

# Busking and Street Entertainment Policy Consultation

February 2021



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## Introduction

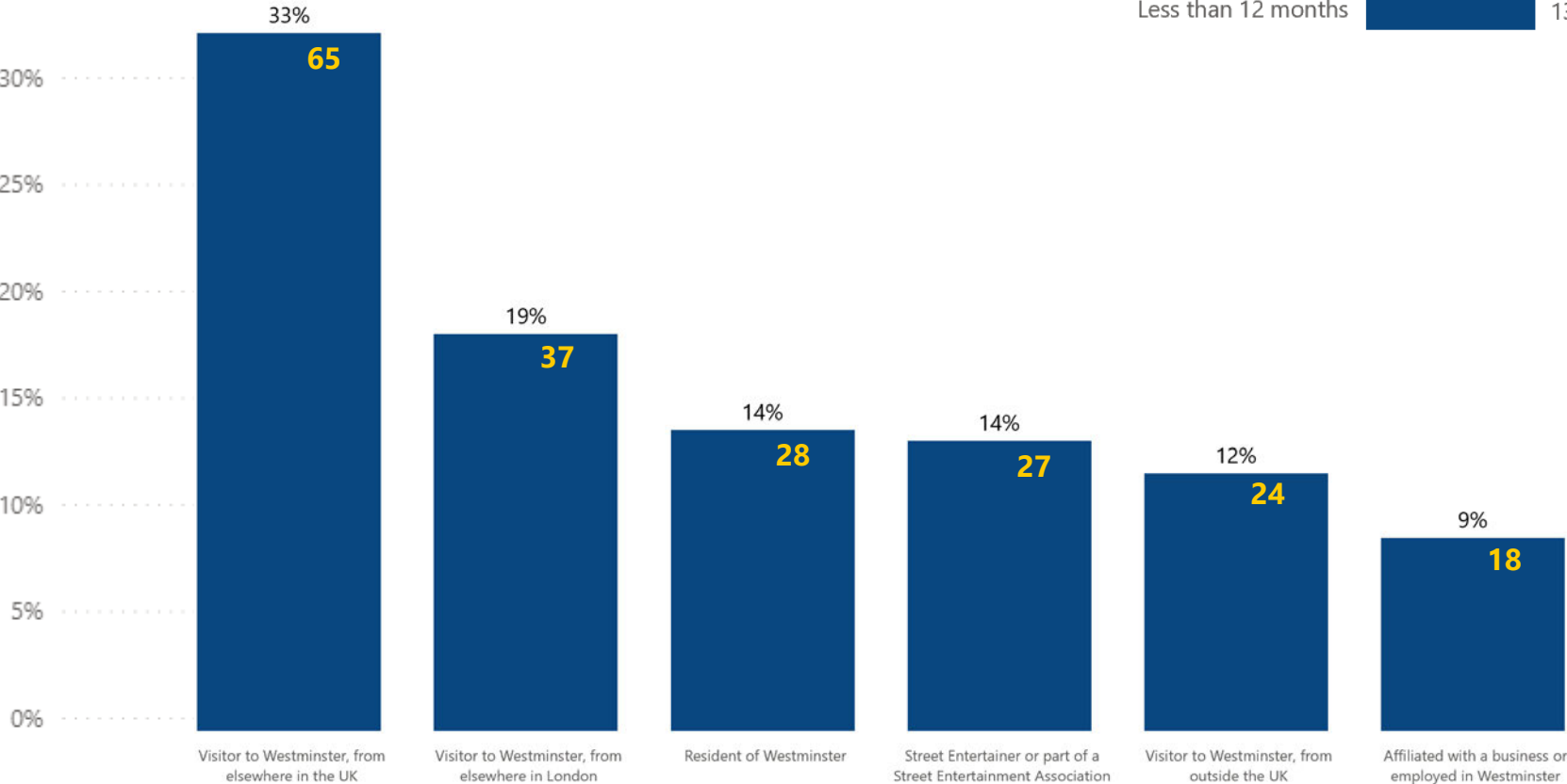
Following a Full Council decision on December 9, 2020 to adopt the draft designation, the Council has since reviewed responses from its original consultation and made some changes to its proposals as a result. This report presents the quantitative and qualitative data analysis of the Busking and Street Entertainment- Designation of Streets consultation, conducted by Westminster City Council from the 9<sup>th</sup> of December until 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2021.

The completion rate was significantly lower than previous phases of the consultation, at 189 responses:

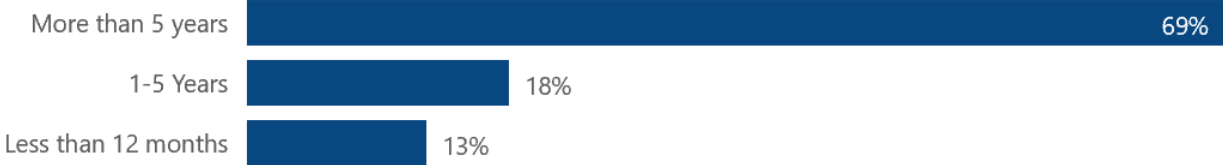
- **28 (14%) residents**
- **27 (14%) street entertainers**
- **18 (9%) respondents affiliated with a business, amenity society or who work in Westminster**
- **126 (65%) visitors total** (37 visitors from London, 65 visitors from UK, 24 visitors from abroad)

# The respondents

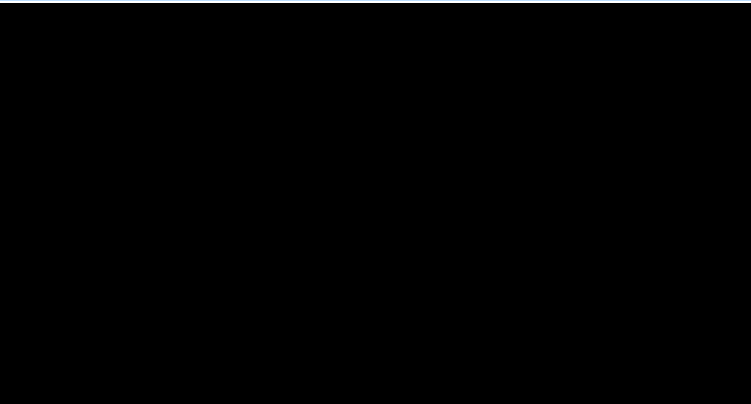
During the consultation, Westminster City Council received 28 written responses from several residents and street performers, businesses, performers associations, BIDs, museums, neighbourhood organisations and housing providers.



## Time in Westminster:



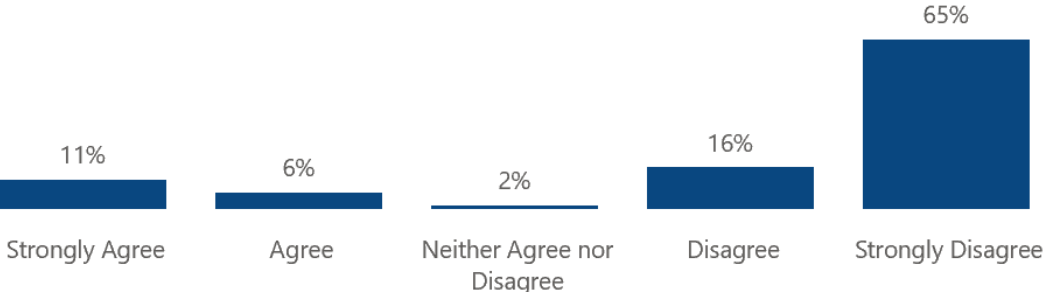
## Organisations:



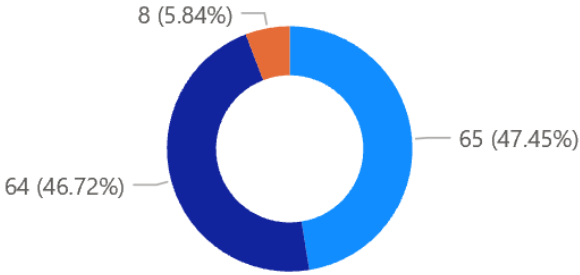
# Regulation of street entertainment and busking in Westminster

While the designated streets were the core focus of this survey, these questions were asked in case clear relationships were found between a particular view of the policy and specific pitches, particularly considering the levels of discontent and possibility of benchmarking against past surveys. However, no particular insights were uncovered, and similar themes emerged from the responses below.

## To what extent do you agree or disagree with the area and streets where we are proposing to regulate busking and street entertainment?



## Top 3 reasons for disagreeing (more than 8 mentions):



● Current regulations are enough to deal with issues in this area 
 ● I do not agree with regulation for buskers and street entertainers  
● This area is too wide/restrictive

## Reasons for disagreeing with the proposed regulated area:

*My disagreement is limited to a few specific sites that I feel are hazardous to pedestrian traffic safety. (Resident)*

*The current proposals are unrealistic and will cost the taxpayers huge amount to of money. This is completely unnecessary and there are better ways to do this which it would appear are not being heard. (Business)*

*I don't play in Westminster yet but can see that a number of spots available have been radically reduced, reading critiques by 'experienced' local buskers I note that 100s of potential good spots have been lost under proposed conditions. I am against this & argue that a reliable & 'informed' consultation to be put together to address this issue ' in the field ' with importantly residents & the like. (Street Entertainer)*

*Pitches designed are unworkable and most of all, this will end Covent Garden history of street performing. (Street Entertainer)*

*This area does not extend regulation far enough. (Resident)*

*The regulations proposed are not enough to avoid disruption as buskers are allowed to perform from early morning until late evening. This makes it impossible for offices in the vicinity of designated areas to have a normal working life. (Business)*

## Responses and suggestions around the streets designated for street performance / busking

### 1. King Charles Statute

### 2. Northumberland Ave.

### 3. Charing Cross Station

All the above sites put the movement of pedestrian traffic at risk with vehicular traffic.

There are many street crossings that require proper attention and concentration by pedestrians for safety. Viewing crowds and sidewalk congestion impair visibility and movement needed to see traffic coming from 5 different directions. My family walk through these areas frequently. So my comments are not conjecture, but rather experience. (Resident)

There should not be buskers on **Gerrard street** because there are a lot of offices around that area, including ours, and on average we do call the council approximately a dozen times per month to complain about noise caused by buskers. (Business)

I believe **Covent Garden** should be run by buskers which it has to date. Unfortunately I have seen many problem buskers on other pitches either playing too loud or not taking advice about proper behaviour. As I have only performed on pitches other than Covent a few times I can't speak fully for them. Covent Garden is considered the home of street entertainment. I feel it should be left alone. (Street Entertainer)

**Leicester Square Pitch 9**, amplified. This pitch has been a cause of extreme nuisance to local businesses and residents over many years with multiple complaints logged with the police from various different businesses in the region. If there has to be busking on this pitch it shouldn't be amplified. (Resident and business)

**James Street Corner**, commonly referred to as "magicians corner" in Covent Garden. With the size of the street shows normally being around half the size of the performers on the **west piazza and north hall**, there aren't many places that allow magicians to perform their shows. (Resident)

I believe that **Piccadilly and Leicester Square North West** are pitches that need to be amplified. It is virtually impossible to do a show there without amplification due to the noisy surroundings. Please reconsider. (Street Entertainer)

I believe that all popular streets **eg Oxford Street** wherever should be 'open' to street-performing, I for one would like to busk in **Mayfair** by the tube station. A 'proper' complaints system with fast-track BID/ Warden response would resolve most issues to do with high volume etc. In towns I busk in this has worked %100 with the pressure of losing one's licence Westminster's complaints completion rate could be the same. Objective 'democratic' accountability along with a stick if necessary does work. Why not apply it in this case. (Street Entertainer)

**1 Marble arch**. This pitch has a very small amount of walk by and is therefore unsuitable for larger performances as they will not generate a large crowd here.

**5/6/7/8** All of these pitches are within very busy and noisy areas. A ban on amplification here means that they will be unworkable.

**13 Covent Garden 'Magic corner'** This pitch is on a busy and noisy corner. Again, a ban on amplification here will make it unworkable.

There are two pitches missing from this area of the plan. The amplified musician's pitches on the **east piazza of Covent Garden, one outside the opera house and the other outside the transport museum** have been in operation here for many years entertaining hundreds of tourists and providing a workable living for a great number of regular musicians.

**14** You have placed this pitch behind the church on your map.

**17-21** Traditionally this area has worked with three amplified pitches, one in the centre for larger circus style acts (16 on your breakdown) and one on each end of the walk for musicians all of which need to be amplified as this is a large and noisy area. Other spots are used by statue acts.

**15/23/24/25** All of these pitches are within very busy and noisy areas. A ban on amplification here means that they will be unworkable.

**22** whoever suggested this pitch hasn't got a clue what street performance or busking is. It is in the middle of a roundabout!!!! (Street Entertainer)

## Responses and suggestions around the streets designated for street performance / busking (cont)

I don't think **Covent Garden** should be included in the proposal. **Pitch 14** is the only pitch big enough in the proposed amp pitches for circle shows. 4 amplified pitches which will be where most of the artists in London will have to perform as most use amplified sound.

1. Not a workable pitch. Marble Arch is a roundabout. there is no proper foot fall here. It is not busy enough so support a workable/viable pitch.

9. established and workable pitch.

14. **Pitch 14** is the only pitch big enough in the proposed amp pitches for circle shows. There are already more performers than shows. To open this up to all amplified acts such as an individual with a guitar who can perform anywhere is not acceptable.  
22. not a pitch. this is a roundabout!! To be asked to perform on a roundabout is outrageous. Traffic noise alone would drown out any performance even amplified. Turning the joy of performing in London in to something quite horrific. *(Street Entertainer)*

*Thank you! Buskers have been a problem for a long time. This will help a lot. I will say that amplified music echoes around the area and is disruptive, including to the other musicians nearby. Friends have stayed in hotels around the **Strand, Leicester Square, etc.** and the amplified music was a real problem. Also, what kind of enforcement will there be? The police currently do not respond. The Noise Department are fantastic but there is a delay in responding (understandably) and I have seen buskers return after the officer has left. In general, I am very pleased about your new policy and hope that people can enjoy music in public, the buskers can entertain, and residents and visitors can have their lives not be interrupted. Thanks again. (Resident)*

***Oxford Street**, specifically outside Selfridges (Resident)*

*Limiting music on the **East Piazza** will ruin many performers. Dominating the performers on the **West Piazza** will ruin the UK's street performing culture and community. (Street Entertainer)*

Please include **Gerard Street and Wardour Street.** *(Business)*

***Oxford street** from marks and Spencer / selfridges to John Lewis - noise travels! (Resident)*

The designated pitch you have located on **Wardour Street** is unlikely to work well with this new street environment. Of all of the pitches in your Policy, this one is located on in a very restricted area for space, it is the only one in a location dominated to this extent with food outlets. With tables and chairs licenses and the high footfall this area attracts, while social distancing remains, we do not consider this location appropriate any longer for a pitch. Street entertainment is intended to gather crowds and encourage people to stop, I think this would mean that this junction could no longer operate in a COVID safe manner.

The principle of having a pitch located here has been supported in normal times, but these are not normal times. [REDACTED] strongly recommends you reconsider this location in the light of the pandemic and consider reinstating it at a more appropriate time. *(Business)*

As mentioned during an online consultation conference and subsequently by email to [REDACTED] of your licensing team on 21 October, the newly outlined regulated area extends to **Marylebone Road**. We reiterate our concern in relation to private/TfL land (which would not be covered by this policy) and the potential for a gap of unregulated land to appear in and around the Baker Street station area. Particularly in relation to Madame Tussauds' forecourt, queues and the Sherlock Holmes connection, the area has the potential to be a lucrative, non-regulated entertainment space if the regulated area does not abut TfL land. We therefore respectfully suggest that due consideration be taken to ensure that the regulated area extends to the north side of Marylebone Road such as you are able to do so, to make sure we have not inadvertently created a loophole in this policy.

*(Resident)*