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**LIVE**ANALYTICS

STATE OF PLAY:  
**COMEDY UK**



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## About LiveAnalytics

LiveAnalytics, a division of Ticketmaster International, is a provider of consumer insight and business intelligence on events, entertainment and ticketing.

We deliver sophisticated data products and services that help to improve customer retention, maximise ticket sales, and increase upsells.

These range from dedicated research resource to access to our International customer database, Live Insight (with more than 60 million individual customer records across 12 markets), with which we produce unique customer insight.

In the UK, LiveAnalytics leverages data from Ticketmaster's massive database of 11m plus fans. Overlaid with in-house and licensed demographic data, LiveAnalytics offers information on fan preferences, and ticketing trends to give artists, venues and teams unrivalled insight into how, where and to whom they can sell tickets – and, afterwards, measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns while events are still on sale, to optimize results and ROI.

State of Play: Comedy UK is the third in a series of reports published under the LiveAnalytics banner by the Insight team at Ticketmaster International, as part of our drive to better understand the live entertainment sector and its audiences. The first 'State of play' report was published in 2012 on festivals, followed by theatre in 2013.

For more information about our services, please contact: [sales@ticketmaster.co.uk](mailto:sales@ticketmaster.co.uk)

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In the last thirty years the live comedy industry has changed almost beyond recognition. A world that started off as one night stands in smokey rooms in tiny pubs and clubs has now grown into a huge business, with acts such as Michael McIntyre, Peter Kay and Lee Evans taking up residency in arenas more used to staging rock concerts. Comedians have become household names on a par with those rock stars, adored by men and women of all ages. Smoking inside venues may have been banned, but the inexorable rise of stand-up demonstrates that you can never ban laughter.

Ticketmaster's State of Play report accurately reflects this seismic entertainment shift in a number of ways. From the growth in popularity of comedy as a mainstream leisure activity to, most strikingly, the increasing number of female comedians now taking increasingly large shows on tour around the UK. It used to be said that women were not funny and that comedy fans only wanted to see men onstage. The likes of Miranda Hart, Sarah Millican and many more have disproved that thesis in recent years.

In the 21st Century going to a comedy show is no longer a minority activity, it is an extremely popular lifestyle choice. The rise of stand-up on television has helped to spark this modern boom, with fans seeing comedians on TV programmes such as Live at the Apollo, Michael McIntyre's Comedy Roadshow and countless panel shows and then deciding to have a night out to see their favourites in the flesh.

The State of Play results also confirmed what I had always suspected, that live comedy is very much a social experience. While we might watch comedy on our own at home on one of our various screens, we go out to comedy events with partners and friends and laugh together. A comedy gig can unite people. There is no sound quite like the sound of a room of people roaring with laughter in unison. Comedy also has an escapist appeal. In hard times we go to comedy to forget about our troubles and cheer ourselves up. In good times we still go to comedy simply because it is a fantastically enjoyable thing to do.

Some cynics have suggested that the comedy boom is a bubble and it has to burst at some point. But it does not feel like that when you are seated at London's O2 Arena surrounded by over 15,000 eager Lee Evans fans. The appetite feels insatiable. Live comedy is here to stay. It may even get bigger. When comedians started playing large theatres regularly in the early 1990s people wondered if it had peaked. Now arena tours have become the norm. It may be only a matter of time before we see the first stand-up gig in a stadium in the UK.

I started this foreword by saying that the live comedy industry has changed almost beyond recognition. One thing has certainly not changed. From the moment they walk or skip onstage stand-up comedians still set out to put smiles on the faces of their fans. The only real difference today is that they do it in front of many more fans. As comedy continues to evolve that desire to make audiences grin from ear-to-ear will never change.

Bruce Dessau, London, September, 2014.

# Executive summary

- 50% of the UK population have been to at least one comedy event in the past three years
  - Likelihood to attend peaks among the 25-34 year olds
  - The majority of comedy attendees are 35-44 years old
- Comedy attendees are more likely than the UK population to also attend all other event genres
  - The biggest attendance overlap is with cinema, which is also the most attended for the overall UK population. Comedy attendees seem to also have a strong interest in music festivals, as they are more likely to attend than the overall population (76% vs. 27% respectively)
- Cost of attending comedy events is the main barrier-to-entry for both attendees and non-attendees
  - The second highest barrier for non-attendees is lack of interest whereas the second highest barrier for attendees is ticket availability
  - However, comedy attendees are willing to pay more than they currently do for events they want to attend, with over half willing to pay extra for a VIP package and for seats in their preferred location, close to the action
- Comedy attendees rely the most on word of mouth to find out about comedy events but use TV (commercials or programmes) to find out about comedians – YouTube and other social media also help in raising awareness of both comedians and their respective events
- With the rise of the ‘celebrity comedian,’ just over half (51%) of comedy attendees would not pay to see someone live if they had not already seen them on TV
  - In support of this, transactional data shows the top-5 selling events since 2009 account for over half of comedy tickets sold each year, increasing as a proportion since 2011
  - Furthermore, over four in five (83%) comedy attendees own a DVD, with nearly one in five (17%) owning more than 10
- Just under two in five (39%) attend comedy events with their partner and nearly a third attend with their friends (31%)
  - 55% share the same sense of humour as their partner or friends, with a further 31% reporting this can sometimes be the case

- One in five attend comedy events for fun, with one in six attending because they have an interest in comedy (22% and 15% respectively)
- Jokes about family are viewed the funniest, making it the most acceptable type of humour and particularly favourable among females. Disability-related jokes are the least funny/ acceptable type of humour
  - On the whole, males have fewer taboos than females, rating more humour types as funny than females
  - 25-44 year olds were more accepting of most types of jokes – specifically, sexuality and scatological jokes are funny for this age group whereas other ages find them unfunny
- Nearly three in five (59%) comedy attendees have laughed so hard they cried, with over half (52%) laughing when not intended
  - 32% have checked their phone during the performance, though only 9% think this is acceptable behaviour at a comedy event

# Introduction

The UK has a strong history in comedy, creating some of the most famous and memorable comic actors, characters and sketches in the past 50 years. Starting on the small screen and stage, the industry has grown and changed over the past decades, and now fills big arenas and stages, while still maintaining its roots in television and local venues. And, although of all live entertainment genres comedy has the narrowest appeal, looking deeper into the people that engage with comedy, we find a popular genre, which attracts and maintains a wide audience. And the demand for comedy events is increasing.



Comedy is often referenced as a cure, an escape and a way to bring people closer together. Around half of the UK population have attended at least one comedy show in the past three years, with nearly two out of five (39%) attending at least one comedy event in the past year. And with the increasing amount of comedy events on offer, we look deeper to understand the key driving and detracting factors for attendance. And as we find, "Comedy can be a complicated business"<sup>1</sup>

1. Dessau, B. 2014. Beyond The Joke.  
[ONLINE] Available at:  
<http://www.beyondthejoke.co.uk/content/1080/opinion-comedys-guilty-pleasures>.  
[Accessed 22 September 14].

# Demographics and (non)attendance



Why do you go to comedy events?

"TO MAKE ME LAUGH AND ESCAPE THE DAILY GRIND"



Half (50%) of the UK population has been to at least one comedy event in the past three years, which is what we define as a comedy attendee.

The majority (25%) of comedy attendees went to their first performance when they were between 16-19 years old.

### Age

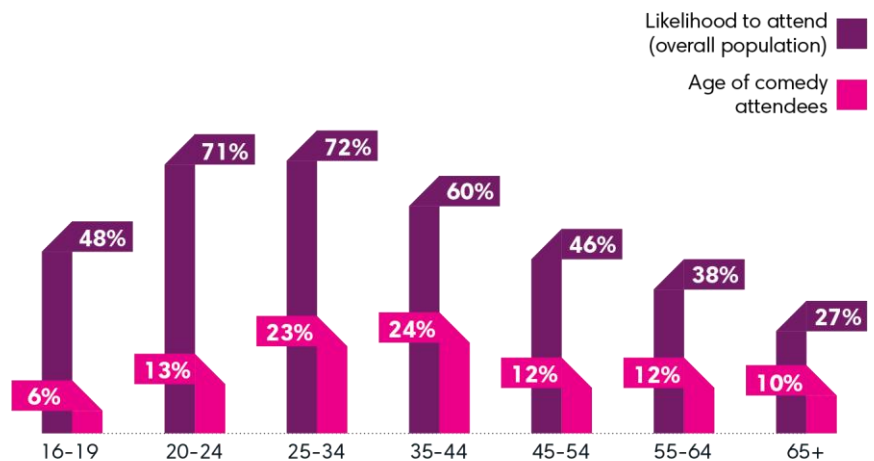
The **likelihood to attend a comedy event peaks in the 25-34 age group**, decreasing thereafter. However, people aged between

35-44 account for the majority of comedy attendees, despite a higher likelihood of attendance in the younger demographics.

### Gender

Overall, an equal amount of females and males are comedy attendees. However, significantly more males aged between 25 - 44 attended a comedy event compared to females, with more females aged between 16-24 and between 45-64 attending compared to males of the same age.

### LIKELIHOOD TO ATTEND / AGE OF ATTENDEES



## Household income & regional breakdown

Comedy attracts attendees from a wide distribution of household income, though the majority (36%) come from households with an annual income between £20k - £39k. Although gender is not the best predictor of comedy attendance, there is a correlation between attendance and household income, whereby likelihood to attend steadily increases with household income.

The **majority of comedy attendees are from London and the South east** who, when combined, make up 29% of all comedy attendees (in line with the UK population). Likelihood to attend was high for all regions, with over 90% of comedy attendees intending to attend at least one comedy event in the next three years.

## Attendance details

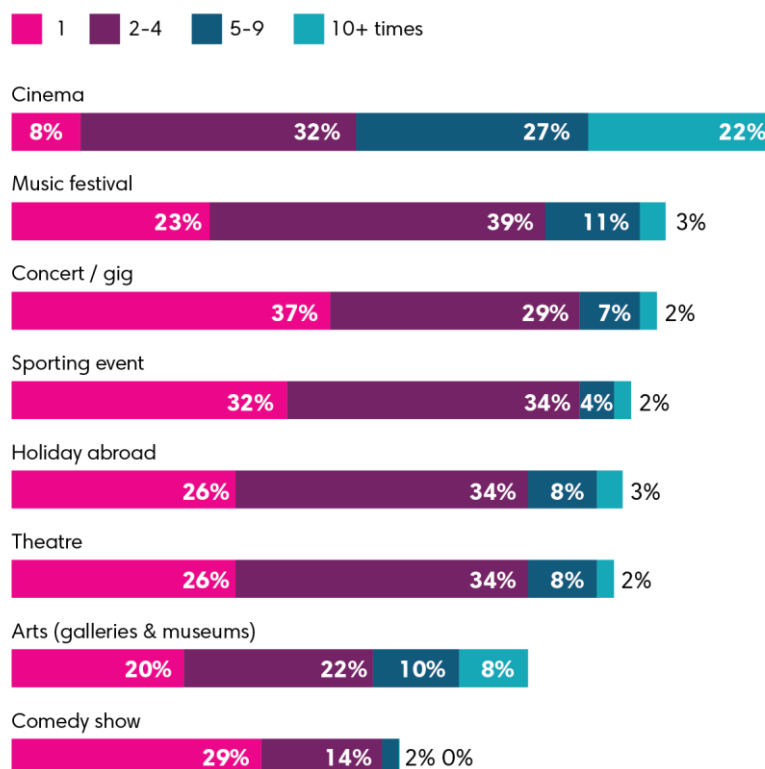
Comedy is very much a social experience, with **the majority (38%) of attendees going in groups of three** and a further 37% attending in groups of four or more, mostly with their partners (39%) or friends (31%).

A quarter of overall comedy attendees did not go to an event in 2013, though the majority (37%) went to one. Over one in four (29%) attended 2-4 events and close to one in ten (9%) attended five or more events, the majority (36%) of which were 25-34 years old, male (70%) and from London (24%).

Comedy attendees are more likely than the UK population to also attend all other event genres. The biggest attendance overlap is with cinema, which is also the most attended by the overall UK population. Comedy attendees seem to also have a strong interest in music festivals, as they are more likely to attend than the overall population (76% vs. 27% respectively).

Ticketmaster's transactional data shows that just over one in three (34%) of tickets bought by comedy purchasers are for comedy events. The top genres outside of comedy are Rock/Pop (accounting for 37% of non-comedy tickets), Musicals (12%) & Alternative Rock (10%).

## EVENTS ATTENDED IN 2013 [amongst comedy attendees]



Why do you go to comedy events?

"I ENJOY COMEDY OVER OTHER SERIOUS THINGS, IT TAKES YOUR MIND OFF THINGS LEAVING YOU FEELING HAPPIER"



While attending the least amount of comedy events in 2013 (with nearly two out of five not attending a comedy event in 2013), over **four out of five of respondents from Wales are planning to attend at least one event** each year for the next three years.

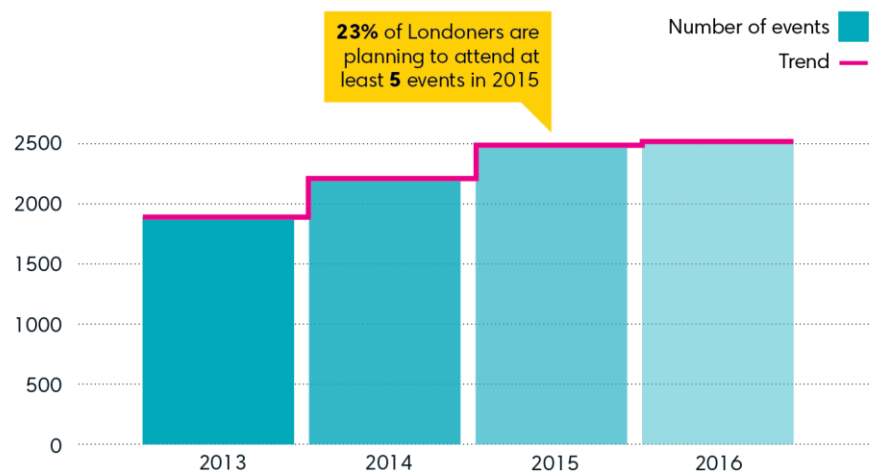
Respondents from Northern Ireland attended the most comedy events in 2013 compared to other regions – it is also one of the regions with the highest percentage (90%) planning at least one comedy event every year in the next three years.

**Londoners were the most frequent comedy attendees**, which comes as

no surprise given the comedy provision in the city. They also intend to continue this trend, with one in five (23%) Londoners planning to attend at least 5 events in 2015, increasing to 25% in 2016.

Comedy clubs and local pubs were the least favoured venues (see Venues chapter), however, those who are more favourable about these venues are more likely to be frequent comedy attendees in the next three years. Comparatively, those who favour regional theatre as a comedy venue are less likely to be frequent comedy attendees.

#### FUTURE COMEDY ATTENDANCE



Why do you go to comedy events?

“MOOD IMPROVER”



### Barriers to entry

The primary barrier to attending comedy events for both attendees and non-attendees was price (48% and 35% respectively).

More than two in three (69%) of those who haven't been to a comedy event in the past three years could have been interested but not able to attend due to factors that could be controlled or addressed by comedy promoters.

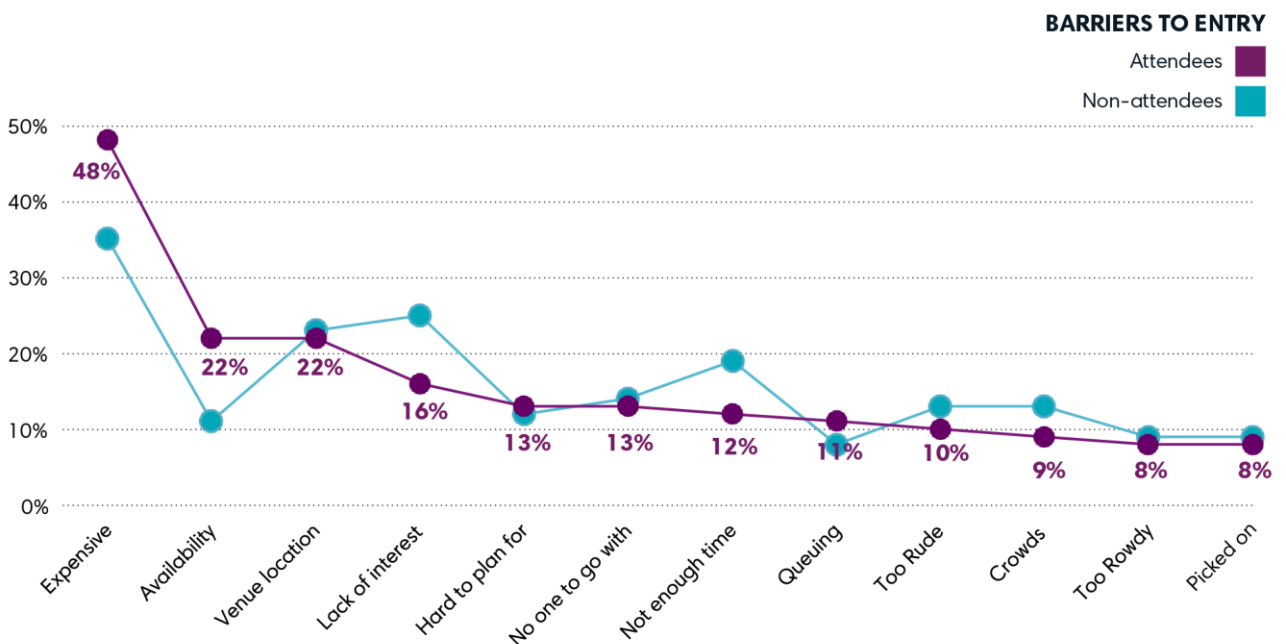
**Tweaks in price, ticket availability (events on sale) and location of venue could all contribute in getting more comedy attendees** – both by increasing the frequency in those that attend and to get more non-attendees attending to begin with. Even so, 25% of non-attendees are simply not interested in comedy, so would be unlikely to attend in the

future, with only 4% of non-attendees saying they are likely to attend in the next year.

Given that (by our definition) comedy attendees have been to at least one comedy performance in the past three years, 75% of them have been to at least one in the past year.

Ticketmaster's transactional data shows the more comedy orders a customer makes the more they are likely to keep ordering in the future – there is a 22% chance a comedy customer will make a second comedy purchase, rising to 35% if they have already made two purchases.

More than half (55%) of comedy attendees have also tried to go to a comedy show, only to find out it's been sold out – 7% have also purchased comedy tickets through resale sites.



# Preferences and motivation

Why do you go to comedy events?

“TO SEE A PARTICULAR COMIC WHO WE ENJOY WATCHING ON TV”



## Comedy preferences

Comedy attendees think of comedy as subjective and humour as personal – even so, there are some wider overarching trends that seem to unite most comedy fans and drive the industry as a whole.

### Favourite comedians

Supply and demand seem to be very much aligned, with **the top-5 best-selling comedians of the past years also mostly reflected as people’s favourite comedians** (see list below).

Across the top-selling performers, awareness was at 86% on average, with 63% of comedy attendees having been to at least one of their performances and 19% having been to four or more.

The rise of the celebrity comedian therefore seems to have a stronger pull on comedy attendees, with **half (51%) saying they wouldn’t pay to see someone live if they hadn’t already seen them on TV** and 67% interested in big comedy tours of primarily one famous comedian over smaller events with a variety of mostly unknown comedians (33%). Ticketmaster’s transactional data supports this trend, with the top-5 selling comedy events since 2009


accounting for over half of all comedy tickets sold in the same time period (average 59%), having significantly increased as a proportion since 2011.

Favourite comedians seem to also unite the family, as the top-10 list is very similar. Most notably, however, Miranda Hart is the only woman to make it to either of the top-10 lists (she was on both). And whilst much has been written about the lack of comediennes in the industry, Ticketmaster’s transactional data shows a shift in both supply and demand – what’s particularly driving this is the number of events on sale for comediennes (up 1064% since 2009 and now accounting for 14% of all comedy events sold via Ticketmaster UK). Furthermore, there is also a modest but notable increase in the number of comediennes with events on sale since 2009.

**This suggests that though there are still relatively few comediennes on big tours (compared to males), they are increasing the number of events per tour to match demand.** This is also evident in the fact that the number of tickets sold by Ticketmaster for performances by comediennes has trebled since 2011.

Moreover, these trends are reflected in transactional data from TicketWeb, which caters for smaller tours, suggesting that the increased popularity for female comedy is not only reserved for established comediennes.

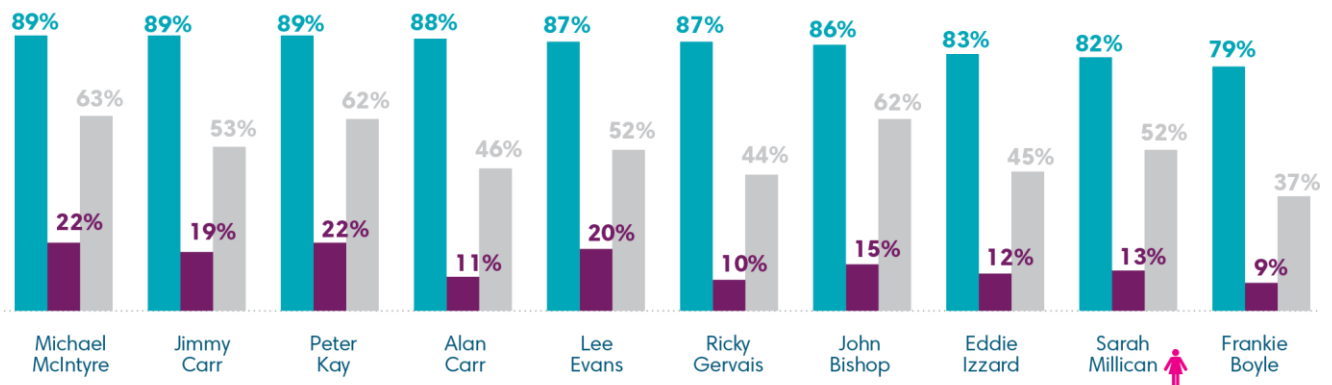
 **TOP 10 FAVOURITE COMEDIANS** (top of mind) 

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Lee Evans	Michael McIntyre	Peter Kay	John Bishop	Jimmy Carr	Billy Connolly	Russell Howard	Kevin Bridges	Jack Dee	Frankie Boyle & Miranda Hart 

 **TOP 10 COMEDIANS TO UNITE THE FAMILY**  

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Michael McIntyre	Peter Kay	Lee Evans	John Bishop	Miranda Hart 	Ken Dodd	Billy Connolly	Russell Howard	Alan Carr & Harry Hill	Jimmy Carr

 **TOP 10 COMEDIANS** (ranked by awareness)   
 Awareness  Attendance  Planning to attend



It should also be noted that with fewer female than male comedians on tour, year-on-year trends for female events can be heavily skewed by tour cycles, which usually require a year off to work on a new show.

### Comedy topics/styles

In the same way that comedy fans are mostly in agreement on who might be funny, they are also unanimous in who and what is considered controversial and taboo. Frankie Boyle, Jimmy Carr, and Russell Brand topped the list of most controversial comedians, as disability and race are considered the most unacceptable topics to joke about, with more than half of comedy attendees not finding these funny (67% and 54% respectively).

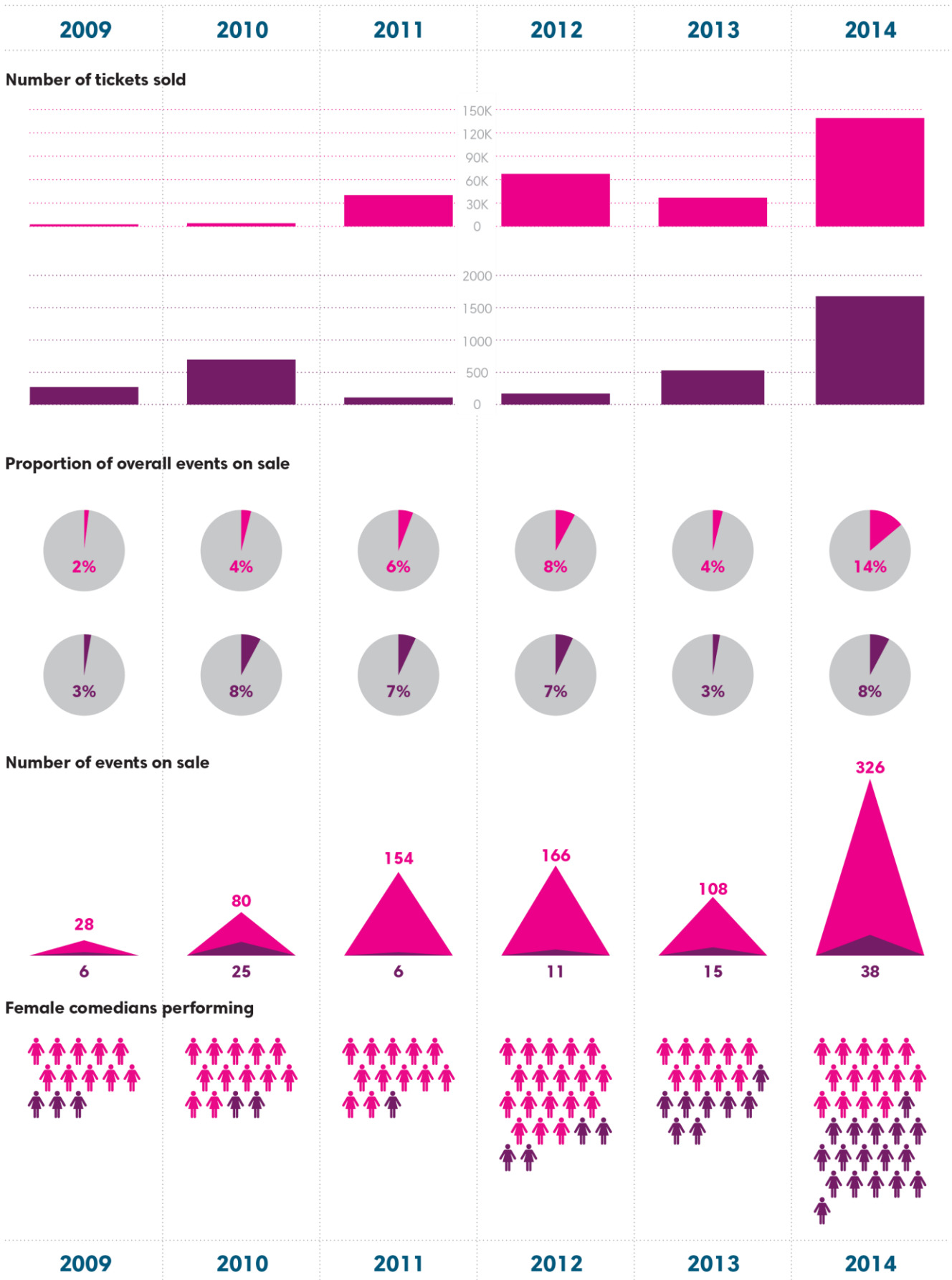
Women find sexual, body/appearance, sexuality, religious and scatological type of humour as

unacceptable, whereas men find these types of humour more funny than not. Although both genders find death, race/colour and disability jokes unacceptable, **males are less offended by these types of humour than females.**

Respondents are united by economy, education, country/region and family related jokes, which all ages find more funny than not. Younger demographics are more accepting of body/appearances and sexual humour, which the older demographics (45+) find unacceptable. Age increases with ratings of political jokes, with the 65+ year olds finding them the funniest type of humour.



TRANSACTIONAL DATA - FEMALE COMEDIANS





Why do you go to comedy events?

“ENTERTAINMENT. IT’S ENJOYABLE TO LAUGH. I ENJOY THOUGHT PROVOKING COMEDIANS”

While there is **no significant difference between what the north and south find funnier**, a few differences exist regionally. All regions found sexual jokes acceptable with the exception of Yorkshire. The South West and North West found regional jokes the funniest, with the East Midlands finding it the least funny.

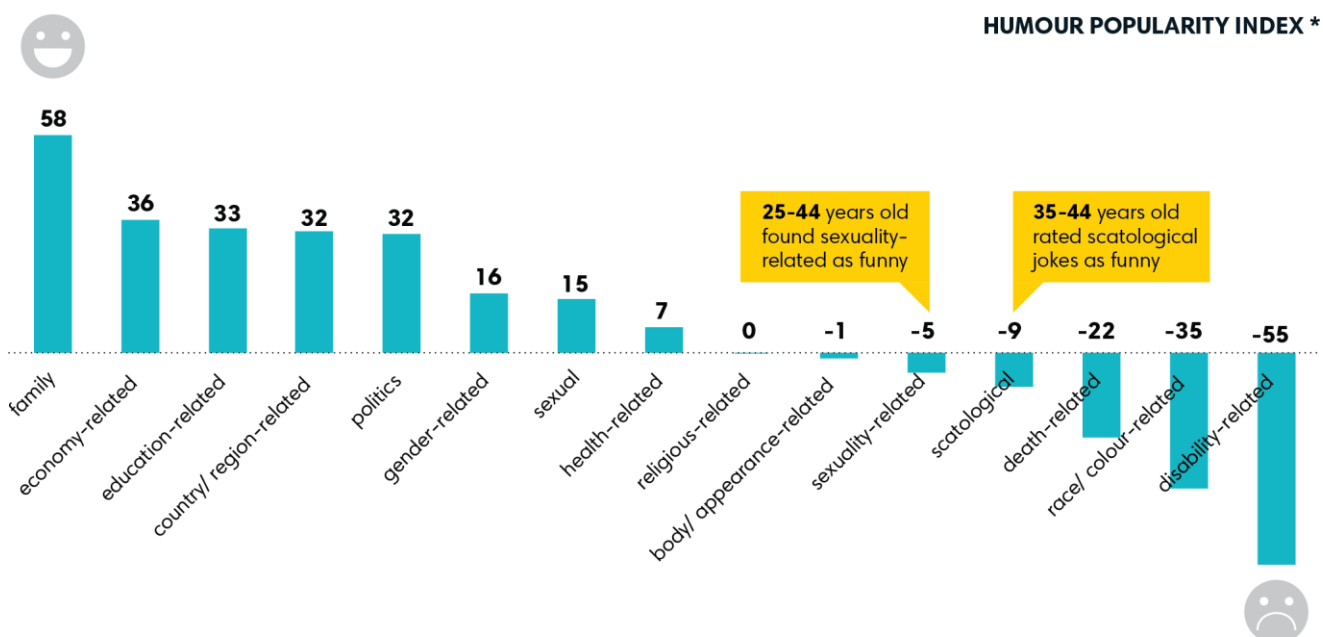
The majority of regions found scatological jokes unacceptable, with the exception of London and Wales, which found it acceptable. Scotland found this the least funny compared to all the other regions.

One in five (20%) of comedy attendees have felt disgust after watching a comedy routine – these were the people that thought of gender-related humour, which overall respondents found acceptable, as unacceptable.

And as comedy routines can come in various shapes and sizes, in addition to comedy topics, we wanted to understand more about the preferences around delivery and type of a comedy performance. Accordingly, just under a quarter (24%) of comedy attendees are fans of comedy that tells a story, with another one in five (21%) preferring dry humour over any other type.

Sketch and dark comedy appeal to approximately one in ten of comedy attendees (12% and 10% respectively).

Despite humour usually being a matter of taste, anecdotally people suggest that it is one of the characteristics they need to share with their partners (and/ or friends) – this research suggests that indeed **more than half of comedy attendees (55%) share the same humour as their partners or friends** (and a further 31% say this can sometimes be the case). And some, in fact, reference it as a reason why they work so well together (and in some cases got married), with one couple also describing how they met at a comedy club. However, **men are more likely to feel they don’t share the same sense of humour** with their partners, with a large proportion thinking they have a better sense of humour than their wives or girlfriends. Most of them claim their partners’ humour is either non-existent or too childish, soft or ‘straight-laced’/ politically correct, with some also citing cultural differences as key reasons for the divergence in humour. At the same time, some recognise that humour can be very personal and therefore expect not to agree on everything related to comedy (and beyond).



Why do you go to comedy events?

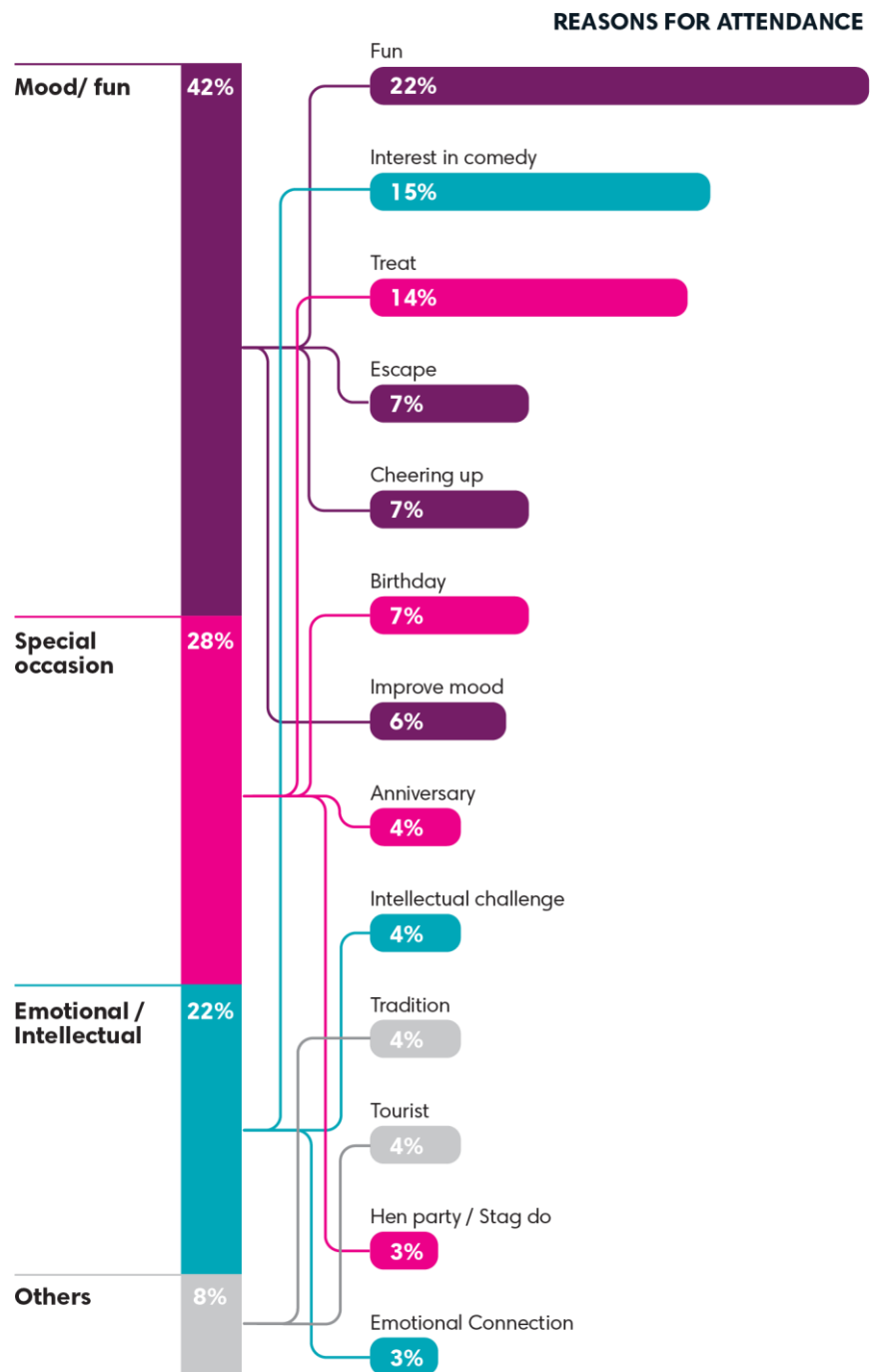
“SOMETHING DIFFERENT... IT'S MORE UNIQUE”

## Attendance motivations

When asked to describe why people go to comedy events, the overwhelming majority referred to their desire **to laugh, to forget and escape** – this can be so intense and cathartic, that more than half (59%) of comedy attendees have laughed so hard they cried.

Attendees also referred to their respect for comedians and the authentic nature of stand-up, with 61% saying they felt admiration towards the comedian and a further 29% saying they felt inspired as a direct result of a stand-up performance they had seen.

However, the research also shows that though the motivation for attending a comedy show is the experience, people follow the comedian, with 62% choosing this as their primary criterion for attendance.



Why do you go to comedy events?

"IT IS GOOD TO EXPERIENCE THE ATMOSPHERE OF A STAND-UP COMIC 1<sup>ST</sup> HAND. THE JOKES ARE FUNNIER LIVE. OTHER PEOPLE'S LAUGHTER IS MORE CATCHING"



## Venues

Nearly a third (29%) of comedy attendees prefer a (regional) theatre for comedy performances, followed by over one in five (21%) who prefer arenas. Preference in (regional) theatre was significantly higher amongst people in the East and North East of England, many of who noted that **comedy is more available than music or theatre events**, either in their local theatre or pub and with a local comedian.

Our transactional data also shows that comedy has been on the rise in regional venues, with events up 46% since 2009 (2011 saw the biggest growth but this appears to be an exception and likely driven by Micky Flanagan who toured in regional theatres, though his following tour covered mostly arenas).

Transactional data also shows that comedy events in regional theatre venues account for the majority (over 51%) of comedy events on sale outside of London, though clubs in London come out on top hosting 81% of all shows in 2014.

**Similarly, London comedy fans were more likely to enjoy attending performances at a comedy club** and were the region with the highest preference for a smaller venue with unknown comedians, although overall Londoners prefer arena tours.

With an increase in demand and a skew towards older family groups, average ticket price has also slightly increased for comedy performances in theatres and arenas to an all-time high of £27.20 and £35.40 respectively. Conversely, ticket prices for comedy events in 'club' venues (defined as having capacity of under 1000), have more-or-less plateaued in the past three years, to £20.60 in 2013, being more popular with young urban groups.

# Live, TV and internet – overlap and cross pollination

Why do you go to comedy events?

“IT’S A GOOD, FUN NIGHT OUT”



## Source of Information

New distribution channels are making it easier for people to share and consume content and therefore find out about comedians they like and performances they might be interested in.

Just over **one in five (22%) of comedy attendees find out about comedians they like through TV**, alongside word of mouth (also 22%). However, TV did not have the same level of impact on informing comedy attendees about comedy shows/performances they are interested in attending – word of mouth was the primary source for a quarter (25%) of comedy attendees, followed by ticketing companies at 14%.

YouTube and other social media also help in raising awareness of both comedians and their respective events.

While viewers of comedy shows are no more likely to attend live comedy performances, there is a correlation between the amount of comedy shows

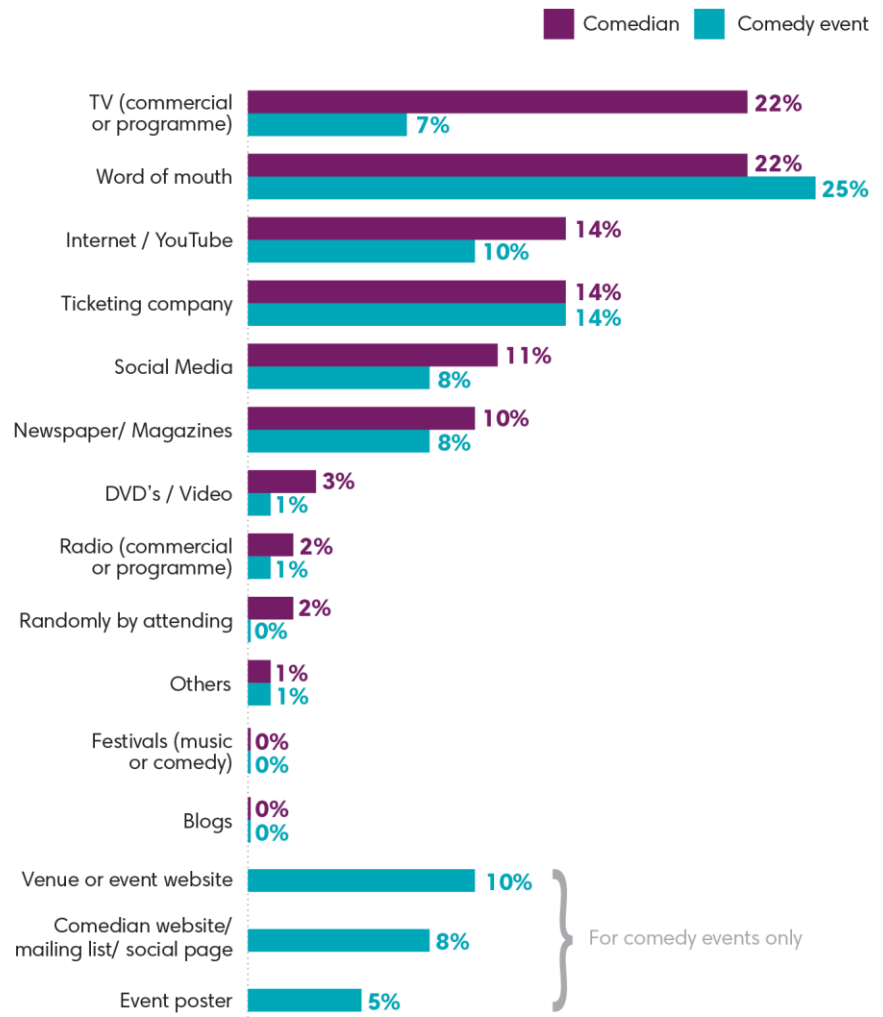
watched and the amount of comedy shows attended – the more shows regularly watched, the more comedy shows attended.

**For those who are regular viewers of a specific comedian’s TV show, they are more likely to attend the respective live performance.** The most telling example is Russell Howard, where 37% of comedy attendees who are also viewers of his TV show have seen him perform live. On the flip side, 72% of Russell Howard live performance attendees are regular viewers of his TV show.

As previously noted, half of comedy attendees would not pay to see a comedian live, if they hadn’t already done so on TV, stating the risk of it not being funny or worth it as the primary barrier – a large proportion of the other half who would be happy to see someone live they haven’t previously seen on TV, mentioned recommendation and buzz as important factors towards deciding to do so, as well as wanting to support new talent and try out something new.

Reviews and articles are important in encouraging over one in four comedy attendees to attend a comedy show (32% and 28% respectively). Approximately one in six (17%) write reviews themselves, mostly on social media (60%).

## SOURCE OF INFORMATION



## Content consumption

Distribution of comedy content is now quite varied, with 62% having watched a live recording of comedy show on TV, 50% through DVD and 25% through the internet. Those watching comedy performances being streamed live were, on average, twice as likely to have attended five or more comedy events in the last year as those who don't. But though several attendees drew an explicit link between TV comedy and attending live, the majority of them explained that the **live experience was better**, with some also saying that it is less censored/ filtered than on TV.

In terms of the event itself, around one

in five (19%) start gearing themselves up for it by watching the comedian's performance on DVD, with nearly a third (32%) watching them on TV. And in trying to prolong the experience, over half of comedy attendees watch the DVD or TV performance after the event itself (54% vs. 56% respectively).

Though music festivals don't yet play a massive part in informing people about comedians or shows they might be interested in, **a large proportion (89%) of comedy attendees are aware of comedy stages at least at one music festival** – Glastonbury (12%), V (12%) and Reading/ Leeds (11%) comedy stages were the most attended. One in five (20%) of our respondents have attended the Edinburgh Fringe festival, yet interest in future attendance is still high, with 55% expressing an interest in attending in the future, most of which (54%) have not been previously.

# Ticket purchasing – when, where and how much

Why do you go to comedy events?

“YOU NEVER KNOW HOW THE SHOW WILL DEVELOP. THE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION CHANGES THE SCRIPT”

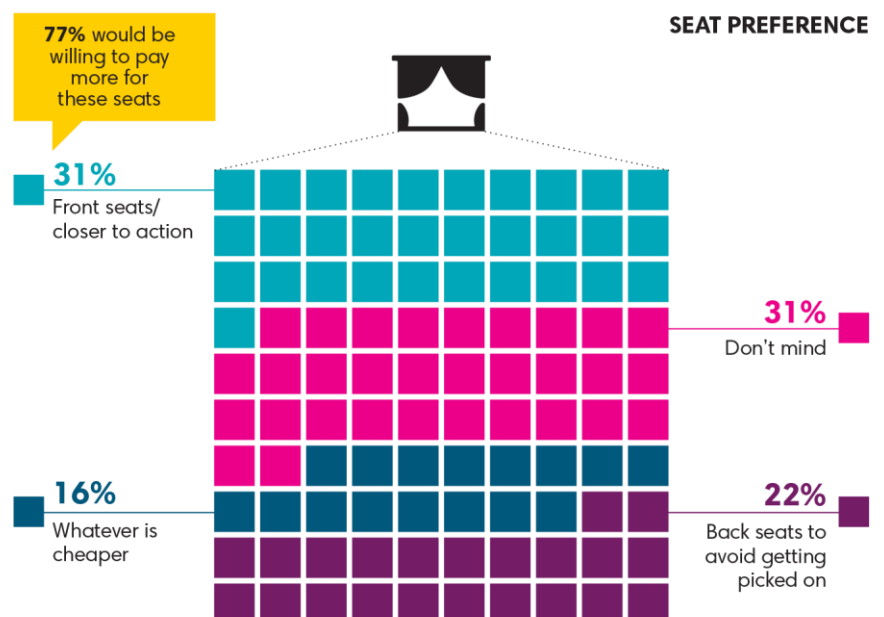


Though comedy attendees enjoy going to other forms of live entertainment as well, they often prefer comedy as they consider it a cheaper and more accessible alternative, and providing better value for money.

Close to **half (45%) of event attendees buy their comedy tickets directly from the venue**, followed by just over one in three (35%) who purchased online from a primary ticketing company (63% of which mentioned Ticketmaster). The majority (37%) decide to go up to two months before the event and purchase around the same time.

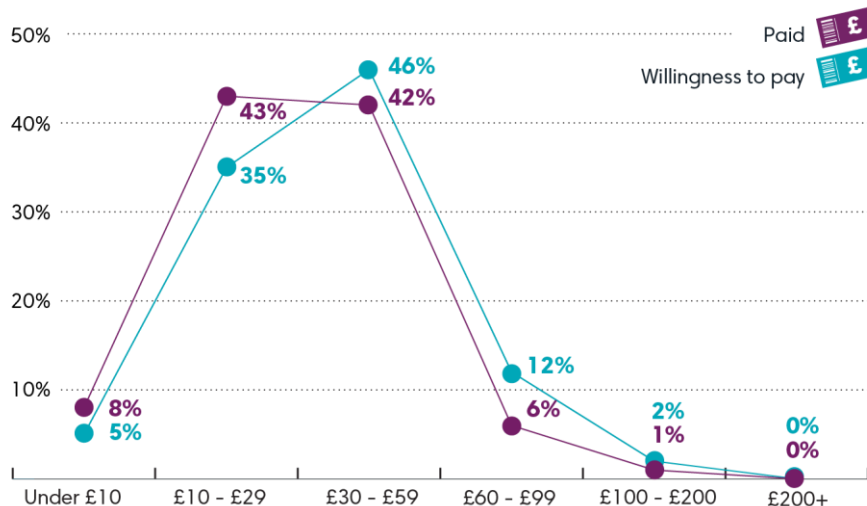
Ticketmaster's transactional data shows **most purchases for big comedy performances are made on the day of the onsale**, accounting for 22% in 2014.

Around half (53%) of comedy attendees prioritise price over seat location (30%) when selecting their comedy tickets, with a further 17% not bothered either way. And in terms of seat location, the majority of comedy attendees (31%) prefer front seats so they can be close to the action, with 22% preferring to sit further back to avoid getting picked on.





## TICKET PRICE



And though seat location is not the primary consideration in terms of choosing tickets, just over **half (54%) of comedy attendees would be willing to pay more for seats in their preferred area**. People who want to sit closer to the action are more likely to pay more for these seats than people who would like to keep a 'safer' distance from the performer (77% vs. 49%).

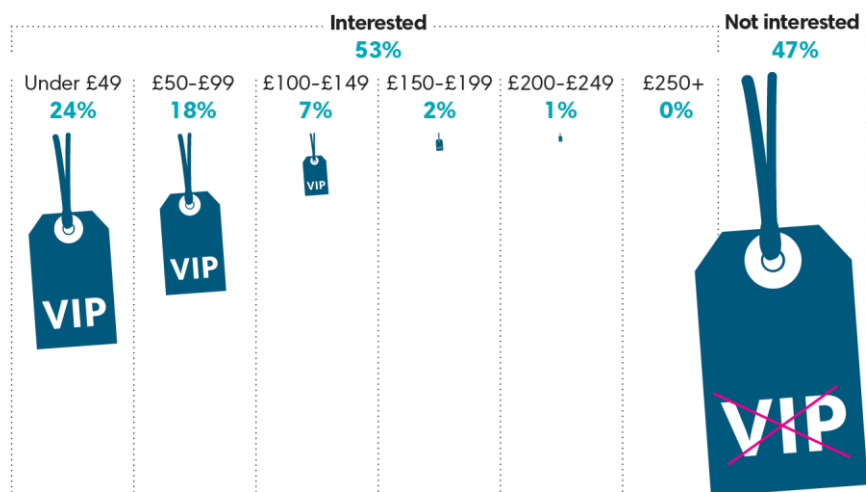
Furthermore, it seems that people generally are willing to pay more than they currently do depending on how much they want to attend an event and possibly due to the fact that they consider pricing reasonable to begin with (though there is a limit, and it stops at £200).

The industry may already be responding to this, as there has been a slight year-on-year increase in average price of comedy tickets since 2009, which reached its peak in 2014 at £32.02.

Just under two in three (64%) comedy attendees would be interested in meets & greets with favourite comedians, though only about half (53%) of attendees would consider paying extra for a VIP package, with only one in ten (11%) of them willing to pay over £100 above the face value of the ticket.

## VIP PACKAGES

Willing to pay [above face value]



# Logistics – who they attend with and how

Why do you go to comedy events?

“EVERYONE NEEDS A GOOD LAUGH AND A LIVE SHOW IS MUCH BETTER THAN THE TV AS THERE IS MORE ATMOSPHERE”

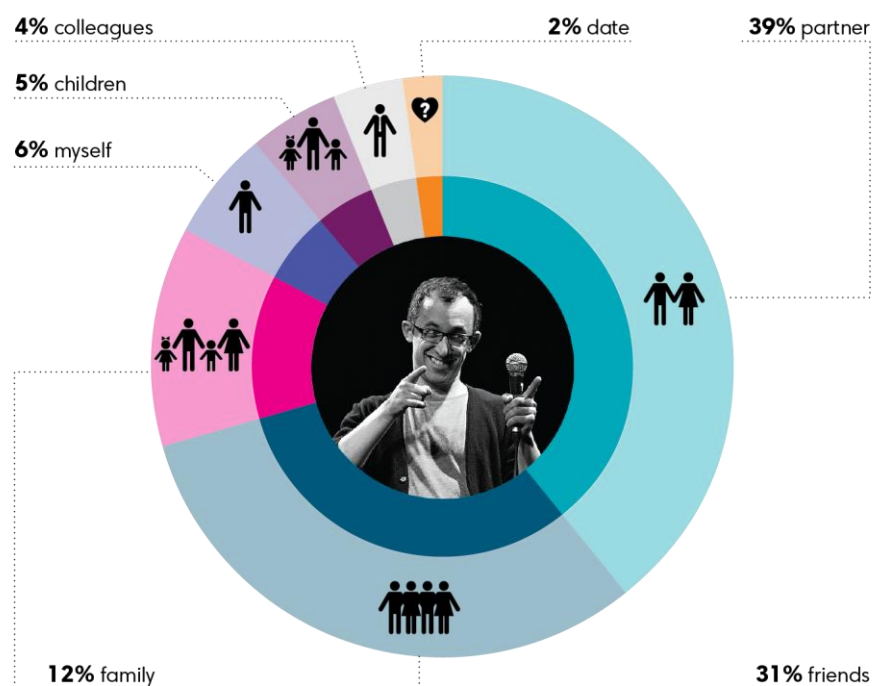


Revisiting the notion that humour is important to be shared between a couple, **39% of comedy attendees usually go to comedy events with their partners**, though only 2% go for a date. Just under a third (31%) usually go with friends and 12% go with other family members (excluding partners and children). Close to one in twenty (6%) go alone, and they are primarily males (68%) aged 25 to 34 (29%).

The majority (64%) of comedy attendees usually travel to their

comedy venues by car – this is the same for all regions except London and is the highest in the West Midlands (78%). A similar amount (61%) are willing to travel up to one hour to get to their comedy destination, with comedy purchasers from Ticketmaster travelling on average 34.2 miles (though this is gradually decreasing year-on-year since 2010 suggesting there is more local comedy provision). A committed 6% is also willing to travel for over two hours to go to a comedy event they really like.

#### COMEDY COMPANION(S)



Why do you go to comedy events?

“CHILL AND RELAX”

**Londoners are the least willing to travel for prolonged periods** as it is the only region where no one is willing to travel more than 2 hours. This is probably due to the method of transport (being the only region where people travel more by public transport than by car), as well as the abundance of live comedy in the region.

Two out of five (21%) comedy attendees have also stayed overnight before or after attending a comedy event, with likelihood to spend the night the same for all regions, including London.

The majority have not seen a comedy show abroad, and of those that have (17%), the majority saw it in English.

**Other spend**

The majority of respondents are willing to pay up to £29 on most ancillary spend, such as merchandise, food and drink. The exception is hotels, for which the majority are willing to spend between £30 to £59. Respondents have a spending limit of £200, with the exception of drink, for which respondents do not spend more than £100 on.

The Northern Irish were the least likely to splash out on food, with the majority spending no more than £29.

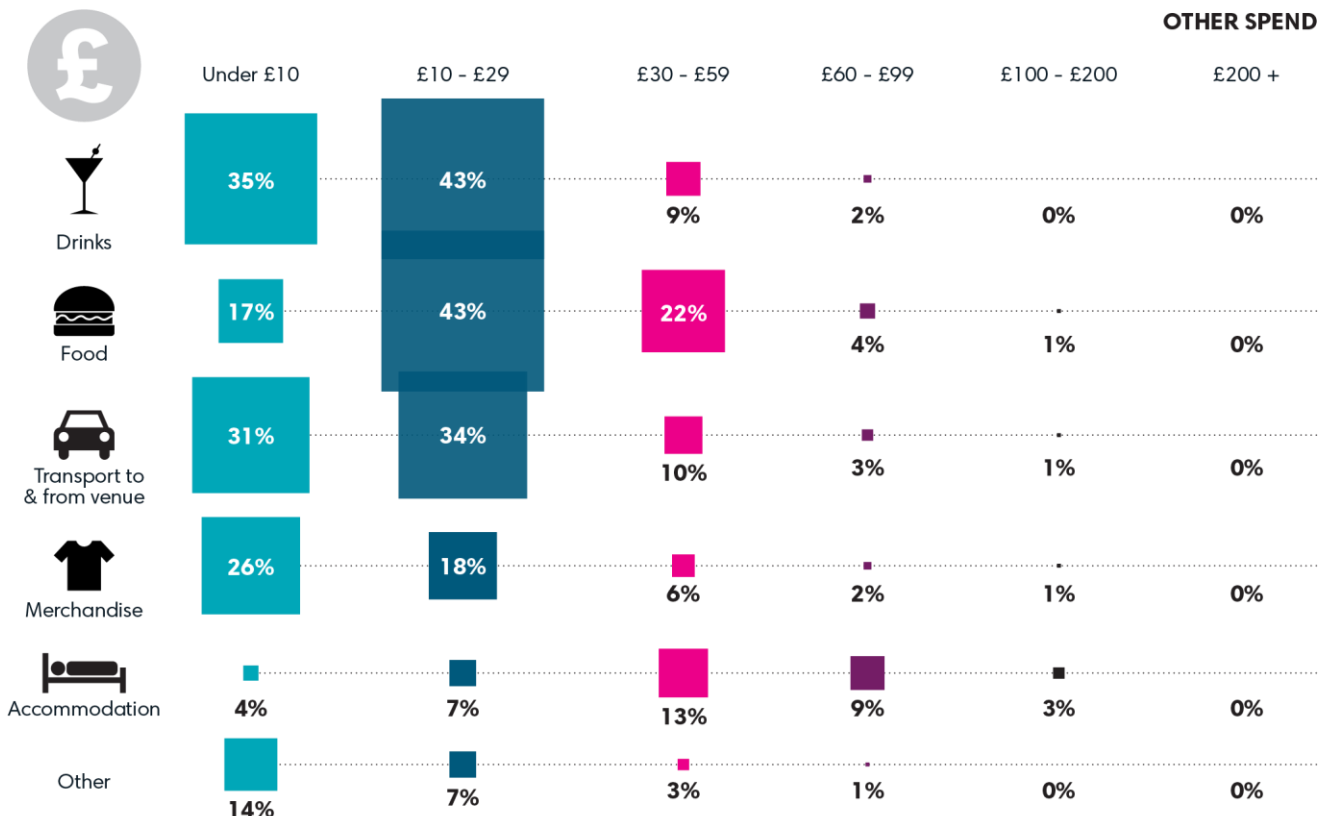
South Westerners were the big spenders where, although the majority spend up to £29, a greater amount were willing to spend more than £100 on food than any other region.

In terms of travel, Londoners spent the least, with nearly half (45%) spending under £10. Those from Northern Ireland were the big spenders, where, although the majority were willing to spend up to £29 on travel, a greater amount were willing to spend more than £100 on travel than any other region.

**Over four in five (83%) of comedy attendees own at least one comedy DVD**, with nearly one in five (17%) owning more than 10).

The majority of DVD owners are aged between 25-34, although 20-24 year olds are more likely to own a DVD. While males and females are equally likely to own a comedy DVD, males are more likely to own more than females. Males are more likely to buy the DVDs for themselves (57%) than females (40%). **Over half (54%) of comedy attendees have bought a comedy DVD as a present** for a friend, with another 31% likely to consider as an option for the future.

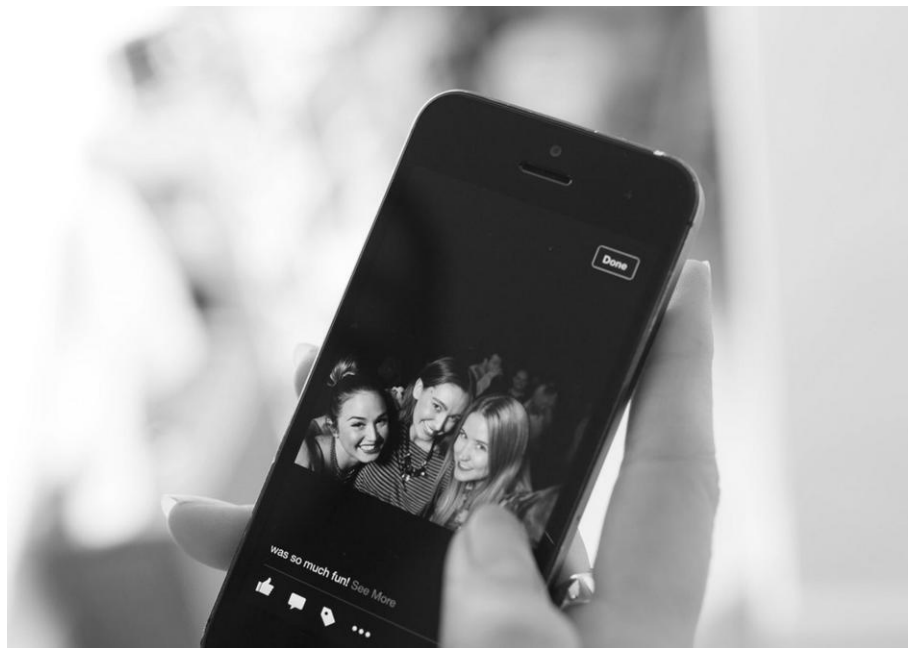
**OTHER SPEND**



# Code of conduct

Why do you go to comedy events?

“LAUGHTER, INDIVIDUALITY, UNCOMPROMISING”

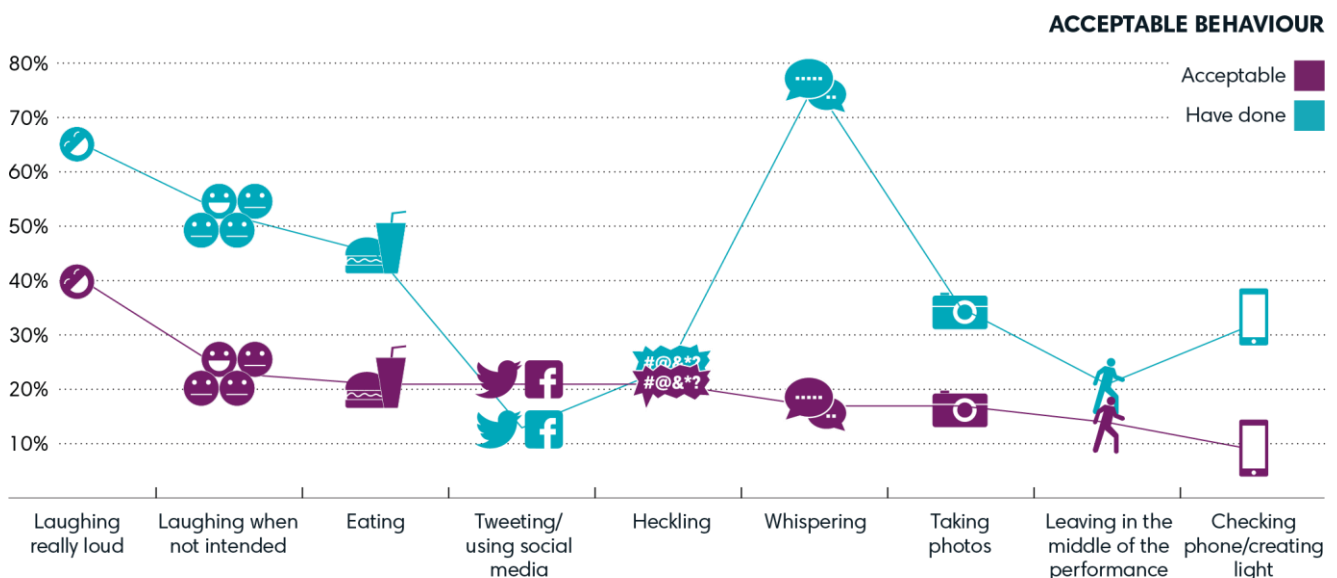


Though there is a strong sense that comedy has a much more relaxed atmosphere than theatre or other forms of live entertainment, there are still certain behaviours and implicit rules that attendees are expected to conform to.

Surprisingly, **heckling is not as common practice as one might expect amongst comedy attendees**, nor is it as acceptable – only one in five comedy attendees think of it as acceptable, and a similar amount have done it, with only 3% of them making a habit out of it and doing it regularly. Laughing when not intended and leaving before the show has finished are similarly frowned upon, though more attendees are guilty of having done so.

Checking one's phone is considered the ultimate misbehaving, though a fair amount of attendees have done it – **the biggest gap however between 'acceptability' and 'practice' levels is on whispering during a performance**; while one of the least acceptable behaviours, over three quarters are guilty of having done so.

The majority of comedy attendees consume between 2-5 units of alcohol on a night out watching a live comedy show. Females are more likely to not drink or to only drink 1 unit. On the flip side, males are most likely to drink between 6-9 units, and twice as likely as females to drink between 10-20 units.



## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

27% | None



15% | Around 1 unit



40% | 2-5 units



13% | 6-9 units



4% | 10-20 units



1% | 20+ units



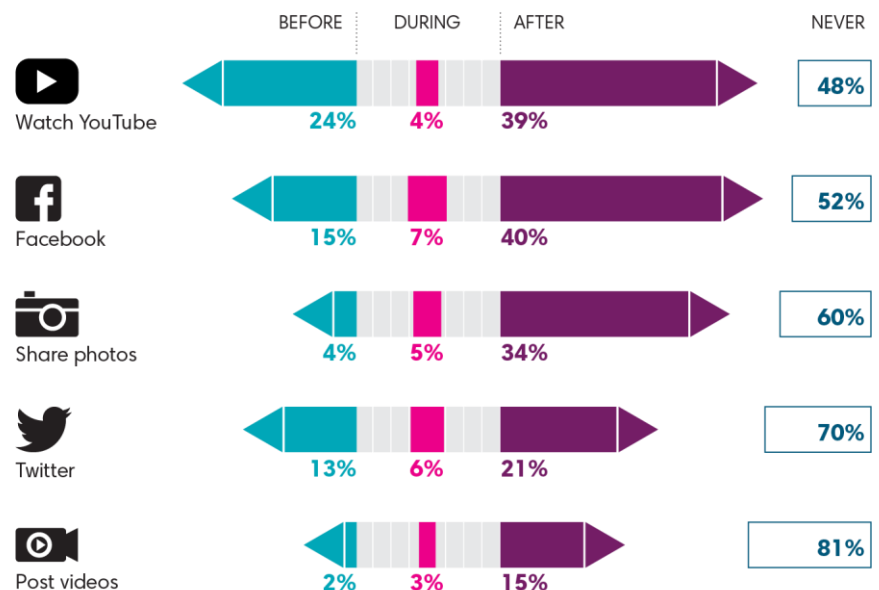
## Social media

As with other major social events, people are keen to broadcast their plans and share their thoughts and feelings on various platforms, building up buzz and spreading the word in anticipation of the events themselves. Close to one in six (15%) used Facebook to comment about the event in advance, though fewer people did so on Twitter (13%). During the event itself, very few attendees use Facebook or Twitter to share their experience (7% and 6% respectively). However, most attendees use social media after the event, with two out of

five (40%) posting on Facebook and over one in five (21%) sharing their experience on Twitter. Photo and video sharing are also the most popular after the event (34% and 15% respectively).

Nearly a quarter (24%) of comedy attendees watch the comedy performer on YouTube before attending the performer's event. Close to two in five (39%) prolong their comedy experience by watching YouTube videos after the event has happened.

## SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION



# Sponsorship



Why do you go to comedy events?

“LAUGHTER IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL”



Close to one in ten (8%) comedy attendees have noticed comedy (venue or performance) sponsorship, the majority of which referenced Carling, Foster's, O2, Perrier and Virgin (though still a small proportion). **Attending more comedy events increases awareness**, with those who attend more than one event a year more likely to notice some form of sponsorship related to comedy events.

Festivals and venues are considered most appropriate for sponsorship, as opposed to comedians, a tour/event or a comedy show on TV, with 40% and 37% respectively saying this sponsorship would make them feel more positive towards sponsors.

### SPONSORSHIP SENTIMENTS

“I am happy for events to have sponsors if it keeps the ticket prices down”



“I rarely notice when an event is sponsored”



“Sponsors should provide a service adding value to overall experience”



“Sponsors have a key role making productions financially possible”



“I appreciate sponsoring brands”



“I am more likely to buy from brands sponsoring my favourite event”



“Comedy sponsorship is tasteless”



# Conclusion

Comedy continues to attract, engage and maintain a wide audience, driven primarily by the experience it provides and its fun nature. Although the majority of attendees are between 25 to 34 years old, 20-24 year olds are significantly more likely to attend comedy events than any other age group.

Attendance is strong, particularly in the South East and London, and the majority of attendees are planning to either maintain or increase their comedy attendance this year and the next. Even though the primary barrier-to-entry is price, **comedy attendees are willing to pay more for tickets** than they already do, with the majority also willing to pay more for VIP experiences and for seats in their preferred area (primarily close to the action).

Attendees rely mostly on friends and family (word of mouth) to find out about comedians and comedy events. Ticketing companies are also heavily relied on as a source of information for comedy events, whereas TV (commercials or programmes) are used to find out about comedians. YouTube and other social media platforms are also proving successful in raising awareness for both comedians and their respective events. Similarly, they also seem to be influencing factors for attendance, given that close to one in four comedy attendees watch a show of the comedian before attending their event, hence removing the element of risk and setting expectations.

Technology is also present throughout the theatre experience, with attendees sometimes using their phones and social media during a performance, even though the majority of attendees think it is unacceptable to do so.

Although TV comedians pull in the crowds, **nearly half of comedy attendees are willing to pay to see a comedian not previously seen on TV** and one in three actually prefer smaller events with mostly unknown comedians. Those more interested in watching up-and-coming comedians are more likely to book tickets on the week of the event, attend with friends and are willing to pay less for tickets. Compared to those who are more interested in established comedians, they are also more likely to rely on radio and word of mouth to find out about comedians and comedy events they're interested in, and be between 35-44 years old.

The growing demand for comedy, coupled by a diverse set of performers catering to different tastes, presents several opportunities for the industry:

- **Adopt a more targeted approach** – comedy events and expectations can vary significantly, therefore smaller events, for example, may benefit more from radio campaigns and last-minute deals
- Understanding audiences well and **capitalising on overlap with and interest in other events**, such as music festivals and cinema, can also help with cross-marketing and publicity
- Take advantage of **digital platforms and other partners to raise awareness** of comedians and their respective shows e.g. through social media and ticketing companies
- **Maximise opportunities around yield and ancillary revenue** through DVD sales, dynamic pricing and VIP packages

## Methodology

A couple of sources were used interchangeably to provide a holistic picture of the wider trends within the comedy industry.

## Primary research

Ticketmaster partnered with Research Now to get a representative sample of the UK population, through an online survey (designed, set-up and analysed in-house), which was fielded between July 25<sup>th</sup> and September 7<sup>th</sup> 2014. Following a thorough cleansing and weighting process, a total of 2499 responses qualified as complete and representative responses. 1259 of them passed our screener (having attended at least one live comedy event in the past three years) and were defined as comedy attendees therefore informing the majority of our report.

Differences between the North and South of England were investigated. The south included London, South East and South West. The north included the East and West Midlands, Yorkshire, North East and North West (Source: British Journal of Cardiology<sup>1</sup>)

\*Humour index calculated by subtracting the number of those finding the categories unfunny (1+2 out of 5pt scale) from those that found them funny (4+5 out of 5pt scale).

## Transactional data

Transactional data based on Ticketmaster data warehouse of 13,731 comedy events sold between 01/01/2009 and 18/08/2014 – please note this data includes only events sold by Ticketmaster and as such is primarily comprised of arena, theatre and club tours for established comedians.

TicketWeb transactional data was also briefly analysed to look at trends in female comedy events, to also cover smaller venues.

***Ticketmaster is an MRS Company Partner. All MRS Company Partners and their employees agree to adhere to the MRS Code of Conduct and MRS Company Partner Quality Commitment whilst undertaking research.***

1. British Journal of Cardiology, *Old problems, new solutions: the HEART UK annual conference* (Image) < <http://bjcardio.co.uk/2011/08/old-problems-new-solutions-the-heart-uk-annual-conference/>>.