

Attendance at cultural events associated with longevity

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This research was conducted by **Boinkum B Konlaan, Lars O Bygren** and **Sven-Erik Johansson** at the **University of Umeå** and **Department of Welfare and Social Statistics, Sweden**.

Summary

Previous research has shown that attendance at cultural events is associated with a longer life expectancy. This study aimed to determine whether specific types of cultural participation had different relationships with longevity. Going to the cinema, concerts, museums and art exhibitions were shown to be associated with a lower chance of premature death, after accounting for other factors known to influence lifespan.

A detailed study of the factors affecting lifespan

The Swedish Annual Survey of Living Conditions interviews a large number of randomly selected individuals each year. This study used data from the survey to provide detailed information on age, education, health and cultural engagement in over 10,000 men and women aged 25-72, in whom survival over a 14-year period was assessed. All forms of cultural engagement initially appeared to be associated with lower occurrences of death, but attending the theatre, church services or watching sporting events were eliminated once other socioeconomic and health factors were accounted for.

Could cultural engagement influence the immune and nervous systems?

This study did not identify the mechanisms behind the differences in life expectancy. The researchers theorise that the stimulation provided by cultural

engagement may affect the production and action of a range of hormones, as well as the growth of certain brain areas. These changes have a positive influence on immunity and the risk of depression. Future research should focus on whether changes in cultural participation predict health outcomes.

This summary is by **Vicky MacBean, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

events **health** **participation** **socioeconomic** **engagement**

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