

The Audience Panel: Results from the August poll

NI audiences' experiences with arts and culture venues

Audiences are beginning to return to events in person. We thought it was a good time to check in with our panel and ask them what they enjoy the most, as well as what puts them off when visiting arts and culture venues.

What is the first thing NI audiences look forward to doing when going to an arts and culture venue?



Almost one third of respondents said that the first thing they look forward to when going into a venue is **finding out about upcoming events**, that means checking out event posters, leaflets, or asking a member of staff.

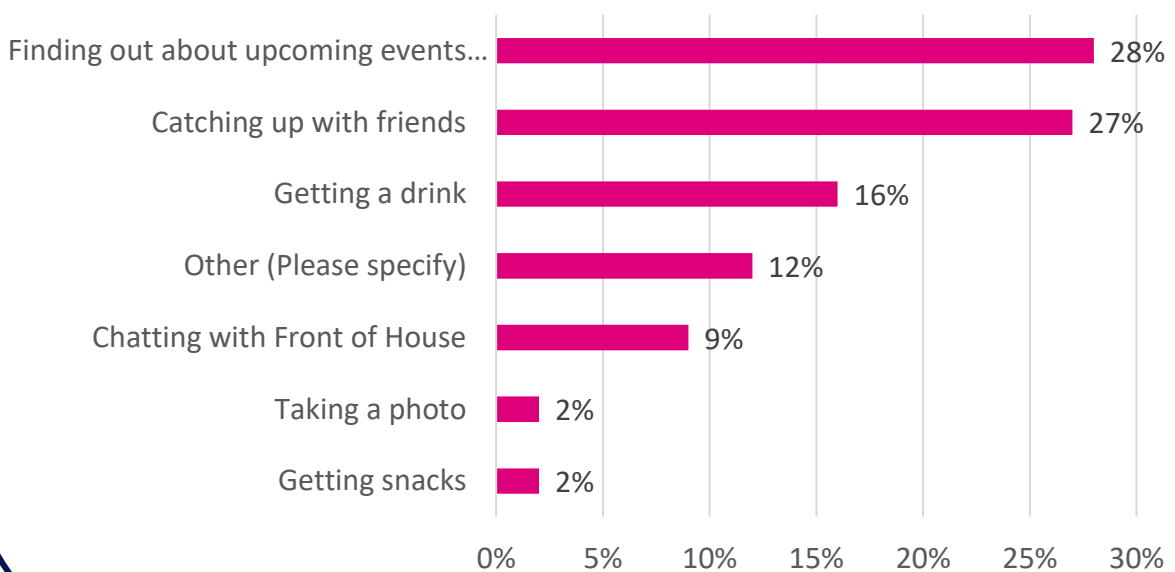


This was even **more important to those age above 65**, with 39% saying that they like to find out about new events when they go to a venue. This may be because older age groups are more likely to spend less time online and may prefer to have a physical leaflet or seasonal programme they can take home and have a browse through.



Remember that not everyone attending an event will be a regular audience member or keep up to date with your events. Use this opportunity to offer an enjoyable experience and **let them know when they can next return to spend time with you**.

When you go to an arts or culture venue, what is the first thing you look forward to doing?



For many audience members, going to an arts and culture event is a **social occasion** to meet with friends/family or just to meet new people with a shared interest. As an arts and culture organisation, you provide an environment that makes people feel comfortable and want to spend their time in.



"Getting to see live music or theatre with an audience; I like the shared experience of it, even if I didn't come with anyone myself."

"The inspiration you get from the work and the artist as well as other attendees, catching up with friends and the enjoyable atmosphere."

"Mixing with like-minded people. Interacting with front of house staff as they are the heart and soul of the venue."

What are NI audiences' pet peeves?



Common pet peeves from audiences included **extended wait times** for things like refreshments and bathrooms.

Of course, this isn't something you can always control, especially smaller organisations, but it is important to let people know what to expect. If you do have a café or bar in your venue, **bring in some volunteers** or have some members of staff nearby **to manage queues and minimise wait time**. Perhaps there are additional bathrooms on a different floor or located somewhere else in your venue – make sure your visitors know about them. Use **signage and staffing** to guide people in the right direction. If possible, have systems in place where people can **pre-order** their refreshments. **Allocating pick-up times** is another solution.



For some audiences, their pet peeves are **unrelated to the venue itself**. It is in fact other audience members' behaviours that can become an annoyance.

This cannot always be avoided. However, what your organisation can do is **manage expectations**; for example, phones can be a distraction– if you want to minimise phone use, a friendly reminder before a performance to turn off phones can help improve enjoyment for all. We can't tell you what your policies should be but make sure that in the case there are disruptive members in your audience, all staff members are well prepped with how to properly handle the situation in a **friendly and professional way**. Your audiences rely on staff to maintain an enjoyable environment.

How did NI audiences feel the first time they went to an arts or culture venue?



80% of respondents said they felt **excited** the first time they experienced an arts and culture venue or event. And we do want them to continue feeling excited each time they return!



However, we found that panel members aged **16-34** and those with **disabilities** were more likely than the average to say they felt **nervous** when first attending. This could be because they're unsure of **what to expect** before their visit. **Provide as many details as possible** on your website, social media and marketing material. These different groups will feel more at ease and confident when coming to your venue. If you're not sure how to display this information, we recommend including a **FAQs on your website** and linking this page in all communications with ticket buyers.