

Effects of participation in cultural activities on the quality of life and social well-being

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1. Abstract

In this chapter we analyse the different forms of participation in cultural life in the public space, at national level. The main objective of the analysis is to capture the profile of the participants in various cultural activities in the public space, depending on certain variables, in

order to identify how people choose to spend their spare time. Another objective of the chapter was to identify the reasons and benefits of participating in cultural activities, in order to support the development and implementation of cultural policies or projects.

2. Introduction

Three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to support the cultural sectors for their sustainable recovery. The cultural consumption trends identified during the pandemic show that there is a need for a rethinking of the way in which culture is perceived and valued by public authorities. The UNESCO report, developed during the pandemic, highlights some key aspects that should be improved for a rapid and sustainable recovery of the cultural and creative sectors, with the support of public authorities, and these aspects mainly refer to the development of new strategies that regard culture as essential for a socially and economically sustainable future. Perceptions of culture have changed during the pandemic, and this represents an opportunity for new sustainable cultural strategies and policies that value culture as a key element in individual and social well-being. At the same time, there is a need to reconfigure current cultural policies and to promote intersectoral collaborations, because *„a rich and diverse cultural ecosystem is advantageous in several sectors of the economy and contributes substantially to social well-being“*¹.

These aspects were the basis of several studies² conducted before the pandemic, which demonstrate the role of culture in social cohesion, quality of life, social well-being, sustainability; and following the pandemic, culture is no longer seen exclusively as a way of leisure or entertainment. During this period, the role of culture as an important development factor in the current context was realised, as culture is a public good with major implications in the quality of people's lives³.

Thus, cultural participation (in the public space) has positive effects on people, the exposure to the variety of artistic forms and cultural diversity gives people the opportunity to be more tolerant, more open to new ideas and concepts, to be more involved in their own community or/ and to take part in activities with a civic component⁴.

1 UNESCO, Department of Culture and Tourism, "Culture in Times of COVID-19 Resilience, Recovery and Revival", United Printing & Publishing, Abu Dhabi, 2022, p. 49.

2 Tavano Blessi, Giorgio; Grossi, Enzo; Sacco, Pier Luigi; Pieretti, Giovanni, Ferilli, Guido, " Cultural Participation, Relational Goods and Individual Subjective Well-Being: Some Empirical Evidence" in Review of Economics & Finance, 2014. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265139702_Cultural_Participation_Relational_Goods_and_Individual_Subjective_Well-Being_Some_Empirical_Evidence [Ultima accesare 18 ianuarie 2023].

3 Tubadji, Annie. "Culture and mental health resilience in times of COVID-19" in Journal of Population Economics 34, (2021), pp. 1219–1259, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00148-021-00840-7>.

4 Regina A. List, Olga Kononykhina and Jessica Leong Cohen, , "Cultural participation and inclusive societies", Consiliul European, Mai 2017, pp.12-13.

Moreover, several studies^{5,6} highlight the fact that participation in artistic/cultural activities brings benefits not only at the individual level, but also at the community level. An increased cultural participation positively influences the quality of life, not only at the level of people, but also at the level of interpersonal relationships.

Annie Tubadji's study conducted during the pandemic on the link between individual well-being and cultural consumption points to the role that culture plays in people's quality of life. Thus, „*culture is clearly a consumer good that is strongly associated with people's mental health*“⁷, cultural consumption (before, but also during the pandemic period) is positively associated with an increased level of well-being, which demonstrates that participation in cultural activities in periods of shock, of crisis is positively associated with emotional resilience, as well as with pro-social behaviour⁸.

Botti⁹ makes a classification of the benefits that participation in cultural activities brings to the people, as follows:

- *Functional (cultural) benefits* – are associated with the need for knowledge and education and are sought by people when they feel such a need (knowledge, curiosity, education, information);
- *Symbolic benefits* – refer to the significations of a cultural

product / event on a psychological or social level. In other words, a person may display their personality and social values through cultural consumption choices. Furthermore, these benefits refer to the desire to reach a certain social status, but without precisely understanding the cultural or artistic product / event associated to a higher social status;

- *Social benefits* – refer to those benefits produced when the cultural product / event conveys a message about a person and their social status. Cultural activities that determine such benefits act as „spaces for reunion and socialisation“ (for example, a theatre play is a reason to meet friends in a certain space, while the play itself becomes a subject of discussion after it ends);
- *Emotional benefits* – are closely related to a person's desire to have an engaging, interesting or fun experience, to satisfy a need, to escape from everyday life, to unwind. Unlike functional benefits, emotional benefits emphasise emotions, feelings, while functional benefits come from an internal need to „fill an inner void“.

In addition to these benefits, we can also analyse people's reasons for attending cultural events, what drives them to attend and continue to attend. Before making a brief classification of these reasons, it is important to note that, regardless of the personal motivation to participate in cultural activities, people's well-being is an important benefit of cultural consumption. People want to feel good when they participate in a cultural activity, they want to relax, to feel that the experience was pleasant and worth repeating¹⁰.

Marylouise Caldwell identified in her study, based on several studies over the years, that there are four main reasons why people participate in cultural activities/events¹¹:

5 Matarasso, François, "Use or Ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts", Comedia, 1997, p. 74.

6 Lee, Chia-Wen; Lin, Li-Ching and Hung, Huang-Chia, "Art and Cultural Participation and Life Satisfaction in Adults: The Role of Physical Health, Mental Health, and Interpersonal Relationships" in *Frontiers in Public Health*, sec. Public Mental Health, Vol. 8, 21 ianuarie 2021, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33558844/>.

7 Tubadji, Annie. "Culture and mental health resilience in times of COVID-19" in *Journal of Population Economics* 34, (2021), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00148-021-00840-7>, p. 1222.

8 Idem.

9 Botti, Simona, "What Role for Marketing in the Arts? An Analysis of Arts Consumption and Artistic Value" in *International Journal of Arts Management*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (SPRING 2000), pp. 14-27.

10 Caldwell, Marylouise, "Applying general living systems theory to learn consumers' sense making in attending performing arts." In *Psychology and Marketing*, 18(5), (2021), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/mar.1018>, pp. 497-511.

11 Idem, pp. 504.

- *Enrichment* – which refers to the desire for affective / intellectual / transcendental stimulation and which is based on the approach of positive experiences that are stimulating, the desired consequences being various experiences, emotions, feelings with an energising, revitalising impact;
- *Simplification* – is the desire for recovery, peace, escape from everyday life and it is based on the accumulation of positive experiences that have a calming impact and from which feelings of relaxation, of timelessness are expected, through which energy is recovered, „the batteries are charged“;
- *Communion* – refers to the desire for socialisation and connection to other people, for unity, and this motivation is based on the approach of positive experiences with people, things or events, on the (re)connection with people from a narrow social circle, with the aim to create intimacy, socialisation, human contact;
- *Distinction* – is the desire for uniqueness, superiority, self-determination, and this motivation is based on the approach of positive experiences with the self, on the desire to be different from others, to feel superior, on the desire for self-updating.

From Botti's and Caldwell's classifications we can see the connections between these reasons; the benefits brought by the participation in cultural activities are multiple (for example, social benefits can be associated with communion motivations, symbolic benefits - with distinction motivations, etc.), but it is important to remember that they are not mutually exclusive, a cultural activity may bring several benefits, the reasons may vary depending on the person and the needs they have at a certain moment (for example, emotional benefits may be associated with reasons of enrichment, but also with those of simplification, depending on the need one is feeling at some point). Following the pandemic, these benefits have become even more evident, and the link between the participation in cultural activities and a higher quality of life has been studied and

demonstrated in several studies that looked at the impact of culture on the quality of life during the pandemic^{12,13}.

Obviously, each type of cultural activity brings different benefits, depending on the person who participates in such activities, but certain types of cultural activities, which are predominantly stimulating, without requiring very high cognitive demands from people, have a positive impact on the quality life, more so than activities that offer instant rewards and lead to boredom fairly quickly, or more than activities that require a demanding cognitive effort, which also leads to boredom or fatigue and consequently to a low degree of attendance¹⁴.

Cultural activities that have relaxation and entertainment components are important in people's lives because they give them the chance for relaxation and personal development¹⁵, but also a chance to expand their „knowledge, skills, sense of belonging and personal achievement“¹⁶, in a pleasant way. All these contribute to „the restoration of individuals' psychological resources after periods of stress... they provide psychological well-being... positive moods“¹⁷.

12 Tubadji, Annie. "Culture and mental health resilience in times of COVID-19" în *Journal of Population Economics* 34, (2021) , <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00148-021-00840-7>, pp. 1219–1259.

13 Radermecker, Anne-Sophie, "Art and culture in the COVID-19 era: for a consumer-oriented approach" in *SN Business and Economics*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43546-020-00003-y>, 2021.

14 Tavano Blessi, Giorgio; Grossi, Enzo; Sacco, Pier Luigi; Pieretti, Giovanni, Ferilli, Guido, " Cultural Participation, Relational Goods and Individual Subjective Well-Being: Some Empirical Evidence" in *Review of Economics & Finance*, 2014, Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265139702_Cultural_Participation_Relational_Goods_and_Individual_Subjective_Well-Being_Some_Empirical_Evidence [Last accessed January 18, 2023], p. 42.

15 Stebbins, Robert A., (1997) "Casual leisure: a conceptual statement", *Leisure Studies*, 16:1, 17-25, DOI: 10.1080/026143697375485.

16 Marques, L și Giolo, G. (2020) "Cultural leisure in the time of COVID-19: impressions from the Netherlands", *World Leisure Journal*, Vol. 62, no.4, 344-348, <https://doi.org/10.1080/16078055.2020.1825256>.

17 Vorderer, P. și Reinecke, L., (2015) "From mood to meaning: The changing model of the user in entertainment research", *Communication Theory* 25(4),

We must mention here that certain specialised studies on participation in cultural activities make distinctions between types of activities according to the way they were traditionally defined and according to social class. As an example we have the "high culture" („highbrow culture"), which was reserved for the elites and the "mass culture" („lowbrow culture"), which was reserved for the common people, who did not have access or the necessary education to take part in „high culture" activities. Within this classification there is also the distinction between art and entertainment, a dichotomy that is also based on social class hierarchies. Similarly to the „mass culture", entertainment was considered inferior to forms of „high culture" for a long time, because, unlike this type of culture, which had as intrinsic values „truth, moral character, political value"¹⁸, entertainment was associated with the „carnal, profane life"¹⁹, the values of the two being divergent.

Cultural activities were also classified according to the types of activity, without reference to social class, but to leisure activities, which are divided into *casual* and *serious* leisure activities²⁰. Casual leisure activities refer to those activities that are generally practised for relaxation, enjoyment and do not require major cognitive effort. Conversely, serious activities refer to those activities which, in addition to relaxation and enjoyment, include a higher degree of (cognitive or physical) effort.

It is important to remember that various forms of cultural activities have different meanings to different people. Attending a classical music or opera performance may provide functional (cultural) or symbolic benefits, and going to the cinema may provide relaxation or entertainment benefits, depending on the personal motivations of people, who are actively involved in each cultural activity in which they decide to participate and

know from the beginning the result they want to obtain from participating in a certain activity.

The connection between the participation in cultural activities and the well-being of people and society is obvious, especially in the current context. Public policies should focus on this through the development and implementation of cross-sector strategies, and this requires consistent studies of people's cultural consumption and their reasons for attending cultural events. Another aspect that future studies should focus on is the identification of consumption patterns for each sub-sector of culture (e.g. performing arts, dance, music, etc.), because such studies can anticipate people's needs and desires, but also future consumption patterns (especially in times of crisis).

The evolution of culture over time is also to be considered; culture is in a process of continuous transformation, it becomes more and more interactive, engaging, it is ubiquitous in all areas of daily life and, therefore, the way cultural consumers relate to it in terms of motivations and benefits also evolves, people filter through their own internal mechanisms how they assimilate and use the cultural experiences they are exposed to²¹. Considering these aspects, as well as the studies conducted (before and during the pandemic) and mentioned in this chapter, which show the positive association between cultural consumption in the public space and individual as well as social well-being, we can realise the cultural institutions' opportunities to promote this connection at the level of local / national authorities, not only through the financing of cultural actions or initiatives, but also through collaboration with adjacent sectors, such as the sectors of education, health and social assistance²².

18 Shusterman, R. (2003) "Entertainment: A question for aesthetics", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 43, Nr. 3, p. 291.

19 Ibidem.

20 Stebbins, R. A. "Casual leisure: a conceptual statement", *Leisure Studies*, (1997) 16:1, 17-25, DOI: 10.1080/026143697375485.

21 Sacco, Pier Luigi, "Culture 3.0: A new perspective for the EU 2014-2020 structural funds programming" in *EENC Paper*, 2011.

22 Radermecker, Anne-Sophie, "Art and culture in the COVID-19 era: for a consumer-oriented approach" in *SN Business and Economics*, 2021.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, several variables were taken into account, through the analysis of which we tracked the distribution of different types of cultural activities and the reasons for participating in cultural activities at the level of the Romanian society, with the aim of supporting a data-based development of public policies or initiatives.

To answer these objectives, descriptive statistics and contingency analyses were used. Descriptive statistics highlight the general degree of cultural participation at the sample level. These explore the frequency with which people participate in various leisure activities. Contingency analyses are used to analyse the types of cultural participation depending on certain

socio-demographic variables (gender, age, level of education, personal income and residence area). Thus, an analysis of the public's profile specific to a certain activity is conducted.

The research hypotheses tested how respondents perceived the benefits of cultural activities by expressing reasons for participation. In Table 1 we present the potential benefits and degree of applicability for each cultural activity that we tested through the analyses. We mention that the functional (cultural) benefits correspond to educational reasons, the symbolic benefits are associated with artistic/aesthetic reasons, the social benefits correspond to socialisation reasons, and the emotional benefits are associated to relaxation reasons.

Table 1. Distribution of types of benefits depending on activities²³

Cultural activities	Functional (cultural) benefits	Symbolic benefits	Social benefits	Emotional benefits
Participation in classical/symphonic music, opera or ballet performances				
Participation in theatre performances				
Going to the cinema				
Going to the library to read / borrow books				
Visiting a historical monument or archaeological site (e.g. palace, castle, church, monastery, gardens, old buildings, etc.)				
Visiting a museum, exhibition or art gallery				
Participation in music festivals				
Participation in theatre festivals				
Participation in film festivals				

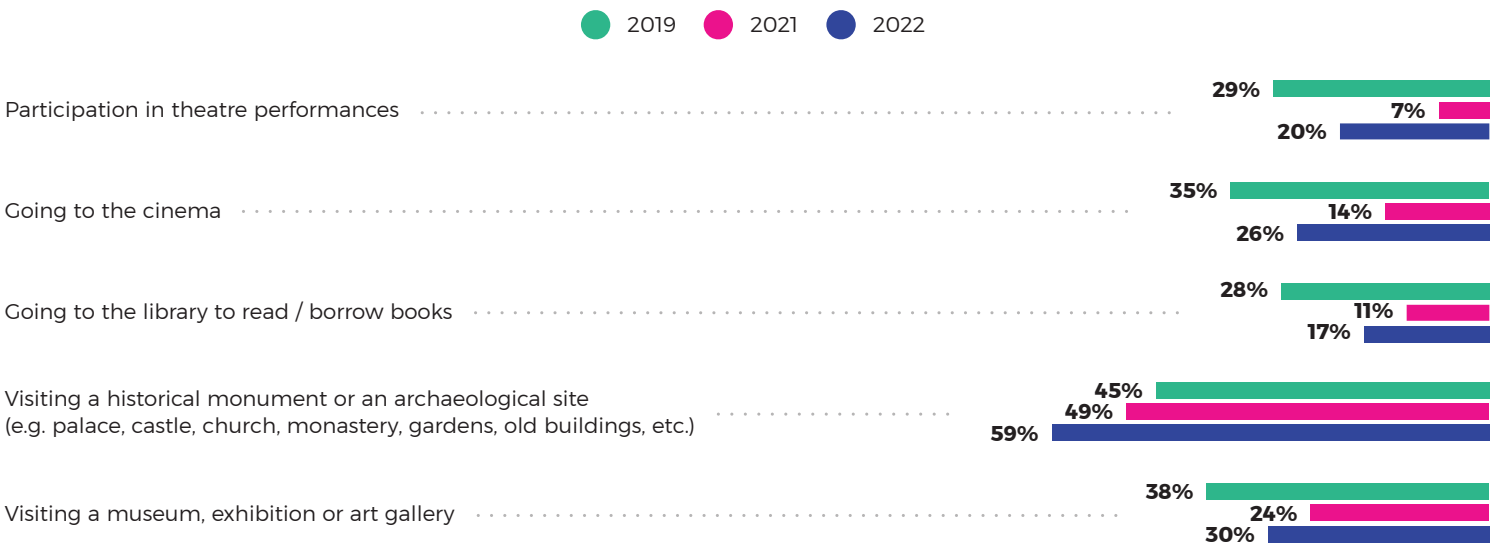
²³ The intensity of the colour expresses the degree of applicability in the case of the cultural activity.

4. Participation in cultural activities in the public space

We will first present comparisons between the frequency of participation in cultural activities before the pandemic (2019), during the pandemic (2021) and in 2022. The frequency of participation in cultural activities starts to increase in 2022, after two years of decline, as we can see in Graph 1. First of all, visiting a historical monument or an archaeological site is the most frequently performed activity by respondents throughout the compared period, and

the high percentages during the pandemic period can be explained through the fact that this activity could take place in the open space, too (for example, gardens or castles). The activities that are quickly recovering from the pandemic are going to the cinema, attending theatre performances and visiting a museum, exhibition or art gallery. For example, the frequency of attending theatre performances increased from 7% during the pandemic (2021) to 20% in 2022.

Graph 1. Comparison of the frequency of participation in cultural activities before the pandemic, during the pandemic and in 2022



At a general level for 2022, the frequency of participation in cultural activities is low (Table 2); thus, more than half of the respondents have not participated in any of the cultural activities analysed in this study in the last year. The only exception is visiting a historical monument or an archaeological site, an activity that 59% of respondents

practise at least once a year. This activity is followed by visiting a museum or art gallery and attending music festivals, with almost a third of respondents practising these activities at least once a year. Going to the cinema is an activity carried out at least annually by 26% of the respondents.

Table 2. Frequency of participation in cultural activities in the last year

	At least once a month	At least once every six months	At least once a year	Never	Total
Participation in classical/symphonic music, opera or ballet performances	1%	4%	5%	90%	100%
Participation in theatre performances	3%	8%	9%	80%	100%
Going to the cinema	7%	13%	6%	74%	100%
Going to the library to read / borrow books	7%	5%	5%	83%	100%
Visiting a historical monument or archaeological site (e.g. palace, castle, church, monastery, gardens, old buildings, etc.)	10%	25%	24%	41%	100%
Visiting a museum, exhibition or art gallery	2%	14%	14%	70%	100%

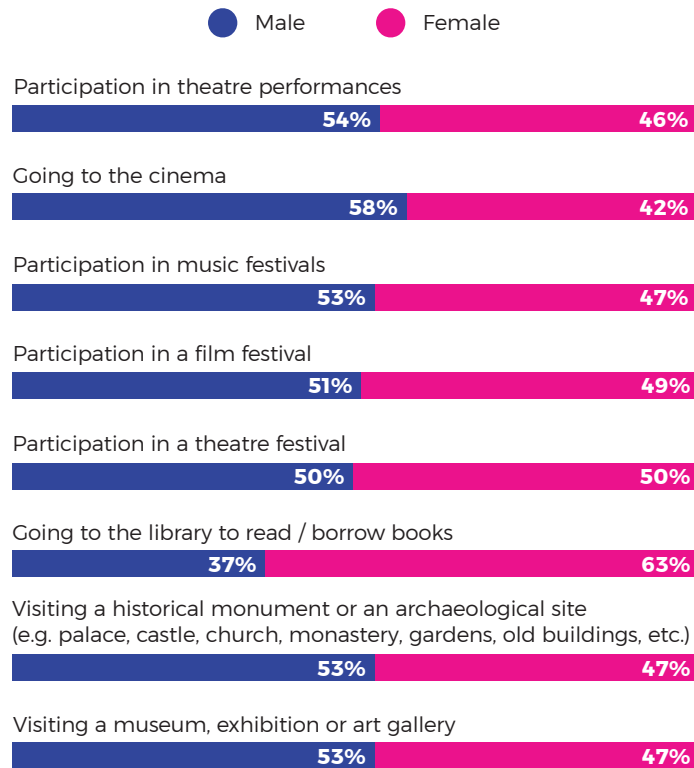
4.1 The socio-demographic profile of the participants in cultural activities in the public space

The public of the cultural activities is balanced, in the sense that in most of the considered activities, female and male persons participate equally (Graph 2). Differences depending on gender are observed in the case of going to the library

(to read or borrow books) and attending classical music, opera or ballet performances, the majority being represented by women. Watching a movie at the cinema or attending a theatre performance are more widespread among men.

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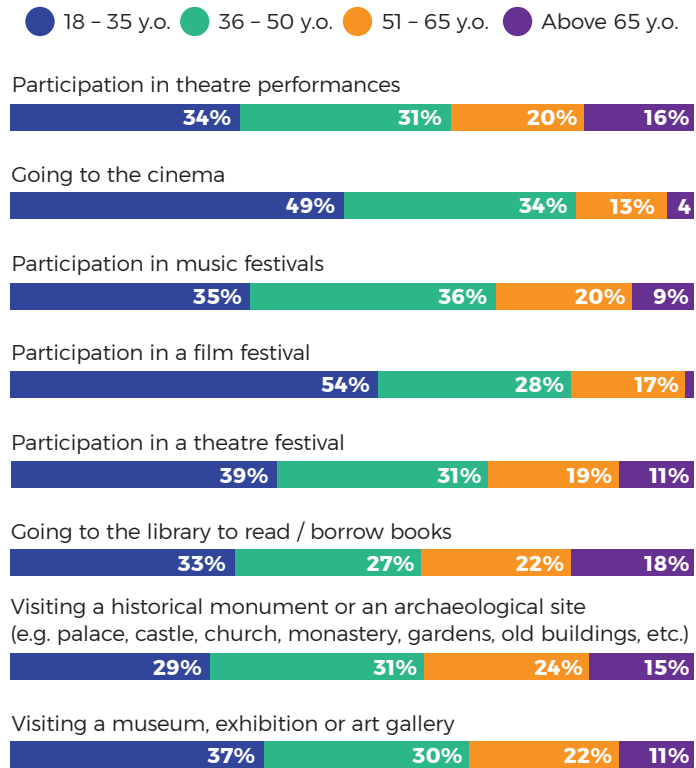
Graph 2. Profile of people who have participated in cultural activities in the last year, depending on gender²⁴



The profile of people who participate in cultural activities is predominantly made up of young people (18-35 years old). Thus, a specific profile (depending on the age variable) is visible among the people who in the last year have attended a film or theatre festival and the cinema, as well as for those who participated in classical music, opera or ballet performances or visited a museum, exhibition or art gallery. There is no specific audience for the other types of activities.

24 The percentages were calculated from the total percentages for the answer options At least once a month, At least once every six months, At least once a year.

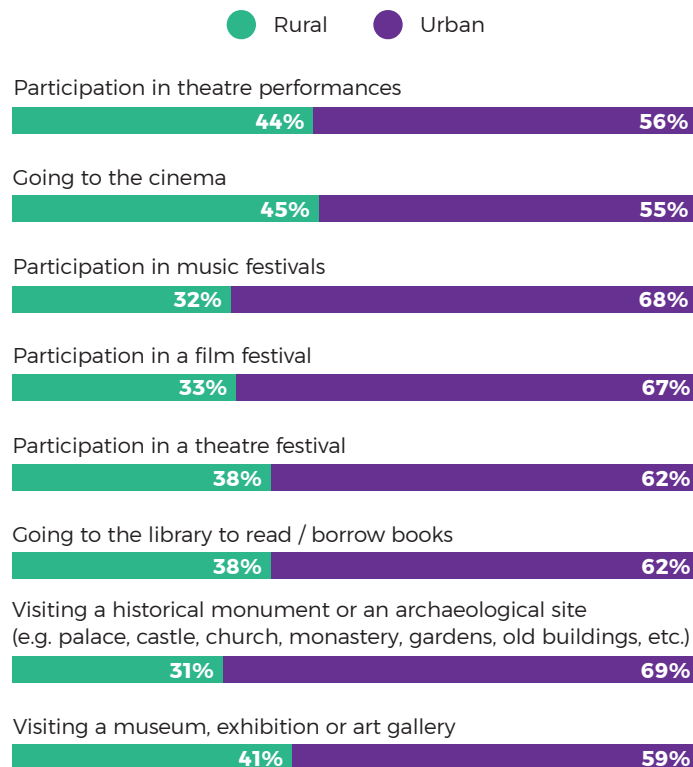
Graph 3. Profile of people who have participated in cultural activities in the last year, depending on age²⁵



In the case of the profile of the participants in activities of a cultural nature, we analysed the cultural practices depending on the residence area of the respondents (Graph 4). All activities have a significant urban audience, without exception, and this could be due to either greater financial possibilities or greater opportunities or accessibility of these activities in urban versus rural areas.

25 The percentages were calculated from the total percentages for the answer options At least once a month, At least once every six months, At least once a year

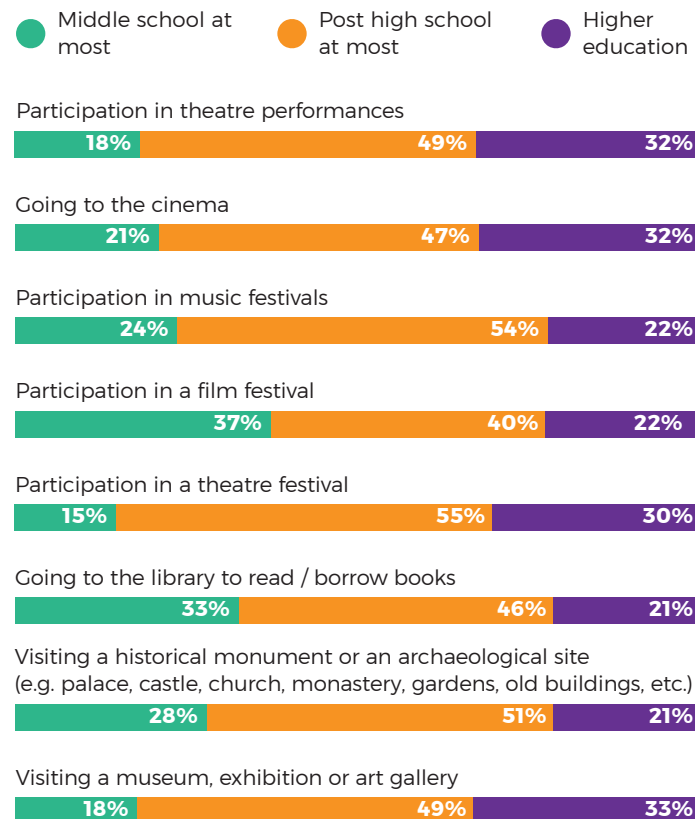
Graph 4. Profile of people who have participated in cultural activities in the last year, depending on the area of residence²⁶



The education level is another relevant criterion in defining the public that participates in activities of a cultural nature (Graph 5). In general, people who practice these activities at least once a year are people with a high level of education. A greater difference is noted in the case of those who attend classical music, opera or ballet performances, these being mostly people with higher education.

²⁶ The percentages were calculated from the total percentages for the answer options At least once a month, At least once every six months, At least once a year.

Graph 5. Profile of people who have participated in cultural activities in the last year, depending on the level of education²⁷



Income is another variable through which we can analyse the audience of cultural activities, and for most of them the audience consists of people with personal incomes over 2501 lei, especially in the case of participation in classical music, opera or ballet performances, going to the cinema and visiting a museum, an exhibition or an art gallery.

²⁷ The percentages were calculated from the total percentages for the answer options At least once a month, At least once every six months, At least once a year.

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Another profile that emerges from the analysis is that of the people with an income below 2500 lei and who in the

last year have gone to the library to read or borrow books (61%).

Graph 6. Profile of people who have participated in cultural activities in the last year, depending on income²⁸



²⁸ The percentages were calculated from the total percentages for the answer options At least once a month, At least once every six months, At least once a year

4.2 Participation in theatre / film / music festivals

Attending music festivals is the activity that scores the highest frequency of participation, with 29% of respondents

stating that they have attended such a festival in the last year. On the other hand, participation in a film festival or a theatre festival records low frequencies; only 9% of people say they have participated in these activities in the last year.

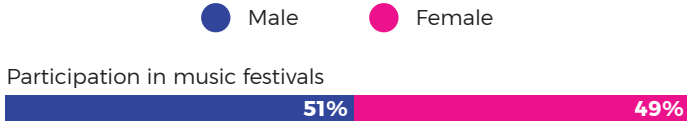
Table 3. Frequency of participation in theatre, film, music festivals in the last 12 months

	At least once a month	At least once every six months	At least once a year	Never	Total
Participation in music festivals	2%	12%	15%	71%	100%
Participation in a film festival	1%	4%	4%	91%	100%
Participation in a theatre festival	0%	3%	6%	91%	100%

Among those who attended a music festival, the majority participated in a traditional/folk music festival, followed by those who attended a pop/Latino music festival.

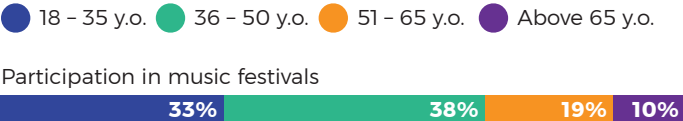
The gender distribution of those who have attended festivals in the last year is almost equal for all categories of festivals.

Graph 7. Profile of people who have participated in music festivals in the last year, depending on gender



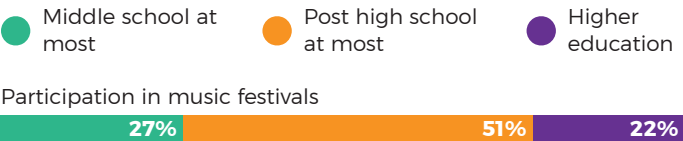
As regards the profile of people who participated in festivals in the last year, festival participants are generally young people and a specific profile of young people between 18 and 35 years old who participated in theatre festivals in the last year is noticeable. In the case of music and film festivals, there is no specific audience.

Graph 8. Profile of people who have participated in music festivals in the last year, depending on age



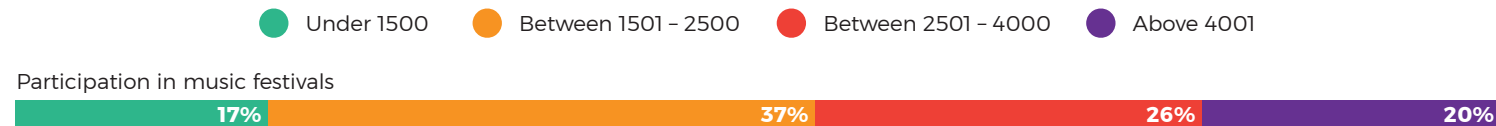
In terms of education level, people with medium and high education are the ones who generally attend the festivals. The percentages for all festival categories are roughly the same.

Graph 9. Profile of people who have participated in music festivals in the last year, depending on the level of education



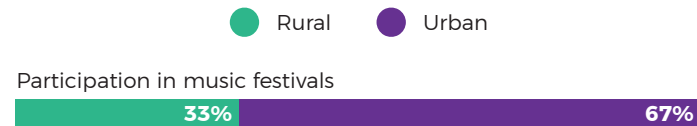
Regarding the profile of festival participants depending on income, people with medium or high income (over 2501 lei) generally participate in festivals.

Graph 10. Profile of people who have participated in music festivals in the last year, depending on personal income

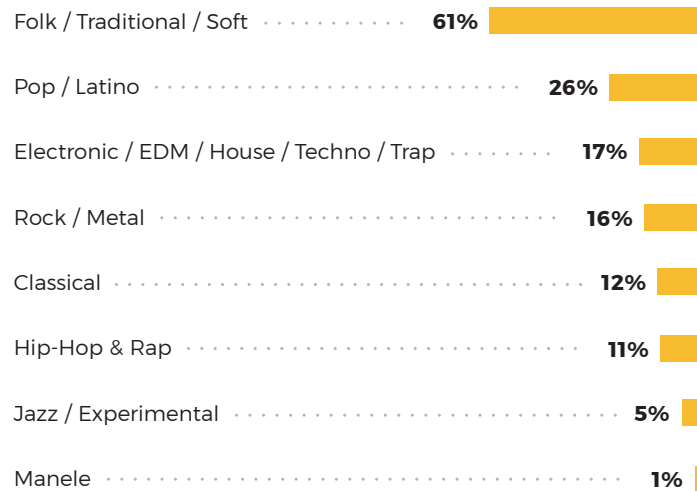


Depending on the area of residence, the profile of people who have participated in festivals in the last year is primarily made of people from urban areas (for all types of festivals).

Graph 11. Profile of people who have participated in music festivals in the last year, depending on the area of residence



Graph 12. Genres of music at music festivals (only yes answers)



As for the music genres most listened to at festivals, folk / traditional / soft music festivals (61%) and pop / Latino music festivals (26%) stand out. The rest of the music genres score low percentages, below 20%.

4.3 Types of access to theatre festivals

Next, we shall present the profile of people who participate in theatre festivals, depending on the type of access (free / ticket-based), in order to have an overall image of those who participate in such festivals. Thus, among those who have participated in theatre festivals in the last year, the majority participated on the basis of a paid ticket / subscription. This data tell us that, although only a small part of people attend these festivals, those who want to attend do so regardless of the type of access - paid or free tickets / subscriptions. There are no differences in gender distribution.

As regards the distribution by age, the profile of a young audience (18 - 35 years old) is noticeable, who mostly participates in theatre festivals with free access. There is no specific profile for those who go to theatre festivals with paid tickets / subscriptions. There are no major differences from the viewpoint of the education level in terms of attending theatre festivals with paid tickets/subscriptions or with free access.

Regarding the participation in theatre festivals depending on income, we can notice a specific profile of people with a personal income below 1500 RON, who have participated in the last year in theatre festivals with free admission. Otherwise, no specific profile stands out.

Regarding the profile of the public participating in theatre festivals, we can see that, in the case of free access, most of the participants come from urban areas. In the case of paid tickets / subscriptions, there are no differences.

4.4 The main reasons for participating in various cultural activities

In analysing cultural practices it is important to understand the reasons why people choose to participate in such activities. The main reasons for participating in various cultural activities were listed in relation to each cultural practice, and the respondents mentioned the variants valid

for their case. We analysed the distribution of reasons by frequency of cultural participation and respondents' socio-demographic profile.

Table 4 shows the main reasons of the respondents who participated at least once a year in one of these activities. Most of the respondents mentioned that they participated in cultural activities in order to relax. It is interesting to note that even for cultural activities that are usually associated with education or the need for increased cognitive effort on the part of people, their main reasons for participating in such activities are not educational, but relaxation reasons, which once again indicates that the perceived benefit of any type of cultural consumption is a pleasant experience.

Table 4. Main reasons for participating in activities of a cultural nature (for people who participated at least once in the last year)

	Socialisation	Education	Artistic / aesthetic reasons	Relaxation	Entertainment / fun	Other reasons	Total
Participation in classical / symphonic music, opera or ballet performances	10%	10%	8%	61%	7%	4%	100%
Participation in theatre performances	17%	10%	12%	38%	19%	4%	100%
Going to the cinema	11%	5%	3%	56%	23%	2%	100%
Participation in music festivals	15%	2%	6%	40%	35%	2%	100%
Participation in a film festival	26%	9%	7%	41%	12%	5%	100%
Participation in a theatre festival	18%	14%	11%	36%	17%	4%	100%
Going to the library to read / borrow books	8%	55%	1%	27%	6%	3%	100%
Visiting a historical monument or archaeological site (e.g. palace, castle, church, monastery, gardens, old buildings, etc.)	9%	23%	6%	48%	6%	8%	100%
Visiting a museum, exhibition or art gallery	7%	46%	12%	27%	5%	3%	100%

Other reasons for attending such events relate to socialisation, education and entertainment. Thus, in the case of those who have attended a library, visited a museum, an exhibition or an art gallery in the last year, the main motivation was to educate themselves. As regards the participation in festivals (music, theatre, film), more than a quarter of the respondents state that they participated for socialisation and relaxation reasons.

The profile of those who go to the cinema for relaxation reasons mainly includes young people (18-35 years old) from urban areas. Urban men aged up to 50 are the ones who choose more to visit a museum for educational reasons. Participation in music festivals for relaxation reasons is more specific to women aged between 36-50 years, from urban areas.

4.5 Participation in leisure activities in the public space

In this section we shall present the degree of respondents' participation in various recreational activities.

The highest percentages are recorded in the case of meetings with relatives or friends: 78% of respondents met with relatives or friends at least once a month. The next most frequent activity is walking in parks or green areas, with 64% of respondents practising it on a monthly basis. This activity is followed by going to malls, with 58% of respondents going to malls for various activities at least once a month. Going to church is another activity practised monthly, the percentage of those participating in religious activities being 51%. More than a third of the respondents state that they went to restaurants / pubs / cafés and that they practised a sport with a monthly frequency.

The other types of activities are performed with an annual rather than monthly frequency. Thus, just over half of the respondents went on trips in the country or participated in local celebrations or events at least once a year. Under a third of respondents attended sports competitions as spectators, went to clubs/discos or went on trips abroad.

Table 5. Frequency of participation in various leisure activities

	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once every six months	At least once a year	Never	Total
Walking in parks, green areas	40%	24%	9%	5%	22%	100%
Practising a sport	23%	13%	6%	3%	55%	100%
Attending meetings with relatives or friends	48%	30%	10%	5%	7%	100%
Participation in local celebrations / events (e.g. Town / Commune Days)	2%	13%	17%	34%	34%	100%
Going to church	24%	27%	20%	12%	17%	100%
Going to a restaurant / pub / café	16%	27%	15%	8%	34%	100%
Going to the mall (shopping, movies, restaurants)	21%	37%	14%	4%	24%	100%
Participation in sports competitions as a spectator	4%	11%	12%	9%	64%	100%
Going to the disco / club	1%	4%	4%	6%	85%	100%

	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once every six months	At least once a year	Never	Total
Participation in entertainment shows (e.g. stand-up comedy, circus, etc.)	0%	6%	15%	12%	67%	100%
Going on trips in the country	1%	8%	28%	23%	40%	100%
Going on trips abroad	0%	1%	6%	18%	75%	100%

5. Conclusions

Through this chapter we aimed to analyse the different forms of cultural participation in the public space and to identify the categories of people who participate in various activities, in order to provide a data-based support in the development of public initiatives/policies that sustain the increase in the degree of cultural participation at the level of the Romanian society. The reasons for cultural participation and its benefits to people are important factors that must be taken into account in the development of public policies or initiatives.

The analysed theories highlighted a series of benefits identified by the researchers as being associated to the respondents' perceived reasons for participating in cultural activities in the public space. Only certain research hypotheses were confirmed, especially those related to the social and emotional benefits associated to watching movies at the cinema or attending music or film festivals, as well as those related to the functional benefits associated to going to the

library and visiting a museum. The hypotheses regarding the functional and symbolic benefits perceived by the respondents for attending classical music or theatre performances, theatre festivals or visiting cultural heritage sites were disproved.

A possible explanation for these results resides in the consequences of the pandemic, which affected the emotional state of the population and which determined the use of leisure activities as a form of loosening up or relaxing in crisis situations, as shown by the studies cited at the beginning of the chapter. Another possible explanation is the paradigm shift in cultural management which, out of the desire to attract new categories of public, turned towards an easier offer, oriented more towards fun and enjoyment and less towards functional and symbolic benefits. It is important to follow in future studies whether this trend is temporary and caused by the social changes generated by the pandemic or if this trend is the effect of new tendencies in cultural management and will be maintained for a longer period.

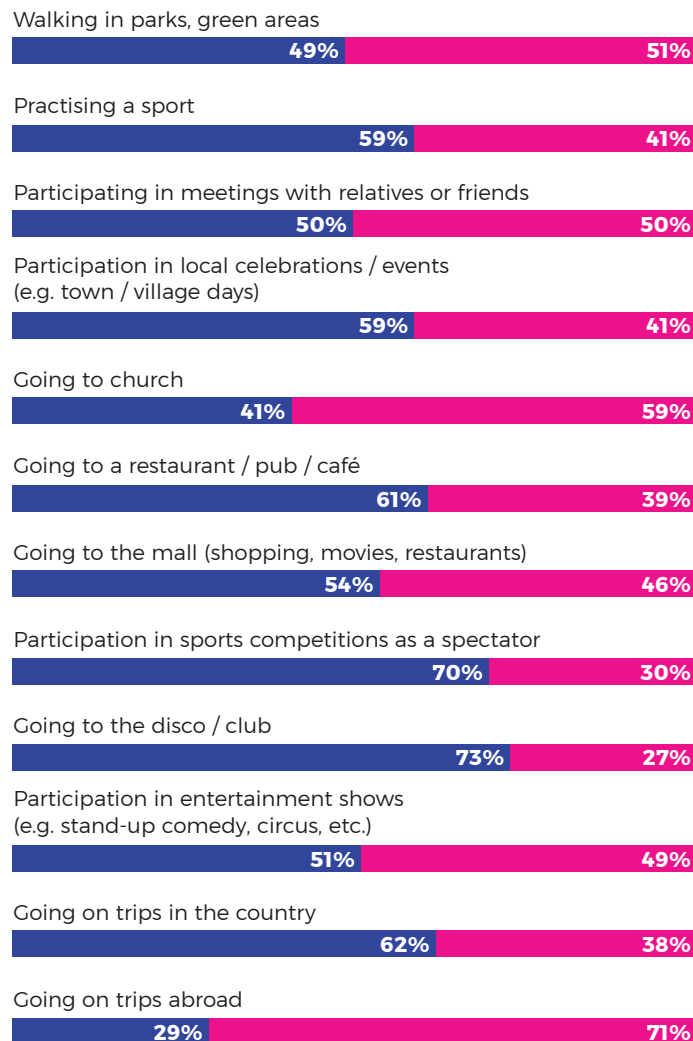
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7. Annexes

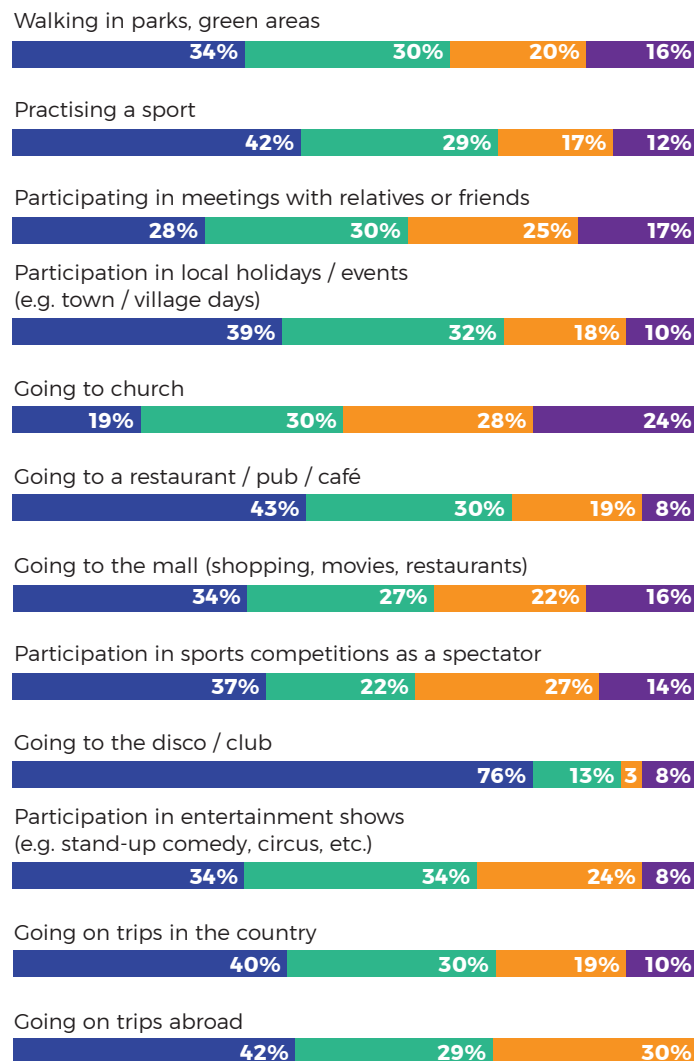
Graph 13. Profile of people who participated at least once a month in recreation and relaxation activities, by gender

● Male ● Female

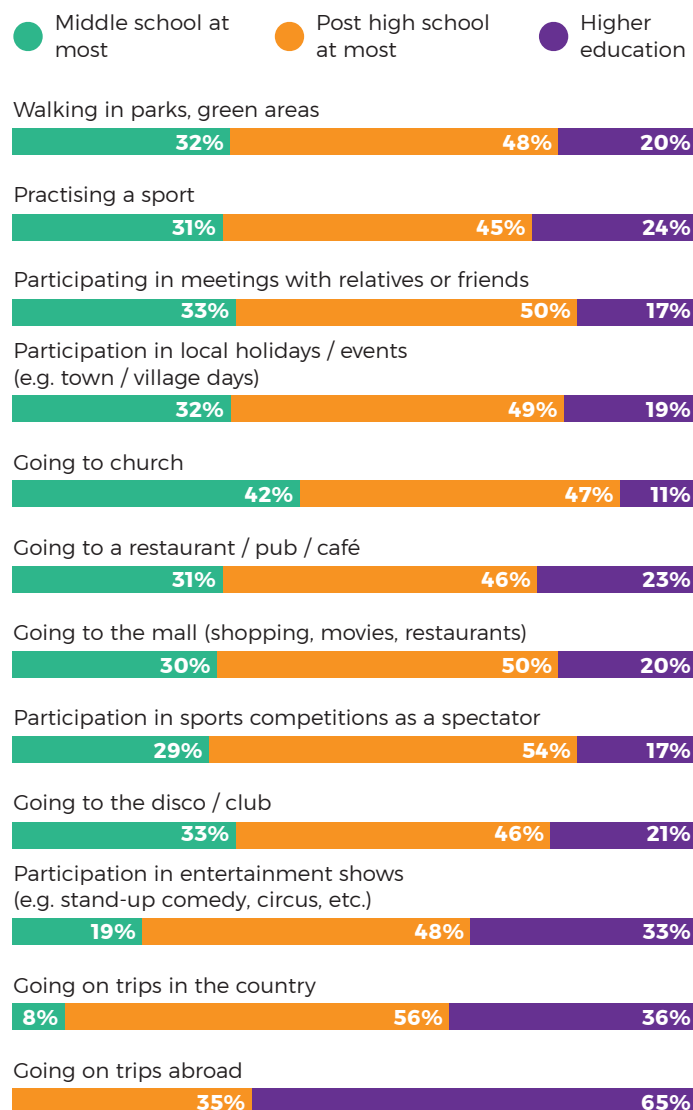


Graph 14. Profile of people who participated at least once a month in recreation and relaxation activities, by age

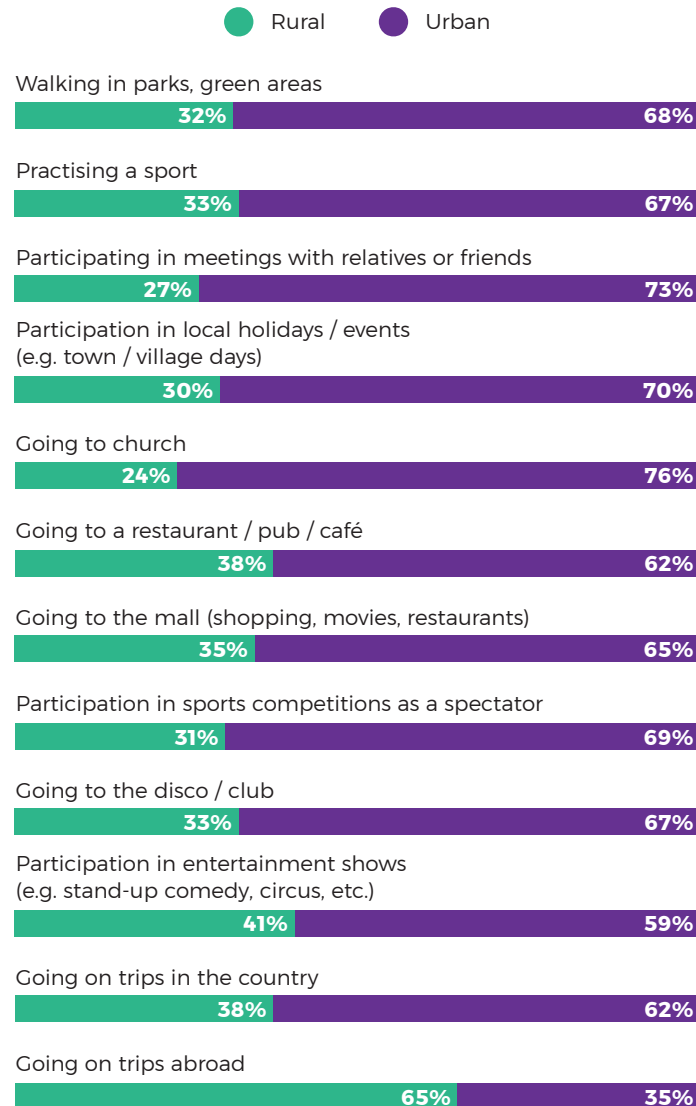
● 18 – 35 y.o. ● 36 – 50 y.o. ● 51 – 65 y.o. ● Above 65 y.o.



Graph 15. Profile of people who participated at least once a month in recreation and relaxation activities, by education level



Graph 16. Profile of people who participated at least once a month in recreation and relaxation activities, by residence area



Graph 17. Profile of people who participated at least once a month in recreation and relaxation activities, by income