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Engagement with culture and the arts during the second year of COVID-19

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The Tasmania Project [Report 23](#) reported that attending arts and cultural events was extremely common prior to the pandemic: more than 80% of respondents to The Tasmania Project's second general survey (TTP2) had attended art exhibitions/galleries, museums, cultural festivals, performing arts, and the cinema in the year prior to the pandemic.

The arts, entertainment and cultural industries were among the hardest hit by COVID-19 and its restrictions. In line with this, engagement with arts and cultural events was much less prevalent during the first months of the pandemic, with roughly a third of respondents engaging in arts and cultural events between March and June 2020.

Arts, entertainment and cultural industries have gradually re-emerged over the latter half of 2020 and into 2021, albeit to varying extents and in different formats, as restrictions have eased. Re-engaging audiences is a key component of recovery for the industry. Accordingly, The Tasmania Project's fifth general survey (TTP5) asked about people's in-person engagement with arts and culture in 2021, so far.

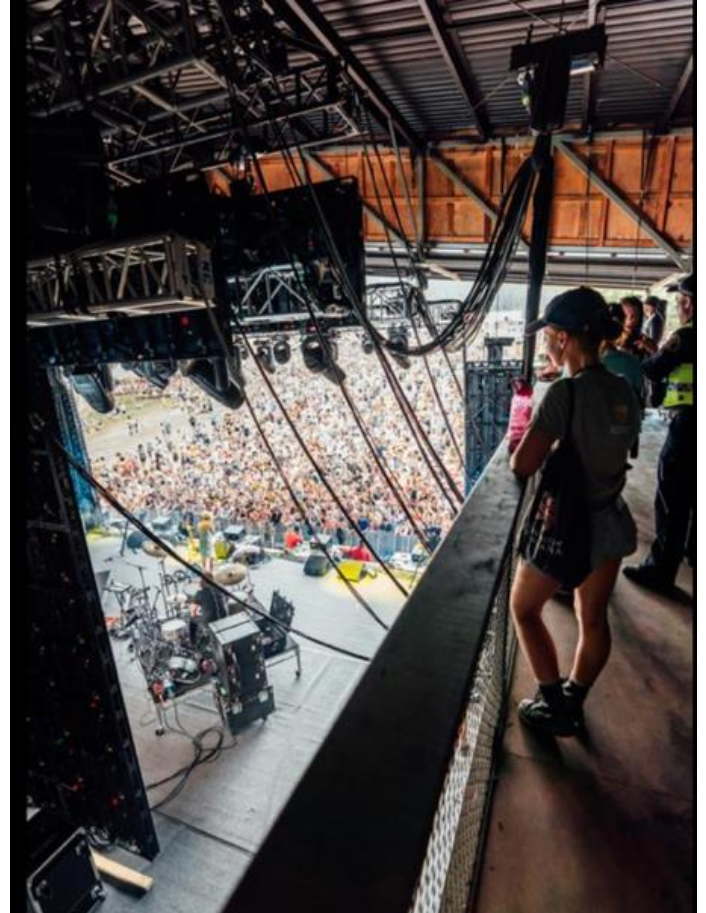


Image: Matt Osbourne

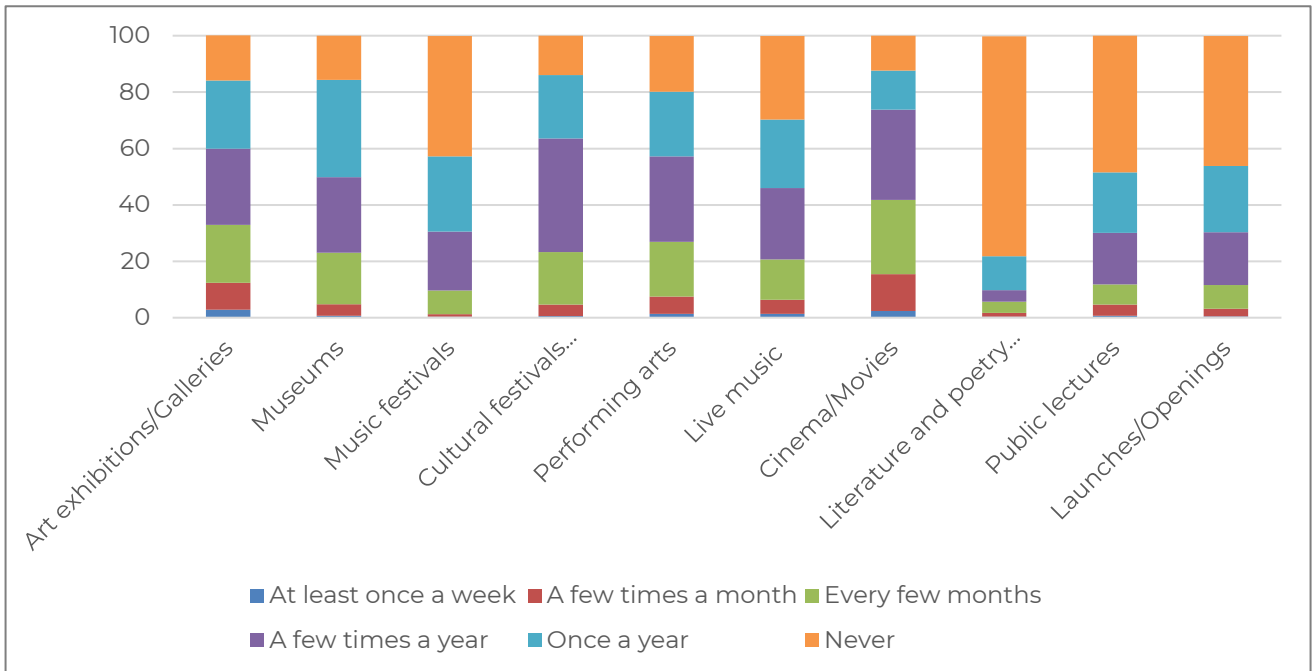


Fig 1. Frequency of attendance at cultural and arts events prior to pandemic

Key findings

- Attending arts and cultural events was a common activity prior to the pandemic – over 80% of respondents to TTP2 had attended art exhibitions/galleries, museums, cultural festivals, performing arts, and/or the cinema in the year prior to the pandemic.
- While a majority of respondents to the second general survey (TTP2) reported that cultural and arts activities and events had been important to some extent in maintaining their overall wellbeing during the pandemic, only one third had attended activities or events in the first three months of the pandemic and 83% had spent no money on arts, entertainment and cultural events.
- Creative and cultural industries were among the top four industries/sectors in Tasmania that TTP2 respondents believed should be prioritised for government support during recovery.
- The fifth general survey (TTP5) found that in-person engagement with the industries is still far below pre-pandemic levels: 44% of respondents had attended an art exhibition/gallery in person in 2021 so far; 41% had attended a museum; 23% had attended a festival; 43% had attended a live performance; 48% had gone to the cinema/movies; 23% had attended a public lecture; and 24% had attended a launch/opening.
- The majority (73%) of respondents agreed (30%) or strongly agreed (43%) that unvaccinated people should be banned from concerts/gigs.

Before the pandemic

In the second general survey of The Tasmania Project (TTP2), which was open from 9 to 17 June 2020, respondents were asked to estimate how frequently they attended cultural and arts events in the 12 months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic: art exhibitions/galleries, museums, music festivals, cultural festivals (including arts/food and wine), performing arts (e.g. theatre, music, dance), live music (e.g. bands, singers DJs), cinemas, literature and poetry readings, public lectures, and launches/openings

Findings for the total sample are presented in Figure 1 above, showing 84% had attended art exhibitions and galleries, the same number (84%) had visited museums, 86% had participated in a cultural festival, and 70% had seen live music.

A slightly higher proportion of women than men had attended each type of arts and culture event in the 12 months prior to the pandemic. Those who attended art galleries, museums and cultural festivals in the year prior the pandemic were slightly older, on average, than those who attended live music events during the same time period. A slightly higher proportion of people residing in the South than in the North and North-West and West had attended each type of arts and cultural event in the 12 months prior to the pandemic

During the pandemic (March-June 2020)

To the question posed in TTP2 (covering the period from March to June 2020) – Have you engaged with cultural and arts activities/events during the pandemic (including online or through broadcast media)? – around one third of respondents overall said yes. A higher proportion of females (39%) than males (22%) had participated in arts and cultural events in the first few months of the pandemic; those in the South (38%) were more likely than those in the North (27%) and North-West and West (28%); and younger people (aged 18-24 years; 21%) were less likely than those aged 25-34 years (36%), 45-64 years and 65+ years (34% each) to have participated in arts and cultural events during this period.

Analysis of free-text answers (n=380) about the cultural and arts activities and events that respondents had engaged with during the pandemic revealed a wide variety of activities and events: from music, film, and dance, to singing, reading, and visual art; from participating in classes and workshops, to practicing one's own art

and/or teaching others; and from radio, streaming, and podcasts, to engaging with comedy, religion, and social and community groups.

In particular (noting that the open-ended nature of the question means that the data only represents those who chose to mention a particular type of event, so prevalence is likely much higher in reality):

- Over a third of respondents referred to 'music' in their response, including livestreams, concerts, and musicals.
- Almost 20% of all responses referred to 'live' events often involving music.
- Performances such as classical music, opera house events and musical theatre featured in around 15% of responses. This included 23 references to the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, including their virtual program known as the 'TSO Daily Dose'.
- There were over 70 references to engaging with learning online, such as participating in workshops, lectures, classes, and webinars. Around 5% of responses mentioned practicing and performing their own art, including through teaching others online.
- Almost 10% of respondents referred to film and film festivals, including 14 references to Tasmania's Breath of Fresh Air (BOFA) Film Festival.
- Other cultural/arts activities included watching dance performances, particularly ballet; reading, such as book clubs, literary events, and own reading; choirs and singing; streaming services such as Netflix; online church services; and podcasts.

In terms of the platforms being used for these events and activities, there were almost 200 references simply to "online" activities and events, almost 50 references to YouTube, and over 30 references to Zoom. In reality, the level at which respondents are accessing these platforms is likely to be much higher, as this is simply the count of answers referring specifically to each platform.

Many responses indicated a desire not only for entertainment, but for connection with others and the 'outside world'. One respondent wrote that they "have felt more included in the community during the pandemic", while another described participating in a neighbourhood centre event in which scones and cakes were dropped off at their house "so we could enjoy [morning tea] while being safe". Another respondent wrote about engaging with concerts put together by "Aboriginal artists, from across

Australia ... to provide entertainment and uplifting messages to the Community". Other respondents described being able to virtually tour sites from across the world, including the Louvre, the Pyramids, and the Tate Modern.

We also asked respondents to estimate the amount of money they had spent on arts and cultural activities and events in the 12 months prior to the pandemic. Of the 764 respondents who provided an estimate, 21% said they had spent more than \$2000, 20% estimated between \$1000-1999, 23% estimated between \$500-\$999 and 23% below \$249.

We then asked respondents to estimate the amount they had spent during the pandemic on their principally online engagement with the arts and cultural events during the pandemic. Of the 669 respondents who answered this question, 83% had spent \$0 during the three months, 8% had spent under \$100, 8% had spent \$100-\$499, and less than 2% had spent more than \$500.

Year two of the pandemic

In the fifth general survey of The Tasmania Project (TTP5), open from 24 September to 3 October 2021, respondents were asked whether they had attended selected arts, entertainment and cultural activities in person in 2021 so far. Of the 1008 respondents who answered:

- 44% had attended an art exhibition/gallery
- 41% had attended a museum
- 23% had attended a festival
- 43% had attended a live performance
- 48% had gone to the cinema/movies
- 23% had attended a public lecture
- 24% had attended a launch/opening.

Recovery in arts, entertainment and cultural industries

Arts and culture are a significant part of Tasmanian life and this is reflected in responses to our surveys, with high rates of engagement pre-pandemic and continued, though drastically reduced, engagement rates through the first few months of the pandemic.

TTP5 reveals a lag in returning to in-person arts and culture activities, with well under half of respondents having attended each type of event in person in 2021 thus far. The issue of vaccination intersects with engagement with creative and

cultural industries: 30% of respondents agreed and 43% strongly agreed that unvaccinated people should be banned from concerts/gigs. This indicates that the industries may have to consider their positions and policies around vaccination and how they are likely to affect their audiences.

Given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on creative and cultural industries and people working in them, and the strong public appetite to support their recovery (creative and cultural industries were among the top four industries that TTP2 respondents believed should be prioritized for government support), there is a clear need to understand what recovery may look like. In particular, models that can offer sustainable funding to the industries and their people, encourage public engagement with the industries, and leverage digital infrastructure are essential.

The samples

The second general survey (TTP2) opened on 9 June 2020 and closed on 17 June 2020. More than 1500 Tasmanian residents aged 18 years and above entered the survey, with 1258 forming the sample for this report after data cleaning removed incomplete answers.

All local government areas of Tasmania are represented, with residents of Hobart, Kingborough, Launceston and Clarence forming 51% of the total sample. Of our respondents, 61% live in the South, 21% in the North, and 18% in the North-West and West. Respondents name 167 towns, suburbs or areas in which they live.

Of the 1258 respondents, 69% are women and 30% men, with 25% aged 25-44 years, 49% aged 45-64 years and 24% aged 65 years and above. 2% are aged 18-24 years. One quarter have a bachelor degree level education, 9% have no post-school qualification, and 7% have a doctorate. More than half are employed.

The fifth general survey opened on 24 September 2021 and closed on 3 October 2021. 1200 adult Tasmanian residents completed the survey, with 1143 forming the sample for this report after incomplete responses were removed.

The largest proportion of respondents (48%) resided in Greater Hobart, 21% in the North West and West, 12% in the Regional South, 11% in the Regional North, and 9% in Launceston. Over half (62%) of respondents identified as female, 27% as male. 2% of respondents were 18-24 years, 17% were 25-44 years, 45% were 45-64 years and 37% were 65 years and above. Just over a quarter (28%) have a Bachelor's Degree, 12% have no post-school qualifications and 7% have a doctorate.

More details of the samples and methods are available [here](#).