

Arts attendance in England

Oct 2020 – Sep 2022

An analysis of official Government data



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Introduction

The [Participation survey](#) is the new flagship survey by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

It is designed to provide a central, reliable evidence source that can be used to analyse cultural, digital and sporting engagement of adults aged 16 and over in England.

Fieldwork involving over 8,000 people has been conducted quarterly since October 2021.

This report, published by Campaign for the Arts and Data Culture Change, analyses attendance at arts events using the first full year of Participation survey fieldwork (October 2021 to September 2022).

Since respondents are asked if they have attended arts events in the last 12 months, the overall dataset includes attendances that occurred between Q4 2020 and Q3 2022.

This was a critical period for the cultural sector in England, encompassing:

- the second and third national lockdowns in Q4 2020 and Q1 2021;
- the gradual easing of Covid restrictions in Q2 and Q3 2021;
- the Omicron wave in Q4 2021;
- the removal of remaining Covid restrictions in Q1 2022.

Analysing attendance data highlights the major and ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the arts and cultural sector, as well as the progress of different art forms towards recovery.

Key findings

1. Attendance increased across all art forms between October 2020 and September 2022

Overall there is a positive trend in arts attendance in England.

The latest data (collected in Q3 2022) shows higher attendance levels for every art form than was the case in Q4 2021.

Across all art forms, attendance increased from an average of 12% between Q4 2020 and Q4 2021 (the period with the most pandemic restrictions) to an average of 20% between Q3 2021 and Q3 2022 (the period with the fewest pandemic restrictions).

2. Attendance continues to grow for film, live music, festivals, carnivals and street art

By the third quarter of 2022, DCMS recorded statistically significant increases in the percentage of adults who had attended:

- a cinema screening of a film or movie
- a live music event
- a festival and or carnival (music, food, culture)
- a street art event

Live music has overtaken live theatre as the second most popular art form in England.

3. For other art forms, attendance growth is slower and may have stalled

While the percentage of respondents stating that they had attended the following had risen slightly by Q3 2022, the increase was not enough to be statistically significant given the size of the sample:

- an exhibition of art, photography or sculptures
- a play, drama, musical, Pantomime, Ballet, Opera
- an event connected with books, reading, or writing
- a craft exhibition (not a crafts market; crafts include for example textiles, woodworking)
- a live dance event

This suggests that attendance may no longer be increasing for these art forms.

4. Attendance of most art forms has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels

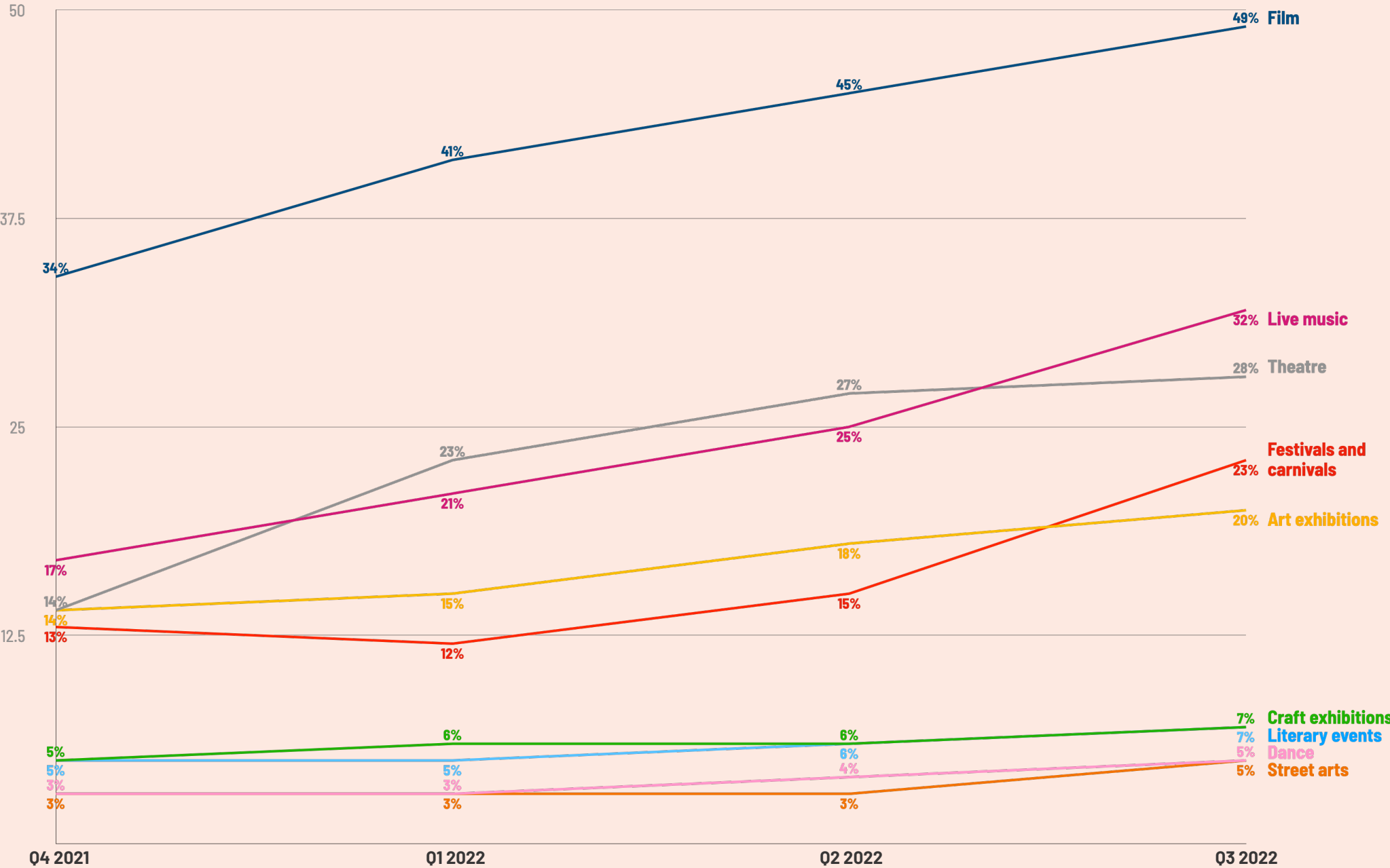
By the end of September 2022, the proportion of people attending dance was only 64% of the number recorded in official statistics from 2019-20. Theatre attendance was at only 73% of the prior level.

The only two art forms registering higher levels of attendance were events connected with books or writing (up 2 percentage points) and festivals and carnivals (up 8 percentage points). However, these and all comparisons with pre-pandemic statistics need to be approached with caution, due to a change in survey methodology (see page 10).

Table 1: Adults stating they have attended arts events in the last 12 months

Table 1: Adults stating they have attended arts events in the last 12 months				PARTICIPATION SURVEY FIELDWORK			
Q4 2020 (Oct–Dec)	Q1 2021 (Jan–Mar)	Q2 2021 (Apr–Jun)	Q3 2021 (Jul–Sep)	Q4 2021 (Oct–Dec)	Q1 2022 (Jan–Mar)	Q2 2022 (Apr–Jun)	Q3 2022 (Jul–Sep)
<p>12 OCTOBER – New three-tier local restrictions. In Tier 1, 'rule of six' and social distancing. In Tier 2, households and support bubbles cannot mix indoors. In Tier 3, local authorities may close venues.</p> <p>5 NOVEMBER – Second national lockdown begins. Arts venues forced to close, some only days after reopening. Schools remain open.</p> <p>2 DECEMBER – Second national lockdown ends. Stricter three-tier system, with capacity limits for indoor and outdoor arts events. All venues in Tier 3 areas must close.</p> <p>19 DECEMBER – New Tier 4: 'Stay at Home' alert level for 18 million people in London and South East England.</p> <p>26 DECEMBER – More areas of England enter Tier 4 restrictions.</p>	<p>6 JANUARY – Third national lockdown begins. All arts venues and most schools must close.</p> <p>22 FEBRUARY – Roadmap published for lifting lockdown, including 'not before' dates for arts events with and without social distancing.</p> <p>8 MARCH – Schools reopen in England.</p>	<p>17 MAY – Arts events resume with social distancing and indoor and outdoor capacity limits.</p> <p>14 SEPTEMBER – Government publishes 'Autumn and Winter Plan' for Covid. 'Plan B' to be used if the NHS faces "unsustainable pressure".</p>	<p>19 JULY – “Freedom Day” – most legal restrictions on social contact lifted in England, although the PM continues to urge 'caution'.</p>	<p>27 NOVEMBER – First case of Omicron variant detected in UK.</p> <p>8 DECEMBER – PM announces move to 'Plan B' measures in England.</p> <p>10 DECEMBER – Face masks become compulsory in most public indoor venues.</p>	<p>24 FEBRUARY – All remaining Covid restrictions lifted in England. Government asks the public to 'practice specific safe and responsible behaviours'.</p>		
Film	34%	41%	45%	49%			
Live music	17%	21%	25%	32%			
Theatre	14%	23%	27%	28%			
Art exhibitions	14%	15%	18%	20%			
Festivals and carnivals	13%	12%	15%	23%			
Craft exhibitions	5%	6%	6%	7%			
Literary events	5%	5%	6%	7%			
Dance	3%	3%	4%	5%			
Street arts	3%	3%	3%	5%			

Chart 1: Adults stating they have attended arts events in the last 12 months



Source: DCMS Participation survey

Pre-pandemic comparisons

There is understandable interest in how recent attendance levels compare with those before the pandemic. Unfortunately it is not statistically sound to draw comparisons within official statistics.

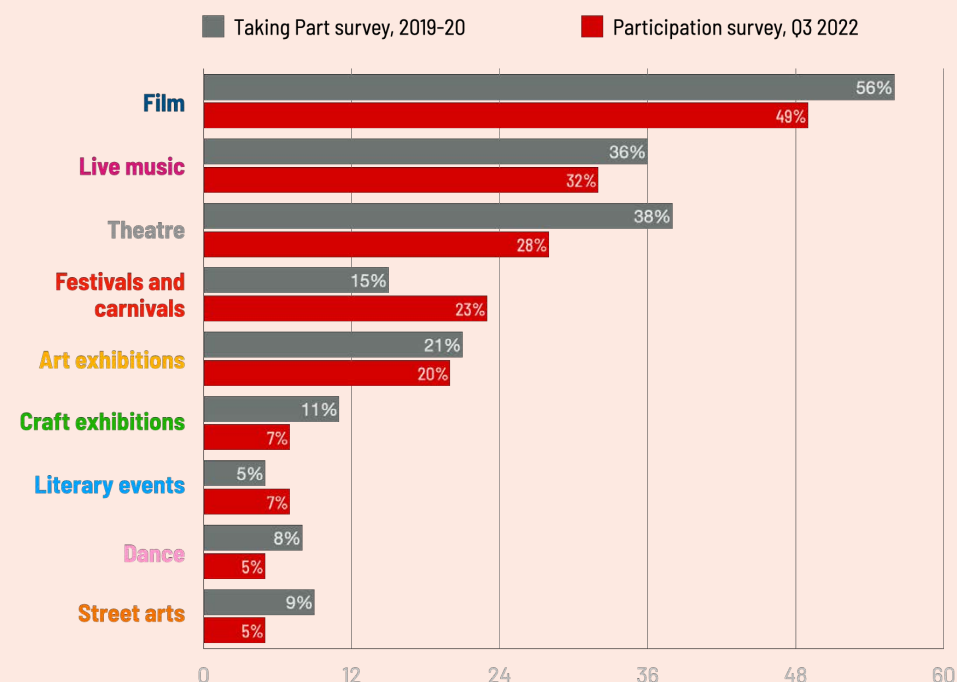
This is because the DCMS Participation survey (October 2021-present) replaced a different survey, [Taking Part](#) (2005 -2020). Although many questions are asked in the same or a similar way, [DCMS guidance](#) details the differences in methodologies between the two surveys.

Results from the Taking Part survey do remain the best available data on cultural engagement prior to the pandemic. The Participation survey is the new 'gold standard' and, with statistical releases every three months, is tracking the rapid changes in levels of cultural engagement in the adult population of England.

Caution should be taken in attempting to extrapolate trends from the chart on the right, particularly where the phrasing of questions varies across the two surveys. Where there are differences in questionnaire content, these are highlighted for each art form on pages 12-29 of this report.

The three most popular art forms pre-pandemic (film, theatre and live music) are no longer ranked in the same order across both surveys: live music has overtaken theatre. There are now two categories (an event connected with books or writing and a festival and or carnival) where the Participation survey is registering higher levels of attendance than Taking Part, although the definition of festivals has broadened considerably in the new survey (see page 20). Affirmative responses were 33% lower for attendance at a craft exhibition, 36% lower for attendance at a live dance event and 48% lower for attendance at a street art event.

Chart 2 / Table 2: Adults stating they have attended arts events in the last 12 months, using most recent data from Taking Part and Participation surveys



	Taking Part 2019/20	Participation survey Q3 2022	Difference
Film	56%	49%	-7
Live music	36%	32%	-4
Theatre	38%	28%	-10
Festivals and carnivals	15%	23%	+8
Art exhibitions	21%	20%	-1
Craft exhibitions	11%	7%	-4
Literary events	5%	7%	+2
Dance	8%	5%	-3
Street arts	9%	5%	-4

Film

The recovery of cinema audiences continues at a steady pace. By the third quarter of 2022, almost half of adults in England had attended a film screening in the previous 12 months.

Taking Part survey

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
56%	56% (-)	56% (-)

The question in Taking Part was phrased 'Film at a cinema or other venue'.

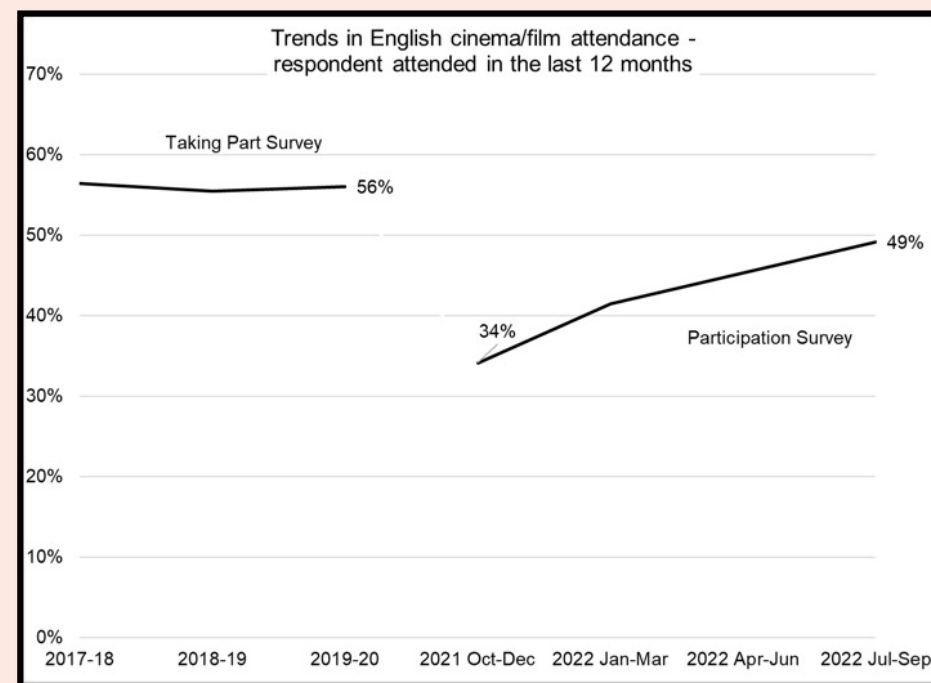
Participation survey

Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
34%	41% (+7)	45% (+4)	49% (+4)	42%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'a cinema screening of a film or movie'.

It is possible that some respondents who have been to a screening in a venue other than a cinema (e.g. arts centre or theatre) will give a negative answer.

Chart 3: Adults stating they have attended film/cinema screenings in the past 12 months



Live music

Live music has overtaken theatre to become the second most popular art form by attendance. The recovery of live music audiences had accelerated by the third quarter of 2022, at a rate exceeded only by festivals and carnivals.

Taking Part survey

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
37%	37% (-)	36% (-1)

In Taking Part, respondents were asked separately about having attended:

- a. Classical Music
- b. Jazz
- c. Other live Music

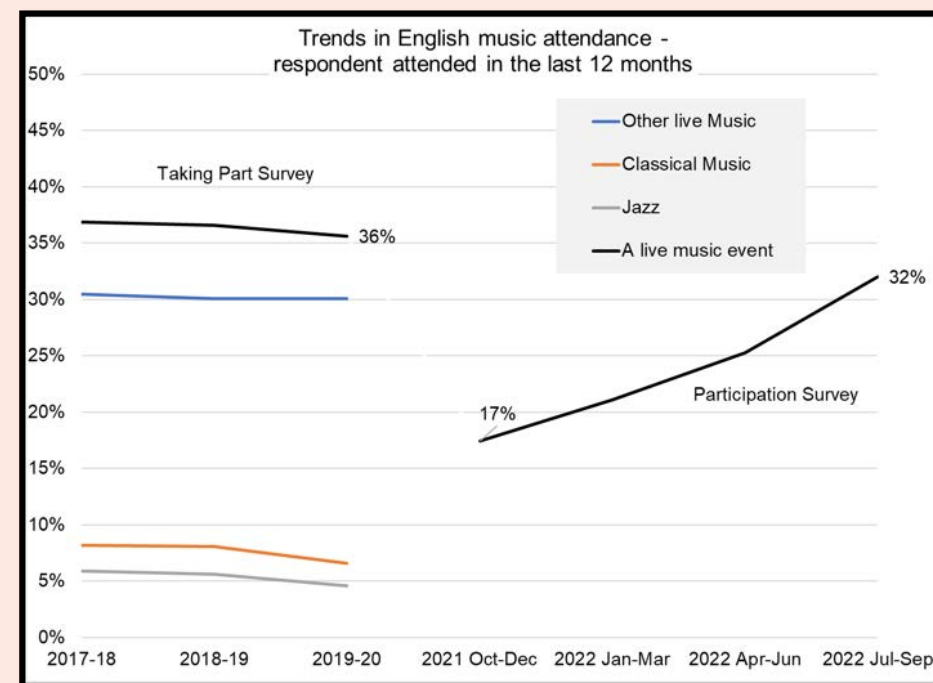
DCMS makes record-level Taking Part datasets accessible via the UK Data Service, University of Essex. We conducted multiple response analysis on records for the final three years of Taking Part to establish the proportion of adults who had responded positively to one or more of the three 'music' questions.

Participation survey

Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
17%	21% (+4)	25% (+4)	32% (+7)	24%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'a live music event'.

Chart 4: Adults stating they have attended a live music event in the past 12 months



Theatre

After experiencing the biggest attendance increase of any art form by the first quarter of 2022, the recovery of theatre audiences appears to have stalled, with no statistically significant increase between the second and third quarters of 2022. There is a shortfall of 10 percentage points between the latest Participation survey figures (Q3 2022) and the final Taking Part figures (2019-20) – the largest of any art form.

Taking Part survey		
2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
41%	40% (-1)	38% (-2)

In Taking Part, respondents were asked separately about having attended in the last 12 months:

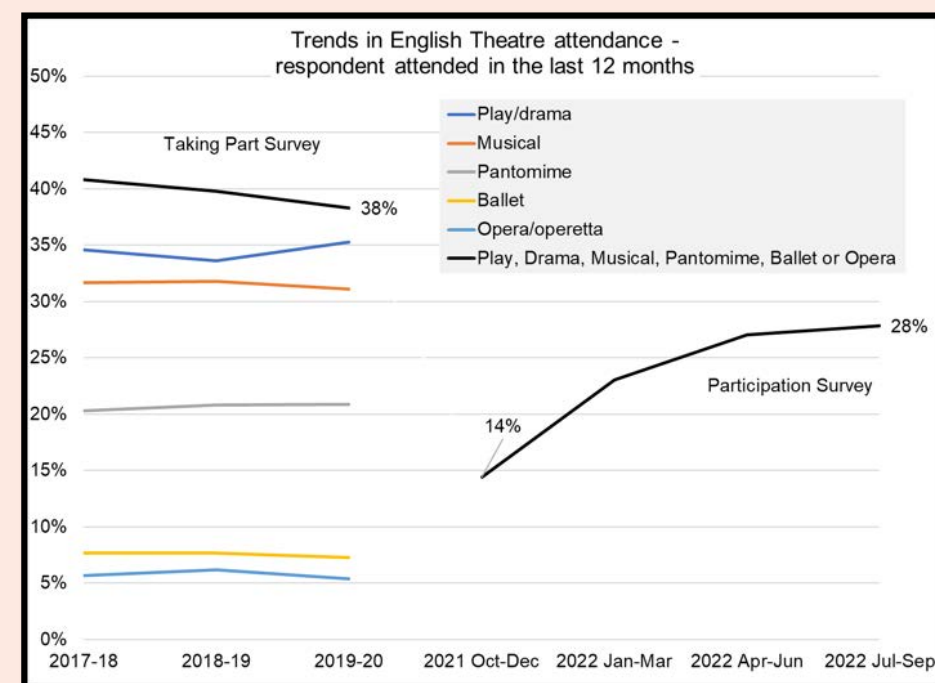
- a. Play/drama
- b. Pantomime
- c. Musical
- d. Opera/opera
- e. Ballet

DCMS makes record-level Taking Part datasets accessible via the UK Data Service, University of Essex. We conducted multiple response analysis on records for the final three years of Taking Part to establish the proportion of adults who had responded positively to one or more of the five 'theatre' questions.

Participation survey				
Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
14%	23% (+9)	27% (+4)	28% (+1)	23%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'a play, drama, musical, Pantomime, Ballet, Opera'.

Chart 5: Adults stating they have attended theatre performances in the past 12 months



Art exhibitions

The percentage of people visiting art exhibitions and collections appears almost to have recovered to pre-pandemic levels. By the third quarter of 2022, 1 in 5 adults in England had attended in the previous 12 months.

Taking Part survey		
2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
21%	19% (-2)	21% (+2)

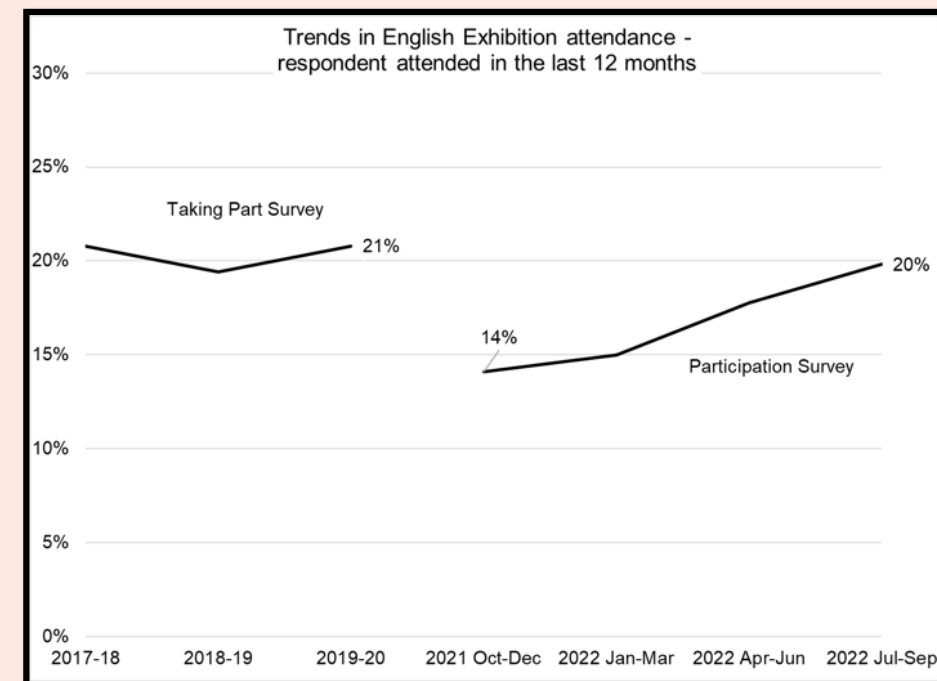
The question in Taking Part was phrased 'Exhibition or collection of art, photography or sculpture'.

Participation survey				
Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
14%	15% (+1)	18% (+3)	20% (+2)	17%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'an exhibition of art, photography or sculptures'.

It is possible that some respondents who have visited a collection but not a temporary exhibition will give a negative answer.

Chart 6: Adults stating they have attended an art exhibition/collection in the past 12 months



Festivals and carnivals

Attendances at festivals and carnivals saw the highest percentage increase of any art form by the third quarter of 2022, as may be expected during the summer months.

Taking Part survey		
2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
15%	15%	15%
	(-)	(-)

In Taking Part, respondents were asked separately about having attended:

- Culturally specific festival (for example, Mela or Chinese New Year)
- Carnival

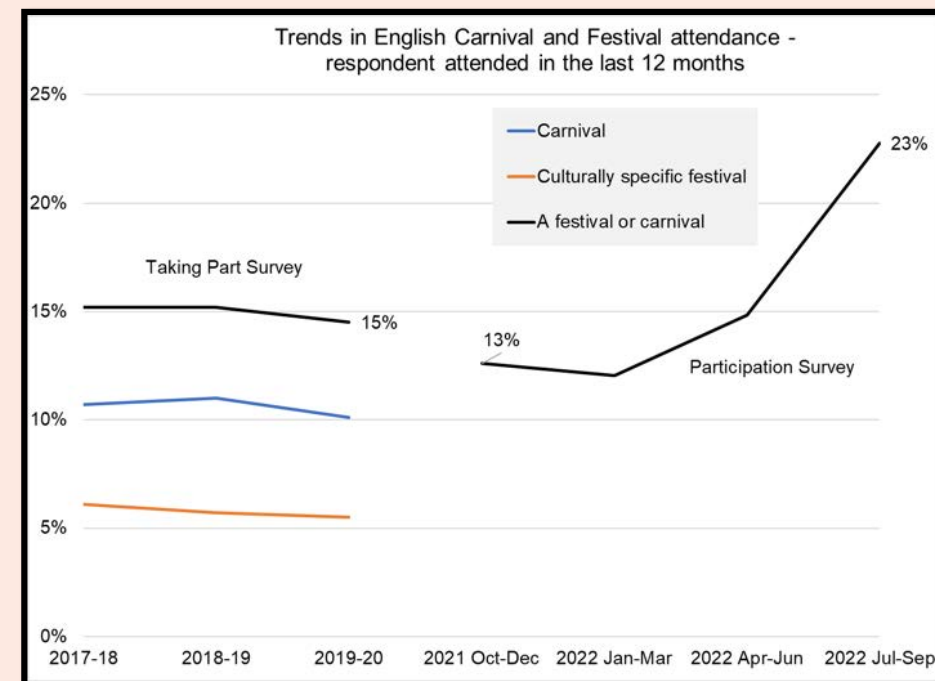
DCMS makes record-level Taking Part datasets accessible via the UK Data Service, University of Essex. We conducted multiple response analysis on records for the final three years of Taking Part to establish the proportion of adults who had responded positively to one or both questions.

Participation survey				
Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
13%	12%	15%	23%	17%
	(-1)	(+3)	(+8)	

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'a festival or carnival (music, food, culture)'.

We view this as a substantially broader definition that would also include (non-culturally specific) music, arts and food festivals. Therefore **we would expect a higher proportion of respondents to respond affirmatively to the Participation survey.**

Chart 7: Adults stating they have attended a festival and or carnival in the past 12 months



Craft exhibitions

Attendance at craft exhibitions is gradually recovering, but there is a 34% shortfall (5 percentage points) between the latest Participation survey figures (Q3 2022) and the final Taking Part figures (2019-20).

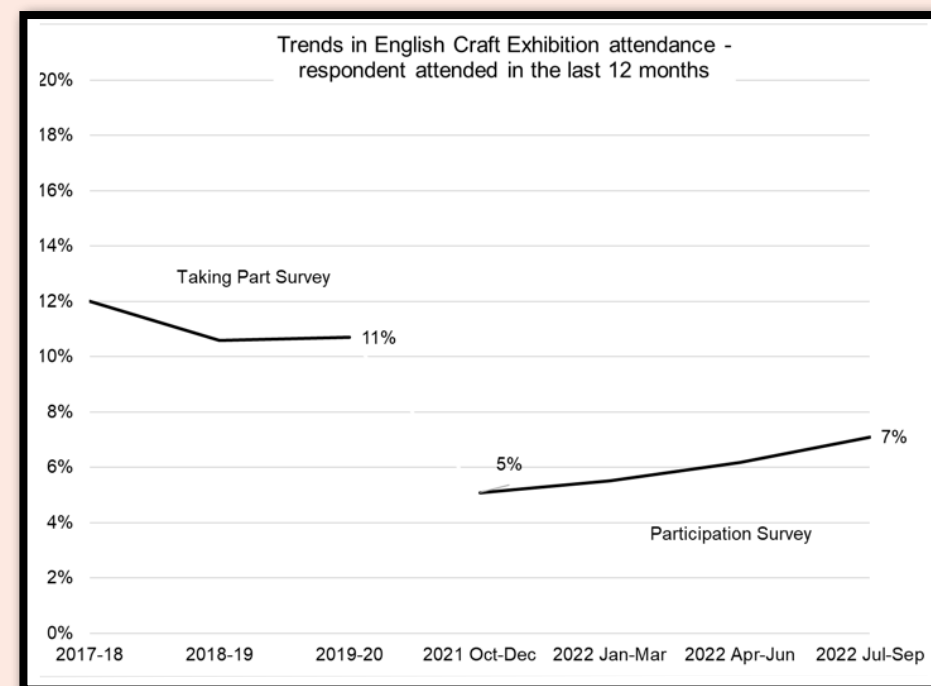
Taking Part survey		
2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
12%	11% (-1)	11% (-)

The question in Taking Part was phrased 'a craft exhibition (not a crafts market; crafts include for example textiles, woodworking)'.

Participation survey				
Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
5%	6% (+1)	6% (-)	7% (+1)	6%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'Craft exhibition (not craft market)'.

Chart 8: Adults stating they have attended a craft exhibition in the past 12 months



Literary events

Attendance at literary events continues to increase above pre-pandemic levels and at a steady rate.

Taking Part survey

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
5%	5% (-)	5% (-)

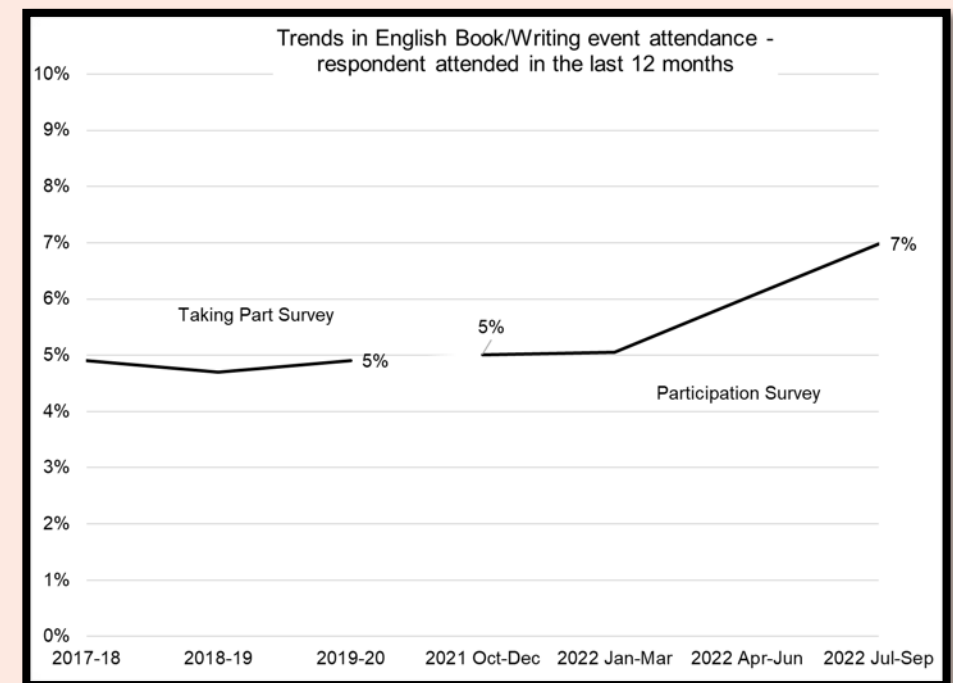
The question in Taking Part was phrased 'Event connected with books or writing'.

Participation survey

Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
5%	5% (-)	6% (+1)	7% (+1)	6%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'an event connected with books, reading, or writing'.

Chart 9: Adults stating they have attended a Book/Writing event in the past 12 months



Dance

Dance audiences are gradually recovering, but there is a 36% shortfall (3 percentage points) between the latest Participation Survey figures (Q3 2022) and the final Taking Part figures (2019-20).

Taking Part survey		
2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
9%	9% (-)	8% (-1)

In Taking Part, respondents were asked separately about having attended:

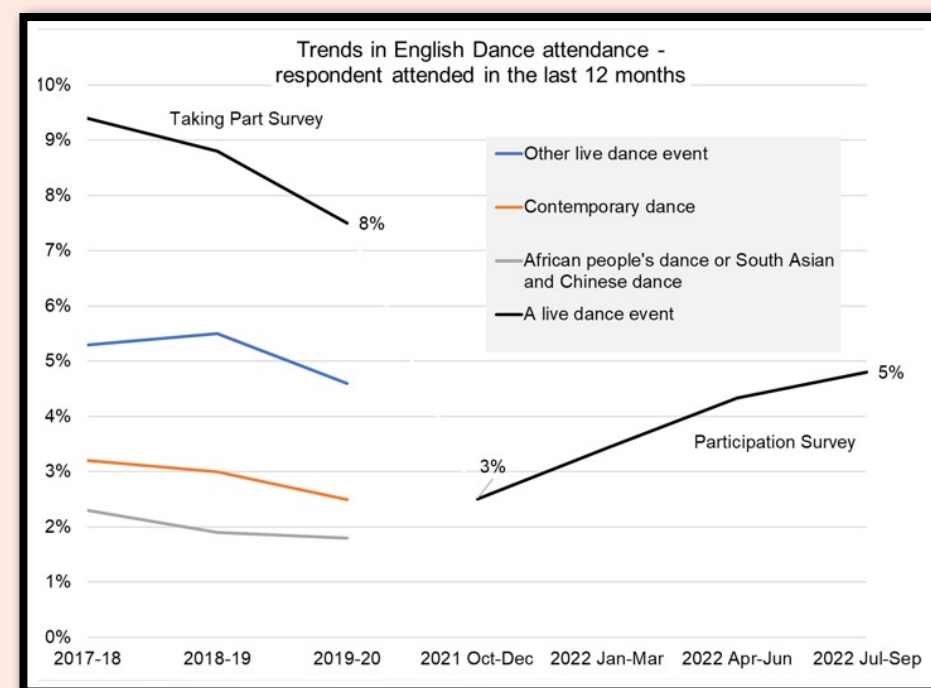
- a. Contemporary dance
- b. African people's dance or South Asian and Chinese dance
- c. Other live dance event

DCMS makes record-level Taking Part datasets accessible via the UK Data Service, University of Essex. We conducted multiple response analysis on records for the final three years of Taking Part to establish the proportion of adults who had responded positively to one or more of the three 'dance' questions.

Participation survey				
Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
3%	3% (-)	4% (+1)	5% (+1)	4%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'a live dance event'.

Chart 10: Adults stating they have attended a live dance event in the past 12 months



Street arts

Attendances at street art events are recovering, with a statistically significant increase of 2 percentage points by the third quarter of 2022.

Taking Part survey

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
11%	10% (-1)	9% (-1)

The question in Taking Part was phrased 'Street arts (an artistic performance that takes place in everyday surroundings like parks, streets or shopping centres)'.

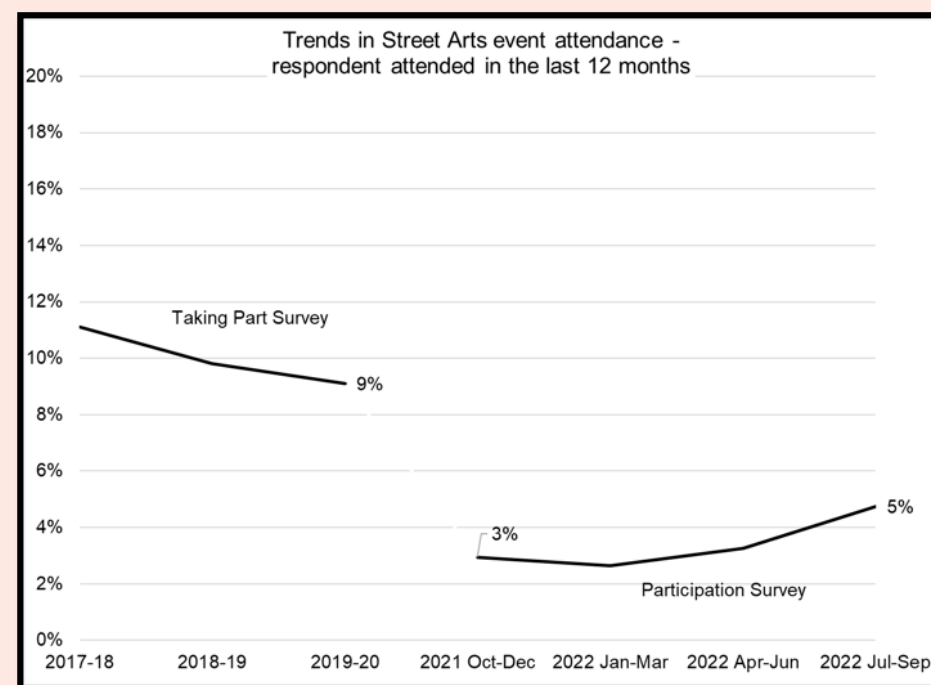
Participation survey

Q4 2020 -Q4 2021	Q1 2021 -Q1 2022	Q2 2021 -Q2 2022	Q3 2021 -Q3 2022	Average
3%	3% (-)	3% (-)	5% (+2)	4%

In the Participation survey respondents are asked if in the last 12 months they have attended 'a street art event'.

It is possible that the lack of a detailed description in the Participation survey will lead to a lower proportion of affirmative responses.

Chart 11: Adults stating they have attended a Street Art event in the past 12 months



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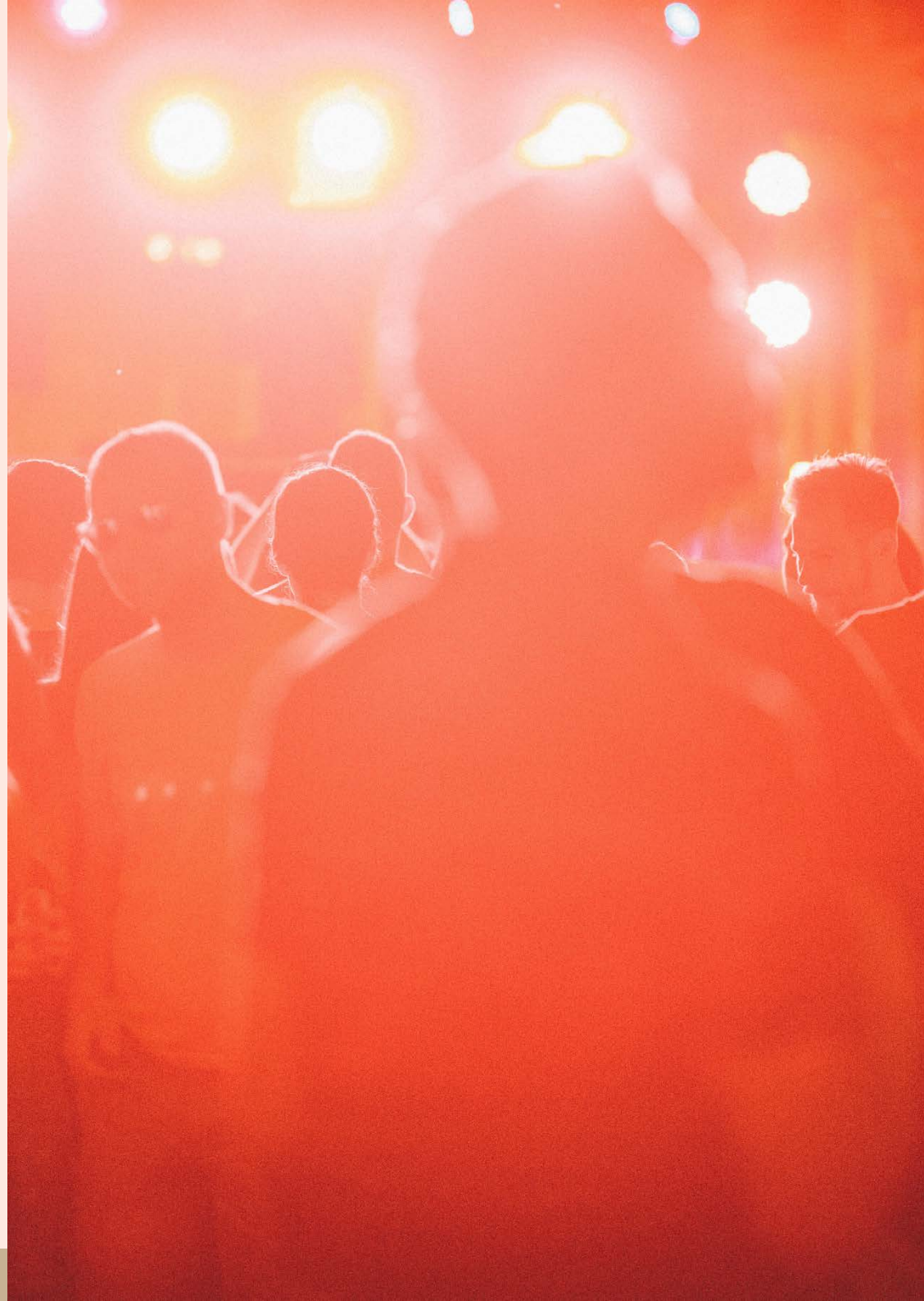
Campaign for the Arts

Campaign for the Arts is the UK's grassroots alliance for the arts, with over 250,000 supporters nationwide. We champion, defend and expand access to the arts and culture, for and with the public.

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