/digital activities/3D scanning	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Education/learning (delivery level e.g. facilitator)	9	7	13	8	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education/learning (strategic level e.g. learning manager)	2	3	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Evaluation/visitor studies/exploratory research/consultation	0	0	1	3	6	4	12	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Events/programming	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



The above data is based on 283 MF survey responses comparing the two questions: 'Thinking back over the last 12 months, what is the average day rate/day rate equivalent you charge for your main type of work?' and 'Which is the MAIN type of freelance work you do?'. Note that this table excludes those selecting 'something else' (n=16) as their main type of freelance role. The data represents the number of respondents (n) rather than % for transparency of the sample size.

Freelance day rates by role (cont'd)

Type/day rate (presented by number of respondents)	Under £100	£100-£150	£151-£200	£201-£250	£251-£300	£301-£350	£351-£400	£401-£450	£451-£500	£501-£550	£551-£600	£601-£650	£650+	Prefer not to say
Facilitation (meetings/away days etc)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Finance/HR/IT systems	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Fundraising	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graphic design	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interpretation/exhibitions	0	1	1	8	4	6	5	3	1	0	1	0	0	0
Library/reader development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oral history/other audio work	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Project management	1	5	6	2	4	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Re-enactment/live interpretation	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teaching/lecturing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Training	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Video/media production	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total number respondents (n)	18	32	34	56	33	33	35	11	9	6	6	4	3	3

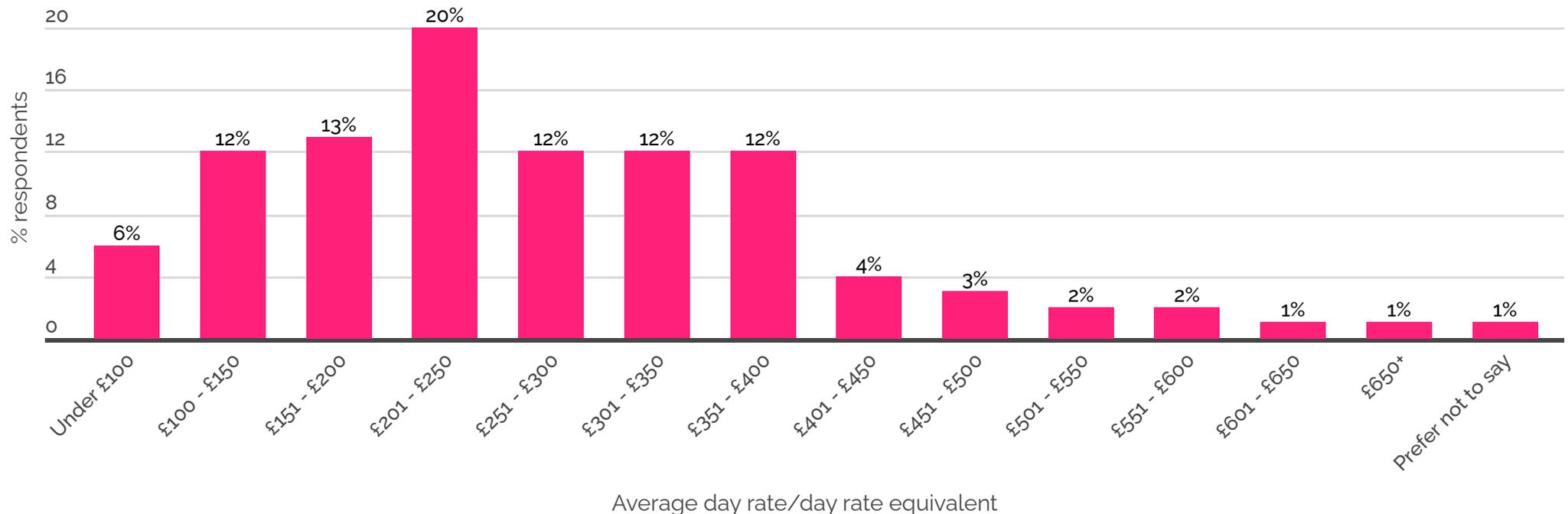


The above data is based on 283 MF survey responses comparing the two questions: 'Thinking back over the last 12 months, what is the average day rate/day rate equivalent you charge for your main type of work?' and 'Which is the MAIN type of freelance work you do?'. Note that this table excludes those selecting 'something else' (n=16) as their main type of freelance role. The data represents the number of respondents (n) rather than % for transparency of the sample size.

Freelance day rates

31% charge £200 or less, with 6% charging under £100 and 18% under £150

We are really concerned with the prevalence of the lowest day rates. Accounting for the costs a freelancer incurs (e.g. insurance, equipment costs, professional memberships and services, travel, marketing, training and so on); tax; that they are not paid for days off or sick days; and that ca. 20-40% of their time is generally not spent on fee-earning work (rather new business development, finance and accountancy, marketing, training, office admin, IT trouble-shooting etc.), the lowest day rates can end up providing an income that equates to an actual hourly rate which is around (or even below) the minimum wage.



The above data is based on 299 MF survey responses to the question 'Thinking back over the last 12 months, what is the average day rate/day rate equivalent you charge for your main type of work? We appreciate that your fee may vary depending on a variety of factors and may differ between projects.' It is represented by the following individual data: Under £100 (n=18), £100-150 (n=35), £151-200 (n=38), £201-250 (n=60), £251-300 (n=35), £301-350 (n=35), £351-400 (n=35), £401 - 450 (n=11), £451-450 (n=10), £501-550 (n=6), £551-600 (n=6), £601 - 650 (n=4), £650+ (n=3), prefer not to say (n=3).

Satisfaction with day rates



60%

of respondents feel they are '**sometimes**' paid an appropriate day rate



21%

of respondents **do not** feel that they are paid an appropriate day rate



19%

of respondents feel that they **are** paid an appropriate day rate

 The above data is based on 299 MF survey responses to the question 'Do you feel that you are paid an appropriate day rate for the work you do?' It is represented by the following individual data: Yes (n=56), No (n=62), Sometimes (e.g. it depends on the project, if you unexpectedly over-service etc) (n=179), prefer not to say (n=2).

Freelance day rates

"Reality is that I usually work more than the contracted number of days, but there's pressure to deliver good value for money in a competitive environment."

"Few managers understand what a day rate actually means. I've had people multiply my rate by 365 and think they've arrived at my annual salary! And poor project briefs that make it hard to estimate the number of days I'll need are the bane of my life."

"I think we feel guilty for charging our worth some times. So we give more than we are paid to do."

"I offer a sliding scale depending on the nature of the work, the quantity, and the client, and overall I feel very well paid."

"I am comfortable on my day rate but cannot save for a pension at the moment."

"Mostly happy with my day rate but sometimes I feel compelled to offer a much lower rate in order to secure the work and/or deliver more than promised for the fees."



Freelance day rates



"It is very difficult to gauge what is a reasonable amount and there is little guidance in the sector both for freelancers and for those contracting them. "

"Some day rates are too low to provide a living wage."

"In the planning and budgeting of projects across the sector there needs to be a massive shift in thinking for freelance careers to be sustainable and to recognise the financial risks freelancers take on doing highly skilled work."

"I am always flexible with my rates and most of my work is based on a flat fee. I try to check in to ensure I am on a par with others. Occasionally I have been approached about work which would equate to less than min wage - to me this highlights a need to raise awareness of the costs incurred by freelancers."

"Greater awareness about what freelancers provide would help raise expectations of freelancer fees which need to cover pension, sickness, tax insurance, resources and travel above the actual work carried out."

"The work is often underpaid when the actual hours are tallied."

Freelance day rates

"I feel my skills are worth more but I want to remain accessible to smaller organisations."

"I've not put my day rates up for years despite higher cost of travel etc. I am concerned that I won't win pitches if I put the day rate up - fees haven't risen at all either."

"I quote a low day rate and promise many days of work, knowing I can in fact do the work in fewer days. That's so I seem cheap and they pick me, but in reality my day/pay ratio is higher than it seems. "

"It would be great if more organisations would check day rates before they just 'picked a figure out of the air' when applying for funding that included freelancer/consultant fees."

"You get a sense sometimes that people think freelancers are overpaid, but they don't consider all the outgoings, such as IT, accountancy, office rental etc and all the unpaid time it takes to secure work."

"In reality you only earn about 1/3 of the fee when you take into account all the outgoings and unpaid work required."



Freelance day rates



"In the planning and budgeting of projects across the sector on small and large scale projects there needs to be a massive shift in thinking for freelance careers to be sustainable and to recognise the financial risks freelancers take on doing highly skilled work. This would mean we are able to build up cash reserves to support emergency situations like the one we are in, instead of already working in debt, with impossible challenges of buying property, being able to save for extra training to upskill further and invest in yourself as a business."

"I almost always find I end up spending more than the time than I/the client have budgeted for. Sometimes this is due to enthusiasm for the project/desire to get the best possible outcome, but also there are often more meetings, phone calls and prep/research time than anticipated. It can be difficult to put all of this on a quote and remain competitive. This is partly why a decent day rate is so important."

"Some clients will pay my ideal day rate, others won't. I weigh up whether to take on the work on many aspects: fee, do I like the client, will it lead to other work, does the project interest me, does it stretch me, how skint am I feeling etc."

"Influential funders should be paying fair rates and ensuring their grantees do the same. And there should be a principle of refusing adverts for any job or contract that doesn't offer an appropriate rate of pay. That would be a start!"

Freelancers' challenges with fees

There are several challenges and concerns that need urgently addressing in relation to fees, including a lack of understanding of how day rates are calculated, inappropriate day rates and over-servicing

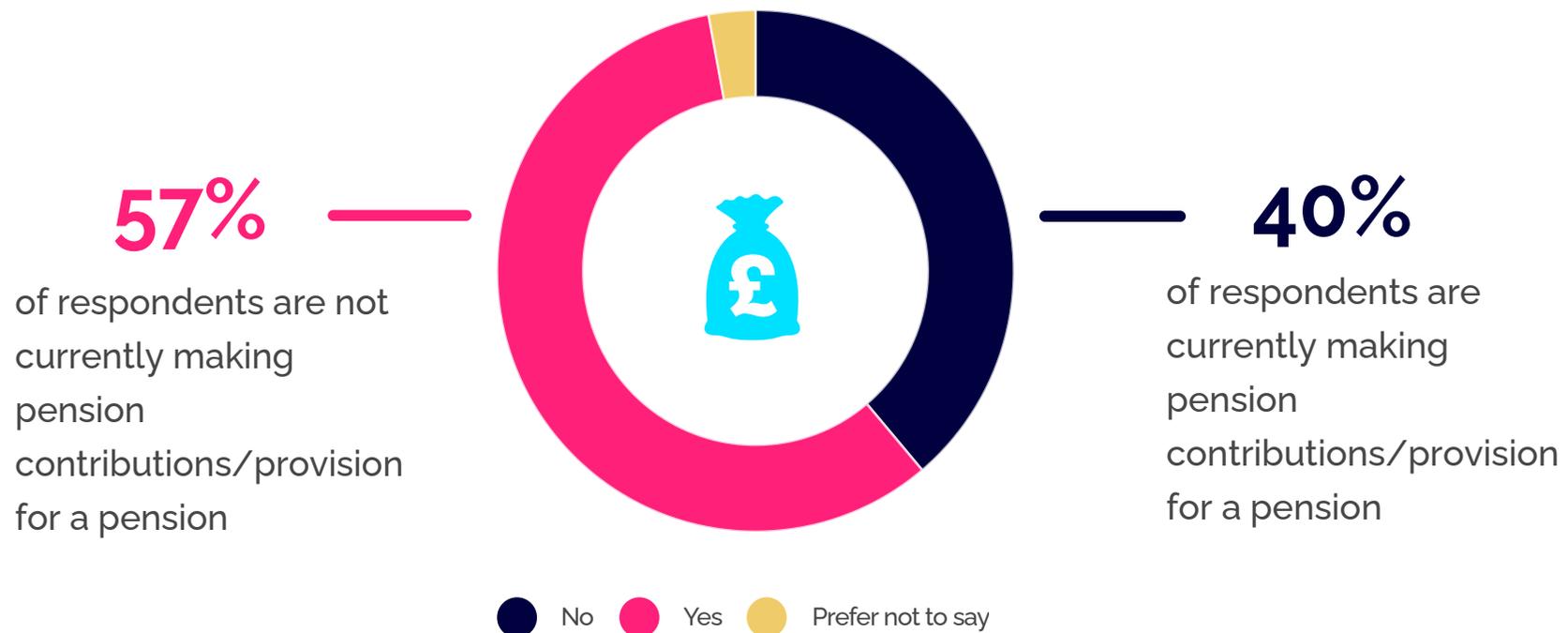
The examples of respondent feedback on the preceding pages reflect commonly occurring themes within the qualitative data on fees and day rates. These can be summarised as:

- **A genuine lack of understanding by some freelancers and organisations about how a day rate is calculated and what it comprises** e.g. inclusive of overheads (such as insurance), sick days, unbillable hours (spent on areas like marketing, training, new business pitches, finances and administration). And a lack of sector standardised/consistent guidance on this available for cultural freelancers.
- **Freelancers regularly over-servicing because projects take longer than originally estimated by either the freelancer/client.** Typically this 'project creep' is attributed to poor client briefs, client requests for more work than originally agreed, or under-estimations by the freelancer themselves e.g. due to a lack of experience. In both cases, the freelancer typically absorbs this additional cost/time rather than asking the client to increase the budget - and in turn this results in them working for a reduced day rate.
- **Suggested rates in client briefs and published rates by some Sector Support Organisations and funders are deemed to be too low** and not constructed based on an appropriate calculation as outlined above.
- **Freelancers often charge less than they ordinarily would because they empathise with organisations** who have less budget and want to remain affordable.
- **Freelancers charge less to just get the work/get a foot in the door,** even though they know they're worth more.
- **Freelancers suggest that sector organisations perceive freelancers are charging too high rates/earning a lot.** Again, this potentially arises from a lack of understanding about what comprises a day rate.

Pensions

Over half of respondents are not currently making pension contributions/provision for a pension

The Association for Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed claim that 69% of the self-employed workforce are not saving into a pension* and there are regular articles in the media warning of the 'looming' pension crisis for the self-employed. So how do freelancers working in museums, libraries, galleries, heritage sites and archives compare? Our survey finds that 57% are not currently paying into a pension or making some form of pension provision. As one respondent described, the issue is not necessarily about putting money aside, it's about finding the right kind of advice and knowing which pension to choose. The results indicate that greater support, guidance and encouragement is needed to ensure freelancers do make appropriate provision.



 The above data is based on 297 MF survey responses to the question 'Are you currently making pension contributions/provision for a pension through whatever means?' It is represented by the following individual data: Yes (n=118), No (n=169), prefer not to say (n=10). <https://www.ipse.co.uk/ipse-news/news-listing/how-to-solve-the-self-employed-pensions-crisis.html>

Propensity to continue freelancing

This survey was completed by respondents in the very early stages of the Covid-19 lockdown and at the time of publishing this report (six months on) there is more awareness of the longer-term implications of Covid-19 on the sector

Anecdotally and from applications to the Museum Freelance Covid-19 Hardship Fund*, we know there is enormous anxiety among freelancers, as what was already a precarious income stream has now become decimated and potentially unviable for many.

Cultural organisations are facing massive financial difficulties and a battle to survive. Many can't reopen while social distancing is in place, and for those that do, they face reduced takings from tickets, donations, shops and cafes while visitor numbers are restricted. Whilst budgets are so tight, organisations' abilities to commission freelancers has understandably been impacted. Many funders have diverted funding to emergency grants, making the prospect of the usual freelance work from project funding sources seem less likely.

A lot of freelancers are considering (or already) applying for freelance or employed work in other sectors as they need income and realise that it may be a long time before they will be able to operate a sustainable freelancing business in the cultural sector as they did pre-lockdown.

As a result, we recognise that the results on propensity to continue freelancing on the following pages are likely to have changed since the survey was carried out. Therefore caution must be drawn when considering these findings.

 *<https://www.museumfreelance.org/news-and-views/2020/9/18/the-museum-freelance-covid-19-hardship-fund-update>

Propensity to continue freelancing

The majority of freelancers report that they are likely to be freelancing this time next year (March/April 2021)



- Very likely to be freelancing
- Likely to be freelancing
- Unlikely to be freelancing
- Very unlikely to be freelancing

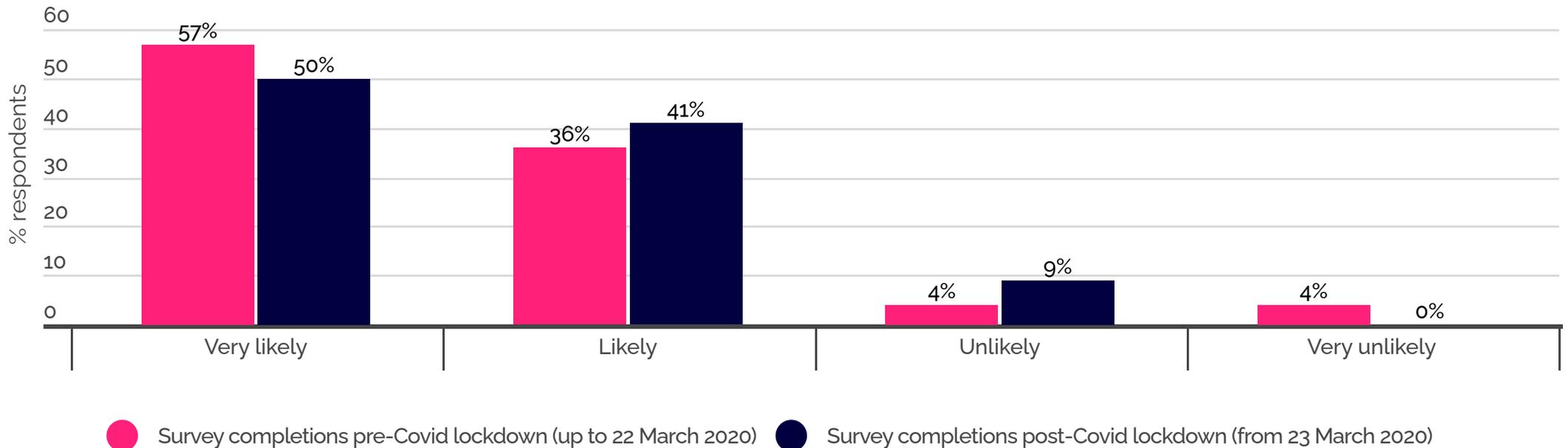


The above data is based on 308 MF survey responses to the question 'How likely are you to be freelancing at this time next year?' It is represented by the following individual data: Very likely (n=171), Likely (n=113), Unlikely (n=16), Very unlikely (n=8).

Propensity to continue freelancing

Covid-19 is likely to have negatively impacted on responses about freelancing next year

Months in the planning, we launched our survey on 13 March 2020 before the UK's Covid-19 lockdown, with a closing date of 30 April 2020. Although the majority of responses were prior to lockdown, they unexpectedly straddle both pre- and post scenarios which could potentially have impacted on the findings. The below graph therefore shows responses completed before and after the UK lockdown. Whilst we cannot directly attribute the rise in 'unlikely' (up from 4% to 9%) or the drop in 'very likely' (down from 57% to 50%) to Covid-19, the qualitative feedback from respondents post-lockdown suggests that the pandemic has had some influence on these results. It indicates that the confidence of freelancers in our sector had already been negatively affected back in spring 2020 by the pandemic and its detrimental impact on creative and cultural organisations (and in turn its freelancer workforce).



The above data is based on 276 MF survey responses to the question 'How likely are you to be freelancing at this time next year?' cross-tabulated with time period data (pre-Covid lockdown - responses before and up to 22 March, and post-lockdown 23 March onwards). It is represented by the following individual data: Pre-lockdown: very likely (n=113), likely (n=72), unlikely (n=8), very unlikely (n=7). Post-lockdown: very likely (n=38), likely (n=31), unlikely (n=7), very unlikely (n=0). 200 completions prior to lockdown, 76 completions after.

Propensity to continue freelancing

(Pre-lockdown 13 - 22 March)

"I love it! I love the flexibility and being my own boss. I see my work as helping my clients and am reaping the benefit of building relationships - I'm asked to get involved in more and more interesting work. I don't want to be part of office politics again."

"I just can't do it anymore, it's too hard on me mentally."

"The flexibility suits me and I have no desire to change it."

"I'm enjoying it, slowly building up a client base and think there is more work that I could do. It also fits really well with family life and childcare and that isn't going to change significantly for a good few years."

"If the right opportunity came along, I would consider giving up freelance work for steady employment that was also a fresh challenge."

"Even though some months can be tough - the way in which I work supports my life, wellbeing and growing family."

"I will be freelancing but not in the same sector, I can't earn enough and have re-trained."



Propensity to continue freelancing

(Post-lockdown 23 March - 30 April)



"I'd like to continue freelancing, but it will be subject to having the contracts from organisations - and if their budgets are strained due to Covid-19, this may impact my position."

"It feels very precarious. I don't know what the sector will be like in 12 months time or if I can find a place in it."

"Because of my health issues, it is very unlikely that I will be out of lockdown until a vaccine is available freely. Best part of a decade building a business, client list, respect within the industry, lost."

"Dependant of course on the economic recovery from Corona pandemic, museums will put on exhibitions and will need contractors to fill those places left by staff cuts."

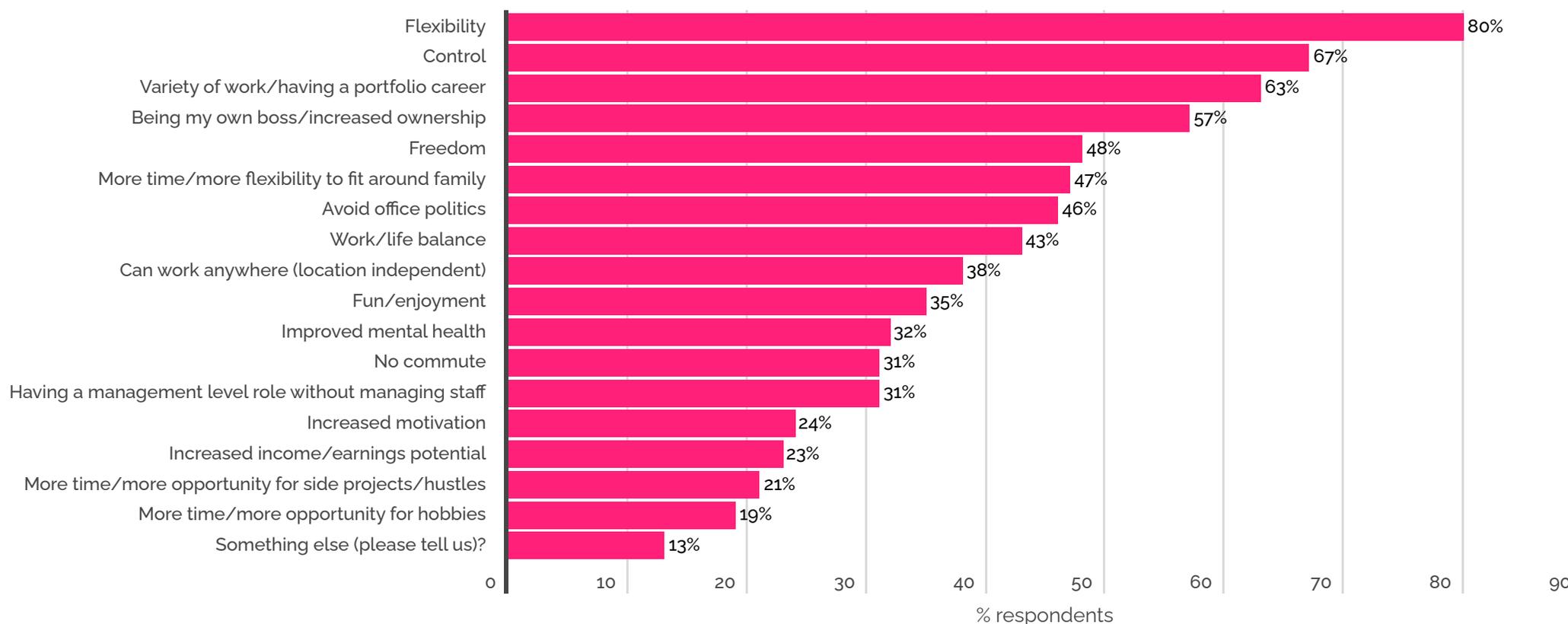
"I would certainly love to be, as I've built up my freelance career over the last 15 years. However, I work in education and events. With Covid 19, I think my career is going to suffer for years to come. I might need to try to find a part time PAYE job."

"I suspect there will be a big dip in freelance work - most of my work over the past few years has been ACE or HLF/NLHF funded and that money has all been diverted to emergency funds. I wouldn't be surprised if this time next year I was doing at least some work outside of museum freelancing whilst the sector builds itself back up again."

Benefits to freelancing

Freelancers benefit from a range of factors with flexibility, control and variety of work the most popular responses

89% of respondents either strongly agree or agree with the statement 'I enjoy freelancing within the cultural sector'. The below graph outlining the benefits to freelancing gives some context as to why that might be, including work/life balance (43%), improved mental health (32%) and fun/enjoyment (35%).



The above data is based on 313 MF survey responses to the question 'Which are the main benefits of freelancing (tick all that apply)? It is represented by the following individual data: Flexibility (n=251), Control (n=211), Variety of work/having a portfolio career (n=198), Being my own boss/increased ownership (n=179), Freedom (n=149), More time/more flexibility to fit around family (n=148), Avoid office politics (n=144), Work/life balance (n=134), Can work anywhere (location independent) (n=120), Fun/enjoyment (n=111), Improved mental health (n=100), No commute (n=97), Having a management level role without managing staff (n=96), Increased motivation (n=76), Increased income/earnings potential (n=73), More time/more opportunity for side projects/hustles (n=65), More time/more opportunity for hobbies (n=59). 'Something else' (n=42) responses included: accomodating health problems/disability including adapting physical environment, offering unique skills/focus on being a specialist, "there are no benefits to freelancing", focus on meaningful work, 'less management bother', no choice as no PAYE jobs as an artist, autonomy/choosing own pathway, getting paid, to widen skill set, less travel, creativity, perceived discrimination in PAYE roles e.g. pay gap/gender/ethnicity, working with people they choose, being able to pursue study, opportunity to collaborate with other freelancers, facing new challenges that would not occur in PAYE roles. The data for the statement 'I enjoy freelancing within the cultural sector' is based on 302 responses and is represented by the following: Strongly agree (n=140), Agree (131), Neither agree nor disagree (21), Disagree (n=10), Strongly disagree (n=0).

Benefits to freelancing



"Experience working with lots of different organisations and increasing my network and inspiration sources."

"To accommodate my health issues and neuro diversity - mostly I can work when I am able, and not work when I can't. Though this does leave me very exposed, with no safety net for illness and reduced earnings."

"Living in a geographically rural place more work opportunities for a sustained career."

"I have not found that freelancing brings many of these supposed benefits. I haven't seen much flexibility, control, freedom or increased earnings. You work when you can get it, you work on the client's terms, and with all of the dead time there is no increased income."

"Creativity - I enjoy the more creative opportunities that freelancing provides."

"I get to go behind the scenes with all sorts of organisations. I love hearing their stories."

"Driving my own agenda, rather than someone else's. Being in control."

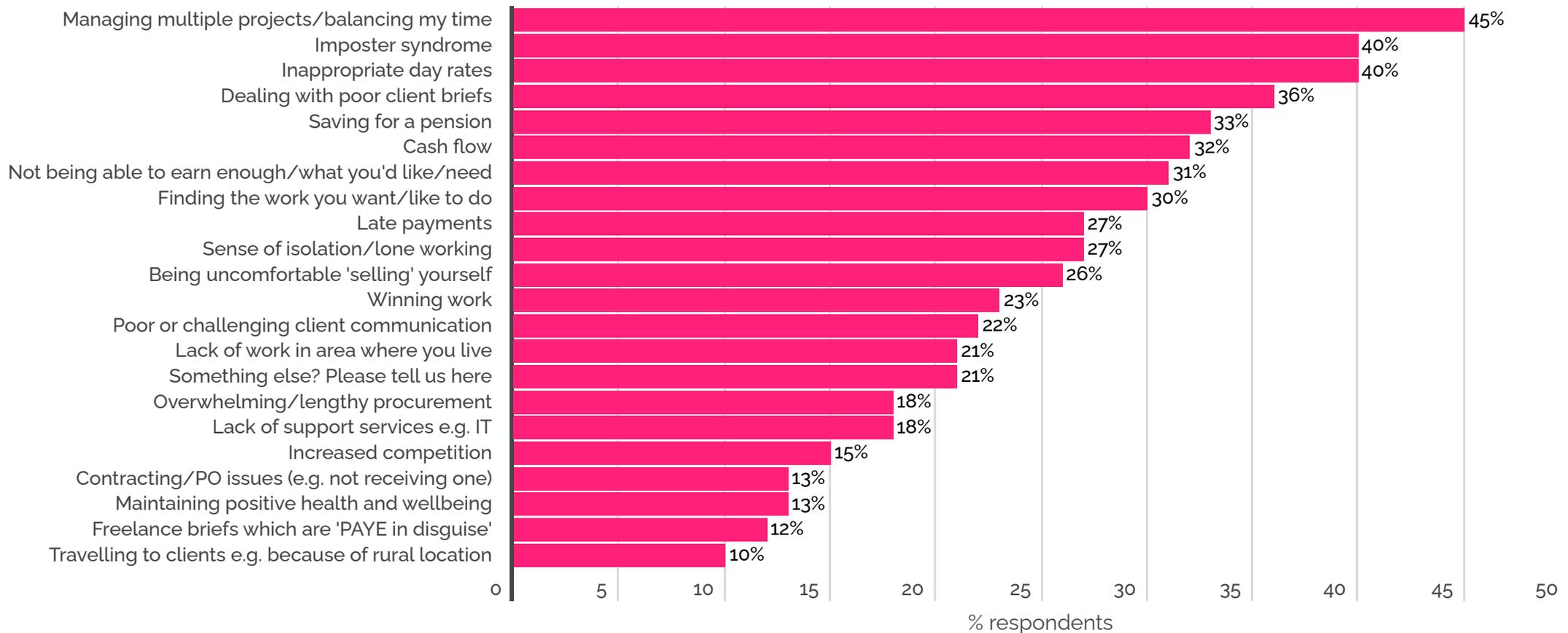
"Meeting some fantastic clients."

"Opportunity to collaborate with other freelancers."

"Ability to pursue higher education at the same time."

Freelance challenges

The top 3 freelancer challenges are balancing time, imposter syndrome and inappropriate day rates



The above data is based on 309 MF survey responses to the question 'Thinking back over the last 12 months, what have been the main challenges for you as a freelancer? (Tick all that apply.)' It is represented by the following individual data: Managing multiple projects/balancing my time (n=139), Imposter syndrome (n=125), Inappropriate day rates (n=125), Dealing with poor client briefs (e.g. vague, too short, too long, missing information) (n=112), Saving for a pension (n=103), Cash flow (n=99), Not being able to earn enough/what you'd like or need (n=96), Finding the work you want/like to do/in your specialist area (n=92), Late payments (n=83), Sense of isolation/lone working (n=82), Being uncomfortable 'selling' yourself (n=81), Winning work (n=71), Poor or challenging client communication (n=68), Lack of work in area where you live (and/or are willing to commute to) (n=64), Something else (please tell us) (n=64), Overwhelming/unduly lengthy procurement processes (n=55), Lack of support services (n=55), Increased competition (n=45), Contracting/PO issues (n=40), Maintaining positive health and wellbeing (n=39), Freelance briefs which are 'PAYE in disguise' i.e. they should be advertised as employed roles' (n=38), Travelling to clients e.g. because of poor public transport., rural location of your base/client, expense of car (n=32). Responses for 'something else' included: project creep, lack of client engagement, Covid-19 cancelled work (and lack of communication from clients about this), balancing work projects, bullying, appropriate day rates, no HR function with client, no clear management from client, attempts from client to cancel at the last minute/clients pulling out of work, organisations taking freelance ideas and then getting PAYE employed staff to carry them out, relying on a small number of clients for the majority of income (i.e. not spreading the risk of non-payment by having a larger client base), less exercise, obtaining effective and accessible CPD/training (often not open to freelancers), finessing offer, creating boundaries between home/work life, saying 'no' (e.g. to clients/projects), security, stagnation (personal and in sector), talking about fees, changes in education within galleries meaning fewer freelancers are employed, lack of security, having 'downtime', lack of advice about going freelance/starting out, over-servicing, expectation of free work, 'no challenges', clients not understanding life as a freelancer, gaps between contracts, intellectual property (with most tenders stipulating before awarding the contract that they will have copyright), global context/Brexit, finding/working with staff who are unwilling to work 'out of the box', lack of sickness related benefits.

Freelance challenges



"Being contracted to projects that then slip, leaving me with unused capacity. Having to make tough decisions about turning things down (a nice problem to have, but still hard)."

"Always having to tender and interview for new projects - feels like I'm constantly having to prove myself and I'm constantly being judged."

"Covid-19 and having all my work for this year cancelled. Lack of communication from my clients about this."

"Finding that places rely on their pool of freelancers - so it's difficult to get into a new organisation."

"I work from home and not having a commute means far less exercise and, although I try to have breaks, I have neck/back issues from sitting at my desk too much."

"Right now it's the entire shut down of my business. Most of my work is with organisations that have been closed due to coronavirus. I have had no income for the last 6 weeks."

"The amount of unpaid time that needs to go into preparing tender briefs and interviews...is an increasing problem and I don't think procuring bodies think about what it costs freelancers. Also - with no evidence for this - I sometimes have the strong feeling that opportunities are tendered to appear open when a decision on who to use has pretty much already been made."

Freelance challenges

"Creating strong boundaries between work and home life."

"Difficulty saying no to projects - in some ways it seems more difficult to end a project or refuse it in the first place when self-employed than leaving a job would be."

"Daily rates have not increased since I started working in the sector 20 years ago. In fact, in some areas they have decreased. There are also more freelancers and less opportunities, so it feels more cut-throat. Clients often value low rates over experience."

"Being able to afford training for professional development and conferences for networking."

"In tendering I have noticed a distinct preference for awarding contracts to consortia or associate groups of freelancers, perhaps an assumption that this is less risky or better value for money."

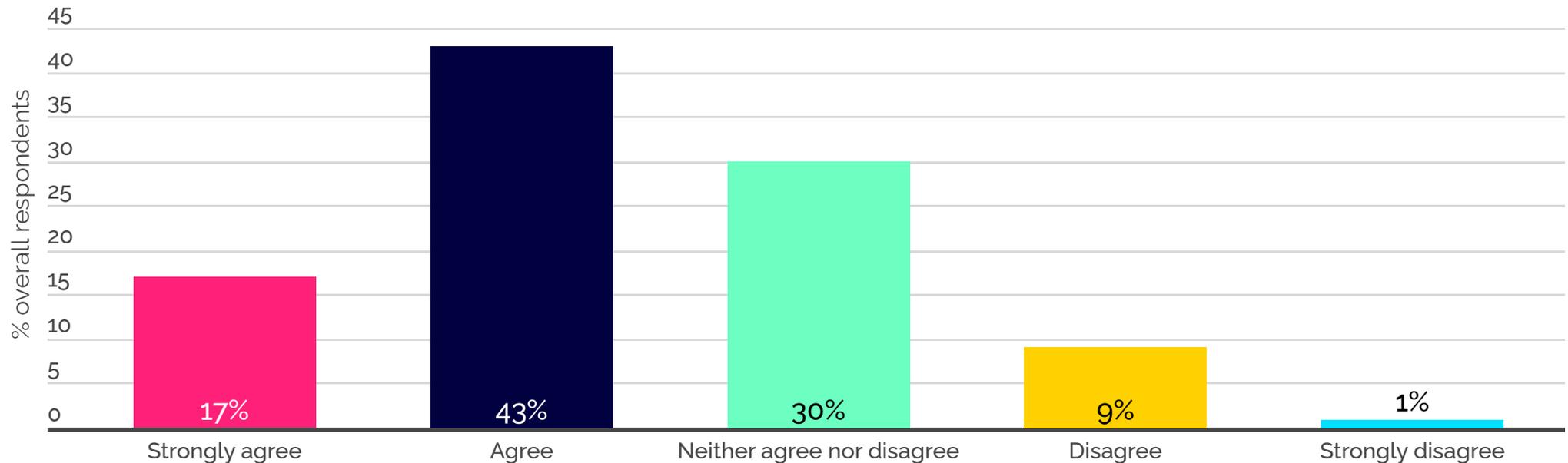
"I have freelanced in learning for over 20 years and my workload has gone up, and my pay down. Also if you decide to question the work/managers/organisation on their practice you are not given work. A type of bullying."



Making a successful freelance career

Nearly two-thirds of respondents believe you can make a successful career from freelancing in the cultural sector

The majority of freelancers strongly agree or agree that you can make a successful career from freelancing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who've been freelancing for seven years or more are slightly more likely to strongly agree or agree, than people in the earlier phase of their freelance career. However, there was a lot of strength of feeling and issues raised among those who didn't agree that you could make a successful career from freelancing, as demonstrated in the qualitative feedback on the following pages. These comments openly and honestly demonstrate the realities of freelancing and reflect that it's not simply an 'easy option'.



The above data is based on 302 MF survey responses to the question 'And how much do you agree with the following statements?' It is represented by the following individual data: You can make a successful career from freelancing in the cultural sector: Strongly agree (n=51), Agree (n=129), Neither agree nor disagree (n=92), Disagree (n=27), Strongly disagree (n=3).

Making a successful freelance career

"In my experience you can make a career of it but it takes a long time to build the work and support networks and - for me - to have the confidence in my ability when going solo (drowning out the imposter syndrome in my head!)"

"You can make a successful career - as witnessed by those who are - but it's hard and not going to work for everyone."

"I consider my career enjoyable, but I don't consider it financially successful. If I did not have a partner working full-time in a conventional job, then I'm not sure I'd be able to do the work I do."

"It is a lot harder to make a living from freelancing than it used to be. There is less work around and at the same time more competition that is driving down rates."

"I think there are a lot of successful freelancers but I have not found it to be fulfilling and I feel deeply discouraged and frustrated."



Making a successful freelance career

"I think margins are so low in the cultural sector and organisations are often not set up to work well with external companies that it is difficult to have a successful business."

"You have to be very focused, determined, ambitious, well-networked and have a good support system around you to make it work. You can make a successful career out of it but you have to be comfortable with the fact there are fewer safety nets, so you need to be resilient and financially resourceful to be able to focus on being successful in delivering what you do."

"I am early-career. Freelancing is far from ideal."

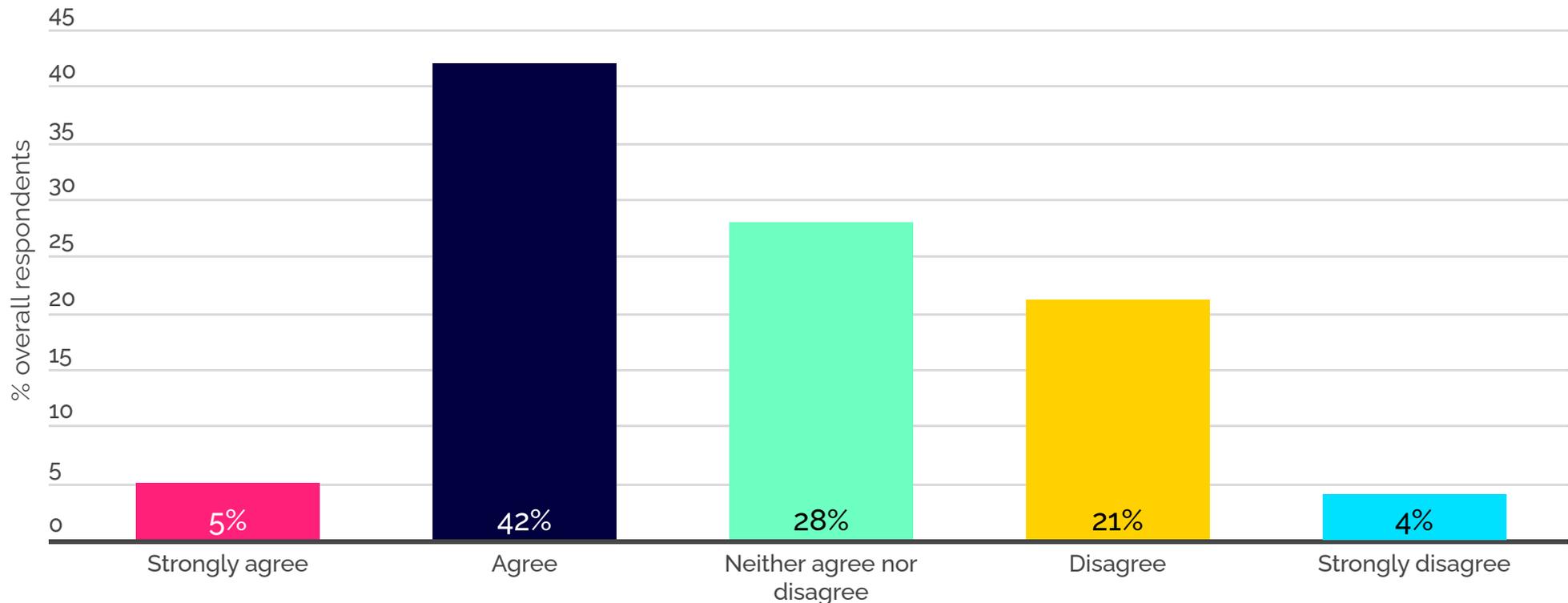
"If you had to fully support yourself financially it is very difficult to get enough work at decent rates. It's a lovely sector to work in - who would disagree - but attracts non-diverse entrants who are supported financially by parents/partners. These people drive rates down, accepting commissions at a very low level of remuneration. This means we self-supporters cannot be taken seriously."



Feeling recognised and valued

Less than half of respondents strongly agree or agree that freelancers are valued and recognised for the work they do

We asked freelancers to respond to the statement 'Freelancers are valued/recognised for the work they do in the cultural sector' with the results highlighted below. There is also evidence within the qualitative feedback to indicate that freelancers working in the sector feel they are undervalued by clients, wider sector organisations and funders. This suggests that there needs to be a greater understanding of what freelancers contribute to the sector and a more inclusive approach to involving and listening to them, for example in training programmes.



The above data is based on 302 MF survey responses to the question 'And how much do you agree with the following statements?' It is represented by the following individual data: Freelancers are valued/recognised for the work they do in the cultural sector: Strongly agree (n=15), Agree (n=127), Neither agree nor disagree (n=84), Disagree (n=64), Strongly disagree (n=12).

Feeling recognised and valued

"We are now much more a part of the sector than we were 15 years ago."

"I feel valued by my clients but I'm not sure all freelancers are valued by the sector. Often their work is not recognised but subsumed by the organisation."

"I think some organisations really value the work freelancers do - but as a sector we often go undetected."

"So often someone else (non-freelance) takes credit for my work/for me rescuing a project."

"Training, development, mentoring etc mostly don't embrace freelancers. Organisations seldom invite freelancers to team events or celebrations."

"Some membership costs etc go up if you're a freelancer, seems to assume high level consultancy or similar. This can exclude freelance voices from sector debates."



Feeling recognised and valued

"I feel you are less respected & represented as a freelancer. I have had experience of organisations welcoming you with open arms when they need your help but not/hardly bothering to respond to emails when they don't need you."

"I think most events and projects are targeted to people working inside museums. Quite often these organisations see businesses as possible 'sponsors' or funders for projects or people with an agenda rather than people who have vast amounts of experience across multiple clients/types of organisations."

"Some clients value you, some don't. I'm learning how to spot this from project briefs."

"I think organisations value the work of freelancers but don't appreciate how much they should pay for it. We could do with a benchmarking exercise like a-n paying artists guidelines."

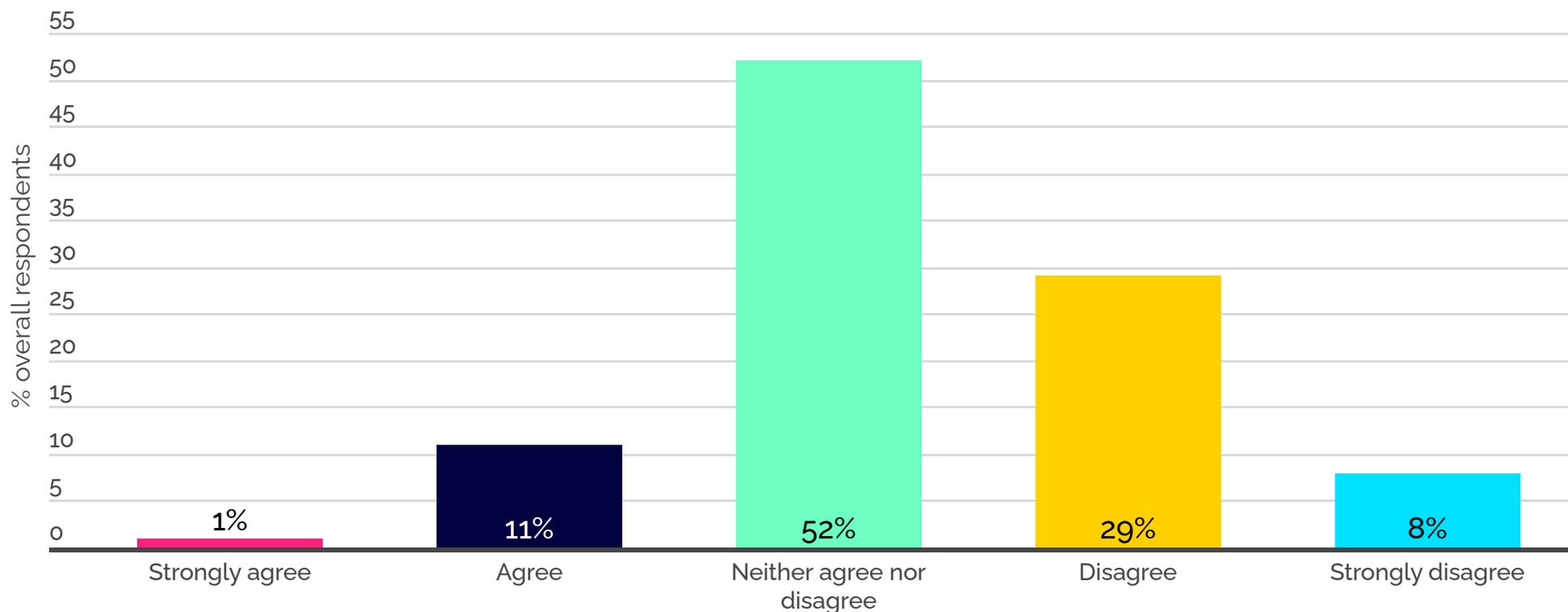
"You get a sense sometimes that people think freelancers are overpaid, but they don't consider all the outgoings, such as IT, accountancy, office rental etc and all the unpaid time it takes to secure work."



Support from sector organisations

Only 12% of respondents agree or strongly agree that sector organisations effectively support freelancers

We asked freelancers to respond to the statement 'Sector organisations (e.g. CILIP, ARA, Museums Association etc) effectively support freelancers in the cultural sector' with the results highlighted below. There is enormous strength of feeling about the lack of support from sector organisations and examples of this are cited on the pages that follow, such as a lack of access to training, affordable conference tickets and memberships. However, there is also recognition that several organisations have stepped up more as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.



The above data is based on 302 MF survey responses to the question 'And how much do you agree with the following statements?' It is represented by the following individual data: Sector organisations (e.g. CILIP, MA, ARA etc) effectively support freelancers in the cultural sector: Strongly agree (n=2), Agree (n=33), Neither agree nor disagree (n=156), Disagree (n=87), Strongly disagree (n=24).

Support from sector organisations

"The sector organisations don't see freelancers as a problem. But they certainly don't welcome us with open arms. I feel underrepresented by these organisations and wish they would do more to engage with us. When we try to reach out them, they tend to view us as they would corporates. We're not corporate companies - we're people."

"Sector organisations do not recognise what experienced freelancers have to offer beyond delivery of projects. I've been turned down for any number of leadership development courses and other subsidised training opportunities despite having decades of experience and a reputation for high quality work..."

"I would appreciate special rates for membership, CPD, training, conferences on a scale so that sole traders have a different rate to freelance/consultancies that have large numbers of employees."

"I think the support that sector organisations are showing at the moment during the lockdown is the most visible I've ever seen it."

"Freelancers are still viewed with suspicion and doubt, especially by sector organisations."



Support from sector organisations

"I think that more needs to be done in sector organisations to recognise contribution and value and advocate for better procurement processes and payment for freelancers. Maybe it's in the interest of those organisations which are dominated by museums not to do so?"

"I think there is increasing awareness of freelancers among the sector organisations, but there could always be more help. Museum Freelance has been one of the best things that I have found for advice and support."

"My experience is that sector organisations pay little regard to freelancers, other than seeing them as another advertising revenue stream."

"Usually the membership fees for organisations, and fees to attend conferences exclude freelancers from taking part...GEM have responded to Covid 19 by offering free membership for a year to freelancers. This is much appreciated, but I won't be in a position to renew it after a year."

"The major sector organisations claim they are supporting freelancers but it always feels like an after thought."



Changes suggested by freelancers

Top 5 things that freelancers would change about freelancing in the sector



1. Improving day rates and fee-related issues



2. Fairer procurement processes



3. More recognition and inclusion from the sector



4. Equality of support with PAYE workforce



5. Greater visibility of opportunities



We received 269 responses to the question 'If there was one thing you could change about freelancing in the sector at the moment, what would it be?'. These were coded and themed into 59 different themes. Other suggestions than those above included: better cashflow, more available opportunities, better communication from clients (and two-way communication), contracts (having one, being able to have some security if a project cancels), financial support during Covid-19, greater coworking/less isolation, having earlier involvement in client projects, greater empathy from clients, managing expectations of freelancers having multiple projects and 'on call' availability, creation of a 'freelance charter', how to get started/greater support and training for new freelancers, improved networks, increased profile, inequality, IR35 support and understanding, last minute requests for work, lack of general funding within sector to contract freelancers, late payment, more collaboration (with other freelancers), less reliance on one client e.g. NHLF funded project work, more permanent roles (reducing the need for certain roles to be freelance), more support and training that's inexpensive (e.g. IT), greater variety, no Brexit, PAYE in disguise, time for planning, recognising the potential of freelancers/innovation through freelancers, realistic timetables for work, regulation of the freelance sector, respect, better IP contractual terms, fewer short-term projects (increased admin), greater SSO support, stability, greater support for long-term freelancers, lower training rates, trust, joining a union, less use of volunteers to replace freelance contracts, year end rush. One respondent also suggested that freelancers should fit around the needs of the sector, rather than the other way round. Five respondents stated they were unable to suggest anything.

Changes suggested by freelancers



Improving day rates and fee-related issues

54 respondent suggestions included: improved fees; greater transparency of fees; improved client understanding of how fees are calculated; being paid if projects are cancelled; better awareness of what can realistically be delivered for a certain fee (client expectations); removal of 'race to the bottom' scenario with freelancers charging lower fees; having clear and consistent fee guidelines.



Fairer procurement processes

40 respondent suggestions included: more realistic, transparent briefs tailored to freelancers (rather than PAYE); simplified procurement; greater understanding of the (free) time it takes to propose and pitch; relevant interview processes (not PAYE); removal of PAYE-in-disguise roles; improved ethical practice e.g. 'three quote' scenario when someone is already in mind; removal of free pitching.



More recognition and inclusion from the sector

23 respondents suggestions included: greater recognition of the value and benefit freelancers bring to the sector/an organisation (often for a small investment); greater understanding of the specialist areas freelancers can offer; recognition from sector organisations that freelancers are a significant and growing proportion of the workforce and need to be included in planning/training opportunities.



Equality and support with PAYE

17 respondent suggestions included: greater Government support for freelancers in order to provide support equal to that of employed people (essentially a 'safety net'); greater support and/or advice with pensions; sick pay; paternity and maternity rights/pay; holiday pay.



Greater visibility of opportunities

10 respondent suggestions included: an easier and more transparent way to find out about contracts; more opportunities openly advertised (rather than directly approaching 'the usual' freelancers) and more opportunities for those new to freelancing/lesser known as freelancers.

Changes suggested by freelancers



"The quality of invitations to tender (ITTs) is often hit and miss and large discrepancies between the way organisations approach sourcing the best person to fit their project and also the way they communicate back to tenderers."

"Improved recognition of the ways that freelancers can add value."

"Generally the approach to procurement and tenders. The balance between fairness, transparency, realism (timescales, budget) is often not right. Examples of tiny budgets, ridiculous timescales, sending out direct invites to 15+ providers, etc."

"Maybe make it easier to hear about opportunities, improve ways to make contacts, and perhaps a portal for freelancers and organisations to be matched up depending on what the organisations are looking for? There are so many of us with experience and ideas, able to do original and creative events/projects that audiences love. We need a way to get our foot in the door and actually be given a chance."

"Greater understanding of the huge benefits freelancers bring to the sector - we are often seen as commercial operations when we are actually often cultural professionals driven by the same passions as non freelance professionals."

Changes suggested by freelancers

"Ensuring that we are not used to make savings by not hiring a permanent employee, and therefore being underpaid whereas we bear all the risk."

"Contracts which are committed to payment if an employer decides to cancel."

"Better rates of pay that reflect the "unbillable" time for bidding for work, office admin, training, holidays as well as costs like overheads, pension, insurance, unclaimable travel. Funding bodies such as NLHF should be clearer in their guidance about rates and also allow applications that reflect the real cost of managing a project."

"I would like to see a different approach to recruitment interviews for freelancers as I have had several interviews that felt identical to those I've had for PAYE work and I don't think all of the questions are appropriate/necessary for freelance work."

"Rates of pay - my day rate hasn't really shifted upwards in 14 years - my accountant has told me if I was working in any other sector I'd be earning £100-£150 per day more."

"Better briefs that also give the budget or at least an outline so you don't waste time coming up with proposals that are unfeasible or not ambitious enough."



Recommendations

Recommendations

There is a lot of work to be done to make freelancing with museums, galleries, heritage sites, archives and libraries a sustainable, fulfilling and positive career choice that is open and financially viable to a more diverse and broader range of people.

This is more important than ever, as the workforce is increasingly shifting to one comprising of more freelance, short-term and part-time project roles.*

On the next three pages we set out key recommendations we have identified as a result of the survey findings which will help the sector to make progress.

It is *all* our responsibility, so the recommendations cover:

- what organisations in the sector can do
- what freelancers can do
- what Museum Freelance will do.



*See page 29 of Character Matters: Attitudes, behaviours and skills in the UK Museum Workforce. Full Report by BOP Consulting with The Museum Consultancy, 2016 https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Character_Matters_UK_Museum_Workforce_full_report.pdf

Recommendations for organisations

1

Value freelancers

Organisations within the sector need to see and value freelancers as a core part of the workforce and cultural sector ecosystem. Supporting their professional development and personal wellbeing will ultimately impact positively on the sector as a whole.

2

Consult with and include freelancers

Organisations should provide ways for freelancers to contribute towards sector strategic plans and policies. Consultation should be inclusive of freelancers e.g. by including appropriate response options for them to tick in surveys. Organisations should provide opportunities for freelancers to share their voices and experiences e.g. in blogs, articles and at conferences.

3

Provide affordable opportunities open to freelancers

As well as not excluding freelancers from access to development opportunities, we call on sector organisations to provide accessibly priced conference tickets, training opportunities and membership for freelancers. Access to these opportunities should be clearly communicated in promotional communication.

4

Develop and implement best practice procurement processes

We call on SSOs, clients and funders to urgently improve procurement processes for cultural sector freelancers so they are fair and tailored to our line of work. We invite them to collectively develop and share a standardised guide to fair procurement, to enable clients and funders to commission freelancers more appropriately and transparently.

5

Develop and implement guidance on contractual issues

We encourage SSOs, clients and funders to develop and disseminate best practice guidance on contractual and payment issues such as briefs, day rates, purchase orders, payment terms and contracts. This will support and protect both clients and freelancers and enable more effective working relationships.

Recommendations for freelancers

1

Think like a business

We always encourage freelancers to think like a business. This discipline can help you to professionalise and prioritise, and it can guide informed decision-making. Don't allow your passion for the cultural sector and your work to enable people to take advantage of your experience, skills, ideas and time.

2

Stay informed

Make sure you're well-informed when it comes to contractual issues, GDPR, insurance, tax and reporting. Know your rights and your responsibilities. When you're running a business, the buck stops with you.

3

Be assertive

Once you know your rights, it's much easier to assert them. Take initiative with clients, be clear on your payment terms and be proactive as soon as you feel uneasy about something. Call out bad practice and champion good practice.

4

Get involved in the Museum Freelance community

The Museum Freelance community of over 1,000 freelancers is a great source of support, learning, friendship and inspiration. Sign up to our e-news, follow us on Twitter, join the LinkedIn group, come to our events and get involved: post questions, share briefs, contribute ideas, raise issues and write an article for our blog. We're about collaboration, not competition.

5

Recognise and shout about your achievements

And ultimately, give yourself a pat on the back! Being a freelancer is a constant juggle, a learning curve and a rollercoaster. Be kind to yourself, recognise your achievements and tell others about them.

What Museum Freelance will do next

1	Disseminate research findings	We will share these findings as widely as possible, to ensure freelancers and people who commission them can benefit from the insights. We will also use them as a basis for conversations with sector organisations and funders about tackling the many issues the research has raised.
2	Create a panel with freelance voices	We will create a panel of freelancers to represent a wider range of freelance voices and perspectives, to help steer future Museum Freelance projects so that we champion issues that will make a meaningful difference.
3	Deliver online training	We will devise and deliver a programme of online training and networking for freelancers that is geared to their needs.
4	Develop campaigns	We will develop a range of campaigns and lobby to create change on issues raised in the research and by the panel.
5	Seek funding	We will seek funding to enable us deliver on our vision and ambitious plans to support and champion freelancers in the sector.

Methodology notes

The finer detail

Research questions

We had several key research questions that we wanted to answer through this piece of work. These included:

- What types of people freelance with museums, galleries, archives, heritage sites and libraries? (We refer to these as the 'museum freelance community' within our report).
- What type of work do they do and how much do they charge?
- Do they contribute towards the cultural sector in any other ways such as volunteering their time?
- What are the perceived main benefits and challenges of freelancing?
- Do they feel valued and supported by the sector?

Our methodology

We began developing our methodology and research questions during December 2019 and January 2020. The survey was designed and piloted during February 2020 by ten freelancers. It was subsequently amended, disseminated and open for completion from 13 March 2020 to 30 April 2020.

The data was cleaned prior to analysis. The average completion rate was calculated and responses taking less than three minutes were removed, leaving 314 respondents. We are confident that we did as much as we could to ensure a representative sample of freelancers were reached - the survey was widely circulated through our existing community network, sector organisations and other informal networks.

The small print: limitations

- Data was collected both pre, during and post Covid-19 lockdown. This was obviously unplanned: the survey was designed and launched before we knew the detrimental impact that the pandemic was about to have on our lives and work.
- Given that we are freelancers ourselves, this report has not been independently or externally analysed. Unconscious bias within the analysis is therefore possible.

The finer detail

- Although we have undertaken numerous cross-tabulations to explore and investigate the data sets, we have chosen not to include all of these in the final report, as the numbers behind the percentages were too small to draw any robust conclusions.
- Despite the survey being substantial in size, we recognise that there are potential gaps in our questions which we will seek to rectify in any future editions. For example, we are unable to report on the percentage of freelancers from working class backgrounds as a) we didn't ask a specific question (such as the Cabinet Office's recommended question for measuring social class) and b) we did not have the capacity nor budget to profile postcodes provided by respondents. We recommend a question exploring this issue is added to future surveys, as it came up in some of the qualitative responses to this survey.

About this report and the data

This report is the result of careful, detailed analysis of the available evidence. It's led by insight - providing interpretation rather than simply information.

The structure of the report is guided by the research questions, with a series of recommendations made at the end. The discussion reflects commonly occurring themes or outcomes, however where findings are only reflective of one individual, this is clearly stated.

Note that where totals do not add up to 100, this is due to rounding rather than error. In addition, some respondents may have chosen to not answer questions, therefore the response rates vary per question. The *N* for each survey question response has been provided for transparency and are included alongside additional data wherever you see this symbol. 🔍

All enquiries regarding the data in this report should be addressed to Museum Freelance via museumfreelance@gmail.com.