

The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

Photo: Laura Purcell.

Creativity, culture and the arts during COVID-19

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The Tasmania Project's second general survey asked a series of questions devoted to creative and cultural practices, engagement and activities. We wanted to know how Tasmanian residents value and engage with the arts, culture and creativity, both in terms of joining events and being creative themselves.

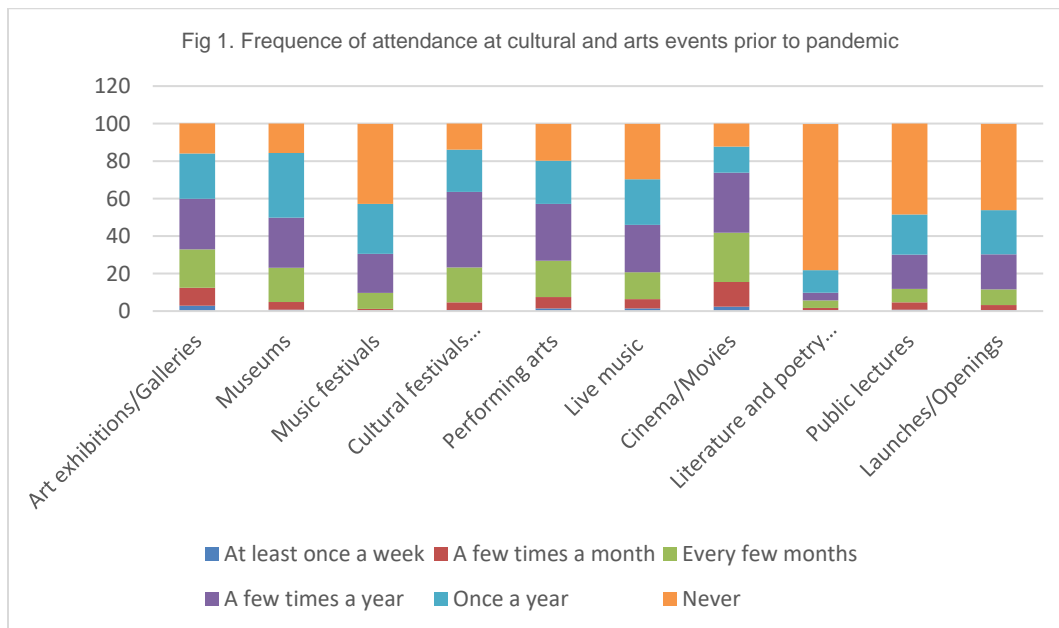
How important have the arts and cultural events and activities been to Tasmanians, before and during the pandemic? Has this contributed to maintaining wellbeing during the crisis?

The arts, entertainment and cultural industries have been among the hardest hit since the state of emergency was declared in Tasmania on 19 March, with all venues for live performance of theatre and music closed, film and television production stopped, school-based programs paused, and doors shut on museums, cinemas and galleries. Recovery is predicted to be one of the slowest.

On the other hand, new forms of online creativity have been emerging daily – from choirs to orchestras, exhibitions to film festivals.

Key findings

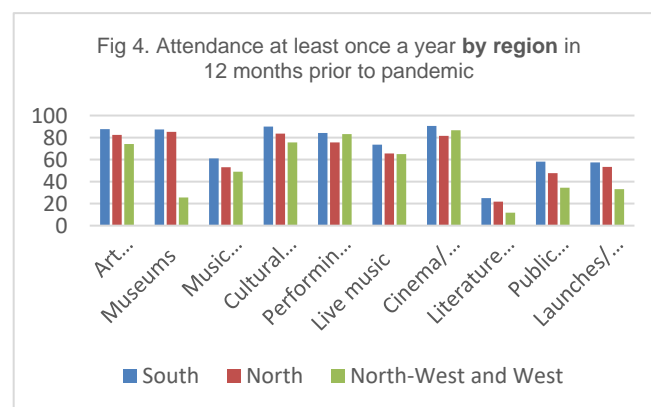
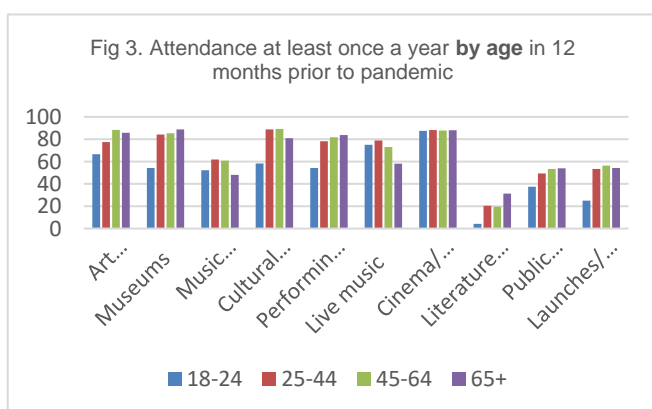
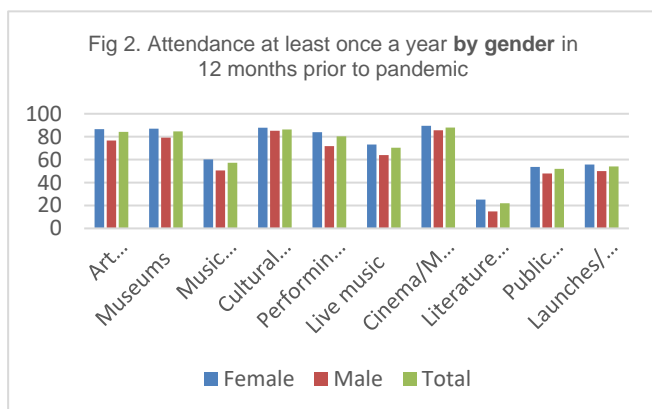
- A majority of the survey's 1258 respondents said that cultural and arts activities and events had been important to some extent in maintaining their overall wellbeing during the pandemic
- Almost half described being creative as important or very important to maintaining their wellbeing during the pandemic.
- Creative and cultural industries were among the top four industries/sectors in Tasmania that respondents believed should be prioritised for government support during recovery.
- Arts and cultural activities featured above tourism, access to nature and advanced manufacturing when respondents were asked what should be prioritised to improve life in Tasmania in the future.
- A large proportion of our sample reported having participated in a range of cultural events and activities in the 12 months prior to the pandemic's onset.
- One third had continued this engagement via online or broadcast media during the pandemic.
- However, very few respondents to the survey had spent any money on creative and cultural activities – including to participate in online events – in the 3 months since the crisis began, in stark contrast to the amounts they estimated they had spent in the 12 months prior to the declaration of a state of emergency,



Before the pandemic

We asked respondents 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.

Attendance at least once a year by gender, age bracket and region are shown in figures 2-4.



During the pandemic

To the question – Have you engaged with cultural and arts activities/events during the pandemic (including online or through broadcast media)? – we received the following affirmative responses: by region, 38% in the South, 27% in the North and 28% in the North-West and West; by gender, 39% of female respondents and 22% of male respondents; and by age group, 21% of respondents aged 18-24 years, 36% aged 25-44 years, 34% aged 45-64 years, and 34% aged over 65 years.

380 respondents provided free-text answers about the cultural and arts activities and events that they had engaged with during the pandemic. These respondents covered 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.

The format of the free-text responses – in which respondents may phrase answers in their own way – means that some activities do not feature as heavily as might be expected if chosen from a set of provided options. Nonetheless, the trends within these responses point to engagement with numerous forms of online creativity:

- Over a third of participants 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 the current 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 were from participants who mentioned practicing and performing their own art, including through teaching others online.
- Almost 10% of participants referred to film and film festivals, including 14 references to Tasmania's Breath of Fresh Air 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.

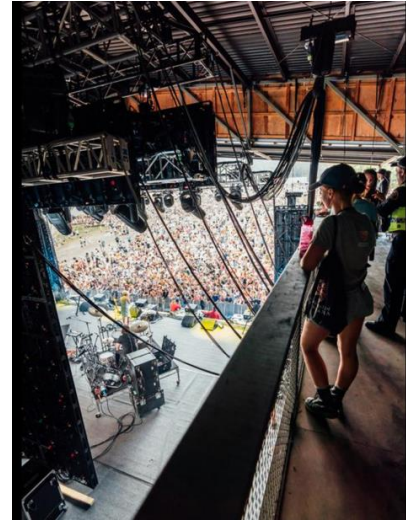


Image: Matt Osborne

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.



Fig. 5. 'Have you engaged with cultural and arts activities/events during the pandemic (including online or through broadcast media)?'

Figure 5 provides a word cloud illustrating the frequency of responses in these free-text answers. 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.

Sixty-five per cent of respondents believed cultural and arts/events activities (including online) had been important for maintaining overall wellbeing during the pandemic: 12% described these as very important, 17% as important, 15% as fairly important, 21% as slightly important, and 29% as not important. More women than men described these as very important or important.

Being creative was described by 80% of respondents as important to some extent to maintaining wellbeing during the pandemic: 21% of respondents said it was very important, while 23% said it was important, 19% fairly important, 17% slightly important, and 17% not important. Again, women were more likely to describe it as very important than men (24% of female respondents compared to 13% male).

Interestingly, age was not a factor in determining how significant being creative was in maintaining respondents' wellbeing during the pandemic.

We also asked Tasmanians 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. Figure 6 provides a word cloud illustrating the frequency of responses.

Fig 6.

Q15 If possible, could you estimate the amount of money you spent on the above events in the 12 months prior to the pandemic?



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. Figure 7 provides a word cloud illustrating frequency of responses.

Fig 7.

Q17 If possible, could you estimate the amount of money you have paid to access cultural and arts activities/events during the pandemic?

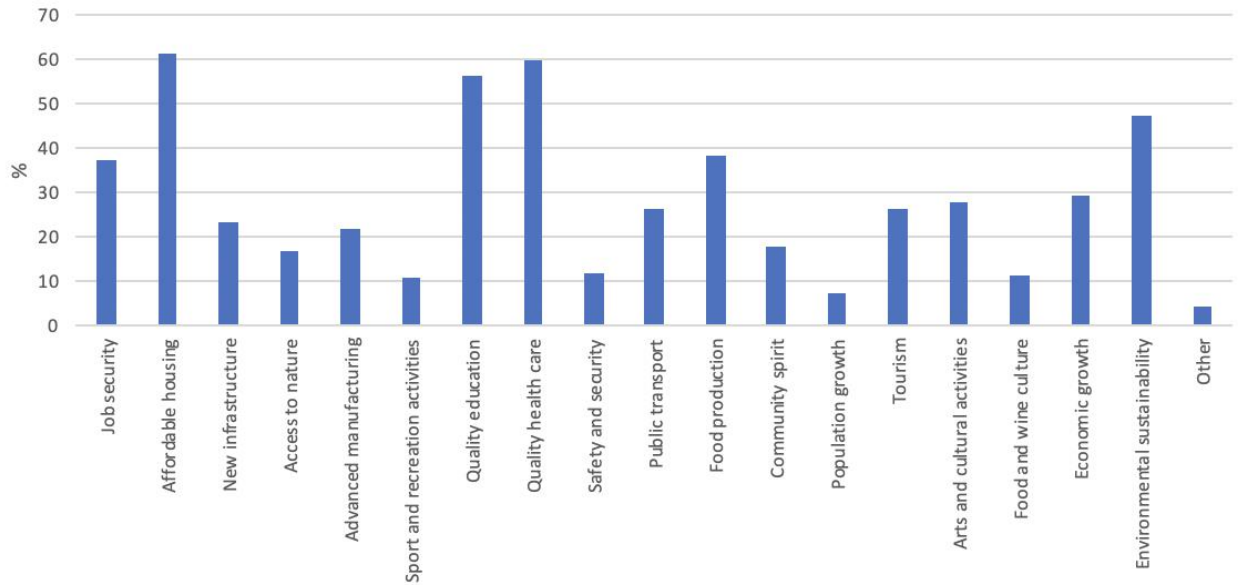


After the pandemic

In terms of supporting Tasmania's recovery, respondents identified creative and cultural industries as a priority area for support by the State Government (when asked to select up to five). Industries/sectors were listed in this order: education and training (66%), health care (65%), tourism and hospitality (64%), creative and cultural industries (45%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (38%), manufacturing (38%), science research (35%), construction (33%), retail (26%), energy (22%), and police and emergency services (20%).

To improve life in Tasmania, 28% of respondents prioritised arts and cultural activities, behind affordable housing (61%), quality healthcare (60%), quality education (56%), environmental sustainability (47%), job security (38%), food production (38%) and economic growth (29%), and over tourism, advanced manufacturing, access to nature, population growth, new infrastructure, sport and recreation, safety and security, community spirit, food and wine culture, and public transport. See figure at the top of the next page.

To improve life in Tasmania, which of the following do you think should be prioritised?



Where next?

These findings indicate that Tasmanians placed a high value on the arts, creativity and culture prior to the pandemic, with high levels of participation in a range of cultural activities and practices and a willingness to pay to attend cultural and creative events.

Nevertheless, as we have seen with other areas of the creative industries moving to digital platforms over the last decade (e.g. media and news), a business model that will pay for content production and delivery may be slow in emerging.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on many professionals working in the arts and cultural industries was immediate and severe, with the nature of the work meaning JobKeeper payments were less available than for other industries and sectors. While a \$250 million Australia-wide recovery package has been announced by the Federal Government, it is vital we understand in more detail the impact of the pandemic on individuals, communities and the Tasmanian economy, given Tasmania has one of the highest rates of work participation in associated areas nationally and artists and cultural events are key elements of the Tasmanian brand and visitor economy

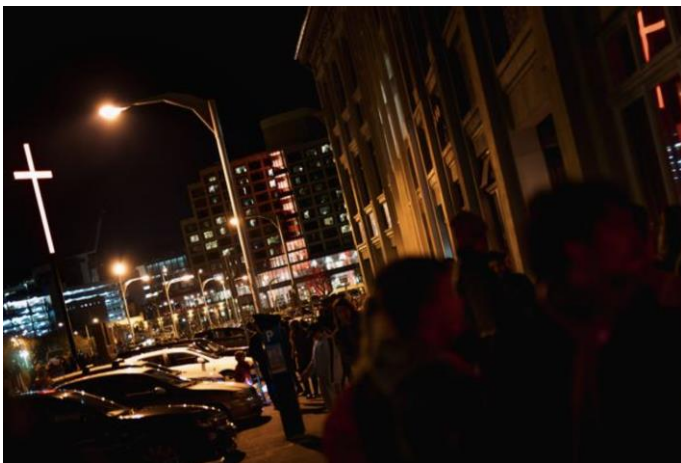


Image: Matt Osbourne.

The sample

The Tasmania Project's second general survey closed on 17 June 2020. More than 1500 Tasmanian residents aged 18 or over 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 over 65 years. 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. More details of the sample and methods are available [here](#).