

# New report shows the impact of arts, creative and cultural activities on the lives of older people

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New research from TILDA and the Creative Ireland program confirms that participating in arts, creative and cultural activities is associated with higher quality of life and lower levels of depression, stress, worry and loneliness.

The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin, T.D., has announced the results of a research collaboration with the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), at Trinity College.

The research, which was commissioned by the Creative Ireland program is a follow on report to the previous TILDA report, "Creative Activity in the Ageing Population" released in November 2021. This new report examines the associations between participation of older adults in arts, creative, and cultural activities in Ireland.

The report examines the association between these activities and physical, mental, and behavioral health outcomes, as well as the long-term benefits of participation.

## **Key findings of the report**

- Participation in arts, creative and cultural activities is associated with higher quality of life and lower levels of depression, stress, worry and loneliness.
- Older adults who have previously participated but no longer do, report lower levels of quality of life and higher levels of depression and loneliness compared to those who currently participate
- Older adults who have never participated report lower quality of life and higher levels of stress and worry compared to those who currently participate
- There are long-term associations between higher quality of life and participation
- Women are more likely to participate in arts, creative and [cultural activities](#) than men, with 62% of women current or past participants compared to 46% of men
- Higher education attainment is associated with participation.

Older adults with third level education are over five times more likely to participate compared to those with primary level education.

- Participation rates are highest in Dublin city and county and lower in more rural counties such as counties Kerry, Cavan, Monaghan, and Westmeath.
- The most popular type of arts, creative and cultural activity was listening to, playing or teaching music, with 52% of participants engaging in this activity.
- The strongest motivation for participation was interest in the activity, followed by enjoyment/fun and then [social aspects](#) /benefits.
- The most frequent location for participation was a private home followed by community centers.

Given the proven positive outcomes for [older people](#) involved in creative activities, the research called for the delivery of creative programs to increase participation in at-risk groups and increased access to creative activities with a focus on communities outside of Dublin and to enable those who previously participated but no longer do, back into participation.

Minister Martin said, "This report solidifies the findings of the previous report and develops on the strong evidence of the positive link between promoting participation in creative life and a sense of health and well-being, amongst older members of our community. I will continue to make it my focus to support initiatives that improve well-being in older age through participation in creative arts."

Principal Investigator of TILDA, Regius Professor Rose Anne Kenny said, "After more than a decade of extensive research, TILDA possesses an exceptional and valuable dataset that unveils significant facets of successful aging. This new report from TILDA, in collaboration with

Creative Ireland, examines the relationships between participation in these activities and various aspects of physical, mental, and behavioral health, as well as exploring the long-term advantages of such engagement, expanding upon the findings of previous work. Moreover, it delves into the realm of engagement, motivations, and barriers to participation in creative activities.

"Notably, the data collection period was during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time marked by public health measures that imposed restrictions on social gatherings, events, transportation, and the operation of cultural venues in Ireland, so these findings hold immense importance. To foster greater involvement of older adults in creative pursuits, it is essential to establish policies that facilitate their participation while eliminating accessibility barriers, regardless of disability. Such measures have the potential to enhance the health and well-being of a rapidly expanding aging population."

**More information:** Niamh Hennelly et al, Creative activity in the ageing population: findings from wave 6 of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (2023). [DOI: 10.38018/TildaRe.2023-02](https://doi.org/10.38018/TildaRe.2023-02)

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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