



University of  
Reading

# ART, CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN READING:

AND ITS IMPACT ON WELLNESS AND CIVIC PRIDE AS A PART OF  
THE GREAT PLACES SCHEME



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**ART, CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN READING:**  
**AND ITS IMPACT ON WELLNESS AND CIVIC PRIDE AS A PART OF THE**  
**GREAT PLACES SCHEME**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://whitley-cda.org/>

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	6
1. INTRODUCTION .....	8
1.1 Introduction .....	8
1.2 Aims and Research Questions .....	8
2. LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY .....	10
2.1 Literature review.....	10
2.2. Research methodology .....	10
2.2.1 Becoming familiar with the topic.....	11
2.2.2 Questionnaires.....	12
2.2.3 The geography of the questionnaire.....	13
3. MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	14
3.1 Participants' Profile.....	14
3.2 Significance of art, culture and heritage .....	15
3.2.1 What the terms 'art' 'culture' and 'heritage' mean to our respondents.....	15
3.2.2 How important are the arts, culture and heritage?.....	15
3.2.3 What cultural activities people would like to attend.....	16
3.2.4 Interest in cultural activities by group .....	17
3.2.5 Attendance of cultural activities by group .....	18
3.3 The links between cultural activities and wellbeing.....	18
3.4 Barriers to participation .....	20
3.5 Whether people are proud to live in Reading.....	23
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	27
4.1 Key findings by research question .....	27
4.1.1 Perceptions of art, culture and heritage in Reading.....	27
4.1.2 How cultural practices link to wellness .....	28
4.1.3 Perceived barriers to art, heritage and cultural activities in Reading .....	29
4.1.4 Areas in need of extra focus .....	30
REFERENCES .....	30
APPENDICES .....	32
APPENDIX 1 – Adapted questionnaire .....	32
APPENDIX 2 – 'Reading Place of Culture' inspired questionnaire.....	33





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research investigates the perceptions of the local community regarding art, culture and heritage in Reading. 'Art, culture and heritage' related activities are hereafter collectively referred to as 'cultural activities' in this report. It looks at barriers to participation in cultural activities, and considers their impact on wellness and civic pride.

The report was compiled as part of the Great Places Scheme. The research was carried out over 3 months in 2018, and was undertaken by University of Reading student interns with the support of academic staff and in partnership with the Whitley Researchers.

236 individuals answered questions about arts, culture and heritage in Reading, and these are the findings by research question.

## *1. What are the current perceptions of art, culture and heritage in Reading?*

- Definitions put forward by respondents:
  - Art: A creative product or expression. Preferred when uplifting.
  - Culture: People - the different ways they relate and the different things they produce.
  - Heritage: Culture and arts passed down to us.
- Around 60% of respondents felt art, culture and heritage to be 'important' or 'very important' to them. 40% felt less interest.
- Cultural provision in Reading was seen to be decent but not outstanding, although Reading was considered to be well situated for accessing other places of interest.
- Those who participated in cultural activities tended to express a greater sense of pride in the community than those who did not.
- The greatest demand was expressed for low cost performances (drama, dance, music).
- Demand was also high for hands-on activities – particularly in the more deprived areas of Reading.
- People expressed the most pride over home-grown creative agendas.

## *2. To what extent do the people of Reading believe that wellness is linked to cultural activities?*

- Linkages were found between being involved with cultural activities, socio-economic advantage and higher levels of wellness (although this study does not clarify which drives which).
- People tend to get involved with what is important to them, and doing what is important to them influences their wellbeing (note also that different socio-economic groups have different priorities).
- Wellbeing was seen to be enhanced by cultural activities in several ways (and so ensuring that cultural activities cover some of these aspects may foster wellbeing):
  - Beauty adds to positivity;
  - Successful creations add to a sense of self-worth;
  - Creativity, expression and communication stimulate the mind;

- Creative activities can be stress-busting;
- Creative activities can be a platform for building social connections;
- Appreciation for/ understanding of other cultures can be fostered through the arts.
- Simply putting on events will not engage new people (or add to their wellbeing) if they have no prior sense of connection with the activity. Working within the local community to build a sense of 'ownership' is important in such cases.

### 3. What are the perceived barriers to participation?

- Lack of information is a key issue. Over half of all respondents were unsure that they knew what was going on in Reading.
- Residents of more disadvantaged areas of Reading tended to be less engaged with cultural activities and more in need of word-of-mouth invites to cultural events.
- Lack of time (competing priorities) was mentioned as a barrier by around 30% of respondents.
- High costs were mentioned as a barrier by around 30% of respondents.
- Transport links are good within Reading, although a third of respondents had no frequent access to a car so accessibility on main bus routes is important. Having to travel in from outside of Reading is a barrier. Having some local events besides the events in the town centre was appreciated.
- Reading's provision appears to be generally accessible to ethnic minorities, to people facing physical or mental health barriers and to people with children.

### 4. Are there any geographical areas of Reading in need of extra attention?

- Compared to other areas of Reading, residents of South Reading:
  - Scored lower on the wellness scale;
  - Were less likely to take part in the cultural events on offer and had less interest in these events;
  - Faced more barriers to participation (poor health, lack of time, lack of money, lack of information);
  - Were more likely to require a word-of-mouth invite before attending an event and were less likely to discover events online.
- Participation may be increased by ensuring that local residents are actively engaged in shaping events. Despite their lack of interest in what is currently on offer, residents of South Reading had *more* interest than average in *hands-on* events.
- Family friendly activities and events that help connect people to one-another are priority areas to work on in South Reading.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

This report on local communities was compiled as part of the Great Places Scheme. The Great Places Scheme is a national programme to pilot new approaches that allow cultural and community groups to work more closely together and to put arts, culture and heritage at the heart of communities. Reading was awarded £558,471 to embed arts, culture and heritage in local plans and decision-making from 2017-2021. A core focus of this scheme is to ensure that participatory methods are used to find out what local residents want from cultural events to make sure that these projects are long term and will continue once the funding ends as an ongoing part of the local community. This report will feed into the wider research carried out by the Reading Place of Culture Scheme in order to allocate funding to art, cultural and heritage groups which matter to people in Reading.

The bulk of the research consisted of two face-to-face questionnaires with 164 participants in the first questionnaire and 72 in the second. Each questionnaire took a slightly different angle on the various aspects of cultural engagement.<sup>2</sup> The questionnaires covered current perceptions of cultural provision in Reading; it explored the link between cultural activities and wellbeing; it considered barriers to engagement; and it allowed us to draw out geographical differences in the responses.

The research was carried out by three interns from the University of Reading with the help of the Whitley Researchers<sup>3</sup> and supervised by Dr Sally Lloyd-Evans. It was carried out from July to September in 2018.

## 1.2 Aims and Research Questions

This project aims to research the links between community-led cultural and heritage practices and health/wellbeing in different communities around Reading. This will help to develop a participatory cultural commissioning framework to be piloted in autumn 2018 and identify communities that would benefit most from cultural commissioning. The following research questions were therefore investigated:

1. What are the current perceptions of art, culture and heritage in Reading? Are they positive or negative?
2. To what extent do the people of Reading believe wellness is linked to cultural activities? Are there aspects in particular which add to wellness?
3. What are the perceived barriers to cultural activities in Reading?
4. Are there geographical areas which need extra focus (because of less civic pride, lower levels of wellness or less active engagement)?

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<sup>2</sup> 'Art, culture and heritage' activities are hereafter collectively referred to as 'cultural activities' in this report.

<sup>3</sup> <https://whitley-cda.org/projects/whitley-researchers/>

There is a national increase in interest surrounding the role of community art as a tool to promote civic dialogue, to address social inclusion and in promoting mental health and wellbeing. A core motivation of this research is to truly understand the people of Reading's perceptions of art, culture and heritage with a view to increasing their participation in these activities. This report will feed into the evaluative process which must be carried out by the Great Places Scheme in order to determine whether their methods and interventions are effective for enhancing social inclusion and wellbeing.

This initial research will be used by Reading Borough Council to produce a report outlining Reading's perceptions of art, culture and heritage at the start of this project. After the pilot year (May 2018 –May 2019), there will be more research carried out to see how the Great Places Scheme has *affected* perceptions of place, art, culture and heritage.

Drawing on participatory methodologies in the research for and dissemination of this project has significant contemporary relevance as towns and cities are seeing decreasing levels of civic pride (Collins, 2016). Innovative and alternative methods of drawing people into art, culture, and heritage initiatives (perhaps through empowering people at the grassroots with a say in what and how things are done) may help to address issues such as mental health and community disengagement.

The report continues with a literature review and research methodology, followed by the main findings, conclusions and recommendations. These sections will address the aims and research questions as stated above, and the conclusions and recommendations will be of use to those planning art, culture and heritage-based events in Reading.



## 2. LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Literature review – How engaging communities with cultural activities interacts with health and wellbeing

The Arts Council England claims that those who had attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60% more likely to report good health compared to those who had not (Art Council England, n.d.). Indeed, there is a growing evidence base which suggests that engagement with the arts through attendance at cultural events and, more commonly, through participation in creative activity, can have positive effects on health and the wellbeing of all ages and social groups. As a result of this, there is an increasing interest in the role of community arts as a tool to promote civic dialogue and address social inclusion. Furthermore, clinical studies have found that art engagement promotes patient recovery, relaxation and reduces patient stress, anxiety and depression (Davies et al., 2015).

Particular attention is being directed to the wellness of children and teenagers. A reason for this is the deteriorating wellbeing of young people in UK. A report in 2007 suggested the UK was labelled as having one of the lowest levels of child wellbeing of all children in economically advanced countries (UNICEF, 2007). The negative effect of social media on wellbeing in children is well documented in current literature. Furthermore, the English Baccalaureate can be seen to undermine the epistemological value of the creative subjects (such as art and music) by excluding these from the award (Clarke and Basilio, 2018). This creates a barrier for young people in engaging with the arts – and potentially affects their wellbeing.

The Culture and Sport Evidence Programme ‘understanding the impact of engagement in culture and sport’ found that learning through art and culture can have beneficial impacts. They conclude that taking part in drama and library activities can improve attainment in literacy. This study also found that participation in structured art activities can increase cognitive abilities, which can result in higher levels of wellbeing. Further findings suggest that schools which integrate art across the curriculum show consistently higher average reading and mathematical scores compared to similar schools that do not (All Party Parliamentary Group, 2017).

The Creative Health inquiry report published in 2017 suggests that community-based art activities could offer valuable continuity that a young person needs to transition through to adulthood. This would additionally help stabilise young people’s mental health and wellbeing and allow contact to remain with specialist services if necessary, therefore providing long-term benefits (All Party Parliamentary Group, 2017).

This research report is one part of an overarching evaluation programme, in which examples of best practice in the funding of cultural activities will be drawn out. Longer term goals (improving wellbeing for example) are broken down into smaller stages, such as identifying target groups, their needs, and the most effective way in which those needs can be addressed (see Theory of Change Community, 2018).

## 2.2. Research methodology

A range of ethnographic research techniques were used to initiate discussions and capture the opinions of participants. The Whitley Researchers were an asset to this research as they used their personal connections to reach the wider Whitley community. All data collected was anonymised, following confidentiality and ethical practices.

### 2.2.1 Becoming familiar with the topic

In order to get an initial feel for the issues and people's views on them, the interns visited an over-50s event at Whitley Wood Community Centre in South Reading, and then Firtree Retirement Club in West Reading. They attended these events together with the 'Abbey on Wheels' project,<sup>4</sup> whose aim is to engage and inspire members of the community to visit the Abbey after its re-opening.

In South Reading, the overall opinion of art, culture, and heritage in Reading was negative, there was little interest in attending the Abbey or similar events. There were several barriers listed, including; transport, money, and distance. As well as those barriers, there was a general disinterest in events revolving around art, culture, and heritage, many branding those activities as 'not their cup of tea'. However, differing opinions could be observed across age groups, with attendees from the lower end of the age bracket (early 50s) encouraging more community events, although, for the most part they did not feel these events should revolve around art, culture, or heritage.

The club in West Reading however was much more open to the idea of art, culture and heritage-based events. Most attendees had visited the Abbey before it had closed in 2010, and 'Abbey on Wheels' brought back fond memories. Conversations were sparked and the attendees readily engaged with the information and artefacts that 'Abbey on Wheels' provided.

The contrast in reception to this cultural activity is an interesting reflection on the demographic composition of these communities, with South Reading facing much higher levels of socio-economic deprivation than West Reading. It highlights the fact that simply putting on events will not ensure engagement amongst persons who have no prior sense of connection with the activity in question. Instead, cultural activities need to be shaped for and by the local community. This is because the sense of ownership helps engagement, as well as the activity being more likely to meet the needs and interests of the community in question.

On a return trip to Firtree Retirement Club, the interns spent time with eight members, exploring some of the research questions using semi-structured interviews. The interest of the members centred around making activities more accessible (proximity to bus routes or to free parking was mentioned); making events easy for the target group to find out about (BBC Radio Berkshire or the local newspaper were recommended by these pensioners); and

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/blog/rolling-around-reading-abbey-on-wheels>

ensuring that activities aimed at older people have a social aspect. They also recommended providing working people with paid time to participate in community activities.

All these discussions helped the interns to become more familiar with the emerging themes. They also helped with shaping a questionnaire for a wider audience.

### 2.2.2 Questionnaires

The main findings of this research were drawn from a survey of 236 individuals. A face-to-face methodology was adopted in the form of two questionnaires to be filled out by the person conducting the survey. The data was collected between July and September 2018 with support from the Whitley Researchers<sup>5</sup>. Two different questionnaires were used so that a wider range of questions/angles could be taken: 72 responses were collected from one questionnaire, and 164 from the other. The first questionnaire drew exclusively on questions from the Reading Place of Culture evaluation framework, and the other adapted these questions to allow for further exploration of the issues.

Trial drafts of the questionnaire were created, and amendments were made following feedback from the Whitley Researchers and the project supervisor. Pilot studies of the questionnaires were undertaken at Whiteknights Campus (University of Reading). This was to ensure participants faced no difficulties in answering the questions, whilst allowing the researchers to check for faults. Pilot studies consisted of two four-hour sessions over two days, and yielded 67 responses overall. Final copies of both questionnaires can be found in appendices 1 and 2.

Following on from the pilot study, the interns contacted organisations and community groups detailing how they could be involved with the research and asking if they wished to contribute. This proved difficult as most organisations were on a break during the summer period. Nonetheless, some groups were available or had events where questionnaires could be conducted, including; Reading Rep Theatre, Berkshire Youth and Whitley Wood Community Centre. Questionnaires were also conducted in public spaces including the town centre, The Oracle, Reading Museum and Forbury Gardens. In total, 39% of all surveys were conducted on Reading University campus (partly interviewing students, and partly staff or passers-by). 37% were conducted in a variety of cultural spaces<sup>6</sup>, such as community groups, museums, a theatre or the Abbey grounds. The final 24% of interviews were conducted in public spaces such as shopping centres and parks, predominantly in the town centre but also in Reading's suburbs.

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<sup>5</sup> A team of Whitley Researchers helped us administer the questionnaire: Liz Ashcroft, Aneta Banas, Sandra Clare, Sonia Duval and Naomi Lee.

<sup>6</sup> It was the case that people who are interviewed in cultural spaces were more likely to express an interest in cultural or heritage based activities, and this introduces bias into the data which is taken account of in the analysis.

All areas of Reading were represented in the survey, with South, Central and West Reading having particularly strong representation, see Table 2.1 below.

### Table: 2.1

A map of the Reading (RG) area, with the central districts shaded in blue. The districts shown include RG1, RG2, RG3, RG4, RG5, RG6, RG7, RG8, RG9, RG10, RG11, RG12, RG13, RG14, RG15, RG16, RG17, RG18, RG19, RG20, RG21, RG22, RG23, RG24, RG25, RG26, RG27, RG28, RG29, RG30, RG31, RG32, RG33, RG34, RG35, RG36, RG37, RG38, RG39, RG40, RG41, RG42, RG43, RG44, RG45, RG46, RG47, RG48, RG49, RG50, RG51, RG52, RG53, RG54, RG55, RG56, RG57, RG58, RG59, RG60, RG61, RG62, RG63, RG64, RG65, RG66, RG67, RG68, RG69, RG70, RG71, RG72, RG73, RG74, RG75, RG76, RG77, RG78, RG79, RG80, RG81, RG82, RG83, RG84, RG85, RG86, RG87, RG88, RG89, RG90, RG91, RG92, RG93, RG94, RG95, RG96, RG97, RG98, RG99, RG100. Surrounding areas are labeled with other region codes: OX10, OX11, OX12, SP10, SP11, SP12, SP13, SP14, SP15, SP16, SP17, SP18, SP19, SP20, SP21, SP22, SP23, SP24, SP25, SP26, SP27, SP28, SP29, SP30, SP31, SP32, SP33, SP34, SP35, SP36, SP37, SP38, SP39, SP40, SP41, SP42, SP43, SP44, SP45, SP46, SP47, SP48, SP49, SP50, SP51, SP52, SP53, SP54, SP55, SP56, SP57, SP58, SP59, SP60, SP61, SP62, SP63, SP64, SP65, SP66, SP67, SP68, SP69, SP70, SP71, SP72, SP73, SP74, SP75, SP76, SP77, SP78, SP79, SP80, SP81, SP82, SP83, SP84, SP85, SP86, SP87, SP88, SP89, SP90, SP91, SP92, SP93, SP94, SP95, SP96, SP97, SP98, SP99, SP100. Other regions shown include SL7, SL8, SL9, SL10, SL11, SL12, SL13, SL14, SL15, SL16, SL17, SL18, SL19, SL20, SL21, SL22, SL23, SL24, SL25, SL26, SL27, SL28, SL29, SL30, SL31, SL32, SL33, SL34, SL35, SL36, SL37, SL38, SL39, SL40, SL41, SL42, SL43, SL44, SL45, SL46, SL47, SL48, SL49, SL50, SL51, SL52, SL53, SL54, SL55, SL56, SL57, SL58, SL59, SL60, SL61, SL62, SL63, SL64, SL65, SL66, SL67, SL68, SL69, SL70, SL71, SL72, SL73, SL74, SL75, SL76, SL77, SL78, SL79, SL80, SL81, SL82, SL83, SL84, SL85, SL86, SL87, SL88, SL89, SL90, SL91, SL92, SL93, SL94, SL95, SL96, SL97, SL98, SL99, SL100. Other regions shown include GU9, GU10, GU11, GU12, GU13, GU14, GU15, GU16, GU17, GU18, GU19, GU20, GU21, GU22, GU23, GU24, GU25, GU26, GU27, GU28, GU29, GU30, GU31, GU32, GU33, GU34, GU35, GU36, GU37, GU38, GU39, GU40, GU41, GU42, GU43, GU44, GU45, GU46, GU47, GU48, GU49, GU50, GU51, GU52, GU53, GU54, GU55, GU56, GU57, GU58, GU59, GU60, GU61, GU62, GU63, GU64, GU65, GU66, GU67, GU68, GU69, GU70, GU71, GU72, GU73, GU74, GU75, GU76, GU77, GU78, GU79, GU80, GU81, GU82, GU83, GU84, GU85, GU86, GU87, GU88, GU89, GU90, GU91, GU92, GU93, GU94, GU95, GU96, GU97, GU98, GU99, GU100.

### Figure 2.1 – Postcode Characteristics of Questionnaire Sample



## 3. MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 3.1 Participants' Profile

It was important to note whether the people being interviewed were residents of Reading as the cultural engagement of settled residents differed from that of students, commuters and visitors (settled residents being more interested in and engaged cultural activities within Reading). It can be seen from the table below that most of the interviewees were residents, but students, commuters and visitors made up 39% of the sample.

Status	% of Questionnaire Respondents (n=236)
Resident	61
Student	18
Commuter	7
Other	14

Table 3.1 - Characteristics of Questionnaire Sample

The sample was biased in terms of female respondents: 75% of those interviewed were female. However, there are still 58 male respondents in the study which is enough to build a picture of male opinion. Men and women were equally interested and engaged with activities and events, although women expressed that they felt more barriers to participation.

As shown in the table below, all adult ages are represented in the sample. Ongoing analysis demonstrated the universal appeal of art, culture and heritage, although retirees can be in a better position to engage.

Age of Respondents	% of Questionnaire Respondents (n=236)
16 – 20	14
21 – 39	26
31 – 40	12
41 – 50	16
51 – 60	13
61+	19

Table 3.2 - Age Characteristics of Questionnaire Sample

Participants were given the option to self-describe their ethnicity, and in this analysis their responses are divided into two groups. 50% of the sample identified themselves as “White British” or (to a lesser extent) “English”. The other half identified themselves as something else – either identifying with a different country, or simply as “British” or “White”. Minorities felt more strongly about engaging with art and culture than others.

34% of the whole sample did not have regular access to a car. Taking students and visitors out of the sample (who were less likely to have a car), 25% of interviewees did not have

regular access to a car. Lack of car access was felt to be restrictive by respondents, although events within Reading were found to be generally accessible to all.

## 3.2 Significance of art, culture and heritage

### 3.2.1 What the terms 'art' 'culture' and 'heritage' mean to our respondents

*Art:* When asked what 'art' means, half of all respondents immediately thought of viewing pictures. Most people gave more than one definition however. Almost half of the respondents also thought of expression and creativity, including their personal engagement in drawing and painting, although producing a product such as a sculpture or a book also came into the definition of art, and nearly a third of respondents also thought of dance, music, film and the theatre. It must be noted that there was a reoccurring theme of visual impact in this, and impact along positive lines. Terms like "beauty" "pleasing" and "colourful" were used often and there was little evidence of an appreciation of art along shock-factor lines.

*Culture:* 'Culture' was related to 'people' in the minds of the respondents. The majority of people gave definitions that had to do with the way people live and interact. Each cultural group (or even family) has its own culture or 'background' which influences their way of life. Secondary to this definition, 17% of persons specifically mentioned religion, beliefs, values or morals. 18% emphasised diversity and variety. 16% mentioned celebrations and traditions. 21% linked culture directly to art, mentioning besides pictures, sculptures and music, foods, fashion, books and knowledge.

*Heritage:* Most people mentioned "history" or "the past". Around half of all respondents linked heritage directly to people, including family. This links to the idea of heritage being something inherited from those who went before us. Furthermore, 15% of respondents mentioned physical artefacts passed on intergenerationally, such as art pieces or buildings.

### 3.2.2 How important are the arts, culture and heritage?

On average, those interviewed felt more interest than not in art, culture and heritage, and there were similar levels of interest in each of the three (around 60% of persons felt art, culture and heritage each to be important or very important whilst around a quarter of respondents felt *little* interest in art and around 15% felt little interest in culture and heritage). Overall, culture was considered to be the most important, followed by heritage and then art. Table 3.3 shows the ratings in more detail. Since the focus of this research is on residents of Reading, the figures in the table below represent the opinions only of Reading's residents (not students, commuters and visitors) and excludes all people who were interviewed in a cultural venue (since these were slightly more likely than others to report positively).

On a scale of 1-5, how much does it interest you?	Art	Culture	Heritage
1=not important	12%	7%	10%
2	14%	8%	4%
3	16%	22%	26%
4	31%	36%	37%
5=very important	27%	27%	23%

Table 3.3

**Art:** When questioned in more detail, most people (just over three quarters) said they found art important because it opens new avenues of the mind and has positive connotations. It adds interest and meaning to life. A few say they cannot be without it, it is an essential expression of who they are, or enables others to communicate something important. The remaining 23% of respondents said they did not care about art. They did not feel the connection, interest or meaning. Some persons mentioned not being creatively inclined themselves. Examples of art activities that people attended included festivals or concert events. In addition, respondents attended museums and exhibitions. There were a few mentions of theatre, dance and some hands-on activities at creative clubs or in a choir.

**Culture:** Enthusiasts said that culture helps you understand other people and helps you understand yourself. Learning about other cultures helps you to widen your perspective and is interesting. It gives you sense of identity – an appreciation of who you are and how you can fit in and connect with other people. A minority of persons were not interested in culture. No reasons were offered – no one suggested a lack of meaning or relevance, but it was rather the case that these respondents were not personally interested. Examples of cultural events or activities that people attended included carnivals, festivals, concerts or shows, museums, clubs and family events.

**Heritage:** Most people said history is interesting and something precious to preserve for its own sake. A significant proportion also mentioned that history adds to our understanding of where we are now and what we can learn from it. There were several mentions of *family* history being especially relevant and that it helps to know where you come from in order to understand where you are going. A minority expressed a lack of interest in heritage. Some said that they did not feel these things had any connection or relevance to their present situations. Examples of heritage-related activities included visiting the abbey ruins, museums, buildings, heritage events and shows or talks.

In the examples of what people do, quite a lot of overlap can be observed between art, culture and heritage activities. In one questionnaire people were asked what events and activities they *attended*. In the other they were asked what they would *like* to attend, the answers to each question are reported in the following sections.

### 3.2.3 What cultural activities people would like to attend

What cultural activities people would *like* to attend (as opposed to what they *actually* attend) was framed as an open question, and the responses received were grouped afterwards into the categories as shown below (listed in order of preference).

1. Watching artistic performances. (Mentioned by 60% of respondents). Dramatic performances were especially appreciated – 45% of respondents mentioned either theatre, cinema, plays, dance or other shows. Music concerts and festivals were mentioned specifically by 37% of respondents. Although being very high on the *wish* list, it can be seen from what people actually *do* that participation in such events is low. Cost may be a factor in this (see ‘barriers to participation’), but low-cost productions perhaps on a community level could be appreciated.
2. Hands-on activities - doing, not spectating. (Mentioned by 45% of respondents). Arts and crafts activities, classes, cooking, engagement in sporting events or walking tours.
3. Museums and art exhibitions. (Mentioned by 37% of respondents). There was an almost equal interest in art exhibitions as opposed to museums with history and/or technological displays.
4. Outdoors activities. (30% of respondents). Walking tours/routes, sports, water-related activities, or festivals.
5. Other: 12% of respondents mentioned talks or lectures. Talks, for example, on local history. 12% mentioned the importance of *community* events. 15% said that activities should be family friendly. 10% mentioned the importance of food.

### 3.2.4 Interest in cultural activities by group

- Residents were significantly more interested than students in Reading’s art, culture and heritage.
- Cultural and art events had general appeal across all ages. However, heritage events appealed somewhat more to older generations than younger.
- Residents (i.e. students and visitors excluded) of South Reading expressed less interest in the art and culture than was the case in other parts of Reading. However, they were much more interested than residents of other parts of Reading in ‘hands-on’ activities.
- Men and women were equally likely to express interest in art, culture and heritage.
- People suffering from poor health (mental or physical) were equally likely to express interests in art, culture and heritage as the healthy.
- People who classed themselves as ‘White British’ or ‘English’ were less likely to express interest in cultural events or in art than people who did not class themselves in this way; cultural and artistic events seem to be important to minority groups, perhaps as a means of communicating and celebrating their heritage.
- Persons with frequent access to a car expressed less interest in art-related activities than those without a car (although they were still interested in cultural and especially in heritage events, and they were just as likely to actually *attend* arts events as the carless). The results held even controlling for age, for whether or not the respondent was a student, for ethnic identity for gender and for whether or not the interview was carried out in a cultural venue. The reasons people gave for their lack of interest included not being good at art and not feeling any connection or interest in it. This suggests that there is an unmet demand for art-related activities

particularly amongst people without cars, and that accessibility to such events is a particularly important consideration.

### 3.2.5 Attendance of cultural activities by group

*Interest and attendance* can be two different things. People were also asked if they *took part* in any events or activities related to art, culture and heritage in Reading. 45% of respondents took part in one activity or another, their participation being almost evenly split between art, cultural and heritage events/activities. People who took part in cultural activities were particularly likely to do art or heritage related activities as well.

- Older people were more likely to take part in these activities, particularly those who were retired (they faced lower time barriers).
- Ethnic minority residents were more likely to take part, as well as finding the activities more important.
- Male and female residents were equally likely to take part, with both finding them interesting. However, female students were more likely to participate than male students.
- Residents of less affluent areas in Reading were less likely to take part, with South Reading being the least likely to participate. The more affluent areas (e.g. Caversham in the North of Reading) were more likely to participate in events/activities.
- People living outside of Reading and its immediate suburbs were less likely to come in to attend events than those who were resident. Reading's events hold the most attraction for Reading's own residents.

## 3.3 The links between cultural activities and wellbeing

Participants were asked to rate their wellness of a scale of 1-10. 1 was ranked as the lowest level of wellness and 10 the best level. For the purpose of this study, 'wellness' included both physical and mental wellbeing.

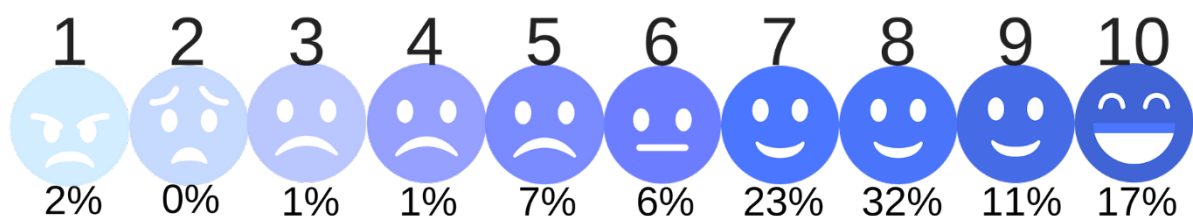


Figure 3.1 - How our participants rated their wellness

This analysis found that women rated their wellness lower than men, students rated their wellness lower than residents, commuters and visitors. Those who identified health as a barrier to activities also ranked lower on the 'wellness' scale. Residents in South Reading

rated their wellness at least one point lower than everyone else on average; in addition, they also reported a higher proportion of health barriers compared to the rest of Reading. Excluding South Reading, respondents in Reading rate their wellness on a similar scale.<sup>7</sup>

There was a statistically significant correlation between having attended an art, culture or heritage related activity and wellness ratings. People who had attended these events rated themselves, on average, over half a point higher on the wellness scale. However, it is not proven whether people become better off because they engage, or whether they engage because they are better off.

The wider literature helps to assure us that causality runs both ways: positive social connections such as inclusion and engagement, along with the cognitive stimulation of co-creating a project can make a real difference to wellness.<sup>8</sup> Therefore engagement in art, culture and heritage events that build social connections and stimulate cognitive engagement are particularly likely to contribute to wellness.

All interviewees were asked directly whether they felt that participating in art, culture or heritage events effects, or would affect their wellness. 46% said no, and 54% said yes. Of the 46% who said no, the majority did not take part in any events. Of those who did take part, 76% (and 79% of Reading residents) felt that the activities added to their wellness. This suggests that people tend to get involved with what is important to them, and that having the opportunity to do what is important to you positively impacts wellness.

When asked an open question on how participating in events and activities affects wellness, the answers of respondents fell into four categories.

1. *Appreciation of beauty*: Respondents enjoyed art, events, and places of natural beauty *for its own sake*. They said the beauty/positive visual impact made *them* feel more positive, or produced 'positive vibes.'
2. *The value of expression*: Finding ways to express one's views, trying something new and also learning from others all have cognitive value. Comments included phrases like, 'I can express something' 'I enjoy the creativity' 'it opens your mind' 'learning' and 'sparks a passion'.
3. *Making social connections*: By going to events and activities (especially regular ones) respondents also expressed that they felt more connected with other people.
4. *Stress busting and getting out and about*: The events gave respondents the opportunity to get out of their normal routine and out of their regular social and physical environment.

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<sup>7</sup> South Reading wards also score poorly on the Index of Multiple Deprivation compared to other areas of Reading (Office of National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>)

<sup>8</sup> Saeri *et al.*, 2018. This article shows how social connections predicts improving mental health. Creative activities are also linked to improved cognitive ability (All Party Parliamentary Group 2017)



### 3.4 Barriers to participation

55% of respondents said they faced a barrier to participation in art, culture or heritage related events. It is interesting to note that there was no correlation between the overall feeling that there are barriers and actual participation, suggesting that some who do not attend do not *want* to.<sup>9</sup> It also suggests that there is an unmet demand amongst people who already attend some activities but would like to attend more.

Potential barriers to participation in activities were categorised under the headings provided in the following table, and respondents were asked to say which of these barriers affected them.

Barrier (in order of importance)	% respondents affected
Time	33%
Money	29%
Find it difficult to hear about events	28%
Travel	14%
Nothing on that interests me	8%
Unable to access care for dependents	6%
Poor health (mental or physical)	6%

Table 3.4

Time was the most important barrier, which is perhaps why retirees are the persons most engaged in art/culture/heritage related activities. The second most important barrier was the lack of money, as some events are costly to attend, followed by the lack of information. Cost and information are clearly important concerns to address. Particularly information, since this was the only barrier out of all those listed above which was significantly correlated with lack of actual attendance at places and events.

Disseminating information through social channels is important, particularly in areas where engagement is low. In South Reading, residents who were engaged were most likely to hear about events through word of mouth and least likely to have looked online, compared to the rest of Reading.

It is good to back up word-of-mouth with online information generally however, since 66% of respondents overall said that they went online to find out about events in Reading. Paper information was less important, but a third of respondents not going online for information said they found out about events through leaflets. In a separate question about whether people knew what was on offer in terms of art, culture and heritage in Reading, respondents answered as follows:

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<sup>9</sup> This interpretation is borne out by the fact that every individual barrier is positively and significantly correlated to the response 'I face barriers to access' except for 'there is nothing on that interests me'. In this case people feel there is no barrier, they just don't want to do it.

**I know what is on offer**

1=strongly disagree	8%
2=disagree	19%
3=neither	27%
4=agree	41%
5=strongly agree	6%

**Table 3.5**

Just under half of all those surveyed agreed with the statement 'I know what is on offer', and only 6% strongly agreed, suggesting that many people are not aware of events in Reading.

Another barrier is transport, especially for those who do not have regular access to a car. When people were asked about where they thought events and activities should take place, their responses showed that central venues were seen to be appropriate for events intended to attract a lot of people, and this was the same whether people had cars or not. Little evidence suggests that people cannot get into the town centre when they need to. People with and without cars were equally likely to access Reading's events. However, 55% of respondents also (or instead) said that local venues were of value. These local events may have particular value in building community.

Not having anything on of interest, childcare barriers and poor health were less significant barriers. This suggests that what is out there in Reading is of interest, is reasonably child friendly and is accessible even to people with poor physical or mental health – a positive reflection.

In a separate question, participants were asked about how confident they feel going along to art, culture and heritage events. Their responses were as follows:

**I feel confident in going along**

1=strongly disagree	0%
2=disagree	6%
3=neither	21%
4=agree	57%
5=strongly agree	17%

**Table 3.6**

These responses suggest that events in Reading are accessible and most people feel confident about attending. Despite this, lack of confidence could be one factor in explaining why some people do not attend events.

**Barriers by group:**

- Residents of South Reading were significantly more likely to report barriers than residents of any other locality within Reading. The barriers for residents in this area centred around poor health (physical or mental), lack of money, lack of information and lack of time.

- Residents travelling in to central Reading from some distance also faced barriers to engagement in activities, and this was due to the transport factor.
- Women were more likely to report barriers than men. Women were not significantly disadvantaged compared to men in any one area measured, although there was some correlation with feeling less informed, having less access to money and being more likely to cite health barriers. Put together, these three factors may account for women's higher overall feeling of facing barriers.
- Age and ethnicity do not significantly increase the barriers mentioned in this research. Students do not face more barriers, despite feeling less confident about going along to art, culture and heritage events in Reading than people who were more permanently based in Reading.



Figure 3.3 - Barriers people faced when accessing art, culture and heritage events.

### 3.5 Whether people are proud to live in Reading

In one questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate how proud they were to live in Reading on a scale of 1-10:

1=not at all proud	4%
2	2%
3	4%
4	2%
5	14%
6	17%
7	21%
8	18%
9	6%
10=extremely proud	12%

Table 3.7

In the other, respondents were given three categories:

Not proud at all	18%
Somewhat proud	62%
Very proud	20%

Table 3.8

In this latter questionnaire, people were also asked whether they like living where they live:

<b>I like living where I live:</b>	
strongly disagree	0%
disagree	0%
neither	19%
agree	60%
strongly agree	21%

Table 3.9

Reading appears to inspire some pride, with a mode average score of 7 out of 10 and a mean average of 6.6 out of 10. The distribution of extreme feelings towards Reading are likewise somewhat more positive than negative.

When people were asked to comment on what they liked or disliked about Reading, 10% of respondents only had negative things to say about Reading, and 14% only had good things to say. Several people mentioned negative press as being more of a problem than real life.

*By group:*

- Residents who had been involved in art, culture and/or heritage events and activities were significantly more likely to be proud of living in Reading (on a scale of 1-10, they rated their pride one point higher than their counterparts).

- Residents and students were equally proud to be in Reading, commuters rather less so.
- Those from all areas of Reading were equally proud to be there. If anything, people from Central Reading were the least proud, but the difference in ratings was not statistically significant.
- Gender, age and ethnic identity made no difference to pride in Reading.

In one questionnaire, people were asked what they like and dislike about Reading. In the other, they were asked what made them more or less proud. Although overlapping, the questions are slightly different (which reflects in the different emphasis given to the responses) this gives a wider overview of what people like and dislike about Reading. The questions were open ended, but afterwards the responses were grouped into categories to gain an indication of patterns and priorities

Like (in priority order)	Dislike (in priority order)
<p>1. <b>Amenities and facilities</b> (44% of respondents). Plenty of shops and restaurants in first place, but also plenty of other things to do: clubs, sport, cultural activities and events. In addition, learning and work opportunities, and all services available including health and social services.</p> <p>2. <b>Appearance.</b> (29% of respondents). The green spaces were appreciated, along with the river. There were some mentions of the architecture. The size of Reading was also appreciated (not too sprawling and yet has everything).</p> <p>3. <b>Accessibility and location.</b> (28% of respondents.) Reading is easy to get around, and easy to get in and out of. Its proximity to London was especially appreciated.</p> <p>4. <b>The people.</b> (Mentioned in a general way by 24% of respondents). The cultural diversity that characterises Reading was appreciated, and so was friendliness. A further 6% of respondents mentioned they liked having friends and family around.</p>	<p>(Note that although there are more categories of 'dislike,' the number of mentions each issue gets is much lower than the 'likes')</p> <p>1. <b>Too crowded.</b> (20% of respondents). Too much traffic and too big.</p> <p>2. <b>Appearance.</b> (19% of respondents). Lack of green spaces, ugly or run-down buildings, rubbish being left around, and several mentions of 'something missing' 'soullessness' or 'lack of identity'.</p> <p>3. <b>Crime.</b> (16% of respondents). Crime included drugs, anti-social behaviour, graffiti and not feeling safe.</p> <p>4. <b>Lack of amenities.</b> (16% respondents). Although amenities were a strength of Reading, there were concerns around the closing down of 'independents' and the take-over by 'chains.' Also, the closing of some public facilities.</p> <p>5. <b>The people.</b> (12% of respondents). Both a strength and a weakness; rudeness or bad attitudes were mentioned specifically.</p> <p>6. <b>Homelessness and poverty.</b> (9% of respondents).</p> <p>7. <b>Expensive.</b> (9% of respondents). Particularly house prices and parking charges, although the high price of some amenities were also mentioned.</p> <p>8. <b>Transport problems.</b> (6% of respondents - more if you count complaints of too much traffic and parking charges). Complex one-way systems and lack of simple access were of issue.</p>

Table 3.10 – what people like and dislike about Reading

Proud	Not proud
<p>1. <b>Amenities and facilities</b> (46%). The University, shops, restaurants, things to do, volunteering opportunities, social care, NHS, the council, jobs and prosperity, technology, 'everything works'.</p> <p>2. <b>Accessibility</b> (32%). Good bus system, proximity to London and the countryside.</p> <p>3. <b>History and heritage</b> (30%). History and heritage (museums, buildings) came up a few times in the previous questionnaire responses and were classed under amenities or appearance, but when addressing the issue of 'pride' the actual words 'history' and 'heritage' were mentioned much more frequently.</p> <p>4. <b>Appearance</b> (29%). Green spaces including the river and parks, plus a mention of the architecture.</p> <p>5. <b>The people</b> (14%). Diversity and dynamics were mentioned as positives, besides the people themselves.</p> <p>6. <b>Other</b>: 9% mentioned their pride in their own family history in Reading. A few people mentioned their pride in Reading's football team, although this is a source of pride only when they are doing well.</p>	<p>1. <b>Lack of investment in appearance and amenities</b> (32%). Uneven paving, potholes, ugly new buildings, poor housing estates, loss of the swimming pool, sewage smells and poorly maintained playgrounds.</p> <p>2. <b>Homelessness, begging and poverty</b> (30%).</p> <p>3. <b>Lack of community</b> (19%). Mentions were made of the clubbing culture, lack of community events and community feel, too big, conflict, lack of culture and independent places, lack of communication between services and service users, poor public services.</p> <p>4. <b>Litter</b> (also 19%). Rubbish left around and dirty.</p> <p>5. <b>Traffic</b> (17%). Reading is overcrowded, parking is difficult, and the one-way systems are awkward.</p> <p>6. <b>Crime and drugs</b> (9%)</p>

**Table 3.11 – things about Reading that make people feel more or less proud**

The things people like about Reading are clear (five categories, with amenities a clear leader). The things people do not like are more diverse. To some extent, the positives and negatives reflect the same overall issues which have both good and bad expressions in Reading. This helps us to see what people have views on and what damages pride. To summarise, the things that are important to people are:

- Having all the shops and services needed and having plenty of things to do. Art, culture and heritage are a significant part of this, and they make a difference to how proud people are to live in Reading.
- The multiple comments on community, the dislike of 'chain' retailers, and the references to local history all suggest that not only the facilities and services are a source of pride in themselves, but also the 'home grown' factor in providing them impacts pride.
- Cultural diversity is seen as a positive, but antisocial behaviour, lack of safety and rudeness are negatives. Community engagement, interaction and 'working together' is seen to be improving to the neighbourhood.
- The natural environment is very important, but it is also important to take care of the built-up areas e.g. clean and litter free. The state of the buildings affects the feel of the town.



- Having homelessness people on the streets is a source of shame to the people of Reading.
- Controlling crime and drugs is important to the respondents.
- Accessibility matters, and this is generally seen as a positive feature of Reading, even in the face of negatives such as the heavy traffic and crowding.

It is of interest to add that a YouGov survey of 20,081 people in England on their pride in place<sup>10</sup> revealed that Reading, on the whole, compares well to other areas of England. In England, there is a general pessimism with three times as many people saying that England was better in the past compared to those who think England's best days lie in the future. Moreover, on average, 11% of respondents across England opted for the response that 'things are getting better in my local area' and 39% felt that things were getting worse. In Reading however, 14% of respondents thought that the local area was getting better, whilst 33% thought it was getting worse. This makes Reading's population significantly more optimistic than England's average (despite the overall pessimism). Similar to the rest of England, 70% of Reading respondents felt they had little or no influence on local decision-making, compared to 24% who felt that they did have influence.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they had heard of the new Reading on Thames Festival (the survey having been conducted just before its launch). Students tended to be more well informed than residents, even though they were not keen to attend. Amongst residents, 39% had heard of Reading on Thames Festival, suggesting that there is still scope for getting more information out. 31% of those who were informed said they were 'definitely interested' in attending, and only 14% were not interested. The rest said they would 'maybe' be interested in attending. There was no evidence of this event appealing to one group of residents more or less than any another.

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<sup>10</sup> Reported by the BBC on 3rd June 2018 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-44142843>

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aims of this research were to explore:

- 1) The current perceptions of art, culture and heritage in Reading;
- 2) The extent to which the people of Reading believe wellbeing is linked to cultural activities, and the ways in which cultural activities make a difference;
- 3) The perceived barriers to cultural activities in Reading;
- 4) Geographical areas or social groups which need extra focus (because of less civic pride, lower levels of wellness or less active engagement).

This research is feeding into a participatory cultural commissioning framework which aims to increase the accessibility of cultural activities by ensuring they are community led. In the summer of 2019, a pilot scheme will be used to shape more grants which are aimed towards improving the wellness of people in Reading through art, culture and heritage. After this, further research will be carried out to see how this pilot has shaped community-led cultural and heritage practices and to see if the process has indeed made these events more accessible.

### 4.1 Key findings by research question:

#### 4.1.1 Perceptions of art, culture and heritage in Reading

Art, culture and heritage are overlapping terms but with different emphasises. 'Art' was defined by participants as a creative product or expression. 'Culture' had more to do with people, their differences, and the way they relate to one another. 'Heritage' especially made respondents think of the past. The majority of respondents (around 60%) considered all three of these to be important or very important.

Low cost dramatic, artistic or musical performances were very much appreciated. So were hands-on activities – almost half the respondents expressed an interest in 'doing', not just in spectating. Museums and exhibition attendance were secondary to these in popularity. Outdoor activities were likewise in demand. Less persons mentioned talks and lectures, but these captured some interest.

The current art, culture and heritage provision in Reading that our respondents had engaged in included; museums, events, heritage buildings and access to the natural environment. These things were mostly remarked on as a source of pride. Moreover, residents who had engaged with these rated their pride in Reading, on average, one point higher out of 10 than those who did not engage in them. The interviewees appreciated that these events are easy to access, and that it is easy to get from Reading to London or to other places of interest. Reading's cultural diversity was remarked on in a positive light.

The key point to work on relates to Reading's community feel. It is very important to people that they feel part of a friendly environment, safe, able to work together with others and

able to develop their own, home-grown creative agendas. Community issues such as homelessness and antisocial behaviour were seen to reduce pride in Reading. Hands-on arts and culture or heritage events that bring people together and help Reading's own people to engage/perform, are therefore a potential source of increased pride. Other needs raised by respondents include; the protection of green spaces, tackling congestion, and keeping the town clean and well maintained. Overall, pride in Reading is not at the top level but neither is it low. Most people are 'somewhat proud' to be in Reading.

#### 4.1.2 How cultural practices link to wellness

79% of residents who participated in arts, culture or heritage-related events believed that participation had a positive impact on their wellness, although of those who had not participated, only 38% felt that participation would make a positive difference. People tend to get involved with what is important to them, and doing what is important to them influences their wellbeing.

Drawing on the responses of interviewees, it was possible to pinpoint several ways in which arts, culture and heritage were believed to enhance wellness:

- *Appreciation of beauty*: beautiful creations and environments add to positivity for their own sake.
- *Self-worth*: where commendable works relate to one's self (either because of having helped to create them, or because of identifying with the creators due to shared history) then those works add to one's personal sense of value. Thus Reading-grown successes make people feel good.
- *Cognitive stimulation*: Creativity and expression stimulate one's own mind, and they help to communicate new thoughts and ideas to other people. This process adds interest to life. It can also aid our grasp of who we are, where we come from and where we are going.
- *Stress-buster*: Besides cognitive stimulation, having a change from one's normal routine and living environment can help to *reduce* stress. Getting out and about also has a fitness element.
- *Social connections*: Supportive relations between people are known to have an important impact on wellbeing, and drawing people together over arts-related events and activities (especially regular ones) can help people to form and extend these positive social networks.
- *Cross-cultural understanding*: Social connections *across cultures* have especial importance to social cohesion. The fact that minority groups were more likely than 'White British' to attach importance to cultural and artistic events suggests that these are seen to channel much-valued understanding and appreciation.

The data shows that people who face socio-economic disadvantage are less likely to take part in art, culture or heritage-related events, and likewise the 'wellness' of disadvantaged people was lower. It is not clear from this whether 'wellness' relates to the socio-economic advantage, or else to art, culture and heritage participation. What is clear is that if art,

culture and heritage-related events are to make any difference to wellness, they are most likely to do so via the wellness-related channels listed above. Each of these points needs to be taken into consideration when selecting which activities to promote. Less economically advantaged respondents tended to prefer hands-on activity to spectator activities, although a large proportion of the total respondents (66%) were also interested in watching dramatic performances.

#### 4.1.3 Perceived barriers to art, heritage and cultural activities in Reading

Lack of time, high costs and not knowing what is on were the most cited barriers to participation. Each were mentioned by approximately 30% of respondents.

‘Time’ is an issue relating to competing priorities. Retired people have fewer competing demands and were therefore more likely to have taken part in events, even though those events appeal to and cater for all ages. People who find the arts, culture and heritage events to be important were more likely to find the time to get involved, but not perhaps to the degree that they would like to.

‘Money’ is a problem and people from more affluent areas of town were more likely to be engaged with events. Many opportunities for engagement are free, (except for the effort and expense of turning up) but there appears to be an unmet demand for low cost dramatic performances.

‘Lack of information’ is an important issue. Although it was found that people facing all *other* barriers to participation were still fairly well represented at art, cultural and heritage events, people struggling for information were significantly less likely to be found at events. Just over *half* of the people interviewed did not feel sure about what is on offer in Reading, and only 6% had strong opinions that they knew what was going on. Although online information is an important source to find out about activities for two thirds of the people interviewed, some residents preferred more traditional methods such as the local newspaper and BBC Radio Berkshire. Word-of-mouth invites and information from sources people can identify with remains important as ever.

Transport is a lesser barrier within Reading (being mentioned by just 7% of respondents within Reading’s borders), even though people outside of Reading centre exhibit some reluctance to travel. Except for major events, the biggest appeal of Reading events was to local residents. Many people expressing interest in events had no car, and so public transport access is important for event organisers to consider. However, it is fairly easy for people to get into the town centre by public transport from anywhere in Reading, and people *without* cars were no less likely to attend events than people *with* cars. Although 76% of interviewees suggested that it is appropriate to hold events in the town centre, 55% also (or instead) expressed the opinion that *local* venues were important. Local venues may have particular value in helping neighbours to connect with one another.

Events in Reading appeared to be accessible to ethnic minorities, to people facing physical or mental health barriers and to people with children. None of these groups were less likely to take part than others, and only 6% of those interviewed felt that sickness or childcare

was a barrier to participation. Although women were more likely to express barriers to participation than men, men and women were equally likely to have actually taken part in events. Students tended to be less interested in Reading's art, culture and heritage scene than residents, and they were also less confident about attending Reading's events than residents. There was no indication that one geographical area of Reading faced more barriers to participation than another geographical area, with the exception of *South Reading*, which is discussed in more detail below.

#### 4.1.4 Areas in need of extra focus

Compared to other areas of Reading (North, West, East and Central), residents of South Reading:

- Scored lower on the 'wellness' scale.
- Expressed less interest in the arts, culture and heritage (although they were *more* interested than others in 'hands-on' events);
- Were less likely to take part in the events currently on offer;
- Faced more barriers to participation; which included poor health, lack of time, lack of information and lack of money;
- Were more likely to require a word-of-mouth invitation before they took part and were less likely to find out about events online.

South Reading residents were found to be just as proud to live in Reading as everyone else. Increasing South Reading engagement will need a participatory and community-led approach. Face-to-face discussions about creative events that the residents want to get personally involved with will be necessary. Family friendly activities were found to be a particular priority to South Reading respondents. To improve wellbeing, the selected activities will need to address the points outlined under Research Question 2 (above); it is activities involving co-creation and social inclusion that are most likely to make a difference.

Overall, the participants of this study were from all walks of life, and it could be seen that different cultural initiatives appealed to different groups of people. For example, the older people interviewed at Firtree Retirement Club asked for more socially oriented activities to help reduce loneliness. The families interviewed asked for more child friendly activities so they would not need to pay for additional childcare. People in more deprived areas asked for 'hands on' activities, as opposed to attending exhibitions. Ethnic minorities especially appreciated cultural and artistic events that allowed them to communicate and celebrate their heritage.

People with health difficulties and people without, older people and younger ones; men and women all were equally interested in cultural activities. Important is to ensure that the activities are accessible and that the information reaches the right people. Moreover, the target group needs to have a say in what the activity consists of and how it is run. 'Owning' a cultural activity is linked to feeling good about it, and more people will attend events if they feel a personal sense of connection.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 – Adapted questionnaire

Interviewed by:

Date:

Location:

Please note that your responses are entirely confidential and anonymous. You do not have to do this questionnaire and you can skip any questions you do not want to answer. Would you be willing to respond to this survey? **Yes** **No**

**Age range:** 16-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61+

**Gender:** Male Female Other ..... **Do you have frequent access to a car?** Yes No

**Residence** (start of post code only) ..... **Ethnicity** (self-described) .....

1. Are you a **Resident / Student / Visitor / Commuter / Other** in Reading? (Please circle as appropriate)

1a. If other, please specify: .....

2. What do the following terms mean to you?

2a. **Art:** .....

2b. **Culture:** .....

2c. **Heritage:** .....

3a. On a scale of 1-5 how much does art interest you? (1: Not Important 5: Very important)

1 2 3 4 5 **Why is art (not) important to you?**.....

3b. On a scale of 1-5 how much does culture interest you?

1 2 3 4 5 **Why is culture (not) important to you?**.....

3c. On a scale of 1-5 how much does heritage interest you?

1 2 3 4 5 **Why is heritage (not) important to you?**.....

4a. Do you take part in any art events/activities in Reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, which events do you attend? .....

4b. Do you take part in any cultural events/activities in Reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, which events do you attend? .....

4c. Do you take part in any heritage events/activities in Reading?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, which events do you attend? .....

4d. Please rate your wellness on a scale of 1-10: (1: Poor 10: Excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4e. Does participating in any of the above events/activities effect your wellness?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please state which activities and how: .....

4e. Are there any barriers preventing you from accessing these events?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what are the main barriers? (please tick all that apply)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel  | <input type="checkbox"/> Time                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Find it difficult to hear about events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money   | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing on that interests me | <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to access childcare             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor health (mental or physical) Other: ..... |   |   |

5. How do you find out about events in Reading?

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online   | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: .....  |

6a. On a scale of 1-10, how proud are you to live/be in Reading?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

6b. What do you like about Reading?

.....

6c. What do you dislike about Reading?

.....

## APPENDIX 2 – 'Reading Place of Culture' inspired questionnaire

Interviewed by:

Date:

Location:

Please note that your responses are entirely confidential and anonymous. You do not have to do this questionnaire and you can skip any questions you do not want to answer. Would you be willing to respond to this survey? **Yes**    **No**

**Age range:** 16-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61+

**Gender:** Male    Female    Other .....    **Do you have frequent access to a car?** Yes    No

**Residence** (start of post code only) .....    **Ethnicity** (self-described) .....

1. Are you a **Resident** / **Student** / **Visitor** / **Commuter** / **Other** in Reading? (Please circle as appropriate)

1a. If other, please specify: .....

2. What are the things that make you feel proud to live in Reading?

.....

3. What are the things that make you feel less proud to live in Reading?

.....

4. How proud are you to live in Reading?

Not proud at all

Somewhat proud

Very proud

5. I know what is on offer in terms of art, culture and heritage in Reading (please circle appropriate)

**Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither   Disagree   Strongly Disagree**

6. I feel confident in going along to art, culture and heritage events in Reading (please circle appropriate)

**Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither   Disagree   Strongly Disagree**

7a. What sort of events and activities would interest you?

.....

7b. Where would you like these events and activities to take place?

.....

8. By working together, we can bring about change in our local neighbourhood (please circle appropriate)

**Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither   Disagree   Strongly Disagree**

9. I like living where I live (please circle appropriate)

**Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither   Disagree   Strongly Disagree**

10. Have you heard of the Reading on Thames Festival?

Yes   ☐                      No   ☐                      Don't know

11. The Reading on Thames festival is happening across Reading on the 6<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> September, there's a live music concert, a night time art-filled walk and many other activities going on as part of the festival – is this something you'd be interested in going to? (please circle appropriate)

**Definitely interested                      Maybe                      Probably not                      Definitely not**

