Survey to establish arts and culture engagement levels in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction
The Arts Council of Northern Ireland commissioned Social Market Research (SMR) in the autumn of 2020 to undertake a survey of the adult general population. It was designed to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the consumption of the Arts in Northern Ireland. The survey findings are based on 1,003 respondents. The following is a headline summary of the findings. The more detailed report can be found on the Arts Council website, www.artscouncil-ni.org

Strategic Summary
The Arts Council delivers a comprehensive programme of research and evaluation. Our research programme aims to:
1. Build evidence based knowledge and understanding of the role and impact of art on people’s lives;
2. Identify patterns of engagement and factors affecting engagement in the arts; and
3. Help create more diverse, equal and confident communities by addressing inequalities as they related to race, disability and gender.

Strategic Development has lead responsibility for the Arts Council’s research, policy development and planning functions. It gathers information, analyses data, evaluates programmes and generates evidence, in an open and accountable way, to inform the decision making process. The team also has responsibility for meeting the Arts Council’s equality and disability compliance duties.

For more information on the Arts Council research and development programme please visit: http://artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development

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www.artscouncil-ni.org
76% attended an arts activity or event in the year prior to lockdown.

23% in the period since lockdown.

24% had gone to a play or drama in the year leading up to lockdown.

3% falling dramatically in the period since lockdown.
76% had taken part in an arts-related activity in the 12 months leading up to lockdown.

The most common activity leading up to lockdown was reading for pleasure.

Participation fell significantly in the period since lockdown, with a decrease of 6%.

47% of people participated in arts activities since lockdown, which is a decrease of 4% compared to before lockdown.

This more-or-less held in the period since lockdown.
60% have participated in or viewed online arts activity

43% watched live social media streams/broadcasts (e.g. of music events)

28% watched filmed performances of theatre, concerts and/or dance shows online

18% looked at art, paintings, and photographs online (e.g. from a virtual collection)

14% participated in an online arts class/group/tutorial (e.g. via zoom or Microsoft teams)

31% said the arts they took part in online or via social media were from Northern Ireland
Among those engaging with the Arts during lockdown, 13% did so for the first time. They were more likely to be older, be from lower down the socio-economic scale and have a disability. These are all groups the Arts Council feel it is important to engage in the arts.

Reasons for engaging with the arts during lockdown…

- **68%** Personal enjoyment and wellbeing
- **33%** Curiosity and something new
- **21%** Engaging with friends/family not in their household
- **15%** Engaging with children and young people in their care
- **12%** Extending social circle
- **5%** Engaging older people in their care
Comfort attending arts events

- Attending street art: 65%
- Attending music or other outdoor performances: 61%
- Attending museums: 59%
- Attending indoor art galleries: 55%
- Attending cinemas: 49%
- Attending music or a talk in a seated indoor venue: 45%
- Attending indoor concert halls: 38%

Likelihood of attending arts events in an indoor space in specific circumstances

- If masks were worn by staff and audience members: 64%
- If the venue adopted a rigorous cleaning regime: 66%
- If social distancing measures were strictly enforced: 65%
- If hand sanitisation was in place: 66%
- If ticket prices were reduced: 54%
- If there were fewer people in the venue: 67%
% agreeing to subscribe to the following models for consuming the arts

- **Free to view**: 83%
- **Pay to view**: 31%
- **Donations**: 24%

Supportive demographics:
Younger, Higher social classes, Economically active

**Attitudes**

- **55%** agreed that …
  - ‘since lockdown, I’ve really missed the opportunity to go to cultural events and venues’

- **48%** agreed that …
  - ‘since lockdown, I have a greater appreciation of the role the arts can play in my life’

- **34%** agreed that …
  - ‘I feel more inclined to get involved in the arts now there is more opportunity to online or via social media’