



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

CORONAVIRUS & CONSERVATION IMPACT STUDY

Feb 2021

Summary Report



ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Background and aims

The ongoing Coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis presents challenges to the heritage sector and the people who work in our field.

Icon's first Coronavirus Impact report, published in April, presented a worrying situation for conservation professionals, with 90% of respondents reporting serious economic consequences arising from lockdown restrictions.

In November 2020, as most of the UK returned to a state of lockdown, Icon launched a second survey to gather further information and data on how the pandemic was affecting the conservation sector.

The research aimed to capture reliable data specific to conservation and its workforce across the UK.

Icon is grateful to all members who helped to build our evidence base by taking part in the research or by sharing case studies through other means.

Icon will use the findings to develop effective response strategies and coordinate support for conservators and the wider heritage sector.

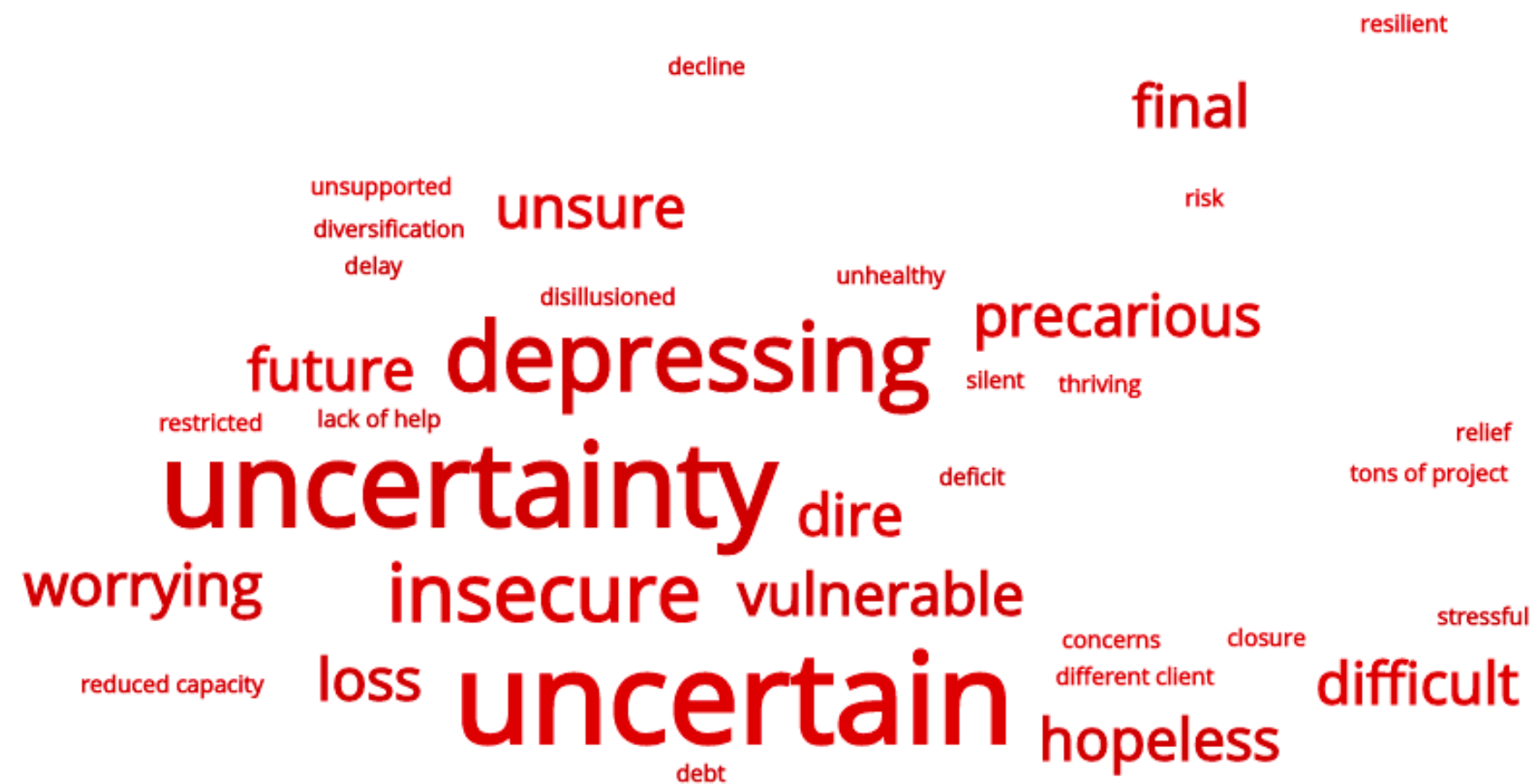
THE HEADLINES

- The Coronavirus pandemic has severely affected the revenue and operations of conservation businesses. Almost half of respondents reported their revenue had decreased by more than 50% compared to normal expectations for the time of year and a quarter estimated they only had up to 3 months of viable operational revenue.
- The pandemic has also had a considerable impact on the work of employed conservators. 87% are working at reduced levels compared to before the outbreak, with a quarter expecting a reduction in their income in 2021.
- Redundancies were more common amongst those employed by large organisations. Only 6% of micro and small business owners had made employees redundant but a third of employed conservators had experienced redundancies within their organisations.

THE HEADLINES

- There appears little planned movement outside of the sector. The majority of respondents were planning to stay within conservation related work with only 3% of employers and 2% of employees planning a move to a non-heritage related field.
- The outbreak has led to great feelings of uncertainty and insecurity amongst conservators. However, employed conservators feel more secure and stable than business owners and the self-employed (Page 4).
- Loss of income, isolation and job insecurity resulting from the pandemic is affecting the mental health of conservators.

Employees see uncertainty ahead but feel more secure



Employers feel uncertain and worried about the future



METHODOLOGY

Two surveys

We collected our data through a survey which ran from 25 November to 9 December 2020. In order to capture concerns unique to employers and employees, we ran the survey as two separate questionnaires with questions tailored to both groups.

Some questions referred to Icon's first Coronavirus survey to allow us to assess the course of the crisis, while others took into account how the situation had evolved. We aimed to align questions to ONS Coronavirus surveying to ensure data can be cross-referenced to national reporting.

EMPLOYEES

for employees of organisations and businesses
AIM: to capture sentiment on future employment, working patterns and career plans.

EMPLOYERS

for business owners, freelancers and the self-employed
AIM: to build a picture of the current private practice environment.

THE DATASET

We heard from 121 respondents in total

EVENLY SPREAD BETWEEN SURVEYS

Participants were spread evenly between surveys, with 69 responding to the employer survey and 52 to the employee survey.

REPRESENTING SOLE TRADERS AND MICROBUSINESSES

95% of business respondents employed 0-5 employees. The majority indicated they worked as freelancers or sole traders.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

While the majority of respondents operated in England, all UK nations were represented and 20% of respondents worked abroad.

WITH MANY SPECIALISMS

Conservators working in book & paper, historic interiors, contemporary art, paintings and textiles were represented the most strongly.



OUR RESPONSE

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO WITH THE
FINDINGS

The results of this research are vital evidence about the impact of the pandemic on the conservation profession. Icon will use them to provide evidence for policy briefings, develop effective response strategies and coordinate support for conservators and the wider heritage sector.

01

SHARE

We will share the results widely and encourage our partners and stakeholders to use the information in their own work so that support for the wider heritage sector is coordinated.

02

INFORM

We will use the findings to inform the priorities of our lobbying activities so that government and funders are urged to provide support where it is most needed.

03

DEVELOP

We will develop our own resources, support measures and projects in line with the findings and suggestions provided by respondents.

We'll naturally carry on supporting conservators through the several projects already in the pipeline, including:

NEW RESOURCES

Launching in February 2021, Icon's new digital membership platform will enable members to apply for and maintain their Icon accreditation, file essential documents securely online, and keep training plans on track.

The simplified platform will help members to achieve their fullest potential in their professional careers, while serving their clients and employers effectively. A fully integrated website portal will mean resources and information are more accessible than ever before.

FUNDING

Made possible through the generous support of the Radcliffe Trust and others, we have launched the Collections Care Stimulus Fund to support the care and conservation of collections at a time when budgets for the conservation of collections and objects are diminishing.

The Fund will support organisations that have suffered from a major drop in income over the last 12 months and are less able to commission conservation projects as a result.

ADVOCACY

Promoting the value of Accreditation and high standards of practice remains top on our agenda. This year's ACR Conference and Pathway Week take place in June aiming to celebrate the achievements of ACRs and to offer support for those on their way to accreditation.

Our continued promotion of the Conservation Register is building awareness of the free online tool to accessing conservators you can trust, helping enhance the profile of our members and their businesses.

RESEARCH

We are planning to undertake comprehensive research of the labour market to better understand issues like skills, demographics, employment and salaries.

Icon's LMI research will offer a vital boost to our evidence base in 2021 as well as provide conservators with up to date information upon which to base important career decisions.

POLICY

Icon continues to work hard to lobby for support for conservators with Government and decision makers.

Our correspondence and briefings have already proven effective, reflected in conservators being made eligible for key sector funding.



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Icon is a charity and the professional body for conservation, seeking to create positive change for cultural heritage.

We represent the interests of conservation and conservators to decision makers on issues that affect cultural heritage, from skills to education to funding.

www.icon.org.uk

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