

# Engagement Snapshot | Older Audiences

One in five people in England is over the age of 65, and the figure is growing. This is a large and diverse cohort spanning from recent retirees to great-grandparents. Delving into the data about older audiences can help the arts sector think practically about the role we can play in building a fulfilling creative culture for older audiences.

## Who are older arts and culture audiences?

### Men and Women

Although more women engage with culture than men across all age-groups, this gap decreases in older audiences:

- Under 65s = 32% difference
- Over 65s = 14% difference

This could be due to older men having more leisure time, though women are still more likely to be the outing organiser.

### Disability and Access

Over 65s who report having some degree of **limiting disability** or health condition in...

The English Population **53%**  
Arts Audiences **18%**

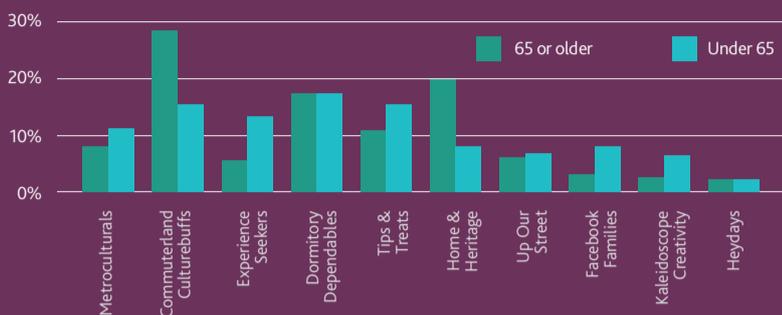
Mobility decreases with age. Creating an accessible environment is key to attracting older audiences.

### Changes with Age

After 70, **Home and Heritage** audiences increase steadily with age, as do **Dormitory Dependables**, though in smaller numbers. More than one in three people 85+ are **Commuterland Culturebuffs**.

Over 65s audiences are not a homogeneous group, but there are some interesting distinctions from other age-groups to consider if you are thinking about developing particular strategies to engage an older audience. Some Audience Spectrum types are more prominent among older audiences and understanding these differences can help you build engagement. Follow the links to find out how.

### Audience Spectrum Profiles over and under 65



**28%**  
**Commuterland Culturebuffs**  
Affluent suburban and greenbelt. Dependable consumers of culture as part of their social lives.  
[Read more about engaging this group](#)

**19%**  
**Home and Heritage**  
Mature households, conservative and traditional in their tastes. Often tend to engage locally.  
[Read more about engaging this group](#)

Learn more about the 10 Audience Spectrum profiles:



## What do they go to and how do they visit?

### Loyal visitors

Over half of over 65s visit the same venue multiple times a year. How do you **support this loyalty** to make sure that frequent older visitors are getting an evolving and enriching experience?



### Friends and Family

Older people visit in different ways, for varying reasons. With **77%** visiting in **adult-only groups**, it is important to offer the opportunity for an engaging social outing.

**Intergenerational groups** are also popular. Nurturing the **family experience** is great for grandparent appeal.

Sociable Seniors

Game Grandparents

### Going the Distance

**65 to 80 year-old audiences** are often still **highly active**, with the money, mobility, inclination and time to explore the arts.

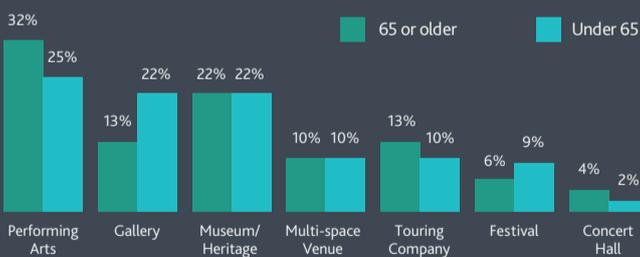
**Staying closer to home** is understandably more common in the less-mobile **over 85s**, but this significant local audience is still keen to be engaged.

**52%**

of newly-retired elders will go

**20+ miles**

to visit arts and cultural events. That's more than any other age group.



**ARTFORMS:** Whilst most artforms attract similar proportions of under and over 65s, Performing Arts and Galleries (Contemporary Visual Arts) attract these audiences differently.

	Under 65s	Over 65s	
HIGH 65+ Engagement:	25%	32%	Performing Arts
LOW 65+ Engagement:	22%	13%	Galleries

% who frequent this artform over others

## How do they feel about arts and culture?

Older audiences are **loyal** and **vocal** customers who can make excellent ambassadors for your organisation, venue or show.

*Older people are intellectually curious, eager to learn and keen for mental stimulation*

Learning and being intellectually stimulated are big motivators for older audiences. Explicit invitations to learn and explore for individuals or groups like [University of the Third Age](#) or [The Arts Society](#) can form an essential part of an older audiences development strategy.

Viewing arts and culture as defining parts of one's **identity** is reported far more prominently in older audiences. The feeling continues to strengthen with age, with **one in five over 75-year-olds** reporting this as their primary motivation.

*"Arts and culture are important parts of who I am"*

**2nd Highest Motivation**

**82%**

of over 65-year-olds rate their likelihood to recommend their visit as **9/10** or higher.

### Let me entertain you

**"To be Entertained"** is the top scoring attendance motivation across all age groups, but even more so in older audiences. While almost 1/4 of under 65-year-olds cite Entertainment as their main motivation, in older audiences **this jumps to over 1/3**

This figure falls as audiences head into their 80s, whereas intellectual and identity-focused motivations continue increasing with age.

## Top Tips | *Engaging Older Audiences*

### Notice differences

Consider distinct groups' interests and needs within the over 65-year old age group. What can you offer an active recent retiree? How can you engage socially isolated elders? Does your venue support access needs that can come with older age?

### Be Holistic

Social experiences are important for older audiences.

Consider how you can add interactive wraparound experiences or participatory activities to your offer.

### Think multi-generationally

Grandparents are a vital part of family groups.

How can your family programming build relationships with multi-generational groups?

### Nurture Loyalty

Older audiences are loyal and great at spreading the word.

How can membership benefits for this age group enhance this loyalty? How could you engage older audiences as ambassadors?

### Embrace Digital

Don't be afraid to go digital with older people. This is Facebook's fastest growing user group.

They are eager to learn and it provides great opportunities for connecting with younger family members.

### Encourage volunteers

Many younger elders have time and experience, so are actively looking for volunteering opportunities.

How can you assist them to support and mentor younger volunteers?

## Learning about your Older Audiences | *Area Profile Reports*

Engagement Area Profile Reports are a quick and easy way to understand the demographics and cultural engagement of active and potential older audiences in your local area.

The report includes information relevant to specific audiences and themes, including elders. Get a comprehensive breakdown of your local population by factors including...

Age group	Life-stage	Household composition	General health
Long-term health	Household deprivation dimensions	Provision of unpaid care	Economic activity
Disability	Social grades	Qualification levels	Proficiency in English

[Discover what you could learn about older audiences in your area](#)

## The Audience Agency | *In the Field*

### Case in Point SHIFT Digital

*"It is often assumed that digital activities work well with young people but alienate and intimidate most older folk. Whilst this can be the case, what SHIFT illustrated so clearly is that, if activities are designed and delivered well, creative digital work can actually connect generations and result in learning for all."*

[Explore our Findings](#)

### Case in Point Culture Champions Scheme

*"The Valuing Older People partnership was an initiative to improve life for older people in Manchester, involving a number of different services, organisations, agencies and, most importantly, older Manchester residents. The Audience Agency's report evaluated the scheme's impact and success in engaging older audiences in arts activities." can actually connect generations and result in learning for all."*

[Explore our Findings](#)

## Industry Insights

There is fantastic research being done across the cultural and charitable sectors into the benefits of engaging older people in the arts. Browse some key findings and surprising perspectives.

**Arts in care homes report**  
The Baring Foundation

**Unexpected Encounters:  
How museums nurture  
living and aging well**  
University of Leicester

**Inequalities  
in later life**  
Centre for Ageing Better

**A Handbook for  
Cultural Engagement with  
Older Men**  
The Whitworth

**Elders Company**  
Royal Exchange Theatre

**Creative and Cultural  
Activities and Wellbeing in  
Later Life**  
Age UK