

JULY 2022 | REPORT

# invent

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

## Descriptive analysis of the Dutch survey data

Susanne Jansen | Nyota Kanyemesha

Designed by Cecilia Arroyo



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## 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, its role 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 the Dutch's 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. Instead, we openly ask 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 the Netherlands and in a European context.

This report is based on a survey on Europeans' – including Dutch's – understanding of culture. The survey was conducted in April-July 2021 as part of a large European research project titled: 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. In addition to the Netherlands, the project is carried out by Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. For more information about the project, visit our website <https://inventculture.eu/>

The Dutch part of the study received a total of 1,596 responses from people living in the Netherlands. Their ages range between 18 and 89. The survey participants are representative of the Dutch population on the parameters of gender, age, region, education, and migration background. The data collection was conducted by [I&O Research] through a web-based and telephone survey.

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## 2. Main results

### Key takeaways from the survey

- The Dutch interpret culture in the broadest sense of the word; as signifying both the arts and creative expression, as well as norms, values, and ancestry.
- In general, Dutch people are satisfied with the cultural activities and events available to them.
- The Dutch participate in a variety of cultural activities, both at home and outdoors. On average, they attend cultural events such as museum exhibitions, concerts, and local fairs at least once a year.
- The most common and frequent cultural activities relate to being active and going out, with over four out of five Dutch people engaging in sports and physical exercise at least once a week. They engage the least frequently in creative activities such as crafting and making art or music.
- 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, travelling, and meeting friends and family (i.e., activities mostly restricted by COVID-19 measures).
- The value that people attach to cultural institutions and offerings is not directly connected to people's cultural participation practice. For example, the Dutch's support for public funding of cultural organizations such as museums and libraries is high even if they do not go there very frequently.



### 3. What does culture mean according to Dutch?

One of the main objectives of the study was to find out what people instantaneously consider to be or belong to culture. The survey did not provide any examples or definitions. Instead, the respondents were asked the very broad and open-ended question: "What comes to your mind first when you think of the word 'culture'?" The elaborate answers revealed a wide variety of understandings. The word cloud (see figure 1) shows the essence of the responses, condensed to the most frequently used words to describe what culture is. It illustrates two dominant interpretations. The first interpretation is the notion of culture in an artistic sense. These responses relate to music, theatre, museums, film, and paintings. Second, culture as encompassing the shared norms, values, and customs of a group of people. The word cloud indicates that Dutch people associate culture with terms such as ancestry, history, traditions, and upbringing. These words are used alongside adjectives relating to both sameness and differences. In sum, the variety of concepts and words indicate an open view of culture pertaining to both a way of living as well as the consumption and creation of art and entertainment.

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



Fig. 1: Word cloud of the most frequently mentioned words in relation to the meaning of culture. N = 1552]

## WHAT BELONGS TO CULTURE?

Next, the survey asked what belongs to culture – and by extension, what does not. Though the Dutch’s immediate understanding of culture is broad and diverse, a clear pattern arose when inquiring more directly about whether or not a particular domain or activity belongs to culture. Classical and traditional cultural domains rose on top, with historical monuments, folk dances, operas, and pilgrimages being most frequently labelled as “definitely belonging to culture.” These were followed by a more contemporary domain, with over half of the respondents deeming hip hop and rap music as belonging to culture.

In contrast, the domains of popular and commercial culture received lower ratings. The vast majority excluded video and computer games, shopping malls, and reality TV shows from culture. Simultaneously, these domains received the most uncertainty. Near to one-third of Dutch people answered “it depends” in regards to key examples such as graphic novels and comics, graffiti, and (Hollywood) blockbuster films.

# What does culture mean according to the Dutch?

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

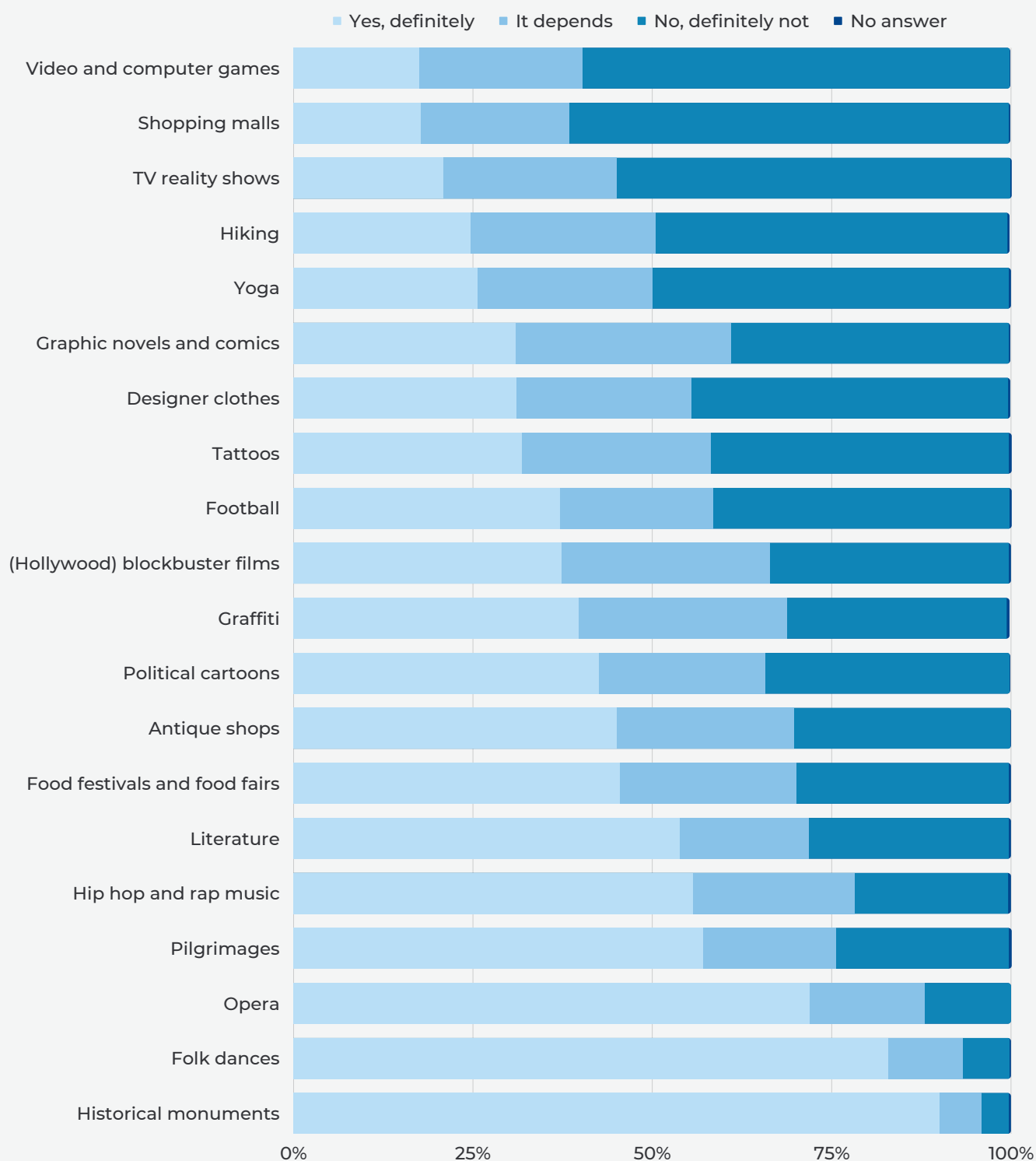


Fig. 2: Dutch's opinions on what does and does not belong to culture.

## 4. The role of culture for society

As illustrated, culture is more than just a product, an activity, or entertainment. Its existence, availability and expression add value to individuals and societies as a whole. People's understanding of culture is constantly evolving: it reflects their lives, the perception of society, (shared) history, etc. For that reason, we asked in the survey whether they think that culture connects people, and bridges political, social, and religious divides. The majority of Dutch people agree that culture connects people across different beliefs and affiliations. One out of five respondents states that culture neither connects nor disconnects.

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

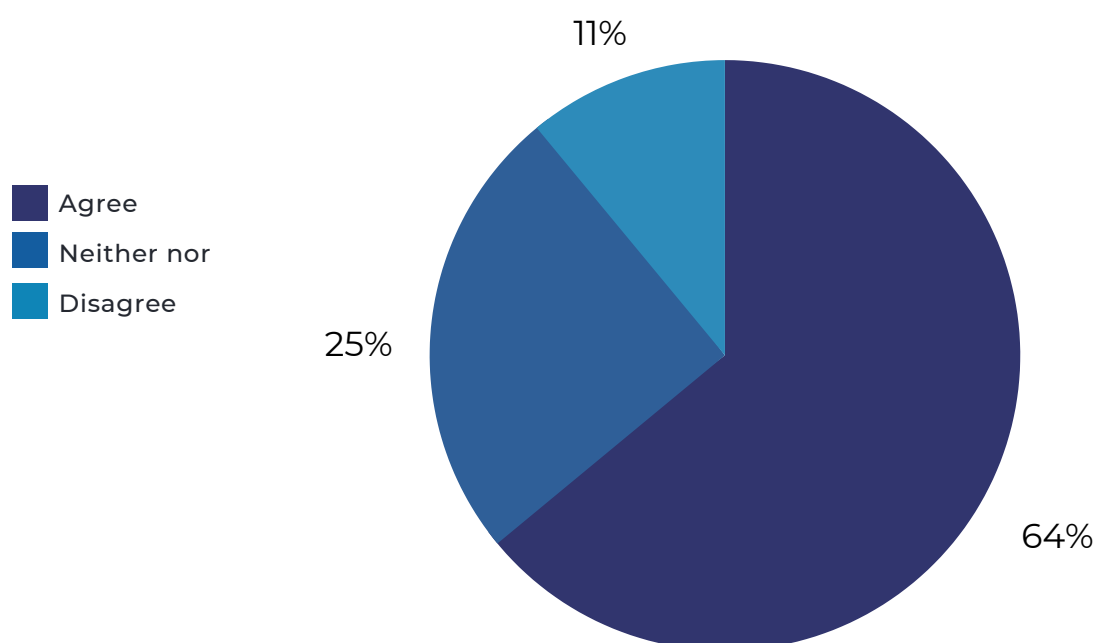


Fig. 3: The role of culture in connecting people and bridging political, social and religious divides.



## 5. Support for Public funding of cultural initiatives

Dutch and European cultural policies aim to provide access to culture for all citizens. Therefore, many public institutions and cultural initiatives receive funding through various bodies. In the survey, the respondents were asked about their opinion on the importance of public funding for various areas of potential areas of funding.

In general, most Dutch people believe that public funding for culture is relatively important, specifically for cultural institutions such as museums and libraries, and cultural heritage such as monuments and historical sites. Domestic cultural productions (e.g. domestic TV, film, game, or music production companies), artists and artistic activity, and minority cultures received the lowest ratings.

### Support for Public funding of cultural initiatives

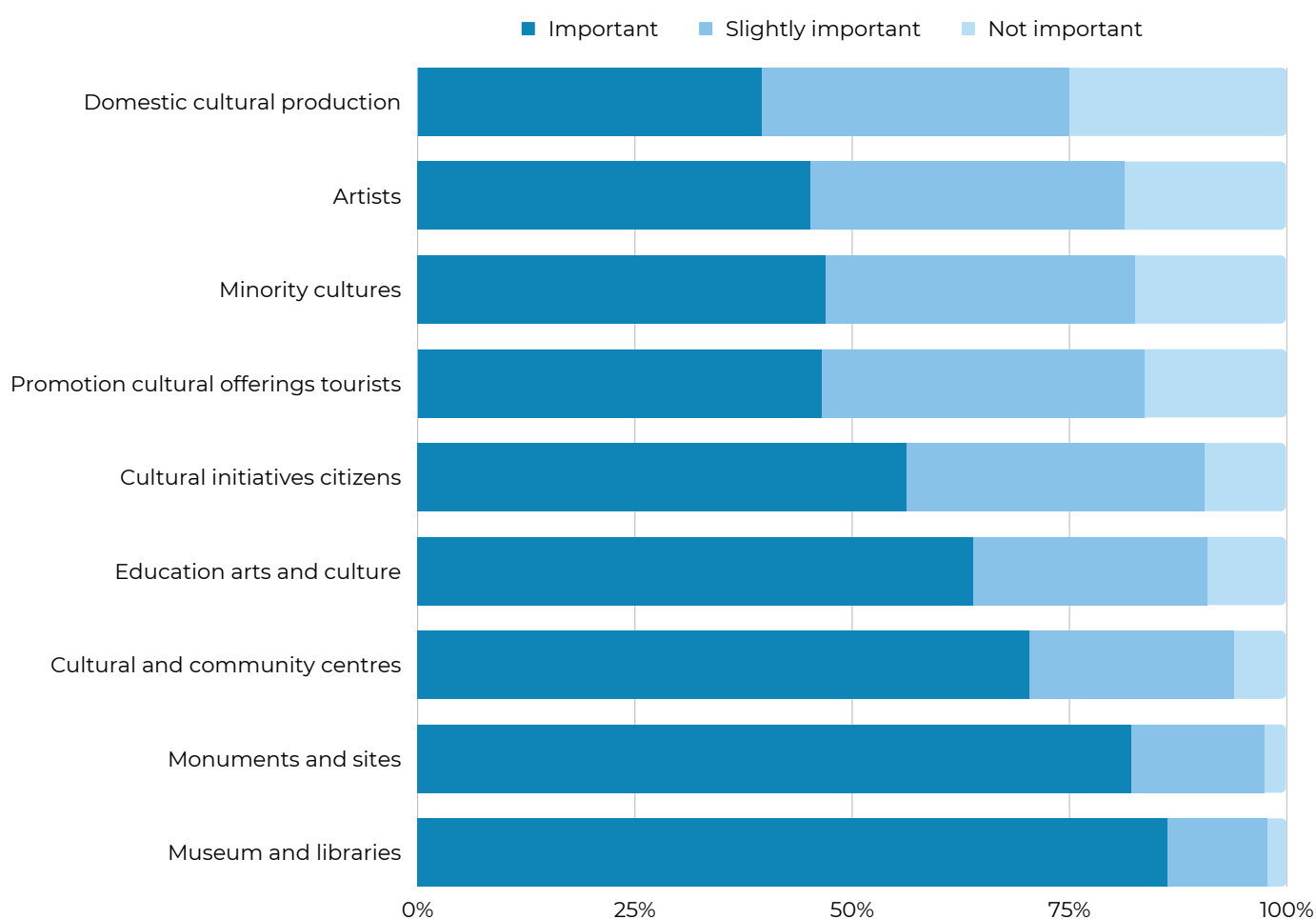


Fig. 4: The attributed importance of public funding for different areas of culture

## 6. Cultural participation and the value of culture

In addition to providing access to culture for everyone in the Netherlands, the second aim of cultural policies is to support the public's participation in a broad range of cultural activities. As shown, the Dutch do not just tie one meaning to culture - culture can mean many things and play different roles in people's life. So what activities and events do Dutch people actually engage in?

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

### EVENTS

Visits to museums, monuments, and historical sites rank among the top most frequent cultural events the Dutch participate in. The majority visit these cultural events on average between one to six times per year. When it comes to theatre performances, music concerts, and festivals, Dutch people are split: around half attend these events at least once a year, while the other half (almost) never do.

*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.*

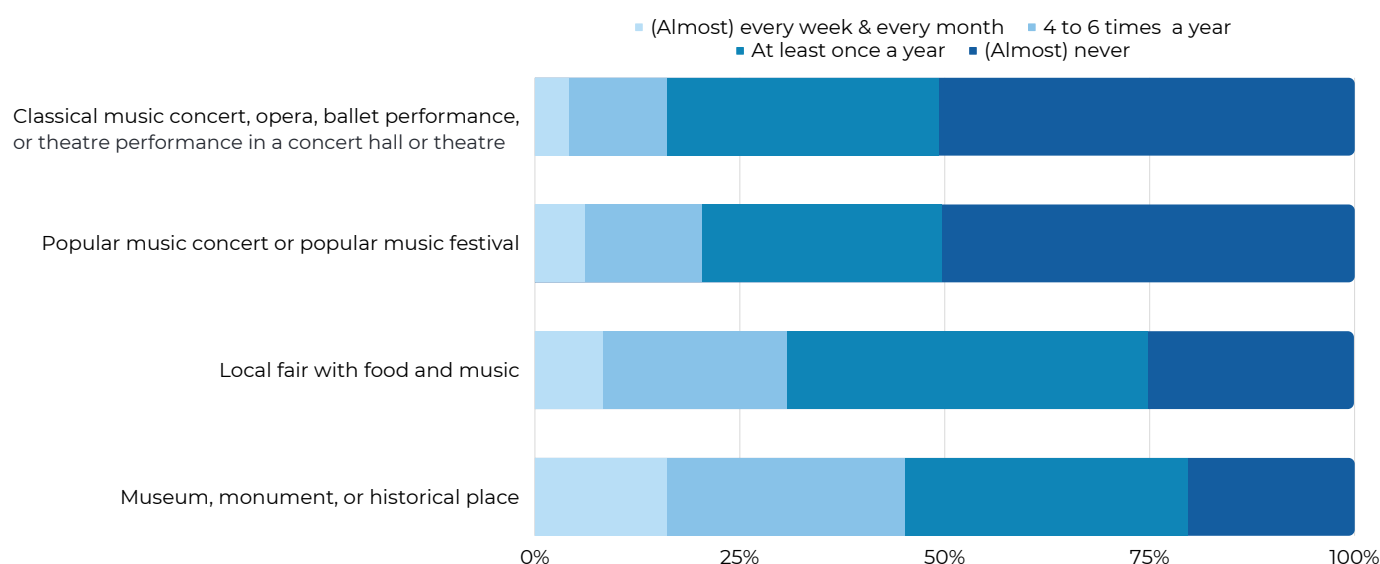


Fig. 5: The Dutch's cultural participation in events



## ACTIVITIES

When it comes to more mundane or everyday cultural activities, the Dutch are on average very active, participating at least once a week in various activities. Four out of five Dutch people engage in sports and physical exercise at least once a week. In addition, attending recreational areas (e.g. parks and beaches), cafes, bars and restaurants is high on the list, most Dutch people do so at least once a month.

There is a difference between consuming and creating culture. This becomes evident from the data: the activities Dutch people on average engage the least frequently in, are craftwork and making forms of art and music.

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

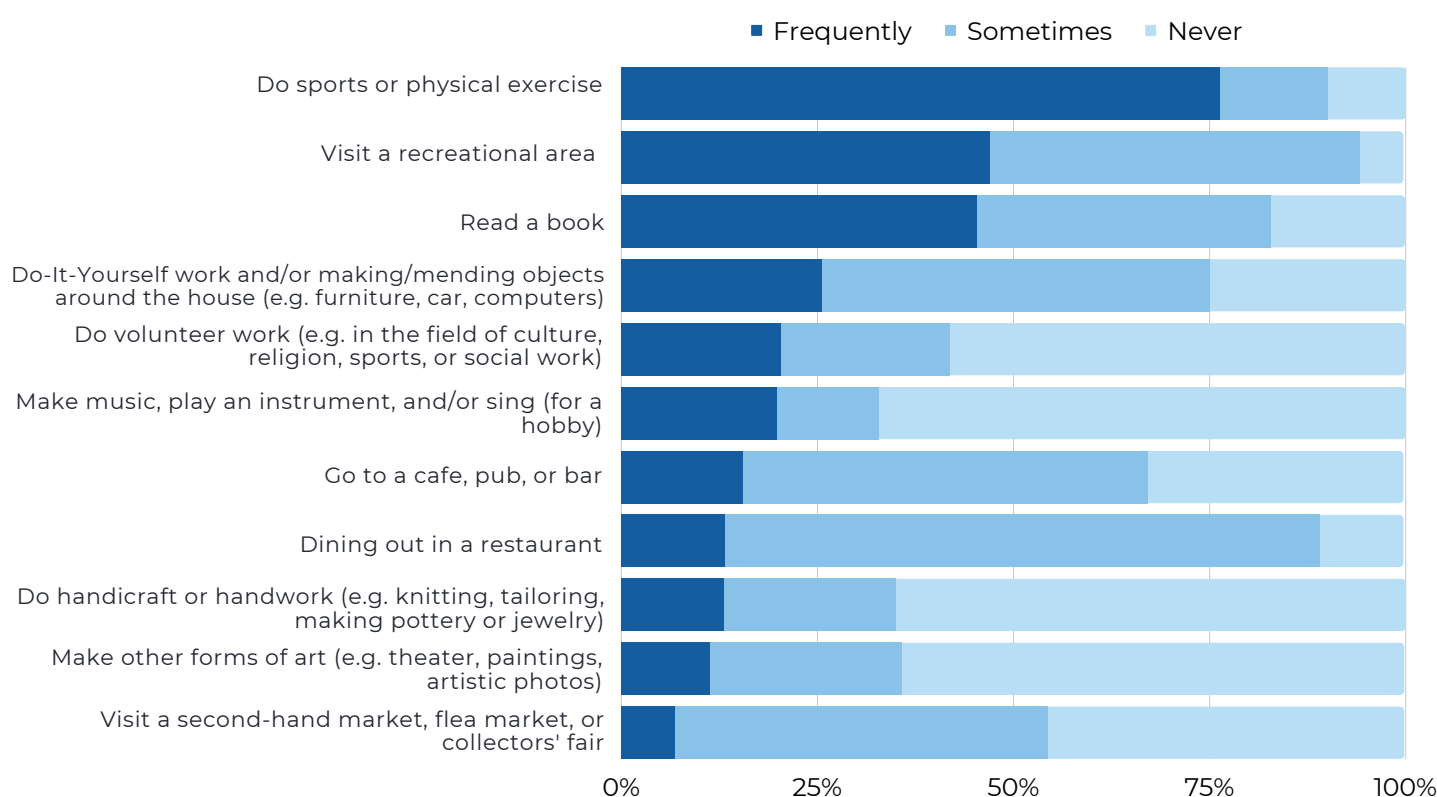


Fig. 6: Cultural participation in various activities. The original response categories were collapsed into three segments: Frequently: (Almost) daily & At least once a week. Sometimes: At least once a month & Less than once a month. Never: (Almost) Never.

## THE ATTRIBUTED VALUE OF CULTURE

When comparing the results of attended cultural activities to the answers of “what belongs to culture” as well as the importance of public funding, a few things stand out. Museums, monuments, and historical sights are not only the most frequent cultural venues Dutch people visit, but also the domains they believe deserve the most public funding and definitely belong to culture. Still, there seems to be no clear connection between the value attached to various cultural offerings and areas to culture and how culture is practiced and lived. For example, watching blockbuster movies and playing video games ranked mid to low in terms of belonging to culture, simultaneously it is a regular activity for many Dutch people. 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)

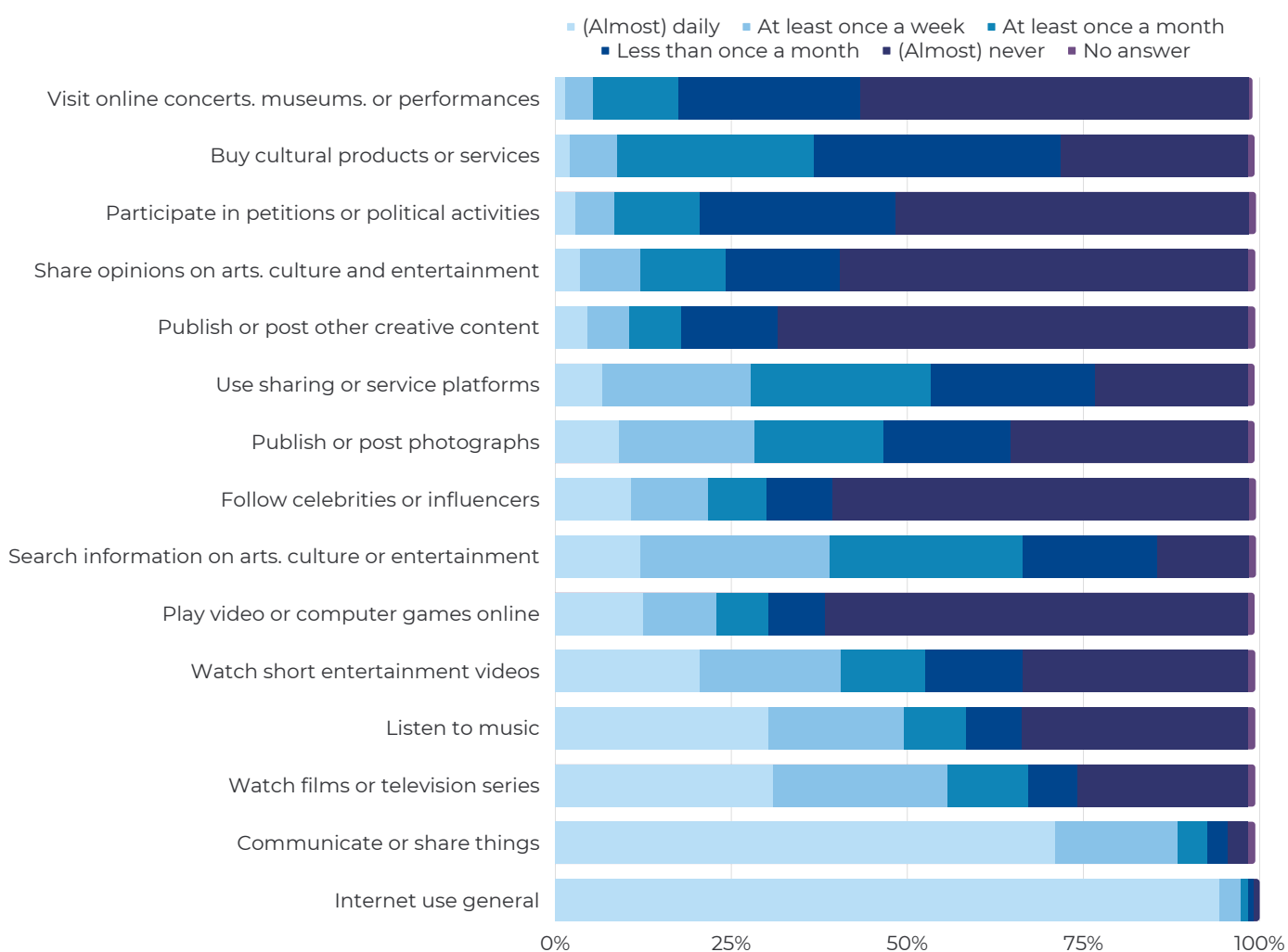


Fig. 7: Dutch's internet use and digital cultural participation.

Digital media and the internet play an omnipresent role in society. The data shows that the vast majority of Dutch people use the internet on a daily basis. Seven out of ten people use the internet (almost) every day for communicative purposes. In addition, half of the Dutch population use the internet for consuming entertainment (e.g. listening to music, streaming movies and television shows, and watching short videos) at least once a month.

The least common as well as frequent use of the internet is participating in online events such as visiting online concerts, museums, or performances. Though one in ten people frequently utilise the internet for playing video games and keeping up with celebrities and influencers, these categories, in general, are not common for most Dutch people. Overall, using the internet to access various cultural activities seems to mirror people's general cultural participation patterns, though some cultural activities are also digital native (e.g. watching entertainment videos on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube).



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

As previously noted, the survey was conducted a year into the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, several lockdowns and restrictions were set into place, which dramatically changed citizens' access to cultural activities and institutions. 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 the Dutch population 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 dining out in restaurants, going on a holiday, playing sports, and attending live concerts, theatre performances and festivals. Ranking lowest on the list are going out dancing and partying and visiting local fairs and markets. Only few people (3%) answered that they did not miss any activity during the pandemic.

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

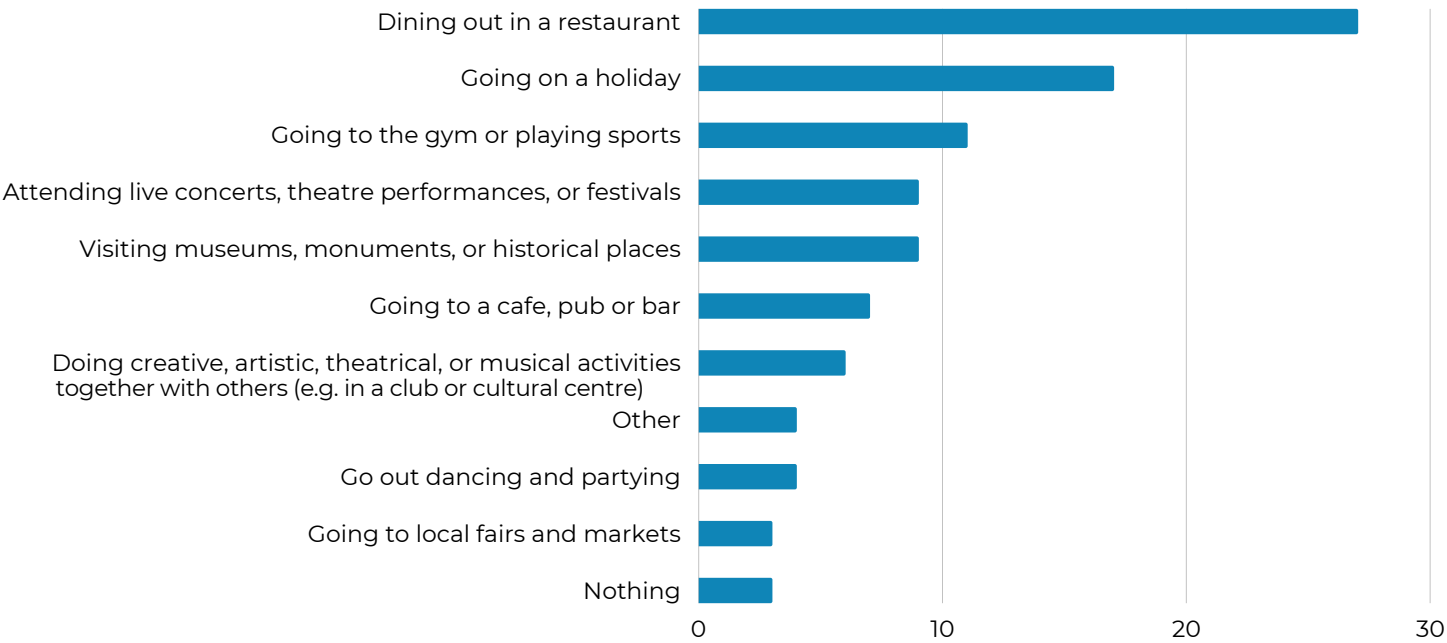


Fig. 10: The most frequently missed activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was possible to check two answers.





When inquiring about the 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) were missed the most. 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.



Fig. 11: word cloud of the most frequently mentioned words in the category “other”, missing most during COVID-19 pandemic. N = 102

