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UK Live Comedy Sector

SURVEY REPORT 2025

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Forewords

“We all know the creative importance of the live stand-up sector to British comedy, and this report gives many useful insights into the challenges comedians are facing right now. Grassroots comedy is important to grow the stars of the future and bring audiences together, and UK-wide representation of comics is a big priority for Radio 4, so I'm delighted that we're partnering with the Live Comedy Association and others to shine a light on the stand-up scene across the UK.”

- Julia McKenzie, Commissioning Editor for Comedy and Entertainment BBC Radio 4 and LCA Advisory Panel member

“It is an honour to contribute a few words to this vital and timely report from the Live Comedy Association, a body whose emergence feels not only necessary but overdue. For too long, live comedy has operated in the cultural shadows; its value assumed but unmeasured, its workforce resilient yet undervalued. What this survey makes clear, with compelling detail, is that comedy is not a side show. It is a main event in our communities, in our economy, and in our collective cultural life.

“The LCA has arrived at a pivotal moment. As grassroots music venues know all too well, the ecosystem of live performance is fragile, interdependent, and too often overlooked by policy and funding structures that favour the established and the institutional. Comedy shares this space, literally and figuratively. It thrives in the same rooms, draws from the same communities, and relies on the same spirit of risk, intimacy and immediacy that defines grassroots music. And, as this report demonstrates, it is growing: in reach, in relevance, and in its economic footprint.

“For venues, comedy represents more than just another night in the diary. It is a growth field, a way to diversify programming, to bring in new audiences, and to strengthen the financial and social foundations of our spaces. In an era of rising costs and squeezed margins, that is not just good to have; it is essential. Comedy nights build midweek trade, foster local talent, and create those vital, informal networks that turn a venue into a hub.

“But growth must be responsible. The findings here, around pay stagnation, regional imbalance, and the barriers faced by underrepresented comedians, are a call to action. They remind us that a thriving sector is an equitable one. The LCA's mission to champion comedy as a recognised art form, to improve working conditions, and to map the landscape properly, aligns directly with the work many of us are doing in music. Our struggles are shared, and so too should be our advocacy.

“This report gives us something we have lacked for too long: evidence. It quantifies the scale, highlights the challenges, and, crucially, charts a path forward. I welcome the LCA as a natural ally in the fight to sustain and celebrate grassroots culture. Together, we can ensure that the stages of the UK remain open, diverse, and alive with laughter, with music, and with the sense of community that both art forms create night after night.”

- Mark Davyd, CEO & Founder, Music Venue Trust

“As CEO of the Night Time Industries Association, I am delighted to endorse the UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025. This report provides a vital, evidence-based insight into the economic, social, and cultural contributions of live comedy across the UK.

“The survey highlights both the vibrancy and resilience of the sector, while also illuminating the economic challenges, inequalities, and regional imbalances that performers and organisations face. Live comedy is not only a driver of economic activity but also enriches communities, supports emerging talent, and strengthens the night-time economy.

“The Survey's recommendations are essential for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and cultural bodies seeking to ensure that live comedy thrives sustainably and inclusively. By recognising comedy as a significant art form and supporting its practitioners, we can safeguard this uniquely British cultural export, while reinforcing its role in sustaining vibrant, accessible, and economically robust night-time cultural ecosystems.”

- Michael Kill, CEO, Night Time Industries Association and LCA Advisory Panel member

Live Comedy Association

The LCA is a not for profit, community interest company, incorporated on 11th January 2021 and with a registered office in Manchester.

The organisation aims to represent and connect the UK live comedy industry. Its current focus is to lobby governments to recognise the live comedy sector as an essential part of the UK's creative industries.

Membership remains free to anyone working in the live comedy sector in the UK. There are currently 1,486 members.

livecomedyassociation.co.uk

LIVE COMEDY ASSOCIATION

Executive Summary

This report details the main findings of the UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025 run by the Centre for Comedy Studies Research (CCSR), the Live Comedy Association (LCA) and British Comedy Guide (BCG). This is a follow-up to the first Live Comedy Sector Survey, conducted in 2024, and examines the economic, social and cultural impact of the UK live comedy sector. It also provides a progress update on the series of recommendations made in the 2024 report.

The 2025 survey was completed by 272 people working in UK live comedy. The 2024 survey was completed by 366 people. The 2025 survey was open for completion at different times of the year compared to the 2024 survey, which may have led to fewer responses. 63% of respondents were comedians and 37% were people working as either comedy promoters, producers, venue managers, festival organisers, agents, technicians, publishers, journalists or comedy critics. Survey findings and their related recommendations are clustered around 4 key themes:

1. The **Economics of the Live Comedy Sector** theme focuses on the size and scale of live comedy, numbers of shows and ticket sales, and turnover, income and expenditure.

Key findings illustrate how the live comedy sector is characterised by economic differences and economic inequalities. Whilst 45% of comedy organisations have been working in the sector for 16 years or more, only 7% are newcomers to the sector. 27% of comedians reported working in live comedy for 16 years or more, and 18% reported being relatively new to the sector, with more newcomer comedians to the sector being reported than in 2024's survey.

The number of shows promoted by comedy organisations annually ranges from 12 or fewer, to 500 and over, with between 50 and 99 shows being promoted receiving the most responses from comedy organisations. The average number of shows performed by comedians per week is 2.54 - a reduction from the 3.2 average shows a week in 2024.

Survey data illustrates that the average annual turnover (not profit) for comedy organisations is £527,295.79, down from £962,212.50 in 2024. The average annual turnover of individual comedians is £21,143, down from £26,778 in 2024. 74% of comedians reported having other paid employment, up from 62% in 2024. These changes may be partly due to fewer responses in the 2025 survey.

Both comedy organisations and comedians reported that over the last 2- or 3-years expenditure has increased for all costs, from fuel and insurance through to accommodation and postage. Comedians reported how economically tough working in live comedy is, with several comedians specifically referring to unpaid gigs, pay stagnation, delays in fees being paid and economic imbalances in the sector as particular concerns, as was the case in 2024.

In August 2025 the Chair of the CMS Select Committee wrote to the Arts Minister suggesting the government put in place various interventions to support those working in live comedy. One of the interventions was “the Government should work with funding bodies to establish an independent, accurate assessment of the size and distribution of the live comedy sector.” The LCA very much endorses this and will continue to work with partners, including the Centre for Comedy Studies Research, to lobby for this work to take place.

2. The **Spaces and Place of Live Comedy** theme explores the geography and locality of live comedy.

Key findings demonstrate the continued dominance of London and the South East in the live comedy sector. 25% of single location comedy organisations are based in London and 11% in the South East with only 4% each in Wales, the West Midlands and East Anglia. Although 22% of comedians report performing in a range of locations, 19% report performing in London and 11% in the South East, with 12% performing in Yorkshire and Humber and 10% in the North West. Comedians reported living in a greater range of locations this year compared to last year’s survey with fewer numbers living in London, down 9%, and the North West, down 5%.

Live comedy, on the whole, continues to be an urban activity with only 5% of comedy venues located in rural areas and only 1% of comedians reporting that they perform in rural venues. As with last year's survey findings, live comedy attracts local and regional audiences with comedy organisations reporting that their audiences travel locally, under 10 miles (39% of comedy organisations) or regionally, from 10 to 50 miles (40% of comedy organisations).

The LCA recognises there are a series of factors which have resulted in the London bias of the sector. They also recognise the importance of highlighting and showcasing the amazing work being done across the UK, in villages, towns, cities and regions. As an organisation they will continue to promote good practice, especially outside of London, and where possible deliver events programme across the UK, for example in Brighton, Edinburgh, Manchester and Leicester.

3. The **Social Impact of Live Comedy** theme examines the contribution that live comedy makes to individuals, groups and society.

Survey responses demonstrate how the UK live comedy sector impacts audiences, communities and organisations in several important ways. A range of social impacts are reported by comedy organisations including contributing to a vibrant cultural offer (76%), providing opportunities for new and emerging comedians to perform (69%) and celebrating British comedy and humour (68%). Cross sector working characterises live comedy, as charity work continues to be a significant aspect of live comedy, with 76% of comedy organisations and 78% of comedians being involved with charity work annually. Similarly, community projects, opportunities for volunteering and training and development continue to be important for both comedy organisations and comedians, with a greater percentage of comedians reporting this year that they benefit from comedy workshops or masterclasses - 46% in 2025 compared to 41% in 2024.

The LCA will continue to showcase the social impact of live comedy, and work with partners (including the CCSR, BCG, Music Venue Trust and Night Time Industries Association) to promote the social value of live comedy shows, venues and festivals, in supporting a robust and thriving UK creative landscape.

4. The **Inequalities and Inequities of Live Comedy** theme reveals demographic characteristics of those who work in live comedy and the equality, diversity and inclusion concerns that those working in the sector consider need addressing by the sector.

New questions in this year's survey asked respondents to share demographics details to provide a clearer understanding of who works in the UK live comedy sector. The majority of respondents described themselves as white British or white (86.1%), male (60.7%) and middle class (51.2%). The age group with most responses was 30 to 39 years old (30%), with the over-60 category receiving 15% of responses and the between 18 and 29 years category receiving only 6% of responses. Almost one fifth (23%) of respondents identified as having a disability or impairment. Identity biases related to ethno-religion and gender were raised in the qualitative comments.

The LCA will work with members and partners to continue to seek to improve working conditions for all those working in live comedy across the UK. They will organise a specific members' workshop with Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (ciisa.org.uk). They will promote, and add to, the "training and development" section of their website, which contains information of programmes and projects that support people working in our sector, especially those who may have been traditionally facing barriers.

We are sincerely grateful for everyone who took part in the 2025 survey - thank you for sharing your experiences, information and time. We are also keen to hear your thoughts about the survey report and/or ideas for future UK live comedy sector research topics or questions. Please do get in touch via email: Comedy.Studies@brunel.ac.uk

Sharon Lockyer & Simon Weaver (Centre for Comedy Studies Research)
https://www.brunel.ac.uk/research/Networks-and-Labs/Centre-for-Comedy-Studies-Research

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Introducing the UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025 that was conducted by the Centre for Comedy Studies Research (CCSR), the Live Comedy Association (LCA) and British Comedy Guide (BCG). The survey examines the size, scale, impact and demographics of the current live comedy sector in the UK. This is only the second time that the live comedy sector in the UK has been surveyed and examined in this way.

Last year's UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2024 report aimed to address gaps in knowledge and understanding about the economic, social and cultural benefits of the live comedy sector in order to support and promote UK live comedy. These aims were achieved, as evidenced in a number of significant ways. Most notably, this included some of the report authors (along with other live comedy sector representatives) providing expert evidence at the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's State of Play evidence session on live comedy in April 2025 (please see: https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/7ad49556-4d37-4a52-9728-71e4d2a75124). The survey report and evidence was also quoted in a letter sent from the CMS Committee Chair to the Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism in August 2025 calling for live comedy to be recognised as a distinct art form and requesting that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport engages with the sector on how the DCMS understands and funds live comedy (please see: https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8784/state-of-play/publications/3/correspondence/). These are significant developments towards the live comedy sector gaining recognition from government, DCMS and other related organisations. However, there is still more work to be done to ensure this recognition is given. This year's follow-up UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025 provides sector insights related to the economic, social and cultural contribution and impacts of UK live comedy that are central for the continued lobbying for comedy to be recognised as an art form.

The UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025 builds on the UK Live Comedy Sector Survey that was conducted in 2024, allowing for comparative analysis and reflection on the progress reached in relation to the recommendations made in the 2024 survey. As the survey is repeated over time the comparative analyses will be extended and deepened.

This online survey took place between 15th July and 18th August 2025 and 13th October and 24th October 2025. The survey was completed by 272 people working in UK live comedy*. 63% of respondents were comedians and 37% were people working as either comedy promoters, producers, venue managers, festival organisers, agents, technicians, publishers, journalists or comedy critics. Survey insights focus on the economic structures and dynamics of the UK live comedy sector, regional variations, venue and performances features and social and cultural impacts. This year's report also gathers demographics details of those working in UK live comedy. The report presents quantitative findings on these topics, supplementing these with qualitative comments made by survey respondents in open text sections of the survey.

The UK Live Comedy Sector Survey was administered by Brunel University of London and ethical approval to conduct the survey was received from the College of Arts, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Brunel University of London.

The Economics of the Live Comedy Sector

Size and Scale of Live Comedy

Survey results reveal that there are 1,810 people working in the comedy organisations that responded to the survey in 2025. This is an increase on the 1,566 people working in comedy organisations that responded to the UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2024, despite a smaller number of comedy organisations completing this survey question this year (96 in 2025 compared to 115 in 2024). The average number of people working in a comedy organisation is 18.85 and up from 10.875 in 2024. The smallest comedy organisation consists of one person, and the largest comedy organisation comprises 300 people (up from 200 in 2024). Similar percentages of comedy organisations are sole traders (45%) or limited companies (43%). A further 5% of comedy organisations have charitable status and the 'other' statuses, which account for 7% of comedy organisations, include collectives, partnerships and university-owned organisations. The majority of comedians are sole traders as 88% of comedians identified with this set up, which is a slight reduction from 2024's figures, where 93% of comedians reported being sole traders. This year, 8% of comedians reported being members of a comedy group or collective, up from 6% in 2024. 'Other' comedian statuses noted by 4% of comedian respondents included comedians working both partly on their own and part of a comedy group.

This year's survey highlights that 17% of comedy organisations have been working in UK live comedy between 3 and 5 years. Another 17% of comedy organisations reported that they have been working in UK live comedy between 6 and 10 years. A further 14% of comedy organisations reported working in the sector between 11 and 15 years. A total of 45% of comedy organisations who responded have been working in the sector for 16 years or more. A more detailed breakdown of these figures shows that 10% have been working between 16 and 20 years, 11% between 21 and 25 years, 7% between 26 and 30 years, 8% between 31 and 35 years, 1% between 36 and 40 years and 8% more than 40 years. Only 7% of comedy organisations are relatively new to the sector with 4% reporting that they have been working in the sector less than 12 months and 3% between 1 and 2 years - these are similar percentages for these periods revealed in the 2024 survey.

49%
OF VENUES HAVE UP TO 10 STAFF WORKING EACH NIGHT

45%
OF ORGANISATIONS HAVE BEEN WORKING **16+ YEARS**

44%
OF COMICS HAVE BEEN PERFORMING FOR **10+ YEARS**

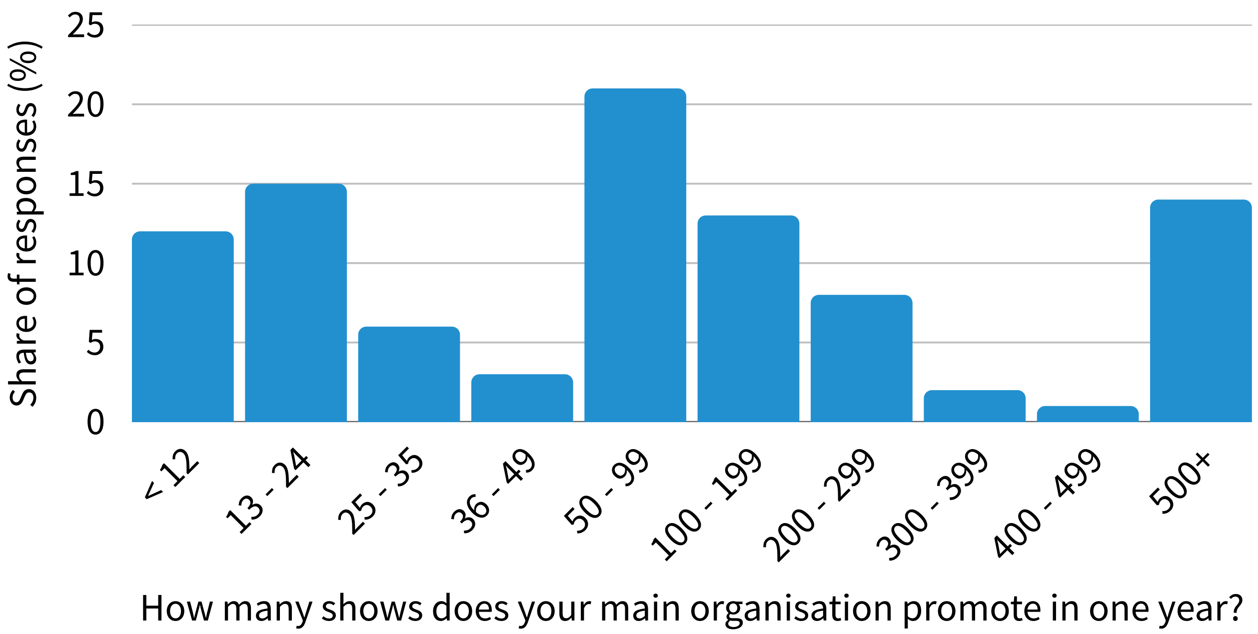
88%
OF COMICS ARE **SOLE TRADERS**

The length of time that comedians have been working in live comedy in the UK follows a similar pattern to comedy organisations. Exactly the same percentage of comedians reported that they have been working in live comedy between 3 and 5 years as did comedy organisations - 17% respectively. A further 20% of comedians reported working in the sector between 6 and 10 years and another 17% reported working in live comedy between 11 and 15 years. A total of 27% of comedians reported working in UK live comedy for 16 years or more, which included 5% reporting between 16 and 20 years, 9% reporting between 21 and 25 years, 4% reporting between 26 and 30 years, 2% reporting between 31 and 35 years, another 2% reporting between 36 and 40 years and 5% reporting more than 40 years in the sector. A total of 18% of comedians reported being relatively new to the sector, with 6% reporting that they have been performing less than 12 months (up from 3% in 2024) and 12% between 1 and 2 years (up from 5% in 2024).

The number of people working in a comedy organisation's main venue on a typical night - including volunteers, staff, security, technical and catering crew - varies across the sector. 19% of comedy organisations report less than 5 people working on any one night (up from 11% in 2024) and 1% reporting 41 or more people (down from 3% in 2024). The categories that received the most responses from comedy organisations are between 5 and 10 people working on a typical night, with 30% of responses, and between 11 and 20 people with 21% of responses. These are similar percentages for these two categories highlighted in 2024, with 34% and 19% respectively.

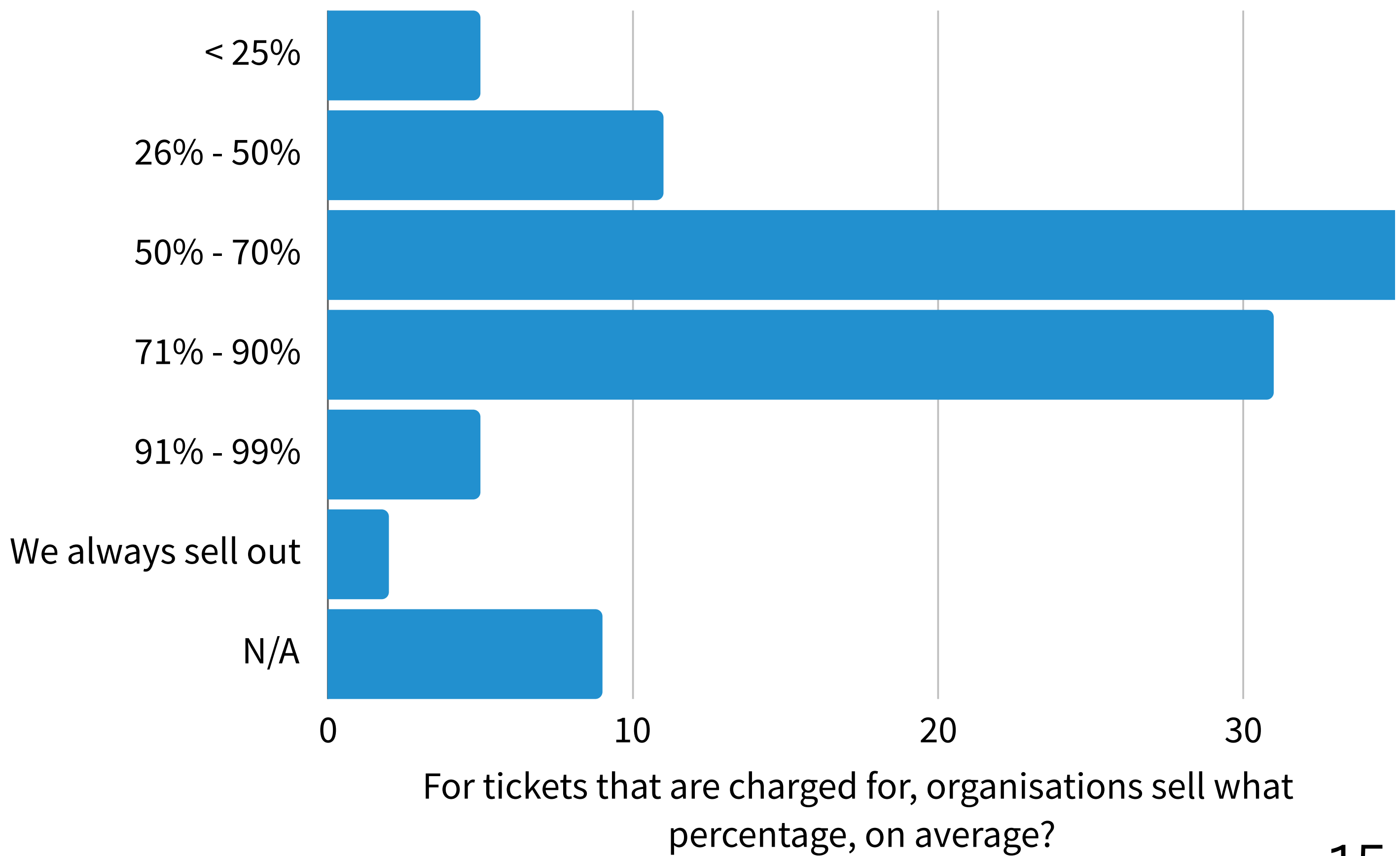
Shows and Tickets Sales in Live Comedy

The number of shows that comedy organisations promote in one year varies from 12 or fewer to 500 and over. The number of shows that received the most responses from comedy organisations was between 50 and 99 promoted shows, with 21% of comedy organisations reporting this number of shows (up from 15% in 2024). The next most popular number of shows for comedy organisations is between 13 and 24, with 15% of comedy organisations reporting this number (up from 9% in 2024), and 500 and over, with 14% of comedy organisations reporting this number of shows (up from 11% in 2024). Twenty four percent of comedy organisations reported promoting between 100 and 499 shows. Breaking these figures down further highlights that 13% reported between 100 and 199 shows promoted, 8% reported promoting between 200 and 299 shows, 2% between 300 and 399 and 1% between 400 and 499. Twelve or fewer shows are promoted per year by 12% of comedy organisations.



Comedians who responded to the survey and who are currently performing live comedy, perform a total of 414.25 shows per week, with each comedian performing an average of 2.54 shows in a typical week (down from an average of 3.2 shows per week in 2024). In terms of the source of their live comedy bookings, 68% of comedians reported that most of their live work (paid or unpaid) comes from individual comedy bookers. Only 9% of comedians report that their live work comes from companies/organisations that book comedy and 2% of comedians reported that most of their live work is festival related. Nearly a fifth of comedians (19%) reported that they generally perform and promote their own shows. Nearly three quarters (73%) of comedians reported that they do not have support from an agent/manager/booker or anyone else who helps them get live work, which is up from two thirds in 2024.

When asked about the percentage of charged-for tickets that are sold on average, 37% of comedy organisations reported selling between 51% and 70% of their tickets. A further 31% reported selling between 71% and 90% of tickets - down from 45% of comedy organisations in 2024. Only 5% of comedy organisations sell between 91% and 99% of tickets (down from 10% in 2024) with a further 2% report sell out shows (the same as in 2024). At the other end of the scale, 5% of comedy organisations sell 25% or less of their tickets (up from 2% in 2024) and 11% of comedy organisations sell between 26% and 50% of tickets (up from 8% in 2024).



In contrast 16% of comedians reported selling on average 25% or less of their tickets and (up from 9% of comedians in 2024). 18% of comedians reported selling 26% to 50% of tickets on average (up from 15% of comedians in 2024). However, as with comedy organisations, the most popular response from comedians was selling between 51% and 70% of tickets, with 32% of comedians reporting such ticket sales, followed by 71% to 90% of tickets sold by 26% of comedians. A further 6% of comedians reported selling 91% to 99% of tickets and 2% of comedians reported selling out completely.

Almost two third of comedy organisations reported that an average ticket price for the main shows was either between £5 and £12 or between £13 and £18, with 31% and 32% of comedy organisations reporting these averages respectively (compared to 33% and 43% of comedy organisations in 2024). A further 20% of comedy organisations reported average ticket prices between £19 and £25, with 3% of comedy organisations reporting average ticket prices of between £26 and £35. Average ticket prices of less than £5, or £36 or above, received no responses and 5% of comedy organisations reported that their shows are free to attend or Pay What You Want (PWYW) shows (up from 2% in 2024).

In contrast to only 5% of comedy organisations reporting their shows are free or PWYW, 22% of comedians reported that their shows are free to attend or PWYW shows (up from 14% of comedians in 2024). A further 4% of comedians reported that their average ticket prices are less than £5. However, as with comedy organisations, almost two thirds of comedians reported that their average ticket prices were either between £5 and £12 or between £13 and £18, with 40% and 23% of comedians reporting these averages respectively (compared to 42% and 34% of comedians in 2024). A further 8% of comedians reported average ticket prices of between £19 and £25 and a further 3% of comedians reporting between £26 and £35. No comedians reported average ticket prices of £36 and above.

Turnover, Income and Expenditure in Live Comedy

The total annual turnover (not profit) of comedy organisations responding this year is £36,383,410 and the average annual turnover of comedy organisations is £527,295.79. Last year's average annual turnover of comedy organisations was £962,212.50. As with last year's survey results, the live comedy sector is characterised by economic variation, with some comedy organisations reporting zero annual turnover, whilst others report an annual turnover of more than £7 million. The total annual turnover of comedians responding this year is £3,319,460. The average annual turnover of individual comedians in 2025 is £21,143, down from £26,778 per annum in 2024. As with comedy organisations, there is stark economic variation across the sector with some comedians reporting zero turnover and others reporting £400,000 plus. It is important to note that some of these figures may have been impacted by the fewer number of survey responses in the 2025 survey compared to 2024.

Further evidence exists in this year's survey data to suggest that live comedy is less financially rewarding for comedians in 2025 compared to 2024. This year's survey reveals that nearly three quarters (74%) of comedians have other paid employment which is up from almost two thirds (62%) of comedians in last year's survey. 17% of comedians reported that none of their income comes from comedy - up from 7% in 2024. A further 32% of comedians reported that between 1% and 10% of their income comes from comedy - up from 19% in 2024. Only 19% of comedians reported that 91% to 100% of their income comes from their comedy, which is down from 31% of comedians in 2024.

In terms of expenditure, comedy organisations report that over the last 2- to 3-years costs have increased. Responses ranged from 'everything!', 'pretty much all' and 'all of them' through to more specific costs including drink, food, electricity, insurance, wages and national insurance contributions, performer fees, rent, accountants, travel, accommodation, public relations, postage and venue hire. It was also noted that 'all costs have increased but ticket prices have not increased to reflect the increases'. Similarly, comedians reported that 'all costs' or expenditure on 'everything' has increased in the last 2- to 3-years, with costs such as public and private travel, accommodation (especially in Edinburgh), fuel, food, advertising and insurance specifically mentioned. The financial situation of some comedians was expressed with some comedians noting that 'venue fees have gone up, marketing, Equity, Spotlight, hotels, travel, food. Pretty much everything, but gig fees, ticket prices haven't changed' and 'fuel and travel costs have gone silly making it not viable to take the train for the small fee which usually wouldn't cover a hotel'.

The open comments at the end of the survey drew attention to the economic barriers experienced within the live comedy sector - these barriers were also raised in the 2024 survey. Economic precarity, economic differences and economic inequalities are seen as key characteristics underpinning the UK live comedy sector in 2025, as they were in 2024. Some respondents referred to working in live comedy as financially 'tough' or a 'struggle'. Several responses highlighted unpaid gigs, pay stagnation, delays in fees being paid and the financial imbalances between promoters and comedians, with promoters making more money than comedians. Relatedly, responses also highlighted how some comedians 'barely break even' or supplement their comedy careers with additional paid work or their pension, or predict that they will remain on benefits long-term due to the low income that performing comedy generates. Some respondents also called for a return of the 'arts grant' and argued that 'arts council funding' should be 'available for solo comedy shows'. Some comedy organisations highlighted the difficulties in negotiating ticket prices to ensure they are affordable for audiences whilst also being financially worthwhile for performers and venues. A comedy promoter noted that 'selling out and covering costs has definitely become harder in the past 5 years. There was a brief boom after the pandemic with many audiences rushing out to support live comedy, but this seems to have dropped immensely since 2022'. Respondents also reported rising cost of 'EVERYTHING', including marketing and technology, which is considered 'a concern at grassroots level and PWYW shows'.

"In general, it's a struggle - trying to keep ticket prices down (around £15) whilst still making enough for the performer, given that we take 20% commission, and that ticket sales % aren't great, and purchases are always coming later and later."

"I am on Universal Credit and don't see how I will ever be off it. I earned more per gig in 2004 than now."

"PLEASE CREATE A COMEDY UNION SIMILAR TO EQUITY BECAUSE THE FEES COMICS GET PAID HAVE NOT GONE UP WITH INFLATION SINCE THE 90S!"

"BRING BACK THE ARTS GRANT!"

"FEES NEED TO INCREASE ACROSS THE BOARD. SMALLER PROMOTERS ARE MAKING MORE MONEY THAN THE COMICS AS A STANDARD NOW"

"I'm more of a show comedian, so it's tricky to calculate the average income/out going because it depends on whether I'm writing a WIP, in Edinburgh or touring. Regardless, I barely break even on a good year and subsidise the shows with acting work, menial jobs. It shouldn't be like that. There should be arts council funding available for solo comedy shows. They're a part of our culture."

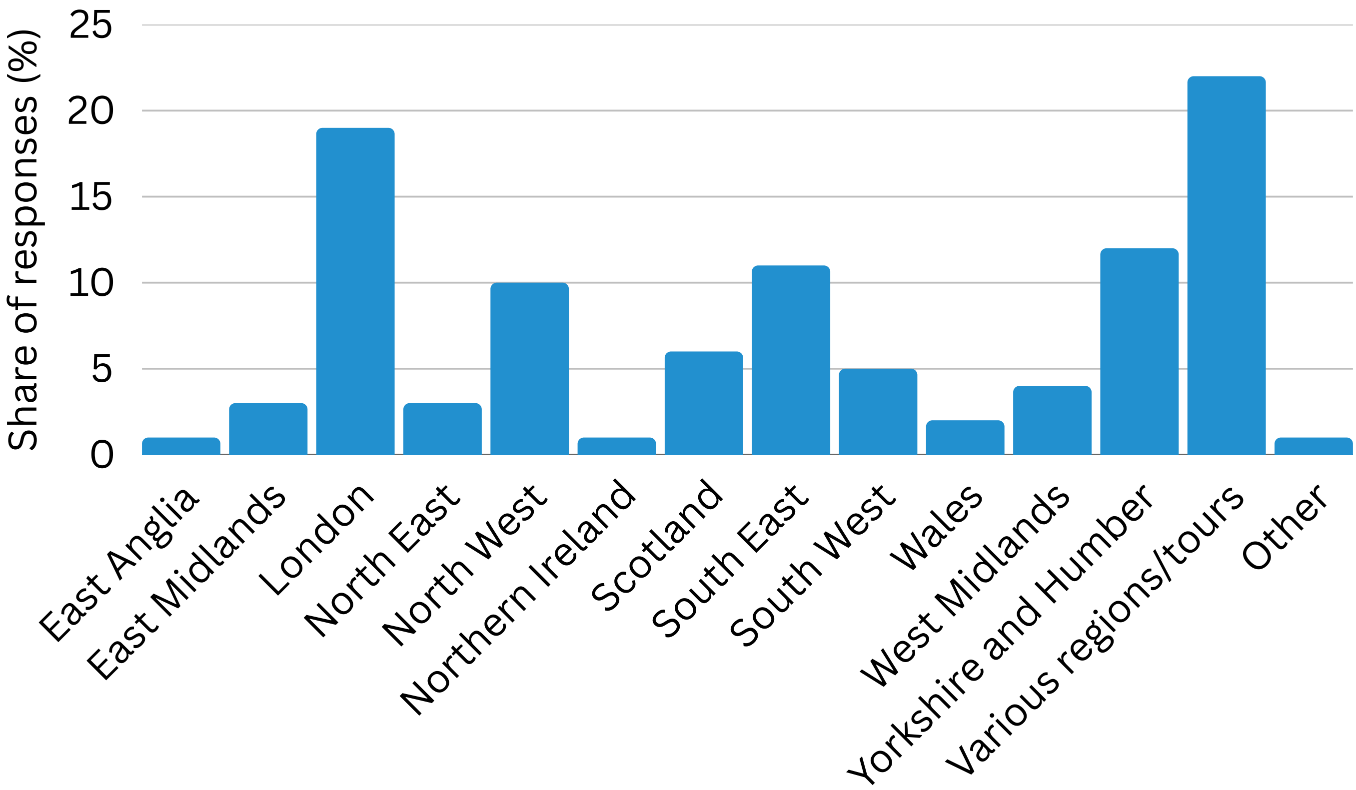
"The fees paid by some promoters are frankly pathetic. It's fine to not pay (or do bucket splits) for certain kinds of gig, e.g. open mics, new material nights, etc. But I feel really insulted by how many promoters think it's ok to invite acts from far away to do middles on pro bills where they've charged £15+ per ticket, and make it seem like we should be grateful to receive a measly £10. I suck it up because I enjoy the gigs and learn a lot from gigging with pros. And I know we're on a kind of de facto 'apprenticeship' in this game. But it still feels morally wrong."

The Spaces and Places of Live Comedy

Regional Characteristics of Live Comedy

The survey found that although live comedy is visible across the UK, the South East and London dominate. The geographical spread of single location comedy organisations sees 25% of shows take place in London, 11% in the South East, 8% of shows take place in Scotland, 7% in Yorkshire and Humber, 6% each take place in the North West and South West, and 4% each in Wales, the West Midlands and East Anglia. Only 3% of shows take place in the East Midlands. The survey shows an increased dominance of London (up 2%) and the South East (up 4%) in comparison to last year's survey. 18% of organisations that participated hold shows in a range of locations.

Comedians described their performances taking place in similar areas, with 22% in a range of locations, 19% in London, 12% in Yorkshire and Humber, 11% in the South East, 10% in the North West, 6% in Scotland, 5% in the South West, 3% each in the East Midlands and the North East, and 2% in Wales. Only 1% each



Where do the majority of comedians' performances take place?

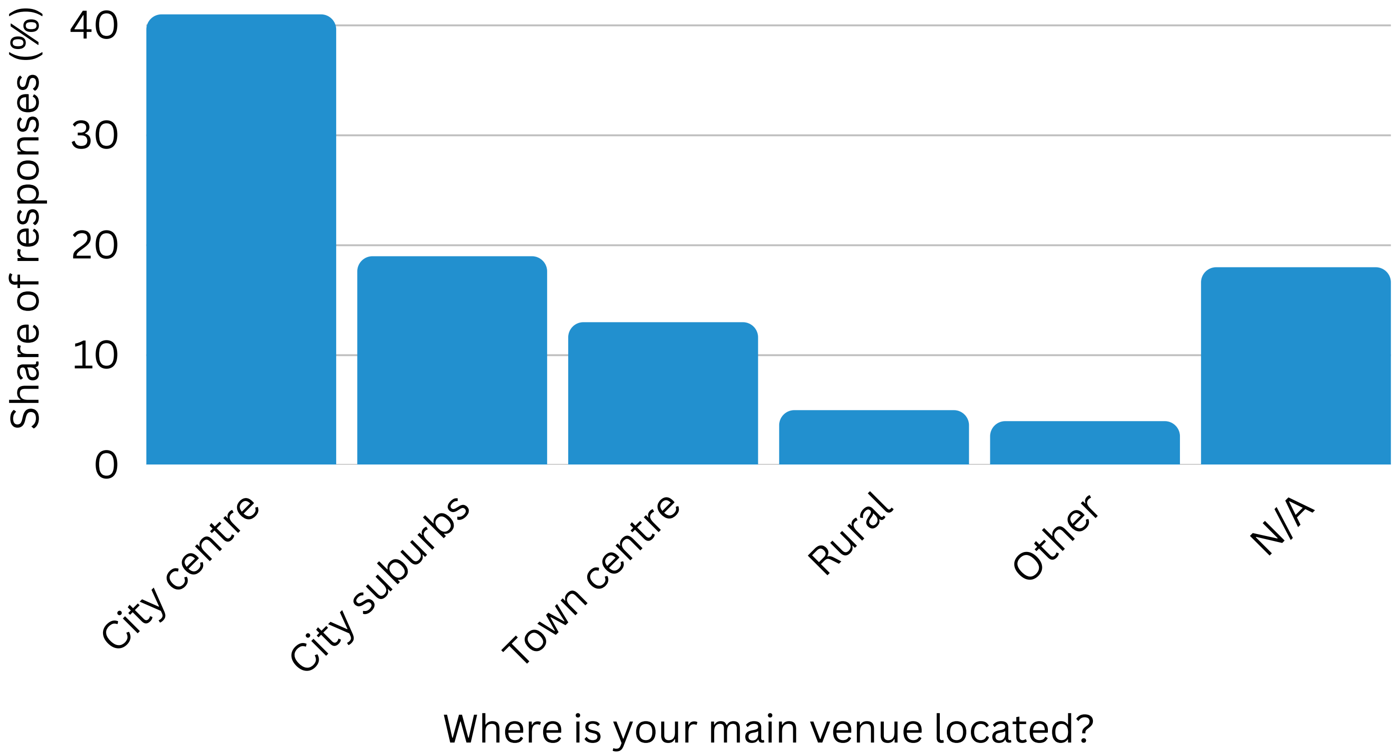
take part in East Anglia and Northern Ireland. 1 respondent highlighted online work as the most significant. These results show a slight drop in comedians working in London (down 1%) and the North West (down 1%) compared to last year's survey. The locations in which comedians live showed greater spread this year, with 23% of comedians living in London (down 9%) and 16% in the South East. 14% live in Yorkshire and Humber, 11% are in the North West (down 5%), 7% live in Scotland, 6% live in the East Midlands and the South West, 5% live in the West Midlands and 4% in Wales. Only 3% live in the North East and 1% live in East Anglia.

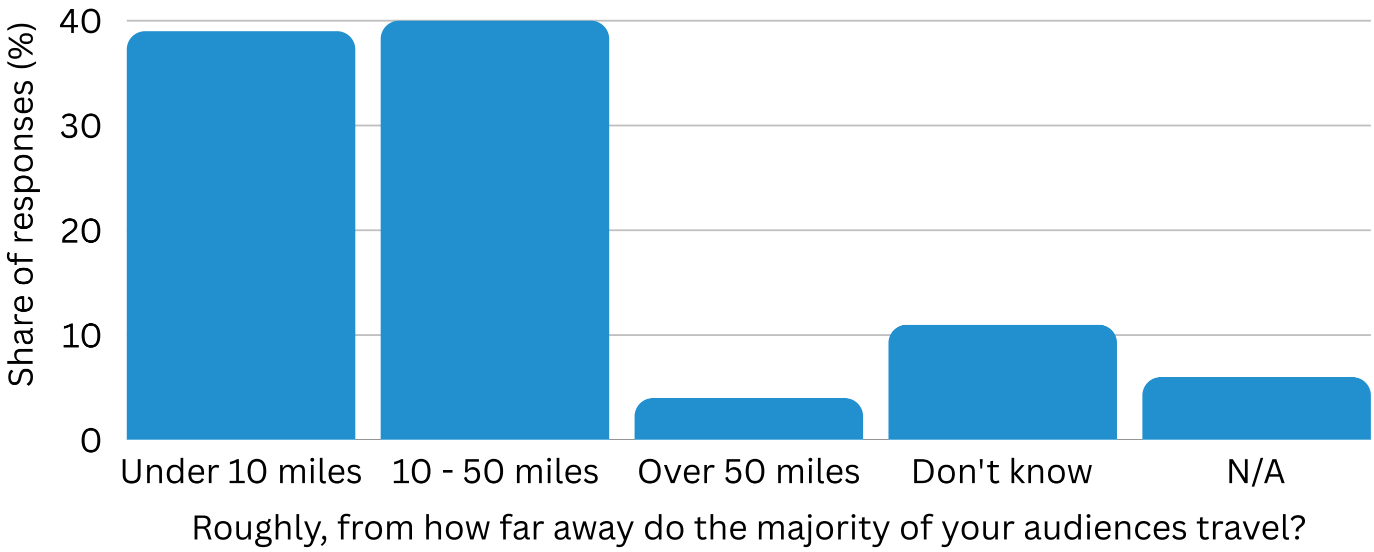
The London-centric structure of the industry was more prominent in the qualitative comments this year, with a number of respondents raising the issue. One said, "Many are top performers but never get London live shows or TV offered because they are not seen". Another respondent describes leaving London and struggling economically: "It's so hard right now - I've had to leave London and start re-establishing a gig base somewhere else, which is so much harder than I expected it to be. I used to make my living in London with gigs, acting work and some classes. That's just not viable any more." Another respondent highlights the lack of support and opportunity outside of London: "Coming from a successful comedy writing career in London I have been amazed at how the industry... is so London centred."

"I think more resources should be put into the North of England. I'm from the North East, but [just] moved to Manchester because it's one of the only places with a thriving comedy scene in the North."

One further respondent highlights both the dominance of London and the dominance of Manchester in the North, calling for greater geographical spread within the North of England and the UK as a whole: "Not enough attention is paid to places in Yorkshire meaning nights are often shut down, or the travel expenses to go further afield get steeper and steeper. I felt like I had to move out of Yorkshire in order to get my comedy career off the ground, which I think is a shame, especially since even Manchester is neglected by the London-centric scene (i.e. I know loads of fantastic comedians who really should have an agent but don't because barely any agencies operate outside of London)". The urban locations of live stand-up comedy are highlighted in the survey, with 41% of venues located in city centres, 19% in city suburbs, 13% in town centres and 5% in rural areas. Similarly, comedians perform 46% of their shows in city centre venues, 36% in a variety of types of locations, 8% in both city suburbs and town centres and only 1% in rural venues.

Audiences tend to be drawn from the local or regional areas, with 39% from under 10 miles and 40% from 10 to 50 miles areas. These figures are very similar to last year.





Organisations reported that most venue capacities tend to be smaller, and qualitative comments highlight that smaller sold-out shows are preferred over larger half empty venues to create a better experience for the audiences and comedians. On venue size, 29% have a capacity between 51 and 100, 17% have a capacity of 101 to 180, 14% have a capacity of 50 or fewer, 12% have a capacity of 181 to 250 and 11% have a capacity of 251 to 400. Only 3% have a capacity of 701 to 1,500. These specific categories were new to the survey this year, which makes direct comparison difficult.

Comedians reported performing in similar sized venues as well. 37% perform most of their shows in venues of less than 50, 19% in venues of 51 to 80, 16% both in venues of 81 to 120 and 121 to 200. 10% perform in venues of 201 to 500. Only 2% perform in venues of 751 to 1500 and only 1% perform in venues of 1501 to 2,500.

44% of venues serve both food and drink, 20% provide just drinks and 24% provide a variety for different events. Only 4% provide no food or drink. The category recording variety was new for this survey and highlights that the food and drink offer is changeable in nearly a quarter of venues.

Length of performances that comedians deliver varies, with 69% of comedians performing 20-minute shows (down from 84% last year), 53% of comedians do 1-hour shows and 40% perform 30-minute shows. Some comedians perform much shorter shows, with 55% performing at open mic slots and 49% performing 5-minute slots. 8 respondents also perform as MCs or comperes (4.6%).

The Social Impact of Live Comedy

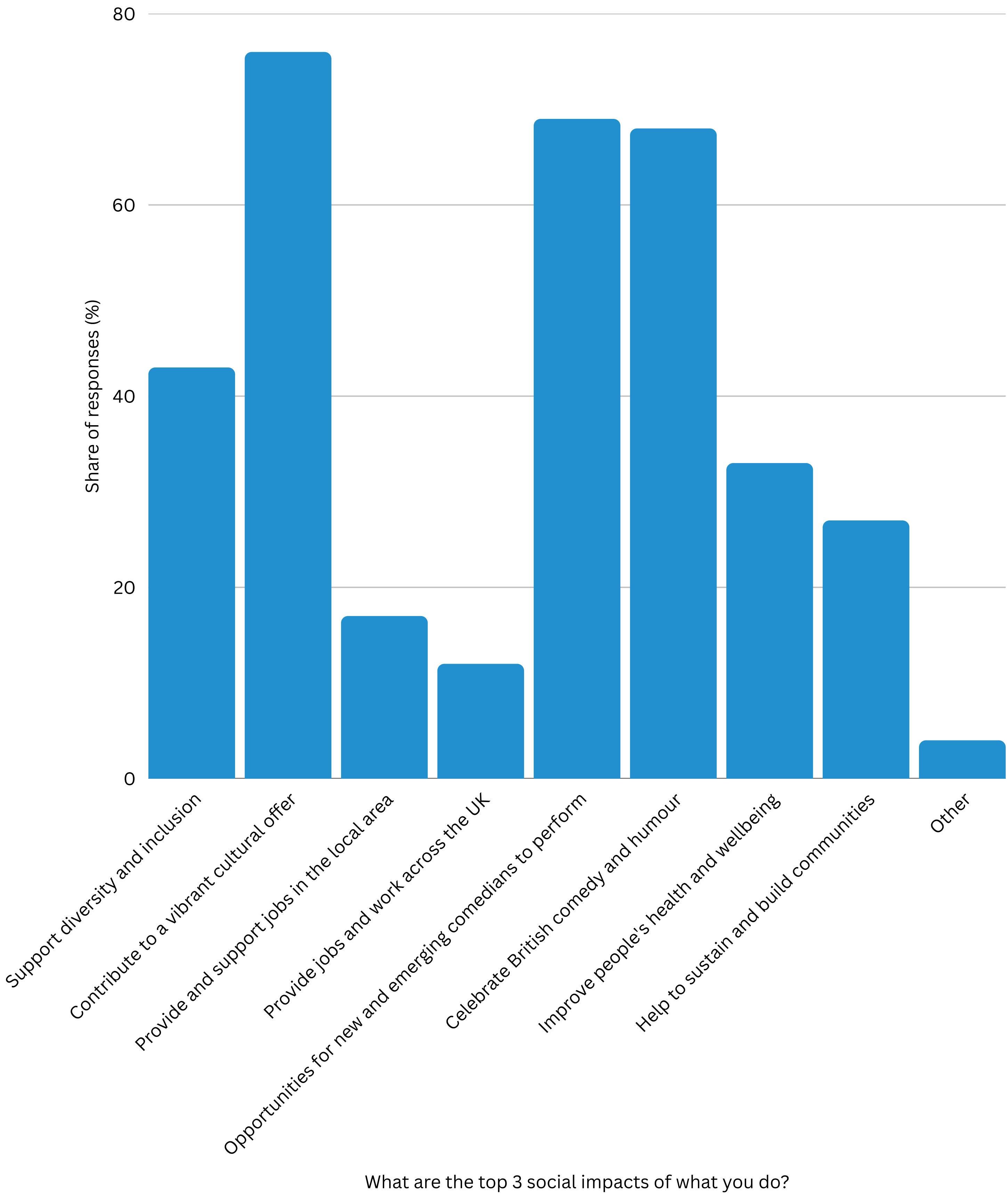
The social impact of comedy includes a variety of impacts on audiences, communities and organisations. These show a great deal of continuity with last year's survey results.

Perceptions of the social impact of comedy vary across organisations. 76% of organisations say they contribute to a vibrant cultural offer (up 4% on last year), 69% say that they provide opportunities for new and emerging comedians to perform and 68% celebrate British comedy and humour (up 3%). 43% support diversity and inclusion and 33% say that they improve people's health and wellbeing.

The comedy sector continues to work with charities. In a typical year, 79% of organisations help raise money for a charity and/or host charity shows. 78% of comedians also raise money for charity or host charity shows.

Not for profit activity takes place in the sector. Annually, 43% of organisations get involved in community projects or activities (for example, projects in schools or other community settings) which involve comedy or humour. 43% offer opportunities for volunteers to get involved in the comedy sector. 43% provide training and development for people working off stage. However, only 23% of comedians have earned income from being a part of a social or community project, or comedy education activities.

Training and development is a key activity for many organisations, although at 31%, the number of organisations getting involved in providing workshops or masterclasses to help develop acts has dropped by 10% on last year. 23% say this activity has led to those people going on into employment in the sector. 46% of comedians said that they benefit from workshops or masterclasses (an increase of 5% on last year).


80
60
40
20
0
Share of responses (%)
Support diversity and inclusion
Contribute to a vibrant cultural offer
Provide and support jobs in the local area
Provide jobs and work across the UK
Opportunities for new and emerging comedians to perform
Celebrate British comedy and humour
Improve people's health and wellbeing
Help to sustain and build communities
Other
What are the top 3 social impacts of what you do?

Inequalities and Inequities in the Live Comedy Sector

The UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025 collected demographic information for the first time. Participants were asked to describe their race and/or ethnicity, gender, social class, age and disability status.

A large majority of respondents were white, with 86.1% of respondents describing themselves as white British or white. 4.47% were mixed race or heritage, 2.61% described themselves as South Asian or British South Asian, 2.23% described themselves as Irish, 1.86% were white non-British or other, 0.37% each described themselves as Asian, BAME, or European. 1.49% did not provide a meaningful answer.

In relation to gender, the survey responses were male dominated. 60.7% described themselves as male, 34.7% as female, 2.2% as non-binary, 0.75% as trans, 0.37% as femme/fluid, 0.37% as trans man. 0.75% answered with a response that did not describe a gender category.

On social class, 51.2% of respondents identified as middle class, 46% as working class, and 0.8% as in poverty or on benefits. 2% did not provide a meaningful response.

Survey respondents were predominantly younger working age people. 30% of survey respondents were 30 to 39 years old, 28% 40 to 49, 20% 50 to 59, 15% over 60 and only 6% between 18 and 29 years old.

23% of respondents identified as having a disability or impairment.

Future surveys could attempt to gain responses from groups that are under-represented in these figures.

The qualitative comments provided several comments on inequality and inequity that focus on protected characteristics and on the geographical distribution of the industry. One respondent raised ethno-religious identity "I have had to move venues during a festival due to uncomfortable topics/views being expressed during a show or by an artist (e.g. Israel-Palestine). This affected me as a Jewish person." Gender and male bias was again raised in the survey, with one respondent saying: "it feels like most of this industry is run by men, women getting paid less, work harder for spots, some promoters don't bother balancing bills, I was on a bill with 17 men and I was the only woman at an open mic".

"I would gig further afield, but I worry about getting home after gigs more so than male comics I talk to."

The Covid-19 pandemic is also highlighted as still having a detrimental impact on live comedy: "I know a few folks who are in my shoes - post covid, things just didn't click back into place... but, I don't know what else I'm supposed to do. Comedy's been my life for 20+ years and it feels like it just turned it's back on me."

Only 40% of comedians are part of an organisation such as a community or support group, union or trade body. One participant commented on this as a way to address economic inequity: "Please create a comedy union similar to equity with acting because the fees comics get paid have not gone up with inflation since the 90s!!!".

UK Live Comedy Sector Survey Recommendations

A review of 2024 recommendations

We said we would lobby for comedy to be recognised as an art form.
After successful lobbying the LCA spoke at a CMS Select Committee meeting (April 2025) focusing on examining the economic, cultural and social impact of live performance on the UK, and the challenges faced by the sector. A letter was sent (August 2025) from CMS Committee to the Arts Minister asking for action to support live comedy sector. There were 5 action points included in the letter (see below).

We said we would consult with the sector about improving working conditions.
The LCA have researched similar codes in other relevant sectors and remain committed to working to improve working conditions. The LCA have had conversations with CIISA and plan to introduce members' events in the future to explore improvements that could be made.

We said we would research the impact of live comedy sector community projects.
Following research and consultation with members, the LCA have published a directory of community projects on their website. This will be regularly reviewed and updated.

We said we would promote training and development opportunities for people working in live comedy sector.
Following research and consultation with members the LCA have published a directory of opportunities on their website and will regularly review and update this.

We said we would explore barriers to entry and inequalities that exist in our sector.
The LCA have continued to explore these and work with members to learn more.

We said we would establish a database of UK live comedy venues.
The LCA have launched Live Comedy Day, in partnership with BBC Radio 4, to help celebrate and promote live comedy sector across the UK. Part of the output of this project will be a database of UK live comedy venues, and of live comedy fans from across the UK. The aim is to make access to the national database of fans available to LCA members to help promote and highlight existing work.

We said we would explore possible resources and funding.
In autumn 2025 the Stand Up And Give Fund was launched to help support the work of the LCA and also the work of members. In 2026 money will start to be used to support projects and activities led by LCA members; more information about this will be available soon. The LCA has worked with members to apply for funding to help support the core work of the LCA. The LCA will continue to promote the fund, and work with partners in our sector to raise money where possible.

We said we would repeat the survey and publish results.
The survey was repeated in 2025 and this report was published at the Live Comedy Sector AGM on 4th February 2026.

We said we would review the survey.
The survey partners (Live Comedy Association, Centre for Comedy Studies Research and British Comedy Guide) reviewed the questions included in the 2024 survey and adapted the questions accordingly.

UK Live Comedy Survey 2025 Recommendations

1. The LCA will work with partners (including the Centre for Comedy Studies Research (CCSR)) to lobby Government for those actions referred to in the August 2025 letter to the Arts Minister:

    a. An independent, accurate assessment of the size and distribution of the live comedy sector.
    b. Formal recognition of live comedy as a distinct art form. In practical terms, at a first step this should mean increased engagement by DCMS with the sector and with Arts Council England on how it considers and funds live comedy.
    c. The biggest venues, producers and promoters to voluntarily mirror the grassroots music levy across all forms of stadium and arena entertainment, including comedy.
    d. The need for a freelance champion is clear and urgent, and we expect DCMS to be working at pace to define and recruit an individual who can reflect the full scope of the creative industries, including live comedy.
    e. Organise a round table discussion on the sector between Government ministers and members of the Live Comedy Association.

2. Continue to programme live members' events across the UK including in areas such as Brighton, Edinburgh, Manchester and Leicester. These will include (but are not limited to) partnerships with Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Komedia and Leicester Comedy Festival. The LCA will also hold regular online members' meetings to update the live comedy sector community on priorities and current work.

3. Partner with organisations such as CCSR, Night Time Industries Association and Ticketmaster and participate in national conversations about the impact of creative industries and cultural framework.

4. Continue to showcase the social impact of live comedy, and work with partners (including the Centre for Comedy Studies Research, Music Venue Trust and Night Time Industries Association) to promote the social value of live comedy shows, venues and festivals, and contribution made to a thriving UK wide cultural offer.

5. The LCA will work with members and partners to continue to seek to improve working conditions for all those across the UK live comedy sector. They will organise a specific members' workshop with Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (www.ciisa.org.uk). They will promote, and add to, the "training and development" section of the LCA website, which contains information of programmes and projects that support people working in our sector, especially those that may have been traditionally facing barriers.

6. The LCA will lead on, and produce, a UK wide Live Comedy Day on 1st April 2026. The day will be a celebration of UK live comedy and will be produced in partnership with BBC Radio 4. We will also work with partners in our sector to fundraise for the Stand Up And Give Fund.

7. The Live Comedy Association should continue to work with leading UK comedy venues to raise the profile of its work and also generate income to sustain the organisation, and distribute via the Stand Up And Give Fund.

8. Review the survey and its questions. The Live Comedy Association and partners (including the Centre for Comedy Studies Research and British Comedy Guide) will review the sector survey and its questions. It will review resources required and consider whether the survey and report will be carried out annually, or biennially.

Live Comedy Association 2025 - a 12 month review

January
- Online members' meeting takes place

February
- First Live Comedy AGM takes place & launch of UK Live Comedy Sector survey report
- LCA podcast: Matt Forde's The Political Party interviews Dr Sharon Lockyer about survey report

March
- Benefit show takes place at The Frog & Bucket, Manchester

April
- Members' training workshop - How To Apply For Funding
- Announcement of CMS Select Committee focusing on Live Comedy
- Online members meeting
- LCA Advisory Panel launched (see below)
- CMS Select Committee evidence committee on Live Comedy takes place

May
- Launch online case studies of community comedy projects

June
- Submission sent to Labour Party National Policy Forum

July

- 2nd UK Live Comedy Sector survey launch
- Question submitted to CMS Select Committee about Creative Industries Action Plan

August

- Letter written to Sir Chris Bryant MP, Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism
- LCA workshop at Edinburgh Festival Fringe

September

- Launch online case studies of training & development opportunities for comedians
- LCA members' event at Komedia (Brighton) in partnership with Jill Edwards Comedy Workshops
- Stand Up And Give fund launched to support grassroots live comedy

October

- Participated in the "London Comedy Industry Business & Growth" Parliament meeting
- Live Comedy AGM announced

November

- Launch Live Comedy Day in partnership with BBC Radio 4

December

- The People's Comedy (Bristol) supports Stand Up And Give fund
- Stand Up And Give fund reaches £10,000 milestone

LCA Advisory Panel

livecomedyassociation.co.uk/advisory-panel

Current membership:
Katy Koren (Chair), Adnan Ahmed, Ailish McCarthy, Bruce Dessau, Chris Sherrington, Donald Taffner, Jr., Janice Connelly BEM, Jill Edwards, Julia McKenzie, Lee Martin, Lynne Parker, Michael Harris-Wakelam, Michael Kill, Mick Perrin, Nina Gilligan, Richard Daws, Dr Sharon Lockyer, Sian Davies, Dr Simon Weaver, Steve Bennett.

The Advisory Panel supports the Directors of the Live Comedy Association with advice and insight. Each individual volunteers their time throughout the year to support the Directors and members of the Community Interest Company.

If you would like to volunteer your time, or have thoughts as to other people who might join, do email us hello@livecomedyassociation.co.uk. We are especially interested in people who might help us fill gaps on the panel, in terms of experience or DEI.

Appendix One: Methodology

The study used a survey to collect data from 272 participants.

Data was collected using the JISC Online survey platform. Research ethics approval for the study was gained from the College of Arts, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Brunel University of London. Initial questions directed participants to record informed consent and to engage with a participant information sheet that explained what would happen to the data collected.

The survey is split into two parts or streams. One stream of questions was answered by comedians (63% of participants), the other by other industry professionals, such as agents, promoters or representatives of venues in the comedy industry (37%). An initial question recorded the main role of the participant, which then directed them to the correct stream.

Questions numbered 49 for the comedians stream and 46 for the industry professionals stream. Questions focused on several areas that are reflected in the data analysis. The survey sought to record the economic conditions of the live stand-up comedy industry, with the aim of measuring the size and scale of the industry. This year, questions were added on expenditure. Questions focused on the other activities within the voluntary, charity and third sector that live stand-up comedy workers are involved with. Questions also focused on the national and regional geography of the comedy industry and on the characteristics of venues and performance spaces. Questions were added this year to record participants' demographic information. There was also the opportunity for qualitative comments to be added, which allowed participants to raise industry-focused issues that were not addressed in the other parts of the survey.

The survey was open from 15th July to 18th August 2025 and from 13th October to 24th October 2025. The survey was distributed through industry press and several further industry distribution lists and networks. Survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

The UK Live Comedy Sector Survey 2025 was jointly conducted by the Centre for Comedy Studies Research at Brunel University, the Live Comedy Association, and British Comedy Guide.