

Press release

Arts, creative and cultural activities boost quality of life and help combat depression and anxiety, new research confirms

From [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)

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

The research, which was commissioned by the Creative Ireland programme 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. This report sought to examine the association between these activities and physical, mental, and behavioural health outcomes, as well as the long-term benefits of participation.

Key findings

- 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 centres

Given the proven positive outcomes for older people involved in creative activities, the research called for the delivery of creative programmes to increase participation in at-risk groups. It also underlined the importance of increased access to creative activities with a particular focus on communities outside of Dublin; as well as supporting a return to participation for those who previously participated but no longer do.

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 wellbeing, amongst older members of our community. I will continue to make it my focus to support initiatives that improve wellbeing 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 ageing. 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 behavioural 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."

Professor Kenny continued:

"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 ageing population."

The report - Creative Activity in the Ageing Population: Findings from Wave 6 of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing - is available here:

<https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/> (<https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/>)

The findings of the report will be discussed on a webinar hosted by Trinity College Dublin and the Creative Ireland Programme on 1 June 2023 at 1pm. Free tickets available on [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/638027937737). (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/638027937737>)

The research was funded under the Creative Ireland Programme of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Notes

Creative Ireland Programme

The Creative Ireland Programme is a culture-based, all-of-government initiative, led by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, that is designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. The programme is grounded in the belief that every person has creative capacities, the development of which contributes to their personal wellbeing as well as to the general wellbeing of our communities and society.

TILDA

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), based in Trinity College Dublin, is a large-scale, nationally representative, longitudinal study on ageing in Ireland. TILDA collects information on all aspects of health and life from people aged 45 and over in a series of data collection waves, every two years. This information is used for many research projects and helps to identify national priorities and policies on issues such as health and well-being, healthcare needs, caregiving, and retirement. Since it began in 2009, over 8,500 people across Ireland have taken part in TILDA. Find out more at [www.tilda.ie. \(https://tilda.tcd.ie/\)](https://tilda.tcd.ie/)

TILDA is funded by the Department of Health via the Health Research Board and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

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