

# Arts in Health EVIDENCE FACT SHEET

STATISTIC	FINDING	SOURCE
<b>LONGEVITY &amp; MORTALITY</b>		
<b>31%</b> lower mortality risk	Older adults (50+) who attended arts and cultural events every few months or more had a 31% lower risk of dying over a 14-year follow-up, independent of socioeconomic, health, and behavioral factors. Even infrequent attenders (once or twice a year) had a 14% lower risk.	<i>Fancourt &amp; Steptoe, BMJ, 2019 (n = 6,710, ELSA cohort)</i>
<b>MENTAL HEALTH – DEPRESSION</b>		
<b>48%</b> reduced risk of depression	Cultural engagement once a month or more was associated with a 48% lower risk of developing depression in older adults over a 10-year period. Attending every few months still yielded a 32% lower risk. Effect was independent of pre-existing depressive symptoms and social factors.	<i>Fancourt &amp; Tymoszuk, British Journal of Psychiatry, 2019 (ELSA cohort)</i>
<b>38%</b> reduction in postnatal depression symptoms	A three-arm RCT found that mothers with postnatal depression who participated in a 10-week group singing program experienced a 38% reduction in depressive symptoms – a significantly faster recovery compared to usual care and control groups.	<i>Fancourt &amp; Perkins, British Journal of Psychiatry, 2018 (n = 134)</i>
<b>COGNITIVE HEALTH &amp; DEMENTIA</b>		
<b>Lower dementia incidence over 10 years</b>	Adults aged 50+ who visited museums every few months or more had a lower incidence of dementia over a 10-year follow-up compared with those who attended less frequently. Cultural engagement was identified as a contributor to cognitive reserve.	<i>Fancourt, Steptoe &amp; Cadar, British Journal of Psychiatry, 2018 (ELSA cohort)</i>
<b>Protective effect equal to exercise</b>	Attending a concert or visiting a museum just 1–2 times per month was found to have a similar protective value for cognitive health as exercising for one to two hours per week.	<i>UCL Social Biobehavioral Research Group / EpiArts Lab synthesis</i>
<b>YOUTH &amp; ADOLESCENT HEALTH</b>		
<b>Reduced antisocial behavior</b>	Across two large US longitudinal cohorts (n > 25,000), teenagers engaged in arts and cultural activities were significantly less likely to engage in antisocial or criminalized behaviors up to two years later. Self-control was identified as a key mechanism.	<i>Bone, Bu, Fluharty, Paul, Sonke &amp; Fancourt, Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2022 (UCL &amp; UF EpiArts Lab)</i>
<b>59%</b> higher odds of strong social support	Adolescents (aged 11–21) participating in school-based arts activities had 59% higher odds of high perceived social support from peers compared to non-participants (OR = 1.59, 95% CI 1.32–1.91).	<i>Bone, Fancourt et al., Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 2022 (UCL &amp; UF EpiArts Lab, n = 11,780)</i>

LONELINESS & SOCIAL CONNECTION		
<p><b>24%</b> lower loneliness</p>	<p>Arts engagement in older adults is associated with approximately 24% lower rates of loneliness. Receptive arts engagement (attending events) and participatory arts activities both show longitudinal protective effects against social isolation.</p>	<p><i>Tymoszuk, Perkins, Fancourt et al., Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 2020 (ELSA cohort)</i></p>
<p><b>20%</b> lower depression</p>	<p>In the same cohort data, arts engagement was associated with approximately 20% lower rates of depression, with loneliness reduction identified as one key pathway linking cultural participation to improved mental health outcomes.</p>	<p><i>UCL Social Biobehavioral Research Group / ELSA analysis</i></p>
SCALE OF THE EVIDENCE BASE		
<p><b>3,000+</b> studies</p>	<p>The WHO-commissioned scoping is the most comprehensive arts and health review to date. It synthesized findings from over 900 publications, including 200+ systematic reviews covering more than 3,000 individual studies. <b>Arts were identified as a social determinant of health.</b></p>	<p><i>Fancourt &amp; Finn, WHO Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report No. 67, 2019</i></p>
<p><b>Prevention, treatment &amp; management</b></p>	<p>The same WHO review identified a major role for the arts across the full health spectrum: prevention of ill health, health promotion, and management and treatment of illness – from childhood through older age – across mental health, physical health, and social wellbeing.</p>	<p><i>Fancourt &amp; Finn, WHO / UCL, 2019</i></p>
ECONOMIC VALUE		
<p><b>£15</b> billion/year NHS savings (UK)</p>	<p>The return on investment of arts and cultural participation on the mental health of working adults alone was estimated at almost £15 billion per year in savings to the UK NHS.</p>	<p><i>Arts Council England / UCL analysis (cited in EpiArts Lab and NJPAC documentation)</i></p>
<p><b>11:1</b> ROI (Wales)</p>	<p>An analysis of arts and cultural investment in Wales found an 11:1 return on investment when health savings were compared to the public investment in local arts and culture.</p>	<p><i>Wales Arts Health ROI analysis (cited in NJPAC Arts &amp; Well-Being)</i></p>

## Key Research Institutions

UCL Social Biobehavioral Research Group, UF EpiArts Lab – Center for Arts in Medicine, Jameel Arts & Health Lab

## Methodological Notes

The majority of epidemiological findings cited above are observational (cohort studies) and demonstrate association, not causation. Authors consistently control for known confounders including age, sex, socioeconomic status, baseline health, physical activity, and social factors, but residual confounding cannot be fully excluded. Where RCT evidence is cited, it is noted. Full citations available upon request.