

**WITHOUT
WALLS**

Audience Scale, Reach & Impact 2023-2025

indigo

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Introduction

Without Walls: Expanding Who the Arts Are For

Between 2023 and the end of 2025, Without Walls reached more than 408,000 audience members across 77 festivals and 168 events throughout England and internationally. Working through its Artistic Directorate (AD) and Touring Network Partnership (TNP), Without Walls continues to demonstrate the distinctive power of free outdoor arts to engage audiences beyond traditional cultural venues.

In a period marked by cost-of-living pressures and declining attendance in many parts of the cultural sector, Without Walls has not only sustained audience engagement but expanded it: reaching new attenders, younger audiences, families, and communities in Priority Places and Levelling Up areas.

This report analyses audience data collected via the Illuminate platform across three financial years (2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 to December 2025¹). It explores:

- Who Without Walls reaches
- How audiences experience outdoor work
- How this differs from venue-based audiences
- How engagement is evolving year on year
- What this means for the future of outdoor arts

The findings show that Without Walls plays a critical role in widening participation in the arts, particularly among first-time attenders, lower socio-economic groups, families with children, and audiences in areas of lower cultural engagement.

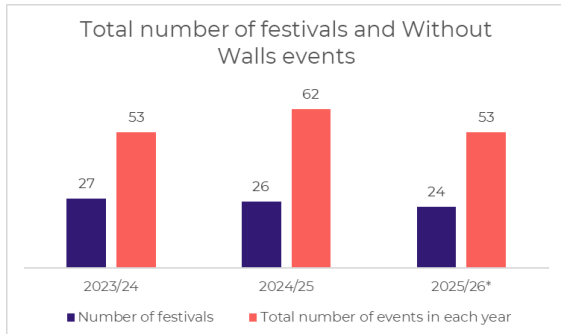
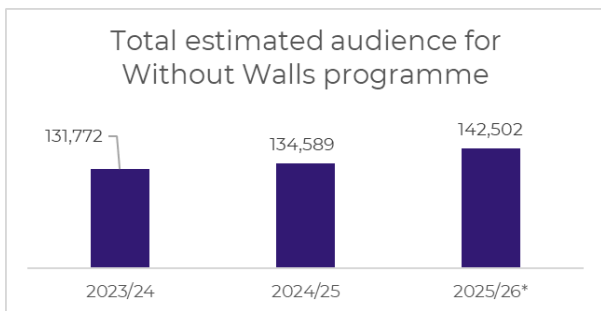
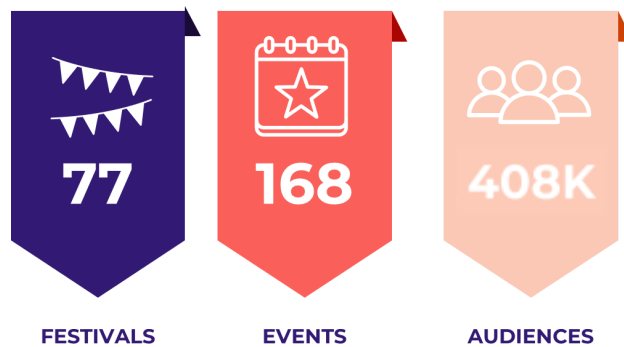
Outdoor arts are not simply an alternative to venue-based provision. They are a gateway. Without Walls is helping redefine who cultural activity is for, and where it happens.

¹ NB. Data only supplied for partial year in 25/26 - to end Dec 2025

1: National Scale and Geographic Reach

Without Walls operates at a significant scale across England. The Artistic Directorate is a group of festival partners that collaborate to commission and present a programme of new outdoor performances each year. The Touring Network Partnership is a group of festival partners that presents this work in subsequent years, ensuring audiences across England experience it. Many of these partners are based in places where there are fewer opportunities to experience the arts and culture.

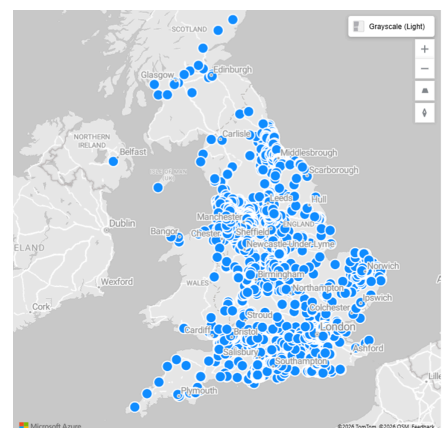
Over the three-year period Without Walls partners collectively delivered:



Annual audience figures² and output through events and festivals demonstrate sustained reach. These figures reflect continued large-scale public engagement across free, open-access events.

A Truly National Footprint

Without Walls audiences come from across the whole of the UK with strong representation across all English regions (see p8)



² Three festivals did not supply their audience figures for 2025 so these have been estimated based on previous years' figures: Festival of Thrift 5,400; Oldham Festival 15,000; Rochdale Feel Good Picnic 5,000

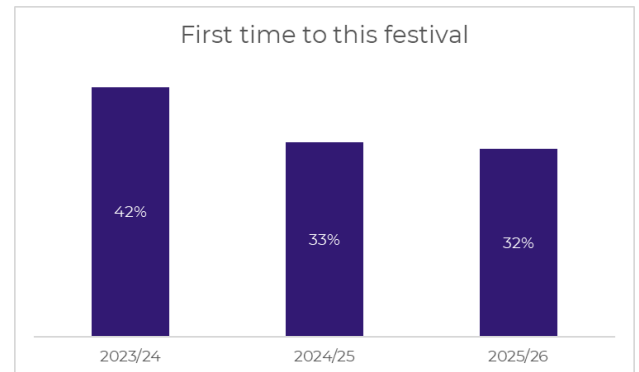
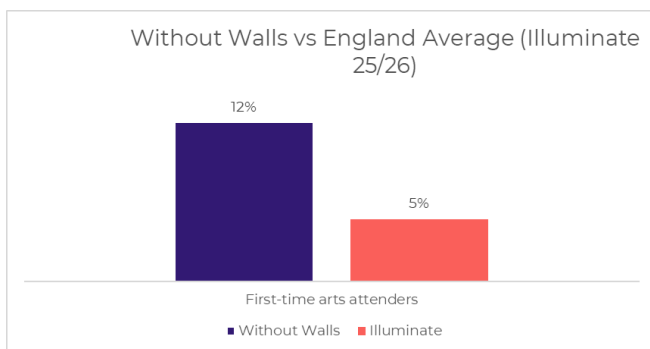
2: Open to all

Without Walls is successful at attracting new audiences:

Attracting New Audiences

First-time attendance to the specific festival:

While slightly lower than 2023/24, nearly one-third of audiences remain new each year,



and is more successful than the England average for attracting first time attenders to the arts.

Reaching Younger Audiences

- **28% under 35**
- Arts average³: **13%**
- England Census 2021 comparator: **30%** under 35

Without Walls more than doubles the national arts average for under-35 attendance, and is in line with the population average.⁴

Engaging Global Majority Audiences

- **22% Global Majority**
- Arts average⁵: **16%**

Outdoor provision via the Without Walls programme supports more ethnically diverse engagement than the national arts average.

Socio-Economic Representation

³ Illuminate data 25/26, Arts Council England

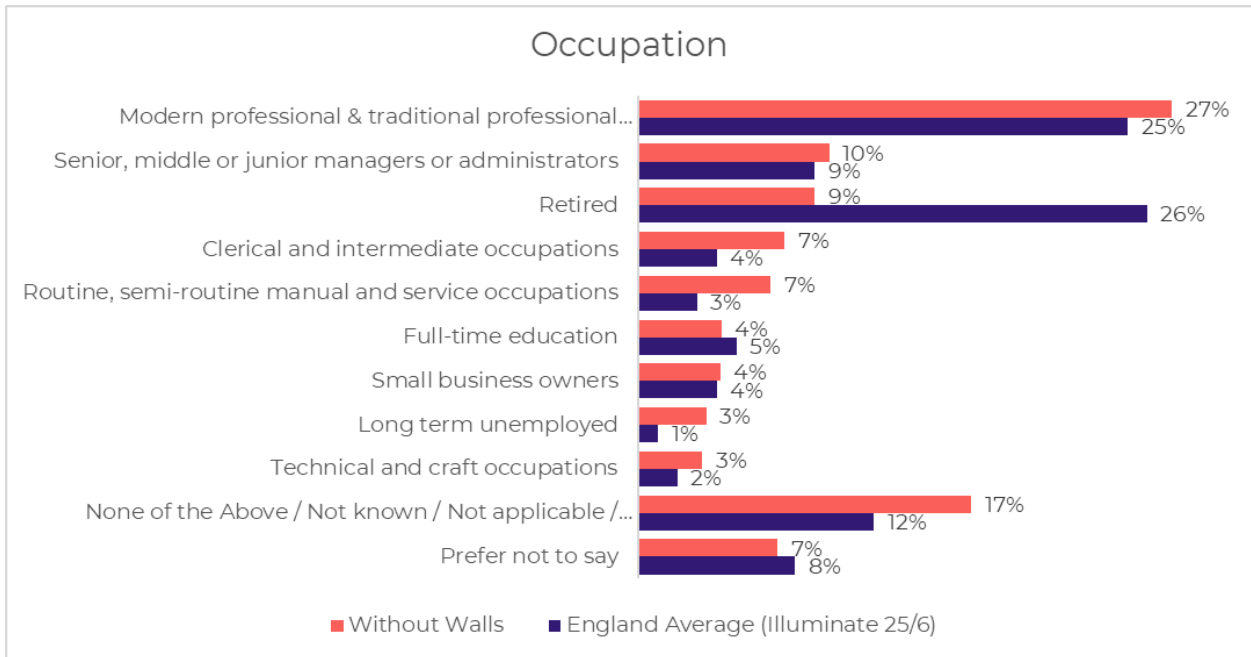
⁴ It should be noted that census data includes under 16s, whereas surveys are unlikely to have been sent to under 16s.

⁵ Illuminate data 25/26, Arts Council England

Without Walls attenders are more likely than other arts attenders to be from:

- Clerical/intermediate occupations
- Technical occupations
- Manual and service occupations

This indicates stronger representation of lower socio-economic groups than is typical across arts audiences.



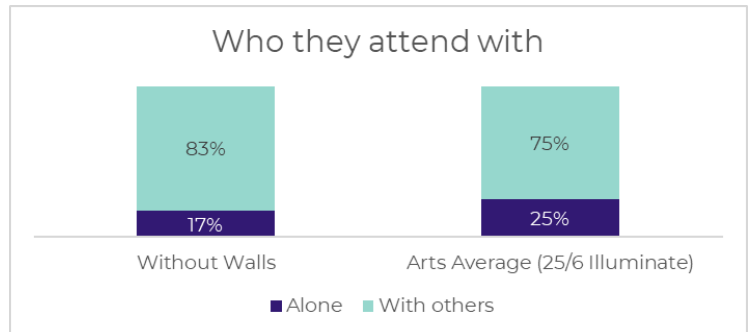
3: A Social and Family Experience

Without Walls events are fundamentally social experiences.

Attending Together

- **83% attend with others**
- Arts average⁶: 75%
- Mean group size: 3.6

Outdoor arts operate as shared, collective cultural moments.



Family Friendly by Design

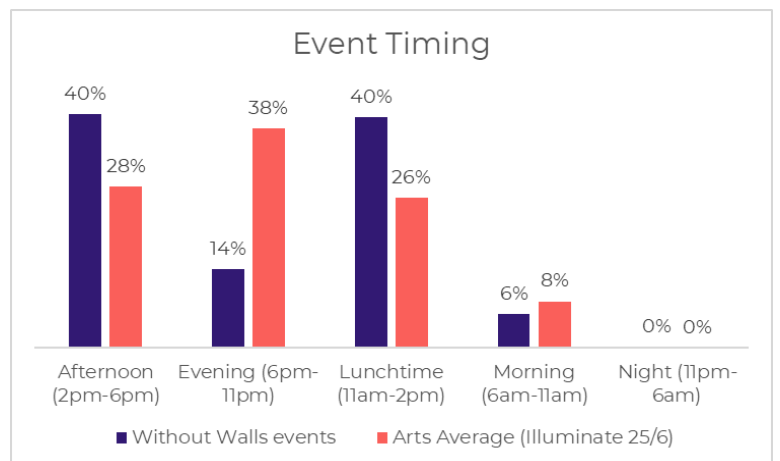
- **45% attended with children**
- **86% of events take place before 6pm**
- Arts average⁷: 62% before 6pm

Programming is heavily weighted towards **daytime** and **afternoon** slots:

- 40% lunchtime (11am–2pm)
- 40% afternoon (2pm–6pm)

This scheduling supports accessibility for:

- Families
- Multi-generational groups
- People with caring responsibilities
- Those less able to attend evening events



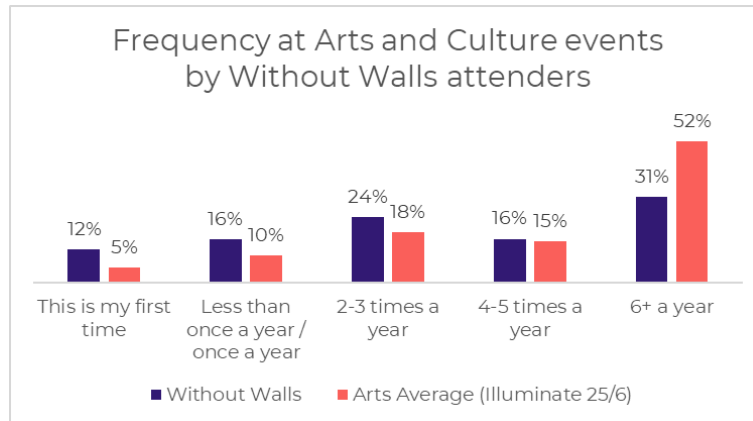
⁶ Illuminate data 25/26, Arts Council England

⁷ Illuminate data 25/26, Arts Council England

4: Participation and Engagement

Without Walls is successful at attracting new and less frequent arts and cultural attendees than is the average for other arts events.

Cultural Participation Frequency

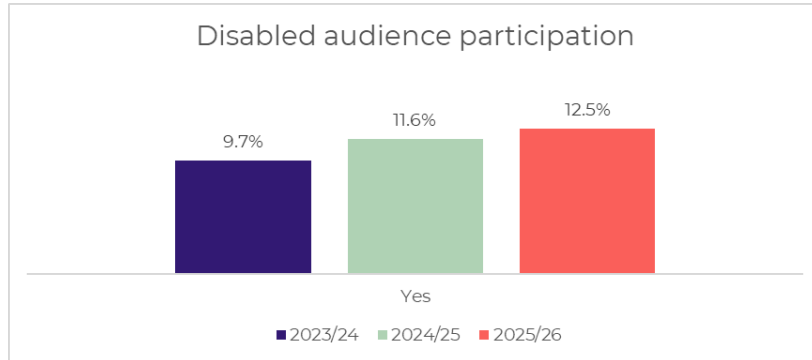


Re-calculated to exclude 'prefer not to say' in both data sets

This shows that Outdoor Arts arts are both an entry point for new or infrequent audiences, as well as part of regular cultural activity for people who are more engaged.

5: Inclusion and Place

Disability



This indicates a modest but positive increase in inclusive reach over time.

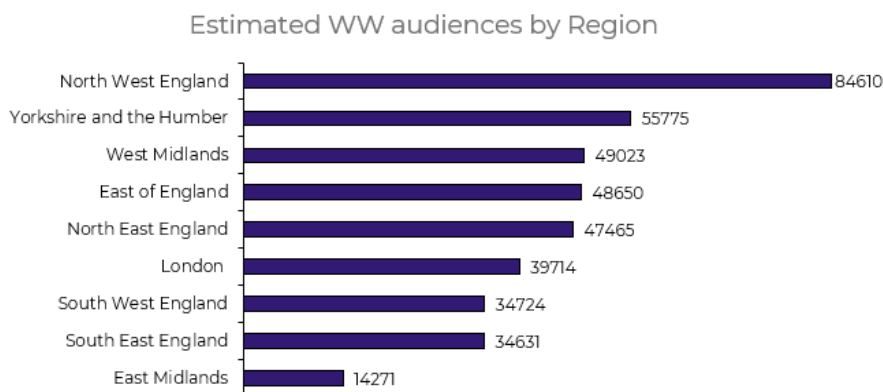
Levelling Up & Priority Places

- **42%** of audiences are from **Levelling Up** Areas
- **35%** are from **Priority Places**

The number of TNP Festivals in levelling up places is proportionally higher, with most partners being located in Priority Places or Levelling Up for Culture. This aligns with the key aim of the TNP to make high-quality outdoor arts available to more people across England, especially in places where there are fewer opportunities to experience the arts and culture.

Regional Access

Audiences are distributed across all English regions with strong northern representation, showing that Without Walls contributes meaningfully to place-based cultural delivery..



Conclusion

Across 2023–2025, Without Walls demonstrates that free outdoor arts:

- Reach younger audiences at more than double the national arts average
- Engage more Global Majority audiences
- Represent lower socio-economic groups more strongly
- Deliver highly social, family-friendly experiences
- Reach Levelling Up Areas and Priority Places at scale
- Sustain large-scale public engagement year on year

Outdoor arts are uniquely positioned to:

- Engage audiences who do not regularly attend arts venues
- Strengthen cultural participation in underserved areas
- Contributed to place through visible, civic cultural experiences

Without Walls is not just a network of outdoor festivals and events. It expands access to culture, geographically, socially and demographically. Outdoor arts are not an optional extra in the cultural ecology. They are essential to widening who the arts are for.

Appendix 1: Notes and Methodology

NAME OF THE FESTIVAL	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total responses
An Indian Summer			91	91
Around the Lake Festival		69		69
Arts by the Sea Festival	447	91		538
Arts in the Park	15			15
Barnsley Garden Party		101	271	372
Basingstoke Festival	105		32	137
Between the Tides Festival	248	466	244	958
Birmingham Weekender	265	438		703
Brighton Festival	144	159		303
Crawley's Creative Playground			12	12
DOCA (Devizes Outdoor Celebratory Arts)	198			198
Encounter Festival	201		68	269
Ensemble Festival	149	64	224	437
Feel Good Family Picnic	186	135		321
Festival of Thrift		402		402
Festival Oldham			26	26
Flux Rotherham	80	59	232	371
Greenwich & Docklands International Festival	469			469
Hat Fair	115			115
Just So Festival	245			245
Norfolk & Norwich Festival	136			136
Now Northwich			64	64
Oldham Festival		118		118
Our Future Starts Here		107		107
Redbridge Outdoor Arts	224	247	246	717
Stockton International Riverside Festival	521	462	444	1427
The Full Shebang	196	169		365
The Mini Shebang	12			12
Timber Festival	211			211
Welcome Weekend			379	379
Whirligig	158		227	385
Grand Total	4325	3087	2560	9972

Confidence Level and Margin of Error per Year

YEAR	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Population Size (total estimated WW audiences) The total number of people whose opinion or behaviour your sample will represent.	131772	134589	142502
Confidence Level (%) The probability that your sample accurately reflects the attitudes of your population. The industry standard is 95%.	95%	95%	95%
Margin of Error (%) The range (measured as a percentage) that your population's responses may deviate from your sample's.	5%	5%	5%
Minimum sample size to achieve 95% confidence level	384	384	384
Actual sample size (total survey responses collected)	4325	3087	2560

Note on weighting

The data was aggregated to give a picture of what Without Walls organisations are collectively achieving. Therefore the data was added together and no weighting was applied.

Methodology

Individual participating festivals sent surveys out to their bookers, which were completed and the results recorded in the Illuminate software. Without Walls then downloaded the responses for each festival from Illuminate, and asked each Festival to provide an estimate of attenders at Without Walls events, and overall.

Questions were determined by Arts Council / Illuminate changed during the period of data collection. Data from the year 2023, 2024 and 2025 has been combined and grouped or mapped where the answer options were different across the years.

Illuminate introduced question changes for some of the survey questions in 2024. Questions with changes included in the report and the mapping are listed below:

- **With which ethnicity do you identify?**

2023 answer options included top level and sub categories. 2024 answer options were cut down to top level answer options. Responses in the report grouped to top level answer options in the following way:

2023 Top level and sub level answer options	2024 top level answer options / Benchmark report
Asian Bangladeshi Chinese Indian Pakistani Prefer to self-describe [free text]	Asian/Asian British
Black Black African Black Caribbean Prefer to self-describe [free text]	Black/Black British
Mixed background Asian & white Black African & white Black Caribbean & white Prefer to self-describe [free text]	Mixed/multiple ethnic group
White Gypsy, Roma or Irish traveller White British White Irish Prefer to self-describe [free text]	White/White British
Self-describe Prefer to self-describe [free text]	Prefer to self describe [free text]
PNS/NK Prefer not to say	Prefer not to Say
Arab Arab Latin American Latin American PNS/NK Not known	Any other ethnic group OR None of the above

- **What best describes your current or most recent occupation?**

Some options were combined into one category 'None of the above / Not known / Not applicable', all other answer options were the same

Raw survey data	Benchmark report
Not known Other Other (please specify) None of the above / Not known / Not applicable	None of the above / Not known / Not applicable