

## Why measure the economic impact of the arts?

Artists, their creativity, and the communities where they work are not separate from economics: they are embedded in it.

Economics is about how we - as people who are part of a society - create, produce, share, and exchange things that are valued and cherished.

The arts are part of this process: they generate meaning, foster connection, help us adapt, and respond to change.

We already know the arts have a wide-reaching impact, but it is important to be able to illustrate it using a language that is better understood in policy discussions:

- How many jobs do they create?
- How much economic output do they produce?

This is not about reducing the arts to numbers, but instead about showing how arts organisations contribute to the wider economic and social dynamics of Northern Ireland.

For that reason, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) recently commissioned Simetrica to examine the economic impact of a sample of organisations which ACNI funds. The analysis looked at the direct jobs these organisations generate, the activity they help create through their supply chains, and the wider spending they stimulate locally.

The study found that ACNI's investment has a strong multiplying effect. The £13.27 million invested by ACNI generated around £24 million annually in economic activity - **almost double its value.**

More importantly, these organisations generate £104m in economic activity per year. This accounts for approximately 80% of the economic activity of Northern Ireland's arts sector and supports about 1,633 full-time equivalent jobs across 123 organisations per year.

These findings help make visible, in economic terms, that the arts are integral to how society works. The arts help us to see things differently and in new ways. This can lead to creative solutions and approaches to the economic problems and opportunities we face as a society.

To read the full report on the economic impact of the arts in Northern Ireland, please visit <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/economic-impact-report-july-2025>.

Looking ahead, we have also commissioned research into the social value of the arts, which we will publish later this autumn.

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