GREATER ANCHORAGE MUSIC CENSUS



Photo Courtesy of Dónal Lakatua

SUMMARY REPORT
September 2024

SOUND MUSIC CITIES

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Ecosystem Composition	5
Creative Profile Venue/Presenter Profile Industry Profile	8
Economic Activity	14
Ecosystem Development	18
Workforce Development	21
Livability	22
Music Friendly Policies	24
Culture & Belonging	27
Key Insights	28
Opportunities	29

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Executive Summary

The 2024 Anchorage Music Census was a community-led study to a better understanding of the current needs of the Anchorage-area music community. The music census launched on May 1, 2024 and ran through June 29, 2024 and collected 377 responses from people working in music in any capacity who are 18 years or older and living in the Anchorage and Mat-Su area.

The Anchorage music ecosystem is predominantly composed of individuals in the Music Creative sector, representing 74% of survey respondents. This is followed by 14% who are associated with the Industry and 13% who are Venue/Presenters. While the gender of respondents overall find a majority in those who identify as male (52%), both the Industry and Venue/Presenter segments find a majority in those who identify as female at 47% and 49% respectively, which is notable because music ecosystems nationally tend to be male dominant.

Anchorage Creative respondents are highly experienced, with 78% having over 10 years in their field. They face key concerns such as the rising cost of living and stagnant pay rates. Annually, these creatives spend an average of $4,601 on career-related expenses, primarily on gear rentals and studio costs. 52% of these expenses go to local Industry providers, showcasing their commitment to professional quality and the local cultural economy. Anchorage's Music Industry showcases a mix of seasoned professionals and diverse occupations among respondents. Over half (53%) have more than a decade of experience, with many roles in Music Marketing (21%) and Venue Operations (19%).

The Venue/Presenter respondent landscape in Anchorage is diverse, with hybrid performance spaces comprising 14% and live music venues making up 9%. Anchorage Venues primarily serve smaller audiences, with 56% having a capacity for 1-100 people and very few able to accommodate more than 1,000. Locally owned for-profit entities dominate the landscape at 45%, while non-profits play a significant role at 40%. On average, Venues in Anchorage host 82 live events annually, totaling 2,856 events per year across all venues, with a notable 78% of venues featuring outdoor capabilities useful during summer in Alaska.

Venue/Presenters in Anchorage face significant regulatory challenges, including confusion and inefficiency in processes, particularly around permitting and inspections. Respondents prefer tools like a single point of contact for permitting, tax incentives for hosting live music, and government advocacy. Public safety concerns include parking, nighttime lighting, and security presence at events. Regarding alcohol statutes, more respondents view the regulations negatively than positively, though most feel neutral about their impact on music-related work.

Music impacts the income of Anchorage's music professionals, generating a total $5.5 million annually across respondents. Music contributes 16% of respondent total annual income, with an average household income of $92K and music-related income averaging $15K. Most respondents are freelancers and sole proprietors, comprising 52% of the industry. A substantial 73% supplement their earnings with non-music jobs, relying heavily on these for primary income and underscoring the financial challenges and instability often associated with music careers alone.

In terms of ecosystem development, 56% of respondents want places for musical collaboration. Venue/Presenters seek audience development tools (86%). Top professional development interests include audio/video recording and engineering (54%), marketing strategies (51%), booking and event production (47%), and community advocacy (42%). Respondents find that the Anchorage music ecosystem offers predominantly positive experiences, and notably, Anchorage ranked the most positive across the music cohort. The Anchorage music ecosystem’s greatest strengths are that it is non-homophobic (85%), inclusive (85%), and safe (81%).

This report and the online dashboard at **AnchorageMusicCensus.org** offer more in-depth data, insights, and opportunities to understand, support, and grow Anchorage’s passionate and emerging music ecosystem and all the benefits it offers culturally and economically.

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Introduction

The 2024 Anchorage Music Census was a community-led initiative to gain a better understanding of the current needs of the Anchorage-area music community. This marks the first time that the music community will have standardized data - benchmarked across dozens of cities and regions around the US that are participating in similar efforts - from which to develop policy solutions and approaches. This report focuses on Anchorage's data.

The Anchorage Music Census launched on May 1, 2024 and ran through June 29, 2024. The study was open to all people working in music in any capacity who are 18 years or older and living the greater Anchorage metropolitan or Mat-Su area. The Anchorage Music Census gathered 377 responses, which is a statistically significant response rate, but a bit lower than desired so that the margin of error is closer to +/-5%.The census was administered by Sound Music Cities, a leading Austin-based provider of music ecosystem studies and music census work, in conjunction with Alaska Creative Economies, the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, and the UAA Center for Economic Development. Anchorage joined a multi-city cohort program administered by Sound Music Cities which met monthly to discuss best practices on improving music industries on a city level, allowing Anchorage to gain insight from other cities conducting similar research.

377 responses
May1-June 29, 2024

13% venue/presenter
14% industry
74% music creatives







Photos Courtesy of Lauren Langford

This summary report has been prepared by Sound Music Cities and includes an overview of the Music Ecosystem Health Assessment based on 10 key indicator areas. The report includes key findings and recommendations. Alongside this report, Sound Music Cities has provided access to an online dashboard where you can find more data at **AnchorageMusicCensus.org**.

INTRODUCTION TO A MUSIC CENSUS

Any strategy to support and grow a music ecosystem begins with a basic understanding of its population. Professional music communities are not easily discoverable using traditional methods (such as through labor statistics or economic data). A music census collects key data points to better understand music people and their economic activity within a specific geography. It provides a baseline for policymakers and the larger community to understand and take action.

The value of a music census goes well beyond the data itself. Such initiatives ignite a range of activities that are conducive to more strategic and sustainable support for local music scenes over the long term, beginning with validating this economically marginalized group, sharing new learning, activating civic and community resources, and ultimately empowering music people to take ownership of change initiatives.

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A Community Effort

The 2024 study was led by the Alaska Creative Economies, the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, and the UAA Center for Economic Development. This study took a grassroots approach that engaged local partners who hold the relationships with music people. Lead and Community Engagement Partners served as an essential means of outreach to music people and these organizations were instrumental in shaping the Census itself.

Thank you to our amazing Lead Partners and Community Engagement Partners!

LEAD PARTNERS

Alaska Creative Economies

CED Center for Economic Development

AEDC Anchorage Economic Development Corporation

Anchorage Chamber of Commerce

#chooseANCHORAGE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTNERS

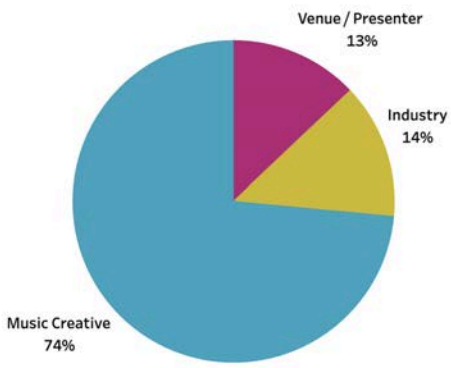
Anchorage Downtown Partnership
Anchorage Museum
Anchorage Music City
Anchorage Park Foundation
BBAAD Productions
Dog Yard Records
Rasmuson Foundation

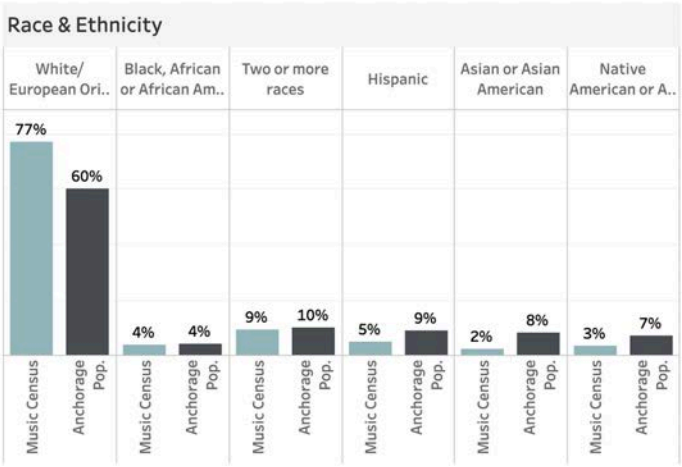
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Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

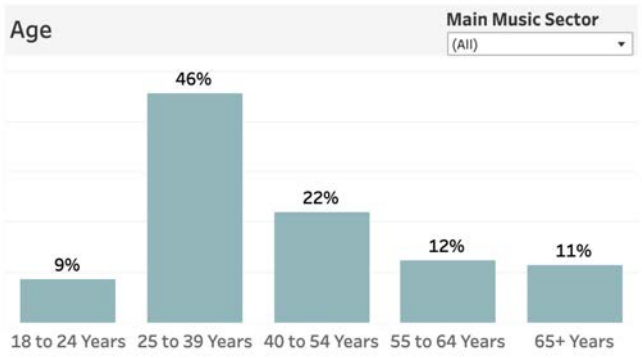
Ecosystem Composition

The Anchorage music ecosystem is predominantly composed of individuals in the Music Creative sector, representing 74% of survey respondents. This is followed by 14% who are associated with the Industry and 13% who are Venue/Presenters. While the gender of respondents overall find a majority in those who identify as male (52%), both the Industry and Venue/Presenter segments find a majority in those who identify as female at 47% and 49% respectively, which is notable because music ecosystems nationally tend to be male dominant.

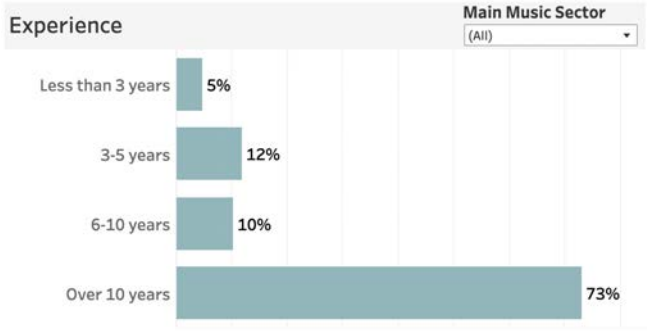




- **Race & Ethnicity** - The racial and ethnic composition of the Anchorage music ecosystem respondents reveals some differences compared to the Anchorage metropolitan statistical area (MSA) general population. In the music census, 77% of respondents identify as White/European Origin, higher than the 60% in the Anchorage general population. Those identifying as Hispanic make up 5% of the music census respondents, which is lower than the 9% in the general population. Asian or Asian American respondents make up 2%, which is below the general population's 8%, and Native American or Alaska Native participation is also lower in the music census at 3% compared with the general population of 7%.
- **Age** - The age distribution shows a significant concentration of participants in the 25 to 39 years age group, which accounts for 46% of the respondents. This is followed by the 40 to 54 years age group with 22%, and then the 55 to 64 years and 65+ years age groups, which make up 12% and 11% respectively. The youngest group, 18 to 24 years, has the smallest representation at only 9%.



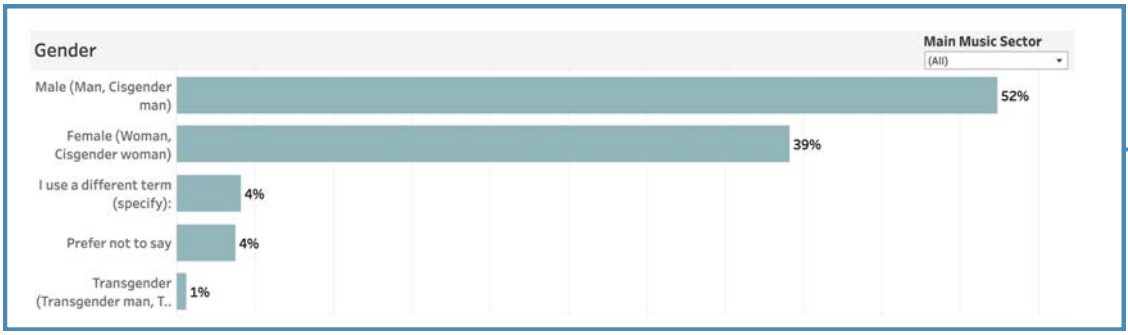
- **Experience** – A significant majority of respondents in the Anchorage music ecosystem, 73%, have over 10 years of experience. Those with 6 to 10 years of experience represent 10%, while individuals with 3 to 5 years of experience account for 12%. The least experienced group, those with less than 3 years, makes up a mere 5% of the respondents.



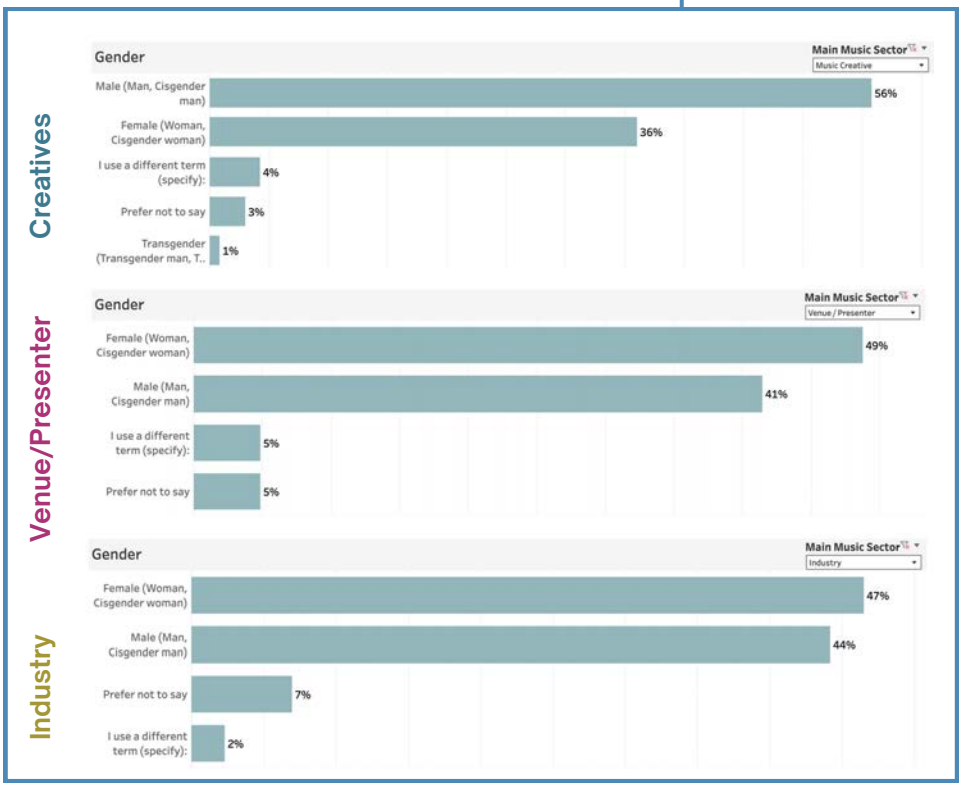
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Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

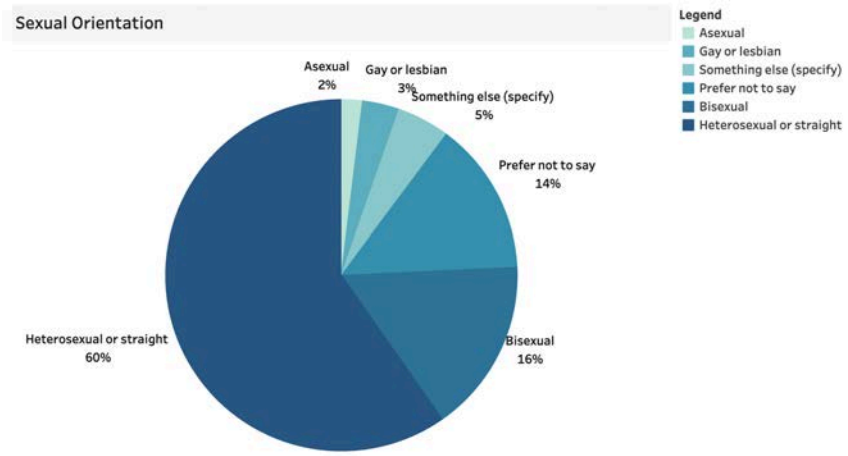
Ecosystem Composition (continued 2/3)



- **Gender** - The gender distribution among overall respondents in the Anchorage music ecosystem shows that males (cisgender men) represent the majority at 52%, while females (cisgender women) account for 39%. Those who use a different term or prefer not to specify their gender make up 4% each, and transgender individuals comprise 1% of the respondents. Notably, in both the Venue/Presenter and Industry categories, respondents predominantly identify as female which is significant because most music ecosystems are male dominant.



- **Sexual Orientation** - The Anchorage music ecosystem displays a range of sexual orientations among its respondents. The majority, 60%, identify as heterosexual or straight. Bisexual individuals make up 16% of the respondents. Those who identify as gay or lesbian represent 3%, Asexual 2%, and 5% identify as something else not specified. Meanwhile, 14% of respondents prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation.



> We have an incredibly skilled and diverse music scene. I think that there could be potential for a larger and more diverse visible scene which would attract more folks to live events.

> The local music community for the most part is very welcoming and supportive.

> Strong sense of community even in artist who have moved operations to areas other than Anchorage, many still work with and put back into the local scene.

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Ecosystem Composition (continued 3/3)

Plans to Stay in Music and Anchorage

- **Creatives** - The majority of Creative respondents in Anchorage, 69%, definitely plan to continue working in the music industry over the next three years, with an additional 27% either probably or possibly continuing. However, their commitment to staying in Anchorage is slightly lower, with 47% definitely planning to remain in the city and 38% either probably or possibly staying. 15% are uncertain or considering leaving Anchorage.

- **Venue/Presenter** - The majority of Venue/Presenter respondents in Anchorage, 46%, definitely plan to continue working in the music industry over the next three years, with an additional 37% either probably or possibly continuing. However, their commitment to staying in Anchorage is lower, with 29% definitely planning to remain in the city and 54% either probably or possibly staying. 17% are uncertain or considering leaving Anchorage.

- **Industry** - The majority of Industry respondents in Anchorage, 56%, definitely plan to continue working in the music industry over the next three years, with an additional 36% either probably or possibly continuing. However, their commitment to staying in Anchorage is slightly lower, with 29% definitely planning to remain in the city and 52% either probably or possibly staying. 18% are uncertain or considering leaving Anchorage.



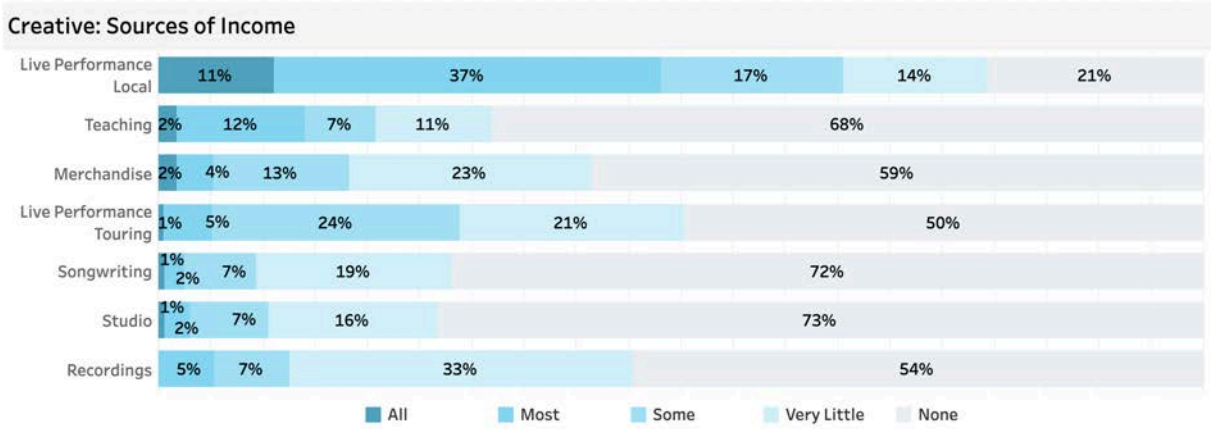
> When it works, the music scene here is awesome. Every tiny community I've run across is very vibrant. And they are all inclusive. Everybody just wants to make something cool. Unfortunately, they're not very aware of each other and so there isn't a whole lot of cross cooperation.

> The scene is really small but it's fairly enthusiastic. There are great musicians and great bands, and I think compared to other places I've lived it's a very welcoming and open community. I think getting that out front and providing more opportunities for musicians to play or interact with the broader public would be awesome.

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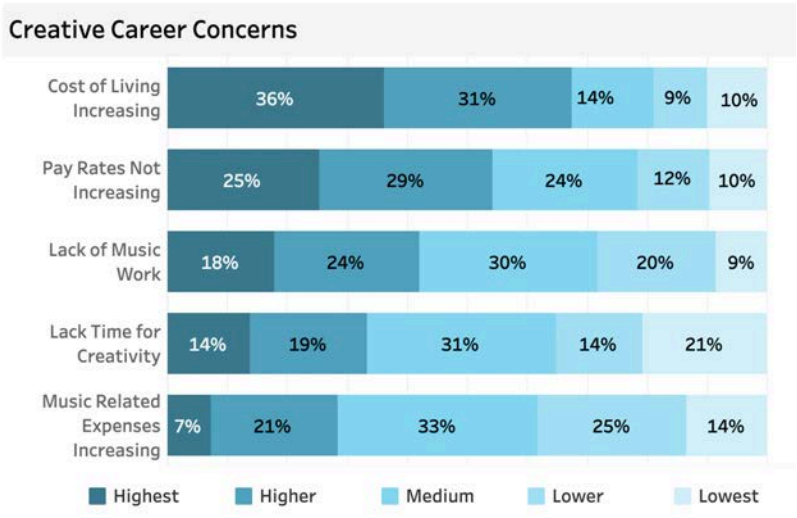
Creative Profile

Anchorage Creative respondents are highly experienced, with 78% having over 10 years in their field. They face key concerns such as the rising cost of living and stagnant pay rates. Many use their homes for activities like equipment storage and home studios, indicating a deep integration of work and personal space. Income mainly comes from local live performances and teaching, providing a stable financial base. Annually, these creatives spend an average of $4,601 on career-related expenses, primarily on gear rentals and studio costs. 52% of these expenses go to local Industry providers, showcasing their commitment to professional quality and the local cultural economy.



- **Sources of Income** - Income for Creative respondents in Anchorage comes from multiple sources, with local live performances being the most significant (11% all, 37% most). Teaching is also a key income source (2% all, 12% most, 7% some). Other income sources include touring live performances (1% all, 5% most, 24% some), recordings (5% all, 7% most, 33% some), songwriting (1% all, 7% most, 19% some), studio work (1% all, 2% most, 16% some), and merchandise sales (2% all, 4% most, 13% some).

- **Career Concerns** - The top career concerns for Creative respondents in Anchorage include the increasing cost of living (36% highest concern) and pay rates not increasing (25% highest concern). Other significant concerns are the lack of music work (18% highest concern), lack of time for creativity (14% highest concern) and increasing music-related expenses (7% highest concern).



> "I'm mostly a hobbyist but do play in working bands that play covers. I'd like to form an original band, write collaboratively, etc.

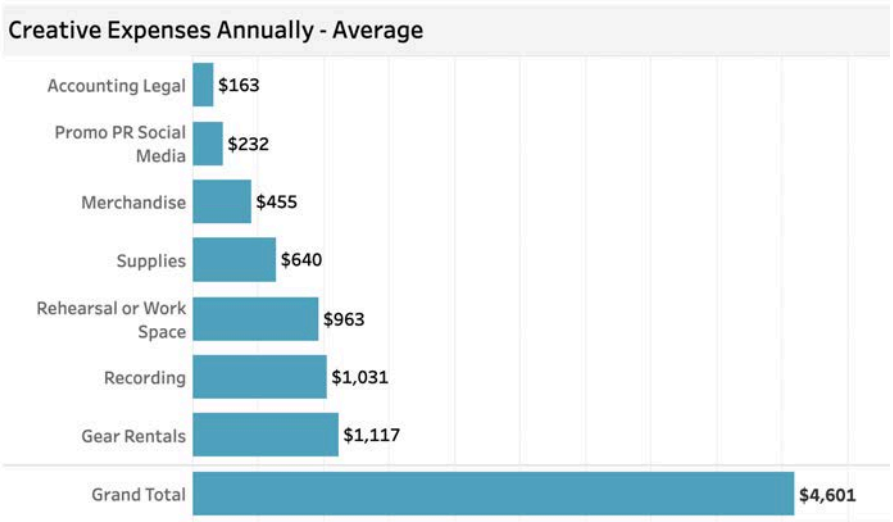
> Rate of pay hasn't changed much in 40 years. I don't know how to change that.

> Need more venues and definitely more all-ages venues.

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Creative Profile (continued)

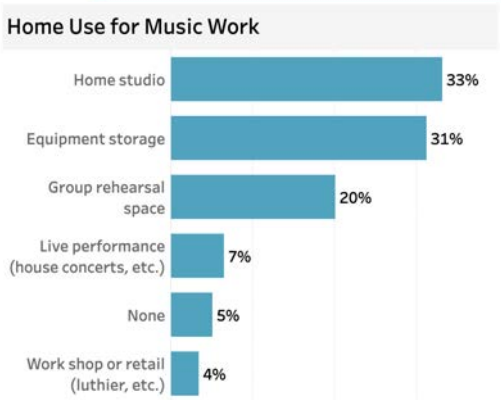
- **Spend** - On average, creatives in Anchorage incur annual expenses totaling $4,601. Major expense categories include gear rentals at $1,117, recording costs at $1,031, and rehearsal or workspace costs at $963. Collectively, Creative respondents spend $1.2M Annually with 52% staying local.

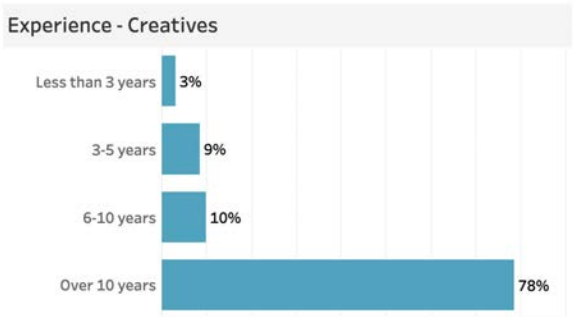


$4,601
Average Creative Spend Annually

$1.2M
Total Creative Respondents Spend Annually

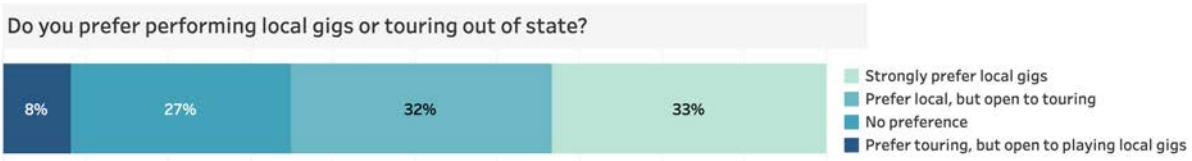
52%
Spent Locally





- **Home Use for Music Work** - Creatives in Anchorage utilize their homes for various music-related activities, with 31% using their space for equipment storage and another 33% for a home studio. Additionally, 20% use their home for group rehearsal space, 7% for live performances like house concerts, and 4% for workshops or retail activities. 5% do not use their home for any music work.

- **Experience** - Among the Creative respondents in Anchorage, a significant majority, 78%, have over 10 years of experience in their field, indicating a deeply experienced community. Those with 6 to 10 years of experience make up 10%, while those with 3 to 5 years represent 9% of the respondents. Only a small fraction, 3%, have less than 3 years of experience.



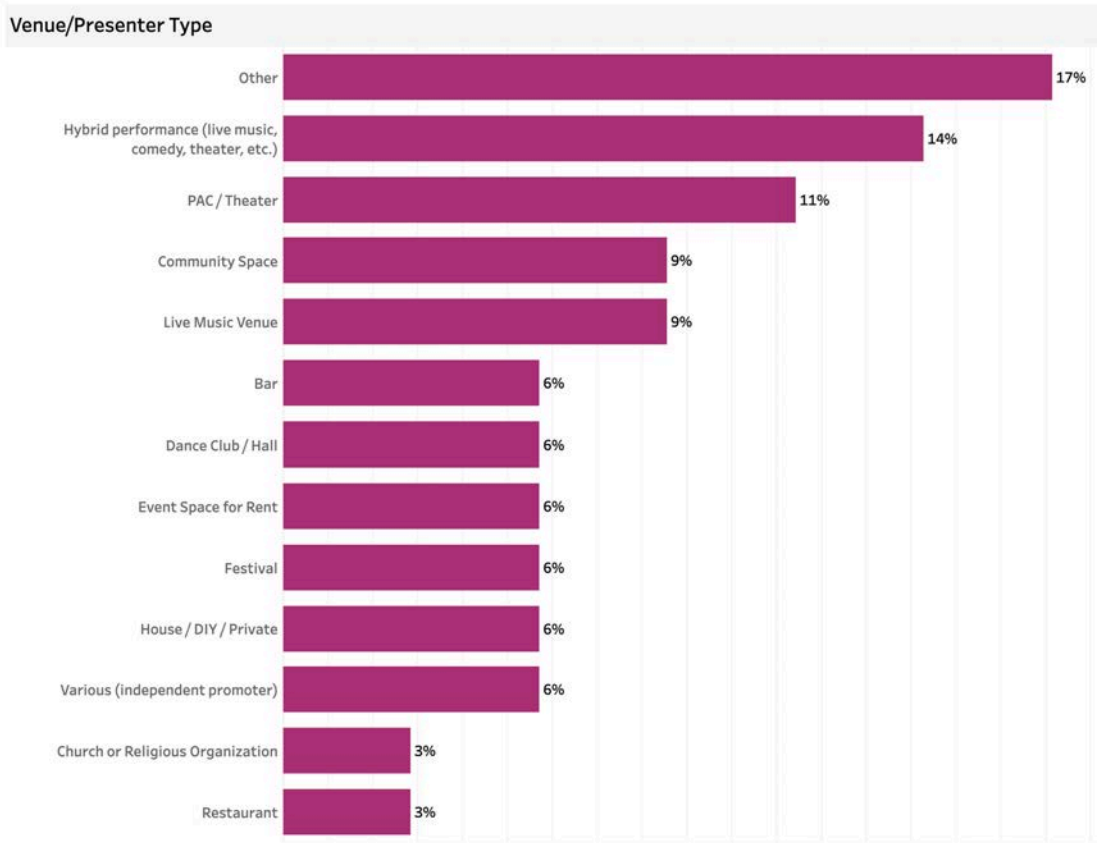
- **Preferences for Performing: Local vs. Touring -** Most Creative respondents (33%) strongly prefer local gigs, with 32% preferring local, but open to touring out of state. 8% prefer touring out of state, but are open to local, and 27% have no preference. Given Alaska's vast geography and extreme isolation, the local preference makes sense.

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Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Venue/Presenter Profile

The Venue/Presenter respondent landscape in Anchorage is diverse, with live music venues making up 9% and hybrid performance spaces comprising 14%. Community spaces, bars, dance clubs, event spaces, and independent promoter venues each constitute 6%, alongside a variety of other specialized venues. Anchorage's venues primarily serve smaller audiences, with 56% having a capacity for 1-100 people and very few able to accommodate more than 1000. Locally owned for-profit entities dominate the landscape at 45%, while non-profits play a significant role at 40%. On average, Venues in Anchorage host 82 live events annually, totaling 2,856 events per year across all venues, with a notable 78% of venues featuring outdoor capabilities, enhancing their event hosting potential.



- **Venue/Presenter Type** - Anchorage showcases a diverse array of venue types. The category labeled "Other," which includes various non-traditional or specialized event spaces, leads with 17%. Hybrid performance venues, hosting a combination of live music, comedy, theater, etc., make up 14% of the total. Performing arts centers and theaters are also prominent, accounting for 11% of venues. Community spaces and live music venues each represent 9%. Bars, dance clubs, event spaces for rent, festivals, and venues operated by independent promoters each constitute 6%. More niche categories like house/DIY/private venues, churches or religious organizations, and restaurants make up smaller portions at 3% each.

> "Need more listening room venues that aren't a dive bar, where drunk people are yelling over you."

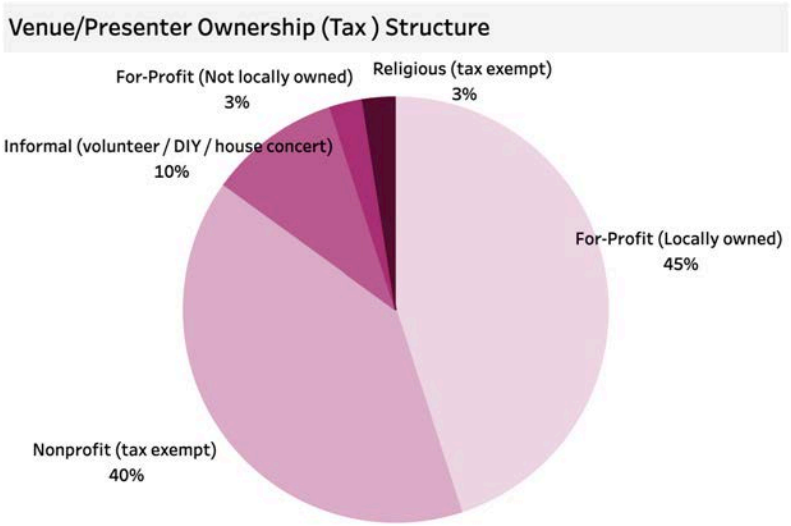
> "There are very few places to play - post-Covid there are no more department store or mall musicians, no coffee shop music, no places to go besides bars."

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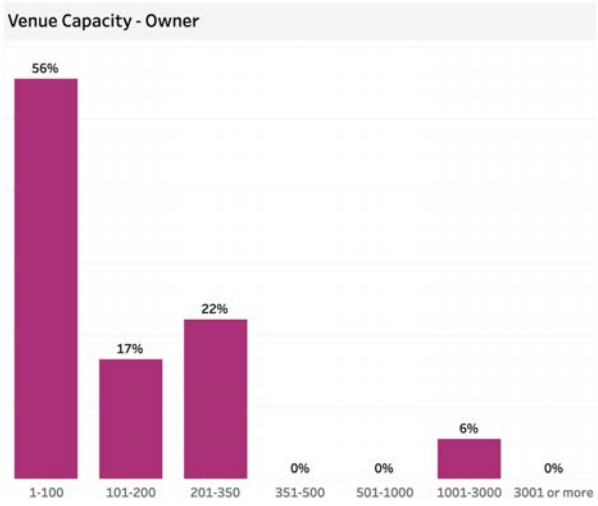
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Venue/Presenter Profile (continued)

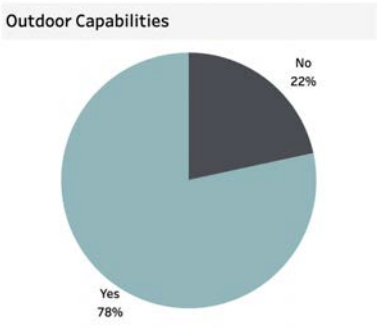
- **Venue Ownership/Tax Structure** - The majority of venues and presenters are locally owned for-profit entities, making up 45% of the total. Nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations also play a substantial role, accounting for 40%. Informal settings, including volunteer-run, DIY spaces, and house concerts, comprise 10% of the venue ecosystem, emphasizing grassroots and community-driven event hosting. Smaller segments include for-profit but not locally owned venues and religious venues, each making up 3%, indicating minimal external corporate involvement and modest participation by religious institutions in the local venue landscape.



- **Venue Capacity & Outdoor Capabilities** - Venue capacity among respondents shows the majority of venues cater to smaller audiences, with 56% having a capacity of 1-100 people. Smaller segments accommodate 101-200 and 201-350 people, representing 17% and 22% respectively. Only 6% of Venues can host between 1,001-3,000 people, and there are no Venues for larger crowds exceeding 3,000. Additionally, 78% of venues have outdoor capabilities, enhancing their event hosting potential, while 22% do not.



- **Venue Live Events Each Year** - On average, respondents host 82 live events annually, leading to a total of 2,856 live events per year across all venues. This volume of activity underscores the vibrancy of Anchorage's event scene, bolstered by the considerable number of Venues equipped with outdoor capabilities, which enhances their ability to host a diverse array of events during the summer.



Venues average

82

live events/year

2,856

total live events/year

> VENUES. We need a high quality affordable, flexible venue for local music and theatre events with a capacity of 200-300.

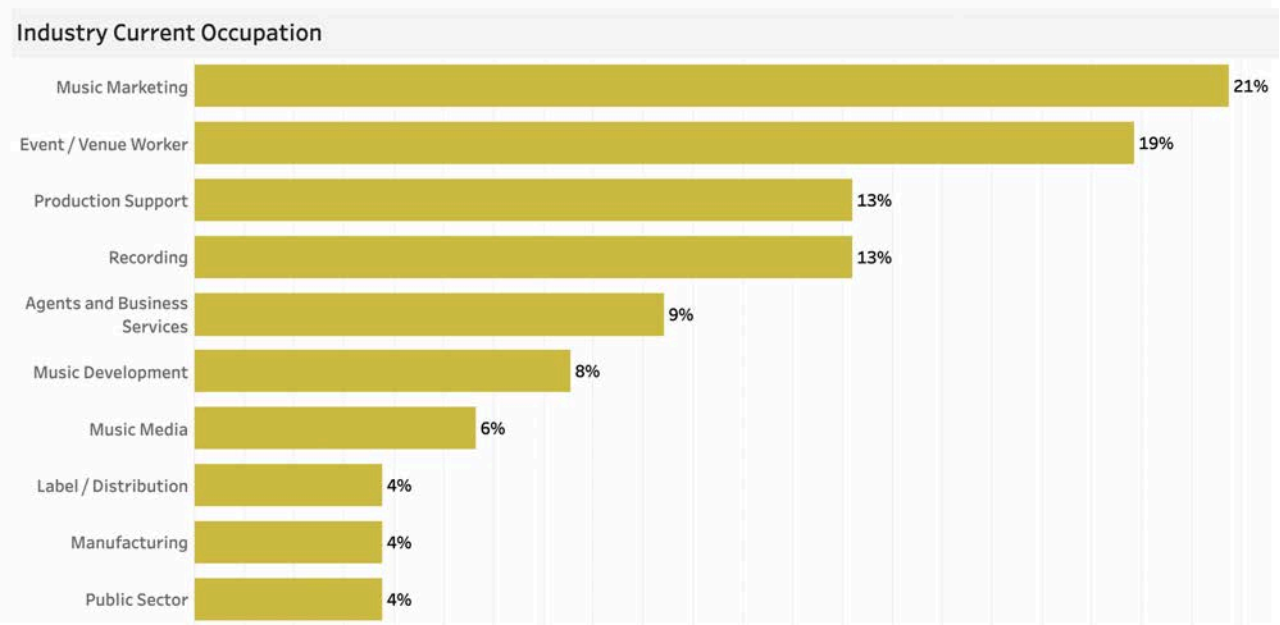
> Very few if any venues or rental spaces good for music and dancing, especially on the cheap/free end of the spectrum.

> We need more venues that cater to live music with proper stage and equipment needs.

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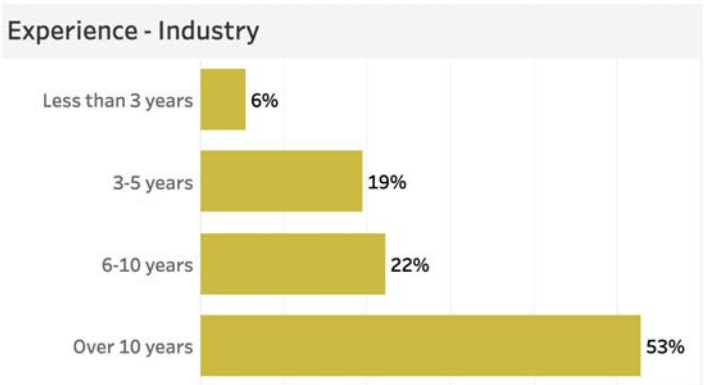
Industry Profile

Anchorage's Music Industry showcases a mix of seasoned professionals and diverse occupations among respondents. Over half (53%) have more than a decade of experience, with many roles in Music Marketing (21%) and Venue Operations (19%). While Creative respondents take a DIY approach to many of their music industry needs, they go to local Industry for studios (39%), equipment (38%), and merchandise (23%). Anchorage Music Industry serves primarily local clients, with some national and international clients.



- **Industry Occupation** - The current occupations of respondents in Anchorage's music industry are varied, with the largest percentage, 21%, working in Music Marketing. Event and venue workers make up 19%, followed by production support and recording professionals, each constituting 13%. Agents and business services account for 9%, and music development is represented by 8%. Smaller segments include music media at 6%, and label/distribution, manufacturing, and public sector roles each comprise 4% of the industry.

- **Experience** - The current experience levels of industry respondents in Anchorage demonstrate a seasoned workforce, with 53% having over 10 years of experience. Those with 6 to 10 years represent 22%, and individuals within the 3–5-year range make up 19%. A smaller portion, 6%, have less than three years of experience, indicating a mature and well-established sector.

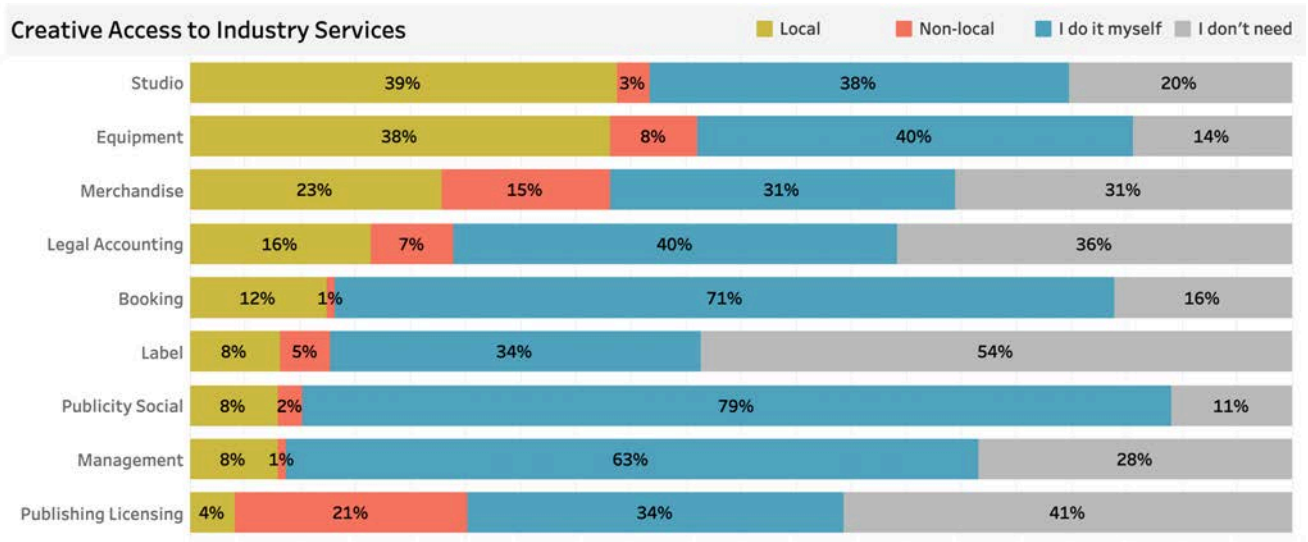


> Lack of recording spaces or safe spaces to work on music.

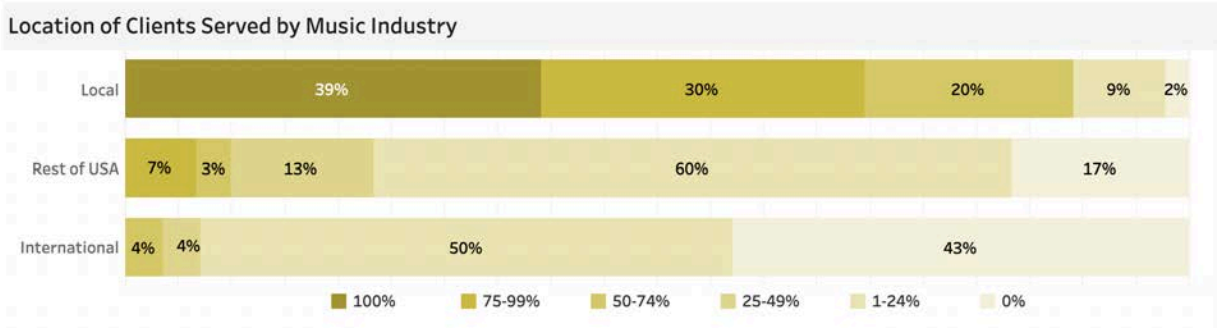
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Industry Profile (continued)

- **Creative Access to Industry** - Creative respondents in Anchorage frequently manage their industry needs personally, particularly in key areas like equipment and merchandise, with 40% and 31% respectively handling these tasks themselves. Local studios are also widely utilized by 39% of respondents. Legal and accounting services, however, are more commonly outsourced, with 40% opting for non-local providers. Booking and publicity are predominantly managed internally, with 71% and 79% of creatives respectively taking charge of these operations. A similar trend is observed in label services, music media management, and publishing/licensing, where a majority of respondents handle these aspects on their own.



- **Location of Clients** - Anchorage Industry is serving primarily local clients. Across the majority (>50%) of the Industry client base, 89% are local, 10% are national, and 4% are international.



> Need pools or resources for support group such as Sound lighting, staging personnel, promotion, booking.

> "Hard to DIY everything, even at venues that have equipment.

> Booking can be difficult as a new band, albeit somewhat understandable. Ignored/read messages on social media platforms make connecting with bigger bands difficult.

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Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Economic Activity

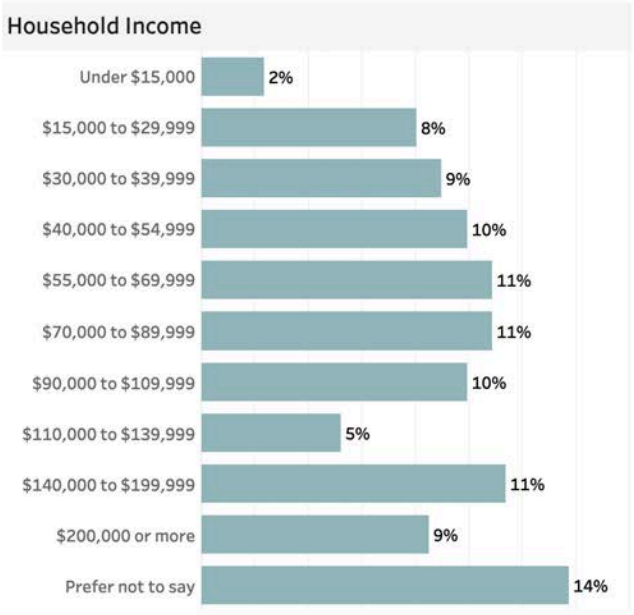
Music generates a total of **$5.5M** in income annually across all respondents

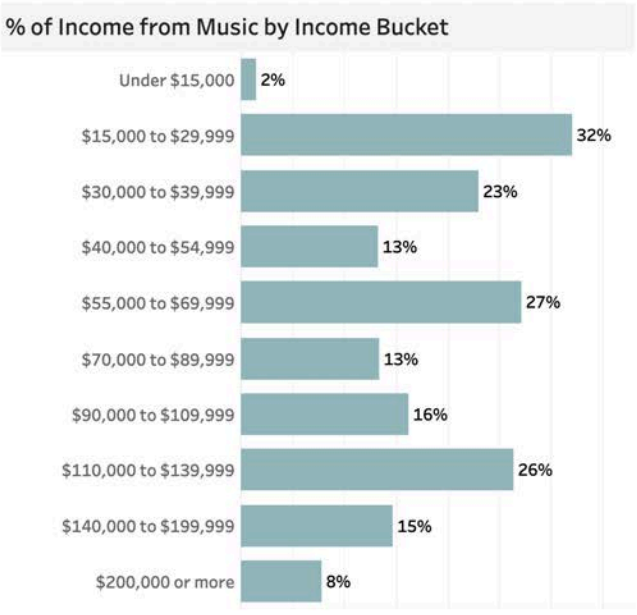
16% of respondent annual income comes from music

Average household income for respondents is **$92K**

Average annual income from music is **$15K**/respondent

Across all respondents, Anchorage's music professionals generate a total of $5.5 million annually from music-related work, with an average income of $15K per respondent. Music accounts for just 16% to their total annual earnings, while the average household income is $92K. Most respondents (52%) are freelancers or sole proprietors, and 73% supplement their music-related earnings with non-music jobs, underscoring the financial challenges and instability of relying solely on music income.. Only 32% of respondents hold intellectual property rights, and half do not engage in any royalty collection. Anchorage Venues host an average of 82 live events yearly for a collective total of 2,856 live music events annually, with local talent prominently featured.





> Gig performance remuneration is low.

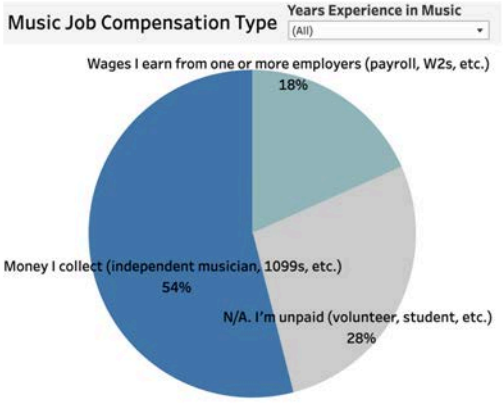
> Pay needs to be higher for groups hiring freelance musicians.

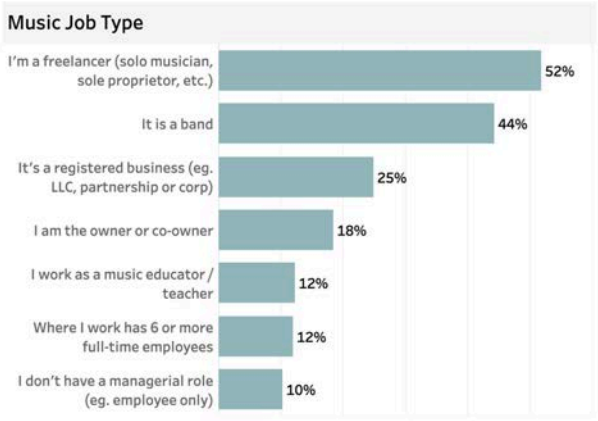
> For-profit businesses are paying musicians the same as, or less than, they did 20 years ago.

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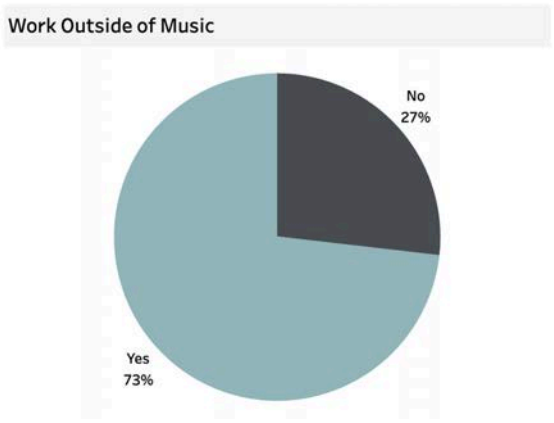
Economic Activity (continued 2/4)

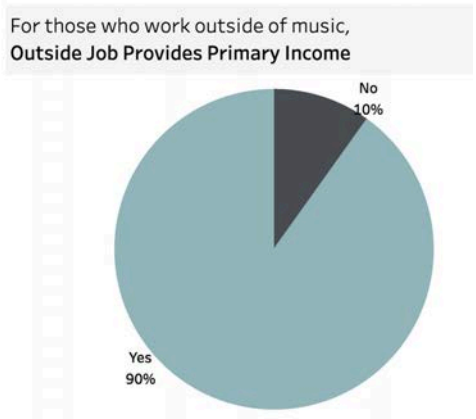
- **Music Job Type/Compensation** - The majority of respondents in Anchorage are freelancers and sole proprietors, comprising 52% of the music industry professionals. These independent professionals mainly generate income through various self-managed sources, representing 54% of the compensation types. Only 18% receive traditional wages from employers. Additionally, 28% of the industry participants are unpaid, engaging as volunteers or students. About a quarter of the professionals, 25%, have formalized their music endeavors into registered businesses, with 18% owning or co-owning their ventures.

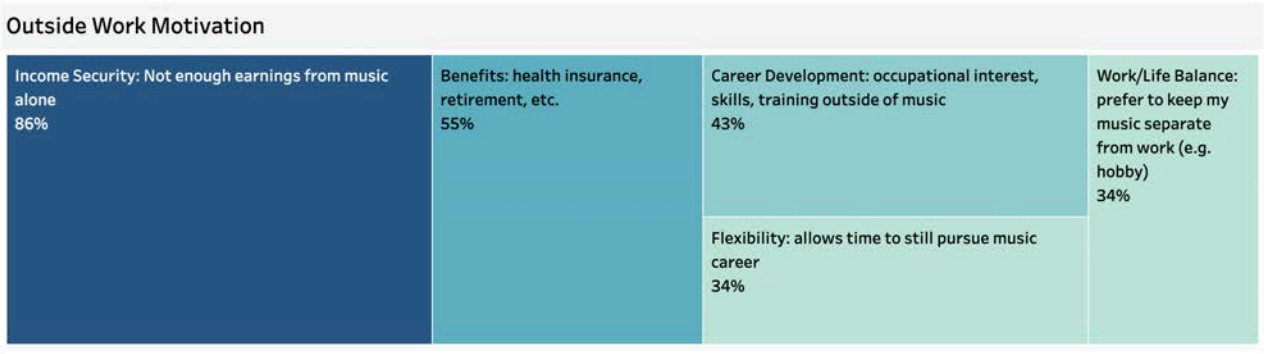




- **Work Outside Music** - A significant portion of respondents, 73%, reported they work outside music to supplement their income, while 27% do not work outside music. Of those who work outside of music, a substantial 90% rely on their outside job as their primary source of income, underscoring the financial challenges and instability often associated with music careers alone. This highlights the need for additional income sources for most music professionals in Anchorage to maintain financial stability.







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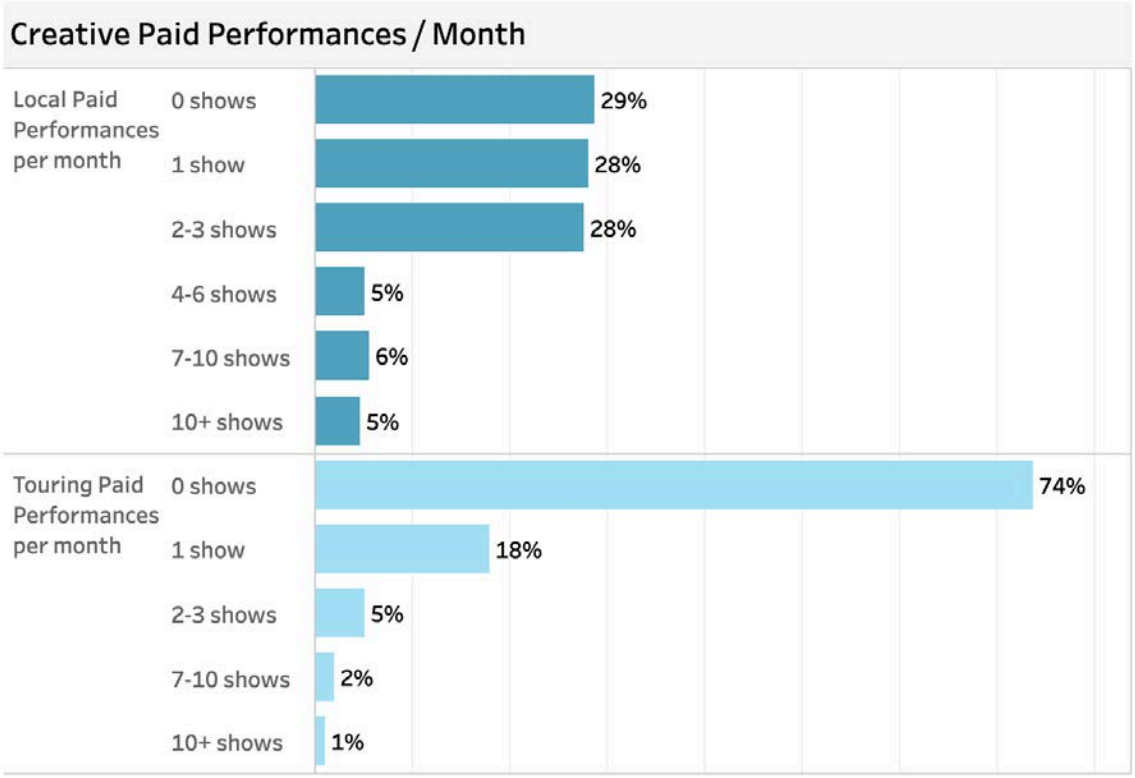
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Economic Activity (continued 3/4)

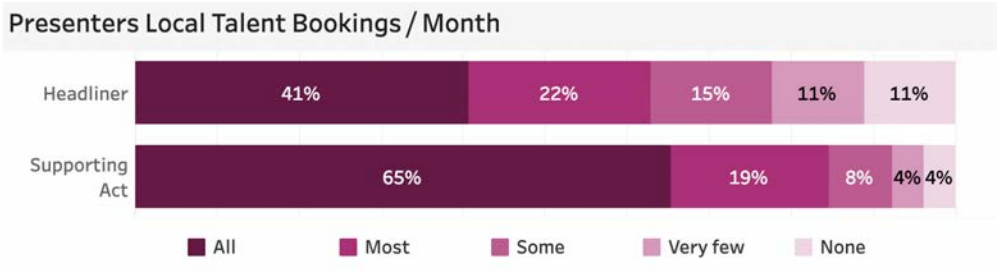
- **Creative Performance Frequency & Pay** - Among music respondents, the frequency and compensation for performances vary. Locally, 29% do not perform any paid shows per month, while about the same percentage perform one show monthly. Those managing 2-3 shows make up another 28%. A small proportion perform more frequently, with 4-6 shows at 5%, 7-10 shows at 6%, and over 10 shows at 5%. Touring is less frequent, with 74% not performing any paid shows on the road. Those who do tour mainly manage one show per month (18%). Average pay per gig is significantly higher for local performances at $400 compared to $143 for touring performances, which ma represent out of state touring given Alaska's geographic isolation.

$400
average pay/local gig

$143
average pay/touring gig



- **Venue Live Events and Local Talent Bookings** - Venues in Anchorage host an average of 82 live events per year, totaling 2,856 events across all venue/presenter respondents. Regarding local talent bookings per month, 41% of headliner slots feature local talent at all events, and 22% at most events, while 11% appear at very few or no events. For supporting acts, 65% of bookings are for local talent at all events, 19% at most events, and 12% at very few or no events.



Venues average
82
live events/year

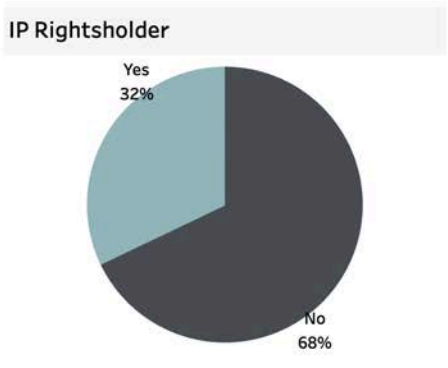
2,856
total live events/year

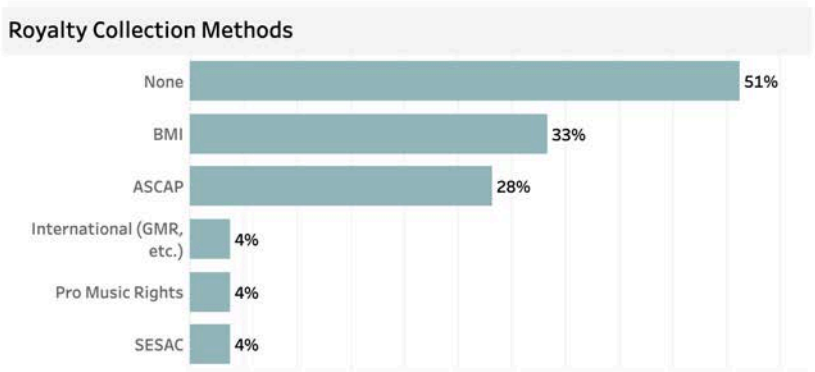
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Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Economic Activity (continued 4/4)

- **Publishing/Licensing** - Among music respondents in Anchorage, only 32% are IP rights-holders, while 68% do not hold any intellectual property rights. Of those who are IP rights-holders, 51% do not utilize any royalty collection methods. For those engaging in royalty collection, 33% are registered with BMI and 28% with ASCAP. Additionally, less than 5% employ other services like international agencies (GMR, etc.), Pro Music Rights, or SESAC. When it comes to licensing, 51% have no licensing arrangements, while a third rely on service providers like labels or aggregators to manage.







> Touring seems fun but out of town in state gigs can be tough because they often force me to take time off from my day job due to scheduling issues negating most of the income from the gig.

> I actually love touring, but the pay is so much less. Would tour with financial support.

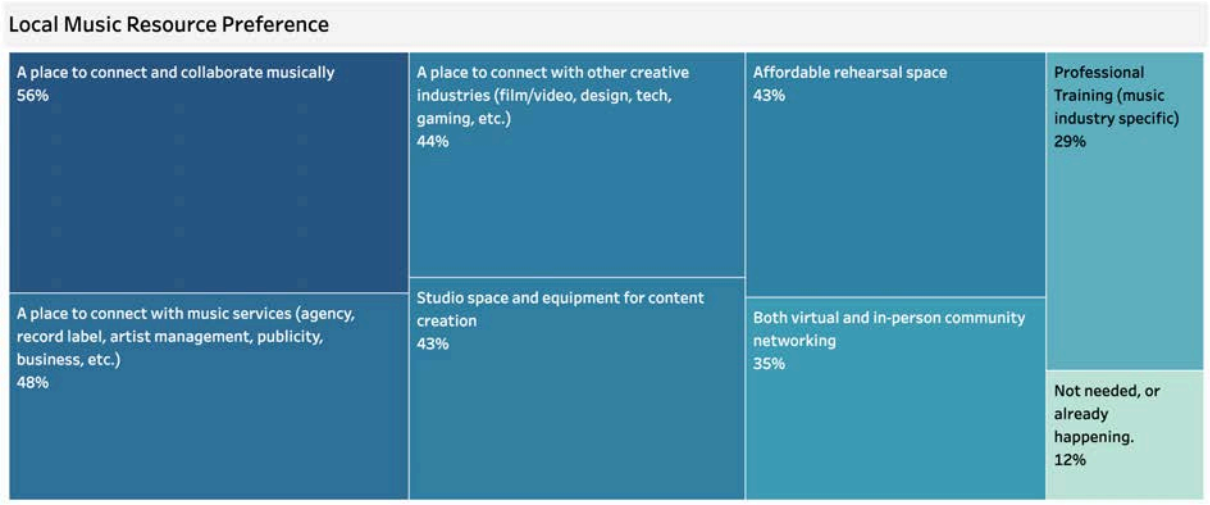
> Out of area gigs are difficult to coordinate with 5-6 band members' day jobs and personal interests, and venues need to compensate well especially if we provide/run our own sound equipment.

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Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

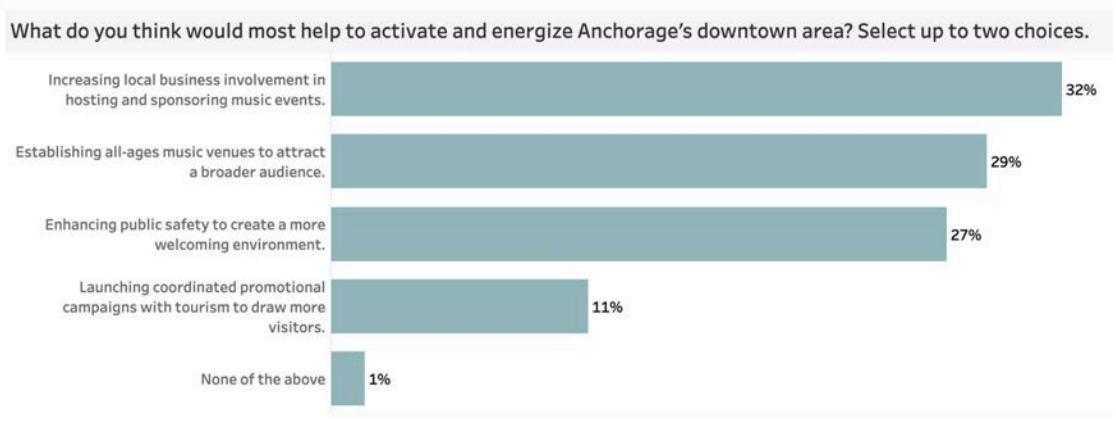
Ecosystem Development

In terms of ecosystem development, 56% of respondents want places for musical collaboration, and 48% seek connections with music industry services such as agencies and record labels, and 44% aim to engage with other creative sectors like film and gaming. Venue/Presenters seek audience development tools (86%). Most music professionals rent their commercial spaces, with 75% renting temporary live performance venues, and many indicating a need for more studio (57%) and rehearsal spaces (64%). Financially, 81% have not received support. In terms of enhancing downtown Anchorage, 32% of respondents support more local business involvement in hosting/sponsoring music events and 29% want all-ages venues.



- **Local Music Resource Preference** - Respondents in Anchorage demonstrate a robust preference for diverse music resources. A significant 56% value a location for musical collaboration, while 48% are seeking connections with music industry services such as agencies, record labels, and artist management. About 44% of respondents desire interaction with other creative industries like film, video, and gaming. Moreover, the need for affordable rehearsal spaces and studio spaces equipped for content creation is emphasized by 43% of participants.

- **Enhancing Downtown Anchorage** - Strategies to energize the downtown area of Anchorage have been prioritized by local respondents, with 32% favoring increased involvement of local businesses in hosting and sponsoring music events. Establishing all-ages music venues is another popular solution, supported by 29% of respondents, aimed at attracting a wider audience. About 27% suggest enhancing public safety to create a more welcoming downtown environment, and 11% advocate for coordinated promotional campaigns alongside tourism to draw more visitors. Only a marginal 1% believe that these measures are unnecessary.

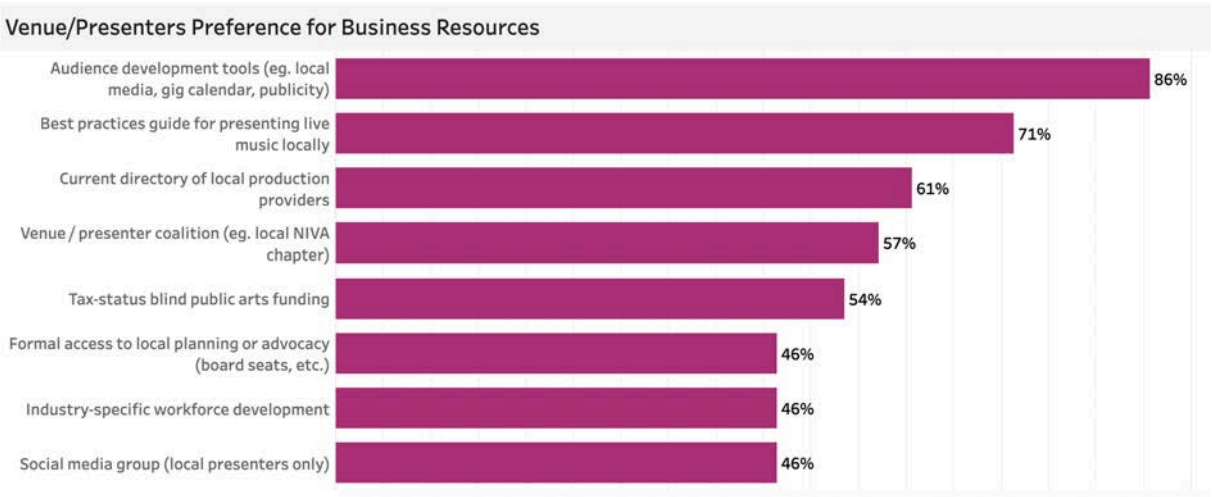


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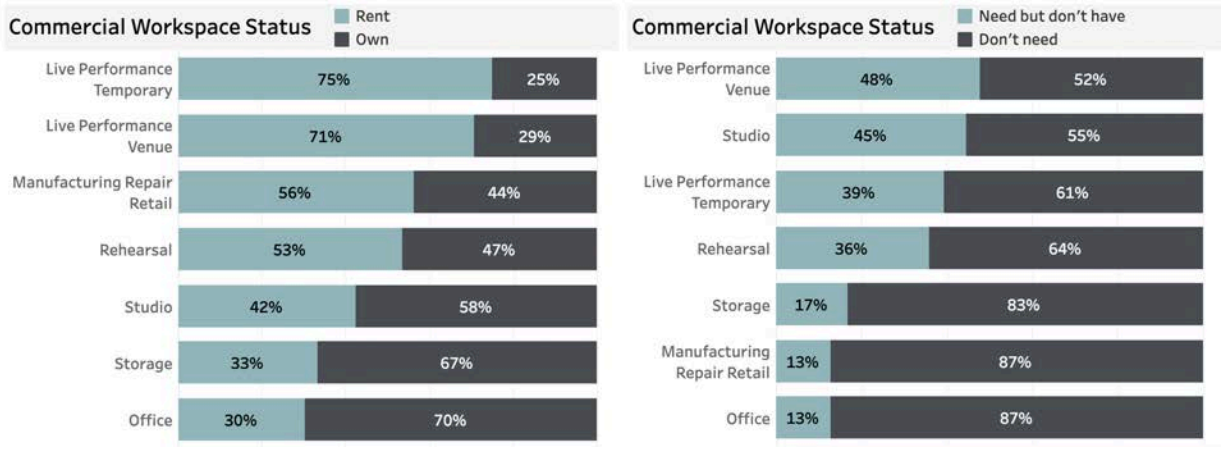
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Ecosystem Development (continued 2/3)

- **Venue/Presenter Business Resources** - Venue and Presenters in Anchorage show a strong preference for business resources, with 86% prioritizing audience development tools such as local media, gig calendars, and publicity. A Venue/Presenter coalition, akin to a local NIVA chapter, is preferred by 57% of respondents. Sixty-one percent value a current directory of local production providers, underscoring the need for accessible and centralized information. Formal access to local planning or advocacy through board seats is important to 54%. Tax-status blind public arts funding is also significant, supported by 54% of respondents, while 46% emphasize the need for industry-specific workforce development and an equal percentage show interest in a dedicated social media group for local presenters.



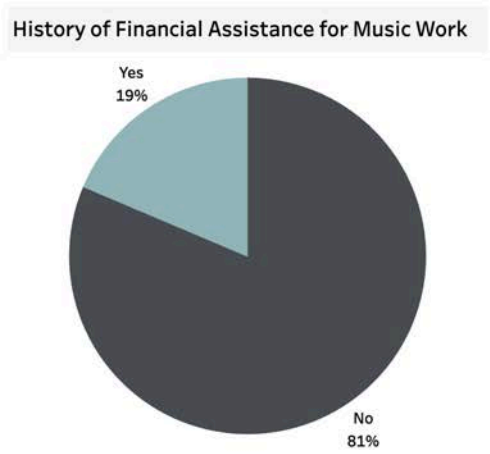
- **Commercial Workspace Status** - In Anchorage, a majority of the music industry participants rent their commercial workspaces. Temporary live performance spaces are rented by 75% and owned by 25%, while permanent live performance venues are predominantly rented at 71%. Storage and rehearsal spaces see a slightly higher ownership with 58% rented while 42% own these facilities. Studio spaces are more evenly split between renting (58%) and owning (42%). Conversely, office spaces demonstrate a higher rate of ownership at 70%, though 30% still rent. In terms of unmet needs, there is a significant demand for live performance spaces, both temporary (61%) and permanent (52%), and for studios (55%), reflecting a substantial gap in infrastructure availability. Additionally, 64% and 83% of respondents express a need for more rehearsal and storage spaces, respectively, highlighting the ongoing challenges in securing adequate facilities to support the local music ecosystem.

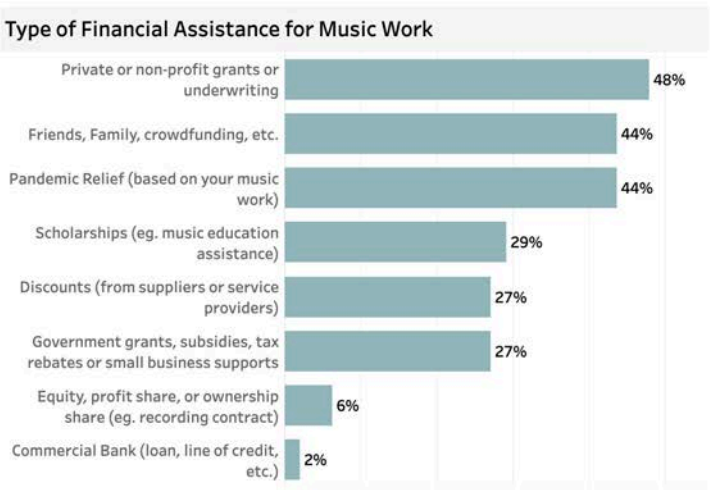


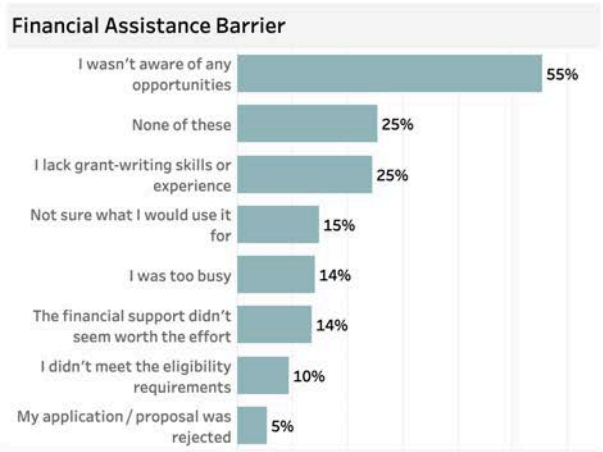
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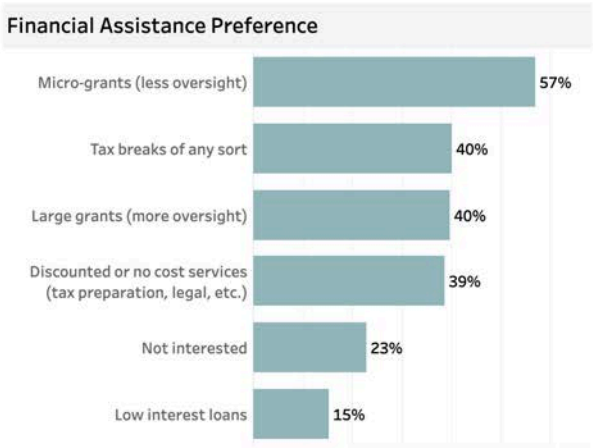
Ecosystem Development (continued 3/3)

- **Financial Support** - A significant majority of respondents, 81%, have not received financial assistance for their music work in Anchorage. Among the 19% who have, the most common aid comes from private or non-profit grants or underwriting. Assistance from friends, family, and crowdfunding sources also plays a major role, helping 44% of those supported. Pandemic relief related to music work is utilized by another 44%. Additional forms of support include scholarships for music education (29%), discounts from suppliers or service providers (27%), and government grants, subsidies, or tax rebates (27%). Lesser used options include commercial bank loans or lines of credit (2%) and equity or profit-sharing arrangements such as recording contracts, which assist 6% of respondents.









> The community is really hard to find. It feels very much like an 'underground' scene. I don't know how to find other musicians and connect with them. I would love to help out, but honestly, I'm not 100% sure how to go about it. I suppose running a census is a pretty good starting point!

> Lack of awareness of events and music-related releases. Cost of events is often far higher than is commonly affordable.

> Clear access and information to help fund local music projects in the community. Especially any groups that promote culturally influenced music.

> I would like to meet other teachers/performers on occasion, maybe once or twice a month, where we sing/play, share student efforts (recital of 1-2 tunes) in a coffee shop setting.... I could help brainstorm such an idea.

> Very little to no places to safely have band practice or rehearsal. No one willing to rent spaces for bands to practice.

> There really needs to be a solid, safe, all ages music venue in Anchorage. don't know how to run one profitably, or how to keep drugs/alcohol out of a music venue, but if kids aren't exposed to live music at a young age, they'll not seek it out as much as adults.

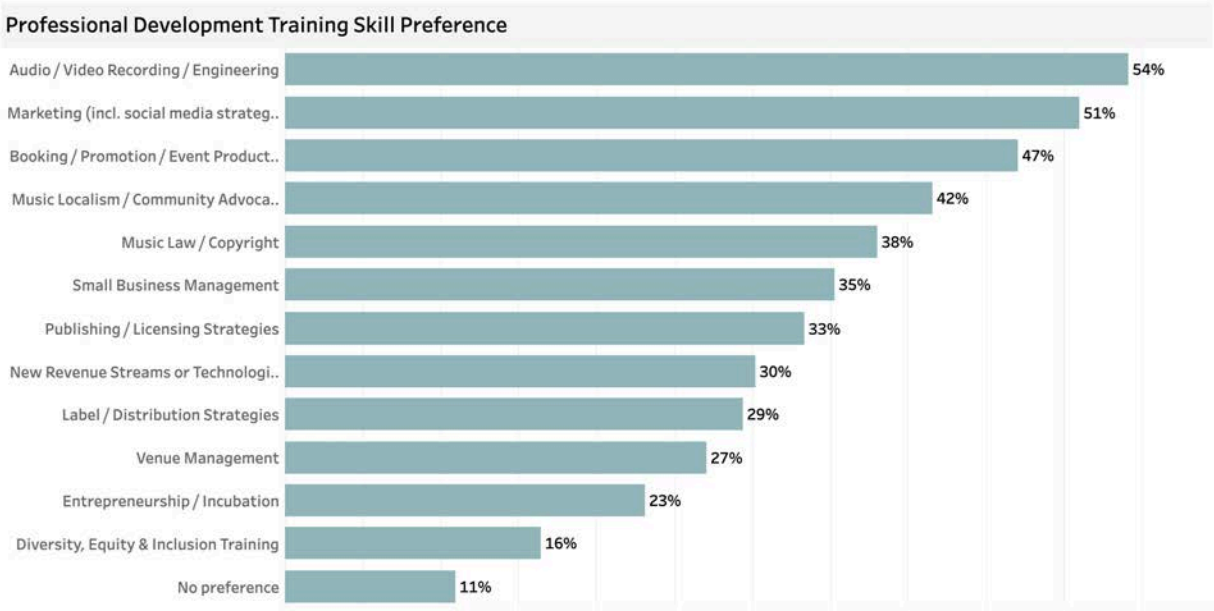
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Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

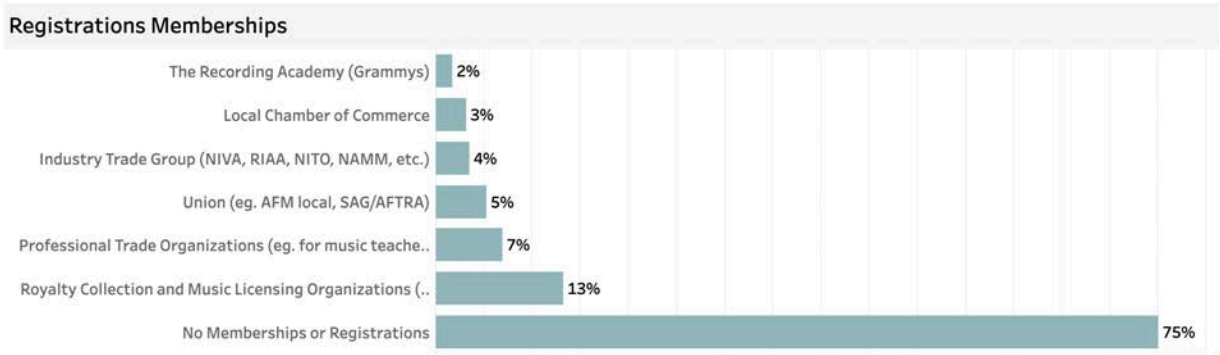
Workforce Development

A strong majority of Anchorage respondents, 73%, have over 10 years of experience in the music industry. Top professional development interests include audio/video recording and engineering (54%), marketing strategies (51%), booking and event production (47%), and community advocacy (42%). Meanwhile, 75% of respondents are not members of any industry organizations which is closer to 50% in other cohort cities. Of those who do, 13% are affiliated with royalty collection and music licensing organizations. Additionally, small portions of respondents are part of professional trade groups (7%) and unions (5%).

> Shortage of trained or upcoming technical workers. The fact that people know us for music says a lot about our passion for it and desire for it but says nothing about how the 'sausage is made'



- **Professional Development** - Top preferences for professional development training in Anchorage include audio/video recording and engineering (54%) and marketing, including social media strategies (51%). This is followed by booking, promotion, and event production (47%), and music localism/community advocacy (42%). Other significant areas of interest are music law/copyright (38%), small business management (35%), and publishing/licensing strategies (33%).

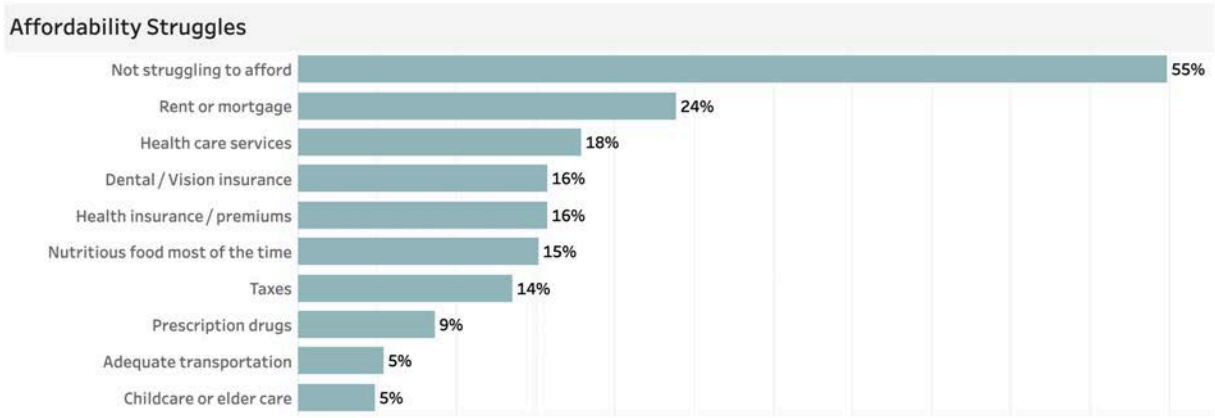


- **Professional Industry Associations** - A majority of respondents, 75%, report having no memberships or registrations with industry organizations. Of those who do, 13% are involved with royalty collection and music licensing organizations. Other notable memberships include professional trade organizations (7%), unions such as AFM or SAG/AFTRA (5%), and industry trade groups like NIVA or RIAA (4%). Only 3% are members of their local Chamber of Commerce, and 2% are members of The Recording Academy (Grammys).

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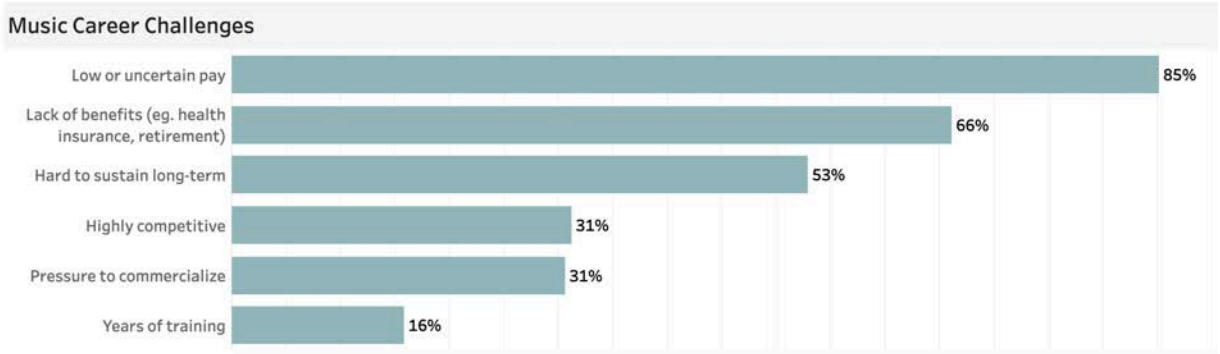
Livability

While 55% of respondents are not struggling with affordability issues, 24% struggle to afford rent or mortgage payments, and 85% cite low or uncertain pay as a major issue. Music career challenges like the lack of benefits (66%) and long-term career sustainability (53%) further compound the challenges. Creative respondents identify rising cost of living (67%) and stagnant pay rates (54%) as high concerns. Venue/Presenters report significant struggles with talent costs (22%) and staffing (21%) being primary concerns.



- **Affordability** - A majority of respondents, 55%, report not struggling with affordability. However, 24% cite difficulties with rent or mortgage payments, while 18% struggle to afford healthcare services. Dental and vision insurance, along with health insurance premiums, are challenges for 16%, and 15% face difficulties in consistently affording nutritious food. Taxes are a financial strain for 14%, and 9% report trouble affording prescription drugs. Additionally, 5% struggle with adequate transportation and childcare or elder care expenses.

- **Music Career Challenges** - Low or uncertain pay is the most significant challenge, impacting 85% of respondents. Lack of benefits, such as health insurance and retirement, affects 66%, and 53% find it hard to sustain their career long-term. The highly competitive nature of the industry is a challenge for 31%, and an equal percentage feel pressure to commercialize their work. Years of training are a challenge for 16% of respondents.



> "Downtown parking fees and lack of event parking make it financially difficult for musicians to perform in the area."

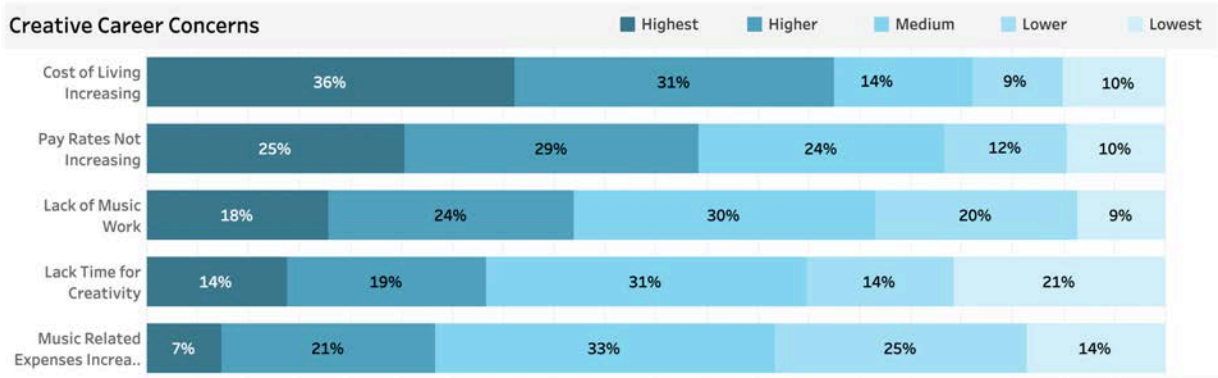
> "For-profit business are paying musicians the same as, or less than, they did 20 years ago."

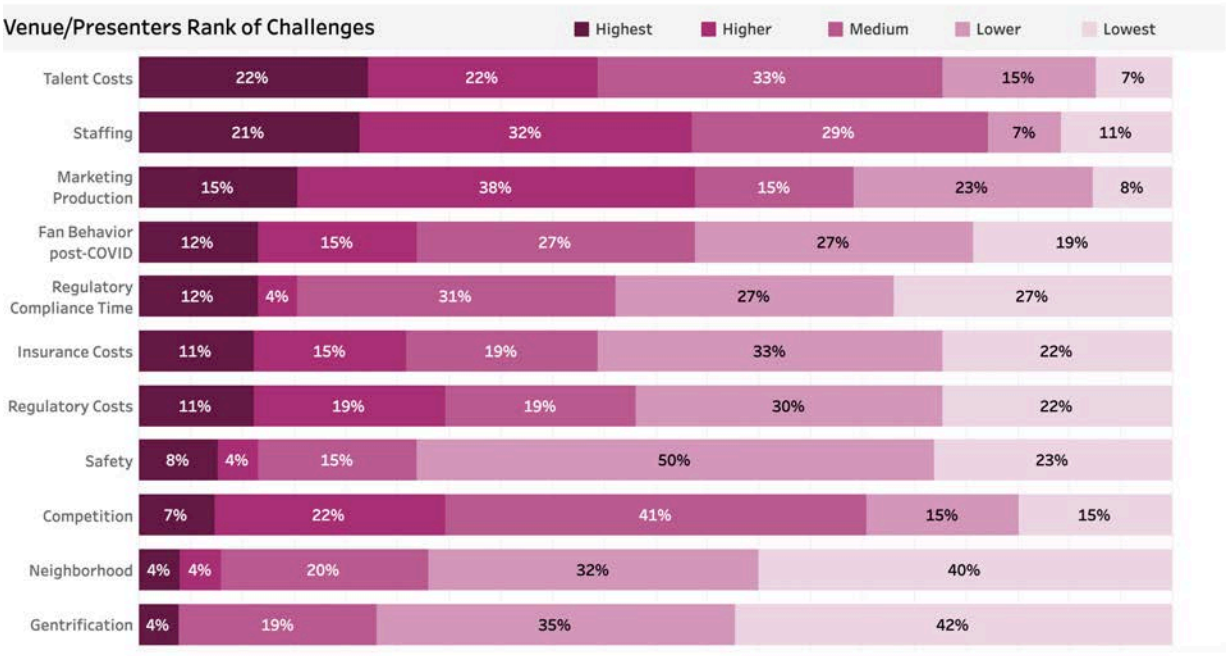
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Livability (continued)

- **Creative Career Concerns** - The increasing cost of living is a top concern for 36% of respondents, with an additional 31% rating it as a higher concern. Pay rates not increasing is an issue for 25%, while 24% are concerned about the lack of music work. Time for creativity is a concern for 14%, and 21% are worried about increasing music-related expenses.

- **Venue/Presenters Rank of Challenges** - Talent costs are the top challenge for 22% of respondents, followed closely by staffing concerns at 21%. Marketing production ranks as a significant challenge for 15% of respondents, while fan behavior post-COVID is an issue for 12%. Regulatory compliance time (12%) and insurance costs (11%) are also prominent challenges, alongside regulatory costs (11%). Other notable challenges include competition (7%) and neighborhood issues (4%), while gentrification and safety concerns rank lower in priority, with 4% each indicating these as significant challenges.





> "The main challenges are pay, and more places to play as a full band."

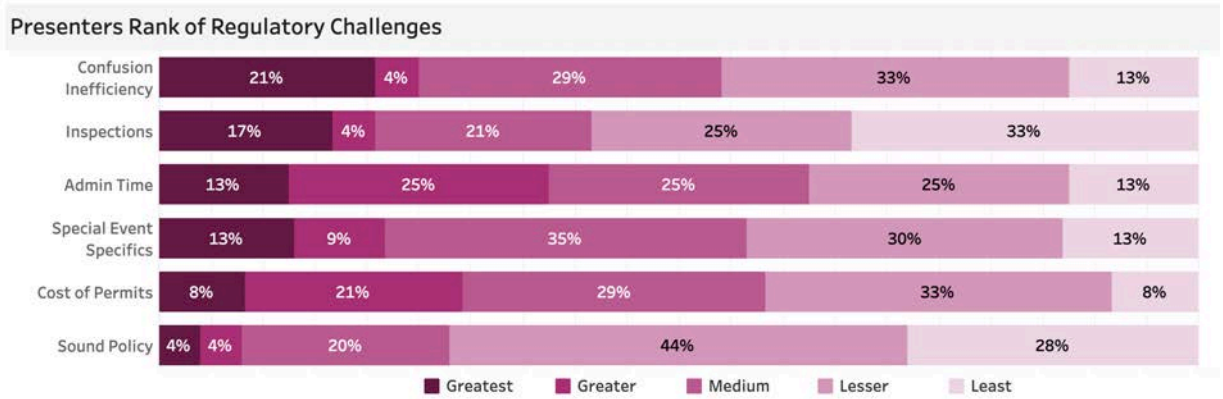
> "There simply aren't enough venues and opportunities for artists to get started with playing live shows."

> "Costs of hiring bands are not well understood, and sharing or reducing costs for equipment could make live performances more affordable for restaurants."

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Music-Friendly Policies

Venue/Presenters in Anchorage face significant regulatory challenges, including confusion and inefficiency in processes, particularly around permitting and public safety inspections. Administrative time, special event specifics, and permit costs are frequent concerns, with sound policy also being a challenge. Respondents prefer tools like a single point of contact for permitting, tax incentives for hosting live music, and government advocacy. Common regulatory processes include street and parking regulations, security requirements, insurance for live music, and music performance licenses. Financial assistance preferences prioritize micro-grants, tax breaks, and discounted services. Public safety concerns include parking, nighttime lighting, and security presence at events. Regarding alcohol statutes, more respondents view the regulations negatively than positively, though most feel neutral about their impact on music-related work.



- **Regulatory Challenges** - Venue/Presenters face significant regulatory challenges with confusion and inefficiency, as 25% of respondents rank it as either the greatest or a greater challenge. Inspections follow closely, with 21% identifying them as major issues. Administrative time and special event specifics are concerns for 17% of respondents. The cost of permits is a notable challenge for 13%, while sound policy affects 8%.

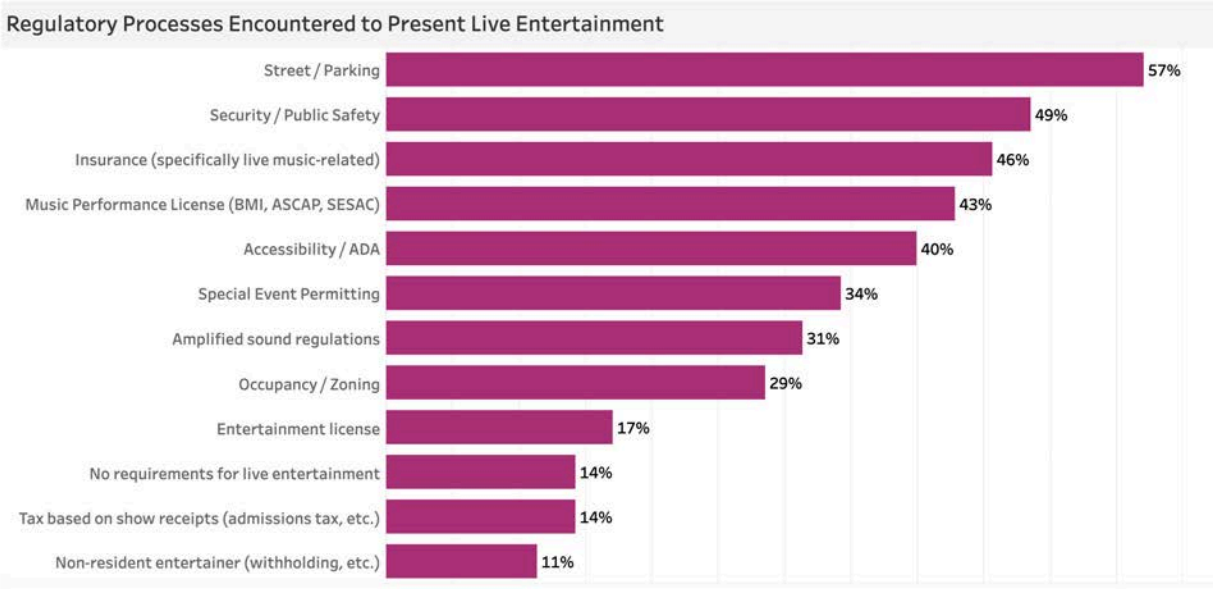


- **Venue/Presenter Tool Preference** - Preferred regulatory tools for respondents include a single point of contact for permitting (78%) and tax discounts, waivers, or incentives to host live music (74%). Other significant preferences include an advocate inside government (70%), an online portal for permitting and communication (70%), and a webpage of current regulations specifically for live music (61%). Annual training sessions and updates from a regulatory body are a lower priority, with 35% of respondents indicating a preference for this.

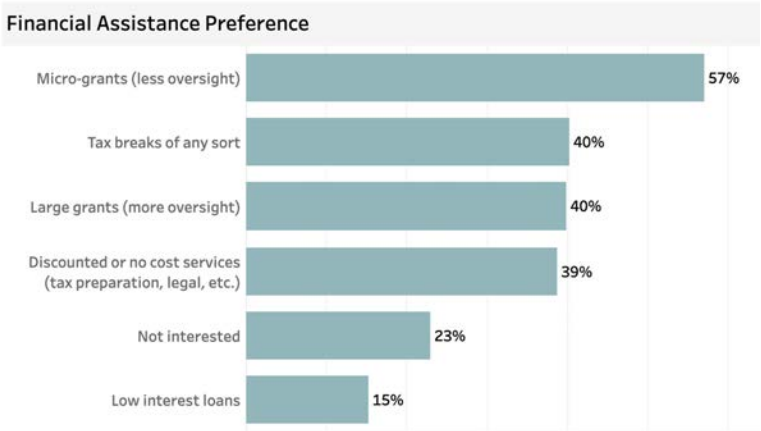
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Music-Friendly Policies (continued 2/3)

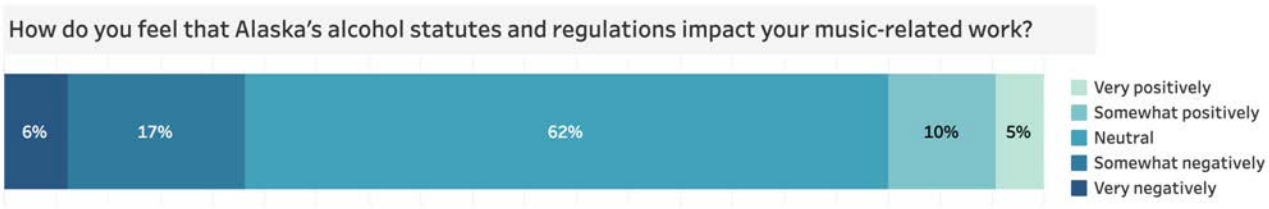
- **Regulatory Fluency** - Venue/Presenters face multiple regulatory processes, with street and parking regulations being the most common, encountered by 57% of respondents. Security and public safety requirements follow closely at 49%, while 46% of respondents deal with insurance specific to live music. Other notable regulatory processes include music performance licenses (43%), accessibility/ADA compliance (40%), and special event permitting (34%). Amplified sound regulations are an issue for 31%, and occupancy/zoning regulations affect 29% of respondents.



- **Financial Assistance Preference** - The preferred forms of financial assistance among Anchorage respondents include micro-grants with less oversight (57%), tax breaks (40%), and large grants with more oversight (40%). Discounted or no-cost services, such as tax preparation and legal aid, are favored by 39%. A smaller portion of respondents (15%) favor low-interest loans, while 23% are not interested in financial assistance.



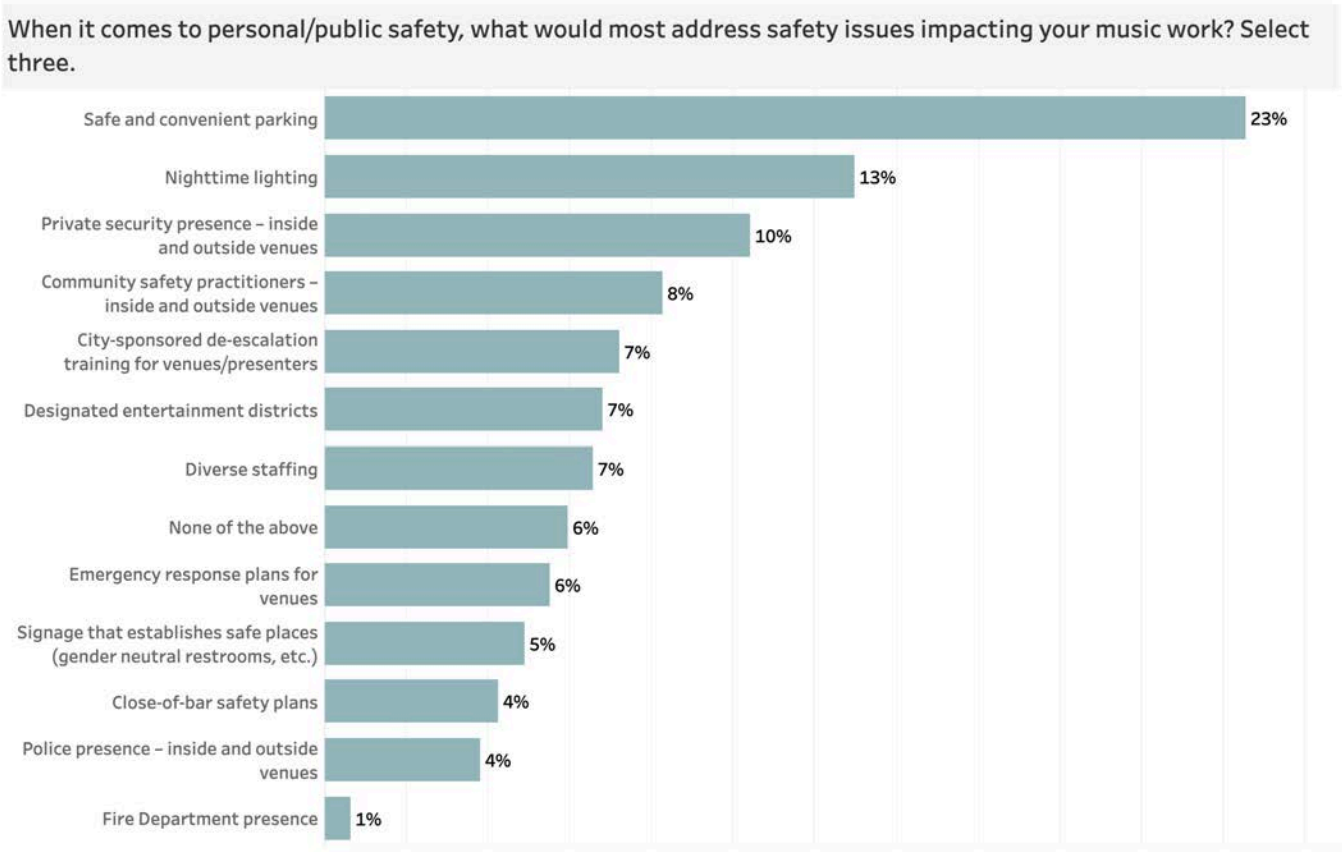
- **Alcohol Statutes Impact** – A combined 15% of respondents perceive a negative impact from Alaska's alcohol statutes and regulations on their music-related work, with 10% viewing it somewhat negative and 5% very negative. A majority, 62%, feel neutral about the impact, while a combined 15% view the regulations positively, with 6% indicating it is very positive and 9% somewhat positive.



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Music-Friendly Policies (continued 3/3)

- **Public Safety Preferences** – The top safety concern for respondents is safe and convenient parking, with 23% selecting it as a priority. Nighttime lighting is also a significant concern, chosen by 13%. Other notable preferences include private security presence inside and outside venues (10%) and community safety practitioners (8%). Additional suggestions for improving safety include city-sponsored de-escalation training (7%) and designated entertainment districts (7%). A smaller portion of respondents (6%) selected none of the listed options.



> Clear access and information to help fund local music projects in the community. Especially any groups that promote culturally influenced music.

> We need more visibility from the local government on supporting music as an economic driver in our community.

> City policy should make it easier for venues to stay open and book more local talent. Right now, it's too difficult to navigate the permits and costs.

> We need policy changes that lower the barrier to entry for musicians trying to break into the industry – more funding and fewer restrictions.

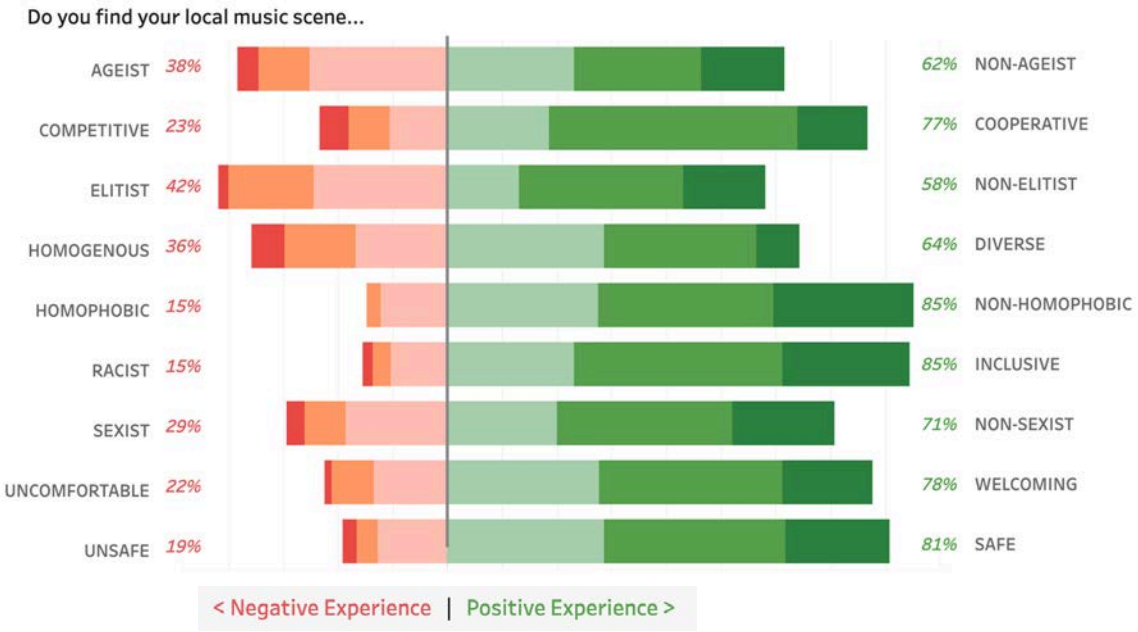
> The Alaska state alcohol laws are killing us. It's insane that a food truck can get a beer and wine license, but a music venue can't.

> If we want a vibrant downtown music scene, we have to start by fixing the state alcohol permit system. It's a huge barrier.

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Culture & Belonging

Respondents find that the Anchorage music ecosystem offers predominantly positive experiences. The Anchorage music ecosystem's greatest strengths are that it is non-homophobic (85%), inclusive (85%), and safe (81%). The Anchorage music ecosystem challenges are elitism (42%) and ageism (38%).



Please see the online dashboard at **AnchorageMusicCensus.org** for full data on each indicator by subgroup. Some overarching themes to the subgroups are:

- **Subgroup Insights** - Respondents who experience the most negative (red) side of the Anchorage ecosystem are people who identify as Gay or Lesbian. To a lesser extent, people who identify as Black, African or African American also experience the negative side of the Anchorage music ecosystem.

> "Exclusive despite being a small scene."

> "There are many instances of racism among Black individuals, and the LGBTQ+ community can be incredibly discriminatory. Anti-white rhetoric is common, and most venues have a significant overrepresentation of these minority demographics."

> "From my experience, there's a lot of older players and an older crowd. I think younger players and more diverse music would help. I think there should be more opportunities for young people to play."

> "The same people are given most of the opportunities. There aren't a lot of consistent opportunities. Many of the people who are uplifted in the scene and industry are elitist/hateful. Some of them are actively harmful, transphobic, and racist."

> "I sometimes feel like grants can be a lot of work for probably not much return... I also wonder, if I'm a straight white person, does that [unofficially] ding me because funders and presenters want to demonstrate their DEI? If I have a day job, do I really need the money? I support funding those who need it, DEI and all the rest—just noting the mindset that has somewhat held me back for context."

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Key Insights

Creative Sector Dominates: The Anchorage music ecosystem is heavily dominated by the Music Creative sector, accounting for 74% of respondents.

Highly Experienced Workforce: A majority of music professionals in Anchorage (73%) have over 10 years of experience, reflecting a seasoned community.

Income Sources are Local: Income for most Creative respondents comes from local live performances, teaching, and recording, with few relying on touring or external revenue streams.

Affordability and Career Concerns: Although 55% of respondents are not struggling with affordability, many face challenges with rising living costs, stagnant pay rates, and lack of music work.

Diverse Age Representation: Respondents span across age groups, with the 25-39 age group comprising 46% of the population, showing the potential for both growth and sustainability in the music ecosystem.

Lack of Financial Support: A significant 81% of respondents have not received financial assistance for their music work, indicating an unmet need for funding opportunities.

Inadequate Music Infrastructure: There is a strong need for rehearsal (64%) and storage spaces (83%), and studio spaces (57%) to support the local music scene.

Public Safety Concerns: Safe and convenient parking, nighttime lighting, and security are top concerns for respondents, impacting both musicians and audiences.

Regulatory Hurdles for Venues: Venue/Presenter respondents report significant challenges with inefficiency in permitting, inspections, and sound policies.

Commitment to the Industry vs. the City: While most respondents plan to stay in the music industry, many are uncertain about staying in Anchorage, highlighting concerns over long-term sustainability in the city.





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Opportunities

Increase Financial Assistance Programs: Develop grants, micro-grants, and tax breaks to provide financial support for music professionals who have largely been left out of assistance programs.

Strengthen Local Business Partnerships: Encourage partnerships between local businesses and the music community to host and sponsor more music events, energizing the downtown area.

Enhance Music Infrastructure: Invest in the development of rehearsal spaces, storage spaces, and studios to fill critical gaps in the local music infrastructure.

Reform State Alcohol Permit Laws: Advocate for changes to Alaska's alcohol statutes to make it easier for venues to serve alcohol and operate more sustainably.

Promote Professional Development: Create targeted training programs in areas like audio/video recording, marketing, and event production to help music professionals advance their careers.

Improve Public Safety at Events: Address concerns about parking, nighttime lighting, and security at venues to create a safer, more welcoming environment for both musicians and audiences.

Simplify Permitting Processes: Implement a single point of contact for permitting and an online portal to streamline venue operations and reduce regulatory inefficiencies.

Develop All-Ages Venues: Establish more all-ages music venues to engage younger audiences and build long-term interest in Anchorage's music scene.

Support Royalty Collection Awareness: Educate and encourage more music professionals to register with royalty collection organizations to better monetize their work.

Retain Music Professionals in Anchorage: Focus on policies and programs that improve the livability and career opportunities for music professionals, encouraging them to stay in Anchorage long-term.







Photos Courtesy of Joseph Hansen and Lauren Langford

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