

MEM SHARES RESULTS FROM FIRST COMPENSATION SURVEY

This spring Music Export Memphis surveyed more than 40 musicians who have been working in the live music ecosystem in Memphis for a minimum of 10 years. About **36% of respondents reported the earliest year of gigging in Memphis between 2000-2010** and about **64% reported an earliest year of gigging in Memphis between 1970-1999**.

We asked the musicians to report their average per-gig pay in the earliest year of their career and their average per-gig pay in the last year of normal activity (2019). We then asked them additional questions to get a better understanding of the types of gigs they were primarily playing (i.e., bars or music venues, private parties, etc.), both then and now, and their monthly cost of living to understand how their spending power has evolved across their careers.

Results indicated that, with the exception of outliers at less than 1 percent, there was little to no correlation with type of gig (bar/venue, private party, etc.) or the musician's role (bandleader, solo artist, member of a band) to any significant differences in average per-gig pay.

Looking at responses in aggregate, the average pay reported from earliest year to most recent year of normal activity did increase (from an average of **\$123** per gig to an average of **\$207** per gig); however, **the majority of respondents answered \$100 for both questions**.

Because of the small sample size, we primarily looked at trends across the entire respondent set. However, we did look at two data points for eight subgroups of respondents indicating the same year of earliest activity in the market: percent change in gig pay vs. percent change in housing cost, and earliest year gig pay adjusted for inflation to 2021. Even in some groups where the average rate of pay kept up with the rate of inflation (respondents from 1995-2010), **only in two of eight subgroups did the percentage increase in average per-gig pay keep up with the percentage increase in housing costs**.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- While the average per-gig pay did increase from the earliest year of activity to the most recent year of activity, the majority of respondents reported \$100 for both questions.
- The median average per-gig pay reported only increased by \$50 from earliest year of activity to most recent year of activity
- Average per-gig pay increased 68% while average monthly housing costs increased 90%
- Median monthly housing cost was \$500 for earliest year of activity and increased to \$1,000 for most recent year of activity





WHAT WE RECOMMEND

Given the year that our music community has experienced, it's a difficult – or impossible – time to consider increasing costs when so many venues and performance spaces have lost an entire year's worth of revenue. Ultimately, all pieces of this ecosystem need each other in order to thrive – our goal is not to take anyone to task. Instead, our goal with this year's report is to begin to collect data to more effectively tell this story – that wages have largely been stagnant in our live music economy for the last 40 years – and to start a conversation about how we can change it.

Going forward, we will issue this report annually, with a focus on strengthening the data, getting more granular to understand other contributing factors to average pay like race and gender, and looking for opportunities to celebrate those venues or promoters who are committed to doing it right.

CALL TO ACTION: If you are a venue owner/manager, an event promoter, or for any reason regularly booking and paying musicians, review your average rates of pay in 2019 (and, depending on your history, across the last 5-10 years) and **consider a small increase going forward** across the board that will result in a small increase to that average. Then, create a system for reviewing that pay annually and making incremental increases.

For our part, **Music Export Memphis is announcing today increases across most of our grant programs.** This also begins what will be an annual review process for our organization of grant minimums and maximums across all programs with a plan to increase, at least incrementally, on an annual basis.



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MUSIC EXPORT MEMPHIS GRANTMAKING UPDATES 2021

Beginning July 1, 2021, MEM will increase its grants and minimum stipends across programs as follows. Moving forward, MEM will review grants and make increases annually in July.

Ambassadors

MEM will introduce a new tier to its Ambassador grants, which will largely be awarded to artists touring overseas, but may be awarded to artists touring significant domestic distances (west coast) with large bands.

Tier I: \$500

Tier II: \$750

Tier III: \$1,000

Tier IV: \$1,500

Tier V: \$2,000

All requirements to qualify for an Ambassador grant remain the same: applicants should have 5 or more dates confirmed outside the city, with a majority of dates outside of a 100-mile radius.

Ambassador Industry Scholarships

MEM will continue to require that artists or industry professionals apply for an industry scholarship prior to the earliest deadline for the particular event so that the lowest possible badge/ticket price is available, in order to extend the scholarships to more people.

Merch Fund

As the Merch Fund is newly launched in 2021, grants will remain at \$250 for projects up to \$500, or \$500 for projects up to \$750. Artists electing to use Merch Fund Preferred Partners will be awarded up to 25% more, above and beyond noted maximums. In 2022, Merch Fund grants will increase.

Experiences

MEM will increase its minimum stipend for performance at a festival showcase **from \$500 to \$600**. MEM will also institute a cash stipend for all opportunities that previously covered costs only, i.e.: at Folk Alliance International, MEM purchased conference badges for artists performing on the MEM showcase. Going forward, artists selected for Folk Alliance (and similar opportunities for which there is a cost to participate) will have their access/badge paid by MEM and **will receive a cash stipend** which will vary based on the specific Experience (distance from Memphis, length of stay, etc.).

Et Cetera

For MEM private donor events that take place in Memphis, and for its public annual benefit, MEM will institute a **minimum individual payment of \$250** for any performance.



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