



Universal Basic Income Survey 2020

Scottish Artists Union

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
KEY FINDINGS	4
SURVEY RESULTS.....	5
RESPONSES.....	5
QUESTION 1. MEMBERSHIP INFO	6
QUESTION 2. WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME?	7
QUESTION 3. HOW SIGNIFICANT WOULD BE THE IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES AND ART PRACTICE	8
QUESTION 4. WHAT IMPACT WOULD IT HAVE ON YOUR LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES AND YOUR ART PRACTICE	8
QUESTION 5. WHAT LONG TERM IMPACT WOULD IT HAVE?	10
QUESTION 6. WOULD YOU SUPPORT SAU TO CAMPAIGN FOR UBI	12

Executive Summary

- **About the Union**

The Scottish Artists Union (SAU) was formally constituted in 2001, becoming the first new trade union of the 21st century. We aim to improve the working conditions of visual and applied artists practising in Scotland, and to raise awareness of their contribution to public life and the economy. Our membership has grown to over 1500 professional working artists and makers, and the union is run by a voluntary executive committee and has a small part time staff team.

The union’s key activities are lobbying on behalf of artists; protecting & extending artists’ rights; and negotiating a wide-range of benefits and services.

More information about the union is available on our website at www.artistsunion.scot

- **Context and Methodology**

Between 2012 and 2018 SAU undertook an annual Membership Survey in order to obtain information about the working lives of its members, allowing the union to gain an accurate overview of the working lives of artists and makers in Scotland. It also allowed members to share concerns about their experiences of work, detailed information about their careers across the sector, and give vital feedback on the services the union provides. These are available to download from our website at www.artistsunion.scot if you are a member; or email us at info@artistsunion.scot if you would like to receive a copy.

This year due to the Covid 19 pandemic we decided to undertake a more nimble approach to survey our members, with a series of short specifically themed surveys. During 2020 we have undertaken surveys on the following themes: an ‘Artists Safety Net’, exploring how working practices have changed, and what kind of support artists have received during the pandemic; an Artists Studio and Workspace Survey and in June 2020 on Universal Basic Income.

- It is clear that the economic impact of the Covid 19 pandemic has had a major and potentially long lasting impact on the visual & applied art sectors across Scotland. Scottish Artists Union has been involved in discussions about how the introduction

Scottish Artists Union

of a Universal Basic Income could support artists and art workers involved in the arts and culture sector, while helping the survival and stability of the sector itself.

- In May this year, SAU Learning Programme hosted a Zoom discussion with Cleo Goodman, the Director of Citizen's Basic Income Network Scotland (CBINS) and Co-founder Basic Income Conversation, UK wide you can read the transcript of the discussion here- [link to transcript](#)

- **Responses**

We decided to undertake a survey on the theme of UBI, due to the high percentage of our members falling through the gaps in government funding for the Self Employed, and the on-going precarious nature of operating as an artist within the arts in Scotland, that has been a continuing backdrop for the majority of Scottish artists even before the pandemic had an impact.

For this survey we encouraged our members to get to know the facts about Universal Basic Income; through hosting an event "A Basic Income Conversation", by encouraging them to read up on the key facts, by reading relevant articles, watching videos, and listening to podcasts on the subject, many of which are listed on our website at https://www.artistsunion.scot/ubi_information

- **Headline findings**

The survey asked if those responding would give their support for the implementation of a Universal Basic Income in Scotland, and if they would support the Scottish Artists Union to campaign for a UBI in Scotland. In both cases there was a large majority in support of these proposals (90% and 94%). There was also a high level of information given in response to how the implementation of UBI might impact short term and longer term career prospects of those taking part in the survey.

- **Actions by Union**

Scottish Artists Union used the information gained in this survey to propose a motion at the AGM on 3rd October 2020, as follows:

This Union notes that the lack of thorough provision for self-employed workers from the current UK government during the current Covid 19 pandemic, has highlighted the shortcomings and the gaps in the current welfare system. This crisis has hit the cultural sector particularly hard and we fear that the current situation is not sustainable. Over 80% of the membership of SAU are self-employed and through our recent survey we have found that 53% of artists surveyed were not in receipt of government support, leaving them in dire financial situations with many relying on financial support from family, friends, or their savings.

This Union believes that the introduction of a Universal Basic Income for all citizens, will particularly benefit creativity, and help to make the careers of artists more sustainable, and that it will make life more bearable for artists and their families.

Scottish Artists Union

This Union resolves to campaign for UBI at all levels of government, locally and nationally in order to achieve an overhaul of the current benefits system and a reassessment of the way the state funds the arts, and artists.

This motion was carried unanimously and the union will fulfil this by continuing its campaigning work around UBI, to contribute to the national conversation around the introduction of UBI and to campaign for the introduction of a UBI that can help to support the careers of artists and creative people throughout Scotland.

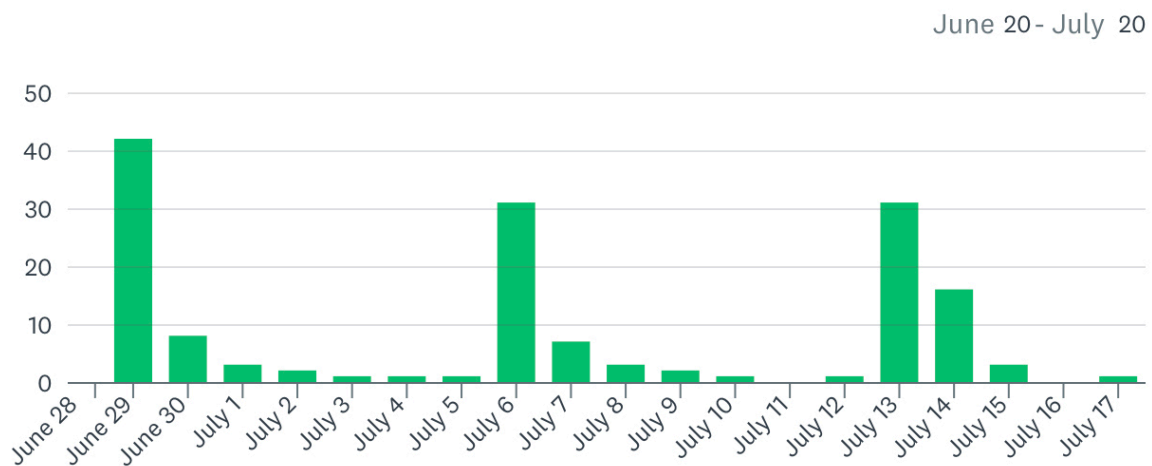
Key Findings of This Survey

- 92% our membership would support the implementation of a Universal Basic Income in Scotland, and only 2% were unsupportive of the idea.
- Over 90% of respondents believe that UBI, at the suggested rate of £215 per week, would impact their practice either 'a great deal' or 'a lot' and only 2% felt it would not impact at all.
- We asked what the immediate impact of this level of UBI would have on their life circumstances and art practice, and received a wide range of responses, with artists describing how they perceived UBI could change their current situations for the better.
- We asked about the long-term impact this level of UBI would have on their life circumstances and art practice, and again got a huge range of responses.
- Our survey found that over **94%** of respondents would support SAU to campaign for UBI, with less than 6% not sure or against the idea.

Survey Results

We contacted our members by email and social media over a period of three weeks at the end of June 2020 to discover how they felt about the idea of the introduction of a Universal Basic Income across Scotland and whether Scottish Artists Union should campaign for this on behalf of our membership.

Members Responses



We received a good response from our membership illustrating the high level of interest and the importance of this issue was for many artists living and working in Scotland.

Here are the results from the 154 members who replied. As stated in all our correspondence with our members, all information which may identify members from their responses has been removed.

Question 1. Membership Info

Q1 Membership Info

Answered: 150 Skipped: 4

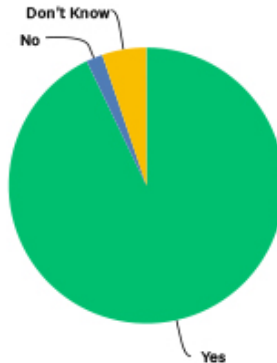
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Name	100.00%	150
Membership ID	94.67%	142
Postcode	100.00%	150

We asked members to confirm their name, union membership ID and their postcode, only. Four people missed out this section completely, with others choosing not to give all the information asked.

Question 2. Would you support the Implementation of Universal Basic Income?

Q2 A Basic Income is a universal, unconditional (non-means tested), periodic cash payment made to every individual. If such a payment was available in Scotland would you support its implementation?

Answered: 154 Skipped: 0



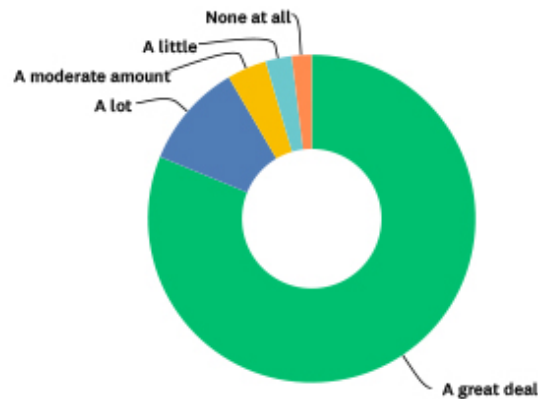
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.86%	143
No	1.95%	3
Don't Know	5.19%	8
TOTAL		154

We asked our members if they would support the implementation of a universal Basic income in Scotland, and over 90% agreed, 5% were not sure and less than 2% were unsupportive of the idea.

Question 3. Impact on Practice

Q3 The recent Feasibility Study report suggested a rate of Basic Income of approximately £215 per week (£930 per month). How significant an impact would this have on your practice?

Answered: 154 Skipped: 0

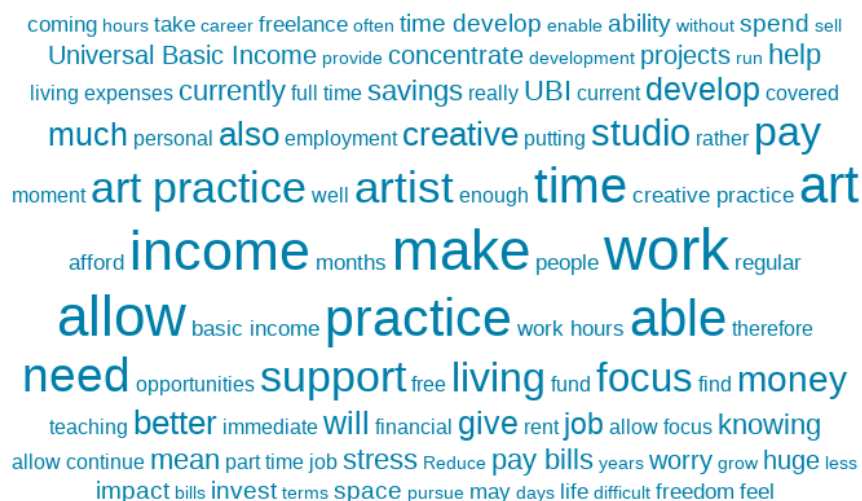


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal	81.17%	125
A lot	10.39%	16
A moderate amount	3.90%	6
A little	2.60%	4
None at all	1.95%	3
TOTAL		154

We asked how significant an impact would the suggested rate of £215 per week have on their practice. Over 90% of respondents believe this level of UBI would impact their practice either 'a great deal' or 'a lot.' Only 2% felt it would not impact at all.

Question 4. Immediate impact on practice.

Q4 What immediate impact would such a level of Universal Basic Income have on your current life circumstances and your art practice?



We asked about the immediate impact this level of UBI would have on their life circumstances and art practice and got a huge range of responses as illustrated by this Wordcloud.

Some of our members responses are below...

"It would provide an income rather than using my savings to live and fund my art practice. It would give me the crucial time to develop and grow as an artist until I am able to sell my work. It puts less emphasis to find art related employment i.e. teaching, residences, workshops etc except if it was needed to fund a particular project or for related study or travel. "

"It would stop the constant panic about where money is coming from and would allow me to develop new work and develop my business."

"I would be able to plan long term for projects that had a deeper, sustainable outcome. At the same time, I could keep a decent studio roof over my head, at present this is difficult."

"Reduce the anxiety of precarious existence and permit focused development of creative process."

"It would mean that my art practice would be immediately financially sustainable, I would be able to stop all non-art related paid work which currently supports my art practice. This would allow me the time to develop my art practice, without worrying about I'm going to pay my bills."

"Less pressure to earn, more time to make work and therefore more creative freedom to develop a deeper practice"

"Had UBI been available when I had graduated from my arts qualification 5 years ago, it would have allowed me to focus more readily on the thing that I had just invested a lot of time and money in pursuing. Instead, my immediate focus on graduation (as a mature student) was making sure I had a

Scottish Artists Union

level of income that would pay the bills. I have worked hard to try and make time to develop my creative practice whilst working outside the sector, but I know, for sure, that I would be much more advanced in my artistic career had this support been available when I graduated."

"I would become less stressed, my mental health would improve and I could concentrate on developing my work and making it into a financially sustainable business, in contrast to currently, when I am needing to take on a variety of different jobs, of varying responsibilities, which all take my attention away from my own practice."

"A piece of mind. A better mental health, wellbeing of not having to worry when next job will come and will I earn enough to get through the month. It would be a safety net to counter the ever-growing doubt in my mind that being an artist or pursuing an art practice will never pay off, in terms of being able to buy a house, raise a family, and support other dependents."

"I wouldn't have to work an extra job. The stress of never having enough money affects my mental and physical health and I often think of quitting my art career. It is also very difficult to work and pay for childcare as a single parent."

"I currently earn most of my income (c. 75%) from teaching within higher education, on short-term contracts, with no guarantee of annual renewal. The rest is in casual work, research awards, commissions, projects etc. And I'm lucky, compared to many artists I know. It would mean a secure regular income and would give me more financial security, which would in turn enable better long-term planning, support family life better, reduce stress, and contribute to a better-planned and more speculative and ambitious creative practice."

"It would mean I could be an artist. Pure and simple. I have always had to find another career, often parallel to my practice to earn a living for myself and my family. This feels like a catch 22 as my practice does not get the time it needs to grow or if it does, I make little in income."

"Provide a solid basis to reduce worries about surviving and covering the basics. And support at an individual level is extremely important rather being assessed as a 'household' which is deeply flawed for all sorts of reasons"

"Fundamentally, it would allow me to continue my art practice and remove my anxiety about cashflow. I'm constantly struggling to scrape a living as well as cover overheads, and regularly have to assess whether or not I can afford to continue."

Question 5. Long term impact on practice.

Q5 What do you think would be the long term impact of the introduction of a Universal Basic Income, on your life circumstances and art practice?

Scotland forward new ideas benefit artistic practice much able save long term full time
freedom contribute development confidence well wellbeing will increased live artwork
community invest help evenings less stressed balance need back create
time spend focus society money future income creativity also sustainable
UBI stress creative believe better spend time art paid work
allow level practice family work go artist
basic income able Universal Basic Income time see make provide
life space mean another less stability art practice develop practice
develop pay bills opportunity greater support positive way without pay open
feel something think finally worry artistic continue build people training projects
time develop mental health also allow fully make ends meet currently enable free sustains
business things

We asked about the long-term impact this level of UBI would have on their life circumstances and art practice and again got a huge range of responses, many of which focus on the benefits to health and wellbeing, and the impact not just on them as artists, but also on family life and the people around them....

"I think it would be very reassuring for me as a freelance worker, as work and income are irregular at the best of times and opportunities for paid work may diminish as I get older (I am 57). I don't think it would change in essence my work practice. However, I believe in the idea of UBI and see it more important for those less well-off and more disadvantaged than me and for those working in the arts whose practice is more experimental and less obviously commercial."

"I would have a healthier lifestyle, a good work balance. I would use this money to provide for my living expenses and hence be less stressed. This would empower me, by giving me much needed time to develop my practice, to learn new skills for its progression as well as the business side of it. As a disabled person this would especially be a great asset. As an artist more time practicing would mean more development, and in turn would mean a better artist. Reaching the top of my game quicker. Having highly developed artists would encourage more tourists, exhibitions and sales. Good for the Artists. Good for Scotland."

"It would have a massive positive impact- the UBI would mean that I would be able to apply for opportunities that at the moment I can't apply for due to lack of financial means. The UBI would provide the means for me to have a financially sustainable practice to enable me to reduce my working hours to a normal full-time week, as I currently don't take any time off as I work everyday and evenings. It would be such a relief to be able to work only one job and have time for creative thinking and not have to use all my annual leave for working. My mental health and the development of my art practice would be greatly improved with a reduction/ cessation of non-art related work and time to rest."

Scottish Artists Union

"I firmly believe that the reduction in money worries would have an incredibly beneficial impact on my mental and physical health by reducing money worries, giving me access to healthier lifestyle options and allowing me to make more balanced decisions on what I do with my life by lessening the urgency of the question 'but how will I pay the bills?'"

"It would allow me to give more back to my community as I would be able to do more voluntary work which currently I cannot do. It would allow me to pivot my practice to the social enterprise focused direction I have been wanting to for years but been unable to spare the time to develop."

"It would totally change how I feel about a career in the arts in general. I would see it as a way to thrive financially, mental health - wise, and creatively."

"I believe I would be able to elevate my own business and creative practice and begin to provide an income for myself, support my young daughter, and ultimately provide more jobs in Scotland also, by employing others. "

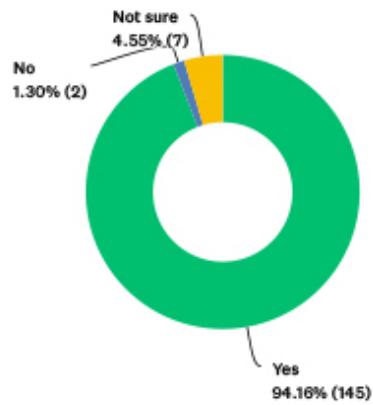
"I would be able to pay all my household bills with enough spare to buy food. The relief would be enormous. My physical and mental health would be improved massively. It would mean that I could afford childcare if needed and the lack of stress would benefit my daughter's life too. Mainly I would be a lot more daring, take risks and the reduction in stress would help my creativity massively. I would be able to fully focus on my art and not have to worry about working a second job and struggling to make ends meet".

"So much stress would be lifted and also guilt for spending time on something that might not pay all the bills. When you have dependants this is a big worry".

Question 6. Supporting SAU Campaign for UBI

Q6 Would you support the Scottish Artist Union campaigning for a Universal Basic Income for Scotland ?

Answered: 154 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	94.16%	145
No	1.30%	2
Not sure	4.55%	7
TOTAL		154

Our survey found that the vast majority (over **94%** of respondents) would support SAU to campaign for UBI, with less than 6% not sure or against the idea.