

## ABSW Covid-19 survey shows science writers worse off in the pandemic

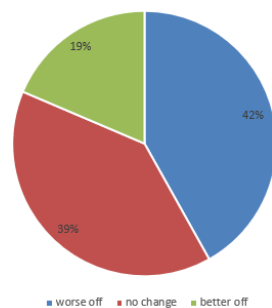
Over two fifths of science writers have found themselves worse off as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, as family commitments, mental health and tightening commissioning budgets took their toll, the ABSW's survey has revealed.

The survey, launched during the UK national lockdown in early May, asked science writers to describe how the pandemic has impacted on their earning power and what action they have taken as a result.

Following is a summary of the 43 responses received as of June 3.

### Question 1 - Has your income been affected by the Covid pandemic?

Around two out every five science writers said they were worse off.



### Question 2 - Please explain how your income has been affected

Of those who said they were worse off, responses included:

*"Hours and pay cut by 80%"*

*"All work non-related to Covid has dried up, and the majority of people not being in the office means that responses to emails have vanished..."*

*"...Writing-wise: One of my two regular contracts on undetermined hold."*

*"Childcare issues reducing hours available to work. Some regular work drying up."*

Of those who said they were better off, responses included:

*"Increased interest in the science has meant greater demand for that kind of journalism..."*

*"...The companies I write for want to let everyone know how and when their technology is being used for COVID19..."*

*"...I have had more pitches accepted and have been reached out to for commissioned work, more so than usual..."*

### Question 3 - Can you share any information about which specific outlets have made changes that affect your income? What were those changes?

Respondents named the BBC, New Scientist, Nature and Wired UK:

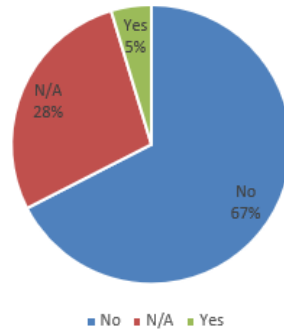
*"More work from the BBC (favouring science journalists and those with news experience) and UKRI..."*

*“Nature and New Scientist just working a lot more slowly on non-Covid articles.”*

*“Wired UK were not commissioning any stories unrelated to coronavirus for a while.”*

#### **Question 4 - Have you been furloughed?**

Only two respondents said they had been furloughed.



#### **Question 5 - Has the Covid pandemic had any other effects on your working life? Can you please explain if so?**

Many respondents said the pandemic was taking its toll:

*“The stress of maintaining food supplies and shielding myself affected my ability to focus on writing.”*

*“...That major outlets are treating the greatest science story in a generation as a political issue has left me convinced science journalism has no future.”*

*“...It is also affecting my physical health since I can't do the necessary exercises that work for me.”*

*“It has been much more difficult to get hold of interviewees...”*

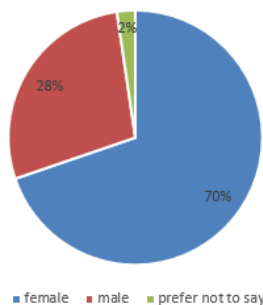
*“...feeling more and more doomed every day.”*

Though some also saw the bright side:

*“I've actually been more productive since I'm always at home and don't have to spend time going to cafes and meetings etc.”*

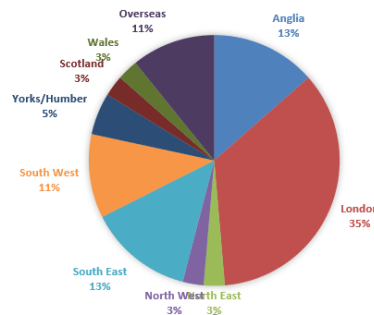
*“...many of the kinds of things I'm interested in have moved online, so I'm sampling a wider range of events in different locations than I would have been able to normally.”*

#### **Question 6 - What is your gender?**



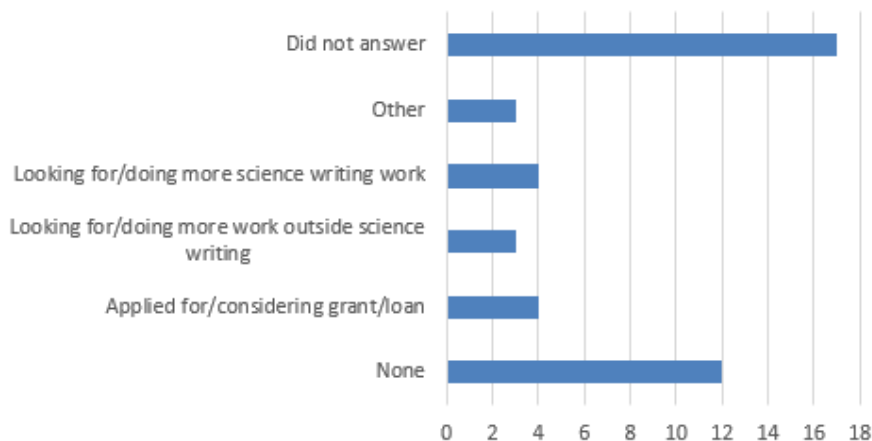
### Question 7 - Where are you located?

More than one in three respondents was based in London, while the survey also had respondents from as far afield as China and the USA.



### Question 8 - What action have you taken, if any, to supplement your income?

While the majority said they are not taking any specific action, or declined to answer, three respondents (7%) said they would be seeking more work outside science writing, while four (9%) said they were doing or were hoping to do more science writing work. Four said they would be seeking loans or grants.



### Question 9 - ABSW Membership Status

The survey also proved to be a good opportunity for recruitment as several non-members asked for information about joining.

