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Ireland: Basic Income for Artists Boosts Creativity and Wellbeing

A two-year impact assessment of Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) pilot scheme has revealed significant positive impacts in the life and work of artists. The weekly €325 payment has boosted creative practice and improved the wellbeing of recipients.

A two-year impact assessment of Ireland's Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) pilot scheme has revealed significant positive impacts on the creative practice and wellbeing of artists and arts workers.

The report, published in September 2025, found that recipients of the weekly €325 payment are more likely to have worked in the arts, spent more hours on their creative practice, and completed more new works than their counterparts in a control group.

The BIA scheme was introduced to address financial instability in the sector following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The evaluation compared the experiences of the payment recipients with a control group that did not receive the payment but was otherwise similar.

BIA Halts the Decline of Arts Work

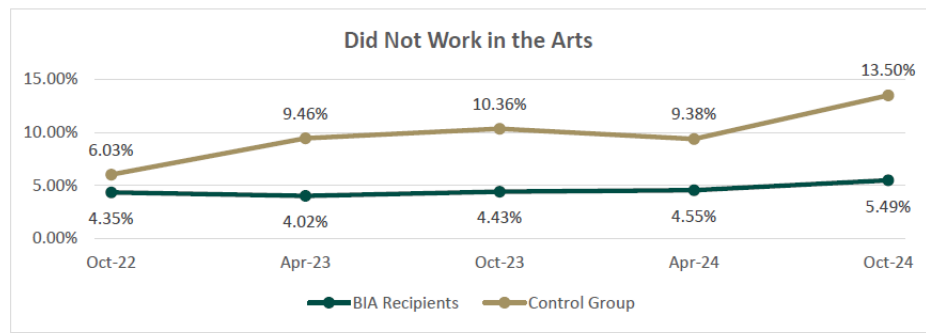
The report provides evidence that the BIA payment is helping to retain artists and creative workers within the sector.

While the percentage of the control group who had not worked in the arts in the previous six months rose from 6% in October 2022 to 13.5% in October 2024, the rate for BIA recipients remained stable, fluctuating between 4% and 5.5% over the same period.

BIA recipients were found to be 6 percentage points more likely to have worked in the arts in the previous six months compared to the control group. This trend is visualized in the chart “Did Not Work in the Arts”.

The report quotes a member of the control group who explains, “It’s getting harder and harder to make work because of a lack of spaces and finances”.

Figure 1 Did Not Work in the Arts



A core objective of the pilot was to enable artists to focus on their creative work. The report indicates that BIA recipients consistently spent more time on their arts practice than the control group.

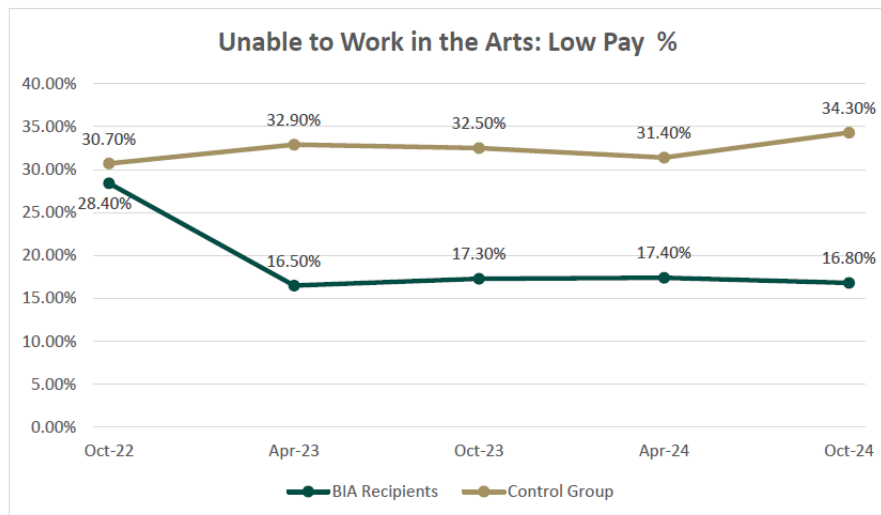
By October 2024, recipients were spending nearly 24 hours a week on “making work,” compared to 19 hours a week for the control group, who have been allocating fewer hours to this activity over time.

Overall, BIA recipients spend an average of 11 weekly hours more on their creative practice than the control group. This includes an average of 5.3 more hours making work and 2.9 more hours on research and experimentation.

A BIA recipient noted this freedom, saying, “Having the time to explore new things, having the time to actually sit down and make my work, without having to shoehorn it into any Arts Council applications has been liberating.”

Another recipient added, “Every country needs artists, but artists can’t be manufactured, they need to grow. The BIA is a huge step towards that.”

Figure 17 Unable to Work in the Arts Due to Low Pay

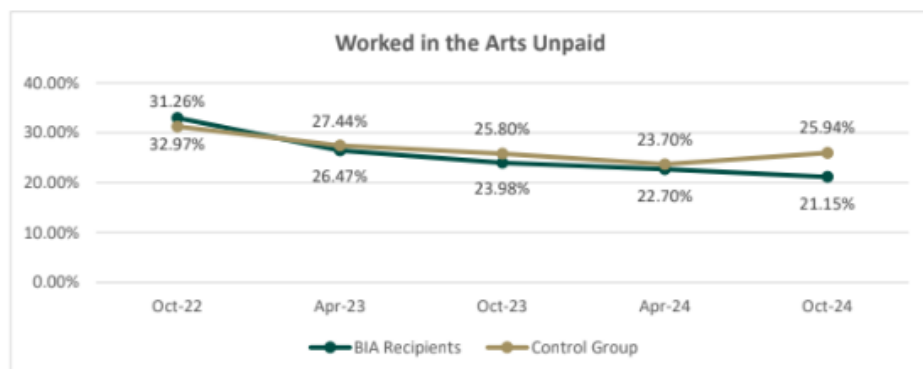


The increase in time spent on their practice has translated into higher production. BIA recipients were 14 percentage points more likely to have completed new works in the previous six months, producing an average of 3.9 pieces of work more than the control group.

They also invested an average of €250 more per month in their practice on items like equipment, materials, and workspaces, compared to their counterparts. However, the report found that the BIA payment had no statistically significant impact on the price of commissions.

Reducing Financial Stress and Improving Wellbeing

Figure 4 Worked in the Arts Unpaid



The BIA payment has significantly reduced the proportion of artists who feel that “low pay” is a barrier to working in the arts.

The percentage of recipients who felt this way dropped from 28.4% at the start of the pilot to 16.8% two years later, while for the control group, the rate increased from 30.7% to 34.3%.

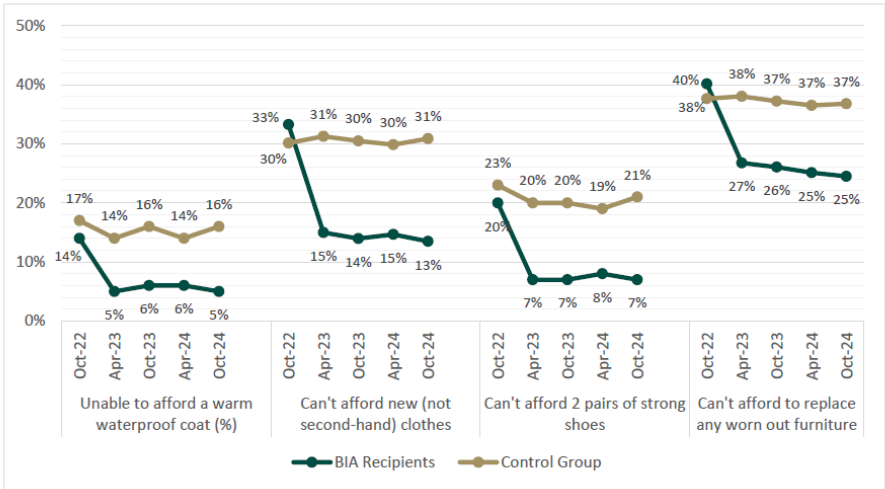
A BIA recipient shared the personal impact, stating, “Previously as my income was variable it led to periods of depression and poverty. To have a regular income has minimised those times.”

The report also shows a notable decrease in deprivation among recipients. As of October 2024, almost 30% of BIA recipients were experiencing “enforced deprivation,” meaning they could not afford two or more basic items.

This is a large decrease from the over 56% of respondents who were experiencing this at the start of the pilot.

However, this figure is still significantly higher than the 15.7% rate for the general population in 2024.

Figure 32 Deprivation Items (SILC): Clothes and Household Items



The report also highlights a significant improvement in the mental wellbeing of BIA recipients.

They were found to be 15 percentage points less likely to have felt “downhearted or depressed” and 16 percentage points less likely to have experienced “anxiety” compared to the control group.

While still a high figure, the percentage of recipients reporting feeling depressed or downhearted was 54% in October 2024, a notable improvement compared to 75% for the control group.

One recipient is quoted as saying, “Previously as my income was variable it led to periods of depression and poverty. To have a regular income has minimised those times”.

The report concludes that while the BIA payment has helped artists and creative workers to stay in the sector and has improved their wellbeing, poverty levels within the arts sector

as a whole remain high.

The report states that this is a “symptom of widespread economic dysfunction in the sector”.

You can [download the report here](#). Or visit the Irish government's website [reports page for the BIA here](#).

Image: [The Poet. Charles Robert Leslie, 1815](#), CC0. The Walters Art Museum.