



The Arts in facts and figures

The arts have something for everyone...



- Enriches everyone's life.
- Brings people and communities together (shared experiences).
- Celebrates our distinctive cultures positively.
- Reflects the diversity of Northern Ireland.
- Contributes to better mental health & wellbeing.
- Creates a place where we all want to live, work and enjoy.

Creative Industries



The Arts and Creative Industries are a powerful and growing economic driver across Northern Ireland:

- The Arts sector provides the people and the skills for this important part of the economy.
- **£1.59bn** in Gross Value Added to the local economy*.
- Generates **44,000 jobs****.
- Extends our influences beyond these shores.
- Unlocks a valuable source of income generation for the region.
- The Arts sector can drive transformation across government and creative industries.

*2023

**2024

Source: [Creative Industries Economic Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)

Creative Industries



- Raises Northern Ireland's global reputation as a creative place that's ready to compete and do business.
- Makes Northern Ireland more attractive for inward investment.
- Enhances Northern Ireland's cultural tourism offering.
- Acts as a catalyst for social and economic regeneration.



- **2024/25 Annual investment survey** that brings together AFP and a sample of National Lottery Project Funding found for this time period the sector employs:
- **1,077** permanent staff.
- **8,823** contract workers.
- Total workforce of **9,990**.
- **1173** Volunteers.
- **42,587** working hours.



Artists and the arts help Northern Ireland stay well, contributing to our sense of community, delivering better mental health outcomes:

- **The Young People & Wellbeing Programme:**
87% of participants stated improved self-confidence and mood.
- **The Arts & Older People Programme:**
participants stated improved health, mental wellbeing and reduced loneliness.
- **The Creative Schools Partnership Programme:** participants stated increased confidence, mental wellbeing, motivation, resilience and enhanced community relations.



£8bn

per year estimated total benefit on health, well-being and productivity due to culture & heritage.

£1,000

value delivered to each adult annually in terms of health & well-being through engagement with the arts.

Frontier Economics 2024 -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/678e2ecf432c55fe2988f615/rpt_Frontier Health and Wellbeing_Final Report 09 12 24_accessible_final.pdf



As part of our 2024-2034 Strategy one of our key outcomes is that; *‘More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences.’*

82%

of adults engaged with the arts in Northern Ireland in 2024/25.*

62%

said engaging with the arts had a positive impact on their wellbeing.*

91%

of audiences rated their experiences as ‘good quality’ (worth attending, enjoyed it).**

*Continuous Household Survey 2024/25

**Impact Survey by Thrive 2025/26

Building a thriving arts sector



- Building a thriving arts sector requires the conditions that enable artists and organisations to grow, collaborate and contribute to wider social, cultural and economic outcomes.
- Supports organisational resilience and long-term sustainability.
- Supports employment, skills development and workforce retention.
- Enables organisations to continue broadening participation and promoting inclusion.
- Supports a safe, accessible and fit-for-purpose cultural infrastructure.

Building a thriving arts sector



- Encourages international collaboration and cultural exchange.
- Strengthens pathways into careers in the arts and creative industries.
- Supports the sector's contribution to wider economic, social and wellbeing outcomes.
- Helps organisations plan for the future and respond to emerging opportunities.

Current sector pressures



Arts organisations continue to face pressures around workforce, costs and organisational sustainability - reported levels of performances and participation activity have declined in recent years.

The number of performances delivered by AFP organisations continues to decline. In 2024-25, 7,376 performances were reported:

A decline of 4% on the previous year and 30% when compared over the three-year timeframe.

Known audiences for performances also fell by 15% year-on-year to under 1 million for the first time since 2021-22.

The number of participation-based events delivered has reduced.

Workforce challenges



- In 2024-25, 31,131 events were reported, **a reduction of 10% on the previous year and 31% over three years.**
- Workforce sustainability - **Over half NI artists (53%)** surveyed indicated they have considered or would consider permanently relocating outside of NI for better career opportunities.
- This figure rose to **65.2%** for those aged between **18 and 34**, suggesting potential issues with retaining young artists due to a lack of career opportunities.

Engaging with stakeholders



All political stakeholders have influence that they can use in government. If you don't already have a relationship with your local councillors / MLAs / MPs, cultivate their support as soon as possible. Bear in mind that they receive a great many requests and have a limited amount of time, so be concise.

A little research goes a long way! It will help you if you know who your local politicians are and what their interests are.

You can research their memberships of relevant committees at Stormont or at Westminster and find out if they have asked relevant questions.

NI Assembly: [The Northern Ireland Assembly](http://niassembly.gov.uk)
(niassembly.gov.uk).

DfC - [Department for Communities](#)

Engaging with stakeholders



Houses of Parliament: UK Parliament

Local Government: District Councils

Department for Communities

It will strengthen your case if you can link your work to the stated priorities of Government. The NI Assembly publishes a 'Programme for Government', which sets out the Assembly's priorities.

The **draft Programme for Government 2024-27**, '**Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most**', lists three key missions **People, Planet** and **Prosperity**.

If you are contacting your local politicians, including local government councillors, please do let us know. It will help us to stay informed and we may even be able to amplify your activity. **Drop us an email at: info@artscouncil-ni.org**.

