

Participating in cultural activities is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction

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This research was conducted by **Jennifer L. Brown, Ronald MacDonald and Richard Mitchell** at the **University of Glasgow, UK**

Summary

This study asked whether people who participate in cultural leisure activities have higher life satisfaction than people who do not. It used data from Understanding Society, a national survey completed by 40,000 people across the UK every two years. Within its broad range of questions, the survey asked people about their levels of engagement in 39 different cultural activities. It also asked people to rate their level of overall satisfaction with life. Results showed that participation in sport, heritage and ‘active-creative’ activities were associated with higher life satisfaction (regardless of a person’s age, gender, household income, or occupation).

‘Active-creative’ cultural pastimes were associated with high levels of life satisfaction; this was not the case for solo or sedentary cultural activities

People who participate in ‘active-creative’ activities (dancing, singing, performing, or taking part in carnival or circus) reported higher levels of life satisfaction than non-participants in those same pursuits. This positive effect was not observed for engagement in popular entertainment, theatre hobbies and museums or galleries. It’s also worth noting that higher life satisfaction was associated with engaging in a number of different activities rather than frequent participation in one type of activity.

Participatory cultural activities often have physical and social aspects that are known to affect wellbeing

The researchers suggest that the increased life satisfaction of some active people may reflect the social interactions generally involved in these activities and the positive effects of health related physical activity. Participation in physical and social cultural activities is not necessarily a direct cause of increased life satisfaction. It could be the other way around, where people who have high life satisfaction are more likely to participate in sports and cultural activities.

Keywords

UK **satisfaction** **participatory** **survey** **wellbeing**

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