



# DIGITAL MEDIA & INDIAN CLASSICAL ARTS DURING COVID-19

**APRIL 2022**

**ArtSpire**





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would like to thank the 157 participants who spent their valuable time in taking part in the survey and whose responses have contributed significantly in the understanding and analysis of how social media can be a better enabler for the arts sector.

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

Social and digital media trends have been constantly evolving over the past decade. Globally, in the recent past, digital trends have significantly impacted the performing arts sector.

In India, social media has significantly changed the way audiences discover, perceive and consume the arts. It has changed the way artists connect and engage with their audiences. It began with artists creating pages on Facebook and Twitter, which were the most popular platforms then, to primarily share information about their performances.

A significant shift happened when Instagram and YouTube gained popularity as social media platforms for artists to share and engage with their audiences. The visually-driven nature and interactive features made these platforms ideal for artists.

The number of Internet users in India in 2021/22 has grown to a whopping 658 million, which is roughly 47% of the total population of India. Instagram is the most used social media platform in 2021/22 with 76.50% of the social media users enrolled. 74.70% of the users in India have profiles on Facebook and that makes it the second most popular platform.

While this digital evolution was previously seen to moderately impact the Indian classical arts sector, a major trigger for this transition was the Covid-19 pandemic that hit India in March 2020. With the cultural events coming to a standstill due to the pandemic, artists and audiences were forced to stay at home and they resorted to digital mediums for sharing and accessing content.



Indian classical arts, specifically performing arts and artists, needed to make a rapid shift from offline to online channels of presentation and networking. This required fundamental changes to be adopted by artists and art organisations alike, changing the course of classical art performance and presentation for the foreseeable future.

Artists began to use social and digital mediums to present art, teach art, to stream content and for online ticketing as well. With more audiences taking to digital space and with no other platform for artists available during the pandemic, social media became the primary platform of sharing and engagement.

To explore this impact of social and digital media on Indian classical arts and its explosion during the pandemic, ArtSpire, an India-based arts management and consulting company and Earthen Lamp, a UK-based cultural research and training company joined forces to develop a research approach to specially understand digital trends pertaining to the Indian classical arts sector.

The research data doesn't constitute India as a whole - majority comes from respondents based in South India (65%) and the least data comes from respondents based outside India (2.6%).

Hence the findings from this study are indicative and not comprehensive. This will give readers a broad understanding of the impact of social and digital media for Indian classical artists in terms of professional growth, networking, brand development and audience development. This report also outlines the methodology adopted for the research, the key findings and future suggestions for the classical arts sector.

The report has been made publicly accessible and aims to contribute to the development of statistical data specific to the Indian classical arts sector.



## 2

## METHODOLOGY

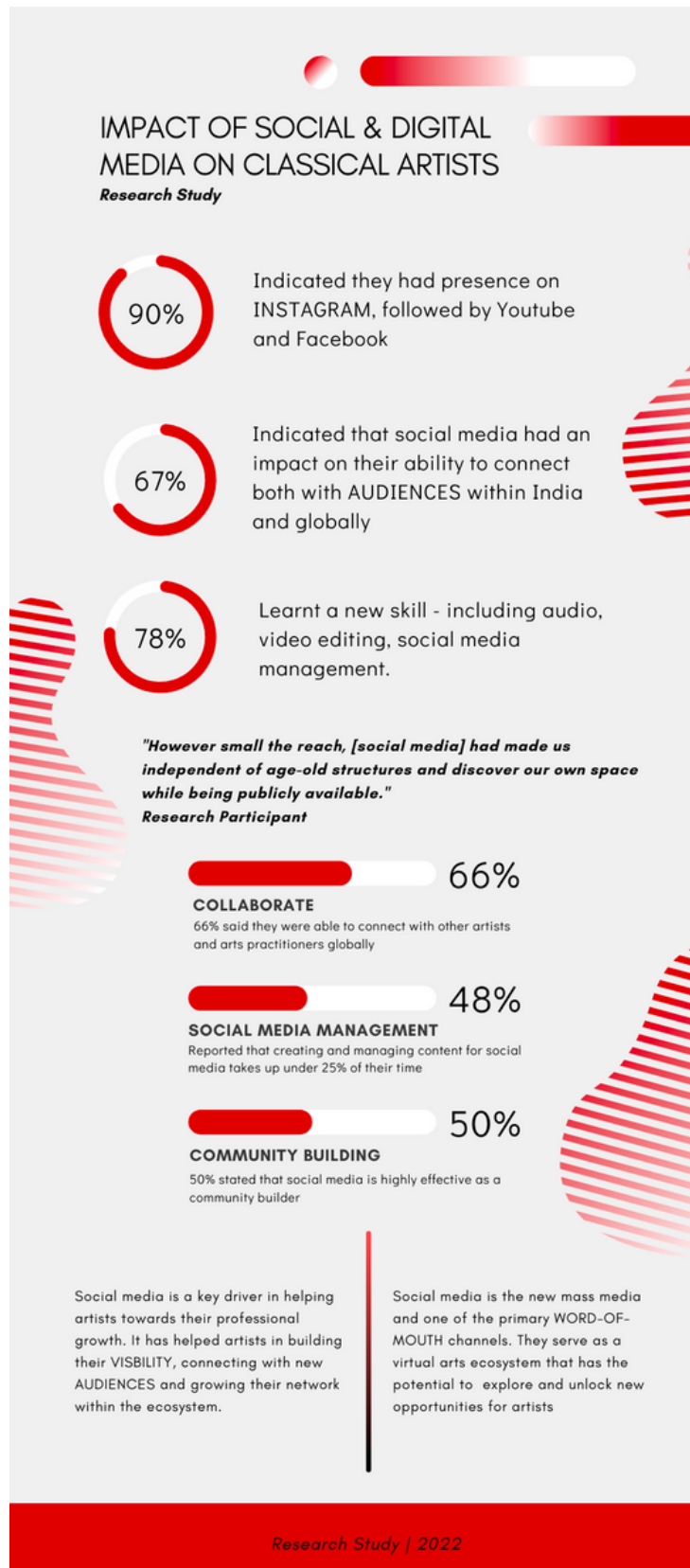
In this first-of-its-kind India-centric research study, detailed secondary data research was conducted to determine the most suitable methodology to be adopted. The data revealed the need for quantitative research in India, to understand better the current social media trends and thereby determine future implications.

The quantitative data required for the study was collected via online surveys specifically designed, keeping in mind the India-centric context of the research as well as the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. The survey was jointly created by ArtSpire (India) and Earthen Lamp (UK) and was made available for 45 days between September 2021 and November 2021.

Questions exploring the respondent demographic, their artistic journeys, and social media interactions - pre/during/post the pandemic - were included in order to gain a thorough understanding of the impact of social and digital media.

The survey was sent to Indian classical artists located across India through emails, social media channels and WhatsApp. The variety of channels and forums used ensured the inclusion of a varied demographic of respondents. The random distribution of the survey ensured the avoidance of any confirmation bias.

The report is designed to be publicly accessible through the ArtSpire and Earthen Lamp websites and social media platforms, with the intention of contributing to the growth of the arts sector as a whole.





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# INSIGHTS FOR ARTISTS & ARTS SECTOR







## #1 OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

### INSIGHTS

- Independent artists have always known to handle a myriad of activities. In addition to creating art, teaching and managing other administrative activities, today artists have to spend time and effort towards managing their social media presence as well. Hence the time on this activity is an important consideration which could help them prioritize across multiple aspects of their profession.
- While there is an explosion of activity on social media which could get overwhelming, setting aside time to spend on social media towards sharing content that is a representation of the artist and their work would be helpful.

### DATA

- 66% of the artists felt overwhelmed by content on social media
- 48% indicated that they felt they had to be on social media
- 45% reported that creating art / teaching takes up between 25% - 50% of their day
- 48% reported that creating and managing content for social media takes up under 25% of their time

## #2 CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

### INSIGHTS

- Social media is a key driver in helping artists towards their career development and professional growth.
- Social media helps artists with building their visibility and growing their network within the ecosystem. It provides artists an unbounded access to global audiences
- It also serves as a medium to present new work and thereby build new audience and relationships with stakeholders.

### DATA

- 59% indicated that social media has a "medium" impact on their professional growth.
- 66% said they were able to connect with other artists and arts practitioners globally
- 67% indicated that social media had widespread impact on participants' ability to connect both with audiences within India and globally
- 47% indicated that social media was helpful in building their brand visibility
- 43% indicated that it had helped them present new work.



### #3 DEVELOPING ALTERNATE SKILLS

#### INSIGHTS

- With artists most often constrained for resources, equipping themselves with additional skills could offer additional support.
- Additional competencies such as technology, business and marketing skills could be helpful for artists.

#### DATA

- 78% of artists developed their skills in audio and video editing
- 62% of artists developed their skill in social media management
- A smaller percentage (30-35%) picked up designing, writing and photography skills

### #4 PLATFORMS & COMMUNITY BUILDING

#### INSIGHTS

- To further their brand and build audiences, artists could consider leveraging the three primary social media platforms namely, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook.
- These platforms have now become the new mass media and one of the primary word-of-mouth channels. They serve as a virtual arts ecosystem where the larger community of stakeholders are present, including organisers, curators, fellow artists, press, arts connoisseurs and arts managers. This virtual ecosystem has helped artists explore and unlock new opportunities.

#### DATA

- Almost 90% of the artists reported that they are active on Instagram
- 66% of the artists had an active presence on YouTube
- 55% of the artists were present on Facebook
- 50% of the artists indicated that social media is a highly effective community building tool while 40% indicated medium perceived effectiveness of social media as a community building tool



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## FUTURE DIRECTION

The past 2 years has led to the emergence of a new normal due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The research study indicated that the new normal has paved the way for increased social media usage. For performing artists especially, the pandemic has shifted the performance space to a digital realm and although it comes with its own set of challenges, it has presented various opportunities as well.

As we look into the future, we see that social media and its benefits will continue if implemented strategically and consistently by artists. There is clearly a need for the artists to adopt social and digital media into their fold. Digital activities have immense potential in the development of some of the critical activities such as audience development and revenue generation.

This research study was an indicative representation of the impact of social and digital media for performing artists. There are several research areas to be further explored in future research studies including – comparative study of pre and post pandemic digital habits of artists; in-depth case studies of individual artists' social media behaviours; analysis of the digital platforms, content, and audience engagement, to name a few.

These areas of future research will help in devising digital best practices for performing artists, which could significantly impact their career and professional growth.

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# APPENDIX: DETAILED REPORT OF RESEARCH FINDINGS



## I. ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

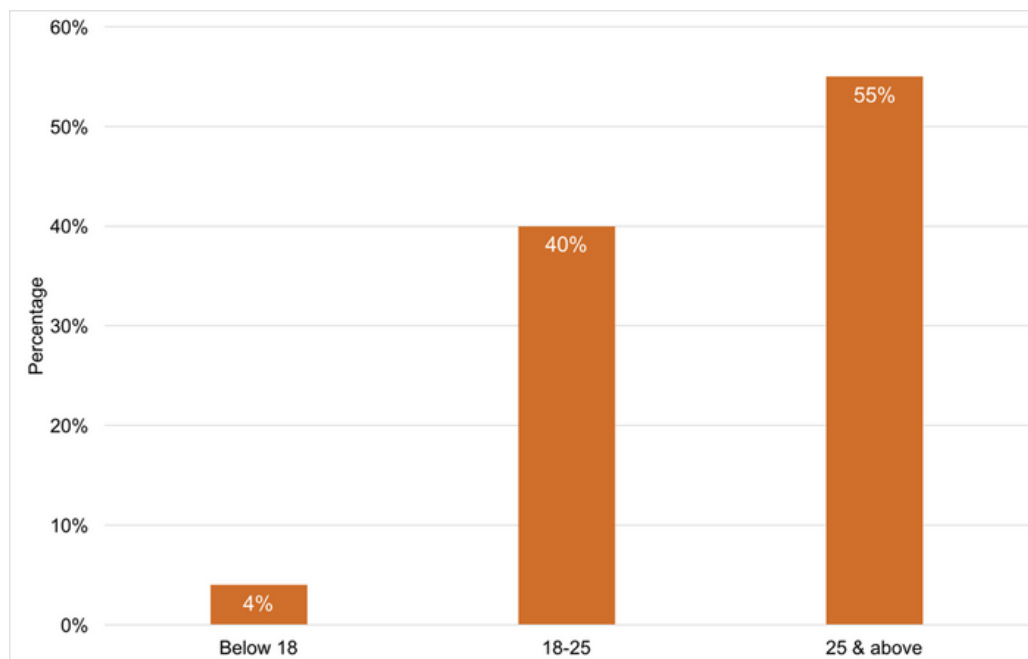


Figure 1: Sample Distribution – Age Groups

Over half of the respondents (55%) were 25 years old or older. 40% were aged 18 - 25, and the remaining 4% were under 18.

## II. LOCATION

Most of the respondents (153) resided in India. Those who indicated their city or state of residence were spread geographically in the following way:

- Tamil Nadu (63, of which 61 in Chennai)
- Karnataka (21, of which 19 in Bangalore/Bengaluru)
- Maharashtra (29, of which 13 in Mumbai and 11 in Pune)



- Kerala (10)
- West Bengal (7, of which 6 in Kolkata)
- Gujarat (5)
- Delhi / New Delhi (4)
- Andhra Pradesh (6)
- Jamshedpur (2)
- Guwahati (1)
- Rishikesh (1)
- Gurgaon (1)
- Ratlam (1)

Additionally there were four more respondents - two reside in the USA, one in Canada, and one in Australia.

### III. ROLE & PRACTICE

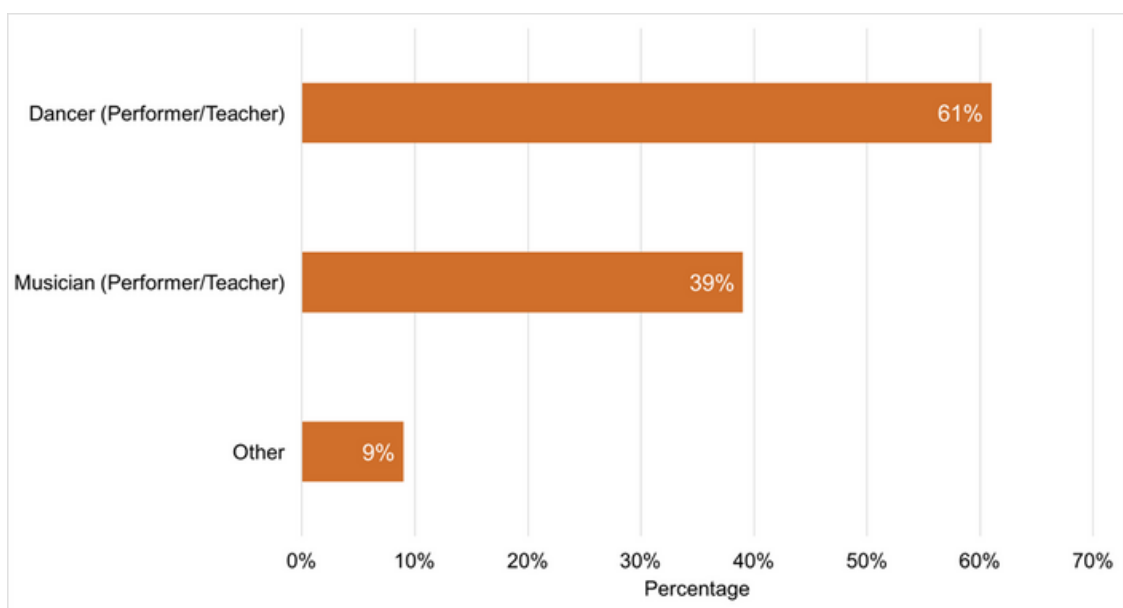


Figure 2: Role and Practice



Around three fifths of respondents (61%) identified as dancers (performers and/or teachers). Almost two fifths identified as musicians. 9% selected the “other” option, either on its own or in conjunction with another option.

Other occupations listed include:

- Theatre practitioner (3 respondents)
- Music student (2 respondents)
- Dance student
- Painter
- Storyteller
- Nadaswaram Artist
- Rasika
- Listener and Supporter
- Connoisseur

## IV. EXPERIENCES IN THE PANDEMIC

### CHALLENGES FACED

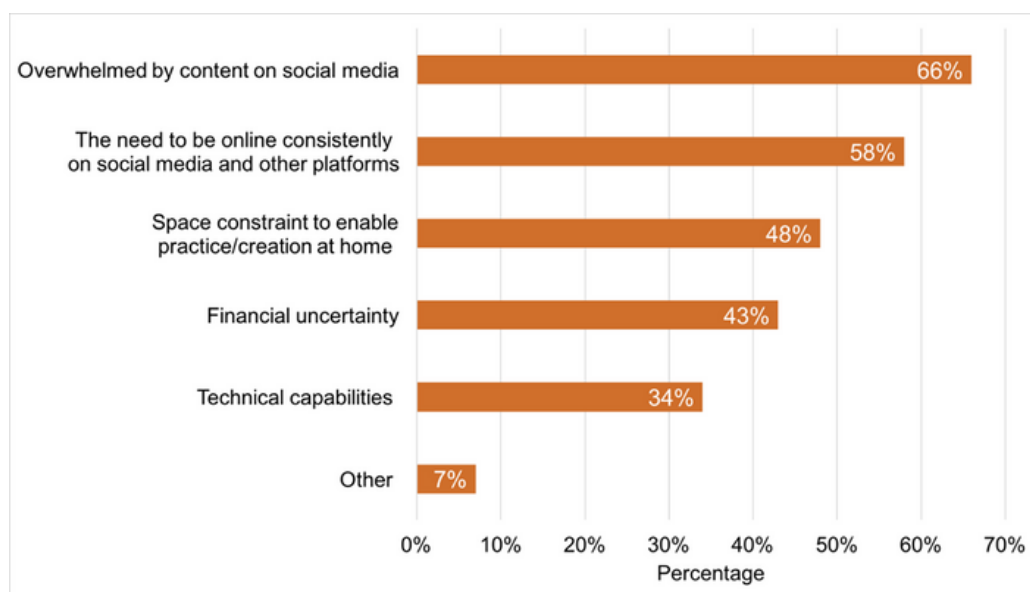


Figure 3: Challenges faced during the pandemic



The two most commonly cited challenges experienced by respondents during the pandemic were related to social media and online platforms. The first was a feeling of being overwhelmed by content on social media (66% of respondents), followed by the need to be online consistently on social media and other platforms (58%).

48% of respondents were also affected by space constraints which made it more difficult to create and practice at home. Around two fifths of the respondents (34%) struggled with their technical capabilities, and 7% listed other concerns including:

- Creative/artistic issues to do with the impossibility to collaborate and attend performances in person (5 respondents)
- Problems with teaching online (2 respondents)
- Mental health issues

## ADVANTAGES

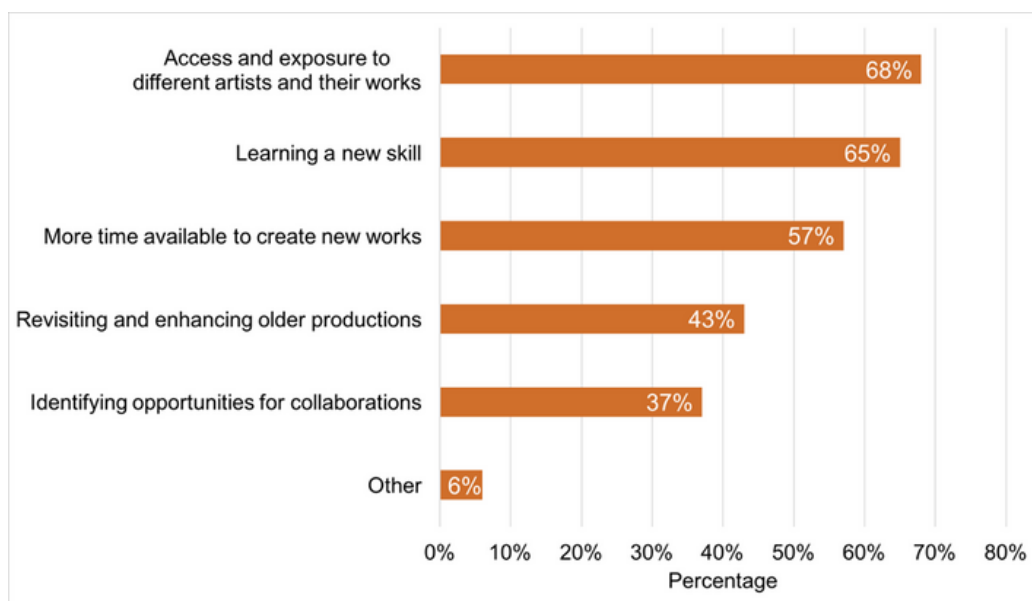


Figure 4: Advantages of the pandemic for artistic practice





The most frequently mentioned advantage of the pandemic for respondents' artistic practices was access and exposure to different artists and their works (68% of respondents), followed by the opportunity to learn a new skill (65%).

57% of respondents found that they had more time to create new works, and 53% revisited and enhanced older productions. 37% were able to identify opportunities for collaborations. 6% of respondents listed other advantages, including:

- Learning new pieces from Gurus
- More time to introspect, react and practice
- More time for Riyaz
- Being able to connect to a lot of students all around the world online
- Acceptance of online training
- Me time

One respondent reported that for them, the pandemic was detrimental, not advantageous, and another that the question didn't apply because they are not a professional artist.

## **AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES**

Respondents were asked to think about what a day in their life looks like in the current pandemic situation, and to estimate the amount of time they spend creating art, teaching, and creating and managing content for social media.



## CREATION OF ART

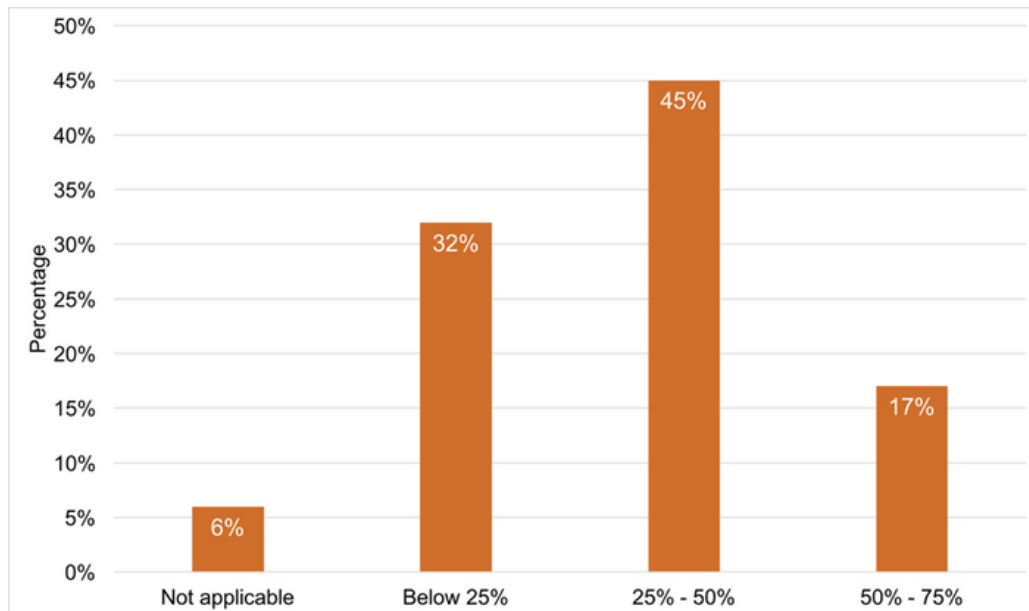


Figure 5: Daily time spent on creation of art

Almost half of the respondents (45%) reported that creating art takes up between 25% - 50% of their day. 32% of respondents indicated that creating art occupies under 25% of their time – more than the respondents who indicated that they spend more than half of their time on this (17%).

## TEACHING ART

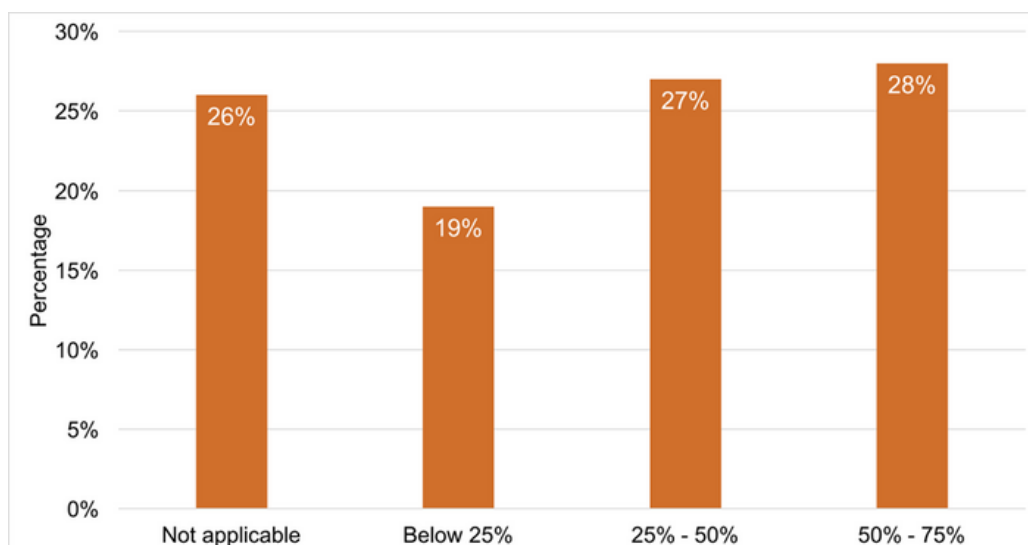


Figure 6: Daily time spent on teaching



Of the respondents who teach as part of their practice, most reported that this activity takes up a significant proportion of their time: either between 25% - 50% (27% of respondents) or more than 50% (28% of respondents).

## CONTENT CREATION & SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

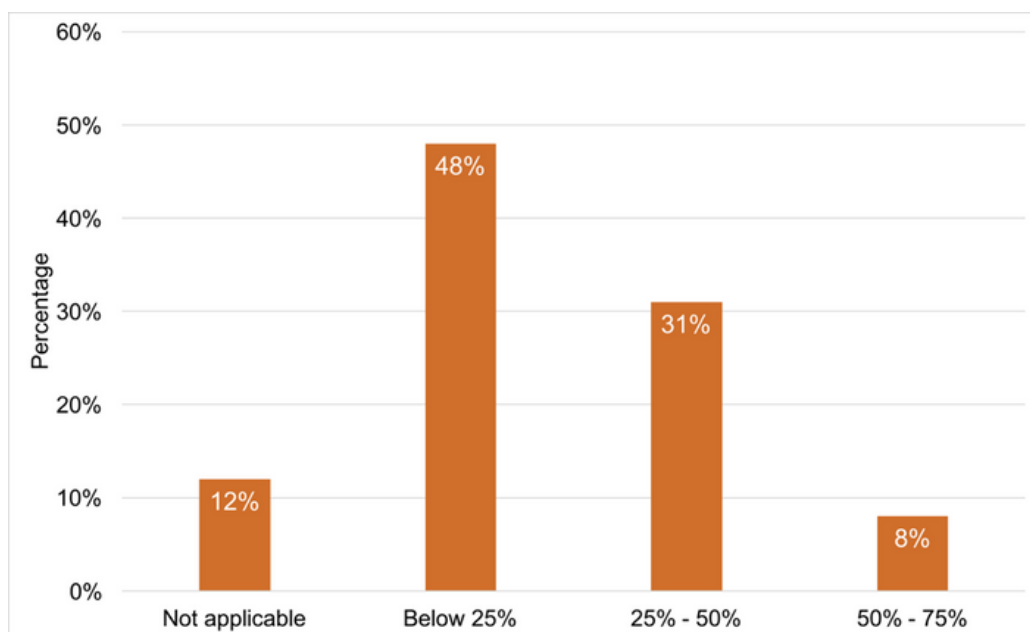


Figure 7: Daily time spent on content creation and social media

Almost half of the respondents (48%) reported that creating and managing content for social media takes up under 25% of their time. 31% reported that it takes up between 25% - 50% of their time, and even fewer (8%) that it takes up more than 50%.



## V. SOCIAL MEDIA

### IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Respondents were asked to rate the impact of social media on their professional growth on a scale of 1-low to 10-high. Around three fifths of respondents (59%) gave a score between 5 – 7, indicating medium impact. Just over a quarter of respondents (27%) gave a score between 8 – 10, indicating high impact, and the remaining 14% reported low impact (with a score between 1 – 4).

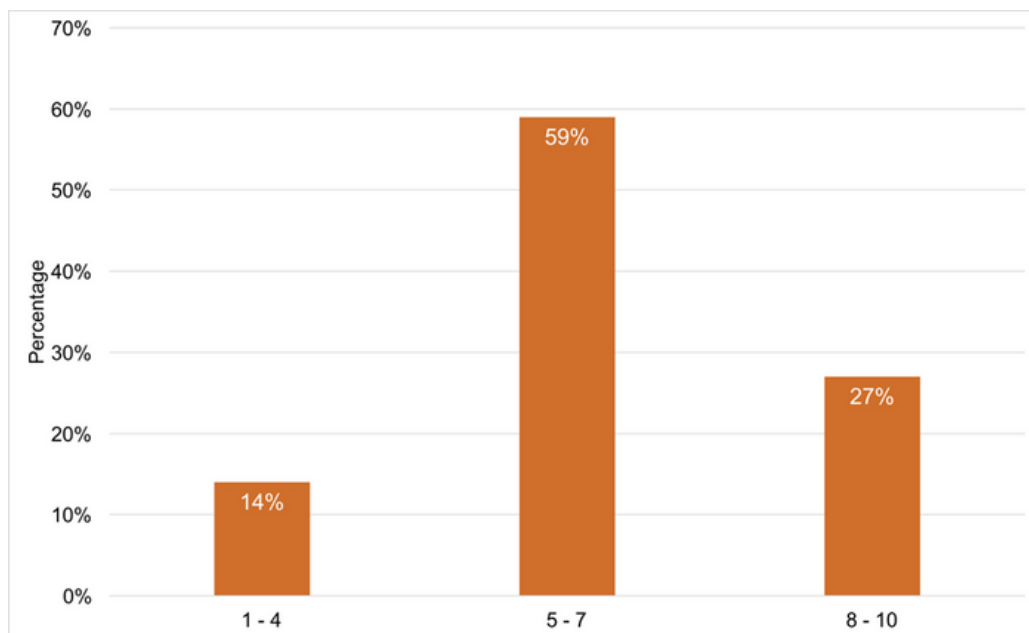


Figure 8: Impact of social media on professional growth



## POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

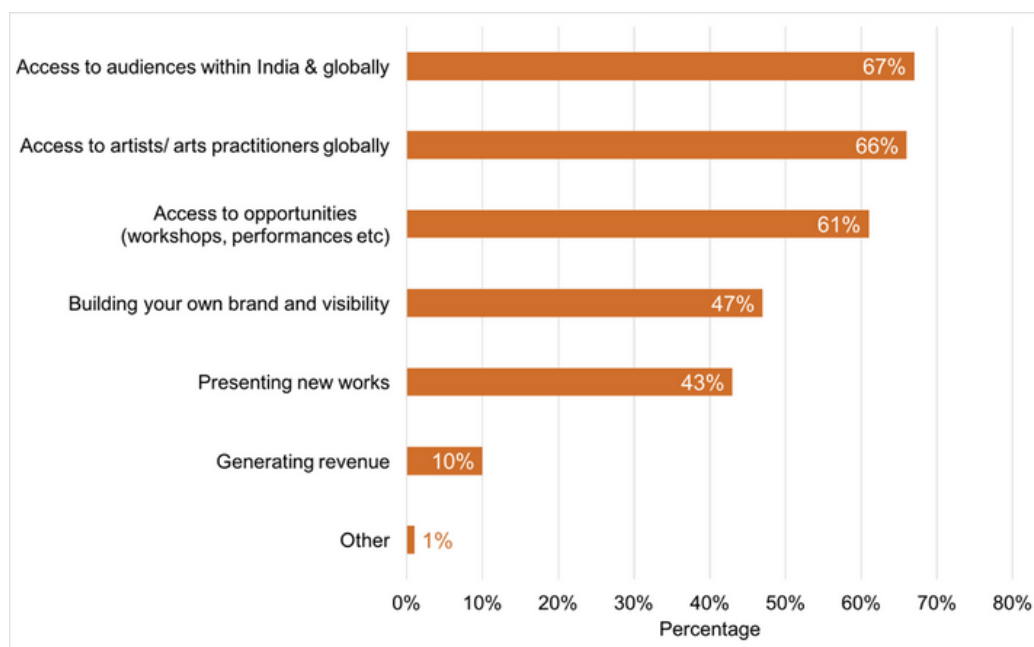


Figure 9: Aspects improved by social media

Social media had widespread impact on participants' ability to connect both with audiences within India and globally (67% of respondents) and with other artists and arts practitioners globally (66%). 61% of respondents also reported that it had helped them access opportunities such as workshops and performances. Just under half of the respondents (47%) stated that social media had helped them build their own brand and visibility, and 43% that it had helped them present new work.

A few of the respondents (10%) reported that social media had helped generate revenue. Of the two respondents that selected the "other" option, one pointed out that "however small the reach, [social media] had made us independent of age-old structures and discover our own space while being publicly available". The other respondent thought that "social media has diluted the quality of art and has ruined the industry".



## EASE OF ACCESS

Respondents were asked to rate the ease of access for arts resources/opportunities on social media, with 1 being very difficult and 10 being very easy. Almost half of the respondents (47%) gave a score between 5 – 7, indicating medium ease of access. 42% of respondents gave a score between 8 – 10, which indicates they found accessing opportunities very easy. Only 11% of respondents reported that they found accessing opportunities quite difficult (score between 1 – 4).

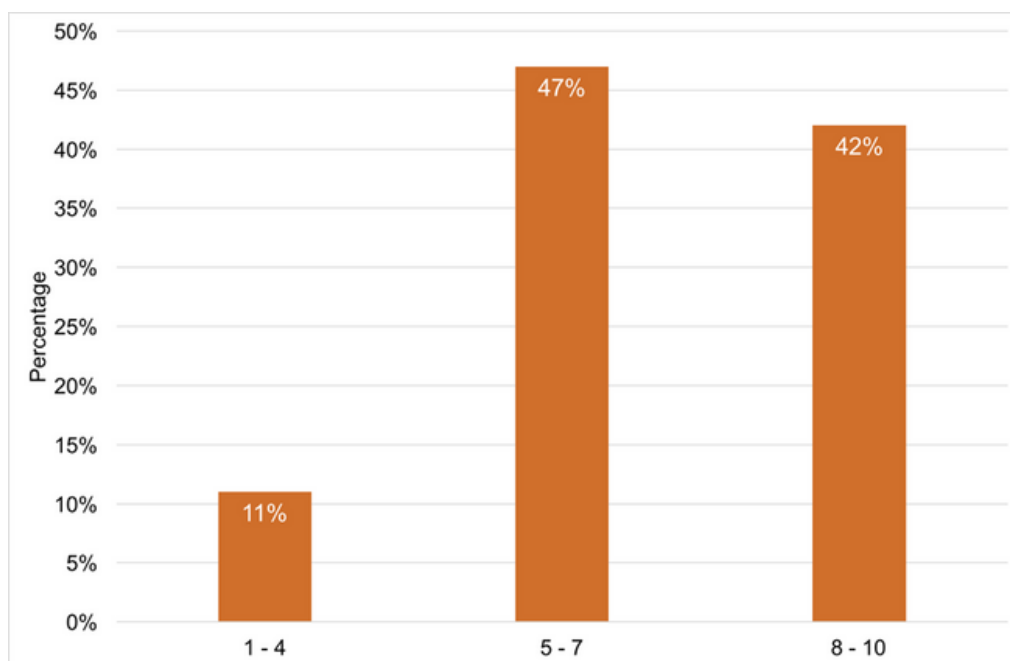


Figure 10: Ease of access for arts resources and opportunities



## ALTERNATE SKILLS

Respondents were asked about skills related to social media that they were able to develop during the pandemic. More than three quarters of respondents (78%) worked on audio and video editing, and 62% on social media management. A smaller percentage picked up designing (36%), writing (31%), and photography (29%) skills. Among the other skills listed, respondents included:

- Viewer based choreographing
- Producing content that is tailored to social media platforms
- Designing, recording, and producing music

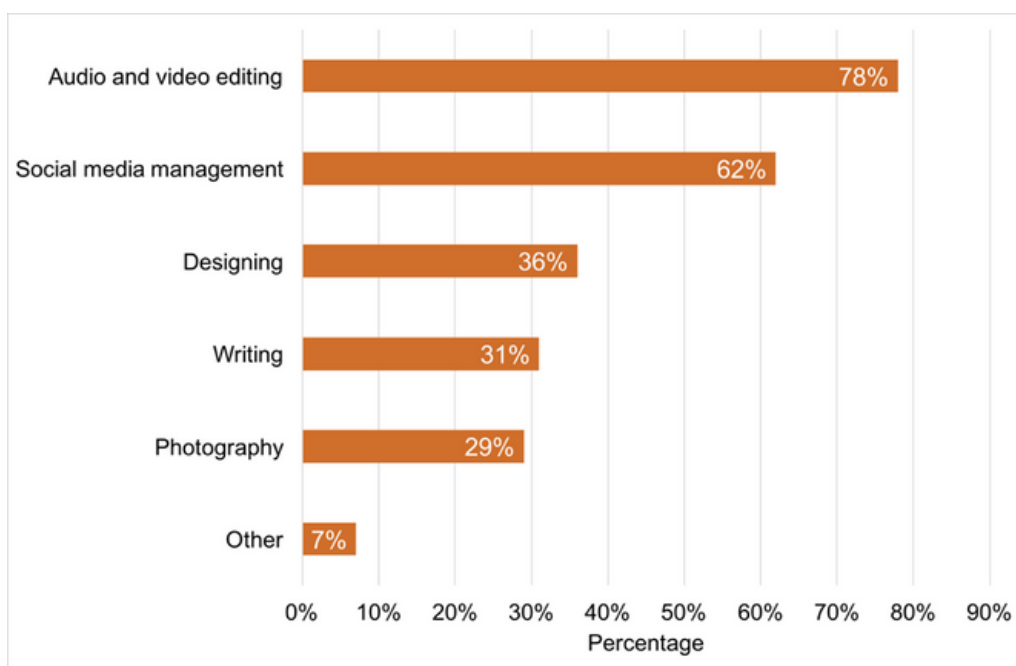


Figure 11: Alternate skills developed during the pandemic.



## PLATFORMS

Respondents were asked which social media and other digital platforms they use effectively. Instagram was the most frequently mentioned platform – almost all of the respondents (90%) reported that they are active there. This was followed by YouTube (66% of respondents) and by Facebook (55%). A considerably lower number of respondents used LinkedIn (11%), Twitter (8%), Clubhouse (7%), and Shaale (4%). Other platforms mentioned by respondents included WhatsApp, Skype, and Zoom (1 response each).

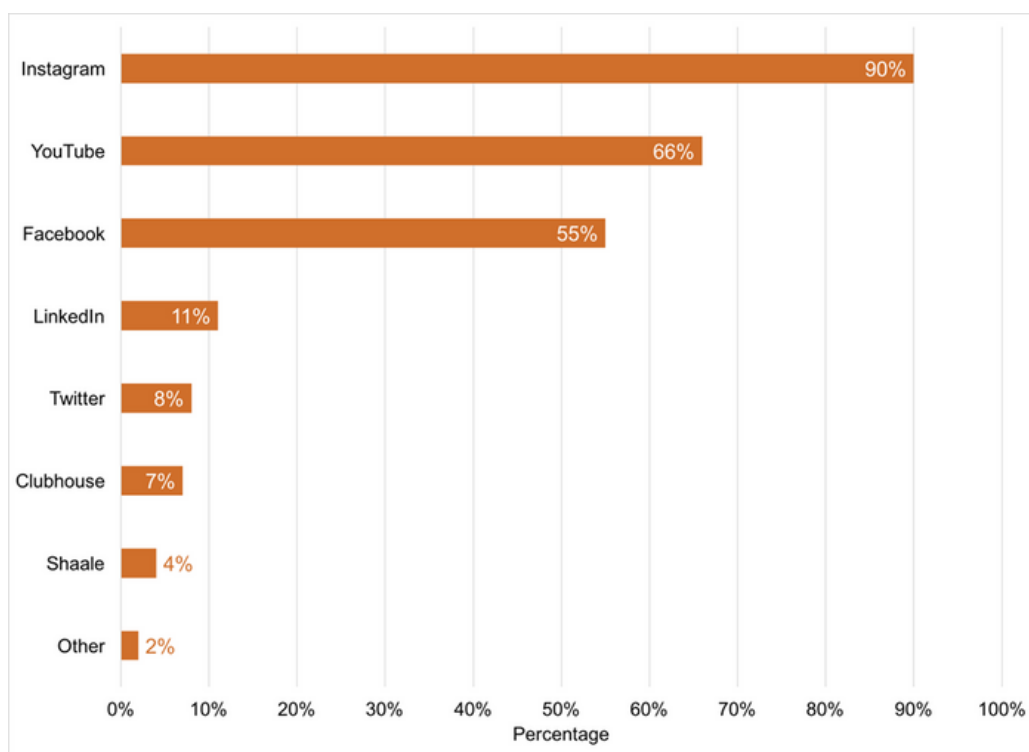


Figure 12: Social media and digital platforms used





## COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Respondents were asked the extent to which they felt social media had been effective in helping artists collaborate and support each other, with 1 being the least effective and 10 the most effective. The average rating was 7, which indicates that respondents have moderate confidence in social media as a community building tool, with room for improvement.

Half of the respondents (50%) gave a score between 8 – 10, indicating that they consider social media highly effective as a community builder. 40% gave a score between 5 – 7, indicating medium perceived effectiveness, and only 10% gave a score between 1 – 4, indicating low perceived effectiveness.

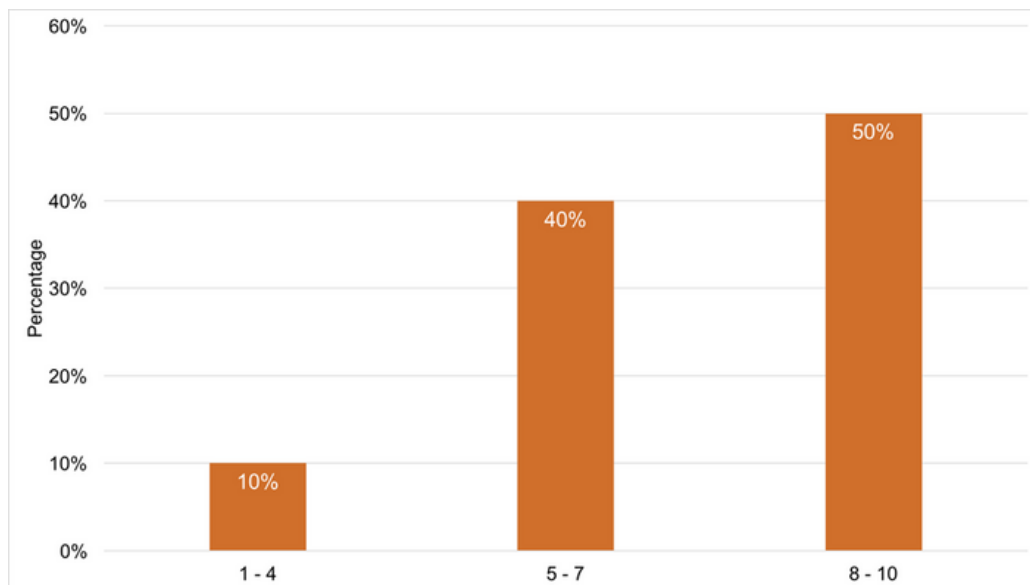


Figure 13: Effectiveness of social media for community building



## VI. THE FUTURE

### FUTURE PLANNING

When asked how they are gearing up for a post-pandemic scenario, and specifically about their plans for the next 12 – 18 months, more than three quarters of respondents (78%) reported that they are exploring performance opportunities and/or festivals. Just over half (55%) are considering ideas for collaboration and creating or re-creating works for the future (53%), and a slightly lower percentage are designing strategies to build new audiences (48%). Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) are applying for grants. Activities listed under the “other” option include teaching, producing, and practicing.

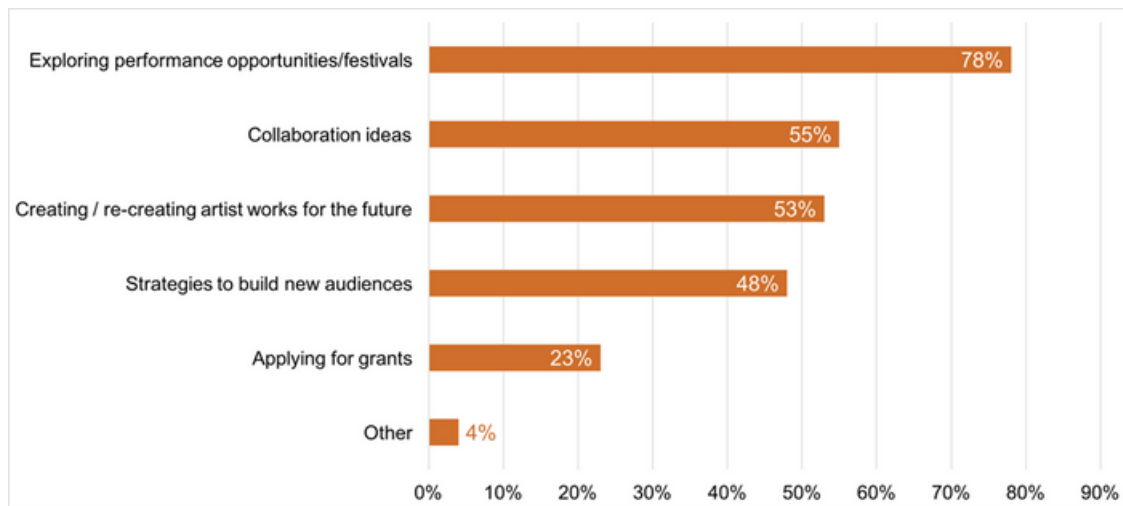


Figure 14: Plans for the next 12 – 18 months



## ABOUT ARTSPIRE

ArtSpire is an arts management and consulting company based in Chennai, India & Toronto, Canada, specialising in the development and management of artistic initiatives. They work with arts organisations, venues and performing artists, supporting them across marketing, audience development, programming, communications, and operations – both strategy & execution. Over the past five years since its inception in 2016, ArtSpire has worked with over 50+ artists and organisations helping build new audiences, develop their branding strategy, build new business models and generate revenue through strategically planned marketing initiatives.

[www.artspire.in](http://www.artspire.in)

## ABOUT EARTHEN LAMP

Earthen Lamp exists to bring bright thinking to cultural and heritage organisations and creative businesses. At the heart of their work is a deep knowledge and understanding of the arts and culture, the policy context and the creative industries. Since 2011, we have worked across the creative sector providing market research and feasibility studies, evaluation, impact assessments and strategy development support. We've worked with local authorities, heritage and cultural bodies contributing to their development, tourism, business partnership and regeneration priorities.

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