

Coronavirus Dance Impact Study

Informational Brief
March 2021

A Dance Sector In Peril

Carrie Blake | Webb Mgmt

Gregory Youdan | Research & Advocacy Coordinator, Dance/NYC

Alejandra Duque Cifuentes | Executive Director, Dance/NYC

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CONTEXT

In March 2020, as COVID-19 arrived and took hold in New York City, Dance/NYC worked to quickly assess the initial impacts of the pandemic and resulting shutdown of the dance field. The findings were dire: hundreds of individual dance workers were immediately unemployed and in need of resources for basic needs like food and housing. Organizations furloughed hundreds of employees and cancelled months of activities, while facilities shut their doors. Also, the field seemed to be scattering, as dance workers, either unemployed or working remotely, relocated to escape the City, where COVID-19 was more prevalent and rampant than any other location in the US.

These results were not surprising. Dance/NYC's recent research *Defining "Small-Budget" Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology* (dance.nyc/sbdmdata2020) highlighted the limiting and oppressive nature of institutional and hierarchical structures, inequitable funding practices, and the resulting disproportionate distribution of resources that minimize support for the individuals workers that make up the sector. These systemic issues were immediately exacerbated to the detriment of individual dance workers and dance organizations, groups, and projects alike.

In response, dance artists and workers quickly came together to provide mutual aid and support on daily sector-wide calls now coined Culture@3, partnered to distribute meals, and engaged in advocacy work using this crisis as a catalyst to position artists as necessary workers. Dance studios came together to create the Dance Studio Alliance (dancestudioallianceny.org) to advocate for local dance businesses; Dance Rising (dancerising.org) organized hyper-local dance outs to bring awareness and visibility to the sector; Creating New Futures (creatingnewfutures.tumblr.com) organized and amplified efforts to secure freelance artists' livelihood; The Dance Union (thedanceunion.com) coordinated town halls and relief funding; Dance Artists National Collective (DANC) (danceartistsnationalcollective.org) organized dance workers; disabled arts workers organized mutual aid support through the Crip Fund (cripfund.wordpress.com); and dance companies created the #NYCDanceUnites and #Dance2Vote campaigns to propel voter engagement, to name a few.

At the same time, the groundbreaking Black Lives Matter movement was enlivened in response to the continued murders of Black people at the hands of white supremacists. Once again, the dance field organized and responded in support of racial and social justice. Dance workers participated in community organizing efforts and protests. They held the field and its leadership accountable for historical bias, racism, and unfair labor practices. Dance facilities such as New York Live Arts, Gibney, and Judson Church opened their lobbies as sanctuary and rest spaces for Black Lives Matter protesters. Dance organizations and groups such as Elisa Monte Dance (bit.ly/JuneteenthDanceMarch) and Get Dis War Dance (instagram.com/getdiswardance) organized Juneteenth activities, while others such as The International Association of Blacks in Dance (iabdassociation.org) and Black Dance Stories (instagram.com/blackdancestories) organized programming centered on the Black dance experience.

Other bright spots emerged as the pandemic endured. Virtual performances and newly choreographed, collaborative digital works were released. Zoom became an essential teaching tool, as the nondisabled community and world at large learned about the accessibility of digital platforms—platforms the disabled community for so long had known to be available and effective yet for so long had to request their inclusion. Bedrooms became studios for individual and virtual group practice. More recently, short-term rentals have become residencies and public space is becoming performance space. Many are looking toward summer, when New York City's public spaces will be activated with arts and culture through initiatives like OpenCulture (bit.ly/OpenCultureNYC) and NY Pops Up (nypopsup.com). While the world has turned inward to evade the virus, the development and delivery of arts and culture—while forever changed—never stopped.

Even still, initial short-term concerns have evolved into grave and lasting impacts, as the pandemic has now passed the one-year mark and the US death toll has surpassed 500K. Many dance entities and workers are still unable to access resources to support human needs, including medical and mental health care, food, and housing. While organizations have successfully transitioned to digital engagement, facilities remain dark and dance workers have left the City.

As the possibility of indoor performances becomes a reality (as of April 21, venues will be permitted to reopen at 33% capacity), many experts predict live performance might not be safe at full capacity until 2022. There is also concern that a lack of proper infrastructure and related costs will mitigate reopening at lower capacity thresholds without substantial subsidies from the State or City. Federal legislation has just been approved to extend unemployment benefits for individuals and provide additional relief for performing arts and live event organizations and venues as restrictions for these activities extend, possibly to the two-year mark.

DANCE/NYC RESPONSE TO COVID

Beyond research, Dance/NYC engaged in several initiatives in response to the pandemic. In March 2020, the Coronavirus Dance Relief Fund (dance.nyc/COVID-19), was established to provide limited but much-needed support to individual dance workers and dance organizations, groups, and projects. The fund explicitly prioritized communities most impacted by COVID-19, including African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA), disabled, immigrant, and women-identifying artists, as well as those at high risk, including elderly and immunosuppressed artists. Freelance dance workers were eligible to receive monthly awards of \$500 with a maximum of \$1,500 across the grant period. Dance-making organizations and fiscally-sponsored groups with budgets between \$10,000 and \$500,000 were eligible to receive one-time grants of \$2,500 to \$5,000. Funds were distributed between March and September of 2020, supporting 734 unique individual dance workers and 125 dance-making organizations and groups with over \$1 million in funds.

Additionally, Dance/NYC worked with a coalition of institutions and grassroots organizers through the COVID-19 NYC Relief Fund Coalition (dance.nyc/covid-19/Relief-Fund-Coalition) to widen the net of arts workers to help for as long as possible through collective efforts. The groups came together to learn from one another, share resources, and be in conversation around the ethics of relief funding. All of the funds aim to support artists, centering those who are most severely affected by the economic shutdown and who may struggle to secure financial resources.

In May 2020, Dance/NYC launched the #ArtistsAreNecessaryWorkers Campaign (bit.ly/AANWOverview) to demand the acknowledgement, representation, and integration of dance and arts workers into the decision-making that will envision the future post-pandemic. In recognition of the consistent presence of artists at every level in New York City—leading tourism, strengthening education, fueling the economy, and ensuring the health, wellness, and imaginations of local communities, the campaign aimed to reposition artists as a critical part of the ecosystem of a healthy City. Dance/NYC penned an open letter to Mayor de Blasio and curated a 12-part conversation series where artists and cultural workers from across the sector considered the new realities COVID surfaced. Highlighting the importance of the arts ecology, the series pointed to current challenges and offered considerations for ways to move forward as a field. With an audience of over 1K unique live attendees, the topics covered included disability justice, studio practice, digital futures, and the future of touring, performance venues, and festivals. The final conversation: "Dance as Dignified Labor," further emphasized Dance/NYC's commitment to advocating for dance worker rights and wellbeing.

For reimagining our world / For moving toward an equitable future / For strengthening education / For fueling our economy / For rebuilding New York City
 #ArtistsAreNecessaryWorkers @dancenyc

dance/NYC
 IN ALLIANCE WITH DANCE/USA

artists are
 necessary workers.

Alt text: Purple box with writing in white reading For reimagining our world / For moving toward an equitable future / For strengthening education / For fueling our economy / For rebuilding New York City #ArtistsAreNecessaryWorkers @dancenyc artists are necessary workers. The dance/NYC is on the right side of the image.

Additionally, since May 2020, Dance/NYC has been hosting weekly calls (bit.ly/dancefieldcall) with the dance field to address pressing questions, needs, and plans for the future of dance in the metropolitan NYC area. The calls have focused on disseminating information related to COVID-19 and on facilitating resource-sharing amongst the dance community. At the time of this brief, Dance/NYC has hosted 35 calls with an average of 43 participants, engaging a total of 416 unique individual participants. Notable guest speakers have included Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals, Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer, and Dr. Julia lafrate, Director of Dance Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center. In response to the sector's overflowing activism, Dance/NYC has been sending out weekly advocacy alerts to provide timely updates on City, State, and National efforts that would further the field's collective goals of relief. In 2020, Dance/NYC also testified ten (10) times before the City and State governments, and signed on to twenty (20) legislative letters advocating for dance and dance workers on issues such as rent relief, reopening, and financial support for the sector.

In February 2021, Dance/NYC and Gibney, in collaboration with the larger dance community, launched *Reopening Dance in NYC* (reopening.dance.nyc), a digital toolkit to support the dance industry's reopening process. The toolkit collected ideas and concepts from the community through Dance/NYC's field-wide calls and crowdsourced efforts to band together to work on what was needed for our sector. To ensure the highest level of safety for all dance workers, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit businesses, the toolkit was developed with guidance from New York State, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and World Health Organization (WHO), and in collaboration with public health, medical, and legal experts over an eight-month period. *Reopening Dance in NYC* will be updated on an ongoing basis as changes warrant to reflect government guidance, COVID-19 information, and industry-wide input.

METHODOLOGY

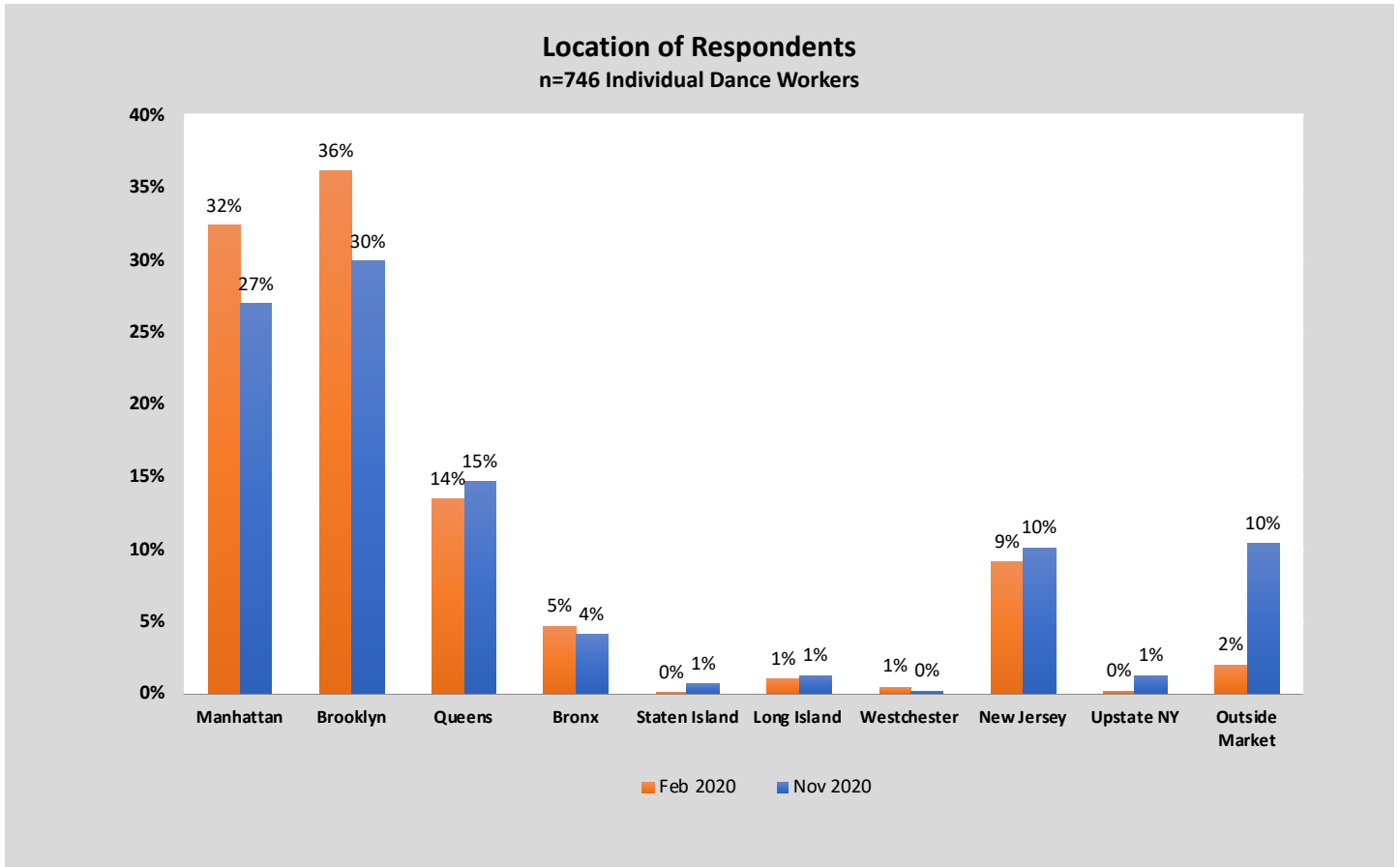
Ultimately, one of the most important tools guiding Dance/NYC's advocacy has been research—the stories and realities of those impacted by this moment.

As the shutdown began in March, Dance/NYC leadership collaborated to design and launch two (2) separate surveys, one for dance organizations, groups, and projects, and another soon thereafter for independent dance workers. Focused areas of inquiry were employment shifts, activity loss, projected income loss, and immediate needs.

Open from March to June 2020, Dance/NYC circulated the survey within the field and required its completion as part of the application for Dance/NYC's Coronavirus Dance Relief Fund (dance.nyc/COVID-19). The field was invited to complete the survey multiple times to inform the investigation of longitudinal impacts. The results were analyzed and published on Dance.NYC every one (1) to three (3) weeks throughout the survey period in order to monitor, advocate and support the needs of the field. This initial research yielded responses from 1,047 unique individual dance workers and 321 unique dance organizations, groups, and projects.

As the pandemic wore on, the research needed more information to assess changing needs and impacts on the field. Dance/NYC along with Carrie Blake of Webb Mgmt developed a survey protocol, retaining some questions from the first round, while adding areas of inquiry related to income shifts, employment status, migration, and engagement/activity since March 2020. This survey, open from October to November 2020, resulted in input from 794 individual dance workers and 201 dance organizations, groups, and projects. The demographics of individual dance workers responding to the second survey was very comparable to the first pool, with two (2) exceptions. The second pool included higher proportions of immigrant and millennial dance workers. The makeup of the second pool of dance organizations, groups, and projects was also comparable despite being more than one-third smaller, save for a larger proportion of organizations based in Manhattan.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do after this is all over. Will my jobs even exist? Will I be able to get a lease if I have no income right now? What is the future of dance?”



Alt text: The bar graph shows location of respondents (n=734) comparisons between Feb. 2020 and Nov. 2020 by location. Data appears as a percentage of total participants. Manhattan Feb. (32%) Nov. (27%), Brooklyn Feb. (36%), Nov. (30%); Queens Feb. (14%), Nov. (15%); The Bronx Feb. (5%), Nov. (4%); Staten Island Feb. (0%), Nov. (1%); Long Island Feb. (1%), Nov. (1%); Westchester Feb. (1%), Nov. (0%); New Jersey Feb. (9%), Nov. (10%); Upstate NY Feb. (0%), Nov. (1%); Outside Market Feb. (2%), Nov. (10%).

KEY FINDINGS & HIGHLIGHTS

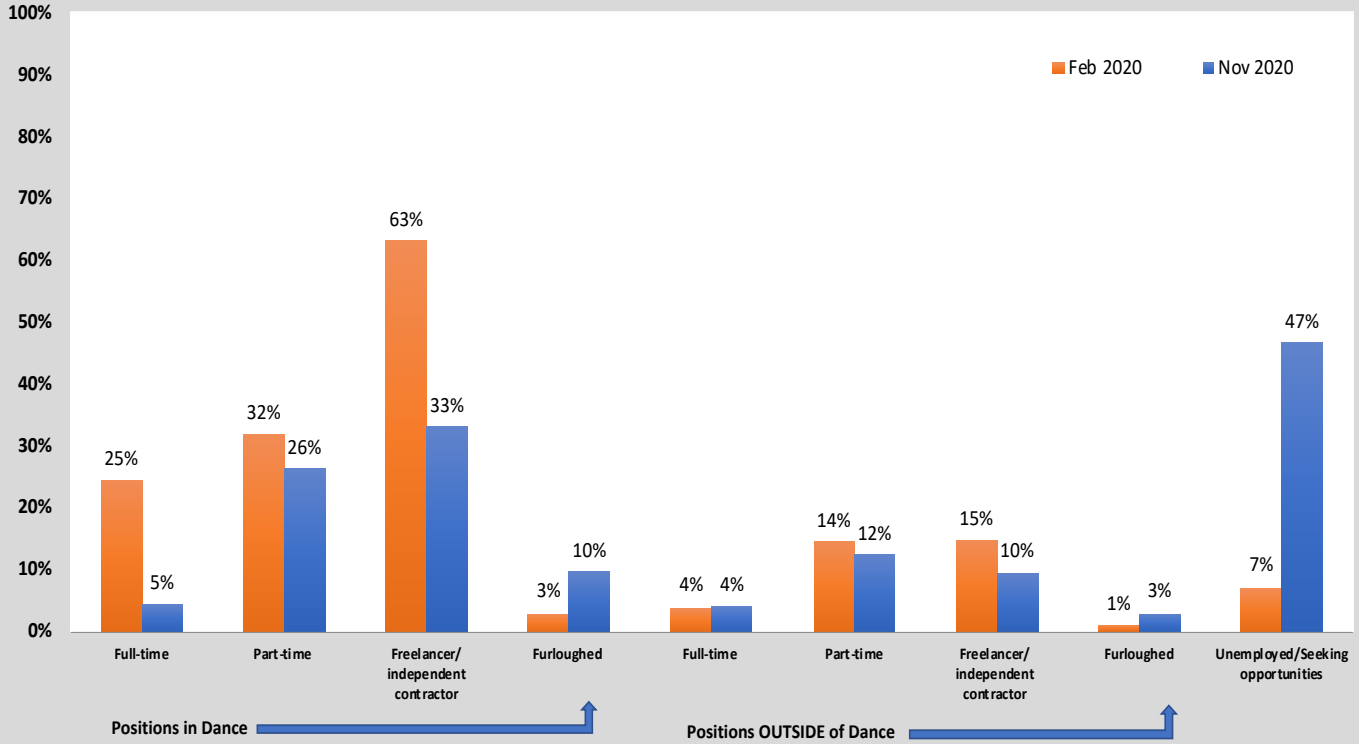
“I have always considered myself exceptionally lucky to be able to live in New York City and make a living doing what I love. However, these circumstances make it impossible not just to live, but to exist—both as an artist and as a human being.”

The longevity of the pandemic is shifting the size and makeup of New York City’s dance field.

- 47% of individual dance workers were unemployed in late Fall 2020 as compared to 7% unemployed at the beginning of the pandemic; 30% of those unemployed are women of color.
- 5% were employed full-time in dance in late Fall 2020 as compared to 25% at the beginning of the pandemic.
- 5% relocated permanently and another 17% are considering permanent relocation.
- 43% are considering long-term career options outside of dance.

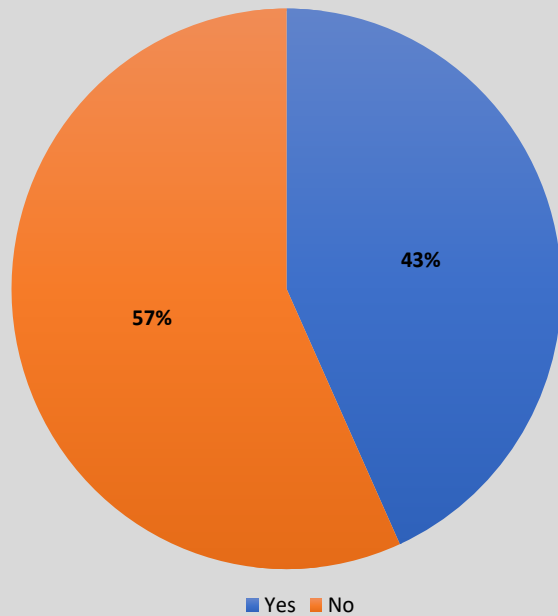
In Spring 2020, 7% of responding independent dance workers noted that they had at least temporarily relocated, with most leaving the City to stay with family and “escape the virus.” Many others were considering leaving shortly. As of late Fall 2020, at least 5% of respondents had relocated permanently and 11% had left for the time being with the hope of returning. Most who left did so due to lack of work and income (63%). Of those that remained in NYC, 17% were considering permanent relocation and 26% were considering temporary relocation. The majority (58%) of those considering relocation were likely to leave within 6 months if they decided to go.

Employment Status n=770 Individual Dance Workers



Alt Text: The bar graph shows comparisons of employment status for positions in and outside of dance for Feb. 2020 and Nov. 2020. Data is shown as a percentage of total individual dance workers (n=770). Positions in dance: Full-time Feb. (25%), Nov. (5%); Part-time Feb. (32%), Nov. (26%); Freelancer/Independent contractor Feb. (63%), Nov. (33%); Furloughed Feb. (3%), Nov. (10%). Positions outside of dance: Full-time Feb. (4%), Nov. (4%); Part-time Feb. (14%), Nov. (12%); Freelancer/Independent contractor Feb. (15%), Nov. (10%); Furloughed Feb. (1%), Nov. (3%). Unemployed/Seeking opportunities Feb. (7%), Nov. (47%).

Considering Long-term Career Options Outside of Dance n=747 Individual Dance Workers



Alt text: The pie chart shows percentage (n=747) of respondents considering long-term career options outside of dance. 57% No, 43% Yes.

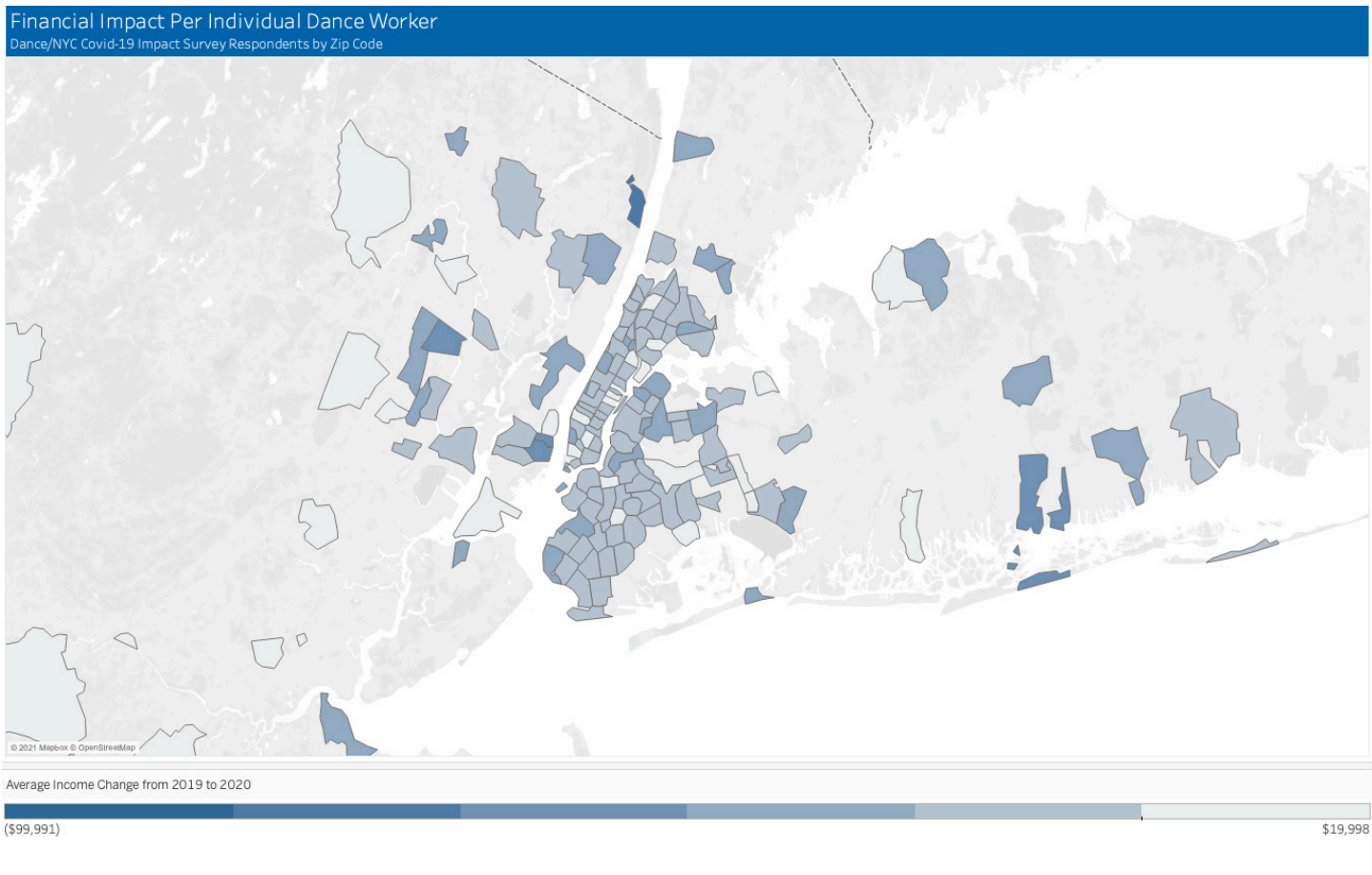
“Being unable to work to support myself in my field or predict a positive future in this field which I’ve trained in for so many years and mastered is scary and a daily source of anxiety.”

Independent dance workers continue to require unrestricted funds for basic needs.

- 72% need funds for housing.
- 69% need funds for food/groceries.
- 35% need access to mental health care (as compared to 24% needing mental health care in Spring 2020).
- 44% have not been able to access needed medical and mental health resources.
- 21% do not have health care coverage.
- 75% have filed for unemployment since March 2020.

While 14% were not able to pay rent/mortgage in March 2020, 20% were not able to pay in October 2020. Individual dance workers lost 36% of their income on average between 2019 and 2020, or double the losses that were anticipated in Spring 2020. Many of these needs are a direct result of income loss. The average income of survey respondents fell from \$32,862 in 2019 to \$21,183 in 2020. For context, the poverty threshold for a single person in NYC in 2016 (the last date for which data is available) was \$15,017, for two (2) adults was \$21,174 and for a family of four (4) was \$32,402.

“I need to find a way to have some sense of stable income. Being ready to adapt to plans A, or B, or C for this long has affected my health. Two mysterious physical injuries and a fragile mental state has been a direct result of the sustained stress of the pandemic. As a freelance worker, I’m used to the fluctuation in activity month-to-month. Now I am looking for guidance on how to create a new career plan.”



Alt text: This bird's-eye map of New York City and the surrounding areas uses color saturation to show the geographical distribution of financial impact per individual dance worker. Zip codes are outlined in black, and each area is shaded light blue, medium blue, or deep blue depending on the change in financial impact per dance worker in that area. Light blue indicates a positive change in budget size. Light blue, medium blue and deep blue indicate depth of financial loss, with deep blue showing the zip codes where individual dance workers experienced the most significant negative financial impacts. Most zip codes in Manhattan and Brooklyn show moderate financial loss with deeper losses in Midtown Manhattan, South Brooklyn and Queens and the deepest losses in zip codes in eight zip codes in Northern New Jersey and Eastern Long Island.

“We are a small team working well over our capacity, over time hours to keep our artist base working and offer virtual events and digital commissions.”

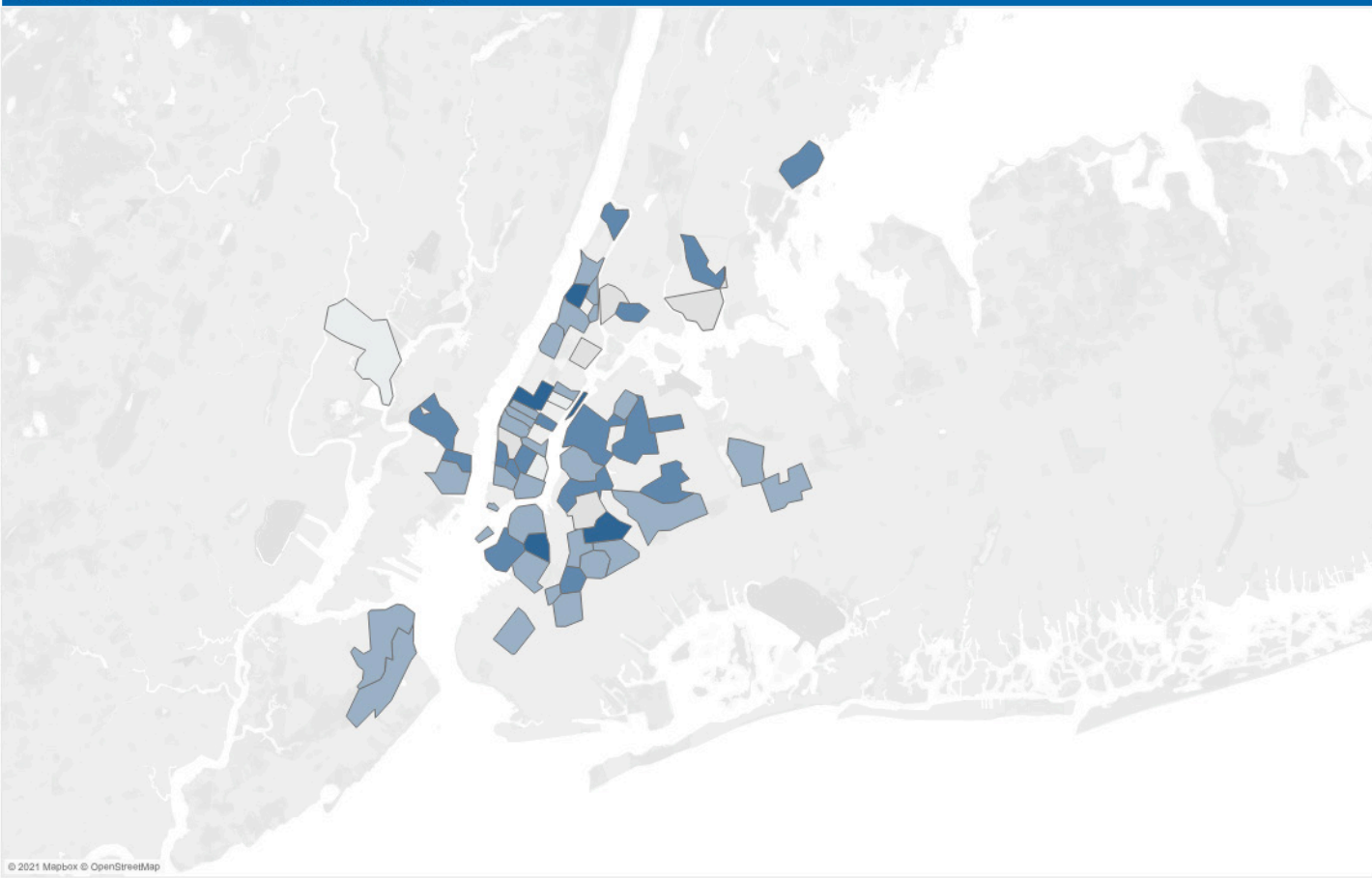
Dance organizations, groups, and projects need unrestricted funds for human, program, marketing, and physical resources.

- 90% need funds for salaries and wages.
- 35% need IT/tech equipment and resources to support digital operations, an increase from 23% since March 2020.
- 35% need communication tools and resources, increased from 19% since March 2020; higher than average proportions of organizations within the \$50,000 to \$250,000 budget range need IT/tech and communication resources.
- 25% need funds for lease/mortgage payments; these are of course primarily organizations that operate facilities now with a higher-than-average need for cleaning supplies.
- 18% believe that permanent closure is likely or extremely likely; 84% of those facing permanent closure have budgets under \$100K, and organizations with facilities are not more or less likely to face permanent closure.

As of Fall 2020, dance organization, group, and project budgets had shrunk by nearly one-third (31% avg) due to earned and contributed revenue losses. For many, reduced human resources were necessary to reduce operating costs. At least 1,124 employees have been impacted, either laid off permanently (14%), furloughed (44%), on reduced salary/time (24%) or on reduced hours/partially furloughed (17%). While 29 survey respondents believe that permanent closure is likely, the number of dance organizations, groups, and projects that have been lost to the pandemic is actually much higher and not captured through this inquiry, which focused on active organizations. Separately, Dance/NYC has been tracking organizational closures and is aware of at least 22 organizations and facilities that have permanently closed their doors due to the pandemic; the majority of which includes studio facilities.

“The Covid-19 related loss of income means a diminished connection to our community, decreased capacity to serve our cultural artists, and a period of dormancy in fulfilling our mission which relies heavily on a shared experience and research.”

Financial Impact Per Organization, Group & Project
Dance/NYC Covid-19 Impact Survey Respondents by Zip Code



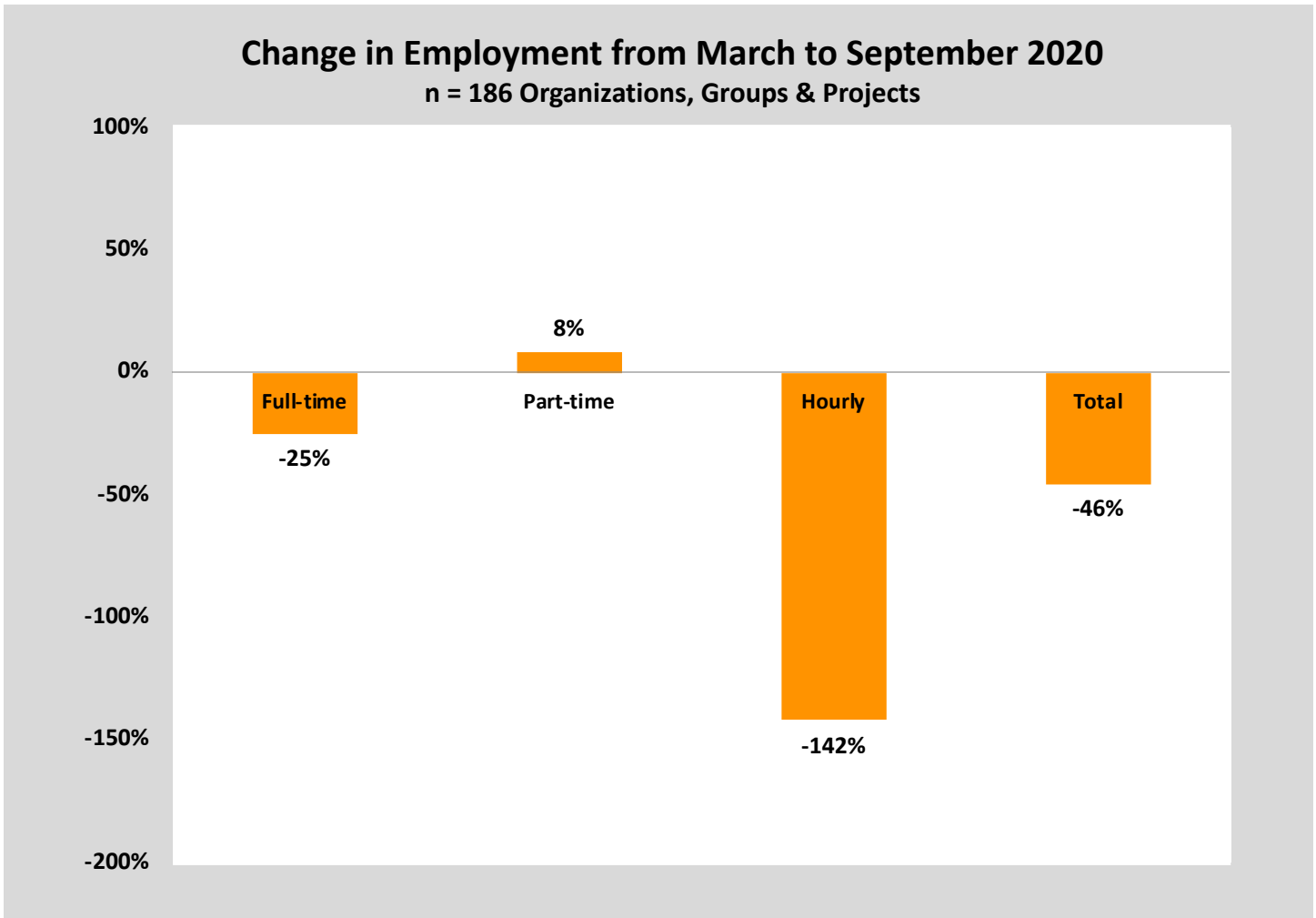
Average Operating Budget Change (%)



Alt text: This bird's-eye map of New York City and the surrounding areas uses color saturation to show the geographical zip code distribution of financial impact per dance organizations, groups or projects as a percentage of operating budget. Zip codes are outlined in black, and each area with corresponding survey data is shaded light blue, medium blue, or deep blue depending on the average change in financial impact per dance organization, group or project in that area. Eight zip codes are shaded light gray indicating a positive change in budget size between fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020. Light blue, medium blue and deep blue indicate more significant budget size reduction. The deepest blue zip codes, with the most significant proportional budget size reductions, are located in the Bronx, Upper Manhattan, Midtown Manhattan, Queens and North Brooklyn.

“Our dancers, in particular, are experiencing loss of other performance and rehearsal income, as well as a loss of gig-income from their supplemental jobs as bars and restaurants in NYC, are closed.

We are most concerned about their livelihoods in this crisis and dipping into creative development funds to support them as much as we are able.”



Alt text: This shows a bar graph for change in employment from March to September of 2020 for dance organizations, groups and projects (n=186). Full-time (-25%), part-time (+8%), hourly (-142%) and total (-46%).

“I’m not an American citizen, and I’m now in the process of renewing my Artist Visa (O1). The process with legal fees and USCIS fees cost around \$4,000 that I have to pay by July 2020. The financial problem that the COVID-19 is causing...is not only for my monthly expenses such as rent and food, but I now find myself in a situation that I might lose the chance of renewing my visa because I can’t afford the visa fees if I’m not working.”

Disabled, ALAANA, immigrant, and older individual dance workers, as well as dance workers who are also parents and dance workers living in the Bronx, have been disproportionately impacted.

- 65% of disabled dance workers have not been able to access all of the medical and mental health resources they need as compared to 41% of non-disabled dance workers.
- 21% of African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) dance workers were unable to pay rent/mortgage in October 2020 as compared to 15% of White (non-Hispanic) dance workers.
- 32% of immigrant dance workers need medical health care coverage as compared to 15% of those born in the US.
- Individual dance workers living in the Bronx identify seven (7) out of 11 needs at higher levels than those working in other boroughs and areas. Those needs include communications tools/resources, food and groceries, IT/Tech equipment resources, medical health care, mortgage/rent, transportation, and personal care.

The financial impacts are also disproportionate. Dance workers who are parents report a 51% average loss of annual income between 2019 and 2020, higher than any other identity category. Immigrant dance workers report a 45% average decrease in annual income between 2019 and 2020 as compared to 33% for US-born dance workers. Dance workers who identify as women report a 37% decrease in annual income as compared to 33% for men. Gen X dance workers report a 43% loss in income as compared to 33% for Baby Boomers and 34% for Millennial workers.

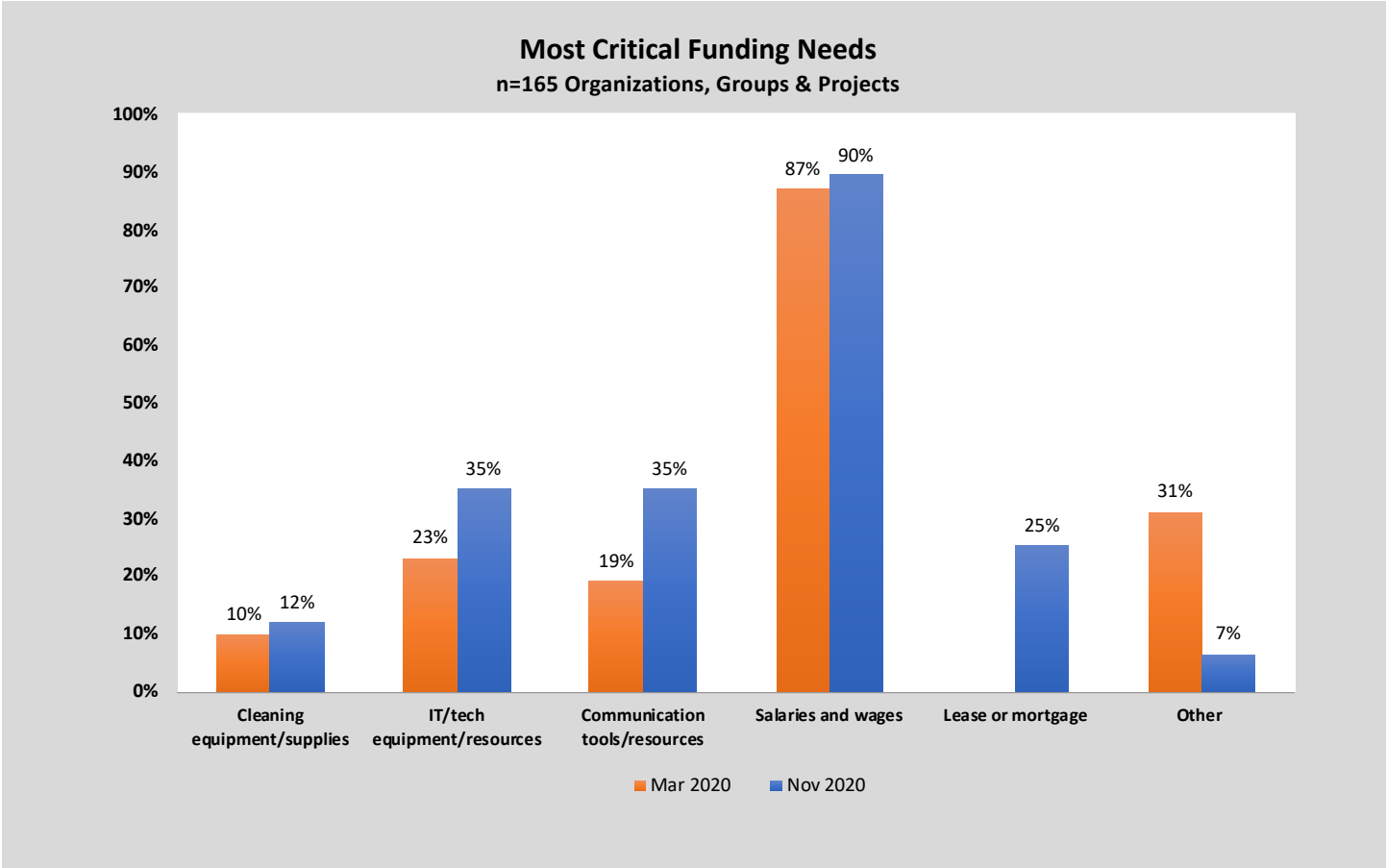
“[We need]...the ability to offer fair compensation to guest artists, instructors and collaborators in residence, in the US as well as from abroad.”

The needs of dance organizations, groups, and projects have remained pervasive throughout the pandemic despite resources made available to date.

- Dance organizations, groups, and projects' budgets shrunk by more than one (1) quarter (26% avg) during the pandemic due to earned and contributed revenue losses.
- The smallest organizations have been most impacted, with budgets contracting by at least half (52% avg) or more than 2x the average loss, while larger organizations with budgets of \$500K+ shrunk by 15-18%.
- For most, insurance was not a resource. Only 9% filed insurance claims, and 38% did not have insurance that would cover pandemic-related losses. 43% did not even have the capacity to file claims.
- 56% applied for federal funding either through the Paycheck Protection Program or Economic Injury Disaster Loan program. Of those that applied, 87% received funding.

Some organizations used available resources to focus on raising contributed income. Shifts in funding sources varied substantially between dance organizations, groups, and projects. While some saw a 100% increase in foundation gifts, others saw a 100% decrease. Overall, average donations from foundations (+26%) and government agencies (+50%) increased, while donations from individuals (-2%) and corporations (-7%) decreased slightly. Groups' ability to access funding during the pandemic has been highly reliant on available capacity, with many groups citing lack of capacity as a barrier.

“The most difficult issue is lack of cash flow and difficulty encountered with no current ability to do paid live performances. Fixed costs need to be paid. So, cash, at the moment, is the most needed resource.”



All text: The bar graph shows comparisons between Mar. 2020 and Nov. 2020 for percentage of organizations, groups and project respondents (n=165) on most critical funding needs. The data is presented as a percentage of total respondents. Cleaning equipment/supplies Mar. (10%), Nov. (12%); IT/Tech equipment/Resources Mar. (23%), Nov. (35%); Communication tools/resources Mar. (19%), Nov. (35%); Salaries and wages Mar. (87%), Nov. (90%); Lease or mortgage Mar. (no data collected), Nov. (25%); Other Mar. (31%), Nov. (7%).

“During the lockdown, we quickly pivoted to virtual rehearsals and digital content creation...Remaining dancers and staff are setting up and developing digital and outdoor performance suitable works. We anticipate that dancers will return to NYC and we will be stronger as re-opening of the arts begin. We will have a new platform to support greater collaboration.”

Digital programs and connectivity are here to stay, bringing increased need for technology and communication resources.

- 83% have offered digital programming since March. This was new for nearly all (92%) of the groups that offered it.
- 52% earned income from digital programming.
- 50% will continue to offer digital programs post-pandemic; 44% are considering it.
- 66% of independent dance workers earned income from remote work between Spring and Fall 2020 and did NOT do this work remotely before the pandemic.

The shifting needs of dance organizations, groups, and projects seem to connect to a relatively new focus on the development, delivery, and marketing of digital programs. As noted, the proportion of organizations needing IT/tech equipment and resources to support digital operations increased from 23% in Spring to 35% in Fall 2020. And the proportion of entities needing communication tools and resources nearly doubled from 19% to 35%. While the need for communication tools and resources could be related to reopening, a portion is likely related to virtual programming, which quickly became a competitive space over the last months.

“With the cancelation of all in-person activities... the company pivoted to creating virtual/online content. This meant that while in-person 2020 programs were cancelled/postponed, new projects were created (including an online VOD class series and a new media dance film work). This led to a shift in staffing where new opportunities arose while others were temporarily suspended.”

The dance field continues to adapt despite an uncertain future. While venues and studios have been dormant, the field has remained active and engaged in dance making and advocacy.

- Since March 2020, 97% of individual dance workers have engaged with the dance field at home/virtually, 75% have engaged outdoors and 49% have engaged in a studio.
- 48% of responding dance organizations, groups, and projects are engaged in live, in-person programming indoors or outdoors.
- 65% of independent dance workers have earned income from work in the dance field.

Beyond practice and work in dance, much of the field has been engaged in racial and social advocacy in response and support of the Black Lives Matter movement and those negatively impacted by the pandemic. Nearly 28% of individual dance workers participated in Black Lives Matter-organizing efforts outdoors, and 23% participated virtually/at home. And about 33% of individual dance workers organized, led, or participated in mutual aid efforts in response to COVID-19 virtually/at home.

MOVING FORWARD

“We need long term solutions to financially support artists, and NYC needs to be an affordable place to live as an artist—and it hasn’t been for decades. The city will have a great migration if they don’t include us.”

The data and trends present in this research are reflective of the pandemic’s broader impacts on arts and culture. In June 2020, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, with SMU DataArts, published data (bit.ly/DCLA_CovidImpact) on the impact of COVID-19 on nonprofit arts and culture from March to May of that year. That data suggested that 11% of nonprofit arts and culture organizations might not survive the pandemic, and that organizations with budgets under \$250K were feeling the most significant impacts. In August 2020, a Brookings study conducted by Richard Florida and Michael Seman (bit.ly/BrookingsArts) suggested that the arts, culture, and creativity sector is at significant risk for long-term impacts and, within this sector, the fine and performing arts were the hardest hit to date. In February 2021, data released by the New York State Comptroller (bit.ly/NYSC_ArtsReport2021) revealed that New York City’s arts, entertainment, and recreation sector has experienced the largest employment decline (66%) out of all sectors in the city’s economy. And these employment levels have remained largely unchanged since April 2020. In March 2021, Americans for the Arts released a research update (bit.ly/AFTA_CovidReport) that estimates losses of nonprofit arts organizations at \$15.3 billion and suggests that 10% of nonprofit arts organizations still expect to fold. This data also estimates artists and creative workers are the workers most severely impacted by the pandemic, with an estimated 63% have become fully-unemployed. **It’s quite clear that the arts industry has endured some of the deepest impacts from the pandemic and will have the longest climb back.**

“It’s very saddening to realize that one of the “essential” things that people need in times like these (the LIVE performing arts/music), the medium that has the power to take people on a temporary journey away from their day-to-day lives to create balance, bring joy, get them to open up and be emotionally connected to themselves, each other, and the universe seems to be one of the last things to come back in the in person realm.”

While access to basic human needs like housing and food have remained high priority needs for the dance field since the beginning of the pandemic, other needs must be addressed to support the health and wellness of individual dance workers and dance organizations, groups, and projects as they continue to navigate this environment and adapt in response. This research has reinforced these needs, issues, and priorities, leading to the following recommendations. These recommendations are specific to the current environment and data collected. They also recognize that the challenges facing the field today would not be as pervasive if the dance workforce did not rely on capitalist structures. The current structure of the system has allowed a crisis like the pandemic to exacerbate conditions that were already dire prior to the arrival of the pandemic, as highlighted in Dance/NYC’s *Defining “Small-Budget” Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology* (dance.nyc/sbdmdata2020).

“As a small dance organization, loss of income could mean the end of our dancemaking work.

Our constantly looming challenges are exacerbated during this period. The line between existing and closing up shop is constantly navigated when running a cultural organization on a shoestring [budget].”

The following recommendations reflect the most urgent measures required to support the field in this moment, as indicated by this data and testimonies. Private funders, donors, service providers, and educational institutions as well as local, state, and federal agencies must:

1: Provide immediate access to resources required for survival, including the ability to easily obtain vaccines, funding for food and housing for individual dance workers and unrestricted general operating support for dance organizations, groups, and projects.

These resources must be easily accessed without the obstacles and notable labor that was previously required for pandemic-related aid and is currently required for vaccine access.

2: Create widely, easily, and immediately available measures to provide equitable medical health care, mental health care, and mental health awareness, and the physical and emotional rest required to support proper recovery. New, equitable, affordable, and uncomplicated pathways to care must be created that eliminate connections between health care access and employment. Efforts must also raise mental health awareness and provide training to leadership so that the field is prepared to provide support and aid particularly as in-person work resumes.

3: Provide immediate access to resources required for reopening, addressing both capital improvements and operational costs. Capital funds are needed for upgraded HVAC systems, socially distanced public, administrative and backstage spaces, and safe and accessible means of ingress and egress. Operating resources must support appropriate equipment, protocols, and training for artistic personnel, administrative staff, audiences, and participants.

4: Develop resources, training, and tools that allow dance artistry to occur in healthy and equitable ways, while allowing space for the sector to evolve and provide new areas of employment and revenue generation, for example, through ongoing digital programming, healing, and wellness offerings as well as more dance making in the public realm. Programs and toolkits that provide education, shared resources, and access to production tools and elements can support these efforts.

5: Continue collective advocacy to demand relief, re-employment, and redevelopment of the workforce.

“We need to fight for a complete overhaul of our labor laws in this country to support artists, if not we will always find ourselves in these positions. The current system is unsustainable.”

This research has also highlighted larger implications for the field and wider arts sector that must be addressed to repair the harm caused by a system that cannot effectively sustain it. In working toward a reimagined, healthy, and equitable dance sector, we must:

1: Make significant structural shifts that eliminate the systems of oppression rooted in white supremacy that are present in dance and across arts and culture.

This must be done by combating racism, ableism, and xenophobia, supporting reparations, and limiting reliance on private philanthropy.

2: Establish structures that are focused on the well-being and value of individual dance workers and treat dance makers as dignified workers, re-centering artists as necessary workers, and the arts as a critical component of healthy thriving communities.

This includes the adoption of universal basic income for art workers, equitable access to affordable health care, and paying arts workers a living wage.

3: Build on funding practices developed and adopted during the pandemic

to simplify application and evaluation processes, limiting the labor required to access funds and trusting the artist to allocate funds appropriately to support their work.

The individual and collective experiences of dance workers, organizations and groups navigating this crisis have amplified the field’s resiliency and augmented its resolve for fundamental change. With new understanding that ‘business as usual’ is no longer viable, the field and its stakeholders must come together to make change that supports the personal and professional well-being of dance workers and redevelops the dance ecosystem in ways that allow it to thrive. With the release of this brief, Dance/ NYC is re-opening the latest survey tool, to understand evolving needs and impacts. This effort supports Dance/NYC’s ongoing commitment to research and advocacy to empower and advance the field toward a new future.

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Prepared by: Carrie Blake, Webb Mgmt, in collaboration with the Dance/NYC team.

Project led by: Dance/NYC, Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, Executive Director; Gregory Youdan Jr., Research and Advocacy Coordinator

Project Assistants: Dance/NYC, Candace Thompson-Zachery, Manager of Justice, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives; Caridad Kinsella, Research and Advocacy Assistant; Maleni Palacios, Research and Advocacy Coordinator Emerita; Noa Weiss, Research and Advocacy Intern Emerita

Design: James H. Monroe, monroeand.co

Copy Editing: Suzette Sagisi

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Dance.NYC @DanceNYC
218 East 18th Street, Ground Floor
New York, NY 10003

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