

# SOCIAL STUDY 2026

THIS YEAR'S TRENDS IN LIVE EXPERIENCES

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## **Live experiences in 2026 are shedding scripts**

and embracing the unpolished, unexpected, and truly memorable. Gen Z and Millennials are chasing hidden gems, spontaneous moments, and gatherings where they can create, contribute, and connect on their own terms. This is the *Reset to Real* — five trends showing how live events are becoming more human, authentic, and alive than ever, from secret pop-ups to mashups that blend cultures and interests.

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# FOREWORD



## The way we gather is changing — more deeply than we expected.

After years online, the most social generation in history is redefining what it means to be truly present. They're done with performative get-togethers and instead want rooftop sessions with secret lineups, block parties where neighbors become friends, and spaces where they can shape the moment rather than perform for it.

They're craving connection without pressure — a reprieve from the constant need to be “on.” We call this the *Reset to Real*: a hunger for experiences that embrace imperfection, unpredictability, and surprise.

That's why pottery-and-wine nights are booming. It's why people will walk through a freezer to reach a hidden bar.

And it's why “soft socializing” — connection on your own terms — is becoming the new social currency.

The five trends in this report reflect a generation actively expanding what live experiences can be. They want to show up as their whole selves to experiences that give them real agency in how they connect and participate.

This report explores how this cultural shift is creating new opportunities for meaningful gathering. We hope it's a resource for organizers designing experiences that truly resonate and for anyone looking to find their people through shared experiences that feel alive, authentic, and genuinely surprising.

**Julia Hartz, Co-Founder, CEO, and Executive Chair**

# HOW WE GATHER

In 2025, gatherings were about *purpose* — finding meaning and belonging. This year, the question shifts from why we gather to *how we gather*.

## What we heard

Nearly 8 in 10 Gen Z and Millennials expect to attend more events in the year ahead, led by young parents, men, and LGBTQ+ individuals. They're seeking experiences that feel personal and unrepeatable, discovered through word-of-mouth or trusted friends rather than digital feeds.

Local connection, participation, and organic moments now matter more than polished production or mass appeal — because authenticity is the new luxury.

## From the community

79% of Gen Z and Millennials expect to attend more events in the year ahead



## Most likely to attend more

### Young parents

1.4x more likely

### LGBTQ+ individuals

1.2x more likely

### Gen Z and Millennials

1.3x more likely

# THE RESET TO REAL

This shift toward uncurated, unfiltered experiences is driving every trend in 2026. People are trading passive attendance for active discovery, and predictable itineraries for spontaneous moments that feel alive.

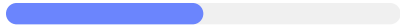
## What we heard

58%



say they want events to feel one-of-a-kind — like they could only happen once

49%



wish events felt less curated and more real

Discovery itself has become part of the thrill: 52% prefer events that feel “under the radar,” and over half say they trust people, not platforms, for recommendations.

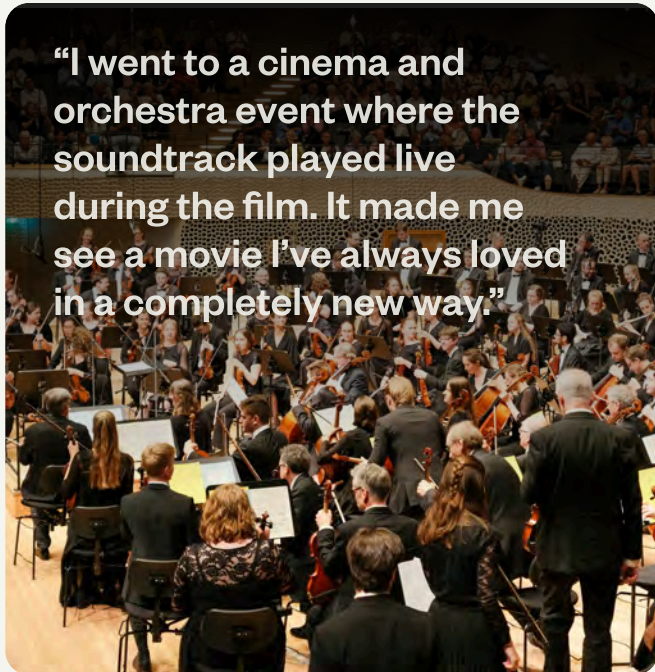




# THE RESET TO REAL

## What we heard

**“I went to a cinema and orchestra event where the soundtrack played live during the film. It made me see a movie I’ve always loved in a completely new way.”**



## Hard to find events people are interested in attending

### Exclusive movie screenings

42%

### Pop-up experiences or installations

40%

### After-hours museum nights

39%

### Speakeasy or underground bars

36%

### Raves / pop-up DJ sets

35%

## Surprise elements driving attendance



### Vinyl nights

events +36% (US)

attendance +95% (US)



### One-day choirs

events +87% (US)

attendance +149% (US)



### K-pop cup sleeve fan events

attendance +74% (US)

attendance +36% (UK)

**OFF-SCRIPT  
ENERGY**



The most memorable events aren't perfectly planned — they're the ones that leave space for the unexpected.

Survey findings



of 18–35-year-olds say **spontaneity** is important at events



say spontaneity helps them feel **present or break routine**

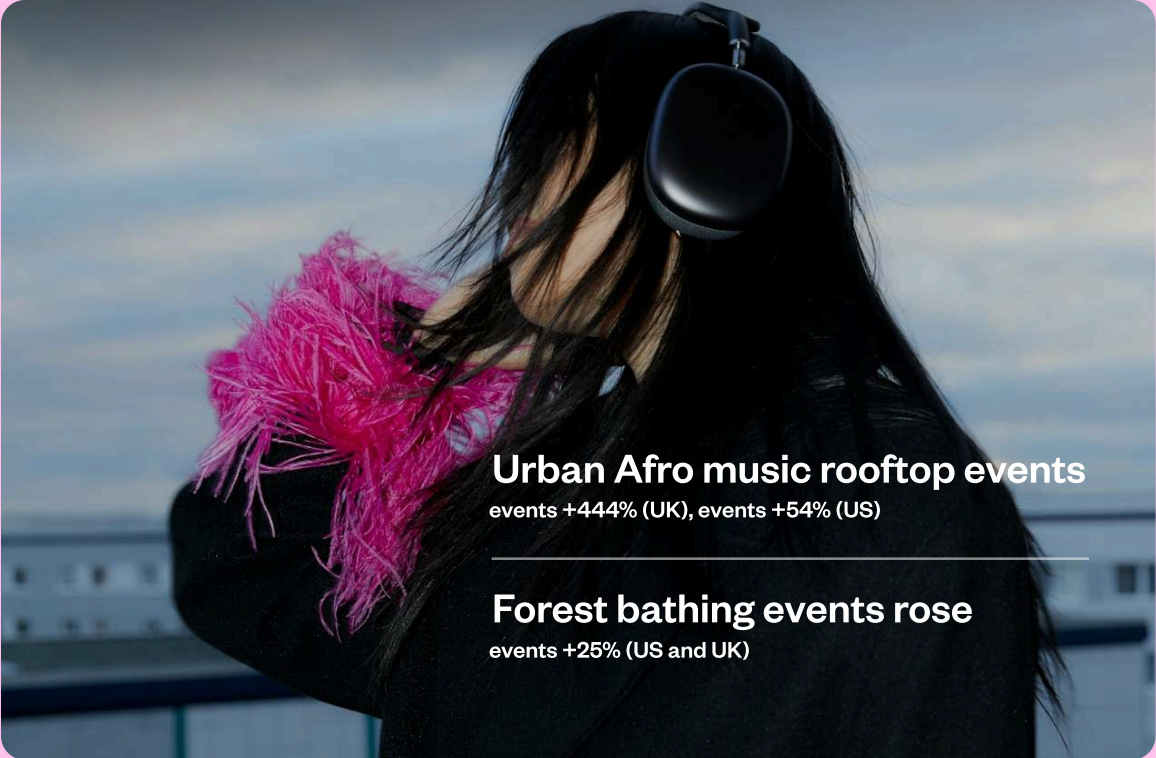


younger Gen Z (ages 18–22) are 1.3x more likely than Millennials to want events that challenge them or **push them beyond their comfort zone**

For this generation, unpredictability signals quality. It's about being present, breaking routine, and creating stories that can't be replicated: a bookstore turned midnight jazz club, a rooftop Afrobeat dance floor, or a sunrise sound bath in the woods.



Platform data



Urban Afro music rooftop events  
events +444% (UK), events +54% (US)

Forest bathing events rose  
events +25% (US and UK)



# And the setting really matters: 44% of 18–35-year-olds say they're more likely to spend money to attend if it's at a unique or exciting venue.

## From the community

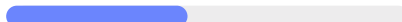


## Settings they crave



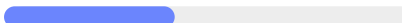
### Hidden nature spots

forest clearings, lakeside screenings, sunrise sound baths (45%)



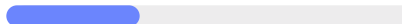
### Rooftops or scenic overlooks

sunset parties, skyline DJ sets (42%)



### Everyday spaces after-hours

museums, offices, bookstores, or laundromats turned into event venues (28%)



## Surprise elements driving attendance



### Surprise performances, guests, or lineups

(54%)



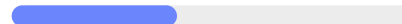
### Exclusive merchandise or giveaways

(45%)



### Unreleased music content, or media drops

(38%)



## The voices behind the experiences — stories from our creators

“

We lean heavily into mystique and mystery. As a guest, you don't know the chef, the menu, or where you're eating, other than the neighborhood, until the day before service. Your mind starts to wander. Suddenly you're dedicating energy to this event all week. You show up to this warehouse location on the edge of town and think 'maybe this was a bad idea,' but then you walk in and boom — this rugged, polished room opens and you see the chef cooking up a storm. On top of that, our current series is phone-free, so the noise of the world disappears from your mind during dinner. Instead, it's the flavor of the food, the comfiness of the chair that you're sitting in, or the story your dinner-mate is telling you that comes into focus. It's about being fully present and embracing an experience that feels unique. Hopefully it's something you'll remember for years."

**BURNT ORANGE HONEY FOUNDER, ADAM GRAY**



Chefs Dan Mollitor (left), Eduardo Cuenca (right). Photographer Alexander Ryan

**SOFT  
SOCIALIZING**

# Connection without pressure is the new social currency.

This generation values comfort and personal choice, letting relationships develop naturally instead of being forced. Socializing doesn't need to be the main event.

## Survey findings



say **socializing** is somewhat important but don't want it to be the focus  
(UK respondents slightly higher: 60% vs 55%)



prefer to **control how and when** they interact



want places to **sit back and observe**

## Platform data

### Flower arranging events

attendance +282% (UK)

### Puzzle competitions

events +151% (US)

### Caffeine tastings

events +80% (UK), attendance +49% (UK)

### Music bingo

attendance +149% (US), attendance +52% (UK)

### Silent gatherings

events +9%, attendance +14% (UK)

## From the community



"A silent disco in the rain – headphones thumping, puddle dancing. It felt like being in a movie I never wanted to end."





Silent Discos in Incredible Places, MEGA Events, British Museum, London, UK

## The voices behind the experiences — stories from our creators

“

Silent discos are a perfect example of ‘soft socializing’ because they offer a unique space in unique venues where people can hang out without feeling awkward. Since they have multiple music channels, everyone can find something they like. This means attendees can pick how much they want to engage, putting their own enjoyment first.”

MEGA EVENTS FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, NATHAN REED

**SHOW UP  
TO SHAPE IT**



# Attendees don't just want to show up — they want to make an impact.

## Survey findings

73%

are more likely to attend an event tied to a cause they care about

50%

are more likely to attend a cause-based event because it gives them a reason to show up beyond fun or escapism

33%

want ways to participate actively, not just watch

59%

of US respondents say cause-based events draw them in because they want to support communities they're a part of, compared to 48% in the UK.

## From the community

**“A fundraiser at a local pub for a playground — the whole community showed up to help. It felt like we built something together.”**



Events that let them contribute to a cause or a collective project—art builds, skill-sharing, cause-based gatherings—are becoming a new reason to gather. People want to feel useful, not just seen.

In-person experiences offer meaningful alternatives to online action, letting participants contribute, create, and connect in a way that truly matters.

Platform data








**Tree planting events**  
events +31%, attendance +43% (UK)

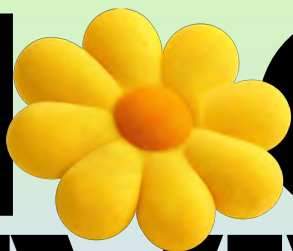
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**Clothing swaps**  
events +40% (US), attendance +37% (UK)

Preferred cause-based event formats

	<b>Live shows or open-mic fundraisers (46%)</b> <div><div></div></div>		<b>Community problem-solving meetups (35%)</b> <div><div></div></div>
	<b>Educational talks or panel discussions (36%)</b> <div><div></div></div>		<b>Mutual aid, thrift, or clothing swaps (33%)</b> <div><div></div></div>
	<b>Art builds or sign-making sessions (35%)</b> <div><div></div></div>		

# NEIGHBOR- HOOD REVIVAL





# Local connection grounds people after years of digital-first experiences.

## Survey findings

89% say it's important that an event helps them feel connected to their local community (91% US respondents vs 88% UK respondents).

Parents are 1.5x more likely to say this is very important; POC respondents are 1.35x more likely to prioritize local connection.

Attendees want to feel known — not just as part of a crowd, but as part of a community. They're choosing events that bring them closer to where they live and who they live alongside.

## Platform data

### Local art walk

attendance +49% (US)

### Craft fairs and markets

events +28% (US), events +16% (UK)

### Backyard and local outdoor parties

events +18% (US), events +25% (UK)

### Downtown tours

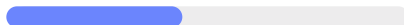
events +10% (US), attendance +21% (US)

**The desire for local connection shows up in event choices: block parties, café meetups, and local markets that help people step outside their door, meet neighbors, and feel rooted where they live.**

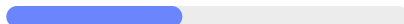
### Top motivations for seeking local connection



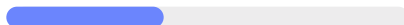
**Support local businesses (42%)**



**Discover hidden local gems (40%)**



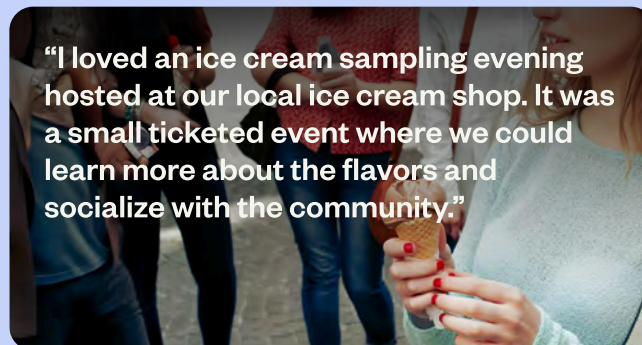
**Celebrate the culture shaping their community (38%)**



### What we heard



**“A block party where families brought signature dishes and activities passed down for generations — it was a truly eye-opening experience.”**



**“I loved an ice cream sampling evening hosted at our local ice cream shop. It was a small ticketed event where we could learn more about the flavors and socialize with the community.”**

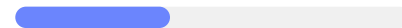
### Most desired local events

**51%**



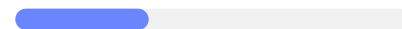
Block parties with food and music

**39%**



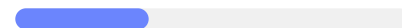
Markets featuring local artists

**36%**



Community gardens or farming meetups

**35%**



"Meet your neighbor" café events

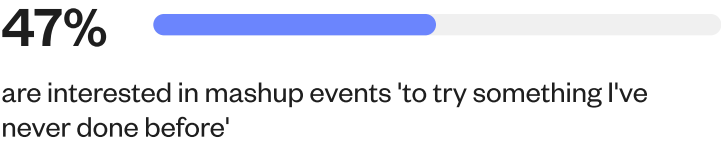
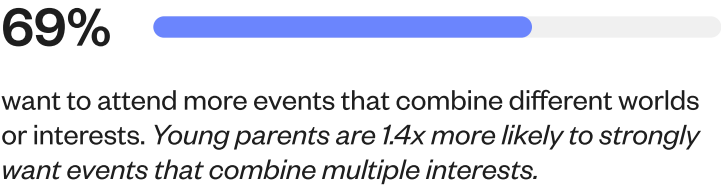
**LAYERS,  
NOT  
LABELS**





Events that combine multiple niches, cultures, or scenes let people show up as their whole selves.

Survey findings



Rather than choosing one scene, people seek mashups blending interests, cultures, and styles — spontaneous, layered, and real.



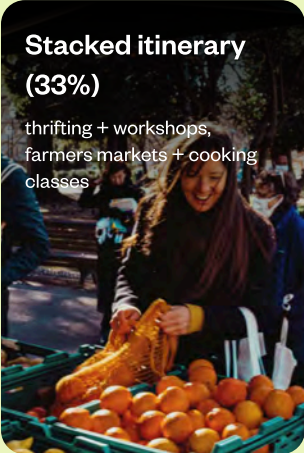
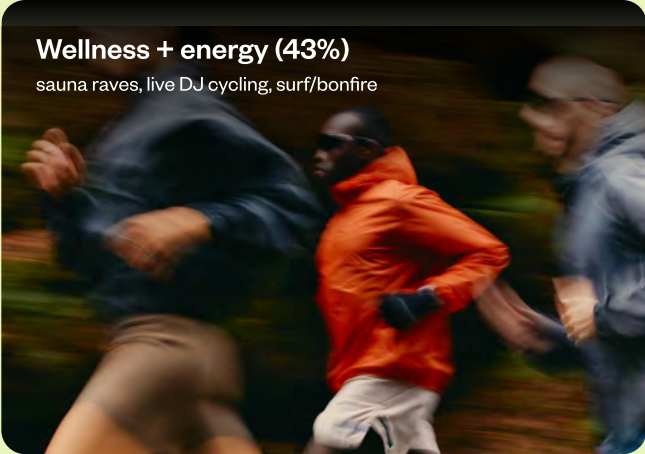
Platform data

**Coffee + running events**  
attendance +233% (US), attendance +182% (UK)

**Anime/cosplay raves**  
events +82% (US), attendance +51% (US)

**Sip & needlework**  
attendance +87% (US), attendance +39% (UK)

# Top mashups for 2026



# THE RESET TO REAL GENERATION

**As live experiences evolve, one truth stands out: a new generation has mastered the art of recognizing what's real.**

Gen Z and Millennials can instantly tell when something feels staged versus when it's created with genuine care and intention. They're not chasing polish or perfection — they're seeking moments that feel unrepeatable, grounded in connection, and alive with possibility.

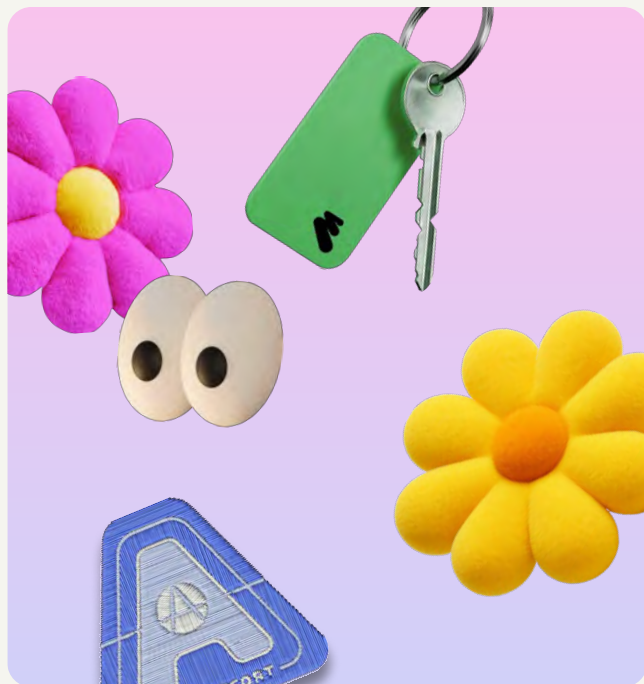
This shift is redefining what makes an event matter. The most successful experiences in 2026 won't be the flashiest or the largest — they'll be the ones that invite people to show up as they are, discover something unexpected, and leave feeling part of something real.

The future of live experiences isn't about perfection. It's about presence, participation, and the power of what can only happen *here and now*.





# FINDING YOUR RESET TO REAL IN 2026



## Discover like an insider

Follow local organizers and trusted voices in scenes you care about. Ask friends for recommendations — word-of-mouth leads to the most memorable experiences. Seek gatherings that feel "under-the-radar" or require a little digging.

## Mix your interests

Try mashup events combining different scenes — wellness + energy, culture + movement, crafting + cocktails. Show up as your whole self and explore new ways to create, contribute, and discover.

## Invest in your neighborhood

Attend block parties, local markets, and community meetups. Support neighborhood venues to discover hidden gems and celebrate your area's culture.

## Connect on your terms

Choose activity-focused events — pottery classes, volunteer opportunities, skill swaps. Prioritize gatherings where you can observe and engage at your own pace. Seek experiences tied to causes you care about for deeper connections.

## Embrace the unexpected

Say yes to unusual venues — rooftops, after-hours businesses, hidden nature spots. Look for events with surprise elements: secret lineups, exclusive drops, or spontaneous moments that push you slightly outside your comfort zone.

# METHODOLOGY

## **dcdx:**

Surveyed 4,051 individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 across the US and UK. Data was collected from July 11–16, 2025, with 2,028 respondents from the US and 2,023 from the UK.

## **Eventbrite Platform Data:**

Analyzed US and UK data comparing Aug 2023–Jul 2024 vs. Aug 2024–Jul 2025, tracking keywords in titles, descriptions, and venues.

## **Press Inquiries:**

[Press@eventbrite.com](mailto:Press@eventbrite.com)