

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.

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 below £21,000. 55% an annual income below £10,000.

Performing groups have an average 61 members or participants, an estimated total of 221,220 across all our performing groups. 75% of members have under 60 participants, 25% have more than 61. 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.

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 Department for Culture Media and Sport's 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. 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.

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. The rest are spread amongst a wide variety of genres.

Geographically our members mirror the population density in their nation or region, e.g. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland comfortably reflect 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.** The average age of those in our membership is 47 years.

Promoting groups don't have quite such a long tradition, and fewer new groups have been set up recently: **16% only were founded since the year 2000, the bulk (56%) between 1950-1999, and 28% before 1949.** The average age of those in membership is 52 years.

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, liaise with artists 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.**

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).**

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