

Busking Guidelines Consultation

Methodology

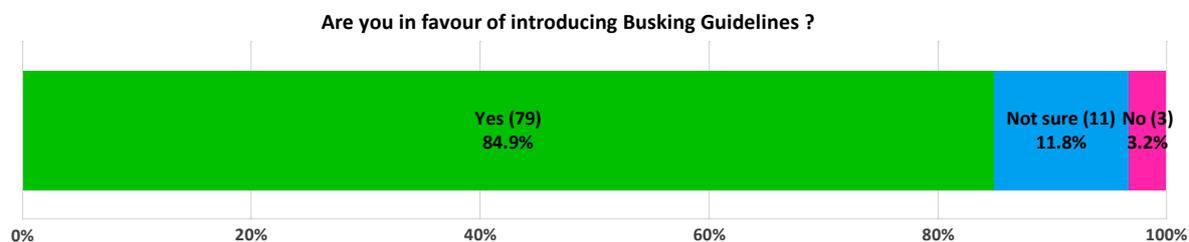
The consultation on the draft busking guidelines was open from 9 September until 1 November. It was promoted online through the Council's website and social media channels. Residents who have signed up for consultation reminders were also notified about the consultation. In addition, residents in receipt of Council Tax Support were emailed and notified of the consultation (as part of a reminder about Council Tax Support Consultation taking place within the same time period).

Participants in the consultation were invited to view the draft guidelines for busking in Maidstone and asked for feedback on them. An online survey is a self-selection methodology, with residents free to choose whether to participate or not. Due to the sample size results have not been weighted.

There was a total of 93 responses. Based on Maidstone's population, aged 18 years and over, overall results are accurate to approximately $\pm 8.5\%$ at the 90% confidence level. This means that if the same survey was repeated 100 times, 90 times out of 100 the results would be between $\pm 8.5\%$ of the calculated response. Therefore the 'true' response could be 8.5% above or below the figures reported (i.e. a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 41.5% to 58.5%).

Introduction of Busking Guidelines

Survey respondents were asked if they were in favour of introducing guidelines for Busking in Maidstone. A total of 93 respondents answered this question.



The most common response was 'Yes' with 79 respondents answering this way.

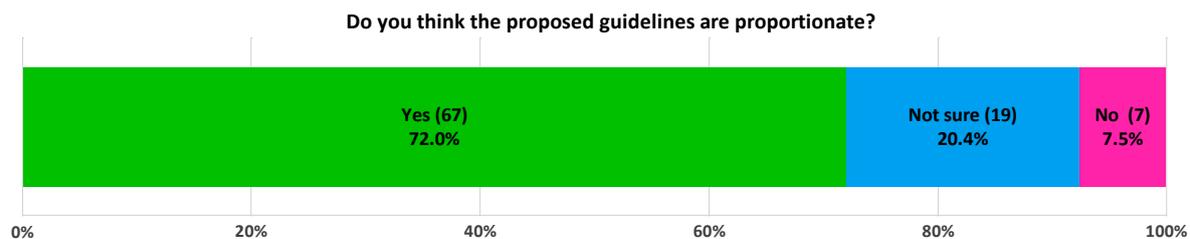
Just over one in ten respondents said they were not sure about introducing guidelines for busking.

Economically active respondents were significantly more likely to agree with the introduction of Busking guidelines. 97.5% ($\pm 4.8\%$) responding 'Yes' to this question compared to 76.6% ($\pm 12.1\%$) of economically inactive respondents answering the same.

Proposed Guidelines

Survey respondents were next asked if they thought the guidelines being proposed were proportionate. A total of 93 respondents answered this question.

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The most common response was 'Yes' with 67 answering this way.

One in five respondents said there were not sure the proposed guidelines were proportionate.

Female respondents were significantly more likely to respond 'Not sure' with 32.6% ($\pm 14.0\%$) answering this way compared to 8.9% ($\pm 8.3\%$) of male respondents.

Comments

Survey respondents were asked if they felt anything was missing from the guidelines and were provided with a free text box to write in their response.

A total of 32 comments were submitted. In addition, direct comments were emailed to the consultation by a local street entertainer.

Ten of these simply said 'No', confirming that they didn't believe that there was anything missing from the guidelines.

Eight comments contained a suggestion. There were two suggestions for set performance spaces, three about buskers competing with each other, with the suggestion that having set distances between performers would help avoid overlapping sound. Two specified limiting the length of performances to 30 minutes. The last comment in this section was a specific addition/amendment to the wording of the introduction (addition in italics) to:

"The Live Music Act 2012 took effect from 1 October 2012 with further amendment on 6 April 2015 and allows for certain types of entertainment. *The changes introduced through the Act were designed to increase the provision of live music without negatively impacting on the 2003 Act's licensing objectives*"

Six respondents commented on amplified music. Two said that it was a problem. One stated that there should be an outright ban on amplified music, Three respondents requested further clarity, expressing that the elements relating to amplification in the guidance was ambiguous, with one stating that it needed to be more specific about volume levels and suggesting that a limit be given in decibels.

Four responders made comments that suggested that they felt the guidelines were too lenient. Two said there was little point in introducing guidelines if they weren't going to be enforced, and another said it was not realistic to expect buskers to follow the guidelines.

Three respondents were positive about busking in generally with one saying they love to hear the music when they go shopping and another stating, they wouldn't want the guidelines to be so restrictive that they prevent busking. One respondent was generally negative, stating that all forms of busking should be prohibited.

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Two respondents made comments that have been classified as 'other' as they do not fit with any of the groupings outlined above. One of these stated that performances should not include 'adult themes' or swearing, the other said buskers should not have animals with them when performing.

Other comments

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to make comments in relation to the guidelines and busking in Maidstone in general. A total of 27 comments were received.

There were five comments that expressed support for having guidelines or were positive about the proposed guidelines, with two respondents stating that the guidelines seemed fair and the remaining three stating that the introduction of guidelines for busking was a good idea.

Five respondents made positive comments about busking generally, stating that they enjoyed music in the town centre and that they add to the atmosphere of the town.

Five comments contained a suggestion:

- Using Benchley Gardens as a performance space (Bandstand)
- Creating set performance spaces in the town centre that are bookable
- Introducing a licensing scheme
- Restricting the numbers of buskers
- Formal programme of street entertainment with different types of entertainment

Three respondents made negative comments about busking in general with these respondents stating that buskers should not be allowed and that they were a nuisance.

Three comments mentioned amplified music, with two respondents stating that it should not be allowed and one stating the guidelines were confusing in this respect, in particular the reference to 'unobtrusive level' regarding pre-recorded backing tracks.

Three respondents made comments about enforcement, stating that adherence to the guidelines should be monitored, and that action should be taken against breaches to the guidelines.

There were two comments that expressed doubt about the guidelines with one stating that they seemed vague and the other that they were 'too reasonable', the implication being that the guidelines should be stricter.

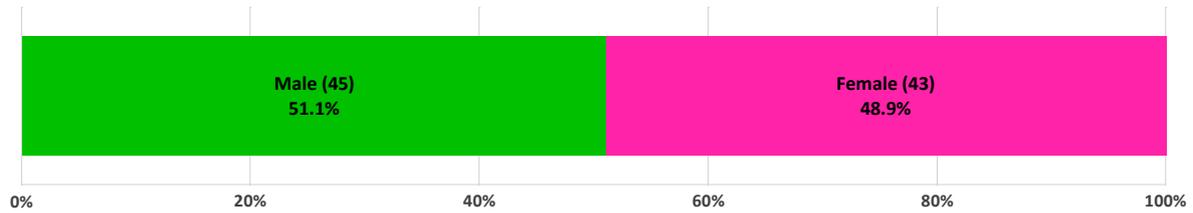
Two comments were categorised as 'other', one referring the busking while Covid-19 restrictions are in place stating that performers can hinder social distancing and the other expressed concern about access, stating that the pavements should be accessible, particularly for people with mobility issues or disabilities.

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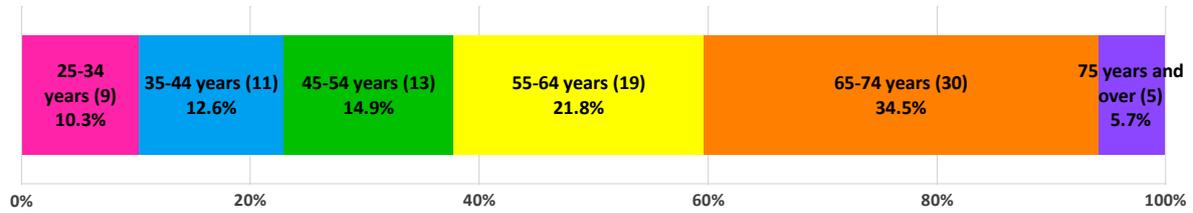
Demographics

The charts below show the proportions of responders across demographic groups.

Gender

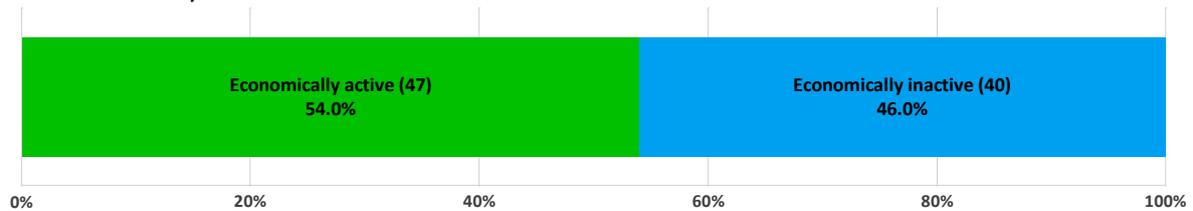


Age



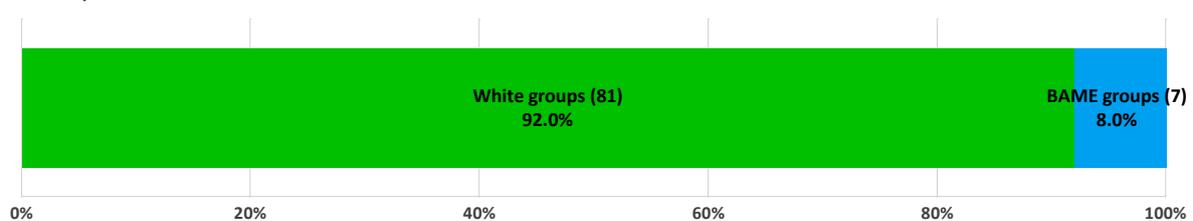
- There were no respondents to the survey that were under 25 years.

Economic Activity



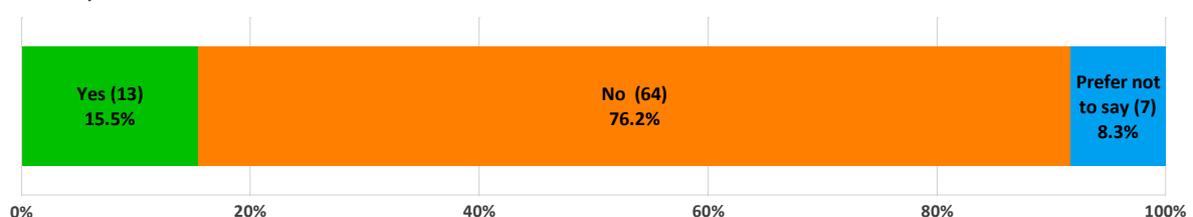
- Economically inactive respondents are over-represented compared to the population of Maidstone overall.

Ethnicity



- 5.9%¹ of Maidstone's population are from a BME background.

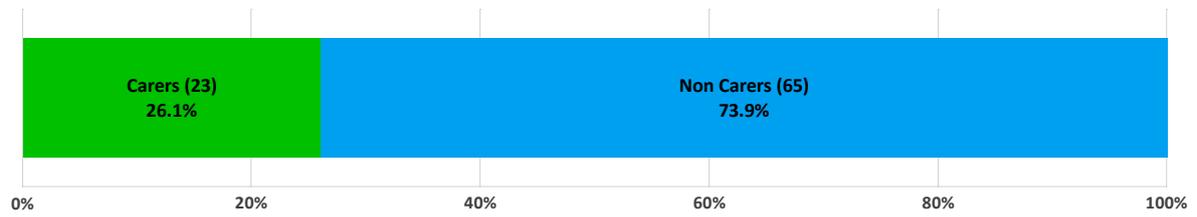
Disability



¹ 2011 Census

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Carers



- Carers are over-represented compared to the population of Maidstone where 10.2%² of the population are providing unpaid care.

² 2011 Census