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CMA Survey Summary

COVID-19 Recovery in the
Chamber Music Field
May/June 2022

View Summaries of CMA's Previous COVID-19 Impact Surveys

[April 2020](#) | [June 2020](#) | [June 2021](#)

This report has been published in partnership with the Wallace Foundation's ["Building Audiences for the Arts"](#) initiative.



Introduction

We are pleased to present the results of Chamber Music America's fourth survey regarding the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the small ensemble music field. Previous survey results were published in April 2020, June 2020, and June 2021.

This survey was distributed to 8,500 email addresses, advertised on social media platforms, and received 377 responses.

In spite of steep financial losses, frequent event cancellations, and sometimes radical alterations of professional activities, the ensemble music field remains resilient and optimistic.

We are grateful to the Wallace Foundation for helping to make CMA's data collection possible, and we thank all those who participated in the surveys.



Kevin Kwan Loucks
Chief Executive Officer

Key Findings

- Nearly 58% of business respondents (artist managers, presenters, music training programs, festivals, and other music businesses) lost between 10 and 50% of their earnings due to the pandemic. 23% lost more than 50% of their earnings.
- Most businesses (77%) were only able to recoup less than 30% of the income lost from the pandemic
- Nearly 60% of musicians (ensemble members/bandleaders, independent musicians, composers) and educators lost more than 30% of their income.
- The vast majority of musicians and educators (82%) were only able to recoup less than 30% of their income lost during the pandemic.

Despite this, there is a fair amount of optimism in the field. When asked how they felt about their music careers over the next 3 years, over 60% responded with Somewhat or Very Optimistic while 17% reported feeling somewhat or very pessimistic, with the rest choosing Neither optimistic nor pessimistic.

Survey Respondents Profession and Location

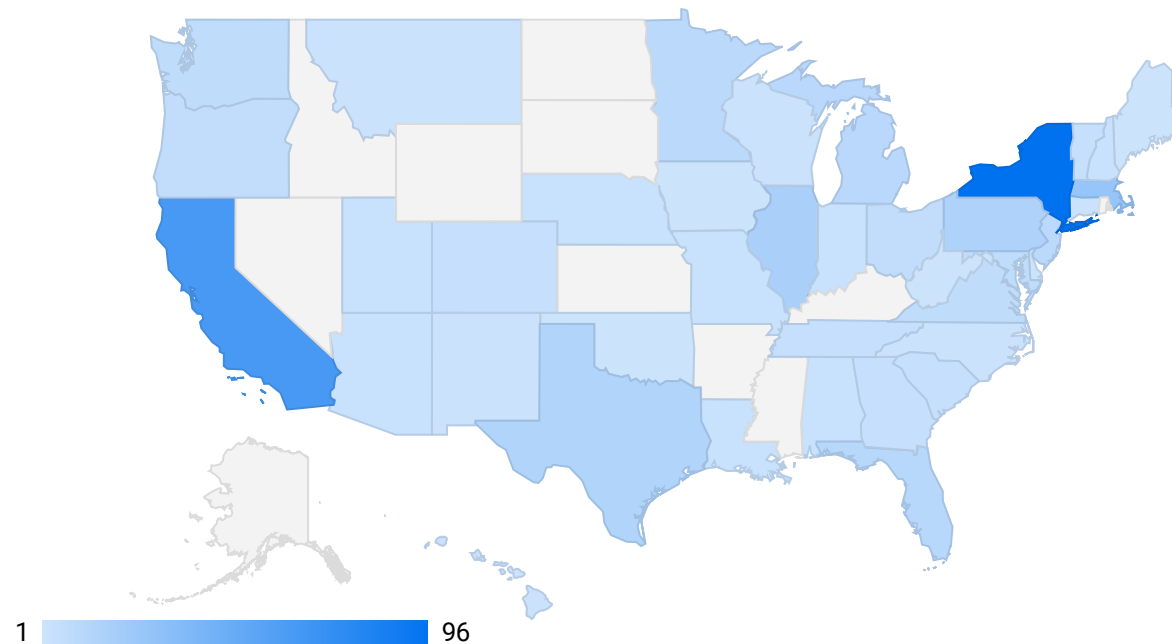
What do our respondents do?*

Profession	Record Count
Ensemble Member/Bandleader	137
Independent Musician	69
Presenter	67
Composer	34
Educator	19
Artist Manager	16
Other Music Business	14
Festival	12
Music School/Training Program	9

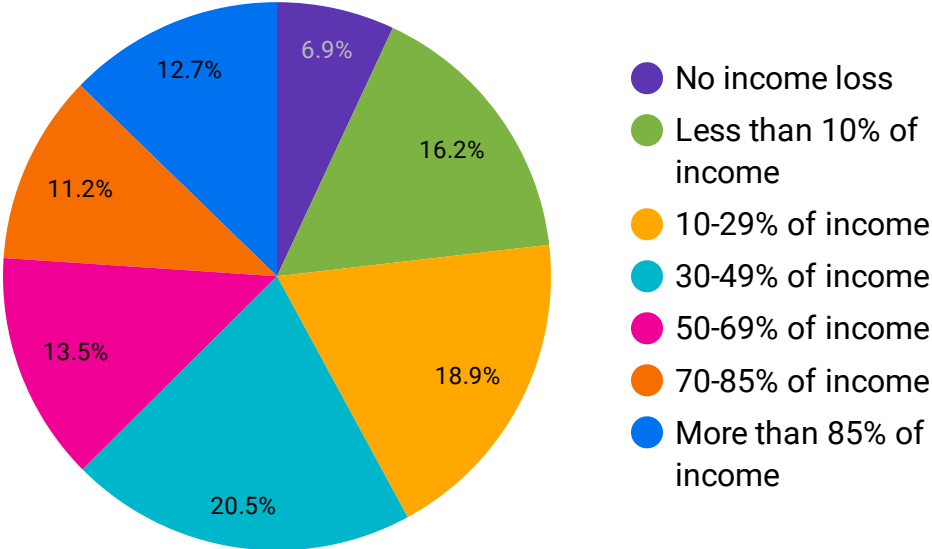
*Questions in the survey were altered, depending on which profession the participants selected from this list

Location

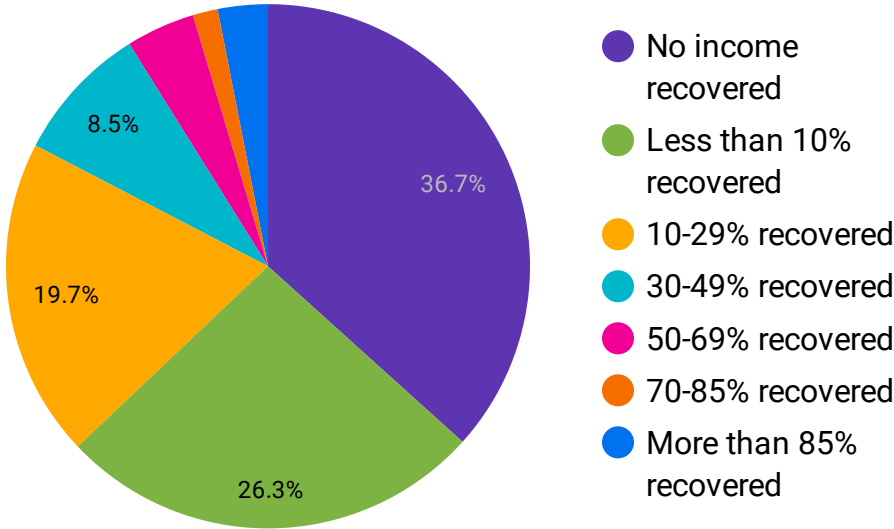
7 Responses were recorded from Outside of the United States, representing Canada (5), France (1), and Germany (1)



Estimated % Lost Wages



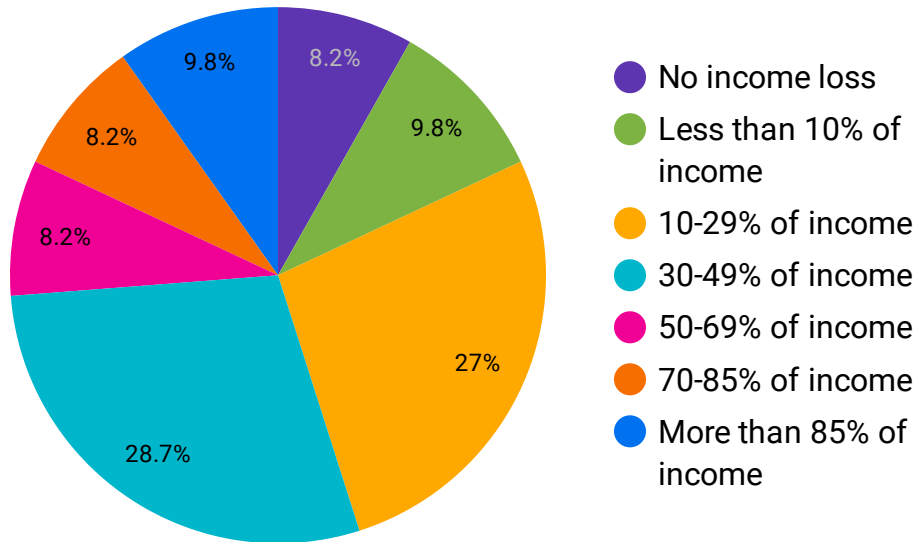
Estimated % Recovered of Lost Wages (via emergency and recovery funding sources)



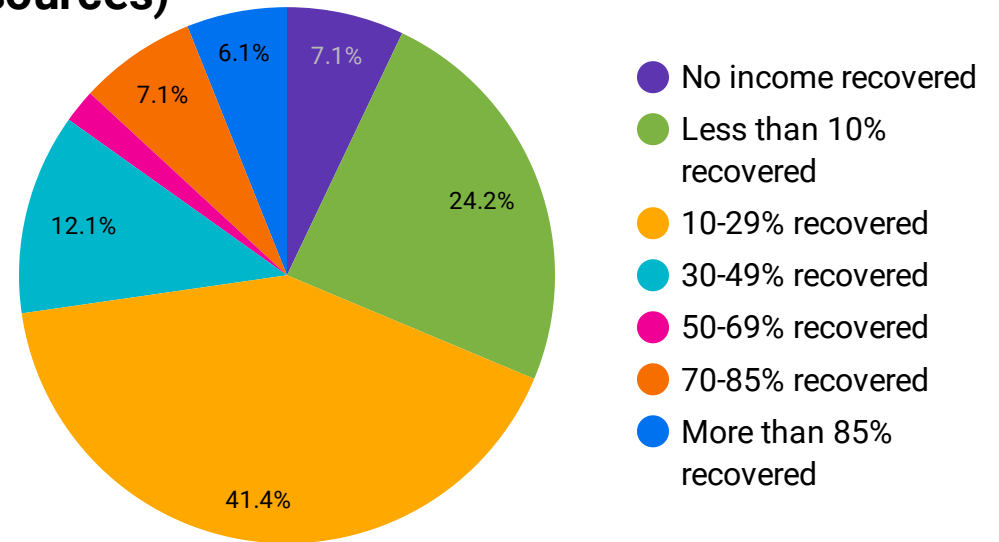
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The vast majority of musicians and educators (82%) were only able to recoup less than 30% of their income lost during the pandemic.

Estimated % Lost Income



Estimated % Recovered of Lost Income (via emergency and recovery funding sources)



Nearly 58% of business respondents (artist managers, presenters, music training programs, festivals, and other music businesses) lost between 10 and 50% of their earnings due to the pandemic. 23% lost more than 50% of their earnings.

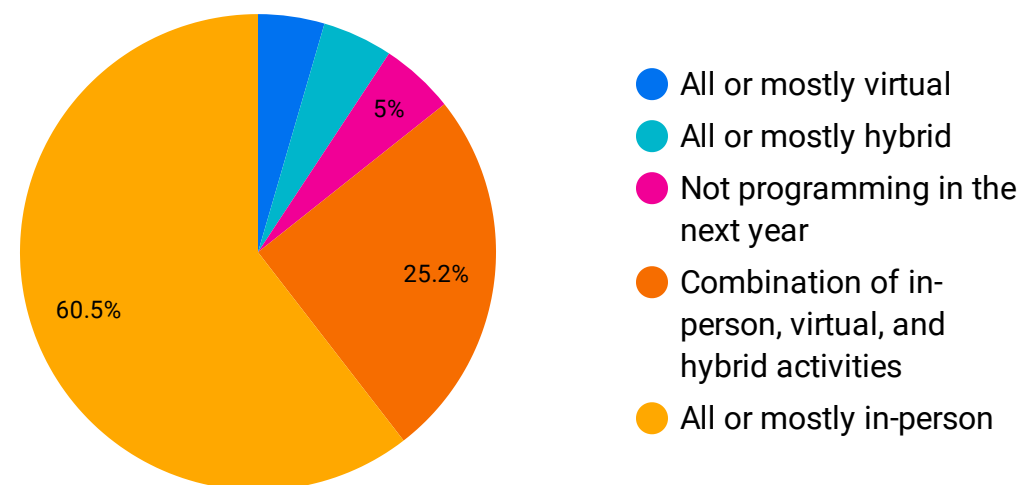
Most businesses (77%) were only able to recoup less than 30% of the income lost from the pandemic

In Person Performance Optimism Despite Challenges

of Event Cancellations Due to Covid Illness or Positive Test Results

Answer	Ensembles	Individuals	Organizations
0	30	36	50
1 to 5	80	63	47
6 to 10	17	16	10
11 to 20	7	2	4
More than 20	3	4	2

How Respondents are Scheduling their Activities



Event cancellations continue to impact schedules of all respondents, but despite this, most (60.5%) are returning to presenting the majority of their work in person

Most are optimistic, in spite of steep financial losses and cancellations

Question: How are you feeling about your music career in the next 3 years?

Answer	Ensembles	Individuals	Organizations
Very Optimistic	29	29	16
Somewhat Optimistic	57	49	52
Neither Optimistic or Pessimistic	27	20	34
Somewhat Pessimistic	17	14	12
Very Pessimistic	6	7	4

Recovery Activities in the Field Past Year

Ensembles and Individuals

Activity	Count ▾
Applied for grants or recovery funding from government, institutional, foundation, or private sources	147
Taken up new self-care/mental health practices	99
Taken classes/workshops/professional development training	93
Created new models or practices for my ensemble	73
Raised funds from individual donations	62
Partnered with an organization or entity in my own community	60
Found a new physical space for rehearsing, recording, or performing	57
Found non-music work to supplement my income	47
Coalition Building	29

Organizations

Activity	Count ▾
Booked new in-person concerts	92
Raised funds from individual donors	89
Applied for grants or recovery funding from government, institutional, foundation, or private sources	84
Created new procedures for my organization or business	66
Hired new personnel	44
Taken up new self-care/mental health practices	26
Reinstated personnel furloughed or laid off during the pandemic	12

Ensembles and Individuals

Activity	Count ▾
Performed/Presented an in-person or hybrid concert	196
Composed new music or practiced with my ensemble	174
Started a new creative project	153
Booked a new in-person concert	139
Presented an in-person workshop, masterclass, or lesson	138
Presented a virtual workshop, masterclass, or lesson	131
Performed/Presented a virtual concert	121
Connected with my network virtually	112
Performed a previously cancelled in-person concert	102
Connected with my network in person	100
Recorded/released my own music (demo, LP, album, etc...)	84

Organizations

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Individual Demographics Race, Age, Gender*

In keeping with its [Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity](#), CMA seeks to understand the demographics of its membership and of the members who access its benefits and services.

For questions related to race and gender, respondents were able to select as many terms as applicable to their identity.

Race ^	Record Count
African/Black	9
Arab/Middle Eastern	3
Asian/South Asian	10
Asian/South Asian White	1
Asian/South Asian; Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; White	1
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1
Latinx/Latino	3
Native American; White	1
Prefer not to Answer	13
Race Not Represented in this List	3
White	77

Age ^	Record Count
25-39	31
40-54	30
55-74	53
75+	8

Gender	Record Count ^
Cisgender woman	49
Cisgender man	37
Prefer not to Answer	31
Non-binary	2
Cisgender woman; Genderqueer	1
Genderqueer; Non-binary	1
Two-spirit	1

[View a Glossary of Terms](#)

**Only respondents who identified as "Individuals" [Composers, Educators, & Independent Musicians - 125 respondents] were asked for their race, age, and gender. Respondents who identified as or represented Ensembles, Artist Managers, Festivals, Music Businesses, and Music Schools/Training Programs were not asked this question.*

The rupture in our activities has halted a momentum that has developed over 30 years. For those of us at the sunset of careers this has been painful and the scaling down of activities as planned has been derailed. Every ensemble has been challenged and affected by the pandemic but there are particular issues that face mature musicians that are doleful and unique.

Our ensemble lost many performances due to COVID but launched a virtual workshop program in-lieu that was able to make up much of our lost income. We had to work very hard to learn the virtual platforms that worked best with composers all over the world and to schedule ensemble meetings safely, following proper protocols. The program was successful and we are going to continue it post-pandemic. Because of the relatively small size of our ensemble (~\$50,000/year budget) and the way we pay artists as contractors (not W2 employees) we received almost no COVID organizational relief support. We had no choice but to find a way to make up for our lost income by getting creative with programming and by working. It paid off. We premiered 58 pieces in 2020, kept composers writing, and continued to provide new music to audiences despite COVID.

It's difficult to know exactly how much of the losses are directly related to Covid. There's a general fearfulness amongst audiences that persists which makes filling up spaces difficult at times OR the complete opposite where you have a great turnout but there's almost always an outbreak following. Travel restrictions for international travel is arguably the most difficult thing to overcome in this situation. The less people you take the less risk of cancellations- as a result instead of using your actual band you hire local musicians. The music suffers but it's the only way to make it work.

While on some levels, the pandemic has shaken things up by letting new musicians into spaces via substituting, the overall amount of concert opportunities remains drastically reduced as people are still hesitant to attend larger in-person gatherings and many smaller venues have closed. From what I've observed, the jazz community seems to be harder hit as they depended more heavily on smaller venues for jam sessions, regular recurring gigs, and concerts.

There's always an institutional technology lag owing to the rapid turnover in tech for the arts. CMA could address this, but not without outside help.

My ensemble stopped all activities after about March 15, 2020. Our least replaceable member moved to a different region of the US, and is very busy with mainly non-music work. I don't know if we will ever perform/record again, or complete a mostly finished recording project.

Haven't performed since March 11, 2020. Have no clue how to generate any gigs for the future. Am attempting to contact other performing groups to perform my music. Am working on designing a new web site for my indie label.

It isn't over. Seeing folk abandon mask-wearing and other protective practices is forcing us into isolation and endangering the ability to present in many venues.

What Individuals Shared

Composers, Educators, & Independent Musicians

We're in a new world, and anyone who tries to get back to the way we did things prior to 2020 will almost certainly fail. We all desperately need help in discovering these new pathways.

My professional music career does not pay my bills. I had gotten a non-music full-time job right before the pandemic; had it for a little under a year before losing it to the pandemic, and then took another non-music full-time job a few months later. I still do music, but it is no longer my primary income.

Recovery/relief funding is very important for the short term. Forming new creative connections and partnerships and engaging new audiences is vital for the future. I also find online workshops and presentations to be very helpful!

No concerts have been canceled because none have been booked. But of course a full calendar of events were cancelled in 2020. I have three in-person concerts booked and I'm fighting with the organizations because they've dropped their mandates though it was a stipulation in the contract. Don't they understand, we are all are finished with Covid but it's not finished with us. If the sanctity of life and the health and welfare of our brothers and sisters isn't a consideration to wear a mask and and keep a safe distance I'm not going to be the one to expose the vulnerable because they are coming to hear "my" music. So we are not booking any more gigs. Not because of Covid (which we know how to mitigate) but because of people's dishonoring life itself.

It is critical to note the loss of momentum in career building that emerging artists lost in 2020. While income is relevant, it is established that many years of investment in a career in the arts is necessary to reach financial stability - recovery funds provide assistance for the now, the short term, but 2+ years of lost development mean that we have also lost the momentum in that development.

It's been very difficult to make a living, in general, as a Jazz saxophonist, but things have been ten times worse these past few years. I've been able to rely on gigs smaller, local gigs to have a buffer but those have mostly disappeared.

Worries for the funding of future concerts and getting audiences back since they have gotten used to live streaming.

The pandemic has exacerbated the previously existing problems with finding venues in which to perform.

I am thankful my students adjusted well to remote classes and lessons via Zoom and FaceTime during the stay-at-home orders.

What Organizations Shared

Artist Managers, Festivals, Music Businesses, Music Schools/Training Programs, & Presenters

I feel in my program the COVID generation of incoming freshman and very behind technically, musically and emotionally. (...) My 9th graders this year were also more like 7th graders. They never had their 8th grade leadership year. Chamber Music has been a great way to turn things around for them and I have seen incredible improvement in all areas because of the skills they need to acquire in life, leadership, self confidence, performance and technical skills. I wish that all schools had access to chamber music programs of a high level.

Our organization will begin to hire new staff soon, but we will not directly reinstate positions that were eliminated due to the pandemic. Instead, we will restructure the organization based on current needs.

The past 6 months have been largely normal. The adverse impacts occurred mostly from March 12, 2020-July 8, 2021 (15 months).

The main obstacle is that we lost our venue as a result of the pandemic and now must hold concerts in different venues for which we must now pay. The older patrons are reluctant to travel to new venues and this has exacerbated the loss of audience.

We need financial support for agents and managers to help them keep their doors open to get engagements for artists...

Our staff has benefited from learning to operate virtually and remotely. It has saved the organization time and money. We intend to keep admin staff partly working remotely.

We learned to be good online content generators. While not ideal and often frustrating, this has helped bridge the gap created by pandemic lockdowns and maintain communication with our constituents. We gained a healthy number of new constituents through online programs.

I am BOTH optimistic and pessimistic about the arts and my career as a presenter in the next few years. Excited about new creativity and energy and ideas springing forth, and completely aghast at the multiple threats to democracy and public well-being that includes MUCH more than just the pandemic.

Events have not been cancelled because programming has not been resumed. Organizational changes at the educational institution we are part of have resulted in no presenting currently. Staff has not yet been re-hired and may not be at all.

CMA

Chamber Music America

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