

# Exploring the challenges faced by self-employed creatives

Research Investigation by Lauren Morgan





4.8  
MILLION

Self-Employed Workers



Creative Freelancers

33%

of workers in the creative industry are self employed

# Introduction

This report investigates the challenges faced by those who are self-employed within the creative industry, utilising existing literature and gaining a further insight into the problems with primary data.

Self-employment is continuing to grow with there being 4.8 million self-employed workers in the UK (IPSE, 2017). As well as the overall industry growth, the creative industry has seen significant growth in the past few years, with freelancing and self-employment becoming a viable option for many creatives, including the 320,000 freelancers within the creative industry (IPSE, 2017). The most recent Government statistics show that 33% of jobs in the creative industry in 2018 were by self-employed workers (Gov, 2018). Self-employment brings many appealing factors;

flexible working hours, the ability to be your own boss, freedom within your work, a better work-life balance are all considered as advantages, just to name a few (Murphey, 2019). However, we must also consider the drawbacks and challenges faced by those who choose to work for themselves. Loneliness, social isolation, lack of statutory leave and sick pay, long hours and admin tasks can become unwelcomed challenges to what is seen by many to be an ideal lifestyle and employment route (Knowles, 2018).

It is important to take a step back and consider the key challenges that self-employed workers face in terms of their well-being and consider how we might overcome some of the challenges to improve the industry and ensure it remains a viable option of employment for future generations.



# Methodology

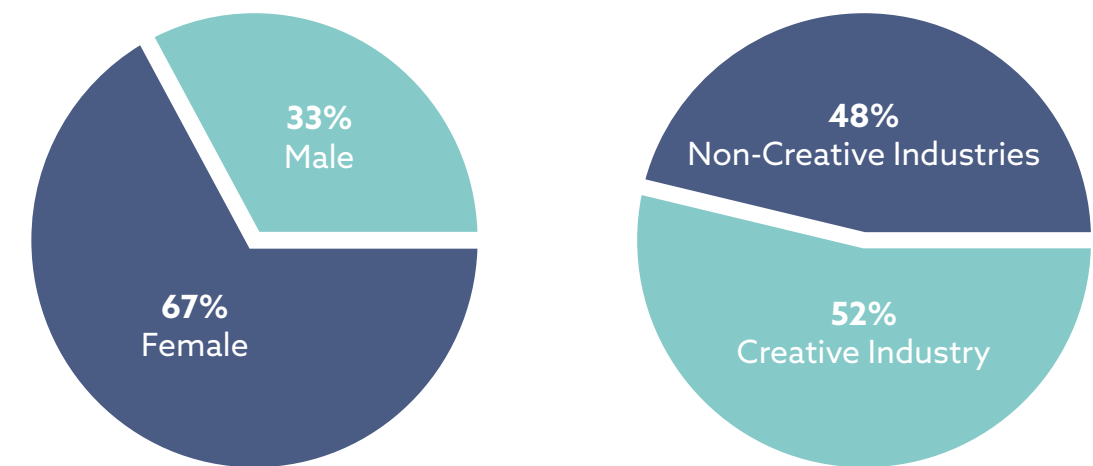
A mixed method approach to methodology was utilised within the report, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. This approach was taken in order to yield statistics and view the problems from a larger scale, as well as looking at individual and opinions of the target audience from a qualitative perspective.

Statistics played a large role in identifying and analysing trends and profiles throughout the report, thus tables of results from large studies were utilised and examined. The author analysed data-sets including those by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Government's 'Department for Digital Culture, Media & Sport', in order to gain an overview of the audience and to examine the trends amongst general self-employment and young people in self-employment as well as their expectations of a work-life balance. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out on an individual and group basis to understand the

perspective of a creative self-employed people since there was a lack of literature that focused on the creative industry.

Information and data regarding the challenges faced by self-employed workers was available to obtain from secondary sources and informed the author of the scale of the audience as well as some persona information and the extent to some of the issues faced. For example, the report published by Consultancy (2020), explained the number of self-employed workers suffering from loneliness, but without further insight into which industry they were apart of and without additional reasons as to why this may be the case. Further information was found on the subject by carrying out a primary survey in order to yield results that were specific to the creative industry.

The author created an online survey with a total of 80 respondents, 42 of which were members of the creative industry and 36 from other industries. The survey stated that all respondents had to be self-employed to take part in order to gain an accurate insight. The survey was distributed to two online self-employed support groups, one of which was primarily creative-orientated, to ensure that the data gathered was relevant and not a repeat of what already exists. 54 respondents were female, 25 were male, with one respondent preferring not to say.



Respondent Demographic of primary survey

Interviews were also used on a semi-structured basis on both an individual and group basis. A total of five people were interviewed on an individual basis, as well as two groups consisting of two and three members retrospectively. Not every respondent's answers have been used within the discussion however, they played a role in insights and leading the report. Per Webb (1995) as mentioned in a report by Stokes and Bergin (2006), unstructured interviews allow the opportunity to "build a close rapport" with the interviewee "thus improving the quality of data" (Stokes and Bergin, 2006). By using a semi-structured interview basis and taking Webb's (1995) views into account, building a rapport was achievable due to the informality, yet there was still control over the questions and structure of the interview.

The table (right) displays the interviews undertaken with an according referenced that is used throughout the discussion to refer to the interviewee where their full name is not known.

In some cases of the research where it was not possible to gather primary data surrounding creatives or where data was needed on a larger scale, existing literature and data regarding general self-employment across all industries was used to at least gain a minimum understanding, for it to be later tested within the creative sector audience using interviews to compare and backup the information.

Finally, a mixed method of ethnography and group interviews was used when the author visited the co-working space 'Rabble' as well as a visit to a local meetup; on both occasions the interviews detailed in the table were carried out. The use of ethnography allowed the researcher to observe the social element of the two environments first-hand, as well as gaining a further insight through a semi-structured interview.



	Interview Type	Demographic	Reference
1	Individual	Male, 18-24 Videographer	(#1 Videographer)
2	Individual	Female, 18-24, Graphic Designer and Illustrator	(#2 Designer) Pope. N
3	Individual	Male, 45-54, Mentor and Photographer	(#3 Photographer) Miller. A
4	Group - Rabble Studios	Male, 35-44, Graphic Designer	(#4 Designer)
5	Group - Rabble Studios	Female, 25-34, Graphic Designer	(#5 Designer)
6	Group - Rabble Studios	Male, 25-34, Designer and Entrepreneur	(#6 Designer)
7	Group - The Photography Support Group	Female, 35-44, Photographer	(#7 Photographer) Lee, B
8	Group - The Photography Support Group	Female, 35-44, Photographer	(#8 Photographer) Redmond, F
9	Individual	Male, 18-24, Student with interest of becoming self-employed	(#9 Student)
10	Individual	Female, 25-34, student and self-employed photographer	(#10 Student Photographer)



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# Defining key terms

The report refers to both 'self-employment' and the 'creative industry' throughout the report. For research to be consistent and to improve the reader's understanding, they can be defined as the following;

## Self-Employment

Throughout the report, the term 'self-employed' refers to those who manage and own their sole trader, partnership or Limited Company. Self-employed workers may or may not have employees working for them (IPSE, 2017), however, the report will focus solely on the business owner, rather than its employees should it have any. Freelancers also fall under the self-employment category as freelancing is a form of self-employment (Novel Coworking, 2018).

## Creative Industry

The idea of the creative industry will vary by literature, with some reports, like the IPSE report for example, combining the arts, literary and media into one category. The report takes into consideration the disciplines outlined by the Government's 'Department for Digital Culture, Media & Sport' in their data report sub-sectors; "Advertising and Marketing; Architecture; Crafts, Design: Product, Graphic and Fashion; Film, TV, Video, Radio and Photography, IT, software and computer services; Publishing; Museums, galleries and libraries; Music, performing and visual arts" (Department for Digital Culture, Media & Sport, 2018).



# Aims and Objectives

**Aim:** Identify the well-being challenges faced by self-employed workers

**Objective:** Review literature and secondary resources to investigate the challenges and causes faced by self-employed workers

**Aim:** Identify the well-being challenges faced by self-employed workers in the creative industry

**Objective:** Review secondary findings based on self-employed workers and compare the results against primary findings based specifically on the self-employed creatives/self-employed workers

**Aim:** Compare the findings of all industries with the creative industry to measure key trends in the data

**Objective:** Compare the findings from both sectors using graphs and charts formed by raw data, to recognise the differences between the attitudes and perceptions of the audiences

**Aim:** Develop an understanding of the user demographics, their thoughts, perceptions and experiences

**Objective:** Analyse and identify trends within the demographic data to discover similarities and contrasting information within each demographics' attitudes and perceptions

# 64%

of freelancers feel lonely

“Loneliness is having nobody to reach out to in a time of need”



## Discussion

### Isolation and Loneliness

Per a research study by Consultancy (2020) “64% of freelancers regularly feel lonely”. 56% of those freelancers admit to suffering from depression in comparison to only 30% of those who work as an employee within an office environment (Consultancy 2020).

The statistics alarmingly highlight that freelancers are more likely to feel depressed than those who work within an office. The study is also backed by data from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) as cited in a report by First Voice (2020); their analysis of the findings correlate with the Consultancy report as they explain isolation is one of the “top three challenges of self-employment (First Voice, 2018).

One of the top reasons for becoming self-employed is the ability to be your own boss, yet many self-employed workers find themselves feeling lonely whilst running their business. A member of social media group aimed to support freelancers, raises the point that they “enjoy being alone” however, their view of loneliness is when they feel there is “nobody to reach out to in a time of great need” (Group member of ‘The Business Café’, 2017), to which several other members agreed with.

Here we can see that loneliness doesn’t necessarily need to be defined as being alone but more to the point of having nobody to socialise with, ask questions and ask for feedback in times of need.



# Who is affected by loneliness and isolation?

The following graphs display the relationship between age groups and loneliness within self-employment in both the creative and non-creative industries, as well as a comparison of responses by gender.

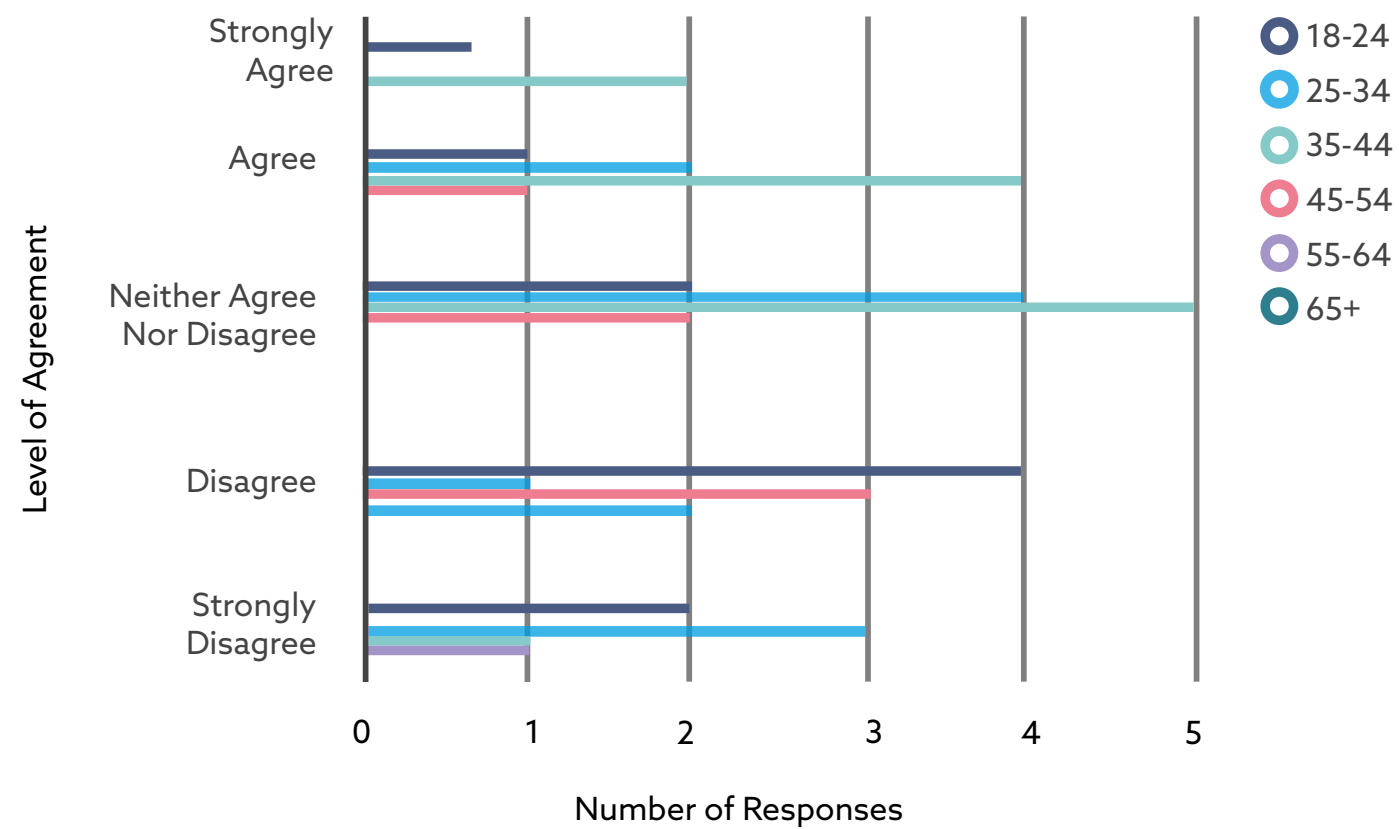


Figure 1 (above) - "I feel lonely when working alone" - graph displaying the results by age in non-creative industries

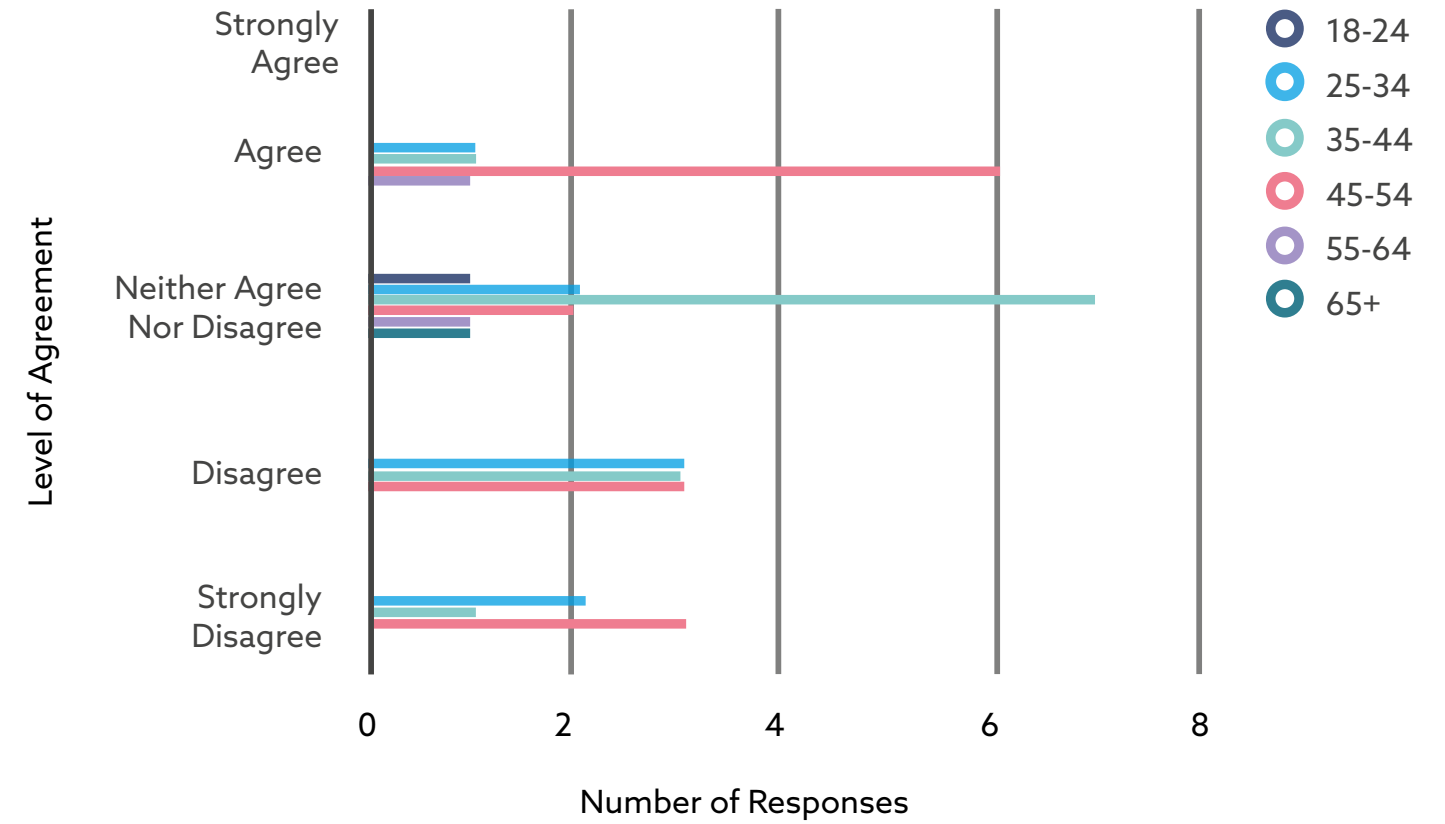


Figure 2 (Above) - "I feel lonely when working alone" - graph displaying the results by age in creative industries



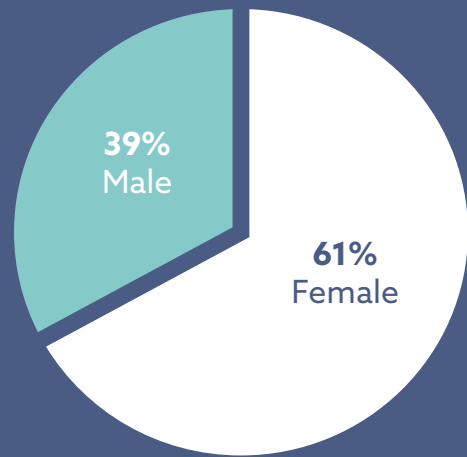


Figure 5 – Those who either strongly agreed or agreed to being lonely within the creative industry, by gender

The findings show that 35-44 year olds and 45-54 year olds were likely to feel the loneliest, however, we must take into consideration that there is also a high proportion of both age categories who disagree with the statements, counterbalancing the results and not indicating clear trends. Instead, we can examine the data from an average point of view, taking all responses into account, as displayed in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

By using the average level of agreement by age category, we can deduce that 35-44 year olds feel the highest level of loneliness in the creative industry, closely followed by 18-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds. There is also a clear majority when it comes to gender, with 61% of those who agreed to being lonely are female as shown in Figure 5

The results prove interesting in comparison to those within non-creative industry, with 45-54 year olds taking the lead on the loneliness scale, yet being one of the least lonely ages to work in the creative industry. Although this information gives us a closer insight into the trends of age ranges, we must consider that the sample size of respondents may be too small to confirm the information. Assuming the data is an accurate representation of loneliness with 35-44 year olds being at the loneliest point, we can consider the question of "How might we eradicate loneliness for self-employed creatives between the ages of 35-44?" to improve their overall well-being and work-life satisfaction.



Average Level of Agreement in non-creative industries by age

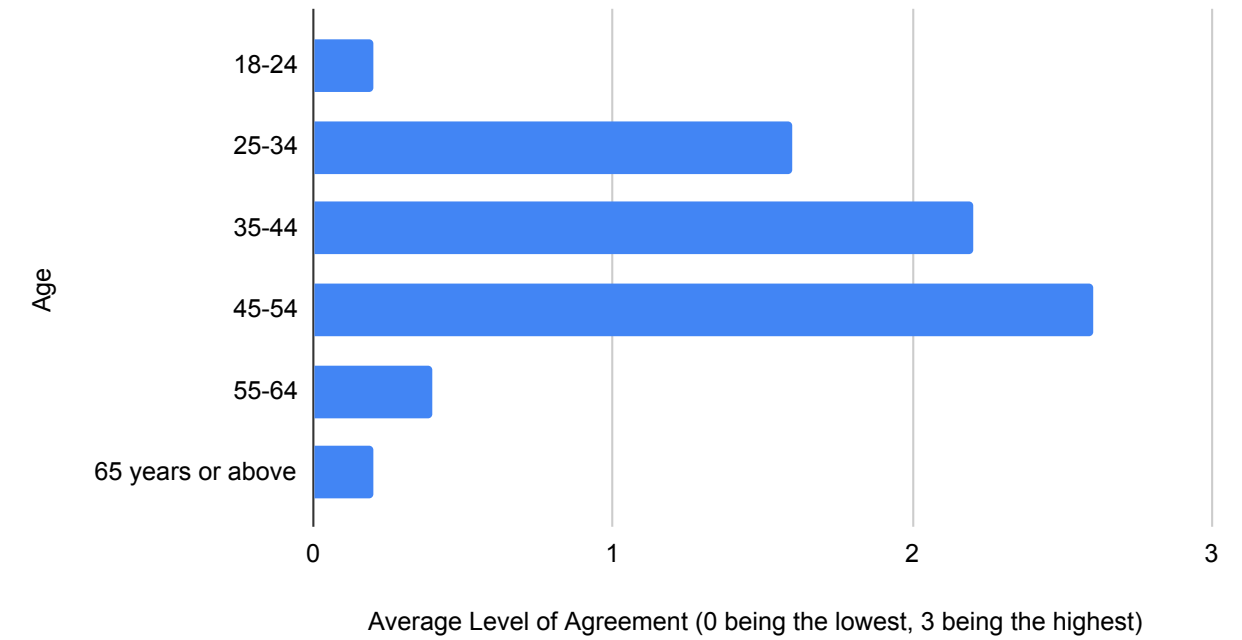


Figure 3 – A graph to show the average level of agreement with the statement "I feel lonely whilst working alone" by age range in the non-creative industries.

Average Level of Agreement (0 strongly disagree, 3 strongly agree) vs. Age in the Creative Industry

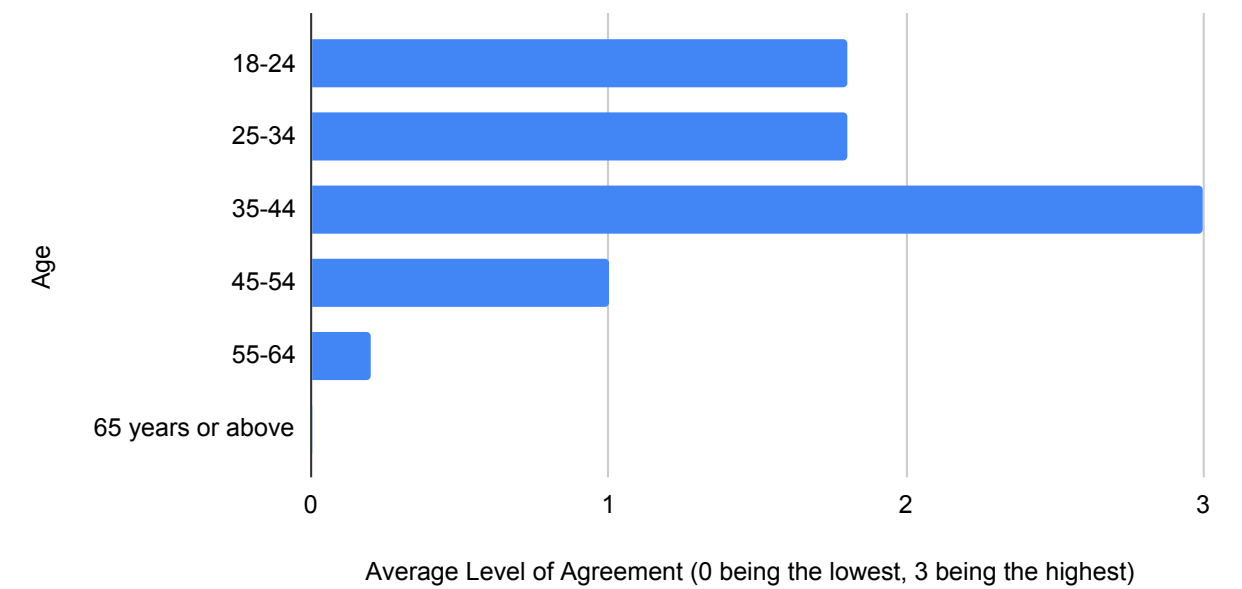


Figure 4 – A graph to show the average level of agreement with the statement "I feel lonely whilst working alone" by age range in the creative industry



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## Social Interaction and emotional coping

A female interviewee of the 35-44-year-old age bracket within the creative industries, admitted to feeling lonely whilst working at home at times, due to the lack of social interaction (Lee, 2020), corresponding with the results in Figure 5 and Figure 4. Lee (2020) explained that at times, they miss the atmosphere of working within an office environment due to the interaction and "office banter" with colleagues – something which they no longer experience from their working day in a home office. Lee (2020) went on to talk about how there is nobody around to chat to if "you're having a bad day" whilst working alone, which can often

lead to negative feelings and emotions.

Lee's (2020) comments regarding the inability to have a chat when you're feeling low are supported by an "emotion approach coping" theory raised by Folkman and Moskowitz (2004, p.761), which explains that expressing emotions to others is a method of coping with thoughts and feelings. Thus, this leads to support the initial research statistic by Consultancy (2020) that those who are self-employed may be more likely to suffer with signs of depression as opposed to those who are employed in an environment with other

people, since they can share their thoughts and feelings with colleagues. Miller (2020), a self-employed creative and business mentor for Government organisation Business Wales, explains that "everybody needs as emotional release" and feels his role is important for people within self-employment who need this emotional support as well as business support, supporting the theory of Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) on the importance of emotion approach coping within the workplace.



Lee, Self-employed  
Photographer



Miller Self-employed  
Photographer and Mentor





# A closer look at Gen-Z

Revisiting the graph in figure 3, 18-24 year olds, also known as 'Generation-Z' are also likely to be a lonely age category within creative self-employment. A study by Randstad and Apartment Guide published by Inc. (2019) agrees with this data trend and found that Gen-Z are classed as one of the loneliest generations and are most at-risk of "disengagement or burnout" (Inc., 2020).

Pope (2020), a freelance creative within Generation-Z admitted to feeling lonely and "misses being part of a team" in her previous role, confirming the findings in both the author's study and the

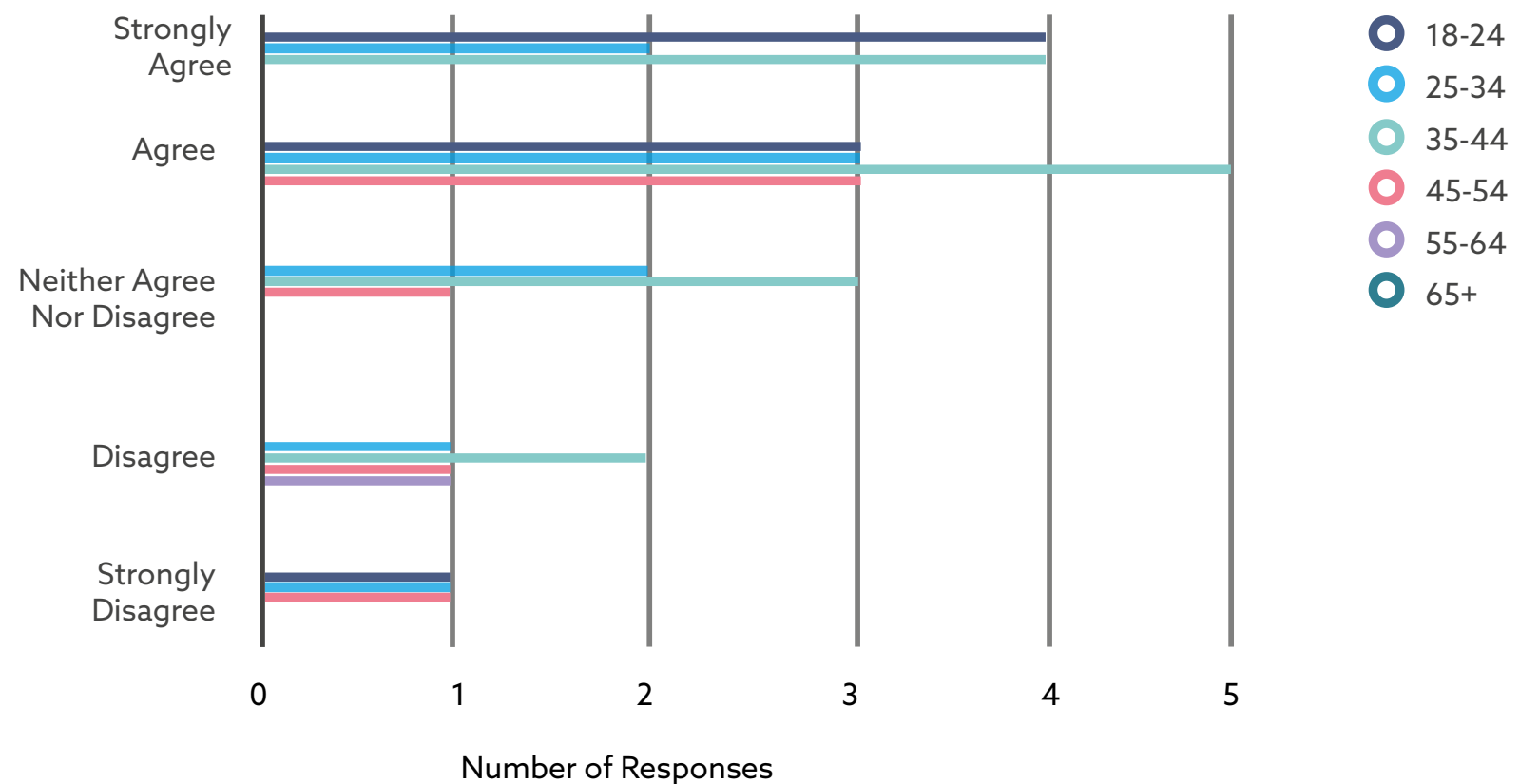
wider external study. Considering coping with loneliness and isolation, she explains that although working at home isn't social, she has become part of communities both online through social media, and offline through networking events (Pope, 2020). Considering Pope's response, we can deduce that Gen-Z attempt to combat their loneliness through a sense of community to aid loneliness and creativity. This leads us to ask "How might we encourage Gen-Z self-employed creatives to utilise communities to combat loneliness?" and be inspired by Pope's coping methods to decrease loneliness rates across the age group.



Pope, Freelance Designer and Illustrator

Further data gathered from the survey conducted by the author of this report shown in figures 6 and 7, found that 52.5% of respondents who work within the creative industry either strongly agree or agree that they "Miss the company of others when working alone" in comparison to 42% of respondents who don't work within this industry. This suggests that those working within a creative field prefer to be surrounded by others, potentially to produce ideas or become inspired. This is confirmed by a further statistic being 60% of creatives either agree or strongly agree that they "Find it hard having nobody to bounce ideas off of". At this point we may ask the question "Does the loneliness of self-employed creatives have an impact on their creativity?", with creativity being defined as ideas, creative outcomes and inspiration. There is little to no literature available to fully support this statement however, a group interview undertaken with three self-employed photographers found that that they feel more productive and inspired working around people with a similar mind-set particularly when discussing work relating to their field (Lee and Redmond. 2020).

Figure 6- I find it hard when I have nobody to bounce ideas off of" in the creative industry by age



Looking at the data in Figure 6, the strongest pattern in results comes from Generation Z, with 77% of the age group either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they find it difficult when they have nobody to share ideas with, suggesting that they work better in the company of others and have a need for socialisation.

An alternative observation that we can draw from these results is the difference in respondents admitting that they feel lonely, in comparison to whether they are lonely. The graph displayed in Figure 7 shows the number of respondents within the creative industry who either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt "lonely whilst working alone" in comparison to those who "missed the company of others" and "find it hard when there is nobody to bounce ideas off of. 26% of respondents admitted to feeling lonely yet over half displayed signs of loneliness through the other statements. This shows a very conflicting result and suggests that workers don't realise that they are suffering from loneliness and isolation, potentially having an impact on their well-being.

Similar results can be found within an independent report by Deane (2016) who discovered that under 10% of self-employed workers chose loneliness as being "a big problem" yet later in the review, 25% of respondents also said they missed having colleagues. This data refers to the whole industry. A clear trend here is that a higher percentage of workers that miss the company of others, in comparison to feeling admitting to feeling lonely, suggesting that there could be a stigma around admitting loneliness or even uncertainty over what loneliness is; this bodes the question of "How might we end the stigma around loneliness and ensure the well-being of self-employed creatives is paramount?".

Percentage of creative industry respondents who either Strongly Agree or Agree with the statements

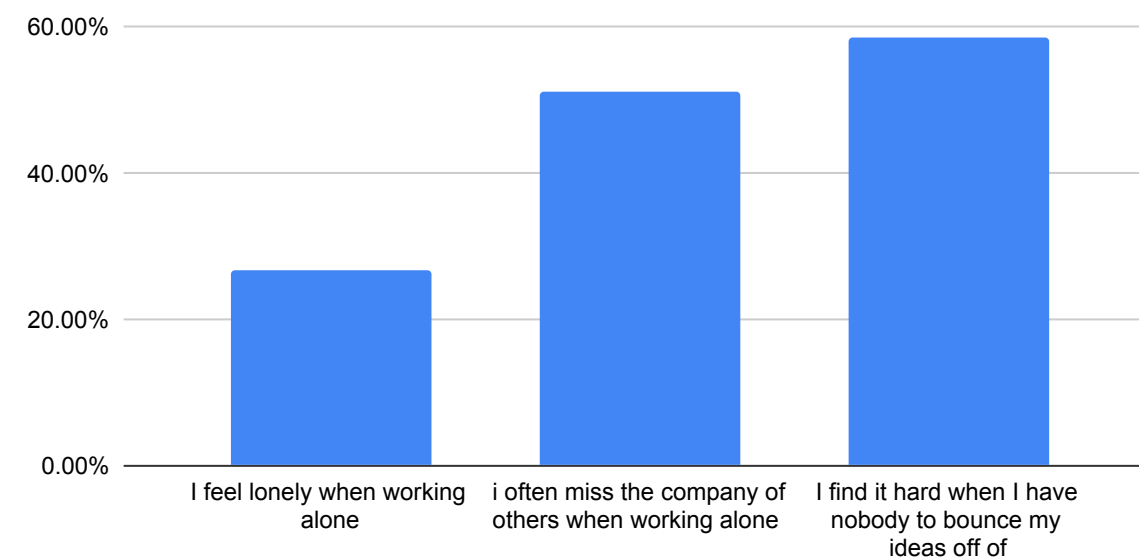
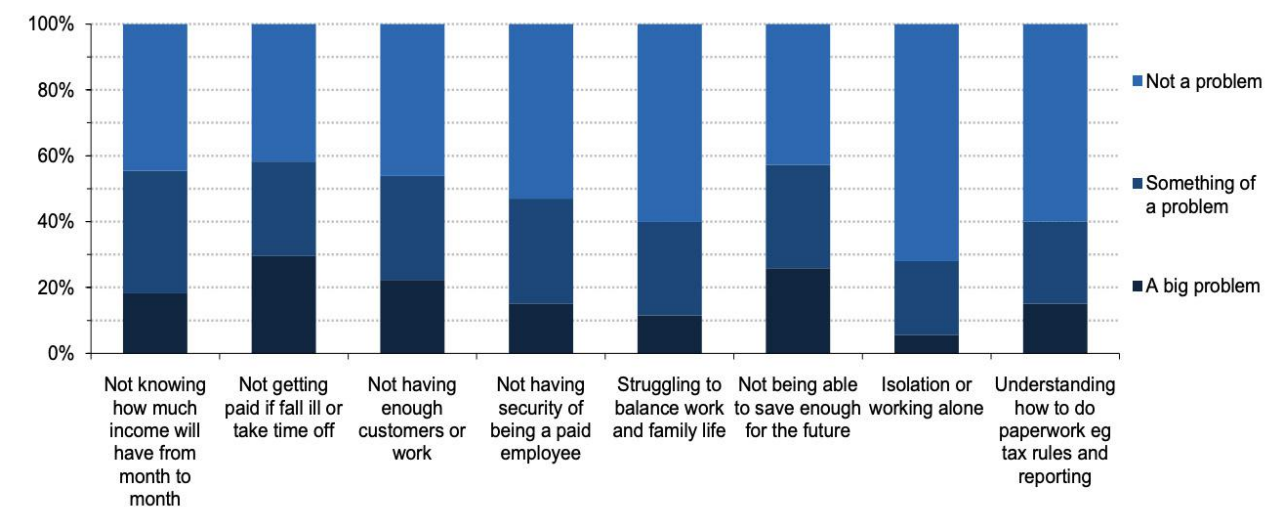


Figure 7- Comparison of agreement levels across the statements

Extent to which this is a problem of being self-employed



Graph from a report by Deane (2016)



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## Support groups

The author of this report completed an ethnographic study by attending a meet-up of a group of self-employed photographers, in an attempt to discover ways of overcoming loneliness. Three group members passed around one of the photographer's recent sample albums whilst another two members were discussing a new piece of equipment. The group said that they "felt inspired" and ready to go and work productively after the insight and new knowledge that they acquired through the activity (The Photography Support Group, 2020). Whilst at the meeting, some of the photographers also expressed any concerns over clients or job opportunities whilst other members provided suggestions and feedback. Lee (2020) one of the attendees, admitted that she would normally "bottle" these feelings away without having the group; re-enforcing once again the emotional coping theory raised by Folkman and Moskowitz (2004).

This appraisal made from observing the group activities and conversations show some of the advantages of socialising with others, in this case, becoming inspired, sharing common issues and problems, receiving feedback on their field of work, and generally socialising with others. From this, we can say that those who are not able to access these forms of socialisation may not receive these benefits and thus have an impact on their mental wellbeing. From this, we can also assume that those who suffer in terms of their well-being are likely to see an impact on the quality of work that they as a business are producing and keeping on top of day-to-day management of administration tasks to keep the business running.

Patzelt and Shepard (2011), who utilised Folkman and Moskowitz' theory, raised the point that the self-employed have more opportunity to make changes to their environment and emotional well-being in comparison to those who work in an employed role due to "decision latitude" meaning the freedom to make decisions to benefit their own well-being. This is an element that should be encouraged since self-employed workers have more opportunities to adapt their business and put their well-being at the forefront, thus they should take the necessary steps to combat their loneliness and isolation.

By looking at the data and research gathered, we can deduce at this point that loneliness doesn't necessarily stem from sitting in a room and working alone, in fact, a high percentage of respondents even felt more productive alone. However, we can conclude that loneliness comes in the form of having nobody to reach out to at points of self-employment where workers have questions, worries and concerns; thus, having an impact on their mental well-being when we take Folkman and Moskowitz' (2004) theory into consideration.



Meeting of a group of self-employed photographers including Lee (bottom left) and Redmond (top right).



# Co-working Spaces



Co-working spaces exist across the UK enable those who are self-employed within any industry to utilise an office environment to complete their own work (Cowan, 2018). Per a report by The Instant Group (2018), there was a “12% increase” in co-working spaces across the UK in 2017. The report suggests that the creative industry is mostly responsible for this growth, with most spaces being used within the creative sector (The Instant Group, 2018). We can assume that this growth is positive for self-employed creatives as it suggests more and more creatives are utilising the space, in a bid to work collaboratively in an appropriate environment.

An example of a co-working space is Rabble Studios, situated in Cardiff Bay, Wales. Spain, the founder, explains that he wanted to bring a new environment to Cardiff

and build a space that encourages a “creative community” (Spain, 2017). The author of this report visited Rabble studios as part of an ethnographic study and empathy experience, to discover the benefits of working within a space curated for creative self-employed workers. Spain (2020) explained there was “one rule” of being part of Rabble, being “nobody must eat lunch at their desk” in attempt to bring together the community spirit and environment that he aims to create. Every member of Rabble took to the communal benches to eat lunch together whilst discussing their latest projects, asking questions about their day and generally chatting about their personal lives. Loneliness and isolation was not present and members seemed to utilise their time productively, taking short breaks when needed and approaching

other members in a collaborative manor if help or resources were needed. Per a study by Gerdenitsch et al (2016), working within a social space can positively affect performance due to the level of social support available from others, thus supporting the idea that co-working spaces such as Rabble and their rule of socialising at lunch, improves the productivity of self-employed workers. The members of Rabble



studio fully support the literature’s benefits of co-working spaces and discussed their experience with the social space and the impact it’s had on their self-employment. Interviewee #4, a male graphic designer, told the author how his business “totally flipped” when he joined the co-working space, due to the community aspect as well as having a permanent, professional base to host client meetings (#4 male designer, 2020). He went on to explain that clients like the idea of being able to have everything pitched in one place as his co-workers often got on-board with projects in a collaborative manor.

Another interviewee (#5, female graphic designer), expressed the advantages of the co-working space from a mental health perspective and how she feels her well-being has improved in comparison to working at home in

isolation, reinforcing the importance of these community spaces. She said that the co-working space is purposeful and allows her to have a routine rather than staying at home all day.

From the ethnographic study and semi-structured group interview carried out, it can be deduced that this co-working space eliminates the feeling of loneliness and isolation, with added benefits to mental well-being thanks to the social and community elements provided. A key observation made within the studio was the age range; of the nine members present, all members appeared to be of an age within the loneliest creative range from Gen-Z to the 35-44 category. The four members within the group interview all praised the studio for combatting loneliness and allowing them to work

as a community (Rabble, 2020). From this we can deduce that co-working spaces solve some of the issues surrounding isolation and loneliness for some creative workers and poses the question of “how might we bring together more self-employed creatives using a social, community space to improve productivity, innovation and well-being?”.



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## Work-Life Balance

Achieving a work-life balance sits hand-in-hand with isolation since it involves an equilibrium between socialisation and working life. A report by Khallash and Kruse (2012) defines a work-life balance as “managing pressure from a competitive work environment with leisure and/or family.”, something which is often seen as an advantage to working on a self-employed basis due to the ability to choose your own hours and be your own boss. The idea of there being more flexibility within self-employment is somewhat contradictory as although hours may be more flexible in some respect, business owners may often find themselves working longer or unsociable hours, particularly around a deadline period, thus eradicating the ‘balance’, as discussed with members of Rabble studio (2020).

The data from a survey carried out by the author of the report looks closer into the satisfaction of work-life balance specifically amongst creative self-employed workers; the data shows that 55% of those who work on a self-employed basis within the creative industry either agree or strongly agree that they have a good work-life balance, in contrast to 70% of those who work in a different industry.

Although we can explore the links and trends between well-being and self-employment, it is important to note that it’s likely every individual has different external factors that could affect their overall well-being and happiness levels, as pointed out in an article by Abreu et al. (2019). A further report by Andersson (2008) suggests that there is evidence of self-employment bringing a higher work satisfaction rate however, there is very little evidence to show that the “life” aspect of being self-employed exceeds the satisfaction levels of those who are employed. It’s important to take these reports into consideration as they consult the idea of the ‘life’ balance of self-employment being worse than in contracted employment.

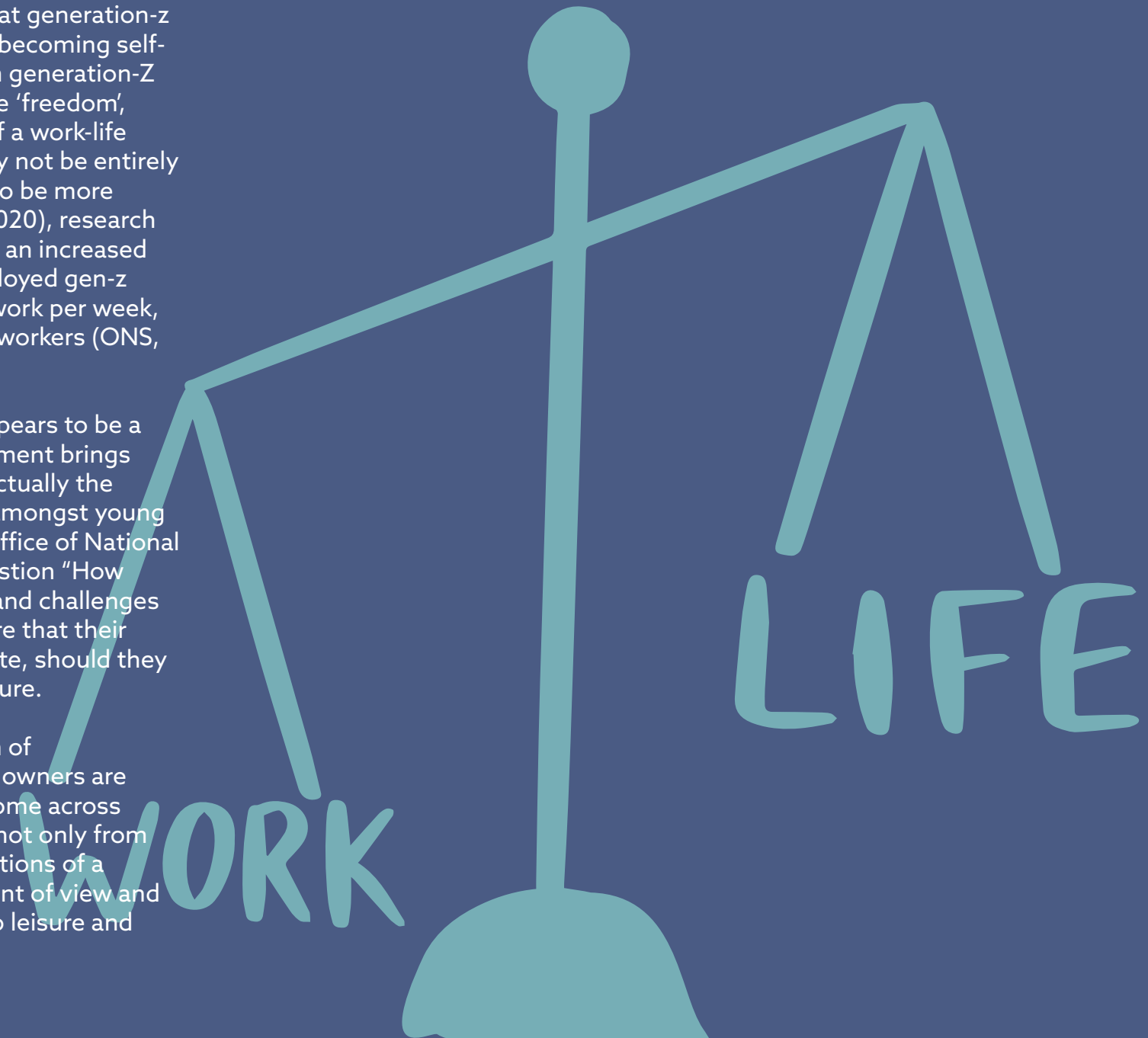
According to a study of 1000 self-employed workers across all industries, 56% of respondents chose to start their business to “enjoy a better work-life balance” albeit 27% admit to working longer hours than their employed previous role (Telegraph, 2018); therefore, eradicating their goal of a healthy work-life balance.

A report by Octopus (2019) looks closer at generation-z and their aspirations and perceptions of becoming self-employed; 84% of the respondents from generation-Z considered starting a business due to the ‘freedom’, an aspect that correlates with the idea of a work-life balance. Once again the perceptions may not be entirely linked to reality; although there is likely to be more flexibility in the hours worked (Rabble, 2020), research shows that gen-z are more likely to work an increased number of hours with 31.9% of self-employed gen-z members totalling 45 or more hours of work per week, in comparison to just 9.2% of employed workers (ONS, 2019).

On analysis of this information, there appears to be a trend in the perception that self-employment brings a good work-life balance albeit it is not actually the reality of self-employment, particularly amongst young people as outlined in the report by the Office of National Statistics. From this study, we could question “How might we educate people on the reality and challenges faced within self-employment?” to ensure that their perceptions and assumptions are accurate, should they wish to become self-employed in the future.

It is important that the future generation of entrepreneurs, freelancers and business owners are aware of the challenges that they may come across should they choose to build a business, not only from a financial point of view and their perceptions of a higher income, but from a well-being point of view and the reality of working hours compared to leisure and

personal hours. We can also deduce that the hours worked by gen-z combined with their level of loneliness can contribute to a level of burnout which can lead to damage to their health and well-being.





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## Time off, Holidays and Sick Pay

In a semi-structured interview with the members of Rabble Studio, work-life balance became a topic for discussion as well as isolation and loneliness. Member #5 (male graphic designer) touches on the analysis in Andersson's (2008) report and agreed that he is much happier with his working balance, particularly in comparison to contracted employment, however there are still times where there are downsides to the 'life' side of the balance. As an example, member #5 discussed a recent period of illness and how being in contracted office employment would mean he would be entitled to sick pay, however, being self-employed he still had deadlines to meet, was not entitled to statutory sick pay and his work-life balance was offset for the remainder of the week as he tried to make up for any hours that were lost as a result of illness; even if that meant working until the early hours of the morning. This issue bodes the question of "how might we ensure the well-being of self-employed creatives during period of illness?", since workers are not entitled to any benefits.

On further analysis into the survey conducted by the author of the report, the data shows that the lack of statutory sick pay, annual leave and maternity leave is a factor that worries other self-employed creatives. When asked about the biggest disadvantages to being self-employed, a staggering 76% opted for this factor being a disadvantage with over a third (38%) of those being in the same age category as member #5 (35-44) and being within one of the loneliest generations.

Looking at the results we can assume that females see the lack of statutory rights as the biggest disadvantage with 82% selecting it as a disadvantage. We can make the assumption that a percentage of this female response may be due to parenthood; according to a report by The Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed (IPSE)(2018), the number of self-employed mothers is increasing, with a study by ONS (2018) to back up this data, suggesting that 56% of mothers made a change to their employment status due to parenthood and childcare; we may assume that this is due to the perception of flexible working of self-employment. An interview with Lee (2020), a mum of two children under 6 and a self-employed creative, falls in line with the study and admitted that her working hours are more flexible, particularly around school holidays where she chooses her own working hours; however, Lee explained that although her time is flexible, her work suffers should she need to have time off to care for a sick child, a time where statutory leave rights would play a benefit in full-time contracted employment.

By analysing this literature and data, we can deduce that self-employment may bring more flexible working hours at times for some personas, yet the ability to take leave through sickness or as a holiday is a problem, often with self-employed workers needing to substitute a higher proportion of their leisure time for work time should they need to take time off. The issues raised leads to the question of "How might we ensure that self-employed workers achieve a healthy balance of work and life, with their well-being in mind?"



# Summary

**After exploring loneliness, isolation and achieving a work life-balance whilst working as a self-employed creative, is it apparent that they are key trends throughout the creative industry as well as contrasts between the creative and non-creative industry.**

One of the key findings is that the level of self-employed workers that admit to feeling lonely is far lower than the percentage that admit to find it difficult working without the company of others, particularly in a typical office environment. This leads to the suggestion that there is a stigma attached to the idea of loneliness


which is present across all industries, but seemingly higher within the creative industry and particularly amongst Generation-Z, 25-34 year olds and 35-44 year olds. The research uncovered has shown that there are certainly methods to overcoming loneliness with the aid of like-minded groups both on and offline, co-working spaces and mentorship schemes available however, the data shows that there is still an issue with the concept. This leads to revisit the question that was previously discussed; **"How might we end the stigma around loneliness and ensure the well-being of self-employed creatives is paramount?"**.

Generation-Z displays another particularly interesting set of results, with the perception of vast flexibility and work-life balance being an attractive feature to creative self-employment. The perceptions versus the reality found that this generation are more likely to work excessive hours (albeit on a flexible basis) and be more inclined to suffer from burnout which can lead negative implications on creativity and mental health, thus leading to an impact on the work being produced by the business. This leads us to search for solutions that can be found to ensure that Generation-Z put their well-being as a priority by eliminating their sense of loneliness, finding a supportive community and being aware of the realities and implications of a creative, self-employed work-life balance. By using design to find a solution, we can ask **"How might we use design to ensure creative, self-employed young people of generation-z maintain a healthy work-life balance and prevent the feeling of loneliness and isolation?"**.

This question, **"How might we use design to ensure creative, self-employed people of generation-z maintain a healthy work-life balance and prevent the feeling of loneliness and isolation?"**, will be taken forward into developing a design solution and solving the problem. It's important that we consider this problem to ensure that future generations do not face the same extent of challenges, to improve loneliness and isolation for the future and to change the way that self-employed creatives work and put their well-being as a priority. Personas and trends amongst age and genders will enable the start of further research in order to identify specific user needs and wants, before developing a final outcome with the aim of **adapting the challenges within self-employment for good**.





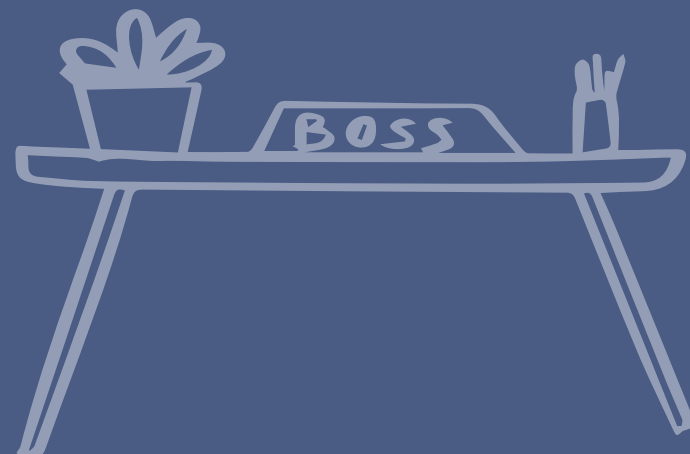


**“How might we use design to ensure creative, self-employed people of generation-z maintain a healthy work-life balance and prevent the feeling of loneliness and isolation?”**

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