

# Art & Well-being research:

Art consumption and well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic.

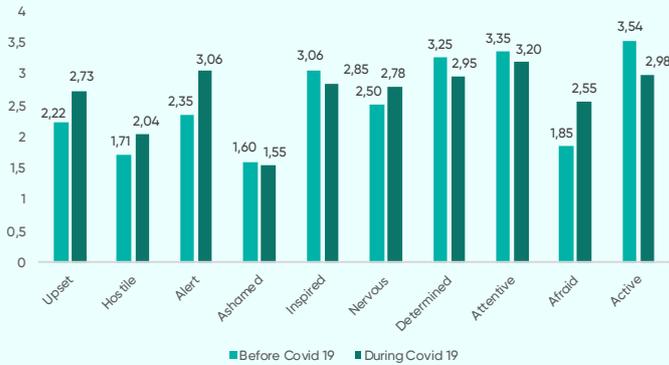
## Key findings of the research

### Reported states of health and well-being

Almost 85% of respondents rated their psychological and health state as "good" and "excellent", while 1% of respondents rated their psychological and health state "not good at all".

- The scores for Negative Affect (upset, hostile, ashamed, nervous, afraid) increased during the pandemic (M=11.68) in relation with pre-pandemic states (M=9.09).
- Positive Affect (inspired, determined, attentive, active, alert) during the pandemic (M=15.06) decreased in score compared to the Positive Affect before the pandemic (M=15.57).
- The most visible is the increase in negative states such as afraid (+0.7) and upset (+0.5).

Self-reported emotional states before and during the pandemic (I-PANAS, Mean scores)



Source: authors' calculation

The negative feelings both before and during pandemic are higher for people working in the cultural field compared to those working in other fields.

### Coping activities during the pandemic

Art consumption (85,18%) and social contacts with loved ones (69,60%) were the most frequently mentioned coping activities during the pandemic.

### Receptive cultural participation/art consumption during the pandemic

The most frequent activity people engaged in during the pandemic was listening to Music. Other popular activities were watching Films and reading Literature.

Art consumption during pandemic



Source: authors' calculation

45% of the subjects responded that they have accessed art less often before the pandemic compared to the pandemic period, while for 32% of respondents the frequency of art consumption was the same. These results suggest an **increase of cultural access during the pandemic**.

Receptive participation in the arts (visual arts, theatre, dance, architecture & heritage) during the pandemic is significantly correlated to a **decrease in negative feelings** ( $r=-0.71, p < .01$ ) and with **meaning/significance** ( $r=0.057, p < .05$ ), **feelings/improved mood** ( $r=0.1, p < .001$ ) and the experience of beauty, awe, transcendence ( $r=0.072, p < .01$ ). Those who often tend to have lower Negative Affect scores than those with low art consumption.

Correlations between receptive participation in various types of culture and well-being benefits perceived by respondents (Chi-Square Tests)

ART	Significance/Meaning (self reflection perspective, appreciation of life, imagining futures, memory)	Feelings/Improved mood (getting into a desired mood, hope, guidance through difficulties)	Social Connection (belonging, understanding others, longing for connection)	Aesthetic/Transcendence (experience of awe, beauty, transcendence)
	Music	Significant	Significant	No correlation
Literature	Significant	No correlation	No correlation	No correlation
Theatre	No correlation	Significant	Significant	No correlation
Dance	No correlation	Significant	No correlation	No correlation
Visual arts	No correlation	Significant	No correlation	Significant
Architecture	No correlation	No correlation	No correlation	Significant
Film	No correlation	No correlation	No correlation	No correlation
Games	No correlation	Significant	No correlation	No correlation

Legend

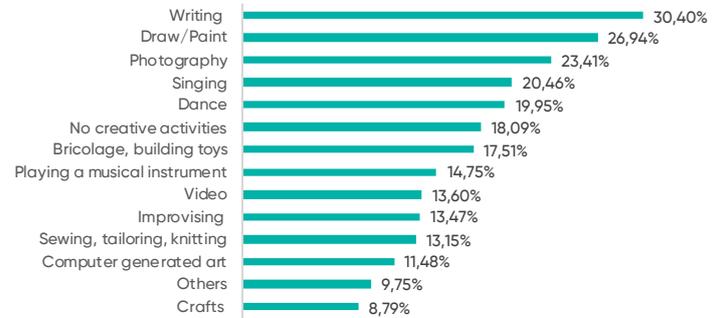
- A significant correlation between art and benefits
- No correlation between art and benefits

Source: authors' calculation

### Creative activities/active cultural participation during pandemic

The most frequent activities performed during the pandemic were Writing poems, small texts, essays, Drawing/painting, and Photography.

Creative activities during pandemic



Source: authors' calculation

46% of the respondents have been less often involved in creative activities before the pandemic and 30% of them engaged in creative activities with the same frequency during and before the pandemic. These results suggest an increase in the practice of creative activities during the pandemic.

People working in cultural fields are doing more creative activities (M=1.98) than people who are working in other fields (M=1.45) and people who are not working (M=1.82).

Most people (69%) reported they have engaged in creative activities daily or a few times a week (2-3 times per week), while 15% of respondents didn't perform any creative activities during the pandemic.

Active cultural participation (singing, playing a musical instrument, dancing, drawing/painting, photography, video, computer generated art, writing, crafts) during the pandemic is significantly correlated with Positive Affect ( $r=.070, p < .05$ ). Those who are doing creative activities often (daily, a few times a week, weekly) tend to have higher Positive Affect scores than those who are engaging in such activities rarely (occasionally, never). People who were engaged in active cultural participation during the pandemic tend to derive significance/meaning ( $r=0.87, p < .05$ ), improved moods ( $r=0.111, p < .001$ ) and social connections ( $r=0.75, p < .01$ ), from this creative processes.

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## Reported connection with the Arts

- 69.5% of the respondents rate their connection with arts as meaningful and very meaningful during pandemic. This percentage registers a slight increase during the pandemic, as 66.5% rate their connection with art before the pandemic similarly meaningful.
- More than half of respondents, particularly 56%, reported that they had a particular connection to an artwork during the pandemic.

Respondents that report a meaningful and very meaningful connection with arts during the pandemic consider that art: **brings significance to their life (81.8%), improves their mood (61.54%), helps them connect with others (59.32%) and enables experiences of awe and beauty (41.16%)**. They also tend to have **higher Positive Affect** scores than those who feel less connected to the arts.

## The contribution of art to individual well-being

64.21% of the respondents declare that art made them feel better, 41.89% claim that art helped them experience beauty, awe, transcendence and 38.17% say that art made them reflect on their lives.

Art contribution to well-being



Source: authors' calculation

## How people describe their experiences with culture during the pandemic

- **The emotions / states of well-being designated as prevalent turn out to be "joy/happiness", "relaxation", and "positive mood"**.

*"Absorbed, in the moment, happy, pleased with what I have achieved (even if it is very small and silly!)" (Female, 46-55 years old, Scotland)*

- **The participants indicated the cathartic significance of the experience and the escape from a problematic reality, through immersion in cultural activities**

*"Película, poema: emoción, catarsis" (Female, 31-35 years old, Spain)*

*"Animata, viva, trasportata, catarsi, svuoto" (Female, 19-24 years old, Italy)*

- **The low attestation of negative connotations however offers interesting reflection: the data point to a sense of inadequacy and frustration experienced during creative or cultural performance/activity.**

*"Numb, Angry, Depressed, Isolated" (Female, 19-24 years old, Scotland)*

*"Entretenida, frustrada, impotente, triste, desanimada" (Female, 31-35 years, Spain)*

*"Nove volte su dieci è frustrante. Ci vuole determinazione e poi ti senti motivata e sorpresa" (Female, 25-30 years old, Italy)*

- **Art seems to induce participants to reflect on the current situation and to feel the need for a greater connection/empathy with others.**

*"Reading and literature made me feel less lonely" (Female, 56-65 years old, Italy)*

## Art and its potential to contribute to human resilience

The dimensions of culture and creativity were exploited by the participants as 'therapies' and support for the prolonged stressful situation of the lockdown. The search of peace and relaxation, the reflection, the connection between one's self and the perception of being part of a community have characterized the experience of many of them.

## Authors

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## Research objective

The study aimed to assess people's engagement with arts and creativity during the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential impact of cultural participation on their well-being.

## Research methodology

**Research type:** Quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

**Data collection:** May-July 2020 (this being the period we refer to, when using the "during the pandemic" formula throughout the text), through an online survey available in 8 languages.

**Sample size:** 1559 valid responses.

**Respondents profile:** individuals aged 14-65+ living primarily in Europe, predominantly young female adults, with higher education, living in the urban area, of which the majority live in Italy, Romania, Spain and Belgium.

**Research instruments:** I-PANAS to assess Positive Affect and Negative Affect (Thompson, 2007), well-being Measures Toolkit (Thomson & Chatterjee, 2015).

## Research limitations

To ensure relevance, the sample was ponderated using as reference the percentage of EU citizens with higher education employed in the cultural sector, in other sectors and currently non-active in the field of work (retired, unemployed or students). The research results thus refer only to subjects with higher education, living in Europe.

## About the research

This research was carried out by the Cluj Cultural Centre (RO) and Fondazione Bruno Kessler (IT), in collaboration with the BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts (BE) and UGM Maribor Art Gallery (SI), within the Art&Well-being Project. The project explores the potential of the arts to enhance individual and community well-being and is co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

## Disclaimer

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