

# **Public attitudes to the arts**

The findings of research into the

## **Awareness of and attitudes towards the arts**

among adults in England carried out by MORI  
on behalf of the Arts Council of England

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## Preface

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The Arts Council of England is the national strategic body for the arts in England. We promote, sustain and develop the highest artistic achievement, encouraging new work and seeking new ways to make the arts available and accessible to all.

In developing this strategic role, information about how and why people engage with the arts, what they enjoy and learn and the value they place on the arts, as part of everyday life, is crucially important. The Arts Council channels public money from Government and the National Lottery into the arts both directly and through the ten Regional Arts Boards, and it is therefore important to understand the impact of expenditure on the arts. On a wider level, as the creative industries become increasingly important to the economy, we can also gauge public understanding of the broader economic, educational and social role of the arts, and the benefits in terms of enhanced prosperity and educational achievement that they bring.

This report presents the findings of some initial attitudinal research commissioned by the Arts Council from MORI. It forms one of the first steps towards a comprehensive research and information strategy for the Arts Council that will enable us to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the arts, both intrinsically and in a wider context.

Further information on the Arts Council our policies and activities, is available by visiting our website, [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk) or by contacting our Enquiries Team on 020 7973 6517 (Minicom available) or email [enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk).

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The Arts Council of England  
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## Introduction

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The Arts Council of England has a responsibility for supporting, developing and promoting the arts. In order to find out what the population in general thinks about the arts, the Arts Council commissioned MORI to carry out some research on its behalf. This report presents the findings of the survey. Interviews were conducted with a representative sample of 1,801 adults in England in May 2000. The main focus of the research was to explore people's awareness of and attitudes towards the arts. The following issues were examined:

- Respondents' definition of the arts
- the extent to which the arts play a valuable role in the country and in people's lives
- the perceived contribution of the arts to the life of the country and levels of support for the arts

## Definitions of the arts

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The Arts Council supports work across a wide range of different arts forms; from opera, through to South Asian dance to carnivals, to name a few. Different people however, have different views about what constitute the arts. MORI therefore asked those who took part in the survey what they understood by the term. People were first asked an unprompted question; in answer to this:

- 59% of people included painting and drawing, 46% mentioned theatre and drama, and one in five cited ballet.

The proportion choosing different art forms increased when they were shown a card; in answer to this question, 79% mentioned painting and drawing, theatre and drama; 77% the ballet; 73% cited opera and 70% included sculpture.

Fewer than three in ten people included rock music (28%), video or digital art (28%), fiction (26%) or circus (24%) in the arts. This is interesting as the Arts Council supports some of these art forms.

Although people in social classes ABC1 (non-manual) were more likely than those in the C2DE (manual) social classes to mention theatre and drama, ballet, paintings and drawings, between two thirds and three quarters of the latter nevertheless thought of these as part of the arts (Table 1).

**Table 1: Which, if any of the activities on this card do you think of as being part of the arts? – top five responses**

	<b>Total</b>	ABC1	C2DE	GCSE	A- Level	Degree	No qualifications
<b>Unweighted</b>	(1,801)	(839)	(962)	(561)	(214)	(255)	(548)
<b>Weighted</b>	(1,844)	(916)	(928)	(928)	(234)	(287)	(507)
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Painting &amp; drawing</b>	79	84	74	77	85	92	70
<b>Theatre &amp; drama</b>	79	87	70	76	88	91	68
<b>Ballet</b>	77	87	67	74	86	92	66
<b>Opera</b>	73	84	61	69	85	91	58
<b>Sculpture</b>	70	78	62	67	80	86	58

## Participation and involvement in the arts

The government is committed to encouraging as many people as possible to experience the arts. The Arts Council and the Regional Arts Boards are therefore working to promote the widest possible access to the arts for people from the whole spectrum of society. Through the New Audiences Programme, the Arts Council has funded a series of events designed to attract people who may never previously have experienced the arts, or who think the arts are not for them. The survey therefore asked people about their involvement in the arts. All but a tiny proportion of respondents said they had participated in or experienced the arts at some time in their lives.

- Over two thirds had been to the theatre or participated in drama.
- Almost half had, at some time, been to see paintings or drawings or had themselves painted or drawn.
- About the same proportion had attended or taken part in a festival or carnival.
- One third had been to a concert or classical music event.

Although the likelihood of doing any of these things was highest in the ABC1 social classes, almost three out of five of those from the manual classes said, for

example, that they had attended or participated in theatre or drama. Asking people whether they have ever attended or experienced the arts does not give information about how recently they have done this. The researchers therefore asked respondents what they had seen, experienced or done in the last 12 months.

- Seven out of eight of those who took part in the survey had attended or participated in at least one type of art in the last year.
- 36% mentioned the theatre or drama.
- 25% cited video or digital art.
- 20% mentioned painting and drawing.

Almost half of the ABC1 social classes and about a quarter of the C2DE social classes had been to or taken part in theatre or drama in the last year (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Proportions watching, participating in or experiencing the arts

	<i>Ever</i>		<i>In the last 12 months</i>			
	Total %	Social Class		Total %	Social Class	
		ABC1	C2DE		ABC1	C2DE
Theatre/ Drama	69	81	57	36	49	24
Festivals/ Carnivals	48	59	38	21	29	14
Painting/Drawings	46	60	32	20	29	10
Classical concerts	34	50	19	12	20	5

## The value of the arts

Attending or participating in the arts can be a great source of pleasure and enjoyment. It can give people an opportunity for creative expression and be a source of inspiration and pride<sup>1</sup>. The majority of respondents (almost four out of five) believed that the arts play a valuable role in the life of the country. On a personal level, almost three in five said the arts play a valuable role in their lives.

<sup>1</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport. (1999) Policy Action Team 10. Arts and Sport.

Almost two thirds of people (63%) agreed that their lives were made richer for having the opportunity to participate in the arts. Fifty eight per cent of women and 53% of men said the arts played a valuable role in their own lives, while 66% of women and 61% of men thought their lives were richer for having the opportunity to participate in or experience the arts.

## Support for the arts

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Efforts to involve more people in the arts seem to coincide with the wishes of the population. The MORI survey provided evidence of widespread support for making the arts more accessible. The most strongly held view was that children should have access to the arts: 95% of respondents believed that all school children should have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument or poetry or to take part in plays or other arts activities. This statement was widely supported by men and women, people of all ages and social classes.

Half of those interviewed would have liked more opportunity to take part in artistic activities themselves. While levels of interest in the arts were higher among those with educational qualifications and among the non-manual social classes, more than two in five people in the manual social classes and more than a third of people with no educational qualifications still agreed that they would like more opportunity to participate in artistic activities.

Three quarters of all people thought there should be more effort to make the arts more accessible to them. This was especially true for those in the 15 to 24 age group, 82% of whom held this view. The belief that the arts should be more accessible was also found across the social classes.

73% of respondents believed there should be public funding of the arts, with the most supportive groups being 15 to 24 age group, 82% of whom held this view. 78% of the non-manual and 73% of manual groups supported the statement that the arts should be more accessible. Almost three quarters of those who took part in the survey believed there should be public funding of the arts, with the most supportive groups being 15 to 24 year olds (78% of whom agreed with this view) and people in the non-manual social groups (81% of whom agreed). However, almost two thirds of those in the manual social classes also supported public funding for the arts.

In April 1999, the responsibility for deciding where much of the public funding of the arts should be directed was devolved from the Arts Council to Regional Arts Boards. It was believed that they were best placed to ensure that public funding met the needs of their areas. This policy seems to be in tune with the views of the population. Seven out of ten of the people who took part in the survey believed that decisions on funding for the arts ought to be taken in the regions where the expenditure actually takes place (Table 3).



<b>Table 3:</b>		<b>Respondents' views of the arts</b>					
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Neither /nor</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	
<i>Base: all</i>							
Unweighted (1,801)							
<i>Weighted (1,844)</i>							
All school children should have the opportunity to play a musical instrument...	68	27	3	1	*	1	%
More effort should be made to make the arts more accessible to people like me	33	42	13	8	1	1	%
I believe that it is right that there should be public funding of arts projects	31	42	13	10	3	2	%
My life is richer for having the opportunity to participate or experience the arts	28	35	17	13	5	1	%
Decisions on funding for the arts ought to be taken in the regions where the expenditure actually takes place	23	48	16	7	2	4	%
I would like to have more opportunities to take part in artistic activities	15	34	23	20	7	2	%

## The contribution of the arts to life in England

**Table 4:**  
**Respondents' views of the extent to which the arts have a beneficial impact on the following aspects of life in this country**

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not a lot	Not at all	Don't know	
<i>Base: all</i>						
	Unweighted (1,801)					
	<i>Weighted (1,844)</i>					
Encouraging tourists to visit	41	45	9	1	4	%
Helping our children achieve more at school	35	47	12	2	4	%
Enhancing our culture and, as a result, helping to make us proud of being British	30	46	15	3	5	%
Creating jobs, and therefore boosting the economy	19	48	24	4	5	%
Helping to promote regeneration in our towns and cities	18	47	24	4	6	%

The role of the arts in creating jobs and encouraging tourism is well documented. A recent publication from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport reported that 1.4 million people, or 5% of the total employed workforce, work in the creative industries in the UK<sup>1</sup>. Unlike many other industry sectors, the creative industries are growing. In the South East region, for example, employment in the creative industries increased by 20% between 1993 and 1996<sup>2</sup>. The arts also make an important contribution to tourism. The Notting Hill Carnival attracts over 2 million visitors, more than 15% of whom are from overseas<sup>3</sup>. Large proportions of people taking part in the MORI survey were aware of the contribution of the arts to the economy.

- The arts were seen as having a role in creating jobs and thereby boosting the economy by two thirds of respondents. Almost the same proportion believed they help to promote regeneration in our towns and cities.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport (1999) Creative Industries Mapping Document.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2000) Creative Industries – the regional dimension.

<sup>3</sup> London Arts Board (2000) Creative Energy, the Creative Industries in London's Economy.

- 86% thought that the arts encourage tourism.

Many people believe that the arts make a valuable contribution to society.

- More than four out of five believed they help children to achieve more at school.
- This view was held by high proportions of both men and women, all age groups and across the social classes.

## Appendices

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### Statistical reliability

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The sample tolerances that apply to the percentage results in this report are given in the table below. This table shows the possible variation that might be anticipated because a sample, rather than the entire population, was interviewed. As indicated, sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample and the size of the percentage results.

For example, on a question where 50% of the people in a weighted sample of 1,801 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary more than two percentage points, plus or minus, from a complete coverage of the entire population using the same procedures.

	<i>Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels</i>		
Size of sample on which survey result is based	10% or 90% ±	30% or 70% ±	50% ±
1,801	1	2	2

Tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results from different parts of the sample. A difference, in other words, must be of at least a certain size to be considered statistically significant. The following table is a guide to the sampling tolerances applicable to comparisons.

	<i>Differences required for significance at or near these percentage levels*</i>		
Size of the samples compared	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
Men vs. Women (867 vs. 913)	3	4	4
London vs. Rest of GB (219 vs. 1,561)	4	6	7

## Technical details

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### Sample design

MORI selected 175 parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain to be used as the main sampling points on the Omnibus survey. These were chosen to be representative of the whole country by region, class, voting patterns and other variables.

Within each sampling point, twelve respondents were to be interviewed. Respondents were selected by means of a 10-cell quota with which the interviewer was provided. The quotas used were:

Sex:	(Male, Female)
Household Tenure:	(Owner occupied, Council/HAT, Other)
Age:	(15-24, 25-44, 45+)
Working status:	(Full-time, part-time/not working)

These quotas were devised by an analysis of a full year's data on the National Readership Survey and the 1991 Census and Registrar-General's mid-year estimates. In each area, quotes represent the makeup of that area. Overall, quotas ensure that the demographic profile of the sample matches the actual profile of the country. The sample is thus representative of all adults in Great Britain aged 15+. The total sample set was 12 x 175 sample points = 2,100. In this case, however, only people living in England took part in the survey, giving a total sample size of 1,801.

### Fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out by MORI/Field & Tab on MORI's Omnibus using Computerised Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). Interviewers were provided with a list of addresses within each point. All interviews were conducted in the home, with only one interview per household. No incentives were offered to respondents.

### Weighting and data processing

Data entry and analysis were carried out by Numbers Data Processing Ltd. The data were weighted using target rim weights for social class, standard region, unemployment within region, cars in household, and age within sex. This was to adjust for any discrepancies in the coverage of individual sampling points and to ensure representativeness.

## Definitions of social grades

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This appendix contains a brief list of social class definitions as used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. These groups are standard on all surveys carried out by Market & Opinion Research International Limited.

Social Class		Occupation of Chief Income Earner
A	Upper middle class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	Middle class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Lower middle class	Supervisor or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	Skilled working class	Skilled manual workers
D	Working class	Semi and unskilled manual workers
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence	State pensioners, etc, with no other earnings

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