

Musicians' Census

LGBTQ+ Musicians Insight Report

February 2024

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Musicians

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Introduction

It's been a long-standing ambition of both Help Musicians and the Musicians' Union to build a comprehensive picture of the lives and careers of musicians across the UK. In 2023, we are proud to say that our organisations fulfilled that ambition with the launch of the first ever Musicians' Census.

Together with the support of key organisations and individuals in the music industry, the Musicians' Census achieved almost 6000 responses. Thank you to everyone who shared their experiences of work and life with us.

For this fourth report we have partnered with a key music industry organisation, Come Play with Me (CPWM). CPWM is a non-profit music development organization who specialise in supporting people from marginalised communities, with a particular focus on LGBTQ+ communities, to further their careers in music. CPWM fights for an equitable, inclusive, and diverse music industry. We would also like to thank Andrew Lansley and Daniel Baxter for their contributions to this work.

LGBTQ+ musicians are an under researched community and because of this very little is known about LGBTQ+ musicians' earnings, experiences and working lives. This report shares their experiences and gives a detailed picture of some of the challenges this community of musicians' face.

Age may be a significant factor in many of the patterns presented in this report as the LGBTQ+ sample is much younger than the overall Census sample. Issues such as income, employment status and certain types of barriers may correlate with a much higher proportion of this sample being students or in the earlier stages of their career.

Sexual harassment emerged as a major issue for this community of musicians, with a high proportion of respondents experiencing this and reporting that it had a significant impact on their ability to work or progress in their career. Trans musicians are particularly impacted by sexual harassment.

LGBTQ+ musicians face high levels of discrimination and experience intersecting barriers across gender, race, age and sexuality but very few musicians' report their experiences, and this has a direct impact on their mental wellbeing. LGBTQ+ musicians reported significantly higher rates of poor mental and physical wellbeing than the overall Census sample and this is directly related to experiencing discrimination.

Encouragingly the majority of LGBTQ+ musicians are open with at least some of the people they work with about their sexuality or gender identity and over 80% reported they think it is likely they will still be working in the music industry in the next 5 years. However, there is still a significant proportion who do not feel they are able to be open about their sexuality or gender identity with anyone they work with.

The findings in this report highlight that there is still much work to do to ensure that the music industry is a safer and more welcoming place for LGBTQ+ musicians. We hope that this report encourages the music industry to be more inclusive of LGBTQ+ musicians and work together to remove the barriers that LGBTQ+ musicians face.



Tony Ereira
Director
Come Play with Me



Naomi Pohl
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About the Musicians' Census

Our aim

The Musicians' Census 2023 is a long-term project delivered by Help Musicians and the Musicians' Union. Our aim is to provide a fuller picture of the musician population in the UK today and to track how key themes change over time. What we learn from this survey will inform the way we help musicians and support the wider music industry to understand and respond to musicians' needs.

Our approach

Census data was collected via a 15-minute online survey, which was open from January to March 2023. Help Musicians and the Musicians' Union collaborated with music industry partners to reach as many musicians as possible. Walnut Unlimited were appointed to develop the survey, manage the data collection and run the initial analysis of the data. All aspects of the research were conducted in accordance with ISO 20252 and ISO 27001, the international standards for market research and information data security respectively. All musicians aged 16 and over "who earn or intend to earn money" from music were invited to respond. The survey was voluntary. Participants were self-selecting and required to give informed consent and complete a set of initial screening questions.

Language and Terminology

There are multiple acronyms to acknowledge the diversity of genders and sexualities that exist. Language about sex, gender and sexuality changes rapidly and we understand that people hold strong and differing opinions about which language is the most appropriate to use. For the purposes of this report, we use the acronym LGBTQ+¹. A full glossary is provided at the end of this report.

Data

A total of 5,867 musicians completed the 2023 Census, which in this report will be referred to as the overall Census sample. This results in this report are based on a total LGBTQ+ sample of 1090 respondents. This includes 1075 respondents who reported their sexuality as something other than heterosexual, 112 respondents who identify as trans, and 128 respondents who reported that they identify their gender in a way other than male or female. All three of these groups overlap with each other to form the overall LGBTQ+ sample size. Sub-group differences have been included where relevant, but the analysis primarily focusses on intersectional characteristics of age and gender. We have made a distinction between those who identify their gender in another way and those who identify as trans because this reflects how people responded to the questionnaire, although we know that many who identify their gender in another way also identify as trans. Where we are discussing only sexuality, we will refer to this as the LGBTQ+ sample.

Where quotes are used from respondents, edits in [square brackets] indicate where potentially identifiable details have been removed to protect the anonymity of respondents.

While the findings of this Census only represent the musicians who responded, it provides a powerful snapshot of the demographics, finances, wellbeing and careers of musicians today. We recognise that there were potential barriers to participation including digital accessibility, trust, language barriers and challenges in reaching musicians who aren't part of more formal industry networks. We're committed to widening access in future Census surveys to ensure that the largest possible number of participants can share their experiences.

Census stakeholder group

Representatives from across the music industry formed a stakeholder group who were involved in shaping the survey design, sharing it amongst their communities and providing feedback on the results. This group helped make sure the Census was inclusive and representative and we're thankful for their collaboration and support.

- Arts Council England (ACE)
- Association for Electronic Music (AFEM)
- Association of British Orchestras (ABO)
- Attitude is Everything (AiE)
- Black Lives in Music (BLiM)
- Drake Music
- Drake Music Scotland
- English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS)
- Featured Artists Coalition (FAC)
- The F List
- Independent Society of Musicians (ISM)
- The Ivors Academy (The Ivors)
- Music Managers Forum (MMF)
- Parents and Carers in Performing Arts (PiPA)
- Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL)
- Performing Rights Society (PRS)
- Foundation Punch Records (Punch)
- Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain (RSM)
- Safe In Sound
- shesaid.so
- UK Music



Executive Summary

The first Musicians' Census gathered data from 5,867 musicians across the UK about their demographics, careers, wellbeing and their experiences in the music industry.

This report presents key findings related to 1090 musicians who identified themselves as LGBTQ+ and details their earnings, career progression and their experiences of discrimination. This is the fourth report in a series of Insight Reports which will each share findings related to key Census themes.

The majority of LGBTQ+ musicians work as performing musicians and music creators and on average their estimated mean annual income from music is approximately £17,600. There is a pay gap of around £4000 between non-LGBTQ+ musicians earning all of their income from music and those who identify as LGBTQ+ musicians. There is a much wider pay gap for trans musicians of almost £10,000 less than the non-LGBTQ+ sample.

Cost-related barriers to career progression are a major issue for LGBTQ+ musicians, **55%** reported a lack of sustainable income as a barrier in their music careers and **29%** told us they cannot support themselves or their families from being a musician, furthermore **20%** reported being in debt.

Only a third of LGBTQ+ musicians earn all of their income from music, and this drops to just **15%** for trans musicians. Almost half need to sustain their musical careers with additional income to support themselves. Some musicians from this community reported working in as many as 7 other sectors.

Over a third of LGBTQ+ musicians reported that not knowing anyone in the industry was a barrier to their career progression, a common theme amongst marginalised musicians and **26%** told us that a lack of access to professional support and advice restricted their career progression.

Discrimination was reported as a barrier by almost a quarter of LGBTQ+ musicians and

the discrimination they experience is often intersectional and goes unreported. **37%** have experienced or witnessed discrimination based on sexuality whilst working as a musician yet, only **27%** reported it. Worryingly over half of trans respondents reported experiencing discrimination based on their gender identity.

This community of musicians reported high levels of poor mental and physical wellbeing. **43%** of LGBTQ+ musicians reported poor mental wellbeing and **30%** reported poor physical wellbeing. This is significantly higher than the overall Census sample. **90%** of those who reported low mental wellbeing also reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination in some form.

Despite the challenging conditions LGBTQ+ musicians work in, **84%** think it is likely that they will still work in the music industry in 5 years' time.

43% of LGBTQ+ musicians reported poor mental wellbeing and 30% reported poor physical wellbeing.

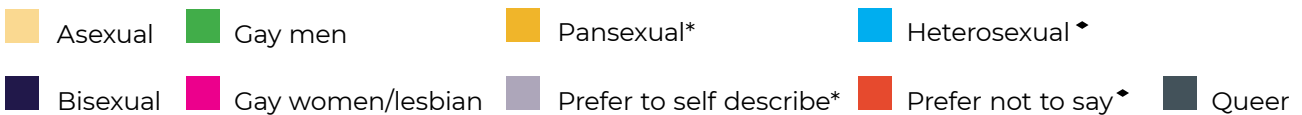


Musicians' Demographics

Sexuality

*Responses from musicians who preferred to self-describe were filtered to remove those identifying as cis-gendered and who responded to the question about sexuality as heterosexual or did not provide a response to the question. There was a significant enough number of self-describing respondents identifying as Pansexual to recode the data to give Pansexual its own category. Other responses included demisexual, fluid and unsure/questioning.

♦Some respondents identify their gender in another way or are trans and reported their sexuality as heterosexual or prefer not to say.



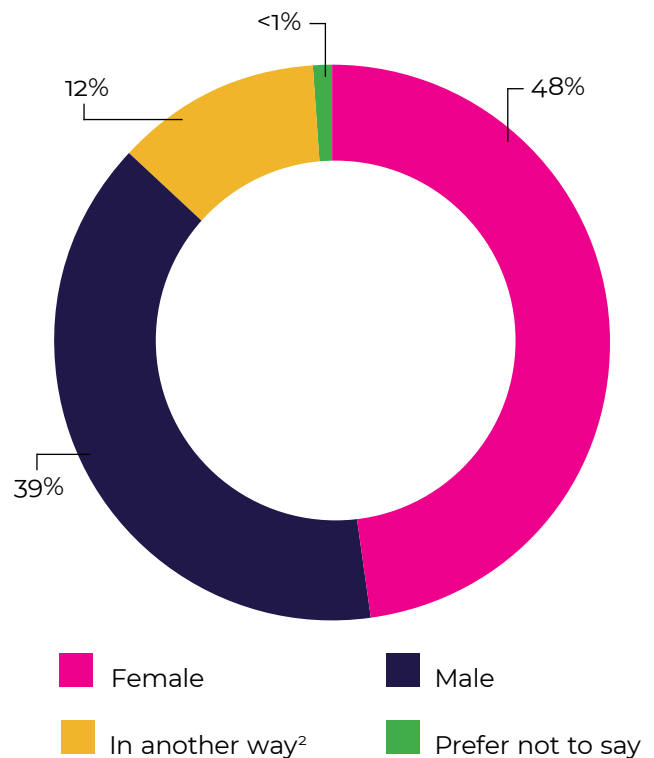
Gender

While the overall census sample has a majority identifying as male (54%), only 39% of LGBTQ+ musicians identify in this way.

128 respondents in the Census said that they identify their gender in another way (other than male or female)², making up 2% of the overall Census sample and 12% of the LGBTQ+ sample. Some of these 128 respondents identify as trans but not all do. The questionnaire did not ask specifically about which gender-expansive identities people identify as.

112 respondents reported that their gender identity is different to that assigned at birth³, and they are referred to in this report as trans respondents.

A total of 159 respondents identify as either trans or in another way than male and female. This makes up a total of 3% of the overall Census sample and 15% of the LGBTQ+ sample.



Where LGBTQ+ musicians live

Northern Ireland – 3%
 Scotland – 12%
 Wales – 6%
 London – 30%
 Midlands – 7%
 North of England – 18%
 East and South East England – 16%
 South West England – 8%

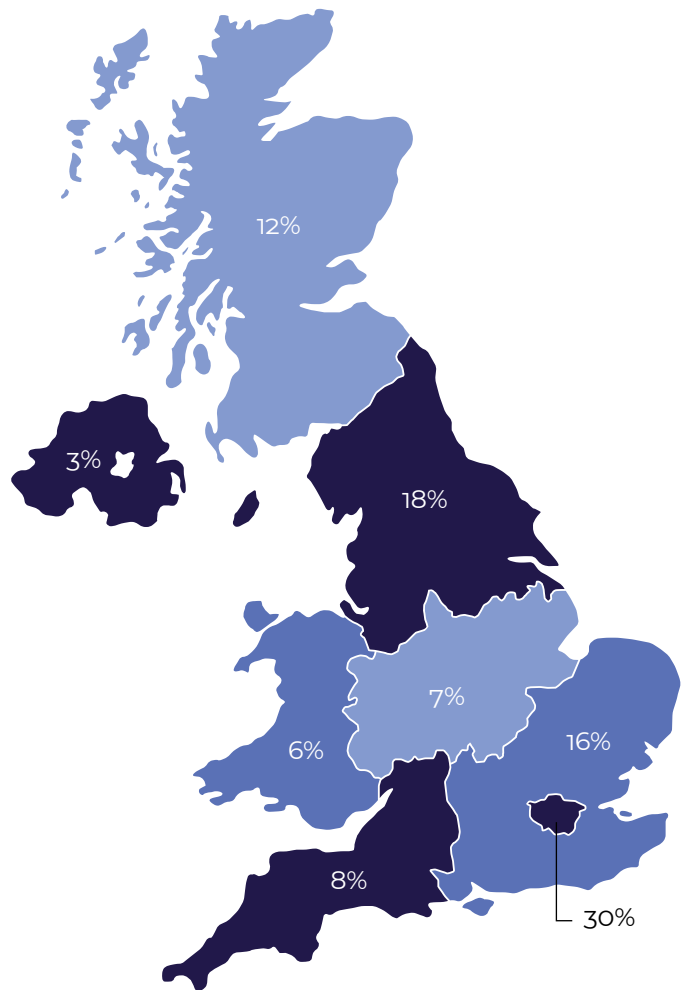


Illustration: Getty Images

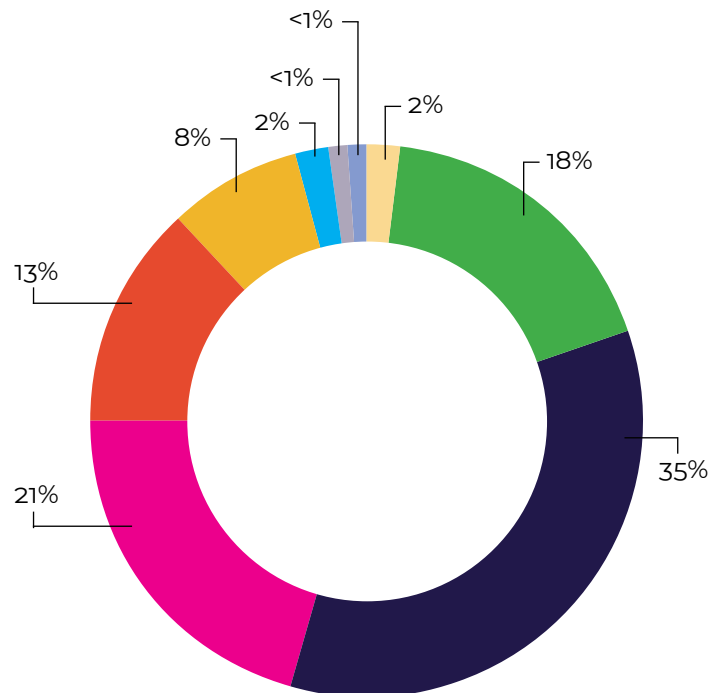
Age

The LGBTQ+ sample is generally younger than the overall census sample, with just **10%** of LGBTQ+ respondents aged over 55 compared to **27%** in the overall sample. While this sample is overall much younger than the overall Census sample, a higher proportion of gay men and asexual respondents are aged over 45, compared to other sexualities.

More than half (**52%**) of 18-24 year old respondents in the LGBTQ+ sample identify as bisexual, as do **43%** of 25-34 year olds. These age groups also represent more than half of the LGBTQ+ sample.

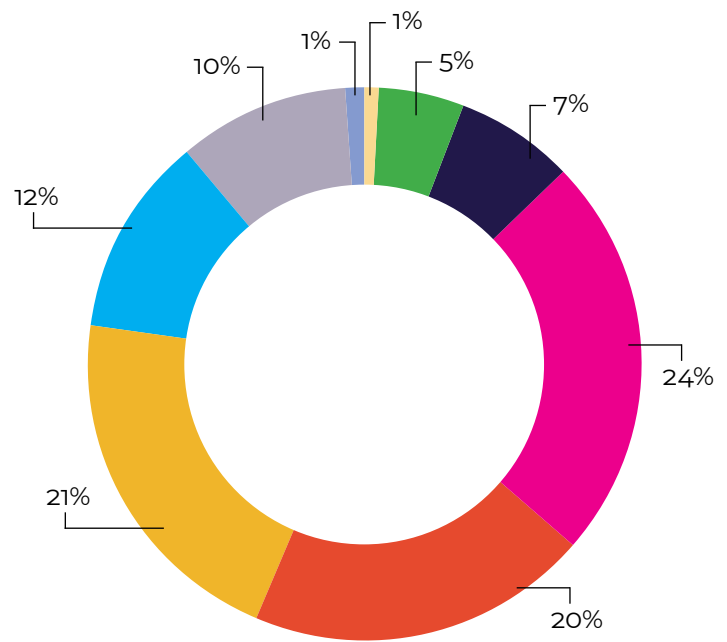
Approximately two thirds of respondents who identify their gender as trans and/or in another way are aged between 16-34.

It is possible that the trends relating to sexuality and gender identity by age indicate generational differences in how people identify. Language has changed significantly and rapidly for this community, and older generations may not use the same language to describe their identity as younger LGBTQ+ people.



Years earning as a musician

The younger age of the LGBTQ+ sample is reflected here, with **22%** working for over 20 years compared to **43%** in the overall sample. A higher proportion of LGBTQ+ musicians are in their first 5 years of their careers (**31%**) compared to the overall Census sample (**20%**).

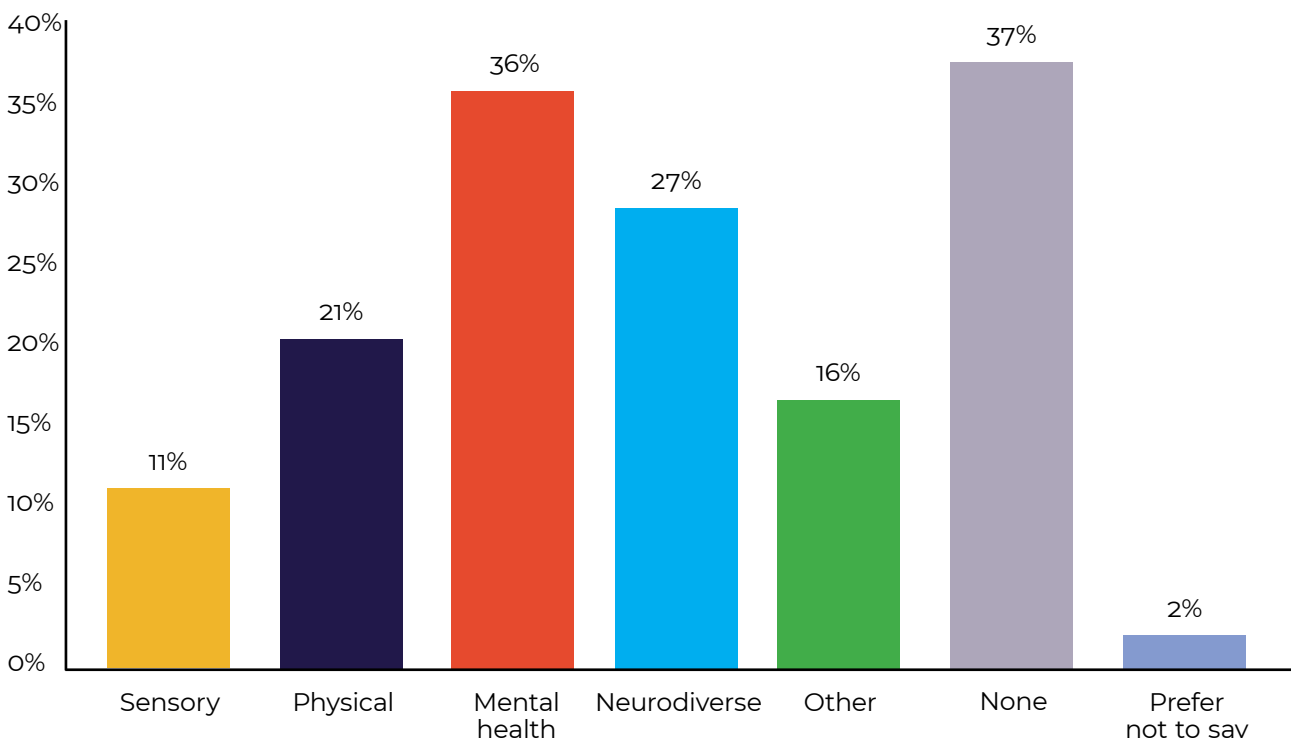


Disability

We asked respondents to report any long-standing impairments and conditions, meaning those which have lasted or are expected to last for more than 12 months⁴.

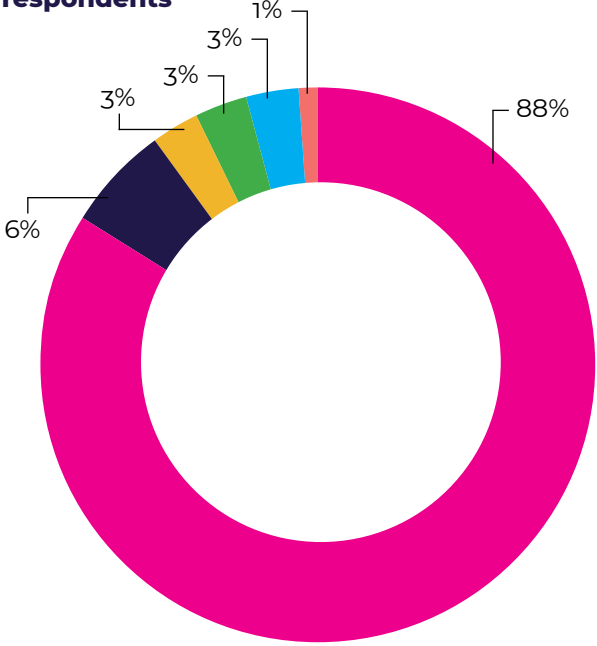
There are much higher rates of mental health conditions and neurodiverse conditions compared to the overall Census sample (**18%** and **9%** respectively). This correlates with existing research that LGBTQ+⁵ people are at a higher risk of experiencing poor mental health. There is also existing evidence which suggests that neurodiverse⁶ people are more likely to be LGBTQ+.

This could be linked to the overall lower age profile of the LGBTQ+ sample as greater awareness and testing/diagnosis routes for neurodivergence are more accessible, and attitudes towards mental health and neurodiversity are better than in previous decades.



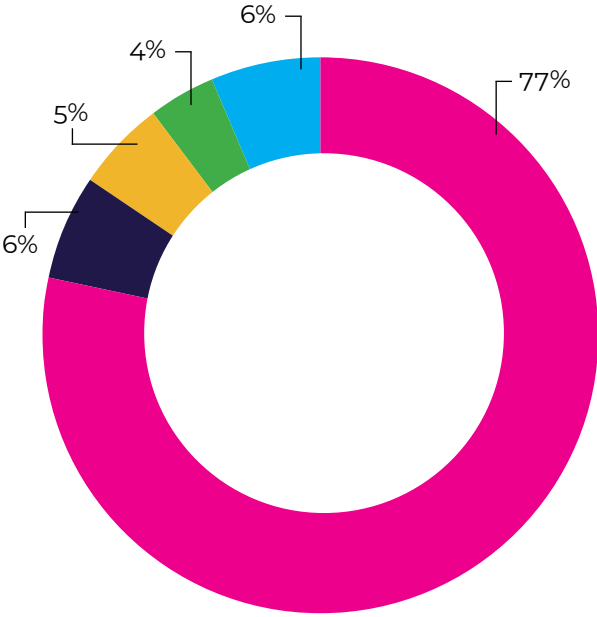
Ethnicity

Ethnicities of all LGBTQ+ Census respondents



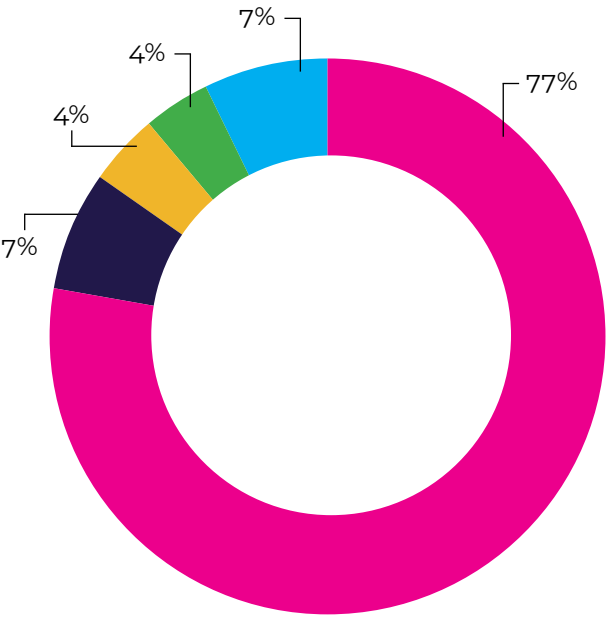
- White
- Mixed/dual heritage
- Asian
- Black
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Ethnicities of respondents who identify their gender in another way



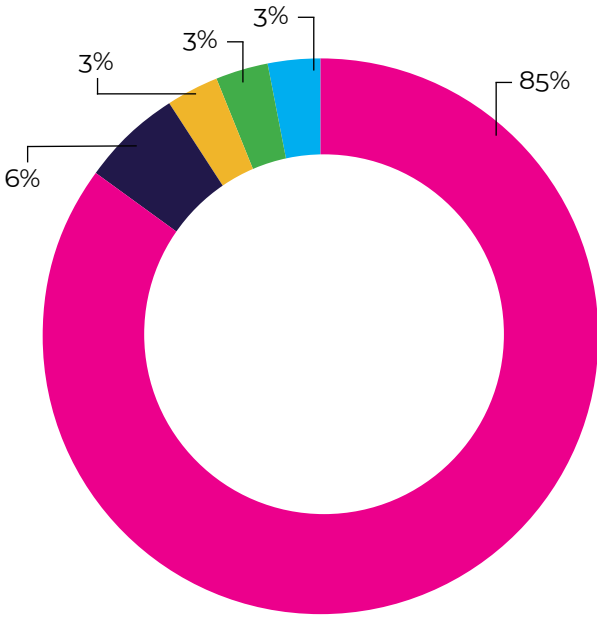
- White
- Mixed/dual heritage
- Asian
- Black
- Other

Ethnicities of trans respondents



- White
- Mixed/dual heritage
- Asian
- Black
- Other

Ethnicities of LGBQ+ respondents

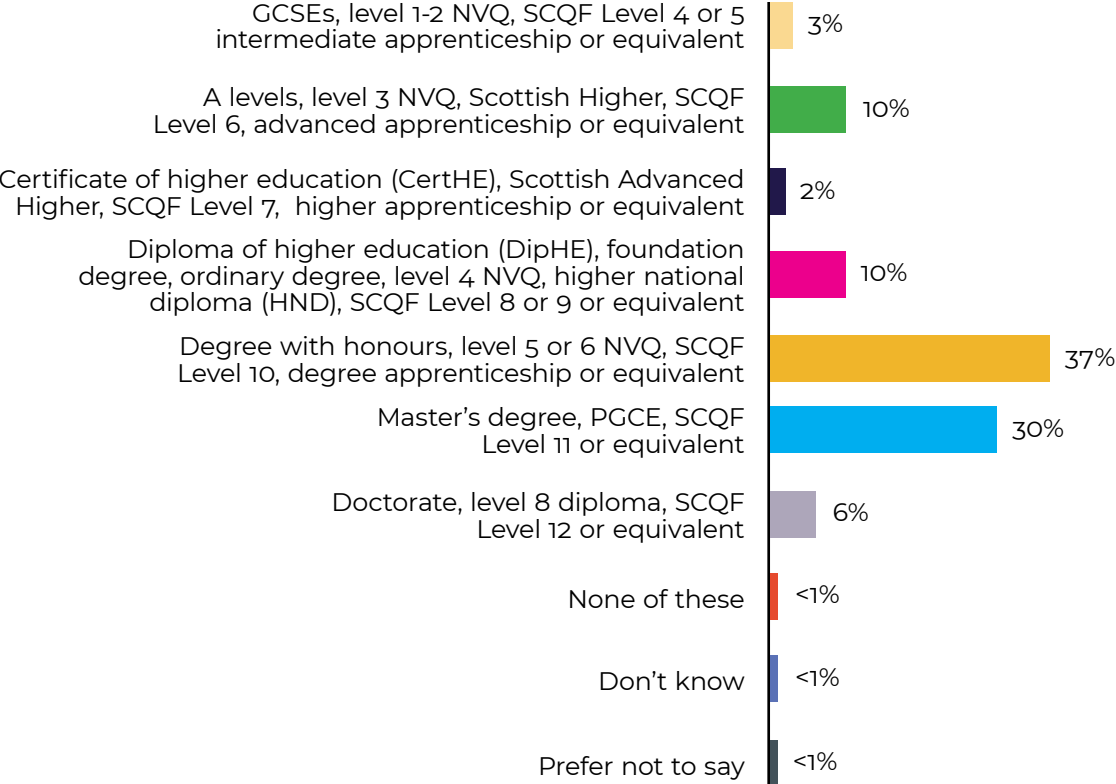


- White
- Mixed/dual heritage
- Asian
- Black
- Other

Qualifications

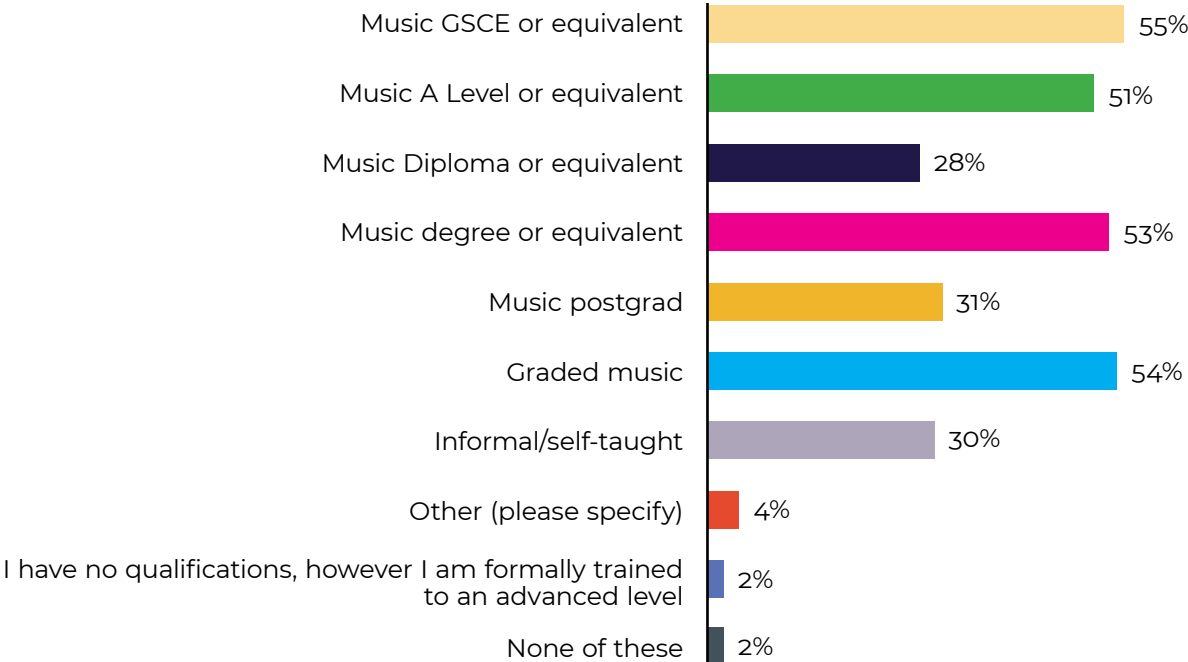
We asked respondents what their highest qualification level is. More than **70%** of the LGBTQ+ sample hold a degree level qualification or higher, which is slightly higher than the overall Census sample.

General qualifications



Music Qualifications

A slightly higher proportion of LGBTQ+ musicians have music qualifications or are informally or self-taught than the overall Census sample.





Key Findings

Income

Overall, the estimated mean annual income of LGBTQ+ musicians is approximately £17,600. This is based on all reported income from music.

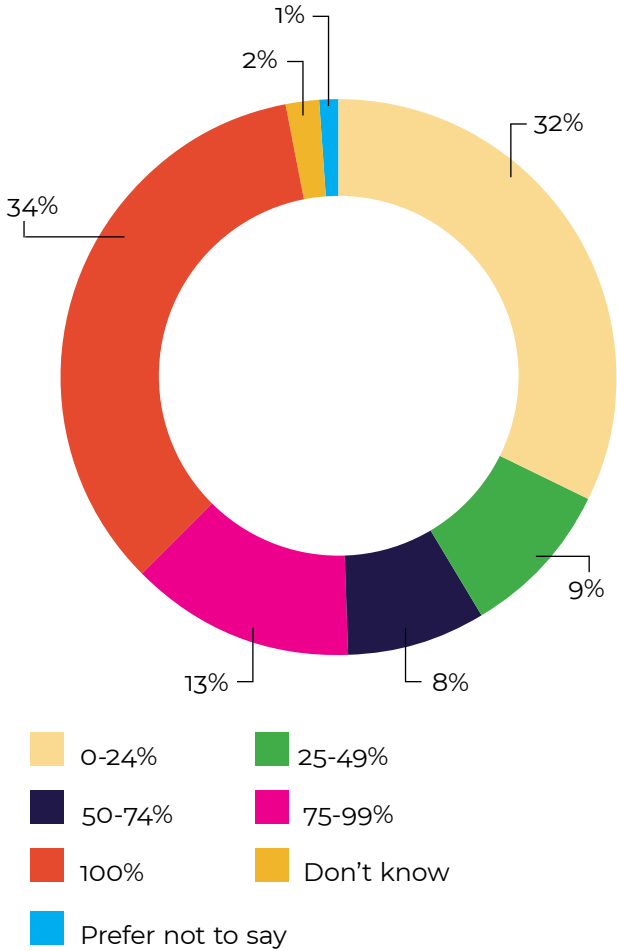
A third of LGBTQ+ musicians make all of their income from music.

Just over half of gay men make **100%** of their income from music, which is the highest proportion earning 100% from music in this cohort. The estimated mean income for Gay men is approximately £35,700, which is also significantly higher than other groups in this sample⁷. Looking at the approximate mean annual income for all men earning **100%** of their income from music, this is around £34,700.

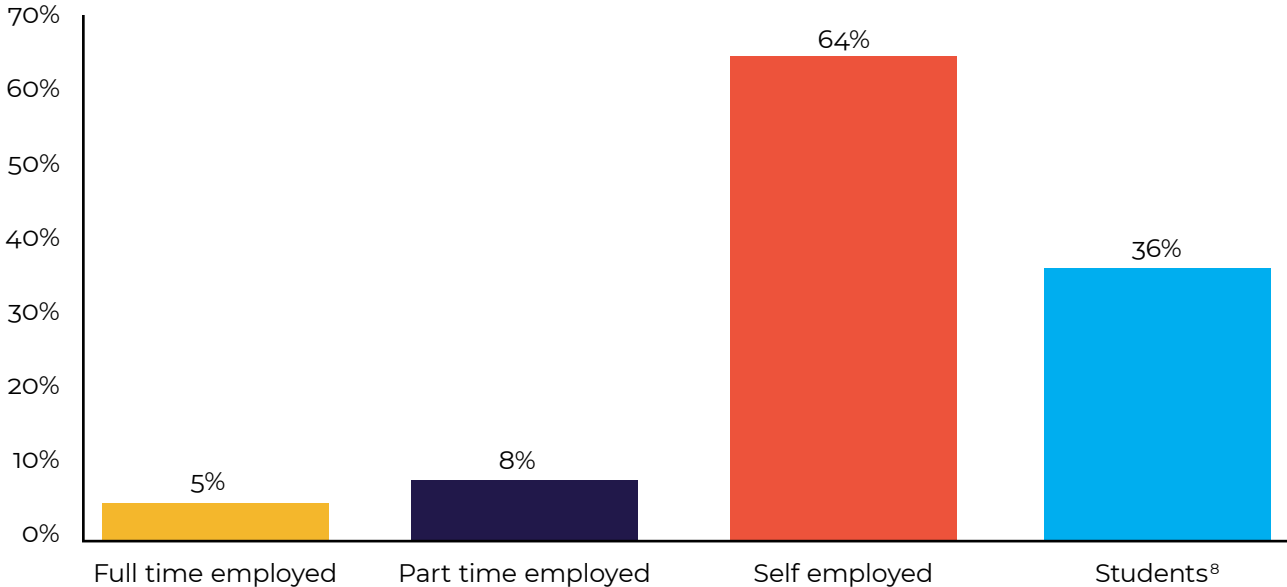
It is worth noting the relationship between age and how long people have been working in the music industry in relation to their earnings. We know from the Musicians' Census Financial Insight Report that it takes 10+ years for most musicians to be making **100%** of their income from music.

Only **15%** of trans respondents make **100%** of their income from music.

% of income made from music

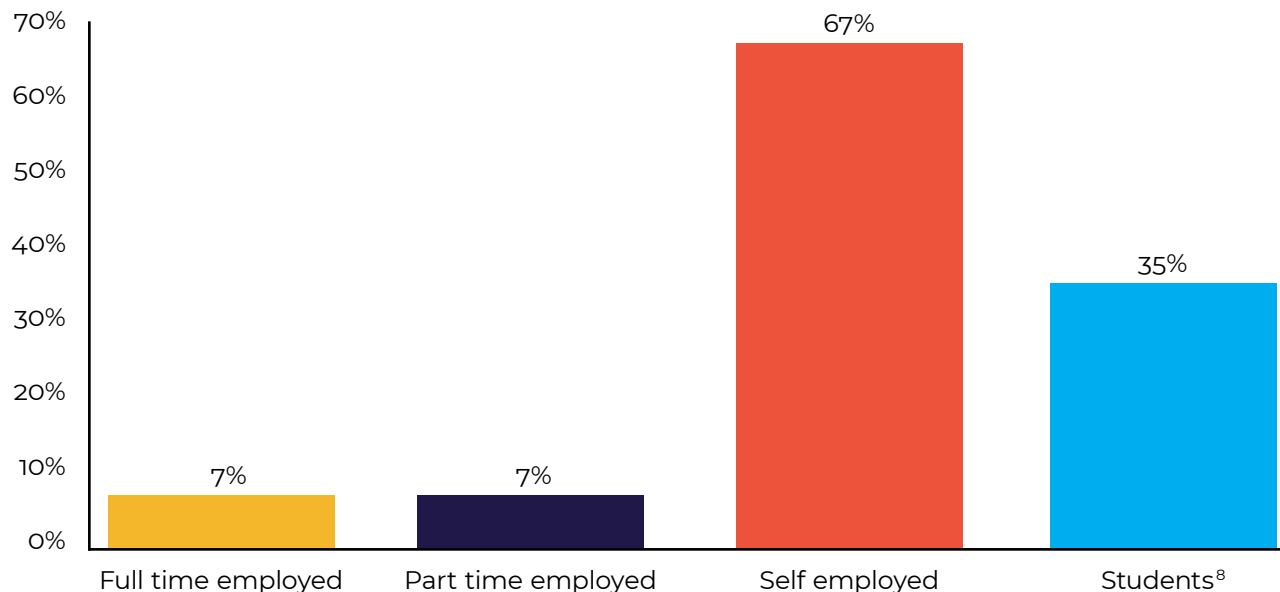


Employment status of trans respondents



While **41%** of male respondents and **32%** of female respondents in the LGBTQ+ sample make all of their income from music, only **20%** of those who identify in other ways make all of their income from music.

Employment status of respondents who identify their gender in a different way



Open-text responses in the census reveal that some LGBTQ+ musicians have had to leave projects due to bullying, harassment and discrimination. Further to this, financial barriers such as informal practices in bands and low pay make musicians feel at risk of having to leave projects if negotiations go unresolved. For many, working in other sectors provides a stability that is unafforded through working as a musician.

"I know I will continue to be a musician for the rest of my life, but I am absolutely considering other options to support my income for the future."

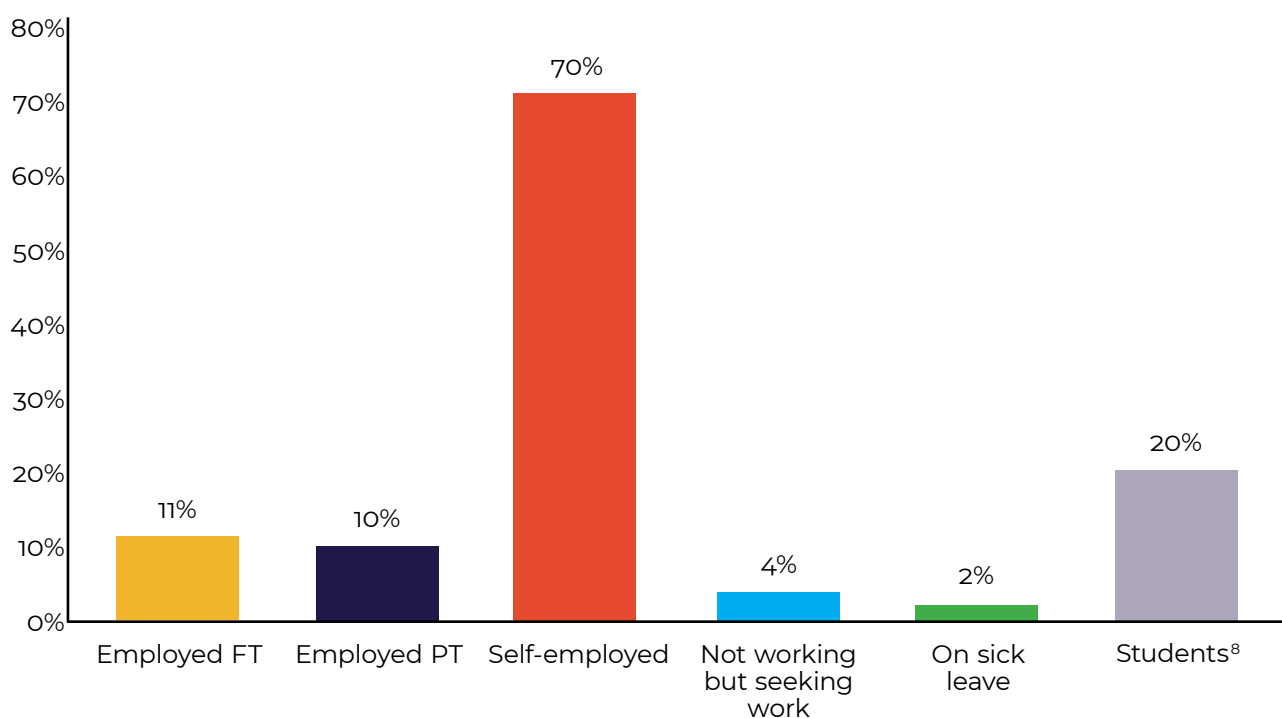
Female 25-34 London

"I've never been able to find enough work as a musician to sustain myself full-time; at the moment I'm a full time [...] student [in another subject], and while I plan to keep working in music if possible, I'd rather my main source of income be more stable."

Female 18-24 Scotland



Working status



29% of LGBTQ+ musicians said they don't earn enough money to support themselves or their family, which is higher than the overall Census sample (**23%**). **20%** of LGBTQ+ musicians are in debt, again higher than the overall Census sample (**17%**). **31%** have enough money left over each month to pay for things they enjoy, and **39%** earn enough to support themselves and their family.

"I'm also usually torn between the cost of maintaining my instrument/purchasing equipment and actually having a life and buying things I like."

Female 25-34 Scotland

Pay Gaps

Taking a look at respondents who are not in the LGBTQ+ community who make all of their income from music (i.e. cis-gendered female and male respondents who identify as heterosexual), their estimated mean income is approximately £32,700⁹. The equivalent figure for all LGBTQ+ respondents is approximately £28,600, indicating a pay gap of around £4,000.

There is a further and substantial pay gap between the wider LGBTQ+ sample and trans respondents, whose annual income is approximately £22,900 (although this is only based on 16 respondents) – however this does show that not only do few trans respondents earn all of their income from music, but those who do earn little.

By comparison, LGBTQ+ respondents had an approximate mean income of £28,500, and

those who identify their gender in another way £27,000 (although again this is based on 25 respondents, indicating low rates of earning 100% income from music).

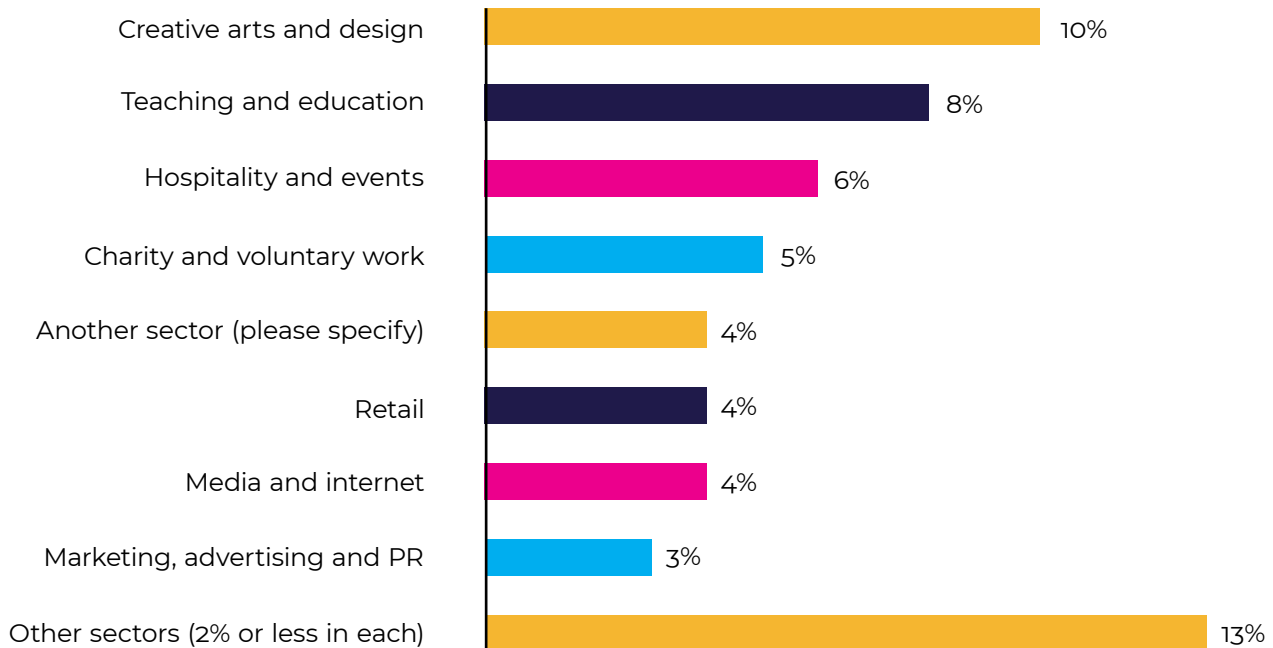
"A lot of gig opportunities I see are not paid, and this is simply not sustainable or worth it as musicians need to earn a living like everyone else."

Female 18-24 South West England

Supplementing income

41% of LGBTQ+ musicians work in another sector. Some reported working in as many as 7 other sectors. The most frequently reported sectors were creative arts and design (10%), teaching and education (8%), and hospitality and events (6%). This somewhat aligns with the overall Census sample, although teaching and education is much less represented in this sample (by 5%)

Other sectors where LGBTQ+ musicians work

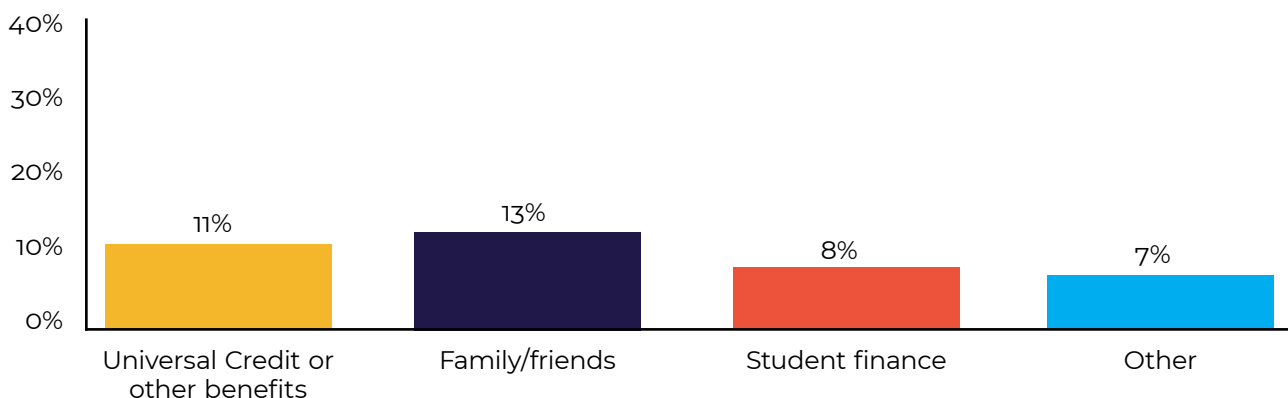


A third of LGBTQ+ musicians say they work in other sectors outside of music for financial reasons. 14% do it because they enjoy working outside of music. 8% worked in another area before pursuing music.

“The lack of any sort of sustainable income as an unpublished songwriter who has worked in the music industry for almost 6 years has been a huge obstacle because it has meant I’ve needed to work multiple other jobs just to be able to pay my rent, but I am still in debt and living off credit and overdrafts.”

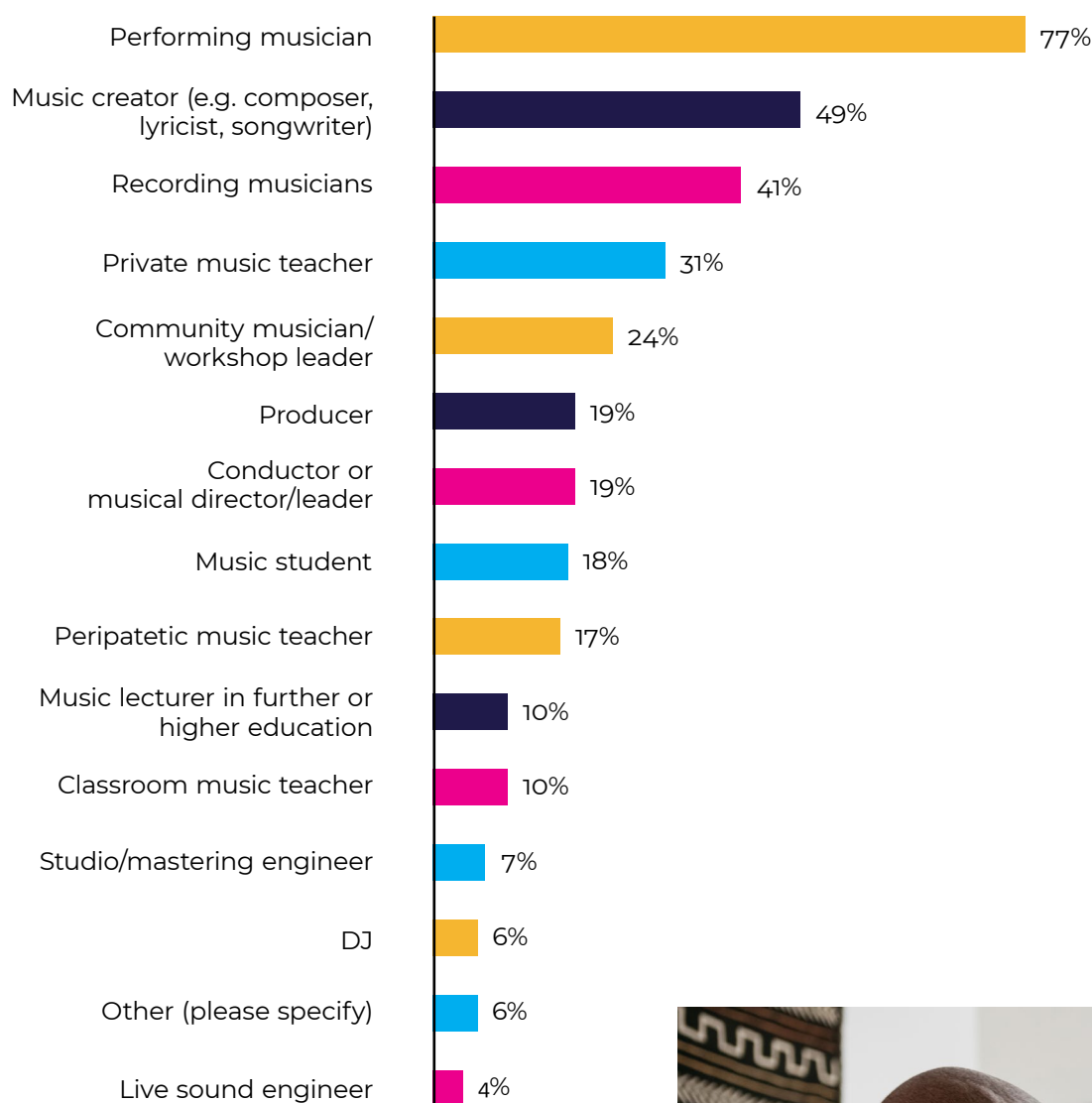
Female 25-43 London

Other forms of support



Working Patterns in music

Working status as a musician



More than a quarter of all DJs who responded to the Musicians' Census are part of the LGBTQ+ community. A much higher percentage are music students than the overall Census sample (**18%** compared to **8%**), and a slightly higher proportion work as community musicians and workshop leaders (**24%** compared to **19%**).





Career Barriers

Financial career barriers

Out of all the barriers asked about in the Census, financial barriers were the most prevalent – **55%** of LGBTQ+ musicians reported not being able to make a sustainable income as a barrier, this is higher than the overall Census sample which is **44%**. The cost of equipment and transport were also cited as top barriers and **28%** reported living too far from opportunities, which is linked to transport costs.

“It’s bleak in the UK at the moment for music and I have little faith that a new government would change that. I’m seriously thinking of moving abroad where I can get much better fees and opportunities.”

Male 35-44 London

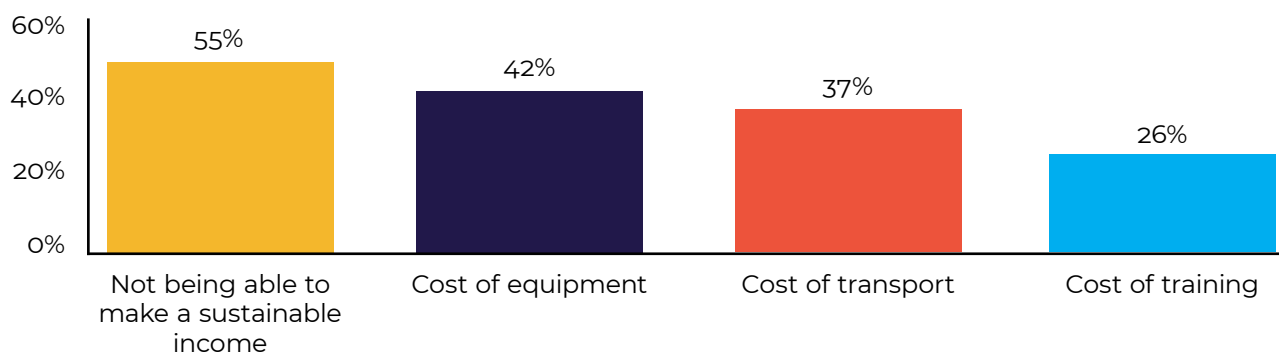
37% of LGBTQ+ musicians have travelled internationally for work in the past year, compared to **29%** of the overall Census sample and **28%** of the non-LGBTQ+ sample.

Brexit and its knock-on effects were also mentioned by multiple respondents as a significant issue in relation to touring, both in terms of working abroad as British artists, the economic impact on the live music sector here in the UK, and the ability for European musicians to come to the UK for work.

“Transport costs are becoming an issue...post Brexit and Covid. International shows have become nearly impossible to book since Brexit. The domestic shows are harder to come by due to Brexit related damage to the economy and the government not valuing creative businesses.”

Male 55-64 North West England

Financial Career barriers



Other career barriers

Not having a clear route for career progression was reported by almost half of LGBTQ+ respondents as a career restricting barrier compared to **38%** of the overall Census sample. Linked to this over a third of LGBTQ+ respondents reported not knowing anyone in the industry as a barrier to career progression and over a quarter (**26%**) said that difficulty accessing professional support and advice had been a barrier.

“Being self-employed there is no defined career progression, so you have to make it up as you go along, which is scary at times. It takes money to invest in training and equipment... I would love to record and release my own music, but it feels incredibly daunting not knowing anyone in the industry or how to get started.”

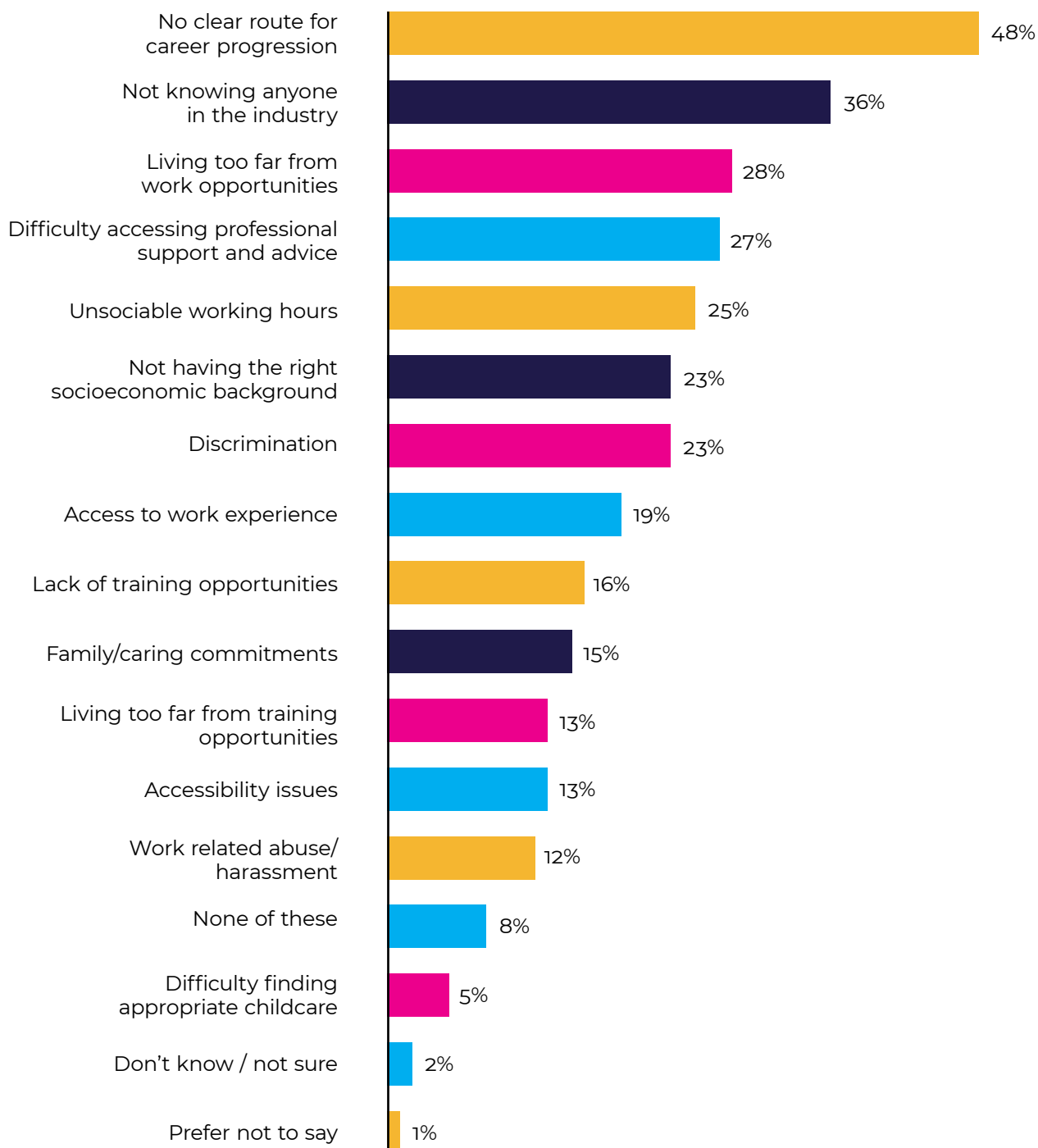
Female 35-44 East Midlands

This could be due to the younger age profile of this community of musicians but could also highlight a lack of visible LGBTQ+ role models in the music industry. A lack of networks and access to professional support has been identified as a common barrier for all marginalised musicians.

“Networks are so very important to the getting of work, and having studied and been brought up abroad I don’t have a developed network, and solo classical singer has no clear career progression.”

Male 45-54 London

Non-financial barriers



A higher proportion of LGBTQ+ respondents reported work related abuse and harassment as a career barrier than in the overall census – 12% compared to 5% overall.

“Abuse and harassment both within the industry and from the public over the years made me feel I didn’t want to perform in certain venues or in specific situations. Lack of support in terms of trying to get paid for recording work and feeling vulnerable as a young woman within the industry.”

Female 35-44 South East England

“I can make a sustainble (sic) living as a DJ but the unsociable hours and the enviroment (sic) mean that I dont (sic) want to be doing this all the time.”

Identifies in another way 45-54 London

Parenting and caring

“It’s entirely unsustainable as I grow older and look into having children, and I’ll definitely not be able to get a mortgage.”

Female 18-24 South East England

While only a small percentage of the LGBTQ+ sample are parents and carers, parenting was specifically mentioned in open-text responses in relation to financial barriers and the sustainability of working in music. Only 9% of LGBTQ+ respondents are parents compared to 18% in the overall Census sample.

“I’d have to seriously reconsider my work and life. Many other people who have different caring responsibilities wouldn’t be able to make a sustainable living. I’m very lucky I don’t want kids!”

Female 35-44 Scotland

For those who are parents, the financial challenges of working as a musician are juxtaposed with the rising costs of childcare. Only 14% of LGBTQ+ parents had access to parental leave and maternity leave, and 8% to shared parental leave. A third of LGBTQ+ parents reported unsociable hours as a career barrier (higher than the overall LGBTQ+ sample), and 70% said family and caring commitments were a barrier.

“For the amount of money I earn from music, it makes less and less sense for me to be away from my family, as it costs us more than that to cover childcare.”

Female 35-44 South East England

Covid-19 Pandemic

A significant number of qualitative responses from LGBTQ+ musicians mentioned the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on their careers. For some this took the form of barriers related to the economy – lower fees alongside higher costs.

“Since covid gigs have become harder to get, pub gig economy is suffering massively. If the pubs can’t keep the lights on neither can the bands.”

Female 25-34 Scotland

Others noted the difficulties caused by fewer networking opportunities during the pandemic. Networking is central to how musicians build and sustain their careers.

“As a music creator, it is hard to find opportunities to work with people when your work is relatively unknown, which creates a bit of vicious circle. I feel like covid has only made this harder, as there have been less opportunities to meet other musicians over the last few years.”

Female 25-35 South West England

“The pandemic also impeded my progression (sic) from being a full time employed musician ... to becoming freelance performer and teacher.”

Male 55-64 West Midlands

The Covid-19 pandemic was highlighted as a particular barrier for younger respondents who have recently graduated or started working in the music industry and have not been able to connect with other musicians or potential employers. Those who were in education during the pandemic have particularly struggled as a consequence of unlucky timing – they have lost their first work opportunities, some have relocated following graduation.

“I graduated music college straight before the global pandemic, so I feel like this limited my career prospects.”

Male 24-34 London

Discrimination

Discrimination was reported as a barrier by almost a quarter (**23%**) of LGBTQ+ musicians. The data on discrimination suggests that for LGBTQ+ musicians who have intersecting identities, the discrimination they face is multi-layered and often goes unreported.

High levels of unreported incidents of discrimination and sexual harassment could be linked to a lack of reporting mechanisms, a lack of trust and confidence that reports will be dealt with appropriately and a fear of victimisation.

Sexuality

16% of LGBTQ+ musicians reported that they are not open about their sexuality with the people they work with, while **49%** are open with some of the people they work with and **35%** are open with everyone that they work with. **58%** of those who are not open with anyone are female.

"I'm gay and this can still very much feel like a (straight) boys club at times. I definitely still code-switch depending on the group I'm in and make sure I'm presenting the most "palatable" version of me in any circumstance."

Male 35-44 London

"I worked as a professional performing musician for almost 20 years... working regularly for major contract orchestras. I stopped and am currently a trainee teacher in an unrelated subject due to the awful conditions in the industry- it became financially and emotionally unsustainable."

Female 35-44 Yorkshire and the Humber

24% of LGBTQ+ musicians reported that they have experienced discrimination related to their sexuality whilst working as a musician. **28%** of LGBTQ+ musicians said that they have witnessed discrimination related to someone's sexuality. Combining these, **37%** have witnessed or experienced discrimination related to sexuality, and two thirds of this group said it had impacted their ability to work or progress in their career. Yet, only **27%** reported it.

"Ongoing homophobic/transphobic discrimination, both overt and subtle, from teenage years onwards - getting better in the last few years, but still there. No provisions for disabilities."

Identifies in another way 35-44 London





Photo: buzzanimation / Getty Images

Gender

41% of LGBTQ+ musicians have experienced gender discrimination and **51%** have witnessed it. **68%** said witnessing or experiencing gender discrimination impacted their ability to work or career progression. **75%** of respondents who reported experiencing gender discrimination are women.

“Sexism in brass playing means it seems much harder to progress as a female freelancer and I’ve heard so many horror stories about people on trials and in orchestral jobs that I’m not sure if that’s a route that I want to go down. People also make assumptions that, as a woman I’ll be having children so will need maternity leave or to “settle down” in a more sustainable job.”

Female 25-34

Half of all trans respondents have experienced gender discrimination, and the vast majority (54 of 57) identify as female or in another way. Again, half of musicians who identify their gender in another way have experienced gender discrimination.

It’s important to consider that trans respondents and those who identify their gender in another way may experience intersectional forms of discrimination related to their gender and gender identity.

Gender identity

159 respondents identify as trans and/or identify their gender in another way – making up **15%** of the LGBTQ+ sample. **23%** of this group are not open with their employers or anyone they work with about their gender identity, and **42%** are only open with some people. Only **32%** are open with everyone they work with.

Over half, **53%** of trans respondents have experienced discrimination based on their gender identity and **39%** of musicians who identify their gender in another way have experienced discrimination based on their gender identity.

22% of all LGBTQ+ respondents (i.e. including trans respondents and those who identify their gender in another way, and noting that both groups overlap with each other), have witnessed discrimination based on gender identity. Collectively, a quarter of all LGBTQ+ respondents have either experienced and/or witnessed discrimination based on gender identity.

Of this, **58%** said experiencing or witnessing this form of discrimination impacted their ability to work or their career progression, but only a third reported it.

“Location and my gender identity have made opportunities (sic) difficult - I can feel unwelcome, looked down upon and it’s hard to find industry partners to work with that can make a difference”

Female 25-34

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment disproportionately impacts LGBTQ+ musicians and has a more widespread impact on their careers and ability to work, particularly for trans musicians.

Looking at the overall Census sample of 5,867 respondents, **18%** have experienced sexual harassment whilst **29%** of all LGBTQ+ respondents have experienced sexual harassment. Of this **69%** are female, **18%** male and **13%** identify their gender in another way.

32% of LGBTQ+ respondents have witnessed sexual harassment, meaning that almost half of all LGBTQ+ respondents (**44%**) have either witnessed or experienced sexual harassment. Two thirds of this collective group said it has impacted their ability to work or their career progression, but only a third of them reported it.

24% of trans respondents have been sexually harassed while **41%** have witnessed it and only **14%** reported it, yet more than three quarters said it impacted their ability to work or their career progression.

"I have been sexually harassed / assaulted on stage as well as coming home late at night from DJ shifts. As a woman I have experienced discrimination based on my gender - often from security in venues who have questioned me when arriving for jobs."

Female 25-34 East Midlands



Photo by Georgia Zimmerman. Insta / X: @molliescoddled

Socioeconomic

Nearly a quarter of LGBTQ+ respondents said that not being from the right socioeconomic background was a barrier to their career progression. **18%** of LGBTQ+ respondents said they have experienced discrimination due to their socioeconomic background, and **24%** had witnessed it – combined, **30%** had either witnessed or experienced it and almost three quarters of them (**74%** of **30%**) said it impacted their ability to work or advance their career progression.

Racism

10% of LGBTQ+ musicians have experienced racism/racial discrimination, and **37%** have witnessed it. **15%** reported it, the majority of whom had witnessed it as opposed to experienced it.

"I wouldn't say it's 'restricted my progression' as such but it's part of the difficulty I've faced being a young black musician. I recently encountered racial discrimination... It was very traumatic and I hated the experience... what I experienced, nobody should have to go through. So I think there needs to be even more support for black and brown musicians."

Male 18-24 Yorkshire and the Humber

7% of musicians from the Global Majority reported that they have experienced discrimination related to their sexuality, compared to **6%** of white respondents. We also found that and student status intersect with experiences of racism and racial discrimination for LGBTQ+ musicians from the Global Majority.

"Racism and local protectionism, which seem to be general and systemic in the realm of classical music in this country. It is still extremely difficult for non-white, and especially, non-white immigrant musicians to progress as fast and smoothly as the 'locals' do."

Male 35-44 East Midlands

"I've faced racism as a brown person throughout the industry both as a student and in the field."

Identifies gender in another way 25-34 Scotland

Health and Wellbeing

43% of LGBTQ+ musicians reported poor mental wellbeing and **30%** reported poor physical wellbeing.

This is significantly higher than the overall Census sample where **30%** of all musicians reported experiencing negative mental wellbeing.

Almost two thirds of musicians who defined their gender in another way reported low mental wellbeing and **63%** of trans musicians reported low mental wellbeing - over twice as many as the overall Census sample.

90% of those who reported low mental wellbeing also reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination in some form. This shows a clear link between experiencing or witnessing discrimination and the negative impact it has on a person's wellbeing.

"I struggled with mental health challenges for some years which affected my ability to work in general and left me in heavy debt. It's now a struggle to prioritise my career when I don't even make enough for financial stability."

Male 18-24 Scotland

How likely is this community to still be working in the music industry?

88% of LGBTQ+ respondents think it is likely that they will still work in the music industry in one year, dropping to **84%** when asked the same question but with a five-year time frame.

Looking at gender identity and sexuality separately, there are no differences based on sexuality, however only **79%** of musicians who identify their gender in another way and/or identify as trans think it is likely that they will still be in the music industry in one year, although a higher number in both groups think they will still work in music in five years: **80%** of those who identify their gender in another way, and **81%** of trans respondents.

"I have been totally unsupported with chronic health issues which have made it very hard to continue in the sector"

Female 35-44 Wales





Next steps

This fourth Insight Report from the Musicians' Census 2023 highlights some of the barriers and issues LGBTQ+ musicians face in their careers. LGBTQ+ musicians work across the entire music industry but many face barriers finding employment and supporting themselves and their families. Financial insecurity, low earnings, especially for trans respondents, and high levels of discrimination have a direct impact on this community of musicians physical, mental, and financial wellbeing.

Health and wellbeing emerged as a particular concern for LGBTQ+ musicians with 43% reporting poor mental wellbeing and 30% reporting poor physical wellbeing. 90% of those who reported low mental wellbeing also reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination in some form. To ensure the health, wellbeing, and diversity of the music industry it's vital that we work together to tackle discrimination as a matter of urgency.

For musicians who experience homophobia, transphobia and any other types of discrimination the MU can help and support you with legal advice, assistance, and representation. The MU also has a Safe Space service where anyone working in the music industry can report instances of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual abuse in the music industry.

Help Musicians provide mental health support via Music Minds Matter, where you can speak to an accredited counsellor who will offer emotional support, advice and information. This briefing is part of a series of Insight Reports from Musicians' Census data on a range of themes.

To get involved with the future development of the Musicians' Census or if you have any questions, please contact Help Musicians (communications@helpmusicians.org.uk) or Musicians' Union (equalities@themu.org).



Glossary

LGBTQ+:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and the + indicates other identities such as Asexual, Intersex, and Pansexual and is inclusive of the variety of sexuality and gender-based identities that have been or are being defined.

Trans:

Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to pursue this. Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

Pansexual:

Refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

Code Switching:

Code switching is the ways in which a member of an underrepresented group (consciously or unconsciously) adjusts their language, syntax, grammatical structure, behavior, and appearance to fit into the dominant culture.

Asexual:

A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not. Asexual people who experience romantic attraction might also use terms such as gay, bi, lesbian, straight and queer in conjunction with asexual to describe the direction of their romantic attraction.

Queer:

Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.



Endnotes

- 1 LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and the + indicates other identities such as Asexual, Intersex, and Pansexual and is inclusive of the variety of sexuality and gender-based identities that have been or are being defined. It's important to note that individuals may identify with one or multiple letters of the acronym.
- 2 In the Census we asked the question: Which of the following best describes how you think about yourself? Male/Female/In another way/Prefer not to say. 'In another way' includes non-binary and genderqueer musicians, and others who identify outside of the gender binary.
- 3 In the Census we asked the question: Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth? Yes/no/prefer not to say.
- 4 Responses were coded as follows:
Sensory = Hearing condition or impairment & Visual condition or impairment
Physical = mobility condition or impairment & Musculoskeletal condition or impairment & Voice/vocal cord condition or impairment & Other physical health condition or impairment
Neurodiverse = neurodiverse condition or impairment
Mental health = mental health condition or impairment
Other = chronic coronavirus ("Long Covid") & Another condition or impairment which affects my day to day life & nervous system condition or impairment & speech condition or impairment & neurological condition or impairment
- 5 <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/lgbtqia-mental-health/>
- 6 <https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/lgbtqia-neurodiversity-neurodivergent-lgbtq/>
- 7 In the Musicians' Census Financial Insight Report we calculated estimated mean income based only on those who are full-time employed and earning 100% of their income from music. The higher sample size allowed us to do this. However since the LGBTQ+ sample is much smaller, and only a small proportion are employed full-time, we have used all musicians earning 100% of their income from music to calculate estimated mean income in this report.
- 8 This combines two questions, one on working profiles (n152) and one on musical roles (n197). Some respondents only indicated student status on one of the questions, others used both.
- 9 This figure differs slightly from the LGBT pay gaps presented in the Musicians' Census Financial Insight Report as that analysis was based on responses to the question on sexuality and not gender identity.

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