

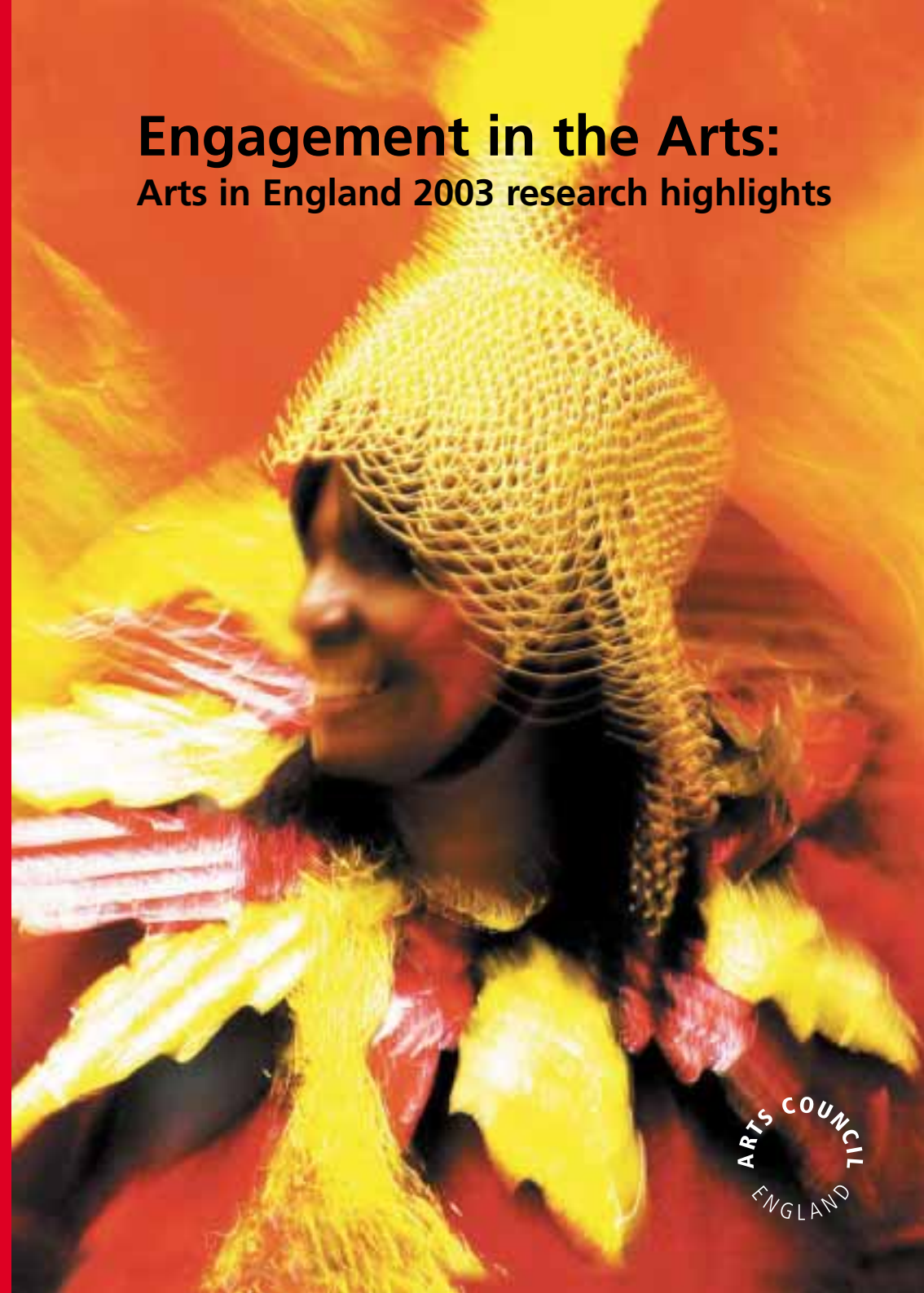
Engagement in the Arts:

Arts in England 2003 research highlights

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How do people engage with the arts and culture?

Arts in England 2003 provides a wealth of answers. The study, the fourth in a series commissioned by Arts Council England, was carried out by the Office for National Statistics. The results provide a rich source of data for policy-makers, audience development agencies, programmers and managers.

The research covers a wide range of artistic and cultural activities, with information about:

- who is attending what kinds of events and how often
- what types of people take part in which artistic and cultural activities
- the media used to listen to or view the arts
- how the public feels about the arts
- how people believe the arts should be funded

Image, left: MC Angel of Stereo Nation. Photo: Tony Griffiths
Cover image: Luton International Carnival, the largest one day carnival in Britain. Photo: Pete Huggins

Key findings

Changes since 2001

We carried out a comparable survey to this one in 2001, which allows us to see differences between the two years. Among the changes are:

- The percentage of people agreeing that 'Arts and cultural projects should receive public funding' increased from 74% to 79%
- The proportion of people visiting an exhibition of art, photography or sculpture in the 12 months before they were interviewed increased from 19% in 2001 to 22% in 2003

Our results also show that more people are using new technologies to access the arts.

- People were much more likely to book tickets on the internet in 2003 (16%) than in 2001 (9%); all age groups under 55 showed a marked increase
- There was a large increase – from 4% to 10% – in the proportion of people who said they had used a computer to make an original piece of art

Attendance at arts events

Our results show high levels of attendance. Four out of five people (80%) who took part in our survey had attended at least one arts event in the 12 months before they were interviewed. Overall attendance ranged from 69% in the North East to 86% in the South East.



- Over a quarter (26%) had attended a carnival, street arts event or circus, and a similar proportion (25%) had been to a play or drama
- More than one in five (22%) had been to an exhibition of art, photography or sculpture
- One in five (20%) had been to a pop or rock concert
- Almost one in eight (12%) had been to a dance performance in the last year
- One in 10 (10%) had been to a classical music concert

Image, above: Creative Partnerships Slough pupils taking part in the Young Arts Alive street festival, the culmination of a week of school workshops managed by Zap Art, July 2003. Photo: Ray Gibson



Taking part in arts activities

Our survey shows widespread participation in the arts. Almost nine out of 10 people (87%) had participated in at least one arts activity in the last year. The proportions participating in at least one activity ranged from 80% of people in the North East to 90% in the East Midlands.

People who took part in the survey were most likely to say they had read for pleasure. Almost three-quarters (73%) of those interviewed said they had done this in the last year.

- Thirteen per cent had painted, drawn, made prints or sculpted
- One in ten (10%) had made original works of art using a computer
- Nine per cent had played a musical instrument for their own pleasure

The diversity of artforms means the arts can offer something for everyone.

Image, left: The Richard Attenborough Centre is part of the University of Leicester, and the wide range of classes on offer are open to anyone who wants to be involved in the arts, regardless of their age, experience or disability. Photo: Rory Carnegie

Attitudes towards the arts

Our survey provides evidence of widespread support for the arts and for the public funding of them.

- Almost four in five (79%) agreed that arts and cultural projects should receive public funding
- Three-quarters (75%) thought that the arts play a valuable role in the life of the country
- Almost three-quarters (74%) thought that arts from different cultures contribute a lot to this country
- All but a minority (97%) believed schoolchildren should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument or participate in other arts activities



Accessing the arts via audio-visual and online media

Almost all (96%) of the people who took part in our survey had accessed the arts through various types of recorded or live media in the four weeks before they were interviewed:

- 87% had listened to the arts on a CD, mini disc, tape or record
- 84% had listened to an arts programme on the radio
- 71% had watched an arts event or programme on the television, video or DVD

Seventeen per cent of respondents had used the internet to access the arts, and 16% had used the internet to find out about or order tickets for arts events in the 12 months before interview.

Image, above: The Place, London. Photo: Rory Carnegie

How did we do the research?

The Arts in England 2003 survey was carried out between September 2003 and January 2004. Questions were included in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Omnibus Survey. ONS carried out face-to-face interviews with a random probability sample of 6,025 adults aged 16 and over living in private households in England. Interviews took place in people's homes using computer-assisted interviewing.

How the research is used

The results provide a rich source of data for policy-makers, audience development agencies, programmers and venue managers. We are using them to assess the success of our commitment to widening and diversifying audiences for the arts.

Arts in England 2003 presents only a fraction of the analysis that is possible. We are working with our audience development and diversity specialists to explore how the data can inform their work. We have also recently commissioned a health statistician to further analyse the data to explore the relationship between engagement in the arts and health; this report will be published in early 2005.

ONS deposits the datasets in the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex, and we would like to encourage others to carry out their own analysis of this rich resource.



Image, above: West Wiltshire Young Musicians, Wiltshire Music Centre. Photo: Rory Carnegie

How to order the full publication

Arts in England 2003: attendance, participation and attitudes is available from:
Marston Book Services
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