



Music is for every
young person.

YOUNG AUSTRALIAN MUSIC AUDIENCES 2026

Research commissioned and authored by The Push
Polling conducted by YouGov



YouGov®

This report has been prepared by The Push. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors.

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The Push acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Lands across Australia where our work takes place and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters, community and culture. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present. First Nations culture and community are integral to the way we work with young people in music.



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ABOUT THE PUSH

The Push is Australia’s music charity for young people. For 40 years, we’ve backed young Australians to find their sound, their people, their voice. We’re connecting millions of young people to music through all-ages events, industry workshops, careers expos and mentoring opportunities, from Busselton to Brunswick.

Young people connect, build confidence and find community through music. The Push believes everyone should have access to music, no matter their age or their postcode. In 2026, we launched A *National Plan for Young Australians and Music* (National Plan), developed with young people across Australia. It sets out what needs to change so more young Australians can access music, build a future in it and experience the connection and wellbeing it brings.

MUSIC IS FOR EVERY YOUNG PERSON

FOREWORD

Young Australians have told us again in 2026 that music matters.

They have told us that attending music events supports their wellbeing and happiness, helps them deal with stress, anxiety or depression and strengthens their relationships and friendships. Live music gives young people a sense of community and belonging — a place to find their people, express themselves and share experiences that can stay with them for life.

These are not marginal benefits. Nearly two-thirds of young Australians rank wellbeing and happiness among the greatest benefits of attending music events. Half say music events help them deal with stress, anxiety or depression, while many value the stronger relationships, community and belonging they experience.

For young Australians, music events are more than

entertainment. They are places where connection happens. But we have also heard that access to these experiences is becoming harder.

Young Australians have less money available for entertainment than they did in either of the past two years, and cost remains the biggest barrier to attending music events. Those with the least money available are also less likely to agree that live music is important in their lives. Affordability is not only determining who can attend. It is shaping who has access to the wellbeing, connection and belonging young people associate with music.

For young Australians under 18, age is increasingly keeping them out. Licensing restrictions and the shortage of all-ages events are now barriers for almost half of 16- and 17-year-olds. At a time when friendships, identities and lifelong interests are being formed, too many young Australians are missing opportunities to participate, connect and belong.

We have also heard that young Australians want a stronger relationship with Australian music, but many rarely see Australian artists perform or do not know where to find local music events. Young Australians cannot support artists they do not have the chance to discover or see live, and Australian artists cannot build the audiences of the future without affordable and accessible places to reach them.

These findings are not simply a reflection of changing tastes or a difficult live music market. They are a clear message about the conditions young Australians need to participate in cultural and community life.

Young Australians are also clear that government has a role to play. Two-thirds support government investment in live music events and programs that help young Australians connect and support their wellbeing.

Through our National Plan, young people have already identified many of the

solutions: more affordable and all-ages events, better access in communities across Australia, stronger pathways into Australian music and a genuine role in shaping the music culture they will inherit.

Sustained investment in music for young people is an investment in wellbeing and participation. It ensures more young Australians can find their people, feel part of a community and experience the benefits music brings to their lives.

Young Australians have told us what music gives them, what is getting in their way and what needs to change. We now need to listen and act.



Kate Duncan
CEO
The Push —
Youth Music Organisation

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

This is the third year of The Push’s national research into young Australians and music. The research began in 2024 to build a clearer picture of what music contributes to young people’s lives, how they take part and what helps or gets in the way. By returning to many of the same questions each year, we can see what is holding steady, what is changing and where new issues are emerging.

The research centres the experiences and perspectives of young Australians. It explores the role music plays in wellbeing, social connection and belonging, alongside the barriers that can prevent young people from taking part. The Push commissioned and authored these reports. The first national poll was conducted by The Australia Institute in 2024. The 2025 and 2026 polling was conducted by YouGov, with the questionnaire developed by YouGov in collaboration with The Push. Where questions are comparable, this report includes findings from 2024, 2025 and 2026.

The 2026 research explores:

- wellbeing, social connection and belonging
- the importance of music and music events in young people’s lives
- attendance and barriers to participation
- how young people discover and access music
- attitudes towards Australian music
- support for government investment.

A nationally representative sample of 1,025 Australians aged 16 – 25 completed the online survey between 11 and 24 May 2026. Respondents were sourced from the YouGov panel, supported by accredited partner panels to reach groups that can be harder to engage in online research.

The data were weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population estimates. While the survey included male, female and gender-diverse participants, results are presented as male and female only, in line with current ABS standards for population

data. Statistically significant differences are reported at the 95% confidence level.

The study was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252:2019, the international standard for market, opinion and social research, to which YouGov is accredited.

The findings are intended to support better policy, stronger investment and more opportunities for young Australians to participate in music and experience the connection, belonging and wellbeing it can bring.

WHAT WE KNOW

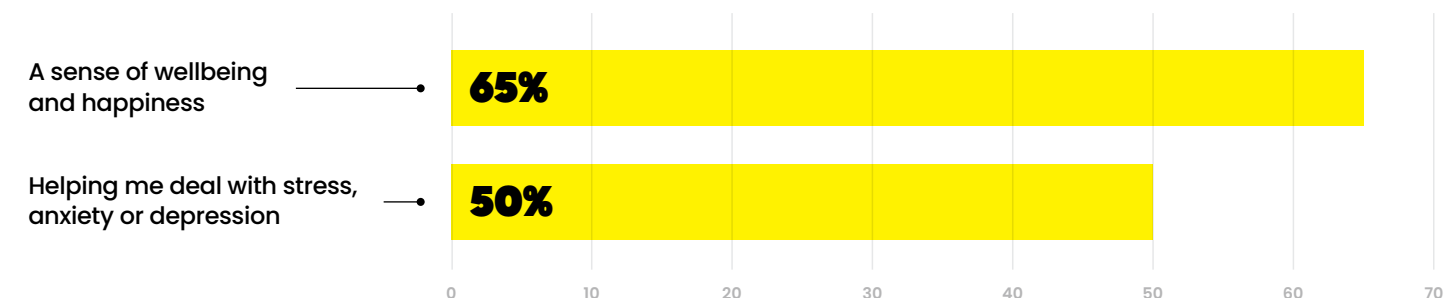
LIVE MUSIC SUPPORTS YOUNG AUSTRALIANS' WELLBEING

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of young Australians rank wellbeing and happiness among the top three benefits of attending music events. Half say music events help them deal with stress, anxiety or depression.

Young Australians have told us that live music is more than entertainment. It can help young people feel happier, manage difficult emotions and find relief from the pressures they are experiencing.

More young Australians need access to safe and affordable live music experiences that support their wellbeing.

1



- Half (50%) of young Australians aged 16 – 25 rank help dealing with stress, anxiety or depression as one of the top three benefits of attending music events. This finding comes as research from headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation shows that almost half of young Australians (49%) are experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress.¹

¹ headspace (2025) *Nearly half of young Australians experiencing high levels of psychological distress – but more are seeking support*, headspace, accessed 11 July 2026.

LIVE MUSIC HELPS YOUNG AUSTRALIANS CONNECT AND BELONG

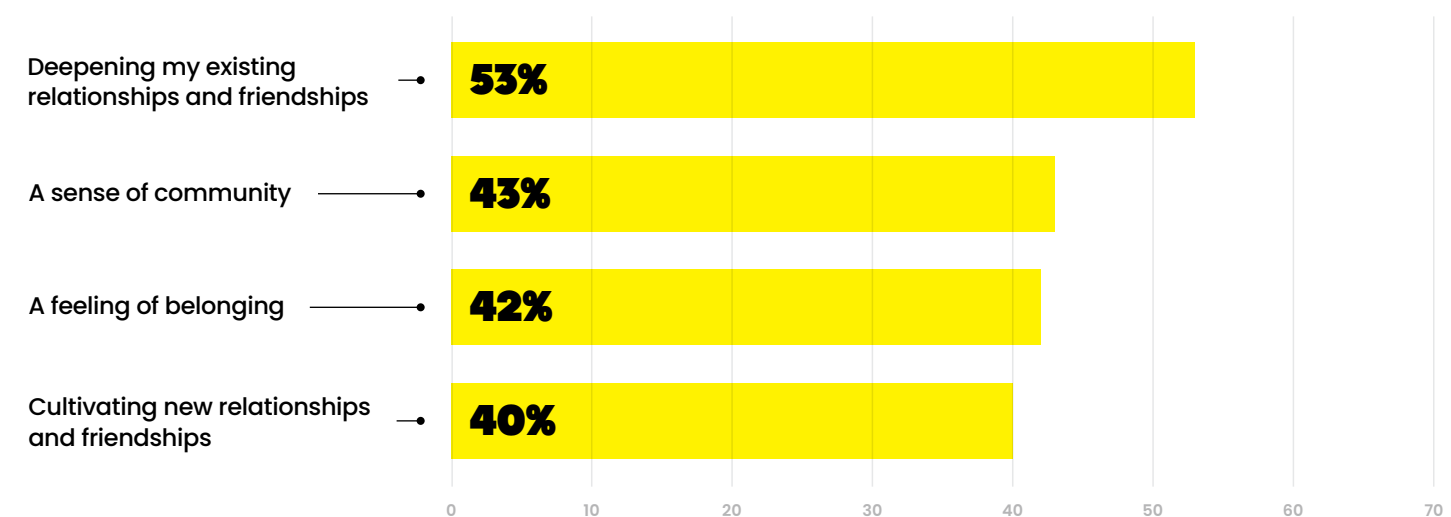
More than half (53%) of young Australians rank strengthening their existing relationships and friendships among the leading benefits of attending music events.

Young Australians also value the sense of community (43%) and belonging (42%) they experience, while two in five say music events help them form new relationships and friendships.

Live music gives young Australians places to spend time with friends, meet new people and feel part of something.

More inclusive and accessible music events are needed so that more young Australians can experience that connection and belonging.

2



- Young Australians rank deepening existing relationships and friendships (53%), a feeling of community (43%) and a feeling of belonging (42%) among the other top three benefits they experience when attending music events.
- Young Australian males are more likely than young Australian females to rank cultivating new relationships and friendships among their top three benefits of attending music events (45% compared to 36%), as are young Australians aged 18 – 25 compared to those aged 16 – 17 (42% compared to 29%).
- Young people in Victoria (57%), New South Wales (55%), Queensland (54%) and Western Australia (54%) are most likely to rank the benefit of deepening their existing relationships and friendships within their top three compared to those in South Australia (35%).

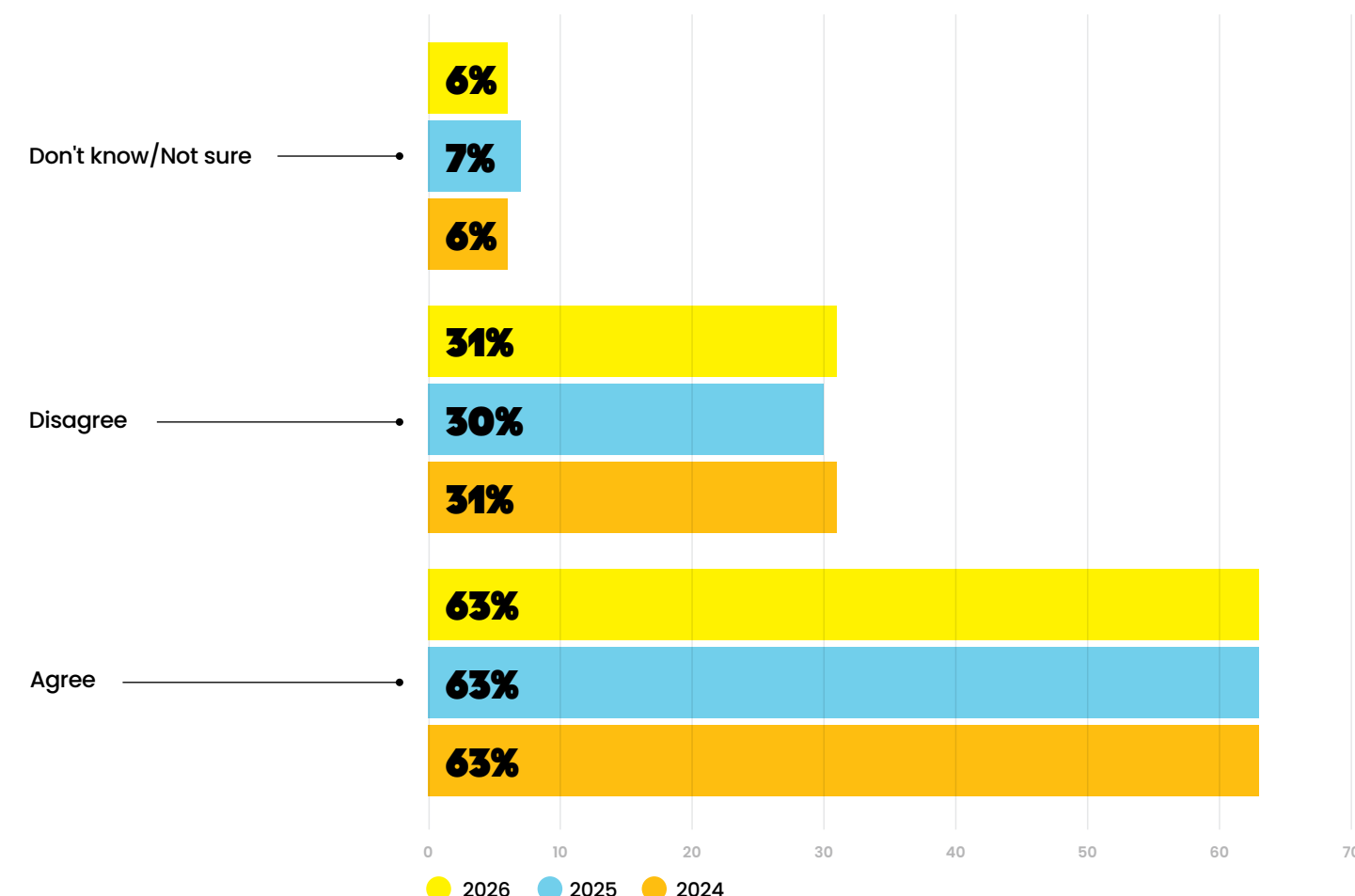
LIVE MUSIC CONTINUES TO MATTER TO YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

For the third year in a row, nearly two-thirds (63%) of young Australians say attending music events is important to them.

Young Australians' interest in live music remains strong, even as cost and access make it harder for many of them to attend.

The challenge is not convincing young people that live music matters. It is making sure they have opportunities to take part.

3



- Almost a quarter of young Australians aged 16 – 25 (23%) strongly agree that attending music events is important to them. This result was 21% in 2025 and 18% in 2024.
- Young Australian males are more likely than young Australian females to strongly agree that attending music events is important to them (29% compared to 17%).
- Young Australians aged 18 – 25 are twice as likely as those aged 16 – 17 to say they strongly agree that attending music events is important to them (25% compared to 13%).
- Young Australians with more disposable income are more likely to value attending music events. Almost three-quarters (74%) of those spending \$51 – \$150 per week on entertainment and activities agree it's important, compared with more than half (55%) of those spending under \$50. This is similar to the findings in 2025 and 2024.
- The findings suggest that when cost limits access to live music, it also shapes how important music becomes in young people's lives. Affordability isn't just influencing attendance, it's influencing connection.

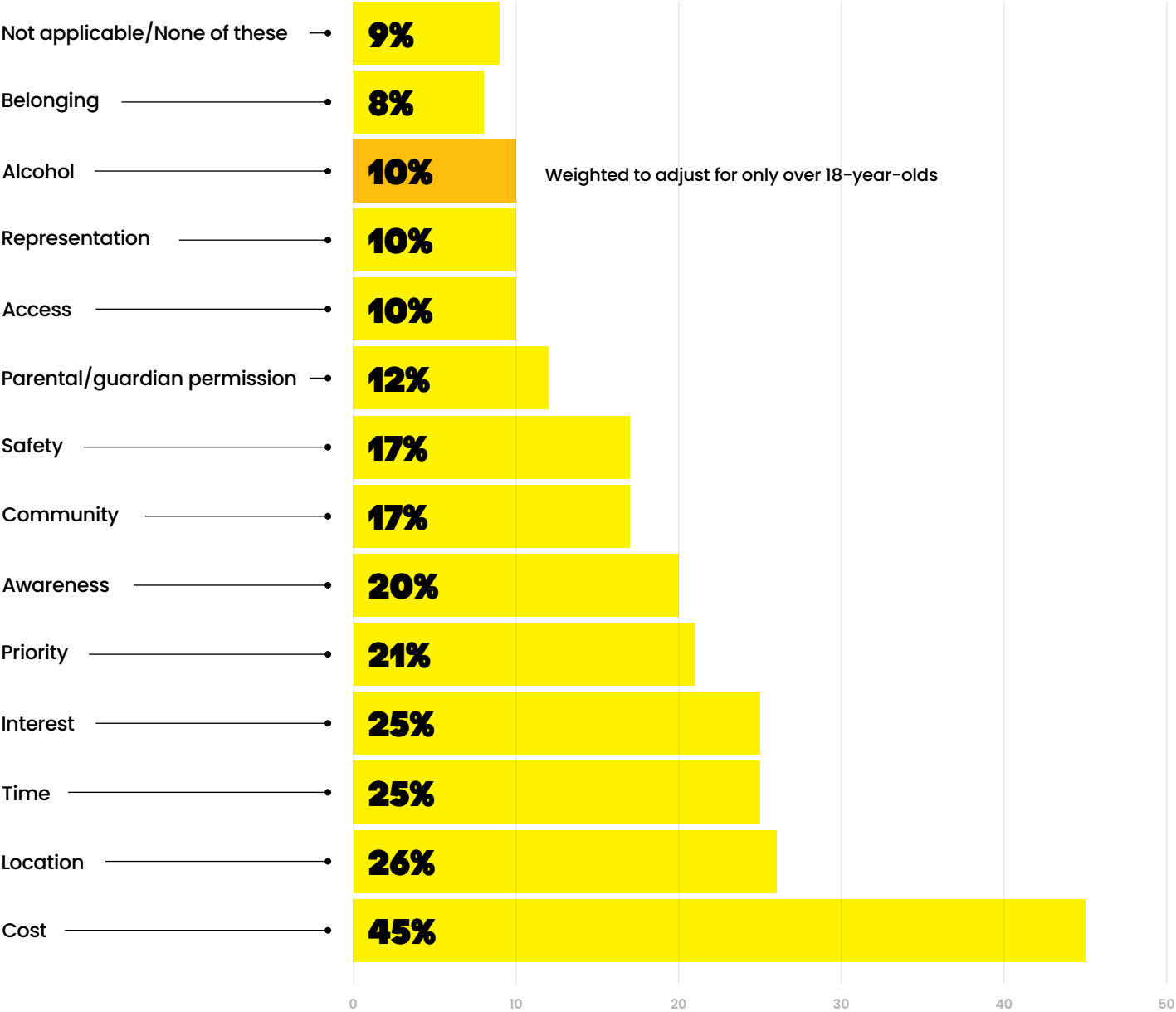
COST REMAINS THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO ATTENDING MUSIC EVENTS

Cost affects almost half (45%) of young Australians. It has been the leading barrier in all three years of the research.

For many young Australians, the cost of tickets, transport and other expenses means they cannot attend as often as they would like, or at all.

More free and affordable events are needed, alongside practical ways to reduce the broader costs of attending live music.

4



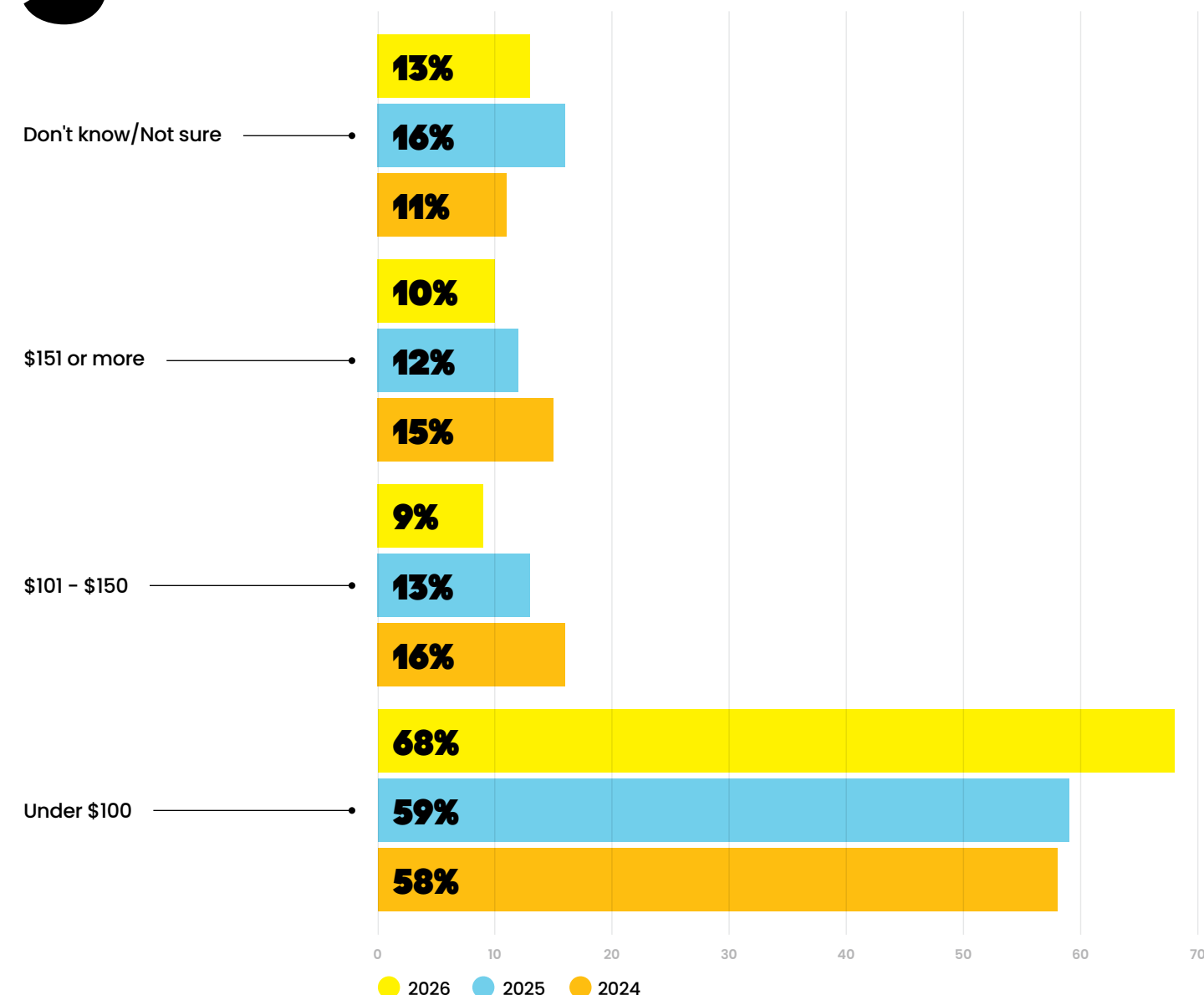
- Location (26%), interest (25%) and time (25%) continue to be among the other top barriers for young Australians aged 16 – 25.
- Young Australian females are more likely than young Australian males to say that location (31% compared to 21%) and safety (21% compared to 12%) are barriers.
- Young people living in New South Wales (20%) and Victoria (20%) are more likely than those living in South Australia (7%), Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory (4%) to say that community (having no one to go with) is a barrier to them attending music events.
- Young people living in South Australia (29%), Queensland (22%), New South Wales (21%) and Victoria (18%) are more likely than those living in Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory (4%) to say that awareness (not knowing what music events are on) is a barrier.
- Almost three in five (57%) of young Australians who have \$0 – \$50 every week to spend on all forms of entertainment and activities, identified cost as a barrier to attending music events.

YOUNG AUSTRALIANS HAVE LESS MONEY AVAILABLE FOR ENTERTAINMENT

Young Australians continue to value live music, but fewer have the money available to take part.

Affordable access to live music is becoming more important as financial pressure increases for young people and their families.

5



- Almost two in five (37%) of young Australians aged 16 – 25 report having \$0 – \$50 every week to spend on entertainment and activities in 2026. This result was 33% in both 2025 and 2024.
- Young Australians aged 18 – 25 are more than twice as likely as those aged 16 – 17 to have \$51 – \$150 to spend on entertainment and activities every week after covering all their other expenses (46% compared to 19%). The financial gap between the two age groups continues to widen when compared to 2025 and 2024 data.
- The number of young Australians with more than \$100 to spend on entertainment and activities every week continues to decline. The result was 19% in 2026, 25% in 2025 and 31% in 2024.
- Young Australians aged 16 – 17 are almost three times as likely as those aged 18 – 25 to have under \$25 every week to spend on entertainment and activities (32% compared to 11%).
- More than two in five (43%) of young Australian females have less than \$50 to spend on entertainment and activities each week. For young Australian males this is 31%.
- While the gender gap in discretionary spending remains consistent over the past three years, young Australian females continue to have less to spend every week on entertainment and activities. 71% of young Australian females have under \$100 every week to spend on entertainment and activities in 2026. This result was 57% in 2025 and 62% in 2024.

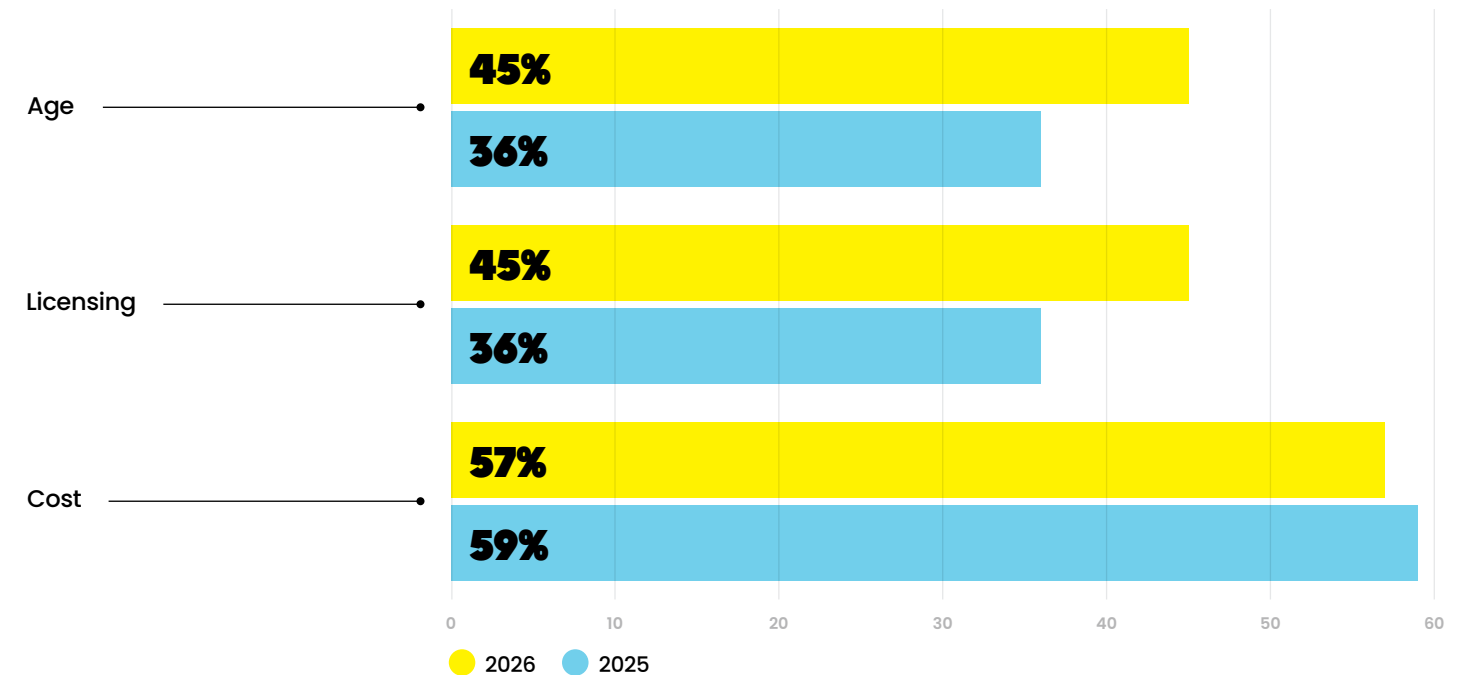
BEING UNDER 18 IS BECOMING A BIGGER BARRIER TO ATTENDING MUSIC EVENTS

Almost half (45%) of 16- and 17-year-olds say licensing restrictions prevent them from attending live music. The same proportion say there are not enough events available to people under 18.

As licensing restrictions and the lack of all-ages events increasingly get in the way, many young Australians are missing the chance to experience live music during the years when lifelong interests and connections often begin.

Young Australians need more regular all-ages events and venues, supported by licensing and policy settings that make it easier for them to participate.

6



- Cost remains the biggest barrier for young Australians aged 16 - 17 attending music events, remaining stable with 59% in 2025 and 57% in 2026.
- For young Australians aged 16 - 17, the other major barrier is parent/guardian permission which has increased from 23% in 2024 to 36% in 2026.
- Young Australians aged 16 - 17 are more likely than those aged 18 - 25 to say that cost (57% compared to 42%), location (36% compared to 24%) and time (31% compared to 23%) are barriers to them attending music events.
- The findings suggest that being underage is becoming a greater barrier to attending music events. As licensing restrictions and the shortage of all-ages events continue to grow, more young people are missing opportunities to experience music events during the years when lifelong habits and connections are often formed.

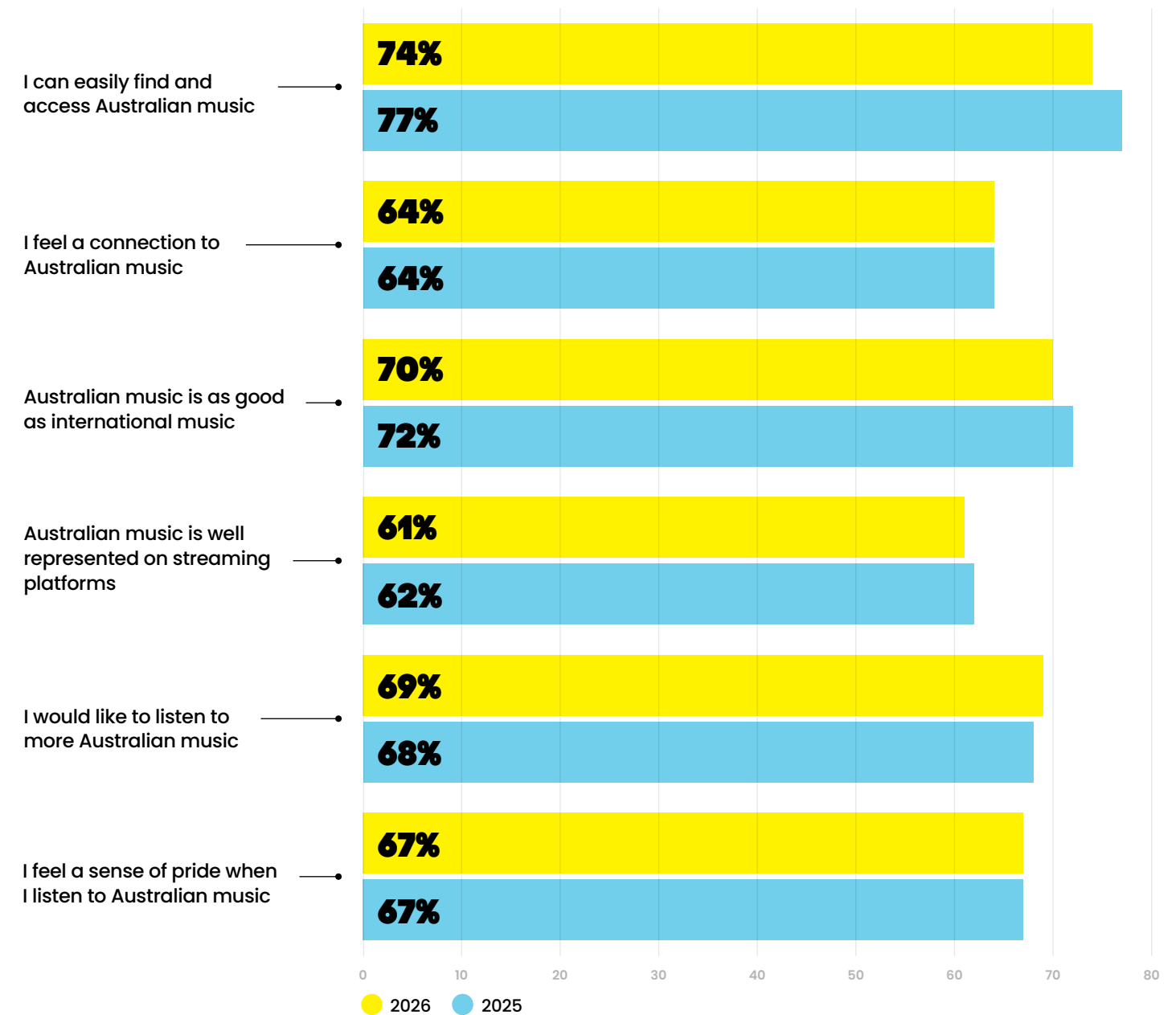
YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ARE PROUD OF AUSTRALIAN MUSIC AND WANT MORE OF IT

Two-thirds (67%) of young Australians feel proud when they listen to Australian music, and seven in ten want to hear more of it.

Interest in Australian music is not the problem. The challenge is helping young people move from wanting to hear more Australian music to discovering artists, attending shows and building an ongoing connection with them.

Young Australians need more opportunities to discover and experience Australian music in the places and on the platforms they already use.

7



- Young Australians aged 16 – 25 are still overwhelmingly in support of Australian music with 67% feeling proud when listening to Australian music (no change from 2025) and 69% wanting to hear even more Australian music (68% in 2025).
- Young Australians aged 18 – 25 are more likely to strongly agree that they feel a sense of pride when they listen to Australian music and that they want to listen to more Australian music (25% compared to 12%) and wanting to listen to more Australian music (28% compared to 10%).
- Young Australian males continue to report stronger connections to Australian music than females across every measure, from pride and connection to discovering and listening to Australian artists. In addition, the gender gap has widened across most measures in 2026.
- There is a significant disparity across the states and territories for young Australians aged 16 – 25 indicating that they'd like to listen to more Australian music. In South Australia 81% of young people aged 16 – 25 agree they'd like to listen to more Australian music, while 60% of young people in Western Australia agree.

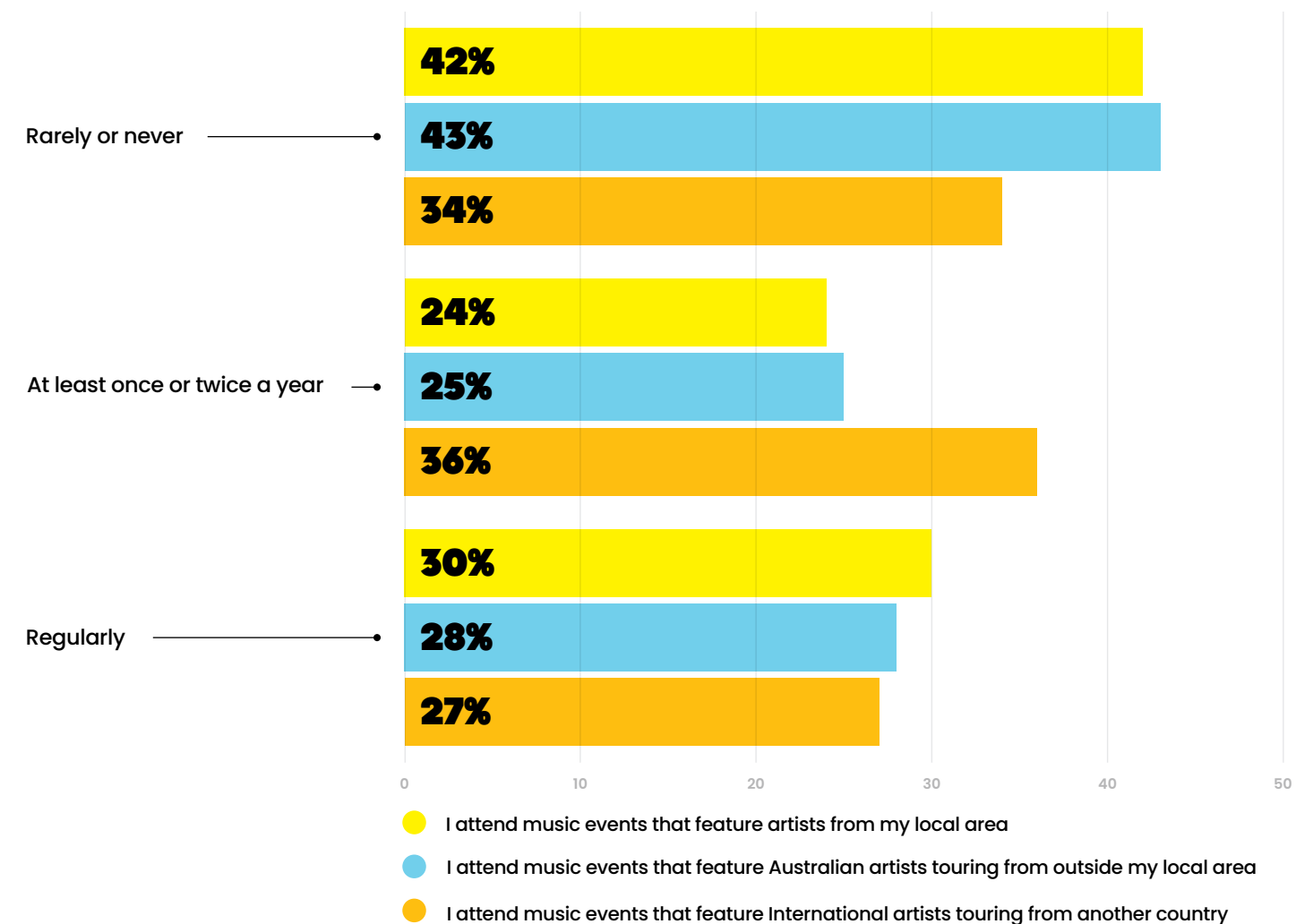
YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ARE NOT REGULARLY SEEING AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS LIVE

Two in five young Australians rarely or never attend performances by Australian artists touring to their area (43%) or by artists from their local area (42%).

There's a clear gap between young people's interest in Australian music and their experience of seeing Australian artists live.

More affordable, accessible and visible live music opportunities are needed to bring young audiences and Australian artists together.

8



- Young Australians aged 16 – 25 who attend music events less regularly (once or twice a year) are more likely to see international artists (36%) over Australian artists touring from outside their local area (25%) or a local artist (24%).
- Over the past three years there has been an increase in young Australians who say they regularly (every few months or weeks) attend music events by local artists (30% compared to 26% in 2024), Australian artists touring from outside their local area (28% compared to 24% in 2024) and international artists (27% compared to 25% in 2024).
- Young Australian males are almost four times more likely than young Australian females to say they attend music events that feature international artists touring from another country every few weeks (15% compared to 4%), while young Australian females are more likely to say they do this once or twice a year (40% compared to 32%).
- Young Australians aged 16 – 17 are more likely than young Australians aged 18 – 25 to say they rarely or never attend music events that feature Australian artists touring from outside their local area (69% compared to 36%).
- Young Australian males are twice as likely as young Australian females to attend music events that feature artists from their local area every few weeks (16% compared to 8%).

YOUNG AUSTRALIANS WANT TO SEE MORE LOCAL ARTISTS BUT DO NOT KNOW WHERE TO FIND THEM

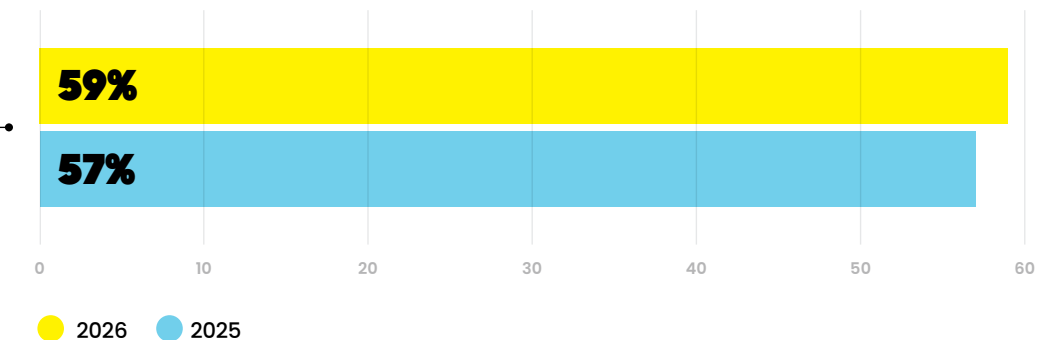
More than half (59%) of young Australians want to see more local Australian artists live but do not know where to find information about their shows.

The interest is there, but young Australians do not always have a clear path from discovering an artist to finding an affordable event they are able to attend.

Young Australians need simpler and more relevant ways to discover local artists and find live music events that are affordable, accessible and open to them.

9

I would like to attend more local Australian music but I just don't know where to find out about it



- Young Australians aged 18 – 25 are more likely to agree than young Australians aged 16 – 17 that they'd like to attend more local Australian music but don't know where to find out about it (64% compared to 40%).
- Young Australian males are more likely to strongly agree than young Australian females that they'd like to attend more local Australian music but don't know where to find out about it (24% compared to 14%).
- Young Australians with more disposable income are more likely to indicate that they'd like to attend more local Australian music but don't know where to find out about it. 71% of those spending \$51 – \$150 per week on entertainment and activities agree they'd like to attend more local Australian music but don't know where to find out about it, compared with 53% of those spending under \$50.
- The findings highlight that young Australians with higher disposable income are more likely to report an unmet desire to attend local Australian music, coupled with a lack of information about where to find it.

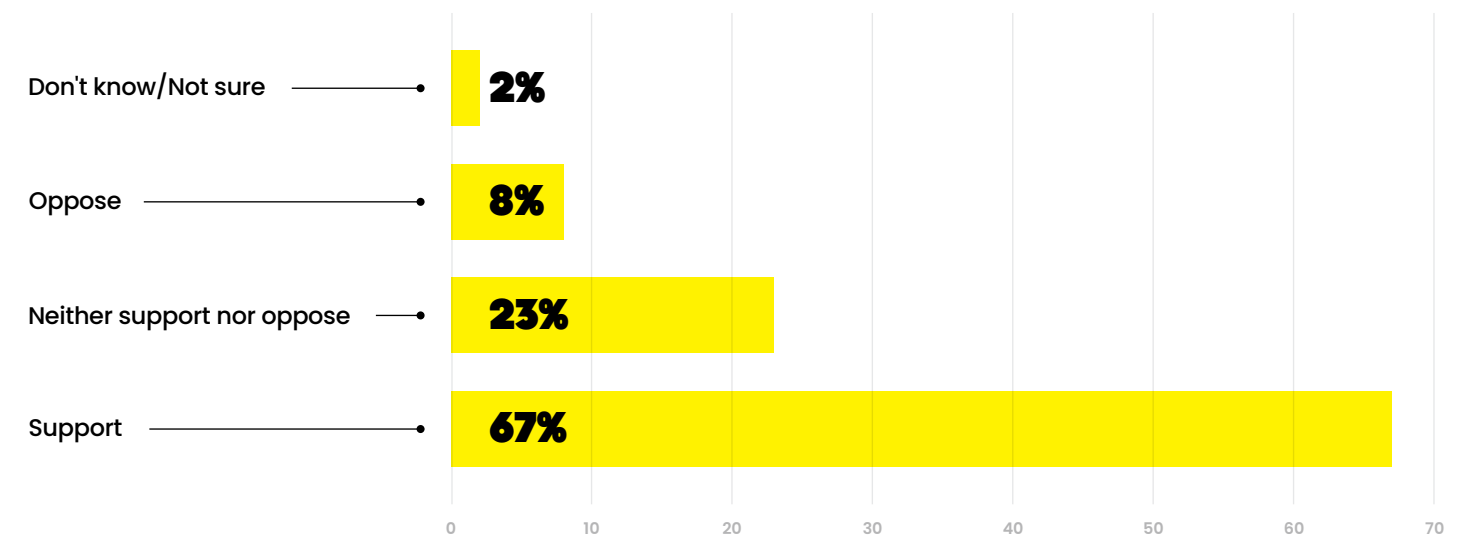
YOUNG AUSTRALIANS WANT GOVERNMENT TO INVEST IN MUSIC, CONNECTION AND WELLBEING

Two-thirds (67%) of young Australians support government funding for live music events and programs that help young Australians connect and support their wellbeing. Only 8% oppose it.

Young Australians recognise that cost, age and location can limit who gets to experience live music.

Government investment can help create more free and affordable programs, more all-ages events and more opportunities for young Australians to experience local music in their own communities.

10



- These findings are reinforced by Creative Australia's 2026 *National Arts Participation Survey*, which found that Australians strongly support government investment in the arts (62%). Ensuring children and young people have access to art and creative experiences was ranked as Australians' top funding priority for arts investment.²
- A third (33%) of young Australians aged 18 – 25 strongly support government funding for live music events and programs that help young Australians connect and support their wellbeing.
- Young Australian males are slightly more likely than young Australian females to support government funding for live music events and programs that help young Australians connect and support their wellbeing (69% compared to 65%).
- Young Australians in capital cities are more likely than those outside of capital cities to support government funding for live music events and programs that help young people connect and support their wellbeing (72% compared to 56%).
- Young people in South Australia (73%), Victoria (72%), Queensland (67%) and New South Wales (65%) are more likely to support government funding for live music events and programs that help young people connect and support their wellbeing than those in Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory (48%).

² Creative Australia (2026) *Creative transformations: results of the National Arts Participation Survey*, Creative Australia, accessed 11 July 2026.



WHAT WE NEED

The 2026 findings point to a clear need for sustained investment in affordable, all-ages and locally accessible music opportunities for young Australians.

Young Australians say music supports their wellbeing, strengthens relationships and helps them feel part of a community. Yet cost remains the biggest barrier, while licensing restrictions and the lack of all-ages events increasingly prevent young people under 18 from taking part.

A National Plan for Young Australians and Music provides a practical roadmap for responding to what young people have told us. Based on these findings, The Push recommends the following actions.

Put young people’s wellbeing at the heart of Australia’s music ecosystem, ensuring music is recognised and used as a powerful tool for connection and inclusion.

Remove age-based barriers so that young people aged under 18 can access music safely and confidently.

Remove financial barriers, ensuring that cost never stands in the way of young people accessing music.

Support the music sector to deliver viable all-ages events through addressing the barriers that exist for music venues, festivals, artists and promoters.

Ensure young audiences can discover, share and celebrate Australian music across platforms and media.

Invest in music programs that strengthen young people's wellbeing, build social connection and create opportunities for belonging in communities across Australia.

Invest in all-ages and under-18 music initiatives that respond to the unique needs of underage young people.

Establish programs, such as a live music pass or subsidised ticketing schemes, to ensure music participation remains accessible to young Australians.

Support access to all-ages grants for music venues, festivals, artists and promoters and consider compliance and licensing settings that make all-ages, alcohol-free events possible in existing venues.

Partner with broadcasters and digital platforms to support visibility, discovery and promotion of Australian artists.

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