
























# ARTS AND CULTURE IN NORTHERN IRELAND 2014

*A summary of key findings from the General Population Survey examining the characteristics and behaviour of adults attending and participating in the arts in Northern Ireland*

September 2014 (Version 1)  
Strategic Development Department

## Headline measures for Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland, 2014

	Significant changes since 2004	Percentage				
		2004	2007	2009	2011	2014
Has engaged with the arts in the last year		74.7	77.6	76.7	82.2	78.9
Has engaged with the arts in the last year (with disability)		54.6	57.7	56.7	63.9	52.3
Has engaged with the arts in the last year - Belfast		74.7	76.9	72.9	87.1	76.9
Has engaged with the arts in the last year - East NI		76.2	79.0	79.7	81.7	80.7
Has engaged with the arts in the last year - West NI		72.7	76.1	74.4	81.0	77.3
Has engaged with the arts in the last year (most deprived 20%)		-	-	-	75.9	69.9
Has engaged with the arts - urban		74.4	79.3	78.1	82.5	78.2
Has engaged with the arts - rural		75.0	75.4	73.9	81.7	80.1
<b>Attendance</b>						
Has attended 1+ event in the last year		73.3	75.8	73.6	80.5	77.3
Had attended 1+ event in the last year (18 to 24 age group)		89.7	93.2	90.7	94.9	95.2
Have attended 3+ event in the last year		36.5	41.4	41.6	49.0	43.0
Had attended the arts in the last year (most deprived 20%)	NA	-	-	-	74.4	66.5
No events attended in the last year (excluding film)		11.2	9.7	7.9	8.6	8.2
Have visited a community festival		13.8	12.2	15.2	19.5	18.4
Have visited a play or drama		22.5	25.9	28.1	30.8	25.1
Have visited a rock or pop music concert		20.8	23.6	24.3	25.5	24.6
Have visited an exhibition of art, photography or sculpture		12.4	11.3	10	13.2	12
<b>Participation</b>						
Has participated with the arts in the past year		22.8	22.3	25.8	29.7	30.3
Had participated with the last year (18 to 24 age group)		33.2	36.8	35.2	48.6	41.8
Had participated in the arts in the last year (most deprived 20%)	NA	-	-	-	21.6	21.2
Had participated in the arts - urban		21.2	22	26.5	30.5	27.9
Had participated in the arts - rural		24.9	22.7	24.6	28.5	34.5
Had participated in craft		6.7	5.5	6.8	9.7	10.5
Had participated in photography or film making		3.6	3.8	7.1	7.9	8.3

## KEY FINDINGS

Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland (2014) reports the characteristics and behaviours of adults attending and participating in arts and culture in Northern Ireland based on the findings of an omnibus survey of the resident adult population. Findings from the most recent survey which was run in January 2014 tell us that:

- Seventy-nine per cent of the adult population engaged with the arts either as a participant or attendee within the 12 months prior to the survey. This continues a steady upward trend.
- Forty three per cent of adults engaged with the arts three or more times in the previous 12 months, an increase from 37% in 2004.
- Seventy eight per cent of adults lived in urban areas compared to 80% living in rural areas. This is the first time since the 2004 that rural engagement has exceeded urban, although the difference was not significant.
- Engagements levels in the arts across each of the defined geographies (Belfast, East and West Northern Ireland) are largely the same, reflecting the upward overall trend described at the Northern Ireland level.
- Youth engagement remains strong, with 96% of 16 to 24 year olds enjoying the arts.
- There was a reduction in the proportion of older people (aged 65 and over) engaging with the arts compared to 2011. Despite this, the long-term trend remains positive.
- Arts engagement rates for the least deprived group was 86%, falling to 70% for the most deprived group. Engagement habits for the most deprived group are slightly different compared to the least deprived, with this cohort more likely to attend street art (e.g. performances in parks) and culturally specific festivals, like the Mela.
- Comparison in the factors preventing adults from engaging in the arts between the 2004 and 2014 surveys show that time constraints represent an increasingly prominent barrier. 'Difficulty in finding time' increased significantly as a barrier, from 27% in 2004 to 41% in 2014.
- There was a significant decrease in overall arts attendance levels between 2011 and 2015 from 81% to 77%, although long-term attendance shows a steady upward trend.
- There was no change in participation levels between 2011 and 2014 which remained at 30%. A comparison with 2004 demonstrates a significant change in adult participation in the arts, increasing by 7 percentage points.

- There is a broad consensus across demographic groups on the actual and tangible contribution that culture and the arts make in community building, personal development and enhancing the image and profile of Northern Ireland.
- There is a strong consensus in favour of government funding of the arts.<sup>1</sup> A relatively low percentage of Northern Ireland residents are prevented from engaging in the arts by cost factors, the availability/proximity of arts venues or due to a lack of interest.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on data from the 2011 survey.

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Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland is a producer of Official Statistics and has been produced to the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. As a producer of Official Statistics, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is required to comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics published by the UK Statistics Authority in January 2009 and the associated Pre Release Access Order (Northern Ireland) 2009. Further information on the Arts Council's responsibilities relating to Official Statistics can be found at:

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/research-and-development/official-statistics>

We want these statistics to meet your needs by helping to inform decisions and deepen your understanding of arts consumption in Northern Ireland. If you have any comments on how this data can be made more accessible please contact the Arts Council's Lead Official for Official Statistics, Graeme Stevenson on: 02890 385 243 or at [gstevenson@artscouncil-ni.org](mailto:gstevenson@artscouncil-ni.org).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland (2014) describes the findings from an omnibus survey of a representative sample of people living in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork was commissioned by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and carried out by the Central Survey Unit in January 2014. Findings are designed to provide a snapshot of the characteristics and behaviours of adults attending and participating in the arts in Northern Ireland.

This report represents the fifth such survey in the series, complementing others completed in 2004, 2007 and 2009 and 2011 and spanning a ten year period. The statistics 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. Findings are designed to support government department, academics, charities and the arts sector strengthen evidence bases used for policy making decisions and for advocacy purposes.

Trends in engagement provide invaluable information for needs assessment, programme planning, programme evaluation, and policy development activities. Examining data over time also allows us to make cautious predictions about future rates of engagement.

The report explores in more detail: levels of engagement (the combination of attendance and participation); levels of attendance and participation; and barriers to the arts. The analysis is provided at an overall general population level but also considers findings relative to a number of population sub-groups including age, sex, social class and disability.

The results presented in this report are based on interviews conducted between 6th January and 8th February 2014. The total sample size for the period was 1,217. Statistical significance tests have been run on all estimates at a 95% level. All differences and changes reported are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This means the probability that any given difference happened by chance is low. 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

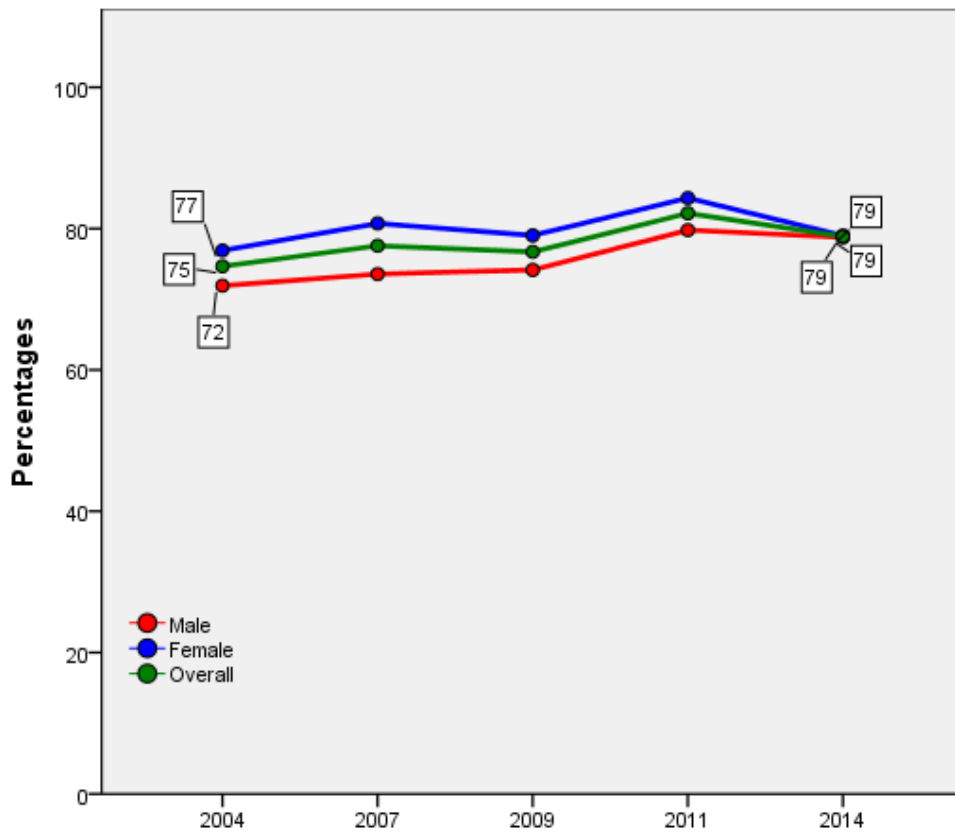
## 2. ENGAGEMENT

Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland is designed to provide reliable and up-to-date information on the composition, characteristics and behaviour of adults attending and participating in the arts in Northern Ireland. The Arts Council combines attendance and participation to provide an overall measure of arts engagement, the breakdown of which can be seen in Figure 1.

The arts continue to be enjoyed by a large proportion of the population. In 2014, 79% engaged with the arts either as participant or attendee, continuing a stable upward trend established in 2004.

For the first time since the initial survey was conducted in 2004, the same proportion of men and women (79%) engaged in the arts. This contrasts with 2007 when there was a 7 percentage point difference in engagement levels between the two genders (81% of women and 74% of men).

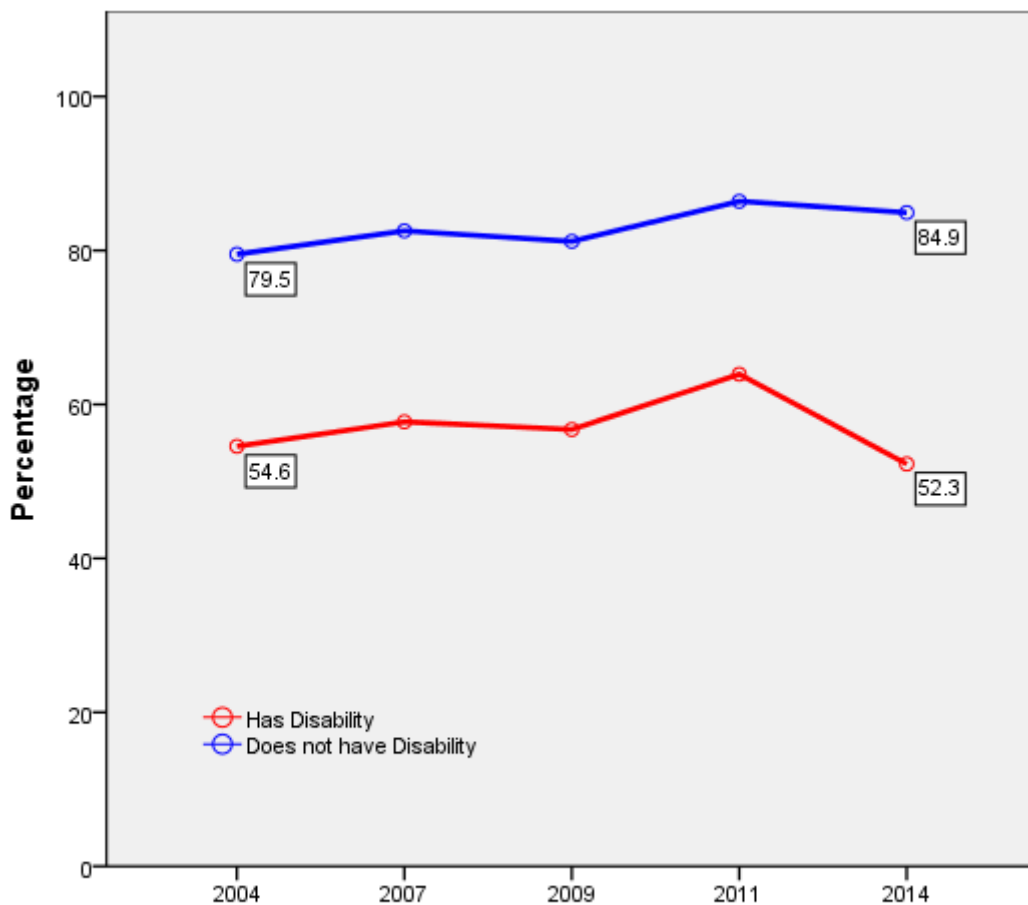
**Figure 1:** Proportion of adults who had attended or participated in the arts within the last year by gender, 2014



The following observations relating to engagement can be made based on the 2014 survey findings:

- 43% of adults engaged with the arts three or more times in the previous 12 months, an increase from 37% in 2004. Despite this long-term increase, engagement levels have fallen back from a peak of 49% in 2011.
- 21% of adults had not engaged with the arts at all in the previous 12 months prior to the 2014 survey, a reduction of 4 percentage points compared to 2004. This year's figure continues a gradual downward trend in the proportion of the population not engaging with the arts at all.
- There remains little difference in the proportion of adults engaging in the arts from either an urban or rural area. In 2014, 78% lived in urban areas compared to 80% living in rural areas. This is the first time since the 2004 that rural engagement has exceeded urban, although the difference was not significant.
- Figure 2 shows a reduction in the proportion of disabled people engaged in the arts from 64% in 2011 to 52% in 2014, continuing a volatile trend in engagement levels since 2009 by this sub-group.

**Figure 2:** Proportion of disabled adults who had attended or participated in the arts within the last year, 2014





- Since 2004 there has been a steady increase in the proportion of adults engaging in the arts within each of the broad geographical areas defined within the survey. These areas are Belfast, East Northern Ireland and West Northern Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Table 1: Percentage of adults engaging in the arts by geography, 2004 to 2014 show that engagement rates by geography in 2014 were largely consistent and continue a gradual upward trend. Belfast shows slightly greater variability at each survey point.

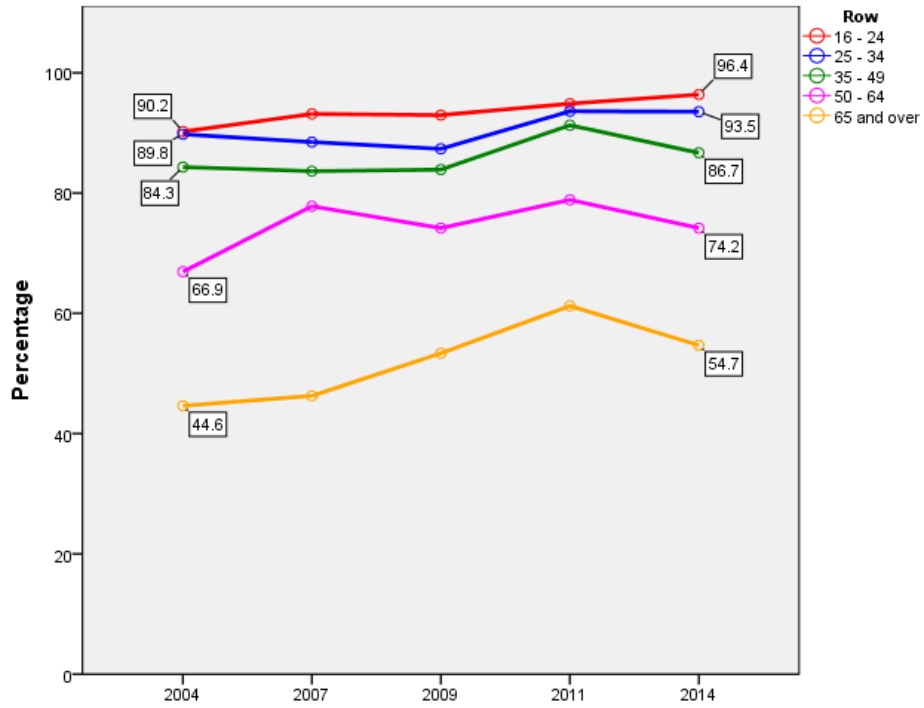
**Table 1:** Percentage of adults engaging in the arts by geography, 2004 to 2014

	2004	2007	2009	2011	2014
Belfast	74.7	76.9	72.9	87.1	76.9
East Northern Ireland	76.2	79.0	79.7	81.7	80.7
West Northern Ireland	72.7	76.1	74.4	81.0	77.3

- Figure 3: Proportion of adults attending or participating in the arts within the last year, by age group, 2004 to 2014 shows the proportion of adults (by age group) engaging in the arts (between 2004 and 2014). Adults aged 65 and over had lower arts engagement rates (55%) than any other age group, although this age group has seen a significant increase in engagement since 2004, from 45% to 55%. Engagement rates for younger age groups have shown a more steady increase since 2004.

**Figure 3:** Proportion of adults attending or participating in the arts within the last year, by age group, 2004 to 2014

<sup>2</sup> The District Council areas that comprise each area can be seen in Appendix x



**Figure 4:** Proportion of the adults engaging in the arts within the last year, by deprivation, 2011 and 2014

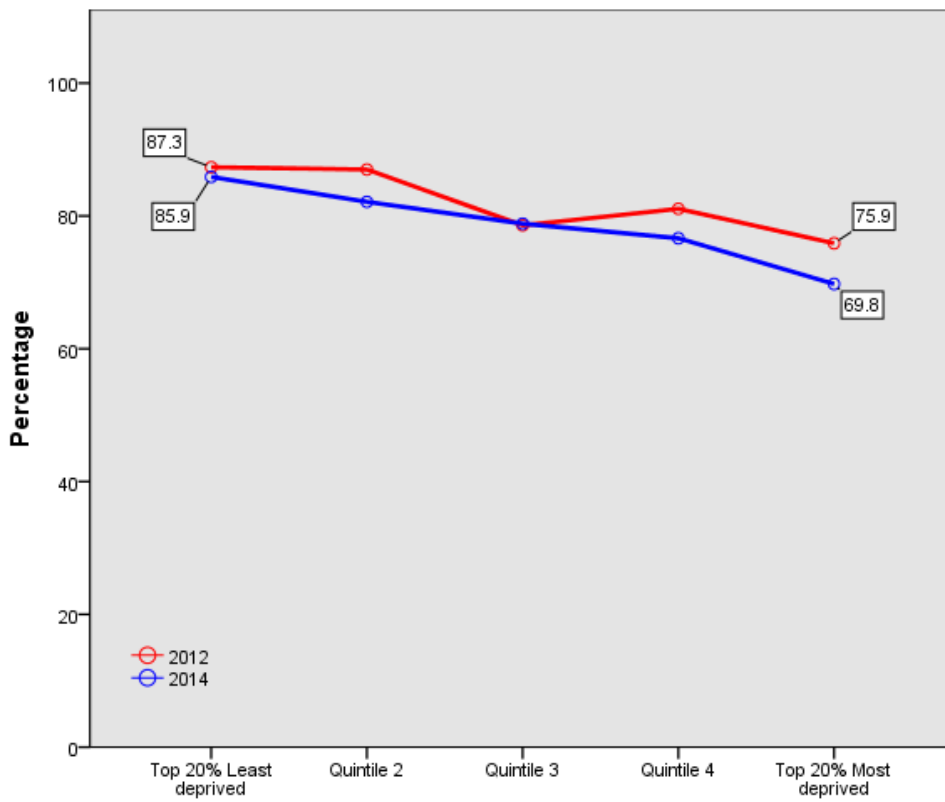


Figure 9: Adult arts participation in the last 12 months, 2004 to 2014, showing no events participated, 1+ events participated and 3+ events participated shows the proportion of adults engaging with the arts within the last year, using data from the 2011 and 2014 surveys.<sup>3</sup> The areas of multiple deprivation are divided into 5 areas (quintiles) ranging from those living in the 20% least deprived areas to those living in the 20% most deprived areas.

Arts engagement rates in 2014 for the least deprived quintile was 86%, falling to 70% for the most deprived quintile.

This survey shows a relationship between arts engagement and deprivation. At an event level, people who live in the most deprived areas are more likely than those from the least deprived areas to attend street art (e.g. performances in parks) and culturally specific festivals, like the Mela. In each of these cases, the differences are not statistically significant but the overall trends are sufficiently distinct to highlight.

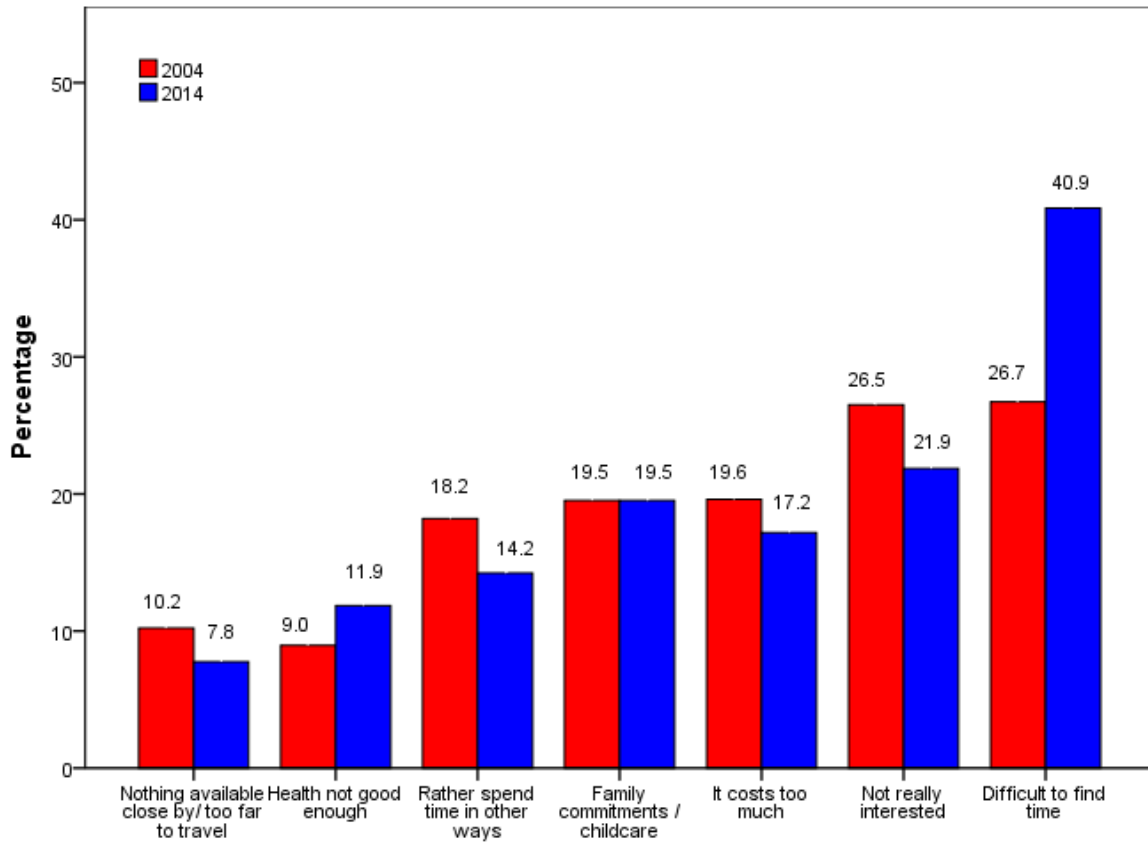
### 3. BARRIERS TO THE ARTS

Figure 5: Percentage of adults identifying barriers preventing attendance or participation in the arts, 2004 and 2014 shows a comparison between 2004 and 2014 in the percentage of adults identifying barriers to the arts. Findings show little change in the barriers preventing engagement, with the exception of those reporting 'difficulty in finding time'. This increased significantly from 27% in 2004 to 41% in 2014.

There was a substantial, although not significant decreases in proportion of adults reporting they would 'rather spend time in other ways' and 'not really interested' suggesting a greater, more general, predisposition to engaging with the arts.

**Figure 5:** Percentage of adults identifying barriers preventing attendance or participation in the arts, 2004 and 2014

<sup>3</sup> The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 is the official measure of spatial deprivation and is used to identify small area concentrations of multiple deprivation.

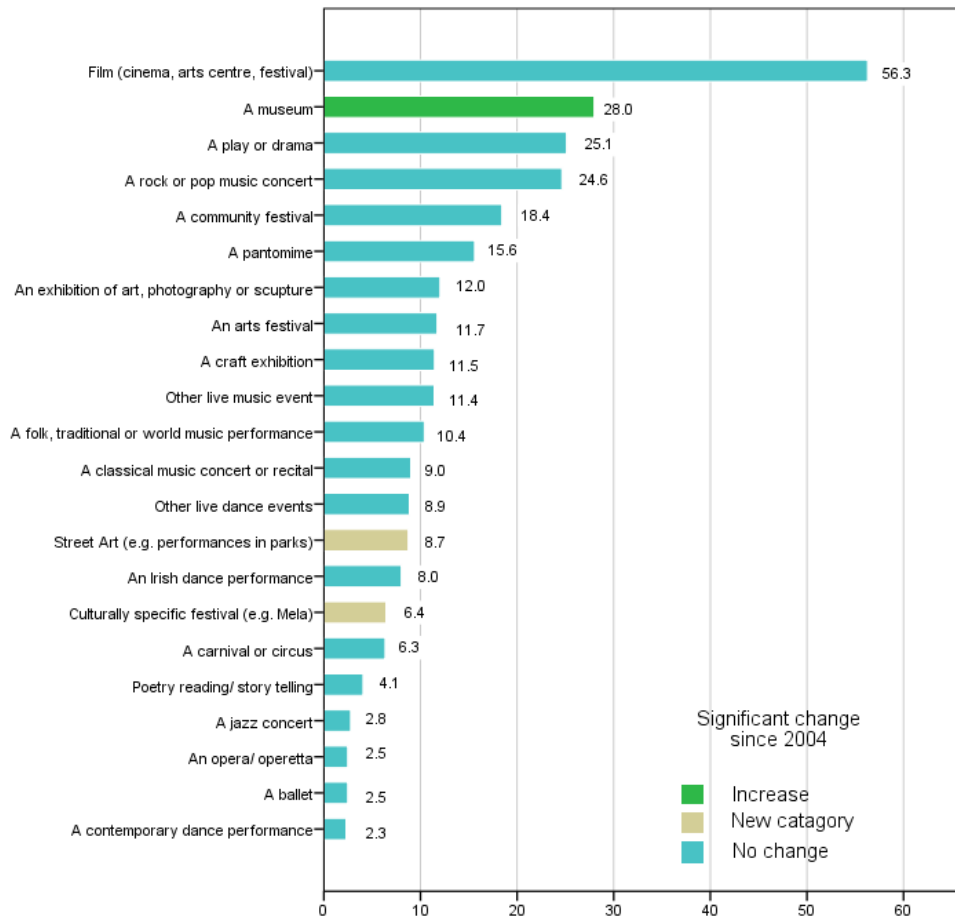


#### 4. ATTENDANCE

There was a significant decrease in overall arts attendance levels between 2011 and 2015 from 81% to 77%.

Figure 6: Arts attended by adults in the last 12 months, 2014, showing significant changes since 20 shows attendance at an individual event level, highlighting significant changes since 2004. Street Art (e.g. performances in parks) and culturally specific festivals (e.g. Mela) were included as new categories in the 2014 survey to reflect the growth in popularity of these artform areas.

**Figure 6:** Arts attended by adults in the last 12 months, 2014, showing significant changes since 2004



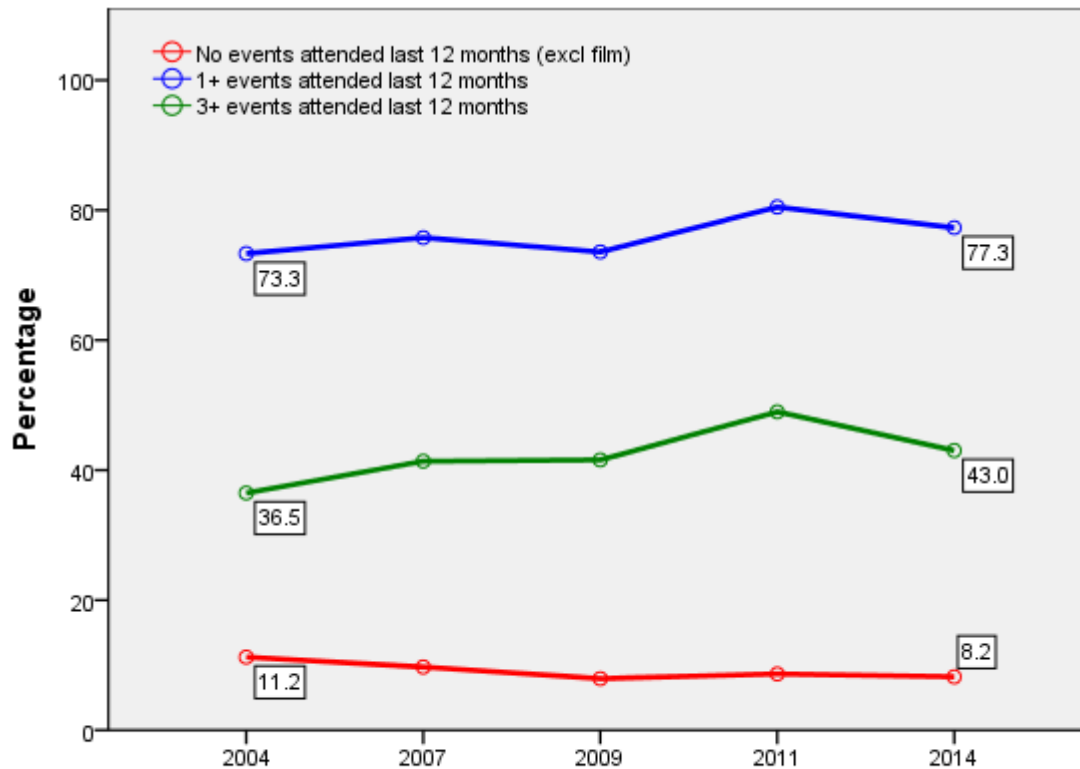
With the exception of visits to a museum, which increased from 17% to 28% there were no significant changes in attendance at individual events when compared to 2004.

The same proportion of men and women attended an arts event in 2014 (77%). However, at an individual event level there was some variability by sex, particularly within the following areas:

- An arts festival (9% men; 14% females)
- A folk, traditional music or world music performance (12% men; 9% females)
- A craft exhibition (8% men; 15% females); and
- An exhibition of art (8% men; 12% females)

**Figure 7:** Arts attended by adults in the last 12 months, 2004 to 2014, showing no events attended, 1+ event attended and 3+ events attended shows attendance / non-attendance rates at the arts for three key groups: those not attending any events; those attending 1 or more events and those attending 3 or more events. Attendance at 3 or more events shows long-term growth (by 6 percentage points) when compared to 2004). Non-attendance shows a continued and steady downward trend.

**Figure 7:** Arts attended by adults in the last 12 months, 2004 to 2014, showing no events attended, 1+ event attended and 3+ events attended



An analysis of the characteristics of adults attending 3+, compared to 1+ event shows that:

- women are more likely to attend than men;
- the largest proportion of adults attending are aged between 25 and 34 (compared to 16 and 24 for 1+ events);
- A larger proportion of the audience is comprised by adults in the upper socio-economic group; and
- Adults are more likely to attend an art exhibition, a museum or play / drama

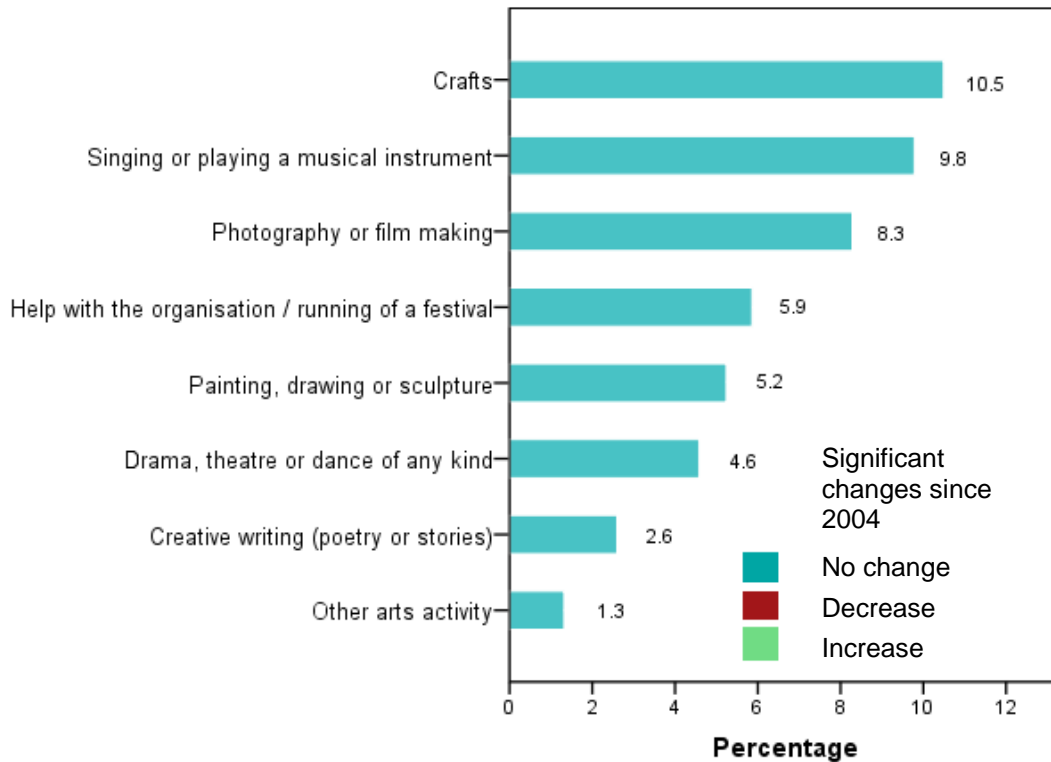
## 5. PARTICIPATION

Figure 8: Arts participation by adults in the last 12 months, 2014, showing significant changes since 20 shows arts participation by adults in 2014, highlighting any significant changes since 2011.

There was no change in participation levels between 2011 and 2014 which remained at 30%. A comparison with 2004 demonstrates a significant change in adult participation in the arts, increasing by 7 percentage points.

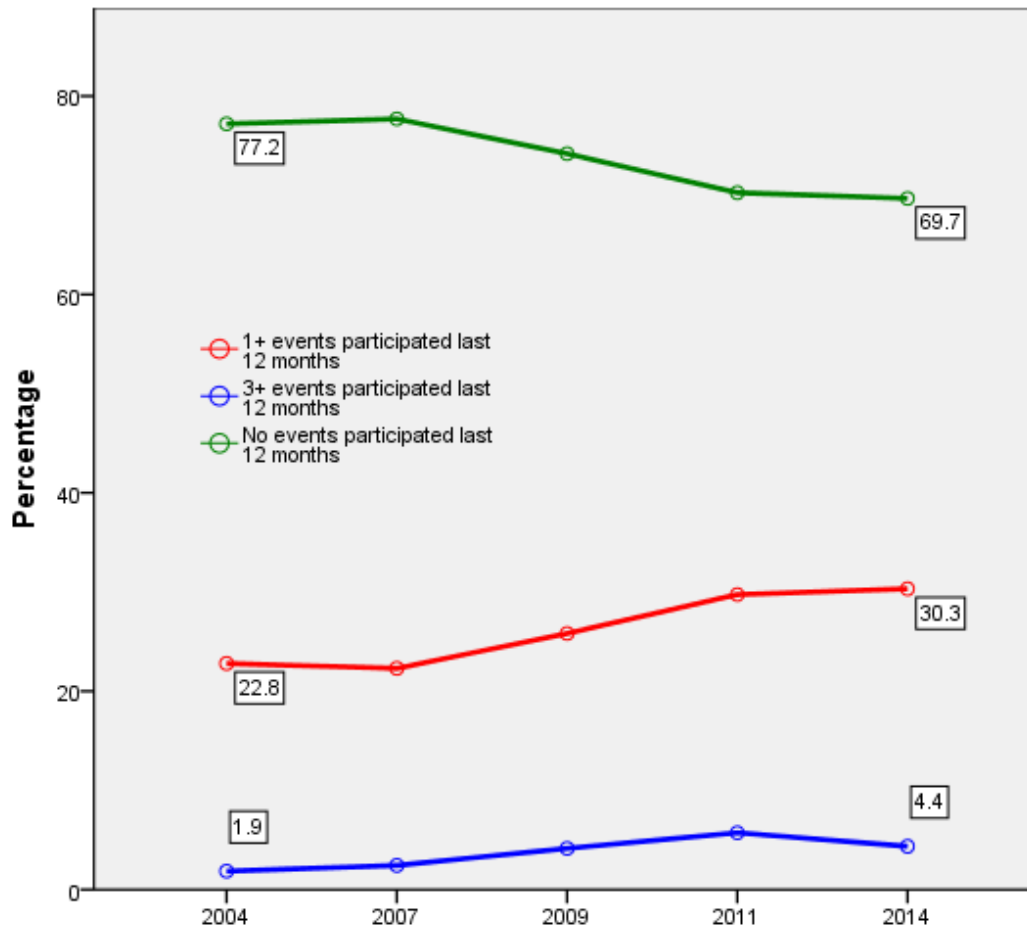
Compared to 2011, there were no significant changes in participation in any of the individual categories. Craft remains the most popular activity with 11% of the adult population taking part in 2014. This contrasts significantly compared to 2004 when participation rates in craft were recorded at 7%.

**Figure 8: Arts participation by adults in the last 12 months, 2014, showing significant changes since 2004**



- In 2014, slightly more women than men participated in the arts (31% compared to 29%). Male participation rates have increased significantly since 2004, growing by 10 percentage points. Growth in male participation over this period has been particularly strong in the categories 'photography and film-making' and 'singing or playing a musical instrument.'
- Figure 8 shows adult participation rates in the arts between 2004 and 2014. Based on a constant and standardised definition used over this period, the proportion of population participating in the arts has increased significantly by 7 percentage points.

**Figure 9: Adult arts participation in the last 12 months, 2004 to 2014, showing no events participated, 1+ events participated and 3+ events participated**



In 2014, analysis by age range shows that participation was greatest for those aged between 16 and 24, at 42%. Based on the long-term trend, this age group has consistently demonstrated the highest participation levels. The proportion of 25 to 34 year olds participating has shown the sharpest increase across the same 10 year period, increasing by 17 percentage points between 2004 and 2014.

## 6. ATTITUDES TO THE ARTS

There is a broad consensus across demographic groups on the actual and tangible contributions that culture and the arts make in community building, personal development and enhancing the image and profile of Northern Ireland (Table 2: Attitudes to the Arts, 2004 to 2011).

Adults think very highly of the arts in general with over three quarters agreeing that they help to enrich the quality of our lives.

Support for some form of public spending on the arts is substantial, about three quarters of adults in 2011 agreed that there should be some form of public support for the arts, a figure



that has been remarkably stable through the sharp fluctuations in economic prosperity over the past 10 years.

When adults are asked about the value of the arts in general, without considering its financial cost or comparing their values to something else, adults express strong support. This is evident in the survey question which asks whether children should have the opportunity to learn to play a music instrument or participate in other arts activities (nearly 100% agree).

Despite continuing support for public funding over time, it tends to remain broad but weak. When survey respondents are given the chance to choose between 'strongly support' or 'somewhat support' public funding, most choose the latter. This is illustrated by the 2011 survey findings which show that 47% 'agree' there should be public funding for the arts, with 28% 'agreeing strongly'.

Despite this, findings do suggest an increasingly larger proportion of the adult population agreeing 'strongly' with public funding for the arts, a suggestion that its value is becoming more embedded, particularly by those who engage in it.

**Table 2: Attitudes to the Arts, 2004 to 2011**

		2004	2007	2009	2011
I believe it is right that there should be public funding of arts and culture projects	Agree	78.3%	79.7%	78.8%	75.3%
	Disagree	7.2%	6.2%	7.6%	9.6%
	Neither	14.5%	14.1%	13.6%	15.1%
Arts and cultural activity helps to bring visitors to Northern Ireland	Agree	85.8%	86.1%	88.7%	87.5%
	Disagree	4.3%	2.9%	3.0%	2.9%
	Neither	9.9%	11.1%	8.3%	9.6%
The arts funded by the Government are just for a small minority	Agree	-	31.6%	31.3%	31.0%
	Disagree	-	40.0%	45.1%	45.0%
	Neither	-	28.4%	23.6%	24.0%
I support my local authority in spending money on arts and culture in my area	Agree	65.6%	70.8%	66.5%	66.8%
	Disagree	17.8%	11.1%	16.6%	15.7%
	Neither	16.6%	18.1%	16.9%	17.6%
Arts and culture is open to everyone in Northern Ireland regardless of differences in religion, ethnic origin or social class	Agree	81.1%	85.1%	84.5%	85.9%
	Disagree	9.4%	5.5%	5.9%	4.0%
	Neither	9.4%	9.4%	9.6%	10.1%
Arts and cultural activity helps to enrich the quality of our lives	Agree	79.3%	79.7%	82.1%	81.3%
	Disagree	4.2%	4.0%	4.5%	4.6%
	Neither	16.5%	16.3%	13.4%	14.0%
I believe artists and arts organisations contribute a lot to society	Agree	-	70.3%	71.1%	71.0%
	Disagree	-	6.1%	9.5%	10.0%
	Neither	-	23.6%	19.4%	19.0%

Notes:

1. No attitudinal questions were included in the 2014 survey
2. Categories 'agree' and 'disagree' are conflation of interview categories strongly agree and agree and strongly disagree and disagree

**Appendix 1 – Local authorities comprising area based geographies**

<b>Belfast</b>	Belfast
<b>East Northern Ireland</b>	Antrim, Ards, Ballymena, Banbridge, Carrick, Castlereagh, Craigavon, Down, Larne, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down
<b>West Northern Ireland</b>	Armagh, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Limavady, Derry, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newry & Mourne, Omagh, Strabane