

Creative New Zealand

New Zealanders and the Arts

Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi

2023 research summary

Plain English

1. Introduction

This is a summary of the key findings of the 2023 edition of New Zealanders and the Arts – Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi.

This research measures New Zealanders' engagement with the arts. This includes attendance and participation in different artforms, as well as wider attitudes to the arts.

The research is repeated every three years.

2. How we did the research

The research was undertaken by an independent research company called Verian.

Verian used online surveys to learn about how New Zealanders took part in or attended different types of art.

Verian surveyed 6,527 adults (15 years and older) and 764 young people (10 – 14 years).

More information about how we did the research and the terms we have used is included on pages 15 – 18.

3. Key findings from the research with adults

New Zealanders' personal connection with the arts has grown. Many feel the arts aid their wellbeing.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- **The arts are for people like me** – 48% agree with this statement (up five percentage points on 2020).
- **The arts are part of everyday life** – 40% agree with this statement (up three points on 2020).
- **The arts are good for my mental health and wellbeing** – 63% agree with this statement. This was a new measure in the 2023 survey.
- **The arts make me feel less lonely and isolated** – 38% agree with this statement. This was a new measure in the 2023 survey.

Quote from respondent:

“It has helped me overcome my mental health issues that have come up quite recently.”

Māori and Pacific woman, 40-49 years, Hawke's Bay

The arts expand our perspectives. Learning about different cultures is higher than it was before COVID.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- **I learn about different cultures through the arts** – 68% agree with this statement (up four percentage points on 2017).
- **The arts can help raise awareness of issues facing the natural environment (te taiao)** – 67% agree with this statement. This was a new measure in 2023.
- **The arts help improve New Zealand society** – 60% agree with this statement (up 8 percentage points on 2014).

Quote from respondent:

“Brings people from all walks of society together. Increases understanding of other ethnic and social groups. Raises and encourages tolerance of other people.”

Māori woman, 70+ years, Northland

The arts connect us with people, place and our past, and shape our identity. This sense of identity is higher than before COVID.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- **The arts should reflect New Zealand’s cultural diversity** – 72% agree with this statement (up five percentage points on 2017).
- **The arts help define who we are as New Zealanders** – 63% agree with this statement (up 11 percentage points on 2014).
- **My community would be poorer without the arts** – 53% agree with this statement (up 10 percentage points on 2014).

Ngā Toi Māori (Māori arts) are increasingly valued by both Māori and the general population.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- **Ngā Toi Māori is an important way of connecting with my culture/identity** – 78% of Māori agree with this statement (up nine percentage points since 2020).
- **Ngā Toi Māori motivates me to kōrero (speak) Māori** – 58% of Māori agree with this statement (up six percentage points since 2017).
– 32% of all adults in New Zealand agree with this statement (up eight percentage points since 2017).

The arts are important to people's personal wellbeing for different reasons.

Four in ten (41%) people say that the arts are important to their personal wellbeing. The top reasons people gave were:

- gives enjoyment
- good for mental health and wellbeing
- allows people to express themselves
- relaxing and healing
- brings people together and encourages connections.

Learning and understanding each other are reasons why people believe the arts improve society.

Six in ten (60%) people say the arts improve society. The top reasons people gave were:

- brings people together
- allows people to express themselves
- helps us understand other cultures and our own culture
- thought provoking – broadens our minds and leads to discussing ideas with others
- helps us understand other perspectives.

Quote from respondent:

“Arts make me feel more positive as it allows me to increase my problem solving and think in the shoes of the artist and helps create feelings of empathy towards others.”

Asian 18-29 year old man, Auckland

The economic benefits of the arts are valued by more New Zealanders than before, and support for public funding of the arts is higher than ever.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- **The arts contribute positively to our economy** – 64% agree with this statement (up 12 percentage points since 2008).
- **The arts should receive public funding** – 62% agree with this statement (up 13 percentage points since 2014).

Quote from respondent:

“Creativity drives success, not only in the arts, but in all spheres of life including business and sciences. A nation that neglects the arts is not ‘saving money’. It's making its people poorer all round. Trying to save money in tough economic times by defunding the arts is an incredibly short-sighted move. Nobody benefits in the long term.”

NZ European woman, 60-69 years, Auckland

Next, we look at how adult New Zealanders engage, attend, and participate in the arts.

There has been steady growth in arts participation over the last decade. Attendance has increased across all artforms since 2020.

Over half (54%) of people participated in an artform in the past 12 months (up two percentage points on 2020, and up 18 percentage points since 2011).

Young people, Deaf and Disabled, Māori and Pacific peoples participate in the arts most frequently.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of people attended the arts in the past 12 months (up four percentage points on 2020). This is similar to before COVID.

Attendance has increased across all artforms, with record highs for visual arts, craft and object art, Ngā Toi Māori and Pacific arts:

- 51% attended visual arts in the last 12 months (up four percentage points on 2020)
- 51% attended performing arts in the last 12 months (up six percentage points on 2020)
- 42% attended craft and object art in the last 12 months (up three percentage points on 2020)
- 30% attended Ngā Toi Māori in the last 12 months (up four percentage points on 2020)
- 23% attended Pacific arts in the last 12 months (up five percentage points on 2020)
- 12% attended literary arts in the last 12 months (up two percentage points on 2020).

Next, we consider how we can increase engagement with the arts.

People have different opinions on how accessible and inclusive the arts are. This hasn't changed since 2020.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- **I am easily able to access the arts in my community** – 54% of all adults agree with this statement. The percentage agreement drops to 48% of Deaf and disabled people.
- **My community has a broad range of arts and artistic activities I can experience** – 49% of all adults agree with this statement.
- **I can afford to participate in creative activities in my community** – 46% of all adults agree with this statement. The percentage agreement drops to 36% of low-income households.

Quote from respondent:

“Arts is only for some people, especially in our economic environment.”

Man, 50-59, Asian New Zealander, Waikato

Addressing key barriers is an opportunity to increase attendance further.

Seven in ten (70%) people say some arts events interest them but they still don't go much. We asked these people what would make a difference to going more often:

- 53% said cheaper tickets
- 49% said more appealing events
- 43% said having someone to go with
- 40% said easier travel to the arts event
- 32% said easier physical access to the arts venue or easier physical access to participate in the arts activity
- 30% said feeling confident that they would be welcome.

4. Key findings from the research with young people and their parents

Almost all young people participate in the arts. In-person attendance has increased after COVID.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- 99% of young people participated in the arts in the last 12 months
- 90% of young people attended the arts in the last 12 months, either online or in person
- 82% of young people attended the arts in person in the last 12 months (up nine percentage points on 2020). This level of attendance is now close to attendance levels before COVID.

More young people want to be involved with art compared to 2020. The increase in interest is especially high for visual arts and Ngā Toi Māori.

Below are some findings from the research that support this key insight.

Over nine in ten (92%) young people want to be more involved with an art form (up four percentage points on 2020).

We asked young people what art forms they would like to be more involved with:

- 58% said digital art (the same as 2020)
- 49% said visual arts (up seven percentage points on 2020)
- 37% said performing arts (up four percentage points on 2020)
- 28% said literature (down one percentage point on 2020)
- 18% said Ngā Toi Māori (up five percentage points on 2020)
- 14% said Pacific arts (up three percentage points on 2020).

Young people continue to feel good about doing creative activities.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are:

- 80% of young people say they feel good or excellent when they do creative things
- 74% of young people say taking part in arts activities helps them feel good about life in general
- 71% of young people say taking part in arts activities makes them feel more confident.

Quote from respondent:

“Art usually makes me marvel at what people can do. Maybe one day I can do that too!” Girl, 13 years old

How young people rate their own creativity has returned to levels before COVID.

We asked both young people and their parents to rate how creative the young person is on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means 'not at all creative' and 5 means 'extremely creative'.

- Nearly six in ten (59%) young people answered that they are creative (a rating of 4 or 5). This is down 10 percentage points on 2020 and is now the same as 2017.
- Nearly three quarters (73%) of parents rated their child as creative (a rating of 4 or 5). This is down nine percentage points on 2020).

Quote from respondent:

“Sometimes they are boring and sometimes the teacher puts too many restrictions on the type of art we can do.”
Boy, 14 years

Previous analysis shows us that how a parent views their child influences how that young person views themselves.

While parents are very supportive of their child taking part in the arts, barriers to getting more involved have increased.

Some findings from the research that support this key insight are below:

- 79% of parents agree that taking part in or attending the arts makes their child a more well-rounded individual.

We asked parents if their child gets to take part in or attend the arts as often as the parent would like. Four in ten (40%) parents answered no. We then asked these parents why their child doesn't take part or attend the arts more often:

- 41% of parents say they can't afford it (up five percentage points on 2020)
- 31% of parents say they don't know what is available (up eight percentage points on 2020)
- 30% of parents say there are not enough creative things nearby
- 28% of parents say their child is too busy
- 26% of parents say it's not easy to get there (up 11 percentage points on 2020)
- 20% of parents say they have no time to take the child (up seven percentage points on 2020)
- 20% of parents say they can't afford the travel costs (up seven percentage points on 2020).

Five of the 11 positive parental attitudes in the research became weaker in 2023. For example,

- **Taking part in arts and creative activities makes my child feel more confident** – 39% of parents strongly agreed with this statement (down six points on 2020).

The current economic climate may play a role here as we see bigger barriers to engagement that are related to affordability. This financial pressure may contribute to some parents downplaying the benefits of their child's engagement with the arts.

5. How we did the research

Independent research company Verian conducted two separate surveys for New Zealanders and the Arts — Ko Aotearoa me ōna Toi; one with adults aged 15 years and over and one with young people aged 10-14 years.

Adult survey

We found out what adults aged 15 years and over thought through an online survey.

6,527 adults took part in this survey in November and December 2023.

Verian used online panels that hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders have joined to take part in research.

We boosted the numbers of Māori, Pasifika, and Asian New Zealanders to provide more robust data.

Disabled People's organisations shared accessible survey invitations with their networks.

The maximum margin of error tells us how much the results of the survey might differ from the whole population. It shows us how confident we can be that the data is accurate. The lower the number the more confident we can be.

The maximum margin of error for the adult survey is +/-1.2% (at the 95% confidence level).

Young New Zealanders survey

We found out what young people aged 10-14 years and their parents thought through an online survey.

In total, 764 online surveys were completed in November 2023.

Verian used online panels of adults to ask parents to invite their children to participate.

We boosted the numbers of Māori, Pasifika, and Asian New Zealanders to provide more robust data.

Disabled People's organisations shared accessible survey invitations with their networks.

The maximum margin of error for the young persons survey is +/-3.6% (at the 95% confidence level).

Definitions

‘Attendance’ covers these experiences in the last 12 months:

- Seeing craft and object artworks at an exhibition, festival, art gallery, museum, library or online.
- Attending spoken word, poetry or book readings, or literary festivals or events.
- Seeing any artworks by Māori artists or going to any Māori arts or cultural performances, Toi Ahurei, festivals or exhibitions.
- Seeing artworks by Pasifika artists or going to any Pasifika cultural performances, festivals or exhibitions.
- Attending performing arts events.
- Seeing visual artworks at an exhibition, festival, art gallery, museum, library, cinema or online.

‘Participation’ is defined as:

- The active involvement in the making or presentation of art in the last 12 months.

The arts is split into six different **artforms**, and attendance and participation is measured for each.

- **Craft/object art** includes things such as uku (pottery), furniture, glass, adornment (such as ‘ei katu, tā moko and jewellery), embroidery, tīvaevae, woodcraft, spinning, weaving or textiles.

- **Literature or literary arts** includes spoken word, poetry or book readings, literary festivals or events, writing workshops, and personal creative writing (eg poetry, fiction or non-fiction).
- **Ngā toi Māori (Māori arts)** are the works of Tangata Whenua Māori artists across heritage and contemporary artforms. This includes, but is not limited to: whakairo (carving), raranga (weaving), kanikani (dance), tuhinga (literature), pūoro (music), whakaari (theatre), kai mā te whatu (visual arts and crafts), digital Māori arts, Māori arts and cultural events (Hui Ahurei, Manu Kōrero), inter-arts and media arts.
- **Pacific arts** are the works of Pasifika artists across heritage and contemporary artforms. This includes but is not limited to: craft/object art (eg tīvaevae, tapa), dance (eg Tongan tau'olunga, Tokelauan hiva), literature, music, theatre, visual arts, digital Pacific arts, Pacific arts and cultural events, inter-arts and media arts.
- **Performing arts** includes theatre (eg comedy, drama, musical theatre, fale aitu, circus, theatre for children, and karetao), dance (eg haka, Pasifika dance, hip hop and ballet), and music (eg contemporary music gigs or performances of choirs, orchestras, and taonga pūoro).
- **Visual arts** includes things such as drawing, painting, raranga, tīvaevae, photography, whakairo, sculpture, print-making, typography and film-making.