

PAF Audience Benchmarks

Collecting the evidence for 2025



Hello!

Thank you for participating in Performing Arts Forum's Audience Benchmarks project 2026. Katy Raines from Indigo and I are collaborating to support arts centres, theatres and festivals get the evidence you need to grow and broaden audiences. We aim to answer your Who?, How?, Why? and So What? questions about your audiences. You can also use the Audience Benchmarks in funding applications and reports to stakeholders.

This element of the project focuses on box office data for events in 2025 and compares it with 2019 and 2022 to 2024. You will get answers to these questions:

How are we doing?:

- total attendance including unticketed events
- number of events
- tickets put on sale
- tickets sold
- % capacity excluding comps

Are we maximising income?:

- average value per ticket sold
- average annual income per ticket buyer

Are we growing audiences?

- how many customers have purchased for the first time?
- how many customers have we kept from last year?

How engaged are they?:

- % of ticket buyers purchasing for one event only
- How many customers purchasing in this year can we communicate with?

NEW In response to feedback, we are introducing new benchmarks looking at social media effectiveness:

- reach – number of unique individuals seeing your content
- engagement – total number of interactions
- number of followers
- social media budget

I will send you a report that shows you your organisation's results and, if you have participated in the project before, your trends, comparing them to the average for organisations like yours.

I will be the only person to see your results apart from you. I will only share with anyone else the aggregated averages and ranges for all festivals, small-scale venues and large-scale venues.

Here is the data specification:

What is an event?

In this project, we're defining an event as any individual time-delimited performance, workshop, talk, class etc. If the run of a production or show consists of several performances count each performance as an event.

Step 1: Tell me about your programme

Open the Excel spreadsheet you downloaded along with this specification. Save it with this filename: **PAFBenchmarks_Results_[your organisation name]**

Enter your organisation name in the spreadsheet and tell me anything out of the ordinary you think I should know about your programme in 2025. If you can, please send me a list of your events so I can double-check your benchmarks. Save it as **Events2025_[Your organisation name]**.

We want to show the overall impact of your organisation so if you programmed any unticketed events in 2025 that are not shown on your ticketing system, please enter the number of people who attended those unticketed events – estimate if you need to.

Did you sell tickets in 2025 through anyone else's ticketing system? For example, a promoter may have sold some tickets through their own channels. If so, please enter the number of tickets in the spreadsheet (this is because they won't be recorded on your ticketing system either).

Step 2: Check for duplicate records

Please run your system's deduplication routine. It is important that there are as few duplicate customer records as possible on your system. If there are more than a handful, you will appear to have kept too few customers and have too many first time attenders and customers who have only bought tickets for one event.

Step 3: Exclude any events that weren't yours

What to include

We want to look at the overall impact of your organisation on the community so **INCLUDE** all these types of event:

- events by professional artists
- light entertainment and popular culture
- amateur events
- venue rentals or hires for arts and entertainment performances and workshops
- events that your organisation has programmed and promoted outside your venue(s) eg community centres (but exclude tours of the same event outside your catchment area)
- films, talks, workshops and participatory activities.

What to leave out

There are some types of activity in 2025 that it would make sense to exclude from the analysis. If you sell tickets on behalf of other promoters for events that do not take place in your venue or are not part of your festival then you should **EXCLUDE** them.

Please also **EXCLUDE** things like car parking, restaurant bookings or sales of artworks from your gallery. If in doubt, email me at heather@heathermaitland.co.uk.

Step 4: The Benchmarks

Please enter the results in the Excel spreadsheet.

How are we doing?: number of ticketed events

- Total number of ticketed events taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025
We're defining an event as any individual time-delimited performance, workshop, talk, class etc.

In the following, please EXCLUDE customers who were only issued with complimentary tickets i.e. the total value of the tickets they purchased in 2025 must be greater than or equal to €1

How are we doing?: tickets sold

- Total number of tickets sold excluding complimentary tickets for events taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025

How are we doing?: % capacity excluding comps

- Total number of tickets put on sale for events taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025

Are we maximising income?: average value per ticket sold

- Total gross income from tickets sold for events taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025

Are we maximising income?: average annual income per ticket buyer

- Number of unique ticket buyers purchasing at least one ticket for an event taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025

How many customers have purchased for the first time?

- Number of unique ticket buyers purchasing for the first time who bought for an event taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025

How many customers have I kept from the previous year?

- Number of unique ticket buyers who bought for an event taking place between 01/01/2024 and 31/12/2024
- Number of unique ticket buyers who bought for at least one event taking place between 01/01/2024 and 31/12/2024 AND for at least one event between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025

How engaged are they?: % of ticket buyers purchasing for one event only

- Number of unique ticket buyers purchasing for just one event taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025

How many customers purchasing in this year can we communicate with?

- Number of unique ticket buyers who bought for an event taking place between 01/01/2025 and 31/12/2025 who have opted in to receive marketing communications by email and/or post

Social Media

Please pick the two social media channels on which you spend most time and money.

Ideally, we would like a year's worth of data but, depending on the channel, if you haven't already collected it you may be restricted to the last 90 days. That's ok, too – just say which you are giving me. All the benchmarks use analytics that are easy to find on most platforms:

- **Reach:** the number of unique individuals who saw your content on this channel in the past year/90 days (e.g. Viewers on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok etc. and Members on LinkedIn) This is not the same as views or impressions.
- **Engagement:** the total number of interactions with your content on each of the two channels (e.g. likes, comments, shares, saves, clicks, retweets, bookmarks, forwards etc.)
- Number of **Followers** on each of the two channels
- **Spend** on paid-for social media in 2025 not including the cost of content creation

I will calculate the engagement rate and benchmark that, too.

Please send me your spreadsheet, saving it as **PAFBenchmarks2026[your organisation name].xlsx** at heather@heathermaitland.co.uk Please ensure that it is attached in Excel format and not as a pdf.

Best wishes and a huge thank you
Heather