



# 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](http://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>

**23 November 2020**

[www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

Member of the audience or visitor to arts activities or events  
pre-lockdown and since lockdown

76%



attended an arts activity  
or event in the year prior  
to lockdown

-53%

23%



in the period  
since lockdown

24%



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

-21%

3%



falling dramatically  
in the period since  
lockdown

Taking part in arts activities pre-lockdown and since lockdown

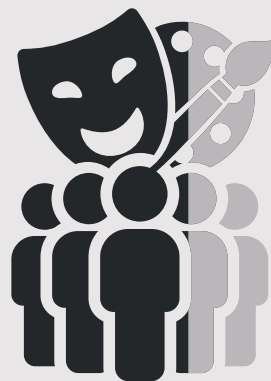
76%



had taken part in an arts-related activity in the 12 months leading up to lockdown

-6%

70%



participation fell significantly in the period since lockdown

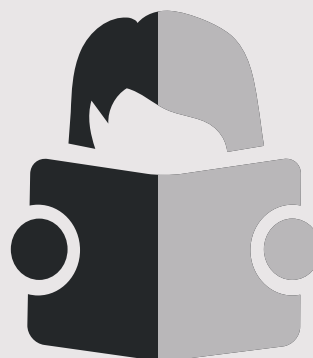
51%



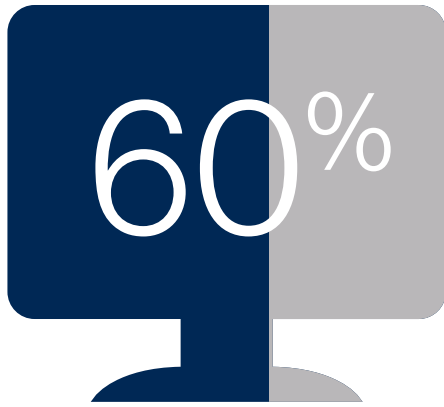
leading up to lockdown reading for pleasure was the most common activity

-4%

47%

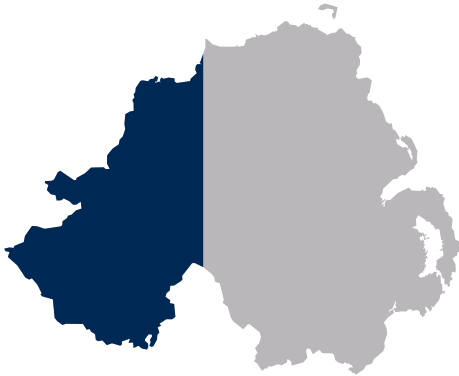


this more-or-less held in the period since lockdown



have participated in or viewed online arts activity

31%



said the arts they took part in online or via social media were from Northern Ireland



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)

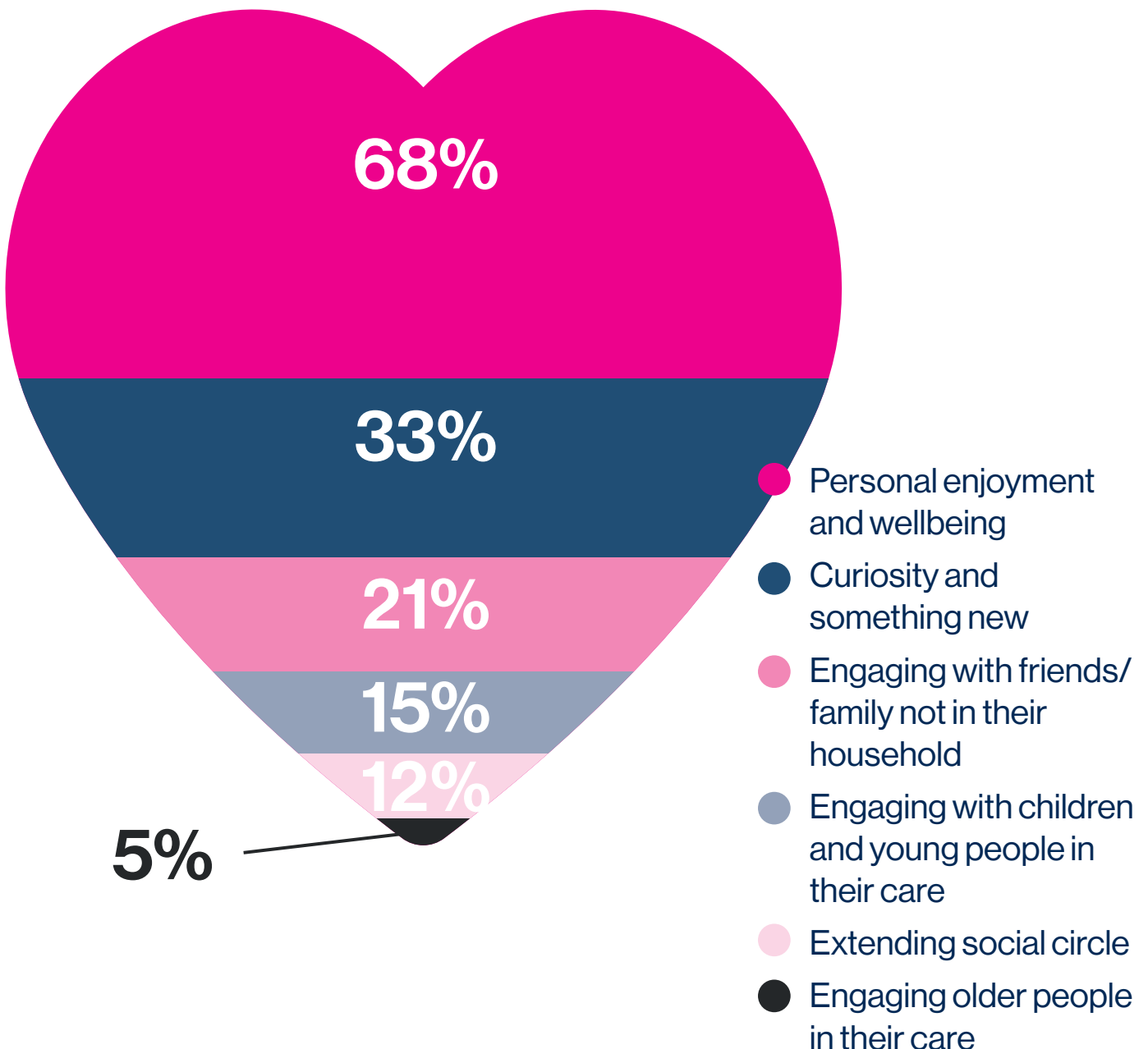
## Engaging with the arts during lockdown

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.

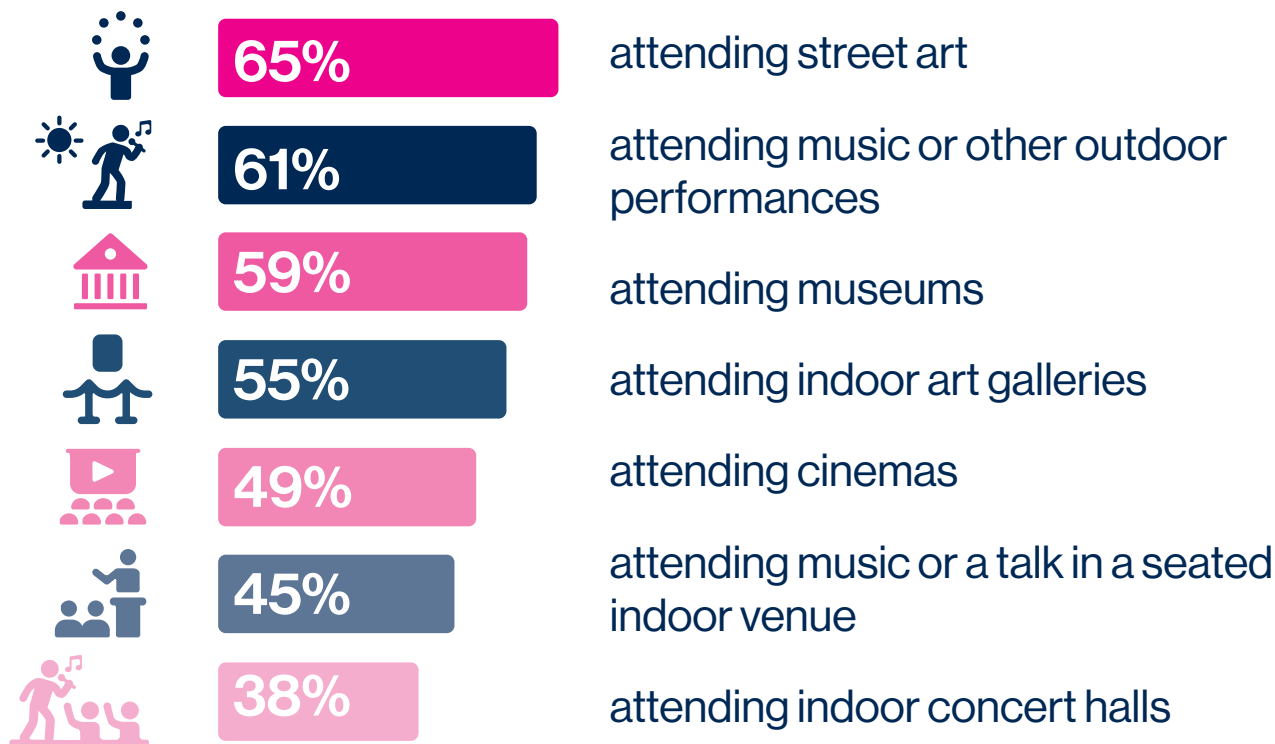
13%



## Reasons for engaging with the arts during lockdown...



## Comfort attending arts events



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

64%



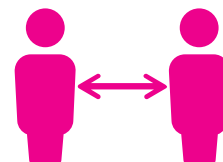
if masks were worn by staff and audience members

66%



if the venue adopted a rigorous cleaning regime

65%



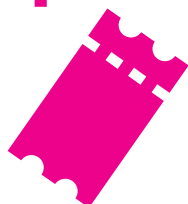
if social distancing measures were strictly enforced

66%



if hand sanitisation was in place

54%



if ticket prices were reduced

67%

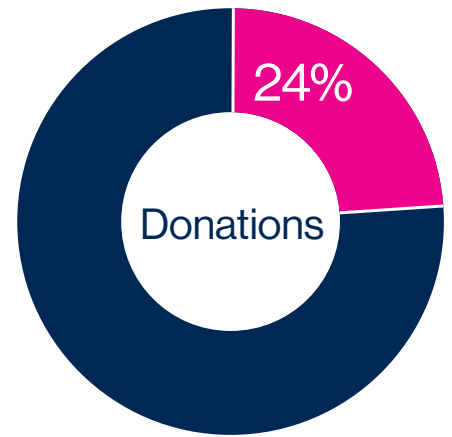
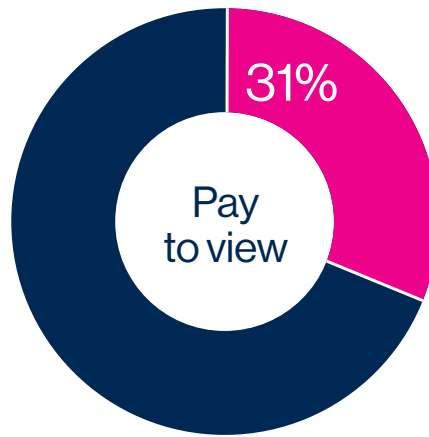
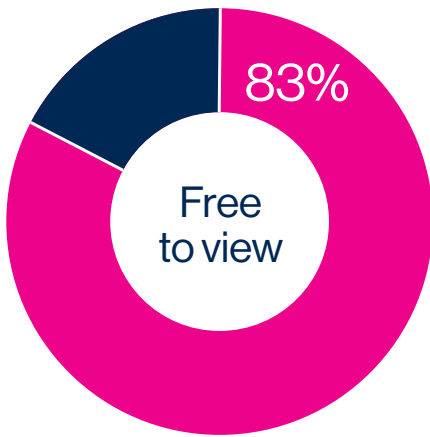


if there were fewer people in the venue

## Consumption

% agreeing to subscribe to the following models for consuming the arts

No  Yes



Supportive demographics:  
Younger, Higher social classes, Economically active

## Attitudes

agreed that ...

55%



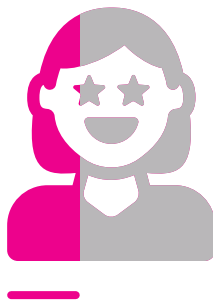
'since lockdown, I've really missed the opportunity to go to cultural events and venues'

48%



'since lockdown, I have a greater appreciation of the role the arts can play in my life'

34%



'I feel more inclined to get involved in the arts now there is more opportunity to online or via social media'