

# Study reveals psychological challenges facing music and performing arts

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Psychological distress, suicidal thoughts and the onset of a number of mental health conditions are some of the findings from the first Mental

Health and Well-being in Music and Live Performing Arts survey conducted by the Centre for Social Impact Swinburne, in conjunction with music charity Support Act.

More than 1,300 professionals in the music and live performing arts industries participated in the [national survey](#) this past March and April, including musicians, songwriters, live production crew, managers, producers and live performing artists.

While 66% of those surveyed reported high-to-very high levels of [psychological distress](#) (four times greater than the [general population](#)), 69% of the participants did say they had sought help to support their mental health and well-being.

Other findings include:

- 35% reported a current mental health condition, which is 1.7 times the proportion estimated in the general Australian population.
- 29% reported having an anxiety condition, and 27% reported having depression, both more than twice that of the general population.
- More than a third reported incomes from their work in music/live performing arts as less than \$30,000 per annum, which is below the poverty line.
- Only 15% said they always felt safe at work, with 35% saying they were exposed to unsafe working conditions in the past year.

## **Pandemic impacts**

The COVID-19 pandemic featured prominently in the results, with more than 47% of respondents losing their jobs as a result. Almost two-thirds said the pandemic had impacted their mental health, 61 per cent said it

had affected their feeling of being part of an industry community, and 56% noted increased feelings of loneliness or social isolation.

Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Impact Swinburne, Dr. Aurora Elmes, says the research indicates that people in music and live performing arts continue to face job insecurity and work environments that can be unsafe for physical or mental health.

"On top of existing issues with working conditions, it reveals the ongoing effects of added stressors arising from the COVID-19 pandemic on people's work, income, social connectedness, and mental health," said Dr. Elmes.

"Participants in this research identified a need for further financial and [mental health](#) support for people working in music and live performing arts, as well as a need for broader change within the sector and government support to enable this.

"People want to see action towards improved working conditions and [work environments](#) that are safe for everyone's mental and [physical health](#)—including addressing identified issues such as ageism, racism, bullying and sexual harassment."

**More information:** Survey summary results: [supportact.org.au/mental-health-survey/](https://supportact.org.au/mental-health-survey/)

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

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