CultureCase

Understanding the relationship between happiness and arts attendance

This research was conducted by **Chris Hand** at **Kingston University**.

Summary

This research took data from two years of the Taking Part survey (2012-2013) and compared people's happiness levels with their arts attendance. The research was therefore based on a data set of more than 7,000 people. Overall there was a positive relationship between arts attendance and happiness, but it was not equally distributed across the population.

Attending only one type of arts event per year is not associated with increased happiness

Attending two or more types of arts event is significantly associated with increased happiness when other factors like age, general health, marital status, sex, employment status and region of residence are taken into account.

The less happy you are, the more that arts attendance seems to matter

This study grouped people according to their stated levels of happiness. As a result it became clear that for people who were broadly happy there was less of a relationship between arts attendance and their level of happiness. The author acknowledges there is a minimum dosage of arts attendance needed for it to make a difference to happiness, and that attending the arts is unlikely to truly counteract other factors that foster unhappiness. The relationship between arts and happiness might arise from two possible sources: the first is a group of intrinsic sensory factors like pleasure and a sense of escape; the second is the social contact that often forms part of an arts engagement.

The author is keen to emphasise a little caution

Firstly, the association between happiness and arts attendance does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship; secondly, the measure of happiness used in the study might be a bit imprecise; thirdly, different types of arts attendance (like concert-going or exhibition-going) might affect happiness differently.

Keywords

wellbeing **survey** **UK**

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