DANCE COUNTS 2010

A SURVEY OF DANCE IRELAND MEMBERSHIP ACTIVITY AND AUDIENCES

Compiled by Dance Ireland with Annette Nugent

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INTRODUCTION AND HEALTH WARNING

Firstly, thank you to the 50 Dance Ireland Members that contributed information for the 2009/2010 Dance Counts Survey. The results gleaned can only be as rich as the number and detail of responses, and we very much appreciate their time in this regard.

This document reflects information given for the year 2009/2010. Survey respondents were drawn from the 171 members of professional categories (categories whose professional priority is dance) in Dance Ireland for 2009/2010. It was not sent to the Dance Friend or Dance Student Members, but was distributed between the 32 members of the Associate category, the 102 members of the Performer/Choreographer Category and the 37 members of the Organisation category.

30% of the surveys were completed and compiled, the best-represented membership category being Organisations, with 46% of that category completing the survey. Although this completion rate is not as high as 2008, all 2010 respondents had also completed the 2008 survey, allowing for comparisons on how activity has changed since 2008.

We received 30 responses from the Performer/Choreographer Category, which is a substantial increase on the 15 surveys returned in 2008. However, due to an increase in the number of members in this category, these completed surveys still represent only 29% of this category, again not enough to fairly represent the activities of this category. Just two Associate members completed and returned the survey this year.

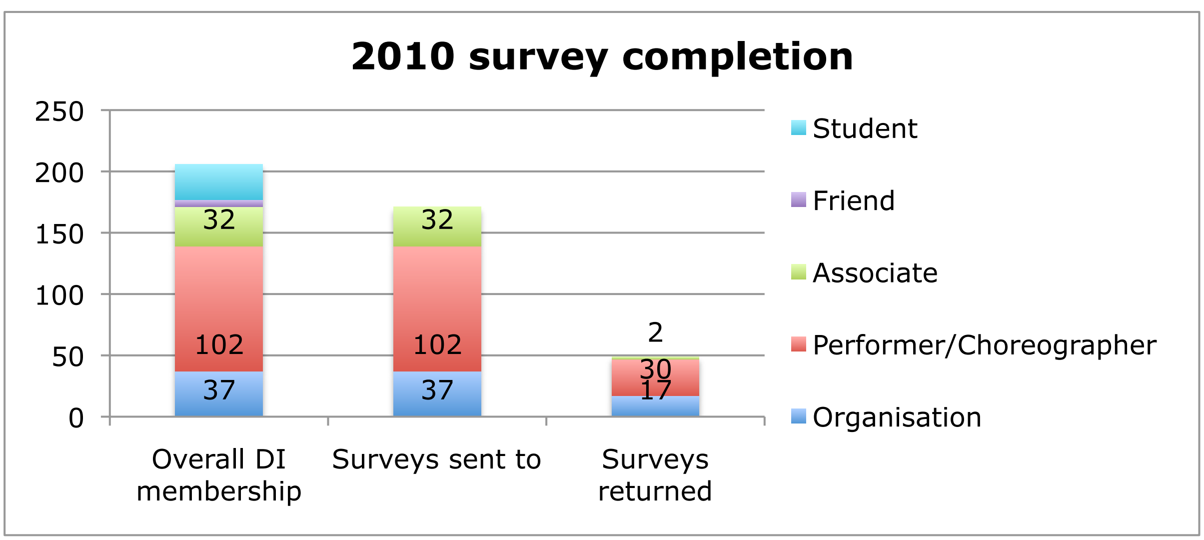

FIGURE 1 – survey completion

It is regrettable that, once again, we are unable to include the information provided by the Performer/Choreographer and Associate members, particularly when so many more Performer/Choreographer members in particular made the effort to complete the survey in 2010. Performer/Choreographer members who did respond accounted for 13% of reported dance audiences and 14% of reported dance participation, not insignificant numbers.

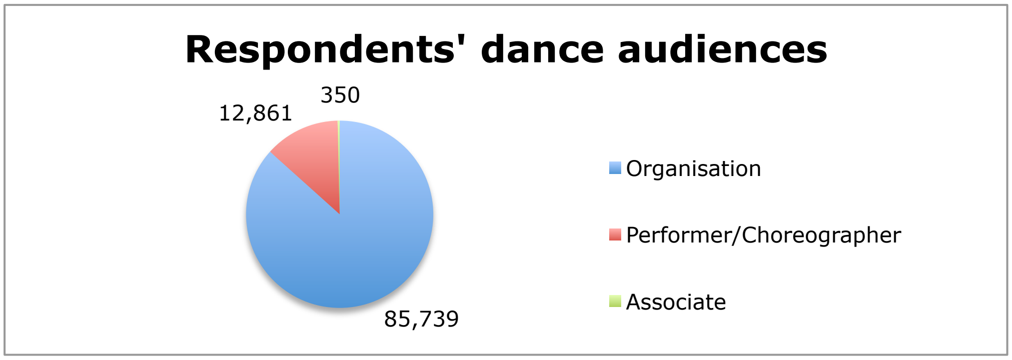

FIGURE 2 – respondents' dance audiences

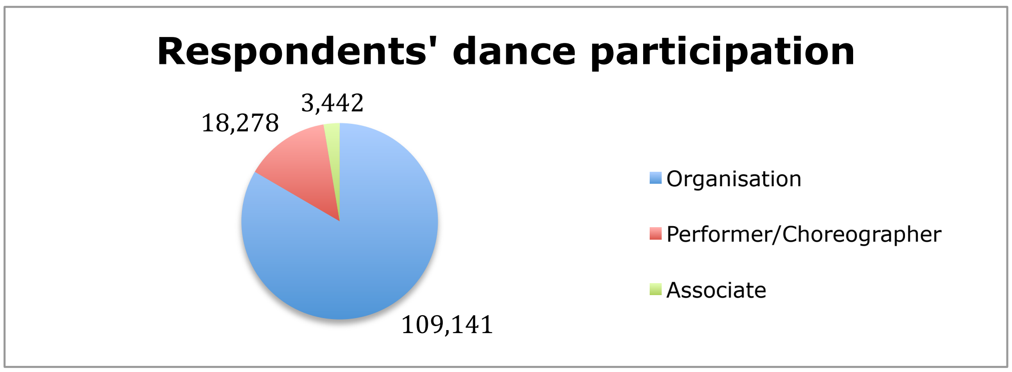

FIGURE 3 – respondents' dance participation

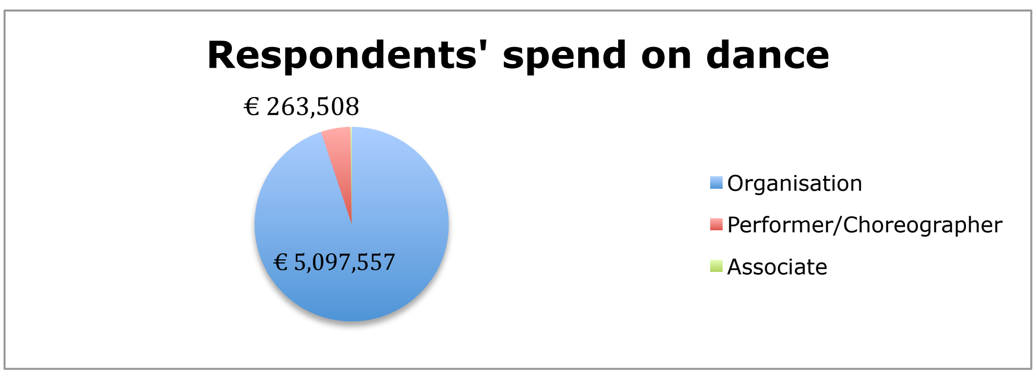

FIGURE 4 – respondents' dance spend

However, it remains the case that Dance Ireland's Organisation members are responsible for the bulk of the Organisation's audiences, participation and spend: 87% of audiences, 83% of participation activity and 95% of all respondents' €5.3m spend on dance activity.

With this in mind, all key findings reported here focus on the survey answers provided by the Organisation category members, and particularly those who completed this survey for both 2010 and 2008.

Membership type	Dance spend of respondents	*% of overall respondents spend*	Audiences of resps	*% of overall resps' audiences*	Participation of resps	*% of overall resps' participation*
ORGS	€ 5,097,557	*94.9%*	85,739	*87%*	109,141	*83%*
PERF/CHOR	€ 263,508	*4.9%*	12,861	*13%*	18,278	*14%*
ASSOC	€ 10,845	*0.2%*	350	*0%*	3,442	*3%*
	€ 5,371,910	*100%*	98,950	*100%*	130,861	*100%*

FIGURE 5 – respondents' spend, audiences and participattion totals

The following findings give a snapshot and approximation of Dance Ireland Organisation members' activity in 2010 and comparative activity by those organisations in 2008. However, it should still not be regarded as scientific, and figures contained within should be treated with caution.

Dance Ireland recognises that the Dance Counts survey format is inherently more suitable to organisations than individuals working in the sector and notes the survey's limitations in assessing the impact and experiences of individual members. Dance Ireland plans to investigate alternative ways of gathering insights on the working lives of Performer, Choreographer and Associate members in 2012/13.

KEY FINDINGS

Employment in dance organisations

680 people worked for the respondent member organisations in 2010, according to the surveys completed and returned to us. As this is derived from approximately half of Dance Ireland's Organisational membership, we would estimate the true figure to be higher than this.

While 680 does not seem to be a significant "workforce", it is interesting to note is that the respondent organisations hired MORE people in 2010 than 2008: up from 628 people. It is also worth noting that the increases in hires were across performing and non-performing areas.

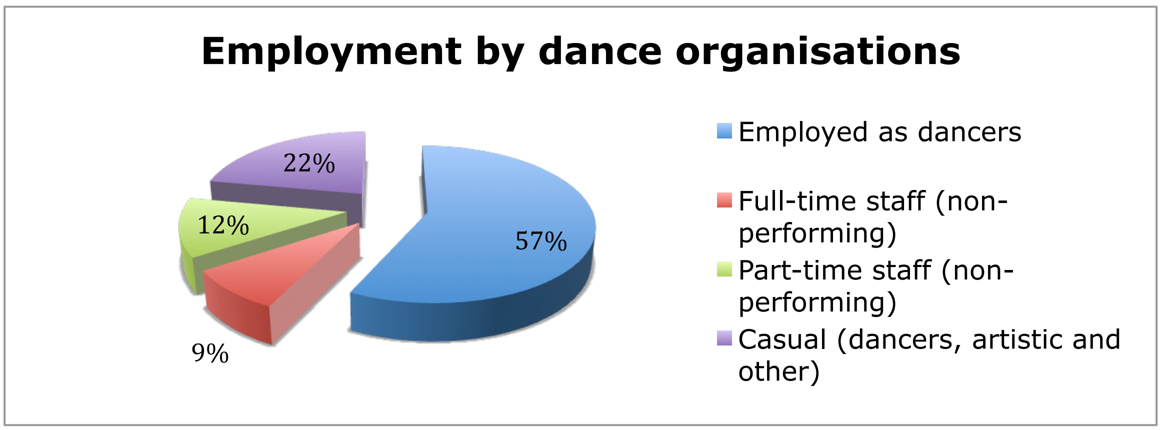

FIGURE 6 – employment by respondent dance organisations

There were 389 people – 57% - employed to dance, which is a positive figure and an increase from 332 (53%) in the 2008 Dance Counts survey. 150 people (22%) were employed on a casual project-based basis, which included technical and artistic hires (such as musicians, for example). This is a drop from 211 (34%) in 2008.*

Just 9% of those working for/with dance organisations are full-time, and 12% are part-time. Full-time positions tended to be administrative, such as General Manager, or managerial/artistic roles such as Artistic Director.

The positive insight to glean from this data is that there are opportunities for dancers to work as dancers. The negative is that the work is not continuous/regular: if we assume all dancer employments noted here are project-specific, then 79% of work in the sector is "casual".

** NOTE: The decrease in this figure could be partly explained by more casual dance hires being included in the dancer rather than casual category in this year's survey compared to 2008.*

Dance audiences

Respondent organisations attracted total audiences of **194,880** to their 2010 activities. 85,739 came to 468 performances and talks, 88,083 attended non-professional dance classes and 21,058 were reached through outreach programmes.

Overall, respondents have grown their audiences by 24% on 2008 figures. If you break this down, performance/talk attendance has increased by 10% since 2008. Class attendance has grown by a phenomenal 65%. There has been a decrease in outreach participation of 17%.

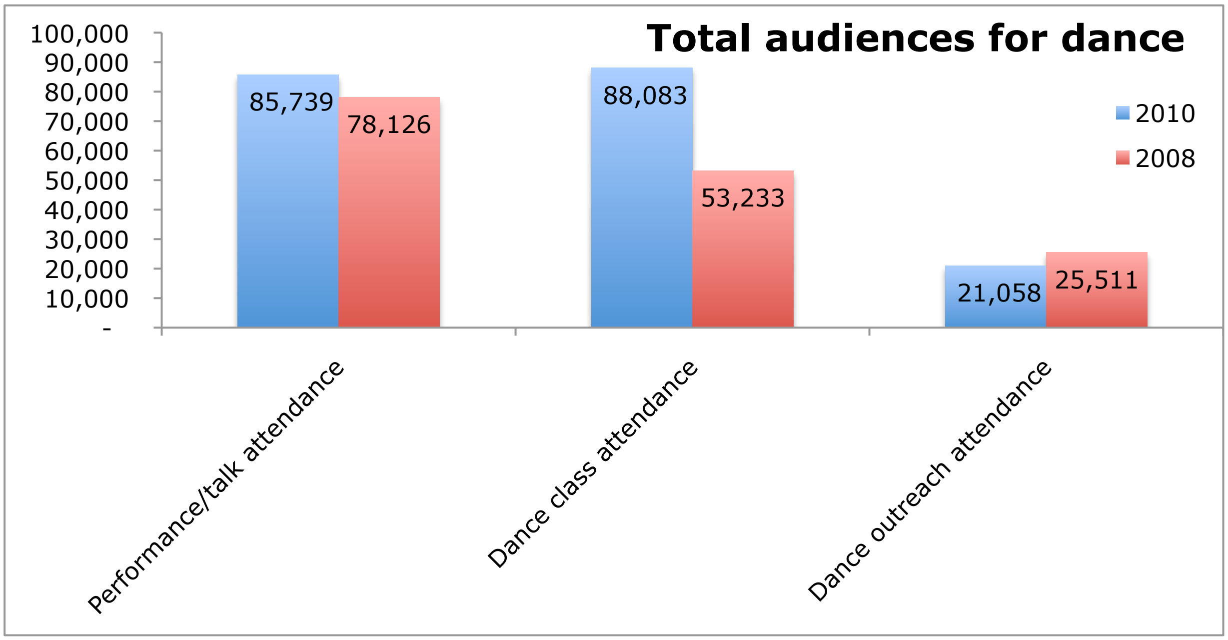

FIGURE 6 – total respondent dance audiences

Regarding performance/talk attendance, this 10% increase is very positive. An almost identical number of performances were staged by respondents (468 in 2010 compared to 475 in 2008), but the number of talks staged trebled (from 39 to 112). As average event attendance remains at approx 150 people per event, we can conclude that the additional talk events made a contribution to the overall audience increase. There may also have been other factors that were not queried in the survey – for example ticket price reduction, the presentation of free events, etc – that may have contributed to the audience growth.

Note: Two respondent organisations also counted additional audiences of 75,000 (TV dance film screening) and 22,000 (performance as part of a major outdoor event). These 99,000 "accidental" dance audiences were omitted to prevent skewing the data, but it is worth noting that such mass transmission of dance can only benefit the artform and the sector.

Dance class attendance is the most significant figure here. Not only did class attendance jump from 53,233 in 2008 to over 88,000 in 2010, it is a larger number than performance/talk attendees. Dance class provision has become a bigger driver of audiences than performances.

This begs the question: which came first? Did extra class provision follow demand, or create it? Have more organisations - perhaps dealing with reduced funding - made conscious decisions to provide dance classes? Or did the demand for more classes come from a participation-hungry public?

It also raises multiple questions on how best to communicate with audiences if the primary way they interact with dance is through class participation rather than performance attendance. We do not know from this survey if class attendees and performance attendees are the same people. If not, an audience development challenge facing these organisations – and indeed the general dance sector – is how to convert dance class participants into performance attendees.

Finally, the 17% reduction in dance outreach activity is disappointing but possibly explained by the reduction in funding and therefore spend by these organisations (see over).

Key audience figures of respondent organisations

	%	**2010**	2008	Diff	*% increase*
Performance/talk attendance	*44%*	85,739	78,126	7,613	*10%*
Dance class attendance	*45%*	88,083	53,233	34,850	*65%*
Dance outreach attendance	*11%*	21,058	25,511	-4,453	*-17%*
		194,880	**156,870**	**38,010**	***24%***

FIGURE 7 – key audience figures for respondent organisations

The range of audience reach continues to be very broad: the busiest organisation for audiences attracted more than 15,000 people to performances in 2010. One venue-based organisation attracted dance class attendance of 27,000 and another organisation engaged with more than 6,000 people through outreach and education.

On average, respondent dance organisations attracted audiences of 3,298 to performances/talks. 4,404 to dance classes and 1,239 through their outreach activities – engaging with almost 9,000 people each in 2010.*

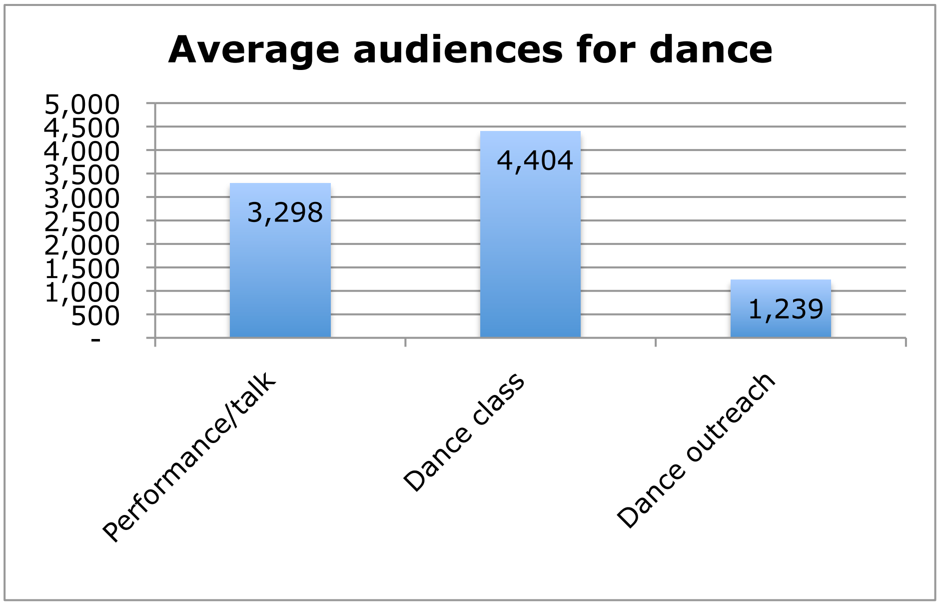

FIGURE 8 – Average audiences among respondent organisations

While dance audience figures once again look quite substantial, it was worrying to again note that many respondents seemed to estimate audiences for this survey instead of having accurate audience data on file. As noted in the 2008 report, the necessity to having accurate audience information is likely to become more important as state funding becomes scarcer and attracting paying audiences becomes a greater priority.

**Note: In addition to the respondent organisations, the 30 Performer/Choreographers who completed this year's survey attracted performance audiences of 12,861 and dance class attendance of 18,278. On average, this means that individual dance artist members engaged with approx 1,000 people each in 2010. In addition, one Performer/Choreographer reported audiences of 100,000 for a TV broadcast of a dance film.*

Dance funding and spend

The overall spend on dance in 2009/2010 by the Organisation respondents was €5,097,557. This is a reduction of over €2M from the 2008 spend of €7.136M by those same organisations in 2008, a reduction of 29%.*

A key source of funding for respondent organisations is the Arts Council. Arts Council funding for dance was €4m in 2008 and €3.2M in 2010: a 20% reduction over those two years. Reliance on Arts Council funding among respondents has, on average, decreased in that same time period: from 58% in 2008 to 51% in 2010.

Therefore, respondent dance organisations are now "multiplying" Arts Council funding into a spend twice the size of the amount received, effectively doubling the impact of the Arts Council investment in their activities.

However, reliance on public funding generally remains high at 69%. Respondent organisations appear to have replaced the "gap" left by reductions in Arts Council funding between 2008 and 2010 not with increases in earned income (which has remained stable at 27% of respondents' spend), but with other public funding sources. **

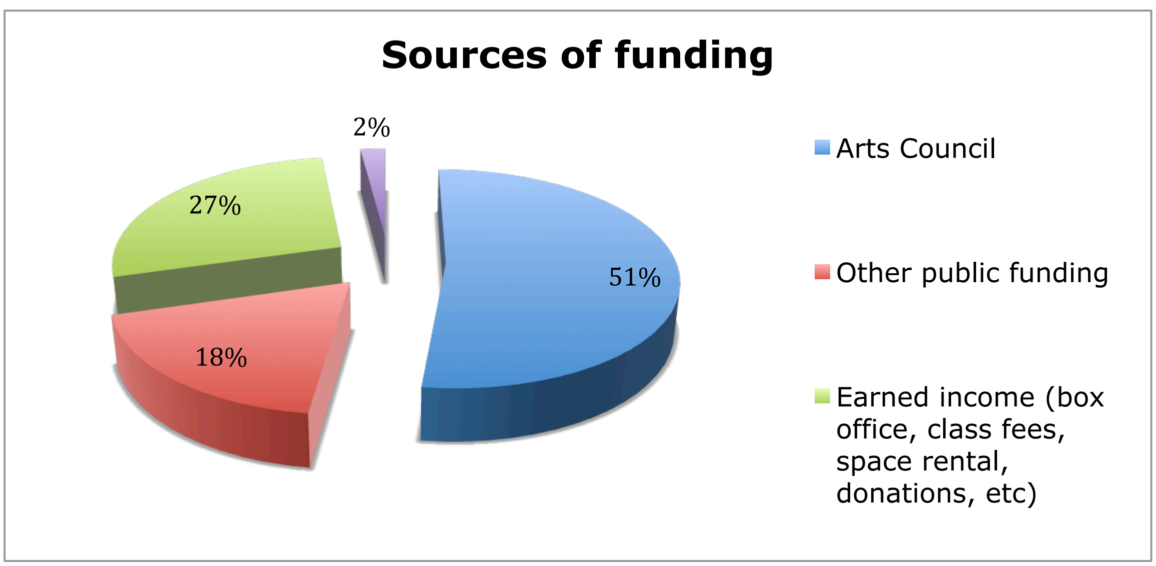

FIGURE 9 – Respondent organisations' sources of funding

Average spend per audience member has plummeted from €45 per person to €26.
This is mainly due to the 29% decrease in spend by respondent organisations, which we believe to be primarily due to reductions in Arts Council and other public funding availability.
The fact that respondents increased overall audience numbers by 24% in the same time period also contributes to the reduction in spend per audience member.
The survey did not ask about if respondents felt their audience interactions had diminished in quality so we are not certain of the impact on dance audience experiences of this decreased spend-per-audience.

** Note: The larger percentage reduction in dance spend compared to overall Arts Council funding reduction may be due to a concurrent decrease in funding and income from other sources.*
*** Note: Reliance on Arts Council funding varied hugely among respondents: from one organisation 93% reliant on the Arts Council to another whose Arts Council funding was just 17% of their total operating cost. The vast majority of respondents were between 30% and 70% reliant.*

CONCLUSION

The Dance Counts 2010 survey results demonstrate an organisation with members under fire but surviving and adapting. In particular, respondent organisations on which this report focuses seem to have found ways to sustain and even increase activity and participation with substantially less funding. It's not clear how they are managing this, or for how long they can continue to work this way.

Regarding audiences, the positive insight is that there are more dance audiences, with the most striking growth taking place in dance class participation. The challenge for the present – and future – is to convert class participants to performance attendees.

In addition to the information gleaned from this survey, we are also hearing anecdotally of increased "fringe" dance activity, more once-off events funded through Dance Project Awards and new regional dance platforms, under the umbrella of Dance Artist in Residence schemes. The emergence of a nascent national infrastructure for dance and increasing audience figures are initial indications of a return on the investment in dance that has taken place in recent years, particularly since the introduction of the Arts Council Integrated Dance Strategy 2010 – 2012, which was rolled out during 2010.

These "seedlings" of development are positive; however they cannot flourish without ongoing nourishment, support and investment. The true challenge for the sector is to work together to minimise the impact of national budgetary constraints on investment in the arts, and particularly on the dance sector.

Ends