



**Report into audiences for Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle in Ireland between June and September 2014**

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## 1. Background to the project

- 1.1 Very little specific recent research has been carried out into audiences in the Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle sector in Ireland.

The last published figures for attendances into people attending Circus, Street Arts or Spectacle can be found in the Arts Council Ireland's 2006 survey The Public and the Arts. <sup>1</sup>

The CASCAS report – Experiment Diversity with the Street Arts and Circus: An Overview of Circus and Street Arts in the UK and ROI provides an in-depth overview of the sector, with some reference to audiences for specific festivals (St Patrick's Festival). <sup>2</sup>

- 1.2 In April 2014 ISACS received a grant from Arts Council Ireland to support research into audiences for Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle in Ireland. Throughout 2015 – 2016 ISACS intend to enhance this research through gathering additional qualitative data on audiences.
- 1.3 The grant has enabled ISACS to work with Arts Audiences Ireland and the Arts Agency UK, who provided support and guidance. Debbie Wright in association with the University of Limerick, with input from Lucy Medlycott created a Street Arts Handbook, Audience Aware. <sup>3</sup> Audience Aware is a guide for collecting, understanding and using audience information. This guide was given as a downloadable tool for any artist/company collecting data on their audiences and was compiled by ISACS also employed Kath Gorman in July 2014 to support the research process, analyse the survey findings and compile this report for the first stage of the audience research.
- 1.4 The purpose of the research was defined as follows:
- a. To produce clear data on audience attendances and related events between June and September 2014 in Ireland.
  - b. To demonstrate the impact of Circus, Street Arts and Spectacle as an artform in Ireland, particularly as the sector attracts such large audiences.
  - c. To be aware of, and learn from any findings

1. <http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/PublicandtheArts2006.pdf>

2. CASCAS – 2011 report: An overview of circus and street arts in the UK and ROI.

3. <http://www.isacs.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/ISACS-street-arts-handbook.pdf>

## **2. Purpose of the research**

- 2.1 This year's initial research focused on gathering data for a sample period in relation to audience estimations (including participatory events), type of events, locations, promoters, method of collecting, attendance figures, contributing factors for audiences attending such events and any other useful feedback in relation to the events monitored.
- 2.2 In 2015 ISACS plan to enter into the next phase of research around audiences for Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle. This is an essential tool for the sector to evidence the impact of the art forms on the wider community and society at large. ISACS will be further refining the initial survey and also seeking more qualitative data from audiences, festivals and local councils on the direct impact of these art forms.
- 2.3 ISACS have also formed a partnership with ISAN UK and the Audience Agency in relation to this research. This will ensure that the data is comparable with what is being produced across Europe. ISAN has invited ISACS and Arts Audiences to participate in a focus group in Spring 2015 that will help ISACS to understand some of the synergies and challenges in mapping this sector.
- 2.4 ISACS are also planning to host training for artists, organisations and festivals participating in this research to further enhance their skills and capacity to gather such data.

## **3. Research Methodology**

This involved the following process:

- 3.1 Initial meetings between Lucy Medlycott (ISACS), Una Carmody (Arts Audiences), Verena Cornwall (Arts Adviser, Arts Council Ireland) and Debbie Wright (Audiences Aware).
- 3.2 Presentation by Una Carmody, Arts Audiences at the ISACS AGM in April 2014 to brief ISACS members regarding the concept and research plans, including a full brainstorm from the members on how to gather the data.
- 3.3 Drafting of an online survey for artists/companies/promoters to complete
- 3.4 Feedback from the board of ISACS regarding the online survey
- 3.5 Initial contact made to artists, companies, promoters including all county/city arts officers regarding smaller festivals and events
- 3.6 Circulation of the survey
- 3.7 Follow up emails and telephone reminders

- 3.8 Analysis of final data
- 3.9 Draft report of key findings
- 3.10 Final report (due by the end of October 2014)

#### **4. ISACS audience research 2014**

- 4.1 ISACS contacted a total of 48 organisations, comprising of artists/companies in the Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle sector, small and larger festivals in both the arts and other sectors. All county and city arts officers were contacted to get their input into events and festivals to contact. Tourism Ireland in relation to recent audience research carried out by Tourism Ireland at City Spectacular in Cork. No details on the audience research were provided by Tourism Ireland.
- 4.2 A total of 20 organisations responded to the survey, giving a success rate of 42% taking part. The majority of the respondents were Circus and Street Artists/companies. There was very little response from the major arts festivals, with the exception of the European Juggling Convention, Junction Festival in Clonmel, Waterford Spraoi and the City of Culture team in Limerick. However, external surveys usually attract between 10 – 20% participation rate so this survey drew a higher than average response.
- 4.3 There were a total of 15 questions (including basic data), which many organisations completed for each show/tour date. Feedback from the artists/companies was that this was labour intensive due to the short turnaround of the survey deadline. Next year, to make the process less onerous, ISACS plan to have the survey open all year to encourage artists, companies and promoters to load up their data shortly after each event takes place.

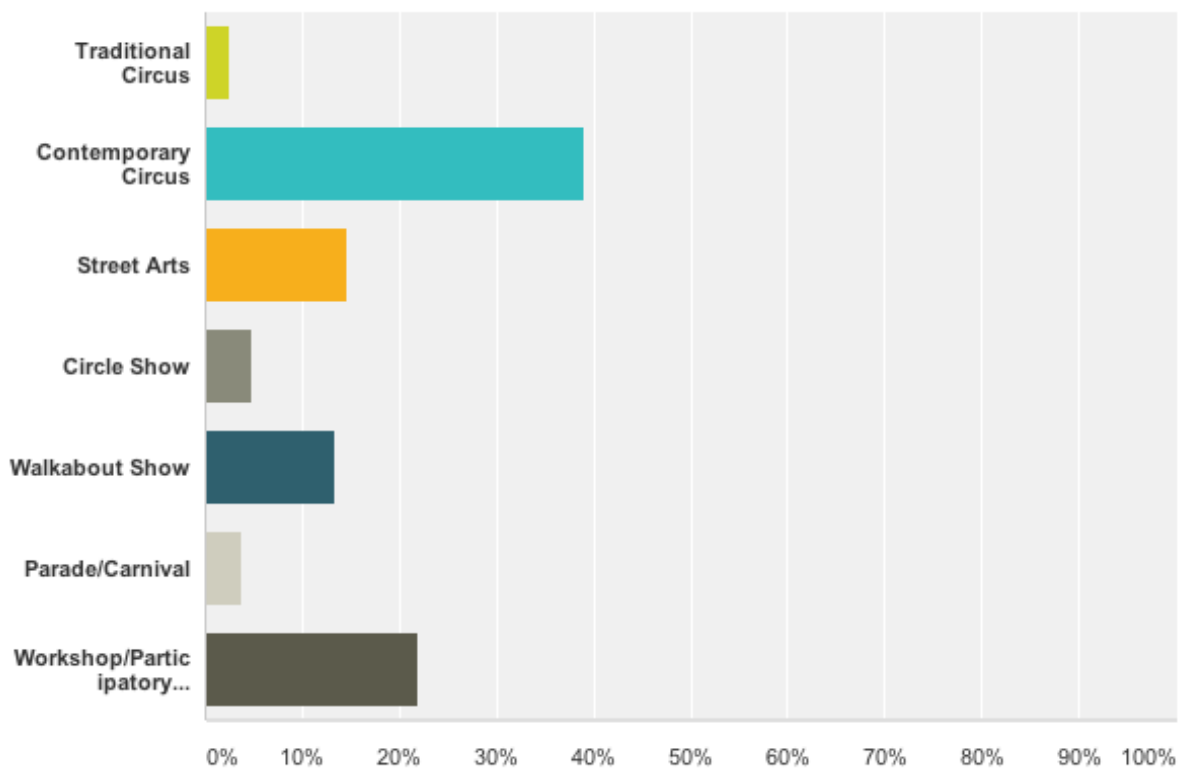
#### **5. Key findings**

- 5.1 The division between indoor and outdoor work shows that more outdoors work is programmed than indoors work, with indoors work accounting for 34% of responses and outdoors work accounting for 60% of responses. 6% of responses were a mixture of outdoor and indoors events that were uncategorised.
- 5.2 Indoor venues ranged from black box studios and theatres to big top tents and hotels. Some artists, such as Fidget Feet have built up extensive tours and relationships with theatres and arts centres in Ireland.
- 5.3 The artists, companies and promoters surveyed recorded audiences/participants of 45,510 between June and September

2014 for work presented in indoor venues. This was an average of 1,297 people per event.

5.4 The artists/companies who took part in the survey identified themselves as follows:

Contemporary circus	39.02%
Workshop/participatory activity	21.95%
Street Arts	14.63%
Walkabout Show	13.41%
Circle Show	4.94%
Parade/carnival	3.66%
Traditional circus	2.44%

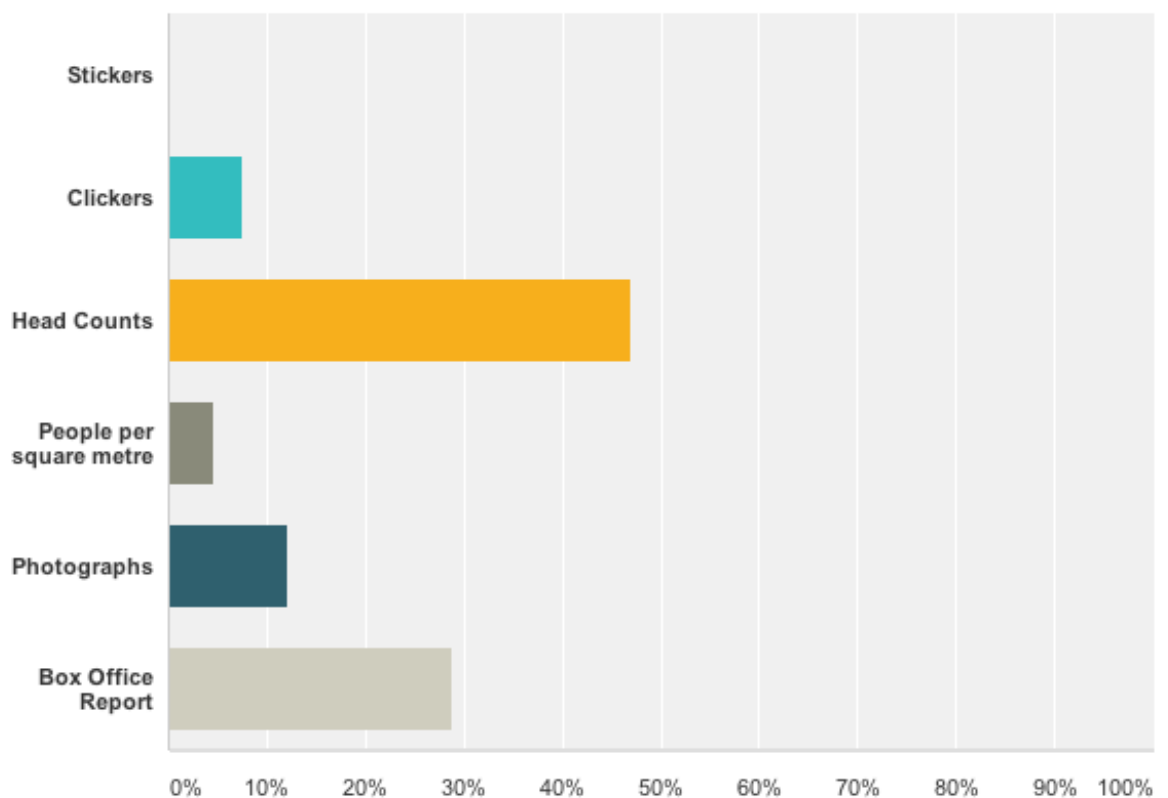


5.5 Outdoors locations ranged from specialist outdoors and street festivals such as Waterford Spraoi to mainstream music and arts festivals such as Electric Picnic and arts festivals such as Westside Arts Festival and Drogheda Arts Festival.

5.6 The artists, companies and promoters surveyed recorded audiences/participants of 89,316 between June and September 2014 for work presented at outdoors sites in Ireland. This was an average of 3,190 people per event.

5.7 In addition to this were uncategorised data, which was a combination of indoor and outdoor events totaling audiences of 17,246.

- 5.8 The figure of 89,316 excludes Royal de Luxe’s presentation of ‘The Grandmother fallen from a galaxy into a field in Munster’ for the Limerick National City of Culture. This drew additional estimated audiences of 230,000 over 3 days. The City of Culture team collected their audience data by estimating the number of people per square metre and through photographs.
- 5.9 For monitoring audience attendances/footfall at outdoor performances head counts of audiences was by far the most popular method (47%), followed by photographs of audiences (12%), clickers (8%) and counting people per square metre (5%).



- 5.10 The participatory work surveyed by Galway Community Circus spans a broad cross section from summer camps for children from age 1 years upwards to master-classes and weekly class attendees.
- 5.11 When asked what the artist/company/promoter felt helped contribute to their audience numbers, a significant majority (50%) felt that having good promotion was important. This was followed by 22% who felt good weather had contributed to the audience turnout on the day.
- 5.12 Neither traffic or noise pollution were cited as factors likely to have a negative impact on audience attendances, although having the right space/location was cited by 9% as having an effect on audiences. Poor weather was felt by 4% to be a factor in reduced audiences.

## 6. Interpretation of findings

- 6.1 The circus, street arts and spectacle sector reaches diverse, geographically spread, rural and metropolitan areas in Ireland. In the period between June and September 2014 the survey findings showed that the following towns and cities presented work in this sector:

Cities: Limerick, Galway, Dublin, Waterford, Cork, Kilkenny

Towns: Tralee, Claregalway, Donabate, Drogheda, Tramore, Bunratty, Foynes, Killorglin, Killaloe, Millstreet, Dingle, Belmont, Castleblaney, Sligo, Carlow, Stradbally, Cabinteely, Clonmel, Ballina, Letterkenny, Castlebar, Ennis, Belmullet.





- 6.2 In the Arts Attendance in Ireland 2012 – 2013 report published by Arts Audiences, all data ROI TGI © Kantar Media UK Ltd it is reported that 2 million people attend the arts, with 1.5 million people attending at least once a year. For the period between June and September 2014 there were reported attendances for the Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle of 354,572, including attendances for Royal de Luxe in Limerick. This is a significant number of people over a short period of time.
- 6.3 The presentation of street theatre company, Royal de Luxe, was the largest public event that Limerick has known and the single biggest event in the National City of Culture programme. It had huge logistical, public safety, inter-agency planning processes and presentation challenges that have also created a bank of knowledge for the event team in Limerick.

*'This was an enormous challenge for the city and all the agencies involved but everybody has responded to the highest degree. To see the city as a pedestrianised city is perhaps something we will all learn from.'*

**said Conn Murray, Limerick City and County Manager, quoted in The Independent**

- 6.4 Anecdotal evidence from artists demonstrates how work from this sector can appeal to a broad cross section of the community, offering an accessible and inclusive artform:

*'Amazing show, 80% migrant population, mostly African and middle eastern muslim folk. A freshly arrived Syrian refugee women and her 12 year old daughter told us how much they loved our show. Best show of the summer.'*

**Tumble Circus at Halmstad Street Arts Festival**

- 6.5 Similarly, feedback from artists shows how participatory work can be a key audience development tool for encouraging more people to attend circus and street arts:

*'Year by year we are trying to promote all the activities related with circus in Co.Clare by providing Circus Skills Workshops and free Circus Events in the Streets of Ennis. We feel that every year is more interest in the community for it, and the benefits of having a positive experience for all the community.'*

**Fidget Feet at Ennis Street Festival**

- 6.6 The visibility of outdoors circus/street theatre shows are also a useful audience development tool for encouraging audiences to attend indoor circus based shows:

*'A lot of the audience on the 14th was brought in by the "Cabinteely Carnival" in the park on the same day.'*

**Dublin Community Circus, performing 'Once There Was a Boy'**

- 6.7 The small evidence gathered so far points to a potential knowledge gap and training need/awareness-raising for some promoters in relation to how best to present work in this sector. One company have said that *'so many small festivals in Ireland put little time or value into preparing conditions for street theatre.'*

*'Terrible pitch, organiser were really nice, but (did not know) how to present the work'*

*'Terrible pitch...so we got demoted to a rubbish location'*

**Tumble Circus**

- 6.8 Although the same artists Tumble Circus report positive experiences at other Irish festivals:

*'Fringe show, went well.'*

**Tumble Circus at Dublin Fringe Festival**

*'Great local festival, well run, well attended.'*

**Tumble Circus at Sligo Arts Festival**

- 6.9 Other specialist festivals and events are also an important source of employment and exposure to the artform, for example Galway Community Circus reported attendances of approximately 10,000 people at the Special Olympics Opening Ceremony in Limerick and Clown Noir reported footfall of approximately 17,000 people at the Airshow in Foynes, Limerick.
- 6.10 Several artists included their attendance figures at international festivals including: P'tit Cirq' en Palc Festival (Belgium); flasterspektakel (Austria); Helsingor (DK) International Street Theatre Festival (Denmark); Kristianstad (Sweden); and London International Youth Circus Festival (UK). Many Irish artists rely on international touring to make a living, particularly in mainland Europe. The overall reported experiences by Tumble Circus were generally more satisfactory at the European festivals.

*'Massive festival. Huge audiences, great responses. There were lots of European producers there, and we got lots of work for the next season out of it.'*

**Spoffin Street Theatre Festival, Amasfort, Netherlands**

*'Well looked after and well organised.'*

**Helsingor (DK) International Street Theatre Festival**

**Tumble Circus**

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 It is recommended that ISACS carry out further training with the sector and for festival and events promoters, programmers, production staff and volunteers on how to gather data on audiences effectively and efficiently.
- 7.2 It is recommended that further partnerships are developed between Arts Audiences Ireland, Arts Agency UK and Circostrada with a view to creating comparable data and statistics for the sector and its audiences across Europe.
- 7.3 It is also recommended that ISACS explore the possibility of running a conference in relation to large scale and smaller scale programming of street theatre. Training for promoters/programmers will in turn enhance the audience experience. This could be in conjunction with the Limerick National City of Culture team, eg, Iseult Byrne, Project Director for Royal de Luxe, Limerick. This follows a conference model run by Artichoke, producers of Royal de Luxe in the UK, titled Larger Than Life – the pleasures and perils of large-scale producing. <sup>4</sup>

4. [http://www.artichoke.uk.com/images/uploads/files/conference\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.artichoke.uk.com/images/uploads/files/conference_booklet.pdf)

## **8. Appendices**

### **8.1 List of artists/organisations/festivals who participated in the survey**

With thanks to:

Áras inis gluaire/erris arts centre  
Brian O'Connell/Circus Fergus  
Bui Bolg Productions  
Carlow Arts Festival  
Castleblayney Community Enterprise/Muckno Mania Festival  
Circus Events Ltd/European Juggling Association  
Circus Gerbola  
Clown Noir  
Dublin Community Circus  
Ennis Street Festival  
Ether Productions  
Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre  
Fanzini Brothers  
Galway Community Circus  
Junction Festival  
Limerick National City of Culture  
National Museum of Country Life  
Orchard Theatre Company  
Tumble Circus  
Waterford Spraoi

## 8.2 ISACS Audience Survey questions 2014

1. Show/Title:
2. Artist/Company/Organisation:
3. Country of residence:
  
4. Category: Traditional circus  
Contemporary circus  
Workshop/participatory activity  
Street Arts  
Walkabout Show  
Circle Show  
Parade/carnival
  
5. Event/Festival/Host:
6. Location/Venue:
7. Town/City:
8. County:
9. Ticketed/Unticketed:
10. Dates from/until:
11. Times
12. Total Audience:
  
13. Method of Collecting Data: Stickers  
Clickers  
Headcounts  
People per square metre  
Photographs  
Box office report  
Other
  
14. Contributing factors to attendance: Good weather  
Poor weather  
Traffic  
Noise pollution  
Right location/space
  
15. Any other comments, information or details to add?

### **8.3 Contact details**

For ISACS:

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