

RETURN TO THE STAGE

March 2, 2021
Courtesy of



Why **Study** how the Performing Arts workforce is responding to this time, agnostic to affiliation, age, geography, or discipline

Better understand the field's most critical asset: the people

Who responded 3,300+ in July 2020,
2,000+ in January 2021
All 50 states represented
Dozens of occupations
College students to CEOs

The survey links were live July 1-14, 2020 and January 1-14, 2021

Goals Identify those at greatest risk of being left behind during the recovery
Analyze priorities and strategies for a return of the Performing Arts

What we know

The Performing Arts workforce needs care. Engagement and support, new ways of creating professional growth at every stage of workers' careers, and potential drivers of long-term attrition from the field all surfaced in the July 2020 survey. The January dataset helps us understand some themes more clearly.

Today's questions

How is the national Performing Arts workforce doing?

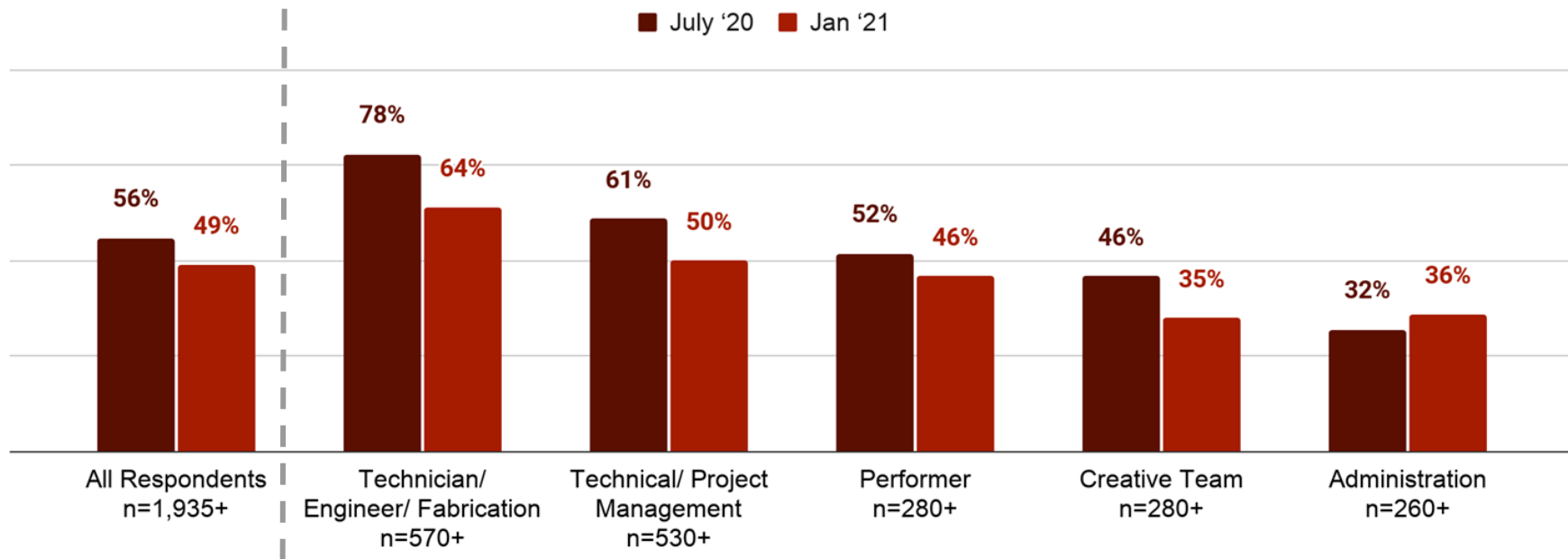
What impacts potential attrition from the field?

What might be linked to feelings of anxiety and despair?

What's next?

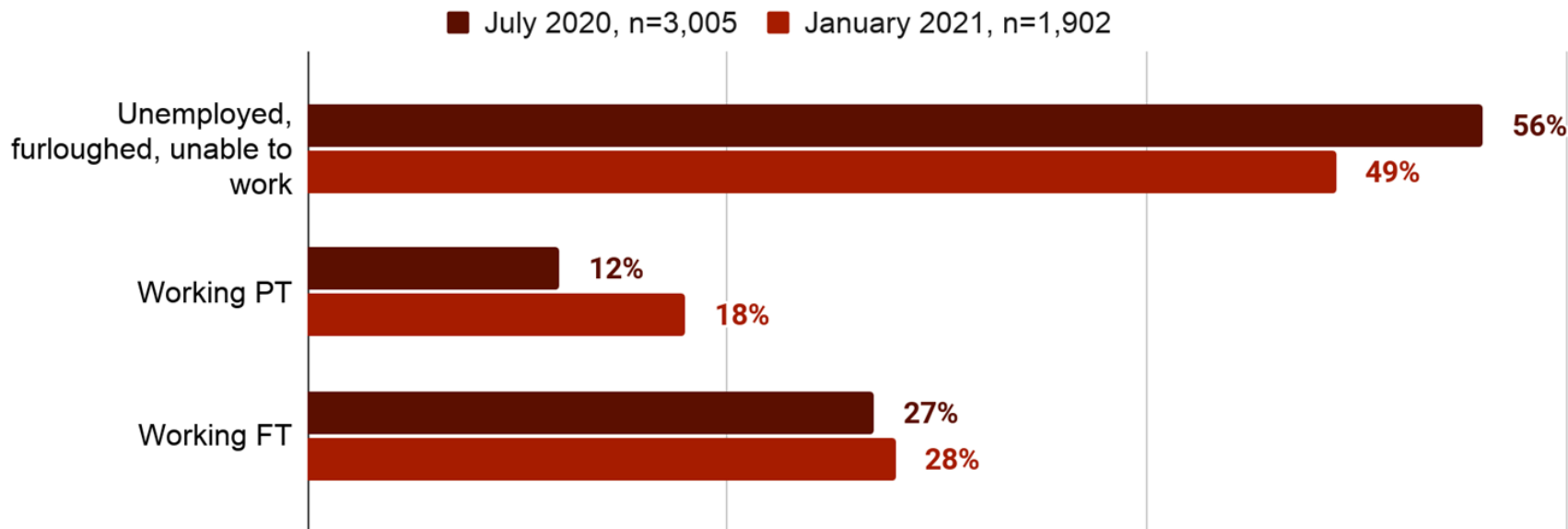
Unemployment remains high. The pain is uneven.

Unemployment by primary occupation



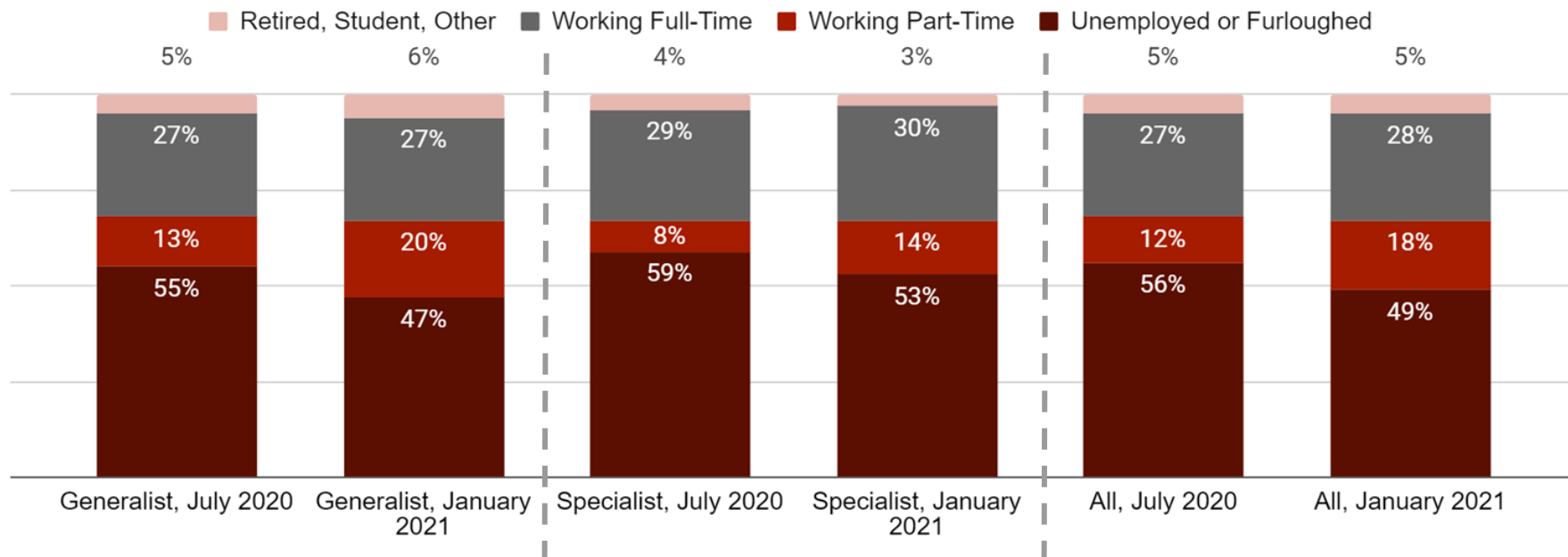
Nearly all job gains are in part-time work.

Performing Arts worker current employment status, July 2020 vs. January 2021



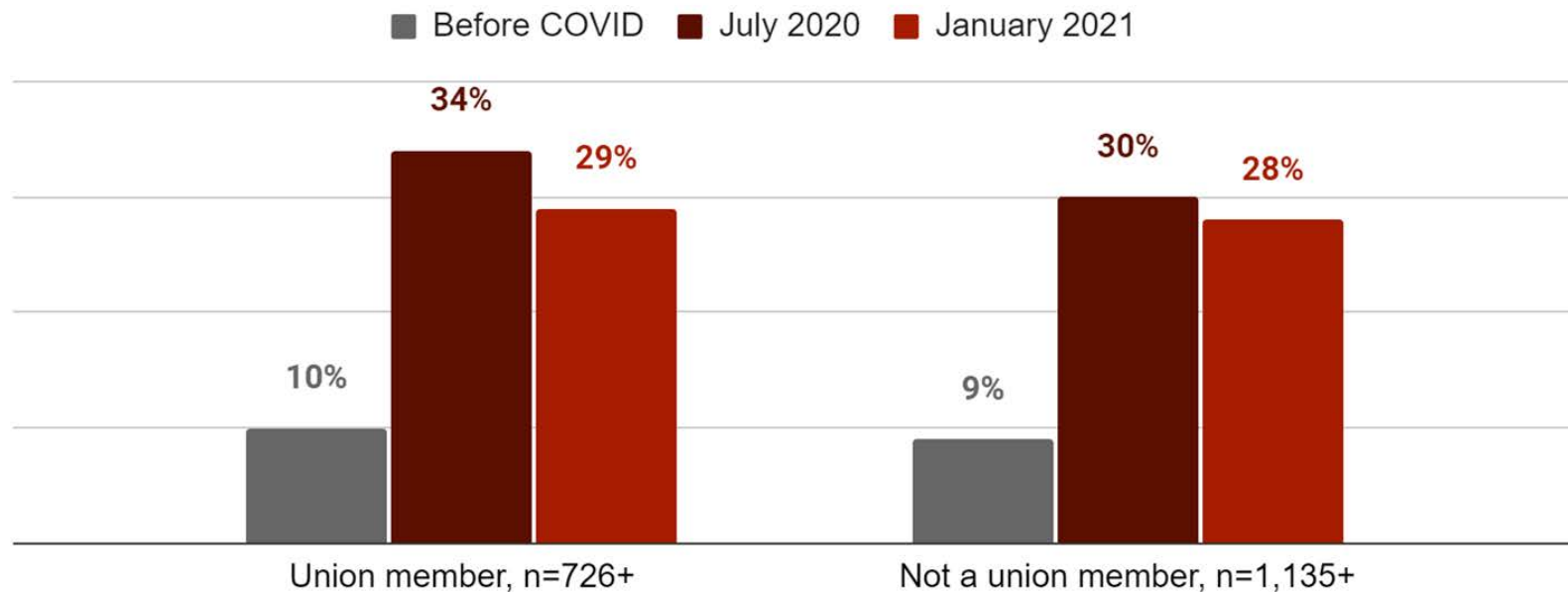
Generalists have recovered more jobs than specialists, mostly on a part-time basis.

Employment status by career type



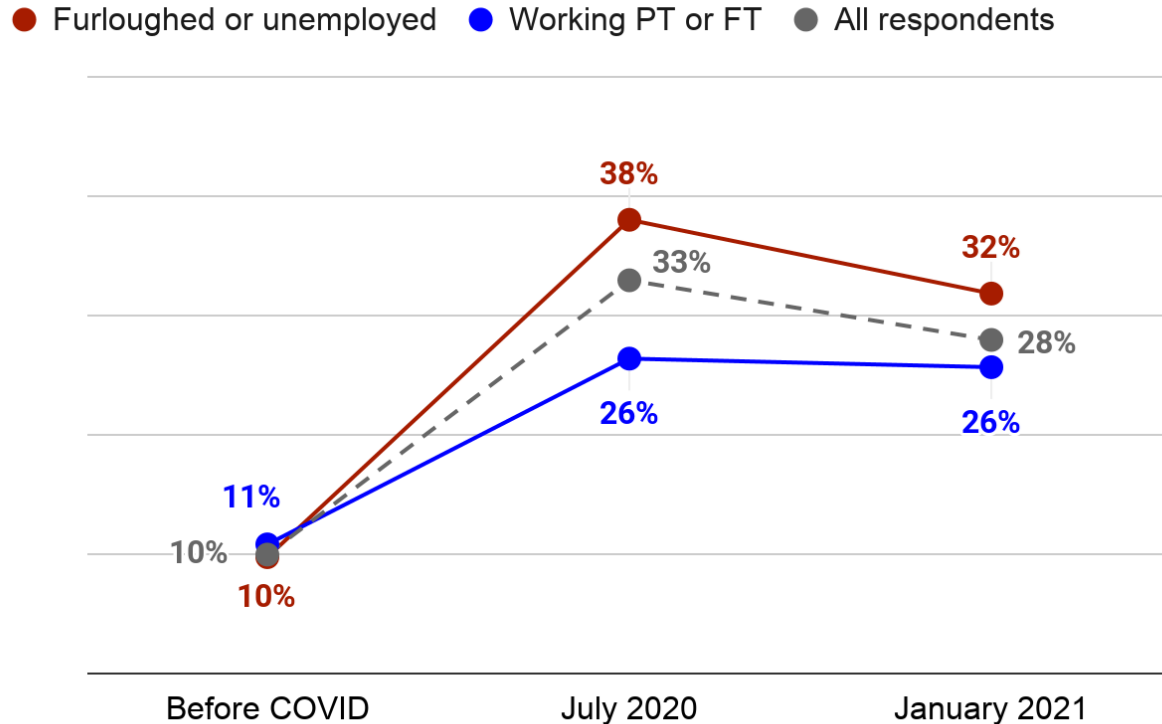
Union membership was faintly associated with higher potential attrition in July, but has become less influential overall.

Extremely or somewhat likely to leave the Performing Arts in the next 5 years, by union affiliation



Current (un)employment is linked to attitudes about attrition.

Likelihood to leave the PA, by employment status



Attrition also correlates with perceptions of employer(s).

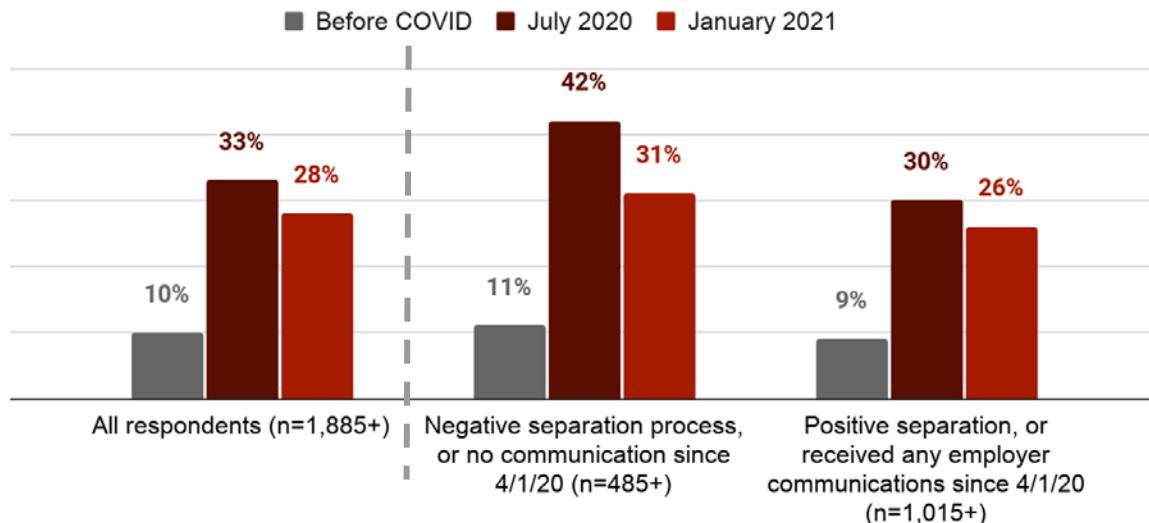
54% have heard from a previous employer since April 1, 2020 ($n=1,932$)

74% find *information* from previous employers to be helpful ($n=1,040$)

49% are happy with the *frequency* of communications from past employers ($n=1,040$)

36% want to hear from past employers *more often* ($n=1,040$)

Extremely or somewhat likely to leave the Performing Arts in the next 5 years



Where do we **find hope?**

About the methodology...

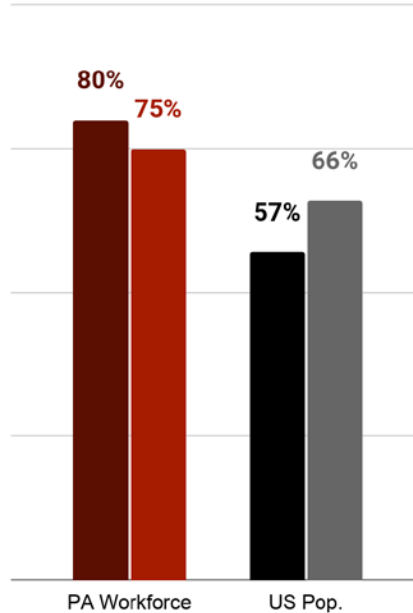
The Household Pulse survey measures social and economic impacts during the pandemic.

The questions we use in *Return to the Stage* gauge how often respondents experience anxiety, uncontrollable worrying, a loss of interest or pleasure in doing things, and feeling hopeless.

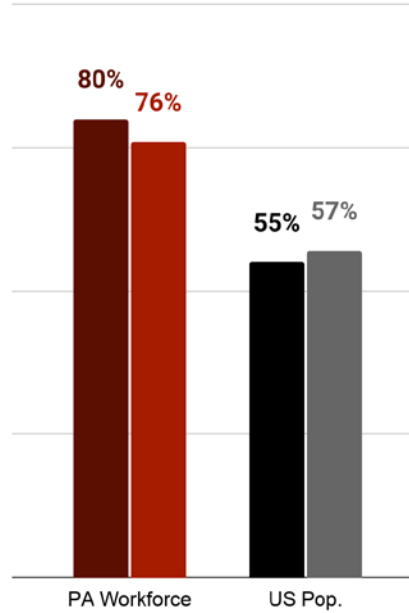
Performing Arts workers are not okay. But despair has lessened within this workforce, while it has risen in the general public.

Might this signal a unique capacity for hope and joy?

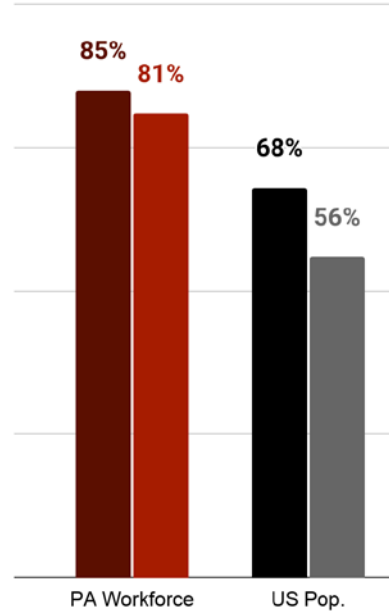
Little interest or pleasure in doing things



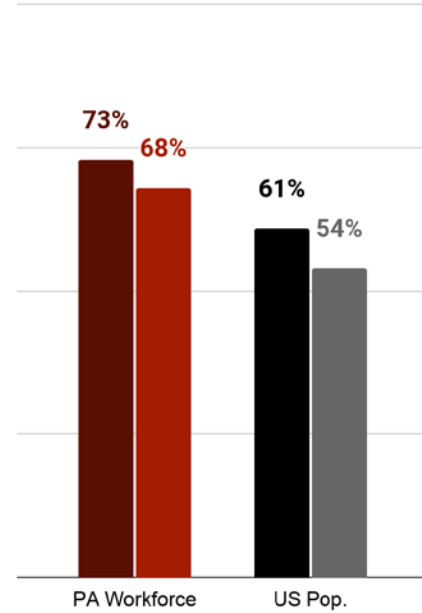
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless



Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge



Not being able to stop or control worrying



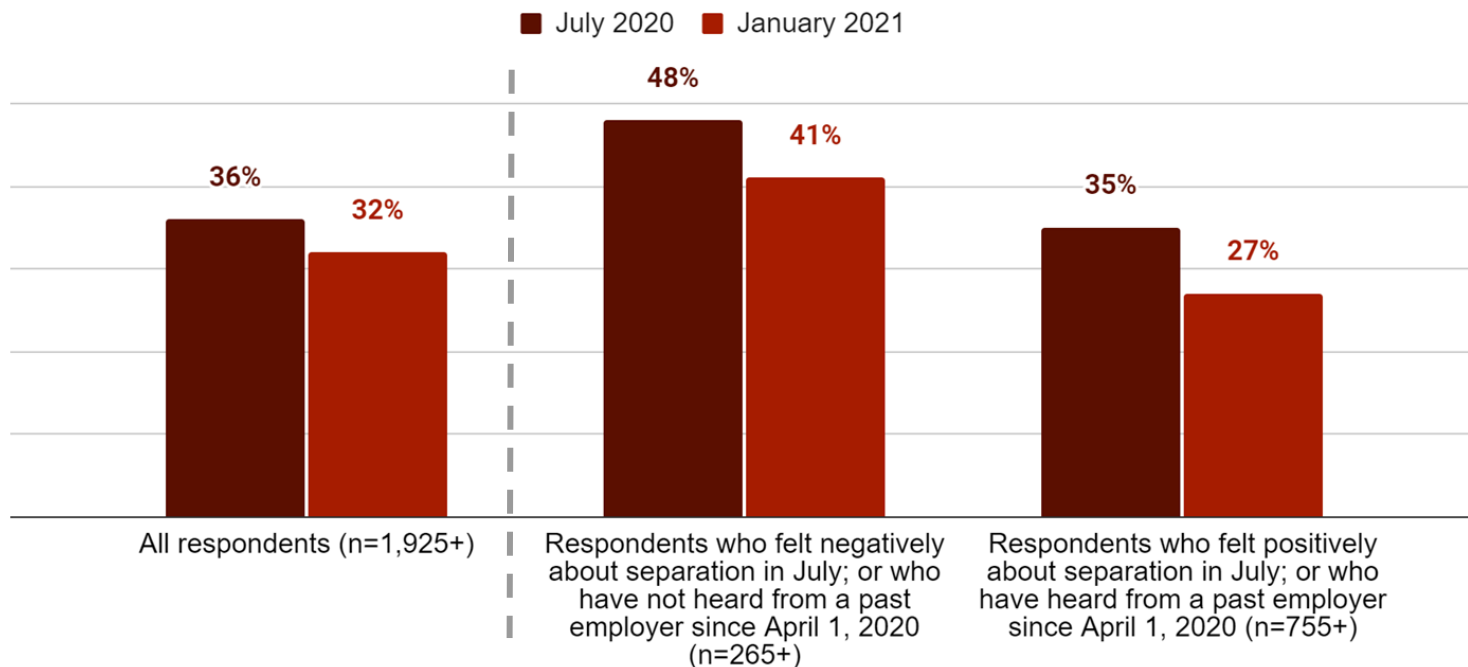
● July 2020 (n=3,000+)



January 2021 (n=1,925+)

Employer interactions may influence emotional wellbeing.

Respondents reporting anxiety or despair "nearly every day"



Return to the Stage continues to ask about eight specific coping strategies. These are intended to reflect the diversity of styles, interests and needs of this workforce.

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Description</i>
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Activist strategies	Creating/participating in collective action to change policies/practices that are harmful
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Career Development strategies	Training for a different job, already employed in a new field
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Creative strategies	Writing/composing, design, performance, building/fabrication projects
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Learning strategies	Enrolling in online courses, learning new communication platforms
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Mental strategies	Meditation, mindfulness, guided relaxation, self-affirmation
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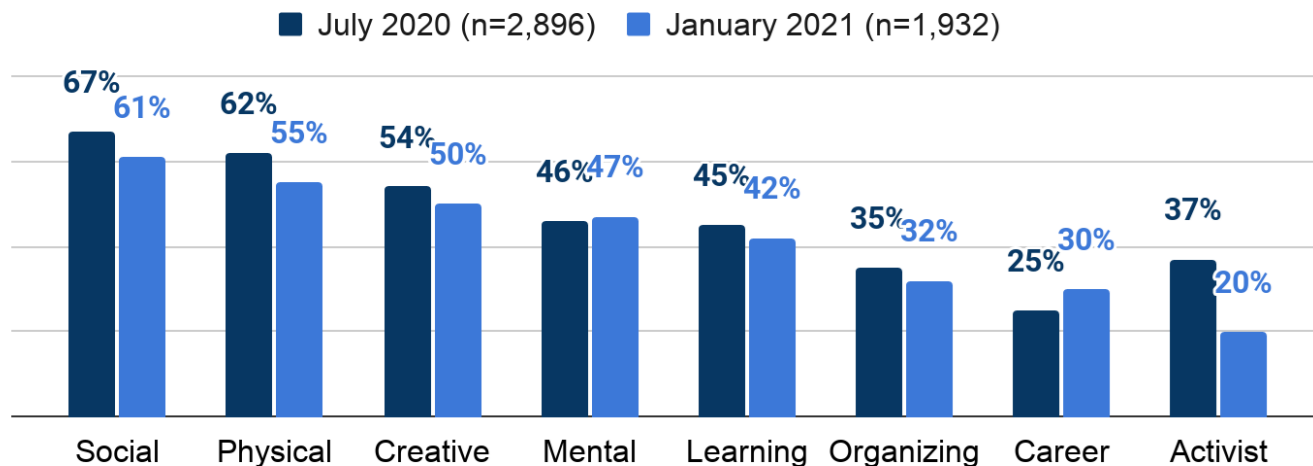
Organizing strategies	Coordinating projects at home or in my community
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Physical strategies	Exercise, training
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Social strategies	Connecting with friends/colleagues, social experiences with people in my household
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The relative popularity of coping strategies is mostly stable. The number of strategies respondents use has declined, hinting that discovery has given way to clarity about ‘what works.’

Coping strategies in use in July 2020 vs January 2021



62%
*using 4+ strategies in
July 2020*



45%
*using 4+ strategies in
January 2021*

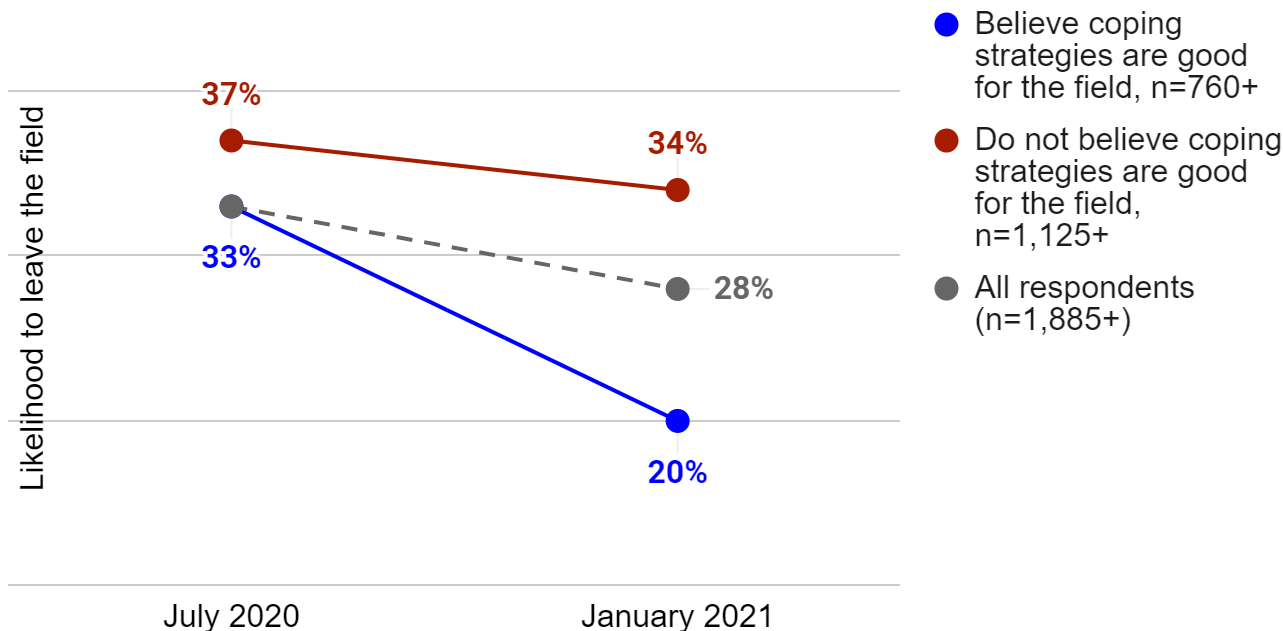
40%

of Performing Arts workers reported using one or more coping strategies because it is good for the field.

(n=1,932, as of January 2021)

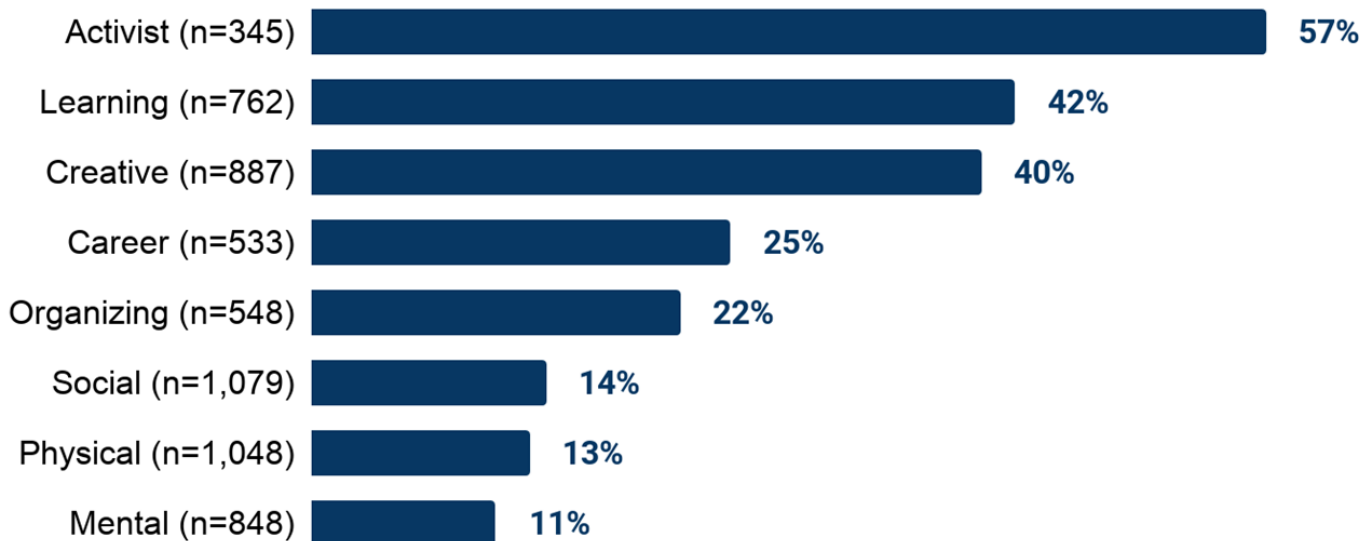
Belief that actions help the field appears to be protective for careers.

Likely to leave the field by belief that any coping strategies are beneficial to the Performing Arts



Individuals coping through activism believe strongly in its benefits to the field.

Coping strategies respondents believe are beneficial to the Performing Arts



Civic engagement is robust.

Performing Arts Workers

VOTE

88%

of performing arts workers
voted in an election between
March 2020 and January 2021.
(66% of US adults voted in the
2020 US presidential election.)

n=2,000, www.returntothestage.com, US voting data from *The Washington Post*

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Performing Arts Workers

GIVE

60%

of performing arts workers
reported donating to a new
charity or cause since the
start of the pandemic.

January 2021 n=1,950

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www.returntothestage.com

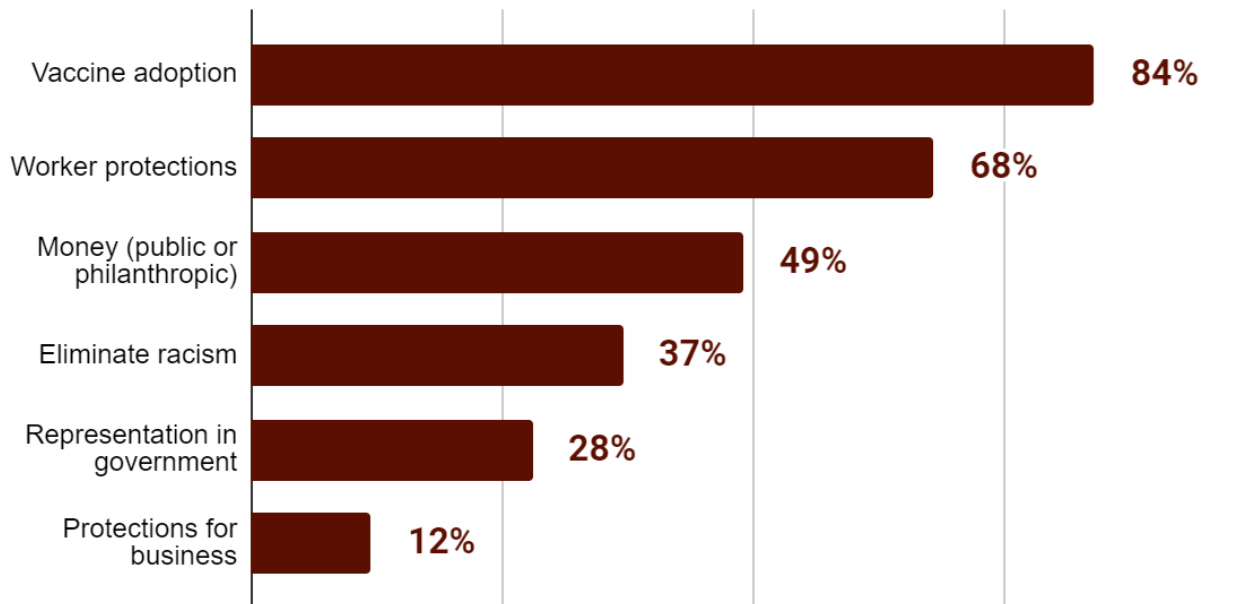
97%

of Performing Arts workers say they will get the vaccine ASAP or when they/their doctor feel it is safe.

(n=1,891, as of January 2021)

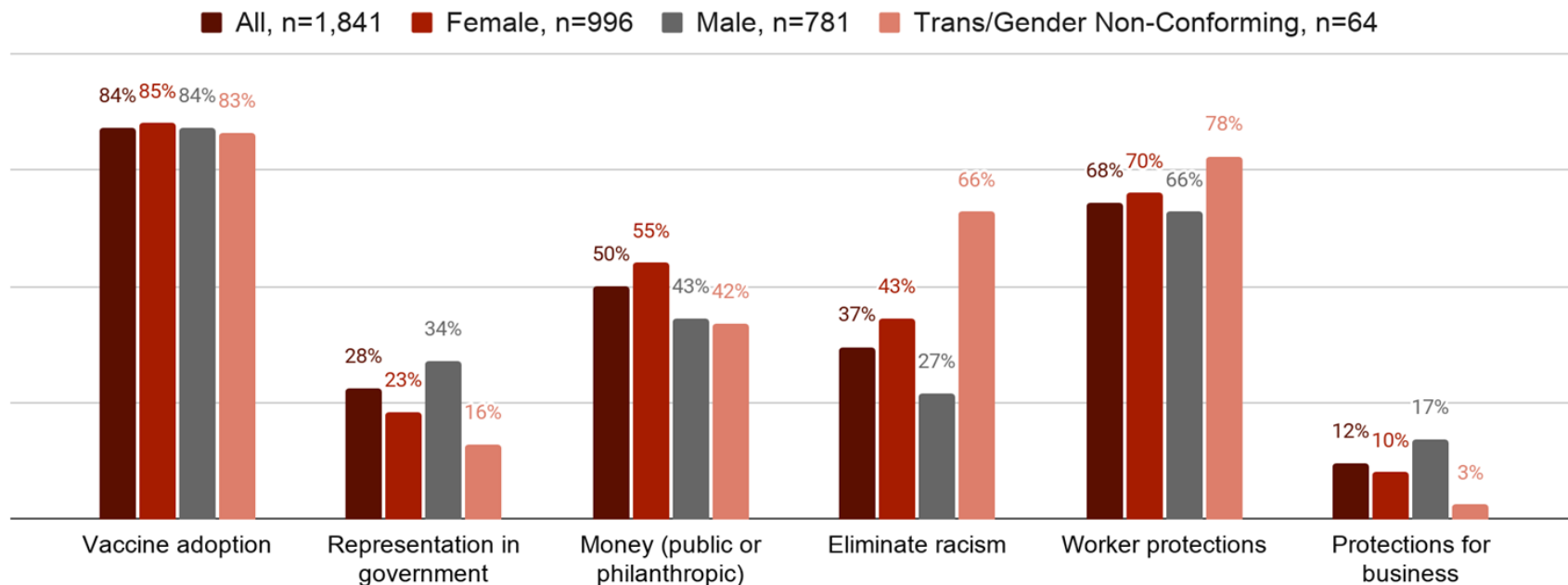
Keeping people safe is top of mind in 'return.'

Top elements necessary for the Performing Arts to return
(n=1,889)

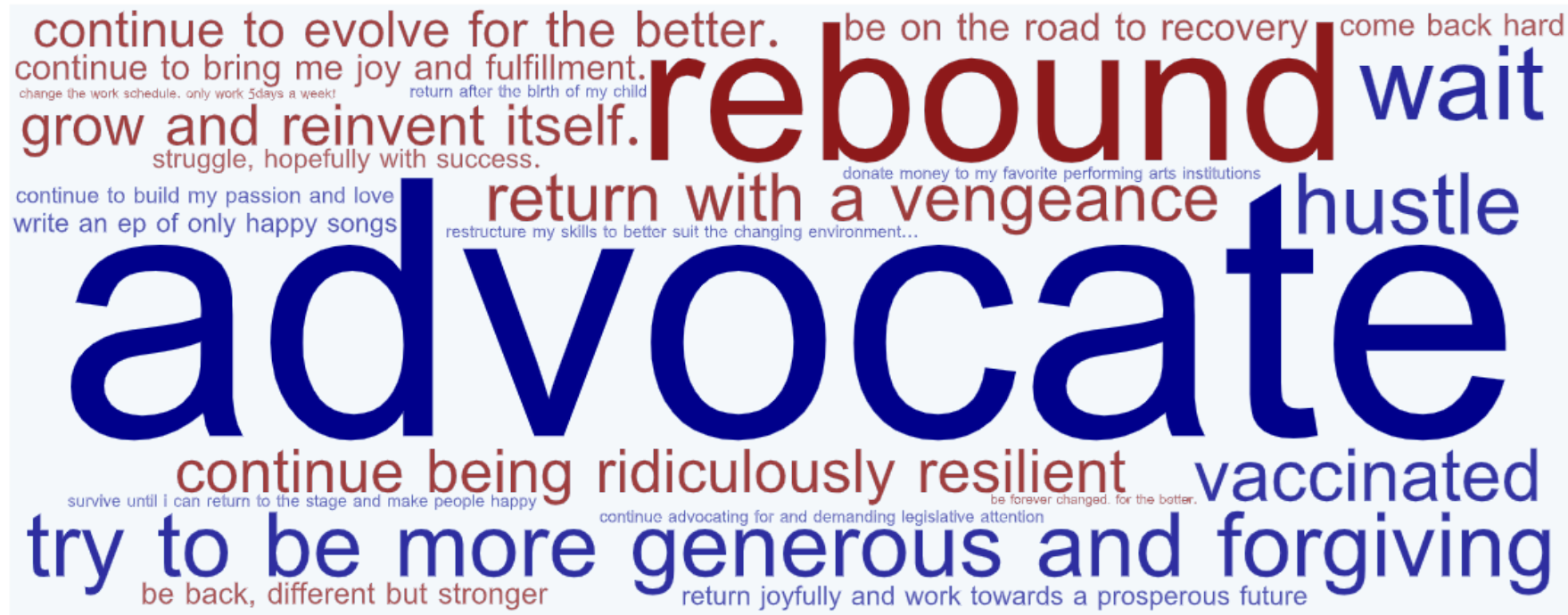


Vaccine adoption is broadly welcomed. Other priorities for return vary, suggesting an inflection point for industry leadership.

Priorities for the return of the Performing Arts, by gender identity



New Year's resolutions draw attention to an optimistic and deeply engaged workforce.



Read more about the New Year's resolution themes at [Stage Directions](https://www.stagedirections.com).

What can we do, going forward?

What we know

Respondents are more resilient and more likely to stay in the field when they **believe their actions have a positive impact** on the Performing Arts.

Communication across the sector is **fragmented**.

Performing Arts workers continue to experience extraordinary levels of **anxiety and despair**.

The 'terms of engagement' we imagine for return vary widely, and some of the divergences suggest an **inflection point for Performing Arts leadership**.

What might be done

Communicate what actions workers can take to strengthen the field.
Recognize and support individuals and their work.

Early communication efforts were hindered by a fear of saying the wrong thing. Future communications need to be **more proactive**.

Make space for workers of all occupations to return safely and at different paces. Create opportunities for workers to have **more agency** in their return.

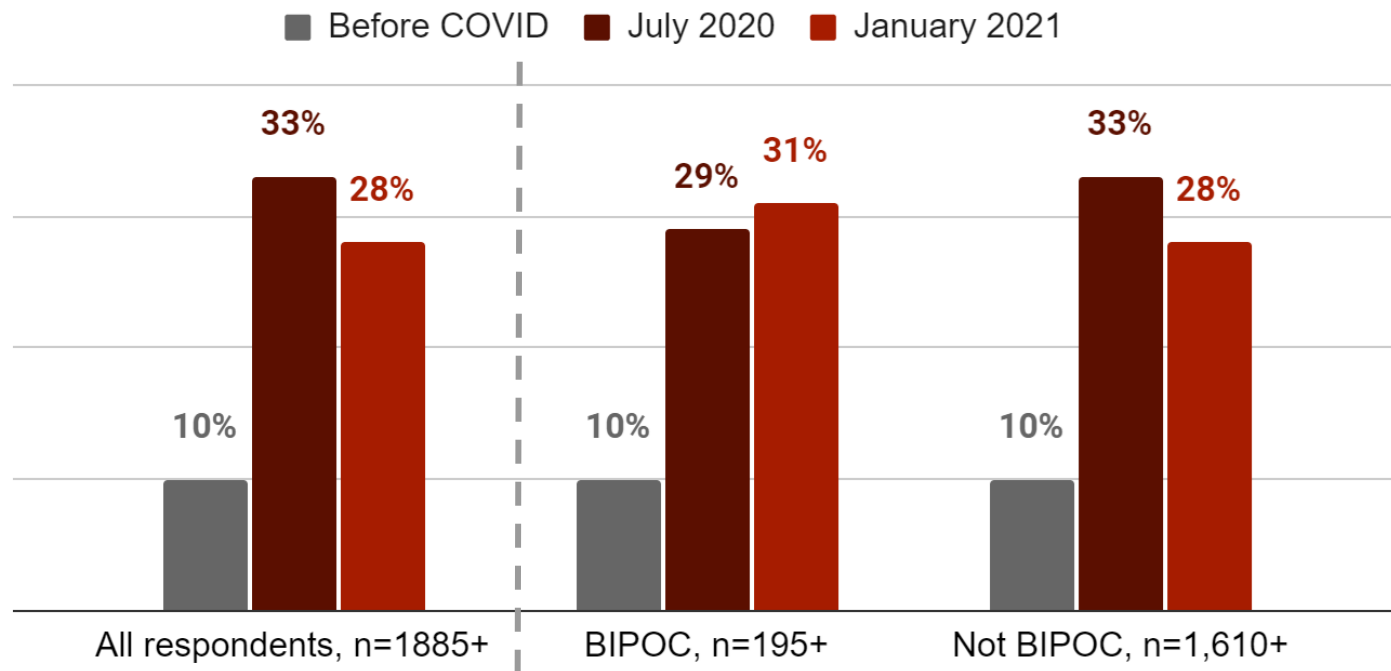
Forge and nurture alliances that are **broadly, intentionally diverse and purpose-driven**.
Reproducing familiar structures may deepen hairline fractures rather than strengthening the field.

“Return, changed but persevering, and I hope that I can return to it as well.”

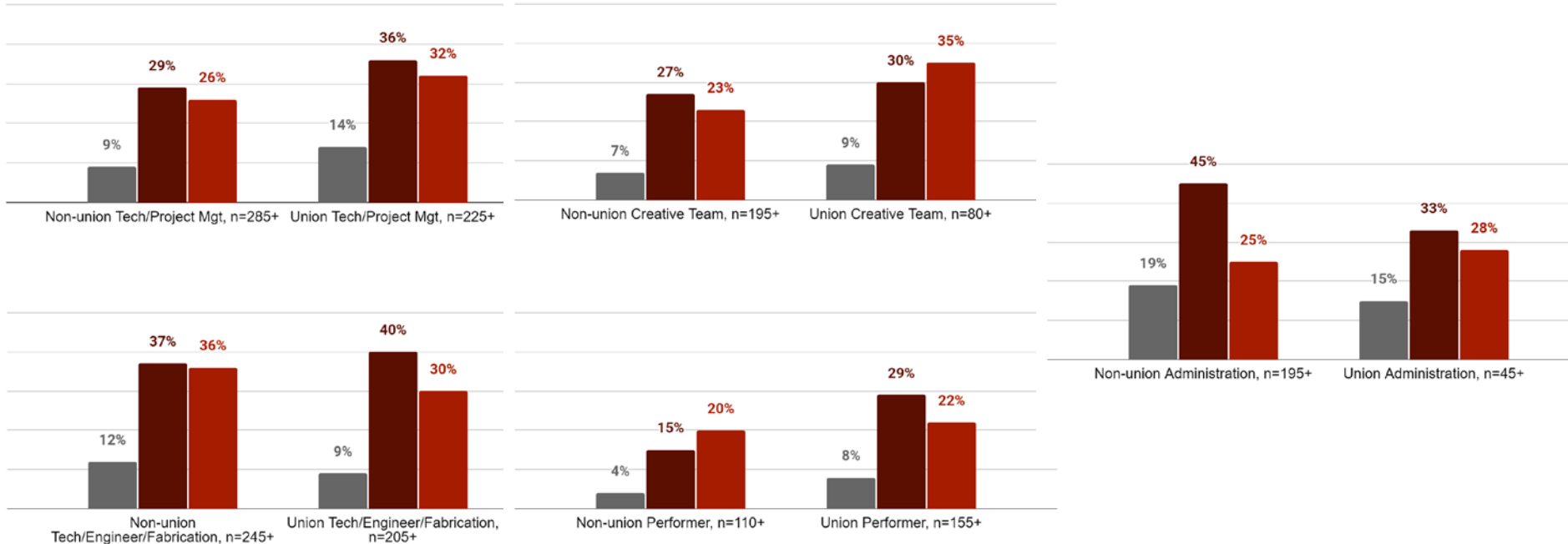
Return to the Stage respondent, January 2021

BIPOC respondents have decreasing confidence that they will remain in the Performing Arts long-term.

Extremely or somewhat likely to leave the field in the next 5 years, by race



Primary occupation, a proxy for union affiliation, suggests areas of concern. The inclination to leave the Performing Arts is slightly higher for union members than for non-union workers.



Thank you.