



# **DANCE COUNTS 2008**

**A SURVEY OF DANCE IRELAND MEMBERSHIP  
ACTIVITY AND AUDIENCES**

**compiled by annette nugent with Dance Ireland  
may 2010**

## **WELCOME**

Dance Ireland is delighted to present the first survey in a planned longitudinal study of dance activity in Ireland, DANCE COUNTS 2008.

Focusing on the years 2008 to 2012, DANCE COUNTS will build up an incredible snapshot of dance activity in Ireland, leading up to Dance Ireland's official 21st year anniversary celebration in 2013.

*Some members with long memories might remember that while the organisation dates from 1989, the notable date is the incorporation of the organisation as the Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland in 1992 as a limited company.*

DANCE COUNTS 2008 to 2012 is one of many initiatives to celebrate and highlight the development of dance in Ireland over the past two decades and Dance Ireland are delighted to be at the centre of this.

Paul Johnson  
Chief Executive, Dance Ireland

## INTRODUCTION AND A HEALTH WARNING

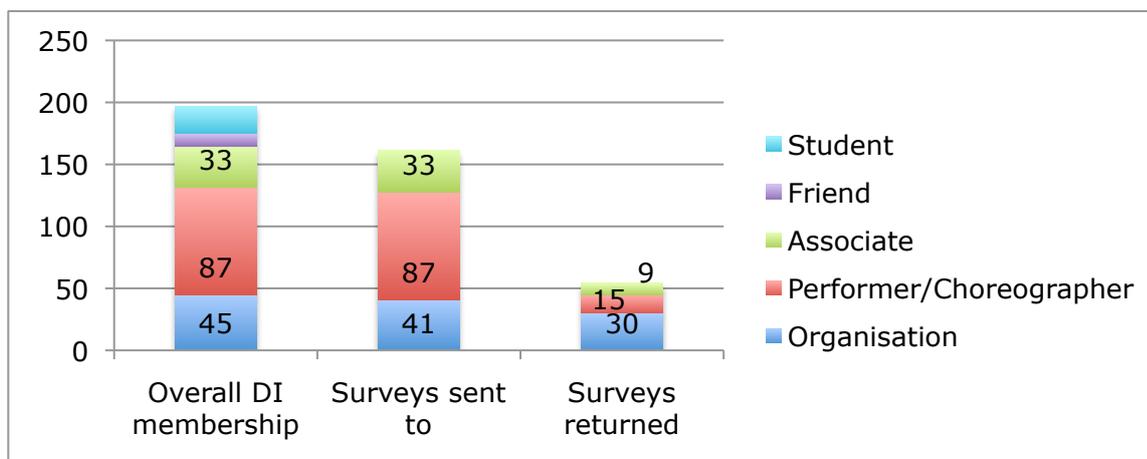
First of all, a big thank you to the 54 Dance Ireland members who contributed their information for inclusion in this research. The results gleaned can only be as rich as the number and detail of responses, and we very much appreciate their time in this regard.

This document reflects information provided for the calendar year 2008. Where possible we have provided average, minimum and maximum figures to give you an idea of the range and scale of Dance Ireland member activity and relevance and importance to the provision of dance activity in Ireland today.

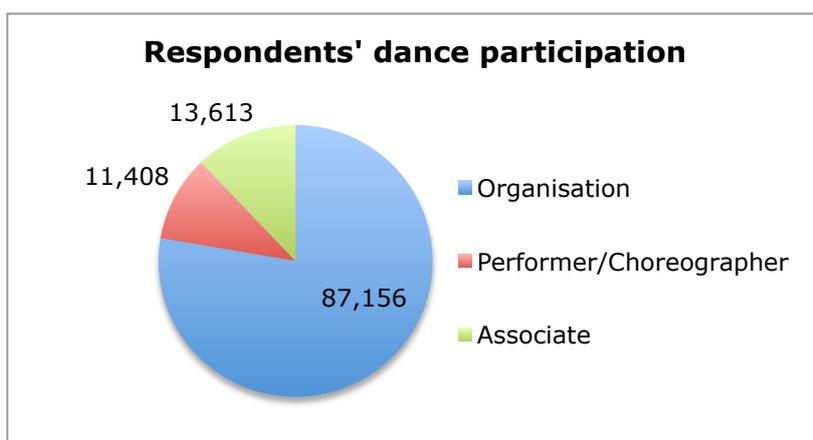
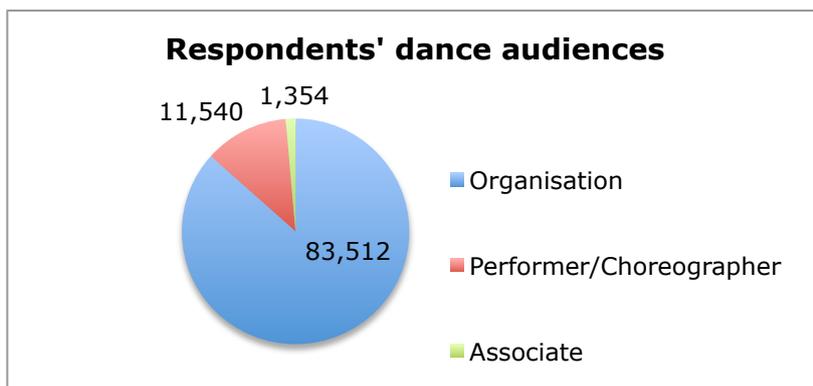
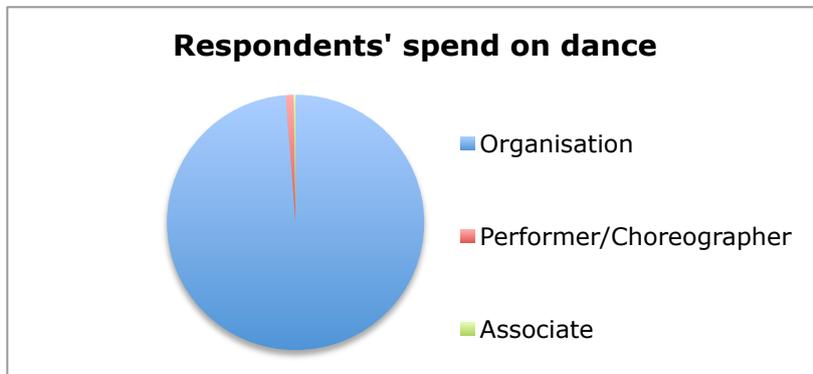
Survey respondents were drawn from Dance Ireland membership 2008, which at the time consisted of 197 members. This survey was sent to the 161 members whose professional priority is dance, i.e. 41 of 45 Organisation members, all 87 Performer/Choreographer members and all 33 Associate members. It was not sent to the Dance Student or Dance Friend membership categories.

34% of the surveys were completed and compiled. These came overwhelmingly from the Organisational members, with 73% of them responding to the survey, giving a really good sense of activity among those members.

Unfortunately, the response rate from the Performer/Choreographer members (17%) and Associate members (27%) was not high enough to fairly represent the activity of those categories of members. As a result, it was decided to exclude their data from further analysis, as the small number of responses would skew overall analysis.



It is regrettable that this analysis is unable to include and assess the impact of Associate and Performer/ Choreographers members. Those Associate and Performer/ Choreographers who did respond generated 13% of respondent audiences numbers and 22% of participation numbers (through classes, etc), even though they account for 2% of spend on dance among respondents.



We estimate that their inclusion would show that Dance Ireland members actually interact with substantially more dance audiences than even this analysis shows.

As the 30 Organisational respondents account almost 99% of survey respondents' spend, and 73% of the entire organisational membership, the following analysis does substantially represent all surveyed and gives a valid snapshot and approximation of Dance Ireland organisation members' activity.

	Dance spend of respondents	<i>% of overall respondents spend</i>	Respondent audiences	<i>% of overall respondent audiences</i>	Respondent participation	<i>% of overall respondent participation</i>
<b>Organisation</b>	€ 7,427,573	98.8%	83,512	87%	87,156	78%
<b>Performer/Choreographer</b>	€ 74,650	1.0%	11,540	12%	11,408	10%
<b>Associate</b>	€ 17,100	0.2%	1,354	1%	13,613	12%
	<u>€ 7,519,323</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>96,406</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>112,177</u>	<u>100%</u>

However, it should still not be regarded as scientific. Figures contained within should be treated with caution for a number of reasons, which are outlined as notes throughout the key findings below.

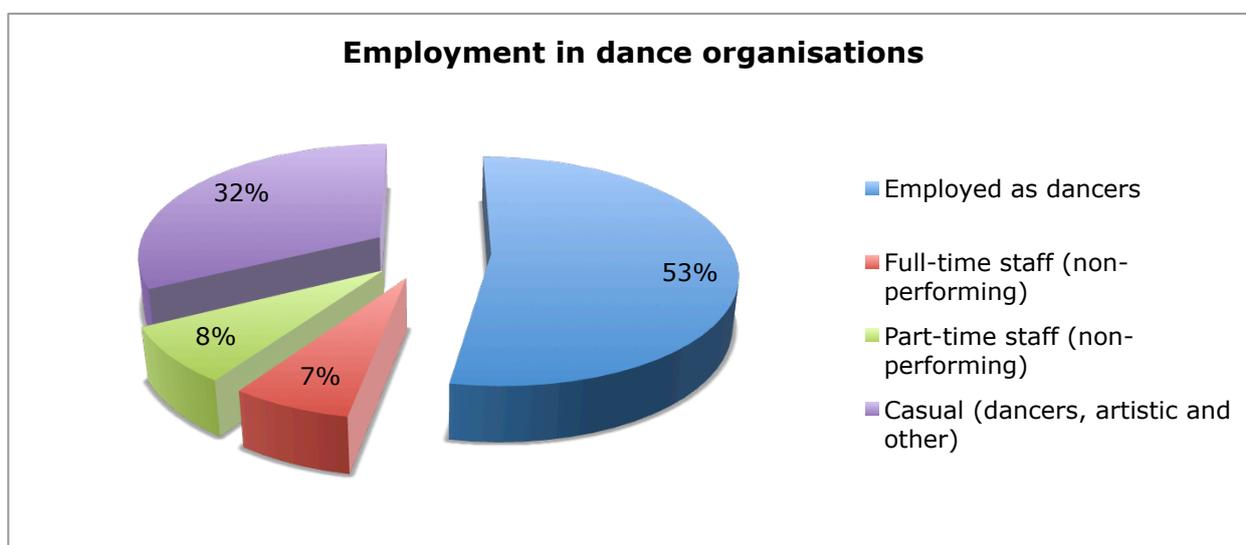
## KEY FINDINGS

### Employment in dance organisations

Some 733 are working in, or for, Dance Ireland member organisations. While this does not seem like a powerful figure, we would guess from this that extrapolating up to entire membership would bring it to well over 1,000 people, a significant workforce.

However, just 7% of those working for/with dance organisations are full-time, another 8% are part-time. Full-time staff tended to be Artistic Director/Choreographer, General Manager and production support roles, part-time staff seem to mainly consist of dance teachers. Assuming part-time staff work half time, then the total number in full-time equivalent employment is 78 people. This aligns very closely with the 2009 Indecon *Assessment of Economic Impact of the Arts report*, which states there were 77 full-time dance jobs in Arts Council funded organisations.

53% of 'employments' are dancers employed to dance, which is positive. However, assuming all dancers employed are project-specific (which the survey did not specifically ask), and adding project-specific workers (everything from production/tech support to designers and non-dance artists), the vast majority of work in the sector is casual (85%). This is not a very stable basis on which to develop a vibrant and flourishing dance sector.



*Note: Where supplied, employments were broken down into full-time staff, regular part-time staff and casual or project-based hires. Where not specified, we have assumed they are casual/project-based hires so as not to overestimate the number of full-time employments in the sector.*

*Note: not all company respondents gave full breakdown of show production staff, so we believe casual hires are even larger than portrayed in this survey.*

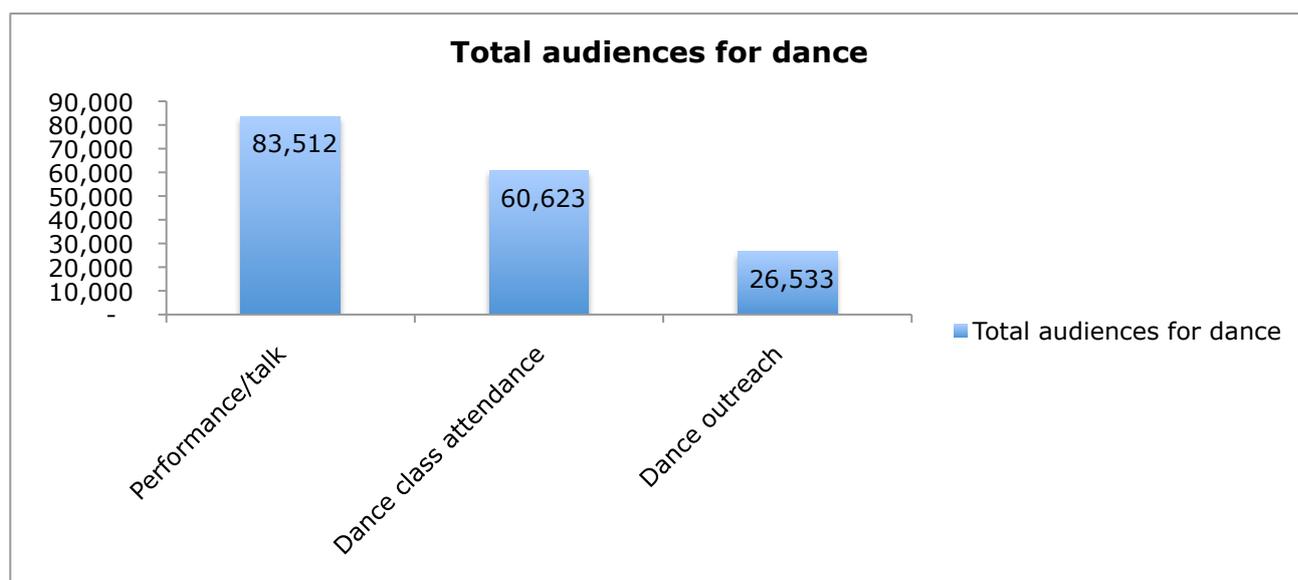
## Provision of professional dance opportunities

The respondent dance organisations created 616 professional dance opportunities in 2008, which included shows, performance platforms, bursaries, masterclasses, residencies and professional workshops. Dance organisations created on average 21 professional opportunities, with one organisation generating 90 in 2008.

*Note: This is a question that needs to be refined and broken down more specifically in future surveys to get a greater sense of the level of professional development activity actually taking place in the sector.*

## Dance Audiences

Respondent organisations attracted 170,668 attendees in 2008. More than 85,000 people came to 578 performances and 57 talks, 60,623 attended non-professional dance classes, and more than 26,000 were engaged in dance through outreach activities.



*Note: It is worth remembering that this figure relates to dance organisations only. If we were able to collate data from associate and performer/choreographer members also, we believe audience figures, particularly for classes and outreach, would be substantially higher.*

*Note: 10% of respondents did not hold any performances at all.*

*Half of respondents did not hold any talks.*

*One third did not run any classes.*

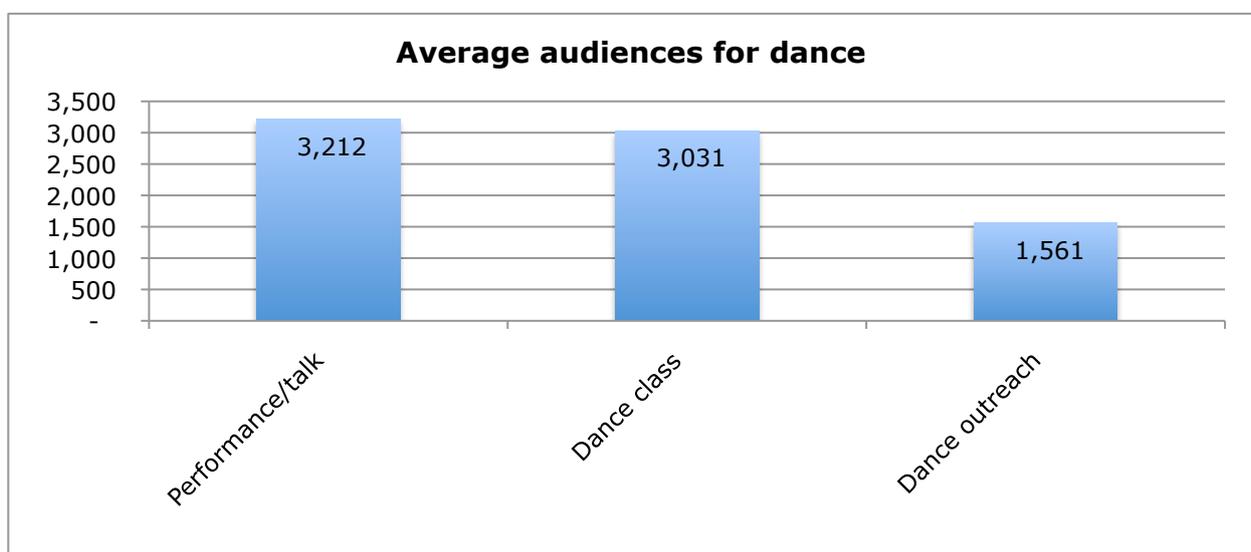
*More than 40% did not run any outreach programmes.*

*The Public and the Arts 2006*, the Arts Council commissioned study on the behaviour and attitude of Irish people towards the arts, suggested attendance at contemporary dance performances at approx 126,000 (3% of the population), while 168,000 or 4%, said they participated in dance classes. As the respondents to this survey alone service audiences approximately half that size, we believe if we were able to count the activity of the total Dance Ireland membership we could demonstrate that the vast majority of dance attendances in Ireland comes through Dance Ireland member activities and opportunities.

It is interesting that dance class attendance accounts for well over one third of audiences, even when one third of respondents did not run any classes at all. This implies that active participation is a key attraction of the dance sector, and an important strength of the artform in its ability to attract and retain public interest, investment and involvement.

On average, dance organisations attracted audiences of 3,212 to performances/talks, 3,031 to dance classes and 1,561 through their outreach activities.

The busiest organisation for audiences was a venue that had audiences of over 13,000. One resource organisation attracted dance class attendance of over 16,000. Two dance companies engaged with more than 5,000 people each through their outreach/education programmes.



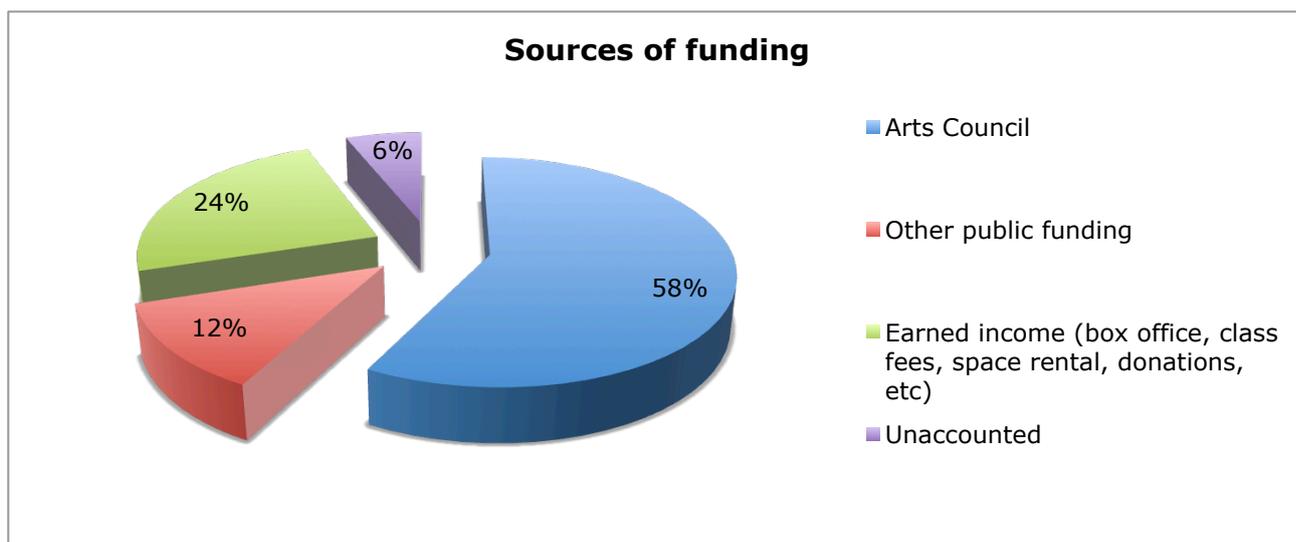
While dance audience figures look quite substantial, it was worrying that many respondents seemed to estimate audiences in the survey instead of having accurate audience data on file. The necessity of knowing the exact number and kinds of people attending your events is likely to become much more important in the coming years as state funding becomes more scarce and attracting paying audiences becomes a greater priority.

## Sources of funding

Overall spend on dance by dance organisation respondents was €7,427,573 in 2008. This equates to an average spend of €43.52 per audience member.

While this is a large amount of money, it is, according to the 2009 Indecon *Assessment of Economic Impact of the Arts report*, just 3.8% of the €192m turnover of all Arts Council funding recipients in 2008.

Of this total, 58% came directly from the Arts Council, 12% from other public funding sources (County Councils, Culture Ireland) and just 24% was income earned by the organisations (box office, class fees, space rental, etc.). Reliance on public funding is high at 70%, possibly to the detriment of the sector in times of reduced public spending. However, with earned income at just 24%, there is significant scope to grow income from other sources, including box office and class fees, as well as looking at encouraging corporate/philanthropic investment.



*Note: The source of the remaining 8% was not expressly provided, but this may be due to the phrasing of the question.*

*Note: Of the 30 organisational respondents, three gave no financial data at all, and another two had either zero funding allocated to dance activity or (in the case of one county council arts office) 'outsourced' their entire dance budget to a dance company to carry out on their behalf. A further five organisations gave incomplete financial data.*

## Ends