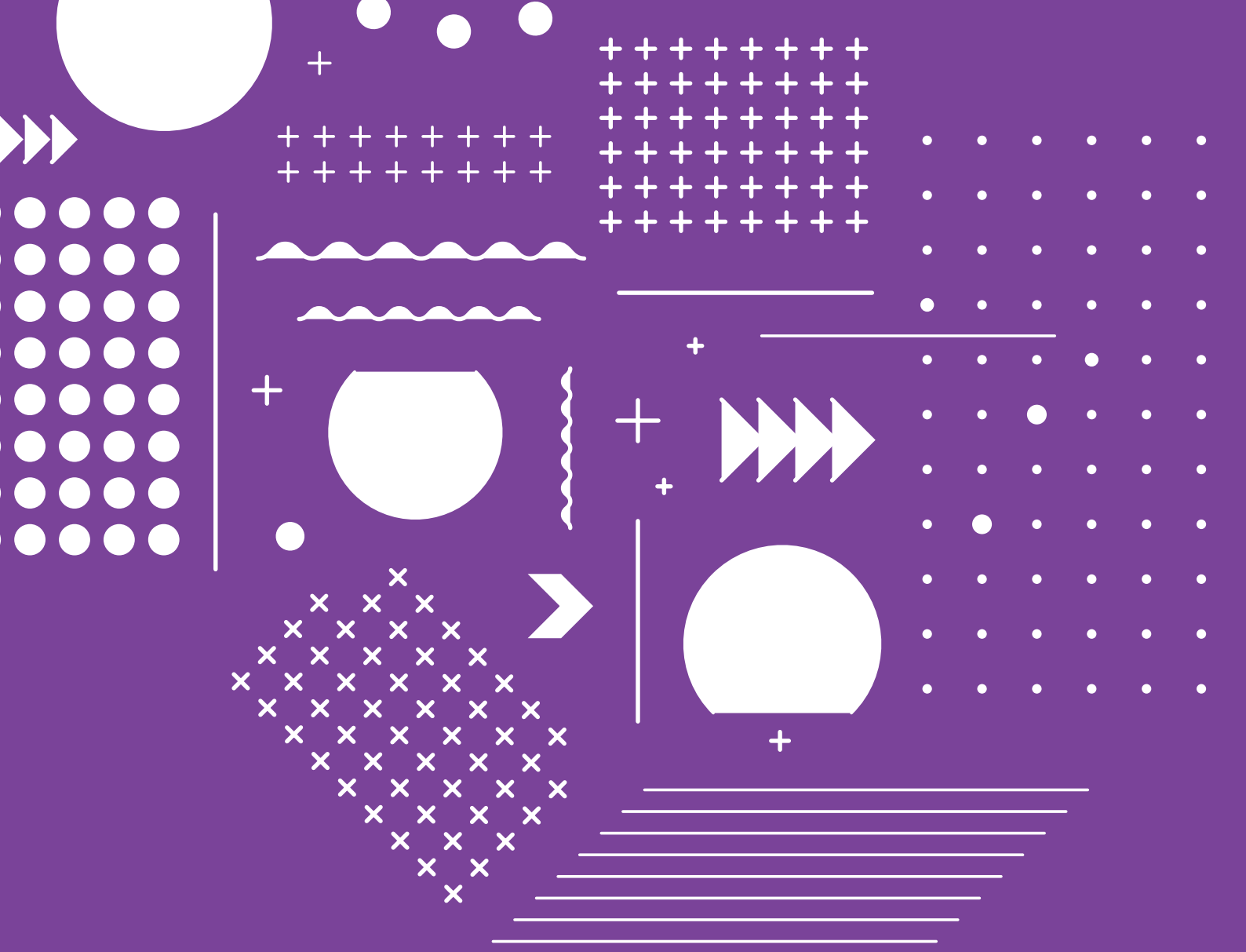


# CONCLUSION/KEY POINTS ON 'A FUTURE MODEL YOUTH ARTS STRATEGY'

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- **Significant measures must be taken to improve opportunities to engage with quality arts experiences for 13-24-year-olds in Offaly. A dedicated holistic approach to youth arts participation is required to meet the needs of an evolving contemporary youth culture.**
- **Investing in youth arts is an investment in the future creative landscape of the area. Implementation of the youth arts strategy will take persistence and patience.**
- **Over the next five years, use of the guiding pillars and objectives will result in a more engaged youth population and an upskilled community of artists and practitioners. It will require building and encouraging both young people and the community at large to take ownership of their youth arts strategy.**
- **Central to the efficacy of the strategy is collaboration. Working in partnership under a central guiding vision will ensure a clear and consistent message for the future of youth arts initiatives in Offaly.**



# CHAPTER

# SIX



# SURVEY FINDINGS

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This chapter sets out the findings from surveyed public opinion, which was undertaken as a key aspect of the research (for full survey results see Appendices). The findings are summarised and an analysis of emerging trends will be presented at the conclusion of the chapter.

## **Survey Methodology**

In November 2017, four online surveys were designed and circulated on the theme of youth arts. They included:

1. A youth survey (13-24-year-olds)
2. Parents of youth survey
3. Artists living and working in Offaly
4. Professionals working with young people in youth centres, schools and community centres.

All surveys were conducted anonymously and were designed to stand alone. There was no intentional link between the respondents. All four surveys were designed and managed by SurveyMonkey.ie. Hard copies were made available to participants at an Offaly Public Participation Network Meeting (Offaly PPN) and the results uploaded to SurveyMonkey.

The public were informed of the rationale behind the process via a press release circulated by email and social media. This communicated that the objective was to gather opinion, which would be taken into consideration in developing a new model for arts provision for young people in Offaly. The Arts Office contacted art teachers in schools to encourage them to promote the online survey to their students, and give time for students to complete the survey in class.

## Survey Response

The online surveys involved 115 young people aged between 13 and 24; 23 parents of young people aged between 13 and 24; 27 artists; and 11 adults working with young people in a professional capacity in formal and non-formal settings, such as schools and youth centres. Participation in the survey covered a geographical spread across Offaly's towns, villages and rural areas. Some 35% of participants listed their location as urban, with 65% stating they lived in villages or countryside. Information was collated on the following themes relevant to young people:

- What arts activities they are currently engaging with and the frequency of the occurrence
- Where arts engagement happens
- Motivation to take part
- How far a young person travels to attend
- What is the most important aspect?
- Descriptions of a good or bad experience with the arts
- Preference of day and time to engage
- How young people engage with the arts as audience members
- Barriers to engaging
- What arts training and events young people would like to see more of

This information was measured from the viewpoint of three stakeholders: young people, parents of young people, and professionals who work with young people. A similar framework was provided for the survey of artists living or working in Offaly. The artist survey also focused on measuring current artist engagement with young people and interest in further training in youth arts facilitation.

## Findings - Youth and Parents' Surveys

Surveys 1 and 2 indicated:

- A high uptake in the **type of weekly arts engagement** in a number of disciplines ranked from the highest frequency of occurrence in drama, literature, art, digital media, dance, music, film.
- **Where arts engagement happens:** a key finding was that engagement was happening in school, as stated by 44% of young people and 55% of parents. Private tuition was the next highest, then youth clubs and private providers such as stage schools. Reference was also made to significant opportunities provided by festivals particularly in the Birr area and in Birr Theatre & Arts Centre.
- The biggest **motivation to participate** was fun, listed by 70% of young people and 63% of parents; followed by skilled facilitator as listed by 50% of young people and 68% of parents. Other important factors included making new friends, cost, location, opportunity to perform, and accreditation. These varied in response from 22% to 28%.
- A feature of a rural area such as Offaly is the **distance one must travel** to engage with the arts. For 23% of young people surveyed, they could only engage in activities that were within walking distance, with this opinion seconded by 9% of parents surveyed. The majority of young people and

adults surveyed discussed car journeys of between 10 and 60 minutes as an option they would use to avail of an arts experience.

- **Significant growth in self-confidence** as a result of youth arts activities was identified by 40% of young people, 80% of professionals and 52% of parents. Some 29% of young people measured significant growth in social skills as a result of youth arts engagement, as did 80% of professionals and 50% of parents. Significant improvement to decision-making skills was named by 21% of young people, 60% of professionals and 19% of parents. Some 14% of young people surveyed witnessed significant improvement in their ability to problem-solve, as did 60% of professionals and 33% of parents.
- **Optimum time for youth arts activities** to take place was identified by 39% of young people surveyed as weekdays after 6pm, seconded by 50% of parents. Some 37% of those surveyed named weekdays between 4pm and 6pm as the best time slot, as did 36% of parents. Wednesdays and Fridays were popular options. Sunday was seen as the least favourable option by all cohorts surveyed.
- Young people who participated in the survey indicated relatively limited ongoing **engagement with the arts as audience members**. The most popular way to engage was through film, listed by 20% of young people who had been to the cinema within a week of being surveyed. Musical theatre, theatre, dance shows and visit to a gallery were mentioned with low percentages.
- **Barriers to participation** in youth arts training or events produced similar findings for both young people and parents. Lack of interest was named by 52% of young people and 47% of parents. Cost was listed as a barrier by 50% of young people and 52% of parents. Location was identified by 48% of young people and 52% of parents. Lack of age-appropriate opportunities was listed by 39% of young people. Other interest such as sports was named as a barrier by 35% of young people and 34% of parents. Lack of choice was listed by 33% of young people as a barrier to engagement. Professionals working with young people identified lack of funding and skill set as the key barriers to engaging the young people they worked with in arts activities.
- In response to **'What would you like to see more of?'**<sup>36</sup> the top six results were: film, music, drama, dance, literature and digital media. Parents' responses ranking from the highest were: drama, music, digital media, dance, literature and art. Professionals gave the following list of preferences: digital media, music, film, circus, art and literature.

## Findings - Artists' Survey

**A total of 27 artists based in Offaly participated in an online survey.** There was a broad representation of art forms including drama, musical theatre, art, digital media, literature, circus, dance, music, photography and poetry. The highest volume of responses was from the genre of drama and musical theatre. Geographical representation was across Offaly.

- Some 56% of the artists surveyed offer **workshops** to the public and 44% do not. Of the 44% who do not offer classes and are not working with young people, all said they would consider it in the future. Some 33% currently work with young people aged 4-24 years.
- **Barriers against working with young people were identified as:** resources, Garda vetting procedures, lack of locations, funding, lack of facilitator training and child protection training.
- Of those who are offering workshops to young people, **location** is a factor. Some 34% work in private premises, rented or owned; 30% work in schools, 19% in youth clubs, 19% in other

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<sup>36</sup> The results here are based upon respondents being allowed more than one choice from options given

locations, 15% in arts centres and 11% in community centres.

- **Engaging with disadvantaged or marginalised communities:** Some 55% of artists have engaged with disadvantaged or marginalised communities, while 22% have not but would consider it. Cost was identified by 70% of artists as the biggest **barrier** to youth participation in this area, followed by lack of choice at 59%, location at 55%, lack of age-appropriate events at 55%, lack of interest at 33% and other interests such as sport at 25%.
- In response to **what artists would like to see more of for young people in Offaly**, respondents indicated: dance - 48%, art - 44%, film - 44%, music - 40%, circus - 33%, literature - 33%, digital media - 29%, and musical theatre - 29%. Photography, street art, spectacle and contemporary theatre were other named interests that should be explored.
- All of the artists surveyed (100%) were willing to upskill to share their expertise with young people. **Artist supports needed to provide workshops** included funding, a suitable location to act as both a venue to conduct work in and also to store appropriate materials, plus training in facilitation, workshop management and confidence-building skills. Many suggested introducing a competitive funding stream for the purchase of equipment and materials that could be used in community contexts for work with young people.

“ THE ARTS SPEAK DIRECTLY TO YOUNG PEOPLE’S MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES AND OFFER A VARIETY OF PLATFORMS TO ‘GIVE THEIR SORROW WORDS’. THE ARTS BRING THEM OUT OF ISOLATION INTO COMMUNITY AND BUILD THEIR RESILIENCE. ONE-TO-ONE SPECIALIST THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION HAS ITS PLACE, BUT IT IS A LIMITED RESOURCE THAT WILL NEVER SOLVE THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. EVERY YOUNG PERSON TODAY IS CHALLENGED TO ADAPT TO A RAPIDLY CHANGING AND FRIGHTENING WORLD FOR WHICH THERE ARE NO CLEAR ‘MAPS’. THE ARTS HAVE A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING THEM MAKE SENSE AND NAVIGATE THESE NEW FRONTIERS. ”

*Dr Tony Bates  
Founder  
Jigsaw - The National Centre for Youth Mental Health*

## Focus Groups

### Focus Group Methodology

Having completed quantitative research on preferences, qualitative research was then undertaken through the medium of focus groups. Three focus groups were held with young people in Offaly aged 13-24. Questions were prepared in advance which would facilitate group discussions and feedback via wallcharts, nominated spokespersons and in some cases, drawings. The line of questioning mirrored the online surveys in terms of garnering information but flexibility was allowed to go with the mood in the rooms if there was a thread to follow.

The following were discussed by the groups:

- What art forms you engage in already?
- Why do you take part?
- What kind of positive outcomes have you had from youth arts?
- Descriptions of good/bad arts experiences
- Practicalities - where and when activities take place, how often, costs?
- Barriers to engaging
- Supportive factors
- Engagement with the arts as audience members
- What do you want more of?

### The groups who participated were as follows:

#### Group 1:

Transition year students at Oaklands Community College, Edenderry

Number of participants: 14

Age group: 16 to 17

#### Group 2:

Youth club participants at Offaly Travellers Movement Youth Club, Tullamore

Number of participants: 5

Age group: 13 to 16

#### Group 3:

Invited sample of audience at Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, Birr

Number of participants: 6

Age group: 16 to 23

## Findings - Focus Groups

- Young people in all three groups needed explanations and examples on what exactly constituted 'arts'. The highest ranking art forms that young people engaged in regularly were: drama, music, art, film, digital media and dance.
- The **biggest motivation** to take part was "to have fun", followed by "to chill out" or relax and "learning something new".
- **Positive and negative outcomes:** Improved self-confidence was the biggest positive outcome from participation in all three groups. Negative outcomes varied in the three different locations. In Edenderry, young people discussed projects ending as a negative and feeling there was "nothing for us out here". At Offaly Travellers Movement in Tullamore, young people reported the feelings of "shame" associated with performing in public and feeling lost in a big group. At Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, young people discussed favouritism in casting and balancing study with rehearsals for plays and musicals.
- **Practicalities** varied a lot in the locations. The majority favoured activities that could happen right after school, ideally in or close to school. Getting home and back into town again was highlighted as problematic by those who lived in rural locations.
- The **barriers to engaging** in Groups 1 and 3 were listed as: cost, lack of choice, lack of time, lack of interest. At Group 2, Offaly Travellers Movement members identified facilitators' lack of understanding of Traveller culture as the biggest barrier to participation.
- **Supportive factors** that would encourage participation were: low or no costs, good teachers, learning support, non-judgemental attitudes and fun atmosphere.
- Young people's main regular way to **engage with the arts as audience** members was through cinema, musicals, music and dance.
- The following art forms were selected as the top six that young people wished to see more of in Offaly: film, music, digital media, dance, drama and circus.

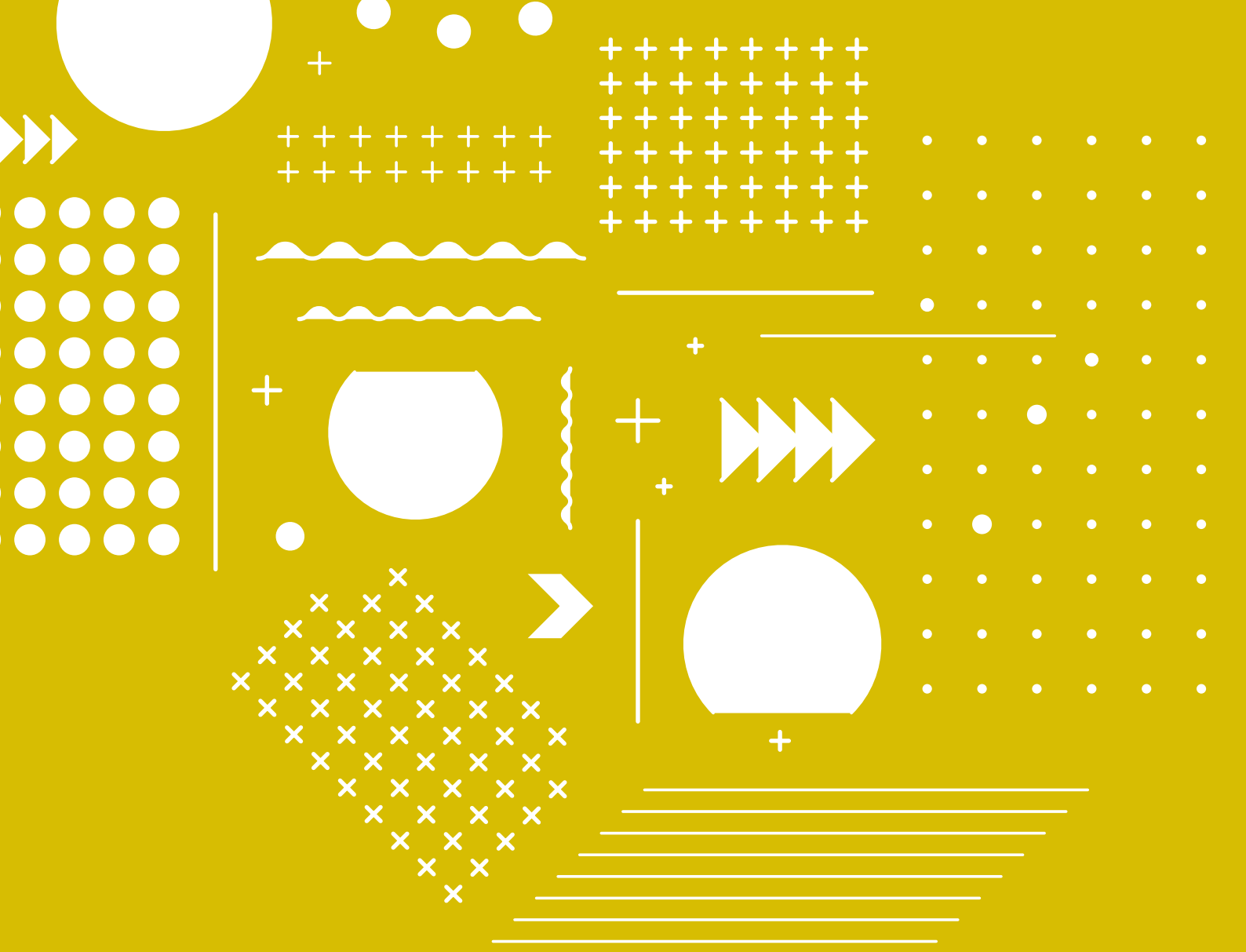




# CONCLUSION/KEY POINTS ON 'SURVEY FINDINGS'

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- **Who?** There are stakeholders on whom a strategy can be built. These stakeholders are: 1) young people as makers; 2) artists as facilitators of skill-sharing; 3) youth services as facilitators of potential target groups and venues; 4) arts service providers as facilitators of advice, guidance, training and overarching vision.
- **What?** The depth of interest in art forms is larger than participation. Discussions at focus groups on what constituted art indicated the potential for embracing new ways to engage young people through new media and digital devices. Unpicking some of the barriers to participation such as cost and looking at what people named as reason to participate, which possibly are not being addressed, such as certification, can be a way to open up participation rates.
- **Where?** Location of arts activities is an important consideration. Much of arts engagement is happening in schools - this can be viewed as either a challenge or an opportunity. Private tuition accounts for much of respondents' experience of the arts and yet cost is identified as a barrier to participation. Bringing this back to the social, economic and geographical makeup of Offaly is important. Addressing the issue of 'where' is a way to address access and inclusivity of arts activities.
- **When?** Survey feedback and focus group discussions indicate that young people are identifying a need for a broader, more multi-disciplinary youth arts strategy. Experience of many art forms outside of school settings is limited.
- The key to nurturing the development of a new model of youth arts engagement is collaboration and partnership. The fusing of the specific skill sets of adult youth workers and artists under the guidance of Offaly County Council Arts Office could allow everyone to work to their strengths for enhanced opportunity for young people to engage with the arts.



CHAPTER

SEVEN



# CONSULTATION TRENDS

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The overall consultation process involved 27 professionals from a variety of local and national organisations from the arts, youth and community sector. Following on from the data collected through surveys and focus groups, this chapter will summarise ideas and suggestions that emerged from these one-to-one interviews. The aim here is to begin to apply the collected information to the beginnings of a strategy.

There was a palpable desire and passion to serve the needs of young people present in the interview phase of this research.

## **Overview of consultations**

The objective of the interviews was to garner information on where the organisation/ department/ individual sat in their provision of youth arts opportunities. The goal was to identify where gaps in provision lay and where opportunities might be further developed. Barriers to engagement, as seen from the point of view of the interviewees, were discussed. With national organisations such as the Arts Council/an Chomhairle Ealaíon, National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) and Youth Theatre Ireland, interviews focused more on the national context and how Offaly's provision of youth arts experiences fared comparatively. Policies and funding streams that are specifically relevant to youth arts were discussed. A thread of consistency was a move towards a collaborative way of thinking and a partnership approach to improving opportunities for young people to engage with the arts.

## **Internal Consultations Offaly County Council**

Several departments at Offaly County Council participated in the consultation. Taking into consideration the information shared, the following section outlines suggestions that can enable a better environment for a Youth Arts Strategy to rest within the overall organisation. Within Offaly County Council, placing prominence on the question “Where do young people feature in this?” for any activity or initiative that is being planned, will stimulate a more youth-centric focus. The following are suggestions and observations for each section made during the consultations:

## **Suggestions and Observations**

### **Public Participation Network**

- Promote the advisory process that PPN offers for funding applications to incentivise community to take on youth arts projects.
- Establishment of PPN-funded training in youth leadership, team-building initiatives that support young people to participate with arts projects.
- Prioritise rural isolation with pilot arts projects in rural areas.

### **Comhairle na nÓg**

- Establish an arts subgroup as part of Comhairle.
- Formalise consultations with Comhairle by an agreed pattern of participation and engagement by Offaly County Council Arts Office with the group - to agree to meet three times a year.
- Consider opportunities for members to achieve their objectives through the medium of arts and continue to source funding streams to support such initiatives.

### **Library Service**

- Due consideration given to programming arts events specifically for the 13-24 age group.
- Support of youth arts initiative with provision of space for advisory panel to meet and training room for workshops, particularly in areas without an arts centre, such as Tullamore.
- Consideration given to improving access to learning in youth arts through the medium of books and reference areas in specialised arts topics

### **Heritage Department**

- Continue to explore the possibilities for partnerships on heritage youth projects that can have an arts focus and programming of events that can have a broad appeal for young people.
- Continue to look at the potential for Creative Ireland to support young people to create through the shared mediums of arts, heritage and libraries.



## **External Consultations - National and Local**

Having consulted with identified national and local figures a number of key themes emerged.

### **Theme 1: Tackling Disadvantage**

Under Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 discrimination is unlawful in employment, vocational training, advertising, collective agreements, the provision of goods and services. The grounds for discrimination are: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Chapter 1 looked at how disadvantage features in Offaly, noting that 50% of young people surveyed named cost as the biggest barrier to arts participation. The development of a Youth Arts Strategy can address the inclusivity of arts experience. The following were suggestions and observations drawn from the consultations.

### **Suggestions and Observations**

- Broadening opportunities for arts education in Offaly by the establishment of accredited training with partnerships between Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB), National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) and Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC).
- Consideration given to training opportunities in technical skills that support arts projects.
- Look at partnerships with agencies that work in disadvantaged communities; consider migrants, Travelling community, disability sector and consider how the young people in these communities can engage with the arts.

- Work closely with The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon in planning how to consider disadvantage when working with young people.
- Continue to look at Per Cent for Art Scheme as a way to generate quality experiences for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Transport: establish support from Local Link transport service for youth arts projects to bring young people from rural locations together for projects.

### **Case Study - Disadvantaged: Tullamore Traveller Organisation**

The following is an example of how a strategic alliance can be a way to improve participation in youth arts, tackle disadvantage and make new work.

The Tullamore Traveller Movement was launched in 1996 as a response to the needs of the local Traveller community and has since become the Offaly Traveller Movement (OTM). The organisation is committed to working for Traveller rights and social justice throughout the county. A community development organisation, OTM offers services responding to health, accommodation, youth, education and human rights.

Youth workers who work with young Travellers on an ongoing basis provided some excellent feedback and a focus group with young people from the Travelling community identified key considerations. "As a Traveller youth group, there are significant barriers to engaging young people in the arts as a result of cultural differences. Notably there is a reluctance to engage in activities other than the interests of their peers and an overall negative view of arts-focused activities. Confidence can be a big issue for these young people who have little opportunity to shine and express their creativity. This is particularly true for young Traveller males who view the arts as 'soft' and 'for girls'. With previous projects we have noted that a small number of males will initially get involved and actively and positively engage, behind the scenes. However, there is a strong resistance to follow through or 'be seen' in terms of an audience. They seek anonymity in this regard due to the negative view they perceive from their peers towards boys in creative activities. The gender dynamic is present in many other activities however outside of arts, and girls are generally easier to engage than boys. While there are barriers that present themselves in attempting to establish a committed group to participate and follow through in arts activities, there is also a strong underlying interest from the girls in these projects. They derive a huge amount of benefits from these activities despite being reluctant at first. The confidence and capacity building of young people that has been achieved upon evaluation of a project has been consistently noted. In addition, there is always an interest voiced in youth groups to start an arts-based project despite the surface resistance."

#### **Saranne Lovett,**

*Youth Worker*

*Offaly Travellers Movement*

### **Focus Group Discussion Summary**

A focus group with young Travellers aged between 12 and 16 highlighted the scope for engagement. What was evident is that young Travellers' ability to engage with the arts was diminished by virtue of their minority status. Raw unique talent was evident amongst the young Travellers who frequent OTM. This could be a way for young people to process fears and navigate changes in society, through the medium of artistic expression. The supportive structure of the centre, with youth workers knowing the young people so well, makes it an ideal project to be identified for a pilot scheme to target disadvantage.

## Theme 2: Pooling Resources

In examples where projects have excelled, such as Waterford Youth Arts, The Grainstore and Galway Youth Theatre<sup>37</sup>, a partnership approach upon establishment has been a key indicator of success and longevity. Offaly's urban areas are small in comparison to some of these examples. There are limited resources available in every context - from rooms to rehearse and perform in to skilled professionals to work with the young people. It makes sense to work in collaboration, to make the most out of available resources. A shared approach where a youth project could offer space and support by means of staff or volunteers who are familiar with the young people could boost engagement. If Offaly County Council Arts Office could fund an artist to work with groups in these contexts, it could cut through a lot of the barriers that both artists and professionals working with young people have identified. (see Appendices for full details) The consultation process highlighted that the partnership process can be the way forward for youth arts in Offaly. Chapter 4 'Resourcing Youth Arts' looked at the options for partnership development in greater detail.

## Theme 3: Meeting Young People where they are at

Young people in full-time education are 'time poor' and under a lot of pressure to spend their spare time working towards school and college work. Youth workers referenced the difficulties facing many of the young people they work with, such as economic constraints, lack of parental support to attend out-of-school settings, low attention spans due to overuse of social media and technology, exam pressure and ignorance of what constituted youth arts. A strategic Youth Arts Strategy must meet young people where they are at, both literally and metaphorically.

Youth arts needs to enter their space in a language that they recognise and understand, providing opportunities for young people in places or services where they are already engaging - schools, youth clubs or any setting where young people attend on a regular basis.

Getting into the 'headspace' of young people, including how opportunities to engage with the arts are designed, packaged and promoted, is essential. This could mean, for example, looking at a graffiti project or smartphone photography as a way to engage a group in visual arts.



<sup>37</sup> <https://www.galwayartscentre.ie/en/galway-youth-theatre>

# CONCLUSION/KEY POINTS ON 'CONSULTATION TRENDS'

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**What emerged from the consultations is the need to adjust focus to enable Offaly County Council to meet needs more completely. This requires some structural reform in parts, a shift in thinking for individuals in leadership roles and a greater consistency in the exploration of collaborative opportunities. There are existing structures within Offaly County Council that can support youth arts in ways that are not exhaustive of resources, both financial and human. With the Public Participation Network (PPN), Comhairle na nÓg, Library Service and Heritage Department, there are opportunities to improve and increase focus on youth arts and to boost engagement through a collaborative approach.**

**In the local community sector, youth workers who were consulted displayed a keen understanding of the benefits of youth arts and a commitment to provide and support arts opportunities for their service users. Collaborating with youth services in Offaly is something to consider as a way for a youth arts model to evolve.**

**National organisations with arts and youth focus are also very keen to advise, support and collaborate with Offaly County Council to rejuvenate youth arts in Offaly and boost opportunities for young people.**

**Three strong themes emerged from one-to-one interviews and consultations with a wide range of individuals. The input of those consulted was that a policy on youth arts must pay close attention to these areas: the importance of a) tackling disadvantage, b) pooling resources, c) meeting young people where they are at.**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

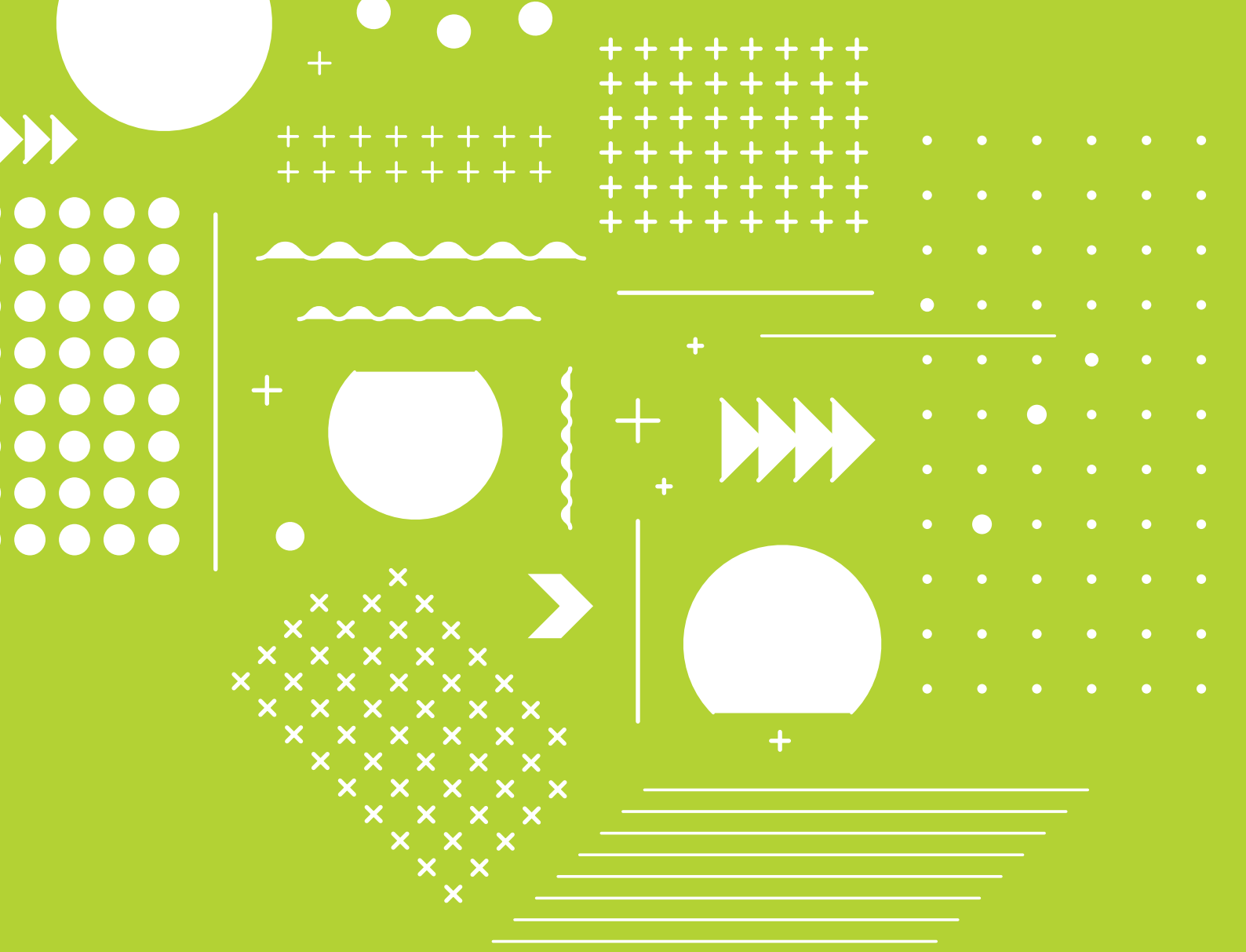
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- Broome, Margaret - Music Generation Offaly Westmeath
- Caslin, Joe - Artist and teacher
- Costello Hynes, Bridie - Public Participation Network
- De Forge, Maureen - Birr Theatre & Arts Centre
- Deery, Macdara - Offaly Youth Theatre
- Dowler, Niamh - Comhairle na nÓg
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- Dunne, Clare - Offaly Council Council, Arts Administration
- Dunnett, Rhona - Youth Theatre Ireland
- Hoctor, Gary - OFFline Film Festival
- Kirrane, Declan - Offaly County Council
- Lovett, Saranne - Offaly Travellers Movement
- Minnock, Olivia - Former OYT member
- Nee Haslam, Emma - Birr Theatre & Arts Centre
- Ní Bhriain, Seona - Arts Council of Ireland
- Ní Chonail, Muireann - Laois County Council Arts Office
- O' Gorman, Anne - National Youth Council of Ireland
- O' Hanlon, Bill - St. Mary's Youth Centre Tullamore
- O'Leary, Sally - Offaly County Council Arts Officer
- O' Neill, Anna - Edenderry Youth Café and Acorn Project
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- Oaklands Secondary School, Edenderry
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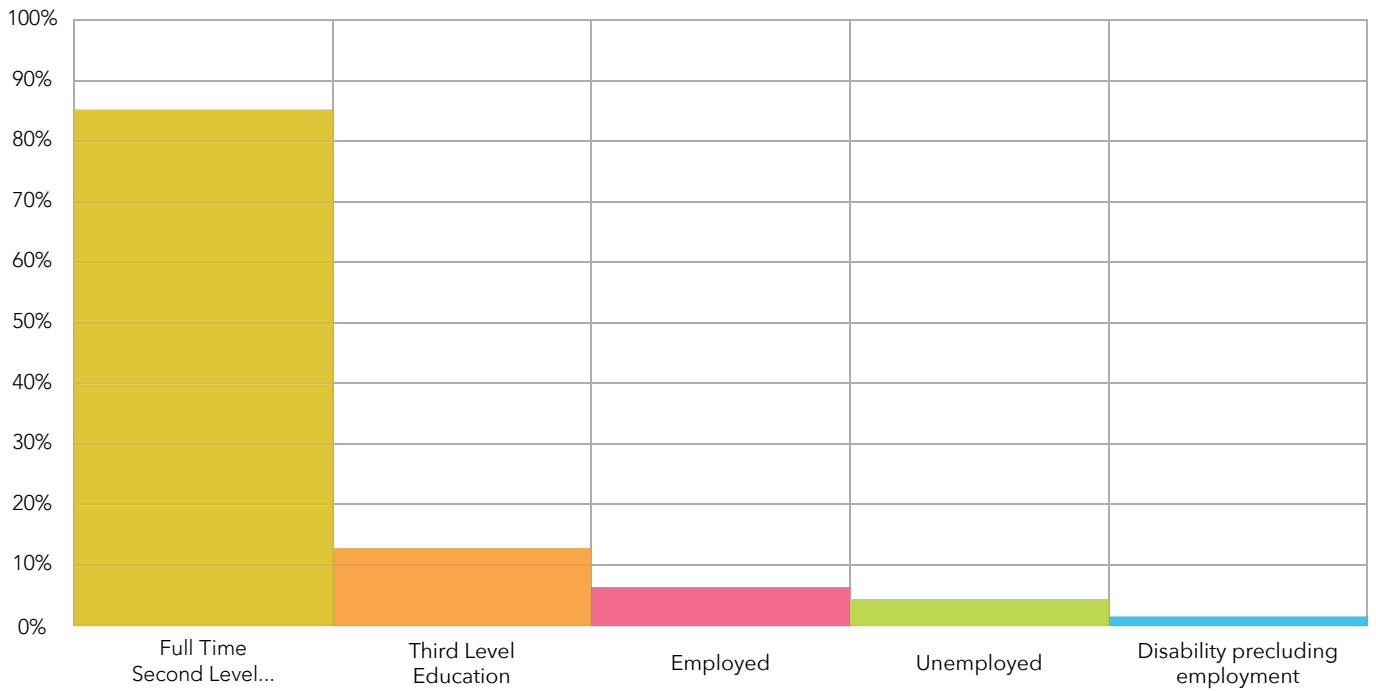
# YOUNG PERSONS SURVEY

## Appendix 1.1 - Young Persons Survey

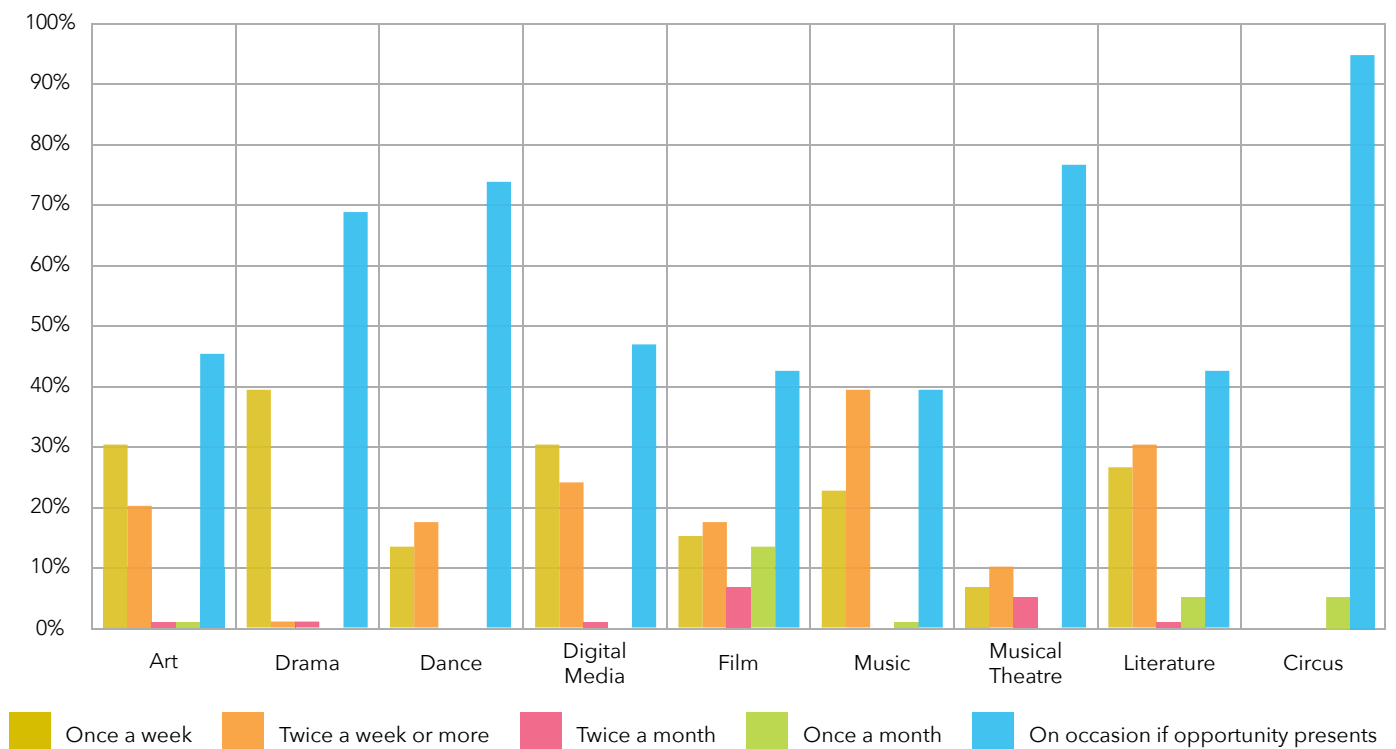
Of those 115 young people surveyed, there was a 100% completion rate. A total of 76% were aged 13-16, and 24% were aged 17-24. Responses came from the following geographical spread, with highest response in order of appearance as follows: Edenderry, Tullamore, Birr, Daingean, Ferbane, Kinnitty and Clara. Some 37% were urban-based, compared to just under 49% rural-based with 13% based in villages.

Here is a visual summary of the responses.

### Q4: Are you in?

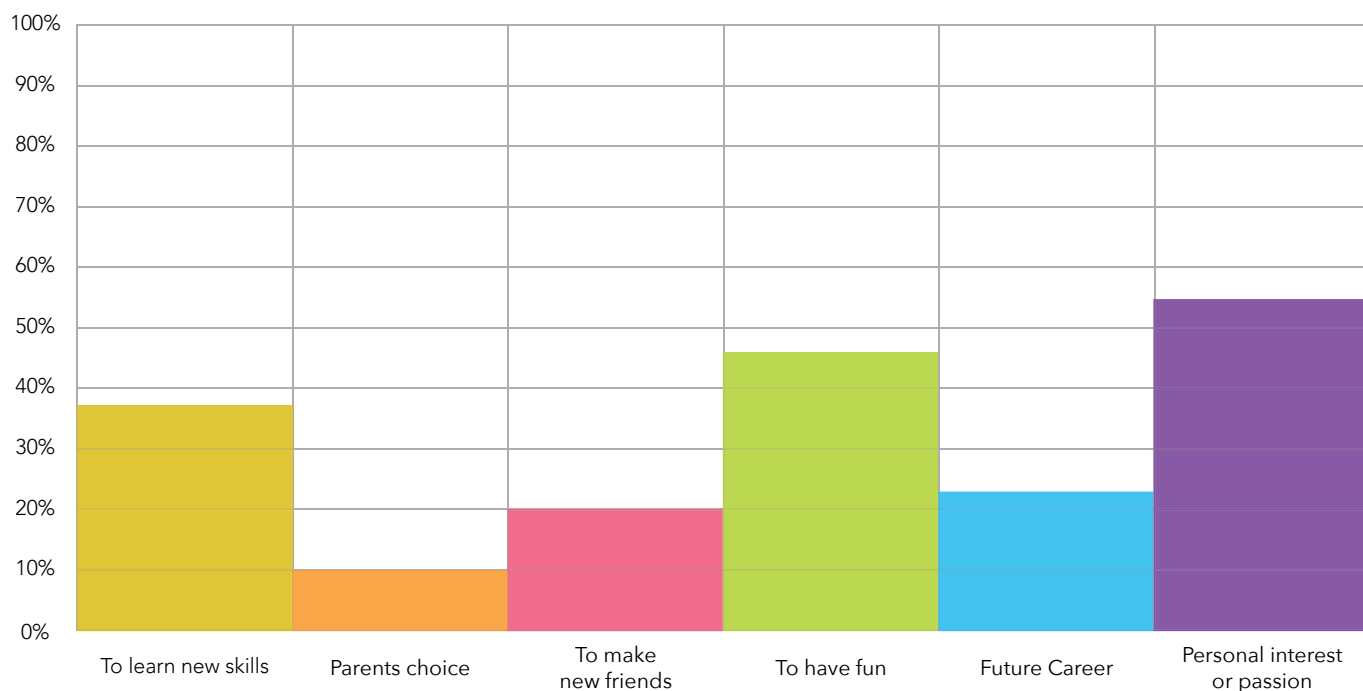


### Q5: How often do you take part in any of these Arts activities?



The art forms young people engaged with, ranking the highest, were: drama (38% weekly engagement); art (31% weekly engagement); digital media (26% weekly engagement); literature (23% weekly engagement); music (23% weekly engagement); film (16% weekly engagement); and dance (12% weekly engagement). However, respondents all showed high levels of interest in all art forms "if the opportunity presented", particularly in art, music, musical theatre, digital media and circus. Interestingly, there were no instances of young people regularly engaged in circus, yet over 96% of young people surveyed expressed an interest in doing so were the opportunity presented.

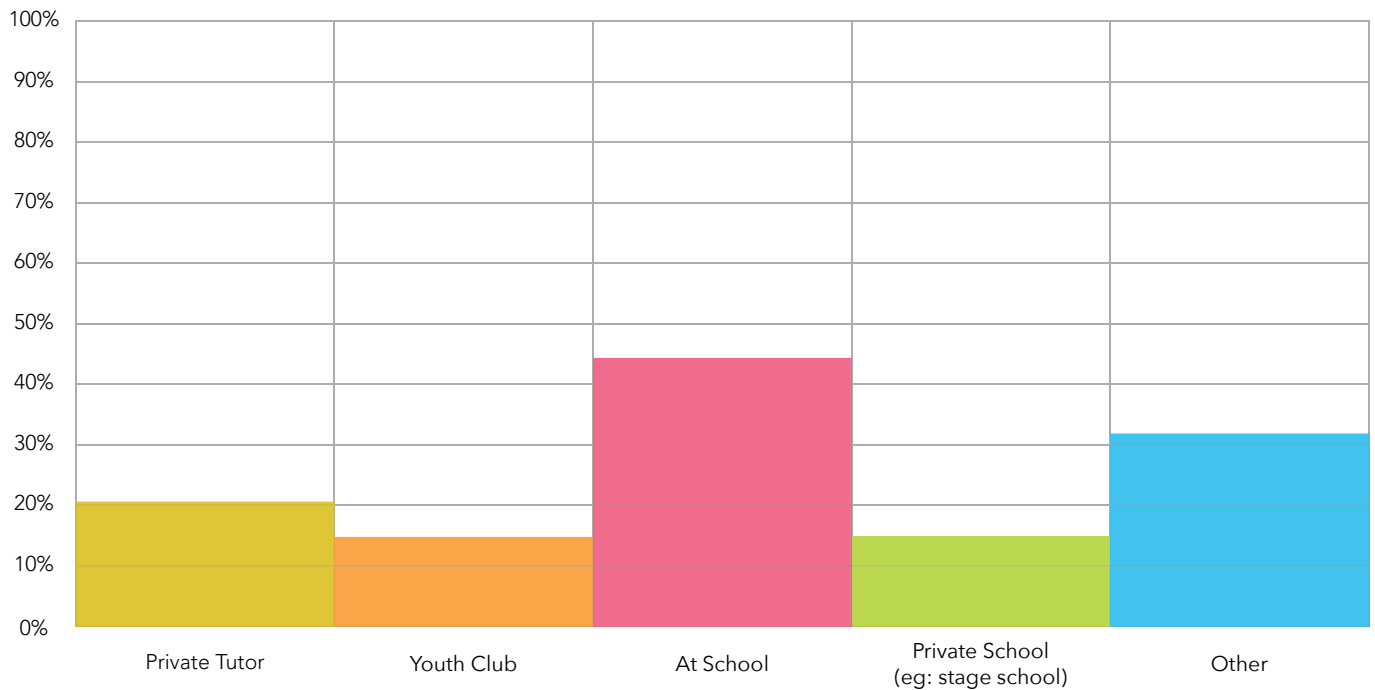
### Q6: Why do you take part?



Young people's primary motivation to engage in the arts was "personal interest or passion" with 53% listing this as the reason for participation, followed by "to have fun" - 47%, "learn new skills - 36%, "to work in the field" - 22%, "to make new friends" - 21%, and lastly "parent's choice" was the least popular answer at 10%.

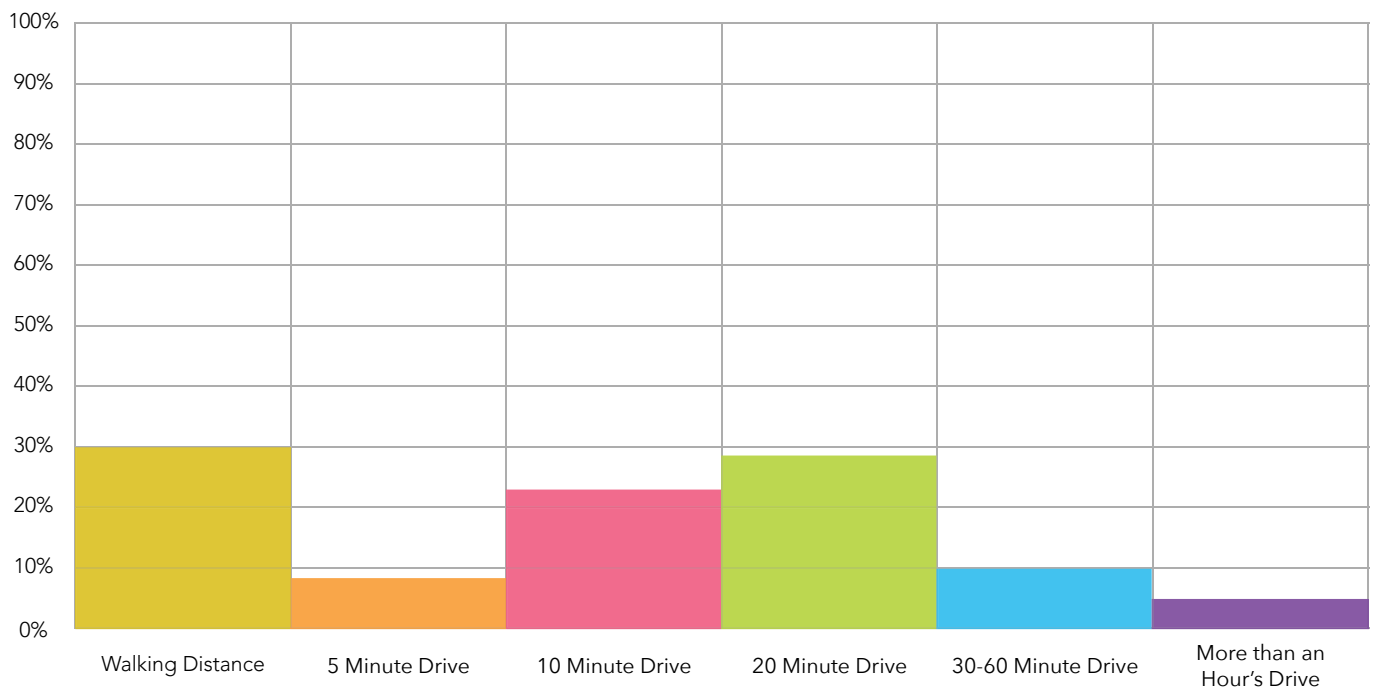


### Q7: Where do activities take place?



Most of young people’s engagement with the arts happened at school which 44% of those surveyed listed, followed by private tutor (20%), youth club (15%) and private school such as stage school (14%).

### Q8: How far could you travel to attend an Arts class/workshop?

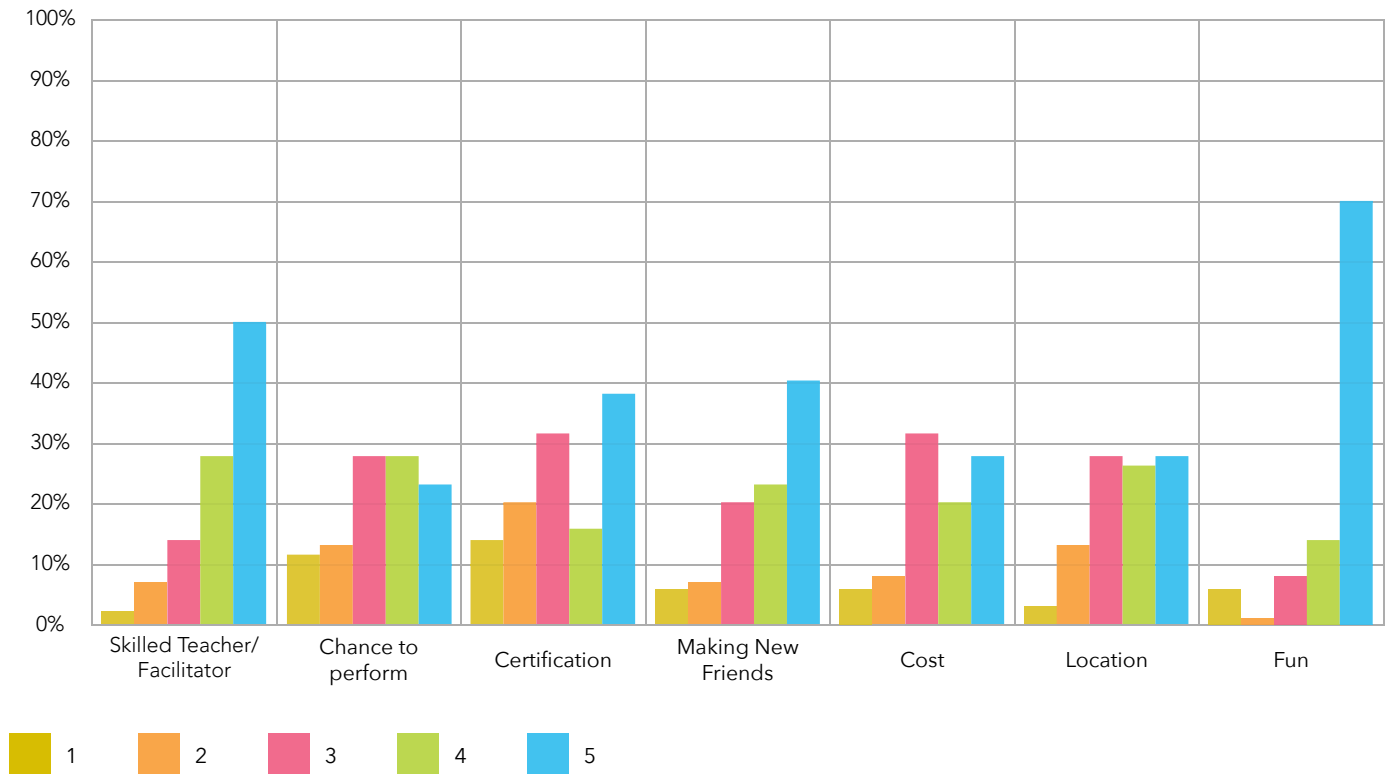


The distance a young person felt they could travel to engage with the arts is particularly pertinent in Offaly, an area where rural links and transport options are limited. For some Offaly residents, there are limited or no public transport options available. Young people rely on parents driving them to activities. This raises the issue of socio-economic divide. In low-income families, access to a car is not always possible. Therefore, if there are not arts opportunities in their local area, the chance of engaging with the arts is limited if it happens outside of school.

Some 28% of young people surveyed felt they could travel up to a 20-minute drive to partake in an arts class/workshop. For 24% this drive time was 10 minutes, with 23% stating that it would need to be walking distance. Just 9% said they could travel between 30-60 minutes, while 4% said they could travel more than an hour's drive.

What the data shows is the importance of ensuring equal access to arts engagement. If a young person does not have the support structure of a regular public transport service or a driving parent, it's important to consider how they have a chance to engage with the arts.

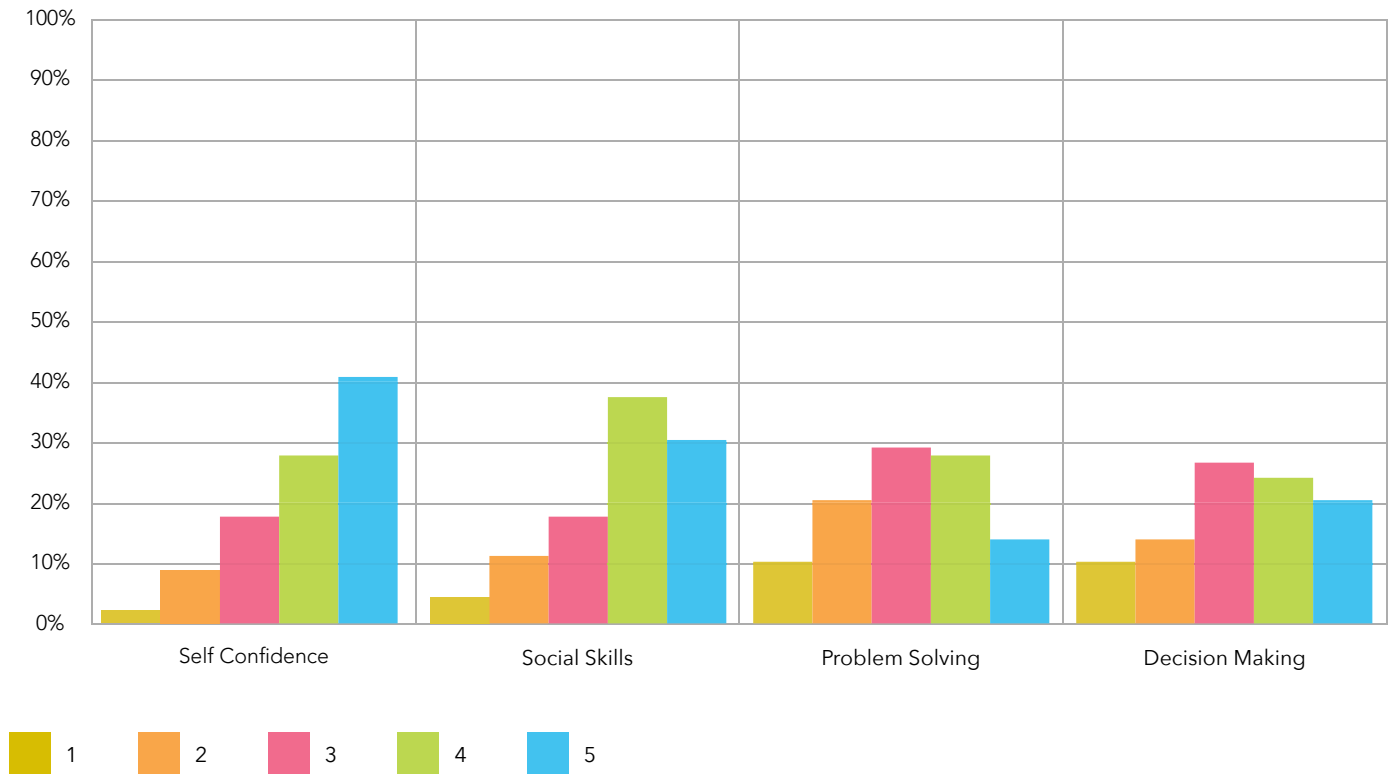
**Q9: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 indicating very important and 1 indicating unimportant) how would you rate the following factors of the Arts experience?**



Fun is the factor identified as most important by the young people surveyed, with 70% naming fun as the most important influencing factor, followed by skilled teacher/facilitator at 50%. Making new friends was rated as important by 39% of those surveyed. Cost and certification were seen as important to 28% of young people while 27% named location as important and 22% cited the chance to perform as the most important factor. This shows the diverse spread of influencing factors and shows how consideration of all these factors is important when planning activities for the group. It clearly shows also that the fun and social element to the work has to be prioritised. If we are to place ourselves in the shoes of a young person and consider essential motivations and interest levels at that developmental stage, the opportunity to be with our peers in a fun, safe environment is crucial.



**Q10: If you have experienced growth in the following areas as a result of an Arts experience on a scale of 1 to 5 how would you rate that growth/development? (5 indicating big impact, 1 indicating little impact)**



When we consider the 'why' of creating opportunities for young people to engage with the arts, it's important to look at what young people have named as positive outcomes. More than 40% of young people surveyed said they experienced a significant growth in self-confidence as a result of an arts experience, while 29% saw significant growth in their social skills. For 21% of young people, the growth they listed was their decision-making ability, and for 14% of young people their ability to problem solve was improved. Key critical skills in the development of young people are seen here to be resulting from engagement with the arts.

**Q11: Can you describe a positive or negative experience you have ever had while involved with an Arts project naming the positive or negative factors that influenced that experience?**

**DRAMA**      **FEELING**      **FUN**      **CONFIDENCE**  
**MEETING PEOPLE**      **POSITIVE**      **EXAMS**  
**MAKING NEW FRIENDS**      **COMPETITION**  
**LEARNED**      **ACTING**      **BIG CROWDS**      **MUSICAL THEATRE**  
**SCHOOL**      **SINGING IN FRONT OF PEOPLE**      **NEGATIVE**  
**DANCE**      **PLAYING**      **GROUP SKILLS**

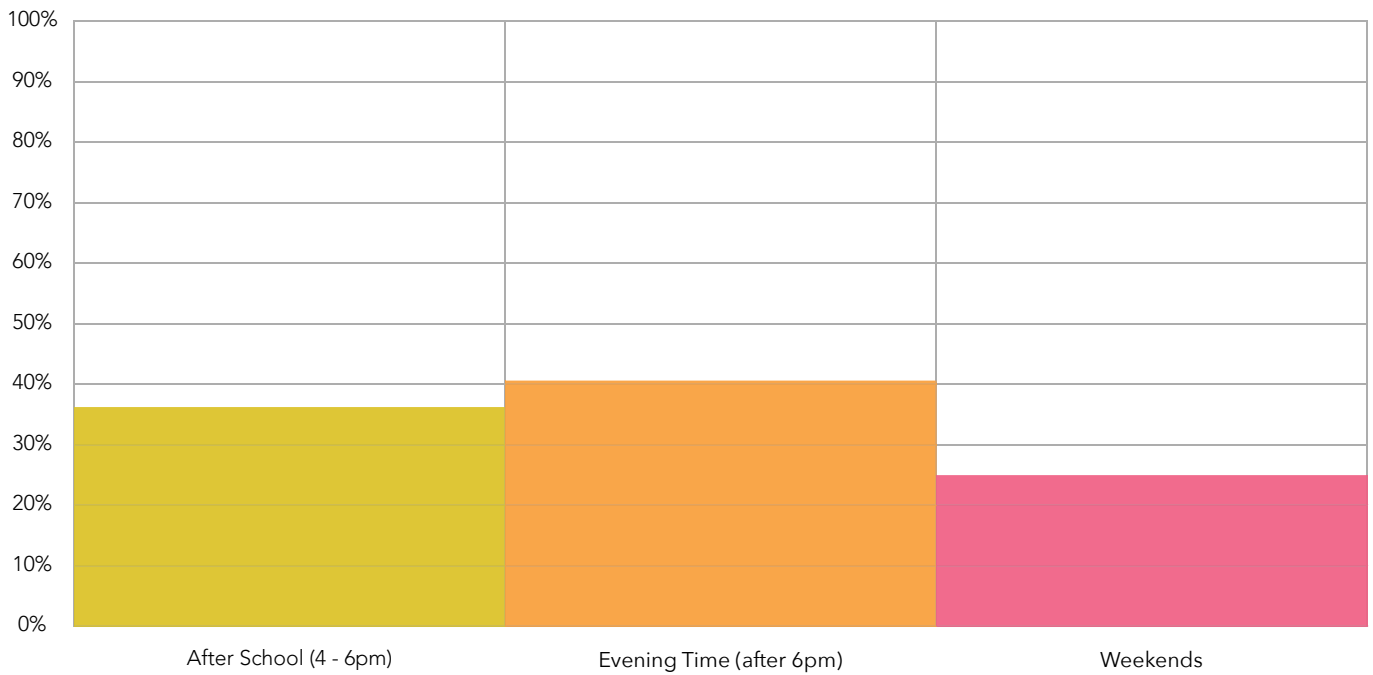


Above is a graphic showing common words and phrases amongst the data collected to capture what was a good or bad arts experience. The most common positive word occurrence was confidence. Friendship and fun were also common themes as positive outcomes. There were significantly more positive experiences than negative. In instances where negative experiences were described, the reasons followed a pattern including: poor or disinterested teacher, favouritism by teacher, feeling awkward or unsure in front of peers, cost and pressure. What is evident is that facilitation of youth arts projects is more than pairing someone with a skill with a group of young people. Offering training in facilitation and youth work is another way to ensure access to arts for young people. Here is a sample of the comments collected:

- "I got a distinction in a music exam and my drawing became the school logo when I was young and still is to this day."
- "The school show as it helps build confidence whilst on stage performing."
- "The coach is very good there is a lot of respect and the atmosphere is amazing."
- "Positive factors displaying my artistic art to peers and wider community. Negative factors don't proper funding for professional tutors."
- "Being part of my school's musical really boosted my self-esteem and ignited a passion in me for theatre. This was largely to do with the people I was involved with during the show."
- "I was once part of a drama group in which the facilitator barely engaged with or participated with the group. And seemed quite disinterested with the whole thing."
- "Meeting like-minded boys who enjoy singing and playing music. I don't do sport and feel very isolated here."
- "Positive; Boosts confidence and independence. Negative; you need lots of time, energy and money is very expensive."
- "I don't like speaking out in front of big crowds like in a play. I was Joseph in the nativity, didn't the 3 wise men come in and deliver the gifts. I forgot what to say, so instead I just said 'thanks lads'. Everyone in the crowd laughed so I thought it was grand like they thought it was funny but sure after the play the teacher gave out terrible to me."
- "I have always had a positive experience with the Arts and have found it to be a huge positive impact in other areas of my life. Not many people realise it but it presents a lot of skills that are there to be learned that are a huge help in everyday living, professionally and privately."

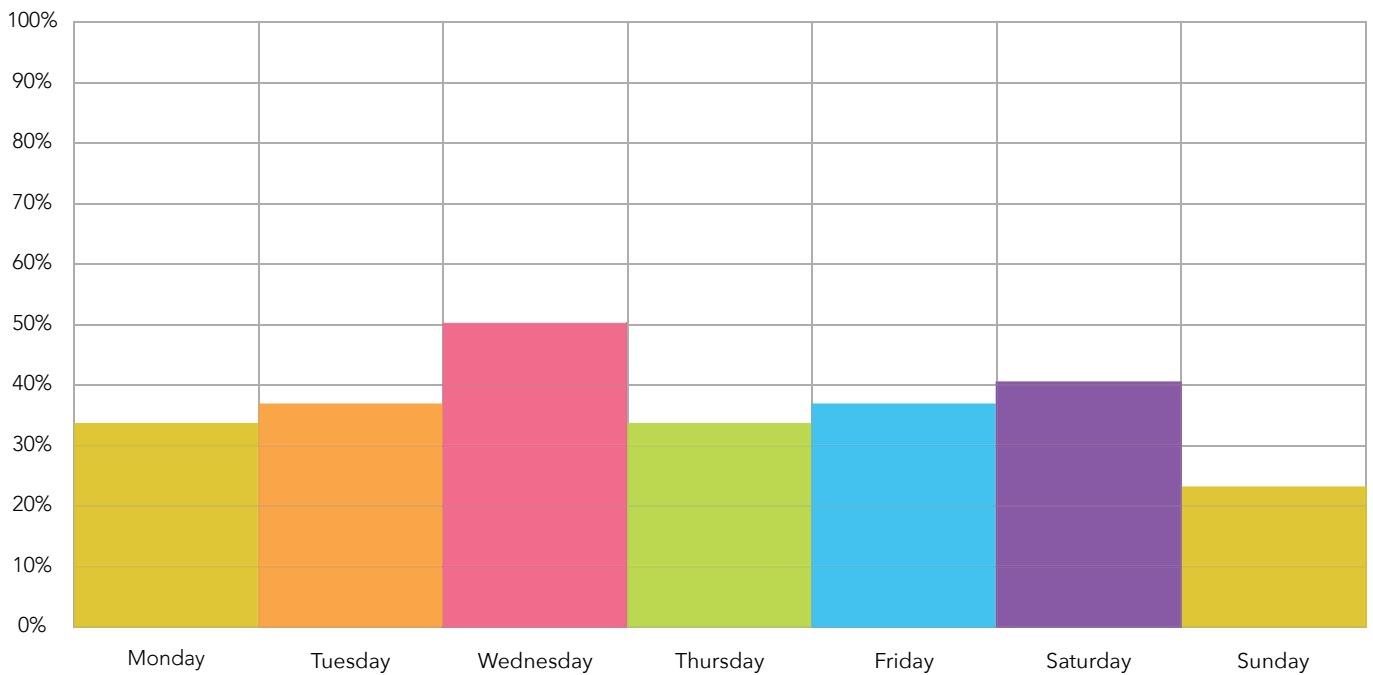


### Q12: What time of day is most suitable for attending classes or workshops?



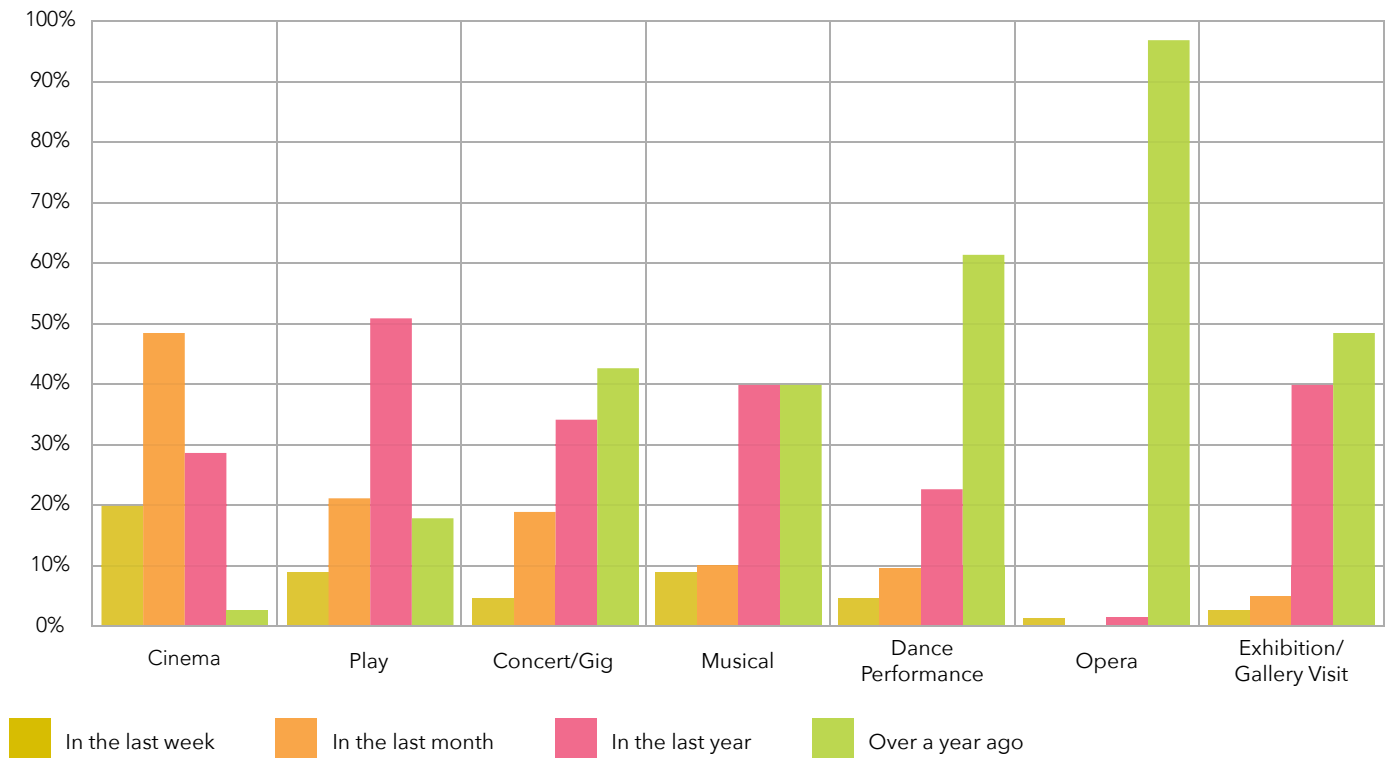
The timing of arts activities is important to ensure appropriateness from a youth perspective and to improve participation rates. Some 39% of those surveyed listed after 6pm on weekdays as best time for classes or workshops, while 37% listed weekdays between 4pm and 6pm as favoured time. Just 22% rated the weekend as the best time for engaging.

### Q13: What days work best for attending classes or workshops?



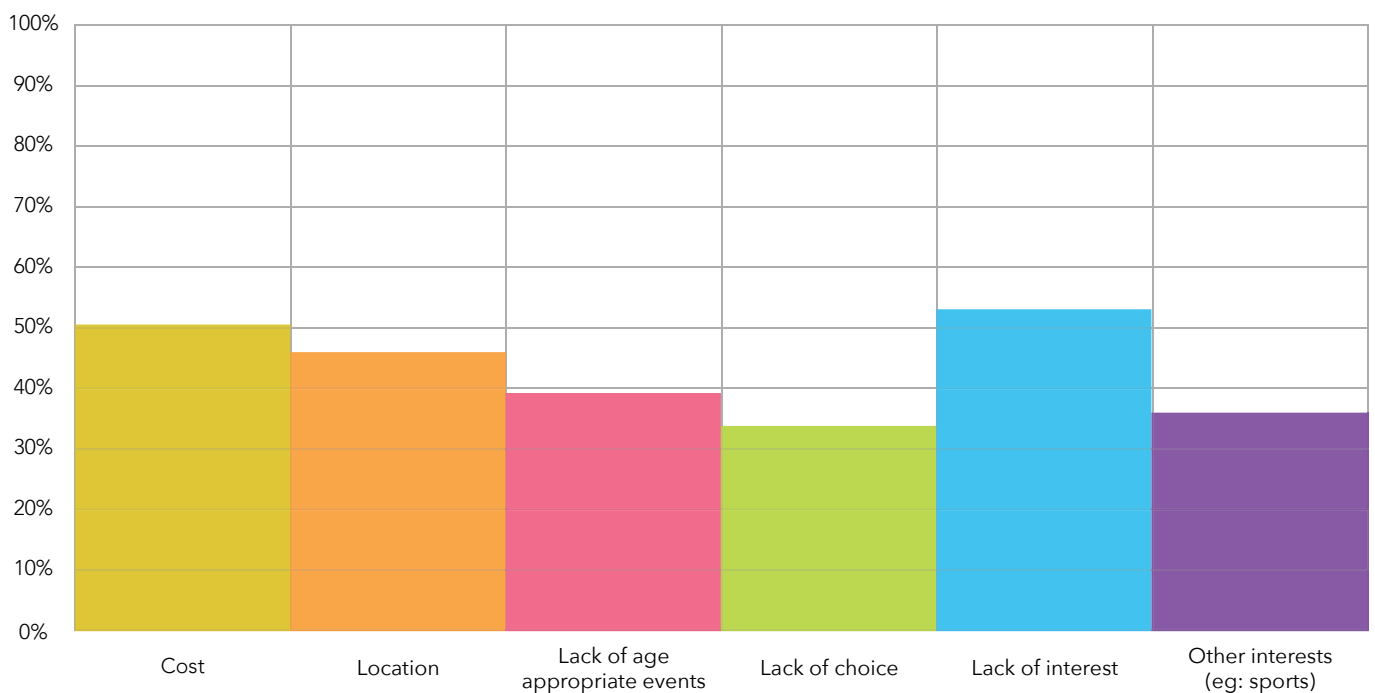
Wednesday was identified as the best day for activities to take place. However, this may be influenced by a high response rate from Edenderry-based young people who have a half-day from school on Wednesdays. The second most popular answer was Saturday, with all the other weekdays averaging 35%. Sunday was the least popular day, listed at 22%.

**Q14: Have you ever attended any of the following Arts events as an audience member?**



In terms of ongoing engagement with the arts as an audience member, the cinema would be the most common way of engaging with an art form, with the highest proportion of responses signifying an experience of film in the last week, accounting for 20%. The next highest was musical theatre at 9%, followed by a play at 8%, dance performance at 5%, exhibition attendance 3% and opera at 2%. Overall, there were low levels of engagement in the time closest to their completion of the survey (January 2018). However, when asked the same question in the timeframe of 'in the last year', 52% had attended a play, 41% an exhibition, 40% a musical, 33% a concert or gig, 28% the cinema and 2% the opera.

**Q15: What do you see as the biggest barriers to young people engaging with the Arts?**

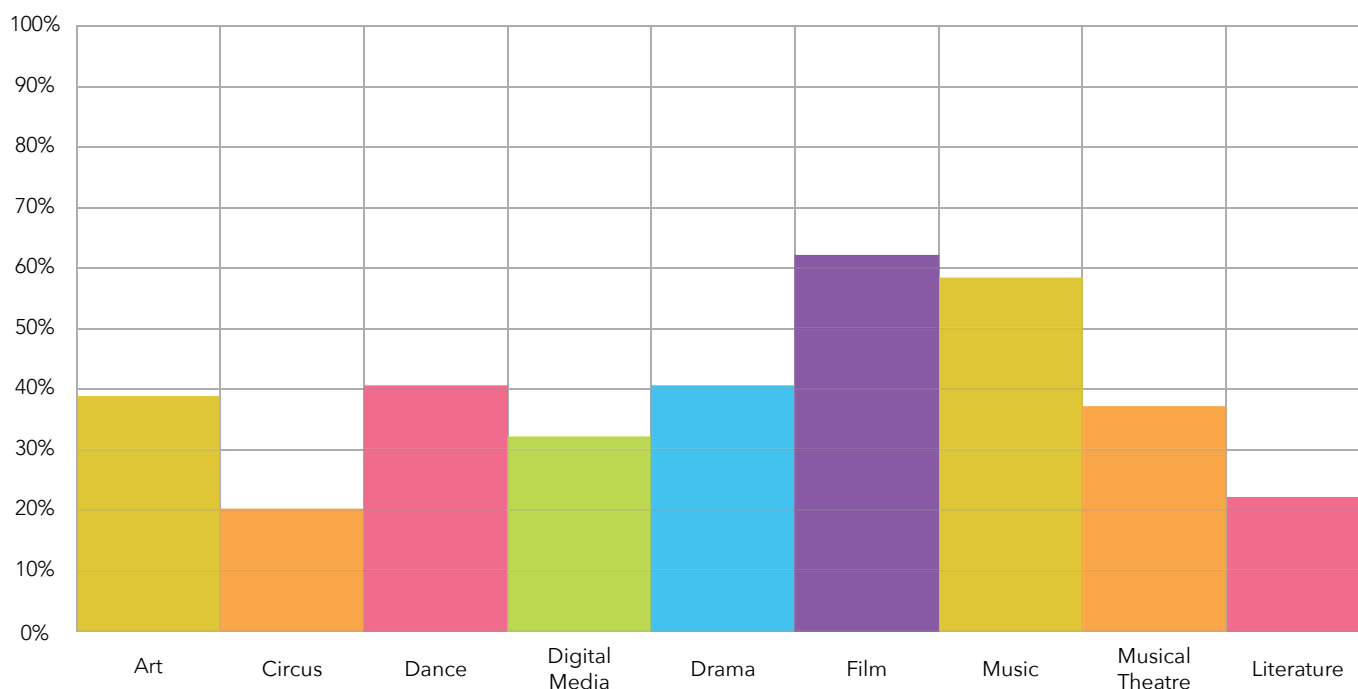


The biggest barrier to engaging with the arts was identified as lack of interest, which accounted for 52% of responses, followed by cost at 50%, location at 48%, lack of age-appropriate material at 39%, other interests such as sports at 35% and lack of choice at 33%. As we can see, this gives us a broader sense of the many reasons why a young person may not engage, and includes many factors which we cannot control such as interest levels and other conflicting interests.

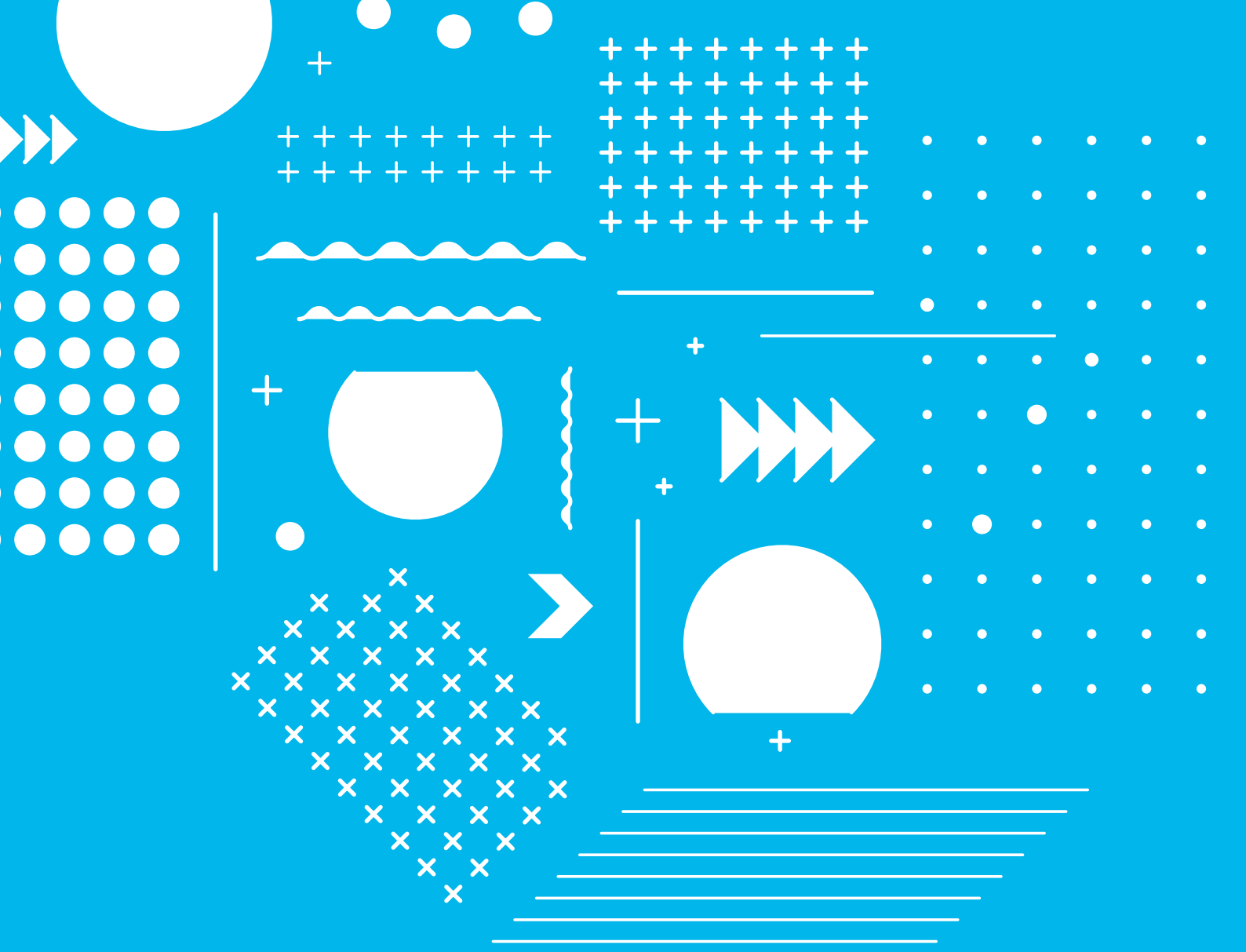
Some of the comments included the following:

- "People are too busy with other activities they do and many don't have the confidence to do something different."
- "A lot of young people just aren't bothered, myself being an example. I don't mean to be rude, sorry :( "
- "They need to be less serious."
- "Not as much time to take part in a lot of after school activities."
- "Lack of local groups/ facilities."
- "I think just lack of knowledge of what's out there is a big one. Also though always try to remember how little control teenagers actually have over our lives! Most have to ask parents for money and lifts and are expected to do 7 hours of homework per night (honestly!) So bear these things in mind when organising workshops etc. if you can - us kids may seem mature but there are still parents and teachers to answer to!"

### Q16: What type of workshops or performances for young people would you like to see more of in Offaly?



Preferences were quite broad, with film coming in at the number one choice for 62% of those surveyed, followed by music at 58%, drama at 41%, dance at 40%, art at 38%, musical theatre at 35%, digital media at 33%, literature at 22% and circus at 20%. The diverse level of interests amongst those surveyed highlights the importance of consideration of the use of multiple mediums when designing youth arts projects or experiences for young people.



ADULT'S

SURVEY

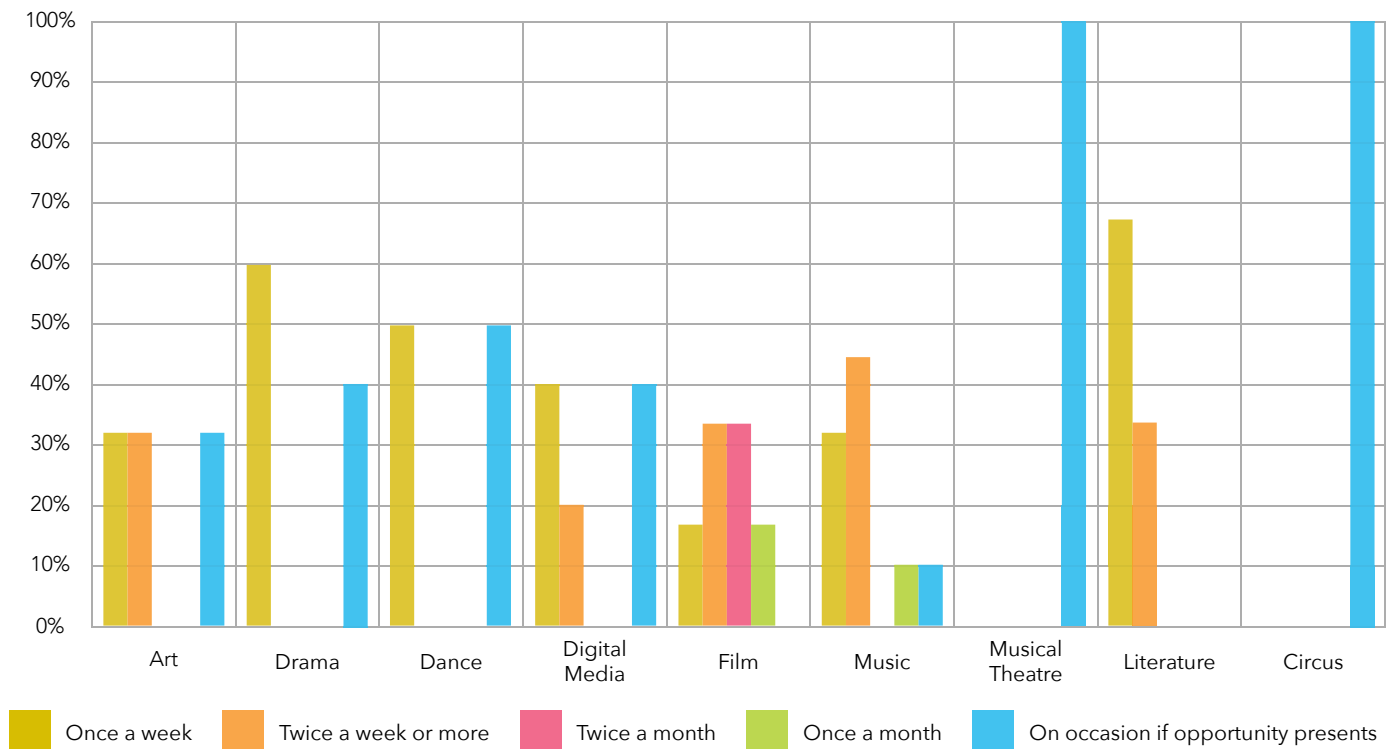
## Appendix 1.2 - Adult's Survey

A total of 23 parents took part in the survey and the age category of their children was as follows: 72% were parents of 13-16-year-olds and 40% were parents of 17-24-year-olds. The geographical spread was from Tullamore, Birr, Edenderry and Banagher and surrounding villages and rural areas.

Some 90% of their children were in full-time second level education with 9% in third level education, 4% employed and 4% unemployed.

### Parents' Survey

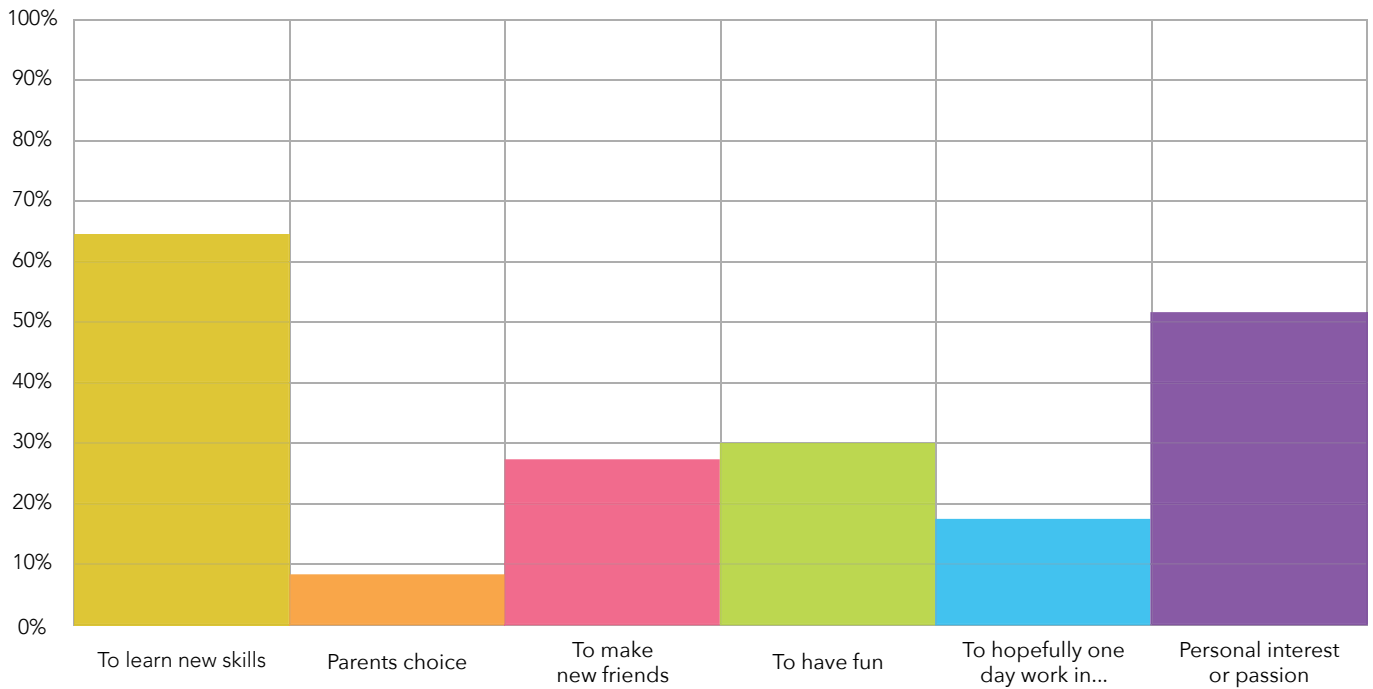
#### Q4: Does your child take part in any of these Arts activities?



The spread of activity across the art forms was as follows, with 66% of parents citing literature as a weekly activity, 60% mentioning drama, 50% dance, 40% digital media and 33% for both art and music.

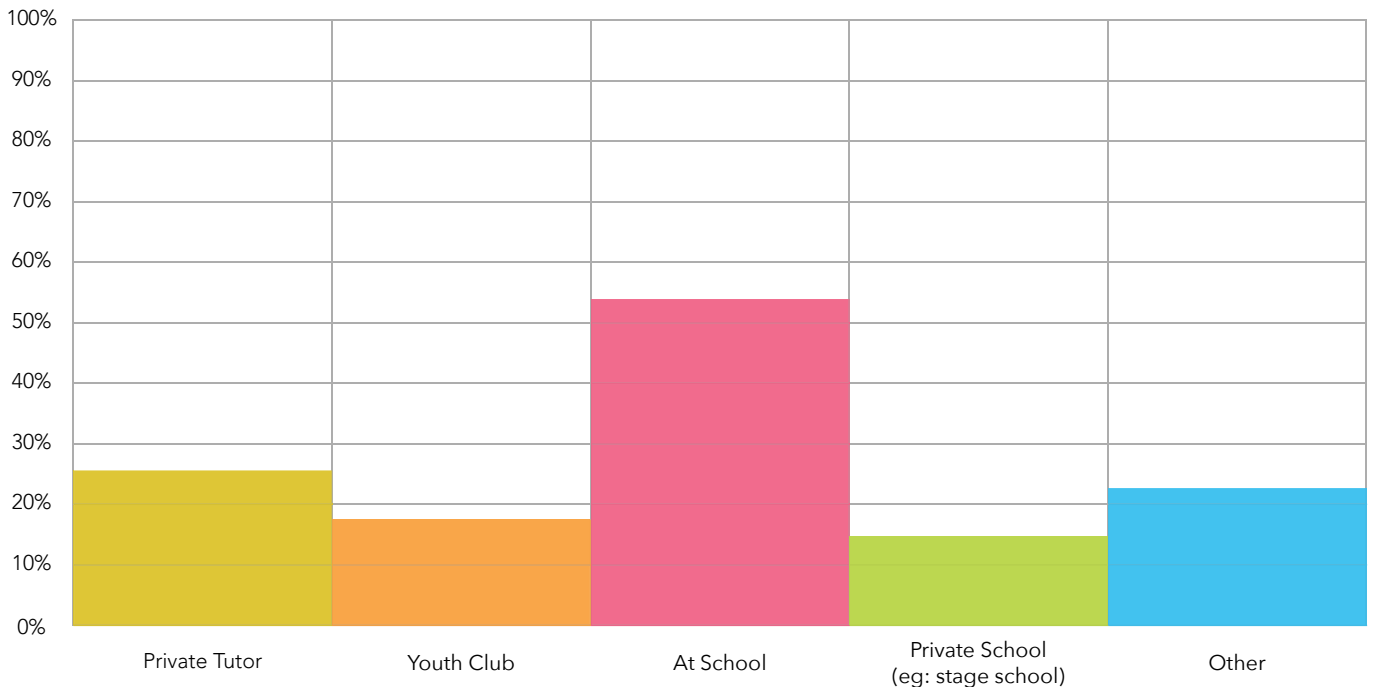


### Q5: Why do they take part?



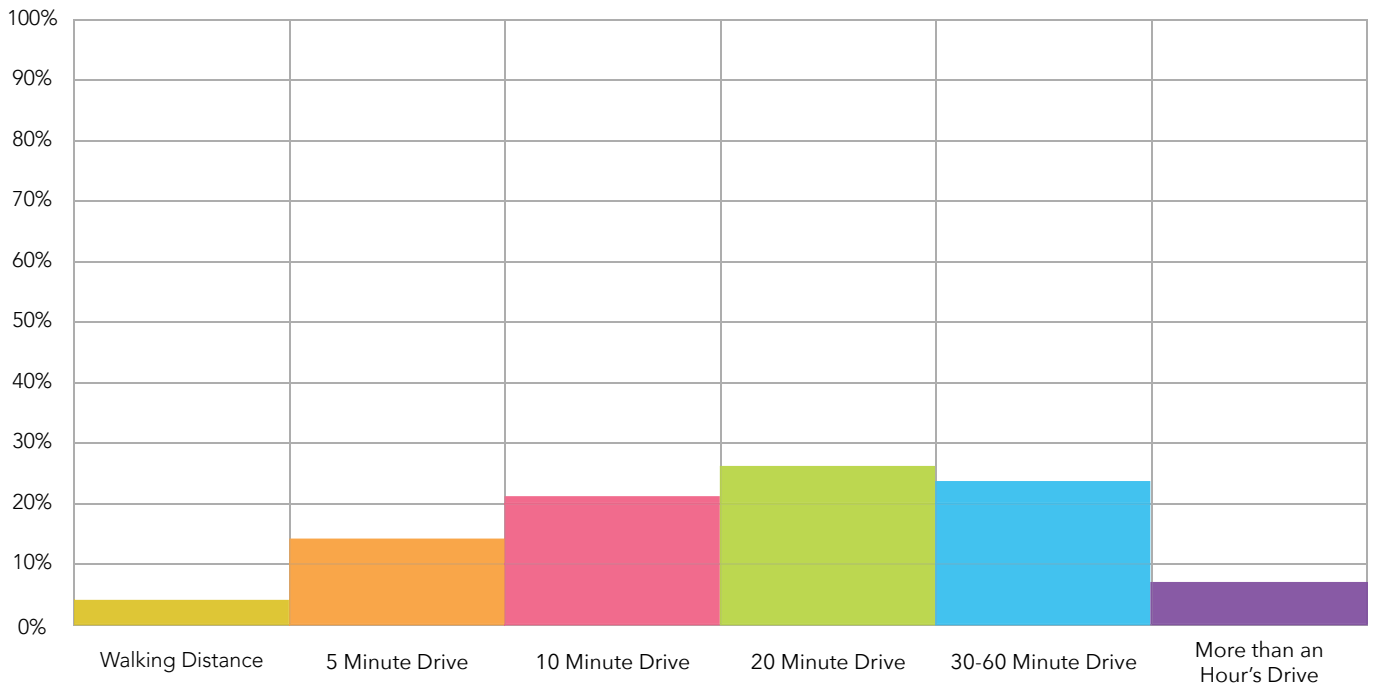
Learning new skills was seen as the most important motivation for 65% of parents, followed by fun, listed by 30% of parents. Making new friends was listed by 26% of parents with 17% listing a desire to work in that area and 8% listing is as parents' choice.

### Q6: Where do activities take place?



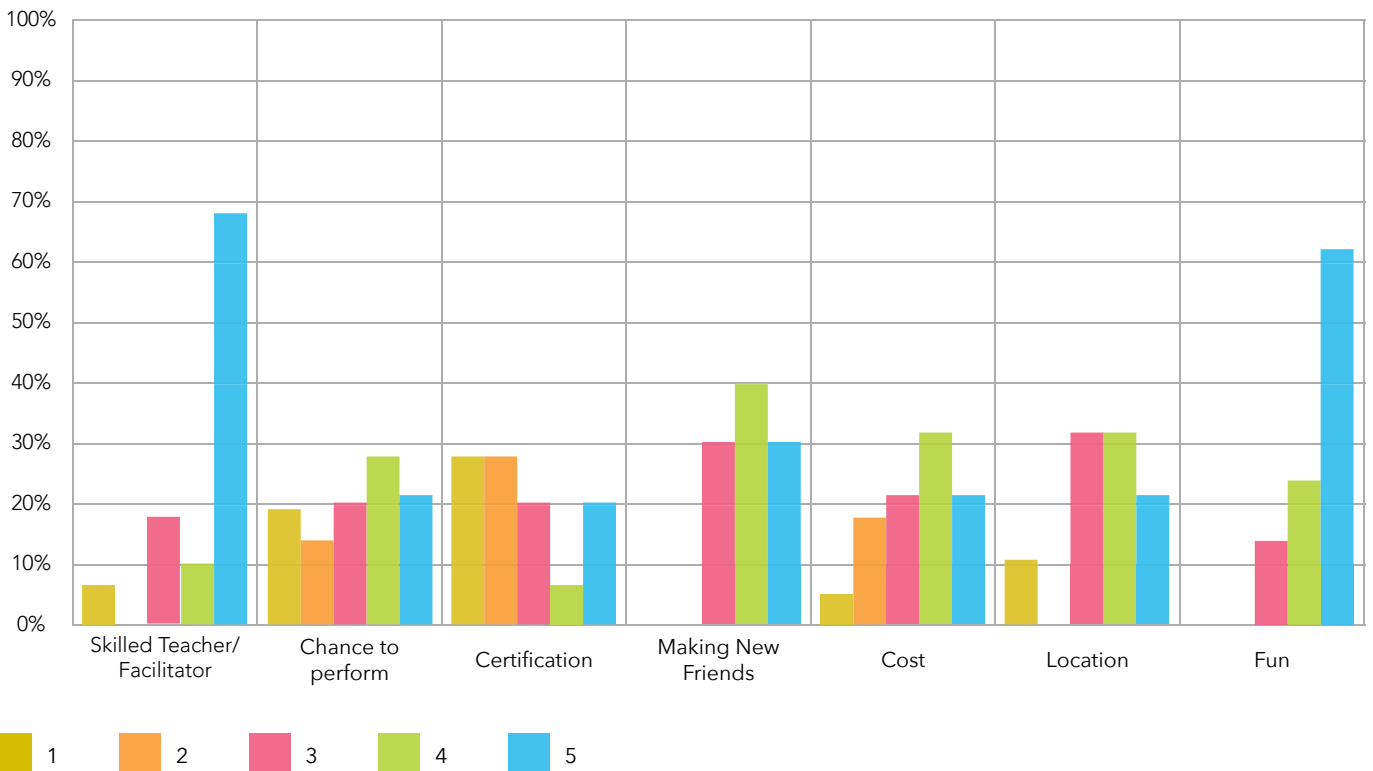
Some 54% of parents said the arts activity happened at school while 27% said it was under private tuition. A further 22% said 'Other' which was compiled of many references to Birr Theatre & Arts Centre, festivals, Music Generation, local pubs and at home. Meanwhile 18% said youth club and 13% said private school such as stage school.

### Q7: How far would you travel to bring your child to a class/workshop?



The majority of parents surveyed were willing to drive a child to a class or workshop, with 26% stating they would travel 30-60 minutes by car and 26% stating they would travel up to 20 minutes by car. Some 21% said they would travel up to 10 minutes by car and 8% would travel over an hour. Meanwhile 4% of those surveyed said they would travel within walking distance. The issue this raises is, of course, what happens to the children who do not have access to a car-driving parent who has the means and the time to bring their child on a journey to engage with the arts?

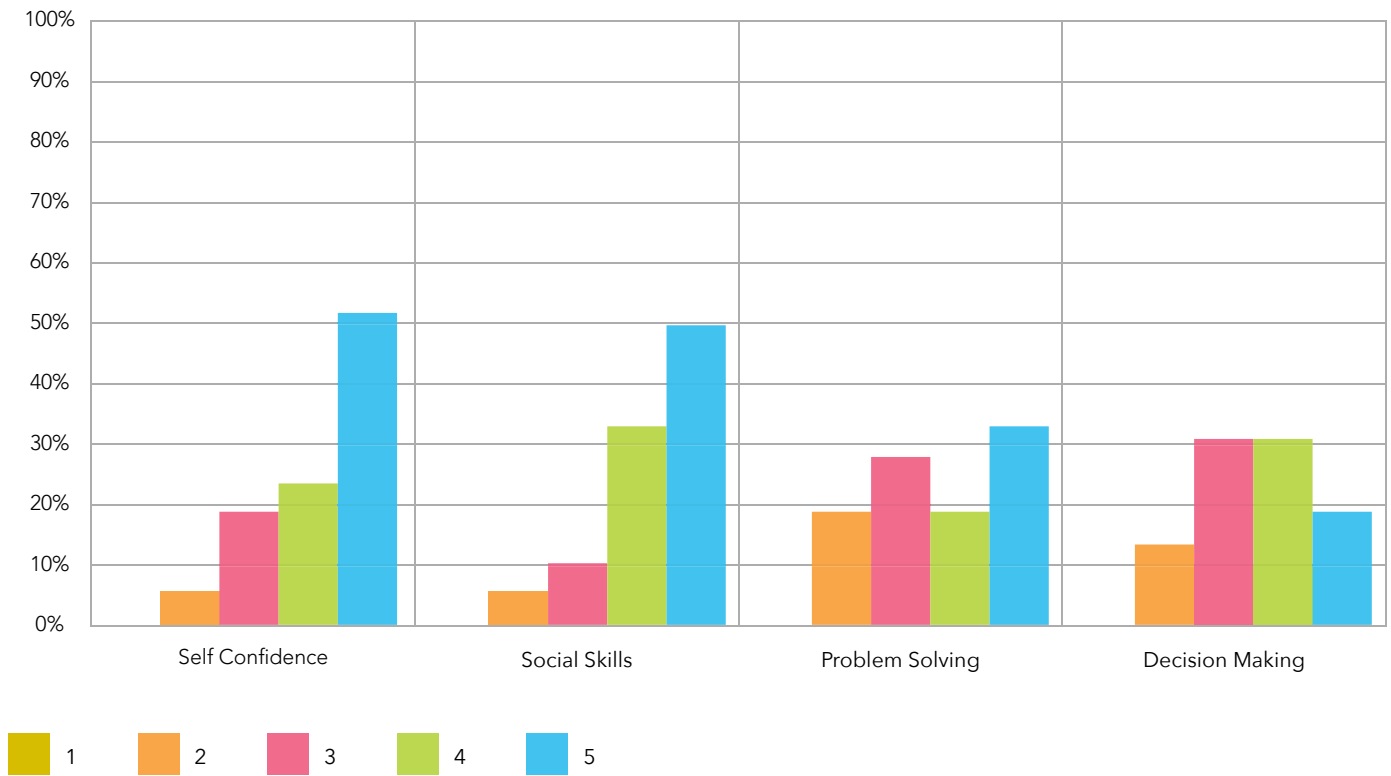
### Q8: On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 indicating very important and 1 indicating unimportant) how would you rate the following factors of the Arts experience?





A skilled teacher/facilitator was seen as most important factor by 68% of parents while 63% rated fun as the most important feature, followed by making new friends at 30% of responses. The chance to perform, location and cost all featured as important to 22% of parents, with 21% listing certification as an important factor.

**Q9: If your child has experienced growth in the following areas, on a scale of 1 to 5 how would you rate that growth/development as a result of their development as a result of their involvement? (5 indicating big impact and 1 indicating little impact)**



A total of 52% of parents noticed a growth in self-confidence from involvement in arts activities, while 50% listed improved social skills. A growth in problem-solving was listed by 33% of parents, with an improvement in decision-making listed by 19% of parents.

**Q10: Can you describe a positive or negative experience your child has had while involved with an Arts project naming the positive or negative factors that influenced that experience?**

**MUSIC** **ADULTS**  
**ISSUES** **SPEAKING** **ARTS PROJECT**  
**SELF CONFIDENCE** **YOUNG PEOPLE**

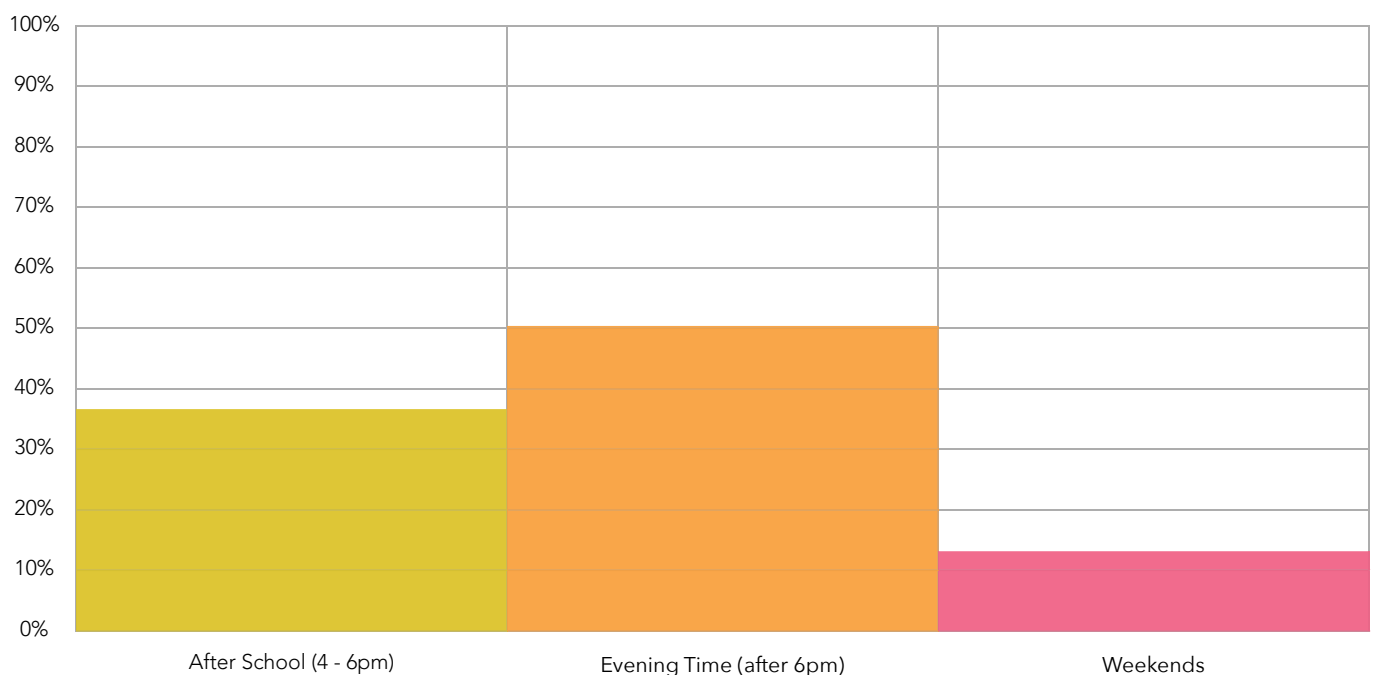
The general trend in feedback from parents was the improvement in self-confidence as a result of an arts experience. Many listed the lack of opportunity to engage as a negative.

See some of the feedback below:

- “Getting a lead role in a production has really made him believe in himself. He has learning difficulties but the external director believed he could do it. He has become part of his school class now because they have gotten to know him where before he didn’t quite fit in. His self-confidence has improved hugely.”
- “My child grew up so much by being involved in an arts project.”
- “There are no opportunities for singer songwriters, Joe Lee’s pub is the only place supportive of this. My son has issues signing on but is never guaranteed gigs, if you have no money you can’t take classes, he is self-taught as his school had no music and we could not afford classes. Arts grants insist you have a tax number and jump through hoops to apply and then the let down when you don’t succeed. There are NO events for young people, it’s sad.”

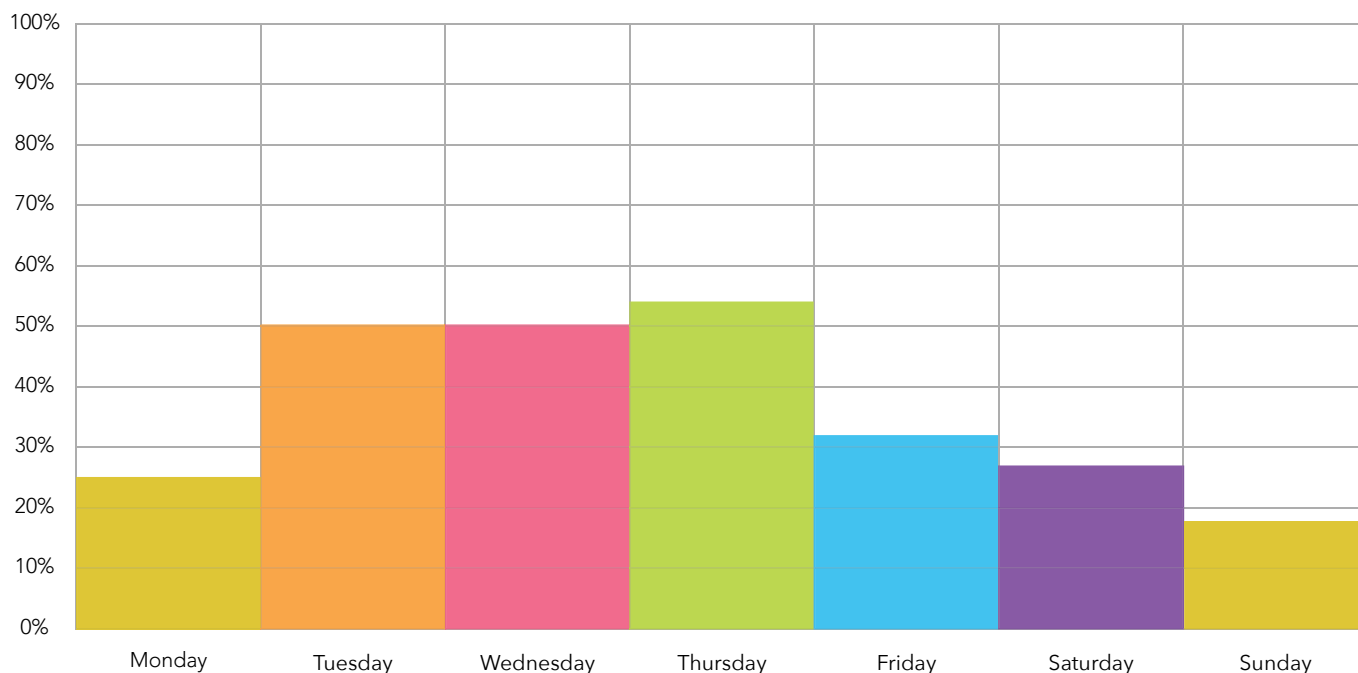


**Q11: What time of day is most suitable for attending classes or workshops?**



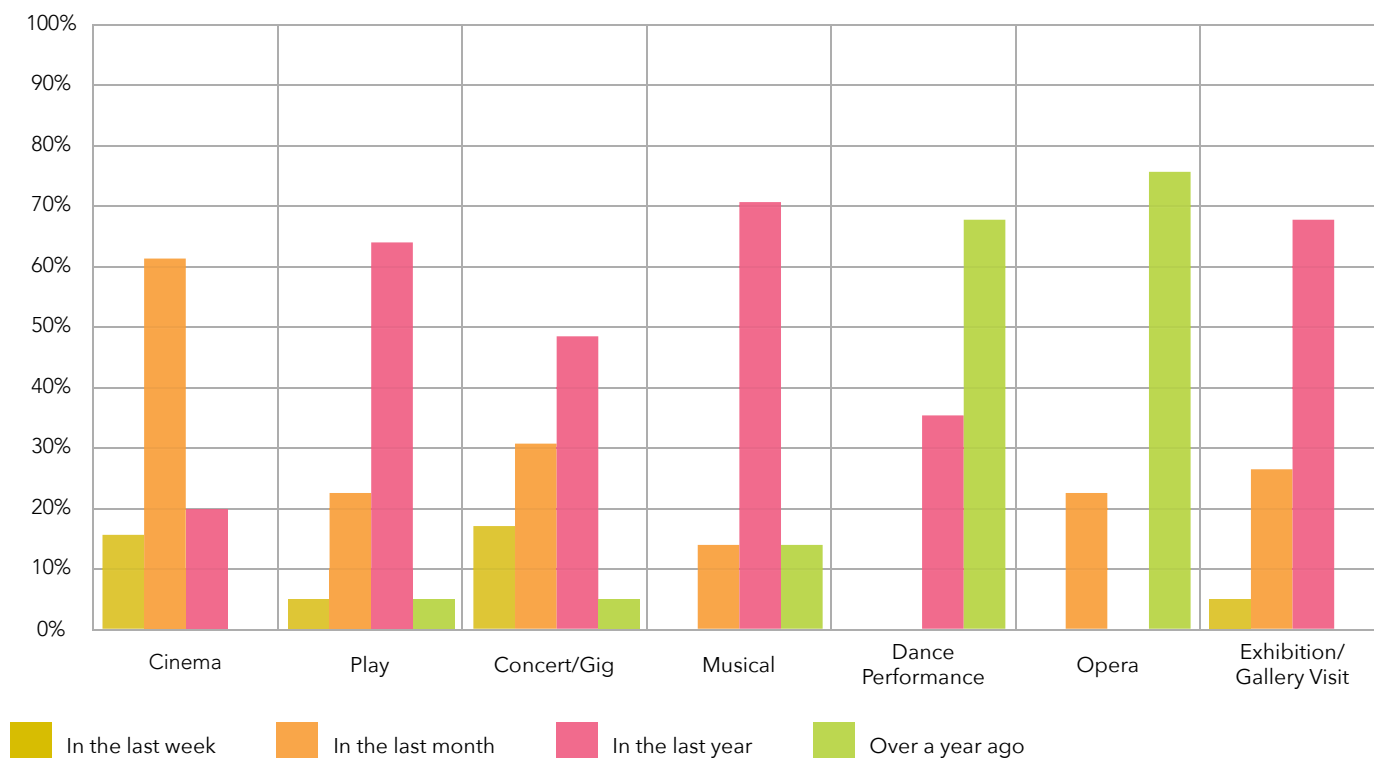
Timing of workshops was in keeping with young people’s feedback, with 50% of parents saying weekdays after 6pm, 36% listing weekdays after school (4-6 pm) and 13% listing weekends.

## Q12: What days work best for attending classes or workshops?



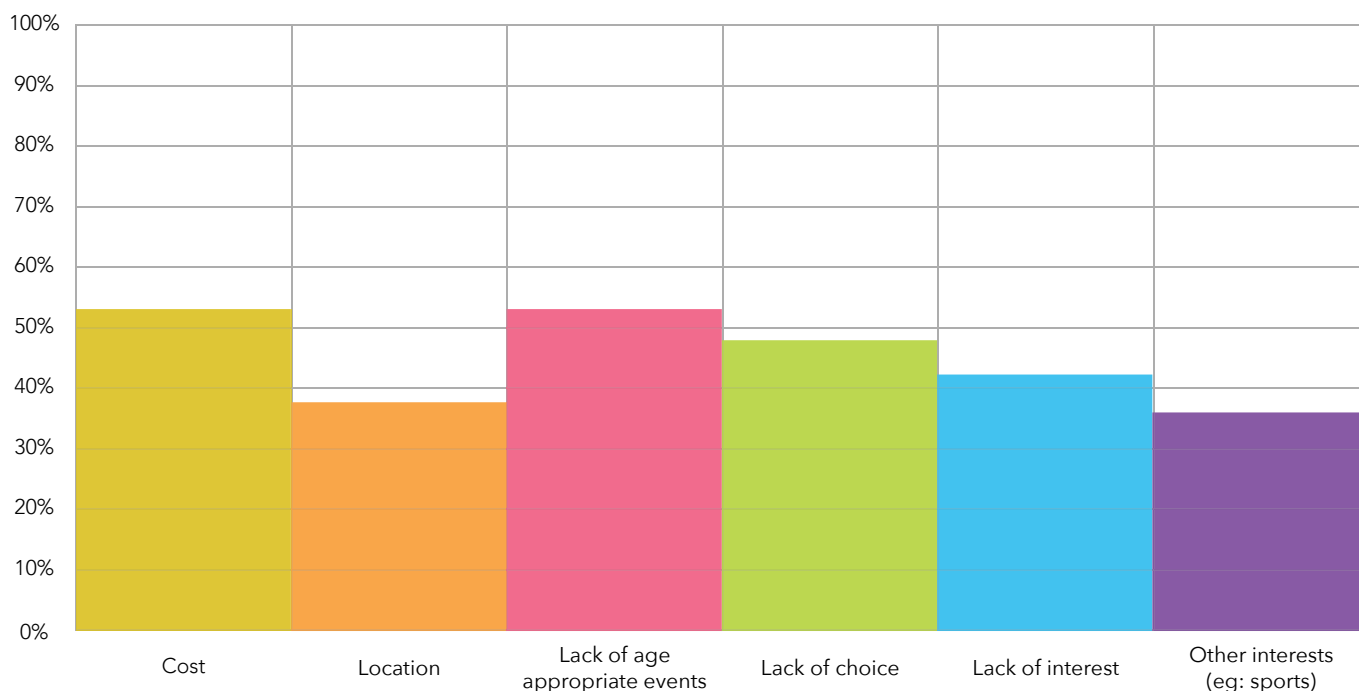
Again, weekdays were all evenly placed as popular days, with Sunday being the least favourite day, as it was with young people also.

## Q14a: Have you ever attended any of the following Arts events as an audience member? If yes, how often?



In terms of engaging with the arts as an audience member, there was quite a difference between recent engagement (within a week of being surveyed) and longer term engagement (within a year of being surveyed). In the last year, 71% of parents said young people had been to a musical versus 0% in the last week. Some 68% of parents said a gallery or exhibition visit had occurred within the last year while 6% had happened within the last week. Meanwhile 64% mentioned a play attendance in the past year compared to 5% within the week; 47% referenced attendance at a concert or gig within the last year versus 17% within the week. Some 33% had been to a dance performance within the last year with no occurrences in the past week, and 21% had been to the cinema in the last year compared to 15% within the week. This shows us that while there are opportunities for young people to engage with the arts as audience members, the most common way is through cinema and musicals.

### Q14b: What do you see as the biggest barriers to young people engaging with the Arts?



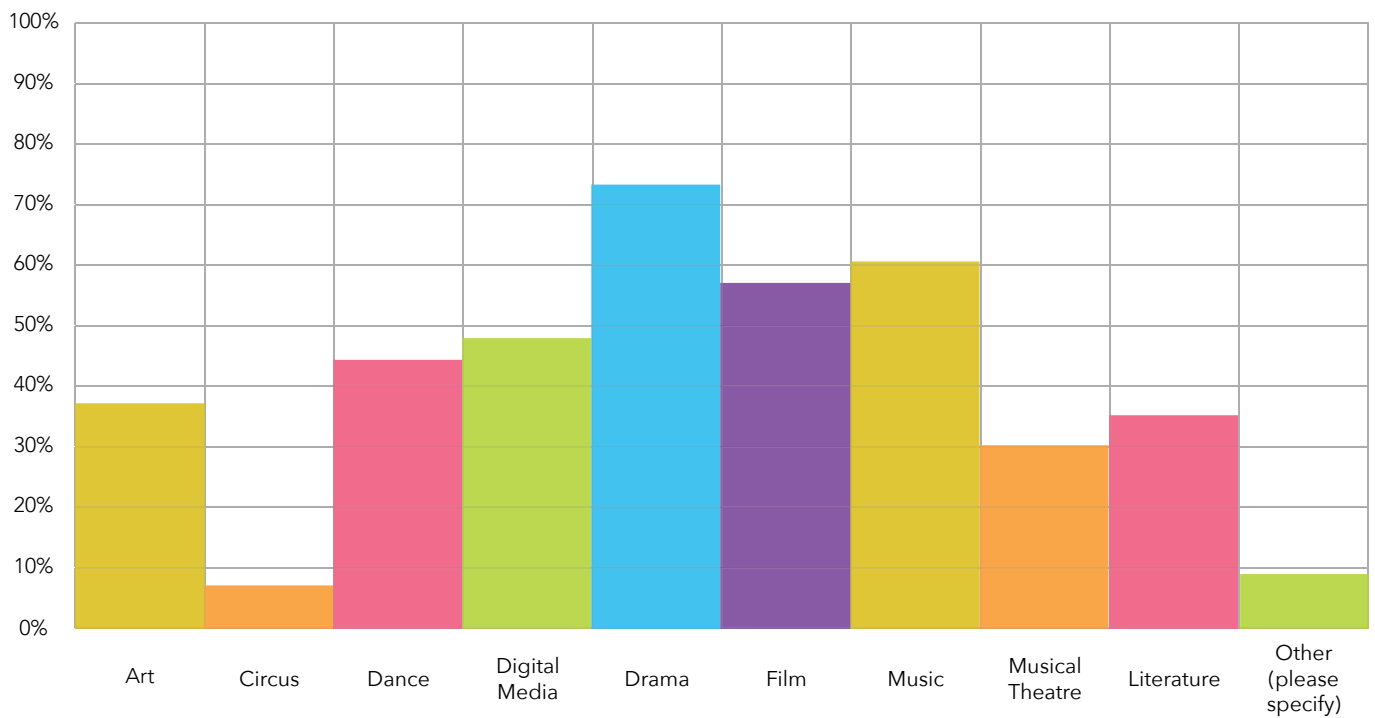
For parents, the biggest barriers are seen as cost and location which both accounted for 52% of answers. Lack of choice was identified by 47% and lack of interest by 43%. Location was mentioned by 39% and interest in other activities such as sports was identified by 34% as a barrier to engaging with the arts.

Some comments on this issue were as follows:

- "Not providing clubs/groups access to art tutors to do projects eg: St. Patrick's Day. Not providing clubs/groups with a simple process to access art tutors. Place to store art project work until complete."
- "Needs to be introduced from age 4 to children."
- "Exposing children from a very young age to all the arts is the key to a lifetime of participation. Visual arts feature well in primary and second level education whereas music, dance and drama are very much at the whim of the school, often dependent on the class teacher's ability/interest, in primary education. Many of these teachers give a wonderful introduction to children in visual art and some in music, but rarely in dance and drama. They cannot be expected to be expert in everything. A lot of lip service is given to the importance and value of the arts in life, which is not matched with resources. Highly qualified and skilled teachers/tutors are needed to insure that

young people’s experience is an enriching, positive and enjoyable one. Music Generation Offaly/ Westmeath is gradually providing this support in schools which can afford to opt in to their music programs. Outside the school structure it is financially not possible for many families to access music, dance and drama programmes for their children. Every school without exception, primary and second level, includes many sports in their day to day activities, with qualified coaches coming in from, and financed by, national sports bodies. Could this highly successful model be adapted for the arts?”

**Q15: What type of workshops or performances for young people would you like to see more of in Offaly?**

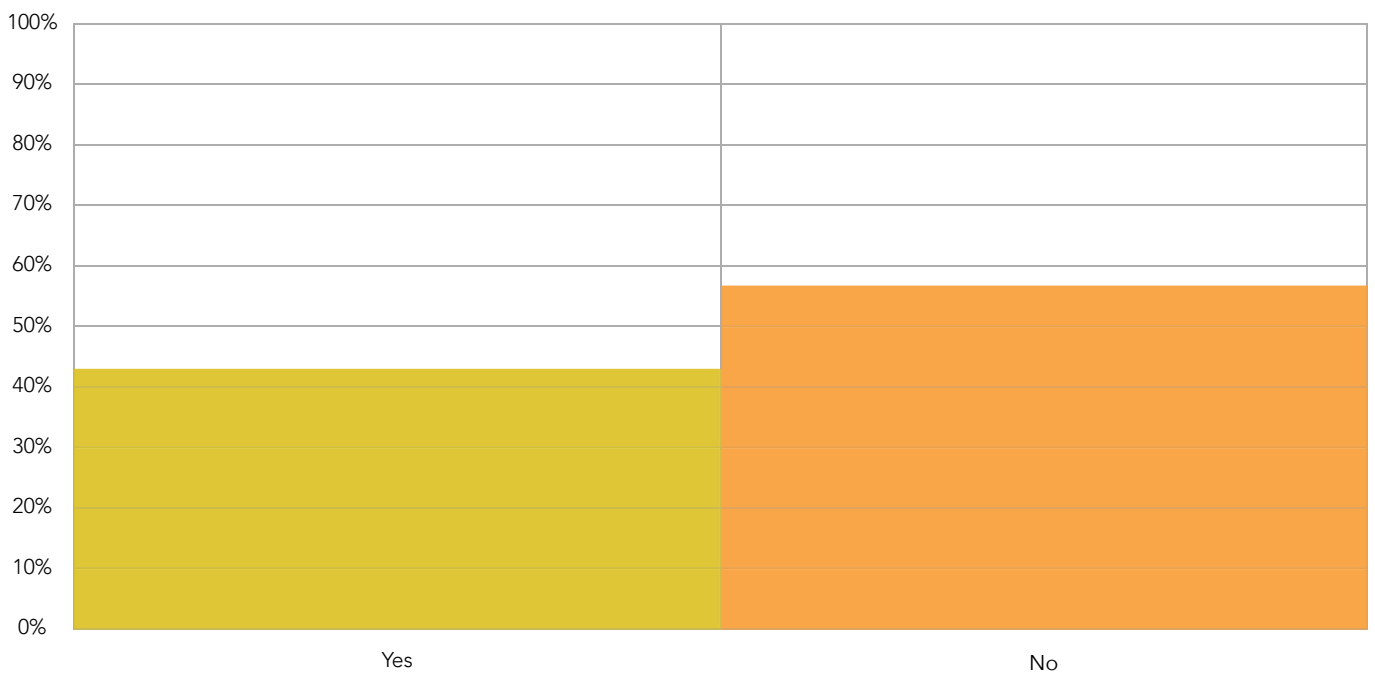


When parents were asked what they would like to see more of in terms of workshops or performances for young people the results were as follows:

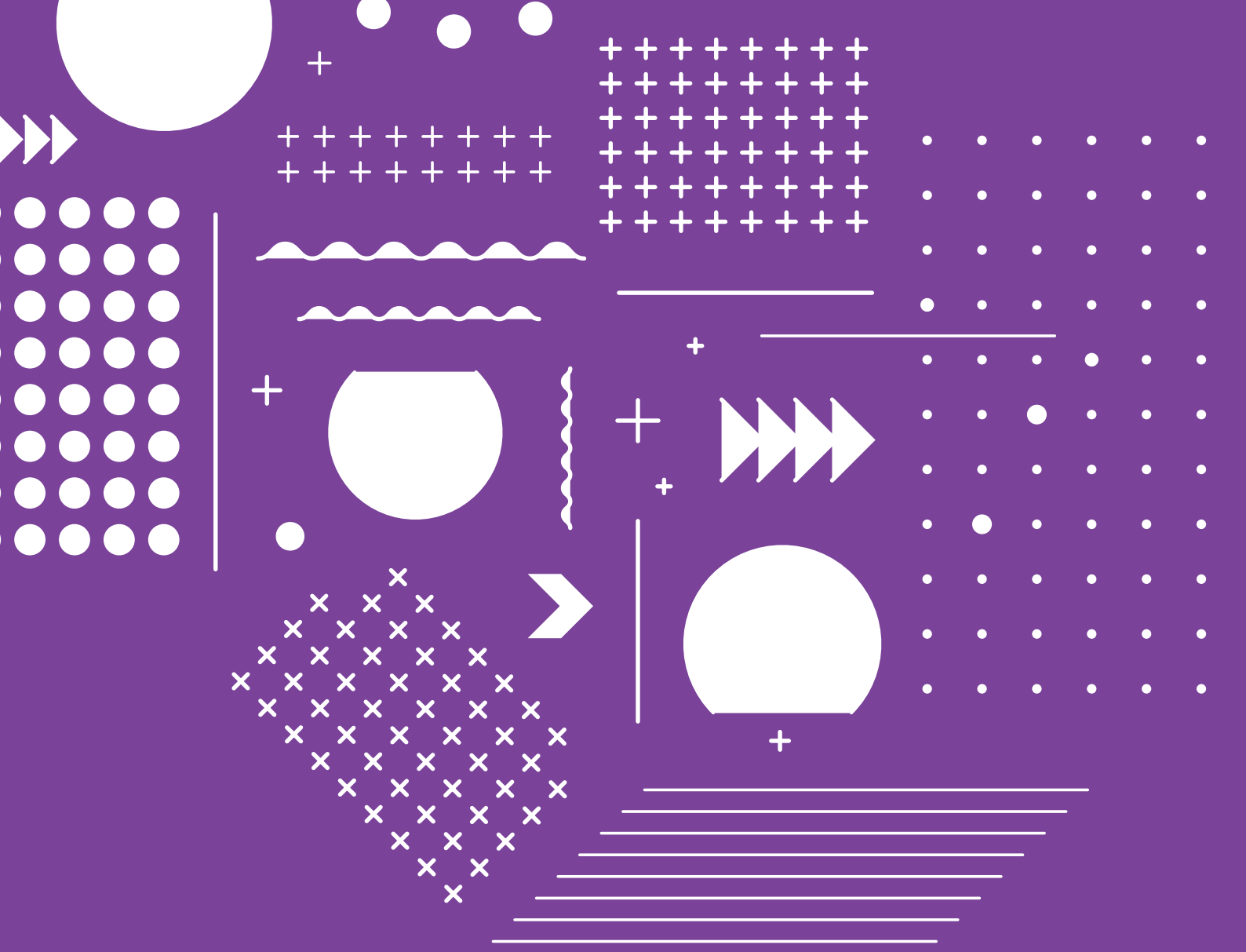
- Drama - 73%
- Music - 60%
- Film - 56%
- Digital Media - 47%
- Dance - 43%
- Literature - 34%
- Art - 34%
- Musical Theatre - 30%
- Circus - 8%
- Other (identified as Spectacle, Street Art, Prop Building) - 8%



**Q16: Has participation in an Arts themed class/workshop/project impacted on your child's choice of further education/employment?**



Some 42% of parents surveyed felt participation in the arts had impacted on their child's choice of further education and employment, with 58% stating that it had not. Many commented that it was too soon to tell, and others again identified the lack of affordable opportunity as a barrier to getting that far.



ARTIST'S

SURVEY

## Appendix 1.3 - Artist's Survey

A total of 27 artists from Offaly participated in an online survey on Youth Arts Participation. There was a broad representation of art forms including drama, musical theatre, art, digital media, literature, circus, dance, music, photography and poetry. The highest volume of responses was from the genre of drama and musical theatre. Geographical representation was across Tullamore, Birr, Clara, Edenderry, Shinrone, Crohan and Ballinahown.

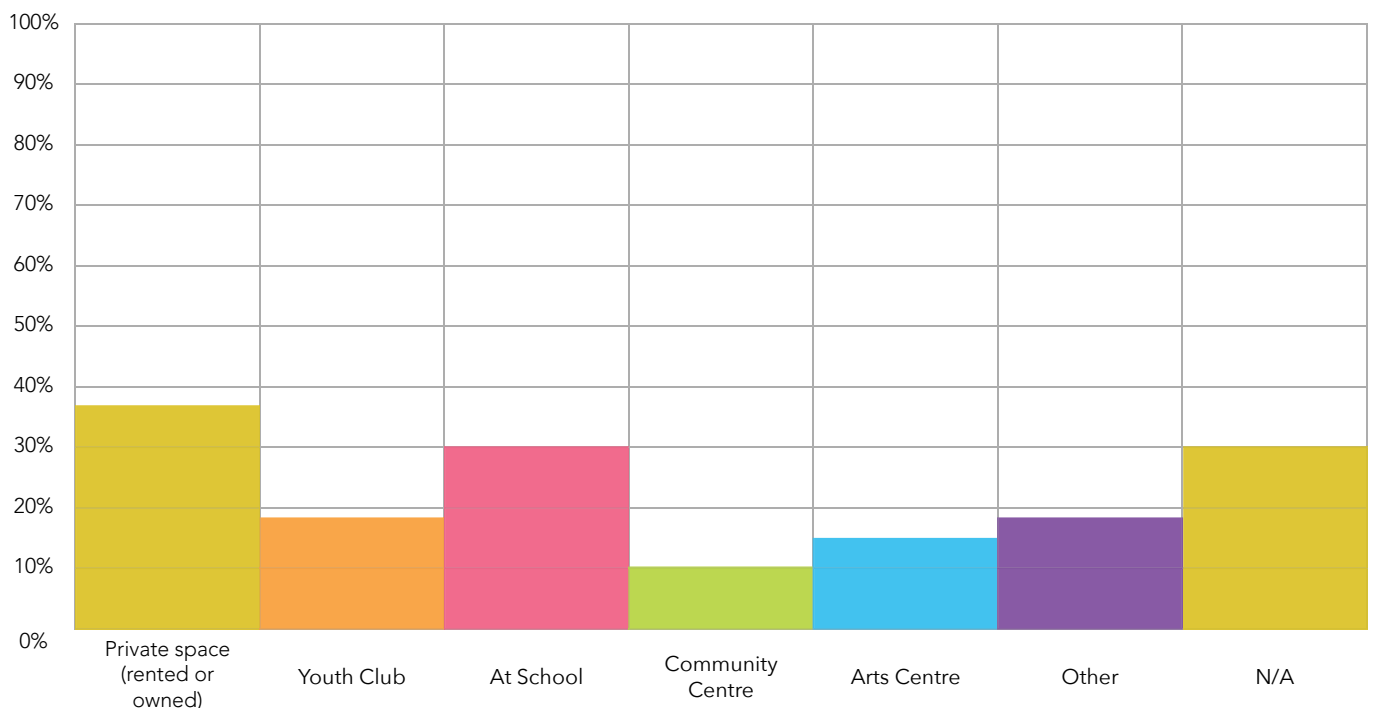
Some 56% of the artists surveyed offer workshops to the public and 44% do not. Of the 44% who do not offer classes and who are not working with young people, all said they would consider it in the future. A total of 33% work with young people aged from 4-24 already.

### Q5: If you are not working with children or young people, what do you see as barriers to doing so?



When asked to identify the barriers against working with young people some common themes emerged: resources, Garda vetting procedures, lack of locations, funding, and lack of facilitator training, child protection.

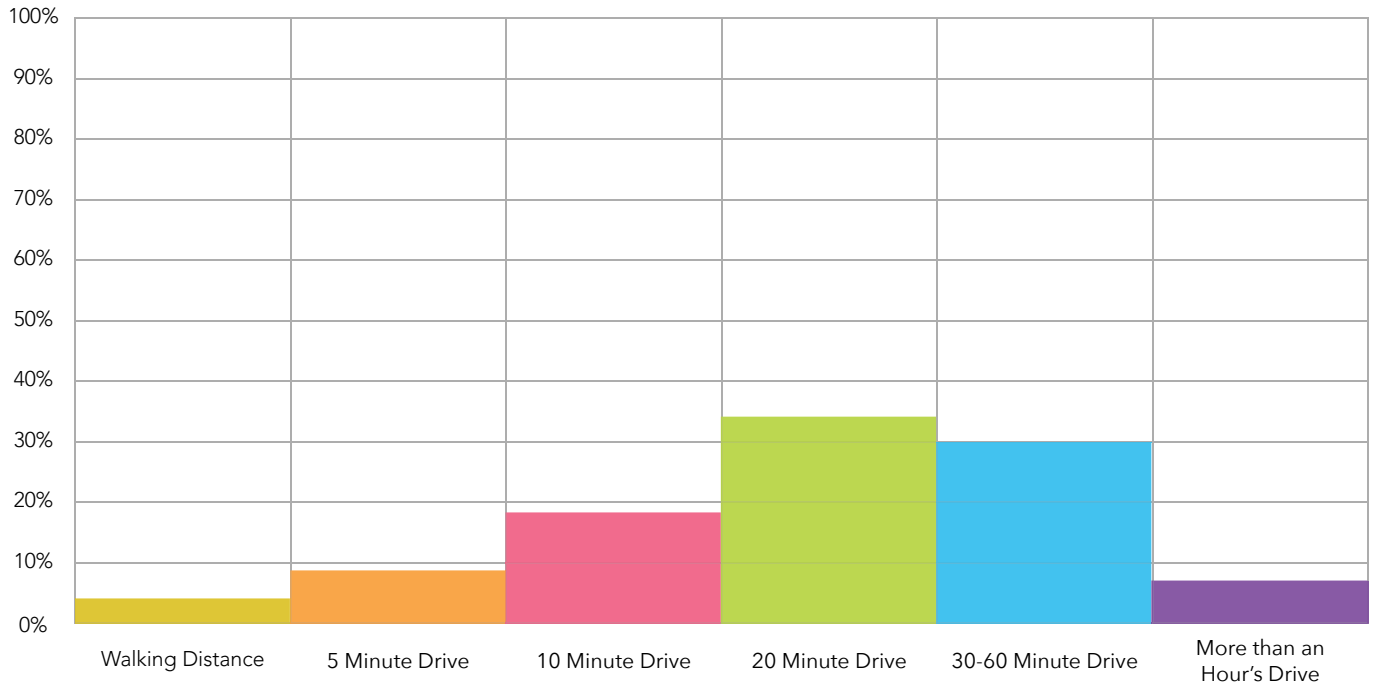
### Q7: If you are providing training, where do activities typically take place?





Of those who are offering workshops to young people, location is a factor certainly. Some 34% work in private premises that are rented or owned; 30% work in schools, 19% in youth clubs, 19% in other locations, 15% in arts centres and 11% in community centres. It shows how lack of location can be a deterrent when the highest proportion of activity is happening in locations that are costly.

**Q8: How far do you think people would travel to a class/workshop/event?**

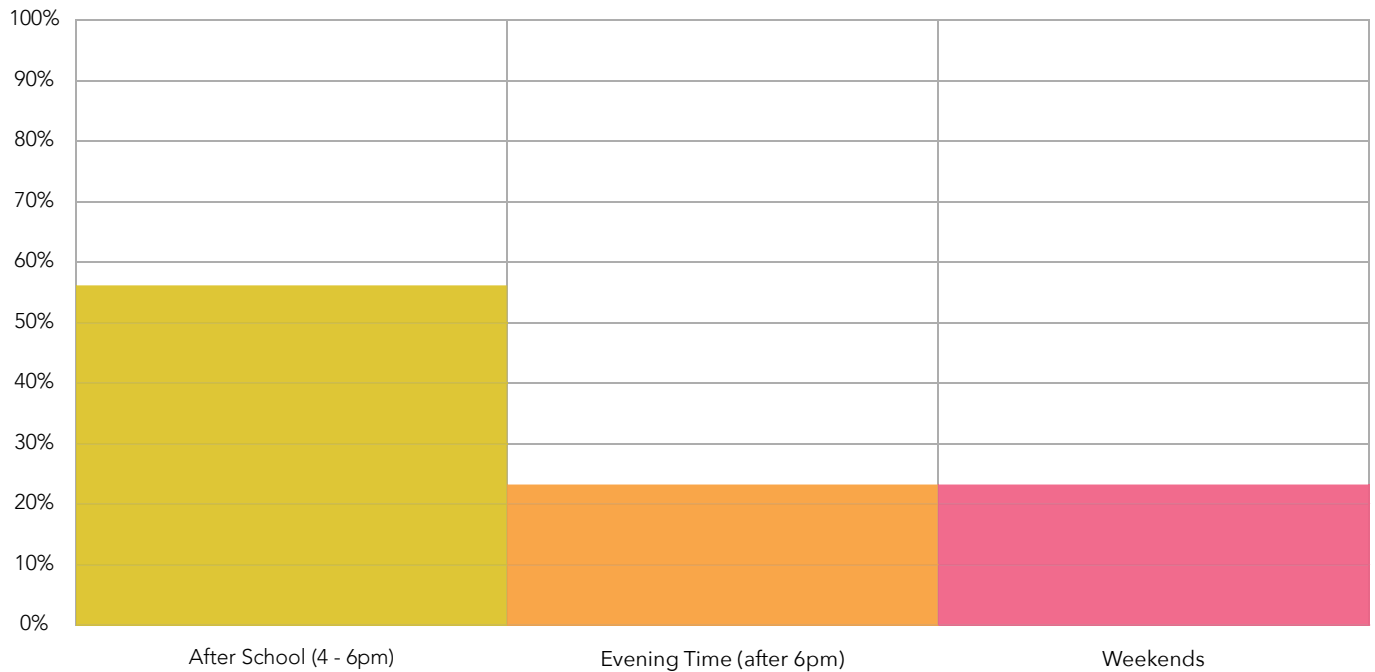


This data again highlights the focus on driving to a location for arts activities which in itself places a socio-economic precondition for arts engagement.

The question of engaging with disadvantaged or marginalised communities is also thought-provoking. A total of 55% of artists have engaged with disadvantaged or marginalised communities, while 22% have not but would consider it. This shows the scope for engagement across the artist community of Offaly and could be a way to ensure inclusivity.

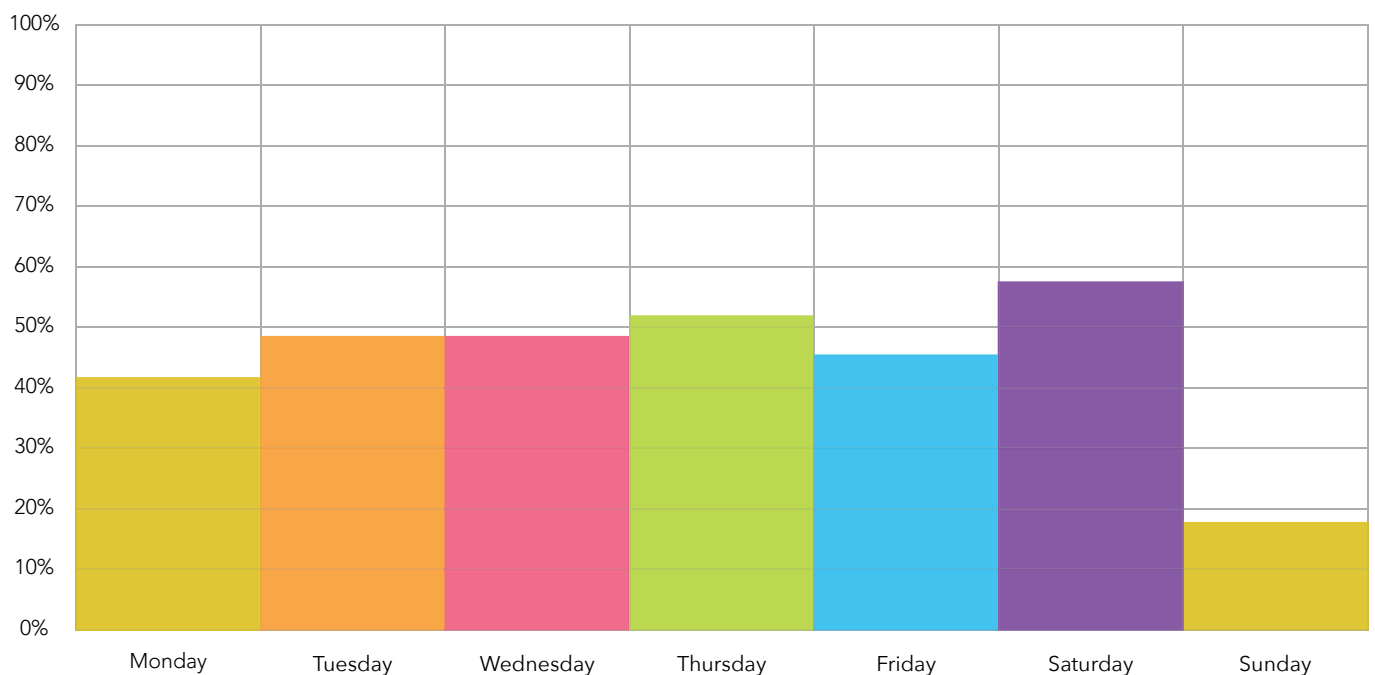


**Q10: What time of day do you consider best for engaging young people in art classes, workshops or events?**



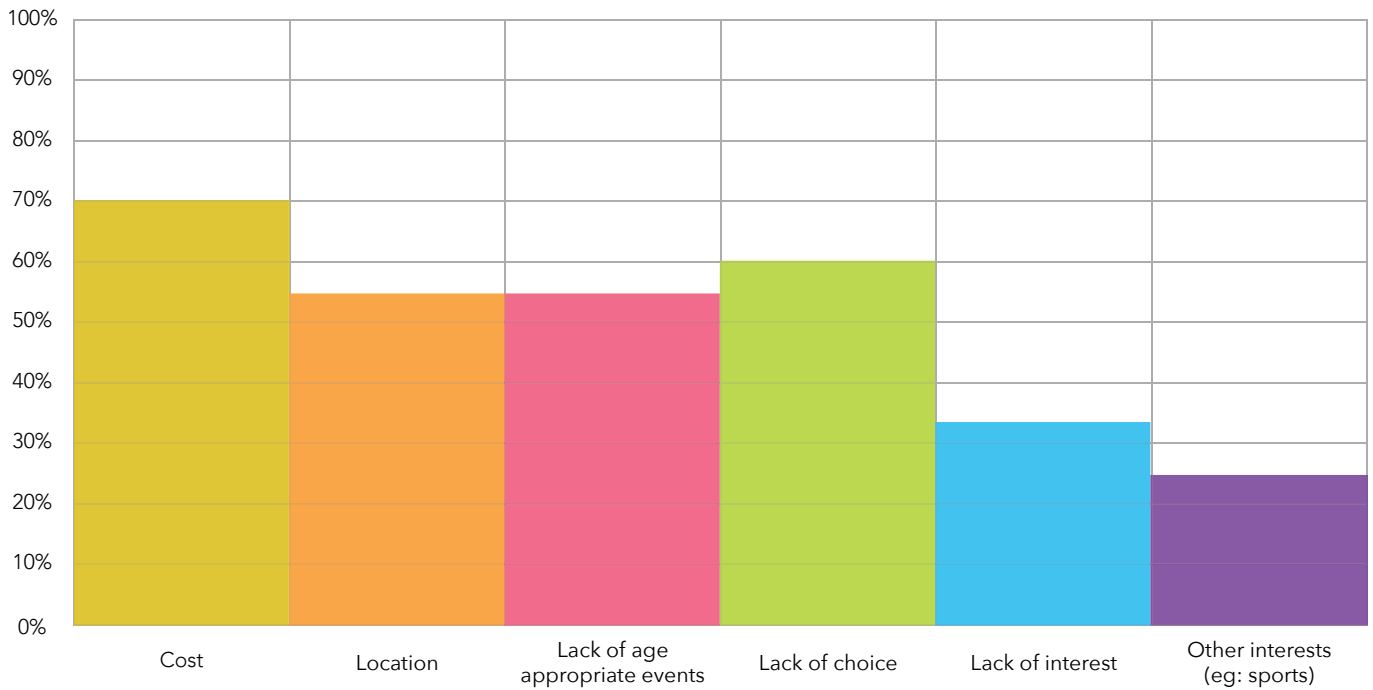
There were similar responses to those from young people and parents, with 53% of artists having a preference for weekdays from 4-6pm, 23% favouring weekdays after 6pm, and 23% preferring weekends.

**Q11: What days do you consider most suited to running workshops for young people?**



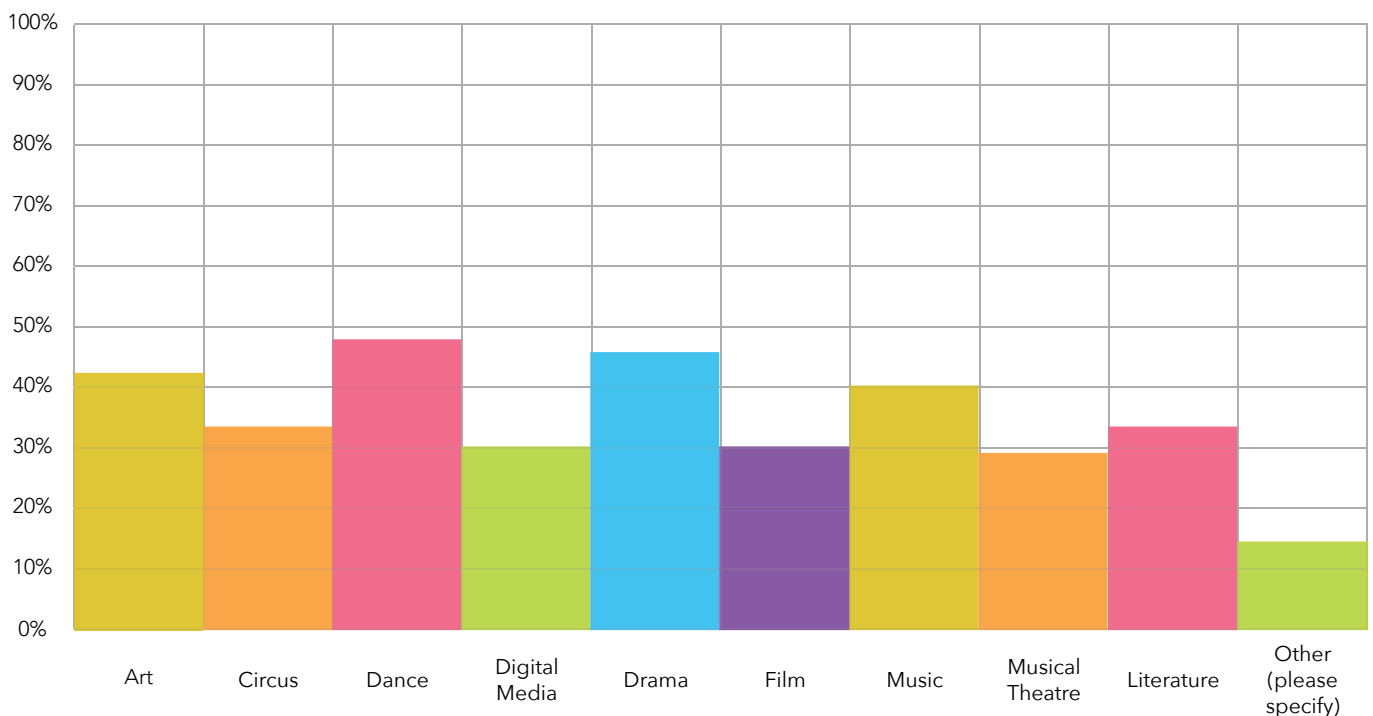
When asked to specify exact days, Saturday was the most popular answer with 55% of answers, followed by Thursday at 51%, Tuesday and Wednesday both at 48%, Friday at 44%, and Monday at 40%. Sunday was the least popular day, which is consistent with other surveys, and accounted for 18% of answers.

**Q14: What do you see as the biggest barriers to young people engaging with the Arts?**



Cost was identified as the biggest barrier to youth participation with the arts by 70% of artists surveyed, followed by lack of choice at 59%, location at 55%, lack of age-appropriate events at 55%, lack of interest at 33% and other interests such as sport at 25%.

**Q13: What type of workshops or performances for young people would you like to see more of in Offaly?**



Artists gave a broad cross section of interests when asked to identify what they would like to see more of for young people in Offaly. The results are as follows:

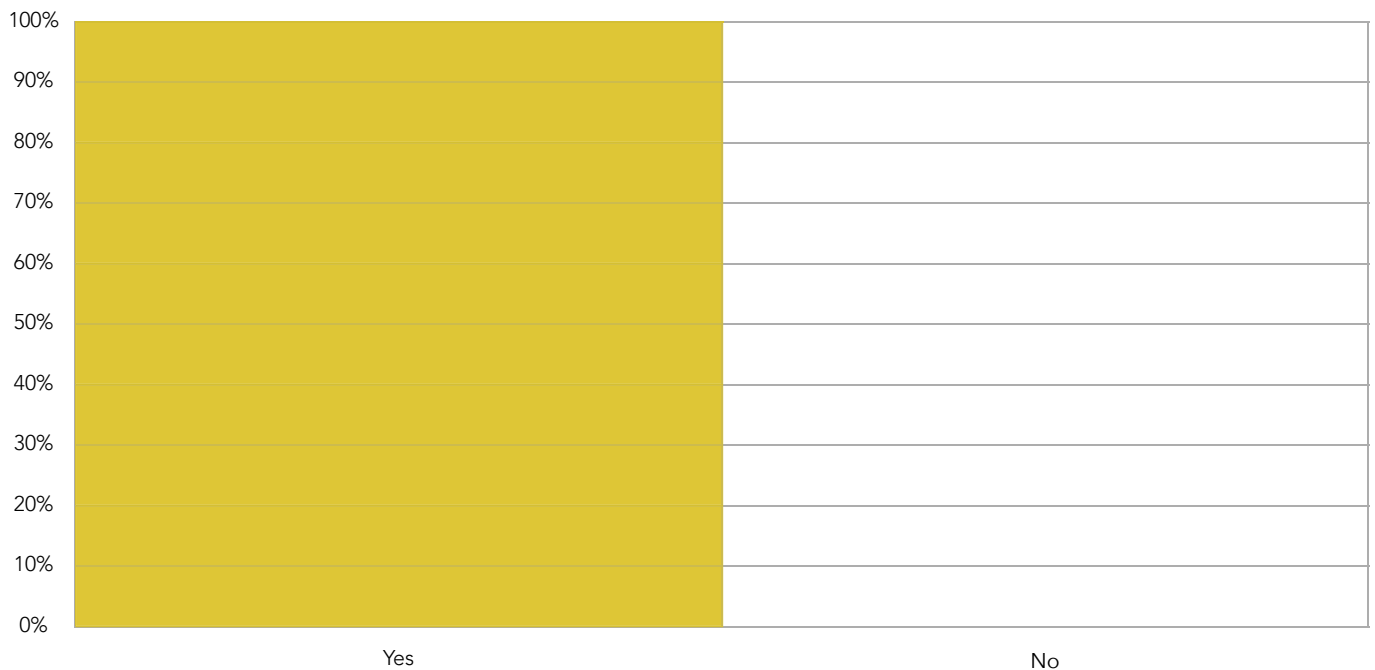
- Dance - 48%
- Art - 44%
- Film - 44%
- Music - 40%
- Circus - 33%
- Literature - 33%
- Digital Media - 29%
- Musical Theatre - 29%
- Artists also named photography, street art, spectacle and contemporary theatre as other interests that should be explored.

**Q14: Can you identify supporting factors that would encourage you to run workshops with young people?**



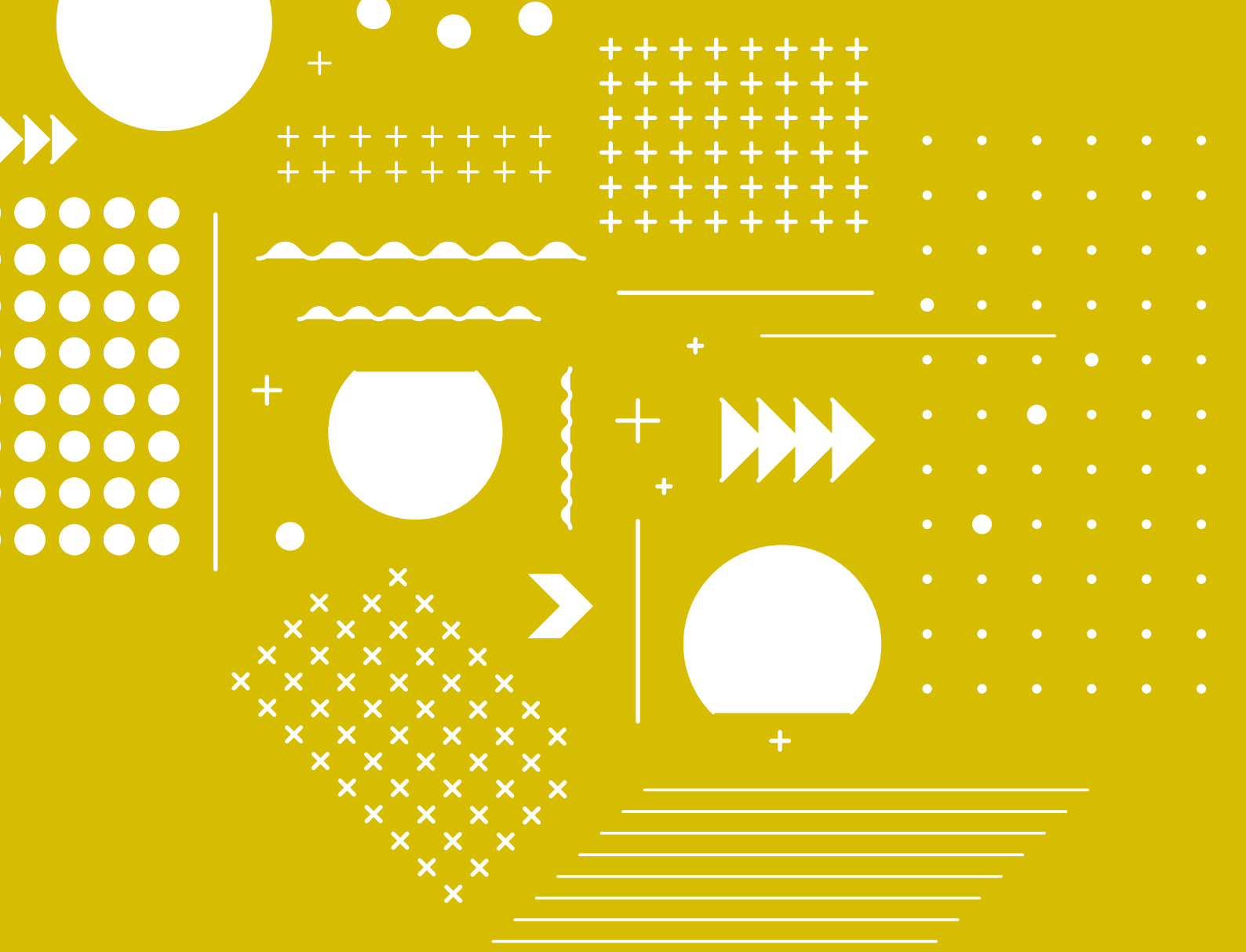
Supportive factors followed a general theme as presented in the word cloud above. Generally, artists felt funding options were the biggest supportive factor that could influence their work with young people. Another area identified by many was the issue of a location, which can act as both a venue to conduct work but also to store appropriate materials. Many people meshed the two issues together, suggesting funding applications be made for the purchase of equipment and materials that could be used in community contexts for work with young people. Training was the next biggest supportive factor that artists felt could assist them in their roles; training in facilitation skills, workshop management and confidence-building opportunities to make the leap from artist to facilitator. In essence, all the feedback points towards providing a training opportunity where artists could learn the essential components of project delivery, everything from handling administration to public relations, to procedures around child protection and Garda vetting. Many mentioned the idea of having a workshop assistant, and again this points towards the reality for so many artists working alone in the community. There is a strong thirst to share knowledge and skills, and core training opportunities in the form of continuous professional development could enhance both the artist experience of life in Offaly and potentially the young people with whom they may work.

**Q15: Would you consider training or upskilling to be better equipped to facilitate youth arts?**



The overwhelming yes from 100% of artists surveyed on their willingness to upskill and train in youth arts facilitation, again reinforces the appetite amongst the creative community to share learning in appropriate youth-centred venues. It is an inspiring response from artists and an action on this point could have direct, long-term consequences for the young people of Offaly and their introduction to arts and culture.





# PROFESSIONAL'S SURVEY



## Appendix 1.4 - Professionals Survey

Eleven professionals who work with young people in a variety of youth work contexts participated in the online survey. A total of 63% of those surveyed work with 17-24-year-olds and 36% work with 13-16-year-olds. Meanwhile 45% work with a mixture of the age groups, plus younger children.

When asked to list the art form preferences of their groups, the following was the result, with position in list indicating preference from most preferred to least: digital media, music, film, circus, art and literature.

A total of 82% had run an arts-themed project in their work and 18% had not. Of those who had run arts projects, 67% had accessed funding from local authority, 11% from the Arts Council, 11% from fundraising initiatives and 43% mentioned other sources including the following: The Trench Trust, Birr Lions Club, Birr Stage Guild, Eradication of Poverty Grant, LCDP, SICAP, HSE and Youth Matters.

On a scale of 1-5, the average rate of improvement in confidence levels as a result of engagement in an arts project, was 4, or 80%. The average improvement to social interaction and social skills was rated at 4 on the 1-5 scale, or 80%. Participants' problem-solving skills and decision-making skills improved by 3 on the 1-5 scale, or 60%.

Some 60% of those surveyed rated the participation levels in arts projects as high and 40% rated the levels as medium.

When asked to consider what were the biggest barriers to running arts projects, the results had similarities to artists' responses. The cost and funding of a project was seen as the biggest barrier, followed closely by a fear of the unknown and lack of arts skills. Transport and the ensuing cost was an identified barrier, as was engaging the support of parents. Interestingly, professionals did not identify key barriers that artists mentioned such as locations, places to store equipment, facilitation skills, information on vetting and child protection practices. What this highlights is the potential of a partnership approach to engaging young people with the arts. We have a wealth of experienced professionals working in the supported structures that lend to good practice in youth work settings with fixed locations, storage facilities and staff with required training and policies in place around how to work with young people. It would seem sensible to advocate for partnerships between organisations, to allow artists to work in the community, supported by youth workers for projects that can develop confidence, self-esteem and decision-making skills amongst the young people.

When asked to express what were the greatest advantages for young people to engage with the arts, professionals were overwhelmingly positive listing the following as outputs: freedom of expression, access to creativity, self-reflection and personal growth, better mental health and wellbeing, access to opportunities that are inclusive and challenging, happiness and inner confidence.

Professionals were very consistent with what would support them to run arts projects, naming the following as key factors: access to skilled artists and facilitators, funding, the artist to come to their centre, more workshops, more variety and projects that recognise diversity.

A total of 91% of those surveyed would be interested in collaborating with another group or organisation to engage with the arts and 9% would not.

Overall, the feedback was very positive and speaks to the overarching guiding research on the value that arts engagement has for young people. However, it also highlights the sense of frustration that many key workers feel about the lack of opportunity for the young people, particularly those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

People discussed the imminent need for change, and the following is a sample of the closing comments:

- "A conscious and dedicated investment into new or existing programmes."
- "Local art projects reaching out to rural communities is key."
- "Investment in the arts is sorely lacking in the Midlands."
- "Overall, I think inclusion of young Travellers within any youth arts strategy is imperative. This is a group with so much to offer creatively and culturally. The under-representation of Travellers within mainstream arts has a hugely negative impact on how young people see themselves and reinforces the belief that the arts are not for them."



# The Makings

## Fostering Youth Creativity

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