

# Audiences on social media

June 2021



## Introduction

*“What social media should our organisation be on?”* is a question we hear often at thrive.

Some organisations have an account on every single platform because they want to “reach everyone”. Others don’t have any social media presence at all because they don’t feel confident with the way they work. Then, there are organisations who try to adopt the latest trends but don’t have the capacity to exploit its full potential.

The single advice we give to each of them is: **Be where your audience is.**

Of course, who your followers are on your different social media channels is unique to your organisation. But the people who use Facebook, or Twitter, or any other network, usually have a lot of things in common with each other.

In this toolkit, we’re sharing:

- Things to consider about social media and arts and culture
- Facts about audiences on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, Youtube and Twitch
- The pros and cons of each platform
- What type of content works well on each network

If you’d like to talk to us about your audiences, we’re always available for a chat. [Book one of our free Audience Appointments.](#) We’re looking forward to meeting you!

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This toolkit is part of our theme First Impressions, supported by our core funding from Arts Council of Northern Ireland.



## Before you start, what should you consider?

Most of you reading this toolkit are probably already using social media. But we'd like you to step back and look at your social media use through a different lens.

### Why do you use social media?

Is your answer something like "to market our programme" or "to communicate our news with our audience"? These are both legitimate reasons but there's so much more you can achieve with them, like:

- Attract new audiences
- Build a relationship with your audiences
- Increase your number of returning customers
- Deliver some of your programme (we're thinking of Facebook, Instagram and Youtube Live as well as Twitch)
- Boost audience participation and engagement with your brand
- And so on...

### Some interesting facts about social media and arts and culture



[39% of people in Northern Ireland use social media for news and information.](#) That means they're online, scrolling through their newsfeed and potentially seeing your posts.



**Each channel has its own audience and purpose.** Some are better for promoting events, some are where parents find family friendly activities to do with their kids, some are great for reaching young adults. Depending on what your organisation is about, some platforms will be more useful to you than others.



**People who follow an organisation on social media are more likely to actually attend that organisation than people who do not follow it.** Surprisingly, the majority of people who follow an organisation on social media are new audiences. Being on social media and using those channels the right way is a massive opportunity for organisations. It's a tool for them to maintain their relationships with returning audiences but also create new ones with people who never visited them before.



**Social media followers have better onsite experiences** because they are already bought-in and they know what to expect before their visit. Following is the same as becoming friends. Their perception of you in-person will be more positive as a result.



Social media enables **word of mouth**, the most powerful tool to bring in old and new audiences into your space. People sharing stories on Instagram about their visit, or people reviewing your organisation in a Facebook post are as important as your own content. **If you can't be tagged, you can't be found.**



For most platforms, **female usage is significantly greater than male usage**. Isn't that amazing when we know women are usually those making plans for going to an arts and culture event and those buying tickets?

Now, let's have a closer look at audiences on each main social media platform:



## Audiences on Facebook



**Who:** **Parents and family audiences** are the groups the most likely to use Facebook. The largest age segment using Facebook in the UK is **25-34 years old**.

### Some stats:

- In NI, Facebook is the **third most popular platform** for news at 32%.
- **45% of new music seekers aged 35-54 discover new music on Facebook**. This is the only age group that lists Facebook as a top-3 source for new music discovery.
- The age group least likely to use the platform are 13-17. In 2020, users aged 18-24 have declined and those aged 65+ have increased.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook groups are very popular to <b>connect with local communities</b> and this is the number <b>one place for parents to find activities for their families</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Sponsored posts</b> can be highly effective if your copy and target audience is spot on.</li> <li>• It's a friendly site for those who run <b>events</b> as event pages can be easily linked to your ticketing system and your event will be listed amongst similar events happening in the same city.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Facebook algorithm means if your posts don't gain a lot of engagement, they will be seen by a very few people.</li> </ul>

**What type of content works best:** Events and posts your audience can feel represented in. For example, a post showing workshop participants or another that establishes a direct dialogue with your audience.



Our favourite Facebook page: [The Orkney Library and Archive](#)



## Audiences on Twitter



**Who:** The **arts, culture and heritage sectors**, funders, government representatives and the **media**. The network is more popular with **men** than women. The largest age segment on Twitter is **25-34 years old**.

### Some stats:

- 17% of people in NI visit Twitter for news and information.
- There are 70% of men on the platform compared to 30% women.
- 29% of users are aged 25-34; 28% are 35-49.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A great platform to show the <b>value of your work</b> and create new PR contacts.</li> <li>• The best online space to <b>network</b> with other organisations and creatives.</li> <li>• This is where you can share <b>short bursts of information</b> in the simplest way.</li> <li>• <b>Threads</b> is a handy feature if you want to tell your audience a longer story that goes over a tweet's length.</li> <li>• It's not only about text. <b>Videos</b> are also popular on Twitter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is not where you'll get people to buy tickets to your show or where you'll reach younger age groups or families. We're not saying it's not possible, but the return on investment of time and effort will be low compared to other platforms that work better for that purpose.</li> <li>• The limited character space can often be... limiting.</li> </ul>

**What type of content works best:** Articles about you in the press or features about you on the radio; job recruitment; results from your projects/programme evaluation showing your audience is satisfied with your offer.



Our favourite Twitter page: [The Museum of English Rural Life](#)



## Audiences on Instagram



**Who:** **Gen Z and Millennials.** We often hear from organisations that Instagram is where young people are. Although people on the app are indeed young, they're not as young as you may think. People under the age of 25 don't use Instagram regularly, and if they do, it's only to communicate with their friends.

### Some stats:

- 11% of people in NI visit Instagram for news and information.
- 65% of users are between **18 – 34**.
- 65+ people are the least likely to use the platform.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can post on Instagram and Facebook at the same time.</li> <li>• Video posts are increasingly popular in the shape of <b>Reels and Stories</b>.</li> <li>• You can market yourself through <b>past achievements</b>, it doesn't have to be photos you've just taken. #TBT or #ThrowbackThursday posts usually work very well.</li> <li>• <b>Reposting your audiences' pictures</b> (don't forget to credit them) is a great way to make them feel appreciated and open a dialogue with them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can't add links in captions and the only place to share a link is via your profile bio.</li> <li>• Most features are only available on the mobile app.</li> <li>• If you don't have the capacity and usually schedule social media posts in advance, you can't just copy/paste what you post elsewhere. Content on Instagram has to be its own thing.</li> <li>• Scheduling in advance is tricky. Although you can via Facebook or platforms like Hootsuite, it never looks quite right. Better to post in real time!</li> </ul>

**What type of content works best:** When it comes to format, **carousels** (multiple photos uploaded at once) and **stories** are the most popular on the platform. Pictures of people and selfies always work better than others. If you're a visual art space or a museum, **behind-the-scenes** and **short videos** showing your latest exhibition are crowd-pleasers. If you want to share a link to a long video on Instagram, **consider uploading the video to IGTV** as users usually prefer to stay on the same platform to consume content.



Our favourite Instagram page: [Field Museum](#)



## Audiences on Youtube



**Who:** Teenagers and young adults.

### Some stats:

- A third of homes in Northern Ireland use Youtube.
- 57% amongst 18–24-year-olds in the UK.
- In 2020, 70% of all watch time was on mobile.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any video uploaded to the site continue to gather <b>views long after it's been uploaded.</b></li> <li>• YouTube users are intentionally searching on the platform for videos to watch, rather than scrolling like on other networks.</li> <li>• Youtube hosts a lot of <b>community-building</b> features like the live chat option during live videos.</li> <li>• Great for <b>search optimisation</b> thanks to videos' titles and descriptions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building an audience on Youtube is time-consuming and requires consistency.</li> <li>• The longer the user is engaged the better the various algorithms will see your content – that is not necessarily a bad thing if your audiences love your videos.</li> </ul>

**What type of content works best:** Engaging videos are a bit like an engaging piece of writing, they have a clear introduction, a body of content, a conclusion and a call to action.



**Our favourite Youtube page:** [Sydney Opera House](#)



## Audiences on TikTok



**Who:** Teenagers and young adults below 30.

**Some stats:**

- The majority of people on TikTok use it to find funny or entertaining content.
- In the UK, the largest age group using the app is 18-24.
- Only 7% aged 45 or over, use TikTok.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Algorithm is very powerful on Tiktok and it pushes relevant content to the right audience. It's about using the right <b>copy, hashtag, communities</b>.</li><li>• <b>Personality</b> is a key driver on the platform so it is your time to shine!</li><li>• How content is doing isn't connected to when you post compared to other social media sites, but to <b>trends</b> it connects to. Your creation could still gain more traffic and engagement a year from now if its topic is trending then.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On TikTok, it's all about the trends and content needs to be highly creative to attract engagement.</li><li>• It can be challenging if you don't have a full-time role in charge of the platform.</li></ul>

**What type of content works best:** **History and heritage** are doing really well on the platform because of their educational aspect. Dance and comedy are very popular on the platform too, but only when connected to trends! Music has the potential to go viral on the app too. The important thing is the **tone** you're using. If you're usually a bit more serious, TikTok is the platform to let your fun and playful side take over.



**Our favourite TikTok page:** [Black Country Living Museum](#)



**Audiences on Twitch**



**Who:** 16-34 years old, mostly men.

**Some stats:**

- **65% of Twitch users are men** and 35% women.
- 41% are 16-24 years old.

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although Twitch is principally a live video streaming popular in gaming, it has started to be used in more and more creative content.</li> <li>• <b>Interactions between performers and audiences</b> is easier than on other platforms. If you're hosting a talk or an event and you'd like it to be highly interactive with your audiences, Twitch is possibly the platform for you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you're not into gaming, or don't have staff members who are, it may be hard to find how you could connect what you do with what audiences are usually interested in on Twitch. Our advice would be to test and try.</li> </ul>

**What type of content works best:** Arts and culture organisations have been approaching the platform bringing a gaming element to their artistic content. This way they can appeal to audiences already using the platform. Once they start building a strong following, they slowly introduced a wider selection of videos, not necessarily related to gaming. **Music, comedy and Drag Queens** are all performance-based art forms that do really well on Twitch.



**Our favourite Twitch page:** [The Art Gallery of Ontario](#)

## Sources

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