



The Big Survey 2022

Topic 4 – All about Making Music members

OVERALL SUMMARY

This report gives you figures on how many hobby musicians and leisure-time music groups there are, and where, in the UK, how old these groups are, their overall income, their main repertoire, and how and by whom they are run. Most of the data are from our 2022 Big Survey, some, referenced (2024), are more up to date membership data.

Summary highlights:

Currently (2024) 3,961 music groups in membership, estimate 29% of total sector

Vocal groups – 54%

Instrumental groups – 36%

Promoting groups – 10%

80% have an annual income of below £21,000.

*Performing groups have an average 61 members or participants, an estimated total of 221,220 across our performing groups. We represent around 29% of the leisure-time music sector, which would mean at least 750,000+ participants involved in such groups UK wide. However, in the DCMS Participation Survey for 23/24, 5% of all respondents reported they had attended 'a choir or music group, orchestra or band, singing or music lesson' - which could mean **as many as 3.5 million people in music groups and classes in the UK.***

Promoters have an average 91 members (audience members who purchase a subscription), a total of 36,500 across all our promoting groups.

Repertoire – 68% of our members list their main repertoire as classical (53%) or modern/contemporary classical (15%). The next biggest category is 'other' with 9%, and these are predominantly groups which sing or play arrangements from a range of musical genres and traditions (as, e.g., brass bands do), thus making it difficult for them to classify themselves.

Geographically our members mirror the population density in their nation or region, e.g. Wales and Scotland comfortably reflecting their share of the UK population.

Some *performing groups* have a long tradition (oldest: 195 years), but groups continue to be set up all the time, and the rate seems to be accelerating: **29% were founded since the year 2000, 'only' 53% between 1950-1999, and 18% between 1829 and 1949.**

Promoting groups don't have quite such a long tradition, and fewer new groups have been set up more recently: **16% only were founded since the year 2000, the bulk (56%) between 1950-1999, and 28% before 1949.**

98% of all groups are run by a committee of volunteers, or charity trustees, over half of which are themselves participants in the group, and at least a further quarter of which are connected to participants in the group (friend, relative or spouse). 69% (75% of promoters) find it hard to recruit new trustees or committee members 38% (47% for promoters) of committee members or trustees are aged 65+.

All types of groups also use a number of volunteers in other roles, e.g. to manage events, create publicity, run social media, source the sheet music etc.. These volunteers are almost entirely drawn from participants or people closely connected to the participants.

Performing Groups are supported by an average of 12 volunteers per group (including committee members/trustees), **around 42,000 volunteers in total giving 1.5m hours per year across all performing groups.**

Promoting Groups are supported by an average 10.5 volunteers per group (including committee members/trustees), **around 4,200 volunteers in total giving 220,000 hours per year across all of our promoters.**

1. General information about Making Music members and leisure-time music groups

- In the last 20 years, Making Music membership has more than doubled (1931 in 2001 to 3972 in 2022)
- Vocal group numbers have increased by more than 75% (to 2144) – but in 2024 make up a smaller percentage (54%) of overall membership than they did in 2001 (63%)
- Instrumental group member numbers have nearly quadrupled, so they have gone from being 19% of members to 36%
- Promoter group numbers have increased by 14%, but now only make up 10% of the overall membership, down from nearly a fifth (18%) of members 20 years ago
- 91% of all our member groups are charities

What are ‘promoting groups’?

These are groups of volunteers coming together to programme a series of events presenting professional musicians. They stage, for instance, a season of concerts in their local area over a period of months, or a festival over a shorter timeframe. Many promoting groups have members who subscribe to a whole season of concerts.

And ‘performing groups’?

These are groups of hobby musicians who come together to sing or play; they are usually led by a professional music director they engage.

Most of them also put on their own concerts – booking the venue, promoting the event, selling the tickets -, though an increasing percentage perform at other organisations’ events, e.g. charity fundraisers, civic occasions, festivals, etc.

How many leisure-time music groups are there in the UK?

The only available data comes from [Our Creative Talent](#), a 2008 study by Arts Council England and the Department for Culture Media and Sport and refers to England only.

Extrapolating to the whole of the UK based on population data gives an estimated 13,800 self-governed volunteer-run music groups in the UK.

Making Music represents around 29% of the total number of such groups (2024, no change from 2022).

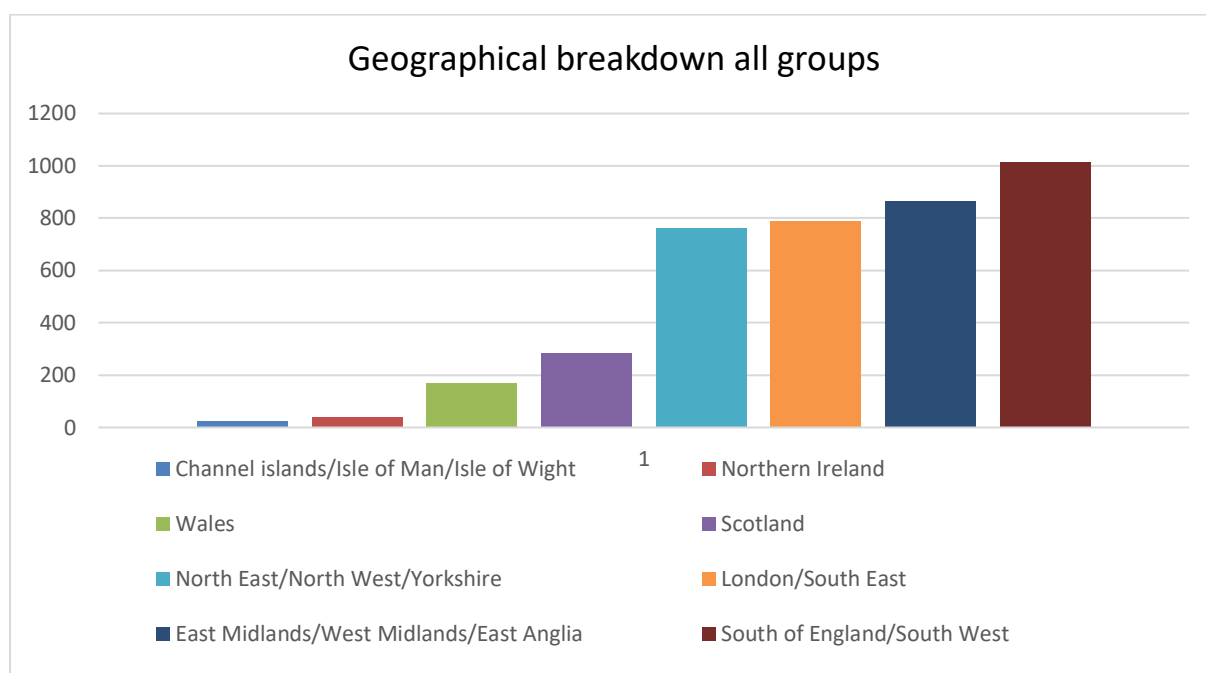
2. Statistics on Making Music members – snapshot autumn 2024

3,961 music groups in membership

Vocal groups – 54%

Instrumental groups – 36%

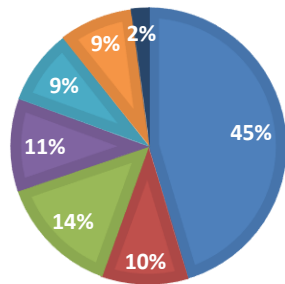
Promoting groups – 10%



Geographical area	Group numbers	Percentage of total
Channel Islands	10	0.63%
Isle of Man	6	
Isle of Wight	9	
Northern Ireland	42	1.06%
Wales	169	4.26%
Scotland	287	7.24%
North West	368	19.23%
Yorkshire	281	
North East	113	
London	404	19.99%
South East	388	
East Anglia	305	21.88%
East Midlands	292	
West Midlands	270	
South West	512	25.59%
South of England	502	

MEMBER GROUPS' INCOME BRACKET %

- Up to £7,200 ■ Up to £10,000 ■ Up to £14,500 ■ Up to £21,000
- Up to £31,000 ■ Up to £100,000 ■ Above £100,000



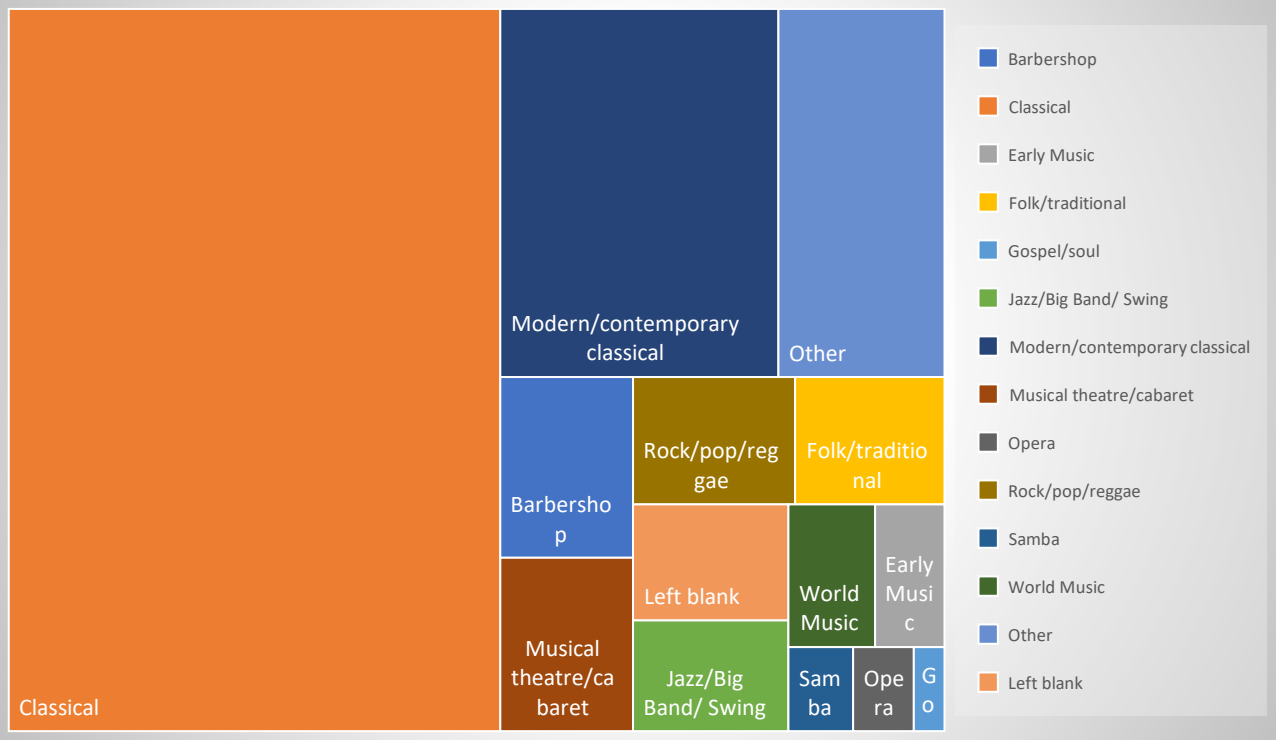
Income band	Percentage groups
Up to £7,200	45%
£7,201-£10,000	10%
£10,001-£14,500	14%
£14,501-£21,000	11%
£21,001-£31,000	9%
£31,001-£100,000	9%
£100,000+	2%

To highlight:

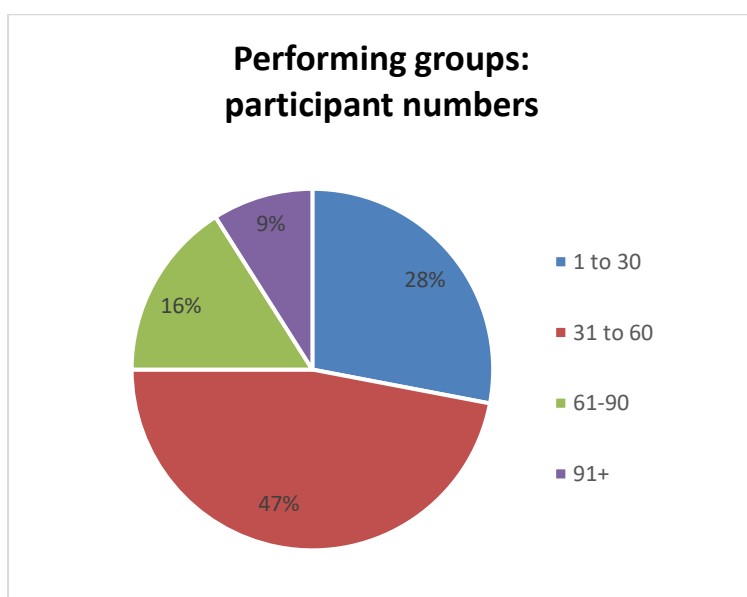
80% of groups have an annual income below £21,000.

55% of groups have an annual income below £10,000.

Groups' main repertoire



Repertoire	Numbers of member groups	Percentage of member groups
Classical	2082	52.6%
Modern/contemporary classical	600	15%
Other	357	9%
Barbershop	141	3.6%
Musical theatre/cabaret	135	3.4%
Rock/pop/reggae	121	3.1%
Folk/Traditional	111	2.8%
No information	106	2.7%
Jazz/Big Band/Swing	101	2.5%
World Music	72	1.8%
Early Music	58	1.5%
Samba	32	0.8%
Opera	30	0.7%
Gospel	15	0.4%



Participants in member groups	Percentage of groups
1-30	28%
31-60	47%
61-90	16%
91+	9%

To highlight: 75% of members have under 60 participants, 25% have more than 61.

Performing groups have an **average 61 members or participants, an estimated total of 221,220** across all our performing groups.

Members of member groups stay an average 13 years, with a range from 1 year to 55 years. An average of 7.7% of members leave a group each year.

Promoters have an **average 91 members (subscribers), an estimated total of 36,500** across all our promoting groups.

Their members (subscribers) stay an average of 16 years, with a range from 5 to 40 years. An average of 8.4% of their members (subscribers) leave each year.

3. How old are these groups?

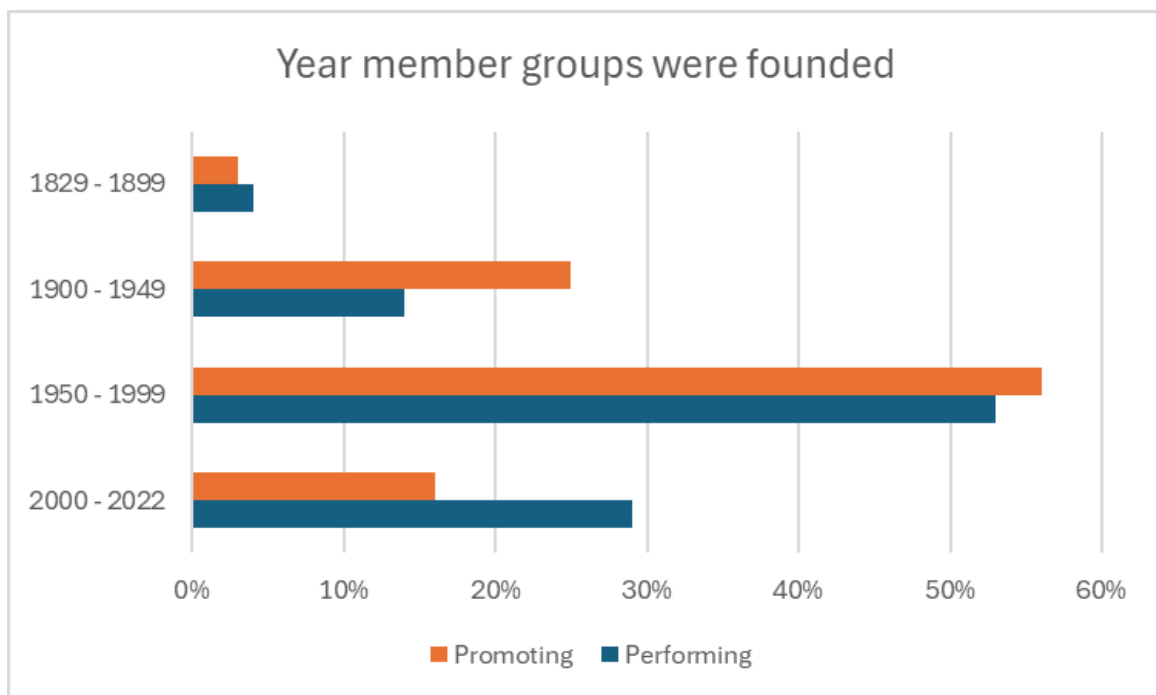
Performing groups – average of 47 years, with a range from 1 to 195 years. 336 groups (9%) are aged 100 years or more, and 363 (10%) are youngsters of 10 years or younger.

- 29% were founded since the year 2000 (22 years old or less).

- 53% were founded in the second half of the 20th century (1950-1999, 23-72 years old)
- 14% were founded in the first half of the 20th century (1900-1949, 73-122 years old)
- 4% were founded in the 19th century (123+ years), the oldest started in 1829.

Promoting groups – average age of 52 years, with a range from 1 to 150, with 16 (4%) centenarians in membership and 38 (10%) youngsters of 10 years or younger.

- 16% were founded since the year 2000 (22 years old or less)
- 56% were founded in the second half of the 20th century (1950-1999, 23-72 years old)
- 25% were founded in the first half of the 20th century (1900-1949, 73-122 years old)
- 3% were founded in the 19th century (123+ years), the oldest we know of in 1872.



Comment

Whilst both types of groups boomed in the second half of the 20th century, performing groups have continued to do so and are set to exceed previous rates of being set up, whereas promoting groups – or the model they are currently using (with subscribers as members) - appear to be in decline.

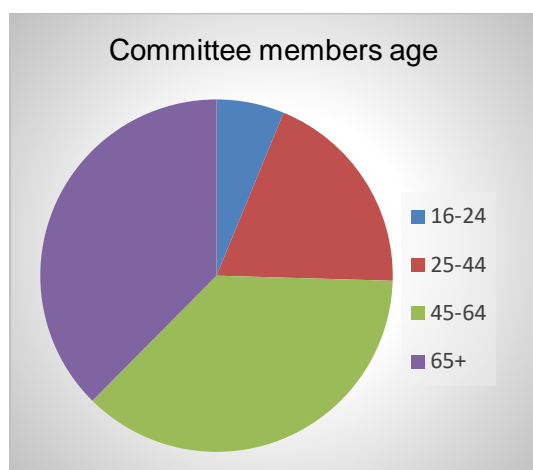
4. Who runs these music groups?

Almost all of our **performing groups and promoting groups** are run by a committee of volunteers or Board of trustees, usually drawn from the participants, also called members or subscribers of the group.

Only 2% (1% promoters) do not have a committee
 42% (36% promoters) have a committee of 2-6 people
 55% (59% promoters) have a committee of 7-15 people.

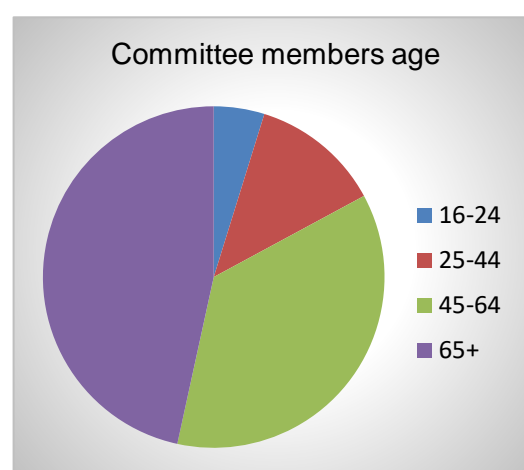
Some performing groups have a separate group of trustees and an executive committee; or a main committee and some sub-groups (e.g. for finance or programming or marketing).

Performing groups



Committee members age brackets – performing groups	
16-24	6%
25-44	19%
45-64	37%
65+	38%

Promoting groups



Committee members age brackets – promoting groups	
16-24	5%
25-44	12%
45-64	36%
65+	47%

69% (75% of promoters) find it hard to recruit new trustees or committee members. 21% (14%) find it easy. 10% (11%) commented that it depended on the role, usually required some persuasion, or a direct approach, and that many committee members continued in their roles for a long time.

Comment

Trustees are often in older age brackets, partly related to availability, e.g. post retirement, but it is clear that promoters in particular are more reliant on trustees aged 65+. More promoters say they find it hard to recruit new trustees, but for both performing and promoting groups this is clearly one of their main sustainability challenges.

[Making Music have started and will continue to support member groups with succession planning and recruiting more and new trustees.](#)

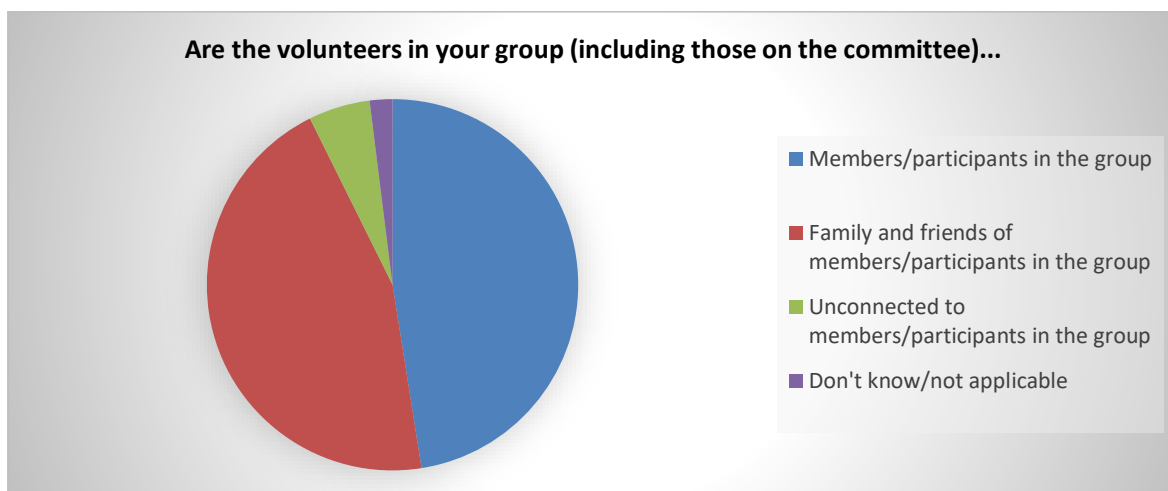
5. Other types of volunteers

Performing groups rely on help from volunteers other than the committee –
 18% rely on musical volunteers (musical leader; orchestral leaders, accompanists, soloists)
 42% rely on other volunteers for their events, e.g. ushers, refreshments, etc.
 33% have the support of a range of other volunteers for specific roles, e.g. librarian, 'welcomer' at rehearsals, teamaker, fundraiser, cake sale organiser, costume maker...
 6% do not have any volunteers other than the committee

Promoting groups rely on help from volunteers other than the committee –
 60% rely on other volunteers for their events, e.g. ushers, refreshments, artist liaison, etc.
 30% have the support of a range of other volunteers, e.g. fundraiser or publicity distributor or social media or website volunteer, marketing, workshop tutors etc
 10% do not have any volunteers other than the committee

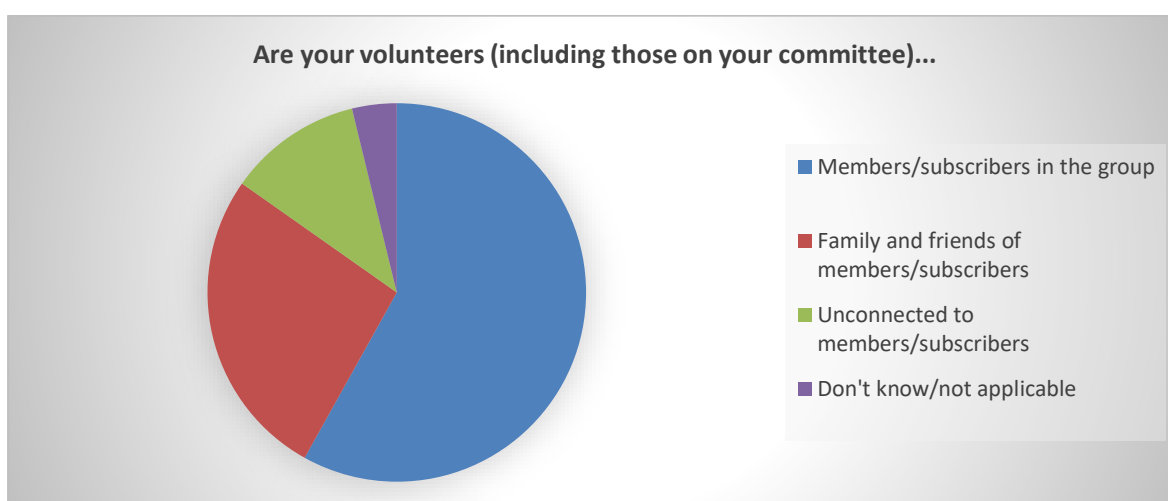
6. What kind of people are the volunteers

Performing groups



Are the volunteers in your group (including those on the include committee)	
Members or participants in the group	47%
Family or friends of members or participants	45%
Unconnected to members or participants	5%
Don't know or not applicable	2%

Promoting groups



Are the volunteers in your group (including those on the include committee)	
Members or subscribers to the group	57%
Family or friends of members or subscribers	26%
Unconnected to members or subscribers	11%
Don't know or not applicable	5%

7. How many volunteers a year help run your group

Performing Groups

An average of 12 volunteers support each group, that is a total of around 42,000 volunteers across all of our performing groups.

Groups estimated hours contributed, giving an average of 445 hours per year per group, which would equate to an estimated total of an astonishing 1.5m hours per year across all our performing groups.

Promoting Groups

Promoters are supported by an average 10.5 volunteers per group, a total of around 4,200 across all of our promoters.

Groups estimated hours contributed, giving an average of 551 hours per year per group, or a total of 220,000 hours per year across all of our promoters.

Comment

With the need for around 46,000 volunteers overall across all our members, it is understandable that recruiting new volunteers is one of the music groups' most pressing issues, and one that has been mounting since Covid which put off a lot of volunteers from continuing in their roles.

Making Music has this very much on the radar and is planning work to support members with this challenge.

It is worth noting and highlighting the number of hours these volunteers contribute to the groups – an estimated 1.75m hours per year. Volunteering does seem alive and well, but given its significance for leisure-time music groups, it does need supporting and nurturing.

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