



Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Barriers to disabled people's participation in and access to the arts in Northern Ireland



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Image: Roisin O'Hagan. Disabled artist Roisin O'Hagan received funding from the Arts & Disability Award Ireland scheme

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Chairman's Preface



This important report, commissioned by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, is the first large-scale study of disability in Northern Ireland to use 'the social model', a concept which, in its simplest terms, moves the focus away from people's impairment towards the obstacles to inclusion that disabled people cope with every day. The research methodology was developed placing this definition at its heart.

The report makes clear that the removal of attitudinal and environmental barriers to participation will require far reaching change in society's values and practices. It provides high level findings which emerge from a substantial body of research evidence around arts and disability. The quality of the work is significant, relying as it does on a large dataset

which was generated using a robust set of sampling techniques, so ensuring that the results are fully representative of the population sampled.

The results provide the Arts Council with the evidence base needed to develop arts and disability led policies which translate government priorities into action. Indeed, the findings are particularly relevant in light of the Disability Equality Duty (2007), which places a requirement on all public authorities to promote positive attitudes towards disability and to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is committed to genuine inclusion, and has made considerable efforts to increase the level and quality of disabled people's involvement in the arts – on disabled people's own terms. The whole purpose of the study was to produce practical recommendations against which we can plan targeted action and measure our progress, and we are committed to following up on the recommendations within this document.

As well as supporting and enhancing the activity of arts organisations, by commissioning research, the Arts Council aims to add value to the work of the wider research community. This approach encourages inclusive practice and creates a culture of evaluation that promotes reflection and innovation.

For ensuring the range and quality of the work I would want to pay tribute to Nick Livingston, Director, Strategic Development, Chris Ledger, Arts Development Officer and Graeme Stevenson, Policy and Research Officer in the Arts Council. Avril Crawford from the Arts & Disability Forum was a member of the research steering group from the outset, and numerous others involved in the sector gave support. I would particularly like to thank disabled interviewees for the time they gave to the survey.

Rosemary Kelly

1 Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, in association with the Arts and Disability Forum commissioned MORI Ireland to undertake a programme of research to establish the current level and nature of disabled people's involvement in the arts.

The specific objectives were to:

- identify barriers to involvement;
- consider the types of support facilitating disabled people's involvement;
- gain information on provision at local government level;
- determine the level of disability awareness among arts organisations and venues; and
- discover more about disabled people's involvement in mainstream arts venues.

The programme of research involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted with people who had a range of impairments and who had been audience members, had participated in arts activities (for example, in community arts workshops) or were practising artists. This was followed by a survey of 500 disabled people. In-depth interviews were conducted with the managers of venues and with the arts officers of a number of local councils. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the key findings and conclusions from this research and recommendations on the actions to be taken to increase the level of disabled people's involvement in the arts.

1.1 Research with disabled audience members

1.1.1 Current level of interest and involvement

Eighty two percent of the population of people with disabilities expressed interest in one or more art forms. Film and Music were the categories most likely to attract interest. Disabled people were less likely to be interested in Dance, Visual Arts and Crafts.

Just under half of those interviewed had attended an arts event in the last 12 months. This is proportionally less than the result for the population as a whole (73%)¹. It must be noted, however, that the population of people with disabilities tends to be older and previous research shows that older people are less likely to attend arts events.

Studying the 16 to 34 age group of this current disability-focused study reveals that 66% have attended an arts event in the last 12 months, compared to 29% of those aged 65+. However, in the General Population Survey², the rate of attendance is substantially higher, with 89% of 16 to 34 year olds attending some form of arts event and 42% for the 65+ age group³. Therefore, we conclude that people with disabilities are less likely to attend arts events than people who are not disabled.

¹ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Arts and Culture 2004*, p.19.

² Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Arts and Culture 2004*, p.20.

³ Caution should be exercised when comparing results as the classifications used for art forms differed between our current study and the General Population Survey.

Table 3.1: Percentage attending arts events

Age	General Population Survey	Disability Survey
16-34	66%	89%
65 plus	29%	42%

Film was the art form most frequently attended. The main reasons for attending events were to see a particular artist and to have an informal evening with friends. Other stated reasons included 'for a special occasion' particularly in relation to Dance and Drama events and 'for educational learning' in relation to Crafts and Literature.

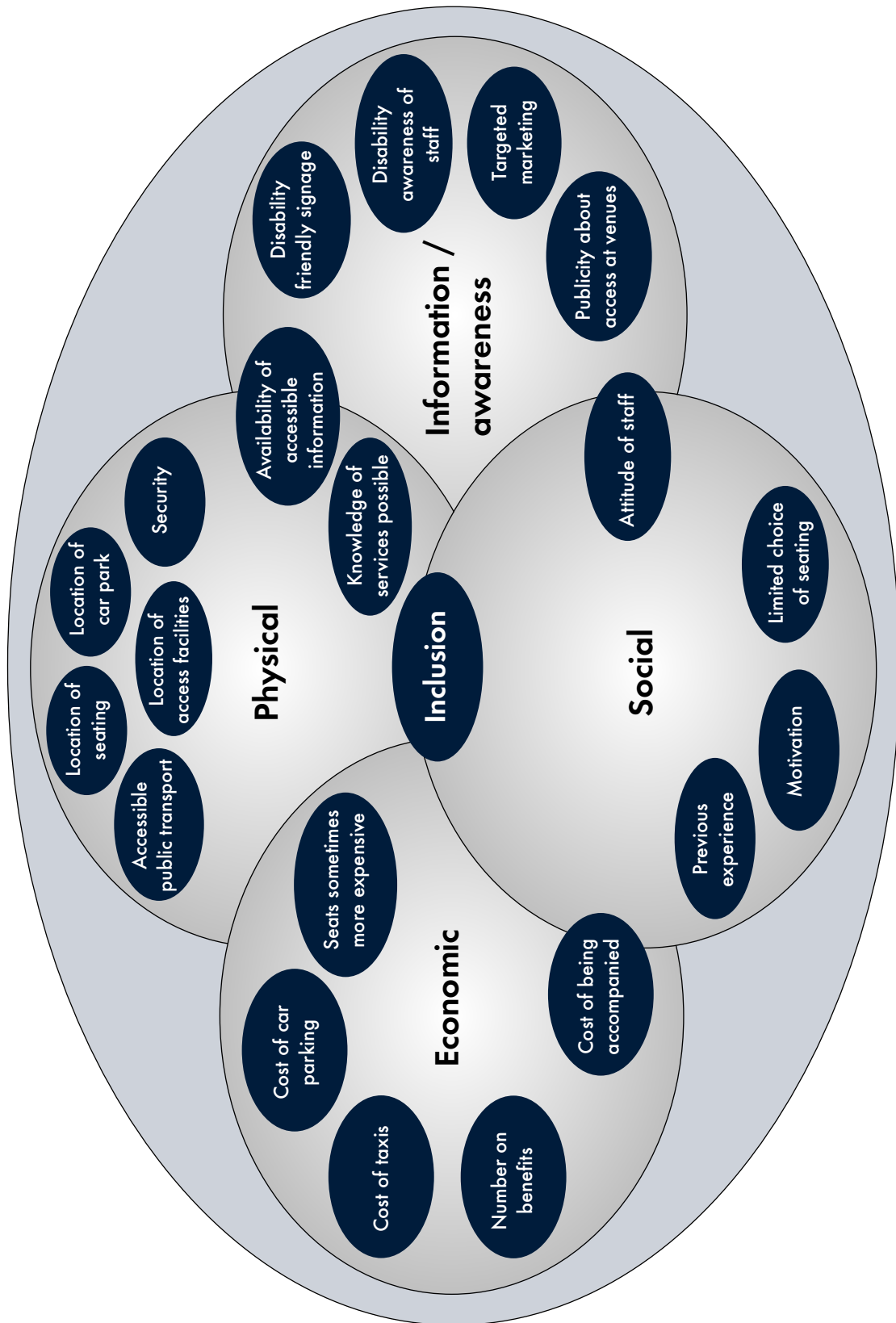
The majority of people with disabilities claimed to be satisfied with most aspects of their last visit to an arts event. Dissatisfaction was most likely to be expressed in relation to parking; comfort and location of seating; cost and ease of getting to and from the venue; and the cost of the event.

Just over half of respondents reported that they would be interested, to some extent, in attending art events more frequently. Interest varied by age, with younger people, aged 16-49 more likely to express a desire for increased attendance (70% compared to 51% of over 50s). Interest in attending events more frequently was lowest among those who had not attended events in the last 12 months; 39% of this group (compared to 53% of total sample) expressed an interest in attending more often. Therefore, we conclude that younger disabled people aged 16-49, who have attended an event in the last 12 months, have the most potential in terms of future audience development.

1.1.2 Barriers to attending

The key deterrents to attending arts events can be categorised under economic, physical, social and information/awareness barriers. However, many of the barriers are interlinked, as demonstrated in the diagram and paragraphs overleaf.

Figure 1.1.2.1 Barriers to Attending



Stated barriers are correlated to some extent, with the aspects of attending an arts event that received most dissatisfaction, for example, the cost of an event and ease of getting to and from a venue were most likely to be reported as deterrents. 'Awareness of what's on' was stated as a barrier by a quarter of those who would like increased involvement in the arts. The overall experience of attending art events is impacted by the possibility of being able to interact with ease socially; for example, inadequate physical access often prevents genuine inclusion.

Physical barriers - The qualitative research found that underlying the issue of 'ease of getting to and from a venue' there were specific concerns relating to the lack of accessible public transport and the perceived risk to personal safety when using these services in the evenings. This means that many people with disabilities either have to rely on family members to transport them, which can have an impact on their independence, or they have to rely on taxis and hence cost becomes an issue.

Economic barriers - Given that a high proportion of disabled people interviewed were claiming benefits, the cost of transport and parking has a clear impact on the frequency of participation. However, there was a mixed response to concession pricing with some viewing it as a form of discrimination in itself, by separating-out disabled people. A 'buddy-card' scheme offering discounts was suggested as a means of addressing the cost issue while maintaining the dignity of the disabled person.

Social barriers - While issues such as signage, staff attitudes, accessible toilets and access at venues were less likely to be stated in the survey as deterrents to attending more often, the qualitative work revealed a number of wider concerns about accessibility. Being treated 'like a second class citizen' by not having access to all areas including bars, restaurants and toilets and being made to use entrances at the back of the building was a particular issue for some. The location, choice and appropriateness of seating at specific venues also came in for criticism. This impacts on the possibilities of genuine equality of interaction.

Information/Awareness barriers - Access to information was considered as having an impact on identifying suitable arts events to attend. Observations were made that advertisements for events rarely gave any details of the level and type of access provision for disabled people.

1.2 Research with disabled people involved in participatory arts

Levels of active participation in the arts were low, with 85% not taking part in any arts activity over the last 12 months. Drama and Crafts attracted the most participants; however, this represented just 3% of those interviewed.

Of those who participated in art forms, their involvement tended to be more regular than for those attending as an audience member. This is not surprising as participation often means attending classes or workshops.

Two in five respondents (38%) expressed some interest in participating more frequently in the arts; 10% were very interested. Younger respondents were more likely to express an interest in participating than older respondents. Those who were currently participating in arts activity were more likely to say that they were interested in participating more frequently.

The qualitative research revealed that those participating in arts classes and workshops faced many of the same barriers as those faced by audience members. This was confirmed through the quantitative survey. In addition, the lack of provision of the type of classes or workshops that interest respondents was the most often cited barrier to increased participation. Lack of information on the classes or workshops available was also frequently mentioned. The ease and cost of getting to and from the venue was viewed as a barrier by approximately a quarter of respondents. A further 17% said that the lack of availability of support to meet their access requirements was a deterrent to increased participation.

The main reasons for participating in the various art forms were: socialising with friends, building confidence, to learn new skills and to increase existing skills.

1.3 Research with disabled artists

Barriers identified by disabled artists were similar to those identified by disabled audiences and project participants. These were access, the desire for mainstream recognition, inclusion and funding.

In relation to access, artists highlighted the problem of a lack of physical access to certain buildings, especially galleries in historic buildings.

Some of the artists interviewed sought greater inclusion in terms of being able to exhibit their work alongside non-disabled counterparts.

Artists expressed a requirement for financial assistance to pay for transport and the materials used in their art form. Concerns were outlined regarding the general lack of awareness of the funding available and the perceived inequalities surrounding funding decisions.

1.4 Research with arts venue managers

The research with venue managers and curators revealed that there were varying levels of awareness and proactivity towards initiatives aimed at disabled people.

All had upgraded or were in the process of upgrading their property to comply with Disability Discrimination Act requirements. However, only three of the 15 venue managers interviewed were aware of staff having received training in this area. Although all claimed that compliance with the legislation was monitored, seven could not say how this was achieved. Those that could respond were more likely to say that compliance was monitored on an ad-hoc basis.

Awareness of the Arts and Disability Equality Charter was low with a third not aware of it and only four being able to outline what it entailed in any detail. All but two venues reported having provided training on disability awareness issues. However, in many cases only senior managers or key staff had received the training and there was an expectation that they would pass their knowledge to other staff members.

Few had a disability policy or disability action plan for their specific venue. However, a number had adopted the policies of their parent body in this regard. A number of venue managers reported that while they adopted an 'inclusive equal opportunities policy' this was not committed to paper. None of those interviewed had specific objectives in relation to a disability policy or disability action plan.

The majority of venues did not record the number of disabled participants or audience members. For those that did, this was driven by a condition of receiving funding.

Events targeted at disabled audiences were limited. Only two venues held eight events in total in the last year specifically targeted at disabled people as audience members. Three other venues offered touch tours and signed artist talks. A number of those we spoke to reported that they preferred an inclusive approach as opposed to targeting specific audiences. Some were under the impression that it would be bad practice to target disabled audiences.

Venues were more likely to have targeted disabled people as participants in classes or workshops. The majority had links with local groups representing various types of impairment. However, most of these events were aimed at children and young people rather than adults.

In terms of support for participants, four venues offered subsidised transport; five venues offered concessionary pricing; seven venues employed outreach or education officers; and ten venues offered large print marketing materials.

Seven venues had arts and disability performances or exhibitions as part of their programme and were working with organisations such as Stage Beyond and the Gateway Club.

1.5 Research with local councils

The interviews with Arts Officers revealed that local councils were more likely than arts venues to have a specific disability policy drawn up with objectives against which performance was measured.

Awareness of the Arts and Disability Equality Charter appeared to be high among the Arts Officers.

Recording of participation levels was inconsistent across local councils with the Arts Officers reporting that this was more likely to be undertaken by individual venues.

Three of the five local councils involved in the survey provided regular training to staff covering issues such as awareness, terminology and access issues.

Four of the five Arts Officers reported that their local council had received additional support from disability organisations in relation to mentoring, training, advice, literature and provision of an arts tutors' register.

1.6 Conclusions and recommendations

Disabled people are currently much less likely than the general population to attend or participate in arts events. However, just over half of disabled people want to attend arts events more frequently and 38% want to participate in art forms more often.

1.6.1 Targeting future resources

The factors that appear to impact most on a disabled person's propensity to attend arts events and participate in art forms are their age, previous experience and motivation. Similarly to the General Population Survey⁴, younger respondents aged under 50 are more likely to attend arts events and participate in art forms and they express a wish to attend and participate more often.

There appears to be a large proportion of older disabled people who have little motivation to attend or participate in arts events more often than they do currently. Our results also show that those who would like to attend or participate in arts events more often are already doing so with some degree of regularity. Key motivators for attending arts events are the actual performance itself - someone/ something that the person has a desire to see and the social experience.

In respect of the above specific issues, the disabled person is not significantly different from the general population and any actions taken by the Arts Council towards improving participation among the general population should also impact on the disabled population.

However, many disabled people have access requirements which, if not catered for, will prevent them from attending and participating in arts events more frequently. Meeting access requirements, for example providing sign language interpretation or targeting disabled audiences with appropriately formatted accessible information, may help to increase the involvement of disabled people in the arts. The greatest impact, in terms of encouraging increased attendance and participation at arts events, is likely to be achieved by targeting those aged under 50 who already attend and participate in arts events to some extent and have expressed a desire to do so more frequently.

1.6.2 Social issues and the physical environment

There are a number of social and physical issues that impact more exclusively on the disabled population, a key one being the limitations of the physical environment as this can limit a disabled person in terms of the extent to which they are able to mix equally in a social situation.

A key challenge for the Arts Council will be to ensure that the inclusion of disabled people underpins any policies that are developed and services that are provided. Therefore, the Arts Council should consider extending its support for projects that focus on enhanced inclusion of disabled people, for example, the Arts and Disability Equality Charter. It should consider undertaking a detailed review of existing arts facilities to identify changes that could be made to enhance the disabled person's experience of attending and participating in arts events. This might include looking at costs, physical access and the extent to which disabled people are able to interact on an equal social basis when

⁴ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Arts and Culture 2004*, p.20.

attending events. Another priority should be to assess current provision of accessibly formatted publicity information, for example braille and large print and the availability of targeted provision such as audio described, sign language interpreted and captioned events.

1.6.3 Staff training

Whilst satisfaction levels were generally high in relation to staff, it is important to recognise the role they play in ensuring the inclusion of disabled people. The best facilities may be available but without knowledgeable and well trained staff to proactively inform and give guidance to the disabled person their impact will be reduced.

The research shows that the training available to frontline staff is limited, with much of the training that is available directed at a management level. Frontline staff at art facilities should have access to adequate training to provide them with the skills for proactive communication with people with disabilities. An example of how proactive staff can help with the inclusion of disabled people may be to automatically ask at the time of booking if any party member has any access requirements and for the staff member to be knowledgeable about the range of support available to meet these requirements.

We recommend that, given the limited training undertaken by venues, the Arts Council encourages any training initiatives that could fill this gap.

1.6.4 Awareness

Access to the arts is limited by a lack of awareness of the various types of support that could be available. As well as providing accessibly formatted information, more could be done to ensure events are advertised to proactively promote the support available to disabled people so that they do not have to seek out the information themselves. In addition to work on the Arts & Disability Equality Charter, which is essentially a move towards kite-marking, the Arts Council should consider encouraging use of standard access symbols to promote the type of disability access that venues can offer disabled people. These symbols could be used in the advertising of events as a short hand method of promoting the support available. The disabled person could then automatically identify the events, classes and workshops that would meet their access requirements.

1.6.5 Cost

The cost of attending and participating in arts events is a particular barrier for disabled people. Additional costs are often incurred because the disabled person needs to be accompanied, because they need to park close to the facility or because public transport is not accessible to them and they have to use taxis. Linked to this is the fact that a high proportion of disabled people are in receipt of benefits. While some venues offer concession pricing and reduced cost of transport, this is neither widespread nor consistent.

Due to the additional costs that disabled people incur when attending or participating in arts events, the Arts Council should consider the possibility that additional financial support is required to promote attendance and participation and a review of ticket concessions may be helpful. Care should be taken to ensure that any schemes developed maintain the dignity of the disabled person.

Disabled artists also face additional costs due to the means of transport they have to use combined with the cost of equipment and materials or communication support. They consider that they have a lack of awareness of the funding opportunities available to them. The Arts Council should consider reviewing the level of funding available to disabled artists to ensure that it adequately meets their additional needs and that they are able to access information on funding opportunities available. This may require additional research to determine what additional expenses are incurred by disabled artists.

1.6.6 Management

Lack of policies or strategies, lack of training, lack of information about the number of disabled people accommodated at arts events and low awareness of the Arts & Disability Equality Charter leads us to conclude that there is little support or direction given to most venues in relation to dealing with and catering for people with disabilities. While there appears to be some support available at local council level this does not appear to reach many of the arts venues that took part in the survey.

The Arts Council should consider ways of supporting venues further. This might include providing best practice guidelines in relation to catering for people with disabilities and making expert support available to enable them to implement the guidelines. The Arts & Disability Equality Charter aims to meet this requirement but may need further support from the Arts Council to achieve even greater impact on the venues.



Image: Kids in Control works with young people of all abilities

2 Background and objectives

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the main statutory body responsible for distributing both government funding and National Lottery funding to the arts in Northern Ireland. Its function is to develop the arts, to improve practice and participation in the arts, to increase public access to the arts, to assist in the provision of facilities and training and to advise government departments and bodies on matters relating to the arts.

In July 2001, a five year strategy, entitled 'The Arts: Inspiring the Imagination, Building the Future,' setting out the vision for the Arts Council was launched. This document outlined four priorities for artists, arts organisations, arts initiatives and partnerships to:

- increase opportunities for creative participation in the arts;
- develop new audiences for the arts and build on existing ones;
- extend opportunities for artists to develop their work and practice;
- strengthen the capacity of arts organisations to deliver quality experiences in the arts

Associated with these priorities were seven strategic objectives. These were:

- increase opportunities for artists;
- strengthen the arts infrastructure;
- engage with community arts;
- engage with voluntary arts;
- enhance young people's access;
- increase audiences for the arts; and
- increase access for disabled people.

An eighth objective: 'to make continuous improvement to the delivery of Arts Council services' was added during the lifetime of the plan.

The main tasks associated with increasing and improving access to the arts for disabled people were identified in the Arts Council's Five Year Arts Plan as to:

- provide more mainstream venue and exhibition opportunities for disabled artists;
- increase the number of disabled people as performers and creators of art and as audience members;
- promote high standards of accessibility in venues;
- develop disability equality training for key funded organisations;
- establish monitored baselines to track trends and monitor progress; and
- work in partnership to remove barriers that prevent disabled people taking part in the arts and implement innovative programmes of support designed to develop new audiences.

Disabled people remain under-represented in the arts - as artists, as project participants and as audiences. The Arts and Disability Equality Charter came into existence after consultation with disabled people in 2004 and it is hoped that significant change will occur across Northern Ireland in future years.

The purpose of this research has been to gather the baseline evidence needed to identify current gaps in provision and assess the needs of disabled people. From this the Arts Council will be able to develop evidence based policy and implement robust and targeted interventions.

The Arts Council appointed MORI Ireland to undertake a programme of research with the following specific objectives:

- establish the current level and type of involvement in the arts sector by disabled artists, audiences and project participants across each type of art form;
- determine the factors that might prevent disabled people from participating in the arts - e.g. access to transport, access to information, attitudinal barriers;
- identify the nature and level of support provided to disabled artists, audience members and participants by a variety of arts organisations (including arts and disability organisations);
- establish the level of provision for and awareness of the arts and disability sector at local government level;
- determine the level of disability awareness amongst arts organisations and venues; and
- identify the number of mainstream arts venues where disabled people are involved in activity.

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) defines disability as 'a condition caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment, which results in loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the community on an equal level with others, owing to physical and social barriers.'

The Arts Council works from the basis of the social model of disability. The social model in its simplest form changes the focus away from peoples' impairments and towards removing the barriers to inclusion that disabled people face in everyday life. For example, barriers could be:

- Environmental: (lack of accessible information);
- Systematic: (segregated provision); and
- Attitudinal: (disabled people being seen as expensive, useless or needy).

In the main it is not the impairment that is the problem, nor the disabled person, rather it is society's failure to take into account and cater for the diversity of its members. The social model shifts policy away from a medical, charity, care agenda into a rights led, equalities agenda.

3 Research methodology

In order to address the objectives of the study a comprehensive programme of both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted. The approach taken is detailed in the following paragraphs.

For the purpose of this research a practical definition of disability was defined in order to identify who was eligible to participate in the research. This was based on self-disclosure of disability. The classification used is detailed in the table below:

Table 3.1.1: Classification of disability
Mobility impaired/physically disabled e.g. arthritis, rheumatism, progressive illness etc.
Blind/visually impaired/partially sighted
Deaf/hard of hearing/hearing impaired/hearing aid user
Mental ill health e.g. depression, 'nerves', anxiety, phobias, agoraphobia, panic attacks etc
Learning disability/intellectual disability including dyslexia, ADD/ADH, aphasia etc.
Hidden disability e.g. speech impairment; epilepsy; diabetes; stomach, liver or digestive problems; skin conditions, allergies; chest/breathing problems, asthma, bronchitis; heart, blood pressure or blood circulation problems; progressive illness not covered above
Any other health problem or disability that limits your day to day activities

3.1 Qualitative research

The aim of the qualitative research was to explore and understand the reasons why levels of disabled people's involvement in the arts are low. The qualitative stage had two distinct elements:

- Focus groups and in-depth interviews with disabled people who had identified as being engaged in the arts as artists, audience members or project participants; and
- Telephone interviews with local councils and both public and privately owned venues.

3.1.1 Focus groups and in-depth interviews with disabled people

This element of the research targeted disabled people who had been identified as being engaged in the arts as audience members or project participants. Seven focus groups were held between December 2004 and January 2005: four were held with audiences, two with project participants and one with artists (45 people were involved in the groups).

Attendance at the audience focus group was generated through face-to-face interviewing using a recruitment questionnaire. For focus groups with participants and artists a list of names was provided by both the Arts Council and the Arts and Disability Forum. MORI Ireland researchers contacted each of the individuals on the lists to request participation. £20 was given to participants at the end of each session to cover out-of-pocket expenses. The topics covered at the focus groups included: participation levels, frequency of attendance/project participation, the provision of facilities at venues, costs and barriers to involvement.

The findings from the focus group process were augmented by twenty in-depth interviews; 18 were conducted face-to-face and two via the telephone. These interviews were held to ensure that the views of individuals who would not have been able to attend the focus groups were included. By undertaking these interviews it was possible to speak to people with a broader range of disabilities.

The rationale behind holding the focus groups and in-depth interviews with disabled people was to provide a better understanding of the issues (findings considered in more detail in section 5) and also to help in the design of the questionnaire for the quantitative stage of the research.

3.1.2 Telephone interviews with local councils and arts venues

Telephone interviews were conducted with Arts Officers at five local councils selected at random: Ards, Fermanagh, Moyle, Derry and North Down. These interviews were held to establish the level of provision for and awareness of the arts and disability sector at a local government level. Interviews were conducted over an eight week period during December 2004 and January 2005. Discussion was broadly based on levels of funding, knowledge of disability legislation and of the Arts and Disability Equality Charter, levels of provision and staff training.

In completing the qualitative research, a total of 20 interviews were conducted with managers at arts venues across Northern Ireland. Venues were selected randomly from lists of those in receipt of the Arts Council's Annual Support for Operations Programme (ASOP) or Lottery funding, both privately and publicly owned. The aim of this part of the qualitative research was: to explore the awareness levels of venue managers in relation to disability issues and regulation; to provide an understanding of what practices are being undertaken in relation to the training of staff and providing access to information and venues and to review the support services being availed of.

3.2 Quantitative research

A quantitative survey of disabled people was conducted to establish the level and type of involvement in the arts sector by disabled people. A face-to-face methodology was chosen: this was considered to be more inclusive of people with a range of disabilities as sensitive topic matters could more easily be dealt with and visual aids could be used when necessary. The length of the questionnaire dictated that the interviewing should be conducted 'in-home' to provide a more focused environment for conducting the interview.

The questionnaire was constructed in conjunction with the project steering group, which had representation from MORI Ireland, the Arts Council and the Arts & Disability Forum. The questionnaire

was based, in part, on findings from the qualitative research and other published material relating to disability and the arts. A pilot of the questionnaire was carried out with 12 people in order to identify any potential problems or ambiguity in the language and layout used.

In order to achieve a representative sample of the disabled population of Northern Ireland, age and gender quotas were set based on a survey of disability conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in 1989/90 (Source: 1989/90 survey of disability Northern Ireland, NISRA). The classifications for this survey used an approach based on the medical model of disability but as there has been limited recent quantitative research in this area these were the most appropriate and up-to-date statistics available on which to build a profile.

Five hundred people with disabilities were interviewed at this stage of the research - 488 interviews were conducted, at random, across Northern Ireland on a face-to-face basis across 40 sampling points. A further nine interviews were conducted with profoundly disabled people in a day centre in Belfast and three with British Sign Language users (with the assistance of an interpreter for two of the three interviews).

All interviews were conducted in-home by fully trained MORI Ireland interviewers between 12th May and 12th June 2005 with the exception of the interviews with profoundly disabled people in the day centre and with BSL users, which were conducted in July 2005. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes.

The following table shows the statistical reliability (at the 95% confidence level) associated with a variety of sample sizes based on this finite population. For example, if the results of a survey of 500 people showed that 50% of people had attended an art form in the last 12 months, the range within which the true figure would lie, would be ± 4 (i.e. somewhere between 46% and 54%), 95 times out of 100. In fact, the 'true' figure is more likely to lie at the mid-point of the range, rather than at either extreme.

Table 3.2 Statistical reliability by sample size

Sample size	Sampling tolerances at 50% (based on 95% confidence level)
	$\pm$ %
150	8%
200	7%
250	6%
500	4%

4 Findings from quantitative research

The findings from the quantitative survey of 500 people with disabilities are detailed in this section of the report. The survey considers:

- the demographic profile of respondents that took part in the survey;
- attitudes towards and levels of engagement with the arts;
- satisfaction with access, facilities and support at venues when engaging with the arts; and
- interest in engaging in the arts more frequently.

The methodology used for this stage of the research is described in Section 3.2.

4.1 Profile of respondents

As described in the methodology section, to ensure that our survey was representative of the disabled population in Northern Ireland, selection quotas were set to reflect the previously estimated demographic profile of disabled people in Northern Ireland by age and gender as illustrated in figure 4.1.1 overleaf. Comparing this to Northern Ireland Census figures (2001) the disabled population tends to be older than the general population. For example, while 37% of the general adult population are aged 16-34 only 12% of the disabled population fall into this category. Those aged 50+ make up 38% of the general population compared to 69% of the disabled population.

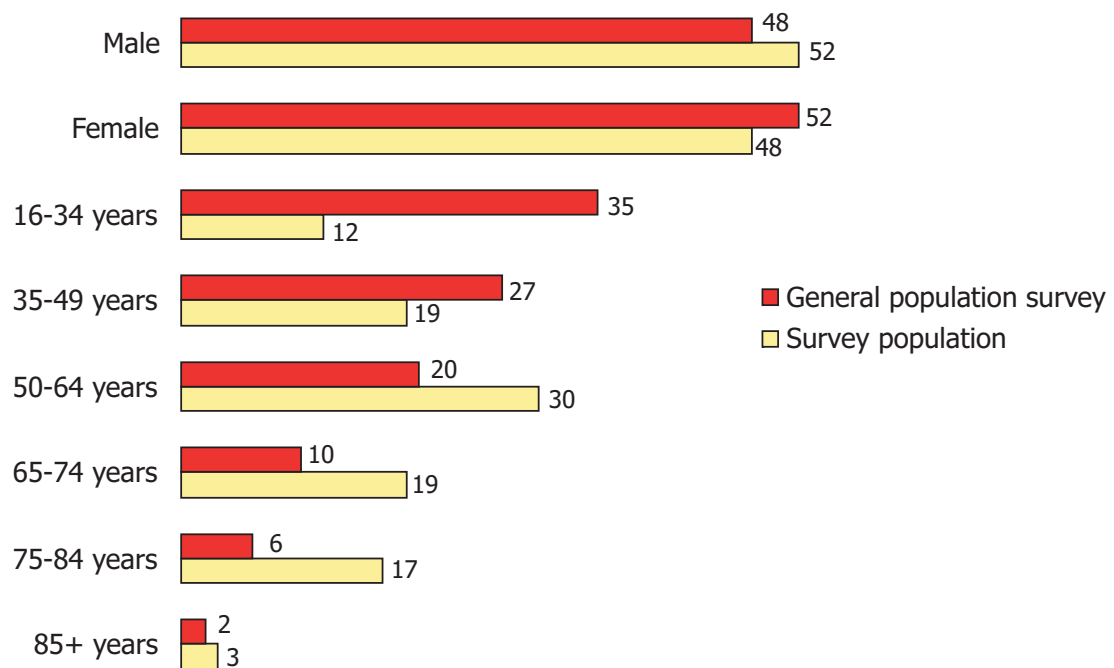
The results of the General Population Survey⁵ shows that older people are less likely to attend arts events. Given that, based on the Northern Ireland Census figures, the disabled population tends to be older, it is probable that attendance and participation levels amongst this group will be lower than in the general population. Although no known comparative research has been undertaken into inhibiting factors, it is likely that barriers faced would be similar for older people at a general population level and for the people with disabilities in this survey.

⁵ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts and Culture 2004, p.20.

Figure 4.1.1

Demographic profile comparison (%)

Base: All respondents - 500

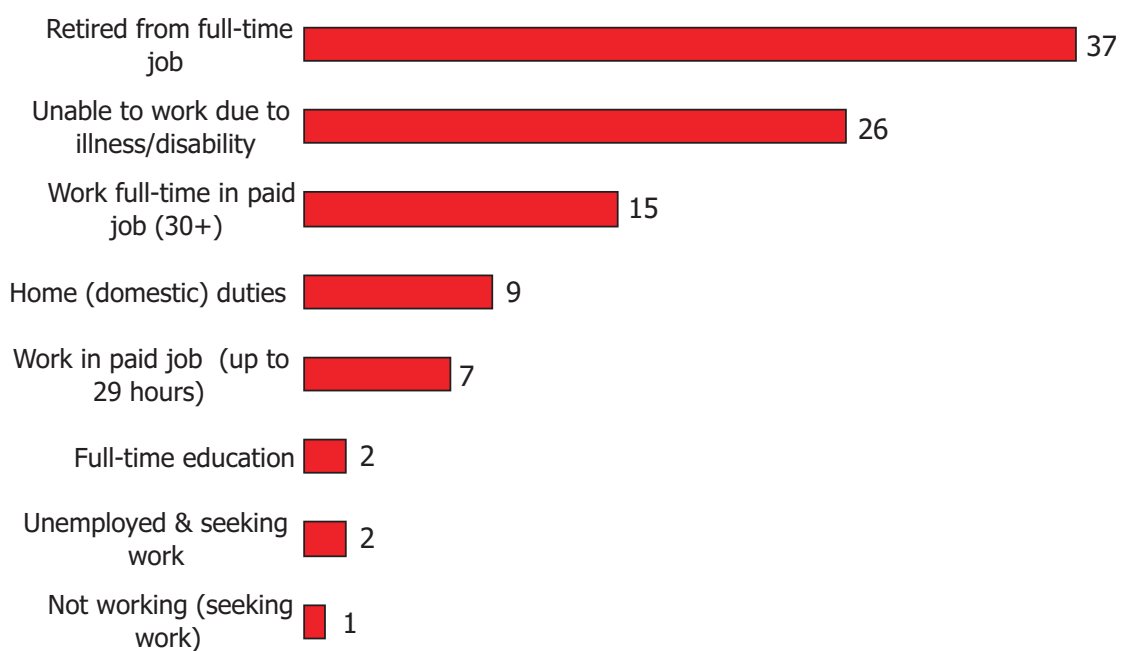


To better understand the demographic profile of the sample, details of interviewees' working status and social class were gathered. Figure 4.1.2 illustrates the working status of all respondents. As the chart depicts, the majority of disabled people interviewed were not in paid employment, mainly due to retirement (37%) or due to permanent disability or illness (26%). Given that 39% of respondents were aged over 65 this is not surprising.

Figure 4.1.2

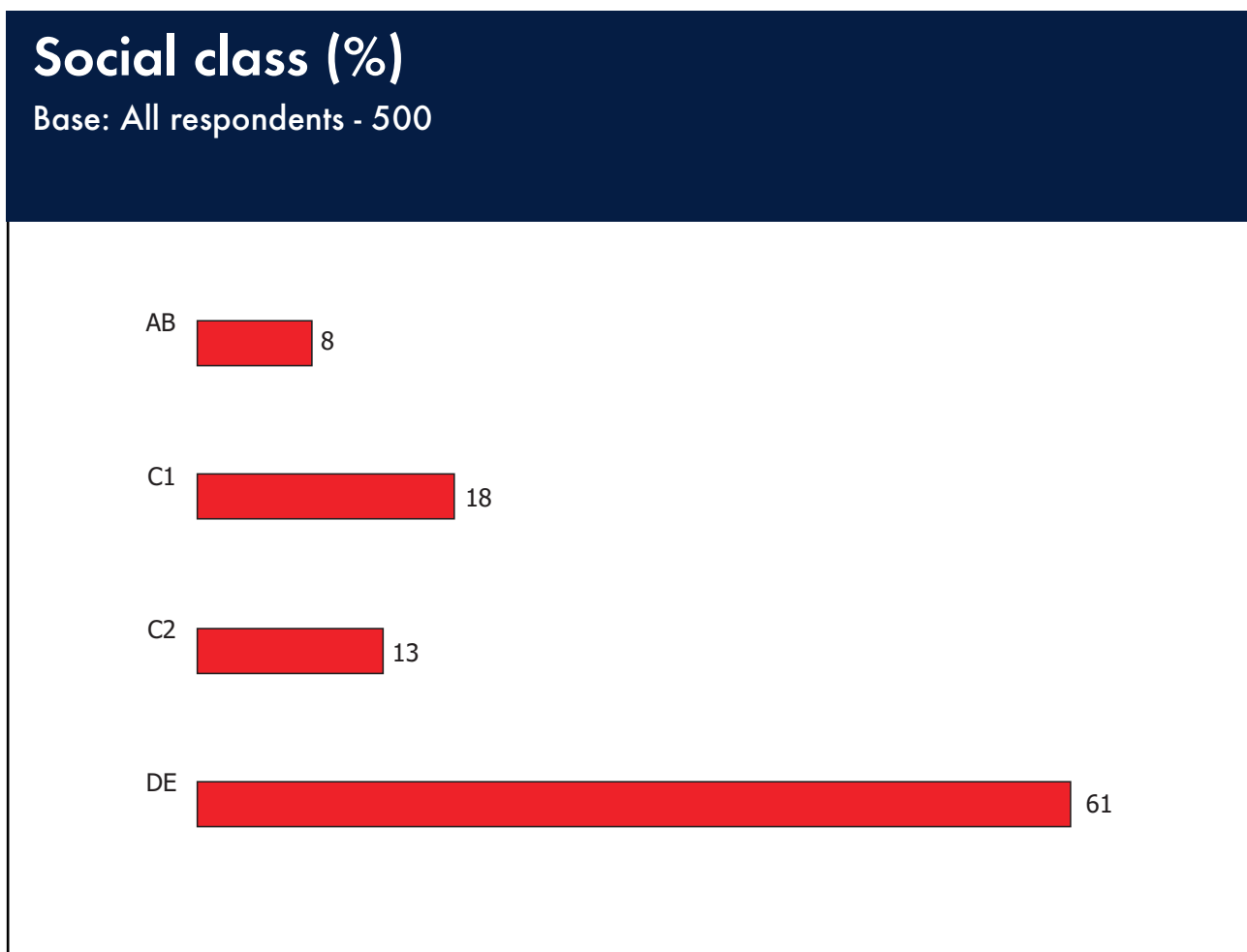
Working Status (%)

Base: All respondents - 500



The high level of respondents not in paid employment is reflected in their social profile (figure 4.1.3). The majority of respondents (61%) fell into the DE grades. Categories within these grades include those entirely dependent on long term state support through sickness, unemployment or old age. The percentage of disabled people classed as social grade ABC1 (26%) was lower than the General Population Survey⁶ which is made up of approximately 39% of people at this grade.

Figure 4.1.3



⁶ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Arts and Culture* 2004, p.21.

As can be seen from figure 4.1.4, just over a quarter of respondents (26%) were single, with 45% either married or living as a couple. Thirty percent of those interviewed were widowed, divorced or separated. The majority of respondents lived alone or with one other person (78%).

Figure 4.1.4

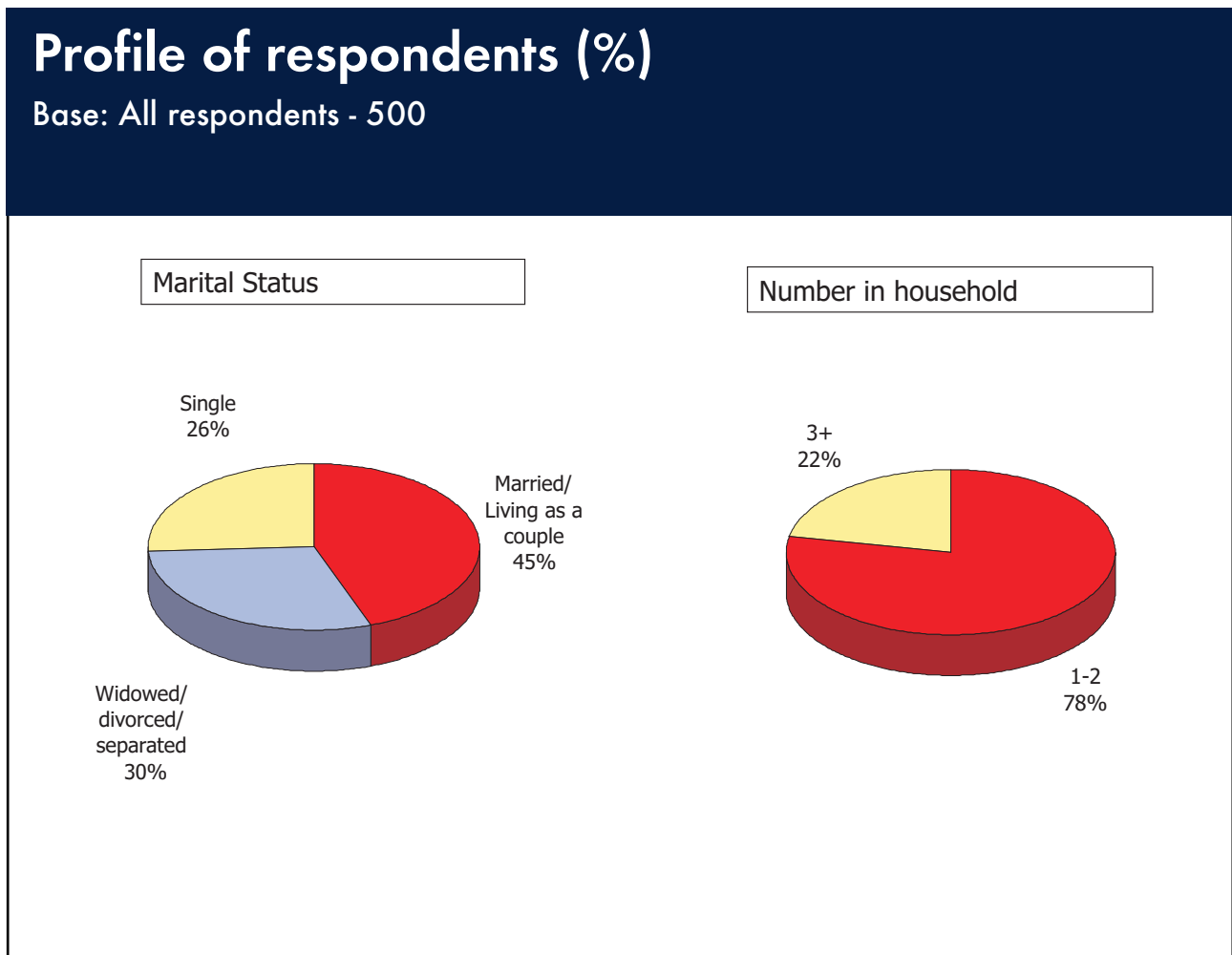
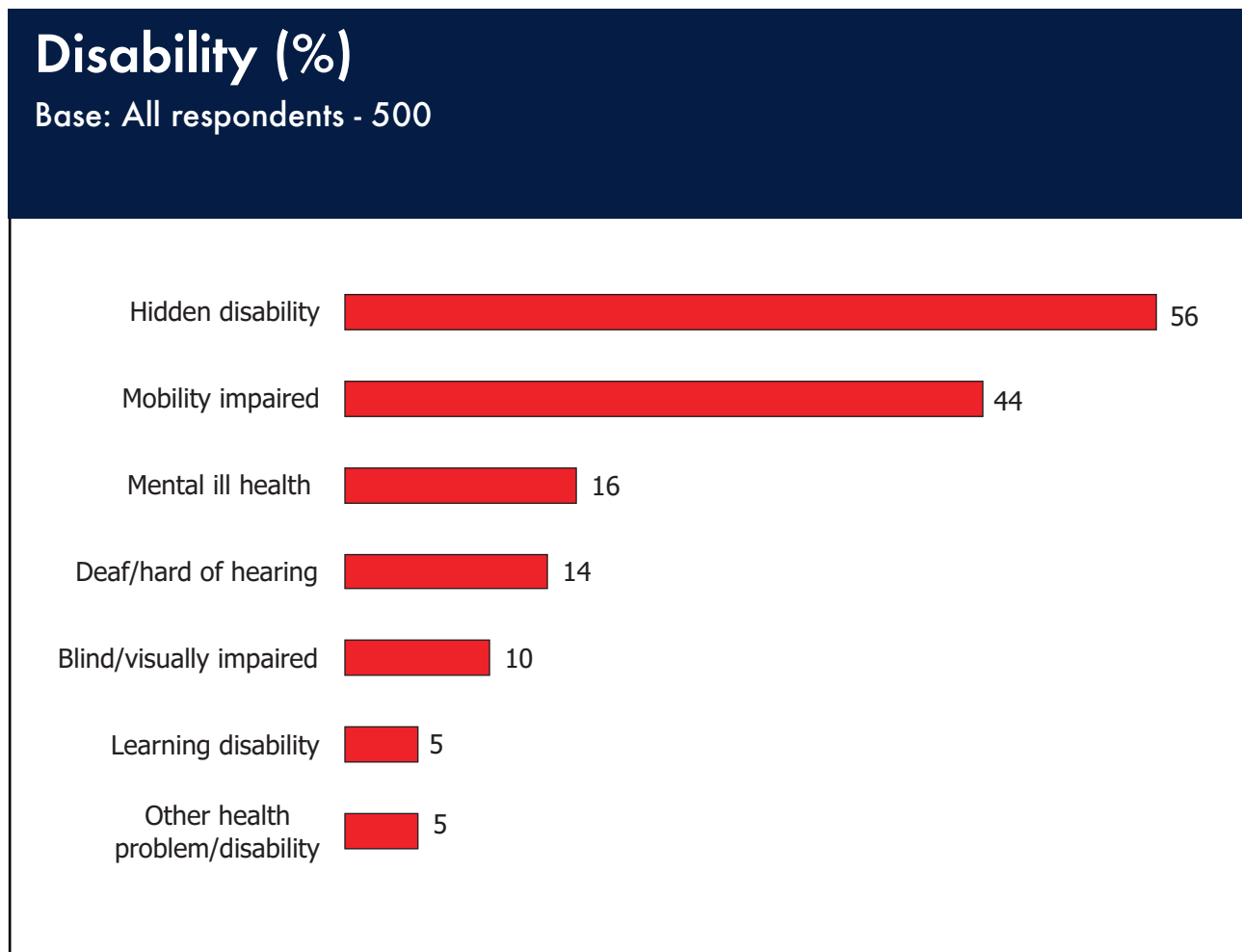


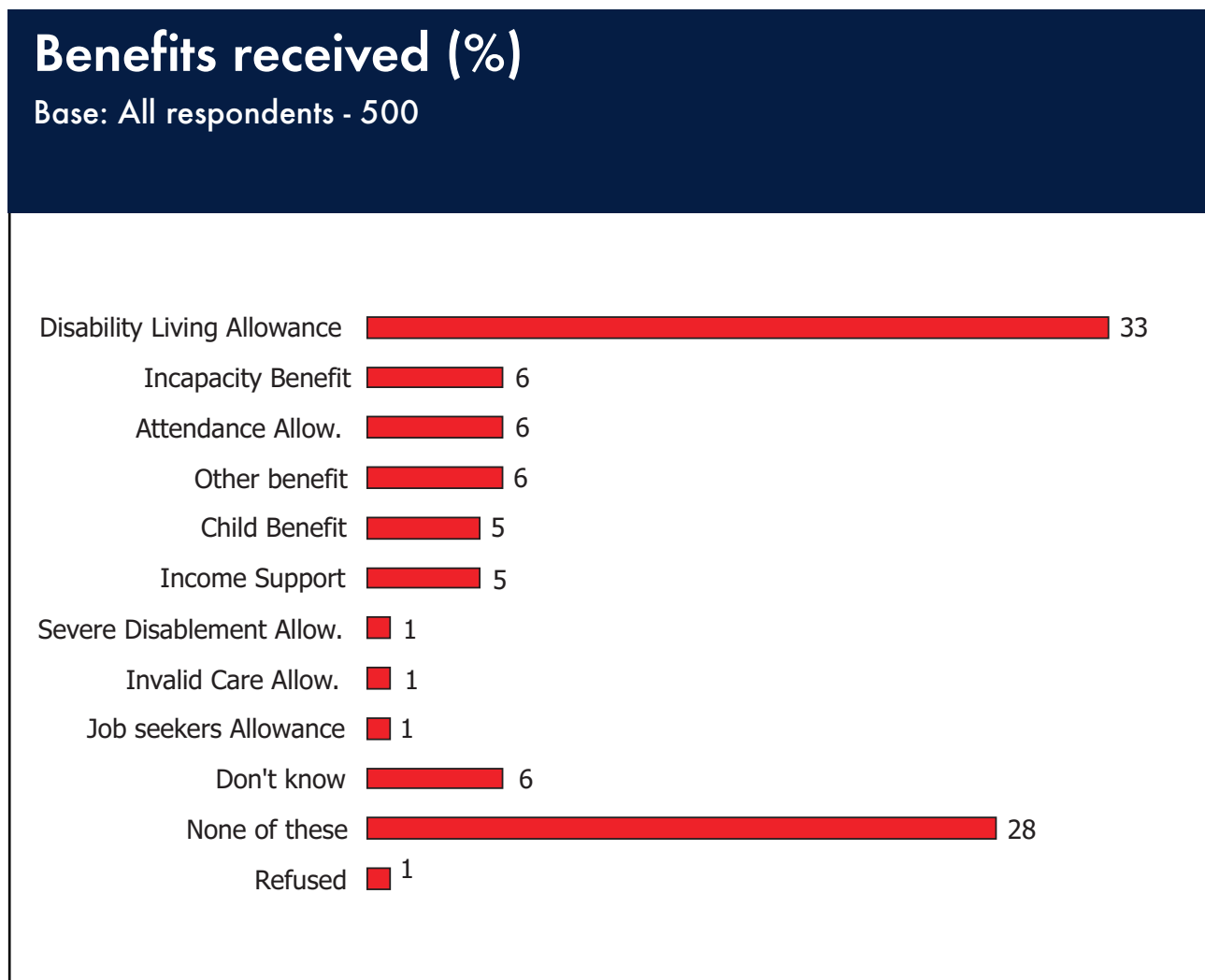
Figure 4.1.5 shows that the majority of respondents questioned (56%) fitted into the category for hidden disability. This was followed by impaired mobility (44%) and mental ill health (16%). Five percent of respondents had a learning disability.

Figure 4.1.5



As shown in Figure 4.1.6, Disability Living Allowance was the most widely received benefit with a third of respondents (33%) in receipt of this. Just over a quarter of disabled respondents (28%) were not in receipt of any benefits (listed or otherwise).

Figure 4.1.6



4.2 Level of interest in art forms and attendance at events

4.2.1 Interest in and attendance at art forms

Respondents were asked which art forms they had attended as an audience member in the last 12 months. Figure 4.2.1.1 overleaf shows that older people are less likely to attend arts events; also attendance for the disabled population is also somewhat lower than the general population.

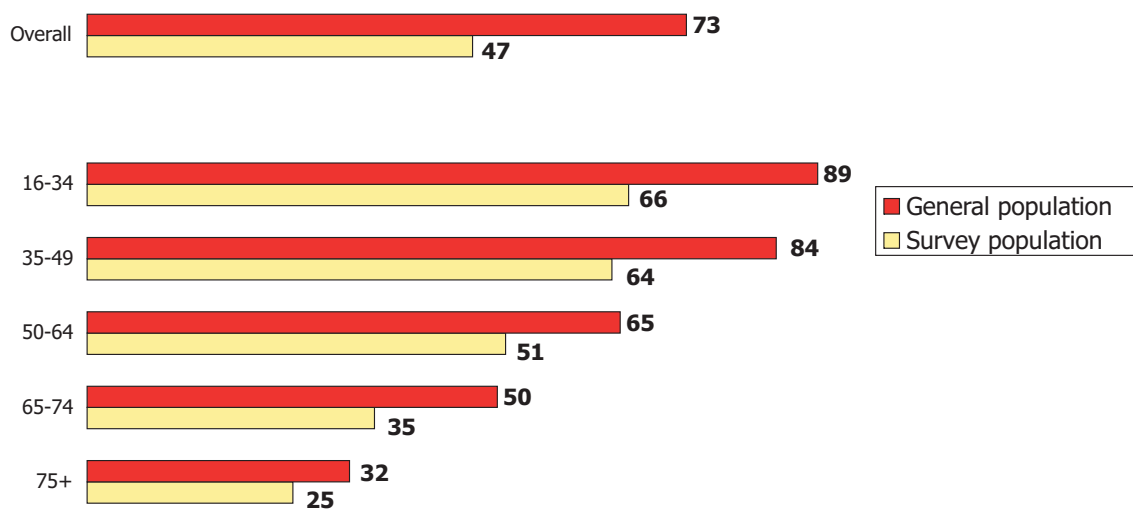
The number of disabled people who had attended an arts event in the last 12 months (47%) was considerably fewer than the Northern Ireland population overall. According to the General Population Survey⁷, 73% of the population had attended an arts event.

As pointed out previously, the general population has a younger age profile compared to the disabled population and younger people are more likely to attend arts events, 31% of 16-34 year olds had 'no interest' in attending events more often compared to 62% of those aged 75+.

Figure 4.2.1.1

% Who has attended as an audience member in the last 12 months

Base: All respondents - 500



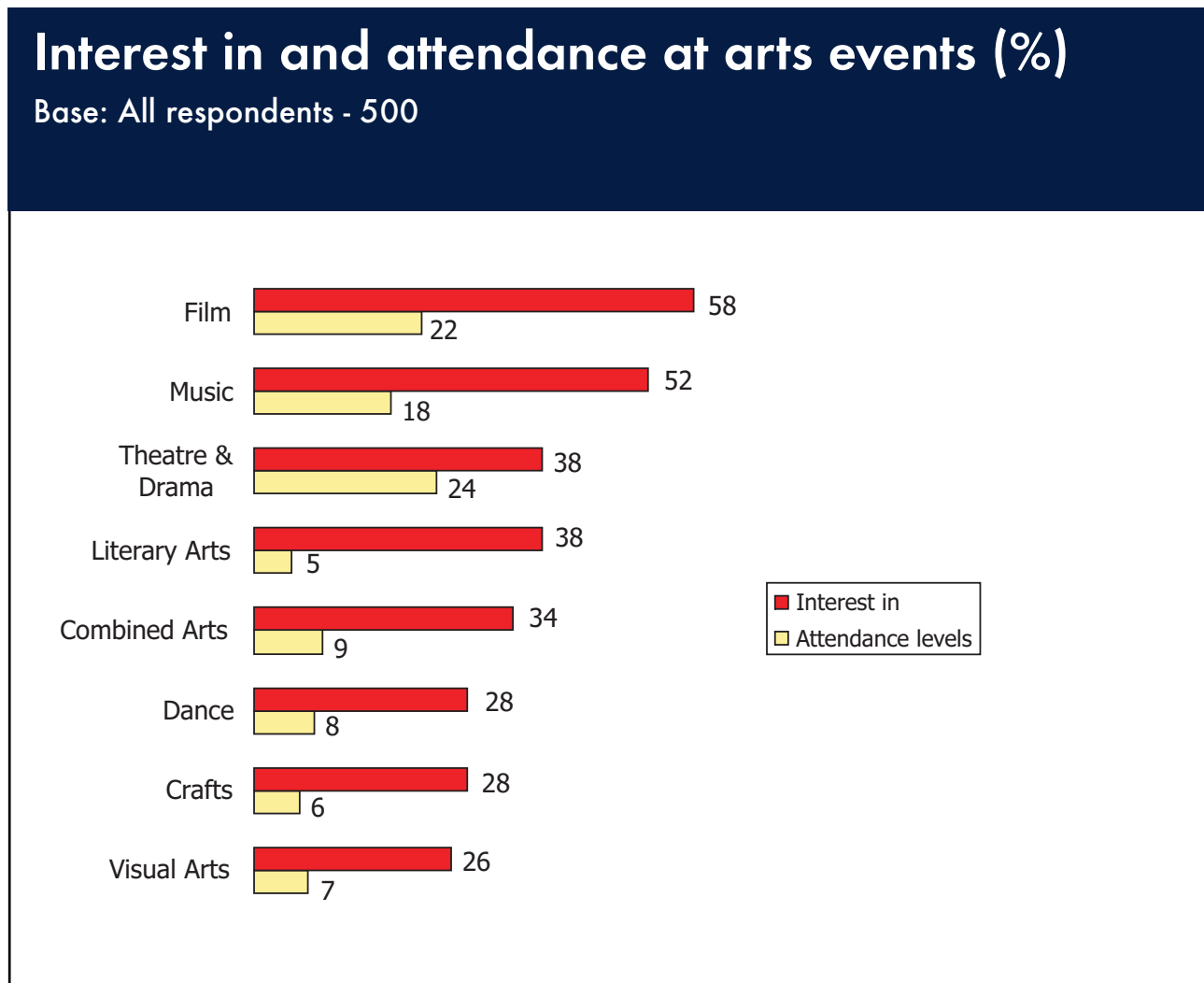
Each respondent was asked how interested they were in a number of art forms: film, music, literature, theatre & drama, combined arts, crafts, dance and visual arts using a 5 point scale; where 1 is 'very interested' and 5 is 'not at all interested'. Figure 4.2.1.2 on the next page shows the combined number of those who stated they were 'very interested' or 'quite interested' in the various art forms and compares this to actual attendance at events.

Film was the most popular art form with 58% of respondents expressing an interest in it. More than half (52%) indicated an interest in music, 38% an interest in literature, and 38% in theatre and drama.

⁷ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Arts and Culture* 2004, p.19.

The least popular art form was visual arts, with 26% of those interviewed stating an interest in it. Overall, 14% of the sample was not interested in any art form listed.

Figure 4.2.1.2



There were few differences in attendance between the general population and the disabled population in relation to theatre and drama, dance and literary arts events. The main differences were in the attendance at film, 53% of the population compared to 22% of the disabled population.

Of the 500 respondents interviewed almost a quarter (24%) had attended a theatre and drama event in the last 12 months, a similar percentage to the General Population Survey⁸, where 22% stated that they had attended a play or drama. Over one in five (22%) had attended a film event and almost one in five (18%) had attended a music event. Combined arts, dance, visual arts, crafts and literary events were attended by less than one in ten respondents.

⁸ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Arts and Culture* 2004, p.19.

A comparison between the percentage of respondents who said they were interested in a particular art form and the percentage that had actually attended that art form in the last twelve months is worthy of note. Film had the highest interest levels (58%) yet only 22% had actually attended a film event in the last 12 months. In the case of theatre & drama fewer respondents stated that they were interested in this art form than film, however, a higher proportion had actually attended.

As figure 4.2.1.3 illustrates, people with a learning disability are more likely to attend theatre and drama events, film and music and are less likely to attend dance and literary arts than those with other disabilities.

Those with mental ill health or hearing impairment tend to be less likely to attend music events. Those with a hearing impairment have the lowest level of attendance, with 67% stating that they did not attend any arts event.

Table 4.2.1.3

Art forms attended by disability (%)

Base: All respondents - 500

	Overall (Base: 500)	Hearing impaired (Base: 72*)	Mental ill health (Base: 82*)	Mobility impaired (Base: 222)	Hidden Disability (Base: 280)	Learning Disability (Base: 25*)	Visually impaired (Base: 51*)
None	53	67	60	60	52	48	47
Theatre & Drama	24	22	20	22	24	36	25
Film	22	10	22	18	22	32	24
Music	18	14	12	17	17	24	20
Combined Arts	9	8	7	6	10	4	12
Dance	8	6	4	7	9	-	12
Visual Arts	7	10	9	6	8	8	6
Crafts	6	4	5	7	7	4	4
Literature	5	4	4	3	5	-	6

* Caution low base

4.2.2 Frequency of attending various art forms

Differences emerged between the various art forms with regard to frequency of attendance.

Film was the art form most frequently attended with 7% attending once a week and a third (32%) several times a month. People were more likely to attend events such as film, crafts, literary arts and music more frequently than they were theatre and drama, and combined arts. In the case of theatre and drama and combined arts fewer than one in ten people attended on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a month).

The main reasons for attending particular events did not vary greatly between the various art forms. The top two reasons overall were 'to see a particular artist' and 'for an informal outing with friends'. Other reasons mentioned were 'to celebrate a special occasion' and 'as part of an organised group outing'. In the case of literary arts and craft events respondents stated 'for education/learning' as one of the main reasons for attending. In the General Population Survey⁸ the main reasons for attending events were 'social event', 'like going to that event', 'recommended' and 'wanted to see performer'.

4.2.3 Satisfaction with attendance

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with various aspects of each type of event they attended in the last 12 months.

Each chart listed in the following section shows the percentage satisfied ('very'/'fairly satisfied') and percentage dissatisfied ('very'/'fairly dissatisfied'). Where totals do not add up to 100 this is because some respondents stated 'don't know' and this is not indicated in the chart.

The figure to the right of each chart is the mean score or average of satisfaction calculated using the scale 1 to 5. The scores were added together and divided by the total number of (counted) respondents to give the mean score.

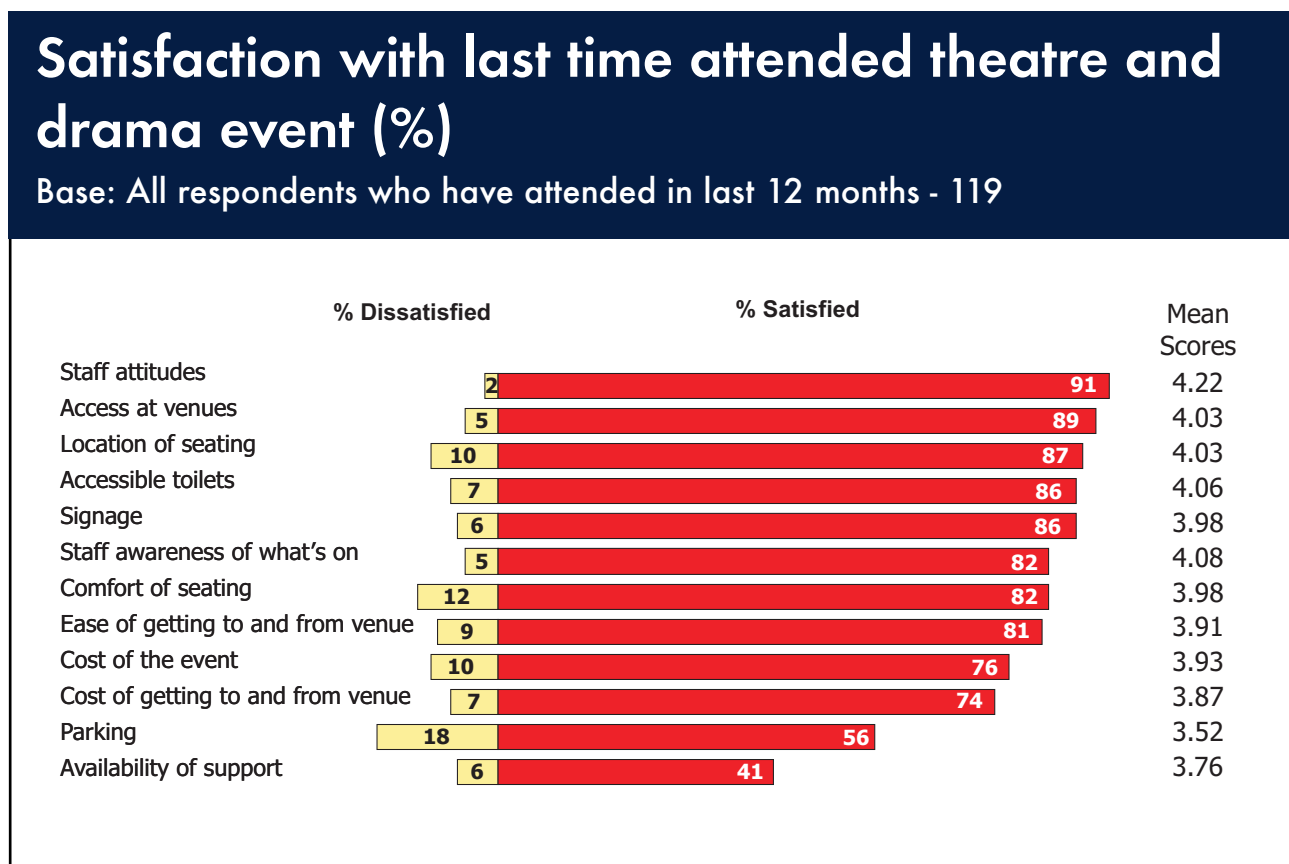
4.2.3.1 Theatre and drama

In general, the majority of those attending theatre and drama events were satisfied with most aspects of their visit (figure 4.2.3.1.1). Respondents were most likely to be satisfied with staff attitudes, access at venues and location of seating. 'Availability of support to meet access requirements' had the lowest satisfaction score; however, this is because a high number of respondents (43%) stated 'don't know' to this question. This may be due to a lack of awareness as to what support possibilities there are and so respondents are not able to state whether or not they are satisfied. Parking had the second lowest level of satisfaction although 20% stated 'don't know' or 'not sure' on this aspect.

Dissatisfaction was most likely to be expressed in relation to 'parking' (18%), 'comfort of seating' (12%) and 'cost of the event' (10%).

When 'don't know/not stated' responses are excluded and the mean scores for each attribute calculated, 'staff attitudes', 'staff awareness of what's on', 'accessible toilets', 'location of seating' and 'access at venues' were all ranked very highly. 'Parking' remains a source of dissatisfaction and was ranked lowest of all the mean scores for theatre and drama.

Figure 4.2.3.1.1



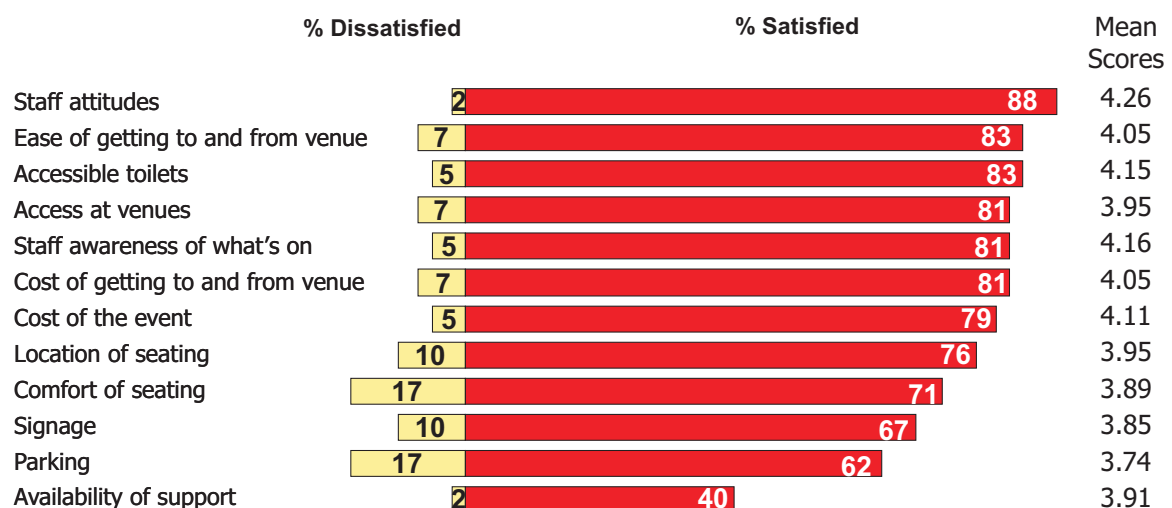
4.2.3.2 Dance

As was the case with theatre and drama, the majority of respondents who had attended a dance event in the last 12 months were satisfied with most aspects of the visit. Again, 'parking' (17%) and 'comfort of seating' (17%) attracted the most comments in relation to dissatisfaction. One in ten respondents expressed dissatisfaction with 'signage' and 'location of seating' (10%).

Figure 4.2.3.2.1

Satisfaction with last time attended a dance event (%)

Base: All respondents who have attended in last 12 months - 42 *



* Caution low base

4.2.3.3 Music

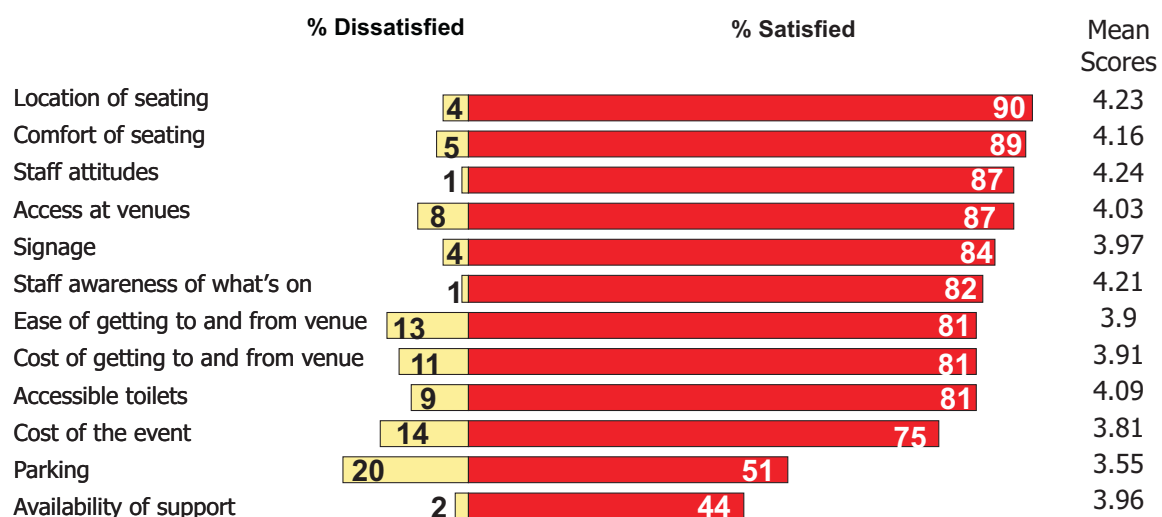
Again, the majority overall were satisfied with most aspects of their last visit to a music event.

Satisfaction levels were particularly high with seating both in terms of location and comfort, staff attitudes and access. The highest level of dissatisfaction was with parking followed by the cost of the event itself. The 'cost of the event' was more of an issue for people who attended music events than it was for those who attended dance and theatre and drama events.

Figure 4.2.3.3.1

Satisfaction with last time attended a music event (%)

Base: All respondent who have attended in last 12 month - 91 *



*Caution low base

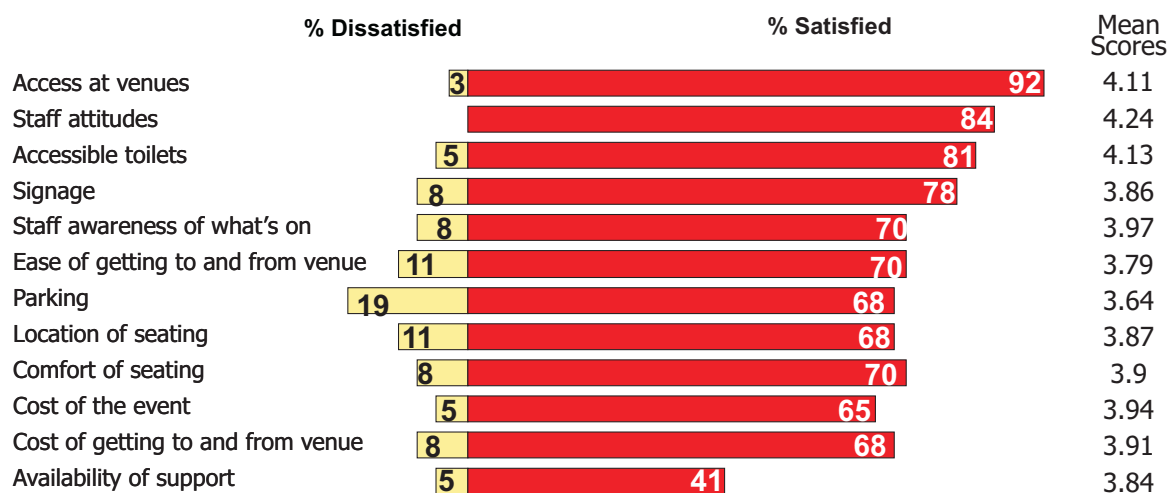
4.2.3.4 Visual Arts

Over nine in ten respondents (92%) were satisfied with access at visual arts venues. 'Parking', 'ease of getting to and from venue' and 'location of seating' were most likely cause dissatisfaction. When comparing mean satisfaction scores, 'staff attitudes' was the top attribute for visual arts events, with 'accessible toilets' and 'access at venues' also scoring highly.

Figure 4.2.3.4.1

Satisfaction with last time attended a visual arts event (%)

Base: All respondent who have attended in last 12 month - 37*



* Caution low base

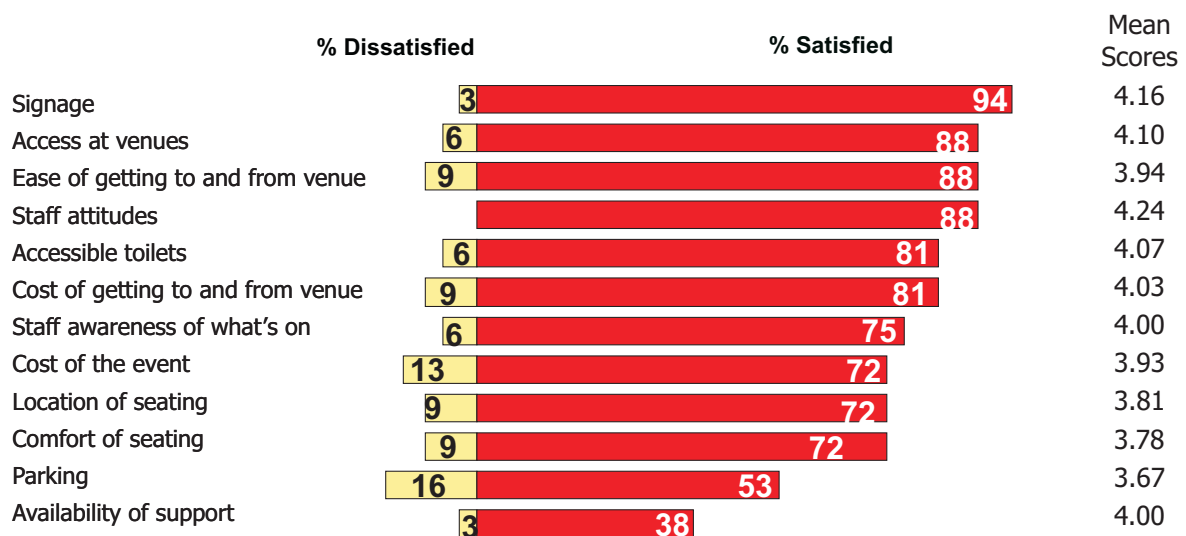
4.2.3.5 Crafts

Satisfaction with crafts events differed to the previous art forms with 94% of respondents stating that they were satisfied with 'signage' at crafts events. In the case of the other art forms 'signage' tended to be ranked considerably lower. Access at venues, ease of getting to and from the venue and staff attitudes also had high levels of satisfaction. 'Parking' and 'cost of the event' gave rise to the greatest levels of dissatisfaction. Access at venues, ease of getting to and from the venue and staff attitudes also had high levels of satisfaction.

Figure 4.2.3.5.1

Satisfaction with last time attended a crafts event (%)

Base: All respondent who have attended in last 12 month - 32 *



* Caution low base

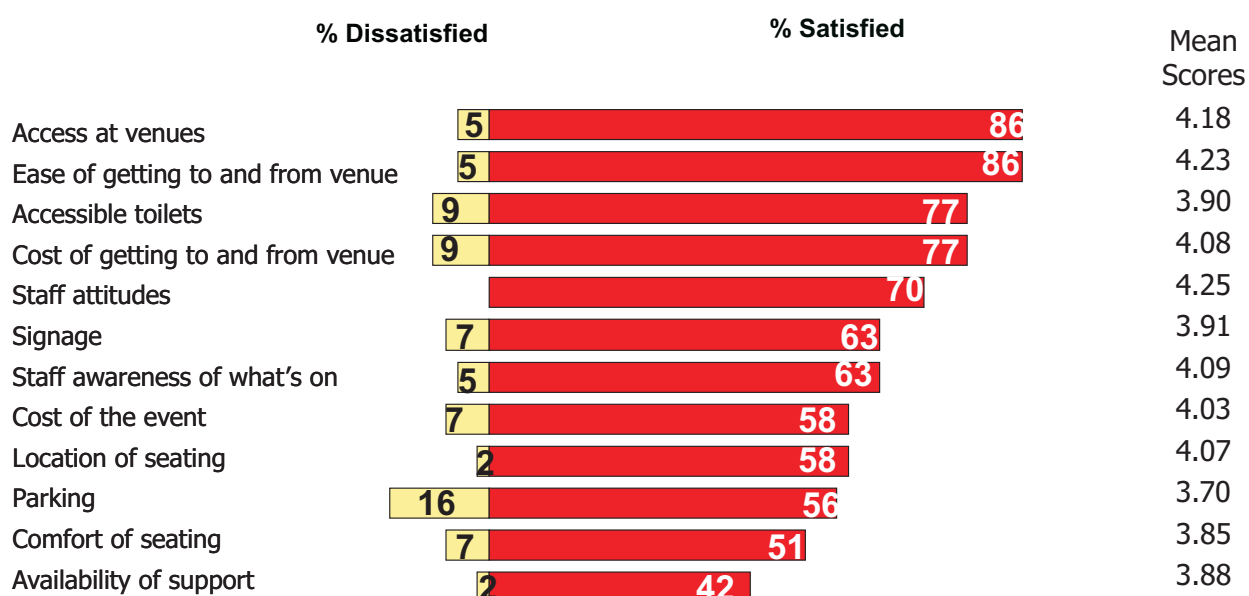
4.2.3.6 Combined Arts

Respondents were most likely to be satisfied with 'access' and 'ease of getting to and from the venue' for combined arts venues. 'Parking' was the aspect most likely to cause greatest dissatisfaction.

Figure 4.2.3.6.1

Satisfaction with last time attended a combined event (%)

Base: All respondent who have attended in last 12 month - 43 *



* Caution low base

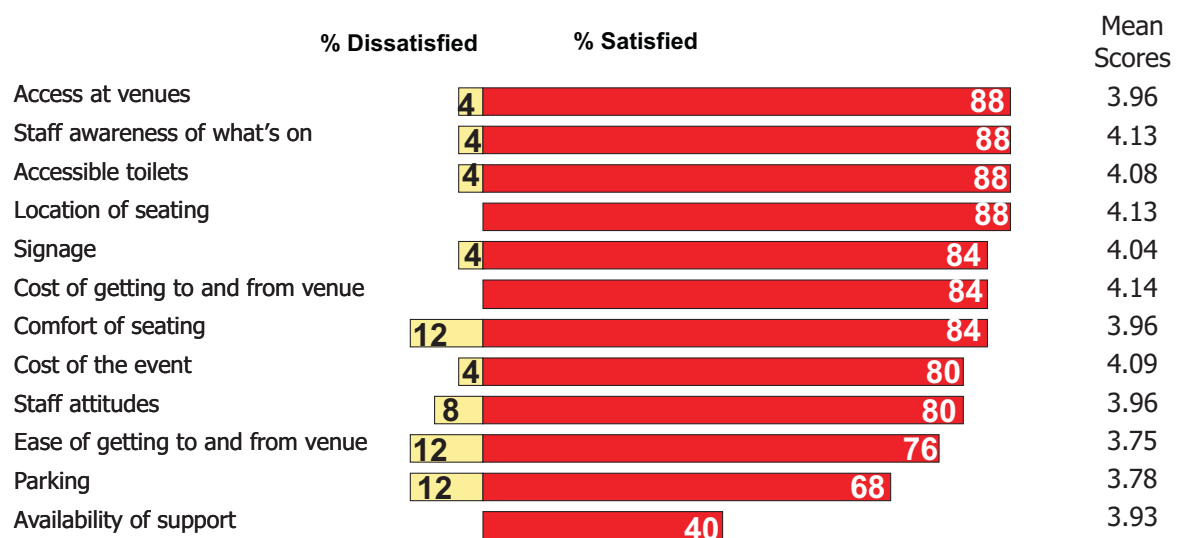
4.2.3.7 Literary Arts

Almost nine in ten respondents were satisfied with 'access at venues', 'staff awareness of what's on', 'accessible toilets' and 'location of seating' for literary arts events. When compared to other art forms satisfaction with 'staff attitudes' was lower for literary arts events.

Figure 4.2.3.7.1

Satisfaction with last time attended a literary arts event (%)

Base: All respondent who have attended in last 12 month - 25*



* Caution low base

4.2.4 Overall comparison of satisfaction with each art form

Table 4.2.4.1 displays the mean scores for each attribute across all of the various art forms. Overall satisfaction with all art forms is fairly high with scores similar between each aspect. The attribute 'staff attitudes' tended to achieve highest mean scores across the event types; 'parking' and 'ease of getting to and from an event' tended to score lower.

Table 4.2.4.1

Comparison of means between art forms

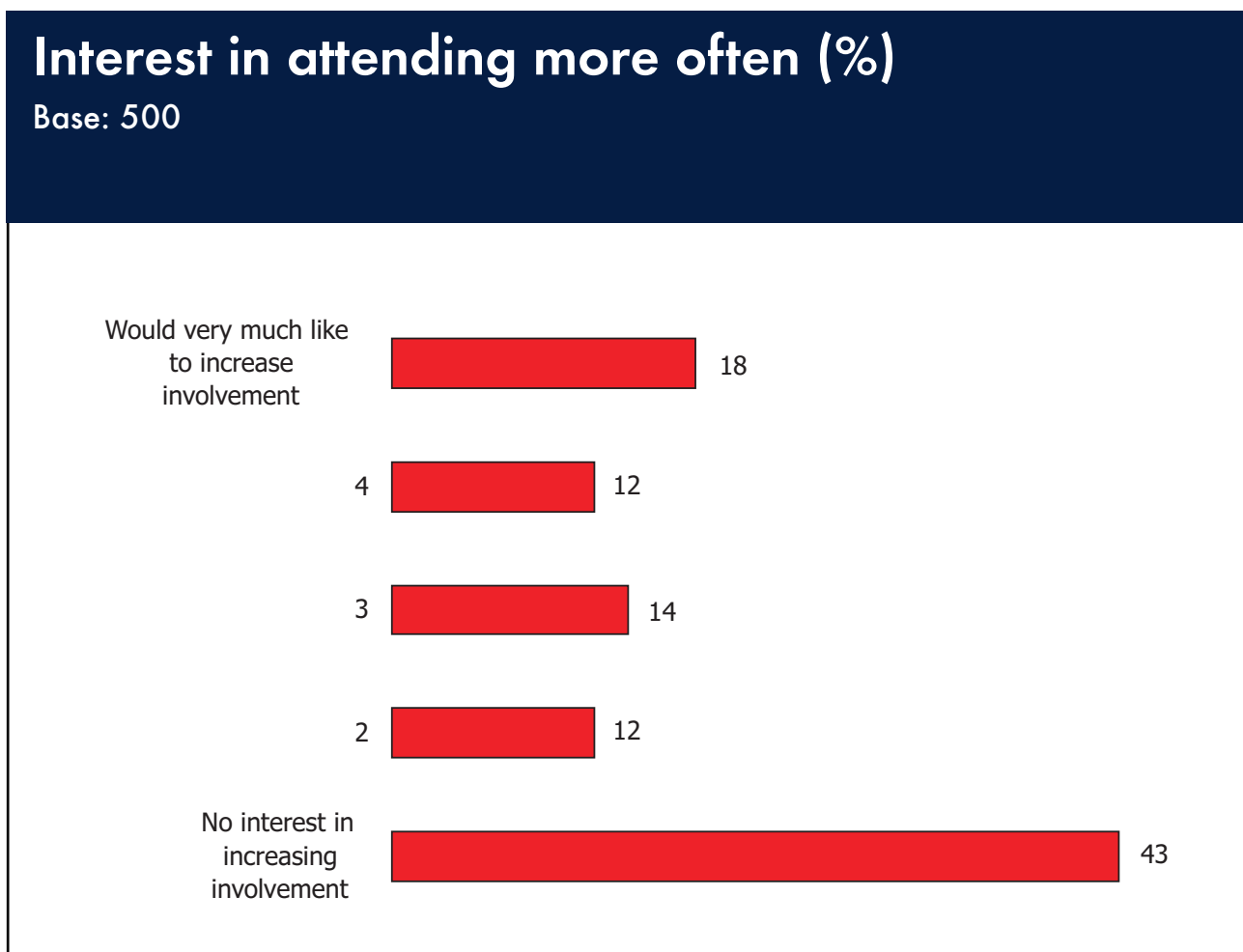
Base: All respondent who have attended particular art form in last 12 months

	Music	Combined Arts	Dance	Literary Arts	Crafts	Theatre & Drama	Visual Arts
Staff attitudes	4.24	4.25	4.26	3.96	4.24	4.22	4.24
Location of seating	4.23	4.07	3.95	4.13	3.81	4.03	3.87
Staff awareness of what's on	4.21	4.09	4.16	4.13	4.00	4.08	3.97
Comfort of seating	4.16	3.85	3.89	3.96	3.78	3.98	3.90
Accessible toilets	4.09	3.90	4.15	4.08	4.07	4.06	4.13
Access at venues	4.03	4.18	3.95	3.96	4.10	4.03	4.11
Signage	3.97	3.91	3.85	4.04	4.16	3.98	3.86
Availability of support	3.96	3.88	3.91	3.93	4.00	3.76	3.84
Cost of getting to and from the venue	3.91	4.08	4.05	4.14	4.03	3.87	3.91
Ease of getting to and from venue	3.90	4.23	4.05	3.75	3.94	3.91	3.79
Cost of the event	3.81	4.03	4.11	4.09	3.93	3.93	3.94
Parking	3.55	3.70	3.74	3.78	3.67	3.52	3.64
Overall Mean score for each art form	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.00	3.98	3.95	3.93

4.2.5 Interest in attending events more often

A large number of respondents (43%) expressed 'no interest' in increasing their attendance at arts events. However, almost one in five (18%) reported that they 'would very much like to increase' their involvement and a further 12% said that they would 'quite like' to increase their involvement.

Figure 4.2.5.1

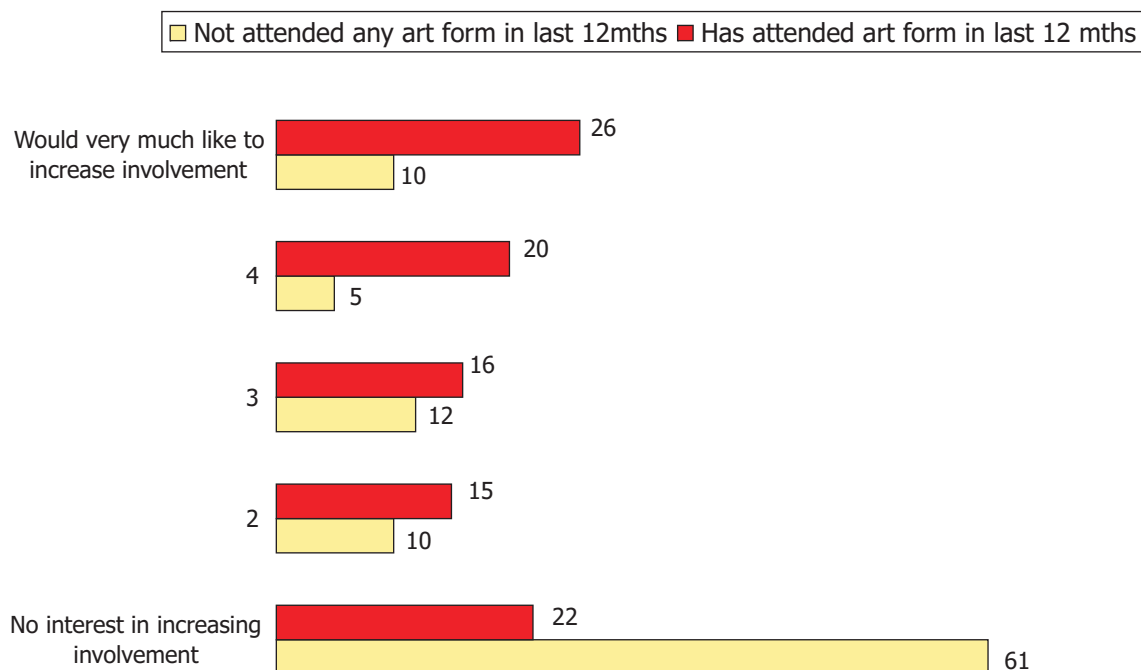


When comparing interest levels in attending more often among those who had and those who had not attended an art form as an audience member in the last 12 months, significant differences emerged (figure 4.2.5.2). Only one in ten (10%) of those who had not attended an event stated that they 'would very much like to increase involvement' compared to over one in four (26%) of those who had attended an event. A similar pattern is apparent when comparing involvement between attenders and non-attenders at a general population level.

Figure 4.2.5.2

Future interest levels by past attendance (%)

Base: All respondents - 500



53% of respondents have not attended any art form as an audience member in the last 12 months.

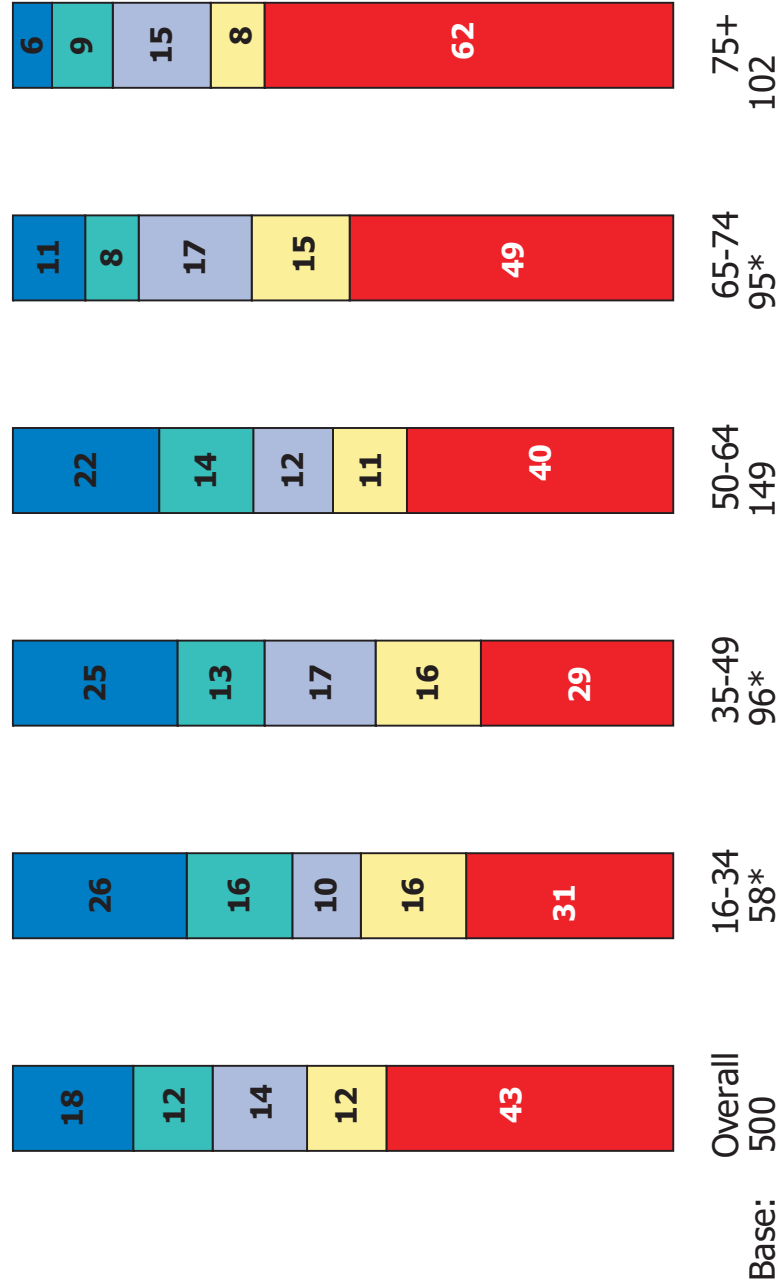
As figure 4.2.5.3 overleaf illustrates, interest in attending events more often tended to vary by age of respondent in that the older a person was the less likely they were to be interested in increasing their current level of involvement and attending events more frequently. The 16-34 (26%) and 35-49 (25%) age group had the highest percentage of those who 'would very much like' to attend events more often.

Figure 4.2.5.3

Interest in attending more often (by age) (%)

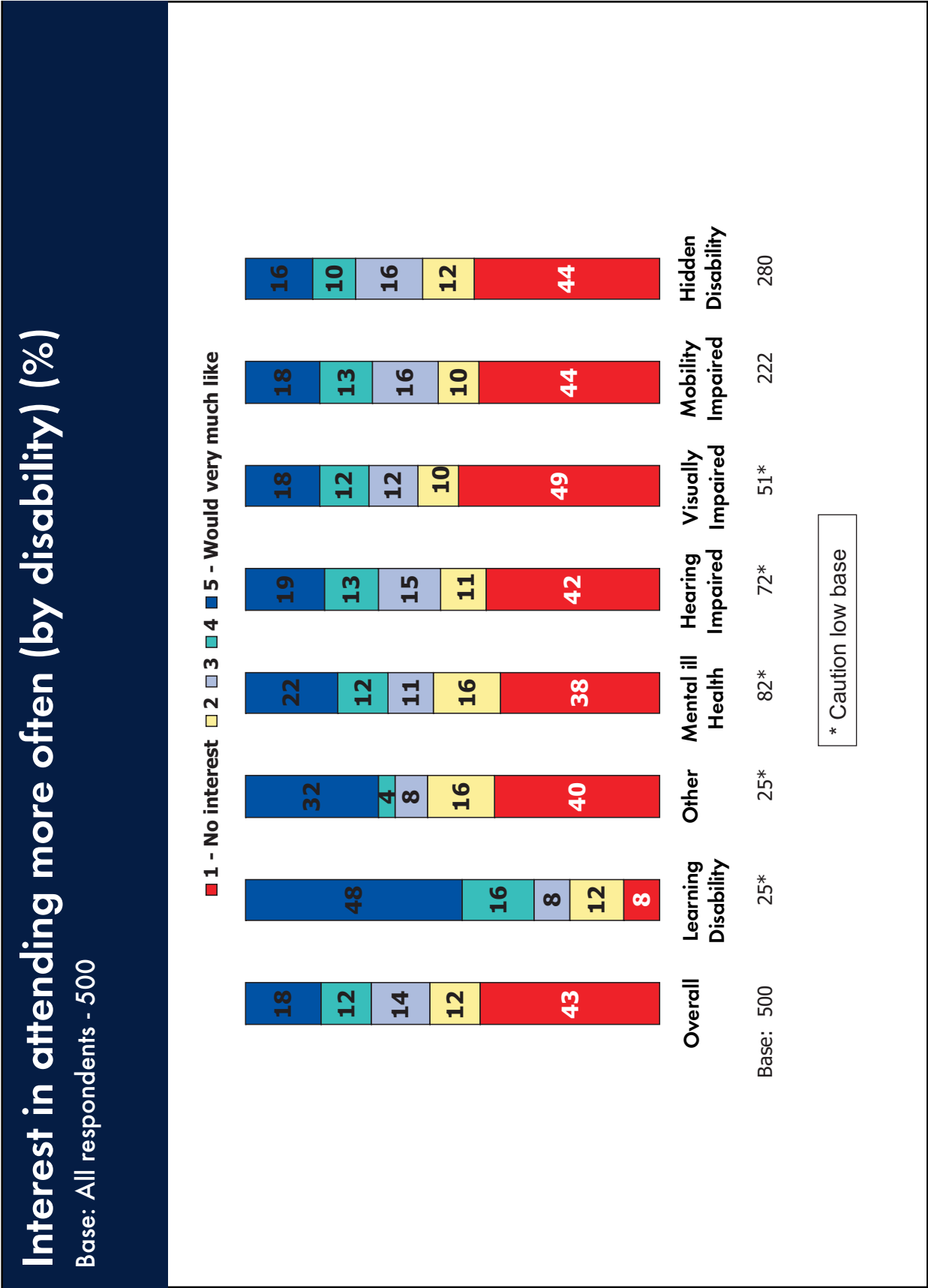
Base: All respondents - 500

■ 1 - No interest ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 - Would very much like



* Caution low base

Figure 4.2.5.4

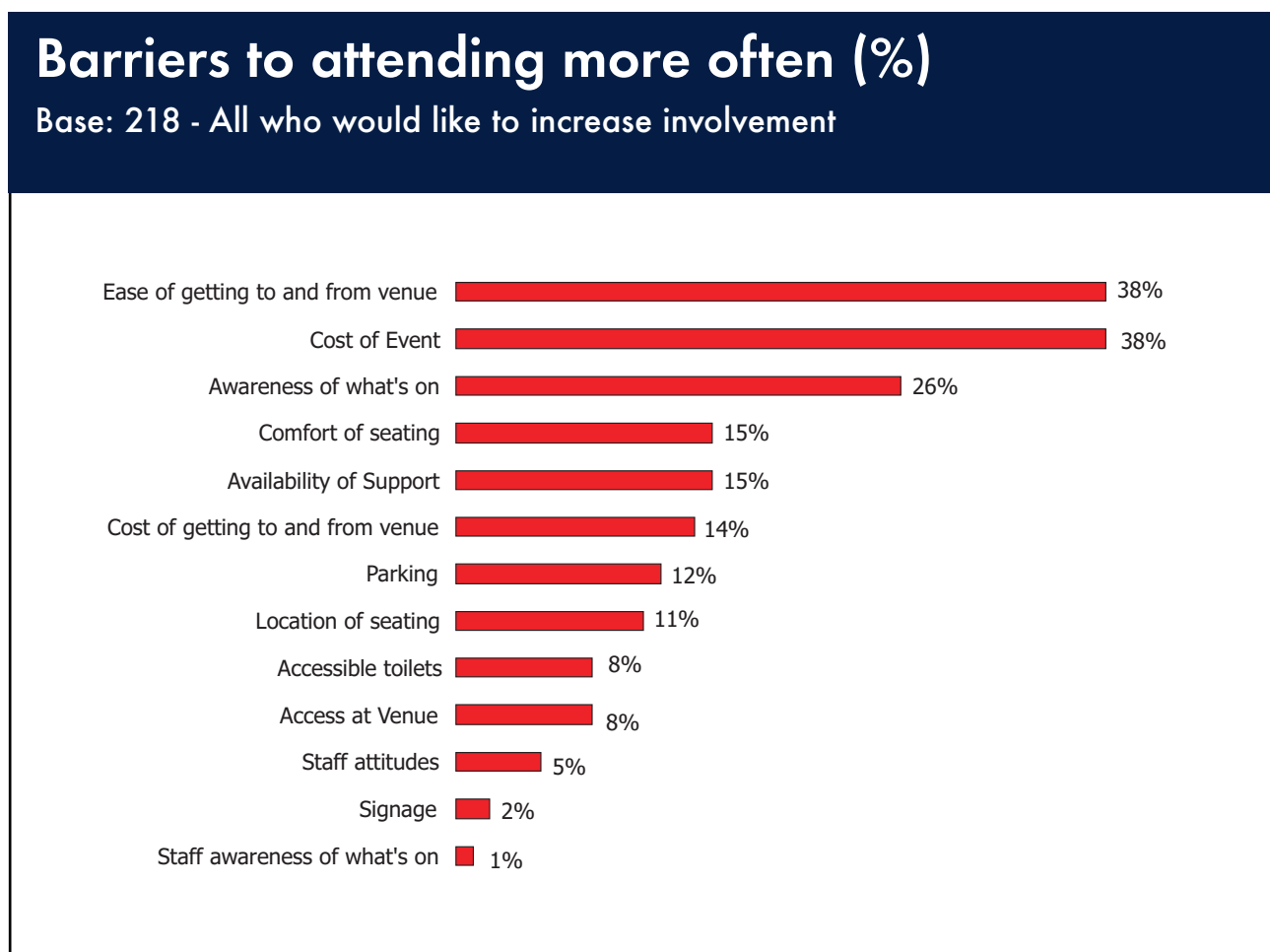


As figure 4.2.5.4 (previous page) shows, respondents with learning difficulties were much more interested in attending events more often than those with other types of disability with 48% stating that they 'would very much like' to attend more frequently, compared to a mean of 18%. Only 8% stated that they had 'no interest at all' in attending events more often, compared to an overall mean of 43%. Visually impaired respondents were the least likely to want to increase attendance with almost half (49%) stating that they had 'no interest in increasing involvement'.

4.2.6 Barriers to attendance

Figure 4.2.6.1 highlights the barriers to attending events more often; the main barriers being 'ease of getting to and from the venue' and 'cost'.

Figure 4.2.6.1



The type of impairment also affects perceptions as to the barriers which prevent people from attending events more often. The 'cost of the event' and 'ease of getting to and from the venue' were barriers for everyone but more so for people with learning disabilities. Parking was slightly more of an issue for those who had a mobility impairment.

Top 5 barriers to attending more often (by disability) (%)

	Cost of Event	Comfort of seating	Parking	Ease of getting to and from venue	Availability of Support	Location of seating	Awareness of what's on	Cost of getting to and from venue	Accessible toilets	
Overall	15	15	26	38	38	15	17	27	40	35
Mobility Impaired	16	24	23	43	37	32	21	29	44	24
Visually Impaired	24	19	24	43	33	16	19	19	54	35
Hearing Impaired	32	21	29	44	24	39	44	22	50	56
Mental ill Health	16	19	19	54	35	15	17	27	40	35
Learning Disability	39	44	22	50	56	36	27	27	55	45
Hidden Disability	15	17	27	40	35	36	27	27	55	45
Other	36	27	27	55	45	15	17	27	40	35
Base: 218	102	21*	34*	37*	18*	121	11*			

* Caution low base

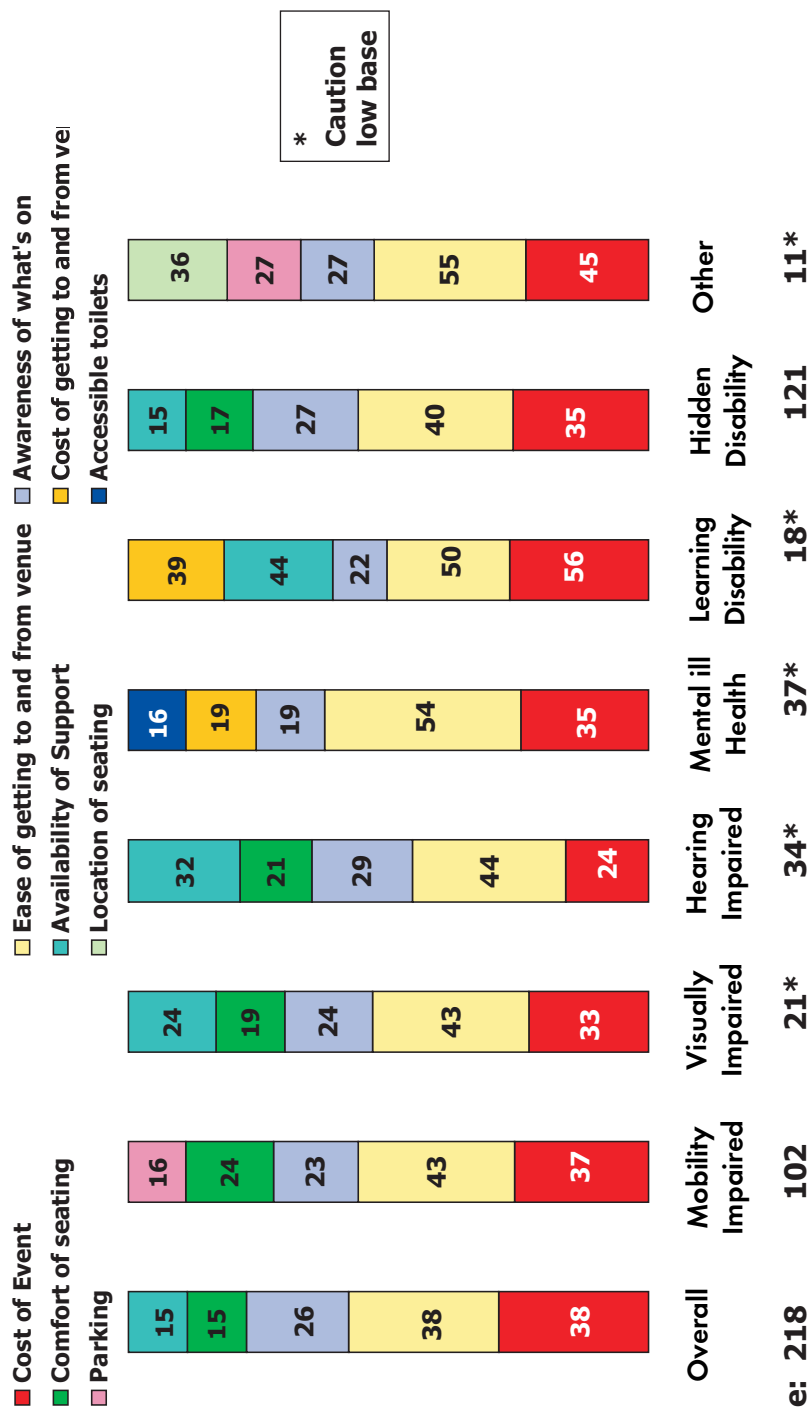
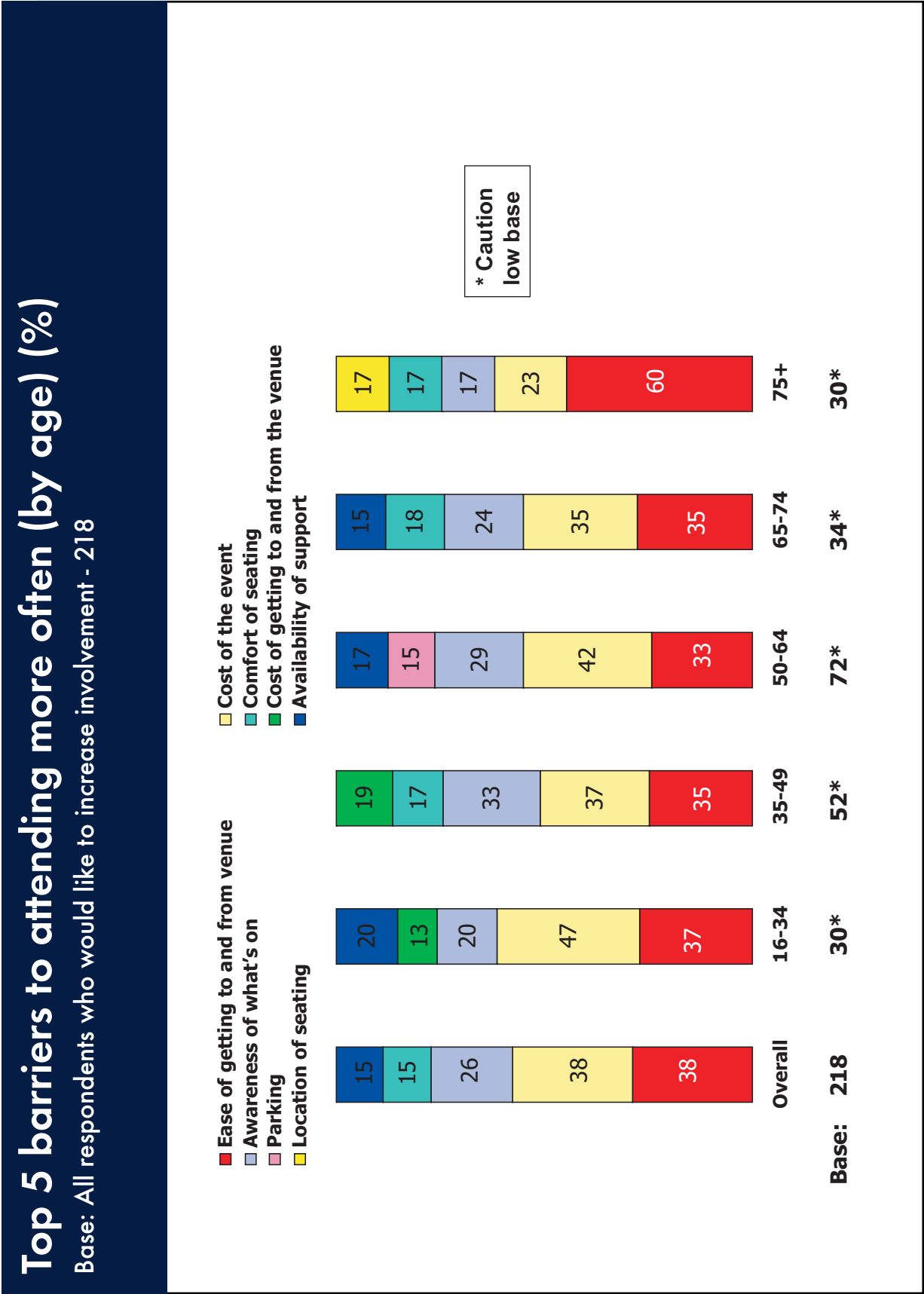


Figure 4.2.6.3



Certain barriers were more of an issue for particular age groups e.g. 'cost of the event' was a bigger issue for 16-34 year olds than it was for older respondents. Older respondents (75+) were significantly more affected by issues such as 'ease of getting to and from the venue' although this still emerged as an issue for all age groups.

4.3 Art forms participated in

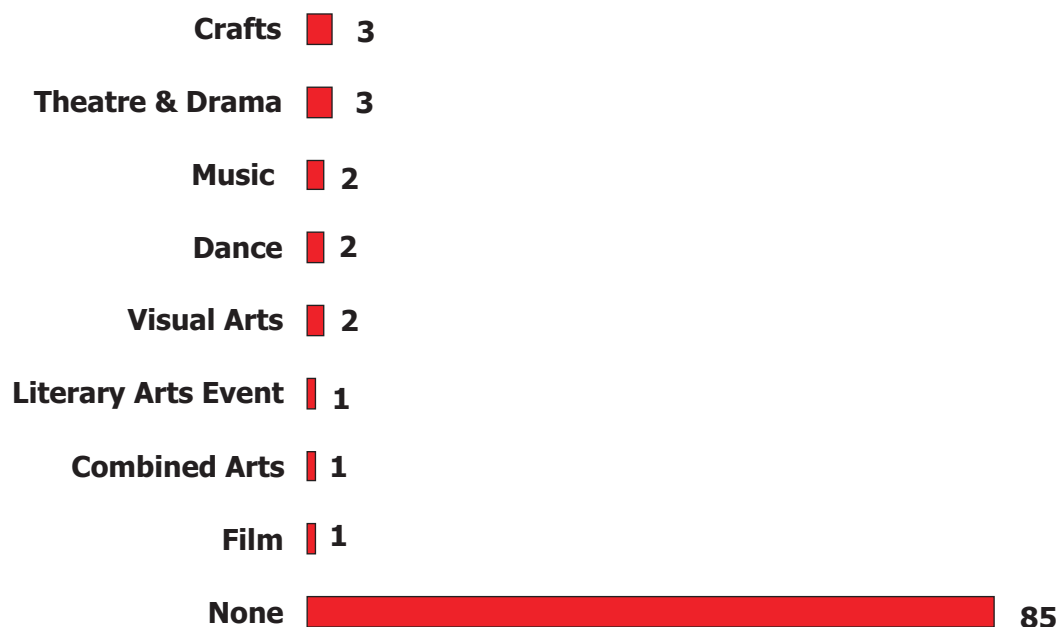
Respondents were asked whether they had participated in a particular art form in the last 12 months. Participation was defined as taking part in workshops, classes, performances or having used a studio etc.

Of the 500 respondents interviewed 85% stated that they had not participated in any of the art forms listed. This compares to 77% of the general population who had not taken part in arts activities as part of their leisure time in the last 12 months. As figure 4.3.1 illustrates 'craft' and 'theatre and drama' were the art forms most participated in (3%) with literary arts, combined arts and film each being participated in by 1% of those interviewed.

Figure 4.3.1

Art forms participated in the last 12 months (%)

Base: All respondents - 500



4.3.1 Frequency of participation in art forms

The low number of respondents who participated in the various art forms means that detailed analysis by individual art form is not possible.

In general, respondents who participated in the various art forms took part on a more frequent basis than those who attended events.

In most cases, for each art form, approximately half of the participants either took part once a week or between several times a month to once a month. For theatre and drama only 14 respondents had participated in the last 12 months, eight respondents did so once a week and two less than once a month but more than once every 6 months.

The main reasons for participating in the various art forms were socialising with friends, building confidence, to learn a new skill and to increase existing skills.

4.3.2 Satisfaction with participation in art forms

Satisfaction with the various aspects associated with participating in an art form was higher for participants than for audience members. Satisfaction with 'availability of support' by dance participants was rated 5 compared with the same category for visual arts which was rated 3.8. Combined arts scored lower in areas such as 'accessibility of toilets', 'location of seating' and 'comfort of seating'; however, it must be noted that only three respondents participated in combined arts.



Image: Open Arts. The Creative Youth Partnerships project has stimulated new work with disabled school students

Table: 4.3.2.1

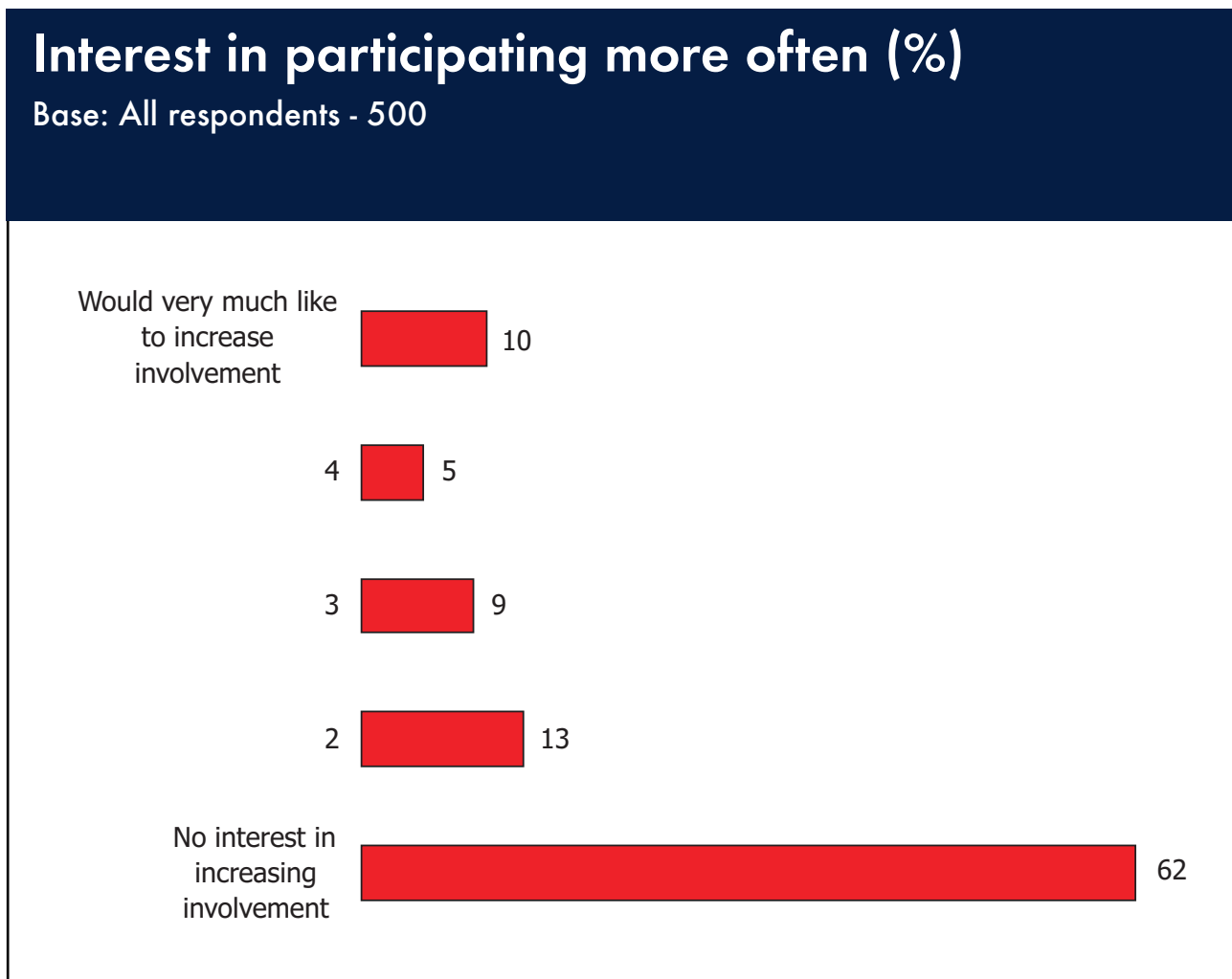
Mean satisfaction scores for participation

	Dance	Theatre & Drama	Crafts	Literary Arts	Visual Arts	Music	Combined Arts
Availability of support	5.00	4.67	4.27	3.33	3.80	3.70	4.00
Accessible toilets	4.50	4.50	4.21	4.50	4.10	3.67	2.00
Location of seating	4.40	4.70	4.31	4.50	4.00	4.08	2.00
Parking	4.40	4.50	4.17	3.25	3.80	3.64	4.50
Staff attitudes	4.40	4.64	4.36	4.50	4.20	4.00	4.00
Staff awareness of what's on	4.40	4.69	4.29	4.50	4.00	3.89	3.33
Ease of getting to and from venue	4.33	4.14	4.50	4.00	3.64	3.50	3.33
Cost of the participation	4.33	4.00	4.38	4.50	4.00	4.10	4.00
Cost of getting to and from the venue	4.33	3.86	4.50	3.67	3.80	3.45	4.50
Access at venues	4.33	4.00	4.43	4.25	3.50	3.92	4.00
Quality of tuition	4.33	4.70	4.50	4.75	4.36	4.00	4.00
Signage	4.17	4.45	4.38	3.50	3.20	3.91	3.00
Comfort of seating	4.40	3.83	4.31	4.00	3.89	3.92	2.00
Overall mean	4.41	4.36	4.36	4.10	3.87	3.83	3.44

4.3.3 Interest in participating more often

Fewer respondents were interested in participating than attending events. Overall 62% stated that they had 'no interest' in participating in events more often, compared with 43% expressing 'no interest' in attending more often.

Figure 4.3.3.1

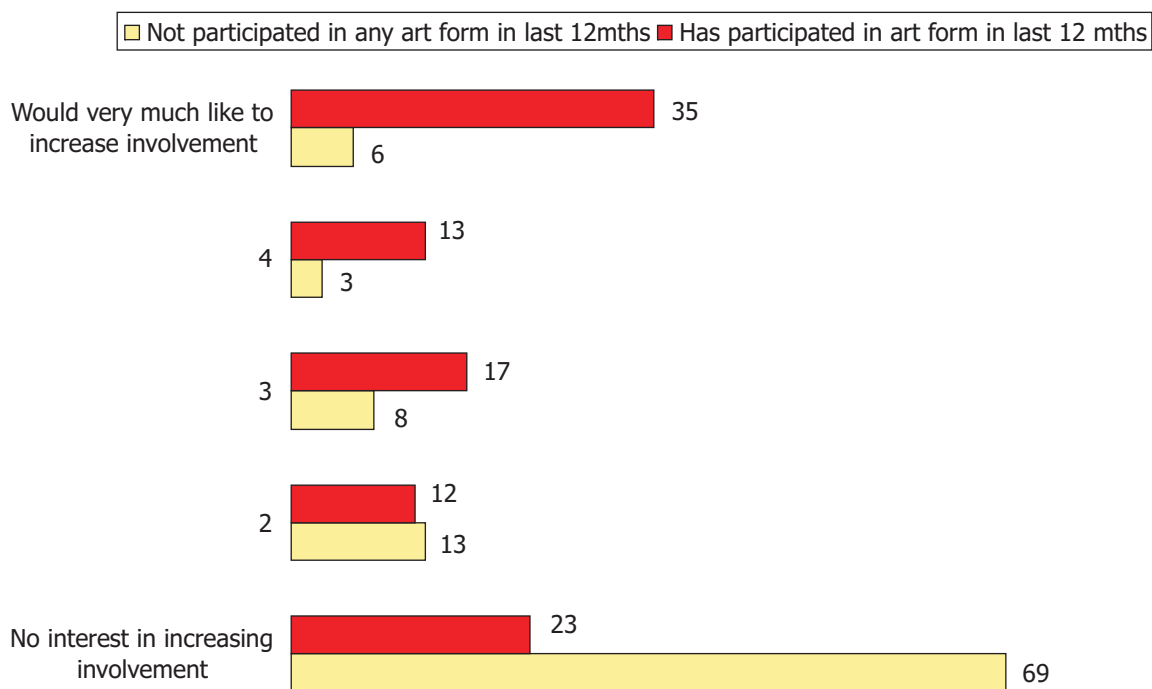


When comparing levels of future interest by past participation, almost seven in ten respondents (69%), who had not participated in the arts in the last twelve months, stated that they had 'no interest in increasing involvement' compared to just over two in ten (23%) of those who had participated. This suggests that generally those who want to be involved in the arts already are to some extent.

Figure 4.3.3.2

Future interest levels by past participation (%)

Base: All respondents - 500



85% of respondents have not participated in any art form as an audience member in the last 12 months.

The level of interest in participating more frequently varied by age (figure 4.3.3.3); the older the respondent, the less likely they were to be interested in participating more frequently. The 16-34 and 35-49 age groups were most interested in increasing participation.

Figure 4.3.3.3

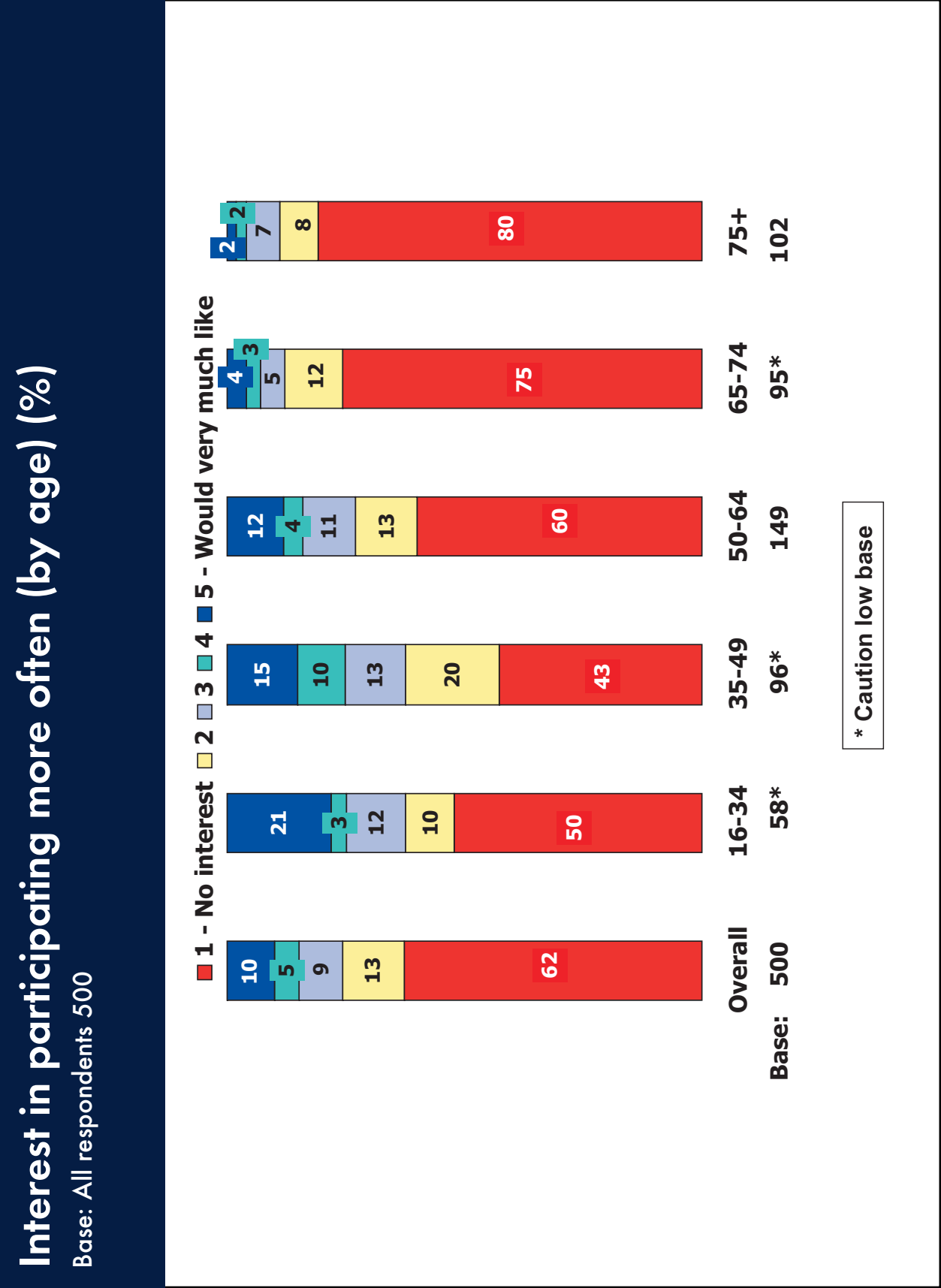
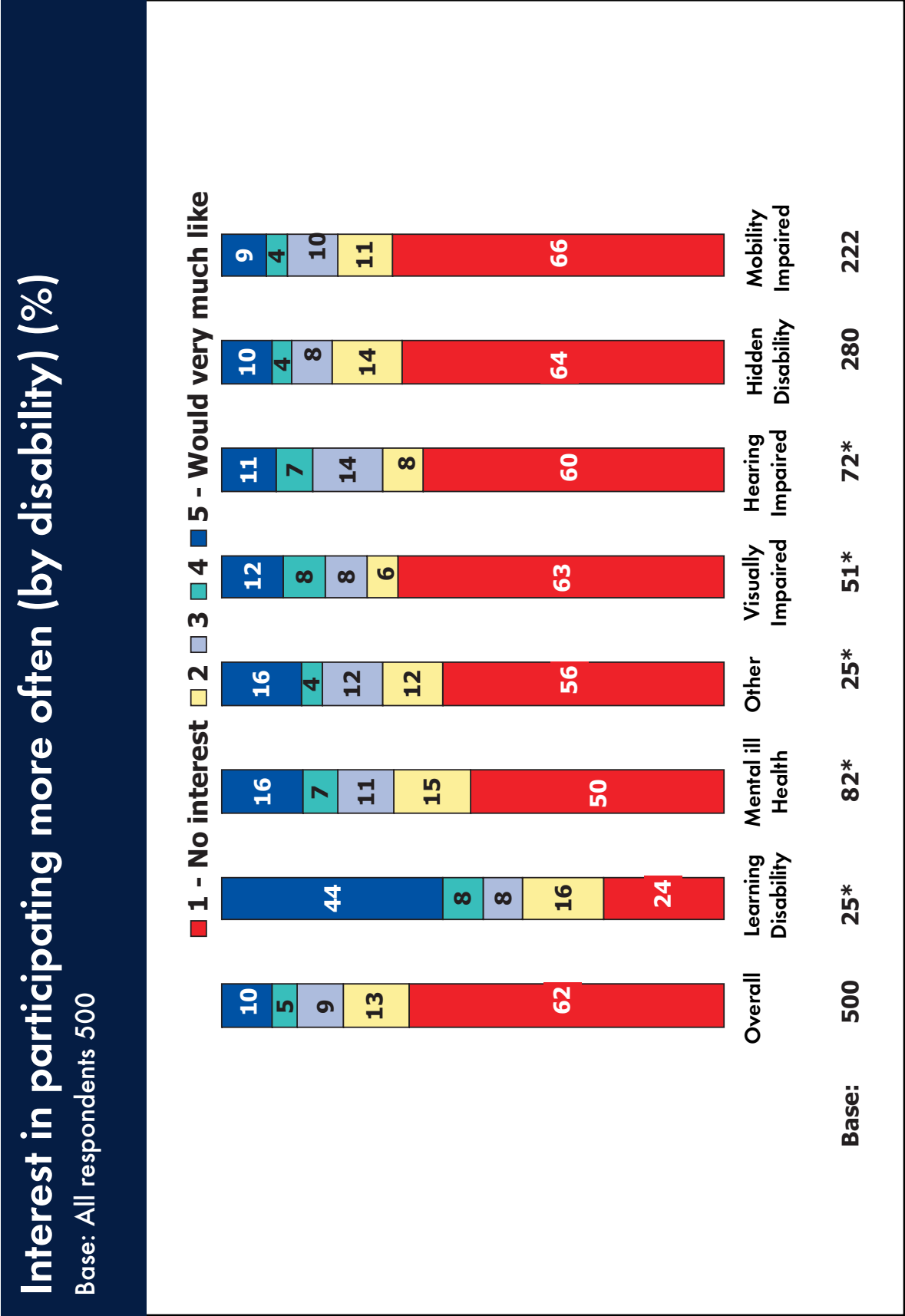


Figure 4.3.3.4

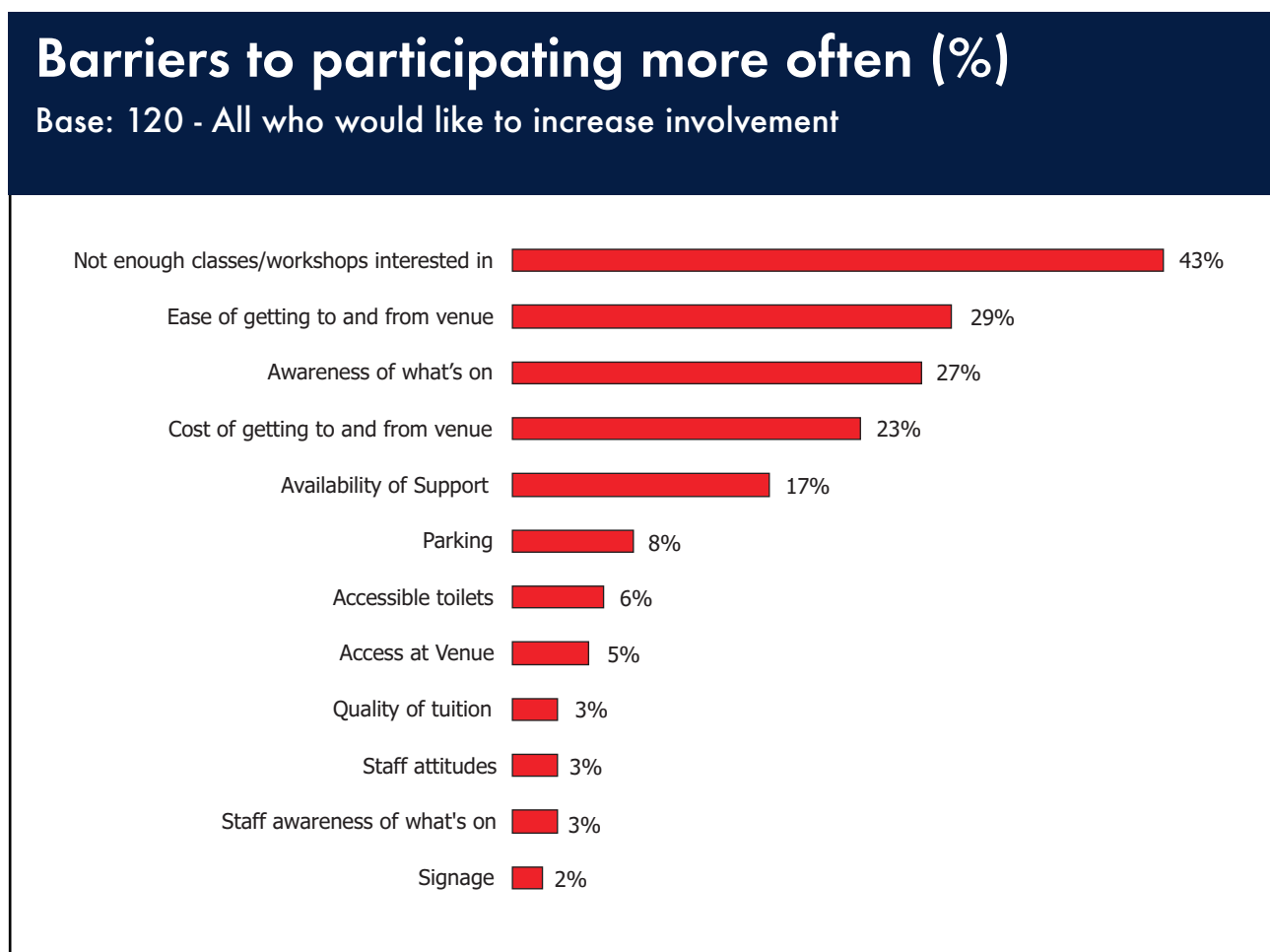


Overall (as Figure 4.3.3.4 shows) only 10% of disabled people would very much like to participate in events more often. However people with learning difficulties were much more interested in increasing their level of participation than people with other disabilities.

4.3.4 Barriers to participating in more events

The main barriers to participating in more art forms were 'not enough classes/workshops interested in', 'ease of getting to and from venue' and 'awareness of what's on'. Overall the barriers to participation were similar to those for audience attendance. In the General Population Survey⁹ the main barriers to participation were 'not really interested' (27%), 'difficult to find time' (26%) and 'family commitments/childcare' (20%).

Figure 4.3.4.1



For the 65+ age group, 'ease of getting to and from the venue' was a major barrier to participation. For the youngest age group 'not enough classes/workshops' and a lack of awareness of what is on were the main barriers to participating in more events.

⁹ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *Arts and Culture* 2004, p.22.

Figure 4.3.4.2

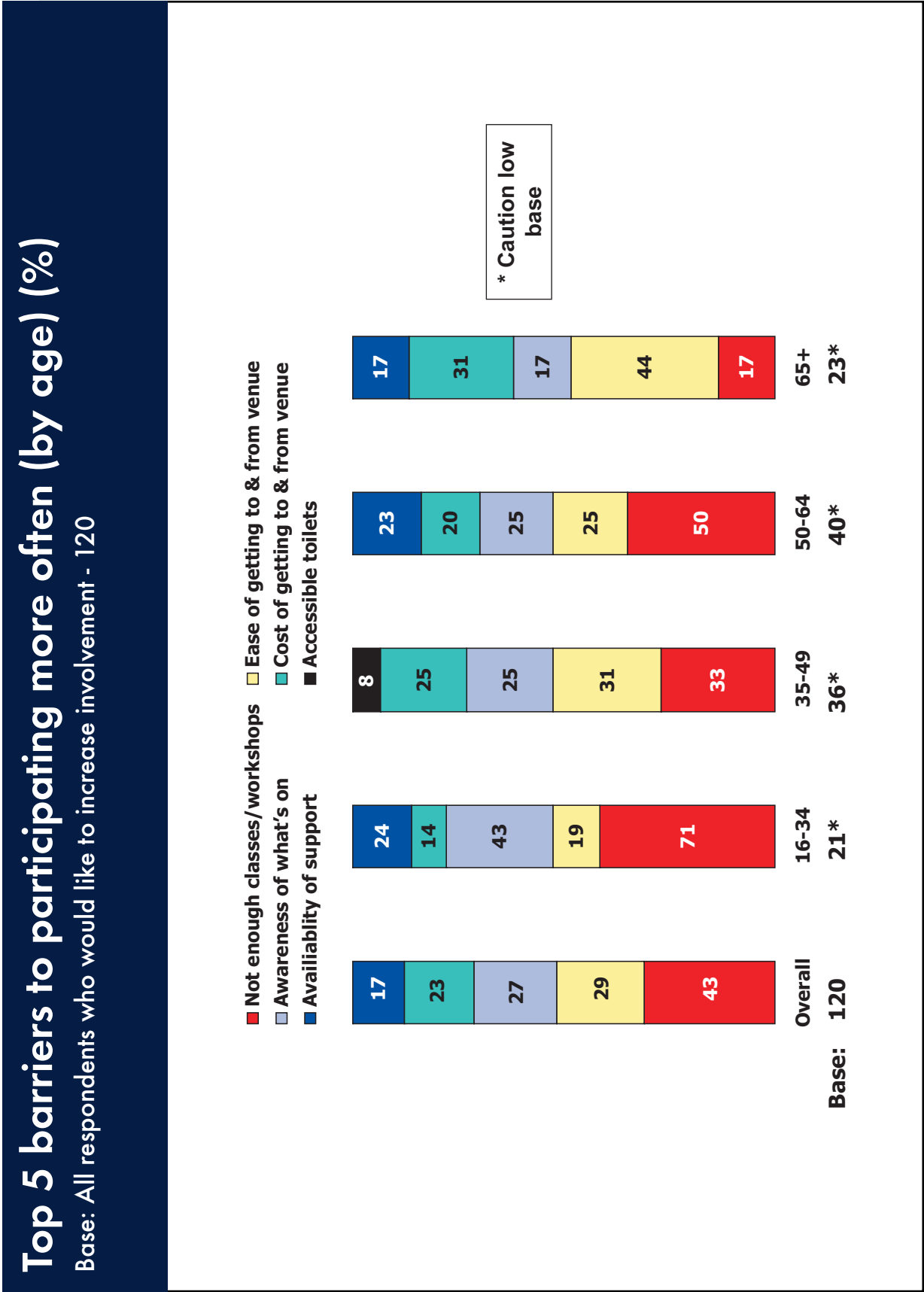
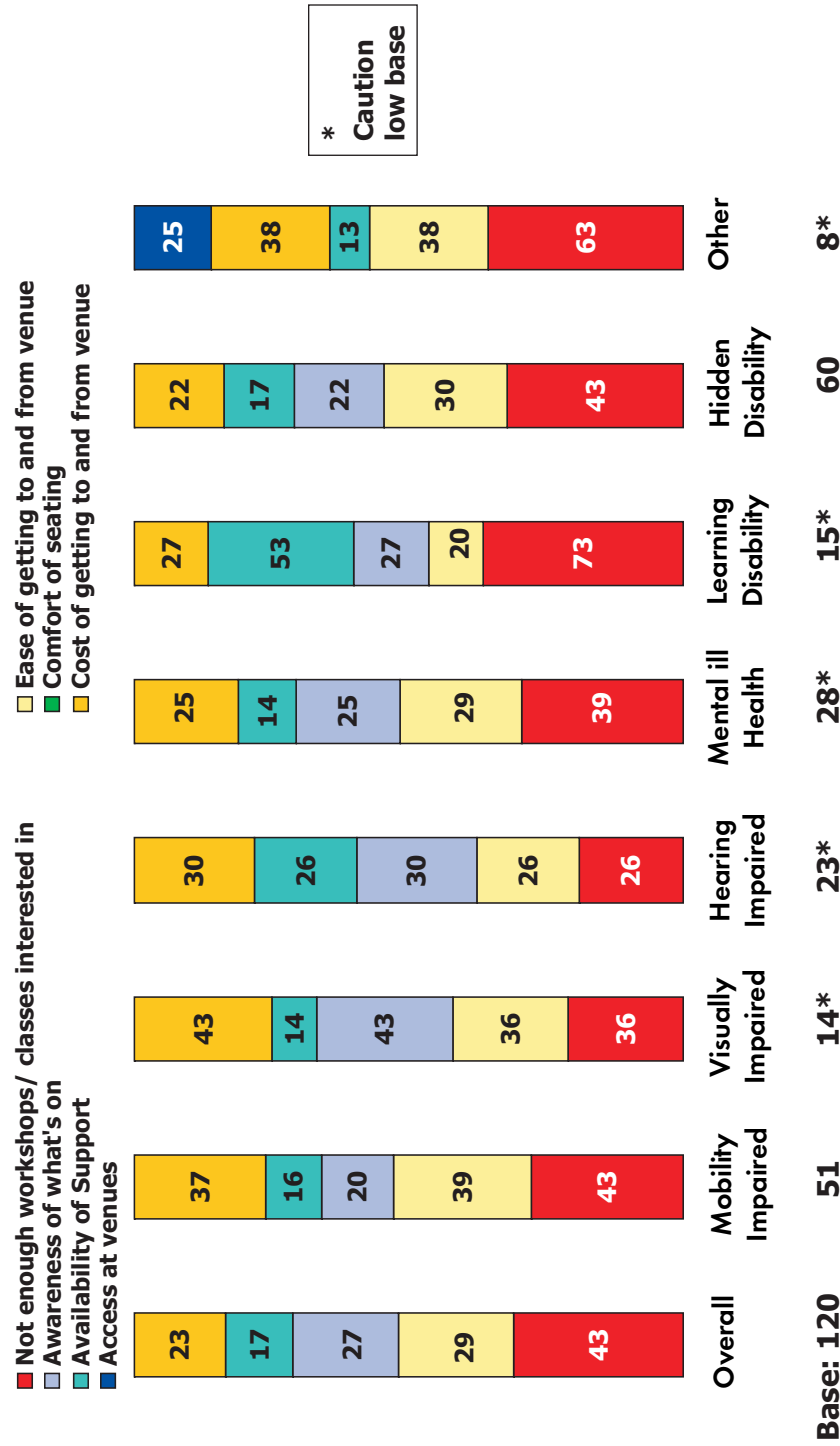


Figure 4.3.4.3

Top 5 barriers to participating more often (by disability) (%)

Base: All respondents who would like to increase involvement - 120



Disabled people with mental ill health were more likely to state 'ease of getting to and from a venue' (54%) as a barrier but were much less likely to say that there were 'not enough workshops/ classes interested in'. People with learning disabilities were more likely to cite barriers like 'ease of getting to and from a venue' (73%) and 'availability of support' (53%). 'Cost of getting to and from a venue' is an issue for all participants but more so for those with a mobility (37%) or visual impairment (43%).



Image: Ronald McDowell. Disabled artist Ronald McDowell received funding from the Arts & Disability Awards Ireland scheme

5 Qualitative research with disabled people

This section of the report details the findings from the qualitative research with disabled audience members, participants and artists. The aim of this stage of the research was to explore the issues for inclusion in the quantitative study. It also provides more detailed context for interpretation of the quantitative results.

The methodology used for this stage of the research is described in Section 3.1.

5.1 Barriers to attendance

Based on the consultation conducted with disabled people through focus groups and in-depth interviews, the main barriers to attendance and participation at arts events were identified as:

- transport;
- physical access;
- availability of information;
- cost; and
- limited number and type of activities available.

The issues around each of these points are explored in the paragraphs that follow.

5.1.1 Transport

It was found that there were various factors present under the overall theme of transport which prevented people from engaging with the arts. The lack of accessible public transport was the main concern expressed by disabled people, which in turn lowered their level of independence. Many spoke of their dependence on family and friends in being able to conduct their social lives.

'My wife drives and she takes me places.' (Belfast, participant)

Focus group members not only complained of the lack of accessible public transport in general but, more specifically, of the perceived lack of security on buses and trains, few evening/late night services and ill-considered locations for bus stops/train stations i.e. not close to venues.

Not surprisingly, given the above concerns, the majority of disabled people used private taxi firms to get to arts events. Again, various barriers were identified relating to the use of taxis including their cost, the attitude of some drivers, the lack of accessible taxis that can be booked at short notice and a perceived lack of security.

'I wouldn't get a taxi on my own because it would be dangerous for me'. 'I would feel more secure if someone else was in the car.' (Newtownards, audience)

'There is only one firm (in Derry) offering specially adapted taxis - they have a monopoly & they totally abuse it. They are unreliable & poorly organised - sometimes I have to wait up to an hour for a booked taxi.' (Derry, participant)

Some disabled people claimed that an additional charge had been levied on them because of their wheelchairs.

'It's really just to discourage disabled people from using the taxis as they take up too much of the driver's time.' (Derry, participant)

Nevertheless, several focus group members, felt that it was cheaper to use a taxi than to pay for car parking and those who were happiest with the service that taxis provided tended to be regular users of the same taxi firm.

Many people felt that the availability of more community transport schemes would alleviate the situation. One person mentioned the Smart Pass scheme which offered discount on bus travel to those in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. Some mentioned that this type of discount scheme was already set up in Belfast.

'If there was some sort of bus that would take you to a place that wouldn't be too dear. Someone told me about Easirider - you show them your disabled badge and they put you on their list.' (Belfast, audience)

The cost of parking and the location of car parks were also considered a significant barrier to attendance at arts events. Many felt that the cost of parking was too high (especially for city centre car parks) and that too many venues failed to offer parking convenient to the facility.

'At the ... there is a huge steep hill between the car park and the theatre. There's no way you could get up there in a wheelchair.' (Derry, participant)

5.1.2 Access

Concerns were outlined relating to access into buildings and within buildings but also 'access' in the wider communications sense relating to attitudes and the availability of information.

It was considered that physical access to some venues was difficult. In some instances, where ramps were installed, these were considered to be too steep. In another instance it was claimed access through the front entrances of buildings was not possible.

'There is a small step at the end of the wheelchair ramp at the ... making it impossible to cross. Then when they have ramps, they are often too steep making it too difficult for people who are not in electric wheelchairs to get up or down.' (Dungannon, audience)

Participants also mentioned significant barriers within buildings including lack of access to certain areas (including bars, restaurants and toilets). Too few lifts, slippery floor surfaces and steep floor gradients were also identified as barriers at certain venues. Some mentioned the associated psychological implication of not being able to enter through the main entrance, instead having to use a side or rear entrance.

'It's like the servants' entrance, just another reminder that you're different from everyone else. You're treated as a second class citizen but paying first class prices. You wouldn't pay first class to fly economy but that's really what's happening.' (Dungannon, audience)

It was felt that there were still too few signed performances and touch tours on offer in Northern Ireland, thereby excluding people with hearing and sight impairments from enjoying various art forms.

5.1.3 Cost

It was generally felt that, when transport and parking costs were factored in, the cost of attending arts events was too high for most disabled people, many of whom were on low incomes. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that some art forms were more reasonably priced than others (e.g. cinema).

There was a mixed response to the suggestion of concession pricing for disabled audience members. Some felt it was a good idea and suggested it should also include carers and be income-related. However, others felt that some disabled people would be too embarrassed to ask for the discount.

'I'd prefer disabled people to receive an 'A1' standard of service, thereby doing away with the need to provide discounts. They should spend the money on making improvements to make the venue accessible to all.' (Dungannon, audience)

People with disabilities reported that they were least likely to use the internet to find out information on when arts events are taking place and most likely to hear via word-of-mouth, usually from family or friends, or from local newspapers or radio. Information was also gained from mail shots and posters.

Some reported that they would like to see more information about venue accessibility and alternative booking formats on advertisements for events and there was very little awareness of information provided in alternative formats.

'I know that the ... do leaflets in large print but no Braille yet. One step at a time. I can book things on the internet as I have speaking software on my computer, but it was expensive to get.' (Derry, audience)

5.1.4 Booking tickets

The majority of disabled people reported booking tickets to events by telephoning the venue. Several felt that there should be more free telephone booking lines available. Very few people had booked tickets on the internet mostly due to lack of access to a computer. Those with learning difficulties and/or severe communication impairments depended on friends/family to buy tickets on their behalf.

5.1.5 Staff

It was felt that most staff at art venues were helpful and demonstrated an understanding of disabled people's needs. However, concerns were expressed at the lack of training evident at venues that had a high staff turnover or that had a higher proportion of older staff. It was felt that some staff needed training to overcome 'patronising' attitudes and to be able to empathise and assist those with hidden disabilities.

Several participants called for designated areas with trained staff on hand where people with disabilities could go to seek assistance if required.

5.1.6 Accessible Toilets

The location and ease of access to toilets for disabled people was a significant concern for many, with some remarking on a lack of good signposting and the lack of appropriate space.

'Signs should be accompanied by pictorial diagrams to assist people with learning/reading difficulties to know where things are.' (Derry, audience)

It was also felt that more could be done to alleviate the considerable unease or awkwardness for those with hidden disabilities experienced when having to use toilets designated for disabled people.

5.1.7 Seating

Various issues arose in relation to seating within venues. These included lack of comfortable and supportive seats with sufficient legroom, the inflexibility of allotted wheelchair spaces (not providing choice of where to sit), the inappropriate positioning of some of these spaces (too close to front or back) and the safety concerns associated with being placed on a slope with a steep gradient.

'The only spaces are right in front of the screen in one cinema. In another cinema, spaces are provided further back but are not secure. I had to be put in at an angle so I didn't go flying down the slope and go through the screen.' (Derry, audience)

5.1.8 'Good' and 'bad' venues

Participants were asked to summarise the factors which made a venue 'good' or 'bad' from a disabled visitor's point of view. The factors outlined for a 'good' venue were good access into and within the building, convenient parking, a sufficient number of accessible toilets, good signage for lifts/toilets, comfortable, supportive seating and 'integrated' wheelchair areas and positive, disability aware staff.

'The ... is good. They have so many stairs but there is also a lift. I was there over Christmas. The ... has good seats, toilets, lifts - it's very spacious, new and modern. They do a matinee sometimes but it's usually a one-off occasion.' (Templepatrick, audience)

The factors outlined for a 'bad' venue included poor access into and within the building, inconvenient parking, poor signage, too few accessible toilets and uncomfortable seating. Access into and within the building was referred to more frequently when discussing 'bad' venues than when identifying 'good' venues'.

In terms of highlighting a 'bad' venue; some venues were highlighted as both 'good' and 'bad', the verdict is dependent on individual perceptions and impairments.

'The ... parking is horrendous. You can pay for parking beforehand but it doesn't help because you have to queue anyway. They need to have a sheltered walkway.' (Templepatrick, audience)

5.1.9 Suggestions for improvement

Participants were asked to suggest ways to improve access/overcome barriers to accessing arts venues within Northern Ireland. In terms of transport, participants called for increased funding and a greater awareness to be promoted of the community transport available (outside Belfast) alongside a greater availability of car parking spaces closer to venues. It was also felt that more outings organised by support groups may assist disabled people who experience transport difficulties.

It was generally felt that physical accessibility into buildings was steadily improving but that operators could give more emphasis to improved signage and ease of access within buildings, including the option of more flexible seating arrangements. An increased number of designated signed performances/events were also requested.

Some considered that a 'buddy' scheme card (offering discounts) could assist some disabled people meet the costs of attending arts events and free phone booking numbers were also considered a good idea.

'The buddy card scheme is a good idea; you wouldn't want everybody knowing your business or have to carry your benefits book around.' (Enniskillen, audience)

There was a request for an increased number and types of events to widen the appeal of the arts for disabled people. Focus group members from rural areas also felt that more events should be scheduled to take place outside the main cities of Belfast and Derry.

'Because it's [Derry] not so big of a place, there's not so much on. A lot of the events are in Belfast only. It's difficult sometimes having to travel to Belfast and stay the night there.' (Derry, audience)

Some considered that operators could do a lot more in terms of providing information on different events in accessible formats (e.g. large print, CD, Braille) and provide more details of access into their venues (on all their advertising materials).

'Improve information on access - if there is a concert on at the ... and someone wanted to go to it but has a wheelchair it never says in the advertisement. It doesn't say whether it's accessible to wheelchair users.' (Belfast, audience)

To minimise embarrassment, several felt that all callers should be automatically asked if they have any disability access requirements when booking tickets. Focus group members outlined the importance of regular staff training and reiterated the idea of having designated areas with specially trained staff to assist disabled visitors.

'Some people wouldn't like to ask for help. But if there was somewhere to go, they might. Maybe just a sign to say that you can ask if you have any sort of need - noticeable or not. People would be more inclined to ask.' (Derry, audience)

Finally, several felt that closer consultation with disabled people would assist venue operators in improving the standard of facilities.

'They [venues] should consult with disabled people. The District Policing Partnerships are running a consultation with people with wheelchairs or anyone who has lost limbs. They are discussing access issues with the council.' (Derry, audience)

5.1.10 Specific issues for participants

Those participating in arts classes/workshops/events reported facing many of the same barriers as audience members. For example, many participants were also dependent on family or used taxis to get to their destinations and faced similar physical and attitudinal access barriers.

'I joined a class open to everybody. As soon as I walked in, the teacher's face fell and I could see everybody thinking what the hell is he doing here? He should be at a special school not here with us. But it's just ignorance as the weeks passed by I made a couple of good friends. But it takes a lot of courage as a disabled person to walk into that situation; nobody likes to feel like they're the odd one out.' (Derry, participant)

Like disabled audience members, participants would also like to see a greater range and variety of choice of activities for disabled people. Some highlighted the high cost of participating in the arts; however, this was generally less of a problem than for audience members as many workshops/classes were provided free of charge. Many complained of the lack of integration between disabled and non-disabled people in these types of activities and called for increased inclusion.

'I think there should be more inclusion. There shouldn't just be people with disabilities at the groups; everyone should be able to attend. There shouldn't be as much segregation, everyone should be included.' (Belfast, participant)

Concern was also highlighted by some, about the lack of subsequent employment opportunities for disabled people who have participated in arts classes or workshops.

'If the casting director is disabled him/herself there is much more chance that they will be able to see past the disability to recognise a person's talent. He/she will not be hampered by preconceptions and discrimination.' (Derry, participant)

5.1.11 Specific issues for disabled artists

Access, integration and funding were the three major concerns for disabled artists. As with audience members and participants, artists also highlighted the problem of a lack of physical access into certain buildings (for example studios and galleries located in historic buildings).

'The point is to facilitate the artist - with disabilities but an artist none the less.' (Belfast, artist)

'It's always left up to the disabled person themselves to arrange things. To go anywhere is a military operation.' (Belfast, artist)

Reiterating the concerns of participants, artists sought greater inclusion in terms of being able to exhibit their work alongside their 'non-disabled' counterparts and to be awarded greater recognition for their work.

'There need to be far more exhibitions. It would make me produce more work if I knew there was an exhibition every few months.' (Antrim, artist)

Artists expressed a requirement for financial assistance to pay for transport and the materials used in their art form. Concerns were outlined regarding their general lack of awareness of the funding available and the perceived inequalities surrounding funding decisions.

'Individual artists need funding. I have very little money to buy paints, canvasses and I know that very few artists have. Who makes the decisions about funding?' (Belfast, artist)

Furthermore, several artists complained of the complexities of the funding processes ranging from complicated application forms to a lack of awareness of how to draw up a funding bid. Some were aware of the Arts & Disability Awards Ireland grant scheme, a fund designated for disabled artists that is administered by the Arts & Disability Forum.

'Funding application forms or 'Art Speak' is hard to understand. People should apply to the Arts & Disability Forum - you apply to them, not the Arts Council.' (Belfast, artist)

One suggestion to overcome this barrier was for Arts Council to set up a mentoring system providing disabled artists with advice and assistance in the funding process.

6 Qualitative research with arts venues

This section looks at the roles and responsibilities of the arts venue managers (including both public and private venues) relating to service provision for people with disabilities. In particular it aims to provide information to:

- indicates the level of provision for and awareness of the arts and disability sector at a local government level;
- examine the level of disability awareness amongst arts organisations and venues; and
- indicate the number of mainstream arts venues where disabled people are involved in activity.

The methodology used in this chapter is outlined at Section 3.1.

Twenty venues were interviewed in the research, these included:

Belfast:

Ormeau Baths Gallery, Indian Community Centre, Golden Thread Gallery and Yorkgate cinema.

Derry:

The Nerve Centre, Millenium Forum, Context Gallery (at the Playhouse), The Nucleus Centre and Verbal Arts Centre.

Other:

Riverside Theatre Coleraine (part of the University of Ulster), Marketplace Theatre/Arts Centre, Armagh; Courtyard Theatre/Arts Centre, Newtownabbey; An Creagan Visitor Centre, Omagh; Newry Arts Centre; Ardhowen Theatre, Enniskillen; Sperrin Heritage Centre, Strabane; Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh; Island Arts Centre, Lisburn; County Museum, Armagh and Share Centre, Lisnaskeagh.

6.1.1 Responsibility for Disability Discrimination Act (1995) requirements

For privately-owned venues, it was mostly the managers/curators who had responsibility for ensuring their organisation complied with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), although sometimes the outreach or education officer was also charged with this task.

In publicly-owned venues, this responsibility was more likely to fall to personnel outside the venue itself, usually at District Council level (Arts and Leisure Department, Central Services, Equality Unit etc.).

6.1.2 Compliance monitoring

Compliance appeared to be monitored on an ad-hoc basis or not at all. Although respondents in all venues claimed to monitor compliance, seven were not able to say how this was achieved, six felt that compliance was ensured as a result of a recent Adapt NI audit having been conducted, and two claimed that monitoring was regularly carried out through physical checks on the buildings (made by trade bodies or a district council). Where it was conducted, monitoring tended to be completed on an ad-hoc basis with only two venues having regular meetings to discuss DDA requirements.

'We just keep an eye on things ourselves and we receive updates of the legislation by e-mail and if anything needs changing, we do it.'

All of those who had conducted audits on their buildings had enlisted the help of a disabled person to review access issues.

6.1.3 Staff training on the implications of the DDA

Only the staff in three venues (a gallery, a theatre and a community centre) claimed to have received training in the implications of the DDA, within a wider training remit covering issues such as anti-discrimination and child protection issues.

6.1.4 Changes because of DDA

Approximately half of all venues had recently made or were shortly going to make substantial physical changes to the building, for example, installation of lifts, automatic doors, riser platforms, lowering of customer service desks, improved site access etc. Five venues (in newer buildings) were in the process of making more minor modifications such as audio/visual enhancements to lifts and alarm systems, upgrading toilets or other maintenance. Two venues were leasing the buildings and not in a position to make physical upgrades. None of the venues discussed changes or improvements to marketing communications in response to this question; the DDA is associated purely with physical and structural changes.

6.1.5 Arts and Disability Equality Charter

Six venues had not heard of the Arts and Disability Equality Charter¹⁰ (three of these were theatres). Of the 14 who claimed to have heard of it, only four were able to outline what it entailed in any level of detail. Two felt that the aims of the Charter were set too high and they could only aspire towards reaching them. Four others felt that the Charter reflected their own existing in-house policies of inclusion and that there was therefore no need for them to know a great deal about it.

¹⁰ The Arts and Disability Equality Charter is a set of guidelines drawn up by disabled people after consultation in 2004. It encourages arts organisations to become more disability accessible, in the broadest sense. The project has only recently acquired a development worker. The Charter will be awarded to arts organisations that can prove they have attained its standards.

6.1.6 Disability policy or action plan

Only two venues claimed to have a specific disability policy or action plan but one admitted this was drawn up a few years ago and that the objectives were now out of date. The other was a policy which mainly dealt with improving physical access to the building. Four thought that they had no such policy or were unaware if they had. Of the remainder, nine claimed to fall under the wider disability/equality policies of their parent bodies (District Councils and a University) and six felt that they adhered to an 'inclusive, equal opportunities strategy' but this was not written down anywhere.

'Our whole policy is based on universal access but there is nothing set down in writing.'

6.1.7 Measuring objectives

None of those interviewed had any specific objectives stipulated in relation to a disability policy or action plan and therefore none was measuring performance against an agreed strategy. Three claimed to have had action plans following audits conducted by Adapt NI but that these had now become defunct.

'We made all the changes recommended so it's just a matter of getting on with things now.'

6.1.8 Records of numbers

Half (ten) of the venues did not record either the numbers of disabled participants or audience members at their venues. Three felt it was impossible to do so as they did not offer concession ticketing and would therefore find it difficult to obtain the information. Most of the others felt that they could provide the information quite easily (through information from concession ticketing, utilisation of car parking spaces, allocated wheelchair spaces, booking forms for participants). Of the ten who did record numbers, four offered concessionary prices to disabled people and all of the six were required to provide this information by a funding body (Adapt NI, the Arts Council, Comic Relief, a Health Board or a District Council). Venues were more likely to record participant numbers, than audience numbers as the information was often easier to track.

Among those who did not record numbers, there seemed to be some confusion over whether funding bodies required this information or not. Five felt they did and usually provided 'guesstimates' while five felt that this information was not required or had no knowledge of having been asked for it.

6.1.9 Marketing to disabled audience members

Only two venues had held a number of events in the last year that had specifically targeted disabled people as audience members (a theatre and a cinema). Both venues put on four events each (signed performances and audio-described films). Three other venues (a theatre and two galleries) had offered touch tours and sign-interpreted artists talks on a one-off basis (having been requested by specific groups).

Generally, there was a lot of resistance to the idea of targeting disabled visitors as distinct from the population as a whole. Many respondents spoke of how they had 'inclusive' approaches to marketing which did not 'single out' any particular groups.

'Our performances are open to everybody. We don't treat disabled visitors any differently to the rest of the population.'

Two respondents were of the opinion that 'static' art forms such as exhibitions/touch tours would be of more interest to people with disabilities.

'We offer a lot of live music events, I mean they're just not suitable for blind or deaf people. You need to be able to see and hear a band to appreciate them.'

Many respondents claimed that they could offer sign language interpretation on request but felt that cost was prohibitive to offering these services on a regular basis.

'It's all right for ACNI to say that there's an untapped market of up to 10% of the population, but not all these people would want to go to the theatre even if we did offer these services. It just doesn't make financial sense to do so.'

'Our exhibitions are not permanent ones, it wouldn't be viable to have touch signs etc.'

Nevertheless, five respondents felt that developing targeted communications materials and offering more services was 'the next step' after ensuring disabled access through physical changes to their buildings.

'In our next funding application, we will be considering these types of issues.'

6.1.10 Marketing to disabled participants

More venues had targeted disabled people as workshop/class participants than as audience members. The majority of the venues (14) had close links with local groups representing people with various disabilities (physical, intellectual, mental). These venues were most likely to employ outreach workers who worked closely with various health trusts, day centres and schools. Venues were mostly targeting children with learning disabilities to attend workshops.

'We run painting classes for the kids at the special needs school, they really enjoy it.'

'All the kids got involved in designing their own costumes for the St. Patrick's Day parade.'

Workshops/classes offered covered various art forms including painting/crafts, music, dance and drama. Marketing to these groups involved forming close links with different associations or sending out communications materials directly to them.

'We would send out the leaflets to the teachers at the schools or to administration at the local health trusts to ensure people hear about what we're offering.'

Two venues had been requested to offer more integrated courses and had revised their opinions on specifically targeting disabled groups.

'Those who were disabled told us that in the next session they wanted to be in along with non-disabled, which is what we did and it worked out brilliantly. They both learned from one another.'

Four venues offered subsidised transport to disabled groups and five offered concessionary pricing to those with disabilities. Seven venues employed an outreach or education officer who worked closely with community groups. Ten offered marketing materials in large print but only three offered it in Braille.

Five respondents related examples of disability groups using their facility for meetings and conventions even though they had not directly marketed it to them.

'We have a group of blind people who come out here for lunch every week because the cafe is on the ground floor and it's easily accessible and we're out in the countryside. I have no idea how they found out about us but word soon spreads.'

'Stage Beyond book our facility to put on their shows and we host exhibitions for other disabled groups.'

6.1.11 Disability arts and arts and disability performances/exhibitions

The majority of respondents felt that these two terms were interchangeable and although several claimed to be offering what they perceived as Disability Arts performances, they were really only offering performances/exhibitions featuring an artist who happened to be disabled. Seven venues described arts and disability performances/exhibitions that had been part of their programme, three of these were exhibitions and four were drama/dance productions. Venues were working with a variety of disability and health organisations, including health trusts, day centres, Stage Beyond, Arts Care, Dance United, the Gateway club - and local schools.

Five respondents felt that the term 'Disability Arts' was 'discriminatory' and 'too prescriptive' and felt that an artist's disability should have nothing to do with the reason they were involved in a production/exhibition.

'They are just artists, I don't see them as disabled artists. I'm not going to allow a painter to exhibit if he/she can't produce interesting work no matter how disabled they might be. It's their skill I'm interested in, not their disability. It's the same for the general public [i.e. they don't care about the disability], and indeed the artist him/herself.'

Four respondents expressed concern about the extent of demand for performances featuring disabled people.

'It's usually just friends and families of wee disabled youngsters who come along to see their plays, isn't it?'

Four respondents spoke of their desire to be more active in what they described as the 'disability arts scene' but all four had previously had funding applications rejected by the Arts Council and felt that this had somewhat dented their enthusiasm.

6.1.12 Staffing levels

The majority (17) of venues employed less than ten full-time staff; only three employed more than 20 full time staff.

Similarly, the majority (14) employed less than six part-time or volunteer staff; only one employed 40 part-time staff and two employed 20+ volunteer staff. Of a total of 113 full-time staff, 67 part-time staff and 67 volunteer staff across all fifteen venues, there were only six volunteer and three part-time staff member with a disability (that the respondent was aware of).

Only one venue had a member of the Board or management with a disability.

6.1.13 Training

There were only two venues in which staff had not received disability related training. Of those who had offered training to employees, only one venue had ensured training for all its employees. All others had involved only senior managers or key staff in training. This course content is then 'passed along' to other staff members.

The majority of venues (15) received training on an ad-hoc basis with no ongoing programme for refresher/update courses¹¹.

Courses were given by a variety of organisations, some which were specialist disability training organisations and some more general training providers. The majority (13) of participants had attended a course provided by a disabled person. Only one venue had staff who had completed the 'train the trainers' course. Most had attended courses focusing on terminology, challenging perceptions of disability, and 'how to treat disabled visitors'.

¹¹ Disability Arts is a specific arts practice where disabled artists create work that is informed by their experience of disability. The work of Disability Arts practitioners contributes to the expression of a disability culture.

Arts and Disability is an overview phrase that includes a broad range of arts practice, embracing artwork by disabled people and activities involving disabled people as artists, participants and audience members. The approach aims to involve all sections of the community on an equal basis, making no differentiation between disabled and non-disabled participants. Where people with disabilities are confined to the margins of a project, or are involved only on terms established by non-disabled people, projects are not considered genuine arts and disability practice.

6.1.14 Additional comments

Three respondents commented that they would like to be kept better informed by the Arts Council of 'best practice' among arts venues with regard to developing disability-related arts programs.

Ten respondents felt that, as a result of the interview, they had become more aware of their shortcomings in terms of provision for disabled visitors.

Four enquired about further training (unprompted). Six commented that the interview had prompted them 'to get round to' drawing up action plans, updating training, setting up systems to track numbers.

7 Qualitative research with local councils

In order to establish the level of provision for and awareness of the arts and disability sector at a local council level, telephone interviews were conducted with Arts Officers from five local councils. The interviews were conducted to establish the level of provision for and awareness of the arts and disability sector at a local government level.

The methodology for this stage of the research is outlined at Section 3.1.

7.1.1 Level of provision and funding

The levels of provision varied across districts with some authorities having more direct responsibility for arts venues than others. Art venues included were 6 theatres, 16 art galleries, 2 museums, 2 multi-functional halls, 12 community centres, 5 arts centres, 1 crafts centre, 1 church hall, and 1 heritage centre.

Funding was received from a number of public bodies including: the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Arts Council, Museums and Art Galleries of Northern Ireland, the National Youth Council, the Community Relations Council, Rural Development Council, Peace II, Department of Education, Department of Social Development, Adapt NI, Royal National Institute for the Deaf, and the Equality Commission.

7.1.2 Disability Policy and Arts and Disability Charter

There was a high level of awareness of the Charter and the majority of authorities had a specific disability policy drawn up. Two, however, had more general equality statements within their Equal Opportunities policy.

7.1.3 Measuring objectives and monitoring

All authorities claimed to regularly measure their performance against pre-determined objectives and ensured compliance with DDA legislation. Objectives were measured by a range of different staff/departments including Equality Officers, Arts/Cultural departments and Policy Units. Planned venues are being largely reviewed from a Health and Safety perspective with only two councils having a more specific disability awareness viewpoint.

Compliance is monitored at council rather than individual department level and several respondents were unsure how external events were monitored.

7.1.4 Linked funding awards

Respondents were largely unaware whether or not funding awards were linked to provision of disabled access. The general opinion was that capital funds were linked (i.e. new build projects) but were unsure whether ongoing funding was. One felt that all awards provided by the Arts and Disability Forum, the Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund were linked in some way.

7.1.5 Recording participation levels

Few authorities keep any consistent record of figures (and claimed that this is mostly done at venue level) and, where they did, the information was only for internal evaluation/Health and Safety purposes. One authority was required to keep detailed figures by MAGNI, another tracked level of participation through evaluation of specific events and another 'to ensure Best Practice in terms of evacuation'. Two authorities felt that this situation needed to be improved and claimed to be in the process of changing their approach to recording such information.

7.1.6 Levels of disabled staff members

None of the authorities involved in the research employed any staff with disabilities in their Arts/Cultural department (although one did in Leisure Services). Respondents were not aware whether they had any staff with hidden disabilities but several were of the opinion that some of the venues they funded did employ staff with disabilities. A couple of respondents felt the need to justify their response to this question.

'It's not as if we're anti-disabled or anything like that. Maybe it was just a case of who the right person for the job was.'

7.1.7 Provision of facilities and recruitment and support received

Two authorities claimed to have good provision for disabled staff (including ramp access, availability of information in different formats, officers with sign language skills, hearing loops), but others were 'not aware' of any additional facilities 'besides those available for the general public'.

None of the respondents was aware of having received specific support from any organisation to employ disabled staff but three had good links with organisations which allowed them access to disabled members (where jobs could be advertised etc). One felt that more use should be made of these links to encourage applications from disabled people.

A couple of respondents strongly felt that there should not be particular initiatives to employ disabled staff as this might be seen as a form of discrimination or 'singling-out' disabled people.

'Our positions are open to all. I don't think disabled people would appreciate an ad where it was obvious you were trying to fulfil your disability quotas.'

7.1.8 Training

Three authorities offered regular training to all staff, while the others had intermittent or no training. Training sessions are run both internally and externally. The majority of training sessions were run by disabled staff, covering issues such as general awareness, terminology and access issues. A couple of participants had been in their position less than a year so were not aware how regularly sessions were run.

7.1.9 Additional support offered by councils and external organisations

Three councils offered specific support (excluding funding) to venues. This support took the form of advocacy, premises, training and dialogue/advice.

'Our Policy Unit is there specifically to be of assistance in these types of matters.'

Four out of the five authorities received support from the organisations listed on the show card (i.e. the Arts and Disability Forum, Adapt, Open Arts, and Disability Action) and respondents were very forthcoming in their praise for these organisations:

'It's great that there are organisations like these, otherwise it would be so complicated getting advice from different sources. Plus they are always up to date with the legislation etc.'

The support received ranged from mentoring, training, advice, literature and provision of an arts tutor's register.

7.1.10 Increasing disabled participation in the arts

Some respondents were unaware of how their council was encouraging the involvement of disabled people as there were separate Community Arts Development Officers who dealt with outreach services and there was little awareness in two councils as to what these individuals actually did.

For those who were aware, examples of initiatives to increase participation included part-funding of what were perceived to be Disability Arts programs, the mentoring and promotion of disabled artists, employment of young people with learning disabilities and subsidised transport schemes.

One participant felt that their authority still had some way to go in this aspect and had been in discussions with venues recently to discuss new monitoring and evaluation systems linked to funding. This particular Arts Officer felt that the council has a 'moral responsibility' in terms of raising awareness of improved disability access throughout all venues but felt that it was not always possible to achieve this.

'It is very difficult when some smaller community owned premises cannot afford to make the necessary changes, but what do you do, stop funding them completely?'



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