

Southwark Council

## Cultural Strategy Residents Research

Library users survey results

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# Introduction

## About this report

Southwark Council approached The Audience Agency to undertake research with local residents to inform a refresh of the Borough's Cultural Strategy.

The primary objectives were to consult with residents in the Borough to better understand:

- Who is engaging with culture
- What culture they engage with in the Borough
- What they are aware of but don't engage with
- Why they don't engage with all or some of the offer
- What the barriers might be
- What they would like to see more of
- What else they do in their leisure time

The findings from this research will inform future developments on the cultural offer for the Borough, including shaping commissioning of cultural activity. This report presents the findings of the residents' survey.

## Methodology

A survey was conducted at five Southwark libraries, and an e-survey distributed via the borough website and digital communication channels. Libraries were chosen as a location at which a wide cross-section of borough residents could be found.

The survey of library users took place between December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015 and January 14<sup>th</sup> 2017, at Peckham Library, John Harvard Library, Dulwich Library, Newington Temporary Library and Canada Water Library. Three shifts were conducted at each location, over a mix of mornings, afternoons, weekdays and weekends.

In total, 263 interviews were conducted, giving an overall margin of error of  $\pm 6\%$  at the 95% confidence level. This means we can be confident that the results are representative of all those who visited the five libraries over the research period, with the observed results in this report being within 6% of the results we would have seen had everyone who visited the libraries over this period been interviewed.

Questions with fewer response will have a larger margin of error; those where responses are more extreme (i.e. further away from 50%) will have a smaller margin of error. The sample size for each question is given below the relevant chart.

Results of the e-survey are given in a separate report.

## Executive summary

The research was conducted between December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015 and January 14<sup>th</sup> 2017.

Survey data collection took place at Peckham Library, John Harvard Library, Dulwich Library, Newington Temporary Library and Canada Water Library.

263 interviews were conducted, giving an overall margin of error of  $\pm 6\%$  at the 95% confidence level.

The demographic profile of the respondents closely reflected that of the borough population as a whole, indicating a strongly representative sample.

### Key findings

#### Demographics

- 51% of respondents identified as female, 49% as male.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents were aged 25-34.
- 73% of the respondents do not have dependent children living at home
- 55% of respondents identified as being from a White ethnic background; 34% White British and 21% White other.
- 29% of respondents identified as being from a Black or Black British ethnic background.
- 10% of respondents identified as being from an Asian or Asian British ethnic background.
- 92% of respondents identified as having no limiting disability or illness.

#### Levels of attendance, participation and interest in arts and culture

- 71% of respondents had attended one or more cultural events in the last 12 months.
- 89% of respondents had participated in some cultural activity in the last 12 months.
- 82% of respondents said they would like to attend more cultural events.
- 74% of respondents said that they would like to take part in more cultural activities.

#### Motivations and encouragements

- 93% of respondents identified the opportunity to be entertained as being the most important factor in deciding whether or not to attend a cultural activity or event.
- 70% of respondents said that being more aware of what's on would encourage them to take part in or go to more cultural events.

#### General feedback

- Comments about current provision of cultural activities in Southwark were largely positive:

*“I really enjoy them and wish there were more!”*

- The key themes which emerged from the open comments were:
  - Better access to information about what’s on
  - Affordable ticket pricing
  - Local community engagement and diversity in programming

*“Things aren’t advertised well enough. Better social media would help”*

*“Affordability is important. More information to help people find out better”*

*“More community gatherings to encourage integration amongst groups of people”*

## Conclusions and recommendations

The following section highlights areas which the Southwark Council teams may find it useful to discuss further. It includes recommendations for audience development approaches to consider within the overall cultural strategy, based on the evidence presented in this report and in the context of the research project aims.

Some approaches may be new to the teams and some may already be in use; in the latter case it may be useful to revisit or refresh them in the light of the research findings.

### Marketing and communications

One of the main themes to emerge from the research is that people do not feel well informed about cultural activity in Southwark. There are some approaches which the borough may find useful to consider:

- Given that the library service appears to attract users who are representative of the Southwark population as a whole, it’s likely that using library sites and digital channels as hubs for communications and marketing activity would be effective in raising the profile of cultural activity in the borough.
- Identifying other service providers and cultural organisations that Southwark residents are already engaged with, and which have the potential to support cross-promotion partnerships - such as local community centres, transport hubs, and cinemas for example - may also offer potential routes to engaging people who aren’t currently accessing information about cultural activities.
- A number of comments about information sources in the open feedback responses referred to digital communications, particularly social media. The Southwark teams

may find it helpful to review how its social media channels are being used, and identify ways to make messaging more effective. For example, ensuring that content is timely and tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the audience; talking to them in the way they expect from any given channel.

### Programming

The research indicates that engagement with culture is high, particularly for participatory activities such as playing music, creative fine arts, and creative writing, and there is an appetite to do and see more.

- The results of the research indicate high levels of participatory cultural engagement and, from our understanding of the behaviour and preferences of lower engaged groups, participation is an effective way of engaging them with cultural activity. An effective approach to maximising the impact of cultural programming could be to include participatory elements in the programming for other types of event. For example, creative workshops to accompany a visual arts exhibition; acting, music, or singing lessons to sit alongside theatre or concert performances; or digital arts workshops to accompany video installations or film showings.
- The most popular cultural activities appear to be visiting traditional venues such as museums and galleries. To engage audiences who are unaware of the offer in Southwark, or are from lower engaged groups, the cultural teams may consider outreach programmes which take elements of these offers out into more widely accessed settings such as libraries and shopping centres.

### Further research

The face to face survey results will be supplemented by further responses collected through an online e-survey version of the same questionnaire. From an interim review of the results, the e-survey respondent constituency is not as representative of the borough as a whole, and may represent the most highly engaged sections of the population. For this reason the results of the e-survey will be presented separately, but in the context of the face to face survey findings.

Other research areas to consider:

- To inform the strategy for reaching currently lower-engaged or hard to reach communities in the borough, a more consultative approach is recommended; using community engagement consultation methods to explore specific barriers and reasons for lower engagement in more depth.
- Given the research findings in relation to information sourcing, the Southwark teams might find it useful to consider further analysis or research to build a more detailed understanding of how residents are currently accessing information about cultural opportunities and events in the borough; including drivers to engage and the relative effectiveness of different channels on decision making.

# Results in full

## Demographics

The demographic profile of respondents closely matched those of Southwark residents as a whole, and generally were more representative of the local population than a typical ‘arts’ audience (as indicated by Audience Finder benchmarks - see footnote below).

### Key findings

#### Sex

- 51% of respondents identified as female, 49% as male. This corresponds exactly with the borough population base and is a more even split than is found in the 2015/16 Audience Finder survey benchmark for London<sup>1</sup>, where 61% of attenders identify as female.

#### Age

- Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents were aged 25-34, compared to 29% in the borough population and 25% in the 2015/16 Audience Finder survey benchmark for London.
- 21% were aged 16-24, compared to 17% in the borough and 15% in the 2015/16 London survey benchmark.
- The percentages of respondents falling into other age categories closely matched those of the borough population and are largely reflective of attenders in the 2015/16 Audience Finder survey benchmark for London.

#### Children living at home

- 73% of the respondents do not have dependent children living at home, this is comparable with 69% in the borough population.  
Of the 27% who do have children living at home, 65% have children aged 5 or under. This is lower than the borough population, where 86% have children aged 5 or under living at home.
- Overall, the results show some significant differences in the ages of respondent’s children and the borough population as a whole, particularly in the 14-15 age group. 5% of respondents have children of this age living at home, compared to 18% in the borough population.

#### Ethnicity

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<sup>1</sup> This is derived from the survey data submitted to Audience Finder in 2015/16 by participating arts and cultural organisations in London. The survey benchmark data is largely contributed by museums, art galleries, heritage organisations, and cinemas. It draws on a sample of over 38,000 survey responses.

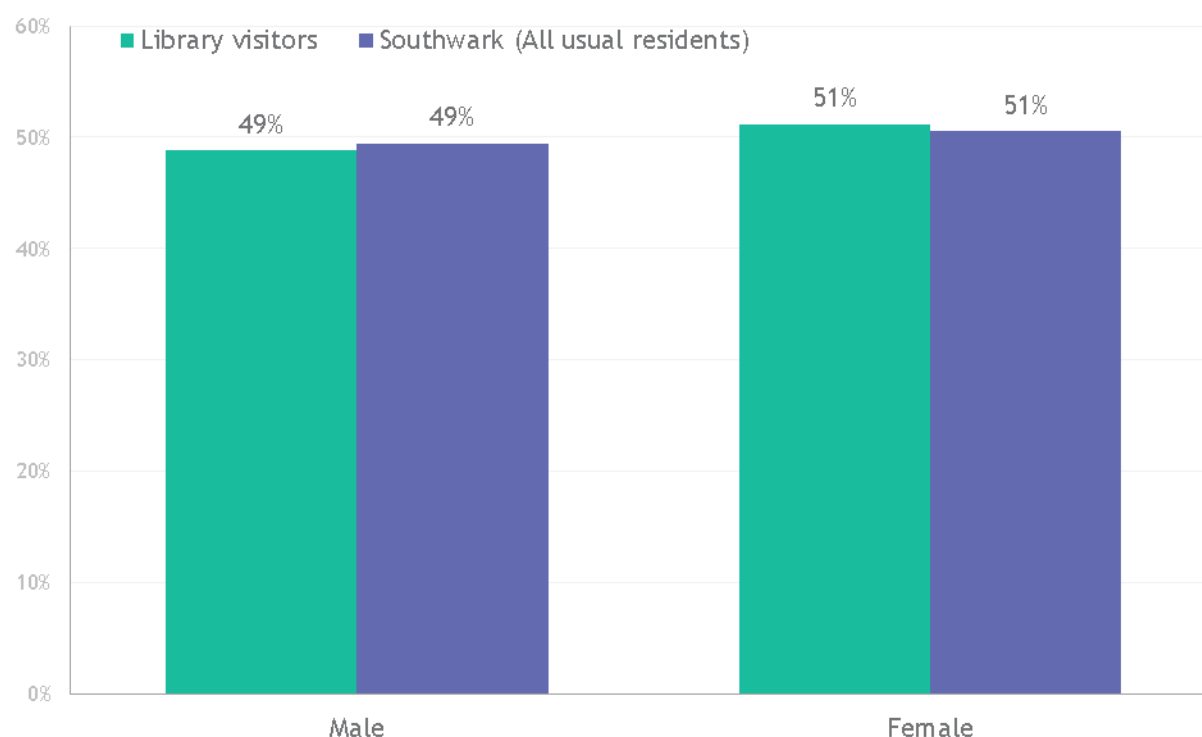


- 55% of respondents identified as being from a White ethnic background; 34% White British and 21% White other.  
Overall this is reflective of the borough population as a whole, where 54% identify as being from a White ethnic background; but 45% and 9% identify as White British and White other respectively.  
It is lower than is found in the 2015/16 Audience Finder London survey benchmark, where 92% of attenders identify as being from a White ethnic background.
- 29% of respondents identified as being from a Black or Black British ethnic background. This directly corresponds with 27% in the borough population, and is considerably higher than the 2015/16 Audience Finder London survey benchmark, where 5% of attenders identify as such.
- 10% of respondents identified as being from an Asian or Asian British ethnic background, this closely matches the borough population figure of 9% and is slightly higher than the 2015/16 Audience Finder London survey benchmark, where 6% identify as such.

#### Limiting disability or illness

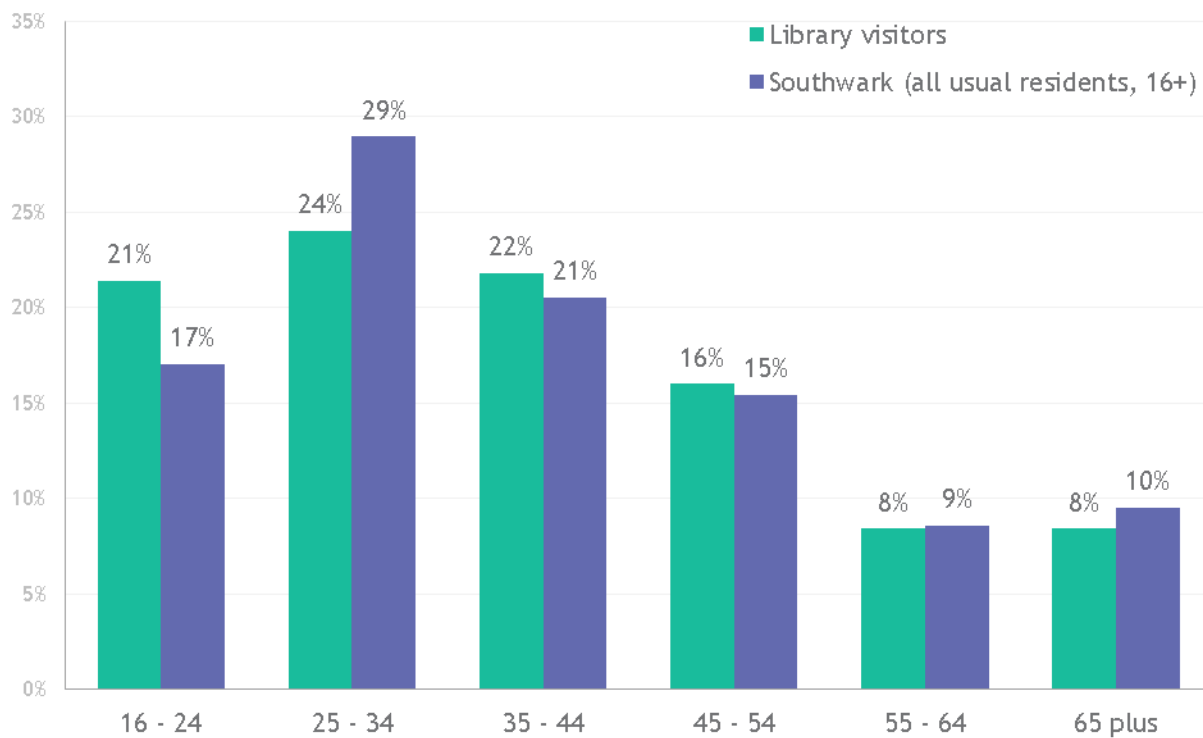
- 92% of respondents identified as having no limiting disability or illness, compared to 86% in the borough population base and 93% in the 2015/16 Audience Finder London survey benchmark.

#### Sex



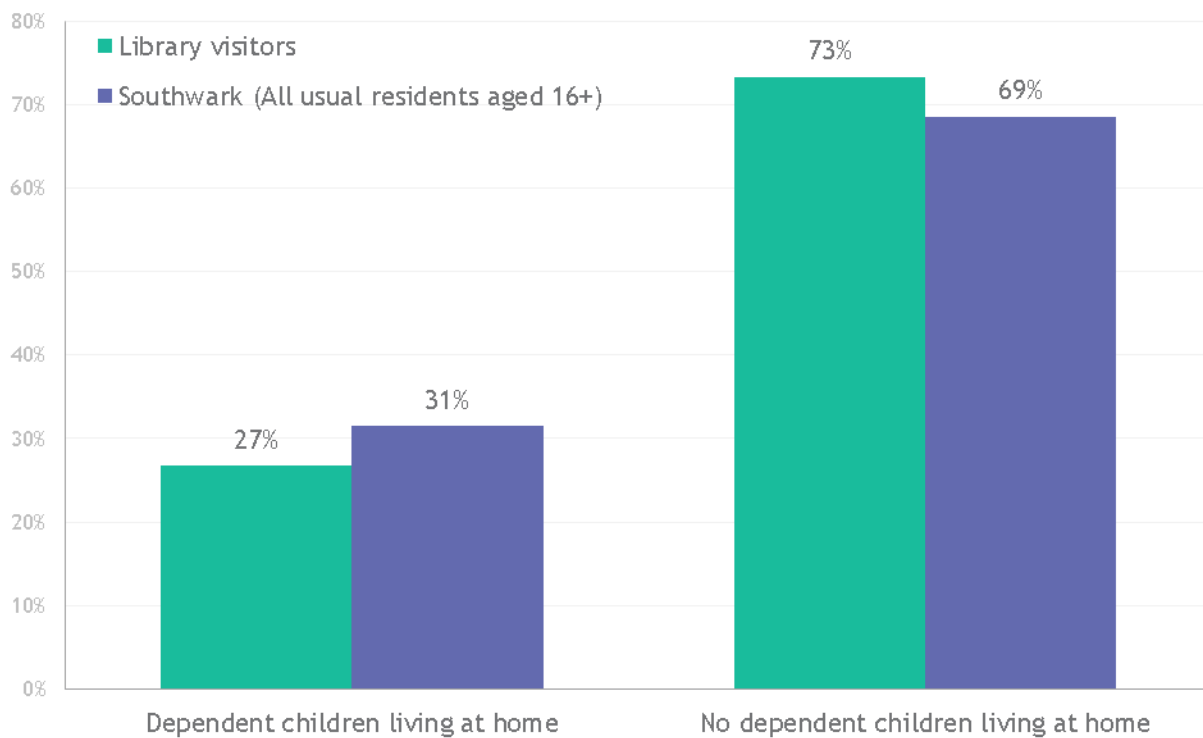
Base: Library visitors - 260; Southwark (all usual residents) - 288,283

## Age



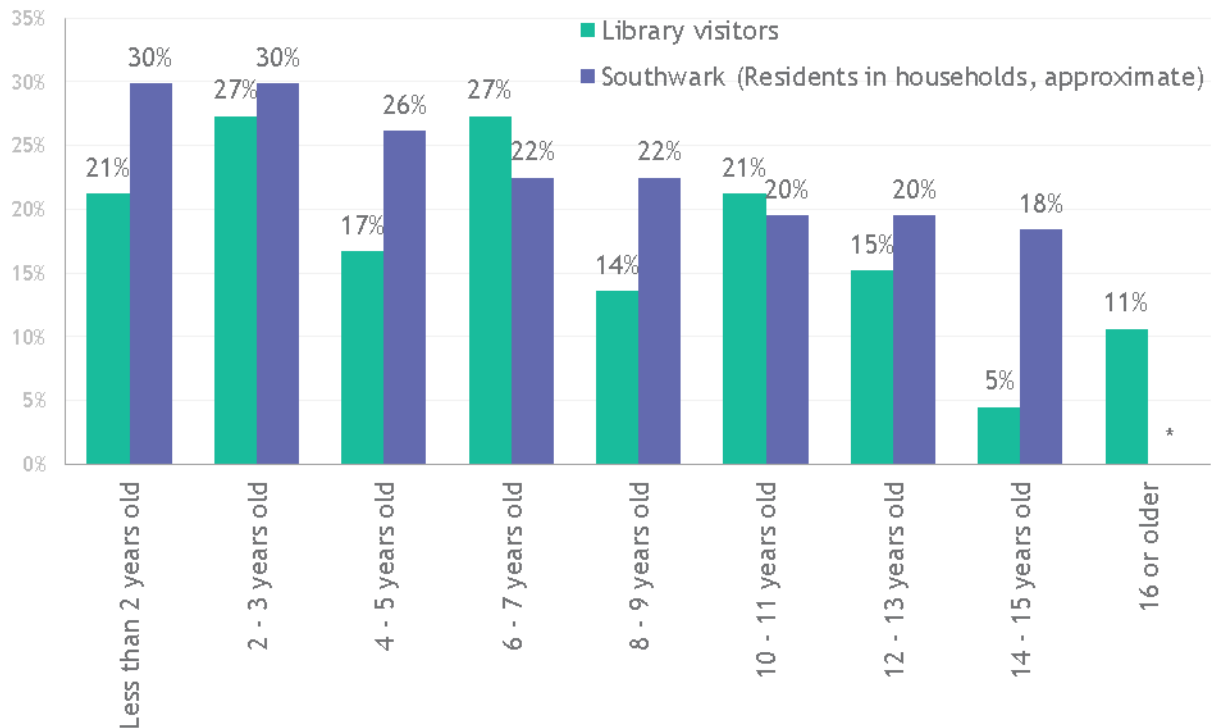
Base: Library visitors - 262; Southwark (all usual residents, 16+) - 234,901

## Dependent children



Base: Library visitors - 247; Southwark (all usual residents, 16+) - 229,266

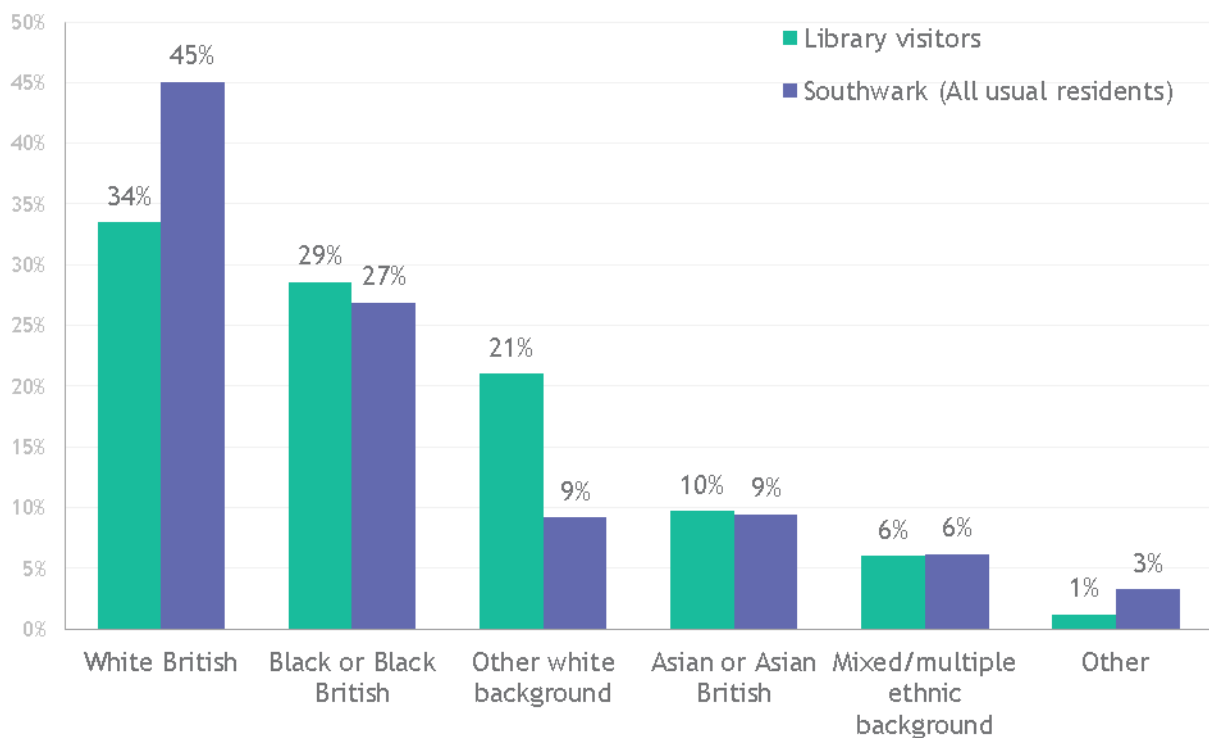
## Age(s) of dependent children in household



Base - those with dependent children: Library visitors - 66; Southwark (residents in households) - 96,031

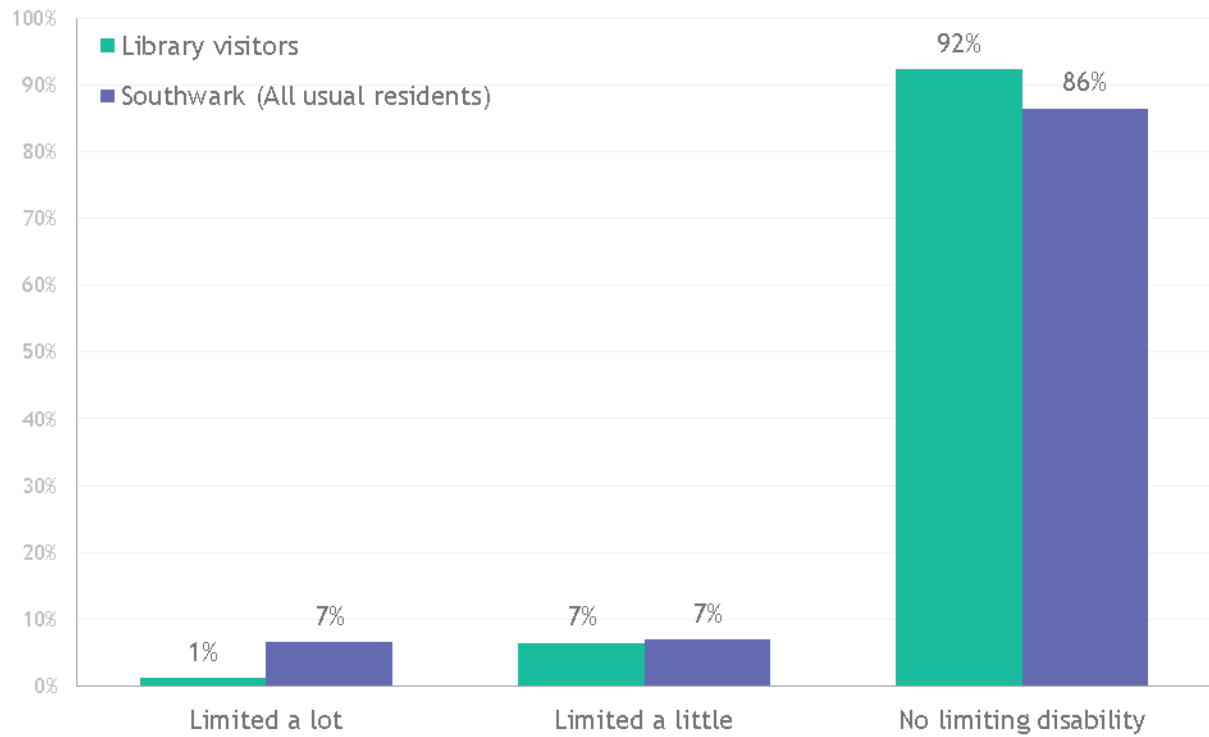
\* No information available for dependent children aged 16+, Southwark

## Ethnic group



Base: Library visitors - 248; Southwark (all usual residents) - 288,283

## Limiting disability



Base: Library visitors - 260; Southwark (all usual residents) - 288,283

## Current engagement

Levels of attendance and participation were relatively high amongst the respondents, across a broad range of cultural activities, indicating regular if not frequent engagement both inside and outside of Southwark.

The respondents' level of interest in arts and cultural activities was also high, particularly in comparison to interest in other leisure activities such as taking part or watching sports, and DIY or gardening.

The research also indicates that there is an appetite to engage more with arts and cultural activities, both in terms of attendance and participation.

## Key findings

### Levels of attendance

- 80% of respondents had attended one or more cultural events in the last three years, with 71% having attended in the last 12 months.
- Of those who had attended within the last year, 49% had been more than once during this time.

### Attendance by artform

- The three activities showing the highest levels of engagement were going to the cinema, visiting a museum or heritage site, and attending a visual art exhibition or event.  
In the last 12 months, 47% of respondents had been to the cinema, 27% had visited a museum or heritage site, and 25% had attended a visual arts exhibition or event.
- Other activities which showed significant levels of attendance, albeit less frequent, were plays / dramatic performances, street arts, events in libraries / archives, and culturally specific festivals / carnivals.  
In the last three years, 23% of respondents had attended a play or dramatic performance, 23% had been to or seen street arts, 19% had attended an event in a library or archive and 17% had been to or seen a culturally specific festival or carnival.

### Attendance by location

- 71% of respondents engage with some level of cultural activity in Southwark, and 83% engage outside of the borough.
- Levels of cinema attendance are even both inside and outside of the borough, with 47% of attenders saying they had attended cinema in both.
- Museum and heritage site visits are higher outside of the borough, with 27% of respondents having visited museums in Southwark and 46% having visited museums or heritage sites elsewhere.

- The pattern of attendance is similar for all of the most prominent activities with 25% attending visual arts in the borough and 36% elsewhere, and 16% attending plays or drama in the borough and 36% elsewhere. The exception to this is library and archive events where 14% of respondents had attended in Southwark compared to 10% elsewhere.

### Participation by artform

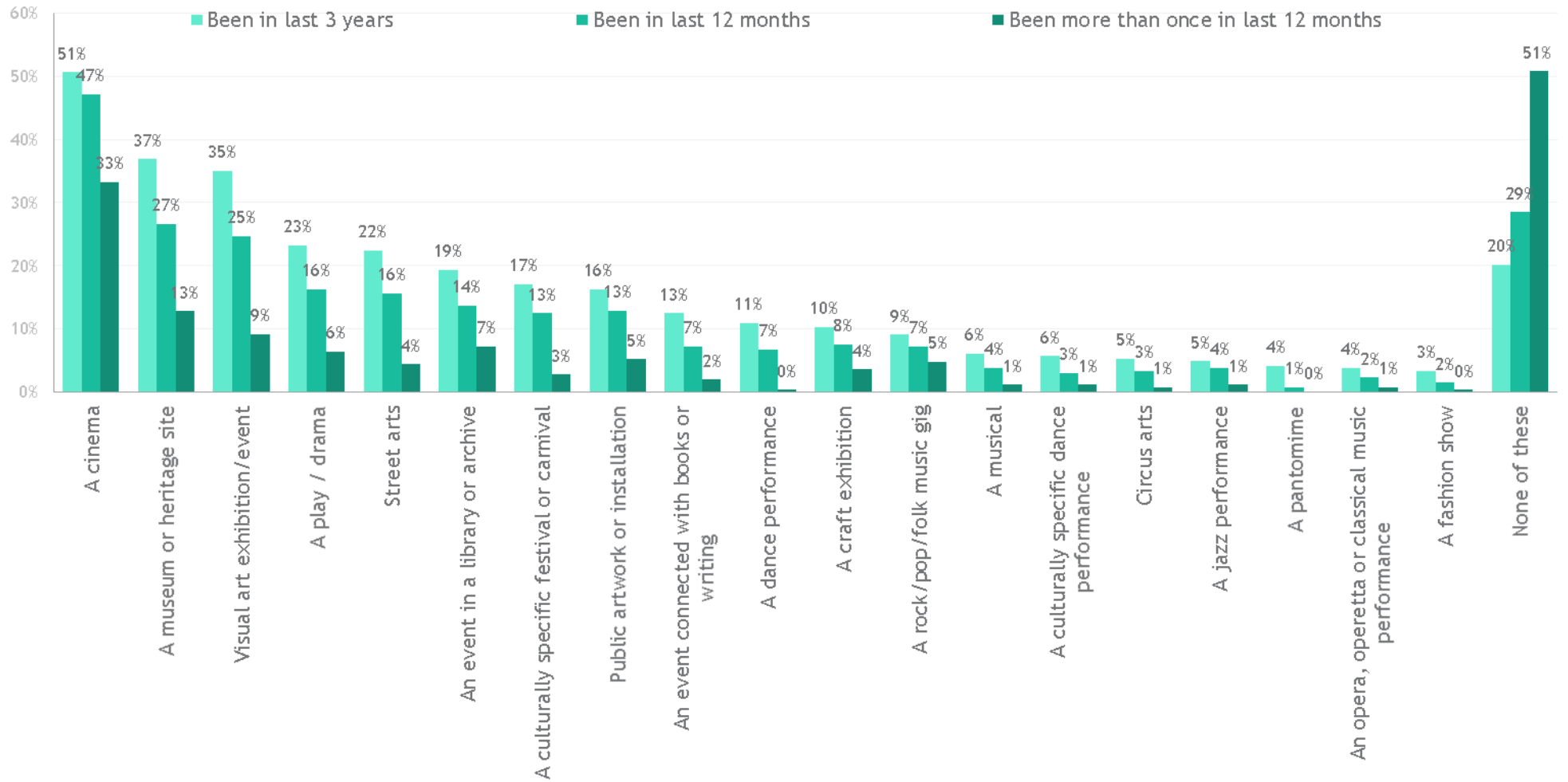
- 89% of respondents had participated in some cultural activity in the last 12 months.
- 83% had read a book for pleasure. Given that respondents were all library users, it's not surprising that this was the activity that showed the highest levels of participation, although similarly high levels of reading for pleasure are indicated in the Taking Part survey results for 2015/16; where 59% of respondents in London said they had read for pleasure in the last 12 months.
- The other activities showing the highest levels of participation were music for pleasure, creative fine arts, creative writing, and historical research.  
In the last 12 months, 36% of respondents had played or performed music for pleasure, 29% had taken part in painting, drawing or sculpture, 23% had participated in creative writing activities, and 22% had undertaken research into historical or heritage subjects.
- Other activities which showed significant, but less frequent, levels of participation were crafts, singing and digital arts.  
In the last 5 years, 24% of respondents had taken part in a craft based activity, 24% had been involved in singing for pleasure or performance, and 21% had made a digital artwork or video.

### Levels of interest

- 33% of respondents 'Strongly agreed' (3%) or 'Agreed' (30%) that they do as much as they are ever likely to do in terms of arts and cultural engagement. This indicates that two-thirds (67%) of respondents represent potential prospects for increased attendance and participation.
- 74% of respondents 'Strongly agreed' (26%) or 'Agreed' (48%) that they would like to take part in more cultural activities.
- 82% of respondents 'Strongly agreed' (32%) or 'Agreed' (50%) that they would like to go to more cultural events.

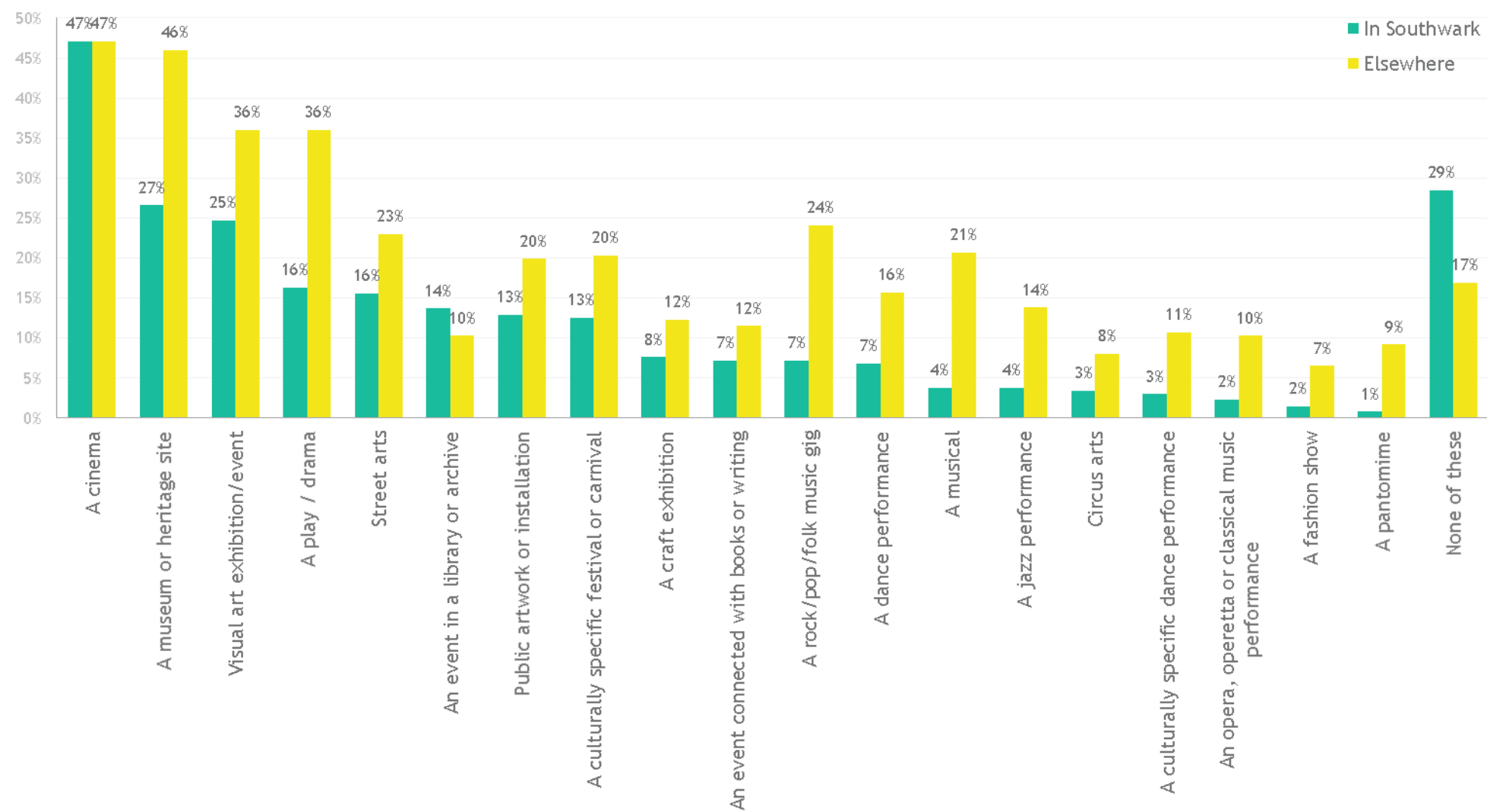
## Cultural events

### Events in Southwark



Base: All respondents (263 / 263 / 250)

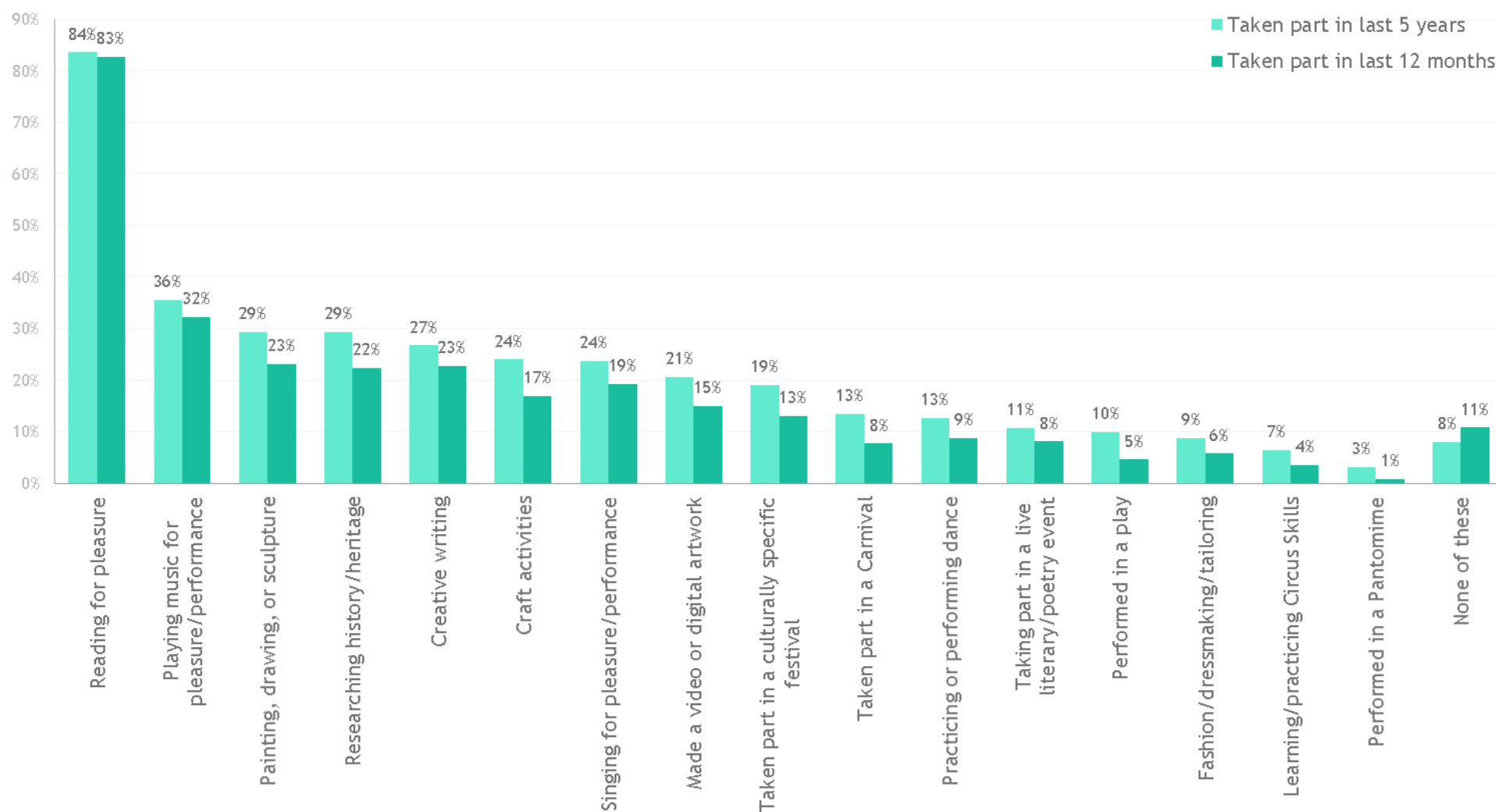
## Events attended in the past 12 months in Southwark and elsewhere



Base: All respondents (263 / 261)



## Cultural activities in Southwark

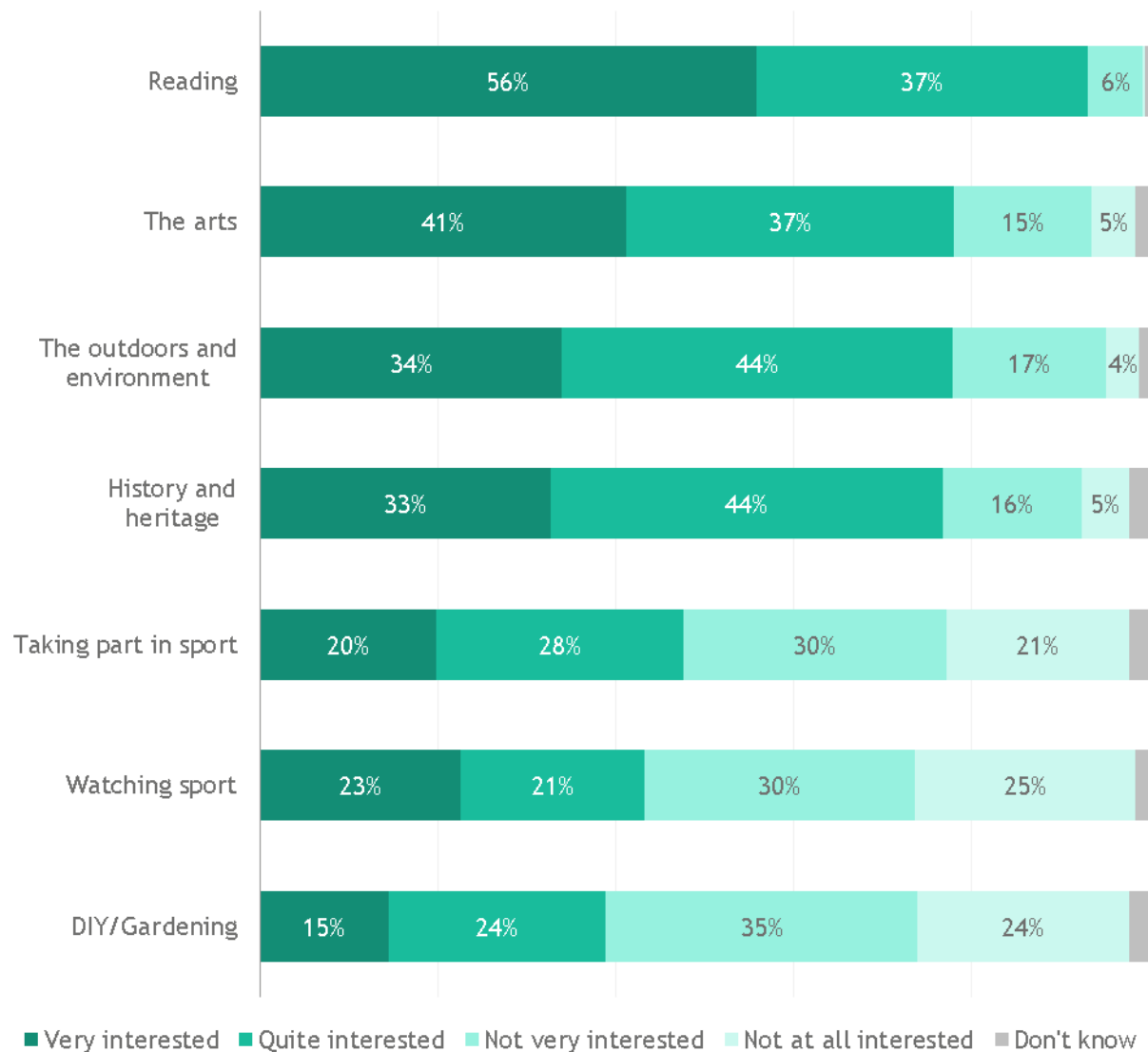


Base: All respondents (262 / 260)

## Interests and aspiration

### Level of interest

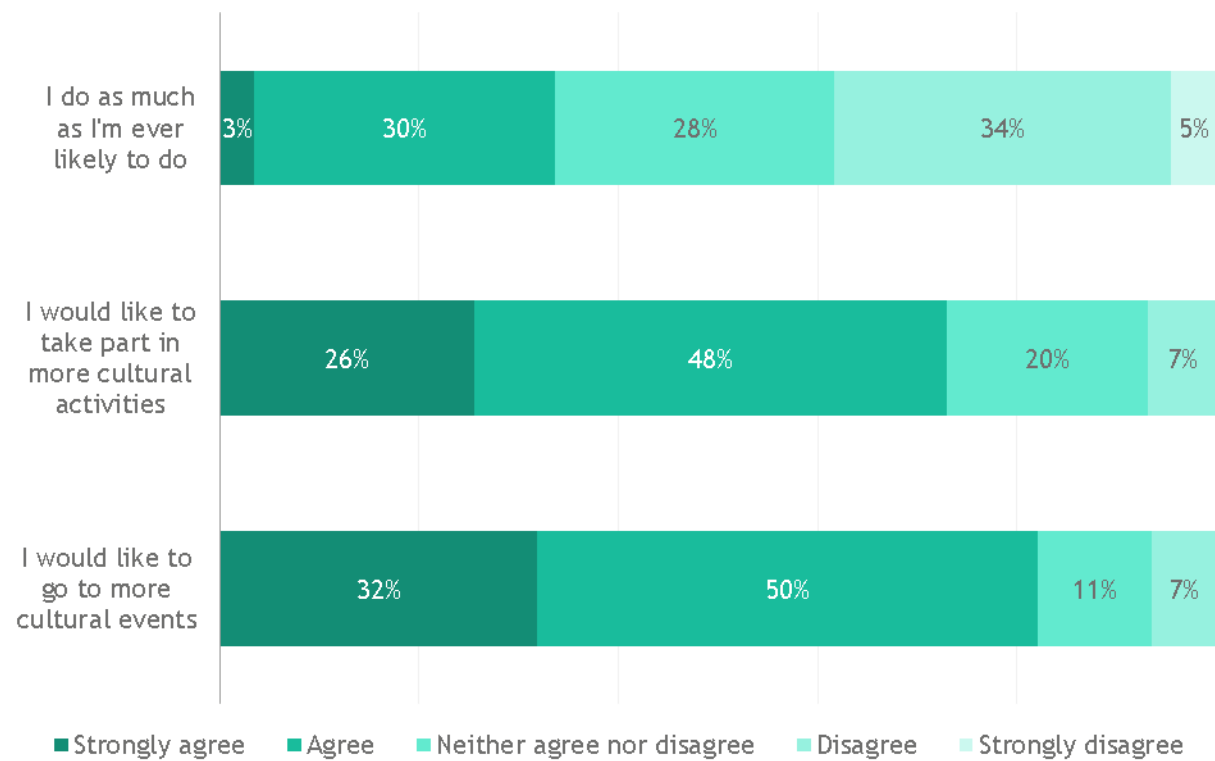
How interested [are you] in each of the following, from very interested to not at all interested?



Base: All respondents (263 / 260 / 262 / 263 / 258 / 261 / 262)

## Aspiration

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements



Base: All respondents (261 / 263 / 263)

## Motivations and encouragements

The respondents identified entertainment factors as being the main motivators for engaging with arts and cultural activities, with learning opportunities also figuring highly.

To encourage them to take part in or attend more cultural activities, the main factor is being aware of what's on, followed by affordability, and having someone to go with.

### Key findings

#### Motivations and decision making

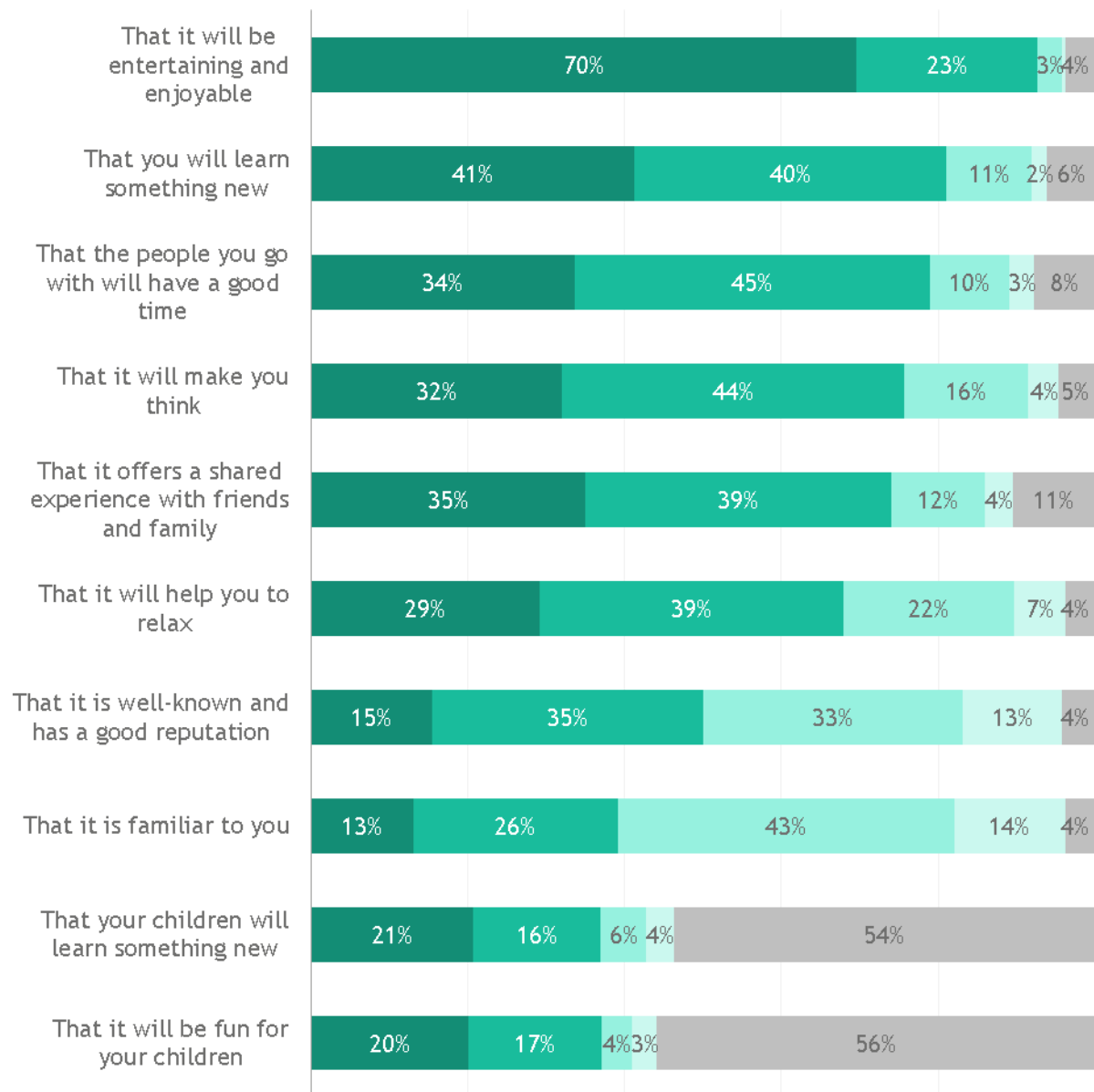
- 93% of respondents said that an activity being entertaining and enjoyable was 'Very Important' (70%) or 'Quite important' (23%) when making choices about which cultural activities or events to go to.  
79% said that knowing that the people you go with will have a good time was 'Very important' (34%) or 'Quite important' (45%).
- 81% of respondents said that learning something new was 'Very Important' (41%) or 'Quite important' (40%) when making choices about what cultural activities or events to go to.  
75% said that an activity or event that made them think was a 'Very important' (32%) or 'Quite important' (44%) factor in deciding what to go to.
- 74% of respondents said that the opportunity to share an experience with friends and family was 'Very important' (35%) or 'Quite important' (39%) when deciding whether to go cultural activities or events.

#### Encouragements

- 31% of respondents said that being more aware of what's on would be most likely to help them to take part in or go to more cultural activities and events; 70% said that it would be an encouraging factor.
- 17% said that cheaper tickets or workshop fees would be most likely to help them to engage more with arts and cultural activities; 56% said that this would be an encouraging factor.
- 19% of respondents said that having someone to go with would offer them the most help in attending or participating more in arts and culture; 53% cited this as an encouraging factor.

## Decision making

How important are each of these when making choices about which cultural activities and events to go to?

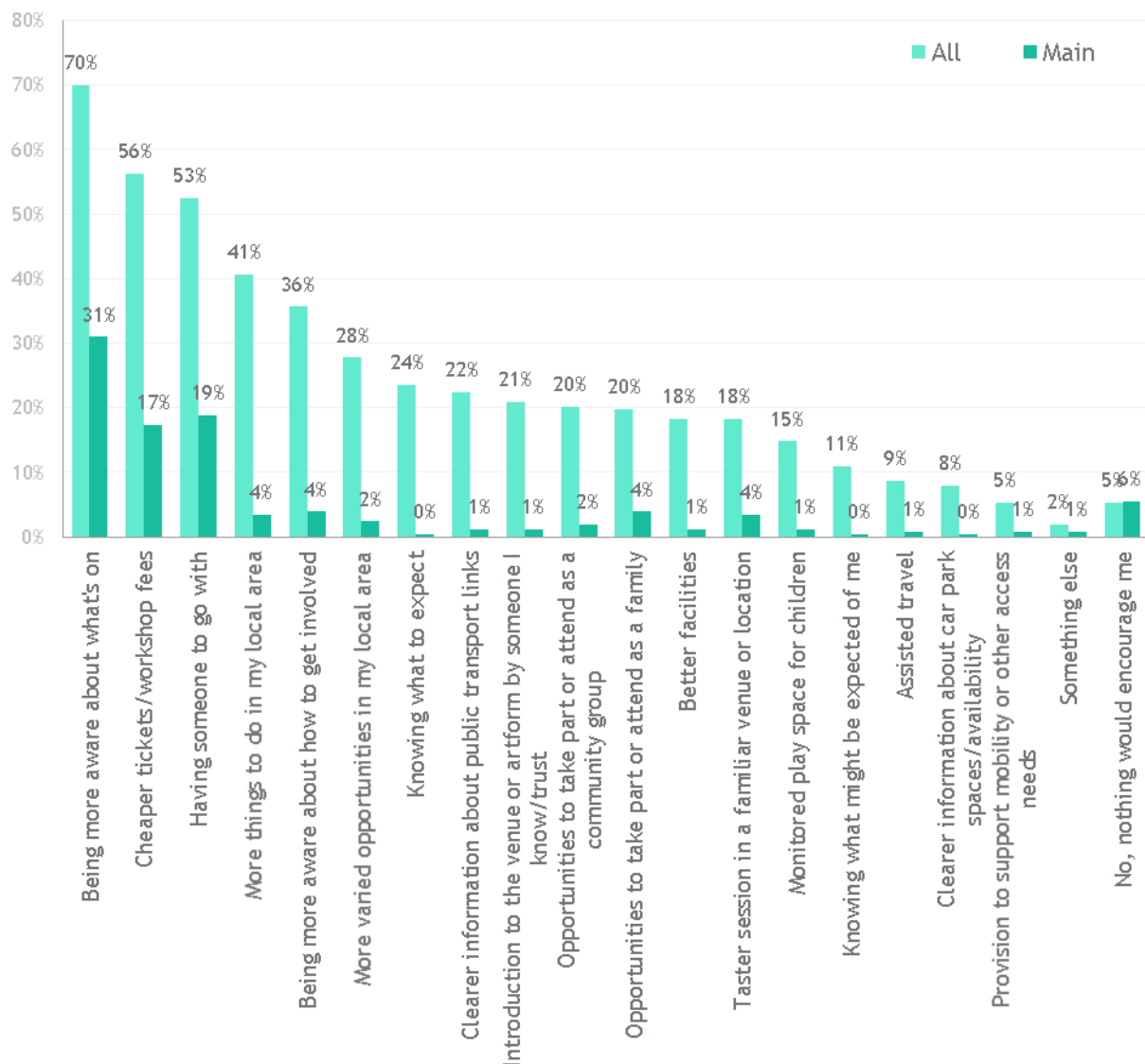


■ Very important ■ Quite important ■ Not very important ■ Not at all important ■ Not applicable

Base: All respondents (260 / 257 / 256 / 259 / 258 / 261 / 260 / 261 / 257 / 259)

## Encouragements

Would any of the following encourage you to take part in or go to more cultural activities and events? And of these, which would be most likely to help you take part in or go to more cultural activities and events?



Base: All respondents (263 / 255)

Other encouragements recorded for those who said 'Something else' were as follows:

### Flexibility with time

Respondent at Dulwich Library

### Group exchange activities

Respondent at Newington Library

### Having more free time

Respondent at Dulwich Library

### Young people's programme

Respondent at John Harvard Library

## Open feedback

Three key themes emerged in response to the open-ended question calling for any other comments on the respondents' experiences of taking part in or attending cultural activities in Southwark:

- **Access to information about what's on**  
Comments centred on the need for more easily accessible information about events taking place in the borough.
- **Ticket pricing structures and affordability**  
The comments about ticket pricing suggest that the cost of attendance can be a barrier and that targeted offers might support attendance and participation for particular groups such as students and families with children.
- **Engagement with local communities and support for culturally specific programming**  
A number of comments mentioned specific cultural groups but most suggested that the overall diversity of the borough should be reflected in cultural programming. There were also suggestions for working in partnership with local community groups, including artists; particularly around funding.

There were several comments about time pressures and meeting the needs of different types of audience including children and young people, and older people with specific access needs. Views were quite polarised in terms of the levels of provision for these different groups, which may be seen as a reflection of the range of needs represented by the respondents.

Respondents also commented more widely on the overall provision and quality of cultural activities in the borough. These comments were largely positive, particularly in respect of the library service and events, with fewer negative observations, and some mentioned specific events which respondents had enjoyed.

### Selected quotes

#### Access to information:

*"Things aren't advertised well enough. Better social media would help"*

*"Don't feel like I know about what's going on - make access to info simpler"*

*"Easier access to information would help"*

*"It should be more visible what's going on. More theatre"*

*"More signs up about what's going on; I don't live in area, but would travel if I was aware something was happening"*

#### **Ticket pricing and affordability:**

*"Only activities I can do with my son in public holidays - would like price not be a barrier"*

*"Time and money stop me and no friends interested"*

*"Cheaper tickets"*

*"Discounts for families"*

*"A luxury as I am studying"*

*"Affordability is important. More information to help people find out better"*

#### **Local community engagement and support**

*"More could be done with reference to local area & events in the square"*

*"Too much bureaucracy in organising cultural activities. More financial support for cultural community groups"*

*"More community gatherings to encourage integration amongst groups of people. e.g.. Eid, Diwali"*

*"There's lots of diversity - need to learn about different cultures"*

*"Local artists/collectives the council need to bring up. Arts community in Peckham, but not linked to council"*

#### **Meeting the needs of different audiences**

*"Children's groups are good and great for kids"*

*"More activities for school age 5-11"*

*"I do not have much experience would like my 9 year old daughter to have them"*

*"There should be more for young people"*

*"My Mum has dementia but she would still go out, be more for adults please as most are for young people"*

#### **Cultural provision in Southwark**

*"Events usually well run and organised"*

*"Very well organised good variety of things, but there isn't enough"*

*"Events at Peckham library are good on Fridays"*



*“Don't like going locally as events seem badly organised. More special to go out of the area for culture”*

## Contacts

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