



# Young People and Participation in Amateur Music Groups Research results

Xenia Davis, Youth Engagement Manager

May 2016

## Introduction and background

Previous research (*Making Music in the UK*, Music For All, 2014) and anecdotal evidence from amateur groups suggest that there is a drop-off in young people's participation in music groups post-15, and that many don't rediscover music making, if at all, until they are over 35. Furthermore, Making Music's 2013 *Treasurers' Survey* suggests the number of under-35s in amateur music groups (14%) is not reflective of the general population (26.4%, 2011 Census).

Under-35s, at a potentially unsettled and sometimes difficult period in their lives (moving out of education and parental homes, starting out on a career, arriving in new places, establishing new friendships, seeking life partnerships, starting families), would benefit enormously from (new or continued) engagement in music-making to support them in the many life-transforming transitions they face .

For music groups, the impact they can have on their communities, in particular in terms of social and intergenerational cohesion, would be enhanced if they were able to encompass and make an attractive offer to all age-groups through their membership.

**The aim of this research, therefore, was to discover the reasons for the post-15 drop-off, find out the music making attitudes and behaviours of 15-35 year olds, and to identify the motivations and barriers to participation in amateur music groups.**

**Reassuringly, the findings show that there are positive actions which can be taken to encourage under-35s to take up or return to amateur music-making, both by groups and by Making Music. Funding from the Pauline Thompson legacy will now support two years of activity, aiming to lead to an improved culture of music groups fully representative of and engaging with all generations in their locality.**

## Research target

In October and November 2015, 816 young people and 679 music groups were surveyed. Two online surveys were run concurrently, one aimed at 15-35 year olds, and one aimed at music groups.

Of the young people, **19%** were aged **15-17**, **37%** were aged **18-25**, and **44%** were aged **26-35**. **72%** were current members of music groups. **28%** were not.

Of the groups, **51%** represented vocal groups, **35%** instrumental groups, **9%** promoter groups, and **5%** were a combination of the above. Only 47% of instrumental groups said they found it harder to recruit younger members, compared to 74% of vocal groups and 94% of promoting groups.

## Main research findings

### *Reasons for joining/not joining/dropping out*

The main reasons cited by under-35s for joining music groups were **enjoyment (84%)**, to **improve musical skills (64%)** and **having the opportunity to perform (61%)**.

The most commonly given reason for dropping out, unsurprisingly, was transition – either **leaving school or university, or changing jobs (48%)**. Other key factors mentioned relate to **logistics** and **convenience (27%)**, the ease of fitting something in around busy and demanding lifestyles.

Asked why they were **not** in music groups, the most common responses related to not being able to sing/play an instrument (**58%**), a lack or perceived lack of **technical ability (40%)** and **time pressures (37%)**.

Only **8%** of young people said they **thought that the age of others in the group would be an off-putting factor**, meaning one of many music groups' greatest fears - that their membership's grey hair may put off newcomers in a younger age bracket – is at the very least not the main factor they need to be concerned about.

Young people themselves put forward that they thought others of their generation were not joining groups because of **time pressure (88%)**, with other reasons lagging far behind: **feeling like you're not good enough (24%)**, **lacking confidence (23%)** or **financial barriers (22%)**.

The main factor that would persuade young people to join a new music group was found to be liking the **style of the music (96%)**.

**Convenience (91%)**, **liking the person leading the group (86%)**, and **having opportunities to perform (80%)** were also all strong incentives for young people to join a group.

### *Repertoire*

Liking the style of the music is the factor rated most highly by young people as likely to persuade them to join a group (96%). On the other hand, only 8% claimed to have left a group because they didn't like the music and only 5% weren't in a group because they didn't like the music of the groups near them.

These seemingly contradictory findings are explained by the wide variety of repertoire which appeals to young people. Rather than the secret to recruiting younger members being to adapt a 'young person friendly' repertoire, therefore, it is important that groups are true to the style of music they set out to perform and that **a wide variety of genres are represented, to reflect young people's interest**.

**The only two genres which appeared to be significantly less attractive were early music and barbershop.**

Interestingly, and reassuringly, this conflicts with a fairly widely held assumption across groups that young people don't like the kind of repertoire performed by groups. **For groups that played classical, modern/contemporary classical and gospel/soul music there was an equal number of groups that found it difficult and no more difficult to attract young people.**

## ***How groups operate***

A significant finding which may point some groups towards useful changes to their *modus operandi* is that **Thursday evenings and weekend daytime sessions were favoured by young people for group rehearsals, but that demand, in particular for weekend sessions, is not currently being met by groups**. It is also worth noting that Friday or Saturday evening rehearsals are very unpopular with the under-35s.

Further useful pointers emerge from the statistically significant finding that **groups with a presence on social media find it easier to recruit younger members** than those who don't, **as do groups which perform regularly** (as opposed to those who never or only very rarely work towards public performances).

More surprising are the discoveries that **the requirement for members to read music for vocal groups**, and that **cost of participation (e.g. membership) made no significant difference in how easy it was for groups to recruit younger members** – though concessionary rates are clearly appreciated by younger people and offered by groups almost across the board.

Another finding of strong interest relates to the **culture and atmosphere of a group which are clearly of significance in terms of recruitment and retention of young people** – their importance can be gleaned obliquely in young people's replies to several of the questions (importance of a group being fun, of liking the leader of the group, of being put off when groups are disorganised or perceived to harbour too much conflict, for instance).

We compared the top 10 words used most commonly by groups that told us they found it harder to recruit younger members with groups that found it easier or the same. The words '**welcoming**', '**ambitious**', '**happy**' and '**professional**' featured strongly in responses by groups that said they found it easier or the same to recruit younger members. Furthermore, 25% of groups who found it easier versus only 12% of those who found it harder to recruit younger members mentioned the word '**fun**'.

## ***Pointers to the future***

Another 'indirect' finding of this research can be summarised as **the crucial role of triggers** in persuading younger people to either join or re-join music groups. Such triggers might be coming across a participative music element in a different context (e.g. at a festival; work; a shopping centre); being reminded about music participation (e.g. simply through this survey, for instance); or starting or resuming involvement to benefit another cause (e.g. to raise funds for a charity).

Finally, we asked both young people and groups for their views of what would increase their interaction. Young people are mainly asking groups to be **friendly/sociable/inclusive** (32%) and **flexible** (e.g. not insisting on young people having to commit to weekly rehearsals) (30%) – and not just to say, but to mean and do something about inclusivity for their age group.

**Groups are quite clearly tasking Making Music, amongst other things, with an advocacy role, in terms of promoting amateur music in general to young people and in terms of lobbying for continued and improved music education for the under-18s.**

This and the other results from the survey point the way towards **activity to be undertaken by groups and by Making Music over the coming two years**, which could include **generic guidance**, more **specific training or workshops, interventions to help 'jump-start' younger people into joining or re-joining amateur music groups**, and specifically **targeted activity brokered by Making Music such as Arts Award** offers by music groups; and **engagement with local schools, music services and music education hubs**.

## **Survey respondents:**

### **1. Survey for 15-35 year olds**

This survey was aimed at 15-35 year olds who are current or previous members of music groups, and who have never been members of music groups. It was disseminated to current members of music groups through our members. It was also disseminated via a number of youth organisations in order to reach young people who aren't current members of music groups (including Envision, VSO, Restless Development, Family Arts Campaign, UNA Exchange, several secondary schools), as well as via Facebook and Twitter and through personal contacts and networks. The survey was open to responses for one month.

Of the 816 respondents to the survey:

**19%** were aged **15-17**

**37%** were aged **18-25**

**44%** were aged **26-35**

**32%** were male,

**65%** were female,

**3%** other/prefer not to say

**24%** were at school/college

**19%** at university

**2%** in an apprenticeship

**4%** out of work

**38%** full time employed

**9%** part time employed

**14%** self employed

**72%** were current members of music groups.

**28%** were not.

Of all the groups that respondents were current members of:

**57%** were instrumental groups

**43%** were vocal groups

**58%** were based in the community

**33%** at home or at friends' homes

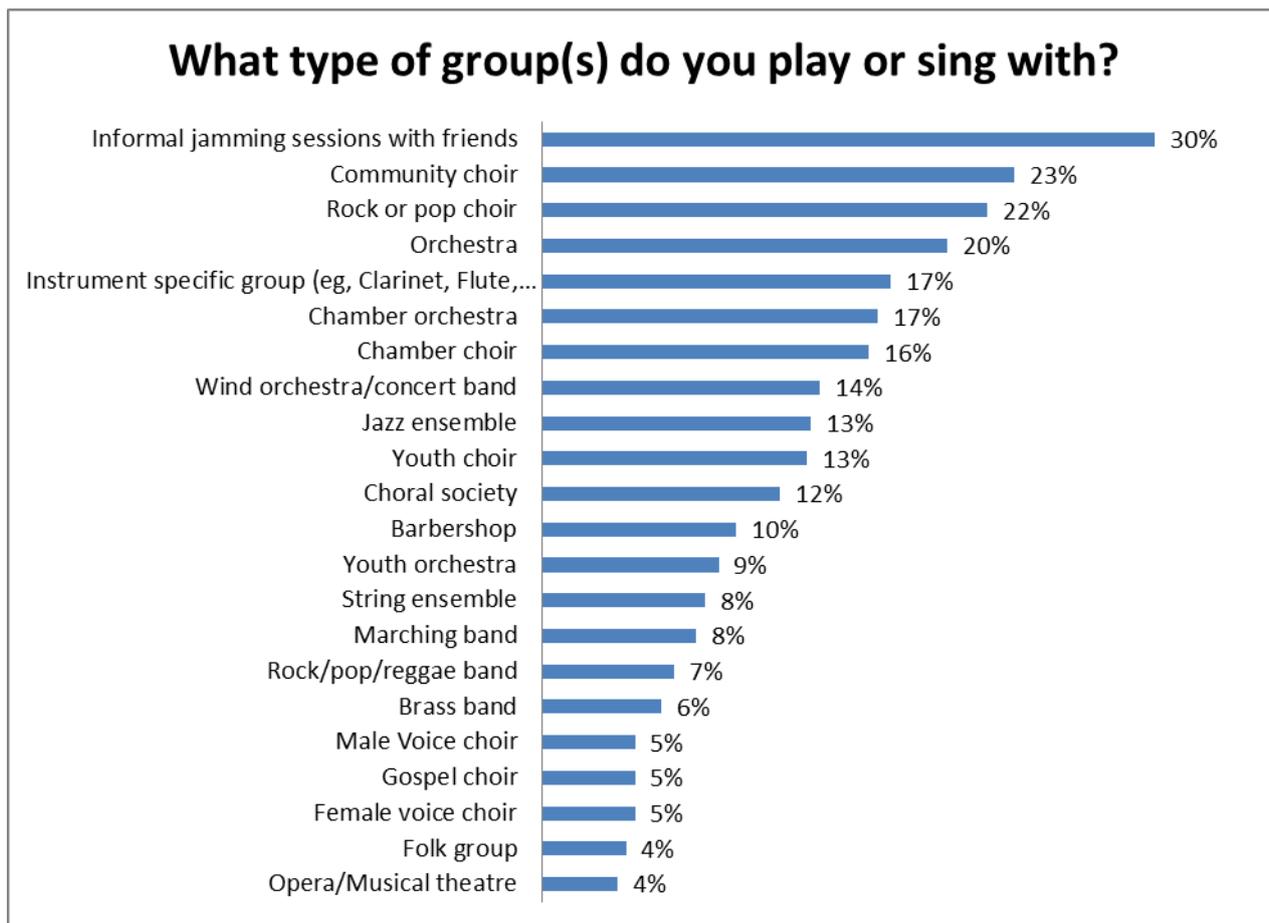
**21%** at university

**14%** at school

**11%** at college

**8%** at work

The type of groups that respondents were members of is as follows:



## 2. Survey for groups

This survey was sent directly to members of Making Music via email, as well as being promoted on Making Music’s Facebook and Twitter. It was also shared with other choir directors/leaders of music groups who aren’t Making Music members, via the Natural Voice Practitioner’s Network, and also through personal contacts. The survey was open to responses for one month.

There were 679 respondents to the survey. This represented 586 distinct music groups, of which 78% are members of Making Music.

Of the 679 respondents:

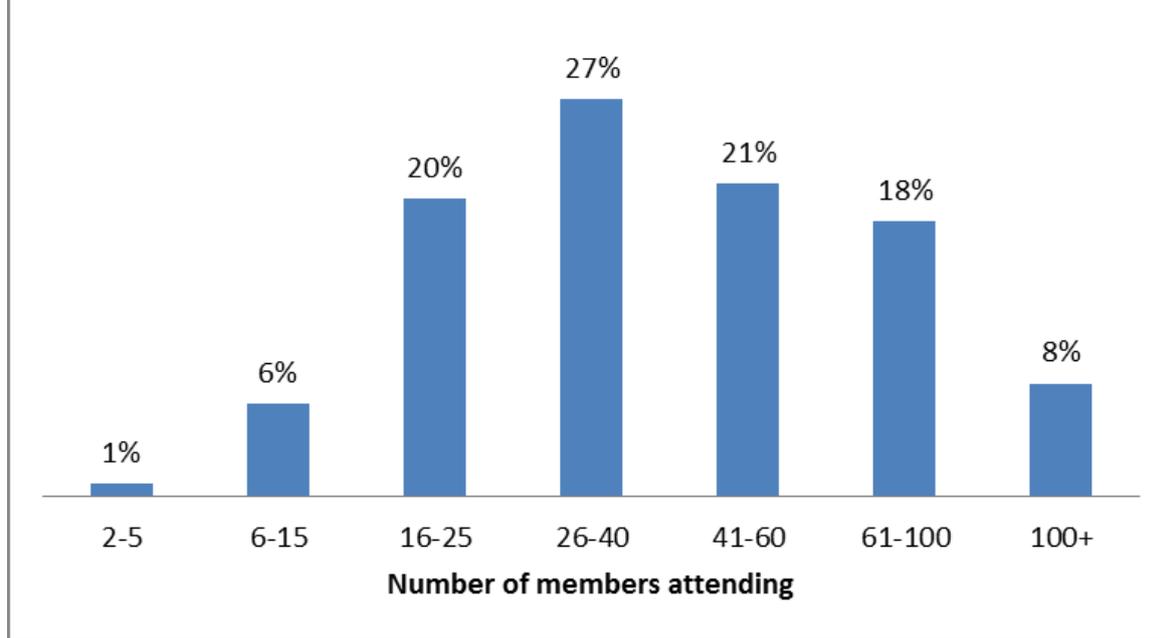
**51%** represented vocal groups

**35%** represented instrumental groups

**9%** represented promoter groups

**5%** were a combination of the above

## How many members come to rehearsals/meetings on a regular basis?



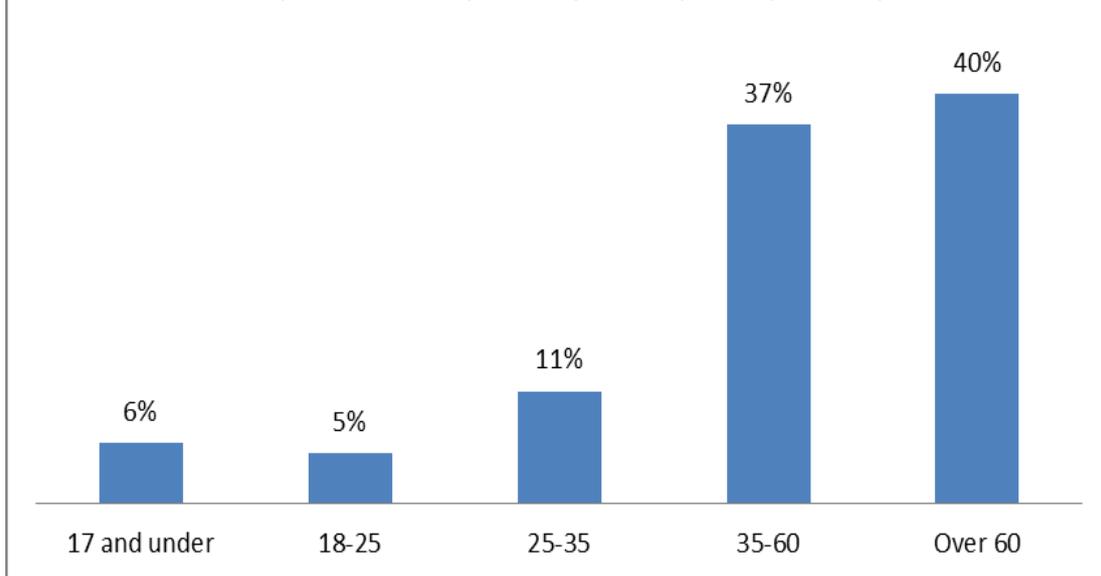
### Age range of members

The following numbers include the 23 groups who responded to the survey who exclusively set out to work with young people, and 4 groups who set out to work exclusively with older people.

Half the groups responding to the survey had fewer than 10% of members under the age of 35.

Only 27% of groups had 25% or more of their members under the age of 35.

**Based on the number of people that attend an 'average' session, approximately what percentage of your group is aged:**

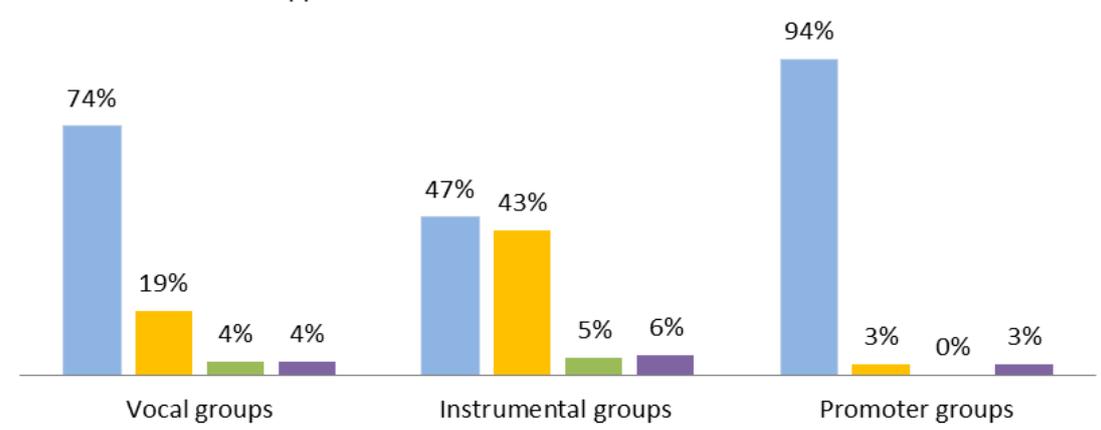


We asked groups whether or not they found it more difficult to recruit younger members (35 and under) compared with older members. While all types of groups told us they found it more difficult to recruit younger members, the difference was much less pronounced for instrumental groups.

Only **47% of instrumental groups** told us they found it more difficult to recruit younger members, compared with **74% of vocal groups** and **94% of promoter groups**.

**Do you find it more difficult to attract younger (35 and under) members to your group than older members?**

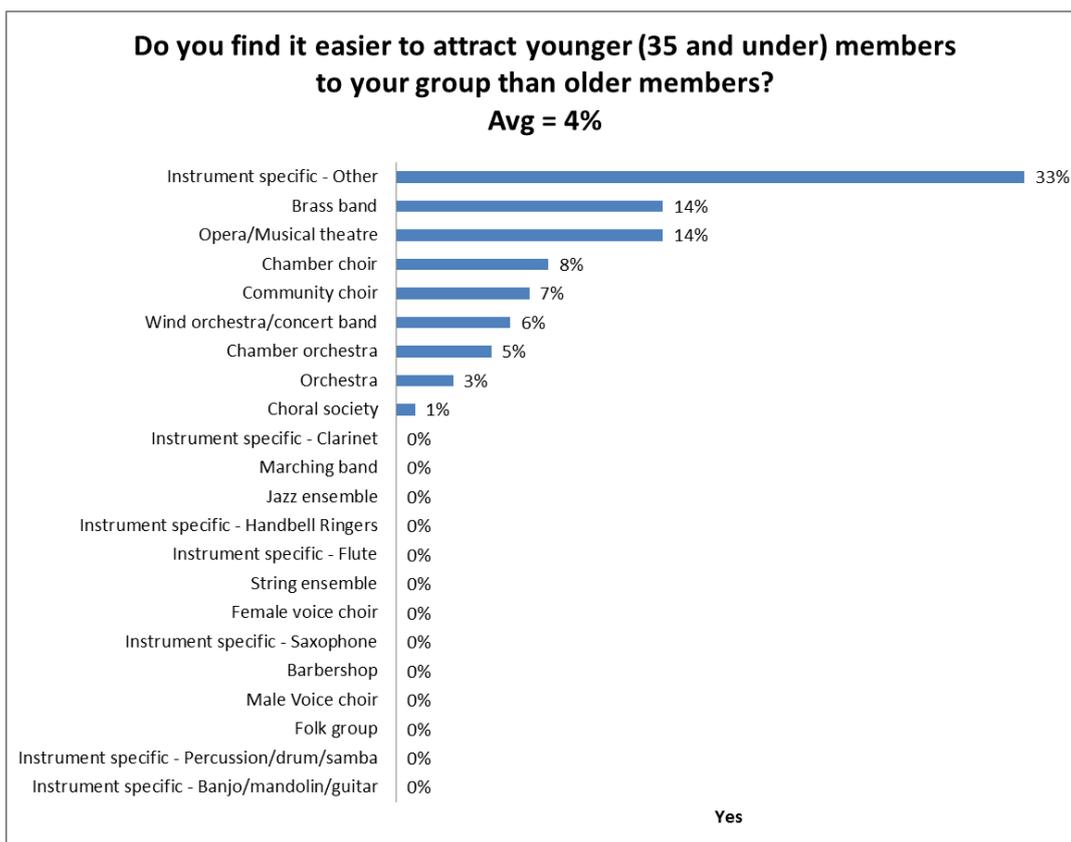
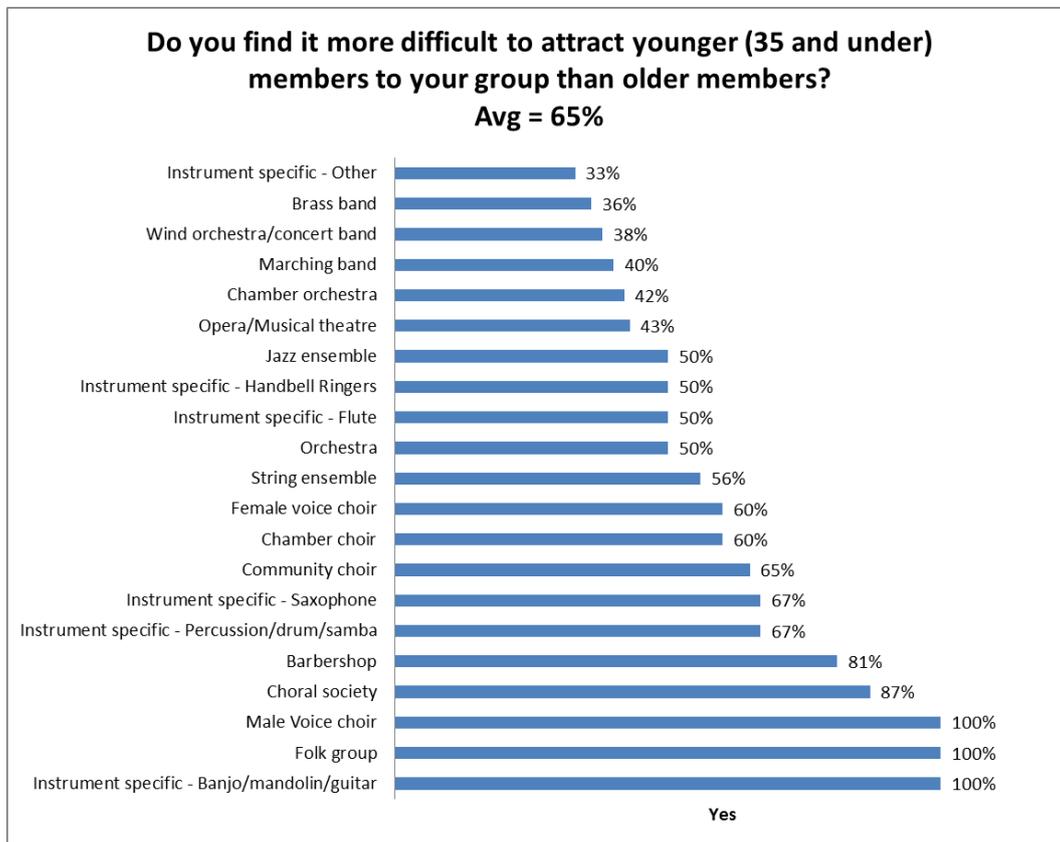
- Yes – it's harder for us to recruit younger members
- It's about the same for older and younger members
- No – we find it easier to recruit younger than older members
- Not applicable



We broke down these results by specific group type.

Saxophone groups, percussion groups, barbershop groups, choral societies, male voice choirs, folk groups and banjo/mandolin/guitar groups all found it more difficult than average to recruit younger members.

Instrument specific groups (fiddle), brass bands, opera/musical theatre groups, chamber choirs, community choirs, wind orchestras/concert bands and chamber orchestras had the least difficulty in recruiting younger members.



## **Index of questions:**

- 1. Why do 15-35 year olds join music groups?**
- 2. What are the reasons people give for dropping out of a group?**
- 3. Why are 15-35 year olds not in music groups?**
- 4. What are the main factors that would persuade young people to join a new music group?**
- 5. Why do young people think that other young people don't join music groups?**
- 6. Does the length of session/day of week/frequency make a difference?**
- 7. Do promotion methods make a difference?**
- 8. Do performances make a difference?**
- 9. Does the requirement for members to read music make a difference?**
- 10. Does cost make a difference?**
- 11. Does repertoire make a difference?**
- 12. Does joining procedure (fixed times/auditions or not) make a difference?**
- 13. Does offering a free taster session make a difference?**
- 14. How do groups describe their 'feel or culture' and does this make a difference?**
- 15. What do young people tell us that groups could do to be more appealing to young people?**
- 16. What do groups tell us that we could do to help them overcome the barriers faced in engaging with young people?**

## Research findings

### 1. Why do 15-35 year olds join music groups?

We asked 15-35 year olds who are currently in a music group what the reasons for them being part of a group are. This is a selection of the responses:

*“It’s a complete release from the stress of being a full time uni student with a part time job. Quite simply - I love it.” F, 18-25*

*“To keep learning new things, to help my memory, and for my mental health” – F, 26-35*

*“I work from home so choir rehearsals are a good, regularly scheduled time and place to socialise with people and get out of the house.” – M, 26-35.*

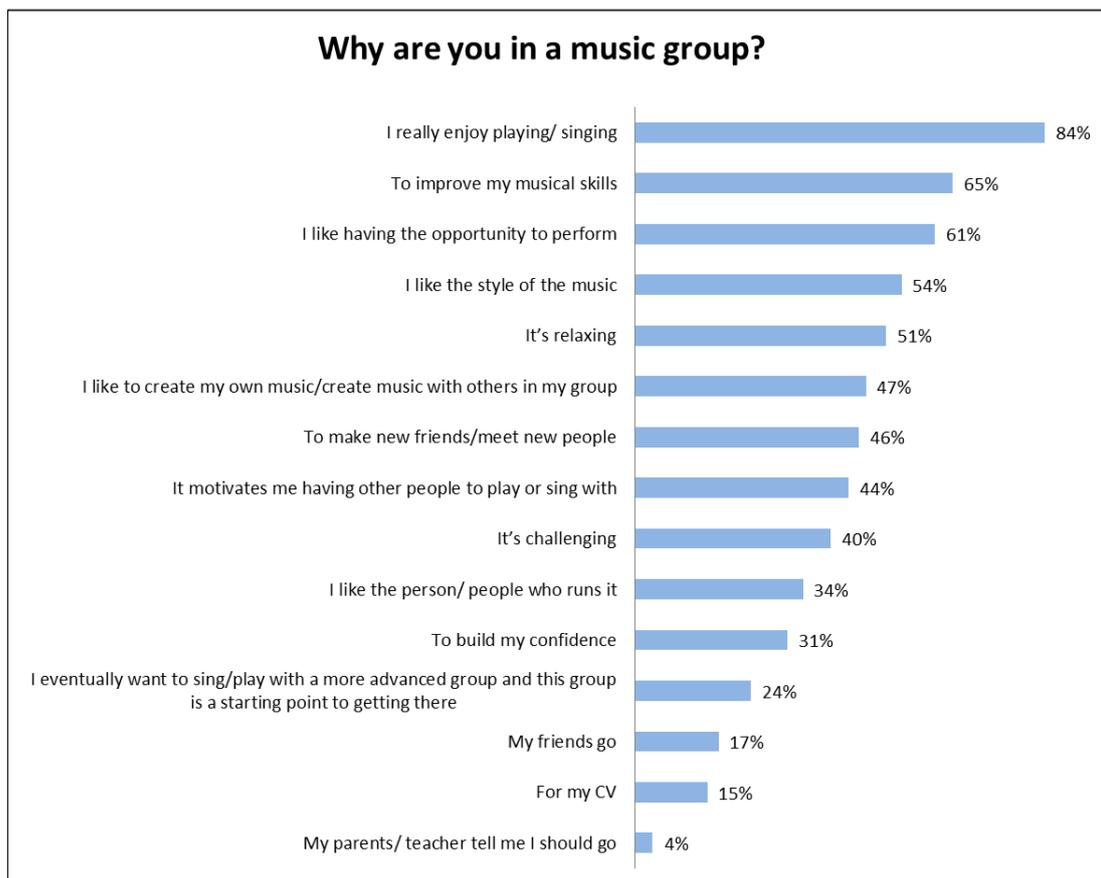
*“To set an example to my young children (ages 2 and 5) and to ensure they have contact with real music, in real life, since so little is now done in schools.” – F, 26-35*

*“To become a better performer and a more rounded musician.” – Gender: other, 15-17*

The most common reasons given were **enjoyment** (84%), to **improve musical skills** (64%) and **having the opportunity to perform** (61%). Liking the style of the music was cited by just over half the respondents.

When we filtered out respondents who took part in informal jamming with friends, to just include responses from respondents who were members of more ‘structured’ music groups, the same general pattern remained, with enjoyment (86%), improving musical skills (67%) and opportunities to perform (66%) remaining the most frequently cited reasons.

Reassuringly, the most commonly mentioned reasons for joining were positive and self-driven. Reasons linked to a sense of obligation or linked to the behaviour or attitudes of others (my friends go /my parents tell me I should go /for my CV) were the least frequently mentioned.



#### a. Is there a difference when you break this down by gender?

When these results are broken down by gender, the same general trend remains. However, a number of notable differences emerge:

- Females are more likely than males to say they **really enjoy playing/singing** (87% vs 77%).
- Females are more driven by **social factors** such as 'to make new friends' (49% vs 41%), and being more motivated by having other people to play/sing with (47% vs 38%)
- Females are also much more likely to mention **confidence building** as a reason for taking part (36% vs 20%)
- Males are more likely to be motivated by **performance opportunities** (66% vs 59%), by finding it **challenging** (45% vs 38%) having the opportunity to **create their own music** (52% vs 45%), and **enhancing their CVs** (18% vs 14%)

#### b. Is there a difference when you break this down by age?

Again, while the general pattern holds (still, the most cited reason for participating is enjoyment), there are interesting and significant difference across all 3 age groups.

Particular differences to highlight include:

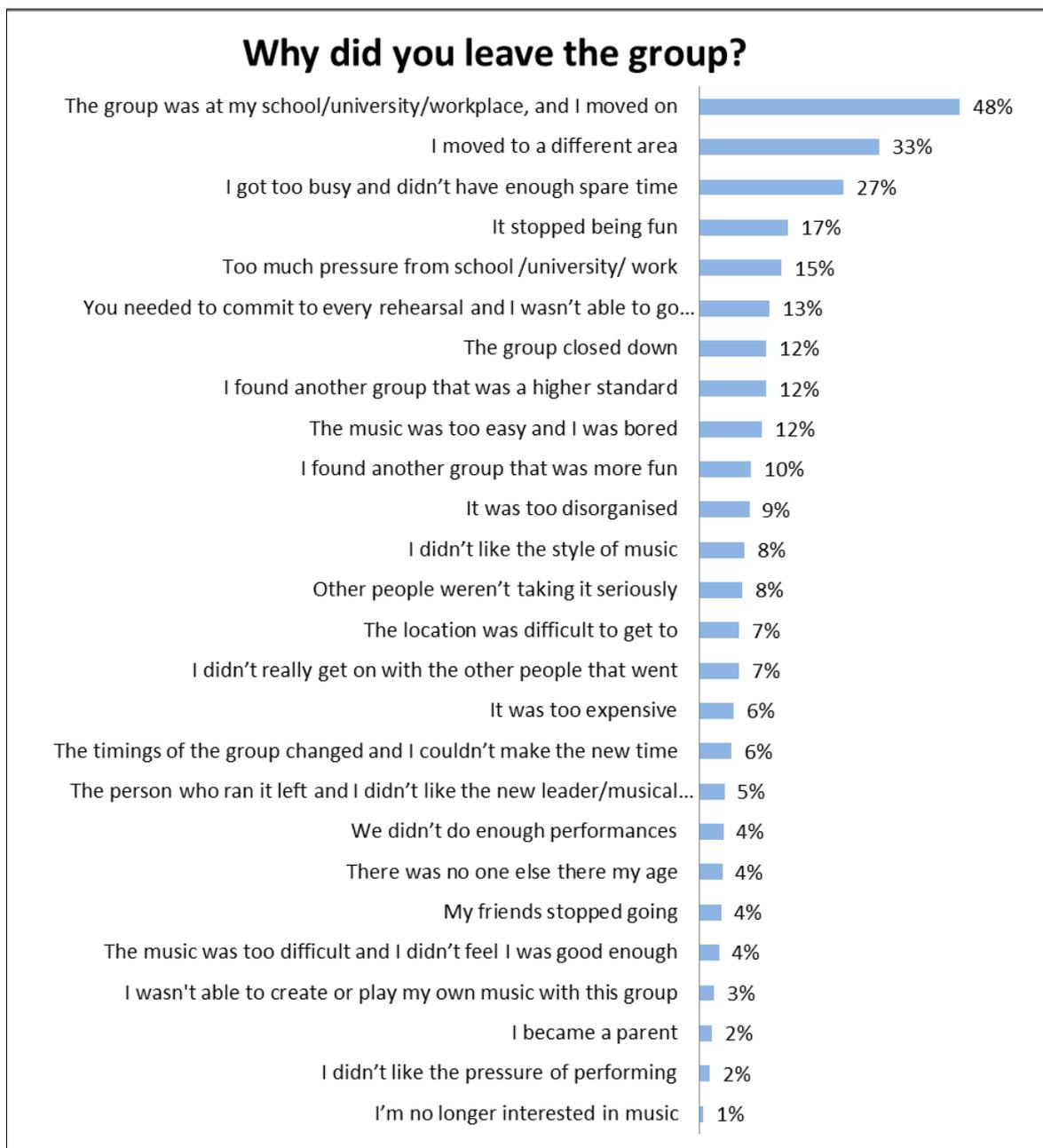
- 16-25s are more than twice as likely to be motivated by the **opportunity to enhance their CVs** (20%) than 26-35s (8%). This is perhaps unsurprising, as this age group will include a significant number of young people leaving school/university and looking for employment.
- Older age groups mentioned being **motivated by having other people to play with** (in descending order of age, 51% vs 46% vs 22%), **liking the person that runs the group** (descending order of age: 46% vs 27% vs 23%), finding it **relaxing** (60% vs 49% vs 35%), and wanting to meet **new friends** (53% vs 45% vs 31%), as important factors. This perhaps reflects more of a sense of voluntary participation in over 18 year olds. This is again backed up by a sharp decrease in over 18s saying they take part because someone else (a teacher or parent) **tells them they should** (in ascending order of age, 13% vs 3% vs 0%)

**c. Is there a difference when you break this down by vocal/instrumental group?**

There is very little difference in reasons for being part of a group when you compare vocal and instrumental groups. This may be largely due to the fact that vocal and instrumental groups aren't mutually exclusive, and so there were a number of participants whose responses fell into both groups.

There was a tendency for members of vocal groups to cite **relaxation** (57% vs 50%), **liking the person who runs the group** (39% vs 35%) and liking the **style of the music** (61% vs 57%) slightly more frequently than members of instrumental groups.

## 2. What are the reasons people give for dropping out of a group?



*"I moved to university."* – F, 26-35

*"Having been really involved in musical groups at school, I joined the non-auditioned orchestra at university however they took it far too seriously and expected a level of skill and wanted to be "taken seriously" which took all the fun out of it."* – F, 26-35

*"It is an irregular rehearsal and concert schedule, and I am unable to commit to all of the concerts throughout the year, and the rest of the choir is much older."* – F, 26-35

*"From the choral society that I was in as an adult, there was increasing pressure to sell more and more tickets to performances, which I found stressful and detracted from the enjoyment of rehearsing/performing."* – F, 26-35

*"Too much time spent tweaking arrangements, not enough time recording or performing."* – M, 26-35

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most commonly given reason for dropping out of a group was transition – either **leaving school or university, or changing jobs**.

Other key factors that were mentioned here relate to **logistics** and **convenience**, the ease of fitting something in around busy and demanding lifestyles, and the group no longer feeling like a **fun** group to be part of.

**Repertoire, cost, and being the only young person** attending were mentioned by fewer than 1 in 10 participants.

These factors chime with Music For All's 2014 report *Making Music in the UK*, carried out by Nexus Research. Music For All's report found that among the most common reasons given by lapsed instrument players for stopping playing were leaving/changing school (12%) and insufficient time (10%). It also found a lack of interest to be a key factor (19%), which interestingly was not found to be the case in this report.

#### **a. Is there a gender difference in the reasons people give for dropping out of a group?**

When these results are broken down by gender, the following differences emerge:

- Males are twice as likely as females to drop out because the group is **no longer 'fun'** (26% vs 13%)
- Males are more likely to drop out because they have found a group of a **higher standard** (18% vs 10%)
- Males are less likely to put up with disorganisation in a group (15% of males cite this as a reason for dropping out, compared to 7% of females)
- Males are twice as likely to drop out because they **don't like the style of the music** (13% vs 7% of females)
- Males are twice as likely to drop out because **'other people aren't taking it seriously'** (13% vs 6%)

#### **b. Is there an age difference in the reasons people give for dropping out of a group?**

The reasons for dropping out of a group differ significantly when broken down by age. A few unsurprising statistics emerge. For example:

- 15-17 year olds are less likely to have **moved location, school or job** as a reason for having to drop out.
- **Becoming a parent** is cited more amongst 26-35 year olds.

Perhaps more interestingly though:

- 15-17s are more likely to drop out because the **music is not challenging them enough** (20%, vs 13% and just 6% for 26-35s).
- 15-17s are twice as likely as older age groups to drop out because they **don't like the style of the music** (16% vs 7%)
- 15-17s are more likely to drop out because their **friends stopped going** (11% vs 2% and 4%).

- 15-17s are much more likely to drop out because they **can't create their own music with a group** (10%, vs 2% and 1%).

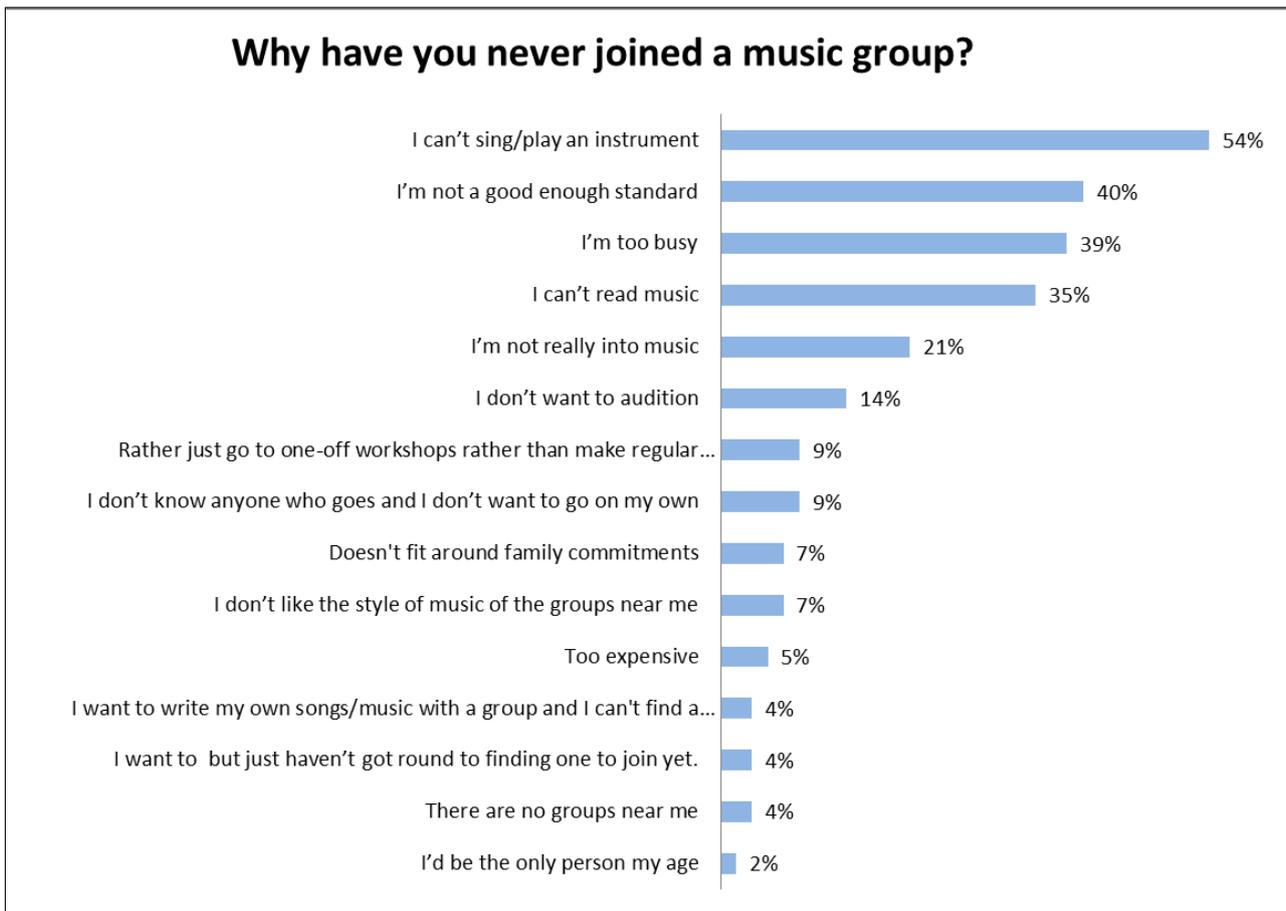
**c. Is there a difference in reasons people give for dropping out of instrumental vs vocal groups**

The data does not show any significant differences between the reasons that people give for dropping out of vocal groups vs instrumental groups.

**3. Why are 15-35 year olds not in music groups?**

We asked this question to young people who have never been part of a music group.

The most common responses related to a lack of, or perceived lack of **technical ability**, coupled with **time pressures**.



**a. Is there a gender difference in reasons for not being in a group?**

When we broke these reasons down by gender, there were significant differences in the reasons given by males and females.

- Females are significantly more likely to be put off because they think they're not good enough to be part of a group (48%, vs 31% of males)

- Females are more likely to be put off by having to audition (19%, vs 8% of males)
- More males said they were 'not really into music' than females (27% vs 16%)

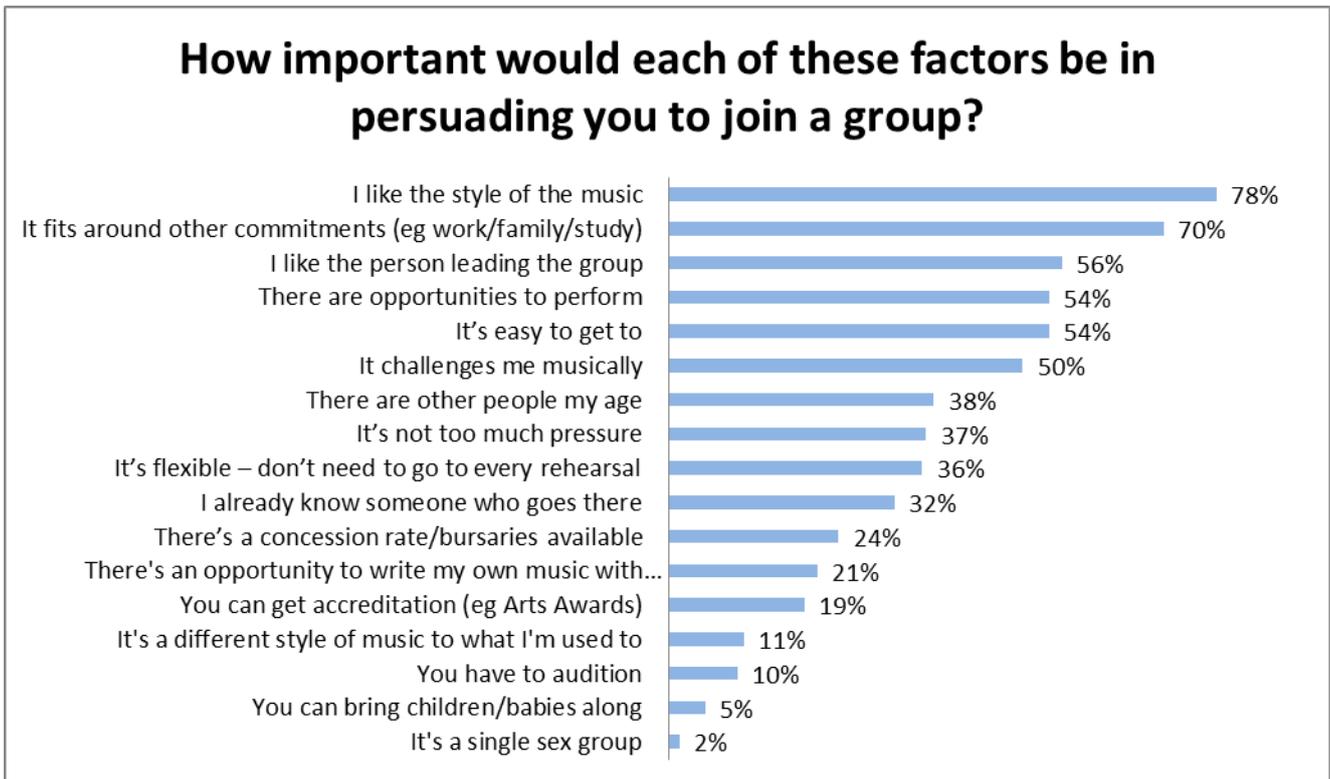
**b. Is there an age difference in reasons for not being in a group?**

We broke down age groups into 15-17 year olds, 18-25 year olds and 26-35 year olds. The following notable differences emerged:

- 33% of 15-17 year olds said they **weren't really into music** (compared with 8% of 18-25s and 21% of 26-35s).
- Both 15-17s and 26-35s were less likely to be put off by **not knowing anyone there** (7%) than 18-25s (15%).
- **Family commitments** (predictably) became more of a barrier as age increased (0% of 15-17s were deterred by this, 8% of 18-25s and 10% of 26-35s)
- **One off workshops** as an alternative to a regular commitment was relatively popular amongst 26-35s (17%) but not cited as a preference for anyone under 25.

**4. What are the main factors that would persuade young people to join a new music group?**

We asked young people to rate the following factors on a scale of 1-7 on how important they would be in persuading them to join a music group, with 1 being 'absolutely no way I'd join' and 7 being 'this would be absolutely essential'. The percentages given represent the participants who rated a factor a '6' (would persuade me a lot) or a '7' (absolutely essential).



The highest rating factors across age groups are:

- Liking the **style of the music**. However, before jumping to the conclusion that the secret to recruiting younger members is to adapt a ‘young person friendly’ repertoire, it is important to note that, as found in Q9, there is a wide range of repertoire that appeals to young people, and of all the genres we looked at, the only two that appeared to be less attractive were early music and barbershop. **(See Q9 for further details)**
- **Convenience** – the group needs to fit around other life commitments and be easy to get to
- Liking the **person leading the group**
- Having opportunities to **perform**

*“A good atmosphere and social diary [is important]!” – F, 26-35*

*“It would persuade me a lot if the company/group already had an established good reputation and multiple successful previous performances under their belt.” – M, 26-35*

The 3 factors that were the most off-putting to prospective members were:

- **Bringing babies or children along** – 25% of participants said this would put them off joining a group. This is obviously a hugely important factor to parents, but understandably not an appealing factor if you don’t have a small child you want to bring along to the group. Unsurprisingly, the appeal of this factor increases with age group. It is also worth noting that 3% of female respondents said this factor would be absolutely essential in whether or not they joined a group.
- **Having to audition** – 24% of participants said they would be put off by this. Again, it is worth noting that while this is the case, 10% of participants said they would be encouraged to join a group if there was an audition process. This variation of opinion probably accounts for the finding in Question 12 that there was no significant difference in how easy groups found it to recruit younger members depending on whether they had to audition.
- The group being a **single sex group** – this was an off-putting factor to 18% of participants. There remains, however, a small number of people for whom this is an important factor in persuading them to join a group – 1% of females and 2% of males who responded said this would significantly persuade them.

An important conclusion therefore here is that it continues to be important for diverse and varied groups to exist – including baby friendly, auditioned and single sex groups, even though the majority of respondents said they would be put off by these kind of groups. It is important not to homogenise groups in order to appeal to a general ‘average’ member, thereby excluding some of those for whom the barriers to participation might be greatest.

#### **a. Is there a difference when this is broken down by gender?**

Generally the results are broadly similar across genders. The main differences are:

- Females are more discouraged by having to **audition** than males (27% vs 18%)

- Females are more encouraged by **convenience factors** than males. 60% say they would be encouraged by a group being easy to get to (vs 41% of males), and 75% say it would need to fit around other life commitments (vs 60% of males)
- Females tend to be more encouraged by the availability of a **bursary** or **concession** rate (27%, vs 17% of males)
- Males tend to be more encouraged by the **opportunity to create their own music in a group** (33%, vs 16% of females), whereas more females tend to be put off by this.

	Discouraged		Encouraged	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
I like the style of the music	1%	0%	79%	76%
It fits around other commitments I have in my life (e.g. work/family/study)	1%	0%	75%	60%
I like the person leading the group	1%	1%	58%	51%
It challenges me musically	2%	2%	50%	51%
There are opportunities to perform	2%	1%	56%	50%
It's easy to get to	1%	2%	60%	41%
There are other people my age	1%	0%	39%	36%
I already know someone who goes there	2%	1%	31%	34%
There's an opportunity to write my own music with other people	11%	4%	16%	33%
It's flexible – don't need to go to every rehearsal	6%	4%	37%	33%
It's not too much pressure	4%	2%	39%	31%
You can get accreditation (e.g. Arts Awards)	4%	4%	20%	17%
There's a concession rate/bursaries available	2%	6%	27%	17%
It's a different style of music to what I'm used to	7%	7%	11%	10%
You have to audition	27%	18%	10%	10%
You can bring children/babies along	24%	27%	6%	4%
It's a single sex group	19%	17%	1%	2%

**b. Is there a difference when this is broken down by age?**

There are a number of significant differences when these factors are broken down by age:

- 26-35 year olds are slightly more encouraged by '**convenience**' factors than younger ages. 57% rate 'easy to get to' as important (vs 54% of 18-25s and 49% of 15-17s) and 76% rate 'fits around other commitments' as important (vs 69% of 18-25s and 61% of 15-17s)
- **Liking the person leading the group** becomes a more important factor as age increases. 62% of 26-35 year olds mentioned this, vs just 43% of 15-17s.

- 26-35 year olds were much more put off by the prospect of having to **audition** (34%) than 18-25s (15%) or 15-17s (21%).
- The ability to work towards **accreditation**, for example, Arts Awards, was highly encouraging to 15-17 year olds (43%) and decreased to just 7% of 26-35 year olds. This echoes the earlier finding that younger age groups are more motivated by being able to boost their CVs than older age groups.
- **Knowing someone who already attends the group** was seen as more important to 15-17 year olds (45%) than older age groups (28% for 18-25s, and 30% for 26-35s)

	Discouraged			Encouraged		
	15-17	18-25	26-35	15-17	18-25	26-35
I like the style of the music	1%	0%	1%	79%	78%	78%
It fits around other commitments I have in my life (e.g. work/family/study)	1%	0%	1%	61%	69%	76%
I like the person leading the group	1%	1%	1%	43%	55%	62%
It's easy to get to	4%	1%	1%	49%	54%	57%
It challenges me musically	2%	1%	3%	42%	56%	48%
There are opportunities to perform	1%	1%	2%	59%	59%	47%
It's not too much pressure	3%	6%	2%	49%	25%	42%
It's flexible – don't need to go to every rehearsal	5%	10%	2%	47%	28%	40%
There are other people my age	1%	1%	0%	44%	40%	33%
I already know someone who goes there	1%	1%	3%	45%	28%	30%
There's a concession rate/bursaries available	8%	3%	2%	27%	30%	18%
There's an opportunity to write my own music with other people	6%	8%	11%	32%	21%	17%
It's a different style of music to what I'm used to	9%	7%	8%	13%	10%	11%
You have to audition	21%	15%	34%	10%	12%	8%
You can get accreditation (e.g. Arts Awards)	2%	4%	6%	43%	23%	7%
You can bring children/babies along	28%	27%	21%	3%	5%	7%
It's a single sex group	21%	17%	19%	5%	2%	1%

### c. Is there a difference when you break this down by vocal/instrumental groups?

When these factors are broken down by vocal or instrumental groups, the following differences emerge:

- Potential members of vocal groups are slightly more put off by having to audition than instrumental groups (19% vs 14%)
- Potential members of instrumental groups are slightly more motivated by being challenged musically (66%, vs 59% for vocal groups)
- Potential members of vocal groups are slightly more encouraged than instrumental groups by liking the person leading the group (60% vs 54%)

- Potential members of instrumental groups are slightly more motivated by having the opportunity to write their own music (27% vs 20%)

	Discouraged		Encouraged	
	Vocal	Instrumental	Vocal	Instrumental
There's an opportunity to write my own music with other people	10%	9%	20%	27%
It's easy to get to	1%	2%	53%	51%
You can get accreditation (e.g. Arts Awards)	5%	4%	20%	23%
I like the style of the music	0%	1%	79%	78%
It's a different style of music to what I'm used to	7%	7%	11%	15%
I like the person leading the group	1%	1%	60%	54%
There are other people my age	2%	2%	35%	33%
It's a single sex group	19%	23%	1%	2%
I already know someone who goes there	3%	3%	29%	30%
It fits around other commitments I have in my life (e.g. work/family/study)	1%	1%	73%	69%
It challenges me musically	2%	1%	59%	66%
It's not too much pressure	5%	4%	32%	28%
It's flexible – don't need to go to every rehearsal	6%	8%	34%	29%
There's a concession rate/bursaries available	2%	3%	27%	29%
There are opportunities to perform	1%	2%	64%	68%
You have to audition	19%	14%	16%	14%
You can bring children/babies along	28%	24%	5%	5%

## TRIGGERS

A point that came up on a number of occasions was the importance of 'triggers' in encouraging young people to seek out a music group, especially in the case of lapsed musicians.

Respondents talked about previously having been in a group, leaving because of moving to university/ leaving university and settling in a new area, becoming caught up in work and life, and then encountering an experience which made them remember how much they enjoyed playing or singing, causing them to seek out a group to join.

*"It's on the list of things [you] should [do], just nothing prods you to do it." – M, 26-35*

A key feature of the triggers mentioned was that they just 'popped up' in people's lives, without needing to be sought out. Examples given included attending a singing workshop as part of a workplace 'away day' or at a music festival, becoming reunited with old musical friends at a wedding and reminiscing about how much fun it had been, and even taking part in this research!

*"Just wanted to let you know that I completed the below questionnaire and it really made me ask myself why I don't do anything musical anymore... So I started looking for a samba group to join (because I've always wanted to be in a samba band) and I've now been to two sessions and I absolutely LOVE it and I'm already excited for next week. So I wanted to sincerely thank you both for prompting this!" – Survey respondent, F, 26-35*

## 5. Why do young people think that other young people don't join music groups?

We asked young people to tell us 3 reasons why they thought young people weren't members of music groups. Participants were asked to free-type their answers, and we then categorised them.

An overwhelming **88%** of young people told us they thought **time pressure** was one of the top 3 barriers to young people joining music groups.

*"[They are] too busy with other things - most of my peers work two jobs and/or have a family." – F, 26-35*

*"We find that increasingly young persons' careers make it difficult for them to commit to a weekly meeting, and short-term contracts mean that many stay with us for only a short period before moving away to another job. This has been a growing challenge for us over the last few years." – Orchestra, NW England*

Once again, this resonates with Music For All's *Making Music in the UK* report (2014), which found that lack of time was the most common factor, cited by 40% of lapsed instrument players as preventing them from taking up playing opportunities.

The next most popular given reasons were **feeling like you're not good enough** (24%), **lacking confidence** (23%) or **financial barriers** (22%). Interestingly only 5% of respondents in an earlier question told us that they personally were not a member of a group due to financial reasons. However, the earlier question did also suggest that being too busy or not feeling like you're good enough were the top reasons for not being part of a group.

*"Fear everyone will be more musically literate/accomplished than me and I won't keep up." – F, 26-35*

Of interest, only **7%** of young people said they thought the **style of the music** was an off-putting factor. This chimes with the finding in Question 2 that only 8% of young people cited not liking the style of the music as a reason for dropping out of a group. Interestingly, and reassuringly, this conflicts with a fairly widely held assumption across groups that young people don't like the kind of repertoire performed by groups:

*"They don't want to sing our kind of music. They join the 'pop' choirs." – Choral Society, SE England*

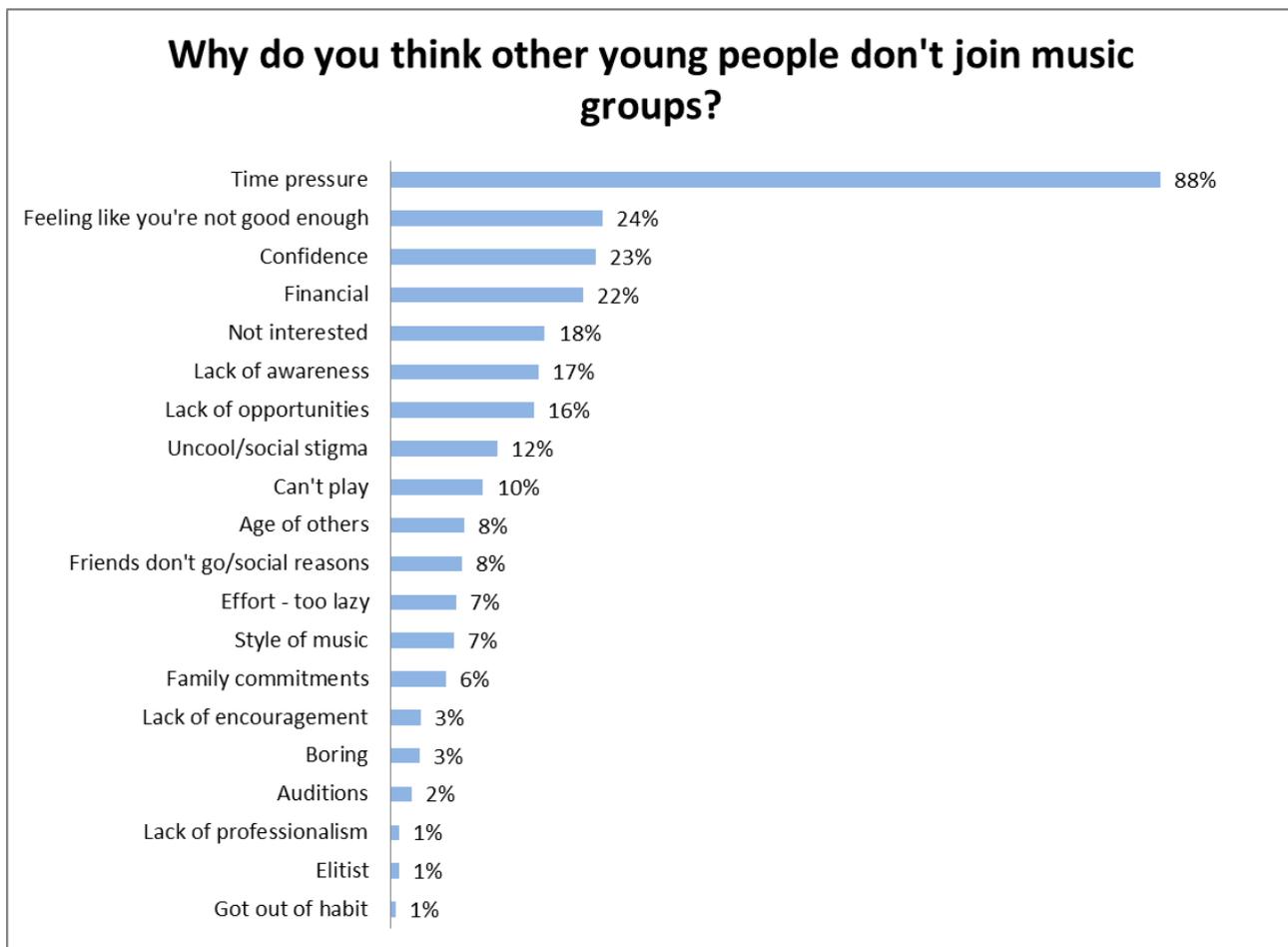
*"Ours is 'serious' choral music which is demanding to sing and doesn't always engage young people." – Choral Society, NW England*

Likewise, only **8%** of young people said they thought that the age of others in the group would be an off-putting factor, which also seems to conflict with a commonly perceived barrier by groups that their existing age profile would be off-putting.

*"The age profile of the choir doesn't make it very attractive to younger members looking for a social side - it's fine if you just want to sing (like I did - I was 27 when I joined)" – Choral Society, London*

That said, it is worth considering that social drivers were found to be a significant motivating factor for young people joining a group. Inter-generational social groups can and do work, but there does need to be

some thought put in to how to create a good social dynamic within the group. Arguably, however, this stands regardless of the age of members.



## 6. Does the length of session/day of week/frequency make a difference?

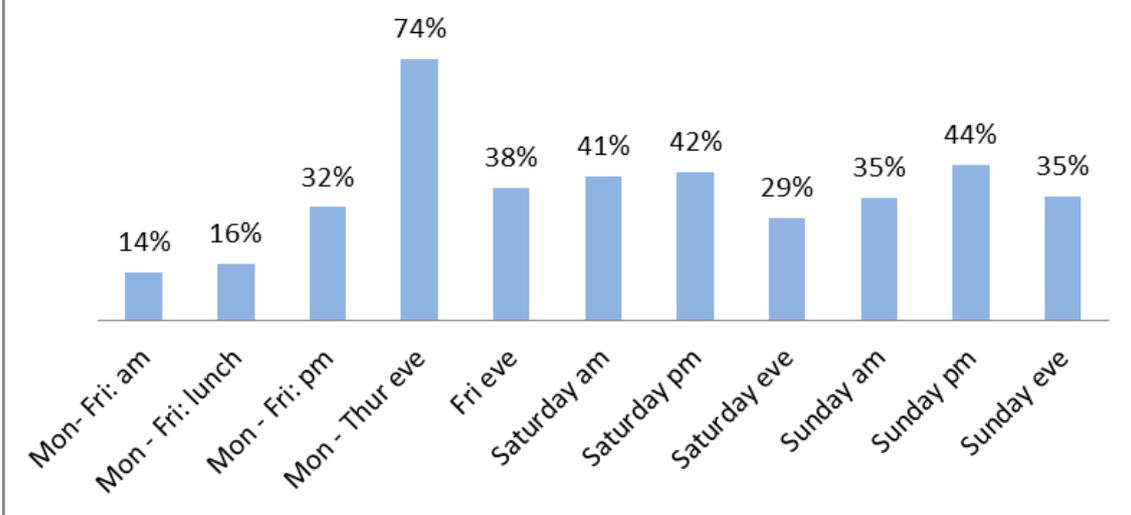
We asked this question both to young people and to groups. Young people were asked about their preferences, and groups were asked when they meet, and whether they find it more difficult to attract younger members.

### a. Day of the week

Young people's strongest expressed preference was for a **Monday – Thursday evening** session (74%). However, weekend daytime sessions were also quite highly rated.

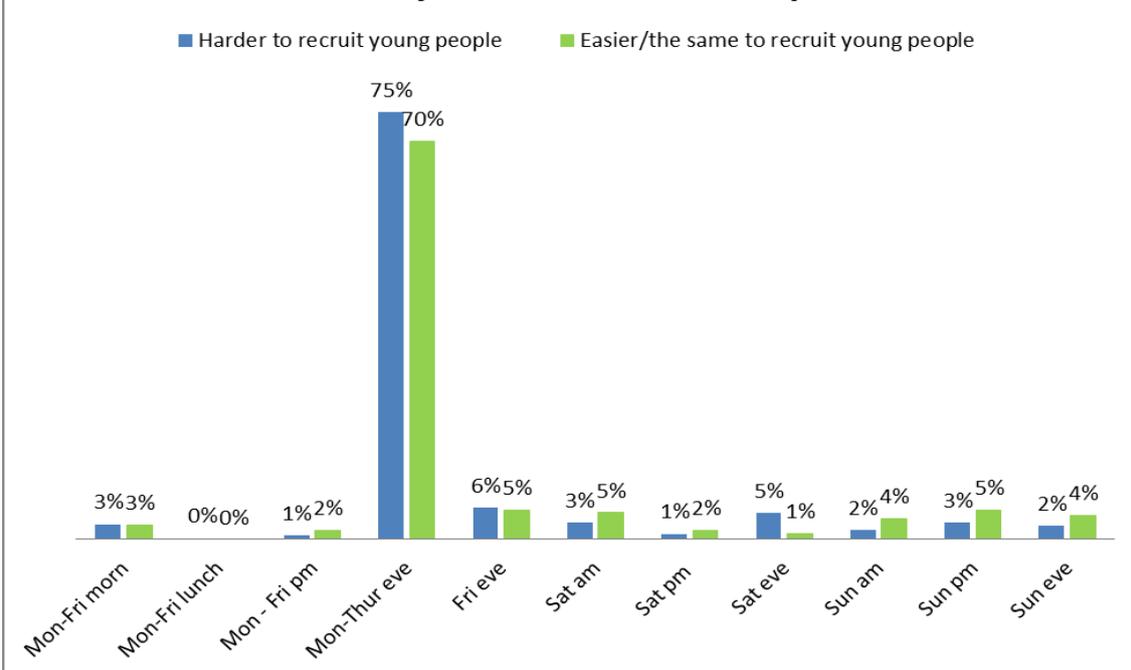
It is important to note that this data includes all survey respondents, including those who work full time, students, parents of small children etc., and so while Monday – Thursday evenings came out as the most frequently selected preference, this would not necessarily be a suitable option for all respondents.

## Which of the following days/times do you/would you consider going along to a music group?



We asked groups when their rehearsals took place, and whether they found it more difficult, less difficult, or no different recruiting younger members.

## When do your rehearsals take place?



While the graph follows a similar pattern to the preferences expressed by young people, with a peak of rehearsals taking place on Monday – Thursday evenings, there are definitely relatively fewer weekend rehearsals actually taking place, compared with the preferences expressed by respondents. This mismatch in what is being offered versus what young people say they would prefer could be *part of* the reason behind groups finding it more difficult to recruit younger members.

A further (and perhaps more obvious) point worth noting is that more groups that meet on a Friday or Saturday evening tend to find it harder to attract young people.

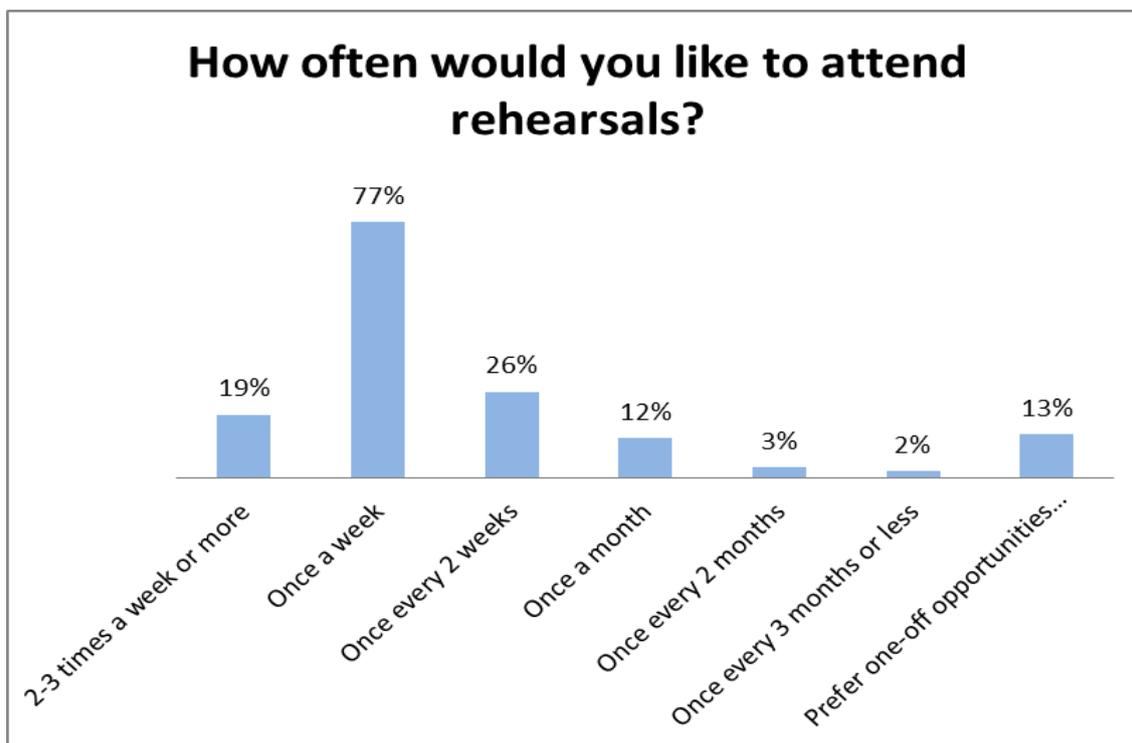
When we broke this down further and looked separately at each day of the week, we found some interesting differences. While, for each day of the week, there were more groups that found it more difficult to recruit younger members, **more groups that met on Sundays or Thursdays said they found it either easier or the same to recruit young people than groups that met on other days of the week.**

Once again, this points to Sunday rehearsals as being a more appealing option for younger members.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Harder to recruit younger members	69%	70%	71%	58%	53%	61%	47%
Easier/the same to recruit younger members	28%	27%	22%	38%	28%	27%	42%

### b. Frequency of rehearsals

We asked young people how often, ideally, they would like to attend rehearsals for a music group. The most popular preference was for **weekly rehearsals** (77%), followed by **fortnightly** (26%), **2-3 rehearsals a week** (19%) or **one-off opportunities** (13%).



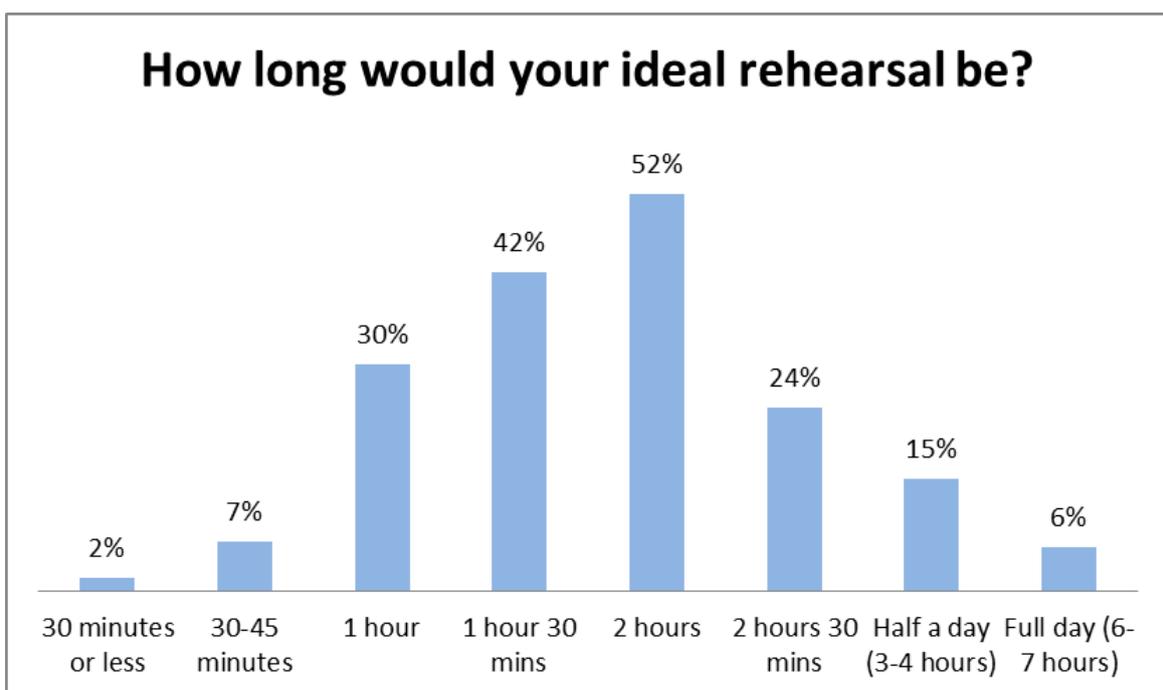
This broadly matches the frequency with which groups told us they run their rehearsals.

There was **no significant difference** in whether it was easier or harder to recruit younger members according to the frequency with which a group met.

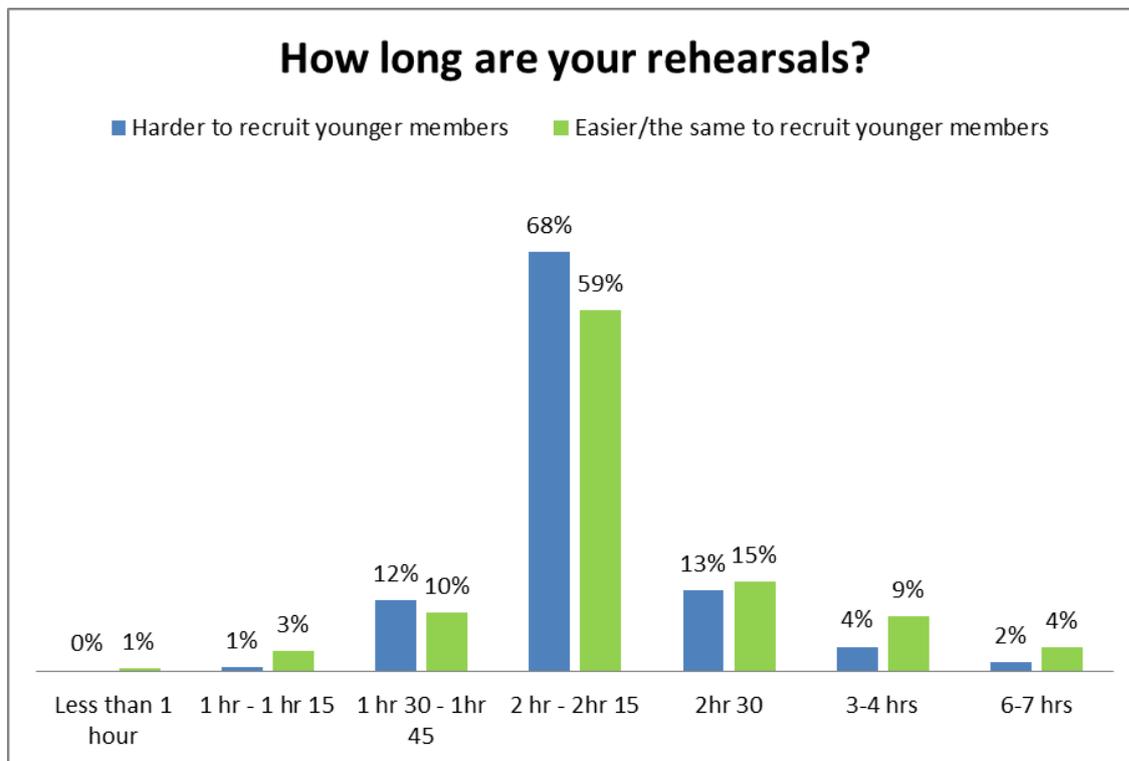


#### c. Length of rehearsals

We asked young people how long their ideal rehearsal length would be. The most popular response was 2 hours (52%) followed by 1hr 30 (42%) and 1hr (30%).



We asked groups how long their rehearsals currently are. The most frequent length of rehearsal was **2 hours**.



Also of interest:

- The distribution was less evenly spread than the responses given by young people.
- Of the groups that ran longer rehearsals (half day or full day), more of these groups said they found it easier/the same to recruit younger members. Given that half and full day rehearsals are more likely to fall over a weekend, this perhaps again points to weekend rehearsals as being a more convenient option for more younger people.

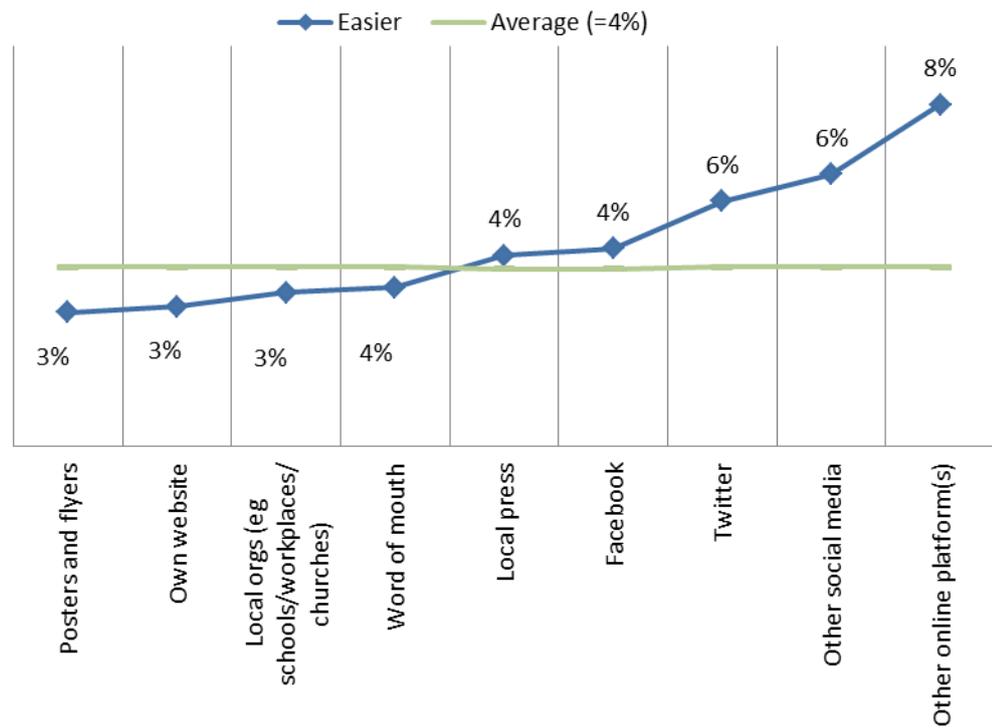
## 7. Do promotion methods make a difference?

We asked groups what methods they used to promote themselves, and whether they felt they found it harder, easier, or no difference in attracting younger members.

Groups that used **Facebook, Twitter, other social media** or **other online platforms** found it easier on average to recruit younger members, and these results were statistically significant.

*“We recently held an open rehearsal aimed at younger people. Despite posters in local student venues we attracted no interest from young people.” – Choral Society, SW England*

## What methods do you use to promote your group and reach out to new members?

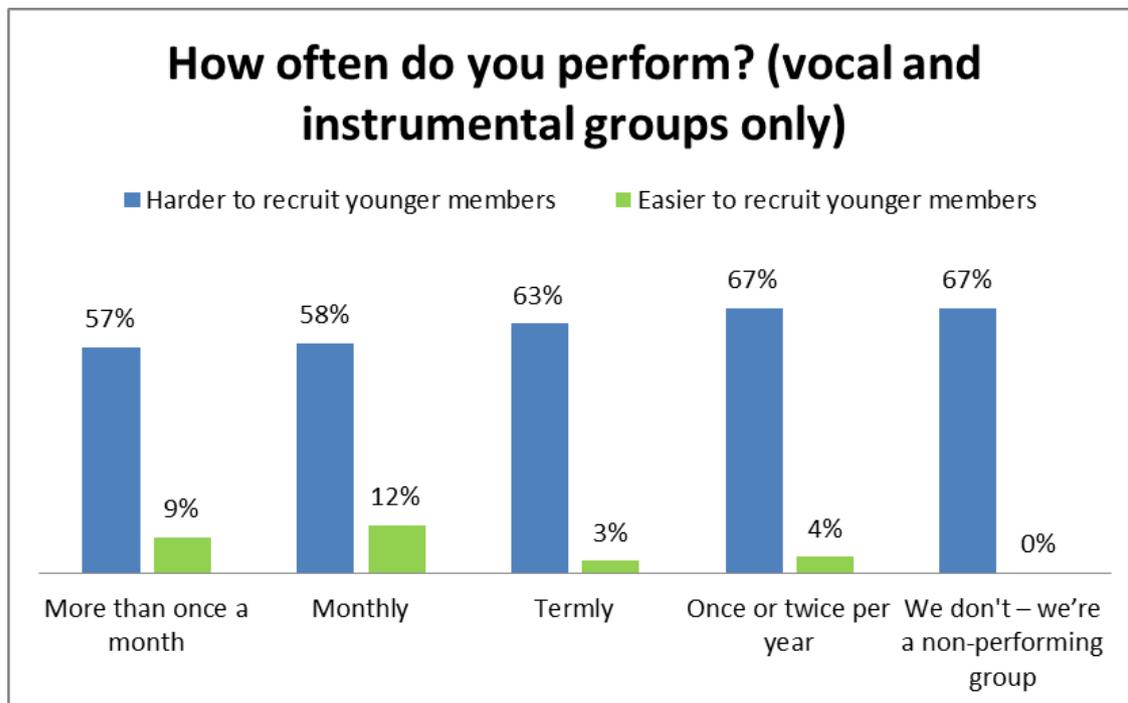


## 8. Do performances make a difference?

We asked groups about how frequently they performed, and whether they felt they found it harder, easier, or no difference in attracting younger members. We analysed vocal and instrumental groups separately to promoter groups.

### a) Vocal and instrumental groups

**Groups that performed found it easier to recruit younger members than groups that did not perform**, and this result was statistically significant. In general, groups that performed more frequently, around once a month, found it easier to recruit younger members. (9% and 12% vs 3% and 4%)



b) Promoter groups

The data showed that all promoter groups who responded except for two found it more difficult to attract younger members, and the response to this question made no difference.

The wording of the question may have been interpreted differently by different promoter groups, with some taking it to mean 'how often do we perform' and some interpreting it as 'how often does our group put on (and therefore promote) performances'.

## 9. Does the requirement for members to read music make a difference?

We asked groups whether their members needed to be able to read music. We analysed results separately for instrumental, vocal and promoter groups – taking into account operational differences in running these groups with and without written music.

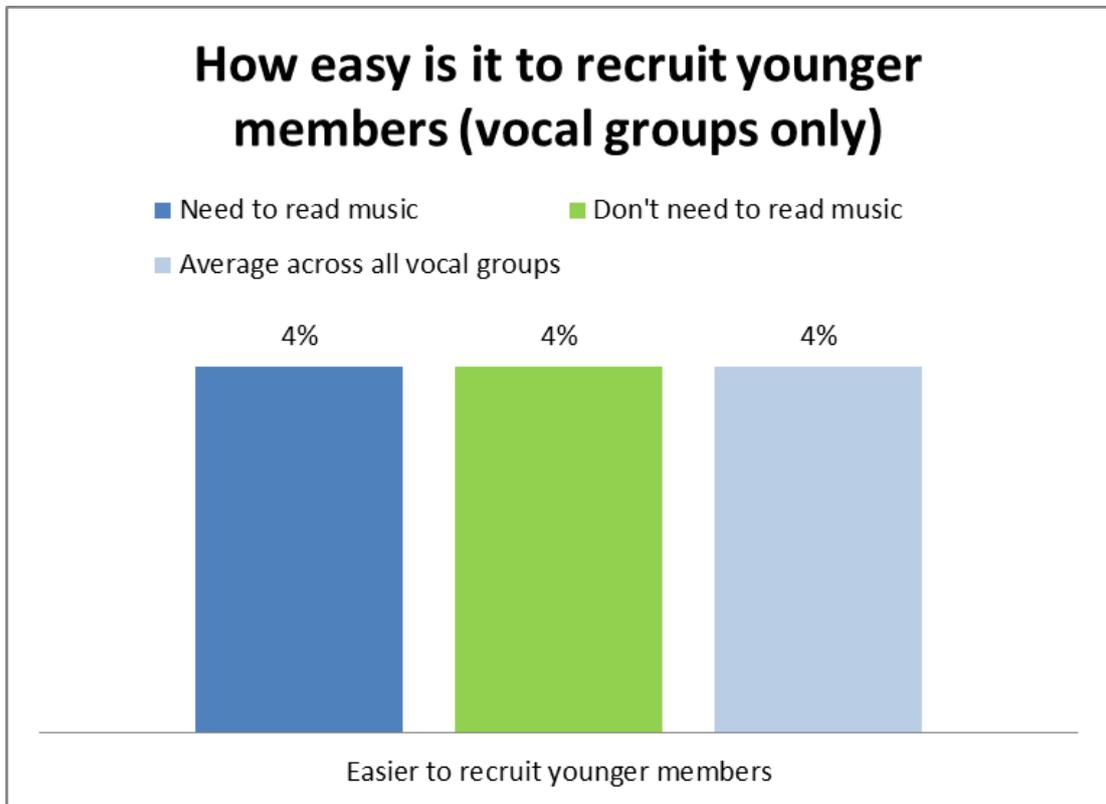
a) Instrumental groups

Groups that by their very nature do not require you to read music and groups which operate a different model to amateur orchestras (e.g. marching bands and brass bands) tended to find it easier to recruit younger members.

There may be some interesting learnings to be gleaned from the brass band/marching band models for other instrumental groups, in terms of first access, but clearly there is – and always will be – a requirement to read music for some types of instrumental groups (orchestras, string ensembles etc.).

b) Vocal groups

There was no significant difference for groups that said they found it easier to recruit younger members in whether or not they required their members to read music, offering some relief from one of choirs' greatest concerns.



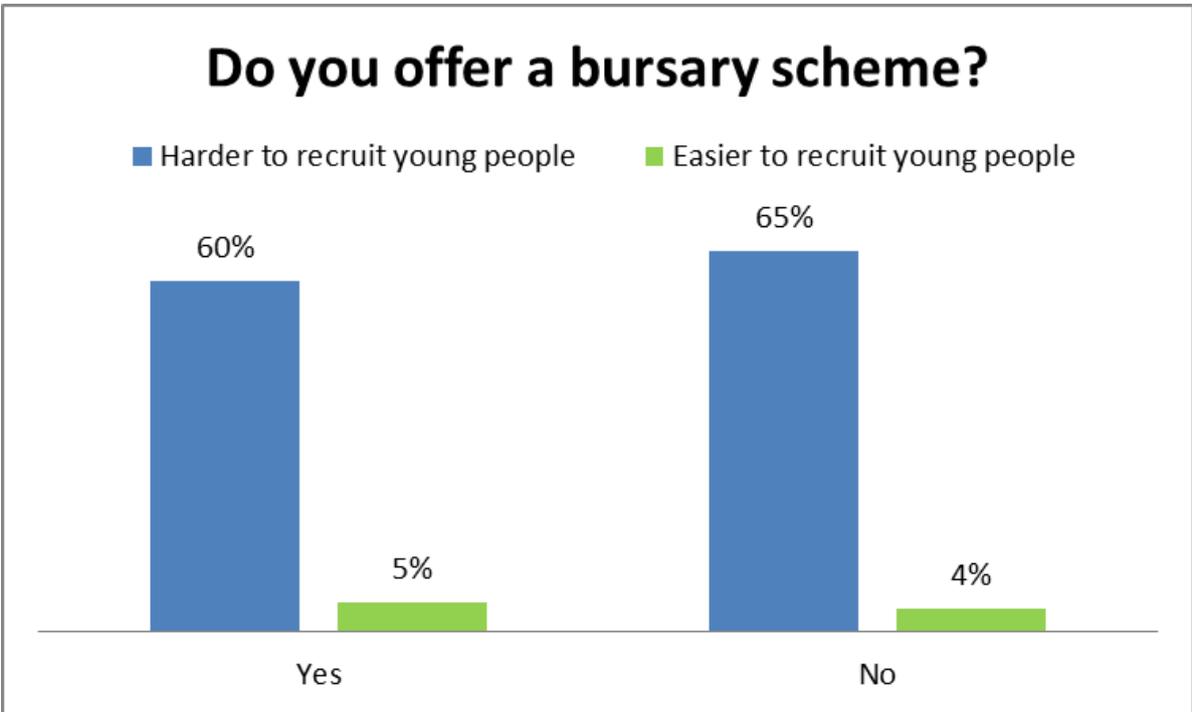
c) Promoter groups

The promoter groups who took part in this research did not require their members to read music.

## 10. Does cost make a difference?

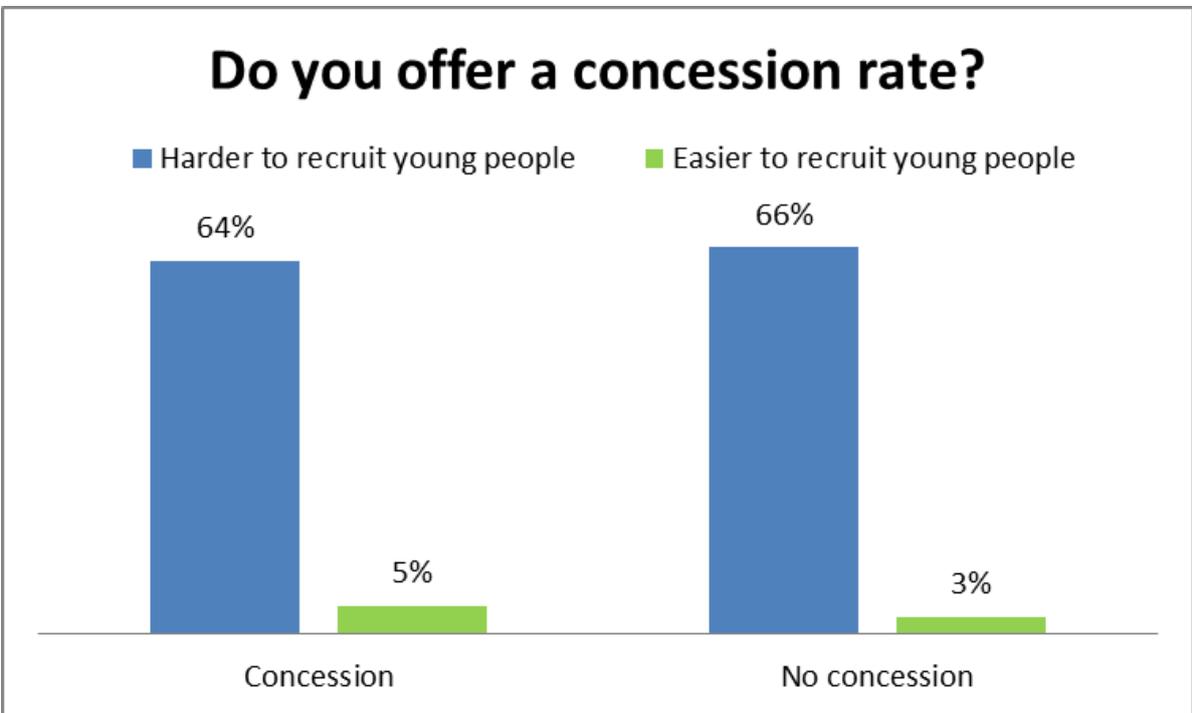
a) Bursaries

We asked groups whether or not they offered a bursary and compared how easy they found it to recruit young people. Of the groups that found it harder to recruit young people, slightly more groups did not offer a bursary than groups that did (65% vs 60%). However, this result was not statistically significant.



b) Concession rates

We asked groups whether or not they offered a concession rate and compared how easy they found it to recruit young people. **Groups that offered a concession rate tended to find it marginally easier to recruit young people, although there was not a significant difference between the two groups.**



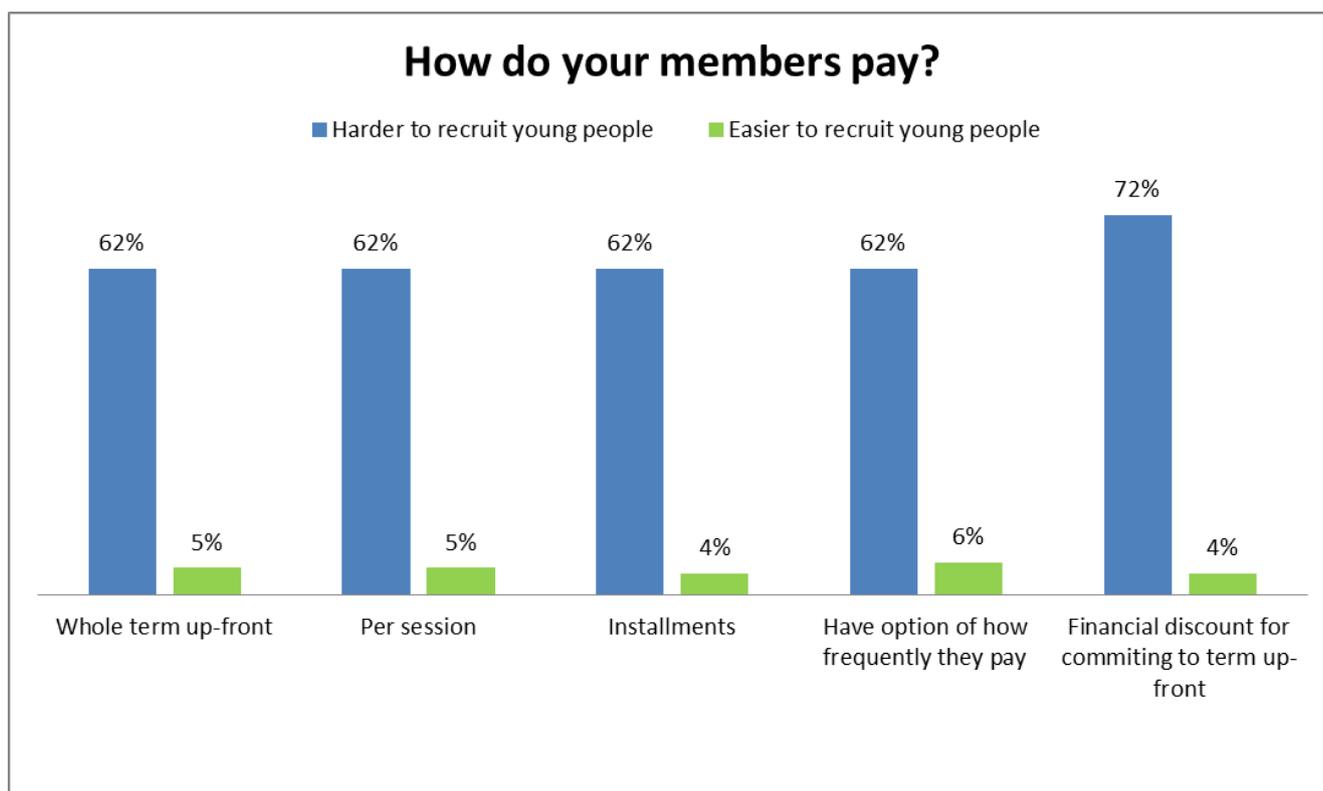
### c) Payment method

We asked groups about how their members made payment – whether they paid per session, paid upfront for a term, paid in instalments, had the option of how frequently they paid, and whether they received a financial discount for paying upfront.

When we compared how easy or difficult groups found it to attract younger members, we found that having the option of how frequently to pay made it slightly easier to recruit younger members. Offering a financial discount for paying for the whole term up front made it slightly more difficult to attract younger members. This makes sense given young people generally have less disposable income, with many being students or at the earlier stages of their careers in less well paid roles.

It also chimes with the finding that young people’s lifestyles generally tend to favour a more flexible approach to membership, and might make them less willing to part with a sum of money up front, not knowing whether they will be able to attend all rehearsals.

Interestingly this was not found to be the case where everyone pays up front and there is no financial discount, perhaps suggesting that subtle options that favour older or more stable members make a difference.



## 11. Does repertoire make a difference?

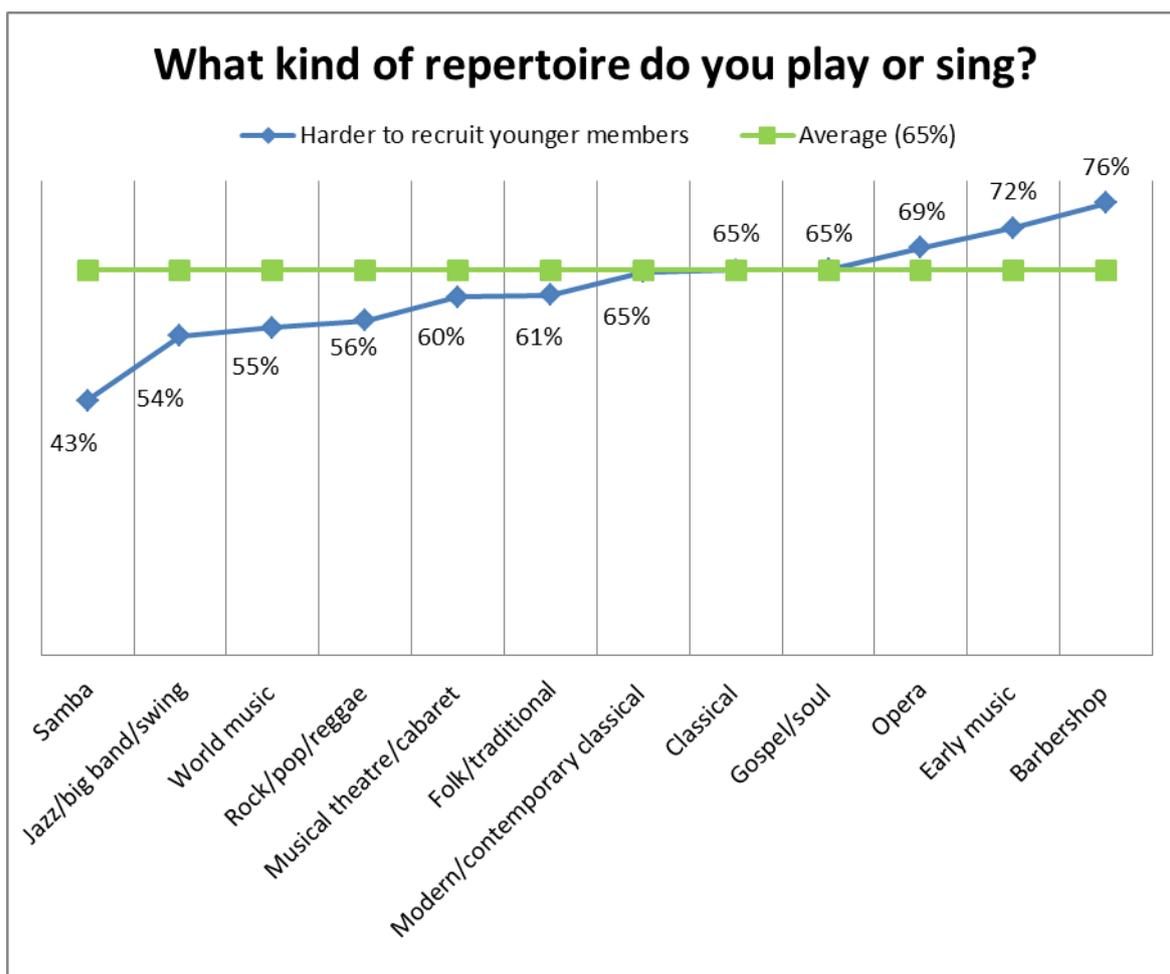
We asked groups what repertoire they play or sing, and whether or not they found it more difficult to attract younger members.

Of the groups that found it more difficult to recruit younger members, a significantly higher number of these groups played or sang **barbershop, opera or early music**.

Of the groups that found it easier, or no more difficult to recruit younger members, there was a higher proportion of **Folk/Traditional music, Samba, Rock/Pop/Reggae, Musical Theatre, Jazz/Big Band/Swing, and World Music.**

Classical, Modern/contemporary classical and gospel/soul music were fairly similar across groups that found it difficult and no more difficult to attract young people.

Before jumping to the conclusion that the secret to engaging young people is to adopt a repertoire composed primarily of jazz and world music, it is important to note the variety of repertoires played by groups that find it easier to attract younger people. While repertoire *is* a relevant and important factor, young people like a wide variety of genres, and it is important that variety continues to exist.



## 12. Does joining procedure (fixed times/auditions or not) make a difference?

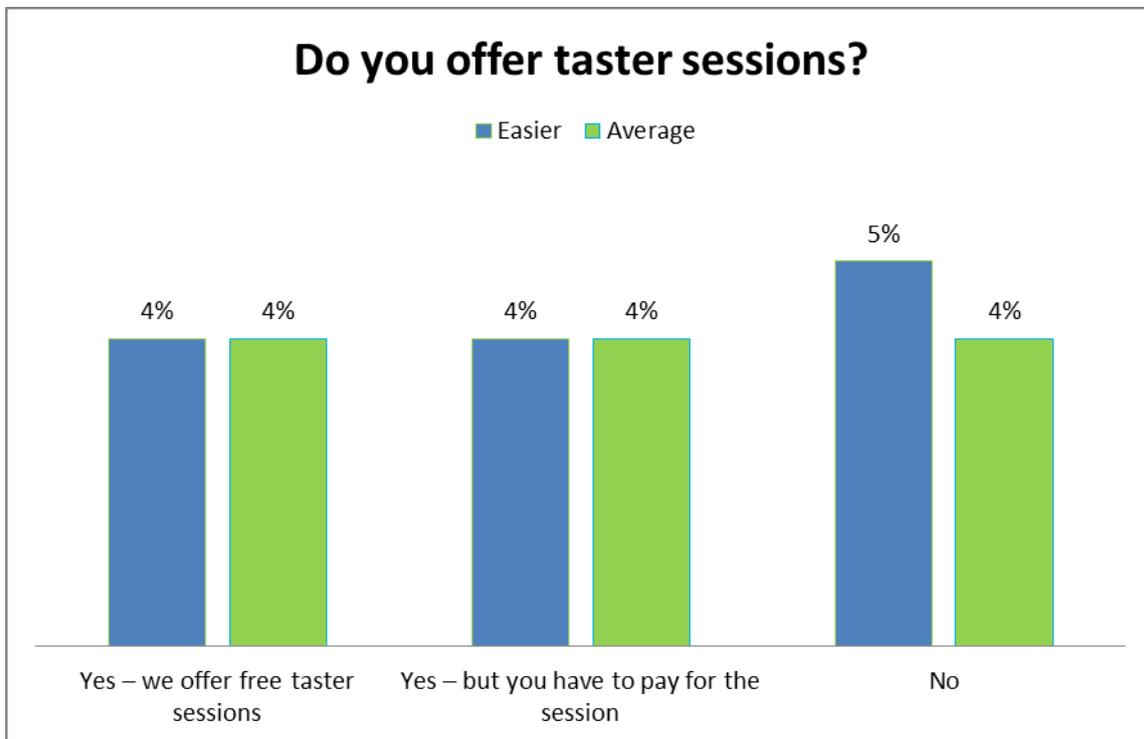
We asked groups about how prospective members would go about joining.

- **Requiring members to audition had no significant effect** on how easy groups said they found it to attract younger members. However, it is worth bearing in mind the finding from Question 4 on factors that encouraged or discouraged young people to join music groups, where significantly more 26-35 year olds than younger ages did say they would be put off by having to audition.
- Having **fixed joining points in the year** for members to join, rather than being able to join at any point of the year, also had **no effect** on how easy it was to attract younger members.

### 13. Does offering a free taster session make a difference?

We asked groups whether or not they offered taster sessions, and if so, whether these were free or you had to pay for them.

**Free taster sessions were not found to make a significant difference in how easy it was to recruit younger members.**



### 14. How do groups describe their 'feel or culture' and does this make a difference?

We asked groups to tell us 3 words that described the 'feel' or 'culture' of their group. We compared the top 10 words used most commonly by groups that told us they found it harder to recruit younger members with groups that found it easier or the same:

- The word '**welcoming**' was mentioned by 11% of the groups that found it easier or the same to recruit younger members, and was not mentioned by any of the groups that found it harder.
- The word '**fun**' was mentioned by 25% of groups that found it easier or the same to recruit younger members, compared with just 12% of groups that found it harder. This resonates with the finding in Question 1 that young people join music groups for enjoyment and in Question 2, that of the people who drop out, nearly a fifth say it is because a group has stopped being fun.
- '**Ambitious**' was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> and mentioned by 8% of groups that found it easier/the same to recruit younger members, but ranked 14<sup>th</sup> and mentioned by 4% of groups that found it harder.
- '**Happy**' was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> and mentioned by 7% of groups that found it easier/the same to recruit younger members, but only ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> and mentioned by 1% of groups that found it harder.

- **'Professional'** was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> and mentioned by 7% of groups that found it easier/the same to recruit younger members, but only ranked 16<sup>th</sup> and mentioned by 3% of groups that found it harder.

Easier/ the same to recruit younger members		Harder to recruit younger members	
Friendly	50%	Friendly	58%
Fun	25%	Enthusiastic	12%
Inclusive	13%	Fun	12%
Welcoming	11%	Inclusive	12%
Committed	11%	committed	10%
Ambitious	8%	Sociable	9%
Enjoyable	7%	Enjoyment	8%
Happy	7%	Supportive	7%
Professional	7%	Hard working	5%
Sociable	7%	Traditional	5%

## 15. What do young people tell us that groups could do to be more appealing to young people?

We asked young people to tell us 3 things they thought groups could do to be more appealing to young people.

1. Be **friendly/sociable/inclusive** (32%)
2. Be **flexible** (i.e., don't insist on young people having to commit to weekly rehearsals) (30%)
3. Better **publicity** so young people are aware of the opportunities (22%)
4. Engaging **repertoire** (22%)
5. Make participation **affordable** (20%)
6. Have **taster sessions** (13%)
7. Make sure there is a **performance**/something to work towards (12%)
8. Make sure the group has a **relaxed/informal/low pressure** feel to it (11%)
9. Make sure there are **learning or progression** opportunities (8%)
10. Be serious about wanting to engage with younger members and actually want to. **Actions, not just words** (6%)
11. Make sure the **venue is accessible and easy to get to**. E.g. ensure there are good transport connections/ at a workplace (6%)

Again it is worth noting that these are the amalgamated comments of all young people who took part in the survey, and this explains the contradictions in preference that exist, for example, in terms of whether a group is ambitious and high achieving, or whether a group is more chilled out and relaxed.

## **16. What do groups tell us that we could do to help them overcome the barriers faced in engaging with young people?**

We asked groups to tell us how Making Music could support them to overcome the challenges faced in engaging with young people.

### **1. Campaign/lobby (15%)**

- a. To make music 'cool'

*"Choirs aren't seen as being "cool" by a lot of kids."* – M, 26-35

- b. For better music provision in schools

### **2. Advertising (14%)** – both directly promoting groups, and supporting groups to be better at advertising

### **3. Advice/training (11%)**

- a. On how best to recruit (link to point above)
- b. On how to create a more 'young friendly vibe'
- c. Safeguarding training if working with under 18s

### **4. Assist with funding (8%)** – both directly providing funding, and supporting groups to access external funding

### **5. Run open days/taster workshops (7%)**

### **6. Develop school partnerships (7%)**

### **7. Share good practice from other groups (5%)**

### **8. Brokering partnerships (3%)** – e.g. with workplaces, colleges, networks of younger people

## Summary and the future

Before drawing conclusions from this research it is important to note the **huge diversity that exists across the 'young people' this research has been targeted at.**

Some of these are fresh out of sixth form and highly ambitious amateur musicians, living more flexible student lifestyles and wanting a musical challenge. Some are single parents, juggling childcare and work commitments. Some are in demanding and busy jobs, living in a new city and wanting an opportunity to socialise and meet new friends in a relaxed environment.

Some are confident in their musical ability and would be completely unfazed by the prospect of an audition, while some are coming to music for the first time or returning after a long break, and are tentatively dipping their toes in the water and would be strongly put off by the prospect of an audition.

Some are only able to attend day time groups due to family life or work shift patterns. Some are only able to attend evening groups due to '9-5' work commitments.

**No set of activities or recommendations is going to be appropriate to the needs every single person in the 15-35 year old age bracket, and it is important that the diversity and variety of groups reflects the diversity and variety of 15-35 year olds.**

On the reverse side of the coin, the existing enormous range of sizes, locations and types of amateur music groups means that for them, too, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to recruiting and retaining younger members.

Both these provisos have to be borne in mind for any activity Making Music will be undertaking in the coming two years, based on this research and funded by the legacy given to Making Music by passionate choral singer Pauline Thompson with a view to increasing the engagement of younger members in adult amateur music groups.

There is clearly an appetite from groups to engage with younger people, given the response rate to this survey and the fact that this topic is raised invariably at members' meetings held by Making Music.

82% of groups that responded indicated that they would like to engage more with younger people, with 98% of these groups saying they would like to engage with young people as regular group members, and 21% saying they would like to engage through specific outreach projects.

And there is equally clearly a vast untapped potential of younger people who aren't currently engaging with amateur music.

Making Music will now be planning a programme of work which could include:

- recommendations and general guidance to members (e.g. on the use of social media as this is one factor shown in this study to noticeably affect recruitment of younger members);
- training or workshops to help members *attract* and *retain* younger members, e.g. through a change of atmosphere and an increased ability to manage group dynamics;
- interventions or trigger events to help 'jump-start' younger people into joining or re-joining amateur music groups;
- specifically targeted activities brokered by Making Music such as Arts Award offers by music groups; and engagement with local schools, music services and music education hubs
- lobbying and advocacy by Making Music on behalf of music education and to promote amateur music to young people.