

## Non-Technical Summary

# The impact of participation in arts and cultural activities on personal wellbeing

### Purpose

This research report commissioned by Toi Mai Workforce Development Council and undertaken by Motu Economic & Public Policy Research investigates the impact of arts and cultural participation on personal wellbeing. It quantifies the amount of income an individual is willing to forego in return for the benefit of arts and cultural participation while maintaining the same level of wellbeing.

### Research Questions

The key topics covered in this research are:

- **determining whether participating in arts and culture has a positive impact on personal wellbeing**
  - If so, how does this vary between the types of activities and how individuals participate ('passive' – observing/audience – or 'active' – taking part)?
- putting a monetary value against any life satisfaction created by arts and cultural participation.

### Key Findings

## ***Passive participation is associated with greater happiness, improved mental wellbeing and higher life satisfaction***

Observing or being an audience member in arts and culture (passive participation) is associated with higher life satisfaction. It is also positively associated with happiness and mental wellbeing. These findings are comparable to sports participation.

For individuals taking part in arts and cultural activities (active participation), however, it is unclear why the research does not find active participation to be significantly associated with life satisfaction, happiness and mental wellbeing. It may be that individuals with lower wellbeing choose to actively participate, which offsets the positive impact active participation may have on short- and medium-term wellbeing.

# People value the wellbeing impact from passive participation at 6–20% of their income

The research estimates that people value passive arts and cultural participation at around 6–20% of their income. This means that an individual with the median equivalised household income is willing to forgo a minimum of \$2,800 or a maximum of \$9,300 income in return for the wellbeing benefits that passive participation brings.

This could be viewed as representing the consumer surplus of 'consuming' passive arts and cultural activities (i.e. the difference between the perceived benefits and the actual direct cost of participating in passive activities). This suggests that individuals in Aotearoa place significant value on passive arts and cultural participation. These values are comparable to that placed on sport participation.

Attending performing arts events and visiting galleries are the two most valued specific activities.

*Note: Equivalisation is the process of adjusting household income by taking into account household size and composition. This allows more accurate comparisons between different types of households.*

## Limitations

While there is confidence in the findings for wellbeing benefits from arts and cultural participation, the results are subject to some limitations. There may be unobserved characteristics or factors that influence arts and cultural participation and wellbeing. Estimations might not be generalisable to the wider population since the approach does not control for selection into arts and cultural participation. Controlling for selection into participation would shed light on whether participation improves wellbeing for the general population or just those who have an interest in AC activities.

## What are the wellbeing measures?

For this research, the wellbeing measures are subjective and include life satisfaction, mental wellbeing and sense of purpose.