

Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Fan-led review of live and electronic music

Fifth Special Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1628



Culture, Media and Sport Committee

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Committee introduction

1. In 2024, our predecessor committee published its report into grassroots music venues which called on the government to launch a fan-led review of live and electronic music.¹ The government rejected the recommendation, stating that it was already engaging fans on improved protections in the secondary ticketing market, as well as prioritising the music sector in its industrial strategy.²
2. We recognised that fans were central to the success of the UK's music industry and still wanted a comprehensive review of the live music ecosystem. For this reason, we decided to launch our own independent fan-led review of live and electronic music in June 2025, with the aim of improving the sustainability of grassroots live and electronic music and ultimately safeguarding the success of the wider UK music industry. We are publishing this review today as an appendix to this report.
3. Our review draws inspiration from fan-led reviews in football, including Dame Tracey Crouch's review of football governance and Karen Carney's review of women's football.³ Lord Brennan of Canton was the clear choice to chair the review. He brought with him extensive parliamentary and ministerial experience, as well as his longstanding passion for music as both a performer and, above all, a lifelong fan. We thank Lord Brennan for his dedication to this review and for his important recommendations below.
4. The review brought music lovers together from all over the UK to discuss their experiences of attending events, regardless of genre and venue size, and to discuss ideas to protect the industry and ensure it works in the best interests of fans. We are very grateful to all those who participated in the review and helped shape its findings.

1 Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Grassroots music venues, Seventh Report of Session 2023–24, [HC 527](#), 11 May 2024

2 Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Grassroots music venues: Government response, Third Special Report of Session 2024–25, [HC 380](#)

3 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Fan-Led Review of Football Governance: securing the game's future](#), 24 November 2021; Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Raising the bar - reframing the opportunity in women's football](#), 13 July 2023

5. This independent fan-led review of live and electronic music must be considered in full by the government, the music industry, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders to inform their ongoing work to support a thriving live and electronic music ecosystem. We expect the government to respond to Lord Brennan's report and recommendations within the usual two months, in line with the convention for select committee report publications.

Fan-led review of live and electronic music



Foreword



I feel fortunate that throughout my life I have had many magical experiences attending and playing live music.

I've stood in the pouring rain with a smile on my face encountering the inspirational reggae of Bob Marley and The Wailers for the first time.

I have played guitar and sung in tiny folk clubs full of warmth, atmosphere and community, and enjoyed the occasional late night at Ronnie Scott's.

I rang in the new millennium in the company of Manic Street Preachers and 70,000 other fans in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium and later witnessed Paul McCartney and Oasis do gigs there.

I've danced the wee hours away in the Stonebridge tent at Glastonbury. I even played a gig at Oxford Street's iconic 100 Club with former Sex Pistol Glen Matlock accompanying on bass guitar, not to mention playing the first ever rock gig in the historic Westminster Hall with my band of fellow politicians/musicians MP4.

I've heard Sir Bryn Terfel communicate with his voice like no other at the Welsh National Opera and experienced Joni Mitchell singing her confessional songs of personal freedom at the height of her vocal and song writing powers.

I realise how lucky I am. Without these and countless other experiences, my life would be immeasurably impoverished. I believe that everyone's life is enriched when they gather with others to enjoy live music.

So, when the Chair of the Commons Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Committee, Dame Caroline Dinenage MP, asked me to undertake a fan-led review of live and electronic music for the committee I could not refuse.

The key phrase for me was "fan-led". There is a myriad of bodies in the UK music industry, from large multinational corporations to tiny local micro businesses, pulling in various directions often with conflicting interests.

I have made it my mission in a quarter of a century in Parliament to get to understand these different interests, and wherever possible to get people involved at every level to act together for the benefit of music, for the musicians who create it, and for the people who love it—the fans.

I have done it with the belief that almost everyone involved in music, in whatever capacity, started off as a fan.

I have done it in the hope that everyone, however high up the ladder of industry they climb, can be reminded that they started out as a music fan, and need to think like a fan for the good of UK music, as well as for the good of their own souls.

However difficult, this has been a mission worth pursuing if the private messages I often receive even from industry high ups, past and present, are anything to go by.

With technological revolution and a devastating pandemic music fans need live music more than ever, but face real challenges.

This review has listened intently to the voice of fans. It is a call to all involved in music to turn the volume dial up to 11 in their favour.

Fans are the lifeblood of the music industry but often feel neglected and ripped off. In some sectors of the modern world of commerce, the annoyance economy appears to be the norm, where consumers are subjected to lousy levels of impersonal service and predatory pricing practices.

Unfortunately, many music fans feel that this approach is emerging in the live and electronic sectors. We must put that right for the future health of live music.

It doesn't have to be this way. Fans have told us that the things they want to improve are practical and achievable.

This review calls on everyone involved in live and electronic music, from ticketing platforms to venues, from artists to promoters, from managers to councils, to treat fans with respect. They can do this by agreeing to adopt the principles and practices of the live and electronic music fans' charter in this review.

Taking this approach will be good for fans, but ultimately also good for business.

By deepening the relationship between fans and the artists and venues they love through cherishing fandom, the long-term future of UK live music will be assured.

The detailed Fans' Charter consists of the recommendations in each chapter of this review but can be distilled into the 'seven essentials of live'.

All parties involved in the live and electronic music world should pledge to provide, sustain, and improve these seven essentials in all their dealings with music fans.

The Live and Electronic Fan-Led Charter Seven Essentials

- Celebration - embrace live music not just for money-making but as a public good!
- Ticketing - treat fans with respect, providing transparency and ending rip off practices.
- Grassroots - nurture grassroots and community live music for its own sake and as the incubator of future success.
- Safety - prioritise protecting fans from harm of injury, crime, violence, harassment and discrimination at and around gigs.
- Accessibility - always think access for all and act accordingly.
- Transport - make live music a central part of transport policy and planning everywhere.
- Voice - listen, promote and support the voice of music fans of every genre.

I hope that the CMS Committee will endorse the conclusions of this review, use its authority to hold industry and government to account and pressure all parties to adopt the principles of the fans' charter.

I would like to thank everyone who gave their time to help with this review. It has been a pleasure to work with parliamentary staff and music sector workers, but above all with the individual fans who participated in person or by responding to our survey.

There is no live music without you.

Encore!

Kevin

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lord Brennan of Canton

Introduction

Live and electronic music provides enormous economic value. According to LIVE (Live Music Industry, Venues & Entertainment), which represents the UK's live music business, the live sector was worth £6.7 billion in consumer spending in 2024, employed over 230,000 people in permanent and casual work, and delivered one gig every 137 seconds in the UK.⁴ In its own report, the Night Time Industry Association, the trade body for the night time economy, revealed that electronic music generated £2.47 billion in total measurable economic activity in 2025.⁵

At a city level, central London generates the most live music income with 26.5%, followed by Manchester (8.1%), Glasgow (5.7%), Birmingham (3.5%) and Cardiff (2.4%). Rural areas in particular benefited from festivals, with Central and South Western England sharing 39% of 2024's festival spend.⁶ LIVE argued that those figures demonstrate "the very wide reach of the live music sector, and how it contributes to the economic and cultural life of every region of the UK".⁷

As well as economic benefits, live and electronic music events have broader cultural significance as well as enhancing the UK's soft power, a view shared by many fans with whom we spoke.⁸

To achieve its economic and cultural success, the music industry depends on many participants, including artists, songwriters, producers, managers, record labels, promoters, venue operators and others. They are intricately linked, with implications for one part of the sector having an effect throughout. Central to this ecology are the fans. Yet they are the ones often excluded from the decisions that shape the music sector, especially when it comes to live and electronic music events.

For fans, live music is more than a consumer choice, it is a way of life. Although the wider economic value of music is important to them, they also want to support the local artists and the independent venues that are a cornerstone of their communities. As well as their love of music,

4 LIVE, [Annual Report & Economic Highlights 2024](#), September 2025

5 NTIA, [The UK Electronic Music Report Fourth Edition](#), February 2026

6 LIVE, [Annual Report & Economic Highlights 2024](#), September 2025

7 See above reference

8 See UK Music ([MEV0036](#))

their experiences are shaped by wider structural conditions such as cost, regulation, available spaces and local infrastructure, which influence how fans access and sustain their live music scenes.

As demonstrated in the Music Fans' Voice survey, a 2025 fan-led initiative which gathered the views of 8,108 fans across live music experiences, fans have valuable insights into the many challenges and opportunities that affect them, such as ticket fairness, price transparency, venue sustainability, safety, accessibility, and inclusivity.⁹ Our fan-led review aims to enhance giving fans a meaningful voice.

Our review

The Fan-led review of live and electronic music consisted of three engagement strands.

- A national survey, conducted between 26 June and 30 November 2025. The survey received 4,144 responses, 98% of whom were based in the UK.¹⁰
- Roundtable events with fans across the UK including music venues in London, Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow, Bethesda, Carmarthen, Manchester, Portsmouth, Newport, Southend-on-Sea, and Stockton-on-Tees. Please see the acknowledgements for a list of music venues and others who gave up their time and space to help organise these events.
- DIY Engagement (or 'distributed dialogue') packs sent to fans or groups of fans who wished to hold their own engagement events and feed their findings back into the review.

We heard from a diverse range of fans of many genres of music who regularly attended a breadth of different venues and festivals—from stadiums and arenas, concert halls, and music festivals to small music venues, mid-sized venues (above approximately 650 capacity), nightclubs, pubs, cultural festivals, and community events.

In addition to engaging directly with fans, we spoke to stakeholders across the music industry as well as organisations advocating for safe, inclusive and accessible live and electronic music events.

9 See [Music Fans' Voice, A Fan Led Review](#). This initiative was commissioned by Greater Manchester Combined Authority, The Mayor of London, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, West Midlands Combined Authority, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Cardiff City Council, Belfast City Council and Glasgow Music City.

10 See the end of the report for survey results

Throughout the review, we have strived to be as inclusive as possible and to listen to a broad range of voices. Although we cannot cover everything that was said throughout the process, we hope this report fairly captures and reflects the views of music lovers everywhere.

This report has seven chapters, each covering a key theme to have emerged throughout the review and ending with a Fans' Charter principle, or 'essential of live'. The Fans' Charter is a set of principles to which all those responsible for nurturing, organising, supporting and participating in live and electronic music can commit. Stakeholders include, but not exhaustively, national and local government, live music festivals and venues, ticketing companies, artists, promoters and fans themselves.

Under each principle we have made several recommendations. Some require coordinated efforts as well as wider discussions around funding and will take time to fully implement, while others are smaller practical suggestions for immediate action. We are asking everyone with an interest in the sustainability of the live and electronic music industry to endorse the 'seven essentials of live', which are the basis of the Fans' Charter, and commit to implement the detailed recommendations in as reasonable a time as possible.

This report uses the term 'live and electronic music' to refer to any musical performance taking place in the presence of an audience, including live vocals, live instrumentation, DJ sets, and performances involving real-time manipulation of sound using synthesisers, samplers, computers, or other electronic tools. This term covers all genres and sub-genres. For reasons of clarity and economy, the report will sometimes use the shorthand 'live' to refer to this full range of performances.

These performances can occur across a range of settings, including small and mid-size venues, stadiums and arenas, nightclubs, pubs, raves, festivals, concert halls and theatres, cultural and community events, virtual or hybrid concerts, and other comparable spaces.

Celebrating live and electronic music

In this chapter we examine the emotional, social and cultural importance of live and electronic music, the inequalities affecting different genres and communities, and the opportunities to celebrate the diversity of UK live music.

Personal impact and shared experience

Live and electronic music events bring joy. Fans consistently told us that these shared experiences are not simply a form of entertainment, but are integral to their identities, shaping who they are. They spoke with passion about live and electronic music lifting their spirits, energising them and helping them to overcome difficult moments in their lives. Several fans told us of improved mental health and wellbeing after attending gigs:

“Since I found the EDM (electronic dance music) scene over 3 years ago my life has changed dramatically for the better and I was able to escape hopeless depression. The combination of dancing, the music and the community is necessary and lifesaving.”

“as an elderly female recently bereaved, music helps me to get out, meet others and find healing in music.”

Part of the appeal of live and electronic music is the collective experience. Whether it's attending events with friends, family, or by themselves, fans describe gigs, concerts and club nights as shared moments that stay with them. Many find a sense of community, forming friendships that last for years. Time and again, fans told us that live and electronic music helps address loneliness, with venues of all sizes offering spaces in which fans feel they belong, can participate, and express themselves freely.

This collective experience is a key driver in cultural citizenship, where fans can develop a sense of pride and place-based identity, allowing them to feel at home and connected to where they live. These shared, in-person spaces are also part of the UK's wider social infrastructure at a time when participation in many other community activities is in decline.

Cultural importance

Beyond personal wellbeing, fans recognise the cultural importance and global impact of UK music. According to the 2025 Music Fans' Voice survey, 99% agreed that live music is a vital part of UK culture, and 95% felt it is important for the UK's global reputation.¹¹ UK-created genres have shaped international electronic music. As Sam Divine, DJ and Producer, said, "we created dubstep, UK garage, drum and bass, jungle. Those genres, no one can take them away from us."¹²

Programmes such as the British Council's Selector Radio have helped share UK music internationally, while closer to home, grassroots scenes and DIY spaces allow fans to celebrate local talent and share knowledge. Fandoms often act as the biggest advocates for artists and scenes, allow for active cultural participation on a community level, and support development for new talent. Fans aren't just customers, they are champions, archivists and location advocates.

"This country should be proud of the cultural impact of the UK's diverse music scene on the world's stage, if we lose that, we lose a large part of our cultural identity and global relevance."

Inequalities

Yet fans are also concerned that not all genres of music are valued equally, especially in terms of funding and accessibility. For example, the All-Party Parliamentary Jazz Group told us, that in 2023–24, jazz received 2% of Arts Council England's (ACE) music budget compared to 49% for opera and 24% for classical. In addition, they noted that ACE no longer collected artform-specific attendance data, which has reduced its ability to assess impact and justify investment. A promoter also observed that jazz music in other parts of the UK rarely reflected the diversity of the contemporary scene of South London, asking "where are the Tomorrow's Warriors and the Kinetika Blocos of the counties?".

Similar concerns about geography were raised among classical music fans, who said that efforts to reach audiences outside London often focused on the North, leaving gaps in the South West and East Anglia. Classical music also continues to struggle with perceptions of elitism that can deter new audiences. We heard that although post pandemic audiences are younger—

11 [Music Fans' Voice Survey](#)

12 NTIA, [The UK Electronic Music Report Fourth Edition](#), February 2026

particularly at the Proms,¹³ which fans said had been successful in breaking down barriers—there can still be a problem with getting young people to engage with live classical music elsewhere.

Electronic music fans are also frustrated that despite the UK's contribution to global electronic dance music and club culture (thirteen artists rank in the global top 100, placing the country second worldwide¹⁴), domestically the genre receives little recognition. Genres associated, often unfairly, with drugs or antisocial behaviour are undervalued, even as fans celebrate the music and build positive community experiences.

“Rave culture is a modern-day spiritual endeavour and those who don’t understand that can’t grasp how profoundly beneficial it is for those in the culture and even those outside of it. It makes humanity a better place and needs to be treated with better respect than an image of degeneracy that it is often portrayed as.”

“There should be more sponsorship for jazz, folk, and classical music in affordable, local venues like community and church halls, pubs, schools, etc.”

“My favourite music (traditional folk) is a minority interest and there is far too little provision of live performances in my area.”

Fans also spoke of a structural bias in perceptions of Black music.¹⁵ An industry expert told us that although the Metropolitan Police’s Form 696, a risk-assessment form intended for promoters and organisers of music events featuring DJs or MCs, was scrapped in 2019, the underlying culture and attitudes that disproportionately targeted Black artists and Black music fans remain.¹⁶

In 2023, Black Lives in Music, the Musicians’ Union and LIVE (the sector body for the live music industry) approached the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, raising their concerns about barriers in the industry. In response, the Mayor and former Night Czar, Amy Lamé, brought together music industry stakeholders to establish the Race Equality in Music Event Licensing (REMEL) project to look at racial profiling in the policing and licensing of live music events. REMEL includes the commissioning of research into “the impact of

13 See [‘BBC Proms reports largest ever digital audience’](#), BBC Media Centre, 17 September 2025

14 NTIA, [UK Electronic Music Report Fourth Edition](#), February 2026

15 We refer people to UK Music’s March 2026 report, [Black Music Means Business](#), for a definition of Black music and genres.

16 See UK Music, [UK Music Diversity Report 2024](#)

policies and interactions with the police, councils, venues and promoters on Black, Asian and ethnically diverse music events”, with a report forthcoming.¹⁷

Stakeholders observed that disparities are also reflected in the way major cultural events are discussed publicly. For example, mainstream reporting of events such as the Notting Hill Carnival, a successful celebration of music and cultural heritage, is often negative instead of focused on its value and contribution — it is estimated to bring in £396 million annually to London’s economy, draws in approximately 160,000 tourists, and supports 3,000 jobs.¹⁸ The message was clear from fans of all genres—the diversity of UK music is a national strength and it should be recognised, supported and celebrated.

Nurturing talent

Although this review is focused primarily on the fan experience, many fans felt strongly about nurturing artistic talent. Many want to see music education strengthened in schools across all genres, including promoting electronic music as a viable career, and greater support for grassroots youth initiatives. Positive examples were given, such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra’s outreach work or youth open mic nights such as those at Oh Yeah in Belfast. However, fans said that such initiatives are rare. Enthusiasm among fans for supporting slot opportunities for new artists and developing young talent was evident across our engagement events.

“Music has been proven time and time again to be hugely beneficial to young people, not only to learn skills in music but also to develop personal skills and make great connections and friends. More needs to be done to ensure those pathways are rebuilt.”

Local place and cultural tourism

Fans also told us how live events can transform entire cities. For example, 2025’s Oasis reunion in Cardiff created an atmosphere of citywide celebration, through collaborative production of satellite events with local businesses. However, fans observed that music events do not always enjoy the same institutional support as major sporting fixtures, especially where public transport is concerned. They want to see live and electronic music attracting the same level of investment which would reflect its cultural

17 See London Assembly, [Race Equality in Music Event Licensing](#), accessed 9 March 2026; and [‘Celebrating Five Years of Black Lives in Music’](#), Musicians’ Union, 29 October 2025

18 [‘Carnival generates £396 million for London’s economy’](#), The Voice, 2 August 2024

and economic importance. Many fans expressed their pride in regional authority supported events that celebrate music from their local scenes and community, such as Twisterella in Middlesbrough.

Fans also see opportunities for the UK to build on its reputation as a global music leader. They highlighted events such as the Amsterdam Dance Event (ADE), which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world, and suggested that UK cities proud of their musical identities could host similarly ambitious events. For example, a rotating, UK-wide celebration of live and electronic music, could showcase local talent and boost cultural tourism. The tapestry of UK culture is often driven by scenes/sounds that are cultivated in 'place'. Many fans feel proud of the artists from their area and actively champion those they believe will go on to be the next representative of their town/city.

“Think about places like Leicester, Oxford, Newcastle, with burgeoning music scenes competing on a larger scale with bigger cities like London, Manchester, Glasgow, and how financial support for the up and coming festivals and promoters there would help even the playing field.”

“Where is the space for experimentation but also development of cultural identity and joy in place. Invest in place and local venues to support local musicians and economy.”

The music industry agrees with the importance of cultivating local scenes. In 2025, UK Music (the collective voice of the UK's music industry) published a report, *Hometown Glory*, which argued that “supporting local music can be a key tool in strengthening communities and driving local and national pride, while simultaneously providing the support the music industry needs to thrive”.¹⁹

The report found that 60% of survey respondents thought that councils should better support local music. It outlined several practical steps for local councils in a Local Music Action Charter under the themes of revitalise the local economy, support skills and inclusive talent pipelines, revitalise the town centre and night-time economy, strengthen local identity and culture led tourism, and build inclusive community access.²⁰

Taken together, the themes explored throughout this chapter underline fans' clear message that the UK's diverse live and electronic music scenes are a vital cultural asset and deserve sustained support and recognition.

19 UK Music, [Hometown Glory: How Supporting Local Music Can Drive Economic Growth](#), July 2025

20 See above reference

Fans' Charter principle: Celebration

Embrace live music not just for money-making but as a public good.

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should commission research to strengthen data on underrepresented live and electronic music genres, to better inform policy and funding decisions.
- Local authorities should ensure that cultural diversity in music is fully embedded within local music plans.
- The UK Government should work with regional mayors and local councils on mechanisms to support career paths into music across all genres. It should develop this strategy for music careers in collaboration with the industry and seek the support of the governments of the devolved nations for this work.
- Councils and cities that want to celebrate their local live music ecosystem should publish a music strategy, including outlining their involvement in cultural champion schemes such as the Music Cities Network, UK City/Town of Culture and UNESCO Creative Cities.
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should establish an annual, rotating roadshow that celebrates live and electronic music. This should be in addition to City/Town of Culture and look to celebrate local musical heritage in its location selection.

Ticketing

In this chapter we explore how ticketing shapes fans' access to live and electronic music, highlighting concerns about transparency, pricing, resale practices and accessibility.

For fans, ticket buying is more than a commercial transaction with ticketing platforms or box offices. Whether arena tours, festivals, clubs or local grassroots venues, ticketing determines whether fans get to participate in a shared social and cultural experience.

Across our survey and engagement events, there was a perception among fans that the ticketing process particularly at larger events was exploitative and lacked transparency, while pricing, availability and resale practices can exclude some audiences, including those on lower incomes or with specific access requirements.

“I think tickets price transparency is vital to saving the music industry.”

The ticketing industry

The UK has a vast ticketing industry, with millions of tickets successfully reaching audiences every year. The industry is made up of various ticket agencies and numerous venues and box offices as well as vertically integrated operators such as the Live Nation Group, AEG, CTS Eventim and ATG Entertainment.²¹

Although there are many independent ticket agents, venue operators and promoters, many fans believe that the larger corporations are too dominant in the live music industry.

“The biggest issue facing live music in my opinion is the monopoly of companies such as Ticketmaster and Live Nation.”

A majority of respondents to our survey disagreed that ticketing platforms should be allowed to act as promoters (48% disagreed and 15% agreed) or venue operators (54% disagreed and 12% agreed). Over half (54%) disagreed that platforms were competing effectively with each other, with only 9% agreeing. Several fans called for competition authorities to “break up” what they saw as monopolies.

21 Vertical integration is when a company takes ownership of multiple levels of the supply chain.

While our fan-led review survey results indicated ongoing dissatisfaction with ticketing platforms, several fans were keen to highlight best practice. Electronic music fans pointed to Resident Advisor, an online magazine and community platform, as setting a good example of transparent pricing and fees. Others praised DICE for its efforts to eliminate ticket scalping and hidden fees for events, as well as local platforms such as Headfirst in Bristol.

Fans across the review had a negative perception, however, of major online ticketing platforms. They felt that the big agencies did not treat fans fairly, that ticket prices were too high, and that little was being done to deal with bots and online ticket touts.

Several fans directed their criticism towards Ticketmaster, which merged with Live Nation in 2010 to become the Live Nation Entertainment (LNE) Group, one of the biggest live entertainment companies in the world. LNE is involved in the organisation and promotion of live music events, sponsorship, ticketing services and artist management in over 40 countries, including the UK.²²

Live Nation and Ticketmaster engaged with our review. They told us they did not set ticket prices, which were instead decided by artists and their management teams. They said that most of the revenue from ticket prices went towards production costs and paying artists rather than to promoters or ticketing platforms. Ticketmaster also commented that, since the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation into the way it handled the Oasis ticket sale, it had committed to setting a high standard for the ticketing industry with clearer pricing displays and in-queue availability updates. It also referred to its continuing development of protections against bots and touts. As well as primary ticket sales, Ticketmaster also has a role in the secondary ticketing market in the UK, operating a capped resale service since 2018.

Fan data

There is also a sense from some of the fans and stakeholders with whom we spoke that some ticketing companies hold on to fan data, limiting the ability of artists and promoters to have a direct relationship with the fans. Some fans suggested that ticketing and streaming organisations may often cite data protection rules as a barrier to sharing fan data, making it harder for artists and promoters to understand where genuine demand is coming from and identify real fans.

22 Live Nation, [About Us](#)

We heard that without reliable data, organisers can also struggle to plan shows effectively or ensure fair access for fans, and are often forced to spend money retargeting the same audiences. One participant argued that data is “utilised by people in power to retain power,” echoing fans’ frustrations around transparency within the industry.

Openstage, a fan data and marketing platform, told us that when artists have direct access to their audiences, they can verify real fans, block automated bots, control who gets in, and own the fan relationship. They cited projects with various artists, including Oasis, Radiohead, Lana Del Rey, and Bad Bunny who managed to get tickets to genuine fans, exclude scalpers or touts (someone who buys tickets and then resells them at a higher price), increase their mailing lists, and, in the case of Bad Bunny’s Coliseo residency, identify local fans for priority booking. They also told us of the Scottish independent band Tidelines who sold out three nights at the Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow by leveraging fan data to determine local demand. However, they noted that such initiatives were only successful because the artists wanted to prioritise their real fans.

A respondent to our fan-led review survey highlighted the benefits of venues operating their own ticketing systems:

“Controlling ticketing data also means that these venues can more effectively and directly communicate with and market to their customers building audiences for artists at various stages in their careers and ultimately strengthening the ecosystem.”

Physical tickets

Several fans told us that they missed physical tickets. Not only did they give fans access to events, but ticket stubs were also important mementoes to be cherished long after a performance. In response to a trend to charge fans for physical tickets, Tim Burgess of The Charlatans has recognised the emotional value of tangible keepsakes and launched a ‘souvenir ticket generator’, which allows fans to create their own physical ticket stubs for any show free of charge.²³ We welcome initiatives which help to preserve the sentimental value of attending live events.

Some fans also noted that people without smart phones are excluded from events as they can neither show a digital ticket nor collect a physical copy from a box office.

23 [‘Tim Burgess unveils vintage souvenir ticket generator ahead of 2026 London Merch Market’](#), NME, 7 November 2025

“Also need physical tickets back, I prefer them yeah but I know people who have stopped going to concerts because don’t have smart phones and can’t just pick up tickets from a local box office anymore [...] Need to have physical tickets sent to box offices or local record stores.”

Secondary ticketing

The secondary ticketing market is essential for legitimate fan-to-fan resale when circumstances change. However, it has become synonymous with exploitative resale practices. So called ‘ticket scalpers’, often using automated bots, rapidly buy up tickets for high demand events at face value and then resell them at inflated prices on secondary ticketing sites. This is at the expense of most genuine fans, benefitting only those with the financial flexibility to pay high prices. Fans are rightly concerned about their exposure to scams and online touts in a complex digital marketplace.

As part of its response to the UK Government’s consultation on the resale of live events tickets, the consumer group Which? found that 61% of UK adults struggled to understand the differences between ticketing websites, with 14% of secondary ticketing buyers not realising they were on a secondary site at the time of purchase.²⁴ 21% of those buying on secondary sites had a problem with their purchase, with 60% of those not making it to the event for reasons such as being refused entry, receiving a fake or invalid ticket, or never receiving the ticket at all. YouGov polling found that 49% of concert goers were concerned about buying counterfeit tickets.²⁵

Which? told us that in July 2025, seats at Lewis Capaldi’s London O2 concerts in September that year were advertised on resale websites at up to £1,400 each. This was despite many tickets for the gig having a face value of between £32 and £111. Similarly, tickets for Taylor Swift’s 2024 Eras tour at Wembley were offered on the resale site Viagogo between £400 to £3,352, while primary ticket prices were between £110 and £172.²⁶

In November 2025, in support of this fan-led review, Which? conducted a nationally representative survey of 2,000 adults to gather the views of people who purchased tickets for a live music event.²⁷ It found that nearly half (47%) of ticket buyers don’t believe prices on resale sites are fair.

24 Yonder, on behalf of Which?, conducted an online, nationally representative survey of 4,133 UK adults aged 18+. Fieldwork took place between 7th and 17th March 2025. See Which?, [DBT’s consultation on the resale of live events tickets - Which? response](#), 3 April 2025

25 ‘Concerns Rise over Ticket Scalping and Dynamic Pricing for Live Events in the UK’, YouGov, 12 September 2024

26 See ‘Taylor Swift fans angry as Eras tour tickets put on Viagogo for vast sums’, The Guardian, 10 July 2023

27 Yonder, on behalf of Which?, conducted an online, nationally representative survey of 2,091 UK adults aged 18+. Fieldwork took place between 14th and 17th November 2025.

According to research by O2 and YouGov in 2024, ticket touts are making approximately £145 million a year in profits from music fans.²⁸ More recent O2 research revealed that 20% of fans had cut back on essentials to buy tickets on resale sites at inflated prices in 2025, while nearly four in ten people reported taking out loans to afford tickets.²⁹

For these reasons, fans welcomed the UK Government's announcement in November 2025, following its consultation, that it will ban the resale of tickets above face value, a measure already in place in Ireland and Australia. The government's analysis suggested that fans could save £112 million a year with the average ticket price on the secondary market reduced by £37.³⁰

The Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers (STAR) has committed to playing a convening role in bringing the sector together to develop guidance and best practice in support of the new framework, and this work has already begun.³¹

Efforts by government and industry to address the problem are welcome steps towards regaining fans' trust. However, this will take time and continued dialogue with audiences.

"Making it illegal to resell tickets at anything above the purchase price seems the simplest way of eliminating exploitation."

Beyond price inflation in the secondary market, disabled fans told us they can also struggle to resell tickets. Because accessible tickets are tied to specific access requirements, they said a fan is often unable to transfer them if they can no longer attend. This means that disabled fans do not have the same legitimate fan-to-fan resale options as non-disabled fans and may be left financially disadvantaged when their circumstances change.

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- 28 [‘Tickets Touts Costing Music Fans An Extra £145m Per Year – O2 Issues Warning To Concertgoers: ‘Not All Resale Platforms Are Made Equal’](#), Virgin Media, O2, 26 September 2024
- 29 [‘Almost four in ten gig goers used loans to afford tickets from uncapped resale sites in 2025, O2 research reveals’](#), Virgin Media, O2, 5 February 2026
- 30 [‘Government bans ticket touting to protect fans from rip-offs’](#), Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Business and Trade Press Release, 19 November 2025
- 31 See Department for Business and Trade and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Government response to the consultation on the resale of live events tickets](#), updated 19 November 2025

Additional fees

Fans told us they are unhappy when they encounter additional charges, often without any detailed explanation as to what they cover, who benefits and the services they can expect to receive in return. Trying to see where their money is going is like peering through dry ice at a gig. Extra fees and charges place a greater financial burden on fans, who in some cases are already paying hundreds of pounds on the face value of their tickets.

Over 2,400 UK adults who responded to our survey were discouraged from buying a ticket because of additional fees. However, fans did not object in principle to all extra charges, with many willing to contribute to the restoration and maintenance of venues and to support the wider live and electronic music ecosystem, especially locally. All they ask in return is that those charges are clearly explained and are fair and proportionate.

“The commissions and extra charges levied on face value prices can appear exorbitant for the services they allegedly provide.”

Again, it was the larger organisations with which fans associated unfair practice. Ticketmaster argued that their service fees in the primary market have remained stable, increasing by only 1% since 2015, despite cost pressures across the wider digital economy. Fees, it stated, are set in agreement and shared with event partners, organisers, promoters, and venues. It said that it retained only a portion of the booking fee to cover costs such as maintaining and improving the website and app as well as technologies to combat bots and fraudulent activity. Fans want to know exactly where the rest of their cash is going.

Under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, ‘drip pricing’—a practice in which mandatory fees are added only at a late stage in the purchasing process—is prohibited. Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance confirms that businesses must display the total price upfront, including all unavoidable fees.³² In practice, this means fans should always be shown the full and final ticket price with fees from the outset.

Dynamic pricing and tiered pricing

Dynamic pricing, also known as surge pricing, is the strategy of adjusting prices in real-time in response to demand. Many sectors of the economy use algorithms designed to raise or lower prices depending on demand to

32 CMA, [Providing clear and accurate information about prices: summary](#), updated 7 January 2026

maximise revenues. While it is prevalent in travel, hospitality and theatre, some fans were concerned that it might begin to influence ticketing for live music events.

Classical music fans, who for the most part were positive about ticketing within their genre, noted the Royal Ballet and Opera had used demand-led pricing, which they said was prohibitive for some audiences.³³ Where fans had experienced dynamic pricing, they also said it was poorly communicated. Dynamic pricing may make economic sense in some sectors, but any potential use of it within live music is regarded by fans as confusing, unfair and “morally wrong”.

“I also strongly disagree with dynamic pricing—I don’t think it’s fair, and it doesn’t help the fans.”

Dynamic pricing should not be confused with ‘tiered pricing’ which is when the same type of ticket is sold at different price levels, with cheaper price tiers released first with more expensive price tiers available once lower tiers have sold out. It is a strategy that can create urgency among buyers.

Following scrutiny of Ticketmaster’s use of tiered pricing during the sale of Oasis tickets, the CMA in September 2025 sought undertakings from Ticketmaster to be more transparent about the practice as well as ensuring clearer price ranges in queues and no misleading ticket labels.³⁴ The CMA found no evidence of dynamic pricing during the Oasis sale, and Ticketmaster states that it does not use algorithmic pricing.

While fans understand that putting on a gig can be difficult for artists and are happy to support them where possible, they can often feel they are being exploited. Not only do they see mechanisms such as tiered pricing and dynamic pricing as exclusionary practices but they perceive them as forms of emotional manipulation. If prices change for any reason during the process of buying tickets, fans can feel heightened levels of stress, fear of missing out and pressure to make unaffordable decisions.

Ticket insurance

When buying tickets for live and electronic music events, fans are often uncertain about their rights and protections if they are unable to attend or if an event is cancelled. Fans told us this is frequently due to cancellation policies and insurance options being poorly signposted or explained at the point of sale, exposing fans to financial risk once they have bought their tickets.

33 [‘Royal Ballet and Opera moves to demand-led pricing’](#), BBC News, 15 November 2025

34 [‘CMA secures changes from Ticketmaster following Oasis tickets investigation’](#), CMA press release, 25 September 2025

Some fans are disadvantaged further by cancellation insurance that regularly excludes pre-existing health conditions, without this always being made explicit or alternative protections being available. As a result, fans with fluctuating health may choose not to buy tickets altogether because they risk losing money.

For fans, refunds and financial protections were a key concern, with 61% of adults responding to our survey agreeing that sellers should have an obligation to clearly signpost insurance options. Roundtable participants also consistently called for an ATOL-style protection model for live events to provide greater financial security for fans.

Access bookings

Although there are several ticketing companies and venues that do their best to ensure all customers can book online, for disabled fans, booking tickets can often be the biggest barrier to seeing live music. Attitude is Everything, a charity that seeks to improve access for Deaf and disabled audiences, surveyed fans within its network and found

- 82% had problems booking access
- 79% had been put off buying tickets as a result
- 73% felt discriminated against when trying to book access

Disabled fans report that booking accessible tickets remains inconsistent across the live music sector. Some venues require access bookings to be handled directly, while others rely on ticketing agents. Where fans must request support through callback systems, these processes are often described as unreliable. In cases where venues use third-party platforms, accessible tickets may only be available through certain providers. Fans also highlighted a lack of clear guidance on minimum accessibility standards and on how to book access.

“Although some music industries are exemplary in making reasonable adjustments in the marketing, purchasing, and access requirements for disabled people, some operate their ‘access’ policies in such complex and restrictive ways, so as to effectively bar disabled access.”

“As a wheelchair user, I want equal access to tickets and to be able to buy them online at the same time as everyone else with minimum hassle. I don’t want to have to phone the venue.”

“Disabled access and seating can be difficult to manage, either by finding out about it before buying tickets, trying to get companion tickets and purchasing the relevant ticket and availability.”

“For standing events I end up having to email the venue and arrange seats and space. Why not do this as part of the booking process.”

We heard concerns that without clear accessibility standards in place, accessible tickets can be misused, further excluding disabled people from live and electronic music events. In some cases, wheelchair accessible tickets are purchased without proof of access requirements, reducing availability for fans who need them. While some venues are reluctant to ask for proof for fear of causing offence, others have shown that clear and consistent verification processes can protect access for disabled fans. As Attitude is Everything observed, however, not all disabilities are visible and someone’s access needs can change periodically over time, especially as tickets are often booked months in advance of an event.

Being asked for proof of disability can also lead to a poor experience on the part of the fan, especially when the person requesting sensitive information may not be qualified to do so. Attitude is Everything told us that many people who may be considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010 may not be eligible for schemes that are used to provide proof of access requirements for events. They recommend that in the first instance, ticketing vendors allow fans to self-certify and have access to the tickets that best suit their needs. However, if ticket sellers require evidence, Attitude is Everything advises the industry to use a recognised scheme such as the Access Card or Hynt, but also encourages decisions on a case-by-case basis if customers are not part of such schemes, rather than an outright refusal.³⁵

Rising ticket prices and their impact

Fans are concerned that rising baseline ticket prices, before factoring in additional fees, dynamic pricing and inflated resale costs, are pricing many people out of live and electronic music events and squeezing available fan spend for grassroots venues. Fewer concessionary rates further exclude younger audiences, those on lower incomes and first-time attendees. When these pressures are added to the wider costs of attending gigs, including travel, food, drink and merchandise, alongside broader cost-of-living challenges, we heard that live and electronic music is becoming increasingly inaccessible.

“Gigs were a part of my life for many years but they are so expensive now I have to be picky. Live music should be for everyone and not just for the people who have plenty of money.”

35 The Access Card (sometimes known as the Nimbus Card) is a photo ID which translates a person’s disability or impairment into symbols, highlighting the barriers they face and the reasonable adjustments they might need. Hynt is a national access scheme that works with theatres and arts centres in Wales.

“This is somewhat compounded by ‘Platinum’ tickets being offered which I feel is a predatory practice with no transparency on what makes these tickets ‘platinum’ to start with, or the justification for it.”

For disabled fans, the effect of increased ticket prices is magnified. Attitude is Everything told us that disabled people typically earn less than non-disabled people while experiencing 25% higher living costs, leaving them less able to absorb ticket price increases or additional charges. Accessible seating is also scarce and often priced above the minimum available standing ticket price. This means that disabled people are often excluded from purchasing the cheapest available ticket.

Ticket prices vary between artists, venue size and genre. Seeing superstar artists in arenas or stadiums is often expensive and prohibitive. In one recent example, tickets to see Harry Styles at Wembley ranged from £44.10 to £466.24, with premium packages exceeding £725.³⁶ Following a backlash from fans, he performed a one-off gig in Manchester with £20 tickets allocated by request rather than through a general sale.³⁷ Electronic dance music fans said some people are prepared to pay between £50 to £100 for a ticket, possibly more for a big-name artist. While headliners are charging more, grassroots venues, nightclubs and independent spaces can often struggle to charge more than £10.

“People are obviously happy to spend £200 on some stadium event, but weirdly reluctant to spend £10 for an event in a small venue.”

“Small and some medium-sized venue gigs are generally quite affordable. Arena and Stadium sized gigs are ridiculously overpriced. At that scale, charging that much per-person is simply greed. I refuse to go to anything above £40.”

If fans are spending most or all of their disposable income on events at the top end of live music, they have less money to support newer musicians at smaller gigs. According to the Music Fans’ Voice survey, fans are spending on average £478 a year for entry into live music events. Electronic music fans spoke of the ‘halo effect’ of the big gig economy, which sees the electronic music scene concentrated around major acts, excluding smaller venues and artists.

By contrast, while fans noted that ticket prices are also rising in classical music, they said that world-class concerts can still be available for as little as £6 in some cases, acknowledging that orchestras often rely on additional income streams such as private philanthropy and public funding.

36 [‘Harry Styles fans are furious at his tour ticket prices - but are they actually unreasonable?’](#), Independent, 30 January 2026

37 [‘Styles unveils Manchester gig with £20 tickets’](#), BBC News, 4 February 2026

“maintaining the high standard and frequency of classical music events is important. I have benefitted a lot from young people’s ticket schemes/ reduced prices.”

Fans’ Charter principle: Ticketing

Treat fans with respect, providing transparency and ending rip off practices.

- Fans are concerned with the market dominance of large companies. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) should monitor the position that big corporations hold in the UK’s live music industry, ensuring it is not detrimental to the fans.
- The Information Commissioner’s Office should provide clarity around the sharing of fan data and issue relevant guidance for the live music industry as to the safe and transparent use of that data. It is important for artists and promoters to access the information they need to plan and promote shows and tap into local demand, all while protecting fans’ data rights.
- The government should introduce legislation to ban the resale of tickets above face value without delay and ensure it is robustly enforced.
- Where strategies such as tiered pricing are used in the sale of tickets for live music events, they must be clearly communicated in advance and applied transparently. Following the CMA investigation the industry should continue to resist the introduction of dynamic surge pricing for gigs.
- The government should strengthen consumer protections by requiring clear, upfront information on refund policies and suitable insurance options at the point of ticket sale on online platforms.
- The live music industry, working in partnership with disability-led organisations, should standardise accessible ticketing across all platforms and providers, ensuring consistent booking processes and equal access to tickets, companion tickets, resale options and refunds for disabled fans.

Grassroots

In this chapter we explore why grassroots music spaces matter to fans and local communities. We look at the cultural and social value of small venues, the pressures they face, and how fans want to help protect them.

Value of grassroots spaces

Although fans enjoy stadium or arena events, many also want opportunities to experience the smaller, less corporate, community driven shows that grassroots music venues provide. Our fan-led review survey found that 88% of over 18s had attended small local music venues in the last three years (with 93% saying they offered good value for money), 42% attended nightclubs and 38% went to a community event. Fans see grassroots venues as vital spaces which provide emerging artists with platforms to develop their sound, build audiences and experiment, while acting as important cultural hubs for communities.

“Since 2017 we have built a wonderful electronic music community that puts on grassroots music events at small music venues and pubs. It started in Manchester and now we have nights across the UK and it has spread to Canada, USA, Australia and Mexico.”

“These small, community-driven spaces are the beating heart of UK culture and the birthplace of every major artist this country has ever produced.”

“There is no atmosphere like standing shoulder to shoulder and watching new bands, supporting your local music industry and the community of creatives that are holding these places afloat.”

Pressures

The challenges that venues face are of significant concern for music fans. Following a spate of post-covid closures, many venues are still at risk. The 2025 Music Fans Voice survey revealed that 58% of fans had experienced a local venue closure since 2020. This is due to a number of factors affecting venues, such as reduced audience spending, rising rents and rates, and noise complaints.

Fans are concerned that venue closures will have a detrimental effect on artists and communities, including reducing entry points into live and electronic music for newer and diverse artists and audiences. Fans are often as emotionally attached to venues as they are to the music and would like to see them protected for future generations to enjoy. 94% of Music Fans' Voice survey respondents agreed that culturally significant music venues and nightclubs should have a form of protected status.³⁸ Our own survey respondents were just as passionate about keeping local spaces alive and celebrating their history.

"Grassroots live music venues are an essential part of the night time economy and the cultural vitality of a community and should be protected as such."

"I hope my children get into music and will have a small venue they can go to and enjoy live music with likeminded people."

"As a jazz enthusiast I believe that the survival of small independent venues is crucial to the development of the music and the career progression of the artists."

"One venue closure reflects the loss of cultural heritage, and the thousands of people who have visited that venue feel a loss."

"It's not just the grassroots venues closing down, we are also losing so many important, unique and special independent festivals and events."

Financial strain

Many fans see economic pressure as one of the biggest threats to grassroots music. They said that rising ticket prices, travel costs and broader cost-of-living challenges make it harder to attend gigs, especially for younger audiences and those on low incomes. Venues are also struggling with higher operational costs and tighter profit margins (the average of which was 2.5% in 2025³⁹), alongside competition from larger events which can dominate local scenes and reduce visibility for grassroots shows.

These pressures are also evident in specific genres. Folded Wing, an audio production company with a focus on jazz, gathered the views of fans, producers and promoters for the review. Experienced jazz promoters spoke about the fragility of the grassroots ecosystem within their genre, noting that even well-established artists sometimes lose money on shows. One promoter said that shows at 150 capacity venues used to sell 100–130 tickets but are now selling 40–50 on average. Because they had lost so much money on small events, they said they had to scale back shows with

38 ['Eight UK cities join forces for Music Fans Voice survey'](#), Festival Insights, 24 April 2025

39 Music Venue Trust, [Annual Report 2025](#), January 2026

emerging artists by 90%. Tribute bands are a growth area, providing alternative employment for musicians and helping to sustain some venues, but not directly helping in the development of new music and artists.

Independent and volunteer promoters are essential to local jazz scenes, often bringing together artists, venues and audiences. However, there was concern that unpaid or underpaid work is becoming unsustainable. Tomorrow's Warriors, which helps to develop young jazz talent, noted that young promoters have no clear pathway to progress from volunteering to a sustainable career. Access to venues can also be challenging for newer or community-based promoters, including those from marginalised groups, as some venues can be risk averse. Without grassroots promoters, local jazz scenes will lose the people willing to take risks on new artists.

Industry support

Fans were supportive of ways in which industry could redistribute money towards grassroots music. In its 2024 report on grassroots music venues, the Culture, Media and Sport Committee called on the music industry to introduce a voluntary levy on arena and stadium tickets.⁴⁰ Following that recommendation, and building on a model piloted by Enter Shikari and Music Venue Trust (and in line with the Centre national de la musique in France), the live industry established the LIVE Trust to receive and distribute proceeds from a voluntary £1 ticket donation on UK stadium and arena shows with capacities of more than 5,000.⁴¹

The LIVE Trust, a charity supported by the UK Government in its Creative Industries Sector Plan, aims to reduce costs, provide expertise and networks, invest in infrastructure, nurture emerging talent, and support risk-takers. Although donations are voluntary, the Trust has already distributed over £500,000 and is projected to receive a further £5m in 2026 to support grassroots venues, festivals, independent promoters and emerging artists.⁴²

The initiative has gained broad industry support, with the Royal Albert Hall being the first venue to implement it and artists such as Olivia Dean, Florence and the Machine, Wolf Alice, Enter Shikari and Harry Styles donating some of their revenue. However, fans overwhelmingly told us they would still like to see the government introduce a mandatory levy.

40 Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Grassroots music venues, Seventh Report of Session 2023–24, [HC 527](#), 11 May 2024

41 [LIVE Trust: Overview](#), accessed 23 March 2026

42 [‘Government urges industry and Live Nation to “step up to help the next generation of talent” and pay into ticket levy’](#), NME, 16 March 2026

Finding local live music

Although fans are passionate about grassroots music, they often struggle to find out what is happening locally. 80% of respondents to the Music Fans Voice survey said they used artists' websites or social media accounts to find out which events to attend. However, declining local media coverage, fragmented digital tools and national listings which benefit larger shows make it harder for smaller venues and events to reach new audiences.

Fans called for improving local listings through partnerships between local authorities, venues, artists and fans. They emphasised that discovery works best when curated locally, such as through venues, nightclubs and record shops, rather than through online algorithms. Social media can be useful, but fans said they sometimes only discover gigs after they have taken place.

"Without social media, it is difficult to find local gigs and events as event listings tend to be exclusive to the ticket providers website [...] I would likely attend more live music gigs and support smaller venues and artists if the above information was more readily available outside of social media which I no longer use."

"Smaller grass roots venues can struggle with advertising all their events. Perhaps some of the money from stadium levies could be used to help with that?"

The jewel box-like Acapela Studios in Pentyrch near Cardiff has successfully built a direct relationship with fans through its mailing list, helping to maintain its viability as a grassroots music venue.

Many fans also told us they had to travel frequently to attend gigs, noting a lack of mid-scale venues in some towns and rural areas, limiting opportunities for touring and audience development.

"I have to travel to London to watch 95% of the gigs I see and this only adds to the cost both in travel there (I travel by car as trains are crazy expensive) and the ticket cost with it being London. Local venues just can't operate in the way they used to and as such can't attract the same quality as the big cities of London, Manchester and the like."

"A lack of venues in my local area, means artists do not come to my city, which makes travelling to live events harder, as it costs money to travel to the nearest city all the time."

Supporting local talent

Fans take great pride in their local artists and music scenes. They are more willing to arrive early or attend lesser-known gigs if they are supporting local talent. Fans therefore want local artists to be integral to programming

and suggested that touring artists could use local support acts more often. This would help upward mobility into the live and electronic music ecosystem and showcase emerging talent.

“Considerations should be made for local artists to be included on every lineup as at least first support acts to help nurture new acts from each city and help drive the local scene.”

Local festivals, day events and multivenue programmes combining local and national artists are also seen as sources of local pride, helping to bring communities together and celebrate local identities. An example is the independent Green Man festival in Wales, which showcases rising talent each year with a strong emphasis on Welsh acts. However, fans are aware that those events require support to maintain accessible ticket prices and inclusive programming.

Newport in South Wales has supported local initiatives such as the Newport Music Trail, The Corn Exchange and the Outline programmes, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the City BID (Business Improvement District). This approach demonstrates how putting the community first helps different groups work together and improves both cultural activity and access to it.

“Local schemes like the Newport Music Trail have been really helpful in giving me the confidence and comfort to visit new venues I wouldn’t have otherwise visited.”

Community action

Fans want actively to support grassroots music, with many willing to help sustain their local scenes through membership schemes, opt-in contributions, levies and volunteering. They also suggested low-cost, practical ways to grow local scenes, including cultural noticeboards, fanzine style publications and making better use of civic social media channels. For example, Cobalt Studios in Newcastle produce screen printed listings which double up as a community fanzine and are a good illustration of a proactive approach to creative scene development and information sharing.⁴³

Fans see live and electronic music as a social experience which forges connections and a sense of belonging. Some fans spoke about being able to attend gigs alone while still feeling welcome and part of the community, highlighting the important role that live and electronic music plays in connecting people.

43 [Cobalt Studios](#), Zine, last accessed 4 March 2026

For many fans, grassroots venues create opportunities to participate in shared cultural life. This is why community led initiatives that tackle barriers to live and electronic music are so important. Fans cited ‘Gig Buddies’, a project which pairs adults with learning disabilities and autistic people with volunteers, and ‘Solo Armada’, a Facebook group for people who attend gigs alone, as successful examples of inclusion and community.

Younger fans particularly see the appeal of smaller, community-based experiences, valuing intimacy, connection and affordability. Many respondents to a survey of 500 UK-based 18–25-year-olds said that when it comes to live music, they prioritise affordability, convenience and local events. They praised local and small-scale venues for creating personal, social and immersive experiences with both artists and fellow fans.⁴⁴ This also reflects a growing trend among younger audiences for intentional, curated experiences that cater for their tastes.⁴⁵

Younger fans want grassroots music to be more visible in their cities, without live events becoming too costly or exclusive. Projects such as ‘Volume Control’ in Belfast put young people (14–17) at the heart of the conversation and show that a proactive approach to self-advocacy, for a young music community, is having beneficial results in increasing opportunities to attend and perform.⁴⁶

Planning

Protecting grassroots venues within the planning system was another recurring theme. A 2025 UK Music survey of 2,000 people found that 69% of respondents agreed that if new homes are built near music venues then the responsibility should be on the builder—or the ‘agent of change’—to ensure noise is not a problem, not venues.⁴⁷

44 See BPI, [Seeking Community: Gen Z’s true relationship with culture & music consumption](#), June 2025.

Developed in collaboration with music marketing agency Blackstar and Gen Z specialists Lemontack, 500 respondents from across the UK were asked to provide insights into how they consume, discover, and connect around music.

45 [‘Inside the UK’s nightlife shift as Gen Z replace clubbing with intention seeking’](#), The Mirror, 1 November 2025

46 See the [Oh Yeah Music Centre](#)

47 The survey was conducted to coincide with the publication of UK Music’s [Hometown Glory](#) report.

In England, the ‘agent of change’ is included in the National Planning Policy Framework, and in Wales it is part of Planning Policy Wales.⁴⁸ In Scotland, the principle is in legislation.⁴⁹

The government said it is “looking at a range of reforms proposed by the recent Licensing Taskforce to support the hospitality industry and night-time economy”, including “considering whether the ‘agent of change’ principle should be strengthened in the licensing regime” in England.⁵⁰

A local cross departmental approach to ‘agent of change’ in co-production with the sector (such as Music Venue Trust and local venues) has produced planning practical guides in Greater Manchester, Brighton and Sheffield.⁵¹ This proactive and collaborative process has been instrumental in protecting important spaces and offers a practical implementation framework for local authorities.

Many fans wanted the ‘agent of change’ principle, however, to be embedded within legislation to better protect existing venues from developers and noise restrictions.

“The rise in residential developments near music venues has led to a surge in noise complaints and tighter restrictions, making it difficult for us to do what we do best. Even when I fully comply with licensing hours and local regulations, it’s often not enough to prevent pressure from residents or authorities.”

“I currently live in Cambridge and the decline of available venues has been drastic, leaving only 1000+ capacity venues or commercial clubs. I was running 250 cap events in a venue in the city (which had become almost one of a kind), investments had been made and just before a new sound system was installed, new residents moved in nearby and submitted so many noise complaints (at all times of the day) we had to completely stop all DJ events.”

“Long standing venues should not be under unreasonable pressure from planning / licencing closures due to noise complaints from new housing developments.”

48 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), December 2024; Welsh Government, [Planning Policy Wales Edition 12](#), February 2024

49 [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)

50 [UIN 77871](#), Noise: Reform

51 See for example, [Planning: A Practical Guide - A Step-By-Step Guide to the Planning Process for Grassroots Music Venues](#)

Electronic music fans discussed problems setting up new spaces, citing inconsistent licensing practices as a barrier to entrepreneurship. In some cases, we heard it was easier to set up one-off or pop-up events using temporary event notices (TENS) than to establish permanent venues.

Fans suggested ‘meanwhile use’, short-to-medium term occupation of empty buildings or land, could help aspiring venue operators to bring unused buildings into cultural use, test their longer-term viability and share music with new communities. The UK Music survey also revealed that 60% of adults agreed that empty and underused spaces in their towns should be repurposed for music and culture.⁵²

UK Music noted that music could play a role in revitalising local economies and encouraged local authorities to create registers of vacant spaces so they can be brought into cultural use through planning tools or meanwhile use schemes.⁵³ We note that the London Nightlife Taskforce is making access to space a priority and will be working with the Greater London Authority to deliver a space register and simplify meanwhile use nightlife space regulation.⁵⁴ Some local authorities already have initiatives to facilitate meanwhile use, such as Brent Council’s Meanwhile Use Strategy.⁵⁵

Exclusivity

The use of exclusivity in contracts, such as ‘radius clauses’, which prevent artists from playing more than one venue in an area, was seen as restricting artist mobility and weakening grassroots scenes. Exclusivity contracts are sometimes used by bookers or venues, often with larger budgets, to restrict where or when a performer plays in the dates surrounding an event. They are designed to protect an organiser’s investment, maintain audience demand and avoid event overlap.⁵⁶ However, some fans felt such practices undermined the principle of live and electronic music as a shared and accessible cultural experience, noting that they can also prevent emerging artists from accepting work and sideline smaller promoters and events.

“In the past major bands would play all the mid-size and some smaller venues, e.g. theatres and now they are actively prohibited by their contracts from playing smaller venues just for the fun of it.”

52 UK Music, [Hometown Glory: How Supporting Local Music Can Drive Economic Growth](#), July 2025

53 See above reference

54 [London Nightlife Taskforce 2026 report](#)

55 [Brent Council, Meanwhile Use Strategy](#), accessed 24 March 2026

56 STW, [Reflections: Are exclusivity contracts holding back local music scenes?](#), accessed 21 March 2026

“I am aware of many cases where they (major companies) have imposed bans on artists from performing at any other events not owned by them, which leads the smaller events to struggle with booking (enough of the right) acts that would help create the demand to attend and therefore enable them to sustain themselves.”

Accessing live music

Finally, fans are concerned that grassroots music is becoming less accessible to some groups. Pricing and a lack of suitable venues or programming can exclude younger, working-class and marginalised audiences.

Community Interest Companies (CICs) and other community led models are seen as valuable ways to widen participation and tailor events to specific needs, such as open mic events, free gigs for under-18s and family friendly shows. However, we heard that some community initiatives face structural barriers when putting on events and need more support.

Some places have had success. Not-for-profit venues, such as The Black Box in Belfast and the Snug in Atherton, have managed to work closely with their local authority and community to deliver inclusive, community first programming. Microgrant support from industry partners and council co-production is central to this success. Having not-for-profit or CIC status is vital, as it unlocks access to this support.

“You need to consider and protect the critical wider role of grass roots music venues in local communities (as well as supporting new talent)—e.g. u18s open mic events, free festivals (inc. spoken word), outreach programmes: in smaller towns, many venues offer the only safe creative space for LGBTQ+, neurodiverse and other young people whose needs are not being met elsewhere.”

Fans' Charter principle: Grassroots

Nurture grassroots and community live music for its own sake and as the incubator of future success.

- The music industry and local councils should work together to support mentorship schemes for emerging local promoters and venue operators.
- The UK Government should take powers in its forthcoming ticketing legislation to introduce a mandatory levy on larger events to redistribute resources to grassroots venues, festivals, promoters and emerging artists should the voluntary approach prove inadequate.
- Local authorities, venues, artists and fans should work together to maintain up-to-date local listings so audiences can easily find out what is happening in their area.
- Promoters, touring artists and managers should prioritise up-and-coming talent by providing platforms for emerging artists, including opportunities for local artists to perform live.
- Artists and managers should be encouraged and allowed in large venue contracts to play in smaller venues to strengthen local scenes and increase the visibility of grassroots spaces.
- The UK Government should embed the 'agent of change' principle in planning legislation in England. Following Scotland's example, we would like to see the principle strengthened in law across the whole of the UK.
- Local authorities should encourage the temporary repurposing of unused buildings as live and electronic music spaces for cultural and community benefit. The UK Government in consultation with devolved governments should draw on best practice to establish clear national guidance to support consistency across local authorities.
- Local authorities should have a cabinet member with 'music' specified within their portfolio.
- The live and electronic music sector should adopt a presumption against the use of exclusivity practices such as 'radius clauses'.

Safety

In this chapter we set out fans' concerns about safety at live and electronic music events and the changes they want to see. It highlights problems around crowd management, staff training, inclusion, welfare, harm reduction and safety beyond the venue.

Safety and harm reduction emerged as key priorities for a fans' charter. When judging whether an event is safe or not, 80% of UK adults in our fan-led review survey said location of venue was the most important factor, followed by behaviour of other attendees (68%), public transport options (67%), venue security (63%), the overall journey (58%) and behaviour of venue staff (56%). Only 19% of respondents said they always feel safe.

Duty of care

When attending live and electronic music events, fans expect a duty of care before, during and after a performance. They called for clearer safety information, including signposting to welfare services, better trained security and stewarding staff, stronger mechanisms for incident reporting, and reliable feedback loops to show that problems were being addressed. They also raised concerns around drug safety, alcohol use, theft, and sexual harassment and sexual assault. Grassroots venues were seen as providing safer environments, further demonstrating the importance of these spaces for local communities and reinforcing concerns around their closure.

Some younger fans actively avoid crowds in fear of their safety. A 2025 report, "Seeking Community: Gen Z's true relationship with culture & music consumption", found that this was due to practical concerns and personal comfort, with problems like crowd control, access to seating and personal safety as key reasons for preferring specific types of venues. Several respondents said that they avoided large-scale events entirely, citing mental health and sensory overload as deterrents to attending concerts or festivals.⁵⁷

Fans also reported that the overselling and overcrowding of events can be a problem, with crowd safety and management a concern.

57 BPI, [Seeking Community: Gen Z's true relationship with culture & music consumption](#), June 2025

“I think venues need improved crowd control management and policies in place so that people do not feel panicked and there are clear emergency exits that are utilised to ease crowd movements, especially when exiting the venue.”

Following a fatal crowd surge at the 2021 Astroworld Festival in Houston, Texas, the Pink Bows Foundation, a not for profit set up in the aftermath, has been working with Steve Allen, an expert in safety and security at major events, to provide training and certification in the Showstop Procedure.⁵⁸ Showstop is a pre-planned, authorised emergency procedure used in live events to immediately halt performances to ensure audience and staff safety during critical incidents like crowd crushes, structural failure, or extreme weather. Over 600 event professionals have been trained worldwide in Showstop, and the procedure is supported by the United Kingdom Crowd Management Association (UKMCA).⁵⁹

The BBC recently reported on an increased trend in the UK for artists to stop live performances out of concern for fan safety.⁶⁰ While such individual actions are commendable, fan safety should be systematically ensured rather than have to depend on the artist identifying an issue from the stage in the midst of a performance.

We support the need for accredited training to enable those involved in organising live and electronic music events to recognise signs of escalation and make decisive interventions to protect people.

Security and staff training

Stewarding, security and policing are essential components of ensuring fans are safe. Fans expect a positive experience when interacting with those employed to look out for their welfare. Although good practice exists, inconsistency in the quality of service was a recurring theme. Several fans reported sub-standard security provision and little evidence of training among staff, especially in responding to sexual assault or engaging with disabled people. Many felt that training seemed designed to comply with minimum requirements rather than genuinely meeting their safeguarding needs.

“Security should be trained properly on women’s safety in and around the venues.”

58 [‘Showstop Procedure crowd safety training expands to the UK’](#), Access All Areas, 4 March 2025

59 [Showstop](#), accessed 5 March 2026; UKCMA, [Showstop](#), accessed 5 March 2026

60 [‘Sombr stopped a show over safety - but are concerts in the UK really that risky?’](#), BBC News, 22 March 2026

“It often feels like they want to find something on you and then use it to exert some sort of power dynamic. It’s disgusting to be frank and puts me off going to those sorts of events.”

A lack of diversity among security and venue staff can also undermine confidence, particularly among fans from underrepresented or marginalised groups. Several fans suggested that security firms and venues should reevaluate their hiring practices to reflect the demographics of the audiences they serve.

There has been some progress in this area. The Musicians Union’s equality action plan outlines ways in which the music sector can improve its representation of the audiences and demographic make-up of the UK, such as through better research, support and practical action, and has called on organisations to support underrepresented groups.⁶¹ The 2024 UK Music Diversity report showed that “in entry level positions, Black, Asian and ethnically diverse employees rose from 23.6% in 2022 to 32.5% in 2024”.⁶²

Safety and inclusion

Fans believe everyone has the right to feel safe. However, perceptions of safety and the behaviour fans experience can vary significantly between different groups. As previously mentioned, there are concerns among several industry stakeholders with racial profiling of Black artists and music fans. Disabled fans said that gaps in staff training, inadequate security searches and the misuse of accessible areas can profoundly disrupt their enjoyment. We also heard that lifts being out of order is common and that wheelchair users are not always informed in advance, leading to unsafe or humiliating workarounds involving multiple staff.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault

Women who attend, perform or work at live and electronic music events are more likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual assault, and are less likely to use public transport late at night. Safe Gigs for Women (SGFW), a small volunteer led initiative established in 2015 to improve the safety of women and all fans at festivals and gigs, noted some progress in addressing sexual assault.⁶³ Examples of good practice in the last ten years include:

- a much wider awareness, and promotion of active bystander approaches and techniques;

61 Musicians’ Union, [Equality Action Plan](#), 19 June 2023

62 [UK Music Diversity Report 2024](#)

63 In 2025, Safe Gigs for Women said it was no longer possible to run the organisation as a small volunteer led initiative, and that the organisation will close after 10 years.

- wider acknowledgement among festival organisers and others that sexual violence is a problem, illustrated by over 100 festivals signing up to the Association of Independent Festivals' Safe Spaces Charter at the time of writing;⁶⁴
- increased demand for organisations such as SGFW to attend festivals and other live events;
- improved presence of police officers trained in addressing sexual assault and better access to sexual assault referral services;
- training provided to more staff, such as the 'Ask For Angela' scheme and similar safeguarding measures in venues;⁶⁵
- many festivals are doing more on safeguarding at events to prevent and respond to incidents, including improved handling of reporting; and
- some efforts are made to provide diverse line ups leading to more diverse audiences that support people to feel safe and welcome.

Fans and SGFW were clear, however, that problems persist and there is still a long way to go. SGFW told us that although they have seen the improvements above, changes are inconsistent or inconsistently applied. For example:

- safeguarding standards across venues and festivals vary with the bare minimum often in place;
- security teams are often under-trained and do not always respond appropriately to issues of sexual safety and the safety of women and minoritised groups that are raised with them;
- it is not always the case that venue and show staff receive training;
- the safety of staff is not always considered, with some staff members reporting sexual harassment and even assault; and
- more funding is required, from government, festival companies and venues, to support activities that can prevent unwanted sexual behaviour, harassment and sexual assault across all areas of live music.

64 Association of Independent Festivals, [Safer spaces at festivals](#), accessed 21 March 2026

65 People who feel unsafe, vulnerable or threatened can discreetly seek help by approaching venue staff and asking them for 'Angela'. This code-phrase will indicate to staff that they require help with their situation and a trained member of staff will then look to support and assist them.

Overall, fans emphasised that live and electronic music should be a safe space for everyone and that women and girls should be able to attend and work at events without being subjected to spiking, sexual harassment and/or violence. Greater education for both fans and society at large about topics such as sexual safety, consent, and respect for women and minorities will help improve safety and the experience for all.

This echoes findings from the Women and Equalities Committee's Misogyny in Music report, which heard that women in live music settings often experience abusive behaviour and sexual harassment, highlighting the need for improved safeguarding across the sector.⁶⁶ Organisations like Women in Music have also been working hard to recognise and amplify artists and practitioners within the sector, committing to advancing equality, visibility and opportunities for women in the arts.⁶⁷

Safe Gigs for Women said that too many fans, however, are reluctant to acknowledge that their scene or community have problems with misogyny, racism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of abuse. They argue that fans should be more aware of what goes on around them, the abuse that members of their own communities can cause, and what they can do to call it out. Having fans develop their own Code of Conduct could establish a shared set of fan-to-fan norms, enabling them to address problems by encouraging and holding each other to a set of mutual standards.

Fan etiquette

Fans from across all genres wanted a clearer approach to phone use and general etiquette at live events. Attendees of events at venues of varying sizes expressed frustration with filming, bright screens and conversations during performances, noting they distract from the shared experience and can lead to tension between audience members. Conversely, others said they enjoy taking a small number of photos while being considerate of other fans but often feel unfairly challenged by security who are misinformed about camera usage.

There can be no set rules as attitudes vary between genres and generations but fans in the main welcome a steer on expectations at different events.

Suggestions included a voluntary code of practice, which would encourage photography at set moments, or 'kitemarks' for certain shows to be 'phone-free' or 'no talking' at some events to establish a clear social contract between artists, audiences and venues. Examples such as Ambers and

66 Women and Equalities Committee, Misogyny in Music, Second Report of Session 2023–24, [HC 129](#), 30 January 2024

67 See [Women in Music](#), accessed 22 March 2026

Sankeys in Manchester, alongside recent phonefree approaches at DJ Fred Again's Alexandra Palace shows, demonstrate effective models for mobile-free environments.

Classical music fans noted the importance of screen-free environments to foster connection and concentration.

Safety beyond the venue

Safety concerns are not limited to inside the venue. Many fans raised issues around poor street lighting, a lack of late-night public transport and high levels of phone theft outside venues, all of which further marginalise women and girls. Phone theft has further implications for victims, who may be left without a way to contact friends or family or pay for their journey home.

Some venues expressed concern about the apparent lack of seriousness with which the police and local authorities regard audience safety. Smaller venue operators reported little to no engagement from police or councils when coordinating safety planning around events. Some towns and cities were seen as better at looking out for fan welfare than others. For example, one fan told us that Norwich puts on SOS buses to provide welfare, first aid and mental health support for vulnerable people, while such initiatives do not exist in other areas.

Glasgow City Council, working with Glasgow Life, have considered the Music Fans Voice Survey qualitative data (on subjects such as street lighting) alongside direct sector consultation undertaken by the Night-Time Economy subgroup of the City Centre Taskforce. This approach places music fans at the heart of policymaking. Insights will continue to inform Glasgow's night-time economy action plan from a fan facing perspective, to address the needs that underpin Glasgow's UNESCO City of Music night economy.

Drugs, harm reduction and alcohol

Many fans spoke about the importance of tackling drug use at live and electronic music events. Rather than responding with more policing and criminalisation, they were in favour of practical interventions to reduce harm before people become unwell. They argued that the focus should be on safety, education and testing. Many supported drug checking services at music venues, especially larger venues and festivals. Fans also called for accessible, stigma free harm reduction services and education on how to respond to drug related health emergencies.

"Treating attendees like criminals fosters a very bad environment inside which is causing more anti-social behaviour."

“Rather than focusing solely on preventing drugs from entering the site and prosecuting those who take them, events should prioritise providing accurate harm reduction information, on-site drug testing facilities, and trained welfare staff. This would allow drug users to make safer choices and reduce the risk of harm from unknown or contaminated substances.”

In 2022, *Drugs, Habits and Social Policy*, a peer-reviewed academic journal, featured a study of service user characteristics, uptake and outcomes for drug checking services offered to over 250,000 festival goers in the summer of 2018. It showed that “for samples matching purchase intent, nearly half intended to reduce dosage, with younger and female service users significantly more likely to reduce dosage. For substances identified as other than expected, nearly two thirds disposed of them.”⁶⁸

Reflecting an emphasis on harm reduction, the Loop, a charity that has provided drug testing services at UK festivals for several years, launched the country’s first regular drug checking service in Bristol in 2024. It has since replicated the model in London, where a similar service began operating in March 2026. These services provide rapid chemical analysis of substances brought in by the public, alongside personalised health advice and are licensed by the Home Office.⁶⁹

Changing attitudes to alcohol, together with a focus on wellbeing, are also affecting people’s drinking habits at events. A 2024 YouGov survey found that 39% of 18–24-year-olds now abstain from alcohol entirely.⁷⁰ However, this can present challenges for venue operators and promoters who rely on alcohol sales to offset costs. Grassroots music venues earn very little money from the live music itself with a shortfall across the sector of £76,643,679 in 2025.⁷¹ This usually has to be made up from alcohol sales, food sales and other revenues streams.

Some fans noted that venues often encourage alcohol use, which can ultimately affect the safety and welfare of audiences. Several fans were in favour of alcohol-free performances. The Night Time Industries Association noted a similar trend with a 92% surge in fans expressing an interest in sober events in 2025.⁷² Where alcohol is served, fans suggested that responsible drinking messages could be better promoted.

68 Measham F and Simmons H, [Who uses drug checking services? Assessing uptake and outcomes at English festivals in 2018](#), *Drugs, Habits and Social Policy* (2022) 23 (3): 188–189

69 [‘The Loop launches London’s first drug checking service’](#), The Loop, accessed 10 March 2026

70 [‘YouGov survey shows more people drinking low and no alcohol alternatives than ever before’](#), Portman Group, 8 January 2025

71 Music Venue Trust, [Annual Report 2025](#), January 2026

72 NTIA, [The UK Electronic Music Report Fourth Edition](#), February 2026

“in my experience the biggest issues are created by people who are buying ridiculous amounts of alcohol. A lot of venues sell them in 2-pint cups to ‘save’ people from keep going back to the bar but that doesn’t work—they just drink twice as much. I think there should be much more focus on reducing alcohol consumption at gigs.”

Basic needs

Practical considerations around people’s basic needs were also raised. Fans recognised the financial pressures that venues are under but said the cost of food and drink at events is too expensive. Fans observed that higher prices often encourage people to eat less or smuggle in their own alcohol, both of which can have repercussions for safety and welfare.

Many fans do not drink enough water unless they can pay for it from the bar and have struggled to access drinking water during times of peak bar usage. To rectify this, fans recommended that free drinking water dispensers should be available at all live and electronic music venues and festivals so that people can stay hydrated.

“There should be plain tap water available in venues, which is not available in all places. There are venues that insist on serving water bottles only and removing caps. This is stated as being for ‘licensing and safety reasons’ but this is not a true statement and then if one of these bottles is knocked over or contaminated after purchase you lose a bottle of water you have paid £4.00 for, which is extortionate.”

“One venue in Portsmouth doesn’t even allow empty water bottles yet you seem to be able to buy them inside.”

Several fans said that improving toilet facilities was a matter of dignity, inclusion, and accessibility, with the lack of hygiene a particular concern.

“Toilets in a number of venues are insufficient for the number of people in the venue and are often unhygienic. Given that we have just been through the pandemic the value of basic cleanliness and hand sanitation should now be established, but is not possible in many venues.”

Hearing health

Concerns around public safety also extended to ear protection. A February 2026 report by Tinnitus UK, “Amplifying Awareness: Turning up the volume on hearing health in live music”, found that 92% of fans experience tinnitus after live music events, with 40% saying symptoms had become persistent. One in five people reported permanent hearing loss.⁷³

When we asked why they avoided ear plugs at events, most fans said it was because they interfere with their enjoyment or they are simply unavailable. Fans wanted more done to encourage the use of earplugs, noting that some artists often wear ear protection and fans should do so too.

People who work within the live music sector are also at risk of permanent hearing damage, with Tinnitus UK finding that 93% of the workforce had experienced hearing problems as a direct result of working or performing at live events, with 59% reporting permanent tinnitus.⁷⁴

Fans suggested that ear plugs should be easily available, with visibility throughout venues, such as on the door as well as at the bar. Because this is a public health concern, fans argued that funding should be allocated to ensure that ear plugs are distributed across all spaces in which loud music is present.

“There are loads of decent ear plugs available to buy online, but I have never seen any to buy at venues. I have only been to one venue that provided free ear plugs [...] People need to be encouraged to consider the impact of loud music on their hearing.”

“Venues should have to provide free ear protection (i.e. foam ear plugs) to all customers in demand, and professional level ear protection for all staff or volunteers within the performance space.”

73 Tinnitus UK, [Amplifying Awareness: Turning up the volume on hearing health in live music](#), February 2026

74 See above reference

Fans' Charter principle: Safety

Prioritise protecting fans from harm of injury, crime, violence, harassment and discrimination at and around gigs.

- Venues, festivals and promoters should ensure clear, visible signposting and safe reporting mechanisms for fans who experience or witness harassment, assault or other safety concerns, including digital options such as QR codes.
- Venues and festivals should ensure consistent welfare and safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers.
- Third-party security firms should provide staff training to meet fans' safeguarding needs, including responding to sexual assault, disability awareness, and anti-discriminatory practice. The music industry and UK Government, in consultation with devolved governments, should work together to ensure a new level of accreditation is available.
- Venues and third-party firms should review their recruitment practices to ensure venue teams reflect the diversity of audiences.
- Fans organisations should work together with industry and local authorities to produce a fan-to-fan Code of Conduct that all fans should adhere to. This Code of Conduct should then be made clearly visible at every music venue and festival.
- Local authorities should coordinate with venues and events, especially smaller operators, to ensure fans are safe before, during and after live and electronic music events.
- Venues and local authorities should work closely with relevant public health services to provide access to harm reduction services, such as drug testing, especially at large scale events and festivals, and educational materials for staff and audiences around drug use and how to respond in emergencies. The Home Office should extend licensed drug checking services where this is shown to reduce harm to fans.
- Venues and festivals should provide safe, free drinking water at all events, in a variety of locations, including in non-bar areas.
- Venues, festivals and promoters should promote hearing safety as an important part of the live music experience. Ear plugs should be easily available for those who want them at all live and electronic music events.

Accessibility

Although disability access is central to this chapter, we consider accessibility in its widest meaning, encompassing physical, sensory, social and cultural barriers that affect people of all ages, identities and backgrounds. Accessibility outcomes are also shaped by wider system factors, including the availability and design of venues, transport links, funding and regulatory structures.

Physical access and venue infrastructure

Accessibility is a core problem, particularly for disabled fans, within live and electronic music scenes. We have already discussed the problems associated with booking accessible tickets and will here turn to some of the physical and behavioural barriers that exclude some fans.

“Many venues think catering for disabled people only means providing facilities for wheelchair users but ignore those who cannot stand for long periods and need some form of seating.”

“I’m in a wheelchair so now rarely go as I either can’t see or take crutches instead but need a seat and a seat in local venues cannot be guaranteed.”

Venues of all shapes and sizes, both indoor and outdoor, should be accessible to their audiences. Fans highlighted examples of venues that attempt to give good accessibility and equal access to fans, such as big outdoor sites like Blackweir Fields in Cardiff. But even here where accessibility policies are brand new fans complained that there was no provision for sitting for general ticket holders. All venues should where possible ensure that there is a place for people to sit down. It isn’t just those with obvious disabilities who need to do so.

Smaller indoor spaces such as Strange Brew in Bristol and The Black Box in Belfast were highly regarded among fans as an example of best practice when it comes to accessibility.⁷⁵

Fans noted, however, that some venues do struggle to provide physical access where needed. These tend to be smaller venues, especially those occupying listed buildings which limits their ability to make necessary

75 See [Strange Brew, Info](#) and [The Black Box, Accessibility](#)

improvements. We note that the Arts Councils of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are supporting the 'All In' scheme as part of efforts to improve accessibility to cultural events for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people.⁷⁶

"I am transgender and disabled and as things are likely to become, some venues are likely to become out of bounds for me [...] All venues should have disabled or accessible toilets and all venues should have gender neutral toilets. [...] I attend quite a few gigs a year, I spend my money on gigs and merchandise. I have no other real interests left in life. [...] If I am unable to go it will affect my mental health very badly."

"More consideration in venues for physically challenged/older music lovers."

Damian Weatherald, who consults on accessibility and inclusion at live events, provided insights from 30 years of attending gigs, first as an ambulatory disabled person and more recently as a wheelchair user. In 2025, Damian visited 101 venues, including theatres, stadiums and live music venues, sharing his experiences as a disabled fan. When we spoke to him, he listed several ongoing problems that he and others encountered:

- Wheelchair viewing areas are sometimes at the very back of the venues, often behind speakers, with poor visibility of the stage.
- Accessible toilets are frequently inadequate, poorly located, or missing essential features.
- Ramps are often too steep, poorly positioned, or installed as an afterthought.
- Lifts are frequently out of order, and wheelchair users are not always informed in advance. This can be both unsafe and humiliating as venue staff often have to use workarounds.
- Training for front of house, security, and stewards is minimal or non-existent. We also heard that as security provision is often through third-party firms, there is no expectation that third-party staff will receive a briefing on access ahead of an event.
- At one outdoor gig, standing customers crowded onto wheelchair platforms, with staff reluctant to stop them.
- Accessibility is not factored into tour planning, with promoters often booking inaccessible venues. Fans with access needs may need to travel for up to six hours or more to attend a gig that meets their requirements.

76 See ['All In'](#), accessed 8 March 2026

Another serious problem identified was a lack of wheelchair spaces. Damian told us that provision is often below demand, with some venues providing less than 0.5% of their total capacity. He added that larger or newer venues tended to do better, offering 3% to 4% of their capacity to wheelchair spaces. However, this was inconsistent. While older buildings may face structural and financial constraints, he argued that new and refurbished venues should certainly meet minimum standards.

We asked Attitude is Everything, a charity which established a UK Government endorsed Live Events Access Charter,⁷⁷ what the minimum standard for wheelchair spaces should be. They said that, based on the British Standard, at least 2% of a venue's total capacity should be accessible to wheelchair users. However, they noted this was an 'ideal' position rather than one it expected venues to immediately achieve.

Outdoor events and temporary facilities

Attitude is Everything also highlighted specific challenges at outdoor gigs, noting that access provision often depended on third-party organisations. They reported that accessible viewing platforms, portable toilets, showers and mobile changing places are often designed without consulting disabled people or following the same guidance as built environment regulations. This means festival organisers often book accessible infrastructure with the best intentions, only to receive products that do not meet the needs of the audience.

Service providers have a duty to provide reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. However, Attitude is Everything argued that, while they and other organisations such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) provide guidance, there is no clarity for disabled fans as to what reasonable adjustments they should definitively expect at live and electronic music events. They noted this leads to variability in how requirements are interpreted and implemented in practice. EHRC interventions, such as its legally binding agreement with Live Nation following accessibility failings at Wireless and Download festivals, shows how serious the consequences can be when expectations remain unclear.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Attitude is Everything, [Live Events Access Charter](#), accessed 10 March 2026

⁷⁸ [‘Live Nation commits to improve festival accessibility through legal agreement with equality watchdog’](#), Equality and Human Rights Commission, 22 November 2023

Neurodivergent fans

Physical access is not the only problem with which fans can experience barriers. We also spoke with Stay Up Late, a charity which enables adults with learning disabilities and autistic people to participate in social activities.

Neurodivergent fans can struggle to find people to go with, unless they are support workers or family. As most fans may have had little exposure to gigs, they may not know what type of music events suit their tastes and interests. This means that attending gigs can be an overwhelming experience for some people. Not only do they worry about the attitudes and behaviour of other gig-goers, but venues themselves can often take for granted that everyone who attends their events knows how they work.

To support better the needs of neurodivergent fans, Stay Up Late has called for live music venues to incorporate the principles of a 'relaxed performance' into their events. Relaxed performances are common in theatre programming and involve performances which may have less noise and more space and light.

Transferring those principles into a live music setting requires both fans and staff to be proactive in making sure that everyone has a good time. For example, it is important to create space for people who need it, perhaps through giving them more physical room in which to move freely or providing 'quiet rooms', where possible, in some venues where people can take a break from noise, strobe lighting or standing.

Stay Up Late's 'relaxed manifesto' also encourages fans to check in with people to see if they are okay, report threatening and abusive behaviour, and hold venues accountable for how they treat neurodivergent individuals. Adopting accessible practices will help everyone.

"Venues need to have comfortable seating for older people or people with special needs. They also should have working air conditioning."

"I have light sensitive epilepsy. This invisible condition makes it virtually impossible to attend most larger events, as they all include strobe lights. However even smaller events and venues usually have a disclaimer that an event may have strobe lights, even when they don't. So the only events I feel safe going to are folk, blues and small pub gigs."

"having some provision where clubs have to offer cooldown spaces, spaces they can hang when they're feeling overloaded, need a break, need to rest their ears."

Black Moon in Belfast is the longest running club night at The Black Box in Belfast. It is a collaboration between disabled artists, fans and the venue, to promote a welcoming and inclusive electronic music offer. Supported by Belfast City Council, this collective has been able to run outdoor festival style events over the last 3 years. This collaborative, community first approach now forms a part of the UNESCO Music Cities model for inclusive and collaborative cultural output.

Age and family access

Age is another factor which determines how fans engage with live and electronic music. For example, several fans noted that it was difficult to find venues that would accommodate under 18s and called for more opportunities for fans of all ages to attend gigs. Fans acknowledged there were tighter restrictions for young audiences at live music venues, such as night-time economy licensing rules, compared to arts centres and stadiums.

Classical music fans told us that it was common to see afternoon concerts with clear finish times, which supports access to music, especially for older audiences. They also highlighted opportunities for people to have access to dress rehearsals. Fans across the board suggested family friendly gigs, as well as daytime events or earlier finishes to cater for audiences who may not be able to stay out late, for example because of work or childcare responsibilities.

“My 7 yr old son would love to attend some larger gigs of some of the big bands he loves but many venues are not child-friendly or gigs are too late or tickets are just too costly. Clearer labelling for which venues accept children or earlier starts for those of us with kids.”

“Recently a lot of events are billed as 16 or 18+ without an obvious reason given, which stops my 15 year old daughter from attending local concerts by her favourite bands with me. Excluding a new generation of music fans from live events like that is unfair.”

Information

Information gaps also hinder access to live and electronic music events, disproportionately affecting disabled fans, parents and rural audiences. Uncertainty around finishing times, travel, and logistics can enhance exclusion, even when tickets are affordable. Fans also suggested better venue information, such as video walkthroughs and clear, accessible images of the layout. Not only would this benefit fans but it could also set a cultural precedent and help venues to identify where access improvements are needed.

Cultural inclusion and representation

Finally, fans recognised that improving cultural and social inclusion across genres would support access to live and electronic music events. 24% of Music Fans Voice respondents disagreed (compared to 58% who agreed) with the statement that live music events currently reflect the demographic diversity of the UK.

Some genres and sub-genres of music do not share cultural parity and visibility with other genres. We heard this is often the case with Black music, despite 80% of music in the UK being rooted in Black culture and music traditions.⁷⁹ Increasing representation of these genres on line-ups, as well as better gender representation, will help to welcome new audiences and more accurately reflect the full diversity of live and electronic music in the UK.

Organisations such as Black Lives in Music, Lila Music, which supports South Asian music in the UK, ESEA, founded by East and Southeast Asian music professionals, and Help Musicians continue to push for a more empathetic and culturally reflective relationship between musical output, performers and the diverse communities that shape British music. This work complements broader efforts charted in the annual UK Music diversity report.⁸⁰ UK Music's March 2026 report, Black Music Means Business, has also for the first time measured the commercial impact of Black British music over the last 30 years, analysing its contribution towards the national identity.⁸¹

Fans' Charter principle: Accessibility

Always think access for all and act accordingly.

- Where possible, venues should work towards allocating a minimum of 2% of their total capacity to wheelchair accessible spaces. Local authorities should ensure this target is part of planning requirements for new or refurbished venues.
- Promoters and artists should consider the access needs of audiences and accessibility of venues when booking shows and tours.

79 UK Music, [Black Music Means Business](#), March 2026

80 UK Music, [UK Music Diversity Report 2024](#)

81 UK Music, [Black Music Means Business](#), March 2026

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission, in consultation with disability-led organisations, should provide clear guidance on what constitutes reasonable adjustments at live and electronic music events, both indoor and outdoor. We recommend a similar review of accessibility at live events in Northern Ireland to ensure disabled fans are not excluded.
- The UK Government and music industry bodies, in consultation with devolved governments, should commission disability-led organisations to develop a UK-wide disability access kitemark for all third-party providers, such as those supplying event infrastructure, security, training and ticketing. Venues and festivals should only use kite-marked providers.
- Where possible venues and festivals should encourage everyone on-site during a live event to adopt the principles of Stay Up Late's 'relaxed manifesto' to promote a respectful and inclusive experience for all.
- Venues should provide clear information about the layout of their premises, inviting regular feedback from fans as to where access improvements should be made. Where possible, we recommend venues provide virtual 'walk arounds' on their websites.
- Venues, festivals and promoters should commit to diverse programmes to ensure line-ups, spaces and timings reflect their communities.

Transport

In this chapter we look at how transport availability, cost, safety and accessibility shape the experience of going to live and electronic music events. It highlights the barriers created by limited late-night services and showcases examples of local solutions that better align transport systems with the realities of the night-time music economy.

Impact on attendance

Fans consistently raised the availability, safety and reliability of public transport as a decisive factor in whether they could attend live and electronic music events. Several respondents to our fan-led review survey said they had both positive and negative experiences of public transport based on the location of the event. Many fans we spoke to said they struggled to get home after late running gigs because they could not find safe and affordable transport options, even in major cities including London.

For fans living outside urban centres, the problem becomes more acute, especially in rural areas. Fans reported having to leave gigs earlier to ensure they can get a bus or train home, which means they either miss headliners or avoid attending events altogether. Several fans agreed that more research was needed better to understand the transport needs of audiences living in smaller towns and villages when it comes to them participating in cultural events outside their local area.

“Public transport is very variable depending on location of the event and time it finishes. Particularly outside of London, transport at the time that a live music event usually finishes is often not available, other than driving or taxis. This is a major factor in putting off going to an event.”

“If I were to catch the last train, I then miss out on the last few songs of a show, meaning I get less value for money with the concert ticket. If I don’t catch the train, I’m stuck in the city of the concert.”

Various survey data reinforce the concerns we heard around transport. While a majority of fan-led review survey respondents agreed that public transport was safe (48% of UK adults), convenient (48%), and the only practical option (46%), only 26% agreed it was reliable compared to 54% who disagreed. Although 55% agreed public transport was available near

to their accommodation and/or the venue location, only 33% agreed it was accessible when they wanted it after attending an event (compared to 48% who disagreed).

The 2025 Music Fans Voice survey found that 53% of fans thought better transport options, such as night buses and later trains, would enable them to attend more live music. A UK Music survey revealed similar results, with 50% of adults saying they would likely go to music events if public transport better matched event times, including 38% of over-75s.⁸²

Cost barriers

Costs were another limiting factor. Several fans mentioned that taxis, including services such as Uber, and hotels use surge/dynamic pricing to exploit the gaps in late-night public transport provision, especially around larger events. If fans plan to stay for the full duration of a show, the costs of getting home or overnight accommodation can often be prohibitive.

“I’d love to be able to go to shows that are in other cities but trains never run late night and hotels are often too expensive or all sold out when shows are on so I can’t get home or find a place to stay after events.”

Even when there are larger events, transport provision does not effectively respond to demand.

“I’ve attended two concerts at Tottenham stadium recently and both took hours to get home in Zone 2 London.”

“Also 3 carriage trains when they know there’s events on that people travel to is ridiculous.”

Risks

Safety risks were also raised. Licensing hours can force mass exits from several venues all at once, putting pressure on limited transport options and overcrowding streets. Fans described seeing people attempting to ride electric bicycles while intoxicated, endangering themselves and others.

Aside from providing more late-night transport services, fans highlighted the need for better street lighting and visible support, either through more police presence or community initiatives like Street Angels or SoS buses. Women, disabled audiences and other fans with additional needs feel particularly vulnerable when transport networks and late-night public spaces are inadequate.

82 The survey was conducted to coincide with the publication of UK Music’s [Hometown Glory](#) report.

“As a girl that lives alone outside of the city centre, I have to get a taxi home from all nights out which is really expensive and also uncomfortable being in a taxi on my own late at night and after drinking.”

Driving and accessibility

For some fans, driving is the only viable option for attending events, but parking is also problematic. Car free zones and early car park closures without alternative public transport options can unintentionally exclude fans.

Disabled fans are disproportionately affected, noting the scarcity or inaccessibility of disabled parking spaces, which is often exacerbated by road closures around major events. Following reports that Co-op Live in Manchester had begun charging Blue Badge holders £25 for parking, where provision had previously been free, some fans were concerned that other venues might adopt similar charging practices, particularly in locations where driving is the only practical option.⁸³

Fans may often have to walk long distances between transport hubs and venues which can present additional accessibility barriers for some disabled and older audiences. Several fans observed that accessibility must be factored into the whole of the fan journey, with better coordination and data sharing between local authorities, transport operators and venues to cater for audiences’ needs. Saffron Walden concert hall, for example, provides wheelchair-accessible buses to and from the train station and times most concerts with train schedules.

“Accessibility getting to a venue is a big issue for me, as is disabled parking near a venue.”

“Every single one of the 4 concerts I have attended in the past year has been negatively impacted by poor public transport provision. [...] I find it ridiculous that train providers do not work with event organisers to ensure that there are adequate transport options and additional trains late enough for concert goers.”

Coordination and timetabling

Extension of routes and timetables is something that regularly came up in conversations with fans, in particular in places where additional stops or a later connection can link a venue or festival with a wider audience. Glastonbury Festival works closely with Great Western Railway on an event-

83 See [‘Disabled man’s anger at new Co-op Live charges after using venue for a year’](#), Echo, 1 November 2025

specific timetable, with additional trains and shuttle buses a key part of provision, allowing the festival to be greener but also allowing fans to travel more reliably and safely. The still independent Green Man Festival partners with National Express to run dedicated coaches to its beautiful rural location in mid Wales, and strongly encourages festival goers to travel this way.

A localised example would be the extension of the V1 and V2 bus from Manchester to Leigh and Atherton, a project undertaken by Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester, with engagement from cultural organisations. Adding 22:15 and 23:15 to the bus timetables made it possible for residents to engage in cultural activity in Leigh and Atherton—where it was previously impossible to make the return journey—servicing grassroots music venues like the Snug in the process. A cultural evaluation is due to be published later in the year showing the impact on venues and surrounding businesses.

Integrated ticketing is emerging as another tool to support audience travel. At Massive Attack concerts in Bristol and Liverpool in 2024, TAG (Transport & Gig) tickets linked public transport directly to the events, helping to make the gigs both more sustainable and more affordable. Liverpool, as a UN Accelerator City on Climate Action, is developing this approach as a potential model for wider use.

“Bring Back The Night Bus” – Liverpool’s journey to restoring late-night public transport

Liverpool provides a good example of how coordinated efforts can address barriers to accessing live and electronic music. In 2022, the University of Liverpool’s Institute of Popular Music conducted a survey of 2,500 people which identified that a lack of night-time public transport was a key factor in why audiences had not returned post-pandemic. This led to a campaign to “bring back the night bus”, supported by Liverpool City Region Music Board; the University of Liverpool’s IPM, Centre for Educational Development & Support and Civic Data Cooperative; Liverpool Nightlife CIC; and venue Future Yard. Footfall data and camera data were collected to support the campaign.

A business case was developed and proposed in partnership with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Merseytravel. The proposal included data from the Liverpool Live Music Mapping Project (LMMP) to establish potential demand. In December 2023, a pilot Night Bus, the N1 operated by Stagecoach, was launched from 12:30–5am on Thursday/Friday, Friday/Saturday, and Saturday/Sunday nights across key areas of the city and through the Mersey Tunnel to link Birkenhead and the Wirral, with tickets priced at £2 to keep it affordable.

The project is regarded as a success, with the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor calling it a step toward “putting the public back at the heart of public transport.” Full evaluation reports are expected in 2026.

Event scheduling

Transparency around specific stage times could help with coordination efforts. Fans frequently mentioned that inconsistent and unclear information about stage times prevents them from making informed decisions about their travel. An electronic music fan told us that in some cases a headline act can appear sometime between 11pm and 3am, making it impossible to plan a journey home. This is a problem, fans argued, that venues, promoters and ticketing vendors had a shared responsibility to address by signposting accurate stage times.

Fans called for more coherent scheduling, including set finish times or earlier performances to account for travel. For example, classical music concerts have predictable timings and rarely finish after 10pm, with afternoon concerts also common. Fans suggested that daytime shows, or weekend matinees, across other genres of live music would support audiences cautious about travelling late at night.

“More matinee gigs. I’m too old to stay out half the night”

“Sometimes I am put off heading to a show if it’s too far to cycle and I know that the public transport will be a nightmare. But earlier finish times for arena shows has helped with this as it means you’re not in danger of missing the last tube/train/bus home.”

“Shorter shows could increase midweek attendance for people with fulltime daytime work schedules. Getting day time gigs for families and children, with the same quality performances, and other times for older adults and people doing shift work and people with other accessibility requirements would enhance live music options for all.”

“Start time on tickets should be the time artists go on stage. Set time should be announced so spectators can plan transport there and back. (Like opera and theatre do, but live music venues never do).”

While fans were supportive of earlier finish times, it is worth highlighting that late nights form a vital part of the culture and experience of different genres of music. For example, fans told us that night life is the “hub of electronic music and DJs” and is “an extremely important contribution to our UK music culture and heritage”. A prominent jazz producer told us that “jazz happens late” and that late-night transport should be available, pointing to Glasgow’s night-time economy strategy as an example to follow.

Fans' Charter principle: Transport

Make live music a central part of transport policy and planning everywhere.

- The Department for Transport, in partnership with devolved governments, local authorities and transport operators, should commission research into late-night economy mobility gaps between cities, towns and rural communities.
- Local authorities and transport providers should work together with venues to display up-to-date and reliable transport information inside music venues and at festival information points and exits.
- Transport operators should ensure that accessible transport options are available for people with access requirements. Local authorities should review the provision of disabled parking around live and electronic music venues to ensure that supply meets demand.
- Local authorities and transport operators should coordinate to align late-night transport schedules with live and electronic music event and venue closing times.
- Venues, promoters, and ticketing platforms should develop and adopt an industry-wide standard for publishing clear stage start and finish times so fans can plan their journeys home in advance.
- Local live and electronic music networks, including promoters and venues, should explore the demand for earlier live music performance times and daytime events.

Fan voice

In this chapter we highlight the importance of fans in shaping live and electronic music policy and outline practical ways to embed their voices in decision making.

One thing was clear throughout this fan-led review of live and electronic music: fans should be at the heart of the policies that affect them and be able to shape the experiences that they receive. As previously mentioned, the Music Fans' Voice survey found that on average highly engaged live music fans spend £478 a year on event entry. Given this significant amount of financial investment, as well as the time, energy and enthusiasm they devote to live and electronic music, fans deserve a seat at the table.

Why fans' voices matter

Fan engagement is a vital part of the live and electronic music ecosystem. Fans are involved with their local scenes and aware of the challenges facing venues, artists and other fans. This is because they are passionate about music and community. Since the pandemic, fans have had greater roles in building and driving live and electronic music in their local areas. They are prepared to 'do the work' if decision makers empower them and harness their energy through active engagement.

Local representation

Live and electronic music fans want a reliable mechanism through which they can voice their concerns, especially when they feel they are being unfairly treated. They suggested local authorities, who are seen by fans as mediators between communities and culture, could act as the consumer voice for fans. For example, more local authorities could provide a forum in which to hear from fans and work together on ways to resolve problems at a local level. Such engagement would need to remain inclusive and accessible for all fans.

A useful example of this kind of locally rooted engagement can be seen in Wigan, where the council has commissioned a community-led Grassroots Music Plan. This work is a good demonstration of how cultural stakeholders and community members can work with borough councils and combined authorities to shape cultural policy in the place that they live.

Local government and combined authority-led initiatives such as music boards and music commissions also provide an important formal route for local music communities to connect directly with decision makers. They can bring together stakeholders to analyse the local music sector, as evidenced by work in cities such as Liverpool, which has developed detailed music sector and venue maps through its music board.⁸⁴ Fans should be at the heart of these initiatives.

Industry dialogue

Fans would also welcome consistent dialogue with the music industry and policymakers, which requires more than one-off consultations. Fan engagement events can work to foster and enhance participation and rebuild trust and relationships between fans, policymakers and the industry. Such events would need to ensure that research and roundtables are diverse and hear from underrepresented and marginalised groups of fans and music genres to help learn how to better counter perceptions, aid inclusion and make events safer for all attending them.

“[it would] be valuable for DCMS to involve locally rooted organisations and representatives in future stakeholder discussions. Initiatives such as Bristol Nights, Free The Night in Northern Ireland, and Save the Scene Scotland show how strong community voices can shape effective policy.”

“I’ve attended a number of music industry panels, conferences etc. and I know of no instance in which audiences were represented.”

National representation

Many fans want to have greater representation at the national level, suggesting either an ombudsman or trade body. Reflecting on the work of the Football Supporters’ Association (FSA), which is funded by English professional football (the Premier League and the FA being the core funders) and advocates for supporter ownership, better fan engagement, cheaper tickets, fan rights, good governance, diversity, and empowering supporters, a similar body could work for live and electronic music fans. It could help to enable greater representation in live and electronic music policy and decision making across a range of challenges that affect fans and on which they can offer their insights to the industry and policymakers.

“This fan-led review is really important but there should be a trade body that represents fans. Fans should have a seat at the table and be represented alongside artists, venues, record industry and songwriters.”

84 [Live Music Mapping Project, Liverpool](#), accessed 22 March 2026

A collective voice for fans is more important than ever and—music like football fan associations—consumer rights and legislation is not protecting fans from predatory practices by hugely profitable corporations.”

Tracking progress

Finally, fans want a way of tracking the progress of the Fans’ Charter. Suggestions included monitoring progress through an annual survey, continuing the work of the Music Fans Voice. It could also feature a specific section each year devoted to better understanding the audiences of an underrepresented genre. The survey could be in the form of an academic research partnership with industry experts from across all genres.

A national body representing fans could also take the lead on engaging with stakeholders across the live and electronic music industry, local authority music boards, devolved and UK Government to assess progress on Fans’ Charter recommendations. Fans also suggested that a ‘working towards’ label could help accountability while recognising limits on resources, especially for smaller grassroots venues, and not penalising honesty.

Fans’ Charter principle: Voice

Listen, promote and support the voice of music fans of every genre.

- The government and music industry should establish and fund a Music Fans Association (MFA), similar to football, to enable greater fan representation in music policy, consumer rights, and decision making. The government should provide initial seed funding, with the music industry taking on the role of long-term funding partners.
- Local authorities should hold regular live and electronic music forums with fans, promoters, venue owners, musicians and agents to capture fan insights. Forums should be inclusive and accessible to all fans and encourage them to speak openly about their experiences.
- The government should commission an annual music fans’ survey from 2027 to provide government, industry and other stakeholders with regular insight into live and electronic music fans. Each edition should include a rotating deep-dive into different genres to ensure underrepresented genres, groups and audiences are fully understood by government, industry and local authorities.

Acknowledgments

Many organisations and individuals helped to make this fan led review possible. So many people took the time to speak with us, share insights, organise, facilitate and host roundtables, and help us spread the word. We are sincerely grateful to all the people and organisations below for their generosity, commitment and support.

In addition, we would like to express particular thanks to the 4,144 respondents to the survey and the 216 fans who attended the roundtables. We are grateful to you for sharing your experiences and ideas, and for ultimately shaping this report and its recommendations.

Sean Adams

James Ainscough OBE at Royal Albert Hall

Bayo Alaba MP

Albert Hall, Manchester

Association for Electronic Music

The Association of Music Editors

Attitude is Everything - Catherine Pymar and Paul Hawkins

Belfast City Council

Sybil Bell at Independent Venue Week

Dr Lucy Bennett at Cardiff University

The Black Box, Belfast

Black Moon

Brighton City Council

Jonathan Brown at STAR

Sophie Brownlee

Cardiff Council - Ruth Cayford and Kieron Jones

Cardiff Music City

CGA/NiQ - James Carnegie, Lou Finn, Reuban Pullen and Charlie Mitchell
Chinnerys, Southend-on-Sea
Clwb Ifor Bach, Cardiff
Jon Collins at LIVE
Creative Wales
Dame Tracey Crouch
Martin Cullingford at Gramophone
Culture, Media and Sport Committee
CWRW, Carmarthen
Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Drowned in Sound Podcast
Sam Duckworth at Music Venue Trust
Katie Duffy and the team at Glasgow Life
Entertainment Retailers Association
EXIT, Glasgow
Focus Wales
Football Supporters Association
Glasgow City of Music
Greater London Authority - Sam Mathys and Paul Broadhurst
Greater Manchester Combined Authority - Holly Jones, Joe Heys and Marie-Claire Daly
Greater Manchester Music Commission
Chris Hodgkins at All Party Parliamentary Jazz Group
Sue Harris
House of Commons Select Committee Team
Julian Jenkins
Rohit Jepegnanam and all at Tomorrow's Warriors
Charlie Kemp, Chris Parmley and all at Tees Valley Combined Authority

Michael Kill at Night Time Industries Association

KU, Stockton-on-Tees

Le Pub, Newport - Sam, Matt and Elisha

Live Nation Entertainment

Cathy Long

Making Music

Kevin McManus at Liverpool City Region

Ministry of Sound

Jessica Morden MP

The Musicians' Union

Music Venue Properties

The team at Music Venue Trust

Kate Nash

Neuadd Ogwen, Bethesda

Newport City Council

NME

NTIA Scotland

Eunice Obianagha, Head of Diversity at UK Music

Oh Yeah Music Centre, Belfast

Openstage - Grant Tilbury and David Ffoulkes-Jones

Output, Belfast

Karen Pearson at Folded Wing

Portsmouth City Council

Portsmouth Creates

The Price of Music Podcast

Geoff Priestley at Wedgewood Rooms

Arusa Qureshi

Safe Gigs for Women

Andy Saunders

Save our Scene - Alex Glyde and George Fleming

Score Draw Music

Six Till Six

So Slam

Sonic Futures

Southend Creatives

Southend-on-Sea City Council

The Snug, Atherton

Stendhal Festival

Fiona Stewart at Green Man Festival

StubHub

Sub Club, Glasgow

Sŵn Festival

UK Music - Tom Kiehl and Olga FitzRoy

University of Glasgow

University of Liverpool - Mathew Flynn and Richard Anderson

University of Plymouth

Volume Control, Belfast

Damian Weatherald

West Midlands Combined Authority

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Katie Windsor at Stay Up Late

Which?

Fan-led review survey results

We launched the fan-led review survey to find out more about the music fan experience, inviting views on a range of topics.

The survey was launched on 26 June 2025 and closed on 30 November 2025. It was shared across various social media platforms, including Instagram, X and LinkedIn. The highest number of responses came from Reddit (21%), where we were able to target music fans of various genres and subcultures, as well as reaching people across the country in regional subreddits. We also invited stakeholders to share the survey.

Results have been calculated as percentages of the respondents who were shown the question. The results for some questions may not add up to 100%. This may be due to rounding results, individual respondents opting not to answer and, for some questions, because respondents were able to select as many options as they wanted.

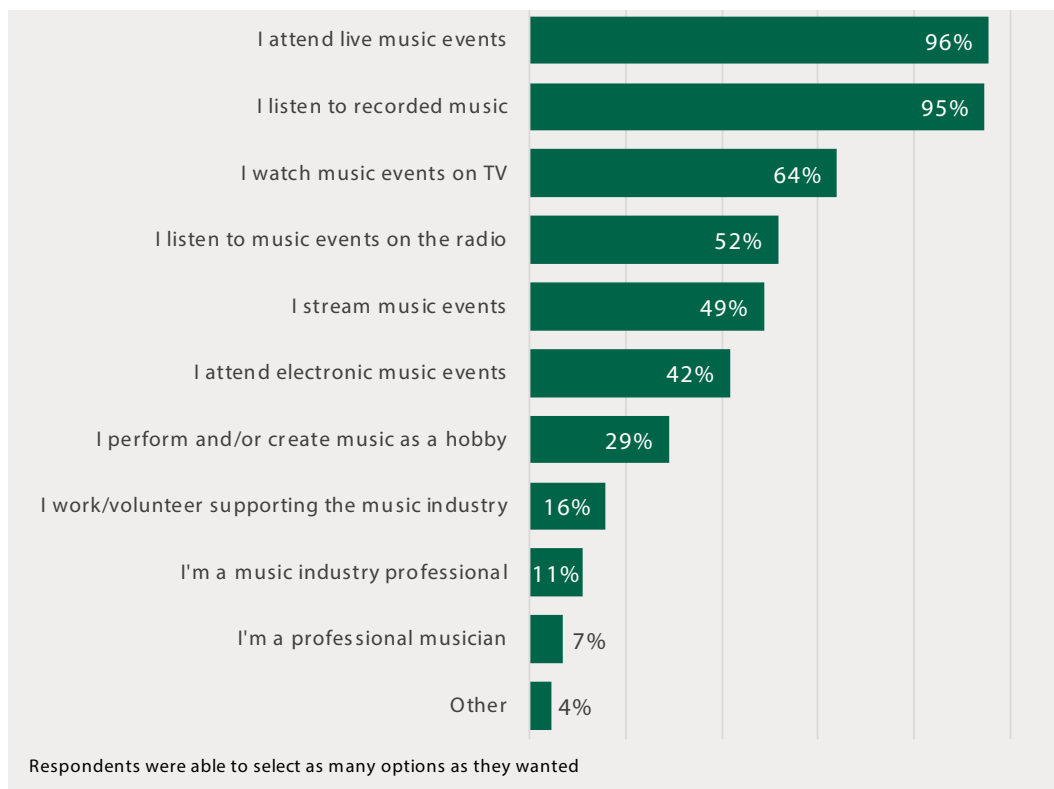
Due to limitations of the survey and the methods of distribution, it is not possible to extrapolate from these results to the wider population.

Demographics

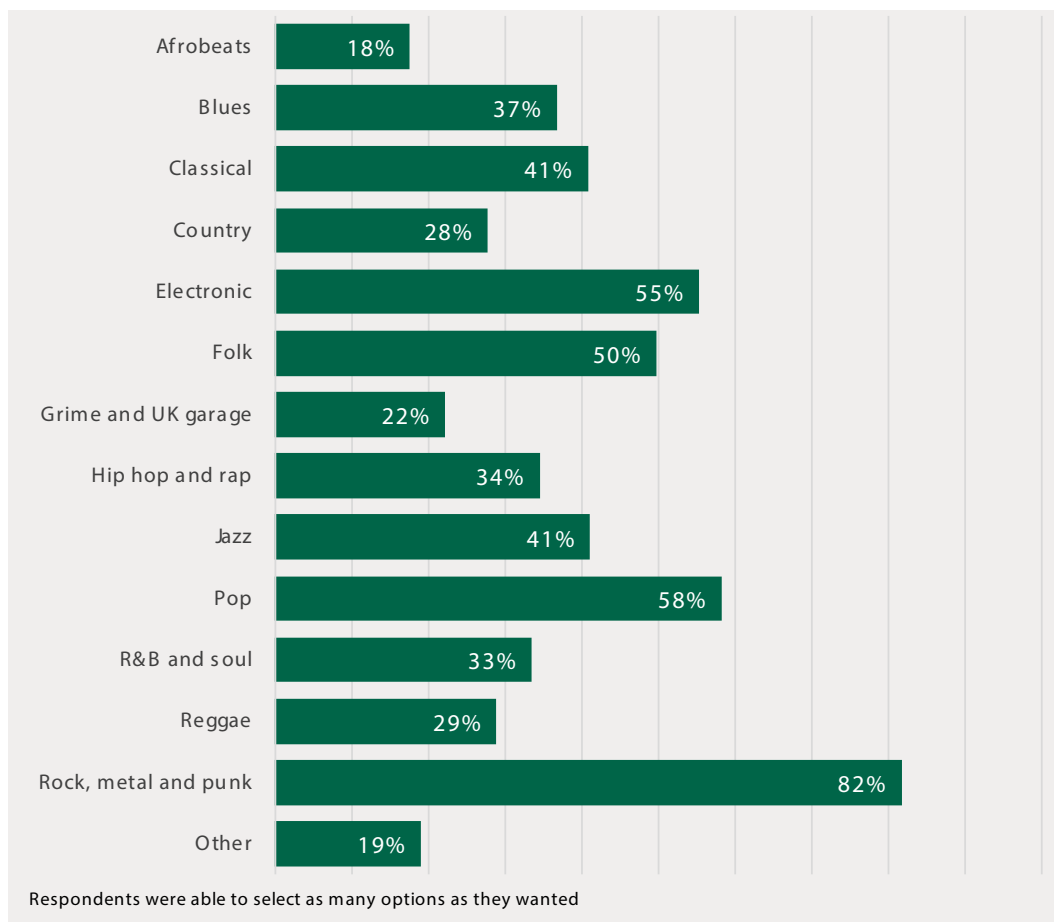
The survey had 4144 responses, of which 98% were based in the UK.

The charts below show the respondents' relationship to music and the genres they have attended in-person.

Relationship to music



What genres of music have respondents attended in-person

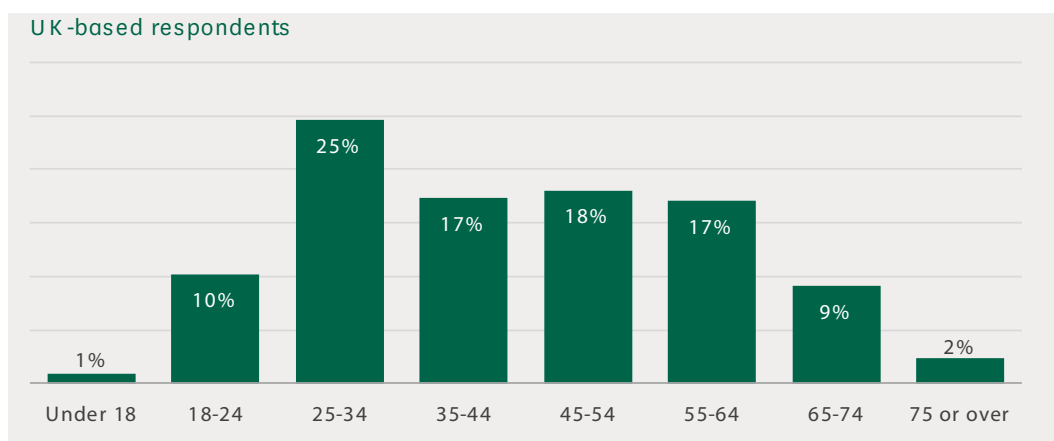


Uk-based respondents

The chart below shows the ages of UK-based respondents. Due to the low number of respondents under 18, reporting on this category is limited. Of UK-based respondents under 18, approximately three quarters had attended a music event in-person. The majority of these had attended at either a small or medium venue or a stadium/arena, and approximately 60% had attended with a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult.

96% of UK-based respondents had attended a music event in-person in the last three years.

Age of respondents

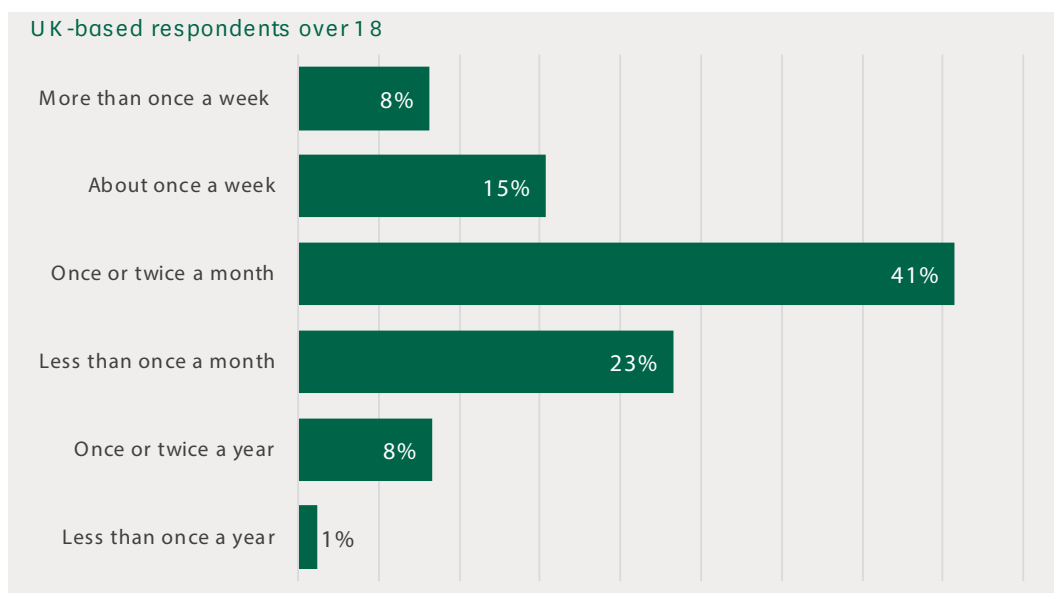


Adults who have attended in the last three years

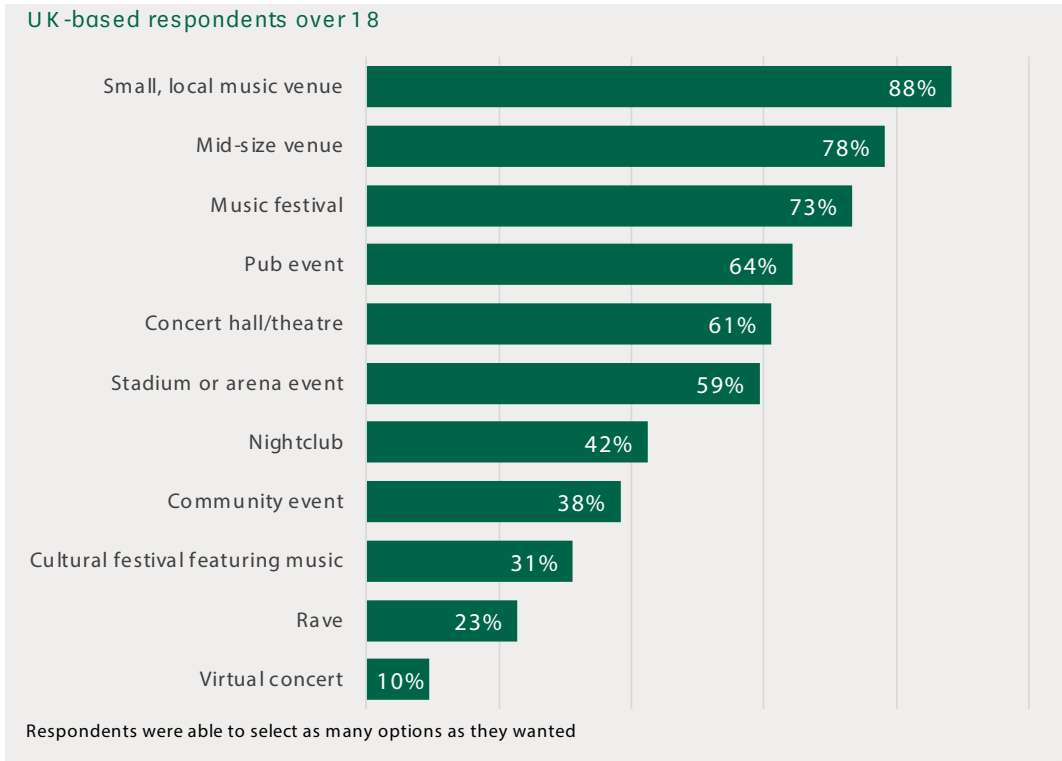
This section shows the results for respondents over 18, based in the UK, and who have attended an event in the last three years.

The following charts show the frequency of attendance, the type of venues attended, events considered good value for money, and reasons for attendance.

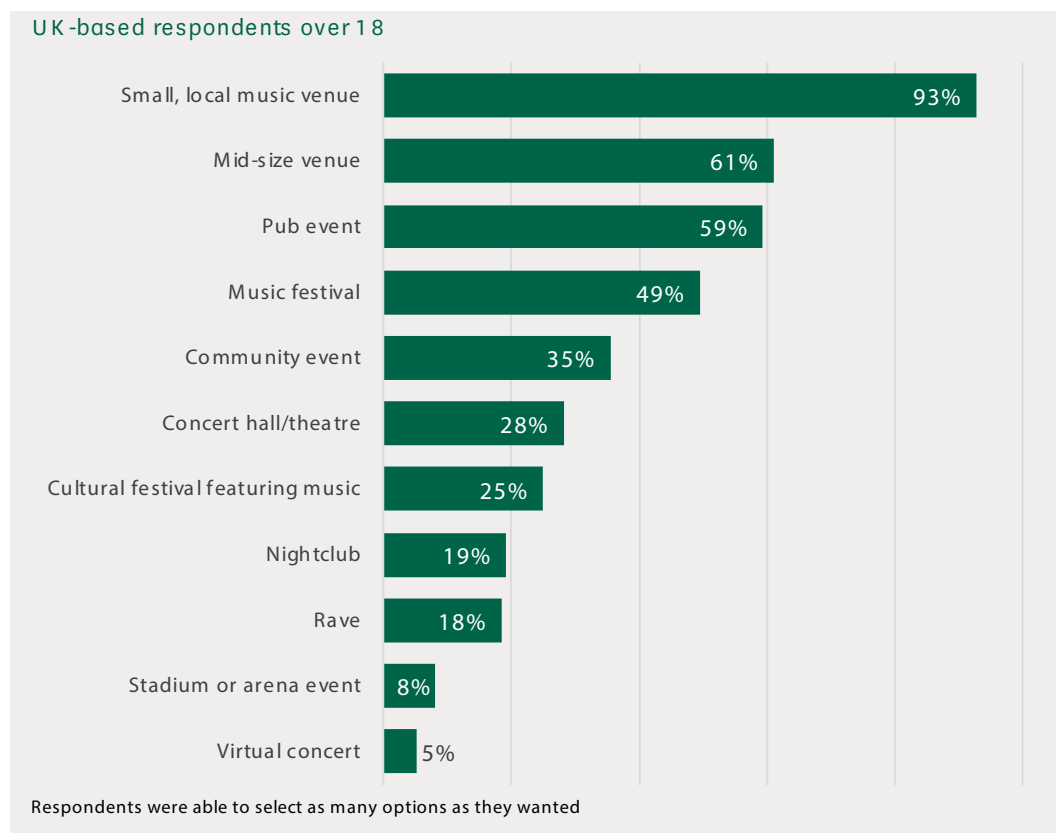
How often did respondents attend events



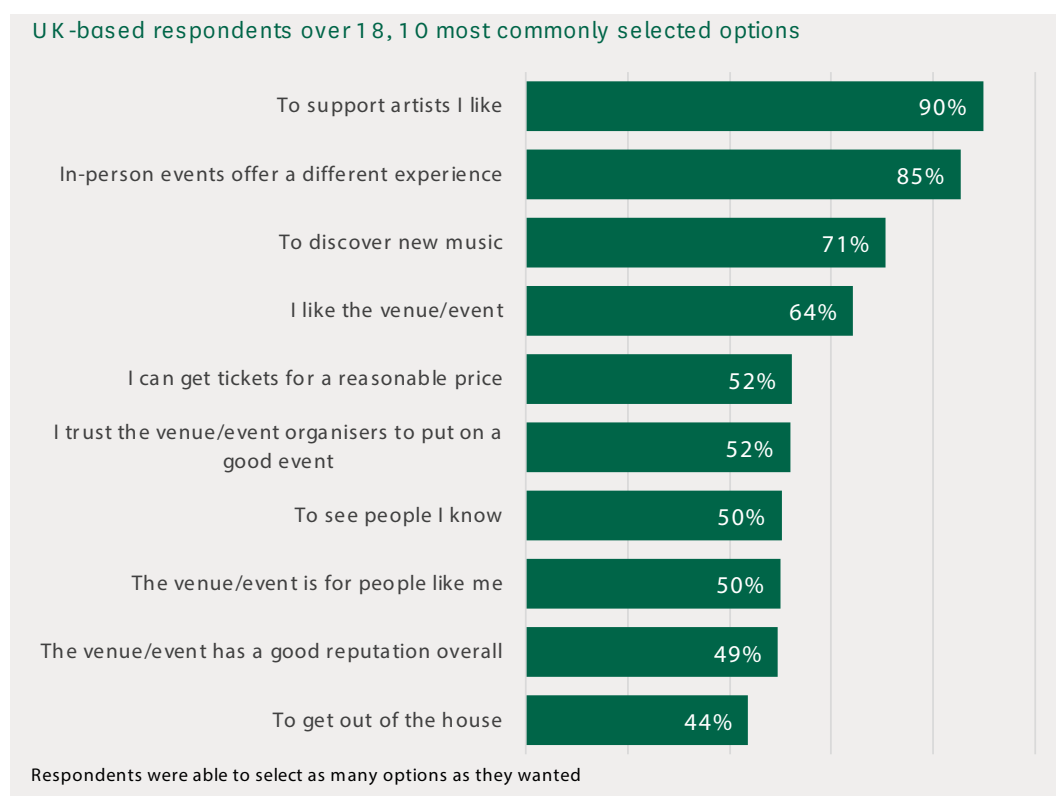
What type of venue/event did respondents attend in the last three years



Events considered good value for money

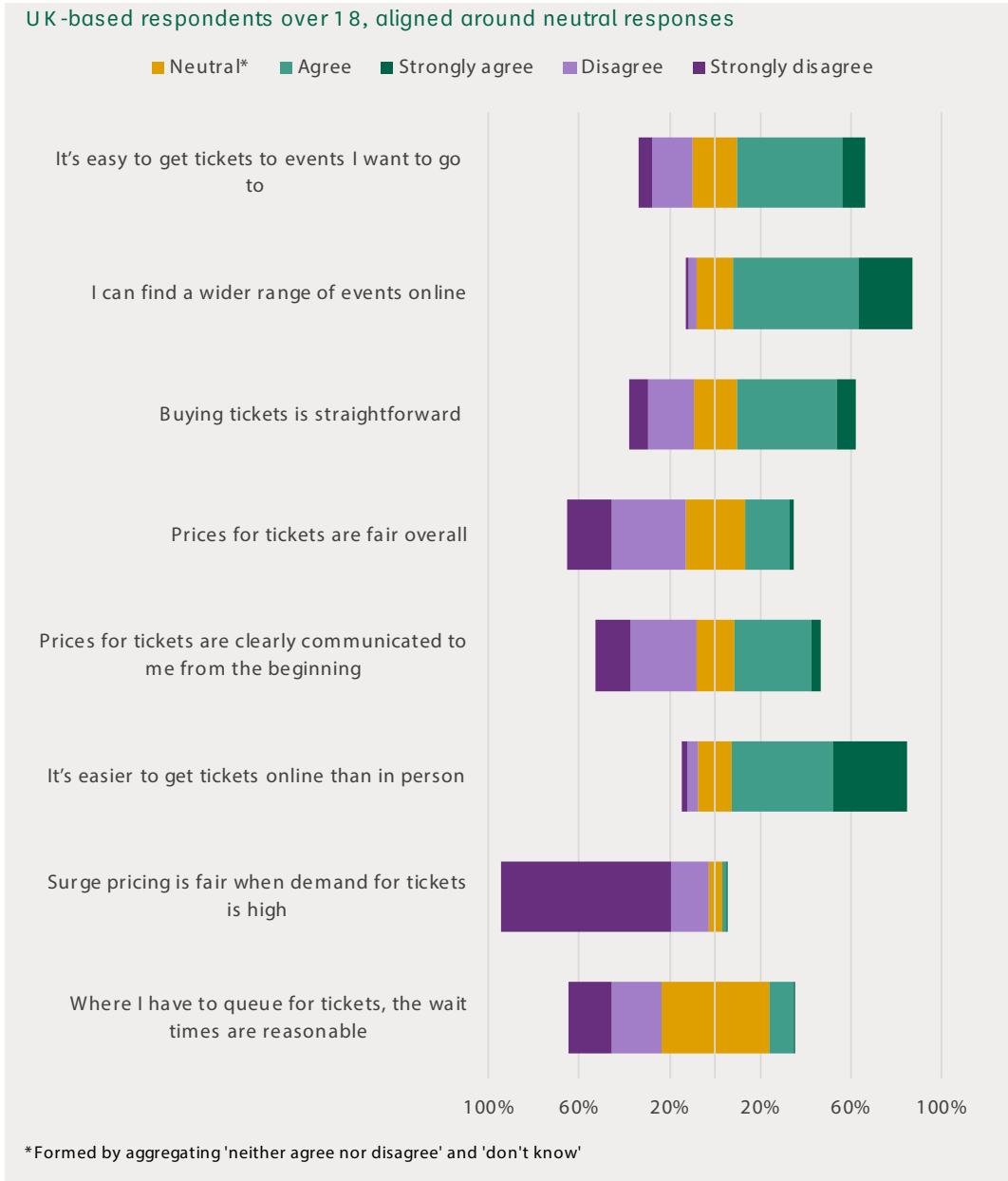


Why respondents attend music events



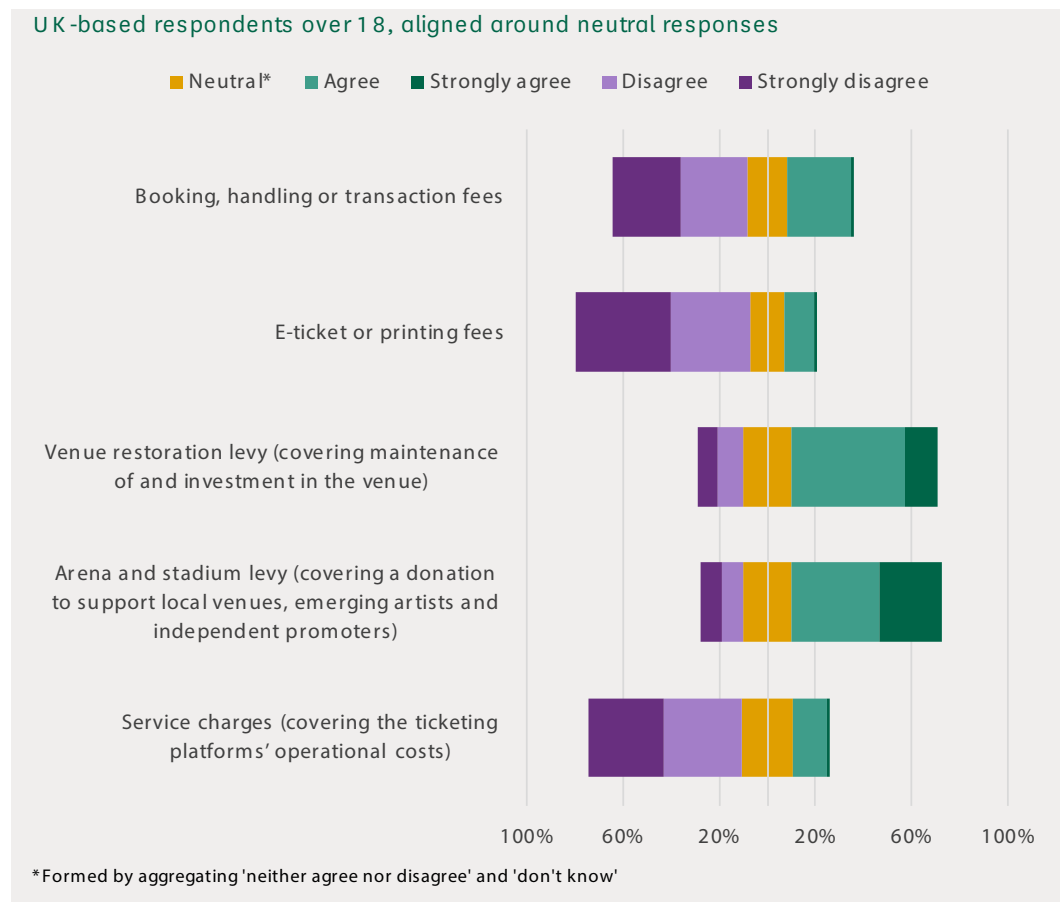
The chart below shows responses to statements about buying tickets online. Respondents generally agreed with statements that suggested tickets were accessible, but disagreed with statements suggesting that pricing was fair, reasonable, or clearly communicated. In particular, 91% of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘Surge pricing is fair when demand for tickets is high’.

Responses to statements about buying tickets online



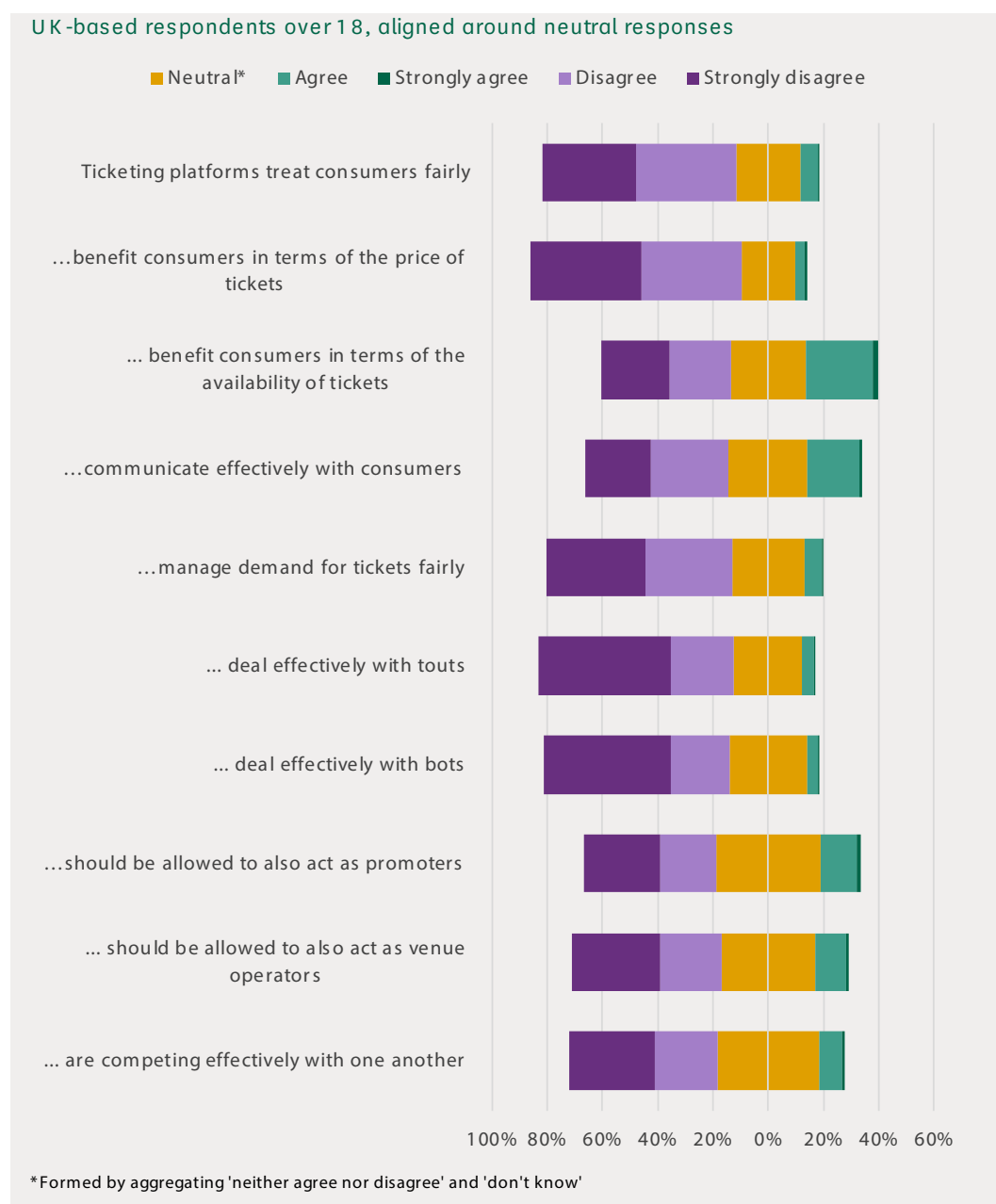
The chart below shows the responses to statements about different ticket fees. Respondents were generally in favour with adding levies to support venues, artists and independent promoters, but were not in favour of sellers adding any other ticket fees. 62% of respondents also said they were discouraged from buying a ticket due to additional fees, when asked.

Responses to statements about sellers adding types of ticket fees



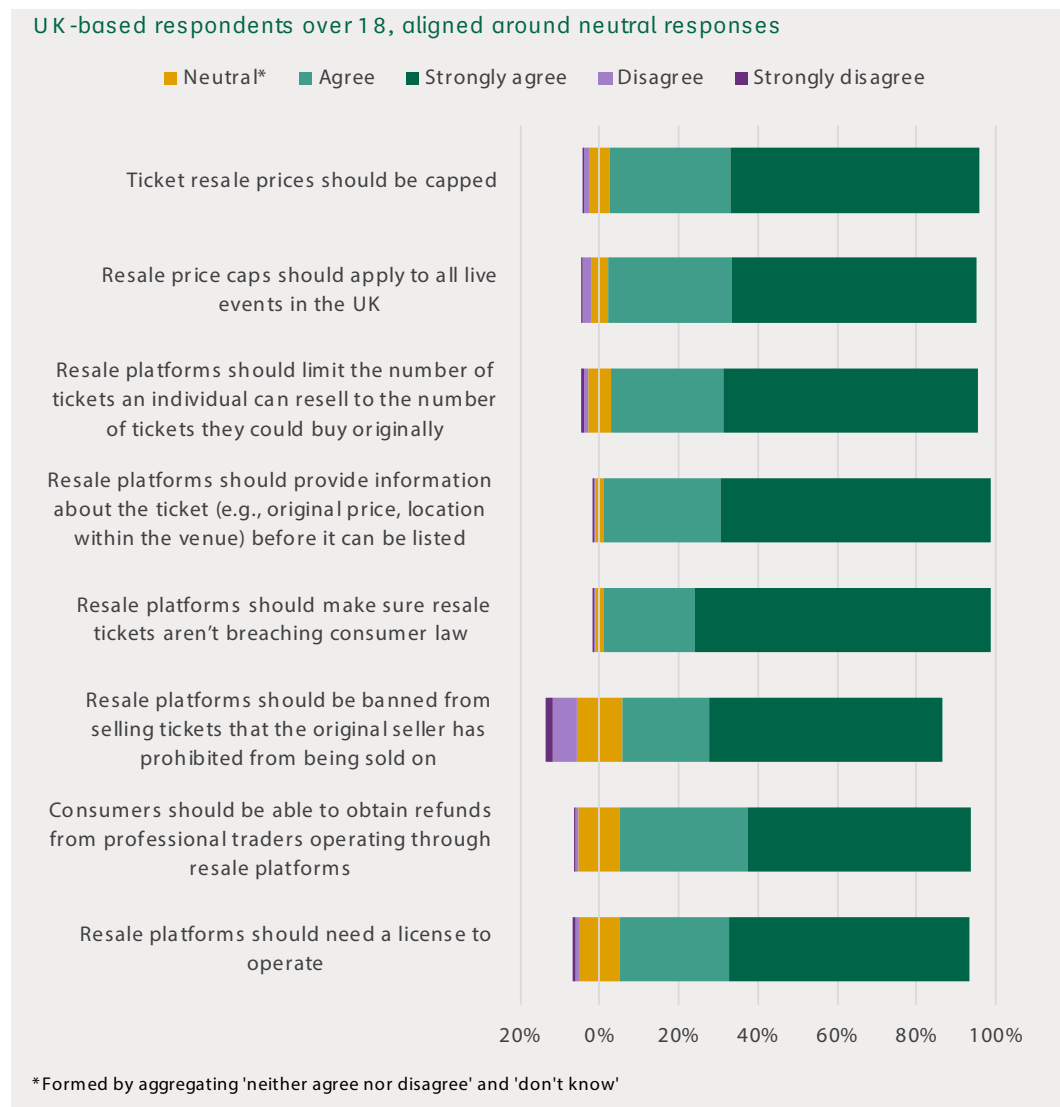
The chart below shows the responses to statements about ticketing platforms. The majority of respondents responded negatively to statements suggesting platforms act fairly or to the benefit of consumers. Respondents also disagreed with statements suggesting platforms should be able to act as promoters or venue operators.

Responses to statements about ticketing platforms



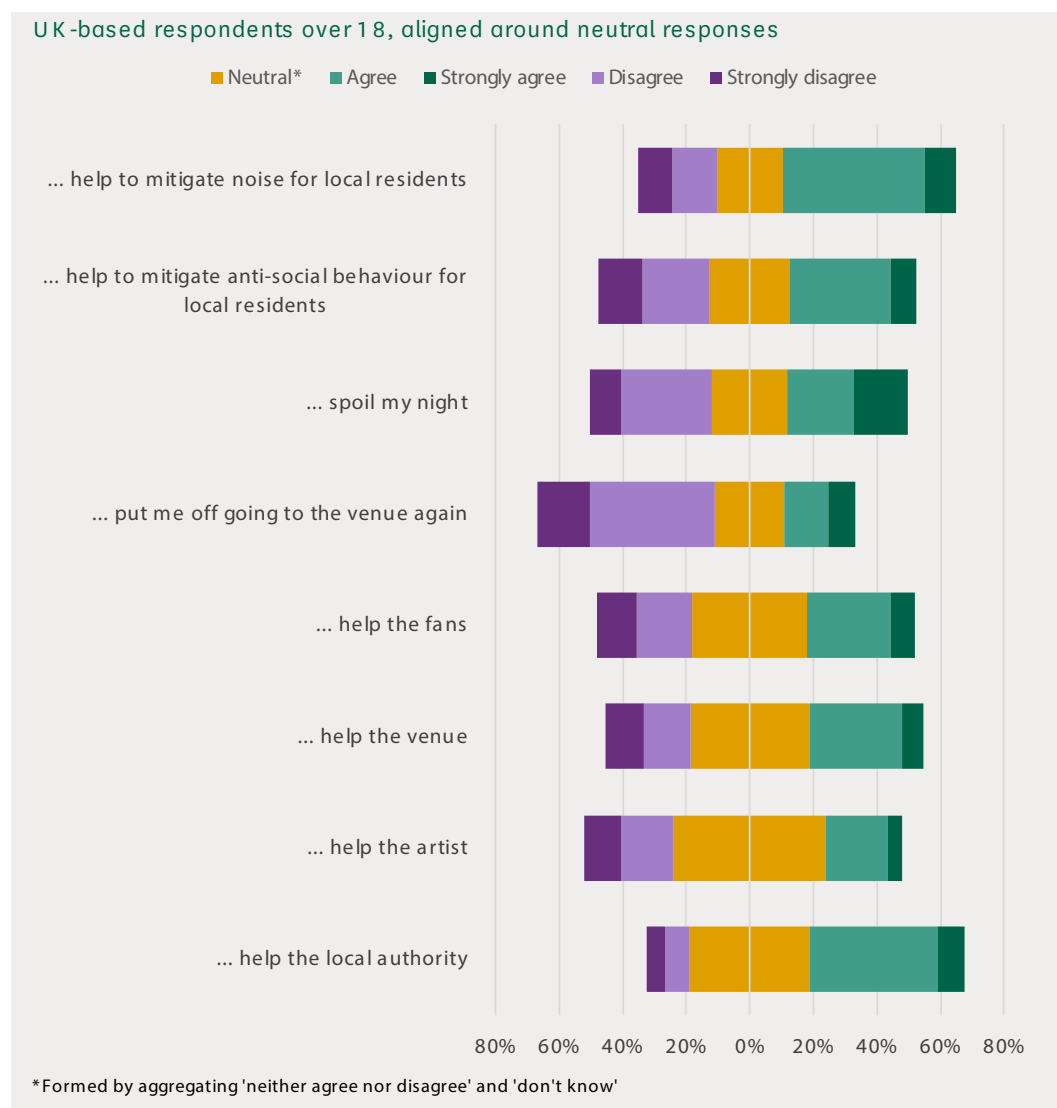
The chart shows the responses to statements about government proposals. Each of the proposals were agreed with by at least 80% of respondents. In a separate question, respondents were asked about seller obligations in the event of postponements or cancellations. 61% said that only consumers who bought insurance should be refunded for transport and hotels, but sellers should have an obligation to signpost to insurance schemes.

Responses to regulations proposed by the government

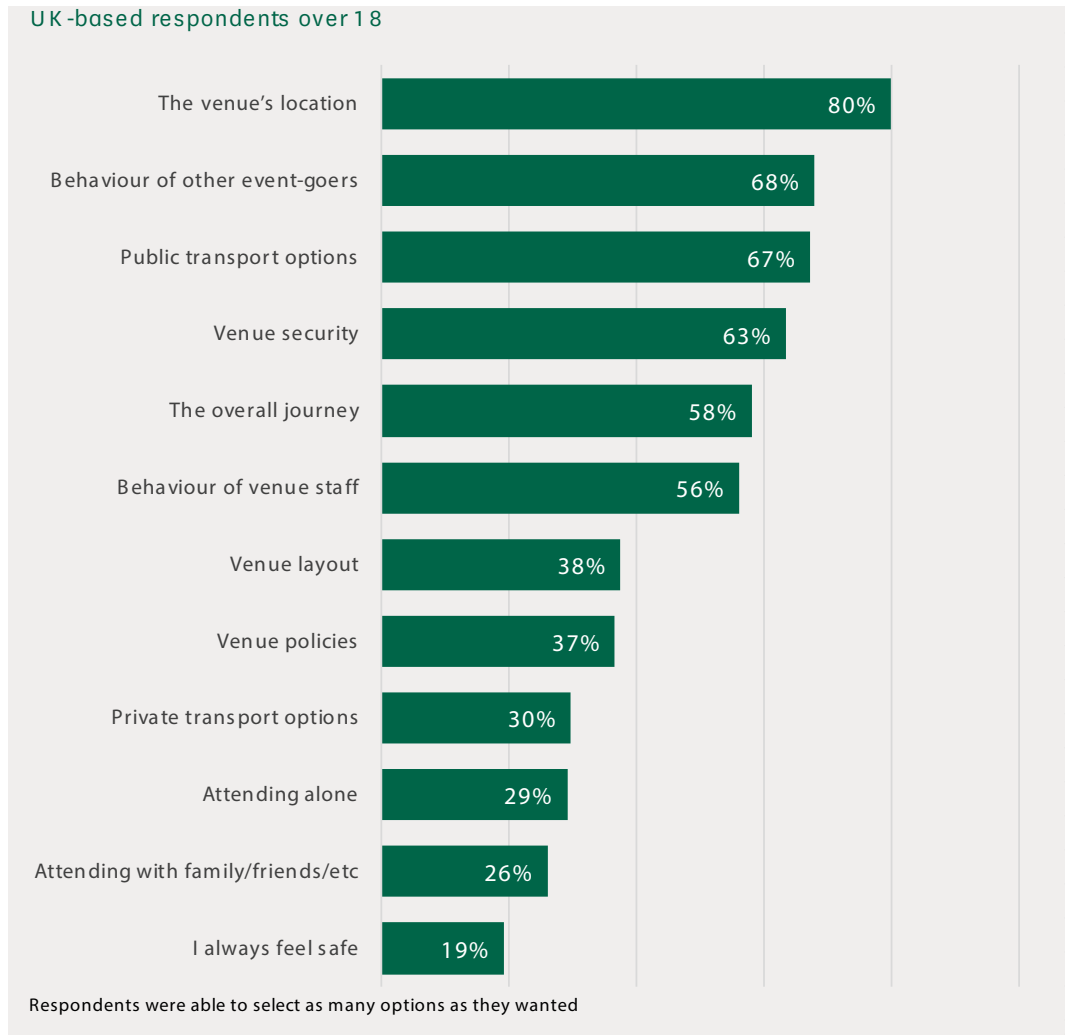


The charts below shows the responses to statements about curfews and earlier event finishing times, factors respondents consider when evaluating safety, factors that discourage use of ear protection, and agreement on statements regarding illegal drug use at music events.

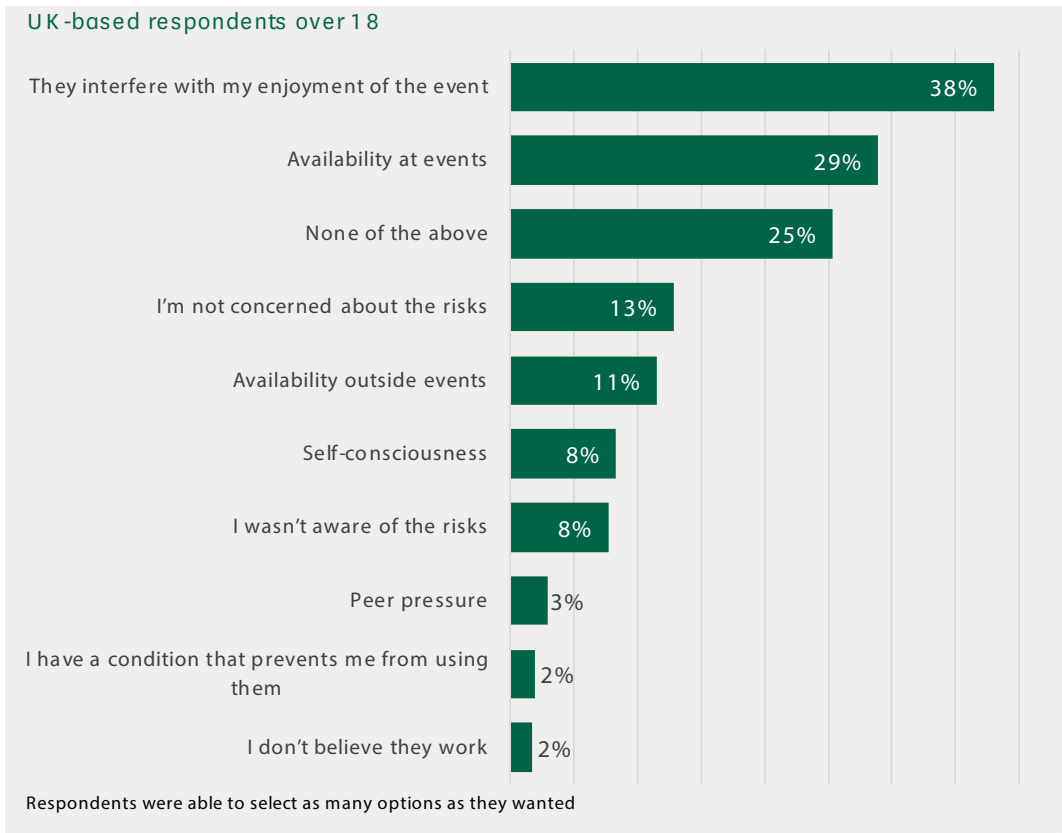
Responses to statements about curfews and earlier event finishing times



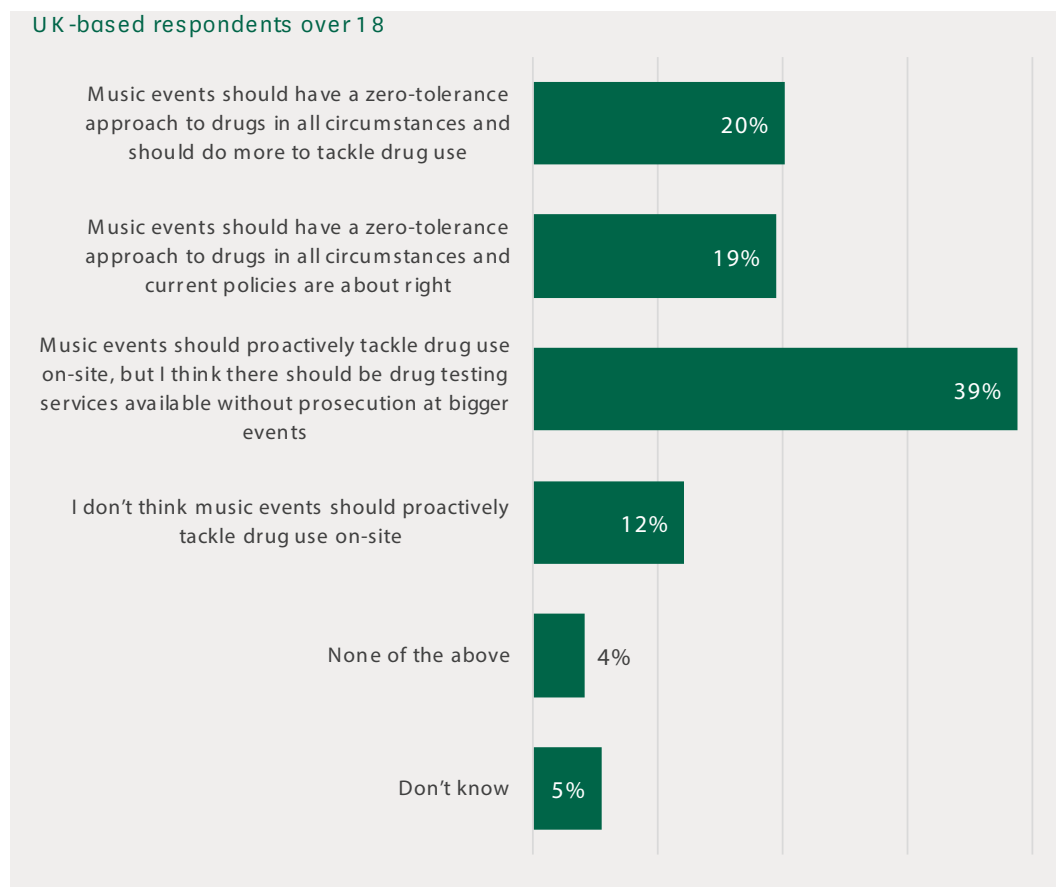
Factors respondents consider when judging the safety of an event



Factors respondents said may discourage them from using earplugs

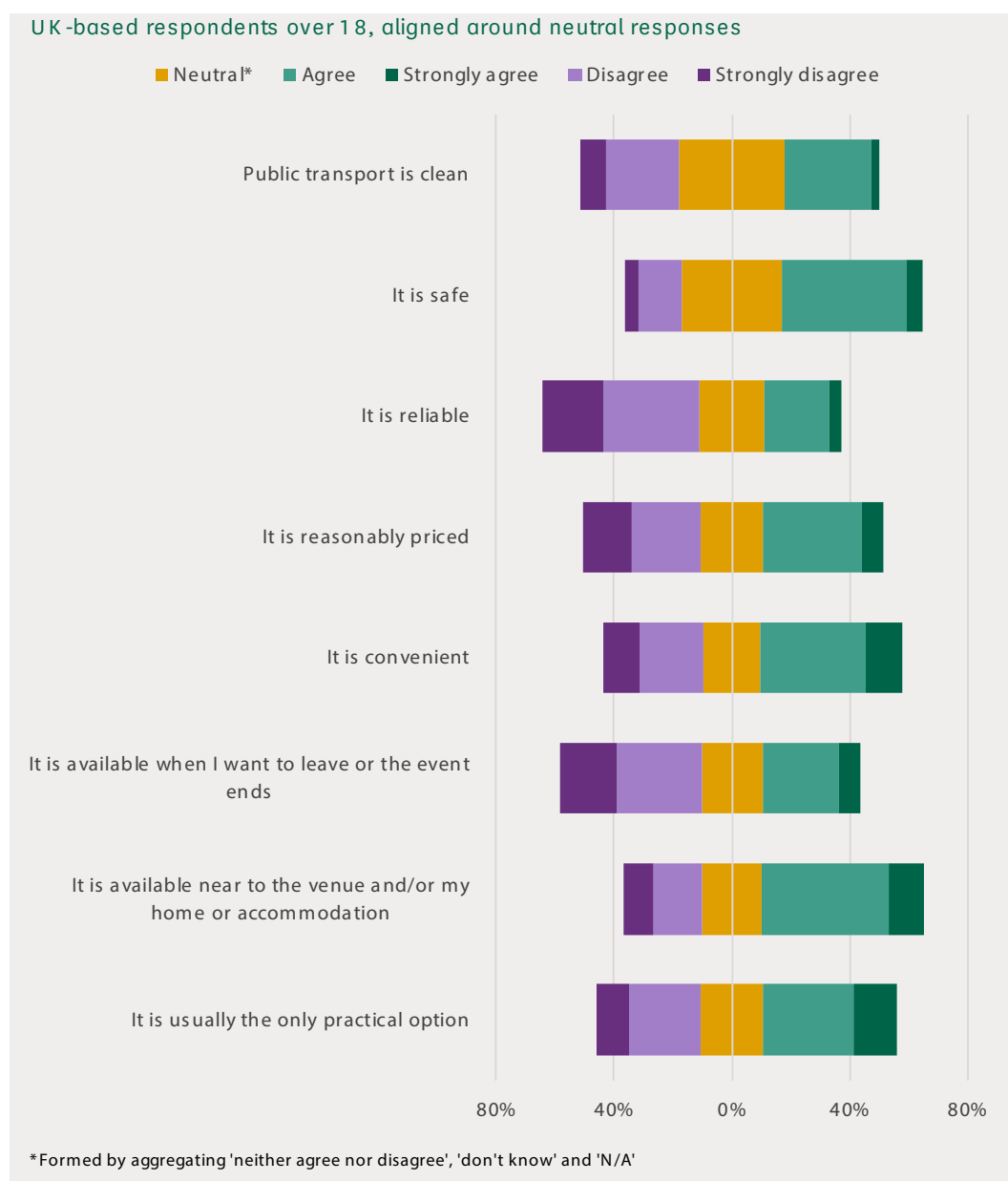


Illegal drugs at music events



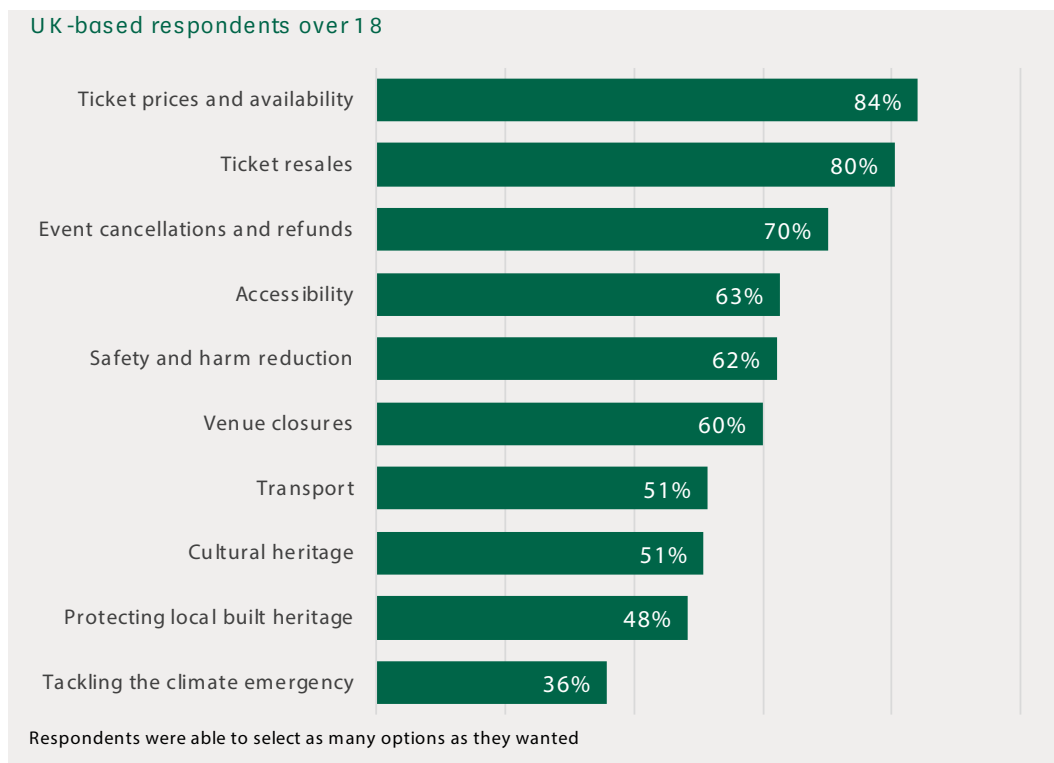
The chart below shows the responses to statements about public transport. The majority of respondents agree that public transport is safe, available (but not when they want to leave or an event ends), and is the only practical option, but a majority also disagrees that transport is reliable. Roughly equal proportions of respondents agreed, disagreed, and felt neutral on whether public transport is clean.

Responses to statements about using public transport for events



When asked, 66% of respondents would consider purchasing community shares in their local music venue, if it gave them a say in how it was run, and 77% of respondents felt there should be a Music Fans' Charter, where the music industry signs up to a set of principles by which fans should be treated. The chart below shows the topics respondents agreed should be included in a potential Charter.

Topics that should be included in a Music Fans' Charter



The word cloud below was produced from free text responses given when asked for any other things the Charter should include.



The word cloud below was produced from free text responses given when asked if there was anything else the respondents would like to say.

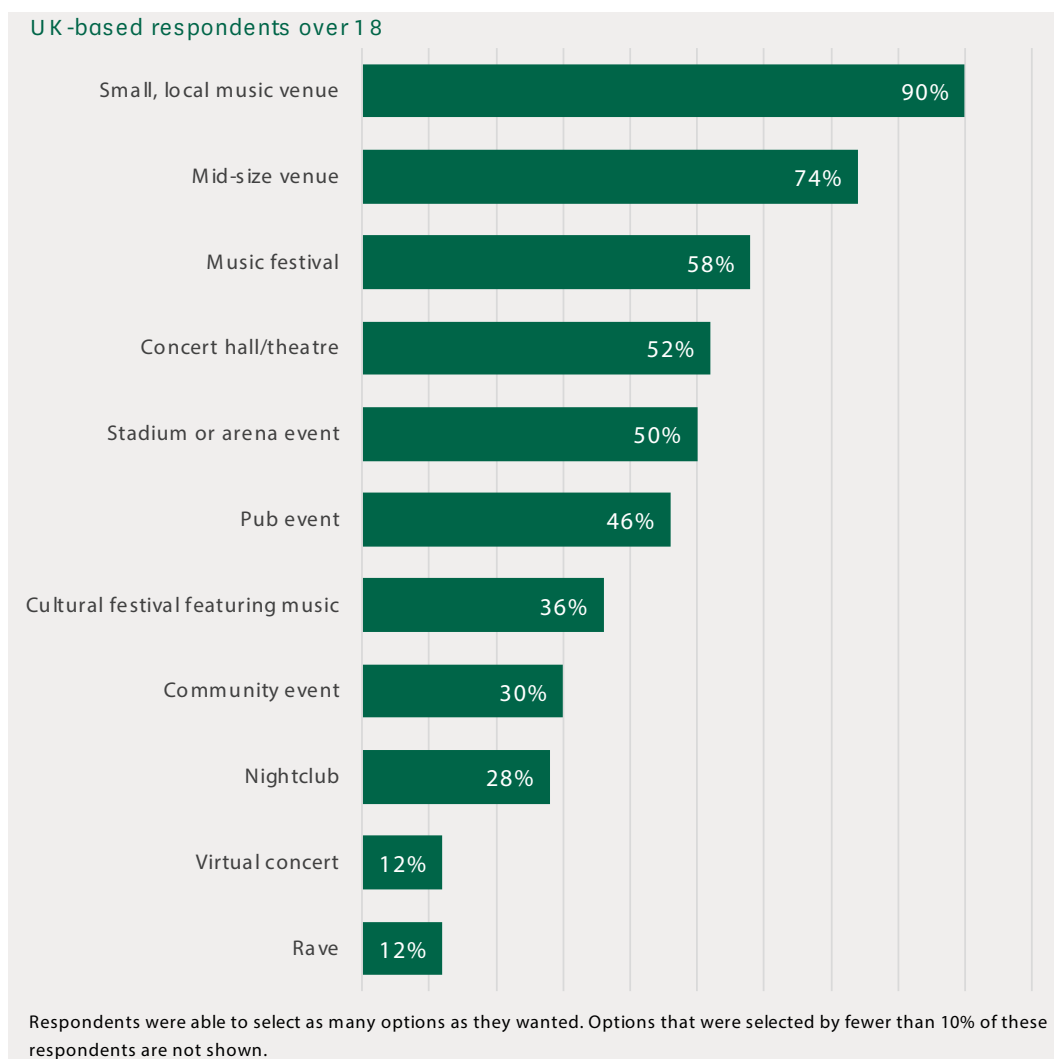


Adults who have not attended in the last three years

Of UK-based adult respondents who had not attended an event in the last three years, the most common reasons for this being selected were that they were not interested in the events on sale (47%) and the price of tickets on release (36%). 30% of respondents said it was somewhat or very likely that they would attend a music event in the future, whereas 46% said it was somewhat or very unlikely.

The chart below shows the types of events that respondents who were either likely, or neither likely nor unlikely, to attend said they might attend.

What type of venue/event respondents are likely to attend

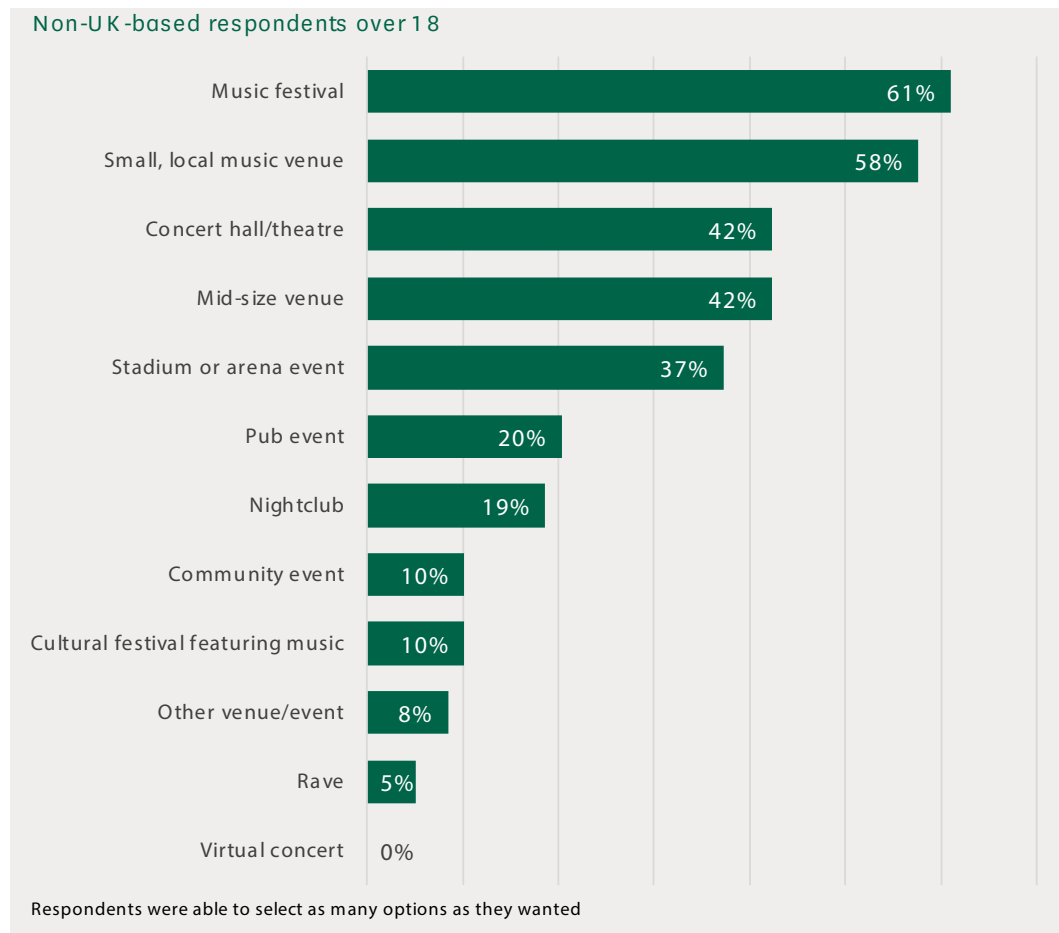


International: Adults who have attended in the last three years

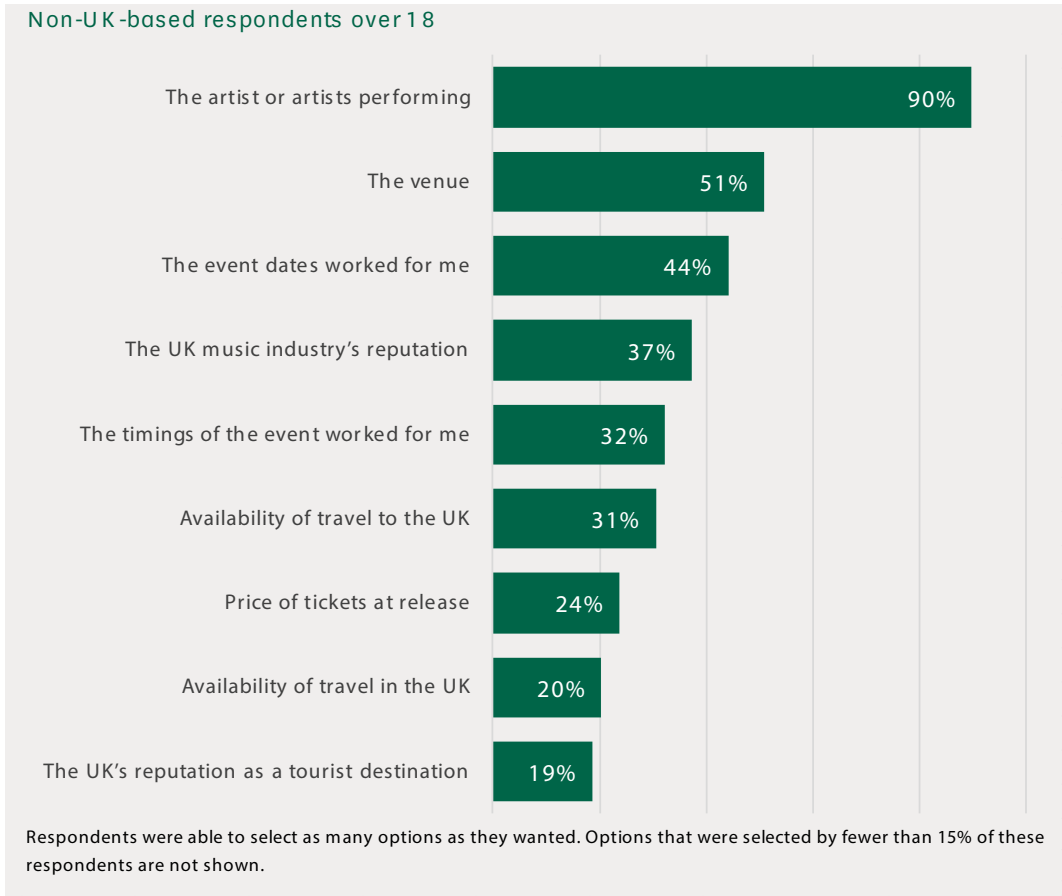
72% of respondents not based in the UK had attended a music event in the UK in the last three years, of which 80% said it was the main reason for travel. Out of respondents who had travelled to the UK, approximately 73% had done so more than once. 100% had attended an event in England, 19% in Scotland, 10% in Wales and 5% in Northern Ireland. 90% said they were either very or somewhat likely to attend another music event in the UK in the future.

The charts below show the types of events respondents had attended, the appeal for doing so, and the challenges faced before or during their trip.

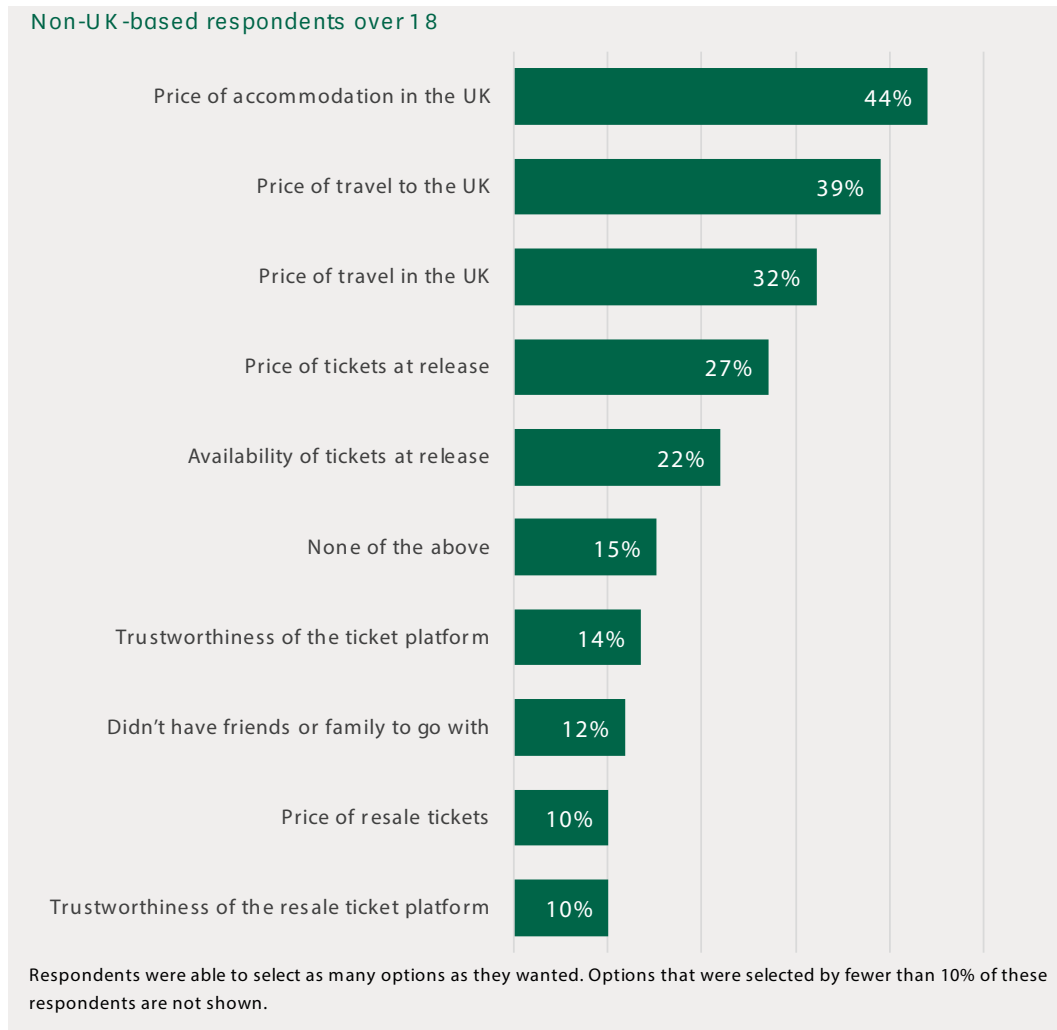
What type of venue/event did respondents attend



The appeal of travelling to the UK to attend a music event



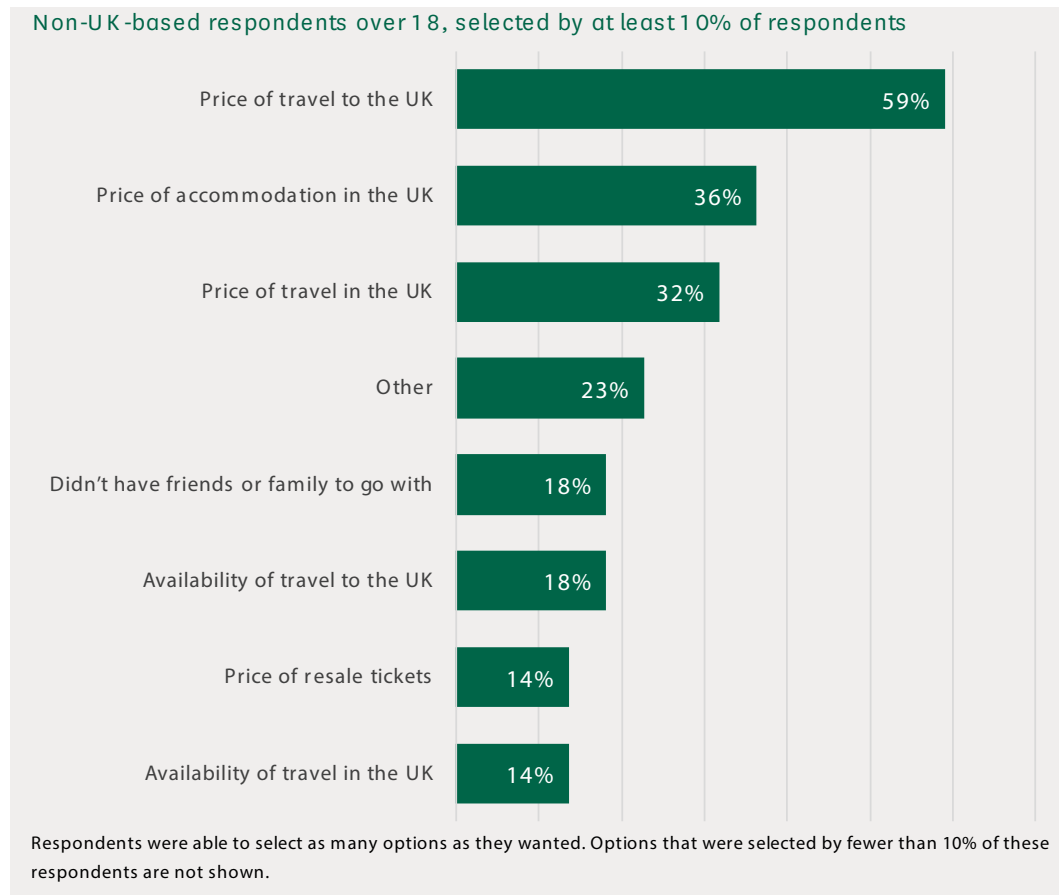
Challenges faced by respondents before or after their trip



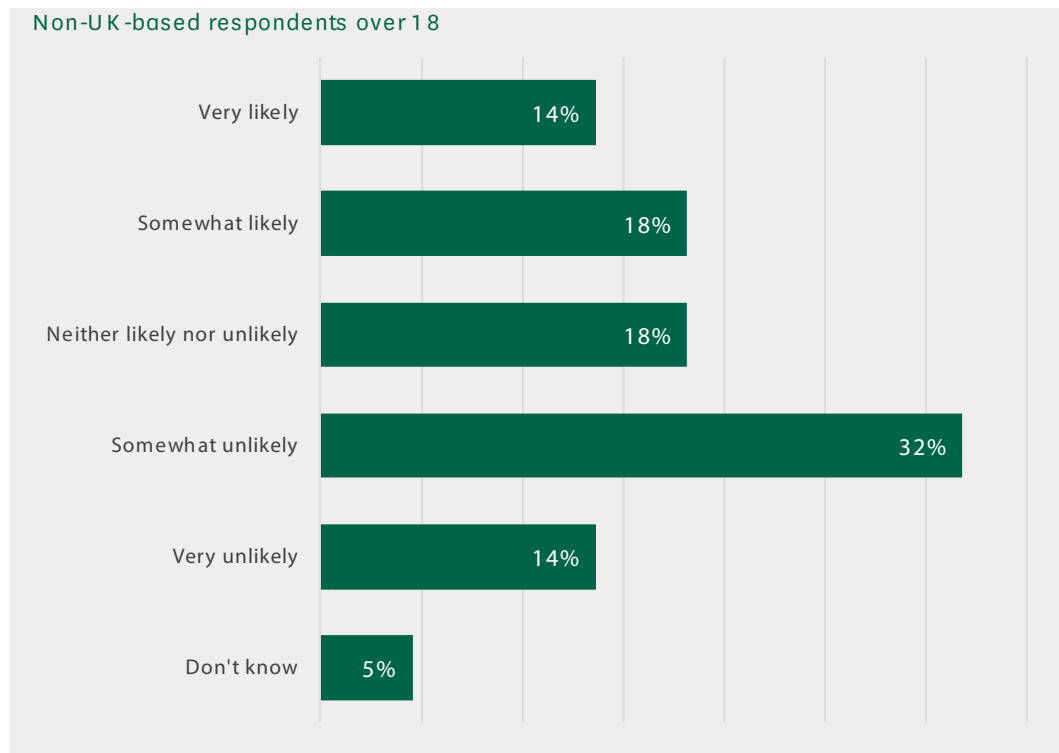
International: Adults who have not attended in the last three years

The charts below show the reasons why non-UK based respondents who had not attended a music event in the UK had chosen not to do so, the likelihood of attending an event in the future, and the types of event they would be most likely to attend.

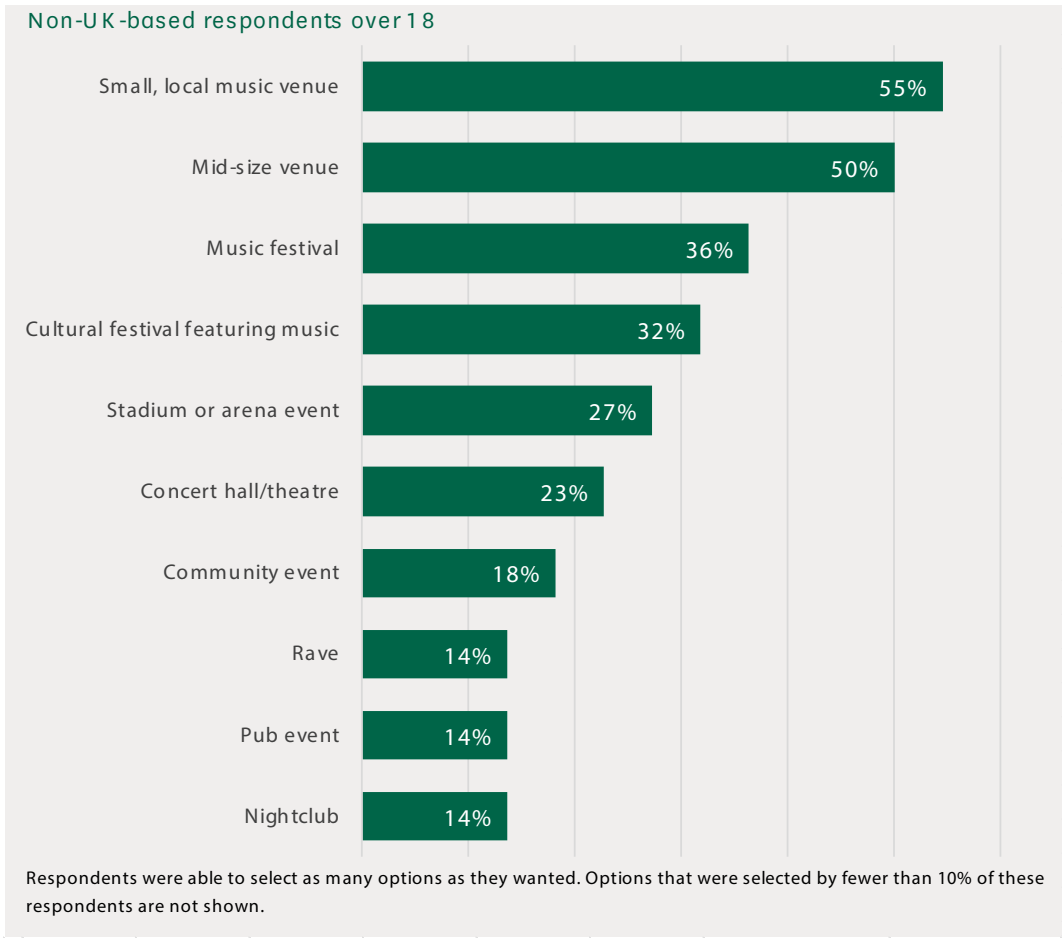
Why respondents had not travelled to the UK



Likelihood of attending an event in the UK in the future



What type of venue/event respondents are likely to attend



Fans' Charter

Celebrating live and electronic music

1. Fans' Charter principle: Celebration

Embrace live music not just for money-making but as a public good.

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should commission research to strengthen data on underrepresented live and electronic music genres, to better inform policy and funding decisions.
- Local authorities should ensure that cultural diversity in music is fully embedded within local music plans.
- The UK Government should work with regional mayors and local councils on mechanisms to support career paths into music across all genres. It should develop this strategy for music careers in collaboration with the industry and seek the support of the governments of the devolved nations for this work.
- Councils and cities that want to celebrate their local live music ecosystem should publish a music strategy, including outlining their involvement in cultural champion schemes such as the Music Cities Network, UK City/Town of Culture and UNESCO Creative Cities.
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should establish an annual, rotating roadshow that celebrates live and electronic music. This should be in addition to City/Town of Culture and look to celebrate local musical heritage in its location selection.

Ticketing

2. Fans' Charter principle: Ticketing

Treat fans with respect, providing transparency and ending rip off practices.

- Fans are concerned with the market dominance of large companies. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) should monitor the position that big corporations hold in the UK's live music industry, ensuring it is not detrimental to the fans.

- The Information Commissioner’s Office should provide clarity around the sharing of fan data and issue relevant guidance for the live music industry as to the safe and transparent use of that data. It is important for artists and promoters to access the information they need to plan and promote shows and tap into local demand, all while protecting fans’ data rights.
- The government should introduce legislation to ban the resale of tickets above face value without delay and ensure it is robustly enforced.
- Where strategies such as tiered pricing are used in the sale of tickets for live music events, they must be clearly communicated in advance and applied transparently. Following the CMA investigation the industry should continue to resist the introduction of dynamic surge pricing for gigs.
- The government should strengthen consumer protections by requiring clear, upfront information on refund policies and suitable insurance options at the point of ticket sale on online platforms.
- The live music industry, working in partnership with disability-led organisations, should standardise accessible ticketing across all platforms and providers, ensuring consistent booking processes and equal access to tickets, companion tickets, resale options and refunds for disabled fans.

Grassroots

3. Fans’ Charter principle: Grassroots

Nurture grassroots and community live music for its own sake and as the incubator of future success.

- The music industry and local councils should work together to support mentorship schemes for emerging local promoters and venue operators.
- The UK Government should take powers in its forthcoming ticketing legislation to introduce a mandatory levy on larger events to redistribute resources to grassroots venues, festivals, promoters and emerging artists should the voluntary approach prove inadequate.
- Local authorities, venues, artists and fans should work together to maintain up-to-date local listings so audiences can easily find out what is happening in their area.

- Promoters, touring artists and managers should prioritise up-and-coming talent by providing platforms for emerging artists, including opportunities for local artists to perform live.
- Artists and managers should be encouraged and allowed in large venue contracts to play in smaller venues to strengthen local scenes and increase the visibility of grassroots spaces.
- The UK Government should embed the ‘agent of change’ principle in planning legislation in England. Following Scotland’s example, we would like to see the principle strengthened in law across the whole of the UK.
- Local authorities should encourage the temporary repurposing of unused buildings as live and electronic music spaces for cultural and community benefit. The UK Government in consultation with devolved governments should draw on best practice to establish clear national guidance to support consistency across local authorities.
- Local authorities should have a cabinet member with ‘music’ specified within their portfolio.
- The live and electronic music sector should adopt a presumption against the use of exclusivity practices such as ‘radius clauses’.

Safety

4. Fans’ Charter principle: Safety

Prioritise protecting fans from harm of injury, crime, violence, harassment and discrimination at and around gigs.

- Venues, festivals and promoters should ensure clear, visible signposting and safe reporting mechanisms for fans who experience or witness harassment, assault or other safety concerns, including digital options such as QR codes.
- Venues and festivals should ensure consistent welfare and safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers.
- Third-party security firms should provide staff training to meet fans’ safeguarding needs, including responding to sexual assault, disability awareness, and anti-discriminatory practice. The music industry and UK Government, in consultation with devolved governments, should work together to ensure a new level of accreditation is available.
- Venues and third-party firms should review their recruitment practices to ensure venue teams reflect the diversity of audiences.

- Fans organisations should work together with industry and local authorities to produce a fan-to-fan Code of Conduct that all fans should adhere to. This Code of Conduct should then be made clearly visible at every music venue and festival.
- Local authorities should coordinate with venues and events, especially smaller operators, to ensure fans are safe before, during and after live and electronic music events.
- Venues and local authorities should work closely with relevant public health services to provide access to harm reduction services, such as drug testing, especially at large scale events and festivals, and educational materials for staff and audiences around drug use and how to respond in emergencies. The Home Office should extend licensed drug checking services where this is shown to reduce harm to fans.
- Venues and festivals should provide safe, free drinking water at all events, in a variety of locations, including in non-bar areas.
- Venues, festivals and promoters should promote hearing safety as an important part of the live music experience. Ear plugs should be easily available for those who want them at all live and electronic music events.

Accessibility

5. Fans' Charter principle: Accessibility

Always think access for all and act accordingly.

- Where possible, venues should work towards allocating a minimum of 2% of their total capacity to wheelchair accessible spaces. Local authorities should ensure this target is part of planning requirements for new or refurbished venues.
- Promoters and artists should consider the access needs of audiences and accessibility of venues when booking shows and tours.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission, in consultation with disability-led organisations, should provide clear guidance on what constitutes reasonable adjustments at live and electronic music events, both indoor and outdoor. We recommend a similar review of accessibility at live events in Northern Ireland to ensure disabled fans are not excluded.

- The UK Government and music industry bodies, in consultation with devolved governments, should commission disability-led organisations to develop a UK-wide disability access kitemark for all third-party providers, such as those supplying event infrastructure, security, training and ticketing. Venues and festivals should only use kite-marked providers.
- Where possible venues and festivals should encourage everyone on-site during a live event to adopt the principles of Stay Up Late's 'relaxed manifesto' to promote a respectful and inclusive experience for all.
- Venues should provide clear information about the layout of their premises, inviting regular feedback from fans as to where access improvements should be made. Where possible, we recommend venues provide virtual 'walk arounds' on their websites.
- Venues, festivals and promoters should commit to diverse programmes to ensure line-ups, spaces and timings reflect their communities.

Transport

6. Fans' Charter principle: Transport

Make live music a central part of transport policy and planning everywhere.

- The Department for Transport, in partnership with devolved governments, local authorities and transport operators, should commission research into late-night economy mobility gaps between cities, towns and rural communities.
- Local authorities and transport providers should work together with venues to display up-to-date and reliable transport information inside music venues and at festival information points and exits.
- Transport operators should ensure that accessible transport options are available for people with access requirements. Local authorities should review the provision of disabled parking around live and electronic music venues to ensure that supply meets demand.
- Local authorities and transport operators should coordinate to align late-night transport schedules with live and electronic music event and venue closing times.
- Venues, promoters, and ticketing platforms should develop and adopt an industry-wide standard for publishing clear stage start and finish times so fans can plan their journeys home in advance.

- Local live and electronic music networks, including promoters and venues, should explore the demand for earlier live music performance times and daytime events.

Fan voice

7. Fans' Charter principle: Voice

Listen, promote and support the voice of music fans of every genre.

- The government and music industry should establish and fund a Music Fans Association (MFA), similar to football, to enable greater fan representation in music policy, consumer rights, and decision making. The government should provide initial seed funding, with the music industry taking on the role of long-term funding partners.
- Local authorities should hold regular live and electronic music forums with fans, promoters, venue owners, musicians and agents to capture fan insights. Forums should be inclusive and accessible to all fans and encourage them to speak openly about their experiences.
- The government should commission an annual music fans' survey from 2027 to provide government, industry and other stakeholders with regular insight into live and electronic music fans. Each edition should include a rotating deep-dive into different genres to ensure underrepresented genres, groups and audiences are fully understood by government, industry and local authorities.