

CONSULTATION ON SCOTTISH NATIONAL SURVEY OF CULTURAL PARTICIPATION, ATTENDANCE AND ATTITUDES

Organisation: Scottish Museums Council

Name and Role in Organisation: Heather Doherty, Information Manager

Do you think there is a need for a national survey covering cultural participation, attendance and attitudes in Scotland?

Yes

Why?

The results would give a factual basis for the formulation of cultural policy and strategy, and indicate priorities in terms of target audiences.

SMC has already contributed to a discussion on cultural statistics concerning the statistics to be collected by CIPFA, which will replace the existing COSLA / SAC survey. (Please see the appended SMC response to the consultation about a Draft Single Survey Form.) It would be useful to know how this consultation fits in with those previous discussions.

SMC had also produced a brief for potential research into audience development in 2002 (in partnership with Resource). In this brief it was highlighted that qualitative research would help to explain visitor trends and help to anticipate how the cultural sector could respond to trends more effectively.

How would such a survey benefit your organisation?

As we advocate on behalf of non-national museums and galleries, the data gained from a national survey would give us useful information about the visitors and non-visitors to these institutions.

In 2001 SMC conducted the National Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries, the first survey of its kind. The National Audit aimed to include all museums, including those few not in membership of SMC. There were two questionnaires, one for the museum organisation and one site specific. The questions were quantitative rather than qualitative. Of the 118 questions in the museum organisation questionnaire 4 related to community involvement / audience development. Of the 88 questions in the site specific questionnaire, 3 related to visitor numbers, 1 related to liaising with disabled visitors about access and 7 related to community involvement / audience development. The National Audit was a one-off piece of research and the data collected has not been updated.

SMC's response to the Scottish Executive's Action Plan for Museums consultation contained several recommendations which would be supported by research into cultural participation, attendance and attitudes. These were recommendations 20, 21, 58, 62, 64, 66 – 67, 70 – 79, 85 – 87 and 91 – 94 in particular. (Please see the appended list of recommendations for fuller details.)

How would you use the information?

The information would be used to inform our work in the areas of access and learning, community planning, museum development, training, audience development, workforce development, volunteering, museums and social justice.

What general aspects of cultural activities and attitudes do you think a national survey should cover?

Research into the reasons people do not make use of cultural activities available to them, and those who make use of them infrequently would result in better informed policy and strategy making in terms of audience development and social inclusion.

What aspects particular to your organisation do you think a national survey should cover?

Again, it would be useful to have research conducted into both non-attendees of museums and art galleries, and those who visit infrequently. This would enable organisations investing in audience development and social inclusion to plan and target resources more effectively.

It would also be useful to include volunteering in cultural activity. The National Audit found that 53% of those working in the museum sector are volunteers. In museums, as in other areas of cultural delivery, a key component of participation is in the delivery of services through volunteering.

Are there any groups in a national survey that you think should be targeted? (eg those living in deprived areas, ethnic minorities, young people, older people etc)

Research targeted at young people and their participation, attendance and attitudes would be very useful. It is often difficult to survey them outside of the formal context of school. Finding out about their attitudes to museums in a social rather than educational context would be very helpful and interesting. However, information on of the sample groups listed above will be useful.

Would you be interested in further, indepth information about these groups (eg 'spin-off research modules)? If so, what kind?

The initial research would be a good start. The results of that research can then guide what areas need further investigation. What would be more useful is for a repeat survey so that it is possible to examine trends.

Why would it be useful for your organisation to collect information about these groups' participation/non-participation in cultural activities?

This information would inform our work on cultural rights, targeting of limited resources, the relevance of public services and the cross domain agenda. It would enable us to plan our own work, and support museums to make realistic plans for the future.

At what level of geographical area would you like the information disaggregated, and why?
Local authority areas are a useful demarcation as it allows comparison with other surveys which tend to use Local authority areas. It also means that if you require a Scotland wide figure, it is easy to calculate a total.

It would also fit with the Cities review as each of the cities mentioned in that review are a local authority area, with the exception of Stirling.

Does your organisation collect data on participation, attendance and attitudes at present?
SMC conducted the National Audit of Scotland's Museums and Galleries in 2001.

If so, please indicate how the data is collected and whether the results are published.
The audit collected data on visitor figures, but not attitudes or reasons for non-attendance or non-participation.
The results are available in hard copy, on the SMC website, and also on a CD-Rom.

Does your organisation currently use data on participation, attendance and attitudes from other sources?
Yes

If so, please indicate the source data, and give some details of the information that you use.
The regular source of data is the annual VisitScotland/Moffat Centre Visitor Attraction Monitor. This publication is very useful, but unfortunately only covers a sample of museums and galleries.

We also use any other statistical reports and research that become available. These tend to be results from one off projects, rather than regularly collected data.

Any other comments

We would welcome a national survey for the cultural sector. This research would help to inform the work of museums and assist in their development as a key part of the cultural offering in Scotland.

Thank you for completing this pro-forma.

Please return (preferably by email) to either:

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