

BLACKBX

BRITISH

Social routines and connectivity

REPORT 2019



— Introduction

For decades, pubs, bars and restaurants have been central to people's social lives in the UK. However, the data suggests that that people are going out less, that pubs are struggling and that younger generations' attitudes to drinking and disposable income have changed. As these factors influence the hospitality sector and as society continues to change, do these venues retain the same importance they once had and what does our relationship with them look like in 2019?

At **BLACKBX**, we were keen to understand how people interact with these venues, the emotional connections they share with them and what venue owners can do to meet the expectations of customers. Having surveyed more than 2,000 UK consumers in April 2019, we believe we can answer some important questions about how people choose their favourite food & drink venues, their willingness to try new locations and how reviews, recommendations and promotions influence people's decisions.

— Key findings

38% 

Brits say they only try new venues to eat or drink less than once a year.

The majority only try a new venue every six months or less

Millenials

are the most regular pub and club patrons, gen Zs are the least.

Has a local pub

85% vs **46%**
25-34yr 18-24yr

Regularly goes to clubs

30% vs **7%**
25-34yr 18-24yr

People seem to be just as willing to

leave online reviews

for positive eating experiences as well as negative.

36%

people said they had reviewed their favourite restaurant

BUT

35%

had left an online review for their worst eating experience

$\frac{1}{2}$ respondents said that they only try new venues when given a prompt

BUT

78% 

people said that their favourite pub/bar puts little or no effort into marketing new deals and events



1 in 5

people said they only go to their favourite venue on special occasions

Londoners

77%

have a pub they consider their "local"

57%
NATIONAL AVERAGE

69%

try a new venue once a month or more, or whenever a new venue opens

47%

know their local landlords or restaurant/café owners - second only to Northern Ireland (50%)



— The decline of the local?

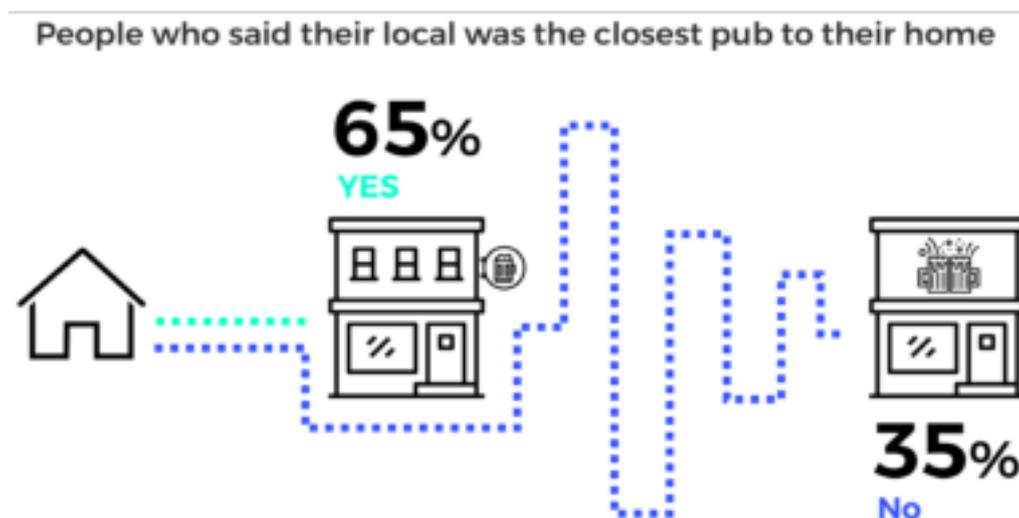
Starting with the venue most synonymous with social life in Britain, the public house. But is it still central to the social activity in the UK? We received some telling results to the simple question of whether people had a pub that they considered to be their local. More than half of the British population said yes (57%), a number which rises to 65% among men compared to just 49% of women. Considering pubs were once a focal point of rural communities, we were surprised to learn that people living in the city were considerably more likely to say they had chosen a pub to be their local (68%) vs village and town folk – 51% and 53% respectively.

Millennials were far more likely to say they had a local vs. any other age range, with a whopping 85% of 25-34yr olds maintaining the local pub tradition. In stark contrast, half that number (only 46%) of 18-24yr olds said that they had a local.

— Do you have a local?



Recognising that 'the local' may not always be the pub closest to home, we asked respondents who said they had a local to specify if it was their closest pub. Indeed, a significant proportion (35%) said no. It appears location isn't the only significant factor and that by building an emotional connection and fond memories with patrons, pubs can become 'the local' no matter where they are geographically.



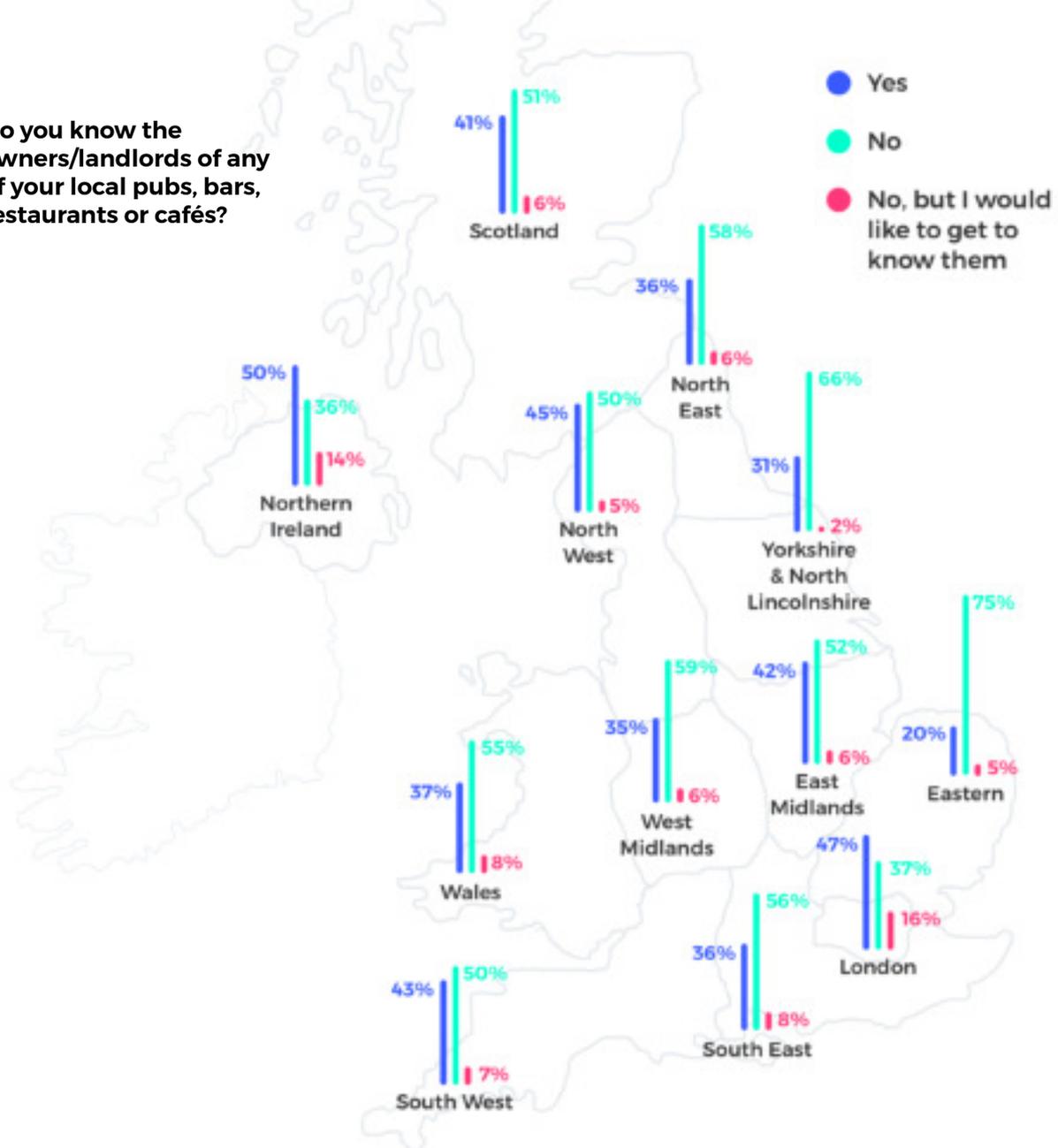
In the past, owners and landlords of local establishments would be pillars of the community and known by the locals, and we were interested to know if this was still the case in the UK today, when we asked respondents:



An encouraging 39% of respondents said yes, suggesting that the personal relationships on which social venues are founded still exist. Of the 61% of people who said they did not know any of these business owners, 13% said that they would like to.

Despite its anti-social reputation, respondents from London were among the most likely to know the landlords of local venues (second only to Northern Ireland). By contrast, only one in five people in the East/East Anglia said they knew these local business owners.

— Do you know the owners/landlords of any of your local pubs, bars, restaurants or cafés?



We also gained new insight into how locals/regulars felt about the sense of community fostered by their favourite venues. The results were mixed, clearly there is a sizable proportion of the population that calls for a more personal relationship with social venues, but this isn't for everyone.

55%

said being a local/regular makes them feel like part of a community

34%

like it when a venue knows their favourite food or drink order

31%

like to be known by name in their favourite venues

19%

want their favourite venues to know them better

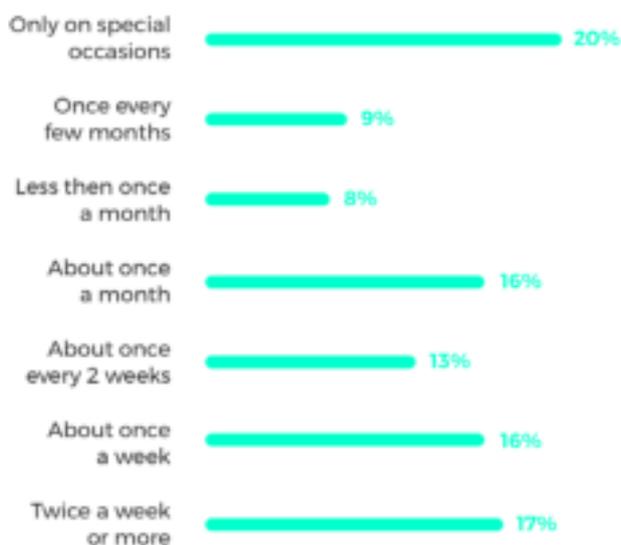
— Brits are creatures of habit

Having a local pub isn't the only way in which pubs, bars and restaurants have become part of our social routines. Indeed, our data proves that many people in the UK are stuck in a routine of going to the same places to eat and drink repeatedly throughout their lives. Many do so because of their connections to these locations and because they are guaranteed a consistent experience/quality, but we also see that respondents are extremely risk averse when it comes to trying new locations.

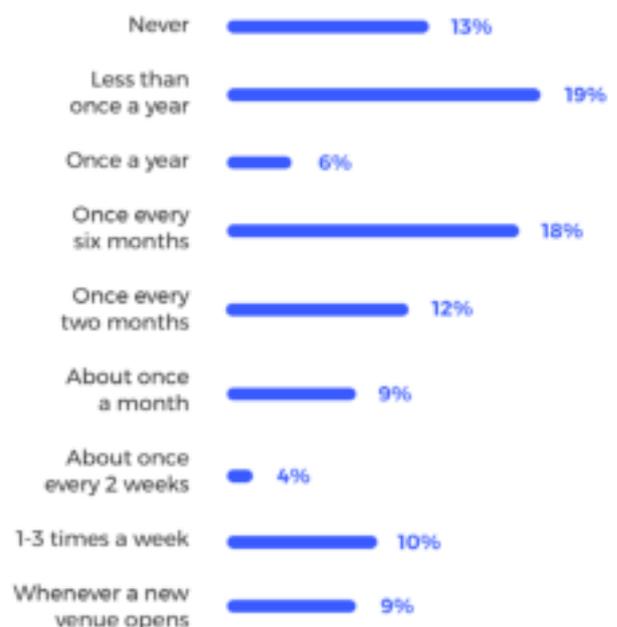
A third of respondents (33%) said that they visit their favourite food or drink venue once a week or more, while one in five (20%) were in a routine of going only on special occasions.

By contrast, people said that they very rarely try new venues. More than half of respondents (56%) said they tried a new venue every 6 months or less and 13% said that they never try new venues. As many parts of the hospitality sector continue to struggle, these stats frame exactly how difficult it can be to bring in new patrons.

How often do you visit your favourite pub, bar or restaurant?



How often do you try a new food & drink venue?



— The power of promotions, reviews and recommendations

Reinforcing the notion that people are not very adventurous when choosing a food or drink venue, 65% of respondents said that they never or rarely try new venues without a review or recommendation.

While it is clearly extremely difficult to attract new customers, the good news is that there are things that venues can do to increase their chances of patrons taking a chance on them. Reviews, promotions and recommendations are like gold dust in such a competitive landscape - in which people won't gamble on new venues unless prompted to do so. The bad news is that many venues do not make the effort to promote their business. 78% of respondents said that their favourite venue puts in little or no effort into attracting new customers or communicate promotions, deals and events.

78%

said their favourite venue makes little or no effort to attract new customers or promote new deals

65%

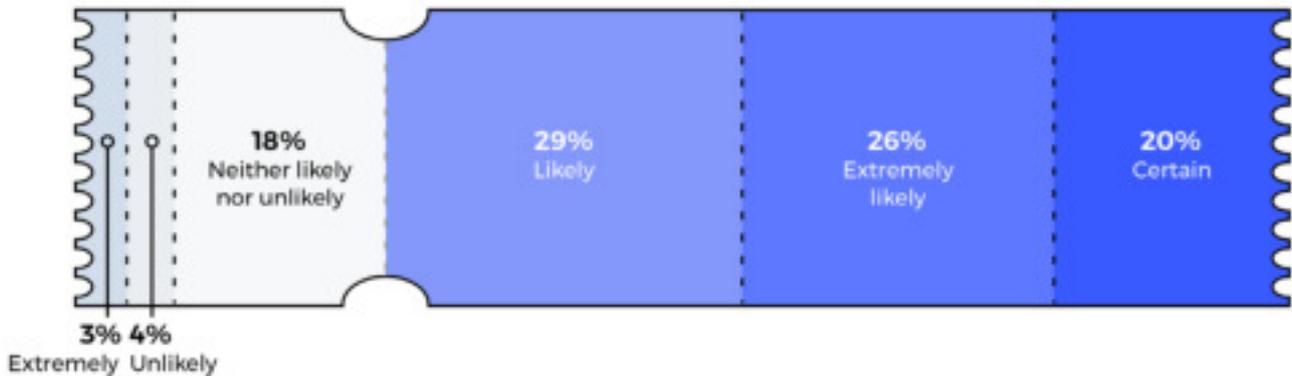
never / rarely try new venues without a review or recommendation

54%

say their perfect night out is to a venue they know extremely well

A great example of the power of promotions: three quarters of respondents (75%) said that they would use a free drink or meal voucher on their birthday. This is a really simple promotion that can help any venue bring new customers into their location, who then have the potential to make them part of their regular social routines.

If given a voucher for a free drink or meal on your birthday, how likely are you to use it?

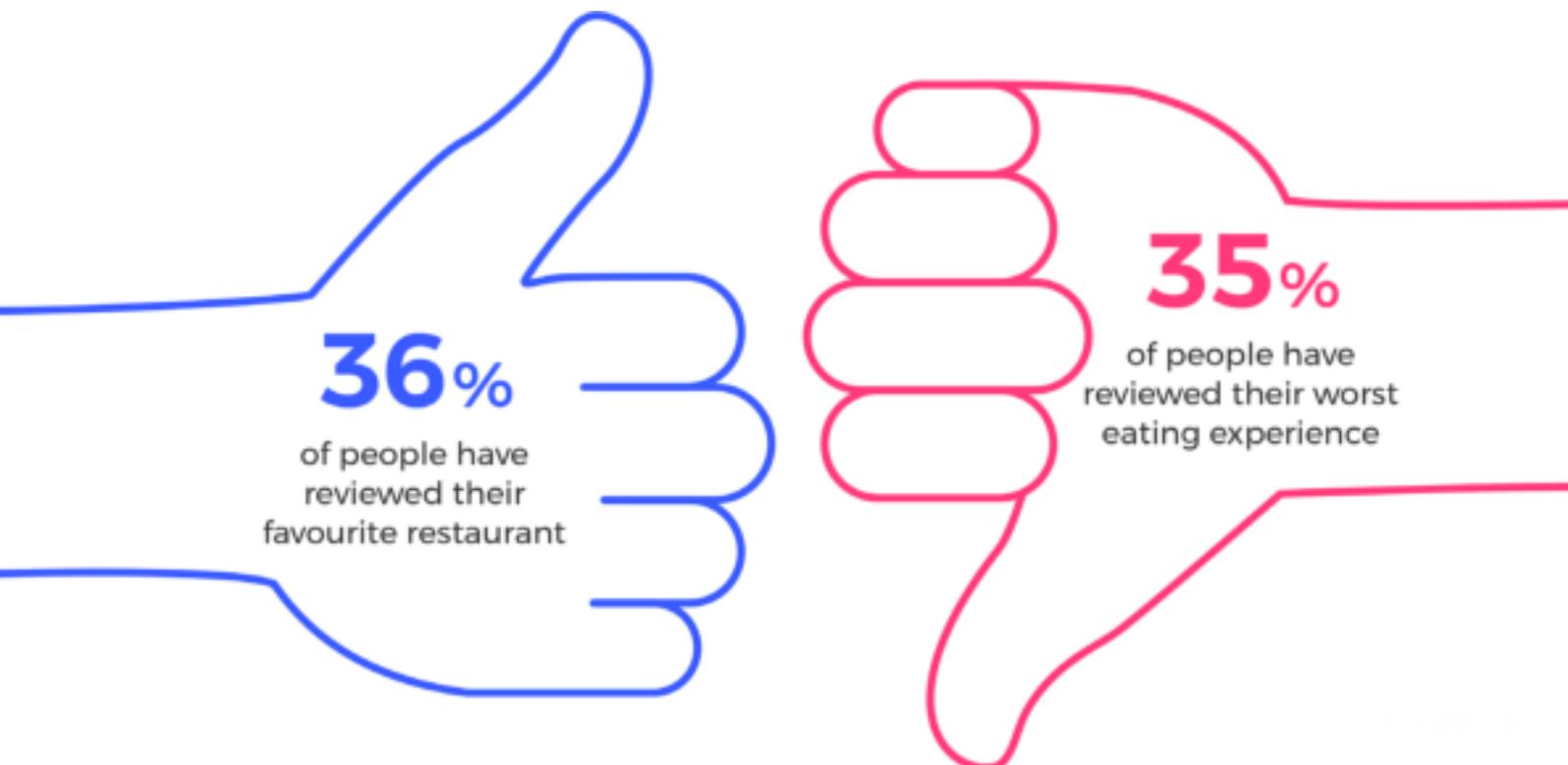


Interestingly, we discovered that the notion that people are more likely to spread the word of negative experiences vs positive ones may not be entirely true.

Dispelling this myth, we found that almost the exact same number of people had reviewed their favourite restaurant as had reviewed their worst eating experience. At 36% and 35% respectively, this number is still lower than many restaurant owners may like, such is the importance of good reviews.

However, it goes to show that people won't just leave reviews when they have something to complain about - they also want to give praise when it is warranted.

Given these findings, venues should be doing all they can to increase the number of people leaving reviews.



— Going out (but not without wifi)

Constant connectivity is a reality of modern life – as people want to share every aspect of their lives with others on social media and use their favourite apps and digital services on the go. As such, we wanted to learn more about how dependent people are on connectivity and get insights into people's experiences with guest wifi.

As a starting point, we tried to get an understanding of just how important connectivity was compared to some of life's luxuries, vices and essentials. Roughly three in ten people said that they could go longer without sex or alcohol (28% and 34%) than data.

A sad day for human connections, more than ten percent said that they could go longer without love or friendships. Among 25-34yr olds, only 12% selected the none of the above option. It seems that, for millennials, being without data for a prolonged period of time is among the worst scenarios imaginable.

— People who said they can go longer without these things than data



34%
Alcohol



25%
Chocolate



20%
TV



17%
Music



28%
Sex



24%
Holidays



12%
Love



11%
Friendship

10%
Food



9%
Sleep

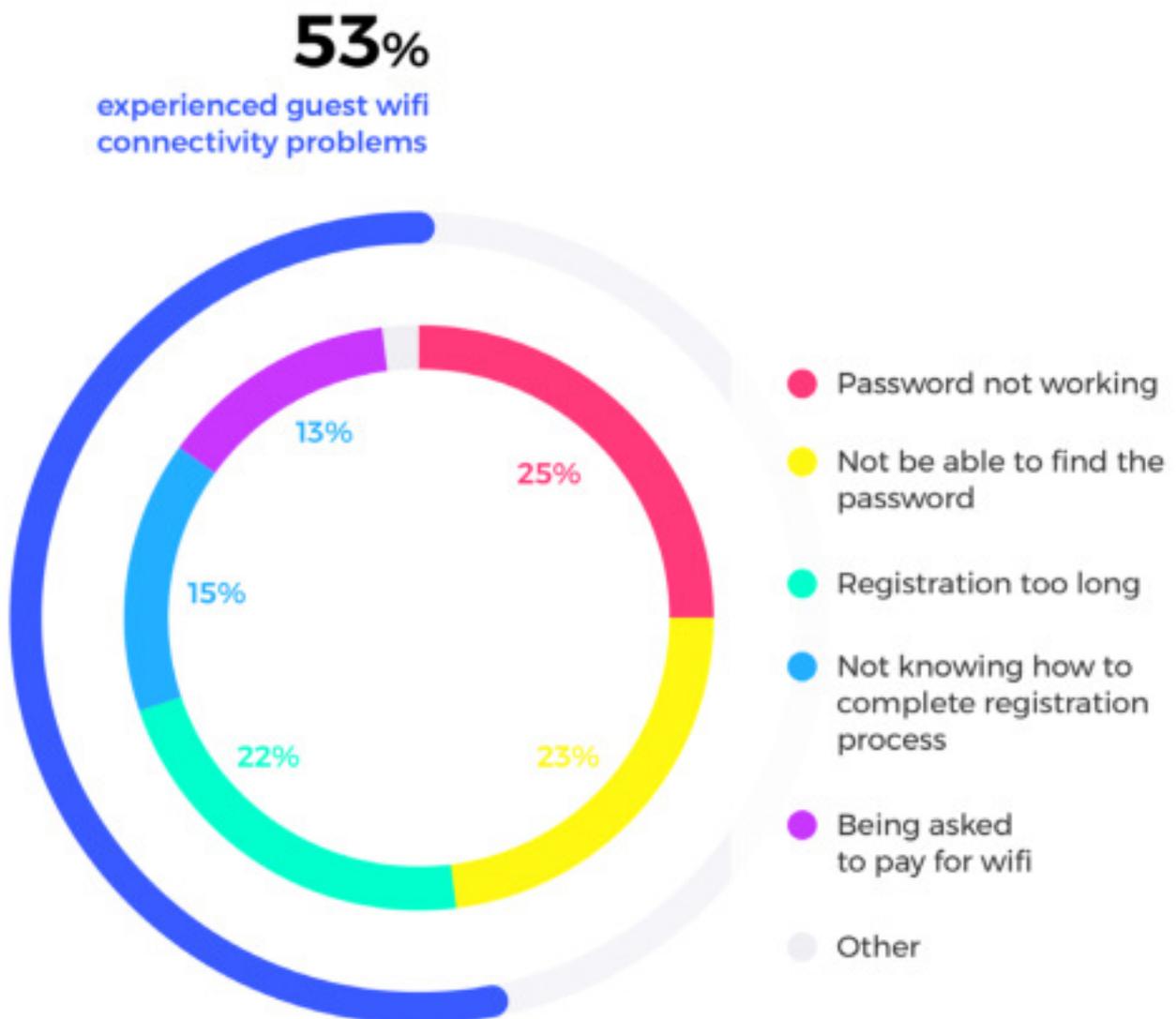


8%
Water



In terms of how this translates to social venues, most people have a mobile data limit of some kind and we wanted to discover to what extent people found it a relief to stay connected to wifi whenever possible. Indeed, 62% of respondents agreed with the statement “I feel better when connected to wifi, even if I have data remaining”. This number rises to 88% for 25-34yr olds, again highlighting how dependent this generation has become on data.

Given our dependence on wifi, the maturity of the technology and how long we’ve had to solve the problem, there is still no standard best practice for how venues set up guest wifi and how customers should register. Passwords quickly scrawled on blackboards are still popular in many social venues, despite the fact that they are easily missed and can represent much more of a security risk than other solutions to the problem. In our research, we found that more than half of respondents (53%) had experienced guest wifi connectivity problems. Of these people, the most common complaints were passwords not working (25%), not being able to find the password (23%) and registration processes taking too long (15%) – people could select multiple options if they had experienced more than one problem.



— Conclusion

These are testing times for hospitality, as the next generation moves further away from the routines and social activities of previous generations. The reluctance from others to proactively try new things compounds this issue from the perspective of pub, bar and restaurant owners, although there is a silver lining to this particularly ominous-looking cloud. People will try something new if you give them a reason to. Thankfully, there's every reason to believe they will stay loyal to you if you do get them into your door, such is the apathy of other venues when it comes to promoting their own deals and attracting new customers.

In this climate, clearly reviews are of vital importance to the success of any hospitality venue. Businesses should be doing all they can to ensure that happy customers are leaving reviews on sites like TripAdvisor and Google, while also making sure they receive all critical reviews so that they can respond directly and improve their services for future visitors.

Given the importance of digital services and devices, and that a significant proportion of visitors want to connect to wifi on the go, using wifi as a platform for encouraging reviews and as a tool for better understanding the needs of customers is a win win. Customers get a better experience with their connectivity – no more searching for obscured passwords scrawled on blackboards – and venues get to better understand their customers and communicate their promotions to them more effectively.

In most venues, wifi is poor and erratic experience, but it doesn't need to be this way. More and more businesses today are seeing the benefits of smart wifi platforms and are prioritising connectivity. We believe that well-designed wifi systems can pay dividends for any business, allowing customers seamless mobile coverage whilst giving venues the ability to connect to them and foster a better, longer lasting relationship.

To speak to a member of the BLACKBX team about what smart wifi can do for your venue, contact us at contact@blackbx.io

— About **BLACKBX**

BLACKBX, was founded in Edinburgh in 2015 by software developer and tech entrepreneur, Patrick Clover, to provide an easy to use and dynamic guest WiFi service that provides tangible benefits to business and is an unmatched experience for customers.

BLACKBX is smart guest WiFi for any venue - from the independent coffee shop to global brands with thousands of sites - providing a level of customer insight previously only available to large corporations. **BLACKBX** avoids the need for password and network logins for users while providing business owners with better information on their customers through improved engagement and insights into consumer habits.

The company has grown rapidly and has served more than one million users from over 450 locations across the UK, Europe, US, Asia and South America.

For more information visit: blackbx.io



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