

COVID-19 and its impact on the UK's Black, Asian and ethnically diverse arts workforce

essence of the arts industry



Inc Arts briefing June 2020

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PLEASE NOTE: This is an updated version of the briefing created in June with revisions to statistical data.

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About us

<https://incarts.uk>

Inc Arts is a UK-wide collective of the UK's Black, Asian and ethnically diverse arts sector workforce.

We are a collective of ethnically diverse freelancers, employees, small and large organisations and membership groups working together to create peer-led solutions to redress the under-representation and lack of diversity within the UK's arts sector.

We champion the creative, economic and contractual rights of the UK's ethnically diverse workforce.

We do this through

- Research and advocacy
- Creating bespoke Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) solutions to arts organisations
- Providing a network of advice, support and fellowship to the diverse arts workforce, across all artforms and seniority, and throughout the UK

The views of over 500 Black, Asian and diverse individuals and organisations are represented in this report. These views have been gathered through research projects conducted by experts in social exclusion research, as well as Inc Arts snapshot surveys, and regular weekly zoom meetings with individuals, leaders of arts organisations and membership groups, as well as campaigning groups including Museums Detox, Theatre Call to Action and Shades of Noir. Our representation includes D/deaf and disabled membership groups and individuals.

Background to the report

We know that government has already received a great deal of insight and expert advice on the impact so far on the creative and cultural sector, and the economic value of the creative and cultural sector.

We know that DCMS has held regular conversations with representatives from a wide cross-section of the cultural sector since lockdown began. Since early in March Inc Arts has been asking for government to meet with representatives of the diverse arts sector and specifically relating to the needs and concerns of the UK's ethnically diverse arts sector.

Throughout April to June DCMS held round tables with groups representing freelancer sector, those working in learning and community arts, and disabled people.

The first meeting with ethnically diverse sector leaders took place towards the end of June.

Report summary, and recommendations

Ethnically diverse people are under-represented in the arts sector, are over-represented amongst the arts freelance community, and in roles that provide significant leverage to organisations around community engagement, education, audience development and training – but not in roles that lead to leadership positions.

Ethnically diverse led organisations are heavily invested in creating diverse work teams, and output, as well as engaging with diverse communities. They are more likely to be under-resourced, and under-funded, yet add significant value to the diversity offerings of larger institutions.

Recommendations from the 500+ individuals who have contributed to this report include

- A revision of the current funding model of ethnically diverse-led organisations, and individuals
- Prioritising the retention of diversity in the arts sector workforce
- Ring fenced funding for diverse individuals and organisations
- Imposing sanctions on arts organisations that do not meet diversity targets across production, employment and audiences.

A full list of recommendations can be found on page 8.

1. Ethnic diversity in the UK

Data from ONS, Creative Industries Federation, ArtsProfessional and Inc Arts research shows

14% of the UK population is Black, Asian and ethnically diverse¹.
40% of London is ethnically diverse²
33% of Manchester is ethnically diverse³

Ethnic diversity in the cultural sector

London receives almost a third of Arts Council England (ACE) funding⁴.
40% of London's population is Asian, Black and ethnically diverse.
36% of economically active Londoners are black, Asian and minority ethnic⁵.

The workforce of the arts sector is not as diverse:

12% of the UK's arts sector is ethnically diverse⁶
8% of Arts Council funded Chief Executives are ethnically diverse
5 % of the UK's heritage sector is diverse
51% of the UK's ethnically diverse arts sector is freelance⁷.

Underfunded

BME applicants for Arts Council England (ACE) funding are three times more likely than white applicants to have their applications rejected at the first round⁸.

Excluded from leadership

92% of ACE-funded organisations are white-led.
10% of ethnically diverse workforce are in leadership roles⁹

Over-represented in the freelance sector

Ethnically diverse people are more likely to be freelance than white people.
Creative Industries Federation 2017 statistics show 46% of the creative workforce is self-employed. Inc Arts data shows that 51% of the Black, Asian and ethnically diverse workforce is freelance.

¹ [Gov. UK](#) Census 2011

² [Gov.UK](#); Census 2011

³ ONS Census 2011

⁴ [ArtsProfessional](#) July 2019

⁵ [TFL report 2019, figures from ONS Annual population survey](#)

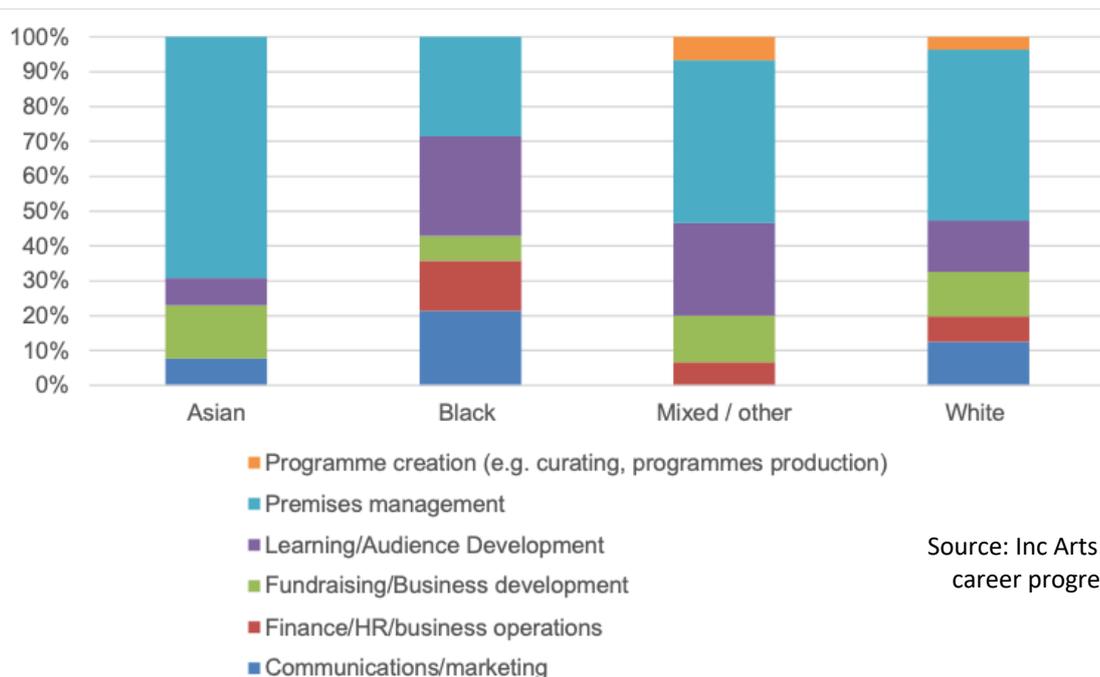
⁶ [Arts Council England Creative Case for Diversity](#) report 2018

⁷ Inc Arts 2020 research 'Career Progression in the Arts'

⁸ [Arts Professional research](#), August 2019

⁹ [Arts Council England, Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case](#) report, 2017

What roles are ethnically diverse people working in?



Source: Inc Arts research into career progression, 2020

The backbone of the sector’s diverse engagement with audiences, communities and education

Black, Asian and ethnically diverse people are over-represented in public-facing roles, and in roles responsible for audience development, education and community engagement: they are 3 x more likely to be employed in learning, development and outreach rolesⁱ

Black, Asian and ethnically diverse staff are less frequently found in roles that progress to leadership positions. They provide organisations with their engagement with diverse audiences, community engagement, education and training.

Black, Asian and ethnically diverse led organisations have significantly higher reach amongst diverse audiences:

Black, Asian and ethnically diverse teams, when they are produce artistic programmes within non-diverse organisations, deliver significantly higher levels of diverse engagement:

'Barber Shop Chronicles', written by Black playwright Inua Elams, Directed by Iranian Director Bijan Shibani, with an all-black cast enjoyed 2 sell out runs at the National Theatre, and brought with it an unprecedented 35% increase in diverse audience attendance.

Director Matthew Xia’s 2018 production of ***Frankenstein*** at the Manchester Royal Exchange saw the biggest spike in sales to under-25 year olds in over 10 years of the theatre’s production.

Ethnic diversity, COVID-19 and Black Lives Matters: the additional pressures of lockdown

Risk to staff roles

In May the Office for National Statistics reported that Black people were at higher risk of dying of coronavirus, and catching coronavirus. More recently it has been reported that Bangladeshi men are at most risk of death after catching coronavirus. As the sector faces high levels of redundancy, there is a growing concern amongst the ethnically diverse workforce that organisations will fail to make provision for ethnically diverse staff to return to public-facing roles, and will instead make those staff redundant once furloughing financial support expires.

Risk to freelancers

Inc Arts research preliminary findings are showing that Black, Asian and ethnically diverse freelance sector workers are experiencing disproportionately high levels of redundancy compared to their white counterparts. Freelancers are already at higher risk of unemployment as organisations deliver reduced programmes.

Risk to diverse training and development, and skills pipeline

Arts social enterprise Creative Access polled 252 of their membership, 89% of which were from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The poll found:

85% of current trainees are either not being kept on or are unsure if they will be kept on after their internship. This compares with a pre-Covid-19 rate of more than 90% of trainees moving on to full-time work at the end of their internships.

More than 40% of respondents had been furloughed, made redundant or had work cancelled or postponed.

80% said their priority is to find a new job or freelance work.

40% of black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents said they have run out of money or are about to do so.

67% of respondents said their mental health is suffering due to Covid-19.

Black Lives Matter and its impact on Black arts workers

In June, the death of US citizen George Floyd prompted global responses to systemic racism experienced by Black people worldwide. Cultural institutions throughout the UK put out statements of support and solidarity with Black communities.

A vast number of Black individuals and Black-led organisations made public statements about the disparities they felt between the public statements being made, and their own lived experience in the workplace.

Black staff, employees and associates to arts organisations have been approached by organisations, asking for help to shape public statements about Black Lives Matters, and

being asked to speak publicly about their own experience of racism. Because of the low levels of diverse seniority in the sector, the majority of staff approached by their places of work have been young, relatively inexperienced, and in junior roles in their organisations.

Inc Arts has received reports of ensuing PTSD as a result of staff being involved in shaping their workplace anti-racism responses. Most staff approached had not been trained to speak of their own lived experience, and have received no care or support in doing so. The majority of staff asked to contribute to public statements on anti-racism have had no experience of communications messaging, nor have they had coaching, counselling or trauma support made available to them. Many have reported that their under-representation in their places of work has been exacerbated by this experience, and has left them feeling more vulnerable and exposed.

Workplace trauma

Inc Arts is fundraising to provide counselling for those affected by the recent events around Black Lives Matters.

Arts Council is yet to respond to the public statements of disaffection from the ethnically diverse workforce.

Inc Arts asks Arts Council England to provide funded support measures including counselling to Black-led organisations, and individuals working in organisations with low levels of ethnic diversity.

Inc Arts asks Arts Council England to provide ring-fenced funding support measures, accessible to Asian, Black and ethnically diverse sector workers, and ongoing free access to diverse-led counselling, advice and support for those in predominantly non-diverse workplaces.

Diverse arts sector responses to coronavirus

In a survey of 87 ethnically diverse people working in the sector, 54% of survey respondents reported that coronavirus has had the biggest impact on their career opportunities and earnings – above health concerns or caring duties.

With consideration of a return to creative engagement as lockdown is lifted, 87% said their biggest concern is a reduction in the amount of diverse work being commissioned or programmed.

Recommendations

Inc Arts is peer-led in seeking solutions. The recommendations are those suggested by the diverse membership.

Protect diversity in our workplaces: change employment legislation to also protect during considerations of redundancy, retention and dismissal

- Section 159 of the Equalities Act allows provision to be made with regard to positive discrimination in hiring of staff. It does not make the same provision for protected characteristics in considerations of redundancy, retention and dismissal, with the exception of redundancy considerations for pregnant women and women on maternity leave.
- **Embed diversity as a condition of funding for all publicly funded institutions.** Approaches to how this may be achieved include:
- **Prioritise the retention of existing diverse staff, and the employment of diverse freelancers in the arts workforce.** The diversity of the sector is already too fragile, and redundancies threaten future work, and future talent development.

For organisations to allocate a percentage of each budget line to an active diversity intervention. This would create a long-term systemic change in everything from procurement to performance

Impose sanctions on organisations which do not meet diversity targets – with immediate effect. This will encourage larger institutions to work with ethnically diverse freelancers

Create a racial equality representative in every workforce with additional funds supplied to implement measures needed to drive change

Introduce mandatory training on racial equality, micro aggressions and cultural differences to ensure a safer environment and that people are talking about it from the start of getting back to work.

Simplify the tendering process & PQQ's for micro businesses

- **Create a Universal income for freelance workers**
- **Create and recognise an independent body that represents the sector's diverse arts workforce**

While there is such disparity in the workplace, ethnically diverse people need a publicly funded body that advocates on their behalf

Invest directly in diverse led organisations, and create a funding stream that is accessible only to ethnically diverse arts organisations

- Public funding has failed us, as it has been distributed by non-diverse gatekeepers. In addition to the need to diversify all work teams, there is additional need for a funding process that is divested to and distributed by those with lived experience of under-representation and exclusion in the arts.

The social benefit of diverse-led engagement, and engagement with diverse audiences

The work done by ethnically diverse organisations throughout the UK are their own testimony. The following is a sample of the activity undertaken by them – and are in their own words, as shared by Inc Arts.

“I work with young people who have experienced cancer and use the arts as a way to empower new voices in the cancer community. We deliver these as arts project for public audiences, but they significantly improve our participants wellbeing, sense of community and comfort to use their language to talk about their emotions and experiences. Our output is used to engage public audiences in conversation around cancer and support their own comfort around this difficult subject matter. We share knowledge from those experiences that relate to so much about experiencing a trauma at a young age.”

We are an award-winning creative movement who create culturally inclusive work across all art forms. Founded by Ryan Calais Cameron and Shavani Cameron in 2015, they produced the critically acclaimed Queens of Sheba, and Typical Birthed out of a collective frustration with the industry’s lack of diversity, Nouveau Riche have set out to create new writing that is thought provoking, challenging and culturally inclusive. The aim was and is to be the first point of call for a generation of incredible talent that were no longer willing to beg for a seat, but were willing to establish something of their own. The most common theme in our work is that we tend to depart from traditional Western storytelling; experimenting with fresh contemporary, and unconventional methods, including cultural influences from the African diaspora. This will usually result in a practice that focuses on creating and engaging an emotional response from the audience. In 2019 we took our production of Typical to Edinburgh Festival, Talawa First Festival and a 4 week run at Soho theatre London. based on ticket sales The show was seen by 3500 people within a 8week period. We were also able to take our flag ship show Queens of Sheba on a 10 week 11 venue sold out national tour. 3673 people around the country saw the show and a further 2800 came to our workshops for young people and community groups.

We deliver eight Youth Theatres for 190 young people on a weekly basis. More than 60% of YT members are from backgrounds other than White British and around 25-30% are disabled or have an additional need. More than half of our members pay our concessionary rate to take part in sessions. We also work in schools, community centres and children’s centres on a weekly basis. We host performances for local families for 24 Saturdays a year and many weekday shows for schools. We tour performances to theatres nationally as well as libraries and outdoor festivals. Approximately 25,000 people see our performances each year and we have around 26,000 participatory engagements in our Creative Learning and Artist Development programmes.

I am of dual heritage and live in a diverse London borough. My work ethic is to promote good role models, employ a diverse staff who reflect the communities we work in. I have and always aim to support all young artists, and some have stayed working with me for over 14 years.

I run a youth theatre which works with socially disadvantaged young people. My work is part of a wider youth service which delivers creative, inspirational and active programmes. We have 7 centres, all of which deliver 7 days a week. The service engages more than a thousand young people per year. 121 young people were engaged on the theatre programme last year.

(We) create high quality, accessible classes and theatre, which reflect and promote the diversity of the local area and in so doing challenge perceptions of Peckham and its young people. We provide a safe space for children to explore, take risks and negotiate their way in a changing world. We welcome young people from all backgrounds to study performance out of school – with a goal to improving self-esteem, raising ambition and giving all children access to the arts. We aim to raise the

skills, confidence and aspirations of children and young people and their families through experiencing, participating and training in the performing arts from first experience to pathways into

employment. We platform cutting edge productions in our state of the art, 200-seat theatre and studios, that push the boundaries of form, use exciting ways to retell existing or imagine new stories, and engage with audiences beyond the performer-spectator relationship. By showcasing new talent and raising the awareness of different forms of theatre, Theatre Peckham is known for developing an exciting and diverse programme and encouraging new audiences to place theatre at the heart of their community. Young people are at the heart of everything we do. Our young black and minority artists define the identity of Theatre Peckham and we provide skills and opportunities, working with excellent creatives in a venue that is both locally focussed with a national and international vision. Audiences who are often excluded due to socio-economic or other circumstances feel at-home in Theatre Peckham. School children become inspired by their peers, learn to tell their own stories and realise the power of self-expression. Theatre-goers travel from afar to experience the authentic joy that resonates from our stage. Theatre Peckham's personality resounds throughout Southwark maintaining and growing relationships with partners, community groups, funders and stakeholders. We champion a model of excellence for developing progression routes into the creative industries working with inspirational leaders and industry professionals.

All our work is socially engaged. Our main projects are Creative Ways Into Work - using filmmaking as a tool to teach young people new skills and support their journey into employment, whether this is in Creative industries or not. We work in disadvantaged communities in Tower Hamlets and Hackney. In the last year we reached approximately 50 young people. Our target this year (before the pandemic) was 80. Flix in the Stix - A pop-up cinema for rurally and socially isolated communities. This project has been running for three years in Lincolnshire and we reach approximately 200 people per year. We had just started this project in North Kent before the pandemic and one screening had reached an audience of 150 people. Japan Festival - we deliver an annual festival to celebrate Japanese culture. We deliver outreach as part of this.

Delivering immersive theatre projects that support curriculum learning to a diverse range of children in UK wide primary schools. A high percentage of schools we work in have pupils experiencing disadvantage. We aim to improve confidence and develop soft skills in problem solving and working as a team. Working with approx. 3,000 children per year.

With One Voice is a UK charity that works at the intersection of arts and homelessness globally. To grow creative opportunities for people who are or have been homeless, WOV commissions and disseminates research, designs and delivers training and connects people, projects and policymakers through exchanges. We run an Advocacy, Research and Training (ART) Lab as space for innovation around arts/homelessness. Consistent with our values of creativity, equity and openness, we are entirely co-produced with 50% of our board and staff people who are or have been homeless. Since its inception WOV has directly worked with over 300 homeless people from 20 countries, reaching a further 25,000+ people through the orgs in our network. We have commissioned 8 pieces of research including the first International Literature Review of Arts and Homelessness, the Cultural Spaces' Responses to Homelessness Review (March 2020) and the Arts and Homelessness Practice Guide (May 2020). Since March 2020 and the lock down, we have also published COVID specific guidance (all links below) The Jigsaw of Homeless Support is the cornerstone of our practice - it show how and why the arts and creativity need to be part of homeless support for people to thrive, not just survive:

<http://bit.ly/jigsaw-of-homeless-support>

Cultural Spaces Resources: <http://bit.ly/cultural-spaces-responses-to-homelessness>

<http://bit.ly/the-cultural-spaces-homelessness-toolkit> <https://bit.ly/cultural-spaces-responses-to-COVID-19>

Mobile Library during COVID <https://bit.ly/mobile-library-during-COVID19>

Map of Arts/homelessness activity during COVID <https://arhomelessint.usshahidi.io/views/map>
Literature Review: <http://bit.ly/executive-summary-review-19>

Our outreach / engagement work tends to be either workshops organised within schools / universities, or programmes designed specifically to engage community groups. The last programme for community groups was in 2018 called 'Kadamati' and was delivered in Edinburgh and Paris: <https://www.akramkhancompany.net/productions/kadamati/> In 2019, we did deliver an intensive residency programme for Classical Indian Dancers (those specialising in Kathak and/or Bharathanatyam) - this was a week long initiative for which participants paid to attend (we did offer some bursary places). The nature of the activity and area of specialism attracted participants of ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Working in theatre with British East Asian communities – participatory and skills development through our academies held every summer; 28 participants and 9 tutors, touring theatre productions, playreadings , professional playwriting programme www.yellowearth.org.uk

Qualitative findings from Inc Arts research

In depth interviews are taking place, the findings of which will feed into Inc Arts career progression research. So far 30 interviews have been completed; the key findings are as follows, and provide background to the recommendations on page 7.

**What effect is the pandemic having on those working in the arts?
Do the effects differ according to background and ethnicity?**

Funding cuts and closures

- Concerns were expressed that arts organisations will close because of Covid-19 and arts funding will be one of the first sectors to suffer public funding cuts.
- A split has emerged between regional arts representatives and those in urban areas, with those in the regions fearing greater risk of closure of arts programmes and venues due to cuts to arts funding in the regions after the pandemic.
- Impact on finances within the sector will inevitably mean that there is even less incentive to plough money into inclusive artforms.

Effects on availability of work

- All interviewees reported that the availability of work and their usual working patterns had been directly impacted by Covid-19, with many prevented from continuing their creative work during the pandemic.
- The situation has hit freelance workers particularly hard as their work has almost completely disappeared.
- Covid-19 has drastically reduced work experience opportunities which will impact young people with little experience and who have no connections.

Effects on diversity and inclusion in the arts

- Interviewees feared that diversity initiatives could be put on hold as organisations struggle to re-establish themselves. Concern was raised that financial insecurity could lead to the protection of existing ways of working instead of embracing diversity and inclusion.
- Very negative consequences for diversity and the sector as a whole as projects have been cancelled and artists have become less mobile. This situation is particularly hard for artforms that rely on physical interaction (such as dance, music and some theatre).
- However, the advent of Black Lives Matter has brought hope that as restructuring to the arts workforce and planning for new arts programmes takes place after Covid-19, diversity issues will need to be fully considered and a more diverse workforce and inclusive arts initiatives could be created as a result.
- Greater diversity in senior level arts management will be needed in the aftermath of the pandemic in order to create diversity and inclusion for those working in the arts at all levels.

Developments in the arts as a result of the pandemic

- The only positive comments about the impact of the virus was that it provided opportunities for reflection and forced people to focus on their local endeavours.
- Some positive ideas have emerged from the pandemic which have helped engagement especially in digital and online provision and these have encompassed wider groups in society. However, access to the internet can unfairly disadvantage the less well-off.
- Interviewees expressed concern that online activities would disproportionately affect older communities and people with disabilities.

Suggested actions to improve diversity and inclusion in the arts in the wake of the pandemic

- A Government commitment to a recovery package for the arts and the provision of a universal basic income for a defined period would be seen as a very positive move to support freelance workers in the arts.
- The establishment of a central database or national network that acts as a UK-wide movement for creating diversity in the arts would be welcomed by BAME arts workers in particular.
- The Arts Council, sponsors and trust funds that support the arts need to act together to provide a mandate for diversity and inclusion within the arts and to provide the financial security for arts organisations to embrace diversity. The budgets of arts organisations themselves, particularly in the wake of Covid-19, are seen as too precarious to allow organisations to develop new strategies for diversity and inclusion by themselves.

- Arts organisations need to engage with schools and universities to enable young people to understand what jobs are available in this sector in order that they can train to take on these roles following the pandemic. Paid internships would allow those in lower socio-economic groups to afford to gain experience in the arts.