

# SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

## „CULTURAL CONSUMPTION AND PARTICIPATION OF LATVIAN POPULATION IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES 2007-2014”

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The study and translation was supported by the State Culture Capital Foundation [www.kkf.lv](http://www.kkf.lv)

### Study context

The promotion of evidence-based cultural policy and the establishment of regular cultural research traditions were one of the general long-term objectives of the society. Culturelab+ research project "A Study of Cultural Consumption and Audiences of Cultural Activities", which was carried out with the financial support of the State Culture Capital Foundation, and whose results and conclusions were summed up in the publication "Cultural Consumption and Participation of Latvian Population in Cultural Activities 2007-2014: Research Data and Statistics"<sup>1</sup> released at the end of 2014, but its short summary is given in this report. The implementation of the study has allowed to obtain data on the population's attitude to culture in general, the most convenient channels of information and communication for target audiences, factors influencing the selection of cultural events, cultural consumption (including on the Internet) and participation in cultural activities, as well as identification of new cultural infrastructure objects and willingness to visit them. Since the study approved a methodology used in preceding cultural consumption surveys, new data were comparable with previous survey data.

Cultural consumption surveys (i.e. surveys on activity rates of the population attending and participating in various cultural events) in Latvia have a relatively recent history. The first cultural consumption survey was conducted in 2006. Until then, the consumption of culture in Latvia was not systematically studied, although some questions about culture and related activities had been included in both household budget surveys and studies about leisure time activities, etc.. A year later, a more capacious and methodologically more valuable cultural consumption study was carried out, which can be considered the first of regularly repeated surveys in subsequent years. There a similar methodology have used to be able to carry out assessments of data changes. By 2010, such studies were carried out once a year. In total, 5 studies on cultural consumption were implemented.<sup>2</sup> Changes in the economic situation and interests of researchers resulted in discontinuity in researches of cultural consumption, thus the research project implemented in 2014 was the first cultural consumption study over the past four years.

### Statistics on cultural activity in Latvia

During the period from 2007 to 2013 the number of population in Latvia as a whole decreased by 8% or 185 015 persons, thus lessening the potential audience of cultural events and activities. At the same time, not all cultural areas have experienced a significant reduction in activities and

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<sup>1</sup> An electronic version of the publication in Latvian available at: <https://culturelablv.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/kulturas-paterins-web-versija-3-decembris.pdf>

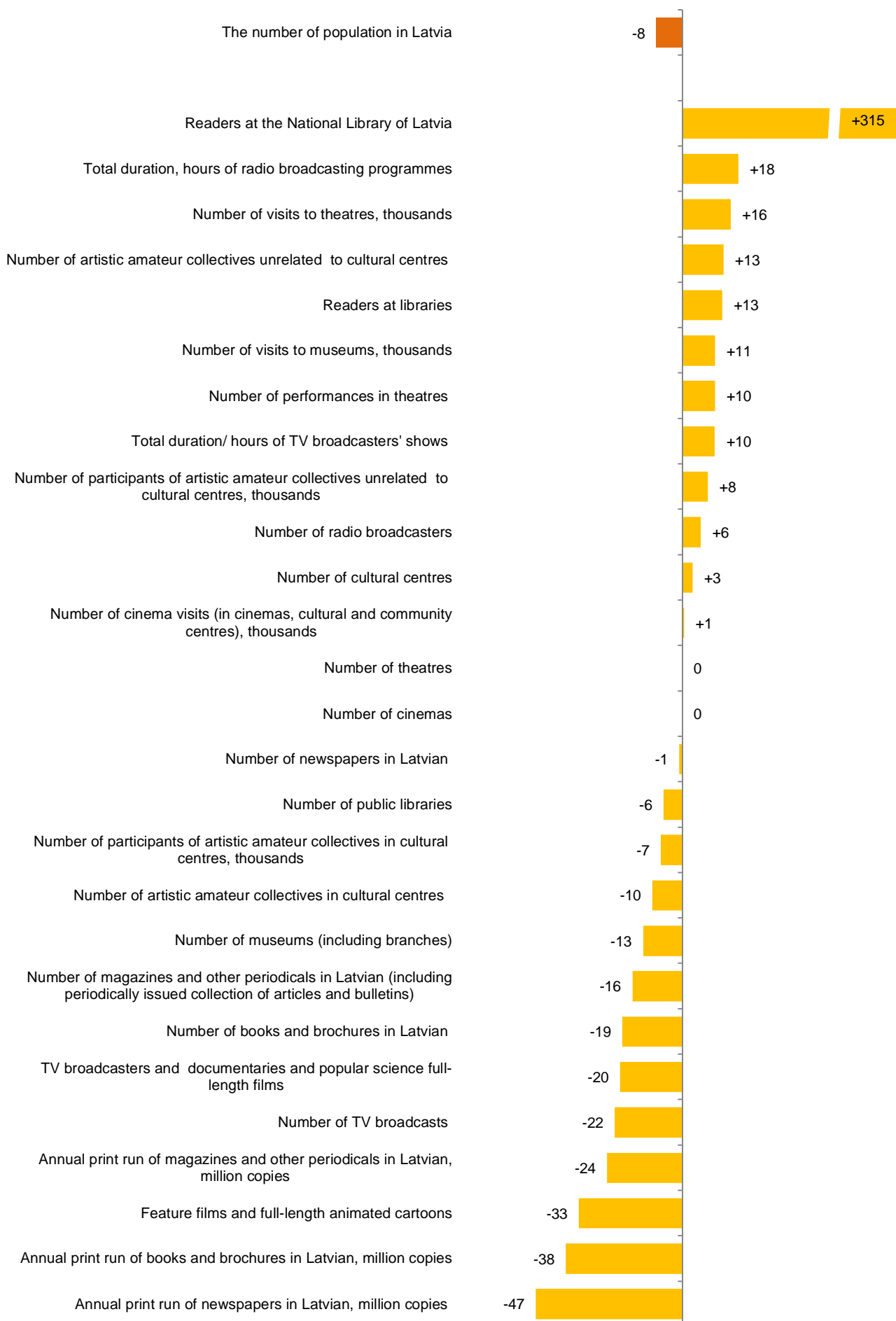
<sup>2</sup> The collection of studies in culture sphere implemented in Latvia available at: <https://culturelablv.wordpress.com/resursi/>

several areas are experiencing even a remarkable increase. The readership at the National Library of Latvia has grown most significantly - the total rise is up 315%, increasing the number of readers from 81 363 in 2007 to 256 189 persons in 2013. The total duration of radio broadcasting programmes (in hours) has increased by about 1/5. Similarly, the number of visits to theaters has grown (+16%), increasing from 860 000 to 994 000 during the corresponding period. The activity has risen by about 1/10 in several other areas too . number of artistic amateur groups outside cultural centres, number of readers in libraries, visits at museums, as well as number of performances in theatres and the total duration in hours of TV broadcastersq shows have increased. It should be emphasised that, despite the increasing offer and availability of electronic mass media content, population habits and desire to attend theaters, museums and cinemas have not abated but have even slightly increased.

At the same time, there is a significant drop in certain cultural activities. The most significant fall has hit the annual print run of newspapers in Latvian (-47%) along with books and brochures in Latvian (-38%). Also the number of feature films and full-length animated cartoons has decreased (-33%, although in absolute numbers it makes up only 2 films, dropping from 6 to 4 movies). Similarly, the annual print run of magazines and other periodicals in Latvian has decreased by 1/5, but by about 1/4 - the number of TV broadcasters and documentaries and popular science full-length films (in absolute numbers the drop from 5 to 4 films) and the number of books and brochures in Latvian. The number of museums and artistic amateur groups in cultural centres has dropped by about 10%.

Cultural activities with no major changes over the past seven years are as follows - the number of cultural centres, the number of movie showtimes visits, the number of theatres and cinemas, as well as the number of newspapers in Latvian.

**Cultural activity in Latvia 2007-2013**  
 (sorted in order from the largest growth to the largest reduction in percentage (%))  
 Data source: the Central Statistical Bureau



**Cultural activity in Latvia 2007-2013**  
**(sorted in order from the largest growth to the largest reduction (in percentage))**

Data source: the Central Statistical Bureau

	2007	2013	2013/2007
The number of population in Latvia	2 208 840	2 023 825	-185 015
Readers at the National Library of Latvia	81 363	337 552	256 189
Total duration, hours of radio broadcasting programmes	326 325	385 110	58 785
Number of visits to theatres, thousands	860	994	134
Number of artistic amateur groups unrelated to cultural centres	489	554	65
Readers at libraries	1 036 033	1 168 973	132 940
Number of visits to museums, thousands	2 404	2 658	254
Number of performances in theatres	3 010	3 326	316
Total duration/ hours of TV broadcastersqshows	91 639	101 214	9 575
Number of participants of artistic amateur groups unrelated to cultural centres, thousands	11	12	1
Number of radio broadcasters	34	36	2
Number of cultural centres	541	559	18
Number of cinema visits (in cinemas, cultural and community centres), thousands	2 363	2 378	15
Number of theatres	9	9	0
Number of cinemas	14	14	0
Number of newspapers in Latvian	193	191	-2
Number of public libraries	864	811	-53
Number of participants of artistic amateur groups in cultural centres, thousands	60	56	-4
Number of artistic amateur groups in cultural centres	3 599	3 252	-347
Number of museums (including branches)	127	111	-16
Number of magazines and other periodicals in Latvian (including periodically issued collection of articles and bulletins)	286	240	-46
Number of books and brochures in Latvian	2 366	1 910	-456
TV broadcasters and documentaries and popular science full-length films	5	4	-1
Number of TV broadcasts	23	18	-5
Annual print run of magazines and other periodicals in Latvian, million copies	46	35	-11
Feature films and full-length animated cartoons	6	4	-2
Annual print run of books and brochures in Latvian, million copies	5	3	-2
Annual print run of newspapers in Latvian, million copies	125	66	-59

### **Most significant upward trends of cultural consumption in Latvia**

Information and data collected, summarized and analyzed within the study make it possible to identify a number of significant upward trends in cultural consumption and participation in culture, allowing to draw conclusions about the changes in cultural activities of the population of Latvia over the past seven years and also directly and indirectly points to the necessity of cultural management institutions and specific cultural organizations to pay special attention to strategic (and long-term) development planning to diversify and expand cultural offer and audiences.

Cultural events and activities are visited by many people, but seldom. In total, a large proportion of the population (93%) attend some cultural events at least once a year, but a very small proportion attends cultural events on a regular basis (not more than 5% of the population visit specific cultural events at least once a month). The average number of activities is also relatively high . on average, during a year one resident of Latvia participates in 8.9 out of 25 cultural activities included

in the questionnaire. Consequently, in order to increase the audience of cultural events and activities a greater effect would be from promoting regular visits, rather than activating and raising an interest of the inactive audience.

Currently less active socio-demographic groups in the cultural consumption are as follows - 55-74 years old people, people with lower income, unemployed, non-citizens, non-Latvians, men, as well as those who live alone. On average representatives of these groups attend annually only 5-7 different events, consequently these are currently less involved target groups in the field of culture. At the same time, these are also the target groups, which are generally less interested in culture and whose financial resources are often limited to be engaged actively in the cultural consumption - subsequently, attracting them would be a great challenge for organizers of cultural events. Also this is another argument for a statement on the effectiveness of increasing the regularity of visits for audience enlargement, instead of activating inactive cultural consumers. This does not mean that these socio-demographic groups should be considered unattainable, but rather that the efforts to interest and engage them in culture must be planned in a long-term perspective. There is another aspect that should be stressed here . almost in all aspects analyzed studies non-citizens and non-Latvians are identified as relatively less active target groups. Although this conclusion cannot be generalized (since this issue was not analyzed in depth in the study), nevertheless it is obvious that during the last seven years a tendency of non-Latvians to engage themselves less in different cultural activities and events has increased. It raises also question if and how culture currently provides a platform for the integration process in society at large.

Seniors will be a strategically important part of culture audience in the medium and long term. Population decline and population ageing trends suggest to regard the senior target group as one of the most important groups in society already in the near future, whose role will be crucial for culture and its audience. *Eurostat* demographic projections<sup>3</sup> anticipate that by 2020 in total the Latvian population will decrease by 7%, by 2030 - about 19%, but by 2050 - 28%. In turn, the proportion of people who are 65 years old will rise from 19% in 2014 to 25% in 2030 and 28% in 2050 (by 2050, the proportion of the population aged 80 years or over will increase more than two times - from 4.7% to 10.5%), while the proportion of under-age persons will not change significantly. Such demographic trends suggest that young people as an audience for the cultural sector will continue to decline (because of total population decline), while the senior audience . will grow significantly. Taking into account that the target groups of seniors are currently expressing a distinctly lower interest in culture and also are attending cultural events to a lesser extent, ensuring sufficient quantity of culture consumers in the long term lead to regard the engagement of these socio-demographic groups as a strategically crucial necessity.

Personal participation in culture has a positive correlation with more active cultural consumption. Those who are personally involved in cultural activities (sing, dance, participate in amateur theatres, take part in crafts, etc.), have attended on average 10.7 different cultural events during the past year, while those who are not personally involved in any activities - only 5 cultural events.

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat data. Available at: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/database>

The study data do not allow making a clear conclusion on whether a more active consumption determines a more active participation or vice versa, however, a positive correlation between consumption and participation allows asserting that for the promotion of cultural activities in the population generally it is essential to activate both consumption and participation along with personal involvement. Consequently the promotion of personal involvement is one of the effective ways to increase the number of cultural audience in general. In addition, the share of involved persons has not significantly changed in recent years, while the cultural consumption has decreased. This allows to conclude that the personal participation ensures a long-term activity of the population in culture, while the cultural consumption is fluctuating under the influence of different external conditions.

Increasing welfare would not significantly affect the cultural consumption. Although the financial capacity of the population was identified in the study as the most significant barrier to more frequent cultural consumption (55% of those who would like to visit cultural events more often, specify the financial shortage as the reason why they fail to do so now), it cannot be asserted that the increased economic welfare will necessarily correlate with more active cultural life. When it comes to the survey question about financial resources which respondents would gladly expend in case their family budget was increased, the majority indicates that they would allocate their extra income for traveling to foreign countries (57%) and over Latvia (42%). In turn, every fifth would go to theater performances, but every fourth to popular music concerts. However, most of those who have given corresponding answers already attend the theater and concerts, while the welfare increase would not significantly activate the currently inactive visitors of cultural events . only about one of ten of those who are currently not attending cultural events mention that a larger family budget would encourage them to do so. On the one hand, this indicates that the effect of welfare increase in the field of culture could have been felt with the time lag, because the population would invest firstly in other emerging and necessary things to them. On the other hand, this also shows that the audience interested in culture is already active therein, and the improvement of financial possibilities would more likely increase the regularity of the existing attendance, rather than attract more people in cultural audience. This, in turn, suggests that the most significant factor that affects the cultural activity of the population is a personal interest in culture, not financial options. Consequently, in the long term it is essential to enhance the population's interest in culture generally and in attending specific events and activities, thereby raising the proportion of the audience which along with increasing prosperity will be interested in spending its income in the field of culture.

According to public opinion, culture currently is not "competitive" with other areas (health, economy, social field, defence). Although in total 63% of the population have admitted in the study that culture is important to them personally and 79% believe that culture should be supported from the state budget, only 4% of the population believe that culture is a priority in creating a state budget, besides - the proportion of persons holding such an opinion has not changed during the last four years. To some extent this allows to assert that currently culture is not a priority of the

population . the population generally supports the necessity of culture, but if they must choose between culture and other needs, the preference is given to the latter (especially when it comes to health, economy and social field). Of course, it can be explained by rational and practical reasons and arguments, however it also means that the cultural sector lacks a sufficiently broad public support in order to "fight" for a greater share of public funding. Perhaps it can also be partly attributed to the fact that currently in Latvia there are no explicit opinion leaders in the field of culture - in total, 43% of the population have been unable to name a specific person whose opinion on cultural events would be important to them, while those who have named, mention many various persons (which means there is an absence of opinion leaders who might influence the general public's opinion).

"Talking" with viewers, listeners, visitors instead of informing the audience. Approximately ten years ago the traditional mass media (press, television and radio) were the most effective communication channels to reach the vast majority of the society, but not now, since significant changes have been occurred during the last seven years. Firstly, there are obvious differences regarding most effective communication channels in different age groups. The most popular sources of information among young people are the Internet, social networks, friends and acquaintances, while seniors still prefer traditional media (television, radio, printed newspapers), whereas the 35-44 year olds more often than other age groups mention news websites on the Internet as the most convenient source of information. Consequently, it is not possible to reach the entire audience equally successfully with particular communication channels, but each of the target groups must be addressed by a set of different communication channels. Secondly, most of the audience (especially the target group of young people) have become a "mass media" themselves, whose information and opinions spread in social networks greatly affect viewpoints, thoughts and decisions on culture of persons of their nearest social circle (friends, acquaintances) and even personally unfamiliar people (%followers+in social media). And, thirdly, the increasing availability of the Internet, prevalence of new media and popularity of social networking as a tool for involving and raising interest of the audience force to switch from an unilateral informing about current events and cultural events to an open bilateral dialogue with the audience as a whole and even with each its representative individually.

The challenge of new regional cultural infrastructure objects is to become the major cultural centres in regions. Most often people attend cultural events in their place of residence (81%), but more than the half (58%) of the population of Latvia at least once a year attend cultural events in the capital city, while only 43% - events in their region. This means that currently Riga is the main center of cultural events and activities - people, who frequently attend events outside their place of residence, normally go to Riga, rather than other populated areas in their region or district. This allows to raise the question whether and how the cultural consumption in regions will be affected by the new cultural infrastructure objects in Daugavpils, Rezekne, Liepaja, Cesis and Liepaja. Although they have a great potential to provide cultural offer as close as possible to the places of residence of regional population, currently the population's interest about them is not explicitly

great. Though relatively many people are aware of these cultural infrastructure objects, only few of them are ready and interested in visiting them during the nearest year. For example, despite the fact that 35% of the population know the Cesis Vidzeme Concert Hall, only 7% express interest to visit it within the nearest year. Other new infrastructure objects have similar rates regarding the interest in visiting them. This is not a high score in relation to the overall awareness of specific objects. Consequently, the "conversion" of awareness into visiting is a significant development challenge of these objects. It should be stressed that currently there is no observable relation between awareness and attendance, namely - the visit readiness indicator of cultural objects, which are more recognizable, are not higher than those of less familiar ones. This, in turn, suggests that the promotion of awareness alone will not determine the growth of attendance. This can be particularly observed in relation to the attendance of cultural objects in other regions. A relatively large part of the population of all the regions wants to go to see the new building of the National Library of Latvia during the next 12 months, while newly opened cultural objects in the particular regions might have been mainly visited by inhabitants of the same region only, and extremely rarely by those living in other (even closest) regions.

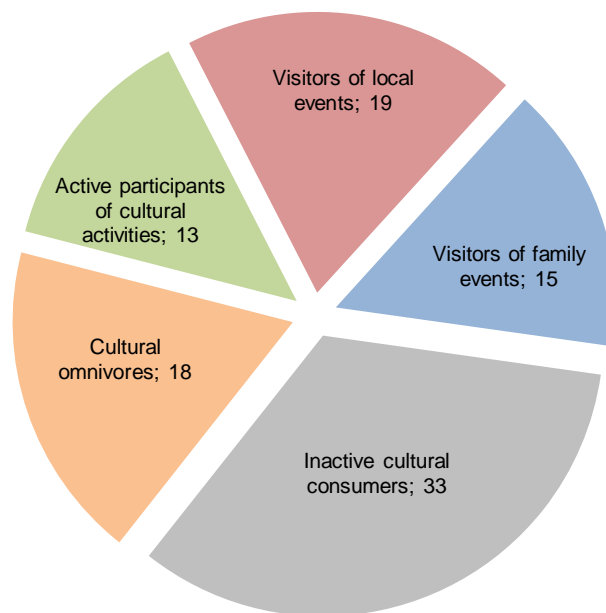
The impact of various annual cultural campaigns on audience extension is minor. One of the world's recognized and widely used techniques for widening audiences of culture are different types of regular (most often annual) campaigns. In Latvia, the most popular campaign is the Night of Museums (the most visited), whose example allows assessing the long-term impact on the audience in the field of culture in general. Although statistics show approximately a 10% increase in visits to the museums of Latvia in general, it cannot be affirmed that the Night of Museums has essentially impacted the increase in the number of regular museum visitors. An absolute majority of the population (71%) assert that they would visit museums even without the Night of Museums, and only 13% say the opposite. It should be stressed, that only every fourth has been fully confident about visiting museums regardless of the Night of Museums, while every second has given a more neutral response - "would rather visit". Consequently, although the Night of Museums has attracted relatively few inhabitants, who otherwise do not visit museums (about 1/10), it has certainly had a stimulating impact on the museum attendance regarding those who would be willing to visit museums even without the Night of Museums, but have not done it yet due to various reasons. This, in turn, causes a challenge how to use the popularity of this and other cultural campaigns to promote the population's interest and willingness to visit cultural events and activities also at times outside free-of-charge events.



## Segmentation of the population of Latvia by cultural consumption habits

The study data also allowed to make a summarized and generalized typology of the population to determine which groups (or segments) of culture and entertainment consumers describe the population of Latvia in general. For such summarization a statistical segmentation of the population's cultural consumption habits was performed within the study<sup>4</sup>. 33% of the population of Latvia can be described as inactive cultural consumers - they extremely less frequently than the others get involved in the cultural consumption or attend cultural events. Other population segments are approximately equivalent by proportions. 19% of the population are exceptionally active in attending local events (events occurring at one's place of residence, city, parish or regional holidays, balls with local musicians, a library, a church). 18% attend and get involved in very different activities (conditionally they are so called "omnivores", as they gladly attend an opera and ballet, pop music concerts, local balls, discotheques and nightclubs, museums, as well as zoos, etc.). 15% are so called visitors of family events (zoos, activities for children, amusement parks, etc.). But 13% participate in activities that require active involvement (discotheques, music festivals, sports competitions, hiking, foreign trips, popular music concerts, events in supermarkets, amusement parks, etc.).

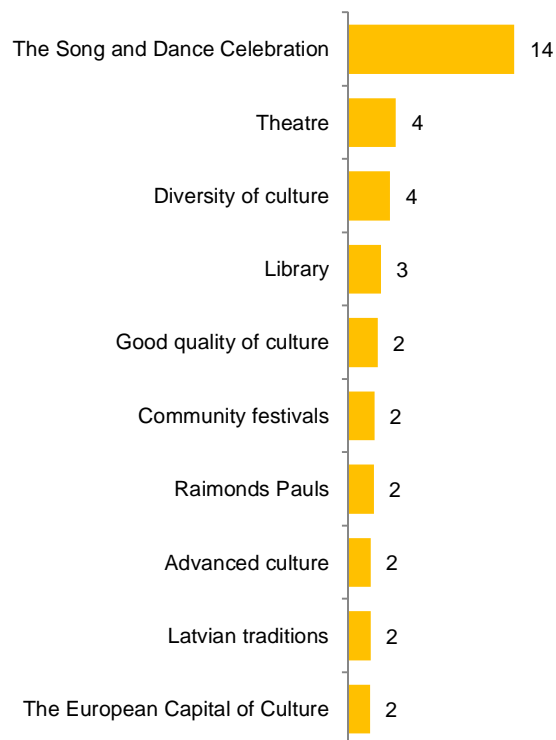
**Segments of cultural consumption of the Latvian population**  
(%; all respondents, n=1047)



<sup>4</sup> The segmentation was performed using factor analysis and cluster analysis, and it was based on population's assessments about how often during the past year they had been involved in various cultural activities (the questionnaire covered 25 such activities).

## The main survey data of the Latvian population (in graphs)

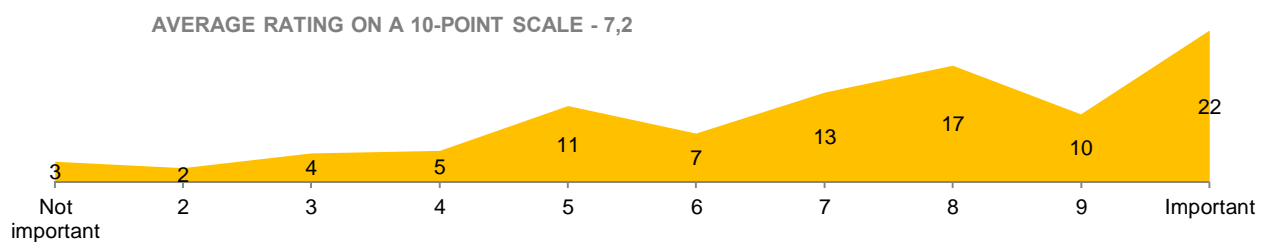
What is your first association when thinking about the culture of Latvia? - The ten most frequently given answers  
 (%; all respondents, n=1047)



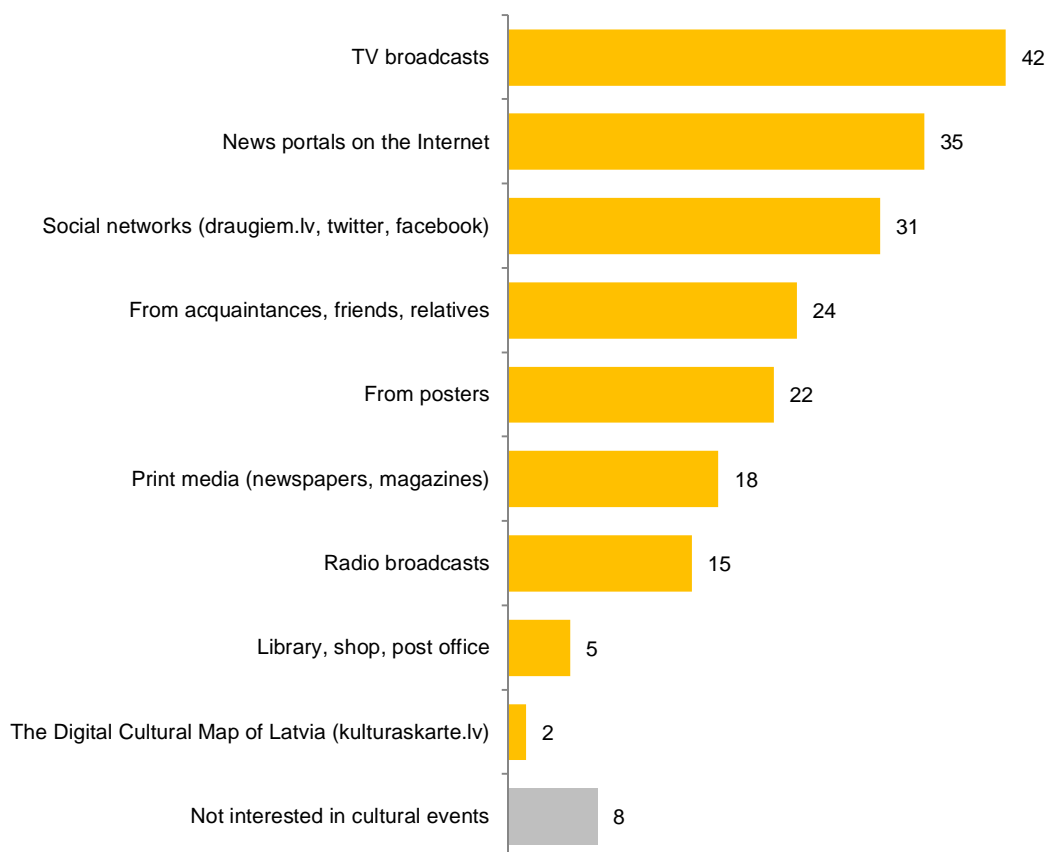
How important or unimportant is culture to you personally? Provide your assessment on the scale of 1 "Important" to 10 "Not important".

(%; all respondents, n=1047)

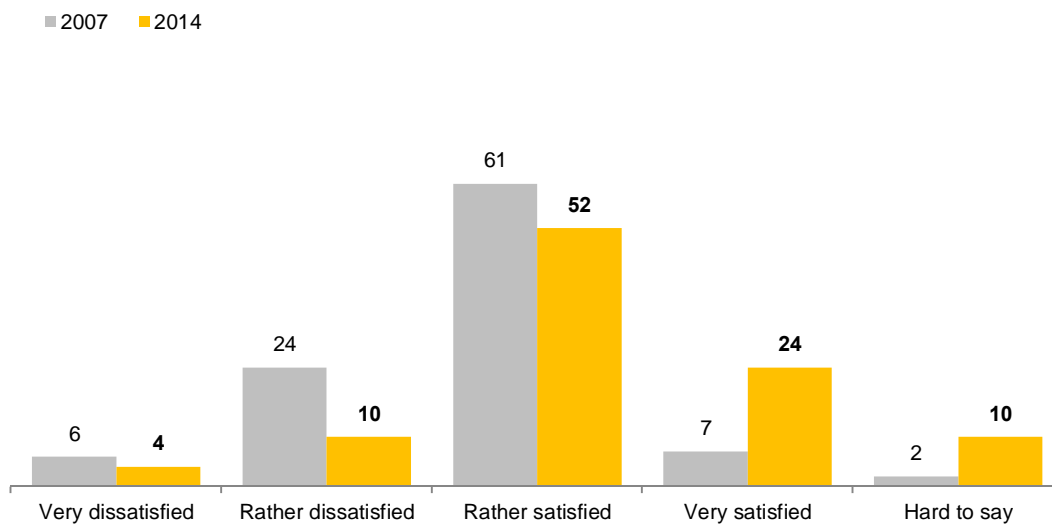
*Note: the category "Hard to say/ No answer" (5%) is not represented in the graph!*



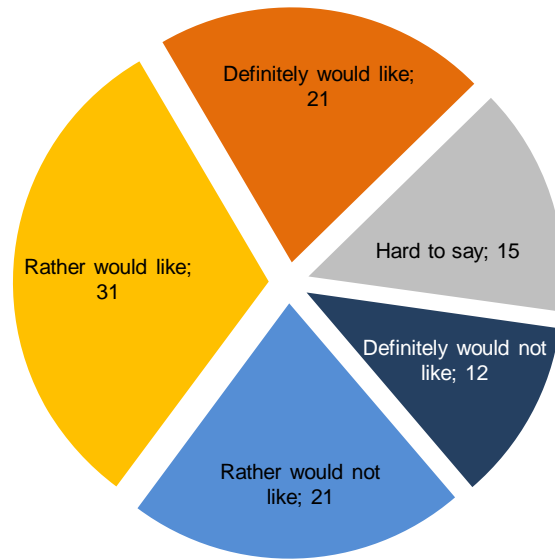
**What would be the most convenient source for you to obtain information on the latest events in the field of culture? What are the main sources of information which are most comfortable for you to use?**  
 (%; all respondents, n=1047)



**How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the options available to you to visit cultural events? - 2014/2007**  
 (%; all respondents, n`2014 = 1047, n`2007=1052)

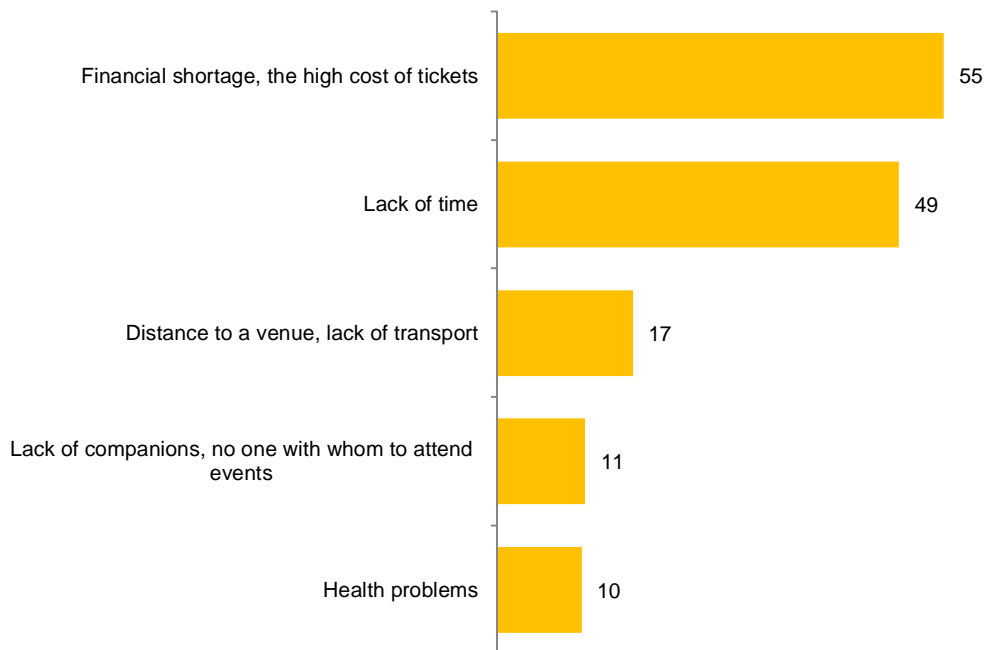


**Would you like to attend cultural activities more often than you do currently?**  
(%; all respondents, n=1047)

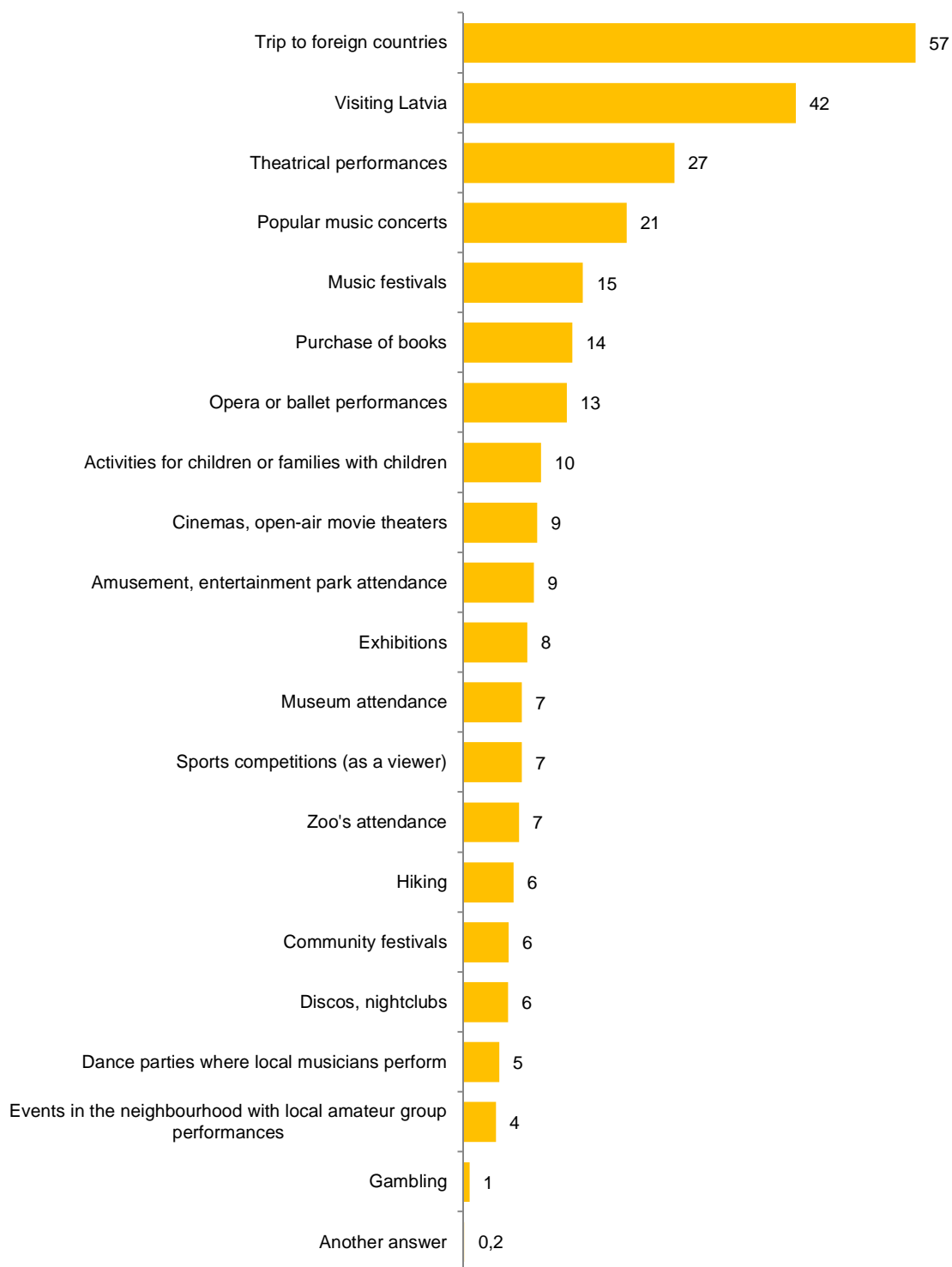


**What are the main reasons why you currently cannot attend cultural events as often as you would like?**  
- The five most frequently mentioned answers

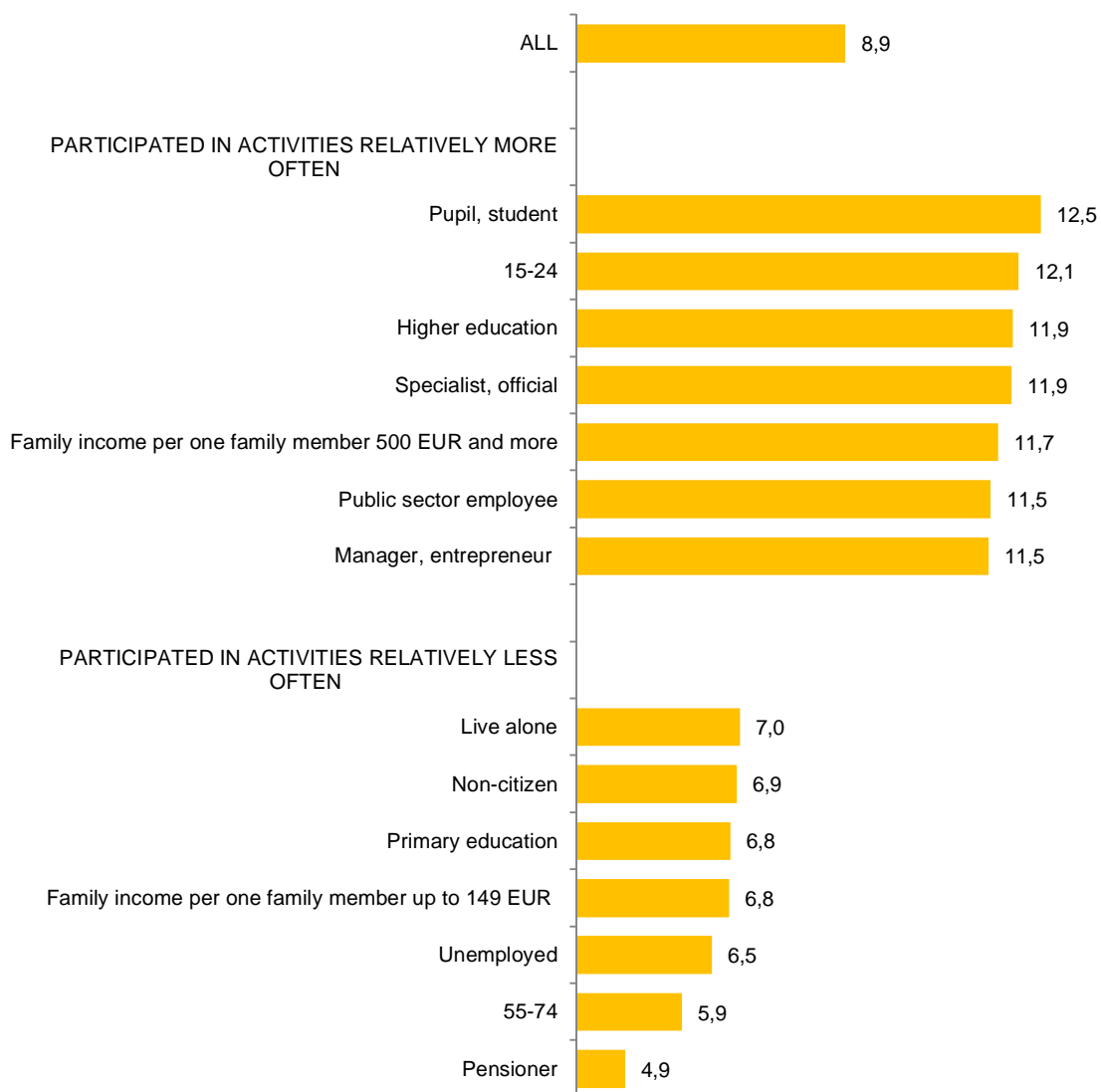
(%; respondents who would like to attend cultural events more often, n=554)



**If your personal or family budget increased, to which cultural or entertainment events would you most likely devote your extra income?**  
 (%; all respondents, n=1047)

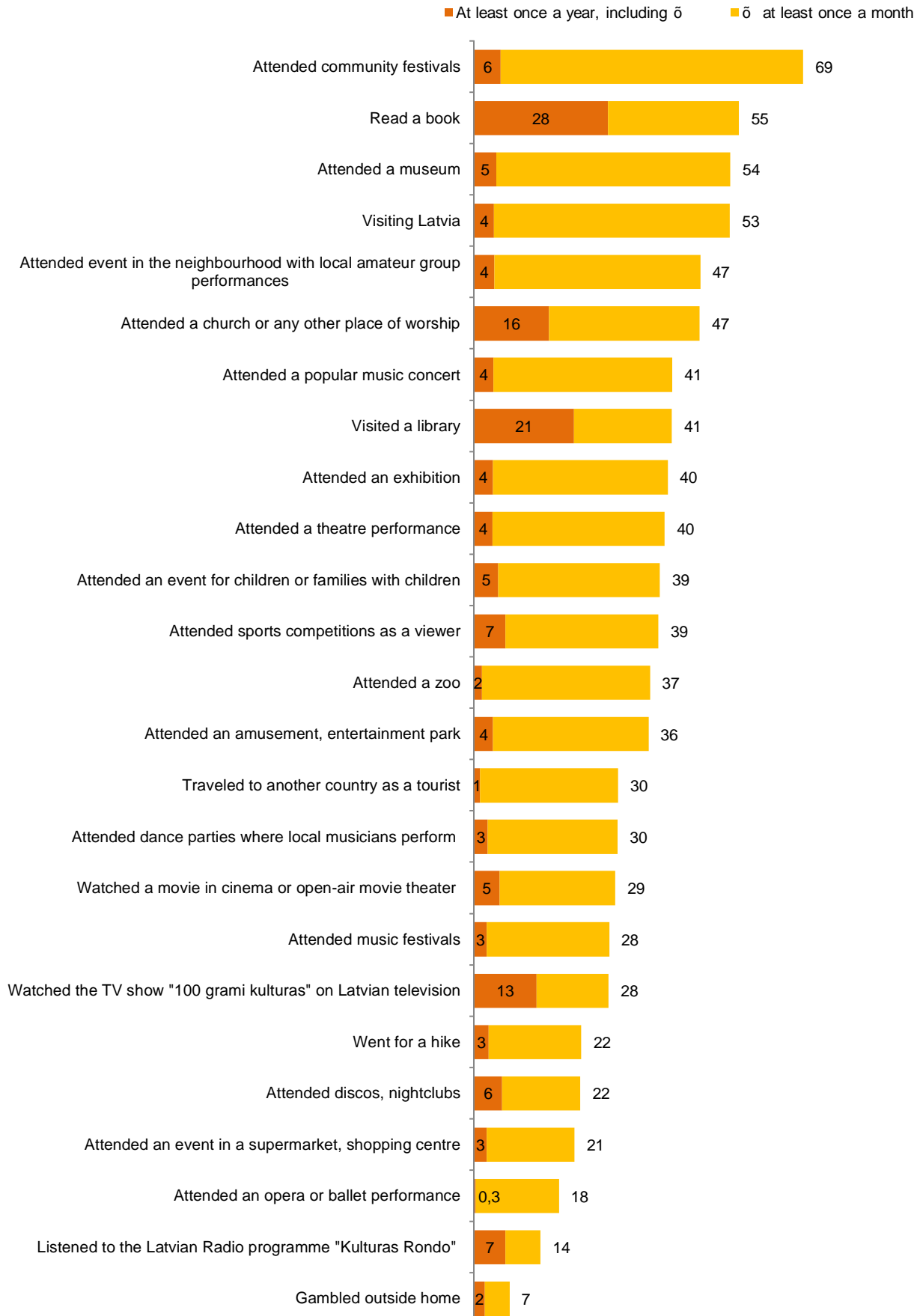


**The average number of cultural activities (carried out at least once a year) in socio-demographic groups**  
 (%; all respondents, n=1047; respondents in socio-demographic groups, see the number (n=) in the sample profile graph)



**About each of these activities, please tell me, how often during the last 12 months have you been involved into each of it?**

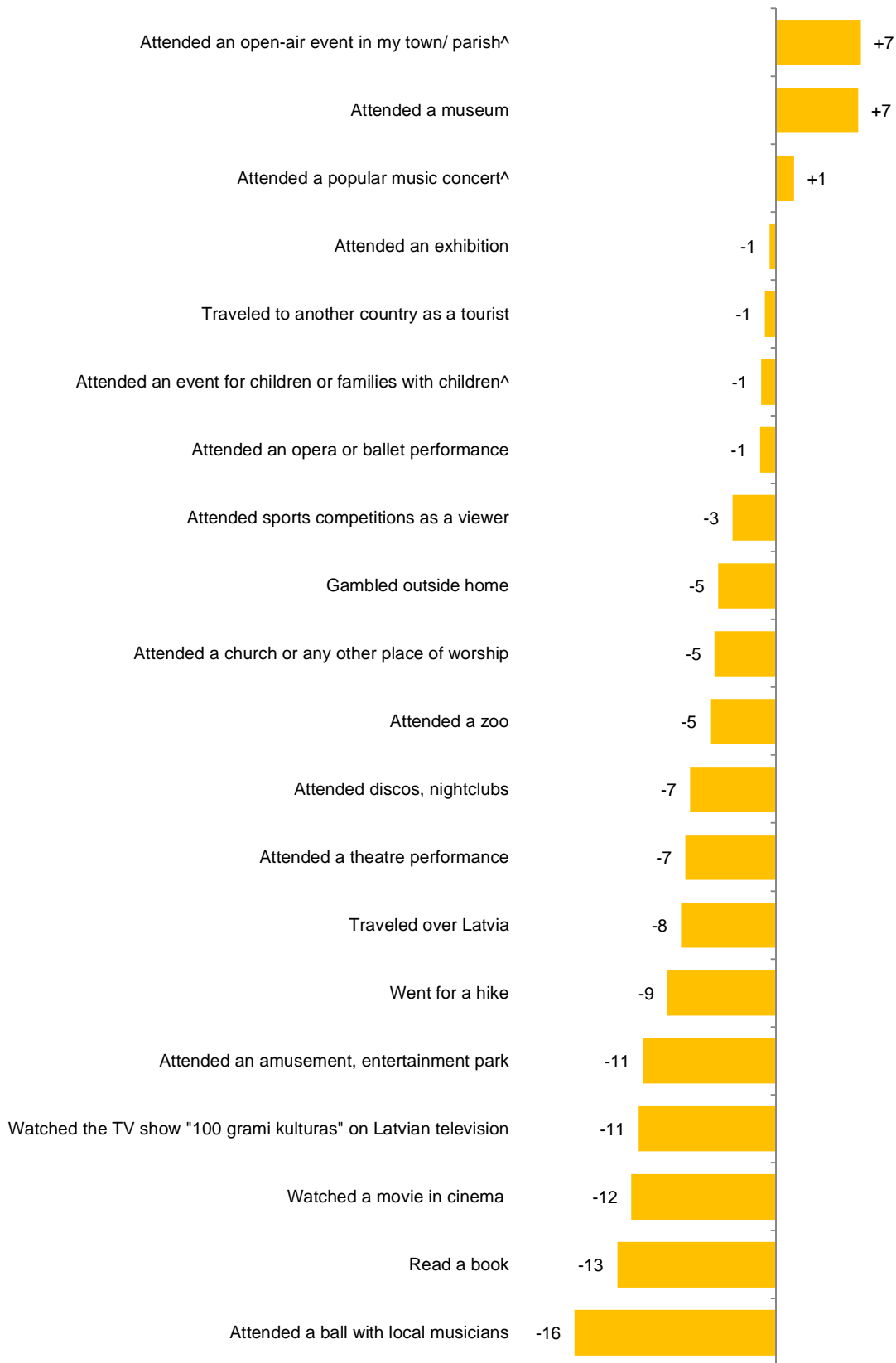
(%; all respondents, n=1047)



### Changes in attendance of cultural activities 2014/2007

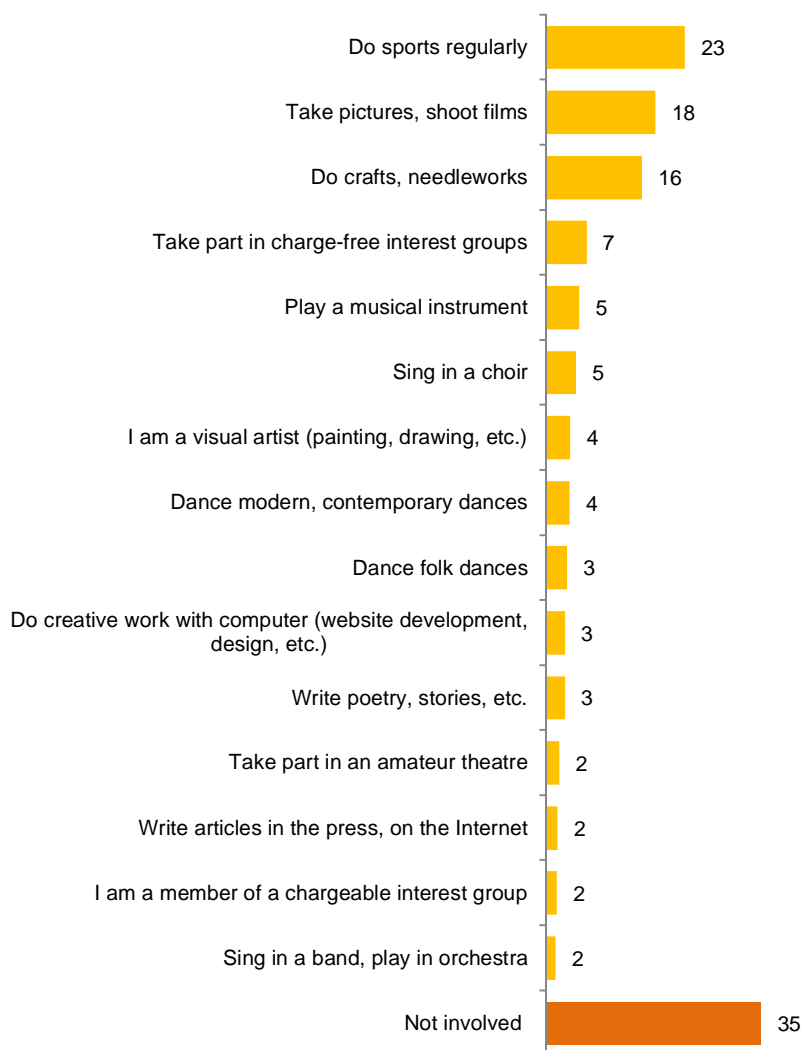
(%; all respondents, n`2014 = 1047, n`2008=502, n`2007=1052)

Note: The 2008 survey data have been used in categories marked with "^", since corresponding categories were not included in the survey 2007.





**Tell me, please, in which of the following activities are you personally involved?**  
(%; all respondents, n=1047)



## Technical details of the study

General population	Permanent residents of Latvia aged 15 to 74 years
Achieved sample size	1047 respondents (a representative sample of the general population)
Sample method	Stratified-random sampling
Stratification indication	Administratively-territorial
Survey method	Face-to-face interviews at the places of residence of respondents
Geographical coverage	All regions of Latvia (127 sample points)
Survey time	From 08/08/2014 till 21/08/2014
Data weighing	By region, ethnicity, gender, age

## Organizer of the study

%Culturelab+ is a non-governmental organization, founded in 2005 with the aim of promoting a sustainable social and economic development of the society, using cultural resources in a strategic and innovative manner.

%Culturelab+ conducts researches in the field of culture, publishes books, develops training materials and conducts seminars on the role of culture in urban and regional development, as well as on issues regarding cultural management and cultural policy.

Helpful resources, studies and publications can be found on the society's website [www.culturelab.com](http://www.culturelab.com).

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