



THE AWARDS INDUSTRY

COMING TOGETHER
IN THE FACE OF THE
CORONA VIRUS
CRISIS

Back in late March, when lockdown was still a new concept, Boost undertook a survey of awards organisers to understand how they intended to respond to the pandemic, and shared the full findings with those who took part (along with an abbreviated version on our website). It proved to be extremely popular, so we decided to repeat the exercise.

Once again, 50 awards organisers have come together in a second collaborative survey to share top tips, ideas and intentions. The ultimate goal here is to work together to sustain the credibility and existence of the awards industry.

The surveys are conducted by us here at Boost Awards. Why should Boost do this? We represent hundreds of awards applicants, run the biggest [awards listing sites](#) in the world and have helped found the [Awards Trust Mark](#). Therefore, we feel we are in a great position to facilitate this.

The first survey in a nutshell

The first survey showed that very few awards organisers planned on scrapping their schemes, but most were considering delaying their events, typically by three months. However, it was early doors, and there was a huge amount of uncertainty at that point.

What we have since observed

Clearly the events industry as a whole was taking a hammering, but awards are a bit different in that people tend to enter for the recognition rather than the event itself. With that in mind, it has been possible for the industry to reinvent itself (even if just temporarily) to remain alive, rather than go into hibernation. There has been intense interest in virtual events (see also our article on virtual award events [here](#)) and delaying events into the autumn and winter.

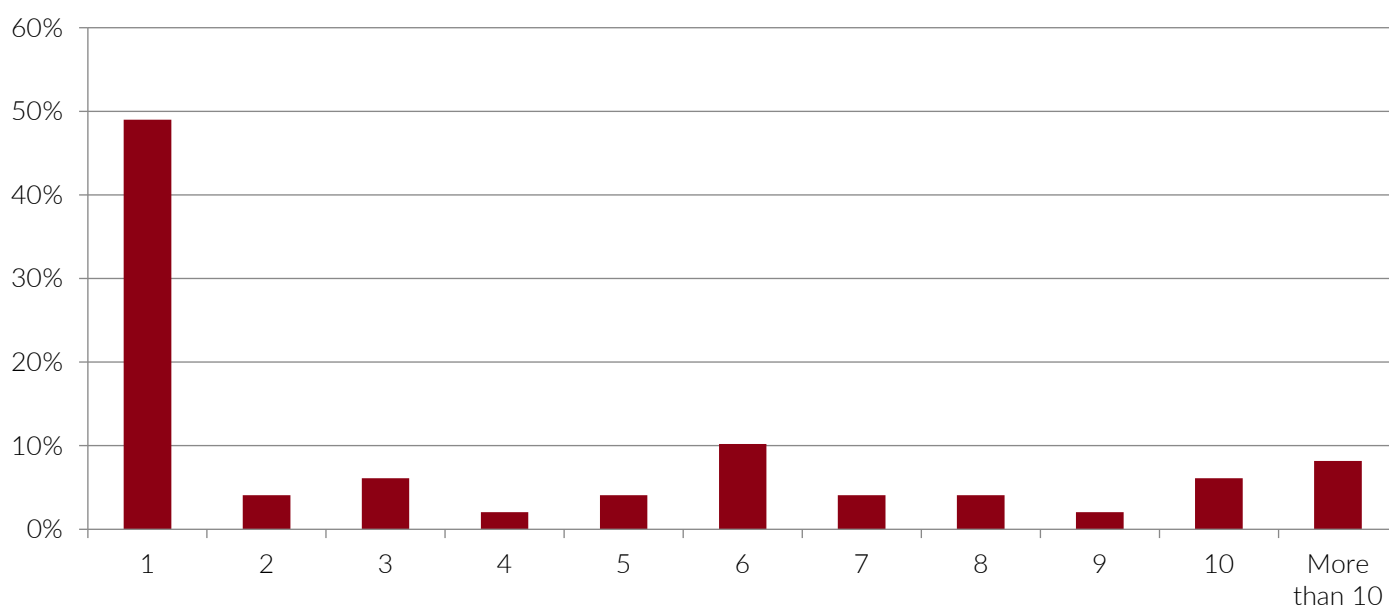
The team here at Boost has been actively monitoring the situation, updating our 4,500-strong awards database, and helping companies to strategically pick which awards to enter. The number of awards and recognitions schemes cancelling has increased with casualties like the Chamber Business Awards and the Stonewall Index, but the number of awards 'going digital' has appeared to see the most growth.

Fortunately, the worst-case scenario – awards opening, accepting entries, then closing – has remained rare.

Who took part

This survey was undertaken by Boost Awards, with the kind contribution of 50 awards organisers representing over 200 awards schemes:

How many awards schemes does your organisation run each year?

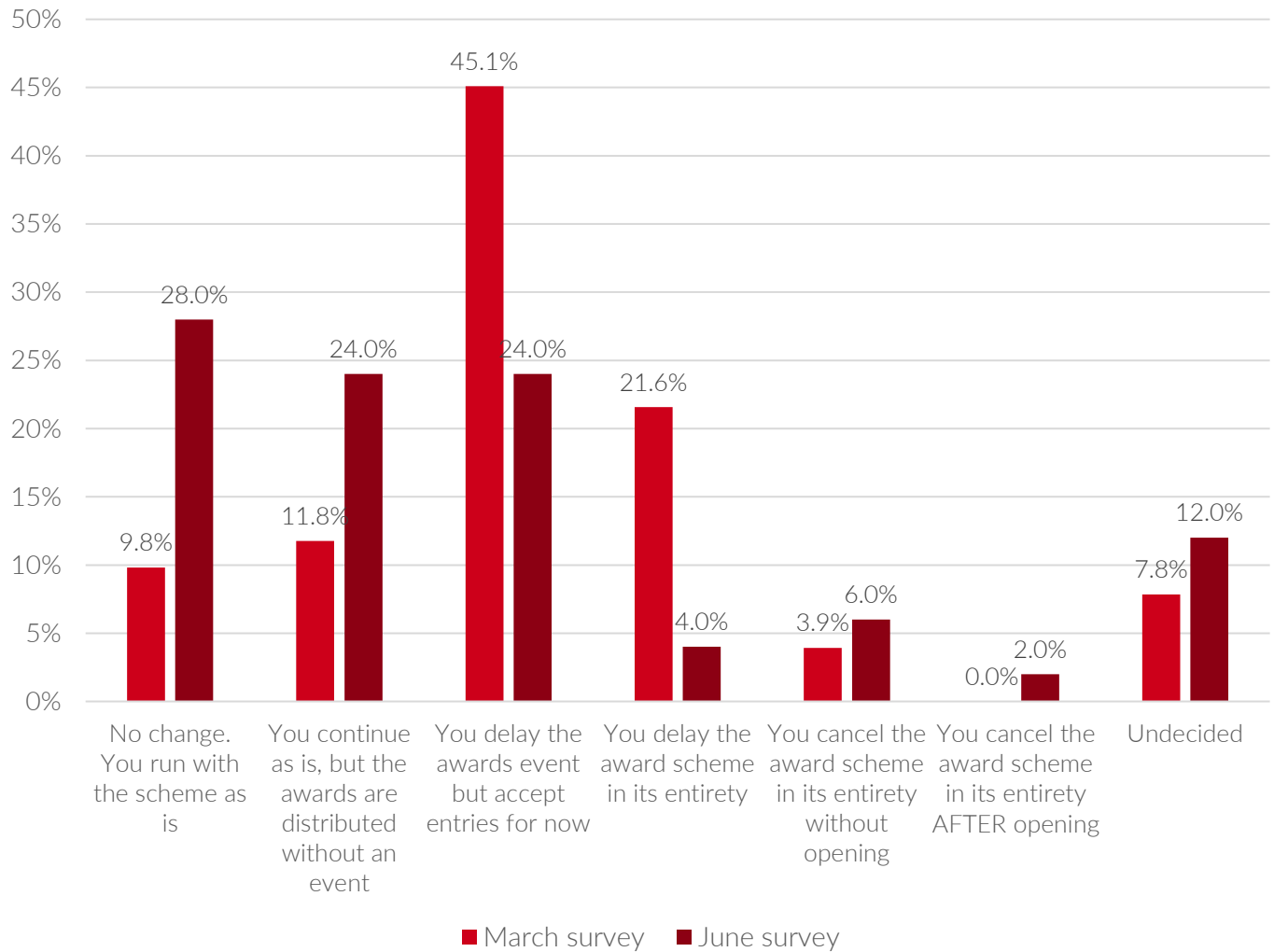


What this survey has demonstrated

For each respondent, we looked at their responses to a number of questions and categorised them by their most likely approach. Therefore, this graph is a combination of other responses (creating one per respondent) – and we compared this with the results from March.

Clearly going digital is on the increase, and the number of awards opening and then delaying the event is reducing – which is arguably natural, given that nearly three months have passed.

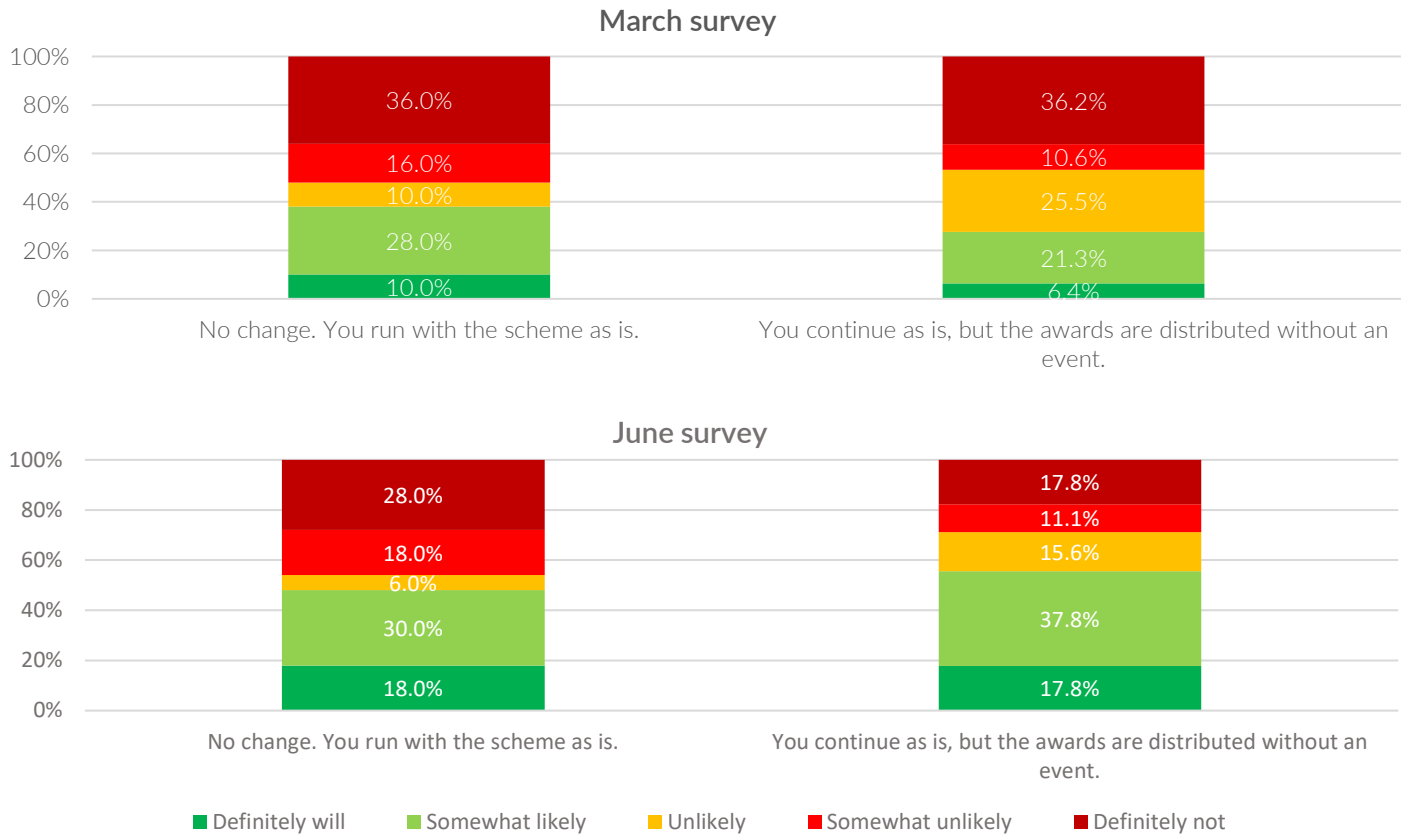
Most likely scenario (one per respondent)



Possible responses

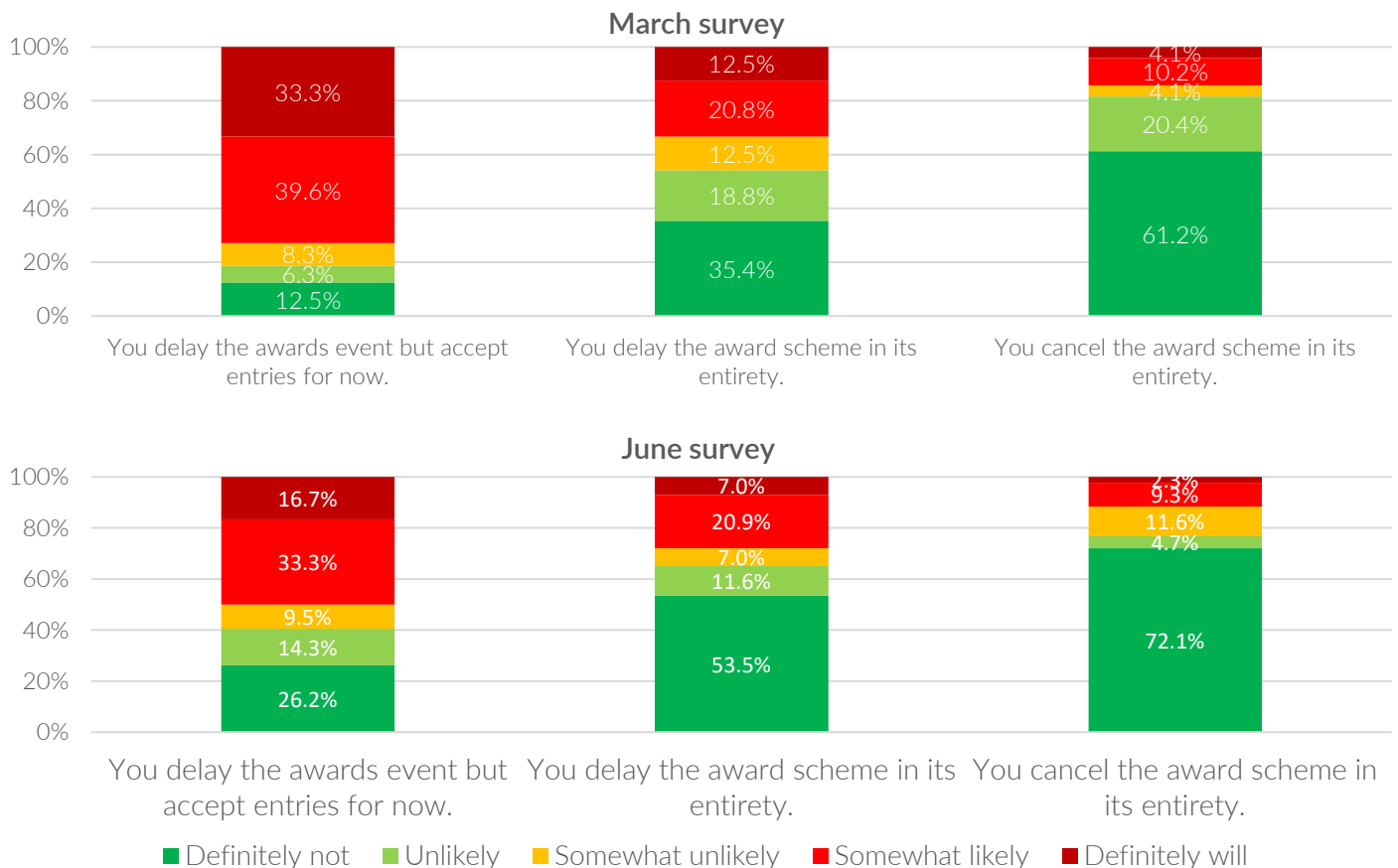
Let's now look at the different possible responses, and how likely they are. Here are the ratings, compared with the March findings.

How likely are the following scenarios for your most current awards scheme? (**Minor** change options)



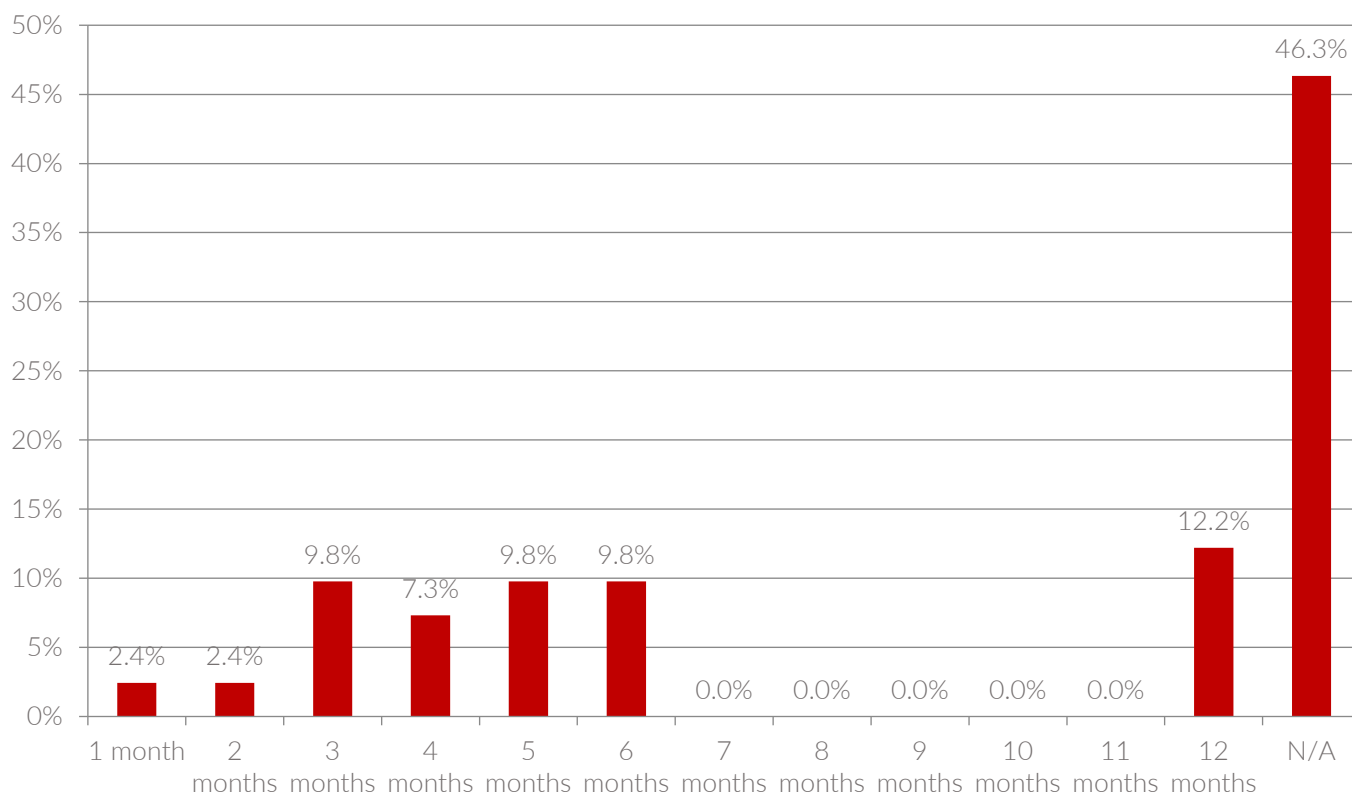
How likely are the following scenarios for your most current awards scheme? (**Major** change options)

The red, amber and green are reversed here, as we are hoping for less awards taking these options.

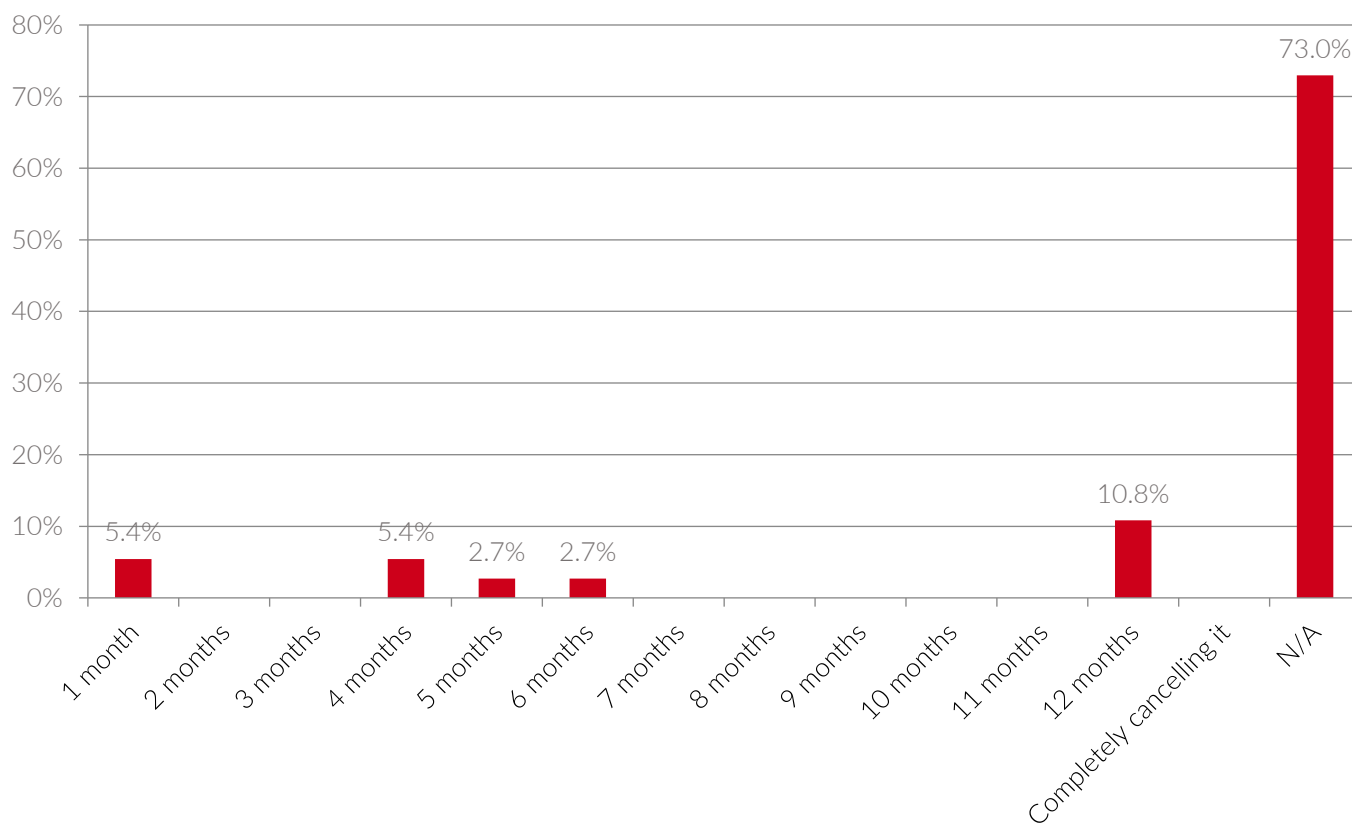


It is clear that delaying the awards scheme or just the event was the main response back in March. This is less of a factor this time around. Nonetheless, here are the responses to these questions in the June survey.

If you are delaying just the event/ceremony, how long for?



If you are delaying **the scheme as a whole**, how long for?

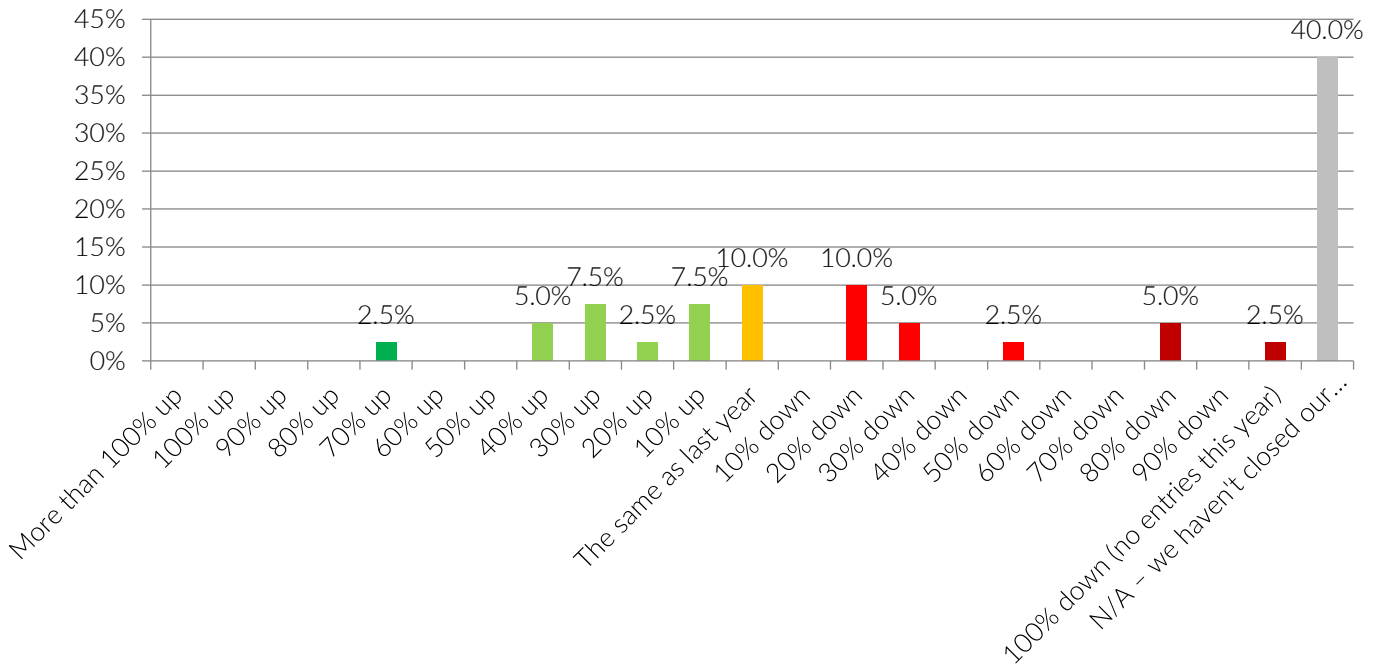


Ensuring success

Our shared priority here is to see the awards industry survive the pandemic. The first measure of success is entry volumes. Here there has been a real mixed bag; the number of awards seeing a reduction in entries (according to our June survey) was almost matched by the number of awards seeing an increase:

Impact on entry volumes

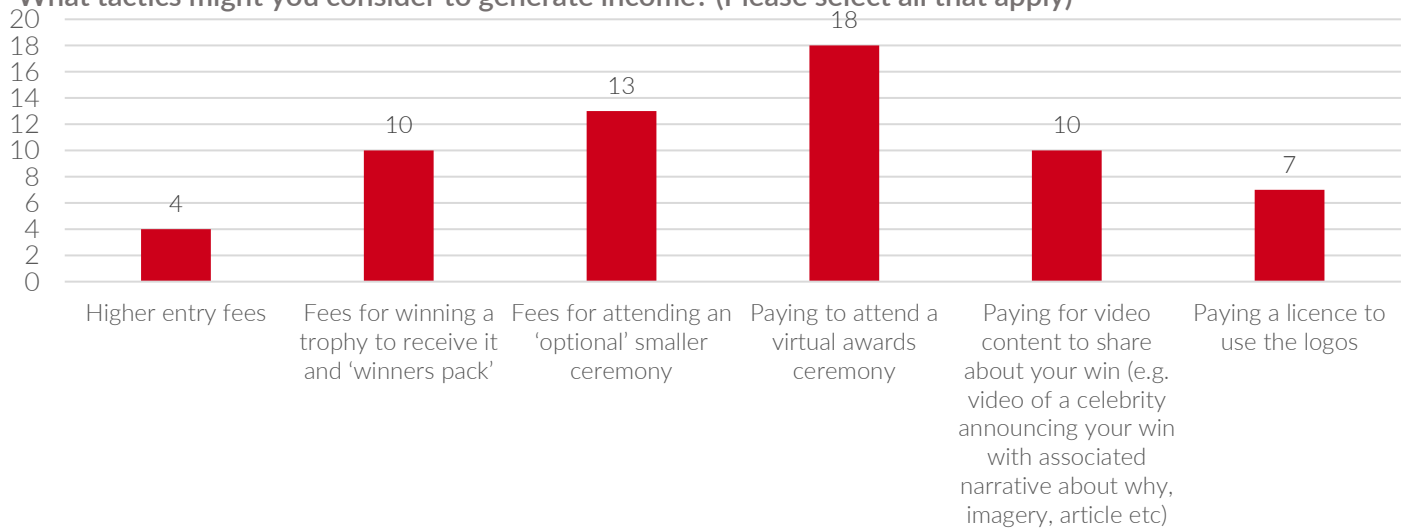
If you have already closed your awards for entries this year, how did the entry volumes compare this year, to last year?



Balancing the books

We then explored the different tactics employed by awards to compensate for the reduction in income from their ceremonies/events. There is clearly quite a menu of options available, and they are proving popular. Our favourite one here is creating content they can share for a fee. In the bad old days, awards charged a fortune to create printed articles for winners, but nowadays the preference is likely to be video-led content that can be shared internally and externally.

What tactics might you consider to generate income? (Please select all that apply)

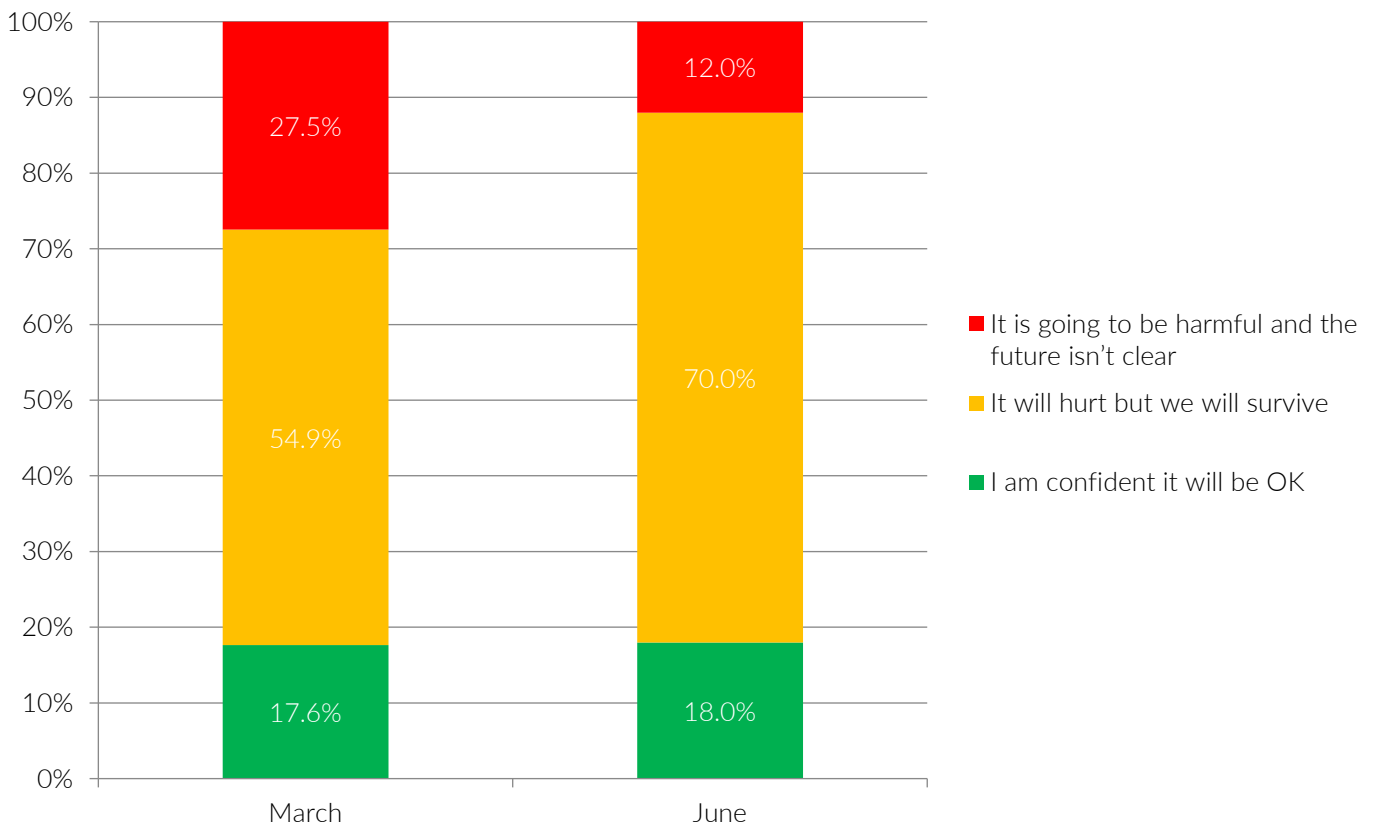


We invited other comments. Here is what was suggested:

- “Limited options. We organise an award in a sector (CSR/environment) with limited budgets as is. Without the possibility of an in-person conference + event, we are near a capped (and small!) total revenue base. Digital-only awards is a pretty challenging financial set-up after taking into account the labour involved in producing a quality, meaningful award.”
- “Extending awards next year and re-structuring to make it more profitable.”
- “We have reduced our entry price and will be offering buy one get one free in order to encourage uptake.”
- “Possibly a combination fee to include the above (virtual awards event, winners pack incl. badge/logo licence and celebration/networking event).”
- “Awards sponsors are receiving a ‘bundle’ of products (not just the awards ceremony). We are not including a table within the sponsorship package.”
- “Borrowing money, furloughing staff, online conference alongside – it’s mostly about continuing to engage and give our customers value.”

When taking all this into account, the general mood hasn’t changed much:

How damaging will the change be (factoring in other awards schemes you run)?



We invited awards organisers to comment on specific impacts they anticipate/have experienced. Here are the comments:

- “Lower entry volumes, fewer post-award trophy purchases.”
- “Corona continuing into 2021.”
- “Loss of sponsorships and momentum for future awards, appetite from the council to have awards in the council timetable.”
- “Loss of audience.”
- “Yes, sponsorship is impacted as we are cancelling the event, that's a major loss of revenue. We also had many businesses withdrawing their entry due to disruptions caused by Covid-19, or some products have never launched because of the situation. Products out of stock and several entrants unable to provide samples for judging (food & drink).”
- “We will be looking to hold a virtual ceremony.”
- “Not able to run an in-person awards ceremony.”
- “Due to Covid-19, we are working with the venue on different scenarios.”
- “Mainly the appetite for people to attend events in general, and having to pay for them when the economy is in ruins!”
- “Potentially run a virtual awards event, to include hampers and trophy distribution, with a celebration/networking event afterwards.”
- “We are going virtual for all of our award ceremonies in 2020. If we can run a live event in Q4, albeit ‘reduced’, we will have a live-stream element.”
- “Pressure on entries, rates and post-award trophy sales.”

- “Hotels may raise costs, hotels may implement social distancing capacity issues – we can do the whole thing from start to finish online, I still consider that to be an event.”
- “Sponsorship for 2021.”
- “Entries were up 10% overall, but corporate entries were severely impacted (down from 65% of entries to 30% of entries) – but that was probably more to do with Brexit.”
- “Change format of event to either online or day-long series of mini awards presentations.”
- “We didn't have an option to delay the soonest ceremony as it's already closed for entries. It's a little different as it will take place in Dubai. However, there are also some awards programmes where we have deferred the ceremony but don't yet have a date, and others where we may go straight to a virtual ceremony.”
- “We will delay our deadlines until everyone is back in the office that is going back.”
- “Worried about the impact all round – we are running entries until August and meant to have the ceremony in November. We would also incur a significant cost from the venue if we had to cancel/postpone, which would hit us hard.”
- “Evaluations will be carried out differently.”
- “The main issue is when events can happen again, and what restrictions will be placed on them regarding social distancing. If the social distancing restrictions impact too much on the guest experience at our events, we will probably not have events this year.”
- “I think 20% down on entries and taking lots of event virtual, we have moved 22 events to Q4 – but I'm still not convinced we can run these then.”
- “Fees need to be flexible, or even removed.”
- “Announcing the winners virtually.”
- “Hoping to give the awards in person to winners at a separate event later this year (but no guarantee).”
- “Brand damage.”
- “We continue to develop and improve the awards, but introducing a focus on how companies are adapting to the post-virus world.”
- “Numbers of entries being fewer.”
- “We will move the final as is needed regarding crowds gathering.”
- “Covid-19 rules around events.”
- “Second wave of Covid-19.”
- “Concern that appetite for general/traditional awards is likely to be low for a while.”
- “Limit international delegates to the live event.”
- “Venues opening and social distancing.”

Top tips

Finally, we asked organisers “What top tips would you suggest to an awards organiser trying to maximise interest, applications and profitability of their scheme?” which generated a range of inputs. Here they are:

- “Push back hard on vendors – example, OpenWater for awards software – that seem to think we organise these awards just to pay their excessive costs.”
- “Include a positive award related to Covid-19.”
- “Drop-in sessions on 'how to'.”
- “Look outside the box and invest in great event technology.”
- “Consider a small spend on paid social promotions such as LinkedIn, develop partnerships, offer contra deals with media companies for exposure.”
- “Provide a commitment and reassurance comms that the awards will indeed be given out, ideally at the planned ceremony itself, at an alternative date, or virtually with a follow up event.”
- “Keep your audience engaged. Judges' feedback is key. Promotion of the shortlist and winners (a digital online winner's brochure) – as much coverage as possible. A great social media campaign. This year you will have to offer sponsors something outside of the ceremony.”
- “Focus on your brand.”
- “Consult with Boost Awards would be one of my favourite tips. Talk to these guys, they know what is going on.”
- “More relevant categories for the times. Highlighting individuals who have stepped up during the pandemic.”
- “Be sensitive to the huge difficulties businesses are facing – as well as the individuals involved.”
- “Recognise the changes brought about by CV.”
- “Survival is obviously the most important thing. But almost as important is the credibility of the awards programme, and making sure that all good work continues to be entered. We are allowing every organisation the opportunity to enter their best work into one category for free into our awards programme.”
- “Publicity and exposure for entrants, to encourage strong entries.”
- “We have incorporated Covid-19 categories, e.g. how teams have acted in a crisis. This has spiked interest.”
- “It's all about showing possible entrants the future marketing potential of entering or being a finalist or winning. This credible differentiation will be vital to businesses as they try to pull themselves through the current situation and beyond.”

- “Show them you are not suffering and you are there to help in any way possible, regardless.”
- “Keep costs under tight control this year! Build the brand for entrants to believe it in all the more next year, when budgets may be coming back a bit. But don't assume it will build back to the past...”
- “Use social media as best as you can. Encourage people to share, share, share through the different platforms. There has never been a better time to get eyeballs on your social media content. Hopefully this low-cost route can help offset some of the other damage.”
- “People have more time to get entries together, so they should be embracing the opportunity.”
- “Listen to clients – which is only going to be helped by seeing the results of this timely survey.”
- “Extend the entry deadline, keep everyone up to date with the cleaning regimes of your chosen venue.”
- “Utilise all social media.”
- “Squeeze margins and ‘give’ as much as possible for as little as possible, rather than trying to squeeze additional income with added extras. Times are hard, but it is important not to appear to be exploiting small businesses who are struggling right now.”
- “Focus on interest and not profitability.”

Final words

Many thanks indeed to those who took part in this survey, and for being part of this unprecedented collaboration within the awards industry.

The findings are the intellectual property of Boost Awards. Although we welcome the sharing of the findings, we ask that if anything mentioned in this survey is published, you first seek the written permission of Boost Awards.”

We are working hard here at [Boost](#) to keep our awards database up to date. Please ensure you keep us up to date with your link, deadline, and event date changes. Please also consider the Awards Trust Mark, and advertising on the www.awards-list.co.uk and www.awards-list.com sites.

