

**COVID-19  
EMERGENCY INDUSTRY SURVEY**

**CONDUCTED JUNE 11TH-19TH 2020**

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# Foreword

Comedy is facing both an existential and economic challenge unlike anything we've ever seen – how does the live comedy industry continue, when live shows are suspended indefinitely? How will our venues stay solvent? And how will our staff and artists – the comedians, promoters, venue managers, techies, producers et al – stay financially afloat?

For the first time in our history, those of us in the live comedy industry are joining ranks to urge the public and politicians to #SaveLiveComedy.

The results of the first ever UK-wide comedy industry survey are galling, but unsurprising:

- **A third of comedy venues believe they will be forced to close within the next six months**, with 77.8% facing closure within the next year.
- **Over 45% of respondents have already given serious thought to leaving comedy** because of the pandemic, with just under 60% of respondents predicting they'll need to leave before February 2021 unless we're able to get back to performances.
- **83% of promoters don't think they will run all of their regular events after lockdown ends**
- **Over 75% of performers have earned less than 5% of their pre-pandemic estimated income** from online performances of any kind.
- **73.5% of respondents have found their mental health negatively impacted** by job and industry uncertainty during the pandemic.

Our comedy scene is the envy of the world – but we're in dire straits. At risk are the venues that are the bedrock of our community; the promoters who find new rising stars and championed our household names before they were famous; and the next generation of comic voices who will have their art shared with millions via the BBC, Netflix, and the channels of the future.

British comedy is a grassroots creative industry, which is accessible and inclusive, no matter your income, where you live, or your sense of humour. Our ticket prices are cheaper than almost any other art form, and comedy takes places in every nation and region of the country, in dedicated spaces but also in pubs, music venues, and theatres in every town and city.

We've long been overlooked within the performing arts; live comedy isn't viewed as being equal to other art forms by funding bodies across the UK. But we have always been working, contributing to local economies and communities, and producing work that is known worldwide.

So to the UK government, national governments, Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Wales, and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, **we have one simple request: to be treated like the rest of the performing arts. In the first instance, that means being given the same access to the £1.57 billion of government funding to save the arts.**

Without help, live comedy as we know it will never be the same again. The effect of this on British theatres, festivals, TV and radio – and the hole that will be left in the worldwide live comedy scene – will be enormous. It's time to #SaveLiveComedy.

Brid Kirby & Owen Donovan  
Chair & Vice-Chair, Live Comedy Association

# An introduction to the survey and the LCA

This report details the results from the Live Comedy Association's survey of the comedy industry, carried out in the middle of June 2020. Responses were gathered from 663 individuals, working all over the country and across the industry - comics, clubs owners, promoters, stage management, arts venue programmers, agents, publicists, photographers, producers, and many more.

The report provides a broad picture of the industry, and then looks specifically at freelancers, venues, and small businesses, before looking at the industry's most common worries for the coming months. Throughout we have included anonymised testimonials from survey respondents.

The Live Comedy Association is a newly formed industry body set up by passionate individuals working in live comedy, with the aim of ensuring we survive the current crisis and thrive beyond it. We have over 1500 members, and we're raising the profile of the live comedy industry and the contribution it makes to the cultural life of the UK - we've now been officially recognised by DCMS as a Cultural Industry for the first time.

This survey is the first of its kind, offering sector-wide insight into the challenges facing the industry, and affirming the urgent need to support an artwork that before the pandemic was flourishing.

The results of this survey paint a picture of the breadth and scale of the industry, from arena tours to basement comedy clubs; month long festivals to the top rooms of pubs, where comedy happens in every town across the UK. This is a sector of considerable size, employing thousands and with a massive impact on local economies - and it's facing a momentous crisis.

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# Contents

1. A Picture of The Industry	4
Who's Most Likely to Leave the Industry, and When?	6
2. An Industry of Freelancers	7
- Comics	7
- Operations (Stage, Tour Management, Technicians etc.)	8
- Promoters	9
- Freelance Producers	9
3. Permanent Venues	10
- Comedy Clubs	11
- Arts & Tour Venues	12
4. Small Businesses	13
- Festivals	13
- Agents & Managers	14
- Production Companies	14
5. Where Do We Go From Here?	15
6. Appendix - Industry Diagram & Definitions	20

# 1. A Picture of The Industry

Over 45% of the industry have given serious thought to leaving comedy because of the pandemic.

Without further support, just under 10% of respondents need to leave the industry immediately or have already done so.

- 18.4% will need to leave before August 2020
- 38.9% will need to leave before November 2020
- 59% before February 2021
- Only 26% don't anticipate having to leave live comedy if live events continue to be banned or unfeasible beyond August 2021

As a result of the pandemic:

- 16.5% of the industry have applied for or are receiving Universal Credit
- 36.7% have used a considerable percentage of available savings
- 24.4% have taken up work outside of comedy
- 23.61% have used money set aside for tax bills
- 18.2% have gone into an overdraft
- 17.1% have asked family or friends for money

57% of respondents have already lost over 50% of their annual personal income as a result of the pandemic. Only 8.9% have lost less than 10% of their income.

In a normal year, 58% of those working in the industry rely on live comedy to provide over 50% of their annual income.

59.5% of those working in live comedy earn less than the median wage in the UK. Before the pandemic, 15% were due to earn less than £12,000 in 2020.

**"I WORRY THAT EVERYTHING I'VE SPENT TEN YEARS BUILDING WILL GO IN THE BIN. THAT I WON'T BE ABLE TO MAKE A LIVING ANYMORE, AFTER ALL THIS WORK."**

**"I'M DRAINING SAVINGS AND GOOD WILL FROM FAMILY. I CAN DO THIS FOR A WHILE. NOT FOREVER."**

**"ALL THE ORGANISATIONS I NORMALLY WORK FOR WILL SUFFER SERIOUS FINANCIAL DAMAGE AND I DON'T KNOW WHEN THEY'LL BE ABLE TO REHIRE ME. IT FEELS LIKE I DON'T HAVE A SAFETY NET AT ALL."**

## Government Support Schemes

32.5% of the industry have received support from SEISS.

18.7% have received support from the government's furlough scheme.

But:

27.8% of the live comedy industry have been ineligible for any government assistance, despite needing support.

Of those that have found themselves ineligible for government support:

- 28% operate as a limited company and pay themselves through dividends.
- 25% earn a mixture of PAYE and self-employed income.
- 18% are too recently self-employed (i.e. don't have a 2018/2019 self-assessment).
- 11% earn above the £50,000 cap for SEISS.
- 12% don't know why they're ineligible.

**"MY SEISS AVERAGE WAS BROUGHT DOWN AS THEY INCLUDED MY TAX YEAR WHERE I EARNED MORE THAN 50% OF MY INCOME FROM PAYE RATHER THAN SELF-EMPLOYED. THIS HAS LEFT ME WITH A VERY SMALL PAYOUT THAT DOES NOT COVER MY RENT."**

**"MY BIGGEST WORRY IS THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON MY MENTAL HEALTH AND HOW THAT'S CHANGED MY CAPABILITY TO WORK. I'M AFRAID MY HEALTH WILL BE SO BAD THAT I AM UNABLE TO WORK."**

Perhaps most worryingly, 73.5% of respondents have found their mental health negatively impacted by job & industry uncertainty during the pandemic.

Of course, these figures vary significantly depending on who you are. If you're a woman, non-white, working class, or under 30, you're far more likely to have suffered negative mental health because of job uncertainty.

For those under 25 in our industry, over 85% have found their mental health negatively affected.

# Who's most likely to have to leave the industry, and when?

You're most likely to have already given serious thought to leaving the industry if you:

- Identify as female or non-binary, or;
- Identify as LGBTQ+, or;
- Have a disability, or;
- Are working class, or;
- Have caring responsibilities, or;
- Are under 40, or;
- Work in Operations, Design/Photography, run a Comedy Club, Live Production Company, or Festival.

You're considerably more likely to have already left, or made the decision to leave, if you:

- Identify as female or non-binary, or;
- Identify as LGBTQ+, or;
- Are not white, or;
- Are working class, or;
- Have caring responsibilities, or;
- Are under 40, or;
- Work as a Comic, Director, in Operations or Design/Photography, or run a Comedy Club.

You're considerably more likely to need to leave the industry before November of this year if you:

- Live in the South East, South West, the Midlands, Scotland, or Wales, or;
- Identify as female or non-binary, or;
- Identify as LGBTQ+, or;
- Are working class, or;
- Have caring responsibilities, or;
- Are under 40, or;
- Work in Operations, Design/Photography, as a Freelance Producer, Publicist or Director, or run a Festival.

**"WHAT I KEEP THINKING ABOUT IS HOW I'M ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES. AND I'M THINKING ABOUT PACKING IT IN. IF I WASN'T ELIGIBLE FOR THE SEISS, I CAN SAY FOR SURE I WOULD ALREADY HAVE QUIT."**

**"I'M WORRIED THAT THE COMPANY I WORK FOR WILL FOLD, I MAY HAVE TO MOVE, AND LEAVE FAMILY OR FRIENDS. AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY, I RELY ON HAVING FAMILIAL SUPPORT AND FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS."**

**"WITH THE SELF EMPLOYED SUPPORT, I KNOW I'M OK TILL AUGUST, BUT AFTER THAT, I'M VERY SCARED THAT IF WORK DOESN'T RESTART AT LEAST HALF AS MUCH AS IT WAS BEFORE, THEN I CAN'T AFFORD MY RENT."**

# 2. An Industry of Freelancers

## Comics & Performers

### Online content as a 'replacement' for live performance

Over three quarters of performers have earned less than 5% of their pre-pandemic estimated income from online comedy-related activities.

Only 1.6% of comics have made over 75% of their pre-pandemic estimated income.

### Creating Content in Lockdown

78.5% of performers have created their own podcast, vlog, virtual gig, online sketches, or live stream during lockdown.

However, 56.6% of those have been unable to monetise these efforts.

### Featuring in others' content

85.5% of performers have featured in others podcasts, vlogs, virtual gigs, online sketches, live streams, or in radio or TV work during lockdown.

57.2% were paid for some of this work, but only 8.4% were paid for every project they took part in.

**"IT'S TAKEN ME A DECADE OF TO BECOME A FULL TIME COMEDIAN. AS A WORKING CLASS PERSON, I WORRY I WILL NEED TO GO INTO A JOB THAT WILL TAKE MY FOCUS AWAY FROM WRITING & LEAVE ME UNABLE TO GIG. I FEEL DISAPPOINTED THAT ALL THE SACRIFICES OVER THE YEARS - UNPAID GIGS, GIGGING AFTER WORK, THE SELF-FUNDED FRINGES - WILL BECOME REALITY AGAIN."**

**"PEOPLE WON'T BE INSPIRED TO PERFORM OR JOIN THE INDUSTRY (IT WAS AT CLUBS THAT I FELL IN LOVE WITH COMEDY) SO WE WILL BE CUTTING IT OFF AT THE GRASS ROOTS AND LOSING THE DIVERSITY IN THE INDUSTRY"**



# Operations

## (Tour Management, Stage Management, Front of House, Bar Staff etc.)

### A Particularly At-Risk Section of our Industry

Along with photographers & designers, those working in Operations (tour & stage management, front of house, technicians, bar & kitchen staff etc.) are the most likely section of the industry to earn under £12,000.

These workers are nearly 20% more likely than the average for the rest of their colleagues to have given serious thought to leaving the industry because of this pandemic.

87.7% of Operations staff have had their mental health negatively impacted because of this pandemic, compared to the 73.5% figure for the entire industry.

Where the percentage of the whole industry who will leave live comedy before November 2020 is 38.9%, by this same point we'll lose 82.3% of Operations workers. This section of the industry were the most likely to say that they anticipated needing to find work in another sector.

### Major Concerns

85% of Operations crews are worried or extremely worried that social distancing measures will make their jobs or parts of their jobs impossible.

81.3% of Operations crews are worried or extremely worried that their jobs will be the last to be reinstated by venues and organisations and they will have a longer period of time out of work.

87.5% of Operations crews are worried or extremely worried that the infrastructure and architecture of the clubs and venues they work in will not be safe to return to work in.

**"I'M  
WORRIED ABOUT  
THE LAST MINUTE  
CANCELLATION OF WORK  
& TOUR BUDGETS BEING  
TIGHTENED EVEN  
FURTHER"**

**"THERE  
IS NO VERSION OF  
MY JOB THAT EXISTS  
WITHOUT LARGE GROUPS OF  
PEOPLE CONGREGATING - NO  
NEED FOR TOUR  
MANAGERS AT  
VIRTUAL GIGS!"**

**"IF VENUES  
CAN'T OPEN, NOBODY  
NEEDS A STAGE  
MANAGER. WE WILL BE  
THE LAST TO RETURN  
TO WORK."**

## Promoters

Only 17.1% of surveyed promoters expect that after Coronavirus they'll be running all of the events that they promoted before lockdown. 41.4% of promoters believe they'll be running fewer than 25% of their usual events.

The majority of promoters (63.9%) were promoting fewer than five shows a month before the pandemic, but 23.6% were promoting between 6 and 15. 8 promoters surveyed here were promoting more than 25 shows a month, and 2 promoters had, by mid June, cancelled over 390 events each due to the pandemic.

**"I WILL CERTAINLY LOSE MY ROOM, AND I'M NOT SURE THERE'S ANOTHER ONE THAT WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR THE GIG I RUN"**

**"I'M CONCERNED ABOUT GIGS THAT I HAVE HAD TO RESCHEDULE TO THE WINTER, WHICH NOW LOOK LIKE THEY WILL NEED TO BE RESCHEDULED AGAIN."**

## Freelance Producers

65.4% of freelance producers had had contracts cut short or cancelled due to Coronavirus.

Of those that had considered moving away from Live Comedy into another field, 39.1% believed they don't have the experience, training, or qualifications to support them in doing so.

# 3. Permanent Venues

## Permanent closure

49.2% of comedy venues think they will definitely face permanent closure without further funding or support. 40% don't know, and only 10.8% think permanent closure is impossible. This is higher for arts & tour venues, where 54.5% think they'll permanently close (compared to 46.5% of comedy clubs).

7.9% of all venues think that they will need to permanently close within the next three months, 33.3% within the next six months, and 77.8% if they're not able to reopen within the next year. These figures are fairly equal across all types of venues.

## Furlough & redundancies

67% of all comedy venues have furloughed over 80% of their staff. (81% in arts/tour venues, 59.5% in comedy clubs).

With no further changes to the government's furlough scheme, 20.3% of all comedy venues anticipate redundancies beginning in July.

A further 26.6% of venues anticipate redundancies beginning in October.

Only 25% of venues cannot see redundancies needing to take place at all.

## Reopening with social distancing

Only 31% of all surveyed venues think it's viable to reopen with 1m social distancing.

43.7% say it's not possible to viably reopen with any social distancing measures in place.

**"I WORRY THAT AUDIENCES NOT RETURNING WILL MEAN MY PURPOSE BUILT COMEDY CLUB WILL BE FORCED INTO BANKRUPTCY."**

**"I OWN AND RUN A VENUE. WITHOUT FULL CAPACITY AUDIENCES IT WON'T WORK."**

**"WITHOUT AUTUMN TOURS, PANTO AND CORPORATES, OUR COMPANY WON'T SURVIVE THE QUIETER MONTHS AT THE START OF 2021."**

# Comedy Clubs

## Insurance

No comedy clubs have been able to make a successful insurance claim due to this pandemic.

## Tenancy & Leases

Only 28.8% of leased venues have been given a rent reduction or rent-free period of any kind, with the majority of these being small rent reductions for an extremely limited period of time.

## Government Emergency Funding & Support

We asked clubs across the country whether they'd received the below forms of funding & support:

- Business Rates Relief - 25.5%
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme - 2.1%
- Bounce Back Loan Scheme - 14.9%
- Small Business Grant Scheme (England only) - 4.3%
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant (England only) - 8.5%

For those who are in a position where financial help is needed but clubs haven't applied, we found:

- 50% felt that loans felt like too much of a risk for the venue to take on with an uncertain future.
- 12.5% had found eligibility criteria to be unclear
- 6.3% didn't know of some of schemes available.

**"I'VE WORKED 15 YEARS TO BUILD A COMEDY CLUB AND BRAND, EMPLOYING PEOPLE, PAYING ACTS WELL, AND THAT COULD ALL GO TO WASTE."**

**"I FEAR THAT A GROUP OF 20+ EMPLOYEES WILL SIMPLY NO LONGER HAVE JOBS BEFORE THE RESTRICTIONS ON SOCIAL DISTANCING HAVE EASED"**

**"AN INFLUX OF THEATRES AND CLUBS MAY GO UNDER. THIS WILL NOT ONLY AFFECT COMEDY BUT ALL SORTS OF PRODUCTIONS AND LEAVE A HUGE ECONOMICAL HOLE."**

# Arts & Tour Venues

## Programming Comedy

The majority of these venues programme comedy alongside other performing arts & events (for over 50% of these venues, comedy made up 30% or less of their annual programming).

But only for 8.7% of venues did comedy bring in a smaller percentage of income than it accounted for in their programming. For 47.8% of venues, comedy brought in a higher % of the venue's income than its % of programming. (43.5% of venues had comedy's % income and % programming being equal).

For these arts & theatre spaces across the country, in normal years comedy helps them to keep the doors open & is an essential part of their profitable programming.

## Government Emergency Funding & Support

We asked venues across the country whether they'd received the below forms of funding & support:

Business Rates Relief - 21.7%

ACE support for NPOs/CPPs - 4.4%

ACE Emergency Response Fund - 8.7%

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme - 4.3%

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant (England only) - 3%

Bounce Back Loan Scheme - 0%

Small Business Grant Scheme (England only) - 0%

For those who are in a position where financial help is needed but clubs haven't applied, we found:

- 75% felt that loans felt like too much of a risk for the venue to take on with an uncertain future.
- 12.5% had found eligibility criteria to be unclear.
- 12.5% were a local authority run and owned venue and couldn't access this support.

# 4. Small Businesses

## Festivals

### Cancellations

65.6% of festivals have been cancelled completely for 2020, and 18.8% of festivals were forced to cancel part of a festival. Even though lockdown only began in March, only 15.6% of festivals have not had to so far cancel a festival due to the pandemic.

Only one festival organiser was confident enough to say that they definitely won't need to cancel future editions of their festival. The majority were either sure that they'd need to (28.1%) or weren't sure (68.8%).

### Public Funding

84.4% of all comedy festivals or festival venues receive no public funding of any kind. For no festival does this public funding cover more than 10% of the festival's income.

### Coronavirus Financial Support

Only 18.8% of festivals or festival venues have received any form of Coronavirus Financial Support (including Business Rates Relief, CBILS, Bounce Back Loans, Small Business Grant Schemes etc.)

### Redundancies & Contract Cancellations

15.4% of festivals anticipate needing to start redundancies in July, with a further 38.8% starting redundancies in July.

65.5% of festivals have already cancelled either 90% or all of their freelance contracts for the year.

**"THE ECONOMIC  
IMPACT OF OUR  
FESTIVAL ON THE LOCAL  
ECONOMY IS  
APPROXIMATELY £300  
MILLION"**

**"OUR ECONOMIC  
IMPACT SPECIFICALLY TO  
THE WELSH ECONOMY IS  
JUST OVER A MILLION  
ANNUALLY."**

**"IT IS  
LIKELY THAT THE  
2021 FESTIVAL WILL NOT  
BE ABLE TO HAPPEN AS IT IS  
TOO RISKY WHEN IT IS TOO  
UNPREDICTABLE  
WHETHER IT WILL BE  
POSSIBLE"**

# Agents & Managers

Between them, those surveyed represented over 525 comics, and estimated that the combined lost income of all of their clients has been £11.7million (and that was only from the 67.5% of agents that would give an estimate!)

Over the last twelve months before the pandemic, 78.4% of agents reported that over half of all of their clients' income came from live comedy.

**"LIVE IS A  
BRILLIANT WAY FOR  
ARTISTS TO TEST OUT / WRITE  
MATERIAL FOR MAINSTREAM  
MEDIA PLATFORMS. WITHOUT THE  
ABILITY TO WIP IDEAS AND SHOWS,  
ARTISTS WON'T BE ABLE TO  
FULFIL TV, RADIO, AND ONLINE  
COMMISSIONS"**

**"SMALL BUSINESSES  
DON'T HAVE THE ADVANTAGES  
THAT LARGER BUSINESSES HAVE IN  
GETTING THROUGH THIS CRISIS.IT  
DEFINITELY FEELS THAT THE WIDER  
ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY IS  
AN AFTERTHOUGHT"**

# Production Companies

70% of production companies had needed to cancel over 60 events each.

Whilst the most common answer to 'How much income has your production company lost so far because of this pandemic?' was 'less than £9,999', two production companies surveyed said they had each lost over £650,000 in income.

76.2% of companies had had to cut short or contract contracts with freelance staff.

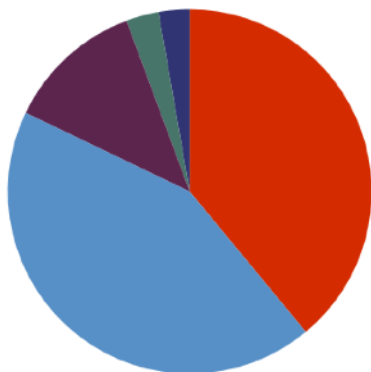
Those running production companies were considerably more likely than average to have considered leaving live comedy and to have suffered mental health issues due to career & job uncertainty.

# 5. Where Do We Go From Here?

All respondents were asked how important each of the below issues were to them:

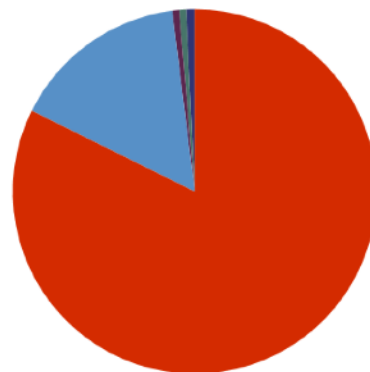
**"The industry losing many individuals who won't return to comedy after this crisis"**

- Extremely Important (39%)
- Important (43.1%)
- Neither important or unimportant (12.2%)
- Unimportant (2.9%)
- Not important at all (2.8%)



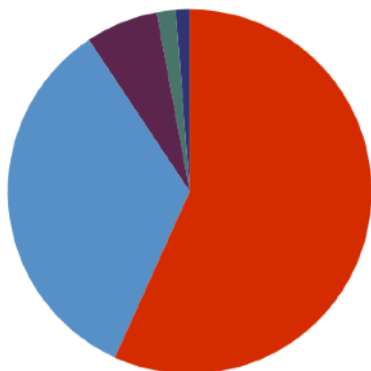
**"The industry losing many venues that won't reopen after this crisis"**

- Extremely Important (82.3%)
- Important (15.7%)
- Neither important or unimportant (0.6%)
- Unimportant (0.6%)
- Not important at all (0.8%)



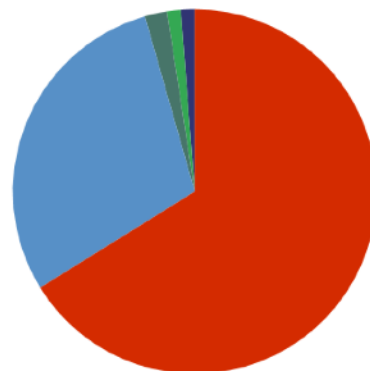
**"The industry losing comedy festivals that won't be able to relaunch after this crisis"**

- Extremely Important (56.8%)
- Important (33.9%)
- Neither important or unimportant (6.4%)
- Unimportant (1.7%)
- Not important at all (1.2%)



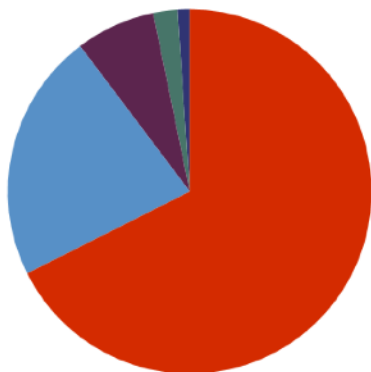
**"The industry losing small businesses that won't be able to operate after this crisis"**

- Extremely Important (66.2%)
- Important (29.4%)
- Neither important or unimportant (2%)
- Unimportant (1.2%)
- Not important at all (1.2%)



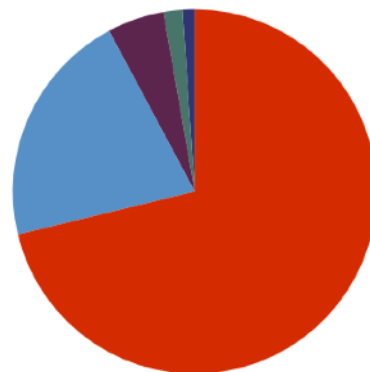
**"Coronavirus further entrenching inequalities across the industry"**

- Extremely Important (67.6%)
- Important (22.1%)
- Neither important or unimportant (7%)
- Unimportant (2.1%)
- Not important at all (1.1%)



**"The industry turning to big names (comics & venues/promoters) as a way of reducing 'risks'"**

- Extremely Important (67.6%)
- Important (22.1%)
- Neither important or unimportant (7%)
- Unimportant (2.1%)
- Not important at all (1.1%)





## RECURRING CONCERNS:

- How will the pandemic affect access into the industry, particularly across class, race, and geography (the industry can't reopen and just be based in London!). Less money = less money for accessibility.
- Will clubs & venues survive, and how can they reopen? Can we have lower capacities without pay for acts & other workers being reduced? What will the atmosphere be like in these shows?
- Will new acts & others in the industry be able to break into the industry?
- Will audiences and the industry just return to the biggest acts and the biggest venues?
- The uncertainty and manifold difficulties inherent in every part of this crisis affecting everyone's mental health.
- How will acts continue to develop their work whilst not being able to perform? Do we have to transition to online, even though it doesn't suit many artists' acts and isn't bringing in real income?
- How can we remind the public (and the government) of the vital role that comedy plays in our cultural landscape, all our lockdown entertainment, and in the nation's mental health?

## What are your biggest personal concerns for your career in the face of the pandemic?

"Finding a new career that I love as much"

"There will be fewer opportunities for gigs for early career comics if venues are obliged to cap the number of shows/audience sizes."

"That my growth, and my colleagues' growth, as a performing artist in live comedy will be scuppered and drawn to a complete halt because live comedy will never recover.

I fear that the lack of regulation in the comedy world will continue, and bad habits will remain. I fear that as and when the industry IS allowed to come back, it will be harder for comedians to make progress because old systems will remain."

"I will probably stop being a pro comedian & have to be a comedian as a hobby again."

"It feels like the comedy industry has stopped just as I was getting somewhere"

"I'm a live captioner making comedy accessible to deaf and hearing-impaired patrons. It's been a struggle getting promoters and comedians to spare any money for access provision, and I think it will be even harder in the future."

"Unless a vaccine becomes available I think it will be unlikely that I will see a return to pre-covid comedy industry in my lifetime"

"Will there be an industry to come back to? Will people remember who I am? Do I really want to keep driving all those miles? Will promoters book me again/replace the gigs that got cancelled? Will I have to rebuild my reputation and have I got the energy to do that? Will comedy go online and do I want to get involved in that?"

"I fear that all the progress I had made in comedy to date is now reset. I am almost back to square one. I think I'm going to be crippled by my company tax bill as the loss of live work has meant I may have to start living off money set aside for tax."

"I have put my entire life into the development of our company, and am personally liable for a large growth loan which is now dwindling away. If the company folds I will be left with no company, career, or savings."

"The fact that I will now be based up north permanently as I can not afford the risk of moving back to London where rents are crippling. Financial security has become a priority and thus I cannot move back to London. I fear this choice will mean my career stalls as everything is still feeling quite London centric."

"That it won't be financially viable to pursue the career I've spent years trying to establish and I'll have to rethink my life plans"

"It's impossible to plan at the moment. There's nothing solid to stand on so it feels like I have to make more solid foundations for myself to stand on by making difficult but necessary decisions in order to not drown in uncertainty."

"The unknowable amount of time it will take to start up again and the delay that follows that i.e. once gigs start up again there will still be a delay of several months-a year to get dates booked in with enough regularity to create a viable income."

"I worry mainly about the younger generation and how, with so many venues shutting as well as this huge impasse, they will be able to progress in the career. I see myself as very lucky."

"My concern is that the fragility of the industry has been highlighted and I do not foresee a world in which I will be able to make a living from comedy and I have concerns about how it will look when we return. Will some promoters be abusing the situation? Will there be no space for non pros to become pros? Will there be anywhere to continue working on a comedy CV at all?"

"That comedy clubs and promoters will fold, and even once indoor events are permitted again, there simply won't be a comedy industry left to work in"

# What are your biggest concerns for the wider comedy industry in the face of the pandemic?

"Comedy is often overlooked when it comes to the arts."

"Newer comedians have been hit hard and I feel it may slow down their progression or cause them to drop out. What bothers me the most is we are a multi million pound industry and provide so much to TV and radio, we are way more relevant and engaging an artform than theatre but the government doesn't seem to want to acknowledge us as valid."

"Afraid that many artists/venues/companies won't be able to survive in this industry without tangible financial assistance. I don't want to think about being in a situation where the incredible wealth of comedy talent we are lucky enough to have in this country doesn't have the chance to shine because of financial hardship."

"Larger venues and known comics will be fine but the industry as it is will suffer indefinitely. I don't believe small clubs will survive beyond a short period of re-opening, they scraped by before the pandemic - who will help them now? Without small clubs we cannot support smaller comics, without comics putting on their shows we cannot support operations crew, venue staff, designers, promoters..."

"That when live comedy DOES come back in some form it will only be the well-off that can afford to go. I'm worried that comedy will no longer be a cheaper form of entertainment, and therefore audiences numbers will drop and audiences will only be middle-class."

"That we will lose something so sacred, something that actually helps people enjoy themselves, and feel like they fit in."

"A soft exit out of lockdown will not work. The government closed the industry in a second by the Prime Minister "suggesting" that it wasn't safe to go to theatres, clubs etc. We need definitives. And the public need to be told definitely when, and only when, it is safe to go. Support must continue until and beyond this point. It will take a minimum of 3 months from the moment we're "allowed" to open again to actually being open. Otherwise, with the support being rolled back as it currently is, the industry will be dead before it even tries to stand up and walk again."

"That the queer friendly venue we use will close. That our night which actively supports female, working class, poc and lgbtq+ comics and which was just breaking even (after a year of work) will now fail and we will be unable to support comedians who are otherwise marginalised in the mainstream scene."

"For comedy, the live circuit, from Saturday night comedy clubs to little improv theatres and small rooms above pubs where we all test new material, is crucial to everything else that follows in the industry, from big tours to TV and films. If clubs and theatres go under due to lack of support from the government, the lifeblood of the industry will be cut off."

"That not only will people have to leave the industry - but of the ones that do, the most disenfranchised will go first. Not the wealthy, not the well represented demographics. And as an industry, we have been working so hard in order to prevent that. It will be a travesty."

"A lack of understanding and public support that our sector has had to operate on so little resource for so long. Many of us have no reserves. The myth of doing it because you love it. We need theatres and comedy clubs in every town. If venues shut and are turned into houses or shops then they are gone forever"

"Without the live circuit the tried, tested - and trusted - pipeline of comic talent reaching audiences is in serious danger. Comics need exposure, a chance to hone their voice, they need chances to be discovered, and broadcasters like myself need audiences to inform us of where new talent (especially) is cutting through. Comic voices offer so much, they can feel like friends and allies as well as vital agitators and provocateurs. We are living in unprecedented times, laughter is medicine, comedy is art and it makers, producers and venues must be protected."

"The effect is so existential that it's hard to properly describe, the idea that comedy may come back but less than before or that the industry won't recover fully in some way is worrying."

"Comedians like me are usually somewhere on the Autistic spectrum. We gravitate to comedy because it's our way of communicating. Comedy often expresses otherwise unexpressed pain. I think there are big mental health problems in here for a lot of folk."

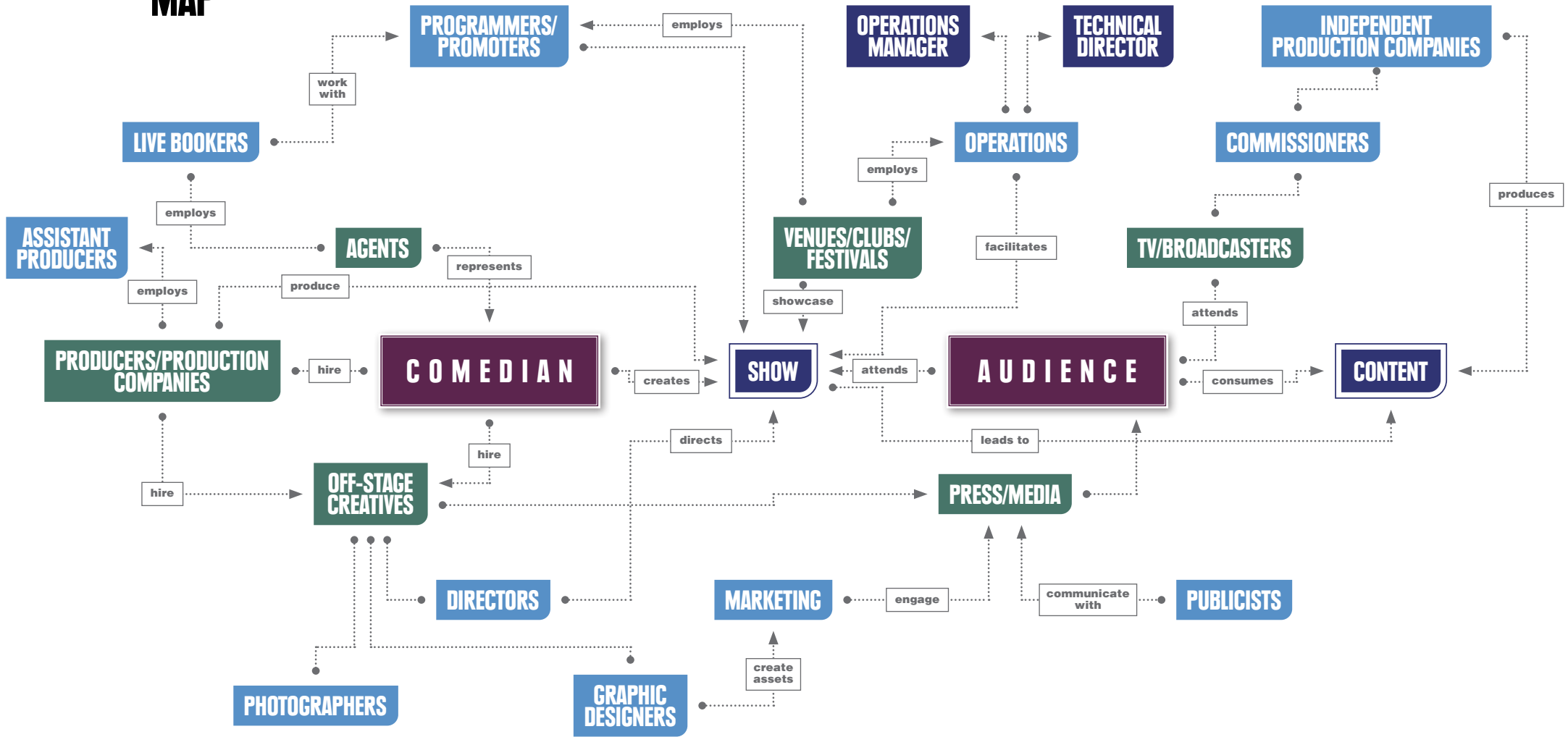
"I worry for people who aren't able to continue work within comedy online - photographers, designers, people who's work needs to be in a physical space, venues. I worry that things won't ever go back to being safe, and that particularly northern alternative comedy that had started establishing a really lovely scene within the industry will suffer as a result."

"We know that women have been disproportionately impacted by the lockdown, and comedy is already a difficult place for women. I just hope it doesn't get harder."

"I'm afraid that this will set back comedy in the UK a few years and not let people who are new to the industry get opportunities."

"I don't want an industry that provides a valuable public service - increasing the morale of the nation - to be moribund. COMEDY ISN'T USELESS FRIPPERY. IT'S F\*CKING VITAL."

**LIVE COMEDY ASSOCIATION**  
**INDUSTRY MAP**



## COMEDIANS

The people who get on stage/television and entertain the audience! Comedians can be represented by an agent. For shows or tours they can work with a producer or they can be self-producing, taking on all aspects of producing a show themselves. This means they hold key relationships with festivals, venues, operations and promoters.

## AGENTS/MANAGERS

### AGENTS

An agent signs a client to find them work, progress their career and represent them in negotiations for a proportionate fee. It is their role to keep their client employed, and to seek out suitable opportunities, recognising that individual needs and wants will be different for each client.

### LIVE BOOKERS

Work with agents, producers and comics to book live gigs on behalf of clients. Sometimes housed within talent agencies, they secure anything from clubs gigs to national & international tours, London transfers and comedy festivals.

### PROGRAMMERS/PROMOTERS

Decide which acts will perform at a comedy night, festival or event and ensure that everyone who might be interested knows when and where it is taking place. Often a programmer or promoter will work on behalf of a venue or a performer, providing a vital link between them in the run up to a gig. It is also their role to drive diversity & representation in line ups.

## VENUES/CLUBS/FESTIVALS

### COMEDY CLUBS

The place where live comedy happens all year round! There are more than 600 comedy clubs across the UK ranging from rooms above pubs to bigger theatres. These clubs can operate as part of a festival or independently, and offer a range of programmes from casual open mic nights which might be for newer comics through to more established weekly events which might aim for a known headline act.

### FESTIVALS

A concentrated celebration of live comedy, often with many shows, venues, and incorporating different types of comedy performance. These festivals range from very established global festivals like the Edinburgh Fringe, through to Leicester Comedy Festival and newer, more intimate festivals like Machynlleth.

### ARTS AND TOURING VENUES

Venues that programme comedy alongside other live performances, including theatre, dance, and other events. They either programme comedy shows as a one off event or as part of a longer run, spanning several days and in some cases weeks. More regional venues are often integrated into a larger national tour of a show.

## TV/BROADCASTERS

### COMEDY COMMISSIONERS

A specialist team within each broadcaster who decide which production companies to award projects to. This will often depend on audience and channel priorities. Once an idea has been commissioned/green lit, the commissioner supports the production process, working closely with the producer to help get the best version of an idea to screen.

### OPERATIONS STAFF

Hired to facilitate the actual run of the show and the operation of the venue spaces in which the performance takes place. This includes front of house managers, technical managers, technical and production staff, ushers, box office, bar staff, and many more.

### OFF-STAGE CREATIVES

A huge range of talent who contribute to live comedy production behind the scenes. From stage managers and technicians who might oversee sound, lights, staging and technical aspects of shows through to set and costume designers, hair and make up artists, show bands and musicians or photographers and graphic designers.

### DIRECTORS

Work with comics to deliver the creative vision of the show. Their goal is to bring out the best performance from the comic, help ensure the jokes land and any story is told in the most compelling way. A director will usually oversee creative choices on set, costume and design, working alongside the comic and the rest of the creative team.

### BROADCASTERS

Broadcasters hold the budget for shows which production companies want to get to screen. A broadcaster will commission a certain number of comedy shows each year, awarding projects to a range of production companies depending on the strength of their ideas.

### TELEVISION PRODUCTION COMPANIES (*Indies*)

Develop and create comedy shows to be broadcast for television in the UK and beyond. Ideas are green lit by broadcasters (or other funders) and the production company makes the show, working hand in hand with the broadcaster.

## PRESS/MEDIA

### PUBLICISTS

Generate and manage publicity for live comedy. They liaise with journalists and producers to get clients interviews across television, radio, print and online media usually with the aim of maximising exposure for comics and their shows.

### MARKETING

Promotes and advertises the show to ensure it reaches its target audience through the strategic use of social media, online ads, and print. For tours of shows, coordinates with PR and publicists to publish reviews and star ratings of the show.

## PRODUCERS AND PRODUCTION COMPANIES

### PRODUCTION COMPANY

A production company helps comedians and performers to make their show idea come to life. Depending on the contract and working relationship, this can include continuous development support from the very beginning, as well as booking venues for the performance, promoting the show and handling all future performances of the show. A production company may employ a number of producers to look after various shows and projects.

### PRODUCERS

Facilitate the best version of a comic's show (usually Edinburgh Fringe/tour shows). Typically responsibilities include looking after budgets, overseeing creative development, managing the production process, and informing the marketing as well as promotional elements of the run.

**#SAVE LIVE  
COMEDY!**



**LIVE  
COMEDY  
ASSOCIATION**