

## **Arts participation associated with better overall health and mental health**

[\*Canadians' Arts Participation, Health, and Well-Being\*](#), released today, probes the relationships between 15 arts, culture, and heritage activities (see text box) and aspects of health and well-being. The research shows important linkages between the arts and health, linkages that are particularly important within the current pandemic and eventual post-pandemic recovery:

- A strong connection between cultural participation and overall health.
- Solid evidence of a connection between cultural participation and mental health.

### **Strong connection with overall health**

Arts and culture activities have a strong statistical connection with overall health. Attendees or participants in all 15 arts, culture, and heritage activities are more likely to report very good or excellent health than non-attendees or non-participants. For 14 of the 15 activities, the differences are statistically significant,<sup>1</sup> including arts activities such as: active arts participation; live theatre or comedy attendance; classical and popular music attendance; cultural festival attendance; art gallery attendance; and book reading.

Another positive indicator is the fact that overall health is better for people with higher levels of cultural engagement, as evidenced by a cultural participation index. (The cultural participation index captures both breadth and depth of attendance and participation: the index score is highest when someone frequently attends or participates in many different cultural activities.)

Regression models show that six of seven arts activities have an association with very good or excellent health, and the associations are seen across different socioeconomic groups: active arts participation, public art gallery attendance, live music attendance, live theatre or comedy attendance, arts or cultural festival attendance, and book reading. This provides strong evidence of a broad-based connection between arts activities and very good or excellent health.

### **Solid evidence of a relationship with mental health**

The analysis provides evidence of a connection between cultural activities and mental health. Attendees or participants in all 15 arts, culture, and heritage activities are more likely to report very good or excellent mental health than non-attendees or non-participants. For 12 of the 15

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical significance provides greater confidence that the differences are not due to random probability but reflect a true relationship between the factors examined (within the margins of error). Statistical significance was identified using a t-test to determine if the differences met the threshold of  $p < .05$ .

activities, the differences are statistically significant, including arts activities such as: live theatre or comedy attendance; classical and popular music attendance; cultural festival attendance; art gallery attendance; and book reading.

Other positive evidence includes the fact that there is a higher level of self-perceived mental health for people with moderate, high, and very high levels of cultural participation than for those with low levels of cultural participation.

The report provides strong evidence of a connection between three arts activities and very good or excellent mental health: live music attendance, live theatre or comedy attendance, and book reading. Regression models show that these three arts activities (of seven introduced into the models) have an association with very good or excellent mental health, and the associations are seen across different socioeconomic groups.

### **For more information**

The full report contains many more details about the research methods and findings, including an analysis of connections between cultural participation, satisfaction with life, and community belonging. Report appendices contain detailed data for each arts, culture, and heritage activity, as well as information about the data source and survey questions.

The report is available free of charge on the website of [Hill Strategies Research](#) and the websites of [the Canada Council for the Arts](#) and [the Ontario Arts Council](#), which funded the report along with the Department of Canadian Heritage. The report is based on Hill Strategies' analysis of [Statistics Canada's 2016 General Social Survey](#).

For media enquiries, please contact Mr. Kelly Hill, President of Hill Strategies Research, Hamilton, Ontario, 877-445-5494 (toll-free voice or text), [kelly@hillstrategies.com](mailto:kelly@hillstrategies.com). [Hill Strategies Research](#) specializes in rigorous and reliable research on the arts and culture in Canada, combined with clear and effective communications.

### **15 arts, culture, and heritage activities**

- Active arts participation (in any form)
- Live theatre or comedy attendance
- Classical music attendance
- Popular music attendance
- Heritage or ethnic performance attendance
- Other cultural performance attendance
- Arts or cultural festival attendance
- Public art gallery attendance
- Museum attendance (other than an art gallery)
- Historic site attendance
- Attendance at a zoo, aquarium, botanical garden, planetarium, or observatory
- Book reading (in any format)
- Magazine reading (in any format)
- Watching a movie (in any format)
- Listening to recorded music (in any format)

### **3 additional combinations of cultural activities**

- Live music attendance (combining popular and classical music)
- Attendance at any of six performing arts or festival activities
- Attendance at any of four museum or heritage activities