Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Climate Change Survey

Key findings from a survey of AFP and Lottery-funded clients

November 2022

Climate Change Survey

Background to survey

In 2022 the Assembly passed legislation to mitigate against the impact of climate change in Northern Ireland. The Climate Act established a legally binding 2050 net-zero carbon target, proposed the appointment of a Climate Commissioner and will require each government department to develop resourced action plans.

Local artist and cultural organisations are in a unique position to challenge, inform and engage audiences in conversations about the environment. Many organisations are already involved in campaigns and initiatives aimed at changing behaviours and introducing new models of working.
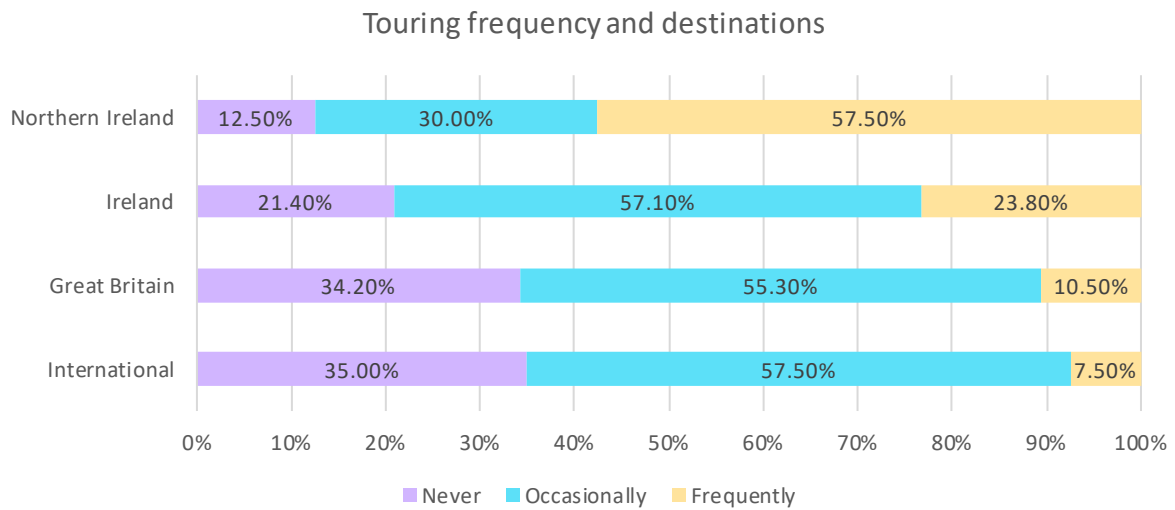
The evidence generated from this survey will:

- Establish current levels of organisation awareness, action and impact relative to climate change and the environment.
- Understand the extent of organisations touring activity – a key contributor to the sectors carbon footprint.
- Gauge attitudes towards the role of the arts in addressing climate change.
- Establish what supports organisations need to address the climate crisis and challenges they face.

About the sample

- The survey was issued to 183 organisations; 55 responses (30%) were received.
- 63% of the sample were Annual Funding Programme (AFP) funded organisations, with the remaining 26% receiving Lottery Project funding. Combined, these organisations received funding support of £5.7m in 2021/22 from both Exchequer and Lottery sources.
- Details of the organisations responding to the survey can be found at the back of this report. The Arts Council is extremely grateful to these organisations for their support in completing the survey.
- All 9 of the main artform classifications were represented, drama formed the largest proportion of the sample (20%), followed by visual arts (18%) and combined arts (16%).
- A range of different types of organisations responded, with the majority (36%) describing themselves as 'other', 29% 'touring and production based' and 18%, 'venues'.

Touring frequency and destinations

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Destination	Never	Occasionally	Frequently
Northern Ireland	12.50%	30.00%	57.50%
Ireland	21.40%	57.10%	23.80%
Great Britain	34.20%	55.30%	10.50%
International	35.00%	57.50%	7.50%

■ Never ■ Occasionally ■ Frequently

The chart shows that the vast majority of touring by local arts organisations is within Northern Ireland, with only a small proportion touring activity 'frequently' internationally.

We define touring activity here as the distribution of the same product, programme or event to at least two, physical, different locations.

Albeit on a smaller scale then other parts of the UK, touring has a significant role to play in NI in terms of employment, income generation and audience reach. This relates to locally based touring companies and companies that tour product to NI. The activity, traditionally, has a high carbon footprint and is the focus of much attention, particularly in England, as ways to offset environmental impact are explored.

Touring destinations by artform

Proportion of NI based organisations touring, either occasionally or frequently

	Combined Arts	Dance	Drama	Literature	Music	Visual Arts	Average
Northern Ireland	67%	100%	82%	67%	75%	40%	72%
Ireland	58%	100%	82%	67%	38%	60%	67%
Great Britain	42%	67%	73%	33%	50%	40%	51%
International	42%	100%	82%	17%	38%	30%	51%
Average	52%	92%	80%	80%	50%	43%	

The chart shows that Drama and Dance organisations are most likely to tour to all destinations.

Based on sample of 48 organisations. Excludes Traditional Arts and Circus / Carnival, due to small sample sizes.

Based on the relatively small sample responding to the survey, dance and drama-based organisations are most likely to tour work to all destinations. As a consequence, their carbon footprint is likely to be higher, as they move resources, including artists, stage sets and lighting to different locations. NI relative isolation to key markets elsewhere in the UK and internationally is an additional factor when considering the carbon footprint of these organisations.

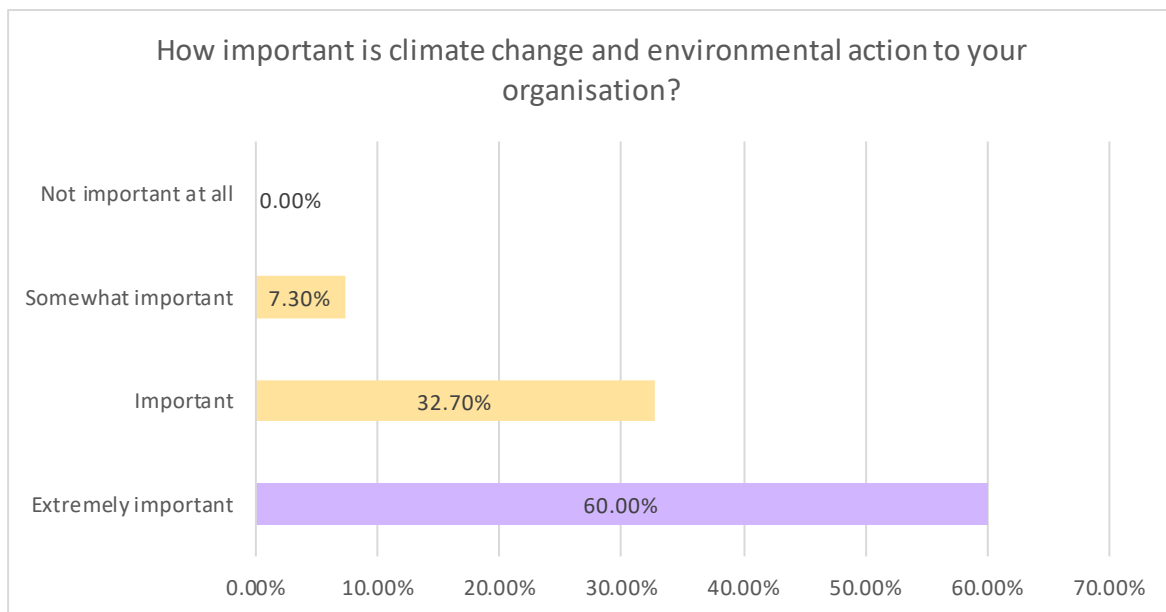# What level of control does your organisation have over its building or workspace?
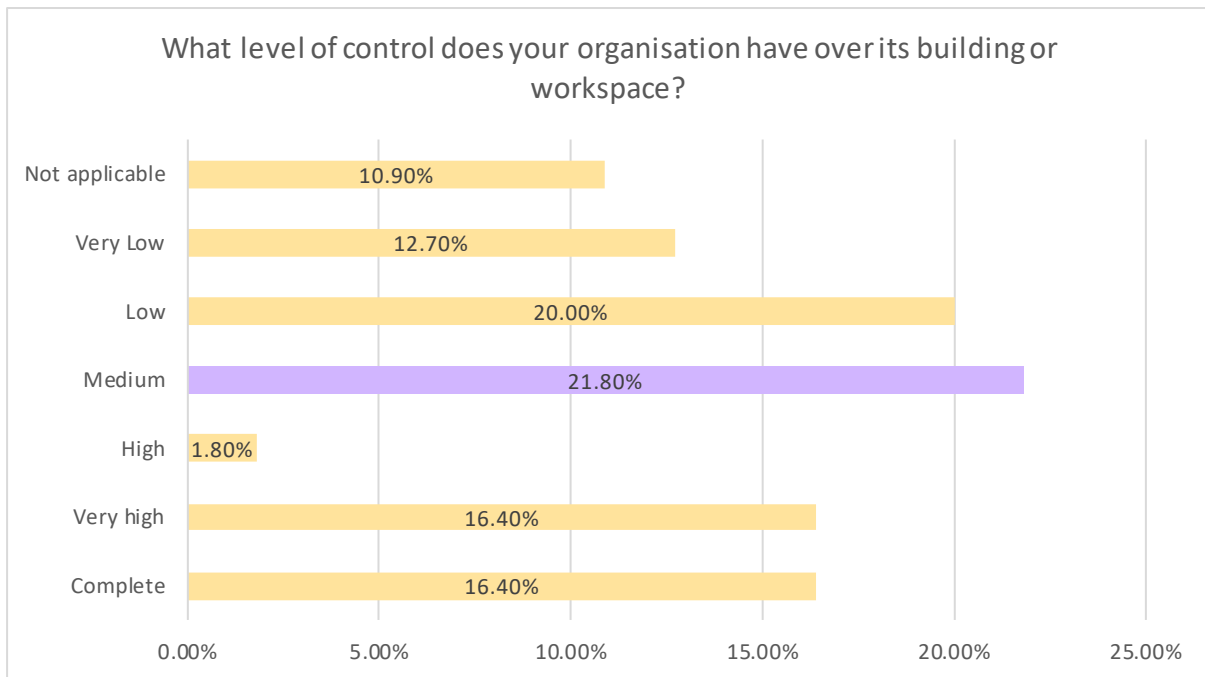
The chart shows that only one third of organisations have 'High' to ' Complete' control over their building or workspace.

The level of control arts organisations have over their building or workspace may have implications on their ability to undertake environmental improvement work, eg., install solar panels or air-source heat pumps.

Based on the findings above, the level of control varies significantly, with only a third of organisations reporting 'high', 'very high' or 'complete' control.

How important is climate change and environmental action to your organisation?

How important is climate change and environmental action to your organisation?

Category	Percentage
Not important at all	0.00%
Somewhat important	7.30%
Important	32.70%
Extremely important	60.00%

The chart shows that the vast majority of arts organisations rate climate change and environmental action as 'important' to 'extremely important'.

- 94% of organisations felt that climate change and environmental action was either 'extremely important' or 'important' to their organisations.
- Only a minority of organisations (operating with the Music and Literature sectors) felt that climate change and the environment was 'somewhat' important.
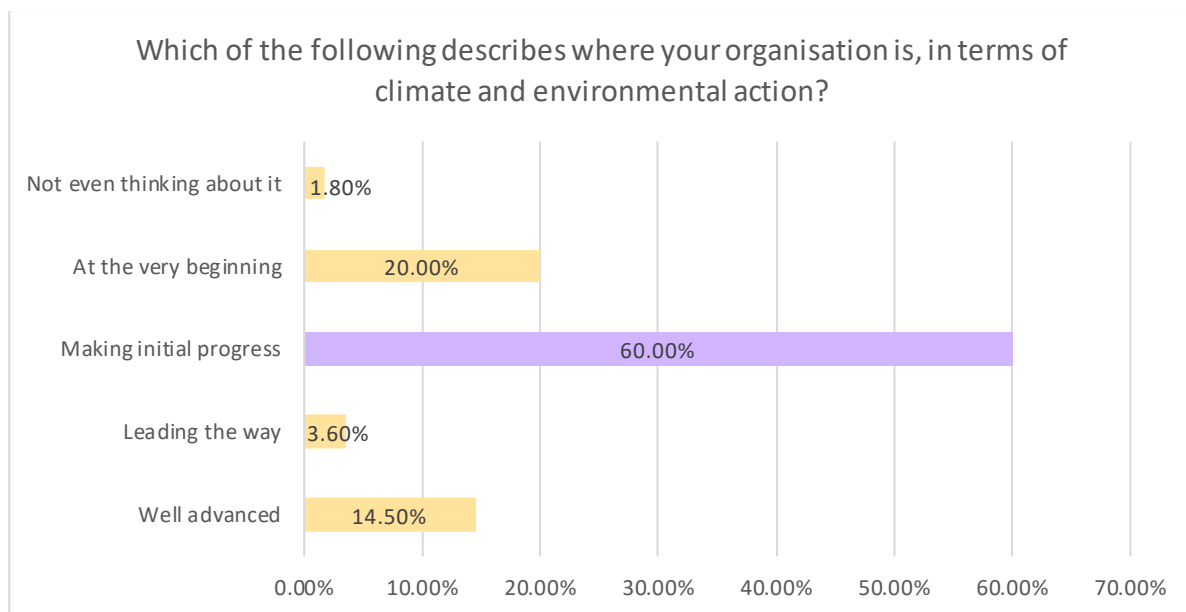
To what extent is climate and environmental action a priority for your organisation?
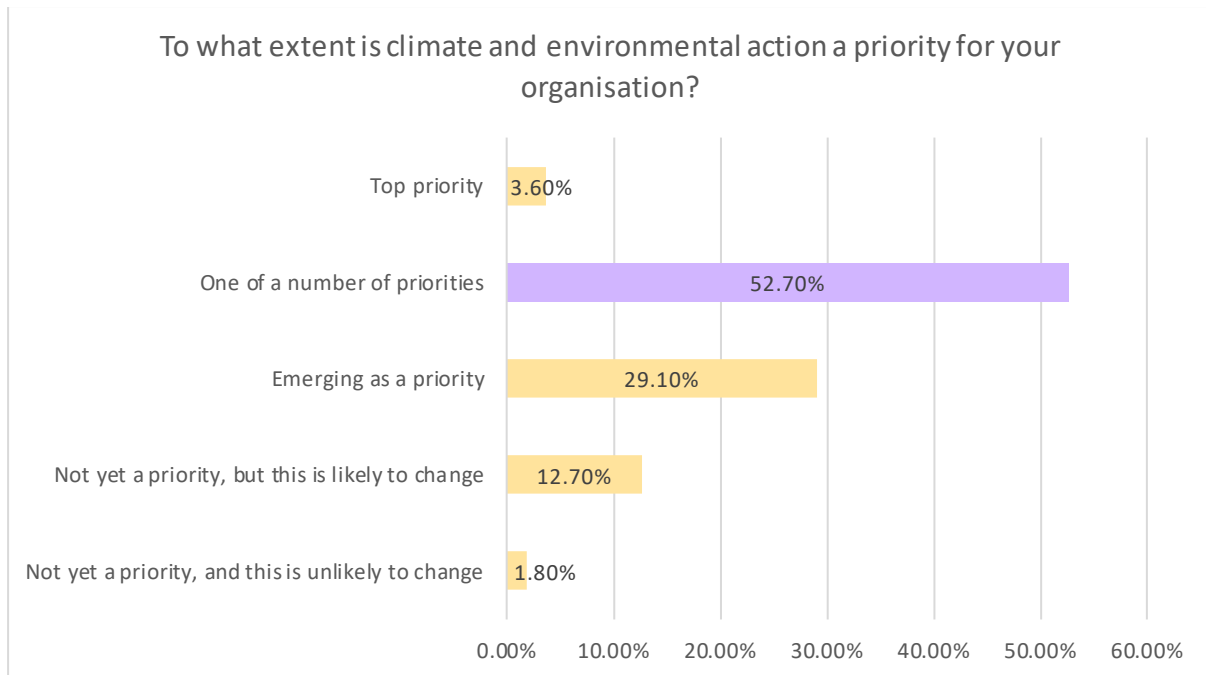
The chart shows that just over one half of organisations rate climate and environmental action as 'one of a number of priorities'.

- The climate and environmental action was recognised by over half of the sample (53%) as one of a number of priorities, with a further 42% recognizing it as an emerging or anticipated, future priority.
- Drama based organisations were particularly aware of the emerging nature of the issue, reflecting a strong sector led response, at the NI and UK level.

Which of the following describes where your organisation is, in terms of climate and environmental action?
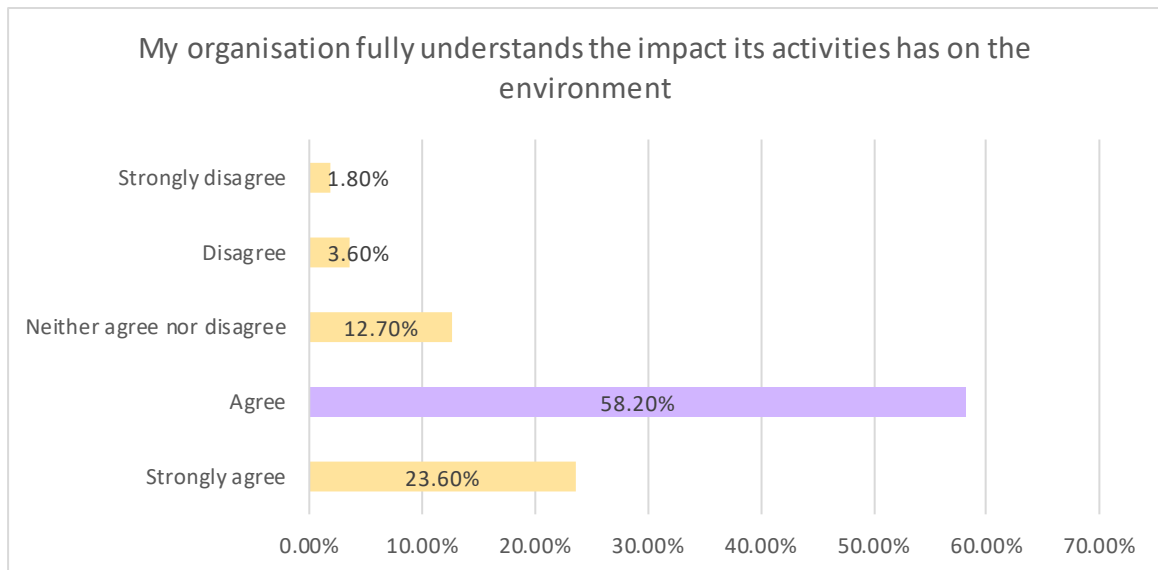

The chart shows that 60% of organisations are 'making initial progress' in terms of climate and environmental action.

- Emerging visibility of the issue is reflected in the preparedness of organisations, with the majority either 'at the very beginning' (20%) or 'making initial progress (60%).
- A significant number (15%) describe themselves as 'well advanced'. Representing Combined Arts, Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts, these have the potential to become champions for change at the artform level.

My organisation fully understands the impact its activities has on the environment

The chart shows that 58% of organisations 'agree' that their activities impact on the environment.

- The majority of organisations (82%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with this statement. This suggests that organisations are starting from an informed position with regard their environmental impacts.

We have clearly defined roles and responsibilities on climate and environmental action within our organisation
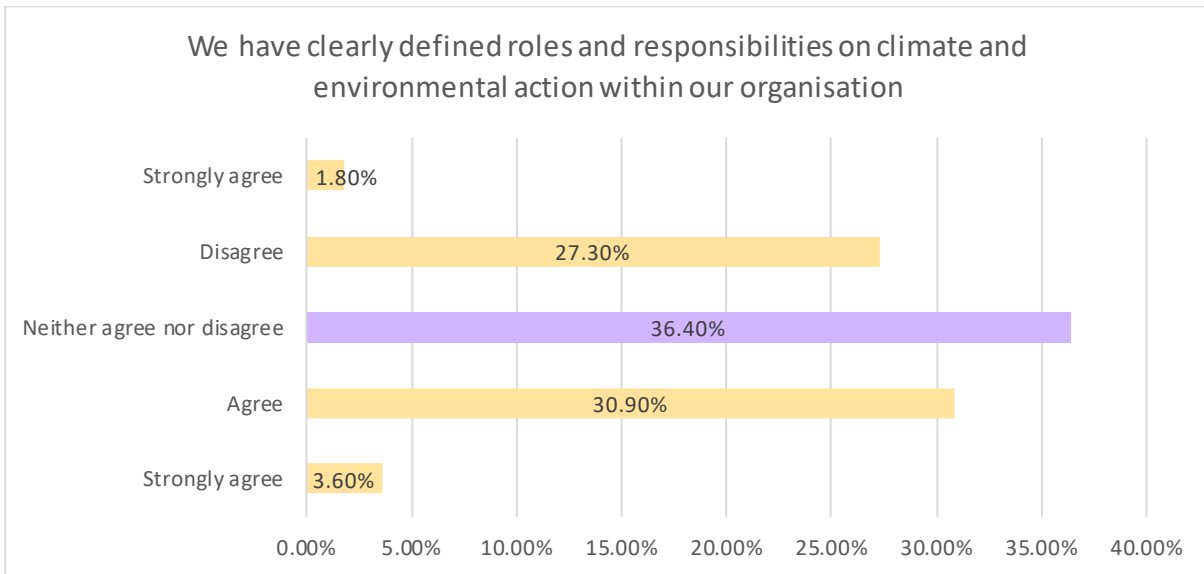
The chart shows that 36% of organisations 'neither agree nor disagree' that they have clearly defined roles and responsibilities on climate and environmental action.

- A more balanced response suggests designated responsibilities for climate and environmental action haven't, as yet, been assigned. This suggests a limited capacity for staff to take on additional responsibilities.
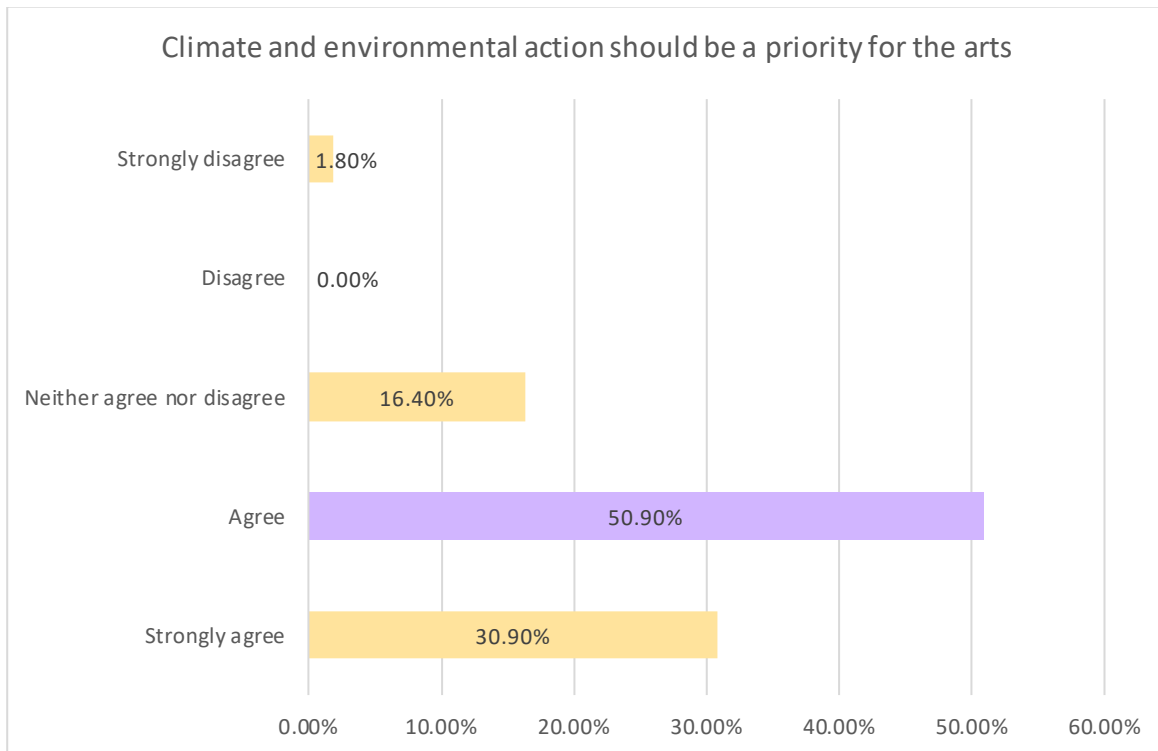
The arts community has a unique and crucial role to play in meeting this moment of climate and environmental crisis - through its ability to engage with people, inform and mobilise change

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Strongly disagree	0.00%
Disagree	0.00%
Neither agree nor disagree	20.00%
Agree	36.40%
Strongly agree	43.60%

0.00% 5.00% 10.00% 15.00% 20.00% 25.00% 30.00% 35.00% 40.00% 45.00% 50.00%
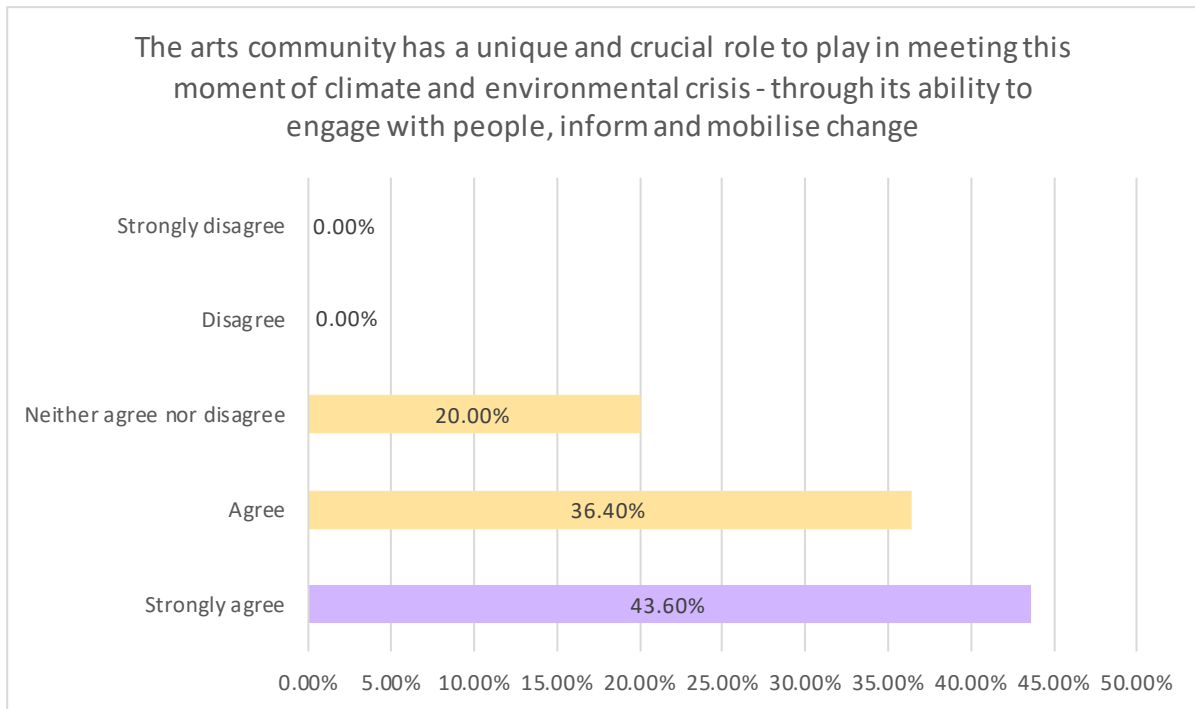
The chart shows that 43.6% or organisations believe they have a unique and crucial role to play in meeting this moment of climate and environmental crisis.

- There was recognition of the role the arts can play in meeting the climate crisis, although support was perhaps slightly moderated by concerns around capacity and the potential to compromise activity in other areas.

Climate and environmental action should be a priority for the arts

Climate and environmental action should be a priority for the arts

Strongly disagree	1.80%
Disagree	0.00%
Neither agree nor disagree	16.40%
Agree	50.90%
Strongly agree	30.90%

0.00%   10.00%   20.00%   30.00%   40.00%   50.00%   60.00%

The chart shows that half of organisations 'agree' that climate and environmental action should be a priority for the arts.

- Arts organisations can shape conversations about the environment and enhance citizen awareness. Support for this statement was more measured, perhaps reflecting the broader challenges facing the sector, currently.
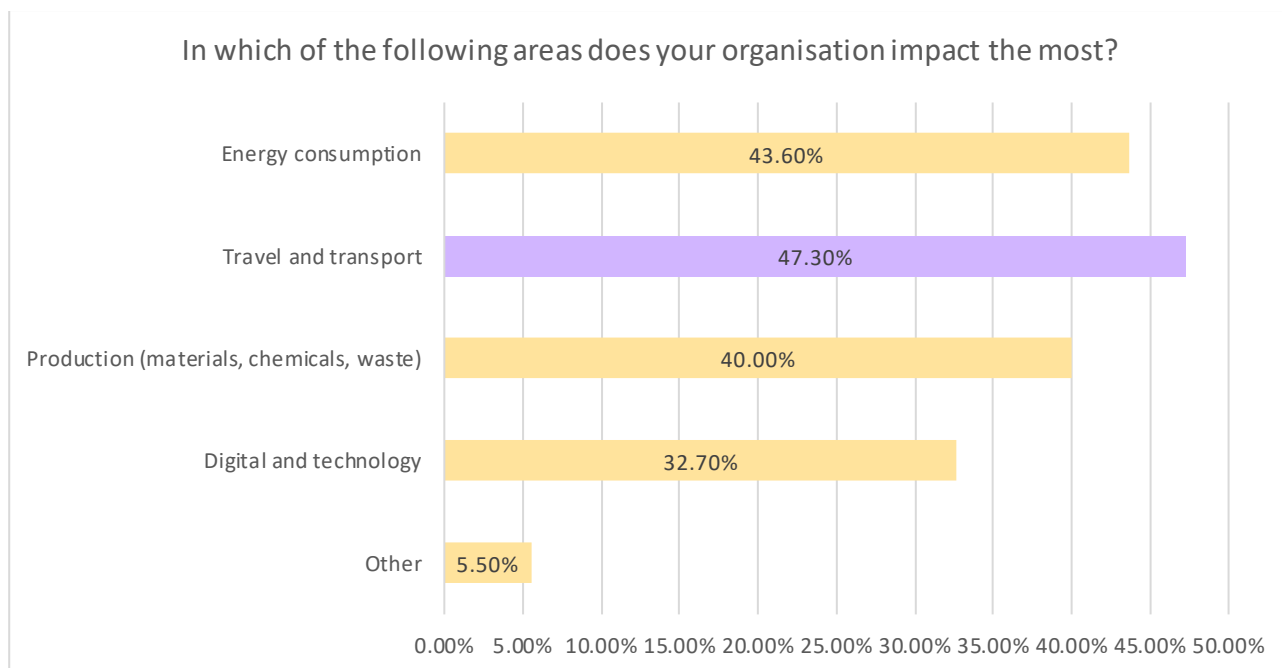
We are working with other networks / organisations to develop green initiatives / grow our own environmental credentials
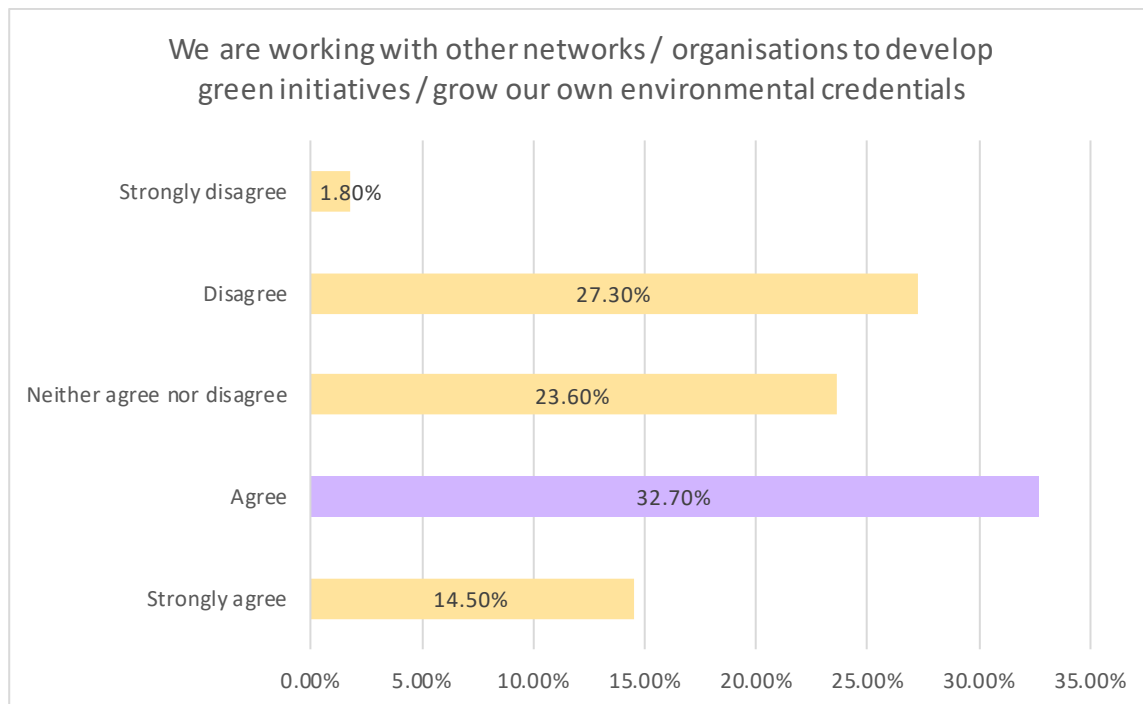
The chart shows that 32.7% of organisations are working with other networks or organisations to develop green initiatives or grow their environmental credentials.

- Almost half of the sample (47.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement – the majority of these organisations were Dance, Drama and Combined Arts based. This reflects the strong industry led responses to climate change in these areas.
- A larger proportion of organisations disagreeing with the statement were Literature and Visual arts based.

In which of the following areas does your organisation impact the most?

In which of the following areas does your organisation impact the most?

Area	Percentage
Energy consumption	43.60%
Travel and transport	47.30%
Production (materials, chemicals, waste)	40.00%
Digital and technology	32.70%
Other	5.50%

0.00% 5.00% 10.00% 15.00% 20.00% 25.00% 30.00% 35.00% 40.00% 45.00% 50.00%

The chart shows that 'travel and transport' create the biggest impact by arts organisations on the environment.

The use of energy and environmental impact are closely related. It is nearly impossible to produce, transport or consume energy without significant environmental impact. Resultant problems include air pollution, climate change, water pollution, thermal pollution, and solid waste disposal. Travel and transport (in the form of fossil fuel combustion) was considered to have the most impact by the largest proportion of respondents (47%). All four of the impact areas were identified by at least a third of organisations. There was some variability in responses by artform with a larger proportion of Literature based organisations identifying production as an impact (83%); Traditional arts, travel and transport (75%); and Visual Arts, energy (60%).

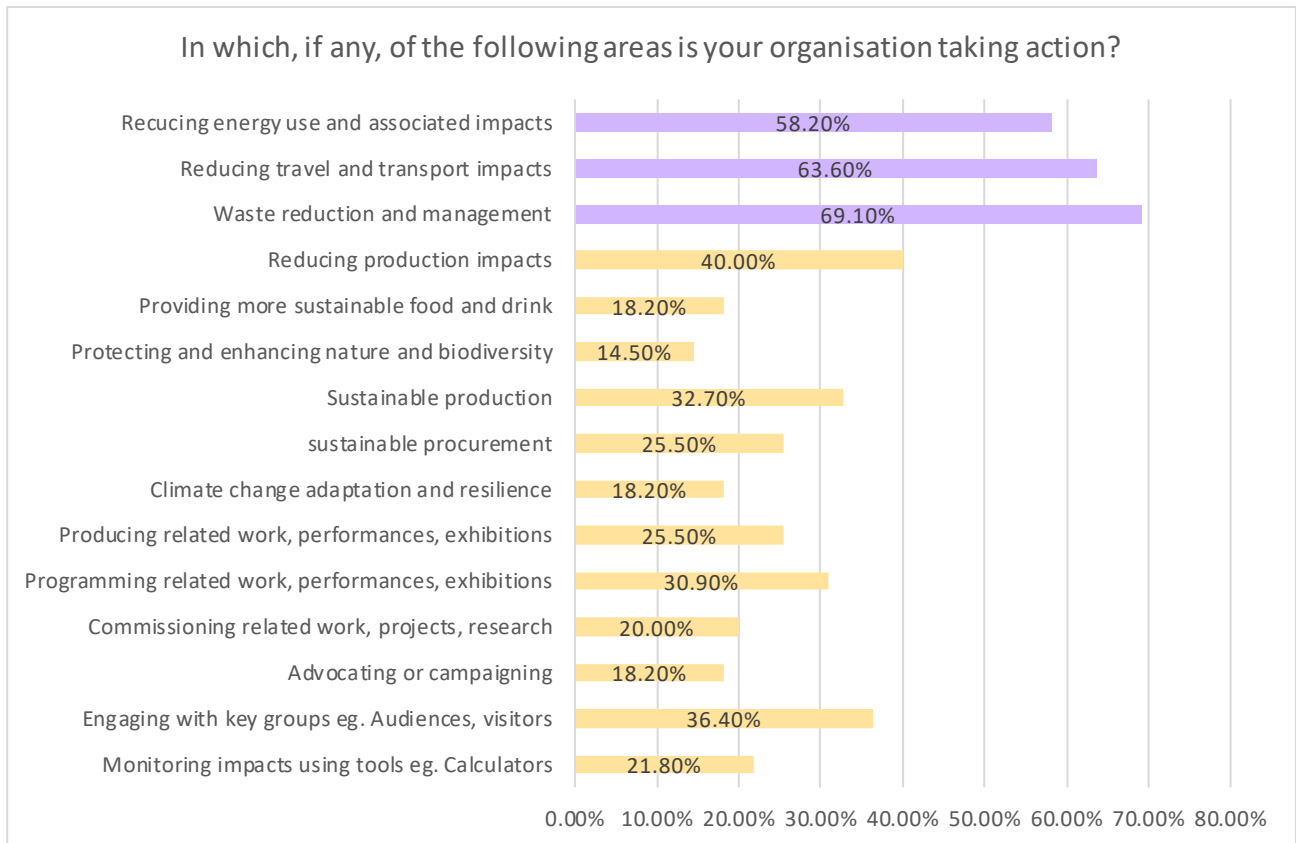# In which of the following areas does your organisation impact the most?
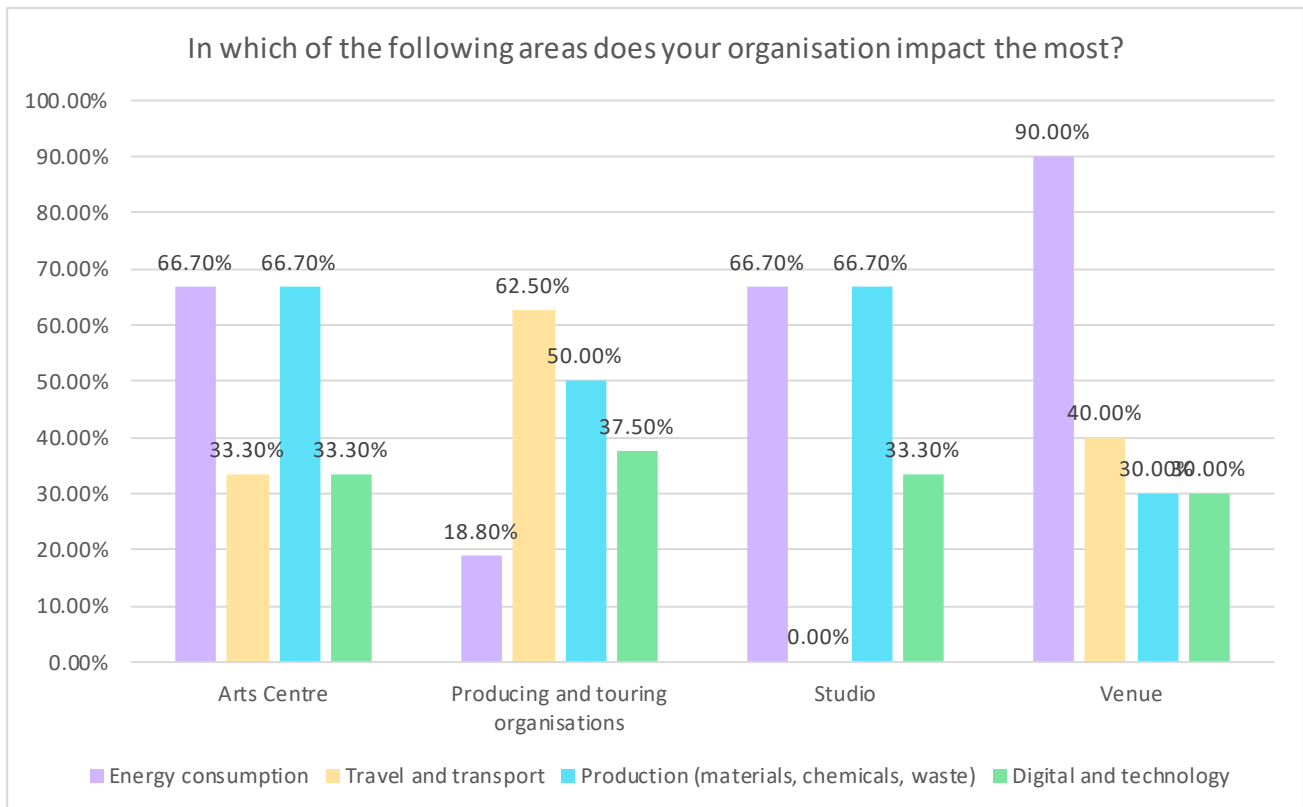
The chart shows the areas in which different types of organisation impact on climate and environmental action.

Some variability in impact by organisation type:

- 90% of venues identifying 'energy consumption' as a major impact
- 66% of arts centre and venues identifying 'energy consumption' and 'production' as major impacts.
- 63% of producing and touring organisations identified travel and transport as the most important impact.

In which, if any, of the following areas is your organisation taking action?

In which, if any, of the following areas is your organisation taking action?

| Area	Percentage
Recucing energy use and associated impacts	58.20%
Reducing travel and transport impacts	63.60%
Waste reduction and management	69.10%
Reducing production impacts	40.00%
Providing more sustainable food and drink	18.20%
Protecting and enhancing nature and biodiversity	14.50%
Sustainable production	32.70%
sustainable procurement	25.50%
Climate change adaptation and resilience	18.20%
Producing related work, performances, exhibitions	25.50%
Programming related work, performances, exhibitions	30.90%
Commissioning related work, projects, research	20.00%
Advocating or campaigning	18.20%
Engaging with key groups eg. Audiences, visitors	36.40%
Monitoring impacts using tools eg. Calculators	21.80%

The chart shows that 'Waste reduction and management' is the largest area in which organisations are taking action to counter climate and environmental change.

- Largest scale action being taken in three areas: waste reduction (69%), travel reduction (64%) and energy use (58%).
- Other, significant but more sector specific actions include: reducing production impacts (40%), sustainable production (33%) and programming related work (31%)
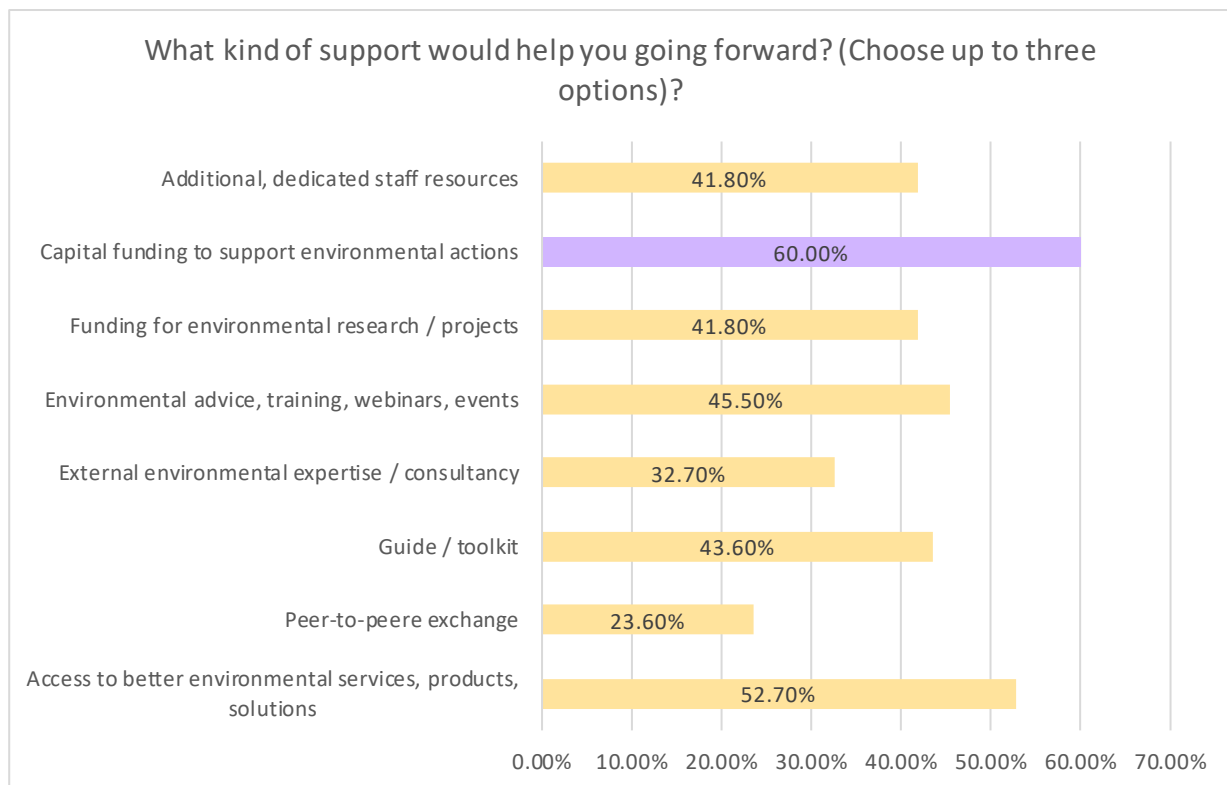
Has your organisation received any advice or support on climate change / the environment?
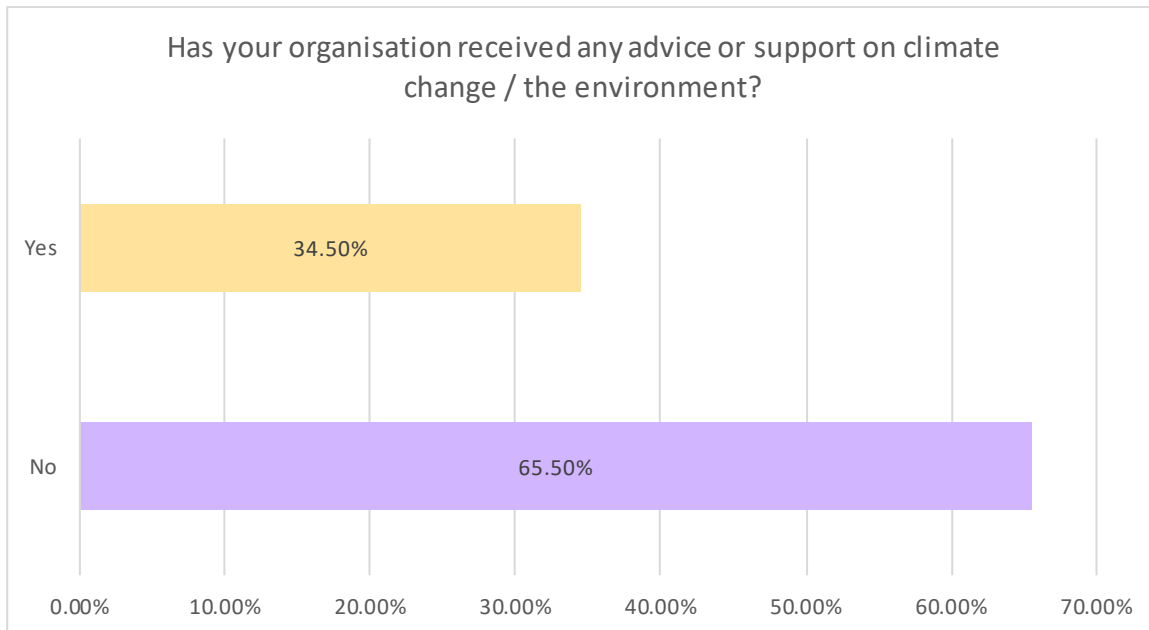
The charts shows that 65.5% of organisations have received advice or support on climate change and the environment.

- One third of organisations have received advice or support. This included 100% of Dance, 46% of Drama and 37% of Music organisations sampled.
- Of the 10 Literature and Traditional Music groups sampled none had received advise or support.
- There was little distinction by organisation type, with arts centre's slightly more likely to have sought advice compared to studios, venues or touring organisations.

What kind of support would help you going forward? (Choose up to three options)?

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Category	Percentage
Additional, dedicated staff resources	41.80%
Capital funding to support environmental actions	60.00%
Funding for environmental research / projects	41.80%
Environmental advice, training, webinars, events	45.50%
External environmental expertise / consultancy	32.70%
Guide / toolkit	43.60%
Peer-to-peere exchange	23.60%
Access to better environmental services, products, solutions	52.70%

The chart shows that 'capital funding' is the main area of support needed by organisations to counter climate change

- Broad recognition that any support moving forward would be useful, with the greatest support for capital funding (60%) and access to better services, products and solutions (53%)
- Three quarters of Combined Arts organisations identified a need for additional, dedicated staff resources.
- There was a strong relationship between organisations that had received advice / support, and those requesting the same support going forward.
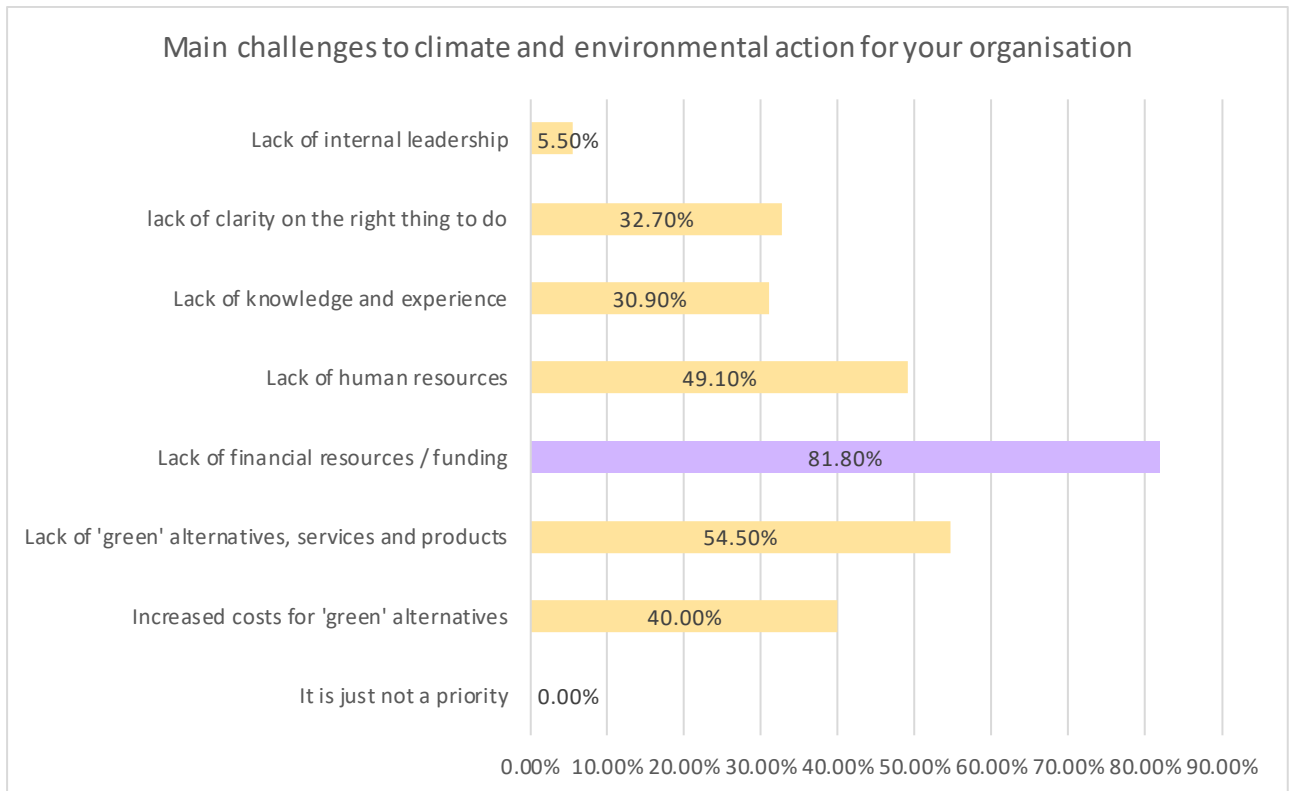
What do you think will be the key drivers of climate and environmental action within your organisation in the next two years?
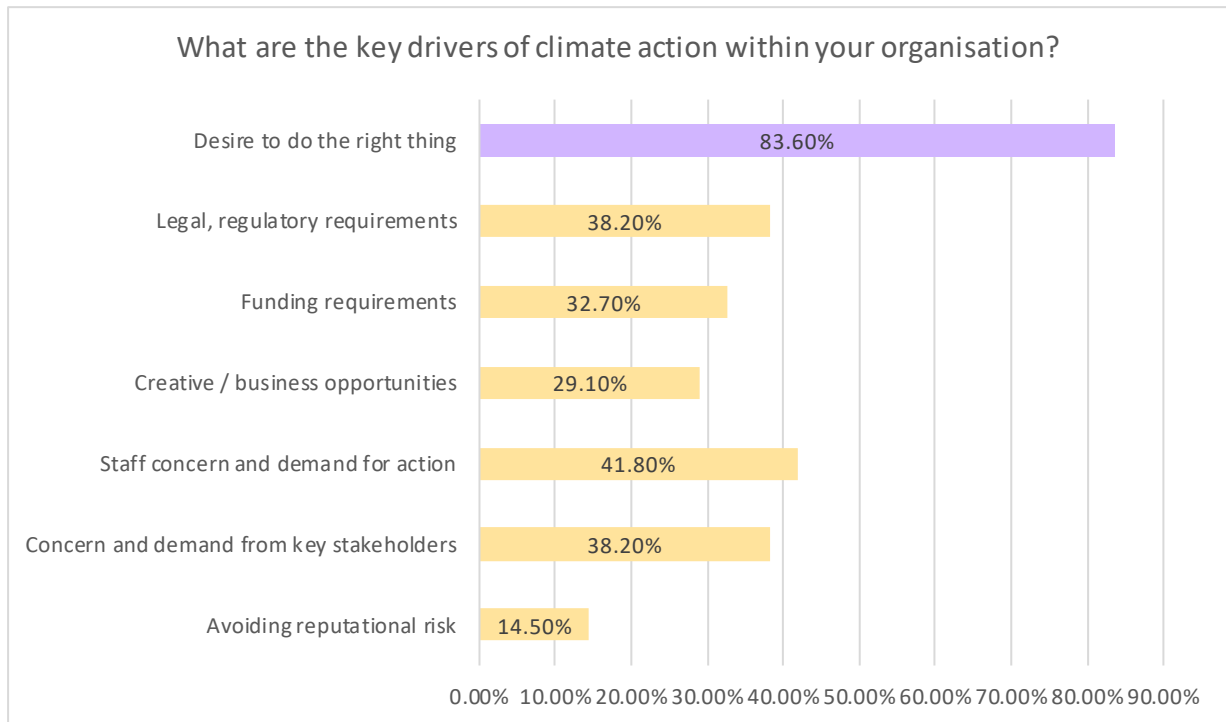
The chart show that 'desire to do the right thins' is the main driver of climate action within organisations.

- Intrinsic, pro-environmental motivations or a moral obligation to 'do the right thing' was considered the primary motivation for change amongst organisations surveyed and was identified by 83% of respondents.
- Other significant drivers included concern / demand for action from staff (42%) and stakeholders (38%).

What do you see as the main challenges to climate and environmental action for your organisation?

Main challenges to climate and environmental action for your organisation

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of internal leadership	5.50%
lack of clarity on the right thing to do	32.70%
Lack of knowledge and experience	30.90%
Lack of human resources	49.10%
Lack of financial resources / funding	81.80%
Lack of 'green' alternatives, services and products	54.50%
Increased costs for 'green' alternatives	40.00%
It is just not a priority	0.00%

The chart shows that 81.80% of organisations identify 'lack of resources and funding' as the main challenge to their climate and environmental action.

- There was unanimity amongst respondents that climate change and the environment is a priority but recognition of a range of financial, knowledge and supply based factors that are likely to limit their ability to respond. Primary amongst these were funding (82%), lack of green alternatives (55%) and human resources (49%).

What do you think the Arts Council should do to support climate and environmental action within the sector?
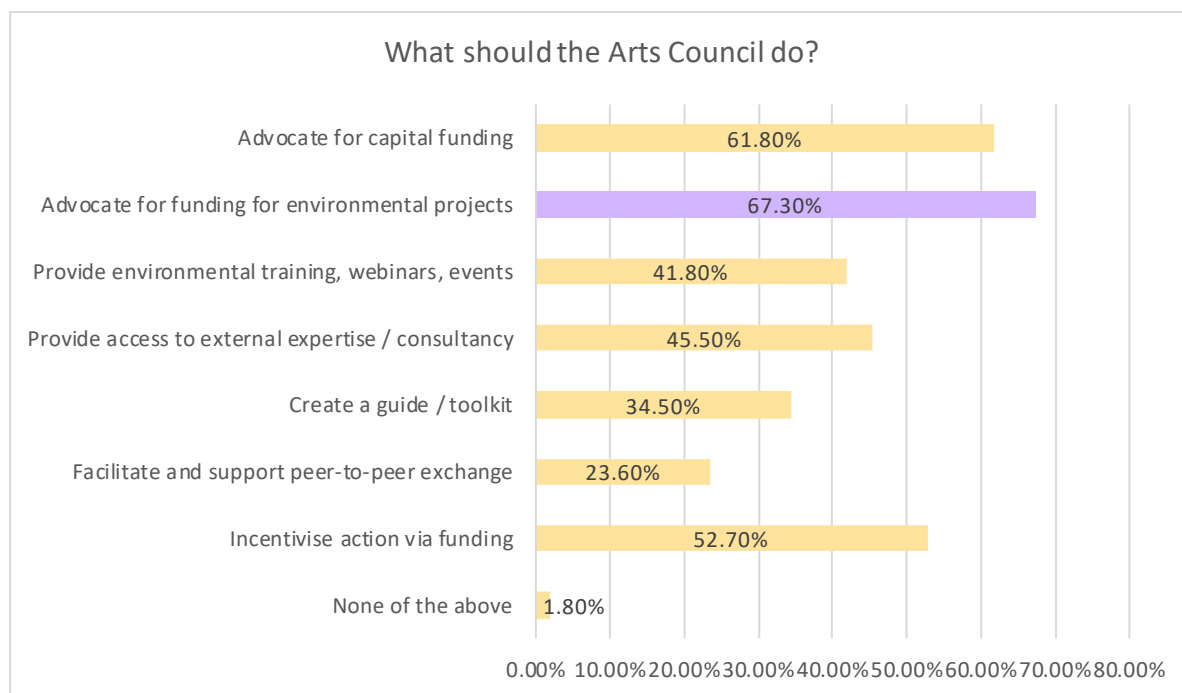
The chart shows that 'advocating for funding for environmental projects' would be the most helpful support provided to organisations by the Arts Council.

- There was broad-based recognition that the Arts Council had a role to play in supporting climate change and environmental action within the sector, with a variety of opinions as to what it's role should involve.
- Its advocacy role, in terms of sourcing additional funding for environmental (67%) and capital (62%) projects was highlighted by the majority of organisations, as was the potential to incentivize action via funding (52%).

General comments…

Around a third of organisations (n=19) provided a response to the open-ended question at the end of the survey inviting final comments. These were particularly rich and naturally fell into three broad themes:

1. Existing sector / organisation led actions

- "We have been involved in organising events and networking sessions in collaboration with Julies Bicycle, Theatre Forum, Creative Carbon Scotland and Siamsa Tire. We promote the work of the Green Arts Collective and the Theatre Green Book, a Green Arts Collective initiative."
- "We developed an environmental policy, based on existing resources provided by Julia's Bicycle, and this is a work in progress. We are actively reducing waste by reusing and recycling props, set and costumes, by extending the life of productions and, where possible, reducing transport and travel."
- "Some makers are exploring ways to achieve results with wood-fired (as oppose to electric) kilns - more sustainable fuels - but this involves re-learning some key processes with training needs and access to fuel an issue."
- "We are an arts organisation with a focus on disability with the ambition of improving our environmental commitments. We've developed new green policies, reduced the travel impact of our programmes and redesigned what we do to be less impactful on the environment, we recycle and upcycle and are exploring the purchase of e-bikes for staff to use for travel within Belfast. We have done this in isolation as there seems to be no central resource we can go to for advice and direction, and we have introduced change which we've had to fund from our own limited resources."
- "Our budgets are so lean we already spend as little as possible on heating. We already travel as little as possible and use public transport where possible. We spend as little as possible on materials, reuse and recycle everything we can."

Final comments…

2. Capital, programme and core funding

- "Changing to LED lighting would save on energy costs, so capital funding sooner rather than later would be a great help to venues."
- "We are aware of major and immediate actions requiring capital funding e.g. insulation, roof insulation, photovoltaic panels, solar water heating, air pump heat exchanger system, and better waste management options."
- "The theatre is looking at an eye-watering £260,000, energy bill in 2022/2023 (up from £70,000 in 2018/2019,). We are currently considering a feasibility study into the installation of solar panels."
- "The introduction of 'greener' policies (e.g. travel) has led to increases in programme costs at a time when funding is at standstill. An incentive programme to support environmental changes would be of great benefit."
- "Delivering more sustainable actions, outcomes and evaluations at festivals requires more staff time. A dedicated funding focus for organisations to deliver more sustainable festivals and events is required."
- "An increase in production and travel budgets to enable organisations to choose 'green' options."
- "While most arts companies will be happy to adopt more environmentally friendly practices, the reality is that without extra support and funding, to do so would reduce the volume and quality of our activities."

3. Support for sector-specific actions

- "Craft makers are aware of the impact they have on the environment in their processes. Some makers are exploring ways to achieve results with wood-fired kilns – more sustainable fuels - but this involves re-learning some key processes with training needs and access to fuel an issue. Shared facilities such as access to bookable kiln space could result in savings for makers as well as increased efficiencies."
- "There is a huge need for peer-to-peer learning for [craft] makers in the developing field of wood-fired kilns - and financial support for training programmes, trainer fees and expenses, workshops and case studies. Shared facilities such as access to bookable kiln space could result in savings for makers as well as increased efficiencies."

Conclusions…

- The survey provides a snapshot of current awareness, actions and attitudes towards the environment at the sector level, based on a relatively small sample but will help ACNI identify priorities and shape sector supports as we move forward into the next strategy period. We hope that, now climate legislation has been passed in Northern Ireland, greater clarity and support will also be offered by government.
- Funded arts organisations are mobile and do tour work, mainly on the island of Ireland and in GB. Only a minority of the sample tour work internationally. Dance and drama-based organisations tour work most frequently.
- The majority of organisations sampled are aware of their environmental commitments and are taking some action to address it, however, internal capacity limits the extent / nature of the response.
- Industry / sector specific actions such as the Theatre Green Book has mobilized collective and organisation-based responses, tailored to the needs of specific art forms. Literature and Traditional Arts based organisations were least likely to have received advice or support.
- Organisation type was a big determinant on impact type. Venues identified energy as the primary impact and 'producing and touring companies', travel and transport.
- There was broad based support for a range of actions moving forward, with funding, access to better services and environmental advice, training most prominent. The Arts Council's role as an advocate for capital and environmental projects was considered most important.
- The narrative responses at the end of the survey demonstrate that some organisations are already responding to the climate emergency at a project and policy level and that existing networks / initiatives are mobilizing change at an artform level. There is a strong moral obligation to 'do the right thing' but this is compromised by funding and capacity issues.

Responding Organisations

Annual Funding Programme (n=35)

- All set cross-cultural project
- Andersonstown Traditional & Contemporary Music School
- Belfast Exposed
- Belfast Photo Festival
- Belfast TradFest
- Cahoots NI
- Centre for Contemporary Art Derry~Londonderry
- Craft Northern Ireland
- Creative exchange studios
- Crescent Arts Centre
- Derry Theatre Trust t/a Millennium Forum
- Digital Arts Studios
- DU Dance (NI)
- Dumbworld
- Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company
- Golden Thread Gallery
- Grand Opera House Trust
- Lyric Theatre
- Maiden Voyage Dance
- Northern Ireland Opera
- Northern Ireland Piping and Drumming School
- Northern Visions
- Oh Yeah Music Centre
- Prime Cut Productions
- Queen Street Studios
- Replay Productions Ltd (Replay Theatre Company)
- Spanner in the works theatre company
- The Playhouse
- Theatre & Dance NI
- Thrive NI
- Ulster Youth Orchestra
- University of Atypical
- Verbal
- Visual Artists Ireland
- Young at Art

Lottery Project Funding (n=20)

- Abridged
- Accidental Theatre
- Arlen House
- B-beyond
- Brassneck Theatre Company
- c21 Theatre Company
- Colourpoint Creative Ltd
- Commedia of Errors
- Contemporary Music Centre Ltd
- Fighting Words Northern Ireland
- Hard Rain SoloistEnsemble
- Live Music Now
- Open House Festival Ltd
- Portico of Ards Ltd
- Quotidian - Word on the Street
- Sliabh Beagh Arts
- Stage Beyond
- Stendhal Festival ltd
- Three's theatre company
- Tumble Circus