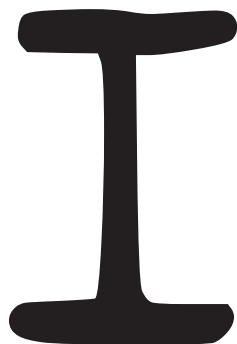
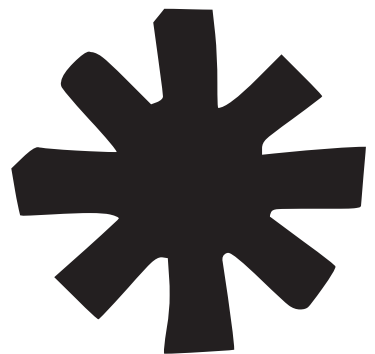
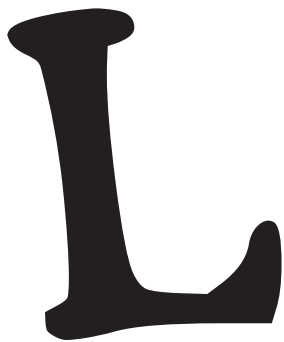
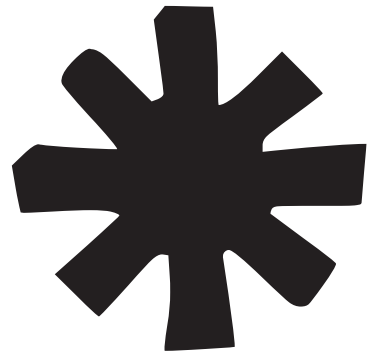


Ind*pend*nt*☆s
BI*nni*L '25



*Independents Biennial ' 25
Evaluation*



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IN SUMMER



In 2025, Independents Biennial welcomed 169,292 visitors through gallery doors to see the work of 470+ artists in 72 venues.

Artists unanimously reported feeling stronger in their practice after the festival than at the start.

A total of £329,750 in cash funding was brought into the region's arts economy. £166,294 (50.4%) of that paid artists directly. £50,410 (15.2%) of that was staffing. The remainder was on production costs, space hire, documentation, print and other costs of building exhibitions and events.

In Numbers

Unique audience :

169,292

Total visits (exhibition
& event) :

230,853

Total visits (public works):

1,201,893

Artist numbers :

470

Associate artist numbers :

830

Event & exhibition venues:

72

Total venues :

102

Events:

206



This section covers the overall objectives of Independents Biennial, with reasoning included under the first heading: 'Ambition and what our original proposal included'.

Ambition setting was the main operational priority of Independents Biennial 2025, which sought to increase access to artist-led space, and provide career enhancing opportunities to local artists. There are a few main points which we will discuss under the second heading, primarily how the 'Listings' section of the programme clouds the ambition of the directed programme, and how they should be defined in future.



The original proposal for Independents Biennial followed a year-long R&D, led by Art in Liverpool C.I.C. with the support of Culture Network LCR, Convenience Gallery, Liverpool Biennial, Metal Liverpool, Jo Mary Watson, Jay Hampton and Sufea Mohamad Noor.

"Enabling the ambition of artists" became the primary working prompt for Independents Biennial 2025. It summarised the desires of the festival to improve visibility of the work of local artists, build new career routes for them, and ensure their work could be fulfilled on the scale it required.

The second key ambition was on environmental sustainability. We set out to use all recycled or repurposed materials in the making of the programme, and to retain those materials for future use. This was both a cost saving and materials circularity exercise. It was led at the R&D stage by Metal Liverpool via their SHIFT Network, and sought to inform their contribution to the Arts Green Book.

The third was Access, which has its own evaluation heading later in this document.

The fourth was established an identity for Independents Biennial, though this was the least clear outcome at the proposal stage as Independents Biennial.

In Numbers:

Art in Liverpool proposed to work with 250 artists, and reach an audience of 110,000*. The ambition was to raise £150,000 for the local arts ecology, focussing internal spending and our partners' spending on artists directly based on previous years' output and the increased ambition of 2025 - or how that would impact the wider ecology.

Proposed to work with
200
artists

Proposed to reach
110,000
visitors

* Calculations from previous years submitted to Arts Council England

HOW WE MATCHED OUR ORIGINAL PROPOSAL

Part 1: Ambition

Without prompt, the most common word used to describe Independents Biennial 2025 by artists and audiences was “ambition”.

It is clear from the feedback that some felt that was best described as over-ambition, though the majority of artists felt that they were in a better place in their career after the festival than before it, and most survey responders reflected on how it had pushed their practice to new places.



Part 2: Environment

Independents Biennial received £16,000 worth of materials and exhibition equipment for free. All of this apart from timber has been retained. The timber has been repurposed by local artists for further exhibition.

A survey of standard electrics in the gallery spaces used is reported on in the Environment section of the evaluation in full and prompts future actions as it was beyond budget to support this scale of development on a venue-by-venue basis this year.

That section also maps audience and artist transport to and from venues, during installation, and when visiting events. An initially proposed partnership with Merseyrail did not come to fruition, but the results (almost equally mixed between car, train, bus, walking and cycle) show a significant need for this partnership in future.

In Numbers:

- 470+ artists actively engaged. 800 artists participating. This is over twice as many as any previous edition.
- 203,000 audiences through doors. 1.5m audiences total including public realm. This is over twice as many as any previous edition.
- 72 exhibition and event venues. 103 total venues, including print and performance. This is more than any previous edition.
- 206 events. Of which, most were exhibitions with multiple-day runs. This is 50% higher than any previous edition.

In Numbers:

- £16,000 worth of materials donated for free. These came from partners, audience members and individual artists. It included timber, wall paint, projectors, mixing decks, and two kilns. That was the entire material spend.
- 0.9kg of carbon per visitor. Combining artist & audience transport with venue listing & AV kWh.

Part 3: Access

Em Williamson, an intern from University of Liverpool led an access review, supporting commissioned artists with access requests. They also built a free guide for all of our venues to consider free or cheap accessibility improvements that could be made to each venue.

This did not have the desired impact this year, but the venues have all reviewed what should be put in place which is particularly important for the smaller artist-led spaces. It has also led to a more routine representation of access per venue for their general event listings through Art in Liverpool.

Where relevant, this now includes guides to step access, toilet facilities and whether or not galleries have hearing loop or quiet spaces. This information meant that disabled visitors were able to contact us to request necessary access facilities for their visit to these venues.

It was also a significant access requirement put in place by the festival team, that bursaries were made available to artists in income support. The majority of these were Universal Credit recipients.

Part 4: Identity

Identity falls under ambition to some extent, but due to a full brand review and much clearer narrative on what Independents Biennial is in its own right, as opposed to its relationship to Liverpool Biennial, do require acknowledgment in this evaluation.

Invigilating volunteers reported that visitors to venues, particularly in Port Sunlight and Belle Vale, were unaware of either Liverpool Biennial or Independents Biennial. Their visit was therefore more significant as a representation the region's art scene, as it was in many cases their first visit to a gallery, and first approach of a biennial.

Andrew Shaw led the brand development project, looking back at a 25 year archive to build a coherent, recognisable identity for the festival programme, which encouraged visitors to understand the history of the festival, and how it had got to this point (important given that the previous two editions were interrupted by COVID and missed funding respectively).

Coming out of 2025 with a confidence on how to talk about and represent Independents Biennial is a huge success on this front, and helped to achieve all of the above goals.

In Numbers:

- ***61% of the artists in the festival were in receipt of income support benefits. Where possible, they were supported for production or transport costs so that they could complete their work.***
- ***14% of artists identified as having a physical disability.***
- ***35% of artists identified as having a cognitive disability or neurodivergence.***
- ***Unfortunately, this data was not collected from audiences.***

In Numbers:

- ***Social media engagement rose by 66%***
- ***Traditional media coverage sunk by 15%***
- ***7,271 visitors to Tracing the Independents Biennial at Bluecoat between June and September. The exhibition charted the archive and changing identity of the festival since 1999.***

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"Independents Biennial is a festival of contemporary art across the Liverpool City Region."

That tagline ran through this year, and is the first year that posters, promotional material and website left out 'Liverpool Biennial' from Independents Biennial's own branding. The international festival remains hugely important to its success, and identity, as a key and supportive partner of the Independents Biennial programme. However, as a regional festival, there is a clear separation between Independents and Liverpool Biennial in purpose and output.

For much of the Independents Biennial audience, "Biennial" is not part of their arts dialect, so the festival had to specifically set out to represent each borough based on its own needs. That meant new working relationships with each council, and bespoke production priorities for each.

Below, we will summarise the relationships and outputs per borough, as it helps us to understand both the impact of 2025, and where to improve for 2027.



Convenience Gallery led planning for the identity and shape of Wirral's programme. The programme was then taken forward by the festival team, including some of the volunteers and one intern from University of Liverpool (Bex Gee, who managed the art markets between June and September).

Wirral Council, primarily Beci Hughes, supported the delivery of the programme, venue sourcing, and partnerships.

Port Sunlight Village Trust, via Mike Ward, enabled major exhibition productions across five venues in the village, including a successful launch event.

BIRCH Gallery & Studios, while not a formal part of the production team, managed and produced a significant portion of the programme, well above what is expected or asked of partner venues in what became a transformational part of the festival's output.

Williamson Art Gallery & Museum managed and curated two selected pieces of programme (Artist A + Artist B's 'The Long Haul' and Broken Grey Wires' 'Who Wants Flowers When They're Dead').

Narrative:

Wirral hosted the launch of Independents Biennial 2025. It was also the home of the biggest exhibition, most ambitious meanwhile space, and the majority of regular event programming.

Outside of Liverpool city centre, Wirral had the largest audience and event share of the festival. The programme was produced far further ahead than in other boroughs, largely due to working more actively with Convenience Gallery than with other partners who supported events in other boroughs.

Wirral Council were the most actively involved council in festival planning throughout the R&D and during production, with monthly meetings to update on programme changes, and an open channel of communication when it came to paying for specific events or bolstering commissions outside of the existing budget.

Actions from working in Wirral:

It is clear that Independents Biennial needs to assess the transport infrastructure and festival programming to avoid clashes with other boroughs to ensure better attended events and private views. When working with council venues, there also needs to be much earlier action on comms to make more of council promotional avenues.

In Numbers:

- *22 venues were in Wirral*
- *244 artists showed their work in Wirral*
- *7177 hours of open exhibitions/events were in Wirral*
- *£16,000 of commissioning went to Wirral*
- *31,615 visitors attended Wirral events*



St Helens Arts in Libraries commissioned several artists, aided in the delivery of one of the core festival commissions (Callan Waldron-Hall and Jacques Verkade), and supported in venue planning for the festival more widely.

The World of Glass gallery also directly curated and installed all of the work in their own gallery, supporting marketing widely across the borough, including several pieces in local press and through council channels.

Narrative:

A large proportion of match funding came from St Helens Arts in Libraries, who redirected and increased their commission pot for 2025 to provide more support and higher fees to artists, enabling the majority of them to engage in multiple events.

The St Helens commissioned artists provided printed goods for the festival launch in Wirral, with Joao Cohello attending multiple market events as a seller and workshop leader.

There was a proposal to work with more library venues for events during the festival, and to site public commissions around the borough, which didn't happen. These conversations have already begun for 2027.

Actions from working in St Helens:

Significantly earlier planning time, particularly on public sculpture or billboard works, which would have helped to promote the wider festival and increase inter-borough audience visiting.

In Numbers:

- **2 venues were in St Helens**
- **14 artists showed their work in St Helens**
- **1032 hours of open exhibitions/events were in St Helens**
- **£12850 was spent in St Helens**
- **16,890 visitors attended St Helens events**



Hazlehurst Studios were the only partner in Halton, and all events in the borough happened at Hazlehurst as extensions of their own programme.

Narrative:

In the planning stage, Halton is highlighted as a priority borough to build relationships with. It was noted in the funding proposal that one venue in Halton would be an improvement on previous editions. This was achieved, but it led to an isolated portion of programme that wasn't on most audiences radars, or in the knowledge of artists engaged elsewhere.

Artists in Halton were more aware of the programme outside their own borough, and the council has now invited Art in Liverpool, as Independents Biennial, to sit on various commission selection panels and help in future planning for culture in the borough.

This is a huge improvement in the relationship with the council, and will help to inform the next edition.

Actions from working in Halton:

Independents Biennial is building a working relationship with Halton Council with a view to placing commissioned work in the borough in 2027. There are also new conversations about meanwhile space similar to Birkenhead Market events and Hilbre Island's programme.

Hazlehurst will be in the next stage of their own development in 2027. This might mean more exhibition space, or less while works are ongoing.

In Numbers:

- *2 venues were in Halton*
- *4 artists showed their work in Halton*
- *2412 hours of open exhibitions/events were in Halton*
- *£6000 was spent in Halton*



Rule of Threes advised on the development of the Sefton programme. This led to a focus on Bootle in the planning stages.

Andrea Watts & Garry McCartney from Sefton Council led the partnership with Sefton Council.

Lizz Brady (Broken Grey Wires) continues to develop new space for 2027.

Narrative:

The Sefton programme was very limited in 2025, due to Independents Biennial's late submissions of interest. However, there

In Numbers:

- *5 venues were in Sefton*
- *17 artists showed their work in Sefton*
- *3584 hours of open exhibitions/events were in Sefton*
- *£4,300 was spent in Sefton*
- *10,420 visitors attended Sefton events*

are more long-term projects that have come out of maintained conversations with the council and individual artists/producers, which will lead to the borough likely having the strongest programme presence in 2027.

There are several significant programme partners in Sefton who will need increased support, as well as significantly more planning time for 2027. These include council ventures, community groups and artist-led projects. All were involved in 2025, but their public presence was limited.

Actions from working in Sefton:

Sefton is physically the longest borough in the region. It's geography is disparate, and planning a borough-wide programme without the council is virtually impossible.

Independents Biennial is working on and supporting several large projects due to launch in 2027, in partnership with the council.



Heart of Glass were listed as Knowsley Producers, but due to unforeseen circumstances could not complete their project. This output was replaced by support from Shakespeare North Playhouse.

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council funded events that enhanced the public presence of already commissioned artists.

Narrative:

Knowsley had very limited festival activity. The majority was council programming, shifted to align with the festival.

There are reflections on that type of programming later in the evaluation, as it blurs the narrative of the festival. Audiences are generally unaware that the events are aligned or linked, and over reliance on each-other's marketing strands leads to under-marketing from both.

Actions from working in Knowsley:

Independents Biennial needs to develop a separate Knowsley Strategy. The suggested initial outcomes of that are an artist-led studio space in Kirkby or Prescott with some public programme, and links to public trails feeding into St Helens via Prescott, Liverpool via Huyton or Sefton via Kirkby.

This would be helped by clearer funding commitments from the council.

In Numbers:

- *4 venues were in Knowsley*
- *16 artists showed their work in Knowsley*
- *24 hours of open exhibitions/events were in Knowsley*
- *£500 was spent in Knowsley*
- *55 visitors attended Knowsley events (incomplete survey responses)*



There is an existing relationship with various parts of Liverpool City Council supporting new strands for 2027, and those conversations continued through the 2025 programme.

Churches directly supported the development of their own programme, supporting marketing and promotion as well as artist-liaison roles. This was a significant and unexpected partnership.

Bridewell Studios and The Royal Standard both managed their own programmes independently.

Narrative:

There was no strategy for working with Liverpool as it has always been core to Independents Biennial. However, the aim was to increase the number of artist-led gallery spaces in the city, which was achieved.

Through commissioning the development of The Rat Shack and improvement works to CBS Gallery, the festival added two additional gallery spaces, which have been retained, and are now available for artists to work with year-round.

The new partnership with Liverpool's churches offered three venues for 2025, which hosted commissioned and non-commissioned work, thanks to, Producer, Jayne Lawless who led that partnership. That relationship has been retained with conversations ongoing about working with churches and multi-faith groups in 2027.

Actions from working in Liverpool:

Improve funding situation from Liverpool City Council and LCR Combined Authority. There was no funding from these sources despite the majority of festival output happening in the city centre, and the most significant long-term impacts being shared between Liverpool and Wirral. The priority for improving funding in 2027 should be seeking funds from Liverpool City Council and the Combined Authority.

CBS, The Royal Standard and Bridewell Studios produced a large amount of programme on the festival's behalf. They were not paid to do that. Effort has to be made to increase funding for staff/managers of these spaces so that they can continue to help facilitate festival work, as well as bolstering their own position.

OUTPUT Gallery, who did not feature in the 2025 programme require space to continue their work. This significantly improves artists' ability to be ambitious, working with a nationally significant gallery. Sadly, they are without a venue, meaning one of the aims for 2027 should remain sourcing one for them.

In Numbers:

- **34 venues were in Liverpool**
- **269 artists showed their work in Liverpool**
- **8514 hours of open exhibitions/events were in Liverpool**
- **£65,000 was spent in Liverpool**
- **329,984 visitors attended Liverpool events**



*R☆ IN M*RS*FSId*

At the start of the festival there were 14 artist-led studios in Liverpool City Centre. At the end there were 16. There are more planned, and in development as a direct outcome of meanwhile spaces set up for Independents Biennial 2025.

Independents Biennial supported the ambition of artists through finance, space and developmental support. This has led to a more confident and more active art scene, albeit one that is fatigued at the end of an active summer.

This section narrates reported figures and narrative from artists, venues and partner organisations involved in Independents Biennial 2025. It seeks to present the role of Independents Biennial and is therefore the most important part of this evaluation for future planning.

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One of the festival artists put this very well: "Independents Biennial supports the independent art scene, it isn't the whole independent art scene."

Independents Biennial tried in 2025 to move away from the listing programmes of 2018, 2021 and 2023., instead focussing on presented curated work, and selected programme. There were points in the programme that failed that:

- Serious Nonsense Festival
- Liverpool Art Fair
- Arena at 40
- Asylum Link at Bridewell

While these events were included in the programme by request, the artists involved did not know they were part of the programme.

The rest of the programme was led by strategy. Every event was part of a whole that supported the development either of artists, venues or audiences. These events were included as habit and didn't their inclusion didn't benefit the artists or organisers.

☆H* V*NV*S

There were 72 event and exhibition venues in Independents Biennial 2025. 102 venues if including transient performance venues, tours and print distribution (outside of usual Art in Liverpool distribution).

All but two venues said they had increased audiences during Independents Biennial 2025.



Independents Biennial published two call outs. One for commissions, the other for self-funded work to be supported by free exhibition/event space or planning support. 470 of the artists engaged in the festival received some tangible benefit in the form of space, materials, AV kit, or funding.

Independents Biennial has, since 1999, been the first public exhibition on most local artists' CVs. This year included partnerships with Liverpool Hope University, LJMU, and University of Liverpool to ensure that recent graduates were actively involved in the programme. The most direct outcome of this were the internships from University of Liverpool, though five of the MA Performance students from Liverpool Hope took part in multiple events across the programme.

Independents Biennial also invited artists from around the UK to be part of the programme. These were not funded from the central pot, which was ring-fenced to support local artists. Instead, they were supported using other funds, primarily Wirral Council, or with joint funding bids to other bodies, with the funding going directly to them (Broken Grey Wires, Michelle Wren).

This was noted in the original proposal to Arts Council England, that engaging artists and studios from outside Merseyside would further support the ambition of local artists by fostering new connections outside the city where many artists reported they'd "finished the game". They'd exhibited everywhere here and run out of new spaces to show.

Tackling that requires long-term connections with multiple studios outside Liverpool, and potentially outside the UK to make the next stages of artists' careers easier to achieve.

In Numbers

- **40 commissioned artists**
- **28 artists supported by independent funding with Art in Liverpool as partners**
- **470 artists actively engaged in the festival with direct contact with organisers and staff**
- **800 artists in total (note the above narrative about affiliated programme)**



MATERIALS & CARBON

This section of evaluation considers the environmental impact of Independents Biennial, the effectiveness of planning and promotion in the recruitment stages of the festival, and crucially the breakdown of significant transport partnerships which may have helped in reducing personal transport for audiences.

Both sections of the below evaluation are based on data from a diverse mix of the venues we worked with (28% of the total venues provided the information used to compile the data below).

Both sections are also the first time this information has been captured so have no comparables. They will be used as benchmarking for 2027.



MATERIALS & CIRCULARITY

The original artist callout for Independents Biennial 2025 asked artists to consider material circularity and travel in their application. This was prompted as a minimum, cost-free, action by the SHIFT Network.

Working with Sanna King to encourage and support the establishment of the Merseyside Circular Arts Network and Circular Materials Library (both projects under development) meant that Independents Biennial events and artists could be used as trial subjects to understand the movement and multiple re-use of materials between events.

59% of all materials used to produced Independents Biennial were from recycled sources (repurposed from previous exhibitions, entirely re-used material, or shared resources).

72% of all exhibition materials was either re-used, recycled or retained after exhibition.

£16,131 worth of materials and exhibition kit was donated by partner venues, individuals (including artists and audience members) or rescued from skips or freecycle. 90% of that material has been retained, and will be used to help in establishing the Circular Arts Network and Materials Library.

In Numbers

- **59% of materials used from recycled sources**
- **72% of exhibitions materials re-used or recycled afterwards**
- **£16,131 of kit and materials sourced on behalf of artists**

CARBON CALCULATIONS

No data of this type had been collected from previous editions. It is therefore not a useful figure to evaluate 2025, instead supporting planning for 2027, either in reducing kWh, encouraging better artist or audience transport habits, or deeper and further encouragement of carbon-use reduction in 2027¹.

Artist & audience travel (combined figures): Total KG/carbon: 213,512kg²

Event & exhibition carbon use (lighting, AV & miscellaneous electricals): Total kWh's represented as KGs of carbon: 1,008kg³

1. *How this data was collected: Surveys (submitted by 18 of 72 building-based venues) / Recorded information (recorded by festival staff in meanwhile venues)*
2. *230,853 visits > average carbon/kg 0.9kg per visitor*
3. *Where 0.233kg is used as the carbon per kWh based on UK-wide averages*

IB 25 IN NUMBERS

☆||* SPREAD

Independents Biennial takes place across six boroughs, at 71 venues and in the public realm. With a combination of exhibitions, workshops, events and trails, the programme is varied enough to give space for both the expected and the unexpected audience. The expected audience knows there is something to book. Whether they subscribe to a newsletter, or they spot it on social media, this audience plans their excursion. The unexpected audience discovers it by chance. With work in both the public realm and in private spaces, there is a chance for audiences to visit both purposefully and accidentally.

Events help to draw audiences in, they help to encourage an artist to engage with their audience and explain or explore their work through a fresh lens. In terms of accessibility, an events programme can help an audience to uncover an exhibition or arts project. With a focus on bringing art to communities, the IB events programme allows for audiences to meet the artists working within their community. This is a valuable experience for both artist and audience, breaking down barriers and helping to share stories and experiences. There was an average of two events per venue, and 132 events across the programme. With an average of four artists per event, and around eight artists per venue, it allows for a spread of artistic engagement with audiences across Liverpool City-Region.

In total, the festival was “open” for 23,903 hours with an average of 115 hours per event.

	Venues	Events	Artists	Audience
Halton	2	2	4	20
Knowsley	2	3	14	220
Liverpool	34	61	266	149,298
Sefton	5	11	20	13,025
St Helens	5	6	18	16,890
Wirral	22	45	244	31,615

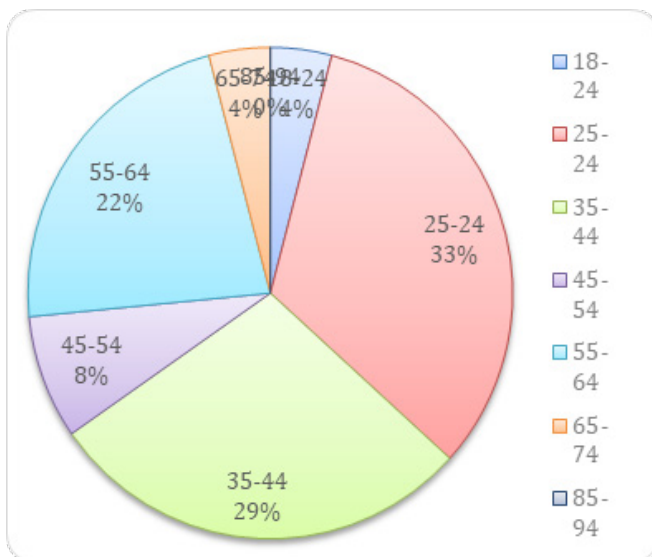
The Independents Biennial programme exists to provide a platform for the art created by artists living and working in the six boroughs of Liverpool City Region.

There are 22 commissions, which are applied for via an open call and then selected by a panel from the city-region's arts community. These commissions provide the spine of the programme, reflecting the wide range of artistry from each of the boroughs.

Alongside this core programme, the Independents Biennial programme features work and activity already existing in the city-region. A Biennial year provides a focal point and a moment for the arts community to communicate with wider audiences. Many arts venues enhance their programme during a Biennial year, to provide a wider showcase of the arts on offer throughout the year. As a funder and a platform, the Independents Biennial is open and accessible. Events taking place within the timeframe of the festival are added to the wider programme and are advertised and promoted across our channels to audiences.

In total there were 480+ artists as part of Independents Biennial 2025. A survey and evaluation process with responses from 10% of the 480 artists involved provided detailed demographics for the artists engaged in the festival.

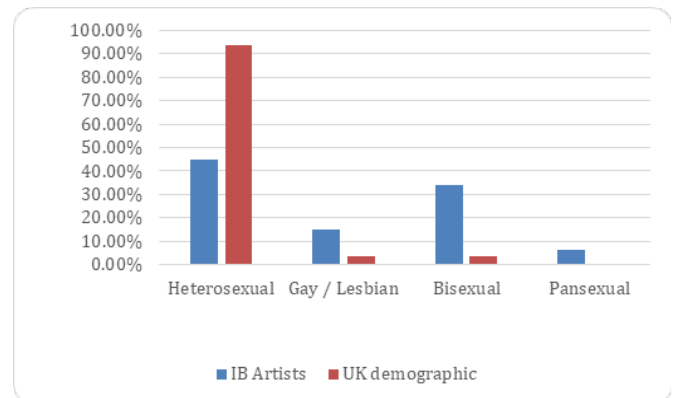
Artist Age Range



25-44 was, significantly, the largest age range of artists in Independents Biennial 2025. This reflects the average age of working artists in the region.

A report published by Art in Liverpool in 2020 explored career drop in artists aged 40-60, later returning to the arts post-retirement. One ambition of 2025 was to increase representation amongst older artists and reengage artists from early editions of the festival, which accounts for the higher 55-64 age range in the chart above.

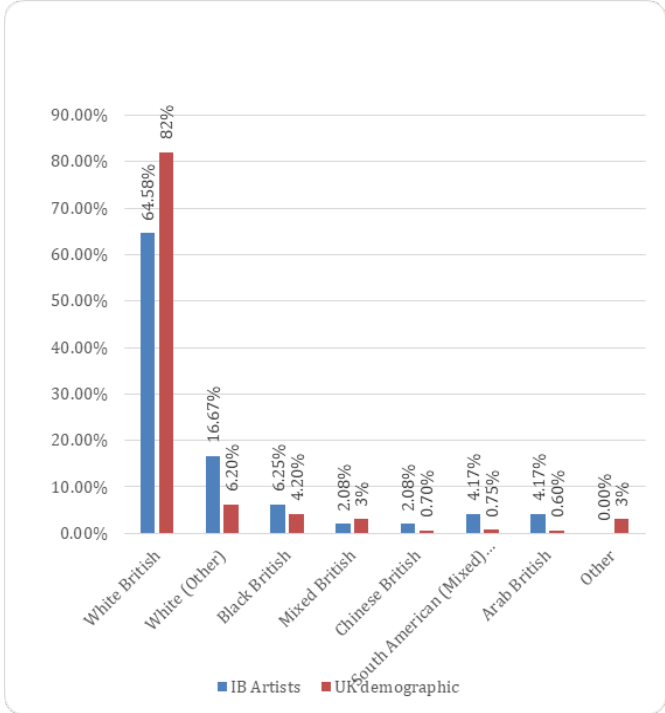
Artist Sexuality



As with above survey results, artists were given open text boxes to complete this section of the form, rather than tick boxes – which IB have previously used from gov.uk recommendations for data capture, leaving out some ethnic groups and some sexuality groups.

In 2025, that meant a more accurate representations of the arts in Merseyside could be presented in this data, with more artists (across age al age groups) identifying as Bisexual or Pansexual than UK demographics presents.

Artist Ethnicity

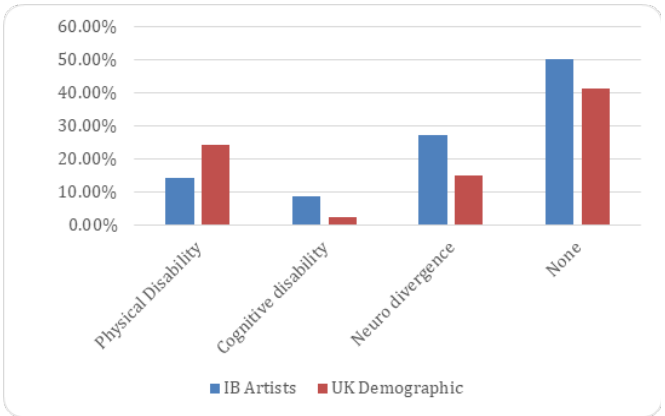


Artists were given an open text field to report ethnicity, gender and sexuality below, to support more open reporting. This meant that 'Mixed' ethnicity could be more focussed on specific groups with higher than UK average populations in Liverpool.

Arab artists and South American artists are well represented by peer festivals including Liverpool Arab Arts Festival and La Feria. Recruitment for Independents Biennial was shared with these organisations, which may have contributed to the higher-than-demographic representation.

'Mixed British' and 'White British' were the only ethnicities under-represented by the festival. This is a positive step towards more active representation, which is hoped will positively impact audience diversity, and engagement in the arts more widely.

Artist Disability

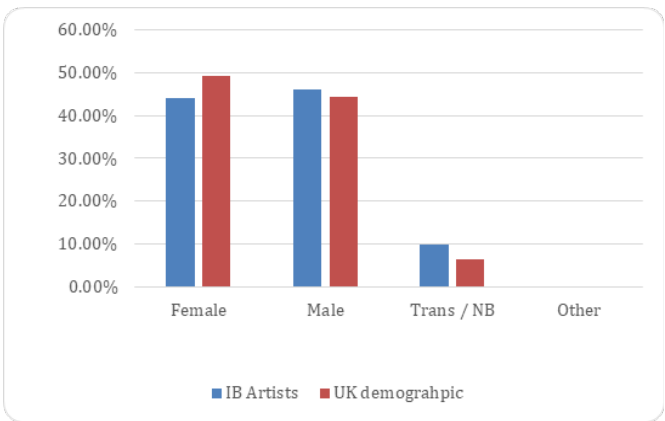


UK demographics for disabled adults do vary, with records showing 40-50% without any disability (UK working age population). The festival's artists met this at 40%, though in the artists identifying as disabled there is a weighting towards neurodivergence and cognitive disability and an underrepresentation of artists with physical disabilities.

In the festival's artis calls, there efforts were made for application processes to be accessible for neurodivergent applicants.

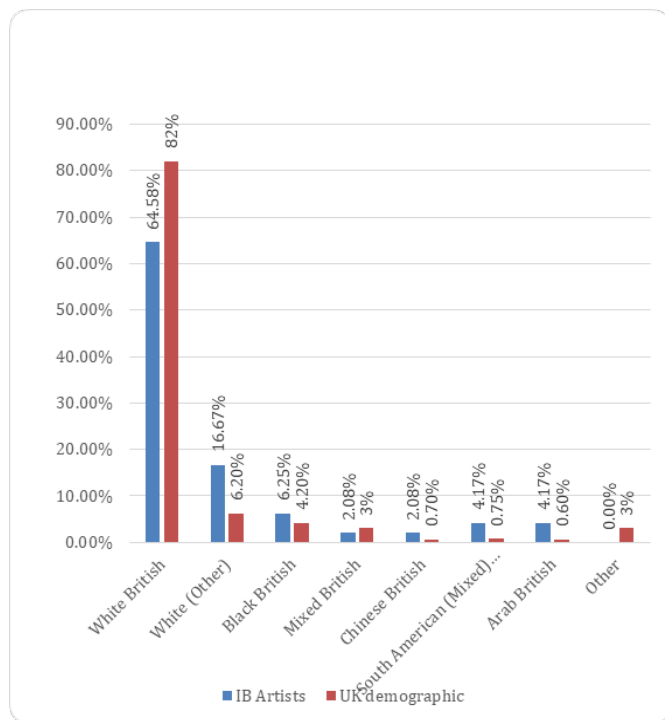
In the festival's proposals, one objective was to improve venue access for physical disability. This was not widely achieved, and is marked as an action for development and may help to improve representation of artists with physical disabilities of all kinds.

Artist Gender



Capturing gender identity in the same method as ethnicity offers other challenges, and potentially inaccurate data, but similarly to other underrepresented data groups, trans / non-binary gender identities are represented above UK average in the artist cohort of Independents Biennial 2025.

Artist Education Levels

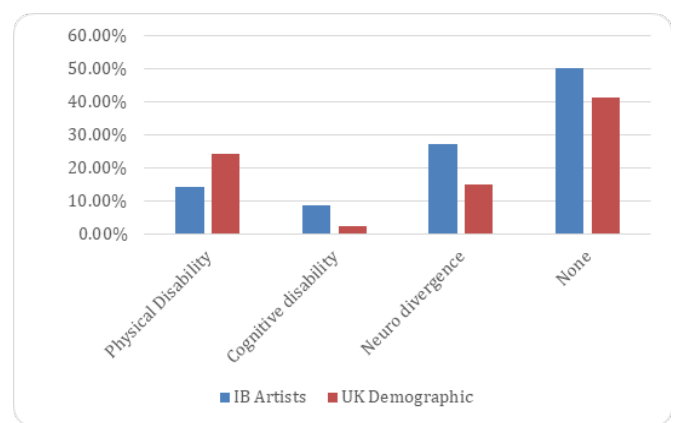


Independents Biennial captured education level data for two reasons; to understand the art world better, and to understand how it can better improve access to the arts more widely, particularly for working class artists who have yet to enter the art world.

50% of the UK population have GCSE or A Level (Level 1 and 2-3) as their highest level of qualification. 100% of artists who responded to the survey had a qualification of Level 3 (Foundation / BTEC), if not higher.

The highest proportion of respondents have Postgraduate qualifications, implying that artists in Merseyside. We will reference this in more detail against artist rates of pay later in this evaluation, but the section that follows this is an immediate reflection on the disparity between education levels and earnings in the arts in the North West.

Artist Financial Support (UK Benefits)



Income support benefits are not the most accurate reflection of earnings, with child support, veterans support, PIP and other benefits not necessarily reflecting earnings. However, 49% of UK adults are in receipt of some form of benefit (this data is also presented as 'UK Households' in government reporting so could be higher or lower).

Significantly though, artists in Merseyside are well-qualified, with a much-higher-than-average education level. More than 50% with postgraduate degrees in the previous chart. Of that, 52% of Independents Biennial artists are in receipt of benefits.

In contrast nationally, 5% of UK postgraduates¹ are in receipt of Universal Credit (600,000 according to a recent report²).

1. [UK adults with postgraduate degrees: 11 million. 600,000 in receipt of UC.](#)
2. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/c7cfb5c7-de14-4bef-83ee-195890a3e476>

There are multiple ways Independents Biennial funds its programme. The majority is through grant funding, managed as commissions or distrusted to artists on income-support benefits to cover costs.

The rest is made up of:

1. Direct-spending. This is investment from partners or local councils in projects specific to Independents Biennial. It might be commissioning artists to work in a borough or produce workshops alongside Independents Biennial events, or the production of print campaigns for example.
2. Independently funded. This is artists, collectives and groups working with Art in Liverpool C.I.C. to raise funds for projects that exceed the festival budget. This is typically for exhibition production or ongoing project costs. In 2025, the two largest examples of this were Broken Grey Wires 'Who Wants Flowers When They're Dead' and Michelle Wren's 'Put Your Feet in My Shoes'.

What has never previously been calculated though is the actual value of time spent on the festival, from partner venues, and by artists themselves. This year that was calculated and is therefore included in value calculations below to properly credit the contribution of artists and organisers involved.

Independents Biennial is funded by Arts Council England and receives funding from three of the six local authorities in Liverpool City Region. The level of funding in this iteration of the festival has enabled us to engage a wider number of artists, offering paid roles for artists and producers. It has also, crucially, enabled us to pay artists for projects in development and exhibition stages. Artists need to be paid for more ideas, that time they spend meeting, thinking, talking, exploring and discovering. Artists have repeatedly told us during this festival that we have empowered them to talk to other artists, to create work and to put those conversations into artists and curators in motion. This, like a garden that is regularly tended, will continue to bear fruit over the coming years.

We funded a total of 22 commissions. Alongside these commissions we supported a variety of artist projects and endeavours; this may have been through funding space or materials. In some instances we were able to step in to ensure projects or exhibitions were delivered when another funder, in one instance an ACE NPO, failed to deliver funding.

In Numbers

Funding (direct to Art in Liverpool C.I.C.):

- ***Arts Council England: £98,000***
- ***Local Authority: £12,000***

Spending (direct on Independents Biennial):

- ***Local Authority: £20,750***

Funding to partners & artists for projects not through Art in Liverpool C.I.C.):

- ***Total figure : £98,000***

Total cash invested in Merseyside's artists for Independents Biennial: £329,750
Of that, £50,410 was spent on staffing.

The lack of alternative funding sources for other projects or events was keenly felt this time around. In many instances, Independents Biennial was the only funded organisation who was both communicative and actively willing to support artists to ensure events took place. This meant that we were able to spend in both artist fees but also in helping to provide costs for transport, materials, exhibition space and tools, goods and services, marketing and other associated costs.



Artist & Venue
Contributions

*R☆IS☆ & V*NNV* ©♡N☆RI B V☆I♡NS

Independents Biennial is an opportunity to unite an entire network of creates, working independently in their own practice and behind gallery walls.

This year, we wanted to ensure that the behind-the-scenes work of artists was reflected truthfully in our evaluation, so requested hours worked by commissioned and non-commissioned artists, as well as from venues we worked with.

Something on the engagement scale of Independents Biennial requires huge amounts of energy and ambition from all involved. This year, that was very visibly enhanced, and artists took it to heart, working about 40 hours each as a minimum on new work for the programme. It is important that that is shared with funders and partners with influence in the hope that it offers a clearer understanding of what 'ambition' means in monetary terms - particularly when that effort is not evidencible as match funding.

In Numbers

£74,957

*value of total hours worked
by gallery staff if calculated
at Living Wage*

£871,953

*value of total hours worked
by artists if calculated at Liv-
ing Wage*

Ind*P*nd*ns B I * n n i * l '25



Thanks to the artists, curators, producers:

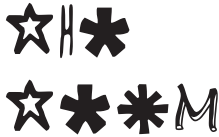
Abbie Bradshaw, Adaesi Ukairo, Adam Cain, Adam Thomas, Afloat Theatre, Agnes Becker, Alan Dunn, Alex Davies, Alex De Vol, Alex Norman, Alex Russell, Alfred Beesley, Alicia Burley, Alison Bailey-Smith, Alison Reid, Amanda Oliphant, Amelia Warbis, Ami Koya, Amodali, Amy Flynn, Amy Mizrahi, Ana Leonor Rodrigues, Ana Mendieta, Andia Coral Newton, Andreea Mate, Andrew Mellow, Andrew Shaw, Andy McFadden, Angela Wilkinson, Angelo Madoinna, Anglea Stringer, Ann Catrin Evans, Anna Jane Houghton, Annabet Wyndham, Anne-Marie Atkinson, Anastasia Doran, Anthony Gribbin, Anticool, Antony Connelley, Aous Hamous, Arianna Sansone, Arthur Roberts, Ashley Caruso, Ashley Holmes, Asylum Link Merseyside, Athena Jones, Aylo Nomad, Baked A La Sk, Barabara Cheney, Barbara Jones, Becca Rauer, Beesley Huskisson, Belinda Yee, Ben Youdan, Bex Gee, Bill Dietz, Bill Drummond, Bludgeonem, Bridget Bailey, Brigitte Jurack, Bryan Biggs, Buried Barghest, Caitlin Hegarty, Callan Waldron-Hall, Candy Chang, Carol Emmas, Carole Dawber, Caroline Brown, Caroline Gorrick, Casey Orr, Cath Garvey, Chandana Das, Charli Kleeman, Charlotte Corrie, Chelsea Johnson, Cheryl Lewis, Chiz Turnross, Chris Jenkins, Chris Jones, Chris Reynolds, Chris Roberts, Chris Shaw Hughes, Christopher Mulray, Claire Beerjeraz, Claire Chinnery, Claire Rachel Umney, Claire Weetman, Clare Pitt, Claude Platzer, Cliff Hughes, Colette Lilley, Colette Whittington, Colm Moore, Comics Youth CIC, Common Folk, Conner Browne, Cook Au Van, Cos Ahmet, Craig Sinclair, Cristina Celestini, Dan Nightingale, Dan Waine, Daniel Davies, Daniel Meakin, Daniel O'Dempsey, Danielle De La Wonk, Danielle Freakley, Dave Venables, Davey Whitcraft, David Atkinson, David Blandy, David Brown, David Hicks, Dawn West, Deb Kemp, DJCD, Dolly Sen, Donalds O'Neil, Dongni Liang, Dorota Modlinger, Dr Joanna Leah, Dr Maria MacLennan, Dr Rowena Gander, Dylan Barr, Ekaterina Mandor, Eleanor Capstick, Elena Platt, Elizabeth Longwill, Elizabeth Willow, Ella Lockley, Ellen Harrold, Elias Eyo Thompson, Ellie Hoskins, Elodie Horsewell, Emily Simpson, Emily Tull, Emma Deaton, Emma Rodgers, Emma Tod, Emma Worth, Evie Wilson, Ewan James Knight, Faith Bebbington, Fancy Pants, Faye Richardson-Highnett, Felicity Bithell, Felicity Clear, Fergus Garrett, Finn Roberts, Fiona Filby, Fiona Philipps, Fiona Stirling, Francesca Fryer, Frank Linnett, Frankie Gold, Freddy Franké, Gail Howard, Gary Finnegan, Gary Sollars, Gary William Myatt, Gee Collins, Gelatin Collective, George Evans, George Grace Gibson, George Metu-Onyeka, Georgia Ruby, Georgina Tyson, Gerrit Handl, Gethin Ceidog Hughes, Gwendolin Kircali, Gilliam Dyson, Giulia Quaresima, Gregory Herbert, Gurinder Kumar, Halyna Maystrenko-Grant, Han Feng, Hannah Browne, Hannah Finchan, Hanne Dale, Harri Harrison, Harriet Morley, Harry Garner, Harry Mytton, Heather Mullender-Ross, Heavy Digestations, Helen Breach, Helen Cass, Helen Cooper, Helen Eger, Helen Kilbride, Holly Herring, Idit Nathan, Ilona Skladzien, Isaac Green, Isobel Cawley, Isobel Jane Kimberley, Ivett Szabo, Ivy Kalungi, Izzy Major, Jackie Haynes, Jacob Chan, Jacques Verkade, Jacqui Barrowcliffe, Jacqui Futers, Jaden Vanezis, Jay Hampton, James Hallinan, James Lawler, Jamie Kirk, Jane Walsh, Janet Holmes, Jasleen Kaur, Jasmir Creed, Jason Jones, Jay Chesterman, Jayne Casey, Jayne Lawless, JC Leisure, Jean Maskel, Jean Smith, Jeff Gilgannon, Jeffrey Knopf, Jennifer Hale, Jennifer-Louise Wilcox, Jennifer Reese, Jenny Porter, Jessica Loveday, Jill Eastland, Jo Mary Watson, Jo Mo, Joao Coelho, Joe Brooks, John Bond, John Elcock, John Steele, John Williamson, Johnny Vegas, Jon Barraclough, Jon Davies, Jonathon Beaver, Jordan Rodgers, Jordy, Joseph Hulme, Joshua Henderson, Jude Kershaw, Judith Railton, Julia James-Turner, Julian Gillespie, Karema Munassar, Karen Edwards, Kate Atkin, Kate Baddeley, Katherine James, Kathryn Poole, Kathryn Raven, Katie Taylor, Katriona Beales, Kaye Hodges, Kazem Ashourzadeh, Keira Blundell, Kelly Cumberland, Keris C, Keziah Thomas-Mellor, Kim Harley Griffiths, Kimberly Keogh, Komal Madar, KOZ, Lara Jennings, Laura Aquilina, Lawrie Vause, Leah Foulkes, Lela Harris, Leo Fitzmaurice, Les Weston, Lewis McVey, Liam Bononi, Lilly K, Lily Patricija, Ling Warlow, Lisa Robinson, Liss Flanagan, Liverpool Art Fair, Liverpool Book Art, Liverpool Shanty Choir, Lizz Brady, Lizzie Thurman, Locate International, Loise Laveback, Lola de la Mata, Lou Scott-Turner, Louise Loakes, Louise Pallister, Louise Waller, Luciana Hermida, Lucienne Cole, Lucy Byrne, Lucy Wilson, Luke Skiffington, Lupini, Lynda Lee, Lynda Roberts, M. Lohrum, Madeleine Pires, Maeve Marta, Mai Mai, Mai Sanchez, Maia Lys, Maja Lorkowska-Callaghan, Manual Coelho, Marcelina Amelia, Mariana Sequera, Marie-Sofie Braune, Marina Diamantidi, Mark Clay, Mark McNulty, Mark Titchner, Markus Soukup, Martin Dawber,

Mary Bryning, Mary Freaney, Mary Pearson, Mary Prestige, Maryruth Walsh, Max Eugeni, Megan Glyn, Mercedes Lucy, Mia Tagg, Mic, Michael Lacey, Michelle Wren, Mohan Welstand Keryk, Molly Mousdell, Mother Collective, Motion House, Nachda Sansaar, Nacho Yunis, Nam J Huh, Naomi Kendrick, Natalie Gilmore, Nate Evans, Neave Hodgson-Ali, Neil Prior, Nicholas Shearon, Nick Kennedy, Nicki McCubbing, Nicky Perrin, Nicole Bartos, Nina Edge, Noel Jones, Noel Molloy, Norman Tomlinson, Onur Orkut, Ottman Said, Paddy Gould, Pam Griffiths, Parham Ghalamdar, Patric Rogers, Patrick Downie, Patrick Kirk-Smith, Paul Evans, Paul Fitzpatrick, Paula Kolar, Pei Tong, Penny Davenport, Peter Hayes, Peter Holland, Philippe Briade, Phill Campbell, Phoebe Thomas, Piotr Marchewka, Polly Moseley, Pop Vox Choir, Port Sunlight Village & Works Crown Green Bowling Club, Portiphillio, Powered by Hip Hop, Priya Foster, Queen Beyard, Queensway Collective, Rachel James, Rachel Welford, Rae McMahon, Ram Samocha, Rankin, Rebecca Chesney, Rebecca Day, Red City Disco, Ren, Rex McKenzie, Rhonda Davies, Richard Meaghan, Ritu Arya, Roan Jenkins, Robin Blackledge, Rod Dillon, Roman Vaughan-Williams, Rory Macbeth, Rosa Harradine, Rosey Paul, Roxy Topia, Roy Eastland, Roz Power, Ruairi Valentine, Ruth Ball, Ruth Dillon, Ryan Guage, Ryu Kim, Sam Meech, Sam Waiting, Samantha Madgwick, Sanna King, Sara Wolff, Sarah Adams, Sarah Burns, Sarah Casey, Sarah Jane Richards, Sarah Leader, Sarah Lovell, Sarah Wood, SCA Students, Scouse Flower House, S'cube, Sharon Kelly, Shelley Theodore, Shiro Masuyama, Silk Street Jazz, Silvia Battista, Simon Armstrong, Simon Carrol, Sinead McMullan, Society of Wood Engravers, Soph Donovan, Sophie Casson, Sophie New, Sophie Thomas, Sorrell Kerrison, Splintered Ukes, Stasia Parker, Stephanie Harlow, Stephanie Preston, Stephen Doherty, Steve Lawes, Steve Scull, Sticky Dub, Sue Baker Kenton, Sue Boardman, Sue McLaren, Sufea Mohamad Noor, Susan Flockhart, Susan Lee Brown, Tacitrun Dance Company, Talking Dog, Tanya Bentham, Tash Evans, Terry Duffy, Tess Gilmartin, The Plastik Moods, The Rat Shack, The Singh Twins, Theodora Koumbouzis, Thom Neild, Thomas Eastland, Tilly Foulkes, Tilly Wilkinson, Tim Bones, Tmesis Theatre, Tom Cartmill, Tom Doubtfire, Tom Kelly, Tom Mole, Tom Rooney, Tom Stockley, Tomo, Tony Knox, Tony Phillips, Tracy Hill, University Centre St Helens BA (Hons) Fine Art Painting, University Centre St Helens BA (Hons) Game Art, University Centre St Helens BA (Hons) Graphic Design, University Centre St Helens FdSc Media Production, Ursula Starr, Valentina Passerini, Veronica Watson, Vicki Reiley, Vidah Roberts, Video 2 Nasty, Vincent Lavell, Viv Netherwood, William Lang, William Richardson, Xanthe Tilzey, Xueying Zhang, Yutong Xu, Yuxuan Hou, Zakiya McKenzie, Zayd Menk.

& venues:

24 Hope Street, 50MV, Adelphi Hotel, ArtHouse Gallery, Belle Vale Shopping Centre, Bidston Observatory Artistic Research Centre, BIRCH Studio & Gallery, Birkenhead Market, Bluecoat, Bluecoat Display Centre, Bombed Out Church, Bootle Library, Boys' Brigade Building, Bridewell Studios & Gallery, Bridge Cottage, Cass Art, CBS Gallery & Studios, Cornerstone Gallery, Court Hey Park, Crosby Beach, Daniel Meakin Studio, Dark Earth Records, Dead Ink Bookshop, Dibbinsdale Nature Reserve, District House, dot-art, Dukesfield Murals, Elevator Studios, Everyman Theatre, Exchange Flags, Fort Perch Rock, Hamilton Vault Studios, Hazlehurst Studios, Hilbre Island, INNSiDe by Melia, Kent Street Studios, Kirkby Gallery, Liverpool Central Library, Make Huyton, Make North Docks, Metal Liverpool, Museum of Liverpool, Nettle Café, News From Nowhere Bookshop, Northern Lights, Old International Social Club, Open Eye Gallery, Port Sunlight Village, Prescott Town Centre, Quaker Meeting House, Rathbone Studio, Royal Liver Building, Salt & Tar, Shakespeare North Playhouse, St Bride's Church, St Margaret of Antioch Church, Start Yard, Street and a Half, The Bakery, The Egg Café, The Gallery 30 Templemore Road, The Hatch, The Lake Gallery, The Old Fire Station, The Rat Shack, The Royal Standard, The Stables Port Sunlight, The World of Glass, Victoria Gallery & Museum, Williamon Art Gallery & Museum, and others who hosted multi-venue works and interventions throughout.

Independents Biennial was made possible thanks to funding from Arts Council England, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, University of Atypical, Wirral Council, St Helens Arts in Libraries and Sefton Council and countless hours of support from Liverpool Biennial.



Independents Biennial creates a bespoke team of creatives including producers, volunteer support, event coordinators, marketing and communications. Staff is both flexible and freelance, working a variety of hours per day and week. This includes invigilation, exhibition and event planning, event management, design work, copywriting, and more.

In total, staff worked 5493 hours across the festival. This is valued at £67,070 at National Minimum Wage, £73,881 at Real Living Wage.

The small but dedicated team works across Liverpool City-Region and is at various stages of their creative career. Some work part-time or full-time, balancing festival work alongside other employment commitments. Others have full time careers in the creative industries, adding the Independents Biennial to their portfolio. Others have never worked in the arts before. Some work to share their experience, others to learn.

This flexible structure allows us to deliver a demanding and well received festival, but it means our team is not as protected or as supported as staff at a permanent venue. We know that when our volunteer coordinator is included in an email chain with staff at three local authorities, she might be the only one not on a salaried position, with a pension with the ability to work regulated hours through the day. The economics of the arts means a flexible structure is necessary, but it puts our team at a disadvantage.

In Numbers

40
volunteers

4
staff

8
interns

470
artists actively leading projects or creating new work



The most important number is “actively engaged audience”. The reporting methods used in 2025 have enabled us to provide a much more meaningful breakdown of audiences than typically expected of programme son this scale.

Usually, we report a total audience figure (most recently 160,000 including all public realm viewers, and readers).

In 2025, the total audience was over 1.2m, but the actively engaged portion of that - who walked through gallery doors, read (and kept) publications, attended workshops, or watched performances, was 169,292.

They made a total of 230,853 visits to events.

In total, 1,201,893 attended the Independents Biennial. This includes our incredibly popular launch event, taking over Port Sunlight, our public realm works, exhibitions, events, workshops and more. The average audience per event was 9,678.

Each exhibition or indoor performance event had an average audience of 1847. This emphasises the importance of using public realm works to encourage people to visit arts venues. Crossing that threshold takes confidence within audiences.

Public art is a gateway drug to make communities feel that contemporary art is for them. For artists working within their communities, it is vital they are able to use public art as a launching point to encourage audiences to visit galleries, studios, spaces and venues used for art. This builds a strong relationship of trust and engagement between artists and audiences.

92,341 people visited two events, 46,171 visited three events.

In Numbers

169,292

unique visitors through doors

230,853

visits to events

1.2m

audience total

138,512

visited more than one event



PR*SS, M*dI* *Nd S♡@I*LS

We know that arts media is in decline in Liverpool, so the core promotion technique in terms of engaging with new and existing audiences is via social media. Images and video are the most powerful tools to do this. However, many independent artists struggle with both the knowledge or income to document their work with quality images. Supporting them in this more would help to boost both their profile and our work.

Storytelling and supporting artists to tell their story through social media is an important tool to inform and educate audiences about the range of artists on their doorstep. How we support artists in this core area of career development in the future should be a key component in our development and what we can offer artists.

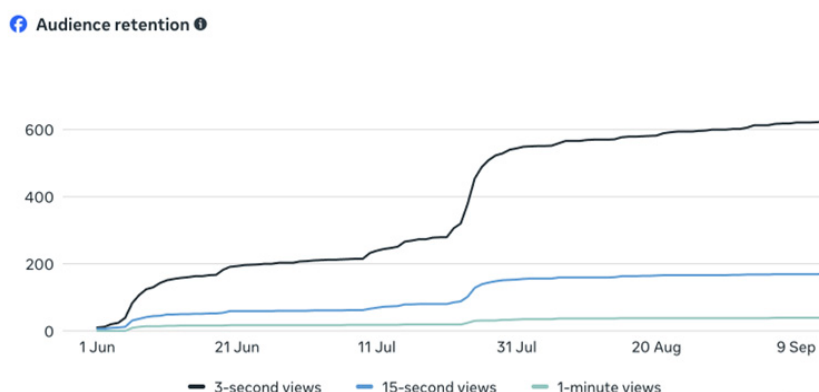
It was an active strategy of the festival this year to empower artists and artist collectives to publish their own content and develop their own platforms. This ensures that the festival can elevate them, not replace them. This is vital because, in fallow years, it means artists are building their own audiences and profiles and we are growing a stronger and more sustainable community.

IN NUMBERS

Facebook

Total Views

23,494 +257.7% From organic 23,494 +257.7%



Instagram

194.6k Views

22.8k Reach

4.1k Content Interactions

Published content

Based on up to 200 pieces of content

+246.0% vs 15 Feb 2025 - 31 May 2025

Stories

500

Posts

192

Artists, bloggers, critical writers and audiences exceeded usual outputs to share reflections on the festival.

This was through a mix of traditional media, blogging and social media. Below is a complete list of coverage relating to Independents Biennial 2025 and associated events:

1. Independents Biennial 2025 "Artist Led Visual Arts Festival Stands on its Own Two Feet", [**Stored Honey**](#)
2. Independents Biennial 2025, "Wirral Welcomes Independents Biennial", [**Wirral View**](#)
3. Independents Biennial: Doing Markets Differently, [**Art in Liverpool**](#)
4. Exhibitions Open in wirral This Month for Independents Biennial, [**Birkenhead News**](#)
5. Major Contemporary Art Festival Coming to Wirral, [**Wirral Globe**](#)
6. Independents Biennial in [**Review, Art in Liverpool**](#)
7. Adelphi: The Living Room [**Review, Liverpool Echo**](#)
8. Adelphi: The Living Room [**Feature, Culture Liverpool**](#)
9. Adelphi: The Living Room [**Review, The Reviews Hub**](#)
10. The Adelphi: The Living Room [**Review, Urbanista**](#)
11. The Adelphi: The Living Room, [**Experience UK**](#)
12. The Adelphi: The Living Room, [**Theatre Reviews North**](#)
13. The Adelphi: The Living Room, [**Stored Honey**](#)
14. ArtHouse: Martin & Carole Dawber, [**Liverpool Echo**](#)
15. ArtHouse: Martin & Carole Dawber, [**QLocal**](#)
16. ArtHouse: Martin & Carole Dawber, [**Southport Reporter**](#)
17. ArtHouse: Drawing With Coal, [**Instytut Polski**](#)
18. ArtHouse: Summer Open, [**Stand Up for Southport**](#)
19. ArtHouse: Art Detective, [**In Your Area**](#)
20. ArtHouse: Art Detective, [**Stand Up for Southport**](#)
21. BIRCH Gallery & Studio: BIRCH Pride, [**Queer Agenda Merseyside**](#)
22. BIRCH Gallery & Studio: Post Analogue Labyrinth VI, [**ArtRabbit**](#)
23. BIRCH Gallery & Studio: Post Analogue Labyrinth VI, [**The Service Station**](#)
24. BIRCH Gallery & Studio: Post Analogue Labyrinth VI, [**Sam Meech Blog**](#)
25. Bluecoat Display Centre: Endangered Craft [**Feature, Uncover Liverpool**](#)
26. Liverpool Biennial Mines the Stuff We're Made Of, [**Liverpool Post**](#)
27. Jude Kershaw [**Blog, Out and About**](#)
28. Boys Brigade Building: Patric Rogers, [**Material Matters**](#)
29. Bridewell: Caroline Gorrick After Hours [**Review, The Double Negative**](#)
30. Bridewell: Caroline Gorrick After Hours [**Review, Liverpool Noise**](#)
31. Bridewell: Caroline Gorrick After Hours [**Review, Explore Liverpool**](#)
32. Culture Diary, June-September, [**The Double Negative**](#)
33. Bridewell: Stories of Solidarity [**Feature, University of Liverpool**](#)
34. Another Dimension of Contemporary Drawing, [**The Double Negative**](#)
35. Bridewell: Drawing Paper Show, [**Blog, Curtis Holder**](#)
36. Bridewell: Drawing Paper Show, [**Liverpool Noise**](#)
37. Bridewell: Drawing Paper Show, [**Blog, Tansy Lee Moir**](#)
38. Bridewell: Drawing Paper Show, [**Blog, Mike Studio**](#)
39. (Multiple Exhibitions/Events included) [**Pink Loud Speaker issue 97**](#)
40. Bridge Cottage: Ellie Hoskins [**Review, Creative Tourist**](#)
41. CBS Gallery: Footnotes [**Blog, Isobel Cawley**](#)
42. CBS Gallery: Slipstream [**Blog, PVerity Substack**](#)
43. Dark Earth Records: Mark Titchner [**Feature, Record Store Day**](#)
44. Fort Perch Rock: Black Rock and Other Wonders [**Blog, Landlines Studio**](#)
45. Fort Perch Rock: Black Rock and Other Wonders [**Feature, Art in Liverpool**](#)
46. Fort Perch Rock: Black Rock and Other Wonders [**Feature, Wirral Globe**](#)
47. Fort Perch Rock: Black Rock and Other Wonders [**Feature, MSN News**](#)
48. Hilbre Island [**Feature, Uncover Liverpool**](#)
49. Hilbre Island [**Feature, Wirral Globe**](#)
50. Hilbre Island [**Feature, BBC News**](#)
51. Hilbre Island [**Feature, West Kirby today**](#)
52. Hilbre Island [**Feature, Liverpool World**](#)
53. Hilbre Island [**Feature, In Your Area**](#)
54. Hilbre Island [**Feature, Birkenhead News**](#)
55. Borderlines Project [**Blog, Shiro Masuyama**](#)
56. Northern Lights: Vincent Lavell [**Feature, Baltic Creative**](#)
57. Independents Biennial Launch [**Feature, Port Sunlight Gazette**](#)
58. St Brides: Put Your Feet in My Shoes [**Feature, Art in Liverpool**](#)
59. Street & A Half: UCSH Degree Show [**Feature, St Helens University**](#)
60. Street & A Half: UCSH Degree Show [**Feature, St Helens Star**](#)
61. The Egg: Paris Toxteth [**Feature, Catalyst Media**](#)
62. St Helens Commission [**News, Arts in Libraries**](#)
63. Victoria Gallery: Brigitte Jurack [**Feature, University of Liverpool**](#)
64. Williamson: Broken Grey Wires [**Review, Creative Tourist**](#)
65. Williamson: Broken Grey Wires [**Review, Corridor8**](#)

*@☆IONS FROM *V*L@*☆ION

This evaluation is a measure of success of 2025, and a pace-setter for 2027.

Artist feedback makes it clear that IB25 produced more programme than could be engaged with, and possibly limited audience share per-event.

It is also clear that there is a disparity in funding with Liverpool city being the biggest beneficiary of IB25 despite no direct funding from LCC or LCR CA.

Concrete actions include seeking funds from LCC and LCR. It is noted that at the time of application to LCC funding rounds ahead of the 2025 programme, Art in Liverpool did not have enough financial evidence to support ongoing funding. Nor did it have evidence to seek higher funding from LCR CA. This evaluation offers evidence to the scale of audience, production and finance required to properly support the infrastructure behind the festival.

There are also staffing changes needed, with roles developing organically through 2025 which will inform clearer responsibilities for staff and freelancers in 2027. It should be a funding priority to provide more paid organisational roles:

Producer split with Development. Marketing split with social media, Volunteer Liaison split with Programme and Artist Liaison.

The remainder of this section is split as identity and structure.

Id*NI☆I☆@: 'B I*NNI*L' *Ncl ☆|* F@☆@R*

It was a key point of R&D in 24/25 to explore the relationship between Independents and Liverpool Biennials. In 2025 this was explored through public programme at Bluecoat, and an archive building project. Now ready to be made live online.

The archive has a heavy hand in shaping the future of this programme, which began in protest but now works in close partnership with Liverpool Biennial.

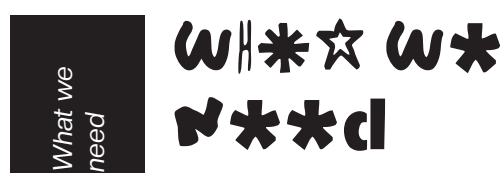
Having produced the first edition which welcomed more audience members than its counterpart, with feedback from volunteers stating a lack of audience awareness of either, Independents Biennial is more responsible for its presence moving forwards. However, that does mean defining a clearer working and public relationship between the two programmes.



One potential separator suggested on artist feedback is to have a legacy programme running after the closing date. This happened informally in 2025, with several artists presenting reflective exhibitions of their 2025 work.

Another would be to ensure independents Biennial dedicates time to developing our partner venues, who collectively put in 5,573 hours of work without pay. This could be a curatorial commission pot, or development bursaries for groups depending on the funding stream that backed it.

The above comes from the fundamental feedback of overstretching staff time, artists' own commitments and of audience fatigue (events through the middle months saw relatively less engagement than those at the beginning or end).



More money, to cover: commissioning that is more reflective of artists' time; staffing reflective of the scale of programme; accessibility measures that level engagement for disabled artists.

The current priority is to formalise Independents Biennial as its own organisation, or move Art in Liverpool CIC to Charitable status so it has the structure and governance needed to move forwards.

While staff actively elect for freelance roles, we do need to encourage payroll so that they are working on a level with their peers. This will require a building of reserves in 2026.

The reserves being set would also reduce the risk associated with grant funding seen in 2025, where artists were paid late or by credit due to external delays with funding.

Above all, we need to develop on our partnerships with local councils, who are the primary supporting bodies, giving significant development and planning time. In most cases this needs to be financial to reflect the benefit IB has on each borough, but it also important to note that the council representatives develop deeper relationships with artists as a result of IB. They are more aware of artist-led spaces and projects as a result of IB. They commission artists for future work as a result of IB.

Ensuring funding bodies and decision makers are aware of what artists are doing in their own backyards is essential to a healthy arts ecology, and is one of the most significant outcomes of IB25, despite being one of the hardest to evidence in data.

25 years

2000+

artists

250+

venues

In Numbers

£770k

additional funding across independent & artist-led spaces over the next two years

15-25

units for long-term use by artists to replace those lost since 2008

INDEPENDENT BIENNIAL '25

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See you in 2027

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