



## KEY FINDINGS

- Average primary market ticket fee is 28.65% of the face value of the ticket
- Ticket fees for SeatGeek, StubHub and Vivid Seats averaged 38.95%, over 10% higher than the primary market average
- Primary market tickets priced at \$40 or less carried higher average fee of 35.5%
- Average price of fee was \$17.51 on an average \$69.70 face value ticket
- Overall fees increased over 36% from 2016 NY Attorney General's report
- Multiple cases of ticket fees costing more than 100% of the face value
- Ticket fees were more than 50% of the face value in almost 10% of the data
- Ticketmaster and AXS fees were nearly double all other providers: TM & AXS fees average 34.73%, all other service providers averaged 18.71%
- Ticketmaster was used in 42% of all venues we examined but was used in over 86% of all venues over 2,000 capacity
- Ticket fees are not reported to the artist, for two shows in amphitheaters there was over \$200K in primary market ticket fees collected

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this report the following terms will be defined as follows:

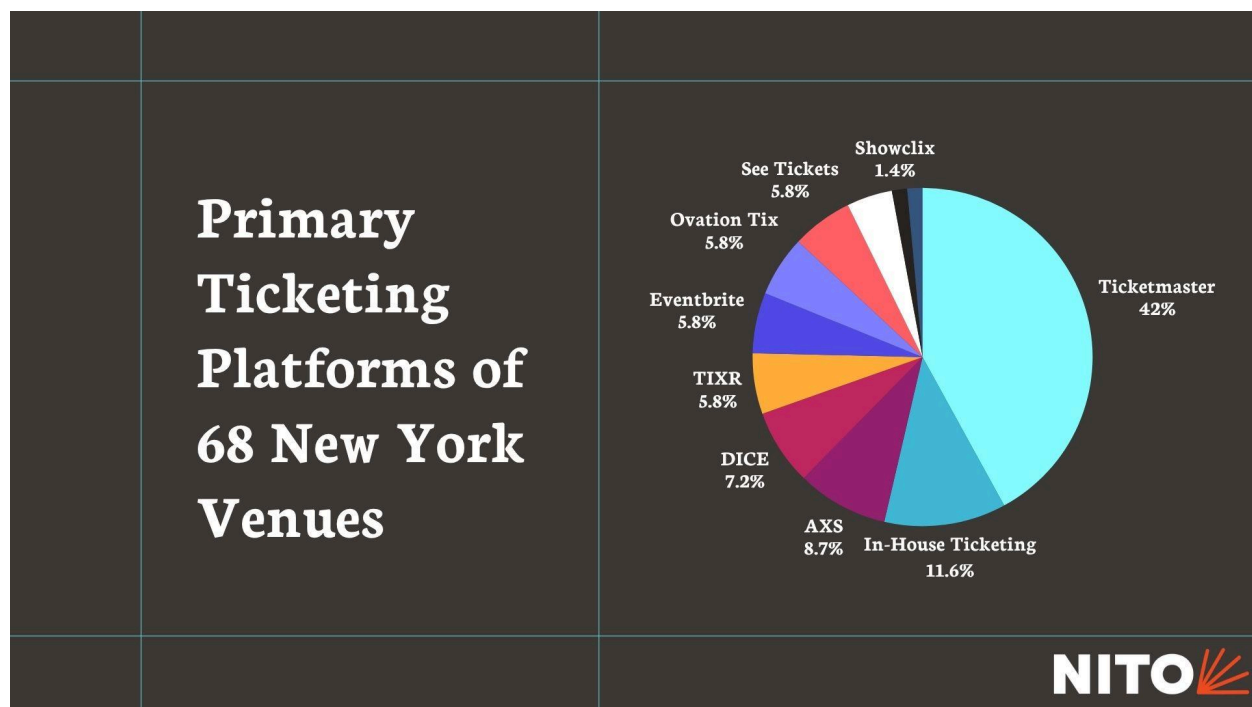
- **Primary Ticket Market** - the original point of sale for the ticket. The sale occurred in partnership with a primary ticket platform on behalf of the event owner, organizer, promoter or venue
- **Secondary Ticket Market** - the resale of an event ticket, most often through a secondary ticket platform
- **Ticketing Platform** - a point of sale system for the selling of event tickets. Ticketmaster, AXS, TicketWeb, Dice are all examples of primary ticketing platforms. StubHub, VividSeats, Ticketnetwork and SeatGeek are examples of secondary ticket, or resale platforms
- **Reseller** - A person, professional broker or other, who is reselling an event ticket
- **Face Value Ticket** - The ticket price listed on the primary ticket market, set by the artist, prior to additional fees
- **Resale Ticket** - The price of the resold ticket, sold through a secondary ticket platform, prior to additional fees

- **Ticket Fees** - An additional fee added on top of the face value of the ticket which is not a tax. Primary market ticket fees are divided between the venue, the ticketing platform and the promoter. Secondary market ticket fees are retained by the secondary ticket platform.

## PRIMARY TICKET MARKET LANDSCAPE IN NEW YORK STATE

The primary ticket market refers to the direct sale of tickets by venues or promoters through contracted ticketing service providers. The current New York law allows for a “reasonable” fee to be charged in connection with mandatory ticket fees for delivery of a ticket. According to the 2016 New York State Attorney General’s report, ticket fees in the primary market averaged 21% of the face value. Our study found that average primary ticket fees in New York State have now risen to 28.7%—an increase of 36.7% in less than a decade. Even more striking, the average fee in 2016 was \$8.00; today, it’s \$17.51—more than double.

Our analysis included 68 venues across the state, using a total of 12 different ticketing platforms. The most dominant by far was Ticketmaster, used by 26 venues, or 29 when including its subsidiary TicketWeb. This dominance becomes even more stark at larger venues (over 2,000 capacity), where 19 out of 22 venues (86%) used Ticketmaster. The remaining three used AXS, owned by AEG, Live Nation’s primary competitor.



Ticket fees charged by Ticketmaster, TicketWeb, and AXS were significantly higher than the state average, coming in at 34.7% of the ticket’s face value. This is 13% higher than the 2016 state average, and nearly double that of all other service providers, which averaged 18.7%. In

fact, 82 out of the 86 instances where fees exceeded 40% of face value occurred on Ticketmaster, TicketWeb, or AXS platforms.

Some of the most egregious fees we found include:

- An \$18.00 ticket at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts costing \$41.00 after fees (127% of face value)
- An \$18.00 ticket at OneCenter Crouse Hinds Theatre in Syracuse costing \$38.35 after fees (113.6%)
- A \$25.00 ticket at Tilles Center for the Arts in Brookville costing \$46.65 after fees (86.6%)

All of the above venues use Ticketmaster. Notably, both Bethel Woods and Tilles Center have previously received New York State funding. Fees exceeding the face value—especially those over 100%—would be hard to justify under any reasonable interpretation of current state law.

At the other end of the spectrum, The Egg in Albany (which uses an in-house system) charged a flat \$3.00 fee, always under 8% of face value. The independent venue No Fun in Troy, using Eventbrite, had fees under \$2.00 for every ticket we studied.

Generally, independent venues—those unaffiliated with corporate operators—had lower fees. These venues often used non-Ticketmaster platforms like DICE, Tixr, Eventbrite, or in-house systems.

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## **WILD INCONSISTENCIES IN PRIMARY MARKET FEES**

Beyond being expensive, primary market ticket fees are wildly inconsistent and raise significant concerns regarding fairness and transparency under current law.

One troubling trend is that lower-priced tickets carry disproportionately higher fees. While the overall average fee was 28.6% of face value, tickets priced \$40 or less carried an average fee of 35.5%. These lower-priced tickets are often offered by artists trying to be inclusive of price-sensitive audiences—yet excessive fees can make them cost-prohibitive, hurting both fans and artists.

Even more baffling are the fee disparities between different venues, or even within the same show. For example, a \$30 ticket could cost anywhere from \$35.17 to \$51.40, depending on the venue and service provider. See the chart below:

# \$30 FACE VALUE vs. FINAL COST TO FAN

All ticket prices below were originally set at \$30 by the artist.  
These were the final costs after ticket fees were added:

<b>\$35.17</b> 250 Capacity Theatre	<b>\$37.19</b> 280 Capacity Club
<b>\$38.14</b> 400 Capacity Theatre	<b>\$38.94</b> 700 Capacity Club
<b>\$39.02</b> 200 Capacity Listening Room	<b>\$39.50</b> 575 Capacity Club
<b>\$39.93</b> 900 Capacity Club	<b>\$39.95</b> 1950 Capacity Theatre
<b>\$40.79</b> 1000 Capacity Club	<b>\$41.56</b> 700 Capacity Theatre
<b>\$44.83</b> 650 Capacity Club	<b>\$45.33</b> 1800 Capacity Club
<b>\$45.75</b> 1575 Capacity Theatre	<b>\$51.40</b> 3250 Capacity Theatre

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In another case, ticket fees for Aerosmith at KeyBank Arena in Buffalo ranged from \$28.95 to \$101.25, despite delivering the exact same service: a digital barcode. The only possible cost difference—credit card processing of 3%—would be at most \$11.39, nowhere near the \$72.30 fee variation observed.

Ticketing platforms also now charge extra for basic services that were once free, like picking up tickets at Will Call (up to \$6), or printing and shipping a paper ticket (up to \$15). Even day-of-show tickets, which historically carried no extra fees, now include service charges including an additional box office fee. Fans are being charged for the privilege to walk up to a ticket seller and buy a ticket.

Consumers are left with no clear explanation of what these fees cover. Ticketmaster vaguely states that “service fees are shared between venues, Ticketmaster, sports teams, leagues, and promoters.” But given that Ticketmaster is owned by concert promoter Live Nation—and AXS by AEG—the fees appear to cycle back to the same corporate entities in various roles, suggesting built-in profit rather than genuine service costs.

Our conversations with venue operators supports that many of these fees are simply profit, split between venue, promoter, and ticketing company. This raises serious legal questions. As the

2016 Attorney General's report concluded: *"To the extent that ticket vendors and their venue operator clients collect these fees for anything other than the provision of 'special services,' they would be in violation of New York law."*

## SECONDARY TICKET MARKET LANDSCAPE

The secondary ticket market is where individuals can resell event tickets at a price they set. None of this money goes back to the artist or venue where the performance takes place. Only the ticketing company and the reseller profit from the secondary market.

New York has a particularly strong resale market due to state laws that prohibit restrictions on ticket transfers. This enables professional brokers—sometimes backed by private equity—to buy up large quantities of tickets solely for resale.

The three major resale platforms—**StubHub, SeatGeek, and Vivid Seats**—charge **average fees of 39%**, about **10% higher than the primary market**. These platforms are not contracted by the venue to sell tickets and have no relationship with the show or the artist performing. These fees are often added on top of already inflated ticket prices. A study by NITO found that tickets on the secondary market were on average twice the price of face value. Consumers are not only paying more than face value for the ticket but also higher fees. In some cases, the fees alone on a resale ticket exceeded the entire original ticket price.

Ticketmaster and AXS each have their own resale market. Both TM+ and AXS Marketplace have significantly lower fees than their primary sale sites. TicketMaster's primary sales average ticket fees at 34% while the average fees for tickets on TM+ were 22.3%. The average ticket fee for AXS marketplace was 19.6% while the average ticket on AXS' primary market tickets was an astronomical 41.8%.

Both of these marketplaces resell tickets to their own shows, allowing them to double dip on ticket fees, or collect fees on both the primary sale and secondary sale. Our study showed instances of tickets being sold on the AXS primary and secondary sites for the same price, and because of fees, costing less on the resale marketplace, harming consumers who did not know a cheaper ticket was available. These marketplaces also sell tickets to shows where they were not the primary market seller, generating additional revenue for both Live Nation and AEG.

This system also penalizes fans who can no longer attend a show. Platforms like StubHub, SeatGeek, and Vivid Seats charge a **10% seller commission** on top of the **39% buyer fee**. To break even on a \$30 ticket, the seller would end up charging **\$57.19** on resale. Conversely, someone trying to sell a ticket for \$30 would have to list it for roughly \$21, ultimately receiving around \$19 after commission—losing money in the process.

These resale websites use search engine optimization for marketing their inventory, the process of paying for higher placement on search engines like Google, often listing these secondary ticket sites before primary market tickets. **StubHub spent \$828 million on sales and marketing in 2024**, including these paid placements that appear above official ticket sites.

Many consumers unknowingly buy resale tickets thinking they are buying from the primary market—paying more for tickets and fees without realizing better options exist.

In fact, because of ticket fees and the inflated ticket price of the secondary market, a face value ticket sold for \$40 bought on the primary market and then resold on the secondary market could end up generating a total of \$122.42 in additional revenue. So for every \$1 the musician actually participates in an additional \$3 is being made off that same ticket that they don't see.

While high primary market fees at least contribute to producing a live concert, the secondary market is entirely extractive. **None of the resale revenue supports the people who create or present the show.**

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## **COST TO CONSUMERS & ARTISTS**

New Yorkers are paying millions annually in ticket fees. The following is data collected by an artist where the artist's name has been removed for the sake of anonymity. At a single show at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC), which sold about 8,000 tickets, the **total fees reached \$163,090.85**. Another show on the same tour at Constellation Brands—Marvin Sands Performing Arts Center (CMAC) sold around 7,500 tickets and generated **\$117,800.55 in fees**. SPAC sits on state-owned land and is leased to Live Nation, which sets ticket fees. Notably, when researching shows at SPAC that were not produced by Live Nation, primary fees are a flat \$6 per ticket—regardless of the ticket price.

These fees are not included in the show settlement—the document detailing ticket sales and expenses shared with the artist. Although fees are part of the ticket price, they aren't reported back to the artist, obscuring the true value an artist delivers. For instance, if a 500-capacity venue sells out at \$25 per ticket, the reported gross is \$12,500. But with \$11 in fees added, the actual gross is \$18,000. The artist's contracted deal could be 60% of the reported \$12,500 gross, meaning they're actually only earning 40.5% of the total brought in. In the SPAC and CMAC examples, the artist generated over \$200,000 more box office revenue than the venue reported back to them—an enormous gap that distorts their market value and future deal potential.

Ticket fees also **distort demand**. A fan looking to pay \$20 for a show may abandon their purchase if fees push the total to \$28 or \$30—even though the artist is only making money on that original \$20. High fees suppress attendance, which in turn affects merchandise sales, word-of-mouth promotion, and the long-term growth of an artist's fanbase. It's hard to make a life long fan if they're not in the room.

In short: **Artists don't set these fees. They suffer from them.**

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## **LARGER SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS**

New York's live event ticketing system is facing a growing affordability crisis driven in part by excessive and inconsistent ticket fees. This report shines a light on those fees—but it is not just an exposé. It's also a call to action. While some fees may be exploitative, others were created out of necessity to support the real costs of producing live shows—especially for independent venues and promoters without the diversified revenue streams of major corporations. Vertically integrated companies that own and operate their own ticketing platforms are collecting the total revenue from ticket fees and protecting their potential losses in ways their independent competition can not. In turn this drives up the cost of tickets across the market as others must increase their fees in order to compete.

Costs of producing live entertainment have risen dramatically for both the artists and venues since the COVID-19 shutdowns. NITO's own data has shown that on a \$100 concert ticket, the artist is only profiting approximately \$8. The concert industry is not immune to the same rising prices that have affected all aspects of American life. Venues facing rising costs while consumption practices around alcohol sales, the main revenue driver outside of ticket sales, are shifting. With declined bar sales and increasing overhead, venues are facing an outsized pressure to find additional sources of revenue. Unfortunately, the concert goer is bearing the brunt of these rising costs with higher ticket fees and prices. In many other countries including much of the EU and Canada, there is higher investment in touring artists and performances. While this does not mitigate the rising costs of producing concerts it does help keep more artists and venues afloat.

While NITO believes in reigning in ticket fees, there are additional steps that need to be taken in order to create a more sustainable concert environment. New York has already taken an important step forward requiring all-in ticketing with itemized fees, which should be the national standard, but there is more that can be done. NITO proposes the following solutions as starting points:

- **Cap ticket fees at 15% of the face value.** We must level the playing field so the biggest companies can't charge the most.
- **Let artists control resale restrictions.** Rising costs are in part tribute to the cost of secondary market tickets. Artists need to set resale restrictions, blocking resellers and allowing true fans to pay the price the artist sets.
- **Commercial rent stabilization for creative spaces.** Venues are facing rent pressures, often becoming a victim of their own success as the neighborhoods around them develop.
- **Tax relief for independent venues with a focus on emerging artists.** Emerging artists are often rarely bringing large crowds but these are essential spaces to the music ecosystem. Without these "first step" spaces fewer artists will be able to gain traction, or have the practice, to have long lasting careers.
- **Direct investment in the creative spaces and artists.** With limited investment in the arts, there are fewer options but to raise prices. We need to increase government funding for creative spaces and touring artists alike. By doing so we would recognize the essential value they provide our daily lives.

In order to ease the burden of ticket fees on consumers we need to look beyond the immediate problem and work towards multiple solutions to ensure a thriving concert economy into the future.

## CONCLUSION

New York's ticketing fee crisis is not a new problem—it's a known problem that's gotten dramatically worse. In 2016, the Attorney General made it clear that fees beyond the cost of delivering a service could be unlawful. Yet since then, average primary market fees have risen by **36.7%**, secondary market fees remain largely unchecked, and fans are being charged **more in fees than for the ticket itself**.

These fees are not just irritating; they are a form of **systemic price distortion**, artificially inflating the cost of live entertainment and degrading the relationship between artists and audiences. In many cases, they also appear to **violate existing New York law**, which prohibits "services charges in excess of the actual cost" of delivering a ticket.

The New York legislature has the power to fix this. **It can pass proposed legislation that would cap primary and secondary market ticket fees..** At the very least, we must stop pretending that this system is working. It is not. Excessive fees hurt fans, burden artists, and erode public trust. New Yorkers deserve better.

## Methodology

This research examined the primary and secondary ticket markets separately, focusing exclusively on music concerts in New York State. The primary market analysis covered **68 venues** with capacities ranging from **150 to over 20,000**, and included pricing data for **500 individual tickets**. To ensure geographic diversity, venues were selected with a rough population balance in mind—**40 venues located outside the five boroughs of New York City** and **28 within**. For each venue, **3 to 5 shows** were analyzed, with efforts made to include a range of ticket price points. **Platinum seats and other dynamically priced tickets** were excluded to focus on standard pricing.

The secondary market analysis focused on the **three major resale platforms—StubHub, SeatGeek, and Vivid Seats**. A total of **150 tickets were reviewed (50 per platform)**. Where possible, identical or comparable tickets (same section and row) were analyzed across platforms. Both low- and high-priced listings were included. In addition, resale platforms operated by primary sellers—**TM+ (Ticketmaster) and AXS Marketplace**—were examined independently to assess how fees and pricing compared to their respective primary markets.

Ticket fees were calculated by dividing the total fee amount by the face value of the ticket, following the same methodology used in the **2016 New York Attorney General's report**, which expresses fees as a percentage of face value.