GIGXCHANGE

MONTHLY MARKET REPORT

THE GIGXCHANGE INDEX

What gigs actually pay.

UK live music fees by city, gig type and band size – built from 3,847 real data points. Open data, free to cite, updated nightly.

Issue 02 · May 2026

3,847	13	313	18 May
DATA POINTS	UK CITIES	RATES PUBLISHED	LAST REFRESH

GIGXCHANGE.APP/RATES

FOREWORD

The gap between asking and earning

> Every musician knows the feeling: you quote a number, the booker names a lower one, and neither of you has any idea where the market actually sits. The Index exists to close that gap. Issue 02 adds 176 new observations and a third agency feed – the picture is getting sharper every month.

£20,700	43%	23%	53%
AVG ANNUAL INCOME FROM MUSIC	EARN UNDER £14,000 FROM MUSIC	CANNOT SUPPORT THEMSELVES ON MUSIC ALONE	NEED OTHER INCOME TO SUSTAIN A MUSIC CAREER

Source: Musicians' Census, Help Musicians UK & the Musicians' Union (~6,000 respondents).

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Each monthly issue snapshots the previous 30 days of new data on top of the rolling observation pool. Here is what May 2026 shows across seven gig types, thirteen cities and four band sizes.

- **Section 1 – The numbers.** UK medians by gig type side-by-side, the band-size cost curve across all use cases, and a city league ranked by wedding fee.
- **Section 2 – How the figures are built.** Sources, weights, geographic fallback logic and the regional adjustment model explained in plain English.
- **Section 3 – The May data mix.** Which sources fed this issue, how volume and weighting interact, and where confirmed bookings will shift the balance.
- **Section 4 – The quality firewall.** Five automated gates plus a ticketed-gig revenue model that keeps bad data out before a human ever sees it.
- **Section 5 – What changed since April.** Dataset growth, new agency coverage, observation-count movement by gig type, and what we still lack.
- **Section 6 – Honest limits.** What this report is, what it is not, and where the data is still too thin to publish with confidence.

WHY WE SHOW FOUR NUMBERS, NOT ONE

A single average hides the spread – and in live music, the spread is the whole story. A £25,000 Mayfair gala drags the average past hundreds of grassroots pub gigs. So every cell publishes four points: p25 (budget), p50 (typical), p75 (strong) and p90 (top-end). You see exactly where any quote sits on the real curve.

SECTION ONE

What the UK market paid in May

Every figure below is artist take-home pay in pounds. Tickets, splits, gear hire, travel and accommodation are excluded – they are not pay and they distort comparisons. A cell only publishes once we hold at least three trusted observations.

UK MEDIANS BY GIG TYPE 3-4 PIECE

USE CASE	P25	P50 (MEDIAN)	P75	P90	N
Wedding	£722	**£996**	£1,253	£1,796	6,929
Private party	£583	**£887**	£1,354	£1,997	3,242
Corporate event	£771	**£839**	£920	£1,082	8
Festival	£200	**£649**	£757	£866	7
Theatre / pit	£631	**£640**	£640	£640	3
Club (ticketed)	£450	**£600**	£1,463	£1,463	33
Pubs & bars	£325	**£487**	£705	£980	132

Weddings remain the highest-paying segment, but the gap is narrower than most artists expect. Private parties sit only 11% below weddings for the same lineup. Corporate bookings cluster tightly because entertainment budgets are pre-set. Pubs anchor the floor – but a pub residency with four monthly slots can match a single wedding fee.

HOW BAND SIZE SHIFTS THE FEE UK NATIONAL, ALL GIG TYPES

BAND SIZE	P25	P50	P75	P90	N
Solo	£233	**£308**	£433	£599	409
Duo	£446	**£555**	£777	£1,328	844
3-4 piece	£722	**£996**	£1,253	£1,796	6,929
5+ piece	£1,093	**£1,433**	£1,800	£2,678	1,222

Solo to duo adds roughly £260 to the median. Duo to 3-4 piece is the steepest jump – you cross the threshold from background music to a headline act with a rhythm section, and the market prices that shift. Beyond five musicians, the incremental cost per head drops because logistics (PA, transport, stage plot) are already covered.

SECTION ONE — CONTINUED

Gig type × band size heatmap

Every cell below is the UK national median (p50) in pounds. Darker cells = higher fees. Dashes mark combinations with insufficient data to publish.

GIG TYPE	SOLO	DUO	3-4 PC	5+
Wedding	£308	£555	£996	**£1,433**
Private party	£375	£367	£887	£675
Corporate	£365	£765	£839	**£1,171**
Festival	£216	£433	£649	**£1,407**
Club	£359	£468	£600	**£2,291**
Pub & bar	£292	£500	£487	**£1,250**
Theatre	£175	–	£640	£960

Weddings dominate the top of the heatmap at every band size. The steepest jump is duo to 3-4 piece – the threshold where a background act becomes a headline band with a rhythm section. Corporate and private-party fees cluster closer than most artists expect. Pubs and clubs anchor the floor regardless of lineup size.

HOW TO READ THIS

Pick your gig type (row) and band size (column) to see where the UK market sits. Then check the city league on the next page to see how your location shifts the number. The live calculator combines all three axes in real time.

SECTION ONE — CONTINUED

City league — who pays what

The thirteen UK cities with enough May data to publish a wedding cell, ranked by typical fee for a 3–4 piece. Other gig types follow the same city hierarchy with minor shuffles – corporate fees track regional income more closely, while pub fees barely vary by geography.

CITY	P25	P50 (MEDIAN)	P75	P90	N
Edinburgh	£1,119	**£1,186**	£1,759	£1,829	30
Brighton	£833	**£1,050**	£1,219	£1,259	123
Cardiff	£887	**£987**	£1,230	£1,455	66
Leeds	£730	**£910**	£1,254	£1,437	96
London	£573	**£903**	£1,200	£1,640	285
Bristol	£793	**£893**	£1,112	£1,143	192
Glasgow	£643	**£868**	£1,419	£1,960	54
Sheffield	£663	**£854**	£1,289	£1,553	126
Manchester	£663	**£825**	£990	£1,153	252
Birmingham	£593	**£788**	£944	£1,210	180
Liverpool	£663	**£773**	£817	£850	129
Newcastle	£657	**£663**	£697	£781	24

READING THE CITY SPREAD

Edinburgh holds the top spot for the second consecutive month at £1,186 median. Brighton climbed to second (£1,050), overtaking Glasgow. London's median (£903) sits mid-table but its p25-to-p90 range is the widest of any city we publish – reflecting everything from registry-office solos to Mayfair black-tie galas. Newcastle anchors the bottom at £663, though its data pool is still small enough that one or two new bookings could shift it materially.

COVERAGE OUTLOOK

We currently publish city-level cells for 13 UK metros. Towns and smaller cities fall back to their region or to the UK overall. Our June target is to add Nottingham and Sheffield corporate cells and begin publishing festival data for Brighton and Edinburgh.

SECTION ONE — CONTINUED

Two markets, one industry

WEDDING FEES BY BAND SIZE UK NATIONAL

Weddings are the highest-paying and most data-rich segment in the Index. The fee scales with band size – each additional musician adds roughly £300–£500 to the median. Duos and solos dominate the daytime ceremony market; 3-4 piece bands own the evening reception.

BAND SIZE	P25	P50	P75	P90	N
Solo	£233	**£308**	£433	£599	409
Duo	£446	**£555**	£777	£1,328	844
3-4 piece	£722	**£996**	£1,253	£1,796	6,929
5+ piece	£1,093	**£1,433**	£1,800	£2,678	1,222

PUB & BAR FEES BY BAND SIZE UK NATIONAL

Pubs anchor the floor of the Index but offer something weddings do not: repeat bookings, built-in audiences, and low-overhead gigs that keep a working musician's calendar full. A monthly pub residency across four slots can out-earn a single wedding.

BAND SIZE	P25	P50	P75	P90	N
Solo	£250	**£292**	£363	£729	386
Duo	£362	**£500**	£600	£700	104
3-4 piece	£325	**£487**	£705	£980	132
5+	£812	**£1,250**	£1,500	£1,750	101

WHY PUB FEES BARELY MOVE BY CITY

A London pub gig pays within 10% of a Newcastle one. Venue economics – door take, bar margin, entertainment budget as a percentage of revenue – dominate over regional income. This makes pubs the most geographically stable gig type in the Index.

SECTION TWO

How the figures are built

> The pipeline in plain English – from raw observations landing in the database to the four-percentile cells you read in this report.

1 — WHAT WE COVER

UK only. Every cell sits at the intersection of three axes: **geography** (city, region or UK national), **gig type** (seven tracked: weddings, corporate, private parties, pubs & bars, ticketed clubs, festivals, theatre/pit), and **band size** (solo, duo, 3–4 piece, 5+). Each cell shows p25/p50/p75/p90 – no averages, ever.

2 — WHERE THE DATA COMES FROM

Nine sources feed the index. Confirmed platform bookings carry the most weight. Three UK booking agencies are re-scanned weekly for publicly listed rate-card updates (39 URLs total). MU and Equity recommended rates refresh annually. Artist profile fees, venue budgets, anonymous submissions and post-event verified reports round out the mix. Every observation is tagged with source, gig type, act type, venue type and genre at ingest.

3 — WHY SOME SOURCES COUNT MORE THAN OTHERS

A confirmed booking – money that changed hands – outweighs a number on a public listing. So every source carries a **trust weight** from 0 to 1. Higher-weight sources have a proportionally louder voice in the final percentile calculation:

SOURCE	WEIGHT	WHY
Confirmed GigXchange booking	1.00	Cleared transaction – the gold standard
Post-event verified submission	0.85	Artist-reported, then matched to a booking
MU / Equity recommended rate	0.60	Authoritative floor – not where the market clears
Agency published rate card	0.48	Asking price; includes agency commission (removed at ingest)
Venue gig budget	0.25	Pre-negotiation target, not a transacted fee
Anonymous public submission	0.16	Useful signal, but unverified until reviewed
Performer profile asking rate	0.16	Self-declared; weakly correlated to actual deals

SECTION TWO — CONTINUED

4 — CITIES WITH THIN DATA

We publish at three levels. **City**: 20 major UK metros with nearby places normalised in (Hove → Brighton, Oldbury → Birmingham). **Region**: the 12 official UK regions. **UK overall**: the catch-all. Three observations is the minimum to publish a city or region cell; UK-level publishes from one. When a user looks up a city we cannot publish, the live tool falls back: city → region → UK with a regional adjustment.

5 — REGIONAL ADJUSTMENTS

When city data is too thin, we apply a blended regional adjustment. The blend uses ONS regional household income, family-spending data and publicly available industry price benchmarks. Weddings lean on industry data (luxury spend does not track income linearly); corporate leans on ONS (entertainment budgets track income closely); pubs barely flex because venue economics dominate pricing. Real observations always override adjustments.

6 — KEEPING JUNK OUT

Five automated gates per observation. Key fields (amount, source, gig type) must be populated. Only the nine vetted sources are admitted. Only artist fees count – ticket revenue, gear hire, licensing and door splits are blocked at the database layer. Per-musician-per-hour bounds vary by gig type, so a £25 wedding band or a £25,000 pub solo gets rejected automatically. And a fingerprint stops the same gig counting twice. For ticketed club gigs we also model the revenue split: guarantee vs. 65%-sellout estimate, whichever is higher.

7 — REFRESH CADENCE

Every cell rebuilds nightly at 05:00 UK time. Agency rate cards re-scan every Monday. Approved submissions feed in daily. Each snapshot is date-tagged, so the history is preserved rather than overwritten – that is what lets future issues track real price movement. A full monthly report is published the third week of every month.

8 — HONEST SCOPE

The Index records **what the UK live music market has actually paid, asked, or budgeted** over the observation window. It is not a recommendation, not a regulated benchmark, and not financial advice. Your gig may legitimately fall outside any cell shown.

SECTION THREE

What changed in the May dataset

This issue is built from **7,547 observations** – up from 3,671 in April. The biggest change this month: a third UK booking agency joined the weekly scan, adding 8 new category URLs and broadening coverage of function bands, party bands and tribute acts.

SOURCE	OBSERVATIONS	SHARE	AVG W × C	NOTES
Agency rate cards	6,420	85.1%	0.48	Weekly snapshot – 3 UK agencies, 39 URLs
Performer profile rates	520	6.9%	0.16	Artist-declared min/max fees
MU / Equity recommended	309	4.1%	0.53	Annually refreshed; authoritative floor
Venue gig budgets	298	3.9%	0.50	Captured at booking-request stage
Confirmed bookings	0	–	1.00	First volumes expected Q3 2026
Post-event submissions	0	–	0.85	Verified leg of the contributor pipeline
Anonymous submissions	0	–	0.16	Public form – held pending admin review

HOW THE DATA MIX SHIFTED

Rate cards still dominate by raw count, but each card only carries 0.48 of a full vote. The third agency feed widens the genre spread without amplifying any single price point. As confirmed GigXchange bookings (weight 1.00) begin landing in volume, they will steadily reshape the weighted picture – by design, one real booking outweighs two rate-card listings.

DEDUPLICATION AND RE-SIGHTING

When the weekly agency scan re-checks a listing, the system bumps the observation's `observed_count` rather than creating a duplicate row. That lets us track which listings persist month-to-month (a signal of price stability) without inflating the sample size. This re-sighting mechanism was restored in the May reliability sprint after a bug had suppressed it since launch.

EXTERNAL SOURCES USED FOR REGIONAL ADJUSTMENTS

- ONS Regional Gross Disposable Household Income, 2023 release.
- ONS Family Spending Survey – recreation-and-culture expenditure share, latest release.

SECTION FOUR

How we keep junk out

Every observation – regardless of source – passes five automated gates before it counts toward a published cell. Anything that fails is logged with a rejection reason; nothing is silently dropped.

CHECK 1

Has the basics

Amount, currency, source and gig type must all be populated. Missing a key field? Rejected at ingest.

CHECK 2

From a known source

Only the nine vetted sources are admitted. New feeds go through a weighting review before any of their data lands in a cell.

CHECK 3

Is an artist fee

Only money paid to the performer counts. Ticket revenue, gear hire, licensing fees and door splits are blocked at the database layer, not in application code.

CHECK 4

Passes the range check

Per-musician-per-hour bounds vary by gig type. A £25 wedding band or a £25,000 pub solo is automatically rejected without human intervention.

CHECK 5

Not a duplicate

Every observation has a fingerprint. Re-ingestion of the same gig is detected and either skipped or merged as a re-sighting.

BONUS CHECK

Ticketed gig model

For ticketed clubs we model the split: guarantee, capacity, ticket price, band cut – then test the reported fee against whichever is higher: guarantee or 65%-sellout estimate.

ANONYMOUS SUBMISSIONS

Public submissions go to gigxchange.app/rates. Rate-limited to deter spam, and every one queues for human review before it enters a cell. Approved submissions count at weight 0.16; if we later match one to a confirmed booking, it upgrades to 0.85.

SECTION FIVE

What this report is and isn't

WHAT IT *IS*

A record of fees that have actually been paid, asked, or budgeted on UK gigs over the observation window. Real numbers from real sources, not modelled or invented. Every cell shows its data sources, observation count and last-refresh date.

WHAT IT *ISN'T*

- **Not a recommended price.** We do not tell anyone what to charge or pay. Your gig can legitimately fall outside any cell shown.
- **Not an official benchmark.** Independent and unregulated. No industry body sets these figures.
- **Not financial advice.** Pricing is your call – we provide evidence, the decision is yours.
- **Not the whole market.** A large share of UK gig fees are negotiated privately and never surface anywhere. We can only show what is visible.

WHAT'S STILL MISSING

- Seven of the top 20 UK metros are still data-thin for non-wedding gig types – they fall back to regional or UK figures.
- Confirmed-booking volume is still building. The weighted picture will sharpen materially once that source leads.
- Festival and theatre cells rest on fewer than 20 observations each. Directionally useful, but expect them to firm up issue by issue.
- No genre-specific cells yet (folk vs. rock vs. soul vs. jazz). Genre tags are captured on every observation; we publish once the volume supports it.
- Scotland is well-covered for weddings but thin on pub and corporate data – Glasgow and Edinburgh corporate cells are still regional fallbacks.

FREE TO USE

HELP SHAPE THE NEXT ISSUE

Every gig you have done is an observation we need. Submit three anonymously at gigxchange.app/rates and you unlock every cell and every trend line for 30 days. No email, no signup.