

What aging facilities mean for performances and audiences

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This research was conducted by **Geoffrey Prophet** at the **New York City Independent Budget Office, USA**

Summary

Many Americans (almost one quarter in 2013) attend popular music concerts, making them an important amenity for communities. There are also wider benefits to the area: civic pride, local jobs and income. For this reason, many music venues, particularly those also hosting professional sports franchises, receive substantial public funding. This funding is linked to claims that as facilities age, concert frequency and attendance declines, and subsidies are required to update and replace aging facilities to continue to attract music artists to the area. These discussions usually begin when facilities reach 10-15 years old. This research used a database of concerts staged between 2012 and 2014 to explore the impact of facility age on concert frequency and attendance, focusing on facilities that also host professional sports. The study found that concert frequency and attendances decline over time, although only a small amount.

Concert frequency and attendances decline with facility age

The rates of decline increase with age. However, the rate of decline of concert frequency is quite slow, and low in absolute terms: if a facility hosted nine concerts in its first year, between years ten and fifteen it is likely to host between six and seven a year. As facilities age, concert attendances also drop, reaching their lowest level at 40 years. However, between 10-15 years the drop in concert attendance is only 1.5 per cent annually.

The annual decline in audience size and concert frequency as facilities age is quite small

This means that public subsidies for renewing such facilities need to be carefully considered. Allocating significant public money to the construction of facilities in order to encourage more concerts is unlikely to make economic sense.

This summary is by **Ruth Craggs, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

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