

THE REACH OF THE ARTS; SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction and problem definition

SCP publishes periodic studies under the title "The Cultural Base" (*Het culturele draagvlak*) to assess the affinity for art and culture among the population. Earlier reports in this series, which was set up with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OC&W), survey trends in interest in the performing arts (Knulst 1995), reading (Knulst and Kraaykamp 1996) and cultural heritage (De Haan 1997). This study is devoted entirely to the various forms of participation in the performing and visual arts in the period 1975-1995. The art forms surveyed are:

- the practising of artistic activities;
- the personal collection of art objects;
- the visits to performances, shows and exhibitions;
- the following of (information on) art via television, radio and own reproductive equipment.

Part 1 describes the interest in art and culture. In doing so, it focuses on the following topics:

- the level of interest at various moments since the 1970s;
- demographic and socio-cultural characteristics of the interested sections of the public;
- changes in the profile of participants over time;
- the interest shown by amateurs, collectors or visitors in art disciplines outside their own field, and the degree to which participants in artistic activities participate in other leisure activities.

Part 2 looks at the background to the trends described. The following themes are discussed here:

- the influence of the geographic proximity of the arts on the participation rate;
- the participation rate in the different stages of the life cycle;
- an explanation of the most striking differences in participation trends of older and younger people.

The findings are set out in the same order below.

Interest in the arts since the 1970s

Practising artistic activities

Artistic disciplines are practised by amateurs on a wide scale. According to data from the Supplementary Use of Amenities Surveys (AVO), almost half the Dutch population aged six and above is engaged in one or more activities. The Time Budget Surveys (TBO), which leave out of consideration active children aged six to 12, arrives at a participation figure of around one third of the population (aged 12

and above). The TBO figure would be higher if, like the AVO survey, it included photography and (video) filming as an artistic hobby and also if it included separate questions on textile crafts. The visual arts (two-dimensional) and playing a musical instrument are the most widely practised artistic disciplines in both survey series. Song, dance, drama, etc., are practised by fewer people. According to the TBO figures, 19% of the population aged 12 and above played a musical instrument in 1995, 17% were engaged in painting or drawing and 5% were active in the area of drama, musicals or ballet. Neither of the data series indicates radical changes in the number of practitioners since the 1970s.

The AVO figures do however show that the number of practitioners receiving some form of lessons increased between 1983 and 1991. The main beneficiaries of this increasing demand for individual or group courses were in the private sector (unspecified lessons given by specialists in the various disciplines). Attendance at institutions offering training in the arts (music colleges, creativity centres, etc.) fell over the same period. The proportion of practitioners joining associations or ensembles also increased, and the same applies for those practitioners who both follow lessons and are members of an organised group.

An association or ensemble, as well as a training institute, seems to impose some sense of obligation, because according to the TBO figures the organised practitioners are more frequently active on a weekly basis than those practising alone. The number of amateurs keeping up their discipline on a weekly basis fell between 1980 and 1995. This applies mainly for the practising of visual arts subjects, because the number of practitioners of the performing arts who rehearse weekly remained roughly constant.

Background characteristics of amateurs

Girls and women are more often engaged in artistic pursuits in their leisure time than men. Participation in artistic activities is highest among children and youngsters of compulsory school age (aged between 6 and 16), with the exception of applied disciplines involving photography and textile crafts. These participation figures fall as people age. These age-related differences, which were initially reflected in corresponding attitudes among those attending courses at artistic institutes and members of associations, changed over the period: participation by 16-35 year-olds fell, while participation by those aged 46 and over increased. Private lessons form an exception here: the increase in the number of people taking lessons referred to earlier occurred in all age categories.

The surveys also showed that the percentage of people actively pursuing artistic hobbies increases with education level and family income. While the figures for education level show virtually no variation between 1983 and 1991, the participation figures by level of income levelled out. Based on a participants' group comprising mainly people with secondary and higher education backgrounds, the profile of the group following courses at training institutes is less one-sided in terms of education background. Among associations, in fact, a slightly higher

percentage of members have a lower level of education. By contrast, practitioners with a lower educational level are under represented among those taking lessons in the private sector.

Turks and Moroccans participate in the performing arts less on average, and people of Indonesian or Moluccan background are generally less strongly represented in the visual arts. In both fields, the participation of people of Surinamese and Antillean background is virtually the same as for indigenous Dutch citizens, though there are differences in the field of textile crafts. Turks and Moroccans are still very weakly represented in support facilities such as courses and amateur associations. Surinamese and Antilleans also lag behind on this point, but to a lesser extent. Amateur associations are particularly unsuccessful in attracting members from ethnic minorities. Institutions providing artistic training and private teachers do enjoy a proportional reach among members of the Indonesian or Moluccan community, however.

Collecting works of art

The number of art lending libraries has increased since the 1970s. The number of people borrowing art objects in this way rose from 1% to 2% between 1979 and 1995. The proportion who sometimes purchase a piece of visual art remained unchanged throughout that period, at just under 5%. The amount spent on works of art has not increased in real terms (after correction for inflation). In 1995 4% spent less than NLG 1,000 and 1% spent more.

Contrary to the usual profile of participants in artistic activity, borrowers include as many men as women, while there is actually a slight predominance of men among buyers. The majority of buyers and borrowers are aged between 26 and 64. There was an increase in the 46-64 age group over the period.

Buyers come mainly from the higher income groups. This did not initially apply for borrowers, but the increase in the number of members between 1979 and 1995 was attributable almost entirely to the higher income groups. The clients of galleries and art libraries include virtually no Moroccans or Turks. The Surinamese and Antillean population are better represented. Interestingly the percentage of borrowers and buyers of Indonesian or Moluccan origin exceeds the average.

Visitors to shows, performances and exhibitions

In 1995 the cinema, with 45% visitors from the population aged six and above, was the most visited cultural institution in the Netherlands. Theatre visits were not far behind in that year (43%), though that figure includes all popular and conventional theatre together. Because of this, second place should really be given to museums, which reached 30% of the population. If the 11% who visited amateur productions is added to the 12% who only visited professional theatre productions, then stage performances are the most visited of the performing arts, drawing a slightly higher figure than pop music, jazz and musicals combined (22%). This is followed by classical music (including opera and operetta) with 15%, cabaret/satire with 10%

and ballet with 3%. Visits to one or more types of performing art – people visiting more than one type count once – rose from 36% in 1979 to 43% in 1995. This increase in visitor numbers was concentrated mainly in the area of pop music, jazz and musicals, which rose from 12% to no less than 22% (the survey did not include specific questions on these musical genres). Nonetheless, interest in classical music performances, including opera and operetta, also increased: from 11% in 1979 to 15% in 1995. The percentage of the population visiting the theatre and ballet remained virtually unchanged. Museum visits increased from 25% in 1979 to 30% in 1995, while visits to galleries increased from 17% to 19%.

Traditional performing arts, museums and galleries draw many visitors from the 36-65 age groups. The average age is highest among visitors to classical music concerts. Theatre audiences are younger, but young people and young adults aged 16-35 are interested mainly in cinema, pop music and cabaret/satire. The audiences of popular stage productions are not very young either, because the growth here was in the age category 26-45. Visitors to artistic productions are also characterised by a generally high level of education and high family income. Education is the decisive factor here, because the predominance of higher income groups can to a large extent be attributed to the influence of the education level attained. The predominance of the middle and higher strata among visitors is not limited to visitors to traditional artistic events. Pop concerts, musicals and cabaret/satire also draw a disproportionately high number of visitors with a higher professional or academic education background. Compared with the 1970s, this predominance has actually increased somewhat, partly because of an increase in visits by 26-45 year-olds.

Interest among ethnic minority members is also lower for visits to cultural institutions. Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans are much less frequent visitors than indigenous Dutch citizens to the performing arts – both popular and conventional productions – and are also less likely to visit museums and galleries. Once again, people from Indonesia and the Moluccas form the exception: their interest in the visual arts, which was apparent in the borrowing and purchase of art, is matched by a higher than average number of visits to museums and galleries. This group is also overrepresented among visitors to the popular performing arts, and proportionately represented among visitors to traditional performing arts.

Art via electronic media

Culture offered to the population by electronic means reaches a wider public than culture presented through the cinema, stage or museums. The primary vehicle for this wide reach of the media is of course films on television. In the world of broadcasting, classical music and programmes on art and culture attract the lowest listening and viewing ratings (and are therefore not highly prized by advertisers). However, in comparison to visitor numbers to live performances or art exhibitions, the reach is extensive: the number of people who listen to classical music at home is more than three times as great as the annual number of visitors to concert hall performances.

Between 1983 and 1995 the total interest in classical music (primarily via radio and CD) and art programmes – primarily via television – fell slightly. However, the number of people who follow art programmes or classical music by electronic means at least once a month did not fall. The more frequent - e.g. weekly - playing of classical music on reproductive equipment did fall, however.

Older people use electronic media more frequently than young people to listen to classical music or watch programmes on art, and people living alone do so more often than people in a family. Despite the wider reach compared with live events, the profile of home viewers and listeners differs little from that of visitors to live artistic events. The percentage of home consumers of classical music and art with a higher professional or academic education background is twice as high as the percentage of those with a lower education level. This difference has increased over time, because since the first surveys it is mainly people with a lower education level who have ceased listening to classical music at home. Compared with members of ethnic minorities, among others, those of Indonesian or Moluccan origin again set themselves apart by showing a greater than average interest in artistic consumption by electronic means.

Actives, receptives and collectors

Practitioners of artistic disciplines are more frequent visitors to artistic and cultural events, at least more frequent than non-practitioners. Practitioners who follow courses or are members of associations produce a higher percentage of visitors than non-organised practitioners. The combination of organised practice and regular visits to events affects conventional artistic offerings most.

Members of art libraries practise amateur art more frequently than average and also frequently visit other artistic offerings. They are more likely than non-members to purchase visual art and thus form part of the much wider circle of visitors to museums or galleries, who are buyers of art more frequently than average.

Those who regularly visit artistic and cultural events have a greater than average interest in art programmes and classical music via the media. This also applies to a slightly lesser extent for those who practise artistic disciplines.

Other leisure activities of people with an interest in art and culture

Those with an interest in art and culture are also exceptionally active in other areas of leisure. Both practitioners of artistic disciplines and visitors to artistic events take part in a diverse range of leisure activities and alternate between a variety of activities. The differences in the degree of diversity compared with those with no interest in art or culture have levelled off since 1975. The difference in participation in leisure activities outside the home between visitors and non-visitors has remained constant over time.

Practitioners who keep up their discipline weekly have the time for this because they watch less television. The fact that watching less television leaves lots of time

for other activities is evident from the fact that amateurs who practise their artistic activity regularly also frequently take part in social activities (voluntary work, club membership, political or ideological activity), sports and going out.

Visitors to artistic events also watch less television, and spend more time than non-visitors in contacts with family and friends and on the social activities referred to above. These differences were maintained between 1975 and 1995. In three cases differences in leisure activity between visitors and non-visitors increased: in the areas of going out, reading and the active pursuit of hobbies. The increased divergence in time spent going out is particularly striking here. The reason for this is that non-visitors to artistic events also rarely visit bars, restaurants or parties, whereas visitors to artistic events do engage in these activities. The growth in this area over time occurred entirely among the group who also visit cultural events.

When those with an active interest in culture go out for the day, their tourist/recreational programme also displays a certain cultural slant. They visit listed objects such as monuments and nature reserves more frequently than average. This does not mean that those with an interest in art and culture avoid things such as theme parks: a proportion of the public have no problem at all in combining "high" and "low" culture.

Occasional visitors to artistic events read to approximately the same extent as non-visitors, but frequent visitors (at least once a quarter) do read more than non-visitors. As expected, the reading matter of these regular visitors often includes quality newspapers, newsmagazines and books, and this group shows a preference for obtaining information on art and culture from newspapers. Although visitors to artistic events watch relatively little television, they still place television in second place as a source of cultural information.

Of the entire population aged 12 and over, 10% were active as volunteers in 1995 in the field of art and culture; half of these were engaged in singing/music or drama clubs. If those with an interest in art and culture carry out voluntary activities, they often do so to help their own hobby, but also frequently perform voluntary work in other fields (e.g. religion or youth clubs).

The drawing power of culture in the major cities

There is a strong concentration of the performing arts and museums in the four major cities in the Netherlands in relation to the number of inhabitants. This differentiated cultural agenda encourages consumption by city residents and draws many visitors from outside the cities. The chance of people being interested in art and culture is greater among residents of the four major cities than among inhabitants of other municipalities. Also, the chance of finding a participant in cultural activities in Amsterdam or Utrecht is much higher than in The Hague or Rotterdam. A greater proportion of the residents of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants in turn visit cultural events compared with the population living elsewhere. School-goers also benefit greatly from the wide availability of cultural

events in the larger cities, particularly museums and theatre. Whether cultural education at schools provides added value here could not be established.

Where someone lives or has deliberately gone to live thus has a clear effect, but the differences in terms of size of municipality are not as great as would appear to be the case based on the number of entrance tickets sold. It can be deduced from these figures that cultural activities in the major cities reach proportionately more interested parties than live in those cities. In other words, interested people from outside account for a substantial proportion of the tickets sold for events in the major cities.

Participation during different stages of the life cycle

Artistic disciplines are practised most by young people, while parents come into contact with the arts more in museums, theatres and concert halls or via the media. Various factors have an influence on this participation in the different stages of the life cycle.

Children living at home participate in art and culture primarily on the initiative of their parents and school. The principle of "setting an example" applies here; parents take their children mainly to museums; at primary schools drawing and handicrafts or textile crafts are often part of the fixed curriculum and school-goers often prove to be willing to take part in a musical for a school performance outside lesson hours. Virtually all primary schools also offer an opportunity for pupils to see works by professional artists during or after school hours. At school children are encouraged to watch plays or puppet theatre; outside of school they often visit museums and the theatre. Secondary school, and particularly the higher levels (HAVO (senior general secondary education) and VWO (pre-university education)) have lessons in art subjects and offer an opportunity for students to include these in their final examination package. HAVO and VWO schools organise cultural activities both within and outside the curriculum, and do so to a significantly greater extent than junior secondary vocational (LBO) and junior general secondary (MAVO) schools.

A growing proportion of secondary school students go on to professional training or academic study. This step to a higher level of education is however not accompanied by a higher average rate of participation in cultural activities. Without the prompting from school and the parental home, students' interest switches to other matters. Today's generations of students are more frequent visitors to popular theatre activities; the influence of their parental home weakens, but does not disappear entirely.

Young people with little cultural competence undergo a stimulus when they begin living with a partner. The arrival of the partner does not always have this effect, however, because people living alone take part in music, for example, more often than cohabitants with the same background.

The presence of small children limits the cultural activity of the parents. This factor appears to have become more prominent over time. When the children reach primary school age, the situation changes. At this age, the children are often taken along with their parents, boosting museum visits in particular. When they are older still – old enough to decide on their own leisure activities – children have virtually no adverse impact on the social life of their parents. Nevertheless, the empty-nest phase does not lead to a real increase in cultural interest.

Although this effect may become less prominent in the future, for people over the age of 65 physical limitations play an ever greater role. This first becomes apparent with cultural activities outside the home. At a certain point physical deficiencies outweigh the advantages of wide cultural consumption; even those with a higher education level and habitual visitors to cultural events then give this up.

Diverging trends in the participation rates of older and younger people

The interest in conventional culture shows an upward trend in the section of the population aged 40 and above and a downward trend in the population aged under 40. Two explanations for this were studied, one based on stages of life cycle theory, the second on a socialisation theory.

According to the *stages of life cycle hypothesis*, the demanding combination of work and care tasks presents an obstacle to participation in time-intensive leisure activities particularly between the age of roughly 20 and 40. Above the age of 45 this pressure of time gradually ebbs and there is more opportunity for cultural participation. In this phase of life the conditions for time-intensive interests have become more favourable. Diverse developments in the field of work and care lead to differences in pressure and psychological strain.

A second possible explanation, the *socialisation hypothesis*, looks for the causes in changes in the child-raising climate and ideals, the effects of which operate through the arrival of new birth cohorts. The assumption here is that generations which grew up in the 1960s and later have been "programmed" differently from earlier generations. This "programming", it is argued, prevents younger generations from developing the skills needed for traditional culture.

The figures mainly support the hypothesis derived from the socialisation theory, rather than that based on the stages of life cycle theory. Interest in the performing and visual arts, in terms of visitor numbers, has fallen in the generations born after 1960. This waning interest among newcomers can be attributed to the changed child-raising regime. Because of a difference in cultural "programming", the number of people with an active interest in conventional art and culture has been swelled only slightly by young newcomers, despite the greater reservoir of people with a secondary or higher education background among those aged up to around 40. The swelling of the ranks of those with an interest in culture faltered particularly among cohorts born after around 1960. However, the turning point cannot be determined precisely in terms of year and month, and it is better to talk of a gradually increasing difference rather than a break.