

Over half of UK's arts and cultural venues at risk from pandemic

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Over half of the UK's arts and cultural venues and organisations believe they are at risk due to the decline in income during the pandemic, a new study from the University of Sheffield, University of Kent, and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising has shown.

The only study of its kind, 'Dealing with the crisis: Creativity and resilience of arts and cultural fundraisers during COVID-19' (28 May 2021), gathered information about how arts and cultural fundraisers were impacted by, and managed the COVID-19 [pandemic](#) during 2020.

Many artists, organisations and venues rely on fundraising as a significant part of their income, using a range of events and activities to fund [creative projects](#), alongside raising funds through patrons, donations, memberships and subscriptions.

The study has highlighted a number of risks which threaten to harm the diversity and richness of the sector due to the impact of the pandemic.

Almost two thirds of fundraisers (62 percent) surveyed in the study, expected their organisation's income to fall during the pandemic, with nearly half (47 percent) reporting the social restrictions during the pandemic meant many of their revenue generating programmes had been postponed.

Some key findings of the report included:

- 79 percent of respondents said that their fundraising activity overall has decreased
- 66 percent of organisations said they had postponed planned arts and cultural projects and programmes
- 64 percent said [financial support](#) in 2021 and beyond was very important to the survival of the sector
- 89 percent said supporting organisations unable to access emergency funding was important

Reports of increased workload and stress also highlighted the concern that if staff welfare issues are not addressed, there will be a real risk of a significant loss of talent from the sector in the future.

Dr. Marta Herrero, from the University of Sheffield's Management School, led the study. She said: "The social restrictions in place during most of the pandemic made a lot of normal fundraising activities impossible for a wide variety of arts and cultural organisations.

"Closures of venues and cancelled events left a gaping hole in the finances of many in the sector, with fundraisers having to quickly find new and flexible ways to raise money in an accessible way to ensure the survival of their organisation."

The research did however, find examples of arts and cultural fundraisers adapting and responding to new ways of working, taking new approaches and changing their fundraising activities during the pandemic. A total of 55 percent of fundraisers said new approaches to digital offers for members and supporters had met, or exceeded their expectations; with many commenting on having the digital infrastructure to hold events and programmes online meant they were able to broaden their audiences.

The authors of the study are now calling on the government to provide substantial support, in the hope that the findings will be able to inform

policy on how best to allocate financial resources; as some smaller or independent organisations are falling between the gaps of emergency support available.

Dr. Herrero, said: "So many of us interact with and benefit from arts, cultural and heritage organisations regularly, such as museums, live music venues, visiting sites of historical interest, or even attending events and activities run by community groups.

"But a significant number of fundraisers report that the sector needs continued financial support, and for furlough and recovery fund schemes to be accessible for all to ensure its survival in the medium and long term.

"Whilst resilience and innovation continue to be key skills characteristic of the fundraising profession in the face of prolonged funding cuts, only with this kind of support will they be able to safeguard the richness of our cultural life here in the UK and create a sustainable sector akin to pre-COVID levels."

Martin Kaufman, Chair of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising RAISE Steering Committee said: "This survey is the first time that the collective voice of UK cultural fundraisers has been heard during the pandemic.

"There are important lessons to be learnt from what the respondents have told us. These need to be taken up by the government and everyone who wants fundraising for arts and heritage to play a critical role in ensuring that cultural activity itself will not just recover but thrive into the future. This survey was conducted in 2020, but what it has to tell us is still of continuing and significant relevance."

Provided by University of Sheffield

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