APPENDIX 5: WHAT WE HEARD

THE MUNICIPALITY OF
CHESTER
NOVA SCOTIA'S TREASURE

What We Heard Summary - Arts & Culture Strategy

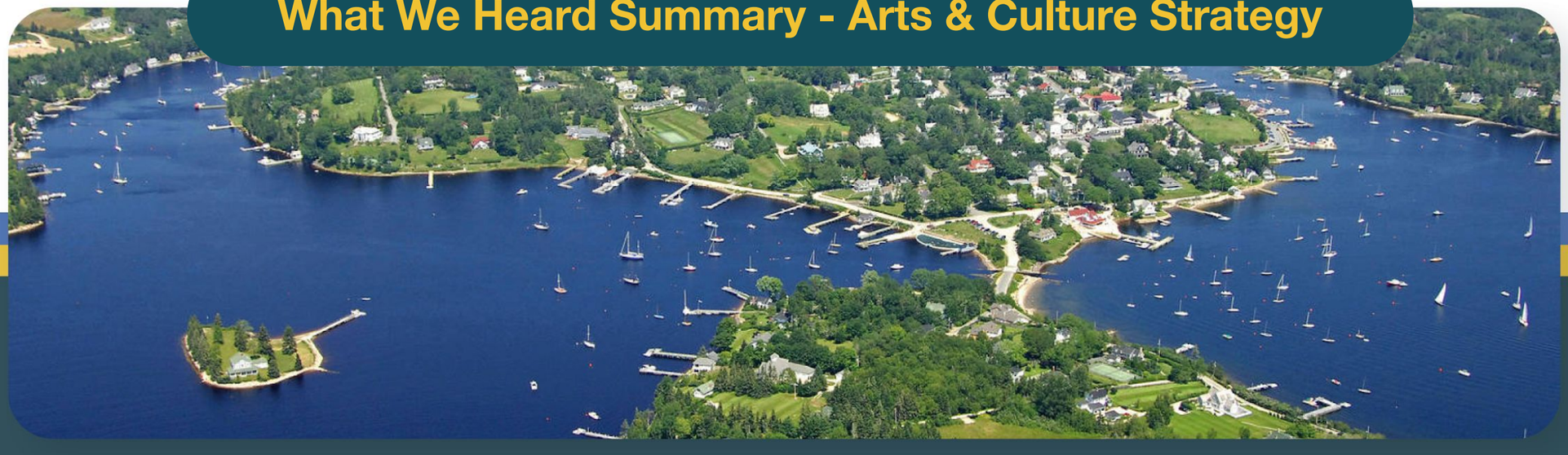


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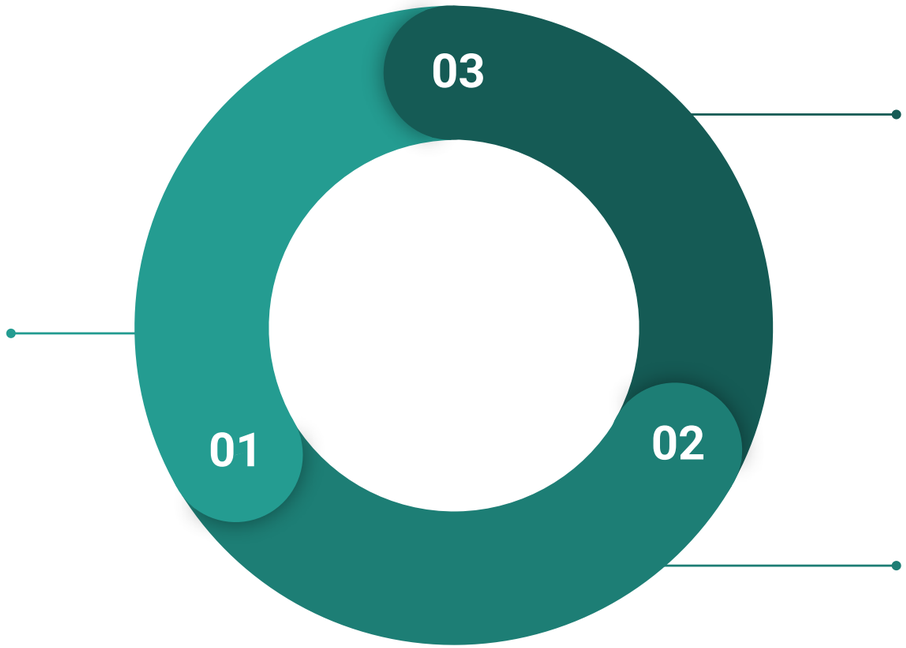
6 Town Hall Results

Methodology

How did we engage?

1. Online public survey

An online survey was created by ASBB to gauge public opinion on Arts and Culture. 75 responses were recorded which are outlined in the following slides, to create a strategy of action.



3. Case studies

Case studies were performed to understand model towns or municipalities which have successfully implemented arts and culture strategies to improve the vibrancy of their localities.

2. Focused discussion groups

A focused discussion as a town hall meeting was organised among locals in the Municipality of Chester to understand public behaviour in the arts & culture domain.

Survey Summary

Summary of the survey

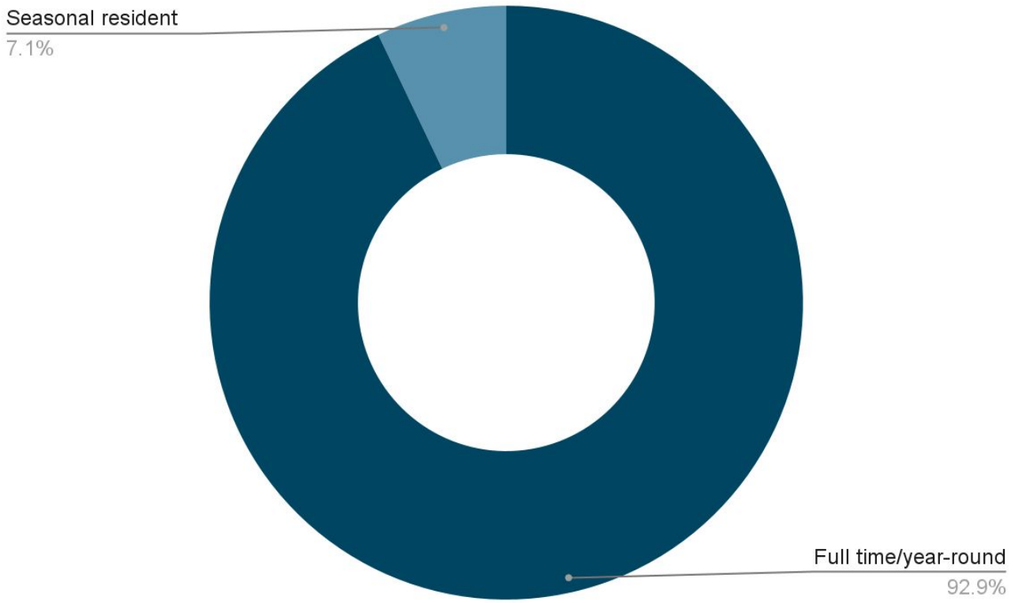
The survey for the Arts and Culture Strategy received 75 responses.

- Lack of information deters participation in cultural events; Respondents believe more information and novel, accessibly priced events, would improve participation.
- 92% of respondents are long term, older residents who are the primary consumers of arts and cultural events; the majority are white with diverse gender identities, indicating a homogenous racial makeup.
- Most respondents felt arts and culture events foster community, promote creativity and innovation, enhance locals' quality of life and contribute to the local economy.
- Most respondents have no accessibility needs and are satisfied with the MOC infrastructure but note a lack of diverse representation among artists and cultural performers and suggest improvements.
- Most respondents believe that a well-developed arts and culture strategy can foster valuable partnerships between businesses and the arts, helping to overcome challenges related to time and resource constraints.
- Most respondents believe that MOC's unique features include its strong community connections, rich history, natural environments, tourist attractions, current cultural events.

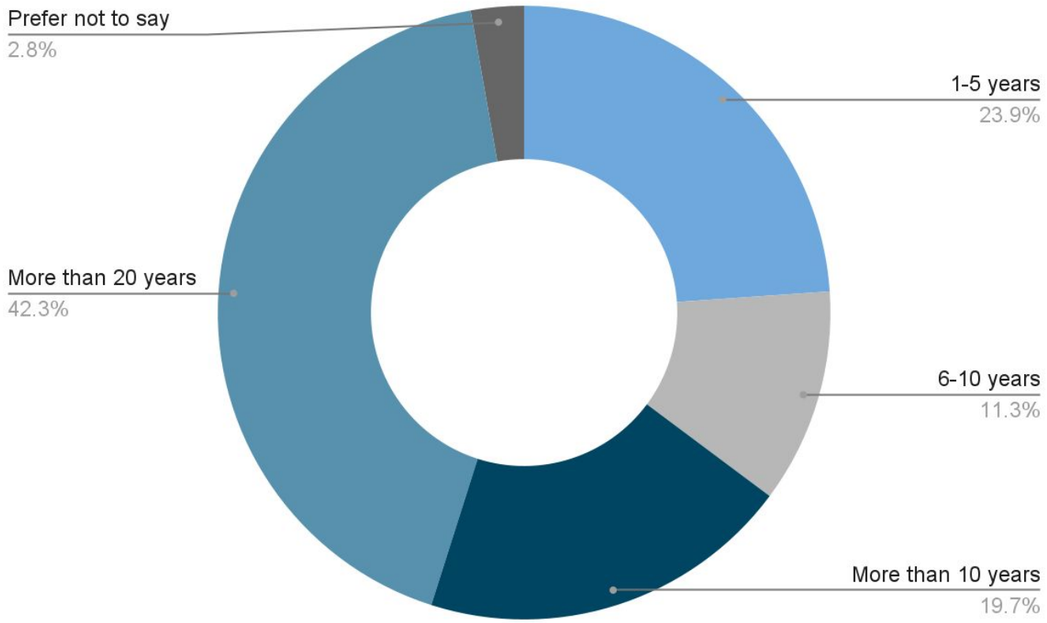
Demographics of Respondents

MOC respondents are mostly long term residents

Q19: What is the residential status of most respondents ?



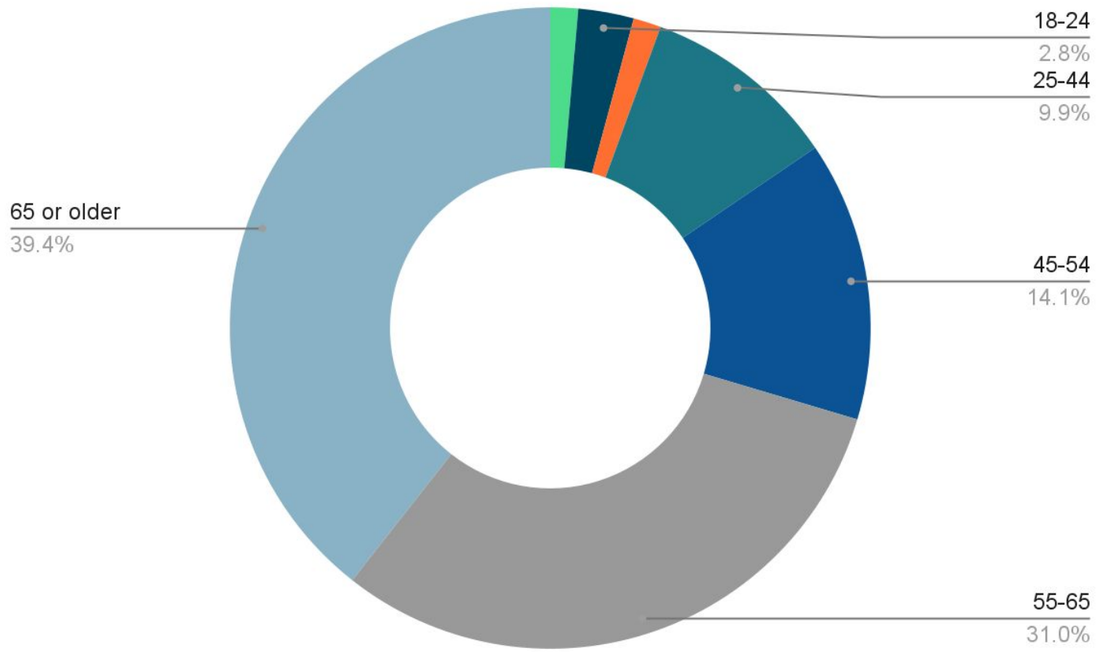
Q20: What is the length that residence lived in the MOC ?



Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers

MOC respondents are mostly long term residents

Q21: What is age of most respondents ?



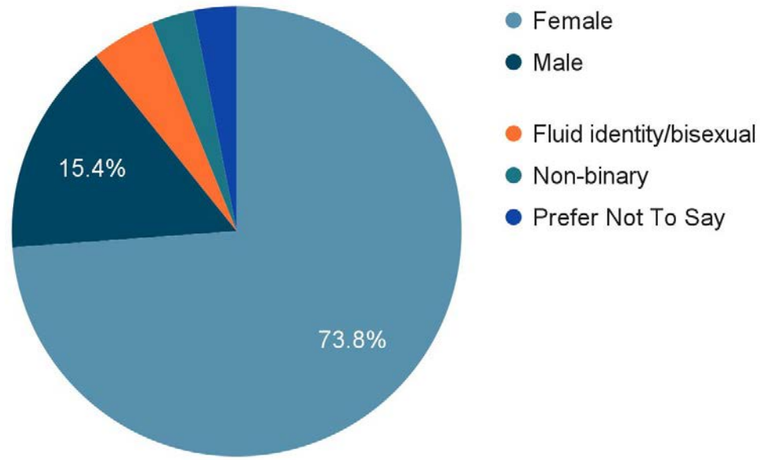
Almost 92% of respondents are long term residents of an older age group, who are the major consumers of Arts and Culture events.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers

The respondents from the Municipality of Chester identify to diverse gender identities but have a predominantly white population (written questions)

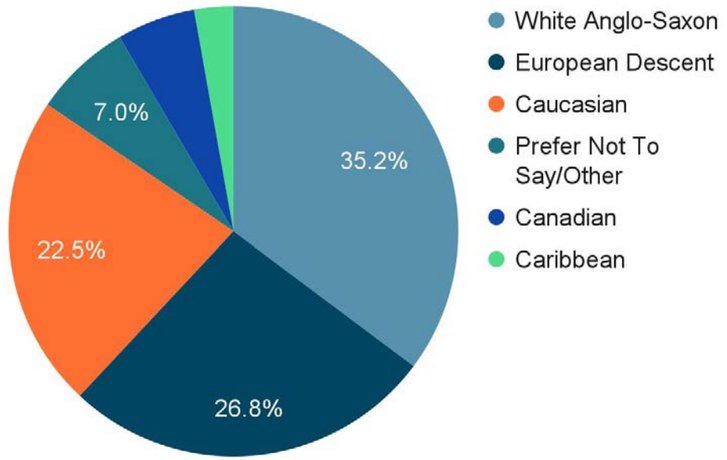
Q22: What gender do you identify with ?

*This was an optional question, which received 65 responses



Q23: What race/ethnicity do you identify with ?

*This was an optional question, which received 64 responses

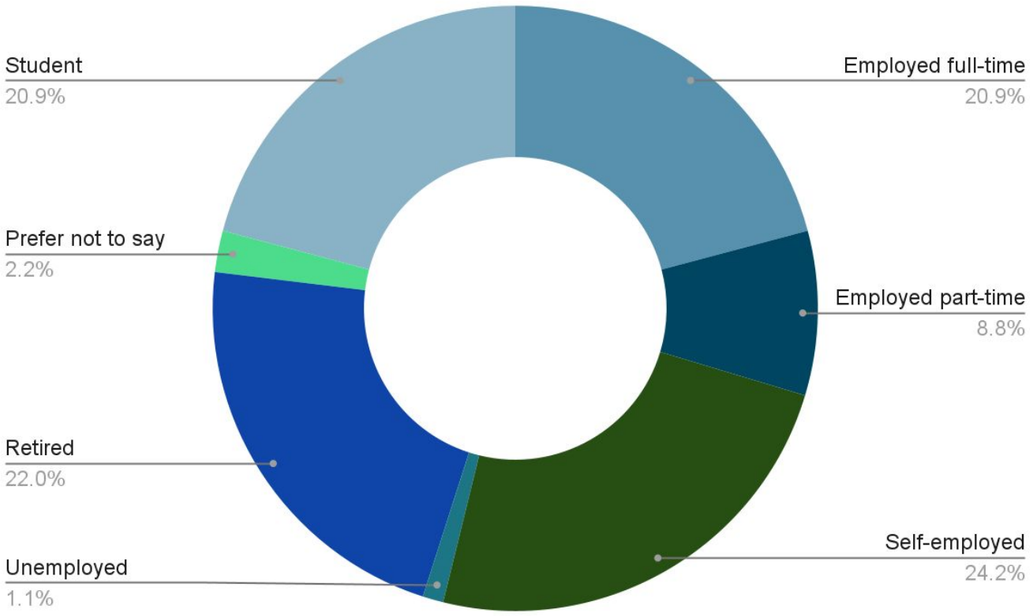


- The respondents have diverse gender identities but are mostly white, indicating a fairly homogenous racial identity among respondents. These questions in the survey helped us to identify patterns in the Arts and Culture practises and consumption habits.

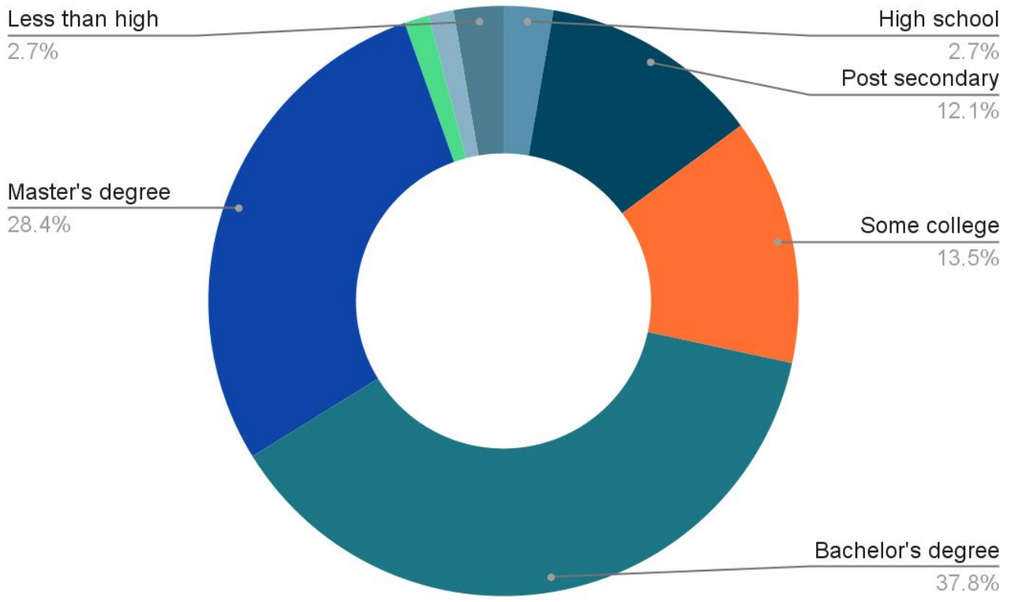
Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose short text answers or skip responses

Most respondents have college education and are self-employed

Q24: What is employment status of most respondents ?



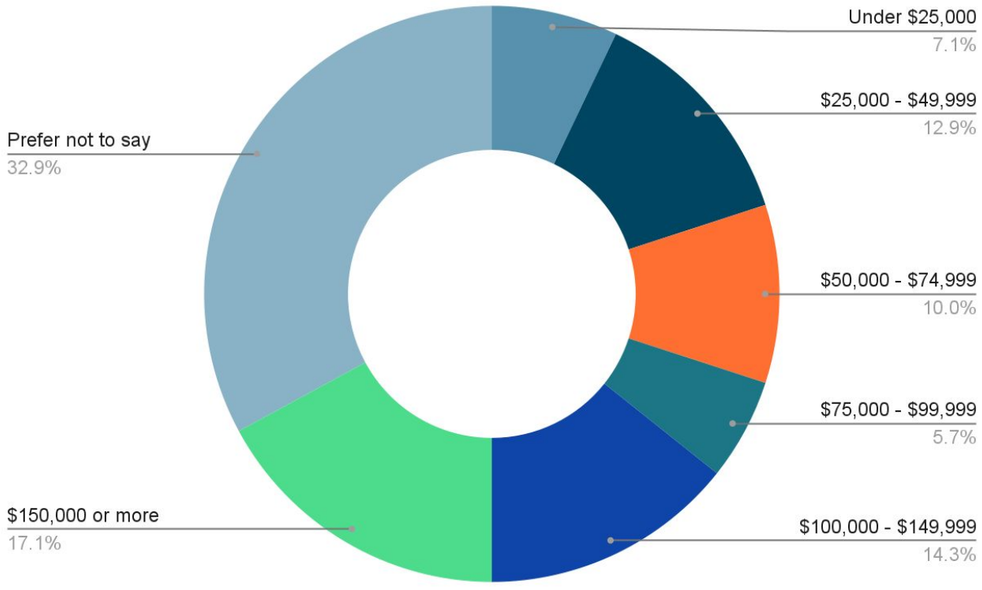
Q25: What is the educational level of respondents ?



Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers

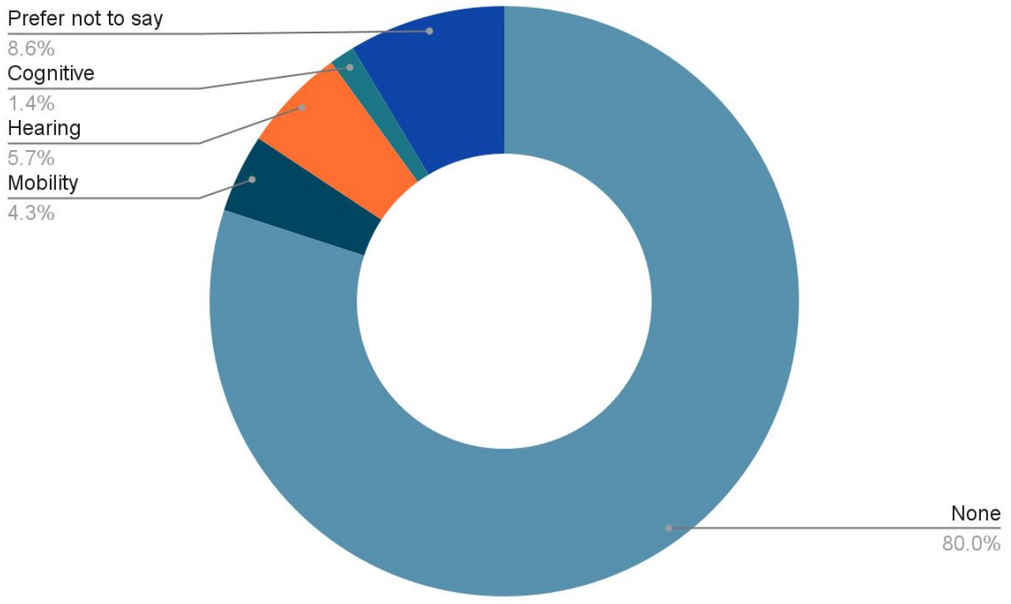
31.4% of respondents have household incomes over $100,000 and almost no respondent has accessibility needs

Q26: What is household income of most respondents ?



Most respondents in MOC are educated, self employed and high earners who may/may not require artistic endeavors to be gainfully employed.

Q27: Do respondents have any accessibility needs?

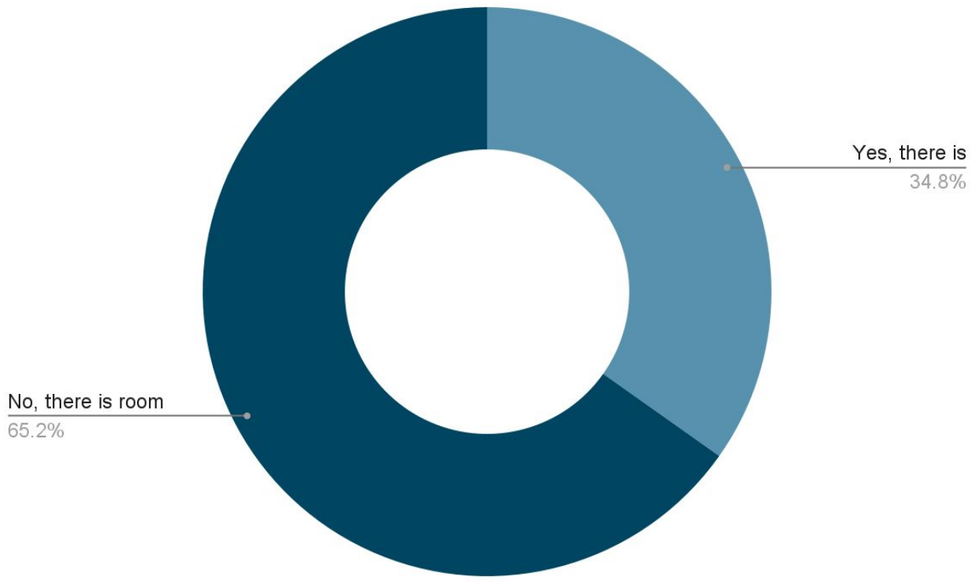


Most respondents (80%) reported they don't have any accessibility needs.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers

The Consumers of Arts & Culture in MOC feel the diversity of artists could be improved

Q28: Do you feel artists/creators/performers/cultural workers of diverse identities are adequately represented in the Municipality of Chester?



Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers or skip the question

Q29: What could be done locally to better include and amplify the voices of individuals and groups of diverse identities? (ranking in order of importance)

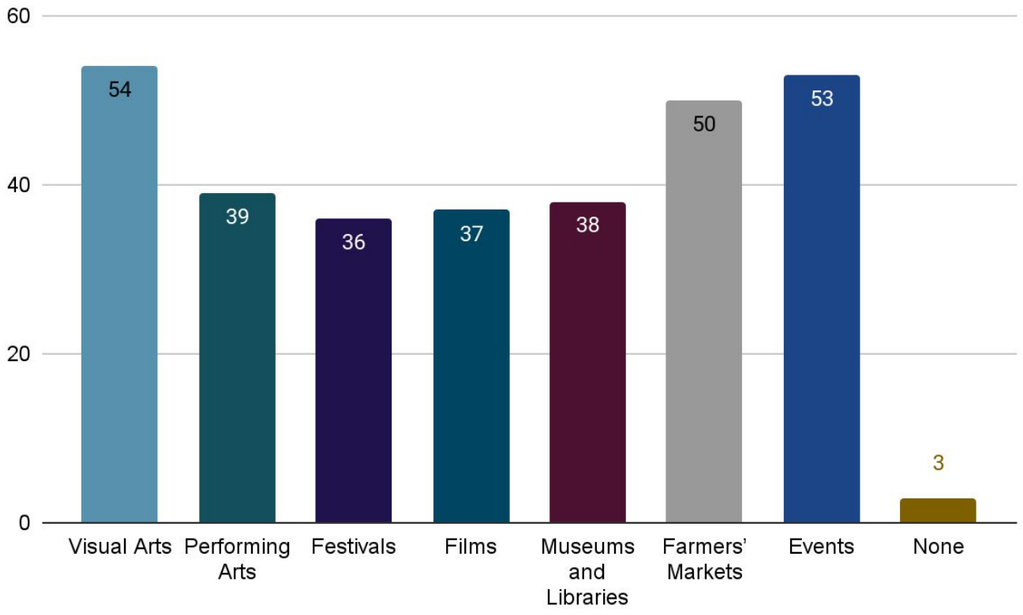
- Setting aside money for DEI initiatives
- Providing training to staff/volunteers on DEI initiatives
- Showcasing equity deserving artists and performers
- Creating opportunities for celebrating the cultures of social groups
- Ensuring venues are accessible to everyone

Respondents highlighted that they find gaps in adequate representation of diverse backgrounds of artistes/cultural performers, and suggest possible remedies.

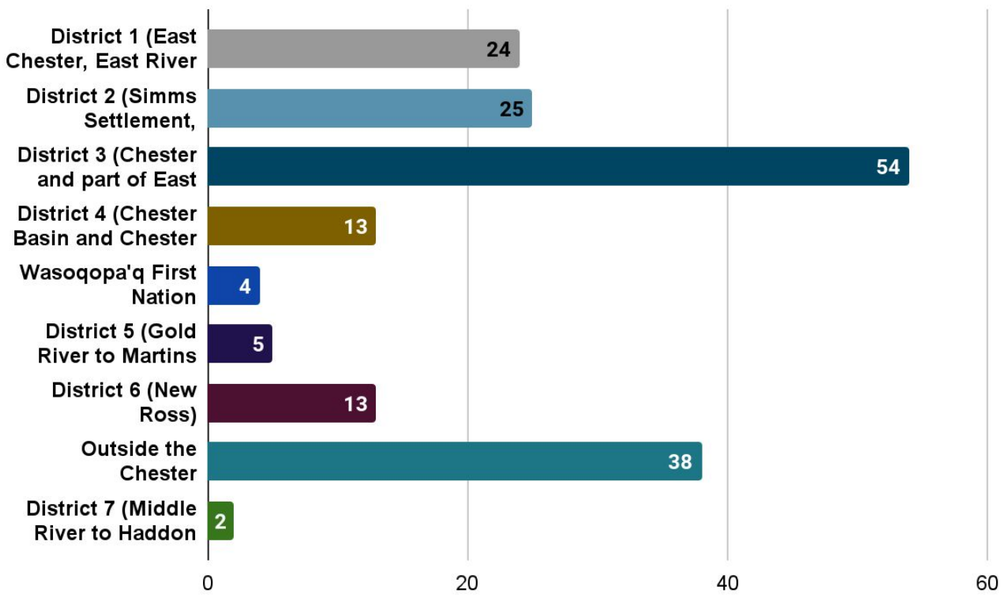
Survey Results for MOC Arts and Culture Strategy

Visual Arts are the main type of event that respondents participate in

Q1: What are the main Arts and culture events that you participate in ?



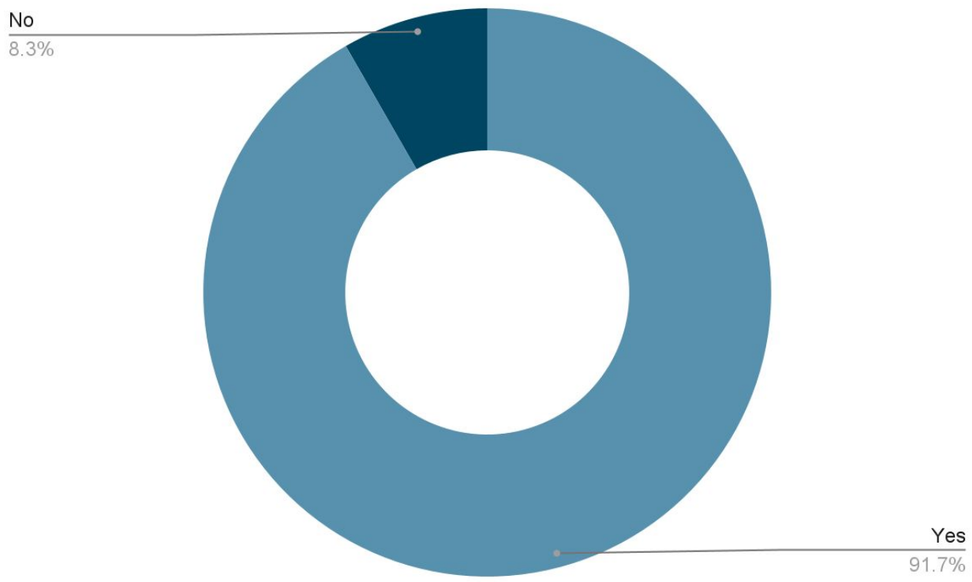
Q2: Where do you participate in the arts and culture events ?



Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose multiple answers

Most respondents want to participate in a wider variety of Arts & Culture events

Q3: Would you like to participate in more events ?



Q4: What are the types of cultural events that you would like to see in the Municipality of Chester?

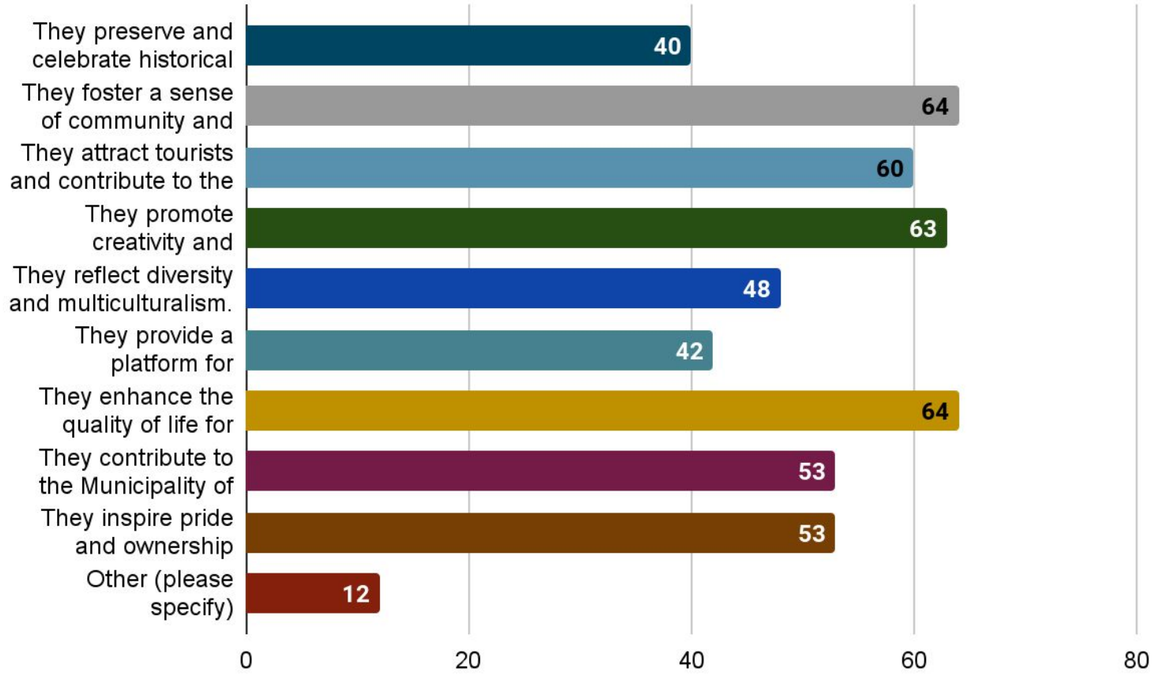
- Public Art competitions, Music and folk culture festivals
- Regular events like Canada Day, summer festivals, themed art studio visits
- Night time art installations like Nuit Blanche
- Heritage festivals to celebrate NS wooden boats like schooners and C-class
- Exhibitions to showcase local talent in music and art
- Local fairs and yearlong themed fairs/block parties and parades to celebrate local produce, food, wine etc,
- Winter activities like carnivals, christmas fairs, Old Home Week which thrived in the 70s
- Farmers markets for seasonal bounties

Almost 94% of responders would like to participate in more events if they fall within their preferences like music and art festivals, local fairs, farmers markets etc.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents provided detailed answers

Fostering community and promoting creativity are the major outcomes of a cultural activity

Q5: How do cultural events shape the identity of the Municipality of Chester ?

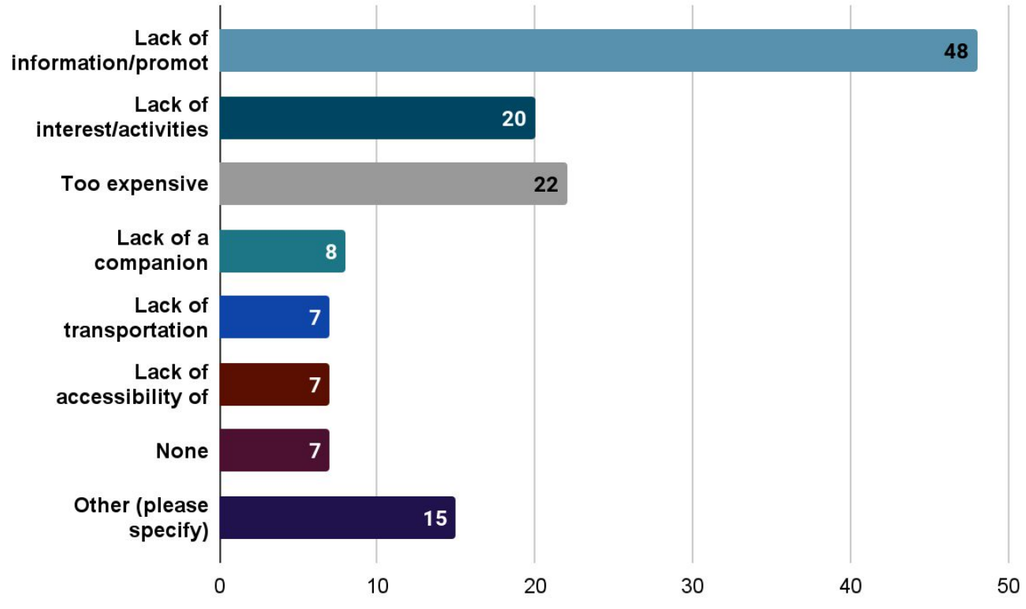


Arts and culture events foster a sense of community and promote creativity/ innovation across the Municipality of Chester. This enhances the quality of life for locals as well an contributes to the local economy.

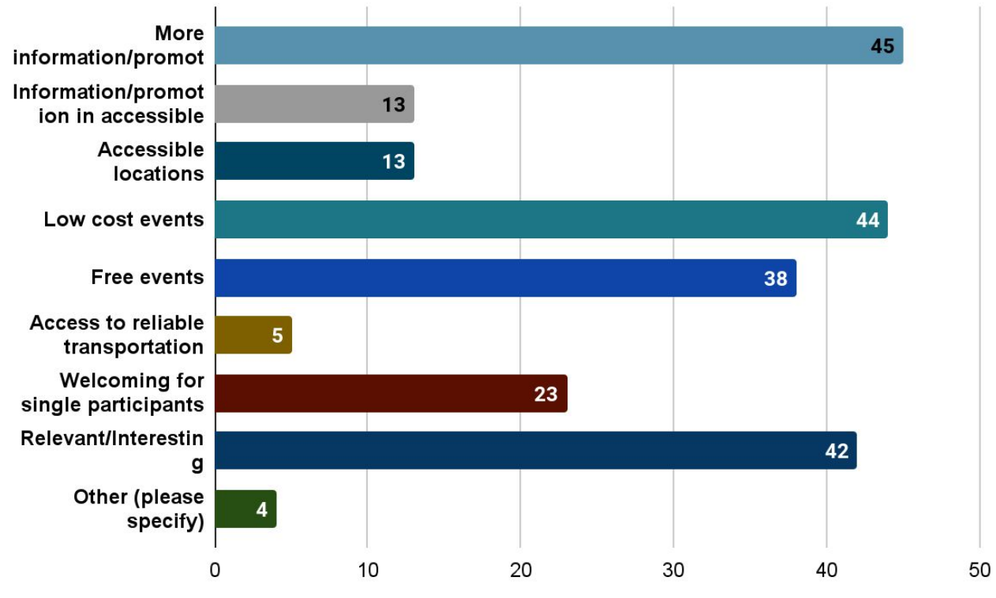
Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose multiple answers

Promoting relevant information would encourage participation

Q6: What are the largest obstacles to Arts and culture activities?



Q7: What would encourage you to take part in more activities?



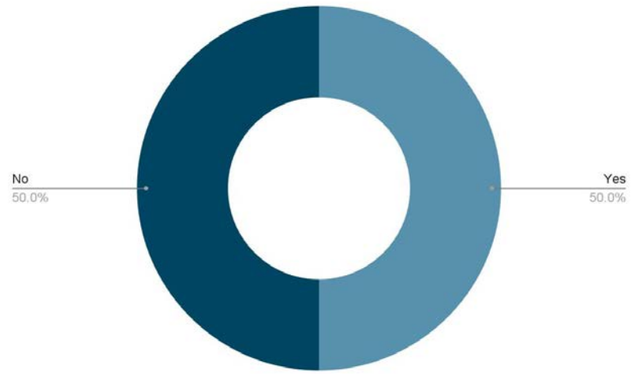
Lack of information is the major deterrent to participation in cultural events. Almost 62% of respondents feel that more information about relevant and accessible events would improve participation.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose multiple answers

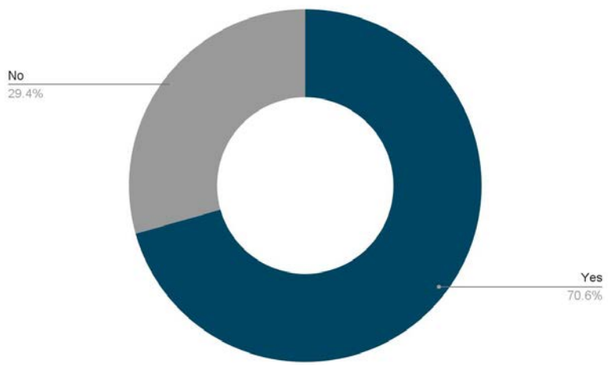
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The Municipality of Chester is a hub for Arts and Culture

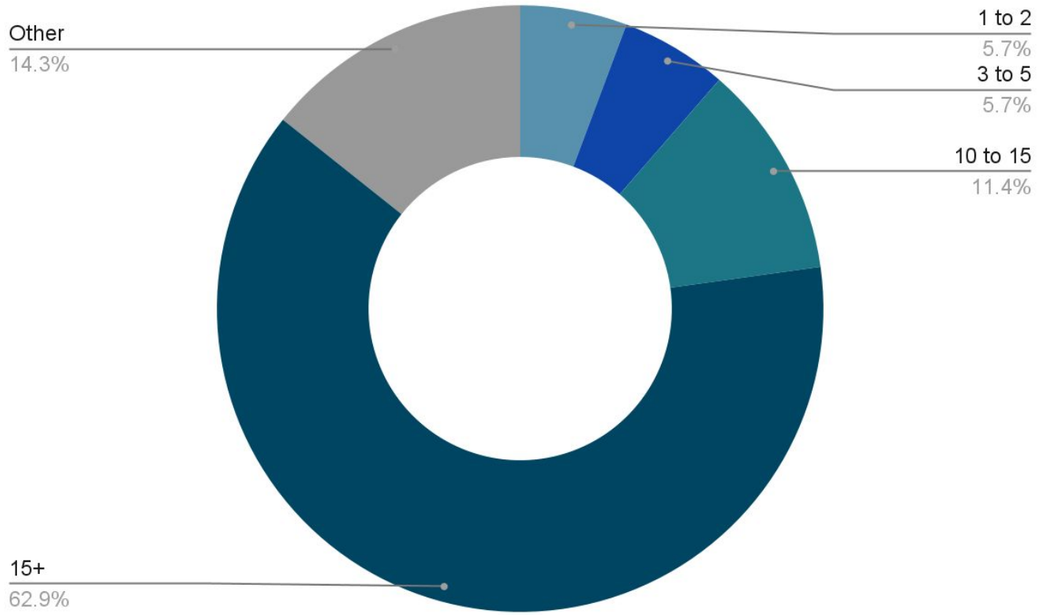
Q30 : What percent of respondents have an artistic practise?



Q32: What percent of respondents practice professionally ?



Q35: How long have you identified as a creator?



While most respondents have an artistic practice or identify as a creator, only a small fraction depend on it for professional employment.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers or skip the question

The MOC is a melting pot for a myriad of art practises with a strong community (written questions)

Q31: What is the discipline of your art ?

*This was an optional question, which received 34 responses

- Visual Arts: 43.8%
- Crafts & Design: 21.9%
- Music & Performing: 12.5%
- Other/Multidisciplinary: 21.9%

Q33: What are your thoughts about your current career trajectory?

*This was an optional question, which received 23 responses

- Established or steady: 36%
- Mid stage/ thriving: 32%
- Early stage/ expanding: 16%
- Struggling: 16%

Q34: What makes the Municipality of Chester a place where you can undertake your creative work ?

*This was an optional question, which received 30 responses

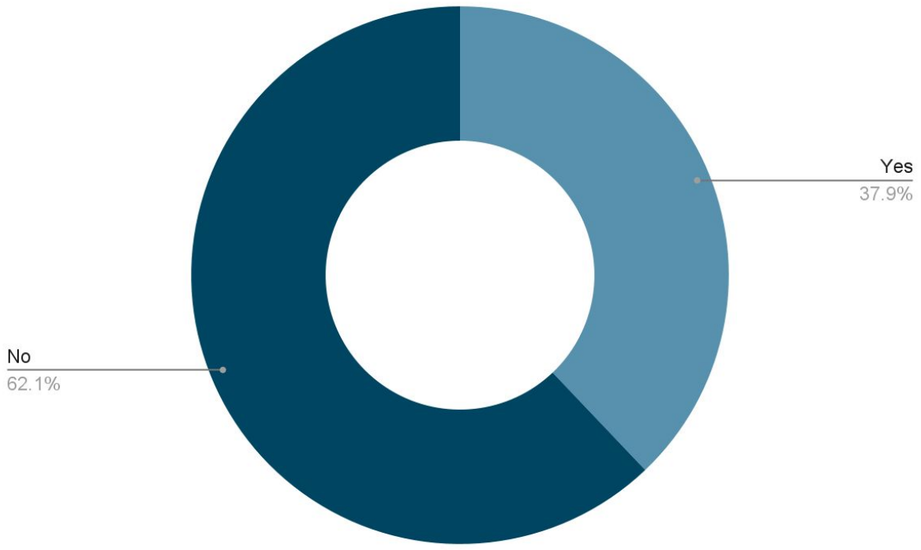
- It is their Hometown: 43%
- Abundance of creative individuals from different spheres of art: 20%
- Appreciation for an artistic culture: 13.3%
- Supportive community: 23.3%

The Municipality of Chester has diverse art and culture practises at various stages, aided by its supportive community culture.

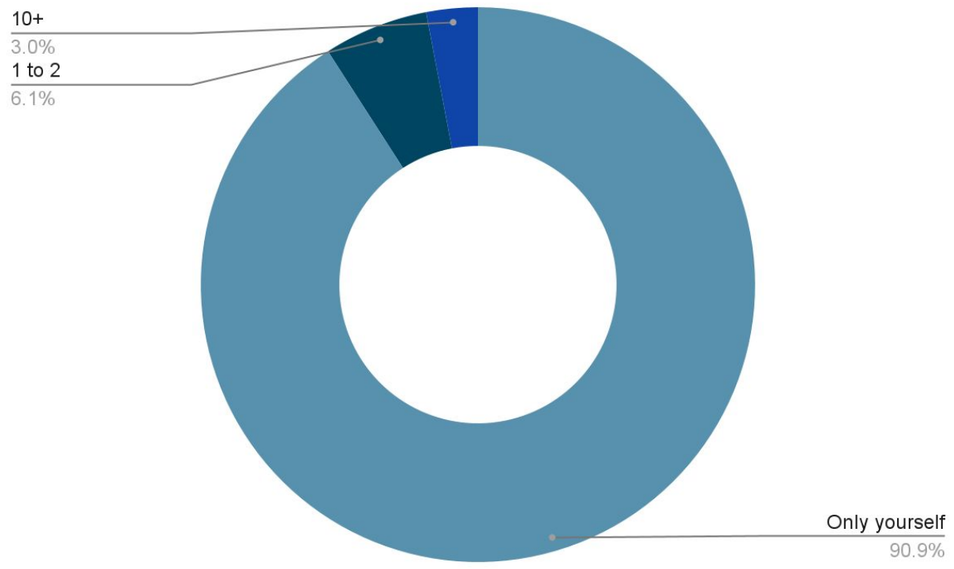
Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers or skip the question

Arts & Culture professions do not contribute to employment or job creation in the Municipality of Chester

Q36 : Is the artistic profession your primary source of income?



Q37: How many employees do you hire professionally?



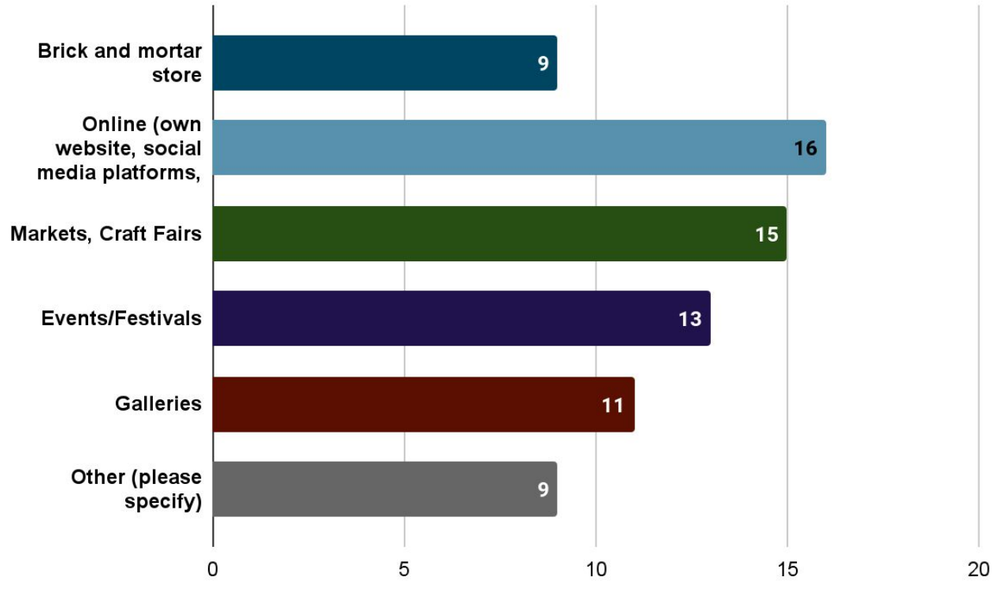
Almost 62% of artistes don’t sustain their livelihood through their art, while 90% don’t pursue it as an entrepreneurial activity.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers or skip the question(s)

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The majority of artists promote/sell their work online and cite tourism as good for business

Q38: How do you sell your work?



Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose multiple answers or skip the question

Q39: How does tourism impact your business?

- Creates an audience for arts and culture shows/work
- Impacts customer footfall through tourist engagement and art sale
- The number of sales for products/services related to arts & culture increase when there are more tourists, especially during summer months

Almost 50% of respondents publicise their work online and generate business revenue from it. Additionally, tourism has an overall positive impact on business by engaging more audience and improving participation.

There is need for improved Municipal support to allow growth in Arts & Culture events

Q40: What Municipal support would benefit you?

- Advertising and promotional support
- Access to education for improving business engagement
- Affordable workspace to host events
- More events to showcase local art and talent

Q41: What Arts & Culture activities/events would you prefer in future ?

- Public engagement initiatives like artists in residence programs , paint the town etc
- Multi-day festivals or cultural activities like art displays or dance, writing festivals
- Street fairs, outdoor concerts, road theatres
- Heritage tours, outdoor history festivals

Most respondents feel better advertising and hosting a variety of events could improve engagement, which can also positively impact local art and talent.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose text answers or skip the question

Better infrastructure support will help local artists benefit in their artistic endeavors

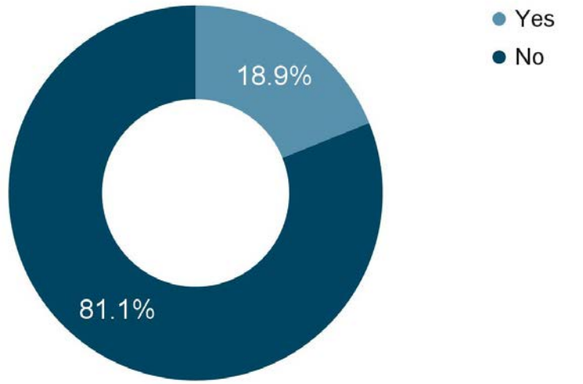
Q42: As an artist/cultural worker/performer, what infrastructure would benefit you in the next 5 years (ranked in order of preference)?
(Written Response)

OPTIONS	AVERAGE RANKING (1 - most important, 8 - least important)
Additional indoor exhibition and performance spaces	3.04
Community arts programming space	3.65
Outdoor space for art installation/public art	3.73
Access to specialized equipment like printing presses, kilns, recording studios etc	3.91
Additional outdoor spaces for festivals and performances	4.00
Access to rental studio space	4.56
Work / living space	4.58
Equipment storage	5.83

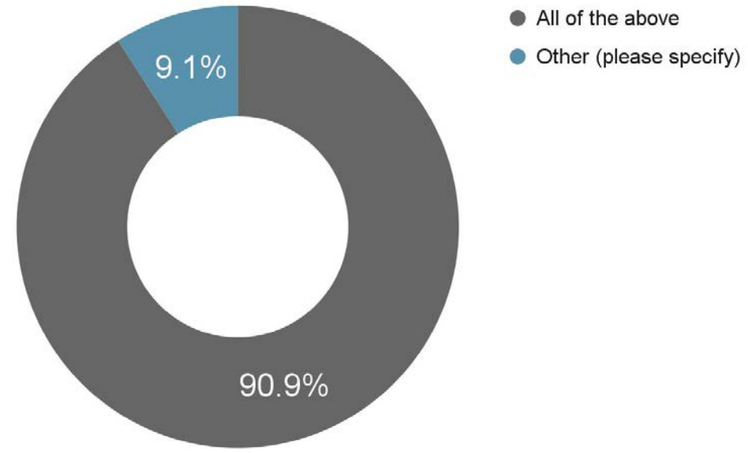
Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose essay answers or skip the question

Hospitality businesses benefit from Arts/Culture events and can provide spaces to host events

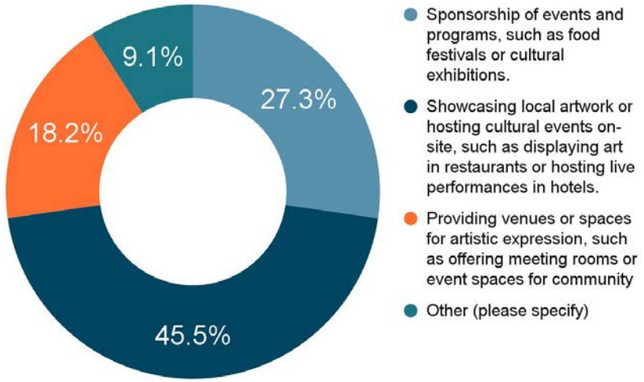
Q43: Do you own a food/accommodation/tourism-related business?



Q44: How do Arts & culture events impact the food/accommodations sector of the local economy?



Q45: How can food/accommodation/service sector businesses promote arts & culture initiatives?

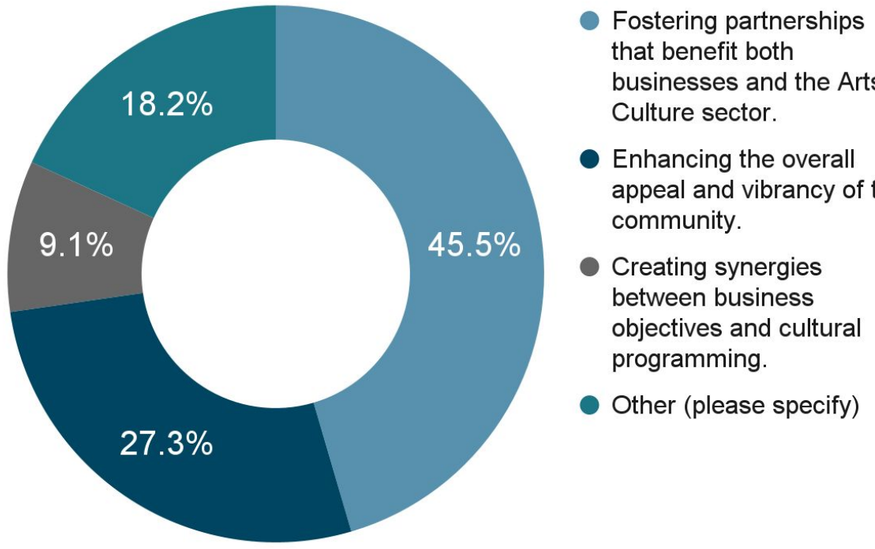


Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers or skip the question

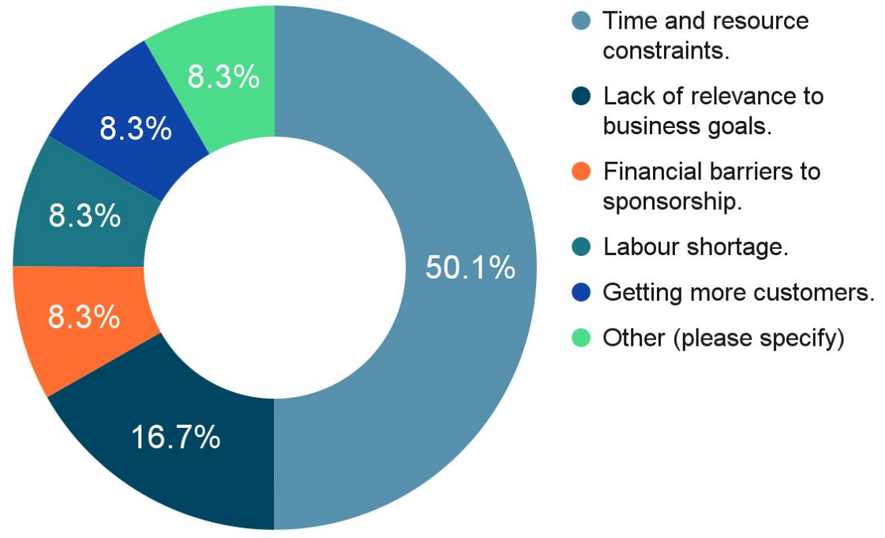
Almost 90% of respondents feel that arts and culture events are good for boosting local economic activity, while food/ accommodation and tourism sectors can also reciprocate by providing space for such initiatives.

An effective Arts & Culture strategy would foster rewarding partnerships

Q46: How could an Arts & Culture strategy align with the goals and interests of the tourism sector in the Municipality of Chester?



Q47: What challenges can be foreseeable barriers to businesses in actively supporting Arts & Culture initiatives ?



Most respondents feel that an effective arts and culture strategy will help in fostering partnerships which benefit both businesses and arts & culture practices, while alleviating the challenges arising due to time and resource constraints.

Source : Public survey for Chester Arts & culture by ASBB ; respondents could choose single answers or skip the question

Town Hall Summary

Purpose of Engagements:

- To understand what makes The Municipality of Chester unique.
- To map out the current cultural resources that are valuable for the community.
- To think about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for arts and culture in the municipality.
- To vision the future of Arts and Culture in the Municipality.

Town Hall Summary

What do you think are the distinctive features, characteristics, attractions, landmarks, and events that contribute to the uniqueness and charm of the Municipality of Chester? What does arts and culture mean to you, and how can the municipality support your vision in the next five years?

- The Municipality of Chester's charm lies in its close-knit communities, rich history, and attractions like Oak Island and New Ross' Christmas tree land. With hiking trails, golf courses, yacht/sailing clubs, live theatre, and historic sites like Ross Farm, it offers diverse activities. Festivals, markets, and art events enrich local culture.
- Strengthen communication between municipalities and local businesses, ensuring their needs are heard and addressed in a timely manner, and attract more restaurants to the area.
- Invest in youth by providing performance and employment opportunities and ensure the sustainable operation of food & beverage and, arts & culture sectors.
- Increase availability of long-term rentals over Airbnbs
- Provide resources to support a healthy non-profit and Arts & Culture sector, and remove barriers for the hospitality sector.
- Create a space directory for community use and appoint a resource person to assist with Arts & Culture groups and grants.
- Expand Pro Kids to include arts and performance activities, and develop funding strategies for youth and children's programs.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Schools provide community engagement with diverse programs and after-school events, while abundant activities and scenic geography, including Rails to Trails and water access, enhance local life.
- The area features local art exhibitions, and recreational opportunities, supported by fresh, energetic employees and rising entrepreneurs with visionary ideas.
- A welcoming communities with strong volunteerism and acceptance of new ideas fosters community-driven activities and local expertise.
- Grants and resources support preservation and development, complemented by local newsletters, web-based communication, and excellent programming such as the New Ross Family Resource Center.
- A variety of formal and informal events are hosted at the Chester Playhouse and businesses.

WEAKNESS

- No cultural information on the Mi'Kmaw community and history, and no information centre for marketing, leading to insufficient awareness.
- Need for more accommodations, shopping opportunities, and recreational facilities in need of repair. While the municipality provides many little grants, there are more opportunities for more targeted grants.
- Many artists are struggling with limited connections to other artists, a lack of studio space, and not enough places to come together and share ideas.
- Loss of architectural heritage
- Volunteer burnout is an prominent issue, with no central hub for the arts, and limited space to showcase art.
- Significant space for inclusivity in the arts community.
- Need for better health and education programs.,
- Lack of versatile spaces to host events year-round, regardless of the weather.
- Similar to the playhouse, there is opportunities for the Yacht and Golf clubs could work towards being more inclusive and bridge the gap between those who are privileged and those who are less affluent.

SWOT Analysis

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase collaboration with schools to engage young people and develop large community projects and festivals like Chester Race Week with art events.
- Attract tourists to stay longer by creating more opportunities, increasing access available to the water, and improving marketing through local fairs and word of mouth.
- Build more accommodations, lower housing prices, and develop a transportation system to support tourism growth and community needs related to the arts community.
- More collaboration with nearby jurisdictions such as Lunenburg to create coordinated efforts.
- Focusing on developing and mentoring the new generation of artists (youth).
- Improve library accessibility for all ages, enhance road infrastructure, and public facilities.
- Offer workshops in natural surroundings with affordable or free programming and maintain heritage while supporting equity.
- Foster community involvement by providing grants and support for artists, and increase the number of arts teachers and accessible programming as the population grows.
- More studio space for artists to display work.
- Tailored programming for attracting professional artists to the area.
- Create more tailored workshops for artists weather it be for running a businesses, insurance, mentorship,and other artistry.
- Creating studio maps and coordinated events and communication.

THREATS

- Municipalities housing and affordability impedes professional or new artists from moving into the area.
- A lack of adequate funding for public arts programs in schools or with youth.
- A lack of space to display and practice arts.
- More opportunities to host professional artists.
- Transportation and housing to be able to attract more artisans.
- Volunteer burnout as much of the arts community runs on volunteers who are involved in various other opportunities throughout the community and lack the time and resources for additional activities.
- A lack of coordinated communication and events across the large area that MOC covers.

Interviews

Who We Engaged

1. Teresa Bergen (Teresa Bergen Ceramics): Limited local art opportunities and insufficient tourist accommodations are a challenge which can be addressed by expanding local artist platforms and fostering a collaborative art community.

2. Sheila Woodcock (Lunenburg Foundations of the Arts): Lack of municipal recognition and Indigenous engagement are key challenges which can be improved through collaborations, addressing funding issues and enhancing community involvement.

3. Kai (Pride Lunenburg County): There are safety concerns and lack of inclusive spaces for queer artists, these can be managed by improving hate crime responses and increasing representation and pay equity.

4. Kenney Fitzpatrick (Dance Nova Scotia): Funding instability and rural isolation hinder progress they can be addressed by advocating for cultural heritage promotion, unique arts experiences, and better representations for marginalised groups.

5. Briony Carros (Arts Nova Scotia): Funding pressure and low grand success rates are barriers addressed through initiatives that integrate art into daily life, fostering regional partnerships, and tracking long-term impact.

6. Ellen Johnson (Accessibility Coordinator): Poor communication and lack of accessible planning are a challenge addressed by improving internal processes and incorporating inclusion and accessibility into projects.

7. Andrew Chandler (Chester Playhouse): Reluctance supporting experimental arts and municipal funding issues can improve with multi-year funding, youth arts education and better communication and outreach.

8. Cynthia Myers (Steering Committee/Kids Programming): Lack of outdoor spaces and transportation limit youth engagements, fixing this requires increasing outdoor venues, school partnerships, and year-round programming for youth.

9. Stephanie Miller Vincent (Visit South Shore): Problems in marketing and lack of collaboration hindering tourism are addressed through a cultural passport program, developing art-focused events, and using municipal spaces for studios.

10. Bronwyn MacFair (ED, Chester Arts Centre): Challenges in efficiency of programming organization and support for queer artists can be supported by improving communication, better transportation for artists and expanding community programs.

11. Livia Davis (Playwear): Networking and staffing issues affect her business, support in more local networking and making Chester a year-round destination will help.

12. Bryan (Doreywood Decor): Difficulty accessing home studio insurance and poor relations between professional and self-taught artists could be solved by encouraging collaboration and promoting creativity.

13. Andrew McNamara and Valerie Denn: Limited opportunities for artistic directors and focus on exporting music are concerns that can be addressed through investments in local arts programming and opportunities in Chester.

11. Municipal Staff

Key Priority Areas for Arts and Culture Strategy

01	**Build Cultural Leadership and Capacity**	• Improve collaboration and communication. • Address artist and arts leaders needs.
02	**Integrate & Prioritize Arts & Culture in Municipal Planning**	• Enable cultural policies and improve internal processes. • Embrace Arts & Culture across departments. • Municipality's role in planning future innovation arts.
03	**Leverage Creative Sector for Cultural Tourism Opportunities**	• Strategic Partnerships. • Coordinated Events Strategy. • Long term view (tourism planning/branding).
04	**Embed Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility in Arts & Culture Sector Planning**	• Align with EDI committee and work with accessibility coordinator. • Prioritize pay equity. • Building authentic relationships with local BIPOC communities. • Address colonial practices in Arts & Culture sector.
05	**Build Community by Strengthening Arts & Culture Programming**	• Address community and artist needs through stronger programming. • Programming to attract more artists in residence.
06	**Improve Public Spaces, Cultural Infrastructure & Access to Spaces for Arts & Culture Use**	• Cultural Mapping. • Creative Placemaking. • Public Art for future developments. • Better access and info for indoor spaces for arts & culture use.

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