

ARTS AND CULTURE IN NORTHERN IRELAND 2012

A summary of key findings from the General Population Survey examining behavior and attitudes towards the arts

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Strategic Development Department

KEY FINDINGS

The findings described in this report relate to the opinions of 1,141 adults living in Northern Ireland in January 2012.

Attendance at the Arts

- 82 per cent of adults reported attending an arts event in 2012, an increase of eight percentage points compared to the previous survey conducted in 2009.
- The category that saw the largest increase in attendance was film, which increased by eleven percentage points to 60 per cent, compared to 2009. There were also substantial increases in attendance reported for museums, community festivals and live music events.
- Attendance at the arts is greatest amongst adults aged between 16 and 24. Within this group, 93 per cent of females and 88 per cent of males had attended an arts event within the 12 months prior to the survey.
- Substantially fewer disabled people attend the arts in 2012 compared to people without a disability. Only 59 per cent of disabled people reported attending one or more event compared to 87 per cent of people without a disability.
- 87 per cent of adults in the least deprived areas of Northern Ireland attended the arts in 2012, compared to 77 per cent of people living in the most deprived areas.
- Lack of time represented the single largest reason for non-engagement in the arts in 2012, identified by 35 per cent of adults. This was particularly the case for people aged between 35 and 49.
- In 2012, 75 per cent of adults surveyed agreed (either strongly or partially) with the statement *'I believe it is right there should be public funding of arts and culture projects.'* Ten per cent disagreed and 15 per cent remained neutral.

Participation in the Arts

- 30 per cent of adults reported participating in an arts event in 2012, an increase of four percentage points compared to the previous survey conducted in 2009.
- The category that saw the largest increase in participation was craft, which increased by 4 percentage points to 30 per cent, compared to 2009.
- Male participation levels have remained fairly constant compared to 2009 at 25%. In comparison, female participation levels have increased significantly from 27% to 35% in 2012 over the same period.

- Twenty five per cent of disabled people reported participating in the arts in 2012 compared to 31 per cent of people without a disability.
- Forty nine per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 participated in one or more activities in the 12 months prior to the survey, with 'singing or playing a musical instrument' most often mentioned.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report details the key findings from the 2012 General Population Survey, providing reliable estimates of adult engagement with the arts in Northern Ireland. The question module was run as part of a wider survey in January 2012 on behalf of the Arts Council by the Central Survey Unit (part of the Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency).

It represents the fourth such survey in the series; complementing ones completed in 2004, 2007 and 2009.

The report explores the following aspects associated with engagement:

- Levels of attendance
- Levels of participation
- Opinions on the funding of art and its role in society
- Benefits of participation
- Obstacles preventing further involvement

Analysis is provided at an overall general population level and also considers findings relative to a number of population sub-groups including age, sex, social class and disability.

The survey findings provide a reliable and current data source which is used for a range of strategic purposes including planning, performance measurement, artform strategy development and equality impact assessment.

Technical Note

The sample for the January 2012 survey consisted of a systematic random sample selected from the Land and Property Services Agency list of private addresses. This is the most up-to-date listing of private households and is made available to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for research purposes.

A total of 2,200 addresses were selected for interview. Addresses were issued to a panel of 250 interviewers in December 2011. The fieldwork period was 2nd January to the 4th February 2012. 1,141 adult respondents were selected to participate in the survey, aged 16 years or older.

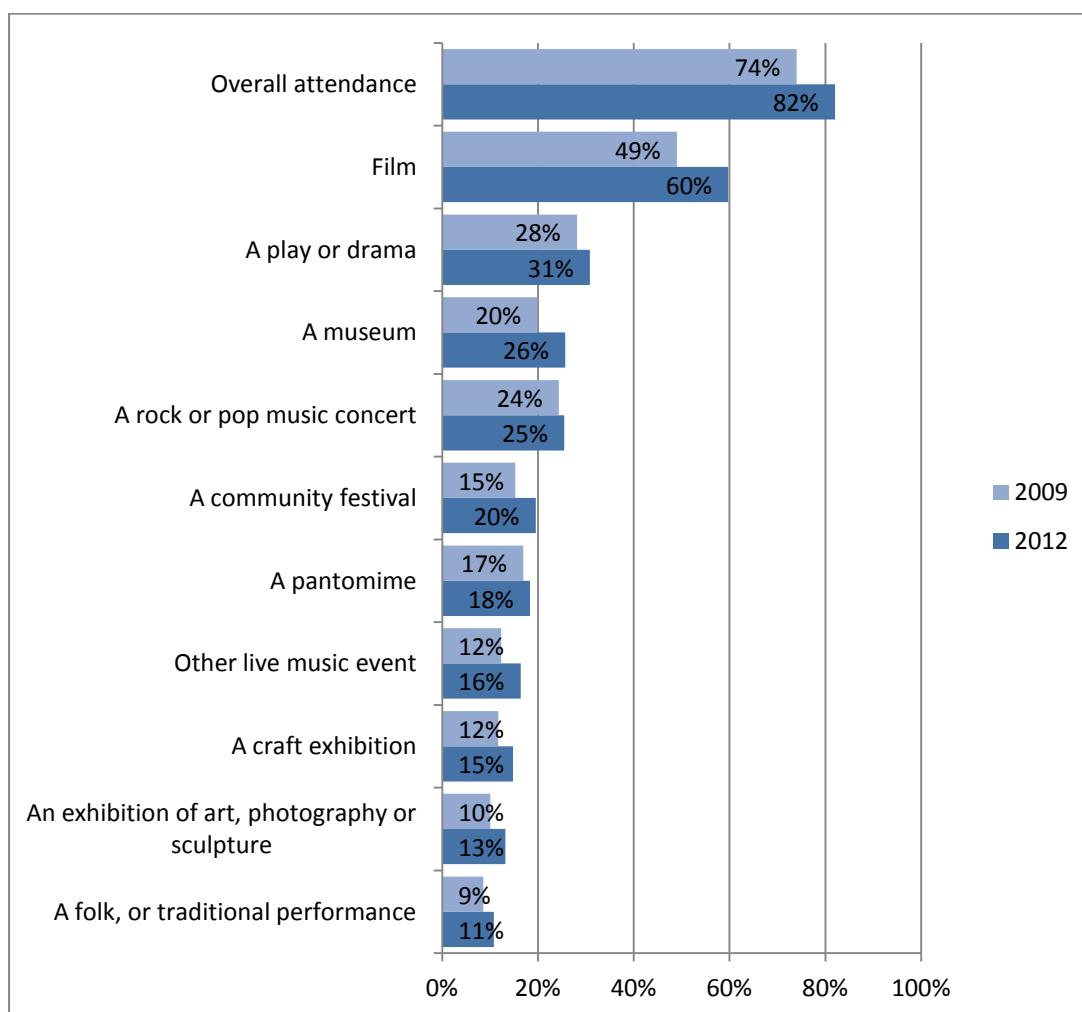
The responses to this survey have been weighted so that the age and sex profile of respondents matches the Northern Ireland population age 16 and over. The reported rates of attendance and participation in arts related activity will be subject to a degree of recall error. Based on the number of interviews undertaken, the confidence level within +/-3%. This infers that, if 100 independent samples were chosen from the same population, 95 of them would be expected to be within +/- 3%, at this confidence level.

2. ATTENDANCE AT THE ARTS

Despite the economic downturn overall adult attendance at the arts in 2012 increased by eight percentage points compared to 2009 to 82 per cent, according to the most recent General Population Survey findings.

As can be seen in Figure 1, increases in attendance were recorded for all of the artform categories, the most notable of which being attendance at films which increased by eleven percentage points from 49 per cent to 60 per cent. There were also increases in attendance reported for museums, community festivals and live music events.

Figure 1: Percentage point change in the proportion of adults attending the arts, 2009 to 2012

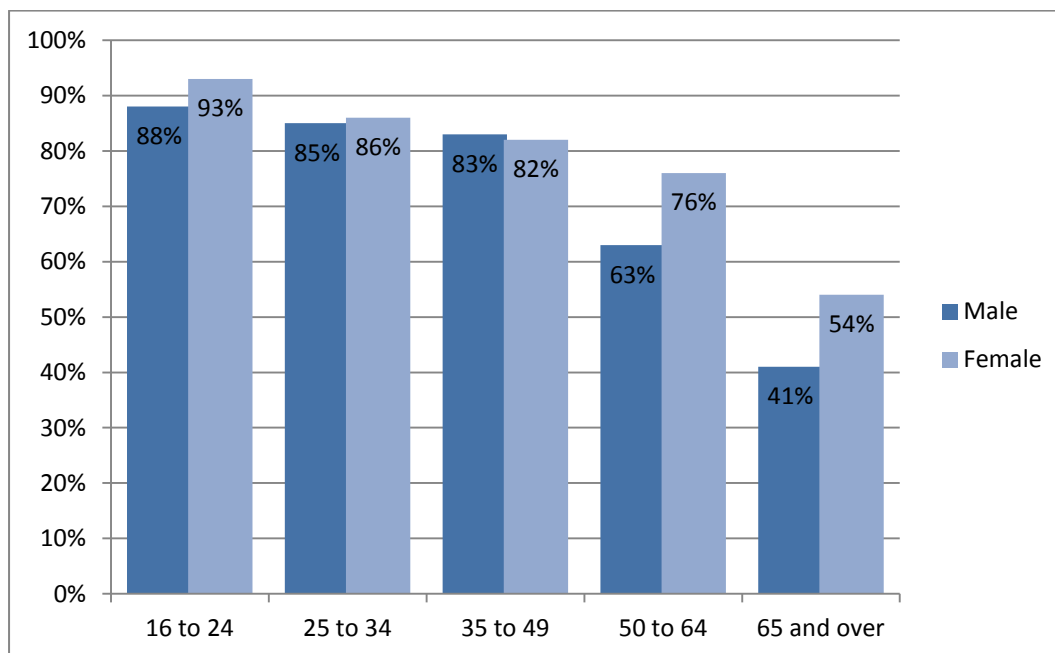


Notes: Percentages add up to over 100% due to multiple responses

Figure 2 shows that attendance at the arts is greatest amongst young people aged between 16 and 24. Within this cohort, 93 per cent of females and 88 per cent of males had attended an arts event within the 12 months prior to the survey.

Levels of attendance decline with increasing age, with those aged 65 and over least likely to attend the arts. Within this age group, about 54 per cent of females attend the arts in 2012 compared to 41 per cent of males.

Figure 2: Attendance at the arts by age group



Other interesting findings relating to attendance by age group shows that:

- Cinema, rock and pop music concerts were attended most frequently by young people aged 16 to 24, (attended by 51% of those questioned).
- Ballet was attended most often by 16 to 24 year olds, mentioned by 4% of those interviewed.
- A play or drama was attended most frequently by people aged between 35 and 49, with 38 per cent attending a performance in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Findings from the 2012 survey showed that 83 per cent of Catholic's attended the arts in 2012, compared to 79 per cent of Protestants. At an individual event level, significantly more Catholics attended a community festival, a play or drama and a folk, traditional or world music performance. In contrast, significantly more Protestants were likely to visit a museum.

The 2012 survey showed that significantly fewer disabled people attend the arts compared to people without a disability. Only 59 per cent of disabled people reported attending one or more event in the latest survey compared to 87 per cent of people without a disability. This difference was reflected across all event types but most keenly relating to film, community festivals, a play or drama, a rock or pop music concert and at museums.

Analysing 2012 attendance by socio-economic group helps us understand the extent to which socio-economic group influences levels of attendance and participation.

Figure 3: Attendance at the arts by socio-economic group

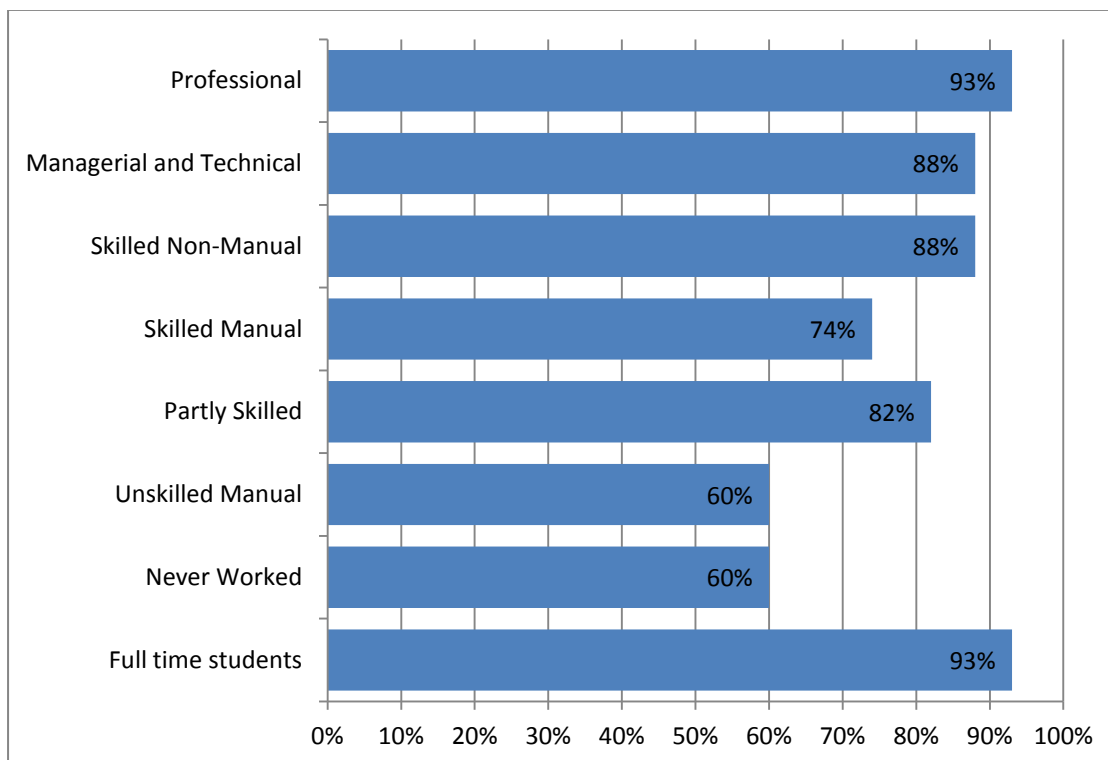
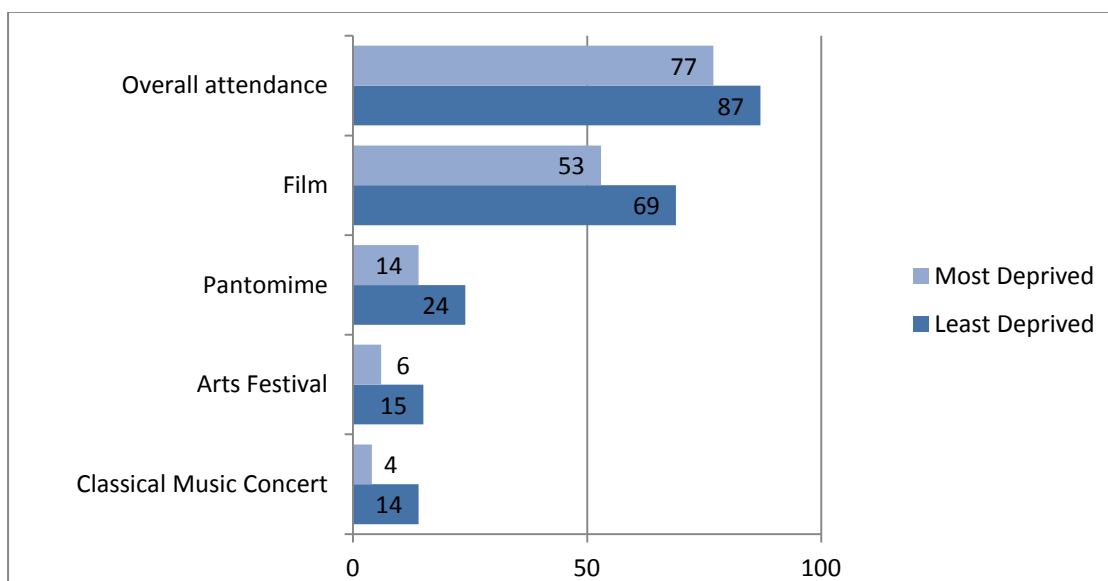


Figure 3 shows that, of the working categories used, 93 per cent of Professionals (the highest socio-economic group) attended the arts. Overall, attendance fell away gradually to Unskilled Manual Workers and those who had never worked before. Despite being the least likely to attend, a significant proportion of Unskilled Manual Workers (60 per cent) still did. The same proportion of full-time students, 93 per cent, attended the arts as Professionals.

Figure 4: Percentage attendance at the arts by deprivation



Using a standard Northern Ireland wide measure of deprivation known as the Noble Indices of Deprivation (2010) it is possible to explore the relationship between attendance and deprivation.

The degrees of deprivation is sub-divided into five equal groups or quintiles ranging from the least deprived to the most deprived. Figure 4 compares attendance at four events where the difference in attendance, based on levels of deprivation, was at its greatest. For each event, attendance was greatest for the least deprived group. The extent of the difference was around 10 per cent for each of the categories shown with the exception of film, where the difference was 16 per cent.

The trend of increasing attendance levels with decreasing poverty levels was not universal across all the event types. Survey findings suggest that attendance at a community festival and an Irish dance performance were higher amongst more deprived groups.

Although there appears to be a relationship between attendance and deprivation, this does not necessarily amount to a causal link between the two, with other factors likely to influence attendance habits.

3. BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

Given the strategic significance the Arts Council places on growing audiences, understanding the reasons for non-engagement in the arts is an important research objective with these findings informing policy direction.

It is widely recognised that the barriers preventing engagement with the arts are often multi-dimensional and include a range of financial, social, cultural and physiological factors. Whilst the scope of this survey question is quite narrow in focus, concentrating on self-reported constraints around time, cost and interest, the findings still provide an initial insight into the perceived barriers.

Table 1 show that ‘difficulty in finding time’ represents the single largest reason for non-engagement in the arts, identified by 35 per cent of those adults interviewed. This was particularly the case for people aged between 35 and 49 with 49% identifying it. By sex, 38 per cent of females identified time as a barrier compared to 33 per cent of men.

Table 1: Most frequently cited barriers to arts in 2012 by age and gender (%)

	Age group					Gender		Overall
	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 49	50 to 64	65 and over	Male	Female	
It s difficult to find time	46	43	49	34	11	33	38	35
It costs too much	31	20	25	21	8	18	22	20
I m not really interested	22	21	18	23	24	27	17	22

Twenty seven per cent of men identified ‘a lack of interest’ as a reason for not engaging in the arts, compared to only 17 per cent of females. Other significant barriers identified included cost, family commitments and a preference to spend free time in other ways – this barrier was one particularly expressed by young men.

Comparing responses to this question with the previous three surveys show some small percentage variation in response but the three main barriers: time, cost and lack of interest, remain those most often cited.

4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ARTS

Each of the surveys commissioned by the Arts Council since 2004 has asked participants to establish the extent to which they agree or disagree with a number of statements relating to the arts.

Figure 4 provides a comparison in attitudes towards the arts between the 2004 and 2012 surveys. As can be seen, responses to the 2012 survey are relatively consistent to those expressed in 2004, with only a 5 percentage point difference in the proportion of adults agreeing with the statement '*I believe it is right there should be funding of arts and culture projects*'. This is despite the contraction in the Northern Ireland economy and resulting pressure on both public expenditure and household incomes. Support for public spending on the arts remains strong.

In 2012, when asked to consider whether '*the level of funding should be maintained, even in times of an economic downturn*,' support was less comprehensive but still agreed with by 50 per cent of those surveyed. This question was not asked in the 2004 survey, so no comparison is possible.

Other interesting findings emerging from an analysis of public attitudes to the arts in 2012 shows that:

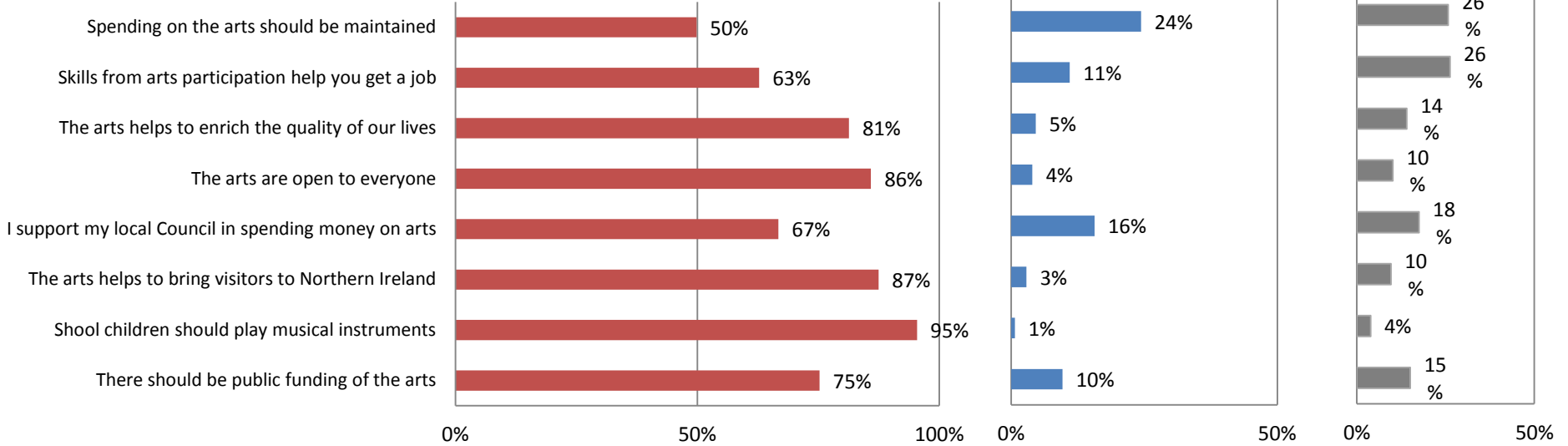
- The strongest level of support for public expenditure of the arts came from those aged 35 to 49 (82 per cent), whilst the lowest level of support by those aged 65 and over (66 per cent).
- Only 57 per cent of young adults aged 16 to 24 supported their local council spend money on the arts in their area compared to 74 per cent of 35 to 49 year olds.
- 42 per cent of young adults (aged between 16 and 24) agreed with the statement that '*the level of public funding of the arts should be maintained even in times of economic downturn*.' This compares to 53 per cent of adults aged between 50 and 64.
- 71 per cent of Protestants supported public funding of the arts compared to 80 per cent of Catholics.
- 76 per cent of adults in Belfast support their local Council spending money on the arts. This compares to 64 per cent of respondents living in the East of Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast)

2012

Agree

Disagree

Neutral



2004

Agree

Disagree

Neutral

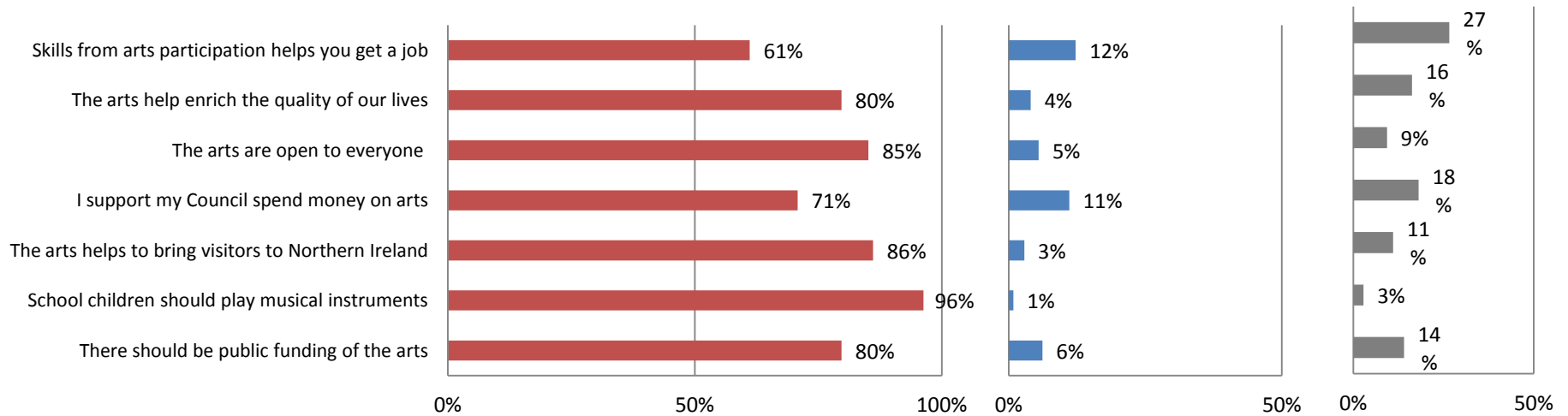


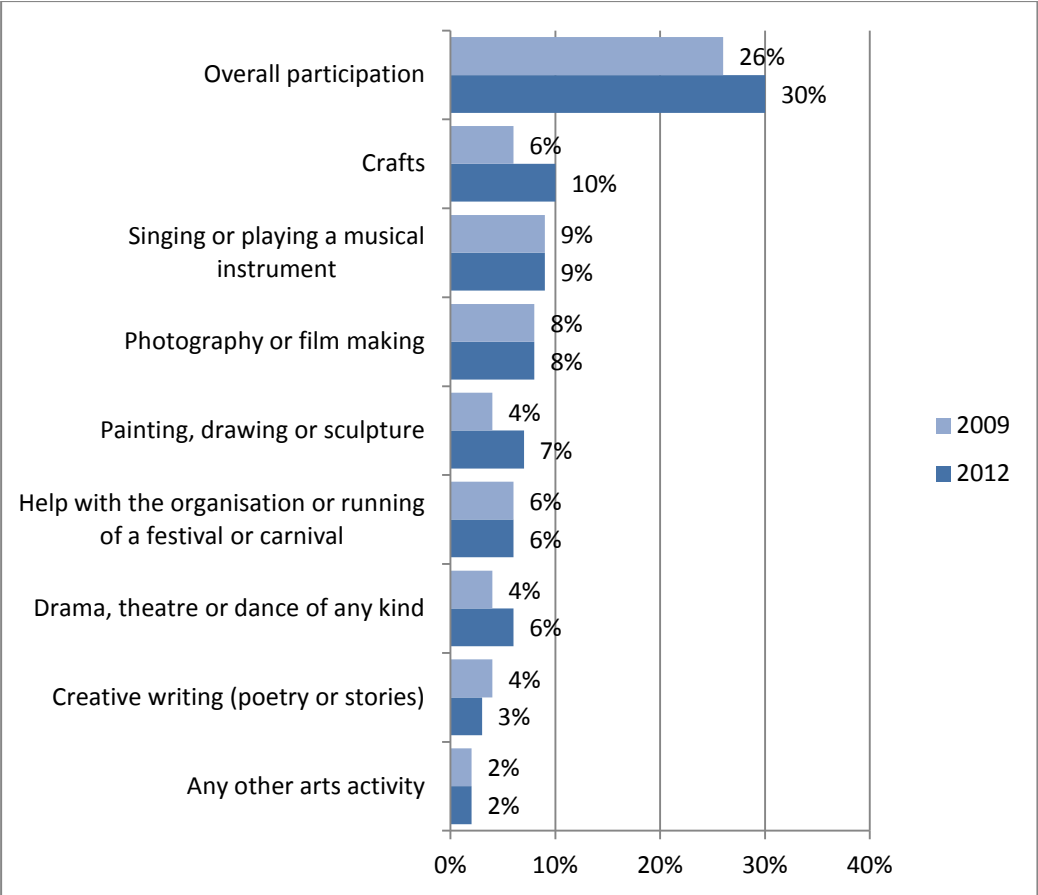
Figure 5: A comparison in public attitudes towards the arts between 2004 and 2012

5. PARTICIPATION

As can be seen in Figure 5, the proportion of respondents stating they had taken part in the arts increased from 26 percentage points in 2009 to 30 percentage points in 2012.

The category that saw the largest increase in participation between the two survey periods was craft which increased from 6 percentage points in 2009 to 10 percentage points in 2012. Increases were also evident in ‘painting, drawing and sculpture’ and ‘drama, theatre or dance of any kind.’

Figure 6: Percentage point change in the proportion of adults attending the arts, 2009 to 2012



Male participation levels have remained fairly constant compared to 2009 at 25 per cent. In comparison, female participation levels have increased significantly from 27 percentage points in 2009 to 35 percentage points in 2012.

Similar to attendance, participation varied significantly by age. Forty nine per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 participated in one or more activities in the 12 months prior to the survey, with ‘singing or playing a musical instrument’ most often mentioned. In comparison, participation rates for adults aged between 35 and 43 were only 26 per cent.

Table 2 shows an analysis of participation by age group and sex. Participation levels generally declined with age with the exception of craft which increased from 6 per cent for 16 to 24 year olds to 12 per cent for those aged 65 and over.

Table 2: Levels of participation by age and gender (%)

	Age Group					Gender		Total
	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 43	50 to 64	65 and over	Male	Female	
Overall participation	49	27	26	30	27	25	35	30
Crafts	6	10	7	12	12	5	14	10
Singing or playing a musical instrument	19	7	9	10	4	9	9	9
Photography or film making	16	11	5	7	7	8	8	8
Drama, theatre or dance of any kind	18	7	4	4	5	5	8	6
Painting, drawing or sculpture	18	8	5	6	6	5	10	7
Help with the organisation or running of a festival or carnival	10	5	8	6	2	7	5	6
Creative writing (poetry or stories)	9	3	1	2	2	1	4	3
Other arts activity	2	4	4	1	1	2	3	2

Twenty five per cent of disabled people reported participating in the arts in 2012 compared to 31 per cent of people without a disability.

6. PARTICIPATION BENEFITS

The benefits of arts participation reported by respondents to the 2012 General Population Survey are shown in Table 3. Creativity was identified most frequently by those questioned, with 58 per cent of the sample identifying it as a benefit. This represented a 14 per cent increase compared to the previous survey undertaken in 2009.

Other significant benefits from participation include self-confidence, concentration, attitudes towards learning and decision making. Although these findings are self-reported and not part of any empirical research, they resonate with research conducted elsewhere which demonstrate the personal benefits gained from participation.

Figure 7: Perceived benefits of arts participation

