Event Self Evaluation Guide

Part 2 - Estimating Attendances

This guide explains how to estimate how many people attended your event. Attendance is the starting point for all event evaluation.

Why Attendance Matters

Knowing attendance helps evaluators:

+ Understand the scale of your event
+ Interpret survey results correctly
+ Estimate the event's overall impact

Key Concepts

Gross Attendance

+ The total **number of attendances**
+ Includes repeat attendance, meaning the same person may be counted multiple times if attending on multiple days or sessions

Unique Individuals

+ The **number of different people** who attended
+ Each person is counted **once**, even if they attended multiple times

Why this matters:

+ Surveys are completed by people
+ Results must be scaled to people, not visits

Gross Attendance Examples:

For a two-day event music festival, gross attendance is the sum of the attendances on each day.

For example:

Day 1 – 2,000
Day 2 – 2,000

Gross Attendance 4,000

For a single day festival held in three different venues around town, gross attendance is the sum of attendances at each venue.

For example:

Venue 1 – 2,000
Venue 2 – 500
Venue 3 – 1,500

Gross Attendance 4,000

For a 2-day festival, held in 2 different venues around town, gross attendance is the sum of attendances at each venue, each day.

For example:

Day 1 (Venue 1) – 2,000,
Day 1 (Venue 2) – 500
Day 2 (Venue 1) – 1,000,
Day 2 (Venue 2) – 1,000

Gross Attendance 4,500

How Attendance is Determined

Ticketed events

Attendance is usually calculated using:

+ Tickets sold
+ Tickets scanned or redeemed

Non-ticketed events

There are several ways to estimate attendance. The right method depends on event size, layout and budget. Cost ranges are indicative only and will vary by event.

Method	What it Involves	Typical Cost
Entry counts	Counting people entering through set points	Low – Medium
Technology providers	Using mobile or sensor data	High
Free registration	Free tickets or registrations	Low - Medium
Drone photography	Aerial images plus field check	Medium - High
Grid counts	Estimating crowd density by area	Low - Medium
Physical counts	Manual counting in small areas	Low - High

Supporting Attendance Estimates with Surveys

Surveys can help improve attendance estimates by:

+ Understanding how long people stay
+ Estimating how often the crowd turns over during the day

A simple approach:

+ Count the crowd at regular times
+ Ask survey respondents how long they plan to stay
+ Use this to estimate total attendance

Converting Gross Attendance to Unique Individuals

	What is Required
Single day, single venue	No adjustment needed
Single day, multiple venues	Ask which venues were attended
Multiple days, single venue	Ask how many days were attended
Multiple days, multiple venues	Ask which days and venues were attended

Example:

+ A festival has live music events at two different parks in town (at different times in the day). Attendances are captured at both sites.
+ Total gross attendances were determined to be 10,000 (6,000 at the first event and 4,000 at the second event).
+ It is important to try and capture a survey sample that is representative of each site (i.e. 60% at site 1 and 40% at site 2).
+ The survey needs to ask the attendee whether they only attended site 1, site 2 or both sites.
+ Imagine the survey process collected data from 100 attendees.
+ **52** said that they attended only Site 1, **28** attended only Site 2, and **20** attended both sites. This creates **120 total attendances**:

  Site 1 = 52 + 20 = **72 attendances**

  Site 2 = 28 + 20 = **48 attendances**

  Total = **120 gross attendances**

+ Therefore, the average number of sites attended is **120 ÷ 100 = 1.2 sites per person**. Now we extrapolate this out to the audience.
+ **100 unique people** made **120 site attendances** which means that **average sites attended = 1.2**
+ Therefore, a gross attendance of **10,000 ÷ 1.2** average sites attended **= 8,333 unique individuals**

Final Takeaway

+ Attendance estimates do not need to be perfect
+ They need to be reasonable, transparent, and fit for the event type