

# Arts participation can enhance civil society

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This research was conducted by **Kelly Leroux and Anna Bernadska** at the **University of Illinois at Chicago, USA**

## Summary

This study examines the effect that arts attendance and participation have on three dimensions of civil society: civic engagement, social tolerance, and way people think about others. Researchers found that individuals who attend the arts, as well as those who create art themselves, are more engaged in civic activities within their communities, have higher levels of social tolerance, and demonstrate higher rates of altruism.

**This study is based on the premise that the arts have the potential to produce positive social outcomes because they are creative and open**

The study used data from the 2002 General Social Survey, (with a total of 1,341 respondents) which gathers information on the volume and character of arts engagement of adults in the USA. Researchers looked at attendance (including visits to museums and attendance at artistic events), as well as arts participation (such as painting or playing an instrument).

**Other factors, in addition to arts engagement, influence a person's contributions to civil society**

The research found that civic engagement in particular increases not only with increased participation in artistic activities, but also with education level. Civic engagement was also found to increase with age, while younger respondents

exhibited higher levels of tolerance towards minorities. Income, however, was found to have no significant impact on individuals' level of civic engagement, tolerance, or altruism.

This summary is by **Paula Serafini, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

## Keywords

**USA** **civic** **altruism** **survey** **social**

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