

ART CONSUMPTION AND WELL-BEING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

RESEARCH REPORT

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

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Abstract

The research explores engagement in cultural activities with reference to well-being and health during the Covid-19 pandemic. In recent years, there has been a major increase in evidence on the impact of the arts on health and well-being. This report brings a new perspective on how arts influence well-being during a crisis period, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

An aspect emphasized by this research is that during Covid-19 pandemic art consumption increased compared to the period before, with people stating that art helps them feel better and become relaxed. Besides the results emphasized by this research and other studies, the beneficial role of the arts for well-being could be furthered through promoting arts engagement at the individual, local and national levels and by supporting cross-sectoral collaboration.

Keywords: Art&well-being, creative activities, cultural consumption, Covid-19 pandemic, emotional burden, coping mechanisms, psychological health, physical health.

About the research: This research was carried out by the Cluj Cultural Centre (RO) and Fondazione Bruno Kessler (IT), in collaboration with 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.

We are thankful for the support to Norbert Petrovici & Cristian Pop, Babes-Bolyai University (RO); Yuste Foundation (ES).

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Introduction

The relations between well-being, society and culture are complex and indivisible. Well-being and health are part of our physical and mental health, and self-perceived health.

The Covid-19 pandemic seriously affected both the physical and mental health of people across the world. According to the World Economic Forum, in April 2020, an estimated 2.6 billion people, one-third of the world's population, was living under some kind of lockdown or quarantine (2). Longer durations of quarantine were associated with poorer mental health – specifically, post-traumatic stress symptoms, avoidance behaviours, and anger. During the quarantine, people reported fears about their own health and/or fears of infecting others. Also, the disruption of usual routines, and reduced social and physical contact with others caused boredom, frustration, and disorientation (3), (4).

While there is growing evidence that arts are effective in the prevention of ill health, in the promotion of health, and even in the management and treatment of certain illnesses across the lifespan (WHO, 2019), public health policies rarely include culture-related measures (5). Therefore, it becomes even more relevant to study how, in the specific context of the COVID-19 crisis, engaging with the arts and with creativity may affect people's well-being. Activities such as photography, music, painting and drawing might serve as coping resources to lift the psychological burden and stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research objectives

The study aims 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. More specifically, the study aimed to:

- Identify what kinds of feelings are experienced by people during this period;
- To what extent people are turning to cultural activities at this time;
- What kind of activities they carry out as part of their coping strategies;
- Whether and how specific artworks arouse their feelings in this circumstance and what kind of feelings they experience when watching certain artworks;
- How people feel their connection to the arts has changed before and after COVID-19.

What do we mean when we talk about well-being?

Well-being is a fundamental dimension of our human functioning, and a key component of economic prosperity and social development, which conditions people's ability of reaching personal life goals, as well as multiple spheres of human experience such as quality of life and relationships, emotions and resilience, but also physical and mental health (6). Well-being is a complex, multi-dimensional construct that can be defined as an optimal human experience and psychological functioning and involves subjective dimensions and objective conditions – indicative of physical, psychological, and social well-being (7). There is a range of definitions and measures of well-being that may be useful for different purposes. For the goals of this research, well-being is defined as:

A positive condition of existence characterized by health and satisfaction, in which individuals and communities feel that their needs are being met and they have the necessary resources to pursue their own definition of happiness and achieve their own definitions of success.

As such, “well-being” - as we will be using the term - encompasses mental and physical health, general welfare and overall personal satisfaction.

There is an important distinction between objective and subjective well-being from a measurement perspective (8).

Objective measures of well-being usually consist of several indicators or of a composite index, as they try to capture the material conditions that have an impact on well-being. Objective well-being is usually understood as a consequence of the wealth, financial, and social status of a person or an institution (9).

Measures of subjective well-being, in contrast, strive to capture how people value their living experiences and process emotional responses and cognitive judgments. Subjective well-being measures try to evaluate the experienced utility through a “single-item scale” or “multi-item measures” (10). Subjective well-being measures refer to an individual’s self-assessment of her/his overall well-being (11), and have rapidly become the focus of a broadening body of field research within the social sciences. The literature has centered on improving our understanding of what matters to individuals, and what are the factors affecting their well-being (12), (13), (14).

The research of subjective well-being is preoccupied to study and understand what people feel in relation to their own values and standards and two broad aspects of subjective well-being were identified: the affective aspects and the cognitive aspects (15). The cognitive component refers to a cognitive judgment of life, individuals comparing their life circumstances with a self-imposed standard (16), meanwhile the affective component of subjective well-being refers to the emotional aspects whereby levels of positive and negative affect are used to measure the level of subjective well-being (17).

An instrument considered in the literature to measure the affective component of subjective well-being is I-PANAS. The International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Short-Form (I-PANASSF) is a ten item scale which includes five positive states (active, determined, attentive, inspired, and alert) and five negative states (afraid, nervous, upset, hostile, and ashamed). People are asked to rate the positive and negative states according to the extent to which each describes the way they have felt during a specified time. This instrument is validated across different cultures and it has a great advantage when considering the time spent with data collection (18).

Other instruments used by specific organisations to assess levels of psychological well-being arising from participation in museum, gallery and heritage activities are the UCL Museum Well-being Measures. This toolkit was validated across the UK and used in over 50 projects and is designed to support people involved in museum and heritage projects to evaluate the impact of this work on the well-being of their audiences (19).

Considering the direct and indirect impact of culture on well-being through cultural participation, we considered in the present research, according to Cuypers et al. (2011), all the ways in which various individuals may access cultural goods and experiences: (1) creative cultural activities or active cultural participation (2) receptive cultural participation. Active and receptive cultural participation represent in fact the way in which individuals interact with art. In active cultural participation, individuals engage themselves in the creative process of art creation and contribute directly and explicitly to the production of the cultural experience itself: playing a musical instrument, singing in a choir, drawing or painting, or writing a text. In receptive cultural participation, individuals access and enjoy the experiences and contents created by someone else and include listening to music, reading a book, watching a show, attending an exhibition or a theatre performance (20).

Research methodology

The research consists of quantitative and qualitative analysis of data collected during May-July 2020 through an online survey available in 8 languages to individuals aged 14-65+ living primarily in Europe. The sample includes 1559 valid responses. Respondents are young adults, predominantly female, with higher education, living in the urban area, of which the majority live in Italy, Romania, Spain and Belgium. Research tools employed include I-PANAS to assess Positive Affect and Negative Affect (Thompson, 2007), Wellbeing Measures Toolkit (Thomson & Chatterjee, 2015). To ensure relevance, the sample was pondered using as reference the percentage of EU citizens with higher education employed in the cultural sector, in other sectors and 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.

Key findings

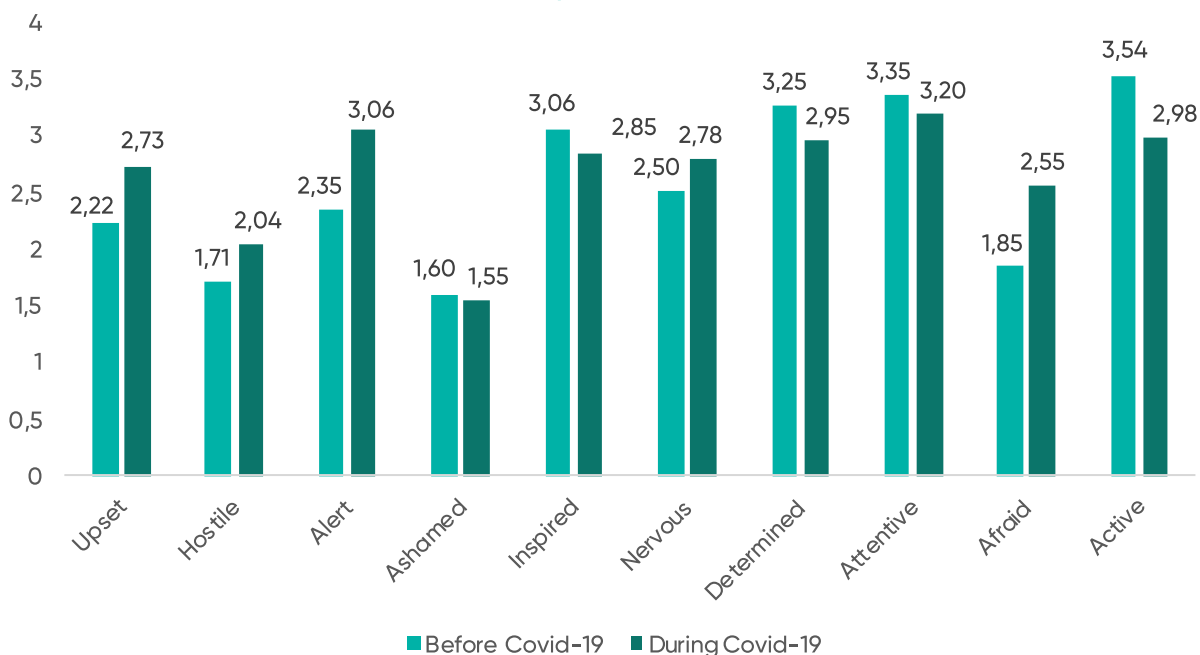
A. Cultural participation and connection with art during pandemic

Reported states of health and well-being

An evaluation of the psychological and health state reveals that most people report good psychological and health state before pandemic (almost 50% of them rated their psychological and health state at 4 - Good and almost 35% of them rated their psychological and health state at 5 - Excellent). Only few of them reported critical state for their mental and physical health (1% of people rated their psychological and health state at 1 - Not good at all). Compared with the situation during the pandemic, when a lot of people were affected at the physical level, the general health state was evaluated as being excellent by a great number of people.

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). Meanwhile, 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).

Figure 1: 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.

Table 1: Positive and Negative Affect scores of different occupational groups before and during the pandemic (I-PANAS, Mean Scores)

Occupation	Positive Affect before pandemic*	Negative Affect before pandemic**	Positive Affect during pandemic***	Negative Affect during pandemic****
Cultural field (N=58)	16.81	10.28	15.59	11.77
Another field (N=1160)	15.47	9.7	15.22	11.35
Not working (students, retired, unemployed people) (N=341)	15.68	10.54	14.43	12.79

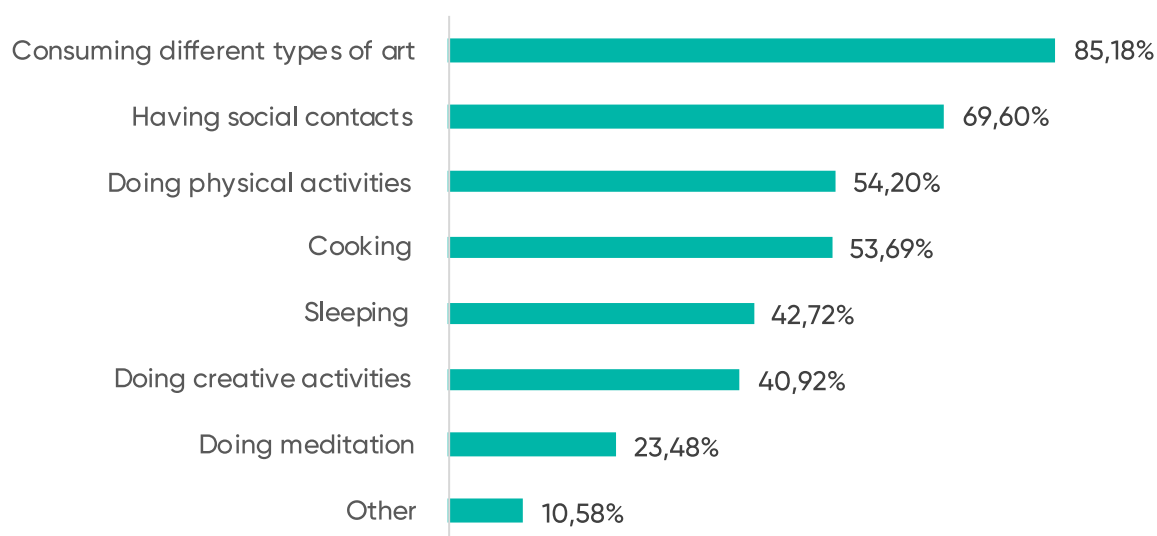
*F=3.2, p < .05; ** F=8.89, p < .001; ***F=5.27, p < .01; ****F=19.68, p < .001

Source: authors' calculation

Coping activities during the pandemic

When asked to choose from a list of activities they engage in for coping with their feelings during the pandemic, respondents mentioned art consumption and social contacts with loved ones most frequently.

Figure 2: Coping activities during the pandemic



Source: authors' calculation

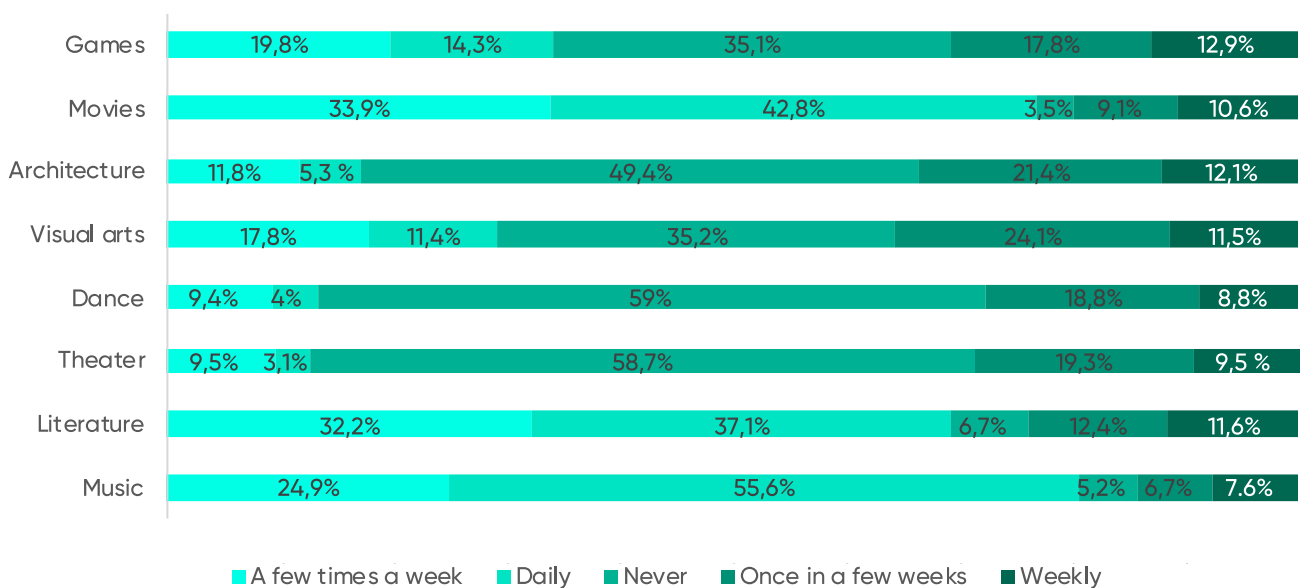
Cultural participation during the pandemic

The research evaluated both receptive **cultural participation or art consumption** patterns (listening to music, watching theatre performances or art shows, etc), and **active cultural participation or creative activities** through co-creation, creative processes and self-expression (playing an instrument, writing, singing, dancing, etc).

Receptive cultural participation/art consumption during pandemic

In terms of art consumption, the most frequent activity people engaged in during the pandemic is listening to Music. Other popular activities are watching Films and reading Literature.

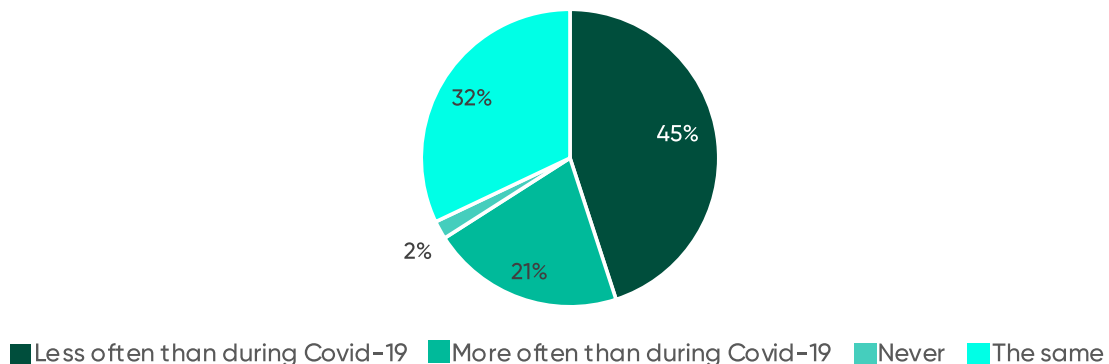
Figure 3: *Art consumption during pandemic*



Source: authors' calculation

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

Figure 4: *Frequency of art consumption before the pandemic*

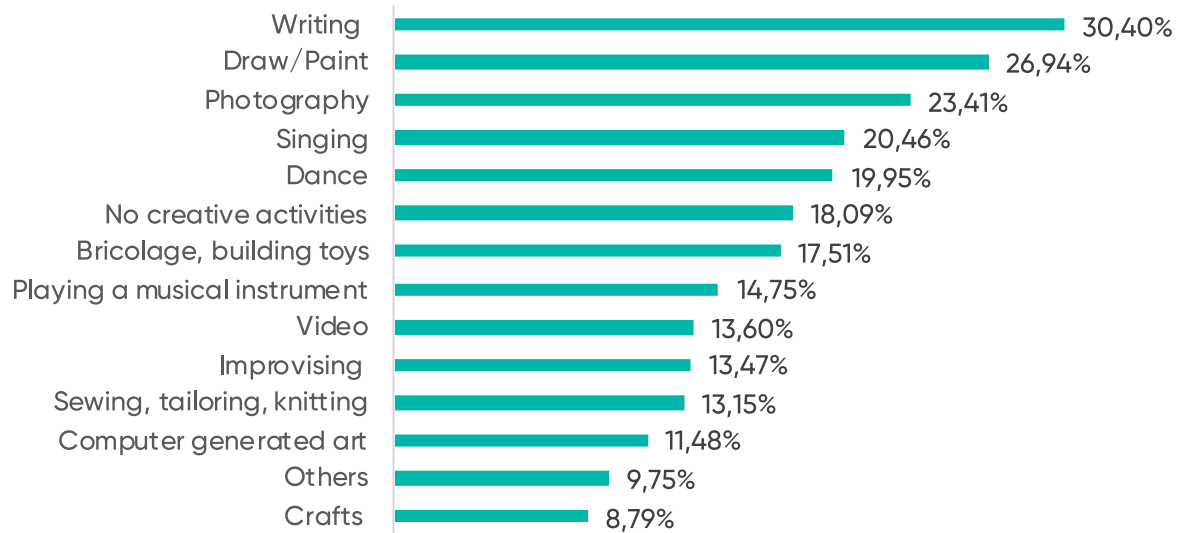


Source: authors' calculation

Active cultural participation/Creative activities during pandemic

Considering active cultural participation, the most frequent activities performed during the pandemic were Writing poems, small texts, essays, Drawing/painting, and Photography

Figure 5: Creative activities during pandemic.



Source: authors' calculation

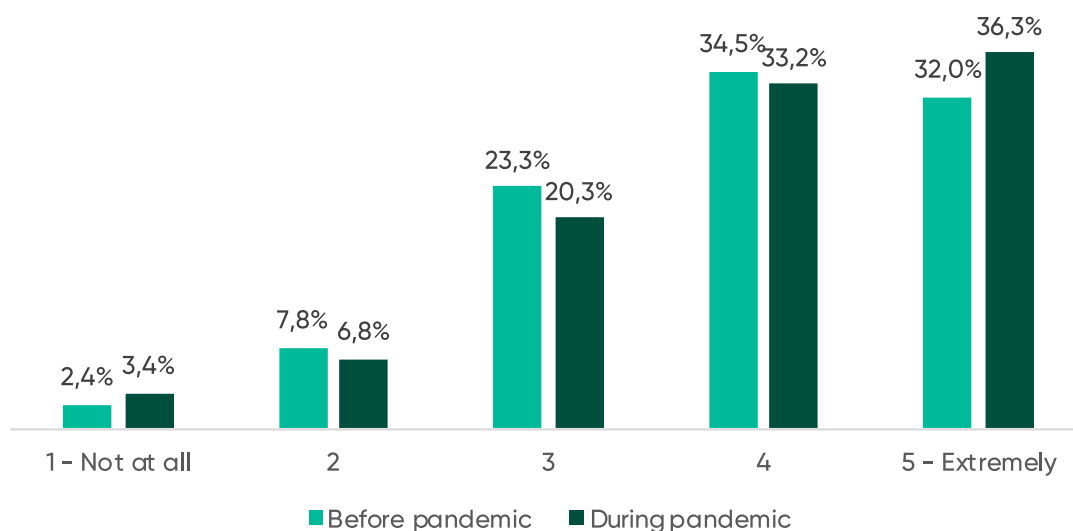
Analyzing active cultural participation, it seems that 46% of the respondents have been less often involved in creative activities before the pandemic, than during this period and 30 % of them engaged in creative activities with the same frequency during and before the pandemic. This result suggests an increase in the practice of creative activities during the pandemic.

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

Reported connection with the Arts

When asked about the frequency of the creative activities during pandemic, 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.

Figure 6: How meaningful is your connection with art?



Source: authors' calculation

More than half of respondents, particularly 56%, reported that they had a particular connection to an artwork during the pandemic.

B. Art and well-being during the pandemic

Asked about the contribution that arts and culture bring to their well-being, 64.21% of the respondents declare that art makes them feel better, 41.89% claim that art helps them experience beauty, awe, transcendence and 38.17% say that art makes them reflect on their lives.

Figure 7: Art contribution to well-being



Source: authors' calculation

Analyzing the collected data several significant correlations between cultural participation and certain dimensions of well-being have been identified.

Receptive cultural participation/art consumption during the pandemic and well-being benefits

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 **access art** often tend to have **lower Negative Affect** scores than those with low art consumption.



Receptive participation in culture more broadly (music, literature, theatre, dance, visual arts, architecture, films and games) is significantly correlated with benefits such as meaning/significance ($X^2= 18.97$, $p<.001$) and social connection ($X^2= 5.062$, $p<.05$). Specifically, 79.5% of those accessing culture (music, literature, theatre, dance, visual arts, architecture, films and games) perceive meaning/significance, and 55.5% of them find connection with others.

Table 2: Correlations between receptive participation in various types of culture and well-being benefits perceived by respondents (Chi-Square Tests)

ART	BENEFITS	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					
Literature					
Theatre					
Dance					
Visual arts					
Architecture					
Film					
Games					

Source: authors' calculation

Legend

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

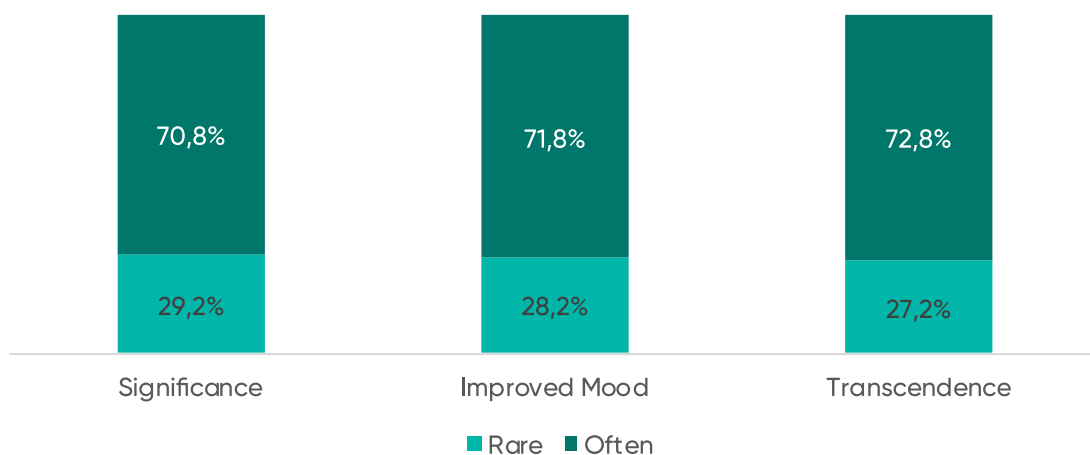
Active cultural participation during the pandemic and well-being benefits

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 doing such activities rarely (occasionally, never). People who are 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.

The frequency of active cultural participation during the pandemic is significantly correlated with the following benefits: meaning/significance ($X^2 = 14.32$, $p < .001$), **feelings/improved mood** $X^2= 11.75$, $p < .01$ and **aesthetics/ transcendence** $X^2= 8.70$, $p < .05$.

Specifically, among those who derive meaning/significance in relation to art, 70.8% are frequently engaged in active cultural participation (often = daily, 2-3 times per week). Among respondents who report improved feelings/moods, 71.8% are doing creative activities often (daily, 2-3 times per week). And of all those who experience awe, beauty, transcendence, 72.8% are often (daily, 2-3 times per week) actively engaged with culture.

Figure 8: Frequency of creative activities during the pandemic and perceived benefits



Source: authors' calculation

Art connection during pandemic and well-being benefits

The relationship between art connection and certain benefits perceived in terms of well-being is statistically significant. 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.

How people describe their experiences with culture during the pandemic

Through **qualitative content analysis in the original language of the sample**, the answers to 3 open questions included in the questionnaire were explored, the research aiming to understand: how participants experienced culture during lockdown, what meanings they attributed to the experience and the ways of interpretation.

The results clearly show that most of the participants involved in cultural and creative experiences and have developed an **awareness**:

- on the level of well-being activated by the cultural experience,
- on the positive emotions that arise as a result of engagement in cultural activities.

People were asked to mention feelings and emotional states they derive from their contact with the arts and engagement with creative activities. They were analysed based on the categories in the Wellbeing Measures toolkit (Linda J. Thomson & Helen J. Chatterjee, 2015). In summary, the categories that emerged most often from analysis are "Relaxed/Peaceful" (frequency 1842, density 11) and "positive" (frequency 1012, density 14). Other relevant categories are: "Joy" (frequency 767, density 13); "Motivated/fulfilled" (frequency 600, density 6); positive "Sense of wellbeing" (Frequency 490, density 21) and "Inspired" (frequency 476, density 7).

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

"Complete/ peace/ useful/ mindful/ happy" (Female, 46-55 years old, Portugal)

"Happy, stressless, calm, satisfied, fulfilled" (Female, 36-45 years old, Romania)

"Peaceful Joyful Relaxed Happy" (Male, 25-30 years old, Israel)

"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)

"Relajada, entretenida, calmada, inspirada, serena" (Female, 56-65 years old, Spain)

"Rilassato, tranquillo, attento, concentrato, calmo" (Male, 25-30 years old, Italy)

"Listening to Martin Cahill renowned fiddle player, made me feel inspired and calm". "Watching films e.g. - 'Calm With Horses' made me feel sad but with moments of joy also. Watching 'Dear Ireland' series of 50 short plays from the Abbey Theatre triggered a range of emotions such as hope, joy, sadness". (Female, 35-45 years old, Ireland)

The attempt to escape from a problematic reality, through immersion in cultural activities, is often made explicit. In some cases, the participants indicated the cathartic significance of the experience.

"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.

"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 sentimotivata e sorpresa" (Female, 25-30 years old, Italy)

In some cases, art seems to induce participants to reflect on the current situation and to feel the need for a greater connection/empathy with others.

"Libro, Ensayo sobre la ceguera, tristeza por el paralelismo con la situación actual" (Female, 46-55 years old, Spain)

"La belleza de las imágenes y la música provocaban placer pero a su vez por la situación provocaban una tristeza enorme". (Male, 46-55 years old, Alemania)

"In the beginning of the pandemic, I ordered online an art book with reproductions of Hieronymus Bosch paintings. studying them again brought me feelings of calm, introspection, reassurance of safety in relation to unknown dangers, but also the comforted sense that we have been through this before". (Female, 45-45 years old, Romania)

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

"Relaxed, connected, flow, "forget all about it" (Female, 36-45 years old, Romania)

"Collection of lovers" streaming/Portuguese artist Raquel André -Loved it, but it brought me a sad sense of impossibility and unknown future. Felt fear about what future my 16 years old art student son will have. What about physical contact in arts, what about humanity, what about freedom!? The artwork is about human connections, about solitude, about love and intimacy" (Female, 46-55 years old, Portugal)

"Viscolul lui Vladimir Sorokin m-am obligat la introspecție acută, căci fascinația miraculosului și a transformării pe care o produce asupra firii umane este un punct de plecare în conștientizarea malformațiilor sociale". (Male, 19-24 years old, Romania)

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.

Table 3: *Main associations between cultural/creative activities and emotions during the pandemic*

	Emotions	Relax Peace	Hope	Positive	Joy	Encouraged	Nostal- gia	Sadness	Interested/ Knowledge	Happy
Art										
Music		Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green		
Visual arts			Light Green	Light Green					Light Green	Light Green
Films			Light Green	Dark Green	Dark Green				Light Green	Light Green
Literature									Dark Green	

Source: authors’ calculation

Table 4: Emotions and states of well-being experienced during the pandemic while engaged in cultural /creative activities. Differences between different language sub-samples

Categories (Wellbeing Measures toolkit) Language Subsample	Relaxed/Peaceful	Positive	Joy	Motivated	Positive sense of well-being	Inspired	Happy	Cheerfulness/fun
Cultural activities								
Italian (N=467)	26%		8%	9%	12%			
Romanian (N=413)	17%		11%	10%	16%		13%	
English (N=265)	21%			8%	12%		11%	
Spanish (N=256)	20%	9%		9%			11%	9%
Creative activities								
Italian (N=467)	19%	8%	9%		14%		10%	
Romanian (N=413)	20%	11%	13%				13%	
English (N=265)	20%	13%	10%			13%	10%	
Spanish (N=256)	17%	16%	7%				11%	7%

Source: authors' calculation

Conclusions

On the basis of growing and consistent evidence on the positive effects of arts on health and well-being, it was important to explore the effect of arts on well-being also when the uncertain circumstances are influencing the way we feel, behave and act. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a generalized increase in stress levels for people around the world, and therefore our interest in exploring the effects of arts on people's well-being reflects a relevant question not only for research, but also for future policies.

The results presented in this report are part of the online research conducted in 8 languages (Romanian, English, Spanish, Italian, French, Dutch, Slovenian and Hungarian), with more than 1500 respondents. The results emphasize an increase in receptive cultural participation and creative activities participation during the crisis period, and this also holds for people who are not working in the field of art and culture.

In this study we also evaluated the well-being state of respondents before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we used the PANAS-I scale, a validated international instrument which comprises both spectrum of affective states - the negative and positive. Negative affective states were evaluated by asking people if they were: afraid, nervous, upset, hostile, and ashamed. The positive affective states were evaluated by asking people if they felt active, determined, attentive, inspired, and alert. The results showed that negative states among respondents prevailed during the Covid-19 pandemic, compared to the period before the pandemic when the positive states were dominant. In the case of negative feelings respondents reported that they were more scared and upset during the pandemic, than before the pandemic, and such results are not surprising considering the negative consequences brought by the pandemic. During the Covid-19 pandemic, respondents increased their engagement with arts and culture. Among the activities respondents engage in to cope with their feelings during the pandemic, the most frequent are art consumption, and social contacts with loved ones.

Writing, drawing and painting were reported mostly by respondents among the creative activities carried out during the Covid-19 crisis by people in the general sample.

Among the respondents, 46% have been less often involved in creative activities before the pandemic and 30% engaged in creative activities with the same frequency during and before the pandemic. This result suggests an increase in the practice of creative activities during the pandemic. Most people (69%) reported they engaged in creative activities daily or a few times a week, while 15% of respondents didn't perform any creative activities at this time.

In the case of receptive cultural participation, the most frequent activity performed during the pandemic was listening to music. This is not a coincidence, the therapeutic and relaxing role of

music was well established in previous studies. Also, film and literature were accessed during the pandemic with a high frequency. Comparing the frequency of art consumption before and during the pandemic, 45% of the subjects responded that they have accessed art less often before the pandemic, while for 32% of respondents the frequency of art consumption was the same. These results suggest an increase of receptive cultural participation during the pandemic.

More than half of respondents, 56%, reported that they had a particular connection to an artwork during the pandemic, suggesting that art tends to become more meaningful for people in this context.

The results show that most of the participants involved in cultural and creative activities have developed an awareness on the level of well-being activated by the cultural experience, and on the positive emotions that arise as a result of engagement in cultural activities.

The most relevant category of emotions experienced during cultural participation is relaxed, peaceful. The main relationships between cultural /creative activities and emotions are: music is in relation to joy, relaxed, peaceful, hope, positive, encouraged, nostalgia and sadness; visual arts in relation to being positive; literature in relation to knowledge and movies in relation to being positive, knowledge, hope and being happy.

As stated above the emotions / states of well-being prevalent turn out to be joy / happy and relaxation, and a positive mood. The attempt to escape from problematic reality, through immersion in cultural activities, is often made explicit. In some cases, the participants indicated the cathartic significance of the experience. Our evidence points to a sense of inadequacy and frustration experienced during creative or cultural performance/activity, and this can be a result of their lack of cultural capital. In some cases, art seems to induce participants to reflect on the current situation and to feel the need for a greater connection/empathy with others.

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

A number of considerations can be derived from the evidence gathered in this report, with a special interest for both the cultural and the health and social care sectors:

- Encouraging artists to produce art for the well-being of individuals, to explore how individuals connect to their artistic artwork, and what effects are generated by such experience;
- Sharing knowledge and practice of arts interventions found to be effective to improve individual health and well-being and to inspire public institutions to pursue more socially beneficial policies;

- Developing cultural well-being guidelines for cities and regions, in order to mobilize local stakeholders to facilitate and support beneficial social change;
- Making arts accessible to everyone, irrespectively of social and economic status;
- Launch cultural well-being education programs in schools to enhance resilience in uncertain circumstances;
- Strengthening collaboration ties between the culture, social care and health sectors;
- Encourage arts organisations to include the well-being dimension in their organizational vision.

This kind of findings can be of great potential relevance to inspire new programs for arts and cultural institutions to promote individual well-being in the medium-long terms, also as part of a societal strategy to improve human resilience to shocking events. It is already well known that the current pandemic crisis will spark significant changes in many spheres of human activity even when it will be over – in terms of lifestyles and habits, of social interaction, of consumption choices, and of forms and organization of work, to name a few evident ones. Understanding and anticipating these massive societal changes will require a considerable research effort, but preliminary research such as the present one may have a role in starting to shape an early research agenda on specific issues, such as the role of arts and culture in accompanying this change or even in driving some specific aspects.

As previously stated, the relationship between arts, well-being and health is already at the center of a flourishing area of research which sees the contributions of scientists from the medical, social and cultural fields. This has allowed us to understand that the benefits of artistic experience are not confined to entertainment and aesthetic appreciation, but can have important consequences on many aspects of human psychological and even physiological functioning.

Therefore, thinking of the arts as an important resource for coping and resilience is far from gratuitous, and deserves extensive scrutiny and policy experimentation. The critical conditions brought about by the pandemic crisis may provide an unexpected yet important test bed to better understand how the arts can benefit humans in situations of stress and need.

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Colophon

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Published by:

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3 Fluieraşului St., Cluj-Napoca, Romania
www.cccluj.ro

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About the research:

This research is part of Art & Well-being project, carried out by Cluj Cultural Centre (Romania), BOZAR (Belgium), UGM (Slovenia) and Bruno Kessler Foundation (Italy), and co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme the European Union.

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