

The relationship between subjective wellbeing and engagement in arts, culture and sport

Home > Impacts of arts and culture > Health and wellbeing impacts of arts and culture

This research was conducted by **Daniel Wheatley** at the **University of Birmingham** and **Craig Bickerton** at **Nottingham Trent University**

Summary

This study explored the relationship between an individual's self-assessment of their overall wellbeing and taking part in arts, cultural and sporting activities. Social survey data from 40,000 UK households was collected in 2010-2011 and analysed to identify measures of wellbeing defined as satisfaction with life, leisure time, job and general happiness. They found that engagement in most arts, culture and sport activities is associated with greater life and leisure satisfaction and general happiness. Arts activities that involve active participation (such as playing an instrument or acting in a play) only generated positive effects on wellbeing when engaged in frequently. It was also found that engaging in passive activities (visiting museums, historical sites and arts events) generates a positive experience irrespective of frequency. However, none of the activities were related to differences in job satisfaction.

There are significant demographic differences in wellbeing measures

As age increased, so did satisfaction with life up until the mid-part of people's lives. People with school-age dependent children reported lower life and leisure satisfaction and general happiness. Men reported lower job and overall life satisfaction whereas women reported lower leisure satisfaction and general happiness.

Impact of engaging in particular arts, culture and sport activities is affected by frequency

The authors argue this research indicates passive arts activities have 'cultural value', emphasising the importance of quality rather than quantity of time spent on them. More research is needed to understand the causal relationships to determine, for example, whether engagement in activities leads to satisfaction or whether lack of access results in lower satisfaction.

This summary is by **Tanya Graham, Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

arts **Culture** **social value** **survey** **wellbeing**

Title	Subjective well-being and engagement in arts, culture and sport
Author(s)	Wheatley, D. & Bickerton, B.
Publication date	2017
Source	Journal of Cultural Economics, Vol 41, Iss 1, pp 23-45
Link	https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10824-016-9270-0
Author email	daniel.wheatley@ntu.ac.uk

By **Culture.Case** | 22 March 2018 | **Health and wellbeing impacts of arts and culture** |



King's Culture

© Copyright 2026

Designed, developed and maintained by **King's Digital Lab**

Originally built by **weheartdigital Ltd**

Accessibility Statement