# Mitchells & Butlers chief warns late-night market shrinking due to younger generation staying home



In a stark warning for the nightlife industry, Phil Urban, the chief executive of Mitchells & Butlers, has highlighted a dramatic contraction within the late-night market. As one of the UK's preeminent pub and bar operators, Urban attributes this downturn to shifting social patterns, particularly among younger generations who increasingly prefer to socialise at home. The rise of social media and home delivery services has fundamentally altered how young people engage with their social circles, rendering traditional late-night outings less appealing.

Urban explained this new landscape in an interview, stating, "The toughest part of the market right now is late night." He noted that, while Mitchells & Butlers is better insulated than dedicated late-night venues, the overall shifts in consumer behaviour pose challenges. The company, which encompasses a variety of restaurant and bar chains like Toby Carvery and Harvester, is not looking to expand into the struggling nightclub sphere, suggesting that the trends observed are likely long-term. Many younger individuals now prefer to meet friends at home for drinks and takeaways before heading out, indicating a preference for more casual, controlled environments over the frenetic energy of nightclubs.

Data corroborates Urban’s claims. A recent report from CGA revealed a staggering 30% decline in the number of nightclubs since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting a broader sea change in consumer habits. The increasing preference for diverse types of entertainment has contributed to diminishing interest in traditional club scenes. Furthermore, findings from Grant Thornton underscore the economic factors at play; 68% of young respondents reported that financial pressures have curtailed their participation in night-time activities, with 53% admitting to spending significantly less on nights out compared to the previous year.

As younger demographics grapple with a cost-of-living crisis, the implications for nightlife are profound. GlobalData’s research has shown that 21% of Generation Z intend to socialise less frequently outside their homes in the near future. Financial constraints are a significant factor, with many students opting to save money by reducing nights out. Additionally, a report from The Spirits Business indicated that a sizeable proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds are pre-drinking more often and seeking cheaper alternatives for home consumption, further eroding the late-night market.

The Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) has also highlighted key barriers to nightlife participation, with 61% of young people citing factors such as financial stress, safety concerns, and inadequate transportation options as obstacles to enjoying late-night social events. As operational costs continue to rise, many venues are struggling to adapt, leading to a wave of closures and reduced viable options for consumers.

In summary, Urban's observations reflect a larger trend unfolding across the UK’s nightlife sector, where changing social behaviours, economic pressures, and evolving consumer preferences converge to reshape the late-night landscape. As Mitchells & Butlers strategically recalibrates its focus away from late-night operations, the future of the club scene remains uncertain, with many stakeholders left to ponder the long-term viability of traditional night-time entertainment in a rapidly changing world.

## 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/nightclub-market-shrinking-as-younger-people-stay-at-home-says-pub-boss-TK44ZIUZZFIKZJY3NXNRPT47MI/), [[2]](https://cgastrategy.com/britain-loses-30-of-nightclubs-since-covid-as-consumers-late-night-habits-evolve/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/nightclub-market-shrinking-as-younger-people-stay-at-home-says-pub-boss-TK44ZIUZZFIKZJY3NXNRPT47MI/), [[3]](https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/insights/cost-of-clubbing-a-challenge-for-the-night-time-economy/), [[4]](https://www.globaldata.com/media/consumer/uk-night-club-closures-reveal-changing-gen-z-behavior-one-fifth-say-socializing-less-outside-home-says-globaldata/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.thespiritsbusiness.com/2022/10/late-night-socialising-down-as-costs-soar/), [[6]](https://www.nightlifeinternational.org/en/news/item/4648-ntia-uk-releases-key-2025-reports-on-the-night-time-economy-and-electronic-music-industry), [[7]](https://www.smeinsurance.com/knowledge-and-resource-hub/news-and-guides/uk-nightlife-economic-uncertainty.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/nightclub-market-shrinking-as-younger-people-stay-at-home-says-pub-boss-TK44ZIUZZFIKZJY3NXNRPT47MI/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://cgastrategy.com/britain-loses-30-of-nightclubs-since-covid-as-consumers-late-night-habits-evolve/> - A report by CGA highlights a 30% decline in UK nightclubs since the onset of COVID-19, attributing the downturn to evolving consumer habits and the rise of alternative entertainment options. The study indicates that the late-night market is diversifying, with consumers increasingly opting for different types of venues and activities, leading to a significant reduction in traditional nightclub attendance.
3. <https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/insights/cost-of-clubbing-a-challenge-for-the-night-time-economy/> - Grant Thornton discusses the challenges facing the UK nightclub sector, including reduced consumer demand, rising operational costs, and changing socialising habits. The article notes that 68% of young people report that the current economic climate has reduced their participation in night-time activities, with 53% spending less on going out compared to the previous year.
4. <https://www.globaldata.com/media/consumer/uk-night-club-closures-reveal-changing-gen-z-behavior-one-fifth-say-socializing-less-outside-home-says-globaldata/> - GlobalData's research reveals that 21% of Generation Z plan to socialise less frequently outside the home over the next three months. The study attributes this trend to financial constraints and changing drinking habits, with students cutting back on nights out due to the cost-of-living crisis and consuming less alcohol.
5. <https://www.thespiritsbusiness.com/2022/10/late-night-socialising-down-as-costs-soar/> - An article in The Spirits Business reports a decline in late-night socialising among 18 to 24-year-olds, with 43.4% pre-drinking at home more and 38.2% buying cheaper drinks to have at home. The piece highlights how rising costs are influencing young people's socialising habits, leading to reduced spending on nights out.
6. <https://www.nightlifeinternational.org/en/news/item/4648-ntia-uk-releases-key-2025-reports-on-the-night-time-economy-and-electronic-music-industry> - The Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) released a study indicating that 61% of young people reported going out less frequently in the past year, with financial pressures, safety concerns, and inadequate late-night transport cited as key barriers to nightlife participation.
7. <https://www.smeinsurance.com/knowledge-and-resource-hub/news-and-guides/uk-nightlife-economic-uncertainty.html> - An article by SME Insurance discusses the impact of economic uncertainty on the UK nightlife industry, noting a significant decline in the number of nightclubs and live music venues. The piece attributes this decline to rising operational costs, changing consumer behaviour, and the cost-of-living crisis.