# Notting Hill Carnival 2024: security and economic pressures test Europe's largest street celebration



Partygoers are gearing up for the final day of the Notting Hill Carnival in West London, a vibrant celebration marking Caribbean culture and history that draws roughly one million attendees each year. Sunday's children's day parade set the scene with colourful costumes, dancing, and music, and the festivities will intensify on Monday with the main parade, maintaining the carnival’s reputation as Europe’s largest street party. Festival chairman Ian Comfort expressed relief that financial hurdles threatening the event's future earlier this year were overcome, while Kensington and Chelsea’s mayor, Tom Bennett, hailed the carnival as one of the world’s greatest street parties, celebrating not only Caribbean culture but also the community’s contributions to the local borough and the UK.

The carnival, which has been running for over five decades, holds deep cultural significance. It originated as a response to racial tensions in the 1950s, including the tragic 1959 murder of Kelso Cochrane, and was shaped by the activism of figures such as Claudia Jones and Rhaune Laslett. The event has since evolved into a vital expression of Caribbean identity and Black British heritage, creating a sense of community and cultural pride that resonates across generations. Despite its importance, the carnival faces ongoing threats from gentrification, funding shortages, and local opposition. A leaked letter in 2025 warned that lack of financial support could put future editions at risk, sparking concern within Caribbean communities who view the carnival as a repository of cultural memory and an essential platform for celebration.

However, the 2024 carnival has also highlighted distinct challenges. The Metropolitan Police reported 140 arrests by Sunday evening—comprising 105 within the carnival area and 35 in surrounding zones—covering offences such as possession of offensive weapons and drugs. Notably, 15 arrests related to assaults on police officers, with one officer hospitalised. The use of live facial recognition (LFR) technology to monitor the approaches to and from the event, along with screening arches employing stop-and-search powers, has been a prominent security measure. The police defend these tactics as crucial for public safety, citing over 1,000 arrests linked to LFR since early 2024 and emphasising a commitment to transparency despite community concerns about this surveillance targeting likely focused on Black and minority ethnic groups.

Street food vendors at the carnival have reported economic pressures linked to rising costs, which some suggest could impact the atmosphere and accessibility of the event. Increases in National Insurance Contributions and soaring prices for poultry—up over 46%—have forced stallholders to reduce staff numbers or change suppliers, with some opting to serve cheaper meat cuts or to withdraw from the event entirely. These financial strains are exacerbated by raised local council fees and heightened security costs, creating a challenging environment for small businesses that play a key role in the festival’s cultural and culinary landscape.

Meanwhile, the policing operation remains a delicate balancing act amid heightened concerns over public safety. Official updates reveal 61 assaults on officers over the event weekend, including several stabbings, with victims sustaining a range of injuries. The police recorded 349 arrests total during the festivities, predominantly linked to weapons possession and drug-related offences. Media coverage has brought attention to 889 reported crimes and 353 arrests, with warnings from senior police officials about the risks of crowd-related incidents, such as a potential 'mass casualty' crush, citing insufficient stewarding staff. Notting Hill Carnival Limited has acknowledged these operational challenges and indicated ongoing collaboration with partners to secure further resources ahead of future events.

As the final hours of the carnival unfold, organisers, vendors, police, and attendees alike confront the complex realities of maintaining a historic cultural celebration in a modern urban setting. While the event continues to offer a joyous showcase of Caribbean heritage, it also underscores wider societal issues—from gentrification and economic pressures to security concerns and surveillance debates—that will shape the future of this iconic festival.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/revellers-to-flock-to-notting-hill-carnival-for-final-day-of-partying-TXFTKULVIFNC3OSYG4D27GO2JQ/), [[2]](https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/life/notting-hill-carnival-caribbean-heritage-why-it-must-survive)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/life/notting-hill-carnival-caribbean-heritage-why-it-must-survive)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/revellers-to-flock-to-notting-hill-carnival-for-final-day-of-partying-TXFTKULVIFNC3OSYG4D27GO2JQ/), [[5]](https://news.met.police.uk/pressreleases/met-sets-out-policing-plan-ahead-of-notting-hill-carnival-3400571)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/189f022f-6b25-4349-9d21-0419b458f86d)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://news.met.police.uk/news/notting-hill-carnival-update-on-incidents-and-arrests-487332), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c07e55159kro), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2891zgqdwo)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/revellers-to-flock-to-notting-hill-carnival-for-final-day-of-partying-TXFTKULVIFNC3OSYG4D27GO2JQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/life/notting-hill-carnival-caribbean-heritage-why-it-must-survive> - This article offers a personal reflection on the profound cultural significance of the Notting Hill Carnival, rooted in the author's Caribbean heritage. The writer recounts how their parents met at the Carnival in 1994 and how the event has been a lifelong tradition that connects them to their cultural identity. Initially experienced as a child on their father's shoulders, the Carnival later became a space for freedom, exploration, and eventually participation as a costumed dancer. The piece traces Carnival's origins to the racial tensions and the 1959 murder of Kelso Cochrane, connecting it to the activism of Claudia Jones and Rhaune Laslett, who laid the foundations for what would become Europe’s largest street festival. Despite its cultural importance and community roots, the Carnival continues to face threats from gentrification, underfunding, media misrepresentation, and local resistance. A leaked letter in 2025 warned that lack of financial support could jeopardize future editions, sparking concern among communities who view the event as a vital expression of Caribbean identity. The author emphasizes that preserving the Carnival is essential to maintaining cultural memory and offers hope that future generations will continue to honour and celebrate this symbol of Black British-Caribbean heritage.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/189f022f-6b25-4349-9d21-0419b458f86d> - This article discusses the challenges faced by street food vendors at the 2025 Notting Hill Carnival due to rising costs, particularly in poultry and employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs). The increased NICs, rising from 13.8% to 15% and affecting salaries above £5,000 instead of £9,100, have significantly impacted small food businesses. Vendors like Jerk Hub and Jerk Pon Da Corner are reducing staff and switching to more affordable chicken cuts or different meats like goat. The cost of fresh chicken has surged over 46% due to various economic and trade factors. Additionally, fees for stalls imposed by the local council have increased, adding further strain. Some traders, such as Dub Pan, have opted out entirely due to costs and security concerns. Despite controversies, including the reintroduction of facial recognition technology by the police and its ongoing legal challenges, vendors stress the importance of participating to preserve the cultural legacy established by the Windrush generation.
4. <https://news.met.police.uk/news/notting-hill-carnival-update-on-incidents-and-arrests-487332> - This official update from the Metropolitan Police provides a breakdown of incidents and arrests at the 2024 Notting Hill Carnival. Over the two days, there were 61 incidents where officers were assaulted, including kicks, punches, and other forms of aggression. Additionally, eight stabbings occurred during the event, with victims sustaining varying degrees of injury. A total of 349 arrests were made, with the majority related to possession of offensive weapons and drug offences. The report highlights the challenges faced by law enforcement in managing such a large-scale event and underscores the importance of public safety measures.
5. <https://news.met.police.uk/pressreleases/met-sets-out-policing-plan-ahead-of-notting-hill-carnival-3400571> - This press release outlines the Metropolitan Police's strategic approach to ensuring safety at the Notting Hill Carnival. Key measures include the deployment of live facial recognition cameras on approaches to and from the event to identify and intercept individuals posing public safety risks. Screening arches are also planned at busy entry points, utilizing stop-and-search powers to prevent weapons from entering the carnival. The release emphasizes the effectiveness of live facial recognition technology, citing over 1,000 arrests since the start of 2024 and a high accuracy rate. It also addresses community concerns regarding the technology's use, particularly within Black and minority ethnic communities, and the police's commitment to transparency and public safety.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c07e55159kro> - This BBC News article reports on the incidents and arrests during the 2024 Notting Hill Carnival. The Metropolitan Police confirmed that eight people were stabbed during the event, with a total of 334 arrests made. The article details the circumstances of the stabbings, including the critical condition of a young mother and her child. It also mentions the injuries sustained by 50 officers during the event. The majority of arrests were related to possessing an offensive weapon or drug offences. The article provides insights into the challenges faced by law enforcement in managing such a large-scale public event and the ongoing efforts to ensure public safety.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2891zgqdwo> - This BBC News article discusses the safety concerns raised by the Metropolitan Police regarding the Notting Hill Carnival. Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist highlighted the risk of a 'mass casualty' crowd crush, citing insufficient stewards during the event. The article reports that 889 crimes were reported across the carnival, with 353 arrests. Organisers, Notting Hill Carnival Limited, acknowledged the challenges and stated they are working with partners to secure additional resources for future events. The piece sheds light on the complexities of crowd management and the importance of adequate staffing to ensure safety at large public gatherings.