



JUNE 2022 | REPORTS

invent

EUROPEAN INVENTORY OF SOCIETAL VALUES OF CULTURE AS
BASIS FOR INCLUSIVE CULTURAL POLICIES



Danes' understanding of and participation in culture 2021

Eva Myrczik | Nete Nørgaard Kristensen

Designed by Cecilia Arroyo



Content

1. ABOUT THE STUDY
2. MAIN RESULTS
3. WHAT DOES CULTURE MEAN ACCORDING TO DANES?
4. THE ROLE OF CULTURE FOR SOCIETY
5. SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC FUNDING OF CULTURAL INITIATIVES
6. CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND VALUE OF CULTURE
7. DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND INTERNET USE
8. SATISFACTION WITH LOCAL CULTURAL OFFERINGS
9. (MISSING) CULTURE IN TIMES OF COVID-19 10

1. About the study

“What does culture mean to you?”

Culture can be many different things to different people. As society is constantly changing, so is our understanding of culture, the role of it in everyday life, and the cultural opportunities of citizens. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed some of the basic conditions of our lives, including our cultural habits, opportunities for cultural participation, and ways of living.

This report presents new research-based knowledge about Danes' understanding of what culture is, their attitudes towards culture, and the importance of culture in their everyday lives. We do not apply a particular definition of culture, but ask openly about different aspects of culture, such as opinions about and participation in a broad range of cultural offerings, internet use for cultural purposes and people's opinions about broader sociocultural changes in Denmark and in a European context.

The report is based on a survey on Europeans' – including Danes' – understanding of culture, conducted in spring 2021 as part of a large European research project entitled *INVENT, European Inventory of Societal Values of Culture as a Basis for Inclusive Culture Policies in the Globalizing World*. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and includes, in addition to Denmark, the UK, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Croatia, Switzerland, Serbia and Spain. More information on the project is available at <https://inventculture.eu/>

The Danish part of the study includes responses from a total of 1,666 people aged 18 to 80, living in Denmark, and representative on the parameters of gender, age, region, education, and minority groups. Epinion conducted the data collection as a web-based survey. The following analysis uses unweighted data.

2. Main results

Key takeaways from the survey

- Danes have a broad and open understanding of culture. Still, when asked about specific details, a traditional view of culture as “arts and culture” prevails.
- Danes are, in general, happy with the cultural activities and offers in the area where they live.
- Danes are, in general, active cultural participants. They attend cultural events on average one to six times per year and participate in a variety of cultural activities, both at home and at venues and organized activities.
- The most common and frequent cultural activities relate to everyday consumption and activities, e.g., reading books, doing sports, and going to a café, bar, or restaurant. The least common ways of cultural participation are creative activities, such as making music or making art.
- Culture is social. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused people to miss especially activities and events that were social in nature, such as going to restaurants, traveling, and meeting friends and family. I.e., activities mostly restricted by COVID-19 measures.
- When valuing culture, such value is not directly connected to people's own cultural participation practices. For example, Danes' support for public funding of cultural initiatives and organizations is higher than their actual cultural participation in these activities.



3. What does culture mean according to Danes?

A main objective of the study was to find out what people instantaneously consider to be or belong to culture. The survey gave no examples or definitions but asked the very broad and open question: “What comes to your mind first when you think of the word ‘culture’”? The open-ended and elaborate answers revealed a wide variety of understandings of culture. The word cloud shows the essence of the responses, condensed to the words used most frequently to describe what culture is. It illustrates that most people express a classical or narrow perception of the meaning of culture, as the most common, immediate responses relate to the arts, music, theater, museum, concerts. The word cloud also shows that some Danes emphasize the social aspect of culture, associating it with experiences, people, society, traditions, values, history, and using adjectives relating to both sameness and differences. In sum, the variety of concepts and words is indicative of an open view of culture, attributing ideas of learning, education, and enlightenment as well as experience and entertainment. Culture can mean arts, religion, food, language – and it is often described as a way of life.

What comes to your mind first when you think of the word ‘culture’?



Fig. 1: Word Cloud of most frequently mentioned words in relation to the meaning of culture.
N= 1604

WHAT BELONGS TO CULTURE?

Next, the survey asked what belongs to culture – and by that, what does not. Though Danes' immediate understanding of culture is broad and diverse, there is a clear pattern when asking more directly about whether a particular domain or activity belongs to culture, or not. Historical monuments, opera, and literature – in other words classical cultural domains, or culture as arts – are the most frequently highlighted as “definitely belonging to culture”. But three in four Danes also see folk dancing as part of culture, followed by food festivals and markets, and hip-hop, showing an openness to popular culture.

What Danes most disagree with in relation to what belongs to culture is clearly connected to popular commercial aspects. The majority excludes shopping malls from culture, followed by TV reality shows and video and computer games.

What does culture mean according to Danes?

For each of the following items, please indicate if it belongs to culture in your opinion.

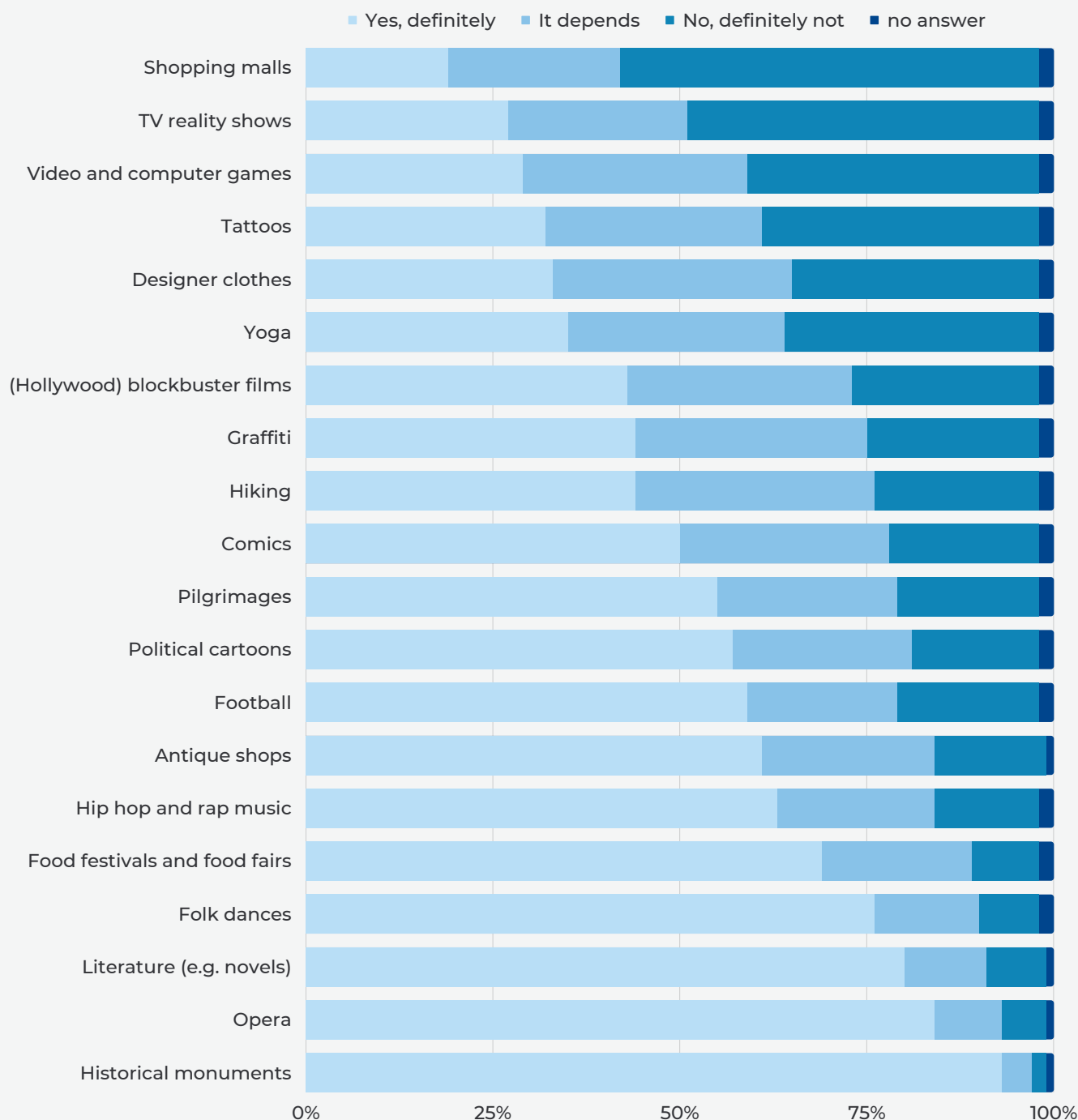


Fig. 2: Danes include a big variety of items to culture

4. The role of culture for society

As illustrated, culture is not just a product, an activity, or entertainment. Its existence, availability, and expression have added value to individuals and society. People's understanding of culture is constantly evolving, reflecting their lives, perception of society, (shared) history, etc. For that reason, we asked people about the role of culture in connecting people across various divides. The majority agrees with the statement that "culture connects people and bridges political, social and religious divides". Culture, according to Danes, thus has the potential to unite people across different beliefs and affiliations.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
Culture connects people and bridges political, social and religious divides

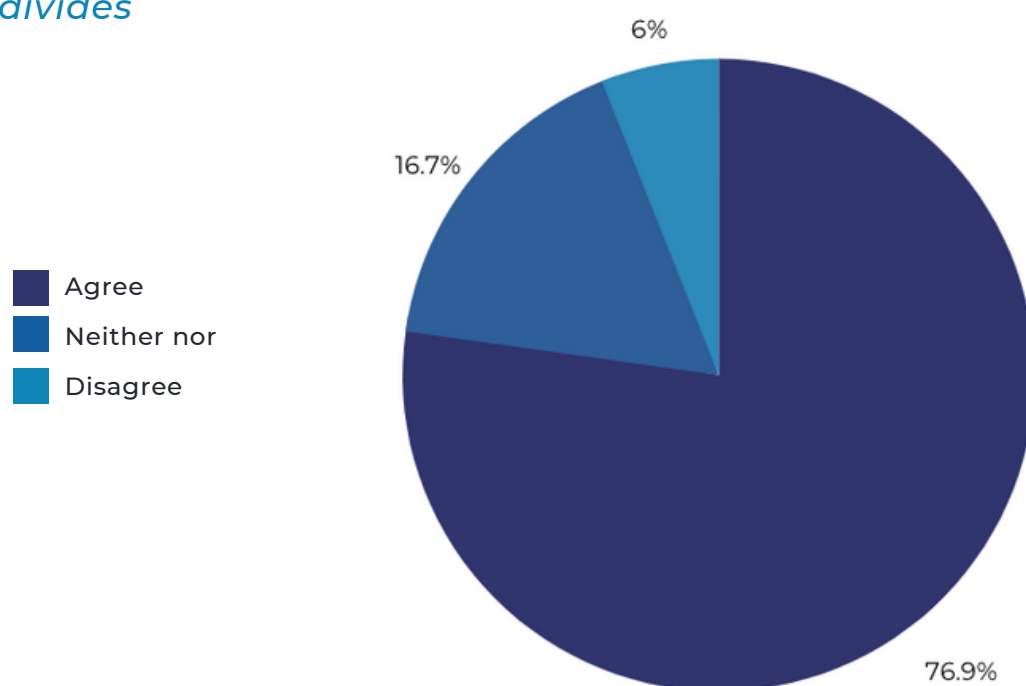


Fig. 3: The role of culture for connecting people and bridging political, social and religious divides. The original five response categories were collapsed into three segments: Agree: Strongly agree & (Somewhat) Agree. Neither agree nor disagree. Disagree: (Somewhat) Disagree & Strongly Disagree.



5. Support for Public funding of cultural initiatives

Danish and European cultural policy aims to provide access to culture for all citizens. Therefore, many public institutions and cultural initiatives receive public funding through various bodies.

Such public funding for specific cultural initiatives is predominantly valued positively, as most Danes find it important to publicly support a range of cultural initiatives – from cultural heritage to more individualized and commercial culture. However, the responses also show a specific order of ascribed importance – with cultural institutions, such as museums, libraries, monuments and sites, leading. The further away from traditional cultural institutions, and the closer to individual or social purposes, the less important public funding is considered. Least importance is ascribed to funding of minority cultures, domestic cultural productions (e.g., domestic TV, film, game, or music production companies) and the promotion of cultural offerings for tourists.

How important or unimportant is it in your opinion that the following items receive public funding from the government? (Either from local, regional, or national government)

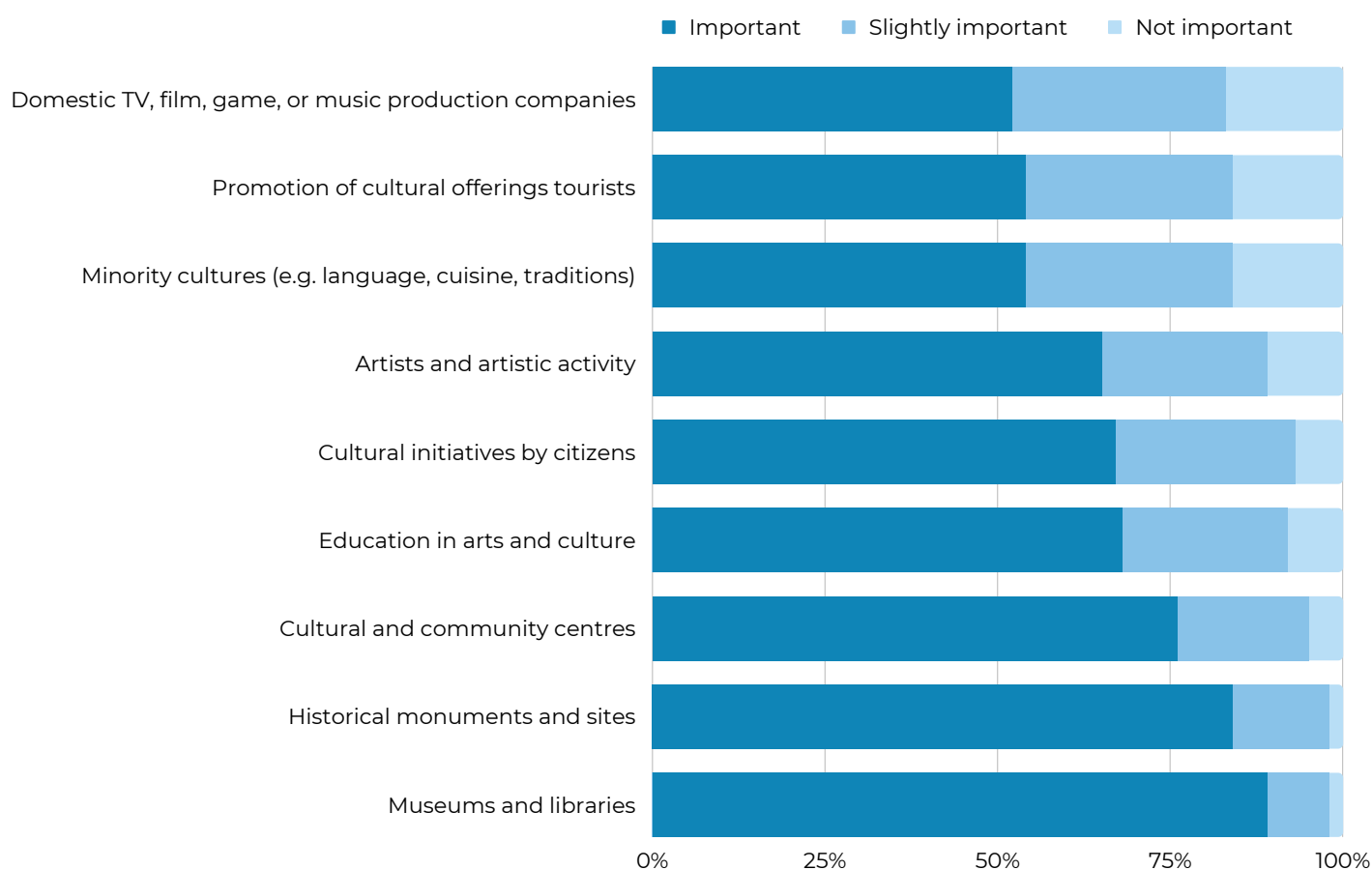


Fig. 4: The attributed importance of public funding for different items. Note. Due to rounding, the percentages presented may not add up precisely to the total 100%.

6. Cultural participation and the value of culture

In addition to providing access to culture for everyone in Denmark, supporting the public's participation in a broad range of cultural activities is another main cultural policy goal. As shown, Danes do not only tie one meaning to culture - culture can mean many things and play different roles in people's life. So what activities and events do Danes actually engage in?

This survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the results are therefore directly and indirectly influenced by these extraordinary circumstances. When asking people about their cultural participation, the questions addressed a situation without restrictions and lockdowns.

EVENTS

Most Danes visit cultural events on average between one to six times per year. Very frequent (classical) culture consumers are more rare, though. A minority of Danes very often visits a museum, monument, or historical site but almost one in two does it up to six times a year. When it comes to popular music events as well as classical music concerts, opera, ballet or theatre performances in a concert hall or theatre, almost half attends such cultural activities at least once a year. These participation patterns reflect the nature of such cultural events, which do not necessarily take place every day of the week. However, almost one in two (almost) never attends such events.

How often do you typically go to the following events or places? Please answer for a situation in which there are no restrictions because of COVID-19.

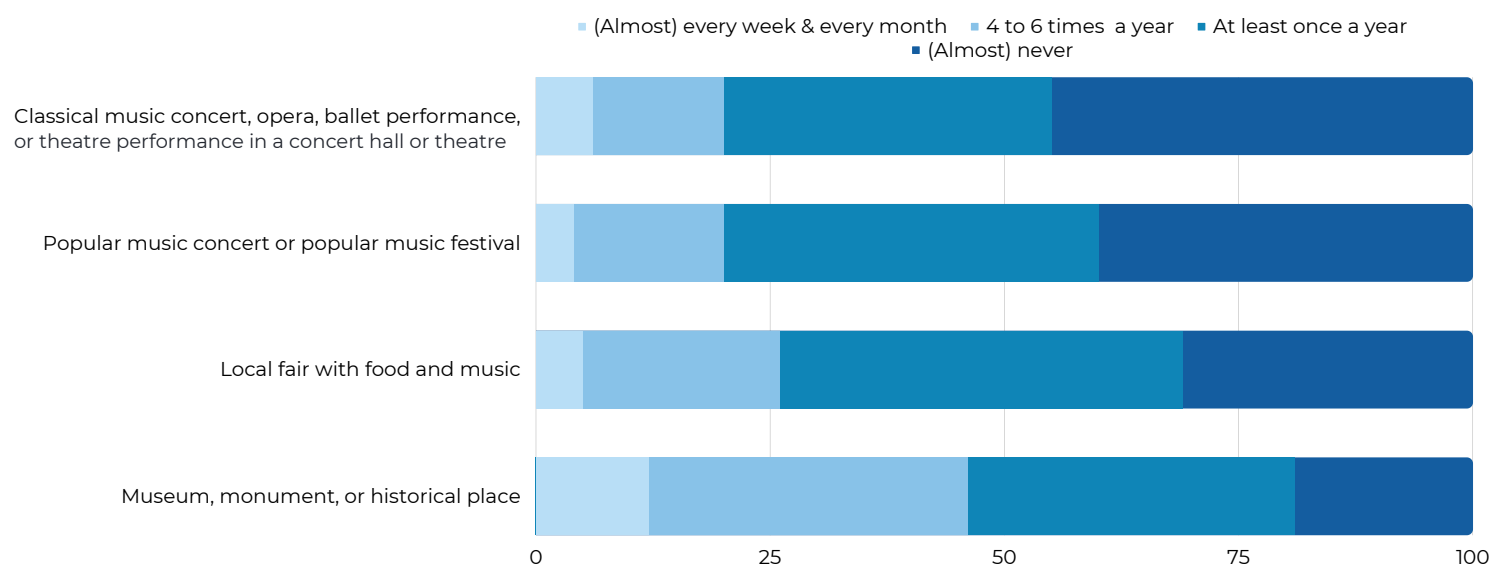


Fig. 5: Danes' cultural participation in events.

ACTIVITIES

When it comes to more mundane or everyday cultural activities, Danes are on average quite active, participating at least once a week in a variety of activities. There is a clear difference between consuming and creating culture, however: it is more common to read books, do sports, and visit recreational areas than to do handicraft, or make music or other art.

Home-related activities such as do-it-yourself activities (DIY) are well spread across the spectrum from being a very frequent to being a very rare activity. Social activities such as volunteer work, or visiting markets or fairs are less frequent. For each cultural activity, there is a small group of people that (almost) never engages.

How often do you typically do the following activities? Please answer for a situation in which there are no restrictions because of COVID-19.

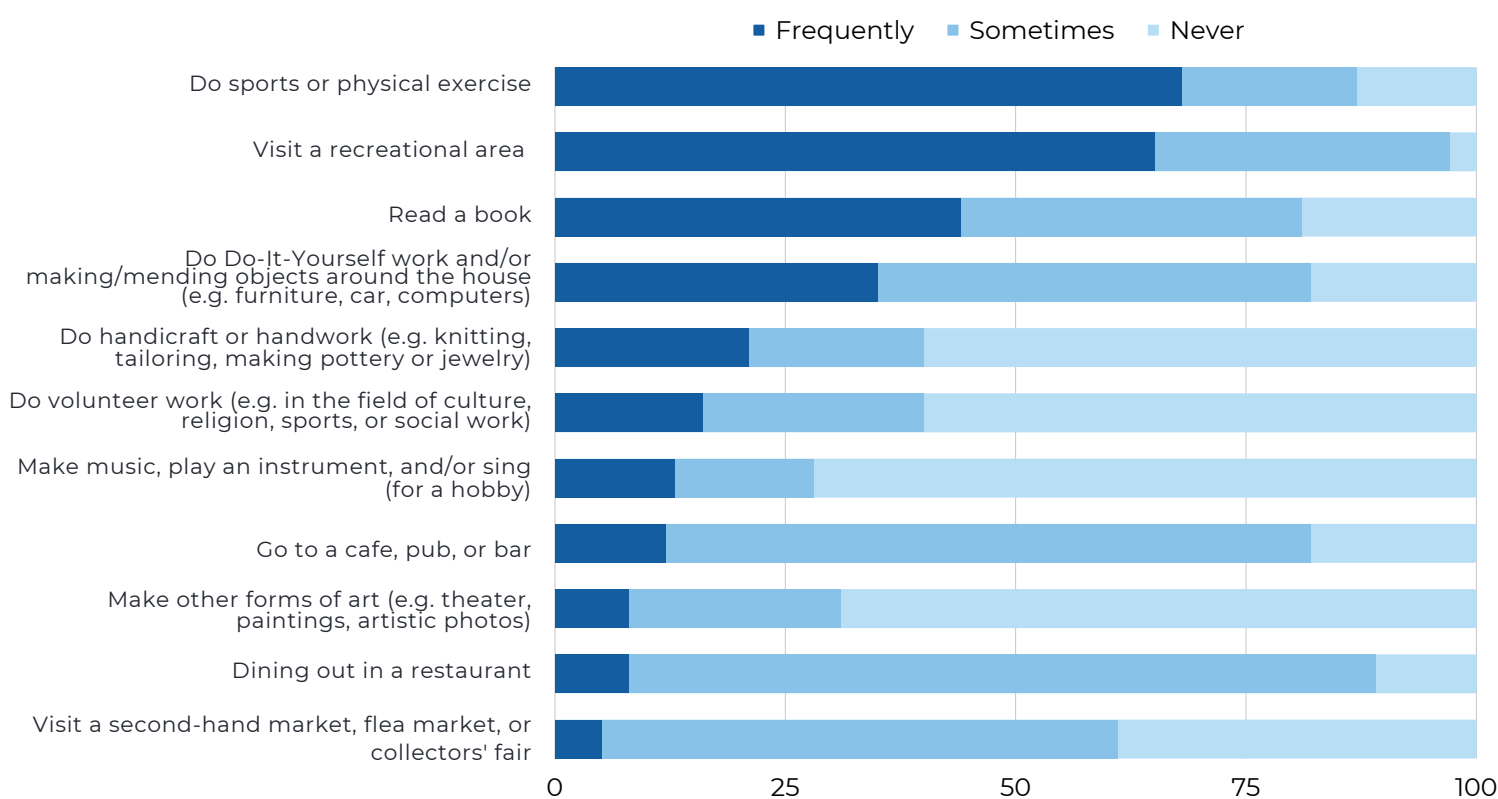


Fig. 6: Cultural participation in various activities. The original response categories were collapsed into three segments: Frequently: (Almost) daily & At least once a week. Sometimes: At least once a month & Less than once a month. Never: (Almost) Never.

THE ATTRIBUTED VALUE OF CULTURE

Interestingly the cultural activities attended by the fewest and the least frequently are the ones mentioned most when asked “what belongs to culture” and perceived as most worthy of public support, such as museums and monuments. There seems to be no clear connection between the attribution of value to culture and how culture is practiced and lived. The existence of certain cultural offers and possibilities seems to be an important aspect when considering the value of culture, independent of the actual frequency of use.

7. Digital participation and internet use

How often do you do the following things on the Internet? (either on a computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone, or smart television)

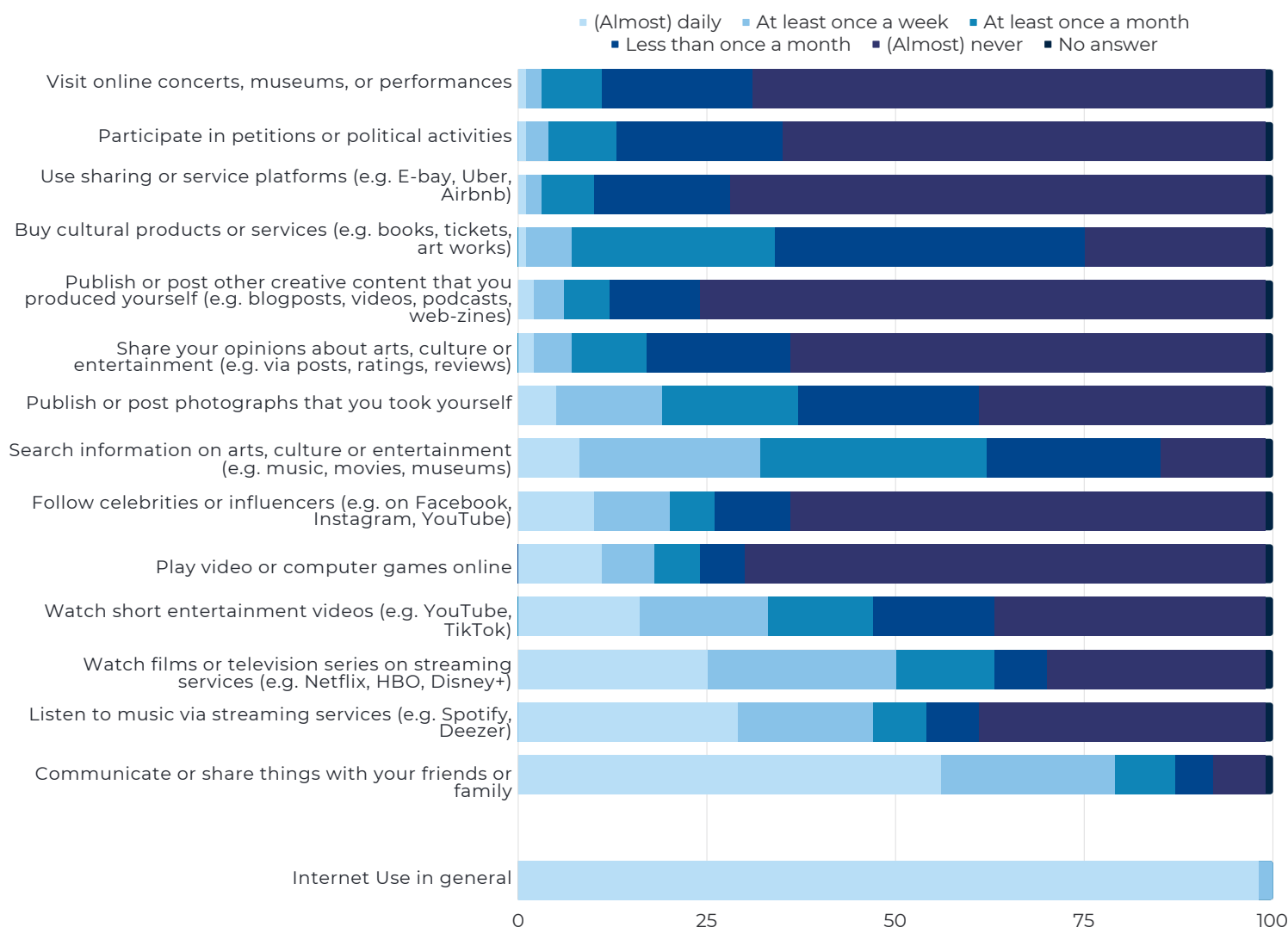


Fig. 7: Danes' internet use and digital cultural participation.

Almost all Danes use the internet daily, and the rest at least once a week. In general, half of all Danes use the internet to communicate or share things with others or listen to music at least once a month. Accessing cultural activities online, such as visiting online concerts, museums, or performances, or sharing opinions on arts, culture, or entertainment, is less common than everyday use of the internet for, e.g., streaming film or video content. This is also the case for publishing or posting other creative content. Overall, using the internet to access various cultural activities seems to mirror people's general cultural participation patterns in everyday culture and popular culture, though some cultural activities are also digital native (e.g. watching entertainment videos on TikTok or Youtube).

9. (Missing) culture in times of COVID-19

The survey was conducted a year into the COVID-19 pandemic which involved several lockdowns and restrictions that dramatically changed citizens' access to cultural activities and institutions, at least temporarily. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, many in-person cultural activities were cancelled or closed. These circumstances offered a unique opportunity to measure what cultural activities Danes missed during this unforeseen crisis. The answer is clear: people have missed the social dimension of culture most. The leisure activities missed the most were travelling, eating in a restaurant, and going to live concerts, the theatre, or a festival. Only few people missed creative or artistic activities, playing theatre or musicals with others, or going out dancing and partying. 6% answered that they did not miss anything.

Which leisure activities do/did you miss most during the COVID-19 pandemic? You can mention up to two activities.



Fig. 10: The most frequently missed activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was possible to check two answers.



When asking about what other activities and events that people missed during the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes even clearer that activities with a social aspect, e.g., spending time with friends and family, that was missed the most. Going to venues such as the cinema, library or swimming pool was also mentioned by many. People also missed organized social activities such as lectures, concerts, sports events, or local clubs and associations. These were all activities affected by measures such as social distancing restrictions and closures.

The word cloud shows all the open-ended answers in the category "other" that people missed during COVID-19.



Fig. 11: Word cloud of the most frequently mentioned words in the category "other", missing most during COVID-19 pandemic. N= 145

