NEWS LESSON

Why Young People Are Turning Up to Ceilidhs



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Why might young people want more offline events?
2. What makes an evening out feel welcoming to someone who arrives alone?
3. Are traditional activities becoming fashionable again where you live?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**renaissance**	☐	A	a time when something becomes popular again
2	**communal**	☐	B	a musical instrument that you squeeze and play with keys
3	**polished**	☐	C	your feeling of how important you are
4	**ego**	☐	D	numbers that show facts about something
5	**dignity**	☐	E	an opinion that something or someone is good or bad
6	**accordion**	☐	F	shared by everyone in a group
7	**statistics**	☐	G	the feeling that people respect you
8	**judgment**	☐	H	very neat and professional, with no rough edges

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

An old Scottish and Irish dance is filling pubs with people in their twenties. Ticket sales are up, and nobody has to arrive with friends.

1 The Ivy House in Nunhead, south-east London, is a pub with a loud musical history. Ian Dury and Elvis Costello played there in the 1970s, and contemporary indie bands still pull in crowds. Last Friday, though, the thing filling the dancefloor was not a gig. It was a ceilidh: a traditional Scottish and Irish dance, pronounced "KAY-lee", from a Gaelic word meaning a visit or a gathering.

2 Reporters and organisers have started calling it a ceilidh renaissance, and there are figures behind the phrase. The ticketing platform Eventbrite says sales for ceilidh events in the UK rose 16% between 2024 and 2025, with 15% growth worldwide. Page Dudley, a spokesperson for the platform, said young people were seeking events that felt "communal and a lot less polished". A touring show, Ceilidh the Musical, opened at Shoreditch town hall in east London last week.

3 What draws people is easier to hear from the dancers than from the statistics. "We spend a lot of time looking at screens," said Matt, who treated the evening as a refreshing way to be offline. George, 35, at his first proper ceilidh, said he liked how silly it could be: "It just makes you feel alive." His partner Louise, 32, valued the absence of judgment. "When you strip away the ego, everyone just becomes their childlike selves," she said. Jamie, 19, has been to plenty, and says the surprise is how often he now meets schoolfriends at them.

4 The format does a lot of the work. A caller explains each dance, the steps are simple enough to copy and complicated enough to go wrong, and partners change constantly, so nobody is left standing at the side. Ed McCabe, founder of the London Ceilidh Club, says the scene has boomed since Covid, and that ceilidhs have low barriers to entry. His point is partly about dignity: you cannot look cool while doing it, which removes a great deal of pressure.

5 The musicians make a related point about who feels welcome. Richard Jones, who plays accordion in the South East London Folk Orchestra, notes that the dances are not organised around men and women. His bandmate Neil McLean put it more plainly: "We don't really do men and women, we do ones and twos." Jones adds that people know they can come without a group, and that the room becomes its own community very quickly.

6 That may explain why an anti-loneliness charity was involved. Link Age Southwark raised money from ticket sales at the Ivy House, and Anna Spree, who works there, said the ceilidh revival had allowed the charity to reach new people. An evening out that happens to introduce you to thirty strangers is an unusual kind of fundraiser.

Sources: The Guardian, 'Ceilidh renaissance' lures gen Z offline in search of real-life joy. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Eventbrite recorded faster growth in the UK than worldwide. T F NG
2. Dancers keep the same partner for the whole evening. T F NG
3. A charity raised money from the ticket sales at the Ivy House. T F NG
4. Most of the people at the Ivy House were under 30. T F NG
5. Ceilidh the Musical opened in Nunhead. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

absence	attended	contemporary	involved	plenty	refreshing	seeking	welcoming

1. The museum shows medieval paintings alongside _____ art made in the last few years.
2. Many graduates are _____ work in cities where rents are lower.
3. After a week of emails, a walk by the river felt _____ .
4. In the _____ of a clear leader, the committee could not decide.
5. Don't rush, we have _____ of time before the train leaves.
6. Several local schools were _____ in organising the event.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Eventbrite says that sales _____ by 16% between 2024 and 2025. (RISE)
2. At a ceilidh, nobody _____ standing at the side of the room. (LEAVE)
3. Until that Friday, most of the group _____ a ceilidh. (NEVER TRY)
4. The scene _____ since Covid, according to one organiser. (BOOM)
5. Folk dances like this _____ for generations. (ENJOY)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Collocations are word pairs that sound natural together. Ask which verb usually goes with the noun, then test each word in the box.

break	build	go	lift	pour	raise	reach

1. The charity wants to _____ money for people who live alone.
2. Because the steps are simple, very little can _____ wrong, and mistakes are funny.
3. The festival hopes to _____ new audiences, including people who rarely go out.
4. Shy people can _____ the ice by starting with a simple dance.
5. The evening gave students a chance to _____ a sense of community.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Ed McCabe says you cannot look cool at a ceilidh. Why might that help?
2. Can an organised activity really solve loneliness, or only interrupt it?
3. What event would you design for people who find socialising hard?

9 Role-play: a Friday night out

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend who wants to go

You went to a ceilidh last week and loved it. Invite your friend for Friday. Explain what it is like, answer their worries and try to agree a plan.

Student B · the friend who is not sure

You are tired and think dancing in front of strangers sounds embarrassing. Ask questions, say what worries you, and decide if you can agree a plan you both like.

Useful phrases

Why don't you come to a ceilidh with me?

I'm not very good at dancing.

Don't worry, you don't need a partner.

That's not really my kind of evening.

How about we try it for an hour? If you're not enjoying it, we'll leave.

Let's meet at seven, then.

Afterwards, tell the class: are you going to the ceilidh, and what changed your mind?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 F · 3 H · 4 C · 5 G · 6 B · 7 D · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 contemporary · 2 seeking · 3 refreshing · 4 absence · 5 plenty · 6 involved

6 Verb forms

1 rose · 2 is left · 3 had never tried · 4 has boomed · 5 have been enjoyed

7 Language focus

1 raise · 2 go · 3 reach · 4 break · 5 build

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