CultureCase

Your arts engagement is partly shaped by where you live

This research was conducted by **Hei Wan Mak, Rory Coulter** and **Daisy Fancourt** at **University College London**

Summary

This paper looked at the relationship between people's arts engagement and the characteristics of where they live. The study uncovered geographical differences in the levels and types of arts engagement. For example, active arts participation was lower in the North of England (and not just because people there tended to be poorer than average). When it came to arts attendance, the region in which people lived was less important, but the level of local deprivation made a difference. Attendance at cultural venues 'was also higher amongst those living in cosmopolitan student neighbourhoods and in relatively affluent countryside areas but lower amongst those living in hard-pressed communities'. The authors posit three explanations for the results: the local supply of cultural engagement opportunities, how easy those opportunities are to access, and how affordable they seem to local people.

The research was based on data from more than 26,000 participants in the Understanding Society survey

The data in this study came from 2010-12 and comprised a sample that was representative of the UK population. The survey asked people whether they had participated in a number of cultural activities (including playing a musical instrument and painting, drawing, printmaking or sculpture) or attended cultural venues (such as visited an art or craft exhibition, visited a musical or dancing performance, visited museums and heritage sites).

A few factors are likely to complicate any simple relationship between people and place

The authors recognise that there may be some self-sorting at work: with people choosing to live in neighbourhoods and amongst neighbours with high levels of cultural engagement. There are also examples in the data of disjunction between individual and local characteristics (for example, rich people who live in a poor neighbourhood, or vice versa).

Keywords

place **survey** **engagement** **UK**

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