

# The Audience Panel: Results from the October Poll

## What art form doesn't float your boat?

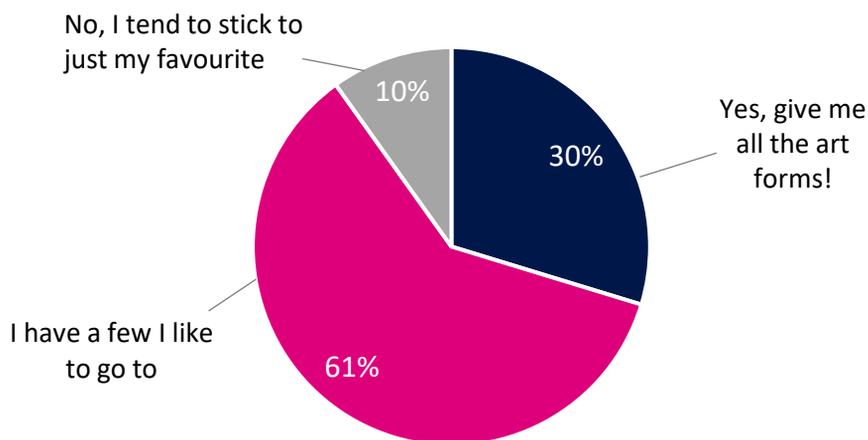
In this month's survey, we wanted to find out what artforms members of the Audience Panel connected with most.

### NI audiences enjoy a variety of art forms



Only 10% of the panel said that they only attended or participated in one type of art form, **with the most common response showing that people liked to include a variety of arts and cultural activities in their life.** We may assume that most people stick with one artform but although they may have a favourite that they consistently engage with, the majority of respondents are open minded and consume a diverse range of artforms in their past times. After all, variety is the spice of life!

Do you attend/participate in a variety of art forms?



### NI audiences are passionate about arts and culture, even art forms they don't necessarily engage with

Our second question asked the panel what artform they would "throw under the bus" from a given list. We expected most would pick their least favourite artform but this isn't what happened at all! Members of the panel passionately refused choosing a specific artform. Multiple respondents prefaced their reasoning with phrases like **"Only because you're making me choose..."**.



For those who didn't choose an artform, they were adamant that they were not willing to diminish the worth of any artform. We were thrilled to see how loyal people were and how much value they put in arts and culture in general:

*"I'm not going to devalue art forms I'm not familiar enough with to appreciate."*

*"All art inspires and uplifts me."*



*"Couldn't decide as really like them all!!"*

*"I couldn't throw any of them under a bus ..."*

*"I don't think throwing art forms under a bus is a good idea."*

Even if there was something on the list they weren't personally attached to, the panel largely had a recognition of the potential value for other members of society. Many respondents chose their artform not necessarily because they didn't enjoy it but instead a lack of familiarity with that artform had resulted in them not really engaging with it:

*"You asked me to pick one! I wouldn't have necessarily discarded any!"*



*"It's the one with which I engage least, although I would rather not throw any art form under the bus!"*

*"Really difficult choice and this was the one that I am least familiar with."*

*"I found it difficult to choose but went for the one I go to the least."*

## How can you burst audiences' assumptions about art forms they're not familiar with?



It was also clear that a lack of exposure from some art forms had influenced the panel's perception and led to assumptions about some of the art forms. For example, people who picked circus often referred to the commonly held association with "Big Top" travelling circuses, trained animals and outdated clowns. For organisations that offer circus performances, it is particularly important to address this misunderstanding and communicate what circus is like today.

In general, respondents were put off by art forms that they perceive as pretentious, boring, or inaccessible. It's ok that people who aren't familiar with your organisation don't understand from the get-go. We can't expect that everyone is going to get you right away. For this reason, the language you use to describe your offer is incredibly important. We need to consider the process that it takes for audiences to expand from their first impression to becoming a long-term fan. As a sector, we often worry about 'dumbing it down' but that's not what it's about. A welcoming and inviting tone as well as an emphasis on the joy the experience brings can do wonders.



## Final note



The overall message is that every single art form has its place at the table and no art form should ever be devalued. We as organisations should remind ourselves that we won't always be everyone's favourite cup of tea, and that's ok. Instead, let's be more grateful for our audiences that do engage time and time again, and benefit from the experiences we give them.