



Street Dance in Focus

Practices, communities and futures
in Australia

Dr Jason Ng, University College Cork





Australian Government



Acknowledgement

Creative Australia acknowledges the many Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and honours their Elders past and present.

We respect their deep and enduring connection to their lands, waterways and surrounding clan groups since time immemorial. We cherish the richness of First Nations peoples' artistic and cultural expressions.

We are privileged to gather on this Country and to share knowledge, culture and art, now and with future generations.

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Cover image: Uni Sessions at State Library Victoria, Melbourne 2023.
Credit: Namchops.

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Age



49% of the street dance community surveyed are **25–34 years old**

33% are aged between **18–24**

Gender



54% of the street dance community surveyed are **women**

Women are also most prominent among dancers aged 18–24 (63%)

Geography



Australia's street dancers largely live in the big cities – in **Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane**

Cultural background



64% of the street dance community surveyed self-identify as **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)**

42% were **born outside of Australia**, with a large number coming from the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand

Most popular styles



Over half of respondents practice **Hip Hop** (56%)

This was followed by **Popping** (24%), **House** (24%), **Waacking/Whacking/Punking** (18%) and **Breaking** (15%)

Career stage



46% are **becoming established street dancers**

36% are **established**

Community roles



Most respondents describe themselves as **dance/community participants** (92%)

49% are **performers**

33% are **educators/teachers** (teaching street dance)

25% are **choreographers**

23% are **event producers/managers**

Street dance careers



35% engage in **paid work** related to street dance

65% participate in **street dance solely for fun**

21% **applied for government financial assistance**, such as grants, awards and residencies

Spaces



Dance practice largely occurs **in community or public spaces** (76%) or in **dancers' homes** (73%)

Not enough spots/places to train, practise or jam nearby is a major barrier to practising (60%)

Training



Dancers typically practise on a regular basis: **44% train every 2–3 days**

Finding the time is the main barrier preventing dancers from practising (68%)

Attendance



52% attend free community or paid street dance events at least once a week

68% travel interstate and **41%** travel internationally to participate in competitions, events or workshops

Street dancers are avid consumers of the arts, with most saying they also **attend arts and creative activities outside of street dance** (89%)

Street dance media



74% make and share videos of their dance practice online

95% say they watched **recordings of competitions, events or battles** in the last 12 months

Paying for media



68% consume street dance media content for free

Of those who consume dance-related content for free, **62%** are willing to pay for content

Aspirations



More than half say they would like to compete in more and/or participate in higher-profile dance events and competitions (56%)

50% want to increase their social media profile in the street dance community

Executive summary

As the first research of its kind, *Street Dance in Focus: Practices, communities and futures in Australia* provides a wide range of insights into the Australian street dance community, its participants, their aspirations and challenges.

Australian street dance is a collection of dance forms and styles, each with its own distinct cultural roots and histories, such as Hip Hop, Breaking, Vogue, Dancehall, Afro Dance and many more.¹

Street Dance in Focus draws on survey data from 471 participants in Australia's street dance community and in-depth interviews with street dancers in Australia to provide insights into how dancers manage their creative lives and professional ambitions. It offers specific insights into the street dance community and economy as it increasingly intersects with commercial entertainment, education, youth programs and internationally recognised dance battle circuits. Our research reveals a community characterised by high levels of creative engagement, cultural diversity and collaborative energy, as well as experiencing limited access to training spaces, short career spans and scarce long-term funding opportunities. Despite these obstacles, people in the street dance community continue to play multiple roles – often in their spare time – to support the vitality of the street dance scene.

The report aims to establish a benchmark for future research, highlighting community demographics across a broad range of street dance activities; the specific conditions in which street dancers work; and the supports required to strengthen this unique and under-researched part of the creative sector. It also considers the distinct skills street dancers develop and the wider cultural and social value they contribute beyond performance alone.

This research was commissioned by Creative Australia in partnership with Cypher Culture, a local street dance advocacy organisation, partly funded by Research Ireland² and led by practitioners and researchers within the street dance community – Dr Jason Ng, Efren Pamilacan and Geoffrey Lim.

Limitations of the research

This report focuses on the demographic composition, practices, participation, challenges, aspirations and professionalisation of the Australian street dance community. The survey offers a starting point from which the community, government and creative industries can better comprehend the realities of the street dance community in Australia. This largely aligns with Cypher Culture's advocacy work aimed at supporting street dancers through better access to information, educational materials and funding opportunities.

Street Dance in Focus does not, however, offer a representative account of all of Australia's street dance communities and their activities. Not all dancers or communities across the country may have been reached or represented in our sample, and we do not claim to capture the entirety of Australian street dance practice. Instead, we aim to establish a starting point from which the Australian street dance community can be made more visible to the wider arts sector, identifying opportunities for future research to better support this growing, diverse community of artists.

1 In this report, 'street dance' is used as a broad umbrella term that encompasses a range of forms and their associated styles. See 'Street dance forms and styles' for more information on terms and definitions within this report.

2 This research was partially funded by Research Ireland project *Networking Asia-Pacific Hip Hop*.

Key findings

Australia's street dance community is characterised by a diversity of forms and their associated styles. Over half of respondents participated in Hip Hop (56%), this was followed by Popping (24%), House (24%), Waacking/Whacking/Punking (18%), Breaking (15%), Krump (14%), Afro Dance (13%) and Locking (12%). There are overall fewer practitioners of Dancehall (8%), Vogue/Ballroom (7%), Litefeet (6%) and a variety of other styles.

The Australian street dance community surveyed is typically young, female-identifying and living in metropolitan locations. Half of the street dance community surveyed are 25–34 years old (49%) and one third are aged 18–24 (33%). Notably, the street dance community has high rates of participation from women (54%) and overwhelmingly lives in big cities, where community infrastructure is concentrated – in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

The street dance community in Australia is significantly culturally and linguistically diverse. The majority of participants self-identified as belonging to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (64%). Almost half of the street dance community members surveyed were born outside of Australia (42%), with a large number coming from the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand.

Street dancers are disciplined despite having few places to dance. Dancers typically practise on a regular basis, with the majority training every 2–3 days (44%). Dance practice is largely sustained in community or public spaces (76%) or at dancers' homes (73%). While many dancers practise regularly, participants reported several barriers that prevent them from training as often as they would like. While finding the time is the main barrier preventing dancers from practising (68%), three in five respondents say the lack of accessible spots/places to train, practise or jam nearby is a major barrier (60%).

City Sessions as part of Sorbaes: Sundae at Sidney Myer Music Bowl, Melbourne 2023 Credit: Tiffany Garvie.



Street dancers are highly engaged in their local and global communities, frequently attending street dance events both interstate and internationally. Over half of surveyed street dance participants are frequent attendees at street dance events, reporting they attend free community or paid events at least once a week (52%). Many say they travel interstate to participate in dance (68%), and two in five respondents say they travel internationally for dance (41%) – highlighting a significant demand for opportunities to participate internationally.

Street dancers are avid consumers of the arts. In addition to their strong engagement with the street dance community, most respondents say they also attend arts and creative activities outside of street dance (89%). Of this cohort, in the past 12 months, 76% attended other non-street dance performances in a theatre or arts venue, 75% attended music events, 56% attended visual arts and crafts events, 51% attended theatre, and 15% attended book or literary events. In comparison, respondents show low interest in sports, with 66% reporting that they had not attended any sporting events in the past 12 months.

The street dance community is highly engaged with street dance media and connected via social media. Street dancers have long engaged with diverse forms of media to stay connected, informed and to broaden their perspectives. Three quarters make and share videos of their dance practice online (74%), and half wish to increase their social media profile in the street dance community (50%). Almost all respondents say they regularly watch recordings of street dance competitions or battles (95%). While most respondents say they consume this kind of dance-related content for free (68%), a significant portion say they are willing to pay for it (62%), demonstrating a potential for street dance's expanding media economy.

Street dancers take on multiple roles across a variety of activities within the scene to support the street dance community. Outside of dancing and general community participation, more than one third of those surveyed work as educators (teaching street dance) (33%), and a quarter work as choreographers (25%) and event producers/managers (23%). Other roles include participating in adjacent ways, such as arts workers, events organisers or volunteers, graphic designers and photographers.

While few are making a full-time career of street dance in Australia, many express a desire to spend more time on their practice and to engage in higher-profile opportunities.

Most survey respondents participate in street dance solely for fun (65%), while one third engage in paid work (35%). Of those engaged in paid work, most work five hours a week or less within their professional dance practice (70%) and the most common working arrangement is working freelance or self-employment (85%). Among all survey respondents, 72% indicated they would like to spend more time on their professional dance practice but were held back by a number of factors, including insufficient income from their professional practice (61%) and a lack of opportunities to perform (50%).

The street dance community is currently learning the ropes of securing financial assistance for its practice. While some are facing challenges and barriers, the street dance community is adapting quickly and experiencing promising success. Findings from this research show in the past 12 months more than one in five respondents applied for government financial assistance, such as grants, awards and residencies (22%), with success rates of 46–59%. Although there is reportedly increasing corporate interest in street dance, those who sought financial assistance through corporate sponsorship arrangements (17%) experienced one of the lowest success rates compared to other sources of non-government funding (41%). Some survey respondents feel the experience of applying for financial support is fairly straightforward. However, others report that they find the funding process extremely challenging and disheartening.

The street dance community wants to increase their participation in street dance, either to realise personal aspirations or to foster connections with the community. The majority of respondents highlighted they would like to participate in higher-profile street dance events and competitions (56%) and increase their social media presence (50%). Other aspirations for the future include the desire to be paid (38%) or increase pay for street dance work (32%). Beyond developing their personal skills and opportunities, there is a strong community spirit and a desire to engage more deeply with the street dance community either by building new communities or by organising events.

Street dance forms and styles

In this report, ‘street dance’ is used as a broad umbrella term that encompasses a range of forms and their associated styles.³

We acknowledge that club dances also intersect with this category, having developed from overlapping yet distinct contexts. While we use ‘street dance’ throughout for clarity, we recognise that the term can at times be overly encompassing.

The list of terms and definitions below offers an introduction to the major dance forms and their associated styles highlighted in the report. These summaries were collated and co-written with input from practitioners of each style. We recognise the rich and complex histories and changing taxonomy of these major dance forms and their associated styles.

Afro Dance

Afro Dance is an umbrella term that includes several different modern street styles from the African continent including Azonto from Ghana, Amapiano from South Africa, Afro House from Angola, Ndombolo from Congo and many more. It is generally performed to the rich soundscape of African rhythms and melodies; it is defined by polyrhythmic movement, full-body articulation, and a deep connection to cultural, social, political and spiritual life. Often performed in communal settings, Afro Dance is as much about shared celebration and storytelling as it is about individual expression, making it a living, evolving reflection of cultural identity.

Breaking

Breaking was born in 1973 at a party at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx held by DJ Cool Herc and his sister Cindy Campbell. Breaking quickly developed as a dance form that provided artistic release and was a defining element of early Hip Hop culture. Originally performed to the instrumental ‘breaks’ in funk records, looped by DJ Cool Herc, the style combines athleticism, rhythm and creativity through a range of foundational movements: upright steps known as top rocks, intricate floor-based footwork, and dramatic freezes. The dance also boasts a wide range of explosive power moves, dynamic tricks and transitions between these movements. Since its early inception, Breaking has given rise to a generation of dancers (b-boys and b-girls) whose innovation has transformed the dance from a community expression into a global art form, now recognised on the world’s biggest stages.

Dancehall

Emerging in the late 1970s in the inner cities of Kingston, Jamaica, Dancehall dance developed alongside its musical genre, which evolved from reggae but features faster tempos, digital sounds, heavier bass lines, dynamic rhythms and an increasing array of cross-genre influences. The movement is a vibrant and rhythmic social dance form, defined by grounded, full-body movements, hip and waist isolations, and a celebration of authentic expression. Dancehall is a reflection of everyday life on the island and a platform for personal expression, making it a lively and evolving form of dance that resonates far beyond its origins.

³ The terms ‘form’ and ‘styles’ are used to mark a distinction in this definition section as many dances, such as Popping, have an umbrella term used to collectivise many styles – eg, animation, tutting etc.



City Sessions at State Library
Victoria Forecourt, Melbourne
2024. Credit: Namchops.

Flood/Flooding

Flood is a local dance style that originated in Ipswich, Queensland, following the 2011 floods and the social conditions of suburban Brisbane's west. More than a dance, it encompasses music, slang, clothing and visual art, blending influences from street dance culture, gaming and the surrounding natural and suburban environment. The dance is characterised by grotesque movements and body postures and is shaped largely by its foundational movement 'warping'. The dance is also performed to its own genre of music that similarly brings together sounds of the environment with Hip Hop beats and glitchy electronic sound design. Flood stands as an Australian-born response to adversity, embodying resilience and identity through movement.

Hip Hop

Hip Hop dance grew out of freestyle expression, shaped by the early social dances of Hip Hop culture and a mix of other influences. Emerging from Black communities in 1970s New York, it carries strong historical and cultural ties to African American traditions. The style is defined by its rhythmic use of bounces, rocks and grooves, performed to Hip Hop music. Inspiration for movement can come from many places, such as other dance forms, everyday gestures, natural elements or even characters from film. It is the individual's interpretation of the beat and the movement that gives Hip Hop its distinctive energy and flavour.

House

House dance began in Chicago and New York alongside the development of House music in the late 1970s within underground American clubs where Black, Latino and queer communities gathered. These spaces became a crossroads of culture, celebration and exchange, blending Afro and Latin dance, Breaking, Martial Arts and other influences that collectively shaped the foundation of House. The dance is known for its grounded yet fluid character – while the upper body often carries a relaxed, natural feel, the footwork is intricate, fast and flows dynamically. Beyond its steps, the form comes alive through individuality, spirit and above all, a connection to the music.

Krump

Rooted in the streets of South Central Los Angeles, Krump is a raw, high-energy dance form that gave voice to a community navigating struggle and survival. Its credited creator, Ceasare 'Tight Eyex' Willis, has described Krump as 'Kingdom Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise', underscoring its roots in faith, spirituality and collective uplift. Defined by vicious, and relentlessly energetic moves including explosive chest pops, sharp-angled arm extensions, and powerful bursts of movement, Krump embodies a full spectrum of emotion, from rage to joy. In this way, Krump stands not only as a dance form but as a testament to resilience, community and the transformative power of expression.

Litefeet

Litefeet emerged from Harlem and the Bronx in New York City in the early 2000s. The form is defined by its fast, seemingly weightless 'light feet' footwork, paired with high-energy, athletic body movements, often incorporating elaborate shoe tricks and hat tricks. Foundational dances such as the 'Tone Whop', 'Harlem Shake' and 'Bad One' anchor the form, while dancers continue to evolve routines using 'Lock In' poses to add punctuation. Litefeet music complements the dance with high-energy percussion that blends Hip Hop, funk and R&B, creating the lively soundtrack to which this dance thrives.

Locking

Locking, also known as 'Campbellocking', is a funk dance style that originated in Los Angeles in the 1970s, created by Don 'Campbellock' Campbell. It is characterised by locked poses, sharp points, high fives, knee drops, kicks and quick, explosive movements, all performed with upbeat grooves and exaggerated, playful energy. Traditionally danced to funk music, Locking emphasises character, interaction and playfulness.

Popping

Popping emerged from California and is a style marked by sharp muscle contractions. Originally, dancers who focused on Popping danced to funk music, but have since danced to multiple genres. These include electro (offering an audio reflection of some of the illusional techniques and use of body control/isolation) and Hip Hop songs with a loud clap (used to emphasise movement and isolations through the dancers' clothes created through muscle contraction techniques). Poppers use isolation techniques to create visual illusions, making the body appear to bend, distort or move in impossible ways. Although Popping is sometimes used as a blanket term for related styles, many pioneers stress the importance of recognising the distinct names and lineages of the various practices that underscore its vast vocabulary – such as animation, waving, tutting and boogaloo.

Vogue

The Harlem Ballroom scene was originally established in the 1960s by Black and Latinx trans-women to provide safety and acceptance for their own communities by forming chosen families known as Houses (eg, House of LaBeija). By the late 1980s, Vogue dance emerged under the Ballroom umbrella, becoming a new category. Beginning with the style 'Vogue', now known as 'Old Way' due to the addition of subsequent styles 'New Way' and 'Vogue Femme/Fem', each style variation is equipped with its own distinct rules and movements. Old Way, created by gay men of colour, originally took inspiration from the striking poses featured in Vogue magazine, transforming them into sequences of stylised motion to House music. New Way was created in response to Old Way by incorporating more fluidity with a focus on flexibility and attracts classically trained dancers, gymnasts and acrobats. Vogue Femme/Fem, now the most popular form of Voguing, was a style created by trans-women of colour to forge their own dance identity, best suited to express their femininity through soft hand movements and dramatic dips to Vogue music.

Waacking/Whacking/Punking

Waacking is a term used to represent the queer-born dance form Waacking and Whacking, while honouring their shared roots in Punking. Punking emerged in Los Angeles' underground gay clubs of the 1970s, including Paradise Ballroom and Ginos, as a dance of expression, play and good times. Punking is characterised by storytelling, posing and Whacking – or sharp striking actions made with arms and various parts of the body. The music for the dance came from DJ Michaelangelo, who played sped-up funk, creating a fast plucking bass line and sharp staccato. Punking also drew on silent films, martial arts, cartoons, figure skating and movie stars for inspiration. The spelling of the dance form remains contested; this research uses the term Waacking to refer to both forms.

Introduction

Street dance is a vibrant and diverse cultural phenomenon encompassing various styles such as Breaking, Popping, Locking, Waacking/Whacking and Hip Hop (among others).

Each style has distinct cultural roots and histories (see page 7 for definitions). Street dance events range from competitive battles to community jams, blending elements of artistic performance, athleticism and community connection.

Internationally, especially in Europe, the street dance scene has experienced unprecedented levels of professionalisation and prestige, with dancers benefiting from opportunities for training, monetisation and creative development provided by governments. In Japan, the incorporation of street dance into education curricula has rapidly expanded participation across the country. Recent estimates by Japan's Street Dance Association suggest dance is 'becoming as popular as major sports such as baseball and volleyball at schools', and Japan's street dance population is 'estimated to reach at least 20 million by 2020'.⁴ Audience participation has also seen significant global development made possible by Breaking's Olympic debut, which attracted an average of 30.6 million viewers across categories.⁵

Across the globe, the size and integration of street dance communities into established cultural and educational infrastructure varies. In Western Europe, East Asia and the United States, street dance has a long history of international collaboration and an increasing portfolio of government financial support. In these regions, street dance features as a collective of dance styles represented within many education and performance institutions, for example, at the University of Southern California in the United States, La Place in France and the Kawasaki Bunka Kaikan in Japan.

The Netherlands is a key site for the street dance community, hosting the world's largest ongoing street dance festival, Notorious IBE (1998–present). Bringing together dancers from every corner of the world, IBE provides opportunities to collectively reflect on and question street dance's relationship to music, art, fashion, research and entrepreneurship. IBE is supported by city and provincial governments in the Netherlands, indicating the role of street dance in stimulating tourism and satisfying city-building objectives in that country. Japan similarly boasts one of the largest street dance communities and creative economies in the world. Japan has been at the forefront of street dance industrialisation, developing new paths for professionalisation via state collaboration and harnessing corporate sponsorship to pollinate their large scenes.⁶

Australia's street dance scene is, in comparison, mainly characterised by a range of grassroots initiatives, performances, events and a growing sense of identity and cultural significance within the broader global dance community. In 2022, 3% of Australians aged 15 and over participated in street dance or Hip Hop. In the same year, 5% of Australians attended street dance or Hip Hop events, with similar attendance rates to other forms of dance (6% attended contemporary dance and 5% attended ballet).⁷

Research shows the majority of events within Australia's street dance scene rely on a community-funded model – with a handful of exceptions when community participants successfully scale their efforts with state and commercial enterprise.⁸

4 Gilhooly R 2019, 'The Meteoric Rise of Street Dance,' *Highlighting Japan, Public Relations Office of the Government of Japan*.

5 NBCU 2024, 'NBCUniversal's Presentation of Spectacular Paris Olympics Dominates Media Landscape Across All Platforms.' NBCU. August 13, Accessed September 9, 2025. <https://www.nbcuniversal.com/article/nbcuniversals-presentation-spectacular-paris-olympics-dominates-media-landscape-across-all-platforms>.

6 Ng J 2023, 'Social Entrepreneurship as Cultural Intermediation: Negotiating Support for Breaking in the Olympics from Japan', *Global Hip Hop Studies* 4:2.

7 Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

8 Ng J 2019, *Connecting Asia-Pacific Hip Hop: The role of the cross-cultural intermediary*, Doctoral Thesis, Melbourne: Monash University.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Australian street dance community faces challenges accessing professional infrastructure and financial assistance, which in turn limits opportunities for career growth and artistic recognition. These challenges are said to arise from limited access to private finance, low visibility in cultural policy, and barriers to securing consistent state support.

This research explores the nuances of Australia's dynamic street dance community and provides data on the challenges and professional aspirations of Australia's street dance scene. It considers the community's role within the larger cultural and creative landscape, both domestically and internationally. It also provides a deeper understanding of the participating demographics in street dance, participants' professional status, career pathways, access to funding (both private and publicly sourced), and the various audience dynamics within the street dance community.

The research provides the first national benchmark study of the street dance community in Australia.

⁹ Gunn R and Shaheen F 2024, *Spaces for Street Dance*.

While other research has focused on specific scenes, such as *Spaces for Street Dance*, which examined Sydney's street dance community,⁹ this is the first time data has been collected across the broader national scene. A collaboration between Cypher Culture, Creative Australia and researcher (Dr Jason Ng), this research aims to assist the community in better understanding and advocating for itself, while also offering governments and commercial organisations data that can be useful in informing policy and strategies for engagement.

While this report presents the findings of the first national survey on street dance in Australia, we acknowledge its limitations. Not all dancers or communities across the country may have been reached or represented in our sample, and we do not claim to capture the entirety of Australian street dance practice. Instead, the findings highlight the characteristics, experiences and ambitions of those connected to particular street dance scenes, many of whom encountered the survey through their networks or related social media channels.

City Sessions: Prelims at Arts Centre Melbourne Forecourt, Melbourne 2022. Credit: Namchops.



Methodology

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach that included two key methodologies: an online survey and in-depth qualitative interviews.

Online survey

Survey participants were sourced by circulating a survey through Cypher Culture’s networks and via key street dance community leaders across the country. Prior to launching the survey, the research team compiled a list of 11 dance organisations, six street dance-associated businesses, seven street dance collectives, and eight community leaders who were invited to take part and disseminate the survey across their communities. In total, 471 street dancers responded to the survey with 417 completing all questions (54 partial completes). The survey gathered information about participant demographics, practices, participation (domestically, interstate and abroad), media habits, professionalisation, aspirations, barriers and funding.

Interviews

This study also draws on in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews with street dancers across Australia. The interviews explored participants’ experiences of practice, participation, and professionalisation across different states and cultural communities, allowing for a grounded understanding of both personal and collective dynamics. From this process, three case studies have been developed, each highlighting a distinct narrative of street dance in Australia. These case studies were chosen to showcase dancers’ practices and professional work, their encounters with funding systems, and the ways cultural contexts shape their practice, opportunities and challenges within street dance. Together, they provide insight into the diverse aspirations and realities of street dance practitioners navigating an uneven and often precarious landscape.

Arai? Aray! as part of AsiaTOPA at Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne 2025. Credit: Namchops.



The Australian street dance community

Demographic information

Street dance is often described as an inclusive art form for folk of all ages, cultures and walks of life. This is due to its many communitarian and politically resistant origins, contributing to the many styles under its umbrella. Notably, this survey highlights the diversity of Australia's street dance scene, as seen in the demographic categories listed below.

Age

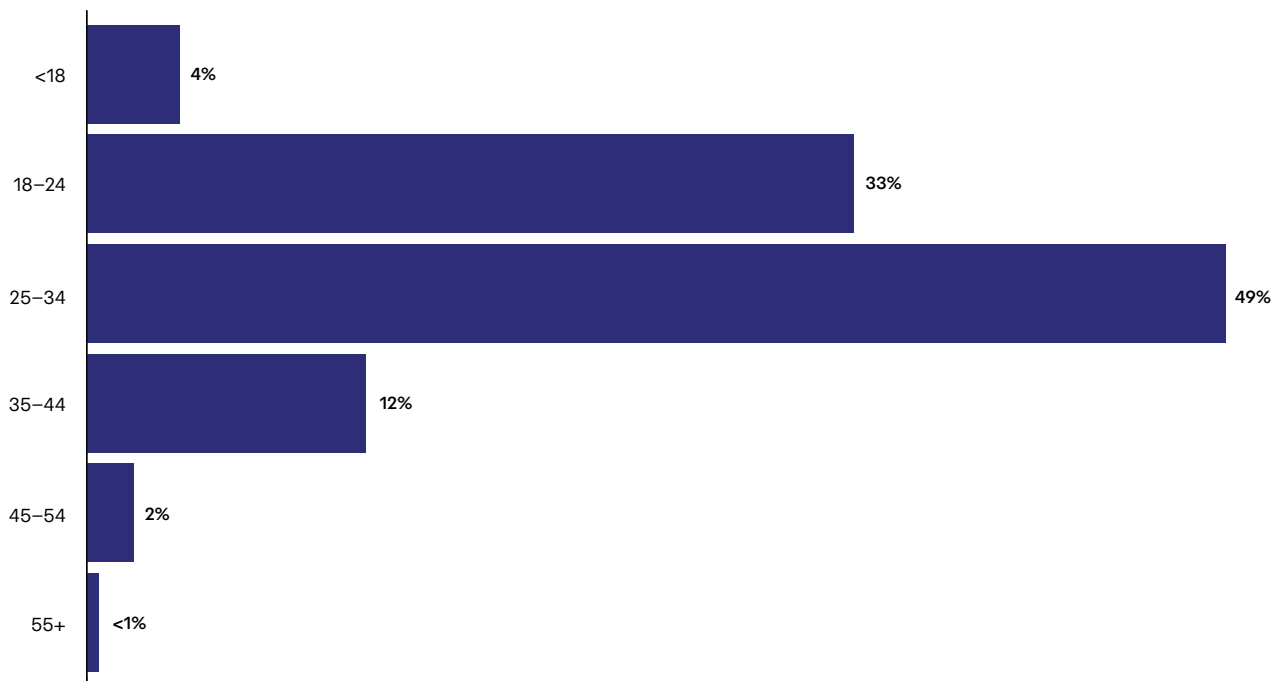
Approximately **half of the street dance community surveyed are 25–34 years old (49%) and one third are aged 18–24 (33%)**.

Older respondents are overall less represented in this survey sample. Only 12% of respondents are aged 35–44, 2% are aged 45–54 and just two respondents are aged 55 and over.

This sample aligns with general trends in traditional dance careers, where most dancers begin their careers early and withdraw in their 30s and 40s due to the physical demands of the profession.¹⁰ This departure from the sector may also be due to financial obstacles and work precarity. Research shows artists across all age groups experience inhibiting economic factors on their professional development; however, there is an apparent aggregated impact of these factors on mid-age artists.¹¹

Figure 1:

Age



Q: Which age group do you fall into? (n=417)

¹⁰ Throsby D and Petetskaya 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

¹¹ As above.

Gender

Over half of our respondents identify as women (54%), with two fifths identifying as men (38%), and 4% as non-binary.¹²

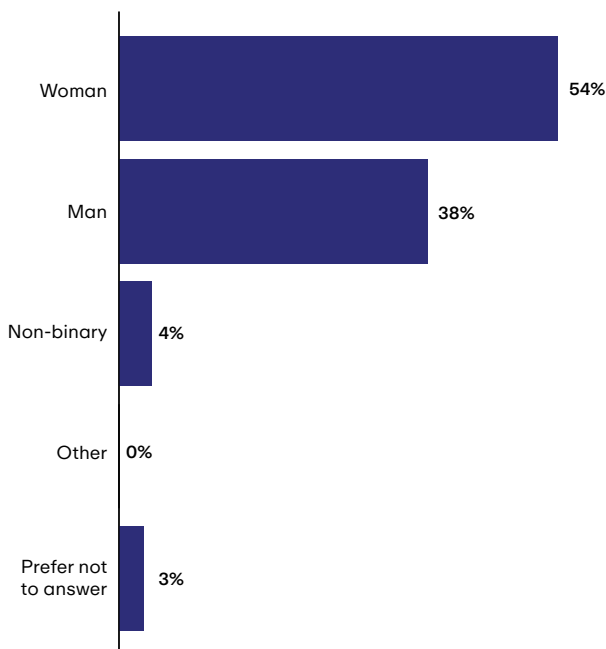
Notably, **women outnumber men in all age groups**. In particular, younger respondents aged 18–24 are predominantly women (63%). Of those aged 25–44, women still outnumber men and non-binary people make up a smaller proportion. No men aged 45–54 and 55+ responded to the survey.

The overall gender distribution in this study is more balanced than in other research examining similar demographics. For example, the Spaces for Street Dance report, which looked specifically at Sydney’s street dance scene, found 78% of street dance participants identified as men, compared to just 30% as women and 8% as non-binary/trans people.¹³

An additional question was asked about transgender identity. Twelve respondents said they have a **transgender history, experience or identity** (3%).

Figure 2:

Gender



Q: How do you describe your gender? (n=417)

¹² This is contrary to the common assertion that street dance has typically been predominantly male. This finding may point to changing gender participation or other variables that inform willingness to participate in surveys.

¹³ Gunn R and Shaheen F 2024, *Spaces For Street Dance*.

Sexual orientation

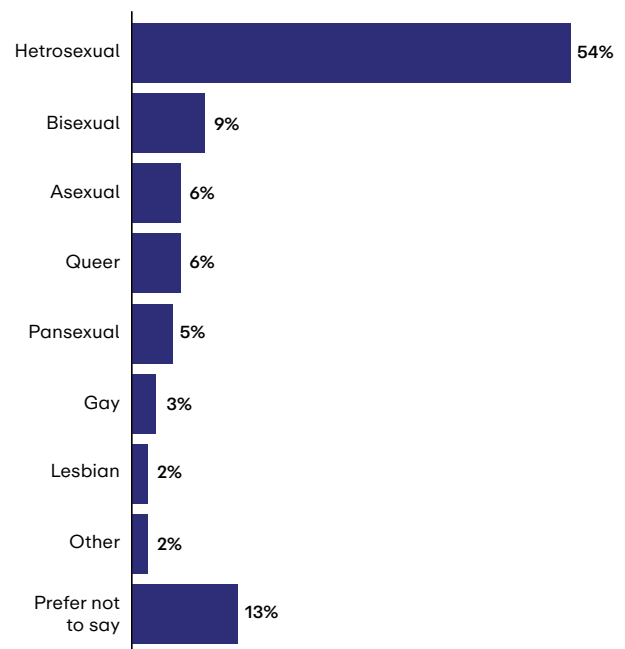
Over half of our respondents identify as heterosexual (54%).

Almost **one third of respondents identify as one of the categories within LGBTQIA+** (31%): 9% of respondents identified as bisexual; 6% as queer, 6% as asexual, 5% as pansexual, 3% as gay, and 2% as lesbian. An additional 13% of respondents preferred not to say and 2% said ‘other’.

These results suggest that street dance provides an inclusive environment where people feel free to explore and express identities. Historically, many street dance disciplines have been linked to communities that created space for diverse identities and self-expression. The presence of a strong LGBTQIA+ base in these survey results reflects the resilience of these roots.

Figure 3:

Sexual identity



Q: How do you describe your sexual orientation? (n=417)

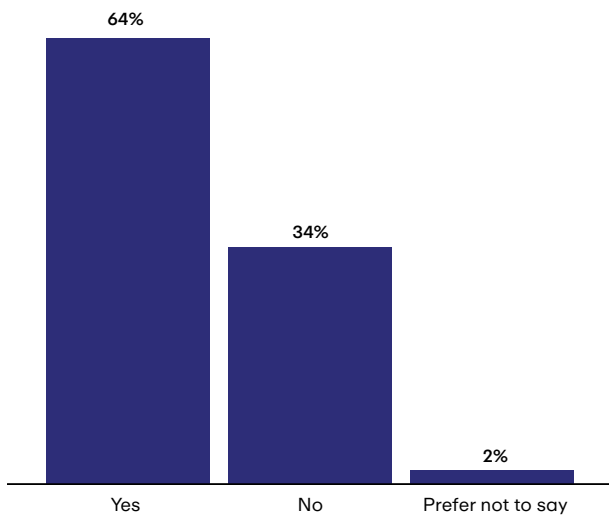
Cultural and linguistic diversity

We also asked members of the street dance community if they identify as being from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Almost two thirds of respondents self-identify as CALD (64%), suggesting that the street dance community is largely multicultural.

Figure 4:

Cultural and linguistic background



Q: Do you identify as a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background? (n=417)

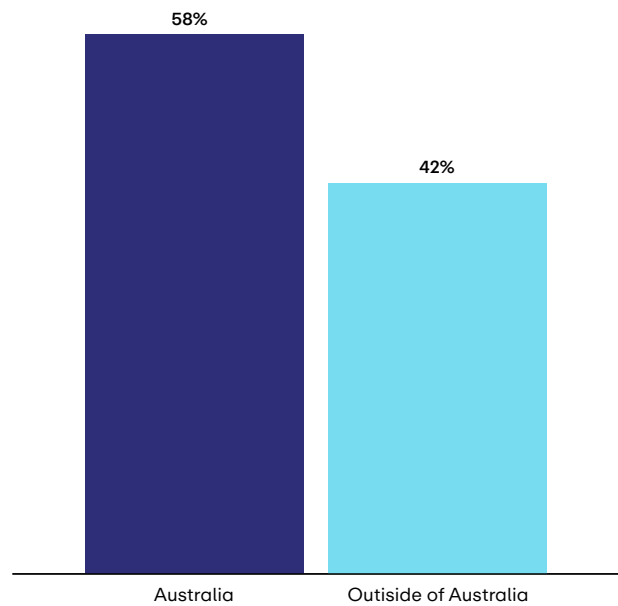
Two in five respondents were born outside of Australia (42%).

Of the 174 respondents who were born overseas, there is a notable concentration of people **born across the Asia Pacific.** For example, 14% were born in the Philippines and 13% were born in China.

Participants also represent a range of other national backgrounds in smaller numbers.¹⁴

Figure 5:

Place of birth



Q: In which country were you born? n=417

¹⁴ Locations with <5 responses included: Sri Lanka, Colombia, Congo, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Chile, Singapore, India, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Other, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei, Cambodia, Czechia, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Europe, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Jamaica, Kuwait, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, The Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

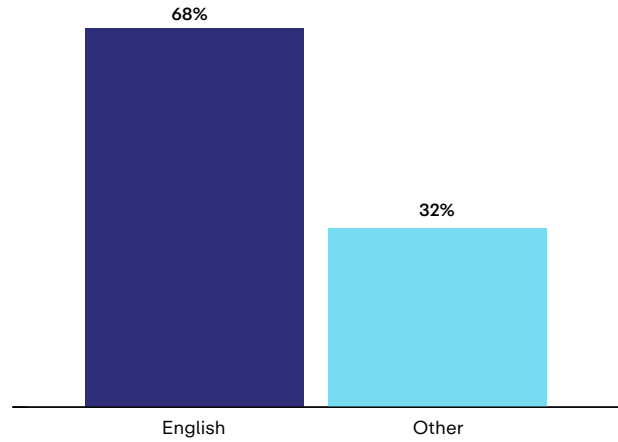


While English was the first language learned for most respondents (68%), **one third of respondents report another language other than English as their first language** (32%).

The most commonly spoken first languages among this group are **Mandarin** (16%), **Cantonese** (13%), **Vietnamese** (8%), **Chinese – dialect unspecified** (8%) and **Indonesian/Bahasa** (7%). These results align with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data that demonstrates these languages are among the most commonly spoken languages in Australian households.¹⁵

Figure 6:

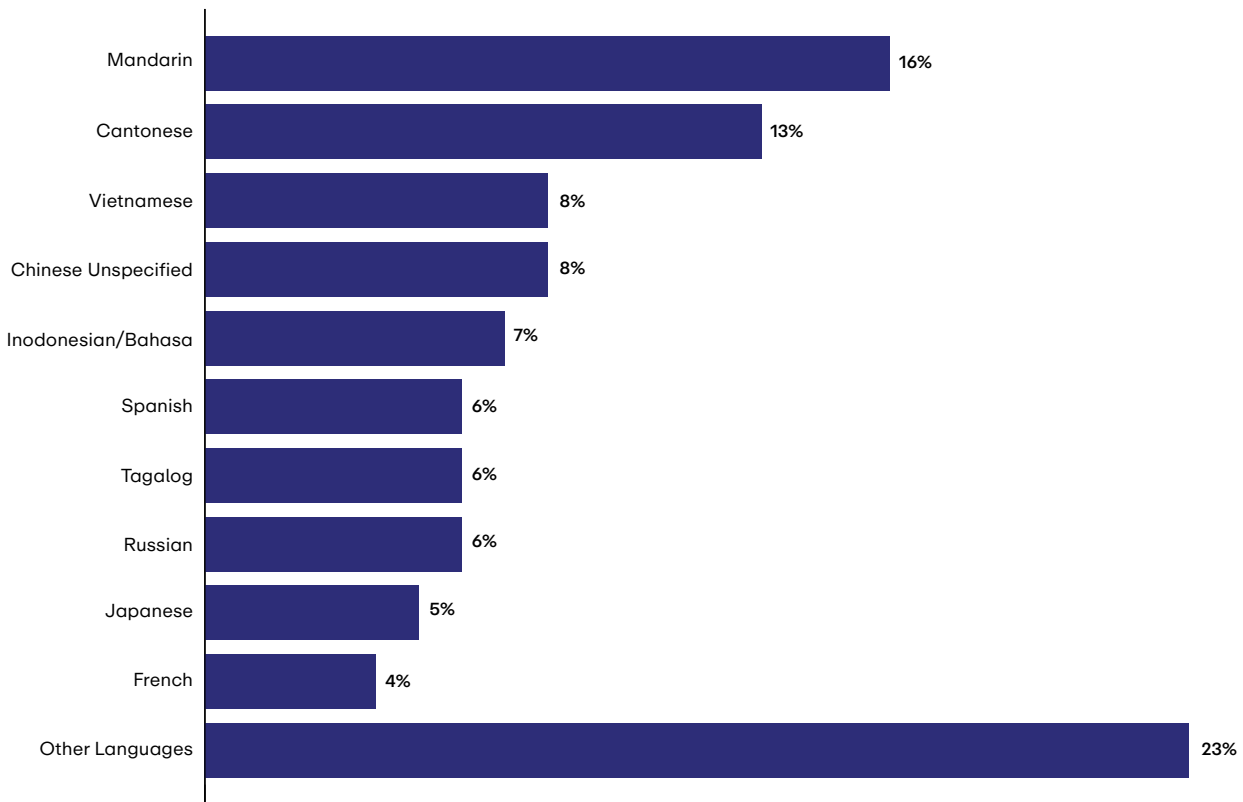
First Language



Q: What is your first language? (n=417)

Figure 7:

Proportion of first languages, other than English



Q: What is your first language? Select: Other (n=133)

¹⁵ Locations with <5 responses included: Sri Lanka, Colombia, Congo, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Chile, Singapore, India, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Other, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei, Cambodia, Czechia, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Europe, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Jamaica, Kuwait, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, The Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

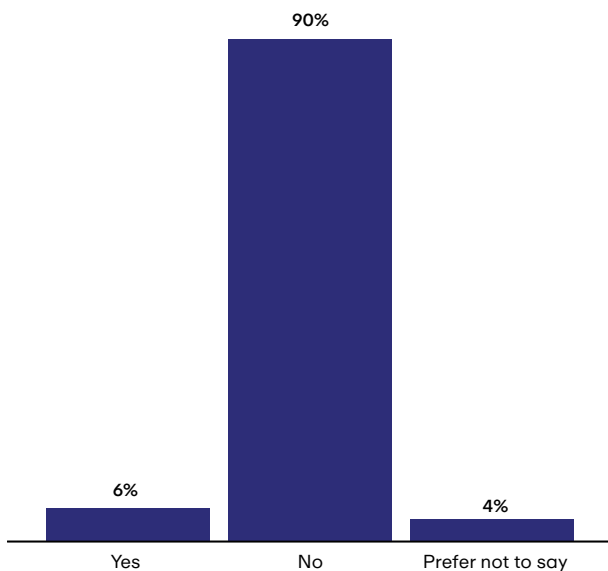
Participation of d/Deaf and disabled people

The contributions of d/Deaf and disabled people provide a vital perspective within the dance community, challenging assumptions about access, expression and inclusion. They highlight both the creative possibilities of diverse practices and the systemic barriers that continue to shape participation.

Of the survey respondents, **6% self-identified as d/Deaf and/or as a person with disability**. An additional 4% preferred not to say. These results are lower than the national average of 21% of Australians who report having a disability.¹⁶

Figure 8:

Identify as d/Deaf or person with disability



Q: Do you identify as d/Deaf or a person with disability?
(n=417)

Where we're at: Street Dance in the Australian cultural landscape at Dancehouse, Melbourne 2024. Credit: Amelia Vu.



¹⁶ See ABS 2024, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

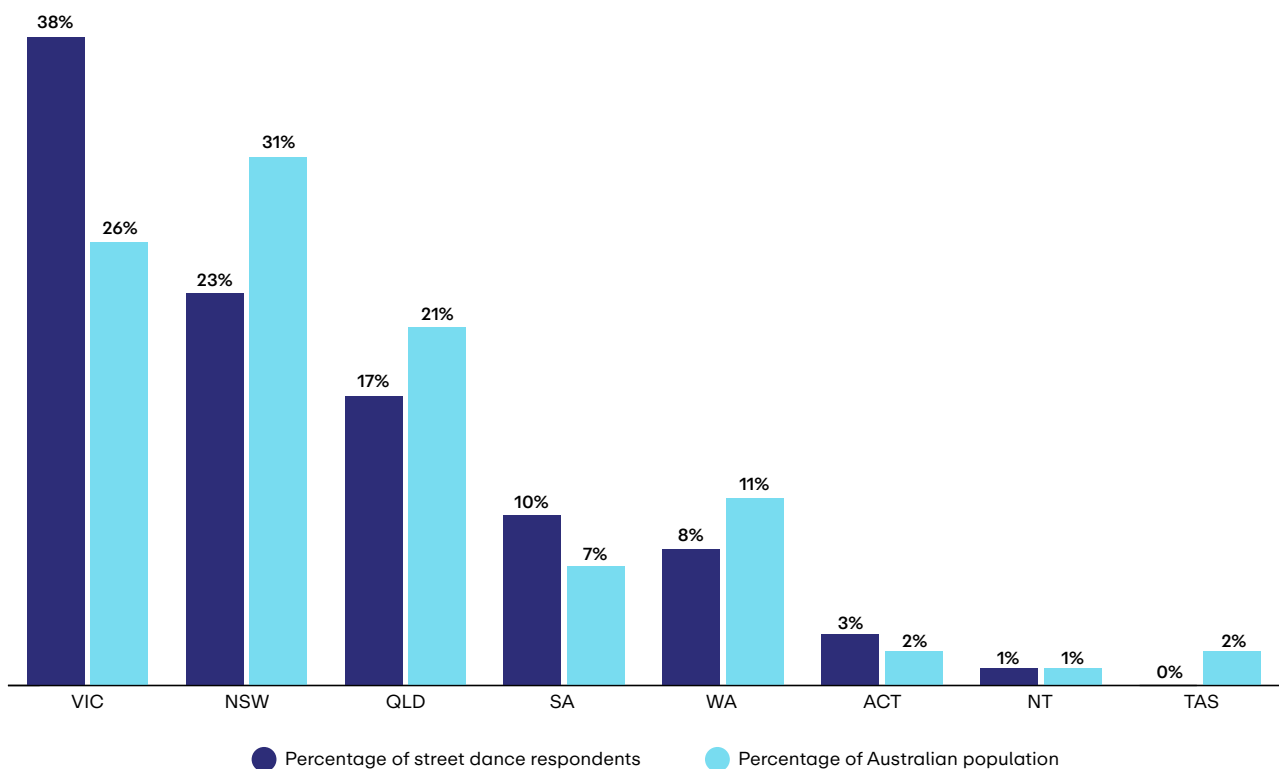
Location

Almost all of the street dance community members surveyed are based in **metropolitan areas** (95%). Only 5% of respondents live in regional areas; none live in remote areas.

Most of the respondents are based in Victoria (38%), New South Wales (23%) and Queensland (17%), where there are frequent events and where much of the street dance infrastructure exists. Mapping these statistics against the national population by state metrics provided by the ABS' 2024 Estimated Resident Population data shows a similar distribution of street dance community members by state population.

Figure 9:

State location, survey respondents compared to Australian population



Q: What is your current postcode of residence? (n=417)

Note: Population statistics were gathered from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2024 Estimated Resident Population.



Maxwell 'ThvFlood' Douglas.
Credit: Drops Archive.

Developing an Australian Street Dance with Maxwell 'ThvFlood' Douglas (QLD)

Dancing as a form of self-expression

Maxwell 'ThvFlood' Douglas began dancing in 2012 following the 2011 Brisbane floods that saw heavy damage across the city's western suburbs. Ipswich, where he resides, was hit particularly hard, with 25% of the region submerged.

Recounting his memories of living out of shelters, robberies and other unsettling circumstances surrounding the disaster, he said: **'That's when I started dancing. It was an outlet for me in a hard situation.'**

ThvFlood gravitated towards the local Queensland freestyle street dance scene, with which he discovered a deep affinity that shaped both his artistry and his community ties. Seeing the potential of various dance forms he fostered new connections while carving out his style. In doing so ThvFlood drew from many styles that lent his work energy and expressive power.

This became the foundation for a new style of movement he later named 'Flood' or 'Flooding'.

The emergence of a new dance style: Flood/Flooding

Flood/Flooding is born from the raw memory of the 2011 floods and their devastation, channelled into a physical language that draws on both personal and collective experiences. As a style, Flooding often sees the body take on distorted and grotesque characteristics to help make manifest expressions of these troubling times. ThvFlood describes this as **'a feeling as a response to my life story'.**

Flood has evolved and been shaped by participants

Over the past five years, ThvFlood has watched the form gain momentum across Australia, shaped not only by his vision but also by the contributions and stories of others who have taken it up.

Among them is KB, who brings an Indigenous perspective, drawing connections between Flooding and longstanding traditions where dance is similarly used **'as an expression of the land'.**

Increasing recognition both locally and globally

Being largely developed out of Ipswich, the majority of Flooding practitioners are concentrated in Queensland. Flooding has received increasing recognition from the region's citizens and officials.

Impressively, the style has also drawn dancers from across Australia to Ipswich to learn more about the art form and pass on their newfound skills and knowledge across the world. As ThvFlood said:

'We had this young fella named Jayden from Melbourne who came to Ipswich to learn Flooding. He just came to the garage and had a session and he went back and showed his friends. He went to Japan, Korea and Adelaide a few times and he just taught it to whoever was keen.'

Challenges to growing audiences, practice and participation

Despite Flooding's growing recognition, ThvFlood explains he has experienced some challenges in building audiences, gaining recognition and sustaining his practice.

He states that internationally there has been some pushback to the new style, with some people commenting online: **'This is not street dance.'**

ThvFlood remedies this tension by recognising that this response has ultimately pushed the conversation around Flood further, enabling its visibility in other ways:

'It sparks intrigue, and it is sparking a cultural shift. It's a new style from Australia, and anything new is met with some scepticism and some resistance.'

ThvFlood also states he has had trouble financially sustaining the Flood dance community. He says he often self-finances classes, events and spaces for creatives to connect and socialise.

He has, however, successfully secured local government financial support to expand his networks internationally. He says:

'We were funded by Ipswich City Council to fly over to New Zealand to teach Flooding. I was already invited, but I put in the funding application to bring other dancers over to help teach. I brought my Indigenous and Asian friends over and thought it was important for them to be there as Australian representatives. We also have the [local] Māori connect in New Zealand, like Indigenous Australians here, a lot of Polynesians involved with Krump support Flood. The council took interest in that.'

He notes building the street dance community's grant writing skills would be greatly beneficial, in addition to providing more accessible application requirements:

'...they don't really know about what we are doing, we don't know what they are doing. We don't know what's available. There's a pretty big disconnect but there have been efforts to make it happen that's for sure.'

Aspirations for the future

Looking to the future, ThvFlood hopes Flood will become a more recognised scene amongst the street dance community. He also hopes Flooding will become more integrated into education, health and the broader creative industries; and more audiences will become aware of and enjoy Flooding. He says:

'In the next five years, if it keeps going the way it's going, [Flood] could become a full scene in Australia, where there are multiple crews in different places. It'll be a more recognised 'style'. It already is but it's still very underground. I think if you're coming into Australia you'll hear about Flooding at some point. It's like that now but I think it'll become more prominent with more people participating.'

Participation in street dance

Forms and styles

The street dance community surveyed **practises a wide range of street dance styles**.

Hip Hop is the most practised style among survey participants, with many selecting multiple styles. More than half say they practise **Hip Hop** (56%).

One quarter practise **Popping** (24%) and **House** (24%), and almost one in five practise **Waacking/Whacking/Punking** (18%).

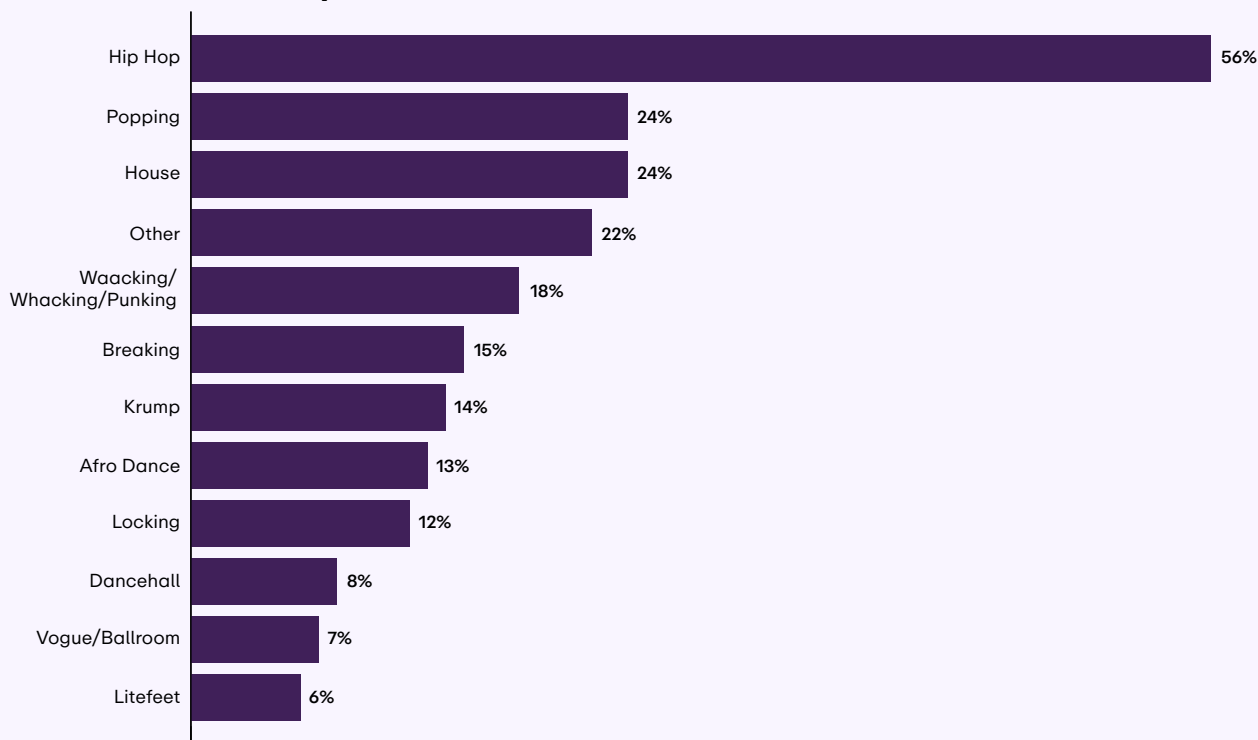
There is also strong participation from practitioners of **Breaking** (15%), **Krump** (14%), **Afro Dance** (13%), **Locking** (12%), **Dancehall** (8%), **Vogue/Ballroom** (7%) and **Litefeet** (6%). A number of other dance styles are also practised (22%), such as Flood/Flooding and Animation.¹⁷

Out of all the respondents, **men** are more likely to participate in Breaking, Krump, Popping and Locking than women and non-binary people. **Women** participate in greater numbers than men or non-binary people across Afro Dance, Dancehall, Hip Hop, House and Waacking/Whacking/Punking.

For the dancers who practise multiple styles, the two most associated styles are **Hip Hop and House**, with 15% practising both.

Figure 10:

Street dance forms/styles



Q: Which street dance forms/styles do you practise? Select all that apply (n=449)

Note: Other includes Flood/Flooding.

¹⁷ Other styles with lower participation include Choreography, Waving, Kizomba, Amapiano, Arbatone, Boogaloo, Butoh, Clowning, Commercial, Contemporary, Dance Cover, Electro Dance, Experimental, Freestyle, Girlstyle, Hustle, Improvisation, Jazzfunk, Jookin, K-pop, Liquid, Lyrical, Melbourne Shuffle, Robot, Shuffle, Street Jazz, Strutting, Techno, Twerk and Krump.

Roles in the street dance community

Most street dance community members surveyed describe themselves as **dance/community participants** (92%).

Nearly half say they are **performers** (49%), one third are **educators/teachers** (33%), and one quarter are **choreographers** (25%) and **events producers/managers** (23%).

One in ten selected ‘**Other**’, identifying as arts workers, events organisers or volunteers, graphic designers, photographers and more (10%).

Most respondents work across multiple roles within the street dance community. The most frequent role pairings reveal how street dance community members often wear multiple hats – blending artistry, teaching and event-making.

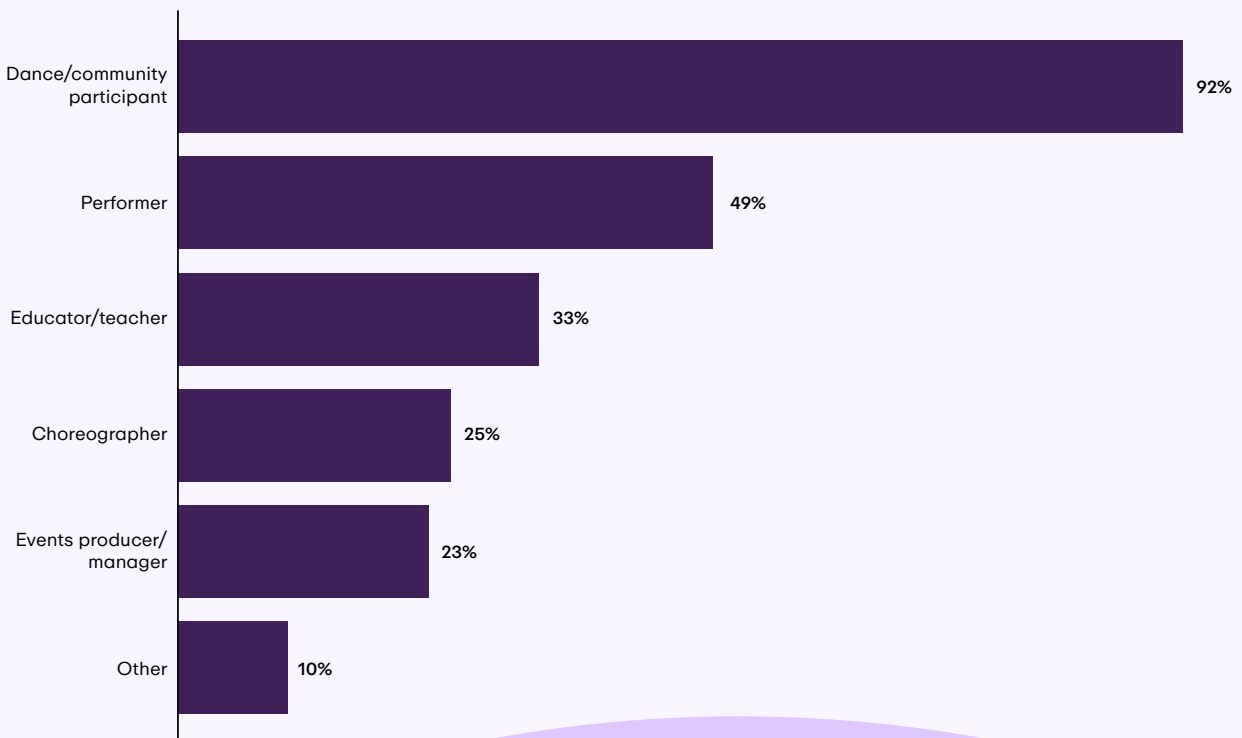
The most common role pairings are:

- **performer** and **educator/teacher** (24%)
- **performer** and **choreographer** (23%)
- **dance/community participant** and **events producer/manager** (21%)
- **educator/teacher** and **choreographer** (21%)
- **educator/teacher** and **events producer/manager** (17%).

Together, these patterns reflect a hybrid professional identity where being a dancer often means being an educator, organiser and creator all at once.

Figure 11:

Roles in the Australian street dance community



Q: Which of the following describes your role in the street dance community? Select all that apply (n=471)

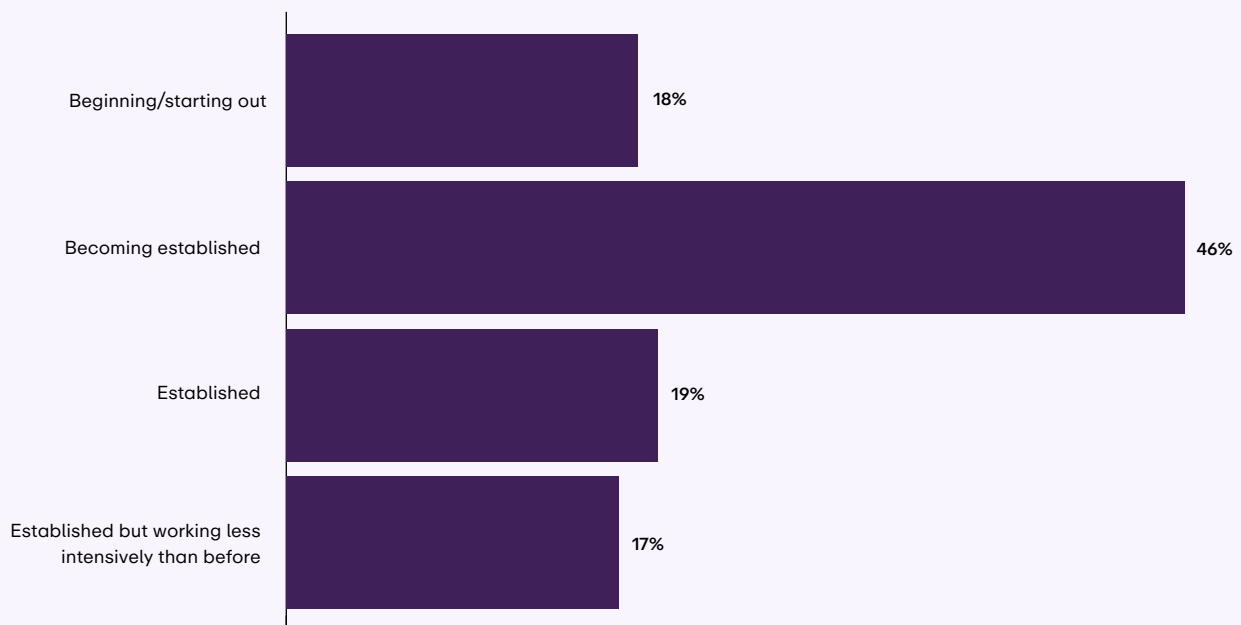
Career stage

Almost half of respondents are **beginning/starting out or becoming established street dancers** (46%).

Over a third of respondents are **established** (36%: 19% are established and 17% are established but working less). Older respondents are more likely to be established than younger ones. Over half of respondents aged 45+ are **established** or **established but working less intensively than before**, compared to 69% of those aged 35–44 and just 39% of those aged under 35.

Figure 12:

Stage of career



Q: Which of the following best describes the stage of your practice? (n=449)



City Sessions: Prelims at
Arts Centre Melbourne
Forecourt, Melbourne 2022.
Credit: Namchops.

Attendance and travel

Street dance events connect the broader scene locally and internationally. The findings from this survey show the community is very involved and travels frequently to participate in street dance.

About **half of the respondents** say they attend free community or paid street dance events **at least once a week** (52% attend daily, every 2–3 days or once a week).

Most respondents regularly attend events, with 74% attending **at least once a month or more often**. The most common frequency to attend street dance events is **once a week or more often** (30%).

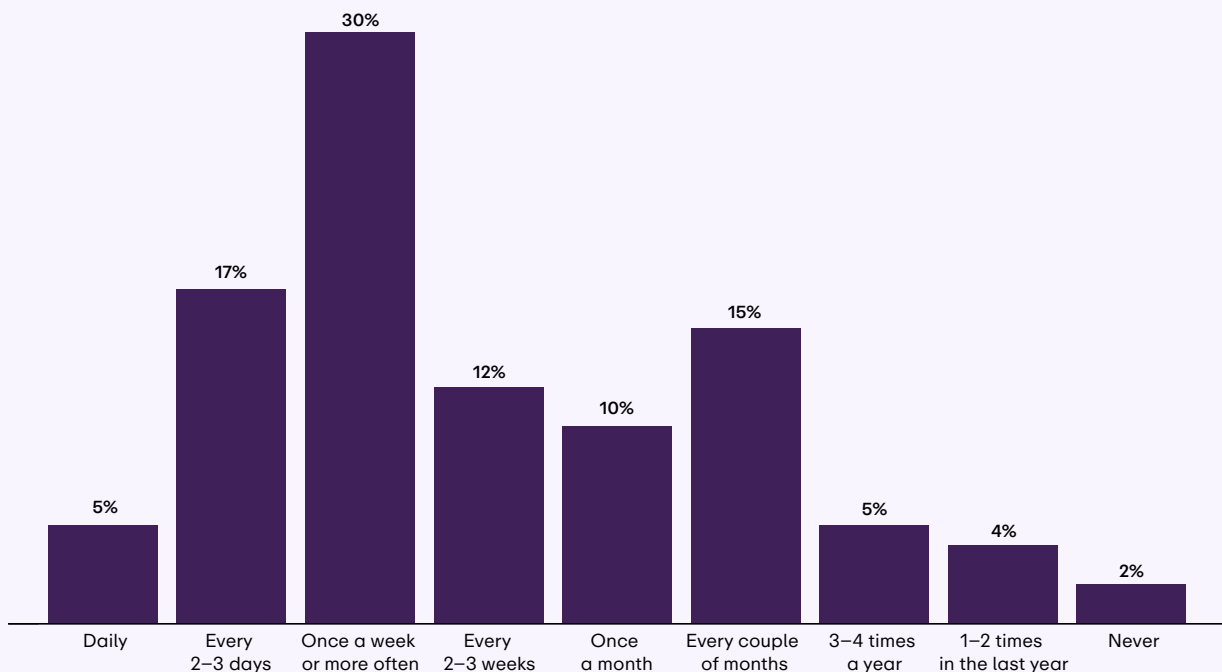
More than two thirds of respondents **travel interstate** for dance (68%) and two in five **travel internationally for dance** (41%). Two thirds of established artists travel internationally for dance (65%) compared to a third of those becoming established (33%) and just 9% of those beginning/starting out.

Of those who travel **interstate for dance**, over half of the respondents report they **travel interstate annually to participate in street dance competitions or events** (59%) or **watch street dance competitions or events** (53%). Two in five travel interstate annually for **community networking** (41%) or to **participate in workshops** (42%). Respondents indicated they **travel internationally** for the same reasons – highlighting a significant demand for opportunities to participate internationally.

Of those respondents travelling **internationally for dance every year**, the most popular activities were to **watch** (40%) or **participate in events** (34%), **network with the community** (33%) or **participate in workshops** (26%). A small percentage travelled for **dance-related professional work** (15%).

Figure 13:

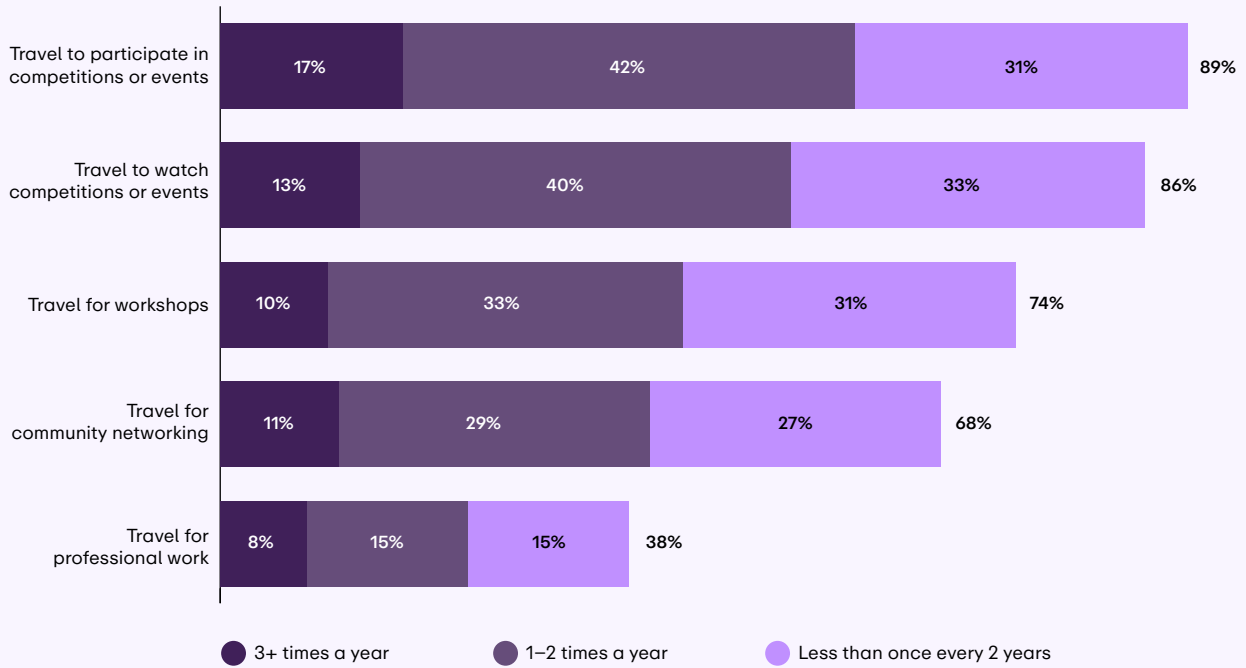
Frequency of attending street dance events



Q: Which of the following describes your role in the street dance community? Select all that apply (n=471)

Figure 14:

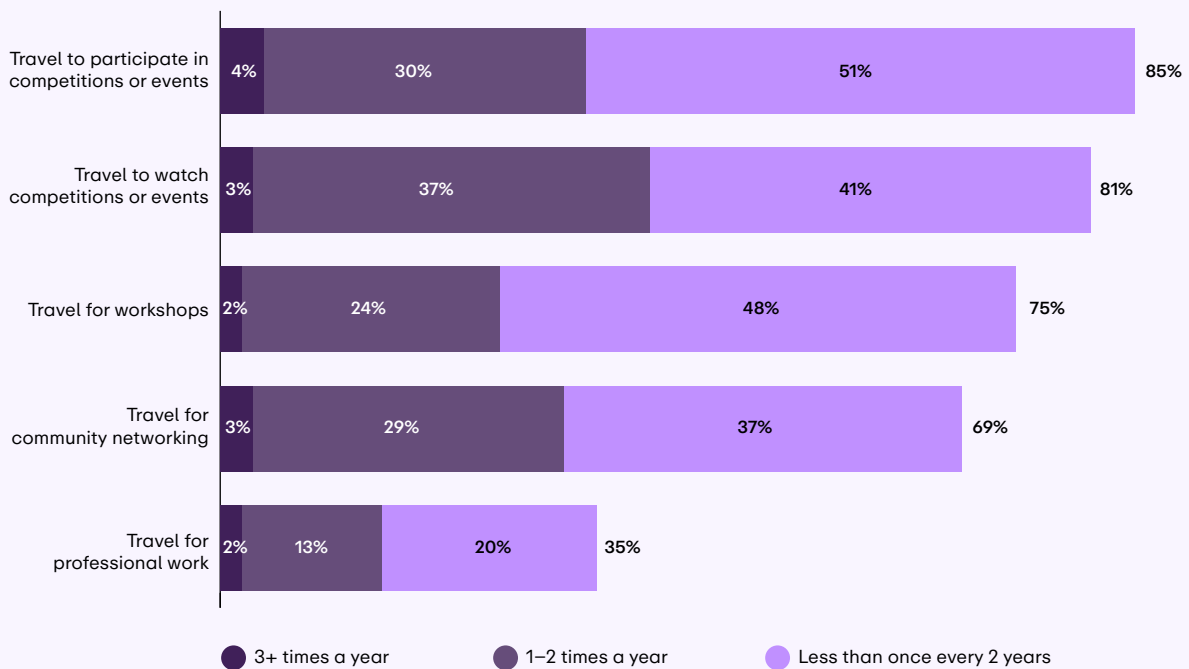
Interstate travel



Q: How frequently do you travel interstate within Australia to...? (n=273)

Figure 15:

International travel



Q: How frequently do you travel internationally to...? (n=163)

Engagement with street dance content online

The street dance community surveyed report that they **create** and **consume** a large amount of dance-related content online.

Three quarters of respondents **make and share videos of their dance practice online** (74%).

Almost all respondents say they had watched **recordings of competitions, events or battles** in the last 12 months (95%).


In the previous 12 months, roughly three quarters of respondents had viewed a **tutorial, workshop or dance class online** (76%) or **dance training videos** (73%). About two thirds of respondents watched **documentaries or dance-related films** (67%) and **live-streamed community events or battles online** (64%).

This dance-related content was largely consumed via social media platforms such as **Instagram** (96%) and **YouTube** (93%). About one quarter of participants watched street dance content on **Facebook** (24%). Other digital platforms used to consume street dance content include **Zoom** (9%), **Twitch** (2%) and **Google Meets** (1%). Another quarter selected 'Other' with most answering 'TikTok' or 'Netflix' (25%).

Two thirds consumed this street dance content for **free** (68%) and one third report they are **paying for content online** (32%).

Of those who pay for content, **half spend \$15 or under a month** (52%). Other respondents say they pay roughly \$16–24 (17%), \$25–34 (12%), or more than \$35 a month (19%).

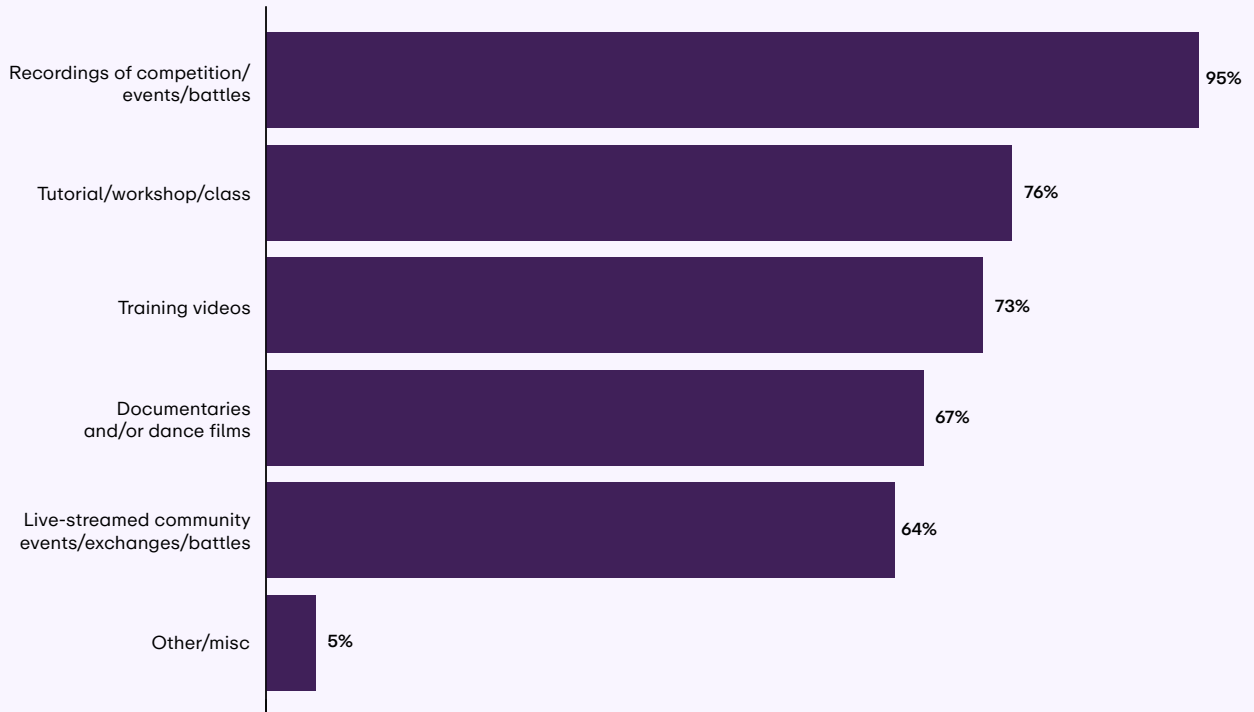
Of those who consume dance-related content for free, a significant portion indicate they **would be willing to pay for this content in the future** (62%). This finding suggests future potential for street dance's digital media economy.



GENESIS kiki ball at Arts House, Melbourne 2023.
Credit: Namchops.

Figure 16:

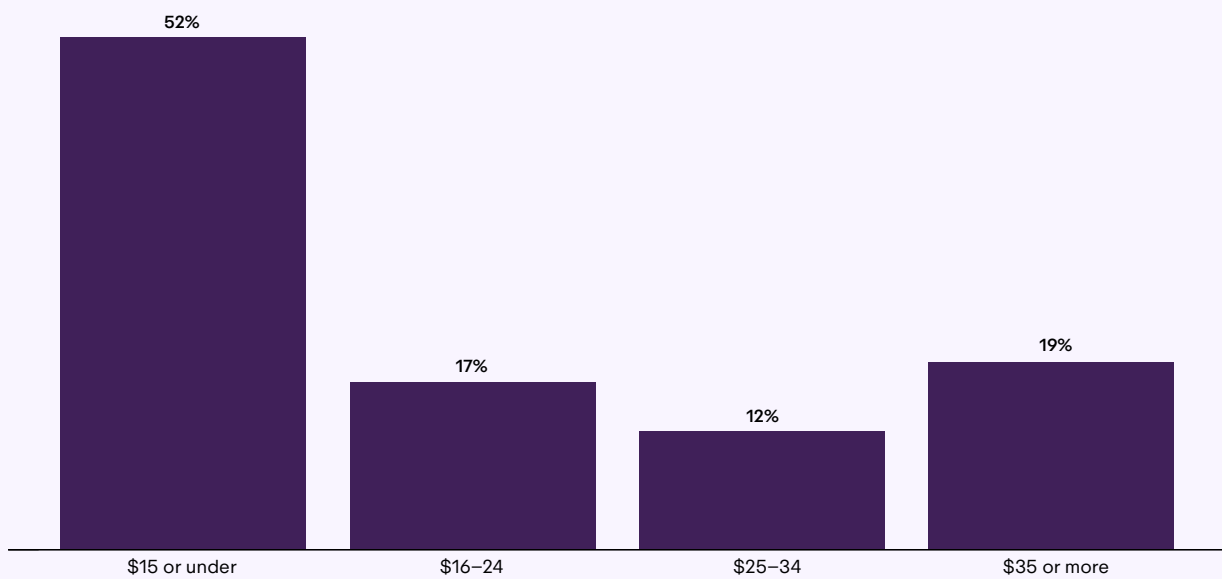
Media consumption



Q: Over the last 12 months, have you viewed any of the following kinds of dance-related content online? (n=471)

Figure 17:

Paid street dance media content



Q: How much do you pay for this content per month, on average? (n=151)

Participation in the arts and sports

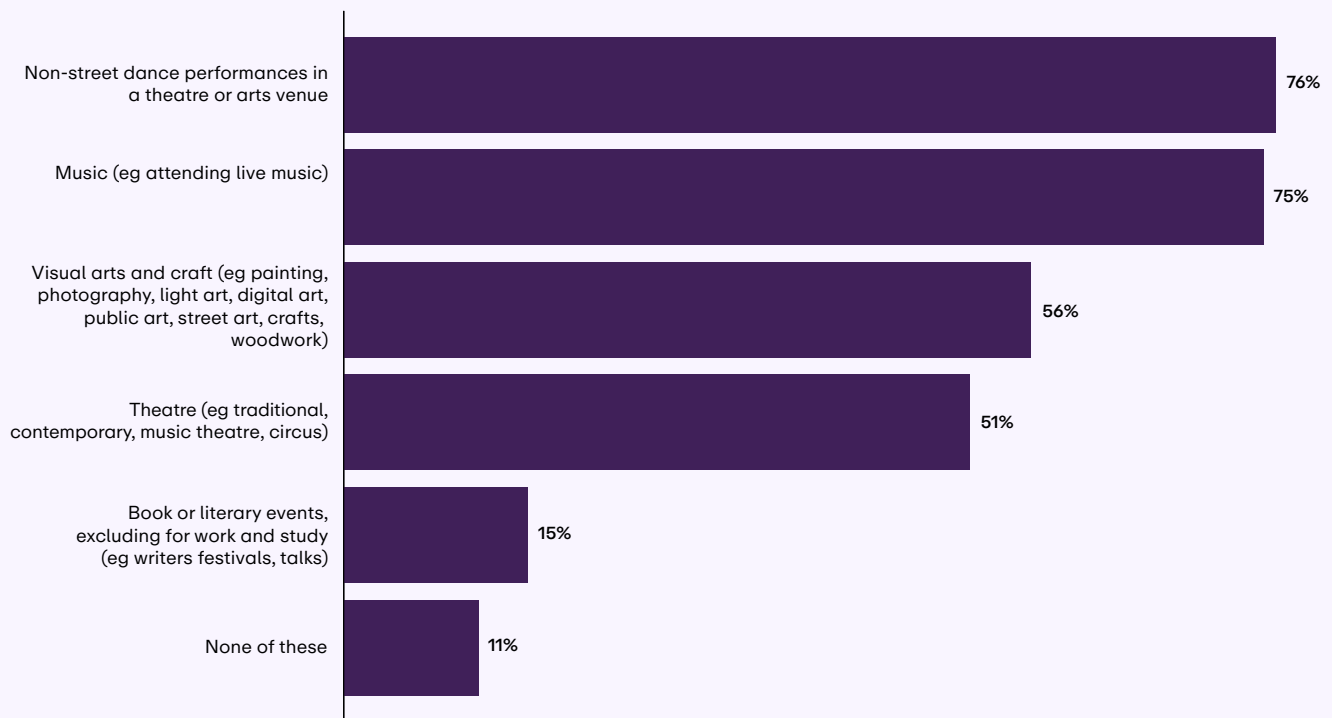
Street dance community members surveyed tend to be **avid consumers of the arts**, particularly of other non-street dances and music.

Almost **nine in ten** street dance community members surveyed say they **attended an arts and cultural event** in the past 12 months (89%). This is significantly higher than the national average for arts attendance, which was 68% in both 2022 and 2019.¹⁸

Around three in four respondents attended other non-street dance performances in a **theatre or arts venue** (76%) and at **live music events** (75%) in the past 12 months. Over half of respondents also attended **visual arts and craft events** (56%) or **theatre events** (51%) and a small percentage attended **book or literary events** outside of work or study (15%) in the past 12 months.

Figure 18:

Arts attendance



Q: Over the last 12 months, have you attended any of these other kinds of free or paid events in person? (n=471)

While the significant majority engage in the arts (89%), **respondents are far less likely to say they attend sport events** (33%).

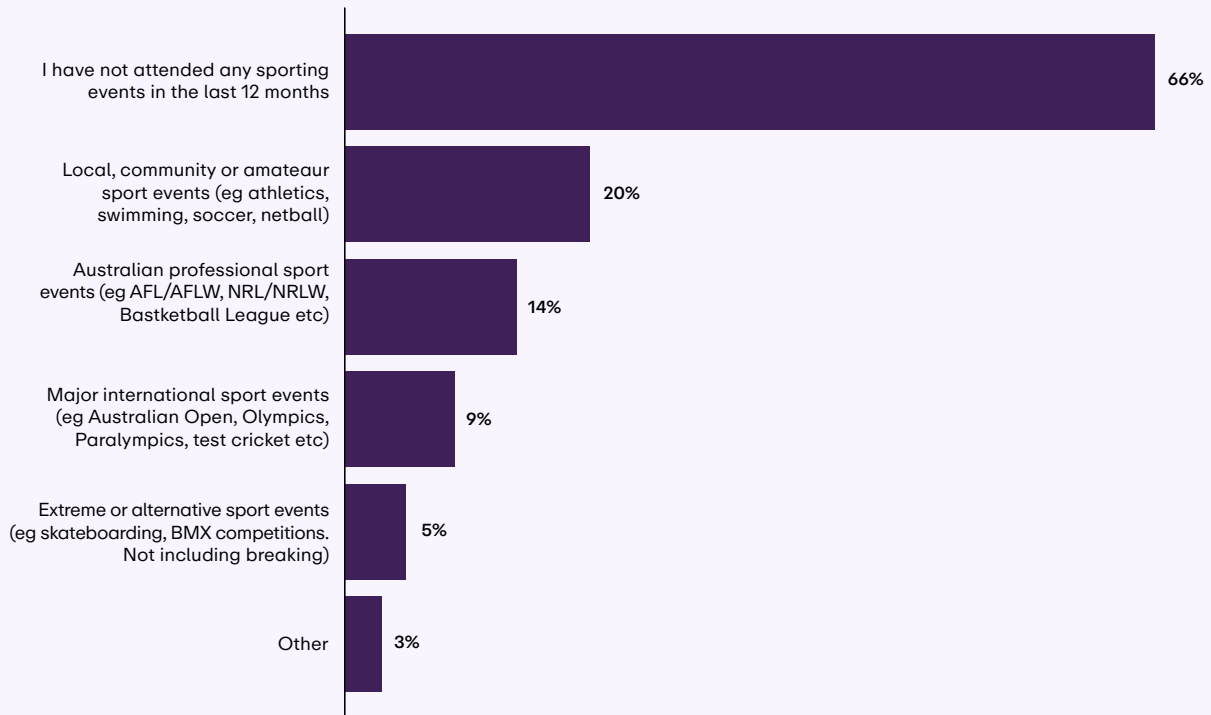
Over two thirds of those surveyed indicated they **did not attend any sport events** in the last 12 months (66%).

Respondents who say they attended sport events in the past 12 months are most likely to have attended **local community or amateur sporting events** (20%), followed by **Australian professional sport events** (14%). Only a small percentage attended **major international sport events** (9%) or **extreme or alternative sport events** (5%). This indicates that street dancers are more likely to associate themselves with the arts than sport.

18 Creative Australia 2023, *Creating Value: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey*.

Figure 19:

Sport attendance



Q: Over the last 12 months, have you attended any of these kinds of free or paid events in person? Select all that apply (n=471)

Uni Sessions by RMIT Funkadelics
Dance Club, Melbourne 2023.
Credit: Cross Step Photography.



Street dance's regional–metropolitan divide with Amanda Vanderkleij (ACT–NSW)

Grassroots beginnings

Amanda discovered her passion for Hip Hop in Canberra where she first took a class with a friend. At the time, the Project Beats studio was the meeting ground for most of the Canberra street dance scene. Amanda reflected on a strong sense of belonging that was fostered here:

'Project Beats was really the Canberra scene ... I feel really grateful because I watched it grow from something small into something bigger.'

Amanda's practice developed at a fast pace. She quickly refined her skills and knowledge of Hip Hop dance, distinguishing herself as one of the most proficient dancers in the territory.

However, Amanda's newfound skills came with distinct opportunities and challenges, especially due to the ACT's smaller size and scale:

'...because it was a small state, I got to start teaching really early on. But that was a challenge in itself. As a small state we didn't have access to a lot of information or a lot of other teachers. So, I was only doing Hip Hop for a year and then I started teaching. I was a beginner myself, but then teaching other beginners how to dance.'

Motivations for moving

Due to the ACT's limited infrastructure for the Hip Hop dance scene, Amanda sought out opportunities in Sydney to develop her professional practice.

Initially, Amanda travelled to Sydney for workshops and battles at her own expense. Each trip highlighted the differences between regional and metropolitan street dance cultures – differences in scale, visibility, infrastructure and opportunities.

After winning major competitions, Amanda was suddenly in demand to teach and judge, but many organisers still hesitated to cover the higher travel costs from Canberra compared to Sydney or Melbourne. **'People weren't willing to pay for my petrol or flights to come interstate,'** she recalled, later reflecting that remaining in Canberra meant **'there's no way I'm actually going to be able to pursue this professionally.'**

She decided to relocate to build connections, enhance her practice and grow her professional opportunities.



Amanda Vanderkleij.
Credit: Andrea Velton.

Building practice and opportunities

After moving to Sydney, Amanda's skills were quickly recognised at the 2025 Red Bull 'Dance Your Style' event in Sydney, where she was invited to participate as a battle guest. She recalled:

'The exposure that event gave me was crazy ... it's been amazing. I went overnight from 2K followers to 36K and that was just from the Red Bull event. That was all from being in Sydney.'

This new level of exposure provided Amanda with specific cultural capital. This exposure helped amplify her audience, rapidly boosting her local and global recognition. She now has over 19 million views on Instagram and over 12 million views on YouTube of her Red Bull 'Dance Your Style' performance.

Amanda considers media visibility a critical part of developing a professional repertoire in today's digital economy. Without it, she argues, finding work as a dancer is much more difficult and harder to sustain.

Aspirations for the future

Looking to the future, Amanda hopes the Canberra scene will grow – inspiring a new generation of local dancers and encouraging more experienced dance practitioners to move to Canberra. Skilled leaders who have established networks and a certain degree of knowledge can attract dancers to places like Canberra, establishing new flows to support smaller scenes.

She also hopes there will be more opportunities for intrastate and interstate exchange, especially for regional practitioners. Using Red Bull's 'Dance Your Way' as an example, she noted the importance of this interstate exchange:

'Flying people in [from across Australia] makes the energy of the room so electric. It wasn't just one rep from each state, there were a few, but this was a commercial event. If we could look at that as an example and translate that to community events for the dancers, it could keep our scene alive and create new opportunities. Being exposed in a real way to each other can be a big thing.'

Art form development

Training

Street dance has often been shaped by **self-directed and community-driven learning**, where practitioners exchange knowledge and experiment alongside mentors and peers. Survey results suggest that **street dancers are expanding their learning contexts**, with many now participating in studio-based and paid classes alongside community-led practice.

Most respondents say that throughout their lives they have engaged in **formal street dance lessons** (93%). Two thirds of respondents have gained dance knowledge through **mentorship from a street dance practitioner** (67%).

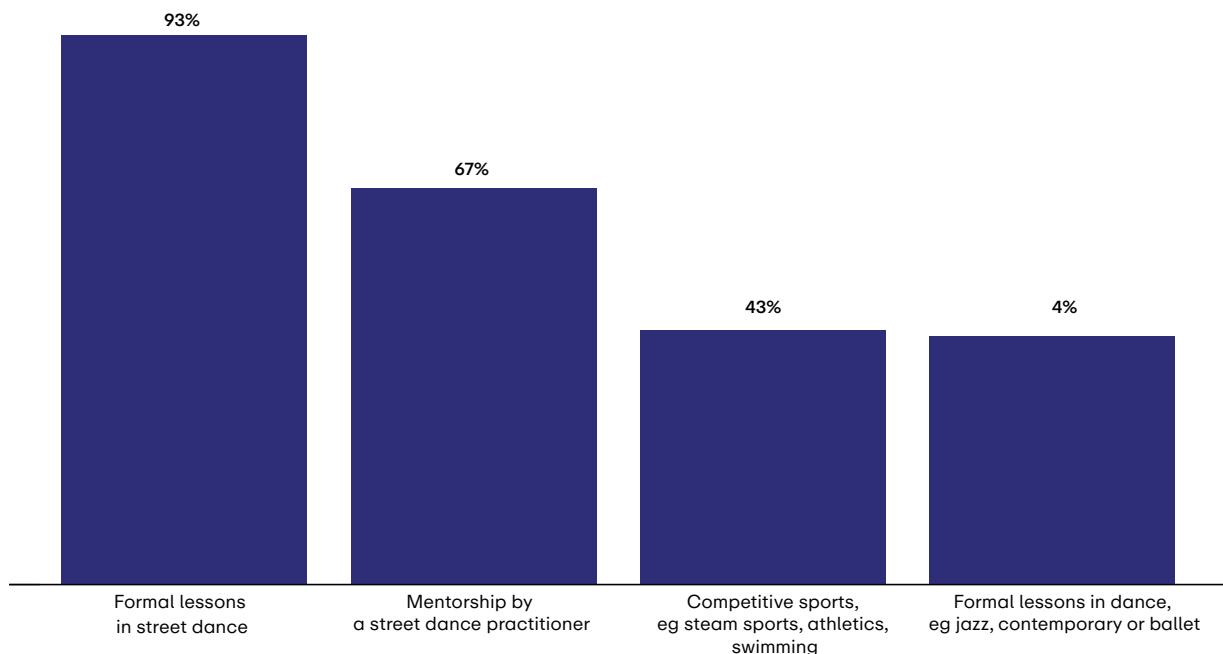
More than two in five respondents have also **participated in competitive sports** (43%) or in **formal dance lessons** – for example, in jazz or ballet (42%).

Three in five respondents have received **both formal lessons in street dance and mentorship by a street dance practitioner** (62%).

Together, these findings indicate street dance **may be moving towards more commercial training models**, supplanting historical forms of community mentorship with more prescriptive modes of street dance education and broader mainstream access.

Figure 20:

Participation in training



Q: Have you ever participated in any of the following? (n=449)

Practising street dance

Practice is at the heart of street dance culture in Australia, shaping not just **technical skill** but **personal identity, creativity and community connection**. For many street dancers, regular training sessions, either solo or in groups, are a vital part of daily life, grounding their artistic growth and enabling new social relationships.

Frequency and session length

Street dance community members surveyed say they **practise regularly**, with nine in ten respondents reporting they practise **once a week or more** (90%). Two fifths practise **every 2–3 days** (44%), 25% practise **daily**, and 21% practise **around once a week**.

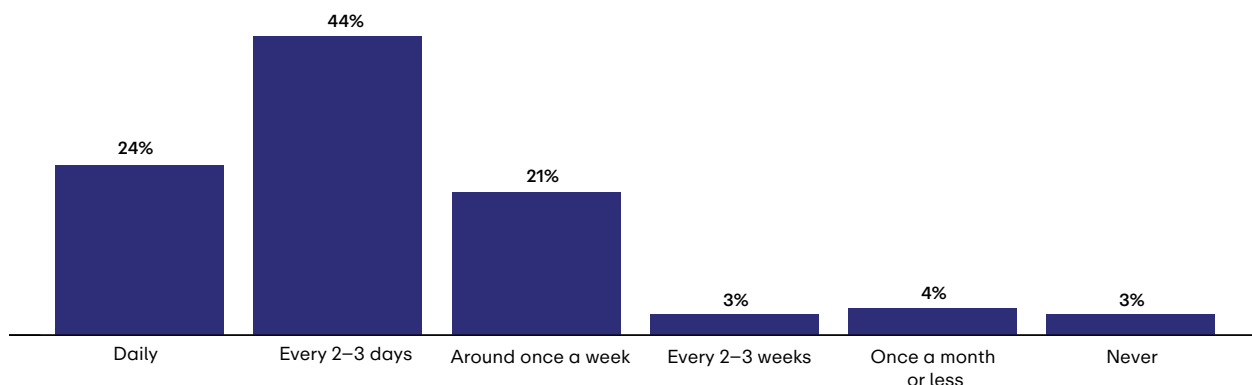
A small proportion of respondents practise **every 2–3 weeks** (3%) or **once a month or less** (4%). A small proportion **never** practise (3%).

During each session, most respondents say they practise for an average of **1–2 hours** (71%). One in six respondents practises for **3–4 hours** per session (17%) and one in ten practises for less than one hour per session (10%). Only a small proportion practises for **more than four hours** per session (2%).

Despite these levels of practise, **only two out of five respondents are satisfied with the amount of time they practise their dance** (41%).

Figure 21:

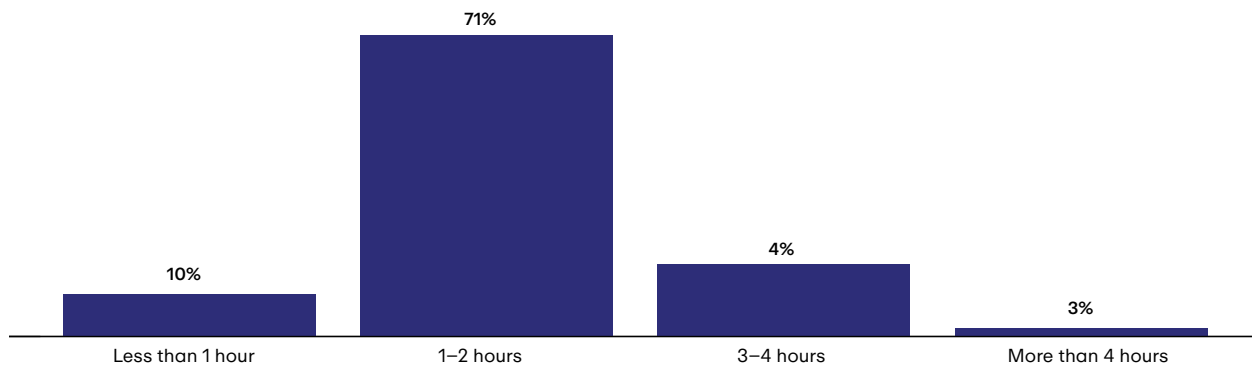
Frequency of practise



Q: How often do you practise street dance on average? (n=462)

Figure 22:

Average practise session length



Q: How many hours on average do you practise in a given session? (n=449)

Time and place

The street dance community often finds time to practise **outside of business hours**.

Most respondents say they practise in the **evening after 5pm** (93%). Three in ten respondents say they practise **during the afternoon between 12pm and 5pm** (29%), and one in ten practise **in the morning before 12pm** (11%).

The main spaces survey respondents say they practise are at **community or public spaces** (76%), at **home** (73%) or at a **dance studio** (63%).

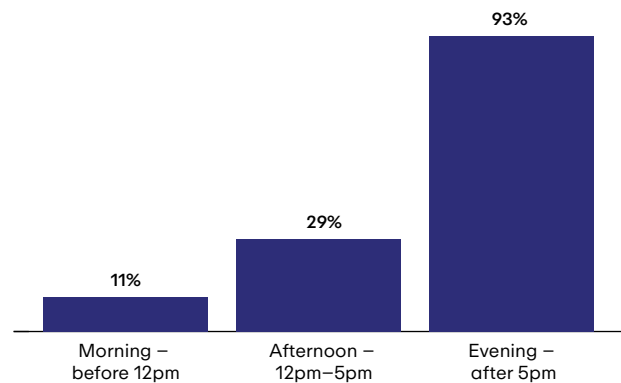
For decades, informal public spaces – such as community parks and train stations – have been key parts of local and global street dance scene infrastructure.¹⁹ These **public areas provide a space for dancers to meet**, practise in groups and share knowledge and ideas. Given the importance of social interaction via practice, accessing public space is a key concern for street dancers.

One dancer reflected on this in the in-depth interviews and suggested there needs to be a focus on:

‘creating free dance spaces for both events and training. These things shouldn't be costing us’.

Figure 23:

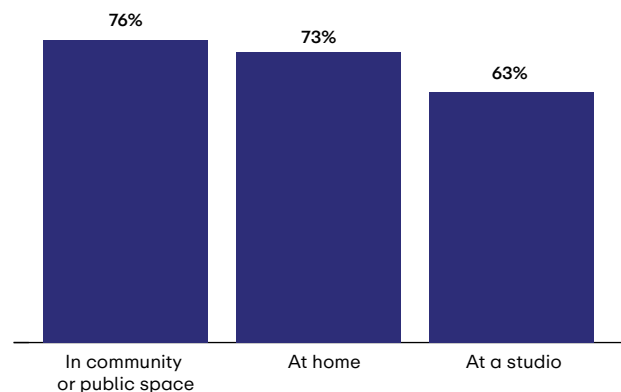
Practice time of day



Q: What time of day do you usually practise? (n=449)

Figure 24:

Location of practice



Q: Where do you usually practise? (n=449)

¹⁹ Ng J 2025, 'Breaking in Greater Tokyo: Socially Constructed 'Sacred Places' for Hip Hop Dance', in S. Raine, S. Blackman, R. McPherson and IA. Taylor (eds.), *Popular Music Ethnographies*, Intellect; Gunn R and Shaheen F 2024, *Spaces For Street Dance*.



Barriers to practising more

Despite 90% of respondents practising at least once a week, three out of five say they are **dissatisfied with the amount of time they practise** their dance (59%).

Survey respondents identified a number of barriers preventing them from practising their art form as much as they would like to.

Among the street dance community surveyed, **finding the time is the most common barrier** to practising as much as they would like to (68%). This reflects similar struggles experienced by other artists across the creative sector.²⁰ In addition, almost half of respondents say **financial limitations** prevent them from practising as much as they would like to (48%) – the third most common barrier selected. Speaking to a reality felt by many street dance community members in this research, one person shared:

‘It’s hard to find the time when I have to work a day job because there aren’t enough work opportunities as a street dancer’.

Other issues, that are often intersecting, relate to the **availability and accessibility of training spaces**. Three in five respondents say **not enough spots/places to train, practise or jam near me** (60%) and 35% say **difficulty getting there** (eg, public transport/parking) prevent them from practising as much as they would like to. As one respondent said in the open-text box:

‘[There are] not enough studios, classes or jams in the eastern suburbs [and] I live too far from the city to travel’.

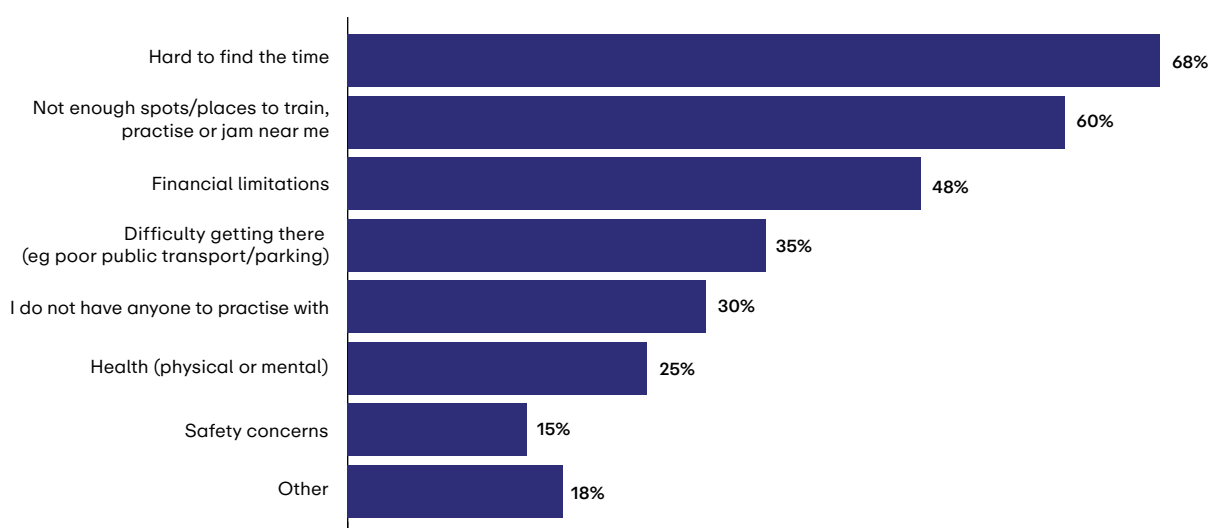
Three in ten respondents say they **do not have anyone to practise with** (30%), pointing to the social nature of street dance.

Safety is a concern for almost one in seven respondents, preventing them from practising as much as they would like to (15%). This concern is perhaps understandable, given street dance is predominantly **practised in public spaces** (76%) and **in the evening or at night** (93%).

An additional 18% of respondents reported they experienced **other concerns**, ranging from work obligations, family or academic responsibilities, to feeling ‘lazy’ or not having enough motivation.

Figure 25:

Barriers to practising



Q: What are the barriers preventing you from practising as much as you’d like to? Select all that apply (n=266)

20 Throsby D and Petetskaya 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

Professionalising street dance

Street dance careers are a relatively new professional practice compared to other dance careers, such as careers in ballet or contemporary dance.

Anecdotally, we know that street dance is becoming an **increasingly popular** domain for professionalisation in Australia. To better understand how street dancers navigate the broader dance industry, we asked respondents about their careers, including working arrangements, skills development and experiences financing their dance practice.

Working arrangements

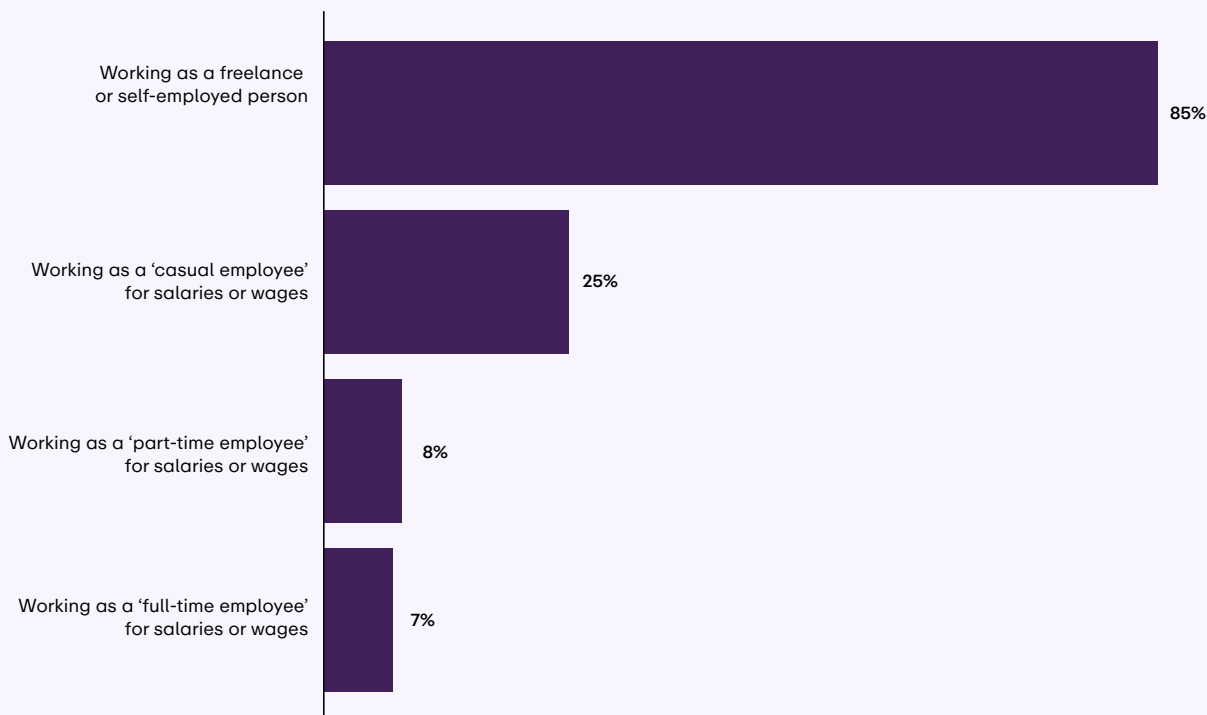
Most street dance community members surveyed **only dance for fun or leisure** (65%).

Over a third of respondents say they engage in **paid work** related to street dance (35%).

Of those engaged in paid work, the most common work arrangement is working as a **freelance or self-employed person** (85%), followed by working **casually** (25%), **part-time** (8%) and **full-time** (7%).²¹

Figure 26:

Working arrangements



Q: Which of the following best describes your professional dance practice? Select all that apply (n=143)

21 'Freelance or self-employed' included the following: Working as a freelance or self-employed person incorporated as a Pty/Ltd company (with an ACN) on my own, Working as a freelance or self-employed person incorporated as a Pty/Ltd company (with an ACN) with others, Working as a freelance or self-employed person with an ABN but not incorporated as a Pty/Ltd company, or Working as a freelance or self-employed person without an ABN and not incorporated as a Pty/Ltd company.

Work hours and time spent on professional practice

Of those who engage in paid work, the **majority are working for only a few hours per week**, with most working **0–5 hours per week** (70%).

One in five respondents engaged in paid work say they work **6–15 hours** (19%), and fewer than one in ten work **16–35 hours per week** (9%). Of those who undertake paid work, only three dancers (1%) say they are working **35 hours per week or more**.

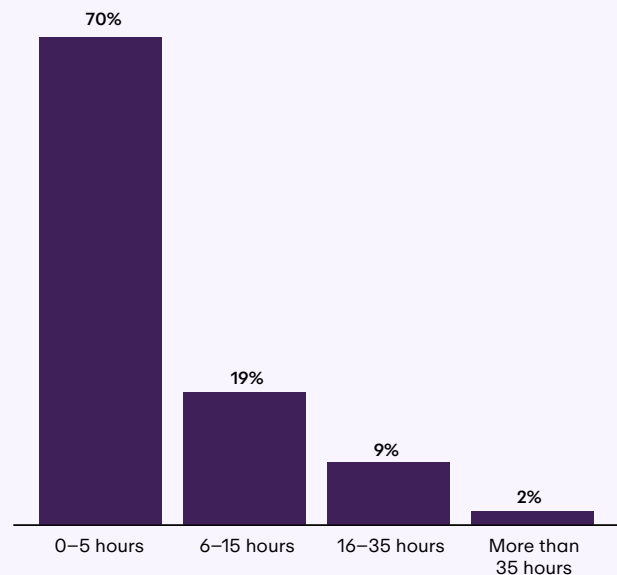
When asked if they want to spend more or less time on their professional dance practice, the majority of the street dance community surveyed say they **want to spend more** time on their professional dance practice (72%).

One quarter want to spend **about the same amount of time** on their dance practice (26%) and only a fraction **want to spend less time** (2%).

Street dance community members **working 6–15 hours per week are the most likely to want to increase the amount of paid professional work they do in the industry** (93% compared to 80% of those working 0–5 hours, and 69% of those working 16–35 hours per week).

Figure 27:

Work hours, of those who engage in professional dance practice



Q: *In your professional dance practice, how many hours of paid work do you typically complete each week? (n=143)*



Dance Battle at Union House Theatre, Melbourne 2024. Credit: Namchops.

Professional upskilling

Survey respondents identified **areas of support** that would assist them in developing their professional practice.

Most survey respondents say having **more performance and event opportunities** would help them build their dance practice (76%). Respondents also want to **connect with more established dancers**, with 56% reporting they would benefit from some sort of **mentorship**.

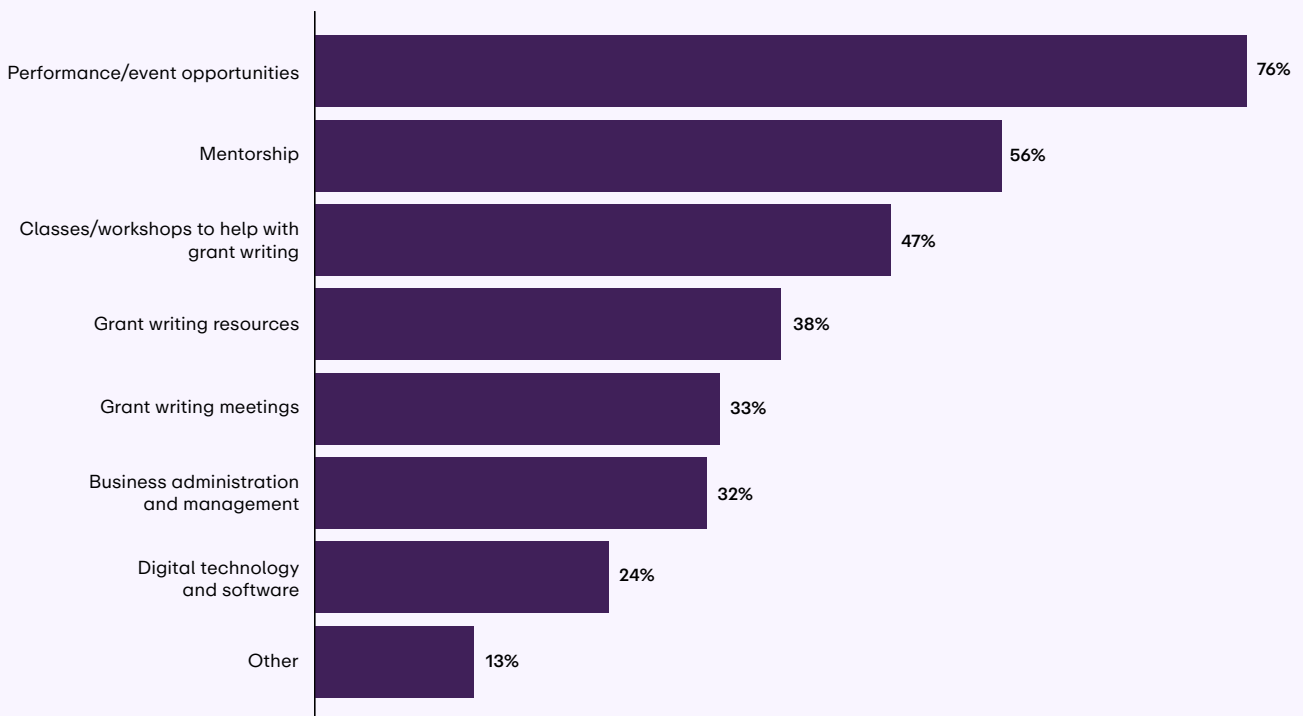
There is a distinct desire to develop skills in acquiring financial support, such as by **attending classes or workshops to help with grant writing** (47%), accessing **grant writing resources** (38%) and receiving **mentorship in writing grants** (33%). For more information see ‘Financing professional practice’.

There is also a desire to **develop technical professional skills**. One third of dancers are interested in learning or getting support for **business administration and management** (32%). Almost one quarter of participants also say that upskilling on **digital technology and software** would help with their professional practice (24%).

These findings suggest that while many dancers struggle with precarity within the street dance economy, many are **interested in capacity building** to support their practice in one way or another. This aligns with the position of many artists across the creative sector who say they have inadequate or non-existent digital business skills (eg, website development or online sales skills) (34%), skills in preparing funding applications (35%) and knowledge of arts-related government regulations (32%).²²

Figure 28:

Support that would be useful to professional upskilling



Q: What kinds of support would be most useful for your dance practice? Select all that apply (n=404)

²² Throsby D and Petetskaya 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.



City Sessions at Sidney Myer Music Bowl, Melbourne 2022. Credit: Namchops.

Barriers to professionalisation

Almost three quarters of the street dance community surveyed **want to spend more time on their professional practice** (72%). Our research identified several barriers that may inhibit the ability for street dancers to spend time on their professional practice, including to create, practise, perform or work.

Insufficient income from street dance is the most common barrier to respondents spending more time on their professional practice. Three in five respondents report they **do not earn enough income** from their professional practice/**need to earn more income elsewhere** (61%). As one respondent said:

'Priorities have changed in life so I am no longer seeking them. It was too hard to make a stable income on freelancing.'

There is also a **relationship between time and income**. One respondent expressed the challenges of allocating time and money to developing their practice:

'... there's time and money needed to be dedicated to training under [opportunity providers] in class settings to be provided with professional opportunities. I cannot physically afford (between my current day job's hours and the financials provided from it) to attend as many consistent classes as I need.'

City Sessions as part of Sorbaes:
Sundae at Sidney Myer Music
Bowl, Melbourne 2023.
Credit: Tiffany Garvie.

Another respondent said:

'I teach dance full time. And it allows me to dance constantly, however I am not training my craft for myself but rather for my students. If I was able to teach a bit less, it would allow more time for self-development but due to funds I cannot teach any less than I currently am.'

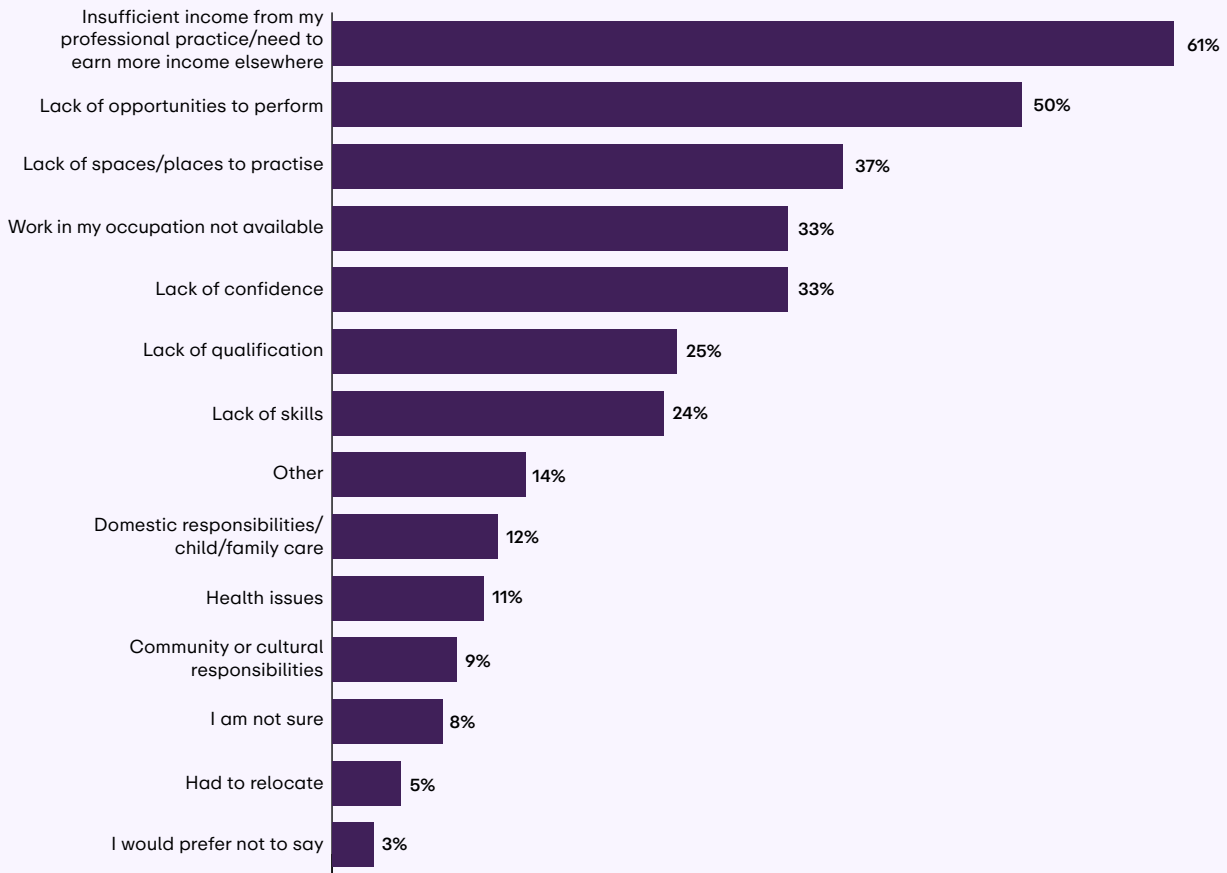
A **lack of opportunities to perform** (50%), **lack of spaces and places to practise** (37%) and **not enough street dance work available** (33%) prevents respondents from spending more time on their professional practice. For one third of dancers surveyed, **a lack of confidence** is a key barrier to working in the dance industry (33%). One quarter say they **lack the necessary qualifications** (25%) and **skills** (24%).

A range of personal responsibilities hinder the capacity for survey respondents to spend more time on their professional practice, including **family care** (12%), **health issues** (11%) and **cultural or community responsibilities** (9%).



Figure 29:

Barriers to spending more time on professional practice



Q: Which of the reasons below prevented you from spending more time on your professional practice? Select all that apply (n= 291)



City Sessions at State Library Victoria Forecourt, Melbourne 2024. Credit: Namchops.

Financing professional practice

Financial sources

In addition to commercial enterprise, **public, private and philanthropic investment** are important mechanisms to support and stimulate growth in the street dance economy.

More than one in five street dance community members surveyed had **applied for government financial assistance in the past 12 months**, such as grants, awards and residencies (21%). These findings somewhat align with the proportion who engaged in paid work related to street dance (30%).

Respondents were **somewhat successful achieving government financial support**. Of the 15% of respondents who applied for **local government or council funding**, 59% achieved this type of support – the highest success rate out of all the government support types.

Over one in 10 respondents applied for **state or territory funding** (13%), with over half of these successfully receiving this type of support (55%).

Of the 9% of respondents who applied for **Creative Australia investment**, just under half successfully achieved this funding type (46%).

In comparison, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia* finds 56% of professional practising artists successfully achieved local government financial assistance, 60% achieved state or territory funding and 48% achieved Creative Australia funding.²³

These results indicate that, while only a small proportion of the street dance community surveyed sought government funding, success rates for street dance show promise.

Crowd funding represents a viable and accessible path for street dancers to financially assist the development of practice, and to present shows and community events. **Crowd or community fundraising** is a commonly sought form of investment, with one in six respondents having sought this form of financial assistance (17%). Of those who crowd or community fundraised, 85% received funding – the **highest success rate** out of all financial assistance types.

Commercial sponsorship is increasingly part of the street dance economy with global corporations such as Red Bull, Monster and G-Shock investing in street dance globally. At a smaller scale, street dance has seen growing interest from a range of smaller global and local organisations and brands (eg, Four Walls, Cyphercode). Although there is reportedly increasing corporate interest in street dance, those who sought financial assistance through **corporate sponsorship arrangements** (17%) experienced one of the lowest success rates compared to all other funding sources (41%).²⁴

Other types of non-government financial assistance were sought, including from **arts or creative industries organisations** (16%), **educational institutions** (11%), **philanthropic funders** (6%), or **sports organisations/foundations** (3%). Applicants in these categories saw decent rates of success with 42%, 58%, 57% and 67% of applications securing funding, respectively.

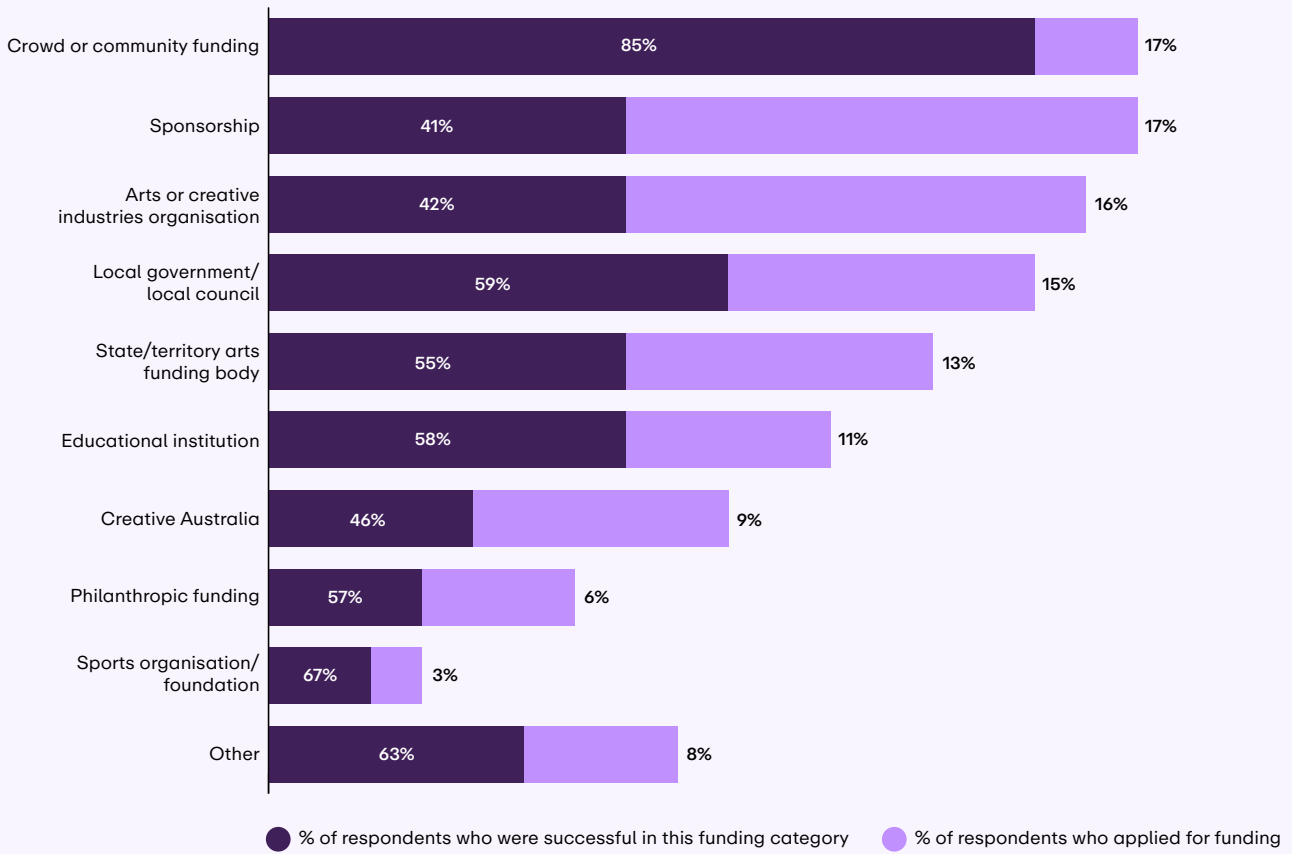
²³ Throsby D and Petetskaya 2024, *Artists as Workers: An economic study of professional artists in Australia*.

²⁴ Note: this excludes other forms of value through commercial sponsorships, such as gifts.



Figure 30:

Funding success rates by sources



Q: Have you applied for funding from any of the following sources? Were you successful or unsuccessful? (n=418)



City Sessions at State Library Victoria Forecourt, Melbourne 2024. Credit: Namchops

Purposes of funding

Street dancers seek financial assistance to **support a range of activities** aimed at enriching their careers, building audiences and creating new works.

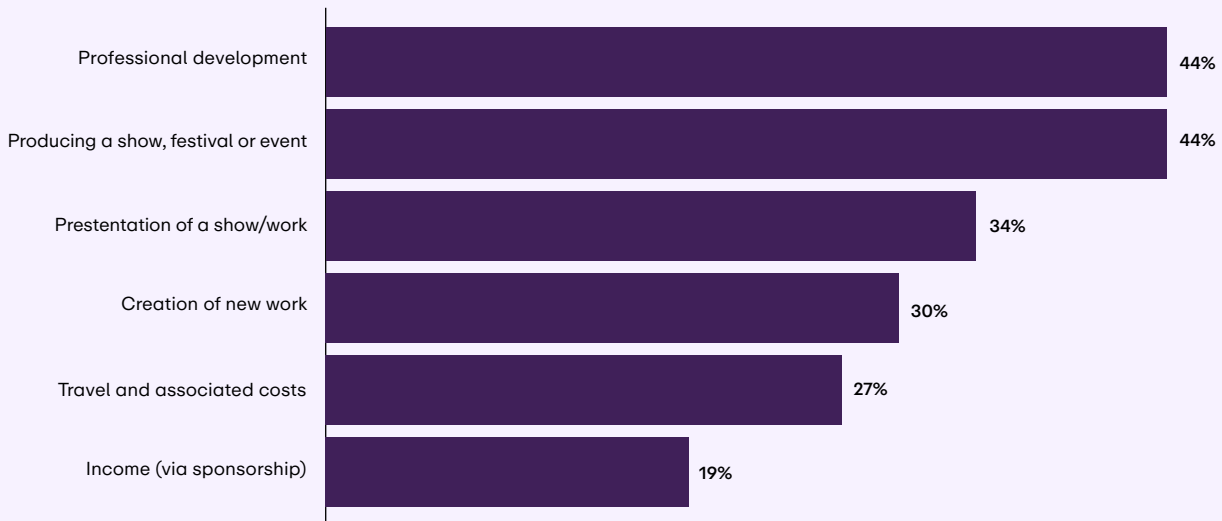
The top two most popular activities for which respondents have sought funding are **professional development** (44%) and to **produce a show, festival or street dance event** (44%).

Over one third of respondents say they sought funding to **present a show or work** (34%) and three in ten say the investment was to enable them to **create new works** (30%).

Funding was also requested to support **travel and associated costs** for street dance work (27%) and to **support income (via sponsorship)** (19%).

Figure 31:

Purpose of sought funding



Q: What were you seeking funding for? Select all that apply (n=418)

City Sessions at Fed Square, Melbourne 2025. Credit: Namchops.



Barriers to gaining financial support

Although the success rates for government and non-government financial assistance show promise, the proportion of those who applied for funding is small.

When asked what stopped respondents from receiving funding, the most common barrier was **not knowing where to find funding opportunities** (49%). This was followed by being **unsure of how to apply** (44%).

One third of the street dance community are **not interested in seeking out or receiving funding** (33%) and one in five reported they **applied for funding in the past but were not successful** (19%).

Other respondents noted they experienced barriers due to **time constraints**. As one respondent explained in the free text section of the survey for this question:

'The process is very long and involved, and very time consuming to do research into what grants are available.'

Another said:

'Have checked the amount of effort needed to apply for a grant and was daunting.'

There was also a sense among many respondents that their work is not good enough or that they do not feel deserving of funding. As one person said:

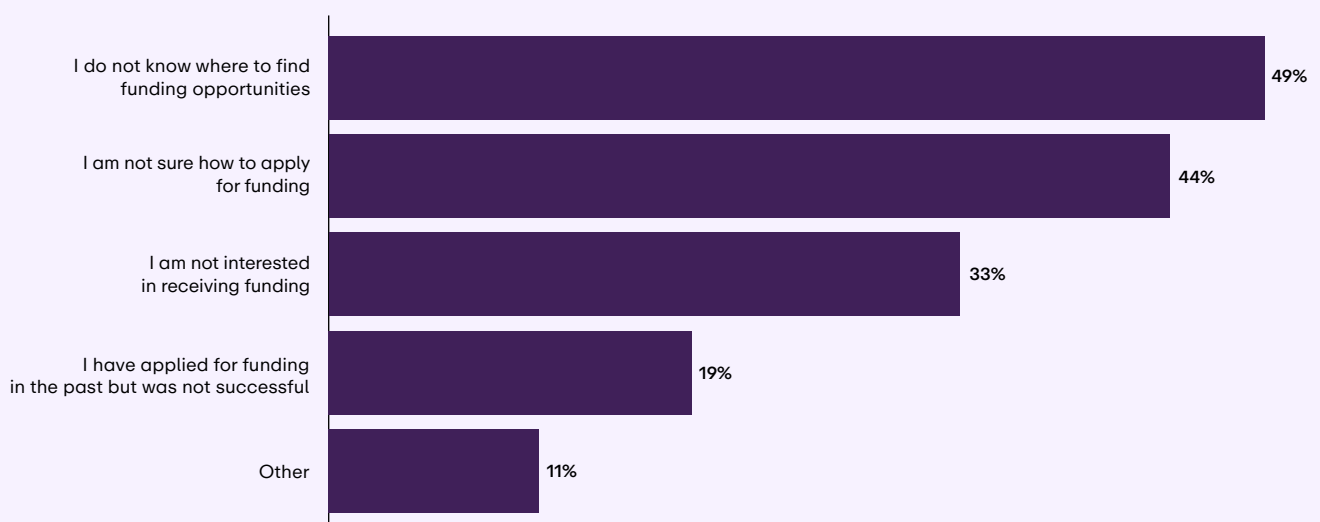
'I feel I'm not a good enough dancer to receive funding.'

Another said:

'I feel like I don't deserve it because I work full time ... and I'm not established enough in my dance practice.'

Figure 32:

Barriers to gaining financial assistance



Q: Which of the following have stopped you from receiving funding? Select all that apply (n= 417)

Experiences acquiring financial support

When asked about their experiences acquiring financial support, some survey respondents feel the experience of applying for financial support is **fairly straightforward**. However, others report that they **find the funding process extremely challenging and disheartening**.

As one person said:

‘Hard to write and hard to be successful. There’s a certain stigma that if you aren’t somebody you won’t be selected’.

Some feel like the process is **too arduous and confusing**, as one respondent explained:

‘Confusing and time consuming, feels high effort for small chance of payout. High friction and barriers to entry’.

One person pointed out that applying for funding is challenging **due to the lack of community knowledge about the application process**:

‘Acquiring funding as a street dancer can be difficult and is fairly uncommon, as a result of this, there is less knowledge to share within the community which would make funding applications more successful.’

These comments align with the findings that the street dance community surveyed would like more resources and mentorship in developing their grant writing skills and capability. See ‘Professional upskilling’ for more.

There is a **shared understanding** among the street dance community surveyed that, as financial support is difficult to obtain, many in the industry **will save up money** to present street dance events themselves:

‘I have seen some organisers struggle to acquire funding that then will pay most expenses of the event from their own pocket.’

‘It’s so bloody hard. I’ve honestly given up on any kind of funding and all my recent expenses for dance I’ve just paid from my own pocket after working multiple jobs.’

Where we’re at: Street Dance in the Australian cultural landscape at Dancehouse, Melbourne 2024.
Credit: Amelia Vu.



Demi Sorono.
Credit: Aaron Blue
(@bstyles_productionz).

Case
study

Breaking the rules with Demi ‘Demilition’ Sorono

Starting out in the Australian scene

Established Break-girl (B-girl) Demi ‘Demilition’ Sorono provides insight into her experience as an early generation Breaker who became fascinated with Hip Hop culture at a young age.

From its first sparks in the 1980s, Melbourne’s Breaking scene has cycled through eras of growth, transformation and revival. Ghetto Rock was one of the city’s most active crews throughout the 1990s and one of the first crews to participate in the X Games in Sydney in 1998. Among the members was B-boy John ‘Jester’ Carlo, Demi’s younger brother. Over the next few years, John introduced Demi to the Breaking scene.

In our interview Demi celebrated John’s mentorship and influence: **‘How I started was through my brother John Carlo aka B-boy Jester. He was my inspiration in terms of getting into the culture of breaking.’**

Demi described her street dance experience in the Melbourne scene in the early 2000s: **‘I just loved Breaking, and it was the best place to be – surrounded by all these other B-boys and B-girls. Being in the cypher, it was amazing.’**

Demi recalls the scene started to grow in size and connectivity due to websites like OzBboy and BboyWorld.

The outcome was an expanding network of dancers and a number of bigger events that attracted various international visitors who came to Australia to participate, connect and bring new perspectives to the local scene.

New inspiration

Demi notes that there were not many B-girls on the Australian scene when she began Breaking. In 2004 Demi went to the United States on a pilgrimage to learn more about Hip Hop culture and attended Freestyle Session. The experience highlighted the global scale of Breaking and the number of B-girls globally. She said:

‘[It] blew my mind because there were so many B-girls there from all over the world, and I’d never ever seen that many B-girls at an event. This was a real Hip Hop event and I was like, “whoa”. That was the day I said to myself, “I’m gonna’ be a B-girl for life”.’

With new inspiration Demi returned to Australia and continued to train and develop her skills. She participated in Breaking events such as ‘She Got Game’, the world’s first international B-girl only event held in Melbourne in 2007. The event brought together B-girls from across the United States, Japan, New Zealand and Europe to participate in Australia.

Demi reflected on the pathway for women in Breaking:

'I think it's a lot harder for women to get into Breaking. Because culturally, Hip Hop culture has been very masculine or male-dominated. I can clearly see it. But 'She Got Game' was a dope event. Just to have an all-female event to represent us in Australia, you know, that was pretty dope.'

From underground Hip Hop to hypervisibility

In 2008, Demi successfully auditioned for the first Australian series of *So You Think You Can Dance*. She highlighted that the show boosted her visibility and helped her develop her confidence:

'I was on the first season and I think Australia really liked my story because I was a self-taught dancer – I'd never been into studios or done the classes thing. I taught myself and learned from my culture: the ciphers, other b-boys and b-girls... [The show] changed my life a lot in terms of the opportunities that I gained from it.'

A range of commercial and other opportunities in theatre and film came with Demi's newfound visibility from making history with *So You Think You Can Dance*. Over the years she has performed in *Blaze*, a popular street dance theatre show from London's West End; *Shadow Warrior*, her own one woman, auto biographical performance; and *Deejay x Dancer*, a performance choreographed by Nick Power which pays homage to Hip Hop's roots.

Reflections on the evolution of street dance

Over time, Demi says she has witnessed the expansion of the scene. Greater visibility, mainstream recognition and funding have led to an increase in events, platforms and opportunities for dancers to professionalise.

She explains:

'There are lots of projects that involve Breakers and street dancers now, there's just a lot of different platforms, events and avenues to promote yourself which has meant street dancers are getting more recognition. Street dancers were kind of 'in the back' of the traditional dance scene [among] ballet and contemporary dancers – the mainstream kind of dances that everyone is more aware of. Now there are choreographers using Breaking to bring contemporary dancers into our world.'

She has also witnessed a boost in women's participation over the course of her career:

'There are a lot more B-girls now than back when I started. It has grown so much in Australia, but it's still quite small compared to some other places across the world. And it's so diverse. Everyone's really accepting of all the different identities participating.'

However, Demi believes that working in the street dance scene still presents many challenges. For example, she discussed tensions between street dancers who are often self-taught and dancers who have formal dance educations. She explains:

'If you haven't been part of a dance school or if you're not part of an agency, I definitely feel like it's harder for us to get those kinds of jobs.'

Demi reminds us that besides the professional opportunities street dance has to offer, at its core it is about passion and connection:

'It's a free spirit movement. Everyone connects to street dance because of the feeling – you feel the music and the energy of the people. It's so moving. I think the most important thing is that you do it with your heart.'

Aspirations for the future

A more visible street dance community

When considering their aspirations for the future, the street dance community highlighted their desire for **greater visibility, professional development and greater engagement with the community**.

More than half of respondents say they would **like to compete in more and/or participate in higher profile dance events and competitions** (56%).

Half wish to **increase their social media profile in the street dance community** (50%). This desire reflects the central role social media plays in boosting visibility and growing audiences for street dance.

Other aspirations for the future include the desire to be paid or to increase pay for street dance work. Two in five respondents say they would **like to start getting paid work within the street dance industry** (38%) and almost one third say they would **like to increase the amount of paid dance work they do** (32%).

Another third of dancers had ‘other’ aspirations (33%). These included wanting to develop new skills and continue growing as a dancer.

Some simply want to **continue enjoying themselves**, as one person shared:

‘I just wanna dance and have fun whilst having the opportunity to, either as a soloist or as a group project, portray or convey messages and/or stories.’

Others would like to get more involved in **building the street dance community and facilitate new connections**, as the following respondents said:

‘I would like to help build the African dance community through events and mentorship of the next generation.’

‘I would like to organise events and help provide my local community with opportunities to connect and grow together.’

Figure 33:

Aspirations of the Australian street dance community



Q: Which of the following describes your current aspirations? Select all that apply (n=401)

A resource for the future of street dance

Given that there have been few studies that chart community sentiments and experiences across street dance communities, **this research stands to be an important resource into the future** – useful for individuals, organisations and governments alike.

Cypher Culture, in collaboration with Creative Australia, developed this research to provide a foundation for **greater understanding, recognition and support of Australia's street dance community**. The data has been collected and presented with the aim of informing future decision-making across community, government and industry sectors. This will help shape funding priorities and infrastructure planning to equitable pathways for artist development.

It is our hope that this report will provide an evidence base for policy and advocacy. We also hope it will encourage ongoing research, collaboration and co-design of programs that reflect the needs and ambitions of street dance practitioners.

Uni Sessions at State
Library Victoria,
Melbourne 2023.
Credit: Namchops.







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