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Report on the Harping Tradition in Ireland

Toner Quinn
October 2014





Harping community meeting in the Arts Council, 2013.

Front row: Máire Ní Chathasaigh; Siobhán Armstrong; Sheila Larchet Cuthbert; Aibhlín McCrann; Áine Ní Dhubhghaill; Caitríona Yeats; Helen Lawlor. Second row: Caitríona Rowsome; Dr Sandra Joyce; Deirdre Granville; Michelle Mulcahy; Laoise Kelly; Janet Harbison; Aisling Ennis; Theresa O'Donnell; Joleen McLaughlin; Ann Jones Walsh; Mary Louise O'Donnell. Third row: Paul Flynn; Tim O'Carroll; Maura Uí Chróinín; Dr Colette Moloney; Deirdre Ní Bhuachalla Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin; Gay McKeon; Geraldine O'Doherty; Úna Ní Fhlannagáin; Claire O'Donnell. Fourth row: Cormac De Barra; Kavan Donohoe; Seosaimhín Ní Bheaglaioich; Kathleen Loughnane; Nicholas Carolan; Mary Nolan and; Catríona Cannon. Back row: Kieran Cummins; Simon Chadwick; Fintan Vallely; Peter Browne; Toner Quinn; Paul Dooley; Jan Muylært. Photo by Maxwell Photography

VOICES OF IRISH HARPERS

'I am proud and delighted by the depth of harp talent in Ireland. I hope that these talented harpists will always be nurtured and helped in the country that has a harp as its national emblem.'

'The interest in the Irish harp is ever increasing and growing worldwide!'

'It never ceases to amaze me the profound effect this beautiful instrument has on audiences all around the world.'

'I think the harp is fast becoming a mainstream instrument, which is brilliant.'

'All Irish children should have an opportunity to hear and see [the harp]... it is part of our culture and heritage and we have a responsibility to try and keep this tradition alive.'

'I find that when I play for people they are... as interested in the stories pertaining to the harp as they are in the music itself.'

'There is a whole market that could be created and developed out of the harp to enhance tourism, cultural life, and generate income.'

'I have been learning the instrument for less than a year, and it's been greatly to my benefit.'

'I have seen the enormous growth in interest in harp playing. Since I started teaching... the amount of students learning harp has doubled.'

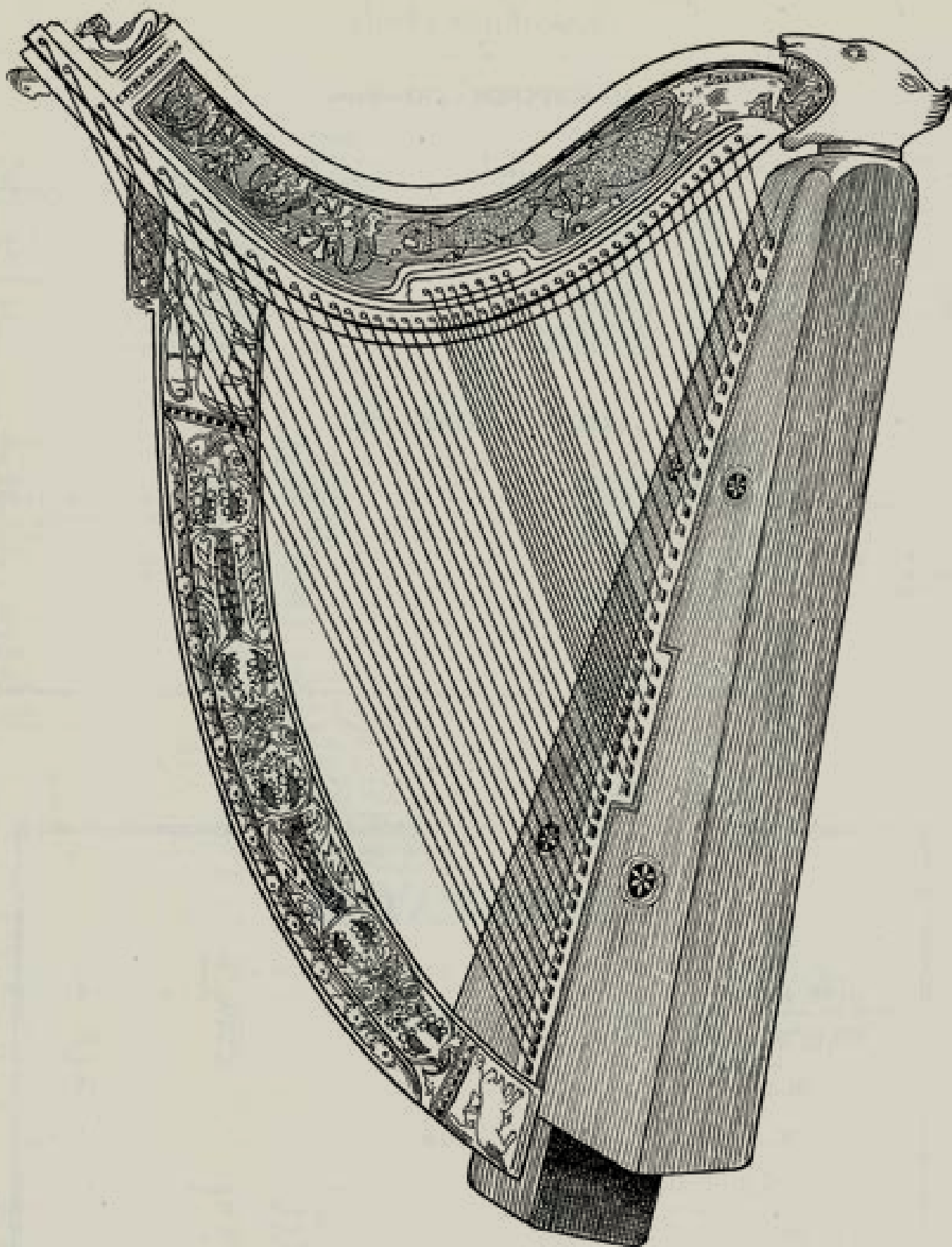
'I think the Irish harp tradition is inspirational worldwide.'



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Janet Harbison conducts *Brian Boru Lion of Ireland* – an orchestral suite for harps, pipes and voices, 2014.
Photo by John Garrett



The Dalway Harp

*Made in A.D. 1621, by Donal O'Dermody of Kilkenny,
for Sir John Fitz Edmund Fitzgerald of Cloyne,
Co. Cork, Ireland.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over several centuries, from at least 1,000AD, a rich culture of performance, composition, improvisation, ensemble and craftsmanship developed around the harp in Ireland. Yet by the end of the 1700s, after successive waves of plantation, the social structure that supported it had been decimated and the tradition reduced to modest numbers of travelling solo harpers.

A small sample of this historic tradition was captured in print by Edward Bunting at the Belfast Harpers' Assembly of 1792. At this time the harp was also chosen by political nationalists as a symbol of the country's cultural ingenuity. This symbolism survives to this day.

Despite the national importance of the instrument, Irish harp practice continued to decline throughout the 19th century, right up until our time.

Due to an outstanding effort by a small Irish harping community over the past sixty years, however, Irish harping has been revived and reimagined, and this thousand-year-old bedrock of Irish artistic life is now stronger than it has been for two hundred years.

It is an exciting niche scene in contemporary Irish musical life, undergoing a new wave of performance, composition, collaboration and experimentation, and enriched by world-class Irish and international practitioners.

Despite its growing popularity, however, the profile of Irish harping remains extremely low. Key among the reasons are:

- a lack of public education about, and awareness of, the diversity and vibrancy of contemporary practice and the rich harping tradition;
- a lack of significant annual showcase opportunities in Dublin (or Belfast) for contemporary Irish harp practice (equivalent, for example, to the Edinburgh International Harp Festival in Scotland);
- the prohibitive cost of instruments and the lack of a national harp-rental scheme (such as also exists in Scotland);
- the small number of Irish harp makers and the lack of research into, or documentation of, Irish harp-making;
- an under-resourced and dispersed support infrastructure, with no umbrella body, central organisation or physical headquarters for Irish harp practice;
- a low number of applications from harpers for the available Arts Council award schemes, including commissions of new work;
- no central database of available tuition;
- the lack of availability of harp tradition at a number of traditional music festivals;



Paul Dooley, Úna Ní Fhlannagáin, Caitríona Rowsome, Máire Ní Chathasaigh and Deirdre Granville. Meeting in the Arts Council, 2013.
Photo by Maxwell Photography

- the unsuitability of some Arts Council schemes to the harp sector;
- the great deal of research and publishing that still remains to be carried out on the Irish harping tradition.

This report makes fourteen recommendations that could address this situation, including,

- support for an Irish Harp Forum that encompassed all harp organisations;
- increased support for the key organisations Cairde na Cruite, the Historical Harp Society of Ireland and the Irish Harp Centre;
- support for research into the development of an Irish Harp Centre;
- ensuring that Arts Council schemes are flexible enough to accommodate and support the full range of Irish harping activity;
- support for professional training development for harpers;
- a public awareness initiative to encourage more harpers to apply for the Arts Council's range of schemes, bursaries and commission awards;
- support for the introduction of a national harp-rental scheme;
- capitalising on the occasion of the 2016 Commemoration through the establishment of an annual Irish harp festival in Dublin;
- encouraging more traditional music festivals to provide harp tuition;
- the creation of a database of available tuition and events where potential students can try the Irish harp (such as Na Píobairí Uilleann undertakes with the uilleann pipes);
- supporting Irish harp-makers by encouraging them to apply for relevant supports;
- support for more research and publication on the Irish harping tradition.

The Irish harp lies at the cusp of reclaiming a prominent place in Irish cultural life, bringing with it a depth of tradition and musical creativity that is unique. Its potential for inspiring and enriching the Irish arts across the entire contemporary spectrum is relatively untapped. After a thousand-year journey for the Irish harp, 2015 represents an opportunity for the Arts Council to put the contemporary supports for the instrument on a more secure footing, and to ensure this historic Irish tradition flourishes into the future.



Harper Laoise Kelly performing in *Sokolo – Atlantic Rhythms*
with artists from Ireland and Quebec, 2015.
Photo by Brian Farrell

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of July 2014, I returned from three days at An Chúirt Chruitireachta, the Irish harp summer school and concert series that has taken place for twenty-nine years in Termonfeckin, Co. Louth. That evening, I happened upon a discussion on RTÉ Television's *Primetime* on the Irish Government's 2014 budgetary plans.

It wasn't long before I began to notice the large image intermittently flashing up on the screen behind the discussion. It is an image that in Ireland we have become so used to that it is sometimes almost invisible to us, and yet there it was, at the heart of our national affairs, its presence a perennial reminder of the depth of Irish musical expression, and it is still reaching out to us 1,000 years on.

The image of the harp will not just be found in television discussions of the national Budget, but on every letter written by an Irish Teachta Dála, in the logos of State departments, on the President's seal of office, on our coinage and car-tax discs, on the hats of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, on the British pound coin, in the masthead of an Irish national newspaper, in the architecture of the Custom House and the Samuel Beckett Bridge in Dublin, on glasses of stout in every public house in Ireland, and in countless other forms relating to Irishness, not only in Ireland but throughout the world.

What does it mean to have a musical instrument as a national symbol? And what do we know about this instrument that we see every day, but do not hear often enough? What can it communicate to us about our music and history, and even about ourselves?

Having a harp as a national symbol only matters if we give *meaning* to that symbolism – through engagement and action – and a musical instrument offers us a particular opportunity.

The harp has the potential to be not just a symbol on paper, but a symbol of how we nurture and care for our musical traditions, our history and culture, our diversity, and the musical opportunities we provide to our citizens. It is because of the harp's deep role in our society over a millennium that this opportunity is so meaningful.

To many Irish people, the harp may have become something remote. It has not had the prominence of other aspects of our musical life, nor the caché. And yet, through an extraordinary effort among harpers, organisations and lovers of the instrument over the past sixty years, there has been a great revival in Irish harping. Irish harp music today is a journey that is awaiting us all.

At this moment, the Irish harp scene has reached new levels of participation and interest, and the Arts Council has a rare opportunity to help it reach its full potential.

There are harping traditions throughout the world, from Sub-Saharan Africa to South America, from Asia to Europe, and Ireland is fortunate to have an ancient harping tradition about which we are finding out more and more with modern research. It is a tradition that has been recovered, recreated, reimagined and reinterpreted for the present day. The harp is a historical bedrock of Irish musical life.

When we think of Irish harping, *diversity* must be a key word. It is an instrument that has been played on this island for an estimated 1,000 years – several hundred years longer than what we regard today as Irish traditional music – and it is extremely multi-faceted, challenging our contemporary definitions of musical genres.

Indeed, there is not just one Irish harp but rather there is the *Irish lever harp*, which is the most popular today and whose origins lie in the development of a new Irish harp 200 years ago, and the *early Irish harp*, which was played up until the 1800s and then practically died out, but which is currently undergoing a renaissance. There is also the concert harp, which is generally associated with Western classical music, but upon which Irish harp music is also played and which has played an important role in the development of the current Irish harp scene. Many harpers, as this report will show, play more than one type.

I use the terms 'early Irish harp' and 'Irish lever harp' in this report for clarity. Practitioners would generally say that they play the 'harp', 'Irish harp' or 'historical harp', and '*an chruit*', '*an chláirseach*' or '*an tseanchláirseach*' in Irish.

(It is well to point out at this early stage that the harp that is Ireland's national symbol – the harp on our coins – is an early Irish harp. Known as the 'Brian Boru' harp, it dates from the 15th century and is held at Trinity College Dublin. Replicas have been created so that we can hear what it sounds like – and who today would not want to hear how that harp sounded?)

All expressions of the Irish harp tradition are dynamic, contemporary arts practices. There are of course differences in style, opinion and approach – and long may they last – but it is this diversity that makes the harp scene particularly engaging, rich and musically enthralling.

In the course of this research over the summer of 2014, I attended several harp recitals and was repeatedly struck by the range of material that a harping concert can cover.

The harp is different because it can act as both a solo instrument and an accompanying instrument – it is similar in expressive range to a keyboard instrument in that regard.

It can lend itself to a vast range of performance formats, from harp ensembles and orchestras to accompanying other instruments and singers; performing solos, such as interpretations of the music of the early harper composers; or indeed a harper may sing and accompany themselves at the same time, performing either traditional or contemporary songs.

As the reader will see from this report, there is great variety in Irish harping practice, but as a community there is one issue on which they are generally united, and that is that the low profile and outdated image of Irish harping is a stumbling block towards the instrument's future development.

The image of an 'Irish colleen' playing background music and singing wistful Irish songs is not the reality of the contemporary Irish harping scene. Bubbling beneath this cliché is an art form that is alive, virtuosic, contemplative, innovative and historic – and replete with both young talent and world-class performers ambitious to receive the recognition they deserve.

This report begins with a very brief history of the harp in Ireland – which is necessary to appreciate how deep its roots are – followed by detail on the contemporary harp scene as uncovered by the recent Survey of Harpers, and finally a section on current challenges followed by 14 recommendations for future development.

It has been a privilege for me to carry out this research. Learning more about the depth of the harping tradition, and contemporary harping, was illuminating, both about Irish music and Ireland itself.

I am grateful to the Irish harping community for being so generous with their knowledge and time, for accommodating my many questions, and for welcoming me at various concerts and festivals.

It is my hope that this report will result in many more people having the opportunity to experience the wealth of our harping tradition, that it will thrive in the future, and that Ireland will be seen as an exemplar of a country that nurtures and supports its musical traditions.

Toner Quinn
October 2014

1. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This research was commissioned in June 2014. It followed a meeting of Irish harpers that took place in the Arts Council on 16 October 2013.

Organised by the Council, this historic meeting had 47 attendees, primarily from the Irish harping community, but also including representatives from key traditional music organisations and the wider music community.

Three key ambitions came to the fore during this meeting:

- the establishment of a National Harp Forum;
- the establishment of an International Centre for the Harp in Ireland; and
- the establishment of an International Irish Harp Day.

There was also a focus on:

- introducing more supports for harp-making in Ireland, and
- the need for core regular funding for harp organisations from the Arts Council, as opposed to them being reliant on project or festival funding.

In response, the Council committed to commissioning research into the harping tradition as a basis for future development and a public tender was issued in April 2014.

Harp Symposium, 2010

The meeting in the Arts Council was itself preceded by a Harp Symposium that took place three years earlier as part of An Chúirt Chruitreachta, International Festival or Irish Harp, in Termonfeckin, Co. Louth, in June 2010.

Organised by Cairde na Cruite, it identified the following issues

- the necessity of a centre for Irish harping;
- the need for more collaboration between harp organisations;
- the importance of safe-guarding of the early harp repertoire;
- the establishment of a national database for teachers;
- the need to ensure that high-quality tuition is available;
- the introduction of a harp-making apprenticeship scheme.



Kavan Donohue, Claire O'Donnell, Dr Colette Moloney, Kieran Cummins, Seosaimhín Ní Bheaglaioich, Aibhlín McCrann, Fintan Vallely, Nicholas Carolan, Cormac de Barra. Meeting in the Arts Council, 2013.
Photo by Maxwell Photography

Research brief

The purpose of this research, as defined by the Arts Council, was as follows:

- To examine the harping tradition in Ireland and the issues affecting its development. The research should:
 - document and measure the range and level of harping activity in all its forms, including harp making;
 - identify the immediate and long term needs of the harping community;
 - assess the impact of Arts Council and other support to date; and
 - identify issues for the future of the harping tradition in continued support of the traditional arts.
- The research should also:
 - analyse the opportunities for and barriers to the development of the harp in Ireland;
 - consider ways to supporting public engagement with and awareness of the harp in Ireland;
 - assess practitioner and stakeholder experiences of, and expectations for, the development of the harp in Ireland;
 - provide recommendations for consideration by the Arts Council and other stakeholders in relation to potential actions in this areas; and
 - analyse the long-term potential or possible sustainability of any such recommendations.

Context

The context for the report was further detailed by the Arts Council as follows:

In 2004, after an in-depth consultation with the traditional arts community in Ireland, the Arts Council published its findings in *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts*.

Since then there has been a significant investment by the Arts Council in traditional music, song, dance and oral arts. This has made a significant impact in supporting the preservation and promotion of the traditional arts, has helped instil a new-found confidence in traditional artists and has also encouraged a significant development of the artform and its audiences. The Arts Council recognises that the harp has an important standing within the wider traditional arts in Ireland. It is a primary national symbol and a distinctive sound of Ireland.

In undertaking this research, it is the intention of the Arts Council to examine the current state of harping in Ireland to identify gaps and explore opportunities for cooperation and development.

The research findings will provide guidance regarding the future development of harping in Ireland, as well as informing practical measures to support this area.

Methodology

The methodology for this research consisted of

- an online Survey of Harpers;
- interviews with
 - harpers; and representatives of Irish harp organisations;
 - representatives of other Irish and international harp, music and arts organisations;
- attendance at harp events;
- desk research.

Survey of Harpers

The Survey of Harpers was issued online in both English and Irish on 19 June 2014. The deadline provided was 8 July, though this was extended to 14 July to accommodate harpers attending Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy.

The Survey consisted of 62 questions over 13 pages and was broken into 11 sections: Background; Harp Practice; Performance; Composition and Arrangement; Teaching; Musical Background; Students; Recordings, Publications & Resources; Funding; Career and Organisations and Harp-Makers.

In total, 397 responses were received, 272 of which were fully completed surveys. The sample size for each question can be seen at the bottom of each bar chart. Twenty harpers (5%) gave their responses in Irish.

Survey of Harpers / *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts*

This is the second time in ten years that the Arts Council has commissioned research into the traditional-arts scene in Ireland.

In 2004, when the Special Committee on the Traditional Arts undertook a process of public consultation, leading to the publication of *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts*, a total of 87 submissions was received from the entire spectrum of Irish traditional music, song and dance. None was received from a harper or Irish harp organisation. The Committee subsequently consulted with a representative of Cairde na Cruite on the issue of the price of harps.

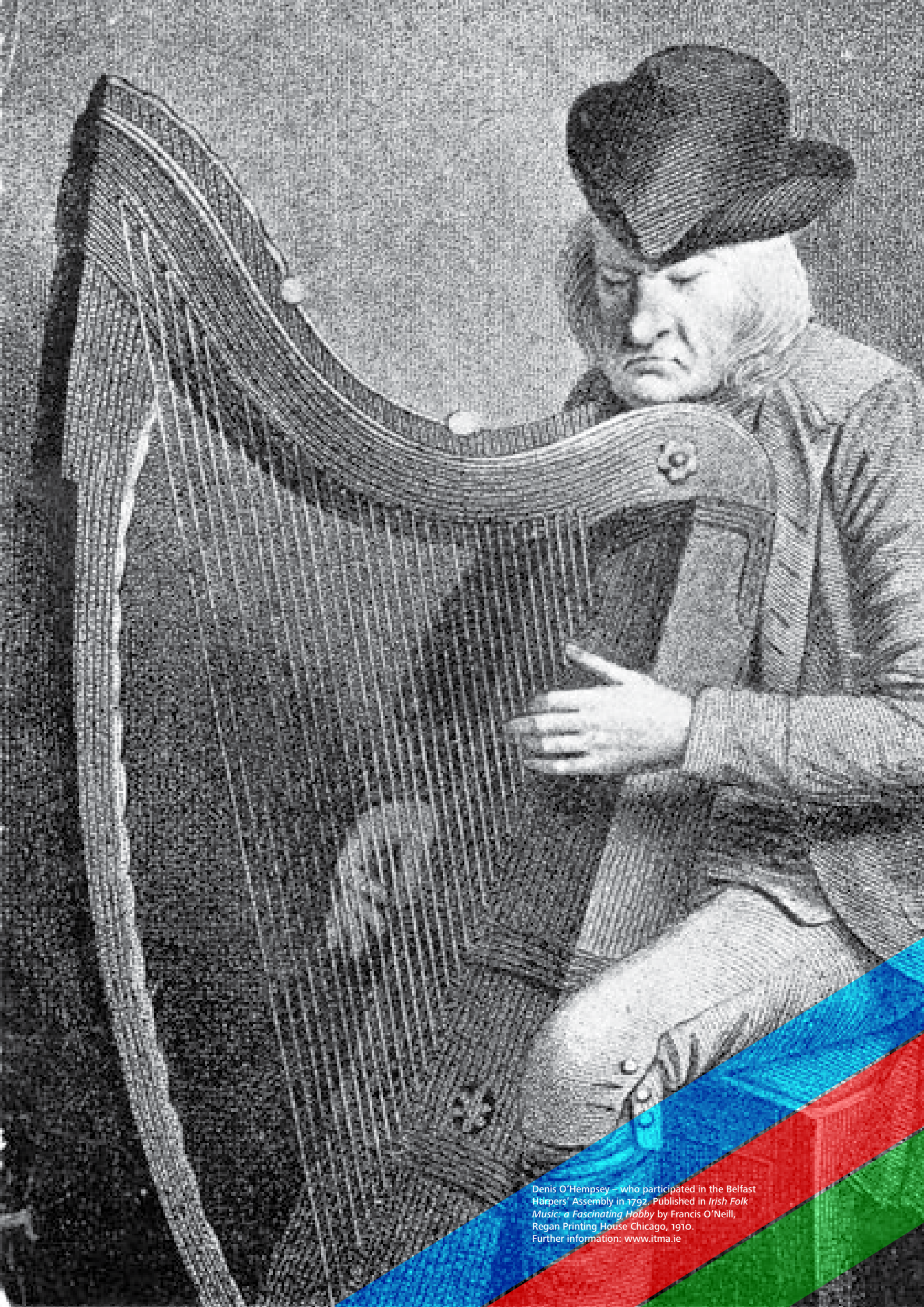
For 397 harpers to respond to the Survey of Harpers just nine years later is therefore quite extraordinary, and exceeded all expectations.

It is partly a result of the changed media environment – social media, email and online news sources played an important role in disseminating the survey – but it is also a result of the growth in harp playing and the clear passion for the instrument that harpers have.

Traditional Arts Funding

Following the publication of *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts* in 2004, the Arts Council in 2005 committed to increasing the traditional arts budget to €3 million in 2006, rising to €5 million in 2008.

The economic crisis has prevented this development. The Arts Council's grant from the Irish Exchequer has fallen by 31.5%, from €83m in 2007 to €56.9m in 2014. The total direct funding for traditional arts in 2012 was €2m and in 2013 it was €1.8m.



Denis O'Hempsey – who participated in the Belfast Harpers' Assembly in 1792. Published in *Irish Folk Music: a Fascinating Hobby* by Francis O'Neill, Regan Printing House Chicago, 1910. Further information: www.itma.ie

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HARP IN IRELAND

The Aristocracy

A frame supporting strings rising from a sound-box – that in essence is what a harp is. This is why there are so many harp traditions around the world. It is not unusual, therefore, that Ireland would have a harping tradition. What is significant is that the harp came to have such status in Irish society – or, more precisely, *Gaelic society*.

Gaelic society was the dominant social structure across Ireland and the Scottish Highlands up until the 1600s. These two territories were intimately connected. It was across that Gaelic society that the harp was the instrument of the aristocracy. The harper performed in various contexts – accompanying the words of the *file* or poet that were recited by the *reacaire* or reciter, and composing and performing instrumental music also.

This was the entertainment of the Gaelic aristocracy. It was high art, an indigenous music that had developed over several hundred years, and around which an entire culture of performance, composition, improvisation, ensemble and craftsmanship had accumulated.

Disruption

With the disruption through English plantations of Gaelic society in the 1600s – the climax of waves of invasion that had started in the twelfth century – the role of harpers began to change radically. The roles that were once separate now began to merge.

Harpers were increasingly solo artists – composing, playing and singing – travelling and visiting the houses of patrons and providing entertainment for a living. They adapted to the new power system, and were patronised by the courts and houses of English aristocracy in Ireland as well as the Irish. Others left Ireland and have been documented as performing at European courts.

The plantation of Ireland ultimately decided the fate of the Irish harping tradition, but harmonic developments in European music also meant that tastes were changing too. Turlough Carolan (1670–1738) from Nobber, Co. Meath – today Ireland's most celebrated early harper – tried to bridge the gap between the old and the new by composing works that combined the Gaelic tradition with the new musical style emanating from Italy.

But along with changes in musical style, musical literacy was also developing, and would challenge the status of oral traditions. While Carolan was still alive, the first printed collection of Irish music appeared, published by John and William Neal in Dublin in 1724.

Four days in Belfast

By c. 1750 in Scotland, the Gaelic harp tradition had died, but it persisted in Ireland, and attempts were made to revive it in the late 1700s – a series of competitions were organised for harpers in the 1780s in Granard, County Longford, and then, most significantly, a four-day event was held in Belfast in 1792.

The organisers of the Belfast Harpers' Assembly – which has become known as the Belfast Harp Festival – offered financial reward to harpers to come and perform on 10–13 July 1792, and engaged a nineteen-year-old organist from Armagh named Edward Bunting to transcribe the music they played.

Eleven harpers attended (ten Irish and one Welsh), six of whom were blind. It became Bunting's life's work – he did much more than transcribe, he interviewed them too, and notated additional aspects of their musical approach, playing techniques and the terminology they used. Bunting went on to publish several collections. The importance of Bunting's work to Irish harpers today cannot be overestimated.

Though only one harper in Belfast played with finger-nails, harpers of the early harping tradition generally employed this technique, the left hand above the right, and employed a method of 'damping' in order to control the resonance of the wire strings. This is the technique that early Irish harpers use today.

Decline and birth

By 1816, all of the harpers that attended the 1792 festival were dead. The harp became an instrument of concern to revivalists and nationalists, but by the third decade of the 1800s, numbers were smaller again.

There were periodic efforts to revive the instrument – the teaching and concert activities of short-lived harp societies in Dublin, Belfast and Drogheda in the first half of the century, as well as a vocal and harp concert series in Dublin in 1869 and a harp revival festival in 1879, but the harp was not prominent in Irish musical life in the nineteenth century.

The instrument itself was undergoing substantial change. As instrument-makers in Europe brought the concert harp to new levels of technical development, a Dublin instrument maker in the early 1800s, John Egan, developed a harp that combined the visual style of the early Irish harp but which incorporated technical advances from the modern concert harp.

This was the antecedent of the modern Irish lever harp. This instrument is played with the finger-tips, with the right hand above the left, is strung with nylon strings rather than wire, and produces a very different sound.

A female instrument

The symbolic value of the harp in Ireland – it had been selected by the United Irishman as a symbol of nationhood – meant that the instrument would never be entirely neglected, but there were no entrants for the Feis Ceoil competition for the harp in the 1890s. The Gaelic League, which had been established in 1893, subsequently purchased several instruments in order to try and encourage more practitioners.

Convent schools played a central role at the turn of the twentieth century in continuing to teach the harp. A Mother Attracta Coffey produced the first tutor for the Irish harp in 1903, and, concurrently, the harp-maker James McFall in Belfast further refined the style and make of the Irish harp.

For the first four decades of the twentieth century, the Irish harp was taught by a small number of teachers, and the number of practitioners remained correspondingly small.

While the harp was traditionally a male instrument – and often an occupation for the blind – it became an instrument associated with women over the course of the nineteenth century, a practice that was continued with its teaching in girls' schools.

Revival

The revival of both the uilleann pipes and the Irish harp was a core aim of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann when it was established in 1951.

In the late 1950s, a number of female Irish harpers, notably Mary O'Hara, came to public prominence for performing song with harp accompaniment.

A gap existed, however, between the traditional music that was becoming increasingly popular among a new generation at *fleadhanna ceoil* organised by Comhaltas, and the style, practice and repertoire of the Irish harp.

When Seán Ó Riada established his group Ceoltóirí Chualann in 1960, he rejected the modern Irish harp in favour of the harpsichord – it was his attempt at recreating the sound of the early Irish harp tradition. Ó Riada did, however, awaken a new interest in the music of Turlough Carolan.

Cairde na Cruite ('Friends of the Harp') was established in 1960 to promote the harp through performance, education and publication, and in 1975 published *The Irish Harp Book* by Sheila Larchet Cuthbert. This seminal publication contained lessons in harp technique as well as a range of studies, exercises and arrangements by contemporary Irish composers.

Pioneering

As Irish traditional music became increasingly popular, the harp's absorption into the mainstream was slow, but significant initiatives were taking place.

Breton harper Alan Stivell in 1971 released his pioneering album, *Renaissance of the Celtic Harp*, Moya Brennan recorded the harp in contemporary arrangements with the group Clannad (1970 onwards), Aibhlín McCrann recorded with Ceoltóirí Laighean (1973/75) and harpist Derek Bell joined The Chieftains in 1975 and released the first of several Irish harp recordings.

Meanwhile, the revival of the early Irish harping practice began when Gráinne Yeats had a wire-strung harp made for her in 1970, and in the USA, Ann Heymann obtained a copy of the eighteenth-century Otway harp. In 1979, Heymann released *Let Erin Remember*, the first commercial recording to try and accurately recreate the music of the early Irish harper tradition.

Dance music

Competitions on harp were introduced at Fleadh Cheol na hÉireann in the early 1970s. In the same decade harps were being imported into Ireland that, with a lighter construction and a lighter string gauge, lent themselves more to playing traditional Irish dance music with speed and dexterity.

Harpers Máire Ní Chathasaigh from Bandon, Co. Cork, and Janet Harbison from Dublin championed traditional Irish dance music on the harp. Helen Lawlor, in her book *Irish Harping: 1900–2010* describes this moment as a 'watershed'¹, as traditional dance tunes came to be performed on the harp in a style similar to that of instruments such as the uilleann pipes and fiddle.

The subsequent extensive teaching of this traditional style, both nationally and internationally, continued to increase the number of practitioners and began to direct the harping tradition more towards mainstream traditional music.

Education

In 1985, Ní Chathasaigh released *The New-Strung Harp*, the first recording on Irish harp dedicated to traditional Irish dance music, and, in the same year, Cairde na Cruite, with 25 pupils, established a residential summer school, An Chúirt Chruitreachta, in Termonfeckin, Co. Louth.

Harbison also established several centres for harp tuition in the 1980s, and formed the Belfast Harp Orchestra in 1992, which collaborated with The Chieftains on *The Celtic Harp: A Tribute to Edward Bunting*, which won a Grammy.

1. Lawlor, Helen, *Irish Harping, 1900–2010* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), p. 91.

Two hundred years on

The bicentenary of the 1792 Belfast Harpers' Assembly was marked by a World Harp Festival in Belfast organised by Harbison, as well as by the publication of *The Harp of Ireland: The Belfast Harpers' Festival, 1792* and *the saving of Ireland's harp music by Edward Bunting* by Gráinne Yeats.

In 1994, Yeats also released a recording of the music of the 1792 harp festival performed on wire-strung harp.

Laoise Kelly from Mayo, who specialised in Irish traditional dance music, raised the profile of the instrument further when she appeared in the BBC series *River of Sound* (1995), and in 2001, Máire Ní Chathasaigh was the first harper to be awarded the TG4 Gradam Ceoil, the premier traditional music award. This was followed in 2006 by harper Michelle Mulcahy receiving Ceoltóir Óg na Bliana ('Young Musician of the Year'), also the first harper to do so.

Borradh

The Historical Harp Society of Ireland was founded in 2003 by harper and early music specialist Siobhán Armstrong, the Irish Harp Centre was established by Janet Harbison in Castleconnell, Co. Limerick, in 2002, and in 2008, in its 35th year, Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, one of the largest traditional music festivals, introduced harp lessons at the school for the very first time.

In 2010, Nicholas Carolan, Director of the Irish Traditional Music Archive, could write:

'Is léir d'éinne a d'fhreasail ar chruinnithe de chruitirí na hÉireann le blianta beaga anuas go bhfuil borradh taghta ar shaol na cruite...'²

('It is clear to anyone who has attended gatherings of Irish harpers in recent years that there has been a resurgence in harping...')

In the context of the outline presented above, the meeting of harpers in the Arts Council in October 2013 was the latest historic step in an extraordinary journey for the instrument.

2. Carolan, Nicholas, 'Foreword' in *Rogha na gCruitirí – Harpers' Choice: 100 traditional tunes for the Irish harp* (Dublin: Cairde na Cruite, 2010), p. v.



Mary Bergin, Antoinette McKenna and Joe McKenna
at Liberty Hall for the 'Ace and Deuce of Piping' 2011.
Photo by Johnny Savage

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I am grateful to Siobhán Armstrong, Simon Chadwick, Janet Harbison, Máire Ní Chathasaigh, Áine Ní Dhubhghaill, Mary Louise O'Donnell and Michael Rooney for additional information.



Harp on the Liffey
– the launch of love: live music 2010.
Photo by Maxwell Photography

3. THE CONTEMPORARY HARP SCENE IN IRELAND: RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY OF HARPERS

Introduction

The purpose of the Survey of Harpers was to obtain an insight into contemporary Irish harp practice, and to act as a basis for further research, which then took place in the form of interviews and desk research.

Direct results of the survey are included in this section.

There are over 50 bar charts, some of which speak for themselves, while others have a short commentary.

3.1 Harper numbers

The harp appears to be at its most popular level in Ireland since the early Irish harping tradition went into decline over two hundred years ago.

Ten Irish male harpers (and one Welsh harper) attended the Belfast Harpers' Assembly in July 1792. This was not the total number of harpers in Ireland, but it was a practice in decline. The low number of practising harpers was referred to in both the nineteenth and twentieth century.

In the summer of 2014, 397 harpers responded to the online survey conducted for this research and another 280 harpers were named (respondents were specifically asked to name other harpers in their area), providing the figure of 677.

Experienced harpers and harp teachers in interview estimated that the total number of contemporary learners and practitioners is up to three times that figure (1,500–2,000 approx.).

3.2 Location

Ninety per cent of respondents were from Ireland, North and South, with 10% based outside Ireland (Chart 1).

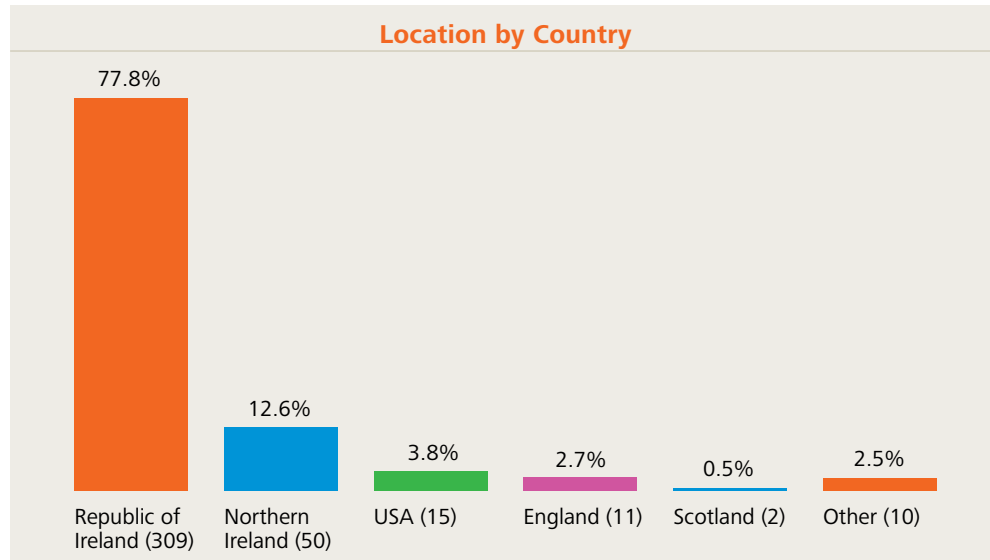


Chart 1: (Sample: 397)

The location by county of the 359 harpers based in Ireland can be seen in Chart 2.

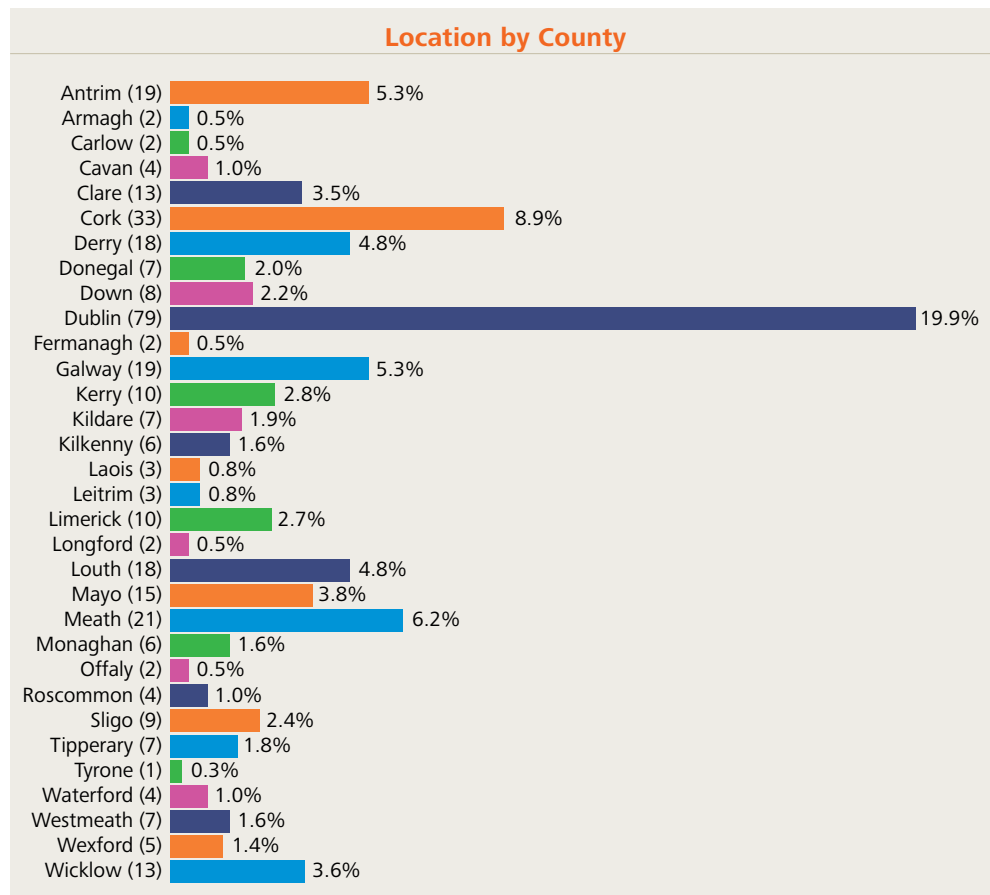


Chart 2: (Sample: 359)

The location of harpers in Ireland is influenced by the fact of high population (e.g. Dublin), but also by available tuition, or a local event focusing on the harp, which in itself may be a result of an historic connection to the harp.

For example, 6% of respondents were from Meath (where Turlough Carolan was born) and which has had a dedicated Carolan harp festival for twenty-seven years, and 5% were from Louth, where An Chúirt Chruitreachta has taken place for 29 years.

Galway (5%) and Antrim (5%) were also well represented, which reflects both the population numbers and tuition available. Belfast since the 1980s has been home to several harp-teaching initiatives, and also has a strong historical connection to the harp.

Cork (9%) features strongly, although it has a smaller population than Antrim, and despite the fact that, in interviews, it was highlighted as an area where there is a lack of tuition, but this may refer in particular to West Cork – one could draw a line from Killorglin in Co. Kerry to Cork City and, save for some private teaching in Kinsale, there is almost no harp tuition available south of that line.

Laois did not feature strongly, although we know that 60 children have been learning harp there under the auspices of Music Generation. Some of those students travel from neighbouring counties.

The numbers for Sligo (2%) and Limerick (3%) may also be unrepresentative. Comhaltas in Sligo has a strong harp contingent and in 2014 produced 5 of the 24 harp winners at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Limerick is the county of the Irish Harp Centre, which has been teaching in Castleconnell since 2002.

The strong figure for Derry (5%) is explained by the presence of two harp schools, Foyle Irish Harp School and Hampsey Harp School, as well as the availability of harp tuition in the Causeway School of Music.

3.3 Gender

While harping was traditionally (pre-1800) a male practice and profession, today the majority of practitioners are female. The gender breakdown of respondents can be seen in Chart 3.

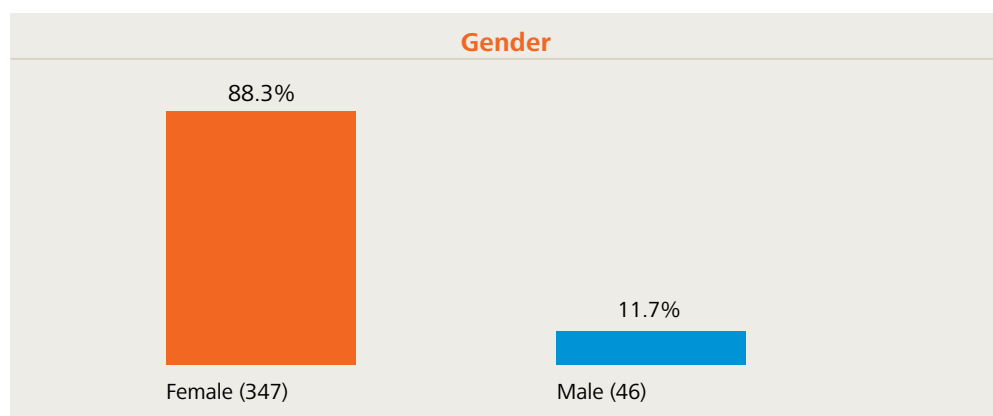


Chart 3: (Sample: 393)

An issue that did not appear in any of the comments in the survey, but which was raised in interviews, was what impact the gender balance has had on the profile of contemporary Irish harping.

It was suggested that, because of family roles, women have not had the same opportunity to develop careers as musicians, and this has had a knock-on effect on the low profile of contemporary harp practice.

3.4 Harps

There are three main harps played in Ireland – the Irish lever harp, the early Irish harp, and the concert harp.

The most popular harp is the Irish lever harp (85%), followed by the concert harp (21%) and the early Irish harp (16%). 22% play more than one harp.

Harps described as ‘Other’ include the Renaissance, Paraguayan, Welsh, Gothic and Baroque harp.

The total numbers of harpers per instrument can be seen in Chart 4.

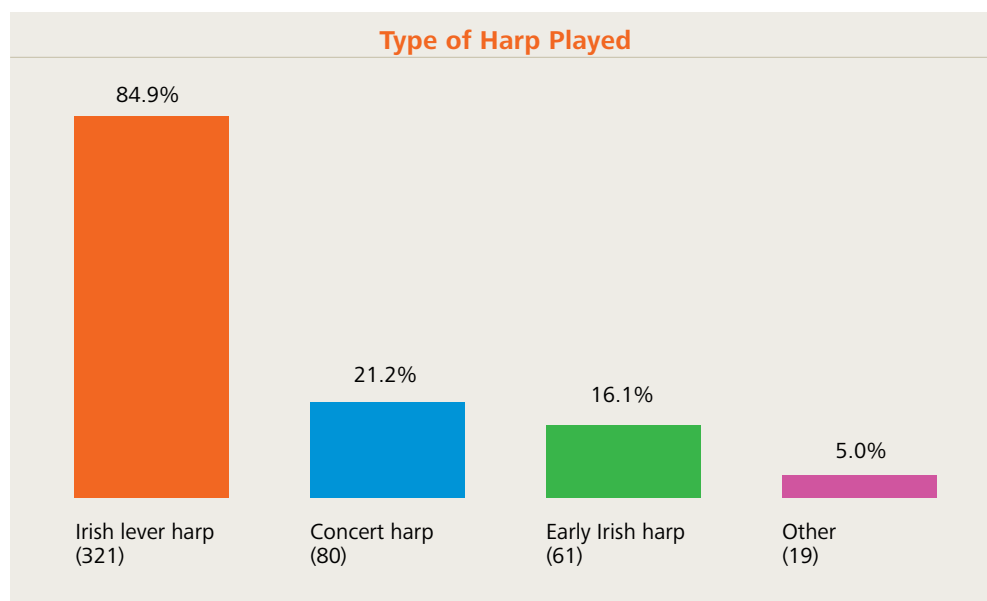


Chart 4: (Sample: 378)

In Charts 5 and 6, the specific harp(s) that a respondent plays are detailed.

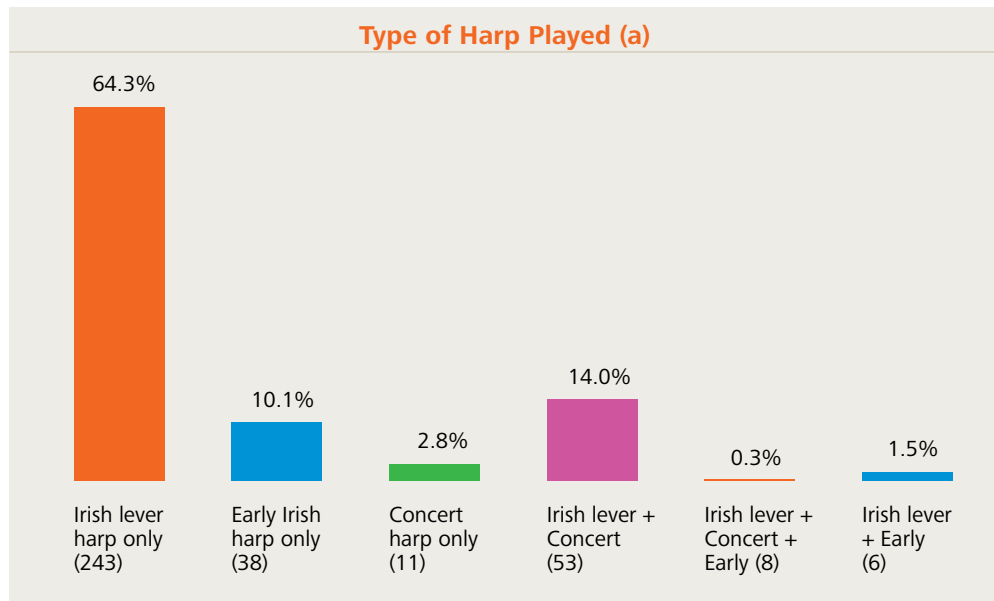


Chart 5: (Sample: 378)

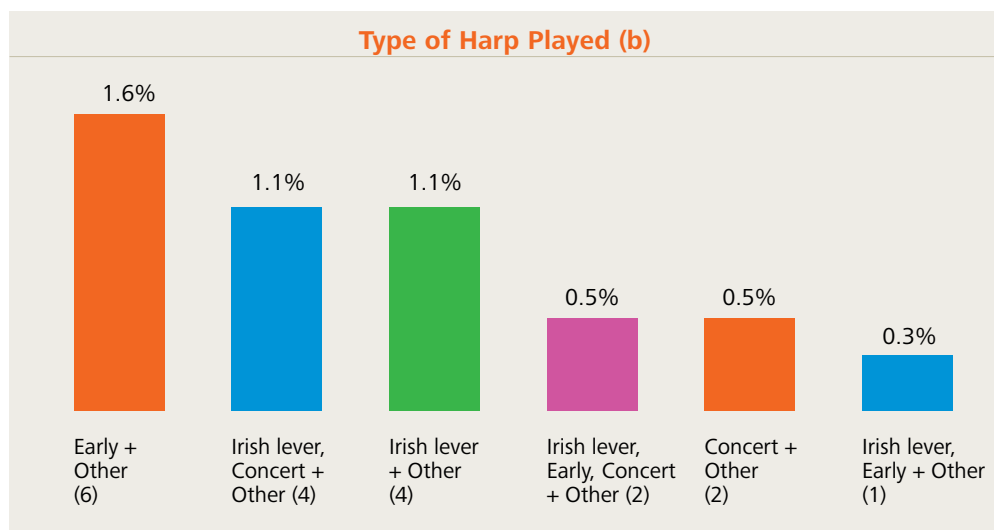


Chart 6: (Sample: 378)

Irish lever harp

The modern Irish lever harp has its origins in the instrument developed at the beginning of the 1800s that combined the visual style of the early Irish harp with the technical advancements of the developing concert harp.

While maintaining its general visual style, it has undergone significant technical advancements over two centuries that today permit the harper to perform traditional Irish dance music at speed and with dexterity, not only including traditional ornamentation common to other instruments, but also incorporating sophisticated accompaniments in the left hand that can include harmony, counterpoint, syncopation as well as the traditional vamping style.

The Irish lever harp is played with the right hand above the left – the former generally playing the melody and the latter performing an accompaniment. It is generally played with finger tips (or finger pads), but there are practitioners who will also play with the finger-nails, or exclusively so.

The 'levers' that appear at the top of each string are used to sharpen or flatten a note, therefore allowing the musician to play in a range of keys. The Irish lever harp has 34–36 strings, although beginner instruments may have less.

Early Irish harp

The early Irish harp is played with the left hand above the right, and predominantly with the finger nails. This is the traditional technique that prevailed between c. 1000 and c. 1800. It is wire-strung, which gives it a contrasting sound to the Irish lever harp, and has no levers. The wire strings will resonate for longer than nylon strings, which means that damping technique is particularly important (though damping is a feature of all harping). The repertoire is typically that of the early Irish harper composers as collected by Bunting, and music of the period pre-1800, although there are practitioners that will also perform more modern traditional Irish dance music. The early Irish harp has 29–30 strings.

Concert or pedal harp

Associated with Western classical music, the concert harp is both a solo instrument and an orchestral instrument. It has a range of six and a half octaves and 47 strings.

It is called the pedal harp because it has the facility to change key using foot pedals (as opposed to the levers on the Irish lever harp).

The concert harp is played with the finger tips and there are different schools of technique. For example, all harp students in the Southern Education Library Board music tuition programme in Northern Ireland are taught the 'Renie' technique.

Just 3% play the concert harp only. 14% of respondents play concert and Irish lever harp.

3.5 Type of music played

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, diversity of repertoire is one of the notable features of contemporary harp practice. This is reflected in the charts below.

The performance of traditional slow airs (song airs and instrumental airs) is a particular strength of the harp and this is reflected in the choice of repertoire in Charts 7 and 8.

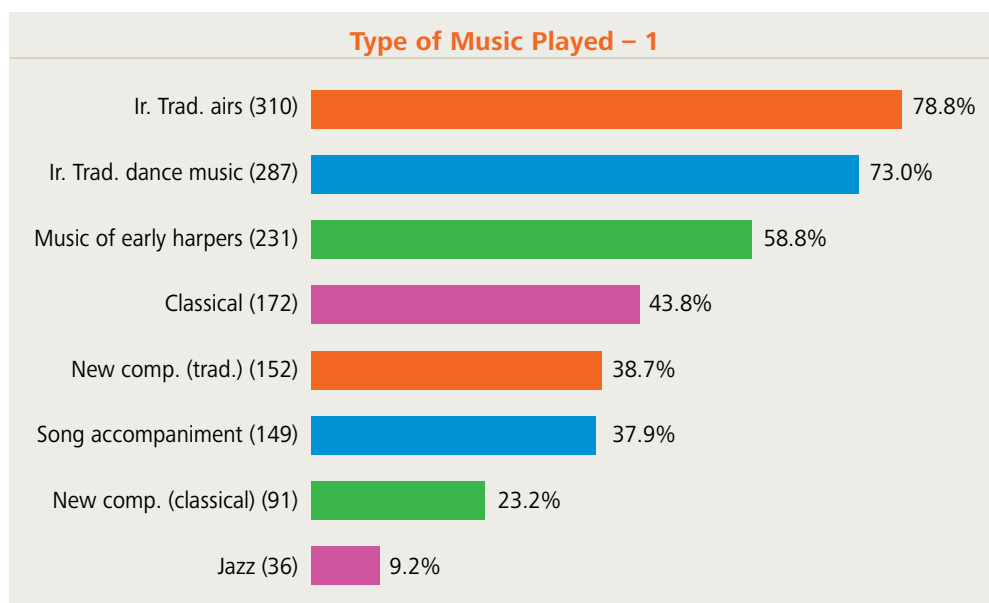


Chart 7: (Sample: 393)

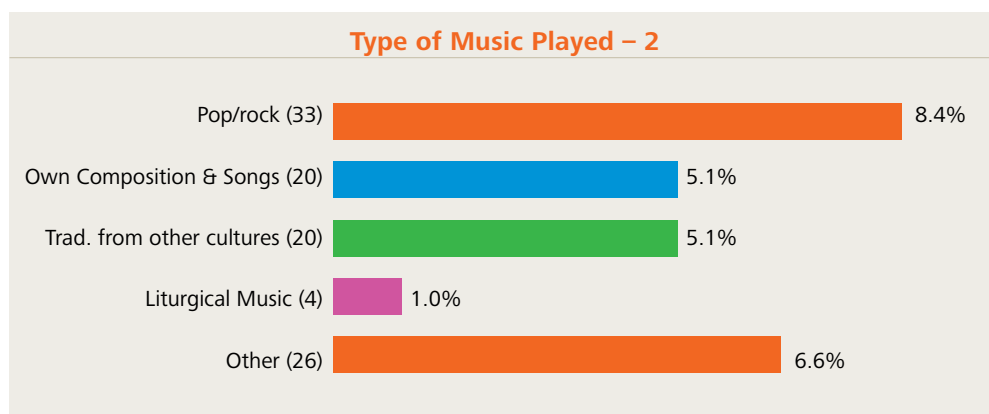


Chart 8: (Sample: 393)

Irish traditional dance music (reels, jigs, hornpipes, polkas, slides, etc.) is particularly suited to the Irish lever harp, and the instrument's popularity means this repertoire is the second most popular.

The importance of the repertoire of the early Irish harpers to contemporary harpers can also be seen in the charts, as can the significance of classical music repertoire.

There was some concern expressed in interviews about a decline in the practice of harpers singing to their own accompaniment. Historically (both pre-1800 and up to the middle of the twentieth century), this was a significant aspect of harp performance.

At the harp recital at the 2014 Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, in which eleven harpers participated, two harpers sang to their own accompaniment. Song accompaniment is at 38% in Chart 7, although this may not necessarily be to one's own singing.

Specialism

Respondents were also asked to indicate what kind of repertoire they specialise in. 60% indicated that they did specialise (Chart 9), 40% indicated that they mainly played a mix of music (Chart 10).

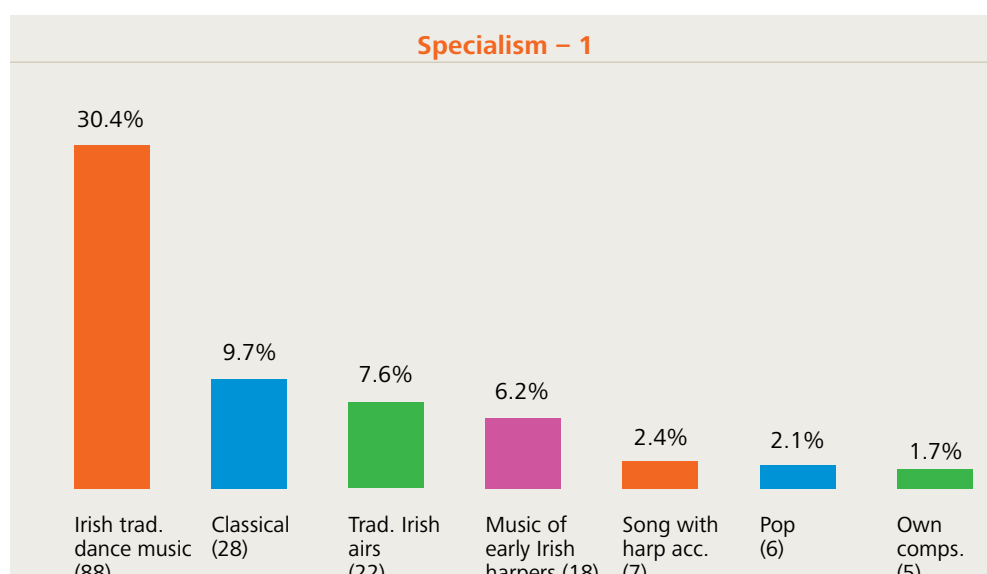


Chart 9: (Sample: 289)

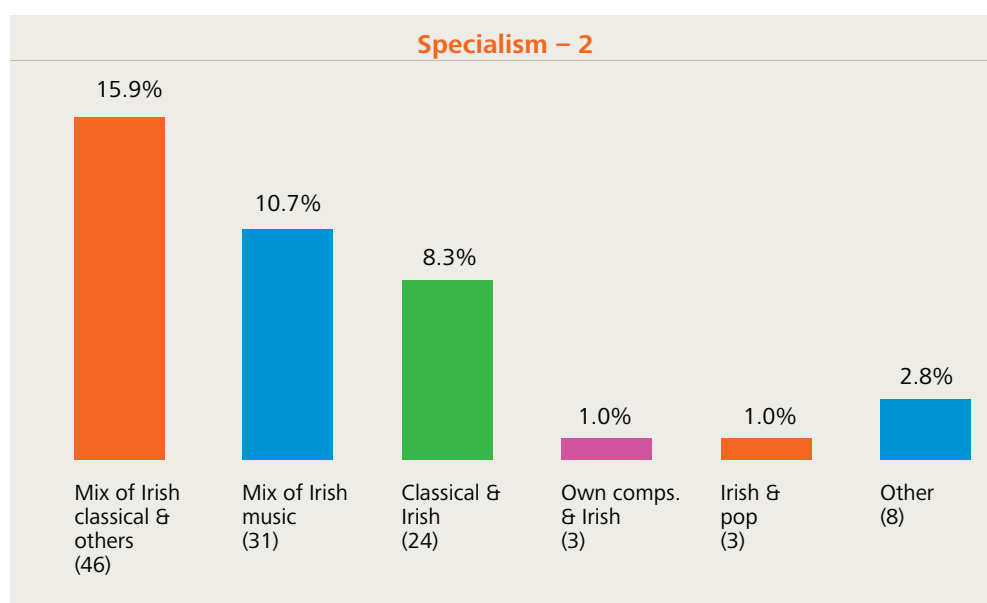


Chart 10: (Sample: 289)

3.6 Profession

Chart 11 provides detail on the profession of respondents. 36% are in full-time education, ranging from primary school to third-level.

Professions included a broad range of roles in the private and public sector, but it is significant that 21% of harpers are employed in the education sector (from primary education to third-level) as harpers may have the opportunity to shape or inform music activities in a school or institution.

While 18% described themselves as musicians, three identified themselves as full-time harp-makers. The issue of harp-making will be dealt with later in the report.

Two respondents indicated that they were unemployed.

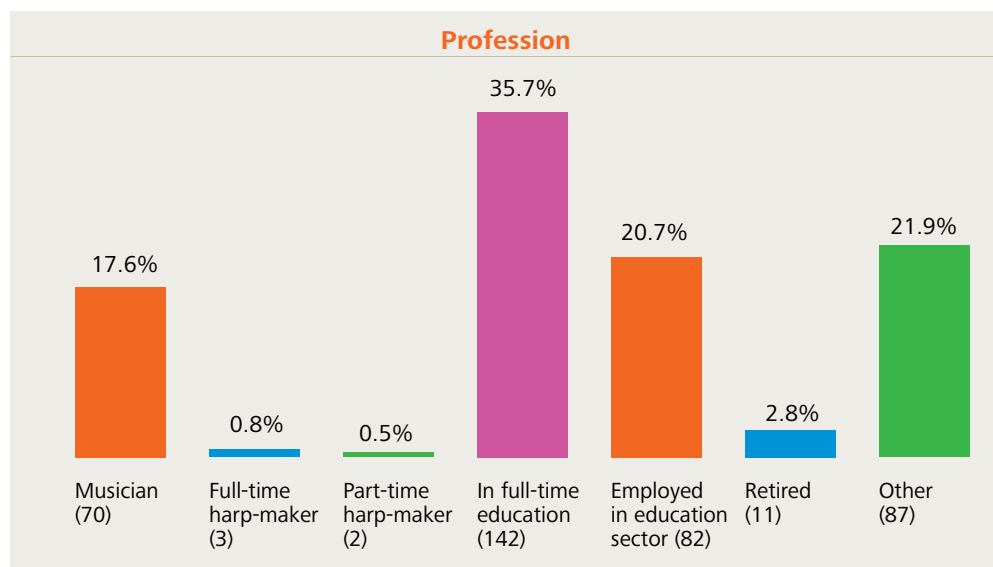


Chart 11: **Profession** (Sample: 397)

3.7 Musical background

The growth in popularity of the harp is evident in Chart 12 – 49% have been playing for ten years or less.

24% have been playing for 11–20 years and 24% for more than 21 years.

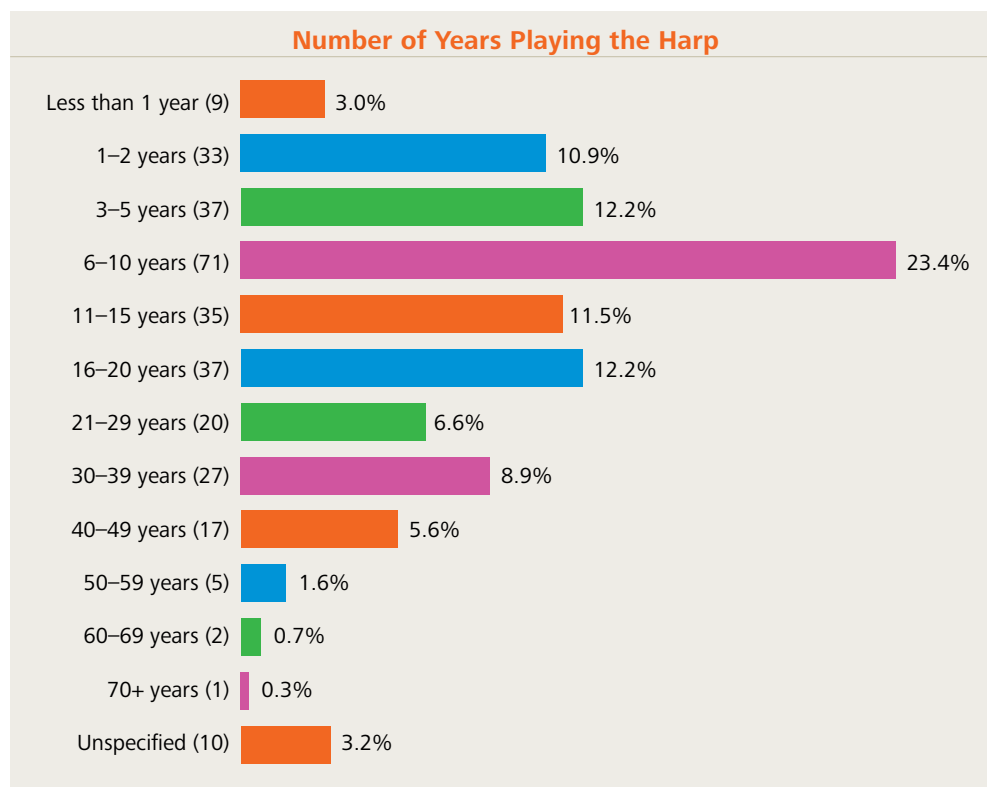


Chart 12: (Sample: 304)

Chart 13 illustrates the importance of formal tuition in harp practice, with 74% having learned through regular tuition with a teacher.

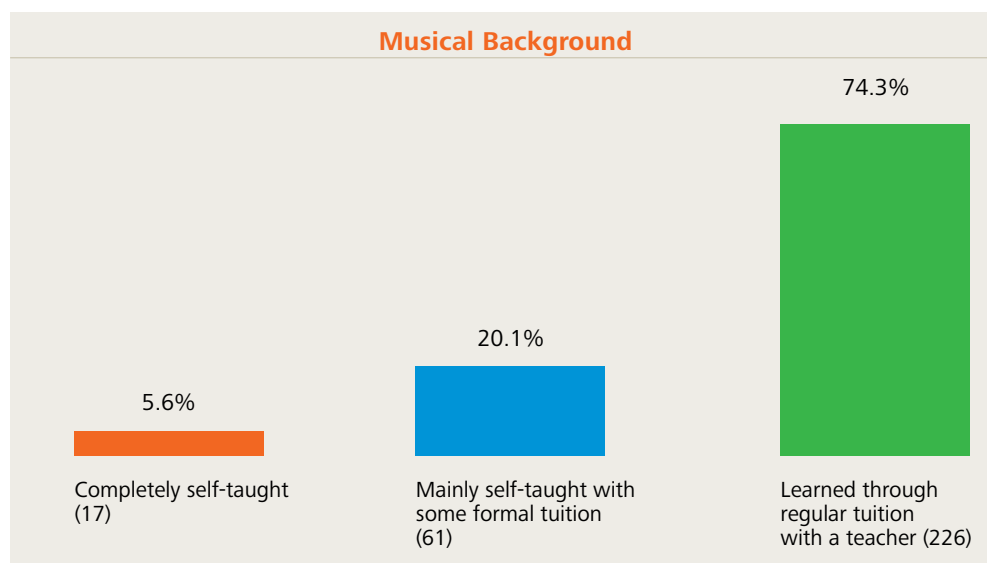


Chart 13: (Sample: 304)

Chart 14 indicates the striking versatility of harpers, with 86% indicating that they play a second instrument or sing.

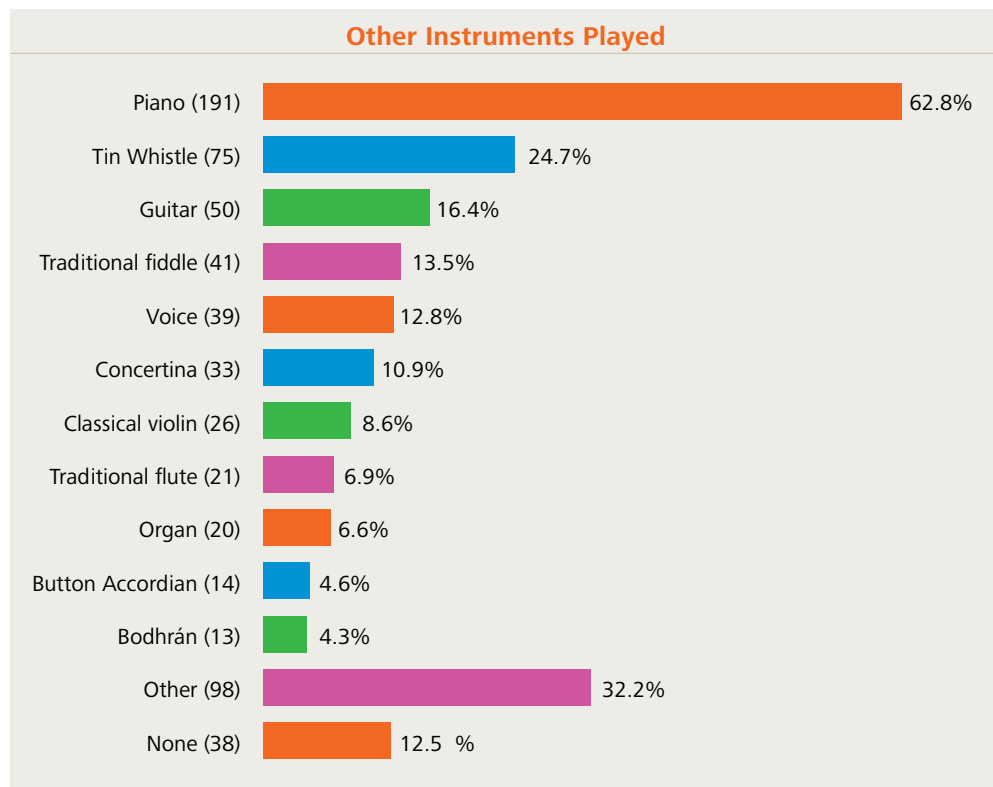


Chart 14: (Sample: 304)

This versatility on a second instrument could be indicative of challenges that have been highlighted with regard to performance opportunities, for example, the difficulty in transporting the instrument; the difficulty of participating in traditional music sessions because of the low volume of the instrument; and a lack of performance opportunities because of the low profile of contemporary practice.

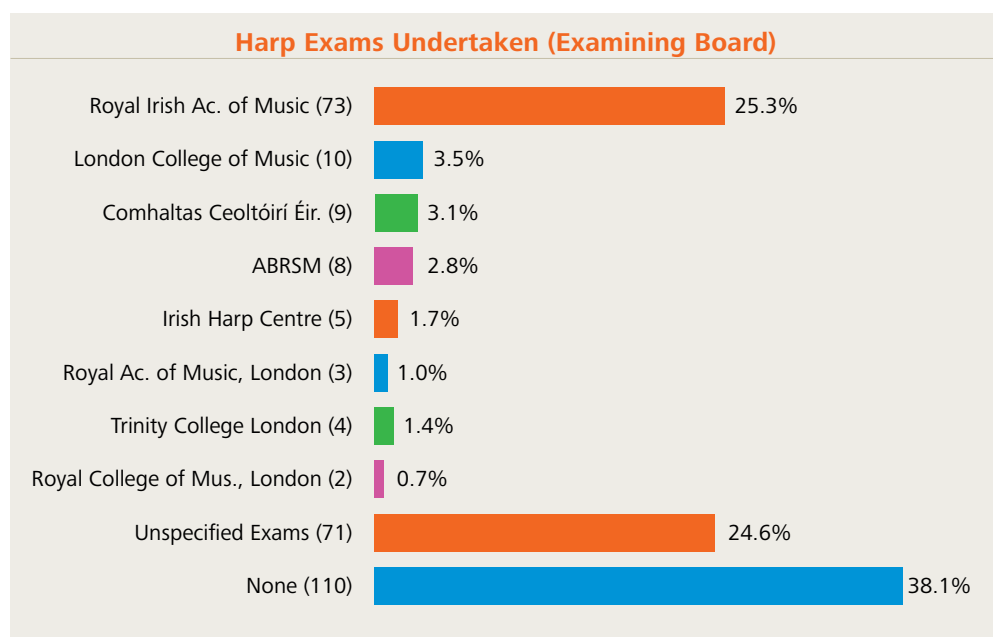


Chart 15: (Sample: 289)

Graded examinations are a significant part of the education of harpers, with over 60% having undertaken exams (Chart 15).

Specialism

Festivals and summer schools also play an important role in the education of an Irish harper (Chart 16).

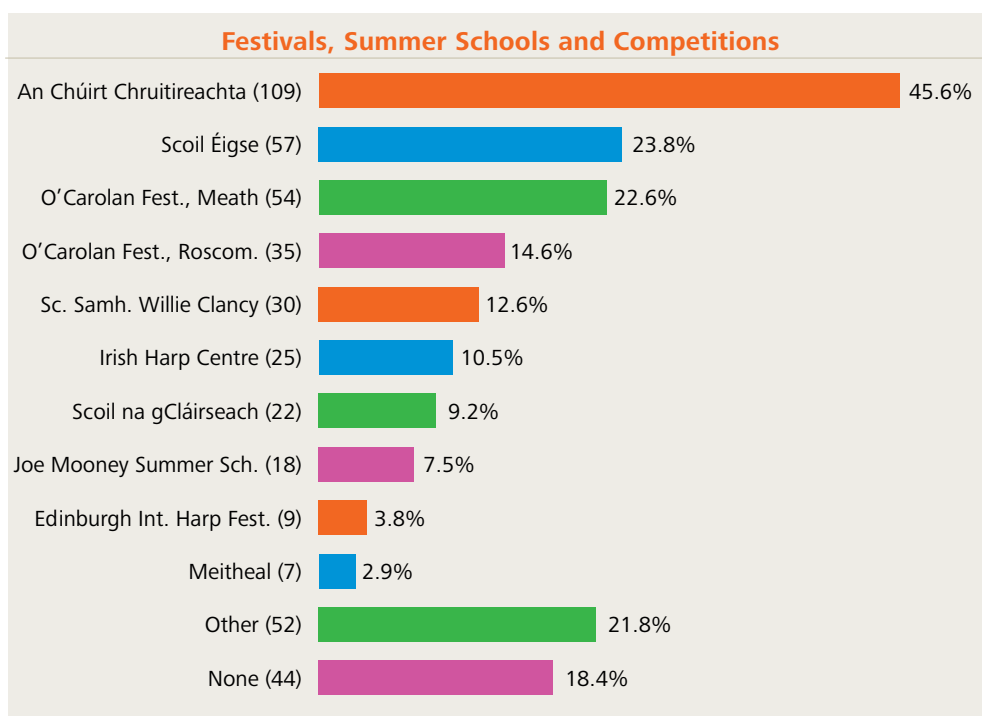


Chart 16: (Sample: 239)

Competitions similarly play an important role in a harper's musical development.

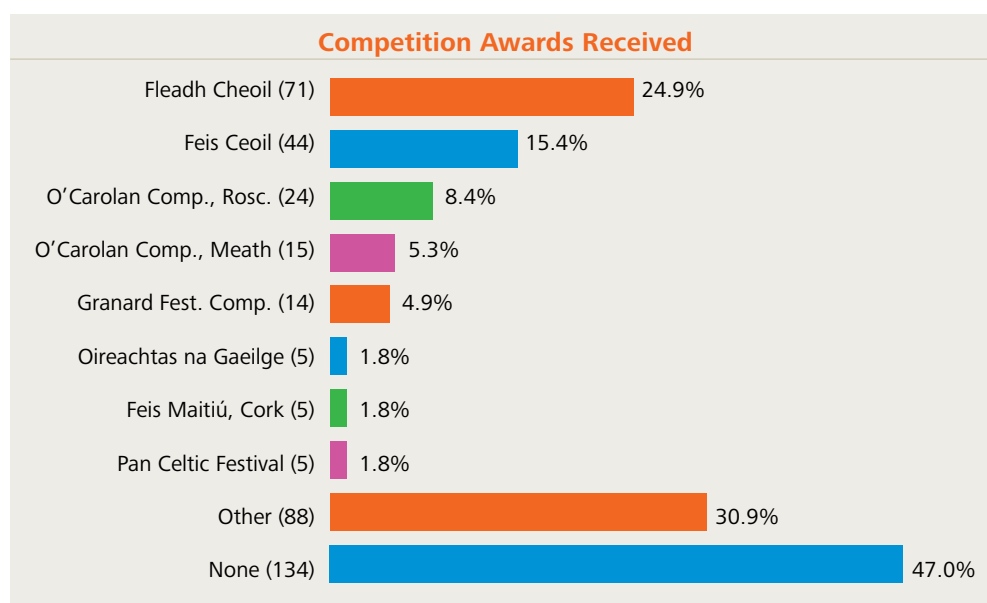


Chart 17: (Sample: 285)

The harp festival in Granard, Co. Longford (5%), has played an important role, but ceased in 2011. The former festival committee still has four harps. Given the unique historical background to the Granard harp competition (the Granard festival was an attempt at reviving the early harp tradition in the 1780s), the re-establishment of this event could have an important impact on the harp in that county.

Oireachtas na Gaeilge, the annual Irish-language festival, has three instrumental competitions – uilleann pipes, fiddle and harp – but entry numbers for the harp competition have been very low in recent years. Feis Shligigh in Sligo, which hosts the Bunting Cup for harpers, has also received a very low number of entrants. It is important that harp organisations collaborate with Oireachtas na Gaeilge and Feis Shligigh to make sure that entry numbers increase and that these competitions remain a part of these festivals.

60% of harpers regularly attend harping and other music events to support their practice (Chart 18).

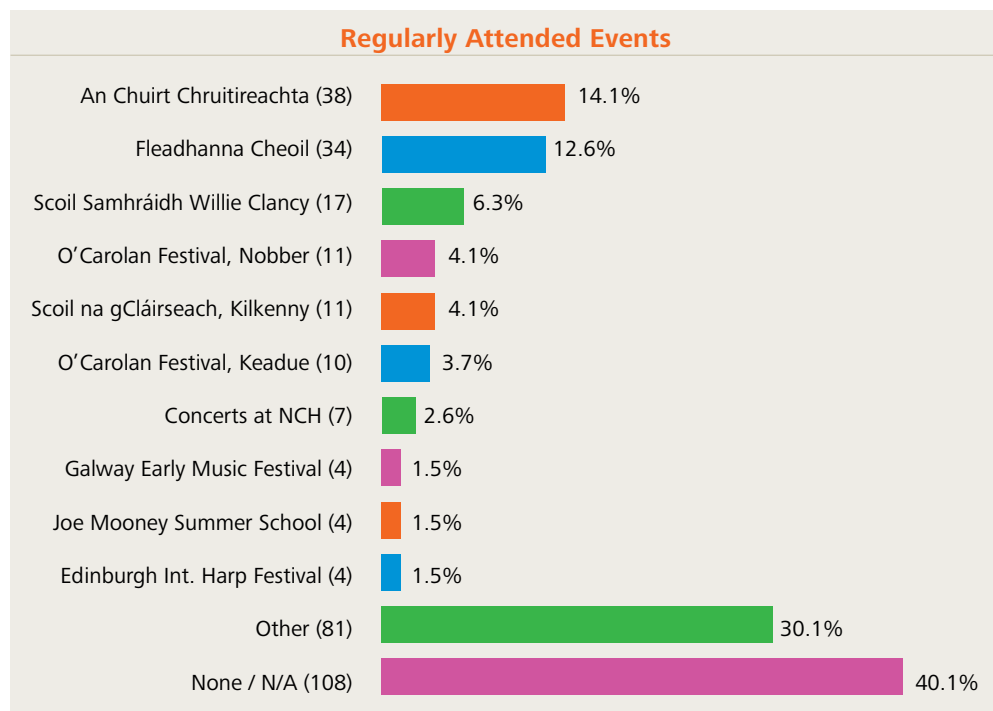


Chart 18: (Sample: 269)

3.8 Performance

Traditional Irish music sessions

Although 85% of respondents indicated that they play the Irish lever harp, an instrument suited to traditional Irish dance music, just 39% indicated that they play in traditional music sessions with any regularity, as can be seen in Chart 19.

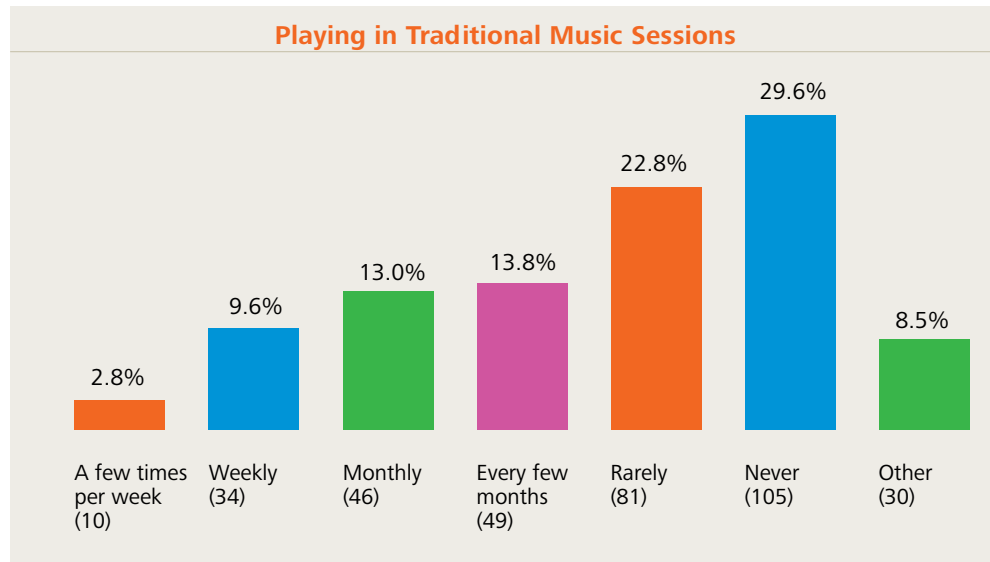


Chart 19: (Sample: 355)

Harpers have indicated in interviews and comments that the harp is much more integrated into traditional Irish music today than it has been. Harps are therefore more common at sessions. However, harpers may still choose to play a different instrument at a traditional music session, because it is easier to transport, or because a harp does not have the volume of other instruments when playing the melody.

Concerts, weddings and other events

Charts 20 and 21 illustrate that harpers perform more regularly at weddings, ceremonial occasions and corporate events than they do concerts.

The wider public are therefore more likely to hear a harper in the former context than the latter.

As will be seen in the Recommendations section of this report, harpers identify a low profile for the harp practice as a key issue, and a lack of public performance opportunities outside weddings and appearances at corporate events may be a contributing factor.

The predominance of performance at weddings, ceremonial occasions and corporate events is reflected in Chart 22, which details the main sources of income.





Chris Stout, Séamus Ó Beaglaoich and Catriona McKay on Harp, The Sugar Club, Dublin 2014.
Photo by Emily O'Callaghan

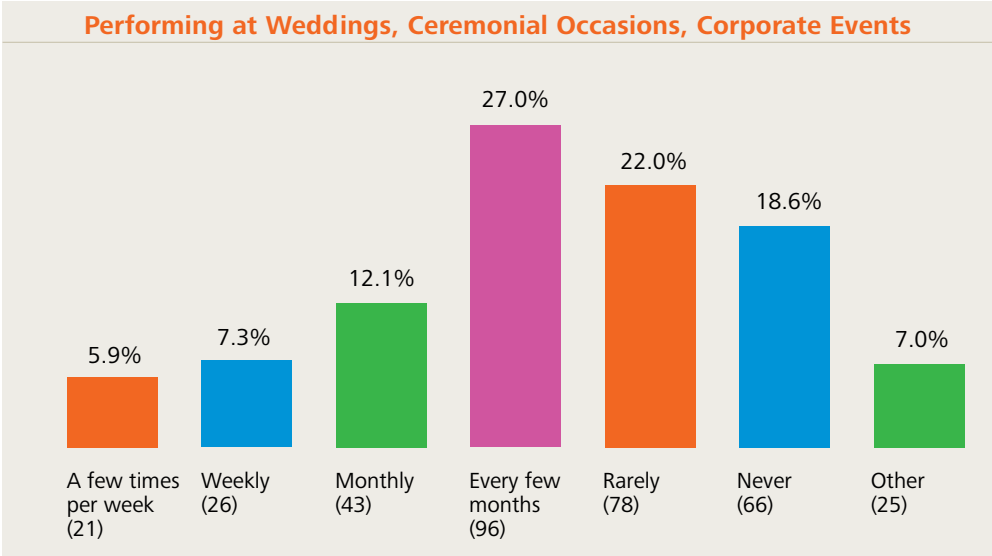


Chart 20: (Sample: 355)

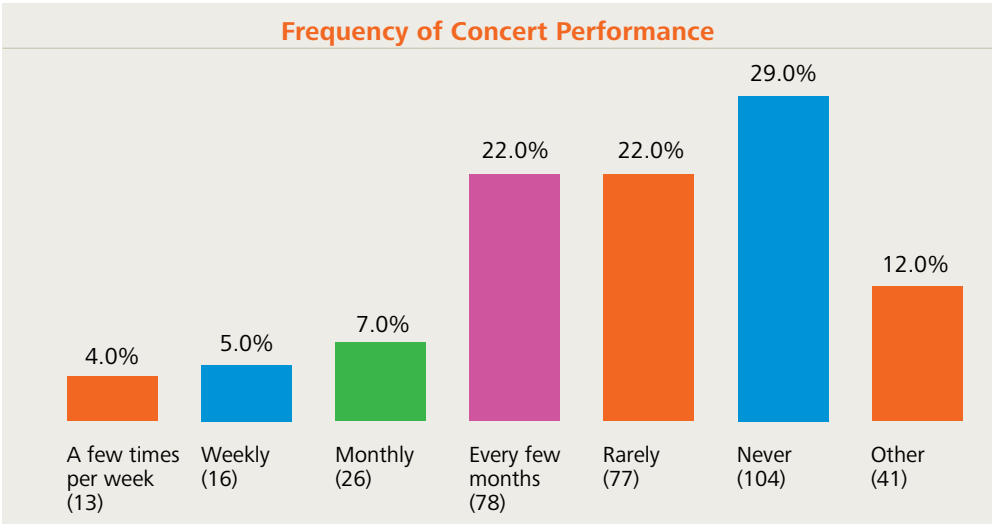


Chart 21: (Sample: 355)

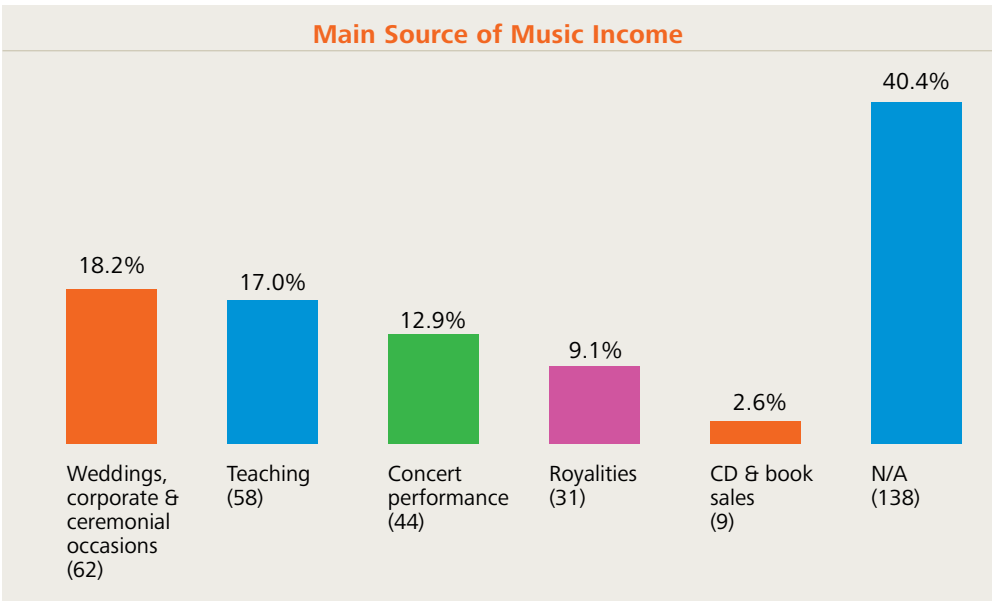


Chart 22: (Sample: 342)

Group playing

Harpers perform as part of a wide variety of groups and ensembles, from professional, touring trios, duets, groups and orchestras to community groups (Chart 23).

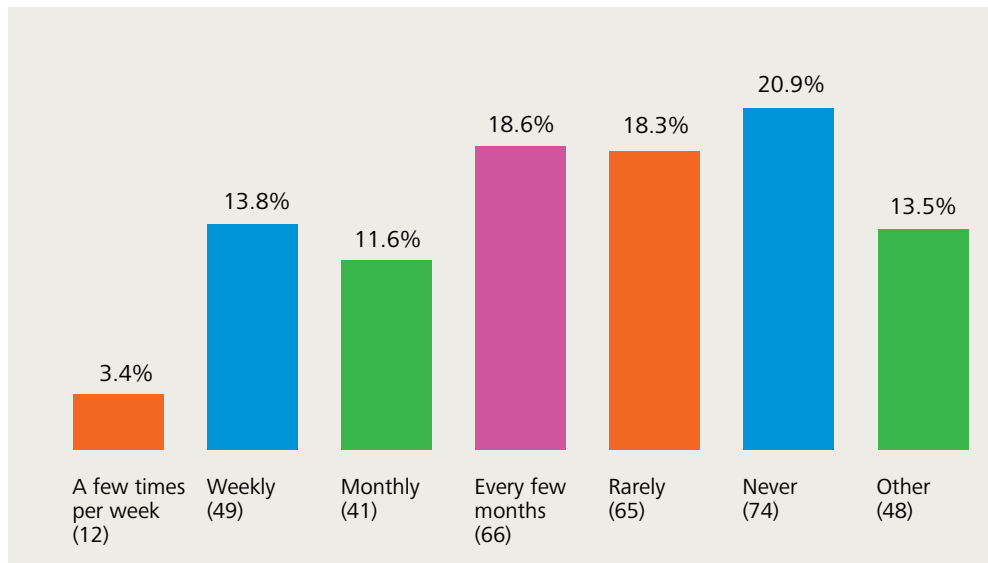


Chart 23: (Sample: 355)

Harp ensembles

Harp-only ensembles and groups are a particular feature of the harp scene, for example the Irish Harp Orchestra, Meath Harp Ensemble, South Ulster Harp Ensemble, Tracton Harp Ensemble, Cairde Ceoil Harp Ensemble, Music Generation Harp Ensemble and Kylemore College Harp Ensemble.

The Meath Harp Ensemble recently performed a newly composed work by Irish composer Vincent Kennedy, *The Chronicles of Meath*, at the World Harp Congress in Sydney, Australia. Commissioned by Meath County Council, and funded by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government under the per Cent for Art Scheme, it is scored for three Irish harps and one concert harp (although the eight-piece ensemble generally performs it with seven Irish harps and one concert harp).

Other groups and ensembles that harpers mentioned in the survey include *grupaí ceoil* (music groups) at school; church groups; duets, trios and groups specifically put together for Fleadh Cheoil competitions; Royal Irish Academy of Music traditional music ensemble; Aer Lingus Music Group; Galway Early Music Society music group; professional, touring groups; and, in the context of the concert harp, orchestras such as the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Irish Chamber Orchestra and Irish Baroque Orchestra.

Shannon Heritage

A pool of up to 11 Irish harpers are employed seasonally by Shannon Heritage to perform – both solo and in ensemble – at nightly banquet shows at Bunratty Castle (Bunratty, Co. Clare), Dunguaire Castle (Kinvara, Co. Galway) and Knappogue Castle (Quin, Co. Clare).

These shows take place twice nightly at Bunratty (February to December) and Dunguairé (April–October), and nightly at Knappogue (April–October), and are directed towards international visitors. Performances consist of traditional songs, instrumental performances and stage pieces with period costumes. Shannon Heritage has been a significant employer of harpers since the 1960s. Over 93,000 visitors attended its banquet performances in 2013.

Professional engagements

Charts 24–26 provide a further insight into harp performance.

The picture is one of mainly independent artists at work, with modest involvement (7%) of agents, manager and promoters.

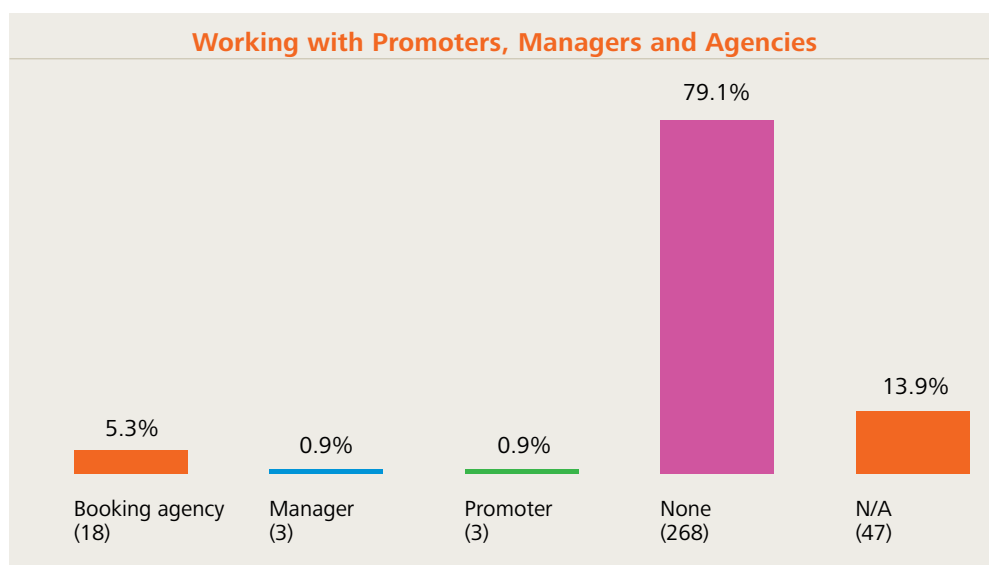


Chart 24: (Sample: 339)

Performance outside Ireland is undertaken regularly (monthly or every few months) by 13% of harpers.

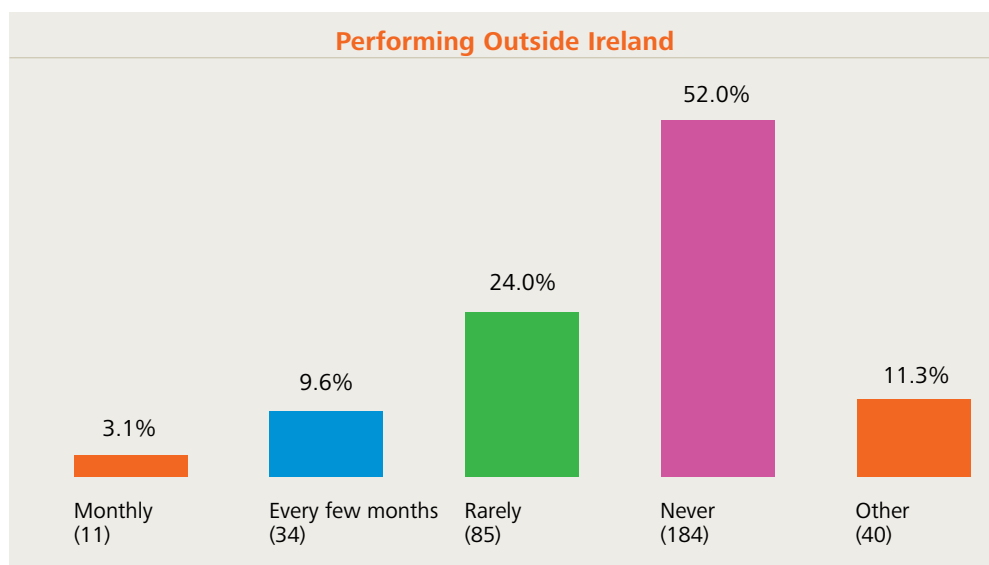


Chart 25: (Sample: 354)



Enda Bates, Cliona Doris and Linda Buckley, Culture Night 2011 at The Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin. Photo by Jonathan Grimes

A similar number of harpers (13%) have performed at various venues in Ireland as part of a concert series or tour, either solo or as part of a group.

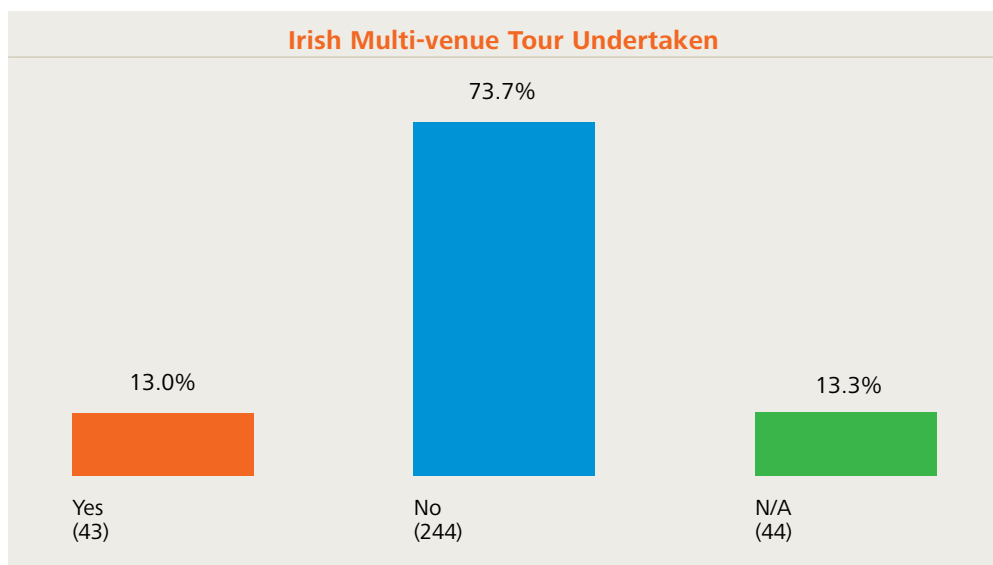


Chart 26: (Sample: 331)

3.9 Composition and Arrangement

Composition and arrangement is a significant and historic part of Irish harp practice.

The early Irish harpers would often have been requested to compose pieces in honour of a patron.

Composition and arrangement, albeit for different purposes, remains a significant part of harp practice today (Charts 27 and 28).

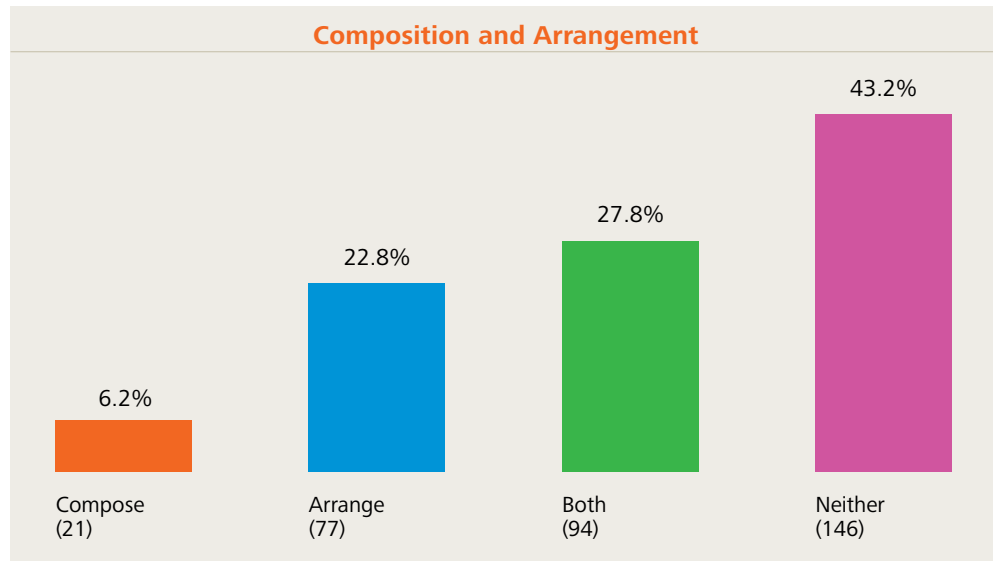


Chart 27: (Sample: 338)

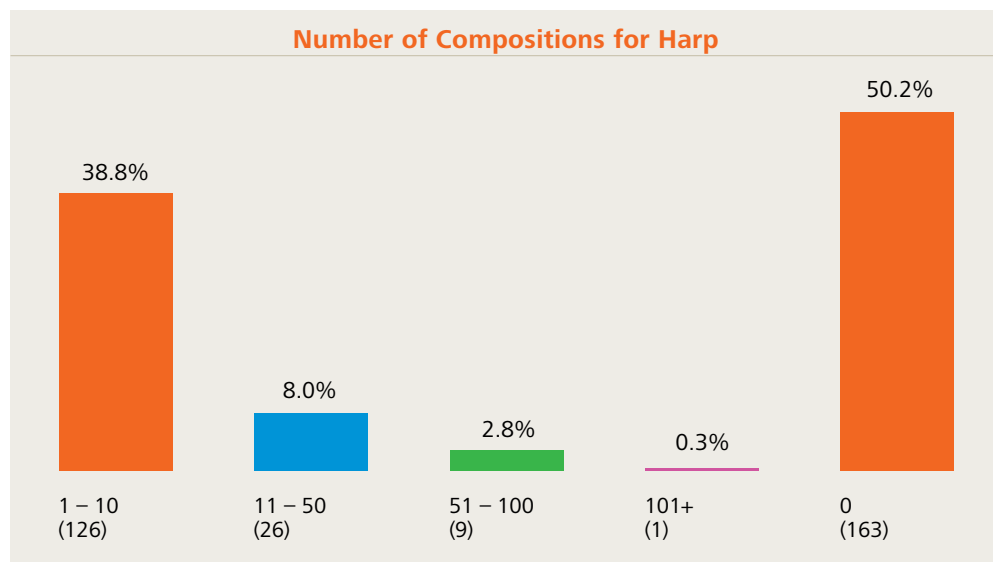


Chart 28: (Sample: 325)

Harpers play both melody and accompaniment in traditional Irish dance music and airs, and the music of early Irish harpers, and therefore in essence have to arrange everything they play. Publishing one's arrangements of harp music, however, is also a notable aspect of harp practice. Chart 29 details the number of arrangements harpers have undertaken, both published and unpublished.

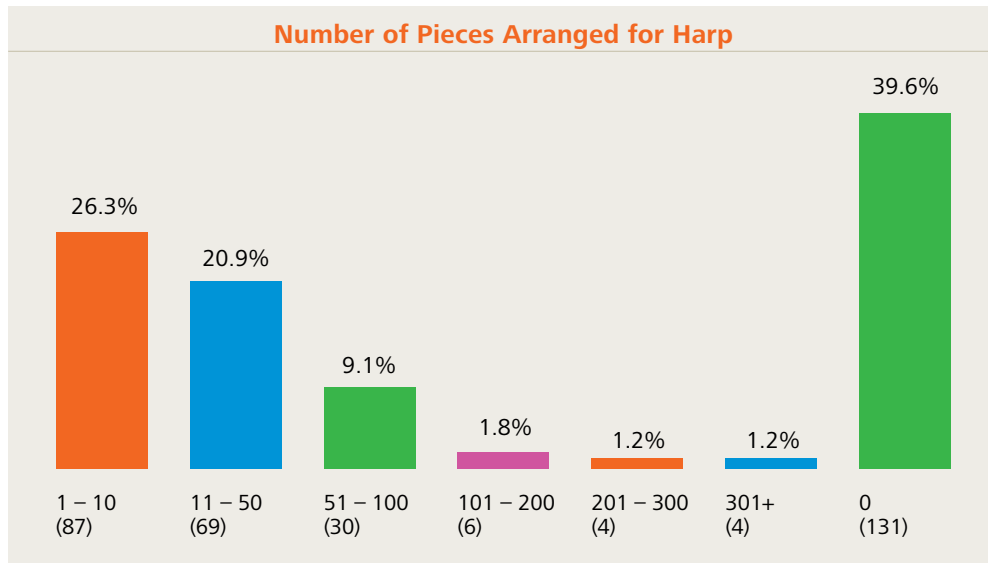


Chart 29: (Sample: 331)

Harpers not only arrange work for performance, but also for teaching, as can be seen in Chart 30.

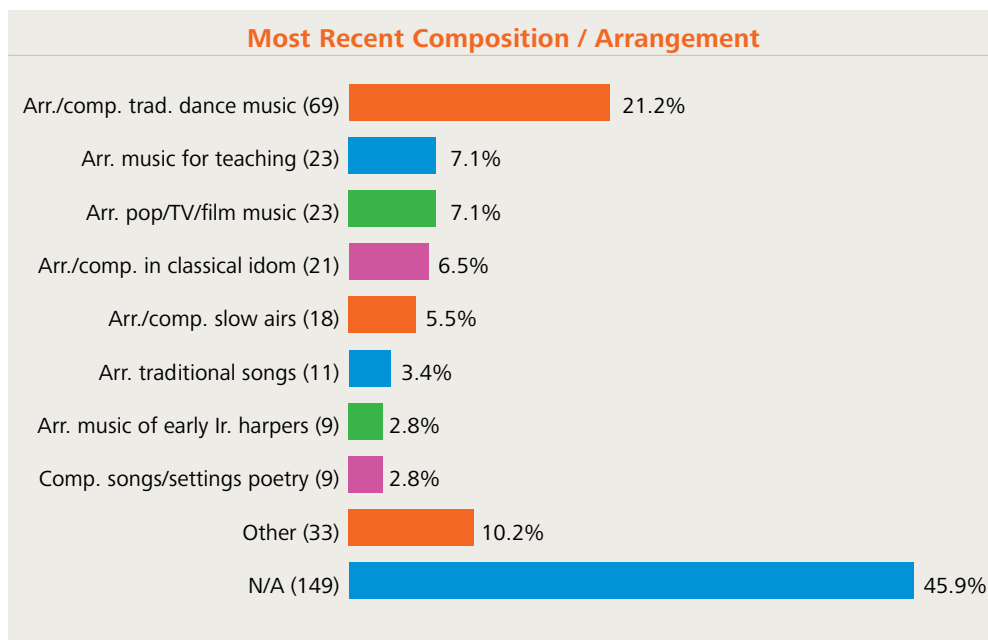


Chart 30: (Sample: 325)

28% of harpers also compose for a variety of other instruments (Chart 31).

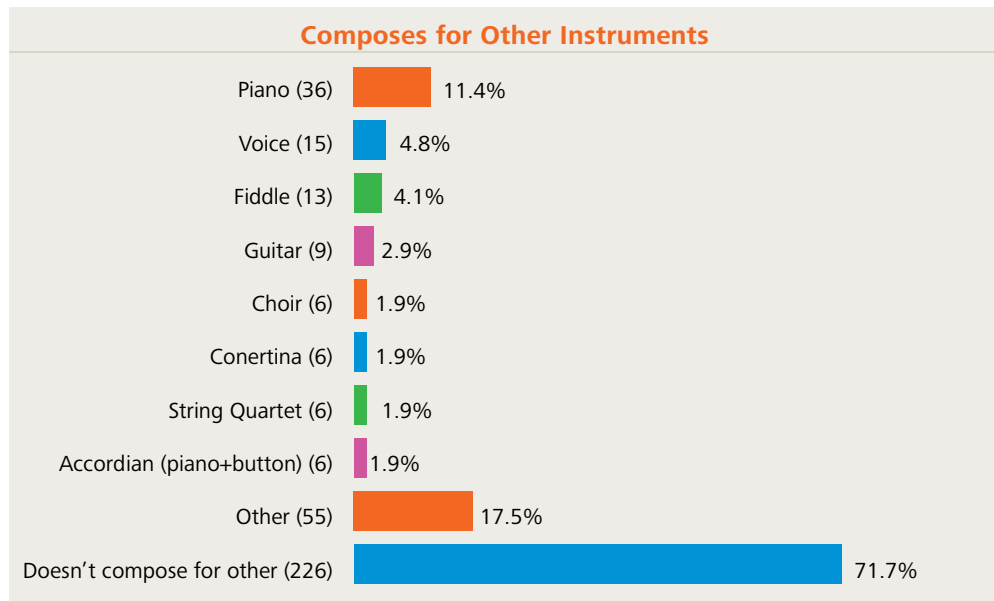


Chart 31: (Sample: 315)

Although 34% of harpers indicated that they compose music, the number of commissions for new works received by today's harpers is small at 4% (Chart 32).

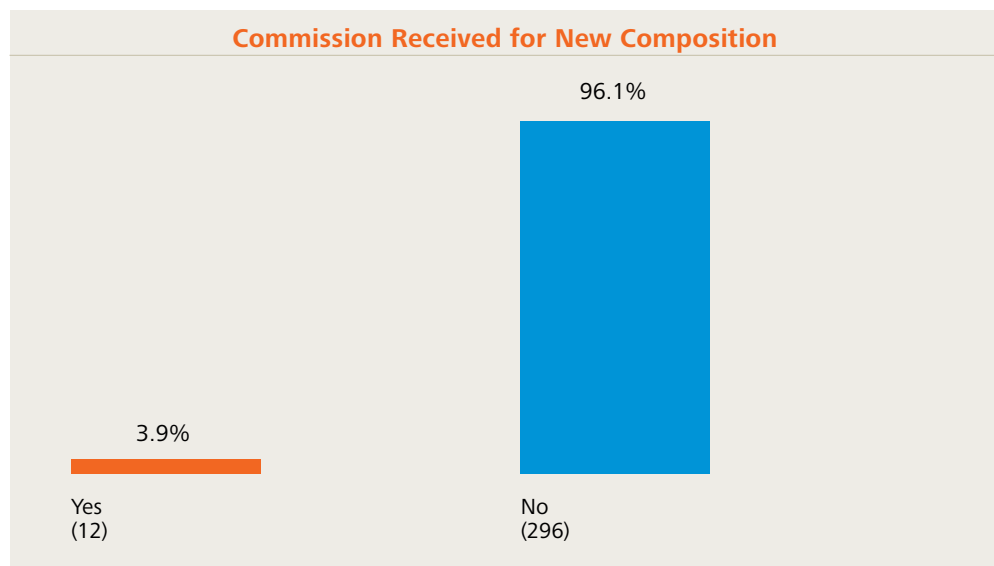


Chart 32: (Sample: 308)

The type of organisations or groups that have commissioned work from harpers can be seen in Chart 33.

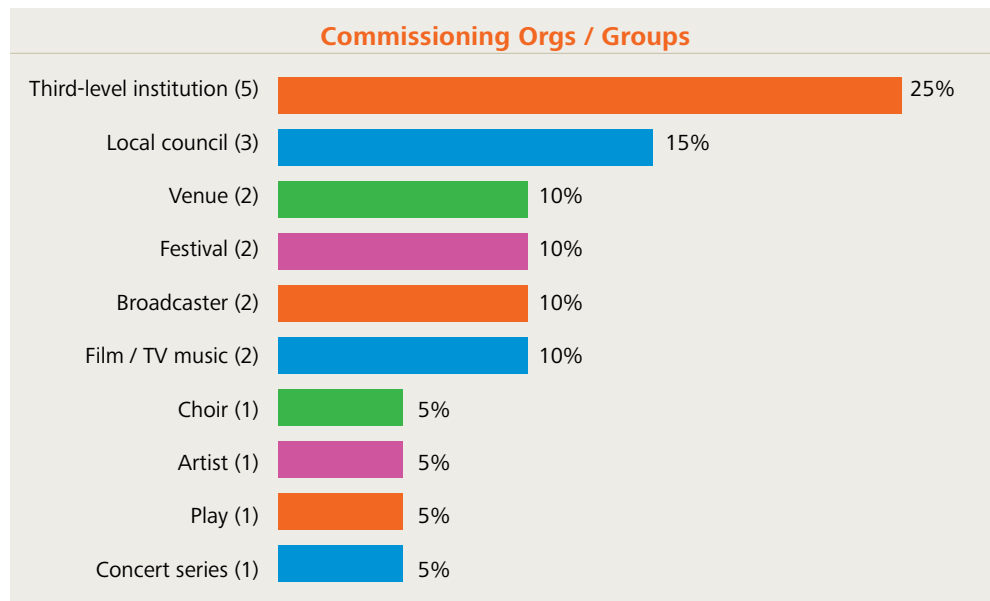


Chart 33: (Sample: 12)

3.10 Teaching

39% of harpers are engaged in some harp teaching activity (Chart 34).

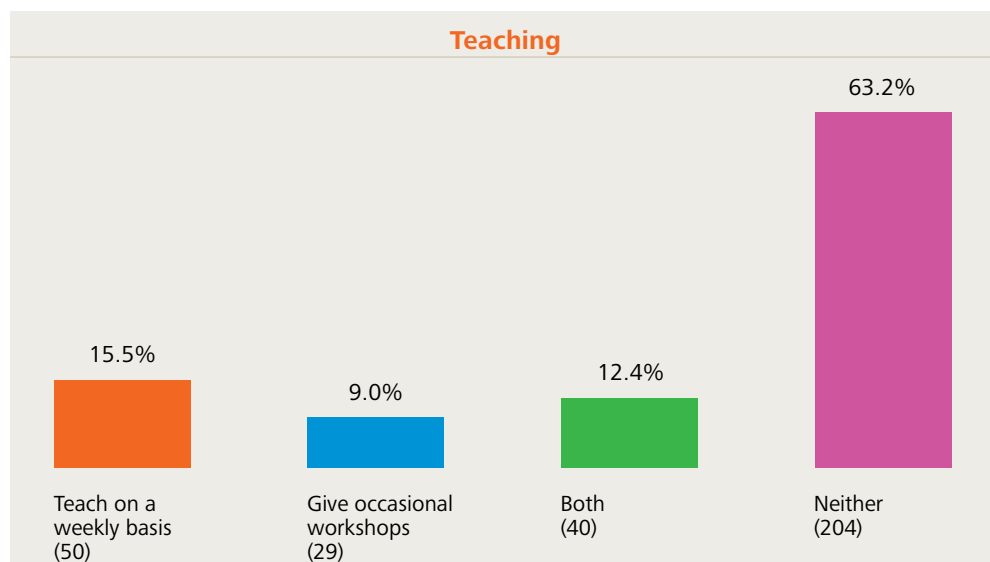


Chart 34: (Sample: 323)

31% indicated that they have a qualification in teaching or education, or are currently studying for one (Chart 35).

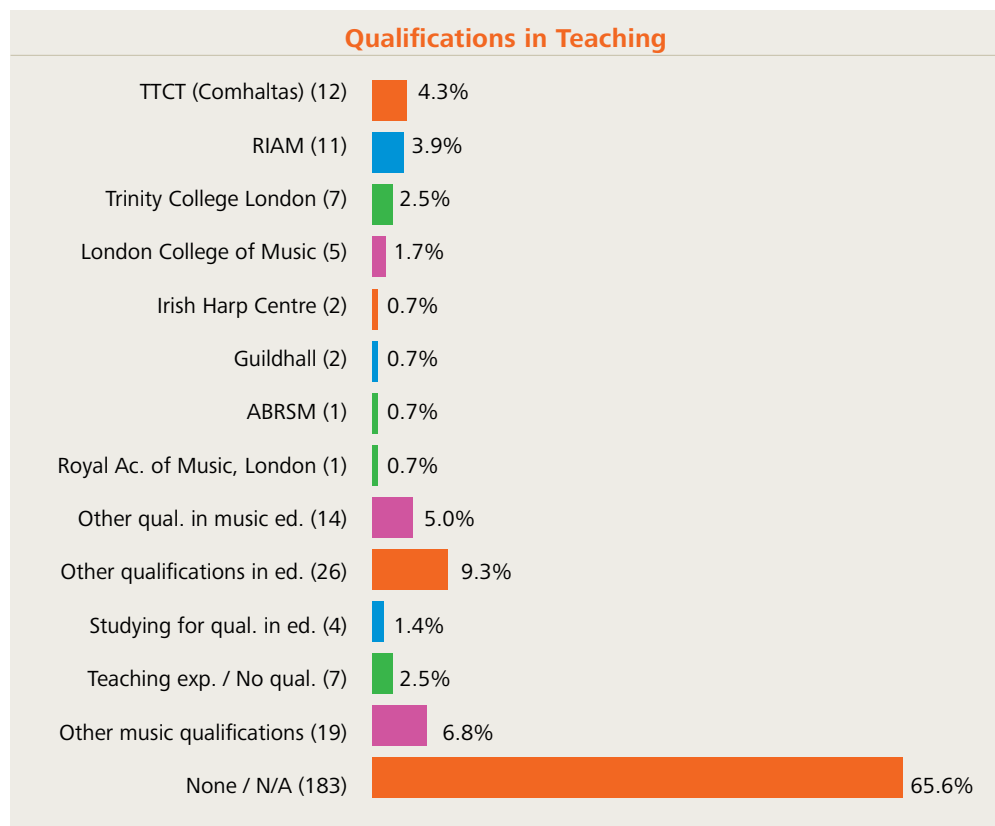


Chart 35: (Sample: 279)

Irish harpers also teach abroad (Chart 36), in the USA notably.

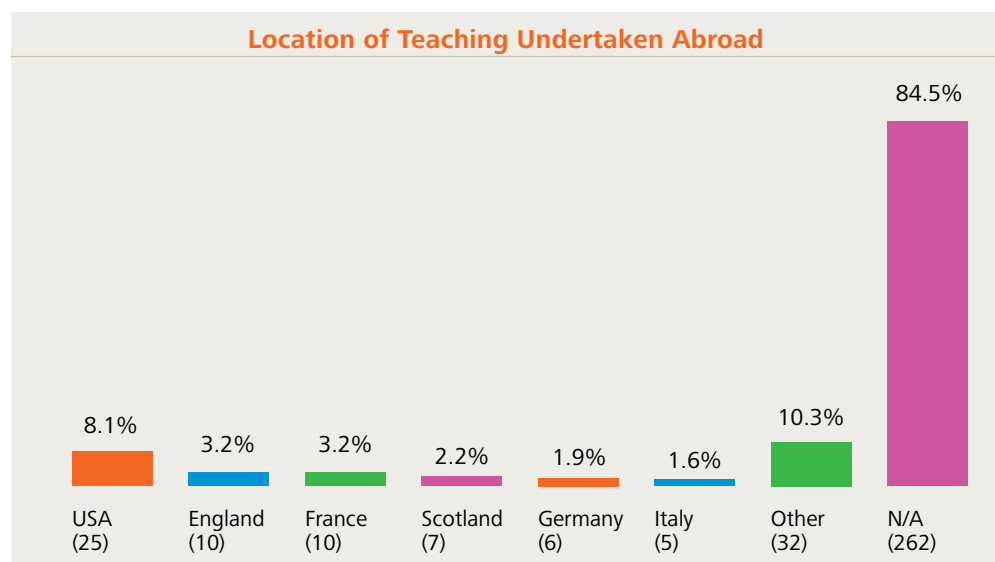


Chart 36: (Sample: 310)

3.11 Tuition

Based on the information supplied in the survey, and additional research, the following list of available harp tuition in Ireland has been compiled. This list does not include private tuition.

Harp tuition is most widely available in Dublin. At the time of writing, DIT Conservatory of Music had 43 registered harp students (32 Junior students aged under 18 – 28 Irish harp/four concert harp; four Continuing Education students – one Irish harp/three concert harp; five undergraduate students – one Irish harp/four concert harp; and two postgraduates – one Irish harp/one concert harp), and the Royal Academy of Music had 27 harp students (three of which were learning concert harp). Thirteen students auditioned at the RIAM for three places. All thirteen played Irish lever harp.

Tuition in Table 1 is on Irish lever harp. Where it is known that tuition is on early Irish harp or concert harp, this has been noted.

Table 1

County	Available harp tuition
Antrim	Andersonstown Traditional & Contemporary Music School, 8-30 Barrack St, Belfast BT12 4AH Belfast Trad: Traditional Music and Dance Society, Crescent Arts Centre, University Road, Belfast Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, 216 Falls Rd, Belfast BT12 6AH Glengormley School of Traditional Music, Edmund Rice College, 96-100 Hightown Road, Glengormley BT36 7AU
Armagh	Armagh Pipers Club, 12–14 Victoria Street, Armagh BT61 9DT Historical Harp Society of Ireland – National Tuition Programme: Armagh. Commences in October 2014. (early Irish harp) Southern Education and Library Board – Portadown Music Centre, Bann House, Bridge Street, Portadown BT63 5AE Southern Education and Library Board (school-based tuition) – Portadown College, Killicomaine Road, Portadown BT63 5BU – St John the Baptist Primary School, 250 Garvaghy Rd, Portadown, Craigavon BT62 1EB
Carlow	Carlow College of Music, 1 Larkfield, Carlow
Cavan	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Belturbet, Co. Cavan
Clare	Brid O'Donohue School of Music, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare Irish Traditional Music Institute, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare
Cork	CIT Cork School of Music, Union Quay, Cork City (Irish lever harp and concert harp) Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Douglas, Cork City County Cork School of Music, Yeats House, Barrack Square, Ballincollig, Co. Cork Lee Valley School of Music, Macroom (concert harp tuition also available; currently no concert harp students)

Derry	<p>Causeway School of Music, Mill House, 24 Railway Rd, Coleraine, Derry BT52 1PE</p> <p>Foyle Irish Harp School, Derry</p> <p>Hampsey Harp School and Hampsey School of Traditional Music, Garvagh Community Building, 85 Main Street, Garvagh BT51 5AB</p>
Donegal	<p>Ceolan School of Music, Merville, Inishowen</p>
Down	<p>Carroll School of Harp, Newry</p> <p>Southern Education and Library Board – Newry Centre (Irish lever harp and concert harp)</p> <p>Southern Education and Library Board (school-based tuition)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Our Lady’s Grammar School, Newry – Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry – St Joseph’s Convent Primary School, Newry – St Dallan’s Primary School, Warrenpoint
Dublin	<p>Churchtown School of Music, The Village Centre, Main Street, Dundrum, Dublin 14</p> <p>Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Ceoltóirí Cluain Tarbh, Marino College, Fairview Mart, Dublin 3</p> <p>Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh Naithí, St Columcille’s Community School, Knocklyon, Scholarstown Rd, Ballyboden</p> <p>Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh Phiarais Uí Ghréagáin, 32 Belgrave Square, Monkstown</p> <p>Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh Seán Treacy, St David’s CBS, Artane, Dublin 5</p> <p>DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama, 163 Rathmines Road Lower, Dublin 6 (Irish lever harp and concert harp)</p> <p>Historical Harp Society of Ireland – National Tuition Programme: Na Piobairí Uilleann, Henrietta St, Dublin 1 (early Irish harp)</p> <p>Kingston Academy of Music, 21 Castle St, Dalkey</p> <p>Kylemore College Music Centre (City of Dublin VEC), Kylemore Road, Dublin 10 (Irish lever harp and concert harp)</p> <p>Royal Irish Academy of Music, 36–38 Westland Row, Dublin 2 (concert and Irish lever harp)</p> <p>Walton’s, 69 South Great George’s Street, Dublin 2</p>
Fermanagh	<p><i>private tuition</i></p>
Galway	<p>Athenry Music School, Station Road, Athenry</p> <p>Blossom Harp School, Ballinasloe</p> <p>Historical Harp Society of Ireland – National Tuition Programme: School of Irish Studies, NUI Galway</p>
Kerry	<p>Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh an Aghasaigh, Dingle/Daingean Ui Chúis</p> <p>Kerry School of Music and Performing Arts, High Street, Tralee</p> <p>Kerry School of Music and Performing Arts: Killarney Centre</p> <p>Kerry School of Music and Performing Arts: Killorglin Centre</p> <p>Kerry School of Music and Performing Arts: Listowel Centre</p> <p>Killarney School of Music, Park Road, Killarney</p>
Kildare	<p>Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh Kilteel–Eadestown</p>

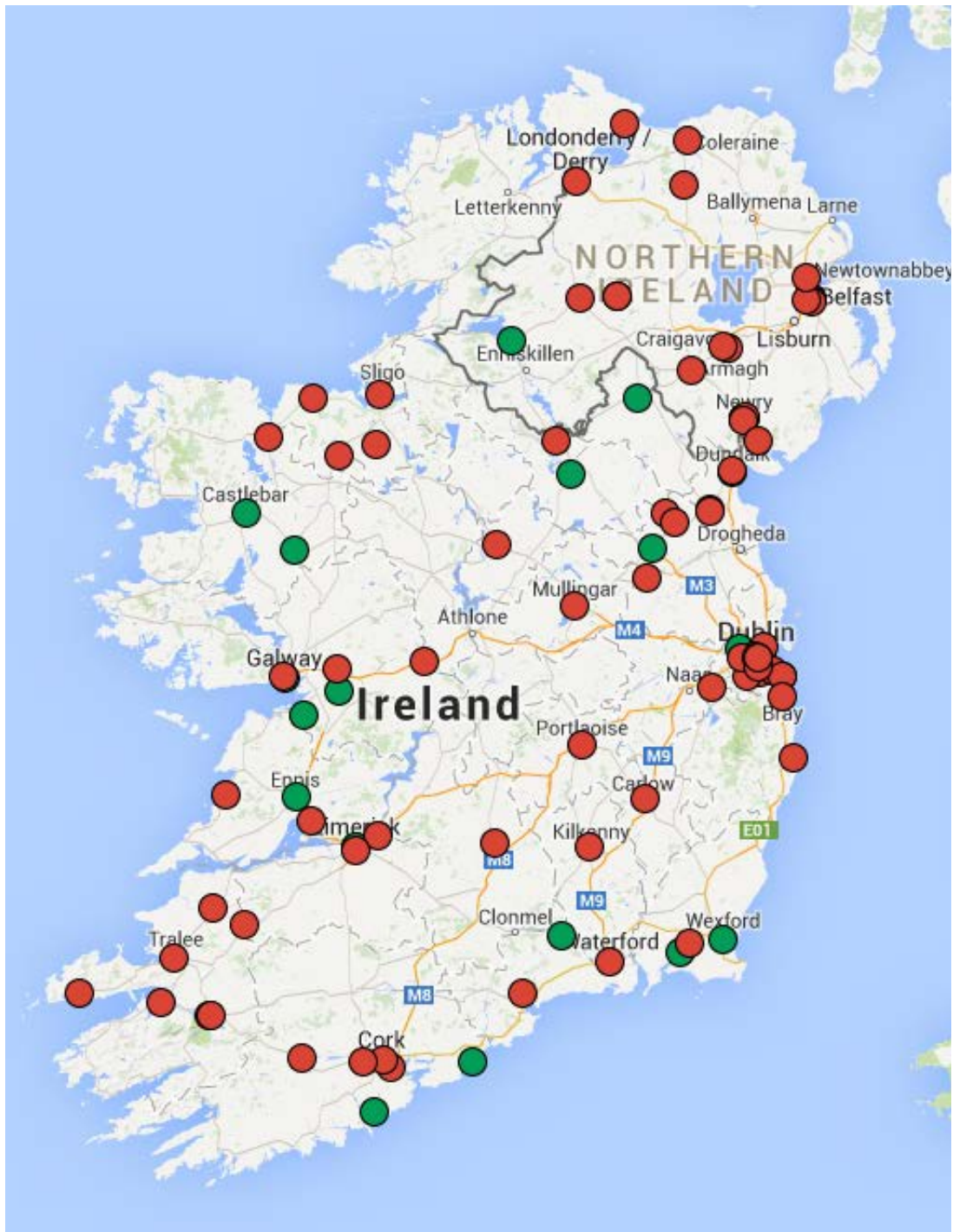
Kilkenny	Historical Harp Society of Ireland – National Tuition Programme: Kilkenny College
Laois	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Portlaoise Music Generation Laois
Leitrim	<i>No details on either organisational or private tuition</i>
Limerick	Irish Harp Centre, Castleconnell, Co. Limerick Kerry School of Music and Performing Arts: Abbeyfeale Redemptorist Centre of Music, Limerick
Longford	Longford Westmeath Education Training Board
Louth	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Comhaltas Craobh Dhún Dealgan, Oriel Centre, Carrickmacross Road, Dundalk Music Generation Louth
Mayo	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Gort na mBó Branch, Ballina
Meath	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Comhaltas Tlachta, Athboy, Ráth Cairn Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: O’Carolan Comhaltas, Kilmainhamwood Meath Harp Academy and Meath Harp Ensemble, Nobber
Monaghan	<i>private tuition</i>
Offaly	<i>No details on either organisational or private tuition</i>
Roscommon	<i>No details on either organisational or private tuition</i>
Sligo	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh Fred Finn, Maugheraboy, Sligo Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh Paddy Killoran, Ballymore Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh South Sligo, Tubbercurry Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh Tireragh, Dromore West Music Generation Sligo (concert harp)
Tipperary	St Angela’s Academy of Music, Ursuline Secondary School, Thurles, (concert and Irish lever harp; currently no concert harp students)
Tyrone	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Omagh Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Dún Uladh, Drumnakilly Road, Omagh BT79 0JP
Waterford	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Craobh na gComarach, Cúil na Sméar, Dungarvan Historical Harp Society of Ireland – National Tuition Programme: Waterford (private residence)
Westmeath	Mullingar Harp School of Music, Mullingar
Wexford	Ceoltóirí Munna, Taghmon
Wicklow	Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: Bray Wicklow Educate Together, Wicklow Town (school-based tuition)

Private and organisational tuition

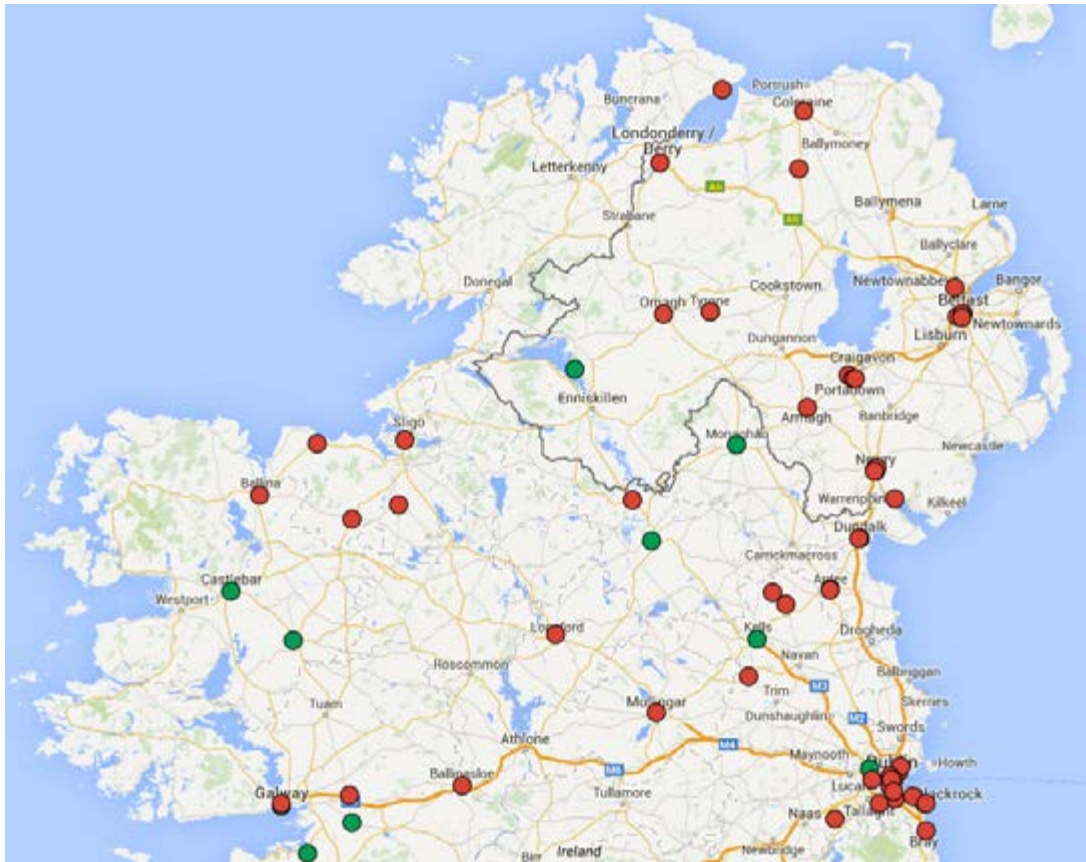
There is private tuition available in a variety of counties. The full range of regular private and organisational tuition is detailed in Maps 1–5 below.

- Music school/organisation/institution/Comhaltas branch
- Private tuition

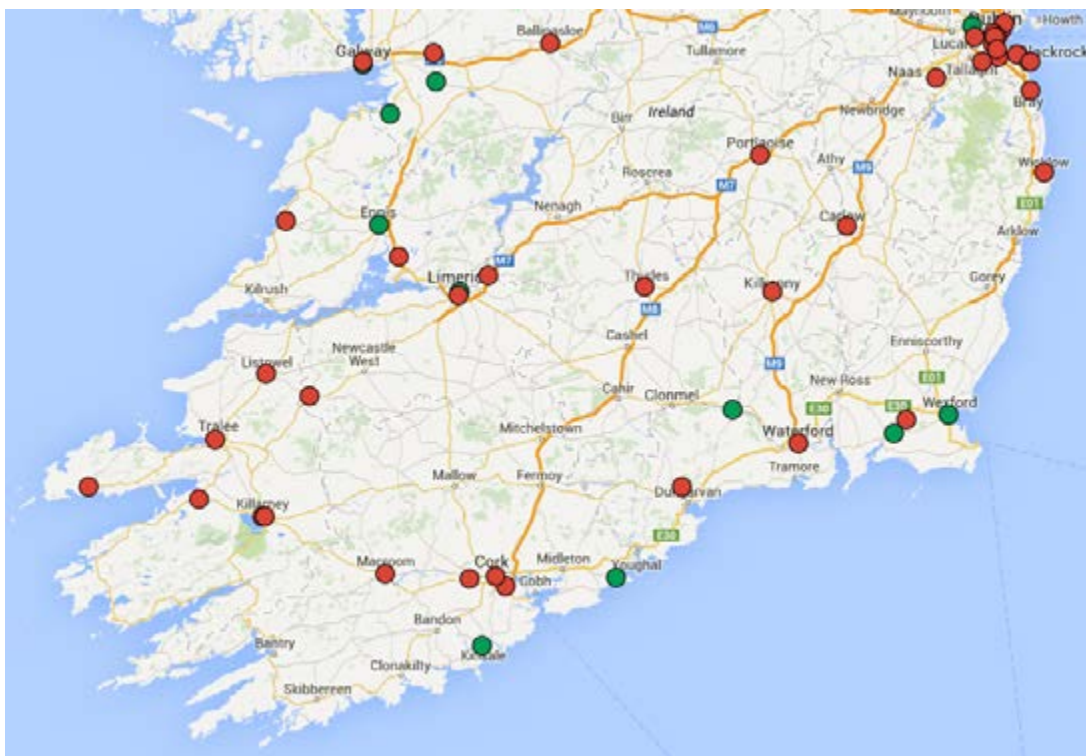
Map 1: Harp tuition: Ireland



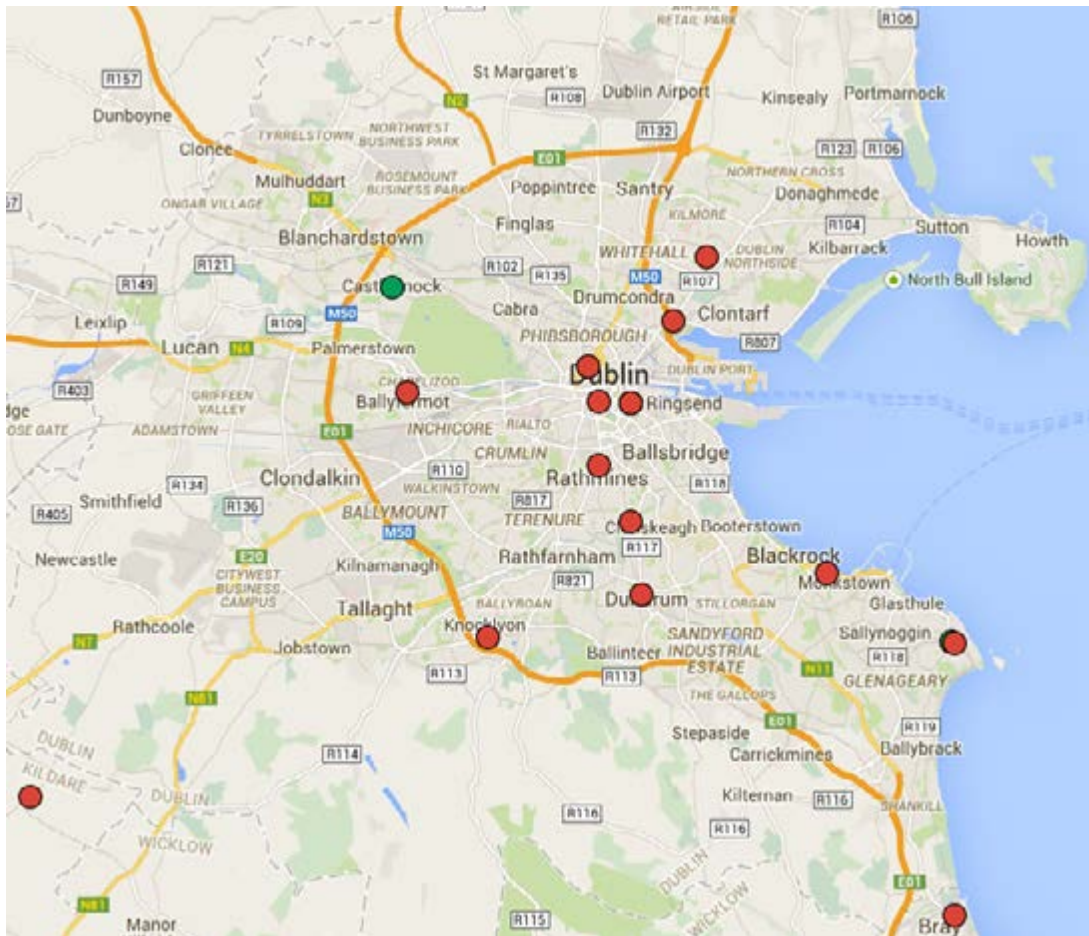
Map 2: Harp tuition detail: Northern half of Ireland



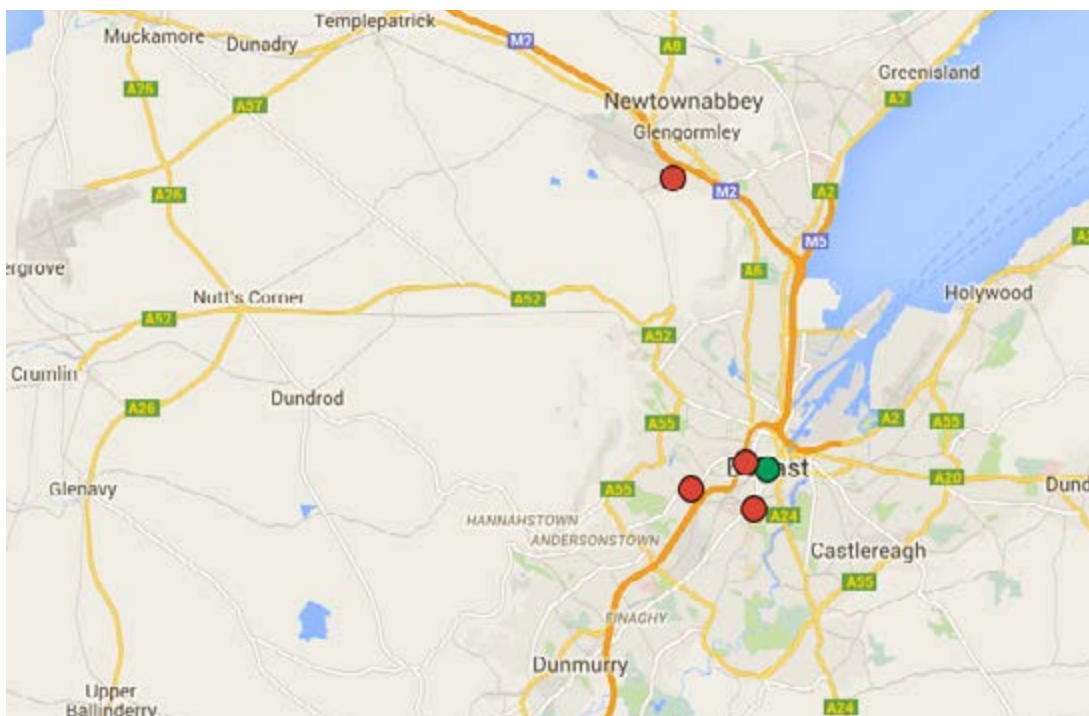
Map 3: Harp tuition detail: Southern half of Ireland



Map 4: Harp tuition detail: Dublin City



Map 5: Harp tuition detail: Belfast City



Harp Tuition at Summer Schools and Festivals

Twenty-one summer schools and festivals in Ireland in 2014 have featured Irish harp tuition.

Table 2

All-year round	Irish Harp Centre, Castleconnell, Co. Limerick (weekend, one-week, one-month, three-month and summer-school courses)
January	<i>No information</i>
February	Féile Patrick Byrne, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan Scoil Cheoil an Earraigh, Baile an Fheirtéaraigh, Co. Kerry
March	<i>No information</i>
April	<i>No information</i> for Ireland (Edinburgh International Harp Festival takes place in Scotland)
May	Féile Chois Chuain, Louisburgh, Co. Mayo
June	Blas – International Summer School of Irish Traditional Music and Song, University of Limerick An Chúirt Chruitreachta – International Festival for Irish Harp, Termonfeckin, Co. Louth
July	Traidphicnic, An Spidéal, Co. Galway (instrumental tuition varies each year; harp tuition in 2014) Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare South Sligo Summer School, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo Joe Mooney Summer School, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim Meitheal – Residential Traditional Music Summer School, Limerick City
August	O'Carolan Harp Festival, Keadue, Co. Roscommon Scoil Éigse (different locations; Sligo in 2014; precedes Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann) Scoil Acla, Achill, Co. Mayo Brian Boru Millennium Harp Festival, Castleconnell, Co. Limerick & Limerick City (organised by the Irish Harp Centre in 2014) Scoil na gCláirseach, Kilkenny City (early Irish harp) Harp Weekend at Bandon Walled Town Festival
September	Tulla Trad Festival, Tulla, Co. Clare Muckross Harp Trail, Muckross House, Killarney, Co. Kerry
October	O'Carolan Harp Festival, Cultural & Heritage Festival, Nobber, Co. Meath
November	<i>No information</i>
December	Edward Bunting Festival, Armagh Town, Co. Armagh (re-commencing in 2014)

Third-level institutions

Harp tuition, where required, also takes place at institutions in the context of third-level music courses. Harpers undertaking third-level courses at the following institutions indicated that they were receiving harp tuition from same: Royal Irish Academy of Music, DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama, Cork School of Music, NUI Maynooth, University of Ulster, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick and University College Cork.

3.12 Students of the harp

A section in the survey was specifically focused on students currently learning the harp. 104 respondents indicated that they were attending lessons (Chart 37).

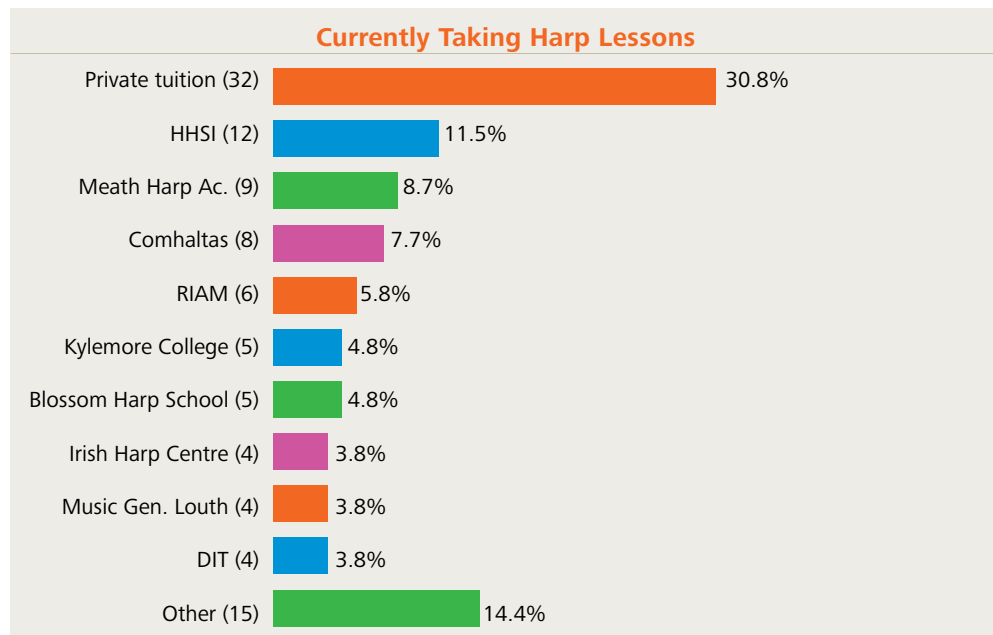


Chart 37: (Sample: 104)

63% indicated that were 20km or less from lessons, 37% indicated that they were 21km or more from lessons (Chart 38).

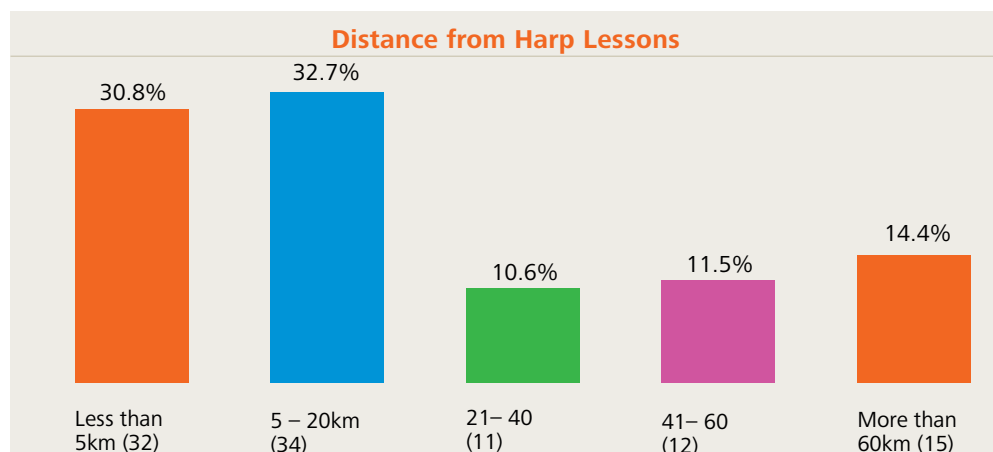


Chart 38: (Sample: 104)



Ann Heymann (USA) teaching a class at Scoil na gCláirseach – Summer School of Early Irish Harp 2013, Kilkenny

63% indicated that they found it easy or relatively easy to source a harp teacher, 37% indicated that they had difficulty (Chart 39).

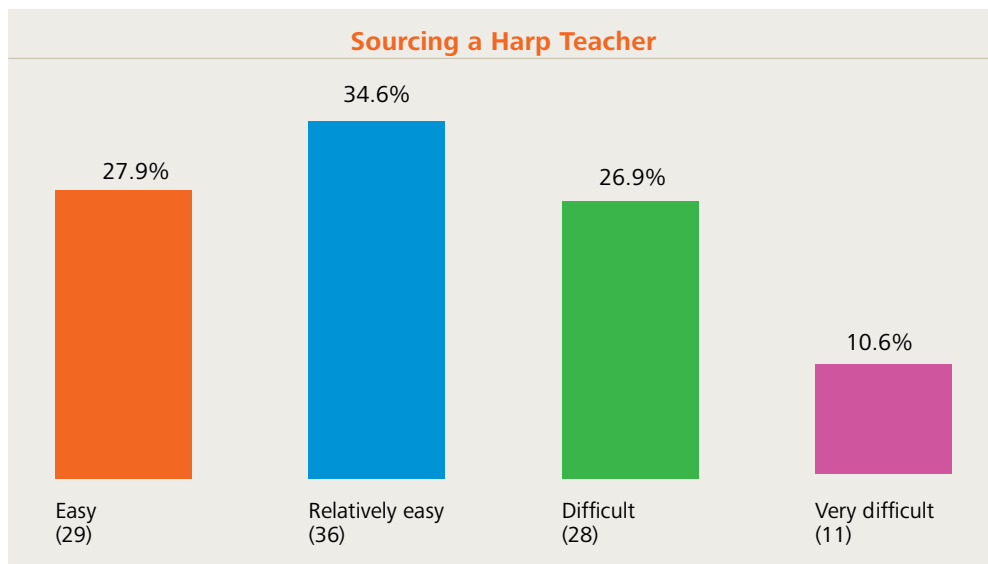


Chart 39: (Sample: 104)

Most lessons take place weekly, but 36% of lessons take place less frequently (Chart 40).

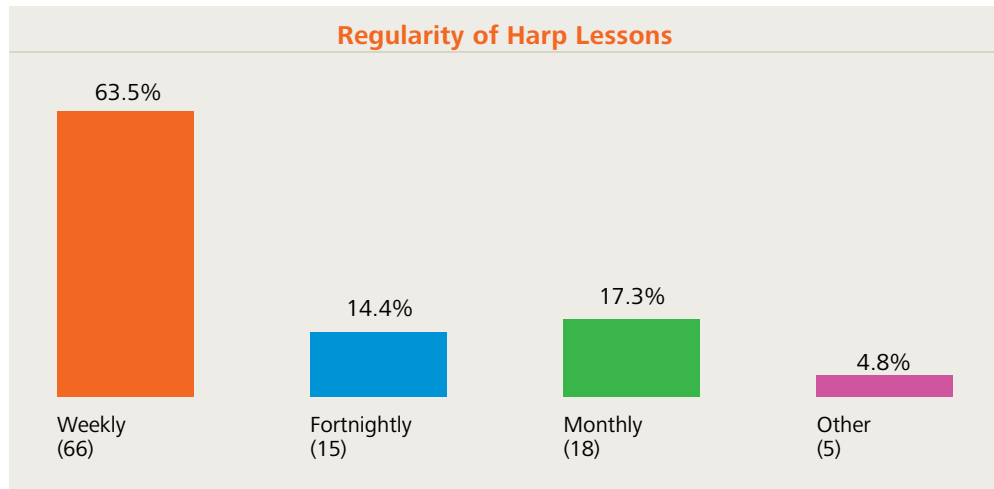


Chart 40: (Sample: 104)

Just over half of students (51%) prefer to learn aurally (Chart 41).

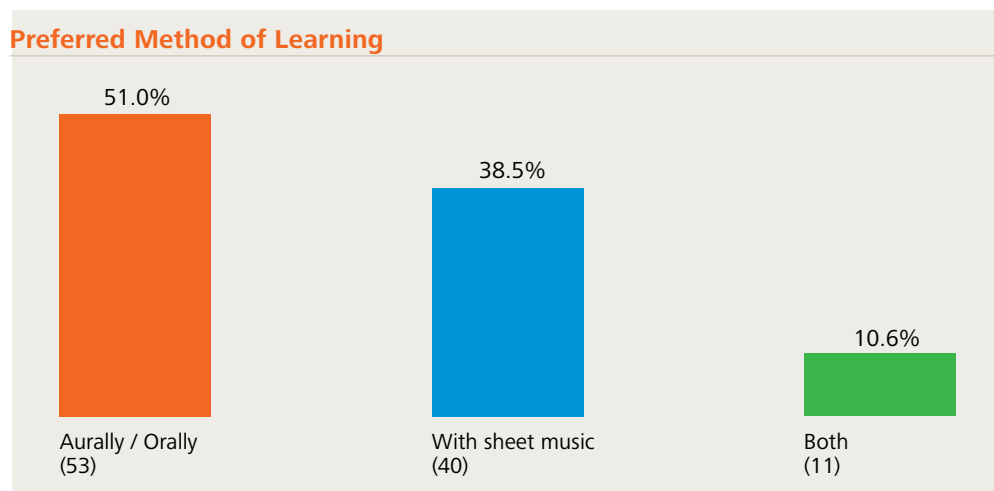


Chart 41: (Sample: 104)

One-on-one lessons are the clear preference (91%) for students (Chart 42).

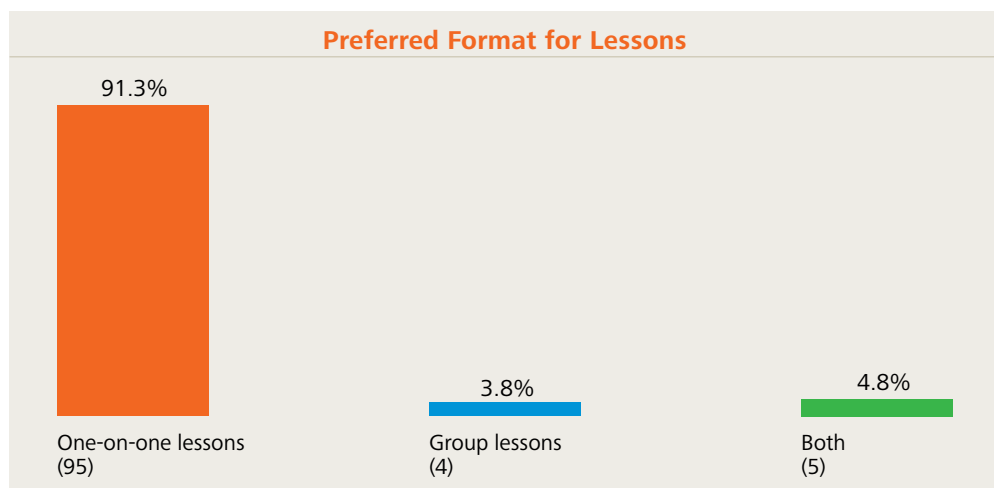


Chart 42: (Sample: 104)

3.13 Organisations

The Irish harp scene has two societies, Cairde na Cruite and the Historical Harp Society of Ireland, and a company dedicated to the harp, the Irish Harp Centre. Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, through its branches and competitions, also plays a key role in the Irish harp scene.

Cairde na Cruite

Established in 1960, Cairde na Cruite is a voluntary and well-established organisation in the Irish harping community. It runs an annual festival, a spring and winter concert, a publication programme, a harp rental scheme, and acts as an information source for harpers.

A key part of Cairde na Cruite's work is organising An Chúirt Chruitireachta, International Festival for Irish Harp, the annual residential summer school and concert series that takes place over six days in Termonfeckin, Co. Louth, and which is in its 29th year.

An Chúirt Chruitireachta consists of morning tuition, a range of afternoon talks, workshops (including a try-the-harp initiative for the public), 'focus on youth' concerts, and evening concerts with Irish and international artists. In 2014, there were 60 students and 11 teachers. The concerts are attended by students, parents and members of the public.

The evening concert programme is rich and diverse, focusing primarily on Irish lever harp but in 2014 also featuring early Irish harp, concert harp, harp ensemble, artists from England, Scotland and Denmark, popular and traditional singers with harp, and group traditional singing.

The week is administered by the 11 teachers and takes place in An Grianán, a large country house in a scenic setting.

Cairde na Cruite also acts as a conduit for information on the harp in Ireland, and between practitioners (it has an email database of 654 and over 900 Facebook friends), and has maintained a publication programme since 1975 (more details about this aspect of its work are available in the Resources section on p. 69).

The committee also has a harp rental scheme: it owns six Irish lever harps that it rents out, and when additional students require a harp at the summer school it liaises with harp-makers to organise harp hire (11 harps were required in 2013).

Cairde na Cruite also organises a spring and Christmas concert, and members who are teaching at Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy also programme the harp recital.

Cairde na Cruite had an income of €58,712 in 2013, consisting of festival tuition fees and concert tickets (62%), grants (19%), harp hire (6%), publication sales (3%) and membership fees (1%). The majority of its income is spent on administering An Chúirt Chruitireachta (75% – €43,897), with the remainder spent on the publication programme, harp insurance and other administrative costs.



Kathleen Loughnane, Máire Ní Chathasaigh, Anne-Marie O'Farrell, Triona Marshall, Dearbhail Finnegan, Kim Fleming and Cormac De Barra – some of the tutors and performers at An Chúirt Chruitireachta 2011. Photo by Kieran Cummins

Cairde na Cruite is a voluntary society with a committee of nine that is supplemented by other volunteers. There is no paid administrator and no payment for the several months spent organising the festival, although those who teach and perform at An Chúirt Chruitireachta are remunerated.

The Arts Council provides annual funding to An Chúirt Chruitireachta under the festivals and events scheme (€11,500 in 2013 and 2014, reduced from €14,000 in 2012 and €13,500 in 2011). An Chúirt Chruitireachta has also received some funding from Louth County Council (€500 in 2014).

Cairde na Cruite has achieved a remarkable amount over the 54 years of its existence, with very modest state support. Its role in the renaissance in Irish harp playing has been critical and the result of a substantial effort by volunteers over several decades. Its programming is inclusive and ambitious and An Chúirt Chruitireachta has imbued generations of young musicians with a passion for Irish harping, and a commitment to safeguarding and developing that tradition.

On its current level of Arts Council support, Cairde na Cruite can not address the many challenges that face the development of Irish harping – or take advantage of the many opportunities for development that are there – and its low funding level is therefore an issue of concern. Core annual funding for the organisation is essential if Irish harping is to continue to grow.

This will be discussed further in the Recommendations section.

Cairde na Cruite's future plans can be summarised as follows:

- investing in the marketing and promotion of An Chúirt Chruitireachta for its thirtieth anniversary in 2015;
- developing its publication programme with the publication of *Sounding Harps 5*, and promotion of its publications to date;
- developing a database of teachers;
- developing and promoting its harp-rental scheme;
- maintaining its programme of spring and winter concerts;
- developing a plan for creating an international harp centre in Dublin.

Historical Harp Society of Ireland

The Historical Harp Society of Ireland (HHSI) was founded by Siobhán Armstrong in 2003. It has a committee of four that organises an annual summer school and concert series, provides tuition in five counties, is engaged in commissioning copies of early Irish harps from harp-builders, has a harp rental scheme, administers a lending library, and acts as an information source for those interested in the early Irish harp.

The HHSI organises the annual Scoil na gCláirseach – Summer School of Early Irish Harp, which is now in its eleventh year. Scoil na gCláirseach consists of seven days of tuition, workshops, lectures, tutor concerts, a public concert and a field trip to Dublin museums to view early Irish harps.

In 2014, there were five tutors and 20 students. Scoil na gCláirseach takes place in the Kilkenny School of Music in Kilkenny City in mid-August (it therefore overlaps with the Kilkenny Arts Festival). Workshops cover topics such as performance practice, historical context, instrumental and vocal repertoire, and harp construction. In the public concert, early Irish harp music is presented with uilleann piping and sean-nós singing performing contemporaneous repertoire.

The HHSI also runs a Summer Concert Series that takes place in Dublin, Kilkenny and Galway.

The Society has a harp-rental scheme and owns 14 harps that are copies of historical Irish harps, measured from museum originals. These harps were purchased over several years with the support of the Music Network Capital Scheme and the Arts Council's Music Capital Scheme. The HHSI's tuition programme extends to Waterford, Galway, Dublin, Kilkenny, Armagh and internationally via Skype. The Society's reference and lending library is catalogued on its website.

The HHSI's income in 2013 was €47,781, comprising of grants (38%), Scoil na gCláirseach income (25%), harp rental, sales of harps and accessories (18%), donations and membership fees (9%), and a small number of sales of books and CDs.

The expenditure in 2013 was on administering Scoil na gCláirseach (48% – €22,794), the purchase of harps and accessories (19% – €9,167), harp rental (5% – €2,510), plus CDs, books, venue hire and administrative costs (15% – €7,280).

The Arts Council provides annual funding to Scoil na gCláirseach under the festivals and events scheme (€4,000 in 2014 and €3,000 in 2013, reduced from €9,000 in 2012). The Council has also previously funded the HHSI's Summer Concert Series under the Deis scheme (€7,500 in 2013 and €6,600 in 2011).

Similar to Cairde na Cruite, the HHSI has no paid administrator and is reliant on voluntary commitment.

In a short number of years, the HHSI has made a significant contribution to Irish musical life. Its philosophy is one of Historically Informed Performance (HIP), which itself is part of the wider international Early Music movement. HHSI has focused on illuminating



Scoil na gCláirseach--Summer School
of Early Irish Harp 2015
Photo by Pat Moore

the qualities of the early Irish harp, and researching and contextualising this music. Its summer school and concert series are rich musical experiences.

There is much more that the HHSI could achieve. The society has ambitious plans, but this development is not possible on their current level of funding. Core annual funding for this organisation is also essential for its future progress.

This will be addressed further in the Recommendations section.

HHSI's future plans can be summarised as follows:

- To increase its network of teachers from four to six and extend early Irish harp tuition around the country;
- increase the number of concert performances annually;
- develop a plan of action towards establishing a HHSI premises, which would have an office, paid administrator, storage room for harps, library space and space for lessons and lectures;
- found an annual *Journal of the Historical Harp Society of Ireland*, to provide a forum for the latest international research in the field;
- develop an HHSI tuition syllabus and a graded exam structure;
- develop parameters for historical harp-building;
- purchase further student harp models (HHSI has already copied five of the existing 18 historic harps);
- establish international branches of the HHSI.

The Irish Harp Centre

Founded by Janet Harbison in 2002, the Irish Harp Centre is based in Castleconnell, Co. Limerick.

Harbison was previously based in Belfast for eighteen years where she established the Belfast Harp Orchestra and directed several harp schools, conferences and festivals.

The Irish Harp Centre is an international centre for harp tuition, offering a range of options from weekend to three-month residential courses and summer schools. It provides tuition for both local harpers and international students, and also teaches other traditional music instruments.

Established in a renovated schoolhouse, the Centre has a range of teaching rooms and accommodation. It also has a small shop/reception with many Irish Harp Centre publications and CDs for sale.

The Centre has 78 Irish lever harps of different sizes for rental to students: 22 full-size (34 string), 18 intermediate (29–31 string), and 38 Bardic harps (26 string).

The Centre is also the base for the Irish Harp Orchestra, established by Harbison, which performs nationally and internationally.

Most recently, the Orchestra performed as part of the Brian Boru Millennium Harp Festival, which was directed by Harbison and took place in Castleconnell and Limerick City on 18–24 August. Including the premiere of a new work, *Brian Boru, Lion of Ireland*, composed by Harbison for harp orchestra (with two harp groups from France and Boston, Massachusetts), pipe band, choir and Irish lever and early Irish harp soloists, the festival also included a summer school, field trips, early evening concerts and a conference titled *Brian Boru, His Harp and Legacy*.

The Irish Harp Centre is a dynamic and ambitious initiative. Janet Harbison's vision for the Irish harp over more than three decades has resulted in many important initiatives that have played an important role in the current buoyancy of the Irish harp scene.

The Irish Harp Centre has not been funded by the Arts Council since 2006 when it received €7,000 for the purchase of 20 harps. The Centre has been adversely affected by the economic situation in Ireland over the past six years. With the right support, it can continue to make a very important contribution to Irish harping. It is imperative that the Council encourages the Centre to explore the Council's range of schemes and how it might support the IHC's programme of activities.

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the harp in Ireland.

The network of Comhaltas' local county, regional and provincial Fleadh competitions engages 25,000 competitors worldwide, 7,000 of which go forward to compete in the annual Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann which takes place every August.

Currently, there are eight harp competitions: 'Irish Harp' and 'Irish Harp Slow Airs' in four age groups (under-12, 12–15, 15–18 and Senior).

Ninety-nine harpers competed in the 2014 Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Sligo, 59 of which came from the Republic of Ireland, ten from Northern Ireland, nine from England, two from Scotland and 19 from the USA.

Fleadhanna also have duet, trio and *grúpaí ceoil* competitions, and competitions in accompaniment, which all attract harp entrants.

Other harp-related activity by Comhaltas includes: harp tuition at Scoil Éigse, which takes place in the week preceding Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann; support for summer schools run by individual branches; organising groups for concert performances and international tours that consistently feature an Irish harper; and administering examinations in traditional music (Scrúdú Ceol Tíre) and a diploma in traditional music teaching (Teastas Teagaisc Ceolta Tíre). In 2014, Comhaltas commissioned the harper Michael Rooney to compose *The Boroimhe Suite* for performance at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

Comhaltas is funded directly by the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. A number of Comhaltas branches receive funding from the Arts Council, particularly through Deis and the Festivals and Events Scheme.

3.14 Resources

Given the historical nature of much Irish harp repertoire, it is essential that institutions safeguard sources and make them available in a range of formats.

The Irish Traditional Music Archive is a key resource for the Irish harping community, but there are several other resources upon which they draw (Chart 43).

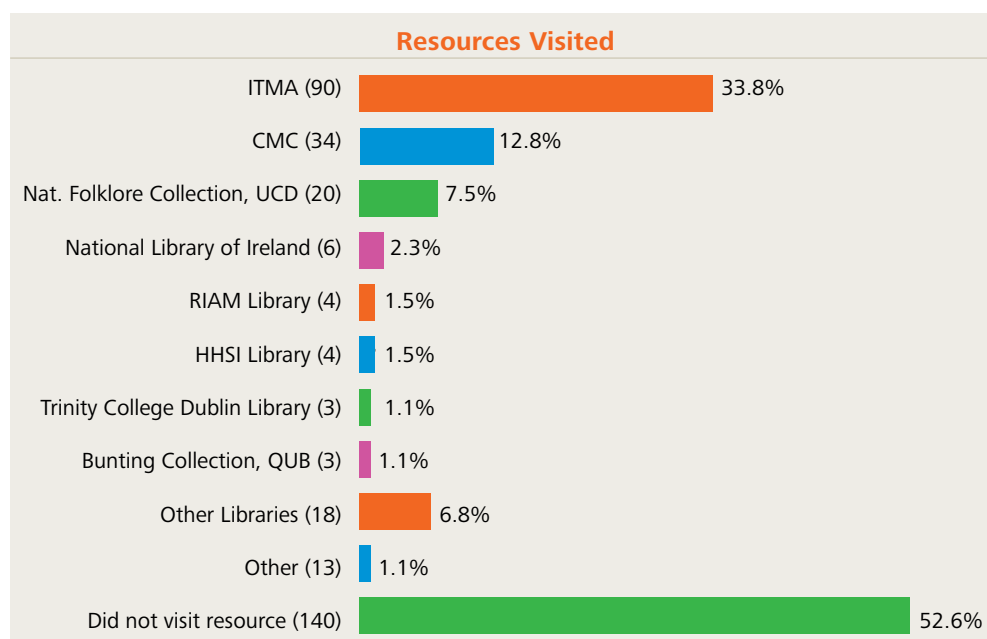


Chart 43: (Sample: 266)

Of particular importance are resources that contain material relating to the early harping tradition, for example, the Bunting Collection in Queen’s University Belfast. The Irish Traditional Music Archive published a key reference work on the Bunting manuscripts by Dr Colette Moloney in 2000, *The Irish Music Manuscripts of Edward Bunting (1773–1843): An Introduction and Catalogue*.

Other resources that were mentioned include the Scottish National Library and the Aloys Fleischmann and Donal O’Sullivan archives in University College Cork. Dónal O’Sullivan (1893–1973) carried out key research on Carolan and published a seminal work, *Carolan – The Life and Times of an Irish Harper*, in 1958.

Print resources

Cairde na Cruite has maintained a publication programme since 1975 when it published *The Irish Harp Book*.

This was followed by four volumes of *Soundings Harps*, which are collections of early harpers’ tunes, traditional tunes, slow airs and songs, graded according to difficulty (beginner to senior). In 2010, to mark the 50th anniversary of the society, Cairde na Cruite published *Rogha na gCruitirí – Harpers’ Choice: 100 traditional tunes for the Irish harp*, edited by Áine Ní Dhubhghaill, Anne-Marie O’Farrell and Aibhlín McCrann, and which contains arrangements of early harpers’ music, traditional tunes, airs, songs and newly composed work by 53 contemporary Irish harpers.



Janet Harbison and Muireann O'Dwyer.
Photo by John Garrett.

Janet Harbison, under the auspices of the Irish Harp Centre, has also published a range of pedagogical publications, including seven graded tutors for traditional Irish harp, from junior beginners to adult beginners.

Harbison and artists such as Máire Ní Chathasaigh, Gráinne Hambly, Michael Rooney and Anne-Marie O'Farrell have between them also published several volumes of tune collections, harp solos and newly composed work.

Key historical print resources include the Bunting and Neal collections. A new edition of the latter by Nicholas Carolan was published by the Irish Traditional Music Archive in 2010: *A collection of the most celebrated Irish tunes – proper for the violin, German flute or hautboy – John & William Neal [eds.] – facsimile edition by Nicholas Carolan.*

O'Sullivan's 1958 work on Turlough Carolan and Francis O'Neill's collections of traditional Irish dance music (1903–24) also feature among key resources.

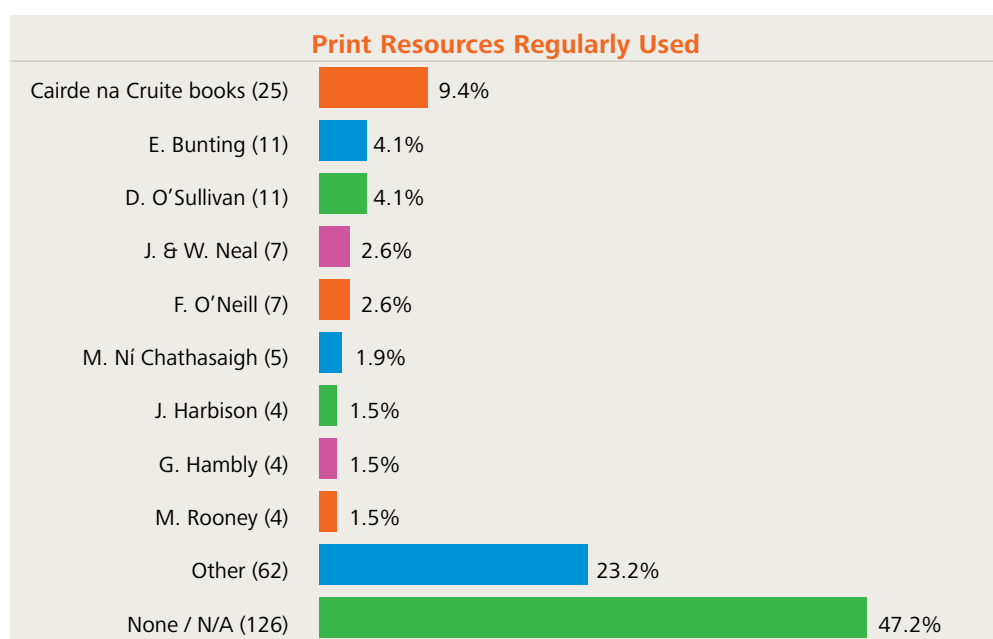


Chart 44: (Sample: 266)

Harpers also use a range of online resources to inform their artistic practice (Chart 45).

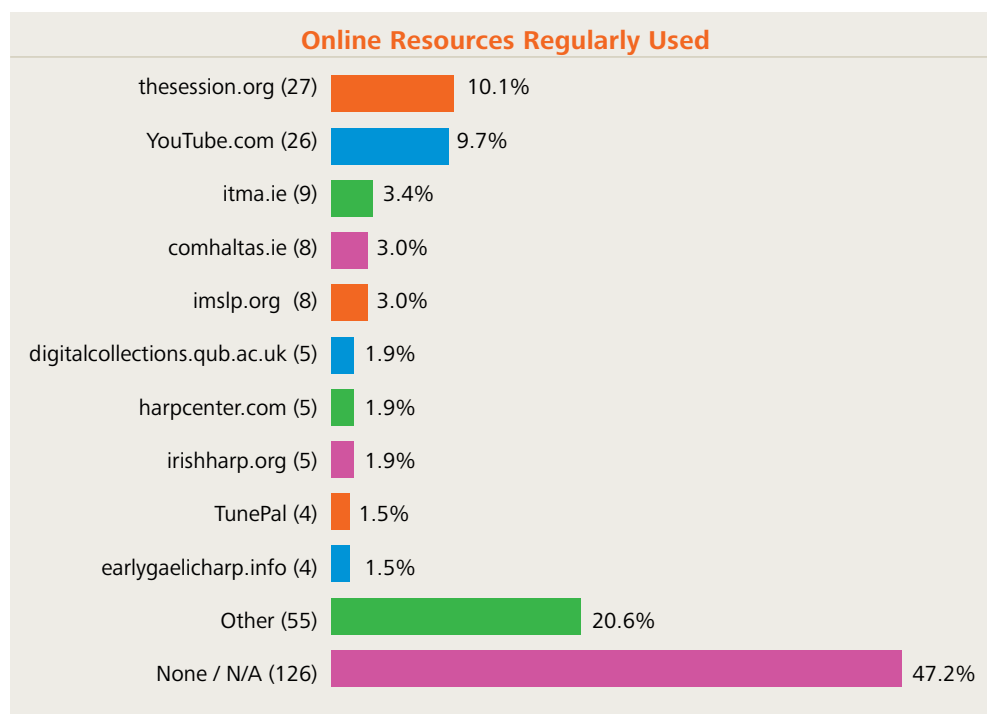


Chart 45: (Sample: 267)

thesession.org is a website focusing on Irish traditional music and has an online database of over 1,200 tunes (in ABC format). It also has a discussion forum and events notices.

YouTube is used by musicians to watch, listen and learn from the work of other musicians.

itma.ie, the website of the Irish Traditional Music Archive, has a constantly growing collection of sheet music and audio and video. Comhaltas' website, too, has a range of audio and video footage of traditional musicians.

The complete original notebooks of Edward Bunting have been scanned by Queen's University Belfast and are available at *digital.collections.qub.ac.uk*.

imslp.org – International Music Score Library Project – is an online collection of sheet music; *harpcenter.com* is an online shop for harp accessories; *irishharp.org* is the website of the Historical Harp Society of Ireland; *TunePal* is a mobile application that recognises traditional Irish dance tunes; and *earlygaelicharp.info* is the website of the Secretary of the Historical Harp Society of Ireland, Simon Chadwick, and contains extensive information on the early Irish harp.

Most harpers also access information on harp-related activity online (Chart 46).

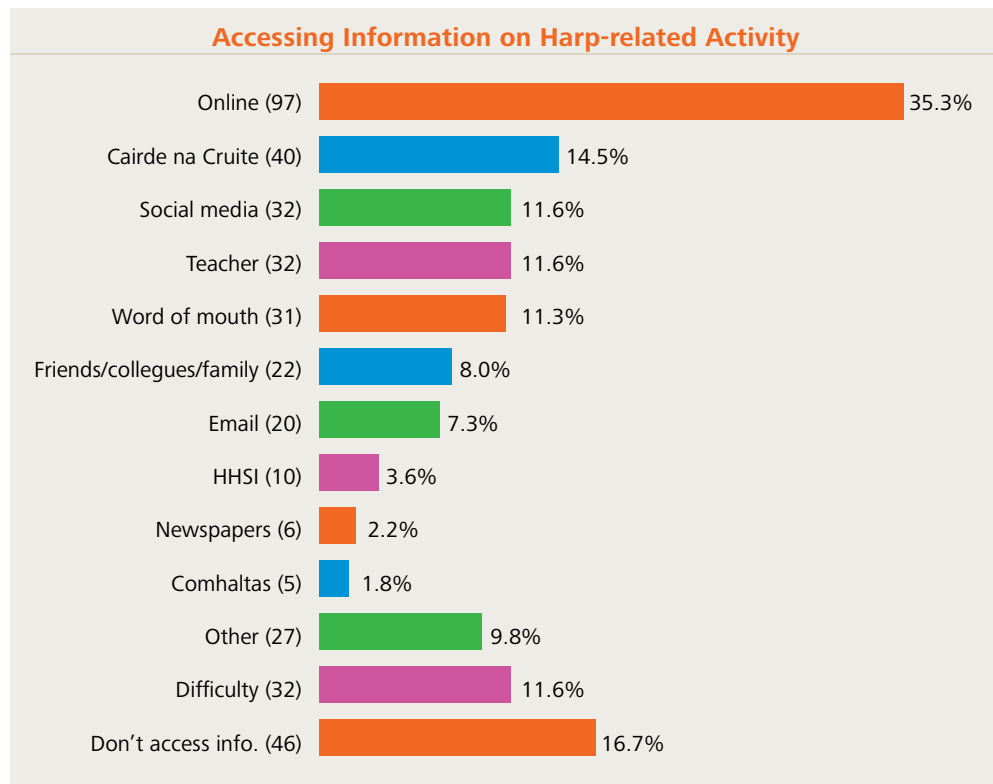


Chart 46: (Sample: 275)

12% have difficulty accessing information on harp activity.

Cairde na Cruite (15%) is a key resource. It has a website, a Facebook page and an email newsletter.

Social media, teachers, word of mouth, and friends and family, are also key for spreading information about harp activity.

3.15 Harp-making

Harp ownership

Ninety per cent of harpers own their own harp (Chart 47)

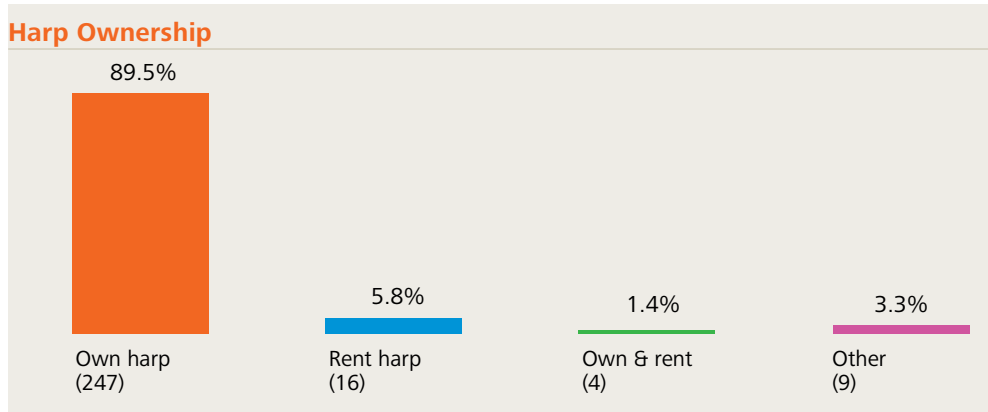


Chart 47: (Sample: 276)

Harp-makers

The make of 431 harps was provided by respondents. An estimated 33% (139) were made in Ireland, including Northern Ireland (Chart 48).

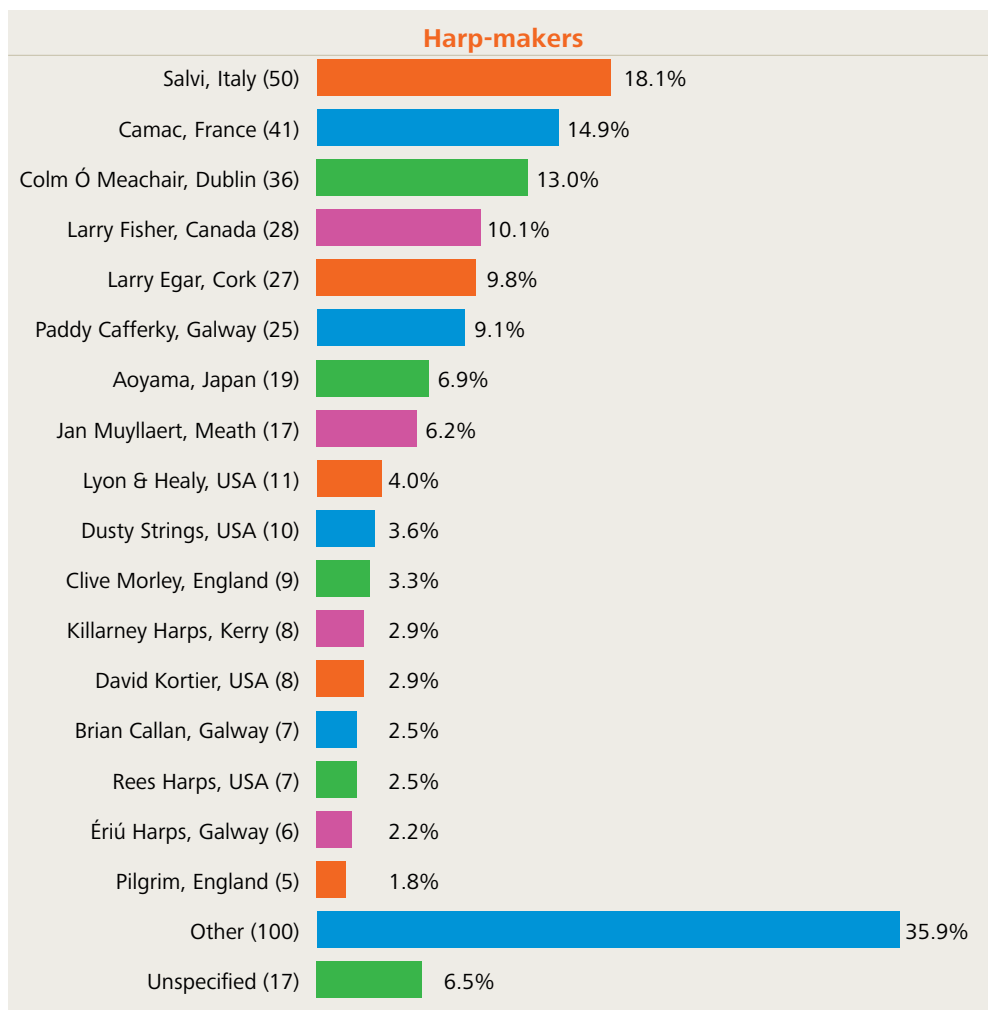


Chart 48: (Sample: 276)

The majority of harps purchased are made by Salvi in Italy and Camac in France. Both of these companies have agents in Ireland.

Of the full-time Irish harp-makers mentioned in the survey, Jan Muylleert in Meath has been making harps (and other instruments) for over forty years; Paul Doyle in Galway has been making a variety of instruments, including harps, for thirty years; Ériú Harps in Galway (Natalia Surina) has been making harps (specialising in early Irish harps) for eight years; and Killarney Harps (Tim O'Carroll) and Brian Callan (Galway) for three years.

Turmennan Harps (Mervyn Waugh) in Downpatrick is a part-time operation and has been selling harps for three years. Davy Patton is a part-time maker in Roscommon, and Ruairi McCann of Narrow Water Harps (Louth) is a part-time harp-maker who has been making harps for one year. There are also a number of people who make harps in their spare time.

Paddy Cafferky and Larry Egar are no longer making harps, and Colm O'Meachair, who accounted for 13% of the harps mentioned in the survey, is recently deceased.

Irish harp-makers are generally solo operations.

In interview, Irish harp-makers identified the following challenges:

- a small number of harp teachers are also agents for foreign harp-makers;
- waiting lists put potential Irish buyers off, so they purchase abroad;
- no database of harp teachers;
- lack of marketing experience;
- labour-intensive work means less time for promotion and achieving sales;
- The Irish Guild of Musical Instrument Makers is no longer active;
- Establishing a workshop is very expensive because of the cost of equipment;
- there is a lack of teachers in certain parts of the country – more teachers would create more demand;
- without formal qualifications, harp-makers cannot gain state support to employ apprentices;
- teaching an apprentice slows down productivity;
- teaching an apprentice requires you to formalise what you do, but harp-making is a dynamic, learning process, and techniques change over the years with knowledge, experience and harper demand;
- the need for comprehensive research into the make of early Irish harps in order to produce accurate copies;
- the low profile of Irish harp-making generally.

They also identified the following opportunities

- demand for Irish harps is increasing;
- there is a growing demand for harp rental;
- a digital presence allows them to tap into a global market;
- as well as providing harps for performers and learners, there is also a market for Irish harps as ornaments;

- harp festivals and events are excellent opportunities to exhibition their harps and generate orders;
- the new Na Píobairí Uilleann pipe-making centre offers a potential model for training harp-makers;
- Harp-making can be a profitable business, but it requires a substantial investment.

Na Píobairí Uilleann's PipeCraft Pipemaking Training Centre

There are an estimated twenty full-time uilleann pipes makers in Ireland and thirty outside Ireland.

Pipe-making and the craft of reed-making have been permanent interests of Na Píobairí Uilleann (NPU) – the organisation of uilleann pipers – since it was founded in 1968, but since 2008, there have been a variety of focused initiatives, such as teaching pipe-making at Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy.

In 2010, NPU established the PipeCraft Pipe-making Training Centre in Clonsaugh, Co. Dublin, and full-time training commenced in 2012. Since its establishment, over 130 people have availed of full- or part-time courses at the Centre.

There are currently 10 full-time students undertaking a three-year course. The trainees are funded by the Leader scheme and NPU employs a pipe-making supervisor on a fixed-term contract.

NPU have developed a syllabus for pipe-making and have full health and safety procedures in place. The Arts Council provided funding of €110,000 over three years in order to develop the curriculum.

It costs NPU €130,000 a year to run PipeCraft. The organisation estimates that with an investment of €7,000 it could purchase the necessary equipment in order to make harps and traditional flutes also.

A key recent initiative as regards developing pipe-making has been to document the work of makers through video and share this knowledge and experience via DVD, online and on a mobile app. This has been beneficial to pipe-making as a whole.

A future for Irish harp-making

The increase in demand for harps in recent years is an important first step for the future of Irish harp-making, but this could be enhanced further by the development in Ireland of a nationwide harp-hire system and a teachers' database, which would drive demand.

It is also essential that there is a far better awareness among Irish harpers, harp organisations and parents of potential harpers of the range of harps and services Irish harp-makers provide, and this comes down to effective marketing and information sharing.

These are areas where the Arts Council's support can make a difference. These issues will be discussed further in Recommendations.

3.16 Funding

Twenty-five per cent of respondents had previously applied to the Arts Council for funding (Chart 49).

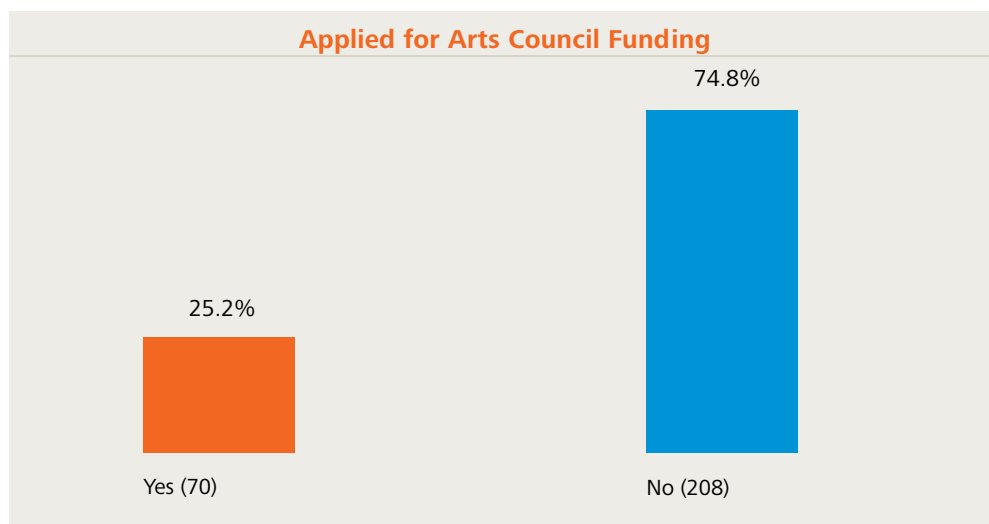


Chart 49: (Sample: 278)

Fifty-three respondents provided further details on the funding they received (Chart 50), with festivals and summer schools being the most popular reason (38%), followed by instrument purchase (17%).

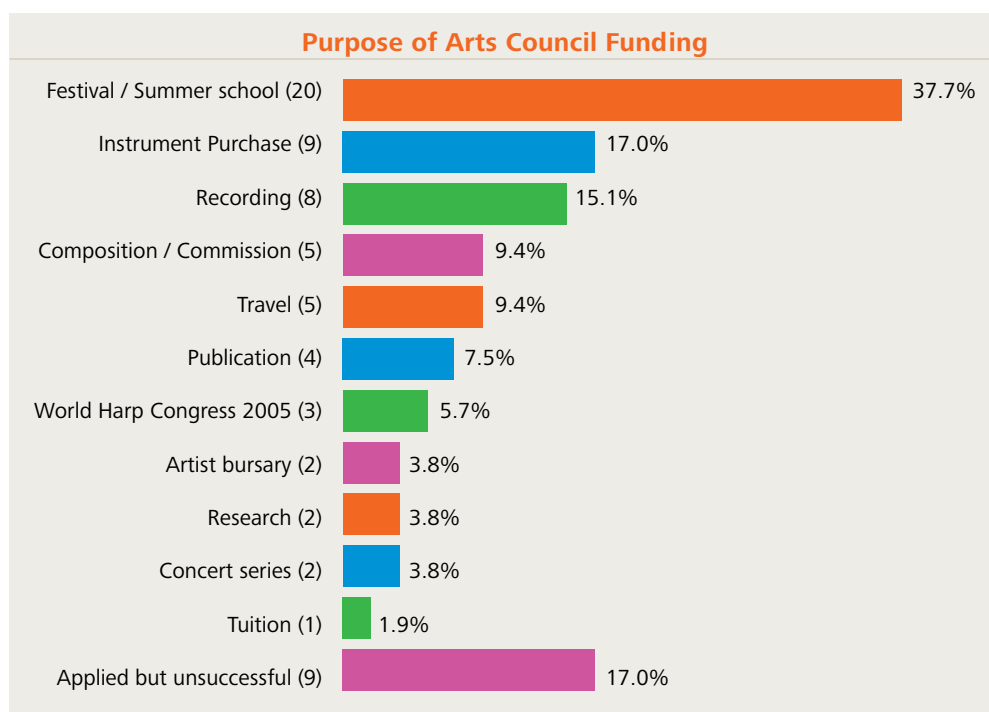


Chart 50: (Sample: 53)

Fifty-five respondents had accessed funding from other sources (Chart 51).

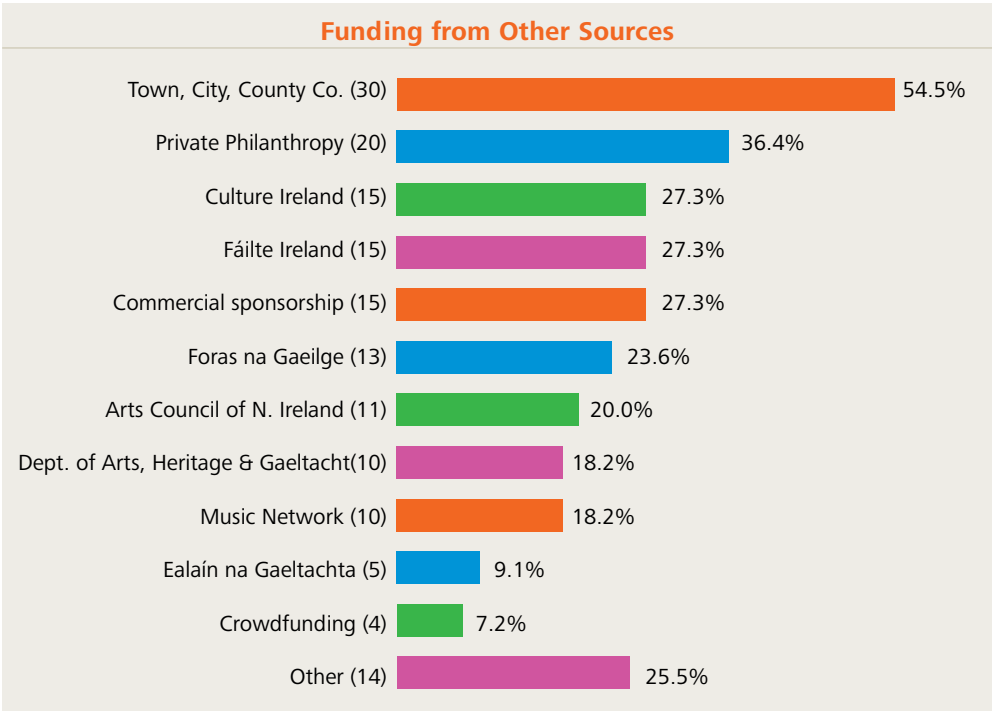


Chart 51: (Sample: 55)

Twenty-three per cent of harpers were aware of the funding options currently available to them through the Arts Council (Chart 52).

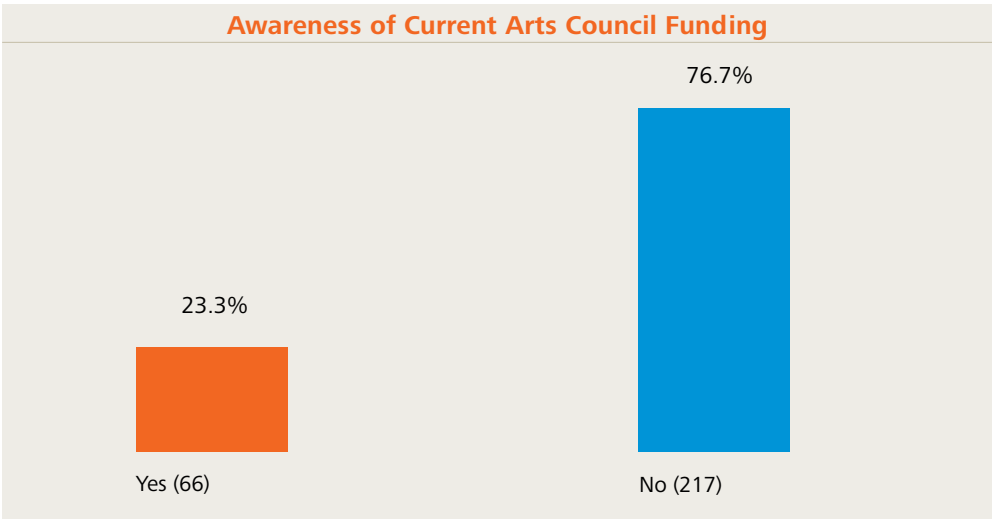


Chart 52: (Sample: 283)

Arts Council funding for the harp

The main Arts Council support for the harp consists of

- (i) funding to events organised by harp organisations
- (ii) support for individual harpers
- (iii) support for one-off harp-related events or projects
- (iv) funding for broader arts and music activity that includes harping

(i) Funding for harp events organised by harp organisations was €160,120 over the past five years, an average of €32,024 annually.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Cairde na Cruite	15,000	13,200	13,500	14,000	11,500
Historical Harp Society of Ireland	12,000	5,000	11,496	10,224	15,500
O'Carolan Harp, Cultural & Heritage Festival (Nobber, Co. Meath)	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	0
O'Carolan Harp Festival (Keadue, Co. Roscommon)	0	4,500	5,000	5,000	3,500
Muckcross Harp Trail	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,350	4,350
TOTAL	30,000	25,700	32,996	36,574	34,850

Table 3

(ii) A total of €96,420 has been granted to six individual harpers over the past five years (an average of €19,284 per year), for projects ranging from harp research and concert series to composing new work and recording CDs. €64,000 of the total was for projects which employed a range of other musicians.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Funding for individual harpers	11,920	9,500	7,000	8,000	60,000

Table 4



Muckross Harp Trail 2015
Photo by Valerie O'Sullivan

(iii) One-off harp-related projects include the commissioning of new work by a harper, two films focusing on the harp, and workshops, festivals and tours that employed harpers. The total was €74,308 (an average of €14,862 per year).

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
One-off harp projects	25,000	0	33,136	13,000	3,172

Table 5

(iv) The Arts Council also supports twelve of the twenty-one Irish festivals/summer-schools that provide harp tuition; the Galway Early Music Festival, which regularly includes Irish harp in its programming; and many other festivals, venues and promoters that employ Irish harpers.

This detail on funding concludes the results of the Survey of Harpers. The next section of the report focuses on recommendations for future development.



Harp on the Liffey
– the launch of love: live music 2010.
Photo by Maxwell Photography

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

At the beginning of this report, the various issues that the harp community has previously raised, at the Harp Symposium in 2010 and at the Arts Council meeting in 2013, were listed.

Key among them were the setting of a harp forum to facilitate more collaboration between harp organisations, the establishing of an Irish harp centre in Dublin, and of an International Irish Harp Day to raise the instrument's profile.

There was also a focus on introducing more supports for harp-making in Ireland, the need for core regular funding for harp organisations, for the setting up of a database of teachers, for more widely available high-quality tuition, and the importance was stressed of safe-guarding the early Irish harp repertoire.

The research in this report corroborates many of these concerns, while at the same time presenting a more layered picture.

When asked to list the main challenges in developing a career as a harpist, 264 respondents provided the following responses (Chart 53):

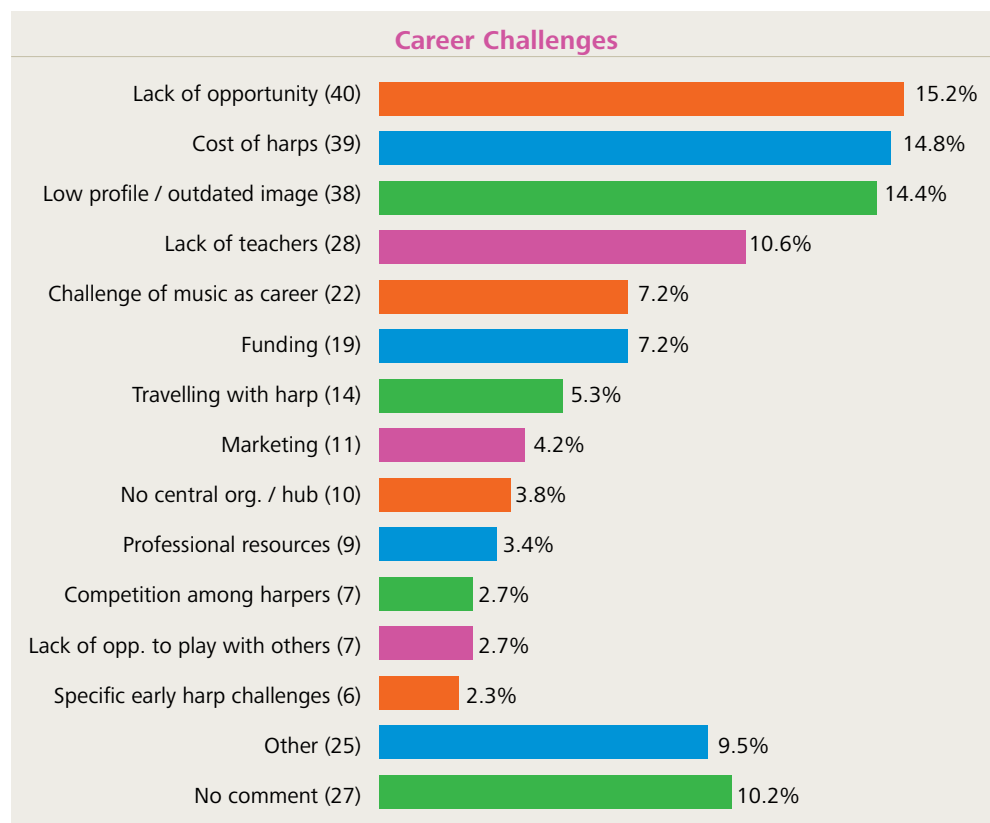


Chart 53: (Sample: 264)

When those who are currently involved with organisations, or have been, were asked to list the main challenges, 76 respondents provided the following responses (Chart 54):

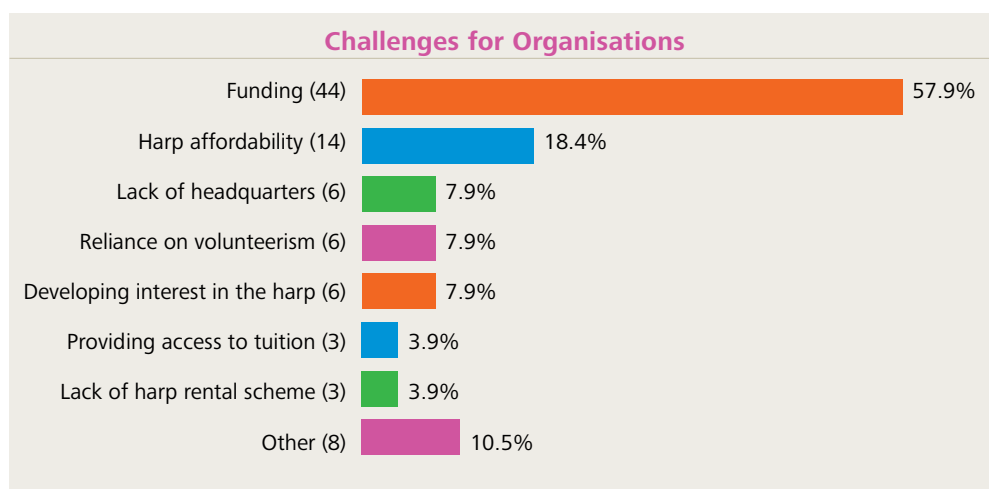


Chart 54: (Sample: 76)

The survey results for this questions were explored further in interviews with artists and organisation representatives.

The issues raised will be dealt with below.

4.1 Funding organisations

Key among the priorities raised, both in this survey and in interview, is increased support for Irish harp organisations. An average of €24,284 per annum has been invested over the past five years by the Arts Council in two harp organisations, Cairde na Cruite and the Historical Harp Society of Ireland. The Irish Harp Centre has not had a funding relationship with the Council since 2006.

The work of all three is extremely valuable to the future of the harp. The challenge is to support their separate work and allow them collaborate if and when necessary.

There are many tasks that need to be undertaken with regard to the harp, but without harp organisations that are better resourced, it is unrealistic to expect substantial progress to be made.

One also cannot presume that because organisations have achieved so much to date, and often have done so voluntarily, that this will automatically continue into the future.

Increasing Arts Council support for the harp organisations Cairde na Cruite and the Historical Harp Society of Ireland, to allow them employ some administrative support, build on the progress so far and engage in long-term planning is therefore a critical first step.

The Irish Harp Centre is an excellent resource for the Irish harping community, but it is not currently a client of the Council. It is important that the Art Council encourage the Centre to explore the Council's range of schemes and how it might support the IHC's programme of activities.

Recommendations

4.1.1 In order to provide key harp organisations with core annual funding, the Arts Council could encourage Cairde na Cruite and the Historical Harp Society of Ireland to apply under the Annual Funding scheme.

4.1.2 It is recommended that the Arts Council encourage the Irish Harp Centre to engage with the Council about its future plans and explore ways that the Council can support the Centre's programme of harp activities.

4.2 An Irish Harp Forum

With three separate harp organisations, the issue of collaboration has naturally been raised, for example at the Harp Symposium in 2010 and the Harpers' Meeting in 2013.

The idea of an Irish Harp Forum, which was put forward at the latter meeting, has merit, if for nothing else but as a periodic channel of communication between the various bodies. The harp scene is small and sharing information, knowledge and experience would be of benefit to the harping community as a whole. The aims of the three bodies are different, but this should not preclude them from staying in regular contact and from collaborating if and when necessary, for example with regard to the idea of an International Irish Harp Day. Cairde na Cruite and the Irish Harp Centre, in particular, share much common ground.

Independently chaired bi-annual meetings beginning in 2015 would be a solid first step.

Recommendation

4.2.1 With a view towards further strengthening the Irish harp community, Cairde na Cruite, the Historical Harp Society of Ireland and the Irish Harp Centre should take steps to establish an Irish Harp Forum with biannual meetings.

4.3 International Centre for the Irish Harp, Dublin

The ambition of an International Centre for the Irish Harp based in Dublin was raised at the Harp Symposium in 2010, the Harpers' Meeting in 2013, and in the results of this survey.

Na Píobairí Uilleann, with its premises in Henrietta Street, Dublin, has demonstrated the positive impact that a centre in the capital can have on a once endangered instrument, repertoire and tradition. In 1968, when NPU was founded, there were approximately 50 uilleann pipers in Ireland. It is estimated that there are now over 5,000 worldwide. NPU currently has a permanent staff of four (CEO, Archivist, Administrator and Administrative Assistant) and employs a Head of Development and a Pipe-making Supervisor on a contractual basis. Its funding from the Arts Council in 2014 was €334,000.

There are four main strands to NPU's strategy: access, education, performance and preservation. The organisation runs a range of activities: providing tuition in Dublin and a try-the-pipes initiative around the country; providing classes in Louth, Laois and Sligo in co-operation with Music Generation; administering a Pipes-on-Loan scheme; organising regular recitals and lectures; running the PipeCraft Pipemaking Training Centre and other pipe-making courses; publishing a periodical, DVDs and recordings; organising an International Uilleann Piping Day; archival work; and partnering with a range of organisations and events, such as Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, in order to promote the uilleann pipes.

It is also currently engaged in a major fundraising drive for a capital project to extend its premises into No. 16 Henrietta Street and create an International Uilleann Piping Visitor Centre and Theatre.

An International Centre for the Irish Harp in Dublin is an important ambition – and it is important that the harping community have such large-scale ambitions – and the example and experience of NPU would prove invaluable in working towards it.

To date, it is an ambition that has been primarily associated with Cairde na Cruite. Such a large project will require leadership and a working group to undertake additional research and planning. It is up to Cairde na Cruite to take on that leadership role if progress is to be made, though any working group should be open to membership from other harp organisations also.

The Arts Council should support the harping community in the ambition of establishing an International Centre for the Irish Harp in Dublin, and through its funding for harp organisations and project and scheme funding, could support further research into this idea.

Recommendation

4.3.1 It is recommended that the Arts Council support the harping community in the ambition of establishing an International Centre for the Irish Harp in Dublin through supporting further research into this objective.



Muckross Harp Trail 2015
Photo by Valerie O'Sullivan

4.4 Opportunity

It is striking that 'Lack of opportunity' was put forward as the biggest challenge facing harpers (these were the respondents' choice of words, not the survey's – it was an open question).

Lack of opportunity is partly related to another key issue – the low profile of the Irish harp – but it also has to do with the more general challenge that is developing a career as a musician.

This is not an issue confined to Irish harpers. Creative work is intensive and often artists struggle to find the additional time to undertake the necessary promotional work to generate a sufficient income.

Whether it is part of a broader professional development training initiative by the Arts Council, or training provided specifically by harp organisations, there is clearly a demand among harpers for training that would help them in establishing a career as a musician.

Recommendation

- 4.4.1** It is recommended that the Arts Council support harp organisations who wish to provide professional development training for harpers to allow them develop a career in music.

4.5 Arts Council awards and schemes

Awareness of Arts Council schemes and awards among the harping community is less than 25% and only six individual harpers have received Arts Council support in the last five years (amounting to an average investment of €19,284 per year).

The Arts Council could have a direct impact on creating more opportunity for Irish harpers by raising awareness of available awards and encouraging more harpers to apply.

This could be achieved through public information initiatives at harp events such as An Chúirt Chruitireachta, the O'Carolan Harp, Cultural and Heritage Festival in Nobber and the O'Carolan Harp Festival in Keadue, Muckross Harp Trail, the harp recital at Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy, and Scoil na gCláirseach; through using the networks of harp and music organisations; as well as a general publicity campaign.

These information initiatives could focus on the following awards:

- Deis scheme;
- Music / Traditional Arts Project awards;
- Music / Traditional Arts Bursary awards;
- Music / Traditional Arts Commissions awards;
- Deis Recording Award / Music Recording Scheme;
- Travel and Training Award;
- Touring and Dissemination Award;
- Beyond Borders.

Irish harping does not fit neatly into one genre. With a 1,000-year-old musical history, it can go beyond our contemporary ideas of genre. Harpers applying to the Arts Council have sometimes felt that they 'fall between two stools' when it comes to applying under 'Music' or 'Traditional Arts'. When applying to Deis, for example, they have tried to second-guess what aspect of their harp practice will be considered as suitable for 'Traditional Arts' and shaped their proposal, and programme of activities, accordingly. The role of Council funding is to support the full flowering of the harping tradition in a contemporary context, and not hinder that expression. The Council should ensure that Music and Traditional Arts schemes, awards and policies are flexible enough to accommodate a broad range of Irish harping proposals and that the harp community is aware of these policies.

Recommendations

4.5.1 It is recommended that the Arts Council undertake a public awareness initiative at harp events to encourage more harpers to apply for its current range of schemes and awards.

4.5.2 The Council should ensure that Music and Traditional Arts schemes, awards and policies are flexible enough to accommodate a broad range of Irish harping proposals and that the harp community is aware of these policies.

4.6 Composition and Commissions

Composition is an historic part of the harping tradition, but only 12 respondents to the survey have been commissioned to write new music. The Arts Council has funded three composition projects by two harpers in the last five years.

The Arts Council could encourage more harpers and harper-composers, as well as festivals, ensembles, promoters and other composers, to come forward with innovative proposals for new commissions, both small- and large-scale, for all three types of harp.

A series of premieres of new Irish compositions for harp and harpers would have the added benefit of raising the profile of contemporary Irish harping.

Recommendation

4.6.1 It is recommended that the Arts Council encourage innovative proposals from the full spectrum of the arts sector for the commissioning of new works for all types of harp.

4.7 Harp affordability

The affordability of harps was highlighted in the 2004 report, *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts*, and it has featured strongly again in this research.

A beginner harp for a small child can range in cost from €165 (Callan 14-string baby harp, Ireland) to €315 (Harpsicle Harps, USA), but when a student quickly graduates to a larger Irish lever harp, with the necessary full complement of strings (34–36), prices for new instruments are in the range of approximately €3,000 upwards.

Similarly, an early Irish harp can cost in the region of €2,200 upwards.

The investment required in learning the harp in Ireland (on top of paying for lessons and travel to lessons) naturally inhibits the number of who will take up the harp, and this is an on-going source of concern for harpers.

Harp rental

The situation in Ireland is as follows:

- Cairde na Cruite has five Irish lever harps to rent at €50 euro per month;
- HHSI has 14 early Irish harps to rent out at €35 per month with a €150 deposit;
- The Irish Harp Centre has 78 harps of difference sizes for rental. It costs €30 per month for a 26-string harp, €40 for an intermediate harp (29-31 string), and €55–60 for a 34-string harp. Deposits range from €100 to €200 euro;
- Irish lever harp rental schemes are also available from some harp-makers,

for example, Killarney Harps, starting at €53 per month. The rental period is 12 months and a portion of the price of rental goes towards the cost if the harper ultimately purchases the instrument.

There are also Irish lever harps in the instrument banks of various branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, for example, Youghal, Co. Cork has five harps, but has had difficulty sourcing a teacher; Cúil na Sméar branch in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, has two harps and three students learning; Portlaoise branch has three Camac Hermine 34-string harps and 8 pupils (harp classes have been taking place at the branch for three years); Comhaltas Craobh Dhún Dealgan in Dundalk has one 34-string harp and seven students; and the Douglas branch has two harps and four students.

Another example is Monaghan Music and Piano Shop, which operates a rent-to-buy scheme for beginner harps that students of the Belturbet branch of Comhaltas have taken advantage of. There are now four children and three adults learning in the branch.

Many of the 60 students learning harp with Music Generation in Laois do not own a harp and are using 26-string harps provided to the school by Music Generation. Music Generation purchased twenty 26-string harps. Due to financial constraints they were not able to purchase 34-string instruments.

The Music Network Capital Scheme provided Cárde Ceol Harp Ensemble in Wexford with €19,860 in 2010 to purchase harps. CIT Cork School of Music has two concert harps and four Irish harps (and is also home to the 'Pádraig Pearse Harp').

The Clarsach Society model

The 'clarsach' in Scotland is the same instrument as the Irish lever harp.

The Clarsach Society in Scotland, which has been in operation since 1931, operates a nationwide harp-hire system and has over 150 harps (plus an additional 25 in individual branches) for rental at £25 (€35) per month. There are 13 Clarsach branches in the UK – eight in Scotland (including a wire-string clarsach branch, i.e. early Scottish harp), four in England and one in Wales.

The model presented by the Clarsach Society – of a large unified instrument bank with low-cost rental and no limit on the period of rental – has been effective in Scotland. According to Creative Scotland (formerly the Scottish Arts Council), the clarsach is among the three most popular instruments in traditional music in Scotland, along with fiddle and accordion.

This collection of harps has been built up over many years. The Clarsach Society estimates that the majority have been purchased through self-generated funds, but there has also been funding granted for the purchase of harps from Creative Scotland as well as local authorities.

There are four full-time commercial harp-makers in Scotland, but the Clarsach Society also purchases harps from Pilgrim in England, Camac in France and Aoyama in Japan.



Natalie Surina of Ériú Harps inspecting a decoration on a freshly made replica of a Trinity College harp. Co. Galway. Photo by Peter Walsh

The challenge for Ireland

Affordability of harps is a most basic challenge for the instrument in Ireland and it must be prioritised if the harp is to develop.

A solution is a large instrument bank and a well-publicised, efficiently administered and widely available harp-rental scheme. Again, it is critical that harp organisations receive adequate administrative funding so that they have the resources to administer such a scheme.

Developing a nationwide harp-rental scheme for the Irish lever harp, for which demand is currently highest, is an area where Cairde na Cruite could take a leadership role, and could collaborate with the Irish Harp Centre in this regard.

HHSI has made excellent use of the available music capital schemes and other organisations could do so as well.

Cairde na Cruite should prioritise the development of a harp-rental scheme, taking advantage of available schemes, collaborating with organisations as relevant, creating awareness among potential students and parents of the instruments currently available nationwide, and developing a strategy to create an efficient and comprehensive harp-rental scheme. This initiative is subject to core funding being made available in order to allow the organisation carry out this work.

Recommendation

4.7.1 Cairde na Cruite should prioritise the development of a nationwide harp-rental scheme for the Irish lever harp, taking advantage of available schemes, collaborating with other organisations and raising awareness of current availability across all organisations. The Arts Council could support this work through core regular annual funding for the organisation.

4.8 Profile and image

The low profile of contemporary Irish harping was cited by 14% as a key challenge to the art form; 8% said that developing an interest in the harp was a key challenge for organisations; and it was an issue that regularly surfaced in comments in the survey.

For harpers, the low profile of the instrument was epitomised by the instrument's absence from the *Ceiliúradh* concert at the Royal Albert Hall in April 2014 to mark President Higgins' state visit to the UK.

The fact that no harper was included in *Riverdance – The Show*, either as a soloist or as a member of the show's band, was also unfortunate for the instrument's profile (the uilleann pipes, fiddle, bodhrán, low whistle and accordion were included). *Riverdance – The Show* has been seen by over 25 million people worldwide over twenty years.

That much of the public's experience of harp music may be at weddings and other ceremonial occasions, where a specific repertoire is required, also contributes to a limited view of contemporary harp practice.

There have been some very good initiatives, however. Music Network has organised a number of nationwide tours in recent years that have featured harpers (within trios), including Gráinne Hambly (2008), Laoise Kelly (2011), Welsh harper Siân James and Scottish harper Mary Macmaster (2012), Colombian harper Edmar Castaneda (2013) playing solo, and Scottish harper Catriona McKay (2014). Music Network and Music Generation also collaborated to provide harp students with workshops by Castaneda and McKay that were extremely well received.

While many good initiatives may also arise from the recommendations above regarding Arts Council awards, addressing the low profile of the instrument is a particular challenge that requires a targeted approach. It needs a pro-active tack rather than a reactive one.

The example of the Edinburgh International Harp Festival is worth considering.

Edinburgh International Harp Festival

The Edinburgh International Harp Festival began in 1982. It is run by the Clarsach Society with funding from Creative Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council, sponsorship from harp-makers and a range of other supporters.

EIHF takes place over five days in April and presents a series of eleven concerts, a harp-makers' exhibition, come-and-try harp sessions, and also offers 43 courses and workshops in different harps, providing over 500 spaces for students, from absolute beginners to advanced. A variety of genres of music are taught and there is no competitive element to EIHf.

In 2014, the festival had attendances over just under 2,500 at its concerts and sold over 2,000 tickets. 500 students attended its workshops and 550 students attended its courses.

The EIHf was initiated by the harp-maker Pilgrim Harps as part of the Edinburgh Folk Festival. In 1984, the Edinburgh branch of the Clarsach Society assumed responsibility for the event, and eventually the Clarsach Society began running it. The Clarsach Society employed its first full-time administrator (whose responsibilities include the festival) in 1986. The fact that the EIHf developed within the Folk Festival was an advantage from the start.

A Dublin Harp Festival

Currently, there is no major annual harp event in Dublin City. If the instrument's profile is to be raised, this would be a natural location to start.

An annual harp event in the capital, a Dublin Harp Festival for example, would have the impact of reaching a large population, would carry easier access to the national media, and could attract an increased international attendance.

The Arts Council could initiate or encourage the development of a major annual harp event in Dublin in 2016, through both collaboration with the harp sector and other music organisations. As with EIHf, a Dublin harp event could initially take place in association with another music festival, if that is to its advantage. 2016, as well as being the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, is also the 200th anniversary of the death of Arthur O'Neill, the last of the harpers who attended the 1792 festival.

The event could host a series of high-profile, diverse concerts that present both traditional and innovative repertoire, a harp-makers' exhibition, classes, workshops and come-and-try sessions, and also imaginative educational and family events that communicate the depth of harping history in Ireland to the wider public.

Such a festival should not replace support for any other harp event.

Recommendation

4.8.1 It is recommended that the Arts Council encourage the development of a major annual harp event in Dublin. The purpose of the festival would be to both raise the profile of contemporary Irish harping and increase awareness among the public of the rich harping history that Ireland has.

4.9 Tuition

The availability of harp tuition was mentioned by 11% of respondents as a challenge to harpers, and repeatedly appeared in comments in the survey.

As Maps 1–5 indicate, there are large swathes of all counties that do not have any harp tuition nearby.

In addition, even where a teacher is available, harp tuition take-up is often still reliant on the availability of instruments, and there may be only places for a small number of students.

A first step in addressing the availability of harp tuition is developing a comprehensive online database of the tuition currently available (for Irish lever, early Irish and concert harp) and what area teachers cover, work that could be undertaken by Cairde na Cruite in collaboration with other organisations.

Secondly, as well as developing a comprehensive harp-rental system, harp organisations can create demand for lessons through presenting try-the-harp initiatives around the country.

Na Píobairí Uilleann is currently engaged in such a drive, organising events in various counties where children can try the uilleann pipes.

Music Generation, the national music education programme, is demand-led as regards the instruments it focuses upon. It is important, therefore, that harp organisations, in a similar way to NPU, generate events where children can try the harp, thereby creating demand for tuition.

Festivals and summer schools

As shown in Charts 14 and 17, festivals and summer schools that provide harp tuition and harp competitions, such as the festivals in Nobber, Keadue and, up until recently, Granard, play an important role in a harper's musical development, and have been key in the growth in popularity of the instrument. It is important that festivals and summer schools that provide high-quality harp tuition continue to be supported by the Arts Council and that more festivals are encouraged to add harp to their roster of available tuition.

Recommendations

4.9.1 The Arts Council should encourage and support Cairde na Cruite, in collaboration with other harp organisations, in developing a comprehensive online database of available harp tuition (across all types of harp), and in organising events where potential students can try the harp.

4.9.2 It is recommended that the Arts Council continue to support festivals and summer schools that provide high-quality harp tuition and encourage more events to add harp to their roster of available tuition.

4.10 Harp-making

A comprehensive database of harp teachers, a nationwide harp-rental scheme, and better resourced harp organisations should have a positive effect on harp-making in Ireland, but ensuring that harp-makers capitalise on these developments is still key.

Harp-makers could be encouraged to apply to Arts Council schemes and awards to obtain support for

- specific promotional activities such as creating promotional materials or attending national and international harp events;
- the development of professional websites;
- the purchasing of necessary harp-making equipment;
- mentoring apprentices who can assist in increasing productivity;
- carrying out research into early Irish harp-building techniques;
- collaboration with professional harpers, other harp-makers and Na Píobairí Uilleann's PipeCraft Centre with a view to improving skills and standards;
- the establishment of an Irish instrument-makers' association that can campaign for Government policies which will assist in the development of the sector.

Recommendation

4.10.1 The Arts Council could encourage harp-makers to apply for its range of schemes and awards in order to promote their work, increase productivity and develop the harp-making sector.

4.11 Resources

As mentioned in the brief history of the harp at the beginning of this report, the work of Edward Bunting is of great import to harpers, as are other collections of early Irish music, and it is essential that such works continue to be widely available.

There is still a great deal about early harpers and the early Irish harping tradition, and even the harp in the nineteenth and twentieth century, that we do not know, and which needs to be researched. The Arts Council could continue to support proposals for research and publication in this area.

Recommendation

4.11.1 The Arts Council should seek to support research and publication on the subject of the early Irish harpers, the early harping tradition, and the harp in Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

I believe that the recommendations in this report will ensure a robust future for the harp in Ireland, while also greatly enriching Irish musical life, and I herewith submit it to the Arts Council for its consideration.

All harpers and harp-makers share, and are bound together by, a rich musical heritage for which they are the guardians, and also the artists best suited to explore, develop and even challenge that tradition.

The diversity within this community is a strength. All contemporary expressions of the Irish harping tradition should be respected equally.

A spirit of collaboration amidst diversity, inspired by 1,000 years of tradition, can be the defining feature of Irish harping in the twenty-first century.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

Toner Quinn
17 October 2014



Aodán Ó Dubhghaill and Aine Ní Dhubhghaill
at An Chúirt Chruiteachta – International Harp
Festival, Termonfeckin, County Louth.
Photo by Kieran Cummins

